

Third Meeting Science Symposium, Brussels, Belgium, 20-21 May 2021

How shall we meet today and tomorrow? Meeting habits in the contemporary world



Meetings are ubiquitous. As researchers, practitioners, social activists, policy makers, managers or scholars, we spend a considerable amount of time meeting to do politics, devise policies, run organizations, and deliver public services. Beyond decision-making, meetings serve to make sense of situations (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005), to govern and resist (Haug, 2013; Schwartzman, 1989; Sandler & Thedvall, 2017), and to learn (Freeman, 2008). As such, they are vital, even decisive, to our social, political, organizational, and administrative life (van Vree, 2011). Following the Covid-19 pandemic, most face-to-face meetings were replaced by virtual meetings (Thunus, Schoenaers, Mahieu & Standaert, 2020). Also, after the lockdown measures, virtual meetings are expected to remain important and be combined with face-to-face meetings. The consequences thereof are still to be researched.

We see this unexpected, unprepared and rapid change as an occasion to initiate a collective reflection about our contemporary meeting habits, meeting architectures and the role of meetings in nowadays globalized and rapidly changing societies. Therefore, we would like to invite you to the **Third Meetings Science Symposium** held on **20 and 21 May in Brussels**.

Like the first two editions of the symposium in Gothenburg (2017) and Copenhagen (2019), the symposium will welcome **researchers and practitioners** in diverse disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, political and administrative science, management and organizational science, communication, and psychology. The symposium programme will include plenary sessions, paper discussions, practical workshops, and social activities. We are specifically

interested in meetings across different settings, learning about the role of meetings in the organizational, political and community arenas, and across different (policy) domains.

For your inspiration, we have compiled a preliminary list of five contemporary topics that we think would be interesting to discuss together. The topics are summarized below. Please do not hesitate to submit work or express interest in different topics than the ones mentioned by us.

1. Meetings as object of study
 - Why are meeting so important to social processes and activities?
 - Why should we look at meetings as unit of analysis?
 - Is there an essential difference in meeting between domains and levels, i.e. political vs community, health vs environment, or local vs international?
2. Meeting practices
 - What is the role of meeting artefacts and architectures for the outcome of meetings?
 - How does interaction take shape in meetings (who interacts with whom and on what terms, who speaks and who is heard), and how does this matter for politics, administration, and organizing?
 - How do materiality, spatiality and temporality matter in meetings?
3. Meetings in context
 - How do interaction and inscription, meetings and documents relate to each other? How do different meetings relate to one another?
 - How can we understand meetings in relation to other aspects of social, political, organizational, and administrative life?
 - What is the relationship between meetings and well-being at work? Under what conditions do meetings increase or reduce stress? What is the role of humour?
4. Improving meetings
 - What drives meeting design choices?
 - How can a moderator increase the effectiveness of meetings? What does effectiveness mean?
 - How do participants experience diversity in meetings (e.g. in multi-lingual settings, interprofessional teams, multi-cultural communities or work-places) and how can barriers to communication be overcome?
5. Virtual meetings and conferences
 - How do virtual meetings change the relationships among participants?
 - How do virtual meetings change how participants achieve meeting objectives?
 - How do technologies change interactional patterns and meetings practices? And how about emerging technologies (e.g., VR, AI, etc...)?

We ask those who are interested in discussing a paper to **send us an extended abstract** of approximately 2000 words. The deadline for submission is **1 December 2020**, please indicate the topic of interest and send your abstract to MSS2021Brussels@gmail.com. You will receive feedback by **1 February 2021**.

Furthermore, we specifically invite **practitioners** to join. It is possible to join without presenting a paper. We kindly ask those who do not wish to present a paper, to tell us what topics they would be interested in discussing or learning about. Finally, if there are practitioners who are interested in sponsoring this event and/or showcase their solutions, you are very welcome to contact us to discuss possibilities.

For organizational reasons, we would like to ask you to express your interest in participating before **1 October 2020**. Final papers need to be ready for distribution **1 May 2021**. Papers will only be shared with participants. Submission and inquiries can be sent to MSS2021Brussels@gmail.com.

Based on your input we will put together an interesting final programme including a key note, parallel paper sessions, and workshops. Participation in the symposium programme is free of charge. We will inform you about the key-note, exact location in Brussels, programme, and possible social activities after the submission deadline.

We look forward to welcoming you in Brussels on 20 and 21 May 2021!

The organizing committee

Sophie Thunus	UCLouvain, Belgium
Willem Standaert	HEC Liège, Belgium
Lianne Visser	Radboud University, The Netherlands
Richard Freeman	Edinburgh University, United Kingdom
Christoph Haug	University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Important dates:

1 October 2020:	Expression of interest to participate
1 December 2020:	Abstract submission
1 February 2021:	Feedback submissions
1 May 2021:	Final version papers
20-21 May 2021:	Meeting Science Symposium

References

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- Sandler J, Thedvall R (2017) Introduction: Exploring the Boring: An Introduction to Meeting Ethnography. In: Sandler J, Thedvall R (eds) *Meeting Ethnography*, pp. 1-23. Routledge, New York.
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