

# Notes on WTMC



Dear WTMC Colleagues,

In these Notes on WTMC (2), you'll find news on:

- Renewed Admission WTMC
- WTMC Board & Staff
- WTMC Website
- New Books
- *Our Annual Meeting (November 15-17): All events listed! Please note the information on registration!*

## **Renewed Admission WTMC**

ECOS (*Erkenningscommissie Onderzoekscholen*) has re-admitted WTMC as post-graduate research school, with a very positive report. This report stresses the high publication output of WTMC members, the high quality of these publications, the high quality of the participating research groups, the international rise of a 'second generation' of WTMC members, the visibility and influence of WTMC members in science and technology policy, WTMC's international focus, its well-structured post-graduate program and the good labor market position of WTMC PhDs. Again, we would like to thank Arie Rip and Marjatta Kemppainen, as well as all members of the former WTMC board, for preparing the *Vervolgerkenningsaanvraag* so well.

## **WTMC Board & Staff**

We are very pleased to announce that Rob Hagendijk will, from October 1 onwards, be appointed as WTMC board member, representing the participating institutions.

From September 1 onwards, Hannie Spronck will adopt the work formerly done by Patrick van Eijs. Patrick will focus on his work for the Research Institute *Cultuurwetenschappen* of Maastricht University. Until October 1, he'll assist Hannie, introducing her into the 'world' of WTMC.

## **WTMC Website**

Our PhD students Niki Vermeulen and Stefan Verhaegh, members of the WTMC Program Committee (*Opleidingscommissie*) have initiated a wiki-community, linked to the WTMC website: <http://www.wtmc.net/wiki> (user name: wiki, pass-word: WTMC). This 'wiki' enables PhD students to share information and discuss PhD issues. A 'wiki' is a content management system that allows participants to create, edit and delete content on a website in an easy non-technical way using a graphical user interface. One of the issues the PhD students aim to discuss at their wiki is how to organize for a stay at a foreign university. We consider this a much-welcomed initiative!

## **New Books**

One member and one former member announce the publication of the following books:

- Have, Paul ten (2004). *Understanding qualitative research and ethnomethodology*. London: Sage.
- Pieters, Toine (2005). *Interferon: The Science and Selling of a Miracle Drug*. New York: Routledge.

## **Annual Meeting (Amsterdam, November 15-17)**

As you have been able to read in Notes on WTMC 1, the WTMC annual meeting has been scheduled for November 15-17, and will be combined with activities arranged for the award of the Erasmus Prize to Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer. These activities are a 'co-production' of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation, the post-graduate research school Huizinga, and WTMC. Below, you'll find the full program, as well as information on how to register. Since this is a co-production, each single event has its own related registration requirements!

### **Tuesday, November 15 (De Rode Hoed, Amsterdam)**

In the evening of November 15, Steven Shapin, Simon Schaffer, Bruno Latour, Hugh Pennington, David Healy and others will contribute to a public debate on the issue *Is there a crisis of scientific authority?* Paul Schnabel will open the discussion. All WTMC members are invited to attend (and contribute to) this debate!

#### *Practical information*

Time: 19:30-21:30

Location: De Rode Hoed, Keizersgracht 102, Amsterdam.

Registration: No Registration Required

Fee: No fee involved

### **Wednesday, November 16 (Master Class: Bungehuis, Amsterdam)**

November 16 has two, parallel events. The first event is a Master Class by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer for selected PhD-students (WTMC and Huizinga). In July, twenty-three students have been selected. Even after the deadline for submission, we have received many requests for participation. We are sorry to say that we cannot admit any new students. Yet, we do have a waiting list. All selected students have received information on the Master Class, as well as on a preliminary meeting in Utrecht on October 27, at which the PhD students will prepare for the Master Class. Bert Theunissen (UU) and Geert Somsen (UM) will co-chair the preliminary meeting. Geert Somsen will chair the Shapin & Schaffer Master Class.

*Practical information:* Only relevant to selected PhD students (has already been provided to these students).

### **Wednesday, November 16 (WTMC Conference: Felix Meritis, Amsterdam)**

Parallel to the Master Class for selected PhD students, WTMC will have its annual conference, with three 'author meets critics' sessions. We have selected books that have been recently published or will be published next month, and that each 'represent' the W (Science), T (Technology) and MC (Modern Culture) aspects of WTMC. Since not all the names of the commentators are known at the moment, these will be announced later. During the conference, we'll enable you to exhibit your publications over 2004 and 2005 at a 'publication market'. We'll organize for the tables to put your publications on. Please bring your publications to the conference (and don't forget to take the publications back home...). We hope this will inform all WTMC members on what their colleagues have been doing in terms of research! Here's the program and timetable:

10:30	Coffee & Publication Market
11:00	Opening & WTMC News (Karin Bijsterveld)
11:15-12:30	Discussion of <i>De ontdekking van het weten</i> Chunglin Kwa 11:15-11:25 Comments by Commentator 1 11:25-11:35 Comments by Commentator 2 11:35-11:45 Response by Chunglin Kwa 11:45-12:30 General Discussion
12:30-13:45	Lunch (at Felix Meritis)
13:45-15:00	Discussion <i>Users Matter</i> , edited by Nelly Oudshoorn & Trevor Pinch 13:45-13:55 Comments by Commentator 1 13:55-14:05 Comments by Commentator 2 14:05-14:15 Response by Nelly Oudshoorn et al. 14:15-15:00 General Discussion
15:00-15:30	Tea/Coffee & Publication Market
15:30-16:45	Discussion of <i>Inside the Politics of Technology</i> , edited by Hans Harbers 15:30-15:40 Comments by Commentator 1 15:40-15:50 Comments by Commentator 2 15:50-16:00 Response by Hans Harbers et al. 16:00-16:45 General Discussion
16:45	Drinks (at Felix Meritis)
18:00-20:00	WTMC Dinner (at Felix Meritis)

Full titles of the books to be discussed:

- Kwa, Chunglin (2005). *De ontdekking van het weten. Een andere geschiedenis van wetenschap*. Amsterdam: Boom.
- Oudshoorn, Nelly & Trevor Pinch (Eds.) (2003). *How Users Matter. The Co-construction of Users and Technology*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Harbers, Hans (Ed.) (2005). *Inside the Politics of Technology*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

*Practical information:*

Time: 10:30-20:00

Location: Felix Meritis, Keizersgracht 324, 1016 EZ, Amsterdam (020-6262321)

Registration: See the registration form below. **Registration deadline: October 1.** For those of you who need a hotel (for the night of November 16), we have an option on hotel rooms in the Rho Hotel (see registration form). Since Amsterdam hotels are expensive, we would appreciate it if you would only request for the hotel if you don't live or stay at 'commuting distance' from Amsterdam.

Fee: 20 euro (without hotel), and 40 euro (with hotel)

## Registration form WTMC Conference 2005

Location: Felix Meritis, Keizersgracht 324, 1016 EZ Amsterdam  
Date: November 16, 2005

Fee without hotel but including lunch and dinner on November 16: € 20,--

Fee with hotel and lunch and dinner on November 16: € 40,--

**Deadline: October 1, 2005**

<b>Surname and first name or initials</b>	
<b>University / Institution Department / Faculty</b>	
<b>Address</b> <i>PO Box or address Post code and city</i>	
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Phone</b>	
<b>Hotel room</b> <b>Rho Hotel, Amsterdam</b> <b>(<a href="http://www.rhohotel.com">www.rhohotel.com</a>)</b>	<i>0 yes 0 no Arrival 16 November, departure 17 November</i>
<b>Address for invoice, if different from above</b>	
<b>Remarks</b>	

**Please send this registration form to Hannie Spronck by e-mail:**  
[hannie.spronck@fdcw.unimaas.nl](mailto:hannie.spronck@fdcw.unimaas.nl) or by fax 043-3884917

**Thursday, November 17 (Trippenhuis, Amsterdam)**

On Thursday, November 17, we have organized for a one-day workshop with pre-circulated papers on *How Science makes Sense: The Transformation of Local Claims into Universal Facts*. Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin will comment on all pre-circulated papers. See for the program, speakers and registration form: below

*Practical information*

Time: 09:30-17:00

Location: Het Trippenhuis KNAW, Kloveniersburgwal 29, Amsterdam

Registration: through Huizinga, see registration form below. **Registration deadline: November 10.**

Fee: No fee involved

# How Science Makes Sense

## **The Transformation of Local Claims into Universal Facts**

One-day workshop on the occasion of the Erasmus Prize 2005 for  
Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin

17 November 2005

Venue: Het Trippenhuis KNAW, Kloveniersburgwal 29, Amsterdam

**Organizers: Praemium Erasmianum Foundation, Huizinga Institute and WTMC**

The workshop highlights the process of ‘universalizing’ knowledge. Studies in history of science have extensively shown that the production of knowledge is context-bound and thus a ‘local’ affair. Less attention, however, has been paid to the work involved in transforming a local claim into a ‘universal truth’. How can we systematize, both historically and sociologically, these processes of transformation and the involvement of standards, instruments, samples, skills and ways of testing? How can research into the circulation of knowledge, a theme of increasing significance within the History of Science, contribute to it? And what have scholars working in the fields of Science and Technology Studies and History of Science to offer to a society that, at the very same time, needs to come to terms with the provisional nature of scientific knowledge.

The workshop also focuses on the study of the increasingly predominant attempts to make science deal with topics that have traditionally been considered rather vague, ambiguous and hard to classify. Such topics are the ‘objectification’ of smell (and indices for the nuisance of stench), of sound (and noise nuisance), and of taste. For a long time, such ‘secondary qualities’ have been regarded unfit for scientific research. Academic trends as well as the societal desire to deal with the public problems related to stench and noise, and to sell and ‘brand’ the taste and other sensorial qualities of products, have changed this situation. Such changes have often been criticized as the ‘colonization’ of the life world. Are historians and sociologists of science able to produce alternative interpretations?

The speakers will provide only short (10-minute) summaries of their main arguments in order to have ample time for questions and discussion. The workshop papers will be precirculated to all participants of the workshop.

## Programme

- 9.30 Coffee
- 10.00 Opening and Welcome by Gerard de Vries (UvA)
- 10.05 Klaas van Berkel (RUG): *Gossip, news and scientific communication. Scientific correspondence and the invention of the scientific article in early modern Europe*
- 10.15 Comments Simon Schaffer (Cambridge University) and Steven Shapin (Harvard University)
- 10.25 Discussion
- 10.50 Lissa Roberts (UT): *Universality, Standardization and Making Science out of Sense*
- 11.00 Comments Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin
- 11.10 Discussion
- 11.35 Coffee break
- 12.00 H. Otto Sibum (Max Planck Institut, Berlin): *The Golden Number. A History of a Scientific Fact*
- 12.10 Comments Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin
- 12.20 Discussion
- 12.45-14.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Gemma Blok (UvA): *Borderline and its history: the origin and spread of a psychiatric diagnosis*
- 14.10 Comments Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin
- 14.20 Discussion
- 14.45 Karin Bijsterveld (UM): *Sounds from the Sky: Seeking for the Golden Standard of Indicating Aircraft Noise*
- 14.55 Comments Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin
- 15.05 Discussion
- 15.30 Tea break
- 16.00 Michael Lynch (Cornell University): *Making common sense of science: Problems and strategies in the courtroom*
- 16.10 Comments Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin
- 16.20 Discussion
- 16.45 Concluding Remarks
- 17.00 Drinks reception
- Moderator: Gerard de Vries (UvA)

## ABSTRACTS

**Klaas van Berkel, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen**

### **Gossip, news and scientific communication. Scientific correspondence and the invention of the scientific article in early modern Europe**

The scientific article still counts as the usual way of distributing scientific knowledge. It is commonly thought that the article developed out of the scientific correspondence of people like Marin Mersenne and Henry Oldenburg in seventeenth century Europe. Writing a letter to a well-known correspondent ensured that local news, including both gossip and locally produced scientific knowledge, found its way to the wider world. Detailed research into the correspondence of some of the early seventeenth century scholars reveals that the situation was not that simple. In my contribution, I will concentrate on the correspondence of Mersenne, Descartes and Isaac Beeckman and explore the scientific dimensions of epistolary rules and conventions.

**Karin Bijsterveld, Universiteit Maastricht**

### **Sounds from the Sky: Seeking for the Golden Standard of Indicating Aircraft Noise**

In the early morning of Saturday April 7, 1960, some members of the British Noise Abatement Society rang at the door of the Minister of Aviation and woke him. Carrying a so-called ‘objective noise meter’ with them, they claimed that aircraft noise prevented them from sleeping and made life unbearable. The start of transatlantic jet services and the arrival of screaming American turbojets at London Airport (Heathrow) had inspired their lament. The Minister, standing in the door opening while dressed ‘in a silk dressing gown, blue pyjamas and red slippers’, was not impressed. He simply responded by saying that noise around airports could not be avoided. ‘It is impossible—unless you close London Airport’. A few years later, however, it was exactly the situation at Heathrow that led to one of the first European attempts to define an aircraft noise index: a scale for the description of aircraft noise and its relation with harmful effects that could be employed to draw the line between acceptable and non-acceptable levels of aircraft noise.

Right from the start of the search for such an index, acousticians considered aircraft noise as an international problem that asked for supranational solutions and agreements. They succeeded in standardizing several units and instruments of measurement embedded in the aircraft noise indices, yet not in finding *the* aircraft noise index. This paper seeks to understand both the successful transformations of local units into international ones, and the processes leading to a range of distinct aircraft noise indices. It does so by following the discussions prior to the establishment of aircraft noise indices in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands—with a few excursions into the United States and Germany—from the late 1950s until the early 1970s. To understand the outcome of the quest for the golden standard, the analysis of longstanding national

traditions in law and academic research, the web of international institutions involved in aviation, and the *forms of objectivity* searched for will be highly significant.

**Gemma Blok, Universiteit van Amsterdam**

***Borderline and its history: the origin and spread of a psychiatric diagnosis***

During the 1970s, a new diagnosis emerged in Dutch clinical psychiatry: the ‘borderline personality structure’. According to the Dutch professor P.C. Kuiper, writing in 1973, ‘borderliners’ suffered from psychological problems lying somewhere between neurosis and psychosis.

According to modern psychiatric literature, ‘borderliners’ lead very instable lives. They regularly suffer from depressions, anxieties, and short psychotic episodes. The suicides rate among borderliners is high. Borderliners have difficulties in maintaining relationships and often show extreme behaviour regarding drugs, alcohol or sex. Most of them are women, and many of them have been (sexually) abused and/or emotionally neglected during childhood.

The diagnosis has been fiercely criticized since its emergence. Some have called the borderline-diagnosis a worthless catchall term. Others have argued that it is a symptom of mental health care trying to expand its terrain, colonize the lives of ‘normal’ people and attract a new group of patients: young, attractive, and more interesting than the average chronic schizophrenic. Despite this criticism, the borderline-diagnosis has become widespread in Holland during the 1980s and 1990s, as in the rest of the Western world.

Using the history of the borderline diagnosis in the Netherlands as a ‘case-study’, this paper will try to shed light on the origin and spread of this psychiatric diagnosis. How did it become a universally acknowledged psychiatric ‘fact’?

**Michael Lynch, Cornell University**

***Making common sense of science: Problems and strategies in the courtroom***

How science relates to common sense is one of the most persistent aspects of the question of how science makes sense. One reason that the question defies resolution is that what is or is not included under “common sense” is even less clear than the, much debated, matter of what is or is not included under the rubric of “science”. Nevertheless, philosophers of science, and scientists speaking philosophically, do not hesitate to venture strong opinions on the question. One common position, exemplified by embryologist Lewis Wolpert in his book *The Unnatural Nature of Science*, is that science involves exceptional methods and requires rigorous training and rare reasoning capacities to overcome the limitations and prejudices of experiential knowledge. The opposite

position, attributed to T.H. Huxley and A.N. Whitehead is that science is built on a base of ordinary experience and commonsense knowledge. This 'base' is not a ground of certainty, but a fallible pre-condition for making sense. Both positions can be supported with historical and contemporary examples, but my aim in this paper will not be to substantiate either position. Instead, I shall examine a specific organizational context that makes the question perspicuous. Specifically, I will examine the way expert scientific testimony is integrated with "ordinary fact" evidence in the adversary court systems of the USA and UK. For the courts, the jury represents common sense wisdom, and expert witnesses represent exceptional methods and forms of knowledge. Debates in the legal literature about the extent and limits of "jury understanding" of expert evidence reiterate different views of how science relates to common sense. The advantage of examining specific cases is that such cases provide vivid displays of the practical reasoning and institutional procedures through which courts provisionally "solve" what might otherwise be viewed as an irresolvable metaphysical question. This paper will delve into the argumentative strategies used in a British appeal case to develop a unified assessment of "ordinary" and "scientific" evidence.

**Lissa Roberts, Universiteit Twente**

***Universality, Standardization and Making Science out of Sense***

This paper will begin with a brief history of 'sensuous technology' drawn from the author's article "The Death of the Sensuous Chemist" (recently republished in David Howes, ed. *The Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, Berg Press, 2004). It will then go on to argue that, in fact, much work has been done to analyze the movement in science from local production to claims of universality. Finally, by discussing the concept of "circulation" as part of scientific practice, the paper will claim that the practical goal of (techno-) science is actually not universality but standardization.

**H. Otto Sibum, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, Berlin**

***The Golden Number. A History of a Scientific Fact***

This paper aims at exploring the history of a scientific fact, most widely known as the mechanical equivalent of heat. When did this „truth attested by authentic testimony“ come to be known as fact, when credited as scientific? The fact to be investigated here was and is an everyday experience known since the existence of human kind: when two surfaces are rubbed against one another heat evolves from this friction. However only in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century did the relation between heat and mechanical force become a matter of intensive natural philosophical investigation and not before the early 19<sup>th</sup> century was it expressed as a numerical fact. It soon became the building block of the new British science of energy – and was even regarded as proof of the principle of conservation of

energy. It then achieved the status of constant of nature and finally around 1900 was named the golden number of the century. The paper therefore covers the period from the late 18<sup>th</sup> until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time of considerable change within the development of the physical sciences. Since the fact in question is a particular one, one which can be expressed by number only, the narrative is about the establishment of precision measurement in 19<sup>th</sup>-century physical sciences, and especially about experimentation as a specific form of scientific experience.

**Commentators:**

**Simon Schaffer** is professor in the department of history and philosophy of science at Cambridge University, UK.

**Steven Shapin** is professor in the department of history of science at Harvard University, USA.

**Moderator:**

**Gerard de Vries** is professor of Philosophy of Science and Technological Culture at the Universiteit van Amsterdam

## REGISTRATION FORM

The registration deadline for the workshop is November 10, 2005. The workshop papers will be precirculated to all participants.

Any questions can be directed toward Paul Koopman at ++ 31 020 525 4433 or you can email [huizinga-fgw@uva.nl](mailto:huizinga-fgw@uva.nl).

REMARK: There is no conference fee

Email the registration form to [huizinga-fgw@uva.nl](mailto:huizinga-fgw@uva.nl) or fax to ++ 31 020 525 4692

I will attend the workshop *How Science Makes Sense*

I will not attend the workshop but please send me the workshop documentation

First Name:.....

Last Name:.....

Title:.....

Institution:.....

Street Address:.....

City:.....

Post Code.....

Country:.....

Email:.....

I would like to attend the lunch

No, I will not attend the lunch

## **Organization**

Praemium Erasmianum Foundation  
Jan van Goyenkade 5  
NL-1075 HN Amsterdam  
Email: [spe@erasmusprijs.org](mailto:spe@erasmusprijs.org)  
[www.erasmusprijs.org](http://www.erasmusprijs.org)

Huizinga Institute  
Spuistraat 134  
NL-1012 VB Amsterdam  
Email: [huizinga-fgw@uva.nl](mailto:huizinga-fgw@uva.nl)  
<http://cf.hum.uva.nl/~huizinga>

The Netherlands Graduate School of Science, Technology and Modern Culture (WTMC)  
Faculteit der Cultuurwetenschappen  
Universiteit Maastricht  
Postbus 616  
NL-6200 MD Maastricht  
Email: [wtmc@fdcw.unimaas.nl](mailto:wtmc@fdcw.unimaas.nl)  
[www.wtmc.net/](http://www.wtmc.net/)