



# ISCAR NEWS

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## 1. Activity 05 — Second Finnish National Congress on Activity Theory and Sociocultural Approach, 16 – 17 May 2005

Activity 05 was held 16. – 17. May 2005 in Dipoli, at the campus of Helsinki University of Technology (TKK). Possibly because of its surroundings, the theme of the congress was: *Activity Theory and Systems' Boundary Zones*. The congress was organized this time by Laboratory of Work Psychology and Leadership, VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, and Lifelong Learning Institute Dipoli together with some other units in Finland. In all, 50 papers were presented and 108 participants were involved in deep and active discussions during the two days. Abstracts (in Finnish) are available at: <http://www.iscar.org/fi/toiminta05/toiminta05-abstracts.pdf>

Activity theory is clearly related to systems theory and systems thinking. It can be seen in the concepts like 'Activity System' and 'Activity Environment'. Some of the classic researchers used the system concept actively in their theory building, for example, P.K. Anokhin and A.R. Lurija, whose model of functional systems of brain has lead to many applications in the field of neuropsychological habilitation. The system concept has revived again after a decade-long silent period, possibly because of the chaotic development trends in global and national contexts. Systemic understanding is needed when fuzziness in thinking and acting is increasing.

The program consisted of three keynote lectures and fifty presentations within four parallel themes.

First, professor Antti Eskola spoke about 'Activity Concepts as an Opener of Blind Alleys in Social Psychology', commented by professor Airi Hautamäki. The second talk was by professor Timo Järvillehto on 'Individual, Community and Development of Consciousness: Possibilities of General Theory of Psychology', commented by docent Kai Hakkarainen. The third keynote was given by professor Yrjö-Paavo Häyrynen on 'Power, Activity and Illusion', commented by dr. Ritva Engeström. Many of the participants considered these talks as the best outcomes of the congress. Two of the speakers are now emeritus professors and one of the first who introduced the

concepts of activity theory and sociocultural school into Finland in the 1960s.

The congress theme 'Activity Theory and Systems' Boundary Zones' emphasizes the cross-scientific nature of activity theory and its orientation to find new ways of thinking and acting by crossing borders. This idea was shown in the four themes under which the presentations were organized:

1. **At the Boundary of Science and Work**, coordinated by docent Anneli Leppänen ([anneli.leppanen@ttl.fi](mailto:anneli.leppanen@ttl.fi)). The topics varied from networked expertise to open source coding and knowledge society.
2. **At the Boundary of Work and Care**, coordinated by docent Kirsti Launis ([kirsti.launis@ttl.fi](mailto:kirsti.launis@ttl.fi)). The presentation dealt with topics like models of well-being and collaboration in work health care.
3. **At the Boundary of School and Science**, coordinated by professor Jarkko Hautamäki ([jarkko.hautamaki@helsinki.fi](mailto:jarkko.hautamaki@helsinki.fi)). Topics of the presentations dealt, for example, with transfer between school and work and information and communication technologies in supporting learning at work.
4. **Methodologies of Changing**, coordinated by professor Jaakko Virkkunen ([jaakko.virkkunen@helsinki.fi](mailto:jaakko.virkkunen@helsinki.fi)). This was the largest group of presentations and covered a whole spectrum of topics like abductive methodologies, dialogical system interventions, and analysis of mobile distributed work.

It always takes some effort to organize meetings like this but afterward it is easy to find all the benefits like seeing the status of activity theory on the national level. It is also amazing to see how quickly the topics are changing in two years time. The third national congress will be organized in spring 2007 by the Centre for Research on Networked Learning and Knowledge Building (<http://www.helsinki.fi/science/networkedlearning/eng/>). You can follow the preparation in <http://www.iscar.org/fi/>. The first announcement is expected in autumn 2006.

(Matti Vartiainen <[matti.vartiainen@hut.fi](mailto:matti.vartiainen@hut.fi)>)

## 2. Felix Mikhailov (1930-2006)

Felix Mikhailov died on 22 February 2006 in Moscow, after suffering with cancer for a longer period. Professor Mikhailov was a philosopher who is especially known among ISCAR members as the author of *The Riddle of the Self* (1976/1980).

(See <http://www.marxists.org/archive/mikhailov/works/riddle/>).

The next number of *ISCAR News* will bring some memorial words about Professor Mikhailov.

## Section News

### 3. Cultural-historical approaches to children's development and childhood (CHACDOC)



#### Constitutive meeting of the section at the ISCAR Congress in Seville, 21 September 2005

(Foto: Patrick Odwora Jaki) full color version at: <http://www.iscar.org/section/chacdoc/>

The organisers of the section Marilyn Fleeer, Jill Robbins Holli Tonyan and Mariane Hedegaard held their first meeting in December 2005 at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia.

We decided that possibilities for shared activities during the first year of our section's life would be in relation to other conferences and not as a special symposium organised by the section itself. We decided that the four of us would take the initiative to organ-

ize formal or informal meetings whenever we attend a congress. We hope that other participants in the section will be interested to meet at the conferences where they find such an announcement, and/or take initiative to organise a CHACDOC section meeting at conferences they attend.

We can already announce the following congresses where these meetings will take place:

- **AERA** (American Educational Research Association) — San Francisco, April 7 – 11 2006. Mariane Hedegaard will be at the Cultural-Historical Research-SIG on Monday, April 10, from 6.15-8.15 pm, Marriott San Francisco / Golden Gate Hall, Section A3, where together with Seth Chaiklin, she will give a lecture. At that meeting she will announce a café close to the congress where CHACDOC members can meet afterwards and have some informal discussions and exchange.
- **ISSBD** (International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development) — 19th Biennial Meeting, Melbourne, July 2-6, 2006. Holli Tonyan will announce a meeting place at this congress.
- **EECERA** (European Early Childhood Research Association) — 16th conference, Iceland University of Education, Reykjavik, August 30 to September 2, 2006. Conference theme: Democracy and culture in early childhood education. Marilyn Flear will announce a meeting place at this congress.

If any ISCAR member takes initiatives to arrange formal or informal meetings at any congress, publish books or knows about publications that could be of interest for CHACDOC, then please send a message

to [Mariane.Hedegaard@psy.ku.dk](mailto:Mariane.Hedegaard@psy.ku.dk), so that it can be published here in the CHACDOC section news, as well as distributed to the section's mailing list.

Members in this section now have access to each others e-mail address. Holli Tonyan will try to set up a network for Ph.D. students in the section that have any interest to support each other, for instance by reading chapters and commenting them. Please write to Holli if you want to be part of this network. [holli.tonyan@education.monash.edu.au](mailto:holli.tonyan@education.monash.edu.au)  
Plans for the future are:

A special issue of the journal *Outlines: Critical Social Studies* with central papers about cultural-historical approaches to children's development and childhood presented at the ISCAR congress in Seville 2005, edited by Marilyn Flear, and expected as the first issue of 2007.

A conference meeting for members of the CHACDOC section, in Copenhagen, in the second half of 2007. A proper announcement will follow.

To become a member of this section, please write to [Mariane.Hedegaard@psy.ku.dk](mailto:Mariane.Hedegaard@psy.ku.dk)

## Announcements

### 4. *Cultural-Historical Psychology* becomes an ISCAR-affiliated journal

Cultural-Historical Psychology is a new journal that is founded and published by the Moscow State University of Psychology and Education. Vladimir Zinchenko is Editor-in-Chief and Vitaly Rubtsov is Chairman of the Editorial Council.

The journal is published in Russian, with an annual English digest. You can see an overview, in English, of the articles published in the first two numbers

of the journal at: <http://www.vygotsky.mgppu.ru/543/>

You can communicate with the journal's editorial office at: [kip\\_journal@mail.ru](mailto:kip_journal@mail.ru)

ISCAR does not publish its own journals, but it has a policy of acknowledging some journals as "affiliated" as a way of marking journals as places where it is likely to find articles that fall within the sphere of interests found in ISCAR.

### 5. 25% discount on *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* subscriptions for ISCAR members

The *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research* (JICR), a publication of the World Communication Association, is published three times a year. JICR pub-

lishes qualitative and quantitative research that focuses on intercultural communication, either cross-cultural comparative research or results from other

types of research concerning the ways culture affects human symbolic activities. Starting in 2006, JICR will be published by Routledge.

ISCAR members can now receive a 25% discount on subscriptions to this journal, so that the annual rate is \$35 USD (normal rate: \$47 USD) (In the UK

and Ireland, the discount rate is £20 GBP compared to the normal rate of £27 GBP). If you are interested in this offer, then send email to: [order@iscar.org](mailto:order@iscar.org).

For further information about the journal and for instructions on how to submit a paper, please visit: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/17475749.asp>.

### **6. Conference: *Beyond the Barriers: Humanity, Text, Communication* 18 – 20 May 2006, Moscow State University, Russia**

There will be a conference honoring the memory of Alexei Alexeevitch Leontiev on May 18-20, 2006. The title of the conference is *Beyond the Barriers: Humanity, Text, Communication*. The themes of the conference are devoted to the topics A.A. Leontiev was interested in: language, psycholinguistics, foreign lan-

guage methodology, semiotics, ethnopsychology, psychology of art, etc. The conference will take place at Moscow State University; the conference language will be Russian, but inquire about possibility of individual translation. For information, contact: [conf05@list.ru](mailto:conf05@list.ru) or <http://www.aaleontiev.smysl.ru/>

### **7. Call for Papers: *Transformational Tools for 21st Century*, 25 – 27 October 2006, Central Queensland University, Australia (deadline: 13 June 2006)**

*Transformational Tools for 21st Century* is about the use of tools — symbolic, psychological and physical — in human activity. The conference focus is on creative ways of thinking and doing, collaborating in groups, teamwork and the creation of new knowledge. The aim is to bring together academic researchers from several fields, including Information Systems, Education and Activity Theory, with the practical activity of consultants and facilitators who use electronic meeting, collaboration and learning systems.

The conference will be held on 25 – 27 October 2006 at the Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia. At the same time, there is a hope to be able to link to other ISCAR members, especially those in the ATIT section, via video conference.

The **deadline** for paper submissions is *13 June 2006*. More information is available at: <http://www.anyzing.com/TT/TTcallforpapers.html>

### **8. Summer School: *Sociocultural and Activity Theory Research: Studying individuals in institutional settings*, University of Bath, UK, 18 – 20 July 2006**

A summer school entitled 'Sociocultural and activity theory research' is being organised by the Centre for Socio-Cultural and Activity Theory at the University of Bath, UK. This course is designed for those who would like to broaden their understanding of socio-cultural and activity theory research and engage in discussion and debate of current issues.

It will involve presentations from researchers directly involved in the field as well as seminars where participants will engage in the discussion of the major issues in the theory based on the presentations and recommended literature. These sessions will cover a range of topics such as Developmental Work Research, Studying Learning at Work, Studying Change

## Announcements

over Long Periods of Time, Studying Change in Professional Practice, and Subject Position and Identity in Activity Theory.

Contributions from the Universities of Birmingham (Dr Jane Leadbetter, Dr Jan Georgeson) and Oxford (Prof Anne Edwards) have been agreed. Dr Ritva Engestrom will discuss her Developmental Work Research in Finnish Schools via a video link. Prof Michael Cole hopes to be able to discuss his long term out of school activity research using the same technology.

Please contact Gill Brooke-Taylor <edsgbbt@bath.ac.uk> to register interest using '3 day summer school' in the subject line.

The registration fee will be £150 GBP and accommodation can be arranged on site.

Details of the work of the Bath Centre for Sociocultural and Activity Theory Research at: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/csar/>

A general site for The University of Bath is available on: <http://www.bath.ac.uk> and for the city of Bath on: <http://visitbath.co.uk/site/home/>

## 9. Two Professorships in Social Processes, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Neuchâtel is offering two professorships in the field of the social processes. One position is focused on migration and population movement. The other position is focused on the circulation of knowledge and competences at an international scale, and will involve work in the Maison d'Analyse Processus Sociaux (MAPS).

*15 April 2006* is the **deadline** for applications.

The formal announcement (in French) with more details about the positions and MAPS is at:

[http://www2.unine.ch/documentmanager/files/lsh/fac/emploi/avis\\_mise\\_concours\\_maps\\_site.pdf](http://www2.unine.ch/documentmanager/files/lsh/fac/emploi/avis_mise_concours_maps_site.pdf)

Although not officially announced, it is hoped that persons with an interest in activity theory and/or cultural-historical theory will apply.

## Publications

### 10. New Books by ISCAR Members

#### Transitions: Symbolic Resources in Development

by Tania Zittoun, Universities of Cambridge (UK) and Neuchâtel (Switzerland)

2005, Information Age Publishing

<http://www.infoagepub.com/products/series/titles/1-59311-227-0.html>

#### 20% Discount for ISCAR members

(discount price shown here includes shipping)

Pb: ISBN 1-59311-226-2 — \$35 USD (\$37, outside USA)

Hb: ISBN 1-59311-237-0 — \$58 USD (\$60, outside USA)

Write to: [order@iscar.org](mailto:order@iscar.org) for ordering instructions.

What do young people do with the novels they read, the films they see, the music they hear and sing? How do these cultural products act as 'symbolic resources' in the process of development? And what can we, as researchers, learn by studying people's uses of fiction? This monograph approaches development through the study of transitions and the processes of exploration that follow ruptures in people's lives. Specifically, it examines young people's symbolic responsibility as they have to choose among the wide range of cultural products societies exposes them to. The book thus examines the books, films and music that young people mobilize when they need to redefine their identity, learn informal know-

how, or have to confer meaning to what happens to them in transitions.

The book has a theoretical scope. It draws on cultural psychology and psychoanalysis to formulate the importance of semiotic mediation in thinking, feeling and acting. Its main contribution is to propose a model for analyzing uses of symbolic resources, such as books and films, in everyday life. It thus shows how

uses of symbolic resources can enable new forms of experiences and conduct. It finally highlights social and personal conditions that might facilitate or hinder developmental uses of symbolic resources. The book, based on in-depth case studies, is addressed to scholars, professional and students in the fields of youth, culture and the media, cultural and developmental psychology, and life-long education.

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### Activity as the Focus of Information Systems Research

Greg Whymark and Helen Hasan (Eds.)  
Knowledge Creation Press, 2005  
\$25 AUD (including shipping)

This book is about challenging areas of contemporary Information Systems research to do with socio-technical systems situated in real-world environments where change and complexity are overriding factors.

The contributing authors come from a variety of backgrounds related to information systems research, many are practising academics at Australian universities, and most are either working in the information technology and communications industry or have spent much of their working lives doing so.

This volume is based on eleven papers that were presented at the First ISCAR Congress in Seville. A table of contents and an order form can be found at: <http://infosys.uow.edu.au/atul/publications.php>

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### Mobile Virtual Work: A New Paradigm?

J.H. Erik Andriessen, Technical University of Delft, The Netherlands; Matti Vartiainen, Technical University of Helsinki, Finland (Eds.)  
2006, 395 p., 60 illus., Springer Verlag  
Hardcover: ISBN 3-540-28364-1  
€ 94.95 / £ 73.00

The objective of this book is to contribute to the understanding and the improvement of an emerging new kind of work arrangement, i.e. mobile virtual work (MVW). Until now no systematic in-depth studies of this phenomenon have been available. The book has grown from several workshops that brought together experts from a wide range of areas. Through their cooperation a state-of-the-art overview could be constructed of areas and aspects related to MVW: from ergonomic requirements to diffusion of mobile work systems, from implications for distributed cooperation to knowledge management for mobile employees. The book is not primarily about

technologies and tools, although many mobile systems will play a role in the studies presented. Its special merit is that it contains many concrete case studies. That means that MVW is described and analysed with an eye both on theoreticians and practitioners.

Contents: Concepts and Prevalence: Emerging Mobile Virtual Work; Mobile Virtual Work – Concepts, Outcomes and Challenges; Mapping the Mobile eWorkforce in Europe; New Forms of Work in Labour Law; Virtually Connected, Practically Mobile; Collaboration in Mobile Virtual Work: a Human Factors View; Model-based Design of Mobile Work Systems; Usability in IT Systems for Mobile Work; Participative Design for Home Care Nursing; Well-being and Stress in Mobile and Virtual Work; Building Scenarios for a Globally Distributed Corporation; Case Descriptions of Mobile Virtual Work in Practice; Organisational Strategies: Knowledge Sharing in Mobile Work; Factors Influencing the Diffusion of New Mobile Services; Mobile Workplaces and Innovative Business Practice; Mobile Virtual Work: What have we learned?

**THEORY & PSYCHOLOGY**

Special Journal Issue  
Volume 16, no. 1, February 2006

***What Kind of Theory is Activity Theory?***

Lois Holzman (Guest Editor)

What Kind of Theory is Activity Theory – Introduction  
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Vygotsky and Consciousness as Con-Scientia, as Witnessable Knowing Along With Others  
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The Properties of Mediated Action in Three Different Literacy Contexts in South Africa  
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Embracing History through Transforming It: Contrasting Piagetian versus Vygotskian (Activity) Theories of Learning and Development to Expand Constructivism within a Dialectical View of History  
Eduardo Vianna and Anna Stetsenko, pp. 81-108

Activating Postmodernism  
Lois Holzman, pp. 109-123

**11. Ph.D. Dissertation Abstracts**

**Crafting Persons. A Sociocultural Approach to Recognition and Apprenticeship Learning**

Peter Musaeus  
University of Aarhus  
<petermus@psy.au.dk>

The thesis is a case study of 13 participants in a goldsmith workshop. The thesis argues that not only is recognition an important concept for understanding the formation of persons in craft apprenticeship, but to sociocultural approaches to learning. Recognition is conceived intersubjectively as a double relation to self and other, namely a) to the act of granting acknowledgement to another person and b) receiving acknowledgement as a person. At this level of analysis, recognition has to do with struggles to prove oneself as a certain kind of person. But recognition is also conceived at a communal level, where recognition comes into existence due to the existence of certain institutions within the state. In sociocultural approaches to learning and cultural development towards self-mastery (Vygotsky) or identity change interwoven with the person’s place and participation in the social world (Lave & Wenger), recognition has not been sufficiently explicated.

Five major lines of thinking inspire this thesis: 1) The thesis draws upon Hegel’s social philosophy in order to understand the sense of struggle for recognition entailed in becoming a person. 2) The thesis draws on cultural-historical psychology, for instance in explaining learning as a tool mediated activity leading to self-mastery. 3) The thesis focuses on apprenticeship learning as a situated activity, a view inspired by situated learning theory and its views on learning as changed participation in practice. 4) Dialogism is used to conceive of the ongoing process of participating and coming to know through open-ended, unfolding dialogue (Bakhtin), situated in specific time and place and in relation to self versus other and making of identity that is involved in becoming an artisan craftsperson. 5) The study relies on empirical phenomenology (Giorgi) in focusing on the meaning of participants’ experiences of learning.

The thesis argues that person formation is mediated by struggles between participants who enter into work activity mediated by dialogue and interpersonal struggles vested in craft history. The ideals of person formation in goldsmith apprenticeship echo the historical tensions over craft versus art that have riveted the goldsmith craft since the Renaissance and which, as argued, situate the participants’ struggles of recognition. The goldsmith constructs a



## Publications

contentious identity since she is both an ordinary person (a skilled, manual worker) and a person with a claim to going beyond herself, staking her life and in this process producing works of art (as a virtuous, hard working and autonomous artisan). Furthermore, the master constructed the goldsmith identity as an artificer or enchanter of the world.

The thesis concludes that learning, conceived as

a person's change in relation to the world due to a change in using artefacts, is interconnected with the act of recognition expressed in granting and being granted particular kinds of identity. Recognition is seen not only in terms of transformed desire or externalisation but also concretely in terms of becoming members of the master's workshop and family.

The dissertation was defended in 2005.



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Copies of previous newsletters are available from: [news@iscar.org](mailto:news@iscar.org)

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[info@iscar.org](mailto:info@iscar.org)