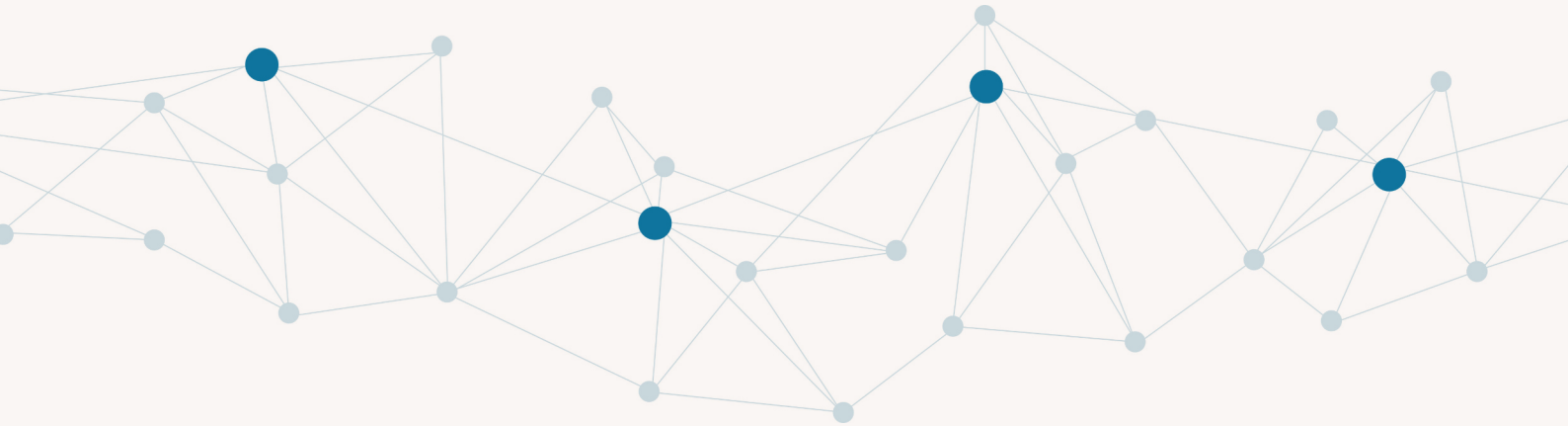


cadra



# The Art of Hosting Questions to Action

Process Formats for Problem Solving  
Action and Development

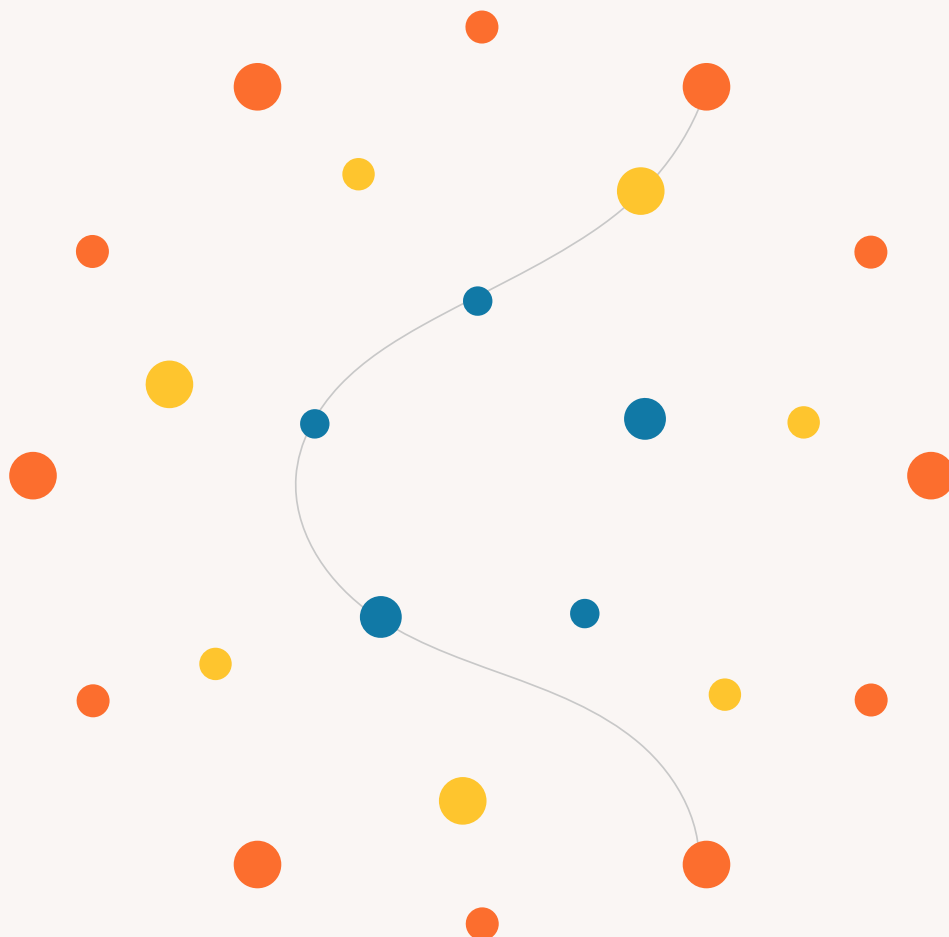
Action Learning

Pro-action café

The Wicked Question Game

Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ programme  
of the European Union





### **What is CADRA?**

The CADRA project is a three year Erasmus+ co-funded initiative, running from December 2020 until August 2023. It explores leadership needs leadership development and focusses on delivering working tools and methodologies to help leaders navigating the challenges of our times.



## Developmental Facilitation for Leaders

In the course of the CADRA project, we used facilitation processes that allow for cognitive richness and mind opening questions. The three processes here were part of our basis for group facilitations. We especially used Action Learning and the pro action café sequences for the Leadership Learning Spaces, where leaders met in a peer learning setting.

We organised an online Action Learning training with members of the CADRA partner organisations, which was a contributing factor to their own individual development and to their practice as facilitators and coaches.

All three practices shared here are already present in the wider consulting and facilitation space. We are here emphasising their use for cognitive development beyond the application for problem solving and agreements for action.

*Action Learning* has been around since the 1940s. We find this developmental peer learning format very supportive for the cognitive development of the people practising it. Besides, it tends to bring about fresh solutions to rather unsolvable issues.

*The pro action café* is a structured developmental group process that instills fresh insights and cohesion for a larger peer learning space.

*The wicked question game* encourages people to ask each other questions that go deeper and address fundamental assumptions, opening minds for new perspectives.

**We wish you inspiration in the reading and a fruitful practice with this!**

## Action Learning

### For what is it good?

Action Learning is appropriate when you have to deal with ill-defined complex issues. It would not just be enough to get an expert or a plumber in to do the job. Someone needs to take hard decisions where no one can tell if there is a good solution at all, or there are many, too many options.

It is essential that at least one person in the room deeply cares about the issue at hand and can do at least something about it. Action learning deals with real practical issues, not just ‘theory’.

### How does it work?

A group of 5-7 people meets for an hour plus 10 minutes or a little longer. They sit in circle close to each other. In the beginning, a few roles are defined:

*The issue owner:* takes care of the issue, takes decisions on which questions to focus on, formulates three concrete action steps at the end of the session.

*The coach:* accompanies the conversation process, manages time, explains and watches about the rules of conversation, interrupts the conversation from time to time to have the group explore the quality of the conversation, asks the group to reflect on the learning from the session and the issue owner to formulate three concrete doable action steps. The coach takes a little distance from the conversation so they can hold the space for it and observe its energy and focus.

*Participants:* explore the issue with openness and curiosity. Engage with fresh questions into the conversation and gradually begin to share the issue with the owner.

*Scribe:* A participant taking notes. The scribe holds a bit more distant position in the circle, similar to the coach. They can look into a variety of noteworthy results from the session, as: What are the most powerful questions? What are concrete options for action? What are hypothesis and assumptions about the context and the issue coming to surface in the conversation? What is the big picture of it all? And many more.

The group will explore an issue that is introduced by the issue owner. The aim is to come to “aha!” moments, where the issue shifts, assumptions become clarified and solutions appear. The method consists in dissolving problems. For this, the group “bombards” the issue with questions. Statements can be exchanged in answer to questions asked, by

anyone in the circle. Notes of the scribes can be used in the conversation to give it fresh directions.

In all this, there is only one rule of conversation: Questions first! This means people refrain from formulating statements if those are not answering a question asked beforehand. If someone makes a statement anyway, you can always call them back and ask them: What is the question behind the statement?

### **The typical sequence of a session**

The Action Learning circle convenes. An issue owner is found or set beforehand, they choose the coach for the session. The coach facilitates the overall session flow. The coach looks into the size of the group and decides to ask for a scribe or even several scribes, clarifies the roles and the rule. They then ask the issue owner to introduce the topic with a few sentences, and then the group to begin to ask questions.

After a couple of minutes the coach would typically intervene and invite the group to reflect how they are doing as a group.

The group would do a survey by thumbs up, horizontal or down (“greatest experience ever”, “so-so”, “rarely felt so bad with a group”) at that stage without any words or comments. The coach then asks each person to make one (only one) statement on what the group is doing well in this conversation. After the circle completes, the coach asks what the group could do better, again only one statement per person. Then the coach invites the group to continue their exploration of the issue with their own recommendations in mind.

Later in the flow, the coach could intervene again, this time to ask the group to reflect in how far they are working on the same question right now. He asks each person to note down what the question is the group is actually exploring right now. Then everybody reads the question they noted. All cards are given to the issue owner who then decides from which of the questions to go on.

More intervention tips and formats further down on tips and tricks.

After about 55 minutes of conversation, the coach asks the group to pause and every person to reflect on their learning out of the session, note the learning into a journal or a piece of paper. Once the group finishes writing, the coach asks each person to read to the group what they noted. The notes will stay with each person.

At the end, the coach asks the issue owner to state three actions they will do as from now, in very concrete doable terms. At least three! Not less.

## Harvesting a session

The harvest can take any form and shape depending on the purpose, topic and context of the session. At least the issue owner will take the notes and plans that were produced by the session. In many places, the results will be minuted and shared with the relevant audience. Note that often groups agree to keep the sessions confidential. In such cases, minutes need to be agreed by all present before 'leaving the room'.

## History of Action Learning

Action Learning was developed by a British named Reginald Revans. He was a friend of the physicist Rutherford and attended a few meetings of the leading scientists of the 1930s that Rutherford hosted in Cambridge. He observed that physicists that already knew all about physics of their time did not bore themselves with lectures about what they knew. Instead, Albert Einstein for instance would open the conversation with a question like: What is the true beginning of the Universe? What is the Universe anyway? And then the group would have an engaged conversation during hours. The results from this could lead to a number of fresh papers, each of which might shift theoretical physics another big step ahead.

Revans felt that if scientists could advance their frontiers through open child-like questions, than anyone should be able to this with any woolly ill-defined issue of our day-to-day life like in management. Basically, anyone could help Einstein to develop further by sharing their own ignorance and asking good open questions. Revans developed the Action Learning format principles we still practice today and applied this with success in the 1940s till 1960s. While the practice was still in use, it got a bit forgotten until it re-emerged with fresh energy in the 1990s. Today there are tens of thousands of practitioners active in Action Learning each day, in companies and governments, family advise groups, churches, communities and science. Rainer v. Leoprechting and many of his colleagues in Brussels learned Action Learning from Robert Kramer who learned it from Michael Marquardt, both practicing in the US.

## Where is Action Learning used best?

In business and management: Action learning can be the meeting format of choice for management groups or leadership teams to explore issues of organizational culture, leadership, personnel, strategy, complex projects etc.

We see many organizations that support Action Learning circles as open opportunities for staff or managers to receive fast, real-time help on otherwise unsolvable issues. Such Action Learning circles could offer a regular slot like once a week at a regular place and time.

It's a valuable ingredient in developmental contexts, like self-development, coaching education, Art-of-Hosting practitioner circles. It's a highly effective format for inter-vision (peer-learning) circles of practitioners of a given practice.

In Salon evenings, Action Learning can be a nice format for a small group to explore an important issue towards concrete solutions, e.g. when there are not enough people for a pro action café.

### **When would you really not call for an Action Learning session?**

Any time the issue is actually well dealt with by an expert, or the work could be given to a practitioner and delegated. We refrain from Action Learning, when we don't feel there is any one in the room that could do even a little thing about it. Before finding this, you can challenge the group. Of course there is no need to do a session, when the solution is already obvious in a simple first conversation with the issue owner.

If the group has a few power struggles with itself that would prevent them to have enough openness to listen to each other, or the boss would not respect the outcome of the session.

We found Action Learning needs a well-prepared and trained coach. A training can be as short as two days, but the coach needs to be solid enough to deal with difficult people and situations in the group and responsive enough to intervene.

### **Tips and Tricks for more advanced users and situations**

#### **No real options for actions in sight:**

Try the inverse intervention. Let the whole group generate options on how the issue could be led to absolute certain failure. Especially when there are not many positive options, negative ones there will be plenty of. After the group has filled two or three pages of flipchart notes, let the group underline those actions that lead to certain failure that they are already doing well.

After this, what is it, the group (or the issue owner's part of the group) could do less that will improve the situation?

**The conversation loses flow...**

That's a clear time to consider any intervention! Besides asking the group how it is doing, or what the actual question is they are exploring together now, here a few more intervention suggestions.

What are the questions that, if answered well, would bring the whole issue further? Let the participants write questions down on cards/paper, questions are all read and shared with the group. The issue owner then asks a fresh question to the group.

**The issue owner is too much in the center of attention...**

You can suggest to the issue owner to take a break and stop talking or answering questions all the time. Instead they take a step back and listen to the conversation the other participants have. After a couple of minutes you may invite them back.

**The group stays on a rather superficial level...**

You invite the group to note down all the assumptions they have heard or come up in them as the conversation was unfolding. They share the assumptions. You invite the issue owner to turn one or two of the stated assumptions around and give a fresh start to the conversation.

**You have 8-10 people in the room...**

So the group is too big for a normal Action Learning session. You may ask a few people to become scribes. Two or three scribes can be a highly valuable resource to harvest relevant outcomes real time during the session. You can use the scribes' observation for the group deliberations and have the scribe share what they note or see for a short moment, then the group goes on.

You may invite one or two people to stay 'in reserve' in an outer circle. As they listen to the conversation, they can decide to intervene, tap the shoulder of any of the people sitting in the circle and change place with them. Once they take the chair in the circle, they become participant. The other person goes into reserve, and can get themselves in back again by tapping someone else's shoulder. (See the wicked question game).



## The pro action café

### What is it?

A group of people is invited to a session to explore concrete initiatives and projects around a common concern during 2½ to 3 hours. People can either bring their specific topic to a table and invite others to co-develop their project through questions and contributions, or join the tables opened by others.

Through three hosted rounds, the projects are questioned and creatively reframed, all rounds building on each other.

As a result, many concrete initiatives are developed, with the mutual help from the various participants. The initiatives are already shared throughout the group, and often very concrete help and alliances are already negotiated throughout the rounds. Some cafés lead into a marketplace of projects or ideas, where the participants can further engage with the results of the session and the project owners.

### A brief history of the pro action café

Around the year 2000 a group of young change agents started to meet regularly in Brussels, Belgium. We called our group “pro action Europe”, as many of us worked in the European Union’s institutions. In our monthly meetings we explored with each other how we could be more successful and more effective in our various attempts to enliven rigid bureaucracies and fixed corporate systems. After a cycle of a year, we continued to meet monthly and had a specific project in focus that we explored together with their initiator. Somehow, these evenings lacked attraction and energy, and the number of people attending never exceeded around 10 per evening. Rainer von Leoprechting who had co-founded the group and had stayed the overall leader of it, then was invited to a world café in Brussels in 2004. It was the first time for him, and he was excited by the format. He left the event with the vision that a big exposition hall with 1000 people would develop 250 projects around café tables and burst of collectively intelligent actions!

Ria Baeck who had facilitated the world café and Rainer then met and designed the pro action café as a tailor-made meeting format for the pro action Europe community. Over years people met after work for a longer evening with friends and new people to develop projects and to come back. Around 2009, the pro action café was introduced into an Art of Participatory Leadership (Art of Hosting) training at the European Commission. It gave a three-day long training a very practical ending,

highly appreciated by the managers present. Toke Møller was present and got inspired to share it with many Art of Hosting trainings worldwide. The café has now been used in countless conferences and events, leadership retreats and indeed Art of Hosting trainings.

Communities meet regularly in many places like Brussels, Helsinki, Singapore, Melbourne, Köln, Bregenz, Graz or Vienna.

### **How does it work?**

A pro action café has three phases:

- Gathering and agenda setting.
- Developing the initiatives and projects through three café rounds in a café setting.
- Closing with results.

#### **Gathering and agenda setting**

The whole assembly gathers in a room. The hosts recall the invitation and purpose of the gathering, explain the overall flow of the pro action café and that all participants can explore their individual quests and initiatives in two ways: by claiming a project table, or by joining others' tables and contribute to their initiatives.

There are café tables prepared that people can take to develop their specific initiatives and questions. The number of tables is the overall number of participants divided by 4. There need to be at least three tables, so the minimum number of participants is 10, better 12.

The group takes a moment in silence so that each and every participant can listen to the questions that emerge in themselves from within. After a while, some people stand up, share their question as an invitation to others to join them, and take one of the project tables. Hosts get their tables on a "first come, first served" basis. The agenda setting process is completed when all tables are taken.

#### **Café to develop projects and initiatives**

Table hosts sit at their chosen tables, the other participants join any table of their choice, however there are a maximum of three free chairs per table. If a table is full, the arriving traveller is requested to find a free place at another table.

The café hosts introduce three consecutive rounds in world café style. The tables are covered with flipchart paper and color pens or markers. During the conversations, people take notes and draw images so that the tablecloth harvests the key points of the conversations, including questions, drawings, connections and so forth.

Each round has a specific guiding question for the conversations. Table hosts stay at their table for all three rounds, the other participants are travellers and visit a different table at each round.

### **Round 1: What is the quest behind the question?**

The first café round invites the project tables to explore the deeper call behind the presenting issue, and to allow the table hosts to take a new perspective on their own project or question. Ideally the question will shift and take a new quality towards the end of the round.

The café hosts listen to the sound of the room. When the noise is increasing and not coming back to some more concentrated tune, it is high time to stop the round and to call people away from the tables.

Sometimes it is useful to offer a break here. For the second round the hosts convene the travellers to choose a fresh table, the table hosts return to or stay at their project tables.

### **Round 2: What is missing?**

The second round begins with the table hosts giving a short summary of where the conversation is now, what their question has become. The fresh participants now focus on everything that is not (yet) on the table. This could be that some important questions have still not been asked. Some perspectives might be absent. Other partners might not have been identified. Concrete options for action might not have been explored. Strategies and lines of action might not be clear or absent. Etc.

The café hosts might have a look at the tables to see how the paper cloth is filling and the tables visibly become more complete. As before, they listen to the overall sound of the room and sense into the best moment to call this round to end.

Again, a break can be very useful here, it allows the participants to re-orient after their table conversations and to take a fresh view on what they just experienced.

### **Round 3: What are the next elegant steps**

The final round again opens with the table hosts giving a fresh summary about the initiative, what their original question has become, what lines of strategy and development they found now, and what concrete next steps they consider. It could be that those concrete next steps are not yet developed, then this round can serve that purpose.

It is essential here not to burden the table hosts with many more extra actions and responsibilities to shoulder. Active people already have a full plate, and extra work is often simply not done. So the inquiry of this

round is more to find out what the few actions are that will bring the project into its own power. Imagine a project that combines all forces in the right way so that working with it becomes effortless.

Elegance can entail to do actually less, not more.

### Closing with results

After the third café round has closed, the group assembles again in plenary. Hosts of tables have the opportunity to share what touched them during the café, and to thank the other participants. Traveling participants can express how their own questions and projects became inspired or informed.

Depending on the context and overall purpose, the closing can continue into a marketplace setting where participants can visit the project tables again for further engagement, like signing up for participation and so on.

### Where does it come from? A look into the many traditions present in the pro action café

Questions have been asked and projects and initiatives developed since the beginning of human time. So what's new and special about the pro action café? Well, in this section we take the viewpoint that nothing is new under the sun, all has been there before, and maybe just the combination of it gives it that extra special that makes so many people like it around the globe.

The pro action café is a stream fuelled by many rivers. We might find more as we go along, here just the most important ones that the founders were aware of.

### Open facilitation formats

The obvious inspiration is from the World Café. It has given the form of the middle part, the café etiquette, tablecloth of paper to take notes and graphical harvest. The pro action café is however not a World Café in its full tradition. The room works on different projects that might not really have much to do with each other, and the questions asked to the room are a process recommendation, they are not asking the substantial issue like often in a World Café.

Open Space Technology has something in common with the pro action café, as the participants set the agenda in the beginning, and the space is indeed open for their very own and personal initiatives. However, the participants are more constrained and the space only allows tables of up

to four people. Furthermore, the modality through guiding questions adds a process guidance.

### **Interventions and consulting**

There is a reference to process consultation. Rainer learned from Peter Block and Ed Schein. The modality questions speak to the three main phases of a process consultation process 'contracting', 'discovery' and 'implementation'.

### **Contracting – moving from the presenting surface towards reality**

The first café round is conscious about the fact that in most cases the client of a consultation presents their issue in a way that it is impossible to be solved. The goal of this round like in any 'intake' or 'contracting' conversation with a process consultant is therefore to make the question shift towards more reality and the possibility to be dealt with if not solved.

### **Discovery in Dialectics**

The second café round is an exercise in dialectical thinking. What is not there becomes a possibility if not a reality. What is missing lets our mind go astray, around the issue and that what is there visibly. It gives us permission to be subversive and state the obvious, as that what is not there can be very mundane. Naming the absence of the obvious allows it to reflect the reason of its exclusion, and what was not there not only might be included. The reflecting of its not being there might illuminate how we excluded it in the first place, and how we have been creating ourselves the very problem that we are now trying to solve. When this insight arrives, we have the keys for elegant actions in our hand, as we can change our way of dealing with the issue, even if we can't do much else. And by dealing differently with the issue, fresh options might join the table.

### **Implementation within Complexity - Systemic Thinking**

We see complex problems and projects as systems, composed of elements that together develop an inner dynamic. This dynamic becomes a proper quality of the system, and the system then influences the quality of all elements in a holistic way.

As a consequence from this, elegance becomes simplicity in action. Finding the spots that make the whole system shift reduces our effort. Our inner shift of attention and the concentration of our resources can lead to impressive results. Doing less leads to more than the burdening of ourselves with more responsibilities and tasks.

**Where to use it?**

The pro action café is most appropriate for contexts, where the power to act is distributed to many. It increases the connection between the powerful individuals.

- It can be well used to introduce a conference. It reassures action-hungry participants that the whole event will lead to results, as they already will take a few results home from the very first moment.
- It can be well used at the end of a longer process, so that the overall development can be harvested into specific actions the participants will have to implement each on their own or in many different teams.
- It can be positioned in the middle of a longer process so that what is already ripe for action can be identified, and major open questions be concentrated for further deliberations.
- It can be well used for communities as a meeting process. It was actually invented for this purpose in the first place.
- It can be applied to bring many diverse people together, it then becomes a team-building intervention.

**When should one not consider a pro action café?**

- Any time people meet with a purpose that is not action, they are not invited to do something or not at all eager for action.
- When there is no ownership of a common issue or concern.
- When there is a strong leader that decides or controls everything, so that the decision or action power is not widely distributed in the room.
- When there are less than 11 participants, or the room is too small.
- When there is not enough time, you need at least 2½ hours.
- When you have 'facilitators', not 'hosts' to hold the process. The hosting attitude is what holds the whole room, rather than guiding or controlling the individual behaviour of the participants.

## Tips and tricks around the pro action café

### Inviting and Convening

The invitation is highly important. Contextualization is everything. The timing needs to be convenient for people to come, participants need to want to attend. If it is a community event, pricing and budget need to fit the means of the community or the individuals, while you should avoid exploiting volunteers. This is easier said than done!

### Logistics

Size matters! For less than 20 participants not much is needed. A room with some space to move and a few café tables with some markers and flipchart paper do the trick.

From the moment you gather more than 20 people, you can consider a sign-up process with cards, and a wall to post the headings of the table sessions. With 200 or more participants in the room, you may forego the sign-up process, people can claim a table directly as a table host.

People should be able to travel lightly, there should be some space between the tables, and participants be encouraged to have little stuff to carry around with them. Ensure there is a place for their coats or bags to be out of the way.

### Hosting

The first phase of the café is critical. See that there is a good quality of silence in the room that the individual questions can come up inside the people like bubbles of consciousness. You may support this by music, body work, gently guided meditation or just simple pure silence.

Never host alone. The larger the room becomes, the more hosts can join the team. Two hosts are a good team, one of them can even join the tables for some rounds of the café, provided the hosts are experienced enough. As a beginner host, we strongly suggest you just focus on the room, not on any individual table.

### Harvesting

Less is more. The main harvest is the actions and initiatives the hosts will engage into. You can support this by inviting the hosts into sharing some of their exploits in a website.

A repeat event, like a further pro action café can serve to harvest the ongoing progress of the initiatives and of the community as a whole.

In a corporate context the reporting is very important. You then might need to set up a whole scheme with project plans, responsibilities and tasks beyond the minimal requirements for open networks or communities.

## The Wicked Question Game

In a playful way, people ask each other only question after question for a short hour, thus transform the questions they started with and digging into the deeper meaning of life and work that brought them together.

### Where does it come from? A short history

This game is a true Art of Hosting creation. Called to illustrate the power of good questions, three participants of an Art of Hosting training in Belgium in 2006 invented this little format. All three were very keen practitioners of Action Learning. So what they developed was also Action Learning “in a nutshell”. Rainer von Leoprechting was present at this training and became the early adopter, the first follower who brought the game into his workshops and trainings on consulting, coaching, life-long development and of course, further Art of Hosting trainings. It has become a standard process in Austrian trainings. Since 2011 we experiment with the game as group interventions. We invited researchers into deepening research questions with the game, or we started the “Congress of integral politics and policies” with over 100 participants with the game.

### How it works

The purpose of the whole game is that every participant, now sitting or standing, will leave the game with a very much improved version of their question they start the game with. At the end, all will have a moment to note down the new questions so that one can compare the before-after effect.

The group starts in a circle of chairs. Everyone receives a card and a pen. The hosts ask the participants to write down what matters to them most at this moment, in form of a question. That question doesn't need to be any perfect, as the following game will help to improve that question. The hosts may expand a little to underline the value of good open-ended questions that as such will offer direction, while the answers that one finds along the way will be the building stones on the journey of developing.

Once the questions formulated, the large group split in groups of four to five. Each small group has three chairs in a small triangle-circle, two (or one) other participant standing next to the chairs.

Now the game can begin. Here are the rules:

#### Conversation rules

People sitting on a chair have a conversation to question the questions. They may speak, however only in question form. No statements allowed.



If someone makes a statement, they will be asked: “what is the question behind your statement?”

People standing must not talk. They listen to the conversation, hold space for it through their attention and see whether the moment calls for their intervention. They can intervene only in one way: They touch the shoulder of someone sitting. That person then stops immediately their participation in the conversation, gets up and becomes a standing participant. The person that stood there before now takes the chair and participates in the conversation.

The game ends when the hosts call it over (typically after 50 minutes), or when the small group has exhausted all its questions and there is no need for it to explore them any further at this stage.

### Ending and harvest

The game ends when the game hosts call it to the end. Every participant gets a new card (preferably with a different color than the first card) to now write down the question they ask now.

Participants bring both their cards to a wall where one can see the questions that were asked before and after the game.

This is the minimal harvest from it. You can take it much further by allowing people to have a conversation about their experience during the game. We often do a learning circle, like: what did you learn about ... ? and are regularly amazed by the richness and depth of reflections that come up.

### There are no other rules.

Sometimes people feel the need to think the rules are more rigid than they are, or to invent further restrictions. We encourage you to refrain from this and allow some confusion among the participants that they can creatively walk through by themselves rather than wanting to ensure a “perfect” result.

### Strategies for players

As this game has now been played a lot, we have learned a few good strategies for playing it with pleasure and good results in a natural flow.

### Distinguishing and using different types of questions

In the beginning, it might feel a bit awkward to just ask questions. It helps to explain that there are different types of questions you might use in the game:

*Process questions:* Who wants to start and read their question for us to explore? Do you want more of our questions or could we move on? Is there no one standing out there who could tap my shoulder? Etc.

*Substance questions:* What is the thing all about? What would happen, if the question is fully solved? Etc.

*Questions about the relationship of the asking person to their question:* What makes you ask that question? What is the question you are avoiding by focusing on the one you did ask?

### Interchanging between standing and sitting participation

The people that are standing most often have a very different experience and viewpoint than those sitting. By interchanging often, these viewpoints can enter the conversation and enrich it.

Changing yourselves into the circle from the margin might have many other positive effects. You can get that one dominating speaker out of the conversation that prevented any one else to say something. You might release the person whose question was in the center of conversation and allow her to observe the conversation from the margin rather than be part of it. You may bring in that question that was so obvious that no one saw it. You may bring an endless quest to an end, and ask people to listen to the new question you want to be explored. And so on.

### Giving time

It's good conversation practice to listen rather than searching to look smart by talking all the time. Silence is a time of collective reflection and generative for even better, more wicked and deeper questions.

Sometimes people played the game with the instruction that for every participant there should be some 10 minutes reserved to 'give equal share' to all. We don't do this any more as we found that the questions build on each other and every question gets deepened by the collective energy and intelligence that starts to fill the whole room. So trust the process and keep the flow, just have in mind that all questions are in need of transformation, and that all participants need to get something out of the experience.

### Tips for Hosts

When you introduce the Wicked Question Game for large groups for the first time, it requires some very specific wording and clarity. People learn it faster and with so much more fun when you do it with humour and lightness. The deeper and serious things are, the more humour will help.

It often helps to demonstrate the setting of the small groups with a group in the center of the large circle. You explain the rules. As the group then starts you can introduce the various strategies so that the circle gets the idea of the game.

**Where to use it?**

You can use it well any time the full presence and contribution of every individual participant is required, and the individual is actually important for the further steps after the event. We see it well happen in Community of Practice meetings or network gatherings.

Any training benefits highly from the game, where the systemic nature of interventions and consulting is not only illustrated by the game but experienced in the body and mind of the participants.

**Where not to use it?**

Any time your gathering follows a very much pre-set agenda. The diversity and personal involvement that the game would produce might get into the way of the smooth implementation. The game will feel artificial when the individual contributions do not need to be much distinct.

We hesitate to play the game with people that need a lot of safety and a very close container. Questions tend to open people, some feel unsafe with this.

Be aware of the specific culture into which you position the game. In some contexts people tend to ask questions only to demolish other positions or people, and the game might need some preparation before it can land well in such a place.