# Fusion of Lowlands and Tavistock-North American STS Designing Principles

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Detailed definitional work by Carolyn Ordowich and Christiane Sels, 2018.

## PURPOSE

Organization designing that enables WHOLE ecosystem effectiveness and active adaptation that is mutually beneficial to all stakeholders who collaborate in work that delivers shared value  -- *healthy work, innovative products and services, business productivity, sustainability for the planet* -- and prosperity for all.

**DESIGN PRINCIPLES DESCRIPTION:**

- **Shared purpose**

  Shared purpose is an essential part of developing effective workplace cultures and one of the founding elements of organization and ecosystem design and development that enables everyone to flourish. Purpose is the ultimate 'why' of the value we provide; it is positioned above all other strategic statements and expresses our identity and the reason we exist.  It is NOT the goals (what) or means (how) we achieve that purpose. Shared purpose results when a group of individuals aligns their belief systems or values with a common challenge, vision or goal. Regardless of the size of any initiative, it is important to establish a shared purpose at the start. Once shared purpose is agreed, ways of working that reflect it also need to be agreed and embedded in everyday activity. Purpose taps into people's need for meaningful work; to be part of something bigger than ourselves. It encapsulates people's cognitive, emotional and spiritual commitment to a cause. A shared purpose is therefore a powerful strategy for unifying diverse stakeholder groups in collaborative enterprise, enabling everyone to work creatively together in the same direction, embracing agreed values and fostering shared decision-making. This shared purpose enables barriers, silos, non-collaborative working and conflicting agendas to be challenged and overcome. Developing clarity of purpose at all levels – teams, organizations and networks - leads to agreement on how purpose can be achieved and what this means for ways of working and priorities.  It needs to be locked into the design.

- **Design first the core transformation process**

  In a client-centered organization, the value adding process is the measure of all things. This implies that process steps that are essential for the realization of the service or product are the core function around which other activities (such as governance, controlling, preparation, support, etc.) are organized. The efficiency and effectiveness of the primary process is central; other processes need to be organized around this. The focus on non-primary processes distracts the organizational energy from the necessary focus on the customer's needs, orders, and requests.

  This focus is crucial, because an economy servicing human beings implies that organizations are demand-oriented instead of supply-side driven. A truly **client-centered organization** is an organization which can organize itself around groups of customer orders in a dynamic way. In a service-oriented economy and society, there is a synchronicity between production and consumption, so customer centricity is inevitably a major focus. In a traditional production environment, organizations can be client-oriented, but they need stocks, modularization or other means to cope with the variety of client-demands. Stocks however cost money and are imperfect. A socio-technically organized company, whether it is in an industrial, service or caregiving sector, fundamentally incorporates client centricity in its DNA from the very start. Respect for clients, the endeavor to build correct, honest and transparent customer-relations and to create high quality client experiences are important specifications for the design of modern, sustainable organizations.

- **Self-organization**

  The ability of a system to spontaneously arrange its components or elements in a purposeful, non-random manner without the help of an external agency. The concept of *emergence* is the central notion of self-organization where new qualities of a system are due to synergies from the interacting elements of the system (a whole is more than the sum of its parts). Self-organizing includes the planning, doing and coordinating of the work someone is responsible for. Today, the ubiquitous access to complex, real-time information allows employees at all levels to contribute to the performance of the entire system—with minimal direction from managers. Self-organization is not a free-for-all. It requires a foundation of well-designed processes and management systems that support them. The rich tradition of professional self-governance and organizing could be a model for a more inclusive and organized system of self-organization.

- **Responsible autonomy**

  Responsible autonomy refers to internal supervision and leadership (self-regulation) at the level of the individual, team or group – people take the initiative to decide how to achieve goals or targets. Semi-autonomous teams provide greater advantage than simply carrying out work tasks with superb cooperation; they are especially effective in dynamic contexts where risks are high and communication difficult. The team takes responsibility for effective functioning as a team (own internal regulation with trusted team members) and for relating the team to the wider systems of which they are a part (organization and ecosystem). It is the freedom to produce continuous, redundant and recursive interactions that allows teams to successfully construct and maintain mutual awareness of team member interactions on each other and the whole. Management's role in this context is to provide resources, provide direction on outputs so they connect with the whole and run interference with the whole regarding resources.

  The foundation of self-organization and autonomy is mutual trust and respect. They are prerequisites for open communication and honest dialogue about values, goals and expectations. They require freedom of expression without fear of retribution, institutional or otherwise, and value the diversity of persons, ideas and choices differing from one's own. Every organization is a system that needs energy to operate; when there is no mutual trust, there are barriers in the energy flow.

- **Human-scale Design** - *for* and *with* people

  Human scale is the practice of designing things to match the physical and cognitive characteristics of humans--designing things to be useful, comfortable and safe *for* people. The role and place of technology has always been one of STS's timeless principles - technology must be shaped by people to support our human endeavors; and not for technology to shape human endeavors. Digital technology is only the most recent – and arguably most encompassing -- manifestation of the technocratic imperative. Technology now touches and transforms every aspect of personal productivity in the workplace. Technologies themselves are siloed. Advocates of autonomous systems and machine learning typically innovate to minimize or marginalize human involvement in business processes. But the STS premise regarding technology is twofold – one element is that digital technology can drive greater self-awareness and self-assessment about how individuals create and

contribute to enterprise value. The second element is that no matter how carefully designed, all automated control systems will eventually face situations that were not anticipated at the time of their design. Technologies are inherently incomplete--they fail, deviate, degrade, become unstable—and the consequences of failure are more catastrophic as today's technology becomes ever more complex.  All such variations require corrective actions by people in an organization. Therefore, technology is best seen to depend upon and co-exist *with* people, in terms of the human roles and capabilities that must be developed to monitor, control, and maintain technical systems. Technology should provide total value, i.e. substitute for unhealthy tasks AND provide opportunities for learning.

- **Integration of diversity**

  The declaration of human rights stipulates that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. But people are also very diverse and different, having different mindsets, competences, preferences, skills, life path, health, resilience etc. Ethical and sustainable organizations are organizations that aim to guarantee equal rights for their employees, in accordance with the declaration of human rights. However, many organizations try to guarantee "equality" by creating uniformity and standardization, which eventually leads to bureaucratization. Bureaucratization processes result at the end in the denial of differences between people. Standardized procedures or processes seldom take into account the diversity of situations, workers, customers, demands, … The actual complex and rapidly evolving organizational environment requires flexibility and adaptiveness. Equal rights can be most successfully guaranteed by an adequate organization structure and resulting organization culture, not by struggle or competition amongst employees. The challenge is to build organizations, organization networks and ecosystems in a way that they respect equality amongst people, but at the same time celebrate the diversity that exists and that enriches and empowers teams and other collaboration structures. Furthermore, organizations must be structured in a way so they can guarantee active jobs that are continuously adapted to the life stage and health of the workers.

- **Reduce complexity**

  Most of the organizations or organization networks operate in an increasingly VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) environment. These complex environments require organizations that reduce internal complexity, increasing the autonomy of their employees and teams to respond to the issues raised by these challenges, especially adaptation. Innovative and dynamic organizations, facing this VUCA-environment, make the transition from complex organizations with passive and high strain jobs (and thus little autonomy), to simple, transparent organizations with active work. Complex organizations lead to broken information flows, strong hierarchical structures, need for command and control, resulting in inequalities and finally in a democratic deficit. Simplicity is also a condition for transparency. We feel that transparency becomes increasingly important for workers of the 21th century, as well as for clients, patients or customers. Information flows must be smooth, clear, comprehensible and accessible.

- **Creation of a learning and innovation environment**

Many organizations are active in a complex and dynamic environment, with rapidly changing technologies and digitalization processes. Because of this context, the ability to learn or the "learning potential" is considered as an essential quality of organizations. The shaping of the organizational context impacts the opportunities or barriers to learn. The innovative organization is a learning organization, where the broad spectrum of human talents is utilized. Individuals are stimulated to reflect on existing models and concepts and think about alternatives. But a learning organization is more than the sum of learning individuals. A learning organization is agile and can continuously improve and renew its processes, products and structures. A learning organization is capable of designing structures and processes that allow quick adaptation to changing environmental conditions. Learning opportunities in the work context are also a means to increase the employability of workers. By constant learning, workers can refine their craftsmanship and safeguard their exchange value in the labor market. Active jobs (with high autonomy and high job demands) tend to lead to increased learning possibilities and innovative behavior. Experimenting and testing/prototyping is essential for organizations that are subject to potential disruption and implies strategies of managing fear of failure.