



## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Utopian Studies Society Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona, Spain, 12th July 2018**

**Present: Chair:** Gregory Claeys, **Treasurer:** Adam Stock, **Secretary:** Justyna Galant, **Committee Members:** Artur Blaim, Andrew Milner, Laurence Davis, Lucy Sargisson, Michael Kelly, Pavla Vesela, Pere Gallardo and 58 ordinary members.

**Apologies** from Fátima Vieira, Jorge Bastos da Silva, Antonis Balasopoulos.

1. **Approval of minutes** from the Gdańsk AGM held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2017. No objections.
2. **The Question of Awards.** Having thanked all present members for attending the AGM, Gregory Claeys proposes that the question of awards raised last year be postponed due to the high number of opponents (53 in favour, 34 Against, 6 Abstentions according to the vote during the 2017 Gdańsk AGM). Andrew Milner proposes to retain the planned Darko Suvin award to be awarded during the 2019 USS Conference in Prato, Italy. On GC's motion, seconded by Annette Magid, it is agreed that the one-off Lifetime Achievement Award will be given to Darko Suvin next year.
3. **Finance.** Printed copies of the Treasurer's Report for 2017/2018 are distributed by Adam Stock to the members at the beginning of the AGM. The report is approved unanimously. AS notes that the Society fee paid by participants of each USS annual conference is now 12€. It is agreed that the Society will aim to give fewer but more substantial grants annually. AS suggests a move of the USS bank account to a European bank.
4. **Conference plans.**
  - a) Having excused the absence of Jacqueline Dutton at the AGM, Andrew Milner confirmed the arrangements for Prato, Italy, 1-5th July 2019. The conference venue should hold around 150 people. The local team has promised organisational help and contracts have been signed.
  - b) Sorin Antohi confirmed the arrangements for the 2020 conference in Romania. The conference venue will be located in Bucharest while a day trip out will also be offered. SA expressed the wish to hold the conference during 3 days. The conference theme is confirmed as 'History and Utopia'. Preliminary arrangements with keynote speakers have been made. Mary Green's question on the height of the Romanian mountains is answered by SA in detail. SA extends an invitation to all, thanks by Gregory Claeys.

5. **Post-Graduate conference segment.** Gregory Claeys raises the question of the Post-Graduate segment to be added to the USS conferences. Andrew Milner confirms this is planned for the first day of the 2019 Prato conference.

## 6. Membership scope.

- a) Gregory Claeys address the issue of the membership scope of the Society, also in view of the elder academics' retirement plans and financial difficulties faced by early career scholars. He proposes personalised thanks as one way to show appreciation for those attending USS conferences.
- b) Sorin Antohi proposes to work on a list of current Utopian projects, creating a database of utopia-themed conferences, with the view to approaching other organisations and institutions with the offer of cooperation.
- c) Darren Webb proposes using Twitter to promote Society's conferences. Gregory Claeys suggests appointing a person to Tweet during a given conference. Adam Stock proposes to appoint 5-6 people for the task. Several volunteers offer to Tweet during next year's USS conference. A vote of thanks to them.
- d) Gregory Claeys proposes to consider the Society's YouTube presence. Sam Bunn offers his help in this matter, including bringing his own filming equipment, if necessary. Sorin Antohi informs the meeting filming equipment should be on site during the Bucharest conference. A vote of thanks to SB.

## 6. Committee and vacancies.

- a) Gregory Claeys proposes to co-opt Sorin Antohi to the USS Committee as the organiser of next year's conference. No objections. GC offers a vote of thanks to the three committee members stepping down this year - Lucy Sargisson, David Bell, Pere Gallardo. Seconded.
- b) Julia Ramírez Blanco is put forward as a candidate for one of the vacancies by Laurence Davis. Lisa Garforth is put forward as a candidate by Adam Stock. Seconded. Susanna Layh is put forward as a candidate by Justyna Galant. Seconded. With no objections all candidates are elected.

7. **Committee meetings.** Gregory Claeys puts forward the proposition to move the Committee's meetings to the first day of the USS conferences.

8. **Committee changes.** Gregory Claeys expresses the need to agree on terms of office for Committee members and any changes pertaining to the Committee's structure. Justyna Galant offers to prepare draft proposals of the changes to be discussed and modified by the Committee, next proposed for consideration and feedback via email to all USS members, returned to the Committee for final considerations and changes to be voted during the AGM of the 2019 USS conference.

9. **Early career scholars.** Gregory Claeys suggests that Society's senior members approach their universities for financial help to be offered to early career utopian scholars. Mohammad Nasravi suggests an alternative funding scheme where Society's members pay

a small amount of money to be offered to early career scholars. Participation in the funding would give the members a vote on which scholars should be awarded the grant.

## 10. AOB

1. **Gender and Code of Conduct Matters.** Gregory Claeys offers to consider gender imbalance in panels and session chairing. He puts forward the proposal to ensure 50% chairs are women and that, if given a choice, a woman is the first audience member to ask a question. Pere Gallardo points out this may be very problematic for the conference organisers. Sorin Antohi suggests retaining the idea in principle and leaving the matter to the discretion of the conference organisers. Seconded by PG. Julia Ramírez Blanco points out the disproportion in favour of male audience members in discussions. Judith Suissa supports the idea of gender balance in the matter by pointing out that good practice schemes are common in many organisations. Chairs ought to be instructed to be sensitive to the gender question while in charge of the discussion. Annette Magid suggests educating chairs how to conduct sessions while bearing in mind both gender question and the matter of politic academic discussion. One way to approach this would be an instructional YouTube video. Michael Kelly supports the effort to improve the nature of discourse yet calls for flexibility in the application of any rules of this sort. AM suggests gender balance is achievable within panels and among session chairs. Judith Suissa suggests a 3-4 minute break between the last speaker and question time within sessions as this is proven to alter the gender imbalance in discussions. Artur Blaim raises the question of the impracticality of the suggestion by pointing out that most sessions already last longer than the prescribed time limit. Manjula Padmanabhan proposes to consider all genders rather than discussing the issue in terms of binary opposition. Gregory Claeys suggests including all suggestions into a code of best practice to be agreed on and placed on the Society's website. Justyna Galant proposes to gather all ideas for the code of best practice to be discussed by the Committee, then all members, to be voted on during the AG, of the 2019 conference. All agree. JG invites all to send suggestions for the Society's reforms to herself or David Bell.

11. Gregory Claeys leads a vote of thanks to the Organisers of the 2018 USS conference.

12. Liz Russell expresses her gratitude to Manjula Padmanabhan for preparing graphics and postcards for the 2018 conference.

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