



Swiss Association for the Studies  
of Science, Technology and Society (sts-ch)  
c/o Martin Lengwiler, Forschungsstelle für  
Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte  
Universität Zürich, Rämistrasse 64  
CH-8001 Zürich

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

28 May 2002

## FIRST ANNUAL REPORT OF STS-CH, 2001-2002

- I. Activities up to Foundation of the Association in May 2001
- II. Communication and Networking Activities
  - 2.1 Mailing List
  - 2.2 Web Page
  - 2.3 Networking Activities
- III. Activities in the First Year of the Association
  - 3.1 Members and Accounts
  - 3.2 Summer School (Lausanne, September 2001)
  - 3.3 "Golden Rice": Visit of Exhibition and Roundtable (Zurich, January 2002)
  - 3.4 "Discourse, Politics, and Bioethics": Workshop (Basle, June 2002)
- IV. Projected Activities

This report is a collaborative product. Section 2.1 has been written by Christoph Müller, section 2.2 by Bruno Strasser, section 3.2 by Marc Audétat and Martina Merz, section 3.3 by Monika Dommann and Priska Gisler, and the remainder of the report by Martina Merz and Martin Lengwiler.

### I. ACTIVITIES UP TO FOUNDATION OF THE ASSOCIATION IN MAY 2001

Before reporting on the activities of our "Swiss Association for the Studies of Science, Technology and Society" (STS-CH) in its first year, the pre-history of the association is summarized.

The starting point was the **Spring School "Science and Technology Studies"** that took place in Zurich on 1-5 March 1999. The spring school was organised by Prof. Bettina Heintz and Bernhard Nievergelt. It was financed by the Swiss Priority Program "Switzerland: Towards the Future". At the occasion of two open discussions during the school, many participants expressed the opinion that Switzerland did not have an adequate network of research groups and individuals studying STS. In order to enhance the exchange of information and to foster discussion across scientific disciplines and universities, a group formed with the purpose of organizing future meetings and activities.

As an immediate result of the spring school, the group set up a **mailing list** for information on Science and Technology Studies in Switzerland. A working group from Lausanne started to plan another **summer school** on STS. Another working group began to work out **statutes** of a future association.

Two further **meetings** took place on 19 January 2000 in **Bern** and on 27 July 2000 in **Lausanne**. They were organized as open platforms, attended each by approx. twenty people from different institutions. After a presentation of STS-initiatives at the meetings' host institutions, several sub-groups discussed ongoing activities and ideas for further projects. Process on and future development of the five agreed upon main projects was discussed: the STS mailing list, the statutes of a future association for STS in Switzerland, building a website with information on the STS network and on related individuals, organizing another STS summer school (2001),

organizing regular local events to enhance publicity and attract new people to our network. The sub-groups continued their work and met independently over the year.

The next meeting took place on 19-20 October 2000 in **Geneva**. It had been set up as a **Workshop**, organized by Martina Merz and Bruno Strasser. On the first afternoon the circa 20 participants met at the Louis-Jeantet Institute for the History of Medicine for a discussion of recent progress on STS activities in Switzerland and a presentation of STS activities in Geneva. The next morning started at CERN (the European Laboratory for Particle Physics) with a guided visit, consisting of an introduction to CERN and high energy physics, followed by one of the last visits ever of a LEP experiment (LEP was shut down shortly after). The program continued after lunch with a presentation by Bertrand Nicquevert (head of Technical Office at CERN) with the title "Behind the scene of science: coordinating technical design of particle physics detectors over the world". At last, the possibility was offered to visit the CERN museum "Microcosm".

On 20 April 2001 the "Swiss Association for the Studies of Science, Technology and Society" (STS-CH) was **officially founded** at a general meeting in Bern. Its goal is to promote STS in Switzerland by organizing regular events, facilitating contact and encouraging the circulation of information. The meeting approved of the statutes. It elected a **board** of seven – Marc Audétat (EPF Lausanne), Monika Dommann (Universität Zürich), Martin Lengwiler (Universität Zürich), Martina Merz (EPF Lausanne, ETH Zürich), Christoph Müller (Universität Bern), Bruno Strasser (Université de Genève), Beate E. Wilhelm (z-link, Zürich) – and a **co-presidency** constituted by Martina Merz and Martin Lengwiler.

For the statutes and further details see [www.sts.unige.ch](http://www.sts.unige.ch).

## II. COMMUNICATION AND NETWORKING ACTIVITIES

### 2.1 MAILING LIST

The idea to install a mailing list for people interested in STS goes back, as mentioned, to the spring school on STS in 1999. Many participants were interested in fostering the exchange of information and discussions both across scientific disciplines and across local Universities. The mailing list was thought as one effort to build a network among STS researchers with a special focus on Switzerland. The main purpose of the list is (a) to exchange information and announcements, (b) to discuss STS issues, and (c) to establish connections between different STS research projects, especially in Switzerland. The mailing list has been installed in September 1999. Technically, it runs on a <majordomo> program, kindly hosted by the central informatics service of the University of Zurich (zi.unizh.ch) and maintained by Christoph Müller.

Right from the beginning, the number of subscribers grew constantly by about 50 new members per year. By the end of 2001, the number of subscribers reached 150. STS\_L is a <low traffic> list, with an average of about 10 messages per month, most of them announcing conferences (Call for Papers) or job offers. The list is thus mainly used for broadcasting, with almost no interactive discussions taking place. However, as there are various people publishing to the list, the readers are informed about the special interests of others and may contact the senders by private communication. Therefore, the mailing list is a vital tool for building a web of STS scholars in Switzerland, offering the exchange of information and encouraging collaboration. Further, it also serves as the main medium for the "STS-CH" association to announce information to and among members. For further information (how to subscribe, send messages, etc.): [www.sts.unige.ch](http://www.sts.unige.ch).

### 2.2 WEBPAGE

The objective of setting up a web site for the association is to facilitate the circulation of information among members, and more generally to increase the visibility of the association. We could obtain a simple internet address on the server of the University of Geneva: [www.sts.unige.ch](http://www.sts.unige.ch).

The STS-CH site is organized around 4 sections: events (forthcoming and past events), people (a directory of members), places (a directory of STS programs in Switzerland) and links (links in the field of STS). It also includes a description of the association and of the field of STS. A new site design, with improved navigation, and better access to recent news is under construction.

## 2.3 NETWORKING ACTIVITIES

- In December 2001, members of the association board have participated in the elaboration of a proposal for a **National Research Programme** (NRP) "Science, Technologie et Société en Suisse (STS-CH) / Wissenschaft, Technik und Gesellschaft in der Schweiz (WTG-CH)" at the Swiss National Science Foundation.
- Contact has been established and joint events are planned with the following **associations and organizations** in Switzerland and abroad:
  - Committee for sociology of science and technology, Swiss Sociological Association
  - Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW)
  - Sektion Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie
  - Gesellschaft für Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung (GWTF), Germany
- **Article** in Newsletter SPP Zukunft Schweiz, 2/2001 p. 6 (German and French). Download at [www.swiss-science.org/sppzch/html\\_e/spp\\_frame.htm](http://www.swiss-science.org/sppzch/html_e/spp_frame.htm)

## III. ACTIVITIES IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE ASSOCIATION

### 3.1 MEMBERS AND ACCOUNTS

STS-CH is a predominantly (with exceptions) academic association with **members** from various disciplinary backgrounds (social sciences, humanities, natural sciences). In our first year, we attracted most new members by organizing public events. For example, in the eight weeks following our biggest event, the summer school in Lausanne in September 2001, the number of memberships increased by 50 percent. By the end of 2001, STS-CH had 58 members. At present (end of May 2002) it has 67 members: 1 sponsoring member, 57 regular members and 9 members at reduced fee (student rate).

The annual **account** for STS-CH in 2001 shows total revenues of CHF 2776.-, total expenses of CHF 1103.20, and a balance of CHF 1672.80 (see Annual Accounts). At its present size, STS-CH can expect an annual income (membership fees) of about CHF 3000.-.

### 3.2 SUMMER SCHOOL (LAUSANNE, SEPTEMBER 2001)

The Summer School «**Knowledge in Plural Context**», **Science, Technology, and Society Studies in Switzerland** was held in Lausanne on 11-14 September 2001. The event was the result of a collective dynamic process occurring both at the national and the local level. With the financial support of the Swiss National Science Foundation and the CUSO (Conférence des Universités de Suisse occidentale) the meeting was co-organized by the association together with different research groups at the EPFL and the University of Lausanne. The summer school brought together about 85 participants. Eight key-note speakers and 62 participants presented papers in fifteen parallel sessions. Many of the participants were doctoral students and post-docs, the ratio of men to women was about one-to-one. The enclosed report by Marc Audétat (*EASST Review* 21(1), March 2002: 6-7) presents a more detailed account of the summer school.

Besides acting as co-organizer of the meeting, the association initiated and set up additional activities. Monika Dommann, Martina Merz and Bruno Strasser organized a **prize contest** for the participants of the Summer School, its questionnaire appealing to the participants' expertise, skill, imagination, and sense of humor. The prize committee (Professors David Gugerli and Trevor Pinch) evaluated the responses according to rather strict criteria: In line with the SSK symmetry principle false and correct answers were treated on an equal basis while emphasis was placed on the originality of replies. The winners Alessandro Maranta and Sally Wyatt (and all others) received a Real Non-Human Actant: Berlin keys in chocolate. The prize ceremony was combined with a public **reception** on the first evening of the meeting. Wine, grapes, and cheese were served together with written (fliers) and oral information about the association.

Next to an evaluation of the summer school which its organizers prepared for the Swiss National Science Foundation, the association realized its own **evaluation** by sending out a questionnaire to all participants of the meeting.

### **3.3 "GOLDEN RICE": VISIT OF EXHIBITION AND ROUNDTABLE (ZURICH, JANUARY 2002)**

Priska Gisler and Monika Dommann organised for the members of STS-CH an evening event on January 31, 2002. The visit of the exhibition «**Good bye Tomato – Good Morning Rice**» by the Austrian Group XPERIMENT! (Arbeitsgruppe für das Experimentieren mit wissenschaftlichen Ideen) at the Swiss National Museum in Zurich happened at the same time as the finissage of the exhibition. The guided tour through the exhibition – a first report of a journey exploring the world of the golden (genetically modified) rice – was followed by a panel discussion in the solemn atmosphere of a patrician living room in the Landesmuseum. Participants of the round table under the auspices of the moderator Monika Dommann, historian, University of Zürich, were: Priska Gisler, sociologist, assistant at the chair for Wissenschaftsforschung and Wissenschaftstheorie on ETH (Zürich) and curator of the exhibition, Christoph Kübler, art historian, head centre of research 20th/21st century at the Swiss National Museum (Zürich), Francesco Panese, director of the Fondation Claude Verdan (Lausanne) and Assistant Professor at Laboratoire d'Etudes Sociales des Sciences, University of Lausanne as well as Bernd Kraeftner and Judith Kroell, the authors of the exhibition. The panel members and the visitors discussed past, present and future modes of exhibiting science and technology in museums and alternatives, which could lead to collaborations of STS researchers and curators in traditional institutions like the museums. All participants agreed that such inspiring discussions should be continued in the future.

### **3.4 "DISCOURSE, POLITICS, AND BIOETHICS": WORKSHOP (BASLE, JUNE 2002)**

This public event succeeds the first general assembly on 14 June 2002. It reflects the tradition of the association to combine an organizational meeting, such as the assembly, with a topical event to stimulate discussion and exchange between the members and other interested parties. The workshop was organized by the recently appointed professor of science studies Sabine Maasen and takes place in the premises of the STS research unit at University Basle.

- ❑ Kathrin Braun (PD Dr.), Institut für Politische Wissenschaft, Universität Hannover. "Deliberation, democracy, and bioethics: How to democratise the politics of biomedicine?"
- ❑ Sabine Maasen (Prof. Dr.), Science Studies, Universität Basel. "Politics by discourse – promises and paradoxes"

## **IV. PROJECTED ACTIVITIES**

### **4.1 ICONOCLASHES: GUIDED VISIT OF EXHIBITION (KARLSRUHE, JULY 2002)**

- ❑ The event is planned for July 12-13, 2002. Additional information will be posted as soon as possible on the mailing list and the website of the association.

### **4.2 SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE BODY (ZURICH, SPRING 2003)**

- ❑ With the participation of Stefan Hirschauer (Prof., Univ. Munich) and Annemarie Mol (Prof., Univ. of Twente, Eindhoven).
- ❑ Co-organized by STS-CH and the Committee for sociology of science and technology, Swiss Sociological Association.