

Online Committee Meeting 7th October 2021, 5pm UTC

Present: **Chair:** Gregory Claeys, **Secretary:** Justyna Galant, **Treasurer:** Zsolt Czigányik, **Committee Members:** Antonis Balasopoulos, Artur Blaim, Michael Kelly, Jorge Bastos da Silva, Laurence Davis, Lisa Garforth, Nathaniel Coleman, Pavla Veselá, Sorin Antohi, Susanna Layh.

Apologies from Adam Stock, Andrew Milner, Fátima Vieira, Julia Ramírez Blanco, Nicole Pohl.

I. PORTO 2021 CONFERENCE

- 1) SOCIETY AWARD: Gregory Claeys puts forward the notion that an award be presented to Lyman Tower Sargent during the Porto 2021 Conference. All in favour.
- 2) PORTO ELECTIONS: Laurence Davis raises the question of the online elections during the conference. Justyna Galant responds that the conference organisers are aware of the need to organize the elections online and steps will be taken to ensure that the process is efficient, with the anonymous votes counted automatically. JG also thanks Laurence Davis for his readiness to serve as a returning officer during the Porto 2021 elections. Further technical details on the process will be obtained and available from the conference organisers in due course.
- 3) SUMMARY PAPER FORMAT OF PORTO 2021 CONFERENCE CFP: Antonis Balasopoulos notes that the format of the “summary paper” included in the CFP for the Porto 2021 Conference is a somewhat confusing terms, given the substantial length specified in the CFP. He also expressed concerns about the participants’ ability to meet the deadline for the summary papers and the impact the speed might have on the final results.

Sorin Antohi points out that the time between the proposals’ acceptance and summary paper due date may be too short.

Antonis Balasopoulos suggests that a compromise may be suggested to the organizers to make the summary papers optional, desirable but not obligatory.

Nathaniel Coleman notes that an abstract allows for a degree of speculativeness and is a less restrictive form and suggests not employing the summary paper format for the future conferences.

Gregory Claeys reads out Fatima Vieira’s answers to the Porto 2021 conference queries passed on by the secretary:

“ 1. Upcoming elections: The technical department of our university is working on this. We will soon know which will be the best way of organizing the elections, preserving anonymity, making only one vote per voter possible, and automatically counting the votes.

2. *Call for papers changes: There were no changes in the call for papers; when we extended the deadline, we decided to allow for the presentation of two proposals – one for section two (Utopian Spaces and Discourses), and another one either for section one (Raising awareness pre-programme) or section three (Co-Designing Workshops).*

3. *Co-Designing Workshops at Porto Conference: As we did not have many proposals for the workshops, we thought of inviting members of the USS as well as other people who do not belong to the USS but are used to realizing utopias. The workshops will be chaired by USS members. These will take notes and will prepare the pertinent sections for the Porto Declaration on Utopian Possibilities.*

4. *The Porto Declaration on Utopian Possibilities: A draft of the Declaration will be presented to the USS Committee. It will be published after it is approved.*

5. *Number of paper proposals: 105 Papers (these include: 8 closed panels with four papers; 2 closed panels with three papers)*

Additional information: We will be using a platform that is being built for the conference. Keynotes will be recorded and broadcast on YouTube. The other paper presentations will not be recorded.

When the programme is closed, we will circulate it and invite people to attend the conference even if they are not making any presentation. There will be no charges for this.”

4) PORTO DECLARATION OF UTOPIAN POSSIBILITIES FROM THE PORTO 2021 CFP

Antonis Balasopoulos notes the need to clarify the addressee and author of the Porto Declaration. Zsolt Czigányik suggests obtaining more details on the subject from the conference organisers. Jorge Bastos de Silva answers that no particular addressee is intended, while the authors will be the Society members present at the conference, who will vote to approve the Declaration during the AGM. Michael Kelly raises the possibility of unintended side effects of the Porto Declaration. This is supported by Laurence Davis, who adds that co-designing workshops (as stated in the Porto 2021 CFP) is a problematic issue. LD adds that the Declaration might sound prescriptive or dogmatic, constituting a “statement on utopianism”, and thus go against the spirit of the Society. Justyna Galant points to the declaration’s name (“Porto Declaration of Utopian Possibilities”) and notes that the inclusion of “possibilities” implies a speculative nature of the Declaration, and does not imply any prescriptive content. Nathaniel Coleman notes that the name “declaration” implies a degree of exclusivity. Michael Kelly inquiries whether the declaration is intended to be signed by individuals, by the Society as a whole, or by visitors to the USS/E website where the document may be displayed. Antonis Balasopoulos, supported by Michael Kelly, points out that the Society is a scholarly, not an activist, body. Pavla Veselá supports the point. Antonis Balasopoulos, supported by Gregory Claeys notes that a clarification seems necessary and asks Jorge Bastos da Silva to pass on the issues arising to Fatima Vieira.

II. 2022 CONFERENCE PLANS

Gregory Claeys informs the Committee of the 2 proposals for the 2022 conference: Oxford, UK and Diyarbakir, Turkey. GC specifies that the Oxford venue poses a financial challenge and would most probably be only a valid option if free accommodation was provided. GC explains that the Diyarbakir conference proposal seems much more possible at this point, both in terms of the overall costs and with regard to the venue's availability; the prospective local organizer, Ecevit Bekler, has informed GC of the option of affordable accommodation on site and has already received a positive response from his faculty's authorities. Justyna Galant adds that the Oxford venue could possibly be partially funded with a portion of the Society's money (confirmed by the treasurer, Zsolt Czigányik), and adds that if the Oxford conference took place in 2023, more money could be raised in the meantime towards its funding. Zsolt Czigányik points out that, given the location and season of the planned event, availability of air-conditioning at the venue is of importance. Gregory Claeys agrees and notes that a crucial factor to be taken into consideration is also the availability of technological facilities at the venue; given the unpredictable situation related to the pandemic, the Diyarbakir conference could only take place in the hybrid form, with the option of conducting the entire event online. Laurence Davis expresses thanks to Gregory Claeys for the effort to secure a venue for the 2022 conference and points out that the procedure of selecting a conference venue should be transparent and that the final decision regarding the venue should be made at the Society's AGM. Gregory Claeys agrees and notes that the presentation of the Diyarbakir venue would be made during the AGM of the 2021 Porto conference, and followed by the vote of all present. Artur Blaim inquires about the possibility of the Committee's meeting with the prospective organizer of the Diyarbakir and Oxford conferences. GC confirms this has already been discussed and is scheduled for the next Committee meeting. Justyna Galant adds that a note will be added on the Society's website inviting all interested parties to propose venues for future USS/E conference. Antonis Balasopoulos expresses thanks to Gregory Claeys for his effort of maintaining the Society's activity during the pandemic and securing venues for the future conferences.

Justyna Galant offers the Committee to reconvene the following week. All agree.

With apologies, Michael Kelly (8:10pm) and Lisa Garforth (8:13pm) leave the meeting.

Jorge Bastos da Silva raises the question of travel costs to Diyarbakir, noting the lack of direct flights from most places in Europe. Nathaniel Coleman agrees. Laurence Davis points out that while both venues are attractive, the costs of the Oxford conference may be excessive. The Committee agrees to discuss the question further during the next meeting. Gregory Claeys expresses thanks to Sorin Antohi for his effort regarding the preparation of the 2021 conference that was cancelled due to the global health crisis. Thanks from all.

Gregory Claeys expresses his thanks to the Committee and closes the meeting.