UTOPIAN STUDIES SOCIETY

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Utopian Studies Society
University of Gdansk, 7th July 2017

Present: **Chair:** Gregory Claeys, **Treasurer:** Adam Stock, **Committee Members:** Antonis Balasopoulos, Artur Blaim, David Bell, Fátima Vieira, Laurence Davis, Michael Kelly, Nathaniel Coleman, Pavla Veselá, Pere Gallardo, Zsolt Czigányik and **81** ordinary members.

1. **Election of Secretary of Utopian Studies Society.** After inquiring whether any other candidates wish to come forward, Gregory Claeys proposed a vote by acclamation for the only candidate – Justyna Galant, whose CV has been sent out to all conference participants on 30th June 2017. JG is elected unanimously.

2. **Approval of minutes** from AGM held at Lisbon University, 7th July 2016 (previously posted on USS website) – no objections.

3. **Conference plans**.

   Gregory Claeys expressed regret that next year's conference cannot take place in Budapest (as planned) and extended gratitude to Elizabeth Russell and Pere Gallardo for agreeing, at short notice, to organise next year's conference in Tarragona.

   a) Tarragona, 2018 – Pere Gallardo informed the meeting that the conference will be organised by Autonomous University of Madrid and University of Tarragona. He also warned that due to sporting events in the country all participants will need to book their flights and accommodation well in advance. Therefore CFP for the conference will be sent out very early. PG also expressed concern regarding Catalonia' political status in the near future.

   b) Proposal for 2019 – Andrew Milner spoke briefly on arrangements for the conference in Italy (Monash University Campus in Prato), expressing concern about the size of the venue and the possible need to limit the number of participants to approximately 140.

   c) Proposal for 2020 – Sinaia, Romania. Sorin Antohi proposed the theme - *History and Utopia.*

   d) Tom Moylan extended an invitation on behalf of the Science Fiction Research Association to organise a joint meeting at some point in the future and offered the contact to Gregory Claeys, gladly accepted.

e) Alireza Omidbakhsh extended an invitation to organise Utopian Studies meetings and workshops at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Iran. GC expressed appreciation for the proposal.

Andrew Milner, seconded by Gregory Claeys, expressed the need to issue an official statement from the Society concerning the situation of Central European University. GC volunteered to prepare a statement of support for CEU on behalf of the Society.

4. **Raising the number of committee members.**

Gregory Claeys' proposal to raise the number of committee members designated in the constitution to 15 (excluding the three officers) is unanimously accepted.
Artur Blaim suggested Andrew Milner is added to the committee. All agreed.
AB proposed that where a vacancy arises among office bearers between AGM's, the Society's Chair or the Committee should appoint a person to fill the position temporarily. Adam Stock raised the question of the position of the Chair becoming vacant between AGM's. It was suggested from the Floor that in such a case the Committee would make temporary arrangements

5. **Plans for reforms.**

David Bell suggested changes within three areas to increase the scope and inclusivity of the Society:
1. Increasing the geographical reach of the Utopian Studies Society, specifically reaching out to underrepresented countries
2. Addressing the predominance of white members in the Society and the ways of diversifying both the committee and the Society.
3. Establishing a Postgraduate Network (a proposal raised by Jessica Day during the 2016 AGM in Lisbon).
To address these issues at length and propose concrete plans, DB suggests establishing one or more Working Groups. Seconding DB's proposal, Laurence Davis made two formal suggestions – nominating **Jessica Day** as the chair of the Postgraduate Network, and **Fátima Vieira** as the chair of the Working Group with input from DB. DB announced with regret that he is unlikely to attend future USS conferences due to career change but offered his help in any capacity.
All agree that the Working Group will make concrete recommendations on the three areas of concern during next year's conference. GC seconded the proposal, emphasising that the Postgraduate Network will be an independent unit attached to the Society.

6. **Removal of committee members.**

Gregory Claeys proposed removal of committee members in cases of non-attendance for two consecutive years (excluding medical reasons). Tom Moylan voiced a concern in case the reason for non-attendance is financial. GC agreed the removal will be subject to review in case of genuine financial distress. Adam Stock

asked for clarification on how the removal process will be conducted. All agree details of the process will be decided on in future.

7. **Grants and website.**

Gregory Claeys seconded David Bell's proposal to reach out to underrepresented groups, also offering financial help when possible. He hopes that the Society succeeds in securing a grant for this and other purposes. GC also expressed the intention to expand the website and make it a more efficient platform for networking and communication.

8. **Postgraduate Conference Segment.**

Artur Blaim proposed a one-day, or half-day, fee-free Postgraduate Segment to be appended to USS conferences. This is seconded by Sorin Antohi who suggested this should also allow for the inclusion of local academics and specialists from the host country. Pere Gallardo objected to the addition of the post-graduate segment to next year's conference (due to time constraints), it is agreed that the decision whether to organise the Postgraduate Conference segment any given year will be left to the organisers.

9. **Awards.**

Gregory Claeys proposed that the Society gives Awards of Merit. Lyman Tower Sargent informed the meeting that Society for Utopian Studies gives four awards – Award for Distinguished Scholarship, Distinguished Service Award, Award for the best article in the previous year's *Utopian Studies*, Award for the best paper by a younger scholar.
Tim Waterman expressed his concern at the possible proliferation of committees within the Society, as awards will require a formation of yet another committee.
Elizabeth Russell, supported by David Bell, expresseed concern at the introduction of competitiveness into the Society.
Tom Moylan observed that committees have the potential to encourage democracy.
Fátima Vieira, emphasised the importance of the award for the best paper by a young untenured scholar. Antonis Balasopoulos expressed a similar view.

After a vote (In favour 53, Against 34, Abstentions 6), it is decided that USS will be giving awards.

However, it was then agreed that the question of Awards can be revisited next year.

10. **Finance:**

Treasurer's Report for 2016/17 was approved unanimously, printed copies were distributed at the start of the AGM to all present.

11. AOB

a) David Bell offered a vote of thanks to Matt Wilson for redesigning the Utopian Studies Society website.

b) Giedymin Jablonski proposed the Society would benefit from a stronger connection with the representatives of the Arts. Using the exhibition organised as part of the 2017 Gdansk conference by the participants from Iran as an example, GJ suggested artistic competitions could be a positive addition to the Society's interdisciplinary approach to utopias.

c) Ibtisam Ahmed asked for support for the LGBT groups, referring to a future event in April 2018, information on which will be sent out to all Utopian Studies members.

d) Adam Stock, seconded by Gregory Claeys, proposed approaching publishers of utopian studies books to organise book launches and book stands.

e) Annette Magid's query concerning plans for publications following the Gdansk conference wass answered by Artur Blaim who confirms selected papers will be published in several forms (an issue of Utopian Studies Journal, an issue of a journal published by Gdansk University and a book publication).

12. GC leads a vote of thanks to organisers.

13. Date of next meeting – Tarragona, July, 2018.

http://utopian-studies-europe.org/