

15 December 2006

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF STS-CH, 2006 (JUNE 1 – DECEMBER 31, 2006)**

Preliminary remark:

Due to the change of the reporting year (from a June to May period to a calendar year period), this report only includes the second half of 2006.

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The report is a collaborative product. Section 1.2 was written by Christoph Müller, section 1.3 by Myriam Spörri, sections 2.1, 2.2 and 3.4 by Sibylle Obrecht, section 3.1 by Cynthia Kraus, section 4.2 by Priska Gisler, and the remainder of the report was written by Regula Valérie Burri and Martina Merz.

## **1. COMMUNICATION AND NETWORKING**

### **1.1 WEBPAGE**

As already reported in the previous report, the redesign of STS-CH's website has been completed with the installation of a new member site in 2006. This interactive site is a special member-only service. The site contains a directory with the names, addresses, research interests and up to three publications of each member. Members are invited to make use of this platform. ([www.sts.unige.ch/formular.html](http://www.sts.unige.ch/formular.html))

The STS-CH website in general provides updated information about the association, including all the events and activities. The objective of the website is to facilitate the circulation of information among members, and, more generally, to increase the visibility of the association and of STS in Switzerland.

URL: [www.sts.unige.ch](http://www.sts.unige.ch)

## 1.2 MAILING LIST

The mailing list is a vital tool for building a web of STS scholars in Switzerland. Established in 1999, its main purposes are (a) to exchange information and distribute announcements, (b) to discuss STS issues, and (c) to establish connections between different STS research projects, especially in Switzerland. In addition, it serves as the main medium for the STS-CH association to announce information to and among its members. In 2006, the list could welcome 18 new subscribers with a total of 230 subscribers at the end of 2006. STS\_L is a "low traffic" list, with an average of about eight messages per month, most of them announcing conferences (Call for Papers) or job offers. The list is thus mainly used for broadcasting.

The STS list welcomes new members and submissions concerning news, events, research projects, abstracts, book reviews, calls for papers, conference information and discussions about issues related to Science and Technology Studies (STS). To subscribe (i.e. add yourself to) the STS\_L list, send a message to [majordomo@id.unizh.ch](mailto:majordomo@id.unizh.ch), with the body of the mail saying: subscribe STS\_L [youremail@address](mailto:youremail@address) (e.g. subscribe STS\_L [Jim.Knopf@univevey.ch](mailto:Jim.Knopf@univevey.ch)). The list runs on a majordomo program, kindly hosted by the central informatics service of the University of Zurich ([id.unizh.ch](http://id.unizh.ch)), and is maintained by Christoph Müller.

Contact: Christoph Müller ([owner-sts\\_l@id.unizh.ch](mailto:owner-sts_l@id.unizh.ch))

## 1.3 NEWSLETTERS

Since January 2003 the board (editors: Priska Gisler, Myriam Spoerri) publishes a regular newsletter twice a year. It contains important information in the field of sts in Switzerland. It announces a) activities and meetings of STS-CH, b) recent developments in the field of science and technology studies in Switzerland, c) national events and lecture series, d) calls for papers and jobs, e) information about newly edited books relevant to STS and is open for further information related to the field.

Newsletter no. 9 was sent out by way of the STS-CH mailing list in October 2006. The newsletters are also available online at <http://www.sts.unige.ch>. Please submit any information to be included to one of the editors.

Contact: Priska Gisler ([gisler@collegium.ethz.ch](mailto:gisler@collegium.ethz.ch)) or Myriam Spörri ([spoerri@fsw.unizh.ch](mailto:spoerri@fsw.unizh.ch)).

## 1.4 NETWORKING

Due to the EASST conference which took place in Lausanne 23 – 26 August 2006, there have been major exchanges among members of STS-CH and of the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology (EASST) in the second half of 2006. Several members of STS-CH were active in the organizing and program committee.

An exchange was also established with the German *Gesellschaft für Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung* (GWTF) on the occasion of their annual meeting which took place in Berlin in December 2006. Members of STS-CH have been involved in the planning of the meeting which was entitled "Merton heute: Wissenschaftsinterne Leistungskriterien, Evaluation und wissenschaftliche Praxis".

In addition, contact has been established, respectively intensified with the following associations and organizations in Switzerland and abroad:

- Committee for sociology of science and technology, Swiss Sociological Association
- Swiss Society for Cultural Studies (SSCS)
- Sektion Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie

## **2. MEMBERS AND ACCOUNTS**

### **2.1 MEMBERS**

STS-CH is a predominantly (with exceptions) academic association with members from various disciplinary backgrounds (social sciences, humanities, natural sciences). In 2001, STS-CH has started out with 53 members. By the end of 2006, STS-CH had 97 members. Seven persons and one institution joined the association in 2006, two person left it.

In order to make STS-CH more visible and to attract new members in 2006, the board designed a brochure to promote STS-CH at the EASST conference in Lausanne and at other events. The increasing number of members in 2006 shows that this strategy is successful.

### **2.2 ACCOUNTS**

See the attached dedicated report.

## **3. EVENTS OF STS-CH JUNE TO DECEMBER 2006**

### **3.1 STS & GENDER (LAUSANNE, JUNE 2006)**

On the day of the 15th Anniversary of Swiss women on strike, feminist and historian of science, Ilana Löwy, gave a lecture entitled "Hormones Stories": Science, Industry, and Gender Hierarchy. Her stories on sex hormones (from their inception to various contemporary usages in sex changes, contraception, medical procreation, and menopause) were of particular interest for an STS gender-friendly audience. Her presentation gave a more tangible idea of the various ways in which hormones can be used as a powerful "technology of gender" (to use Teresa de Lauretis' phrase). Her talk was also a serious invitation to extend and refine our understanding of the multifarious ways in which biomedical objects and techniques can reinforce, or destabilize, gender hierarchies – a challenge, that we would hope, will be taken up by more STS scholars.

### **3.2 EASST: RE-THINKING SCIENCE, POLICY AND STS IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY (LAUSANNE, AUGUST 2006)**

At the EASST conference which took place in Lausanne in August 2006, STS-CH organized a plenary session entitled "Re-Thinking Science, Policy and STS in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Analytic insights from an outsider within?". Helga Nowotny gave a wonderful lecture on her experiences as a member of the newly founded European Research Council – ERC. Being a social scientist and a science studies scholar aimed at bridging the gap between different disciplines and between science, society, and politics, and an outsider among her scientist colleagues in the ERC, Helga Nowotny shared her expert knowledge and political insights in how the future research policy is being shaped in the EU.

EASST president Christine Hine was the commentator of this lecture, which was followed by a lively discussion.

### **3.3 "ESCALATING CONTROVERSIES", LECTURE BY PROF. THOMAS BERNAUER (ZURICH, OCTOBER 2006)**

In October, the first lecture of the colloquium series "Scientific Futures, Public Affairs", organized by Regula Valérie Burri and Priska Gisler, took place in Zurich. ETH scholar and political scientist Thomas Bernauer gave a lecture on "Escalating Controversies: Dynamics in WTO Disputes over Environment, Health and Safety Issues".

Thomas Bernauer presented a study on the dynamics of social controversies over the regulation of environmental, health and safety issues which he had conducted. By analyzing more than 500 WTO trade disputes he could show that the escalation dynamics vary between the different stages of the dispute-settlement process.

This interesting talk was followed by an extended and lively discussion which involved the entire audience.

### **3.4 “TECHNIK IM ALLTAG ALS BIOGRAPHISCHE ERFAHRUNG”, LECTURE BY GERRIT HERLYN, HAMBURG (BASEL, NOVEMBER 2006)**

Gerrit Herlyn, M.A., cultural anthropologist and member of the *Forschungskolleg Kulturwissenschaftliche Technikforschung* at the University of Hamburg, held a lecture in Basel on November 16, 2006. The event was organized by Sibylle Obrecht for STS-CH and the *Seminar für Kulturwissenschaft und Europäische Ethnologie*.

Gerrit Herlyn presented the results of a bigger empirical research project on the everyday use of computers. His lecture showed the importance of doing research on technology from an anthropological perspective, focusing on the way individuals attribute meaning to technical artefacts and practices.

## **4. PROJECTED EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES**

### **4.1 “VERMITTLUNG VON WISSENSCHAFT IN AUSSTELLUNGEN”, LECTURE BY SILKE BELLANGER (LUCERNE, JANUARY 2007)**

Historian Silke Bellanger will give a lecture on the representation of science in exhibitions on 25 January, 2007. Information will be provided on the mailing list.

Contact: Sibylle Obrecht (s.obrecht@unibas.ch)

### **4.2 SCIENTIFIC FUTURES - PUBLIC AFFAIRS ? (ZURICH, JANUARY – FEBRUARY 2007)**

The colloquium series “Scientific Futures, Public Affairs? Negotiating Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Science, Media and Politics”, which is organized by STS-CH with the support of Collegium Helveticum, started in fall 2006. The series includes various speakers from science, media, politics, and industry in order to discuss issues of scientific and public perceptions and imaginations of future technologies. It will be continued by the following two lectures in February and March 2007:

- February, 8: "Deliberative Mapping". Gail Davies, geographer at the UCL Department of Geography, London, was a member of a research group developing a novel participatory decision-making approach. She is specifically interested in the role of the social sciences within these experimental spaces of knowledge production. From this angle, in her speech she is going to address the phenomenon of the kidney gap in organ transplantation procedures, which was discussed during one of these participatory conferences.

- March, 7: "The Atlas of Ideas: new geographies of science and society?". James Wilsdon, of the London based think-tank DEMOS is going to talk about the newly discussed and in Switzerland still widely unknown concept of "upstream engagement". Its proponents argue that participatory processes need to be turned upside down, from academic researchers reaching out into the public explaining their projects in a one-way style to a science that is taking serious the ideas and themes raised in the wider society. In this view scientists are challenged to find new ways of listening to the key issues formulated by various publics. James Wilsdon is going to analyse, how current trends in science and society throughout a globalised world need to be tackled by these new approaches.

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### **4.3 STS GOES NANO (LUCERNE, NOVEMBER 2007)**

The projected Workshop “STS Goes Nano: Social, Cultural, and Historical Perspectives on an Emergent Technology” aims at bringing together scholars that investigate nanotechnology in STS and related perspectives to foster intense discussion of work in progress.

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### **4.4 SWISS STS MEETING 2008: SCIENCEFUTURES (ZURICH, FEBRUARY 2008)**

STS-CH prepares for the next major event. The “Swiss STS Meeting 2008” is jointly organized by STS-CH and the Centre for the History of Knowledge (ETH Zurich and University of Zurich). It is projected for February 6-9, 2008 and will take place at the ETH Zurich. This academic event tailored to the interests of junior STS scholars, in particular PhD students, is the fourth of its kind (1999 in Zurich, 2001 in Lausanne, 2004 in Basel).

By way of the theme "ScienceFutures" the meeting will encourage scholars to engage with science futures, including social, cultural, political, and economic implications in a cross-disciplinary as well as syn- and diachronic fashion.

The program committee has taken up work in April 2006. At present, it is in the process of securing funding for the meeting, inviting keynote speakers and finalizing the call for papers which will be posted in spring 2007.

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