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## The Dialectic Storytelling of the Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry (sc'MOI ) as it Dismembers and Re-members

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### Keywords

*sc'MOI*  
*Conference*  
*Storytelling*  
*Death*

### Abstract

Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry (sc'Moi) is coming undone, in the process of ending its 25-year conference run, and being dismembered, its members leaving for other conferences. The purpose of my talk is to develop a Hegel and Žižek understanding of the dialectic of storytelling of sc'MOI. Žižek claims that Hegelian dialectics is making a comeback because it is uniquely suited to our time. Unlike the usual erroneous oversimplified formula reading of Hegel (thesis-antithesis-synthesis), I will assert there is no synthesis, Marx rejection of 'Spirit' and Adorno's turning dialectic into a pursuit of objectivity, leaves us with a shallow dialectics. By reclaiming the 'Spirit' in relation to system and science as well as materiality in Hegelian dialect, we have a new way to understand sc'MOI. Spirit is not about religion, but rather it is the experience of Reason in action and Being. Spirit stands in dialectic relation to the system principles (abstract, schemata), and to system that becomes science. In addition, Spirit's relation to system is worked out in space, in time, in mattering, or what Karen Barad calls spacetime mattering. Looking at the history of sc'MOI, I will claim sc'MOI never was a whole system, but rather a systemicity of unmerged and unfinalized parts in search of a whole. sc'MOI was part of the umbrella conference (International Academy of Business Disciplines) until Boje was beheaded as IABD conference president, and three divisions of IABD jumped ship to start sc'MOI in 2004, and held its first conference in 2005. From 1993 till 2004, that means sc'MOI was only a potentiality, a shadowy outline of a conference, not actually coordinating its own location, audiovisuals, meals, coffee, setting its own schedule and business meeting, etc. Even after 2005, sc'MOI did not get its legs, did not merge its processes, did not sustain economically or socially as a robust alternative to the Academy of Management (AOM)

conference, ever its nemesis. As sc'MOI prepares to dismember its membership and remember its past, sc'MOI is without beginning, middle, and end. Its Spirit lives on, as do its materials: proceedings, paper presentations, receipts for room rentals and airline seats. sc'MOI is a movement, an opposition to modernity in its critical postmodernism, to corporate university, to TQM, reengineering, AACSB, to war, to globalization, to humanism in its posthumanism, and to unsustainability. Best to dismember before all of sc'MOI is unsustainable, its systemicity unraveling, its unfulfilled science, and only the sc'MOI Spirit actually can live on.

## Introduction

Is it better to check out before one is forced to come to an end? One story is that the global economy is about to bankrupt our continuing as sc'MOI (Standing Conference for Management and Organization Inquiry). Another story, that the European economies and their universities no longer support travel funds, much less traveling to small conferences. Others say it's the journal ranking system that makes it essential to go to big Academy of Management (AOM) conferences. I think that is a superficial explanation of a 25-year old movement of going against the grain of the AOM conference, as well as its journal content, and its pragmatic science of managerialism, and its globalist narrative of non-complicity.

sc'MOI has an historical truth of its particular existence, a community with contingent and arbitrary as well as strategic aspects of conference content. The way sc'MOI *inquiry* has been made, its *science*, at each conference moment, is in its community's identity and self-consciousness.

sc'MOI is a *double fold*, a *quantum storytelling dialectic*. It is dialectic within and between two folds. The first fold is the space sc'MOI creates and goes to, the time of sc'MOI each year for 25 years, and the mattering substance of sc'MOI. Karen Barad (2007) calls this quantumness, the inseparability fold of *spacetime mattering*. But from a Hegelian perspective such as that of Žižek's (2010) critique of Barad's quantum philosophy, there is a second fold, the Spirit of sc'MOI (not in any religious sense), the System (or as I prefer, systemicities) of sc'MOI in a gamut for wholeness of an unfinalized, unmerged never whole systemicity (Boje, 2008, 2014), and a Science of managing and organizing that thumbs its nose at the science of the Academy of Management (AOM).



**Figure 1: The Two Folds of sc'MOI**

These two folds and their six elements are being dismembered as members are consigned to other conferences, perhaps even to our nemesis, the AOM. With the disappearance of sc'MOI the negativity of its content, its counter-narrative to the dominant positivity narrative of AOM, *spacetime mattering* and its *Spirit-System-Science*, does the dialectic of our engagement come to an end?

Has the ‘falsity’ of AOM content disappeared as the movement of sc’MOI negativity-as-truthfulness, its process of meeting each year, comes to its End?

The answer lies in the Notion of difference that the sc’MOI movement, in its own sociomaterial process, in its own double fold has established.

sc’MOI, as you can peruse in Table 1, has no beginning, no middle, and no end. sc’MOI was never whole. I can tell you I did show up in 1991 to give a paper at IABD in Detroit, to a track that did not exist, and was there and then appointed track chair for Organization Theory, which I immediately renamed ‘Postmodern Organization Theory’ and invited Bob Dennehy to kick off the track in 1992 in Washington DC. We were skeptical of modernist management, TQM, and buzz words like ‘empowerment’. But truth be told, we were not our own conference, until in 2004 I was beheaded by the board of IABD for many evils I had done: being a radical peace activist when US was at war, dressing as the clown Ronald McDonald in the theater we did at conference dinner, insulting an IABD member for dressing down two doctoral students (Bill Smith & Mark Hillon), and so on (take your pick). It was at the final hour of IABD, that the Postmodern OT, the Spirituality, and the Cross-Cultural tracks of IABD defected to form the sc’MOI movement. We met in Philadelphia in 2005, and Stanley Aronowitz was our keynote speaker.

**Table 1: Some Highlights of sc’MOI**

Year	Place	Theme
1991	Detroit, MI	1991 Detroit -Genesis Story: Boje (1991) shows up to present paper in IABD OT track, but chair is sick, and no track is organized; Boje is appointed Organization Theory (OT) track chair for next year by Abbass Alkhafaji, founder of International Academy of Business Disciplines (IABD) in 1989.
1992	Washington DC	Bob Dennehy joins Postmod OT track of IABD. Boje & Dennehy (1992) Postmodern Management, opposite of Modernist-Bureaucratic; Boje (1992) How Stories give context to become Quality Buzz Words like Empowerment," presentation to The New Technology of Quality Management.
1993	New Orleans, LA	Boje (1993) “Beyond Toyotatism;” Boje & Dennehy (1993) “Resistance to Postmodernism in the Academy [of Management];” see Boje & Winsor (1993) critique of TQM as Taylorism ( <a href="#">Anti-TQM</a> ).
1994	Pittsburg, PA	Stewart Clegg keynote to Postmodern OT track, he has to turn down the music for it disturbs rest of IABD; Grace Ann, Deborah Summers, Terrence Krell join in; Winsor & Boje (1994) “Work Ethic as a Culturally Conditioned Mechanism for Exploitation” paper presentation at IABD.
1995	Redondo Beach, CA	Anti-TQM Boje & Rosile (1995) “Greenback company: beyond simulation, the postmodern virtual corporation.”

1996	Rockville, MD (DC)	<a href="#">Call on critical postmodern</a> : Tojo Thatchenkery leads first <a href="#">Doctoral consortium</a> for Critical Theory/Postmodern methods; Grace Ann Rosile as Track chair; Boje, Fitzgibbons, & Steingard (1996) "Barbarians at gates of ASQ journal."
1997	Orlando, FL	
1998	San Francisco, CA & El Paso, TX	Boje (1998a) "The Swoosh goddess is a vampire: Nike's environmental accounting," storytelling paper presented to the International Meeting of the International Academy of Business Disciplines in Juarez/El Paso, TX (October). Boje (1998b) "Foreward: A Wicked Introduction to the Unbroken Circle Conference: International Business and Ecology."
1999	Chicago, IL	No room scheduled by IABD for Postmod OT track; we met in a cage overlooking the lobby about five floors in the air.
2000	Las Vegas, NV	Theme: Deconstructing Las Vegas ( <a href="#">special issue of M@n@ging Journal</a> ); Boje (2000a, b, & c) paper; George Ritzer, keynote for critical postmodern OT track.
2001	Orlando, FL	<a href="#">Call theme</a> : (Mis)Managing in a Global Environment ( <a href="#">abstracts online</a> ); Boje (2001a) presentation; Boje (2001b) "Will to power and will to serve in Disney." Our track did a tour of Disney's Celebration Village. The tour guide said to a bus load of environmentalists, "There was nothing here before Disney!"
2002	Marina Del Rey, CA	Boje, Dennehy, & Gardner (2002) on 9/11. Boje (2002) on postmodern ethics and war  <a href="#">Philosophers Steve Best and Douglas Kellner</a> as keynote speakers for entire IABD conference.
2003	Orlando, FL	Theme: Spectacle in the Entertainment Industry; Boje elected incoming President of IABD (his beheading plan was initiated throughout 2003); Boje (2003 a & b) "Enron and the Oil war."
2004	San Antonio, TX	Track theme: New Perspectives for McDonaldizations: McDonalds, McUniversity, McMedia, McAcademy, McWar, and McBody; Boje (2004 a b) McDonalds goes to Iraq play and regenerating McDonalds play; Boje is beheaded for many reasons; New Board of sc'MOI is formed to initiate 2005 separate conference (see <a href="#">Dennehy "History of formation of sc'MOI"</a> ; or " <a href="#">Decapitating Boje</a> ").
2005	Philadelphia, PA	15th Annual Meeting, and first as sc'MOI; Theme: Manufacturing Identity(ies); Stanley Aronowitz as conference keynote; Boje elected first sc'MOI President. Boje (2005a) presents "Decapitating Boje," and "Grandma Wilda" (2005b); Boje & Al Arkoubi (2005) dialogical systems theory; Boje & Cai (2005).
2006	Washington DC	Theme: Deficit of Democracy; George Ritzer keynote address.
2007	Las Vegas, NV	Theme: Feminism and Gender Issues in Las Vegas; Heather Hopfl keynote address; Abbass Alkhafaji, an award-winning Slippery Rock University School of Business professor dies September 20, 2007 at The Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore. In 1989, Abbass founded the IABD conference that hosted

		sc'MOI from 1991 to 2004. He was always very supportive and we miss him; <a href="#">more info</a> ; Schipper & Boje. (2007) "The Ethics of Transparency, Branding and Entrepreneurship; the case of Nike" Boje (2007) "Boje's feminism."
2008	Philadelphia, PA	Theme: Excess of History (Boje, 2008)
2009	Orlando, FL	Theme: Organizing Space and Time; Boje (2009) "Indigenous Storytelling;" Smith, Boje & Hillon (2009) "The Hijacking of Environmental Rhetoric."
2010		Boje (2010) "Beyond reflexivity."
2011	Philadelphia, PA	Boje (2011) "A Subtler Quantum Physics;" official twentieth anniversary meeting of sc'MOI.
2012	Providence, RI	Boje (2012) "Consentology, Heart-of-Care for Ivy DuRant's Writing Covered-over by Academia."
2013	Alexandria, VA	Boje (2013). "Games Workers Play in Middle School: A Dramaturgical Study of Quantum-Pragmatism."
2014	Las Vegas, NV	Boje (2014) "Why I study Materialist Posthumanist Storytelling." Stan Deetz keynote address.
2015	Philadelphia, PA	Svane & Boje (2015). "Tamara Land Fractal Change Management - In between Managerialist Narrative and Polyphonic Living Story."
2016	Philadelphia, PA	The Last Meeting of sc'MOI. Boje (2016) "The Dialectic Storytelling of sc'MOI." Final presentation to 25th meeting of sc'MOI.

## The Spirit of sc'MOI

sc'MOI is the "*appearance* of Spirit" and it is the "experience of Spirit" that it embraces. sc'MOI is a complex web of passageways from the Appearance of system that never gets whole, the appearance of Spirit that promises Science in its method. sc'MOI is merely the dialectic negative, an antithesis that comes up against the spread of the AOM positive. sc'MOI's experience of Spirit, its systemicity in search of an impossible wholeness (whole system), the quest to be critical postmodern organization science, is always the negative: against TQM, against modernist managerialism, against performativity, against reengineering, against war, against globalization, against AOM, against journal rankings, against AACSB, against management itself, against Nike, McDonald's, Disney, Las Vegas, and so on.

Our ideas of experience of Spirit, to come up against the obstruction, to make a passageway for the community of scholars to work out a movement of opposition, has worked well now and again, but hardly enough momentum and force to sway either AOM or AACSB, or turn the tide of globalization.

sc'MOI did not emerge readymade in 1992 in the Postmodern Organization Theory track of its host, IABD (see Table 1), nor did it birth as a mature conference, when three divisions split to have their first conference in 2005, in Philadelphia.

It comes down to this: sc'MOI is not 'true' and AOM 'false.' Nor is AOM the *subjective* agent making sc'MOI the antithesis. Rather, sc'MOI opposes something universal (many universals, each of which has its essence in corporate practices).

The false managerial is a universal, and sc'MOI its negation, a material substance of presentations, room arrangements, slides, proceedings, journal articles, and some books to develop the content and knowledge of the negativity. It is this distinction and determination to oppose managerialism that is the defining living Spirit of sc'MOI. All around sc'MOI is the negative of the negative, that knowledge of managerialism its practices in general, that constitute the substance of the managerialist Spirit, its fulfillment in corporate, university, and government systemicities. It is this very disparity, the multiplicity of antinomies, the variegated dialectic that is the passage to science, and the pedagogy of the conference, its own lifeblood.

Where such otherness has been annulled (declared invalid, with renewed protests) there we find the Spirit of sc'MOI, the experience of sc'MOI.

AOM is not bad and sc'MOI is not good, nor is AOM evil and sc'MOI its negative. Rather, who actually needs the content and knowledge, and the meetings, and to pay the dues of AOM? If we can live without AOM, publish and not perish in the university without AOM, then is there a need for sc'MOI. Or has sc'MOI outlived the usefulness of AOM? Is the resultant identity of sc'MOI beyond AOM antimonies?

I once thought, as a blacksmith we could forge AOM, lift away its dross, leave the pure gold, be the scientific tool of post-AOM, but that is not how dialectic works. sc'MOI was never any more separate from AOM than it was separated from its birth mother, IABD. AOM is directly present in sc'MOI. Members of sc'MOI experienced their currency rise in AOM, be invited to its editorial boards, publish in its journals, rise in its ranks—this is how cooptation works, how assimilation of the negative by the positivity works.

It is important to designate the moments of the passageways of sc'MOI between itself and AOM, between itself and corporate university, between itself and IABD. Does sc'MOI have any existence outside of AOM? AOM certainly is undisturbed by the movements and wave ripples of sc'MOI. Its placement center will make placements, its journal decide tenure fates, and so on, long after sc'MOI's last breathe.

The distinction and differences between IABD and sc'MOI, between AOM and sc'MOI matter, in space, in time, in mattering, in *spacetimemattering*.

sc'MOI has its historical spacetimemattering, its historical *truth*, its community, its contingent and arbitrary situation. We did postmodern critiques. We did kidnap the IABD keynote speaker on TQM and interrogated him till he admitted it was a sham. We did mourn the death of Debra and Terence. We mourn the passing of our community, after its twenty-five years. "But even such plain truths as these just illustrated are not without the moment of self-consciousness" (Hegel, 1977/1807: 23).

The rebellion is over, the demonstration no more. We are dismembering. The movement of sc'MOI has to do with its process, of our ideas that were brought forth, our antimonies, the coming-to-be of sc'MOI.

## Conclusions

sc'MOI never was a whole system, never a whole independent conference. It did rebel, resist, provoke, and become theater of social change. People worked hard on the two folds (spacetimemattering and Spirit-System-Science). These two folds are unfolding, the fragments will soon or already belong to other folds. Thank you one and all for your participation in the sc'MOI movement. The Spirit lives on.

I am grateful to Bob Dennehy, Grace Ann Rosile, Ken Ehrensall, Carolyn Gardener, and others who served on the board of sc'MOI over the years of its fledgling existence. I learned a great deal from the participants both at IABD and at sc'MOI. I appreciated Jerry Biberman and Slawomir Magala for taking their divisions with our organization theory track one day in April, and for the wonderful sweat lodge that followed in Austin, Texas where I totally forgot my beheading. I appreciate all the Europeans and people down under who came to sc'MOI, making it truly an international experience. Thanks to you one and all.

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