

## Some Notes From the Past

by Aant Elzinga, Past President of EASST

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This summer it will be six years since Stuart Blume, former EASST president, asked me to consider running as chairman of a new board to be put in place. I think it was after he had scouted around in the European STS network and sent out ballots with seven names – all men – in April 1991. I was already a member of the council elected Dec. 1986/Jan.87 and that for a four year period, but had not been very active. It was with considerable reluctance that I even considered the idea. As an organization EASST had been around for roughly a decade and had now become rather dormant. Most of the more regular and visible action seemed to be in the U.S. with 4S, or with SHOT, HSS and PSA, all four of which were fairly weak on the science and technology policy studies dimension, an area that EASST also tried to cultivate (in the very first number of the EASST Newsletter Arie Rip already pointed to the unfortunate gap that existed between social and historical studies of science, and science policy, an observation that came up and evoked commentary from time to time also in subsequent issues). Furthermore, I was already overloaded by other commitments. One of these, the organizing of a joint 4S/EASST conference in Goteborg the next year overlapped, so after talking with Andrew Jamison and Paul Hoch, who were also to be on the new board, we decided, OK let's give it a go. After all we had some strong names with us: Steve Woolgar (Brunel) and Ben Martin (Sussex).

I

The first council meeting over which I presided was held in Cambridge Mass. (MIT), where several of us went to attend the 4S conference. Here we discussed a strategy for revitalizing EASST and revamping its newsletter. Chunglin Kwa was also coopted as editor, taking over from Arie Rip who generously appears to have shouldered this task with great stamina for the whole previous decade of EASST's existence as an organisation. The date was 16 Nov. 1991, exactly to the day three years after the opening of the joint 4S/EASST conference in Amsterdam so deftly managed by Loet Leydesdorff. Being (after Ghent 1984 – "the Sarton Centennial Conference") the second such a joint conference with our North American (and Australian) cousins, Amsterdam could be called the tradition-setter. Now it was our turn to go on from there; directly from Amsterdam we had Rob Hagendijk with us – and from the far north there was Hans Skoie (Oslo) who was more than most of us directly concerned with European science policy.

Actually we didn't have much of an idea what we were taking on, which was probably fortunate, for otherwise the whole project might have been dropped. Anyway, Stuart Blume had come up with the genial idea that EASST should have a new category of members alongside individual ones (EASST Newsletter vol. 9, no. 2 May 1990). These were to be institutional members, a consortium of centres in the field that would sign on to pay a substantial sum for a three year period. In addition Stuart had an agreement with the Science Policy Support Group (SPSG) in London to handle the functions of a secretariat and distribution of the newsletter on a year by year contractual basis. Peter Healey's role in this and other respects became pivotal for our success.

Counting from that first fateful day in November 1991 I have now presided over eleven council meetings in various locations – Cambridge Ma., Amsterdam (thrice), Goteborg, Brunel/N. London, Budapest, Paris, London, Bielefeld, and most recently Vienna. The old council was replaced by a new one in Budapest, where a glaring gender skew was partly corrected (cf. the inside front page of this issue). The most recent round of elections earlier this year led to a partial correction of a northern European bias. So now the new council that constituted itself at its first meeting in Vienna (hosted by Ulrike Felt, the Organisational Secretary) also includes members from southern Europe and one with a strong third world connection.

At midnight the 30th of June Rob Hagendijk and I will get together over the phone so I can wish him luck as new president of EASST for the period to come.

Rob's steady hand as our "finance minister" during what will have been 2040 days (five years, seven months and fifteen days since the Cambridge Mass. meeting) has been a mainstay, keeping us on a lean, yet dynamic track, critically appraising the expanding infrastructure needed to push the original newsletter (redubbed "Review" in 1994) ever further in the direction of Chunglin's ideal, revamping into the (S)T(S) Literary Supplement of Europe.

On top of this we now have a Homepage, travel stipends, funding of joint workshops with NECSTS, and other initiatives, as our strategy document put it, "to foster within Europe the scholarly study of science and technology, including their historical development and role in society. More specific aims include improving scholarly communication and exchange in this field, increasing the visibility of the subject to policy-makers and the general public, and stimulating and supporting teaching on the subject at all levels" (Revitalization strategy statement of 29th Oct. 1991).

Looking back, I think it is fair to say that we achieved some of the goals that we set ourselves five years ago, yes. EASST has expanded its membership, even if there is still an ebb of numbers between and an influx during major events, like conferences. Here

Bielefeld marked a new tidal high point. Also, we have actively reached out to all parts of Europe in connection with workshops on topical issues, often in collaboration with NECSTS. The system of travel stipends for young scholars has helped highlight new curricular programmes and attendance to summer or graduate school initiatives in STS. More recently EASST began to raise its voice in Brussels, as one of many actors to provide input into policy discussions in as far as these have a bearing on intellectual agendas in STS. Apart from workshops the major events remain our conferences, the one held jointly with 4S every four years, as well as the biannual EASST conferences in between, the last one in Budapest 1994 (the next one due next year). Out of Budapest, thanks to David Edge's unflagging enthusiasm, also came a handsome solid thematic issue of *Social Studies of Science*, on the situation of and prospects for science in Eastern and Central Europe.

Putting on a certain species of spectacles one might say what I have just described is an episode in the construction of a network-cum-institutional arrangement with a five letter acronym that someone dreamed up some sixteen years ago, and how serendipity had us run with it. Rob Hagendijk in his recent book "Wetenschap, constructivisme en Cultuur", shows that constructivisms now are many. Not even the non-relativist brand of "cultural constructivism" comes with ready made wooden shoes – if anything, it is a question of appropriate sunglasses and ballet dancers' slippers.

I want to express my gratitude here and now to all members of the previous two councils; without your support and involvement we could not have gone ahead, nor had as much fun on the way. To the new council, all the best with your continuing venture.

But is that all I have to say? No, there is more. Of course as reader you may very well stop here, because now I am going to get more longwinded.

## II

At the Bielefeld meeting last year 4S celebrated its 20th anniversary. This got me thinking – isn't EASST actually older than 4S? From where do we trace our roots as an organisation? Is it really only from the foundational year 1981, or isn't it more like 1973, or even slightly before that? In a certain sense it depends on one's perspective – (Rob, don't forget those old sunglasses that you use when you go sailing on the Frisian lakes).

Doing some quick historical spadework revealed to me that a case might be made that we are actually older than 4S. This is if we negotiate the "fact" that EASST sprung out of and continues the spirit of project PAREX which was created in 1970 and continued until 1986. The first EASST council of five persons consisted of several leading figures from

PAREX (a second – six man – council elected in Dec. 1982 showed less overlap, with John Ziman as president).

PAREX is a contraction of “Paris-Sussex”, and the project was a vehicle for promoting collaboration on Anglo-French basis between scholars working on different aspects on the social studies of science. The two “co-animateurs” behind the effort were Gerard Lemaine and Roy MacLeod, the one in Paris and the other then at Sussex. Others involved were Elisabeth Crawford, David Edge, Michael Mulkay, Günther Koppers, Peter Weingart and, I think, also Helga Nowotny (Helga tends to have been involved in most things European).

PAREX’s secretariat was located at the Maison des Sciences de l’Homme (MSH) on Boulevard Raspail in Paris, a nice location with good library facilities and the home of the journal Social Science Information which picked up on the finalization thesis (1976) and even now continues to publish in our field. MSH, together with the CNRS Programme STS also supported publication of the journal “Pandore” in which Bruno Latour took a leading role.

In November 1994 I took an initiative to invite persons from various French STS groups and had a meeting at MSH with representatives from many of them in hopes of bringing EASST back to its former (PAR-EX) home. This, and a second meeting later, was set up by Iskender Gokalp from CNRS-Orleans who is on the board of MSH, where the director, Maurice Aymard was interested. The idea, was simply to try and site an EASST conference in Paris, and perhaps also a workshop at MSH. Unfortunately nothing came of it.

For the sake of the record I can say that our invitations went out to persons at GERS, BETA, GERSULP (Strasbourg), ECP, GEMAS, Orstom, CRHST, INSERM, REHSEIS, Ecole des Mines, and CNAM. Those of you who know the Paris scene won’t need a glossary of acronyms at this point – anyone else is here and now challenged to make an effort to get acquainted with what’s behind all those letters.

I still have not given up the idea of a Paris conference and/or workshop(s), and hope the new council may pick it up again and try to make it happen in the future. We will have history on our side, in that case.

In 1973 PAREX, in order to continue to receive support through MSH was asked to “Europeanize”. This led to a leap from two to eight countries being represented. Apart from becoming more solidly European in scope PAREX also became more broadly interdisciplinary in character (EASST Newsletter vol. 5, No. 1 Feb. 1986 contains some of this story). The purpose of this European network became to organize one general

meeting each year and several working sessions on particular themes. Benchmarks are a meeting the "Naissance des nouvelles disciplines: conditions cognitives et sociales" (Paris Dec. 1973), the meeting "Methodology in the Sociology of Science" (York, UK June 1974), and "Finalization in science" (Starnberg, Germany 1974); "The Role of Research Organizations in Orienting Scientific Activities" (Inst. of Advanced Studies, Vienna, org. Karin Knorr). Similar questions and the new approach had already been ventilated at the International Sociological Association's Research Committee on Sociology of Science (RC 23) held in London in September, 1972. The volume from this latter meeting characterized the papers it included as follows: "They represent a radical change in the dominant concerns of the sociology of science: from exclusive attention to the social behaviour of scientists to a systematic understanding of how and why particular sciences have developed and of the relations between scientific and dominant cultures and institutions." The meeting of ISA's Research Committee 23 followed upon an earlier discussion of new developments at the World Congress of Sociology in Varna, two years earlier — (RC 23 was there with us in Bielefeld last year and some of the folks from EASST will probably see them again at the coming ISA world congress in Montreal).

Project PAREX for its part also sponsored a series of interdisciplinary, comparative and international studies in the history and sociology of scientific development. Concern was the need to study "both internal, scientific and technological processes involved in the generation of new knowledge, and the social factors which accompany and influence those processes", and to get historians and sociologists to join forces in such an endeavour. This was also a leitmotif of the group at the Max-Planck Institute in Starnberg who brought in the problem of the bounds and conditions of "steerability" of science from the side of policy, a theme continued in Bielefeld. In his review of the new problematique Peter Weingart in "Wissenschaftsproduktion und soziale Struktur" (1976) spoke of the the transformation of the "wissenssoziologischen Grundfrage auf die Analyse der Wissenschaft", particularly in the light of the work of Thomas Kuhn. The old externalism- internalism distinction was blurring as it received new form and content.

The Starnberg and Bielefeld approaches were also influential at first in the initial stages of the design of a programme for science studies at the University of Amsterdam which came out of a national competition in the Netherlands for government funds for a priority programme in STS. This took place around the same time as EASST was being conceived. At the same time the MSH had been particularly active in stimulating science studies, with a couple of symposia 1979; in March 1980 a PAREX French-British workshop at CNAM in Paris focused on controversies in science. Later in the same year, 25-29 September 1980, at the ISA/RC 23-PAREX meeting in Deutschlandsberg near Graz in Austria (a meeting in which I also participated) the idea of a new membership organization took shape and the name "EASST" was coined: Peter Weingart was one of

the organizers. Two years later the first conference of the newly formed EASST was held in Deutschlandsberg. Trevor Pinch in a report from that meeting observed how a "brief head-count of the participants showed that over half came from the Netherlands", and now with "the establishment of a new Chair in 'science dynamics' at Amsterdam it would seem that the locus of science studies in Europe has shifted a few hundred kilometres north of the Paris-Sussex axis". EASST, he also noted, "has largely replaced PAREX as the main European forum for Science Study activities" (4S Newsletter 7, no. 4, Winter 1982, p. 27).

Through the PAREX-network the proposal to establish such a Europe-wide membership organization was distributed, and the response was sufficient for the PAREX Steering Committee (which had already been expanded in 1979) to take the step and start acting as the council of the new organization. Thus out of PAREX came EASST, officially working as such 1981. In 1979 the PAREX newsletter (PAREX Informations, first appearing in 1976) had gotten a new base in Bielefeld, with Georg Kamphausen as editor; with the reconfiguration of part of PAREX into EASST 1981 Kamphausen became responsible for the new membership secretariat, while Arie Rip (since 1979 a member of PAREX's enlarged council) took charge of the EASST secretariat and became the editor of the new organization's newsletter.

By this time another new entity had also already appeared on the European arena, the annual publication of a Sociology of the Sciences Yearbook, starting with its first volume in 1977, the same year as the Ina Spiegel-Rösing and Derek de Solla Price edited *Science, Technology and Society, Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives*, published under the aegis of the International Council for Science Policy Studies (ICSPPS); rapidly on the heels of this came Stuart Blume's book, *Perspectives in the Sociology of Science*, also repealing Mertonian analyses of the production of scientific knowledge.

The 1980 Yearbook on Social Processes of Investigation (Knorr et. al. eds.) actually came out of a joint conference with PAREX at the University of Bielefeld (June 1979).

In the Yearbook collective, too, emphasis was on the comparative cross-disciplinary understanding of the sciences. The term "sociology" was defined broadly to include historical and philosophical dimensions, in contrast to a "narrow professionalised conception of the field." The basic standpoint was to view the sciences "as a plurality of socially constructed ways of comprehending natural and social phenomena. It therefore rejects any attempt at imposing a unitary and monolithic schematisation of scientific knowledge and aims to situate developments of the sciences in broader systems of cognitive production." The institutionalisation of scientific knowledge as distinct cognitive structures and their relations with other forms of understanding institutionalised in

different societies was also seen as important, opening up to anthropology of science and knowledge in a broad sense.

1981 was also the year that Karin Knorr-Cetina's *The Manufacture of Knowledge: An Essay on the Constructivist and Contextual Nature of Science* appeared, So did the special issue of *Social Studies of Science*, "Knowledge and Controversy" edited by Harry Collins. This was just two years after *Laboratory Life: the Social Construction of Scientific Facts* by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar; *On the Margins of Science* edited by Roy Wallis; *Natural Order* edited by Barry Barnes and Steven Shapin; *Counter-movements in the Sciences* ed. by Helga Nowotny and Hilary Rose; and in 1980 came the anthology by G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter, *The Ferment of Knowledge*.

It was a heady time where the existence of important macro-actors on our own transepistemic arenas could make a difference. In Paris the designation of the *Département Général de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique* (DGRST) in France made it possible in 1980 for the Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation at the Ecole des Mines to undertake an extensive programme of research and method involving co-word analysis. The actor-network theorists were sceptical about the nature and influence of pre-existing, large-scale social structures such as class and markets, and in particular the prior attribution of social interests. Instead they started their analyses from the level of interactions between individuals, groups and non-human entities, aiming to "scale up" from there to obtain broader explanations. Here constructivism took a different – Machiavellian – direction, leading to a more radical implosion of boundaries, between social and cognitive dimensions, external/internal, as well as between nature and culture. This was an orientation antagonistic to the more historical sociological approach to constructivism cultivated in PAREX and even tended to irritate some people in the same town like Jean-Jacques Salomon at OECD who later set up an STS teaching programme with a strong policy/macro-politics slant at CNAM. In the somewhat broader and neo-institutionalist perspective that still informed PAREX, and in part the new more oecumenical organisation EASST, Everett Mendelsohn in his introduction to the *Yearbook of 1981 on Sciences and Cultures*, assessed the significance of the break with Mertonian sociology of science. The latter was seen to represent in its maturer post-war form a scrutiny of the role of the sciences in democratic societies, analyzing the social norms and social structures in which this obviously important activity might flourish. In consequence with this, even if not intended so, the "early historical and sociological studies were in large measure celebratory of the sciences and scientists", with a conscious pairing of the norms of science and those of the democratic state. The new approach was destined to deviate from that glossiness.

The breakdown of this positive and celebratory appraisal of the sciences did not just grow out of Kuhn's hat. In the perspective that informed EASST at the time of its inception 1981, and one that I have tried to promote on various occasions as president since 1991, there is another dimension that becomes equally important in drawing attention to our politico-cultural and intellectual roots. It is the emergence in society of various social movements in the 1960s and into the 70s, among them specific movements of criticism of science, its uses and its products on the one hand, but questioning also the very value of instrumental rationality and its very existence on the other. I am thinking of the anti-imperialist movement of those days, the radical student protest movements, the environmental movement, and particularly the women's movement which within academe spurred a radical feminist critique of science. In my view we have a double heritage, intellectual and activist at once. From a moral point of view, and speaking of our own "ethos" as part of what I like to think of as a movement for the social responsibility of science, our roots go back even further than 1970, the year that PAREX, our institutional ancestor started up as a collaborative project/network in Europe.

When it comes to trying to get a handle on a history like this, I am struck by something paradoxical; STS-people are puzzling. They tend to become rather narrow-minded in constructing their own past, positioning themselves programmatically in mostly cognitive terms, while ignoring their own broader historical and socio-political contextuality. I guess this is part of the (very much "modern") game of having to legitimate oneself in purely professional terms in academe in the fight for respectability and funding. As Loren Graham has pointed it out once in an article, this has funny consequences; Hilary Rose in her book on Love, power and knowledge points to the same thing — (Here, by the way, it was heartening to hear a corrective to this at the Bielefeld conference; referring to Bernal in his informal introductory remark, David Bloor countered the usual idealist account and made some important points of retrospect in his talk at the banquet on the occasion of his receiving the Bernal award).

Loren Graham remarked how scholars in our field have repealed internalism but when they write their own history in the long term perspective they sometimes point to J.D. Bernal and even Joseph Needham, and so they play up the event of the History of Science Congress in London 1931 as very significant. Then then they go on to trace an intellectual genealogy from the ideas in Boris Hessen's benchmark paper to Bernal 1939, Needham, Levy Hyman, and others to the externalism-internalism debate in the 1960s (with Merton coming in as a target alongside historians like Butterfield) – leaving out all the activism in and around the key figures from the thirties. Thereafter Kuhn's *The Structure* is usually introduced as a new benchmark. In this reconstruction of the past something vital is rendered invisible. It is the existence and importance of the Science and its Social Relations movement of the 1930s and the many science activists in

various countries who took part as committed and reflective intellectuals and scientists in a broader anti-facist and anti-racist movement of that time. Their concern, shared with Merton's, was "keeping science straight".

Hilary Rose for her part has noted in the same way how the "social turn" in our later history from the late 60s onward too has been reconstructed as an internalist cognitive genealogy that tends to fix upon Kuhn.

There is a paradox. While today's social studies of science take for granted the social context of science, their practitioners none the less typically tell their own origins story so as to emphasize the internal development of their history, and to neglect any version of externalism, whether the historical materialist question of 'What conflict outside us was within us the reflex of thought?' or any social constructionist account. There has been a tendency to focus upon Kuhn as founding father, single-handedly opening the doors to the possibility of a fully social account of science. To question this account is not to diminish Kuhn's contribution, nor to neglect the importance of intellectual development, but rather to insist that attention is paid both to theories and their historical location – not least our feminism's own theorizing and our own contexts of production.

It is in such a broader perspective that I also like to locate one of the dimensions of EASST, an amalgam of impulses coming from the various "turns" in research agendas marked by various programmes within STS together with responses to socially, culturally and politically shaping forces in society at large – not as something internal/external, but as a part of a coevolution of, broadly speaking, intellectual and social orders. Here, for example, in Scandinavia the welfare state that has now been dismantled in various respects has also been a significant patron. Where, moreover, would be the various programmes without the sorts of government priority programme funding, and even commercially inspired projects, that have come our way, permitting consolidation of research units with exiting agendas of research under some variant of the rubric STS? This has created new opportunities, but it has also contributed to many of the inbuilt tensions we are facing today. If these tensions are articulated and properly managed at an organisational level I think it should even be possible to do some further bridging with colleagues working in the neighbouring domain of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).

I also think that in this broader perspective that takes us back to the 1930s, we can make the case that we are also carrying forward the spirit of critique and analysis of a generation ago, pertinent to the social responsibility of science in our own. It was this quest that scientists in 1937 too formulated, under for them specific historical circumstances, when they set up the Committee on Science and its Social Relations

(CSSR) under the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU). At that time it was physicists, biologists, astronomers, geoscientists, and some chemists, and they complained of the lack of social scientists to participate in their critique of science and/in society. Granted they only focused on the one way relationship of the impact of science on society, and not the reverse relationship of societal shapings of science, even in its cognitive character. Granted too, therefore, that in retrospect their generation to us appears as rather scientific. This assessment also goes for both Bernal and Needham, and it is confirmed by a look at the approach of the parallel body with overlapping membership with the CSSR. I am thinking of the international organisation set up in 1947, the Commission on the Social Relations of Science (CSRS), within the International Union of History of Science which was also created in 1947 (under ICSU – later IUHS became IUHPS, International Union for the History and Philosophy of Science (IUHPS)).

At the outset CSSR too was fired by an `externalist' radicality in its view on the science question in society. With the advent of Cold War politics this appears to have ebbed out – some of this can be seen by reading through the annals of the offshoot journal "Impact (of Science on Society)" published by Unesco. However, and this is the point here in the present context, the scientism cultivated by the animateurs of CSSR was not narrowly celebratory of science as is the case with our present day natural scientist instigators of the so-called Science Wars. These latter day luminaries, as David Edge has convincingly shown, do not even have the courtesy to apply the same rules of argument and evidencing they use in their own domain when for some strange reason they feel compelled to declare battle with people in STS. I am sure the scientists in CSSR and CSRS in the 1930s and 40s respectively, fired by an acute sense of social responsibility, would have no difficulty understanding what our mission in STS today is about, and be sympathetic.