The Intellectual and Institutional Development of BUIRA:

A 60 Years Retrospective

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Forward

Horen Voskeritsian's 60 year history of BUIRA is a magnificent achievement and we were more than fortunate to have had available someone of strong intellectual insight who was able to provide a methodologically robust and focused analysis and evaluation of what limited extant information was available about BUIRA and its past activities in the field of Industrial Relations (IR). Importantly, this historical assessment lays down a benchmark that enables BUIRA to take stock of its future direction within the challenging environments of academia and society. I joined BUIRA in the early 1990s, which Horen identifies as a defining time for what BUIRA has become today. Having served on the Executive Committee (EC) for nine of the past 11 years, I have been privileged with a unique insight into how BUIRA as an institution has developed and changed in the recent past. I would like to offer some reflections and future observations picking up particularly on the three parameters Horen identifies as significant: the administration of the Association, membership policies and actions.

So far the administration of BUIRA has survived largely on a grace and favour basis, by way of a heavy cost subsidy to fund its whole way of being. First, every activity relies heavily on the overt and tacit financial and administrative commitment of the host institution of the officers in stewardship of BUIRA. Apart from a senior management pledge, oiling of the wheels of day-to-day business depends on the regular presence of a highly competent administrator who is conversant with getting things done in today's cost-driven university environment. Second, the extent to which the administrator's job is made more or less difficult depends upon the decisions of the 13 people that comprise the EC. Third, the extent to which many things actually happen at all and on time relies on a major time commitment from the BUIRA officers.

BUIRA business is no longer restricted to the thrice-yearly EC meetings: it has become necessarily and routinely virtual thanks to email. The administrative burden has increased as a function of the complexity of a more substantive BUIRA agenda during the past three years, planned and unforeseen. Even so measures to streamline routine administration have been made, such as the introduction of formal application and approval process based on fully costed institutional bids to host the annual conference two years in advance. Major challenges have included the implementation of a subscription increase (with a concomitant aim to ascertain more reliable membership levels) and the creation of a members' email list. In response to the Keele dispute names were collated for an open protest letter, a special one day conference was mounted and funds were collected to pay for a BUIRA statement that was published in the Guardian. There was the production and distribution of dedicated BUIRA publications, the redesign of the format for BUIRA News, the mounting of an Equality and Diversity Initiative, commissioning the writing of this history, the organisation of the 60th Anniversary Conference and the development a new and sustainable website of greater potential to replace one of limited ability that disappeared unexpectedly into the ether. Some of these developments have begun to chip away at some of the administrative burden, for example, BUIRA News is now posted electronically on the website and by email.

Further exploitation of the website's facilities will also ameliorate some of the workload; it will also allow for greater transparency, discussion and debate and feedback among members. That said the amount of paperwork generated over the past three years is likely to increase the size of the BUIRA archive of 57 years ten times over.

BUIRA membership remains strong and is continually regenerating itself in the direction of a younger and more gender equal and diverse population. The implementation of the subscription increase has taken three years to reach the point at which the membership numbers of round 500 can be regarded as more or less accurate, although not all members are paying the new fee, in spite of numerous reminder letters. Importantly the extra income from subscriptions and other sources has enabled the EC to finance quite an ambitious programme of activity for members including substantial website investment, the production and free distribution of BUIRA publications and the creation of bursaries for doctoral students to attend IIRA and BUIRA conferences.

BUIRA's actions are now much more than the organisation and mounting of the annual conference and dealing with occasional correspondence, as the activities of the past three years have shown. In the last four years three new Study Groups (Migrant Workers, Teaching IR and the History of IR) have been created and two others (Public Sector IR and Small Medium-sized Enterprises) have been revived. Many of the now seven Study Groups (the other two are London BUIRA and Comparative and International IR) are now inter- and intra-institutional collaborations with regular meetings taking place at different venues around the country to maximise attendance. BUIRA and its individual members have become more active and vocal in the public domain, notably in response to the Keele and BA disputes. Apart from the publication in the Guardian of the statement headed 'Critical Thinking Under Attack' the letters page often features members' contributions. The most notable recent example about the BA dispute was masterminded the Phil Taylor and others, prompting much furore among BA senior management as well as attracting considerable media attention.

In somewhat controversial circumstances, two institutions have now been chosen to lead BUIRA over the next six years, first Strathclyde and then Leeds. This should not be viewed in negative fashion because both teams have already outlined new ideas to take BUIRA forward that further consolidate other stewardships' more recent intentions to manage business more strategically. The extent to which new initiatives can be realised depends on the sustainability of past practices and the ability of the EC to identify new resources and means to manage the BUIRA business of the future. The challenges ahead are how BUIRA is administered, what its membership should be and what actions BUIRA can feasibly mount and engage in. All these issues point to the need for a review of BUIRA Rules and custom and practice. Notwithstanding, BUIRA is in great shape, thanks to the collective efforts of its membership, and looks set to thrive and prosper for many years to come.

Rosemary Lucas, President (2007-10), Manchester Metropolitan University

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Abstract

The foundation of BUIRA's predecessor in 1950 signified an important turn in the academic life of Great Britain, as it set the proper bases for the development of the field of Industrial Relations in the country. Although the study of industrial relations-related matters occupied the British literature since the 19th century, it was the establishment of BUIRA that gave the impetus for the further institutionalisation of the field. However, BUIRA was not always perceived, either by its members or by the rest of the society, as a professional association actively representing a community of "Industrial Relations" scholars; the passage of BUIRA from an informal annual meeting, or "gentlemen's" club', to a professional association occurred gradually. In parallel to the evolution of BUIRA's identity, its role also changed, from an association interested primarily in the promotion of its members' interests to an association actively interfering in the public debate concerning the future of the field of Industrial Relations in Britain. Operating, nowadays, in a rather hostile environment for the study of industrial relations, BUIRA seems to resist the degenerating trends in British academia, and to continue to be valued as an important institution for British Industrial Relations. However, this does not mean that changes cannot or should not occur, to preserve and advance its position in this new environment in order to continue to help in the field's development.

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List of Abbreviations

AGM	Annual General Meeting
ALSISS	Academy of the Learned Societies in Social Sciences
ARP	Annual Review Paper
BJIR	British Journal of Industrial Relations
BUIRA	British Universities Industrial Relations Association
EC	Executive Committee
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
IIRA	International Industrial Relations Association
IRRU	Industrial Relations Research Unit
IUSGIR	Inter-University Study Group in Industrial Relations
LERA	Labor and Employment Relations Association
MoL	Ministry of Labour
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
SASE	Society for the Advancement of Socio-economics
SIT	Society of Industrial Tutors
SSRC	Social Sciences Research Council
THES	Times Higher Education Supplement
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UCU	University and College Union
UIRA	University Industrial Relations Association
WEA	Workers' Educational Association
WERS	Workplace Employment Relations Survey

Introduction

The history of the *British Universities Industrial Relations Association* (BUIRA) is closely tied to the history of the field of Industrial Relations (IR) in Britain. Although one may talk of an IR prehistory, represented primarily by the works of the Webbs, or by the wider 19th century literature on labour issues (2003), the actual emergence of a *field* of IR occurred when the study of industrial relations became more systematic and was concentrated around certain institutions that provided a material 'body' to the abstract nature of thought. The beginning may be said to have happened in the early 1930s, with the establishment of the Montague Burton chairs in Industrial Relations in Cambridge, Leeds, and Cardiff but this can only be perceived as an *ad hoc* attempt to guide research and teaching towards a specific ideological direction (as was the case with the equivalent departments and Schools in the US – see Kaufman (1993; 2004)); it is not coincidental, for example, that Montague Burton's initial aim was to fund chairs in "Industrial Peace", and it was only after Keynes's intervention, who argued that such a title may provoke many a member of staff in Cambridge, that the title "Industrial Relations" was eventually selected, following the example of the chairs on International Relations that Montague Burton also funded (William Brown, personal communication). In reality, the actual institutionalisation of the field began with the establishment of BUIRA's predecessor, the *Inter-University Study Group in Industrial Relations* (IUSGIR), in May 1950. This group was the first IR forum in Britain, which brought together the scattered academics interested in the subject of IR.

To argue that BUIRA was always a professional scientific association, in the sense of a body that represents the field's community and acts in such a way as to promote and support the intellectual nature of the field and the work of the said community, both within the scientific world and in the wider society, is at least anachronistic. Although such elements could indeed be found in that early Study Group, it is mistaken to assume that they were directed towards the creation, or the support, of the IR community of the time (if such a term is meaningful anyway). Thus, to claim, as Berridge and Goodman (1988) did, that "among the first aims of BUIRA … was to develop the intellectual and research foundations of industrial relations" can be true only under certain conditions, and once the historical context in which BUIRA developed has been taken into consideration. It is the primary aim of this paper to investigate these conditions and to clarify the nature of the Association by tracing its intellectual and institutional development from its foundation in 1950 to the present day.

To fully understand the development of an association, however, one must not solely rely on how the association was perceived by various individuals, or how it identified itself. On the contrary, it is the role of the historians to reconstruct the identity of their subject by examining its role in the environment in which it operated – in our case, the position BUIRA occupied within the field of IR. For, since BUIRA claimed to represent the IR community in Britain, one must examine whether these claims had any concrete basis in reality. To evaluate this, one should examine three parameters: the administration of the association, its membership policies, and its actions. The administration needs to be considered to establish whether the

association has an organisational character or whether is just an *ad hoc* collection of individuals; the membership policies will show whether the association is, indeed, a pan-communal scientific association, and when exactly it acquired this characteristic, and its actions will reveal whether the claims of being a professional scientific association, in the sense described previously, have any bearing in reality.

Based on the above, the paper has three main sections. In the first part I will trace the development of the organic structure of the Association by examining the evolution of its administrative structures and its membership policies. In the second part, I focus on the actions of BUIRA in relation to its role as a scientific body and examine whether they are in accordance with the Association's claim that it represents and promotes the academic study of IR. Finally, in the third section, I will evaluate the structural position of BUIRA and I will conclude by discussing the possible role the Association may occupy in the future.

The Institutionalisation of BUIRA

Perhaps one of the most difficult tasks concerning BUIRA is the determination of its nature; for although the Association defines itself as a "learned society representing the scholars in the fields of work and employment studies ('industrial relations')", the perceptions regarding its actual nature vary among individuals: Rosemary Lucas, for instance (BUIRA President 2007 – 2010) regards BUIRA as "the academic voice for the field of IR" (Rosemary Lucas, personal communication), whereas Linda Dickens (BUIRA President, 1998 – 2001) argues that BUIRA never was, nor is, "a body which speaks for the professional externally. It is very much an association of people in teaching and researching in IR, not a lobbying organisation or a representative voice for the profession outwards" (Linda Dickens, personal communication). Others regard BUIRA as just an 'annual conference' and a forum that provides opportunities for social networking in the, by now traditional, free bar. Faced with these different conceptions, it is important to clarify the nature of the Association and to trace its intellectual and institutional development. The working hypothesis of the paper is that BUIRA *is* a professional scientific association, but that it was not always so – BUIRA gradually evolved to this state as a result of various internal and external processes. My aim, therefore, will be, first, to ascertain the truth of the former proposition and, second, to examine how BUIRA reached this status. To do so, however, it is necessary to clarify the characteristics of the professional scientific association.

As mentioned previously, the scientific association is an organisation that represents the field's community and actively promotes and supports the study of the field (Voskeritsian 2009: 42). According to this definition, a professional association should have three important characteristics: first, since it is an organisation, it should have a structure that will be able to support its functions; second, it should be open to the field's community and, third, it should be engaged in actions that promote and support the field. The latter issue will be examined in more detail in the next section; for the time being it is important to consider in more detail the nature of the word 'community', for its definition will determine who may and who may not become a member of the association – and, in a sense, it will be

the criterion according to which one can judge whether an organisation is, indeed, a scientific association.

Although the definition of the scientific community may be a contested issue, for our purposes it is legitimate to accept as its member anyone who participates in the workings and processes of science; that is, anyone who is involved in the development of the intellectual edifice of science and in its dissemination to any third party (this involves both researchers *and* teachers of a specific scientific subject)[1]. Based on the above, a professional scientific association should *at least* allow as its members anyone researching and teaching the subject it represents[2]. To determine, therefore, BUIRA's identity, we have to examine its organisational structure and membership policy.

Early Steps towards Institutionalisation

The title 'BUIRA' was adopted in 1967, seventeen years after the foundation of the initial group that constituted the core of the Association. The original title of that group – the *Inter-University Study Group in Industrial Relations* – stressed from the beginning its amateur nature, by including the term "study group" in its title. The primary aim of that body was to serve as a network for the exchange of ideas in an annual meeting and was never intended to function as a representative body for the IR community in Britain. The Group's networking nature was also clear from the beginning, when it was stated that its functions would be primarily three: to hold further annual meetings, to circulate useful information at intervals between conferences, and to promote the interests of its members. Although in those early years some basic administrative structures, which are still retained, existed (there was a President, a Secretary, an AGM in the annual conference, and a Bulletin which served as a communication tool for its members) the group had not as yet developed any formal rules or policies that could define it as an organisation to the wider society and to the social scientific community.

The professionalisation of that semi-official group occurred gradually, when it became evident that the rise in membership, the complexity of organising a large annual conference, and the serving of the group's initial aims, required a more

[1] A stricter sociological, but not necessarily historical, definition of the scientific community could also include as a criterion the holding by its members of a professional qualification that proves, in a sense, that its holder is capable for participating in the community – in the modern era this certification is the PhD. This is a strict criterion for its application could lead to an anachronistic reading of the historical record – even in recent times, many people who were accepted as members of the scientific community (based on the less strict definition provided earlier) did not hold PhDs. In the case of Industrial Relations, many of the early members of BUIRA did not satisfy this criterion; Allan Flanders, for example, had neither a PhD nor an undergraduate degree for that matter. For an interesting discussion regarding the historical definition of the scientific community see Gascoigne (1995; 1992).

[2] Notice that this is the *minimum* criterion for the characterisation of an organisation as a scientific association. Obviously, this may be modified as the association thinks proper. For instance, it may also allow as members people who belong to the scientific community, but not necessarily to the field the association represents. Also note that the upper boundaries of the association are not set in my definition: the association, for instance, may decide to open up its membership to anyone interested in joining without any reference to a person's professional qualifications.

bureaucratic structure. Although the group took its first steps towards its professionalisation in 1957, by changing its name to *University Industrial Relations Association* (UIRA), it was only in 1967 that the bases for the current structure were established when the Association created its first set of official rules and adopted its current name. It must be noted that, while a number of operating procedures existed in the past, "they had never been established as formal rules" (Ben Roberts, quoted in AGM Minutes 1967), leaving, thus, the Association without an official organisational abutment.

The 1967 rules, which have largely remained unchanged till nowadays, defined the identity and purposes of the Association and its place in the wider society and the social scientific world. The first draft of rules, produced in February 1967, clarified that the aims of the Association would be solely "of a scientific and academic character and lay strict emphasis on the study of IR without regard to political philosophic or religious considerations". The scientific nature of the Association was further underlined by the inclusion of a clause which stated that "the association shall not endorse opinion on policy questions". Although both these sentences were dropped in the final draft of rules, which were adopted by the AGM in July 1967, and were replaced by a more general and vague statement according to which "the Association shall promote the study of industrial relations in the United Kingdom through the relevant academic disciplines", their essence would continue to determine the actions and the identity of the Association for the years to come (though, as we will see, the latter clause would be overruled many times in the future). To promote its aims BUIRA could use a variety of methods, among which were the organisation of an annual conference, the information of its members about developments in the field of IR, the holding of periodic surveys of its members' research activities and the representation to appropriate Government departments and other relevant institutions to improve the quality and extent of statistical sources, teaching, and research in the field of IR in the UK.

It is evident that BUIRA had already entered a different era regarding the realisation of its role and identity in the field of IR; from a small informal and amateur group of researchers, who gathered annually to discuss matters of common interest, it had now evolved to a formal institution with rules and specific purposes that aimed to promote the study and teaching of IR. This latter point, i.e. the fact that the Association seemed now interested in speaking for, and promoting, the field of IR – and not the interests of its individual members – constitutes the important turning point in its identity and defines it, in my opinion, as a professional association in the making. I say in the making, for although the association seemed to acquire a formal nature, it was still far from developing a proper bureaucratic structure.

The Administration of BUIRA

From its very first meeting, the Association had decided to adopt a loose administrative structure, which has not radically changed since. Its basic characteristic was its voluntary and amateur nature, as its administrators were unpaid individuals who devoted part of their working time in the management of the

Association. Although voluntarism does not necessarily imply amateurism, in the case of BUIRA the latter is a consequence of the former.

The amateur nature of the Association is evident by the fact that in its sixty years of existence it was never housed in permanent offices, not did it ever employ any permanent staff – clerical or otherwise – to assist the running of the organisation. The implications of keeping BUIRA in a 'loose' format were many, the most important of which was the inability of the Association to administer more complex projects, apart from the organisation of the annual conference. Although the conference was, and still remains, the major focus of the Association, its ability to promulgate the causes of BUIRA was contested as early as 1970, when it was argued that "the Association ought to consider reviewing its role which is at present mainly confined to organising the annual conference". Yet the lack of proper organisational structures created a variety of obstacles in the realisation of alternative actions and events. As many Secretaries and Presidents have argued time and again, the running of the Association would not have been possible if it was not for the use of the resources of the universities to which the Presidency was based – stenographical and wider secretarial support relied heavily on people already employed by the hosting institution.

Despite the various administration problems that the lack of a permanent basis led to, the decision to keep the Association in a flux was justified on two grounds that were, of course, related to the voluntary nature of BUIRA. The first was financial; the acquisition of permanent offices or staff would incur high costs to an organisation whose cash reserves largely depended on a rather small membership fee and on any profits yielded by the organisation of the annual conference. The voluntary work of its executives was always considered as a good solution to keep the Association in a healthy financial state and no one seemed interested in drastically altering this. Apart from the financial reason, however, another, equally important, concern was purely administrative: from the first meeting of the association, it was decided that its administration would be undertaken by a different institution every three years. The focus of the above unwritten rule was not only the need for leadership rotation (which was important in itself), but the fact that the leadership would be assumed by a different institution in regular intervals. Although this was a very smart decision, as it helped to avoid the emergence of rivalries, feelings of injustice, or favouritism among its members, to retain the collegiate and democratic atmosphere that characterised the Association since its foundation (John Goodman, personal communication) and to distribute the financial burden of administering BUIRA more equitably, it also had the obvious defect that the Association's offices could not be permanently based in a specific place.

The cost of the decision to keep the administration of the Association voluntary was primarily felt by its Secretary; especially during the early years of the Association, when there was only one Secretary responsible for the membership, communication and financial control of the organisation, the complaints about the overwhelming nature of the work were quite regular. This was very often the case when the Secretary was involved in activities beyond the organisation of the annual conference, such as the creation of a research registry, the monitoring of the members' status and whereabouts, or the collection of unpaid fees. It is, therefore, understandable that the Secretary was the usual advocate for the further

'bureaucratisation' of the association. However, although complaints about the increasing workload of the Secretary's job were voiced from early on, it was only in 1986 – when the Association was growing and its management was becoming more complex – that specific proposals were laid down by John Berridge, the then Secretary, on how to alleviate the secretarial role. Two of the three proposals implied an administrative change: either to hire a firm to do the routine secretarial work (admissions, subscriptions, accounts, etc.), which would have led to an increase in the fees, or to appoint a more permanent secretary for a period of five years – in other words, to create a more permanent secretarial position. The third proposal, on the other hand, was technical: to computerise the Association's membership and accounting databases, which could save both time and money in the long run. This latter proposal was eventually pursued by the next premiership, and the first computerised members' database was initiated in 1987 by Colin Gill.

As we have seen, the organisational nature of BUIRA developed rather gradually and in an *ad hoc* manner – most changes seemed to be reactions to some external stimuli rather than the result of strategic planning. It can be said that the association acquired a proper organisational form when it changed its name to BUIRA and adopted its first official rules in 1967. It was then that the rather vague nature of the UIRA acquired an official material body, even if this was only on paper. However, the running of the Association did not necessarily transcend the limits of voluntarism and amateurism that characterised it since its foundation. Although important administrative changes have occurred since the mid-1980s, with the gradual expansion of the Executive Committee (EC) to eight members, the creation of a Treasurer and Communications Secretary posts in 2002, and the appointment of two auditors in 2008, to audit the financial state of the Association, BUIRA still does not look ready to abandon its 'loose' administrative structure[3]. As late as 1994, for instance, the suggestion that BUIRA should adopt a mission statement was defeated on the grounds that consensus among members would be difficult and "the view was expressed that BUIRA should remain a loose 'confederation' of IR and HRM academics whose role was really to provide opportunities to present research and encourage communications" (EC Minutes 1994).

BUIRA's Membership Policies

The membership policy of an organisation provides an interesting index regarding its identity. A professional scientific association, which is supposed to represent a scientific field, should not and cannot be exclusionist – it should provide opportunities to anyone interested in the study of the specific subject area to participate in its structures. The less exclusionist an organisation is, the more it tends to become a representative professional scientific association. The examination of

[3] The first EC was formed in 1951 and consisted, until 1955, of three members. In 1955 it expanded to four and in 1957 to five members. From 1962 onwards it consisted of six members, until 1994 when two more members were added, to assist with the refereeing of the annual conference papers. The appointment of auditors was discussed as early as the late 1970s, but there is no evidence that they were ever appointed. Although in 2005 it was suggested that two auditors should be elected to audit the Association's finances, no evidence exists that this motion was actually carried forward. The first auditors were appointed in 2008, and in 2009 their election became an official rule of the Association.

the membership policy, therefore, is vital for our understanding of the evolution of BUIRA's identity.

BUIRA and its predecessor, the IUSGIR, were never intended to function as professional scientific associations in the sense discussed earlier – i.e. as representative bodies of the field's scientific community. For much of its early life BUIRA was characterised by an elitist and exclusionist approach to its membership, since it was only open to people employed by universities and by institutions of similar rank. In other words, the definition of the 'community' for the early BUIRA was quite narrow since it only included people engaged in *research*; teaching, in a sense, was secondary for BUIRA. The narrowness of this definition, however, excluded from the Association a considerable amount of people who could have become members, had a more liberal approach been implemented. Indeed, if BUIRA had regarded as members of the community all those researching *and* teaching IR (without any restriction as to the employing institution), its membership basis would have been considerably expanded, as universities were not the only places where IR courses were taught in the 1950s. IR education was widespread in other British educational institutions as well, especially in polytechnics and technical colleges, and although research was not conducted in the same way or extent as in the universities, many of their staff were undoubtedly equally interested in the research and policy advances in the field, as is evident from the many membership applications to join the IUSGIR and, later, the UIRA and BUIRA. However, these people were excluded from membership as it was believed that they would demote the intellectual standards of the meetings, as many of them did not have PhDs, or were not involved in research.

The position of the teachers in polytechnics or technical colleges preoccupied the Association for the years to come. In 1964, for example, Professor Kahn Freund argued for the inclusion in the Association of the teachers in non-university institutions. Yet his motion was rejected, as many members of the organisation "were opposed to further expansion of the Association's membership and pointed out that no positive direction of changes had been suggested" – the reason, as mentioned previously, being the belief that teachers in polytechnics were not of university calibre. Similarly, in a paper presented at the AGM around that period, Dr Shirley Lerner presented the case for the inclusion of non-university people in the organisation, although her argument encompassed not only the teachers in technical colleges but anyone outside academia (i.e. employers, Trade Unionists and government officials)[4]. Contrary to the dominant view of the time, Dr Lerner argued that the inclusion of non-university people will only lead to a small increase in size,

[4] In another submission made to the EC of the UIRA by Dr. Shirley Lerner *circa* 1964, the case against the "admission of all teachers of industrial relations in technical and management colleges" was also clearly summarised: "The quality of the general run of teachers in technical colleges is not very high. Many received lower seconds when they were university students; others have no degrees at all. They do little, if any, research work. Frequently, Industrial Relations is taught merely as a sub-section of a Liberal Studies course, and the teacher tends to waffle for part of the course on Industrial Relations. Such people can contribute little to the work of the Association. Their admission would most certainly lower the status of the association. We would be taken over by people who know little or nothing about the subject". Although Dr. Lerner does not appear as an advocate of the aforementioned thesis, she certainly expressed the views of many a member of the Association around that period.

which will not turn BUIRA into a massive organisation, and that the status of the discussions will not deteriorate nor will free speech be infringed if the selection of people outside academia is based on strict criteria and is subject to selective admission. Despite her proposals, however, she never clearly advocated the opening of the Association to 'aliens': her solution to the problem of non-admission was to create a British Industrial Relations Association, which would comprise UIRA and an association of the teachers in technical colleges and practitioners. In a sense, the Association's elitism would still be retained and the problem would be transferred to a higher level; this idea, however, was never materialised.

The continuing policy of the Association to exclude from its ranks teachers from technical colleges and polytechnics was to be sealed in the first set of official rules of the Association, according to which "[m]embers may be individuals who are engaged in teaching and research in industrial relations in the several relevant academic disciplines in universities in the United Kingdom (The term 'universities' includes colleges of advanced technology and institutions which are to receive university status)" (Rule 5). It must be noted, however, that the rules allowed for a small proportion of people, who did not belong to the above categories, to become members in the association, once they were proposed by a member and the EC agreed; their numbers, however, could only amount to 20% of the Association's total membership. Still this cap was not enough to contain the increasing number of departments that taught IR-relevant subjects outside the universities.

From the 1950s onwards, people who worked in non-university – but still academic – institutions grew in numbers and started to require intellectual representation in a body where they would be able to share ideas and views with their colleagues. This need was eventually materialised in 1968/9 with the foundation of the *Society of Industrial Tutors* (SIT)[5]. Contrary to the exclusionist membership approach of BUIRA, the Society's membership was drawn "from every shape and size of further, higher and adult education institution" (Stuttard 1974: 301), and its major focus was IR teaching, not IR research. The founding members of the Society had realised that "industrial relations teaching was not just controversial, but threw up a number of other problems" as "it had to be taught not just to different groups for different purposes but in a variety of institutions, from full-time to part-time; it suffered from a lack of usable teaching resources of both general and specialist kinds; and it demanded particular attitudes in teaching and organisation" (*ibid.*, 302). The major aims of the society were, therefore, to bring together teachers of IR and to "concentrate on activities of practical help to tutors in their work" (*ibid.*, 301).

The inclusiveness of the SIT was evident in its membership trends; in 1970, for instance, the society had 93 members, and within two years its membership more

[5] The SIT was founded by tutors working in the Extra-Mural Departments of Universities and in the *Workers' Educational Association* (WEA). They were actively involved not only in the formulation of the syllabi but in attracting students and facilitating their participation in the courses (tutors, for example, were personally involved in negotiations with the management to grant paid time-off to shop stewards to participate in the classes). Although at the foundation meeting of the Society, in Sheffield in 1968, it was proposed to call the new organisation the *Society of Trade Union Tutors*, the less restrictive name SIT was finally adopted.

than doubled, reaching 200 members – a result of a variety of activities to attract members, and of a dynamic leadership. The Society proved to be an important forum for those teaching IR: similarly to BUIRA, it held conferences in various UK cities "in order to tempt in and provide a focus for tutors in these areas" (*ibid.*, 303), and acted as a pressure group in various instances (for example, in 1970 it provided evidence to the Russell Committee on adult education and in 1971 to the Alexander Committee on Scottish Adult education). In contrast to BUIRA, however, it was heavily involved in the publishing scene, firstly by initiating a series of fourteen books, published by Hutchinson's, and, secondly, by publishing a journal – the *Industrial Tutor* – from 1969 to 1996, when the Society was eventually dissolved[6]. Faithful to the causes of the Society, the *Industrial Tutor* provided a forum to those teaching IR by publishing articles on teaching methods, teaching material and problems of IR teaching. Its first editor, Geoffrey Stuttard, would later become a central figure in BUIRA, through the organisation of the London BUIRA study group[7].

Eventually, the tutors in non-university institutions were granted membership rights in 1971, under the presidency of Hugh Clegg. Whether this was the result of a maturation process regarding the position and role of BUIRA in the field of IR, or of the understanding that tutors in non-university institutions were becoming an important part of the field's intellectual geography, cannot be said with certainty. Notwithstanding the reasons, however, one may regard 1971 as the year when BUIRA made the decisive step to form a pan-IR identity and started to function as a truly representative body of the field in Britain.

Despite this important decision, the organisation continued to remain unapproachable to a special class of the academic community that may not have had full-time placements as teachers or researchers in academic institutions, but did, nevertheless, participate, in the intellectual life of British IR; research students would have to wait another 23 years before being granted full admission to the ranks of the Association. There were several reasons for the reluctance of the AGM to admit them in BUIRA, which closely resembled the justifications provided in the 1960s and 1970s against the inclusion of non-university teachers: that the academic quality of the conference would be undermined by the participation of research students, that their inclusion would create several administrative problems to an organisation with no permanent structures and, perhaps most importantly, that their inclusion "could possibly reduce the Association's credibility with external agencies" (AGM Minutes 1986).

It is interesting to note that the arguments against the inclusion of research students in BUIRA reverted around the possible implications for the Association and not around the position they occupied within the social structure of science.

[6] The book series was called "Trade Union Industrial Studies" and it was used to teach shop stewards the basics of industrial relations. The books were available in pocket-size paper back form in affordable prices (90p per copy), and included titles such as "Workers' Rights", "Industrial Action", "Statistics" etc, written by both academics and practitioners. The series proved to be a great success as over 200.000 copies were sold (Geoffrey Stuttard, personal communication).

[7] A complete up-to-date history of the society is not as yet available. Although the early steps of the society are traced by Stuttard (1974), its later history may be harder to write since with the dissolution of the Society in 1993 its archive was lost (Clarke and Gold 2006).

Although one could question whether research students are members of the scientific community, this was never done. Indeed, strictly speaking, research students become full members of the scientific community once they complete their PhDs (i.e. once they finish their 'apprenticeship'); yet their involvement in the processes and culture of science places them closer to the workings of the community than any other person. Whether they will be considered as organic elements of the scientific community depends solely on the subjective interpretation of their position by the gatekeepers of science and not on any objective criterion. In the case of BUIRA, research students could have become members if the rules of the Association were strictly interpreted. Indeed, as already mentioned, membership was open to anyone employed by a British university who conducted research or teaching in IR, preconditions that were fulfilled by many a research student, at least from the 1980s onwards[8].

The first step towards the inclusion of research students in the Association was made in 1986, when the AGM decided to allow them to participate in the annual conference, as long as they were registered for higher degrees of research (i.e. not taught courses) and were nominated by a BUIRA member. However, their numbers would be limited to ten participants per conference and no more than three students from any institution could participate in the same conference. It was in 1994 that the Association decided to grant full membership status to research students. From then onwards, BUIRA has taken several steps to promote the inclusion and participation of PhD students in the organisation: from mere conference participants in the 1980s, PhD students now have the opportunity to present their work in the annual conference, and can benefit from special pre-conference doctoral workshops (this tradition was initiated in 1999, although a similar proposal was put forward in 1986 by Richard Hyman but was never materialised)[9].

In 1994 another important change took place regarding the membership policy of BUIRA, which helped it transcend the narrow national borders in which it operated until then, and acquire a more global identity. The Association's policy towards international membership was always very strict – the "British" element of its title was always protected, not on racial grounds of course, but on strictly professional ones as it was always clear that only academics working in British institutions could be eligible for membership. Although in 1974 this rule was overridden, to grant

[8] Notice that BUIRA rules did not explicitly specify whether the potential members should have been full-time or part-time employed by the university. Since research students may have been employed to conduct paid research or to teach courses on a part-time basis, they fell within the aforementioned provisions.

[9] Another important action of support to PhD students was the decision, in 2008-9, to fund four doctoral students to attend the International IIRA Conference in Australia. However, it is also interesting to note that a proposal put forward in 2004 by the Keele administration to use the Association's surplus to fund doctoral students to attend the annual conference was never further explored. In 2010 the EC established two forms of conditional funding for doctoral students and new researchers: an IIRA Congress Facilitation Fund to cover attendance at IIRA European and World Congresses and three annual bursaries for BUIRA conference attendance.

academics from the Republic of Ireland "associate" membership[10], in general BUIRA remained 'closed' to the rest of the world. This policy of 'nationalism' was finally abandoned in 1994, when the Association decided to open up its membership to anyone researching or teaching IR, or any of the relevant disciplines, from all over the world, subject to the EC's decision.

Although voices to include foreign academics in the Association are as old as BUIRA itself (the Irish are a case in point), this decision was certainly also influenced by the increased mobility that characterised the body of the British academic community, especially during the 1980s and 1990s: many of its members, either because of their nationality or because of other, purely professional, reasons, would leave Britain to join universities or research institutes in other countries; a strict interpretation of BUIRA's rules, therefore, would either lead to a considerable loss of existing members or to a loss of potential members, who would realise that their membership depended largely on geographical and not scientific criteria.

In view of these changes it can be argued that 1994 signifies the high point in the maturation of BUIRA as a scientific association, as it became open to anyone researching or teaching IR. This change in policy and rationale is also signified by the fact that around the same period (in 1996) the EC discusses, *for the first time since the Association's foundation*, strategies for the attraction of more members to the organisation. BUIRA seems to transcend its exclusionist and elitist past and to reach out to the world – and not vice versa, as was the case till then. Indeed, the only common element of the mid-1990s BUIRA with its earlier self is that it remained (and still does) a strictly academic association, as professionals are still not allowed in as members[11].

The Role of BUIRA in the Field of IR in Britain

Although BUIRA became an all-encompassing organisation in the mid-1990s, it had already began to develop a collective identity since the 1960s, when it transcended its group-like orientation and started behaving as a body representing the field of IR in Britain. The creation of an identity, however, is not enough to characterise an organisation as a professional scientific association; one should also closely examine the actions and the role of this body within the context in which it operates.

A professional scientific association has several roles, among which are to represent the field to the wider society, to provide a forum where networks may be developed, or where ideas can be exchanged, and to act as a common reference point for the scientific community it represents. These general roles apart however,

[10] This allowed them to participate and present papers in the annual conference but it did not grant them any voting or election rights. Irish academics were granted full membership rights in 1985.

[11] Contrary to other professional associations, such as the *British Sociological Association* or the American *Labor and Employment Relations Association* (LERA), BUIRA was always closed to people outside academia. This matter has been a contested issue since the foundation of the Association and up to nowadays the dominant position is that BUIRA should retain its strictly academic nature by not allowing anyone outside academia to participate in its structures. The only exception is the invitation of non-academics (such as trade unionists, employers, or representatives of the state) as speakers in plenary sessions in the annual conference.

a scientific association performs three main functions: first, it *develops* the study of, and the research in, the field through various means, such as the organisation of conferences, the publication of journals or books, the provision of scholarships or the funding of research. Secondly, it *defines*, either explicitly or implicitly, the subject it represents. This may be done, for instance, through public statements regarding the nature of the discipline, or through the various intellectual events it sponsors. Thirdly, it *promotes and supports* the field both within the wider scientific community and in the wider society. There are many ways to do so, such as representations to other bodies or committees, cooperation with other associations, participation in programmes for the promotion of the field etc. In what follows I am going to examine how far BUIRA's actions are in accordance with the above three functions, starting from its attempts to develop the field of IR in Britain.

Developing the Field

BUIRA was involved in the support of the intellectual and institutional development of the field since its early days, even before it had developed an identity as a professional association. As expected, however, the importance and breadth of these actions developed in parallel to the development of its role as a representative body of the field in Britain. Among the most important tools in its disposal for the promotion of the field was the annual conference, which runs continuously from 1950 till nowadays. Other, less influential, mechanisms were the establishment of study groups, the circulation of a quarterly newsletter, and the publication of various projects, such as research registries.

The Annual Conference

The organisation of conferences is one of the most important functions of any scientific association, and BUIRA is no exception. Apart from providing networking opportunities, the conference is also the primary place where ideas are being tested. It is where scientists realise whether their ideas are accepted by their peers and whether there are any problems with their approach. The importance of this institution for BUIRA cannot be underestimated, since it can be argued that this annual meeting was the actual reason for its initial formation: as has been already mentioned, the original group of academics who founded BUIRA's predecessor did so primarily because they required a forum to exchange ideas.

As one may expect, the character of the annual conference followed closely the evolution of BUIRA's identity; from an elitist meeting of a small group of academics, to an inclusive and open forum for the whole IR community[12]. Indeed, until the late 1960s, the conferences were so small and unofficial that the conference parties could take place at individuals' houses, as was the case in 1967 when the post-conference drinks were served at Dr. Guy Routh's home. Moreover, the mentality of

[12] This is, in a sense, an overstatement: until the time of writing, only BUIRA members were allowed to participate in the conference, either as presenters or mere delegates. Exceptions, of course, did (and do) exist but they are up to the President's discretion – for example, the President has had the right to invite in the conference representatives of the State, the Trade Unions or the Employers, either as plain delegates or as speakers to plenary sessions.

the early conferences was quite different from the current, usually friendly, intellectual atmosphere. Some, like John Purcell (BUIRA President 1995-1998), found them intimidating in many occasions (John Purcell, personal communication), whereas others, like Linda Dickens considered them intellectually stimulating, although tough at certain points (Linda Dickens, personal communication).

Until 1986, the conferences lasted two days and were organised around specific plenary sessions. There were no workshops and the papers were given by established academics in the field, or by invited speakers in the industry, the trade union movement or the government. Young researchers were not encouraged to present papers, although in 1978 this tradition was momentarily overturned when a young researcher spoke in an extra session, an innovation which was largely welcomed[13]. The current structure of the conference, with the combination of plenary sessions and workshops, was first tested in 1986, although some initial steps had already been made in 1980, when it was decided that the conference should be extended in length. The 1986 workshop experiment was positively accepted and it was agreed that this mode of organisation would be followed in future events as well. Although this innovation created opportunities for more papers to be discussed, it also created an issue regarding the selection of the papers to be presented; this problem was addressed in 1994 when it was decided that members of the Executive would referee the submitted papers using the single-blind review system[14].

The travelling nature of BUIRA's administration was also reflected to the organisation of the conference, which was hosted every year in a different British city. As Berridge and Goodman (1988: 163) argued, "[t]he reasons for a location's selection appear to include … a large and active local membership, a desire to proselytise the subject of industrial relations at that university, and the need to strike a balance in visiting different regions of the British Isles". This unwritten rule regarding the conference's location was attempted to be overturned five times in the past, but only in two occasions was the conference hosted outside the UK – in 1975 in Dublin and in 2006 in Galway. In the other three instances (in 1972, in 1989, and in 1992), when the conference was proposed to be held in Dublin, the plans had to be postponed for security reasons and the conference to be eventually organised in Britain[15].

The annual conference may be the most important and influential event the Association organises, but it is not the only one; an equally important tool in its disposal for the promotion of the study of Industrial Relations in Britain is the support it renders to the development of study groups, although compared to the conference they remain underdeveloped.

[13] This 'young researcher' was Christine Edwards, later BUIRA President (1992 – 1995).

[14] The current system of double-blind review was introduced in 2001.

[15] Interestingly enough, the Conference has never been hosted in London, despite it being a stronghold of the IR community. The first annual conference in London will be organised in 2011 by the University of Greenwich.

The Institution of the Study Groups

Even though one of the first study groups to be formed within the organisation was a group initiated by Allan Flanders in Oxford, in 1957, to discuss general IR issues, the actual development of this institution had to wait till 1981, when the London BUIRA seminars were developed. The BUIRA study groups, though they could play a vital role in the development of the field in Britain, were never properly exploited by the Association's administration, which lacked an official policy and strategy on the matter. During the history of the Association more than a dozen study groups emerged[16], but most of them vanished within a year or two from their inception because of the lack of any support to their mission. The fortune of the groups was tied to the ideology of voluntarism that prevailed in the Association and, as a result, they only lived for as long as there was some interest in their missions by the members that comprised them.

Until 1996, the various study groups had a semi-official nature: although BUIRA endorsed their activities it had not granted them any official status. In 1996, however, the formation of study groups acquired an official standing within the Association, when Section II, Subsection 3(f) of the Rules was updated to include the formation of study groups, seminars, and workshops among the means through which BUIRA may try to achieve its designated aims. Despite this official recognition, however, a concise strategy regarding their function was still lacking; BUIRA's only involvement with the study groups was (and is) restricted in three actions, namely their financial support (in 2007 each study group could be funded with up to £400, although few actual claims are being made), the provision of specific slots in the conference to hold meetings, and the coverage of their activities in the newsletters.

Although most of the study groups did not manage to retain their activities for more than five years, the London BUIRA group has proved to be the most resilient of all: founded in 1981, it continues till nowadays to offer seminars in London around various IR topics. The London seminars were so successful that in 1987 – and again in 1999 – the Association encouraged other regions in the country to set up similar groups; for instance, the BUIRA-of-the-North study group, which was established in 1991, was based on the same rationale as the London group. Interestingly enough, the establishment of the London group contradicted an earlier decision by the Association not to support any "formal meetings or organisation on a regional basis" (AGM Minutes, 1971); this development shows that the Association had by then realised the importance of communication and networking both for its own future as well as for the future of the field.

The importance of the London study group does not only rest on the fact that it was the first ever study group to be supported by the Association, but also that it was the first official collaboration of BUIRA with another scientific association. The

[16] Among them were the following: Human Resource Management, Reward Management, Public Sector IR, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), International IR, Marxism and IR, European IR, Postgraduate, Migrant Workers. Most of them were dissolved after two or three years from their foundation, or remained dormant. At the time of writing (2010), BUIRA has the following study groups: International and Comparative IR, London BUIRA, Migrant Workers, Public Sector IR, Teaching IR, History of IR and SMEs.

London seminars were initially run by the SIT since 1972, in the Polytechnic of Central London (now Westminster University) with the support of the University of London Extra-Mural Department and the London WEA. In 1981, however, Geoffrey Stuttard, who was one of the SIT founders and a BUIRA member, asked BUIRA to collaborate in the running of the seminars. Indeed, until 1996, when the SIT was dissolved, the seminars were organised under the common aegis of both organisations[17].

During their early years, the London seminars were of two kinds, and strictly comparative in nature: "one monthly meeting on Fridays, from October to March, which would aim to give a basic description of the industrial relations' pattern of individual countries, and a more specialist all-day meeting once a term on a Saturday, at which a panel of speakers would present more detailed studies of one of the countries dealt with on a Friday" (Study Group Report to BUIRA, 1981). Nowadays, the seminars run once per month on the Michaelmas, Lent and Summer terms and although the comparative element is still present, the content of the seminar has further expanded by including more theoretical and empirical presentations of a non-comparative nature.

What explains the success of the London seminars however? Undoubtedly, a very important reason is geographical: London is easily accessible, not only to British residents but to any foreign speaker as well. Secondly, London hosts a big IR community and, thus, it is easier to attract participants in the seminars. Thirdly, the London study group was not a study group in the traditional sense of the term – i.e. its content was not centred on a specific thematic such as Human Resource Management (HRM), or Rewards, or Migration. Although in the beginning the seminars had a comparative nature, the selection of the topics rested largely on the research interests of the speakers, and revolved around several different issues. This flexibility and adjustability of the London seminars, and the involvement of those regularly attending in formulating the programme, granted them an intellectual edge that differentiated them from the rest of the study groups, which depended largely on the research interests of their initiators and members (and which were dissolved once they did not manage to attract enough people interested in the subject under consideration). As a result, the London seminars managed to acquire an independent identity, which did not necessarily conform to the research interests of their administrator and, thus, managed to adjust their contents to the needs and requirements of each era[18].

BUIRA Publications

Apart from the organisation of the annual conference and the funding of the various study groups, BUIRA tried to support the field of IR through various

[17] Geoffrey Stuttard acted as the first convenor of the London Seminars, from 1981 to 1997. He later handed the running of the seminars over to Tony Swabe, who was then succeeded by Simon Gurevitz who organised them till 2001, before handing them over to Linda Clarke who still convenes the monthly meetings. Traditionally, the London Seminars are organised by, and held at, the University of Westminster.

[18] The fact that the London Seminars are open to anyone interested in the topics discussed, practitioners included, may also explain their diachronic success.

publications, whose primary aim was to enhance social networking among its members. One such publication is the quarterly circulation of a newsletter that provides information on various events and activities in the field of IR in Britain and abroad. Although the newsletter in its current form was founded in 1992 (under the Presidency of Christine Edwards), an early version existed since 1950, in the form of a bulletin that was used as a means to disseminate to the group the work of its members, and as a forum to discuss various issues of common concern, such as IR programmes' syllabi.

Important though the newsletter may be, BUIRA attempted in the course of its history to gain a more rigorous position in the publishing scene, although until very recently its publications were restricted to simple informational material. One of the very first BUIRA publications was a bibliography on IR, published in 1952; apart from the English-language material, it also included a selection from recent French, German and Italian sources, as well as books and pamphlets on IR in Asia, Africa and the Commonwealth. A similar work was published in 1986, although its focus was on the comparative literature: it included information on every comparative piece that had been published in English, from the end of the Second World War till the mid-1980s.

A third type of publication that the Association had sponsored was the compilation of a Research Register, which included information on the research interests and publications of BUIRA's members. The first research registry was published in 1985, although some initial discussions about the need for such a document took place in 1978 with no immediate effect; its primary target was to "assist members in making contact with other researchers active in their own field, and to provide a picture of the diversity of research activity, sources of funding and related publications" (Purcell 1985: ii). A second research registry was published in 1987, with some financial support from the Institute of Personnel Management that also acted as a publisher (Purcell *et al.* 1987). Although the initial intention was to make this an annual or biennial publication, the plan did not materialise; the next – and final – research registry appeared in 1995.

Apart from these plainly informational publications, BUIRA was never involved in more 'hardcore' scientific publications, nor did it initiate any book series or monographs on the subject of IR[19]. Only recently, in 2003, the EC discussed the possibility of sponsoring or of directly publishing a series of books. Indeed, the first book published under the aegis of BUIRA was Alan Fox's autobiography (Fox 2004). Despite the various discussions, however, the publication strategy of BUIRA remains *ad hoc* and books seem to appear only when the need arises, as was the case with the recent monograph and edited volume on the future of IR and critical social sciences (Darlington 2009a).

Finally, it must be noted that, contrary to many other professional scientific associations, BUIRA does not publish its own scientific journal. An initial attempt by Hugh Clegg, in 1953, to persuade Basil Blackwell to publish a journal of IR was rejected by the publishers on financial grounds; even so, however, it is not clear

[19] But see also below, p. 26 regarding the Annual Review Papers.

whether Clegg acted in the name of BUIRA or as an individual. In a sense, BUIRA never considered the matter seriously, for when the *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (BJIR) was founded in 1963 by one of BUIRA's founding members (Ben Roberts of the LSE) it covered the gap in the British market. The BJIR was always in close contact with BUIRA (for example, BUIRA members enjoy reduced subscription rates to the journal), but never officially tied to it[20]. One may safely assume that the reasons BUIRA did not publish its own journal were linked to the general mentality of the Association described in the previous pages – i.e. its nature of voluntarism and the lack of any permanent administration that could bear the weight of such an attempt.

Defining the Field

The activities in which a scientific association is engaged define, among other things, the nature of a field; this can be done either explicitly, through a public statement, for instance, which provides a definition of the field and states what is accepted as legitimate research, or implicitly, through the decisions the association takes on intellectually-related matters. For instance, the selection of papers to be presented in its conference, or to be published in its journals, are such implicit actions, since they set the intellectual borders in which the people who wish to participate in the aforementioned fora must act.

BUIRA was engaged in setting the intellectual boundaries of the field since its Group days: in the founding meeting of the IUSGIR there was a discussion about the directions the field should take, and although there was a view that the subject "could only be studied profitably as throwing light on economic processes", others contested that law, political science, sociology and psychology should be given equal consideration; the common feeling, nevertheless, was that IR was something more than mere "Trade Union studies"[21]. The nature of the field would continue to occupy the IR community in those early years, both within BUIRA and outside it, as is evident by the various publications on the matter (Behrend 1963; Hameed 1967). In 1972, for instance, there was a debate regarding the disciplinary status of IR, with Professor Beacham arguing that IR could not stand as a separate academic discipline but only as part of a wider discipline, such as economics. Professor Kirkaldy, on the other hand, argued that although this might be true for teaching, it was not so for research, since IR was stretching "across the frontiers of many disciplines, [and] could not be treated merely as a branch of any one of them, but only as a distinct and unified (though related) subject" (AGM Minutes, 1972).

A more rigorous definition of the subject, however, had to wait until 1995, when BUIRA was obliged, in a sense, to provide an operating definition of IR to the ESRC. According to that formulation,

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[20] The BJIR was linked from its foundation to the LSE (it was the third journal published by the School) and, from 1964 onwards, to the newly founded Department of Industrial Relations.

[21] This comment obviously referred to the various Trade Union studies courses that were running in the country during that period (the LSE was running such a course since 1945), and whose curriculum was built around the needs of the trade unionists and the public servants who attended them; in that sense, the IUSGIR wanted to differentiate itself from this purely educational orientation to the subject.

> "IR is concerned with all aspects of the study of the employment relationship. As such it is not a discipline but a cognate area of study where many disciplines have something to contribute. As an important area of *management research* it is often located within a business or management faculty. However it is not restricted to a management perspective being concerned at the macro and micro levels, nationally and internationally with the many processes and structures that influence work and employment". (John Purcell to Anne McIntyre, 9/11/1995, my emphasis).

Although this definition has many common points with the discussion some twenty years ago (for instance, that the subject of IR is not only about Trade Unions but studies the employment relationship, or that IR is not a discipline but a cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary field of study that uses various methods to approach its subject), it also includes the interesting new element of positioning IR within the management sciences – a stark difference to the early conceptions about the economic and socio-political nature of the field. The emphasis on the employment relationship and the multi-disciplinary nature of the field would be retained in the following years, although the reference to the 'managerial' would be eventually dropped (Darlington 2009b: 2) [22].

As one can appreciate, BUIRA's definitions of the field are rather abstract; apart from setting some general intellectual limits within which the field should operate, no other information is available regarding the Association's conceptualisation of the nature of IR, and the actual topics, or themes that BUIRA considered, and promoted, diachronically as the legitimate intellectual hard core of the field. Thus, the questions remain: how did BUIRA define the field of IR? Were there any topics that were diachronically discussed and can be considered as the hard core of the field? How has the intellectual geography of the field changed from the 1950s till nowadays? To answer these questions one needs to examine in more detail the manifestations of the Association's ideas regarding the nature of the field, i.e. the papers that were presented in its annual conferences. The conferences' papers show, in a sense, the conceptualisation of the subject area by BUIRA, since they represent the intellectual focus of the Association in a particular historical moment[23]. Before, however, discussing the nature of the conference papers, it is necessary to consider some other evidence regarding the intellectual direction of BUIRA, namely the institution of the *Annual Review Paper* (ARP).

The ARP was initiated in 1979, when the BJIR accepted a proposal by BUIRA to sponsor "an annual review article on an appropriate topic within the IR field" (AGM Minutes, 1979)[24]. This article would be presented in a special session in the annual conference and, if it was up to the journal's standards, it would be published in the BJIR (of the 12 ARPs commissioned, five were eventually published by the journal). Although members were asked to submit proposals for the title of the first ARP, in

[22] It is not my purpose to discuss the evolution of the various approaches to the disciplinary nature of IR. For more details see Voskeritsian (2009), Chapter 2.

[23] Note that this does not necessarily imply a conscious strategy regarding the future of the field.

[24] An honorarium of £150 was paid to the author of the first ARP, but it seems that this policy was discontinued thereafter.

later years BUIRA was responsible for the selection of the topic. The first ARP was presented in the 1981 conference and the last one in 1992, when the funding of the ARPs was discontinued.

The importance of the ARP lies on the fact that it is the first time that the Association funds an actual research project, in the sense of producing new knowledge (as we have seen, the publication of later projects in the mid-1980s were predominantly of a referential nature). An examination, therefore, of the ARPs can reveal the intellectual interests of BUIRA at the time, and its interpretation of the field's nature and limits. Table 1 presents the titles and the authors of the various Papers sponsored by the Association from 1981 to 1992.

Table 1
Annual Review Papers Commissioned by BUIRA

Year	ARP Title	Author
1981	A Review of Industrial Relations Research	David Winchester
1982	Management Decision Making and Industrial Relations	John Purcell
1983	Industrial Relations, Unemployment and Inflation	Guy Routh
1984	The State, Law and Industrial Relations	Roy Lewis
1985	*No paper commissioned*	
1986	1. Pay Determination	1. Willie Brown & Peter Nolan
	2. Japanese Industrial Relations and Industrial Relations in Japanese Companies Overseas	2. Keith Thurley
1987	Unemployment and Industrial Relations	Laurie Hunter
1988	New Technology and Industrial Relations	Jon Clark
1989	European Trade Unionism: Challenges and Responses	Richard Hyman
1990	N/A	N/A
1991	Industrial Conflict: Themes and Issues in Recent Research	Paul Edwards
1992	Employment Legislation: Thatcher and After	Kenneth Miller

Source: AGM Minutes and Conference Programmes 1981-1992

One can discern eight major themes being discussed by the ARPs: IR research, the role of management in IR, Macroeconomic issues (two such papers were funded – in 1983 and in 1987), Law and IR (in 1984 and in 1992), Labour Economics, Comparative IR (in 1986 and 1989), Conflict, and New Technology and IR. As we will see below, many papers had already appeared – and many would appear in future conferences – which followed these intellectual trajectories, so one cannot claim that BUIRA actually generated the interest on the above themes. The only safe conclusion that can be drawn is that these topics represented the intellectual interests of the Association at these periods, and that their study was regarded as legitimate IR research.

Important as the Annual Review Papers were, they did not reveal in its totality the way BUIRA defined and perceived the intellectual corpus of IR. As mentioned previously, a more complete picture can be provided by the examination of the papers presented in the annual conferences. For this reason, a Content Analysis of all the papers that appeared in the Annual Conferences was conducted, starting from

1954 and taking 3-year intervals up to 2008[25]. Table 2 presents some interesting statistics about the intellectual status of the conference in the aforementioned period:

Table 2
Papers and Topics Discussed per Year 1954-2008

Year	Papers	Clusters	Streams	Thematic Density Index (TDI)[1]
1954	4	3	-	1.3
1957	5	5	-	1.0
1960	5	3	-	1.7
1963	2	2	-	1.0
1966	3	3	-	1.0
1969	3	3	-	1.0
1972	4	4	-	1.0
1975	4	4	-	1.0
1978	5	5	-	1.0
1981	6	4	-	1.5
1984	7	5	-	1.4
1987	11	11	-	1.0
1990	11	8	-	1.4
1993	21	11	-	1.9
1996	28	14	4	2.0
1999	34	20	4	1.7
2002	40	23	4	1.7
2005	47	23	6	2.0
2008	56	23	8	2.4

Notes:

1. The Thematic Density Index (TDI) shows how dense, in terms of topics discussed, the conference is. It is the quotient of the Total Papers per Year divided by the Total Clusters per Year, i.e TDI_t = Total Conference $Papers_t$/Total Conference $Clusters_t$, where *t* is a certain year. The TDI takes values between 1 (when Total Conference Papers=Total Conference Clusters) and *n* (where *n*=number of Total Conference Papers; this is the case when there is only one Cluster discussed in the Conference). The higher the value of the TDI, the denser the conference is in terms of topics discussed, and vice versa. As the TDI$\rightarrow n$, the conference gains in thematic consistency but looses in thematic plurality. When a conference is small, say $n<10$, we may expect the TDI$\rightarrow$1; but as the *n* increases we may expect the TDI to increase as well.

As is immediately discernible, in the pre-1986 period the majority of the conferences had a TDI=1, which means that each paper discussed a unique thematic[26]. In other words, the conference did not have any specific thematic orientation but it was simply a meeting where various themes relevant to the field of

[25] For an analytic presentation of the methodology used, see Appendix 1. There, the rational for the sample selection and the definition of some terms used in the rest of the analysis (e.g. Cluster) are being explained.

[26] Recall that in 1986 the institution of the workshops was introduced. This made the conference larger, in terms of papers presented, and, as such, one may expect not only a quantitative difference in the number of papers presented, but a qualitative change as well.

IR were being discussed. This is neither surprising nor reprehensible, for the conferences were small (n<10), and their main focus was to serve as small informative meetings, where general topics of concern to the Association's members were being discussed. There were instances, however, such as in 1954, 1960, 1981 and 1984, where the TDI>1; this shows that these years had some thematic consistency although, more likely, this was accidental rather than consciously pursued by the organisers.

With the introduction of the workshops in 1986, the conferences experienced a greater thematic grouping (1987 is an exception to this trend, perhaps because it was the second year when the practice was being implemented). It is interesting to note that the grouping of the workshops in streams was initiated in 1996, ten years after the introduction of the workshop experiment. However, the clustering of the themes discussed in the conference, even if they did not follow an explicit strategic plan from the Association's part, reveals two things: first, that the conference organisers had, in their minds, some basic guidelines on what will be presented in the conference, which reflects their conceptualisation of the subject and, secondly, that this conceptualisation was shared by the IR community, since papers had been submitted that were in line with the organisers' idea of legitimate IR research[27]. The opening of the conference to the public was a test, both for BUIRA and for the IR community: would BUIRA be able to attract as many papers as it wanted for a successful conference based on its conceptualisation of the subject? And, would the community accept BUIRA's intellectual direction? A negative answer to these questions would either mean that BUIRA could not be considered a representative body of the IR community, or that the IR community had not as yet settled on its intellectual identity. Fortunately, none of the above happened.

The appearance of the streams in 1996 managed to slightly restrict the thematic expansion of the conference, although, as one can see from Table 2, the number of the clusters was much higher than the number of the streams. This should not surprise us, however, for the streams' titles were generally vague and the topics with which they dealt could be approached by many different angles. If anything, it shows the many ways with which a subject can be approached (an interesting point to consider especially in relation to the various allegations regarding the crisis of the field – see below p. 41 ff.). Despite the growing number of clusters in those years, the TDI has increased, showing that although there is still plurality in the way the subject is being perceived both from BUIRA and from the community, there is a trend towards a thematic consistency, which proves, in a sense, both the multi-theoretical nature of IR and the fact that the field is indeed a field (and not a random collection of research subjects), since it has some hard core pillars that define its

[27] It would be very interesting to see *what* papers were rejected at each conference, and *why*: was it because of epistemic reasons, because their content was considered irrelevant to the field, or simply because they were not of good quality? This could provide us with a much better understanding of the organisers' idea of proper IR research. Although data of this kind are available for the period of the MMU stewardship (2007-2010), showing that the rejected papers did not fulfil the criteria laid down in the call for papers, they are not enough to reach an informed conclusion about the decision-making process used by the reviewers.

nature. What are those pillars then, and how have they changed in the 60 years of the Association's history?

Table 3 presents the clusters that have been discussed in the period under examination, together with the frequency of their appearance. In general, 45 clusters appeared, 17 of which were discussed in the pre-1986 period and 43 in the post-1986. From the former 17, 15 were retained in the post-1986 years, revealing the strong intellectual continuity both within the IR community and in the way BUIRA defined and understood the intellectual nature of the field[28].

Table 3
Frequency of Cluster Appearance 1954-2008

Clusters	Frequency	Clusters	Frequency
Trade Unions	**15**	Terms & Conditions of Employment	3
Wages & Benefits	**13**	Union representatives	3
Industrial Relations (IR)	**10**	Work Practices/Types	3
IR Theory/Research	**9**	Culture	2
Management Practices	**8**	Health & Safety	2
Policy	**8**	Legal Rights	2
HRM	**7**	Macroeconomics	2
Bargaining	**6**	Miscellaneous	2
Employers & Management	**6**	Trade Unions Recognition	2
Labour Market	**6**	Work Quality	2
Workers Participation	**6**	Worker Types	2
Labour-Mgt Cooperation	5	Age	1
Mediation & Arbitration	5	Europe	1
Alternative Forms of Workers' Representation	4	Immigration	1
Equality	4	Industrial Action	1
Gender	4	International Organisations	1
Training & Education	4	Judiciary	1
Conflict	3	Public Sector	1
Enterprise	3	Race & Ethnicity	1
Globalisation	3	State	1
Labour Market Institutions	3	Worker	1
Law	3	Young Workers	1
Trade Unions Organising	3		

As one can observe from the above Table, no cluster has been discussed in all the years under consideration; the most frequent cluster – Trade Unions – has appeared 15 times, i.e. in 15 of the years examined. Moreover, many clusters which one may think as important for the IR research corpus appear only once or twice – e.g. the *Industrial Action* or the *Europe* clusters, to mention just two. The most frequent clusters, i.e. those with a frequency greater than five observations, represent some

[28] The two clusters that disappeared were the *International Organisation* and the *Miscellaneous*.

important themes of the IR literature and are the hard core of the topics discussed in the conference diachronically. It must be noted, however, that although a cluster may appear quite frequently it is not necessarily implied that it is the most important cluster for a specific year. Similarly, clusters that appear once or twice may be the most frequent clusters in the year of their appearance. To understand the intellectual foci of the Association, therefore, one must examine both the evolution of the most frequent clusters, and the most important clusters appearing each year – especially in the post-1986 period. Figure 1 presents the development of the nine most frequent clusters in the period under examination.

~Figure 1 around here~

Figure 1
Evolution of the most Frequent Thematic Clusters 1954-2008

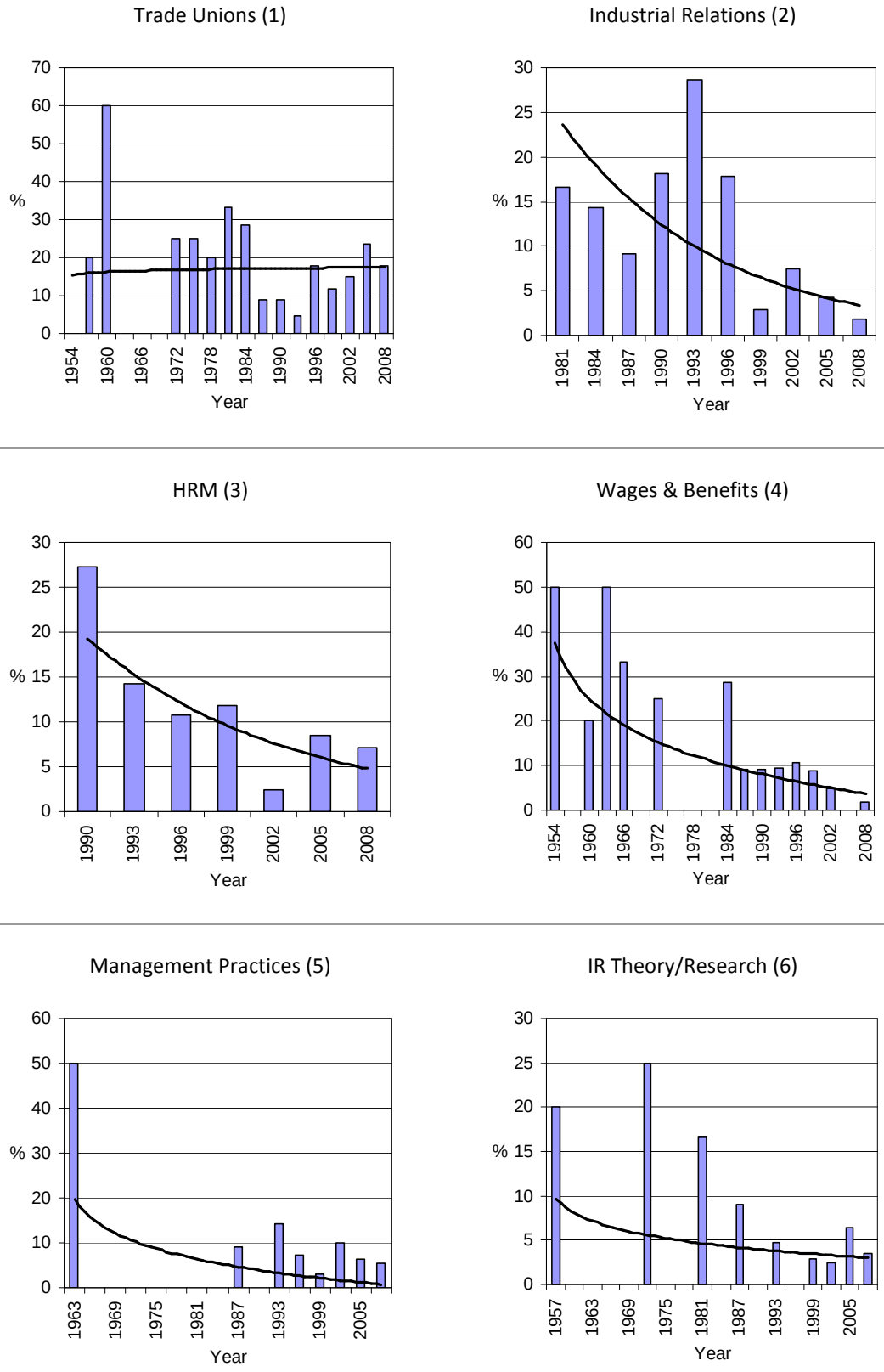
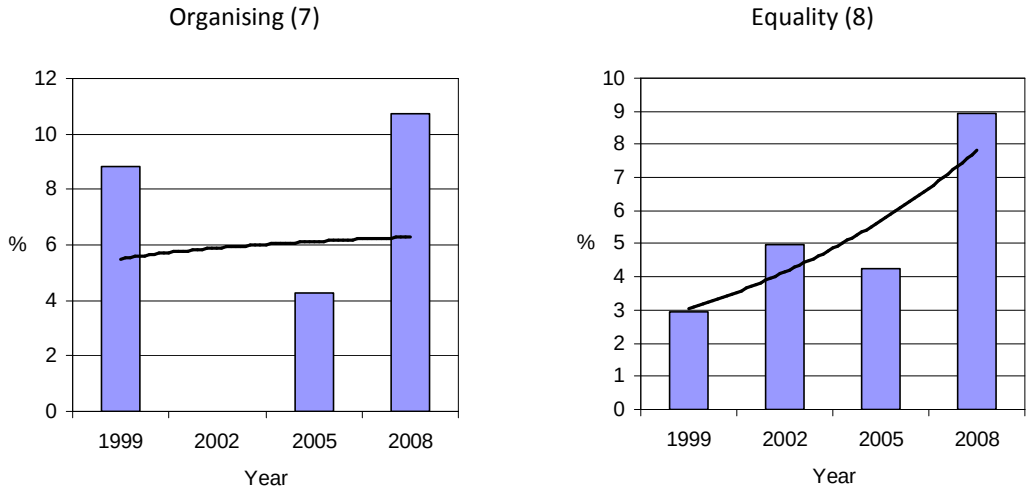
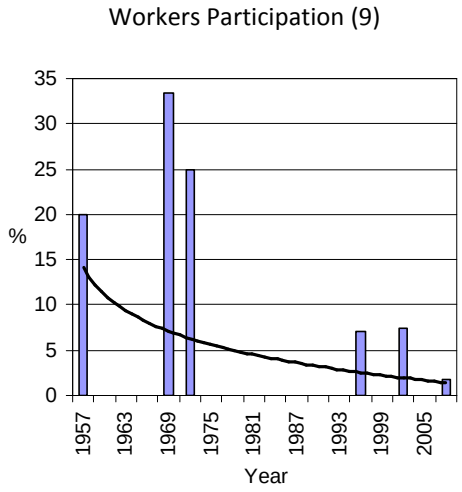


Figure 1 *(cont.)*
Evolution of the Most Frequent Thematic Clusters 1954-2008





The figure presents each cluster as a percentage of the total papers per year, i.e. it shows the space each cluster occupied in the conference in which it appeared. As can be observed, this space changed diachronically and, in the majority of the cases, it diminished. Only two clusters seem to occupy a steady space in all the years of their appearance – the *Trade Unions* and *Trade Unions Organising* ones. The former is one of the oldest and most frequent clusters in the sample, and its steady longitudinal performance shows its importance and centrality for the intellectual corpus of the field; the latter is a relatively new cluster and its development reveals the community's interest on the subject. Only one cluster grows in terms of percentage coverage, the *Equality* cluster, a relatively new subject but quite important, as it seems, for the community.

As for the rest of the clusters, although they constitute the hard core of the field, they appear to lose their importance diachronically. For instance, the *Workers Participation* cluster diminished considerably from 1957 to 2008, as has the *IR Theory &Research* or the *Wages & Benefits* clusters. The decline in their importance

shows that although the community has not completely disregarded the old intellectual corpus of the field, it has transcended the classical intellectual boundaries and developed new interests. Indeed, the opening up of the conference led to the appearance of *28 new clusters* but not all of them managed to occupy an important position in the intellectual geography of the conference. Table 4 presents these new clusters, and the total space they occupied in the conferences throughout the period:

Table 4
Total Space Occupied by the New Clusters Post-1986

Cluster	% of Total Space Occupied
HRM	9.3
Trade Unions Organising	4.6
Equality	4.2
Labour-Mgt Cooperation	3.4
Gender	2.5
Union representatives	2.5
Alternative Forms of Workers' Representation	2.1
Globalisation	2.1
Law	1.7
Work Practices/Types	1.7
Conflict	1.3
Health & Safety	1.3
Immigration	1.3
Labour Market Institutions	1.3
Trade Unions Recognition	1.3
Terms & Conditions of Employment	1.3
Work Quality	1.3
Age	0.8
Culture	0.8
Industrial Action	0.8
Worker Types	0.8
Europe	0.4
Judiciary	0.4
Public Sector	0.4
Race & Ethnicity	0.4
State	0.4
Worker	0.4
Young Workers	0.4

The majority of the new clusters did not manage to occupy much of the total space in the post-1986 period, which means that the more 'traditional' clusters remained at the top of the discussions. Indeed, as one can observe from Table 5, out of the seven topics that monopolise the top position each year in the post-1986 period, four have appeared in the pre-1986 period and belong to the most frequent topics discussed diachronically (*Trade Unions, IR, Wages & Benefits, Management*

Practices). The remaining three (*HRM, Organising, Labour-Management Cooperation*) are new clusters that also belong to the most frequently discussed topics, with the exception of *Labour-Management Cooperation*; notice, as well, that the *Equality* cluster does not figure among the most important topics in those years, although it appears more frequently, in total, than the Labour-Management Cooperation cluster.

Table 5
Most Frequent Clusters per Year 1990-2008

Year	Cluster	Total Papers per Year	Papers per Cluster	% of Cluster Papers per Year
1990	HRM	11	3	27.3
	Industrial Relations	11	2	18.2
1993	Industrial Relations	21	6	28.6
	Management Practices	21	3	14.3
	HRM	21	3	14.3
1996	Industrial Relations	28	5	17.9
	Trade Unions	28	5	17.9
	Wages & Benefits	28	3	10.7
	HRM	28	3	10.7
1999	HRM	34	4	11.8
	Trade Unions	34	4	11.8
	Labour-Mgt Cooperation	34	3	8.8
	Trade Unions Organising	34	3	8.8
	Wages & Benefits	34	3	8.8
2002	Trade Unions	40	6	15.0
	Management Practices	40	4	10.0
2005	Trade Unions	47	11	23.4
	HRM	47	4	8.5
2008	Trade Unions	56	10	17.9
	Trade Unions Organising	56	6	10.7

Note: The table does not include 1987 as its TDI=1 and no meaningful comparisons can be made.

To sum up, two important conclusions can be drawn from the previous analysis. First, that BUIRA experiences an intellectual continuity in terms of the subjects discussed, since traditional subjects, such as *Trade Unions* or *Wages and Benefits*, still remain important for the Association, although not as much as they used to[29]. Secondly, new subjects that reflect the changing nature and challenges of the world of work are represented in the conference, which means that BUIRA was, and is, able to regenerate itself and to expand its definition of the field, subject to the new social realities.

[29] But not necessarily the contents! Although the thematic may remain the same, its content may radically change. This is something, however, that the present research cannot discuss as it requires a different kind of analysis.

Promoting and Supporting the Field

As a professional association, BUIRA has been involved many times in the promotion and support of the field in the wider society. In a sense, its involvement in various episodes in the field's history helped define its identity and its role as a professional association. Thus, in its early years, BUIRA's engagement with matters concerning the field was neither as active nor as collective as in later years. This, of course, does not imply that BUIRA (or its predecessor) did not take a public stance whenever needed; rather that this stance was primarily informed by the still obscure nature of the group's role and function. For instance, the financial support (of £50) the Association provided to Professor V.L. Allen in 1964, during his imprisonment in Nigeria, and the letters it wrote to the Commonwealth Relations office, were primarily motivated by the collegiate atmosphere that characterised the Association in its early years – it was rather a support to one of the 'old boys'; this was the first, and only, time when the Association officially supported an individual member[30].

As the Association matured, however, so did its actions; in 1994, two years after the appearance of the first Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the then President, Professor Christine Edwards, expressed the Association's concerns about the use of ranked journals as assessment materials. The official position of BUIRA was that "the rating of journals tended to promote conservatism and to favour the interests of certain disciplines, particularly economics, against others" and that "journals published in Britain were of equal stature in many respects to those published in the US" (letter to Cary Cooper, chairman of the Business and Management panel at RAE in 1995). In the same year, BUIRA made representations to the ESRC regarding the cutting in the spending of research studentships. Both these developments were very important, not only in their own respects but also because they indicated that BUIRA had developed a more active role as an association that safeguarded both the discipline and the interests of its members.

In general, however, BUIRA refrained from being involved in political matters or in promoting political causes. For instance, when in 1999 two of its members, Professors Mike Terry and William Brown of Warwick University, asked BUIRA to officially support a motion on the Fundamental Labour Standards, it was decided that this action did not fall within the Association's remit, but BUIRA members were encouraged to support the motion on an individual basis. An exception to the above rule was the financial support of the sacked Liverpool Dockworkers in 1996, with a donation of £255.31 sent to the Merseyside Port shop stewards[31].

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[30] Professor V.L. Allen of Leeds University was arrested in 1964 in Nigeria and was "accused of plotting to overthrow the government". For more details on the case see http://www.independent.co.uk/news/east-german-agent-with-the-perfect-pedigree-1120356.html (accessed on 10/10/2010). See also Berridge and Goodman (1988: 172).

[31] During the 2007-2010 Presidency, this trend was reverted, as will become evident with the reactions of the Association to the Keele case (see below, p. 36). In 2010, for instance, during the British Airways (BA) cabin crew strike, BUIRA was indirectly involved in supporting the strikers. The motion in support of the BA cabin crew was initiated by BUIRA members (among whom were Phil Taylor, Gregor Gall and Ralph Darlington), and the Association provided access to its mailing lists and facilitated the circulation of letters of support, memos etc regarding the strike (although it did not encompass an official position on the matter). Moreover, in the 2010 conference, BUIRA hosted two

Yet despite BUIRA's efforts not to be overtly involved in political matters, there were instances where this could not be avoided. For one must not forget that science is not a self-existent construct, but a social institution subjected to the influences of the wider socio-political environment. To sustain its institutions and structures, science requires funding either from public or from private sources, which immediately places it in a dependent relationship *vis-à-vis* the State or private capital. Therefore, a professional scientific association, whose *raison d'être* is the promotion and support of the field it represents, is, by definition, subjected to a potential social exchange with the authorities that control funding or set the operational limits of any scientific endeavour. The dilemma that obviously emerges concerns the actions a professional association shall take once its field faces problems related to its socio-political nature; shall the association remain idle or engage into action? The answer to this question depends on the association's members and its administration, but any decision must, inevitably, take into consideration the fact that the limits between the purely epistemic and the socio-political nature of science are not always as clear as one may desire. During its lifetime, BUIRA was forced to consider this matter twice, when the existing structures of the field were challenged by the establishment – in 1982, with the *Industrial Relations Research Unit* (IRRU) case, and in 2008, with the Keele case[32].

The 1982 Rothschild Report on the functions and desirability for the existence of the *Social Sciences Research Council* (SSRC – now the *Economic and Social Research Council*, ESRC) proved to be the most important challenge the field had faced since its foundation. The Rothschild Committee had been appointed by Sir Keith Joseph, the Secretary of State for Education and Science of the Thatcher government, to investigate alleged "'left-wing' bias in courses run by the Open University" (Brown 1998: 274). The report eventually came out supportive of the SSRC but it contained a paragraph which argued that the work of the IRRU is unfairly biased in favour of unions[33]. As a result, another committee was formed, which comprised Sir Kenneth Berrill, Sir Henry Phelps Brown, and David William (Brown 1998: 276), to investigate these allegations. Although the final report, published in 1983, vindicated the IRRU, the fact that the inquiry ever took place was important in itself: it showed that the work of the most important IR research centre was being perceived as one-sided, something that had implications for the whole research conducted by IR academics. The attack on the IRRU was not an internal matter of concern for the research centre, but could have influenced the future of the field as well.

BUIRA's reaction to the above situation was immediate: when William Brown presented the case in the 1982 annual conference and "asked for direction on the

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BA strikers in one of its plenary sessions, and collected £750, £250 of which were donated to the strikers' solidarity fund (the rest were sent to two other strikers' funds, at the University of Westminster UCU and the Manchester College UCU).

[32] BUIRA, as a British association, was primarily concerned with developments in Britain. Although it was interested in worldwide developments, it did not act as strongly as in the latter context. Thus, although a petition was circulated to support the Institute for Working Life in Sweden, which was to be shut down by the Swedish government in 2007, no more actions were taken for its support.

[33] According to Brown (1998: 274), "there is authoritative evidence that this recommendation was added after Rothschild sent his draft report to the Secretary of State. As it happened, the main text contained two sympathetic references to the IRRU".

part of the membership under the present delicate political circumstances", the AGM voted a motion, which was passed unanimously, stating that "the Executive should take whatever action it deems necessary, including the calling of an extraordinary meeting, in light of the Committee of Inquiry Report". Individual letters were sent to the Committee and the press, and BUIRA issued the following statement:

> "BUIRA welcomes the Rothschild report on the SSRC. But it notes with concern the treatment of industrial relations research, and in particular of the Industrial Relations Research Unit at the University of Warwick. By its very nature, industrial relations research is occasionally contentious, being concerned with extremely important areas of policy formulation and legislative enactment. BUIRA therefore feels that to single out the SSRC's extremely distinguished unit at Warwick as the subject of a separate enquiry, on the grounds of bias, is inequitable, the international reputation of the Unit and the standard of its research is unquestioned: indeed recently a reviewer in the US Industrial and Labor Relations Review commented, 'The best industrial relations research during the last decade in the English speaking world has been conducted in Great Britain and of this research I find the Warwick Studies in Industrial Relations most impressive'. BUIRA believes the proposed enquiry into the Warwick Unit to be completely unnecessary whilst having complete confidence that its report will dismiss this uninformed accusation".

Upon the publication of the Berrill report, the AGM agreed to send a letter to the SSRC stating that it welcomed the report and that the Association regretted that the inquiry ever took place. The IRRU case signified an important turning point in the Association's mentality; it was the first time that the Association acted as a collective entity representative of the field in Britain, to support one of the field's most important institutions, and assisted the further maturation and socialisation of its community.

Thus, when the Keele case emerged in 2008, the Association was ready to act much more effectively and concertedly than in 1982. In 2008, the administration of Keele University decided to merge its management, economics, and industrial relations and HRM programmes, into a Business School; this movement was accompanied by the declaration that a substantial number of staff would be sacked as part of the rationalisation process[34]. Anyone cognizant with the situation in British higher education will recognise in the above situation some familiar patterns: for the last twenty years or so, many industrial relations departments either change their names to more 'marketable' titles – such as HRM or Organisational Behaviour – or they are absorbed by Business Schools (the Department of IR of the LSE – the first ever such department in the UK – had a similar fate when, in 2006, it became part of the newly founded Department of Management). The Keele case, therefore, was not something new or unique in British IR history; its importance lay in the fact that the majority of the IR personnel were to be made redundant and that the IR courses were to be eliminated from the curriculum (something that did not necessarily

[34] For a more detailed presentation of the Keele dispute see Seifert (2009).

happen in other institutions that followed a similar strategy). BUIRA's reaction to the above situation was immediate since "the campaign over Keele … touched a raw nerve for BUIRA members, as it appeared to be symptomatic … of the threat posed to industrial relations research and teaching more generally" (Darlington 2009b: 2).

Contrary to the IRRU case, BUIRA was not restricted in issuing a statement or in encouraging its members to contact the Press or the relevant authorities. During a London BUIRA seminar in 2008, it was decided that a team of IR academics would produce a document to show the relevance of IR research for modern society, which was to be presented in a special one-day conference in December 2008 in Manchester. The conference, which attracted more than hundred participants, proved to be quite influential and led to the publication of an edited book (Darlington 2009a). Although some of the Association's members expressed their reservations regarding the involvement of BUIRA in the Keele case, on the grounds that this was an employment issue and not an epistemic one, the prevailing stance was that the Keele case was a fight to maintain the Association's integrity as a champion of IR – as Rosemary Lucas, the then President, argued.

BUIRA was not contained in the actions described previously. It issued a statement which was signed by more than hundred scientists within a day from its launch, and was sent to several national newspapers; it sent a letter of complaint to the Keele Management with 425 signatures against the university's plans and encouraged its members to write individually to the university's chancellor; it issued press releases to a number of media, such as the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (THES), the Guardian, the Financial Times, the Independent, the Times, the Daily Telegraph, the Morning Star, the Socialist Worker, the magazine Personnel Today, and the Labour Research and Associated Press, and sent short letters to the editors of the THES, the Guardian, the Independent, the Times, and the Daily Telegraph; it paid for an advertisement in support of Keele and critical social science in the Guardian, and it encouraged its members to participate in the rallies, organised by the University and College Union (UCU), at Keele.

Despite this mobilisation from the UCU, BUIRA, and other professional associations (such as the Royal Economic Society), the Keele administration went on with its merging plans, although not with the redundancies or the extreme changes in the curriculum. Judged in this manner, the campaign was partially successful; but seen under a different light, the campaign managed to strengthen the identity and position of BUIRA as a professional association even further, both in the scientific community and in the wider society.

Apart from supporting the field and its institutions, another fundamental function of the scientific association is the constant promotion of the field's intellectual and institutional character; that way, the scientific community may build concrete bridges with other bodies, either external or internal to science, and may be able to avoid situations such as the ones previously described. In a sense, the stronger and better relations an association has with the wider world, the more able it will be to support the field when the need arises. BUIRA's relationship with other scientific or non-scientific bodies has been characterised, throughout its history, by introversion. As John Goodman argued, BUIRA was always a bit nervous of other organisations

because of the subject's strong political nature and any approach from outside bodies was being perceived as if having a wider political agenda. Moreover, the wish of BUIRA, especially in its early years, to keep an explicit research-oriented profile withheld it from forming any alliances with bodies that lacked the academic focus and impartiality BUIRA wanted to possess – as has been already mentioned, the first time BUIRA officially collaborated with another association was in 1981. Having said that, it is interesting to examine in more detail the relationships the Association formed with other bodies, and the way it tried to promote the field through them.

Relationship with other Scientific Associations

BUIRA's introvert nature was nowhere more evident than in its relations with other professional scientific associations. The only stable, and powerful, relationship BUIRA held with another association was its organic connection to the *International Industrial Relations Association* (IIRA), which was co-founded in 1967 by Ben Roberts, one of BUIRA's founding fathers (Kaufman 2004). Traditionally, the BUIRA President is represented at the EC of the IIRA and BUIRA members enjoy reduced membership fees in the Association. Yet despite this linkage, the actual collaboration between the two bodies is minimal; the high point in their relationship was the co-organisation in 2007 of the 8th European IIRA Regional Conference in Manchester, to which BUIRA contributed £4000[35].

Moreover, BUIRA was also a member of the *Academy of the Learned Societies in Social Sciences* (ALSISS – now *Academy of Social Sciences*) since the latter's foundation, but its membership was terminated in 2007 because of the little gain the Association received from it (EC Minutes, 23/11/2007)[36]. Generally speaking, BUIRA has consciously decided to follow its own independent path in the social scientific world and has not pursued any collaboration with similar associations, such as the *Manchester Industrial Relations Society*, or the *Industrial Law Society*. The only time BUIRA cooperated with another scientific association (apart from the IIRA or the SIT) was in 1995, when it co-organised a conference with the *Scottish Labour History Society*.

Relationship with non-scientific bodies

During its early years, the IUSGIR, had developed a close collaboration with the Ministry of Labour (MoL), regarding the quality of the labour statistics the latter was gathering. As has been already discussed, one of the primary aims of the Group was to secure "the widest possible availability of material likely to be useful to those of its members engaged in research". It comes as no surprise, then, that one of its first actions was to make representations to the MoL regarding the quality of the labour statistics. In 1950, the IUSGIR submitted a memorandum to the North Committee,

[35] A proposal, in 1998, to co-organise the 6th European Congress of the IIRA in 2001 in the UK was not carried, as the EC felt that BUIRA was not up to the task, for financial and administrative reasons.

[36] The consequences of BUIRA's withdrawal from the ALSISS were particularly felt during the Keele dispute, when BUIRA asked for the Academy's support. The Academy replied that if BUIRA wished for its support, it should firstly become its member. Eventually, the Academy did not take an official stand on the dispute.

which was responsible for the improvement of the labour statistics, where it put forward several proposals and points the Committee should take into consideration before reaching its final decision. However, when the Ministry failed to respond, another memorandum was submitted in 1959, which was more positively received – UIRA members met with the Ministry's representative to discuss the matter. It is not clear whether the Ministry implemented any of the memorandum's suggestions when it published, in 1962, its "Statistics on Incomes, Employment and Production"; however, one may assume that the contacts of the Association with the MoL might have influenced the Ministry's approach.

No matter if UIRA had succeeded in altering government policy on the matter, its contact with the Ministry helped it to be regarded as a scientific association by the MoL. In 1963, the Ministry asked the UIRA, through Professor Robertson, to compile a memorandum regarding the research conducted in Industrial Relations, and especially the research that was completed in the last two years, which implies that the Association was being perceived as an informed source on IR research. When the memorandum was submitted in November 1963, it also outlined the various concerns and complaints regarding the conduct of research. The conclusion of the memorandum was very interesting:

> "The association feels that the problems outlined in the foregoing paragraphs can only be solved by the formation of some kind of research council for social sciences which should be responsible for watching the general progress of the social sciences, including IR. This body should have the power to consider research projects and to finance those which it considered worthwhile, and it should provide full-time post-graduate studentships for research in IR and the other social sciences. Only in this way can a sufficient volume of worthwhile research in IR be undertaken" (p. 6).

Can we say that UIRA contributed in one way or another to the formation of the SSRC (founded in 1965, two years after the memorandum)? This is, indeed, a far-fetched conclusion, as there is no other mention of the matter in the archives; when, however, the official history of the SSRC is written, it may not come as a surprise to learn that UIRA, or some of its members, participated in and influenced its foundation.

Apart from this early contact with the MoL, BUIRA does not seem to have been engaged in close cooperation with any other government department from then onwards. This does not by any means imply that the Association terminated its relationships with other public organisations; from the mid 1960s till nowadays, BUIRA attempted to be involved in the wider educational and research policy of the state through its collaboration with the SSRC (and, later, the ESRC) and the RAE. As an advisor to these bodies, it attempted to influence government policy regarding the field of IR.

The very first contact of BUIRA with the SSRC was rather adversarial: in 1966-67, the SSRC commissioned some IR academics (who were BUIRA members) to conduct a survey of research in IR in Britain (something similar to the Registry of Research BUIRA comprised in 1974). The initial results of this research were presented in the annual conference but the BUIRA executives were concerned that the SSRC did not consult BUIRA prior to the research. After the presentation, the meeting approved a

motion by Hugh Clegg to contact the SSRC and to "express concern ... about not being consulted about the survey and to examine the methods through which membership opinions about the future of IR research could be ascertained for the purpose of determining BUIRA policy on this matter". The reaction of the SSRC Chairman of the Committee, Mr Campbell Adamson, was instantaneous, and he agreed that the Committee had been at fault by not consulting BUIRA and said that no decision will be taken without further consultation with the Association. He also stated that harmonious relations were in the mutual interest of the SSRC and BUIRA, and that there was no reason why these should not be maintained in the future. This motion was a double victory for BUIRA: in the first place, it was recognised as a representative scientific organisation of the field of IR in Britain and, secondly, it was established as an actor that should be taken into consideration in any decision concerning the field of IR.

The influence of BUIRA's motion was so important that, following this incident, the EC met with the SSRC in 1968 to discuss the desirability of establishing a research unit of IR, which "would provide an institution framework for large scale research projects and would provide greater continuity of work" (EC Minutes 1968). Allan Flanders was invited to consider the post of the Director of the new unit, which was proposed to be located near Oxford. Moreover, it was mentioned that any such organisation should be national in character, to avoid money being channelled into an institute attached to one centre. In 1969 it became known that the SSRC would go ahead with the establishment of an IR research unit and seven universities (Leeds, Manchester, Glasgow, LSE, Warwick, Oxford and Cambridge) were invited to bid for the institute. Eventually, in 1970, the unit was created in Warwick, under the directorship of Hugh Clegg; the IRRU – Britain's most important research centre in IR – was born.

In later years, the relationship of BUIRA with the ESRC would be primarily advisory, as the Association was being consulted in the various consultation exercises of the ESRC, and its members would be appointed in various ESRC committees. Despite these linkages, however, there were instances where the quality of the relationship with the ESRC was being questioned, as was the case in 1997 when John Purcell, the then BUIRA President, argued that the contacts of BUIRA to the ESRC "were less well established" than with other external bodies, despite the fact that Christine Edwards, BUIRA's ex-president, was serving as chair of the ESRC Postgraduate Training Panel since 1996.

A similar advisory relationship also existed with the RAE although not of the same extent or depth as that with the ESRC. Although BUIRA nominated people for the RAE panel since 1995, they were not always elected. However, in recent years, as in 2001 and 2008, the Association was being consulted by the RAE regarding the latter's approach to IR. BUIRA may not have had such an active relationship with RAE but this did not stop it from expressing its views regarding the policies of the Assessment Exercise. As has been already mentioned, Christine Edwards had expressed the concerns of BUIRA regarding the use of journals as indices of academic performance, a position also supported by John Purcell when he became President.

Apart from the above relationships with government bodies, BUIRA did not develop any other fruitful collaboration with non-scientific institutions. Although

BUIRA members participated in another important institution – the *Workplace Employment Relations Survey* (WERS) – either as designers or analysts of its results, BUIRA itself was only indirectly involved to the whole process, functioning primarily as "a vehicle for dialogue between the IR community and the WERS steering group" (email from Keith Whitfield to Rosemary Lucas, 21/7/2010). This should not come as a surprise as it is in accord with BUIRA's almost ascetic presence in the social scientific world. In recent years, however, there seems to be a slight change of direction on this matter; for instance, BUIRA was involved from the beginning in the foundation of the *Union Ideas Network*, which runs under the auspices of the TUC. When, in the 2005 conference, Paul Nowak of the TUC announced the TUC's intention to set up a forum for the exchange of ideas on IR matters, BUIRA was quick to offer institutional support despite the reservations of some members, and it appointed Martin Upchurch, the then Communications Secretary, as its representative to the Advisory team to the project.

The Future of BUIRA

In recent years many argue that the field of IR faces, or may face a crisis; the Keele case, for example, and the general erosion of the IR academic departments, are representative of the new context in which IR research and teaching may have to function. Apart from this, however, IR has been attacked from an intellectual standpoint as well: the debate, in 2005, between Mike Emmott of the CIPD and Keith Sisson of the University of Warwick regarding the value of Employment Relations (Emmott had purposefully chosen the title *Employee Relations* – see Emmott (2005) and for Sisson's reply, Sisson (2005)), or the recent gloomy predictions about the field's future by Kaufman (2008), testify to the fact that the epistemic and practical value of the field are being contested. Under this light, it can be argued that BUIRA may also suffer, since its future is largely tied to the future of the field. Before arguing so, however, one should examine the 'health' of the association to establish whether it faces, or may face, any problems in the future. This can be done by examining two indices: first, the association's membership trends and, second, the response to the association's conferences (if it organises any). A healthy association, in contrast to a degenerating one, will be able to steadily increase its membership, and to attract a growing number of participants in its conferences. Table 6 presents the evolution of BUIRA's membership from its foundation till 2010[37].

[37] Appendix 2 illustrates in more detail how the contents of Table 6 were formed.

Table 6
BUIRA Membership Trends

Year	Leaving Members	New Members	Total Members	Year	Leaving Members	New Members	Total Members
1950	-	18	18	1981	11	24	305
1951	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	1982	0	25	330
1952	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*	1983	14	22	338
1953	1	2	34	1984	17	15	336
1954	1	6	39	1985	19	29	346
1955	2	6	43	1986	9	46	383
1956	2	7	48	1987	11	17	389
1957	3	11	56	1988	0	18	407
1958	0	5	61	1989	1	17	423
1959	1	13	73	1990	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*
1960	0	15	88	1991	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*
1961	2	10	96	1992	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*
1962	0	19	115	1993	18	37	447
1963	6	9	118	1994	0	17	464
1964	8	18	128	1995	*N/A*	*N/A*	*N/A*
1965	1	3	130	1996	71	42	473
1966	5	15	140	1997	23	31	481
1967	18	19	141	1998	10	36	507
1968	8	25	158	1999	2	48	553
1969	5	13	166	2000	2	88	639
1970	0	20	186	2001	109	54	584
1971	5	20	201	2002	1	33	616
1972	26	39	214	2003	1	44	659
1973	16	31	229	2004	0	27	686
1974	11	32	250	2005	74	29	641
1975	7	17	260	2006	8	45	678
1976	21	15	254	2007	18	21	681
1977	14	13	253	2008	12	23	692
1978	14	22	261	2009	216	28	504 [1]
1979	13	31	279	2010	60	41	485
1980	9	22	292				

Notes:

1. The 2009 drop in membership by 188 members is explained by the overhaul in subscriptions that followed the implementation of the raised subscription to £20 from 2008. See also Appendix 2 for a more detailed explanation on how the membership levels were calculated.

As one can observe, the table contains some extreme values, especially in the *Leaving Members* column (see the 1996, 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2010 years). These values reflect the deletion of members from the membership lists due to the non-payment of fees. Their extreme nature depends on various factors, the most important of which being the fact that the 'clearing-up' of the membership database was not taking place at regular intervals. The reasons for this were primarily administrative: either the members' whereabouts were not properly monitored, making, thus, their tracing very hard, or the various changes in the membership fees created coordination problems with the bank and the payment of the fees. Because

it was difficult to track down some members, they may not have been aware of the change in the fees level, and they might have been paying a smaller amount than required. According to the rules of the Association, these members were typically in arrears with their fees but they were not erased when they should have been (according to the provisions of Rule 8), because the AGM agreed to keep the rule dormant until the Secretary managed to contact all the members. By the time this was eventually done, the number of people who did not wish to continue their membership was growing exponentially, leading, thus, to the extreme values depicted in the Table.

Leaving this methodological issue aside, however, the Table reveals some very interesting information about the status of the Association. First, despite the existence of some variations, the *Total Membership* of BUIRA follows a steady upward trend, which indicates that the Association is able to renew its membership base. More specifically, the annual average growth of the total membership is *5.6%*[38]. Second, although in certain years the Association is loosing far more members than it gains, the total sum of the *Leaving Members* is *906*, considerably lower than the total sum of the *New Members* at *1358*. Moreover, the Association attracts, on average, *23.9 members per year* and loses *16 members per year*. In other words, although the Association loses some of its membership (either because of retirement, or because of resignations, or because of deaths) the new members it attracts are, on average, more than the ones being lost.

Regarding the response to the annual conference, Table 7 presents some interesting statistics:

[38] All the annual average growth rates (AGR) were calculated using the following formula: $r = \left[\sqrt[m]{\frac{X_N}{X_T}} - 1 \right] \times 100$, where *r* is the average percentage growth rate, X_N is the value of the last variable in the series, X_T is the value of the first variable in the series, and *m* is the difference in years (or observations) between the first and the last observation (Hudson 2000: 125).

Table 7
Annual Conference Statistics

Year	Conference Papers				Conference Participants	Participants as % of membership[4]
	Plenary Sessions	Workshop Papers	Total Papers	Posters		
1950[1]	-	-	-	-	15[2]	83.3
1951	*N/A*	-	*N/A*	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1952	4	-	4	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1953	4	-	4	-	14[2]	41.2
1954	4	-	4	-	15[2]	38.5
1955	5	-	5	-	28	65.1
1956	4	-	4	-	22	45.8
1957	5	-	5	-	27	48.2
1958	6	-	6	-	26[2]	42.6
1959	4	-	4	-	20[2]	27.4
1960	5	-	5	-	40	45.5
1961	3	-	3	-	32	33.3
1962	3	-	3	-	32[2]	27.8
1963	2	-	2	-	34[2]	28.8
1964	3	-	3	-	35[2]	27.3
1965	4	-	4	-	29	22.3
1966	3	-	3	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1967	4	-	4	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1968	4	-	4	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1969	3	-	3	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1970	3	-	3	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1971	4	-	4	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1972	4	-	4	-	95	44.4
1973	4	-	4	-	89	38.9
1974	4	-	4	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1975	4	-	4	-	82	31.5
1976	4	-	4	-	84	33.1
1977	4	-	4	-	64	25.3
1978	5	-	5	-	82	31.4
1979	5	-	5	-	81	29.0
1980	5	-	5	-	111	38.0
1981	7	-	7	-	91	29.8
1982	5	-	5	-	86	26.1
1983	7	-	7	-	89	26.3
1984	7	-	7	-	82	24.4
1985	7	-	7	-	68	19.7
1986	6	5	11	-	95	24.8
1987	5	6	11	-	55	14.1
1988	5	6	11	-	100	24.6
1989	5	8	13	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1990	5	6	11	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1991	6	11	17	-	65	*N/A*
1992	5	12	17	-	61	*N/A*
1993	4	18	22	-	113	25.3
1994	2	21	23	-	109	23.5

Year	Conference Papers				Conference Participants	Participants as % of membership[4]
	Plenary Sessions	Workshop Papers	Total Papers	Posters		
1995	4	22	26	-	*N/A*	*N/A*
1996	4	24	28	-	101	21.4
1997	4	32	36	-	141	29.3
1998	4	28	32	-	110	21.7
1999	4	30	34	6	115	20.8
2000	6	40	46	9	180	28.2
2001	5	32	37	6	120	20.5
2002	5	39	44	6	93	15.1
2003	3	33	36	2	98	14.9
2004	4	34	38	3	74	10.8
2005	4	46	50	7	92	14.4
2006	5	70	75	5	98	14.5
2007[3]	-	-	-	-	-	-
2008	3	53	56	3	90	13.0
2009	4	56	60	2	97	19.2
2010	3	53	56	3	100	20.6

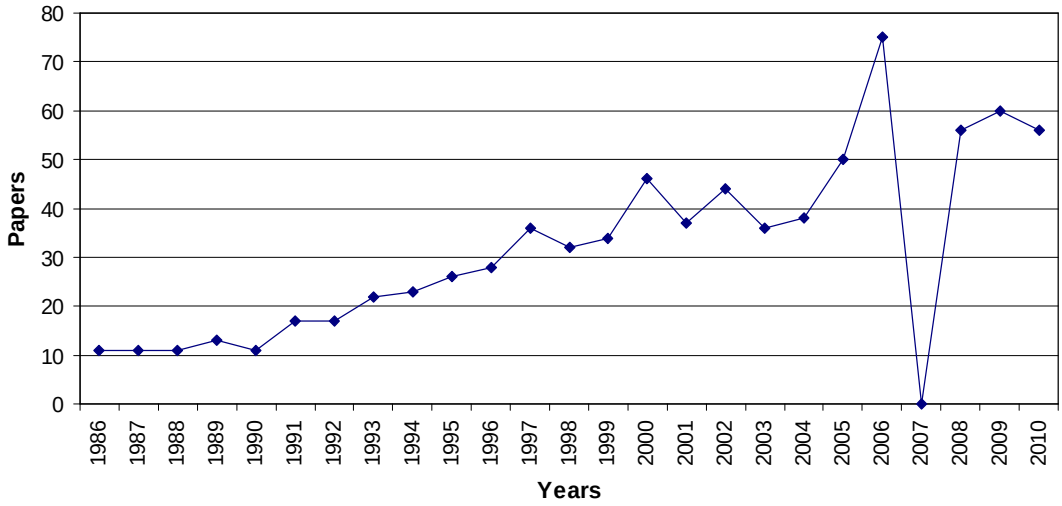
Source: AGM Minutes, Secretary Reports and Conference Programmes 1950-2009.

Notes:

1. In 1950 there were no plenary sessions, only discussions regarding the future directions and actions of the Group.
2. For these years, I have counted as participants those present in the Business meetings; for all the other years, I was based on the numbers reported in the Secretary Reports and in the AGM Minutes.
3. In 2007, the Annual Conference was co-hosted with the 8th European IIRA Conference. Therefore, there was no separate programme or list of participants.
4. These are calculated using the *Total Members* column from Table 6.

As is evident at a first glance, until 1986, when the workshop sessions were introduced, the amount of the papers presented followed a rather steady development, with an average of *4.4 papers* being presented annually. Although an increase in the number of plenary sessions can be observed from 1978 till 1986, it is very small and rather insignificant. The important change occurs from 1986 onwards, when an upward trend is observed in the total papers presented (see also Figure 2). The average number of total papers presented during the period was *31.6 papers per year*; during the same period, the AGR of the papers presented was *7%,* a significant increase compared to the AGR of the period from 1952 to 1985, which stood at *1.7%.*

Figure 2
Total Papers Presented 1986-2010



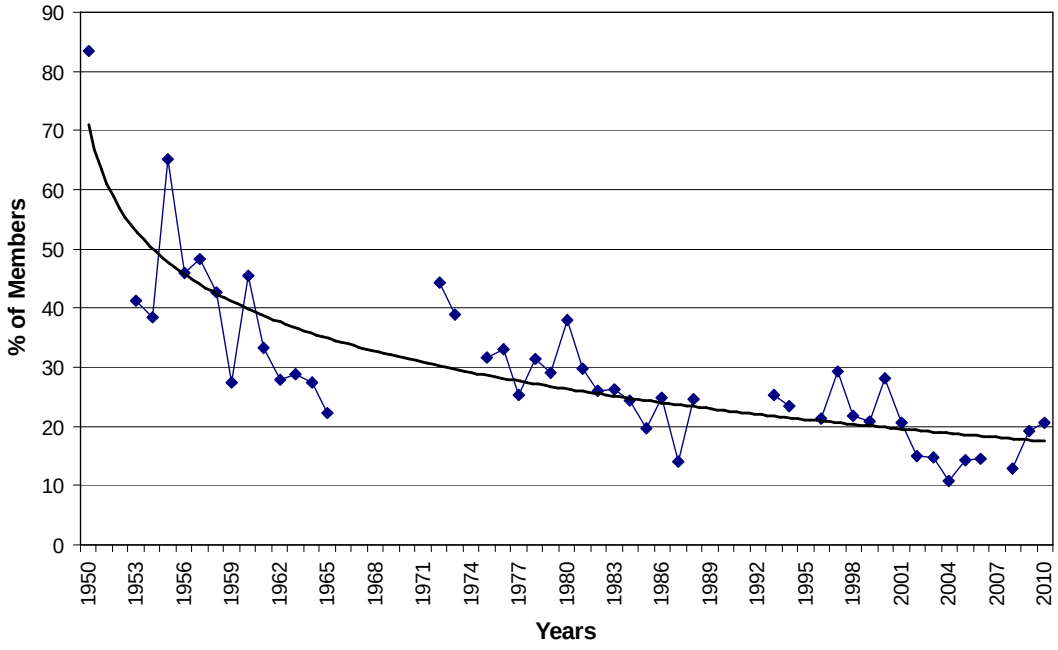
The attraction of more papers to the conference once it 'opened up' to the community reveals two interesting points: first, that there were always people interested in presenting their work to the conference, which, in turn, means that the conference was (and is) valued as an important forum for the communication and discussion of ideas; and, secondly, that the subject of IR, as defined by BUIRA, generated, and continuous to generate, interest among the community. Although one may argue that the number of papers presented are not as many as in other, relevant, conferences (for instance, the *Society for the Advancement of Socio-economics* (SASE) or the LERA conferences), one should also keep in mind that this reflects a conscious decision by the EC to keep the conference small and manageable, so as not to loose its 'informal and friendly' character. The fact that in recent years, especially from 2006 onwards, the conference tends to include more papers implies that there is space for expansion if, and only if, the EC decides to accommodate the demand[39].

Similar trends can also be observed regarding the participation in the conference. In the early years of the Association the participation in the conference was rather small, consisting primarily of the hard core that comprised the Association's membership. Yet from 1972 onwards, when the Association opened up its membership to the tutors of technical colleges and polytechnics, one can observe an exponential rise in the numbers of participants: the average number of participants for the years 1972-1986 is *84.9 participants per annum*, a stark contrast to the corresponding average of *26.4 participants per annum* for the 1950 to 1971 period; from 1986 onwards, the average number of participants rose to *100.3 participants per annum*.

[39] An index that would show how much the conference is valued by the scientific community would be the percentage of the papers actually selected for presentation (i.e. (papers selected/papers submitted) x 100). However, no data are available regarding the denominator.

Leaving these trends aside for a moment, there are two interesting points to discuss in relation to Table 7. First, it must be noted that the AGR for the years 1986 to 2010 is rather low, at 0.2%, compared to the AGR for the period from 1950 to 1985, which stood at 4.4%. Secondly, the percentage of members participating in the conference is generally declining as the years go by (see also Figure 3). May this mean that the BUIRA conference is not as attractive as previously implied? Not necessarily, for this phenomenon can be explained by three factors: first, from the fact that the membership is growing faster than the conference participants (Membership $AGR_{1986\text{-}2010}$=1% > Conference Participants $AGR_{1986\text{-}2010}$=0.2%); secondly, because one cannot expect all the members to be research active every year and, thirdly, because the decision to participate in a conference depends on various factors such as whether the participants present a paper in the conference, the date of the conference, other commitments that the perspective participants may have, the clash of the conference with other conferences, or the cost of the conference, to mention but few.

Figure 3
Conference Participants as % of Membership



Although there is ample room for improvements, especially regarding the attraction of new members and the sustention of the old core, and the further enlargement of the conference participation rates, the Association does not seem to face any immediate institutional or intellectual challenges, since it continues to attract members in its core in a rather steady pace, and the conference it organises appears to be a point of attraction for the IR community.

Some Thoughts on the Field's Future and BUIRA's Role

As already mentioned, in recent years several voices discuss the imminent crisis of the field of IR. The most important problem, however, is that no one actually defines 'crisis'. To fully appreciate this term, it is necessary to consider the nature of the scientific field. A scientific field, apart from its purely intellectual nature, also has a social nature, in the sense that it comprises the various institutions that provide it with substance and assist in the development of its purely epistemic function. There are five such institutions, namely the academic journal, the academic department, the academic research centre, the academic conference and the professional scientific association. Each of this institution performs a different function within the field and each one helps the promotion and sustainability of the field's intellectual work[40]. The common elements of these institutions, the threads that keep them all together, are the scientific community, i.e. all these people who develop the intellectual bases and communicate the field's research outcomes to the wider society, and the field's problematique – i.e. the theories and general themes the field studies. Taking the above into consideration, one can either talk of an *intellectual* or an *institutional* challenge to a field (or both).

The *intellectual challenge* refers to the purely epistemic nature of the field, i.e. to its theories and methodologies. To argue that a field faces an intellectual challenge means that either its theories are not able to perform their functions – i.e. to explain, predict, or describe the phenomenon under consideration – or that the phenomena the field studies have become dated – i.e. they have either ceased to exist, or they have changed without a parallel change to the field's theoretical directions, or they have become obsolete due to theoretical developments either from inside or outside the field (this is Kaufman's (2008) thesis regarding the intellectual status of IR, for instance).

An *institutional challenge*, on the other hand, targets the field's institutions, its social organisation. A field, therefore, faces an institutional challenge if, first, the scientific community is not able to regenerate itself, secondly, if the community is not able to sustain its existing members or, thirdly, if the field's five institutions face a challenge. For instance, the field's journals or conferences may not attract papers, or high quality papers, or the membership in the professional association may decline or may not be renewed, or the academic departments may not attract students or may face closures, or the sources of funding may dry up. Consequently, the scientific community becomes slowly marginalised, both within the wider scientific world and within society, and runs the risk either of disappearing altogether or splitting to several, smaller, neo-communities.

Taking the above into consideration, we are able to understand whether a field is, or will be, in a state of crisis. The field of IR in Britain, for example, contrary to what is assumed, does not seem to face an intellectual or an institutional crisis, with the

[40] All these institutions, with the exception of the academic department, are places of knowledge development. The academic department, on the other hand, is the primary place of knowledge dissemination to the wider society – it is the field's mirror to all these people who are unaware of science's nature and functions. For more details about the functions and properties of these institutions, and for a more elaborate discussion on the nature of science see Voskeritsian (2009).

only exception of the academic department (Voskeritsian 2009). BUIRA, for instance, seems to be in a rather healthy state of affairs, as it manages to attract both new members and to organise successful conferences.

Since the academic department is the only institution that faces a crisis, three important questions are being immediately raised: first, how important are these developments for the field, secondly, how exactly can they influence it, and thirdly, what can BUIRA do? To adequately address these issues one must understand the role of the academic department within the wider construct of science. The academic department constitutes the field's mirror to the wider society, since it is the forum that attracts and trains the future members of the community; without its own departments a field runs the danger of becoming *invisible* to the future generations of students. How serious, however, is the change in titles for the future of Industrial Relations? To answer this question one has to research in more detail the nature of the change; to say that the field will plainly suffer because its departments change names is not enough. One has to study the curricula of the various ex-Industrial Relations departments and see how the actual teaching of the subject has been affected, the way teaching is conducted, and the ideas discussed in the lecture theatres and the classrooms. At the same time, it is necessary to examine the faculty structure of the new departments and compare it to the old ones, to see if any quantitative or qualitative changes have actually taken place (and to what direction).

Moreover, the dissolution of the departments does not necessarily mean that the field will face an imminent crisis. To reach this point the whole structure of the field must be eroded, something that has not as yet happened, or looks probable to happen in the near future. As long as there are people interested in the subjects the field studies, Industrial (or Employment) Relations will be able to survive and to continue to thrive. The fight for the sustainability of the field must, at this stage, be concentrated on two major fronts: first, in sustaining its presence within universities and secondly, in making itself valuable to the wider society; it is within this context that the role of BUIRA becomes crucial. For it is through its structure that a mobilisation of the IR academics may be materialised, to eventually influence and control, as much as possible, these new realities. Under these circumstances what are BUIRA's choices?

Taking into consideration the previous discussion and the history of the Association as depicted thus far, the most important step BUIRA should consider taking is to gradually abandon its *ad hoc* reactions to the external stimuli and to engage into a more proactive stance towards the forces that shape its environment. IR education and teaching seem to face the most important pressures at the moment and this is where the primary focus of the Association should be; the existence of the Teaching IR Study Group is a step to the right direction, but not the only one. More emphasis should be given on the new challenges that IR teaching faces, seminars and discussions should be organised on a regular basis, and BUIRA must provide a continuous forum through which the community may be able to communicate and exchange views on the matter (the recent re-emergence of the BUIRA website can serve as such a platform). Moreover, BUIRA needs to start proselytising more people in its ranks, especially the younger generation of academics who will shape the form of the things to come; how this will be achieved

is up to the Association to decide. At the same time, more emphasis should be placed on the development of the field's intellectual corpus; thus far the conference is the principal agent for this achievement, but is it truly enough? The involvement of the Association in the publishing scene – through the publication of books, monographs, and working papers – can serve as a vehicle both for the intellectual advancement of the field and for the attraction of new members. Finally, it is important not to forget that science is a social institution that is shaped by the developments in the wider socio-political environment; an association that represents a field, and claims to promote its subject-matter, must by definition be involved in these wider socio-political processes. As many episodes in the history of science have taught us, avoiding a contact with the external world and retracting into the, seemingly, safe and 'neutral' environment of science and academia is not, and never was, the right course of action. Under these conditions, the advice of Joe Hill – a Wobbly organiser – just before his execution sounds as timely as ever: "Don't waste any time in mourning. Organize" (Zinn 2003: 48).

Appendix 1: Content Analysis Methodology

The primary aim of the content analysis was to examine the intellectual focus of the annual conference, and to analyse its development. The analysis was centred on the *research topics* discussed in the conference and not so much on the content of the papers presented. Although the latter type of analysis would be more fruitful in terms of the conclusions reached, its materialisation was impossible as an archive with all the papers presented in the annual conferences does not exist and many presentations were not actual papers but small announcements.

Under these circumstances, the analysis of the research topics was the only available option. I was based on the titles of the papers presented in the conferences, which were readily available through the conference programmes. Due to time constraints, I decided not to analyse the whole population of papers but only a sample of them. I decided to start the analysis from 1951, the first year where papers/presentations were made, and to take three-year intervals up to 2008. However, since data were not available for 1951, I started the analysis from the next available observation, i.e. 1954. The three-year intervals provide an accurate picture of the conference's intellectual development since, if a new and interesting topic or idea appears in between the above years, it is very probable to leave its mark in the following ones.

Keeping the above in mind, the title of each paper was broken down in six major components: first, the major keyword was identified – i.e. the word that constituted the primary focus of the paper – and was called *Keyword #1*. Then the secondary keyword was identified, if it existed, which was also central to the paper but usually complementary to *Keyword #1*; this was *Keyword #2*. The epithets that qualified *Keyword #1* and *Keyword #2*, or words that denoted method (such as "quantitative analysis" etc), and words that referred to the empirical focus of the paper, such as the countries, industries or sectors under examination, were categorised as *Auxiliary Words* (*Auxiliary #1, #2, #3*).

The focus of the analysis would be *Keyword #1*. The completion of this process resulted in the identification of 296 words (some of which were similar or synonymous to others). Due to their amount the words were further categorised in wider *clusters*. Synonymous words, or words with close meaning, were placed within a wider and more encompassing cluster. The resulting *45 clusters*, which constituted the basis of the analysis, were presented in Table 3.

Appendix 2: Membership Calculation

At the time of writing, the calculation of the membership of BUIRA presented several problems that had to do with the lack of a comprehensive membership dataset. Until the early 1980s, the membership archives were kept up-to-date; however, from the late 1980s onwards, the increasing complexity of the organisation, the lack of a systematic method of keeping track of the members, and the absence of a proper system of membership recording contributed to the inability of the Association to provide a coherent account of its members. In a 2003 Executive Committee meeting it was explicitly stated that "it is not currently possible to produce a single definitive membership list" (EC Minutes, 3 July 2003).

The major problem with the calculation of the membership has to do with the fact that many names in the Secretariat's lists are not up-to-date with their fees payments. This means that many of them should not actually be members, despite their appearance on the lists. Moreover, many of the names may have resigned from academic life, or may have been deceased, and the lists may not have been updated. In certain intervals, the Secretary 'cleared' the lists from all the individuals who had been in arrears with their fees for more than a certain period of years, but this exercise did not take place each year[41]. Therefore, the membership numbers had to be reconstructed from various sources.

The major document that discusses membership statistics is the Secretary's report or, in earlier years, the AGM Minutes. Usually, the report included the following information: *number of new members, number of deceased members, number of resignations, members deleted from the records*, and *total members*. However, the Reports or Minutes were not always very detailed. Moreover, as stated above, from the 1990s onwards, the total membership was quite inflated, as there was no proper track of the members' condition or whereabouts.

My calculation of the membership trends was a combination of the total membership data presented at the AGM by the Secretary, together with any other information I could derive from the above sources. When a discrepancy between the numbers appeared, I treated it as a miscalculation from the part of the Secretary. Table A2.1, which is a more analytic version of Table 6, shows exactly how the membership trends were calculated.

[41] The period for which one was allowed to be in arrears with one's payments changed throughout the history of the Association. Once it was one year, later it became two years, and then three years. Currently, it is one year (Rule 8).

Table A2.1

BUIRA Membership Trends: Analytic Presentation

Year (1)	Initial Members (2)	Leaving Members				New Members (7)	Total Members (8)	Hypothetical Total Members (9)	Difference (10)
		Deceased (3)	Resigned (4)	Other (5)	Total (6)				
1950	18	0	0	0	0		18	18	0
1951			*No data available*					-	0
1952			*No data available*					-	0
1953	33	0	1	0	1	2	34	34	0
1954	34	0	1	0	1	6	39	39	0
1955	39	0	2	0	2	6	43	43	0
1956	43	0	2	0	2	7	48	48	0
1957	48	0	3	0	3	11	56	56	0
1958	56	0	0	0	0	5	61	61	0
1959	61	1	0	0	1	13	73	66	+7
1960	73	0	0	0	0	15	88	88	0
1961	88	1	1	0	2	10	96	96	0
1962	96	0	0	0	0	19	115	115	0
1963	115	0	4	2	6	9	118	120	-2
1964	118	0	3	5	8	18	128	133	-5
1965	128	0	0	1	1	3	130	131	-1
1966	130	0	3	2	5	15	140	142	-2
1967	140	0	0	18	18	19	141	159	-18
1968	141	0	8	0	8	25	158	158	0
1969	158	0	5	0	5	13	166	164	+2
1970	166	0	0	0	0	20	186	180	+6
1971	186	1	0	4	5	20	201	205	-4
1972	201	2	6	18	26	39	214	220	-6
1973	214	3	11	2	16	31	229	226	+3
1974	229	2	4	5	11	32	250	251	-1
1975	250	1	3	3	7	17	260	260	0
1976	260	1	7	13	21	15	254	256	-2
1977	254	0	6	8	14	13	253	253	0
1978	253		7	7	14	22	261	258	+3
1979	261		3	10	13	31	279	274	+5

Year (1)	Initial Members (2)	Leaving Members				New Members (7)	Total Members (8)	Hypothetical Total Members (9)	Difference (10)
		Deceased (3)	Resigned (4)	Other (5)	Total (6)				
1980	279	2	3	4	9	22	292	292	0
1981	292	0	5	6	11	24	305	305	0
1982	305	0	0	0	0	25	330	330	0
1983	330	0	3	11	14	22	338	338	0
1984	338	0	1	16	17	15	336	352	-16
1985	336	0	1	18	19	29	346	345	+1
1986	346	1	2	6	9	46	383	378	+5
1987	383	2	0	9	11	17	389	398	-9
1988	389	0	0	0	0	18	407	406	+1
1989	407	0	1	0	1	17	423	423	0
1990	*No data available*							-	-
1991	*No data available*							-	-
1992	*No data available*							-	-
1993	428	0	0	18	18	37	447	465	-18
1994	447	0	0	0	0	17	464	464	
1995	464	0	0	0	0	38	502	502	
1996	502	1	5	65	71	42	473	538	-65
1997	473	1	2	20	23	31	481	489	-8
1998	481	1	6	3	10	36	507	510	-3
1999	507	2	0	0	2	48	553	541	+12
2000	553	2	0	0	2	88	639	639	0
2001	639	1	1	107	109	54	584	691	-107
2002	584	0	1	0	1	33	616	616	0
2003	616	0	1	0	1	44	659	659	0
2004	659	0	0	0	0	27	686	686	0
2005	686	1	0	73	74	29	641	714	-73
2006	641	0	6	2	8	45	678	680	-2
2007	678	0	3	15	18	21	681	696	-15
2008	681	3	8	1	12	23	692	693	-1
2009	692	1	3	212	216	28	504	716	-212
2010	504	2	3	55	60	41	485	540	-55

Column 2 is based on data taken from Column 8: the previous year's report on the total membership is considered to be the next year's initial membership. For example, in 2007 the Secretary reported that the total members of the Association for 2007 were 681 (Column 7). This number was thus considered as the initial membership for 2008 (Column 2).

Columns 3 & 4 are being informed from the AGM minutes and the Secretaries' Reports. Column 5 is partially informed from the above sources: it contains all those people who were deleted from membership because they did not pay their fees *and* the contents of Column 10 when appropriate.

Column 10 represents the discrepancies that were found in the records due to the problems mentioned in the beginning. It is calculated by subtracting Column 9 from Column 8. A negative value means that more members were deleted from the records than the ones mentioned by the Secretary, and *vice versa* for the positive value. In many cases, for instance, the secretaries did not justify completely their final *Total Membership* numbers, which meant that they had not deleted some people from (or added some people in) the membership. Column 9 shows how the membership would have looked like if the numbers referred to in the Reports and the AGM minutes were to be followed. Column 9 was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Hypothetical Total Members}_t = \text{Initial Members}_t + \text{New Members}_t - \text{Total Leaving Members}_t \quad (1)$$

where t is the Year.

To be in accord with the Secretaries' reports regarding the total members, I needed to delete (or add) the contents of Column 9 to Column 5 (or Column 7) .

As one may observe from Table A1.1., for the majority of the years the difference between the actual and the hypothetical membership are either non-existent or insignificant. In some cases, however, there are huge discrepancies between what should have been the case and what the secretary actually reported in his Statement.

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Appendix 3: Past Presidents and Secretaries of BUIRA & Conference Locations

Table A3.1

BUIRA Presidents and Secretaries 1950-2010

Year	President	Secretary	Treasurer [1]	Communications Secretary [2]	Host Institution
1950-1953	J.H. Richardson	J.D.M. Bell (1950 – 1951) K.J.W. Alexander (1951-1953)	- -	- -	University of Leeds
1953 – 1956	H.S. Kirkaldy	J.D.M. Bell (1953 – 1955) D.J. Robertson (1955 – 1956)	D.J. Robertson (1954 – 1955) Miss H.R. Kahn (1955 – 1956)	- -	University of Cambridge
1956-1959	E.H. Phelps-Brown	D.J. Robertson (1956 – 1958) N.S. Ross (1958 – 1959)	Miss H.R. Kahn (1956 – 1958)	- -	London School of Economics
1959 – 1962	A.D. Flanders	N.S. Ross (1959 – 1961) J.P. Davison (1961 – 1962)		- -	University of Oxford
1962 – 1965	D.J. Robertson	J.P. Davison (1962 – 1963) G.L. Reid (1963 – 1965)		- -	University of Glasgow
1965 – 1968	B.C. Roberts	R.F. Banks (1965 – 1966) R.J. Loveridge (1966 – 1968)		- -	London School of Economics
1968 – 1971	H.A. Turner	L.J. Handy		-	University of Cambridge
1971 – 1974	H.A. Clegg	G.S. Bain		-	University of Warwick
1974 – 1977	W.E.J. McCarthy	J.W. Durcan		-	University of Oxford
1977 – 1980	L.C. Hunter	A.W.J. Thomson		-	University of Glasgow
1980 – 1983	Dorothy Wedderburn	P. Willman		-	Imperial College, London
1983 – 1986	J.F.B. Goodman	J.R.K. Berridge		-	University of Manchester
1986 – 1989	William Brown	Colin Gill		-	University of Cambridge
1989 – 1992	John Gennard	C.J. Lockyer		-	University of Strathclyde
1992 – 1995	Christine Edwards	Edmund Heery		-	Kingston University
1995 – 1998	John Purcell	Nicholas Kinnie		-	University of Oxford
1998 – 2001	Linda Dickens	Stephen Bach		-	University of Warwick
2001 – 2004	Roger Seifert	Carole Thornley & Mike Ironside	Paul Smith	Steve French	Keele University

Year	President	Secretary	Treasurer [1]	Communications Secretary [2]	Host Institution
2004 – 2007 [3]	Stephanie Tailby	Hazel Conley	Andy Danford	Martin Upchurch	University of the West of England
2007 – 2010	Rosemary Lucas	Paul Brook	Hamish Mathieson	Carol Atkinson	Manchester Metropolitan University

Notes:

1. The Treasurer position was founded in 1954, abolished in 1958 and re-established in 2002. During the 1954 – 1958 and 1958 – 2002 periods, responsible for the financial state of the Association was the Secretary.
2. The position of the Communications Secretary was founded in 2002.
3. In 2005 the Secretary position was re-named to Membership Secretary

Table A3.2

Conference Locations 1950-2010

Year	University	Year	University
1950	Holly Royde Residential College, Manchester	1981	University College of North Wales, Bangor
1951	Grantley Hall, Ripon	1982	University of East Anglia, Norwich
1952	St. Anthony's College, Oxford	1983	Van Mildert College, Durham
1953	St. Anthony's College, Oxford	1984	St. Peter's College, Oxford
1954	St. Cuthbert's Society, Durham	1985	University of Nottingham, Nottingham
1955	St. Cuthbert's Society, Durham	1986	University of Bath, Bath
1956	St. Cuthbert's Society, Durham	1987	University of Strathclyde, Glasgow
1957	Trinity College, Cambridge	1988	Wolfson College, Cambridge
1958	University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh	1989	University of Wales, Cardiff
1959	University College of North Wales, Bangor	1990	University of Warwick, Coventry
1960	St. Anthony's College, Oxford	1991	UMIST, Manchester
1961	St. Cuthbert's Society, Durham	1992	University of Warwick, Coventry
1962	University of Keele, Keele	1993	Univerity of York, York
1963	University of Bristol, Bristol	1994	Worcester College, Oxford
1964	St. John's College, York	1995	Van Mildert College, Durham
1965	University of Glasgow, Glasgow	1996	University of Bradford, Bradford
1966	University of Sussex, Sussex	1997	University of Bath, Bath
1967	Selwyn College, Cambridge	1998	Keele University, Keele
1968	Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh	1999	De Montfort University, Leicester
1969	Leeds University, Leeds	2000	University of Warwick, Coventry
1970	University of Technology, Loughborough	2001	Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester
1971	Easton Hall, Newcastle	2002	University of Stirling, Stirling
1972	University of Warwick, Coventry	2003	Leeds University, Leeds
1973	University of Sussex, Sussex	2004	Nottingham University, Nottingham
1974	University of Stirling, Stirling	2005	University of Northumbria, Northumbria
1975	St. Patrick's College, Dublin	2006	National University Institute Galway, Galway
1976	St. Catherine's College, Oxford	2007	University of Manchester (combined with the 8th IIRA European Conference)
1977	University of Lancaster, Lancaster	2008	University of West of England, Bristol
1978	University of Bristol, Bristol	2009	Cardiff Business School, Cardiff
1979	University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh	2010	Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester
1980	New Hall, Cambridge		

Biographical Note

Horen Voskeritsian graduated with a PhD in Industrial Relations from the Department of Management of the London School of Economics in 2009. His research interests include the study of the intellectual and institutional development of the field of IR in Britain, the theoretical bases of IR, Trade Unions strategies, and Industrial Conflict. He is also interested in Labour History and on the emergence of Radical Trade Unionism. He is currently working as a tutor at the Business College of Athens (BCA) and is a Research Associate at the Centre of Industrial Relations and Negotiations (CIRN) of the Athens University of Economics and Business (AUEB).

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