

SCOS Book

Contributors

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Introduction

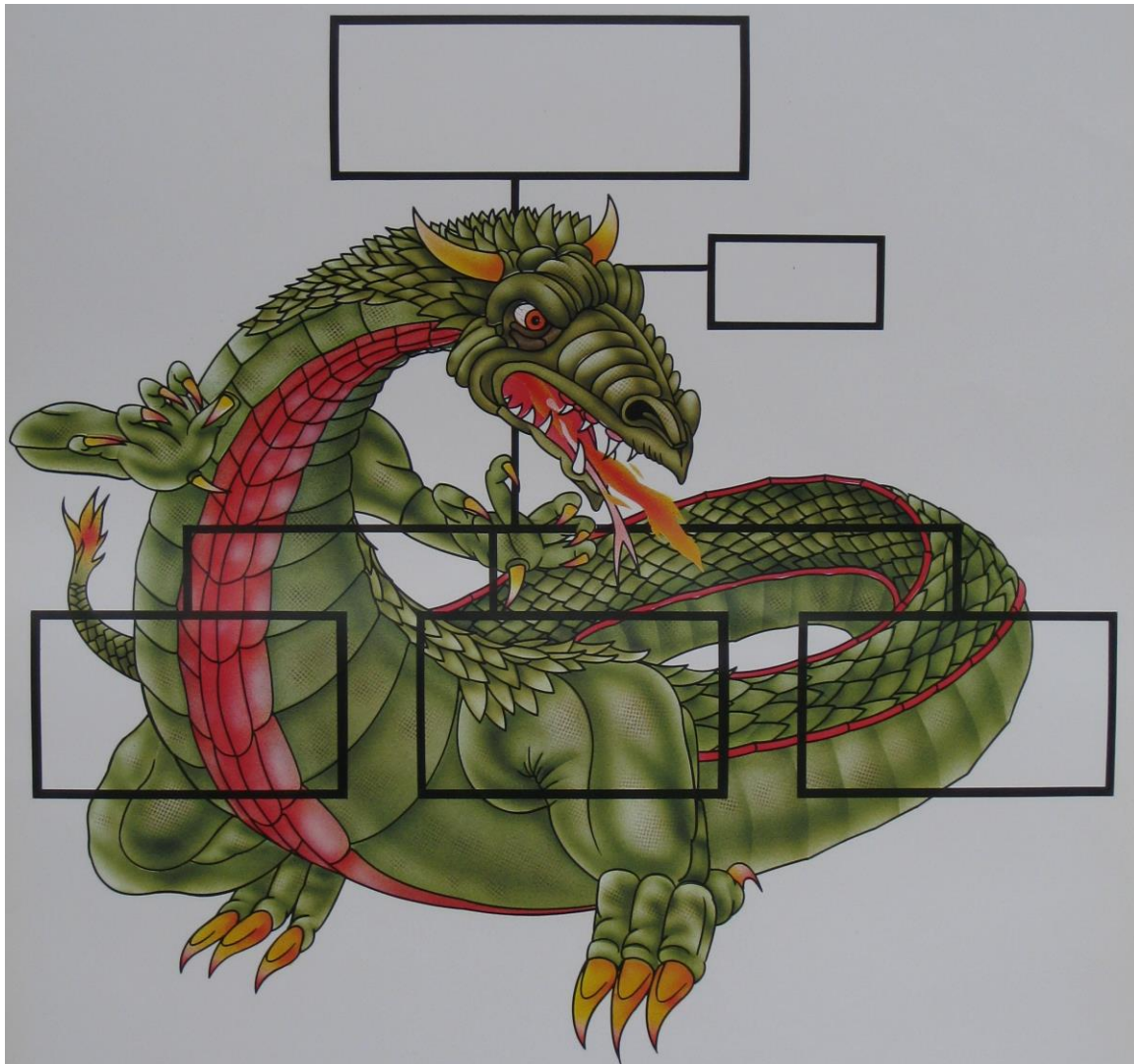
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Becoming SCOS

Releasing the Dragon

The formative years of SCOS, 1981 – 1984

Per Olof Berg



Chasing the dragon!

From the very beginning I want to say to all readers who wanted to have THE account of the very early history of SCOS. This is not it!!

This is rather a very personal, rear-mirror account of the creation and formative years of SCOS. The presentation is subjective, in some cases even purposely pervasive and at worse – invocative, in order to depict the core spirit from the time when SCOS came to life. The reason is that the history of SCOS is very far from the story of a carefully contemplated, thoroughly planned enterprise. The early formative period could rather be seen as a collective and highly affective invocation process, tossing and turning in

different directions dependent on the interests, means and resources of key actors and the perceived opportunities and restrictions (in that order!) in the academic ecology in which the SCOS initiative was “released”. To put it in another way, it was like chasing an erratic Dragon consisting of culture and symbols – trapped deep inside an organization.

The main part of the events described in this article also comes from my own memory – which over the years is getting not only more blurred – but also more sensitive and discriminative to my own values and preferences. However, to support me, I have been aided by the fact that I have stuffed my office with a large amount of written material from the early years of SCOS, including protocols from board meetings, letters to board members, a video from the Lund Conference, a complete version of the first 5 years of NoteWork, and maybe most important – my personal notes from many of the conferences from 1982- 1986. For the collection and filing of this material I am in great debt to Alexandra (Axa) Bellineto, who served as the administrative secretary of SCOS from 1982 and on, took part in all early board meetings and was also a key person in the 1984 Lund conference. I have asked her, and some other close colleagues and friends, among them; Carl Johan Asplund (first academic secretary for SCOS), Lisbeth Svengren (later secretary of SCOS), Kristian Kreiner (Member of SCOS board from 1982, and later chairman of SCOS) and Pasquale Gagliardi (member of the SCOS-board from 1983), to comment on the text.

But in the end – this is my very subjective interpretation of – the release of the Dragon!

The Zeitgeist of the 80's - the dragon cage

To understand the background to the creation of SCOS, one has to recognize that the mainstream in organization theory in the early 1980's were focused on industrial organization (e.g. Woodward 1980 and Porter 1980), economic transactions from a microeconomic perspective (e.g. Williamson 1981), and social exchange from a sociological perspective (e.g. Crozier and Thoenig 1976 and Blau 1980). The emphasis was on formal aspects of organizations and accordingly, there was a continued search for contingencies and structural efficiency (e.g. the work of the Aston Group). In 1975, Peter Blau even forcefully argued that “organization studies in the future is going to be all about mathematics!”

The influx of perspectives from academic disciplines other than microeconomics or sociology was marginal, and the prevalent research methodology applied was surveys and subsequent statistical tests! There were of course some individual studies that seriously addressed cultural issues in organizations (e.g. Pettigrew 1979), but most research in this area did not focus on culture as a phenomenon as such, but rather on culture as a managerial issue (e.g. Hofstede 1980, or Ouchi 1981).

This is not to say that there was no interest in aspects of organizations, softer than structures, hierarchies, power and contingencies. A good example is the work done in the behavioural sciences, e.g. field of organization change, and particularly in OD (organization development). Other examples were the two streams of research emanating from the Tavistock institute, i.e. the small group research carried out by

Wilfred Bion, (which was a major inspiration in my own work on “Emotional structures in organizations”) as well as the work life studies by Emery and Trist. Jim March had also challenged organization studies through his work on the technology of foolishness and the garbage can model of decision making in the middle of the 1970’s.

When it came to organizing conferences in the early 1980’s, EGOS was the main European body dedicated to the study of organizations – basically from a sociological perspective. Of the four members in the coordinating committee of EGOS at that time (generally called the Super-Egos by those of us that were not part of the inner circle), three were sociologists (Cornelius Lammers, Renate Meintz, and Catherine Balle), while the fourth member was a political scientist (Franco Ferraresi). Apart from EGOS annual conferences and regular workshops, interactions took place within the Autonomous Work Groups (AWG’s) in EGOS, for example the AWG’s on Labour Unions (Wolfgang Streek), Health Organizations (John Cullen), Public Agencies (Bob Hinings) , Structure and Process (Kas Kastelein) - representing topics that interested students of organization at this time.

However, some of us became increasingly uncomfortable with the research in the area. Or, as one of my colleagues once said after a workshop “There has to be more to organizations than just structure and power”!!!

Teasing the dragon in Glasgow 1981

It was in the zeitgeist described above, that a number of us set-in motion what later was to become SCOS, when independently of one other we attended the 5th EGOS Colloquium in Glasgow 1981. Angela Bowey from University of Strathclyde, was the host of the conference, and the conference theme was “Organizational innovation in the 1980’s”. The conference which attracted 90 participants from 19 nations, was organized in four topical tracks, of which one – by far the largest - was labelled; “The impact of organizational interpretations of change” was convened by Angela herself. In this session two papers from university of Lund were presented; a case description by Carl Johan Asplund, entitled “Closing down the Öresund Plant”, and a conceptual paper by myself, entitled “The Internal Dynamics of Organizations”. In the concurrent review by Angela she stated that:

Asplund and Berg from the University of Lund talked about their research design for a programme to study organization change. In particular, they described the case of a plant in the process of closure, and the role of myths, rituals and rumour in the process of accommodation to liquidation.

What Angela did not say in her review was that the presentations created a very heated debate indeed, particularly between myself and Barry Turner from Exeter University. Barry – who had published his book “Exploring the industrial subculture” ten years earlier – was rightly upset by the fact that we had not taken his and other scholars research into account (this was long before google scholar and other reference search engines). However, the debate became even more heated when Barry raised the issue of the ethics of researching a liquidation process, and Carl Johan (in 1981 being a very young PhD student) responded in affect “You see – I am not God am I – so how

could I answer your question"? which might be a less suitable response in an academic debate today! At this point in time Derek Pugh (professor at London Business School) stepped into the debate, stating with a calming voice that the audience (at that time rather agitated) should not just condemn new ideas from young researchers, but seriously and with open eyes look into the possibilities the new ideas carried with them!

In the break immediately after the session, Barry and I and a number of other people rushed to continue the discussion over coffee, finding out – to our surprise – that we did not only share research interests or had mutual aversion for the kind of chi square research characterizing the research of many of the invited presenters, but also that we actually shared the same views on how research should be done, and above all – the same sense of humour. Rein Nauta, then a PhD from Groningen, later professor in Psychology of Religion and Pastoral Psychology at University of Tilburg, joined the discussion and the three of us – together with a couple of other thirsty participants – quickly decided to leave the conference sessions for the day and instead continue to develop our newfound good-fellowship in a nearby pub.

It is in this pub the idea of forming – what was much later called SCOS – took place. Even though we shared a similar interest in “the soft” aspects of organizations (call it culture, symbols, or whatever) the driving force was a rebellious one – to propose the creation of an “Anti”-Work Group within EGOS, with the sole purpose of having fun, as so much of the research at that time was so terribly booooring! After a reasonable amount of beer and heavy laughing – by calling our initiative “an AWG on Organizational Symbolism”, we agreed that we could possibly gain “some” sense of legitimacy and thus also support from the Super-Egos. As everything in this world can be seen from a symbolic perspective – we also agreed that the label “organizational symbolism” was broad enough to include everything we thought could be fun, and help us to realize our motto which was formulated in the following way; “We do it for fun – as research is much too important to be taken seriously.”

In the evening the mayor of Glasgow had invited the conference participants to a reception in the city hall, and it was agreed that Rein and I should approach the Super-Egos with an “academized” version of our AWG proposal. So we did, with somewhat unsteady legs after the visit to the pub, and a considerable amount of trepidation as well as an expectancy of being treated as something that the cat has brought in from the street. Now, it didn’t turn out that bad. Supported by Jean Claude Thoenig we were asked to submit a formal application to the EGOS board to become an AWG, including names and affiliations of those behind the proposal, as well as a short summary of what we wanted to do. This was of course a problem, as we did not really know what we wanted to do (apart from having fun!), and moreover our purpose was not to become one of EGOS Autonomous Work Groups, but rather an Anti-Workgroup within EGOS! This might explain why the Super-Egos proposed that also Guiseppe Bonazzi, (with close relation to EGOS) should be part of the initiative – understandable as an “overcoat” to protect EGOS interests. Thus, the founding group of the AWG on organization symbolism consisted of the following members PO Berg (chairman), Barry Turner, Rein Nauta, Guiseppe Bonazzi and Claes Gustavsson.

However, as it turned out, Bonazzi and Gustavsson never turned up to the subsequent board-meetings or conferences and should thus not be held liable for the future development of SCOS.

Don't let the dragon out - on becoming an Anti-Work-Group within EGOS

Immediately after the Glasgow conference, the founding group started to plan upcoming activities, beginning with a meeting in London in the early fall of 1981. Prior to this kick-off, a provisional statement of the purpose and aim of the AWG was drafted. It was said in a rather uncommitted mission statement that: "the purpose of the group is to support researchers who are working in this field to initiate new research projects, and to spread information on research results to researchers outside the group." This mission statement also described our field of research in the following reasonable blurred way:

We are interested in Organizational Symbolism (symbols in organizations, symbolic behaviour in organizations, organizations as symbolic systems etc.) in all its forms. We are not working with a clear definition of what exactly we mean by the concept organizational symbolism, but want to indicate some areas that might be of interest...

In the statement we also declared that "we want to keep the group small, with an ideal size of around 10 persons..." This formulation was basically meant to create a sense of exclusivity for something that did not yet really exist, and to reduce the anxiety of the Super-Egos. This proved to be highly effective, and after communicating the AWG (which was at this time not yet accepted by EGOS), to our collegial network, the number of members grew fast, from 14 in the early fall of 1981, to more than 80 one year later.

Evidently, and with good reason, EGOS was rather suspicious of our new AWG on organization symbolism over which they had only a certain degree of control. In November 1981 I was thus called by EGOS to attend the meeting with their Coordinating Committee in Paris in November. My memory as well as the notes I took, reveals that it was not a pleasant meeting, I perceived it rather as an inquisitive challenge of the very ideas upon which our AWG rested. In my handwritten notes from the meeting I made for example the following remark: "this is an attack on my suggestionsI feel discriminatedEA had previously told me that they did not want troublemakers – and this strengthens me in my perception of EGOS."

Seen from the perspective of EGOS, that at this time was an organization in a process of formalizing and institutionalizing its operations, this form of inquisition could of course be understood as an important and necessary step in the academic quality assurance process. However, in retrospect I also think that EGOS at this time was facing its own problems, or as stated in the secretary's invitation to the meeting "Many people have voiced the need for a discussion of EGOS aims and plans", and it is quite evident that our AWG did not easily fit into such a process.

A first public note on our AWG was published in EGOS news, nr. 14, May 1981, and a first open call to join the AWG, was published in the newsletter the same year.

Planning conferences – the dragon starts to move

During the spring and summer of 1981, we also discussed our future activities primarily future workshops. Derek Pugh from London Business School who had openly backed us in Glasgow, continued to support our initiative by housing our board meetings at LBS during the first three years. To us this was an important gesture in itself, as it was the very first sign of open support for our venture from a prestigious academic institution.

In one of our first meetings, the three of us that remained from Glasgow agreed on arranging one workshop each, Barry in Exeter, Rein Nauta in Groningen and I was to organize one in Lund. As I was to spend the year 1981-82 as visiting professor at INSEAD, and Barry Turner in the pub in Glasgow had invited Rein Nauta to spend the spring term of 1982 at Exeter University (Barry's University), it was decided that we should start with what we initially called a "small workshop" at Exeter University in the summer of 1982. When this was decided, Barry quickly co-opted Bob Witkin to be part of the planning committee for Exeter, and later on to become a full member of the board with the role as SCOS "scribe". Bob's formulation skills were formidable, and he was also the one who during a board meeting in late 1981 coined the name "Standing Conference of Organization Symbolism" as the full name of our AWG, and "SCOS" as our brand.

The planning of the Exeter workshop was later relabelled to working conference and as our ambitions grew later upgraded to The first European AWG conference on Organizational Symbolism. The format of the Exeter conference became the template for subsequent conferences – even up till today if I understand it right. The first information letter that was submitted to various networks, journals, institutions and academic associations carried the following statement:

We are organizing regular conferences in Europe – at Exeter in July 1982, in Groningen in June 1983 and in Lund in September 1984. The emphasis at these conferences is very much on bold thinking, a creative opening up of the field of enquiry and receptive approaches that are both new and illuminating and a departure from the dominant rational-technical traditions. The actual organization of the conferences themselves is innovative and designed to encourage participants to bring material and ideas in various stages of completion or development from the rough-hewn model to the finished work.

The template for the Exeter Conference that gradually took shape throughout the spring of 1982, contained three active features:

The first element that early on became an important element in our conference planning, was to design the setting in a way that it was "seriously fun" for everybody involved, be it presenters, participants or of course the conference organizers themselves! This was of course related to our joint experiences from the Glasgow event and our first policy- statement "we do it for fun"- and thus by implication - not for our careers. However, at a more fundamental level the "fun" statement came to serve as an

important element in opening up collective imagination and creating an open and inquisitive conference community. A main part of the fun was to experiment with new more engaging ways of presenting research, alternative session formats, and by bringing more or less erratic and unintelligible “symbolic events” into the conference program, as eyeopeners and conversation pieces. A good example is Stephen Linstead’s memory of the SCOS conference in Lund in 1984.

I came from a little college at the bottom of the UK pecking order and met several of my heroes there - I was stunned by their approachability and that they treated me as an equal, which was from a beginning a hallmark of SCOS. I was really inspired - I wanted all conferences to be like that! My ambition became to do the keynote at a SCOS conference - the keynotes were more like performances than anything else, and instead of workshops there were “symbolic events” in the evenings - entertainment that was nevertheless part of the intellectual programme, cognitive, affective and in some cases conative simultaneously.¹

As I understand it “serious fun” is also a hallmark of SCOS conferences today, and maybe one of the explanations why they continue to produce lifelong friendship ties across disciplinary and national borders.

A second element was the way in which the conferences were communicated multidisciplinary and comprehensively – using academic networks wherever we thought there might be an interest in applying perspectives, concepts and theoretical frameworks related to culture and symbolism to the study of organizations. In fact, this multidisciplinary approach was a hallmark from the very beginning where each discipline brought its own knowledge into the field, without losing their academic identity (as opposed to cross-disciplinary research ventures). We also reached out internationally to other emerging networks, among them to a group on “organization symbolism” that had just been commenced in the US, with Tom Dandridge (SUNY) at the helm, as well as the folklorists planning a conference in the west coast of the US. The simple reason for this academically and nationally “inclusive” call-for-papers-policy was from the beginning not related to a quest for multidisciplinary research in general, but to the fact that we simply did not know in which direction we should start to look for the Dragon, and above all that we desperately needed participants to our first conference, regardless of where they came from!

A third feature that should not be underestimated concerned how to deal with financing the planning and organization of the conferences. As we had absolutely no economic resources at our disposal, costs for travel and accommodation had to be covered by the board members themselves. In one of letters ahead of the formal acceptance to be an AWG, we wrote for example that; “The AWG members cannot count on any financial support for the meetings, but have to look for their own funding. Thus, we will try to make the arrangements as cheap as possible (e.g. with accommodation in private families, student rooms etc.).” Barry Turner and Rein Nauta tried unsuccessfully to get funding for travel as well as for our meetings from various

¹ <https://vimeo.com/136999200>

Dutch and European sources. Particularly our board members from UK were desperately short of money all the time (this was during the Thatcher era in UK). I am not sure from what funds, or how much money we succeeded to obtain. I only know for sure that I used a substantial amount of my own external research grants from Sweden to fund the planning of the Exeter workshop for all of us – without the consent of my Swedish funding agency. To be frank, I think that was the best use of funding money that I have ever made! Another hallmark was to let the conferences themselves – and not SCOS as an organization, take the full financial responsibility for its conference (losses as well as profits). For example, in the case of the Lund conference in 1984, the net profit earned made it possible for our research group in Lund to finance a qualified academic secretary for more than a year! In my mind, this fostered an “entrepreneurial spirit” among the conference organizers that has been instrumental in securing a responsible and stable development over time.

The Exeter conference – awareness of the Dragon

As stated above, the lead word for all activities in SCOS at that time was to do it for fun, but the question for us was how to build that into Exeter’s three-day conference format. The solution we came up with was to experiment with unconventional presentation formats, like roleplay, dramatic acting and other forms of performances, and to mix the academic content with “symbolic events” for example a theatre performance. We were also very uncertain of how many persons we would be able to attract to the conference, and thus opened up to market the conference to all possible academic as well as professional fields. In the end 33 participants from all over Europe attended the Exeter conference, coming from areas such as: landscape architecture (Boberg), aesthetics (Strati), Jungian psychology (Tatham), business administration (Gamberg), engineering (Kreiner), religion (Nauta) and performances including the participants enactment of the procrustean myth to illustrate the dental service system in Sweden (Åredahl).

The highlight of the conference was however the totally unintelligible symbolic drama that was played out by the student drama company at Exeter University at the first night of the conference, leading to extended and heated discussions on the very meaning of symbolism. Barry has asked the students well ahead of the conference to keep the performance as a secret not only to the participants but also to the conference organizers. Later on, we found out that the students had indeed forgotten about the conference and its theme, and when reminded they decided to walk in and randomly do whatever they felt like there and then! – to us who were planning the conference, this was fascinating as it was “serious fun”, and as far from traditional conference events that we could imagine, and we promptly decided that this was something that had to be repeated in future conferences. The “symbolic event” has after that been a standing feature in SCOS conferences, and in retrospect one might say that this was the first time that the “Dragon of organizations” was let out of its academic confinement.

The outcome of the Exeter conference was not only a rapidly growing number of people becoming aware of our network, or the initiation of new research projects, but

above all a slowly growing realization that there might actually be some academic substance in the field of Organization Symbolism – and not only fun!

Notework as fieldnotes from the pursuit of the Dragon

From the very beginning it was evident that we needed some sort of newsletter in order to communicate our ideas and activities to ourselves, as well as to similar groups around the world. Thus, in the fall of 1982 we published a Newsletter for SCOS, later named Notework. The first newsletter was edited and published in Lund, with Carl Johan Asplund (Lund) as editor. He continued in that role until 1984, when Kristian Kreiner (Copenhagen) took over, followed by Lisbeth Svengren (Lund), Antonio Strati (Trento) Stephen Linstead (Lancaster) and Bob Grafton Small (St Andrews), as I remember it. From the very beginning, the idea was to be as open as possible to new ideas, concepts and ventures in our field. This worked well in the beginning, when most of the content announced new conferences and workshops. However, over the years, it also led to some strange contributions, not even remotely related to our area, as well as some articles that for many of us were totally unintelligible - giving us an early sign of the coming of the postmodern tradition in organization research. This was of course fun, but over time made the need for “real” academic outlet for our academic research necessary, thus Dagoon (thank you for the struggle with this magnificent little journal Vincent Degot), and later Studies in Cultures, Organizations

STANDING CONFERENCE ON ORGANISATIONAL SYMBOLISM - EUROPE

CONSTITUTION

1. NAME: The name of the organisation is Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism.
2. AIM: To provide an international forum to promote and disseminate research and scholarship on organisational symbolism, particularly in a European context.
3. FUNCTIONS: The functions include:
 - (a) organising international conferences and workshops;
 - (b) co-ordinating the publication of research results relating to the aims of the Standing Conference;
 - (c) encouraging the provision of funds to support research in this area;
 - (d) furthering the recognition of organisational symbolism as an area of scholarly work;
 - (e) publishing the Newsletter.
4. MEMBERSHIP: Membership is open to any person with an active interest in the study of organisational symbolism.
5. STRUCTURE: The structure of the Standing Conference consists of
 - A General Meeting: all members are entitled to attend the General Meeting which will take place every two years, and to vote for members of the Executive Committee. Each member has one vote and postal votes are permitted.
 - An Executive Committee: this Committee consists of a co-ordinator, an assistant co-ordinator, a treasurer, a secretary, and two ordinary members. The Committee has power to co-opt additional members.
6. FINANCIAL RESOURCES: The financial resources of the Standing Conference are derived chiefly from:
 - membership fees
 - grants, awards and donations
 - payments for work undertaken by the organisation
 The Treasurer is responsible to the Executive Committee for the organisation's finances.

agreed on 10th December, 1982, by the following members of that Committee elected by the General Meeting at Exeter in July, 1982.

Carl-Johan Asplund, Secretary,
SWEDEN.

Per-Olof Berg, Co-ordinator,
SWEDEN.

Vincent Degot, Member of Co-ordinating Committee,
FRANCE.

Rein Nauta, Co-Co-ordinator,
THE NETHERLANDS.

Barry Turner, Treasurer,
ENGLAND.

Bob Witkin, Member of Co-ordinating Committee,
ENGLAND.

The above Statutes have been approved by the constitutive meeting of the Executive Committee held in Paris on 10th December, 1982, and

and Societies (1995 - 2001), renamed 2002 to *Culture and Organization*, the current SCOS in-house journal.

In a provisional board meeting in Paris in December 10th 1982, the draft to a SCOS manifesto was created and signed by the SCOS board at that time.

The interest for SCOS, continued to grow, and in October 1982² it included 80 members from 15 countries and across many disciplines. In a call for the Groningen Workshop on Culture and Symbolism in Organizations issued in late 1982, it was for example stated that: “many different disciplines contribute to the study of organization Symbolism, e.g. management, economics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, folklore, psychoanalysis, comparative religion, literature and linguistics.” This gives a good impression of the disciplinary scope of SCOS at that time.

The Groningen Conference

After the Exeter conference, the planning of SCOS’ next venture, the conference at the University of Groningen started, headed by Rein Nauta and supported by the Faculty of Theology and Religions Studies. The conference attracted 30 participants, again from a wide spectrum of European countries and academic disciplines.

The call for papers to the Groningen Workshop contained four themes that also reflected this disciplinary span; Rituals and ceremonies, totemism, style and symbols, and power and status – in organizations. The open creativity of SCOS at that time could also be seen from the forms in which the participants were expected to present their contributions, stating that apart from traditional papers, “films plays, cases or exercises are welcomed.”

This conference was characterized above all by the experiment with alternative ways to jointly explore the field of culture and symbolism in organizations. It is without doubt the most experimental of all early SCOS conferences, where we tried out more or less (mostly less though) successful new ways of using a conference setting to explore our field. This included for example videos, theatre, “theory dramas” (once again performing the procrustean myth), and the theoretical hot- seat (taking an idea from gestalt therapy and applying it in an academic setting).

The “theoretical hot-seat” particularly stands out in my memory, as Kristian Kreiner (Copenhagen) and myself without any preparation was to take on Bob Cooper’s version of postmodern organization theory – a concept that was utterly diffuse to myself (coming from business administration), and Kristian (coming from engineering). Not surprisingly, the session ended up in total disaster when we challenged our “theoretical client” Bob on how to “measure” a grand narrative. It became even more horrible when the client asked us on our views on the latest editions of Lyotard, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, which we later found out were not examples of premium wine producers.

² From the cover letter to the SCOS application form, 1982-10-15

However, not everything in Groningen was experiments, but also serious business. During the conference, the SCOS policy in the form of the “Groningen Manifesto”, was discussed and accepted. Among other thing, it stated for the first time the way in which we expressed our field:

SCOS draws its energy from a growing interest in establishing more broadly based approaches to the study of organizations, particularly those approaches which treat the organization as a “way of being”, or as a living and lived reality for its members and above all, as a cultural and, therefore symbolic entity.

(Source: The Groningen Manifesto – The SCOS Policy)

The manifesto was mainly drafted by Bob Witkin and is still today one of the best definitions of the very core of the organization symbolism field that I have come across.

The international hunt for Dragons

However, the most important decision coming out of Groningen was the decision that SCOS should go for its “First International Conference” at Lund University in the late spring of 1984. The reason for this was very simple – to be successful in the academic field, SCOS needed to be visible, seen and eventually respected. The problems we were facing is illustrated by a short episode.

In the spring of 1983, I was invited to the Organizational Folklore Conference in Santa Monica, organized by Michel Owen Jones and David Boje from UCLA. On the way to the conference, Larry Greiner from USC introduced me to a tall aristocratic Italian business school dean named Pasquale Gagliardi, who incidentally was to take part in the same conference. On our way to the conference Pasquale and I found that we shared the same ideas on the importance of the multifaceted European-based research tradition in general, and of culture and symbolism in organizations in particular. As my fellow members of the SCOS board had asked me to look into ways to openly collaborate with our US colleagues, I succeeded to arrange a meeting with the two organizers, and quickly adopted Pasquale into the SCOS community as a support for the meeting. Here we encountered two men dressed in pin-striped suits who opened the conversation with “How nice of you to come and see us, as we have been thinking of going international with our network you see”, thus leaving little room for doubt either of their intent, or on their view of the status of European research in their area. In the elevator after a rather abrupt end of the meeting, Pasquale and I looked at each other and said “This was a declaration of war - let’s go for a really big conference in Lund.”

Another international landmark at this time was the conference on “Organization Culture and the Meaning of Life in the Workplace” in Vancouver (arranged by Peter Frost), which attracted around 80 participants from the US (I think Pasquale Gagliardi and I were the only Europeans), basically from the area of business administration. The key issue in the conference was whether corporate culture and organization

symbolism had anything new to offer, or if it was just another “trivial and short-lived fad” as Charles Perrow vehemently argued. To be fair to Perrow, my impressions today is that he was quite right given the content in most of the presentations made at the conference.

Lund 1984 - The dragon breaks out of the organization chart!

In the meantime, the planning of the Lund conference continued, and we used every resource available to communicate the upcoming conference to possible participants – wherever they came from, geographically or disciplinary. Inspired by the contributions received for the Groningen Conference, the board members in the London Board meeting in 1984 also listed a set of more or less fanciful themes, such as: The death of reason and the birth of hope; Fun and variety; Dutch courage; The importance of not being earnest; Not for real – or a real thing; and then my personal favourite; Symbolism is a word that scares us.

However, in spite of these conference themes, the marketing campaign was very successful, resulting in submissions from all over the world, sometimes accompanied with requests that were not easy to meet. A couple of our Czech colleagues for example asked if they could pay the conference fee in kind, by bringing us bohemian crystal glass, and others, due to lack of funding asked for free room and boarding. As a way to deal with the number of applications, a large group of the PhD students in Business Administration at Lund University were engaged, some of them later also deeply involved in the SCOS community.

Our target for the conference was 200 attendants, which at that time was more than what the EGOS conferences used to attract, and it was way beyond the previous corporate culture conferences in Santa Monica and Vancouver. However, when the conference started we had over 350 persons attending, which was close to a nightmare given our very limited financial resources. As earlier said, the main financial source was a research grant I had obtained before for a different project. Luckily, though, this grant helped us not only to finance the planning of the conference, but also to hire Alexandra Bellineto, the main administrator for the conference.

In addition, to further strengthen the economic resources, a Management Track, consisting of “applied contributions” was offered the business community, that was asked to pay three times the academic conference fee. An interesting observation was that the participants in this track soon migrated over into the academic tracks, which they thought were much more interesting! On the other hand, researchers kept sneaking into the management track, partly due to the fact that coffee and snacks were served for free between the presentations!

The Talking -stick with a dragons head!

Inspired by the native Indian “talking-stick”, that was used to keep the various speakers on time in the “Organization Culture and the Meaning of Life in the Workplace” conference in Vancouver, I introduced at the Lund conference a Viking inspired talking stick with a dragon head. The stick was effectively used to keep the

rather chaotic conference not only on time – but also on track – and was frequently utilized to open the various symbolic events – reasonable on time. The SCOS talking-stick was then used as the semi-official ceremonial artefact for all SCOS conferences until the INSEAD conference in 1989. Shortly after the opening ceremony at INSEAD it disappeared, and rumours said that was due to the fact that it was seen as a “phallic symbol”, representing a paternalistic perspective on research and thus a disgrace to the openminded SCOS community. As I carved the talking stick myself out of a branch of juniper wood, I am very curious to hear from anyone who might know what happened to it, and where it is today.☺

Symbolic events – the Dragon waving its tail

The Lund conference contained three receptions of which some to our surprise turned out to become symbolic events. The first was the solemn opening ceremony in Lund cathedral, where we had asked the female dean of the cathedral to make an opening speech and arrange some sort of solemn ceremony to signify the opening. The opening speech by the dean on symbolism versus diabolism, was appreciated, even some of our more piteous Catholic as well as Arabic participants objected to seeing a woman in a clerical position. However, when it thereafter turned out that the solemn ceremony consisted of ten young female dancers appearing on the church floor accompanied by church organ music, the comfort zone for some of the participants was definitely trespassed, and forced the conference organizers as well as the other SCOS board members to stay up long at night to explain the meaning of it all.

We had a similar experience at the gala dinner the last night of the conference, where the “entertainment” organized by the PhD students from Lund that helped us out with the conference, was to be a surprise to all of us – again including the members of the SCOS board. In this case the entertainment consisted of an “amateur dancing company” from the rural part of southern Sweden. The dancers were dressed in rather flimsy and reasonably revealing costumes. The dinner audience (particularly the sociologists) became quieter and quieter as the show proceeded. When it ended with a can-can dance in which the dancers at final moment were throwing up their skirts each one revealing a letter on their bum, together forming the (misspelled) message S-E-E Y-O-U I-N A-N-T-B-I-E-S, as a first call for the 1985 Antibes conference, the catastrophe was total!

The dragon is finally recognized!

As far as I know, the Lund conference was also a rare conference to use video as the media for conference proceedings. With the help of Robert Poupard (later organizing the 1986 conference on “Cultural Engineering” in Montreal), a number of participants were picked out, and “dragged down to a subterranean room where they were interviewed, usually after their presentation but occasionally before if they'd had chance to read it”³. Those of you interested in this time document of questionable

³ Stephen Linstead, commenting on his own experience of being interviewed for the video.

The video contains presentations from the following participants; Harry Abravanel, Omar Aktouf, Brenda Beck, Tom Dandridge, William de Marco, Anders Ekstrom, Pasquale Gagliardi, Bengt-Åke Gustavsson, Jeremy Hendricks, Steven

value please use this link: <https://vimeo.com/136999200>. The rationale for this was to sell the videos in order to contribute to financing the conference. However - the outcome was quite the opposite! In all eleven copies were sold, hardly paying for the video cassettes used for the recording. As a 35 years old time-document of culture and symbolism research though – it has a value as it illustrates that what was important for us in SCOS at that time, was not formal positions or academic rank, but rather the novelty of the presenter's ideas. A characteristic feature of the SCOS community at that time – including those in the video - was in fact that not one member of the SCOS board (and only Guje Sevón of those appearing in the video) yet had an academic chair or a tenured full professorship.

After the conference, the membership also continued to rise, and in early 1985, Notework announced that 130 scholars were registered as members of SCOS. EGOS also noticed the growth of its small rugged AWG, and Flemming Agersnap, then chairman of EGOS who was also participating in the Lund Conference remarked that SCOS by now were drawing more people to its conferences than EGOS did, and he could not understand why.

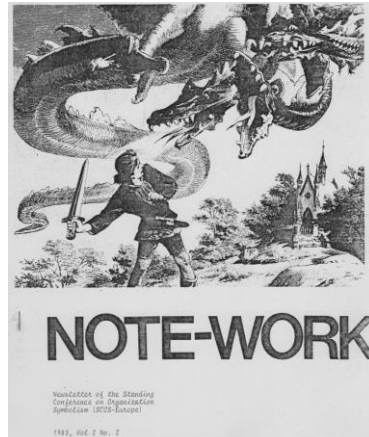
What kind of animal was the Dragon we pursued?

Described above is the first three years of the pursuit of the elusive Dragon – an enigmatic animal of some kind, that has broken out of its cage with serious consequences for its academic environment. When we in SCOS started to use the symbol of the dragon, it was representing the hidden, forceful, primitive, sometimes vicious forces in the organization, that according to our academic colleagues needed to be locked in by structures, domesticated by the power of rules and institutions, or even killed (through ignorance or denial) by self-proclaimed academic knights. However, to us the dragon came to stand for something very different – a new unexplored perspective on organizations where the dragon was guarding a treasure-chest filled with secrets of cultures signs and symbols.

Our idea from the beginning was essentially that in order to get a hold of that treasure-chest, we needed a group of people with the courage to release the dragon, or in less symbolic terms, to open up for all possible disciplines, perspectives, methods and ideas in studying “the living and lived reality in organizations” – from a symbolic perspective. This ambition is well reflected in the images of dragons that started to appear in Notework from the very beginning. For example, the first issue of Notework, featured a man trying to trap a dragon with the help of a horse-lure ⁴, and the cover of Notework 1983, shows a heroic knight, fighting a vicious dragon.

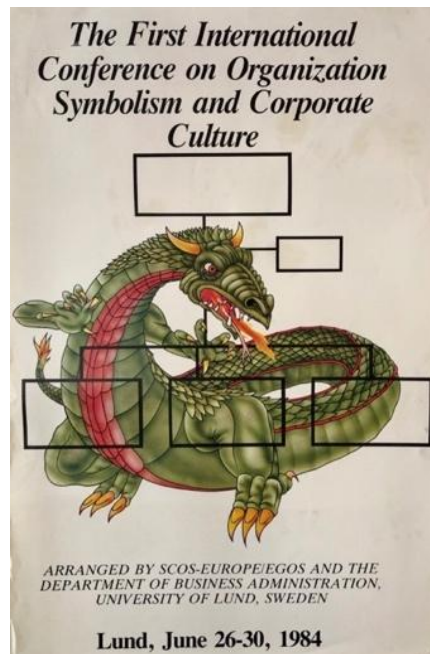
Linstead, John Martin, Klara Pihljamäki, Robert Poupard, Dick Raspa, Guje Sevón, Burkard Sievers, Steven Smith, Barry Turner, Robert Witkin and Åke Åredahl.

⁴ Source Newsletter for the AWG on Organization Symbolism, Fall 1982



I am not quite sure what these images stand for, but I have a weak memory that it should illustrate a way to kill the dragon, thereby allowing us to dissect it! What I am sure of though was that the mythological power of the scary dragon, would draw attention to our venture.

Over time though, the images of the dragon in relation to man changed rather dramatically, and the very concept of the superiority of man shifted to the image of the beauty and power of the dragon itself, breaking out of its confinement in the organization structure, as in the poster from the 1984 Lund Conference. An important element in the marketing of the conference was the folder and poster, containing the dragon that breaks out of the organization chart (see the figure below). The first version of the drawing was done without the organization chart, making the dragon just cute, hence the artist Sverker Holmberg was later asked to add the chart to communicate the unknown, undomesticated, dangerous and enchanting inner life in organizations that was to be the theme of the conference.



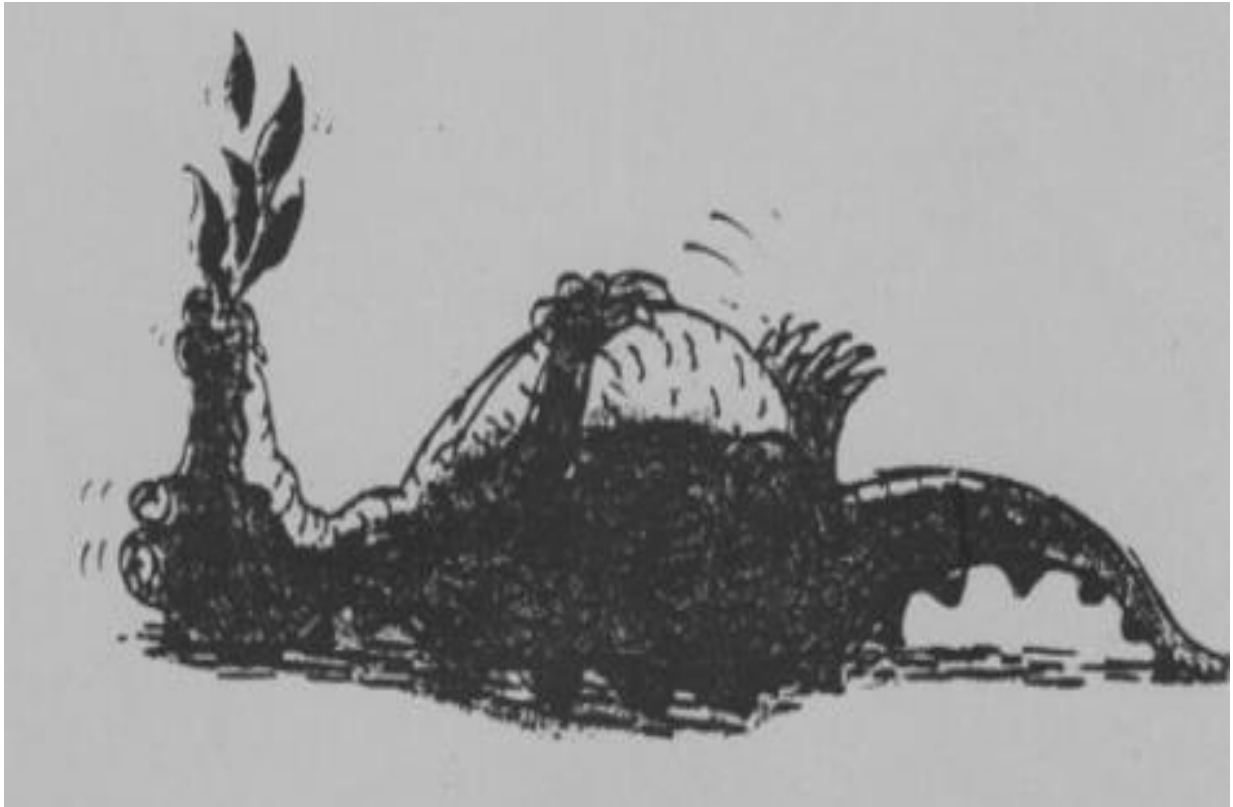
Burkhardt Sievers, the leading SCOS “dragon historian”, who has regularly studied the SCOS dragons said for example that:

The heroic solution of killing the dragon obviously is the predominant one in our western tradition. The magic creators of the SCOS logo around P. O. Berg have deliberately not chosen the image of the knight fighting the dragon because that would have given "too much power to the knight as being a symbol of the victory of the modern technocratic society over the primitive and instinctive dimensions of life"⁵

Quite different from this is the image of the fat and lazy dragon that appeared on the cover of Notework's critical “Wither SCOS” issue in 1986,⁶ after the rather intense discussions related to the two competing conferences organized by SCOS in 1986, the “Organizational symbolism” conference in Hull, organized by Pippa Jackson and Norman Carter, and the “Cultural engineering conference” in Montreal organized by Robert Poupard.

⁵ https://sievers.wiwi.uni-wuppertal.de/fileadmin/sievers/daten/texte/monster_oB_.pdf

⁶ Notework 1986, 5, (2)



What has happened with the animal we once started to chase in the early 1980's, I really don't know, but I hope it is not like the one above, but keeps some of the scary vitality that made us so eager to trace it.

This is the end of parts of my story of the early formative years of SCOS. There is much more to tell, but that I leave to others with better memories.

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Feeling fluid

Noortje van Amsterdam

I feel a tingle of excitement
for things beyond my grasp
things that are becoming
yet they evaporate
before they materialize

The non-graspable,
the things I cannot yet absorb
the almost-but-not-quite-there-ness
of this... knowing *with*

not just mind but also body
a knowing together, in connection
It is at the tips of my fingers
on the brink of my limbs
twirling around in my stomach

it is becoming

I am intrigued,
I am thirsty for more
Maybe it is the heat
my sweating body a metaphor
for drinking in new ideas,
forming new connections

It is like the water I keep ingesting
I can feel the flow
a visceral quenching of thirst
In-through-out, and in again
The sweat dissolves my boundaries
fluidity my state of being
Where does me end and the rest begin?

I am sticking to chairs,
my clothes are sticking to me
New insights stick too

In-through-out, above and beyond
I am leaving stains, (re)marks,
traces of myself
in connection with you

Recollections of the early days of SCOS

Robert Witkin

SCOS began life as a breakaway group of friends from EGOS (European Group on Organisational Studies). They wanted to make the cultural and symbolic dimension more central to organisation studies. They were not precise in their understanding of how this might be done but they had moved away from the study of organisations as rational-technical machineries towards a concept of organisations as living and lived cultures, the site of myth and value, of ways of being and of styles of life.

The first conference was organised by my close friend and colleague the late Barry Turner and took place at Exeter University in the UK. My own involvement occurred in the following way: Barry's room in the university was adjacent to mine. I knew nothing about EGOS or Organisation Studies. I was a sociologist with a particular interest in the Creative Arts. He came to see me one afternoon and asked me, as a favour, to sign a document which made me co-organiser with him of a conference on organisational culture. He told me that in order to get the facilities, room etc. for the conference, there had to be two members of the university, organising the event. "You don't need to attend or anything like that," Barry reassured me, "It is just your signature that we need." To Barry's surprise, I insisted on attending the conference as a fully participating member and for me SCOS became a new chapter in my life.

Following the Conference there was a meeting of the organising members of this group. An important item on the agenda was the question of what this new group should be called. As I recall, at that time I was a member of a University Committee known as the Standing Committee of Senate. Senate meetings took place at specified dates during the year. Its Standing Committee was in a sense continuous and could be called to meet as needed to deal with matters that came up. I suggested to my new friends that what we seemed to be aiming at was the creation of a standing conference. The meeting then adopted the name SCOS (Standing Conference on Organisational Symbolism).

For me, the birth of SCOS was a genuine learning curve. Even when I was sceptical about a conference paper, I frequently found the issues raised were thought-provoking and I kept recalling them in different contexts. I remember the contribution of one scholar who analysed the Swedish Dental Industry using the myth of Prometheus almost as a model or calculus. If I was not persuaded I could certainly see the metaphorical significance of the myth. Some years later when I read Will Wright's classic deconstruction of the Hollywood Western in which the classic features of a Western movie (such as Shane) are analysed as the mythic reflection of the contradictions and conflicts inherent in capitalism I was reminded of SCOS. SCOS shows the myths in organisation. Myths which perhaps aim to create overly simple truths.

SCOS and/as Excess

Alf Rehn

My first recollection of SCOS is likely to be rather unique. I remember entering a small, radiused auditorium. There, a large man in a dress, a floppy hat, and somewhat random makeup, accompanied by a fetching woman in a mustache, dressed up more or less like Chaplin's famed "Little Tramp"-character, gave a rousing presentation on cross-dressing and organization at SCOS in Turku – the 1995 conference, to be precise. It was a suitably queer introduction to the conference and its ethos, and I didn't know at the time that I'd meet Stephen and Jo many, many times after that first, special time I laid eyes on them.

I wasn't even a doctoral student then, but roped into the fray/merriment by my supervisor, professor Claes Gustafsson, who had been present at the nigh-mythical pub in Dublin (during an EGOS-conference) where the first notion of SCOS was floated. He was one of the arrangers of this twelfth conference whilst I was brought along to get a taste of what research could be about, and I was immediately swept along by the sheer energy of the conference. To me, then and for many years after, SCOS was BIG. Not in numbers, necessarily, as I quickly learnt of far larger conferences. But big in the sense of having big ideas, big arguments, big personalities, people going all in for the parties, and so on. Sometimes the ideas were too big for the papers, but that was part of the fun. Sometimes the parties got out of hand, and that was even better. Big drinkers, larger-than-life affairs, big drama, and serious fun. But also big hearts, big dreams, and a true community.

It was the excess of it all that endeared me to the conference. Here people didn't think twice about dressing up for a presentation (I once gave a paper in a lucha libre mask, as El Profesor Misterio). Here people experimented with video, sound, art, experimental theater and even more experimental theory. Was some of it awful? Hell yes! Was some of it self-indulgent? Most certainly. But it was always about pushing the envelope, about taking risks, about falling flat on your face – metaphorically or literally. Here Damian, dressed in his most exquisite "high-maintenance tramp"-outfit, could present a conceptual paper so abstruse not even people who'd spent years trying to make sense of him could follow, and we applauded it. Here a precocious doctoral student could present a paper that redefined the word "ambitious", and have professors fiercely debate him as an equal (and then take him for a pint). Here Ann spoke of dolls and textiles, knowing that people would, as the young ones say, "get it". Yes, there were the usual issues – some clicques formed, some sexism persisted – but overall the conference was an intellectual carnival, in the best sense of the word.

This was also the reason why I, when I was my turn to host the conference, knew what the theme would have to be: Excess and organization. It was perfect, and I couldn't believe that no-one had done one yet. The conference was to run in July 2005, ten years after I'd first experienced SCOS, at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden. Thanks to

generous support from my institution, the running of the conference went smoothly, and included a dinner at the theme park – fully in line with the theme. Also, and if some self-promotion is allowed, I had sourced a fine conference bag. Rather than the drab pieces of plastic some conferences come with, this was a nice orange-and-white canvas beach bag, which several conference-goers used for years afterwards. In my world, the quality of a conference is judged on the conference bag, and I invested accordingly. But I digress.

Organization theory has a complex relationship with excess. On the one hand, theories of organization are often intimately connected to notions such as efficiency, intelligent use of resources, professional identity, and contained knowledge. At the same time, we know full well that the lived reality of organizations can be one of too many meetings, bachhanalia (particularly at Christmas parties and SCOS conferences), and other forms of overflow. In a sense, excess is the dirty secret of organizations, the objectively provable fact that they are not nearly as machine-like and efficiently functioning as theories sometimes want to make them out as being. Excessive bodies, frivolous projects, frippery and waste; excess is a horn of plenty for organizational researchers.

The SCOS community, I am happy to say, heeded the call and rose to the challenge. The conference might not have gotten a record-breaking number of submissions, but a very healthy amount for a SCOS conference. In fact, it was about this time that SCOS started to see a slight decline in participation rates, as many universities had started to put ever-stricter limits on conference funding. Being a more specialized conference, one that might be seen as niche by some of our more limited brethren, SCOS found itself squeezed by the ever-growing EGOS and the Academy of Management, and to a lesser degree by the Critical Management Studies-conference and the Gender, Work and Organization-conference. This was also one reason behind my push for the notion of excess. If the other conferences positioned themselves either as all-encompassing or aligned with a specific school of thought, why not make SCOS the official conference for the misfits, those not easily contained by pre-assigned boxes?

That is also what the conference became. The papers were quite heterogenous, with a dazzling array of topics. As always, there were well-prepared papers, and papers that were really no more than an idea turned into some presentation slides. There were excellent pieces, and some duds. As is so common at SCOS, the highs were high, the lows low, and the strange stranger than just about anywhere else. Just as we like it. Leafing through the proceedings of the conference, for in those antediluvian times we actually had printed such, one can come across papers on status and space, on bodies and commodities, as well as works on identity and managerialism, all engaging in one way or another with excess and the ways in which organizations spill over, overreach, go beyond what is strictly necessary. It is not always simple to see the connections between the papers, as what unites them at SCOS is not so much a theme as it is an ethos or an affect. For those who've lived with SCOS, the last point is the most salient. There's no specific theme that makes a paper a SCOS-paper or not, but there is a feeling, a shared feeling, when a paper hits that special affective space that harmonizes with this most excessive of conferences.

Looking back, "my" SCOS was a highlight of my academic life. Not so that it was the pinnacle thereof, as that would have been rather sad (not least as I was 33 at the time), but it re-inforced my belief in taking excess and the unexplored seriously. I realized that there is a

need for a space that allows for the kind of experimentation and tomfoolery that, to me, is the very ethos of SCOS. The conference didn't care about the eternal question of "what's wrong with SCOS?", but instead celebrated that what's wrong with SCOS is in fact what is right with SCOS. If anything, SCOS has of late lost some of its excessive, anarchic energy. In part this is due to an increasingly frigid and arid academic climate, one that doesn't much care for frivolous blooming in the groves of academe. In part it is due to doctoral students being more cowed, less rambunctious and gloriously arrogant than I believe they were in the past. Some still carry the torch (come up to me at the next conference, reference this chapter, and that round is most certainly on me), but I have seen a worrying amount of young scholar's turning up at morning sessions, rosy of cheek and in different clothes from yesterday, ominous suggestions of sensible behavior quite unbecoming a young SCOS attendee.

For why do we need SCOS? We need SCOS because humanity without excess is nothing. We need bacchanalia, carnival, intellectually intoxicating revelries. We need orgies of thought, indulgent academic ecstasy, gluttonous thinking. SCOS has, for me and many others, been the space for exactly this. A gloriously excessive conference, gleeful in its indifference to the fact that the world probably doesn't need a Standing Conference of Organizational Symbolism – or, as my girlfriend stated, "That sounds like a load of wank.". To which I naturally replied: "Yes, isn't it wonderful?".

Dear, excessive SCOS, with your art and antics, brooding and bonding, cross-dressing and childishness, drinking and debauchery, ethics and elevation, how glorious you've been! You were a home for many of us misfits, us who colored outside the lines, us who never really understood what the point of moderation was supposed to be. I hope you can keep to your ethics of excess, for it is your soul and your purpose. Before Stockholm, in Stockholm, and far beyond Stockholm.

Narcissism with Modesty

To do SCOS for fun requires courage

Antonio Strati

"Bob, have you retired?"

"Yes, I'm Emeritus now at Exeter! Have you?"

"Oh, yes, sure, and Silvia too, a couple of years after me. Bob, you remember Silvia, right?"

"I would say so, if she's still the same Silvia ..." – laughing.

"Do you know that we just got married, after some forty years together and after becoming great-grandparents?"

"Oh, you Italians ... You always do the things in the right order..."

Atto I° - Sproloquio

Bob is Professor Robert Witkin and this was, more or less, what we said on the phone; myself from Janet's beautiful apartment in the theatre district of London, Bob from his house in Exeter. The new one, as I learned recently. But I did not know that he had changed place when I was on the phone from London. So in my imagination, I was "seeing" him as if he were in the old apartment I had visited on various occasions throughout the Eighties.

Janet is the widow of Barry Turner, who left us rather young. We still see each other. Whenever we are in London we stay at her place. Occasionally she has come to visit us in Trento or in Siena. Now that we are often in Paris, she might arrive in the morning and leave at night by the Eurostar train, since my "studio" does not have enough room to have guests to stay with us.

The studio is not too little, however, for having an "apéro" party. There were more than ten of us to celebrate my 60th year. P. O. even arrived from Stockholm, although he was not expected. He called me several times, in fact, to apologize that he could not make it. He called me from Siena, where I invited him, together with Guje Sévon, as visiting professors at the University. He also called that evening:

"Antonio, I am so sorry, I cannot come, it's a pity, you're going to celebrate your sixtieth birthday without me ..." – and added, laughing – "without me messing up everything and spoiling the atmosphere ...".

"P. O., I understand it ... don't worry, be sure that I won't be alone, that I'll not feel lonely, nor abandoned ... In fact, there are already some friends

coming, somebody has just rung the bell at the front door ...”, I answered, turning myself towards the door that Silvia had gone to open.

Turning myself towards the door I saw P. O.! He was just entering the studio and continuing to apologize on the phone for his pretended absence. He was the first one. Thus, little by little, everyone arrived, also Martine and Vincent Dégot. You can grasp the apéro atmosphere from the photograph (fig. 1): P. O., i.e. Professor Per Olof Berg, on the left, Silvia Gherardi and myself in the center, Vincent Dégot, from the Centre de Recherche en Gestion (CRG) of the École Polytechnique, in Paris, on the right. Three academicians who founded SCOS in Glasgow 1981 were still sitting, laughing, making jokes around that table in my little Parisian studio some decades after. And, let us also imagine hearing P. O. say:

Let me tell you: Everything began in a pub in Glasgow ...you know what I mean ...

// Fig. 1 about here//

Figure 1. The apéro for my sixtieth birthday in Paris

This is not true. The origins of SCOS are in fact in the following simple sequence of 6 “organizing situations”:

- I. Paper-*presentationS* (with tie) at EGOS '81
 - on “Emotional Structures of Organizations” (*Asplund & Berg*)
- II. Academic European *controversy* (*Turner*)
 - (Scandinavia - UK – Others West & East Europe)
- III. Pub’s draught *beer* (*All of us*: how many?)
- IV. To coin a name: *Organizational Symbolism* (*Nauta*)
- V. Pencil and a *blank* checkered sheet (*Berg*)
- VI. “Super”-Egos Meeting: *autonomous work group* (*Berg*)

The scenario of the six situations was constituted by one of the first colloquium of EGOS, the recently institutionalized academic network of the European Group for Organization Studies. This meeting, held in Glasgow in 1981, was divided into different tracks, one of which dealt with the theme of technological change and “something else” that I do not remember precisely, i.e. organizational process or structure or strategy.

I participated to discuss issues regarding socio-technical study, semi-autonomous work groups, action research and organizational power, which emerged in a rather large empirical research project conducted in the wood sawing industry. It was my first participation in an international academic conference; I was an academic “novice” who had just obtained tenure as researcher, at the prestigious Faculty of Sociology, Trento, Italy. But I was feeling twice a “novice”, because from Glasgow I was to go to New York for my first participation in a collective exhibition dedicated to the new style in Italian art photography. My feelings, my body, my attention were not “taken” only by the academic venture, but also by the artistic one.

Carl-Johan Asplund was presenting on the emotional structuring of organization, when P. O., in white t-shirt and tie, joined him to amplify and clarify the debate. These two young researchers from the university of Lund, Sweden, were discussing mind, feelings, emotion, values, cultures; rather than structures, roles, functions, and technologies. A less young participant, Barry Turner (at the time Reader at Exeter University, England) made polemic assertions about such approaches that seemed to resonate in the terms of “risk of further exploitation of workers”. As someone who had researched and published on industrial subcultures, Barry Turner was known to be a “connoisseur” of organizational culture issues...

Thus, in this tale it was an academic controversy at the origins of SCOS, and it was only after it that the “pub origins” of SCOS entered the scene. We said, “let us discuss more after dinner”. P. O. and Carl-Johan invited everybody to meet in a pub, and at a certain moment, in the middle of all those beers, the choice to form a new area of European organizational research was made. This novel field of study had even a name – “organizational symbolism” – coined by Rein Nauta, Professor in Groningen, Netherland.

The following morning, Per Olof Berg was already asking those who had been in the pub the night before to “sign” the proposal of an autonomous working group inside EGOS dedicated to research on “organizational symbolism”. I still remember him with a pen or a pencil and a sheet of paper that was checkered and already had a few names before mine.

This is my “souvenir” of the foundation of SCOS in 1981 in a pub of Glasgow, composed by selected fragments, by flashes of visual memory, by uncertain truths. Blurred memories of the legend and the myth of the origins which constitute the initial basis of my argument: that “narcissism with modesty” is a fundamental feature of the organizational aesthetics of SCOS.

Blurred memories also represent the academic prehistory of SCOS, which, instead, was formed more than one year later during the first workshop organized by our EGOS autonomous group in Exeter, in July 1982. The new name – Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism – and the acronym of SCOS, the constitution of a formal board, the organizational belief that everyone in the board had to be engaged in organizing meetings, promoting events, researching cultures and symbolism in organizational contexts, marked this change.

Exeter, thus, was a step towards the institutionalization of the research area on organizational symbolism, the European and critical approach to the study of organizational culture. But, Exeter also represents the creation of the “Spirit of SCOS” – such as Norman Jackson and Pippa Carter observed – because of the style in which the Exeter workshop was organized by Barry Turner and Bob Witkin. The SCOS workshop was in fact inspired by attention to being welcoming towards the participants, by openness and experiments in the sessions, by debate and disputes, by the importance assigned to art and social events. This “spirit” has also legitimized a myth of SCOS; that it has its origins in a pub in Glasgow.

During the Exeter workshop I presented the paper “Sproloquio” – from which the title of this section is derived – a kind of rambling speech written during the sabbatical year I was having at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations of London. On the last day, during the

party at Barry's home, we found ourselves discussing 'til late at night; qualitative analysis, grounded theory, "ceti medi" - that is the middle classes - in Italy, and other sociological issues in understanding organization and society.

We continued, along the years of our friendship, to find ourselves discussing organizational, sociological, or art topics. It happened having a walk in the Dolomites, lining up for an exhibition in Paris, waiting for the vaporetto in Venice, having a coffee in Portofino. We spent a lot of time together on his turf in Exeter, London or Varese; or on Silvia's and mine in Trento and in the Riviera Ligure; or in the several places of the SCOS meetings.

Atto II° - Symbolic Events & SCOS

"Symbolic events" represented for me a beautiful bridge between "science" and "art" in knowing organization, something I've learned through SCOS workshops and conferences.

I became aware of this "bridge" during the Groningen workshop organized by Rein Nauta. We all went to the theatre after dinner and, the following morning we were all discussing the impact of that theatrical moment. The theatre had not been a mere entertainment, but a component of the workshop processes. In other words, going to theatre at night had not been merely the *maquillage* to the workshop, but a way towards the aesthetic understanding of cultures and symbolisms in organizational life.

In Lund, in 1984, my awareness of the importance of the symbolic event in SCOS meetings intertwined with the importance of social event. The first SCOS Conference organized by Berg, Asplund, and the team of Lund doctoral students, was characterized by the continuous dynamics between the symbolic and the social events, all along the conference ceremonies, rites, rituals, and, of course, paper presentations.

In Lund I was amazed by the fact that, in just a couple of years or so the relatively small academic body of SCOS had been able to invent: a logo for SCOS (the dragon); some rituals (such as the one of the "talking stick" to have the right to speak); a newsletter to communicate (the "Note-Work"); an on-going reflection on SCOS, the research area on symbolism, and the conference sessions (the long video shot during the conference); and lateral spontaneous non-organized events, such as the "carrot party" that Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, professor in Lund, organized at his place.

We had, for instance, a nice wine party for the opening of the conference. But this occurred in Lund Cathedral after the ceremony of the speech from the pulpit, which captured participants' ears and eyes by stressing the dynamics between the symbolic that unifies and the diabolic that, on the contrary, divides.

At dinner, in the endless light of the Scandinavian summer, we continued "to sit down to drink a drop / to stand up to sing" and we ended up dancing. Of course, I did not dance, but watching I reflected upon how far the ordinary ritual of dancing was important to create a nice "conference atmosphere". Well-known professors, as well as young researchers and students in organization, were dancing, sometimes without elegance, but smiling and adding the satisfaction of the "body need" for touch and movement to the satisfaction of need "to voice" research results and theoretical studies during the conference sessions.

It was Barry Turner who used this expression, the “body need”. He did it as regards to a banal ritual I introduced in our SCOS meetings: “hugging” each other, to welcome each other and as a bodily expression of avoidance of hierarchical relations.

I was fascinated by the dynamics between these organizational creations. To me, SCOS’ interactions manifested a profound criticism against the “seriousness” expressed through the grey atmosphere of the traditional canons of organizing academic meetings dictated by a ‘professional ethos’.

So, when I began to design the SCOS event on The Symbolics of Skill, I imagined the “academic debate” immersed in the complex dynamics between “symbolic event” and “social event”. Voilà, “at a glance”, the principal features of the SCOS conference-workshop held in 1985 at the Faculty of Sociology of the University of Trento:

- I. *Welcome: **Wine-tasting*** (with a **sommelier**)
- II. *Academic debate*
(Green **carpet** on the desk with a **dragon-toy**)
- III. *Concert: **Quintetto a fiati italiano***
- IV. *Symbolic Event: **Interviewing the Quintet***
(Running Commentary interview conducted by *Witkin & Poupart*)
- V. *Foreseen but unexpected: **Italian television** team film during the interview*
- VI. *Wine-visit at the **Museo Provinciale d’Arte***
(**Photopoesia** catalogue)
- VII. *Gala Dinner in a mountain **Agritourism***
- VIII. *Booklet: **The Symbolics of Skill***

I wanted to welcome the participants with a mundane symbolic event – the “wine-tasting” – rather than with a social event, such as the wine-visit at the museum we did the last day. I was aware that the difference between symbolic and social was subtle, but this difference was important to me. The theme of the conference was on the Symbolics of skill, and the region where the University of Trento was – and is – located represented one of the most important areas for the production of wine as well as of a “spumante” comparable to French champagne. The wine-tasting, therefore, was in my eyes the best way “to taste”, physically, something of the local culture, and to appreciate some aspects of the organizational and working skills present in the area surrounding the university.

The voice of a sommelier describing what we were drinking, its flavors, its production, even its price, accompanied our tasting of wine and spumante. Slices of local cheeses interrupted the drinking, while participants’ questions and sommelier’s descriptions often required translation, and chairs and tables rendered the peaceful atmosphere of a late afternoon in a nice hotel garden in the medieval part of Trento.

The main symbolic event began, instead, after dinner, with the concert of the “Quintetto a fiati italiano” and continued during the following morning with the interviews to the Quintetto. I use the plural for the interview, because in effect we employed two diverse styles of interviewing, the experimental one and the traditional one.

At first, Bob Witkin together with Robert Poupart, professor in Montreal, Canada, experimented with the use of the “Running Commentary” technique. Interviewing the

Quintet in the plenary session, they tried to lead the interviewees to – publicly – relive some experiences of their organizational life and musical performance.

Robert Poupart gently asked the five musicians to take all of us through some experiences “as if using a video camera”. The five musicians were also invited – and instructed - to tell us the chosen experience as if re-living it.

To do so, the musicians were to describe the event as if it had been occurring in that moment. So instead of describing something like “when I looked at Diego – the Quintet leader – I knew I had to switch from Luciano Berio’s Folk Song to Henri Mancini’s Pink Panther theme”, they were encouraged by Bob or Robert or the translator to be more detailed and, at the same time, to speak in the present tense. Something like: “Now I look on Diego, I scrutinize his expression, I look back at the scores, I feel anxious, I look again at him, yes, it’s the moment, no, not yet, I take the necessary breath to intone the note with the transverse flute, I go back to the scores, it’s now, I begin the Pink Panther theme ...” and so on.

One can imagine the intensity of this moment of the conference. When the Italian Television team entered the university hall, their boss told me that they felt like they were intruding on an “enchanted atmosphere”.

But the translation from English to Italian, and from Italian to English, gradually made the experiment impossible: the rhythm of the conversation was continuously interrupted, the intimate atmosphere began to vanish, and the “running commentary” lost all fascination. We switched, therefore, to a non-experimental style of interviewing, and every participant had the opportunity to intervene with questions.

These two symbolic events – the wine-tasting and the concert-interview with the Quintet – were surrounded, of course by the process of paper presentations, but also by the social events of the wine-party at the museum and the formal dinner in the agritourism restaurant up in the mountain, but at walkable distance from downtown.

// Fig. 2 about here//

Figure 2. The program is a postcard, the postcard is the program

The postcard of the conference, the badge with the SCOS dragon in piazza Duomo, the set of conference papers, the catalogue of a previous exhibition of my art photography at the museum, and the booklet *The Symbolics of Skill*, published in the series of University of Trento Press – Quaderni – completed the scenario of this conference workshop on organizational symbolism where I wanted very much to have art and everyday aesthetics merged with the academic debates.

The program itself of the conference had been designed in such a way as to immediately indicate this combination of art, aesthetics and science. It was just a color postcard that had as the image (fig. 2) a blue sky with the dragon in the main square of Trento at the center, illuminated by as many yellow stars as there were conference sessions. Each star, then, as well as indicating the time of the session, was surrounded by the planets announcing the participants presenting a paper.

On the reverse of the postcard (fig. 3), there was the “call for papers” on the left side, the dragon in the Trento main square as the stamp, additional information regarding SCOS, on the left, and regarding Trento University on the right. In between these two sets of additional information was the announcement for the booklet to be published on the theme of the conference; an initiative to which scholars were invited to contribute even if they did not have the chance to participate in the Trento SCOS Conference.

// Fig. 3 about here//

Figure 3. The reverse of the postcard as a program

All these various elements resonate with the issue of “Narcissism with Modesty”, as I argued in my keynote speech in Rome 2017 during the XXXV SCOS Conference dedicated to the theme of “Carne: Flesh & Organization”.

In my eyes, “narcissism with modesty” has characterized the distinctiveness of SCOS compared to other academic networks. Since its beginnings, SCOS invented its legends, myths, and sagas, and gave form to its organizational aesthetics. At the same time, this creation included that of the organizational research area of organizational symbolism and constructed the “academic body” of writings, events and organizational scholars. An organizational flesh, in other words, that has been strongly engaged in polemics against the dominance of the rationalist and positivistic paradigm in organizational theories and management studies.

Atto III° - To do Research for Fun

Now, when we imagine the early Eighties, it is easy to forget that we were then living in “another world” where academic communication was based on the postal service, telephone, fax, travel, meetings and on an enormous amount of printed papers and photocopies. *Note-Work*, the newsletter, constituted the pillar of the organizational communication within SCOS and from SCOS towards other academic networks and colleagues. These papers, together with our essays in international journals and in edited books, with our few monographs, and with the beautiful initiative of *Dragon* connected us. *The Journal of SCOS* realized by Vincent Dégot in the mid-Eighties, the *Note-Work* represented the main feature of the SCOS “flesh” until the SCOS Journal *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies* appeared in the mid-nineties.

// Fig. 4 about here//

Figure 4. A couple of issues of the SCOS Note-Work

I loved to be in charge of editing SCOS *Note-Work* (fig. 4), for the few years I did so. I still hold the reward I received – for the beauty of the artefact I realized – at the Istanbul SCOS Conference organized in 1988 by Zeynep Sozen, professor at Istanbul University: a nice glass box with golden-like calligraphic decoration and full of almonds covered with cocoa (which obviously it does not contain anymore!).

I did it for fun, to rearticulate the SCOS motto. I am persuaded to have been the one to have coined the very phrase, “We do research for fun,” even though I cannot say when or where such a thing happened.

“We did SCOS for fun”. I can now add this tale to the varied corpus of symbols, myths and legends that constitute SCOS narcissism-with-modesty. It required, however, an intense engagement from all of us (fig. 5). A conference each year, sometimes even two conferences the same year – as, for instance, in 1985 with the Antibes-Trento conferences and, in 1986, with the Montreal and Hull conferences. Three very large conferences in the first ten years, in 1984 in Lund, in 1987 in Milan, in 1991 in Copenhagen. The latter, the Valhalla conference organized by Kristian Kreiner together with Majken Schultz at Copenhagen Business School, was also prepared through a couple of beautiful workshops held previously in the Danish island of Möns.

// Fig. 5 about here//

Figure 5. We do SCOS for fun!

Moreover, to organize a conference a year implied a couple of SCOS Board meetings in between, which usually had associated social and/or symbolic events. For the Trento conference, we decided to meet in Rome, and we participated in the ritual dinner of a Roman family made to celebrate the birthday of the father of a friend of mine. We had artichokes “alla giudea” as a main meal, that is artichokes softly cooked under the ashes.

The celebration of the Roman birthday brings me back to the celebration of my birthday in Paris (fig. 1) with which I began this writing. After the apéro at my little studio, we took the city bus to reach the restaurant “La Coupole”. At a certain point, surprising everybody, P. O. wanted to make a speech, even though the noise in the restaurant did not make this easy or comfortable.

He spoke of our friendship and said that I am a “courageous person”. He made mention in this regard of the crucial change I introduced in SCOS during the beautiful and very large conference that, in 1987, Pasquale Gagliardi organized in Milan on the Symbolics of Corporate Artifacts. “It’s something revolutionary”, as Pasquale told Linda Smircich and Marta Calás – who were participating at their first SCOS conference – during the party given at his home the same evening.

What was so revolutionary? I proposed to change the system of forming the board, and to move from the system of co-optation of the new components of the board to the system of election. I made this proposal directly at the meeting of the general assembly, without having first discussed it in the Board. This proposal was approved, since the SCOS Board was inherently democratic – as Kristian Kreiner beautifully remarked –, because P. O. Berg considered it a renewal of SCOS and supported it, and, of course, because this proposal met the favor of the numerous participants in the Milan SCOS General Meeting. This proposal changed, physically, the organizational “flesh” of SCOS.

There is a 'body need' that comes with research, to be part of a body and to feel joy and connection. To research, to know, is not only to perform surgery to slice passion from a written page or in a conference presentation. These are parts of the body of SCOS and required narcissism, the flesh a part of knowledge and included in our studio. The joy of flesh, however, included energetic work. Our myths and stories conceal and sustain truths about controversies, organizing situations and symbolic events as the work of fun in our past. Thus, let me conclude this tale with this narcissistic and modest new motto for SCOS: "to do SCOS for fun requires courage".

*

I want to acknowledge that Marcelle Berdugo took the photograph in fig.1, while P.O.'s son, Markus Berg, took the photograph in fig. 5. I have thus digitally manipulated these files in order to realize the final images shown in the tale. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to my first reader, Laura Mitchell, for her precious editorial suggestions.

SCOS: A Home for Misfits

Jo Brewis

What is your view on the history of SCOS? How would you describe the SCOS 'soul'?

I don't know whether I find it amusing, predictable or sad that we're back in the soul-searching phase. Before I became chair, the board always had an agenda item called 'The Future of SCOS' and I do remember feeling quite bored with these repeated discussions at every single board meeting.

I've been involved in SCOS since 1993, that was a long time ago! I suppose what I would say is that I absolutely understand where it came from. The bastard step-child of EGOS who trots off and gets its own identity: organizational symbolism was, you know, a very very new and untrodden area at that point in time. But what's really interesting is that by only about 12-13 years later I think the organizational symbolism focus was already becoming quite muted, and instead what was happening, which I think was really cool, and I think really, to this day, is that it was establishing itself as a home for misfits. I don't think there's anything wrong with being a misfit, I've been a misfit all my life! I remember going to the conference for the first time and just thinking, "Oh my God, I didn't know these people existed." You have to bear in mind that I was studying at UMIST at the time amongst a group of pretty sexy, left-of-centre folk. And then I get to Barcelona and I'm like, "Oh my God, these people are even more mad than the people I work with" and I just thought that was amazing.

What memories stand out for you, what did you think about your first SCOS? Why did you go? Why did you decide to return?

Barcelona 1993 was my first SCOS conference. I only went because it was in Barcelona! I committed myself to going before I realised that my department wouldn't fully fund me, which was annoying, and I had *no idea whatsoever* what this conference was. Such a limited idea, in fact, that 1993's theme was on 'Leadership' and I wasn't doing anything remotely connected to leadership and I didn't present anything remotely related. It was in this fabulous conference centre at the foot of Montserrat and it was just mental. It was crazy. I got there and I was like "Oh my God, conferences are *ace!*"

It was in this amazing setting and that obviously helps a lot. But the papers were just incredible, the social side of things was insane, and the whole thing just taken together.... Well, to give you an idea of the sorts of things that were going on, there was one night when there was an artistic intervention which involved white sheets and a lot of red clay. We were encouraged to get in among the red clay and walk all over these sheets. I can't really remember what the point was. But, you know, this beautiful conference centre, with these very pale carpets – they were just covered in red clay footprints for days afterwards!

There was another event where there were fireworks being let off - with no attention to health and safety whatsoever – I seem to remember people being dressed up as witches and wizards. And this shouldn't be a clear memory, but it is, the bar in the conference centre would be shut at one o'clock in the morning, but they didn't *shut* the bar. The staff just left – and so there were all these awful academics (including me) just helping themselves!

All of that side of things was quite a revelation, but very significantly and at the same time, the atmosphere was just so supportive. So collegiate, so welcoming. At my presentation, I got asked a question by – I just knew her as this short slim lady who was pretty assertive – and afterwards someone said to me, “well done on answering Marta's question” and I said, “who was Marta?” and they said, “you know, Marta Calás.” I nearly fell over. I had no idea that she was Marta Calás and the question that she asked me was quite a challenging question, but she also came up to me afterwards and was really positive. You know, ‘that was a really interesting answer, we should talk, bla bla bla...’ So I met her, I met Steve, I met Pippa and Norman, David Knights and Hugh Willmott were there who I knew anyway, a whole bunch of other folk, you know, including some very big names at the time.

It was just extraordinary, it really was. It was my first conference where I wasn't presenting in a doctoral colloquium, and I think what was really significant was that at no point was I made to *feel* like a doctoral student, and I just came home and I was telling all my mates about it. So yeah, it started a very, very strong affinity with SCOS. I have said it before, but I don't honestly think that I would be where I am now, had I not gone to that conference. I think, in retrospect, it really was quite life-changing. Or career-changing at least.

So I think what SCOS is and always has been important for, is providing that supportive, developmental and egalitarian space. The sort of space where you might present something that is incredibly wacky and *someone* will find the rubies in the dust. Someone in the audience, or afterwards, will say “that's amazing; you should carry on doing it. Here's what you could look at, these are the sources, the places where you can publish” and so on. I think it's also been a real sanctuary for folk who are in very mainstream business schools, or in countries where the tradition is very orthodox full stop. So particularly people in the Americas and, to a lesser extent, a lot of people in the UK. It can be really isolating when you realise that you're the only person in your school that's doing the kind of work that you're doing and your colleagues; they don't understand your work, they don't know why you're publishing in these *weird* journals. I think we've always provided a really good community and sanctuary for those people, and long may it continue.

I think in particular SCOS is a *very* supportive environment for doctoral students and early-career researchers. I see that to this day and I just think that's so crucial.

Do you think there has been a fundamental part of SCOS' history that results in this return to these soul-searching questions?

Some years ago, I heard a comment I thought very interesting; about how you 'grow out' of SCOS. I don't think it's necessarily that people do 'grow out' of SCOS, but more that as a community we are quite *insecure* despite being very committed to our work. There is an

interesting level of insecurity that accompanies always being on the margins; on the one hand we make that marginality a virtue and on the other we find it very unsettling. So I think that underlying tension is what's happening.

I think also, the relationship between SCOS and CMS is very interesting because although all these debates were going on before CMS was really 'a thing', I think the CMS conference as it has grown and become established and is so big and so institutionalised now, has almost poached on some of the SCOS terrain or territory. I'm not sure if that's a problem or not but I definitely don't think it helps with SCOS' insecurity. You do see what you might regard as the big names coming and going, so that was why it was so lovely to have Antonio in Rome and to get that really clear sense of how much he still loves SCOS and how important he still thinks it is. And he's maybe late in his career now but I think the fact that he hasn't been to a SCOS conference in a while isn't significant in terms of his relationship to SCOS, but I think what you do see is, perhaps names becoming established and perhaps more established because of CMS. Because that has opened up a whole territory for people to go and occupy in more prominent and powerful positions.

Journeys in SCOS

Les débuts de l'incroyable aventure hautement fraternelle et intellectuelle de la formidable «SCOS»

Omar Aktouf

Enfin un forum où on peut discuter de théories des organisations et de management en dehors de la mainmise (sinon domination) du point de vue purement US !

C'est quelque part au courant de l'année 1983-84 que j'apprends, par la bouche d'un collègue de HEC Montréal, l'existence d'un nouveau forum international dédié aux questions de « culture et de symbolisme organisationnels ». Et surtout que ce Forum est d'inspiration « européenne », fondé par des Européens... qui plus est, avec une « vision critique » et « profondément intellectuelle, multidisciplinaire », qui se veut hors du « main Stream » dominé par le mode de pensée venant traditionnellement des USA, et plus particulièrement du « quantitatifisme à tous prix » qui y règne. Or, dès mes études de MBA, et plus particulièrement lors du cheminement en vue de la préparation de ma thèse de doctorat en management, j'étais singulièrement agacé par le (même relatif) simplisme intellectuel des théories « made in US », leur manque de rigueur « anthropologique », leur manque de « culture humaniste », leur « fonctionnalisme » quasi mécaniciste, leur obsession de la mesure et de la quantification, leur « mathématisation » à outrance... À tel point que je décidai de prendre tout le monde à rebours dans mon comité de doctorat « conjoint » de l'époque entre les Universités McGill, HEC Montréal, Concordia et UQAM, en proposant de réaliser une thèse soit complètement théorique sur le sujet de « l'aliénation au travail », soit une thèse totalement exploratoire, ethno méthodologique (observation participante), en me faisant embaucher comme ouvrier de base dans des brasseries à Montréal et à Alger. Ce que les ouvriers m'ont appris sur « le management vu du côté de ceux qui le subissent » fut absolument fantastique. À tel point que, même si ma thèse remplissait déjà bien au-delà de 500 pages (800 en interlignes doubles), le nombre d'articles potentiels que je pouvais en extraire était innombrable. Mais se posait la question des forums et des supports de publication en gestion aptes à recevoir des textes « humanistes, déconstructivistes, critiques, anti-mesures... » ! Dès lors SCOS me parut comme une bénédiction.

Lund 1984, mes premiers pas en présentation en « société savante » et dans... les quasi premiers pas de SCOS

Le premier article que je rédigeai à partir du matériau de ma thèse portait sur les systèmes de représentation mentale - symbolique et les différences de registres langagiers au sein d'une organisation étudiée en observation participante. Il fut accepté par le comité de lecture de SCOS, et me voilà en voyage, pour la première fois de ma vie, vers la Scandinavie et vers un congrès international. Pour la petite histoire, et malgré la piètre qualité de mon anglais autant écrit qu'oral, ma présentation fit sensation (sans doute à cause de la rareté, en tous cas à l'époque, de communications portant sur le point de vue que l'ouvrier porte sur le management) et fut sélectionnée parmi les « highlights » de la Conférence de Lund. Ce qui me valut de figurer dans la vidéo réalisée lors de SCOS 1984. Jamais une telle présentation

avec un tel contenu n'aurait (j'ai essuyé bien des refus de nombreux congrès et revues, pour cause de « parti pris idéologique envers les travailleurs) été admis ou écouté, et encore moins primé, dans un autre forum du type de ceux qui dominaient le champ organisationnel – managérial ! Mon amour pour SCOS fut aussi immédiat que fulgurant. Mais pas seulement, car aussi et beaucoup, énormément, pour ses fondateurs, ses pionniers...

Une belle et longue histoire de profondes amitiés et de délicieuse complicité intellectuelle

Depuis Lund, je me suis fait la solennelle promesse de ne jamais, pour rien au monde, manquer ne serait-ce qu'une des éditions futures de SCOS. Mon assiduité annuelle a duré jusqu'en 1992. À mon très grand regret, diverses circonstances contraignantes, dans ma vie personnelle et professionnelle, m'ont empêché de continuer après 1992. Revenons donc à Lund et à mes premières heures avec SCOS. Je fis le voyage le plus direct possible (économies obligent) entre Montréal et Lund. Inutile de dire que j'y arrivai épuisé. Après une sieste dans la chambre de la résidence universitaire où nous étions accueillis, je mis pour la première fois le nez dehors dans Lund. Le (heureux) hasard fit que la toute première personne que je rencontrai – dans l'ascenseur – était nul autre que notre cher Antonio Stratti. Nous nous dîmes bonjour en anglais, puis il me demanda « *Where Are You From ?* ». Je répondis avec naturel et spontanéité : « Canada ! ». Antonio qui me fit savoir que lui venait d'Italie, ne dis rien, mais je voyais bien qu'il avait l'air mi- amusé, mi- intrigué par ma réponse. Détournant légèrement la tête – sans doute pour me cacher son sourire dubitatif- je l'entendais répéter « Canada ! ». Comme nous cheminâmes ensemble vers les lieux d'inscription, de formalités d'enregistrement, puis vers la salle du cocktail de réception... nous devînmes presque instantanément familiers et amis. Je me souviens qu'il éclaté d'un gros rire gras et sonore, comme seul lui sait faire, lorsque j'entrais dans les détails pour révéler que j'étais Algérien, à peine arrivé au Canada depuis un an, « immigrant – quasi citoyen »... Je ne compte plus le nombre de fois où Antonio raconta cette singulière rencontre (j'étais plus basané et bien plus « typé » que lui !) avec tout l'humour, la gesticulation et... l'exagération toutes méditerranéennes qui font son légendaire charme. Ce fut-là ma première belle, solide et durable jusqu'à ce jour, amitié au sein de SCOS. Les suivantes, et non moins belles et durables amitiés, furent (de mémoire : désolé si j'en oublie certainement pas mal d'autres) celles de Barry Turner, Bob Witkin, Pasquale Gagliardi, Burckart Sievers, Sylvia Stratti, Suzan Schneider, Pier Olof-Berg, Mats Alvesson, Bob-Grafton Small, Paul Jefcutt, Didier Van Den Hove, Marcel Bolle de Bal, Steven Linstead, Dick Raspa, Zeinep Sözen, Marta Calas, Jacques Girin, Linda Smircich, Pierre Guillet de Monthoux... Que de merveilleuses personnes et bien profondes valeurs intellectuelles !

Deux années SCOS mémorables pour moi :

1- Milan

C'est lors de la Conférence de Milan en 1987 que, à mon insu, et à l'initiative d'Antonio et je pense Pier-Olof, se débattait la question de mon entrée au prestigieux Comité Scientifique de SCOS. Comité où ne siégeaient que des membres SCOS ayant organisé une conférence dans leur pays ou leur université. C'était une des règles d'admission en ce Comité. L'accueil réservé à mes contributions jusque-là, et mon enthousiasme « Scosiste » quasi militant me valurent, je crois, d'attirer l'attention en vue de ma nomination (en fait élection en plénière) comme *Scientific Advisor*. En pleine conférence de Milan donc, Pier-Olof vint me poser la

question (je ne savais pas pourquoi, bien entendu) de savoir si je pouvais organiser une conférence SCOS en mon pays d'origine, l'Algérie. Ma réponse fut un catégorique « non », vues les conditions dans lesquelles j'ai été poussé à quitter l'Algérie. Puis ce fut le tour d'Antonio de me poser la même question avec une certaine amicale insistance, « d'au moins tenter, tâter le terrain en mon pays, avant d'être aussi catégorique »... Je ne comprenais toujours pas la raison de ces demandes, car l'idée de faire partie de ce prestigieux cercle de *Number Ones* ne m'effleurait absolument pas l'esprit ! C'est alors qu'Antonio procéda à une « révolution » (ce furent ses termes) dans les règles SCOS : non plus coopter un « organisateur de conférence », mais faire élire, en plénière, la personne qui devait entrer cette année-là au *Scientific Board* ! Il obtint ce changement et vint me demander d'immédiatement poser ma candidature. Amicalement et chaleureusement soutenu par plusieurs parmi les amis cités plus haut, je le fis et fut élu. Merci encore cher ami Antonio et éternel *Cultural Brother* !

2- Istanbul

C'était lors d'une discussion autour d'un café à Milan que, en compagnie de notre chère Zeinep, j'évoquai avec elle la possibilité d'organiser une Conférence SCOS à Istanbul. L'idée fit son chemin et se concrétisa dès l'année suivante, 1988. Ce fut tout d'abord et avant tout un épisode SCOS mémorable du fait de se dérouler dans cette ville « coup de foudre » qu'est le millénaire Istanbul, mais aussi du fait que... ma mère est d'origine turque. Dès ma première visite en Turquie quelques mois avant la Conférence, afin de procéder aux derniers détails d'organisation avec le Board, je me rendis compte qu'on me prenait (vue ma tête) pour un Turc émigré. Très vite devant les questions (en anglais) qu'on me posait à ce sujet, je répondais (ce qui est vrai) que ma mère était Turque d'origine (de la région de Smirne). Mais ce qui devint, au sein de la communauté SCOS, presque une légende urbaine suite à cela, c'est que ma « *Turkish Mom* » allait bien servir ! Le tout débuta par un incident aussi cocasse que fâcheux. Le premier jour de la Conférence, je pris un taxi depuis l'aéroport pour aller à l'université. Pas de taximètre. Je m'enquis – en anglais bien entendu- de la distance à parcourir auprès du chauffeur : c'était traverser toute la ville ! Je m'attendais à payer une petite fortune. Or une fois arrivé, le taximan me demanda une somme quasi ridicule comparée à ce que je craignais. Je lui donnai donc un généreux pourboire. Une fois rendu au hall de la cité universitaire, je vis là un collègue Belge – blanc, blond, yeux bleus-tout en émoi et furieux : son taxi lui avait demandé pour le même trajet que moi, presque 10 fois ce que moi j'ai payé ! Je compris alors que mon taximan m'avait pris - *Turkish Mom* aidant- pour un compatriote émigré qui trime dur à l'étranger et qui vient aider sa famille... comme tous les Turcs émigrés. Donc relativement « pauvre ». Alors que le collègue Belge qui « fait » bien occidental, est lui, automatiquement « riche ». Dès lors je n'eus aucun scrupule à user et abuser de ma « *Turkish Mom* », y compris dans le célèbre Bazar d'Istanbul, où les prix qui m'étaient demandés à moi étaient systématiquement largement inférieurs à ceux demandés à mes amis et collègues « Occidentaux » ! Même si je ne parlais qu'anglais. C'était la course à qui pouvait se faire accompagner par moi au Bazar pour profiter des incroyables prix que me valait ma bonne *Turkish Mom* ! Ce cher Bob s'en souvient encore ! C'est cela la SCOS que j'ai connue et aimée, et me plaît à aimer toujours, elle avait (et a toujours j'espère) une âme, un ADN aussi uniques que profondément attachants.

En conclusion : une âme, de l'amitié, aucune compétition, haute teneur académique et beaucoup d'humanisme

Hélas, et encore une fois à mon grand regret, ma participation aux Conférences SCOS ont cessé en 1992. Jamais, au grand jamais, n'ai-je rencontré une organisation de type « société savante » d'une aussi haute tenue intellectuelle, multidisciplinaire, humaine, simple, humaniste, chaleureuse, amicale... à tel point que même les conjoints – conjointes, enfants... s'y sentaient immédiatement « *at home* », en famille, sans manières. C'est ce que les mères et pères fondateurs de SCOS y ont insufflé : une grande exigence intellectuelle mais aussi une âme, une innocence, une spontanéité et une « qualité d'être ensemble » uniques. J'espère de tout cœur que c'est encore le cas !

Good News, Everybody!

Futurama, SCOS and Transatlantic Liminality

Anthony R Yue

My lived experience of the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism (SCOS) is characterized by liminality. As a junior scholar in North America I was struggling to understand continental philosophic perspectives while studying in a fledging critical PhD program in eastern Canada. This program was described as taking a “Mid-Atlantic” perspective, so I was already operating in a liminal zone within my own context. I decided to be quite literal in my interpretation of “Mid-Atlantic” and go across the ocean in search of expanded perspective. I attended a SCOS conference in Nijmegen.

Thus my experience of SCOS is fundamentally about travel, and in time this has become central to my family as well. My daughter, the “SCOS baby”, has travelled with me and my wife to Slovenia, Sweden, the UK, France, Spain, Turkey, and numerous other locations. Philosophy is my family business and transportation to and from SCOS is central to our operations. With this in mind, I am immediately reminded of another family business: the Planet Express delivery company found in the animated art-world of Futurama.

In the animated series Futurama, the protagonist Phillip J. Fry is erroneously and cryogenically frozen only to awaken in the year 3000. The future is bewildering in its mundane familiarity and Fry soon finds himself employed as a delivery boy for the Planet Express Company which is owned by his elderly nephew, The Professor. The Futurama family business is fundamentally about transportation and delivery, across both space and time. So also is my family’s business of philosophy.

For a North American, Europe constitutes the old, but I travelled to Europe in search of the new. SCOS nurtures and prunes the rhizomes of thought that I investigate and play with. What is old is new and what is new has already been done. This is a hermeneutics without purposiveness which suggests that the philosopher might matter as much as the philosophy.

In Futurama, each episode has the Professor sending his team on delivery missions to their certain doom. He does this with the pronouncement “Good News, Everybody!” and indeed my first trip to SCOS was met with a combination of excitement, trepidation and a sense of inevitability. I was drifting from my stereotypical North American functionalist fascination with quantitative methods and my dissertation supervisor was far from happy. I was on a mission I did not understand to a future I could not conceive of in a place I knew nothing about, this surrounded by aliens. And then things got weird.

When I attended SCOS at Nijmegen I began to realize that my work was far from as edgy as I thought. I met people who allowed themselves to think and to write and to explore in

ways that I did not believe possible, or more accurately, believe to be acceptable. This was good news but my doom was inevitable. I returned home to Nova Scotia and I could never look at a data matrix the same way again. I tried out of compulsion to definitively prune the rhizome, but it just kept moving and reemerging. I was hooked, but I wasn't sure what I was hooked on. This is part of the enigmatic beauty of SCOS.

SCOS has to be experienced to be understood and much of this experience is tacit, so I sometimes identify through examples what the SCOS experience is not, rather than attempt to describe what it is. It seems that this is typical of experiences that exist in the in-between spaces. Moreover, successful navigation in liminal spaces often requires a guide, and this guide functions like a map or chart, in that their guidance is not the same as the terrain itself. Such SCOS guides act as the inverse of the maps of old; when these guides say "there be dragons", they are welcoming us to the realm of the SCOS lived experience rather than warning us away from the threatening unknown. These SCOS guides are academics, philosophers, artists, consultants and writers. They are implicitly the heart and soul of the liminal organization.

SCOS functions as an entity, a space of indiscernibility and a delivery mechanism all at once. And to embrace this as a lived experience is, in a loosely Heideggerian way, to invoke some sort of "*SCOS-Being*". Thus, Futurama is perhaps a better comparison for *SCOS-Being* than another academic conference like the Academy of Management, for example. To abide in the art-world of Futurama is to comfortably exist in a future which is only imaginable because it is as equally incomprehensible as the present is. In Futurama, one eyed mutants and alcoholic robots are our friends and colleagues. At SCOS I found a friend and book coauthor who was first a heavy metal drummer and then later a philosopher; fellow travelers in a terrain which is only able to be navigated through its somehow familiar incomprehensibility.

So the question might be posed: Why attend SCOS, wherever in the world the annual conference might occur? The structure of an academic conference, combined with the sense of being a fellow traveler rather than only a colleague is important. Possibility is born here, and conference attendees provide the midwifery to allow such possibility a healthy entry into the world. No mere community of practice, but rather an inspired collection of individuals engaged in the seriousness of academic play. Here play is not an imaginary rehearsal for the ontological real, but rather an exploration of the art of map making applied to a co-created terrain.

And thus we return to the art-world of Futurama, a space where the world of tomorrow is familiar not in terms of its characters and situations, but navigable because of a comfort level born out of a phatic approach to the incomprehensible. As an inexperienced scholar and fledgling philosopher I went to the Old World in search of something new. At SCOS I found a community that helped me to realize that the searching was the most important part of my journey. Excellent friends and sage guides in the becoming of *SCOS-Being*... Good news, everyone!

My SCOSsy journey

Ilaria Boncori

I was sitting in my colleague's office, who also happened to be my supervisor as the previous year I had decided to embark in a part-time PhD while working full time as a management lecturer at the University of Essex. At the time, my 'impostor syndrome' was peaking and I was getting really nervous about joining the international research community. I felt even more insecure for being fairly young, female and engaging with autoethnography. Heather (Höpfl) grabbed her cup and looked at me with a smile: "Have you ever heard about SCOS? I think you'd love it". But I chickened out. I felt that I didn't have enough to say to go to a conference and that I could not face academic egos and mean attacks, especially as this research was so much about me, my identity and my life.

The following year Heather told me again about SCOS, how she had contributed to its birth, and how it had become a home away from home in many ways. She had been a founder, a Chair and a frequent participant. She explained that SCOS is different, that you don't really get the vicious self-absorbed questions at the end of presentations like in other conferences (not naming names here but we did draw a comparison with a couple of other big annual meetings in the field), that people are genuinely nice and helpful, and especially with PhD students. She said it would be the ideal first arena in which to release the reins of my research. I started considering it seriously and talked to friends about it. My fellow doctorate colleagues all laughed at me and said "SCOS is the friendliest conference you will ever go to, stop stressing about it and send in an abstract!". So I did, and got accepted, and ended up taking a leap of faith and booking a flight to Istanbul. I can still remember how nervous I was at the mere idea of presenting my own work in front of an academic audience – oh so very different than teaching other people's seminal ideas! I remember meeting academics on the first conference day whose books inspired my research and teaching from the shelves of my office, and everyone being so kind and open to both constructive discussions and non-professional chats. I got to know people who would have become part of my life in future years – some friends and other colleagues. I remember attending some really interesting presentations and furiously taking notes on my ribbed notebook, jotting down ideas, sources, dates. I spent the first two days attached to my friend Tom, hiding in his shadow while he introduced me to people – Dan (Hartley) was my first SCOS encounter and really made me feel at home. I remember having late night drinks and delicious vegetarian food in old city alleyways, hearing laughter and happy chatting on a boat cruising the Bosphorus, chairing some sessions to cover for a colleague, and making a complete idiot of myself by not recognising the name of an esteemed colleague whose work I loved, who nonetheless reacted in the most graceful, non-egotistic and gentleman-like manner anyone could think of (Heather laughed at my recollection of the encounter when I saw her upon return from the conference; she loved the story as she had worked with him as an external in several occasions and told me I should tell our colleague my funny recollection of the shameful event one day, but I actually never did!). I can still feel the flurry sensation in my stomach after the last word of my presentation, the questions asked, and Hugo (Gaggiotti) offering to

help with sources and materials (which he kindly sent when I then got in touch with him after the summer). I had been 'scossified'.

The following year I went to SCOS on my own, no old friends or colleagues to hide behind but some new ones I looked forward to seeing there again. I had invested all my personal development fund in SCOS and it was going to be the only conference I would attend. That year I was asked whether I would like to join the SCOS Board, to help as editor of the newsletter. I have always enjoyed attending Board meetings, in various capacities of the past five years, and appreciated the opportunity to help carry on the SCOS baton, so to speak. It felt then, as it feels now, like going back to my academic Home. SCOS is a place of acceptance, experimentation, challenges to the ordinary and a space where we can dare to be ourselves as academics. It's one of the few conferences where people are actually genuinely happy to see each other, where one can talk to people because you like them and find their work interesting, not because they are journal editors or famous professors (even though many of the participants are). SCOS' social activities are what, in my opinion, networking should look like as you are spending time together rather than "working the room". Our motto is "Serious fun", which I think really sums up what we do, what we stand for and who we are. I have made friends at SCOS, but I have also found people I now co-author research with and others who have offered invaluable feedback on my work by side-stepping the boundaries of hierarchy. This is why SCOS is a great space for everyone, but especially for Early Career Researchers and doctoral students.

In 2013, my friend and once PhD supervisor Heather Höpfl asked whether I would like to run a doctoral workshop with her at the SCOS conference to be held that summer in Warsaw. We ran a very well attended session, where I also met Costanza, who was later to become my first PhD student. Unfortunately, that was going to be Heather's last academic presentation before falling fatally ill, but she will always be dearly remembered as a key figure not only in her field but also in the creation and development of SCOS and its ethos. She pushed me to be true to myself as an academic, to listen to my own voice, not to shy away from challenges and not to be afraid of being in the margins and trying new paths. SCOS is the place where this can happen as new methodologies, ideas against mainstream currents and interdisciplinarity are more than welcome. To me the existence and nurturing of this *locus* is crucial in today's academia, which is too often shaped and constrained by commercial needs, funding limitations, and rankings.

Had anyone told me eight years ago that in 2017 I would have chaired the organising committee of the SCOS conference, I would have laughed and called them bonkers. Seriously. I was truly baffled when Ann Rippin and the Board she chaired at the time asked whether I would organise a SCOS conference. After the initial shock wore off I started getting excited about the idea of taking SCOS to Rome, my city of origin, even though I live and work in the UK. The idea of our conference theme came to me rather quickly – "*Carne, Flesh and the Organization*" to explore the bodily side of Organization Studies, the materiality of organization behaviour, the metaphor of the organs within a corporate structure, themes relating to food, death, sensuality, the senses and more – and I remember the enthusiastic responses this theme received from the Board and others I pitched it to. Gathering a group of colleagues and friends with whom I could organise the conference was easy: everyone I asked immediately said yes and others even volunteered. And, of course, I

also involved Davide (my PhD student at the moment) as I knew he greatly would benefit from the experience. Organising a four-day long conference for over 100 people coming from all continents of this planet in a different country is not a simple matter, but it was actually very enjoyable. The size of SCOS is another aspect that I truly enjoy as one gets to meet people and forge relationships that are simply not possible in what I call “mega-conferences” of management scholars with thousands of people, which I find rather alienating.

We already had a great theme that we were sure would attract quality research, but SCOS is not just about work, it is also about the people involved in it. Since SCOS had been a home away from home for me, especially since nobody in my department does what I do in terms of research, I was keen to welcome my fellow scossers to my *home* town - literally, metaphorically and in my family rituals. As an expatriate, I am only able to go back to Italy once a year. Although many members of my family live in Tuscany, I was born and grew up in Rome, where I completed my Bachelor degree and my Masters. So in organising the Conference I chose La Sapienza, my *alma mater*, as the location of our conference, although I didn't previously know the colleagues we were going to collaborate with *in loco* as my first degree is in Oriental Languages and Cultures with a Major in Chinese, so in another faculty altogether.

When I was little, I used to live in a fairly central neighbourhood, in a street running parallel to Villa Borghese, a beautiful park now also home to the Galleria Borghese museum where the voluptuous sculpture of Paolina Bonaparte lays gingerly for all to admire. I learned to ride my bike in the museum gardens; I used to play in the fountain next door under my auntie's loving watch. She used to take me to museums and galleries, where we built memories I still treasure. I decided I wanted to make the bag design very personal, so I asked our resident artist Beatriz Acevedo (who is also the pen behind our SCOS dragon symbol) to interpret Canova's statue of Paolina as a woman who is there on display, beautiful and seductive, fleshy but also 'a piece of meat'. This commission made sense to me even more as Beatriz had been the very person who invited me to take her place on the SCOS Board many years before. She internalised and developed my brief beautifully and came up with a bag design I truly love (in two versions, to be more gender balanced). I didn't really have to think too long about the evening options – I took my academic family to the places frequent with my biological family. So the first social dinner was organised in the restaurant near Via Veneto where I have been having dinner with my dad since I was a grumpy teenager. The Gala dinner was organised in a beautiful Villa owned by an aristocratic family one street down from where I used to live, which is also the same road where my father had his medical practice for about two decades. I had never been inside the Villa before my scouting visit for the SCOS conference two years before the actual Gala dinner, and I immediately loved its cosiness. I used to fall asleep to the music coming from the Villa through to my open window while lying in bed as a child during hot summer nights, fantasizing about evening dresses, shimmering jewels and charming dances. I then found out that the only catering business allowed for events at the Villa is a famous family-run patisserie, one that I used to frequent perhaps a bit too often in my younger days as it was located just on the ground floor of my apartment building, almost opposite my mother's shop. I remember the current owner's grandfather stretching out from behind the counter to

reach a toddler version of me with a precious chocolate bon bon in his hand, pretending that was going to be our sweet secret from my mom.

I worked on the organization of our SCOS Roma 2017 conference for over two years, but ended up not being able to attend due to the birth of my first child just two months before. Although ecstatic about the arrival of my little *amore*, my daughter Livia Silvana, I have to admit I was rather disappointed about missing SCOS, especially *my* SCOS. But in true scossyness, instead of holding my absence against me, colleagues and friends surprised me by signing a beautiful hand painted portrait made by Beatriz of my growing family, and made me feel part of the conference through messages and post on social media. SCOS has been precious to me as an academic on many different personal and professional levels, and I am sure it will continue to inspire generations of researchers.

Immersion

Peter Zackariasson

/ɪˈmɜːʃ(ə)n/

Noun

- the action of immersing someone or something in a liquid
- deep mental involvement in something



Loreen1 at Kulturkalaset in Gothenburg 2018 (Peter Zackariasson)



Loreen2 at Kulturkalaset in Gothenburg 2018 (Peter Zackariasson)



Maple & Rye at Pustervik in Gothenburg 2018 (Peter Zackariasson)



Deadheads at Pustervik in Gothenburg 2018 (Peter Zackariasson)



Familjen at Hoki Moki in Gothenburg 2018 (Peter Zackariasson)

Monks, Rats & Explosions

Luc Peters

Dedicated to Temi Darief (rip)

Von der Abgeschlossenheit des Klosters bis zu den drei Schichten in der Fabrik versetzt die menschliche Ratte ihren Käfig in Drehung und glaubt, sie käme voran, während sie sich in Wirklichkeit nur in ihrer Tretmühle im Kreise bewegt.

(Michel Serres)

This quote by Michel Serres informs us of two things. First that there is a logical connection between the monastery and the factory. The second thing is that although human beings might think they are moving forward, or even that there might be some sort of evolution, this is not the case. The only movement is some sort of pointless turning in circles or an endless movement on a roundabout without the option of leaving. Serres refers to the human rat in its treadmill just moving in circles, endlessly. It thus opposes all thoughts on progress or evolution. Thoughts that are deeply embedded in ideas on organization studies. Apparently things are not as straightforward as often presented. It implies that organization is under the influence of paradoxes.

But what is organization and how can we get to know it, and especially why should I personally be interested in it? Let's start from the beginning. From way back when I've been encountering organizations and even indulging in the obscure tendency of organization. In all kinds of different shapes it has crossed my path and maybe even laid it out for me. It probably started with my first job, working at a conveyor belt at a local plastic factory, which name remains undisclosed. There I was assigned as manager of cardboard boxes. Besides the cardboard boxes the work involved assembling all kind of nice and shiny plastic products. Thinking back I still vividly remember the nauseating smell of plastic, the horrendous noise and the deeply bored colleagues. The senses were put to the test.

The reason for working there was pretty straightforward, namely: money. Next to that I had always been told that having a job is the most important thing in life. That always struck me as mighty strange, as my main interest was making music and wanting to become a musician. There was no natural attraction to the idea of a job, which some even considered a dirty word. Still I ended up at this factory. The main reason probably was that my musical career didn't hit it off immediately so I needed to find some other way to make money. This money was mainly intended for buying musical instruments, records and beer.

Meanwhile I was banging on my drums, trying to sound like Cozy Powell, Tommy Aldridge or Randy Castillo, while playing in a hard rocking band with some guys I met along the way, desperately trying to get something going. The success was only very limited despite the large amount of explosives we used at our shows. In hindsight the stage antics might have been pretty irresponsible, especially when we thought it would be a good idea if the

singer would chop up a speaker cabinet with an axe, while simultaneously the explosives would go off. As this happened next to my drums it might not have been such a swell idea after all. Still I left the scene uninjured. You never know what a musicians is capable of.

Next to music I was also enthralled by reading literature. One of these books, *Post Office* by Charles Bukowski helped me to find another job, namely postman. Delivering mail to the citizens of this small city I lived in, during the coldest winter of the century, 1996-1997, was pretty rough. It also made me a witness of the 'postman rituals' and the bizarre group dynamics involved. Out of sheer routine and boredom it is apparently great to start annoying and bullying each other. Besides that it was physically hard labor while enduring freezing cold, pouring rain, batshit crazy traffic, vicious dogs, scarcely clad housewives and so on. I also quickly noticed that I had to eat double the amount I used to while trying to avoid becoming a skeleton. The body suffered endlessly for the sake of money.

A phone call from a temping agency changed all this and moved me into this huge office tower where I became a manager, again, changing from cardboard boxes to people. French filmmaker Jacques Tati questions the difference between these two in his 1967 film *Playtime*, but I noticed that there is a difference, although the fine line is fluid and punctured. It also made me realize how an increasing trust in numbers evoked. The number became the most important thing and the employees, like cardboard boxes, only played their part in order to secure these numbers. Something which never happened by the way. Nevertheless it fascinated me.

What I also noticed was the 'bigness' of the office tower and how it became a world in itself. Standing outside, looking up, watching it scrape the sky and opening up its giant mouth on ground level to the willing cardboard employees waiting to be digested. All these people slowly moving into these buildings intended for organization. Maybe it could be considered some kind of evolution, despite Serres' thoughts. Moving out of the cave, like Plato proposed and into the office tower, which can be considered another beautiful cave ruled by numbers.

I also noticed that fascination or passion is not a big thing in organization. It made me realize that the difference between the conveyor belt and the office is pretty small. What also became obvious is the difference between managing staff or managing a wild bunch of musicians. Where the former lacked passion and fantasy the latter almost drowned in it. It made the movements from the one world into the other and vice versa even more intriguing. It was like the difference between the worlds of Iron Maiden, Judas Priest, Miles Davis, John Coltrane or Frank Zappa and the worlds of Peters & Waterman, Senge, Porter or Mintzberg. Moving in and out of these worlds, just like moving in and out of caves.

*'We cannot do that,
that fucks up our plan'*
(Walter Sobchack in *The Big Lebowski*)

Meanwhile my fascination for organization and subsequent hunger for knowledge moved me towards Nijmegen where I studied management and organization in order to become a

master. It was during that period that I became interested in philosophy, especially caused by a guest lecture by someone called René ten Bos, who introduced me to Deleuze. What became clear to me was that being a master did not really do the trick, meaning that the gap between my life in organization and the organizations in textbooks, master-style, became even wider. I also sensed that the only way to explore that gap was through the world of philosophy.

So I started to get acquainted with philosophers like Deleuze, Foucault, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Baudrillard, Kierkegaard or Sloterdijk, to name just a few. It also introduced me to critical management studies and thinkers like Steve Linstead, Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, Martin Parker, Antonio Strati, Gibson Burrell, the before mentioned René ten Bos and many more. This laid the basis for my PhD where I investigated organization and the way these are caught in clichés, and the way in which philosophy and film can break through these clichés. It involved studying the works of directors like Tarkovsky, Antonioni, Takeshi Kitano, David Cronenberg, Guy Maddin, Ulrich Seidl or Takashi Miike. It informed me about the relevance of film for organization studies. Something which later materialized in the *CORPORATE BODIES Film Fest* which explores new perspectives for film as a research and educational tool for organization. I also noticed that the more I started researching film the more fascinating it became. Diving in deep and getting carried away as a zesty enterprise.

The PhD was published as the book *Cliché & Organization, Thinking with Deleuze & Film*. An important part in this was also played by architecture and the way architecture moves us and makes us move. This involved studying the works of Frank Lloyd Wright, Peter Zumthor, Louis Kahn, Rem Koolhaas, or John Lautner, to name just a few. It was also the reason for living in a monastery on two occasions. Once at the monastery of St Benedictusberg in Mamelis (NL). The famous monastery built by Dom van der Laan and based on the liturgy. This involved joining the monks in their rituals driven by the Benedictine horology. The second encounter was at the monastery of La Tourette built by Iannis Xenakis and Le Corbusier, and based on the Xenakis composition *Metastaseis*, which deals with the concept of mass noise. Something which will be explained in the book *Silence & Geiselnahme* (together with Dr Claudia Schnugg). For some reason living in the shielded off heterotopic world of a monastery is not very different from working in an office or even attending a conference.

By the way, the before mentioned Frank Lloyd Wright takes a special position. It was his work, and especially a black and white image of the great workroom of the Johnson Wax Administration Building in Racine Wisconsin, that intrigued while simultaneously puzzling me. Looking at this photograph I knew that I was left with only one option and that was to get on the first available plane to New York and from there rent a car and drive up all the way to this enchanting structure. For some reason I had the idea that the trip itself and experiencing this amazing piece of architecture would direct me in my quest in understanding organization. I also felt that there is only one way and that is to be inside these buildings, and try to experience them, in a corporeal way. The body and the thrill of its senses are essential in understanding architecture.

What also happened was that I got totally carried away by traveling and by the works and life of Frank Lloyd Wright. I started to study it extensively by moving to his buildings and

investigating them. Learning about his life as a nomad, his obsession with destroying boxes and the constant experimentation of fusing nature and architecture. This destroying of boxes, just like the chopping up of speaker cabinets with an axe made me realize how organization studies itself can become a box of which we then have to break out again. The Einstürzende Neubauten informed me that these boxes constantly need to be torn apart, as their band name suggests: collapsing new buildings. Buildings which are not solid but in a state of perpetual destruction. Nature is never solid and stable so why should organization be that way. It is all about disruption and disturbances.

*'In order to learn discipline,
You must learn to misbehave'
(George Liquor in Ren & Stimpy)*

In order to constantly disrupt or disturb the moulded thoughts about the world, philosophy and art is needed. It is needed in order to translate the world, in this case organization into new languages. Now it seems quite clear that language always has its restrictions, but simultaneously its possibilities. This depends on the kind of language that is used. Obviously art can have many languages like film, architecture, photography, literature, music and many more. When considering organization the expression mostly used is the written word, just like I am doing now. In organization these written words are basically limited to clichés, those expressions that have rendered thinking obsolete. Now there might be those who consider thinking in organization an overvalued luxury. I however take a different position and claim that organization needs thinking and therefore disruption and thus art.

But then on the other hand, and yes we need paradoxes, there is the character of Seymour Moskowitz in one of my favorite movies: *Minnie & Moskowitz* (Cassavetes, 1971). Seymour despises thinking. He wants to run, he wants to scream, he goes berserk. When the most cherished thing in his life, his love for Minnie, threatens to go sour on him, he starts punching walls, screaming and in a final attempt to win the love of his life, he cuts off his mustache. This works and shows that thinking is not the only option, although mustaches aren't very fashionable these days. Now fashion or style is another dirty word, just like job. Nevertheless the potency of cutting off a mustache should not be taken lightly as Seymour Moskowitz has successfully demonstrated. And although the last part of his name contains Witz, German for joke, it was not a laughing matter for him.

Besides all that something else happened, namely during my PhD research I also started to attend conferences. One of the first I went to was the SCOS conference in Nijmegen in 2006. Stepping into this radical world of those involved in thinking about organization heavily affected me. Besides intriguing and inspiring presentations, it was probably the whole social climate that appealed to me, meeting all those who were into philosophy, art, and organization, just like me. This first time also proved to be addictive and made me move all over the world visiting all these beautiful places where SCOS, or ACSCOS or affiliated conferences would take me. Places like Sydney, Barcelona, Manchester, Montreal, Copenhagen, Istanbul, Melbourne, Rome or recently exploring the subtle and intense world of Tokyo and Japan. Becoming this nomad, always on the move towards exciting new

adventures and knowledge. Meeting all these wonderful people, some of which became close friends like the Yue gang from Halifax, Anthony (with whom I wrote the book *On Mirrors, Philosophy, Art, Organization*), Trish and Sienna. Anke Strauß, with whom I embarked on a train journey from Gothenburg, via Berlin to Istanbul, while discussing the relevance of traveling in relation to thinking. Or Temi Darief (rip) who I met in Melbourne and Sydney, and who, together with Anke, attended my PhD defense, but who died much too young and who is dearly missed. My supervisor the mighty René ten Bos with whom I went on many heavy drinking sessions and devastating concerts like the Swans, the Meridian Brothers, the Einstürzende Neubauten or Rangda. My second supervisor Ruud Kaulingfreks, Sverre, Carl and Alisson, Ed and Vicky, Chris and Gretchen, Albert and Jean, and many more beautiful people in beautiful places. Moments to cherish and never to forget. It therefore seems clear that SCOS definitely shaped my thinking about organization and living and probably will keep on doing so. Oh and before I forget: the Dude abides.

Fleshy encounters

Noortje van Amsterdam

When in Rome...
flesh becomes center
flesh that moves and sweats,
profusely... acutely

Unruly bodies swarm,
warm,
in and around this building

We meet, bump into, collide with
ideas, bodies, matter(s)
we look to each other
we look for one-an-Other
we search out an 'us'

We talk about
Fordism, poststructuralism,
postcolonialism, new materialism,
neo-liberalism

I-get-confused-ism

We talk, we eat, we walk, we seat,
we laugh
We admire, we inspire, we perspire,
we *transpire*

Our flesh demands
our view expands
and *we* become

SCOS, Scossier, Scossiest

Monika Kostera & Tomek Ludwicki

Monika

My first SCOS was 1991, the Valhalla Conference in Copenhagen. Well, it both was and wasn't. I didn't go – too expensive – but my co-authored paper did, together with my co-author. He came back with a complete set of papers for me and a SCOS poster, which I had on my office door until a few years ago, when it disappeared. Someone must have taken it. There was a dragon on it, so you never know, maybe no one took it after all, it just took flight. I spent much time reading and re-reading the papers. I studied each one of them. They fascinated me: here there were texts unheard of in my then everyday academic life: about ethnography, about art, drama, photography... They were like the books about adventures and foreign lands I so loved to read when I was a kid. There were even drawings in some of them. And a dragon. A world full of amazing ideas and rhythms, and almost real, almost possible, unlike Earthsea, which was real in many ways, but, of course, not quite in the sense I could one day hope to land in.

And I did land. It was 1995 and I went to SCOS together a colleague from Warsaw University, Tomek. The place was Turku and the theme identity and self. Against the dramatic setting of the Finnish nature and the sublime archipelago, white nights and cloudy days, the conference was an explosion of creativity and brilliance. I was mesmerized: several days of poetry, ideas and good conversations. This is what it must have been to hang around in the original Akademia. Minus the climate, of course. The climate did not treat us as kindly as the presentations. One evening we went to a restaurant called The Mediterranean and the contrast between the bleak and rather chilly July evening and the name made Linda Smircich, the keynote, laugh out loud in the street. It was very funny, yes, but the Swede in me balked. Why would it not be allowed to celebrate summer in the cold North? And we did celebrate, despite the fog and the greyish sunlight.

After that I have always been a Scosser. There were several conferences I attended, several where my paper was present but not was I, one I co-organized and one I dreamed about. The latter was organized up on a hill and people walked up and down, talking. I don't know what the theme was or if, indeed, there was a theme at all. But it didn't matter, as there was so much going on, all rather chaotic, in a very good way. There were trees also, and intensively green grass.

"There", someone told me "so now you know why it's called SCOS".

And I did, in the dream.

Tomek

I have attended four SCOS conferences over the period of 20 years and some board meeting in between. I have been to many other places in the meantime, however the SCOS would be

always a very special place in my heart. First and foremost this is a very warm places that welcomes strangers and geeks from all over the place. This is the soul of this conference that is somehow built by all of the participants and board members. This is the community very far from the mainstream and very open for people like me – a young scholar from a former Eastern Bloc country brave and naïve at the same time to lay down the theory of transferring the leadership (Ludwicki, 1995). I was not criticized nor excluded. I felt just like one more person trying to put his or her personal observations into the theory.

Los Angeles conference was another part of this dream. It was also to feel a member of community. For us it was a great challenge to finance the trip. So I raised some money that was not enough. But Hugo Letiche helped and we made the trip: by bus, by train, by plane to reach the US. This time however it was also about methodology and discovering new spaces. We have developed an article in which we used images for the basis of interpretation – now quite common practice. I still remember the vibes when we present that after LA next would be in Warsaw – Poland!

It was also a big dream to bring all of those great scholars to Warsaw – city that saw too many wars and still on every block you can find its wounds and scars. So we were so happy to have the conference to did our best – did our best empty stage possible. And again, all those great professors turned out to be really nice and friendly people with you can chat without full introduction supported by a long list of articles. This is still unique for SCOS.

And finally, second SCOS in Warsaw. This time I felt a little bit more seasoned and some gray hair caused that I felt different emotions. But even though I haven't known many participants the vibes were the same. It was just great to feel the same flow again!

Bescossed

We are Scossers. We don't always go to Scosses, even if we've been to some. Those we have attended have not always been unvarying highest level intellectual bliss. We agree with the scos-sceptics that SCOS is exceedingly uneven, with some well thought through presentations and some – time wasters of epic proportions. This magnitude of variation is not very common at conferences. But there are other things about SCOS which are not common, and which make it a good space for people like us.

Firstly, we are nowadays badly lacking big ideas. They are perhaps not to everyone's liking, but it sure would be nice to have some around, as they are able to ignite imagination and serve as guidelines, utopias worth making the effort of taking chances, or just alternatives to what is. All of this could be quite handy now. SCOS doesn't do big ideas as such but it provides a space for thinking big and some people come back with stories which complement their earlier stories and to which they have a special dedication. It's a growing ground for big ideas, if we ever saw one.

Secondly, (social) science is community. Without community we cannot do much. We need conversations. Okay, there are some exceptions, notable or not, but most of us need to talk about our research. SCOS is a good community for and of people who are passionate about research and are courageous in their thinking. It brings people together and it gives good topics for conversations. Most Scosses have had themes attractive to think about, experiment

or play with, maybe to run with a bit and to discuss with others. The themes very seldom are effects of micro-politics or institutional fashions as is rather usual with many other conferences. They are proposed in order to inspire and they often do.

Thirdly, SCOS is a conference for people who want to talk about their research. Very few people attend SCOS to get a promotion, to make themselves visible to someone micro-politically important or to gain credits or CV points. SCOS is usually not about exciting locations or huge galas, it's good to have nice food but that's not why we meet every year – and have been doing so since 1984. It's not about the presence of superstars (oh, they do come sometimes but do not behave like ones at SCOS). It's not about CV contests or learning how to work the system. It is something we are looking forward to, year after year, the place where academic things persist to happen, anyway.

Well, that's our story.

What is yours?

SCOS as 'recovery'... reflections on my first SCOS and stitching myself back together

Harriet Shortt

To me, SCOS means recovery. SCOS is a community where members enthuse and inspire each other and at the annual conference, which for me and many European colleagues is held towards the end of each academic year, there is an opportunity to reignite research relationships and nourish research passions. It is a space for remembering what we love and why we love our work and it is the essential antidote required, given the current academic pressures and challenges we experience in our institutions.

SCOS 2010 - 'Vision', held in Lille, France, and organised by Professor Samantha Warren and Dr Beatrice Acevedo, was my first experience of 'SCOS recovery' and one that was much needed – it was July and I had just handed in my PhD thesis and was nervously awaiting a Viva Voce examination in late September. Just a few weeks before SCOS I had triumphantly handed in my PhD thesis, bound, complete and finished, yet I remember thinking, have I *actually* finished? After the ceremony of handing in I sat drinking champagne in the sun at a pub on the outskirts of Bath, watching the river boats make their way up and down the Avon, and suddenly feeling very in-between things - I no idea what I should be *doing* for the next three months. Should I be reading my thesis again? Should I be 'revising'? And if I don't, won't I forget everything by September?

Fortunately, I had SCOS to look forward to. I had only ever heard good, supportive, friendly things about this group of scholars and was excited to meet old friends and new in Lille. I was going to present on one of my key findings from my thesis – the meaning of liminal spaces for hairdressers working in hair salons – and given the conference theme of 'vision', I was looking forward to sharing the hairdresser's photographs and the findings from my first visual study with some of the SCOS community.

From the moment I arrived in Lille I felt a sense of recuperation. Before the conference started, I had arranged a meeting with Sam (Warren) – later to become great friend and regular co-author - in the foyer of a budget hotel close to the venue. Sam had offered to read my thesis and offer some feedback before the Viva so, coffees in hand we sat and talked about contributions, visual methods, why I might potentially always hate writing literature reviews and how to make 'theory' my friend. I remember this conversation gave me a real sense of resurgence, a revival for my research – it had been a long four years and the past twelve months had been particularly tough what with juggling final drafts and a new lectureship with a large teaching load. Still a familiar story, I expect, for many.

A sense of recovery and healing also came in the shape of 'social SCOS' (although I can't say the same with regards to the hangovers associated with such events). I remember drinks outside a pub in the sun, a dinner at a long table in a restaurant that was filled with laughter, then hysterical laughter, and then quite a few wine bottles – and my partner now husband, Russ, helping every academic at the table get an individual receipt for everyone's individual expense claims – he became known as 'the care worker' for the rest of the week. I remember amazing food, spectacular canapés, dancing on tables, falling off tables, and late-night clubs,

and...well, SCOS *does* stand for 'Serious Fun'. Seriously then, this social and fun side was, for me, restorative. The PhD had been a lonely experience, despite a supportive supervisor in Professor Steve Fineman. At this time, doing a PhD, in a School of Management, that used visual methods and photography and was based in hair salons was seen as defiant by some, difficult by others and certainly challenging for me. Back then, SCOS was group of people that represented a new home, somewhere to belong and be accepted. It was a group that put its big friendly, warm, sometimes slightly odd (in a good way!), sometimes slightly drunk, happy, clever, creative arms around me and said – it's ok, you're good and you fit in.

But by far the most inspiring moment of this SCOS and the one that rescued me during this strange transitory few months, was seeing former SCOS-Boss Dr Ann Rippin present her paper, and her quilt, on Anita Roddick and her work with The Body Shop. I remember sitting right at the back of the room – and if anyone was at SCOS 2010, you'll remember it was boiling hot and most of us were melting in the top floor rooms at the IAE! (...I think someone had to go out and buy fans?). Ann's paper, *'Portraiture and the politics of vision: Depicting Anita Roddick'* was asking methodological questions about the use of visual methods based on her ethnographic work at The Body Shop with its charismatic founder. Amongst other things Ann talked about how visual, arts-based methodologies can represent research 'findings' and positioned herself as an 'academic quilter' – here were beautifully crafted textiles, combining quilt making with academic scholarship (see for example Rippin, 2004, 2005, 2007; Wicks and Rippin, 2010). I was captivated.

Ann's presentation at SCOS 2010 was – is – vital for me in terms of making peace with my academic work and academic identity. I am a sociologist who ended up in a School of Management and Business School. I come from an art background with two artist parents who created a childhood home full of fabric, weaving, clay, love for handmade paper, and the smell of Spray Mount. Back in 2010 as I transitioned from PhD student to Lecturer in Organisation Studies, I felt I was struggling to find my place in the Academy and had hopes for the future in somehow making links between my love of art and creative practices and my academic work. And here was Ann Rippin, academic quilter – a scholar with interesting, critical questions, thoughtful arguments, using visual, arts-based methodology and making embroidered textiles – literally stitching the worlds of art and management together. This was exactly what I had hoped for, exactly what I was looking for. And you know when you are *truly* inspired by a conference paper because you actually get excited about what the person is talking about – your tummy goes over, your brain goes like the clappers and there is overwhelming urge to go home and start writing, start reading, and start thinking about how your ideas connect to theirs. At least that's how I felt up in that boiling hot room. I knew then *exactly* how I was going to spend the next three months – I was going to make a quilt, a fabric picture, that told the story of my PhD thesis and my fieldwork in hair salons.

The rest of the conference in Lille was just as nourishing as the experiences above – earnest talks with fellow early career researchers, laughing, making new academic friends, more laughing, and my presentation went well too. Once again boiling hot, I spoke to a packed room of scholars fanning themselves with printed abstracts and name-tags at the ends of lanyards, about how I understood hairdressers' experiences of liminal spaces at work and showed lots of participant-produced photographs of cupboards, stairwells and toilets. For

its first 'outing' as a key finding, it couldn't have gone better. Again – there were feelings of relief and a restoration of confidence in a topic I'd be defending in three months' time.

The Eurostar journey home from Lille was spent planning my 'PhD Quilt'. Firstly, I wanted to make a fabric picture that incorporated all the elements of my thesis – from conceptual framework to methods, from findings to conclusions, and my experiences in the field. It was going to be a way of seeing the big picture – a way of converting a linear, text-based book (that frankly I couldn't cope with reading again) into one artefact that used symbols and visuals to express meaning. Figure 1 shows the first draft of this planning.



Figure 1. Planning the PhD Quilt

Secondly, I wanted to consider how the creative practice of quilt-making and textile art, using scraps of material and found objects as symbols, could help me cope during a period of transition. I wanted to think about how the act of sourcing objects, cutting and sewing material and attempting to represent my PhD with physical representations, could act as a coping mechanism.

Over the following three months I used buttons, fabric, labels, small found objects and various ephemera to create this fabric picture. I photocopied my field diaries onto fabric and stitched them into the quilt and used the negatives made from the photographs the hairdressers captured to create a border around the patchwork squares representing my methods. This whole process of making was a form of recovery and recuperation in itself; rather like SCOS, it was the essential antidote required, given the past four years of writing and reading and having to privilege words. That said, this practice of making had its somewhat taxing moments, like when I found myself in a bead shop in Bath wondering how I could best represent Foucault's account of the panopticon, and when I asked a hair salon manager for a bag of hair cuttings from the floor so I could stuff my fabric conceptual framework. Surprisingly he agreed without much of a flinch – apparently quite a few clients ask for hair cuttings to deter deer from their gardens ...although not quite so many ask for it as stuffing...



Figure 2. Ephemera and fabric used to make the quilt – add a couple more? Take up to date pics – these were captured on an old phone, so new pics will be sharper/ high res.

Broadly, the creative act of making the PhD Quilt in this period of transition had three areas of value and meaning for me. Firstly, it offered the opportunity to anchor my sense of self within *something*. Since periods of transition arguably make for somewhat unsettled identities, by making something and being creative I could make my mark and express my individual voice (Gauntlett, 2011) and renegotiate who I was, or rather the identity I was transitioning to. Secondly, this creative practice provided an opportunity to step back and reflect, review and re-cover, giving me time to think about my work and experiences. As we know, creative forms of reflection and review, particularly those that privilege the visual, provide an alternative way of seeing, understanding and developing knowledge (see for example Mayer and Massa, 2003; Taylor and Ladkin, 2009; Wildt, 2008). Thirdly, and possibly most importantly to me, I was able to make the intangible, tangible; be it working with concepts and ideas or my experiences of emotions and feelings, this creative practice helped to crystallise meanings and thoughts and communicate that which I found difficult to describe. Figure 3 shows a picture of me, with the finished quilt.



Figure 3. The finished PhD Quilt

Up to this point I had not shared with many people that I was making this textile picture. I had told a few SCOS friends, knowing they would understand, not laugh, embrace its oddity, and cheer me on. In September I took the 'PhD Quilt' to my Viva exam in a bag and hid it under the desk. Steve (my supervisor) and I had talked about whether or not to take it to the examination and he'd cautiously but supportively advised waiting until 'a moment when you feel it might be appropriate'.

I was fortunate enough to have the wonderful, sadly missed Professor Heather Höpfl as my external examiner. At the end of the examination she (and my internal examiner, Professor Russ Vince), asked me if I had any questions for them – this felt like the 'appropriate moment' – so, despite my concern that whipping out a quilt of my PhD might potentially jeopardise what felt like quite a positive defence of my thesis, I unfolded the fabric onto the table. Heather was...wonderfully Heather...she helped me hold it up by the window so it could be seen, she encouraged Russ, Steve, the Chair, all to come over and 'feel it, just feel it', and she warmly congratulated me on my creativity and wondered if I had met Ann Rippin yet...

My positive defence turned to a positive outcome – a pass with minor corrections; I was asked to give some clarity to my conceptual framework as I had done in the Viva – I had drawn my framework in pen on the whiteboard in the exam and I was to include this picture in the final thesis. And I was to include pictures and reflections on making the PhD Quilt at the back of the thesis as a sort of epilogue. So, my corrections – all visual.

Over the past nine years since SCOS in Lille, Ann's work continues to inspire me. I presented my 'PhD Quilt' at another SCOS a few years later, and again at York University at a staff research seminar. I've since made four textiles pieces that tell the story of my travels with Russ around Australia. I've used textile art as a way of reflecting on my own workplace

coaching and mentoring practice – and am working this into a journal article. I made three textile pieces during my maternity leave as a way of reflecting on my experiences as a new mother. I continue to write on visual methods, with Sam, and Dr Jenna Ward and I are currently incorporating chapters from other talented scholars on knitting and quilting into our edited book on arts-based methods for research. I continue to have coffee with Ann in local watering holes across Bristol and the last time we met she gave me a patchwork bear for my three-year old daughter Lauren – a textile piece that will always be treasured.

Here, at the end of my story and reflections on my first SCOS, and how as a community it has an important role to play in the Academy (particularly for early career researchers), I think now would be a good opportunity to thank some of the wonderful women who helped me recover in that hot summer of 2010, wonderful women who are very much part of the SCOS fabric; Sam and Bea, Ann and Heather.

References

Gauntlett 2011

Mayer and Massa, 2003

Taylor and Ladkin, 2009

Wildt, 2008

Going East

Marcus Lindahl

*The thrill is gone
The thrill is gone away
The thrill is gone baby
The thrill is gone away
You know you done me wrong baby
And you'll be sorry someday*

BB King "The thrill is gone"

When did You become such a gruesome barren dessert to me Love? Yes, I know – it's not "You" its "Me". Maybe I am just getting older, not necessarily wiser but more seasoned, numb, maybe even apathetic. **Been there. Done that.** Tried that in the last century. Is it the regular Via Dolorosa walk down an academic career (long or short) past Zenith. "Jesus was an architect previous to his career as a prophet" sang Nine Inch Nails. Great song by the way. H-index. Going for full Nadir.

No, It's me. I am a wanker. Can't keep it up. Longing for a past that never was. Yes of course. I am getting tired, bored. Had to push the envelope pretty hard to get up on this pile of dung. Didn't we? Had to kick pretty hard to stay on top. Didn't we? And now what? Haven't really found the cure for cancer, have we? Haven't really introduced circular economy have we? My god, Ovid could have written an essay on this – what a splendid transformation – into **a self-pitying naked little white monkey** with a permanent income and benefits. Only question from what? A moth? A dragonfly? Sooooo sad. Ok. Time to get a grip. H-index. Four star. Annual review.

This really sucks. I wouldn't hire myself even as a post-doc. Big laugh. My god – I wouldn't hire myself as a PhD student really. Fun thought actually. Notes on application: Unclear RP. Idiosyncratic method. Has very limited publishing strategy. Little chance of finishing within 4 years. Four star. I want to go West. No, probably East. Annual review. H-index. You write like a hedgehog. Spikes all way round. Why is there no research question in your paper? Essay?! That's quirky! Does that count? I just want to cry a little. I often cry in the shower.

What a pathetic image. A grown-up sobbing away in the shower?!! Why? "It's my party and I cry if I want to." Sang Lesley. Four star. But hey, you and I know it isn't the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. **To be brutally honest** - you do not look the way you used to do either. It's hard to tell you from anybody else these days. You do not seem to care anymore. "You lost that loving feeling." Sang the Righteous Brothers. Na na na. Accredited according to EQUIS.

Anything really goes. Or, no. Maybe it is the other way round. Nothing really goes anymore. That's it. There is not much content in here, is it? But again, you do not care so much about content anymore. Do you? As long as the form is there, right? Form is content. Content is form. And work. Work is good. Hard work. Organized work. Standardized work. Word count 9000. We could for all that matters be working in a porridge factory. Here come the tears again. "I just want to kick ass and chew bubble gum and I am all out of gum." said Duke.

I hate you. You suck the air out. Asphyxiated. Four star. APA. Double blind.

You know. Actually, I think your morals have changed. Are you bitter? Naah. Probably not bitter. That would mean that you actually cared. Just so detached. So sober. On beta blockers? Lithium?

If I cut you, will you still bleed? I am not sure. Vampire. I am not sure I would bleed. Only red sand would pour out. If your lucky. "Welcome to the Jungle, we got fun and games." Sang Gun's & Roses.

The story goes - in Japan there are places where grown-ups go and pay decent money to be an infant for an hour or two. Taking a dump in your diapers for 400 000 Yen. I want to go East. I want to pat a Hedgehog in a Hedgehog Café. "Surfin Hedgehog" sang the Lords of Acid.

But Love. Sorry. I lost my way. Wandered astray. I must try to be honest, or, at least I should be just. I know, I am not being fair. I love you although I hate your guts most of the time. I love you when you trick me out of my misery. You should do that more often. I would be a better person then. Or at least a happier one.

When you come out and play. With your flimsy smile and razor sharp gaze. "Buckle your seatbelt Dorothy, cause Kansas is going bye bye." said Dozer. When I see your crazy glimpse in your bloodstained eyes I remember why we got together in the first place. You make me want to play. I love play. Don't we all? All fun and games. Or, Funny games. Haneke is a weird guy. Doing a remake on his own merchandize. Did he like it so much? Or, did he just hate the first one?

My God I love you when you are off the tranquilizers. When you stop sleepwalking and get real. We are so great when we stop pretending. Or maybe it's the other way around again. **We are great when we pretend.** Pretend we do not care. Pretend we do not need to get somewhere. Just chillin. Enjoying our own great company. I love you when you dress up in that bear costume. Bacchanalia. Remember the times when we meet in our bear costumes? Our extended weekend off? We come alive. I can't stop giggling. All your fantastic parables glitter like sunbeams in my mind. Ephemeral logics intertwined. We chase around each other with the lightest touch, like air. Showing off without malice. Provocation without hostility. Racing games of associations. Breaking chains of linear thought. The sheer joy of thought without the weight of conformity and instrumentality.

Some would say we are just being silly but what do they know? **Silly is good.** It rhymes with “Piccadilly”. Can’t be all bad then. And “Chilly” but that is not important right now. I often think about our days and nights in our funny costumes, our silliness, our play. Especially when I hate you. My Love, I think, for some short moments when we are over there - we see each other again. I mean really see each other – anew. We feel the joy, the tingling sensation of possibility, of vitalization. We see and feel the best in us again. I see you – I see myself. I see you seeing me. Our joy, our wit, our happiness. Is it genuine? A game of intellectual pinball. Not much we say seems to make sense. But again. Maybe it does. Or maybe it is not important. At least not then and there, here and now. You are lovely. You surprise me. Your spirits are high. **I love you when you go full dragon on me.**

Little dragon. Do you remember that awfully hot summer we spent in Budapest? Time stood still. What a ball we had. Remember the finger paint? Finding your inner cave person? Indecent some said. Hell no. Liberating. Well now, that opened up for a quite interesting discussion did it not? Or when we went to Lille? Had you dropped Belladonna in your eyes? They were so big and dark. What did you see? Christmas came early that year I remember. I almost drowned. Not to mention Barcelona. Trippin! “Gucci gang, Gucci gang, Gucci gang. Gucci gang.” Ranted Lil Pump.

Come to think of it Love. We need our little getaways, don’t we? Our own little 400 000-yen moments. At least until one of us change fundamentally.

Get your costume on, Love. Go get into your dragon shape. You look splendid. Ready for frivolous play and silliness. I’ll be your Knight in shiny armour. Or no?! I do not want to be some shitty Knight in shitty armour. Come to think about it, **I want to be a dragon too.** Can I be Spike? Please can I be Spike? Please. Please. Please. Please. **Please.** I could settle for Rainbow Dash as well. But I prefer Spike.

Lets go East.

Marcus “Spike” Lindahl
Uppsala University

Click

Luigi Maria Sicca & Davide Bizjak

1995, maybe 1996.

Back home, pissed off, on the way home, at the sunset. After a stupid misunderstanding with an ex-fiancée. A potentially beautiful night has been thrown in the trash. Simply the first story of (apparent) love: one of those love stories in which everything is a symbol for its own sake: not artifacts at all. Even sex, flesh, Sundays and Christmas rituals are just shared symbols to “feel” themselves adult people. To behave as “adults” do.

I was, as always, on my Vespa, the symbol of an Italian generation and an Italian Company, Piaggio, which has accompanied my life for a quarter of a century and accompanied all the great cinephiles who enjoyed *Roman Holiday*. Reversing the story of Cinderella. That movie that made the (my old) Vespa famous all over the world also triggered the first “Click” and made me meet SCOS for the first time.

“Click” today inhabits the frenetic life of social networks. But an intuitive or fortuitous “Click” is older, but is often not fortuitous, because it marks important meetings, often in an unrational way. “Click” is the sound of something snapping... you don't know, why... Or sometimes you do.

By Vespa, coming back from the bourgeois area of the city, I met by chance (“Click”) Fabrizio Ferraro, who was a young Ph.D student in Italy, before starting his brilliant career in the major Business Schools of the world.

We stopped to talk like young people who esteem each other, talking about the world of academic research at first hand. A mysterious world of pleasures still to be glimpsed, like a veiled beauty.

Fabrizio told me for the first time about SCOS, a mere newsletter at a time when the Internet was further than a click away across the slow cables of the telephone line. And he told me about an open call for papers: “it seems made just for you”. He was oriented to the outside world at the time; I was yet introverted and immersed in my inner world, fascinated by the symbol as a key to interpreting the world and by music as a lens to observe organizations in a perspective of Critical Management.

Yet it immediately “Clicked”. Once again. Because even then, in the first half of the 1990s, I perceived that the international economic crisis was not only one of many in the Keynesian cycle, but also a crisis of theoretical apparatus to read the world. A crisis of thought.

Paul Jeffcutt was the Editor of that Special Issue. I connected using (and paying for) one of the first providers on the Italian (or rather Neapolitan) market for the SCOS Newsletter. I still remember my email address @vesuvio.synapsi.it. When I wanted to see if there were incoming messages, a cockerel would announce the arriving “Dragon”. And it was immediately there, “Click”.

A **Mind-Click**: a sort of short circuit between a (very) post-adolescent private crisis struggling with the symbols of adults and the economic crisis of the early 1990s. A short circuit that pushed me to keep my feet firmly on the ground. At the time (and still today) I believed in the importance of sinking and founding the work of academic research, in the roots of an Italian spirit made up of traditions that were necessary in times of storm: not only my old Vespa-Piaggio, but above all introspection on which to leverage to understand the change in the outside world, the change in geopolitical arrangements after the fall of the Berlin Wall and in the face of the strong and resistant myths of the 1980s. These were already obsolete. *Disconnected*. Those recipes of guaranteed success, of best-practices, the big multinational myths of the Strategic Management consultancy.

I do not claim to provide a general theory on these statements. It was enough for me (and I still need it today) instead, to intuitively **Click**. Because intuition is a good (imperfect) synthesis between worlds (and ways of regulating coexistence, and therefore economics) that are only apparently distant from each other. And SCOS offered to the academic world the opportunity to follow this approach.

I was then (at the beginning of the nineties) and we are all today, in the face of the challenges of the beginning of the third millennium, looking for questions, rather than for answers.

I believe that in the face of the failures of the models that the twentieth century has left to us, with the dogmatism typical of the myths of industrial capitalism and real socialism (two real "bereavements") we have the opportunity to look for new (or old) forms of sublimation that **click** in many different possible ways: ways of doing academic research in organizational studies and HR management, irrational, reckless, convinced, bold, never really prudent and reassuring, just for the need to have reassurance.

The prevailing academic world was (and still is) surrounded by the Harvardian-inspired models, from structural analysis of the environment to strategic planning and forecasting.

In Italy, at the time of my first meeting with SCOS, academic research was very much concerned with "industrial sectors". In many management schools, for example, the textile industry was studied and the concept of an "industrial district" was affirmed (for example, with reference to the one of Prato, in Tuscany). Many academics were practically interested in public transport services on road and on rail. Many proposed the formulas of the marketing mix or themes of management control. Afterwards, new fashions arrived: for example, the ones related to research on start-ups and spin-offs, with the illusion (because it has remained so) of being able to reverse the course of the economic crisis in southern Italy.

Politics put an end to State intervention in the economy of Southern Italy. These promises were often not false, they were not liars. They were simply "beliefs" that arose from the *echo* of the Economic Boom and international agreements after the end of the Second World War that had brought injections of funding in all European countries.

SCOS instead offered (and still offers) different "glasses to read" management. To distinguish facts from the interpretation of them. To distinguish between what is a map and what is, instead, a territory. Between text and how to read it.

* * *

Back to the future.

I've always had chamber music in my life. That was also another "**Click**". A childish one that understood a possible way "to be in the world". I had played chamber music in an amateur way, first with the violin and then with the clarinet, and I had listened to a lot of chamber music in 33 LPs. **Click**: I always sensed that those musical notes, in their interweaving and in the production of their plot, could express a way of being together. A way to understand the division of labour and coordination. With two hypotheses:

- (a) the one proposed by Adorno (1962) in his considerations on the art of chamber music, that the first lesson to be learnt is not to hog the limelight, but to be discreet and retiring.

The ensemble is constituted not by the imperious affirmation of each individual part, which would result in chaotic anarchy, but by self-knowledge and restraints. The great chamber music artists are constantly attentive to the parts of their fellow musicians. For Adorno the closest analogy to this ideal is the ethic of fair play that characterises (or used to characterise) the English attitude to games. But chamber music represents for me at least three other things that are often important to experience his own restlessness. The pleasure of taking part in a small-scale activity, giving the sensation of belonging to a "select few" where the "concertante" or "dialogata" style of writing, in which the different instruments in turn take up the melody and accompany each other. In terms of performance technique, in chamber music there is no doubling up of parts or reinforcing of melodic lines. Each instrument (or voice) has its own independent role in the ensemble (in a string quartet there are four stringed instruments, in a five-part madrigal there are five singers). This style of writing determines the way in which the performers interact, which I investigate as the "listening ability" of the members of a performing group. Obviously, such a form of production process will be based on partnership;

- (b) From the time of its origins in court life in the late Middle Ages, chamber music was made outside the "institutional" contexts of musical production, and thus chamber music is a sort of "counter-culture", alternative and in some ways inimical to the "official culture".

The musicians were responsible for organising their own activity, making them "entrepreneurs and managers of themselves". The performing groups are not large, there is no conductor, and the co-ordination and acknowledgement of leadership comes quite spontaneously: the members of such groups are directly and collectively responsible for relations both with the concert-going public (prosuming) and within the group (listening ability). Such a direct involvement of the musicians means that the performing groups work as auto-organisations, and this way of working has important implications for the definition of the concept of value in the perspective of the performing arts.

* * *

In response to Paul Jeffcutt's Call for paper in the Dragon Journal, I retrieved research materials that I had collected (perhaps unconsciously) and kept in order for many years: I wrote by day and by night the results of my experiences (those I experienced directly, in the form of self-narration) of chamber music. I realized (**Click**) that I had lived that experience of chamber music with a dual attitude: that of the "fly on the wall" that observes everything, records in the mind, inhabiting the organizational action, and that one of the restless young man who was dissatisfied with mainstream thinking, both because of the physiological (even hormonal) protest of the world I lived in and saw changing before my eyes from month to month, from year to year; and because (in contradiction to what I just said) I realized that many of the changes were not actually real, but in many cases they were just different ways of saying the same thing all the time. And even at this point, SCOS came to my aid.

I was immersed in a world that was changing before my eyes: a world that was getting smaller and smaller, thanks to the paradigm shift that the computer revolution was producing and with respect to which the production of chamber music continued to be inelastic. It was clear to me that studying that world, immersing myself in the life of chamber music, orchestras, festivals, opera choirs, musical theatre, was a unique opportunity to see enlarged as "under the microscope" dynamics of organizational action that live in any other form of organization. Even those most studied by the prevailing literature of management and organization.

From this feeling (**Click**) was born the subtitle of my paper for the special Issue edited by Jeffcutt.

I lived in a very small house where the sofa-bed occupied the whole room and was all one with my round table (I love the round tables, they help me to find the concentration, **Click!**), where I had my first laptop, those of Apple that today are objects of Modern Art. Twenty days without sleeping, to write, to respect the deadline of the call for paper of that special Issue.

* * *

I sent the paper (there was no "upload" yet) and while waiting to receive a reply (a desk rejection? minor revision? major revision?) I needed further comparisons. So I contacted two scholars of whom I had already read a lot, two scholars who were very different from each other: Pasquale Gagliardi, who at the time was directing the ISTUD (I met him through his writings, in particular *Symbols and Artifacts*) and Massimo Warglien, who was a young researcher at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, who I met during my doctoral years. We met each other over the years, participating in a working group on the concept of post-Simon "rationality", correlating this concept to the prevailing construct of management and organizational studies.

The old professors perhaps thought that we were a group a bit *carbonaro*, which in carboran relay had nothing: we met once a month in a different city of Italy to discuss theory of organizations.

Pasquale send me a very detailed review by fax that was very useful. With Massimo I had a very long conversation by phone, punctuated by times of turning on his pipe (at least that's how he told me on the other end of the phone).

The comments I then received from the anonymous referees were for the most "minor revision": I remember that one of the two anonymous referees was a bit dysfunctional. Instead, Reviewer 2 gave me many useful tips for revisions and I am still very grateful to her/him/*: the advice I received encouraged me to continue studying the organization through music and stimulated in me another **Click**: that of the textual nature of the organizations. I learned about Roland Barthes and his idea of "narrative" and "writing" in contemporary reality and the possibility of dealing with social institutions through the encounter-clash relationship between language as a collective heritage and individual language.

After a few years I saw my article published (Sicca, 2000), and I found a box with the "excerpts" of my article, returning from a dramatic experience at the University of Warwick, where I learned some basic rules of living with the deepest parts of the Self and with the others.

* * *

2009. In Italy I had finally become an Associate Professor, after ten years of precarious employment, including doctoral, post-doctoral and post-post scholarships..., waiting for "my turn" to come.

I was invited to hold an Organization course at a small private university where there were very few economics courses and only one class of Organization studies. The center of gravity of that University was (and still is) the humanities studies. During the course I noticed a very shy and silent girl always sitting at the first desk. She did not miss any of my classes during the entire semester and at the end of the year she asked to do her dissertation with me.

We worked on the case study of a large Italian multinational (later sold to a Japan company) and on the ways in which some categories of the ancient world tradition (in particular of the fifth century BC) could fertilize the decisions of the HR of that large multinational.

After graduating, this young student chose the impervious path of a PhD. That was the occasion to reconnect with SCOS: I proposed to her to live the experience of a first international conference, presenting the research we were doing at the 31st Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism held in Warsaw, JULY 13th - 16th. "Creative de-Construction".

The very Scossey atmosphere seemed ideal for an international baptism of a young Ph.D student and that was the opportunity to meet Ilaria Boncori. We found ourselves, on that occasion, "twins (academics) separated at birth", as Ilaria is used to say.

* * *

Meanwhile... in Italy....

In those same years, a historic group of "old travel companions", engaged in the search for Art Management, had decided to meet again. The initiative started from Luca Zan who had already for many years abandoned his main research activity on the Unions, dedicating himself, full time, to those research contexts labeled as "art organization".

In 2005 Luca and I published together a work on the Rhetoric of the managerial language in the management of the Opera Houses (Sicca, Zan 2005) and we met with friends and colleagues at the University of Venice to resume "the thread of speech".

The idea was to build a Study and Attention Group (GSA – Gruppo di Studio e di Attenzione) as part of the Italian Academy of Management (AIDEA – Accademia Italiana di Economia Aziendale) that could make critical mass bringing to the attention of the international academic world our way of doing research. It was there that I also met Monica Calcagno, with whom I had shared a period of research in England at the end of the 1990s (she studied at Birkbeck College, I had my visiting at the City University at the Department of Cultural Policy and Management) and many other friends and colleagues. My perspective, however, had shifted a bit further than my early interests in art organisations. For some years now, in fact, artistic organizations were not for me an "object" of study. Rather, I was interested in working closely with artists (especially contemporary electronic music musicians/executors and composers) to understand how their grammar and syntax could fertilize the centre of gravity of management studies. And in this operation (reckless for mainstream managerial thought) the lesson of SCOS was once again useful. Not only that, but SCOS itself turned out to be the fertile ground for these research practices.

A new **Click** was just around the corner.

2015. The board of SCOS decided, on the impulse of Ilaria Boncori, to organize its annual conference in Italy, with a preference for Rome. They asked me to act as a link between academic worlds that, historically, always had very little dialogue. My choice fell on La Sapienza University of Rome where we organized the XXXV Conference, 10-13 in July, 2017.

In those years Davide Bizjak took the first steps of his academic life with whom I had opened a new line of research (Diversity Management) treated and articulated in a field also very little beaten by the prevailing managerial thinking: we worked together with transgender people in business organizations.

I discussed the thread that unites these two research stories (art management and diversity management in a broad sense) in a small article I wrote during the summer (Sicca, 2016): in that paper I highlighted the "construct of inclusion", which provides the possibility for those in central positions and governance, to rethink and rebuild their theoretical vocabulary and practices from the experiences of those who live on the margins of an organization.

The "construct of inclusion", in short, understood in the opposite sense to that of "integration", which provides stable frames with the aim of bringing into predefined frames those who are on the margins or even outside the organizations.

I consider this way of understanding inclusion not only as a working method in managerial and organizational practices, but also as a working method in epistemological practices, generating powerful sources of knowledge (Sicca, 2012).

From these ideas, which I have briefly summarized here (and on which Davide wrote his PhD thesis), I founded the project puntOorg International Research Network, which from informal network of sense-making has turned into a structured research community, living (or suffering?) all the risks that arise from the processes of institutionalization of research movements (Pareschi, Bizjak, Sicca, 2019).

Perhaps a bit like SCOS which, from the critical rib of EGOS, in 1980 detached itself, posing as an autonomous "movement", and then gradually became institutionalized.

* * *

One more click.

During my course on Organizational design that I held in 2009 at the University of Naples Federico II, there was another **click**. One year before, I presented, together with Renato Viscardi, a paper concerning neophilia and neophobia to the 3rd ASCOS, organized by Alison Pullen. I could never miss the chance to make use of the discretion (that is sometime scepticism) typical of the Southern Italy, to propose research around the risks of the neophilia. I was proposed that to not undertake those risks would result in a return to the archetypical structures of the ancient world. Particularly, I was addressing the words "language", "text", and "*enantiodromia*", where the latter is a Greek term the draws on the philosophy of Heraclitus from Efesu, meaning that a thing exists due to its opposite. To me, a connection *clicked* but its opposite *snapped*.

In Italy the Politics of the Berlusconi Government were redesigning the rules of academic life, with the aim of harmonizing the European academic systems. During my classes I proposed that my students participate in an experiment on the concept of organizational culture, starting with the work of Pasquale Gagliardi. Within that audience, a **Click** was triggered with a student-worker from Capri Island, to whom I now leave the pen (or rather the **Click** on his computer keyboard), to tell how and when SCOS entered his life and why the little Dragon passed into his hands.

* * *

Just a click

It has definitely been a novel **click**. Something was not working at all with my academic path at that time. I was attending the bachelor's degree course in Business Management at the University of Naples and all the stuff I was learning seemed so comforting. Every model seemed to be a faithful representation of the firm, and every theory seemed to perfectly explain each piece of a company. But something was not working at all. I was going mad due to that all certainty about what an organization was and how it should work. My feelings and my scepticism concerning my education were overwhelming my efforts in being critical, addressing the same troubles and seeking new perspectives. Either I was searching for some alternative sources of managerial knowledge, or I was going back to the

primary source of managerial knowledge. I was not aware of what I was searching for at the time, I felt just incomplete and wholly immersed into the “matrix” of academic education. My first **click** was a decision to do something that I never did before. I was attending the “Organization studies” class and I have decided to visit the professor during the office hours in order to seek elucidation concerning the class. That Professor, who is the author of the previous paragraphs, was holding a book in his hands whereas I was standing in front of his office. He didn’t say too much, but he gave to me the book he was holding: “Symbols and artifacts: views of the corporate landscapes”, edited by Pasquale Gagliardi in 1990 and published by Walter De Gruyter & Co. That edited book collected several contributions by the SCOS Conference held in Milan from 24th to 26th June in 1987; I was born just a month before.

Symbols and artifacts: views of a learning path

I distinctively remember the sense of wonder in reading about management and organizations at such a new level. In that book nothing was taken for granted, and any idea was a proposal to the reader and to the future researchers. Even if something was generally accepted, it was not with the aim to get the audience comfortable, but rather to encourage new questions. I was not aware of the difference between a comfortable handbook and the collection of a research papers, but it was something I needed in that moment. I felt totally immersed in the problematization of organizational culture, into the uncomfortable meaning construction of symbols within organizations, drawing on Cassirer and the role of the artifacts, that exist independently from human willingness (Gagliardi, 1990). That book was the first research material I ever read, and it was the **click** which connected my first research interests. Organizational Culture and Organizational Artifacts. This is how I have been aware of SCOS and its community of scholars.

New click onwards

A bunch of years passed after that reading and several research experiences have accompanied my education during my attending of the former bachelor’s degree, and the master’s degree afterward. But it was quite at the end of my Ph.D. course that I encountered SCOS again, thanks to Ilaria Boncori and Luigi Maria Sicca who involved me in contributing to the Rome SCOS as Conference Assistant, together with Chiara Meret from Sapienza University. It was my turn to contribute to the Conference and my journey, coming back from Colchester after a visiting period, together with Scossy. The conference mascot was more than a symbolic dragon to me. I felt the same sense of wonder I did at the beginning, realising that I was now inside the experience and community which had shown me a new way to look at management and organization some years before.

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On four decades of fitting in with the misfits

Steve Linstead

I'm writing this after the SCOS conference in Tokyo, which very sadly I was unable to attend. Despite studying martial arts across a couple of decades, including in Hong Kong, I was only ever able to make one trip to Japan - a one day stopover. And I never got out of the hotel. The airline lost my luggage and the only store open in the airport had nothing "sumo-size" in stock. What I bought was two sizes too small and could not be worn outside my room. Even so, I could tell that even inscrutable room service found my appearance hysterically entertaining. The conference theme of incompleteness and imperfection certainly resonated with my visit.

The first SCOS Conference that I actually attended was in 1984, in Lund, the first big international meeting for SCOS and by far the biggest conference I'd attended. It was only my third conference, the first being an educational one, and the second being a rather mean-spirited BSA meeting where everyone seemed to know each other through well-established adversarial relations. Having submitted my PhD I was awaiting my viva – I had seen the fabulous SCOS “dragon-in-the organization-chart” poster on the wall at Templeton College, Oxford when I went to see my ebullient supervisor, Dan Gowler, who was as excited as I was about it and thoroughly encouraged me to go.

Although I had a few years of work experience and had been teaching for three years, even getting a promotion, I was working in a small college and remained somewhat naïve about academic conferences, and the ones I had attended hadn't been terribly welcoming. In Lund I was like Charlie in the Chocolate Factory. The field of organizational symbolism, and the study of corporate culture, was taking off globally and everyone who was anyone was there. I was starstruck. Everywhere I looked there were people whose work I had used and cited, some of whom were my heroes and inspiration, like the great Barry Turner. And they talked to me! The atmosphere was all generosity and kindness, amazing intellectual energy and imagination, and the presentations were stellar. Even the coffee breaks were inspirational. I met people like Pierre Guillet de Monthoux whom I couldn't have imagined existed. Some of them became lifelong friends through a shared sense of adventure, and it was that friendship I wanted to share with my other friends back home who hadn't made it – like the late Bob Grafton Small. Bob, one of the smartest people I've ever known, had, like me, suffered from having his work classed as esoteric and marginal, his spirit constantly clouded despite his brilliance as a researcher and teacher. I dragged Bob Grafton-Small along the following year to Antibes/Trento, then to Montreal in '86 and SCOS became a real source of resurgence for him. This *was* a conference of the esoteric and marginal, and wow it was good, full of character, like a participative mass work of art. Some of the presenters were interviewed by Robert Poupart of UQAM and a video presented by creative torrent Per-Olof Berg was released – a couple of years ago I digitised it for the SCOS webpages, and I can't believe I was so young. Or ever owned such large spectacles.

The principle of serious play was fresh then, although it has now been sufficiently appropriated by others to have become something of a cliché, but what also struck me, and influenced me indelibly, was the idea of “symbolic events” – that is, the social events were in some way linked to the conference themes, so the intellectual work continued by other means. For someone whose political education had been sparked and driven through music, this confirmed and legitimated what I had always known – the work never sleeps, and the real work may start when the job stops. Of course, politics isn’t the same for everyone. In this period two Bulgarian scholars began to attend (before the collapse of the Berlin Wall). One of the two never said anything in the presentations they did, never replied to questions, and was really no fun socially. It turned out he was a representative of the *First Main Directorate of the Committee for State Security* – the scholar’s secret service minder! Reassuringly, though, he never carried an umbrella. Subsequently I joined the Board, which was a hive of passionate discussion and ideas – when Vincent Degot launched *Dragon* from Ecole Polytechnique and we had meetings on the very streets that 20 years previously had been upturned to reveal “la plage”, I took days to come down.

I met so many people that I couldn’t wait to introduce to SCOS, and it was so rejuvenating to see them have a similar experience to mine, meeting and making new friends with whom they then went on to forge new working relationships - Heather Höpfl being perhaps the one that most stands out. Heather and I were introduced by Julia Davies at Lancaster, when Heather was easing her way back into full-time work after motherhood, and we were given a tough assignment – to turn round a corporate diploma programme for a major blue-chip. It had collapsed in acrimony with both academics and corporate trainers abandoning the class in tears and we had the job of resuscitating it. Both Heather and I shared a commitment to management education and practice as well as having more artistic interests and working with her to rebuild relationships and redesign the programme was just a delight. Unwinding after the early formal work we discovered a mutual interest in theatre (Heather had been a theatre administrator) and worked that passion into the programme with spectacular results. In 1992, Heather helped me to organise the SCOS conference *Organization and Theatre* at Lancaster with some memorable events, and we began to realise that there was a broader interest specifically in the arts that couldn’t be fully satisfied within the main SCOS conferences. So we began a small series of workshops, sponsored by SCOS as an official spin-off, on aesthetics and organization. This led to a book, and ultimately another conference series (started with Ian King and Ceri Watkins at Essex). When this conference hit institutional problems in 2010 after Ian King left Essex, I took over with another SCOS attendee Jenna Ward, who is herself a force of nature, to turn it round and relaunch it at York, and this year *The Art of Management and Organization* became a charity in its own right. I’ve always seen it as a SCOS related endeavour, a bit more arty, performance and practice focused where SCOS is more scholarly, but part of the same ethos and driven by the same motivations, to get mind, body and emotions working together (which is why we hold it in late summer/early autumn so as not to compete with SCOS, and every two years when CMS isn’t running). That it exists at all is because of SCOS, and the ongoing support and encouragement of SCOS members and successive boards.

From 1989-92 was Secretary and Editor of *Notework* with the great Barry Turner in the Chair. During this period SCOS became even bigger – the conference run by Pasquale Gagliardi in Milan, which I remember for conversations in the Bar Magenta and on the roof of the

Duomo with Linda Smircich and Marta Calàs, and the legendary Valhalla concept culminating in Copenhagen in 1991, underlined the need for more effective formalization of some functions. But having been part of the beginning of this process I spent the next 6 years in Hong Kong and Australia and couldn't attend board meetings so I stepped down. The 90s became theoretically and politically troubled times for SCOS. New figures moved in; old ones moved aside. Divergences and schisms occurred at board level and when Heather took over as Chair in 1995 there was a great deal of healing to be done, which she did brilliantly. SCOS made two attempts to become international in this short period by holding its annual meeting outside Europe (it had done so with debatable success in Montreal in 1986). This affected the continuity of its membership in unanticipated ways, such that despite a magical conference in Brazil in 1998, where I took over the Chair, we were forced into considering the awful prospect that SCOS may have run its natural course and prepare plans for winding up. Despite the 1999 conference in Edinburgh being a modest success, protracted administrative problems with the release of money had us within a whisker of going out of business. I couldn't believe that in 15 years we had gone from that coruscating event in Lund to this – when there was clearly no falling off at the level of the experience and passion of the conferences. We just had to get the business end right – and give some necessary attention to the seriousness that would enable the play to continue.

Fortunately, with Simon Lilley as Treasurer, and the support of a young and visionary board, we were able to find ways to fix the finances and set the foundation for becoming paper-free, and for a new relationship with the journal. One of the problems with hosting conferences in countries distant from your membership base is that it's hard to make money from them and often there are institutional problems with attribution of costs and funds transfers. Even if numbers don't fall, you tend to lose people from Europe (especially graduate students) who can't afford to travel so far and you may lose them as future members for good. Then the locals that you replace them with may make for a good event but as a rule don't become regular attenders for the future. All this affects your credibility when Deans are making decisions on which conferences they are willing to support for their junior staff. To offset the risk and still encourage international SCOS members to self-organise, we formalised the encouragement of international local groups and sponsored spin offs, a policy that ultimately led to ACSCOS. At that time, *Notework* was hardcopy, and *Studies* was hardcopy, so there were inevitable expenses and stress (not directly regarding *Studies*, but the publisher put a lot of pressure on us to increase physical subscriptions in the days before digital packaging). There was a subscription to be paid, but if people didn't come to the conference it was hard to get them to pay it and we hadn't the resources to follow up. If a conference in LA (for example) didn't break even, you lost journal subscriptions from both the US and Europe. Simon and I proposed including a subscription to the journal hardcopy with a new conference levy (beyond which the conference hosts bore all gains or losses), which was effective in the short term until with the advent of a new publisher digital bundling was possible, and the process of going fully digital with *Notework* began. We also developed a model contract and guidelines for conference organization which other conferences have also used as a model. We then started the process of building up enough reserves to cover administrative expenses for two years so that should there be a need to wind up it could be done gracefully. SCOS then enjoyed something of a turnaround with conferences in Athens, Dublin, Budapest and Cambridge which gave us the security to

host another out of Europe in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 2004. Since then SCOS hasn't looked back.

In the early 90s, Paul Bate had been instrumental in brokering an agreement to launch *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies* with Harwood Academic Press, but as the decade wore on they became very difficult to deal with, making heavy weather of everything and absorbing a great deal of the board's time and psychological energy – but most particularly that of founding editors Barbara Czarniawska and Brian Rusted. At the end of my term as Chair in 2001, Dave Richards took over – because no-one else on the Board was available. Dave was very modest, and didn't feel that his intellectual standing was sufficient for him to exercise the leadership he felt the position of chair required, although he was a very experienced and distinguished educator. But the board disagreed and prevailed, and he stepped in and filled the gap very generously and selflessly. Sadly, he was diagnosed with cancer in 2004 and we lost him the following year.

I hadn't been able to extend my term as chair (as unassuming Dave would have preferred) because in 2001 Heather and I took over as joint editors of the journal, following the fantastic achievements of Barbara and Brian to create a genuinely multidisciplinary forum. At the same time, our problematic publisher was taken over by Routledge, and we were able to negotiate a new title, *Culture and Organization*, and a new visual identity that certainly helped the journal's development, whilst also increasing its frequency. Better support eventually led to an Impact Factor rating and CABS/AJG rating, although in many people's view this does not reflect the quality of the contributions and inevitably suppresses the number of submissions. Heather had just joyfully attended the SCOS conference in Warsaw in 2013 when she was stricken by her final fatal illness, but her legacy and spirit have been as important to SCOS as that of Barry Turner, another friend taken from us far too soon.

Across four decades now, whether via the conference or the journal, SCOS has provided a wellspring of inspiration and imagination, and a place where off-centre thinking can find supportive critique. It never does things predictably and I have memories like the smuggling of outsourced patisseries into the gala dinner in Lund (the hotel charge had exceeded the dessert budget) and the death-threat from a drug-dealer in Montreal after I stumbled upon a clandestine pharmaceutical exchange in a doorway on the Rue Ste. Catherine, that remain a constant symbolic resource for not taking academic life too seriously. And SCOS has given me unexpected gifts too, like introductions to work I would never have otherwise encountered. Back in 1990, both Barry Turner and Barbara Czarniawska – two voracious polymaths – recommended the brilliant work of Bud (H.L.) Goodall on narrative ethnography, a much-awarded ethnographer surprisingly unfamiliar to Europeans. The titles of his first two books *Casing a Promised Land* and *Living in the Rock'n'Roll Mystery* brought music and detective novels together in the service of organizational analysis with pure SCOS DNA. I had always wanted to meet him, and when co-organising the first QRMO conference with Ann Cunliffe in New Mexico I was tasked to invite him, while Ann invited John Van Maanen. What we didn't know is that John had been instrumental in ensuring the acceptance of Bud's first book by the publisher, although they had never met. Their coming together was a real celebratory occasion. Bud subsequently became a good friend – he shared the SCOS spirit of curiosity, openness, and willingness to share enthusiasms for the offbeat, and without SCOS I'd never have heard of him.

SCOS has struggled with the demands of institutionalization in order to survive without becoming corporate, and maintaining its journal without becoming rankings driven, its sociability supporting rather than diluting its standards. But survive it has, and different generations have found that values marginalized by the mainstream take centre stage in SCOS and emerge renewed. Without SCOS my career would have taken a very different path, and I hope it continues for many years to curate the work and care for the spirits of those who take the risk of being intellectually different in trying to change a world that proliferates novelty rather than originality in perpetuating intellectual claustrophobia.

At Home Abroad: SCOS as Safe Haven

Patricia A.L. Ehrensall & Kenneth N. Ehrensall

We are relative newcomers to SCOS, having attended and presented for the first time in Copenhagen/Malmö in 2009. Since then we have been to Lille (Ken only), Istanbul, Barcelona, Nottingham, Rome and have plans for York in 2019. We must say that SCOS is the conference that we like, enjoy, and want to attend each summer. This stands in contrast to all the conferences that we feel we “must” attend (which, unfortunately, sometime conflict with SCOS.) We have chosen this title as it reflects our feeling of marginality, particularly when presenting at US-based conferences, in contrast to the welcome we always feel at SCOS.

Tricia’s Story

A good subtitle for this section would be “But you were never in a classroom with children!” My area of research concerns pre-Kindergarten to 12th Grade (preK-12) (primary and secondary) school organizations. While I have spent my academic career in university schools of education and in educational leadership departments, I have been a “misfit” for two reasons; my non-traditional entry into this field and the focus of my critical research.

The traditional route into the academic field of preK-12 educational administration/leadership generally begins with a career in teaching and administration. This includes receiving a Bachelor or Master’s in Teaching degree and (state) teaching certification, experience as a classroom teacher (3-5 years depending on the State), a Master’s degree in educational administration/leadership, certification as an (building) administrator and experience as an assistant principal and principal of a school. One then goes on to earn a doctoral degree (either Ph.D. or Ed.D.), and (in some States) certification as a school superintendent⁷. Some will then go into academia, while others will pursue central office administration positions as assistant superintendents and of course as superintendent of schools. This however, is not the route I took.

My undergraduate degree is in biology, and I spent the first ten years of my career as a research technician in academic biomedical research laboratories. After two years in the

⁷ In most State in the U.S., the State will be divided into school districts either by County (as in Maryland), municipality (e.g. Philadelphia, New York, and smaller ones such as Reading in PA) or township (e.g. Merion in PA). These school districts consist of elementary schools (Kindergarten through fifth grade), one or more middle schools (sixth through eighth grades) and one or more high schools (ninth through twelfth grades). Each school will have one or more assistant principals and a principal. The central administrative tasks and coordination (personnel, curriculum administration, etc.) take place in the district’s central office. The superintendent (now often called the Chief Education Officer (CEO)) is the head of the entire school district. The districts School Board oversee the work of the school district.

research lab of the New York City Department of Health's (NYC DOH) HIV testing division, I took an administration position in that division. My duties included managing the other than personal services budget and materials (writing, reviewing and shepherding purchase orders for supplies through the complex NYC DOH system). Based on this experience, I decided to pursue a career in the field of (academic) research administration. Thus, I obtained a Master's in Education (M.Ed.) in Higher Education Administration, and an Ed.D. in Educational Administration. However, during the taught part of the doctorate, I became more interested in the areas law, policy and organizational studies concerning preK-12 schools, thus changed the focus of my studies and research and decided to pursue an academic rather than an administrative career. My research interest then and continues to be the discourses in and around preK-12 school organizations, particularly at the nexus of law, policy, and school organization. It is grounded in critical theory and (critical) ethics. My dissertation was a critical discourse analysis of legal documents concerning drugs and violence in schools in both the U.S. and England. While working on my dissertation, I served as a School Director on the School Board for Pottstown School District⁸, which gave me experience in and "practical" understanding of school governance.

While I have always been a faculty member of a graduate educational leadership department, I have been a "misfit" in these departments. There are three reasons for this lack of fit. First, my lack of preK-12 teaching and administration experience (neither my experience as "public" administrator in the NYC DOH nor on a school board is considered "real" experience as I was a teacher or school administrator), consequently both my colleagues and students question my pedagogic authority (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Second, both my teaching and research emphasize theory, however education programs, including the doctorate (Ed.D.) are viewed as practice oriented. Consequently, both my colleagues and students not only don't recognize the link between theory and practice, they also view theory as nothing more than a "hoop" to jump through. Finally, while critical theory has become part of the mainstream in educational administration research, it has mostly been used to examine the various "-isms" in the politics and policies of education and how inequitable policies have been imposed on schools. I turn this critical lens on the organizational arrangements of schools and the educational actors therein, in short asking how the structure (agency is emphasized in the U.S.) and educators, as part of that structure (unwittingly) act to maintain the systems of oppression and domination in both school and society. When I challenge students in my classes (modules) to use theory to critically self-assess their practice and question their assumptions, it is met with pronounced resistance. Further, when I present my research at educational administration/leadership conference it is either dismissed because I don't offer "solutions" to the problems I raise, or it met with resistance (and sometimes anger) because both scholars and practitioners become defensive

⁸ In the U.S., by law, local school boards are an arm of the state legislature, whose charge is to ensure that state policies are implemented (Alexander & Alexander, 2005). However, the members of these bodies are elected locally. In addition to ensuring that state policies are implemented, the major duties of the school board include hiring/firing and supervision of the superintendent, overseeing the administration of the school district, enact local policy, budgets and levy taxes to fund the school district (in the U.S. the major source of school district funding is local taxes).

about their research and/or practice. Therefore, it is difficult for me to get helpful critique of my work or be challenged in my thinking.

Ken's Story

If I were to give this section of our contribution a sub-title, it would be "From anthropologist in another department to other in an Anthropology department." This reflects my "eclectic" academic background, which mixes undergraduate and post-graduate studies in Cultural Anthropology with post-graduate studies in Business and Organizational Studies, and returning for additional post-graduate studies in Anthropology. While a post-graduate student in Anthropology in the late-1970s and early-1980s it became clear that pursuing a career as an academic anthropologist might not be a good decision, as the job market was quickly shrinking. Under the advice of my undergraduate mentor (an anthropologist) and his wife (an advertising executive working on the portfolios of international clients) I moved from studying Anthropology to pursue an MBA with a focus on international business operations. This was the early 1980s, a time in the business world where executives were focused on two things; the Japanese business challenge (internationally) and corporate/organizational culture (internally). Thus, a potentially a perfect market niche opened for some who could claim expertise in both Anthropology and Business. At least the Dean of the b-school of the University that awarded my MBA thought so, and I was offered a position as a (very) junior faculty member. From the September of 1983 through December of 2009, my academic appointments were in the "B-school". I must point out that neither my first appointment, nor the subsequent two appointments as b-school faculty were particularly planned, the first, most certainly, just 'sorta' happened. The two subsequent moves were not based upon any kind of rational planning or forethought. (As I tell my students, careers are really post-hoc rationalizations of the random things that have occurred during one's work life; like life stories, in general, the coherence comes in the telling not the living.)

Elsewhere, I have written about the culture and institution of the b-school; so here I will only make brief comments. As others have pointed out, the curriculum of the business school is part ideology and part technocracy. Given the ideological component of the curriculum, I have argued elsewhere, it is then necessary for faculty to be true believers. The purity test for faculty is then based upon a combination of academic credentials, work experience, and the ability to engage in the discourses of capitalism. While I pass on the first of these criteria – I do have a MBA in International Business and an MPhil in Organizational Studies. I fail on the second criteria – I am and have always been an academic. That failure makes one immediately suspect. As to the third criteria, I would like to address that in more detail.

At the undergraduate level, where I have done the vast majority of my b-school teaching, the principal activity is socializing the students into the languages of business – spoken jargon, accounting, and statistical/quantitative analysis. It is then the "duty" of the professors to be models of, what Bourdieu (1994) calls, "authorized language." The authorized language of the b-school is both unquestioningly pro-capitalist and pro-managerialist. Further, the discourses of *management*, the topic that I taught, are overly individualistic and psychological – a perspective that, as an anthropologist, has always seemed somewhat problematic. For me, this is where there was always (well, at least after the first couple of years when the effect of the MBA wore off) a disjuncture between my

sense of identity and the individual I was required to be in the classroom and in front of b-school colleagues and students. My classroom talk required the over-simplification of the social, structural and political aspects of life in organizations. Raising these issues in conversations with colleagues would often draw blank stares. I would have to talk the talk as if I believed it, without indicating my deep felt cynicism. Of course, the fact that I sported a ponytail and eschewed the bank manager uniform favored by my colleagues may have hinted at my true feelings. (Resistance was not going to be futile I would not be assimilated.) My solution was to “other” my colleagues and students. Rather than be an anthropologist *in* a business school, I became an anthropologist *of* the business school. However the product of that work – papers and publications – probably qualify me as a Dale Carnegie flunk out, at least among some in the b-school community and AACSB.

Sometime in early 2009 the weak signals began. At the time I was the vice president of the campus chapter of the faculty union. The union president came to me and said something like, “today the provost said the most interesting thing, ‘Ken is more like a sociologist; how did he end up in the Management Department?’” A few weeks later, the union president came to me again, saying (something like), “The Provost brought it up again that you were more like a sociologist, and was wondering if you would be interested in moving departments. I [the union president] told him to ask you directly if he wanted an answer.” We knew something was up. The Provost had hired a new Dean for the b-school and he was given one, and only one, objective to meet – obtain AACSB accreditation. Over the next few months it became clear that the Dean’s perception was that my university was a weak case for accreditation, and that to achieve that goal, he would “need to drive the car right down the middle of the street.” He needed a faculty that looked more like mainstream business faculty.

After a meeting late in the Spring semester of 2009, almost as a non-sequitur, the Provost asked me directly, “have you ever thought of going to the sociology department, and do you think you might be happier there?” My immediate response, in a register to clearly indicate that I was dead serious, was something like “that would make my day!” With the beginning of the Spring semester of 2010, I found myself in a new department with new colleagues (many of whom I had known for years).

Life was much simpler when I was an undergraduate and anthropologists studied “primitives” in far off exotic (and isolated) places. Today, anthropologists study a much broader range of phenomena and often, much closer to home. But that leaves Anthropology with an identity crisis. Students come to us as majors because they either are interested in the “exotic other,” or they want to be Indiana Jones. Further, we still do have a large number of colleagues who believe that cultural anthropology is still the study of the “exotic other.” Additionally, several colleagues do not consider “applied anthropology” as “real” anthropology (or, at best, it’s a kind of lesser anthropology done by scholars who couldn’t get a job doing “real” anthropology).

Consequently, the research that I carried out while in the b-school is often seen as not being *real* anthropology. This includes my most recent major fieldwork, which was an academic year away from Kutztown spent studying business undergraduates.

Being an anthropologist, like being a business professor, requires one to “talk the talk.” In cultural anthropology, this is framed in the “my people” discourse – “kinship – my people do this,” “religion – my people believe that,” and so on. The more exotic your people and what they do or believe, the more of a *real* anthropologist one becomes. Very little “street cred” is accrued from (some) colleagues when the “my people” statements are about the people sitting across the room from you in the lecture hall or are the businessperson down the street. During my years in the b-school I attempted to attend the American Anthropological Association conference as regularly as possible, to reassure myself that I was an anthropologist. Once I moved departments I attended, in part, to reassure my departmental colleagues, that I am, in fact, an anthropologist.

So, who am I? For years as a b-school faculty, my front-stage self talked the talk while my backstage self “othered” my colleagues and students, and now as an anthropology faculty there is more consistency between my front-stage and backstage self, but the talk I talk is, well, just not quite right. So, I suppose who I am depends on whom you ask. I’m either an anthropologist who pretends to be a b-school faculty or I’m a b-school faculty masquerading as an anthropologist.

SCOS as a Safe Haven

Both of us have taken unorthodox paths and approaches to organizational studies, and consequently neither of us has been able to be fully accepted by our departmental colleagues. This marginalization has not only resulted in a sense of isolation, but more importantly means that neither of us has been able to cultivate critical friendships.

Costa and Kallick (1993) define a critical friend as “a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lenses and offers critique of a person’s work as a friend” (p. 50). This friend takes time to understand the context and perspective of work/research. Critical friends intentionally create opportunities to challenge colleagues (Bambino, 2002). In short, a critical friend “is an advocate for the success of the [research]” (Cost & Kallick, 1993, p. 50). Baskerville and Goldblatt (2009) state that the choice of critical friends emerges naturally in a group of with shared interests and values. Further, as a trusting relationship develops, critical friends “shift from *professional indifference* through *challenge* to *unguarded conversations*” (emphasis original) (p. 216). That is, the relationship moves from colleagues politely listening to the research presentation, to critiquing points, and then to friends who engage in the hard conversations to help strengthen the research.

Appleton (2011) discusses critical friends as a research tool. She argues that it is important to develop a group of critical friends to “‘walk beside me’ and assist me to maintain my personal and professional integrity as I work though the research process” (p. 1). For Appleton, critical friends believe in one’s “abilities to successfully undertake [the] research, and, equally important, they were colleagues who were able to challenge and question [one’s] assumptions and interpretations in ways that would support critical reflection of [one’s] role and purpose” (p. 7). The role of critical friends includes challenging research positions in a positive way, having unguarded conversations about data collection and analysis, thus safeguarding the integrity of the research (Appleton, 2011; Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009). Appleton (2011) does caution that critical friends bring their own bias to

the conversation, which can have a counter-productive effect. Thus, she argues, it is important to have a diverse group of critical friends to minimize this risk.

SCOS and its members fit the criteria of “critical friends.” According to the official SCOS website, the group originally formed as a working group within the *European Group for Organizational Studies* (EGOS), but became an independent group over 25 years ago. Like a critical friends groups it developed naturally based on shared interests in organizational studies and its philosophy of “serious fun.”

Serious, because we are dedicated to the development of unusual and groundbreaking ideas in the analysis of organization, organizing, management and managing. Fun, because the members of our network provide a continual source of enthusiasm, support and inspiration for each other: for SCOS the social side of our activities is an essential – indeed indistinguishable – element of our intellectual and practical endeavours. (SCOS website)

This “serious fun” philosophy creates a safe haven for scholars to engage in divergent thinking and develop heterodox research. In both the formal paper sessions and the social events at the annual conference, members, as critical friends, engage in unguarded conversations (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009) in a spirit of friendship to foster the success of research projects. This serious fun philosophy also creates a conference where members take the work, rather than themselves seriously. Thus, conversations focus on the research, and feature a generosity that is not found in other conferences where networking is focused more on career building and rising in the scholarly hierarchy. Finally, “SCOS is a global network of academics and practitioners, who hail from a hugely diverse range of disciplines and professional backgrounds” (SCOS website). This diversity strengthens this network of critical friends by offering a plethora of views and approaches to research. It also helps minimize the risk of groupthink and counter-productive effects that a single lens or view might impose on the research (Appleton, 2011).

At the SCOS conferences both of us have found a “home” where our work is not only accepted but also encouraged. Here we have found a group of critical friends who are invested in the success of our research projects. Additionally, and just as important, we have found a scholarly network where we feel valued and are encouraged to engage in unguarded conversations about the work of fellow scholars. At SCOS our non-traditional backgrounds and approaches to organizational studies are considered strengths to offer rather than weaknesses to be avoided. Thus, each year we look forward to traveling abroad to this home and the enthusiastic exchange of ideas in this safe haven.

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Organising SCOS

Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism: and Still standing!

Kristian Kreiner

Introduction

I missed the evening in 1981 when SCOS was conceived and cannot claim to be among the founding fathers. However, I observed SCOS grow from infancy into maturity – a development for better and worse. I attended the very first SCOS conference in Exeter in 1982 and with Majken Schultz I organized the 8th International SCOS conference in Copenhagen in 1991. In between these events, I attended all conferences and served on the board (1984-88), part of the time as the editor of the SCOS newsletter and later as the chairman.

In a few paragraphs I will reflect on this experience which certainly influenced me more than I influenced SCOS.

Getting started

My interest in organizational culture and symbolism was incidental. I earned my master's degree at Copenhagen Business School, specializing in organizational decision making. Returning to Denmark from a year at Stanford University with James G. March and the scholars behind the book *Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations* (Kristian Kreiner 1976b; March and Olsen 1976/1985), I was offered a Ph.D. scholarship at The Technical University of Denmark and chose to follow the money. In this manner, I ended up in the field of construction management. I studied planning and decision-making on construction sites. Long into an observational study of management meetings on construction sites I realized that these meetings were keyed events. They meant something different from what they communicated. This realization made me write my dissertation (K. Kreiner 1976a) as an ethnographic study, analyzing the site meeting as a ceremony, and relying very little on the literature on construction management. Bigwigs of anthropology, like Fredrik Barth, were my main inspiration.

In the preface to my dissertation, I made apologies for having diverted from all beaten paths of technical research. To my surprise, instead of reprimands the University offered me a permanent position, seemingly inviting me to pursue my deviant and exotic academic interests. On the part of the university, this gesture was due partly to ignorance, and partly to indifference. I had never happened, of course, had my colleagues at the department not wanted me to stay, probably because my exotic research added a little flesh and blood to their field of optimizing models and rational algorithms. This experience taught me that you can create substantial license for yourself even in highly institutionalized contexts like a university.

Technical research is a munificent field and I had no difficulty financing my work and travel from the Technical research council. Applying from a position at the Technical University, my work was without question (and probably without reading) classified as technical research and therefore considered fundable. I could do what I wanted if I didn't expect anybody to read and care. In that phase of my career, I learn the truth (and benefit) of the trade-off between substance and status (Cohen and March 1974), or between substance and symbolism.

Reaching out

Being a loner in the world of technical research, I was motivated to reach out to people who might read my texts and somehow care a little about the substance. I stumbled over a call for papers for *The First European Conference on Organizational Symbolism* at University of Exeter in 1982, and I submitted my paper, *The symbols of organization. Conspicuous and unobtrusive management*. I didn't know the organizers and had low or no expectations of finding readers and future collaborators in Exeter. But I was wrong.

When checking in to the conference, a blond Swede came rushing towards me. "Are you the Kristian Kreiner who wrote *The Site Organization*?" The welcoming Swede was Per Olof Berg (PO), for many years the driving force behind SCOS and its first chairman. Such enthusiasm and substantive interest in culture and symbolism proved to be the guiding principles of SCOS over at least a decade. We experimented with form and content, carried on a wave of collegiality, non-conventional research subjects and methods, and a large dose of humor and irony. "We do it for fun, not for funds" was an important slogan, but in my case, what I did for fun proved easily fundable.

Organizing SCOS

Fun and experimentation can only be sustained among friends. The group of friends that carried my engagement with SCOS for a decade included people like Barry Turner, Rein Nauta, Pasquale Gagliardi, Antonio Strati, Bob Witkin, Vincent Degot, and PO. Tight social relationships encourage innovation and joy relative to competitive, disciplined and opportunistic research ventures. To make sure, joy, experimentation, enthusiasm does not substitute for seriousness, but they make it more likely that there is something interesting to be serious about. A stream of research publications proved the point that some issues were pursued seriously. A prominent example is (Berg and Kreiner 1990; Gagliardi 1990).

SCOS as an autonomous working group under EGOS became a great success. We joked about the fact that more people were involved in our working group than in the EGOS mother institution. But such success has its price. When the membership multiplies, friendship loses its carrying capacity as organizational foundation. Without much formalization, SCOS became vulnerable to competition, fragmentation, politics, and ideology. For example, during my chairmanship we organized a conference in Istanbul, which stirred considerable controversy because of the undemocratic government of Turkey. We carried through, but ended up in a sweatshop, both because of heated politics and because of a combination of intense heatwave and lack of air-conditioning.

Experimenting with conference formats

We all took turns in organizing conferences. Copenhagen Business School was the host in 1991 of what became known as the Valhalla Conference, a reference to the Nordic mythology. We also chose a theme of much public currency at the time, organizational culture, aiming to reclaim the subject for cultural research.

An inevitable consequence of accommodating many participants, the SCOS conferences had converged to the type of conferences that we originally tried to escape: short paper presentations, an occasionally relevant and well-prepared discussant, and seldom time for any collective debate and reflection. The early, smaller SCOS conferences were designed as ongoing conversations, and the Valhalla conference tried to restore some elements from these early conferences in spite of the big number of participants. We did so by redefining the conference from being a discrete event over three days to become the culmination of a longer conversation. In practice, we invited scholars to a series of workshops over a period of two years, two workshops in Denmark and one in Italy. The idea was to discuss and learn from the same papers at each workshop, revising and refining them each time before eventually presenting them to the conference. Such repeated trials and preparations should improve the quality of the papers, but in addition it should build the research and social relationships that we were longing for. We fertilized such relationships by extra-curriculum activities, like going to an outdoor opera in the beautiful Italian night, or arranging a special celebration of Babette's Feast in Denmark, first showing the film and later replicating the meal. There are many memorable moments from this workshop series that we still share and cherish when meeting.

Not all we would have welcomed as participants were able or willing to commit to such an extended procedure. The process was one of self-selection, and the workshop processes were strong enough to build collaborative relationships between people who did not know each other beforehand. From my perspective, the experience was quite successful, but to my knowledge, it has never been repeated. The present taste for more strategic research collaboration would make these bottom-up processes and emergent research agendas too laid-back and/or idealistic. Their instrumental rationality is hard to argue up front, even if, as in this case, it is relatively easy to recognize in retrospect.

Conclusion

Even if I gradually lost touch with SCOS, I seem always to have mingled with the kind of people who attended SCOS events over the years. It seems that while SCOS has been standing since 1981, it has not been standing still. I suppose that the medicine against cultural and intellectual stiffness is the insistence on being light-footed, doing foolish things, experimenting with ideas and forms, prioritizing listening and reading over speaking and writing. I hope that SCOS is still the kind of refuge from the university institutions that force scholars to know what they do before they do it, to write and speak before they have something to say, and to pay more attention to the fundability of ideas than to the fun they may hold.

SCOS taught me about the importance of friendship and social relationships as the foundation for research. I believe that intellectual discussions among friends are sounder and more creative than discussions among competitors – and even if it is an unproven belief,

I would still argue that it is better being wrong believing in friendship than being wrong believing in competition.

The SCOS experience also taught me another important lesson, namely that cultures are soft. Symbols are vague and ambiguous, and are therefore inviting you to use them as licensing tools in the pursuit of interesting identities. (K. Kreiner and Schultz 1995). The values of science are not limiting your academic practice to some straight and narrow path in fear of forsaking your career. Good ideas and insights do not come from doing what all the others are doing, reading the books and articles that everybody else quote, thinking along the ways of legitimate methodologies, and climbing the prescribed academic career steps. There are reasons to believe that you are as much judged by your imagination and ideas as by the length of your publication list. The trade-offs may vary from place to place, but even an unfavorable trade-off offers you a strategic rationale for pursuing what you think is right, interesting, and fun.

Of course, there are costs to such a deviant strategy but often less than you would expect. In my own experience, doing ethnographic research that earned me a formal Engineering degree, I was informally made to promise that I would never build houses or other things that required the knowledge of an engineer. Carrying such costs have not ruined my life and career; it may even have enriched it.

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My SCOS, your SCOS

Monika Kostera

Follow the dragon
up and down stairs,
through doors,
through corridors, betwixt
and between.

The dragon is both female and male,
both fragile and free,
both reasoned and rogue.
Always resisting
the tyranny of lines.

Take the dragon as guide:
here be symbols,
here be flesh and blood.

SCOS is a community, an imaginarium, a language, a mindset, it is a way of looking, a way of seeing. It is ideas, stories, it is much talk, and it is anticipation. Maybe waiting for more, or looking back? looking forward to turning a milestone? waiting until something interesting comes along.

... or, until next time, as Gibson Burrell put in a 1997 conference presentation (not SCOS, SCOSesque).

Stop: what's wrong with SCOS?

An interview with

Peter Case

So, could you tell me about your first SCOS conference?

I remember my first SCOS very clearly. I had finished my PhD in 1988 at the University of Bath under the supervision of Iain Mangham, who was professor of organizational behaviour at the University of Bath at the time. Some time after completing the PhD, I got a teaching position at what was then Oxford Polytechnic, now Oxford Brookes University. I had just completed my first year of teaching, when I got a phone call from Iain, who said "you should think about going to SCOS in Lancaster". Iain was one of those who had been around from the beginning of SCOS and was good friends with Barry Turner, a member of the so-called 'gang of four' - the founders of SCOS. Iain and Barry also organized an event on organizational culture at Bath University's School of Management in 1980, which was one of the threads that led to the emergence of SCOS becoming an offshoot of EGOS.

Iain's call came just a few weeks prior to the conference so, obviously, I'd missed the deadline for abstracts. Steve Linstead contact was the organizer for SCOS 1992 and Iain gave me his contact details. I phoned up Steve - this was pre-Internet days! - and, very graciously, he allowed me to submit a late paper. This was really the only paper that came out of my PhD and it was a reflexive performance piece, which I thought suited the theme of the conference: *Organization as Theatre*. The piece was called 'Information happenings: Performing reflexive organizational research' [published as: Case, P. (1996) in *Studies in Cultures, Organizations & Societies* 2(1): 45-65] and I enrolled various delegates, including my former supervisory, Iain Mangham, to read parts. I remember that it was quite a shocking piece and it did seem to make some kind of impact.

Another memory from the conference was that I met a young Heather Höpfl who was just completing her PhD at the time. We met standing around watching an open-air production of *Taming of the Shrew*, which Steve Linstead had arranged as a cultural event at the conference on the Lancaster University campus. Both Steve and Heather became firm friends from that point on and, as you know, they both became enormously influential in SCOS in succeeding years. I also recall meeting Hugo Letiche for the first time and being immensely impressed by his philosophical prowess and linguistic skills - he stepped in to translate for a French colleague who was struggling to present fluently in English.

I fell in love with SCOS from the outset. It was so exciting intellectually and socially. This was around the time when postmodernism and poststructuralism were beginning to get traction in organization studies, which, to tell the truth, was rather late in the day compared with other disciplines, such as, social anthropology and sociology. There were those who had started the ball rolling earlier, like Gibson Burrell and Bob Cooper, with their interests in Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, respectively. But this preoccupation with

contemporary Gallic philosophy was beginning to emerge and grow within the SCOS community. That was quite wonderful from my point of view!

From 1992 to 2010, I believe I only missed one conference; the one in Guarajá, Brazil on the theme of 'Organizations and Symbols of Competition'. Having moved to work at James Cook University, Australia, in 2011, I then attended Barcelona in 2012 and Warsaw 2013. After Warsaw, however, my lifestyle changed and my research interests shifted much more toward practice-based, project-based international development work. This made it increasingly difficult to attend conferences. Those that I'm now able to attend tend to be anthropological and tend to be in Southeast Asia. So regrettably, as much as I love SCOS, I haven't been as regular an attendee as I would have liked to have been since 2013.

What is your view of the development of SCOS, has it remained the same, or changed in some way?

That's a very difficult question to answer in short measure. The last SCOS I went to was the Animal conference in Uppsala in 2016. If I compare the 1992 Lancaster conference with Uppsala, there are certainly commonalities. There is something peculiar to SCOS: it has its own, dare I say, 'culture' - I can't think of any better word for it - but which I suppose is somewhat fitting given our earlier conversation about the origins of the conference and the split from EGOS having been instigated by the 'cultural turn' in organization studies in the early 1980s. There's something particular about the SCOS community: a spirit, a zeitgeist, which has persisted over all the years. Every conference is, of course, unique but there is an abiding spirit that outlives any individual, be they Chairperson, board member or delegate.

I used to describe this spirit as 'friendship', almost in a classical sense; friendship in the way of being able to be in a room and be honest, gentle, and compassionate with each other. Maybe I'm idealizing or romanticizing this, but that's my sense of the SCOS community. I've seen occasions where, say, a doctoral student has presented a relatively weak paper and there were critical comments from the floor. If that was seen as unfair or unjust, other more experienced scossers would leap in to support the presenter. I've seen that happen on many occasions. It is a supportive environment, which embodies the value of scholarly community. I should add that I've also seen very many wonderful presentations at SCOS on the part of doctoral students. I just use this as an example of the collegiality and mutual support that characterizes the conference.

You talk about friendship but is there also a common theme of interest that unites scossers?

I think that the term Organizational Symbolism is now anachronistic. I can't be precise but at various points in the history of SCOS there have been thoughts about changing the name, because it doesn't speak to our interests anymore; and each time it has been mooted the decision was made to not to change it. I'm not sure how the name came into being but presumably the 'gang of four' had something to do with it. I guess it's an interesting signifier in the sense that we can all project into it very many different interests and motives. Therefore, it is quite functional insofar as its ambiguity enables a range of creative and imaginative interpretations.

I think there are thematic intersections between SCOS and other conferences. There is an interest in social and organizational critique which would see our interests overlap with those Critical Management Studies, for example, but, unlike CMS, SCOS is not coming exclusively out of Marxist or post-Marxist critique; which is not to say that these positions are unwelcome at SCOS – it's just that SCOS is not married exclusively to those positions. There is aesthetic interest but the conference is, nonetheless, different from the Art of Management and Organization. Like the Conference on Organizational Discourse, SCOS is interested in discourse analysis but it also welcomes many other methodological choices.

What we currently are thinking is that SCOS is always occupying this non-mainstream space, in the sense that it constitutes a critique, a counterpoint which is subjected to shifting times and interests...

I think that's right. It offers a counterpoint to all these other conferences and therefore it creates a unique space of its own; and we all know that, don't we? It's unlike any other conference in our field. I've spoken to so many people at summer conferences who were attending this or that conference, and they all see it as a kind of professional burden: they have to be there; they have to do the networking. But then they say that they're really looking forward to SCOS, which usually falls a little later than other organization studies conferences in the European summer season, and the freedom that it represents.

I know that you were the Chairperson from 2002 to 2007/8, but when did you become part of the board?

I was enrolled as a board member by my third conference, in Calgary, in 1994. At that time, Barbara Czarniawska was on the board, Hugo Letiche, Paul Jeffcutt, Bob Grafton-Small, Paul Bate, Brian Rusted and several others. I remember that the first board meetings were quite 'old school', in a style set by Barry Turner who preceded the chair at the time - Paul Jeffcutt from Queen's University in Belfast. We met twice a year, and the board meeting typically lasted two days. They were quite a marathon, I can tell you: quite unfocused, pretty heated at times, and the only standing agenda item was: "what's wrong with SCOS?" We discussed the meaning of SCOS, fundamentally questioning its purpose, and in my view the discussion was repeated in a quite unhelpful way. The friendship, fellowship, collegiality were all there, and meeting some of these very fine minds was a privilege. But the board meetings were not a pleasant experience, by and large.

Also, people were seconded rather than elected to board membership. If I may be a bit critical, it was all rather cliquey. I think it was Bob Grafton-Small who tapped me on the shoulder and asked me if I wanted to join the board. My dear friend and colleague, Peter Pelzer, was also 'summoned' at the same time! As a board member, you just showed up and expressed yourself, and there were really no responsibilities outside the board meetings. Essentially, all the concrete operational work of keeping the conference going fell to the chairperson: making sure that conferences were arranged and keeping up correspondence with members. The chairperson's role was enormous.

And how did the board work develop while you were on the board?

If memory serves me, Heather Höpfl succeeded Paul Jeffcutt as chair in about 1995. She was a fantastic figurehead for the conference but was overburdened because there was no delegation of tasks. A significant change occurred when Steve Linstead took over from Heather. Steve brought a new approach to chairing the board. He wasn't prepared to accept the heroic role which had, to that point, been the lot of the SCOS chairperson; so he introduced the idea of delegating responsibilities, shortening the meetings to one day and bringing considerably more focus to discussions. Under Steve's chairpersonship, I held various posts, and when I was membership secretary, I was asked to write a constitution for the conference, which set out executive role designations and responsibilities, terms of office, design of election protocols and so on and so forth.

At the end of the 1990s we suffered a financial crisis, which I think was precipitated by holding the conference in Brazil in 1998, and Steve essentially put forward a suggestion to wind SCOS down. He had a financial plan which would lead to the termination of the conference. I was one of several members who opposed that idea when he proposed it during a meeting at the Athens SCOS in 2000. But, fortunately, the conference recovered and by the time I became chairperson in 2003 - with Cambridge as my first conference in that role - we had about 130-150 delegates. So, we suddenly started to have a lot more money in the coffers and eventually we started to accrue an embarrassment of riches. We had to start thinking about using the money in creative ways: awarding PhD bursaries for conference attendance and finding other meaningful ways of disbursing funds: for example, supporting SCOS-related events outside of the annual conference.

What do you remember from your time as a Chair of SCOS? How did you develop the way the board worked?

During my time as chairperson I reduced the duration of board meetings to three hours. It was my preference to make it much more - I hesitate to say it - 'business-like' in style [I can't believe I said that: wash my mouth out with caustic soda!]. This is not to say that conversations or debates were shut down, that was certainly not my style at all, but meetings were a much more focused affair with specific agenda items, executive board member reports, etcetera. I tried to keep discussions within given time boundaries which, perhaps, was not terribly scossy of me but, nonetheless, enabled us to cover the necessary ground more effectively.

The key purpose of the board in my mind was the perpetuation of the conference. We were scouting around, trying to find candidates for conference organization, locations, ideas, and conference themes. We had conferences booked three years in advance, by the time I left. The planned sequence was open to change, but at least we had a plan.

I think the idea of appointing regional representatives also came up under my tenure - although it might have been when Steve was chair. We felt that that would be helpful - it would help promote the organization in different parts of the world. I think we got

delegates coming as a result of those representatives, for example, from South and North America.

Another very important thing I did, in my opinion, was to outlaw the question "What's wrong with SCOS?" I suppose I wanted to avoid those early experiences of long conflict-ridden soul searching. Maybe my approach was too utilitarian, maybe too managerialist even. But we did debate future conferences and themes - and there were some conflicts over that - but we didn't agonize about what was wrong with the organization. Nonetheless, the question became a standing joke. Those who remembered the nature and tone of earlier meetings would sometimes say: "we've run out of things to talk about, so let's talk about what's wrong with SCOS!" I recall chairing a General Meeting of SCOS in a large tiered lecture theatre - I think in 2006 in Nijmegen - when one of the delegates from high up at the back asked what I considered to be SCOS's vision and strategy. Without missing a beat, I replied that I wanted nothing to do with any organization that would even contemplate having a vision and strategy. Metaphors far too oracular and militaristic for my taste!

Did anything particularly challenging happen during your term as Chair? You talked about the financial trouble that followed SCOS going to Brazil. How did you dare to go to Canada?

In 2004, we had a conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia. That was a conference where I almost resigned as chairperson because of some accusations that were made about a colleague. These had to do with sexual impropriety or inappropriate sexual advances. The accusations were serious and I supported the view that the colleagues should be held to account, but there were members of the board insisting that this person should be expelled forthwith, without any hearing, and I objected to that. I felt that this was an unjust process; the accused person's voice needed to be heard. Fortunately, we were able to find a resolution that didn't lead to my stepping down. The colleague in question never ever turned up to a SCOS conference again.

We also had a crisis with the 2007 conference. At short notice we changed the location of it to Ljubljana when plans to host the event in Helsinki went pear shaped. Campbell Jones and his colleagues from Leicester stepped in and organized a hugely successful conference. The 2006 conference at Radboud University, Nijmegen, was also the occasion of a couple of other controversial events. There was a keynote presentation by a colleague which featured some footage from an arts film whose explicit content offended some of the delegates. I ended up having to field a lot of complaints about this. And at the end of the conference gala dinner, some of the female doctoral students who'd helped with the conference organization decided to perform a Turkish-style 'belly dance' by way of celebration. As you might imagine, this didn't go down well universally; but by the time the music started there was little that I or the main conference organizers could do about it [the students in question had kept the whole affair secret]. So, being chair was actually quite turbulent experience at times.

Unequivocally, however, I enjoyed serving as chairperson and found it a period of enormous personal learning. It was a genuine privilege to have the opportunity to work with such generous and talented people from all around the world. I also enjoyed solving political problems as and when they arose. As perverse as this may sound, I found these

challenges interesting and was energized by the need to find imaginative ways of resolving difficult situations and interpersonal conflicts. The lessons I learned in diplomacy and so on stayed with me and they have been incredibly useful throughout my career. I've benefitted enormously from that long period of tenure. On reflection, it was quite a responsibility to take on but one that I certainly don't regret.

After you were the Chairperson, you became co-editor in chief of Culture and Organization, with Simon Lilley. What are your memories from that period?

First of all, *Culture and Organization* reflects something of the spirit of SCOS itself. It's marked by a preference for interpretative studies, directs its interest towards the shadows as opposed to what is in the light. It has an emphasis on high theory, ethnography and the aesthetic; and it encourages alternative forms of representation. Indeed, *Culture and Organization* has been relatively experimental since its inception.

Both the journals *Studies in Cultures, Organizations, and Societies* and *Culture and Organization* had a place, because they permitted a creativity which was more or less absent in other journals that were being published by recognized publishing houses. During the time when Simon and I took over as editors in chief, we had to look seriously at how to improve the number of submissions, principally because of the moves that were made in the UK around the Research Assessment Exercise and, later, the Research Excellence Framework. We looked at ways to improve the journal's ranking. We took the step of appealing with the Association of Business Schools what we thought was an unfair ranking of 1-star and, after exerting a great deal of time and energy in making a formal case, we did manage to get it raised to a 2-star rating. We had to adapt to the changing climate when the chill winds of neoliberalism beginning to blow through the corridors of UK higher education; chill winds which have now become howling gales. Incidentally, I think the journal is still under-ranked.

In this hostile environment, what do you think the role of SCOS could be?

That's a very challenging question and I certainly don't have a silver bullet that would solve the challenges that SCOS is now facing. The funding situation in the UK and possibly also elsewhere in Europe and other parts of the world with respect to support for conference attendance is not going to improve, in my opinion. In the UK, the managerialist, neoliberal driven agenda has won the day, it seems to me, and there seems little scope for resistance. Sorry for striking a pessimistic tone but each year it's more and more of a struggle to get funding to attend conferences, which means that people for career reasons are making career-driven, strategic choices to go to other conferences. SCOS is likely to be pushed ever more towards the margins as these hostile conditions intensify. I don't know whether this has had an impact thus far. SCOS still has a firm place in many people's hearts and minds so I think colleagues do still make an effort to come along. That might be enough to see it through. Still, given the experience of recent SCOS conferences, I'm pleased to see that it is going strong and sincerely hope that it can have a lasting future despite the unfavourable environment.

Our SCOS

Monika Kostera & Tomek Ludwicki

It must have been somehow during the Turku conference that it was decided that the 1997 one will be held in Poland. It was Heather Höpfl's initiative, she wished to include an East European country to symbolically build another bridge. The organizers would be two Polish academics, Monia Kostera, then young professor, and Andrzej Koźmiński, chancellor for a newly created private university in Warsaw, and an experienced Scosser, Hugo Letiche from Holland. Tomek, then an assistant professor, together with a group of students, was to become member of the organizing committee.

During the next two years the two of us attended meetings in various countries. Monika went to Amsterdam for a board meeting, where she, much to her astonishment, learned that a formal meeting can be, in fact, quite informal and also incredibly funny. Laughing as part of the minutes? Well, apparently, possibly. In the afternoon she and Heather went out for a coffee and cigarette together. They sat down, facing a big window, talking and keeping silent at time, as they often did together. They sat looking at the window, which was growing increasingly dark. When it started insistently presenting them with own faces, Heather spoke:

"Why don't you call it The Empty Space"?

"Yes! Why not!"

And so we did.

Then Tomek went to see Hugo.

One of the organizers of the Turku conference, Claes Gustafsson, came to Warsaw to talk about how to organize a conference, share his experience and console us that it can, actually, be done. He and Monika spent much time driving around in Warsaw and chatting about all scosy things between heaven and Earth. There was particularly one thing that he said which had a greatly reassuring effect: SCOS has an intrinsic flow. There are many things happening all around, many things that need to be seen to and taken care of. But the conference has a dynamic all by itself, once you have it in one place, it unravels.

All the time, there were intensive preparations of various kinds. There were the artistic and social events – Adrian and Marcin were in charge of these, together with Andrzej, who enjoyed coming up with ideas of theatrical surprises for the participants. There was a lot of administration, including budgeting and collecting of fees. Marcin organized that area of the preparations, supported by Monika and helped out by the university's administrators. Finally there was the academic part, to collect and read all the abstracts and then the full papers (yes, precisely so, in these days!), review them and communicate with authors. Monika and Tomek, together with the rest of the Organizing Committee, busied themselves with it for several months preceding the conference. In the end, the papers had to be divided into streams and put into a calendar. Until this moment things were going peacefully and

even blissfully, but the ordering of papers provoked quite a few discussions and quarrels, as we recall. The problem was, of course, the usual conference dilemma from the producer's perspective: how to organize it in a way that would make it possible to see all the best presentations. When there are many people who want to do that, and also are presenting papers of their own, conflicts of interest are bound to arise. And no, it is not possible to make everyone happy.

And finally, it began. People started arriving, and we were, despite Claes' excellent advice, getting increasingly nervous and sure that things would never work out as planned. We were bracing ourselves to face an endless procession of organizational disasters. In retrospect, we think no memorable disaster happened. It all went well. Very well. The presentations were good, several were unforgettable. The social events were lovely, at least one of them tends to be remembered by the people who took part (more about that one soon). Well, there was one element that did not cooperate with us – the weather. It had been raining excessively in the weeks leading to the conference, and there was serious flooding in the south of Poland. Warsaw wasn't that badly affected, except it was damp and gloomy, and the skies were still overhung with clouds. Monika's car had somehow managed to collect water inside it, which she discovered when she was about to fetch Heather from the airport. There wasn't much to be done at this point: she got her feet completely drenched in water and so did Heather. They sat in the car joking that this felt just like something out of a strange artsy black and white film. The dull weather made the colours disappear and there was an ocean inside of the car.

When we were thinking of the theme of the conference we decided that actually it would be great to actually *show* the empty space. But how? I don't recollect who mentioned that actually the best would be an empty stage. But if the stage which one – the largest! There are actually two large stages in Warsaw, one is in the Grand Theatre and second in congress hall located in the Stalin's gift to Warsaw – palace of Culture and Science. So we contacted the management using some personal connections and asked if we can rent the stage for one night. We were lucky – there was no play nor concert. The participants were bussed to the side entrance and from the foyer and entered the stage as actors do. The curtain was down so the participants did not see the audience hall. On the stage there was a long table so we all sat down and had the dinner. And finally the curtain was up and the all the lights on. We suddenly realized where we were and how close it is to move from the back- to on-stage. In the audience there was one person clapping hands and giving applause to the SCOSers.

After the conference a special issue was edited of the journal *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies* (now *Cultures & Organizations*), one titled "The Empty Space". It contains several beautiful texts from the conference, including Heather Höpfl's sublime "On being moved", a poetic reflection on the meaning of being ordinary. She uses Goethe's poem, *The Erl König*, to consider the significance of carrying in management and the unmanageable, ordinariness beyond order, and the mystery of movement.

There are many other well written and genuinely inspiring articles. We can only recommend you to retrieve this old special issue and have a heartfelt, hearty, old fashioned read.

Making Sense of the 2004 Halifax Conference

Albert J. Mills & Jean Helms Mills

The 22nd Colloquium of the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism was held over July 7-10, 2004 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on Canada's eastern shore. The event was held at the Lord Nelson Hotel and attracted over 100 papers accepted for presentation. The theme was 'Sensation and Organization' and events included a tour, a gala dinner, and a play at Pier 21 – Canada's equivalent of the US's Ellis Island (an entry point for immigrants to the country): the play - on 'McDonaldization' - was written and performed by David Boje and company. Keynote speakers included Doug Kellner and Neil Levy, and Michael Overington – of *Organizations as Theatre fame* – dropped in to catch up with many old friends.

Sheena J. Vachhani, a self professed "neophyte Scosser" went on to describe the event as "Sensational Halifax" (Vachhani, 2004, p.38) and to capture the mood thus:

The aesthetic and picturesque provenance of Halifax aligned itself well with this year's theme, *Sensation and Organisation*. I was impressed by the diversity of presentations from sound bites of music to the aesthetics of space in office cubicles. There was even talk of seafood. I listened to vigilant understandings of what Foucault would deem theorist's fictions; the fractures, frictions and anomalies of modern organisational life; life counterpoised with baselines of organisational schizophrenia. Interesting keynotes were heard by Douglas Kellner and Neil Levy. Neil Levy's talk on the genetically indeterminable was followed by Douglas Kellner's keynote on the age of the spectacle drawing on Guy Debord's work, and the plausibly unshockable society, a particularly topical debate.

The Banquet dinner was preceded by a dive into the cultural history and immigration of "New Scotland" and was theatrically accompanied by David Boje's play on McDonaldisation. This provided an interesting juxtaposition of the gravity of Canada's history of immigration and industrial trade with the simulacra of contemporary modern capitalism.

The final day of the conference saw Halifax host a festival. Artefacts of cultural identification, namely bagpipes, were to be heard all over the city. SCOS was somewhat like the evanescent sound of bagpipes that, however phonetically fleeting still lingered in my auditory range on the final day of the conference. Providing an almost aural hallucinogenic quality, even silenced, their legacy lived on. *Sensation and Organisation* (re)presented a lot that is good about academia and although short-lived in the academic year it has left a mark on my academic life. To be Derridian (RIP), I have felt the (present) trace of its past, since leaving Canada, much like the faint sound of bagpipes (now with its synaesthetic associations and tonal imagery).

The vitality of SCOS was refreshing, some would say it was like having an eye test (I apologise for this somewhat trite optical metaphor, perhaps it could be considered post-ironic). SCOS improved my academic vision in a sense, the smudges of cynicism and

malaise diminished somewhat. Trappings of egotism, theoretical duelling and the wounds of academia perceived through a different lens. In all truth (if one can even use such a phrase in these paradigmatically fragile and fractured times) SCOS made me consider a career in academia without the thought that it was to be my manacled fate (pp.38-39).

One of the lighter moments came at the end of David Boje's play when, dressed in full Ronald McDonald costume, David wandered into the local McDonalds. The reaction was priceless as staff and customers alike initially took it to be anything from a visit from head office to a current advertising gimmick.

Yet, the Halifax conference almost never came off. Indeed, the venue for 2004 was supposed to be Rome. When Jean and I attended a SCOS Board meeting sometime in 2002 we were all looking forward to Rome in 2004. We never dreamed that within a few months we would be heavily involved in organizing the conference in our own city of Halifax. For reasons that we can't now remember, the Board were informed that the arrangements for the Rome conference had fallen through and we needed to seek a new venue. For various reasons, we volunteered to organize the conference in Halifax. For one thing we were strong SCOS supporters: I had attended my first SCOS conference ten years earlier –ironically, given the circumstances, it was held in Calgary in Canada. The following year, in 1995, Jean attended her first SCOS in Turku in Finland. Thereafter we attended SCOS conferences in Warsaw (1997), Guaruja (1998), Athens (2000), Dublin (2001), and Cambridge (2003). For another thing Jean and I both had roles on the SCOS Board – I was the North America Representative and Jean was the North America editor of *Culture & Organization*. For yet another thing, we had experience of running a conference. We had successfully run the annual conference of the Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC), drawing over 600 participants. We reasoned that such experience is totally useless except for running other conferences so, with some concerns of our own, we volunteered to organize the SCOS conference in Halifax.

There was some relief in the room but also some trepidation; relief because it provided a venue and with enough time to adequately advertise the event; trepidation because a previous 'North American' conference - the 1996 Los Angeles conference– was deemed to have been problematic in failing to draw significant numbers of participants to the event. Concern was such that a previous SCOS Board meeting agreed to not hold any more conferences in North America in the conceivable future. That decision would haunt the choice of Halifax for weeks to come.

The next hurdle – at least for us as the organizers – was the conference theme. 2003 had seen the publication of Jean's first book – *Making Sense of Organizational Change* and we were keen to develop a sensemaking theme. It wasn't to be, as discussions between ourselves and other board members deliberated over an agreed upon theme. We had not been able to attend those meetings where the theme was discussed, so with time being eaten up, Peter Case facilitated an on-line meeting between Jean, myself and Steve Linstead to settle on the theme. Agreement was finally reached and we all settled on 'Sensation and Organization' to widen the scope for potential contributors. The minutes of the 10th May 2003 Executive Board Meeting at Copenhagen described the situation as follows:

Conference report-Halifax 2004

The Chair had disseminated his email exchange with the Halifax organizers following discussion of the preliminary call for papers at the November meeting. The Board discussed the revised call for papers and felt that it was a considerable improvement on the earlier version. Building on the 'sense and sensibility' framework, the Board generated a number of constructive ideas that it felt might be helpful to Albert and Jean.

ACTION: It was agreed that Peter C. and Steve contact the Halifax organizers in person to share the Board's ideas. Steve and Peter to liaise with Jean and Albert about setting up a possible videoconference.

In the end, we received over 100 paper proposals and the conference went ahead. Submitted papers came in from Finland, Sweden, the UK, Canada, the US, Brazil, New Zealand, Denmark, Switzerland, Australia, Italy, France, Portugal, Japan, the Netherlands, and Norway. In terms of sheer numbers the conference was grounded by a large contingent from Canada and the US, the UK, and the Nordic countries. Arguably, it still retained the feel of a wonderfully quirky and creative *European* conference.

Sensemaking, or the process of making sense, was featured in several papers, including Maria Aggetam's (Sweden) 'Entrepreneurship as Sensemaking, Sensemaking as Entrepreneurship;' Ana-Maria Davila-Gomez's (Canada) 'Sensemaking of Information Technology Solutions,' and Doug Creed's (US) 'Wiping the Theological Slate Clean? Sensemaking in the Careers of Gay and Lesbian Protestant Ministers.'

Some submissions, in true SCOS tradition, focused on a play on words, utilizing the conference theme to raise challenges to ways of conceiving of organizing and organization. These included Erik Piñeiro (Sweden) and Peter Case's (UK) 'The Slashdot Aesthetes: Programming Sense and Sensibility,' and Michèle A. Bowring's (Canada) 'Sense vs. Sensibility at the Office: the Effects of Integrated vs. Fractured Performances of Gender.'

Others drew on the connections between physiological and cognitive metaphors to make sense of the feeling of understanding. This group of papers included Lynne F. Baxter and James M. Ritchie's (UK) 'The Sensation of Smell in Researching a Bakery: from the Yummy to the Abject,' Fiona Candlin's (UK) 'Touch and sensate matter,' and Helena Csarman's (Sweden) 'Sensational Speed - a partial history of the experience economy.'

Yet others drew on the notion of sensationalism, like Gina Grandy (UK/Canada) and her 'Exotic dancing: Sensational research or just another *sight* for management research?' and Bill Cooke's (UK) 'The House UnAmerican Activities Committee, Red Scares and Management Gurus: A Comparative, Sensationalist, Reading of the FBI Files of Kurt Lewin and Goodwin Watson.'

And, again in true SCOS tradition, many papers drew on a range of themes and foci in which the conference theme was either embedded or oblique. These drew us into the realm of aging (Iiris Aaltio, Finland), the theatre of oppression (Jan Betts, UK), National Identity (Michelle Byers, Canada) and many other far ranging discussion points.

Much of the fun was the usual challenge of the array of sometimes weird and wonderful titles that challenged our knowledge (e.g., “the Sensorium Commune” – Martin Corbett, UK), our thought processes (e.g., “The Word for World is Not Forest” – David Crowther, UK), and our sheer ability at guess work as creative interest (e.g., “The Blur Sensation-Shadows of the Future” – Damian O’ Doherty, UK).

Proceedings (on a CD) were distributed to attendees and subsequently (but belatedly) posted on the SCOS website. A Special Issue of *Culture and Organization* on ‘Sensation and Organization’ followed in 2006.

Mills, Albert J., and Helms Mills, J. (2004). Editors of the Proceedings of the 22nd Colloquium of the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism, Halifax, NS, July 7-10.

Mills, A. J., and Helms Mills, J. [Eds.] (2006) Special Issue of *Culture and Organization* on “Sensation and Organization.” 12:3

Vision

Sam Warren & Beatriz Acevedo

28th Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism – VISION- Lille 2010

Organised by: Beatriz Acevedo (Anglia Ruskin University) and Sam Warren (University of Surrey, Institute d'Administration et Entreprise I.A.E. Lille). With the collaboration of Katy Hovelaque I.A.E.)

Motivation

When we wrote the call for papers two years in advance for the conference in 2010 on Vision, little did we know about the visual explosion that would come later with the likes of Facebook and Instagram. Vision was a relatively new topic in organizational studies: Sam Warren, had been working on using photo-elicitation for organizational research, Beatriz Acevedo, was exploring the relationships between art and education and other scholars were starting to 'see' the importance of the visual in organizational practice in a range of disciplines (e.g., see Bell et al. 2014). We both were very much enthralled by the idea of organising a conference for SCOS, as it had been our playground for discussing ideas, pushing boundaries and having very serious fun for some years. And as any conference organiser will tell you, there simply comes a time in many SCOSsers lives where "it's just time" to be involved in organising a conference.

The topic: Vision

As customary with SCOS papers we wanted to have a wide call for people to reflect about what "vision" is, a term extensively used when talking about strategic planning, organisational design and leadership. Vision and Visuality was also part of the "aesthetic turn" and the post-structuralist approach to organizational research, and we had been advancing in establishing methodologies in this area, including other approaches engaging the senses. The response was overwhelming as it showed an increasing interest for the topic, and the streams were as varied, including: Image, Identity, Seeing, Gaze and Not seeing, Imagination, Mirrors and Films; surveillance, vision and seeing; Senses and sensorial research; visual research methodologies, Cyber-vision: Facebook and Second Life (yes! This sounds very old fashioned now, even only eight years on); Space, Place & Architecture; professional visions and of course Visual Symbolism amongst many others.

Place and Venue

As an international network of academics SCOS has always tried to look for different cities to organise our events, and perhaps those less famous than capitals or the "poster child" of a country. We thought about Lille thanks to the recommendation of Peter Elsmore who had

been working at the IAE, and also because we wanted to find new places outside the “academic touristic track”. We wanted to keep the intimacy and excitement of our conference, where friendly advice and welcoming comments are our identity: Friendly, imaginative, international and importantly for us, beautiful to behold and travel through, Lille ticked all those boxes, a very French city without the pomp of Paris, easy access through trains and a place of an industrial and multicultural history, complex yet accessible. We were supported by the amazing team at I.A.E (Xavier, Benoit and the wonderful Katy Hovelaque) whose premises were located in a former psychiatric hospital: a perfect place for our “mad” ideas in critical management and organizational research influenced by Foucault and other French philosophers!

The Event

From 7th to 10th of July, 2010 SCOS participants discussed around 114 papers and five workshops held. The quality of papers was really exceptional, and the vast majority of them were firmly on the theme of ‘Vision’. We streamed into 4 parallel sessions a day plus workshops, and built in longer coffee and lunch breaks to allow folk to mingle – and to take advantage of the French ‘lazy lunch’ culture. The workshops included:

1. Social Dreaming organised by Rose Mersky and Burkhard Sieves. Exploring collective dreaming as a way of reflecting on organisational issues and social problems through free association and conversations. This proved very popular as the participants had to meet every day at 08:15 to share their dreams!
2. Doll-making and writing as inquiry, coordinated by Ann Rippin and Patricia Gaya (Bristol Bluestockings Reading Group). Based on the work of Helen Cixous and her paper *The Laugh of Medusa*, this workshop invited participants to “make” a doll and reflect on the complex text and multi-layered meanings of this writer.
3. The Glittery Organization, talking about Queer Theory in Management studies, homosexuality (or gay employees?) and activism in contemporary organisations. Coordinated by Gavin Jack this was also a very cutting edge topic, responding to the need of challenging heteronormative context and seeing diversity and inclusivity through the queer lens.
4. The filmic Affect coordinated by Martin Wood became the forum for discussing processes of creating and using film-based audiovisuals in social science research and teaching.
5. Revealing the Art of Peer Reviewing offered a glimpse of peer review processes and other publication rituals useful for both experienced and starting writers. Based on their

experience as editors and peer reviewers Jo Brewis, Peter Case and Simon Lilley continued the tradition of critical friendship and support of our academic community.

The Conference Bag

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of any SCOS conference is the bag. We had so much fun preparing it with vision-related objects like masks (brought from Colombia by Ana Maria Carreira); kaleidoscopes (to materialise the idea of different ways of seeing); a small Indian decorated mirror (reflect, refract...); and a small digital camera for the participants to record their memories of the event. The bag itself was made of transparent plastic, emphasising the “visual” nature of the event, and we were amazed to see it later in the catwalk of Gucci during that summer! You know SCOS always the trend-setters!

The Gala Dinner is always the culmination of the conference but this year was particularly special because it was all about the “visions” and “images” of the conference. Participants took pictures of the city or other type of “stimulus” regarding the topic of vision and gave us their SD cards (yes, this is pre-smart phone times, don't laugh it was only seven years ago!) and we created a video that became the standing memory of this amazing event.

The Video is still available: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOnSg-U3_Ig

The Special Issue

Many of the papers presented ended in the SI of *Culture and Organization* as follows:

An awareness of ‘ways of looking’ as intrinsically linked to our primarily metaphorical ‘ways of seeing’ in organizations (Acevedo & Warren 2012)

A reflection on the paradox of embodiment and research methods which allow us to ‘see’ (Wheeler, 2012)

Examining leaders’ depictions of personality and organizational journeys through portraiture (Rippin, 2012)

Critiquing how the spectacle of the Other defines difference and limits possibilities for inclusion (Kersten & Abbott, 2012)

Memory Lane

Perhaps people forgot about the specific papers or the discussions but we are sure there are some more engrained memories, these are some of ours:

- The three courses lunches at the best French style: good food, wine and exquisite conversations. A feast for all the senses! In fact, the catering company *refused* to work with us unless we had wine with lunch and a full sit down service, such is the French tradition of lunch!

- The unexpected high temperature. Being located in the North, Lille enjoys a cool weather most of the time, but that particular week the climate reached high temperatures. We were not prepared for that, and we had to buy some of the few fans left in the city to stop people from fainting! The fans, as expected, only managed to move the heat from one place to other, so it was a testimony to the participants enthusiasm to remain in the top floor of the building listening to the presentations.
- Although SCOS people are not what you can call “mainstream” or “traditional”, this particular year we had an amazing participation of people from different avenues. Who could forget the eccentric delegate who rode a bike from Utrecht to Lille and camped on the outskirts of the city?
- In the same vein of dear people, we cannot avoid a tear when watching our gone friends Pippa Carter, Heather Hopfl (who albeit did not attend Lille was active in the whole inspiration and organization of the event) and Jan Schapper from Australia, smiling to the camera, a poignant reminder of the fragility of life.

Legend says...

- That there were rivers of Champagne and people drank at least two bottles per person. The truth is that when we were negotiating the venues for the social events, there was this odd policy of Open Bars in the French establishments, requiring that a free flow of drinks were part of the catering. An offer we could not refuse. Little they knew about the legendary drinking capacities of our participants...
- Rumours talk about people dancing on the tables at high hours in the night, some others singing in the streets and people hanging in the main square in the early hours of dawn, still wondering how they got there, some minor injuries and an overall bonhomie.
- That the venue for the Gala Dinner was a former Burlesque Parlour... that is totally true and indeed the baroque decoration and chandeliers talked about decadence, indulgence and joy... very scossian we would dare to say!

What they don't tell you in the instructions

Every SCOS organiser received the wisdom of the group through a sacred book of Instructions about how to organise the event. The excitement of proposing a topic and developed it through almost two or three years is priceless, and at the end it is a great thing to do for yourself and your career. However, there are bits that are not in the manual: first of all, be sure you have a great partner, because you are going to disagree and stress will make you to fall apart. That happens, but the results at the last day and the smiles of people in the gala dinner will make you forget all about the preparations. Secondly, dealing with different countries can be a nightmare, we were extremely lucky with Katy Hovelaque who did all the negotiations on the French side, she was truly our secret for success. Thirdly, get a good administrator who can organise all the issues about registering, catering, dietary requirements budget, etc. Finally, don't expect to make a profit, as this is a non-profit

organisation there is not so much case in thinking of this as a “business” it is just an opportunity to have a nice party, with great conversations, lovely people and play the role of an Intellectual Hostess in a contemporary type of academic Salon. leading a topic in an intellectual salon.

Vision today

After the conference the topic of vision actually “exploded”. Facebook, instagram and the use of smartphones enshrined vision as the language of the earlier 21st century. Selfies, image management, image control and visual languages are more complex than ever, and with them a number of consequences that require a closer look: The dreadful events of 2016 regarding fake news and the manipulation of public opinion through social media and other “visions” or rather smoke and mirrors proved the importance of vision in contemporary society and politics. The election of Trump as a celebrity president relying on “visions” of Make America Great Again and with a strong misinformation campaign and visual warfare, makes vision a central issue to investigate. Current political climate seem to carry the power of make visible some issues, while making other groups invisible. But by the same token, what is invisible is suddenly being made visible and last year “MeToo” became the mirror of many women and men denouncing experiences of sexual harassment and discrimination.

Visual research methodologies, that were discussed as an alternative method for inquiry became more established and relevant in contemporary organisational research. Thanks to a grant from the ESCR Invisio (international research on vision in organisations) became the obligatory place for any person doing visual research and also opened other type of sensorial research. Using visual material as part of research and education is becoming the rule in management studies, with an increasing number of papers and experiences worth to share. Another topic we explored in the conference was the issue of aesthetics, and art-based methods in research but also in education, and some of the ideas of using art for education are being actually pushed toward considering education as art, and allowing a merging and blending of disciplines and identities. What is truly valuable in SCOS is to open the opportunity for this type of explorations, that at the time may sound a bit odd or too wacky, but with time proved to be valuable, fertile and definitively transformative.

Displacement, Travel and Movement in Barcelona: What Happened

Hugo Gaggiotti & Laura Mitchell

The theme

The theme was transformation and transitions in a broad sense, inviting to explore the idea of nomadism and movement. Participations were, among others, on the territory of identities of movement, the meaning of home, transformation when entering and leaving organizations, the visions and practices of migrants/nomads, transformations and transitions, nomadic theories of organizing, travelling, changes in organizational cultural aspects

I arrive

I have never visited Spain before. Well, except once to Santander on a cruise ship which made me sick the whole journey. Catalonia, I am told, is different. This is my first conference since I became a lecturer and it has been so much harder to attend than I thought. My newly-bought tablet laptop has stopped working in the heat, and I have no idea how to find my hotel. Luckily I have a printed ticket and a bus booked to the Plaça Espana. I trek up the Carrer de Sants, dragging my suitcase and breathing in the city. The crossroads are different here compared to England, but the stench of the waste bins in the heat is just like in Cyprus where I grew up. The familiarity is calming and the difference excites.

Philosophy

The conference was framed on the relationship between metaphor and movement, following de Certeau ([1984] 2001) and the idea that despite the fact that in our intellectual pursuits social scientists and scholars of organization are used to travelling with our bodies and minds, it is something of a paradox that, more often than not, explanations of organizing and the social appear fixed and static rather than reticular, mobile, dynamic. The inspiration of the call was based on the paradox that although proponents in the organization studies field who insist that our epistemology, methodology and ethics reflect, and reflexively enact, an underlying process ontology (Chia 1998a, 1998b, 1999; Chia & Holt 2009; Cooper 2005, 2006), mainstream western scientific epistemologies and methodologies persist in attempts to delineate and fix reality. Another inspiration framework was Rosi Braidotti (1994) suggestion to acknowledge nomadism as an existential condition.

I learn

I had been reading process theory throughout the latter stage of my PhD, exploring the significance of the distal and proximal as methodological approaches to the doing of ethical or unethical practices. I had read pages and pages of Chia, Cooper, Whitehead, Barad and attempted to combine their thinking with interactionist methods. But the ink on the page was not as convincing to me as the feeling and movement of my participant and non-

participant observations had been. My participant's stories were authentic, but also simplified fictions.

How can a process and journey be narrated? The travel and movement at speed, the pauses to decide where to go or turn and the inevitable musings over the best coffee I have ever tasted in the Barcelona sunshine. I had been at rest. I had missed this.

The conference was a pause in my new academic life. It was a space for thinking and exploring instead of producing teaching guides or texts. While the body was still, my mind was re-mobilised, absorbing ideas around authenticity and mobility, considering copies and plurals in narratives going front-to-back and back-to front. Technology allows us to move and displace actions, positions, words, stories. In this type of world then, our making sense is always a journey.

Symbolic events

"Movement and transformation" were the leitmotifs of all the events.

1. Lunch and catering were "on the move". Participants walked before lunches
2. Choral activities were organised in Barcelona public spaces, squares, streets
3. Multiple synchronous social events implied travelling from one to another corners of the city
4. The gala dinner was organised in a bull fighter square transfigured into a shopping mall

Queues & Crocodiles

To travel across the city was enjoyable yet confusing. We went by metro and walking the (sometimes) beautifully engraved pavements, conversing in pace with those alongside. Arriving at lunch we would stand in line to enter the restaurant, discovering common themes of interest (ships, Thomas! Who else cares about them?) with those serendipitously nearby. The Dragon is emblematic of Barcelona, and we enacted our own winding pilgrimage to sites of sculpture and song, uncertain of whether we were to be celebrated or vanquished for our tuneless cacophony. Yet the process of the SCOS crocodile was not always straight, instead winding and rewinding in curves and circles. Who says progress is always about going forward anyway? My word count has not increased. My bracelet is a circle, containing all the knowledge I need for reminding me of my topic and purpose here, yet I will change it before I present. That's progress.

Sponsorship & Sustainability

Main sponsors of the conference were:

- Saint Mary's University
- University of Bristol
- University of Barcelona
- EAE Business School

- University of the West of England
- EAE Business School
- Uppsala University
- AFIN-Autonomous University of Barcelona
- University of the West of England
- University of the West of England
- University of the West of England
- University of Barcelona
- European Film College
- EAE Business School
- University of the West of England
- Gaur Hari Singhania Institute of Management & Research
- University of Barcelona
- Taylor's University

One of the main objectives of the conference was to be sustainable, reduce waste as much as possible and to be locally resourced.

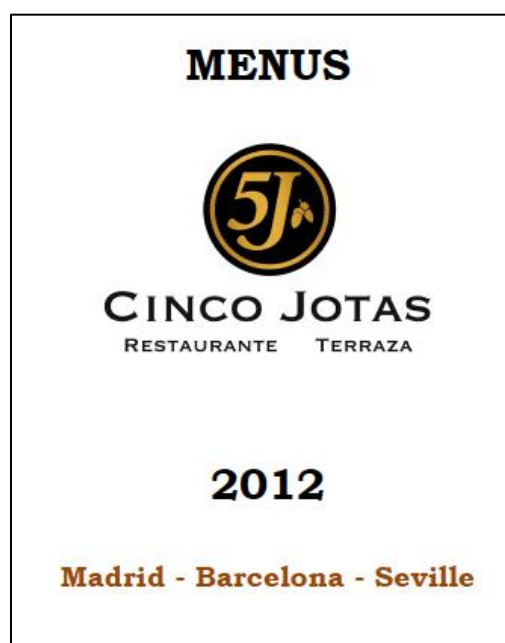
BerSo supplied the coffee breaks, lunch bags, registration and general logistics. BerSo is an entrepreneurial initiative of a group of students of the University of Barcelona.

Dim Sum Wok provided the lunches; the company is a family business of Catalan-Chinese restaurateurs.

David Conde, the provider of SCOS 2012 Reception, served also EAE catering.

Ediete produced all the video material. Ediete is a joint venture of local media young producers.

5Jotas Restaurant (Gala dinner) is one of the more traditional Spanish restaurants, locally acclaimed by it's Iberic 5J jam.



A “Bracelet Memory stick” was designed with SCOS logo. All abstracts, CFP and guidelines were saved in the stick and distributed to all participants.



The Conference bags were made by PRAYAAS. PRAYAAS is a NGO from Kanpur, India, managed by women who support poor girls from Uttar Pradesh with vocational training for their sustenance.

<http://students.iitk.ac.in/prayas/>

Caffeine and Community

The students staffing the conference were more to us than well-dressed waiters dispensing caffeine and comfort between paper sessions. They were inspirational actors in the moment. On the roof of the Arenas de Barcelona we had consumed an excellent gala dinner and debated the merits of writing coaching in academic work. Wine had been consumed and the question floated to the surface - where will we go to dance with this energy? The students said, ‘it’s okay! We know a place’ and with that the crocodile moved. Across the Plaça d’Espana and underground, split over train carriages and reassembled on trams, trekking along the Carrer de la Marina, the long tail of the Dragon followed these brave students. To Barceloneta, cocktails and sand, even some late-night swimming. By now we were no longer scholars, but angels and fish, celebrating our association and discovery of the new.

I travelled back to my hotel on a bus, appreciating the many locals making the same journey at 4am by bicycle, and I left many SCOSSers (and the brave students!) behind. Sessions would begin again at 9am, and those same brave students were already there to serve much-needed coffee (though I hear they had a nap under the tables while we discussed final papers). The conference had come to an end, and you might think all had had enough, yet encountering SCOSSers the next day it transpired we met with the students again, and they took us for a most beautiful lunch, celebrating their city through the eyes of these strange nomads, who had come here to think.

And think I had, in winding circles and illogical swirls, discovering new ideas and fresh enthusiasm. Things I had left behind now seemed important, not to be forgotten. I had to return, to rediscover the energy in the tired texts, to seek for a journey of flesh and blood instead of ink and paper.

References

de Certeau ([1984] 2001)

Chia 1998a, 1998b, 1999;

Chia & Holt 2009

Cooper 2005, 2006

Braidotti 1994

Exploring off the beaten track

An interview with

Jo Brewis

Do you think there have been a lot of commonalities between SCOS conferences?

With no exceptions I can recall, SCOS has always been that warm, friendly, collegiate, welcoming, super creative, really quite insane space. What I think is also interesting, is that even when people who aren't really SCOSsers (in terms of coming to the conferences regularly) have organised conferences that feeling has still been there. So a key example would be Istanbul, in 2011. Mustafa as far as I am aware had only been to one or two, or had never been, and Ahmet who he co-organised with is a professional conference organiser, but Istanbul was amazing. It felt incredibly SCOSsy! So, I guess we bring ourselves with us, if you like.

I think there have been conferences where, I mean they are all different in their own little ways and that's partly to do with who's sitting on the board at the time, who's organising it and what the theme is. I suppose you get this core and periphery thing going on with SCOS, so although it is a changing group, there will always be people who go consistently and people who come and go over the years; people who get the virus and people who don't. I suppose the key differences have been to do with my relationship to the organisation at the time, and also there have been, as you know, some times when, backstage there have been some really quite strong tensions being worked out. But I don't know that someone who hadn't been to SCOS previous to that particular conference would have picked up on them, I think that some of them were happening more backstage and particularly in the board meetings.

How do you see SCOS in relation to other conferences?

I know there is an overlap between SCOS and other conferences, but I think even at its most extreme SCOS always has a very solid intellectual base which I don't think is true of some other conferences. CMS is interesting in and of itself, I went to the first two, I didn't go to the 2003 conference because that was when the Cambridge conference was that Gav and I organised. I then went in 2005 and didn't go at all, then, until 2013 and only went to 2015 because we ended up co-organising it. After that I said I wasn't sure I would go back to CMS at any stage, but somehow I have ended up co-organizing CMS 2019. Really not sure how that happened!

I have also heard a lot of stuff which has really raised my awareness about how problematic CMS can be, perhaps because I'm so old now that I don't get exposed to that kind of stuff and I only hear about it through other people. But I think it's dominated by white, middle-aged, able-bodied cisgender men. And some people who seem happy to get on that

bandwagon with them, and yet proclaim loudly and constantly that they are extremely critical, and I just don't see that. And I don't think SCOS does any of those things. Let's put it this way, if you're a careerist and you see SCOS as a vehicle for your career, you need your head testing. And long may that continue.

Who would you describe as key people, then, in SCOS?

Antonio Strati, definitely, Steve Linstead, Bob Grafton-Small and Heather Höpfl (may she rest in peace), Pascale Gagliardi, Jo Hatch, Barbara Czarniawska, back in the day...I am really thinking of the old guard there, it's funny isn't it? Because very few if any of those people attend now, and that's interesting as well. Pippa and Norman ... I mean, we have also had people floating in and out. So, Mats Alvesson has been a couple of times, Marta too.

It did strike me, I was thinking on the flight home from this year's conference, I was trying to remember how many people were in Rome who I would regard as 'Old Guard SCOS'. And at that I think I came up with four names; me, Peter Pelzer, Antonio and Silvia Gherardi. I don't really know what that meant, or whether as an organizer of the conference I cared. I just thought it was interesting. I suppose it's also just that it is really sad, we're losing people, we are literally losing people, we've lost Pippa, we've lost Heather, we've lost Bob Grafton-Small, and they all died really very young, but that's quite a shock, you know, we've been around so long that we've been around long enough for people to actually die. It sends a shiver down my spine.

How did you perceive the board before you became part of it?

The period when I started going to SCOS, the early 90s, I think was a high water mark in SCOS history. There were some really profound schisms on the Board and I think I became quite quickly aware of them. I think there were also, and I may be mis-remembering here, a set of tensions to do with what was then, *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Society* which was being established. The board meetings seemed, from what I heard then, really quite problematic. Hostile is probably going a bit far, but there was a lot of conflict. Not necessarily intellectual conflict, more just personalities clashing and people finding it all quite difficult. That was certainly the first five or six years. I remember Heather Höpfl saying to me in '95, "Oh, you should be on the board, you should definitely be on the board," and I was like, "what? I'm only 12! And I have only come to two conferences". But oddly enough, two years later, or thereabouts, I did indeed join the board. Back then the board wasn't as well-defined as it is now, so there were people in particular roles but there were also general board members. I think that I joined as *Notework* editor, or I shortly became *Notework* editor.

The board meetings have changed quite a lot. When I first started going we would have an admin meeting and get all the rubbish out of the way, followed by some sort of intellectual thing which was sometimes quite brilliant and sometimes dreadful. I remember one in particular where someone discoursed, at length, on Deleuzian readings of 'the'. I sat through that one just thinking 'I have really no idea what you are talking about' and feeling a little bit annoyed; not even condescended to because I just didn't understand what was going on!

I'm like, "look, we're in Frankfurt, let's go out and get pissed! Let's not do this." Anyway, that started to dissipate and then it became more admin-focussed, but also less tense. So the conflicts and schisms had really calmed by this stage.

I then stepped down from the board in either 2004 or 2005. But after I stepped down there was quite a significant problem with a group of organisers, and I remember thinking, thank God I'm not on the board anymore because I really don't want to have to deal with any of this. So, that was quite a difficult conference backstage because the people involved were there and behaved badly – I don't know if that was before or after it was made clear that they would no longer be running the conference they had been allocated. So, then, I was asked to be Chair, sometime after that, and I attended a meeting in late 2007 where it kicked off again because some people in the room were uncomfortable about the way in which I had been appointed. I remember, actually, getting quite cross and leaving the room. Saying, "perhaps you'd like to have a discussion about this, I'll be in my room". I went upstairs and, well to be honest, crying and being a bit 'what the fuck?' But it all got calmed down and the period of time while I was Chair seemed fairly smooth. There wasn't shouting or bitching or people falling out. I was always of the opinion that you should not drag meetings out. And if I'm chairing a meeting it's going to be over in five minutes if I can make it happen, so maybe I just rattled through the business so fast that nobody had any opportunity to express any contradictory opinions! My last conference as Chair was Istanbul, and then I became C&O editor. I'm still *ex officio* on the board but I think I have only been to two board meetings since and that was only because they were in Nottingham and I felt like I couldn't really say I wasn't going to be there, given that the city centre is only a few miles away from where I live!

Were there discussions about the future during your time as Chair?

I seem to remember that at that point it was no longer on the agenda, we had settled into a period of feeling reasonably secure with our selves. The thing that I do remember very vividly from those years is me spending a lot of time checking out our legal status. Primarily because we had so much bloody money in the bank account – and that worried me, for all sorts of different reasons. Dave Crowther, a former member of the board, had always talked about us being an unincorporated association under English law and I'd never really understood what that meant. I spent quite a lot of time talking to friends and colleagues who were involved in other sorts of organisations like EGOS, and I spent a lot of time talking to a colleague who worked in the School of Law at Leicester, and actually establishing that yes, indeed, we are an unincorporated association and this is what that means.

I remember feeling very happy when that was settled, because by no stretch of the imagination did I want us to be some sort of exotically managed, bureaucratic, bla bla bla organisation. I just wanted to be sure that none of us, collectively or individually were liable for anything. So we also spent quite a lot of time tightening up the constitution on that basis, because it was really just covering our backs more than anything else. If you're taking money from people and you are sitting on what I seem to remember was around £20-25k at that time, which is a significant sum of money, you want to be sure you are doing the right things. So the treasurer and I (I think it was mainly Nina Kivinen who was treasurer for the

duration) were worried that we could get properly dragged over the coals for this, so it was important to be absolutely clear where we sat on those basic principles. Maybe because we spent so much time on that, the whole soul-searching and 'where are we going?' questions kind of got sidelined, because it wasn't the right time to be doing those things. We needed to work out what we *were* first.

Did you have board meetings three times a year (one at the annual conference) like we do now?

Yes, during my time that was always the expectation really. What has changed and it has changed for good reason, is that for many years the November board was in the place where the summer's conference was going to be, but obviously geography makes that very challenging at times. And the Spring Board was always somewhere we fancied going, so I remember one year it was in Barcelona and I think they basically tried to drink Las Ramblas dry, and the bill for the board dinner was, I mean I wasn't on the board at this point, it was over one thousand pounds because of all the cava! And it was exactly that kind of thing that was making me very nervous when I was Chair. [interviewer – *I think the board are very abstinent now then!*] Yes I think you are! I think that was maybe simultaneously the high point and the low point of what was going on at that time.

What do you see conferences as a vehicle for?

Increasingly I'm not sure, though perhaps that's more to do with me as an individual and the career stage that I'm at. I mean I'm mid-late career and I'm also a person with very little patience, and a person who doesn't travel well, and has never travelled well, and the older I get the worse I travel. So increasingly for me conferences aren't a thing. I don't feel the need to go, I don't want to go and if I am going, I'm almost always thinking "Oh God why did I sign up for this?" So in 2018 I promised myself a conference-free space, and that may continue going forward, but I am absolutely aware that they have a function. I think ideally, conferences should be a place where people can bring ideas that are fairly nascent, fairly embryonic and get good, solid, supportive, constructive feedback from others. And for that to be useful to them to develop a thesis, or a grant application, or a paper, or it might be all three. So I think that's one function, and I think the second function *is* to allow you to hang out with your intellectual community and be inspired, excited, and not just get comments on your own work but be provoked by other people's work. And I think it's also a place to hang out with your mates and I don't think that's a problem at all, some people only see each other at conferences. *However*, all sorts of other things happen at conferences which are much less productive, much more problematic, and in some ways downright bloody scary. But SCOS is not one of those conferences, which is another reason for it to continue to exist.

Can you reflect on the 90s problems...?

Because SCOS has always been a home for misfits, I think that it maybe attracts people who might have been made unwelcome in other spaces. Sometimes, though, that's for a good

reason. Although that seems a horrific thing to say and I may be one of those people myself I'll freely admit, but there are some people who are really quite damaged who are former SCOS members. Damage takes different forms, and actually that can be no problem or it can be incredibly destructive to getting things done, and sometimes it really comes back to bite the board, quite significantly, on the bum. There's just a level at which the misfittery starts to spill over into something that's a bit more pathological. So I don't think there's anything to do with the conflicts of the past that are to do with the intellectual commitments of the conference, but ironically it's more to do with the welcoming atmosphere. I'm happy to say that in the last few years I've really seen very much less of those conflicts.

Definitely I'll say I think it's just a function of being a little over-welcoming, of being too nice to say no to people. I mean I have never had, as my problem, being too nice. Rather the opposite! I was always of the opinion that you should shut that kind of shit down so I have likely been experienced as over-assertive shading into aggressive. It's difficult, isn't it, because I never want that welcoming culture to go away, I just think it can also produce problems sometimes, and create difficulties for the board.

Did you organize other events for the SCOS community apart from the annual conference?

We were always a community who ran things that were not necessarily branded with SCOS, but definitely had that flavour. So there was an event that was known as the Bolton conference which was always in the Spring, and was bonkers, and brilliant. Then ACSCOS also came about, and all of those sorts of things with events in other parts of the world. But the particular period when I was Chair, we instituted a Special Events fund for three years with a top limit of £1000 which could be applied for to support SCOSsy activities. However, in those three years I think we only funded one activity. There were a couple more applications which we did approve but for whatever reason those events never happened. We never got very many applications, which was really odd considering that this was when neoliberalisation in the university was really biting, we really thought people would be queuing up for them but surprisingly they didn't. I think the only event we supported was one at Bristol in 2010 which Ann Rippon and Mary Phillips set up using craft methods (doll-making) to engage with ideas or experiences often excluded from intellectual writing.

How did you perceive C&O before becoming editor?

I remember the journal moving from Harwood to Taylor and Francis publishers, which at the time was seen as something really good. I think we changed the name of the journal from *Studies in Cultures, Organizations, and Society* to *Culture and Organization* shortly before we moved to T&F, but my memory could be misleading me there. I guess I always really thought of it as a really important outlet for the kind of work that scossy people do. Not that you had to be a SCOS member to publish there, but that the work had to be sympathetic to those ideas, if that makes any sense. It had an awful pale-green colour when it first launched, with blue elaborate script. I remember when Steve was Chair we had a long discussion about what the new cover should look like, and I quite like the cover now,

though I liked it much less at first. I always thought the journal was intellectually distinctive, really because it was the only place, and I would say is perhaps still the only place (with the possible exception of *Organization*) where you can publish really off-the-beaten track material. In a journal which, fair enough may not be especially well-ranked, but which has a ranking and impact factor.

Did you want to change it in any way, and did you set out to do so?

No. I didn't want to change it, I just wanted to ensure that the quality control stayed rigorous. It had only just acquired an impact factor, in fact during my first stint as co-editor the impact factor went down, though it's gone back up again now. I didn't really have intentions when I took it over, but things became apparent to me while I was co-editor the first time around that needed to be done. I mean the most obvious one was producing special issue guidance, which we have done now. I also became aware towards the latter end of my tenure, and now again that I've come in to replace Ann, that, within limits, we need to be more strategic. We need to do so in a Scosy way, but we can no longer give as much leeway – for example we need to be more careful about the papers that go into the January issue, because apparently they are the ones that get most citations. So, if they are OnlineFirst and they have had a lot of hits, then we do a very instrumental allocation. Because previously, it was just first in, first out, in terms of pipeline. So we are just trying to be a bit more strategic in those sorts of things.

I think increasingly, and this has nothing to do with the intellectual content which I believe is at a very high level, we are hampered by some operational difficulties. We are going to need to think about the frequency with which the editorial team changes. Currently that creates a lot of backstage problems with issues like the change in institutional email addresses, but we have addressed that now by using a gmail address instead. I do love the journal, I'm really proud of it actually.

How important do you think the journal is to the conference or vice versa?

I would like to think that perhaps people would see the special issue coming out of the conference as an extra fillip to attendance. I would never want it to be the be-all and end-all. There are plenty of those special issues which will have material published which was presented at the conference but equally, stuff that wasn't, which I feel is good and very much how it should be. So I'm not really sure how important the journal is to the conference.

The importance of the conference to the journal is trickier, I think. We hope that papers presented at the conference will be of a really high standard and will make it into the special issue, but perhaps more importantly, that people will become more aware of *Culture and Organization* as a publishing route if they weren't already. I mean SCOS is a really interesting group, because it isn't the conference, it isn't the journal, it's bigger than that and it subsumes both of them.

I think what I like about both avenues is that our barriers to entry are quite high. That may sound awful, but we do get a lot of stuff where we think, you haven't even looked at the homepage for the journal, never mind the aims. I take great delight in spiking those submissions and being very categorical about the fact that *this* is what we do, and *this* paper does not fit. I mean the number of submissions that we get where there is no reference, at all, to the journal. And you know, there's no hard and fast rule about citing publications from the journal in your submission but that usually does suggest that the paper isn't suitable. So, I think the relationship is there, but I think both entities could survive without the other. But I don't want that to be the case and I don't think it needs to be the case. I think both of them have firmly established roots and the journal could, if we needed to, survive without the conference special issue, I just wouldn't want that to be the case. Especially since the conference also generates a reasonable amount of revenue for the journal.

What do you think of the role journals play in contemporary scholarly writing?

I think my honest answer to that is that it is an increasingly problematic relationship. It's more and more difficult to navigate between stupid managerialist bollocks and actually publishing stuff that you want to publish in places you want to publish it. I don't think any of us can close our eyes to the fact that these monsters like the ABS ranking, and impact factors and all the other ranking systems used throughout the world. Meaningless and zombielike though they are, these are proxies now. They are almost like the signifier for journal quality which is *utter nonsense* and I cannot stress that in clearer terms. We all know it's nonsense. Yet it exists, and to some extent we are all complicit in that. I'd really like to go back to the mythical Arcadia where there were no such things as rankings or impact factors and you simply published your work in the place where it sat best, where there wasn't this massive proliferation of journals, where you could guarantee that your work, as long as it was reasonably intellectually robust, would get a sympathetic hearing and where journals weren't run as closed shops. And even where reviewers and authors behaved themselves, but we're not in that world and probably haven't been in that world for at least twenty years, if we ever were.

I hear the most appalling things about other journals. I see the most appalling things happening in other journals; none of the ones that I try to publish in I should add. I'm nearly fifty and I've been publishing since 1993, I sometimes wonder if people look at me and they think, oh well, it's easy for you. It's not! I find it more and more difficult to get published. I don't know if that's because the quality of my work is declining, or if journals are just getting ridiculous, or some kind of mix between the two! What I find so difficult is, when I am talking to earlier career colleagues, not telling endless tales of woe. I want to be upbeat about this and say, God your work is amazing, you should so do this that and the other with it. I think all those things and I say them out loud but then I find myself having to say "but..." Because I don't want anybody to think that this is an easy game, because it isn't.

I think this is also where SCOS can make a difference as a community, people who are working, largely unsupervised, not necessarily doctoral students but folk in the early years of their careers who may or may not have achieved their PhDs are often working in environments where they don't get the kind of mentorship or support that they need

because they are a lone voice in a morass of orthodoxy. For those people in particular I really worry. I would say that it takes a village to write a journal paper. I believe reviewing is a form of co-authorship which I think has all sorts of different facets to it. Some of which are actually extremely positive, and I think if we could get back to a stage where the village that makes a journal paper is a really lovely communal supportive cooperative endeavour then I think that would be brilliant.

But I don't think that's currently the case, or I don't think that's the case with a lot of the processes that go on in journals. So I almost think that we're at the point where it's so badly broken I'm not sure we can fix it, and where we're just going to have to accept that... I mean it's not entirely meaningless to publish, of course it's not *that* ridiculous. And there are places where you are going to get a much more sympathetic hearing. But that means that journals like *Organization* and journals like *C&O* get more and more submissions because all sorts of other places that may have been possible in the past are just shutting their doors. The experience, too, from one submission to another seems highly variable; I had a beautiful experience with one journal a couple of years ago, really lovely. I mean, certainly hard core reviewing, but overall it was a really positive experience. My next submission there, they sent the paper directly to a reviewer who – if we guessed right – has a fundamentally oppositional view on the topic who, on ideological grounds, would never even give these arguments the time of day. And you just have to think, “you did that because?” I mean, just desk reject the paper, don't use the reviewers to spike it, that's not okay. Those different experiences were only around six months apart. So, alright my co-author and I are experienced and both old enough and ugly enough to take that stuff on the chin, but that's not the case for lots of other people. Particularly when it's the case that people's careers literally depend on this now, it isn't just a nice-to-have. We seem to have got ourselves into this mess which is almost entirely of our own making. Coupled with the fact that publishers know exactly how much money they can make out of journals despite investing almost nothing in them. Because we do all the work, unpaid largely, so I'm not very fond of journals any more!

Do you think there's an alternative?

I think there are alternative ways of doing journals, yes. It would involve a radical shake-up of the system though, and I suppose the problem is that it is entirely possible to set a journal up and run it on a shoestring though it takes a lot of work and investment, and a lot of free labour and technical skills. But that will only ever be one little voice, one little outlet. Because unless it has an ABS ranking and an impact factor, an H-index and all the palaver, who's going to publish in it? I mean I don't know if you have come across the journal Kate Sang set up out of Heriot Watt University, *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Equality and Diversity*, it's superb. It's just the perfect mechanism, the way that they have set it up ticks every single box including the fact that you can publish work in there that isn't written in English. That's *exactly* the kind of journal that I want to exist. But with all the multi millions of pounds that can be made, I'm just not sure it's ever going to happen on a significant scale. That's a nice cheery note.

In your opinion, does SCOS have a raison d'être today?

Yes. Absolutely. I was absolutely terrified about Rome. I was so scared. Both Charlie and I were so stressed about it. I hadn't even been to Rome, I didn't know what the venue was like, I don't speak a word of Italian, Charlie had only been the one time! I hadn't met any of the local organisers either, Davide, Chiara, Mauro, Luigi-Maria. We had talked by email and that was about it. So when we got there we were very worried that everything was just going to be a complete disaster. Thankfully it wasn't and I really do think that that was all down to Chiara and Davide, we could not have done it without them, God they were amazing. What I saw, was this - sort of 'magic' that happens? I can't think of any better way to put it. There's a point where you think, "yes, this is working". Obviously, conferences only work if the processes and the admin are there on the very basic level, but then there's the sort of magic or human element that has to be there in order to make them enjoyable. Because a conference can be incredibly well-organised and still be utterly dreadful. Even badly organised conferences can be enjoyable if the magic is there.

I hope Rome wasn't too badly organised, despite my best efforts to send people to completely the wrong Villa Spalletti, and so on. But again I just think that the magic happened. Obviously lots of people had been to SCOS before and they brought their own magic with them, but all the new people who came just 'got it' straight away, and they were so happy to be there. That was genuinely delightful, almost tear-inducing, to see people pal-ing up, going around with each other, you know, new friends, old friends, all sorts of different mixes of friends. Sessions being well-attended, people getting really good feedback, particularly ECRs and doctoral students. And I think absolutely there is a reason for SCOS to exist. Numbers of attendees of course, shift in peaks and troughs, we have hit 'highs' of 150 plus, and 'lows' of 75-80. I think as long as we are somewhere between those two extremes we are absolutely fine. SCOS has always had the occasional 'fallow' year and I don't think that's a problem. So, Brazil was a fallow year because of the expense of travelling from Europe. As long as that doesn't continue as a trend, though, I don't think it's a problem.

We also have ACSCOS (Australia) and JSCOS (Japan) communities now, and I think it still stands for something. People within the community still understand it as something that is qualitatively different, even from CMS. A much warmer space, and a much less instrumental careerist space. I have never got the impression that people use SCOS for instrumental reasons. Mainly because, we're just not, it doesn't allow for that. I think that is good, and that is part of us being marginal. You know, you can go to CMS and pretend to be oh-so-critical and just be, like the worst person in the world. I don't think we see that at SCOS, or if we see it - it doesn't happen very often and those people don't come back.

What do you think SCOS should be in the future?

I think SCOS should just aim to be what it has always been, I don't see any reason for any of the things that I have talked about not to continue. I know, and I'm thinking again of the 'you grow out of SCOS' comment, qualms have been expressed by others over the years about the 'intellectual level' of the conferences being in decline. But I'm sitting there

thinking, actually, I don't know what you are talking about. I will freely admit that I have been to some conferences where I have thought, "hmm, maybe the quality control is slipping a bit here." But they are exceptions to the rule. There are always six or seven, what I would call 'price of admission' papers, which I actually think is unusually high. Most organisation studies conferences you are lucky if you can go to *one* session that's actually worth you being there. So I think when people are making those comments, about the intellectual level or the number of doctoral students, it's because you realise that you are the old guard and you're – not being sidelined, at all – but there's all these lovely new young people coming in and taking the group and getting on with it. And I think that's also what I meant a bit about my relationship to SCOS, because I feel like I'm pulling back from it now, and I'm not pulling back for any other reason than that. It's given me a lot of things, and I have those things now. So, absolutely, if I think there are conferences in the future where I think the theme and the location are good for the work that I do, then I will turn up, but I think my consistent attendance won't happen now. But that's nothing other than that I have had a beautiful relationship with this organisation for many years, and that relationship is still very strong, but it's a different relationship now. So, no, don't change. DON'T CHANGE!

I think SCOS should continue. I think categorically, soul-searching and reflexivity is important but I don't think it should lead to any conclusions other than; this beast has changed it's colours a couple of times over the years but never substantively. And the fact that key people or the old guard don't show up any more, or as regularly, matters not at all. It's the nature of the beast. And if there is a point where you're only getting fifteen people coming to the annual conference then maybe that does indicate that it's time to stop. But we had over one hundred people in Rome, and considering that we were competing not just with EGOS but also with CMS and Rome is not a cheap city, I think you can draw your own conclusions really.

Here be Dragons

Innocent Dreamers

Tomek Ludwicki

Innocent ideas,
Thoughts and faces
Dreams Big and high
Over the system
Over the society
Over the organization
Naïve to establish
The Theory
Brave to build the
New idea

The emptiness left
The void of ambiguity
With no firm base

The emotions of
Memories bring
The Flow

The Dragon ripping up the Organizational Chart

Silvia Gherardi

An extract from: Gherardi S. (1995), *Gender, Symbolism and Organizational Cultures*, Sage, London.

The number of articles catalogued under the heading 'culture' amounted to some 2,550 in 1990 (Alvesson and Berg 1992). The last ten years have seen the birth of the cultural approach to organizations, its enormous expansion, and - in the opinion of some - its demise (Smircich and Calás 1987). Many of these articles were surveys, and to these I refer readers who wish to broaden their knowledge of the subject: I do not intend here to embark on yet another purely illustrative review (Allaire and Firsirotu 1984; Ouchi and Wilkins 1985; Knights and Willmott 1987; Jeffcut 1994).

In this section I shall set out a conception of the cultural approach to organizations in the tradition of symbolist thought, with principal reference to the European cultural and philosophical legacy of Cassirer (1923) and to the heritage of symbolic interactionism (Mead, 1934; Goffman, 1967; Denzin, 1992).

It is extremely difficult to define the cultural approach, for it has become a field in which it is easier to draw distinctions than to unify. Corporate culture, organizational cultures or subcultures, cultural organization, postmodern approach to organizational culture: these are some of the labels adroitly deployed by Linstead and Grafton-Small (1992). For the moment, I am interested in the features shared by the many approaches to cultural production - and organizations are a cultural product - and which differentiate them from others which reify culture and search for its properties.

Appropriate here is a definition as broad in its scope as the title of an article by Czarniawska-Joerges (1991): culture is the medium of life. Drawing on Latour's (1986) distinction between an ostensive and a performative definition of society, Czarniawska-Joerges draws a parallel distinction between an ostensive definition of culture which assumes that, in principle, it is possible to discover properties that are typical of a given culture and which can explain its evolution, although in practice they might be difficult to detect, and a performative definition which assumes that, in principle, it is impossible to describe properties characterizing any given culture, but in practice it is possible to do so. Under an ostensive conception of culture, actors are useful informants and social researchers, using appropriate methodology (what Denzin (1992) calls 'ethnomethodological voyeurism'), uncover opinions, beliefs, myths and rites and arrange them into a picture. Under a performative conceptive, there are no actors who know any more or any less, and reseachers ask the same questions as any other actor, although they might use a different

rhetoric in formulating their answers. Thus "ostensive definitions are attempts to explain principles, whereas performative definitions explore practices" (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1991: 287).

I therefore use the term 'cultural approach' to refer to a performative definition of organizational culture as the system of meanings produced and reproduced when people interact. An organizational culture is therefore the end-product of a process which involves producers, consumers and researchers. Thus the construction of meaning is purposive, reflexive and indexical.

I shall refer to the cultural studies conducted by SCOS, the acronym for the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism; analyses presented at SCOS conferences, but which have only in part appeared in the official journals. My intention is to show that the cultural approach is neither functionalist nor structuralist but springs from the paradigmatic breakdown (Turner, 1990b; Gherardi and Turner, 1988) which, in the 1980s, prompted organization scholars to look for analytical tools other than those of the dominant structural-functionalist paradigm (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

In 1981, in fact, within the European Group for Organizational Studies, an organization was set up which embraced the cultural approach, in the broadest sense of the term and without claiming to establish an orthodoxy and without seeking to lay down the canons of a new creed. What is distinctive about SCOS is the fragmentation and plurality of its voices - which is, perhaps, the only factor that unifies its members. One thus understands the difficulty of presenting as a unitary phenomenon what is an ongoing debate among many and conflicting points of view. I shall attempt to do so by examining the logo of this cultural organization. However, more comprehensive illustration of SCOS's work can be found in Alvesson and Berg (1992) and in a number of anthologies containing its most representative output (Pondy et al. 1983; Turner 1990a; Gagliardi 1986, 1990; Frost 1985; Frost et al. 1991).

Within the broader cultural approach, organizational symbolism is an area of research more sketched than thoroughly explored. It is a set of intuitions more than a methodology, and as such is graphically depicted by a dragon tearing up an organization chart, the symbol of organizational rationality. Since 1984, the dragon has appeared on posters for SCOS annual conferences, on its various brochures and gadgets, and it may be taken as the organization's official logo. *Dragon* was also the name of a journal published between 1985 and 1987 which collected numerous articles on organizational symbolism.

I shall argue that the dragon is a root metaphor for the cultural approach to organizations. The dragon is a potent symbol, one common in both western and eastern cultures and which represents the beast *par excellence*, the adversary, the devil. Combat with the dragon is the supreme test. Yet, on the other hand, the tamed dragon with five legs is the Chinese emblem of imperial power, of wisdom and of rhythmic life.

Dragons were conventionally portrayed with the bust and legs of an eagle, the body of an enormous serpent, the wings of a bat, and a coiled tail with an arrow-shaped tip. These images represented the fusion and confusion of all the elements and all the faculties: the eagle stood for celestial power, the serpent for occult and subterranean power, the wings for the flight of the intellect, and the tail for submission to reason.

Ambiguity and duality are the distinctive features of every symbol, since the symbolic function resides simultaneously in the force of coagulation (i.e. in the synthesis, by images and correspondences among symbols, of a multiplicity of meanings into one) and in the force of dissolution (i.e. in a return to chaos, to the mixing of meanings, to dissolution).

Thus the SCOS dragon "was meant to symbolize the ambiguity of corporate or organizational cultures. On the one hand there was the terrifying, collective 'beast' lurking beneath the smooth corporate surface; on the other hand, the dragon was to symbolize the ancient and inherited wisdom built into social structure and artifacts" (Alvesson and Berg 1990: 3). SCOS folklore has developed a real and proper "draconological discourse" (Sievers 1990). And from this organizational symbolism we may deduce that the dragon is present to the consciousness of those who study organizations using a cultural approach as the intellectual unease provoked by the fact that, although rational explanation and refined theory have their logical and empirical foundations, there still remains the unexplored continent of shadowland, where the most interesting phenomena of organizational life occur, and to which the concepts and languages of normal science do not apply. Science and scientific discourse are based on distinction, on separation, on analyticity and on logico-temporal sequence; their subject-matter, by contrast, is untamed, its causations are multiple and reciprocal, its boundaries are uncertain and constantly shifting, and the very action of studying such matters transforms them before our eyes.

This discussion of the dragon brings to mind another metaphor for organization, one which has enjoyed great popularity among organization scholars and which, originally, was a Zen story. People who had been blind from birth were taken to an elephant (an organization) and asked to describe it by touch: those who felt the trunk described it as a serpent, those who touched an ear described it as a great bird with wings, and so on. The dragon, the elephant and other similar stories simultaneously express both the idea that the organization is a totality and the difficulty of describing it as such: order and chaos can appear together, but what concepts can we employ to assert that something can both be and not be at the same time? Being and non-being dissolve and coagulate like alchemic principles, like words tattooed on the arm of the devil in the fifteenth arcanum of the tarot; the dragon biting its own tail in the Uroboros of the gnostics as the symbol of every cyclical process; and, again for the gnostics, the igneous dragon symbol of Kaos and therefore of the 'path through all things', the principle of dissolution, hard and soft, hot and cold. These too may be routes to knowledge of organizations.

Understandably, generations brought up to believe the myth of science, to trust in the rational thought which vanquishes the obscurantism of faiths, and to be confident in technology's ability to resolve all problems, recoil in horror from the dragon, and reject symbolism as a legitimate source of knowledge. Before we dismiss this latter possibility, however, we must be pragmatic: we must assess whether or not organizational symbolism can throw fresh light on organizations, or help us to see something already known from a different vantage point. Indeed, a precedent already exists. Until only a few years ago, no one had explored the potential of metaphorical thought in science (Black 1962; Brown 1977; Ortony 1979). And since the work of Morgan (1986), organizational studies, have learnt to explore increasingly complex metaphors: from the organization-as-machine to the organization-as-hologram, to the organization-as-brain. Therefore, the organization-as-

dragon may provide a metaphor for what is hidden, suppressed, slumbering beneath the surface, the irrational, the feminine, the devouring mother.

The symbology of the organizational dragon as the beast of dread condenses everything that is unconscious, everything that lies in the deeps, within the bowels of the structure, everything that may rise up to assault the Conscious Ego, the seat of rationality. Organizational scholars have always been aware of the dark side of organizational life, as expressed in the dichotomies of formal/informal, on the stage/behind the scenes, upper world/underworld; or in the spatial symbolism where above = managerial world = planning rational, below = workers' world = resistance = irrationality; or in the cognitive patterns where top-down = rationality moving downwards towards its implementation, bottom-up = institutionalization of social practices. In its battle to repel chaos and the irrational, management reincarnates St Michael or St George, although it is less aware of the gender symbolism implicit in the dragon.

In its positive symbology, the dragon blends the Ego with the richness and the creativity of the unconscious to produce a richer 'subjectivity'. The dragon ("culture" for Smircich 1983: 347-8):

promotes a view of organizations as expressive forms, manifestations of human consciousness. Organizations are understood and analyzed not mainly in economic or material terms, but in terms of their expressive, ideational, and symbolic aspects. Characterized very broadly the research agenda stemming from this perspective is to explore the phenomenon of organization as subjective experience.

This is the romantic dragon (Ebers 1985) that we have inherited from the cultural tradition of the nineteenth century; the healer of profound conflicts because it shows "the organization's expressive and affective dimensions in a system of shared and meaningful symbols" (Allaire and Firsirotu 1984: 213) and because it has transcendental functions for a humankind "emotional, symbol-loving and needing to belong to a superior entity or collectivity" (Ray 1986: 295).

Culture conveys into organizational analysis subjectivity, emotionality, ambiguity and sexuality, all themes associated with the symbolism of the female in its fundamental psychological ambivalence: the good mother and the devouring mother.

In other words, the field of studies which falls under the umbrella term of 'culture' can be depicted as a monster with five heads, each of which is quite distinct from the others, but all of which are connected to a body in which they find unity and a common life source.

We may take that these five heads to represent, respectively, five approaches to organizational culture (Alvesson and Berg 1992: 93):

- The head as culture, which possesses four eyes, each of which looks at: (i) the corporate culture, i.e. culture as one of many organization variables; (ii) culture as a system of values and beliefs which links with a deeper level of basic assumptions

shared by the members of an organization; (iii) cultural cognitivism which regards the system of cognitions and shared forms of knowledge; (iv) cultural artifacts which relate to unitary symbol systems unique to an organization and which function as 'culture bearing milieux'.

- The head as meaning construction, which possesses two eyes swivelling between organizations as shared meanings or as constructions and deconstructions of meaning.

- The head as ideology, which considers what positions or actions are correct, what behaviour or attitude is legitimate. This head has two ways of thinking ideology: a) neutrally, as a specific philosophical system, i.e. the corporate ideology of an organization; b) pejoratively, as political ideology which legitimizes the interests of dominant groups.

- The head as psychodynamics, which considers the way in which the culture phenomenon is related to unconscious and primitive aspects of human behaviour. This head has two eyes which look at shared fantasies and the organizational members' projections of their inner impulses and contradictions, and at the archetypes made manifest in the myths, rituals or other "cultural blinders" inherent in the unconscious of organizations.

- The head as symbolism, which generates a symbolic picture of the organization. This head also has two eyes: one to see the particularism of symbols, the other to see their universalism.

As well as its five heads, the dragon also possesses a body, which sweats and emits steam. Following Chetwynd (1982: 138), this suggests the transformation of solid matter into energy: work activity and heat are symbolically linked through fire and the rhythm of breathing. Fire symbolizes the working order of the world, the energy of the body, the life forces of the cosmos; an image of love and therefore of union. The rhythmic flow of breath unites the inner and the outer realm; but it is also an image of the invisible flow of mental energy, which lasts as long as we breathe.

We now know a great deal about the organization/dragon, but one intriguing question is still unanswered: what sex is the animal?

Very little is known about the sex of the dragon; draconology is somewhat reticent on the matter. There are, though, two kinds of dragon. The cosmic dragon is the incarnation of chaos, it cannot be regarded as an animal and hence does not have a sex. Mythological dragons, instead, are animals which live in caves and wander the mountains and lakes "leaving behind them stink and slime" (Sievers 1990: 212).

Yet we do not know whether there are male and female dragons, or whether they are single-sexed. The same problem arises over psychic mythodragons, which, although inhabitants of the human inner world, cannot be acknowledged as such and must therefore be projected onto objects in the outside world.

With so little known directly about the sexual and reproductive life of dragons, we may indirectly deduce their gender by considering the relationships that humans have established with these strange beasts.

Sievers (1990: 213) lists five practical ways to cope with a dragon:

1. the heroic way: 'You have to kill him!'
2. the magic solution: 'Kiss him!'
3. the Chinese version: 'It is the emperor of wisdom and rain!'
4. the science fiction approach: 'Ride him!'
5. the lonely child solution: 'Let's be friends.'

The second and the fourth solutions are similar: 'Tame him!' So too are the third and the fifth: 'Ingratiate yourself with him!'.

But by far the best known relationship with the dragon is heroic combat and the dragon's slaughter (Degot 1985), with the victor then absorbing its strength or, through a drop of its blood, achieving supreme knowledge. A broad array of Christian male saints, apart from St George and St Michael, have fought with dragons; but only two female ones: St Martha, who vanquished the dragon with holy water, and St Margaret, whose burning cross slew the monster. Male saints instead confront the dragon with a variety of weapons and in open combat. Combat is generally a type of social relation which arises among men, and it is valued more highly, the more it takes place between equal adversaries and according to the chivalric code. A man and a beast cannot share the same code of honour (cultural product) in combat, and there is nothing to prevent the beast from being female but ferocious and wicked. Yet combat is an activity which is assumed to be male and generally conceptualized within a male symbolic universe. Even the magic solution presupposes that it is a male dragon which is tamed - either by the Russian sorceress Marina or by the French ghost Lady Succube (Sievers 1990: 218). The dragons of science fiction, too, are tamed, albeit by other means.

Finally, a third form of relationship can be established with the dragon: ingratiation, in both its Chinese version of the invocation of rain, and the childish one of soliciting friendship. These three relational modalities - combat, domestication, ingratiation - conjure up the idea of a male being. But whereas the first two modalities are behavioural strategies which belong to a male symbolic universe, even when the dragon is tamed by a woman, the third strategy is inscribed in a female universe and attributed to women, to people socially marginalized and generally powerless. I shall develop this topic later.

There are also good grounds for arguing that the dragon symbolizes the female gender: "since the Middle Ages the dragon became a container for the often conscious anxieties related to sexuality (...), a symbol of the pleasure of the flesh and lasciviousness which then had to be projected by men into women" (Sievers 1990: 217). In the Jungian psychoanalytic tradition, the dragon is the archetype of the 'great mother', of the most inaccessible level of the collective unconscious.

The image of the Madonna with the dragon subdued beneath her feet is a symbol of the wholeness of the female self, and so too in the Christian tradition is the image of Mary crushing the head of the serpent (synonymous with the dragon).

The dragon ripping up the organization chart in the SCOS logo more closely resembles an inhabitant of the human inner world than a frozen symbol of corporate identity, like the flag of the Dragoon Guards. It therefore belongs to the subterranean world of shadows, of the intuitive, of the female and of what has been erased.

Corporate identity belongs to the domain of the conscious, of the public and of the rational, whereas the dragon is the Jungian shadow, the unaccepted split-off part of it, irrational and emotional reality. Bearing in mind the three ways to handle the dragon - slay it, tame it, or ingratiate oneself with it - let us look very briefly at their treatment in the literature on gender and the organization.

First of all, it is extremely difficult to take seriously the contention that 'gender and organization' is truly a neglected topic, given that so many articles have been written to make precisely this point. It may be that this view is only the romantic expression of nostalgia or, even worse, the grumbling of those who have been excluded. Broadly speaking, the literature adopts one of two equally good strategies to cope with the problem of gender: the functionalist strategy of treating gender as just one variable amongst others, and therefore to be considered only when the need arises (Hearn and Parkin 1987), and the emancipationist strategy which emphasises the fundamental 'sameness' of men and women and which underrates sex differences in work and positions within organizations (Kanter 1977).

Equal opportunities and equal rights are consequently the preconditions for women to become as good as men. The literature contains a broad strand of prescriptive recipes on how to tame the dragon. I refer to the 'fit-in' school of thought, which instructs women on how to enter organizations and management. Evidently it is taken for granted that women and organizations do not 'fit' together naturally, especially at managerial levels, and that women must therefore be socialized to roles, jobs and organizations that are by definition neuter.

Another way of taming the dragon is to exploit, to the organization's advantage, the sexual division of labour in a society which differentially socializes men and women to diverse roles in family life, in order to obtain cheap labour from women (Clegg and Dunkerley 1980; Saraceno, 1984) and a stable male labour force to be assigned the best jobs.

There is, finally, the strategy of ingratiating oneself with the dragon by recognizing the increasing feminization of all work, especially white-collar occupations. This strategy acknowledges the strategic importance of service, understood both as the tertiary sector and as the factor 'service' within the industrial sector, and therefore positively evaluates the different skills deployed by women because they have been socialized differently and because their skills are valuable to organizations. Following Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982), the difference between the sexes which appoints women as carers and assigns to men a greater 'denial of relation' is an incentive to organizations to appropriate what is good (for them) in women and to preserve it.

I have employed the symbology of the dragon to convey multiple messages, but mainly to provide the reader with a first insight, more empathic than analytical, into organizational culture viewed from a cultural standpoint. I have sought to give an idea of the plurality and fragmentation of the subject, to show that various textual strategies can be used to address gender, depending on how the relationship between gender and organization is conceived. I have moved on various levels because symbolic understanding allows exploration of the area that lies between being and non-being. Whereas in the next section I shall give analytical treatment of what is meant by symbolic understanding, here I have used a symbol as if its meanings were boulders in a river. By stepping from one to the other I have moved from functionalist analysis to symbolic analysis. These stepping stones have been a scientific community, SCOS, as a cultural community or a community of practice, depending on how one wishes to define it, which has symbolically broken with the rationalist paradigm: the dragon unmask what the organization chart conceals. The dragon has five heads, five different approaches to organizational culture, with a single shared body and a sex. Then, in order to jump to the next stepping stone, I have asked what this symbol represents for the community which has chosen it for its logo. A possible interpretation is that the female hides behind the organization chart, but the female is both seductive and terrifying. An alternative interpretation is that the cosmic dragon represents chaos; it has no sex, it is Uroborus, the eternal flux, indeterminacy, and symbolizes process, becoming, the passage from organization to organizing.

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Misfittery: a dialogue

Laura Mitchell

Alone:

I am no poet
Words agonise
Fail to describe
Thinking and feeling

I am no scholar
Thoughts spiralise
Out of control
Twisting and reeling

I am no manager
Aims fantasise
Unstrategically
Talking and dealing

Missed, I join others
Resisting the chart
Fit for inspiration
Discoveries may start

University:

But who will care?
For the CV actor and the impact factor?
The financial amount in the university account?
Second marking and guest speaker's parking?

It's only fair
Your emotional labour
Is paid out to your neighbour
Students miss mummy
Publishers need money
We're paying your wage, so write another page!

Stand in the cold air
With your placard chants
We're immune to your rants
Market yourself to sell
Others do it as well
Entitled as you are, aren't you going too far?

Dragon:

We are no dragon

Helan Går

Swallowing more

Crunching and eating

We are no network

Touching only

Through prostheses

Connecting and tweeting

We're flesh and desire

Seeking to know

Ideals are held higher

Utopias to show

Ouroboros bends

Recycling prettily

Beginnings and ends

Transform misfittery

Exploring SCOSsiness: from a beginner's view

Takashi Majima

1. Introduction

I'm an organization scholar who has been working at Japanese University for about 15 years. I have attended academic conferences in Japan many times. Therefore, I should almost comprehend the path peculiar to Japanese organization studies communities (their attitude to research, and their preferences and paradigms regarding research topic and methods etc.). On the other hand, my first encounter with SCOS was only 5 years ago. I've participated only three times in the annual conference. That is to say, I'm a complete beginner of SCOS. Thus, it's hard to say that I'm familiar enough with SCOS's own path: SCOSsiness. However, the beginner's view for it might be a little helpful for further progress of SCOS. Although I'm not sure whether such a contribution is requested of me, in this article I argue for the interest, attractiveness, and importance of SCOSsiness from the beginner's view. My experience says that SCOSsiness seems quite different to the Japanese organization studies' way of thinking. Accordingly, this essay presents SCOSsiness while showing differences between the two ways of study.

2. The encounter with SCOS

I have long been interested in European organization studies, which have developed their own particular or novel ways of research. For instance, critical management studies (CMS), the narrative turn, or the turn to practice. That's because I had felt an incompleteness in the ultimate objectives for my own research. For example, I would often wonder, "Is it really meaningless for society?". When in such a situation (in 2010), I happened to meet a SCOSser at a workshop in Japan. Every time I discussed various topics with him, I was always surprised by his interesting approaches to the idea which came from unexpected angles. I was surprised to discover a deep familiarity with philosophy and ethics which included ideas from both western and eastern origins. In a sense, this was my first encounter with SCOS. Such experience as I gained from these conversations with him invited me to learn more about SCOS.

3. SCOSsiness is spoken by a beginner

As mentioned above, my experiences of the SCOS annual conference are very few (2012, 2016, 2017). Nevertheless, I have felt the differences between SCOSsiness and features of Japanese communities of organization studies. At the same time, I have felt difference between other European communities of organization studies and SCOS. SCOS is something strange in a good way. I think SCOSsiness is constituted of four aspects from my experience in annual conferences; *varied, unique, enjoyable, critical*. In this section, at first, I briefly explain each aspect on the basis of my experience. Furthermore, I consider SCOSsiness from another angle, which means to attempt to determine recent trends (e.g. research topic) of *Culture & Organization* while comparing to them of a Japanese academic journal.

3-1. My understanding of SCOSsiness derived from my experience in some annual conferences

(1) varied

As far as I have experienced, SCOS is very much an interdisciplinary community as described on the official website (<http://www.scos.org>), that is, they have a wide variety of research topics, methods, and researcher's specialty. At the conference, there have been many times when I met with theories and methods which made me want to say "Hi, nice to meet you" instinctively. For instance, in Italy (2017), I was introduced to various disciplines and fields I would usually set apart from organization studies, for instance, philosophy, gender theory, semiotics, film studies, literature, art, aesthetics, and so on. SCOS in this respect has always provided new intellectual as well as social encounters for me.

(2) unique and interesting

It seems not only that SCOS has had various research topics and methods, but also each topic, method and researcher's viewpoint on subjects for research has been unique and interesting. For example, papers presented at one conference covered topics as diverse as; toilet behaviour, homunculus, mixed martial arts, Sicilian mafia and poetic inquiry. And this selection is a brief one. Similarly, the themes of the annual conference (such as flesh, animal, and home) are pretty unique to organization studies. It is completely different to Japanese conferences, at least. In Japan, we often meet under a small but serious conference theme such as the future of organization studies. SCOS always brings out surprising features in this respect.

(3) enjoyable

SCOSsers at conferences also seem to be enjoying the presentation and discussion. The tone and format promotes constructive "dialogue" rather than "debate"; which is a word which brings "combat" or "battle" to mind. By contrast, we have been apt to "debate" in Japanese academic conference, as far as I know. While this aspect might be not unique to SCOS but more of a European characteristic, SCOS is better size for dialogue. The inclusion of activities (e.g. orienteering at Uppsala 2016) in their annual conference also promote enjoyable and social experience.

(4) critical and ethical

I feel that this aspect must be the most important feature of SCOSsiness. SCOSsers have been illuminating overlooked and serious problems within society, while reconsidering social and organizational life through unusual research objects, methods, and theories. That is, they are critical, and ethical in a practical sense which inspires open-ended moral reflection (Weiskopf, 2014).

SCOS is unique in its playful and unusual themes and topics, but it is also serious. Taking an unusual approach to the study of organization such as a focus on toilet behaviour has uncovered serious problems such as managerialism and stigmatization through uncommon standpoints (Lennerfors, 2017). So, setting unique themes in annual conference has worked as a device that makes scholars become more critical and ethical thinkers about their own

research and society. They have become, SCOSser.

3-2. Thinking further of SCOSsiness through examining *Culture and Organization*

Are these understandings of SCOSsiness key points? Or are they irrelevant to the production of theory and ideas? To enrich my understanding of SCOSsiness, this section tries to argue it from another angle. That is, I try to examine SCOSsiness by collecting and investigating some data such as keywords which are described in articles published in *Culture and Organization* over the past two decades⁹. In parallel, I compare this research with the result of data collected in a similar manner from a Japanese famous journal of organization studies, *Soshiki Kagaku* (Organizational Science)¹⁰. Of course, their approach is not SCOSsy. It however is an effective clue to help me comprehend SCOSsiness. The findings are shown in figure 1, 2, and 3.

{figure 1.} would like to put around here.

{figure 2.}

{figure 3.}

(1) *varied*

As far as we consider the number of each keyword and the ratio of each one to total from figure 1 and 2, it seems that the keywords are rather scattered, and the dispersion thus shows a wide variety of research topics in SCOS. Furthermore, Simpson's diversity Index (D) indicates 0.9985, hence a variety of SCOS¹¹. However, comparing figure 3, whether they have particularly wider variety than Organizational Science is open to question (FYI, the

⁹ This examination got some ideas from Kawabata et al. (1987), Futagami(1997), and Takeishi et al.(2010) and so on. For more complicate researches in such approach, see also Scandura and Williams (2000), Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro (2004), and Calabretta et al. (2011) etc. Additionally, our examination objects are all articles which presented Keywords and published in *Culture and Organization* and *Organizational Science* from 2000 to 2017.

¹⁰ *Soshiki Kagaku* (*Organizational Science*) is the most famous academic journal in Japanese organization studies. It is the Academic Association for Organizational Science(AAOS) in-house journal. But it leaves room for argument whether *Organizational Science* is an appropriate comparison to understand SCOS. However, I think that it is appropriate for the follow reasons at this time. 1) Just as SCOS, AAOS defines oneself as interdisciplinary forum for research. 2) I expect as a Japanese researcher to clarify differences between SCOSsiness and features of Japanese organizational studies. To isolate SCOSsiness more specifically, it would also be necessary to compare SCOS with other journals in European management studies such as *Organization Studies*. This is a topic for a future study.

¹¹ This is an index that is adopted to measure biological diversity and means that the closer 1 the value is, the more various species there are. Although it is not an index to measure diversity of research topics, this essay has used it on trial.

Simpson's D is 0.9991). Additionally, 67.1% of 1st authors of articles in *Culture and Organization* have belonged faculty of business administration (business, management, or organization) or economics. According to Takeishi et al (2010), this ratio isn't so different from it in *Organizational Science* (58.7%)¹². In that sense, it is hard to say that SCOS has a special level of diversity in researcher's specialty¹³. As a result, SCOS has a wide variety of research topics and area but this variety is not unusual. These results are different to my previous understanding. This is only an initial study, however, and it would be beneficial to conduct more detailed research in the future, such as grouping keywords by bigger category, comparing to other journals, and using various other statistical techniques.

(2) unique and interesting

By comparison with above, figure 2 and figure 3 display that SCOS's research tendency is so different to *Organizational Science*. On the one hand, in *Organizational Science* each article tends to present directly organizational or managerial phenomena as the keywords (e.g. innovation, HRM, and leadership). They are also assumed as a kind of objective reality. On the other hand, in *Culture and Organization* most keywords are not terms associated with organizational phenomena themselves but terms which try to seriously highlight something that lies behind the organizational phenomena (e.g. culture, identity, gender, ideology). Moreover, they are concepts to understand that various phenomena are embedded in their wider social and cultural context. This tendency was also observed in annual conferences where I participated. We discussed that even our body is constructed socially or by some kind of agency such as technologies (at Italy,2017).

A distinct uniqueness of research methods in SCOS can be found represented in the Keywords. For instance, there are many studies which utilise auto-ethnography in *Culture and Organization* (e.g. Riad,2007; Lucas,2014), but it isn't a method widely adopted by Japanese organization and management studies. Innovations such as art-based research methods are even rarer; I don't know any organization studies which have adopted it in Japan.

Although it may be derived from difference between the cultural and social context of Europe and Japan, this difference made me recognize that SCOS is a unique and interesting conference. To get such feelings for SCOS might be just because I am Japanese scholar, and thus to clarify the uniqueness of SCOS I will have to compare it to other European academic conferences in the future¹⁴.

¹² Takeishi et al (2010) has been conducted by using data for 43 years between 1967 and 2009. Therefore, it's not appropriate to compare their study to ours for recent two decades. However, even if we compare only the result of both overlapped term (2000-2009), the result isn't so different from above. Accordingly, it's nothing to change previous opinion. FYI, each ratio in this term is as follows. It in *Culture and Organization* is 67.63%. *Organizational Science* is 64.9%. The difference between the two ratios is closer than above.

¹³ Of course, there is a limit to make sure of their specialty from faculty.

¹⁴ According to Takeishi et al (2010), there are a lot of keywords related to institutional theory in *Organization Studies*. On the other hand, they don't appear a few times in *Culture and Organization*. SCOS might have uniqueness on this respect, albeit we have to make some

(3) enjoyable

It isn't easy to identify this aspect in the publication from this quantitative approach. But if I have to mention anything, Journal title of *Studies in Cultures, Organizations, and Society* which is a former title of *Culture and Organization* has a sense of fun. The enjoyable themes of the conference also appear in the themed annual issues.

(4) critical and ethical

As mentioned above (3-2-(2)), in *Culture and Organization* a lot of keywords highlight unique concepts and methods to reveal various serious problems that lie behind organizational phenomena. That is read as a sign that SCOSsers are likely to uncover serious problems from unusual angles, to think critically and ethically. On a related note, it is symbolic that such words as aesthetics ranks in the top 20. Specifically, it is crucial what kind of aesthetics we have, if we conceptualise our reality as a socially constructed one. In this view, any practice including research is thus recognized to be performative for the construction of that reality. As such it is necessary to critically reflect on this practice. In contrast with *Culture and Organization*, unfortunately, there are very few instances where such concepts are featured as keywords in Japanese management and organization studies. For example, articles which present keyword concerned above in *Organizational Science* are really few for the last 20 years (e.g. Chikudate, 2004; Takenaka, 2007; Udagwa, 2015). To be a member of SCOS for Japanese organization scholars can therefore be a good opportunity to reflect upon how our research and thinking is embedded in the Japanese context.

3-3. What's SCOSsiness

From the above argument, SCOSsiness can be defined as follows. SCOSsiness is a research attitude that attempts to reveal the serious problems embedded in social context that hide behind management and organizational phenomena by using unusual research perspectives and methods.

4. Concluding remarks: SCOSsiness is an attitude that I must acquire as a researcher.

This essay has considered SCOSsiness. I sought to contribute to SCOS by showing a beginner's experience and through application of an unusual(?) method. But my findings are likely common knowledge for SCOSsers. This study, however, has been a good opportunity for me to reflect on my own research attitude. Do I try to reveal serious problems of organization? Do I try to find unusual perspectives and approaches? Am I content with my own study life? Is my attitude SCOSsy? These 30 years, many Japanese people have been feeling stuck in organizational and social life. We have been suffering from some kind of mental or physical disorder due to excessive work, and the diversity of our society haven't been developing well. I'm not sure, maybe because of that, our society has struggled to bring about innovation (product, process, social etc.). To resolve such immobility requires shifting essentially our viewpoint on our research - as well as our society. I expect that SCOSsiness is a pathway to that. Thus, SCOSsiness is an attitude that I must acquire as a researcher.

further investigations.

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Signs of the future

Campbell Jones

In the European summer of 2007 the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism was held in the beautiful city of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. At that time I was fortunate to be working with an exceptional group of academics and graduate students based at the University of Leicester, who in conjunction with the Faculty of Economics at the University of Ljubljana organised an exceptional event. There were more than 100 presentations over three days in July, along with stunning and perverse keynote presentations by the immortal Renata Salecl and the incomparable Bent Meier Sørensen. As was fitting for the SCOS conference in its visit to the city of the dragon of Ljubljana, not only the scholarly work but the festivities were superb, including a trip to Lake Bled and a Slovenian feast at the hilltop Ljubljana Castle.

The theme for the 2007 conference was 'Signs of the Future', which might in some way portend to the upheavals which were already rumbling underground and in the months would be unleashed in full scale financial crisis and in the decade of economic, social and political violence that followed. While in hindsight that crisis and its fallout are perhaps perfectly predictable, the specific form of that crisis and the resultant response were far from determined.

The conference theme arose from and spoke to concerns that long animated the Standing Conference. On the one hand was the question of the sign, perhaps the most longstanding question of the conference, in its complex articulation with economic realities and organisational forms. On the other hand was the always present concern with the most pressing theoretical conversations and thus a connection with philosophy and the humanities. Hence the question of the future, which was very much in the air at that time, in the sense of direction and pathways, of the 'to-come' in what, in the Global North at least, seemed to be repressively stagnant times. In this context the conference call for papers was both a product of its time and still speaks to our present.

The call of papers read as follows:

Today the future seems both more promising and more perilous than ever before. What will the future look like, and by what signs will we know it? How are we organizing for the future, and how might we plan for different futures of culture and organization? After various attempts to bring history to an end, today we again sense a mood of possibility. There is, it would seem, a future for the future. What will that future hold?

Victor Hugo writes: 'For what tomorrow will be, no one knows'. This kind of remark might seem a poetic extravagance when faced with the need to plan and to organise for the future. Any practical person knows that in order to bring about our plans we must organise gradually and methodically, paying due care and attention to the demands of time. But at the same time, we sense that the more routinized our

planning for the future, the less likely that the future will be particularly surprising. In this way, maybe the last thing that any manager wants is to come face to face with the future.

The future often appears today in the popular imagination as complete system failure or global ecological catastrophe. The end of the world is now no longer a religious problem, but something of immediate concern to policymakers and newspaper readers. If the future involves increasingly unmanageable waves of risk, out of this crisis emerges the possibility of a different future, the promise of a future as radically different.

If we learned from the twentieth century the dangers of eschatological promises of a perfect future, today we sense both the peril of those promises and at the same time the catastrophe that the future will bring if we remain on our current course. The theme of the future therefore asks profound questions about alternative futures. If these no longer appear in the form of Utopia, they do however imply the impossibility of refusing messianism and hope. Hence the prospect of speaking, following Jacques Derrida, of a 'messianicity without messianism' and a future that is forever to-come.

Revisiting the conference a little over a decade later, and re-reading the abstracts and published versions of the papers presented at the conference, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks for all that were involved. At that time my colleague, comrade and dear friend David Harvie would farewell seminars and social gatherings with the salutation 'It's been average!'. If the 2007 conference was average, then it must be said that it was a pretty high standard of average.

Looking at what has changed in the world over the past decade, it is hard not to have an uncanny sense of premonition of what in fact unfolded. This decade has been marked by accelerating environmental catastrophe; a monumental crisis of the capitalist financial system; an age in which lunatic politicians have become more the norm than the exception; a culture of fear, hate and exclusion of others. And at the same time this past decade has been a decade of a radical renewal and reinvigoration of hope: it has been a decade of experimentation with new forms and spaces of radical egalitarian politics; with a proliferation of new forms of culture, music and art; an incredible return of feminist politics, indigenous and African American strength; a decade of shifts in the geopolitical balance away from its traditional centres; and the creation of material prospects which are now recognised as the grounds for profound social and economic change.

What is perhaps continuous is the chasm between the current catastrophe and those new space of hope. At times this seems unbridgeable, in that it seems safer to look to one side of the other rather than to put these in relation with one another. Forgetting the dialectic has always been a mistake, and we should lift our hat to Derrida one more time for reminding us of at least one way of thinking the dialectic.

Continuous between the present and the situation of a decade ago, then, is that the present is just as much divided or indeed more divided in two. It is split, and increasingly so, into those fully accorded participation and those rendered marginal. It is divided into a North and a South, in which the prospects for the South are either permanent servitude or mimicry

of the path of the North. For all of the talk of levelling, we live in an age of the building of walls, physical, symbolic, financial, urban and conceptual. Academics today are even more afraid than they were a decade back, intent on defending their turf and the small and relatively safe place that they call their discipline. In this, university discourse repeats and reproduces the divisions that characterise the world.

One of the great achievements of the Standing Conference has been the attention paid to the telling of stories, both the stories that are told by people in organisations but also the stories that are told about them. There is no idealism in knowing the power and the force of the symbolic order. As I was reflecting on what I might say about the theme of the 2007 conference, a story kept coming back to me, a story that was told even before the conference but that returns with a particularly pressing relevance today. It is a story told by Arundhati Roy, one of the truly great storytellers of our age, one who will say again and again that she is not only a theorist or an analyst but at the same time someone who tells stories, someone who writes. Of her detailed research into for instance the World Bank dam building projects in India, she will with humility insist that she was demanded to tell of what is happening: 'Trust me. There's a story here' (Roy, p. 59).

The particular story I have in mind here recounts a repeated encounter in her home city of New Delhi as she passes workers by the road: 'In the lane behind my house, every night I walk past road-gangs of emaciated labourers digging a trench to lay fibre-optic cables to speed up our digital revolution. In the bitter cold winter, they work by the light of a few candles' (p. 168). For our storyteller who is of course more than just a storyteller, this snapshot crystallises the broader tendency of capitalist development that it reflects. This is a street in New Delhi but it is not just a street in New Delhi. This is capitalist development, this is the future that capitalism offers. It is at once the brightest and the darkest. It is the unity of light and darkness, their separation and differential distribution to different parties.

Roy apostrophises this tendency and the vision of the future that it provides: 'It's as though the people of India have been rounded up and loaded onto two convoys of trucks (a huge big one and a tiny little one) that have set off resolutely in opposite directions. The tiny convoy is on its way to a glittering destination somewhere near the top of the world. The other convoy just melts into the darkness and disappears' (p. 168). The image of workers in a trench makes sense only in relation to the whole of which it is a part. And here our storyteller rests on the most sophisticated understanding of how the momentary appearance of the image relates to the overall global reality of capitalist expansion. The image is paradigmatic in the sense that it makes clear all of the other instances alongside which it stands, and for which it stands in. 'Of *course* India is a microcosm of the world. Of *course* versions of what happens here happen everywhere. Of *course*, if you're willing to look, the parallels are easy to find. The difference in India is only in the scale, the magnitude, and the sheer proximity of the disparity. In India, your face is really slammed up against it' (p. 169).

It is of course not simply the world but the storyteller who is doing the slamming, and in this sense Roy is a model of the brutal necessity of what must be done with words if the future will be worth living in. This is not to say that the future is made of signs more than it is of candles, cables and dirt. But whatever the nature of matter, the thing is that the two convoys of trucks have already departed. They always had. At the same time, they are

bound together, for the reason that the motion of the small convoy is only possible because of the ongoing labour and the license of the larger one.

There is no discerning the future by the reading of tea leaves, but the very specific plans for the future of work and life that have been prepared by for instance the World Bank have a palpable reality. In this the fable that the future is made by machines rather than socially associated deliberation is being incessantly asserted. This story is certainly working to assure that the future that for the most on the planet will be a living hell. Here a sense of modesty about alternative plans along with an inward-looking reflection on what grounds our selves and our knowledges, marked a moment of caution we can well remember as far too often a false modesty. A world outside is screaming blue murder. Those on the side of the few are already on their feet and are confidently designing a future for all of the rest, while we are still waiting for those who reassure themselves of the promise of another future to rise from the comfort of their fearful repose.

Reference

Roy, Arundhati (2001) *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*. London: Flamingo.