

September 10, 2012

ANNUAL REPORT OF STS-CH, 2011 (JANUARY – DECEMBER)

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1. EVENTS OF STS-CH IN 2011

1.1 “GA Event: History of Medicine” (Lausanne, March 2011)

This event provided an occasion for Swiss STS scholars to meet up with researchers involved in the history of medicine at Lausanne. It included a guided tour through CHUV's Institute of History of Medicine and Public Health with its library and wonderful collection of instruments and technical devices.

Organized by Emilie Bovet (emilie.bovet@chuv.ch)

1.2 “The Brain, the Person, and the Social. Probing Neuroscientific Ideas and Practices from STS & History of Science Perspectives”, International Workshop (Zürich, June 23-25, 2011)

The Workshop provided a context for exploring the production of neuroscientific knowledge and its impact on different disciplines and the public by engaging with current developments in neuroscience. It fostered research perspectives from social studies of science and technology and history of science, providing specifically junior scholars with an opportunity to discuss their respective work in progress.

The Workshop opened with a keynote lecture by Andreas Roepstorff (Aarhus). Under the title “The Brain – Nature meets Culture through Agency,” he argued that the brain has left the realm of nature and that its location is currently being renegotiated between the spheres of nature and culture. Twelve scholars from Switzerland and abroad presented their current research, addressing topics such as brain modulation and enhancement, the transformation of neuroscientific knowledge into technology or marketing, the use of neuroscientific expertise as evidence in court cases, etc. The overarching theme of workshop discussions was the notion that knowledge travels, raising questions such as: What happens once neuroscientific knowledge leaves the lab? Under what circumstances does such knowledge become interesting for other disciplines? What role do funding policies play in the diffusion of neuroscientific knowledge into other areas of research and practice? In her concluding remarks, Beatrix Rubin (Basel) initiated a wider debate by asking why the brain receives so much attention today and why the (neuro-)lab coat seems so attractive to social scientists while genetics was met with more overt hostility. Such questions constitute an ongoing challenge for social scientists and historians of science – and the Workshop proved once again that “the brain” has become one of STS' key topics.

Concept and organization: Johannes Bruder (Univ. Basel) and Svenja Matusall (ETH Zürich).
Supported by STS-CH and Zentrum Geschichte des Wissens, University and ETH Zürich.

1.3 “Les non-dits de la théorie. Atelier de doctorant.e.s sur les impasses et la réflexivité en STS”, Workshop for doctoral students (Université de Lausanne, November 9, 2011)

Also the second Workshop organized by STS-CH in 2011 targeted PhD-students and their respective thesis projects, albeit favoring a different set-up. It created a discussion context for horizontal interaction among PhD-students – deliberately without the presence of professors – in order to encourage the former to render explicit the problems encountered during their research and writing process. An intense discussion evolved initiated by the six presentations of doctoral students from the Romandie who addressed topics such as the notion of plasticity in neuroscience and art, organ transplants, the “medical machinery” around 1900, or the social construction of adolescence.

Concept and organization: Emilie Bovet, Nicholas Stücklin, Marc Audétat, Olivier Glassey (Univ. Lausanne).

2. EVENTS IN 2012 (REALIZED AND PROJECTED)

These events will feature in more detail in next year’s Annual Report.

2.1 “‘Ein ganzes chirurgisches Costume’: Die Kontroverse um die Einführung von Operationshandschuhen in der deutschsprachigen Chirurgie in den 1890er Jahren”, lecture by Thomas Schlich (Universität Basel, March 19, 2012)

Concept and organization: Sibylle Obrecht.

2.2 “The Local Configuration of New Research Fields. On Regional and National Diversity”, Workshop (Universität Luzern, June 14-16, 2012)

Workshop incl. an evening lecture by Hans-Jörg Rheinberger “Patterns of the Global and the Local in the History of Molecular Biology”.

Concept and organization: Peter Biniok, Martina Merz, Philippe Sormani (Univ. Luzern).
Supported by STS-CH, SAGW/ASSH, SNSF, Univ. Luzern.

2.3 “III. Kongress kulturwissenschaftliche Technikforschung” (Universität Zürich, October 12-14, 2012)

Meeting organized by “Forschungskolleg Kulturwissenschaftliche Technikforschung” in cooperation with Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Volkskunde/Société Suisse des Traditions Populaires and STS-CH.

Contact: Thomas Hengartner (Univ. Zürich).

3. COMMUNICATION

3.1 Website

The website of STS-CH has the URL www.sts-ch.org.

Contact: Mario.Kaiser@unibas.ch

3.2 Mailing List

The association’s mailing list STS_L is hosted by the central informatics service of the University of Zurich (id.uzh.ch). It has approximately 240 subscribers. To SUBSCRIBE, send a mail to sympa@soziologie.lists.uzh.ch with the subject “subscribe sts_l”.

Contact: Christoph Müller (sts_l-editor@soziologie.lists.uzh.ch)