



European Society for the History of Science

## **Report President 2018-2020 (and Agenda as Vice-president 2020-2022)**

The two years I served as president of the ESHS passed at an incredible pace. Fortunately, as the ESHS is run at any period of time by a triumvirate (president elect, president, vice-president), my actions as president are directly connected to those implemented as president-elect and those I will realise as vice-president, in articulation with the other members of the presidential trio, and always in close dialogue with the Council and Scientific Board members. It has proved particularly effective as it allows both for continuity and change.

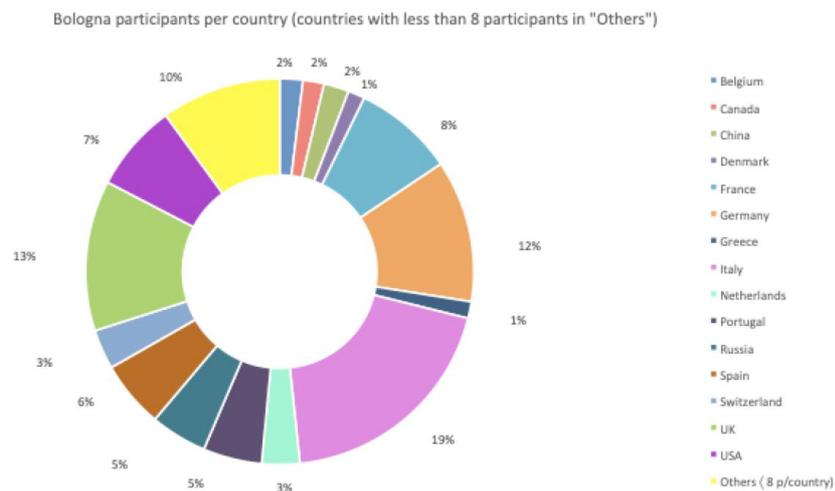
The experience of working together for a common aim in an ever more transparent and egalitarian way has been particularly gratifying. As president I strove to affirm the ESHS vision of a plural history of science in its various dimensions (geographic, career- and gender-wise, thematic and methodological), whose mission is to provide a high-level interdisciplinary European forum for research in history of science broadly conceived and eager to meet the needs of an ever more diverse and multi-continental constituency, with a special concern for its early career members, at the same time acknowledging the guiding responsibility of life-long achievements in the history of science by means of its prestigious Gustav Neuenschwander (GN) Prize (a medal and a financial reward), created in 2011 by Erwin Neuenschwander in memory of his father Gustav. From 2020 onwards the GN Prize awardee is invited to assess in his/her lecture the state of the history of science broadly conceived, in connection with historiographical trends informing the dynamics of the international community of historians of science. I take this opportunity to thank heartily Erwin Neuenschwander for his steady support of the ESHS. You have been a main pillar of our Society.

### **ESHS Bologna virtual meeting (2020) and Lisbon in-between meeting (2019)**

According to the ESHS statutes the main function of the president as executive head and legal representative of the Society is to organize its biennial meeting, a privileged forum for the communication of recent research among its members and the exploration of various connections among members and non-members.

Following the proposal of the Italian Society for the History of Science (SISS) approved in the ESHS 2018 meeting in London to organize the ESHS 2020 meeting in Bologna on the topic of “Visual, material and sensory cultures of science,” a detailed discussion took place at the in-between meeting “Rethinking the history of the sciences in Europe – historiographical approaches and future prospects,” held in Lisbon on 4-5 October 2019, the organization of which is another main function of the president, yet unacknowledged in the Statutes. No one could predict then that the ESHS, SISS and the Bologna Local Organizing Committee (LOC) would face the challenge to organize the first big virtual

conference in our field, taking place from 31 August to 3 September. When Italy was dramatically ravaged by the COVID-19 pandemics, the courage, professionalism and stamina of SISS and the LOC, managed to prepare a virtual meeting involving 583 participants from 5 continents, 40 countries and 11 parallel sessions. Of these participants roughly 20% are graduate or post-graduate students, and 6% are non-presenting attendees.



[Argentina 4, Australia 1, Austria 12, Azerbaijan 1, Belgium 11, Brazil 2, Canada 10, Chile 5, China 12, Czech Republic 7, Denmark 8, Estonia 1, Finland 2, France 48, Germany 68, Greece 8, Hong Kong 1, Hungary 2, India 1, Iran 1, Ireland 1, Israel 2, Italy 111, Japan 3, Luxembourg 1, Mexico 4, Netherlands 18, Norway 1, Poland 6, Portugal 28, Romania 3, Russia 27, San Marino 1, Serbia 1, Spain 32, Sweden 5, Switzerland 19, Taiwan 1, United Kingdom 72, United States of America 42]

The Conference also includes five plenary lectures (GN Prize, Presidential Address and three Early Career Lectures), two sessions dedicated to the Early Career (EC) Network, parallel events including two round tables (one following the Documentary “The Decision. Edoardo Amaldi and science without borders,” and the other on “The Digital Life of Objects and Images: Challenges and Perspectives for the History of Science”), and finally the two ESHS organizational sessions – the Scientific Board meeting and the General Assembly (GA). Adjustments to the virtual format were supported by the expertise of the Bologna IT personnel, supported by graduate students, under the guidance of the organizing committee. They were especially challenging in what concerns the voting for new officers and Scientific Board members taking place during the GA. I am especially grateful to Simone Turchetti for having taken this extra task upon himself. They also involved the five plenary lectures, which will be delivered in a short format especially adapted to a virtual conference. Following the London Conference, three, instead of two, EC Lecturers were selected, and contrary to London lectures will take 20, not 45, minutes. It was also agreed that the three lectures will be submitted to *Centaurus* in paper format by December 2020 in order to be published during 2021, therefore allowing to meet the needs of fast publication of early career scholars. The GN Prize and the Presidential Address will also be delivered in Bologna in a concise format and re-addressed in full in the ESHS 2022 meeting, together with the medal awarding ceremony

accompanying the GN Prize. As such, a continuity between the two succeeding biennial meetings in different formats, one virtual and one live, will be secured, extending the Bologna “spirit” into 2022. An extra advantage of the virtual format was the ability to support 25 early career participants affiliated to academic institutions in 12 different countries (7 UK, 1 Sweden, 6 Italy, 1 Argentina, 1 Denmark, 2 USA, 1 Canada, 1 Greece, 1 Poland, 1 Iran, 1 Switzerland, 2 China), two thirds of which are graduate students. Grants covered their registration (and amounted to 1200 €), instead of the former four or five participants supported in the past with grants covering registration, flight and accommodation.

I take the opportunity to thank heartily Ezio Vaccari, Maria Comforti, respectively President and Vice-President of SISS, and all members of the Organizing Committee, and most especially Marco Beretta, Elena Canadelli, Sandra Linguetti and Paolo Savoia, involved in the challenging task of organizing such a ground-breaking conference in Bologna, the first virtual conference of its dimension in our discipline.

### **Beyond the president’s main function**

Besides the organization of the ESHS 2020 Bologna meeting, I was actively involved in major recent changes in the ESHS deemed central to fulfil its mission and dealing with its official identity status (statutory reform and new officers, legal address and relation to CAPHES, French bank account), membership and visibility (survey mapping the ESHS community, website update), and its official journal (*Centaurus*, contractual relation to Wiley, exploration of other publishers’ alternatives, and open access challenges). All these activities involve stretches of time longer than two years, from their initiation to their completion. Many were started during Karine Chemla’s presidency, pursued by Toni Malet, and are now heading towards conclusion. Others are still in progress, and still others by their own nature will be evolving dynamically. I count on working together with Theo Arabatzis in order to complete most of them. With such a smooth continuity the empowerment of the ESHS and of its members, most especially its early career ones, more prone to the vulnerabilities of the job market, will be secured.

I take the opportunity to thank Karine Chemla and Toni Malet for all I have learned with them, Toni Malet and Theo Arabatzis for all the discussions held and decisions made during my mandate, in which we were helped according to the topic by Erwin Neuenschwander, Simone Turchetti, Matthieu Husson and Koen Vermeir as well as by the other officers and Scientific Board members, to whom I also thank.

### ***ESHS official identity status***

The new statutes of the society proposed by the Council and Scientific Board were voted and approved at the GA in London in 2018, but will be effective after the Bologna meeting. Revisions included more precise formulation of some articles, exemplified by the restriction of most officers’ mandates to two terms in order to secure more democratic governance. They also encompassed new officers’ functions, such as Archivist, and Web-editor and Communications Officer. In articulation with the Secretary, Public Relations Officer and Webmaster, these two new officers will work in order to build the ESHS memory, visibility and networking ambitions. The Archivist will coordinate the

organization of the extant documents amassed since the creation of the Society in 2003, profiting from the transfer of its seat to the Centre d'Archives en Philosophie, Histoire et Edition des Sciences (CAPHES), of the École Normale Supérieure (rue d'Ulm, Paris, France) (<http://caphes.ens.fr>), building a dynamic archive able to house both documents pertaining to Society's life and to act as a potential repository of pre-prints and publications by Society's members. A discussion of efficient ways to retrieve past mail exchanges and to accommodate easily future ones (for instance, e-mail addresses housed at CAPHES server) is in need. The Web-editor and Communications Officer, together with the Public Relations Officer, will boost communication in different media formats both among members as well as with other sister societies or institutions deemed relevant for the ESHS networking goals. In these past two years, Simone Turchetti, Brigitte van Tiggelen and myself held conversations with HSS, SHOT and MPIWG representatives, including Tom Misa, SHOT's president, and Jurgen Renn, director of MPIWG Department I, but no practical actions materialized so far. I was also contacted recently by Marco Armieri, now president of the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH), but the pandemia curtailed the discussion of possible joint actions. Roberto Lalli and Erika Luciano were more successful in securing collaboration with the Italian Society for the History of Science, the Italian Society for the History of Physics and Astronomy, and the Italian Society for the History of Mathematics.

The formalization of the relation of the ESHS with CAPHES, the new seat of the Society has been the subject of a protocol. Its implications for the Webmaster functions have been addressed during my mandate, but it is still necessary to secure the "official" recognition of the work of a member of the IT personnel of CAPHES/ENS associated with structural changes which took place during my mandate in the ESHS website housed at the server of ENS, and which will certainly continue. As to the promises offered by the new role of Archivist, Society's members should have in mind the immense advantages provided by the functionalities offered by the Archives Ouvertes HAL (<https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/>). HAL is an open archive established by the French CNRS where authors can deposit scholarly documents, including PDFs of their articles published in journals or chapters published in books, while having access to all documents archived. At this juncture, it is necessary to work out the technical details to launch the online repository online, if the ESHS members wish so.

The new legal address of the ESHS at CAPHES, rue d'Ulm, Paris, has delayed unwittingly the process of opening a French bank account on behalf of the ESHS. I took upon myself this task as soon as the new statutes were approved in 2018. Clément Goutorbe, a history student working in Paris under the supervision of Pascal Griset at the Sorbonne, applied for an internship in Portugal during the academic year 2018-19, at the Interuniversity Center for the History of Science and Technology (CIUHCT), which I co-coordinated at the time. Together with Maria Paula Diogo, then CIUHCT's coordinator and institutional member of the ESHS Scientific Board in representation of CIUHCT, we took the decision to put him to work on various matters pertaining to the ESHS. One was the translation into French of the old and new statutes, as well as the parts of the minutes of the 2018 GA pertaining to statutory changes and to the election of the new officers and scientific board members. Together with other documents, they were submitted at the platform of the French police for approval. After the

process was completed, all documents necessary to open a bank account in Paris at BNP Paribas were submitted. The signatories of the account were chosen to be the ESHS President, Erwin Neuenschwander, the ESHS treasurer, and Matthieu Husson, acting as the ESHS contact person living in Paris, who kindly accepted to play such a role and who has been tireless in a process which proved to be a nightmare. By early September 2019, on the occasion of the first EC network meeting, which took place at the National Observatory of Paris, the three of us met in Paris, to sign the documents to finalize the process of opening the bank account. I especially thank Matthieu Husson for making possible our appointment with the bank representative and Erwin Neuenschwander for his willingness to accommodate this visit to Paris on an already tight schedule of meetings. While it looked that the process was nearing its end, the wrong address of the seat of the Society in the documents signed – not rue d’Ulm, as it should be, but the old address – proved to be a source of an immense exchange of mails, visits to the BNP Paribas agency, new documents signed and sent, which together with the indirect impact of the pandemia have delayed so far the process’ conclusion. In this ordeal, Matthieu Husson tirelessly contacted the bank agency, almost on a weekly basis. When the process will be completed, the change in the ESHS president will have to be officially acknowledged in the documents of the bank account. The need to open a bank account on behalf of the ESHS is fundamental for financial transparency and specifically: 1) to secure registrations in the ESHS biennial meetings to be directly deposited in the ESHS bank account, which include the membership fee for the next two years, thereby circumventing problems of data protection, as well as 2) to ease the process of looking for future sources of financial support for the ESHS, deemed especially important in a future open access environment for its official journal. I thank heartily Erwin Neuenschwander for having taken so far upon himself the burden of dealing on behalf of the Society with its present bank accounts.

### ***ESHS membership and visibility***

The clarification of the ESHS official identity better serves the needs of its diverse and increasing membership. The ESHS membership has grown roughly by a factor of 10 since the ESHS meeting held in Lisbon in 2014, which initiated the inclusion in the meeting registration fees of the ESHS membership for the succeeding two years at a reduced price (with free access to the Society’s official journal). Right before the Bologna meeting, the ESHS membership amounts to 570 members. While the Lisbon measure solved the ESHS membership deficit, it raised simultaneously a highly fluctuating membership pattern, dependent on meeting’s attendance, and unable to secure *per se* a committed and participative membership, going beyond a core estimated at a fifth of the ESHS overall membership. While this may be a pattern common to other societies, during my mandate some actions were taken to contribute to its solution. One was the Survey Mapping the ESHS Community, the other was revamping the ESHS website to better serve its members while enhancing the ESHS public visibility. I detail them in what follows. It is my conviction that other actions should be articulated and put in practice in the near future.

The Survey Mapping the ESHS Community attempts at a first characterization of our community, in all its diversity, and was prepared under my supervision, first with the help of the intern Clément Goutorbe and then with

the expert guidance of the sociologist Paula Urze and of Maria Paula Diogo, both CIUHCT members. I thank all of them for their willingness to help me in this venture. In the in-between meeting held in Lisbon comments were invited from officers and scientific board members, before the survey was made public at the ESHS website and an invitation was sent through the ESHS membership list. The Survey addresses the training, scientific and professional profile of ESHS members, mobility and publication patterns and ability to cater for EU funding. It is my conviction that the analysis of answers received will enable a better knowledge of our community, inviting actions to foster its healthy growth and cohesion. So far, around 100 answers were submitted. In my Opening Address at Bologna I will invite once more participants to fill it, and will report on its results by the end of 2020. In any case, the final number of answers will give us an independent assessment of the ESHS core membership.

The involvement of ESHS members in Society's life has been boosted by their participation in major ESHS actions, including the proposal of candidates for the Gustav Neuenschwander Prize, and for EC scholars' lecturers, as well as proposals for thematic issues of *Centaurus*, together with the participation in selection committees for the EC lecturers and also for *Centaurus* thematic issues' assessment. An increasing number of proposals in recent years points to the liveliness of the Society. Additionally, following the creation of the EC network in September 2018, the realization of their first meeting in September 2019 in Paris, supported partly by a ESHS grant (1000 €), together with a EC network dedicated part of the ESHS website has fostered scientific discussions and debates on prospective activities. The future actions of the EC network and the ESHS commitment to support it in all possible ways will be a sign of the ESHS vitality.

The EC network dedicated part of the ESHS website is just one of the novelties, however important, of the ESHS website which took place during my mandate. I felt that the ESHS webpage was in need of some uplifting, in order to become more attractive. Its front-page has been enlivened by a dynamic strip with major recent news, and new entries in the grey strip, including one on the Early Career Scholars Network and another on *Centaurus*. In the process, it was realized that being housed in the CAPHES server, structural changes had to be implemented by CAPHES IT personnel, a process dependent on their time availability, and were also restricted to approved templates. The other major change resulted from negotiations with Wiley concerning access of ESHS individual members to *Centaurus* directly through the ESHS website, and not through the *Centaurus* website. By clicking *Centaurus* on the grey strip at the ESHS front page, the individual member can access *Centaurus* with a login and password, which redirects him/her to the website front-page, and by clicking "Wiley online" at the bottom, the member enters *Centaurus* and has access to all its issues. The login and password is common to all members and is available upon request to the Secretary. Other forms of distribution are still under discussion, and include a specific mail sent through the ESHS mailing list at least once a year or preferably whenever a new *Centaurus* issue is announced. I am deeply grateful to Matthieu Husson for his work as Webmaster and for his mentorship of the EC network.

### ***ESHS official journal and relation with Wiley***

*Centaurus*. An international journal of history of science and its cultural aspects exists since 1950. It is one of the oldest and best journals in the field of history of science broadly conceived, and since 2006, it became the official Journal of the ESHS. Since 2017, when Koen Vermeir was appointed editor-in-chief of *Centaurus* upon recommendation of the ESHS, major changes have taken place. Publishing 4 issues a year, now with an average of 10 articles each, it has also been due to Koen Vermeir's sheer stubbornness that the journal has managed to be finally on schedule after lagging behind for several years. It is particularly rewarding that this feat has been accomplished with the publication of a fully open access and truly original and timely issue – a spotlight issue on the history of epidemics in the time of COVID-19.

The journal features now various typologies of issues, different sorts of sections and a closer association with the ESHS than previously. It publishes the GN Prize Lectures, Presidential Addresses, and EC scholars' lectures. It has also signalled the ESHS 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary with memories of its past presidents. Resulting from ESHS calls for Special Issues, various issues are thematic, and around 90% of its authors are members of the ESHS. The diversity fostered by the ESHS as regards to the profile of its members, geographical provenance, training, career stage, and approach to the discipline (thematic and historiographical) have been reflected in *Centaurus*, giving it a very broad and original profile. Following the creation of a new typology of issues – the Virtual Issues – the first of which has recently come out, I will propose to the ESHS presidents, Scientific Board members and *Centaurus* editor-in-chief a virtual issue on “Celebrating diversity in the history of science,” using a selection of *Centaurus*' publications since 2006, when it became the ESHS official journal, as a mirror to reflect on the various meanings of diversity embodied in the ESHS. The ESHS is very supportive and committed to make its official journal flourish and is very enthusiastic and positive about *Centaurus*. With the concerted efforts of Koen Vermeir and the ESHS, *Centaurus* has become much more attractive. This is certainly mostly due to Koen Vermeir's persistent and creative commitment and I thank him heartily.

However, as acknowledged since the presidency of Karine Chemla and of Toni Malet, *Centaurus* is currently 100% owned by Wiley, which has a final say on all aspects related with the editorial structure and editorial line of the journal. The editor-in-chief is also appointed by Wiley. Although Koen Vermeir has been appointed upon recommendation of the ESHS, nothing obliges Wiley to abide to the ESHS's suggestion. Following several exchanges with Wiley during the two previous presidencies, amply discussed in report of the last president (2016-18), and including contacts with other publisher houses, both university presses and commercial publishers, as well as exploratory exchanges with some of them, pursued tirelessly by Toni Malet, during my presidency I concentrated all my energies in articulating as much as possible a better relationship with Wiley, more favourable to the ESHS, despite and beyond the contractual full ownership of *Centaurus* by Wiley. This included the negotiation of a flat rate of 1750 € to be paid by the ESHS to Wiley from 2017 onwards, not dependent on the number of ESHS members as contractually declared, and applied until *Centaurus* became published on schedule, when this fee will be renegotiated, as well as the access of ESHS individual members to *Centaurus* through the ESHS website, mentioned

above. A close interaction with Koen Vermeir has proved extremely beneficial for *Centaurus*, and has recently included a discussion of the drawbacks of the journal's visual image and layout (logo, cover and pages' layout), and alternatives to it. While Wiley, through Graham Russel and Renée Takken, made a lot of effort to reach out to the ESHS in recent years, accepting many of the proposals put forward by the ESHS, including the suggestion of the new editor, and a more close involvement of the ESHS in matters pertaining to its official journal, this does not seem to be the case since the appointment of Kate McKellar as *Centaurus*' managing editor in January 2020. My feeling is that Wiley is not working anymore *with* the ESHS, in the same spirit Graham Russel and Renée Takken were. This is corroborated by the recent decision of Wiley to eliminate print copies for individual members, restricting print copies to institutions for sustainability reasons. This was done against the contract between Wiley and the ESHS, and without prior agreement from the Society (which in its statutes refers explicitly to the possibility of individual members to acquire print copies at reduced rates in Article III.10).

It is my conviction that a satisfactory solution to the scientific control of the Society upon its official journal should be worked out in the next two years, taking advantage of the challenges of the EU Open Access (OA) guidelines, which have to be articulated by 2021. In order to serve its growing and diverse membership, it is my conviction that whatever OA solution will be negotiated for *Centaurus* it cannot fall upon its authors, mostly ESHS members, to cover the charges of OA, and most of them are not integrated in institutions able to pay the APC fees (Article Publishing Charge fees). Some strong sponsorship needs to be found. In this context, recent contacts with Brepols are ongoing. I commit myself to work together with Theo Arabatzis, the ESHS president after Bologna, the Council and Scientific Board members, profiting from the advice of Koen Vermeir, Chief-editor of *Centaurus* and an acknowledged expert on OA issues, to find a good solution for the new phase the Society's official journal will enter in the very near future.

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I take this opportunity to thank once more all officers and Scientific Board members with whom it was a pleasure to share experiences and knowledge in the two past years, and most especially those who will no longer be part of the Scientific Board – Mitch Ash, Elaine Leong, and Dimitri Bayuk – but who will certainly continue to be very active ESHS members. I enthusiastically welcome all those who will be part of the Council and Scientific Board for the next two years. I also thank all ESHS members for their participation in the life of the Society, and urge them to be creative in the ways they can contribute to turn the ESHS into an ever more dynamic forum for discussion of history of science matters.

Ana Simões,  
25 August 2020