



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE
PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF ORGANIZATIONS

14th ISPSO European Regional Meeting, Dublin, Ireland

1 – 3 April 2016

Irish Writers Centre, Dublin, Ireland

Meeting Theme

Working from the periphery, leading from the edge

Organising committee

Annette Clancy (chair), Gerry French, Frances Heery, Maeve Houlihan, Ian Miller, Simon Western

The 14th ISPSO European Regional Meeting took place in Dublin between 1 - 3 April 2016 at the [Irish Writers Centre](#). The theme of the meeting emerged in discussion between the organising committee members and following consultation with organisers of previous meetings. Our desire was to find a theme that resonated with our location on the edge of Europe and, one that would link with the role of psychodynamic practitioners in relation to their various roles. In planning the meeting the committee were also conscious that ISPSO membership in Ireland remains small and we wanted to create an environment in which we could introduce this way of working to a broader community in the hope that it could prove useful and stimulating and, that it might also increase curiosity about ISPSO. Our intention was to create an evocative and provocative space in which we could think together over the

course of the weekend. In doing that we explicitly decided to invite three speakers – two from outside the psychodynamic community and one from within rather than a single voice. The decision to invite an entrepreneur and an art historian was predicated on knowledge of their careers; as people who have championed the ‘edge’ (such as Outsider Art, or creating a European Airline from the edge of Ireland) and who have an insightful knowledge of the ‘centre’. We also wanted to include a contemporary psychoanalytic perspective on periphery/centre, derived from thinking about applied practice, to anchor the conference in our psychoanalytic ‘roots’.

Attendance

The meeting was fully subscribed eight weeks before the event and we had a waitlist of ten people. Due to changes in composition, we were able to accommodate four of those on the waitlist. Due to personal circumstances two people had to cancel at the last minute so the full attendance for the meeting was 38 people. 10 of those attending were not ISPSO members; and in attracting a sizeable proportion of non-members, the organising committee agreed to successful task fulfillment in widening ISPSO awareness in Ireland. Delegates came from Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States, Denmark, Norway, Australia, Sweden, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Design

Delegates were welcomed by the chair of the organising committee and introduced to the overall theme and design of the meeting.

The meeting was designed around five different types of events

Keynote speakers

Workgroups

Plenary sessions

Social Dreaming

Social activity

External keynote speakers from entrepreneurial business and the arts shared personal and organisational experiences in an intimate atmosphere. The final speaker focused on the psychoanalytic aspects of working on the periphery leading from the edge - bringing us back to our core task. Working in small group formats over the weekend we worked on individual cases, bringing psychoanalytic insights to the work.

The plenary sessions were a time for deep thinking, reflection and engaged dialogue. Social dreaming captured overnight associations. The first of two social dreaming events encouraged the type of creative improvisation and functional adaptation advocated by the first speaker (or, an “informal rising” as one delegate termed it!) when the venue representative failed to show up to open the venue on the second day. At this point, guided by social matrix facilitators who quickly negotiated the conditions of use with the managers of a local café, delegates relocated and instigated the first occasion (as far as we know!) of a ‘social dreaming café’.

Of note is that while the formal structure of social dreaming (snowflake matrix, non-invasive space etc.) were lacking, the facilitators’ active coordination and joining not only with the dreaming-group, but with the providers of the physical location context in which the group convened, established a seamless group process with complaint only in relation to a subgroup of members’ disappointed expectations that the event did not go perfectly (“as promised in the pre-conference material”) and so reflected organisers’ dysfunction. Of course, what was missed in this critique was exactly the relation of center to periphery in the sense of the center = expected ideal and the periphery= functional deliverable in the real world.

The second social dreaming matrix was more conventional in application and captured the wide range of passionate affects in play during the weekend.

An informal buffet on the first evening extended the opportunity for dialogue and socializing and this continued on the second evening over a very congenial dinner in a local Italian restaurant. 35 people attended the dinner in [Dunne and Crescenzi](#).

Themes

The following themes were raised throughout the weekend

'If you are riding a dead horse - get off'

In response to the first speaker who used this analogy to explain how he dramatically changed careers at different times and why. In particular the speaker spoke about being unable to change the culture of the staff room and this led him to reflect on the necessary decision to 'walk away'. This theme inspired a positive energy in the attendees that carried through the weekend.

Centre and edge and the outsider role

Throughout the weekend the theme appeared and reappeared. For example, the Relationship between centre (ISPSO) and periphery (regional meetings)

Creativity

Brought to life in images and through thinking about creativity and the edge by the second speakers presentation on 'outside art'. During the plenary session it was mentioned that Francis Bacon's studio was installed in the Hugh Lane Gallery 2 doors from our meeting venue. Many delegates visited the studio over the weekend. This raised the relationship between confusion/chaos/uncertainty and creativity. For more details see this link <http://www.hughlane.ie/history-of-studio-relocation>

Francis Bacon Studio at the Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin



ISPSO

Its role and task: unhappiness with the emotional tone of the listserve.

The thinking space of the regional ISPSO meetings having blurred boundaries where some wander into a group relations type space exploring/processing emotional experience.

Administration

The committee worked well together primarily communicating via Skype, phone, email and occasionally face to face. There was consensus from the outset on the theme, design, speakers and venue. Some confusion arose with ISPSO regarding payments for the event (at the time of organising the event ISPSO did not have the capacity to accept multi currencies). The committee decided to use Eventbrite to process payments (this incurred an 8% service charge). Payments had to be lodged to the personal account of a committee member (which isn't ideal) but the system facilitated a seamless transaction process with up to a reporting, easy cancellation/repayment when necessary and timely payouts. The committee would definitely use this system for a future event of this size.

The committee also improvised where necessary and we were conscious of checking in with each other as the weekend unfolded. We decided at the last minute to cover the additional costs of wine/coffee that exceeded the fee paid by delegates at the dinner on Saturday night. (35 bottles of wine were consumed on the night....). As a committee we supported and looked after each other and were mindful of the emotional tasks being undertaken by each on behalf of the group.

The committee reflections

The first Dublin meeting was a place of thinking, sharing, exploration and engagement of psychoanalytic ideas in relation to organisations and we were happy with the event. Too, the event surfaced the tension between expectation of organisational perfection and disruption, mirrored in the event's location, within sight of the Garden of Remembrance, commemorating the revolutionary events of 1916; and so too, the conference surfaced both contentment and individuals' expressions of disappointment at the weekend's lack of perfection in alignment with personally-held orientations. Overall we received positive feedback privately from individuals. Are there things we would have differently? Yes, of course e.g. deleting one of the work groups and extending the lunch break and/or closing the gap between the end of the meeting and dinner. But overall the selection of a theme that was relevant to the host country and which had resonances for attendees created a context for deep thinking and courageous conversations.

The event made a profit of €1992. Photos from the event can be seen [HERE](#).

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