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PARIS SPECIAL: TENSIONS OF EUROPE CONFERENCE

Past and Future

The 6th Tensions of Europe Conference, taking place in Paris, took stock of the past and looked at the future, and so does this newsletter. We look back at Paris through the eyes of the local organizers, newcomer in the network Adelheid Voskuhl, as well as our very own Maria Paula Diogo. And we look ahead. The "so-called" management committee reflects on its activities and ideas for the further development and coordination of the Tensions of Europe network. Last but not least, we advise our young scholars and recently graduated PhD's to check out the ICOHTEC Young Scholar Award 2014 at the end of this newsletter. There is a nice prize to win!

About the Tensions of Europe Conference

It was good to see so many of you in Paris last month. The organizers did a wonderful job and made the 6th plenary Tensions of Europe conference a huge success. We witnessed the presentation of the first two *Making Europe* books to Mrs. Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. The book series capitalizes on 1,5 decades of *Tensions* research and hopefully provides new intellectual departures. We got a taste of the impressive research programs of our local organizers, the *Resendem (Réseaux Techniques en Démocratie)* program and the new *laboratoire d'excellence* program "Writing a New History of Europe" and its strand on "Europe in flux: Europe as a product of material civilization". We had many inspiring sessions debating the conference theme of Technology & Democracy, possible future intellectual agenda's of the Tensions of Europe network, outreach activities such as the Inventing Europe Digital Museum for Science & Technology, and a great variety of other exciting topics. Our local organizers responded to the challenge of throwing a good party by making us compete for excellent wine and allowing the Sorbonne to rock – starring the one and only, and unsurpassed, *Tensions* band. Last but certainly not least, we celebrated and thanked our departing chair Johan Schot for creating and nurturing Tensions of Europe over the past many years.

Suzanne Lommers
Erik van der Vleuten

FROM THE PARIS ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

Main objectives

Organizing the Paris Conference, three main objectives were defined, with the turning point in the life of the Tensions Network in mind.

1. Offer *high visibility* for the results, works in progress and future initiatives of Tensions of Europe.
2. Aim to offer strong *thematic coherence* around the core subject of the conference, the relations between democracy and technologies in Europe from the 19th Century onward, as well as disciplinary openness in approaching the theme.
3. Offer a strong *creative conviviality* within the spirit of the previous tensions conferences, continuing to build links between the participants.

Introduction of the *Making Europe* book series and digital museum *Inventing Europe*

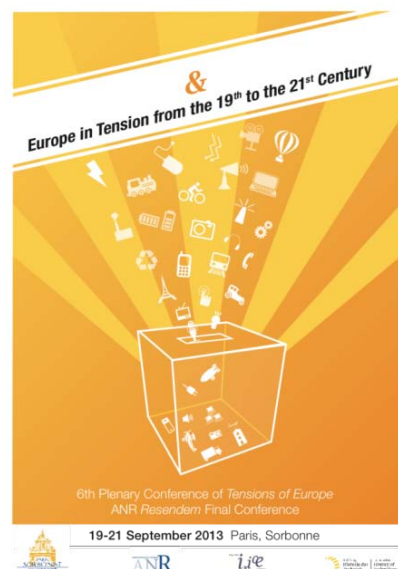


Used with the courtesy of Slawomir Lotysz

The opening day of the conference was held at the historical Sorbonne in the presence of Mrs. Androulla Vasilliou, the European commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. She introduced the first books of the *Making Europe* book series, as well as the digital museum *Inventing Europe*, to the large audience of students and researchers, including the specialists in international relations from the project 'Writing a New History of Europe' (« Ecrire une histoire nouvelle de l'Europe » LabEx EHNE). Over 300 people participated in this first day,

which was open to the public, and approximately 200 registered participants took part in the conference over the following two days. Such high turnout attests to the relevance and widespread interest in the work of Tensions. [Here](#) you find more impressions of the opening session.

The subject and the diversity within the disciplinary backgrounds of the participants – historians of course, but also political scientists, sociologists and specialists in media – no doubt worked to shift the chronological centre of gravity of the 100 papers presented toward the last decades of the 20th Century. The role of experts and expertise, the place of audiovisual media, the development of socio-technical controversies as well as new conceptions of responsible innovation as promoted on a European scale, formed the core of the discussions. Nuclear power, biotechnologies, chemistry and the internet as both vector of, and challenge to, democracy presented many cases for participants to explore these problems. This will certainly have presented plenty of material for Tensions members to reflect on together as they consider future intellectual agendas for the network. Such discussions were the subject of two plenary sessions chaired by the new Management Committee.



Johan Schot, “Ne me quitte pas”

During the first day of the conference, history students organized a walking tour through the vibrant Latin Quarter. In closing, the medieval Réfectoire des Cordeliers hosted some unforgettable stage performances. The “winEurope” contest, organized with the help of professionals from the French

wine industry and a number of members of the network allowed those present to both taste and perform the diversity of European wines as they explored the sometime tense circulation of grape varieties and labels. The long-awaited comeback of the Tensions filled the dance floor, captivating the audience during the encore with a magnificent interpretation of “Ne me quitte pas” in honour of Johan Schot. It was an eloquent closing argument in convincing new participants and reminding long-term members: Tensions is unique.



We hope to have provided all together many solid foundations for re-launching Tensions toward new horizons.

On behalf of the local organizing committee:

Pascal Griset
Léonard Laborie
Arielle Haakenstad

JOINT ORGANISATION OF ToE and RESENDEM

Presentations, discussions and dissemination

(by Maria Paula Diogo, NOVA-New University of Lisbon, Faculty of Sciences and Technology)



The 2013, 6th Plenary Conference of Tensions of Europe was held in Paris as a joint organization of ToE and the French Research project, Resendem, coordinated by our ToE colleague Pascal Griset. It took place at the Sorbonne and at the Maison de la Recherche, just in the center of Paris’ rive gauche. The venue of the opening session, the Amphithéâtre Richelieu, was impressive and set the tone for the meeting topic “Democracy and Technology” , bringing together researchers and politicians to discuss the importance of new approaches to European history. *Making Europe* presented its first two books from the series whereas a new French initiative that aims at writing a new European history was launched. In this new initiative one volume is dedicated to technology as a way of, and I deliberately use these words to invoke the first TOE’s debates, linking and de-linking Europe. The start day of the meeting ended with a lecture by Dominique Pestre, followed by a short discussion and a welcome reception, which allowed the participants to gather in a very informal atmosphere, enjoying champagne and a diverse range of delicious *amuse-bouche*.

The second and third days were tough working days. There were four groups of sessions per day, from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., with two short coffee breaks and a buffet lunch of sandwiches. Each session group had five or six parallel sessions, all featuring excellent and challenging papers. More than 150 scholars from all over Europe attended the meeting, which was able to attract a significant number of young researchers and graduate students.

The topic of the meeting was particularly compelling. It tackled some of the most pressing issues of contemporary societies, i.e. the role played by technology in different political settings and its use as a tool for citizenship. The iconic metaphor of technology as a black box was dissected, analyzed and criticized by the participants and challenged by the logo of the conference that depicted a glass box where different technological artifacts were thrown in.

As a sort of mini parallel program, there were two ToE plenary sessions and two workshops on the Inventing Europe Digital Museum. The plenary sessions discussed the future of the research network and the need for *ToE-ers* to actively engage in disseminating the results of the ToE network and the *Making Europe* book series amongst larger audiences. After one year of testing, *Inventing Europe* is proving its value, being such dissemination tool.

The Inventing Europe workshop accommodated two discussion groups, one on the future trends for developing the Digital Museum and the other on its use as a tool for teaching. The workshop was attended by around 20 colleagues from all over Europe from the fields of cultural heritage, research as well as teaching. Together the participants exchanged views on several experiences already underway and drew common strategies to enlarge and better use this innovative pedagogical environment.



On Saturday evening, the Closing Gala honourably fulfilled its relaxation mission, beginning by a nice wine tasting, followed by a dinner and the traditional ball. The long-awaited return of the *Tensions*, which, as usual, offered us an outstanding and unforgettable show, was just icing on the cake.

NEW: MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

News from the new “so called “Management Committee”

The Paris Conference reflected the transition stage of the Tensions of Europe network and research program. It demonstrated the results of a remarkable intellectual and organizational effort started over a decade ago, and simultaneously urged for a new beginning. In his introduction to the conference program, Pascal Griset noted how Tensions of Europe has gone through phases of exploration, networking and dissemination; produced unique meetings and an impressive research agenda; managed to acquire funding; attract a new generation of young scholars; and successfully involved Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, he noted, our last conferences in Sofia, Copenhagen and Paris explored ways to revitalize our research questions and reveal new historical dynamics relevant to the challenges that Europe faces today.

Inspiring the network

In terms of organization, this transition of the *Tensions of Europe* network is reflected first and foremost in Johan Schot's stepping down as our network chair. Obviously the strength of our network resides in the enthusiasm and skills of its participants and its dynamics cannot be credited to one man alone. And yet, for the last 13 years there was always Johan Schot in the background or on the foreground, dreaming up, founding, inspiring and enabling the network and its expanding range of activities, new stages, and bold projects. His leadership cannot be easily replaced.

An independent committee proposed candidates to form a new Management Committee (a pompous name, which is why we would rather speak of a 'so-called management committee'). We, the undersigned, have accepted to place our energies at the service of the network in the coming years. The committee will not have a fixed, but a rotating chair.

Maintaining an open network

Tensions of Europe should remain an open, program driven, multidisciplinary, bottom-up network focused on our joint investigation of the technological shaping of Europe. It is open because anyone contributing to its research agenda can join the effort – there are no inside/outside boundaries characterizing most scholarly associations. It is program driven and multidisciplinary because that is what is needed to answer our research questions. We often call ourselves a 'history of technology' network, for disciplinary affiliation helps navigating the academic (funding) landscape. If so, it is an open and outward-looking kind of history of technology; it does not define boundaries, but instead develops synergies with other disciplines in order to engage with its research topic. It is bottom-up because much of its energy, activities, and resources stem from local initiatives that contribute to the bigger whole.

For this to work, and make the network larger than the sum of its parts, coordination is pivotal. In Paris we agreed on a number of activities that should further enable and inspire the network. In order to facilitate exchanges between participants, we will continue the biennial conferences (we have several offers for hosting the next one, probably summer/fall 2015), the website www.tensionsofeurope.eu and newsletter (we aim at more interactivity), and summer schools (often local initiatives adopted as ToE summer schools by the network). The outreach program is good on track with the *Inventing Europe* Digital Museum program, and we will explore additional outreach and educational options.

Network funding

We will also search for network funding, which is very important. Yet, until we obtain these, *Tensions of Europe* depends on the contributions of its enthusiastic participants. For the time being the Foundation for the History of Technology (SHT) in Eindhoven continues to function as the network's secretariat, also hosting our Amsterdam University Press book series and the Karen Freeze Fellowships. Our budget is modest. We kindly ask participants with access to project money or other local money if they can spare 2000 Euros per year to support us (please contact Jan Korsten at J.W.A.Korsten@tue.nl!).

Intellectual agenda

An exciting and important intellectual agenda drives our network. Our research topic, the technological shaping of European integration and fragmentation, has lost none of its potency and urgency. In Paris we debated the need to upgrade our agenda. We agreed that the old questions are still extremely relevant and timely. At the same time we could speak more directly to the big issues facing Europe today.

When we started out in the late 1990s, the big issue for Europe was the ambiguous reunification of East and West following the end of the Cold War and a globalizing world. We have shown that

technology and material culture were a crucial (yet often hidden) arena shaping this and similar processes over the past two centuries or so. Since the early 2000s, however, politicians and the media increasingly tied the future of Europe to a number of new 'big issues', not least a succession of major crises: The security crisis following 9/11, the ecological crisis, and currently the financial and economic crisis spurred debate of reorganizing Europe and the need for a new societal transition. In this context the meaning of Europe (in terms of territory, values, inclusion and exclusion, and governance models) was once more renegotiated and redefined, and once more technology and technological systems are heavily implicated.



*The So-Called Management Committee in Paris: From left to right, Leonard Laborie, Erik van der Vleuten (chair), Telly Tympas, Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, Nina Wormbs, Hans Weinberger and Andreas Fickers
(Photo: Jan Korsten)*

A historical inquiry of the technological shaping of European crises and transition dynamics is needed to put current debates and developments in perspective, and our network has the intellectual and organizational tools to do just that. We'll continue the discussion of the *Tensions of Europe* research agenda at our next conference, and in smaller meetings until then.

On behalf of your so-called management committee,

Erik van der Vleuten

REPORTS FROM PARIS

A newcomers' view

(by Heidi Voskuhl, University of Pennsylvania, Department of History and Sociology of Science)



The 6th Tensions of Europe Plenary Conference in Paris in September 2013 was the first one for me to attend. I had been aware of the network for a while and knew of its agenda, its members, and their work, and had been looking forward to an opportunity to participate. Finally, this year, I was able to make the trip to Europe, and the conference's theme – Technology and Democracy – fitted directly with my current research project.

The intimate atmosphere and excellent conference organization and theme provided plenty of opportunity for discussion and conversation. I learned a great deal in this environment, which naturally differs from the larger annual meetings of other professional associations of historians. The conference provided a stimulating perspective on issues in the research, writing, and teaching of the history of technology. I particularly appreciated the selection of papers and the strong presence of southern and eastern European topics as well as the general discussion about the place of Europe – its centers and its peripheries – in university curricula and global politics.

I have taught History of European Technology for fifteen years at North American universities, and it was especially helpful for me to discuss with teachers at other universities the questions and problems that emerge in our daily teaching, such as ideas about technological and social “progress” as well as technological and military supremacy. A number of conversations concerned themselves specifically with the situation of the history of technology in North America, and I felt I was able to take home with me a bundle of new ideas – such as about materiality, environmental history, and relations of the history of technology to Science Studies and other area studies – to use in my teaching, advising, writing, and work in professional organizations.

It was a veritable case of trans-Atlantic academic trade. I have appreciated very much ToE’s invitation to participate in its annual meeting and am looking forward to more collaboration in the future.

AGENDA

ICOHTEC symposium Braşov, Romania, 2012 (29 July – 2 August 2014)

We call young scholars to apply for the ICOHTEC-Book Prize, which is sponsored by the Juanelo Turriano Foundation and consists of 3,000 Euro. The prize winning book will be presented and discussed at a special session of the next ICOHTEC symposium that will take place in Braşov, Romania, 29 July – 2 August 2014.

ICOHTEC, the International Committee for the History of Technology, is interested in the history of technology, focusing on technological development as well as its relationship to science, society, economy, culture and the environment. The history of technology covers all periods of human history and all populated areas. There is no limitation as to theoretical or methodological approaches.

Eligible for the prize are original book-length works in any of the official ICOHTEC languages (English, French, German, Russian or Spanish) in the history of technology: published or unpublished Ph.D. theses or other monographs written by scholars who, when applying for the prize, are not older than 37 years. Articles and edited anthologies are not eligible.

To see the full call, the application and contact details please see the [announcement](#) on the Tensions of Europe website.

On behalf of the Prize Committee members,

Dr. Rachel Maines, Prize Committee Chair
Dr. Peter L. Jakab
Dr. Klaus Staubermann

PUBLICATIONS

Making Europe Book Series

Who, indeed, built Europe? Entrepreneurs and engineers? Politicians and scientists? Consumers and activists? Making Europe tells the story in 6 richly illustrated volumes. Starting more than 150 years ago, this series charts the people and ideas, the goods and technologies that spread between countries— and between continents. Making Europe reveals the history of:

- *Day-to-day practices, from drinking milk to commanding wind power*
- *Powerful infrastructures, from the railroads to the Internet*
- *Knowledge networks, from CERN to the European Space Agency*

New publications in this series:

Consumers, Tinkerers, Rebels
The People Who Shaped Europe



By Ruth Oldenziel and Mikael Hård

Expected: November 2013. Who has decided how Europeans have dressed and dwelled? Traveled and dined? Worked and played? Who, in fact, can be credited with the shaping of Europe? Certainly inventors, engineers, and politicians played their parts. But in the making of Europe, consumers, tinkerers, and rebels were an unrecognized force—

[Read more...](#)

Building Europe on Expertise
Innovators, Organizers, Networkers



By Martin Kohlrausch and Helmuth Trischler

Expected: November 2013 Focusing on experts in technology and science, Building Europe on Expertise delivers a new reading of European history. We see experts shaping societies, setting political agendas, and creating cross-border collaborations. And we discover that experts' unique knowledge was key to uniting the continent. Seven reasons [Read more...](#)

The Technology and European History series

The Technology and European History series seeks to present scholarship about the role of technology in European history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The series focuses on how technical communities, nation-states, businesses, social groups, and other actors have contested, projected, performed, and reproduced multiple representations of Europe while constructing and using a range of technologies. The series understands Europe both as an intellectual construct and material practice in relation to spaces inside as well as outside Europe. In particular, the series invites studies focusing on Europe's (former) colonies and on the two new superpowers of the twentieth century: the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Interdisciplinary work is welcomed. The series will offer a platform for scholarly works associated with the Tensions of Europe Network to find their way to a broader audience. For more information on the network and the series see: www.tensionsofeurope.eu

New publications in this series:

Valentina Fava, *The Socialists People's Car: Automobiles, Shortages, and Consent on the Czechoslovak Road to Mass Production (1918-64)* (Amsterdam, May 2013)

The Socialist People's Car reconstructs the history of Škoda Auto between 1918 and 1968. Based on new archival research, Fava's volume illustrates the contradictions of the Czechoslovak experience, raising the question of how the stratification of foreign technical and organizational knowledge shaped the Czechoslovak production practices and generated a specific technical and organizational culture. The volume not only illustrates how this culture was formed, what its components were, and how engineers and managers performing their professional duties related to the Party's power but also addresses the Party's controversial approach to mass motorization.

Jiří Janač, *European Coasts of Bohemia. Negotiating the Danube-Oder-Elbe Canal in a Troubled Twentieth Century* (Amsterdam, November 2012)

The Danube–Oder–Elbe Canal attracted a great deal of attention throughout the twentieth century. Its promoters defined it as a tool for integrating a divided Europe. Although the canal was situated almost exclusively on Czech territory, it promised to create an integrated waterway system across the Continent that would link Black Sea ports to Atlantic markets. In return, the landlocked Czechoslovakian state would have its own connections to the sea. Today, the canal is an important building block of the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways. [read more](#)



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