

JOIN US

The Global STS Design Network

Background

The combination of massive economic upheavals, breathtaking advances in technology, wide spread political turmoil, unprecedented social relations has left organizations with a full plate of adaptation challenges. The combined demands on productivity, quality, flexibility, innovation, sustainability, and healthy work are driving a revitalized search for humane and innovative organizations that effectively integrate people, technology, and organization. Since the founding in the 1950's of 20th century STSD (socio-technical systems design), STS Design theory and practice have evolved in different regions and countries of the world (for instance, in Belgium and the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Germany, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, and Canada and the United States). Despite some differences among these communities of practice, there remains a shared focus on three simultaneous objectives for a systemic approach to work design--quality of working life, productivity, and (increasingly) environmental sustainability.

Several of these communities have networks of academics, managers, labor representatives, and design practitioners to advance the values, theory and practice of STS-D in their specific locality/region (e.g. the STS Roundtable in North America, the Ulbo de Sitter Institute (USI) in Belgium and the Netherlands). In 2012, members of the STS Roundtable (STS/RT) and USI met in Canterbury, England. Since then, members of these two communities have held annual meetings together and learned a great deal from each other. Eventually, in 2015, this partnership led to a "journey to Leuven, Belgium" where a "Festival of Connecting" brought together over 400 participants from North America, Scandinavia, UK, Australia and New Zealand, and most importantly, the European Work Innovation Network (EUWIN).



Inspired by the experience of several years working together plus the success of the international "Festival of Connecting", in 2015 at Leuven, representatives of the STS Roundtable and the Ulbo de Sitter Institute agreed to form a Coordination Group to foster the potential of a more extensive, Global STS Design Network.



We were joined in 2016 at San Francisco, (where "STS Design met the Silicon Valley"), by IT professionals and a delegation from a third region of the world with an emergent local network organization of modern STS-Design practitioners and researchers, namely, Australia.



Now we invite other communities to co-create with us a Global STS-D Network.

Added value

The value-added of a global network would be:

- (1) to support growth in the vitality and number of local/regional STSD network organizations throughout the world;
- (2) coincidentally, a global network can facilitate communication and shared learning among researchers and practitioners in our diverse fields of STS Design practice—as members of USI and the STSRT have already experienced; and
- (3) as long espoused but seldom achieved, a global STSD network may encourage the collaborative and comparative (action) research and documentation necessary to help us all address the challenges and opportunities that are shared globally in new forms and technologies of work. See for an example a jointly written book of articles: Bernard J. Mohr & Pierre van Amelsvoort (Eds.), *Co-Creating Humane & Innovative Organisations: Evolutions in the Practice of Socio-Technical System Design* --available at-- <http://bit.ly/2bGUYEo>

The Global Sociotechnical Systems Design Network wants to be an open learning community that advances the values, theory and practice that create healthy and powerful human work systems that are demonstrably capable, humane and responsible.

The Challenge

The current business and social context, the changes in the technological and social systems coupled with the emerging trends require the development of a new paradigm and creation of new actionable knowledge about STS. Some of the gaps include the need to focus on the integration of advanced Information and Communications Technology; deeper theoretical development and understanding of knowledge-intensive firms' design – the nature of non-routine work and contemporary work systems as networks of permanent and temporary workers in which the 'unity of time, place and action' is no longer present; greater focus on the issues of sustainable systems as a counter measure to work intensity that has increased dramatically and has become a major work-life problem; and, deeper understanding of adaptive

work systems as ecosystems in which the design of the customer/client experience is central and transforms the business/enterprise model.

We strongly believe that the principles and values of socio-technical systems, along with participative design tools and methodologies, are exactly what our organizations, workplaces, communities, and planet need to survive and thrive in this topsy-turvy world. STS Design has a unique opportunity to fill a void with principles that create healthy, innovative, and productive organizations and communities for a chaotic world in transition.

We see the need to pull the different STS-D communities in the world together to address this challenge.

Global Network Purpose

- Support each region in growth and vitality of local network organizations
- Facilitate communication and shared learning among researchers and practitioners across our respective fields of experience
- Encourage collaborative and comparative (action) research and documentation to help us all to address some challenges that are shared globally.

Note **2017 Global STS Design Network Meeting** -- on the theme of "*Collaborative Ecosystems*" – at Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA (near New York City). September 11-15, 2017.

For more information and/or if you want to join this growing Global STS-D Network, please contact us:

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