

# **The critical role of social capital in strategic sustainable development**

A study of the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter in the European Commission and Columbus Ohio

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## **Abstract:**

The primary intent of this thesis was to determine if and how the practice of *Art of Hosting*, a dialogue-based, participatory process architecture, could foster social capital in communities and other large, complex social systems working to address a variety of complex challenges, in order to draw conclusions that could contribute, in a meaningful way, to the advancement of strategic sustainable development (SSD). We hoped to gain useful insights by examining and interpreting the results from two case study systems existing within very different social contexts and with very different organizational structures: Columbus, Ohio and the European Commission. Based on the results of our research, strategic recommendations, guidelines and tools were developed for SSD practitioners wishing to assess the level of social capital in the systems in which they operate and take strategic steps to increase it. These same recommendations, guidelines and tools should also be helpful for Art of Hosting practitioners working to address complex societal challenges in general. Overall, the authors of this thesis believe that these results hold particular significance for any collaborative or multi-stakeholder effort to build support for adoption, and ensure the successful implementation, of sustainability goals and programs. This could include Eco-Municipalities, Transition Towns, Agenda 21 Communities, Smart Cities, and large complex organizations such as multi-national corporations or universities, to mention but a few.

**Keywords:** social capital; trust; complex systems; Art of Hosting; adaptive capacity, strategic sustainable development; complex societal challenge

# Statement of Contribution

The snow was a foot deep and the ice on the Baltic was almost strong enough to walk on when the three of us first convened at Wayne's Coffee in Karlskrona, Sweden to discuss possible thesis topics.

A month later, we found ourselves numerous times in Paul's apartment, noodling on causal loop diagrams and drawing "icebergs" on the sticky whiteboards. Since then, much has happened. There have been highs and lows. There were certain times when it seemed like we were on-track when some sudden realization would make it clear to us that we had a major gap in our logic. At such times, however, one or the other of us would pull a late night session and in the morning the others would check our email to find a newly formed idea fully fleshed out and we would be back on track, at least for the time being. This holds true for all members of our group; the ability to go the extra mile, especially when it was crucial.

Apart from the purely academic journey we have been on for the past five months, we also went on a couple of other journeys together; first to the four day Art of Hosting training here in Karlskrona and later to the annual Authentic Leadership in Action conference in Utrecht, Holland. These would prove to be two of the most meaningful experiences of our time together as they gave us an opportunity to meet deeply inspiring people, some of whom we had only read about up until that point.

The three of us worked to our own individual strengths. During the literature study, for instance, Paul's tremendous capacity to tirelessly synthesize vast amounts of information and craft coherent text, along with his ability to lay down a robust flow of logic, making sure that we remained scientifically robust, proved to be invaluable assets to our group. Elaine's ability to cut through complexity with sharp, well-aimed questions has helped the group to remain vigilant and stringent. Her ability to synthesize in a systematic, well-grounded fashion while still remaining highly creative benefited the group beyond measure. Niklas' contribution was that of scrutinizing our reasoning, at the same time suggesting paths forward that had not yet been conceived of. He often asked questions from a new angle that sometimes led to beneficial shifts the direction of the thesis.

All in all it has been an intense and very gratifying learning opportunity for all three of us and we feel very privileged and grateful to have journeyed this road together.

***Niklas Bruce***

***Elaine Daly***

***Paul Horton***

8<sup>th</sup> of June

Karlskrona, Sweden

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In particular, we could not have succeeded were it not for the significant time and experience so graciously offered to our team by some of the pioneers in the international Art of Hosting network including Toke Paludan Moeller, Ursula Hillbrand, Matthieu Kleinschmager, Helen Titchen Beeth, Tuesday Ryan-Hart, and Phil Cass. We also benefited from the support and important insights that we received from Tim Merry, Sophie Beernaerts, Bertrand Meusburger, Martin Martinoff, and Catherine Jordan. We are truly inspired by work that all of you are doing to try and bring about what may with hindsight be seen as the first steps in a paradigm shift.

We are also grateful for the constructive guidance and critical insight provided by our primary and secondary thesis advisors, Marco Valente and Sven Borén, and by Merlina Missimer and our program director, Tracy Meisterheim. Thanks also to Barbro Bruce, Eric Bragg, Bernie Cullinan, Roman Bojko, and Zenoby Orsten-Butler for taking the time to offer their thoughtful critique of our initial draft interview questions and to Silvia Martin for helping us out with some of the graphics in our document.

Finally, special thanks go to our MSLS peers and to our friends and family members, who are in a very real sense the reason that we have chosen to spend the many hours doing research, word-by-word transcriptions, and sometimes grueling of coding in order to produce this thesis.

# Executive summary

The aim of this thesis is to research if and how social capital can be fostered in communities and other large, complex social systems through the use of a collection of collaboration process principles and methodologies referred to as the *Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter* (hereafter referred to as the Art of Hosting). The underlying purpose of the thesis is to draw conclusions that could contribute, in a meaningful way, to the advancement of strategic sustainable development.

## Introduction

The sustainability challenge is both urgent and highly complex in nature. Like living systems, complex adaptive systems, such as communities and other large organizations or social systems tend towards more rather than less complexity, thus exacerbating the already daunting sustainability challenge.

The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development was designed to enable both experts in the relevant disciplines and non-experts alike to collaborate to address the inherent complexity of the sustainability challenge.

However, for society to be able to deal with the level of change, uncertainty and surprise that characterizes complex adaptive systems the following four essential dynamics: diversity, learning, self-organization, and social capital and trust are required. While the FSSD has proven useful in moving businesses, communities, and other large social systems strategically towards sustainability, the authors of this thesis believe that its value can be substantially improved if these four dynamics are in play.

Social capital and trust are two interrelated factors that are (1) critical for increasing the conditions for social cooperation, (2) widely cited as essential for building adaptive capacity in social systems, and (3) highly correlated with the success of multi-stakeholder or cross-sector planning in general. Other research has shown social capital, and in particular trust, to be key factors in the success of sustainability policy adoption and adoption of sustainability programs in particular.

The Art of Hosting (AoH) is intended to help individual organizations and broader complex social systems work within complexity and foster the dynamics of adaptive capacity. An examination of the literature on AoH points to social capital, and in particular trust creation, as common denominators in the successful outcomes and almost viral-like spread in places such as Columbus, Ohio, Minnesota, Nova Scotia, and in the European Commission.

A central hypothesis of the authors was that AoH practices could improve the conditions for adoption and successful implementation of sustainability goals and programs within communities and other large complex organizations or social systems. By gaining a deeper understanding of social capital and trust creation in social systems where AoH has been practiced extensively and over a substantial period of time, it was felt that insights and/or guidance could be developed first for strategic sustainable development practitioners who aspire to implement sustainability related programs within communities and other large, complex social systems and second, for AoH practitioners working to address complex societal challenges in general.

To explore this hypothesis, we posed the following question.

*Can the use of Art of Hosting practices in communities and other large, complex social systems foster greater social capital, and if so, how?*

In order to answer the above question, we posed the following secondary questions.

*Did social capital increase in systems studied?*

*What were the key factors in the fostering of social capital?*

*How did the use of Art of Hosting practices enable increased social capital?*

## **Scope of research**

This research focuses on two social systems (referred to hereafter as systems), both of which have been using AoH extensively and in different ways over a period of at least seven years: Columbus, Ohio and the European Commission.

## **Methods**

The thesis team relied on a thorough literature review, preliminary interviews with twelve experts in the field of AoH, hour-long interviews with 20 AoH hosts, callers and participants in Columbus, Ohio and in the European Commission (EC), and a combination of our own personal experience and deduction to triangulate and make sense of our research findings. A semi-structured, qualitative approach was used for the interviews.

A number of definitions of social capital were studied as a way to get a balanced and multi-faceted definition upon which the interview questionnaire was based.

## **Results**

While certain differences were observed between the two systems prior to the introduction of AoH practices, overall both systems demonstrated characteristics of low social capital. Following the introduction of AoH practices, both systems, to different degrees, reported substantial increases in social capital. Both systems also showed positive indicators of the other three essential dynamics of adaptive capacity: diversity, learning and self-organization. However, the depth of the change was in many cases substantially more in Columbus than in the EC.

29 success factors for building social capital in social systems working towards sustainability were identified. These are classified under five primary success factors associated with trust, norms and networks. These are:

- High levels of trust
- A high degree of beneficial norms of communication and working
- Robust, open flow of information / knowledge
- A large number of social connections
- High quality social connections

Four categories of enablers and 36 sub-enablers of the success factors were also identified. The four enabler categories are: Hosting & Design Enablers, Principle Enablers, Method & Tool Enablers, and Other Enablers.

## Discussion and recommendations

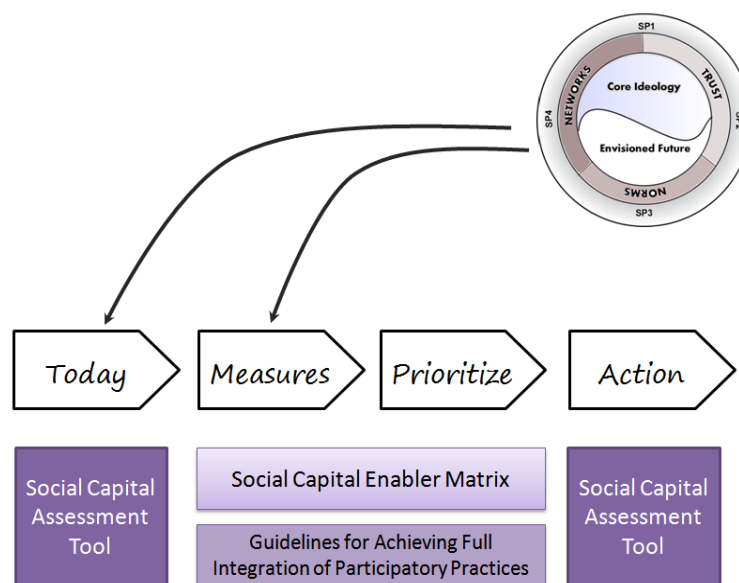
### Strategic recommendations

Strategic recommendations, guidelines and tools were developed for:

- FSSD practitioners who aspire to implement sustainability related programs within communities and other large, complex social systems; and,
- Art of Hosting practitioners wishing to increase social capital within the social systems they operate in.

#### *Strategic recommendations for SSD practitioners*

A *Social Capital Assessment Tool*, a *Social Capital Enabler Matrix*, and *Guidelines for Achieving Full Integration of Participatory Practices* were developed to support SSD practitioners during the development and implementation of a Sustainability Management System (SMS). The following image depicts how the categories of success factors, tools and guidelines can be integrated into a traditional SMS process.



*Figure1: SMS process with the categories of success factors (trust, norms and networks), tools and guidelines integrated*

The *Guidelines for Achieving Full Integration of Participatory Practices* are listed below in descending order of importance.

- Implement/integrate the enablers as a system
- Develop your personal capacities as a leader and facilitator
- Develop the expertise and skill of the host
- Consider carefully who is on your invite list

- Create and maintain a Community of Practice
- Customize the approach to the organization, system, setting

### *Strategic recommendations for AoH practitioners*

Many societal challenges AoH practitioners help to address (e.g. affordable healthcare, adequate housing, feeding the hungry, etc.) are also part of the broader sustainability challenge and each of them can, if approached from a whole-systems perspective, be an impetus for strategic sustainability. AoH practitioners should approach their work with this understanding in mind. Specifically, AoH practitioners are uniquely positioned to try and ensure that questions that are asked in hosted environments address the full spectrum of sustainability. Furthermore, AoH practitioners should consider introducing the four sustainability principles as design constraints for the creation of organizational purpose and vision statements.

The authors believe that AoH practitioners can make use of the different tools shown in this thesis to both develop a baseline of social capital in the systems in which they work and guide process design and facilitation in order to foster greater social capital.

## **Conclusions**

In each of the social systems, to different degrees, we not only observed substantial increases in social capital, but also more positive, happier and engaged employees, improved stakeholder relationships, and more functional and productive organizations overall. Furthermore, it was clear from our research that AoH was a causal factor in the creation of several of the observed outcomes and of the increase of social capital as a whole.

Overall, the authors of this thesis believe that these results hold particular significance for any collaborative or multi-stakeholder effort to build support for adoption, and ensure the successful implementation, of sustainability goals and programs. This could include Eco-Municipalities, Transition Towns, Agenda 21 Communities, Smart Cities, and large complex organizations such as multi-national corporations or universities, to mention but a few.



## List of abbreviations

5 LF - 5-Level Framework

AoH - Art of Hosting

AHC - Access Health Columbus

CoP - Community of Practice

DG - Directorate General

DG ESTAT - Directorate General for Eurostat

DG HR - Directorate General for Human Resources

DG RTD - Directorate General for Research and Innovation

DG SANCO - Directorate General for Health and Consumers

DG Translation - Directorate General for Translation

DG JRC - Directorate General of the Joint Research Center

EC - European Commission

EU – European Union

FRA - Fundamental Rights Agency

FSSD - Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development

MOFB - Mid-Ohio Food Bank

OOH - Our Optimal Health

OSU - Ohio State University

RL & CSB – Rebuilding Lives & Community Shelter Board

SMS - Sustainability Management System

SSD - Strategic Sustainable Development

# Glossary

**ABCD process:** Four-step strategic planning process that uses backcasting from the four sustainability principles to help groups identify actions that can help them move step-wise towards sustainability. The four steps are: A) creating whole-systems awareness and a vision of success for the organization based on the four sustainability principles; B) developing a baseline of the organization's current conditions; C) brainstorming a list of actions or measures to help the organization move from its current state towards its vision; and, D) strategically prioritizing the list of actions or measures.

**Art of Hosting:** Global community of practitioners using participatory processes and planning tools to engage groups in meaningful conversation, deliberate collaboration, and group-supported action around complex topics (Cretney et al. 2011)

**Backcasting:** "The term 'backcasting' was coined...to describe an approach to futures studies which involved the development of normative scenarios aimed at exploring the feasibility and implications of achieving certain desired end-points, in contrast to forecasting studies aimed at providing the most likely projection of future conditions." (Robinson 2003, 841)

**Callers:** Individual(s) who convene a group within an organization or system (a hosted environment) around a question that is meaningful and that triggers people's curiosity to explore it further, either in a specific hosted session or in a larger hosted engagement.

**Complexity:** Complexity is a state in which cause and effect relationships are not simple or linear (i.e. predictable) and where there are a large number of interconnected variables. In complex adaptive systems cause and effect relationships can only be seen in hindsight (Kahane 2004)

**Community of Practice:** A group of hosts and apprentice hosts who share a common interest and come together to form a learning environment to gather experiences and support one another in the use of AoH practices.

**Dialogue:** An intentional practice of conversation focused on deep listening, suspension of judgment, and inquiry with the intent to seek emergent or fresh knowledge (Nissén 2012).

**Dialogue-Based Methodology:** A structured means of engaging groups of any size in meaningful conversations centered around a question of high importance to the parties involved. Such methodologies are intentionally designed to help resolve complex situations.

**Emergence:** A way in which new properties, patterns, or behaviors arise (or emerge) out of a series of independent interactions or collaborative processes linked by a common purpose. The system that emerges will exhibit properties, patterns or behaviors not previously observed and that hold potential for change that could not have been predicted by examining only the individual parts.

**Five-Level Framework:** A structured strategic planning model consisting of five distinct but interrelated levels – Systems, Success, Strategic, Actions, Tools – that facilitates decision-making in complex systems.

**Four Fold Path:** A never-ending cycle of learning and growth consisting of (1) “hosting oneself”, (2) “being hosted”, (3) “hosting others”, and (4) “being part of a community hosting itself”.

**Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD):** A structured and scientifically rigorous strategic planning model that identifies the minimum ecological and the societal conditions which are necessary for humans to continue to live within the finite limits of the biosphere. The structure of the FSSD is consistent with the 5LF. A critical innovation is the integration and strategic use of backcasting using the four sustainability principles.

**Harvesting:** A practice of gathering and making sense (typically in a visual fashion) of information, produced from a meeting or brainstorming session, with the intention of capturing the collective intelligence in the room and making the results visible.

**Host:** An individual who uses a set of emerging practices for facilitating group conversations guided by principles of participatory leadership such as welcoming diverse viewpoints, maximizing civil participation, and transforming conflict into productive cooperation.

**Hosted Stakeholder Network:** A stakeholder network is a network that uses the Art of Hosting practices and philosophy.

**Masters in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability (MSLS):** A “whole systems” and trans-disciplinary international masters program with a dual focus on strategic sustainable development and organizational learning and leadership.

**Network:** Any interconnected group or system that has a method of sharing information or resources between the systems (Doyle et al. 2008).

**Participant:** An individual who takes part in a hosted process without a specific role of host or caller.

**Participatory leadership:** see definition for Art of Hosting

**Self-organization:** A living system’s inherent ability to spontaneously organize its elements in a purposeful (non-random) manner and where all elements act simultaneously, where no single element coordinates the actions, and without the help of an external agent (Luhmann 1995).

**Social capital:** That which “enables the solution of collective action problems” (Rothstein and Stolle 2003,4).

**Steward:** An Art of Hosting “host” who has achieved a high degree of mastery.

**Stakeholder network:** “a web of groups, organizations and/or individuals who come together to address a complex and shared cross-boundary problem, issue or opportunity” (Svendsen and Laberge 2005, 2).

**Strategic Sustainable Development (SSD):** Strategic decision-making and planning intended to bridge the gap between the current, non-sustainable socio-economic system and one that achieves full sustainability, based on a set of four first-order sustainability principles

**Sustainability:** A state in which organizations or the socio-ecological system as a whole has achieved full alignment with the four sustainability principles.

**Sustainability principles (SPs):** In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing:

1. concentrations of substances extracted from the Earth's crust;
  2. concentrations of substances produced by society;
  3. degradation by physical means;
- and in that society...
4. people are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their capacity to meet their needs (Ny et al. 2006, 64).

**Trust:** Willingness of an individual to take a risk or make themselves vulnerable in situations where outcomes are uncertain based on an assessment of the trustworthiness of the trusted agent.

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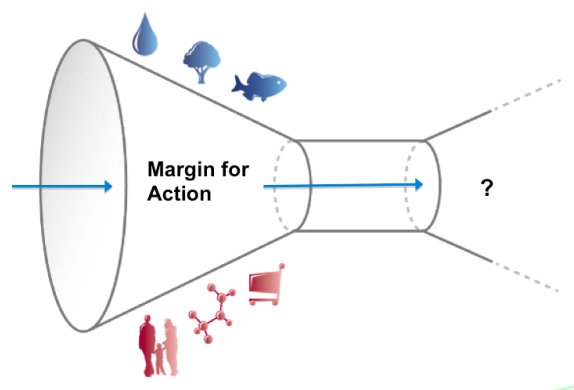
# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The sustainability challenge

There is growing consensus today that society is facing a sustainability challenge of a potentially catastrophic nature (Kiron et al. 2012; Worldwatch Institute 2013). Both human and natural systems are being deeply affected by large-scale, systemic challenges such as climate change, species extinction, rainforest depletion and desertification. Across the planet, human caused impacts on global biodiversity and ecosystems are escalating. Researchers at the Stockholm Resilience Centre estimate that the safe operating boundaries within which humanity can continue to thrive and develop in the future appear to have already been crossed for three of the nine Earth system processes identified, while others are “in imminent danger of being crossed” (Rockström et al. 2009,15).

This startling fact exists within the context of a planet that will relatively soon host nearly nine billion people (United Nations 2011), all of whom will be competing for ever-diminishing resources thus putting further pressure on the Earth’s carrying capacity (Rockström et al. 2009). In tandem with increasing number of people on the planet, evidence suggests that trust between people is decreasing. The global trust surveyor the Edelman Trust Barometer shows that people’s trust in major societal institutions (e.g. government, banks and businesses) have been in serious decline over the past few years (Edelman Trust Barometer 2013). This development is especially troublesome as trust is widely cited as a necessary condition for successfully tackling the sustainability challenge (Missimer 2013; Missimer et al. 2010).

These combined issues limit society’s options for the future. An apt metaphor for depicting these combined issues is society moving deeper and deeper into “a funnel of declining opportunities” (Ny et al. 2006, 64), that will act as “dynamic constraints on human activity” (ibid., 64).



*Figure 1: The Funnel Metaphor*

## 1.2 Sustainability is a complex challenge

Like many contemporary issues that society faces, sustainability is a complex challenge (Snowden and Boone 2007). Complex challenges are distinct from simple or complicated

problems that “assume an ordered universe...where the right answers can be determined based on the facts” (Snowden and Boone 2007, 4).

According to Kahane (2004), complex challenges are complex in three ways. Firstly, they are dynamically complex, in that cause and effect relationships are distant in time and space and as such are difficult to understand from a first-hand perspective. Secondly, they are generatively complex in that they do not unfold in familiar or predictable ways. Thirdly, they are socially complex in that individuals see the same things in very different ways. Failing to acknowledge and address complexity appropriately, is, according to Kahane (2004), often resulting in people getting “stuck” and societies becoming polarized, making collective and consensus-based action less likely and more difficult (ibid.). Thus it can be argued that there is a need for a widely accepted and shared mental model that allows for groups of people to cooperate and deal with the inherent complexity of the sustainability challenge without getting lost in reductionism.

### **1.3 The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development**

The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD)<sup>1</sup> was specifically designed to offer a whole-systems perspective and to enable both experts in the relevant disciplines and non-experts alike to collaborate to address the dynamic, generative and social complexity of the sustainability challenge, using a common, scientifically valid and systems-based framework (Robèrt and Broman 2011).

The FSSD is a structured and scientifically rigorous strategic planning model that identifies the minimum ecological and societal conditions that are necessary for humans to continue to live within the finite limits of the biosphere (Ny et al. 2006; Broman et al 2000; Azar et al. 1996). These minimum conditions are presented as the four sustainability principles and are as follows:

“In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing ...

1. concentrations of substances from the Earth's crust ...
2. concentrations of substances produced by society ...
3. degradation by physical means  
and, in that society...
4. people are not subject to conditions that systemically undermine their capacity to meet their needs” (Ny et al. 2006, 64)

The FSSD is based on the 5-Level Framework (5LF) which is designed to facilitate planning in any complex environment. The FSSD is constituted by five levels: *system*, *success*, *strategic*, *actions* and *tools*. The FSSD defines the system as “society within the biosphere”. Success is defined as alignment with the sustainability principles. The strategic level ensures a strategic approach to achieving success. The actions and tools levels include any actions and tools which can help to achieve success.

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<sup>1</sup> The Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development is also widely known as the Natural Step or the Natural Step Framework.

A four-step process called the ABCD process provides strategic, step-wise guidance for bridging the gap between current non-sustainable practices and the desired future state using backcasting from the four sustainability principles. Collectively this is referred to as strategic sustainable development (SSD).

## **1.4 Social complexity and complex adaptive systems**

According to Clayton and Radcliff (1996), communities and other large organizations display characteristics of living systems and as such can be considered as complex adaptive systems. As these systems evolve they tend towards more rather than less complexity (Clark et al. 1995). In fact, many social scientists have observed that social the coordination of social systems is becoming increasingly difficult as it becomes more globalized and as the development and use of technology spreads (Giddens 1990; Luhmann 2000). For society communities and other large, complex social systems to be able to deal with the level of change, uncertainty and surprise that characterize complex adaptive systems requires the following four essential dynamics: diversity, learning, self-organization, and social capital and trust (Missimer 2013).

While the FSSD has proven useful in moving businesses, communities, and other large social systems strategically towards sustainability, its value can be significantly improved if these four dynamics are in play (Missimer 2013). We will briefly explore each of the four dynamics below.

### **1.4.1 Adaptive capacity: the role of diversity, adaptive learning and self-organization**

#### *Diversity*

It is increasingly acknowledged by many contemporary social scientists that approaching complex and interconnected challenges such as sustainability is not solely the remit of CEOs, politicians, topic experts, or any single organization alone. Instead it requires the coordination of a diversity of stakeholders representing a variety of interests and perspectives (e.g. government, business, academia, civil society etc.) to define their respective challenges, see where they may overlap, and how they can be collectively addressed (Zilahy et al. 2009; Svendsen and Laberge 2005; Bradley 2003; Hemmati et al. 2002).

#### *Learning*

Similarly, research on social and institutional learning emphasizes the need to avoid becoming in any way monolithic or rigid. Instead, cultivating the ability to constantly learn and adapt to any situation adds further to the resilience of the system (Chapin et al. 2010; Nelson et al. 2007). Furthermore, it has been showed that overly rigid organizational structures can inhibit trust creation (Davis et al. 2007).

#### *Self-organization*

The capacity for self-organization without centralized control is one of the characteristics of complex adaptive systems (Walker et al. 2006; Gunderson and Holling 2002). This capacity is seen as particularly important in the face of sudden changes in the environment (Osbaahr and Twyman 2010; Norberg and Cumming 2008) and in particular when addressing socio-ecological sustainability (Folke et al. 2002).

### **1.4.2 Adaptive capacity: the role of social capital and trust**

Social capital and trust are two interrelated factors that are not only widely cited as essential for building adaptive capacity in social systems (Missimer 2013), they are also highly correlated with the success of multi-stakeholder or cross-sector planning in general (Sroka 2011; Nevens et al. 2008; Laberge et al. 2005). Higher levels of social capital, and in particular, trust, within a network increases the potential for stakeholder cooperation. Other research has shown social capital and trust to be key factors in the success of sustainability policy adoption and adoption of sustainability programs in particular (Owen and Videras 2008).

Social capital is defined here in general terms as that which “enables the solution of collective action problems” (Rothstein and Stolle 2003, 4). More specifically social capital is defined as being made up of three separate but highly interrelated parts; *trust, norms and networks* (Putnam 1995).

#### *Trust*

There are many definitions of trust and many converge on the notion of willingness; the willingness of the individual to take a risk or make oneself vulnerable in situations where outcomes are uncertain based on his or her assessment of the trustworthiness of the person he or she chooses to trust (Missimer 2013; Fukuyama 2008; Rothstein & Stolle 2003; Putnam 1999). Inspired by Gauthier (Gauthier 2004), the authors of this thesis also classify trust in terms of the willingness to invest (one’s time and energy) and the willingness to examine one’s own assumptions and biases. According to (Baland and Platteau 1998, 211), “trust lubricates cooperation.”

#### *Norms*

Norms refer to principles or patterns of commonly accepted behavior based on expectations within a group (Putnam 1995). For this thesis norms are separated into *norms of communication* and *norms of working*.

#### *Networks*

Inspired by Rothstein and Stolle (2003), networks here refer to the number and quality of social connections as well as the exchange of knowledge and information within a group.

Batt (2008, 488) points to the importance of a robust network by saying that: “*Social norms are more likely to be spread and observed in a densely connected society*”.

## **1.5 The Art of Hosting**

It is widely agreed upon that social capital and trust can be created as well as destroyed, very much like human relationships. Therefore, it was deemed important to seek ways in which social capital and trust could be proactively and intentionally fostered at a community and organizational level.

We chose to look at Art of Hosting (AoH) because the literature on AoH pointed to social capital, and in particular, trust creation as common denominators in the successful outcomes and almost viral-like spread in places like Columbus, Ohio, Minnesota, Nova Scotia and in the European Commission (Frieze and Wheatley 2011; Moeller et al. 2011; King 2007). This has been further validated in interviews with AoH co-founder Toke Moeller and a handful of AoH stewards<sup>2</sup> (Cass 2013; Ryan-Hart 2013; Merry 2013; Jordan 2013; Kleinschmager 2013; Hillbrand 2013).

AoH is a participatory, dialogue-based process architecture designed specifically to help individual communities and other complex social systems to work together in complexity and uncertainty and to foster adaptive capacity. AoH facilitates conversations —often centered around a meaningful question— among participants who, in many cases, hold multiple, often conflicting perspectives (Nissén 2012). A variety of group facilitation methods such as *Open Space technologies*, *World Café*, *Appreciative Inquiry*, to mention but a few, are used to create common ground for participants (please see Appendix 1 for a full description). AoH has been practiced in a wide variety of contexts worldwide for stakeholder engagement around complex challenges including health care, housing, hunger, and conflict resolution.

## **1.6 Goal and research questions**

The overarching goal of this thesis is to research how a more rapid transition to a sustainable society can be proactively fostered. We hypothesize that by gaining a deeper understanding of social capital and trust creation in complex social systems key insights and/or guidance can be developed for SSD practitioners aspiring to implement sustainability related programs as well as AoH practitioners working to address social challenges in general.

The primary research questions for this thesis are as follows.

*Can the use of Art of Hosting practices in communities and other large complex social networks foster greater social capital? If so, how?*

In order to answer the above question, we posed the following secondary questions:

*Did social capital increase in the systems studied?*

*What were the key factors in the fostering of social capital?*

*How did the use of AoH practices enable increased social capital?*

## **1.7 Scope of research**

### **1.7.1 Overview of case study systems**

This research focuses on two case study systems, both of which have been using AoH practices extensively and in different ways over a period between two and seven years, situated in the area of Columbus, Ohio and the European Commission. Following is a summary of the two systems.

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<sup>2</sup> Steward: A host of the Art of Hosting who has achieved a high degree of facilitation-mastery.

## *Columbus, Ohio*

Columbus is the state capital of the US state of Ohio with approximately 800,000 inhabitants. Within the larger Columbus system AoH has been practiced in eight separate sub-systems, each of which, in one way or another, spun off from an AoH “Taster Evening” held in 2004 and a subsequent formal AoH training held half a year later. An AoH Community of Practice (COP) also meets for a half a day every quarter to enhance their abilities and to strengthen their commitments as AoH hosts. It is estimated that over 800 people have been trained in Columbus over a nine-year period and thousands have attended hosted events held throughout the community. The sub-systems where AoH has been practices are listed in Appendix 2.

## *European Commission*

The European Commission (EC) is the governing body of the European Union (EU). It is made up of different Directorate General’s (DGs), which focus on different areas of concern such as health and human services, energy, and agriculture and rural development. AoH was first introduced into the EC in 2006 when an official from the Learning and Development Unit of the DG Human Resources and Security (DG HR) first suggested it as a potentially valuable tool for improving internal staff trainings. Since 2006, approximately 10 percent (approximately 3,000 of the 30,000) of EC staff has been exposed to AoH practices. The vast majority of them have been exposed to AoH practices at large-scale annual staff trainings organized by the Learning and Development unit of the DG HR. A much smaller number have been working more closely with AoH practices through their respective DGs. Approximately 800 people have been trained as hosts, out of which around 150 are actually hosting AoH engagements (EC 4<sup>3</sup> 2013). An AoH CoP also meets regularly to enhance abilities and to strengthen commitments as AoH Hosts. The sub-systems where AoH has been practices are listed in Appendix 2.

### **1.7.2 Limitations of research**

The scope of this thesis is limited to two case study systems that have used Art of Hosting methodology; hence it is unlikely that it would withstand a high level of statistical security. As to increase the credibility of the research, empirical data from a greater number of case study systems could have been retrieved, however, due to time constraints this was deemed as not being feasible. As sociological concepts such as trust and social capital are a matter of interpretation and the perception of the individual it is difficult to be sure that our definition and way of highlighting the traits of our concept definitions are the most adequate. Furthermore, it is hard to determine whether the questions we asked our interviewees were the most appropriate. Similarly it is possible that the interviewees of this study may have interpreted our question based on their own personal beliefs and assumptions therefore affecting the outcome of the results. As a way to mitigate this potential source of subjectivity (i.e. validity issues) and diverging interpretations we have tried to be very clear with communicating our definition of the core concepts of this study.

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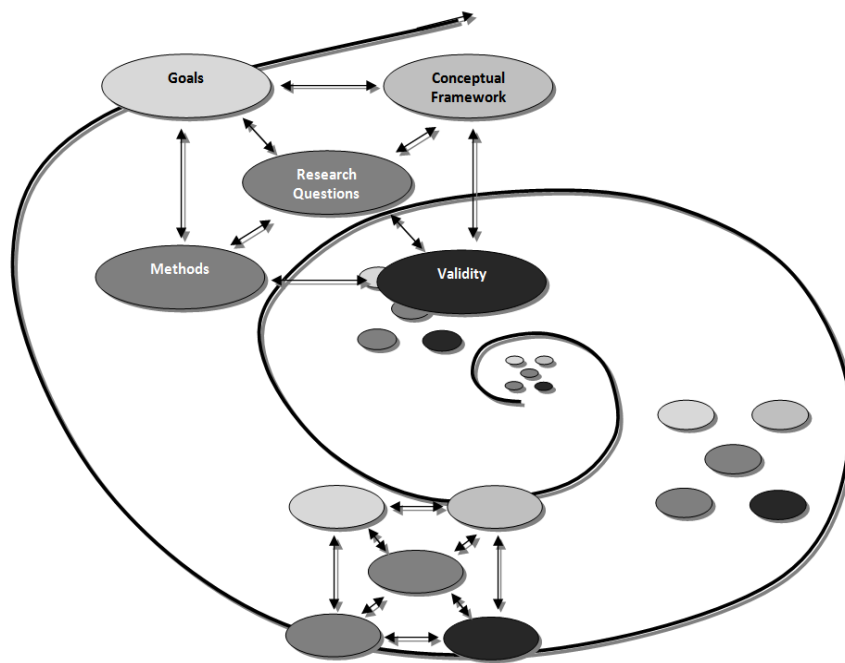
<sup>3</sup> For confidentiality reasons, the authors have chosen to refer to interviewees by number rather than by name (e.g. EC 1 2013 represents the first interviewee from the European Commission while CO 1 represents the first interviewee from Columbus). See Appendix 3 for the full list.



## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Research design

A qualitative approach as detailed by Maxwell (2005) was adopted for the research. The research design was based on an iterative approach (Figure 3), again using the Maxwell framework, to ensure that the goals, conceptual framework, research questions, methods and validity were in alignment. The Methods section details the steps taken to carry out the research and any validity issues raised during the research.



*Figure 2 The iterative process<sup>4</sup>*

### 2.2 Research structure

In structuring the different stages of the research, Maxwell's (2005) phases model was found to be well suited for the purpose of delivering a comprehensive research outline. Hence, the research process was divided into five stages, each describing the order in which the respective actions were taken.

**Phase I** consisted of a preliminary literature review, creation of suitable criteria for selection of research systems, and exploratory interviews with 11 AoH stewards from the US, Canada and Europe.

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<sup>4</sup> Maxwell (2005, 114)

**Phase II** detailed the research methods required to ascertain the data needed, which led the group to choose a semi-structured interview process. The interviewee selection criteria were agreed upon and interviewees were chosen based on these criteria. The interview questions were then developed and subsequently tested.

**Phase III** was the data collection phase, which included 20 interviews within the two selected case study systems.

**Phase IV** consisted of coding and thematic mapping of interviews, where time was spent analyzing each case study system based on the coded interview data.

In **Phase V**, the results of the case studies were interpreted departing from the conceptual framework with the goal of distilling the results into strategic guidance and indicators of success to meet the previously stipulated goal of the thesis.

## **2.3 Case study selection**

### **2.3.1 Selection of dialogic process: Art of Hosting**

Based on a detailed literature review, the dialogue-based, participatory process architecture called Art of Hosting (AoH) was chosen as the process of study for the research. A content review of AoH training manuals and other literature, alongside exploratory interviews with AoH stewards, revealed the practice of AoH to be extensively used worldwide within multi-stakeholder contexts and anecdotally linked to increases in social capital and trust. Art of Participatory Leadership is the name AoH carries in the EC. For convenience, Art of Participatory Leadership is referred to henceforth as Art of Hosting.

### **2.3.2 Selection of criteria for the choice of systems to research**

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, criterion-based sampling was chosen. According to Maxwell (2012), criterion-based sampling is stated as preferable over probability-based sampling when only a limited sample of data is available as correlations derived from a limited sample are unlikely to withstand statistical scrutiny. Hence, as the sample of data available to the thesis group was limited, a criterion-based approach was adopted. Similarly, as the goal of the thesis was to find patterns and correlations amongst the sampled case studies, the criterion-based sampling enabled the comparison of ‘apples with apples’.

After gaining a basic understanding of the field of study, criteria in line with the goals and research questions were developed to facilitate selection of case studies. One-hour exploratory interviews with AoH hosts with plentiful experience (stewards) who worked in the considered systems of study were held to further refine the case study system selection process.

The group chose to combine two kinds of criteria for the case study systems selection; one based on four exclusion criteria and one based on three weighted criteria. The exclusion-based criteria included duration of practice, depth of AoH utilization, number of AoH methods in use, and access to interviewees. The exclusion-criteria, along with the numbers derived from the weighted criteria assessment of the different multi stakeholder settings, can be found in Appendix 4 as a part of the full case study system selection matrix. If the case study failed to satisfy any of the exclusion-criteria it was excluded. The case studies that satisfied all exclusion-based criteria went on to be assessed against the weighted criteria.

### 2.3.3 Selection of case study systems

The first round of selection revolved around assessing the potential of the eight different systems identified through exploratory interviews with AoH stewards.

Several contemplated case study systems were rejected as they failed to meet the above mentioned exclusion criteria. Lacking multi-stakeholder quality, diversity of participants, diversity of AoH methods used, and duration of practice of AoH, were all main factors of exclusion. In the end two large complex social systems were chosen; Columbus and the EC. These two not only met all of the criteria but also had structural attributes that the authors found to be interesting.

### 2.3.4 Selection of interviewees

In order to ensure a spread of viewpoints and responses, a mix of callers, hosts, and participants from each of the two selected systems were chosen for interviews.

- A *caller* is defined as the individual who convenes a hosted engagement process
- A *host* is an individual who uses a dialogue-based process for facilitating group conversations guided by principles of participatory leadership such as welcoming diverse viewpoints, fostering civil participation, and transforming conflict into productive cooperation.
- A *participant* is someone who takes part in a hosted process without having previously defined role, as that of host or caller.

Two AoH stewards from each of the two systems of study served as conduits to the final list of interviewees. Once the interviewees had been selected, an initial email was sent that included interview details (date of interview, duration of interview, confidentiality stipulations, etc.) and a summary document outlining the research objectives, background on the MSLS program, and the author's biographies.

## 2.4 Data collection design

The research was designed to collect qualitative data exclusively, focusing on the participant's experiences of the two hosted environments.

Interview questions were pre-tested with three students of the MSLS program and three additional individuals not affiliated with the program test for clarity and appropriate length. The pre-test showed the interview questions to be rather broad, hence they were refined to give more specific information on changes in trust, networks and norms within hosted environments. This process of review was repeated after the first three initial interviews.

### 2.4.1 Structure of interviews

A semi-structured approach was chosen to enable comparison of the qualitative data without hampering the emergence of an organic dialogue (Maxwell 2012). Consistent with a semi-structured methodology, the interviewers maintained the freedom to ask questions without particular order (Maxwell 2012).

The interviews were structured mainly departing from Putnam's (1995) definition of social capital, including the three sub-categories trust, norms and networks. The questionnaire was also informed by Gauthier's (2004) attributes of trust: willingness to invest (time and energy) and willingness to examine biases and assumptions.

## **2.5 Data collection**

### **2.5.1 Interviews**

Two sets of interviews were carried out; 11 exploratory and the 20 primary interviews. The first two-thirds of each of the exploratory interviews focused on providing a background on the different possible AoH case study systems. In the last roughly one-third of each interview the stewards were asked to provide their view of social capital, and in particular trust, creation as a result of the practice of AoH in the systems in question.

The focus of the primary interviews was to collect data to answer the pre-defined research questions. In order to enhance uniformity of the primary interviews, a detailed interview question template was compiled and utilized to record answers to interview questions and to flag key words, AoH methods, trust creation factors, etc.

At the onset of the interviews, a small number of slightly differing preliminary questions were asked of the callers, the hosts and the participants. These preliminary questions were designed to gather essential background information on the individual and the area of the hosted stakeholder network in which they worked. The same interview questions were asked of all callers and participants. The interview questions asked of the hosts differed only slightly and the questions may be found in Appendix 5.

One author acted as the lead interviewer while another took minutes and on occasion asked clarifying questions if they felt it necessary to do so. In all interviews, at least two members of the group were present to address the possibility of a validity threat resulting from subjectivity of a single interviewer. After the interview, the recording of the interview was listened to and transcribed by, a member of the group.

The exploratory interviews were carried out between February 7<sup>th</sup> and March 27<sup>th</sup> 2013 and the primary interviews were carried out between April 7<sup>th</sup> and April 20<sup>th</sup> 2013. All interviews were conducted by Skype and recorded (with the permission of the participants). The interview durations were around one hour long.

## **2.6 Transcription and coding of data**

### **2.6.1 Transcription**

The interviews were transcribed, nearly word-for-word, and the content of each interview subsequently rendered into an exhaustive summary with key quotes. All conversations were listened to and transcribed by the secondary interviewer so as to decrease the personal bias of the lead interviewer.

## **2.6.2 Coding**

To increase validity two separate authors coded each interview. Key sections of the transcription were highlighted and copied into a coding template by the second interviewer. Two authors coded the sections independently, according to an agreed upon coding matrix. It was agreed that new codes could be created during the coding process if it was deemed relevant and not yet included in current coding matrix. The new code was then included in the coding matrix. Once complete, the original coder reviewed both codes together and came up with a combined coding for each interview. At this stage, missing elements were identified, disagreements were discussed among the full group and resolved, and a final coding was agreed upon. The coded interviews were then aggregated and brought forward to the analysis and synthesis stages of the research.

## **2.7 Analysis**

To make maximum use of the data collected and to assure alignment between the thematic mappings of the coded interviews, a comparative qualitative research approach (Maxwell 2005, 90) was adopted. Once the major themes were highlighted by the group, a member of the group went back through all of the coded interview documents and did a rigorous count of how many of the interviewees referred to the highlighted themes in order to get a ranking of importance for synthesis section listed below.

### **2.7.1 Counting**

The themes brought up in the interviews were counted once per interview, regardless of how many times it was mentioned within the same interview. As such, the level of emphasis regarding a particular theme brought up by an interviewee was not captured. The rationale for doing the one count per interview was to prevent one interviewee from having too strong an impact on the total interview material, in relation to the other interviewees.

## **2.8 Synthesis**

In the synthesis, the coded and thematically mapped results yielded from the interviews were integrated with the findings of the literature review to form a coherent body of knowledge that in turn was used to inform the crafting of the success indicators and strategic guidance.

## **2.9 Validity**

The following validity threats were identified during our research:

### **2.9.1 The interview questionnaire**

*The absolute state of social capital not measured*

As measuring an absolute level of social capital is a very difficult, if not impossible task, the questionnaire used for the purpose of this research focused on the change, comparing the social capital before and after the AoH engagement, not accounting for any absolute level of social capital. Thus, the authors can only draw conclusions on the measured difference in social capital before and after.

### *Inhibitors not addressed*

The questionnaire did not explicitly ask about inhibitors of the adoption and practice of AoH. As such a potential gap may exist in our results.

## **2.9.2 Accuracy of the interviewees' recollections**

In a few cases, an interviewee had not worked in the hosted environment for the last two or three years. As such, the interviewees' recollections regarding the practice of AoH might have blurred somewhat, although this risk should not skew the results in any particular direction.

## **2.9.3 Bias**

The study was undertaken by three co-authors who are all from developed West European or North American environments. Similarly, all three authors are students of the MSLS program and thus may hold similar preconceptions based on their educational background and worldviews. Special effort was taken to ensure that the biases and assumptions of the authors were considered throughout the process to decrease the subjectivity of the research.

## **2.9.4 Assumptions**

Throughout the entire research process the research team aspired to remain mindful of how potential biases may have influenced the way the interview questions were crafted as well as whether and to what degree the conceptual framework that was used might color the interpretation of the collected data.

Throughout the entire research process, the authors would sit together and discuss the possible assumptions and blind spots. The authors decided to hold each other accountable to a high level of scientific rigor and often paused to examine personal assumptions and biases.

## **2.9.5 Triangulation of qualitative data**

To allow a deeper and more multi-faceted understanding to emerge, interviews were conducted with individuals representing multiple perspectives on the use of AoH practices in each of the two systems of study. This included AoH callers, hosts and participants. This enabled triangulation and enabled a deeper understanding of how the AoH practices were interpreted by those who had experienced working in hosted stakeholder environments.

The results of the interviews were also triangulated with literature and with exploratory interviews with AoH stewards.

## **2.9.6 Expected results**

The researchers expected to find results correlating the use of AoH practices in the two systems of study with increased levels of social capital and in particular increase in trust, as well as several positive organizational outcomes.

Furthermore, once the data was compiled and the results analyzed, the authors expected that characteristics of successful social capital and trust creation would emerge and that these and other insights could be organized in terms of the 5-Level Framework (see Glossary).

## **3 Results**

This section details the results to the research questions pertaining to our goal of gaining a deeper understanding of social capital creation in communities and other large complex social systems where AoH has been practiced extensively and over a substantial period of time, in order to offer insight and guidance to strategic sustainable development. This section has been structured by way of the sub research questions (SRQ). The themed results are listed in descending order based on the selection and weighting criteria (see below).

### **3.1 Selection and weighing of empirical data**

#### **3.1.1 Selection**

Given the time and scope of our research, it was not deemed suitable to use any statistical analysis tools to test if the probability of possible trends was statistically secure. It was, however, deemed necessary to limit the extensive amount of retrieved data by theming only those items that were reported at least seven times across the whole sample (20 interviews) or three to four times within either system sample (11 interviews in Columbus and 9 in the EC).

#### **3.1.2 Initial, quantitative weighing**

As to get an idea of whether a certain theme was reported more in one system than another, the respective interviewee groups were weighted against one another in four weight classes; no difference and then slight, significant and substantial, depending on the level of difference. If the difference in frequency of reporting between the two systems was less than 30%, no difference was reported. If the difference was between 30% and 99%, it was reported as slight. If it was reported between 100% and 199% more often in either system, it was deemed significant, and all differences in reporting above 200%, were deemed as substantial. It should be noted that although the percentage limits were the same for the whole sample, themes, which were frequently reported arguably, had a higher validity than the lesser-reported themes due to the relatively lower confidence of a small sample. There was no reasoning behind these specific percentage limits other than deemed to be a good fit for this sample.

#### **3.1.3 Secondary, qualitative weighing**

With respect to the results of the interviews, an important clarification is warranted. The method of selection and counting of the themed results (e.g. increase in listening to and valuing all voices; high increase in authentic and genuine conversations; etc.) involved a single count, regardless of whether an item was mentioned multiple times by the same interviewee. While we believe that this form of counting is both valid and necessary, it does not incorporate the more stressed aspects of the individual and aggregated interviews. It can thus be argued that this way of counting discounts much of the emphasis and/or nuance of what was said (for instance, in some cases themes were referred to multiple times by an interviewee but in reference to different questions). Thus, in addition to the initial single count theming, the secondary qualitative weighing provided a more vivid picture of the interviews.

## **3.2 SRQ1: Did social capital increase in the systems studied?**

This section is separated into two major parts; the first is an overview of the similarities and differences observed between the two systems of study, presented here in a highly summarized fashion to paint a picture of the situation on-the-ground prior to and following the introduction and on-going use of AoH practices. For more detailed information on Columbus and European Commission systems and the use of AoH practices in both systems please see appendix 6 and 7. The second section is a more detailed description of the themes that emerged from the studying both systems.

### **3.2.1 High level overview of results from Columbus and European Commission systems**

#### *Results prior to the introduction of AoH practices*

Low levels of trust existed in both stakeholder networks among co-workers and within the institution (or in the case of Columbus, between different organizations) and their external stakeholders prior to the introduction of AoH practices (though some reported small pockets of trust within certain niche settings). Based on the emphasis and detailed descriptions made by interviewees, a somewhat lower level of trust was reported in the EC than in Columbus. With respect to norms of communication, overall communication was not inclusive. There tended to be many 'one-off' or 'back-room' conversations. These, and many of other conversations and meeting outcomes, were not captured in a way that could be useful for future conversations. There was also a general sense that people didn't feel listened to and that communication was not open, honest or authentic.

With respect to the norms of working (e.g. organizational behaviors), there was in general a lack of clarity of purpose and vision, not only for individual meetings and events but also for the organizations as whole.

Most characterizations of the working environments prior to the introduction of AoH practices in both Columbus and the EC were as rigid and top-down hierarchies. The EC was, however, depicted as the more rigid, controlled and hierarchical of the two. Columbus, on the other hand, was depicted as more of an organic social system made up of many often loosely affiliated sub environments, each with its own unique organizational structures – some quite flexible while others were less so (e.g. Ohio State University, OSU).

Decisions were often made by authoritative figures with power. People commonly described the dynamic in terms of "*I say-you do*", where the leader would send orders down the hierarchy for them to be acted upon. There was a lack of transparency in decision-making. For example, in the cases where people's input was solicited, it was often not clear whether and to what degree their input would be included in decisions being made. People often didn't feel that people at higher levels of the power structure valued their ideas and opinions. Furthermore, external stakeholder input into decision-making was the exception rather than the rule.

With respect to the flow of information, the general sense was that of highly formalized and restricted flows. The primary methods of communication were emails and formal memos. Top-down and/or 'one-way' communication also appeared to be standard. This was more the



case in the EC than in Columbus, however. Knowledge and information flow was often described in both systems as disjointed, disintegrated, or unclear.

With respect to social connections, people often worked in silos and there was a lack of cross-unit collaboration in both stakeholder networks. Similarly there was little contact with external stakeholders.

The quality of social connections was low in both networks, though it appeared to be lower in the EC. A core member of the AoH community within the EC described the EC as suffering from broken or forced relationships. This person indicated that “the EC is an institution that is suffering from the absence of relationships or the presence of broken relationships and relationships that people don’t want to have”. (Expert 6 2013a)

### *Results following the introduction and on-going practice of AoH*

Substantial increases in social capital were observed in both stakeholder networks following the introduction and on-going use of AoH practices. This included a substantial increase in overall trust, many improvements in the norms of communication (e.g. more authentic, open and inclusive communication, etc.) and norms of working (e.g. more transparent and participatory decision-making, more well-designed and purposeful meetings; etc.), and a greater number and quality of social connections.

### *Positive outcomes from the use of AoH practices:*

15 out of 20 interviewees reported positive improvements in internal processes, culture, and organizational output, to a similar degree in both networks. These positive outcomes were stated in many cases as being more conducive to meeting the needs of the community/target audience. It was reported by many that these outcomes would not have been possible without the use of AoH practices.

These positive outcomes became one of the main reasons for the continued spread and use of these practices. One of the interviewees from OSU in Columbus noted that in the beginning it was a hard sell to introduce these practices but when you see the changes it brings about it becomes easy (CO4 2013). In several cases, using AoH practices was seen as better utilization of financial resources. This was also mirrored in evidence that linked these better decisions to the long-term sustainability of the organizations and community groups in question. One interviewee even went so far as to state, that in the past a lot of money got wasted and now “By using AoH, because they're investing their time and energy in it, it actually improves the sustainability [read: long-term effectiveness] of whatever kind of change your trying to bring about. It's pretty significant what I've seen” (CO8 2013).

Similarly these positive outcomes (both process outcomes of increased social capital and organizational and/or project outcomes) created a positive reinforcing loop which compounded and maintained the increased levels of trust and social capital within the systems. Thus these positive outcomes acted as a driver of the continued use of AoH practices and the utilization of a more participatory approach.

### 3.2.2 Themes

Below is a list of the themes that emerged from the research relating to changes that were observed in the two systems. They are broken down into three sections relating to the changes in social capital; trust, norms and networks.

#### *Trust*

As stated in the introduction the authors focused their definition of trust on the notion of the willingness of the individual to take a risk or make oneself vulnerable in situations where outcomes are uncertain based on his or her assessment of the trustworthiness of the person he or she chooses to trust (Missimer 2013; Fukuyama 2008; Rothstein & Stolle 2003; Putnam 1999). Inspired by Gauthier (2004), the authors also chose to classify trust as including willingness to invest (one's time and energy, etc.) and willingness to examine one's biases and assumption. These were included as markers of a trusting environment in the research. The results can be found below.

#### *Increased levels of trust*

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices within Columbus and the EC, there were significantly low levels of trust both between co-workers, external stakeholders and with the institutions and organization themselves (13 out of 20 interviewed). This was reflected in reports of people feeling that their abilities were not trusted and that their contributions were not valued. Though a couple of "pockets of trust" were reported within the organizations and broader stakeholder networks, these tended to be only in certain niche environments where close working relationships already existed or, in some cases, with external stakeholders (2 out of 20 interviewed). Specifically, within the EC, one interviewee reported a formalized trust, which may be related to the high competency levels in the EC.

18 out of 20 interviewees in both stakeholder networks reported an increase in trust, more or less equally in both stakeholder networks. There were also many reported changes in the depth of trust felt between colleagues and participants in hosted engagements with an increase in feelings of belonging, community and connectedness. This was especially the case within the AoH Community of Practice of the EC. Overall there were increases in trust in: self, colleagues, hosts and leaders, the organization, and the process as a whole.

Within the EC it was reported that AoH practices have been a trust amplifier within the organizational niches in which AoH practices were been used on an on-going basis. Many interviewees mentioned the reciprocal nature of trust and the depth of the AoH practices and the mind set it creates.

*"For me AoH is much more than the methodologies, yes we use those as well, but it is also how you approach people from the outset, I simply approached people with more trust from my outset ... that will almost always increase their trustworthiness, because if people feel taken seriously, they don't want to let you down."*(EC6 2013)

Within Columbus people reported to now having the tools to institutionalize this newly increased trust.

There were some cases where there was no reported increase in trust, or that the improved trust levels could not be linked to practices of AoH. There were also reported increases in trust at the staff level and none at the management level.

### ***3.2.2.1 Increased willingness to invest time and energy***

While a number of people spoke to being committed to their work prior to the introduction and use of AoH practices, 17 out of 20 interviewees reported, nonetheless, an increase in willingness to invest time and energy, to a similar degree in both networks. An interviewee from OSU stated that “Yes it has increased, in terms of volume but it has also increased in terms of where I put in that extra... So maybe the breadth and scope has changed the most” (CO1 2013).

There were reports of people being more willing to attend and participate in non-required meetings, and also correlations with increased staff motivation and commitment. Some people also spoke to what motivated these increases, for example “when you are more involved in something and do it with pleasure you put more time effort and energy into it” (EC1 2013). Three out of nine interviewees from the EC also noted increased willingness to invest time and resources in AoH trainings.

### ***3.2.2.2 Increased willingness to examine assumptions and biases***

14 out of 20 interviewees reported that “well done hosting increased their willingness to examine their own assumptions and biases” (CO5 2013), being slightly more reported in the EC. This correlated with increased introspection, reflection and increases in willingness to examine one’s own misconceptions and to admit that they were wrong (13 out of 20 interviewed). It was observed that there was a marked change in the assumptions originally held within the EC regarding the use of AoH practices. In niches where the practices have been used extensively, there was a decrease in the amount of skepticism regarding and resistance to using these practices. A senior staff member of Access Health Columbus (AHC) stated that “a good indicator ... is when you’re hosting an event and people unsolicited will speak to their misconceptions and assumptions they held about other people” (CO8 2013).

### ***3.2.2.3 Increased willingness to risk and be vulnerable***

Eight out of 20 interviewees (all in Columbus) reported an increase in willingness to risk and be vulnerable. This was strongly linked with people not feeling that their voices were included in the dialogue. For example, a senior manager from Our Optimal Health (OOH) stated

*“We have seen a greater increase in people willing to take risk here, decisions that challenge the status quo a little more, what do we have to lose, this is what we are here for, we are supposed to be a catalyst for change and try to create greater value and we might step on a few toes but let’s give it a try, we will at least step on toes in a respectful way, so increased risk in a good way, has been the result of greater trust among decision-makers.”* (CO5 2013)

There were also many cases of increased willingness to let go of control and show more vulnerability, which will be discussed later as an enabler in fostering increased social capital. Another example of being willing to risk centers on the changes in how people view learning and mistakes. For example, a senior manager from the Mid-Ohio Food Bank (MOFB) stated

that now his staff “recognize[s] that we are going to try and sometimes it doesn’t work. They are not viewed as a personal failure but something that we tried that didn’t work - we learn from it” (CO3 2013).

### ***Norms***

The themed results relating to norms are separated in terms of norms of communication and norms of working.

#### ***3.2.2.4 Norms of communication***

##### ***3.2.2.4.1 Listening and valuing all voices***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, many people in both networks reported that they did not feel “seen”, that their voices weren’t heard, and that their opinions and contributions weren’t valued (7 out of 20). This included a lack of stakeholder input into decision-making (5 out of 20). People commonly reported that they didn’t see their input on decisions. People also commonly reported that the loudest voices or the ones with decision-making authority were the ones speaking and everyone else was listening (8 out of 20).

18 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in listening and valuing all voices, to a similar extent in both systems. Many reported these as both changes within the system as well as drivers of other changes. One interviewee from AHC said “I think that trust gets built by people seeing that authentically you really do care that all voices are heard and there’s actually learning from all of those voices in the room” (CO8 2013). A similar statement came from an interviewee from the Directorate General EUROSTAT (DG ESTAT): “It [AoH] opened an avenue for how things can be done in the future, because the participants said that they never felt so included” (EC8 2013).

##### ***3.2.2.4.2 Conversations more direct, authentic, and based on honesty***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, many reported (8 out of 20) a lack of authenticity and honesty among people, more or less equally reported in both systems. People also reported that people were not really taking time to have conversations with one another.

15 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in more direct, authentic, and honesty-based conversations following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in the EC. A senior manager of OSU stated that the introduction of these practices “created a way to be genuine” (CO2 2013). Many also confirmed that there were more meaningful conversations occurring in both systems. Another interviewee from OSU reported that conversations were more meaningful, that people treat, see and hear each other differently, and that everyone speaks and is heard (C10 2013).

##### ***3.2.2.4.3 Increased overall openness***

Five out of 11 interviewed in Columbus reported low levels of openness prior to the introduction of AoH practices. Though none reported low levels of openness in the EC, 13 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in conversations that were more direct, authentic, and based on honesty, to a similar extent in both systems. This was reported to be true both internally and with external stakeholders following the introduction of AoH practices. Similarly, there were also a few comments about people’s increased openness to try new

things. There was also a change in the level of acceptance of others and of the AoH practices themselves. For example, an interviewee from the Columbus (CO11 2013) spoke to the issue of people not sharing openly or with only partial information, which she felt was due to lack of trust in others and people seeing information as power. Following the introduction of these practices the same interviewee reported that “It gave the people that normally don't get together the opportunity to discuss in a very open and honest way” (CO11 2013).

#### **3.2.2.4.4 Increased courage to speak out**

Many reported that the working environment was such that many voices were not heard, in particular the more shy or reserved (7 out of 20 interviewed), being slightly more reported in Columbus.

10 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in the courage to speak out following the introduction of AoH practices, being significantly more reported in the EC. An increased level of courage to speak up in groups and to express oneself more fully was also stated. Many pointed to the creation of a safer space in which to talk and the inclusion of small group conversations being of key importance in the fostering of these changes (see enabler section below)

*"One thing that I noticed right away was that using these methods allowed the weaker voices to become more present. We had a lot of egos in the room and a lot of outspoken people, and there were a whole cast of people that were very bright but very introverted regularly their voices were suppressed by nature of the group conversation, their volume wasn't that high so they couldn't get their point across in the context of the larger noise that was happening at any given time."* (CO4 2013)

*"Because people meeting each immediately with a different attitude, we sit in front of each other and I can see everybody in the face, it's so equal and there are no barriers between us. I have experienced this many times. We dare to speak so openly about some issues."* (EC9 2013)

#### **3.2.2.4.5 More welcoming of questions and contrary opinions**

Only a few people reported that questions were not welcome prior to the introduction of the use of AoH practices (3 out of 20 interviews) being significantly more reported in the EC.

13 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in the welcoming of questions and contrary opinions following the use of AoH practices, to a similar extent in both systems. An example of this came from an EC official from the DG for Research and Innovation in the EC who stated that when she first joined the agency she asked “a lot of questions. Often I questioned the existing instruments that they were using so they advised me not to ask questions, because you might go down as stupid, if you ask a question you might go down as you don't know.” Following the introduction of AoH practices she reported “it was a freer environment to invite the questions in and not to treat them as a total nuisance or something that is trying to challenge what the boss/colleague has said” (EC4 2013).

### **3.2.2.5 Norms of working**

#### **3.2.2.5.1 More clarity of purpose**

Only a few people reported that there was a lack of clarity of purpose prior to the introduction of the use of AoH practices (4 out of 20 interviews) being substantially more reported in the EC.

15 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in clarity of purpose, both at an organizational level and for meetings and events, following the introduction of AoH practices, to a similar extent in both systems. This linked to a greater shared understanding of the group's mission and increased ownership of the goals and outcomes of projects. An interviewee stated that "the purpose-driven nature [of our work] changed the tenor of our conversations" (CO4 2013). Specifically within the EC, interviewees reported of an increase in clarity of purpose prior to the introduction of AoH practices (6 out of 9 interviews). The actions taken and the meetings held were more connected to their respective purposes than previously. An employee of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union (FRA) stated that

*"I look more carefully where I invest my time and energy, and I think that I've become much more efficient in investing my time and my energy because I always ask the purpose question, the end purpose...I'm much more strict with asking the question 'does this contribute to our impact?' NOT 'is it a nice thing to do?' And for me personally that was definitely a learning from the AoH." (EC6 2013)*

One significant change that was noted was how the practice of AoH had enabled some of those interviewed from Columbus to dramatically shift their purpose and vision to something far more client-centered, with a much broader and more strategic scope (3 out of 11 interviewed). A member of the senior management of the MOFB reported that during the café style conversations in the first half of their board meeting he would ask his board (which is made up of community leaders from Columbus)

*"'Do we [as food providers] believe it's even possible to end hunger?' The answer was: If not us then who? That gave the impetus to give our staff the encouragement. Having the board believe that we have to take this on changed the entire game. The old model of board meetings or presentations and reports, and education wouldn't have had that level of strategic conversation." (CO3 2013)*

Within the EC only one interviewee from the FRA reported a similar informal shift in purpose by way of reconceptualization of their role as bureaucrats into listeners (EC6 2013).

#### **3.2.2.5.2 Changes in decision making structure**

Both systems reported that decision making was hierarchical, very controlling and directive. Decisions were made in a formal top-down manner with one decision maker having all of the control and burden of the decision making process (15 out of 20 interviewees).

15 out of 20 interviewees reported changes in decision-making structure following the introduction of AoH practices, to a similar extent in both systems.

Nine out of 11 interviewees in Columbus reported a higher quality of input along with more well informed and improved decisions as a result of more participation in decision making.

One interviewee reported that participative decision making has led to more willingness to make decisions on behalf of the group where “The decisions are better accepted and they are probably better decisions ... so the implementation is faster, the decision-making is slower, but the direction ahead is more clear” (CO6 2013)

Six out of 9 interviewees in the EC reported little or no perceived change in the decisions themselves, yet more voices were taken into account before management made the decision.

*“Decisions are still with the same people, strategic decisions still with management. However there is an understanding that you need to involve and activate the collective intelligence to get further. Problems and issues are very complex. There is an understanding that it’s not just one person or group who own the truth but if we want to meet the challenges both internally and externally that we have to listen to each other.”* (EC9 2013)

An interviewee from the FRA said "I hear a lot more voices, rather than just a director's update, but I don't know that if in the end that actually affects the decision made, maybe they make the decision in the same way. I feel maybe more openness is present" (Keller 2013). Another interviewee responded “If you have created another dynamic of working together and a higher level of trust then I think you end up making better decisions and maybe more efficient and effective decision making” (EC9 2013).

### **3.2.2.5.3 Increased collaboration and co-creation**

Low levels of collaboration and co-creation were reported in both systems (9 out of 20 interviews) prior to the introduction of AoH practices. 13 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in collaboration and co-creation within and across their organizations following the introduction of AoH practices, being significantly more reported in the EC.

### **3.2.2.5.4 Increased diversity of people included in the dialogue**

As stated above there was a limited diversity of input into decisions prior to the introduction of AoH practices. 12 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in diversity of voices and perspectives in the dialogue following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in Columbus. This change was particularly noteworthy in stakeholder engagement processes. One interviewee stated that the use of AoH practices “for the majority, creates a sense that we are in this together, the more the merrier, the more diverse - not diversity in the sense of black and white - but the diversity of ideas, experiences, background”.

### **3.2.2.5.5 More inclusive and participatory meetings**

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, the style of meetings in both systems was reported in 17 out of 20 interviews as “traditional”, "where the manager talks and everyone else listens, you are all around the table and its clear from the setting of the room that the hierarchy is there" (EC3 2013). One interviewee said

*“People would come to a meeting, they’d sit on their hands, and they would listen to what we had to say. You don't take the time to find out what people really think. That’s the way a lot of us used to run meetings.”* (CO8 2013)

14 out of 20 interviewees reported more inclusive and participatory meetings as well as better meeting and process design (meeting with a clear purpose, good agenda, clear follow-up, etc.) following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in the EC.

One change was observed in OOH within its patient-centered medical home where a new practice of “team huddles” was created to bring together the doctors, nurses, medical assistants and support staff into circle to ask the question “here are the patients that we will see today, what do we need to know, what should we be aware of?” (CO5 2013). Including voices of seemingly low power and authority in the conversations brought new awareness. “It embodies ... a different flow of information, a different value and ... a different level of trust, when you begin to see people not quite in a linear top-down approach” (CO5 2013).

People also reported that AoH practices became the organizational norm when conducting meetings and stakeholder events. In seven out of 10 of the sub-systems in Columbus, in particular, methods like *Check-in* and *Check-out* and *Circle* practice are now used on a regular basis and have become the norm in meetings.

Within the EC system, lesser changes in meeting styles were seen, though in some niches (such as in the FRA), meetings are now more inclusive and participatory even to the point of including stakeholders in the design and harvesting of events. “It is interesting for a public institution to be working with stakeholders in this way. It is really a paradigm shift” (EC6 2013). Another FRA member stated that participants now report “wow, I’ve never been to a meeting like this before - it was so interactive” Everybody got a lot more out of it than expected” (EC3 2013). Another interviewee from DG for Health and Consumers (DG SANCO) reported that she thinks that participatory leadership meetings are considered by participants to be more interesting as they are not just listening in meetings they are actually acting, working and being involved, and exchanging information by expressing their views and maybe contradicting others (EC1 2013).

### **3.2.2.5.6 Increased ownership and responsibility**

10 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in ownership and responsibility following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in Columbus.

Increased ownership and responsibility are two of the widely reported benefits of utilizing a more participatory approach. One interviewee from Columbus reported that

*“I’ve seen more of a sense of a shared leadership. It’s not just the person at the top saying that I’m willing to share leadership but there are people within organizations and in the community who are ready to step up and take leadership. It’s more of an ownership of what’s happening and the work that’s happening.”* (CO7 2013)

Though only three out of nine interviewees reported this in the EC (within the FRA and DG for Human Resources and Security, DG HR) compared to 7 seven out of 11 in Columbus, within certain niches in the EC where changes did occur, it was reported that “there is a lot more shared ownership that gets created from participatory leadership [AoH] meetings ...[which] really effects how people work together and communicate” (EC3 2013).



### **3.2.2.5.7 *More friendly and improved work environment***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, in addition to the reported culture of fear, which included fear of voicing opinions and views within both systems. This reinforced the tendency for people to work alone (in 4 out of 20 interviews being substantially more reported in the EC). This created a culture of withholding opinions and information and further increasing the “siloe” and segregated relationships and working styles.

11 out of 20 interviewees reported a more friendly and improved work environment following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in Columbus. Following the introduction of AoH practices, it was reported that people were more prone to give their colleagues the benefit of the doubt as opposed to jumping to conclusions. It was also said that people became “less paranoid and more prone to assume positive intentions” (CO4 2013).

### **3.2.2.5.8 *Increased equality***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, nine out of 20 interviewees talked of leaders having the most powerful voice and, in some cases, the voices of stakeholders were not even heard, let alone held at the same level.

14 out of 20 interviewees reported that the use of AoH practices created a space where all voices were listened to and taken into account equally. *Circle* practice was cited specifically in 9 out of 20 interviews as being a tool that assisted in the creation of this space of equality.

Similar to the increased participation and listening mentioned above, 10 of the 20 interviewees reported a higher sense of equality, especially in between the participants in stakeholder dialogues, following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in Columbus.

*“Because people meeting each immediately with a different attitude, we sit in front of each other and I can see everybody in the face, it’s so equal and there is no barriers between us. That I have experienced this many times. We dare to speak so openly about some issues.”* (EC9 2013)

Though some mentioned that the authoritative voices still held power, all voices are now listened to more equally. For example, a senior manager from OSU stated that “the dean has more power but everyone has a voice now, though not all voices have the same weight” (CO1 2013).

### **3.2.2.5.9 *Increased awareness of a whole systems perspective***

Nine out of 20 interviewees reported an increased awareness of “the whole system” following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly higher in the EC. A senior manager of the AHC noted that “one of the big shifts is seeing people realize that there really isn’t anyone in charge of these big systemic issues that we’re dealing with.” (CO8 2013). Similarly, a senior manager of the MOFB talked about the need to “get the whole system in the room” and even now includes the client’s voice in any meeting that they hold in order to keep the staff focused on their client-centric vision and focus (CO3 2013). Another interviewee of the OOH spoke to the fact that in utilizing these practices “they have made visible the lack of communication between the different stakeholders involved in delivering

and/or financing health care [thus the] dysfunction [of the system] is made visible” (CO5 2013).

### ***3.2.2..5.10 Increased ability to work with ambiguity and uncertainty***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, several people in both Columbus and the EC reported that there was a tendency to move quickly to solutions without understanding the upstream causality of the complex challenges that were being faced.

Six out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in people’s ability to work with ambiguity and uncertainty following the introduction of the use of AoH practices, being substantially more reported in Columbus.

*“It has been a game changer. People are now comfortable with words like sitting in not knowing and working in emergence and truly honoring people’s questions and all voices. Those things are hard to quantify sometime but they truly have changed how we work.”* (CO3 2013)

One of the outcomes at OSU was a new curriculum design that was created through a dialogue with the whole community. One of the leaders there said “one of the things they used to talk a lot about was doing this curriculum design. That the quality of the curriculum was going to be directly related to our ability to tolerate ambiguity” (CO2 2013).

### ***Networks***

As stated in the Introduction of this thesis, the group was inspired by Rothstein and Stolle (2003), networks here refer to the number and quality of social connections as well as the flow of knowledge and information within a group. Special attention was also given to characteristics of a network-focused systems and stakeholder networks as inspired by the extensive literature review (Svendsen and Laberge 2005; Svendsen 1998).

### ***3.2.2..6 Improved quality of social connections and relationships***

15 out of 20 interviewees described the quality of the social connections and relationships as poor prior to the introduction of AoH practices with 4 out of 20 interviewees depicting the level of work relationships as very low, being significantly more reported in Columbus. A common depiction of the quality of the social connections within both systems was that was that of highly siloed working environments where many people didn’t talk to each other.

15 out of 20 interviewees reported an increased quality of social connections following the introduction of AoH practices, to a similar extent in both systems. Relationships were reported as improving within organizations and systems in general, with several of the interviewees reporting a change in the way people interacted with each other (e.g. more meaningful, authentic, positive connections, and open connections) and knowing each other better and more deeply.

Closely related to the quality of social connections is the increased level of respect in relationships (reported by 8 out of 20 interviewees), being significantly more reported in Columbus. One person from Columbus said that there is “a lot more trust and respect in workplace. Communication with each other is more respectful” (CO3 2013). Another person said, “I think once people get used to their voice being heard that creates a different

atmosphere in the team and I think a lot of respect for one another and seeing everyone as an equal, it has been leveled out and is no more top down” (EC3 2013).

### **3.2.2..7 *More cross-silo interactions (lower hierarchal rigidity)***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, either a minimal, or in some cases, no communication was reported in both systems, both vertically along the hierarchy of power and horizontally between units and between the units and their external stakeholders (17 of 20 interviews). The words “*siloed*”, *segregated* and *disconnected* were repeated frequently in both systems (13 out of 20 interviews).

14 out of 20 interviewees reported increased cross-silo interactions and lower hierarchical rigidity following the introduction of AoH practices, to a similar extent in both systems.

Following the introduction of AoH practices, people saw the potential of letting go of the “org-chart”, working across boundaries or units, and/or combining skills on multiple projects and strategic decisions. It was reported that this was due simply to having a conversation about what it would be like to work together more closely and how could it help to facilitate the achievement of the mission. For example, one person from MOFB reported

*“People are empowering each other, they are empowering themselves to make decisions, to do the work, and to do that across teams versus in silos. We try hard not to create silos around here, and a lot of that AoH has allowed that occur.”* (CO3 2013)

### **3.2.2..8 *Increased number of social connections***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, seven out of 20 interviewees reported a low level of connectivity throughout the organizations and systems as a whole, being slightly more reported in Columbus.

12 out of 20 interviewees reported an increased number and broader range of social connections within the organizations and systems following the introduction of AoH practices, to a similar extent in both systems. This change was described as a web of interconnections with increased interaction vertically as well as horizontally within organizations and with community stakeholder organizations. One person from OSU reported that not only have the social connections increased in her organization and in Columbus overall, AoH practices have also “greatly improved the social connections among people and when you changed that you’ve changed the whole nature of the relationships in the workplace” (C10 2013). Another person reported that “They talk to each other. So it doesn’t have to all come through a small staff here. That is the beauty of what we are starting to see more and more of - a web of people talking to each other and sharing” (CO3 2013).

### **3.2.2..9 *Increased diversity in how information flows***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, 13 out of 20 interviewees reported a very limited number of formal pathways of information flow, more or less equally in both systems. 15 out of 20 interviewees reported specifically that much of the communication was one-way, directive, and of low value. For example, information flow within OSU was described as “one-way communication flow... emails and formal memos with the result that nobody really paid a lot of attention to information coming their way” (C10 2013).

11 out of 20 interviewees reported changes in the diversity of methods and pathways for information flow, being slightly more reported in the EC. While some reported the continued use of formal memos, there was an increase in informal two-way, participative communication.

### ***3.2.2..10 Increased participation with stakeholders***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, both stakeholder systems reported a low level of stakeholder participation (5 out of 20).

Three out of nine interviewees in the EC reported fear of including stakeholders in dialogue and of using participatory methods. For example, within the FRA of the EU one person said, “there are a lot of assumptions and fear around what can/can’t be done around stakeholders” (EC6 2013). Within the DG HR another person said

*“If you embark on a process of collective consultation it is difficult to ignore the result at the end, which is certainly the fear of some people about this [AoH]. Even my DG is not very keen on consultation because she says what do we do if we don’t like the outcome.”* (EC2 2013)

11 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in participation of stakeholders following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in Columbus. An increase in the depth in which they were invited to participate or their level of input into strategic discussions was also reported.

The three interviewees in the EC who initially reported having fear of including stakeholders in conversations and consultation reported changes in both attitude and practice when dealing with stakeholders. For example, within the DG HR, one person said, “the idea that you can make a meeting with a large group of people and all of them get the chance to express themselves is a good innovation that we see being used more and more” (EC2 2013).

Seven out of 11 interviewees in Columbus reported that stakeholders are now part of the participatory process and that the end-users and/or clients now have a voice throughout all discussions and decisions. One individual from OOH reported that “clearly we have had examples of projects that have been able to begin to get participation in, amongst multiple stakeholders that normally would not be working together” (CO5 2013).

### ***3.2.2..11 Increased lateral information flows***

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, six out of 20 interviewees reported very siloed information flow. In the EC this was exacerbated by a highly rigid hierarchy, which forced any information flows first up through one DG and then across to another DG, and then finally down to the staff who ultimately required the information.

10 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in lateral information flows following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in the EC. One interviewee in the DG HR stated that AoH had “created space for communication throughout the whole network not just center out” (EC2 2013).

### ***3.2.2..12 More formalization of informal communication***

Seven out of 20 interviewees reported an increase in the capture of informal or off-line conversations following the introduction of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in the EC.

Some reported cases where previously informal conversations and “back room” chats have now been given space and opportunity to be expressed in open settings. As an example, one individual in the MOFB in Columbus reported that

*“When you start meetings, letting people express where they were and checking out when meeting is over changed the dynamic. So we often say "Say it in the circle or don't say it". Versus going out and saying out over the water cooler or complaining about something later. Have the ability from a relationship stand point when there is a confrontation of some kind, or something is not going well in a project, being able to "call a circle" and come together and have a conversation about what is going on.” (CO3 2013)*

Another interviewee from OSU in Columbus reported that “deals are often crafted in informal settings and that this is never going to stop” nor should it according to the interviewee be quelled. The interviewee went on to say

*“I think it is valuable, but ...what hosting does is that it recreates some of that space, it creates a container for those same kind of conversation to happen where the outcome can be recorded, and the ideas can be harvested in a more organized fashion, so the trust that gets created between people in these in-between-spaces, if you construct a hosting container, you can watch that happen live, instead of guessing at what is actually happening, so it just makes that same process more transparent I think.” (CO4 2013)*

The same interviewee went on to say:

*“It definitely allowed us to have paralleled types of conversations with everybody watching, so it did allow us to either duplicate or bring it out of the rest-room or the hallways and into a place where we could leverage it, because if it is happening in the hallways it might just stay an idea it might never be acted on, whereas if there is transparency and accountability, then in some ways it legitimizes those ideas and allows them to become real.” (CO4 2013)*

### **3.3 SRQ2: What were the key factors in the fostering of social capital?**

The authors of this thesis recognize that contradictory opinions exist in literature as to what is the optimal organizational structure to yield the highest level of social capital (vertical vs. horizontal, homogenous vs. heterogeneous, etc.) (Krishna and Shrader 1999). Similarly, there are also diverging opinions regarding what are the ideal social norms for achieving a high level of social capital (Krishna and Shrader 1999).

However, departing from the review of the literature in the field, the authors of this thesis have outlined below five categories of factors of success (matching what Putnam (1995) defined social capital as being made up of three separate but highly interrelated parts; *trust, norms and networks*) for building social capital in communities and large complex social

systems in order to create more fertile conditions for adoption and successful implementation of sustainability goals. The first category refers to trust and in particular how Gauthier (2001) measured trust, the second refers to norms and the last three refer to networks

- High levels of trust
- A high degree of beneficial norms of communication and working
- Robust, open flow of information / knowledge
- A large diverse number of social connections
- High quality social connections

Based on results of the interviews, 29 success factors for communities or other complex social systems working towards sustainability have been identified. The individual success factors are listed in descending order within each category, based on the number of times each was mentioned by an individual interviewee. In order to be listed as a success factor, the theme from RQ1 must have been associated with an environment of increased social capital and thus the authors deemed it as a marker of success with success being a social and organizational environment that fosters high levels of social capital. Note also that the three individual success factors under the category of *High levels of trust* correspond directly to the theory on trust (Gauthier 2001). This is because we chose to use this same theory as the basis the creation of the trust related questions in our questionnaire.

### ***High levels of trust***

The existence of high levels of trust can be demonstrated in the following three ways:

- people demonstrate a willingness to invest time and energy (e.g. participating, going the extra mile, volunteering, etc.)
- people demonstrate a willingness to examine their own biases and assumptions
- people demonstrate a willingness to take a risk in the face of an uncertain outcome or in situations where reliance on others is required

### ***A high degree of the following beneficial norms of communication and working***

#### **Norms of communication**

- people listen with attention to others and value all voices
- people feel listened to and heard
- conversations are authentic, genuine and based on honesty
- communication is open
- people feel safe or have the courage to speak up, ask questions, and/or voice contrary opinions
- people have ample time and space for reflection and self-awareness

#### **Norms of working**

- the organization's or system's purpose is clear and meaningful
- meetings have a clear purpose and/or vision of success
- decision-making processes are clear and transparent
- the decision-making structure is not overly hierarchical or rigid
- meetings are inclusive and participatory

➤ active participation in required meetings by all attendees is high; people are participating regularly and fully at non-required meetings
➤ there is a high level of collaboration and co-creation
➤ a diversity of voices and opinions are in dialogue and inform decisions
➤ the working environment is positive and friendly
➤ people have ownership over projects and are proactively taking responsibility
➤ there is a sense of equality throughout
➤ people are capable of seeing the whole systems (vs. only fragments / their corner of the organization or system)
➤ people are generally tolerant of and able to work comfortably in uncertainty and ambiguity
<b><i>Robust, open flow of information and knowledge</i></b>
➤ substantial horizontal or lateral communication (flow of information) exists across group boundaries; Substantial cross-unit or cross-silo interactions occur
➤ substantial vertical communication (flow of information) exists across boundaries of power
➤ there is a high degree of communication flow with external stakeholders; Stakeholders participate regularly in processes and decision-making
➤ there is a diversity of pathways for the flow of communication (not just email and formal memos)
➤ informal or off-line conversations are captured and made use of
<b><i>A large number of social connections</i></b>
➤ there is a high density and number of social connections within the organization and with external stakeholders
<b><i>High quality social connections</i></b>
➤ relationships are based on respect / exhibit respectful behavior reciprocally

*Table 1: Success factor table*

### **3.4 SRQ3: How did the use of AoH practices enable increased social capital?**

The following section details the enabling factors that were cited as having a positive effect on the increased levels of social capital reported in the two systems and on the success factors mentioned above. Based on the coded results, the different enablers have been organized into four categories: Hosting & Design, Principle, Method & Tool as well as Other Enablers. A Hosting & Design Enabler is something that has been identified as a key aspect of AoH processes itself. Methods & Tool enablers are those methods suggested by the AoH workbook (e.g. World Café, Proaction Café, Open Space technologies, etc.). The principles enablers are the norms of behavior associated with the practice of AoH as outlined in the

AoH workbook<sup>5</sup>. The term Other Enablers is used here to describe any other enabler which emerged from our research which enables the creation of the conditions that foster increased social capital not otherwise captured by the other three categories. It should be noted that although the authors chose to categorize the enablers in this way, they are best looked upon as a system that is interlinked and connected.

### *Meta Enablers*

Within both systems there were two enablers which arose that were key drivers of both a number of the positive outcomes and the increases in social capital reported in both Columbus and the EC. They were also part of a positive reinforcing loop, which compounded and maintained the increased levels of trust and social capital within the systems. The two Meta Enablers were: (1) changes toward a more participatory leadership style, and (2) AoH becoming the norm or operating system within a community, organization or other social system, and are associated with the Other and Hosting & Design enabler categories respectively. A strong reciprocal relationship was found among the two. For example, when a leader steps in fully and allows his or her vulnerability to be expressed, this fosters more trust within the group, which coincides with an increase in participation and collaboration.

Below is a matrix containing all of the enablers.

<i>Hosting &amp; Design Enablers</i>	<i>Principle Enablers</i>	<i>Method &amp; Tool Enablers</i>	<i>Other Enablers</i>
<i>AoH as the organizational operating system*</i>	all voices in the room meeting as equals	World Café	<i>move towards a more participative leadership style*</i>
safe space and time for people to share and all voices and opinions to be heard	suspending assumptions and judgements	Circle	leaders let go of some level of control / encourage shared leadership
slowed down process with intentional space and time for personal reflection	inquiry / powerful questions' are driving force	Open Space Technologies	leaders fully and authentically embraces AoH (or dialogue-based, participatory) practices
great process design (plan 3 steps ahead, harvest outcomes, etc.)	inclusive participatory approach based on dialogue	check-in (check-out)	leaders model open communication and encourage discussion of difficult topics
experienced, authentic host	listening with attention	Appreciative Inquiry	feeling valued, empowered and comfortable
clarity of purpose	speaking with intention	Art of Harvesting	existence of more human relations

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<sup>5</sup> AoH workbook is the guiding document for the AoH training sessions and details all of the methods, tools, principles and practices used by AoH practitioners along with supplementary information on the theories on which the methods are based.



<i>Hosting &amp; Design Enablers</i>	<i>Principle Enablers</i>	<i>Method &amp; Tool Enablers</i>	<i>Other Enablers</i>
existence of a Community of Practice	allow solutions to emerge from the middle	Action Learning	existence of more trust
clear follow up	engaging the collective intelligence for better solutions	Proaction Café	clarity and transparency about how all decisions are made; people see their input on decisions
Four Fold Path		Collective mind map	diversity is welcome in the system
		Collective Story Harvesting	people feel safe to be vulnerable & more open

*Table 2: Social Capital Enabler Matrix (\* meta-enabler)*

### 3.4.1 Hosting & Design enablers

#### *Safe Space*

14 out of 20 interviewees cited having safe spaces to honestly communicate issues, ideas and solutions, as well as a space for people to be seen and heard as being an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems.

The former city manager of the city of Upper Arlington (Columbus) described the safe space as follows

*“It is the environment that is created, that enables all the good things to flow from there, so no matter what technique you are using, it is the environment. You know you could use any of the techniques individually and not get the results you would get if you don’t have the environment holding it.” (CO6 2013)*

A senior manager of AHC commented that “People are feeling like they’re coming into a safe space and that’s very unique. You can bring your opinions into a process and you’re not going to be criticized” (CO8 2013). A senior staff member of OSU commented that “The safeness of this space induces the increases of trust and kind of things that people do when they trust each other” (CO1 2013).

#### *Slowed down process and increased reflection and awareness*

13 out of 20 interviewees cited increased reflection and awareness of participants in hosted engagements, the hosts themselves, and in leadership as being an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being slightly more reported in the EC. This increased reflection coincided with an increase in people examining their assumptions and biases and also to changes in organizational purpose. It was also linked to other enablers like slowing down, suspending judgment, and the creation of powerful questions.

Seven out of 20 interviewees cited the slowing down of the decision making process to give space for all voices to be heard, as well as allowing space for new “emergent solutions” to come to light, as enablers of the reported increases in social capital, seen in a similar extent in

both systems. This was also linked to suspending judgment and more time for reflection. One person reported that “the implementation is faster, the decision-making is slower, but the direction ahead is more clear” (CO6 2013).

### *Great process design*

13 out of 20 interviewees cited “great” process design and giving sufficient time to the pre-work that goes into creating hosted events as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. An interviewee from OSU reported that

*“The more effort we put into designing a container for a conversation [via] a purpose, invitation question or the calling question the better our outcomes were and the just kept getting better and everybody saw that and it was immediately apparent.”* (CO4 2013)

One key aspect of great process design that was reported was looking at the whole system and context for which you are creating a process. For example an interviewee from the Homeless Shelter Board (Columbus) stated that “when you do a good design and hosting you’re creating good safe space, and with that comes building trust” (CO7 2013).

### *AoH as norm or operating system (Meta enabler)*

11 out of 20 interviewees reported the shift from the use of AoH practices as merely an occasional practice and/or the use of one or two of the AoH methods in certain isolated cases to it becoming the organizational norm or the “operating system” as not only a major change in itself but also as both a key factor in bringing about and maintaining the increases in social capital and the many positive organizational outcomes reported. A senior manager of the MOFB said “We have created a culture that we call our *way of being* – this is the way we want to operate. We call it our operating system” (CO3 2013). A senior manager of AHC further supports this notion

*“If you start applying AoH and you make it your operating system... you'll build a reputation in your community and your region, and that reputation will spread to even new people coming into the room, because they know that when you invite people into the room it's going to be very different and it's going to be meaningful. And I think that contributes to building trust.”* (CO8 2013)

Within the EC sub-systems many interviewees spoke about making the use of AoH principles of behavior explicit in their working environments and making AoH the norm of choice when dealing with external stakeholders and consultation (4 out of 9 interviewed). There were no reported cases of AoH becoming the “operating system” within the EC itself, which also coincides with the lower overall degree of increases in the social capital that were observed there.

### *Experience of host*

Eight out of 20 interviewees cited the experience of the host (e.g. the use of AoH practices including process design and delivery) as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being significantly more reported in the EC. One of the interviewees said it succinctly that the role of a host was to give “people a structure in which to engage” (CO2 2013).

Another host provided perspective on what she felt is important in the role and experience of a host.

*“What I've seen is, when I go in and host for people I hold the purpose of the work in the middle. I'm very clear about this. I'm not here to protect your organization. I'm not here to make sure your organization survives. I'm here to make sure your mission survives and the people you serve. I bring that into my practice and how I host and design meetings. I think people begin to see that and I've built a lot of trust in the community that I won't take sides. I'll say, what's best for the people you're trying to serve and I hold that in the middle. I don't have my own agenda coming in nor the agenda of the organization that's hired me.” (CO7 2013)*

It should be noted that the authors chose to look at systems where a high level of host experience was already present as part of its selection criteria.

#### *Clarity of purpose or focus on purpose*

11 out of 20 interviewees cited changes in the overall organizational purpose and/or a stronger focus on the purpose of meetings and events as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being substantially more reported in Columbus.

One interviewee from OSU noted the importance of “establishing a sense of a field from which a purpose emerges or which will speak back to purpose” (CO1 2013). Another take on the importance of having a clear purpose for a meeting or a decision was reported as follows: “It is important to be really clear when we are going to participate and when we are going to issue an edict. Edicts do have to happen and it's the clarity of purpose that helps to clarify that” (CO2 2013).

#### *Community of Practice atmosphere*

Seven out of 20 interviewees in both systems cited the formation of a Community of Practice as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being slightly more reported in the EC. A CoP is a space where trained hosts within the systems can come together to improve their hosting skills and support each in an open, trusting and safe environment.

An interviewee from DG Translation (EC) stated that the “CoP gives a space to share and practice and give continuity to relationships” (EC5 2013). A key feature of the CoP is the atmosphere and container it provides wherein the AoH practices are allowed to grow and deepen. This enabled a shift “from individuals to a CoP that has a routine. We have the core group” (EC8 2013). Another important aspect of the CoP is the fact that it serves as a fertile ground to test out ideas and get support from the hosting community for new collective, cross boundary initiatives. For example an interviewee from DG SANCO stated that

*“With the COP, even if we came from different corners we did manage to have concrete outputs, a structured way of thinking and we even presented a proposal considered seriously by the Secretary General so I think that the power increased as we worked more and better together.” (EC1 2013)*

Other key enablers which were reported less frequently include the need for follow up (5 out of 20 interviewed) and good feedback (3 out of 20 interviewed). Lack of follow up and follow through were also reported as inhibitors (see the inhibitor section below). Finally the

four fold practice on which AoH is based was reported in one interview by a host as being a key enabler of increased social capital.

### **3.4.2 Principle enablers**

#### *Having all voices in the room*

12 out of 20 interviewees cited having all voices in the room as being an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. This was also stated as characteristic of changes in social capital as mentioned section 3.2.2..4.1 above. Having all voices included in dialogue was not only important for increasing participation but it was also critical in terms of increasing trust and improving norms and connectivity within networks. In some cases people who had not previously been invited to speak were given the chance to express their opinions. One person from Columbus said, “In some of these processes I’ve been with people that have been in their place of work for 20 years and no one ever asked them their opinion” (CO11 2013). Another interviewee commented that, “You could tell just from the dynamic that changed for the network was that we were honoring all voices. We were giving people a chance to talk” (CO3 2013).

#### *Suspending assumptions and judgments*

Nine out of 20 interviewees cited “suspending judgment” as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. This was linked to slowing down and increases in reflection and awareness.

#### *Powerful questions*

Eight out of 20 interviewees cited asking powerful questions as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being slightly more reported in Columbus. Powerful questions lie at the heart of AoH practices and play a lead role as the frame in most of the AoH processes. These questions can often be the catalyst for transformative conversations and dialogues, which challenge the status quo and often lead to a new vision and purpose of organizations. For example one person in the MOFB reported that “the framing questions are [now] different. They are asking the question ‘how can we better serve the people that are hungry?’” (CO3 2013). This question led them to create a new mission "ending hungry one nourishing meal at a time and co creating a community where everyone thrives" (CO3 2013).

Also at the first AoH taster evening in Columbus, one community member stepped up to ask the following question in an *Open Space* conversation: “What could happen if we could work on questions of the community that nobody dares touch—like health care, like education, like distribution of wealth—because these are too hot for us to pick up as individuals?” (King 2007). This one question spun out into many sectors in the community including health, homelessness, hunger, education, and municipal government.

#### *Participatory approach*

Eight out of 20 interviewees cited a participatory approach as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being significantly more reported in the EC.

Other principle enablers mentioned in AoH training manuals were: listening with attention, speaking with intention, allowing solutions to emerge from the center of conversations, and

engaging the collective intelligence for better solutions to emerge. These were included in the enablers table so as to cover the breath of principles used in AoH practices.

### 3.4.3 Method / tool enablers

AoH practitioners use a mix of different process facilitation methods or tools (see Appendix 1 for a full listing and description of the methods that are referred to in this section).

Method/Tools	Description
World café	15 out of 20 interviewees cited <i>World Café</i> as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. One of the interviewees said  <i>“I have found that people, once they go through a topic on World Café, they are jazzed and energized, and they can hardly wait to come back, which is a total shift from, you know, they drag out of the meetings after three hours of listening to somebody talk to them, now they really are excited, they’ve met some new people that feel the same way they do, which is surprising and amazing to them, and they come back, so we get greater participation and more voices are being heard, and they like it, it’s fun.”</i> (CO6 2013)
Circle	Nine out of 20 interviewees cited <i>Circle</i> practice as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being significantly more reported in Columbus. It was reported that many senior managers in Columbus are now using it as the norm for their staff and board meetings. It was also linked by one person to more equal and participative dialogues. “We work in circle so things are not driven by a singular somebody who is running the meeting. They are hosted by a person so the direction of conversation gets determined by multiple actors” (CO1 2013).
Open space	Eight out of 20 interviewees cited <i>Open Space technology</i> as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being significantly more reported in the EC. One person described it as a method for bringing all voices into the room and for increasing self-reflection: [by tempering the] “loud and disruptive voices in a subtle but very effective way, they were forced reflect on their own behavior” (CO4 2013) .
Check-in/ Check-out	Seven out of 20 interviewees cited check-in and check-out as enablers of the reported increases in social capital, being significantly more reported in Columbus. One interviewee said “we will say we are going to do a check-in now and everybody knows that having a check-in is about establishing a sense of a field from which a purpose emerges or which will speak back to purpose”(CO1 2013).
Appreciative Inquiry	Six out of 20 interviewees cited Appreciative Inquiry as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, being substantially more reported in Columbus. It should be noted that when it was mentioned, it was often done so numerous times in answer to several different questions.
Art of Harvesting	Six out of 20 interviewees cited harvesting as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, significantly more reported in the EC. It was reported as being of importance in creating and maintaining the observed changes in the system.
Other Methods	Some other methods that AoH practices include are: Proaction café, Action Learning, collective mind mapping, and Collective Story Harvest

Table 3: Method enablers

### 3.4.4 Other enablers

#### *Changes toward a more participative leadership style (Meta enabler)*

Prior to the introduction of AoH practices, 6 out of 20 reported that the leadership in their stakeholder network was not authentic or focused in their use of employee and stakeholder participation. 12 out of 20 interviewees reported an increase towards a more participatory leadership style, though slightly more changes were reported in Columbus. Many interviewees mentioned it several times in response to different questions and in reference to both changes relating to the creation of greater social capital and also as a major driver and enabler of these changes. Some characteristics of these changes toward a more participative leadership style were: letting go of control, showing more vulnerability, admitting to not knowing all the answers, becoming more authentic, showing more patience and slowing down more, showing increased trust and familiarity with the process (e.g. AoH / dialogue-based, participatory leadership principles and practices), fully and authentically embracing AoH practices. One of the interviewees commented that

*“It has a lot to do with leadership in the organization and not just giving AoH methodologies and practices a head nod but really embracing it also. They have to live it too if they want the folks in the organization and the folks across the community they're working with to embrace it. They have to be very authentic about it.”* (CO7 2013)

The same interviewee went onto say “Unless the leader changes inside, really deeply inside, things won't shift dramatically within the organization” (CO7 2013).

#### *Leader letting go of control*

As stated above seven out of 20 interviewees cited the role of the leader as a major factor in the reported increases in social capital. Particularly important was the willingness of the leader to let go of control, which was substantially more widely reported in Columbus. One person in Columbus summarized this succinctly as:

*“Definitely some people have had to let go of what is considered power - the power of making decisions - and it has empowered others to have the confidence to express needs and as a result, decisions can be made more quickly, and it increases trust.”* (CO11 2013)

#### *Feeling valued, empowered and comfortable*

18 out of 20 interviewees cited feeling valued, empowered and comfortable as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. Cass (2013) reported that one of the main reasons for the success of AoH and its outcomes in Columbus is the “transmitting the message that the people invited are worthwhile”. It was also reported as being related to the creation of a safe space, inclusion of all voices, and more respectful relationships, which have been described above.

### *More human and improved human relationships*

15 out of 20 interviewees cited the creation of deeper more human relationships as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. Many people also referred to this as an enabler for multiple changes in trust, norms and networks. For example, a senior manager from OSU referred to what he saw as deep and thick relationships.

*“The idea of creating a shared field where people in the margins are in the field that for me, in my mind anyway, is what’s created the most possibility for these relationships that have developed and this network that has developed in a real thick deep way.” (CO1 2013)*

Another interviewee from OOH talked about the impact of having these improved relationships.

*“What has changed is that people have been able to have a relationship at an individual level and local level rather than strictly organizational positions, which has allowed for projects to emerge where we can begin to work differently and begin to work across some of those silos.” (CO5 2013)*

### *Increased trust*

11 out of 20 interviewees cited trust as both an outcome and as a major enabler of other aspects of social capital. Trusting environments led to reciprocal trust, better decisions, and improved outcomes, to a similar extent in both systems. Another enabling factor related to trust was trusting the process and allowing space for divergence in order for something to emerge (CO2 2013; CO6 2013; EC3 2013). Another similar thing which was reported is trusting that the people in the room are the right ones and that the answers are already to be found in the room (CO11 2013).

### *Seeing input in decision/ outcome*

11 out of 20 interviewees cited people seeing their input on the way decisions are made as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. This created more trust in the participatory process and led to increased engagement in and support of the use of AoH practices.

### *Talking with diverse groups*

*10 out of 20 interviewees cited having a more diverse mix of people involved in conversations and dialogues as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. This included increased awareness of others, a wider more systems view of the organization, decreased judgment, and increased awareness of people’s assumptions and biases.*

### *Being more vulnerable*

Seven out of 20 interviewees cited being more vulnerable as an enabler of the reported increases in social capital, to a similar extent in both systems. This was linked to increased courage to speak out, and increased willingness to risk and be vulnerable.

### **3.4.5 Inhibitors**

None of the interview questions focused specifically on the identification of barriers or hindrances. However, as part of the pre-framing prior to each interview, interviewees were asked to offer both positive and negative experiences resulting from the use of AoH practices. The list of themed inhibitors is included in Appendix 8.



## 4 Discussion

In this section we will summarize and interpret the results of our research based on the research questions in order to offer guidance to the field of SSD with respect to increasing social capital.

### 4.1 Summary and interpretation of results

As indicated above, substantial increases in social capital were observed in both systems following the introduction and on-going use of AoH practices. It is noteworthy that the results also reveal, to varying degrees, positive indicators of all the four of the essential dynamics of adaptive capacity (Missimer 2013), both of which are necessary for successful social coordination in the face of increasing complexity and sudden and unpredictable change (Missimer 2013; Svendsen and Laberge 2005). References to the three other aspects of adaptive capacity (diversity, learning and self-organization) were observed in the interviews along with references to living systems on which the adaptive capacity theory is based. Diversity was by far the most pervasive and has its own section listed in Results. Learning was referred to by 3 of the 20 interviewees, though it could be said that the AoH practices themselves are designed to cultivate this capacity. Self-organization was also referred to by an interviewee as the method by which the use of AoH practices have spread. The Community of Practice (CoP) in Columbus is also structured around the idea of self-organization.

While greater changes were seen in some areas in Columbus, in others, greater changes were seen in the EC. However, the qualitative data paints a somewhat different picture.

While many increases in social capital were observed following the introduction and on-going use of AoH practices, it is clear that overall; the depth of the change was in many cases substantially more in Columbus than in the EC. For instance, though the spread of AoH practices within both of the systems was described by at least one person each as being “viral”, in the sense that the spread has been both rapid and widespread over a similar time period, the spread of AoH practices within the Columbus has been deeper and more pervasive than in the EC. In several of the sub environments in Columbus AoH has actually become the organizational norm or “operating system”, whereas this has not been the case in the EC. Fewer of the various AoH methods have been employed in the EC and the various AoH principles as well as the names of the different methods (e.g. World Café, Open Space technologies, etc.) have intentionally not been made explicit to all but a relatively small number of people that have been exposed to it.

As indicated in the Results, the leader(s) adopting a more participatory leadership style is considered a “Meta Enabler” in the sense that it can have a disproportionate effect on the enabling of the other success factors. One example of this relates to the way that AoH was introduced into the two systems. In Columbus, for instance, highly credible and well-connected local community leaders first introduced AoH into the community. This, we believe, was a critical in bringing about wide acceptance of AoH practices leading to the successful spread of it across multiple sub environments as well as it becoming an operational norm in many (this is further elaborated in section 3.4). This was in stark contrast to the EC, where the introduction of AoH in many cases not only lacked mandate and support

from high level officials, it was sometimes introduced “in disguise” by people who wished to create a more participatory way of working but felt they had to “protect it [AoH]” (Expert4 2013) from managers that they feared would otherwise stifle the new participative methods which they sought to introduce.

The people who first introduced AoH within the EC were concerned that EC officials would see it as unprofessional or esoteric and as such would alienate people. This concern was validated early-on when a high level EC official reported that managers that had attended a meeting using AoH methods were critical of the process (Expert6 2013). Furthermore, prior to AoH receiving the “go-ahead” in one part of the EC, the leader of the division stipulated to that “the twenty most cynical managers” first needed to attend a hosted meeting and signal their approval (ibid.). This fear of alienating people was a key reason why the early supporters of Art of Hosting in the EC chose to call it Art of Participatory Leadership in the EC (ibid.).

Furthermore, as pointed out earlier in Results, following the introduction and on-going practice of AoH, the fact that the AoH principles were not made explicit within the EC may have been a limiting factor to the use of AoH practices not becoming more deeply embedded there.

While both systems reported, to different degrees, rigid, top-down hierarchical structures prior to the introduction of AoH practices, the majority of the sub environments in Columbus were less rigid and hierarchical prior to the introduction of AoH practices than the EC. Furthermore, the EC remained considerably more rigid and hierarchical following the introduction and on-going practice of AoH than Columbus. An official from the FRA contextualized the role of AoH to hierarchical nature of the EC by saying “you have to understand that [AoH] is fundamentally contradictory to the way in which public administration works, where you have a strict hierarchy” (EC6 2013). We believe that the combination of the less rigid hierarchical structures and the more participative leadership styles within the different sub environments in Columbus are key factors in the deeper overall level of social capital observed in Columbus following the introduction of AoH.

## **4.2 Strategic recommendations**

### **4.2.1 Recommendations for SSD practitioners**

#### *Assessing and enabling social capital within a Sustainability Management System*

Organizations (including communities) often use management systems to help them implement actions and to ensure they are progressing towards stated goals and objectives. To ensure that a full sustainability perspective is integrated into an organization’s existing management system, SSD practitioners often develop sustainability management systems (SMS). Such systems are categorized under the FSSD’s Tools Level. At the same time, the elements of an SMS apply to all five levels. For instance, at the Systems Level, there is understanding that the organization is a sub-system within the broader socio-ecological system. At the Success Level, the organization crafts a clear vision of success from which to be able to plan. At the Strategic Level, the organization utilizes a structured approach for planning and selecting moves in the most strategic manner. The Actions Level consists of the actions the organization chooses to implement. The Tools Level includes any additional tools that are needed.

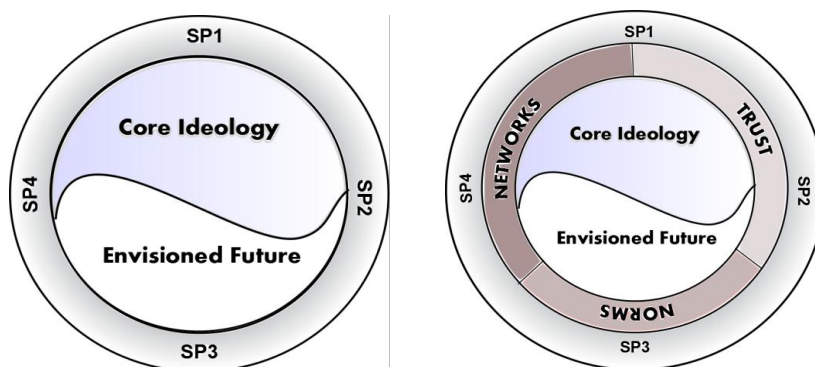
### *Integration of trust, norms and networks into the organization's vision*

A first order priority is for SSD practitioners to guide the organization in the creation of a shared mental model of both its identity within society within the biosphere as well as a coherent vision of success. From an SSD perspective, the vision should be defined as within the constraints of the four sustainability principles and also include the core ideology, the core purpose, and the envisioned future.

This thesis team has integrated the five category headings of the success factors for fostering social capital into the traditional SMS. The five category headings are organized below by the three parts of social capital, trust, norms and networks.

- Trust
  - High levels of trust
- Norms
  - High degree of beneficial norms of communicating and working
- Networks
  - Robust, open flow of information / knowledge
  - A large number of social connections
  - High quality social connections

The following image shows how the above categories of success factors can be integrated with the organizational vision as depicted in an SMS.



*Figure 3: Comparison of the traditional SMS vision with one with Trust, Norms and Networks incorporated*

Once an SSD practitioner has helped the organization to create a vision, which now incorporates the three aspects of social capital, backcasting from the vision can then take place. This process consists of four generic steps: (1) analyzing the current reality, (2) creating a list of compelling measures, (3) setting priorities, and (4) creating an action plan for implementation. These steps closely relate to the B, C and D steps of an ABCD process.

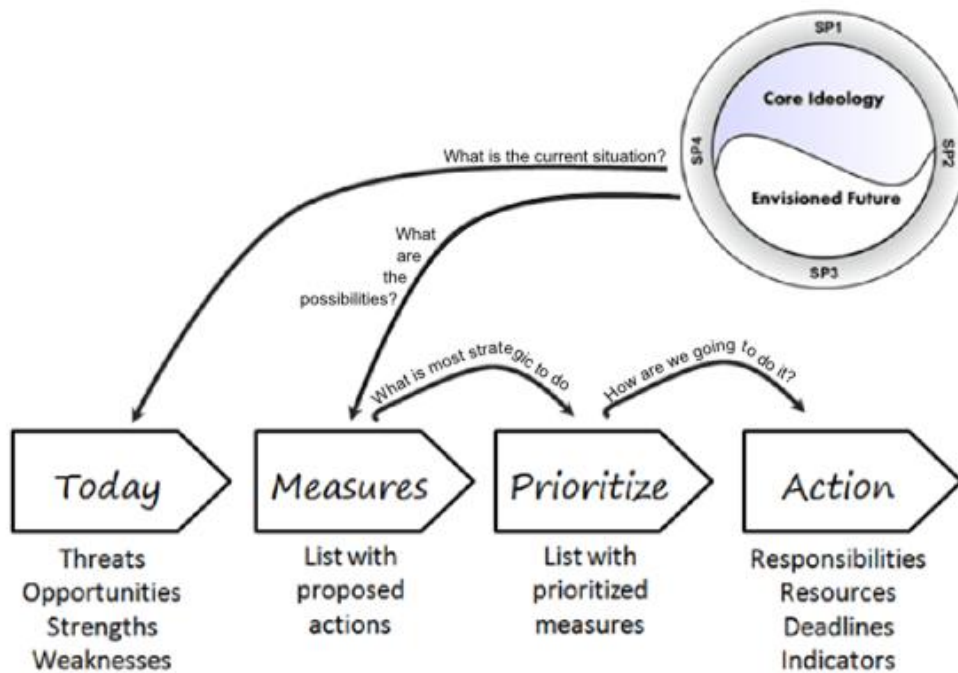


Figure 4: Generic SMS process

#### *Integration of Social Capital Assessment Tool into the current reality analysis*

The first stage of the SMS process is the current reality analysis to identify both internal (organizational) and external aspects that might significantly impact its ability to achieve the vision. This can be summarized in a SWOT analysis, including Strengths and Weaknesses (operational or interior world) and Opportunities and Threats (exterior world). The interior world analysis uses the sustainability principles to identify *sustainability aspects* while the core purpose, core values and envisioned future are used to identify *success aspects*. At this stage, SSD practitioners can use the *Social Capital Assessment Tool* developed by this thesis team (see Appendix 10) to develop a thorough baseline understanding of the level of social capital internally and within the organization's larger stakeholder networks.

The assessment tool relies on a set of triggering questions, the answers to which will add substantial depth and nuance to a baseline understanding of the organization's planning and decision-making framework, including in particular, informing the answer to questions having do with the way that the system is constituted, i.e. management hierarchy, levels of trust, norms of communication, etc. (Systems Level), how it defines success, i.e. whether and to what degree there is a clear sense of purpose (Success Level), how planning and decision-making is handled, i.e. who is involved in decision-making and how (Strategic Level). The results of the survey will also help to identify those operational aspects that could play a

significant role in helping the organization live up to its core purpose and values and to reach its desired future state<sup>6</sup>.

The results of the Social Capital Assessment will also inform the exterior world analysis. Specifically, they will inform the *Social* aspect of a PESTLE analysis (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental), which is often conducted by SSD practitioners to map external present and foreseeable future trend<sup>7</sup>.

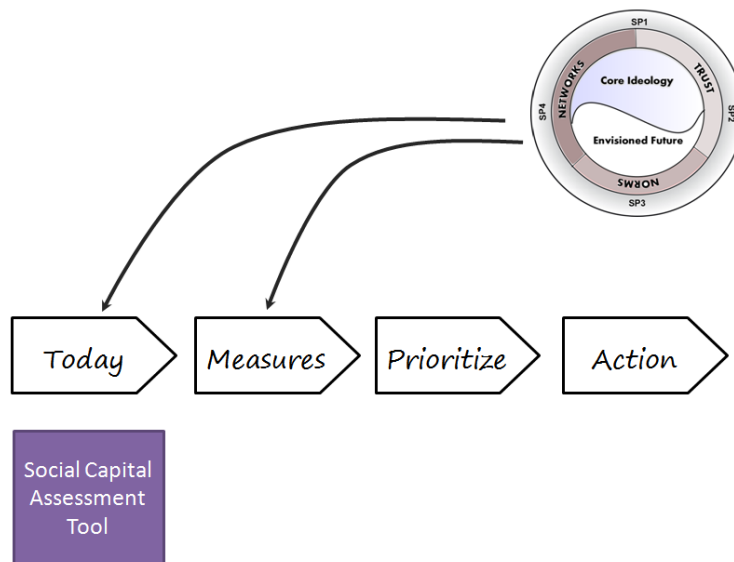


Figure 5: SMS process with Social Capital Assessment Tool integrated

#### Consideration of AoH related measures

The next stage of the SMS is creating a list of compelling measures to move the organization towards the vision. At this stage, while it is typically not the job of the SSD practitioner to recommend particular measures, he or she should be prepared to ask participants of the process to consider actions such as identifying a certain number of relevant staff to attend an AoH training and integrating AoH practices into the working environment (internal and/or external with stakeholders) during the coming year, at whatever level is appropriate. During the third stage of the SMS, the setting priorities stage, participants can check the measures towards integrating AoH practices and building social capital against the following three prioritization questions.

1. Will the action(s) help the organization head in the right direction where all parts of the vision are considered (in this case, the 4 sustainability principles, the core purpose

<sup>6</sup> The Social Capital Assessment Tool utilizes a Likert Scale approach in order to capture the interviewee's level of agreement or disagreement in a systematic manner.

<sup>7</sup> Note the importance of conducting a thorough stakeholder relationship map as part of the exterior world analysis to identify all stakeholders with whom the organization has an existing relationship as well as those they don't but who may impact them in the future.

and values, the envisioned future, the strategic goals, and the five category headings of the success factors for fostering social capital)?

2. Will the action(s) be a platform for further improvements towards the vision?
3. Will the action(s) provide sufficient return on investment (including whether any stakeholders may have requirements for or views on the action)?

*Integration of Guidelines for Achieving Full Integration of Participatory Practices into setting priorities and action planning*

Throughout both the setting priorities and the action planning stages, SSD practitioners can use the following six *Guidelines for Achieving Full Integration of Participatory Practices* developed by this thesis team to enable the full potential of participatory practices. These guidelines are derived from a combination of the counted and themed data from our interviews, a list of observations from the interviews which did not fit into either of the two categories of prior to and following the use of AoH practices but that the authors deemed of high importance, and the author's qualitative interpretation of the data. The six guidelines are as follows:

1. Integrate/implement the enablers as a system
2. Develop the personal capacities of the leader
3. Develop the expertise and skill of the host
4. Consider carefully who is on your invite list
5. Create and maintain a Community of Practice (CoP)
6. Customize the approach to the organization, system, setting

***Implement/integrate the enablers as a system***

AoH is sometimes referred to as “process architecture” for hosting and harvesting conversations that matter within organizations and other complex social systems. More than any particular methodology, AoH is an intention regarding how people want to be together and work together in the world. This intention is loosely formalized in a handful of simple yet elegant principles of behavior and interaction (see Appendix 1).

If AoH is treated as simply an adjunct to the old way of working (so that it doesn't become the norm) or if only one or two AoH methodologies or principles are utilized in isolation, the positive reinforcing or synergistic benefits of taking a whole systems approach is likely to be missed. Similarly, if the hosts do not have a deep understanding of the process architecture, principles, methods and tools of AoH or do not have the personal skills to create a safe space, many people may not feel safe participating fully and honestly. The authors believe that this largely explains many of the differences in positive outcomes that were observed between Columbus and the EC.

As indicated in the Results, it was not possible to draw direct correlations in most cases between any particular outcome with a specific AoH principle or method. The results of our research did, however, demonstrate clearly that one or more enabler from three, or in many cases all four, of the enabler categories might work in a synergistic fashion to enable a particular success factor. In this sense, having a full systems view - treating the enablers in a

holistic manner rather than as simply a set of isolated methodologies - could, in itself, be looked at as yet another “heavy lifter”.

While we recognize that designing for an outcome, be that an increase in social capital or an explicit desired goal, is very context and environment specific, we would like to show by way of an example of how multiple enablers can positively influence an individual success factor; in this case *a felt sense of being listened to* (see table 4).

<i>Hosting &amp; Design Enablers</i>	<i>Principle Enablers</i>	<i>Method &amp; Tool Enablers</i>	<i>Other Enablers</i>
<i>AoH as the organizational operating system*</i>	all voices in the room meeting as equals	World Café	<i>move towards a more participative leadership style*</i>
safe space and time for people to share and all voices and opinions to be heard	suspending assumptions and judgements	Circle	leaders let go of some level of control / encourage shared leadership
slowed down process with intentional space and time for personal reflection	inquiry / powerful questions' are driving force	Open Space Technologies	leaders fully and authentically embraces AoH (or dialogue-based, participatory) practices
Great process design (plan 3 steps ahead, harvest outcomes, etc.)	inclusive participatory approach based on dialogue	check-in (check-out)	leaders model open communication and encourage discussion of difficult topics
experienced, authentic host	listening with attention	Appreciative Inquiry	Feeling valued, empowered and comfortable
clarity of purpose	speaking with intention	Art of Harvesting	existence of more human relations
existence of a Community of Practice	allow solutions to emerge from the middle	Action Learning	existence of more trust
clear follow up	engaging the collective intelligence for better solutions	Proaction Café	clarity and transparency about how all decisions are made; people see their input on decisions
4 fold path		Collective mind map	diversity is welcome in the system
		Collective Story Harvesting	people feel safe to be vulnerable & more open

*Table 4: Example Social Capital Enabler Matrix for a felt sense of being listened to (\* meta-enabler)*

As the example Social Capital Enabler Matrix above indicates, a dynamic combination of Hosting and Design Enablers such as creating a safe space for people to speak and be listened to, Principle Enablers such as people suspending judgments of others, Method and Tool

Enablers such as Circle practice, and Other Enablers such as the leader modeling more open communication can all add up in an interconnected and synergistic fashion to support (or enable) people feeling listened to or heard. Keep in mind that differing constellations of enablers will bring about different changes in different success factors. Two additional examples of can be found in Appendix 11.

### ***Develop the personal capacities of the leader***

Based on our research the leadership style of the leader or mandate given is of vital importance. This is mirrored in the work of Baan et al (2011) who point out that in order to successfully lead dialogue-based group engagement processes among diverse stakeholders with different perspectives, facilitators or leaders must be committed to: (1) self-development (or personal mastery), (2) the development of others, and (3) the benefit of society as a whole (Baan et al. 2011).

Baan et al. (2011) conclude that the ‘personal capacities’ of a facilitator are just as important as the process or the content itself (Baan et al. 2011). They recommend the ongoing development of a number of personal capacities, including but not limited to being present, whole self-awareness, compassion, and intention aligned with higher purpose. They also suggest that these capacities “can be developed through personal practice, exercise and experience” (Baan et al. 2011, v; Szpakowski 2010).

### ***Develop the expertise and skill of the host***

Similar to the point above, the host has a major effect on the outcome(s) of a hosted process. As the name suggests it is an art form that first must be practiced extensively until one develops a certain level of mastery. This not only includes mastery in the use of the various methodologies but also the ability to design an authentic, participative processes which takes into account the needs of the participants as well as the ability to dynamically adapt the process based on what is needed in any given moment. The essence of AoH is often referred to as the *Four Fold Path*, which underlies the principles and methods. It is a cycle of learning which flows from *Hosting yourself*, *Being Hosted*, *Hosting Others* to *Being part of a Community that Hosts Itself*. Embracing this on-going journey of learning and growth is fundamental to a host’s practice (please see appendix 1 for more information).

### ***Consider carefully who is on your invite list***

Although one of the core AoH principles (for Open Space technology) is “whoever comes are the right people”, it makes particular sense to carefully consider who is invited to early AoH gatherings, kick-off meetings or trainings. Managers, staff, stakeholders and other key influentials are likely to be best positioned to help to champion it and foster the spread of AoH practices.

### ***Create and maintain a Community of Practice***

Several interviewees reported that having a Community of Practice is conducive to building the skills and capacity of local AoH practitioners and ensuring that any changes brought about by AoH are long lasting.



## ***Customize the approach to the organization, system, setting***

Each organization, system or setting is unique and thus a one-size-fits-all approach is probably less likely to yield optimal results. Different approaches should be tried. For instance, AoH was introduced within Columbus as a shorter AoH “Taster Evening” rather than a typical four-day AoH training. Later, once the interest in and use of AoH practices had gained a certain amount of traction in the community an AoH Community of Practice was launched. Such an approach may not be appropriate in another setting. Another example comes from one of the interviewees who brought to light how different AoH practices are to the current organizational norms in practice in the EC. This speaks to the need to specifically customize your approach to the situation and organization you are dealing with, noting that this may mean that full implementation of AoH as an operating system takes a longer time.

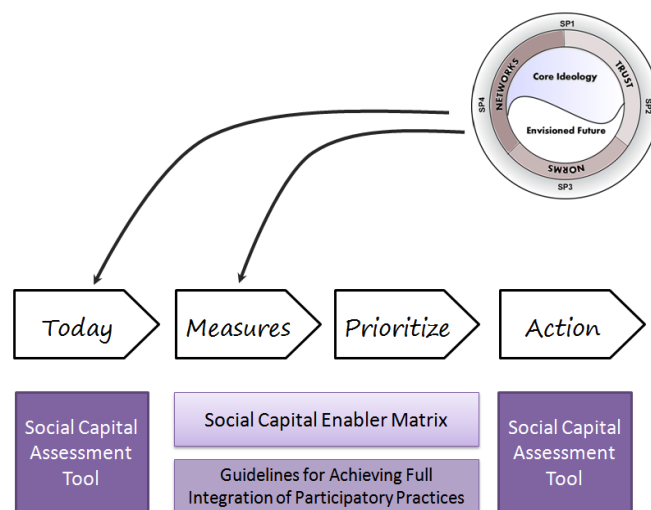
*“You have to understand that AoPL [AoH] is fundamentally contradictory to the way in which public administration works, where you have a strict hierarchy. Of course if everyone takes AoPL seriously, it profoundly challenges the hierarchical set-up of how management deals with that, is very much related to their own personal beliefs, which accounts for the fact that participatory leadership develops much faster in some contexts than in others.” (EC6 2013)*

The authors recommend working with a trained AoH steward or host to support the development of a thorough understanding of the needs of the community and their particular context with respect to the use of AoH practices and then to discuss and design different plans of action.

## **Integration of Social Capital Assessment Tool the action planning**

The action stage of the SMS includes both action planning (the vision, plus who does what tasks and in what order) and implementation (process management, monitoring and auditing). At this stage, SSD practitioners can use the *Social Capital Assessment Tool* annually or as needed to evaluate the extent of change in terms of social capital as a result of the practice of AoH during the prior planning cycle and, based on the results, the SMS process can be refined for the coming period.

The following image depicts the integration of the above recommendations with the traditional SMS process.



*Figure 6: SMS process with Enabler Matrix and Guidelines for Achieving Full Integration of Participatory Practices*

#### **4.2.2 Specific strategic recommendations for AoH practitioners**

The authors believe that AoH practitioners can make use of the different tools shown in this thesis (*Social Capital Assessment Tool*, *Enabler Table*, and *Guidelines for Achieving Full Integration of Participatory Practices*) to both develop a baseline of social capital in the systems in which they're working and guide process design and facilitation in order to foster greater social capital.

Additionally, many societal challenges, including providing affordable healthcare and adequate housing, feeding the hungry, and creating safe, equitable and thriving communities, just to name a few, are also part of the broader sustainability challenge. While they tend to be most associated with so-called "social sustainability" (and to a lesser degree economic sustainability), each of them can, if approached from a whole-systems perspective, be an impetus for strategic sustainability. The authors of this thesis recommend that AoH practitioners approach their work with this understanding in mind. Specifically, AoH practitioners are uniquely positioned to try and ensure that questions that are asked in hosted environments address the full spectrum of sustainability. Furthermore, AoH practitioners should consider introducing the SPs as design constraints for the creation of organizational purpose and vision statements.

#### **4.3 Note on inhibitors**

None of the questions asked to the participants of this study involved the identification of barriers or inhibitors. Several of the interviewees, nonetheless, identified a number of possible inhibitors to the full and effective use of AoH practices. These include: too rigid a structure; lack of time and resources; unsupportive management; initial skepticism of AoH practices; and, fear of collaboration, to name a few.

The authors recommend that leaders and facilitators first review the list of inhibitors in Appendix 9, periodically reflect on whether and to what degree any of them (as well as any others not identified there) might be in play, and develop a plan of action to proactively address them.

#### **4.4 Limitations and suggestions for further research**

As indicated above, the main limitation of our research was the fact that we did not, but for a few exceptions, prove any direct correlations between a particular outcome and a specific AoH method or principle. The authors of this thesis recommend, therefore, a larger study to try and determine, where possible, closer causality between particular outcomes and specific AoH methods. This might entail a more extensive study of the Columbus and EC complex social systems using a combination of interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions of a larger number of participants.

While the design of our research questionnaire did not specifically ask about inhibitors to the use of AoH practices or to the creation of social capital, several participants, nonetheless, voluntarily provided examples of inhibitors. A future study that includes a thorough examination of both enablers and inhibitors would contribute greatly to the understanding of

social capital creation through the use of AoH practices as well as to the advancement of SSD.

Due to limitations on time, we were not able gather input on the viability of integrating the different tools developed by this thesis team with the traditional SMS conducted by FSSD practitioners, nor was it field tested on real world projects. Similarly, the use of the tools has not been evaluated or field tested by AoH practitioners working to address other complex challenges. Future efforts to gather such feedback would be useful.

## 5 Conclusion

As indicated in the Introduction, the FSSD is specifically designed to offer a whole-systems perspective and to enable both experts in the relevant disciplines and non-experts alike to collaborate to address the inherent complexity of the sustainability challenge, using a common, scientifically valid and systems-based framework.

While the FSSD has proven effective in helping organizations to plan for success in the context of full sustainability, the literature points clearly to the critical role of social capital and, in particular trust, in the success of collaborative efforts to plan for sustainability and for multi-stakeholder and cross-sector planning in general.

Literature points to the fact that communities and other large complex social systems which have high levels of social capital would tend to see greater levels of participant ownership and personal responsibility, be happier, more effective, and more productive than those with lower levels of social capital, all other things being equal. Furthermore, based on the literature and our interviews, we hypothesized that increased social capital would improve the conditions and social environment for adoption and successful implementation of sustainability goals and programs within complex social systems.

The primary intent of this research was to determine (within the constraints of our study) if and how the practice of Art of Hosting could foster social capital in complex social systems working to address a variety of complex challenges, in order to draw conclusions that could contribute, in a meaningful way, to the advancement of SSD. We hoped to gain useful insights by interpreting the results from two systems existing within very different social contexts and with very different organizational structures.

In each of the case study systems, to different degrees, we not only observed increases in social capital, but also more positive, happier and engaged employees, improved stakeholder relationships, and more functional and productive organizations overall.

Based on the limitation of our research, we could not, with a few exceptions, prove any direct correlations between a particular outcome and a specific AoH practice. For similar reasons, it was not possible to claim that all of the outcomes observed are attributable to AoH. It is nonetheless clear that AoH was a causal factor in the creation of several of the observed outcomes.

Considerably greater increases in social capital were observed in Columbus than in the EC. The results of our research show that the full adoption of the use of AoH practices and the embodiment of them by the leaders of the organizations are the most important factors of success. It was clear that both of the two were displayed in Columbus, whereas the EC system displayed neither the adoption of AoH as a *modus operandi*, nor did the leaders within the different Directorate Generals where AoH had been practiced embody the practices as fully.

Departing from a combination of the literature and the results of our research, we have outlined five categories of success factors (29 in total), four categories success enablers (36 enablers in total), including two meta-success enablers. Additionally, we developed recommendations, guidelines and tools for FSSD practitioners wishing to assess the level of social capital in the systems in which they operate and take strategic steps to increase it.

These same recommendations and tools should also be helpful for Art of Hosting practitioners.

Overall, the authors of this thesis believe that these results hold particular significance for any collaborative or multi-stakeholder efforts to build support for adoption and ensure the successful implementation of sustainability goals and programs. Examples of contexts where the findings of this research is likely to be highly relevant include Eco-Municipalities, Eco-Villages, Transition Towns, Eco-Districts, Agenda 21 Communities, Smart Cities, and large complex organizations such as multi-national corporations or universities, to mention but a few.

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## Appendix 1: Summary of Art of Hosting Practices

First and foremost, the Art of Hosting, otherwise referred to as the Art of Hosting and Harvesting Conversations that Matter, is a learning community. Art of Hosting (AoH) practitioners seek to help individuals and diverse groups bring about meaningful shifts in being, thinking and doing by asking powerful questions. In addition, AoH seeks to build ownership and commitment as well as tapping into the power of the collective intelligence of groups of diverse individuals. Within the AoH toolkit lays an emergent set of group process practices, principles, methods and tools for facilitating group conversations of all sizes to address complex challenges.

The global hosting community uses a variety of methods and tools including Open Space, Appreciative Inquiry, and World Café, to name a few. All of them share certain common principles or qualities having to do with inquiry (typically focused around powerful questions) dialogue, intentional speaking, intentional listening, and suspending of judgment. A basic organizational form used in many of the methods is the circle, whether used in multiple smaller conversations or as part of much larger conversations. The art of storytelling is also widely used to ground conversations in people's real life experiences. Following is a brief overview of the most common process facilitation methods and tools used in AoH practices. For a more in depth understanding of AoH practices please see footnote.<sup>8</sup>

**Circle Practice** — Circle practice is based on a form of meeting that has been practiced for thousands of years where people gather together into respectful conversation. A common characteristic of a circle is the use of some type of speaking object where the person holding the object has the full attention of the other participants. There are three principles which guide all circle conversations: leadership rotates, responsibility is shared, and reliance on wholeness not on personal agenda. These three principles are joined with three guiding practices of listening with attention, speaking with intention, and tending to the well-being of the circle.

**Open Space Technologies** — Open Space technologies provide a space and the time for people to deeply discuss issues of importance to them and to help them come to greater clarity around how they can move forward on these issues. Following a general, open invitation, articulating the purpose of the meeting, individuals with the desire to know more about particular subject, propose topics that are included as part of a “marketplace” of topics. Participants are then free to choose a topic of interest and/or can move freely among different topics, learning and contributing as they go. The result of the individual sessions is then presented (harvested) in a plenary session.

**World Café** — The World Café is a conversational process focused around a meaningful questions or themes. During a “café”, several simultaneous small group conversations build off of each other in a way that reveals a living collaborative learning network based on dialogue. The goal of a World Café is to tap into the collective intelligence in order to come up with greater clarity on a shared purpose and shared goals.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://artofhosting.ning.com/page/core-art-of-hosting-practices>

**Pro Action Café** — A Pro Action Café is a blend of Open Space technologies and World Café that creates a space where individuals can bring forward their “call”, project, idea or anything they feel called to manifest in the world, and request help from participants.

**Action Learning** — Action Learning is a process whereby people work together in small groups (called action learning sets) to perform an action focused around a real issue and then reflect on their actions in order to gain knowledge that can inform and improve future actions. This process is opposed to traditional instruction that is often not action based.

**Appreciative Inquiry** — Appreciative Inquiry is an organizational strategy that builds on what is working or what an organization does well rather than trying to fix what is perceived as not to be working. This way, opportunities for positive, inspired change can be identified and expanded upon.

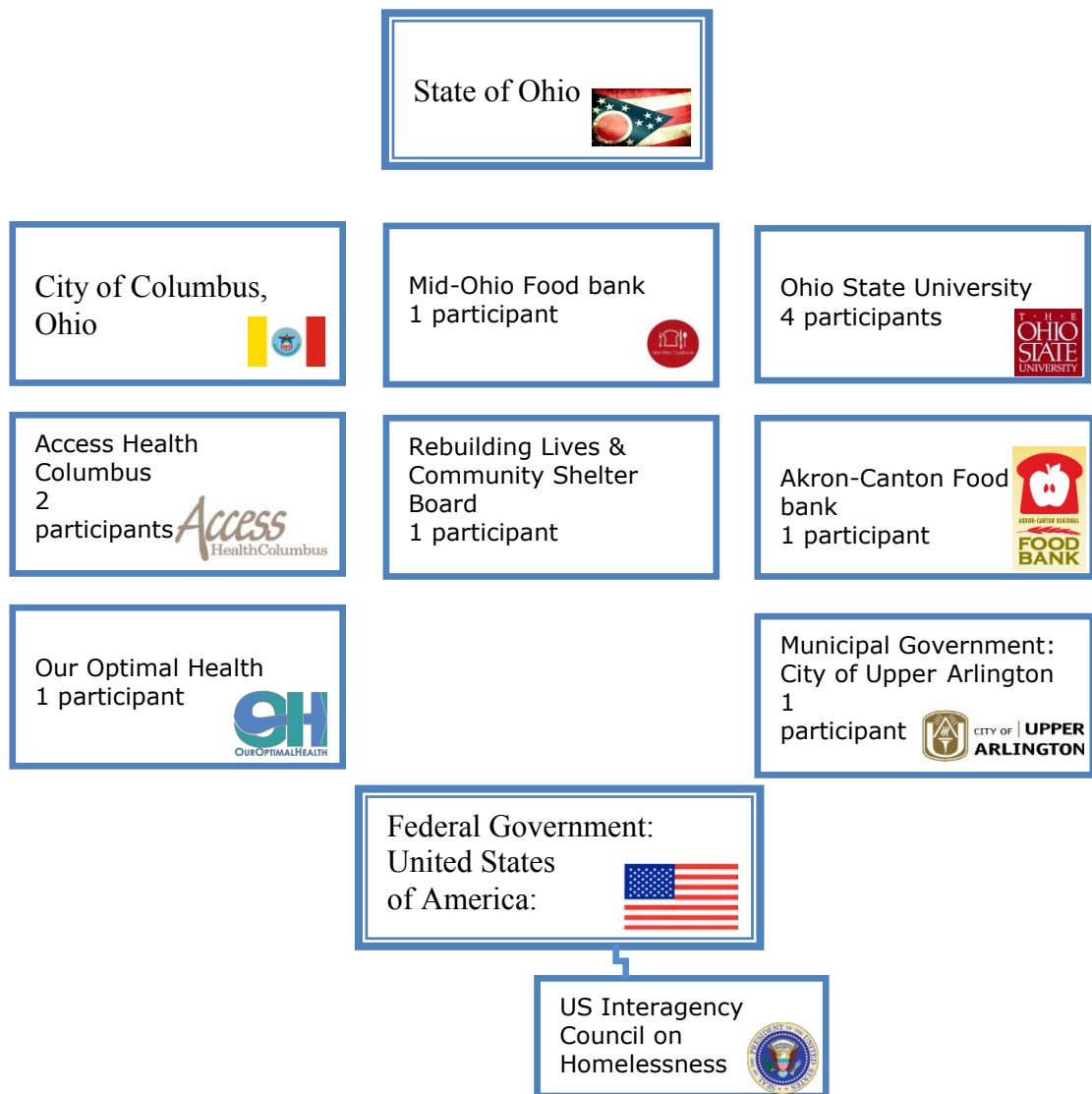
**Collective Mind Mapping** — A collective mind map is a fast and easy way to visually produce an overview of the key challenges, issues or opportunities that are relevant to a specific topic or challenge that all participants can contribute to and understand. This can be done on a white board, a large piece of paper, or using mind mapping software projected onto a screen.

Hosting is, however, more than simply a set of facilitation tools or methodologies. It is often described as a process-architecture or an “operating system” for engaging groups in conversations that matter. More specifically, the various process methods and tools are combined with a set of specific principles that are designed to produce the conditions in which the collective intelligence of the various and diverse participants can be tapped and wise action can be fostered.

Another key aspect of Art of Hosting is the *eight breaths* of process architecture. This follows a path from a disturbance or collective call-to-action through divergences, emergence, and ultimately convergent to get to a wiser more informed action. The *Eight Breaths* are based on the *Chaordic principles*, being: calling, clarifying, inviting, meeting, harvesting, action, reflecting and learning and finally holding the whole.

The essence of Art of Hosting process architecture could be described as *the four fold path*. *The four fold path* is seen as a never ending cycle of learning and growth. It begins with “hosting yourself”, which is characterized by being present to yourself and becoming more conscious and disciplined. By being a learner you move into “being hosted” as you participate as a student and listener, which is characterized by a state of openness and curiosity. By learning together you move into “hosting others” which is when you stand up a process designer and design, host and harvest conversations. By being a part of a community that learns together you move into “being part of a community hosting itself” by way of a co-creation and a community of practice. This marks a commitment to continued learning which brings you full circle to hosting yourself. In this way AoH is a holistic model of service and support for change makers and hosts.

## Appendix 2: Interviewee map of Columbus and the EC Case study systems<sup>9101112131415</sup>



<sup>9</sup> <http://www.akroncantonfoodbank.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.osu.edu/> (Ohio State University)

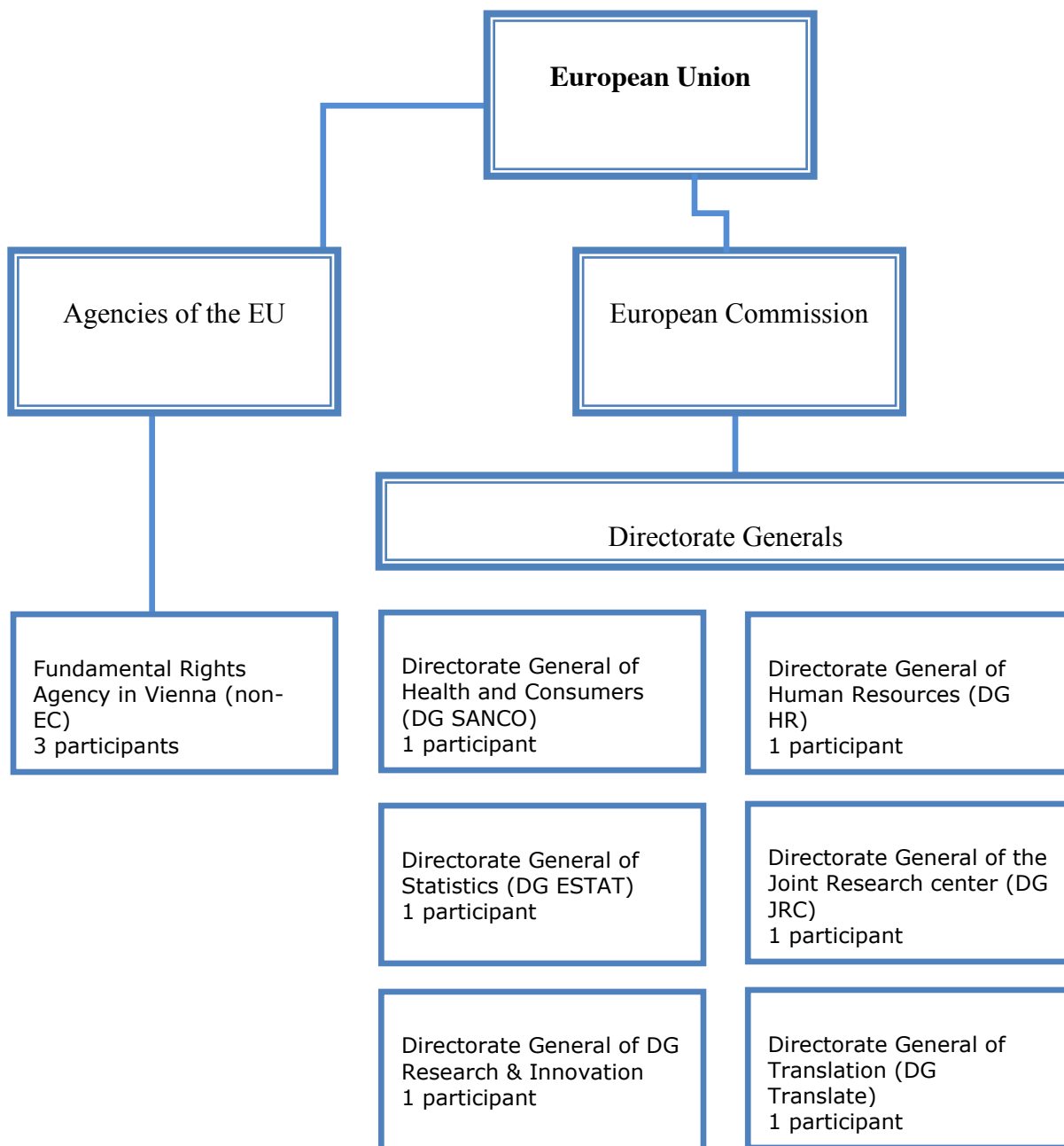
<sup>11</sup> <http://www.midohiofoodbank.org/> (Mid-Ohio Food bank)

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.uaoh.net/> (City of Upper Arlington)

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.centralohiohospitals.org/resources.html> (Access Health Columbus)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.citycapz.com/ColumbusFlag.html> (City of Columbus Flag)

<sup>15</sup> <http://ouroptimalhealth.org/oohcms/aoh-os/> (Our Optimal Health)



## Appendix 3: List of interviewees

<i>Exploratory Interviews</i>				
Exp 1	Toke Moeller	07/02/13	Steward	AoH co-founder
Exp 2	Tuesday Ryan-Hart	28/02/13	Steward	Columbus (Our Optimum Health)
Exp 3	Catherine Jordan	28/02/13	Steward	Minnesota Clean up the River Environment (CURE)
Exp 4	Anon.	01/03/13	Steward	European Commission (SPP)
Exp 5	Phil Cass	05/03/13	Steward	Columbus (Columbus Medical Association)
Exp 6	Anon.	19 and 22/03/13	Steward	European Commission (DG HR)
Exp 7	Anon.	27/03/13	Steward	European Commission (DG HR)
Exp 8	Bertrand Meusburger	12/03/13	Host	Vorarlberg Office of Future Questions (Austria)
Exp 9	Martin Martinoff	15/03/13	Host	Finance Innovation Lab and Audit Futures (UK)
Exp 10	Tim Merry	04/03/13	Steward	Co-founder of AoH & Nova Scotia (Youth Social Infrastructure & Public Health)
Exp 11	Manfred Hellrigl	26/02/13	Host	Vorarlberg Office of Future Questions (Austria)



<i>Primary Interviews</i>			
<i>European Commission</i>			
EC 1	01/04/13	Participant	European Commission (DG SANCO)
EC 2	07/04/13	Participant	European Commission (DG HR)
EC 3	11/04/13	Participant/host	Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) of the European Union
EC 4	12/04/13	Participant/host	European Commission (DG Research and Innovation)
EC 5	12/04/13	Host	European Commission (Dutch Translation Unit in DG Translate)
EC 6	15/04/13	Host	Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) of the European Union
EC 7	15/04/13	Caller/host	European Commission (DG JRC)
EC 8	11/04/13	Participant/host	European Commission (DG ESTAT)
EC 9	15/04/13	Participant/ host	Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) of the European Union
<i>Columbus Ohio</i>			
CO 1	10/04/13	Participant	Columbus (Ohio State University)
CO 2	10/04/13	Caller	Columbus (Ohio State University)
CO 3	19/04/13	Caller/host	Columbus (Mid-Ohio Food-Bank)
CO 4	07/04/13	Host	Columbus (Ohio State University)
CO 5	10/04/13	Caller/host	Columbus (Our Optimum Health)
CO 6	11/04/13	Caller/host	Columbus (Upper Arlington)
CO 7	10/04/13	Host	Columbus (Homeless Shelter Board)
CO 8	10/04/13	Host	Columbus (Access Health Columbus)
CO 9	15/04/13	Host	Columbus (Akron Canton Regional Food bank)
CO 10	18/04/13	Host	Columbus (Ohio State University)
CO 11	04/12/13	Participant	Columbus (Access Health Columbus)

## Appendix 4: Case study system selection matrix

Exclusion criteria	Possible Case Studies / Case Study Systems							
	Columbus	European Commission	Voralberg Office of Future Questions	Nova Scotia Youth Social Infrastructure	Nova Scotia Public Health	Minnesota CURE	Finance Innovation Lab (UK)	Audit Futures (UK)
Practiced extensively over period of at least 2 years	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Broad, systemic use of AofH practices/methodologies	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO
Diversity of AofH methodologies/tools used (at least 3)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO	NO
Access to participants for interviews	✓	✓	NO*	✓	✓	✓	NO	NO
Total exclusion-based score	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Weighted criteria	Columbus	EC
Multi-stakeholder setting	3	2
Reported successful outcomes	3	3
Hosts w/ substantial experience	3	3
Total weighted score	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>

Exclusion criteria	Weighted criteria
✓=satisfactory	1=less so
NO=non-satisfactory	2=partly
	3=more so

\* As the Voralberg Office of Future Questions mainly offered German-language interviewees it was deemed not feasible as only one thesis-member is a German-speaker

## Appendix 5: Interview questions

A number of pre-framing questions were asked in order to welcome the interviewee and to frame the process. These are not included below. The questions that are shown below are the ones that were used for callers and participants. Slight alterations were made for the hosts to ask what their perception of the changes that they witnesses after and during the event that they hosted.

### *Norm related questions*

1. What was your perception of the organization with regard to its norms [*and behaviors?*] prior to the introduction of AoH practices?
2. Since the use of AoH practices,
  - a. What, if anything, changed in the way that you work together?
  - b. What, if anything, changed in the way that people communicate?
  - c. What, if anything, changed in the power and/or decision-making structures within the system?
3. How have these changes impacted the way decisions are being made within the system given previous and current challenges?

The last few questions have referred to changes within the norms of the system:

4. What specifically about the use of AoH practices was a significant factor in any of the changes?

### *Network related questions*

5. How would you characterize the exchange of knowledge and information within the system prior to the introduction of AoH practices?
  - a. Did this change over time?
6. How would you characterize the quality and amount of social connections within the system prior to the introduction of AoH practices?
  - a. Did this change over time?
7. How have these changes impacted the way decisions are being made within the system given previous and current challenges?

The last few questions have referred to changes within the networks of the system:

8. What specifically about the use of AoH practices was a significant factor in any of the changes?

### *Trust related questions*

9. What was your perception of the level of trust, prior to the introduction of AoH practices, in:

- i. your relationship with other individual participants (or staff/employees)
    - ii. the organization as a whole
  - a. Did this change over time? If so, how?
10. Has your willingness to invest your time and energy increased or decreased since the introduction of AoH practices?
- a. If so, how did this change over time
11. From your perspective, has the willingness of other people in the organization to examine their assumptions and biases changed since the introduction of AoH practices
- a. If so, how has this change over time
12. How has this impacted the way decisions are being made within the system?

The last few questions have referred to changes in the levels of trust & willingness in the system:

13. What specifically about the use of AoH practices was a significant factor in any of the changes?

#### *Other questions*

Is there anything else that you would like to highlight that you believe is related to the introduction of AoH Practices

#### *Mandate-giver*

[this question was added if the interviewee had the mandate to use or assign organizational resources]

In Q10 above: Add “organizational resources...”

## Appendix 6: Columbus case study system

Columbus is the capital of the state of Ohio. With both a highly diverse economic base and demographic, Columbus has for many years been used by the retail sector and by restaurant chains as an ideal test market for new products.

Over a nine-year period, beginning in 2004, leaders from a variety of sectors in this city of just under 800 people have trained in AoH practices. Throughout this period, thousands of people have come together to explore complex questions like: *What does ending hunger mean to you? What is the purpose of the healthcare system? How can we create the community people are longing for?*

An "AoH taster evening" was held in October 2004 with the intention of seeding participatory leadership practices in the community and to see if there was interest and momentum in taking AoH forward. 25 people were in attendance. In March 2005, 35 community leaders attended the first formal AoH training. During this event, someone called an open space question "*What could happen if we could work on questions of the community that nobody dares touch—like health care, like education, like distribution of wealth—because these are too hot for us to pick up as individuals?*"

That original event spun out into many sectors in the community including health, homelessness, hunger, education and municipal government. In addition, an AoH community of practice (CoP) currently forms the backbone of all AoH events in Columbus. A Community of Practice meets 3 or 4 times a year and has a dedicated core of around 25 members.

### **Spin off Projects/Outcomes:**

#### **Health / Our Optimal Health (2006 – 2012)**

Our Optimal Health (OOH) originated out of one of the Open Space exercises at the first AoH training in Columbus where a physician asked the question, "*how can Columbus create sustainable and affordable health care for everyone?*" That one question gave rise to a seven year project. Ten community assemblies were held from December 2005 to September 2007 with roughly 80-130 people in each including citizens, business leaders and politicians. Many of the people that went to the first training used OOH as their practice lab. This was key factor in creating fertile ground for other projects.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Access Health Columbus (2005- present)**

Access Health Columbus (AHC) was born out of the input and impetus of the large community assemblies held around OOH. AHC is a public-private partnership working to improve delivery of local health care by coordinating collaborative improvement projects in Central Ohio. Its vision is: "*Health care for all people in Franklin County that is affordable for individuals and sustainable for our community*".

By the end of 2013 there will be 300,000 people receiving care from patient centered medical homes that is the result of what AHC has done using hosting and bringing business,

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<sup>16</sup> <http://ouroptimalhealth.org/oohcms/aoh-os/>

insurance, and providers together to conceive of a new primary care delivery system for roughly a third of the population by the end of this year.<sup>17</sup>

### **Hunger / Mid-Ohio Foodbank (Oct 2010 – present)**

Since its introduction into the Mid-Ohio Foodbank, AoH has helped the organization to craft a new vision of “A hunger-free and healthier community” and mission of “To end hunger, one nourishing meal at a time and co-create a sustainable community where everyone thrives”. The Mid-Ohio Foodbank was a key participant “in a regional food movement across seven counties exploring how to shift the proportion of food produced locally from one to ten percent.” The hunger project is now convening conversations around hunger in 20 counties. <http://www.midohiofoodbank.org/>

### **Homelessness: Rebuilding Lives & Community Shelter Board (No dates available)**

Since February 2007, the “Rebuilding Lives” program has run community meetings as entirely open processes attended by shelter service providers and funders, advocacy groups and businesses, and by former and current homeless citizens. Participants of these meetings developed 96 strategies which they collectively whittled down to 11 priorities focused on pressing issues like how to coordinate emergency assistance, accelerate re-housing and connect to employment opportunities for Franklin County’s more than 8,000 homeless people.

### **Education / Ohio State University (OSU) (2006-present)**

The first AoH training at OSU was held in April 2007. Since then AoH has spread to at least six academic departments and at least four administrative departments. To date over 150 people have been trained. In addition, representatives from three other universities have visited OSU to learn about what is happening there.

### **National Homelessness / US Interagency Council on Homelessness (Department of Housing and Urban Development) (July 2009 – present)**

The manager of the “Rebuilding Lives” program was asked by the Secretary of US Housing and Urban Development of the Obama-administration to lead the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness and to develop a new national plan to end homelessness to present to Congress by May 20, 2010. Over a four-week period, she brought together into World Cafés more than 750 people from six cities representing the full range of stakeholders (including the homeless) to inform the national strategic plan on homelessness. The results were then presented to a 60-person decision council representing the 19 federal agencies that needed to approve the plan.

### **Municipal Government / City of Upper Arlington (April 2009-present)**

The City of Upper Arlington is an affluent suburb on the northwest side of Columbus with approximately 35,000 residents. The former City Manager introduced AoH in 2004 and since then it has been practiced in a variety of places throughout the community. When the city

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<sup>17</sup> <http://accesshealthcolumbus.org/>

began to develop a new master plan it also used AoH as part of community-wide engagement.

### **Municipal Government / Clintonville (March 2007-late 2010)**

A Community Assembly was called in March of 2007 during an open space session. People from Our Optimal Health (OOH) with previous experience with AoH offered to help support the work. The Clintonville group developed their purpose statement and principles in August 2007 and then developed actions they wanted to work on in the next year. They updated their actions a year later. They continued to meet through late 2010.

### **AoH Community of Practice (2004- present)**

The Community of Practice consists of approximately 25 people representing OSU, the food system, youth work, homeless shelters, the healthcare system, municipal government and the Board of Regents. These people come together for a half a day every quarter to enhance their abilities and to strengthen their commitments as AoH hosts.

## Appendix 7: European Commission case study system

Together with the European Council and the European Parliament, the European Commission (EC) forms a center of power in the governance of the European Union. In the governing documents of the European Union (EU) it says “the European Commission represents the interests of the EU as a whole”<sup>18</sup> (European Commission 2013). More formally, the EC “proposes new legislation to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, and it ensures that EU law is correctly applied by member countries.”<sup>19</sup> (European Commission 2013)

A major reason as to why AoH (later re-named Art of Participatory Leadership) was brought in to the EC was the frustration with organizational inertia, stemming from the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of the EC (Expert 4 2013; Expert 6 2013a).

In early 2006, an EC official of the Learning and Development Unit of the Directorate General Human Resources first suggested AoH as a potentially valuable tool to be used for internal staff trainings. There was some initial uncertainty as to whether the organizational culture of the EC was ripe for the introduction of a new methodology like the AoH. For this reason, the responsible head of unit decided to “test it” on what he called “15-20 highly cynical EC-managers” (Expert 6 2013b) to see how it would be received by them, assuming that it would be safe to introduce into the EC if they approved. As it was deemed promising by the “cynical managers” AoH was first brought into the EC in October of 2006 (Expert 6 2013a).

Once the AoH had made it into the EC, it did not take long until it came under heavy criticism from participants that had taken part in an AoH event. The practice of AoH was accused of being “sect-like”. One person said that it was “outrageous that a sect it had made its way into the EC” (Expert 6 2013a). With the strong negative reactions still fresh in memory, fearing that the mere name AoH might be a source of further criticism, it was decided that the name should be changed to *the Art of Participatory Leadership*, as to avoid unnecessary alienation.

Since 2006, approximately 10 percent (approx. 3000 of the 30,000) EC staff has been exposed to the AoH. The vast majority of them have been exposed to AoH at large-scale annual staff trainings organized by the DG Learning and Development. A much smaller number has been more working more closely with AoH through their respective Directorate Generals (cf. “departments”) that have managers and officials with mandate that see the benefits of using AoH for hosting meetings as well as providing guidance to the work. 800 people have been trained as hosts, out of which around 150 are actually hosting AoH engagements (EC4 2013).

### Strategic Planning & Programming Community of Practitioners (SPP CoP) (2007-present)

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<sup>18</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/index_en.htm), European Commission 2013, accessed the 18<sup>th</sup> of May

<sup>19</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/index_en.htm), European Commission 2013, accessed the 18<sup>th</sup> of May



According to Expert 4 (2013) the CoP has provided AoH practitioners in different parts of the EC a safe space for sharing ideas and cross-pollinating, especially valuable in a context as rigid as the EC. Through the CoP, more AoH practitioners have been able to connect across DGs, create synergies, and strengthen their resilience in an environment that is not always supportive of new methodologies that challenge the status quo (Expert 4 2013, Expert 6 2013a).

### **Art of Hosting in the EC:**

#### **DG Human Resources (DG HR) (2006-present)**

The Learning & Development Unit in DG Human Resources has played a pivotal role in the introduction and diffusion of AoH practice, through training seminars as well as consultancy services. Participatory processes have been used in the Career and Management Performance Management Unit for the review of a core HR process (Appraisal and Promotion) in 2011-2012 as well as the engagement of various stakeholders and development of a new strategy for the unit of Learning & Development. Similarly AoH has also been used the unit of Financial Training (2009-2011) (Expert 6 2013a).

#### **Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna (FRA) (2010-present)**

The use of AoH was originally brought into the FRA as there was a perceived need to improve relationships with external stakeholders. From there, it has been spreading into staff engagement processes and to engage stakeholders around the results of their research on fundamental rights issues (EC 6 2013).

#### **DG Research & Innovation (DG RTD) (2009-present)**

Participatory leadership has been used in a wide variety of contexts since 4 years including unit strategic planning processes, stakeholder events on Responsible Research & Innovation, Ethics network events etc. (Expert 4 2013).

#### **Dutch Translation Unit in Directorate for Translation (DG Translation) (2008-present)**

The use of monthly check-ins about the operations of the unit and Action Learning are the most commonly used methods in the DG Translate. AoH has also been used in creating a network between the different translation units, which has become a more extensive task since the EU expanded in 2004. (EC 5 2013).

#### **Joint Research center (JRC) (2008-present)**

DG JRC has been using AoH as one method out of many for hosting their meetings, including the (very costly) strategic research conferences that involves convening a hundred of the most prominent researches to discuss strategic approaches. (EC 7 2013).

**Directorate General for Health & Consumers (DG SANCO)**  
(unknown-present)

DG SANCO has used AoH for a variety of subjects, such as: impact assessments, evaluations, general planning approach and working together on the issues extracting the essential elements. AoH has facilitated the “getting to the bottom of the problem” and finding solutions that actually target the issue. (EC 1 2013).

**Directorate General for Statistics (DG ESTAT) (2008-present)**

DG ESTAT has used AoH for a variety of subjects, such as structuring knowledge and for strategic planning purposes as well as for working together on prioritization issues aimed at extracting the essential elements of their work tasks (EC 4 2013).

## Appendix 8: Results data

### Themes pre introduction of AoH practices:

Ranking	# interviewees	Theme detail	Social capital
	17	traditional meeting style	Norm of Work
	17	hierarchical Culture + controlling	Networks
	15	authoritarian Decision making	Norm of Work
	14	1 way communication	Networks
	13	low trust levels	Trust
	13	siloed network environment	Networks
	13	slow and formal flow of information	Networks
	9	low level of equality	Norm of Work
	9	no or low Participation / collaboration	Norm of Work
	8	only loud voices heard	Norm of Comm
	8	conversations are not genuine and/or direct	Norm of Comm
	7	low networked connections	Networks
	7	shy or fearful to speak	Norm of Comm
	6	leader not authentic regarding participation	Meta
	6	low lateral flow of information	Networks
	5	low levels of openness	Norm of Comm
	5	low connection with stakeholders	Networks
	4	low relationship level	Networks
	4	bad working environment	Norm of Work
	4	no clarity of purpose	Norm of Work
	3	questions are not welcome	Norm of Comm

### Themes post introduction of AoH practices:

Ranking	# interviewees	Theme detail	Social capital
	18	trust in both systems	Trust
	18	listening to and valuing all voices in both systems	Norm of Comm
	17	willingness to invest time and energy	Trust
	15	authentic and genuine conversations	Norm of Comm
	15	clarity of purpose in both systems	Norm of Work
	15	decision making structure in both systems	Norm of Work
	15	quality of relationships in both systems	Networks
	14	more inclusive and participatory meetings	Norm of Work
	14	cross-silo interactions in both systems	Networks
	13	overall openness in both systems	Norm of Comm
	13	increase of welcoming of questions and contrary opinions in both s	Norm of Comm
	13	collaboration and co-creation	Norm of Work
	13	willingness to examine assumptions and biases in both systems	Trust
	12	increase of diversity of people included in dialogue	Norm of Work
	12	number of connections in both systems	Networks
	11	more friendly and improved work environment	Norm of Work
	11	participation with stakeholders	Networks
	11	diversity of pathways for communication	Networks
	10	courage to speak out	Norm of Comm
	10	ownership and responsibility	Norm of Work
	10	sense of equality	Norm of Work
	10	lateral flow of info	Networks
	9	awareness of the whole system	Norm of Work
	8	willingness to be vulnerable and to risk	Trust
	8	respect in interactions (nested into trust)	Trust
	7	capture of informal/off-line conversations	Networks
	6	willingness to work with ambiguity/unknown	Norm of Work

## Key enablers of the creation of an environment which fosters high social capital:

Ranking	# interviewees	Theme detail	Social capital
	18	feeling valued, empowered and comfortable in both systems	Environmental
	15	small table conversations in both systems	Methods & Tools
	15	human/improved relationships in both systems	Environmental
	14	safe space in both systems	Environmental
	13	more reflection and awareness	Hosting & Design
	13	great process design	Hosting & Design
	12	having all voices in the room in both systems	Hosting & Design
	12	changes in leadership (META ENABLER)	Environmental
	11	adoption of AoH as operating system (META ENABLER)	Hosting & Design
	11	focus on purpose	Principle
	11	increased trust in both systems	Environmental
	11	seeing input on decisions in both systems	Environmental
	10	talking to diverse groups in both systems	Environmental
	9	suspending judgment in both systems	Principle
	9	use of circle	Methods & Tools
	8	experience of host	Hosting & Design
	8	powerful questions	Hosting & Design
	8	having tools to convene conversations	Methods & Tools
	8	participatory approach	Principle
	8	use of Open Space	Methods & Tools
	7	CoP atmosphere	Hosting & Design
	7	slowing down process in both systems	Hosting & Design
	7	check-in/check-out	Methods & Tools
	7	leaders letting go of control	Environmental
	7	being more vulnerable in both systems	Environmental

	16 and more
	11 to 15
	7 to 10
	4 to 6

	>200%	European Commission: level of dominance
	100-199%	
	30-99%	

	>200%	Columbus Ohio: level of dominance
	100-199%	
	30-99%	

## Appendix 9: Inhibitors

None of the interview questions focused specifically on the identification of barriers or hindrances. However, as part of the pre-framing prior to each interview, interviewees were asked to offer both positive and negative experiences resulting from the use of AoH practices. Following is a list of themed inhibitors.

### *Skeptical view of AoH practices*

Eight out of 20 interviewees reported that initially some people had a skeptical view of AoH practices and that this could inhibit the acceptance and adoption of AoH practices, being slightly more reported in Columbus (note that this is somewhat contradictory to what has been said in the expert interviews, particularly in the interviews with Expert 6 and Expert 4).

It was reported that people initially felt a bit uncomfortable with the use of AoH practices. One employee at the MOHB spoke to some initial hesitancy with the AoH practices and the language being used "When I started talking about some of these AoH practices it probably felt a little foreign to some" (CO9 2013).

### *Lack of follow up*

Six out of 20 interviewees found that a lack of follow through on ideas discussed while working with a participatory (hosted) approach could lead to declining trust, being slightly more reported in Columbus. One person from OSU said

*"Even if the right question is asked it often fails to shift the energy level in the room if the dialogue is not followed up with action that makes a difference in the way of working" (CO5 2013).*

Another person from OSU said, "if the hosting is limited to only planning, then the level of energy goes down that quickly ends up being a defeating situation" (CO4 2013).

A manager from OOH said

*"The trick is that people have more energy when there is a connection to these conversations that are a part of action that people can begin to see a difference. It is one thing to be involved in planning and it is a different thing to be involved in implementation" (CO5 2013).*

A manager in the DG HR explained that trust can be destroyed if participatory methods are not followed through on: "Asking people their opinion and not following up on it has the capacity to decrease trust" (EC2 2013).

### *Lacking support from management*

Six out of 20 interviewees said lacking support from management was an inhibitor of the adoption of AoH practices, being significantly more reported in the EC.

A head of unit in the DG HR highlighted the fact that people in power may very well feel threatened by AoH practices, explaining that “some people feel that this [AoH] undermines their authority” (EC2 2013).

#### *Other inhibitors*

Other inhibitors that were observed in the interviews include: the time it takes to bring about changes being too long (4/20); highly rigid hierarchical structure (4/20); a lack of time and resources (2/20); hard to see what creates the change (2/20); high learning curve for hosts (2/20); continued lack of transparency in decision making (2/20); still not whole system in the dialogue (1/20); fear of collaboration (1/20); overriding mandate givers (1/20); and, the varying demographics of those who use these practices (1/20).

## Appendix 10: Social Capital Assessment Tool

SOCIAL CAPITAL ASSESSMENT TOOL						
#	Trust	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A1	In my organization people demonstrate a willingness to invest time and energy (e.g. participating, going the extra mile, volunteering, etc.).					
A2	In my organization people demonstrate a willingness to examine their own biases and assumptions.					
A3	In my organization people demonstrate a willingness to take a risk in the face of an uncertain outcome or in situations where reliance on others is required.					
Sub Total						
#	Norms of Communication	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
B1	In my organization people listen with attention to others and value all voices.					
B2 a	In my organization people feel that their voices are being heard.					
B2 b	People feel included.					
B3	In my organization conversations are authentic, genuine and honest.					
B4 a	In my organization communication is open.					
B4 b	Important conversations are happening and they are not taking place behind closed doors.					
B5	In my organization people feel safe or have the courage to speak up, ask questions and/or voice contrary opinions.					
B6	In my organization people have sufficient time and space for reflection and self-awareness.					
Sub Total						
#	Norms of Working	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
C1 a	In my organization there is a widely shared clarity around the organization's purpose.					

C1 b	People feel compelled by the purpose.					
C2	In my organization the purpose of every meeting is clear and transparent.					
C3 a	In my organization everyone is clear about how decisions are made and when and how their input will impact decision-making.					
C3 b	People can see their input on decisions.					
C4	The decision-making structure mostly flat (rather than mostly top-down and hierarchical).					
C5 a	In my organization meetings are inclusive.					
C5 b	Participation is encouraged.					
C5 c	Communication is used as a means for dialogue and discussion (rather than for information only).					
C6 a	In my organization everyone attends all of the required meetings and participates fully.					
C6 a	People participate regularly and fully in non-required meetings.					
C7	In my organization there is a high level of collaboration and co-creation.					
C8 a	In my organization most decisions are informed by a diversity of both internal and external (stakeholder) input.					
C8 b	Space and time is dedicated to dialogue.					
C9	In my organization people feel that their working environment is positive and friendly.					
C10 a	In my organization people feel ownership over projects.					
C10 b	People are proactive.					
C10 c	People take responsibility.					
C12	In my organization people feel that there is a sense of equality throughout.					



C13	In my organization people show that they are capable of seeing the whole systems (vs. only fragments / their corner of the organization or system).					
C14	In my organization people show tolerance and ability to work comfortably in uncertainty/ambiguity.					
<i>Sub Total</i>						
#	<i>Robust, open flow of information and knowledge</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
D1 a	There is substantial horizontal or cross-departmental communication (flow of information) existing in my organization.					
D1 b	Substantial cross-unit or cross-silo interactions occur.					
D1 c	Few barriers are currently in place to restrict the flow of information.					
D2 a	Substantial vertical communication (flow of information) exists across the hierarchy within my organization.					
D2 b	Few barriers are currently in place to restrict the flow of information.					
D3 a	A high degree of communication flow takes place with external stakeholders in my organization					
D3 b	Stakeholders participate regularly in processes and decision-making.					
D3 c	The ideas and opinions of external stakeholders factor into decision-making.					
D4	In my organization there is a diversity of pathways for the flow of communication (not just email and formal memos).					
D5	In my organization informal or off-line conversations are captured and made use of in an open and transparent way.					
<i>Sub Total</i>						
#	<i>Number of Social Connections</i>	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
E1	There is a high density and number of social connections within and across the organization and with external stakeholders.					
<i>Sub Total</i>						

#	Quality of Social Connections	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
F1	In my organization people feel that relationships are based on care and respect for others.					
	<i>Sub Total</i>					
#	Leadership Style	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
G1	The leader(s) let go of some level of control / encourage shared leadership.					
G2	The leader(s) show more vulnerability to staff and stakeholders.					
G3	The leader(s) admit to no knowing all the answers.					
G4	The leader(s) is (are) patient. In certain cases, the leader(s) slow down the decision-making process to allow solutions to emerge.					
	<i>Sub Total</i>					
	<b>TOTAL</b>					

This tool was designed to enable an organisation to survey and assess their baseline and ongoing levels of social capital. The left hand column links the questions to the success factors stated in the Results. The second column is the survey questions themselves along with a likert scale to map respondent opinions. The authors recommend using a survey software to send out the survey to staff and participants and used this table as a way of collating how many people responded to each question (for example the sub totals and totals).

This table is part of an Excel model that when run generates charts and spider diagrams that can be utilized to map the organisations levels of social capital. The model is has yet to be fully tested, however the authors wish for it to be open source and are happy to share it with anybody who wished to utilize it. Please email us directly for access to the model.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Percentage
A1	2	4	41	3	50	OK
A2	50	23	24	1	0	OK
A3	21	35	44	0	0	OK
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>50</b>	
B1	21	35	44	0	0	OK
B2	21	35	44	0	0	OK
B3	21	35	44	0	0	OK
B4	21	35	44	0	0	OK
B5	35	44	21	0	0	OK
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>85</b>	
C1	21	35	44	0	0	OK
C2	21	35	44	0	0	OK
C3	21	35	44	0	0	OK

# Appendix 11: Sample Enabler Matrices

Enabler Matrix for *a full systems perspective*

<i>Hosting &amp; Design Enablers</i>	<i>Principle Enablers</i>	<i>Method &amp; Tool Enablers</i>	<i>Other Enablers</i>
AoH as the organizational operating system *	all voices in the room meeting as equals	World Café	move towards a more participative leadership style *
safe space and time for people to share and all voices and opinions to be heard	suspending assumptions and judgements	Circle	leaders let go of some level of control / encourage shared leadership
slowed down process with intentional space and time for personal reflection	inquiry / powerful questions' are driving force	Open Space Technologies	leaders fully and authentically embraces AoH (or dialogue-based, participatory) practices
great process design (plan 3 steps ahead, harvest outcomes, etc.)	inclusive participatory approach based on dialogue	check-in (check-out)	leaders model open communication and encourage discussion of difficult topics
experienced, authentic host	listening with attention	Appreciative Inquiry	feeling valued, empowered and comfortable
clarity of purpose	speaking with intention	Art of Harvesting	existence of more human relations
existence of a Community of Practice	allow solutions to emerge from the middle	Action Learning	existence of more trust
clear follow up	engaging the collective intelligence for better solutions	Proaction Café	clarity and transparency about how all decisions are made; people see their input on decisions
4 fold path		Collective mind map	diversity is welcome in the system
		Collective Story Harvesting	people feel safe to be vulnerable & more open

\* Meta Enablers

## Enabler Matrix for *more participatory decision-making*

<b>Hosting &amp; Design Enablers</b>	<b>Principle Enablers</b>	<b>Method &amp; Tool Enablers</b>	<b>Other Enablers</b>
AoH as the organizational operating system *	all voices in the room meeting as equals	World Café	Move towards a more participative leadership style *
safe space and time for people to share and all voices and opinions to be heard	suspending assumptions and judgements	Circle	leaders let go of some level of control / encourage shared leadership
slowed down process with intentional space and time for personal reflection	inquiry / powerful questions' are driving force	Open Space Technologies	leaders fully and authentically embraces AoH (or dialogue-based, participatory) practices
Great process design (plan 3 steps ahead, harvest outcomes, etc.)	inclusive participatory approach based on dialogue	check-in (check-out)	leaders model open communication and encourage discussion of difficult topics
experienced, authentic host	listening with attention	Appreciative Inquiry	Feeling valued, empowered and comfortable
clarity of purpose	speaking with intention	Art of Harvesting	existence of more human relations
existence of a Community of Practice	allow solutions to emerge from the middle	Action Learning	existence of more trust
clear follow up	engaging the collective intelligence for better solutions	Proaction Café	clarity and transparency about how all decisions are made; people see their input on decisions
4 fold path		Collective mind map	diversity is welcome in the system
		Collective Story Harvesting	People feel safe to be vulnerable & more open

\* Meta Enablers

