

28<sup>TH</sup> STANDING CONFERENCE ON ORGANIZATIONAL SYMBOLISM – SCOS – LILLE 2010



The 28<sup>th</sup> Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism takes Vision as a central motif of contemporary management practice and we invite delegates to think of vision and organisation as conceptual, ideological and metaphorical practice. We want to inspire you to broaden your vision of vision beyond that which is 'just' symbolic.  
Lille – France, July 7-10, 2010

**NEW DEADLINE FOR ABSTRACTS:**  
**11 JANUARY 2010**

### Motivation

To *envisage* and to *visualise* – we are told – is the ultimate goal of organizational action. Having the ability to see the future in one mind's eye is the cornerstone of true (visionary) leadership. For to see into the future is to anticipate, be ready for and above all to attempt *control* of that which is unknown, unknowable and cannot be *seen*. Thus, all management disciplines are fundamentally concerned with vision. But to see is also to be seen. Who has the power to see and who is too weak to shield themselves from gaze(s)? Gaze is political – especially so in a mass mediated society where image is coming to stand for experience itself. Organizational images both reproduce and disrupt established orders of seeing. What is more, these ocular technologies of order are not new but have a long history in organization studies that is often belied by neophilic tendencies to emphasise 'The Visual' as a leitmotif of only our relatively recent past and present.

Vision also sees through things. It is transparency – seeing things as they 'really are'. We say that those with vision can 'see' things that other less gifted individuals cannot. What does this mean for organizations? How do organizations seek to see? How do they hope that others will see them? The artefacts that construct the corporation in others' eyes are techniques of transparency: "Look! you can see through us! we are clear! we are *accountable!*" In certain cultural contexts, to see is to believe, thus, if organizations make visible processes, products, ideas, ideals, thus, public may believe in their existence or in their good intentions. In this complex game, visions can be also used to obscure or to hide... as Foucault said: visibility is (also) a trap. If you are looking at something you cannot be looking at/for something else at the same time – thus vision is also illusion – perhaps even trickery. In this process, organisations may determine what can be seen or what/who is not seen, thus issues related to diversity, equality, identity and differences might be included here.

But vision locates us in time and space in an ocular relation with the world. To rely on one's sight is to flatten the embodied sensorium, to rely on 1/5,6,7,8,∞th of our being-in-the-world. So vision is impoverished, partial and that is before we begin to think about the partiality of sight itself. But often we do not see unaided – we use lenses to sharpen, enlarge, bring into focus and expand that which we do not see by ourselves and through technology we can 'see' things which we can only conceptually trust in – the electron microscope, the deep space telescope... scopic regimes which rely entirely on contemplation and that which we take on trust: theories as ways of seeing.

**Details of submission are posted on the SCOS website [www.scos.org](http://www.scos.org) soon and sent via the mailing list**



# Inspiration: some themes and ideas....

