



Open Space Technology, World Café

**and other tools/methods
to activate the citizenship**

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Lifelong
Learning
Programme

Open Space Technology, World Café

**and other tools/methods
to activate the citizenship**



Guide to Open Space Technology

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Introduction

In Europe there is an urgent need to focus on active participation in public life. To foster civil participation and engagement, creating the basis for social spaces where citizens start to interact actively with Public Institutions: an Open Government (OG) structured system, more open, transparent and collaborative.



The project “OpenGovEU” submitted under LLP Programme GRUNDTVIG Learning Partnerships for the period 2013-2015 involves 13 partners from 12 countries. The main needs emerging during the activities of the project concern finding ways to enhance:

- active participation of citizens in public life
- more efficient social services
- administrative and decision-making transparency
- open access to public data, including accounting, public health, e-government, environment management, mobility, quality of life, etc.

This guide offers to Public Administrations and to citizens an alternative point of view in relation to each other, thanks to innovative methodologies and approaches. In order to facilitate the implementation of the methodologies are clear examples of the practical points to be considered during their application. The methodologies selected are 4:

- Open Space Technology
- Free writing
- Online Mood Board
- World Café Method

It is necessary to consider all approaches described in this guide as complementary and it is possible to integrate them with each other - in effect, this process is easy thanks to their versatile characteristics, especially of Open Space Technology.

During the project meetings we’ve used these methodologies to facilitate workshops and interactive activities with very good results and effective participation.

We have enjoyed these activities, they really work, and so we are inviting you to try them for yourselves. Initiate similar events, involve both your local Public Administrations and citizens in order to help create a better community in which to live.

What is Open Space Technology?



Open Space Technology (OST) was created in the mid-80s by Harrison Owen, an American expert on science organizations. It consists of an approach to hosting meetings, conferences, corporate-style retreats, and community summit events, focused on a specific and important purpose or task—but beginning without any formal agenda, beyond the overall purpose or theme.



- To organize an OST workshop is not necessary to have a defined agenda because every aspect is managed by the participants who are contributing and managing autonomously the work plan by the theme proposals and the selected insights.
- Once the topics are chosen it is possible to organize parallel work sessions and take the focus on the topics more important from a strategic point of view.
- When the OST event is finished, every participant should receive the minutes that includes the description of any aspect/activity.
- Indeed, the lack of a defined structure is only apparent because the OST is a well-structured system to manage meetings and conferences. OST uses procedures more natural and appropriate to human behaviour.
- The main aspect of OST is the power to give the impulse, create effective connections, strengthen the sustainability of the events available into the organization: projecting and actions, learning and know-how, capture the attention, responsibility, participation and performance
- That's why OST is perfect and often used for the active participation of citizens.
- In the last 20 years it has been used in several countries to manage groups composed of 5 to 2000 persons involved in conferences that could last several days.
- This innovative method helps the participants not to become bored and, thanks to the pleasant atmosphere, in a little time it is possible to produce an "instant report" - a document summarising the proposals/projects created by the group.

The 5 principles

The OST methodology is based on 5 principles and only 1 law

1st Principle - Whoever comes are the right people



The decisions are made only by the participants. It is not useful to think about who could come but it is important only to focus on who is present. Participation in OST must be voluntary, in effect only those who care about the topics are going to be active and responsible during the activities.

2nd Principle - Whenever it starts is the right time



It is the creative aspect of the methodology. Reminds participants that “spirit and creativity do not run by the clock.” It is clear that a start and an end is necessary but no predefined time schedule should be applied.

3rd Principle - Wherever it happens is the right place



Reminds participants that space is open everywhere all the time. Please be conscious and aware.



4th Principle - Whatever happens is the only thing that could have...



Reminds participants that once something has happened, it's done—and no amount of fretting, complaining or otherwise rehashing can change that. The facilitators of an OST event have to be completely confident in the group

5th Principle - When it's over, it's over



Reminds participants that we never know how long it will take to resolve an issue, once raised, but that whenever the issue or work or conversation is finished, move on to the next thing. Don't keep rehashing just because there's 30 minutes left in the session. Do the work, not the time.

The only 1 law The “Law of Two Feet”



Reminds participants that we never know how long it will take to resolve an issue, once raised, but that whenever the issue or work or conversation is finished, move on to the next thing. Don't keep rehashing just because there's 30 minutes left in the session. Do the work, not the time.

Example of conducting an OST

A nice open room without any furniture or table. A big panel with the title of the meeting e.g.: “Ideas for an intelligent mobility”.

The participants are members of public organizations or private NGOs and all of them are seated in a circle.

The programme is very light and includes parallel sessions of different groups that don't know which is the topic to be discussed.

A facilitator starts the meeting by explaining briefly how to decide which is the topic to be discussed and how the system works - then he/she disappears.

Some participants stand up to introduce some proposals, ideas and explain in detail the doubts and what they want to discuss.



They write the proposals on a piece of paper and then they stick the piece of paper onto a big notice board. At the same time they choose the time and the place for the meeting with anyone interested to discuss the selected topic.

So, the sessions start and all participants are free to decide which topic they want to participate in.

During the day, several different group sessions are working.

Every group is free to manage autonomously the work session.

Everyone is free to decide to participate in a session, to move to another session if interested.

The participants talk with passion, exchange opinions and ideas and compare the available proposals.



It is possible to notice different situations:

- some groups have long discussions, meanwhile others finish soon
- - some groups have large numbers, meanwhile other groups are very small
- some participants often change their groups
- participants who decide to have a break can leave the group at anytime and can take a coffee or some food
- food and beverages are available anytime

At the end of each session, every group prepares a short report about the discussion and proposals.

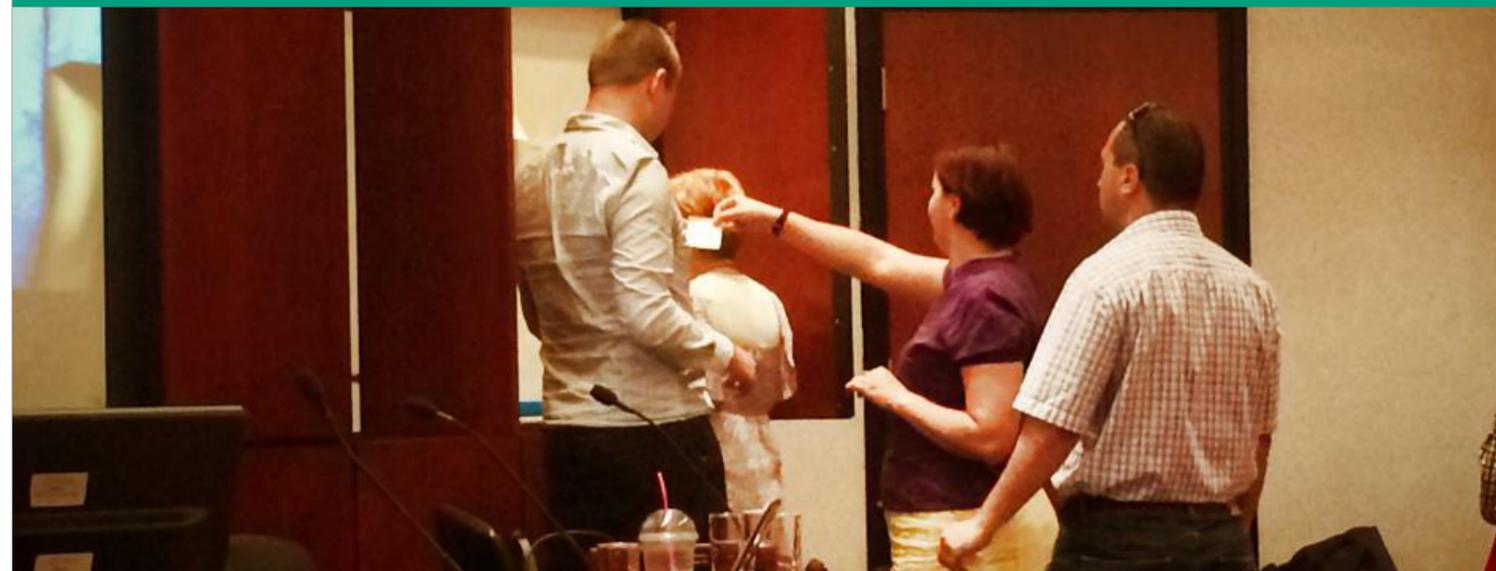
All the different proposals are collected in a final report that should be available online after the end of the meeting.



THAT's the Open Space Technology!!

Examples like this are very useful and permit the active participation of citizens, the emergence of interesting ideas and the spreading of the knowledge about several activities that would otherwise be unknown. Events like the one described are cheap but undoubtedly effective. It is advisable to organize frequently - in every municipality - an OST event about specific needs of the local community

1. Free writing



Take a blank sheet of paper, preferably an unlined sheet (e.g. copier paper) rather than one with ruled lines. Grab your favorite writing instruments - pens, pencils, crayons, whatever feels most comfortable in your hands. Set a timer on your watch, Phone or computer for example 15 minutes.

Say those words aloud slowly, to imprint them on every one's mind. Then start the timer, and simply write down whatever occurs to you. Forget about grammar, punctuation, spelling or even obvious relevance to the issue. When the timer goes off, stop writing and read what you've written. Share your ideas with the group.

Town hall Free Writing method

All the participants gather in the town hall. In the town hall is a big wall on which participants can write their ideas and suggestion regarding a certain topic. The following five components comprise the basic model:

- 1 **Setting:** Create a place on the wall where participants can put up ideas and suggestions. Facilitate pens, sticky notes, bluetac and tape.
- 2 **Welcome and Introduction:** The host begins with a warm welcome and an introduction to the Town Hall Free writing process, setting the context, sharing the Cafe Etiquette, and putting participants at ease.
- 3 **Small Group Rounds:** The process begins with the first of three or more twenty minute rounds

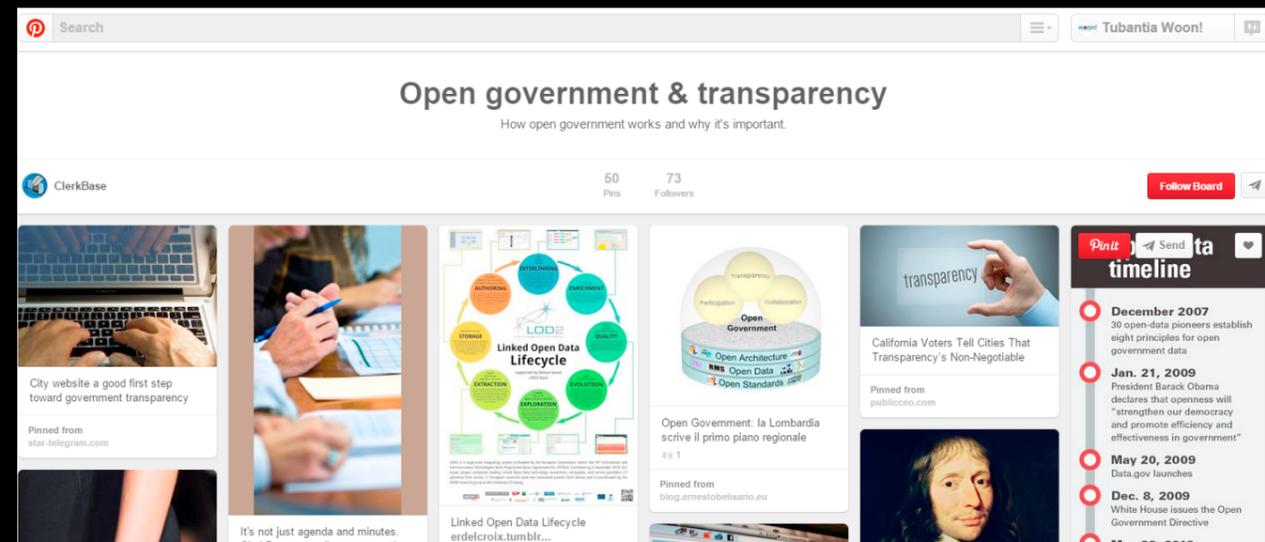
of conversation for the small groups seated somewhere in the town hall. Pick some group leaders.

- 4 **Questions:** each round is prefaced with a question designed for the specific context and desired purpose of the session. At the top of the page, carefully write a statement of what you want to solve, for example "I can help the fair by

- 5 **Harvest:** After the small groups (and/or in between rounds, as desired) the group leaders are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways, most often using graphic recorders in the front of the room.



2. Create an online mood board



A mood board is a type of collage consisting of images, text, and samples of objects in a composition. They may be physical or digital. A mood board can be used to visualize ideas and come to consensus about different kinds of topics.

An online tool can be used to work from different locations on the same project. A good free tool to use is the popular social media Pinterest (www.pinterest.com).

Online mood board method

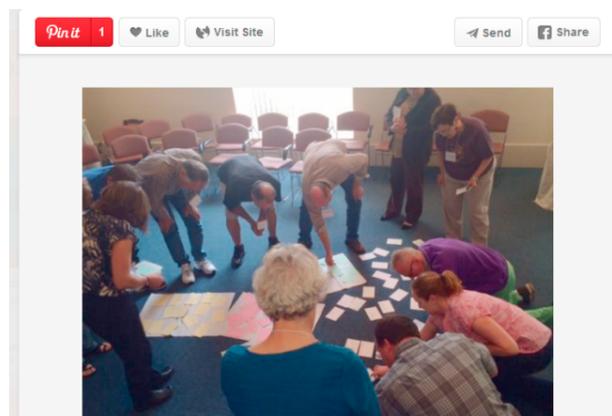
When using this method, participants don't have to be physically at the same spot. Using new technology, which is available for free, can generate ideas in very easy way. Users can put pictures (Pins) on a moodboard (a board). This can be done by more than one user. The following five components comprise the basic model:

- 1 Setting:** All users need a Pinterest account to join. The host creates one board with a name of objective, for example "How I see the fair." After that, all the users need to be given rights to be able to put Pins on the board.
- 2 Welcome and Introduction:** The first pin is done by the host and explains the rules and the introduction.

3 Small Group Rounds: Because of the digital context, a small group round can't be done. Everybody can freely add pins during a certain amount of time. Each pin consists of a picture and a small description of the picture. This gives insights into the way people think and act.

4 Questions: For each round, a new board, with a new question is created. This means that there can be many boards with many different themes.

5 Harvest: There are two ways of getting data. 1. The host can get all the ideas and find similarities. 2. Participants are allowed to comment on each other's pins.



3. Speed Geeking or Rapid Demos



Each presenter does a five-minute presentation/demonstration for a small audience. After five minutes, the audience moves on to the next demo/presentation. This repeats for a full hour. This "carousel" format is a great way to see many short demos in a row with advantages for both sides: presenters refine their pitch through repetition; the audience moves from demo to demo, efficiently using their time while exposing themselves to different concepts.

Speed Geeking / Rapid Demo's

All participants move from one demo to another demo. The following five components comprise the basic model:

- 1 Setting:** Presenters have 5 minutes to convince the audience, so they need a laptop, beamer and a mic. Participants need a red and green sheet.
- 2 Welcome and Introduction:** The host explains the rules and the participants take their chairs. The presenters present themselves one by one.
- 3 Small Group Rounds:** After every presentation, the participants can ask questions for five minutes.
- 4 Questions:** For each round, a new board, with a new question is created. This means that there can be many boards with many different themes.
- 5 Harvest:** After the five minutes, the participants show a red or green sheet to show if they support or reject the idea. A green sheet is a "yes" and red sheet is a "no"

4. WORLD CAFÉ METHOD



Drawing on integrated design principles, the World Café methodology is a simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue.

World Café

World Café can be modified to meet a wide variety of needs. Specifics of context, numbers, purpose, location, and other circumstances are factored into each event's unique invitation, design, and question choice, but the following five components comprise the basic model:



- 1 Setting:** Create a “special” environment, most often modeled after a café, i.e. small round tables covered with a checkered tablecloth, butcher block paper, colored pens, a vase of flowers, and optional “talking stick” item. There should be four chairs at each table.
- 2 Welcome and Introduction:** The host begins with a warm welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context, sharing the Cafe Etiquette, and putting participants at ease.
- 3 Small Group Rounds:** The process begins with the first of three or more twenty minute rounds of conversation for the small group seated around a table. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group moves to a different new table. They may or may not choose to leave one person as the “table host” for the next round, who welcomes the next group and briefly fills them in on what happened in the previous round.

- 4 Questions:** each round is prefaced with a question designed for the specific context and desired purpose of the session. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction.
- 5 Harvest:** After the small groups (and/or in between rounds, as desired) individuals are invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group. These results are reflected visually in a variety of ways, most often using graphic recorders in the front of the room.



What is Open Space?

[\[WorldStory\]](#) - the spirit of Open Space, as originally told by Harrison Owen

[AboutOpenSpace](#) - an executive summary with links to stories and explanations

[WorkingInOpenSpace: A Guided Tour](#) - the typical OST meeting, common features and adaptations

[OpenSpaceElevatorSpeeches](#) - short short answers to “what is open space?”

[OpenSpaceExplanations](#) - notes about essential elements and characteristics

[\[Selected Videos\]](#) - a hand-picked collection of YouTube? videos, describing and depicting open space meetings

[\[OpenSpaceWeblog\]](#) - stories, resources, news and insights from around the World

[BooksAndVideos](#) - the [OpenSpaceInstituteUSA](#) bookstore offers resources and recommendations

Stories

[\[WorldScape\]](#) - a growing collection of open space stories from everywhere

[OpenSpaceExamples](#) - short-short event summaries give a good overview of uses and results

[OpenSpaceExamples/Conferences](#) - short-short stories about mixing Open Space and traditional conference keynoters

[\[OpenSpacePhotoAlbum\]](#) - photos collected at Flickr and tagged with openspacetech

[\[OpenSpaceVideos\]](#) - YouTube videos of open space meetings, events and explanations

[PodCasts](#) - recordings of openings, interviews, and The Practice of Peace (book)

[OpenSpaceStories](#) - newsletters, case stories, and other reports of Open Space events and results

[OpenSpaceArticles](#) - collected explanations, overviews, stories and results

[OpenSpaceQuotes](#) - short short comments from participants, clients and facilitators

Community

[\[WorldMap\]](#) - find an OST facilitator almost anywhere in the world

[EmailDiscussionGroups](#) - how to join the [\[OSLIST\]](#) (worldwide) and other (regional) practice groups

[OpenSpaceOnOpenSpace \(OSonOS\)](#)- the annual int’l practice conference and a number of regional events

[OpenSpaceInstitutes](#) - news and contact info for local practice groups worldwide

[\[OpenSpaceWorldNET\]](#) - workspace for various OST groups worldwide

Practice

[PractitionerWebsites](#) - significant offerings of stories, resources and support

[FacilitatorTraining](#) - who to contact for training workshops around the world

[FacilitatorResources](#) - little things that make things easier

[OngoingOpenSpace](#) - ongoing conscious practice as inviting, interactive organization

[\[OpenSpaceOnline\]](#) - state of the art virtual OST meeting and conference hosting facility

Edges

[ResearchActivities](#) - a deeper look at Open Space process and results

[\[OpenSpaceInitiatives\]](#) - putting Open Space into community practice

[\[OpenSpaceWorldNET\]](#) - open working space and collected invitations

[KindredSpirits](#) - methods that play well with Open Space

[ContactUs](#) and [SupportThisWork](#) - Thank you!



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