While we were together in Belgium this August for a Warrior of the Heart training at the beautiful King’s Mill, we (Ria and Bob) had a chance to sit down and have a very good conversation around what we thought we had agreed to do when we had stepped forward into “holding the whole” of The Art of Hosting. We went to one of Ria’s favorite natural wooded areas where we walked through the woods and then sat beneath “The Climbing Tree”, as it has been named. Here we sat on a log, talked, and drew diagrams on the ground with sticks. We started out by asking, “Do we need to actually do anything?” We weren’t sure, so we asked, “What is AoH and what is an AoH practitioner?” This inspired us to start to develop a couple of diagrams that might help us define things. We say, “start to” because we want everyone to understand that this is definitely a work-in-progress and we hope it will be added to or redrawn many times over, as long as it helps us all understand what we are talking about.

The first diagram that inspired us was the one I have temporarily called "The Art of Hosting - the mega field?."
We thought this diagram shows that the most important function (maybe) of this 'thing' we call Art of Hosting is in its being a core, essential, fertile practice and ground for other, more specific and directed activities to sprout from. It reminded us also of the image of the mycelium. It is not visible on the surface, it goes where it is needed to 'compost', and it seems to be connected widely. The different activities and functional forms we now see are: Art of Powerful Places (Learning Centers that use AoH as operating system), Art of Participatory Leadership (AoH for people in leadership positions) and Warrior of the Heart (synergy of Aikido and AoH). All can be seen as sprouting from similar AoH principles and values, use AoH as its primary operating system and can draw on a shared wealth of knowledge and experience of their 'sister/brother' streams. What we also see is the maturing of the whole AoH domain, and the need - in different places - to call into being different Communities of Practice.

That led us to another diagram [see below] that we originally produced on the ground beside The Climbing Tree, and that is in response to the questions, “What exactly is an AoH Practitioner other than the obvious experience of participating in trainings? And “What could be the “distinguishing marks” and behavior of a practitioner?”

It occurred to Ria, and I agree, that we could take the principals of the four-fold way, along with an addition contributed more recently [thank you very much Chris] and perhaps others to come, as a possible guide. We thought that if this was all the case, then our (Ria, David, Chris, Bob and whoever else shows up) job of 'hosting the whole' could be two fold.

**Our first responsibility** might be to hold a field where the differing offshoots of AoH would interrelate, share wisdom, co-create new possibilities, helping each other stay centered and vital. This is all in recognition that we all share equally in something very important and vital, which is called The Art of Hosting and with our differing abilities, skills, experiences and desire of where and how to work in the world, we could improve our professionalism, cross-fertilize and enhance the whole field.
Our second responsibility then might be to look what this maturing web of practitioners really needs in order to evolve
* The domain (What makes our domain a coherent body of knowledge? Where does it fit in the broader scheme of things?),
* The community (Caring for a domain goes beyond a circle of acquaintances. ... Fully realizing the potential of a domain means seeking out participation from all the relevant players, ... The community needs to accommodate newcomers who may find that joining the community is a daunting undertaking.
* The practice (Building a coherent body of expertise means mapping knowledge in the domain more thoroughly and addressing both the known and the unknown. ... it can set some direction and take a more active role in defining a learning agenda) How to integrate the best of Communities of Practice into the trainings, into the Powerful Places, into the process work of the large-scale systems change?

As you can see, we have left many places for additions and rearrangements. This is all intended to be just working diagrams, a place to start a good conversation from. We know many of you may have spoken similar ideas and that it seems really quite simple but I think a good harvest diagram always helps kindle more thoughts. It did for us.

Thank you,
Ria & Bob
September 30; 2008