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In praise of holistic scholarship: A collective essay in memory of Mark Easterby-Smith

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Abstract
This collective essay was born out of a desire to honor and remember Professor Mark Easterby-Smith, a founder of the Management Learning community. To do this, we invited community members to share their experiences of working with Mark. The resulting narratives remember Mark as a co-author, co-researcher, project manager, conference organizer, research leader, PhD supervisor, and much more. The memories cover many different aspects of Mark's academic spectrum: from evaluation to research methods to cross-cultural management, to dynamic capabilities, naming but a few. This space for remembrance however developed into a space of reflection and conceptualization. Inspired by the range and extent of Mark's interests, skills, experiences, and personal qualities, this essay became conceptual as well as personal as we turned the spotlight on academic careers and consider alternative paths for Management Learning scholarship today. Using the collective representations of Mark's career as a starting point, we develop, the concept of holistic scholarship, which embraces certain attitudes and orientations in navigating the dialectical spaces

and transcending tensions in academic life. We reflect on how such holistic scholarship can be practised in our contemporary and challenging times and what inspiration and lessons we can draw from Mark's legacy.

Introduction

On 15th April 2020, Professor Mark Easterby-Smith passed away. The Management Learning community lost a mentor, a teacher, a thinker, a friend. Mark was all of these and more to many of us within the wider community. In this collective memorial we celebrate Mark's life and reflect on his legacy that, we suggest, traces the contours of what we term *holistic scholarship*.

Mark was a founding member not only of this journal but more broadly, the scholarly area of Management Learning, that for over 50 years, has been focusing on learning and knowledge in management and organizations. As the field mourns his untimely death it is with bittersweet feelings that we edit this collective essay in his honor. We focus on memories of Mark's scholarly practice, as a mentor, researcher, and leader/organizer to trace his legacy. We contend that Mark embodied a *holistic scholarship*, which the invited authors draw out in different ways in each contribution. *Holistic scholarship* offers a different path from the contemporary instrumental trajectory to academic stardom that today seems the sole path available in management academia, especially but not only, for early career scholars (Bothello and Roulet, 2019; Bristow et al 2019).

By reflecting on the shared experiences of working with Mark, we retrace a holistic scholarship that is characterized not by repression of, but by a way of living *with* the tensions and contradictions of the pressures of publishing, of instrumentality, of increased competition and job precarity. *Holism* responds to all these pressures by producing a particular scholarly praxis distinguished by pluralism, community building, nurturing and developing of individuals and the field.

Such retrospection on management scholarship is especially timely in this current COVID crisis. Moments of crisis often encourage reflection and the challenging of normative practices. These latter processes are, we believe, particularly important at a time when many scholars feel that their choices have shrunk; when collegiality is reduced and academic work is commodified and intensified; and when the only possible way forward seems to be to safeguard one's time, to be shrewdly strategic in one's teaching, publications, service, and networks. We hope that our collective reflection on Mark's career, contribution, and presence will provide a space to consider alternative directions and ways of working creatively with the many tensions and contradictions of our profession by inhabiting the holistic scholarship he embodied.

Introducing professor Mark Easterby-Smith

For those who did not meet Mark we introduce you to him with a short biography.[1] Mark's first degree was in Engineering and then he gained a PhD in Organizational Behavior both from Durham University, UK. In 1978, Mark joined the Management Teaching and Development Unit at Lancaster University. Also, thanks to Mark's work, this unit became the fully-fledged Department of Management Learning in 1984. In his over 30 years at Lancaster, Mark published more than 70 articles and 10 books and led research projects on management development, organizational learning, dynamic capabilities, and knowledge transfer across international organizations and within the UK. Mark took academic citizenship and university service seriously, undertaking many senior roles such as PhD Director, Head of Department, Deputy Dean, and Director of the Graduate

Management School. Externally, Mark worked indefatigably to build communities of management scholarship. He was a founding member of the British Academy of Management (BAM), BAM Chair in 2004, and President in 2007. Between 2003 and 2007, he was Senior Fellow of the Advanced Institute of Management Research (AIM), researching Organizational Learning, specifically dynamic capabilities. Mark also co-established the Organizational Learning Conference (OLC), which later became OLKC. He also oversaw the conversion of the Journal of Management Education and Development to this current journal, Management Learning in 1994. Exemplary of Mark's strong commitment to management learning, teaching, and development, is the ESRC Management Teacher Fellowship development scheme (ESRC MTF), which ran from 1989 to 1995. Mark co-designed this scheme with Dr Monica Lee, and his leadership was instrumental in the development and expansion of UK business and management education in the 1990s. Around 180 newly-appointed UK business and management school academics experienced three one-week workshops during the first year of their appointment, focusing on developing an appreciation of the business and management school landscape and having the opportunity to develop their pedagogy. In the following 2 years of their ESRC-sponsored appointments, ESRC MTF Fellows participated in conferences they had co-designed in a country with established business schools (the U.S.), a country where business schools had different governance structures (France), and in the then emerging capitalist economies of Central Europe (Czech Republic). Some of these fellows have contributed to this collective essay.

Despite his many achievements, Mark's self-description on ResearchGate shows someone remarkably humble, giving some insights into his character:

> "I started off at Durham University conducting evaluations of management training and development, where I developed a particular interest in repertory grid technique. Since joining Lancaster in 1978 I have built up a reputation in two main areas: organisational learning and management research methodology. In both areas I was lucky to be there at the beginning of serious research work, and I have therefore been able to follow, and to some extent influence, the evolution of these fields." (see Note 1)

For someone with over 26,535 citations on Google Scholar this self-description, with its emphasis on luck and on following before influencing, appears modest. On the same page, Mark listed "Teaching" as his first interest. This is also rather unusual in sites like ResearchGate that are designed to boast research profile and credentials and especially given progressive devaluing of teaching in academia. These are some of the features of Mark's praxis that we believe delineate his holistic scholarship. We now let this scholarly praxis emerge through 13 contributions.

Albeit not an exhaustive list of Mark's collaborators, the contributors all had the privilege of working closely with Mark. The aim in selecting these authors was to cover a cross-section of Mark's interests and activities in order to tease out some of the specificities and sensitivities of his holistic scholarship. The authors write through different theoretical lenses, following diverse styles and covering many academic contexts and themes. For ease of reading and reflection, we have divided the 13 contributions into three sections that each address a different aspect of holistic scholarship which, whilst not wishing to over-curate, we gently reflect on between sections.

The first section speaks to Mark's character and presence and considers how Mark manifested his own distinct approach to scholarship, and how this approach touched and inspired others, often leading to community building. The second section picks up and develops the relational and interpersonal aspects of Mark's scholarship and explores how he inspired emergent scholars to find their own way. This leads us to reflect on what we can learn from Mark to support future generations of scholars. The third section considers the plurality and range of Mark's scholarship and invites us to consider how to take Mark's ideas forward in responding to the challenges of our own difficult and complex times.

We hope the following accounts of Mark's practices of mentorship, theory-generation, research and service to the community can inspire others to explore their own practice of academic holism, and to recognize and encourage it in developing new scholars as a way to counter the loneliness, anxieties, and pressures of the instrumentalism scholars increasingly find to characterize contemporary management academia.

Section 1: Developing holistic scholarship: Mark's character and presence

Mary Crossan and Dusya Vera: Character and the building of bridges

The question that Mark Easterby-Smith has inspired in us is: What does it take in academia to build bridges when others seek to build empires, to create connections and dialog when others package old wine in new bottles, to strive for integration when others live complacently in a silo, and to consistently think in pluralistic ways, when others are comfortable in an unidimensional space?

The answer to these questions is not an issue of competence. There are plenty of competent individuals in academia. The answer is competence entangled with character, that is, the deep and persistent interconnection and mutually-reinforcing connection between highly-developed character and highly-developed competence (Sturm et al., 2017). Mark always demonstrated remarkable competence as a researcher, both in theory development, and in quantitative and qualitative methods. He was also a competent mentor, journal editor, co-author, conference organizer, and leader of the organizational learning, knowledge, and capabilities (OLKC) field. He possessed outstanding people competencies and strategic competencies. But, again, competence is not enough to achieve Mark's contributions to the field. Having known Mark for several decades, we have witnessed first-hand the strength of Mark's character and competence and his capacity to elevate both in others. We find this legacy to be important for us as scholars and also to guide what is needed in the OLKC field.

In a wonderful "Celebration of Life" scholars recounted experiences of Mark that were emblematic of his strength of character. He led with an accountability and integrity for what we stand for as scholars along with the courage to "get things done," but not in a heavy-handed way. When he detected an area that needed attention, he did not wait for others to do it, but had the drive to address the need himself. Mark's humanity and collaboration were always in play as he sought to understand and engage many stakeholders. Bringing together the OLKC communities was just one example of this. He was also generous in developing others, particularly doctoral students and junior faculty. We can't recall seeing Mark in a flustered state as his patience and calm were always on display. Few scholars seem to embody the type of transcendence (being appreciative, inspired, purposive, optimistic, creative, future-oriented) that fueled Mark's ongoing vision of what was possible. In his humility, he once called his research activities "unfocused"; however, contrary to this, his research endeavors showed his curiosity and his ability to see the big picture of a field. He not only studied learning; he was the ultimate learner. There is no doubt that Mark had tremendous competence as a scholar, but it was the entanglement of his character and competence that set him apart.

Yet, this entanglement was not a solitary endeavor. Most of us recognize that we were better people when we were around Mark, something we refer to as positive character contagion. Essentially, he activated within us dimensions of character which may have been latent and reminded us that we needed to step up. What does it take to do work that makes a difference when others see publishing as a game? What does it take to be respected and loved by your colleagues when others are hungry for power and status? In a field that over-appreciates the role of competencies, Mark's life and scholarship raise our awareness of the critical role of character in our profession.

We extract two important implications of Mark's character-competence entanglement. Individually, it calls us to reflect on our choices about how we show up in our field. As scholars, it sheds light on the theories of organizational learning that seek to describe how learning occurs and to predict its outcomes, but which have overemphasized the competence needed for individual, group, and organizational learning at the expense of the character needed to learn. We can't imagine a more important agenda for the field of OLKC than to learn from Mark's legacy regarding the importance of character and to imagine an agenda that elevates character alongside competence in our scholarship.

Bente Elkjaer: Mark—A pragmatist learner and educator

My encounters with Mark have mainly been in connection with the Organizational Learning (later: the Organizational Learning and Knowledge Capabilities, OLKC) conferences of which the first was held in Lancaster in 1996 and organized by Mark and colleagues from Lancaster University (Easterby-Smith et al., 1999). Here the ground was laid out for a cross-disciplinary field, for many publications and conferences to come as well as lifelong friendships with colleagues. This initiative as well as the many publications epitomize Mark's work as an experimental learner and responsible educator driven by curiosity. I can for example easily imagine that Mark around the middle of the 1990s could have said to himself and his colleagues: "*Why don't we organize a conference right here in the beautiful setting of Lancaster and see what comes out of it?*" It must also have been around this time he worked on his influential paper on "the many disciplines of organizational learning" (Easterby-Smith, 1997). Maybe this was driven by a debate with himself in which he might have asked the following question: "*How can I contribute to create an overview and order of this apparently messy field of organizational learning without trying to pin it down to one theory of learning and organizing?*" To maintain the field of organizational learning open and alive with many different sorts of contributions seemed important to Mark in order to avoid narrow-mindedness and to foster a field marked by a "pluralistic universe" (Dewey, 1920 [1982] citing a fellow pragmatist William James). This pluralism is also visible in the Handbooks on "organizational learning and knowledge management" that he put together across the Atlantic with Marjorie Lyles (Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003, 2011) and in many more books and articles written by Mark (see Vera, 2009 for a comprehensive account of Mark's work).

Although Mark to my knowledge never defined himself as a pragmatist, it is obvious that his practices as an experimental and curious learner and educator (to not only his students but also to his fellow peers within the field of organizational learning) is in line with being one. Mark appeared as a pragmatist in his being what I call a "full" person. He was not only a knowledgeable person, but also demonstrated passion and humor in his encounters with colleagues. Being with Mark was always about more than knowledge, it was joy and laughter. He was a living illustration of being an experienced human being in the pragmatist sense. Experience is not just about knowledge, it is about living and participating in life with an awareness of connectivity with the social and material worlds of which we as human beings are all a part. The world is not only social but material and made up of "things" as John Dewey would have put it (Dewey, 1925 [1981]). This experienced living in the world is a prerequisite for preparing for the future. It is only through an experimental, curious, and responsible way of living and working that one can imagine what will come next. The future can never be anticipated but only dealt with in explorative and playful "what-if" ways, rather than in causal "if-then" ways. There is usually more than one solution, and most issues are not of any "necessity." A pragmatist-inspired theory of learning requires just that—an active learner who as such is able to be a responsible educator who can guide and support students' (and peers') imaginative thinking and practices.

Wayne St Amour: Balancing scholarship and character development in supervision

Observing and modeling behavior is a basic social learning and self-teaching process (Bandura, 1977; Thompson and McHugh, 1995) as the selective adaptation of behaviors to usefully achieve aims can avoid less-effective episodes of trial and error. Burgoyne and Reynolds (1997) encourage self-examination in management learning; asking whether the tendency to emphasize transactional, instrumental, or technical approaches, might distract awareness from a manager's ethical and moral choices. Critically reflecting on modeled behaviors that go beyond transaction may also yield insights for the supervision of management learning scholars.

I had the good fortune of having Mark Easterby-Smith as a mentor, PhD supervisor, and later, my work manager, yet Mark rarely *supervised* me. Indeed, throughout my project, there were many meetings, progress reports, panels, and editing remarks as assessments of progress but that supervisory model was only part of our relationship. I characterize Mark's approach to the scholarship of management learning as a light touch on direction and strong on facilitating personal reflection. Easterby-Smith et al. (2002: 15) describe a "responsive" supervisory approach and emphasize being available and mutually committed as a student evolves through different learning process stages. Reynolds and Vince (2004) highlighted methods of "organizing reflection" and how a *heedful* (Weick and Roberts, 1993) assessment of performance often continues learning for oneself and others we are engaged with, reframing positions, and stimulating self-examination. Mark's constructive critical guidance, authenticity and generosity of time, and care prompted examination of my own character. His nature and behaviors could be modeled as a way of learning.

Various authors recognize a style of supervision like Mark's (Marshall and Green, 2004; Phillips and Pugh, 2000), yet the role of supervision as a means of modeling character within the discipline is not fully explored. Arguably, there is no "right way" to facilitate character development, nor should it be the job of a student or workplace supervisor to be responsible for another's value system, yet Mark's example encourages reflection on whether in management learning, particularly the management practices areas of study, transactional and administrative aspects of supervision are overemphasized and the role's potential to shape student and practitioner character is neglected. Informed by Gandhi's identification of "Knowledge without Character" as one of the seven social sins (1995), Stephen Covey argued for principles-centered leadership three decades ago:

> Purely intellectual development without commensurate internal character development makes as much sense as putting a high-powered sports car in the hands of a teenager who is high on drugs. Yet all too often in the academic world, that's exactly what we do by not focusing on the character development of young people. (Covey, 1990: 89)

Mark's model exceeds just signaling the merits of principles-centered ideals. Instead, Mark consistently and genuinely put these actions into practice. He was an active participant with students through their development. Mark's generosity for introducing PhD students to networks of relationships, his lived values and reflexive practices familiarized students with the social character of the management learning discipline while simultaneously helping to cultivate scholarly repertoire and knowledge creation.

Mark's approach may be a lesson on student supervision and have application for workplace managers. He demonstrated that it is not exclusively what we know and how we stimulate new knowledge, insights, and theories in our discipline, but also who we are, and the role we can choose in shaping scholarly development and integrity-based communities.

Editorial reflections: Developing holistic scholarship—Mark's character and presence

The three contributions in this section highlight how Mark was able to navigate and indeed transcend some of the tensions and dilemmas of academic life through embodying and practicing a distinct holistic approach to scholarship. This involved building bridges rather than empires; striving for new connections and knowledge versus the repackaging of old knowledge; committing to integration rather than being in a (knowledge) silo; thinking in pluralistic ways versus being comfortable working in an unidimensional space; being an active learner versus being an expert; giving constructive critical guidance versus directive prescriptions; being generous with time, networks, and knowledge versus safeguarding them. Mark's developed an alternative form of scholarship somewhat in apposition to a very narrowly focused, individualistic one arguably encouraged in business schools in order to achieve individual and institutional research output targets. Although Mark achieved all the required outputs, it is clear from the above that instead Mark had the courage to be driven by his character and to follow his curiosity, to never stop learning, to celebrate pluralism, to pursue knowledge with passion and humor. Thus Mark fully—holistically, rather than narrowly, engaged in (academic) life, reaching out to others to get things done, putting his humanity and his collaborative preferences to good use whilst displaying humility and curiosity in bringing together what he knew and who he was in shaping the development of others and of communities. He demonstrated a "full person" holistic model of scholarship which others could emanate whilst at the same time mentoring and encouraging incoming scholars to develop their own paths.

Section 2: Modeling a holistic scholarship: Mentoring and sustaining others

Selen Kars: Taking and making time: The unhastened professor

It is relatively uncontroversial to say that increasing workload and competing pressures is accelerating academic life. The omnipresent "excellence" regime (Ratle et al., 2020) contributes to this, imposing a harsh temporal rhythm onto already domineering rhythms of operational work that revolves around teaching timetables, and marking and reporting deadlines. This acceleration is symptomized by "hurry sickness" where we feel continuously starved of time, harassed, frustrated, and incomplete in our lives and our lives' tasks (Vostal, 2015). This oppressive experience "is (of course) deeply gendered, racialised and classed, connected to biographies" (Gill, 2009: 240).

As a Turkish female PhD researcher, Mark Easterby-Smith's office was my "oasis of deceleration" (Rosa, 2010) amid the rat race. His was a "slow personality" who "read and write more and talk less than the 'fast cats' who are attracted to more decisionist, stress-driven and hasty cultures" (Pels, 2003: 209). Contrary to many academics, whose acts are reactively entrained to outside temporal rhythms, Mark *made time*. From cooking his PhD/post-doc researchers Christmas lunches, to commenting on our work-(eternally)-in-progress to provoke new thought (or stabilize thought); from coaching (and cheering) us through our first conferences, to weaving us into webs of interaction across academic platforms; Mark catalyzed our attention to new opportunities and fields; reflected with us over the meaning of past, current, and future experience.

It would be wrong to think this "oasis of deceleration" decelerated minds. Contrarily, his office was also the port of "accelerative-energizing moments" of inspiration, spark, and fascination (Vostal, 2015) that emerged from conversing, questioning, and spontaneously contributing ideas. These accelerative-energizing moments nudged us out of unstirring mental blockages, arguably reflected in his career. With this ebb and flow of fast moments and slow processes he was neither

a "temporal dope" (Granqvist and Gustafsson, 2016) nor a "slow professor" (Berg and Seeber, 2016); but the *unhastened professor*—balancing striving and being in the moment.

Being unhastened is not the accepted norm in academia. Hence, its instillment requires agency. However, Mark exercised agency uniquely too. Despite his status at Lancaster and broader academic community, in meetings he would, for example, say "what are *you* working on?," before leaning back with his hands still on the table. This act emphasized that his responsibility was not to give advice but to increase our ownership and autonomy, encourage us to think for ourselves and provide tangible and emotional support as we try our thoughts out. As a servant leader, Mark encouraged us, his "subordinates," to see academic life as a place to make a contribution and ourselves as valuable contributors.

Mark's anything-but-unremarkable leadership approach was remarkable in the academic environment where rank is ever-present. Alvesson and Sveningsson's (2003) warning is relevant here: the act of naming someone a leader may convert their acts to be remarkable in own and subordinates' eyes and place the leader (in a throne) above others. Academic leadership that assumes an enlightened professor responsible for enlightening others can intensify this seductive process. Leading through "power-with" and "power-to" instead "power-over" others (Starhawk, 1987), Mark likely had to counter established assumptions about the need to demonstrate "strong" leadership (Turnbull et al., 2007).

Turning the success/failure game of the competitive academia on its head, Mark embodied leadership as a liberating force, a force that awakens people to find more meaningful ways of working and living.

Shenxue Li and Marjorie Lyles: Internationalizing through "humbition"

Professor Mark Easterby-Smith led several China-based research projects spanning multiple research streams. We were privileged to be involved with one of them, the Advanced Institute of Management (AIM) initiative, instigated in 2001 by the Economic and Social Research Council and tasked with improving the quality and impact of UK management research. Though hard to express Mark's enduring qualities, we briefly share one observation that, in our view, has profound implications for management learning.

Mark took a remarkable step to internationalize management research by venturing into new territories with "humbition," a portmanteau coined by Kaufmann (1973) designating an amalgam of humility and ambition. Through the AIM project, Mark had the novel idea to internationalize dynamic capabilities research in China at a time when the concept was in its early stage of development (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). Meanwhile, he embarked on numerous other projects of an international scale (e.g. Easterby-Smith and Lyles, 2003, 2011; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008a, 2008b), seeing him collaborate with world-renowned professionals and institutions, leading to highly impactful outcomes. For instance, Easterby-Smith and Lyles's (2003, 2011) books on organizational learning and knowledge management brought together the latest approaches from over 60 world-leading experts. As one of the most respected intellects of his day, Mark's unmatched ambition for internationalizing management research has been deeply admirable. Yet, in addition, Mark embodied the virtue of humility, contrary to the common belief that the two are contradictory (Taylor, 2018).

In an increasingly competitive environment where prospective managers and leaders are screened for charisma and ambition, humility, often viewed as a weakness or an opposing virtue of confidence (Kidd, 2016; Konkola, 2005), is not rewarded. Therefore, it is unsurprising to have media headlines riddled with headstrong leaders and unfulfilled bold statements (Cooper, 2020). Accordingly, management education, through which prospective managers and leaders learn to

effectively run organizations (Burgoyne and Reynolds, 1997), tends to emphasize the need for confidence. Humility has been rendered irrelevant in contemporary organizations, particularly for entry-level managers and leaders who zero in on the desire for quick results (Taylor, 2018).

Yet humility is a fundamental quality for effective management and leadership. In managing the portfolio of his international-scale AIM projects, Mark always paid full attention to members of his teams' views, whatever their position in the hierarchy, and exhibited tremendous appreciation of others' strengths, instilling a strong sense of trust among collaborators which helped deliver on his ambitious agendas. Several studies (e.g. Halverson, 2018; Shellenbarger, 2018) suggest that humble leaders inspire close teamwork, rapid learning, and desirable outcomes. Nielsen et al. (2014) argue that humility is closely connected with ambition and the former plays a special role in the management of the latter. According to Taylor (2011), it is humbition that drives innovation, effective collaboration, and leadership. Humbitious leaders utilize hidden strengths in their teams and barely turn to the power of official authority (Kaufmann, 1973).

Here lies an enormous challenge requiring a fundamental rethink of current scholarship practices at a moment in history when managers and leaders are increasingly facing complex international challenges, from climate change to COVID-19. Mark's legacy ought to induce us to reflect on and cultivate the virtue of humbition in nurturing the abilities of future leaders. This enables them to empower others in a more dynamic world and strengthens our claims to educational excellence.

Manuel Graça: Entering the field and developing relationships

I worked with Mark as a researcher on an ESRC-funded project on the evolution of business knowledge (2003–2005). Together with his immense generosity and simplicity, and a unique ability to identify and focus on what is central, I was impressed from early on by his dedication to enrich the learning process of newcomers on board of the research vessel, as it was the case with myself. Three issues, in particular, stand out for me from that key learning experience of doing research with Mark and observing his own way of undertaking a research project and doing things in the field: managing access to companies, conducting interviews, and debriefing. For him, doing fieldwork was not simply about getting data but always involved investing in and developing a relation with interviewees, which frequently translated in them brokering new contacts within and across organizations and projects. Using personal contacts to open doors that lead to new contacts, asking little time, developing collaborative relations, as well as practicing the principle of reciprocity by giving in return to companies something from our research, were key in managing access. Right at the beginning of the project, Mark asked me to make contacts in order to arrange an interview in an organization. He then questioned how much time I was going to ask. I said "*an hour, an hour and half*," to which he promptly objected: "*No, ask them for twenty minutes.*" When I observed that twenty minutes would be "nothing," his answer was eloquent about how to play the game: "*It doesn't matter. What matters is that they say yes. And once we are there, then we'll see what we can get.*" On one occasion, this "rule" of asking 20 minutes translated into 6 hours with the CEO of a multinational company, from 9 am to around 3 pm, with lunch served in the manager's office for the three of us as well as the number two of the management board who joined for the last part of the interview. It all started around the coffee machine on the way to the CEO's office, with Mark asking him how things were going there and if there was a particular success story in recent times. When we sat down for the formal interview, the conversation was already in full flow, and trust and empathy created. As our interviewee provided details about recent achievements and current projects, Mark kept looking for more information through the techniques of laddering up ("why"

questions) and laddering down (asking for examples). After conversations dominated by "successes" and "good stories," the final parts of interviews were usually dedicated to reflect on problems and things that didn't work as expected. Debriefing started soon after leaving the research sites, usually on the train back to Lancaster, or around a cup of coffee at the very first opportunity, with Mark collecting other researchers' inputs and adding a few more bits in the concise, focused, and clean handwritten notes taken in his ever present *Black n' Red* ruled A5 notebook. "*It's all about being disciplined*," as he once observed on one such occasion. Knowing and working with Mark made an important difference and key lessons remain with me ever since.

Ann Cunliffe: "Do you know anything about postmodernism?" The ongoing journey toward reflexivity

I vividly remember Mark asking me this question in one of my PhD student meetings with him at Lancaster in August 1993. He asked me in his gentle, inquiring, challenging but not demeaning, well think about it . . .. way. To cut a long story short, my tumultuous journey through postmodernism and poststructuralism (no truth, no values, no rationality, no meaning, etc., and no clue where it would take me) led me to reflexivity—which helped me situate the abstraction of the "posts" in lived experience.

Reflexivity has been a major part of my life since then, personally and academically, and I owe this interest to Mark for two main reasons. First, his approach to supervision, which involved nudging you gently and supportively to stretch your thinking and (contrary to some PhD supervisors) his genuine interest in your development not in imposing his ideas. Second, his approach to scholarship and to management learning and education, which was deeply reflective. In our first collaboration we observed that "the key to effective experiential learning is an ability to reflect upon our actions" (Cunliffe and Easterby-Smith, 2004: 31). But, typical of Mark, this was not enough, because while reflection was and still is central to many management learning programs, we argued a need to go beyond the disengaged, objective, rational, reflective approach, to learning *in experience* through practical reflexivity. Practical reflexivity is an ontological activity in which we question our ways of being, and the assumptions that underpin our doing, interacting, and relating with others. In doing so, we generate a dialog that leads to deeper insights into ourselves, others, and often taken-for-granted practices and processes.

The need to be *reflexive* is becoming more important in today's pandemic world as we encounter not just the clash between science and politics, but also systemic forms of social and institutional blindness and exclusion, and psychopathic leadership. While reflexivity is often framed as a critical intellectual activity by erstwhile postmodern scholars, or as a methodological technique, I've come to realize that it is much more. *Being reflexive* means understanding how we can "create and sustain our human-ways-of-being-human-in-a-human-world" (Shotter, 2016: 116)—both individually and communally. Why is this reflexive? Because it situates us as intersubjective, responsible, and caring people embedded in and shaping the world around us—questioning how our assumptions and actions impact other people, organizations, communities, and our environment. The implications for management learning scholarship are profound: reflection "on" the world is about analyzing a situation by applying logic and existing knowledge, understanding reflexivity "in" the world requires us to explore how we shape situations in which we find ourselves (Allen et al., 2019). So while Mark has a substantial and influential body of work around organizational learning, for me it is his work around reflection and reflexivity that resonates. His inclusiveness, his willingness to question and go beyond the obvious, to facilitate dialog, and to be human.

Editorial reflections: Holistic scholarship in practice

In this section, we have gained more insight into Mark's holistic practice and in particular, his support and development of others, and his own continual learning. We can observe how some of the tensions drawn out in Section 1 are evident in the stories in the current section. Yet, through Mark's way of being in academia, he was able to reach a certain resolution to managing these tensions. For example, in Kars' "Unhastened professor," Mark provides an "oasis of deceleration amid the rat race," whilst asserting a certain type of "accelerative striving such as encouraging inspiration, spark, and fascination."

We also see how the balance in the tensions sometimes shifts. For example, Graça's "Entering the field and developing relationships" is quite focused on Mark's functionality and pragmatism in getting access. However, there is certainly a tension between playing by the rules—"being disciplined"—and a certain rebellion in the service of quality and change. A similar tension is seen in Li and Lyles' "Internationalizing through 'humbition'" where we see Mark's confidence and ambition at play alongside his humility and respect for the opinions of all others in the research process regardless of their status. Yet at the same time the status of being an international researcher and AIM fellowship was important to Mark and certainly oiled the research process. As in the previous story what we see here was that Mark was able to lead the research process in a way that everybody learns and benefits from: the process thus being relational rather than extractive. This requires much reflexivity, which we can see in both the research stories, and which is beautifully illustrated in Cunliffe's "Do you know anything about postmodernism?" In this section we can see that although Mark might have had prescribed ways of practicing his scholarship, through his reflexivity he was also able to adapt to the needs and interests of the person in front of him which also shows great openness to and care for others. What we perhaps do not yet perceive is a sense of his pluralism. In the next section we gain insight into the range of Mark's research interests and how some of his research ideas complete with their embedded tensions, can be adapted and put to work to help address our contemporary challenges as scholars in academia.

Section 3: Developing holistic theory and practice: Toward pluralistic futures

Richard Thorpe: Laying the foundations for management research

An important theoretical concern for Mark, central to his substantive area of interest, organizational learning, was the way the field of Management and Business was being researched. What he considered of particular importance was that the field drew for its theoretical insights on a wide range of disciplines—all with their own paradigms and problematics not always well served by the quantitative approaches dominant since management and business became an academic field in the 1960s. He recognized that although there had been the adoption of methods from other disciplines throughout the 1970s and 1980s, these had not been integrated. The contribution Mark made to methods, derived in part, from his early academic training in the field of evaluation research (c.f. Easterby-Smith, 1986) was the link he provided to the transfer issue which remains one of the underdeveloped features of Management Learning something he developed further in *Management Research* (1991).

In writing this Mark saw an opportunity to identify and justify both methods and philosophies specific to researching management and business. His objective was not only to provide an overview of the possibilities open to researchers, that was both succinct and accessible, but one that introduced balance to the quantitative orthodoxy. The book showcased a range of positions and

approaches that were open to researchers in order to encourage them to decide for themselves how they might wish to tackle a particular topic, and give them the understanding to enable them to argue for themselves and avoid being overly influenced by their supervisor.

Mark was also keen to differentiate the book from other general social science texts. One way he set about doing this was to highlight how management research differed from research in the broader social sciences. He was always conscious of the political, often constructed nature of management and developed a whole chapter which addressed a range of political and ethical issues often overlooked by researchers. *Management Research* has been a first port of call for many generations of doctoral students needing to find somewhere to start.

Mark saw Management and Business Studies as an applied social science discipline, sharing some of the features of other applied fields such as Social Policy and Planning. One similarity was the number of part-time students enrolled and another was the age at which academic staff entered the profession. Whilst serving on the *ESRC Training Board* he participated in a review of the UK Social Sciences which in turn led to several initiatives to improve the quality and quantity of those entering the profession. As an "importer disciple" he recognized that academics trained in other disciplines may not always have the skills, nor sometimes the interest, to address problems that were relevant to managers, and he was keen to ensure that research conducted was relevant to policy makers and practitioners alike. Although awareness of the importance of the translation of knowledge has received greater attention recently, there is still progress to be made; Mark's contribution to capacity building here was a significant one.

Valerie Stead: Demonstrating value in management research

In the early 1990s, Mark and I worked together on a major evaluation project with Ford Motor Company (Stead and Easterby-Smith, 1995). Reflecting on this project, and ideas of evaluation, brought to mind Anderson et al.'s (2019) observations in their review of the 50-year history and field of management learning. They remark on a shift from an applied focus on manager and management development, toward a more theoretical perspective, that has strengthened management learning's conceptual underpinnings but with less obvious links to practitioners.

Evaluation debates seem to adopt a different pattern with significant attention to conceptual underpinnings some 35 years ago. Mark's work was foundational in this area, in the journal and beyond, (e.g. Easterby-Smith, 1981, 1986, 1988), representing a "sea-change" from positivistic quantitative approaches to more qualitative forms (Tanton and Fox, 1987), and mirroring a greater emphasis on critical and contextual approaches in management learning and education (Reynolds and Vince, 2020). Observing an uptake of ethnographic designs in evaluation research, Mark was at the forefront of reconceiving evaluation (Easterby-Smith, 1986), as a pluralistic concept with multiple values (Tanton and Fox, 1987).

The focus on value was a touchstone for our research with Ford. Ford had committed to a major educational strategy to help tackle a range of challenges, still relevant for organizations today, from increasing global competition, and technological advances, to environmental concerns and a more discerning customer base (Lucas et al., 1994*).* Within this context we aimed to develop long-term evaluation methodologies, using the Ford/Loughborough University part-time MSc in Advanced Automotive Engineering program, as our development focus.

We adopted a stakeholder approach, reframing little "e" (Easterby-Smith, 1981) evaluation, as instrumental method, to Evaluation (big "E") as a pluralistic values based concept, to integrate theory and practice. Revealing the multiple and shifting values that stakeholders attached to the learning and to the project, led to diverse outcomes that can be articulated through Mark's model (Easterby-Smith, 1994), including how the program was meeting planned needs (controlling),

learning generated about the program (learning), evidence of learning application (proving), and changes to enhance learning (Improving).

Evaluation (and this model) remains central to management learning practice (e.g. CIPD, 2021; Hirsh and Garrow, 2011), yet its conceptual potential is under-explored in this journal. Only two articles with "evaluation" in the title or abstract since 2010 take a conceptual approach: to interrogate understandings of knowledge claims evaluation through examining what happens in practice (Peters et al., 2011), and to propose alternative affective-based evaluation methods that challenge the prevalent quantitative management education paradigm (Ward and Shortt, 2012).

These articles indicate Evaluation's contemporary relevance to management learning as a concept to enable "active engagement with difference" (Greene, 2002: 262), providing a values counterpoint to challenge measurement-centric assessment within the rise of educational audit cultures (Ratle et al., 2020). As a value-laden undertaking (Khakee, 2003), evaluation offers potential to connect theory and practice through a deeper questioning of what value, for whom and for what purpose, surfacing differences, and tensions among and between different sets of values. With calls for robust conceptual frameworks that reflect and interrogate the complexity of management learning with a view to social change (Anderson et al., 2019), perhaps it is timely, honouring Mark's legacy, for a renewed focus on Evaluation.

Robin Snell: Understanding organizational unlearning in times of turmoil

I accompanied Mark on an academic visit from Lancaster University to Beijing and Guangzhou around 1985. He was paving the way for a major collaborative research project and we ran workshops on experiential learning and organizational behavior. Besides being impressed by Mark's skills of leadership and diplomacy, I remember the bicycles, the dusty premises, the FEC notes, the general lack of facilities, and the way the steel company that we visited appeared to be functioning as a *danwei* (see Lu and Perry, 2015). That China would go on to abandon many tenets of traditional socialism and come to house world-leading indigenous companies and prominent business schools before 2020 was unimaginable for me then. The ensuing institutional and economic changes have necessitated radical adjustments in our mental models of the nature of Chinese markets (Boisot and Child, 1996), organizational capabilities, and stakeholder relationships. For relatively peripheral actors or observers, the associated "unlearning" may have entailed "a gradual, continuous process" proceeding in tandem with learning (Tsang and Zahra, 2008: 1447). For those more closely involved, "unlearning" may have taken place in the context of "punctuated equilibrium" (Hu, 2012), "episodic change" or crisis (Tsang and Zahra, 2008: 1447).

The idea of unlearning was identified as one of seven major contributions in our field (Easterby-Smith et al., 2004). It can be conceptualized at both individual (Hislop et al., 2014) and organizational (Fiol and O'Connor, 2017a) levels. Unlearning involves the destabilization, questioning, "wiping" and discarding of established routines of thinking and acting, and (normally) the substitution thereof with new understandings and routines (Fiol and O'Connor, 2017b). For individuals, "deep" unlearning entails changes in values and assumptions and "may be accompanied by . . . anxiety, fear and confusion." (Hislop et al., 2014: 552). In order to proceed effectively at a wider organizational level, unlearning may require leadership interventions that do not simply dwell on the inadequacy of old frames and habits but also invoke positive sentiments such as hope in order to fuel experimentation with new ways of seeing, thinking, and acting (Fiol and O'Connor, 2017b). Easier said than done.

How managers and organizations unlearn (and learn to unlearn) in the face of a cocktail of disruptive events and incompatible stakeholder demands remains poorly understood. I believe that high quality qualitative research studies (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008c) will be necessary means for

developing clearer and more nuanced understanding of such processes. Obtaining credible data about contextual challenges is likely to require fine-grained probing into and cross-checking of basic facts, while insights into processes of unlearning are unlikely to be gained in the absence of trust between researchers and members of case organizations. Mark's comparative study of HRM practices in China and the UK (Easterby-Smith et al., 1995) is an exemplar of how to build trust and cooperation across organizational and national boundaries and of how to elicit a richly triangulated qualitative dataset.

Elena Antonacopoulou: Sensuousness activating organizational learning-beyond absorptive capacity

I celebrate Mark's commitment to understand the strategic significance of learning which we examined in several of our co-authored research outputs (Easterby-Smith and Antonacopoulou, 2006; Easterby-Smith et al., 2004; 2008a, 2008b) and which has inspired my efforts to advance further. Our shared interest in the processual orientation toward organizational learning and the sensitivity toward the socio-political dynamics that underpin knowledge management practices in organizations, also propelled our shared commitment to account for the subtle and invisible nature of learning as a process which tends to resist traditional attempts to isolate, measure, and pin-down. Arresting the unfolding process and movement as integral characteristics to learning as a phenomenon remains one of my life-long scholarly passions.

I focus here on "*activation*" as integral to strategic organizational learning drawing on Zahra and George (2002) to account beyond stimulus and response in activating the learning process. Activation of learning is more than the spark propelling knowledge acquisition or behavioral change as it is traditionally understood. It is a complex array of other subtle processes that comprise and contribute to what this activation itself creates which is not just learning but a response to the unknown, so critical to the volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of our times. In our research on knowledge management practices in organizations, we learned how this activation became central to the "absorptive capacity" defined as "the firm's ability to identify, assimilate and exploit knowledge from the environment" (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990: 129). We emphasized the role of power in the way knowledge was "absorbed" and the permeability of boundaries within and around organizations that affect the movement of ideas and incorporation in organizational practices (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008a, 2008b). Such knowledge management practices fuel idea generation and dissemination and stimulate organizational creativity which is consistent with more recent efforts to account for "idea work" (Coldevin et al., 2019) also colored by power dynamics. Such dynamics energize the dynamic capability (Zollo and Winter, 2002) and capacity to convert potential into realized absorptive capacity.

This is where my further and more recent research in the Military profession enabled me to better appreciate that the activation triggers in organizational learning are more than sensing the threat and crisis, something that this context is particularly apt in. Instead, as I have found, beyond episodic and systemic power and the permeability of boundaries, there is a sensuousness (or sensoriality Antonacopoulou, 2019) that underpins knowledge flow. Sensuousness, reflects the process of growth and maturation of individuals, communities, and organizations, and *Sensuous Organizational Learning* as a strategic response energizes responsible action that serves the common good. Learning from Mark and drawing on his scholarship legacy, this fresh conceptualization provides a foundation for theorizing afresh the "Learning Organization" explicating *Institutional Reflexivity, High Agility Organizing*, and *Learning Leadership* as key characteristics. Understanding the senses and sensuousness more widely will remain a key priority in management research and education.

Suzanne Gagnon: Future directions from Mark's scholarship—humane research

As tributes in this collection attest, Mark was not only a founder of this journal, but a central pioneer in the field of organizational learning, bringing it to prominence through his own scholarship and through spearheading collections such *Organization Learning and the Learning Organization: Developments in Theory and Practice* (1999, with John Burgoyne and Luis Araujo, Sage). For students like me, these works and Mark's scholarship provided important insight through the lens of learning into a wide range of topics in organization studies and management theory. They taught much about ensuing and continuing debates in process studies of organization, organizational change, routines, theories of knowledge, narrative and discourse, among others. Organizational learning as a fundamentally systemic, dynamic lens on organization warrants our deep attention, Mark taught, and studying it requires acumen and rigor in qualitative methodology, another major facet of Mark's legacy.

To draw on Mark's scholarship to address pressing questions in our field, I have two main reflections. The first is that this learning lens can be applied to critical areas where organizational learning would appear to be imperative, but remains weak. Here I think most prominently of equality studies. At a systems level, how can organizations shift institutional structures within their own purview to counter longstanding inequality? The processes through which this might occur are not well understood. Mark's ideas about organizational forgetting (with Marjorie Lyles, 2011, *Journal of Management Inquiry*) might be applied to understand, counter-intuitively, how "forgetting" culturally rigid modes of operating can aid in change efforts. What are these processes of forgetting? This and subsequent literature in unlearning offers a system-oriented approach to address the embeddedness of inequalities, untouched by prominent individualized ontologies in diversity and inequality studies. Mark's more recent contributions to theory in dynamic capabilities can also inform future studies of the pursuit of systemic equality as a dynamic capability in itself (indeed, some have begun this work).

A second strong implication of Mark's work for future research, that I imagine he instilled in all of his PhD students along with myself, is the importance of relevance. As a pragmatist, Mark was committed to usefulness and applicability, asking how research can inform better practice (and vice versa). He was a scholar who was in society not apart from it. Our job is to rigorously theorize from our fieldwork to create better conceptual and practical understanding. This meant attention "on the ground" to those with whom we were relating in our research, as living and breathing social actors, as are we as researchers. As such, ethics and politics inside organizations and in our research processes were elemental in his orientation to this work. His approaches to qualitative methods, happily, are well documented in his many writings on this subject. I think of "Working with pluralism: Determining quality in qualitative research" (2008, with Karen Locke and Karen Golden-Biddle), and *Management Research* (with Richard Thorpe), now in its fifth edition (2018) with thousands of citations, sources I will continue to use with students for years to come.

Mark did not steer us away from messiness or difficulty, quite the contrary. Given his inclusiveness, valuing of pluralism, optimism, and ample enactments of a commitment to developing others, it isn't surprising that his choices of scholarly preoccupation were also profoundly generative and humane, ultimately encouraging us to tackle the toughest questions.

Pavel Bogolyubov: Sustained relevance—Looking toward the future

Going back more than a decade, Mark and I were discussing my future research proposal for an ESRC Fellowship and the PhD that he was to supervise. Mark was most insistent that it had to not

only to address a clear research gap from the past or even the present, but also to have a clear outlook into the future—that is, a research gap that would remain current and relevant for years to come.

But what would this principle that Mark was so keen on—sustained relevance—mean for the field or Management Learning as a whole? After all, the fundamentals of it—such as Dewey's principles (Dewey, 1897), Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984), or Argyris and Schön's single- and double-loop learning (e.g. Argyris, 1996), to give but a few examples, are seemingly unshakable, and do not appear likely to lose their currency. However, over-laying these fundamental principles, there are some trends in the way the world is developing, having a palpable impact on Management Learning. If I were to pick one or two that I think will continue to make a large impact on those, they would be globalization, and technological development.

A more globalized, more integrated world challenges whether the essentially Western prevalent approach toward Management Learning is necessarily the best, or even the only one. Hence there has already been a growing number of publications on the alternative viewpoints, for example, the postcolonial view (Joy and Poonamallee, 2013) or the Islamic perspective (e.g. Ahmad, 2013). But do we really understand the fundamental meaning of globalization from the Management Learning point of view? Or does it require some double-loop re-think of our own fundamental assumptions about learning? For example, aforementioned Kolb's Reflective Learning Cycle, one of the most commonplace models in management learning and education, bears Western cultural biases such as individualism. But what about cultures where interdependent self-construal is prevalent (Markus and Kitayama, 1991)—does this individualist, self-confined process still apply?

The potential impact of technology going beyond the mere "we all use smartphones now" has been very recently highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and it has already been nothing but a rude awakening for me and many of my colleagues. Within Higher Education, we are pushed by the circumstances into a much more online-focused teaching mode, and it turns out that going online doesn't mean merely digitizing the content and using Zoom for seminars; the pedagogy is different (Harasim, 2000). Technology ought not to be taken for just a facilitating platform conveying the same traditional approach via different means. I would argue that the same issue would apply to management learning in a broader sense, or even to human learning and cognition as a whole; and looking further into the future, more questions arise; for example, with AI coming out of its infancy, what role will it play in the way managers learn? Will it substantially change, take on, or even eliminate some elements of it—through, for example, increasing the share the *augmented* intelligence (Pasquinelli, 2015) bears?

Maintaining the right balance between retrospection and looking into the future can be difficult if one is to anticipate the development of the field, yet to avoid speculation and blind alleys. This, however, has always been one of Mark's innumerable strengths, and an immense inspiration to me and countless others.

Editorial reflections: Holistic theory and practice—ways forward

This section demonstrates how the memories of Mark's character and its relationship with his holistic academic scholarship in sections 1 and 2 were accompanied by a nimble multi-disciplinarity and pluralism and keen interest in understanding the socio-political nature of organizations. The themes in this section make sense when we consider Mark's deep commitment to fostering others and to developing the field. We see his character and interests reflected in his approach and contributions to research methodology. We see it also in how he reconceived evaluation as a pluralistic concept with multiple values, extending existing approaches to more qualitative forms. These memorial pieces remind us of a strong and inspiring theoretical and empirical legacy in Mark's work including, but not limited to: models of how to build trust and cooperation, understanding the

strategic significance to learning through the subtle and invisible nature of learning as a process, relevance in tackling inequality through unlearning, organizational forgetting, and finally his focus on sustained relevance by balancing retrospection with looking into the future. In all this Mark demonstrated, in Gagnon's words that "he was a scholar who was in society not apart from it."

Conclusions

This collective essay was motivated by the remembrance and celebration of Mark Easterby-Smith's academic life and contribution to scholarship based on the memories of colleagues touched by his graceful, fun, insightful, purposeful, and steady presence. In getting together to mourn Mark and reflecting on his presence in our lives, we realized that his scholarly praxis in teaching, researching, serving, and building communities amounts to a distinctive practicing of management scholarship that we believe the field and profession can learn from. Mark embodied a *holistic scholarship* in countering individualistic, reductionist, and competitive tendencies that too often today appear to be the single path available to management academics.

Mark's biography and the memories shared by the contributors reveal he was widely successful according to the usual metrics of citations, awards, esteem factors, contribution, etc. Yet, while publishing, collaborating, researching, serving, leading, teaching, advising/mentoring, and networking extensively, Mark did so in non-instrumental ways, namely he did not diminish the dignity of others (students, colleagues, collaborators, knowledge informants, etc.) by reducing them as means to ends (i.e. the next article published, the next research grant, or leadership role). Mark dealt with the pressures of an increasingly competitive and commodified business academia through cherishing and empowering others. In short, Mark worked in a dialectical space between the different tensions and contradictions of academic work in ways that had great humanity and balance. As we have seen in the memories shared here, Mark was fun and serious. He was time-bound yet unhurried, making time for what was important. He was ambitious and humble, open to continuous learning. He was in the present and future-aware. Mark planned carefully yet remained curious and responsive to the unexpected. He managed but rarely supervised, and guided but did not impose, always keeping space for dialogue and reflection. He questioned rather than challenged. He was his own person but developed communities. He built theory but emphasized relevance and valued practice. He was interested in research design and equally interested in the evaluation of its impact.

As detailed in these contributions, Mark knew how to get things done. He was driven, organized, and entrepreneurial. Despite all his achievements, what emerges powerfully from the personal accounts—one of the key features of Mark's holistic approach to scholarship—is that Mark was a good human being who had integrity in his teaching, in his research, in his writing, and in his collegial relationships. He was someone who cared. Mark's entrepreneurial spirit and dedication to the field did not come at the cost of his openness toward the other, his deep relationality. As the memorials demonstrate, he showed the ability to be finely attuned to what piqued the interest of his students, colleagues, co-authors, the managers, and workers who were part of his research, and the world of knowledge they could produce, explore, and contribute to. This openness to the other was without prejudice; something extremely difficult to practice. It called for a ready ability to check one's biases and assumptions, but also to trust in the other, and be trustworthy. Not a critical scholar, Mark was not into critical social theory and did not engage directly with feminism, Marxism or postcolonialism, for example, yet never discounted them when used by his colleagues or students. Rather, Mark was a moderate, a pragmatist, who was open to ideas that could sustain the rigor of logic and the tempering of empirical scrutiny. He was deeply reflexive, constantly asking questions of himself and others, and constantly learning.

His approach also involved a steady confidence that Mark had in himself, as in others. Mark came from privilege. He was a white, "public-school" educated, English man who had studied in one of England's elite universities. His drive and confidence could be easily accounted for by his upbringing and background, but his ability to care, his integrity in staying open to knowledge and to the other, was something of his own and more rare. We like to think of it as something at the very core of his character, that he cultivated and invested in just like his many passions (e.g. for the theatre and languages).

Mark could have chosen differently, but he chose to embody academic holism. He embodied an intentionality to get the work done, to advance scholarship and develop new knowledge by researching and publishing, by building his career and contribution, and Mark did all of that enormously well, contributing to many facets of management learning. These included: management evaluation; research methods; cross cultural approaches to organizational learning; the development of the concepts of dynamic capabilities and unlearning, and building and sustaining the Organizational Learning and Management Learning communities internationally. With that focus also came the care, the wonder, the time, the trust.

While reluctant to distil specific, "final" lessons of Mark's life, if pushed we prefer to highlight Mark's attitudes, the orientations he displayed in navigating the dialectical spaces so well in embodying his holistic scholarship. As they emerge across the many memories, experiences, practices, and domains captured in the 13 contributions, we would highlight, and celebrate in Mark:

- *an orientation to pluralism*: by valuing difference and heterogeneity

- *an opening to emergence*: by respecting mystery, the unknown, the potential which involves both learning and unlearning

- *a care of others*, which requires integrity and reflexivity

- *a sensitivity to the context*, the situation, the problem at hand, which calls for rigor, and discernment.

These orientations suggest that Mark's holistic scholarship is part of a set of conduct that, while difficult is not an academic path confined to the past. It is one that can still be chosen, cultivated and built with others every day, even in the complicated, uncertain and demanding circumstances we currently face, and even more so as an alternative to suffocating self-doubt, anxiety, and self-exploitation prompted in our current conditions (Bothello and Roulet, 2019; Bristow et al., 2019). The path that we learn from Mark—holism—gives a chance to dialogue, to care, for seeing and seizing collaborative opportunities and for flourishing.

We hope that these reflections on the impact of an individual scholar on an academic community and the broader arena will lead to conversations about the future of the Management Learning community and beyond, to further reflection on the nature and purpose of academic careers.

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Notes

1. See Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) and the more recent version, Easterby-Smith et al. (2018).

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