

Across the Universe: Exploring how art can support the search for more contemporary and fit ways of promoting the activism of the reflective citizens through the social engagement of social sciences

Antonio Sama Christ Church Business School (Canterbury Christ Church University).

Juliet Scott Tavistock Institute of Human Relations J.Scott@tavinstitute.org

Call for Papers and Contributions

We propose a work stream for AoMO Conference that showcases and explores the emergence of the arts as an 'active' or 'activating' discipline amongst the trans-disciplinary (Liao, 2016) applied social science of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR)¹. Since 2015, a partnership between the Institute and Canterbury Christ Church University Business School has led the ongoing work with the Institute's archive with the Wellcome Library, where the arts have been a challenging and integral part of the deeply excavational and out-loud process of opening up and working dynamically with organisational history (Sama and Scott, 2018).

The rationale guiding our interest in introducing the arts as an 'activating' discipline is based on the realisation that:

- Organisations of any kind (private, public and third sector entity, as well as citizens and political) are operating in a VUCA environment and are faced by the weakening of "traditional" approaches when it comes to creating knowledge and initiating actions. The crisis of old paradigms are asking for innovative ways to engage with our current realities and their "wicked problems" exploring all of our types of knowledge: from the embrained to the embedded .
- The attention is put on new and original approaches that can help us make sense of what is going on and inform our action. New sense making and new ways of promoting "social engagement of social and applied sciences" need to be explored and tested.
- In our domain of organisational consultancy and change history and performing arts are among the disciplines that are being tested as helping us out of the crisis of old paradigms. (Scharmer, 2018)

In 2017 we ran, as part of TIHR's 70th Anniversary Festival and launching the archive at Wellcome Library a series of events, exhibitions and performances that married the disciplines and provided a comprehensive space for integrating multidisciplinary research in the social sciences with an emphasis also on customising the approaches, the methods and the tools in order to contribute to a more robust awareness of the actions in the relevant environments.

We would like to bring that experience for deeper exploration among fellow practitioners looking at what art has activated within a social science Institute and amongst its community; and the associated challenges.

Key Concepts Informing the Stream

¹ More on the story of TIHR work with arts. Expanding our disciplines and customising practice at: <https://www.tavinstitute.org/what-we-offer/art-and-organisation-at-tihr/>

1. Arts supporting **in depth archaeological excavation**, a careful and sympathetic process, capable of making the space for a safe awakening of the spirits and potency of the past in our work with the archive (Scott, 2016).
2. **Dreaming as supporting the emotions and dynamics of working with history** here has to be declined in more than one meaning:
 1. A series of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations occurring involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep. - Social Dreaming Matrix
 2. A state of abstraction; a trance: wandering around in a dream. – The shamanic work
 3. A condition or achievement that is longed for; an aspiration – Michelangelo describing how the David was in the marble ready to be freed
3. **Working out Loud** as an approach to develop, emerging, dynamic and flexible containment of all this

Aim of the stream

The stream aims at:

“Exploring how art can support the search for more contemporary and fit ways of promoting the activism of the reflective citizens through the social engagement of social sciences”

The stream intends to contribute in formulating questions like “How do we describe the world we live in now?”, “What are the implications for practice informed by the social engagement of social science?”; “How can engaging with history and art can bring innovations to light and what will we take into the future?”

Activities for which applications will be sought [events in brackets give examples from events at the festival]

- a. Two Social Dreaming Matrices (Lawrence; 2004)²
- b. Displays (Past, Present & Future: From the Tavistock Institute Archive)
- c. Readings (Tavistock Poetry Reading)
- d. Artworks (Object Relations: a still life exhibition)
- e. Performances (A Participatory Performance; Shadows and Light; Ambient Jam; BED)
- f. Presentation of a reflective paper ‘Activating the arts as an expansion of multi disciplinary social science practice’

The stream will be curated by core members of the team who were involved in the creative direction, curation and realisation of the 2017 festival and the ongoing work with the archive.

Abstracts of no more than 500 words, in word.doc format, should be submitted as an email attachment by **2nd December 2019** to aomo2020liverpool@gmail.com and to Juliet Scott J.Scott@tavinstitute.org as stream convener. All decisions will be made on the basis of the abstracts submitted. For those in need of a fully refereed conference paper, a deadline for submission will be communicated a little closer to the conference.

Antonio Sama

² Lawrence, W. 2004. **Introduction to social dreaming: Transforming thinking**. London: Karnac Books

I am a Senior Lecturer and Programme Director of the MBA Healthcare and Education in the Christ Church Business School (Canterbury Christ Church University). My research, academic and professional interests include the role of system psychodynamics in Higher Education, cross-boundary collaborations and whole system change processes in the third sector and community systems, complexity theories and action research applied to organisational and community systems.

Juliet Scott

Over the last few years and alongside senior management responsibilities, educational and other roles at the Tavistock Institute, I have had the privilege of becoming the artist-in-residence. I was festival director of the 70th Anniversary Festival 'Reimagining Human Relations in our Time' and lead our work on 'Arts and Organisation'.