

# Greetings from Stefan Gruner

HI DERRICK :-)

We met like modern people meet in these days: via the internet. I had just broadcast some of my usual comments to the entire membership of Formal Methods Europe (FME) via that organisation's mailing list, when you –then head of department here at CS/UP– where in search for an external PhD reporter for the thesis of Marlene Ross (who has, by the way, also written a contribution for this festschrift). In those days a member of FME as well –I don't know if you still are today– you picked up my message and –for whatever reason– you decided to reply. You might imagine my surprise about a response from so far away as South-Africa on the other half of the globe, but your message caught me and we kept in touch. Not much later I was officially declared external reporter to Marlene's thesis –a book like a brick!–and I still keep (in one of my dozens of paper boxes) the official letter from UP with all those funny words in *Afrikaans* printed on it: *Faculteit der Natuur- en Landbouwetenskappe, Universiteit van Pretoria*. This PhD reporter job was the first one of that kind for me, only two years after I had received a PhD (of very modest quality) myself. Yes, those were the days of small bureaucracy – I doubt that in our times of big bureaucracy any academic committee would agree to the proposal of having a young dude as external PhD reporter, with no substantial publications to his name and completely unknown to the academic community (except for making a splash via the mailing list of FME). But Derrick, as we know him, does not think inside the box of customs and traditions, and I was so proud of being chosen as “external” that my report about Marlene's “brick” was probably the longest external PhD report in the history of the department. Not much later you –still head of the department– offered me a position as lecturer, which I *nolens*

*volens* declined because I had just subscribed to my position as a research fellow at the University of Southampton (where also Judith had been for quite a while – in fact she had just left before I came), and I did not want to upset anybody by resigning from a job to which I had just subscribed. (By the way: my research mentor there at Southampton had just written a CSP Model Checking Tool in Prolog, something that you had already done some twenty years ago.) You, Derrick, showed a lot of understanding for my situation, and we decided to keep in touch until, at a later point in time, another job opportunity here at CS/UP would crop up. This happened in the year 2005 (though you were then not HoD any more) and *only* 18 month later (thanks to the *rapid* processing of my residence permit application by South Africa's efficient immigration bureaucracy), in July 2006, I eventually arrived. Needless to say how well we got along together since that day, both inside and outside *varsity* (as they call a university here in this land). Only briefly I want to mention how you acted like the biblical *good Samaritan* when I was recently hospitalised, and how you also helped me with your signature under our NRF-supported Roggenbach-project which I was not allowed to sign due to my lack of South-African citizenship. As a token of gratitude I asked Markus to write a paper for the festschrift too :-)

As a foreigner with some sensors for language phenomena, I have noticed again and again that South-Africans seem to be “hooked” –possibly even unconsciously– to three particular “buzzwords” in these days. Open any newspaper or listen to any official *Verlautbarung*, and you can be pretty sure that any of these buzzwords will not be far. These three buzzwords are: “leadership”, “empowerment” (to “empower”), and “celebration” (to “celebrate”). Words, especially such “public” phrases, are like windows through which a language-sensitive foreigner can look straight into the soul of a nation, to see their hopes, their dreams, their wishes and aspirations – regardless of the factual truth which might occasionally be very different. The reason why I mention these three words here is their suitability for providing a contrast background

against which you, Derrick, are standing out: *unzeitgemäss*, as a man like Nietzsche would have called it, beyond the fashion of the day. Where the common voice calls "leadership", you emphasize (and practice) the moral as well as epistemological autonomy of the individual, or, in the words of Kant: *Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst-verschuldeten Unmündigkeit*. Where the common voice calls "empowerment", you would rather and more cautiously speak about "enabling" – knowing from 60 years of life experience that power is something with its very own problems attached to it: either as an illusion of power, to keep the de-facto powerless calm, or as a too-much of de-facto power in the hands of some people onto which it should better not have been bestowed at all. Last but not least: there, where a self-righteous *zeitgeist* is keen to "celebrate" almost anything and everything, you Derrick have not forgotten that we are fallible and that the quality of our achievements will be judged by history: *not now*, but only in 100 or 200 years from now (or even *after* history – if you want to assume a religious point of view). In fact, history has shown us plenty of cases in which those, who were regarded as important in their own time, are now as dead as they can only be, whereas others, who have been ignored or belittled during their own lifetime, are now coming out into the light as those ones who truly deserve attention and respect. Thus, in contrast to the popular values of "leadership", "empowerment" and "celebration", Derrick has put his emphasis on *autonomy* (versus "leadership"), *modesty* (versus "power") and *skepsis* (versus "celebration"). These three indeed –and not those fashionable buzzwords– are genuine academic values, the values of a scholar, and I hope and wish that you will be keeping them alive as long as you live and work amongst us. Derrick is leading by not trying to lead.

As mentioned at the beginning of my greetings, with *broadcasting* it all started, and now we are doing broadcasting again :-) namely with the newly invented CSP partial-parallel operator (though my own contribution to its development is, as usual, very negligible). Philosophically it has been an

interesting time as well, with more Popper, Kuhn, and the School of Frankfurt –and occasionally even Teilhard de Chardin and pope Benedict!– than it is generally recommended for mental sanity. I am glad for all those opportunities which you have made possible, and I thank you very much for them. May there be many more to come.

Thus, happy birthday, *herzlichen Glückwunsch und alles Gute*, from a German "gypsy" who is always far away from home, and very much at home at the very same time.

[Pretoria: 08 June 2008]