<u>**Call for papers**</u>

**Propositions vs. States-of-Affairs**
**Workshop proposal for the 49th SLE meeting, Naples, August 31 – September 3, 2016**

**Convenors**
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**Aim**
This workshop aims at bringing together linguists of different orientations and with different research focuses in order to furnish our understanding of contrasts between Propositions (truth-valued predications) and SoAs (non-truth-valued predications).

**Background**
The distinction between Propositions and States-of-Affairs (SoAs) can be characterized in terms of the notion of truth-value: Propositions are truth-valued predicational meaning units, while SoAs are non-truth-valued. The distinction plays a central role in language philosophy and metaphysics (e.g. Loux 1998). In linguistics, it has been employed in several frameworks and by a variety of scholars – although under different names:

> *Proposition*
> "Proposition" (Loux 1998; Svenonius 1994; Schüle 2000; Lyons 1977)
> "Propositional content" (Dik & Hengeveld 1991)
> "Fact" (Lees 1960; Vendler 1967; Dixon 2006)
> "Third-order entity" (Lyons 1977)
>
> *State-of-affairs (SoA)*
> "State of affairs" (Loux 1998; Svenonius 1994; Dik & Hengeveld 1991)
> "Event" (Vendler 1967; Schüle 2000)
> "Action" (Lees 1960)
> "Activity" (Dixon 2006)
> "Second-order entity" (Lyons 1977)

Pertaining to predicational meaning units, the distinction is relevant to clause contrasts (including nominalizations). It has been used to capture contrasts between different complement types of, for instance, modal predicates (1), perception predicates (2), knowledge predicates (3), and utterance predicates (4) (see Boye 2012: 188-194 for an overview; cf. Dixon 2006: 23-31).

(1)  Modal complements (e.g. Lyons 1977: 842-843; Palmer 1979: 35; Perkins 1983: 7-8)
     *He may stay in that house.*
     a. 'It is possible for him to stay in that house'.          (**SoA reading** of complement)
     b. 'It may be the case that he is staying in that house'.   (**Prop**. **reading** of complement)

(2)  Perception complements (e.g. Dik and Hengeveld 1991: 242-245; Boye 2010a)
     a. *I saw [him write a letter].*                            (**SoA complement**)
     b. *I saw [(that) he was writing a letter].*                (**Propositional complement**)

(3) Knowledge complements (Sørensen & Boye 2015) (data from Jacaltec; Craig 1977: 241, 235)
    a. *Wohtaj [hin    watx'en kap    camixe].*                  **(SoA complement)**
       I.know  I.make  ?       CLF/DET  shirt
       'I know how to make shirts'.
    b. *Wohtaj [tato    ay tzet ch'alaxoj jet    bay    chon    toj tu'].* **(Prop. complement)**
       I.know  COMP  is what is.given  to.us  where  we.go  ?    that
       'I know that they will give us something where we are going'.

(4)    a. *I told him [to go].*                         **(SoA complement)**
    b. *I told him [that she didn't like him].*        **(Propositional complement)**

It has also been used to capture contrasts between different kinds of nominalization, such as the contrast in (5) (e.g. Lees 1960: 59-73), Vendler (1967: 122-146; Fraser 1970):

(5)    a. *her singing of the aria*  (**SoA nominalization**)
    b. *her singing the aria*     (**Propositional nominalization**)

Importantly, the distinction has been associated with the distinction between the "major sentence types" declarative, interrogative and imperative. It has been argued that imperatives involve SoAs, while declaratives and possibly also interrogatives involve propositions (see Boye 2012: 199-206 for discussion). The distinction is of relevance not only to (possibly nominalized) clause type contrasts, however. Certain nouns may be described as designating SoAs (e.g. *event*, *action*), while others may be described as designating propositions (e.g. *fact*, *proposal*). Moreover, verb- or clause-level semantic categories may be distinguished according to whether they relate to propositions or SoAs. For instance, manner adverbs and non-epistemic modality are associated with SoAs (e.g. Hengeveld 1989), while it has been argued that evidentiality and epistemic modality are associated with propositions (Boye 2010b, 2012). Arguably, then, Proposition-SoA contrasts are pervasive in the world's languages. Still, however, they remain heavily understudied.

**Topics and issues covered**
All aspects of Proposition-SoA contrasts are of relevance to the workshop, including the following.

Proposition-SoA contrasts in individual languages or language families or across language families
- Nominalization contrasts.
- Noun contrasts
- Contrasts in complement, adverbial and/or relative clauses

Modelling the Proposition-SoA contrast
- As mentioned, propositions can be characterized as truth-valued predicational meaning units, and SoAs as non-truth-valued meaning units. But how should the contrast be understood more precisely? Is a cognitive linguistic conception preferable to a denotational one (as argued in Boye 2012), or vice versa, or is there an alternative to both of these options?

A typology of Proposition types and/or SoA types
- Can different types of Proposition types and/or SoA types be distinguished? For instance, is a distinction between fact- and non-fact propositions linguistically significant? How is the notion of SoA related to action types (Aktionsarten)?

Interaction with other semantic or grammatical categories
- What is the relationship between the Proposition-Soa distinction and distinctions such as that between Realis and irrealis? What is the relationship between the Proposition-SoA distinction and distinction between types of evidentiality or epistemic modality?
- Cristofaro (2003) suggests that the Proposition-SoA distinction is related to the distinction between finite (or balanced) and non-finite (or deranked) dependent clauses. In a similar vein, Harder (1996) argues that the distinction is related to the distinction between tensed and non-tensed clauses. Is this the case? If so, why is this?

## Submission procedure

We invite you to submit abstracts of up to 300 words related to the topic outlined above. Please send your abstract to the organizers of the workshop:

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Deadline for submission of the 300 word abstract is November 10, 2015. Selected abstracts will be included in the workshop proposal, and a 500 word version will have to be submitted directly to the SLE by January 15, 2016 (cf. http://sle2016.eu/call-for-papers).

## References

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