

*Better Places To Work and  
Places That Work Better*



## **REFLECTIONS OF SAN FRANCISCO 2016**

### ***It's all about Design - My reflections on the STS Roundtable 2016***

This year, I attended my second Roundtable meeting in San Francisco. I didn't go to the meeting in 2015, but having attended the webinars throughout the last two years, I felt that the conversation kept flowing, uninterrupted, since Montreal 2014.

The opportunity to discuss the topic of **Integrating Technology and Organization in the Digital World** IN Silicon Valley, and to hear from people that have been in the field of Organization Design for many years, gave this conference a very unique

flavor.



Having a guided visit in Silicon Valley (Thank you, Peter!), as well as the presence of Beulah Trist and Edgar Schein allowed us to make a bridge between the origins of organization design and the way is now working and challenging

tradition in state-of-art organizations.



The design of the meeting, with brief lightning talks followed by deliberations, was particularly interesting, as it allowed us to be inspired by passionate speakers and challenged by relevant questions that made the participants at the table share their insights, ideas and questions. The way the tables were arranged to maximize diversity (diverse perspectives, disciplines, experience), created a rich tapestry of knowledge and inspired discussion. The conclusions from each table were (and still are) great starting points of very rich conversations.



Some of the coolest ideas for me?

- The 4th industrial revolution
- The i in iVUCA
- Breaking paradoxes Standardizing & Empowering, Controlling & Innovating, Orchestrating & Unleashing -Jo Steuns
- The importance of mastering the process, not only the technology
- The importance of finding the Optimal design (at intersection of Personal context and Organizational Context) Where is locus of control? freedom of choice?
- Digital PTSD
- The new age of relationships (after the era of IT and Biotech)
- Ecosystem design is our field of intervention
- Sensemaking and the importance of democratization of data
- Minimalist interventions
- It is time to design at the intersection of ITC, Facilities and Organizations

This quote from Eli: Soccer principles to consider: No play is ever intended to be played as designed. If the team is looking at the coach is too late -E Berniker

Because of my background and experience, I always expect a great balance between content and design, work and fun, and innovative ideas and personal connection; I can say this conference surpassed my expectation, as the balance of work, creativity, fun and great camaraderie was present during the entire conference. It is clear that the STS Roundtable is all about bringing the humane perspective and designing for results into everything we do. -Marcela Urteaga, 2016

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*“As a student, it was an amazing experience to be exposed to all of the attendees, their experience and knowledge and their thought processes. As one of our faculty stated, we were “drinking learning through a fire house” which is totally how I feel. I’m still processing all I learned!”*

– Sonja Drown, a Masters candidate in Organization Development from Sonoma State University

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## My Experience of the STS Roundtable 2016, SAN FRANCISCO By Adam Redshaw

There are several communities in the field of Organisation Design. I have participated in several during my short time in the field. This month I was able to attend the Sociotechnical Systems Roundtable (STS because Sociotechnical Systems is far too long of a name) in San Francisco. While many of the other communities in the Org Design field are fairly young, this community has been around since 1986. It is a community that has a history of academia and prestige. You hear big names being thrown around such as Erich Trist, Ed Schien and Fred Emery, all fathers of Sociotechnical system theory. So while I was familiar with the community I had previously little interest in participating. I believe that ON THE MARK approaches Org Design from a very practical angle so a community that prides itself on lots of theory and academia hadn't really interested me. In fact my friend and colleague Peter Turgoose had attended two years previously and had been very disappointed at the 'talking heads' aspect of it all. Irregardless, I was in the US and had the week free of client work so with encouragement from Mark LaScola I decided to check it out. It helps that it was being held in San Francisco, one of my favourite cities in the US.

The theme of the conference was not a new topic in our field but a popular and important one nonetheless. It was how digital technology integrates with Org Design and Sociotechnical Systems.

	GLOBAL STS DESIGN "Integrating Technology and PROGRAM	NETWORK ROUNDTABLE Organization in a Digital World" AGENDA	
TUESDAY, SEPT. 6	WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 7	THURSDAY, SEPT. 8	FRIDAY, SEPT. 9
7:30 AM Breakfast	7:30 AM Breakfast provided	7:45 AM BUS Loads	7:30 AM Breakfast provided
8:30 AM – Noon Crystal Ballroom, Marines' Memorial Hotel  (OPTIONAL) WORKSHOP <i>Digital Technology, The United Farm Workers (UFW) &amp; The 'Equitable Food Initiative' (EFI)</i>	8:30 AM – Noon Crystal Ballroom, Marines' Memorial Hotel Welcome—Setting Context for the meeting  <b>'Lightning Talks':</b> Digital Transformation--Jo Steuns The Paradox of Virtuality—Pam Posey & Doug Austrom The Digital World Exemplified by Uber-- Steve Alter Global-Africa Perspective--Judith Okonkwo  <b>Deliberation Topic A:</b> <i>"What do we mean by the 'Digital World' &amp; its characteristics in the context of work?"</i>	8:00 AM – Depart from MM Hotel; Silicon Valley to Palo Alto, Quadrus Conference Center  <b>NARRATED (BUS) TOUR of Silicon Valley</b>  by the new Apple 'spaceship' HQ. with a stop and walk-about at one of the Valley's iconic company premises, and a ride through the Stanford University campus and adjoining Venture Capital district of the Valley	8:30 AM – Noon Crystal Ballroom, Marines' Memorial Hotel <b>Case Studies:</b> <i>(JT integrated with Organization Design)</i> Business Ecosystems--Peter Aughton IBM & Big Data--Jeanette Blomberg Minimalist Design in a Complex Adaptive System--Dave Roitman Consumer Product case study—Jo Steuns  <b>Deliberation Topic C:</b> <i>"What are key characteristics of both the design process and the design outcome where the Digital World is currently being integrated with Organization Design?"</i>
Noon: LUNCH provided	Noon: LUNCH provided	Noon: LUNCH provided	Noon: LUNCH provided
1:00 – 5:00 PM Crystal Ballroom, Marines' Memorial Hotel  (Optional) WORKSHOP <i>An Appreciative Review of various "schools" of Socio-Technical Systems (STS) Design Thinking</i>	1:00 – 4:30 PM <b>'Lightning Talks':</b> Big Data Challenges--Jeanette Blomberg Data Literacy—Carolyn & Richard Ordowich Blockchain-- Friso van der Meulen ICT & Networks—Eric-Hans Kramer  <b>Deliberation Topic B:</b> <i>"How is the 'Digital World' disrupting and/or opening opportunities for Systemic Work Design?"</i>	1:00 – 5:30 PM Quadrus Conference Center  <b>Digital Strategy &amp; STS Design:</b> Case Study of Satellite Healthcare— Stu Winby (Spring Network) & Dean Hovey (co-founder of IDEO & software entrepreneur)  <b>Edgar Schein—"Humble Inquiry"</b>  <b>'Disruption Up Close &amp; Personal':</b> Conversations about the 'Valley culture' with Experienced IT Professionals and New Age Workers from Google, Intel, etc.	1:00 – 5:30 PM <b>'Lightning Talks':</b> ICT, Facilities & Organization Design— Bernard Mohr & Richard Ordowich IT in Redesign of Construction & Healthcare—KU Leuven Team ERP: An STS Perspective—Mark Govers  <b>Deliberation Topic D:</b> <i>"Going forward, what ideas and 'building blocks' can incorporate digital technology more effectively in Systemic Work Design?"</i>
3:00 – 5:30 PM Registration	4:30 – 5:30 PM STS Roundtable Annual General Meeting		5:00 – 5:30 PM Wrap Up & Intro to 2017 Roundtable
7:00 – 9:00 PM Crystal Lounge. RECEPTION & OPENING Speaker: Ann Majchrzak	7:00 – 9:00 PM Crystal Lounge, Marines' Memorial Hotel  <b>GALA COMMUNITY DINNER</b>	5:30 – 7:00 PM Quadrus Center Patio (overlooking Silicon Valley) <b>Informal Reception/Appetizers</b>	

### The agenda of the 2016 STS Roundtable

There were only 3 people I knew prior to attending the conference and I was also the youngest person there (despite Sam Pless trying to claim that title which I felt compelled to correct) but as soon as I walked in I was warmly welcomed by many new people. They asked how I knew about the community and I essentially told people what I have written above but my skepticism was combated with reassurance that this year was going to be very different and I am pleased to say I think they were right.

I joined the first day where the first workshop I attended was an appreciative inquiry into STS. This was a nice intro for me. The session comprised of three presentations discussing STS methods from North America, the Lowlands and Australia. We were then asked to choose one of the groups and join them in discussion about what were the methods, similarities and differences between the three. I joined the Australia group as I was very engaged by the practical and anecdotal way that Peter Aughton presented his views. After a discussion all groups converged and presented back their thoughts. That evening the conference formally opened allowing me to get to know some more people over drinks.

The following day continued in a similar format. By that I mean there was very limited presentations from ‘talking heads’ and much more group based discussion. What made this more effective was that the design team made a very conscious effort to keep the groups diverse for age and background. This is a much more familiar way of working for me in previous conferences I had joined. It also meant that we were able to make more headway on the issues of digital technology in STS.



Groups working together in deliberations in the Marines Memorial Hotel where the conference was held

By the end of the second day I was pretty mentally exhausted but very much excited for the third day as in the morning we went on a bus tour of Silicone Valley and a walk around Google’s campus which Peter Sorenson did a fantastic job of being our guide. I think if he is ever short of work he could defiantly start his own tour company!



### Me with Android

In the afternoon we were taken to the Quadrus Conference Center which is a beautiful facility blending with the countryside with a great view of the valley. It was here that Stu Winby along with several other prolific people (including Dean Hovey who developed the Levi's compatible mouse for Steve Jobs) delivered an as ever though provoking session on how digital technology is changing the healthcare STS. This was followed by presentations from Beulah Trist, and Ed Schien themselves. This was a facilitated panel about the history and culture of silicone valley. The panel was made up of a few people who had history in valley. This session with all of this very smart and prolific people was what I described to Stu as frustratingly inspiring. I was filled with all of this ambition to go out and change the world but at the same time I know it's not that easy! This evening was concluded perfectly with wine, cheese, more great conversations with people and a great view of the valley.

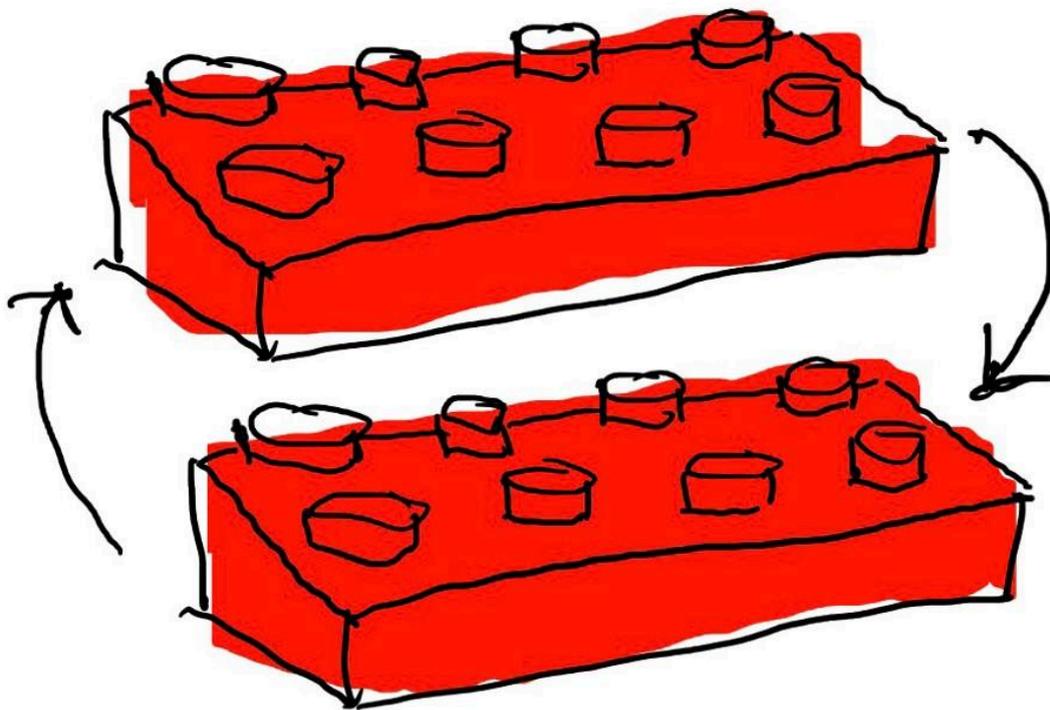


Beulah Trist providing us with some background on Erich Trist who can be seen in the photograph on the table in front of her



The patio overlooking Silicone Valley at the conference center

The final day followed the same format. Diverse groups deliberating about the topics posed and we debriefed each team. By this point I felt quite close to many of the participants. There was a strong sense of community in the group throughout and there were continuous appreciations for many people which showed me how much of an impact each of them had made on each other. I am looking forward to reading through their work.



A diagram I drew on my iPad as a metaphor I no longer remember the meaning of! I think it is going to take quite a few months of reflection to process the information I gathered throughout the week. Overall the conference was an incredibly enjoyable experience filled with friendly and very knowledgeable people. I hope that the STS keeps going down the same route it seems to have adopted because I would very much like to remain present in the community and continue having stimulating discussions with them. The only thing that remains is to thank the organisers for hosting me.