

Museletter of the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism



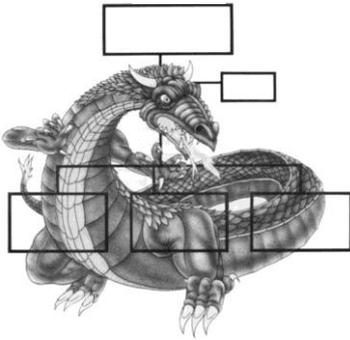
Notework

November 2009

SCOS is an international and interdisciplinary network of academics and practitioners interested in organizational symbolism, culture and change. The SCOS philosophy of 'serious fun' is articulated throughout the network's activities, particularly in the encouraging of unusual and groundbreaking ideas in the analysis of organizing and organization. We are committed to providing a forum for research that crosses traditional disciplinary and functional boundaries, and a reflective space for the development of new forms and new voices for this work.

Visit: <http://www.scos.org> for further details or
Email: smatil@essex.ac.uk to join

Out with the “Old”!



Three years ago, Damian O’ Doherty and Sam Warren passed the *Notework* editing responsibility over to two wet behind the ears, eager to contribute, keen to gain experience PhD students.

These PhD students were described in glowing terms, with particular emphasis placed upon their enthusiasm and their youth. These PhD students, however, are no more. In their place, we find the caffeine overdosing decrepit husks of long ago wasted potential you read before you, the creativity starved editors whose crappy puns and poppy turns of phrase you have long grown tired of...word to the wise: this is us doing “sombre”!

High time then, we hear you say, for the youth of yesterday to give way to the Yoda of tomorrow. Steve Vallance and “To Be Confirmed”, we therefore *all* salute you! Best of luck taking up the reins – we two can promise you that these 3 years will fly by and, when they do, you too will be wondering what happened to those times when the time you offered was your own to offer. May this moment be a long time coming, however!

Our final edition sees us sticking with the old reliables, reserved and conservative as we have become in our recently realised old age! Jo Brewis kicks off with her **Notes from the Chair** whilst Sam Warren dishes the dirt on the most recent board meetings in her **Board Secretary** section. Whiter than white, as always, of course!

On this point, we should also announce that any SCOS members who are interested in making sure that we aren’t set to do a Northern Rock are free to have a butchers at our book cooking mechanisms. Put other wise; please contact our Treasurer **if you would like to see our accounts** if you are interested and, of course, if you are a member.

We also bring to you the **SCOS 2010 CFP**: please be sure to get your abstracts in soon as the clock is ticking and, as always, it promises to be an excellent event. Special thanks to Bea and Sam for all of their hard work on this, of course. Plenty more where that came from yet, of course, but lets all try to make it a little easier on them by getting our respective pearls on wisdom in on time.

From here, we go through a review of **SCOS 2009** kindly compiled by Annette Risberg followed, in turn, as always, by the **Musery**. This time round we are happy to include fascinating contributions from both Janet Sayers and Beatriz Acevedo. The musery is open for contributions, as always, and we’re sure both Steve and TBC (for short!) will be very happy to hear and receive your ideas for consideration.

From the sublime to the slightly less sublime but no less important section which deals with **Rep Reports** from around the world. We’re pleased to include a few new contributors here – welcome aboard and, for the rest of you, welcome back!

Next up, and by way of conclusion, we include some recent **Calls for Papers** which will be of interest to the SCOS community. All that remains for us to say, now, is thanks to everyone who has helped us out over the last three years, the very best of luck to Steve and T (shorter still), and we hope to see you soon at a forthcoming SCOS event.

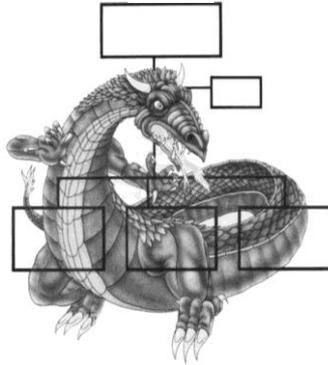
See you later, see you later FOREVER!

Stephen and Sheena

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SCOS: the Standing Conference on Organization and Symbolism (oo-r-ya?)



We are...

...an international and interdisciplinary network of academics and practitioners interested in organizational symbolism, culture and change. Formed in 1981 as an autonomous working group of the European Group for Organisation Studies, SCOS has grown to become a global research network comprising of hundreds of members.

Philosophy: scosophilia

The SCOS philosophy of 'serious fun' is articulated throughout the network's activities, particularly in the encouraging of unusual and groundbreaking ideas in the analysis of organizing and organization. Since its formation, SCOS has run annual international conferences and regular workshops, producing both critical debate and a considerable output of original scholarship. SCOS has always been committed to a critical approach to qualitative research that crosses traditional disciplinary and functional boundaries as well as to reflection on the forms and voices that this work takes.

Research

Moving into its fourth decade, the SCOS network continues to develop innovative views of organization and management, taking inspiration from a variety of different fields and disciplines. SCOS has always been committed to providing a forum for research that crosses traditional disciplinary and functional boundaries, and a reflective space for the development of new forms and new voices for this work. The SCOS Network also aims to produce and develop theoretically and practically innovative views of organization and management and seeks to:

- encourage and foster new approaches in the study of culture and symbolism of everyday life in organizations
- provoke discussion of marginalised perspectives on the understanding of organized life
- provide an arena where the boundaries of conventional thinking about organized life can be challenged and blurred
- sustain continuity and development in this fast-growing field of study
- enable the continued exchange of information and the development of community amongst a highly dispersed group of researchers, scholars and practitioners.

Notes from the Chair

Eh up¹, Constant Reader, it's Madam Chair here. Yes, *again*. It's part of my job description, see. Now then, the first item of business is to formally record the amazing time that we had in Copenhagen and Malmö during SCOS 2009, and to send a resounding SCOS thank you to Annette Risberg, and the 'blue T-shirt gang' (also known as Lise Søstrøm, Andrea Kloss, Majbritt Vendelbo, Maja Dueholm and Ulrik Zahle Harsanyi) at CBS, Peter Elsmore and Dave Crowther as co-organizers, and also the teams at Malmö Högskola and Bar Jacobsen at the Carlsberg Visitor's Centre for making it all happen. Congratulations also to all delegates for making it safely to Malmö for the Big SCOS Day Out ☺. Plus I'd like to personally thank the bar staff at Carlsberg for the beer cocktails. Although I wasn't feeling quite so grateful the following morning. Even less so when my bag decided not to accompany me all the way home, and had an impromptu overnight stay in Amsterdam instead. Ahem.

Anyway, my delayed baggage and mixing of drinks aside, a hugely good conference was had by all. Which in a highly professional 'she's done this before' segue leads me neatly to SCOS 2010. Those of you who were in Copenhagen will already have the call: if you haven't seen it, please visit <http://www.scos.org> and click on Conference 2010. This link takes you to the full conference website. Our theme as you know is Vision, our dates are 7th – 10th July 2010, and our location is Lille in Northern France. And our genial hostesses Sam Warren and Bea Acevedo request your words of wisdom in abstract/ workshop proposal form by 15th December 2009 – again you can find all the details on the website. Looking rather further ahead, we hope to be in Istanbul for SCOS 2011 and Spain for SCOS 2012 – more when our plans have advanced a little further. Also please remember that we are always happy to discuss offers to hold SCOS conferences from members, so do get in touch with me (j.brewis@le.ac.uk) with any ideas.

On to other news, we have had to wave a teary farewell to several Board colleagues over the last few months but have been lucky enough to welcome lots of lovely new replacements in top SCOS revolving door stylee. So, big love and 'we'll miss you's' to Saara Taalas (former Treasurer) and Carl Rhodes (former Australian regional representative), and big welcoming hello's to new Treasurer Nina Kivinen (formerly regional representative for Nordic countries), new website officer David Sköld, new Secretary and Elections Officer Lynne Baxter, new Australian regional representative Jan Schapper, new Benelux regional representative Marja Flory, new Japanese regional representative Thomas Lennerfors, new Nordic countries regional representative Lena Olaison, and new North American regional representatives Jeannie Helms Mills and Albert Mills. Phew! Welcome on board (ha ha) guys ... Also, this is the last issue of *Notework* that Stephen and Sheena will be editing: we are pleased to announce that Steve Vallance has been elected their replacement with another to follow. Three cheers to them as well for a fabulous term in office – you will also be missed and y'all are a very hard act to follow!

Oh and our first Special Events Fund-ed workshop 'The Atrocity Organization: JG Ballard and the Technologies of Psychopathology Management' takes place in London this month. A report on the event will follow in the May issue of *Notework*. News on decisions about the second tranche of SEF funding in that issue as well.

And, for those who are interested, I succeeded in turning 40 in May (or so I am told by reliable eye witnesses) but my other objective of learning to cook Nasi Goreng failed due to my rubbish local shops not being able to provide the necessary condiments. Am now desirous of learning to knit in age-appropriate leisure pursuit type fashion. More riveting Jo Brewis household minutiae next time. Until then ...

May the road rise with you

Jo

¹ East Midlands (of England) vernacular. Roughly translates as 'hello'. Unavoidably infectious even for non-natives of the region (like your esteemed Chair). Works equally well in Yorkshire.

VISION

The 28th Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism will be held in Lille, France from July 7th – 10th at the Institut d'Administration et Enterprise (IAE) Lille France, in collaboration with the Universities of Surrey and Anglia Ruskin University, UK

Call for papers

The 28th 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.

Motivation

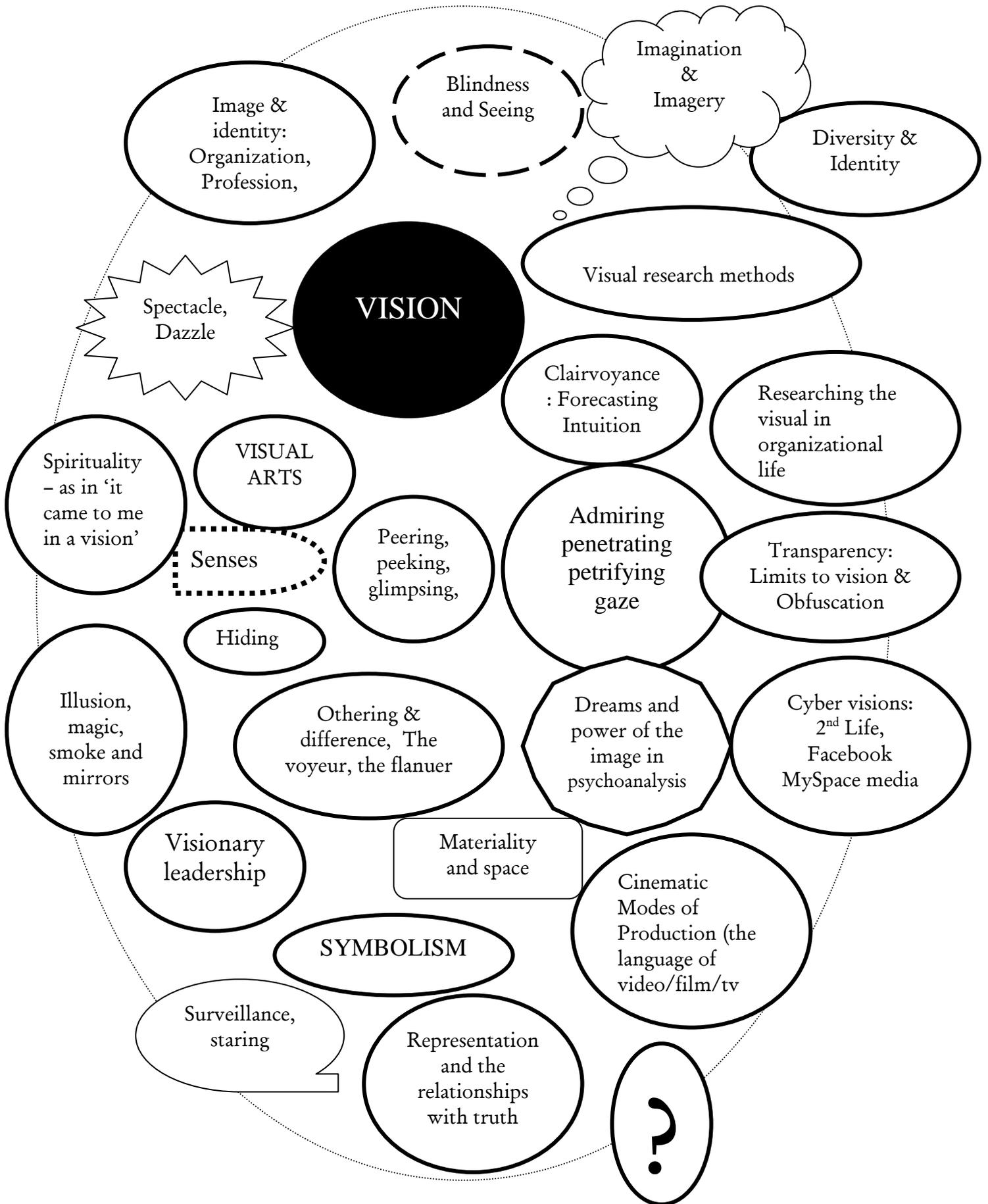
To envisage and to visualise – we are told – is the ultimate goal of organizational action. Having the ability to see the future in one mind's eye is the cornerstone of true (visionary) leadership. For to see into the future is to anticipate, be ready for and above all to attempt *control* of that which 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.

**Abstracts (of no more than 500 words) and proposals for other forms of presentation welcomed.
Further details will be posted on the SCOS website and mailing list.**

Inspiration: Some Themes and Ideas....



Musings of a Board Secretary....

Copenhagen Board Minutes November 2008

A compact and bijou board met in snowy Copenhagen on November 22nd 2008 to discuss SCOS matters and check out the venue for the 2009 conference. After the usual apologies for absence and agreement of the minutes from the previous meeting, Jo Brewis, Sam Warren, Annette Risberg, Peter Case, Peter Elsmore, Sheena Vachhani, Kat Riach and Saara Taalas tackled the business of the day.

Highlights from the 'Matters arising' included (in no particular order) discussion of the forthcoming ASCOS conference; a welcome to David Varley as the new person at Taylor & Francis looking after our journal *Culture and Organization* and invitation to attend the Copenhagen conference (with heartfelt thanks to Katie Barratt who has now stepped down); and confirmation that the website had been translated into German, French and Spanish (with a new 'welcome' message from Jo). It was also agreed to produce a version in Swedish, Danish and Finnish.

Details of the Copenhagen conference were presented by Annette – and by now you know who the keynote speakers were confirmed as and the fact that the conference organization was excellent indeed! Sam then put forward ideas for Lille and reported on the progress she and Beatriz were making with the 2010 event on the theme of 'Vision'.

The board then had a lengthy discussion about possible people and places for 2011 and 2012 conferences given that previous plans had not followed through.

The board then turned to the thorny problem of "Who are SCOS?" Concerns had been expressed by some board members as to their personal liability for SCOS activities, so it was decided that enquiries should be made as to the merits of various different types of organizational forms SCOS could take (a fitting concern for an Organization Studies network!).

Part of this was driven by the fact that prudent accounting and low expenditure has meant that SCOS has accumulated a surplus of money that needs to be accounted for and preferably spent in some way!

Lengthy discussions ensued and it was decided that the monies should be used to fund PhD bursaries for conferences and for forming a competitive 'Special Events Fund' to provide small sums of financial support for SCOS-sy events run by SCOS members that might otherwise have a hard time getting funded. It was also agreed that a good use of the money would be to create an archive of back issues of the original SCOS journal *Dragon* as well as abstracts and conference papers that would be available from the website. Finally on this issue, a new constitution was ratified at the meeting, after having been substantially revised by Jo and Annette. Phew!

Sam then reported on the current state of board members' tenure, noting that several positions would soon become vacant.

The board were disappointed to hear that Brenton Faber our newly appointed North American regional rep had stepped down from the role. Nina (Nordic rep) and Rowland (UK rep in absentia) then gave details of all the things they had been doing to promote SCOS in their regions.

Sheena tabled the *Notework* editors report and the board had a lively and creative discussion about what might appear in future issues (and now you know!), before Peter Case gave the low down on C&O, including its aims, scope and the change of editorial office and administrator. The board minuted its thanks for the sterling efforts of the previous editorial administrator Jane Malabar and arranged to send some flowers as a token of their appreciation.

After a final written report from Alf Rehn on the state of the SCOS website which generated discussion about standardised typefaces, logos and other such visual branding matters, the meeting closed and everyone trudged back to town in the snow for a well deserved meal!

For London (May 2009) PTO

London Board Minutes May 2009

Stepping in at the last minute to help us out after a change to our previous arrangements, Peter Elsmore kindly hosted the SCOS board meeting at South Bank University, London on May 30th 2009. Our Scandinavian and European board members were delighted to be in the UK again to take advantage of the weak pound, strong euro and plenty of shopping before and after the meeting! Members in attendance included Beatriz Acevedo, Jo Brewis, Stephen Dunne, Peter Elsmore, Nina Kivinen, Simon Lilley, Sumo Matilal, Damian O'Doherty, Peter Pelzer, Alf Rehn, Kat Riach, Annette Risberg, Saara Taalas, Sheena Vachhani and Sam Warren.

Various routine matters arising were discussed and the board quickly turned their attention to the ongoing issue of the legal/ organizational status of SCOS. Jo and Saara reported the discussions they have had on this matter with colleagues, the merits of several options were discussed and a decision was made to take further legal advice.

Attention then turned to conferences, with Damian reporting on the success of the Manchester 2008 conference, noting a pleasing interest in the call for papers for the special issue of C&O planned from the proceedings (and an open call) and noting that having a large conference organizing team may be counter-productive for future organisers given the consultation and communication delays that are inevitably involved. Annette and Peter gave an update on the Copenhagen 2009 conference, reporting a high number of abstracts and excellent progress on the social side of things.

Sam and Bea then informed the board of developments regarding the Lille 2010 conference which is shaping up nicely. Jo then led a discussion about possible future venues, including a strong proposal from Mustafa Ozbilgin to hold the conference in Istanbul in 2011 and one from Hugo Gaggiotti who proposed taking the conference to Barcelona, both of which were very well received. Staying with the theme of conferences, discussions were held about whether conference organisers should be required to provide a blind refereeing process (with ISSN/ ISBN) for full papers submitted, to enable more delegates to obtain university funding for them to attend. This was generally supported, although hard copy proceedings were not deemed to be essential as long as the papers are in the public domain (eg: on a CD or website).

Regional rep reports were then tabled, from Nina, Peter, Janet, Rowland, Bea and Carl who are all promoting SCOS through their networks and the conferences they have been attending including the Nordic Academy of Management, ASCOS, and the Manchester Business School doctoral conference.

The next item on the agenda was applications to the 'Special Events Fund' (see above!) for which 4 applications were received. 2 of these were rejected immediately since they did not meet the criteria, one was rejected after discussion since it sought funding for eminent and well resourced academics and the last application was part-funded. Following this initial consideration of applications, the board decided to make future calls more explicit about the ways the proposed activity would benefit SCOS.

A condition was stated whereby SCOS publicity material and *Notework* had to be provided to delegates at SCOS sponsored events. A related proposal was received to fund doctoral bursaries for the ASCOS conference but this was treated as a separate issue from the 'Special Events Fund' and interesting discussions followed concerning the nature of the relationship between SCOS and ASCOS, including whether ASCOS delegates should have subscriptions to C&O built into their fees.

In response to the decision to require SEF events to include SCOS publicity material – and possibly in response to the visually saturated nature of our times?! – the board then discussed plans for a new SCOS logo, letterhead and font that would be common across all SCOS literature. Bea – our resident SCOS artist – agreed to design a new 21st century 'fit for purpose' Dragon and present it at the next meeting.

Moving back to more routine matters, Sumo then reported that SCOS now has 744 members including 67 new members since his last report, many of whom are Manchester doctoral students so well done to Rowland! The treasurer's report followed and Saara suggested that we reduce the SCOS 'levy' that is currently charged on the conference fee to fund the operation of SCOS. This was tabled for further discussion at the next board meeting in conjunction with the new treasurer since this was Saara's last meeting. The *Notework* editors' report was next up with Sheena reporting that a lot of contributions had been received for the May issue but some of these were rather 'self-promoting' advertisements for books etc, which led to a discussion as to what should and should not be published.

London Board Minutes May 2009 (cont'd)

This was followed by C&O – Simon explained that although things are healthy, there is a slow down of proposals for special issues and a severe shortage of reviewers. John Doherty has now officially been appointed as Editorial Administrator based at UWE.

Changes to the board membership were then reported by Sam and the board welcomed David Skold as Web Officer, elected unopposed to replace Alf, Replacing Sam as secretary/ elections officer, Lynne Baxter won the election with 30 votes to Marja Flory's 14. Nina and Rowland are due to step down as

regional reps, as are Sheena and Stephen as Notework editors and these issues were signalled as the first of the new election officers duties in Copenhagen. The board also thanked Alf for his superb efforts in revamping and maintaining the SCOS website over the past several years.

In his last report, Alf confirmed that the site has now been migrated to Alf company server and that back issues of *Dragon* have been uploaded to a new archive section of the website which also includes *Notework* and conference proceedings from times gone by. The Danish, Finnish and Swedish translations have yet to be added. In customary self-effacing fashion he

also pointed out that running the SCOS site was not a lot of work and the volume of traffic it generates does not warrant establishing a Facebook site or similar.

Staying with technology, under Any Other Business, Jo confirmed that after Sheena notified her that the welcome message on the JISC-mail SCOS list is very out of date; she has taken steps to update it. The meeting closed at 4pm and the date of the next meeting was set for 4pm immediately before the Copenhagen conference registration.

Your board are currently:

Chair: Jo Brewis (UK) **Meetings Secretary:** Kat Riach (UK) **Secretary & Elections Officer:** Lynne Baxter (UK), **2009 Conference:** Peter Elsmore (UK), David Crowther (UK) and Annette Risberg (Denmark) **2010 Conference:** Sam Warren (UK) and Beatriz Acevedo (UK) **Membership Secretary:** Sumohon Matilal (UK) **Treasurer:** Nina Kivinen (Finland) **Notework Editors:** Steve Vallance (UK) and TBC **Web Officer:** David Sköld (Sweden) **Journal Editors (C&O):** Peter Case (UK) and Simon Lilley (UK) **Regional representatives:** Peter Pelzer (Germany), Jan Schapper (Australia), Marja Flory (Benelux), Lena Olaison (Nordic Countries), Rowland Curtis (UK), Jean Helms Mills and Albert Mills (North America), Thomas Lennerfors (Japan), Janet Sayers (New Zealand) and Beatriz Acevedo (Latin America).

Conference Review

The 27th Conference on Organizational Symbolism (SCOS) held at Copenhagen Business School and Malmö University College July 8-11, 2009 - Conference report

On the afternoon of July 8 the Kilen building at Copenhagen Business School, was filled with expectant SCOS delegates. At registration the delegates were not just provided with the usual conference bag (containing among other stuff an ISBN registered CD-rom with proceedings from the conference and a booklet of paper abstracts) but with the opportunity to design their own conference bag. The conference organizers had bought plain white tissue conference bags, and many pens to paint on textile. Many took the opportunity and we saw many academics spending literary hours on painting their bags (others spent a few seconds) and the outcomes were some spectacular and highly personal conference bags.



After the registration a buffet was served in the Atrium hall of the Kilen building and mingling took place.



July 9 the formal proceedings started. 125 delegates attended the conference and over the three days there were 61 paper presentations in four parallel sessions. The topics ranged from "Death and the Bridge" to "Dancing the talk: experiencing mindful selfhood and leadership in contemporary organizations". After lunch July 9 Professor Heather Höpfl, University of Essex, held a key note speech on the theme "Installation, Compilation, and a little Suspense: Strange bridges and even stranger crossings". Later that night dinner was served in another CBS building.



Friday 10 July the conference moved venue to Malmö University College where formal proceedings continued with parallel sessions. The delegates travelled by train (tickets provided in the conference bag) from Copenhagen to Malmö and back. After lunch Professor Per-Olof Berg, Stockholm University held a keynote speech on " Bridging to the future;

Bringing Magic into Organization Studies” where he also told the tale of the birth of SCOS. After the formal proceedings there was a drink reception on the boat Prince Bernhard. Unfortunately it rained so the plans to serve drinks on the sun deck were cancelled and the reception was moved to the boats night club.



Saturday July 11 we were back at CBS again and the last conference presentations took place. The conference ended with a gala dinner at Carlsberg Visitors Centre, including a tour at the museum, dinner and free beer the whole night. Considering the age of some of the delegates I don't think SCOS needs to worry about the future.



Malmö 2009-10-30
Annette Risberg, Conference organizer
Photos by: Lise Søstrøm

The Musery

Kafka's Ghost, and dogs, in 'Disgrace'

By Janet Sayers

It is possible to read Kafka's animal stories for a quite a while without realizing that they are not about human beings at all"

(Benjamin cited in Danta, 2007)

Now at last I can look at you in peace, I don't eat you anymore.

(Comment to a fish, after becoming a vegetarian)

The book 'Disgrace' won the Booker Prize in 1999 (Coetzee, 1999/2000). John M Coetzee, the author, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003 and he had previously won the Booker in 1983 for 'The life and times of Michael K'. A South African, he immigrated to Australia in 2002. The film is a faithful adaptation of the book and if you are not familiar with Coetzee's novels, then the movie should be intriguing enough to get you reading them, even though some may experience it as a bit of a downer.

'Disgrace', the book or the film, can be read as a complex and troubling allegorical tale about South Africa and post-apartheid challenges. David Lurie, the character played by John Malkovich in the film, is the central protagonist – selfish, arrogant, pompous, unwilling to bend – an academic (expert in Romantic poetry) – who nevertheless manages to hold audience empathy despite his self-centred casually racist and sexist attitudes. The first part of the movie paints a picture of Lurie as a lonely sexual predator, who has an inappropriate sexual relationship with a young coloured student, and is then forced to resign from his university position in disgrace after he refuses to make a public apology for the affair. He then retreats to his daughter's rural outpost farm to lick his wounds. A central narrative thread in the movie is the subtle transformation of his distant and patronising relationship to his (lesbian) daughter Lucy which is forced into a radical change through an act of shocking violence that sees him beaten, brutalised and burnt and Lucy pack-raped, silent (language-less) and unseen (to David) in the next room. And yet the most shocking act of violence in this pivotal scene is the shooting and execution of the kennelled and defenceless dogs - not seen but heard – with one inference being that both Lucy and David could just as easily be executed in the same way; like dogs. The dogs are pivotal in the story as they introduce another 'other'.

Much of the story takes place in an animal shelter where Lurie takes up employment helping abandoned and mistreated animals, and there are many of them. One of his roles is to assist in the euthanasia of dogs that cannot be re-housed or are left over from the official cull paid for and administered by the government. It is not so obvious from the film, but is from the book and its commentaries, that the 'disgrace' of the film's title refers not only to Lurie's disgraceful conduct that leads to his resignation, but to the disgrace felt by the dogs being put down, and the disgrace of how humans treat (mistreat) animals. When Lurie, towards the end of the film, likens their (his and Lucy's) situation to being 'like dogs', which to many might seem to be an abject and miserable condition to be in, it is actually a pivotal point of the story in that the main characters' (the Lurie's) animal 'metamorphosis' has come full circle. The reader/viewer has been ethically and ontologically shifted into 'the other's' eyes.

It is up to the pragmatic and fatalistic Lucy, who has become pregnant due to the rape, to carve out an uncertain and unsafe, increasingly marginal and precarious future in the new South Africa. Lucy is a central character because Lurie's process of becoming something different from what he was at the beginning of the story, is at least partially because of his troubling attitudes towards women.

For Lurie, what he achieves I suppose is a tiny but significant revelation and redemption through his acknowledgement of his subjection as an animal through his own pain and suffering felt in silence. This occurs through the physical attack (which he endures in silence), the psychological shame of his trial by the university in which he refuses to defend himself, and his concern for his daughter in the aftermath of her rape, which he cannot articulate because he does not have the experience (he is at the other end of the smoking gun so to speak). So he endures his pain in silence, like an animal, as does Lucy (she will not talk about it with him) (Birke & Parisi, 1999) . Yet, although he is etherised in a state of 'Prufrockian uncertainty', as are all the characters in 'Disgrace' (only Petrus the main African character in the novel/film - Lucy's farm manager and neighbour at the beginning of the story and land-owner and family-member by the end of it - is going up in the world), a tiny, compromised but significant moment of redemption is given over to Lurie.

Lurie's epiphany is shown through a pivotal scene. In the last scene in the book (earlier in the movie) Lurie offers up a favourite dog (one that responds to his banjo playing - he is composing an opera of sorts), for euthanasia, he 'gives him up', in a scene where David acknowledges both that the dog has a soul, and that he has a communion with the dog. He finds his humility and his humanity through this relationship with the animal as he offers it for a kind of sacrifice. This is the last moment in the book, but in the film the final scene is one where Lurie abandons his car on the side of the road as he is taking the dead bodies of the dogs to their crematorium, and walks across the landscape to Lucy's house, and she asks him inside.

The very last shot in the film is a pull-back from the entrance into Lucy's house to show Petrus's glowing new white house in the valley, the older house on the hill of Lucy, the old now abandoned shed where Petrus used to live while he impatiently but carefully built his new house (he has waited long enough after all), and to the side, shabby, un-noticed, the dog-house. The power relations all shifted and changed. Each character working through their desperate personal solutions, compromised, and damaged (reshuffling themselves in relation to South Africa's new landscape of power). And the dog house still there, clinging onto the side of all of them.

Although Coetzee's motivations are always somewhat ambiguous, one impetus that always seems to be behind his work is Kafka's stories, especially those featuring animals. In particular this can be seen in his previous hybrid lecture-novella 'The lives of animals' (Coetzee, 1997) where Elizabeth Costello, a fictitious character and animal rights activist uses Kafka's pseudo lecture/novella of Red Peter's (the ape's) 'A report to an academy' (Kafka, 1917/1983) to illustrate her animal rights arguments. 'A report to an academy' is not just a satire about humanity even though it has a "bright satirical tone" revealing a savage bitterness underneath. In 'A report to an academy' the ape is 'trying to find a way out' whilst he is captured and forced to become human, and the only truth in the story is his 'pain'. This is what motivates his unctuousness and his other behaviour and he becomes a performer as a form of escape from pain and from his cage.

'A report to an academy' has also been interpreted as a reversal of 'Metamorphosis', as the animal becomes human, whereas in Metamorphosis, the human becomes animal (Kafka, 1916/1965). The story has also been read as a commentary on the Jewish Diaspora and their need to adapt to survive, mimesis, performance and Darwinian-ism, and the post-colonial experience (Norris, 1980). Reading interpretations of Kafka in relation to post-colonialism, thinking about the book and film in relation to South Africa, and myself being a New Zealander of European origin, I have read, watched and reflected on 'Disgrace' as post-colonial fiction which is about the psychic effects of dislocation and the guilt of the coloniser; essentially the effect of not belonging in a landscape where power-relations are reversed away from colonialism, displacement and back towards indigenous empowerment. Where does the European-originating immigrant now belong? Are we now Red Peter, who could be originally seen as the symbol of what colonialism wrought? As Ozick (1983) has said, Coetzee is a writer "of clarifying inventiveness and translucent conviction ...his landscapes of suffering are defined by the little-by-little art of moral disclosure". To the characters in his books - outcasts, strays, simpletons, the unsuspecting, and the innocent - ideology is incomprehensible. Like 'The life and times of Michael K', 'Disgrace' is a sorrowful story about South Africa and the damage that has been inflicted there by, essentially, violent stupidity; a complete lack of grace about the fundamental right of 'the other' to exist. But Coetzee's stories about South Africa have a resonance way beyond that country, and his fiercely intelligent workings out of character against ideology, landscape and 'the other', leave a rich legacy for those interested in working through its implications for thinking about post-colonialism and power relations more generally.

Coetzee works these ethical dilemmas out by using, in 'Disgrace', dogs, as another 'other' and completely conflates the natures of all the characters. Everyone is in pain and a state of disgrace, human and non-human alike; only recognising the non-ideological essential individuality of 'the other' provides any sort of way out. Philosophers such as Derrida also collapse the distinctions, holding them as an impediment to understanding (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ry49Jr0TFjk> for Derrida talking about his thinking about 'animals', a term he eschews but can't help using) and Deleuze and Guatarri (1987). Huggan (2004) summarises Coetzee's contribution here:

... a great deal of Coetzee's concern, both early and late, has been to articulate a third term: ... it is adding to the two poles of civilized and barbarian the third pole of post-colonial, while more recently, it has been substantiating the category of the animal as distinct from the traditionally opposed human self and its other. In Coetzee's texts, animals are fictionalised in a drama of human mortality and suffering – one in which the attempt to reach out to the animal world, to inhabit the mental and emotional space of animals' lives through a sustained act of sympathetic imagination, is counteracted by the ironic awareness of animals as objects of human desires and needs: objects of exploitation and abuse, objects of charity and affection.

I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound and stab us. If the book we are reading doesn't wake us up with a blow on the head, what are we reading it for? ...we need the books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea inside us. (Kafka's letter to Oskar Pollack, 27 January, 1904)

Janet Sayers
(NZ Representative)

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GRACIAS A LA VIDA, FAREWELL TO MERCEDES SOSA

By Beatriz Acevedo

For many Latin American people of my generation the sudden death of Mercedes Sosa has been the cause of great sadness. The deep voice of the Andean mountains crossing through the 'cosmic waist of the South' resonates in our memories, while each of us -- perhaps treasuring a moment of our lives -- evoke her presence and her music. For the last couple of days I've been playing old records, searching in YouTube and singing old tunes I thought I had forgotten... There are memories and dreams, and music and ideals that belong to my life as much as to Latin American history. Thus, I thought that for this edition of Notework and as a way paying homage to 'La Negra' -- as she was kindly known - I will be playing some of her songs and music while weaving memories of my own past...

It is Friday afternoon somewhere in the late 1980s. I left the campus of Universidad de los Andes toward my secret life with friends and mates at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. The green campus of La Nacho starts coming to life. Groups of students debate ardently about socialism, Hegel and Marx; others sit singing around a warm guitar sipping cheap wine. At the Freud Garden people embark on psychedelic dreams... afar on a barely illuminated corner, the drunken poet cries and prays to a mesmerized crowd. All of a sudden, I noticed a growing crowd crossing the Garden toward *la Plaza del Che* ... "What's up guys?" "There is a concert! Come on join us"- they respond with a smile. Without hesitation I joined the enthusiastic group, yet not really knowing what the concert was about or whether or not I will get tickets. The *Auditorium Leon de Greiff* is really busy and I managed to get a place far away from the scenario; people talk and shout and sing and wait. Lights turn off and there is an odd silence, when the sound of a solitary drum emerges from the stage... the lights are still off and a single ray illuminates the figure: there she is, her deep voice invading the soul:

<p>CANTANDO COMO LA CIGARRA based on a Poem by Maria Elena Welsh</p> <p>Tantas veces me borraron, tantas desaparecí A mi propio entierro fui solo y llorando Hice un nudo en el pañuelo pero me olvidé después Que no era la única vez y seguí cantando</p> <p>Cantando al sol como la cigarra Después de un año bajo la tierra Igual que sobreviviente Que vuelve de la guerra</p>	<p>LIKE A CRICKET</p> <p>How many times I was 'deleted', so often I disappeared... I attended my own burial all alone and crying... But I tied my handkerchief and after a while I forgot, because it was not the first time, and I kept singing</p> <p>Singing to the sun like the cricket After a year underground Like a survivor Coming back from the war</p>
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In a time when dictatorships prevailed on most of Latin American countries, spreading the terror, 'disappearing' those who dared to contradict their authority, torturing, killing and massacring, this song was a hymn for those who believed in freedom. Political exiles throughout the world felt the pain and hope of this song. In Colombia, a small group of exiles were welcomed by intellectuals and progressive leaders... and yet, that was not enough, because the drama of being forced to abandon one's country cannot be easily described ...Only subtle means, such as songs and music, could grasp at the real tragedy of these migrants. On the other hand, the contact with people from many other countries built a feeling of our being brothers and sisters in a Latin American spirit. After learning of Mercedes Sosa's death I felt the necessity of talking some of my Latin American colleagues and friends in the UK. Little messages in Facebook and some telephone calls... While talking to them and sharing feelings and memories concerning Mercedes Sosa, I could not help but realising how 'latin-americans' we really are... How to explain that?

Whereas European people still debate the idea of the European Union and African countries aspire to a pan-Africanism; we somehow define ourselves as Latin Americans, beyond frontiers and differences... and it is through the music of people like Mercedes Sosa, and other marvellous artists, that this feeling has been possible.

The artist introduces the next song as a hymn: a journey through Latin America. While describing the song, she encourages people to join the chorus... I can hardly believe how she masters the excited crowd... I try to follow, hardly understanding the deep meaning of these lyrics, I just felt deep inside a sort of brotherhood... and I sing out loud...

<p>CANCION CON TODOS</p> <p>Salgo a caminar por la cintura cosmica del sur piso en la region mas vegetal del viento y de la luz siento al caminar toda la voz de America en mi piel y anda en mi sangre un rio que libera en mi voz su caudal</p> <p>Sol de Alto Peru, rostro Bolivia, estaño y soledad, un verde Brasil, besa mi Chile, cobre y mineral</p> <p>subo desde el sur hasta la entraña America y total ... Pura raiz de un grito detinado a crecer y a estallar</p> <p>Todas las voces, todas Todas las manos, todas toda la sangre puede ser cancion en el viento canta conmigo, canta hermano americano libera tu esperanza con un grito en la voz</p>	<p>I walk along the cosmic waist of the South Threading along the most vegetal region of winds and light...While walking I can feel all the voices of America in my skin, and in my blood a growing river liberating its stream....</p> <p>Sun of the High Peru, the Bolivian face of tin and solitude, a green Brazil, kissing my Chile, copper and mineral</p> <p>Going up from the South toward the American womb and the pure root of a scream aimed at growing and burst out!</p> <p>All the voices, all All the hands, all All the blood can be song in the wind Sing with me, sing Latin American brother Free the hope in your voice</p>
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But who is this wonderful woman: the embodiment of the Pacha Mama, a mystical totem, the voice of America... All of this is new for me, and then she sings: Soy pan, soy paz, soy mas...

<p>SOY PAN, SOY PAZ, SOY MAS Piero</p> <p>Yo soy, yo soy, yo soy, yo soy soy agua, playa, cielo, casa blanca soy mar Atlántico, viento de América soy un montón de cosas santas mezclado con cosas humanas Como te explico? cosas mundanas.</p> <p>Fui niño, cuna, teta, pecho, manta más miedo, cuco, grito, llanto, raza después cambiaron las palabras y se escapaban las miradas algo paso?, no entendí nada</p>	<p>I AM BREAD, I AM PEACE, I AM MORE</p> <p>I am, I am, I am.... I am water, beach, heaven, white house I am Atlantic ocean, wind of America I am a lot of holy things Mixed with human things How can I explain to you? World matters</p> <p>I was a kid, a crane, a breast, a blanket But, fear, cuco, fear, cry, race.... After a while words changed And gazes escaped... Something happened... I did not understand a thing!</p>
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Born in the little town of San Miguel de Tucuman in the northwest of Argentina, Mercedes Sosa took on folk music from an early age. Her strong voice and her moving lyrics made of her a figure not only in Argentina, but soon she was touring around Latin American countries, the USA and Europe. A firm believer in freedom and justice, Mercedes Sosa was mostly a great activist, normally associated with left wing ideas. In Argentina, the military dictatorship of Videla banned any political dissidence; Mercedes, as with other creative artists, was perceived as a threat to the system.

In 1978 the police interrupted violently at a concert in La Plata; they imprisoned her, and hence she had to seek political asylum in Paris and then in Spain. The experience did not silence Mercedes; on the contrary, she kept on touring around the world, loyal to her principles and political views. By singing and denouncing, she became the voice of those who were proscribed or “disappeared” by the military board, in one of the darkest chapters of our recent history. While many other artists were embracing rock’n’roll influences, Mercedes and a group of Latin American singers such as Pablo Milanés, Silvio Rodríguez, Piero, León Gieco, Chico Buarque, Chabuca Granda, Violeta and Nicanor Parra, became more attached to folk music. They aimed at searching for our Latin American roots, providing reasons for being proud of our heritage as Mestizos, Indios or Negros. They transformed poems into songs, fused Afro-Caribbean tunes with Andean songs; revealing the voice of a deep and exotic Latin America, full of myths and folk tales, poems, landscapes, imagination and legends...

The next song is introduced softly: It tells the story of the poetess Alfonsina Storni, who walks toward the deep sea, caressing marine caracoles, carrying old wounds and silent sorrows... The lonely guitar is the only company for that ancient voice of wind and salt... and now it is only Alfonsina and the Sea

<p>ALFONSINA Y EL MAR Ariel Ramírez and Félix Luna</p> <p>Por la blanda arena Que lame el mar Su pequeña huella No vuelve más Un sendero solo De pena y silencio llegó Hasta el agua profunda Un sendero solo De penas mudas llegó Hasta la espuma.</p> <p>Sabe Dios qué angustia Te acompañó Qué dolores viejos Calló tu voz Para recostarte Arrullada en el canto De las caracolas marinas</p> <p>Cinco sirenitas Te llevarán Por caminos de algas Y de coral Y fosforescentes Caballos marinos harán Una ronda a tu lado Y los habitantes Del agua van a jugar Pronto a tu lado.</p>	<p>By the soft sand kissing the sea Her small footprint won't come back Only a little trail of sorrow and sadness arrives to the deep waters... And a lonely trail of muted sorrows arrive to the sea-foam</p> <p>Only God knows of your anguish Of your old wounds that silenced your voice, lying down cooed by the singing voice of the marine caracoles...</p> <p>Five little mermaids will take you throughout seaweed roads and coral... and fluorescent sea horses will dance around you... and the sea people will play alongside you...</p>
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It is difficult to describe the influence of Mercedes Sosa in our lives as Latin Americans. Some may dismiss her music as ‘leftist’ or too melancholic, others may not even be touched by her message. Mercedes was a diva in her own right, lacking the frivolities and the pelvic movements of MTV singers... And I won’t be wrong to say that for many people of my generation, her music is engraved alongside scenes, memories, a lot of important moments that defined what we are now... This perception is confirmed by the many anecdotes linked to Mercedes Sosa’s music.

During the last few days I've talked to many Latin-American friends, some living in England, some back in Colombia, and all of them have something to share about Mercedes Sosa: a tale, a memory, a special song, some have also shed a furtive tear...

Ana Maria, my dear Argentinian friend, remembers the first time she went to a Mercedes Sosa gig: It was in 1982, soon after the tragedy of the Falklands War, when the military dictatorship had given place to a new 'democratic spring', apparently, winds of change were blowing... Mercedes, who had been exiled for the last few years, returned to the country and the time could not be more special. After the dark years of the military dictatorship, Argentina held their first democratic elections of its modern era; besides, the Argentinian team had just won the Football World Cup and the future seemed bright. The *Teatro Opera de Buenos Aires* was full of people... Ana Maria, who had just finished secondary school, attended the concert. Little did she know about what was going on, and yet, at that particular moment she could feel that something was changing, that beyond the euphoria deep troubles remained unsolved...

While studying at the University of Buenos Aires she learned of the striking wounds of the country that had been silenced during many years. Only few people, such as Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, remained asking their incessant question: *Where are our children?*... Silence... *Where are our children?*... Silence... only armed guards moving the old women out of the Square. The official version refused to respond - many children disappeared while protesting, simply for the fact of their being young and hopeful (a film called *The Nights of Pencils – La Noche de los Lapices* – is a poignant account of what happened with these young people). Some years later, the film *La Historia Oficial* with Norma Leandro shows the different sides of the tragedy... and Mercedes Sosa, alongside many other artists on the sub-continent, continued to invite us to find out, to question, to challenge, to abandon the veils of ignorance –and above all, to pray against indifference and oblivion.

And then she sings....

<p>SOLO LE PIDO A DIOS Words and music by Leon Gieco</p> <p>Solo le pido a Dios Que el dolor no me sea indiferente Que la resaca muerte no me encuentre Vacio y solo sin haber echo lo suficiente</p> <p>Solo le pido a Dios Que la guerra no me sea indiferente Es un monstro grande y pisa fuerte Toda la pobre inocencia de la gente Es un monstro grande y pisa fuerte Toda la pobre inocencia de la gente</p>	<p>I only ask of God, He not let me be indifferent to the suffering That Death does not find me, empty and lonely without having done enough</p> <p>I only ask of God, He not let me be indifferent to War It is a big monster stepping harsh Over the humble innocence of people It is a big monster stepping harsh Over the humble innocence of people</p>
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Mercedes walks up and down the scenario, opening her arms, embracing the audience... encouraging us to join her... it is not really necessary: voices and souls join her praying... It is really moving and I sing without knowing very well the lyrics; years later I can even sing them in my sleep!

Beyond the protest, the political undertones and the melancholic tunes, Mercedes will be always remembered for her hopeful attitude to life. She was experimenting with music genres, touring the world, joining younger artists, reminding us to be grateful: that life is a fragile treasure, unique and precious. Today I could not do more but thank her. Thank her for the memories, for the music, for encouraging us to stand for what you believe, for friendship and solidarity, for the life itself...

GRACIAS A LA VIDA

(Violeta Parra)

Translation: Sergio Reyes

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.
Me dio dos luceros, y cuando los abro,
Perfecto distingo lo negro del blanco,
Y en el alto cielo su fondo estrellado,
Y en las multitudes al hombre que yo amo.

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.
Me ha dado el oído que, en todo su ancho,
Graba noche y día grillos y canarios
Martillos, turbinas, ladridos, chubascos,
Y la voz tan tierna de mi bien amado.

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto,
Me ha dado el sonido y abecedario.
Con él las palabras que pienso y declaro,
"madre, amigo hermano" y luz alumbrando
la ruta del alma del que estoy amando

Gracias a la vida, que me ha dado tanto.
Me ha dado la marcha de mis pies cansados.
Con ellos anduve ciudades y charcos,
Playas y desiertos, montañas y llanos,
Y la casa tuya, tu calle y tu patio.

Gracias a la vida que me ha dado tanto
Me dio el corazón, que agita su marco.
Cuando miro el fruto del cerebro humano,
Cuando miro al bueno tan lejos del malo.
Cuando miro el fondo de tus ojos claros.

Gracias a la vida que me ha dado tanto.

Me ha dado la risa, me ha dado el llanto.
Así yo distingo dicha de quebranto,
Todos materiales que forman mi canto,
Y el canto de ustedes que es es mismo canto!

<http://www.geocities.com/taileus/t57/theme57.html>

IN GRATITUDE TO LIFE

Thank you, Life, for you gave me so much.
You gave me two stars for eyes and when I
open them
I can perfectly distinguish black from white
And up above in the skies the constellations
And in the crowds the man I love.

Thank you, Life, for you gave me so much.
You gave me ears so that I can hear
And record the sounds day and night of
Crickets, canaries, factories, dogs barking,
The rain falling, and the sweet voice of my loved
one.

Thank you, Life, for you gave me so much.
You gave me the sounds and the alphabet
And with them the words I think of and declare
Mother, friend, brother and light shining
Over the route of my loved one's soul.

Thank you, Life, for you gave me so much.
You gave my tired feet the strength to walk
On them I have visited cities and potholes
Beaches and deserts, mountains and valleys
And your house, your street, your backyard.

Thank you, Life, for you gave me so much.
You gave me my heart that beats like a drum
When I see the fruits of the human brain
When I see good so far away from evil
When I look in the depth of your beautiful eyes.

Thank you, Life, for you gave me so much.
You gave me laughter and tears
So I can express happiness and sorrow
The two elements my songs are made of
And your songs, which are like my songs,
And everybody's songs, which are also mine.

Thank you Life.

Gracias Mercedes, gracias a la vida por darnos tu canción y tu presencia maravillosa! Always in our heart!

SCOS Regional Reports: News From Around The Globe.

Thoughts, views and news from the SCOS regional representatives, take it away reps!

Peter Pelzer (German Rep)

Mindchanging?

General elections usually provide a moment to hesitate and think about possible consequences for higher education. During the election campaign each party states how important education is in meeting the challenges of the future. Strange enough it is to notice that during the campaign in Germany no party has a prominent candidate for the post of the ministry, let alone convincing proposals for future developments. Instead, so it can be formulated pessimistically, everything will go on as under the past government; or even more into this direction: the election saw a change to a conservative-liberal majority in the parliament.

The worries go at least in two directions. The Bologna process, as it is realised in Germany, is a move towards more efficiency in higher education. Studying shall provide the student with knowledge of facts that are immediately job applicable. 'Fast knowledge' it could be termed in analogy to 'fast food'. In a time where a careful consideration of complexity and difference is required, where the traditional understanding of knowledge as a capacity to judge is needed perhaps more than ever, higher education develops in the opposite direction.

The other point is a result of research done during PISA and a special study on who profits from bursaries. There is obviously no equal opportunity concerning social classes. It is still a fact that the better educated kids of the German population have easier access to universities. Contrary to the intention of bursaries, the participants in these programs are in their majority children of academically educated people who are successful in their job. Higher education is class oriented and all too often prevents kids from lower classes or migrants from getting the chance to achieve a university degree.

Considering these facts, a newly elected conservative-liberal government does not make me optimistic for change: knowledge and perhaps even wisdom is not calculable, and therefore not efficient.

Nina Kivinen (outgoing Nordic rep)

Pimp My Uni!

The Finnish university system is undergoing its greatest transformation ever. As of January 1, 2010 universities will no longer be governmental departments, but (semi) private institutions. In order to achieve this independence from government, universities now need to raise money. As governmental departments, universities need not worry about cash flows, as the bottomless pit we call the state budget would have made things run smoothly. In a few weeks all will be different. So there is a race going on and Finnish universities are really competing head on. Ten, fifteen years from now the university structure in Finland could be very different with mergers all ready taking place and other consolidations likely to occur. The primary, short term goal for every university is to raise new equity for their universities by the end of 2010. The government has promised to match all money raised by the end of next years with an index of 2.5. So for example my university aims to raise 1 million Euro and hopes to get an additional 2.5 million Euro from the government. Not a bad deal although some are a bit sceptical that with the economy being what it is, this might be a promise the government might not be able to keep.

Fund raising at this scale is a completely new thing for Finland and it has been necessary for all universities to quickly get branding and marketing campaigns off the ground. Hanken in Helsinki calls their campaign Hanken100 as they happen to celebrate their 100th birthday. The Sibelius Academy of Music has named their campaign the Nightingale and seems to rely on the patronage of world renowned composers and musicians. Turku University was originally founded with the help of private donations ('a gift from an independent people to independent science'). Now they are focusing on challenging the high concentration of university education to Helsinki with a campaign slogan of 'let's make Turku the science capital of the country'. The university of Oulu talks about 'our university', emphasising its strong connection to the local community and region.

What can I say? Brand consultants must be having a field day pimping universities of every size and quality. We need to look good to get the attention of local and international businesses, alumni and private foundations. Good luck with that! So when you see support groups and the like on Facebook, its not that our universities are under immediate threat, its only our universities trying to be hip, cool and present within virtual spaces.

This is my last report as Nordic rep on the SCOS board. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank the SCOS community for inviting me in. This has been a wonderful way to be involved in an open, enthusiastic and engaging research community.

Thank you everyone! And see you all in Lille in 2010!

Nina

Rowland Curtis (UK Rep)

Anxieties of Learning and the National Student Survey

It has been interesting to hear of some of the contrasting responses of academic departments in the UK to the National Student Survey (NSS), and its results. For those unfamiliar, the NSS is an annual survey running since 2005 across all publicly funded Higher Education Institutions in the UK. As described by its website, the survey asks final year undergraduate students to provide feedback on their courses through responses to twenty two standardised questions relating to such themes as 'Teaching on My Course'; 'Assessment and Feedback'; and 'Academic Support'. Students are also given the opportunity to write positive and/or negative comments on their student learning experience as a whole at their university/college. The results are subsequently published on the Hefce/Ucas 'Unistats' webpage which is provided to help potential students choose which academic departments to apply to for their undergraduate studies. The results have also been used as one of the factors taken into account in the Guardian newspaper's influential University League Tables (Swain 2009). In this light, we might best understand the NSS in its role as a key 'quality indicator' in the UK HE sector, taking its place as part of the wider 'rankings culture' that has been a significant feature of the political dynamics of business schools and wider academia in recent years, both in the UK and beyond (e.g. Wedlin 2006).

While perhaps more trivial reported examples have included the offering of 'orange juice' to students to try to improve response rates to the NSS and/or produce favourable responses, it was also reported in the academic press last year that that one UK business school had been criticised for its more assertive attempts to influence its NSS score by asking students to "seriously reflect" on their response to the survey "as it impacts on the reputation of your university, your teaching department and your award" (Atwood 2008).

We might take both these reported behaviours, and their journalistic reporting, as indicators of the *anxieties* among academic communities of the stakes associated with such representations of quality and their potential interpretations and deviations, suggesting parallels in the domain of teaching with the perhaps more familiar politics of rankings cultures associated with academic research publications and associated quality judgements (e.g Dunne et al 2008; MacDonald & Kam 2007). Meanwhile, evidence of the *reactive* consequences of such anxieties with respect to the NSS has been seen by some to have included the suspension of Professor Lee Harvey from his post as Director of Research and Evaluation at the Higher Education Academy – an institute set up in 2004 by the four UK funding councils to "foster robust debate" on "policies that affect [sic] the student learning experience" - after a letter of his was published in the Times Higher Education magazine strongly criticising the NSS (Atwood & Gill 2008).

It is in this arguably paranoid organisational climate that it has been interesting to hear of innovations being proposed in a number of UK academic departments that would seek to respond to disappointing NSS survey results by a return to elements of a more traditional 'tutorial' model by which to improve the student 'experience', and as a potential means by which to boost anticipated future NSS scores.² Such tutorial proposals have been reported to include the reduction of student numbers for selected core seminars to a maximum of ten members, thereby improving student-staff ratios and contact time. They are also understood to offer more sensitive and individualised tutorial attention and support, moving away from the more anonymised dynamics of web-based learning and blind marking conventions.

² Perhaps this could in some way be compared to the 'perverse' effects of the RAE in having, in some notable cases, fostered enclaves of academic critique and dialogue that would be overtly hostile to the RAE and 'its' operation.

Furthermore, it has also been suggested that the model of small tutorials working together on critical analyses of selected academic texts can offer a powerful alternative to more programmatic 'study skills' first year certification modules, which some have argued risk contributing to an infantilising of undergraduate study that can hinder the development of more independent and 'worldly' styles of scholarly engagement (cf. Wright Mills 1967).

In this context it has also been interesting to hear reports of *resistance* to the reversion to such traditional models of learning from academics who may be expected to deliver such courses - resistance furthered through the employment of arguments regarding fears concerning the 'comparability' of such courses, and the articulation of other concerns regarding deviation from prescriptive, closely-structured syllabus-based models of undergraduate learning.

To draw parallel with my own teaching experience here, in promoting styles of academic learning that deviate from the 'security blanket'-like reassurances of bullet-pointed and compartmentalised modes of learning-to-the-test, I have come to expect forms of resistance by students for whom such structures have been familiar disciplinary features of their learning going back as far as primary school. However, to learn of this parallel tendency among academic teaching staff faced with a similar 'weaning off' would seem to suggest powerful complicities at play here in what we might call the collective 'management' of anxieties, arguably stimulated and provoked by the 'existential' stakes of more rigorously demanding and personally involving modes of learning (e.g. Brinzman 2009).

In this light, it may only be through the acknowledging and working out of such anxieties and insecurities, and by their consideration as part of wider political dynamics in academia and beyond, that we might find ourselves in a position to begin to take up some of the more profound questions of quality in higher education and their significance for the "student learning experience" that the NSS seeks, in its own way, to monitor and improve.

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Thomas Taro Shinozaki Lennerfors (Japanese Rep)

On One Piece

I am working hard to catch up on Japanese manga and anime. This is a report of the first 120 episodes (out of more than 400 as we speak) of One Piece – an ongoing manga converted into anime that has captured the Japanese mind since August 1997.

If you have always dreamt of being a pirate, fighting for your dream, pillaging at will, violating social rules and having a lot of fun while doing it (are any of you SCOSers in for it?) – this is the anime for you. Maybe the theme of this anime really fits the Japanese psyche, but since I just arrived here in Tokyo I have to wait to tell if I can agree with Hofstede and the cross-cultural bunch and claim that there is actually greater power distance and lower individuality here than in Western countries.

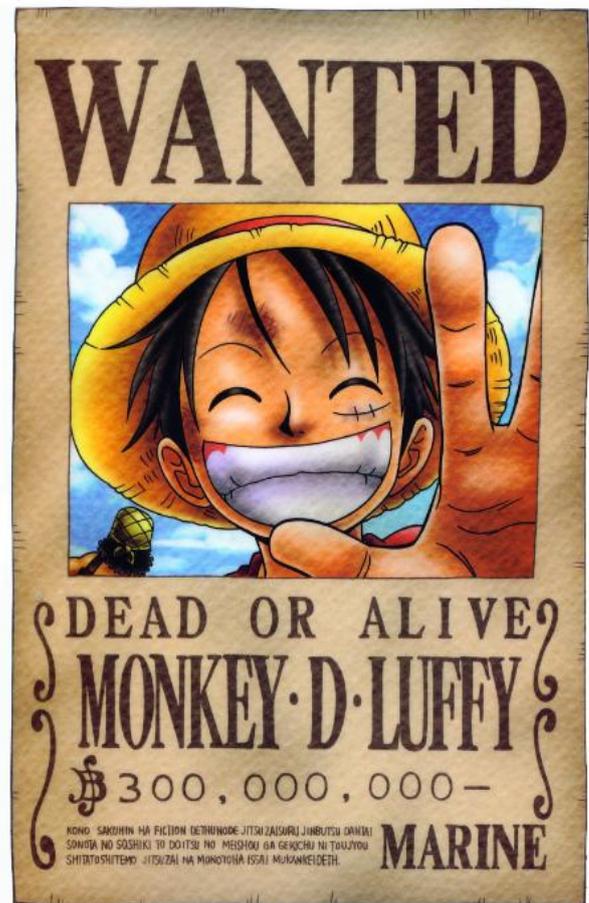
The protagonist Monkey D. Luffy, in his upper teens, departs on the voyage towards becoming the king of the pirates. In his childhood he happened to eat one of the devil's fruits (namely *Gomu Gomu no mi* – the rubber fruit) giving him the ability to stretch his body in mind-boggling ways. Increasingly becoming aware of the powers of the fruit, he has developed inhuman fighting skills such as the *Gomu Gomu no Pisutoru* (pistol) – a strong punch, and the *Gomu Gomu no Gatoringu Gan* (Gattling Gun) – multiple rapid blows. The fruit also protects him – he can't be killed by blows but can only be sliced or pierced to death. However, the people who have eaten a devil's fruit have one major weakness. They become hammers – they lose the ability to swim. But Luffy has already made his career choice. And he has the best reason for not falling into the water.

Luffy has, after 120 episodes, already beaten the hell out of a lot of different pirate crews – a bunch of fish people, some other wielders of devil fruit power, like Buggy the Clown, who, differently from Luffy, can't be sliced to death, and Captain Smoker, of the Marine forces, who not only constantly smokes two cigars but also has eaten the *Moku Moku no mi* – a devil's fruit that enables him to generate, manipulate and become smoke. Luffy is also on his way towards forming his very own pirate crew having recruited Roronoa Zoro – a man who dreams of becoming the world's finest swordsman, by using his self-invented three sword technique (one sword in each hand and one where? Of course – between his teeth.), the eternal liar and do-it-yourself chemist Usopp, the female thief and navigator Nami, the hard-kicking cook Sanji and a reindeer who ate a devil's fruit called *Hito hito no mi* making him become a reindeer-man.

Luffy's crew always have fun, they think about each other, but they never forget their own individual goals. Nobody reduces him- or herself to just a tool for the others. Still, each of them tries to do what they can for the others. They also have a strong sense of belonging, for which they use the word *nakama*. And most importantly, they never kill any of their enemies. So, some people like the series for the cool fighting scenes, others for the depictions of friendship, and some just for understanding the discursive construction of organization in Japanese popular culture. Right now I follow the Luffy crew in a struggle against the pirate Crocodile who is part of the *Shichibukai* – seven pirates who have allied themselves with the World Government. This is all for now.

All episodes of One Piece are available on the Internet. Check it out!

Thomas



Jan Schapper (Australian Rep)

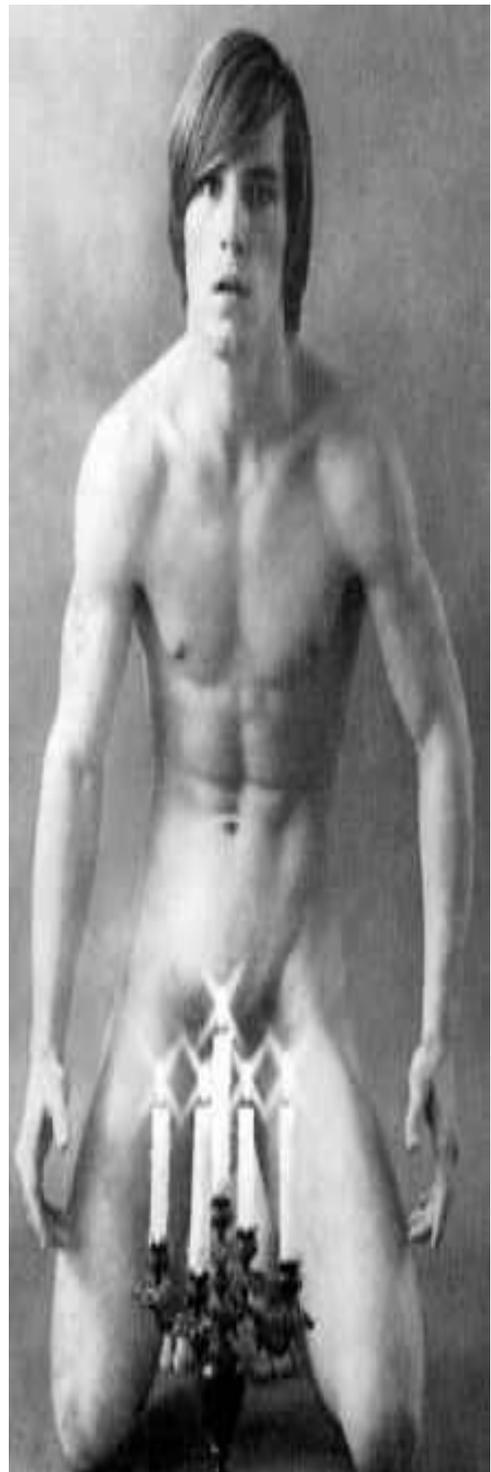
It is a bit hard to give thought to serious matters as I write this on the day preceding *Cup Day* in Melbourne. For the rest of the world who has no idea to what I am referring, this is Melbourne Cup Day, the star event of the Spring Racing Carnival (see <http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au/articles/melbournecup/>). This one horse race of less than 4 minutes' duration is of such significance that we in Victoria are granted a public holiday for the event. Indeed the Spring Racing Carnival that includes 89 race meetings over 50 days across the state has become a marketers' and retailers' delight as men and women tart up in their spring racing clothes, and hats (or fascinators) and "hit the track". Because the Cup runs on the first Tuesday in November, it has now also become tradition for people to make a "long weekend" of it and take Monday off work. Indeed, there are many businesses that are closed on both Monday and Tuesday.

This all sounds like such a cliché – Australia – uncultured, obsessed with gambling, sport loving and the land of the long weekend. In this instance, I am afraid it seems to be true.

But life in Australia is not just the racing or cricket or footy or any other distraction. There are more significant issues that require our consideration. Such as our response to refugees/ asylum seekers who escape their countries of origin in leaking boats; the Australian response to the United Nations conference on climate change in Copenhagen; the government's "intervention" strategies in Australia's indigenous communities; the widening gulf between our social classes and for all of us, the growing realisation that our daily lives are unavoidably being shaped by our climate.

In Melbourne, as we enter what is widely forecast to be a shocker of a summer, our water dams are currently at 37.9% capacity. Many or most of us have become water-wise – installing water tanks, capturing kitchen, bathroom and laundry water for use in our toilets and/ or gardens, planting drought resistant gardens and so on as we prepare for what is understood to be a foreseeable future of "drought". And in the suburbs, not just the bush, people are preparing bushfire plans for again what is forecast to be an even worse bushfire season than 2008-2009.

With these issues as the background to life in Australia, preparations have already begun for the 2010 Australasian Caucus of SCOS (ACSCOS) planned for end of November/ early December, 2010 in Melbourne. The Call for Papers will be posted shortly, but for those who are forward planners, do circle these dates in your diary. Appropriate to our times, the conference theme is **Heat**. The conference may not be as steamy as Joe Dallesandro in Andy Warhol's *Heat*, but we guarantee you can dress up (or down) and look hot, discuss the latest hot topics and then check out Melbourne's hot spots. More details to follow from Julie.WolframCox@deakin.edu.au and Jan.Schapper@buseco.monash.edu.au



Joe Dallesandro *Candelabra*

Melbourne, 2 November, 2009

Tales from the Field

Dr. Zoe Bertgan – over to you Zoe!

I must write briefly and quickly. The city of Idaho forbids people from showing their buttocks in public, largely to curb erotic dance parlors. There are some exemptions, including dance, ballet, music or dramatic performances, or artistic displays; nudity during hockey practice isn't on the list. You can imagine my surprise then when studying puck reverb stochastics on the back of a research grant I am spending with my good colleague Bull McKulvey. It seems I'm always condemned to ethnography in these notes from the field, even if going native has not always been my strong point. Bull was there with his old clipboard in hand, theodolite, chrome cod piece and stopwatch, his breath freezing in the form of small mist globules that hung for a moment in front of his mouth before crashing to the floor with a crystalline explosion. His young research assistant, Bella Pasta, was more useful tracing particle trajectory on Feynman scatter diagrams; but old Bull is still analogue pen and pencil which he knows risks losing the subtleties of perturbation expansion on a Murray Gell-Mann option. Digression aside, I was attired, please note, in a rather more elegant field costume, complete with a silver fox Eskimo pompom style winter fur hat. Sweet Lord if those 17 year old boys and gals didn't just start losing a glove here, or face mask there, each time they lost a goal. This had turned into a game of strip ice-hockey. The young boy goalkeeper seemed to bear the brunt of this forfeiture rule. We were reminded of course of all those initiation rituals, as recounted in the classics of organization studies – Roy, Burawoy, Turner, Thompson and Son, et al. With the score 23-10 to the visitors, the poor young boy was all blue and knobby-kneed, skinny little sticks for legs with only a thin whisper of a downy covering to keep him warm. Unfortunately he affected that kind of hangdog countenance, an open-mouth breather with dropped shoulders and long long arms that meant his knuckles dragged on the floor as he moved. I have to say, though, that for large parts of the game he didn't drop a ball. However, at one point he did get stuck to the ice after making the mistake of falling backwards and then immediately trying to recover into a seated position. This is not standard coaching practice with a full set of clothes, but buffed up at minus 24 it is certainly not advisable. Despite his protests, both teams took great delight as they gathered in a circle to watch the spectacle. One of his colleagues then performed a swift cell-phone "happy slap", which was cruelly captured as a Feynman trace on Bella's apparatus. Old Bull was by now half past five in an angular lean of 130degrees walking around in small circles, or more accurately articulating a short paramabolic whilst reciting a short prayer from his hand held Gideon's. Our data was in disarray, and the whole day of research was in danger of becoming a farce. I don't mind admitting that it was I who reported the incident, and I have been reassured by Boise police spokeswoman Lynn Hightower, that an investigation is pending. Science must prevail.

Calls and announcements

Call for Papers for a Special Issue of *Organization: The Critical Journal of Organization, Theory and Society* on: 'Organizing Christmas and Beyond'

Guest Editors:

Philip Hancock, University of Warwick, UK
Alf Rehn, Åbo Akademi University, Finland

From Valentine's Day to Diwali, from Thanksgiving to the Day of the Dead, cultural festivities provide an excuse for producing, consuming and organizing. On a global scale, however, few surpass the economic significance of Christmas. In countries where Christmas is a state or religious sponsored festival it accounts for up to 60% of the average retail store's annual turnover. Even where this is not the case, its impact is significant. In China, for instance, more is now spent at Christmas than during the traditional Mid-Autumn Festival. Furthermore, in 2007 the country exported \$13.4 million worth of artificial Christmas trees and \$142.6 million worth of Christmas tree ornaments to the US alone, a trade that is, for some, associated more with the prevalence of sweatshop working conditions than it is with the proliferation of peace and goodwill. It is not purely as an economic event that Christmas and what one might term its associated festivities are significant, however. They also require the mobilization of vast organizational and logistical resources. In the UK, for instance, the Royal Mail delivers around 150 million cards and packets during the pre-Christmas period; a figure that rises to around 20 billion in the US. Festive events such as Christmas are also often high on the organizational agenda of individual households as they cater for, and entertain, not only their usual members but also scores of relatives, friends and casual acquaintances. In order to manage what are often such stressful demands, a significant self-help industry has emerged to service this increasingly profitable market. This ranges from the mass provision of magazines and websites, to the individualized services of personal planners and even Christmas consultants amongst others. Christmas, along with its associated festivities, can, therefore, be viewed as a nexus at which a range of organizational questions and problematics are thrown into stark relief. Yet despite this, they have received little sustained consideration from within the field of organization studies. In order to address this lack of attention we invite both theoretical and empirical submissions that critically explore, but are not limited to, festive themes:

The globalization and homogenization of festivity
Finance, markets and the Christmas hiatus
The festive labour process
Festive commercialization, organizational excess and waste
Ethnic and spiritual identity in the Christmas workplace
The aesthetic and spatial characteristics of festive business
Representation of festive organization
Festive tourism and cultural identity
Gender and the sexualization of festive labour
Domestic organization at Christmas and beyond

Submission: Papers must be submitted electronically by 30th April 2010, but not before 31st March 2010, to SAGETrack at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/organization>. Manuscripts should be prepared according to the guidelines published in *Organization* and on the journal's website. Papers should be no more than 8,000 words, excluding references, and will be blind reviewed following the journal's standard review process. For further information, please contact one of the guest editors: Philip Hancock (philip.hancock@wbs.ac.uk) or Alf Rehn (alfrehn@mac.com)



Work, Play & Boredom

An *ephemera* conference at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland, 5-7 May 2010

Call for papers and details at: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/conference/>

Deadline for Abstracts: 31 January 2010

3rd Conference of Practical Criticism in the Managerial Social Sciences

University of Leicester, 21st-22nd April, 2010

Call for Papers

Background

Occasioned by a sense that there has occurred an atrophy of the critical function in the academic study of management, two Conferences of Practical Criticism in the Social Sciences of Management (PC Conferences) have so far been held at the University of Leicester School of Management. Both gatherings were considered very useful and enjoyable by those who attended; the presentations and debate being of a high standard. A selection of the papers from the 2007 conference was published in *ephemera*, 8, 4 (Dec. 2008) and a further selection from the 2008 conference is to appear early in 2010, published by Mayfly Press. Thus encouraged, we invite submissions for a Third PC Conference which will be held on the 21st and 22nd April 2010, also at University of Leicester School of Management.

Rationale

As the strong programme in the sociology of science reminds us, there are centripetal tendencies at work in any formally-open field of enquiry. Where careers are made on the basis of 'becoming an authority', that authority is routinely exercised through the various modalities of what Bourdieu called 'professorial power'. So it is that examinerships, appointments committees, editorships and the advisory boards of grant-giving bodies become instruments of patronage through which loyalists are infiltrated into positions of influence. Thus consolidated through networks of alliances, professorial power is in a strong position to suppress any interrogation of its academic basis.

Coexisting with these authoritarian tendencies, the social sciences of management have also undergone a kind of Balkanisation. The uncertain and contested relationship between management research and practice, has made it possible for the energetic and determined scholar to fashion 'new' fields of knowledge as an alternative to an apprenticeship of conformity and deference. Once institutionalised, academic authority in these new fields is able to consolidate itself through the mechanisms of censorship and self-censorship already described.

The result of this dialectic of differentiation and conformity is a deformation of the critical process in management research. There is criticism a-plenty between the quasi-independent fiefdoms into which the field has fragmented but little of it within them. Between academic regimes, there are exchanges of critical position-statements but there is little detailed re-appraisal of particular pieces of research except insofar as they embody the approach of a particular school. Experience suggests that criticism of this first type ('paradigm wars') is largely ignored, possibly because it poses no threat to authority relationships within the academic regimes at which it is directed. Criticism of the second type, on the other hand – that which concerns the quality of research *within* a particular idiom - is fundamental to academic production because what stands in the literature can be legitimately cited in argument. Such criticism, however, remains very much the exception, because of the obvious threat which it poses to academic authority. On the assumption that their refereeing and editorial procedures are a sufficient guarantee of what they publish, journals appear to operate a kind of double jeopardy rule, wherein that which has survived the refereeing process is normally exempt from subsequent re-evaluation. The notes of dissent which occasionally accompany some articles are only an apparent exception since these ordinarily originate in the refereeing process itself. Thus insulated from criticism, the standing of the authority-figures within particular academic regimes becomes both self-confirming and self-perpetuating. Their standing as academics is attested by a mass of citing publications certified by a refereeing process which simultaneously refracts their own authority and protects it.

Observing similar processes of collusion around the manufacture of reputations in the literary London of the 1920s, the literary critic F.R. Leavis coined the evocative term 'flank-rubbing'. In these terms, the Leicester Conference of Practical Criticism is directed against flank-rubbing and its consequences in the social sciences of management. Its principle means of doing so have been loosely modelled on the close-reading techniques of practical criticism pioneered by Leavis' mentor I.A. Richards. Particular works by academics who are prominent within their fields of study have been subject to a detailed examination in respect of the arguments they make, the evidence and the representations of previous scholarship on which they are based and the validity of their claims to have made important and original contributions. What is to be scrutinised, in other words, are the standards of scholarship which are being implicitly promulgated through the influence-networks of managerial social science.

That said, the form which contributions might take is flexible. Some contributions to the first two conferences have examined the processes of refereeing and reputation-building in themselves, sometimes in general terms, sometimes with reference to particular cases. Others have been aimed at a revision of our view of the corpus of scholarship on management, seeking to resuscitate scholarly contributions which have been obliterated by the contemporary noise of reputation-building. What matters is that contributions should be aimed at opening up the process of academic production to critical scrutiny where presently it is closed. The ultimate aim, perhaps a long-term one in the current circumstances, is to encourage a culture of critical reading in management academia, one in which the validity-claims of what is represented as the production of knowledge are subjected to a closer scrutiny than is presently the case.

Submission and Selection of Papers

Papers will be selected by a committee which includes Peter Armstrong, Stephen Dunne, Simon Lilley, Geoff Lightfoot and Campbell Jones of Leicester University and Cliff Oswick of Queen Mary, University of London.

Please send abstracts of 400-800 words, via e-mail to p.armstrong@le.ac.uk or sd142@leicester.ac.uk by 31st January 2010. The abstracts should include details, where appropriate, of the work(s) to be criticised and the grounds of criticism.

Successful submissions will be notified by 28th February 2010. Complete papers should be received by 31st March 2010.

Publication

As has been the case with the previous PC Conferences, a selection of the papers will be published either in the form of a special issue of a journal or a volume of readings

CALL for PAPERS

9th International Conference on Organizational Discourse: Crises, Corruption, Character and Change

Amsterdam, Wednesday 14th July-Friday 16th July, 2010

Conference Theme

Contemporary organizing is confronted by seemingly endless 'crises' which are routinely projected through apocalyptic metaphor. Over coffee, we can skip-read through today's 'ecological catastrophe', the 'global financial meltdown' and 'the collapse of capitalism' before 'getting down to work'. All of which suggests that the distance between our discursive projections of the future and our inability to confront those possibilities has, perhaps, never been greater. In the post-whatever world we now inhabit, all appears to be simultaneously terminal and – bizarrely – transient.

Hence, the theme for the 9th Conference has a narrative focus on the discursive construction and re-construction of *crises, character, corruption and change*. At the meta-level, the conference theme is intended to elicit papers which address the discursive construction and re-construction of 'crises'. In our view, linguistic framing is a fundamental aspect of how 'crises' are being manufactured, constituted, projected, perceived and addressed (or finessed) at all levels of organization.

Perhaps most problematic is how we have depicted the *character* of these various crises for their technical and global complexity invariably engenders over-simplified description. In parallel, we appear to be experiencing a persistent growth in *corruption* as manifest in the prevalence of institutional practices which directly undermined the presumed core processes of organizations and in our accounts of such seemingly corrupt behaviour which privilege rhetorical dissimulation. These issues raise further questions regarding the problems of continuity and the scope for *change*. What is the role for, and status of, discourse(s) in relation to change (or non-change). How does discourse shape 'character-formation' and possible responses to crises and corruption?

The submission date is **15th January 2010**. Notification of acceptance of papers will be given by **5th March 2010**. Abstracts (1000 words max) should be sent as an email attachment (saved as a Word document or a text file) to **Tom Keenoy and Cliff Oswick** at: Discourse09@cardiff.ac.uk

For full details see conference web page: <http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/carbs/conferences/icod10/index.html>

Call for interest
Where Is Africa?

During and after the last Critical Management Studies conference some of us found it inevitable to ask ourselves "Where is Africa?". This question was raised not only because of the limited number of participants from African universities, but also because of a more general silence around Africa and African perspectives within CMS and more widely within management studies.

From such general observations, we started interrogating ourselves on the issue and we would like to open up this discussion to anybody interested in exploring and acting on this seeming invisibility. More specifically we would like to create a forum/space to actively promote the inclusion of African perspectives and experience within CSM debates. We are especially interested in exploring how African philosophies and practices can inform, re-articulate and advance critical management theories and practices, as well as how CMS can open up alternative narratives and understandings of mainstream histories of Africa, both past and present.

We also share the sentiment of trying to put in place proactive strategies to increase the opportunities of exchange and cooperation with scholars and researchers based in African countries.

There are some ideas that have come out so far, including organizing a stream at the next CMS in 2011 as well as an event/workshop around May/June 2010. We have just started our thinking and we very much look forward to other contributions to develop further this initial set of ideas.

Therefore, we would like to encourage you to join our group (<http://cmsorg.wikispaces.com/Africa+%26+CMS>) as well as to circulate this announcement to anyone who you think may be interested in developing and contributing to such a project.

Thank you in advance for your interest,

Alessia Contu, Emanuela Girei, Olufemi Lawal, Yaqub Murray, Nceku Nyathi
<http://cmsorg.wikispaces.com/Africa+%26+CMS>

...and finally

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of *Notework*. Please continue to support your locally global SCOS museletter by sending your contributions to us. Any suggestions for new features, don't hesitate to contact us.

Your new editors are:

To be Confirmed

Steve Vallance
sv76@le.ac.uk