First LeSS Conference - Ever

The first LeSS Conference – Ever
So the first ever LeSS conference was about to take place in Amsterdam. A few former colleagues were planning on going so I was immediately interested as well. The lineup was promising, Bas Vodde and Craig Larman would be present and Gojko Adzic was one of their guest speakers. My knowledge of LeSS was limited to what I had read online as I have not yet been in an organization using LeSS as a scaling framework. Well, you guessed right, I ended up going and in this blog I will share some of my personal highlights of this two-day-event.

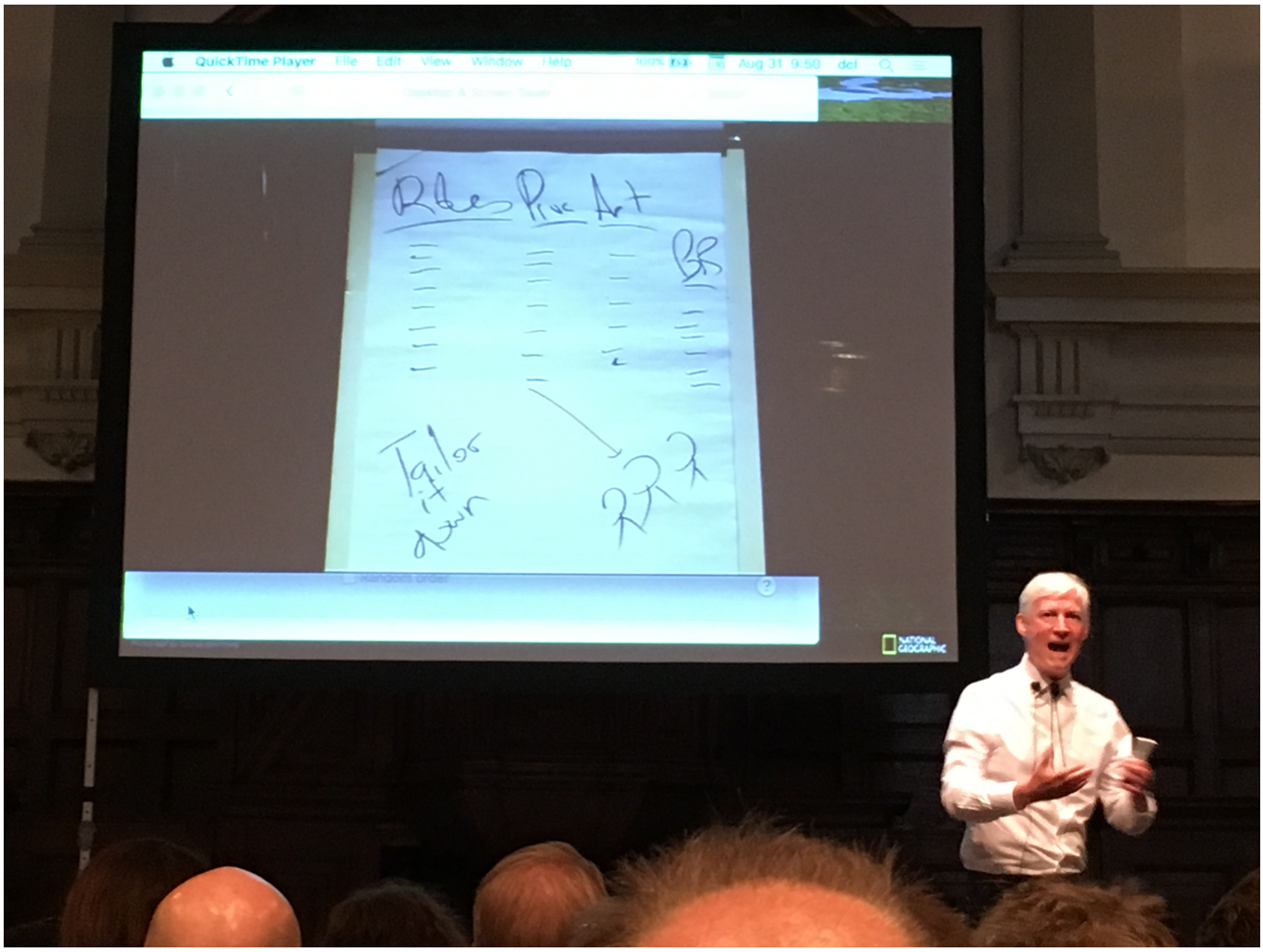
Opening and setting
The body organization of LeSS is not a big commercial vehicle which rolls out events like this every few weeks. So things were new and the atmosphere was also newish and therefore relaxing. Cesario had the honor of opening the conference

Story of Less- Bas Vodde
The history of Less may be told during trainings, yet as I heard the story for the first time it was entertaining, recognizable but also refreshing. LeSS is still Scrum, but with a little extra. The focus on Feature teams is an important aspect and needs to be strong. Component teams are not ‘forbidden’, but they mustn’t form the majority. Another interesting point is continuing the Scrum mindset as a framework. The opposite as with RUP, which you have to tailor down, meaning don’t use everything except the parts fitting your own situation. In LeSS it is called “Build Your Method Up”. Bas can probably tell the Story of Less like no one else and the good thing was, he told the story like sitting around a bonfire (just a fire on a video this time). He only showed the slides of the actual story in a total of 20 seconds when he was finishing up. The story was mainly on the core essence and the history of LeSS and not like a mini-course.

Teams and assignments
One of the goals the event organization has was to establish new communities and to enhance the interaction between visitors. The leading mechanism they initiated was the forming of new team who should collaborate on genuine product to be shown at the end of day two. So the entire group of people were gently pushed to form teams by self-organizing. Every visitor had received one or more small buttons indicating a certain capability, e.g. developer, designer, LeSS expert. The goal was to create teams with all the capabilities covered. Yes indeed like a true cross functional team. So this was my team:

The method worked pretty well and it was indeed good for introductions to new people. The actual goal for the assignment wasn't that clear so most teams lost quite a bit of time on discussions and a few teams dissolved entirely the next day. Yet, experimenting is also a foundation of LeSS so no harm there.

Owning versus Renting Your System – Craig Larman
The title sounds somewhat more relating to a car or house but it made quite an impact on me. When coaching and convincing people to adopt Scrum and to adhere to the rituals correctly you can really see the difference. Some teams start breathing Scrum and start coaching each other- yes and me – when things are not done properly. Stand ups are swift, the board is neat and people respect priority set by the Product Owner. Other teams, are never prepared for anything, forget Dailys when the Scrum Master is not around and follow the coach or Scrum Masters guidance a bit reluctant. The latter team is just Renting Scrum they don't Own it, the first team does! Craig didn't use this example, that's just my reflection of the difference in my daily struggles.



The way to make people buy into an idea and letting them own it was the main thread in his talk. The Why (by Simon Sinek) is solid starter and he then used some more examples based on system theory to let people reach their own opinion and ideas about the way of working. In doing so people are coming up with a part of the solution and start owning it – bit by bit.

Memorable Quotes:

'No more yak shaving'

'Underpants gnome profit plan'

So..
The relaxing atmosphere and openness to experiment with the format was nice. Only downside was that it perhaps was a bit stretched and for me personally the last sessions of the second day lost some value. All in all it was very interesting and an excellent place to meet like minded people and increase your network and at the same time increase your knowledge!

Contributions & References

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