MES 9 AGORA NOTES

Conference Structure:
The Co-Chair began by asking for feedback on the location of the conference at a hotel rather than at a university venue. He noted that hosting the conference at a venue such as the Valis Resort Hotel rather than at a university venue aimed to foster community, but impacted on the costs.
Question from the community: How many delegates are staying at the Valis Hotel Resort rather than at the cheaper venues?
Response from MES9 Conference Chair: Approximately 90 delegates staying at Valis.
Responses from the community:

- Some delegates choose to stay at the alternative venues for reasons other than costs.
- Some delegates (those who applied for financial support and teachers) were offered cheaper accommodation at the Volos Hostel.
- Sense of community created by delegates staying together is important.
- Choice of accommodation is a good compromise. Two minute walk to the venue is fine.
- Sharing meals is important for fostering community.
- Agreement on importance of eating together, but if offer of accommodation is offered elsewhere, this needs to be accompanied by promise of safe transit between venues for all.
- Need to take care that different accommodation costs does not lead to differentiation in the community. Financial supplementation by the MES (for example, surplus from previous conferences or a levy) could be used to try to avoid such differentiation.

Location of MES9:
Comments from the community:

- "Great", "Beautiful"
- The conference is often held in Europe
- The conference location in Europe is historical, as most of those involved initially were based there. Also depends on who volunteers to host.
- But cannot just rely on who volunteers as there may be constraints that prevent other geographical reasons making an offer to host. We need find ways to support the conference to happen outside of Europe. Moving outside of Europe might involve an active choice.
- Are there certain hubs that are cheaper for most to get to? Growth in the group over time has led to the expansion in the possible venues. Need to consider a strategy for sharing of costs and expertise across regions. Also using combined committees with international collaborations, distributed work.

- A destination in Europe might be cheaper for those in Europe, but not the case for those elsewhere. Hosting in other places enables local participation, has symbolic value.
- 2017 is the first year that a call for donations has been made to the community.

Research Sessions:
The Co-Chair asked for reflections on whether the 10 minute research session is productive. It was noted that how this is applied seems to vary.
Comments from the community:
- Many ways to do this. Assumption that delegates have read the paper, but this may or may not have been done. What about someone else presenting your paper? This requires a deep reading and respect.
- There was support for this option, with CERME given as an example – seven minutes, strict timing, very small groups, productive space to work in. However it was also noted that CERME structure differs from other aspects of MES, e.g. fixed working groups that meet consistently throughout the conference.
- Came as a surprise for a participant attending for the first time. Noted that two sessions attended thus far structured differently: Presentation then small group vs. presentation then Q&A and then small groups (the latter gives one time to formulate thoughts for the discussion).
- Another participant attending for the first time felt the format was good for encouraging discussion. But discussion too theoretical, and did not get as far as considering practical, concrete solutions.
- The expectation that participants have read all the papers beforehand is problematic, as out loads do not allow us. It is also not easy to read papers during the conference, given the full schedule.
- Regarding the timing of the conference it was noted that the Jewish Passover dates were not taken into account when planning MES9 (function of the composition of the IC).

Language of communication:
The Co-Chair noted the IC discussions re- creating the opportunity to write abstracts, and slides in other languages.
Comments from the community:
- Such slides were used in a MES9 session and this seems to have been welcomed by all in the session.
- Need to be aware of danger of creating language hierarchies when we discuss which languages. Rather consider offering the opportunity for the local language related to the host country. Needs to be decided by the host. Other possibility – but needs volunteers – is translating abstracts into other languages.

- Language is about communication and accessibility. Abstract translation symbolic, but huge amount of work with small payoff re- access and communication.
- Perhaps symposia organisers could choose the language(s) for that session?
- But this symposia possibility may lead to constrain access and lead to exclusion. Pace of MES is slow. We have lots of time to discuss so there is scope for presenters to present even in broken English. Can use the time to grapple with this.
- So far this conversation is about rules. But our choices also regulate us. What can we do to support our colleagues and be responsive to their needs? For example, thinking about slides choices when compiling slides.
- MES participants need to be supportive in the moment. This might involve, for example recognising that a participants might need encouragement to convey an idea in ones' own language. Should we identify ourselves with labels indicating which languages we speak? Also about making the space welcoming.
- Need to consider language of communication outside the conference. For example, placing abstracts in languages other than English on the website allows our work to be found by others.
- Reference was made to the work of Meaney at a previous MEs conference. She argues that by using English we shape the knowledge base.
- Good idea to prepare in more than one language, but amount of work this requires need to be noted. This can change the possibilities, by pushing us to think more deeply. Also allowing more people to engage.
- It is noted that the most populous nations have no/less representation at MES. Should MES consider an "affirmative action" programme? Can we reach out to a particular language group to support them? Can this help us to build the body? E.g. Mandarin speakers?
- Argument that we are "trapped" in English. We need ot work with this by speaking slowly, accepting that 'broken' English is part of the community. English as additional language speakers speak slowly because they are translating. English home language speakers need to consciously slow down.
- Our bodily habit is related to our speaking and we need help with this. This should be included in guidelines for Chairs. Also support for plenaries, for example, what it is possible to say slowly in a given time.
- Creating space for local languages will enable participation of local teachers. Agree with idea of online abstracts in other languages. Agree re- speaking slowly. Also reminder that low tone (''speaking for themselves") may not be clear for others. Need to consider participants with hearing difficulties.
- Value of reflective process that MES enables. MES is a space where we should think about time, space and pace. Also make this more prominent in guidelines.

- When presenting in a language that is not your home language the anticipation of questions can be frightening.

Reviews:
The Co-Chair referred to some of the aspects of the review process for MES9:
- The opportunity to resubmit papers after review led to administration difficulties. Should we do this?
- Option for language editing offered for MES9.
- Getting timely responses from reviewers was a difficulty.
- IC has prepared guidelines on reviews.
- Some MES9 reviews unhelpfully long but others unhelpfully short.

Comments from the community:
- The guidelines document was prepared following discussions about the review process at MES7. Designed in the spirit of MES being an inclusive community, that is, that we should use the review process to build the community rather than exclude.
- Noted that the online review submission process contains categories that need to be responded to.
- Making the review process 'inclusive' could mean many things. For example, ICMI reviewers have been told not to exclude any submission. What does quality mean? We need to be careful of accepting anything. When funding is related to paper being accepted it can be problematic if the paper is poor. Inclusivity does not mean anyone can come. Need to give nurturing feedback, even if this means saying that a paper is not ready yet.
- The review process is an issue that gets revisit regularly at MES conferences. We do have criteria for making decisions. Discussion at MES8 pointed to the need to focus, not on structure and language but whether content of paper is aligned with MES interests. What does one do if we have two "Yes"? (When you have two "No's", can send to a third reviewer.) Process becomes unmanageable for a small group to overview the whole process – it becomes like editing an journal/book vs. organising conference and producing conference proceedings.
- We owe it to people who are struggling with 'quality". MES has unique opportunity to offer 'work in progress' papers. Accepting a paper not only enables funding but also mentoring opportunities at the conference, and eventually leading to a peer reviewed paper. By providing such support we demonstrate our commitment to equity and social justice.
- The "project presentation" option was originally intended as a "work in progress" option. Resubmission is problematic, but so is having one chance at producing a paper. Sometimes a review is based on language as basis for rejection, with no chance of resubmission. Some people may want to come and learn at the

conference, even though the first submission is not closely aligned with MES interests or use the valued theories. We cannot exclude - on the basis of one submission - people who want to sharpen their work.

- Review focused on paper rather than on presentation. What about requiring that submission includes a section on how the paper is to be presented? Would this help the decision-making? Yes/no responses to criteria not helpful. Prefer rather feedback on how to present my work in a way that is helpful for others to understand.

- Community service work not valued at my institution. However, acceptance of a paper on this for MRS9 has shifted perceptions in the value of eight years of my work. Appreciate the value of this shift.

- Appreciation of thought the MES9 Committee put into matching local specificities of papers with reviewers.

- How do we know whether comments made in the review process are taken seriously? Should the reviewer check?

- What about offering some 'coaching' in advance of submission? MES researchers are already doing this informally. Can we formalise this? For example, use the webpage to list researchers who offer to play this mentoring role. This could assist with language editing, too.

- For MES9 - good fit re- which papers went where.

- Process relies a lot on reviewers, and for MES9 reviewers were sent the criteria. We all share responsibility for review quality. Criteria for choosing reviewers is that they have to have participated in MES before. But for MES9 the Conference Chair still had to look at all the reviews. But only possible to scan. What about papers with Yes/Yes reviews but need language editing and structure help. Chair needed to make judgements about what needs to be done beyond Yes/Yes. Language support was announced before the official submissions deadline, only one paper was submitted. Some authors asked for support late. Need shared responsibility for how the process runs. Sometimes comments provided not constructive. Can authors come back to ask about constructive feedback? Author responsibility to work with feedback.

- Need to consider the purpose of the submitted paper? Is it to get access to the conference? But also to be published, and this needs criteria. MES conference organisers have, over the years, made attempts to give support re-language and structure. Proceedings are public face of MES to rest of mathematics education. Is review process trying to address the two purposes – access and publication - simultaneously? Proposal for a two stage process: Initial submissions regarded as ready for publication or initial submission is regarded as something of interest to the MES community, but needs revision before publication. Both sets of papers are placed online prior to the conference. Electronic proceedings – which

include papers revised post-conference – are published after the conference. This proposal will require a rethink about providing hard copy proceedings. The printing of this hard copies adds to conference costs. In the past excess hard copies have been placed in libraries, but these institutions are increasingly electronic anyway.

IC Structure

The Co-Chair noted the MES community has tended to avoid being over formal and structured. This tends to work except when IC members are not active in the discussions for a long period. Being on the IC comes with an expectation that one will contribute to the tasks. The following guidelines for the composition have been suggested: about 20 members, diversity re- gender and demographics, and length of time on committee. The IC will respond as necessary to ensure such diversity. Nomination forms will be provided during MES9. Encouragement to ask those involved what being on the IC means/requires. The following IC subgroups have been proposed (as well as positions of Chair and Secretary): finance, communication, planning for the next conference, programme committee.

Comments from the community:

- Need to make provision for continuity on the IC. Need turnover but also keep institutional memory.

MES9 - AGORA II

Norms that support the conversations

- Very interesting to have these norms. It is better to speak about the values not the norms. The values that we respect and let us more free.
- Many people start to experience certain years in MES community and people know to interact. It is not necessary to put the norms.
- Do we have to have the prescriptions to be put there? If people have oppressive remarks, it could be challenged.
- There was a good guidance for the discussion groups but some of them were ambiguous. Maybe we could have more structures? Maybe we could have brief feedback across the discussions groups?
- I do like the idea but we should have values rather than norms. The questions of inequalities and status- differences among us age, experience and so on, which may influence the way the people speak and interact. How can we ensure the everybody has a voice?
- We need to think how to give feedback? Do we need to come back together? Maybe we do not come back together and leave open rather than close?
- Following norms. It is not possible to follow all the norms. People can play with these norms when giving feedbacks. Having norms is ok.
- Being in the MES, the image came to my mind being tiredness and exhausted. There is also a lot of care and emotions and also discussing issues deeply. Sometimes people disagree. We do not need to put the series of regulations. Up and down.
- This is pretty common in the US context. There are many organizations and teacher ed programs, people think about ensuring everyone's voice. I appreciate the idea of values. We'll question the power relations in the society and in this room? Representations of the different voices. I see this as an attempt to address this issue. What about the co-construction of the space for those of us who has more power?
- My first MES conference. For the newcomers in this community, it is good to have clear and explicit expectations to set the tone of this community and have safe space. It is about how to engage in the discussions. What about the status of different type of presentations (i.e. poster, short oral)? Are there a sign of status or another form of communication? We need to think about the implicit power relations?
- I thought a lot about these lists. Including more bullet points also excludes other. We also interpret different values differently because we come from different locations of the world.
- First MES. My experience: It allows me certain things to see and I learned a lot about intersectionality and positioning theory. Don't we reproduce precisely traditional intellectuals and working class? But we have teacher-researchers as organic intellectuals. We need to look for teacher-researcher to invite MES and represent working class. What about the police of 10-minute presentation? Why do we have to present in 10 minutes? I wasn't able to say in 10 minutes what I wanted to say. These two boxes I feel we did not attend.

- Similar issues and questions. Is MES our social project consisting with our values and goals? What is our larger project? Is that mathematics ed and society? Where are the journalist, community organizers etc.?
- Pattern of the MES conferences. Looking at the proceedings is a way to connect with each others. In the first conferences, teachers reacted to the plenaries. There could be text in these proceedings from the teachers. There are many ways of opening these. What about our memories?

Proposed Statement about PISA

Indian government is about to participate in the PISA tests. Anita Rampal initiates a statement from MES community to respond this coming policy.

- Can we manage to translate to many languages? PISA is becoming an important issue to rethink in other countries, too.
- The question I wanted to raise that is MES a community to generate a consensual statement? Maybe people can sign (I would personally sign)-
- What kind of an organization are we? I think we need to make a stance, we need to be bolder. This is one way to do this. We can develop a force and stance for the things we care. This helps us to become an organization. But is there a form of uniformization? Unified community?
- After 1st PISA in 2003, we organize a meeting to discuss the problems of PISA with the teachers coming from different countries.
- I am part of the organizations that make statement. There are specific things of MES can say about these issues. We can and should support. It is possible to reach a consensus to give a powerful message to those policies.
- Change in the text: We can say MES9. This could be a MES9 statement.
- Using new forms of communications in the social media to include other people who are here at MES9.

Thanks to Anna Chronaki

- Academics also have work load and might do work without being paid.
- It might be expensive to come to this conference. For others it might not be. We need to think about the justice here.
- The way of participations of teachers from Greece was possible by volunteering. And also students are volunteered in the conference.
- All the facilities are paid- mics, lights, internet etc.
- Double roles of the volunteers: Not only they helped around but also participated in the intellectual activities such as discussion groups, sessions.
- Thanks to volunteers and local organizing committee
- Thanks to plenary speakers

Next Location for MES10: Hyderabad

- Welcome Song
- Invitation-welcome presentation