

## EDITORS' NOTE

### Our journal on the 25th International Congress of History of Science and Technology

From July 23 to 29, Rio de Janeiro was host to the 25th International Congress of History of Science and Technology. This was the main meeting of the Division of History of Science and Technology of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (known by the acronyms DHST and IUHPST, respectively). Although the names of these institutions only came about after World War II, their origins can be traced to the first International Congress of History of Science that took place in Paris in 1929. After the war, these meetings occurred every four years (the previous edition took place in Manchester, in 2013). Only in 2001 was a congress held in Latin America, the 21st International Congress of History of Science, which took place in Mexico City under the title "Science and cultural diversity." Four years later, the congress took place in Beijing, under the telling title "Globalization and diversity: diffusion of science and technology throughout history." These two events were clear indications of the growth of this field in developing countries. This year, hundreds of researchers from dozens of countries came to Brazil to discuss different dimensions of the general theme "Science, technology and medicine between the global and the local." We would like to devote this letter to the general theme, mentioning a symposium that was of particular interest to us and making an important announcement about *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*.

Over the past few years, a global turn, or an emphasis on transnational circulation of knowledge, people, and material objects, has had a strong impact in the history of science. New code terms like "global history," "transnational circulation," and "provincializing Europe" are replacing previously used terms like "center" and "periphery," and some claim that the "nation-state" will no longer be a framework of analysis. Most historians have enthusiastically embraced the global turn, promising to demonstrate how knowledge is formed and reconfigured in a global movement (as opposed to specific locations), a few are skeptical that a truly supranational history can be studied, and many use the terms with ambivalence. We would like to make a small contribution to discussions on the global turn by raising some provocative questions: is the global history of science the same as the history of transnational circulation of knowledge? Is transnational history a methodology or a buzzword? Is global history an old wine in a new bottle? Is the history of global science, or the history of transnational science, a study of the encounters and clash of elites around the world? Particularly important questions for Latin Americans are: should we dismiss regional

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-59702017000300001>

studies (Latin America being one of these regions) as an invention of the Cold War and US universities? And considering the strong tradition of working only in national archives and the current general economic crisis, will it be possible to travel to different archives around the world?

Along with these questions, Latin American studies suggest that it is important to consider the role of asymmetry, invisibility, and language skills. In terms of asymmetry, inequality has been and is intrinsic to societies all over the world. The unequal distribution of scientific resources, power, and prestige were especially acute in the Americas starting in the sixteenth century. These inequalities affected the scope, pace, and varieties of circulation, and were crucial to validating authority. Therefore, even beyond the circulation of science, it might be pertinent to talk about the asymmetrical circulation of knowledge.

Additionally, studies on circulation have to take into account a persistent tendency to completely ignore contributions made by healers, savants, scholars, and lay people in developing countries. Frequently, knowledge was disseminated from the local to the global, altering the expected supremacy of metropolitan science. At the same time there was a marked effort to credit these contributions to metropolitan scientists, portraying science as an activity only performed by a small group of nations and people, dismissing the rationality of non-metropolitan actors. The trend to invisibilize “losers” in the history of science suggests that circulation was never fluent, smooth, stable or continuous, and that several processes of circulation of science and resistance to circulation coexisted.

One obstacle to engaging in the global turn in Latin America is language skills. While most of the literature on global history is written in English, French, and German, Latin Americans mainly publish in Spanish and Portuguese. Many Latin American historians can read foreign languages, but few can write in good English or have access to excellent translators, and even fewer submit their articles to mainstream academic journals that rely on the modern scientific *lingua franca*, namely English. As a result, Latin Americans cite works in English, French, or German, but their work is rarely cited in Europe or the United States (with the exception of historians from Portugal and Spain). Solving the language obstacle in Latin America involves not only asking graduate students to read in English, but teaching them how to express their ideas and write in English. It also means establishing better working relationships with translators (which includes more financial resources devoted to translation), and promoting bilingual and transnational publications coauthored by historians with different language skills (a combination that would also enrich the perspective on transnational histories of science and facilitate access to diverse archival collections). In any case, the global turn is an opportunity to improve and relaunch our field, but we should be careful; flexibility in our sources, methodologies, perspectives, and interpretations might be key to future good histories of science in Latin America.

The congress this year included many fascinating symposia. One dear to us was entitled “21st Century Challenges for History of Science and History of Medicine Journals;” it discussed how, since the 1990s, history-of-science journals in different countries have faced challenges related to financial sustainability, professionalization of staff, internationalization, and use of social media. Most of the speakers were editors or staff members at journals published in

different parts of the world. The papers were especially important for rethinking our own journal.

One of the topics raised in this session – and even before – is the need to publish broad review articles that identify crucial findings and debates and improve dialogue with other audiences besides historians who are interested in knowledge and society. In the present issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos*, we begin what we expect to be a regular practice and new section in the journal: historiographical reviews will be included, providing a profound and panoramic perspective of what has been achieved on selected themes and what needs more investigation. We also hope that these articles will become an educational tool for graduate students, intensifying our process of internationalization and helping us celebrate our 25 years of existence in 2019. In this issue, Nelson Sanjad, an experienced historian of science from the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, in Belém, was commissioned to write on international exhibitions related to Latin America. He produced an elegant, remarkable, nuanced, and insightful review that we are more than happy to publish. We should mention that this article was possible thanks to the grant we received from the Wellcome Trust about a year ago.

In summary, this issue contains not only relevant articles but appears at a significant moment for the history of science. Let us hope that *História, Ciências, Saúde – Manguinhos* will help maintain this relevance and significance for our field, for the benefit of our readers and the community we serve. The fact that one of the science editors of HCSM is president-elect of the Division of History of Science and Technology of the IUHPST – yet another positive outcome of the international conference in Rio de Janeiro – will certainly contribute to this.

*Marcos Cueto*, science editor

*André Felipe Cândido da Silva*, science editor