

## Abstract

This dissertation will use Burrell and Morgan's *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (1979) to make clear the centrality of theory-method in research practice. The researcher will locate his position within the 'Radical Humanist' paradigm. The research method will deploy an ethnographic approach to the field. The field of study is the University of Lincoln's *Occasional Working Paper Series*, (OWPS) a student-led, peer reviewed online journal. OWPS is part of a wider initiative that seeks to encourage undergraduate publishing as well as student-lecturer collaborations.

The informing theory is Social Construction of Technology (SCOT). Specifically, one of the main tenets of SCOT is 'co-construction' and this will be discussed. The study will assess whether 'co-construction' is taking place between 'relevant user groups', for instance, authors and reviewers. The aim of co-construction is to achieve stability of the technological artefact, in this example; it is the Online Journal System (OJS). There will also be a discussion about the appropriateness of ethnography in studying SCOT.

Also, the researcher has some concerns about doing research. In particular, does theory-method remain consistent during immersion in field practice? Indeed, the researcher's concerns are realised whilst producing field vignettes reveal contradictions in his assumptions and ethnographic writing. This is also discussed.

The study will focus on the mundanity of everyday work and the influence of technology within OWPS. Also, the study will question whether the issue of involvement is tangible or mere rhetoric.

There are of course some suggestions for how this dissertation might be extended for future research.

# Chapter One

## Theory and Method in Organisational Analysis

This introduction aims to outline central points of theory and methodological practice in organisational studies. In providing this outline, this chapter draws heavily on Burrell and Morgan's seminal and still useful discussion of *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (1979).

The chapter is structured as follows. First, the chapter will outline why Burrell and Morgan set out to emphasise the importance of theory-method and then the notion of a paradigm is discussed. Next the intersecting continua of order-conflict and objective-subjective and their framework itself is discussed, followed by a discussion and evaluation of the tenets in each of the four paradigms. Incommensurability and silos are also discussed. An alternative framework is used as an extension, with the chapter being concluded by the researcher outlining his research concerns.

Burrell and Morgan's purpose was to articulate and encapsulate a clear framework for mapping organisational theory. In this process they underline the importance of recognising theoretical assumptions that underpin and inform organisational research and analysis. In 1979 Burrell and Morgan identified the lack of framework or 'divining rod' for useful discussion and sought to offset latent and manifest theory by providing such a 'device'.

The framework adopts the notion of the paradigm to investigate assumptions, tenets and practices of theory and method that distinguish one research paradigm/researcher from another. Burrell and Morgan identify these

assumptions, they began to challenge the value freedom of theory and practice, and illustrate how cherished beliefs were necessarily represented and reproduced in both theory and knowledge production. Finally, they sought to dispel any notion of theory as being apolitical.

## **Paradigms**

Drawing on Kuhn's (1962) notions of a paradigm, a paradigm is an organising principle for assumptions, tenets, practices, protocols of a particular paradigm community. The paradigm is fundamental to the identity of the community; the paradigm defines what is in and outside its boundary. But the paradigm is more than that as it assigns power, authority and responsibility to the community, it confers and adjudicates on what constitutes as knowledge, how it is produced and what questions can be asked. The paradigm provides coherence and stability in which the community can work. Whereas, a perspective is part of the paradigm, but one particular point of focus is seen from different perspectives or points of view. A perspective within the paradigm is different. Take for example, the notion of power; there are among others, Marxist and Foucauldian concepts of how power is theorised and exercised. Both are theorised differently, but both are perspectives with a paradigm, although, one might have more explanatory power than the other in different contexts.

Originally Burrell and Morgan sought to trace the origins of the various philosophical traditions for studying social theories. From this assemblage of traditions it would allow them to make classifications and maps for negotiating these subject areas. But as they have noted, what had been conceived and created was a 'simple classificatory device for organising the literature now

presented itself as an analytical tool' (*ibid*: xi). By developing the paradigmatic framework, Burrell and Morgan sought to 'emphasise the commonality of perspective which binds the work of a group of theorists together...within the bounds of the same problematic' (1979: 23). Although they readily acknowledge that in an attempt to explain some of theoretical issues, assumptions and methodological arguments they oversimplify and overstate their case (*ibid*: 12). Given the complexity and fine nuances of the paradigm areas, particularly as one reaches their boundaries, this oversimplification and overstatement helps to maintain the markers for the reader. How this manifests itself in practice and its implications for researchers will be discussed later.

Burrell and Morgan achieved what Seidman has described generally as set of 'sociological canons...classic texts and contemporary heirs and defined by key problems and augmentative strategies' (1998:160). What this meant was by explicitly and implicitly *identifying* within a particular paradigm the researcher/theorist finds a place to reside and position from which to know. Although this suggests that researchers and theorists know exactly where they operate, they should be aware of the concerns of operating in that paradigm. It is a way to define and lend oneself credibility as a researcher, one who is familiar with the philosophical and sociological underpinnings, but is one who is also able to research and operate within a set paradigm. Position brings clarity; this means that one is both conscious of the paradigm one operates within, and that one can identify the appropriate analytical and methodological tool sets to operationalise research. However, clarity is never complete or unproblematic, if it were then there would be no change, but the seeds for change or a 'shift', or a new moment

are always there. Indeed, it could be argued these seeds for change are inherent within the paradigm.

As will be outlined later, even though the paradigms offer a framework, there is a possibility to develop the paradigm with new methodological tools, constructs or techniques. However, the possibilities for shifting between paradigms are limited.

### **Burrell and Morgan's continuum**

In terms of setting out how these debates could be articulated and conceptualised for discussion, Burrell and Morgan overlaid two continua to create an intersecting axis: axis one is objective-subjective and the second is the regulation-radical change (order-conflict) axis. Both sociological and ontological assumptions sit on the regulation and radical change continuum and the ontological assumptions on the nature of reality sit on the subjective-objective continuum. Burrell and Morgan's innovation was to overlay the continua and mapped research to create a four quadrant framework. Similarly, for some researchers and theorists, the continuum explicitly locates and identifies them as belonging to a sociological school such as 'Marxist' 'Weberian' or 'Parsonian'. For others, they were simply not aware of these underlying assumptions that guided their work or were simply unconcerned with such labels.

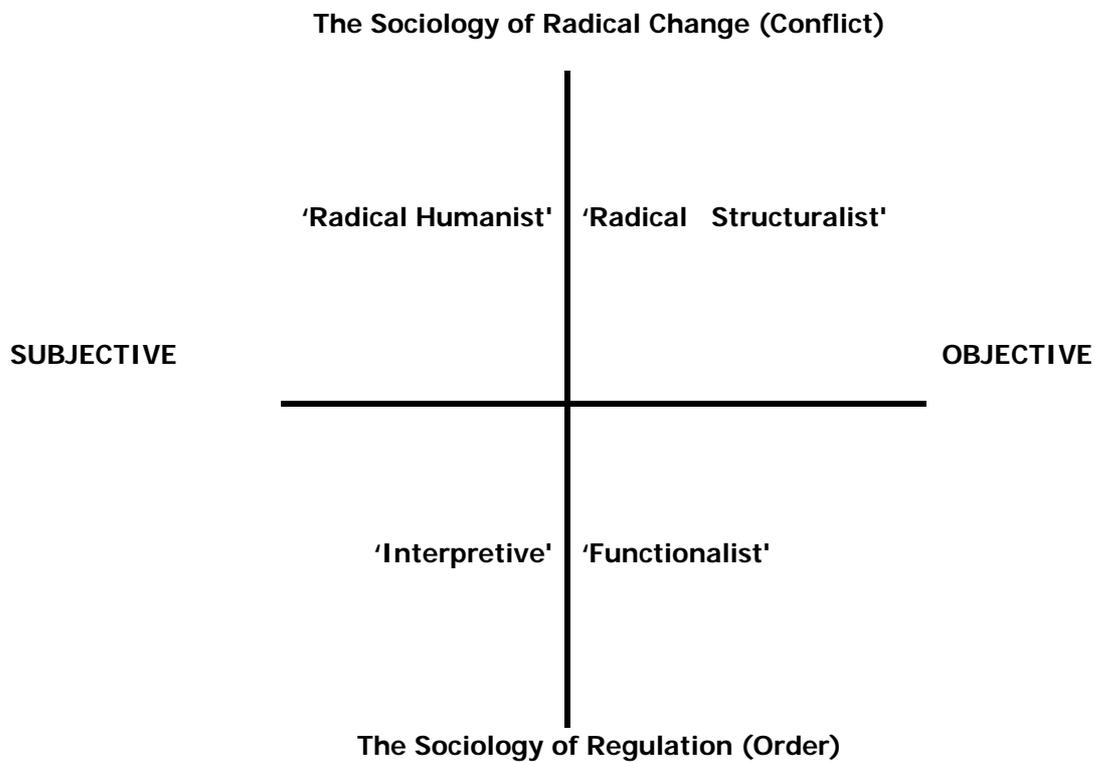


Figure One: Burrell and Morgan's Four Paradigms for Social Theory Analysis (Page 22).

### Order-conflict continuum

Within the framework, there are two diametrically opposed assumptions of how society and people operate and interact with each other. For the purposes of illustration, Burrell and Morgan use two columns, but they note that many writers recognise that two lists may not appreciate the distinctions of the concepts. So perhaps to conceive of it as a continuum of order and conflict at opposite ends may be preferable. At one end, the archetype theorists is Durkheim and his theories of 'Order' (integrationist) and at the other is Marx with 'Conflict' (coercion). The Order theory features the following as components or tenets: stability, integration, functional co-ordination and consensus. Conversely, conflict theory stresses change, conflict, disintegration and coercion (*ibid*: 13). To assist with making distinctions between different views of how society exists and co-exists within the order-conflict debate, Burrell and Morgan again offered the continuum between 'Regulation' (order) and 'Radical Change' (conflict) as 'ideal-

types'. Noting they had conceptualised two broad, polarised sociological perspectives, they commented 'recognising that while variations within the context of each other are possible, the perspectives are necessarily separate and distinction from each other' (*ibid*: 19). Given the level of complexity, they readily conceded these dimensions were most problematic to illustrate (*ibid*: 16). However, they offer the follow schema, setting out the extremes to emphasise the distinctions:

The Sociology of REGULATION is concerned with:	The Sociology of RADICAL CHANGE is concerned with:
A) The Status Quo B) Social order C) Consensus ( <i>voluntary agreement</i> ) D) Social integration and cohesion E) Solidarity F) Need satisfaction ( <i>aligning social and individual needs</i> ) G) Actuality	A) Radical change B) Structural conflict C) Modes of domination D) Contradiction E) Emancipation F) Deprivation ( <i>the social need erodes individual fulfilment</i> ) G) Potentiality

**Figure Two: Burrell and Morgan's The Regulation-Radical Change Dimension (Page18).**

In terms of aligning major theorists to each distinction, Burrell and Morgan linked Durkheim with term 'sociology of regulation' based upon his theories that sought to describe social phenomenon by identifying 'social facts' (Durkheim: 1895). For instance, suicide in certain social groups was a 'social fact', this was because, according to Durkheim, society exists outside the human mind and that structure restrains or stimulates their action to take one's life. To describe the 'sociology of radical change', they emphasised what Marx (1847) had theorised about the struggle and relationship between capital and wage labour.

## Subjective-objective continua

To contrast and compliment the order-conflict continua, Burrell and Morgan also locate theory in another axis arguing that theories also have deep seated beliefs on the policies of 'out there' and the subject-object continua. At one end is the subjectivist and at the other are the objectivist assumptions. How one views epistemology, ontology, human nature and methodology dimensions form which end you gravitate to. The dimensions including tenets and assumptions are summarised as follows:

<b>Subjectivist Dimension</b>	
<b>Ontology:</b> <i>(The nature of reality)</i>	A Nominalist position supposes that the social world is made up of names, concepts and labels that structure social reality.
<b>Epistemology:</b> <i>(The Theory of Knowledge)</i>	Anti-positivist accounts reject the notion that science can generate objective knowledge of any kind.
<b>Human nature:</b> <i>(What determines human action)</i>	Voluntarism suggests that the individual is autonomous and free-willed to act and that structure has no bearing on action.
<b>Methodology:</b> <i>(Appropriateness of analytical tools use):</i>	Ideographic approaches feature personal accounts, diaries that get inside a situation that encourages the unfolding of the investigation. Specific, bespoke and context bound.

<b>Objectivist Dimension:</b>	
<b>Ontology:</b>	Realism asserts that reality is observable and measurable in the world whether humans can perceive them.
<b>Epistemology:</b>	Positivism holds that knowledge can be tested using hypotheses to explain casual links between phenomena.
<b>Human nature:</b>	Determinism; the environment and organisational structure determines, affects and directs human action.
<b>Methodology:</b>	Nomothetic includes strictly adhered systematic protocols, standardised research instruments and quantitative techniques for analysis. Generalisable results are produced and can be replicated.

**Figure Three: Brief definitions of Burrell and Morgan's Sociological Assumptions**

(Page 1-7).

The objective and subjective continuum best illustrates the fundamental differences at each pole. Each researcher will gravitate towards a pole. Each dimension has its own traditions and lineage of development, and these emphasise different routes to knowledge. As we can see, from the definitions above, if we take for instance the ontological dimension and juxtapose the two (realist and nominalist), it would appear there is little scope for combining each perspective. Although, in terms of research, the subjective-objective continua has a direct influence on a research approach. What can be said, if the researcher examines their assumptions, differences can be identified and this encourages the researcher to adopt their position on the continua.

### **Radical Structuralism**

Radical structuralist theorists advocate a sociology *of radical change* from an *objectivist* standpoint. Theorists contend that society and organisations are highly ordered, regulated and structured, and can be viewed from a scientific perspective. In terms of action, radical structuralists are committed to radical change, emancipation and potentiality, and emphasise power, structural conflict, modes of domination, contradiction and deprivation. Tensions are inherent within organisations; radical structuralists argue these tensions merely a reflection of tensions within society. Their assumptions tend to be *realist, positivist, determinist* and *nomothetic* in perspective and approach. This means there is an objective, external reality; there are causal links that can be hypothesised and tested; that structure determines action and not freewill, and finally research is directed by rigid protocols and testing regimes. The focus is on the structural and power relationships within the realist social world, radical structuralists seek to explain the role of social forces in bringing about social change. The common strand is

that political and economic crises generate radical change. A 'mature' (as opposed to his *German Idealist* period) *Karl Marx* and *Friedrich Engels* did the most to theorise these ideas, due in part to Marx's interest in Darwinian *Theory of Evolution* and political economy. *Vladimir Lenin*, *Nikolai Bukharin*, and *Louis Althusser*, all communists, have also been influential theorising and operationalising theory. Finally, there is a strong *Weberian* bureaucratic influence as well, again related to structure influencing action.

Related to organisational analysis, Braverman's (1974) Labour process theory (LTP) is influential in this paradigm as it located capital in the labour process and LTP raised the ideological standard for Marxists in organisational analysis. In keeping with the view that organisations are highly regulated and structured, LTP is deterministic in explaining organisation analysis and because of its Marxist lineage, its assumptions are realist, there is also conflicts and struggles for power between capital and wage labour. Ackroyd and Thompson (1999) also write from a Marxist perspective focusing on 'organisational misbehaviour' as employee reactions to managerial and organisational control. Taken together, economic determinism features strongly, this would suggest even though the individual has little personal control over their actions or little subjectivity or free-will for them to display, they do act and resist to what they perceive as oppression and domination which is liberating itself.

## **Interpretivism**

The central ontological tenets are hermeneutical (personal interpretation of an event) and solipsism (reality is a construct of the mind). The assumptions tend to be *nominalist*, *anti-positivist*, *voluntarist* and *ideographic* in perspective and

approach. This means for the researcher the world is viewed from the participant rather than the observer's perspective at a subjective level and cannot be measured using a naturalistic, scientific method. Interpretivists contend that a social world is an emergent process created by the individual. If this is so, then Parker's contention that language...is central to an organisation's being (2000:70) it would appear to be plausible. Individual action is guided by (voluntarist) freewill and not determined by structure. Interpretivists' interests and positions in the order-conflict debate is from a subjective perspective that focuses on the order side of the debate, they assume the world is cohesive, ordered and integrated, not conflictual. *Immanuel Kant, Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Weber* and his notion of *Verstehen* or interpretation of another's perspective are all influential.

At the organisational level, some Interpretivists question whether an organisation exists in anything but a conceptual or symbolic sense (Turner, 1992; Smircich, 1983). From this perspective it is possible to question whether organisations are only conceptual constructs operating at an individual's level. But this would deny that an organisation has both a physical and intangible structure that influences people in a tangible way within organisations and society. Of course, organisations have their symbols and brands; these convey messages which have meaning for individuals, not a universal meaning for all, but meaning none the less. These symbols and personal meanings influence the individual. This is where solipsism and interpretivist arguments emerge from.

### **Radical Humanism**

The Radical Humanist paradigm attempts to develop the sociology *of radical change* from a *subjectivist* standpoint. The approach is similar to the Interpretivist

paradigm. Radical Humanism is *nominalist, anti-positivist, voluntarist and ideographic* in perspective and approach. Radical Humanism claims that society is anti-human, and encourages humans to overthrow or transcend the spiritual bonds that exist in the social arrangements of society in order to fulfil their potential. Radical Humanism is an inversion to the Functionalist Paradigm. The focus is on issues of '*domination*', '*alienation*' '*depravation*' and '*false consciousnesses*' as possible causes for humans not realising their potential. Originally, '*German Idealists*' theorists such as *Immanuel Kant* and *G.W.F Hegel* were influential, *Karl Marx*, who according to Burrell and Morgan, then reinterpreted by inverting it against positivism. This was followed in the 1920s, with contributions from *Georg Lukács* on History and Class Consciousness and *Anton Gramsci's* notion of Hegemony; the ability of one dominant group to set culture and social standards for other groups. M. N. Roy further developed the notion of radical humanism into how political action could bring about social change. *Jurgen Habermas* and *Herbert Marcuse* of the *Frankfurt School* added to the paradigm by introducing a 'critical' perspective by challenging accepted notions such as consensus.

Social theorists such as *R. D. Laing* focusing on psychology schizophrenia; *Ivan Illich* on methods of '*De-schooling*' education from dominant ideologies; *Carlos Castaneda* contested 'anthropologist' and writer, and finally, the existentialist philosophers like *Jean-Paul Sartre*, who emphasised 'the dignity of humanity, the centrality of human choice to the creation of all values' (Warburton: 2006: 224), all belong to this group. In terms of 'organisational culture', Parker describes it as, 'a contested relationship relation between meanings-the distinctive understanding

of a particular social group which may conflict with those of other social groups (2000: 74).

## **Functionalism**

Functionalism advocates the objective study of organisations. The assumptions tend to be *realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic* in perspective and approach. Of all the paradigms its primary focus is on the order side of the order-conflict debate. In the Nineteenth century *Auguste Comte, Max Weber, Karl Marx* and *Emile Durkheim* were influential. Taking these theorists together, their theories have contributed to the most dominant sociological paradigm over the last hundred and fifty years. The underlying metaphors of the paradigm are biological and mechanical ones that describe the social world particularly well. These metaphors have significant explanatory power; they posit the idea that organisations and society are viewed as objects that are 'functional' in predetermined ways. Moreover, if they become 'dysfunctional' they are able to be 'fixed' or 'realigned'. The paradigm seeks to provide an understanding and explanation of the maintenance of the status Quo, social order, consensus, social integration, solidarity and 'need satisfaction' and actuality. 'Systems Theory' is a development of the structural-functionalist perspective. Functionalism has been influential in the United States with the work of Parsons (1937), he theorised that not organisations, but societies could be fixed or modified to the benefit of individuals in society.

Related to organisational analysis, culture as a focus is particularly well covered within the literature that draws upon a functionalist perspective (Simon, 1957; Drucker, 1982, 1985; Peters and Waterman, 1982). Again, as the functional-

structural argument goes, if an organisation is struggling or languishing, management can encourage the adoption of new cultural mores and norms that will lead to an improvement in performance or motivation. This may be a little far fetched, but what makes this so attractive is that it suggests and reinforces the orthodox, managerialist view that management can influence and control the destiny of the organisation.

### **Evaluation and critique**

In terms of evaluation, the paradigms are not equal in their level of explanation power for organisational analysis, but all tell us something about the nature of organisations. Differences arise out of the individual researcher's alignment and sympathy for a particular paradigm; one paradigm resonates more than the others. Such an evaluation cannot be satisfactorily previewed in this dissertation. Only a brief discussion will be attempted. It would be accurate to suggest that both functional and radical structuralist paradigms advocate over-arching theories and solutions for social and organisational ills. For instance, within the functionalist paradigm, commercial organisations require some degree of organising bureaucracy and structure that records activity and exchange to be able to function (Weber, 1914: Parsons, 1951: Merton, 1957). With functionalism some sociologists argue that structure is created by humans and others argue the opposite; therefore, if structure does affect the way in which individuals act and work, then it seems there is cul-de-sac effect at play with little hope of moving beyond this structure/agency dualism. Giddens (1984) has attempted to bridge this dualism with the concept of 'structuration' which Parker explains as 'the process of people making structures that make people' (ibid: 93). One is left asking whether structure/agency is two sides of the same coin or poles apart.

Perhaps, structure/agency is two sides of the same coin, when compared to other couplets such as determinism/voluntarism.

The radical structuralist paradigm, in particular, articulates a worldview where society generates tensions between class and capital relations over resources and the distribution of wealth. Radical structuralists identify power structures that dominate and oppress, and argue this is crucial to explaining and understanding organisational analysis. Like functionalism, radical structuralism tends to offer grand theories of society. Increasingly, societies and organisations throughout the world are too diverse and heterogeneous to be covered by some grand narrative. Finally, it denies the willingness of people to work together and cooperate for a common goal, even when people are conscious of class differences. However well meaning, overarching teleological rational explanations for the way society and organisations operate have been found to be wanting by post-structuralist critique; for example, Parker in particular identified Parsonian functionalism as 'straw targets, tattered from years from years of critique' (1993: 207).

Both the Interpretivist and Radical Humanist paradigm focuses in varying degrees on the individual and action as an extension of identity. Perhaps, the radical humanist paradigm identifies the levers and microphysics of power (Foucault: 1976: 1980) as a way of showing how human interaction is explained, whereas, the interpretivist paradigm emphasises the informal rather than the formal. I would argue that both paradigms are not the most suited for setting out clear and concise strategies for organisational action. This is due in part to their focus on interpretative constructs such as identity and meaning. Although, Habermas (1989) advocates a powerful programme for social action and Gramsci

(1996) explained ideological control and power through 'hegemony' and 'common sense'. Generally, any explanation is contextualised within the local, and merely foregrounds the level complexity and heterogeneity within organisation analysis which is helpful to researchers and the organisation in question.

### **Incommensurability and silos**

As we can see in Figure One, by intersecting the two continua, Burrell and Morgan created four spaces where the paradigms are located. Kuhn first described the notion of a paradigm as 'the use of laws, theory, application, and instrumentation together- provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research' (1962: 10). Kuhn argued that operating within different paradigms generate tensions between those within and those outside the particular paradigm. He was both interested and concerned in how scientific assumptions that had produced what he called 'normal science', a progressive accumulation of knowledge, could be discredited within an instant. Kuhn called this the 'paradigm shift'. In physics, the obvious example is the fundamental difference between Newtonian and quantum physics, physicists cannot hold both assumptions of space and time simultaneously. These tensions could periodically break out into what has been described as 'paradigm wars' (Searle: 1999), although did Kuhn observed the revolutionary component is eventually ameliorated and the shift is accepted by the paradigm community.

Another one of Kuhn's concern's centred on the appropriateness of adopting and adapting natural science philosophy and approaches to the social sciences. He recognised that any attempt at mixing paradigms or communicating practice from one paradigm language to the next and crossing the boundary could be equally

difficult. For instance, in treating a person for an illness, a doctor would prescribe medicine, whereas, a shaman would perform a ritual to cure the person. These different actions are manifestations of a belief in a particular paradigm. This could have a detrimental effect on passing knowledge and understanding on between paradigms.

Recognising this in a later edition of his book (1962), Kuhn offered the notion of 'translation' as a way for communicating between scientists within different paradigms. In the absence of a shared language that neither could understand what the other was saying, one would take up the role of translator. While in Kuhn's model, the paradigm communities remain fixed and in opposition, it would appear that they eventually intercommunicate and differences become mutually resolved, after generations perhaps. The paradigms may remain distinct but the community gains an ability to work with their different languages, to communicate and to utilise their insights in a complimentary way (ibid: 203/4). This meant that in research situations, areas of study and performances of practice would be different, but what counted as knowledge, what constituted as 'good' and 'bad' practice could be translated and agreed upon. This was the translation. This sounds engaging and progressive, but as we will see, it offers the opportunity for the translation to determine or to dominate how the other paradigms learn or operate.

I would argued that one outcome of framework was to re-invigorate the 'incommensurability' debate of mixing, or not, of paradigms within research. For many researchers and theorists, advocating such mixing does not form a coherent approach to research. Burrell and Morgan argued that developments within the

paradigms should be viewed in isolation; they rejected calls for 'synthesis and mediation' and instead advocated 'paradigmatic closure'. But they asserted that what was needed was a way 'to avoid emasculation and incorporation within the functionalist problematic...this would provide a basis for their self-preservation by developing on their own account' (*ibid*: 397/8). In contrast, related to organisational analysis, Donaldson (1985) cautioned against any notion of paradigms being mutually exclusive, as Burrell and Morgan had asserted. Exclusivity really does depend on location within the paradigm. Although there is at times some permeability, certainly, it is difficult to expect someone positioned at either poles of a continuum to theoretically appreciate the other pole's perspective, for example, the atheist and the theist cannot reconcile the other's view on the existence of God. Indeed, as one explores and moves along the continuum to the intersection, the aspect of the paradigm are increasingly weakened. The integrity and tenets lose their determinacy, power and the assertion of exclusivity begins to wane, but there is a line in the sand where the core assumptions are no longer be negotiated.

In the case of Donaldson, he articulates a concern from the functionalist paradigm with a lack of consensus and progress in social science. He favours inclusivity and optimism, he does not reject incommensurability, rather, he views incommensurability as an unnecessary problem that stifles progress. Ultimately, Donaldson believes that theory should be value-free. 'If implemented it [incommensurability] would mean that the four paradigms would continue being developed in parallel' he argues, 'the literature on organizations would be 'subject to the factionalism of relativism without hope of integration' (1985: 37). Using this comment as a way to locate Donaldson in the order-conflict debate, his concern

suggests a worldview which advocates that social theorists should seek, whenever possible, to identify where their investigations can lend to generating integrated theories. Such a worldview strongly encourages theorists, to put aside their differences in pursuit of some consensual project.

Although not necessarily following Donaldson's call, some theorists have sought to bridge this perceived incommensurability by advocating various strategies for theory building (Gioia and Pitre,; Aldrich, 1992; Hassard, 1993; Willmott, 1993; Weber, 2004), the possibilities of paradigm interplay (Schultz and Hatch, 1996), or questioning the relevance of asserting incommensurability (Mingers, 1997; Clarke, 2001) and finally advocating a 'mixed-method' approach to research (Mingers, 2002). For example, even though there might be incommensurability between paradigms, 'mixing methods' is possible. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are combined by converting interview results/data or the number of utterances first into codes and then numerical values to be measured and analysed. Both are important, but they operationalise their activity in different ways.

Carter and Jackson (1991) offer a much different take. For them the paradigm is a space which creates the possibility of organisational development in that 'it serves to protect the plurality of modes of scientific enquiry from imperial aspirations from an orthodoxy whose interests are rooted in performance and control, rather than the liberation and emancipation of the individual in society' (1991: 110/1). They further contend that 'the paradigmatic model can be seen as a way of regularizing the non-orthodox interests to allow them to develop unimpeded by the weight of justification solely referring to the dominant framework' (*ibid*, 124). Again, an example is helpful, by creating a space in which to develop theory, new

ways of seeing or discussing organisations can emerge. For instance, since Carter and Jackson's comments, notions/metaphors of organisations as 'bridge' or 'theatre' have developed within the interpretative paradigm. These notions can be assessed and discussed for their insight and contributions to knowledge and ways of seeing. This is partly a result of using tools and approaches developed from within the paradigm and not imposed or forced on by another paradigm. Increasingly, very few theorists advocate some futile searches for theoretical unity and over-arching method, as Seidman has commented, 'the hope for disciplinary integration that underlines both the natural scientific and grand humanist projects seems utopian' (ibid: 159/60). With this in mind, I would argue this provides some justification for researchers and theorists that paradigms can develop without having to participate in some consensus of approach, particularly if they are not convinced of the arguments put to them.

### **Further extension**

Burrell and Morgan's book in 1979 was the first to set out such a conceptual framework, by intersecting the two major concerns in social science continua. Following this, others such as Grint (1991) and Hassard (1993) have attempted to extend the notion of a framework. Although Burrell and Morgan's paradigms maintained their analytical power, the blossoming of new sociological and organisational theories encouraged modifications to the continua. For example, Grint's organisational analysis focused on producing a topography of contemporary sociological analysis/theories of work. He developed a 'Determinist/Interpretivist' continuum and 'Technocratic/Critical' continuum to illustrate the mapping of more recent theories:

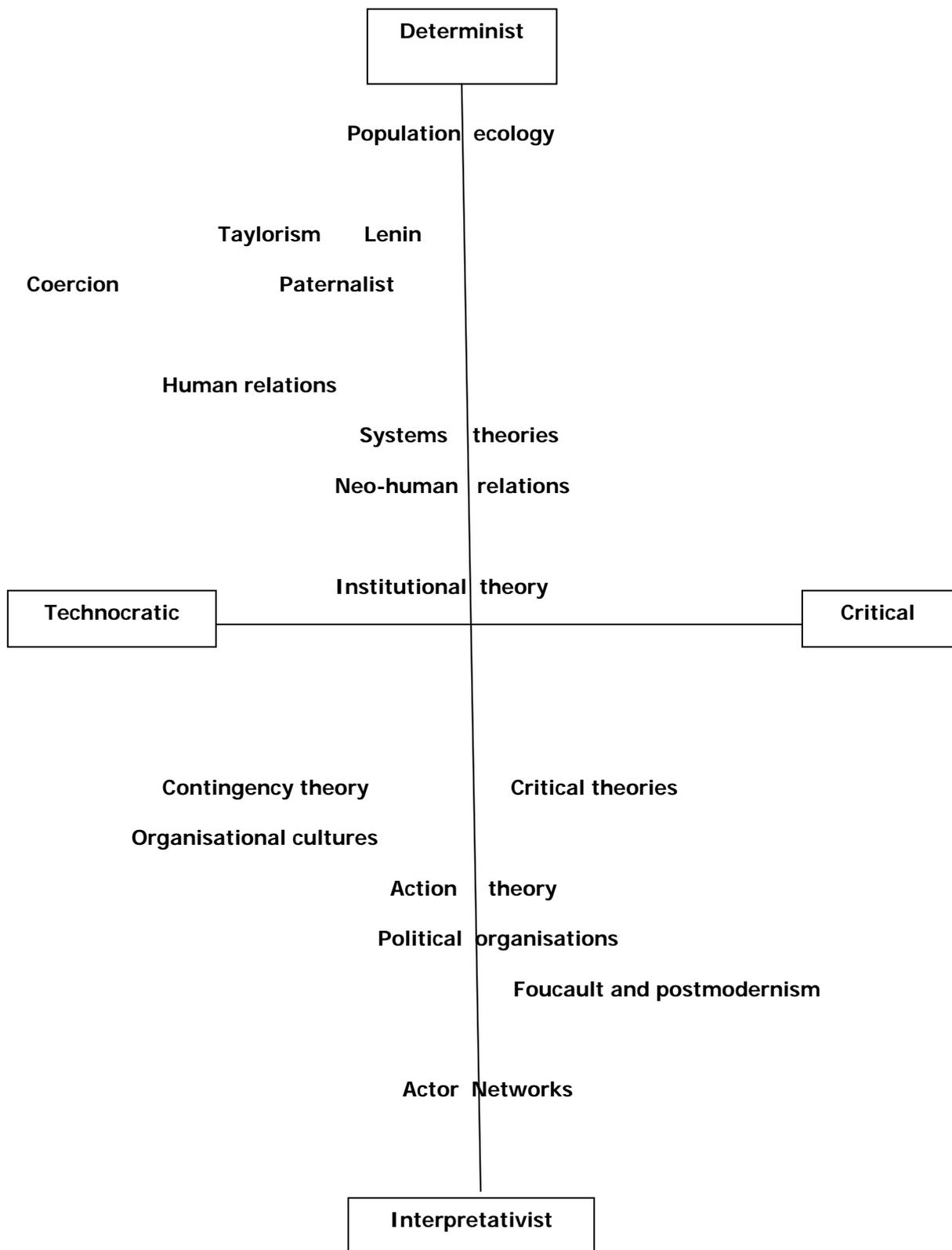


Figure 3: Grint's Framework of Contemporary Organisational Theories (page 114).

Benefitting from the passage of time and new theories, Grint elaborated poststructural and postmodern theoretical enquiries from, for instance, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, and other new theoretical developments, particularly

postmodernism and Actor Network Theory. Indeed, some of Grint's classifications have a direct lineage back to Burrell and Morgan's paradigms. For example, Systems Theories and Human Relations and can be traced back to the 'Functionalist' paradigm or 'the sociology of radical change' which created space for elements of critical theory or Foucauldian notions of the suppressed voice. Without wishing to revisit Donaldson, I would make the point that Grint's framework does locate Donaldson in the deterministic and systems theory quadrant, where the notion of 'fixing' society or an organisation is possible and desirable.

Grint's framework, underlines the seminal nature of Burrell and Morgan's original work; the paradigm concept encouraged the ability for theoretical development to take place within existing spaces. The temptation is to compare and critique both Burrell and Morgan's and Grint's frameworks, but I would argue such an exercise is likely to be distracting for this discussion. Rather, by acknowledging differences and then grappling with both frameworks, we begin to fully appreciate the complexity and inevitable contradictions. It is not so much that interesting points for discussion emerge as some intellectual indulgence, but it is challenging research issues which emerge that concern me as I embark on my research.

### **My concerns**

As we have seen, Burrell and Morgan's framework has received considerable critical attention reflecting a level of respect for their work. The focus on paradigms represents a degree of clarity and structure and has given researchers a means to position themselves coherently, and clearly defines assumptions and approaches to research. Grint's contemporary organisational theories and

mappings further extended the theoretical space. In such a context, I would position myself thus with the Radical Humanist paradigm. Radical humanism is by far the most liberating of all the four paradigms for theoretical and methodological development. I recognise that each paradigm have some tenets that can reveal aspects of organisational life and in so doing inform any organisational discussion. For instance, that structure and action work both ways on the individual and organisation level. What is important within the paradigm is the emphasis on the subjective perspective of argument, where individual identity is central to a person's performances and motivations, and that subject positions emerge from a process of knowing and meaning that is contextualised and changeable within the organisation. The paradigm values the explanatory power of these constructs, and not in apparent formal structures or attempts at universal explanations or encouraging consensus or cohesion. Finally, radical humanism operationalises these constructs to reveal and emphasise power relations which exist between individuals and groups by focusing on their local context.

Without stating the blatantly obvious, the issue of incommensurability is important to research practice as it reminds researchers, sometimes uncomfortably so, that theory-method is not value free; politics are never far from the surface. It is a recurring issue for this researcher. I recognise there is a tension between working within one paradigm and appreciating the contributions from other ones. So much so that I have attempted to offer some small contribution to this debate (Dyer, 2008). On the one hand, not being distracted by other arguments allows researchers in silos to focus and develop theories as constructs and practice. However, although I have no evidence, my concern is the theories become ever more distilled and inward looking, with the potential for internal theory warfare

within the paradigm taking place between theorists. This is potentially just as unhelpful and divisive as inter-paradigm warfare. On the other hand, ignoring or simply being oblivious to other paradigms, unless you evaluate reflexivity as part of social constructionism, one can never really examine one's own paradigm; periodic exposure to other ways of seeing is most welcome.

Whilst it is easy to reflect on theory-method as an intellectual exercise to the test is to 'get their hands dirty' doing research. This is pertinent as Matthews has observed 'the psychology of research rarely ever matches the critical rationalist logic of research' (2006: 124). Therefore, my concerns will be examined throughout this dissertation by putting theory-method and myself to work reflexively in this organisational analysis.

As we will see in the dissertation, the use of technology is central to the research. The next chapter will preview the Social Construction of Technology and how this might assist in the field.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Theoretical approach: Social Construction of Technology**

Now that an account of the importance of theory-method has been set out, this chapter discussion will proceed to examine the linkages and tensions between Social Construction of Technology (SCOT) and Actor Network Theory (ANT). However, the primary focus of this discussion is on SCOT and how a stabilisation of technology by user groups is achieved through co-construction.

#### **'Paradox of technology'**

Technology in the broad sense has been a feature of human society since the early Neolithic period. Innovation and adaptation of technology is a recurring feature of human history. We are now in the Computer Age where technology and technological innovation, be it computer hardware or software, the photocopier or printer, has the capacity to liberate or frustrate us by emphasising our individual acumen, skills or inadequacies. This is something that Kaplinsky has referred to the 'paradox of technology' (1984: 170). Increasingly, sociological interest focuses on the interaction of technology in social and organisational practice. Technology has multiple uses, meanings and interpretations for user groups, publics and scholars. For the most part in the context of this dissertation, technology means artefacts that are overwhelmingly electronic that are deployed by a certain user group, the Editorial Team, for the alleged benefit of other user groups; reviewers, authors, general readers.

#### **Theoretical developments**

Over the last five decades, there has been a blossoming scholarly interest in the interaction and development of technology in organisational analysis. Much of this has centred on the 'opening of the black box' of technology. Grint and Woolgar (1997) have set out a genealogy of theories under the 'umbrella' of the 'sociology of scientific knowledge' (SSK). A central principle is that science is 'socially shaped'. This means that there are various branches of focus in SSK; 'socially constructed' character of scientific knowledge (Collins, 1985; Latour and Woolgar, 1986) which gave rise to social constructivist approaches to technology (Grint and Woolgar, 1992; Woolgar, 1985) which included SCOT (Bijker et al 1987); the social shaping of technology (Edge, 1988; MacKenzie, 1991; MacKenzie and Wajcman, 1985) and finally the Rubric of Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Bijker and Law, 1992; Callon, 1986; Latour, 1987, 1988; Law, 1991) (1997: 19). Taken together, these branches of SSK all emphasise in differing ways how technology influences the social. This influence can be in the form of technology being deployed by policy makers or other groups to act politically. For instance, the height of bridges on the 'Long Island Parkway' were used to deter certain social groups from travelling along it on buses (Winner: 1999) or in the case of this dissertation, utilising freely available publishing software on the internet for the purpose of publishing undergraduate work.

### **Social Construction of Technology (SCOT):**

Perhaps the most lucid exposition of SCOT is Pinch and Bijker's (1987) account of how the common 'safety' bicycle (Lawson's bicyclette) design became accepted by the 'relevant user groups'. Relevant user groups are collections of people who use or are directly affected by technological artefacts for work and leisure. The artefacts have meaning for the user groups and this shapes the way in which they

view the artefact. To be sure, evolution in terms of design was important, but it was how one particular feature, the pneumatic rubber tyre and its significant effect on the speed at which the bicycle could go was the deciding factor. However, Pinch and Bijker set out the 'closure' of the debate was achieved by the user groups. First, 'Rhetorical closure' pacified the 'safety controversy' by declaring the high-wheeler bicycle 'safe' even though engineers knew this was not the case. Second, 'Closure by Redefinition of the Problem' centred on the nullifying the opposition of certain user groups; the argument was not that the tyre was an anti-vibration device, but it was 'the meaning of the air tyre was translated to constitute a solution to quite another problem...how to go as fast as possible (1999: 44-46). SCOT theory suggests that the character of the technological artefact is most contingent during the design process and becomes progressively less so as negotiations are closed off, until some final form of the artefact gains general acceptance (*ibid.*: 19). This process is known as 'interpretive flexibility', it means that 'relevant user groups' (Bijker and Pinch: 1989) have different concepts of what constitutes a technology as 'working'. So, it is evident that reframing the issues of concern will eventually lead to acceptance by the relevant user groups. Although, this might suggest that an element of power relations (Foucault: 1980) has not been fully appreciated in the way in which this 'closure' takes place. However, as we will see below, there are other tenets of SCOT which add further insight to 'closure'.

As the phrase suggests 'social constructivism' (SC) according to Grint and Woolgar 'technology does not have any influence which can be gauged independent of human interpretation...technology is constructed through human interpretation'. They use the example of 'facts' not speaking or exist independently of themselves,

they have been created by some agency, technology does not exist independently outside human interpretation (1997: 10). This is perhaps the most important distinction between SCOT and ANT; this is because SC contends that reality is constructed by language that creates meaning and interpretation. Further, as MacKenzie has noted, there is often a view that SC 'is prone to the misconception that there was nothing real or obdurate about what was constructed' (1999:18).

SCOT takes place throughout the entire process of mediation between user groups. Schot and de la Bruheze are particularly interested in the relationship between producer and consumer, because it is illustrative of the process. Schot and de la Bruheze articulate mediation as 'a process of mutual articulation and alignment, product characteristics, the use, the user, and the user's demands become defined, constructed, and linked' (2003:230). They further identify the mediation process of design into three categories of user; projected users; real users and represented users (ibid: 235). This is mediation process is vital in reaching 'stabilisation' of the technological artefact.

Schot and de la Bruheze's discussion is helpful in outlining the process of 'stabilisation' where the artefact is accepted by the relevant user groups. The notion of the 'user' is central to SCOT as it identifies the groups that are included or excluded within the process of stabilisation. If one particular group, in this case the 'projected users', is not consulted or incorporated into the process, this potentially extends the duration between production or being 'brought to market' and reduces the chance of gaining acceptance with that 'projected user' group. In addition, it also arouses suspicion from the user group as to why they were not consulted in the beginning. Pinch (2003) extends the interest in 'producer and consumer' by focusing on the role of salespeople and marketers in the

development of technology. According to Pinch, field sellers, due to their close proximity to users are the first to recognise the 'domestication of technology' (2003: 248). This 'domestication of technology' is another indication of the stabilisation and closure process. There is of course the possibility for extensions of use with the technological artefacts by users.

## **Critique**

SCOT is not without criticism. Although Kline and Pinch (1999) acknowledge its progression as a theory, weaknesses remain. They identify three in particular. Originally the focus was on the design stage of technologies, they asked 'how and in what circumstances the 'black box' of technology could be reopened as it was taken up by different social groups' (1999: 114), the purpose of the 'black box' metaphor relates to how to better understand the process of action and acceptance by user groups. The second criticism centres upon the lack of comment about 'the social structure and power relations within which technological development takes place', and finally, 'the neglect of the reciprocal relationship between artefacts and social groups' (*ibid*: 114). Indeed, from an ANT perspective, Akrich extends this to contend that SC denies the obduracy of objects and assumes that only people can have the status of actors (1992: 206). Taking these criticisms together, we can see a distinction between 'non-human' influence not being taken into account in the social realm, the interactions between user groups not dwelling on power relations or the micro-physics of power on the local (Foucault: 1980, 1997). In both cases, these are important omissions from any analysis. Any socially constructed analysis must at least recognise that power, however conceived, articulated or wielded, affects the interaction between user groups. The other criticism of not acknowledging the implicit or explicit influence

of artefacts in analysis is perhaps less convincing and justified, incorporation of the technology is a central tenet of SCOT, granted it is not as integral as in ANT, but the artefact is part of the analysis none the less.

### **Actor Network Theory**

In contrast to SCOT, ANT makes no distinction between the human and the non-human; networks are composed of both kinds of actors. Indeed 'actants' is the correct description for the human and non-human actor. They form a 'seamless web' of the network (Hughes: 1979). According to Grint and Woolgar, one of ANT's major tenets is that 'analytical divisions between the social and the technical explicitly prohibited' (1997: 28). Whereas, Law and Bijker assert a similar point in terms of their analysis; they do not wish to fall into 'old distinctions between the social, the technical and cultural (1997: 291). As there is no distinction, Doolin and Lowe emphasise ANT's ability, particularly in information systems, to generate 'detailed and contextual empirical Knowledge' (2002: 69). As the human and non-human are equally acknowledged actors, the theory has power, not because there is equality, but because there is inclusion and recognition of the influence on the other. The vocabulary below will illustrate the point.

ANT has its own vocabulary for particular processes. For the purposes of clarification, Akrich and Latour, provide some explanation for ANT terms. A 'setting' (or 'set-up') either human or non-human 'is the object of analysis', these settings have competences and enact performances that are distributed; an 'actant' is whatever acts or shifts actions...the actant is endowed with competences...and an actor is an actant endowed with a character. 'Inscription' is generally carried out by engineers and designers and 'de-description' is the opposite

and only happens in a 'crisis'. The 'Program' is the collection of actions by specific actors within process. Latour uses the example of a large heavy weight being attached to hotel keys, in the hope that guests comply with the verbal request that they hand in the keys when they leave the hotel (1997: 259-261). The 'Anti-program' is the opposite and a reaction of visible and invisible users against the 'program'. Latour makes some distinctions between actants, the longer the list of the actants components the more active it is. The more the actant appears as being composed of different elements from version to version, the less stable its essence. Conversely, the shorter the list, the less important the actor and the more diversity it encounters among different actors it meets, or the more difficult it is to open its black box, the more coherent and firm it is (2000: 48). This can be confusing, but essentially, the non-human actant takes on anthropomorphic qualities and thereby renders influence on the social.

'Translation' is the outcome of what has been articulated above, namely the actor network itself. Woolgar and Grint describe four distinct stages in the 'translation' of the network from one to the next. First, 'problematization' requires identifying and persuading the key actors that their solution to their problem lies with the enrollers. Second, *intéressment* involves the gradual dissolution of their existing networks and their replacement by a new network created by the enrollers. Third, the stage of 'enrolment' proper occurs through coercion, seduction, or consent, thereby the new network achieves a solid identity. Finally, the alliance is 'mobilised' to represent an even larger network of absent identities (1997: 28). Also, Latour adds further explanation by noting that whilst the process of translation takes place, the object is 'clamped' (2003: 174). This clamping is

essential and enables the translation to take place, after this, the object is then ready to move within the extended network.

### **Critique**

With no distinction between the human and non-human this inevitability causes challenges against acceptance. Oudshoorn and Pinch have noted that some feminist theorists have criticised ANT for an 'executive approach' which excludes certain user groups in the use and development of technology. To give voice, the term 'implicated actor' was introduced to include invisible actors/users and to make explicit power relations 'in the analysis of user-expert relations' (2003: 6). Further, Oudshoorn and Pinch have also noted, what is in effect a 'Hobson's choice', users 'either accept or reject the designer's intended use and meaning of technological objects' (ibid: 16). As they also note, this does not fully capture the dynamic and fluid way in which technologies are extended and adapted by users to create new uses.

Similar to the critiques of SCOT, power relations and domination are not part of ANT repertoire. Instead of indicating 'control', ANT language postulates that an actant is either 'quietened' or 'amplified' in the process of translation. In the absence of explicit power, certainly, the ability to inscribe or exclude capabilities into a technology would suggest a power component for an actant. Ultimately, this directly affects the usage of the technology which leaves a trace of that original power relationship.

### **Human-machine reconfigurations**

To provide an example of how co-construction of technology can be achieved, some background discussion would be helpful. For human-machine interaction

actions to take place there is typically a set of assumptions within the process. Suchman (2007) provides such an outline,

*'Machines behave with a set of resources provided by "its" situation, the user in accordance with the resources of hers...the situation of the user comprises preconditions about the nature of the machine and the operations required to use it, combined with the moment-by-moment interpretations of evidence found in and through the actual course of its use...the intersection of the situations of the user and machine is the locus both for successful exploitation of mutually available resources and for the problems of understanding that arises out of the disparity of their respective situations' (2007: 126).*

Essentially for co-construction to take place between user groups, the above quote sets out one of the pre-requisites for stability. As we will see in the 'fieldwork and analysis' chapter, users must be content with the resources offered by the technology, in this case, the online journal system (OJS). The online help resources were inscribed in the OJS significantly and therefore prejudice or favour its success. This is a curious comment given the OJS is designed to help people publish their work. In the design process, if there is a mismatch by the designer with their perceived capabilities of the user and the actual ability of the user, then there will be a 'gap of execution' (Latour: 1997). In effect, there is a loss of potential power in the design or artefact. It can also indicate the underlying assumptions about the user groups by the designers.

## **Co-construction**

Essentially, co-construction is a process where the design of the technical artefact or the program is accepted by a majority of users within the relevant user groups. At this point, the technology or the design is said to have achieved stability or closure. However, co-construction is as much about the creation of identity and meaning as it is about the acceptance of technology by the relevant user groups. This can be demonstrated by the development of the electric shaver for both males and females, this development enforced the dominant gender identities through design (Van Oost: 2003). To make this chapter relevant to the dissertation, perhaps Bijker's discussion about the closure of the bicycle's safety features by the relevant user groups is helpful. There is one such moment that the researcher has identified in a later chapter. When the reader arrives at the relevant the chapter, the researcher suggests substituting or juxtaposing 'bicycle' with the '*Occasional Working Paper Series*'. This will make a distinct link between theory and an actual example of closure from the field.

### **Subjectivism and SCOT**

SCOT appears to share strong linkages with radical humanism (RH) and interpretivism on the order-conflict continuum. SCOT is partly about creating new or maintaining existing relevant user groups and re-enforcing their identities and meanings. RH acknowledges there is cohesion within sub-cultures which have their own distinct and informal identities from the mainstream ordered and formal structure. Interpretivism and subjectivity offer possibilities for negotiation around roles that fit with identities within the user groups. As we have discussed, one purpose of the user groups is to bring about closure to a technological controversy either through 'rhetoric' or 'redefinition of a problem'. These identities are crucial

in bringing closure or stabilisation about because they provide user groups with a focus and justification for action.

RH contends that within organisations there are dominant organising principles, language and culture. But below and behind the dominant culture are different group subcultures which have their own perspectives and agendas; these are not always aligned with the dominant culture or organising principles. Within organisation the subcultures jostle among each other for resources and influence. As meanings are contested this would suggest fertile ground for issues of closure to be negotiated between user groups. The process of emancipation can take place on the user groups terms provided they have sufficient resources, power and cohesion. Of course, designers that create technological artefacts or designs are often not part of the same organisation; therefore, this negotiation and adaptation by user groups takes place in isolation particularly when there is little communication between user groups and the designers.

Having established centrality of theory-method and an outline of SCOT, attention will now turn to the methodological choices. The chosen method is ethnography, as a method, ethnographer lends itself to developing rich insights from which to analyse.

## Chapter Three

### Methodological Choice

This chapter seeks set out what ethnography is and the assumptions that it brings, as well as provide a flavour of its rich traditions and approaches. In addition, it will preview some of the styles of writing as well as a positioning of the researcher in terms of style. This chapter will not discuss ethnography as practice that is addressed in the next chapter. This is because ethnography, as practice is replete with fieldwork relationships and reflexivity that would add an unnecessary degree of complexity at this point. As has been set out in the opening chapter, the researcher has concerns about how theoretical and methodological choices are experienced in the field.

Ethnography, like so many other research methods have evolved over time. In the early formative stages Boaz (1911), Malinowski (1922), Radcliff-Brown (1922), Mead (1928) and Evan-Pritchard (1940) all greatly influenced the early development of anthropology. They encouraged ethnographers not to rely on second hand accounts, but to go forth and study the field for oneself. Rosaldo has outlined four guiding principles of classical ethnography; these were based upon 'a commitment to objectivism...complicity with imperialism...a belief in monumentalism (creating a museum-like picture of the culture studied) and a belief in timelessness of the study' (1989: 31). Some anthropologists would focus upon certain aspects of a society, for instance, Radcliff-Brown (1952) sought to

reveal notions of structural functionalism in primitive societies. Other ethnographic accounts focused on the rituals, customs and hierarchies of the written about group in question. These 'realist' accounts would 'pass more-or-less objective data in a measured intellectual style that is uncontaminated by personal bias, political goals, or moral judgements' (Van Maanen, 1988, 47).

This approach to fieldwork was very much in keeping with a natural science notion of the observer as neutral and aloof. Viewed as philosophical and methodological pillars, they held sway for decades. Issues of speaking on a group's behalf centred upon providing an authentic account. The account was provided by the ethnographer, consulting with the interlocutors over the accuracy or tone was not considered important. Atkinson has commented that in his field studies of *The Nuer* (1940), Evan-Pritchard asserted 'his authoritative credentials for his text, based on his uniquely intimate knowledge of the Nuer' (1990:27). Moreover, Clifford has articulated this relatively one dimensional, one sided view derived through their fieldwork, (though not endorsing it in his practice) the authorial authority and justification for studying a particular group or tribe in the past, was to declaring to those studied "*You are there...because I was there*" (1988: 22). This suggests an unequal relationship between the two. Certainly, this could only offer a partial view for any reader. Although these accounts are often accurate at, say for instance, locating an individual within a hierarchy, what was likely to be missing was a humanistic sense of what it was like to be in that hierarchy.

### **Authority of 'being there'**

A central tenet of ethnography is establishing a right to speak about and on behalf of the field. This conferred right to speak is typically earned by an extended

period. Immersion and familiarity with the customs and rituals are acquired observation, participation and learning the language of the field. Ultimately, any ethnographic account really needs to pass the 'interlocutor' or 'native' test. This means the field must be able to recognise the descriptions and accounts the ethnographer has produced. Ideally, the accounts should be vivid and evocative, although this is not a precondition of authority as in the case of producing a 'realist' account where accuracy is paramount. If, there are discrepancies or inaccuracies these should be addressed and incorporated through discussion with the field. However, one thing to be mindful of is the possibility the account may be too vivid, too insightful; the field or interlocutor may request that revisions are made. This obviously presents a dilemma for the ethnographer in terms of ownership of the work, but in a curious way, it would suggest the account was accurate and insightful, although for a host of reasons, usually political, revisions have had to be made. Achieving a balance and insightfulness is always a challenge for the ethnographer.

### **Into the urban and professional realms**

Ethnographic study was not just confined to anthropology in exotic and far places, it could equally be found in urban settings as well. The most notable was the so called 'Chicago School' of sociology in the United States of America that emerged from the early 1920's. One of the early proponents of the Chicago School's ethos was Robert Park. Van Maanen noted his emphasis was on 'digging for data' so that the 'real story' could be told. The representation of social reality was seen as technically unproblematic once the facts had been unearthed (1988: 19). Even though the early gaze was on the dispossessed of American society, honourable as it was, the way in which their story was represented was cast from a realist

perspective that sometimes lack a depth of feeling. As the sociological interest migrated from the urban setting to fieldwork that focused upon the professions and other vocations, the influence of realism as the chosen textual style continued, as we will see this was beginning to be challenged, slowly but surely.

### **Unwelcome legacies**

According to Aull Davies, from the late 1960's a process of 'self-criticism' had gathered pace, due in part to a realisation that in some cases anthropology had been party to, and benefitted from, colonial expansion (2008: 11). Ottenberg makes a similar point (1990: 151). Moreover, it was becoming apparent that those who studied groups or tribes were, more often than not, producing accounts on behalf of their subject's lives, stories and customs. These accounts were often sanitised or bore no relation to the groups or tribes own experiences. Post-structural and feminist theory was developing powerful analytical tools for examining the short-comings of the written texts (Foucault, 1972: Derrida, 1978: Borland, 1991). Ethnographic study and practice was evolving and taking seriously such accusations and sought to address them directly. Marcus has described this as a process of 'reflexive modernization' within anthropology (1999: 11). Leading authorities such as Clifford (2003) have tried to incorporate this within his narratives. Fischer and Marcus have noted that an ethnographic approach claims a 'transparency of representation and immediacy of experience' (1986:2). This has further been developed and extended to include 'self-ethnography' of practice (Boufoy-Bastick, 2004: Hemmingson, 2008), but this is briefly discussed in the methodology chapter.

It would appear that ethnographic practice has become a 'broad church' that has come to welcome a variety of techniques and methods. As Stanton has described, ethnography is a 'methodological 'school' within which social researchers from various disciplines and traditions position themselves' (2006: 404). They are pregnant with assumptions about research. Like culture itself (Wolcott paraphrases Moerman, 1988: 56), an ethnographic approach should 'influence without being controlling' (1988: 108). For Nason and Golding, 'ethnography...is largely an act of sense making by the researcher as they focus upon the manner in which people interact and collaborate through the observable phenomena of daily life' (1998: 241). As has been discussed in the opening chapter, theory and method looms large within ethnography. This requires the positioning of oneself in practice, according to Johnson to Johnson, fieldnotes are of central importance and how one analyses them assists with locating oneself:

*'What makes joining the scientific and the humanistic traditions in anthropology so challenging a task is that like oil and water they do not mix well; every step towards scientific reliability seems inevitable to be a step away from humanistic intimacy, and the achievement of many-layered humanistic interpretations seems possible only at the expense of scientific precision'. (1990: 161).*

It appears that one must be content with the theoretical and methodological choices that are made. This researcher believes that 'humanistic interpretations' will reveal more to the reader than 'scientific precision'. Therefore, given this positioning, it is appropriate for this researcher to focus upon ecological validity within the particular field, rather than, attempting to generate reliability from the field.

According to Pole and Morrison, 'ethnography as product is a reflection of the ethnographer in terms of his or her biography, the intellectual tradition(s) that have influenced his or her approach to research and to the decisions he or she makes about the research process as it progresses' (2003: 129). Mindful of possible charges of relativism made against them, they argue that researchers who embarking on 'unrealistic searches for a version of truth which is neither available nor appropriate to the social sciences' are perhaps misguided in the purpose and objective of their research, but it would appear to them that 'if ethnography is guilty of a form of relativism then this is due to its capacity to represent the complexity of knowledge about the social world in ways which recognise that this knowledge is rarely, if ever, uncontested and certain' (ibid: 131). Of course this is the challenge of relativism, as the Greek philosopher, *Protagoras*, first articulated it by advocating that *homo mensura* 'man (or woman) is the measure of all things' (Rescher: 1993: 186), the challenge for an ethnographer-come-researcher, is to produce an account which describes the culture in question, its rituals, the variety of interactions, conversations, use of artefacts (or in this case technology) in a way that is recognisable to the people who have been the focus of the study. This is the challenge; regrettably not all accounts are as rich in their description of the events. It is not just a matter of the author's ability to write in a lucid or engaging manner, but to convey the nuance and subtlety of what has occurred from that one vantage point. And so, it is this which makes some descriptions of these social worlds more revealing.

### **Methodological power**

So what is it that ethnography, as part of a research method, can offer that other methods do less effectively or revealingly? For Van Maanen, 'ethnographies join culture and field' (1988:4). According to Allen, 'people, that is, live in cultural matrices of meaning. Those matrices are created by people, and are communicated to them (deutero-learning), not only by what they say (beliefs, concepts), but especially by what they do together' (original bracketing) (1982: 1). So, if people live within 'cultural matrices', then studying those within the field appears to be an appropriate method. Being located and connected, either physically or electronically, within the field of study is crucial to being able to evidence your immersion within those cultural matrices.

Qualitative methods, particularly ethnographic and participative observation, can legitimately claim to know about a subject (Hammersley, 1990). How this is achieved is a combination of reflection and reflexivity on ones practice, as well as an awareness of one's biases. As Johnson and Johnson, have contended, 'it is a conceit of ours, for no one-certainly not a well-trained cultural anthropologist-arrives in the field naïve and free of bias' (1990: 173). This is important to be conscious of, if one is to produce an ethnographic account that is honest about its method and approach. There is nothing inherently wrong with following a particular approach, so long as one is consistent. So, whilst in the field, one is reminded by Stake's observation that 'qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world' (2000: 449), this is a valuable comment, being a guest in a private space does not necessarily mean participants will participate with the research. Showing respect and developing trust is crucial, it is as important now as it was more than one hundred years when ethnography was in its infancy.

The purpose of this review is to perhaps identify what ethnographic approach has been adopted. Mindful of Wolcott's observation that if you do not label your work, others will (1995a: 81), it is entirely sensible for the researcher to choose the label for one's work. The label the researcher applies to their work suggests an authorial position. Of course, this may be challenged, but it at least provides a starting point for discussion. Although it is important the author accepts that once the account is given form, how it is accepted by readers is out of the author's control. With much of the research having to be conducted with one eye to the recent past, due to unforeseen circumstances, a 'retrospective' description seems appropriate.

### **Developing a style**

Van Maanen's *Tales of the Field* (1988) is most helpful in trying to locate oneself within an ethnographic style of writing. Broadly speaking, there are three genres: 'Realist'; 'Confessional' and 'Impressionist'. 'Realist tales' according to Van Maanen 'push most firmly for the authenticity of the cultural representations conveyed by the text (ibid: 45). With realist accounts the individual speaks in the third person tense, it is argued this ensures authorial authority and *gravitas*. The reader can expect an unbiased account, unfettered by subjective opinions of the author. 'Key informants' and 'participant-observation' are key phrases within realist vocabulary. With the emphasis on authenticity, method and convention, rather than, producing accounts that capture the richness of the field, one is left wondering as Van Maanen has done that 'viewed as literary creations, realist tales may not seem so very real at all (ibid: 67).

Van Maanen has noted a number of points concerning 'confessional tales'. Like the description suggests, the approach can reveal a great deal about fieldwork practice. However, such approaches require significant foregrounding of the topic and the fieldwork practices to allow the 'confessions' to be made. Not all ethnographers find an audience interested enough to read their 'confessions' (ibid, 81). Added to that, the author can be drawn into 'a black hole of introspection; the confessional is obsessed with method, not subject, and drifts toward, single-minded, abstract representation of fieldwork' (ibid, 92).

In contrast, the impressionist tale uses metaphor, phrasings and the ethnographer's recall of events to create a 'tightly focused, vibrant, exact, but necessarily imaginative rendering of fieldwork, an impressionist tale of the field results (ibid: 102). Not surprisingly, with such styles the interpretative influence features strongly in the account. The narrative must maintain its momentum or runs the risk of continuity and with its audience (ibid: 103). Of course, done well, the style maintains the readers interest, but those less adept at writing engaging fieldwork narratives are unlikely to have the same effect; regrettably, aspiration and ability are found wanting.

There is a further approach in ethnography which Van Maanen briefly mentions which is 'Critical tales'. As the title suggests, this approach focuses upon details that surround the political, social and symbolic issues of the field. These studies have tended to be informed by a Marxist perspective. They also focus upon cross-disciplinary aspects of knowledge production as legitimate areas of study. He notes there is 'little celebration of the *status quo* (or romancing of the past) to be found among them' (ibid, 130). A critical, ethnographic perspective is more likely

to begin to reveal how SCOT explains such issues as 'co-construction'. There is little detail on the stylistic conventions for crafting critical tales, so a form of hybridisation between 'confessional' and 'impressionist' will be attempted. However, as with the basic tenets of critical theory, Atkinson advises that 'sociologists (and researchers) pay close attention to their own textual practices as well as those they study (1990: 6).

In terms of adopting a radical humanist position and applying it to ethnographic method, Parker cautions against 'common attachments to the metaphors of empathy and immersion' of interpretive ethnography (2000: 70) and emphasises that 'romanticism (in the form of empathy) is tempered by a focus on the power relationships that help to constitute different senses of subjectivity' (ibid: 75). Therefore, the 'critical tale' is very much in keeping with the theoretical and methodological approaches that the researcher has committed to. This approach will assist in seeking to reveal some of the underlying research concerns issues related to the *Occasional Working Paper Series*. To be sure, there is a great deal to be aware of once the field is entered.

## Chapter Four

### Ethnography: Issues, Concerns and Practice

*This methodology chapter will focus on my research concerns related to the dissertation; how using theory-method and applying it becomes problematic when faced with the field. In the ethnography chapter, I surveyed the literature, noting it's distinguished, but controversial history, the attempts at addressing criticism and the need to develop an 'authorial voice'. My tentative understanding of ethnographic practice is to go as a researcher or participant observer and immerse myself within a culture or community. Then view their practices, rituals, language and their ways of creating meanings, and then, to produce an account of that experience as close as possible to reality, something that is recognisable to the field. As we will see, this sounds a straight-forward endeavour, but ethnography is not, I suspect, as straight-forward as I am making it sound. As Wolcott has commented 'ethnography contributes in its own way to the confusion surrounding it' (1995a: 82). Having set out in the ethnology chapter why I feel this is an appropriate method to adopt, I will provide a cursory justification for not adopting other well established methods. I will discuss my experiences of ethnography and practice and finally some of the issues that emerge.*

***Why ethnography, why not some other method?***

*I will provide a brief assessment of appropriateness and justification for not deploying other methods.*

*Stakeholder Theory is concerned with the development of legitimating and ensuring political representation and giving 'voice' (Foucault: 1982) to interested groups. Guthrie et al make a distinction in ST between an ethical (moral) branch and a positive (managerial) branch (original bracketing) (2004: 283). This infers an obligatory relationship between groups. Conflict between groups is a feature (Friedman and Miles: 2002). Not surprising, Rowley advises us of the need to take account of the 'multiple and interdependent interactions that simultaneously exist in stakeholder environments' (1997: 887). ST correctly identifies certain power and resource relationships and behaviours between groups on a human level, but in this context the theory lacks sufficient explanation of how the co-constructions of technology become stabilised. Admittedly, the OWPS project is conceived and constructed to encourage hitherto absent groups having a 'stake' or voice, but this is not the focus of the research.*

*Content Analysis would appear to be a possible contender for the favoured approach. Krippendorff has noted the interest of scholars in the content of documentary documents and texts, beginning with the German historian, Leopold von Ranke, in the 1820's. Krippendorff's approach is to identify the links between symbols and language use within the text. He defines 'Content Analyses as a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data in their context' (1980: 21). The frequency and 'unitization' (coding) of words can be measured and compared allowing, ultimately, hypothesis testing (ibid: 52). Following this, from an organisational perspective related to CA, the more*

*something is mentioned, the more important it is of interest to the research. In this case, I could identify the key words from the field, for instance, 'participation', 'inclusion' or 'technology'; these could be used to generate the quantitative comparisons that CA offers. Of course, I could use the results and go back to the field and discuss why such and such phrase or word recurs so frequently. This definition and rationale alludes to the stripping out and de-contextualising of the data. Indeed, Guthrie et al's research strategy deploys both ST and CA to inform their research. They emphasise the point by noting the limitations of differentiating between 'sentence and paragraph' and by concluding that analysis may be 'contingent on investigative context in some cases' (ibid, 290). Therefore, as much of the generated fieldwork does not focus upon publishable documents, annual financial reports and the like, this method is not likely to provide sufficient insight to the research concerns. That being said, if I was to extend the research and develop a research question, this I am sure, would form part of my method.*

*Another method might be to follow Garfinkel's (1967) example by utilised ethnographic methods into developing what he described as 'ethnomethodology'. Again the focus is to analyse conversations and interviews by identifying how respondents construct their social world in their own words. Its main contribution to research practice is to order the 'indexical expressions' of respondents. Ethnomethodology does this by 'investigation of the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organised artful practices of everyday life' (1967:11). As valuable as this may be for interview coding purposes, I do not believe this has much utility for this dissertation, given the research concern problem. Of course, I am interested in what interviewees have to say and how they say it, but, such emphasis on coding*

or 'indexical expressions' will not yield sufficient analytical leverage to warrant its adoption.

### ***Further discussion about ethnographic practice***

*Alvesson, commenting from a postmodern perspective, adds a note of caution related to practice, 'postmodernists emphasise the difficulties or impossibilities of letting fieldwork determine results. They emphasise textual strategies for writing the ethnography as a key element in research' (2002: 178). So, I am mindful of the potential difficulties of ethnographic practice, but I am also aware of the potential for creating an account that is both rich in its description and methodologically rigorous in its approach. Hammersley has noted, that identifying underlying assumptions prior to the study can omit or influence the true nature of the phenomena, 'one should begin research with minimal assumptions so as to maximise one's capacity for learning' (1990:8). As the opening chapter set out, assumptions very much inform the research process, but to allow the process to progress sufficiently to be knowing of my assumptions. Then, encourage not stifle, as much material as possible to emerge, and then begin a narrowing down and a bringing into focus the rich tapestry of insights of this field.*

*In the earlier ethnography chapter, I suggested that I would attempt to be a 'critical' ethnographer whilst incorporating elements of the 'confessional' and 'impressionist' styles of writing. Auto/ethnography is another style, as the classification suggests it hinges very much on the individual. It has attracted concerted and prolonged critique by certain enclaves within academia and it seems that these criticisms cannot be easily dismissed. With this epistemological approach, validity and reliability are problematic, it is after all one person's*

*account of an event, it begs the question "how can such an approach be taken and judged as truthful or accurate?" Some contend, such as Coffey, that researchers advocating autoethnography can succumb to 'gross-self indulgence' and narcissism (1998: 132). Conversely, others maintain the approach encourages an emancipatory quality and perspective which has countered dominant realist empirical frameworks for ethnography, Richardson (1994), Garrett and Hodkinson (1999) question whether traditional forms of evaluation are appropriate for autoethnography in any case. Holt (2003) provides a personal account of how these issues manifest themselves related to navigating the peer review process as an obligatory point of passage for autoethnographic work. He suggests that there may be a lack of judgemental guidance from within the research community, clearly frustrated at the process he became 'resolved to 'keep trying' because to admit defeat would be to accept the marginalization of both my pedagogical experiences and the method by which I chose to express them' (original emphasis, 2003: 17). I did not fully appreciate these collected comments until I began to write up the fieldnotes. My research concern is maintaining consistency in analysis and approach, particularly the use of language. This issue is addressed directly in the analysis chapter.*

### ***Achieving distance?***

*Being the project coordinator and lead editor inevitably means there is total immersion within the gamut of organisation activities in the project. Yorks and Nicolaidis, describe the potential for 'role migration' for researchers, particularly when boundaries are porous (2007: 111). On the one hand, it offers me as 'researcher' to knowingly select vignettes and moments that will assist with setting out an account, story or tale. On the other hand, this is not so helpful; in fact it is*

*highly problematic. It is crucial for me to maintain distance, not to go 'native', that ever-present trap for any ethnographer, where going native often means internalising the issues and concerns of the field. For Tedlock, ethnography involves 'an ongoing attempt to place specific encounters, events and understanding into a fuller, meaningful context' (2000: 455). Achieving this distance becomes difficult as the boundaries begin to blur.*

*Alvesson and Deetz make two crucial points about critical informed research, the first is 'a high degree of theoretical sophistication must inform critical sensitivity in organisation research in order to research cultural 'depth structures'' and the second is being aware of 'common-sense categories and dominating vocabularies carry hidden meanings that pre-structure and constrain voices and spaces for action' (2006:274). I raise this because I am both a primary producer of researcher material for the study; as project coordinator and lead editor, and at other times a simultaneous researcher and a primary producer. How do I recognise a difference between me as actor performing the role of project coordinator and lead editor within the project and then performing the role as researcher? For me as a researcher, there is at times temporal separation and distance as producer but switching between different identities is more problematic. One possible way to address this lack of conscious distance on my part, could be to adopt what Alvesson and Deetz describe as 'De-familiarisation', 'this means that we see things not as self-evident or rational but as exotic and arbitrary, not as functional and helpful but as constraining as repressive' (ibid: 275). Indeed, as I think reflect back to the opening theory-method chapter, the notion of 'common-sense' categories and assumptions are pregnant with an underlying politic; 'inclusion', 'student as producer' or 'raising the student voice'.*

### ***Reflexivity and ethnography practice***

*Perhaps a crucial aspect of reflexive practice is to acknowledge that I have a direct influence on how the research is constructed and what it claims to represent. Having surveyed the current literature, Alvesson et al offer four discourses on how reflexivity is dealt with. They posit four reflexive practices (multi-perspectives; multi-voicing; positioning and destabilizing), this can be further delineated into D-reflexivity (deconstruction, disclaiming) and R-reflexivity (reframing, reconstruction) which can be deployed for researcher practice R-reflexivity contributes to this discussion as it seeks to 'encouraging consideration of alternative views...is about developing and adding something' (2008: 494). As we will see in the analysis chapter, this D-reflexive and R-reflexive process is taking place as I comment on my experience of working in the field.*

*Latour (1988) in his discussion of reflexivity and writing scientific texts identifies a number of paradoxes: attempting to be here and there at the same time; here and there and in between managing the networks that tie the two together and finally how to steer a course between being believed too much by the readers and not enough (original emphasis) (1988: 165/6). Latour goes onto provide a powerful critique of both Derridian deconstruction and Garfinkelian ethnomethodology arguing that meta-reflexivity ultimately makes 'texts less interesting, less rich and less believable' (ibid: 169). Taking account of Latour's comments, I can appreciate there is a balancing act to achieve particularly with the writing the vignettes. Evocation and encouraging the reader to question the vignette are crucial to achieve sustained engagement with the vignette.*

## ***Interviewing and gathering experiences***

*Grounded Theory (GT) (Glaser and Strauss: 1967), builds theory from emerging themes, stories and observations. I wish to highlight some comments made about GT related to interviewing, but emphasise this research does not utilise or adopt GT in any way. For Charmaz, Grounded Theory 'offers a set of flexible strategies, not rigid prescriptions' (2000: 513), what a constructivist Grounded Theory offers is an approach which 'necessitates a relationship with respondents which they can cast their stories in their terms' (ibid: 525), this is relevant to the un-structured interviews. I very much want to hear what respondents have to say and have no wish in attempting to fit or impose theories on what they have to say. Of course, as I have mentioned, there will be only one group of interviews. This invites critique, for example, Charmaz contends 'one-shot interviewing lends itself to partial, sanitised view of experience, cleaned up for public discourse...such a structure reinforces such proclivities a respondent has to tell only the public version of the story. Researcher's sustained involvement with research participants lessens these problems' (ibid: 525). Although there are relatively few interviews in this study, there has been sustained involvement with participants which allows clarifications to be made.*

*I adopted an unstructured interview approach. For Mishler, there are two questionable assumptions with structured interviews, the first is a 'behavioural event rather than a linguistic event' and the second is a reliance on the 'stimulus-response paradigm of the experimental laboratory for conceptualization of the interview process' (1986: 10-13). These assumptions fail to take account of the interview as a discourse using a shared language. By their nature, structured interviews are limited in creating shared meaning, particularly if the language used*

*is unfamiliar to one or the other. This was the case when, I interviewed a technical/programming expert, this required some re-phrasing of questions and explanations from both of us. This re-phrasing and explanation went a long way to help me understand, or certainly to interpret, what I was being told. Although, this requires me to be aware of this process is taking place. I chose to adapt the unstructured approach for the interviews. There was no set number of questions and these were not formulated into a scripted set of questions which I had cognitively constructed.*

*Of course there has been a degree of me mulling over issues, prior to the interviews, aided by referring to my field notebook. This referring back encouraged me to distil what it was I wanted to ask. So what was verbalised by me was a product of that cognitive reflection on what it is I want to discuss. I wanted the interviewees to give me as rich an insight into their experience as possible, so I could reflect upon what it is I am researching. I would contend this is an appropriate way of capturing these rich experiences, although it does not lend itself to making accurate, direct comparisons to responses using a structured interview approach. I was not researching a large group of people with similar characteristics or attributes, but specific people within a specific trajectory within the project, therefore it was an appropriate strategy for me to adopt. However, as the dissertation progressed and in my capacity as lead editor, I had a couple of new authors who I had to help navigate the OJS. I specifically asked them if they would report on their individual experiences of using the OJS uploading software. An example illustrates the point well. One reviewer attempted accessing a blind paper on the OJS; he commented by email that "I must say that it was not very clear where the link is for the download. May be an idea to highlight it so that it is*

*a bit more obvious" (Received 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2008). As we will see, these comments help to build the co-construction of OWPS.*

### **Validity**

*As a researcher I seek to achieve a satisfactory degree of ecological validity. According to Sanjek, ethnographic validity can be assessed using three canons: theoretical candour, the ethnographer's path and fieldnote evidence (1990: 395). The first two canons have been addressed and outlined in the preceding chapter, but the latter 'fieldnote evidence' has not been discussed sufficiently I believe. I have chosen to focus upon some aspects of the translation of the fieldnotes from the spoken word using technology.*

*OWPS is technologically dependent. How does technology affect the use of fieldnotes? Does technology does affect my ability to collect insights whilst in the field? I have included two examples to assess this. The first can be seen by comparing how the technology, the laptop, the programmes (Excel) and the Dictaphone affects my approach to ethnography. I conducted an unstructured interview with Dirk Sedtke. There is a translation taking place, an enrolment of the technology, from my interview with Dirk, to the Dictaphone, to the laptop that translates the spoken words, the sighs, the pauses and the stutters into a clean relatively accurate representation of the interview event. For instance, when I was transcribing and formatting of the interview, I listened to it just to make sure it was accurate; there was two words missing, but when I tried to insert the two words into the transcript, the formatting of the entire document went to awry, so-much-so that I have had to omit the two words. Clearly, this is a constraint in*

*terms of producing a verbatim version of the interview, although, in my opinion the omissions do not detract from the spirit of the comments.*

*Being able to validate the internal accuracy, the faithfulness of the translation of an event, in this case an interview is particularly important for me to achieve. This is problematic given the overall objective of producing a faithful account and description that is co-constructed, one that can be recognised and supported by interviewees and with the field at large. Searle outlines varying degrees of validating the interview, a first level is described as a 'weak' (1999: 62), version that focuses on the comments of the interviewee the accuracy of the interview transcription. To achieve this, the face to face interview was first audio recorded, through the transcription process was a translation of that interview into a 'word' document, it was then coded and a 'Post Interview Fact Sheet' was produced. Below is an email extract from the 'key informant', Dirk Sedtke, and his subsequent comments. I use this 'realist' term knowingly, not in the realist sense where there is distance between interlocutor and interviewer. Dirk has been my main link with the field; he has been helpful, suggestive and engaged with this process and has taken an active interest throughout the research. He has been my 'field corroborator', for the interview interpretation and 'Navigating the system' vignette two. These comments focus on the accuracy of the transcript, and the analysis of the interview specifically on the research aspect, namely the influence of technology and participation:*

***"I am satisfied with the way you interpreted my answers, everything is in the way I wanted to express it. I only added 'might function' regarding the technology as a deterrent***

*(‘Interview Transcription Coding Sheet’ Minute 2). What I mean with that is: If people are as stupid as I am in computer stuff, the system might function as a deterrent! ...and I can also say that I learnt a bit again. The thing of ‘reviewing’ one’s one [sic] interview is an interesting aspect, but from the interviewers point of view I especially like this kind of validation to make sure that you really got the [sic] and finally interpret the information correctly”.*

***Extract from an email received (21/09/2008) from Dirk Sedtke***

*I would argue this approach helps to encourage engagement with Dirk; incidentally, Dirk has been interested through the research and analysis phase of the dissertation. This gives me confidence and helps to provide evidence that I am acting ethical by not misrepresenting his comments in my analysis. For a full account of my involvement with Dirk please refer to Appendices one through seven.*

### ***Ethical considerations***

*Research must take account of any possible unethical practises. Surprising reflexivity can be used to help achieve ethical practice, Hibbert et al (2008) draw on Cunliffe to emphasise the point that reflexivity as an ethical project, just as much as a technique for improving practice (Cunliffe, 2004). Being ethical in practice is important for a host of reasons, not to endanger or compromise research collaborators or confidants, and also to ensure the integrity of your work. Related to the interviews, the audio tapes will be destroyed once the dissertation has passed. Also, with the exception of Dirk Sedtke who is no longer at the university, all other individuals in the vignettes have been given alternative names.*

*Permission was sought from the people in the photographic exhibits. Finally, it is*

*important to ensure that when using material it is used in context and does not misrepresent what the person was saying. A copy of the Ethical Approval Form (Appendix eight) can be found at the end of the dissertation.*

### ***Boundaries, fieldnotes and selectivity***

*A key question related to the multi-site, itinerant ethnography aspect is where the boundary from one location or moment to another is drawn. Some of the locations are more readily identified, for instance, the workshop is straight-forward. The specific date confined it to a specific time and space; 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2008. Another one is 1<sup>st</sup> August, during an 'uploading process' with an author. These are moments or events that are selected and bounded by me for two reasons. First, the research is a longitudinal study; therefore, there is a great deal to select from, so drilling down into the moment is preferable for the analysis. Both moments are sufficiently rich enough to illustrate both the field in terms of users and how co-construction is achieved. Second, by selecting these rich moments, it allows me to offer a description of events, from there, I can analyse my style of authorial voice and assumptions.*

*Selectivity is crucial to any fieldwork. The selections of material taken from the data sets that I make indicate many of my underlying assumptions. Wolcott advises with descriptively based research, the objective is not to get as much data as possible but 'to try to get rid of as much extraneous data as possible, so that the corpus of data we actually deal with is manageable' (1995b: 202). This was pertinent as the research offered all manner of data sets from which to select from. To assist with this, apart from observation and the perspective it may*

*reveal, a key purpose of fieldwork is recognising something of significance has been observed even 'potential significance-has been observed' (ibid:163).*

*In addition to the field note exhibits, I have included some photographs of me performing my role as project coordinator. When including photographs from the field is always problematic. There is often a suspicion that the photo is staged for the camera. Although there is no accompanying text or comment, one particular photo of Franz Boas, an exalted anthropologist, is pictured holding up a large sheet as a backdrop, while a woman spins yarn makes the point the point very well (Clifford, 1988: 186). As Ball and Smith caution against the notion of an arbitrary and independent picture, they warn "people, not cameras, take pictures" (2001: 305). The possibility of a constructed, contrived image is always a strong possibility. However, the photos exhibits in this dissertation were taken by three different photographers and at different times throughout the year. They are included to show the peripheral boundary which the OWPS extends to. I have also included a copy of some time I spent with the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Scheme (Appendix nine). On a light hearted note, in exhibit six, I am pictured preparing materials for the group sessions at the July workshop, if the photo would have been staged, there is no way that I would be displaying my very thin patch of hair on my head!*

*Now that I have further discussed ethnographic practice, it is appropriate to turn to the small matter of analysis. Two 'moments' have been selected to illustrate how the theory, practice and method are deployed for analysis.*

## Chapter Five

### Overview of *The Occasional Working Paper Series (OWPS)*

The preceding chapters have linked theory-method, and practice. This chapter concerns' itself with foregrounding the research context by introducing the field. In this chapter I will not offer any analysis. I merely seek to describe and preview as neutrally as possible certain aspects of the project that became my site.

#### Relevance to organisational analysis

At a broad level, the use of technology in communication, cooperation and engagement have identified adaptation and learning as key issues for organisations as they deal with increasing levels of complexity (Axelrod, 1997a, 1997b, 2000; Axelrod and Cohen, 1999). The Occasional Working Paper Series is a student-led, peer-reviewed online journal. Its relevance to organisational analysis is that it is part of emerging scholarly interest in online student journals and institutional repositories that seeks to highlight an institutions work (Kennan and Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2007; Koohang *et al*, 2008). Traditionally, academics and MRes Dissertation on SCOT and the mundanity of work, 2008

lecturers have been the sole producers of academic research output. As a group of organisational actors, undergraduate, and to a lesser extent postgraduate students' have almost been absent from working on peer-review publications. OWPS is an initiative that is part of a wider agenda that seeks to redress this imbalance.

### **Background of the topic**

The OWPS is the University of Lincoln's, Faculty of Business and Law's attempt at producing a student-led working paper series. It follows other universities initiatives at encouraging the 'in-house' publication of student work. The ethos is part of a much wider radical project for action, imbued with a subtle, yet powerful political rhetoric. *'Inclusion'*, *'participation'*, *'engagement'*, *'students as producers'* and *'raising the student voice'* are the chosen words, phrases and organising principles of the field. The underlying assumption of such initiatives is students are viewed as 'producers', rather than, 'consumers'; the students are not viewed as vessels to be filled, but a creators of knowledge. In keeping with the radical humanist tradition, this movement like many others has to enter into the 'cut and thrust' of institutional politics to make itself heard and to secure resources.

### **Areas of field interest**

I entered the field with three broad points of interest. These are based on my radical humanist and interpretative interests. These were as follows:

- What sorts of tasks are taking place and are they stimulating?
- Are user relevant user groups actually getting involved and does this suggest that co-construction is taking place?

- Is there genuine involvement of students in the project or is it mere rhetoric on the part of Editorial Team?

Academic institutions are not the only interested body in developing research capabilities of undergraduates; government agencies have a keen interest to. As Waite and Davis have commented, the 'United Kingdom government priorities have placed an increasing emphasis on the need to develop the key skills of inquiry and working with others' (2006: 403). This fits well with a research informed learning ethos and no doubt helps to justify an institutions *raison d'être*. However, this approach has drawn some criticism from academics. Willison and O' Regan contends that 'providing undergraduate students with research experience has been asserted as a way of reinventing university education. This assertion lacks both substantial empirical evidence and a coherent theoretical framework' (2007: 393). Perhaps, these criticisms are unsurprising given the approach is still in its infancy. There is circularity to this, for such initiatives to have any chance of success, both lecturers and students need to be research active, to inform their lecturing and for students to develop research and critical skills. These comments do however, begin to indicate some of the wider issues, the politics and agendas that circulate and challenge such initiatives.

For the proponents, the original idea was to create a vehicle for encouraging staff-student collaborations or student work that is of a publishable standard. The purpose of the 'working' paper is to have a piece of work that has gone through the blind peer-review process. The work is of an intermediate stage of readiness for publication, that is to say it is of sufficient quality in terms of rigor or relevance, or both, to be submitted to more senior academic journals in the

future, should the author wish. The papers are published occasionally in a series once sufficient papers have been processed. These papers are uploaded using freely available online software in the form of the Open Journal System (OJS).

Authors retain copyright but agree to make the paper freely available on the webpage. Also, the authors are free to publish the paper simultaneously elsewhere. Typically, people that contribute papers are undergraduates and post-graduates. The reasons these authors offer their papers can only be speculated on, this is not an exhaustive list, but reasons alter as they : develop their writing skills; become familiar with a more academic 'review' process; their lecturer suggests they submit their paper or to increase their chances of employment by strengthening their Curriculum Vitae.

### **OWPS organisation**

There is a small group called the 'Editorial Team' (ET) who runs the OWPS voluntarily. The role of the ET members is to assign papers to reviewers. At present the ET is comprised of Project Leader, a Co-ordinator and one student reviewer. Currently, OWPS draws on twenty-one reviewers and one external advisor: four student reviewers; three student/lecturers; ten lecturers; two external reviewers and two university staff. At the time of writing OWPS had eleven papers under review and with a further five being prepared for submission.

### **The project**

The central aim of the project is to blur boundaries between undergraduate and postgraduate study and create opportunities for showcasing student work. The project has been in existence since December 2007 where it successfully attracted

funding from the University of Lincoln's *Centre for Education Research and Development* (CERD) for twelve months, however, it is envisaged the project will have a trajectory that lasts much longer.

The objectives set out below are a sample taken from the original funding proposal. There are also emergent objectives that add further complexity to the project and its subsequent network. They also indicate the type of keywords that inform the language of inclusion, participation and engagement:

#### **Objectives of the project:**

- To encourage student and staff collaboration in transferring class-based learning/research into an intermediate stage of publication.
- Provide mentoring opportunities between editorial board members within and across departments.
- To link into the idea of a student-led on-line journal (currently being developed across the university).
- To build teaching and learning research capabilities and develop a community of staff and students in the production of knowledge.
- Encourage cross-faculty collaboration.
- To challenge traditional distinctions between undergraduate and postgraduate experiences.
- To raise the profile externally and internally of the universities activities in teaching and learning research.

#### **Emergent objectives from the OWPS project**

- Developing business and community links, which may encourage new research opportunities.
- Act as a marketing vehicle for attracting potential students to the university.
- Provide staff and students with the experience of reviewing and showcasing excellent and celebrated work.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop their individual CVs.

These emergent objectives also offer the possibility to further extend the network of user groups that OWPS is connected to.

### **Technological influence**

The project is predominantly computer and technologically based. This can be demonstrated by the photographs taken in the field, they illustrate the ubiquitous nature of technology in the project. Where there is a computer terminal with internet access, OWPS can be accessed. In fact it is hard to imagine how OWPS could operate without the internet.

### **Timeline of development**

To assist with the discussion it would be sensible to set out two distinct periods of development of the OWPS using computer technology: Pre Workshop Format (PWF) and Post Workshop Open Format (PWOFF). These are crucial to this discussion. There have been two platforms for developing and constructing, one internal creation emerging from the university's Computer Services (CS) department and the other from the 'open-source' (OS) movement which has collaboratively built an 'Open Journal System' (OJS) for universities and novice

enthusiasts to use and develop. As we will see, this distinction between the two phases of development is crucial to understanding the background to this dissertation.

Pre Workshop Format (PWF)	Post Workshop Open Format (PWOFF)
December 2007 to July 2nd	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 2008 to date
Developed by the University of Lincoln's Computers Services department	Developed by a group of American universities
Available through the university of Lincoln's public accessible portal	Available through the open source technology platform

Figure Five: Developmental Timeline of the OWPS delivery platform

The PWOFF has simultaneously strengthened the OWPS with enhanced 'self-management' capabilities in the form of triggered emails to user groups, and yet it has de-humanised the submission and review process.

### **Participation that is broadly defined**

'Participation' is central to the concerns the field. Participation as a concept is well served by the literature and not surprisingly it is can be viewed from many perspectives. From a radical humanist perspective, 'participation' is a laudable concept that suggests empowerment; however, it comes with a certain caveat. For instance, participation does not just happen, it has to be developed, protected and maintained, power relations feature strongly, and not everyone has the same view of what participation means. The way this is interpreted by users is different as we have seen in chapter two.

*From this point on the researcher will refer to himself in the first person tense and the text will be italicised.*

### ***Shaping my role***

*The idea of a student journal was suggested by a student some years back which Professor Carole Brooke has since championed. My involvement began when I started the Master of Research degree in September 2007, Carole invited me to participate and help develop the project. My participation began with assisting with successfully drafting and tendering for a portion of the 'seed' money in CERD's 'Further Educational Development' fund. I was given the role 'Project Coordinator'. Interestingly, for me at least, the role did not become 'real' or at least me conceiving the job as having to be performed until I was given specially printed 'Business Cards'. These have become part of establishing my identity within the OWPS and the wider university community. The cards are a physical object, rather than a technological one, that indicates my positional legitimacy and authority to speak on behalf of the project. My electronic and technological legitimacy is indicated, maintained and supported by the assigning of a university 'staff email account'. This is particularly important when contacting both internal university people and external collaborators for the first time, especially when no physical business card can be offered or exchanged.*

*Over a period of time, the OWPS has developed from something that I conceived as being simple to achieve in terms of delivery, but has developed into something much complex with an identity all of its own as users co-construct it. My position has evolved to include the role of 'Lead Editor' something that I had not envisaged, but one that I am comfortable with. As I will outline later, this role requires me to assume certain responsibilities as a 'gatekeeper' or what Latour has highlighted as an 'Obligatory Point of Passage' (OPP) (1992: 234) for authors to have to pass through to have their papers accepted. I speak often on behalf of the project in terms of searching for additional sources of funding, encouraging new*

*and existing authors to submit papers or identify new reviewers. Also, the OWPS seeks to develop links with outside business and third sector organisations in the hope of creating future research opportunities.*

*By sketching out this brief history of the project and outlining of my emerging role, I hope this affords me some latitude to comment on the field. The next chapter deals directly with my research concerns.*

## **Chapter Six:**

### **Fieldwork and Analysis**

*In this chapter I will bring together the discussions from the previous chapters. I have shown how theory-method informs practice but is problematic. Informed by Burrell and Morgan's (1979) radical change-regulation and subjective-objective continuums, I located myself within a more subjective and radical humanist/interpretivist paradigm. I explained that how Social Construction of Technology and Actor Network Theory are similar but slightly different in their perspectives on agency between the human and non-human. By using Pinch and Bijker (1999) I demonstrated that co-construction takes place by 'closure' between relevant user groups by either 'Rhetorical closure' or 'Closure by Redefinition of the Problem'. Either way power-relations circulates to a degree by an ability to define or close the problem. By drawing on ethnography's rich and illustrious literature, method and stylistic possibilities (Van Maanen: 1988), I will be able to*

*reveal and then examine selected insights from the field. For this, I will attempt to write in a hybridised 'confessional, impressionist and critical' style. The background details of OWPS have been set out which add context to the dissertation. I noted that OWPS is part of a wider movement that champions the 'student as producer' and that however noble this may be, this is political in intent. As with any study, boundaries have to be set, justifications have to be made so that the selected material can be properly discussed and evaluated. Inevitably, this leads to deselected material; it can be a challenge and distressing at times any the researcher as potentially fruitful lines of inquiry are dropped.*

*This analysis chapter will discuss my research concerns; specifically, how consistent can I be with applying theory-method to practice. My intension is that what is selected has analytical purchase and reveals the tensions and challenges of producing an ethnographic account that is informed by theory. I have three other interests separate from my research concerns. My field interests have arisen because OWPS has a definite purpose to its activity. Therefore, it is appropriate that I offer some discussion of this. The interests are as follows:*

- What sorts of tasks are taking place and are they stimulating?*
- Are relevant user groups actually getting involved and does this suggest that co-construction is taking place?*
- Is there genuine involvement of students in the project or is it mere rhetoric on the part of Editorial Team?*

*The chapter is structured as follows, there are two vignettes taken from the field which I then discuss. These comments and discussion is then followed by a discussion about my field interests in turn. Finally, some final thoughts on this chapter are set out.*

## ***Writing ethnography***

*You cannot be an ethnographer without writing ethnography. This skill has to be developed and the all important 'authorial voice' (Van Maanen: 1988) can only be has to be honed with practice. At first glance, it is straight-forward in terms of process: immerse yourself in the field, talk and interview people, participate where appropriate (and talk with people about their experiences), take fieldnotes, write those fieldnotes up and finally produce a faithful and evocative account of your experiences that provides rich descriptions and insights. Simple, sounds almost like a recipe?*

## ***Selected Vignettes***

*I have chosen to write up two vignettes from my fieldnotes to address my research concerns. Both vignettes run concurrently. The two vignettes are: 'Performing design' and 'Navigating the system'.*

### ***Vignette One: Performing design?***

***Names of individuals have been intentionally changed in this first vignette***

*Phew, that was close...*

*A lot of work had gone into getting the journal site on the portal and up in time for the workshop. Don, from Computer Services, had been a star in putting the effort to get front page and infrastructure done, I really appreciated it. There was a lot riding on the journal working electronically, existing reputations and potential reputations. This was a big day for OWPS and for me too. It was our launch; I hadn't seemed to have stopped in the last two days and I had been running around like the proverbial 'blue arsed fly'! I was pleased with how the preparations had gone, you can't plan for everything, but this was going alright so far. We did have a shortage of hot water for people to make tea in the registration session. I nipped over to the main building and asked the canteen people to bring some hot*

*water over for the mid-morning session. I thought that if this was the biggest mishap, then the workshop would be okay, even the computer presentations had went well. Sam had been doing the greeting in his own friendly, inimitable way, that seemed to put the attendees at ease.*

*Me and Lucy had been getting the displays up the previous afternoon, trying to spread stuff around the foyer. I had set my laptop up in a prominent corner so that when people looked out the front window, they would see the strategically placed laptop, clever I thought. The weather was nice and bright and made you want to look in that direction towards the sunshine, where the laptop was. The only issue was unfortunately no one was with the laptop to show the webpage which was a shame. I couldn't be with the laptop to show the front page off when people went down for their cup of coffee and piece of Lincolnshire plum loaf, a missed opportunity I thought. Christine and Sam, my fellow Editorial Team members were on the case though, chatting and getting to know our guests. I was too busy rushing around making sure the tables and the questions that Christine had just given me were ready for the 'world café' exercise. We had displays up in the foyer of student work, giant dices, a black and white wall tapestry of student experiences of being in this country. All good and impressive stuff, it made me motivated and proud to be at Lincoln. It provided the backdrop for what OWPS wanted to achieve, and what we were doing here at this workshop. Sid was being a proper David Bailey taking lots of photos for future publicity and posterity.*

*I apologised to people that I spoke to about the fact that we didn't have any papers uploaded. Obviously there was the webpage but no 'working papers' to show. I must admit, had I been a visitor, I would have thought it a little embarrassing to hold an event to show off authors work and there's no papers. But I knew the effort involved to get the webpage up and running. Of course, we was still waiting for reviewers to review and that takes time, tact and plenty of gentle reminders, Rome wasn't built in one day as they say...At least it was visible and people could see tangible progress on the webpage front, but most of all, Christine my boss. The only issue in the back of my mind was that we had a location for the journal, on the university's portal site, but how easy would it be*

*for people find and read these papers? This was going to take some serious thinking about.*

*I managed to get a coffee and try a piece of the plum pudding, very nice too and I took a moment to savour it. I was quietly pleased with how the workshop was going, people were chatting it seemed there was some good mixing going on. I was looking around and noticed this tall guy was taking an interest in my laptop, I could see he was trying to get online as he was moving the mouse around. At least someone was interested in the webpage, shame there wasn't much for him to see. I didn't recognise him though. I noticed he was talking to Christine for a while, she was most probably making new connections and publicising stuff we were doing, she's good at that. Although, that usually means more work though! She brought him over to me. Jack introduced himself as CERD's Technology Officer, he was the guy that had emailed me the day before and asked if he could come to the event. Marie from the Art and Architecture Faculty had told him about the workshop. Good to know that word of mouth was effective at bringing people in. In his email, he said that we had similar interests in publishing student work. Jack had put NEO, the university's student wide journal on the web by using some new publishing software he'd found. Jack had sent me a link to it and asked if I had chance to look at it, in truth I hadn't, the night before I had been cutting out and making name badges for attendees. That seemed the most important job at the time, getting them to look just right seemed to occupy me more than looking at NEO's webpage. No rivalry you understand, just the order of priorities.*

*Me and Jack managed to talk a little bit about this online journal system. He knew his stuff, there was no doubt about it and seemed a nice bloke too. He said we had produced a front page that was alright, but how would it be seen by people, how would they know student work was there, he asked? Fair comment. Then he started to drop in these little hooks into the conversation like, "this system hosts 1400 journals on it, this is where academics and readers go to find online papers", "the search engines tend to look for the JAC codes on these sites. "JAC codes, what they are?" I asked. "Oh, they are designed to attract the search engines". Well, you learn something new I thought. Then we was talking about how the journal works for you as an editor, "it sends out reminder emails to reviewers you know", and what really done it was when he told me about this UROS student*

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*who was working on the 'One Laptop per Child' project, he had only just put his work on this OJS and had been contacted by three different universities from around the world in a week!*

*Jack was keen, enthusiastic, and selling it really well. This was too good to be true. I could see what he was saying, but I was torn between the efforts that me and Don had put in, and this OJS sounded irresistible with whistles and bells as well! I kept thinking, how could I tell Don, "Sorry, Don, but you and me have just wasted our time...?" Then I was asking myself, why didn't I know about this months' ago? This really doesn't look good for my judgement ability and yet this will do the trick. How am I going to handle this, we are going to have to change course...*

### ***Vignette Two: Navigating the system***

*This Skype conversation took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008, between me and Dirk Sedtke, an OWPS author. It was both mine and Dirks first attempt at uploading a paper onto the much vaunted Online Journal System.*

*It was Friday afternoon, and I was getting ready to go to my sisters wedding the next day, I was really looking forward to it, I must admit I was a little 'D mob happy'.*

*From my window I could see into the street, I just watched the cars go by...and was thinking about seeing my children and family. I snapped out of it and went back to more mundane things. I moved the mouse and the Skype icon was flashing. I clicked on it. It was Dirk, a potential OWPS author and one of my German friends and drinking partner. We start off our conversation by talking about a possible job vacancy that might be of interest to him.*

*We then got onto the subject about him uploading his three papers; Dirk was very keen about this. I'd been trying to spread the word about this since the workshop in July and he was one of the few students that could see the potential benefit to his CV. Jack's online journal system, would not only help to showcase OWPS, but a place where potential employers could view a student's work, no doubt about that. I was really excited, it was going to make my life easier once I got used to the system. Of course, authors getting used to the system would vary and this might be a potential flaw for those people using the OJS. Me getting used to the OJS didn't mean I was some technical genius, far from it; I'd just be using the OJS just that little bit more. We would have to make the OJS as easy as possible for users to use.*

*As we were on Skype, I suggested we go through the submission process and upload one of his papers in 'real time' as it were, partly to help Dirk and for me to get a sense of what it was like for someone else to use. We could both be guineas pigs! Earlier in the day I had spent two hours with Jack getting used to the OJS and how it worked, I was all excited about it. I must say Dirk was really chuffed at the thought of being an author, excitement all round really. This was what OWPS was all about. By doing this I could also report back to Christine and Jack about what the submission experience was like for someone to use.*

*We started to work through the process. I started to develop that anxious feeling that something isn't as easy as you think. Oh no, the enthusiasm might be short lived as well, we were running into some difficulties now...For instance, 'making a blind copy' of the paper for the reviewers, so they don't know who had wrote it was one example. Dirk's laptop instructions were in German and my instructions that I sent him were in English. Poor guy, he was having some problems with*

*submitting it. I realised this was a valuable moment in my research because, we had hit a problem that was developing right in front of me, and this system was beginning to act in a prescribed way that I had not envisaged. As editor, I had to perform my role and support this process. Yes, we had enrolled this system to perform a submission process for us, but we had not been party to creating this OJS webpage. It was putting obstacles in the way that were necessary for the stability and integrity of the editorial process; it wasn't a classic obligatory point of passage where you must 'click this button to proceed'. I asked Dirk if I could save the Skype conversation. He didn't mind, he just questioned whether there was enough swear words in it... more problems...Blimmey, he had just sent me the 'exploding head' icon, the process must be bad for him! I felt bad now and I hoped he was alright with this. I told Dirk to hold on, I had an idea to get around the obstacle. I suggested that I make a blind copy of his paper for him and send it back. This seemed like a solution so we did that. We had to suspend the process as I had to get over to my girlfriends.*

*About an hour later, I had cycled to my girlfriends, and was back on Skype with Dirk, occasionally looking out her lounge window, not at cars passing by, but at the leaves blowing in the wind. He asked if he could upload the first of his papers. Well Dirk, "a couple of things", I told him, "First, you need to create an abstract for each one of them, about 100 words. You also need to choose about 6 key words/phrases".... "Also, you need to go through the JACs list and choose which codes best categorise your paper".*

*Dirk was being very patient and said "ok, so I will add the abstract and keywords on page 1, then go through the list of JACs and look for the most appropriate*

*categories which I need to select during the uploading process. Correct? Is there anything else?"*

*"Don't forget the biography" I relied.*

*"Ya, wow, will keep me busy for a while!" Dirk typed, "Alright, guess I need time to do all the abstracts and go through the paper and so on! btw, where is the upload button? Have not found it till now!" I was thinking Dirk must be keen to keep doing this, as he was having some issues with finding the right buttons to click. I felt anxious and we both thought this was going to be straight-forward! I went on the webpage to try to help Dirk navigate his way through. At least now we started to make some progress, Dirk was happy and I was relieved. I didn't think it was right for me to let him struggle and leave him to the mercy of the process.*

*Then we were onto the small matter of identifying the codes he was going to use and writing an abstract for his paper. Dirk made some suggestions, about what should be included. The thing for me was how much do you contribute and give advice, after all, it is his paper, but you do want to be supportive. I made some small suggestions, but really the appropriate people to give the advice were the reviewers. Eventually, we managed to get the paper uploaded, but we didn't do any more that evening, Dirk went off and prepared the other two papers for submission and I got ready for my sisters wedding...*

### ***A shocking verdict***

*To ensure the legitimacy of the vignettes, I have not changed the text since they have been read by my supervisors, except correcting some grammatical errors. Throughout the dissertation, I have been advocating SCOT as my informing*

*theoretical gaze. It is perfectly understandable for the reader to expect analytical 'hooks' that inform and reveal insights from the field about SCOT. However, in both vignettes there is a distinct lack of 'hooks'. Why is this? The vignettes are evocative and legitimate, I described what I felt and experienced. Perhaps, the passage of time may have denatured my memory. That being said, Dirk and others have been complimentary about the evocation.*

*How has this focus slipped in terms of analysis? I wrote the vignettes and showed them to my supervisors, having read them they specifically asked me to read aloud and explain in my own terms one particular extract. I explained why I had emphasised in the text Dirk's alleged discomfort about producing a 'blind copy' of his paper. I explained that as lead editor, it was important that Dirk had a good experience of uploading his paper, given the fact that he has offered seven papers to OWPS, and he was a friend of mine. Also, this problem could well be experienced by other authors. I mentioned that as the researcher, I felt this was a 'moment' in the field which had analytical power; to that extent my intuition was right because it offered me a point for reflection. Obviously, I chose which moments to write up as vignettes. On reflection, there was another occasion where a very powerful SC moment could have been unpacked, this related to the discussion circulating around the 'domain' name for the overall webpage location, not just OWPS, but NEO and the Institutional Repository. This included other relevant user groups; indeed, this would have offered a powerful radical humanist hook by showing the use of language to illustrate particular meanings of what 'commons' meant to their group. This is was a matter of selectivity, I chose not to develop this, essentially, the discussion was email based. For me, 'moment' did not have the intimacy of experience. The irony is this would have been a very*

*powerful, but impersonal analysis; my fear would have been the analysis would have been too rational. So what is the irony? When I finished my explanation, knowing my theoretical position my supervisors said "Pete, theres a realism in your writing, are you aware of it?"*

### ***What is going on?***

*Throughout this dissertation I have been advocating the virtues of SC. For me, SC is lucid and has intellectual and explanatory power. I have offered in this chapter 'performing design', 'navigating design' and outlined another possible vignette on 'commons'. But this was before the shock. I have been thinking and writing the theory-method chapter in a SC way, but writing the vignettes in another way, a realist way. This is not a slight against realism. I fell back on familiar language when I wrote the vignettes, even though the style is evocative, the analysis is not SC, in fact there is little SC in the vignettes. The vignettes suggest a flat reality, where I see a world where situations can be fixed or changed. According to my vignettes theres is an 'it' out there. That 'it' can be navigated and found, there are distinct worlds all circulating around OWPS. My vignettes suggest these exist and they are not social constructions made up of language, symbols or meanings. The shock remained. I protested saying "I don't do models, there is power relations that circulate and influence, people are not rational... but I am not into domination!"*

*"Perhaps you're a critical realist then" they suggested.*

### ***Is it an ethical issue?***

*"I am not into domination!" That is a curious comment to make. Testing hypotheses does not equate into domination or imposition, does it? I do not*

*believe so. In the hard sciences there are standards, protocols, formulas that are strictly followed which provide reliable and generalisable results. I am not convinced they have much explanatory power in certain branches of social science. This is because such regimes are not appropriate or revealing in my study. This issue of domination and imposition is an ethical question in research. Realism is not ethically or morally poor. Realists, such as Durkheim, Marx and Dawkins are and have been people with a genuine desire to improve the human condition. So it is not credible for me to assert that a particular view on the nature of reality is morally poor.*

***It is an identity thing?***

*Realism does contend there is a reality that exists externally to our perception and senses...the tree falling in the forest does make a sound, even though I cannot hear the sound. Does this mean I whole heartedly accept all the tenets of realism? I am not sure that I do. Van de Ven (2007) sets out the assumptions of critical realism, I have summarised these:*

***There is a real world, but understanding of it is limited, physical things are easier to understand than reflexive and emergent social processes; all facts, observations and data is theory-laden and there are no absolutes in scientific knowledge; inquiry is not value-free or impartial and some methods are better than others; complex reality needs complex perspectives, and finally, models solve and allow evolutionary power. (2007: 70)***

*In my opinion, these assumptions are credible and plausible. However, I would question where is the politics and the power-relations between groups acknowledged? To exclude such notions and constructs from any analysis is not giving a true account of how knowledge is produced in my opinion. If identity, meaning and the struggle for resources is ignored or discounted to the periphery within the organisational setting, then critical realism for all its strengths seems to lack a depth of appreciation and understanding in daily life.*

### ***But constructs abound!***

*I know constructs abound and circulate outside of these vignettes, I experienced them. For instance, had the first vignette continued and cover the next few days this would have included. More constructions are revealed, we have a large meeting and then I have smaller meetings with Jack later. One particular group, the Editorial Team (ET), made a decision on adopting the OJS, but other relevant user groups, namely, the authors, reviewers or general readers, do not get a chance to comment. Like the designer charged with identifying and inscribing future user needs, the ET made a decision based on what was thought to be a strategic choice for achieving OWPS objectives. But as been alluded to earlier, what is being experienced is a 'gap of execution' (Latour: 1997). Obviously, Christine, Sam and I were reviewers and I was an author, but I was not completely neutral, after all, I was project co-ordinator and lead editor. This certainly guided my opinion; after all I wanted a 'self-managed' system.*

### ***Field research interests***

*I must readily acknowledge that my research concerns do appear to have taken centre stage in place of my field interests. That being said, there is ample opportunity to discuss the field.*

***What sorts of tasks are taking place and are they stimulating?***

*Typically, the editorial team undertakes the tasks required to produce OWPS, such as reviewers being given 'gentle reminders' and sometimes chased for reviews. There is significant activity in promoting and publicising OWPS within the business faculty and wider university community. Encouraging students to submit their work seems to require significant energy on the part of ET. This is vital to ensuring the flow of papers for OWPS; after all you cannot have a journal without papers.*

*Whether editorial activities are stimulating is a matter of individual perspective. Creating an identity is important to some people, being involved in the ET does confer some credibility and status. Certainly, the reasons why people want to get involved in the ET could be connected to how they perceive themselves. Of course, people may have organisational abilities which they want to demonstrate or they may sympathise with the objectives of the project. If it is the latter, this suggests a political awareness for their interests.*

***Is co-construction is taking place?***

*Also, even now there has not been closure or stabilisation, authors and reviewers still chose to email me rather than use the OJS. It would appear that the technology is for many connected with OWPS, the 'other' something that is treated or seen as liberating, but restricting and discerning. The 'navigating the system'*

*vignette deals with co-construction between members of the relevant user groups. Between me and Dirk we navigated our way through the OJS, it wasn't pretty, it felt like 'the blind leading the blind' even with Jacks training earlier in the day and even having the user manual to hand, which was not particularly helpful. The 'gap of execution' is clearly demonstrated. There appeared to be a mis-match between the levels of acumen the original OJS designers perceived users would have.*

*As Pinch and Bijker (1999) have outlined, co-construction and stabilisation takes place by 'interpretative flexibility'. An example illustrates the point well. Related to the relevant user groups, one reviewer attempted accessing a blind paper on the OJS, he commented by email that:*

*"I must say that it was not very clear where the link is for the download.*

*Maybe an idea to highlight it so that it is a bit more obvious"*

*Received 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2008*

*For closure to take place, the controversy over use and 'does the system work' some form of agreement needs to take place, but this may not be agreed by all. If an individual has difficulty using the system then they may well challenge any claim that the system works. At least with the comment above, the reviewer is making a specific suggestion, it is then up to the ET to implement this if possible.*

### ***Genuine involvement or mere rhetoric?***

*Given the relatively low number of student reviewers to lecturers, there is the possibility of an imbalance as the project achieves a level of stability in terms of activity. There does appear to be a cycle of submissions which shadows each*

*semester. OWPS relies on enthusiasm and goodwill, so whether students actually feel 'ownership' of OWPS remains to be seen. One student reviewer made the following comment:*

*"Sorry for not being more involved but having never done anything like it before I'd like to see how I do with the first one or two before maybe taking on more next semester or over the summer".*

*Email received 6<sup>th</sup> June 2008 from a student reviewer*

*Arguably, this reviewer is content to be involved and envisages taking part in the future. Having been through the process as a review as a student reviewer, the reviewer made the following comment:*

*"Please tell me if this is close to what you are looking for and whether you want it"*

*Email received 24<sup>th</sup> September 2008*

*Like so many activities that involve volunteering, OWPS is dependent on goodwill and this does affect the effectiveness of the project. This student reviewer is unsure of the standard that is required, but the aim of OWPS is to develop student skills, so from that perspective there is involvement. Of course the ET can add further review comments to the author's feedback. However, this could be seen as undermining both the reviewer's integrity and feed back. Equally, the ET can provide advice feed back to the reviewer for the future. After all, skills and confidence need to be built with reviewers and authors alike.*

*The degree of rhetoric does depend on the level of genuine involvement by students. If large numbers of students get involved, the proponents can*

*legitimately claim there is interest by students in publishing their work. This involvement would then justify the proponent's belief in their project. Conversely, little involvement undermines such claims of student interest by potential detractors. This issue takes on a political significance. Simply put, success attracts funding and other resources, where as a lack of interest and success makes securing resources to much harder.*

### ***Some final thoughts***

*I earlier referred to ethnography as a recipe and like all recipes; the process gets a little messy! Practice is deep and embodied. I would suggest there is interference, a disruption between theory-method and practice that is emanating from me as a researcher. What I seek is a developed knowing, a reflexive practice that features the necessary intellectual understanding of theory-method and the virtuosity of practice; of having a methodological tool-set and being able to consistently apply it to the field. With practice, there is no getting it right or wrong only consistency in performance. In my own ethnographic practice, I adopt an unstructured interview approach, but the first thing I do is first transcribe and then code the work, does this indicate a tendency towards realist practice; is this some contradiction or does this indicate a flexible approach to practice? I think the latter. Of course, there is a fundamental difference between theory-method and practice, but what the practice indicates is the analytical consistency of the researcher. If I did not understand or appreciate it before, I certainly do now.*

*The final chapter will round up what has discussed and how this might manifest itself in my future practice.*

## ***Conclusion***

*This conclusion can be divided up into three areas for discussion: the role of theory-method on practice; technology and mundane activity and finally the appropriateness of ethnography in studying SCOT. There are of course some suggestions for how this dissertation might be extended for future research.*

### ***1) Theory-method on practice***

*In the opening chapter, I used Burrell and Morgan's (1979) notion of the paradigm to locate myself within ontological quadrants divided by subjective-objective and regulation (order) and radical change (conflict) continua. The framework provided clarity which afforded me the opportunity to demonstrate the relationship between theory-method. However, I am reminded that however alluring an intellectual*

*argument or set of assumptions is, they have to be followed through and demonstrated in my field practice.*

*The issue of incommensurability has been discussed as well. I noted that some theorists wished to downplay the role of theory in method, whereas Burrell and Morgan sought to remind theorists that theory is partial and replete with assumptions. This debate will continue, but there are some developments in terms of 'mixing methods' (Mingers, 1997; Munro and Mingers, 2002) between qualitative and quantitative methods is possible in some paradigms, for instance, radical structuralist and functionalist, but mixing paradigms is still very problematic. Indeed, I expect the paradigm wars (Searle, 1999) to continue for some time to come. In my opinion, provided knowledge and theory can progress in its own terms, within its own paradigm, then I see no reason to force theorists or practioners into accepting other paradigm assumptions.*

### ***Influence of the field***

*As I alluded to in the previous paragraphs, this whole dissertation has challenged me which is to be expected. It has been emotionally draining; I started off being clear on my epistemological and ontological positions. However, when faced with going through the research process, I find it is not that clear cut as I first thought. 'Getting my hands dirty' has been extremely helpful in developing my awareness of ethnographic practice. I have found my ethnographic method, I am comfortable and content in trying to develop an 'impressionist' (Van Maanen: 1988) voice. I am not inhibited at all, there is no inhibition in my writing, and perhaps it is a little bit too familiar at times. Any source of tension is not the content or selection of material that I have chosen, but what the vignettes reveal. These vignettes aim to create a story, an account of my experiences and then reveal insights from the*

*field. Having fashioned the ethnographic vignettes, my analysis reveals an ontological perspective that is realist in practice. This was shocking to me.*

*My intellectual inclination, or so I thought, is that of an interpretivist or radical humanist. For me, my only saving grace that I simply do not accept the entire realist position. I still contend that people can and do influence to a large extent their external world, but it is contingent on how other people in my world also act and behave. Perhaps, in the absence of a firm paradigmatic position, it is sensible to go through a process of elimination. I am not a functionalist, or a radical structuralist, so I feel content with either an interpretivist or radical humanist paradigm. I noted Van de Ven's (2007) tenets of critical realism, but drew attention to the lack of political influence in terms of securing resources and presence of agendas. These omissions are why I am drawn to radical humanism; it recognises that identity and meaning are shaped by such influences.*

*It could be argued this revelation, this insight, is a little late in the day for a nascent researcher to have discovered. That may be so, but that is exactly the situation I find myself in. Equally, one could legitimately ask what I have been studying all this time; this is a challenge to answer. Perhaps, I have been intellectually seduced by social constructivist ontology, given my own personal philosophy, subjective perspective and ethics that direct me to gravitate towards a humanist perspective. What has drawn me to radical humanism is the sense of involving myself in activity that seeks to challenge something, in this case, the lack of undergraduate opportunities for publishing their work. For me this is consistent with the view that consensus is difficult to achieve, but if you feel obliged to act, then act you must with or without consensus.*

*This is not a case of methodological hypocrisy or some case of 'bad faith' or self deception (Sartre: 1969) on my part, but a genuine evaluation and reflexive analysis of my own practice and ethnographic writing style. Indeed, since writing the vignettes, I am more conscious of my theoretical gaze than before. For me, the focus must be on maintain the awareness that I can lose the critique in the writing, but then the critique must be worked back into analysis, perhaps using Alvesson et al (2008) techniques of D-reflexivity (deconstruction, disclaiming) and R-reflexivity (reframing, reconstruction) in my writing.*

## **2) Technology and mundane activity**

*In previous chapters I clearly identified the significance of technology in the field. This dependence has an effect on how OWPS and particularly the ET operates with the relevant user groups. Although the dissertation features technology as a point for research, it is not about whether selecting and defending the OJS as the delivery platform is the correct choice for the OWPS, clearly this decision has ramifications for the project.*

### **Reliance on technology**

*This is perhaps a salutary lesson where enrolling technology for politically expedient ends, however laudable, comes with a warning of unexpected consequences. Namely, what technology is expected to deliver does not always deliver. Sometimes technology works too well, too efficiently and has the opposite effect on involvement. Unfortunately, there are issues with the configurations and the set up, so that the user groups cannot use the technology as was originally envisaged. This is partly due to one network developer's design that over*

*estimates the technical abilities of its users, something that is borne out in the literature (Latour, 1997: Oudshoorn and Pinch, 2003).*

*Like Pinch and Trocco have noted with the way the Moog synthesizer shifted the definitions of people and of legal boundaries within the music recording studio and music industry (2002: 306-314), so too has open source and online journal publishing within universities. These online initiatives are blurring the traditional boundaries of who does and who does not publish. In that way the OJS is liberating, but the way in which the process is operationalised by the ET still leaves room for encouraging involvement.*

### ***Mundanity***

*Most projects are enthusiastically supported that seek to improve the social condition. However, the same mundane issues connected with encouraging people to become active in the editing and reviewing process or submit papers remains. For the ET, it appears that encouraging students to view themselves as potential authors, reviewers or editors, challenging apathy, dispelling general ignorance or raising awareness of OWPS remains a mundane activity.*

*On the positive side, OWPS has been create to achieve certain political objectives within the university, as we have seen the language of the field indicates intent on 'challenging the boundaries', encouraging the notion of 'student as producer' and remedying 'not hearing enough student voice' all promise organisational action. There is of course the fear this may be just rhetoric. But much has been achieved since OWPS creation, a journal website, internal and external reviewers, a growing*

*number of peer-reviewed papers and a group of people who identify with the objectives represents a degree of activism.*

### ***3) Ethnography and SCOT***

*Had there not have been such a full discussion on my research concerns, an extensive discussion would have taken place regarding what the ethnography has revealed about the SCOT. The practice of ethnography and the choices made during the research has been extensively discussed. I would argue ethnography has revealed valuable insights for this dissertation. SCOT is a theory which can be actively studied using ethnography to watch and record the interactions, the negotiations, the attempts at closure by the relevant user groups. I am content with the possibility of only offering partial and tentative, co-constructed but validated observations about this field study. We have seen that ethnography does not offer reliability for its activity; it offers readers a rich contextualised view of the field. Through email extracts and appendices I have demonstrate that a limited degree of co-construction is taking place. The limitation is solely a result of the early stage of development of the project. As more people become involve then the potential for co-construction will emerge.*

### ***Further research***

*Later this month, another OWPS workshop is scheduled to take place. Provided enough people from the various relevant user groups attend, this will give me the opportunity to discuss with them some of the issues this dissertation has raised. Such discussion could centre on whether the issue of the OJS and whether there is a possibility for 'closure' through 'interpretative flexibility' by the relevant user groups. Will such closure be possible, how might this be achieved through*

*negotiation and discussion? Or will the ET influence any discussion in a particular way and will there be exchange of views on the issues. Now that I have a full appreciation of the role of theory-method in practice, I am confident this area of study can be extended.*

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