

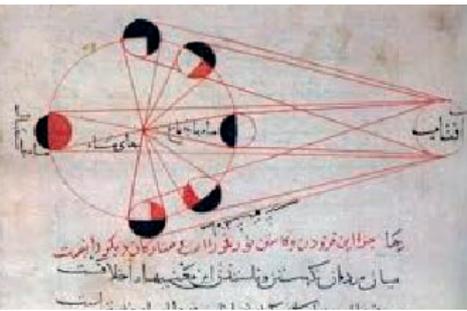


International Committee of Historical Sciences  
Comité international des sciences historiques

# NEWSLETTER

No 4 | February 2021

N° 4 | Février 2021



## EDITORIAL

This newsletter was supposed to provide important details on the way to the Congress in Poznań this August, but the globally circulating Corona virus has also thrown a spanner in the works of the ICHS. The Board decided at its meeting on 23 January 2021 to postpone the congress for another year until **21-27 August 2022**, when we hope to have all travel routes accessible again so that a real meeting of historians from all over the world can take place. This would not have been possible in 2021, because the regulations in the face of the second or even third wave of the pandemic are so different that it became evident that only a minority of panels would have been completely unaffected.

In the first part of this newsletter, we publish the text of the Board's letter to all organisers of panels at the

planned Congress. At the same time, we summarise the Board's decisions and provide information about the planned General Assemblies in April and May 2021, which will take important decisions for the future work of ICHS – such as the election of the new Board and the selection of the venue for the Congress, which is now scheduled to take place in 2026 in view of the Centenary of our organisation.

Covid-19 has made not only the 2020 ICHS Congress, but many other academic meetings impossible. We have asked member organisations about their experiences and fortunately a considerable number have responded. While, of course, we certainly cannot claim to provide a complete overview, we do give some impressions of the adjustment of communication among historians across sub-disciplines and



world regions. This can be found in the second part of this newsletter. We hope that this will at the same time provide an incentive to continue a necessary conversation, because presumably, even after the immediate threat of a pandemic has passed, academic communication will not simply return to its old tracks. As often as the wish is expressed to meet in person again soon, there also remains the odd conclusion that the CO2 balance of transcontinental events as held in the past is probably not sustainable either. It will not come down to a simple return to the old, nor to a simple continuation of practices developed ad hoc during the pandemic crisis. As historians, we are experienced enough to know that the new is difficult to discern in the midst of transition, but will inevitably take shape in the end. But this new world of academic communication will not come into existence without our active participation. Perhaps exchanging ideas about this is also a way of coping with the iso-

lation during the crisis. In any case, we warmly invite all members to share their experiences with new formats of scientific exchange, either because they can recommend them as a model or because they want to warn others against making similar mistakes. While this newsletter contains the bleak news that we will not meet in Poznań in 2021, it is at the same time a document of hope for a meeting next year and it is an invitation to actively participate in shaping our organisation’s way forward out of the pandemic during General Assemblies held in the upcoming months.

In this spirit, I wish all readers good health and a return to the usual academic work as unaffected as possible by lockdowns and quarantines.

**Matthias Middell**

Board member of the CISH and newsletter editor  
Professor of Cultural History at Leipzig University

## PART 1: DECISIONS TAKEN BY THE ICHS BOARD DURING ITS MEETING HELD ONLINE ON 23 JANUARY 2021

President **Andrea Giardina** reminded in his welcome address that it is not for the first time in the history of ICHS that congresses had



to be postponed or have not taken place due to deep economic crisis or war-times but that it is for the first time that a pandemic affects the congress. He invited everyone to take criticism seriously that insist on equal chances for each and every historian in the world to participate

in the congress and to present his or her work to the academic community. Given the many obstacles that exist nowadays for travelling and meeting in large crowds he recalled the fact that the pandemic truly endangers the organisation of the XXIIIrd Congress in Poznań that had been postponed to 2021. He opened discussion about the various alternatives that range from maintaining the congress to any kind of hybrid format and to another postponement. He underlined the risk for the reputation of ICHS if

there is not a coherent answer to the many questions raised by member organisations and he insisted on the fact that staying in close contact with the members is a major task.

**Krzysztof Makowski** reported on behalf of the local organising committee on the situation in Poznań and assured that everybody in Poznań is committed to make the Congress a success while the situation remains very uncertain. Since many participants, particularly those from far-away, will probably not be able/allowed to travel, it might be wise to postpone the congress a second time even if there is a certain risk that not all sponsors will stick to their commitment for 2022.



In the subsequent discussion, the vast majority of the Board supported the idea of another postponement since it will allow many more participants to come to Poznań



than in 2021. At the same time, it deems necessary not to wait with a couple of decisions until 2022 but to consult with the member organisations during a General Assembly as soon as possible and to see which parts of the programme need a freshment given the fact that proposals for panels had been submitted to the General Assembly in 2017 in Moscow. There was great unanimity among the members participating in the discussion that the Board's strategy towards global inclusivity shall be continued as an absolute priority and that this strategy does not leave any alternative to a postponement since so many non-Europeans would not be able to come to Poznań in August 2021. In order to reduce the harm that such a postponement does to the communication among the community of historians a General Assembly shall be convoked as soon as possible. As a consequence of these debates the Board decided:

1. To postpone the XXIIIrd Congress in Poznań to 21–27 August 2022
2. To organize a General Assembly in two sessions on 12 April and 11 May 2021 at 1 pm in order to accommodate all time zones

The General Assemblies will have the following agenda:

- activity reports of General Secretary and Treasurer,
  - examination of the applications for the new Board,
  - decision on the place for the General Assembly 2024,
  - deciding on eventual applications for membership by new national committees or commissions,
  - examination of the applications for the next Congress (the Board agrees to propose 2026 in order to allow for a sufficient time-span between the congress in Poznań and the subsequent one, but also to relate the next congress to the ICHS centenary).
- The agenda as well as all relevant documents will be sent to all members approximately one month before 12 April; between the two sessions of the General Assembly the members will thus have one month to study the material and ask questions. The second session, respectful of the ICHS statutes, will vote on the issues on the agenda.

The new Board will take its functions immediately after the vote by the General Assembly and will be officially introduced during the opening ceremony on 12 August 2022.

These decisions have led to a letter sent out immediately after the Board's meeting to all panel organizers of which we give here the exact formulation in order to circulate it as widely as possible across the community.

---

## LETTER TO THE PANEL ORGANISERS

---

**Dear Panel organisers, dear colleagues,**

The ICHS Board, in its meeting of 26 January, has had to take an important decision regarding the organisation of its XXIIIrd Congress, to be held in Poznań. The public health situation induced by the Covid-19 pandemic has already forced us to postpone the Congress from 2020 to 2021. Unfortunately, the disease is still spreading worldwide and the current progress of vaccinations does not yet allow us to ensure that participants from all continents will be able to travel to Poland.

There is a consensus on the part of both the Board and the Organizing Committee on the need to keep the form of the Congress face to face, thus avoiding the scenario of a virtual meeting.

Therefore, the Board unanimously, in accordance with the Organizing Committee, has agreed to postpone the Congress to August 2022.

We kindly ask all panel organizers to communicate if they would like to change the content of their sessions, or otherwise reformulate or reframe their proposals in order to adapt them to the new schedule. In a few months, the Board will also open a few slots to allow new proposals for various sessions to be submitted before the end of the year.

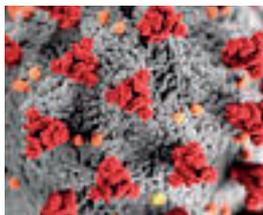
**Andrea Giardina**, ICHS President  
**Catherine Horel**, General Secretary  
**Krzysztof Makowski**, Organizing Committee

Paris, Rome, Poznań, 1 February 2021



## PART 2: EXPERIENCES OF MEMBER ORGANISATIONS WITH THE PANDEMIC

As said already in the editorial, we have asked CISH members to report on their experiences with and reactions to the pandemic. A number of member organisations have responded and we will present a summary of their practices which allow for insights



into the changing patterns of academic communication at times of the pandemic.

What we can conclude from this non-representative survey is that while the virus has had a significant impact on the work of member organisations,

it has by no means brought activities to a standstill. All over the world, historians have taken to video-conferencing and electing their representatives to keep the organisations going and representing the interests of their adherents. However, these activities usually take place within the framework of one's own country or participation has been limited to a smaller circle of board members. We can thus formulate the hypothesis of a decline in international connections in historical scholarship without already having sufficient data to make such a hypothesis valid. It would be interesting to get more information and opinions on that from our members! But observation of the announcements and reports of congresses and workshops held outside the membership of ICHS also suggests such a conclusion. This observation also explains the desire expressed by many to hold the ICHS Congress, originally planned for 2020, in presence if possible, in order to re-establish the loosened ties. It speaks to a deep need for transregional interconnectedness in historical scholarship and counters the reduction of our profession's role to that of a guardian of national memory.

We cannot emphasise enough that this survey is not representative. However, it is striking that very important parts of international historiography have not responded at all to our enquiry about ongoing activities and the ways communication has been organised. This perhaps also points to a further weakened connection between continental historiographies and gives us clues as to where communication needs to be intensified in the future in order to turn this development into the opposite and to strengthen ties again.

What we can learn is also in many cases the professional associations of historians were forerunners in the self-organisation of online-teaching and the digitisation of material. At the same time, the work in archives and libraries, so essential to our métier, became extremely difficult, which has demonstrated how vulnerable the access to analogue material is. Particular attention to the cooperation with librarians and archivists seem to be a conclusion one can draw from the experience of 2020 as well.

### ARGENTINA

**Raquel Gil Montero**, President of the Asociación Argentina de Investigadores en Historia (AsAIH), reports that the Covid-19 pandemic in Argentina had led to a severe restriction of mobility, beginning in March and lasting until November 2020, when some internal borders were opened for people with special authorisations.



The first months have been complicated for the academic exchange until the platforms for virtual meetings were more accessible to everybody. In the second semester of 2020, however, the activity increased significantly.

In general terms, all the teaching activity in our universities continued, particularly postgraduate, although with some delay until it was better organised. The main national conferences as well as national symposiums were postponed. We saw, however, an increase of other academic activities such as workshops, round tables, academic discussions, and book presentations. The National Council for Scientific and Technical Research adapted its activities quickly and all of them continued (particularly evaluation and financial support for scholarships and projects).

The policy of our association was to increase the contact with our members via email, social nets, and the webpage. Among other resources, we created a daily newsletter called "how to do research during the quarantine", whose compilation is now available on the webpage (<http://asaih.org.ar/investigar-en-cuarentena/>).



We also compiled didactic resources for secondary schoolteachers, celebrating specific anniversaries (<http://asaih.org.ar/efemerides/>). The result was an intensification of our communication and more participation of our members in our activities.

Regarding our research activities, almost none of the archives and libraries offered a solution for the pandemic. Online access to digital libraries is limited in Argentina; thus, this was an important problem for the researchers. We organized a questionnaire for our members and started the communication with these institutions.

#### AUSTRALIA

**Daniel May**, Executive Officer of the AHA, reported the following: The Australian Historical Association is the peak body for historians working in and on Australia. The Covid-19 pandemic has had substantial impacts upon the activities and members of the AHA. Australia as a nation has weathered the pandemic relatively well, aided by a robust public health system, geographic isolation, and lengthy border closures. The division of responsibilities between federal and state governments has allowed for varied responses. For instance, the state of Victoria endured a second extended lockdown that stretched for 112 days from June. Other jurisdictions such as Western Australia have enjoyed minimal internal restrictions but closed state borders.

The AHA's annual conference is traditionally held in late June/early July. In March, the conference and executive committees of the AHA made the painful but necessary decision to cancel the 2020 conference to be held at Deakin University, following rapid increases in Covid case numbers, and tightening closures of events, venues, and state borders. The 2021 conference – to be held at the University of New South Wales – has been delayed to late November/early December, to give the best possible chance for a face-to-face conference.

Publication and distribution of the AHA's quarterly peer-reviewed academic journal *History Australia* has been delayed due to Covid-19. The AHA has maintained the distribution of its weekly newsletter to keep members informed of ongoing opportunities and to keep the notion of an AHA community together. The AHA has sought to respond to the lack of conference activity by developing an Online Postgraduate Database for students to collaborate and develop

their own networks. The AHA has sought to implement flexible rules for its prizes and awards to take into account the circumstances of the pandemic, for instance by allowing for alternatives to research trips for its Allan Martin Award.

The closure of international borders has had significant impacts upon international student numbers, in turn drastically reducing the revenue of many universities. This was compounded by the Commonwealth Government's decision not to extend substantial Covid-based financial support to the tertiary education sector through its JobKeeper programme. In response, many institutions immediately or gradually terminated the employment of casual academics. Some institutions have also called for voluntary redundancies, or are in the process of implementing forced redundancies or 'spill and fill' motions. The Commonwealth Government has also legislated changes to tertiary funding on a disciplinary level, targeting humanities courses for increases on unsupported assertions of 'job-readiness', despite concerted lobbying from the AHA and other bodies. The effect of these changes remains to be seen. The AHA has spent considerable energy on advocacy responding to these various changes to the tertiary sector in Australia.

Most institutions have reported that while un-

dergraduate student numbers declined modestly during the first lockdown, subsequent lockdowns have affected students far worse than the first. Many students who have experienced online teaching have not returned to campus despite having the opportunity to do so. Graduate and honours students have been greatly affected by the lack of access to research materials as have researchers.

The forced shift to working from home saw a proliferation of streamed seminar talks, small conferences, book launches, and workshops. For example, the Australian and New Zealand Environmental History Network held an online conference for an hour each day over the course of a week for presenters who wished to give the presentations they would have otherwise given at AHA 2020.

The AHA held its annual General Meeting online in July and experienced what was by far its greatest





AGM attendance in recent years. While it is impossible to quantitatively compare the level of scholarly activity prior and during the pandemic, the shift to online scholarly activity is highly significant for Australia – a vast country where academics are often divided by geography.

### CANADA

**Michel Duquet** the Executive Director | Directeur général of the Canadian Historical Association | Société historique du Canada sent the following remarks:

The 2020 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, scheduled to take place at the end of May, was cancelled,



as was the Congress for the Humanities and Social Sciences within which the CHA conference takes place. In its place, the CHA opted to launch a series of webinars on various issues related to the historical profession in Canada. Entitled Engaged | Engagés, the series has posted three webinars online thus far, namely two on the indigenisation of the teaching of North American history (one with English panelists, the other with Francophones) and another one on precarious historians in response to the Precarious Historical Instructors’ Manifesto. Two more webinars on precarious historians are planned for January and March 2021.

The 2021 Congress for the Humanities and Social Sciences will take place online at the end of May, beginning of June and so will the CHA Annual Meeting. It is hoped that it will attract a lot of historians thirsty for scientific exchanges and seeing, albeit virtually, their colleagues and also encourage members to renew their membership to the CHA which has declined quite dramatically in 2020.

### IRELAND

The activities of the Irish Committee for Historical Sciences (ICHS) have been badly disrupted during the pandemic, as **Steven G. Ellis**, Emeritus Professor of History at NUI Galway and chair of the committee, reports. The main event organized by the ICHS is the Irish Conference of Historians, a three-day event

which had been scheduled as usual for May, and this year was to be held at NUI Galway on the theme Frontiers and Borders. The ICHS normally then publishes an edited volume based on papers given at the Conference and published in a series entitled Historical Studies which the Committee organizes. Much of the preliminary work of organizing the Conference (fundraising, lecture halls, accommodation, sixty speakers invited) had been completed when the decision to postpone was taken in March. Speakers were advised that the organizers hoped to reschedule the Conference for May 2021 (the Conference is normally held every second year) and they were invited to speak then instead. Since then, however, the ICHS has not as yet made firm arrangements for the rescheduled Conference, although a Committee meeting of the ICHS held virtually last September agreed to look at holding the Conference in August 2021, either live if possible or otherwise virtually. At the time of writing, the organisers had been awaiting the vaccination campaign that was about to start in order to make a decision and will then make a decision as to whether the Conference should be held live or virtually, and when. Otherwise, it has not been possible to hold any events during the pandemic beyond occasional Committee meetings on a virtual basis.



As regards the impact on member organisations of the ICHS, I can add the following comments. The Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns in Ireland have resulted in the closure of research libraries to external readers. The compilers of Irish History Online (the National Bibliography of Irish History, which is part funded by the ICHS) have been unable to carry out their routine work since mid-March 2020. There is likely to be a reduction of 70 per cent in new data added to the bibliography this year. There have also been some delays to the publication of academic books and periodicals on Irish history, primarily because researchers could not get access to libraries to complete their research. Other member organisations of ICHS including the Church of Ireland Historical Society and the Irish Legal History Society have been endeavouring to maintain the rhythm of their events with online meetings, conferences, and webinars.



### NETHERLANDS

In 2020, the Royal Netherlands Historical Society (Koninklijk Nederlands Historisch Genootschap) held all its conferences online, as **Antia Wiersma**, the Director of the KNHG (Koninklijk Nederlands Historisch Genootschap), reports. The Spring conference was canceled



and webinars were organised (1 hour each, 4 in total during 2020) instead.

The annual conference (organised 19 November) was fully online via Zoom and the Summar Party, to celebrate our 175th anniversary, has been postponed to the Summer of 2021 in the hope that one will be able to celebrate in person by then.

Next March we will decide whether we will organise the bi-annual Historians' Days at the end of August 2021 or if we will postpone this three-day gathering of historians as well.

### SPAIN

**Luis A. García Moreno**, the President of the Spanish ICSH committee (Comité Español de Ciencias Históricas), summarises the situation in his country as follows:

In Spain, the current pandemic has had a very high impact on research and teaching activities in the historical sciences as well as in other scientific disciplines. Almost all scientific congresses and meetings were suspended, even in some cases twice as they were postponed to the fall of 2020 for a first time. University teaching was also suspended from mid-March to September. The worst thing is that until mid-June all university libraries and other historical research centres were closed. Several members of the Spanish Committee of ICSH believe that these decisions, almost all required by the Spanish central government, should have been more nuanced, seeking a fair middle ground between the preservation of health on the one side and university and research activities as well as the economic ones on the other. Fortunately, the performance of regional governments and many academic authorities has been more intelligent in the fall of 2020. In this new attitude the Royal Academy of History has stood out, although government imperatives have impeded the continuity of its informative

activities in the field of academic exchange and historical education through a series of conferences. The information technology has undoubtedly made possible to alleviate some of these excesses, but not all.

### Commission internationale d'histoire et d'études du christianisme (CIHEC)

**Anders Jarlert**, President of the CIHEC, about the experiences made by the organisation:

Some conferences have been postponed from 2020 to 2021, while the formal meetings necessary for the run of organisations and societies – on both national and regional levels – have taken place only on Zoom, Teams, or Skype. Workshops, editorial meetings, etc. were realised almost entirely on Zoom.

Some conferences were postponed from spring 2020 to autumn 2020, and were realised in the happy months (Sep-Oct) when the restrictions were milder. These realisations were made in a combination of physical attendance and Zoom simultaneously. For example, a conference planned for Italy was postponed and then realised in the very south of Sweden. This combined form has been quite fruitful and will be a positive consequence of the situation, though it often demands technical assistance. In some other countries, everything has been done only on Zoom.

Some new cooperations have started, for example between the higher seminars in Church history in Lund, Sweden, and Glasgow, Scotland, entirely on Zoom. Already established international contacts on a personal level have worked in a normal way by e-mail, Zoom, and other instruments. International cooperation in examinations, etc. has been realised entirely by Zoom. This works, but is by no means ideal. There have been differences between countries according to different national standards and differences between academic milieus according to their different resources. In some countries (Ireland, Finland, etc.) all contacts have been virtual.

Libraries have been partly closed, though book reservations have worked as usual. Some archives and libraries have at times been open only two hours/day, which of course has been a great hindrance to academic research in manuscripts, etc. On the other hand, both libraries and publishers have opened free internet services normally not available.





### Commission Internationale de Diplomatie

As the new president of the Commission Internationale de Diplomatie, taking over from Olivier Guyotjeannin, **Benoit Tock** from the University of Strasbourg reported that the traditional scientific meeting, held each year or every two years, was planned within the framework of the ICSH congress



in Poznań and therefore had to be postponed, too. Nevertheless, as the mandate of the former board was ending in 2020, a new board was elected during a series of online meetings and via e-mail, for the first time in the history of the organisation.

The new board began to work on the programme for the years 2022 and 2023, and the thematic proposal for the next meeting in 2022 was approved by the online assembly.



### Commission for the History of the French Revolution

The Commission had hoped that the postponement of the Poznań Congress would allow to meet in physical presence and hold the planned colloquium of the organisation during the larg-

er ICHS congress in 2021, after the previous conference in Vizille in autumn 2019 had dealt with relations between Britain and the Revolution and paid tribute to the work of the Commission's former president, Michel Vovelle. In order to maintain contact with the members, another workshop is now planned for autumn 2021 in Vizille, which will certainly be based on a combination of physical presence and on-line participation.

### International Association of Byzantine Studies

**John Haldon**, President of the International Association of Byzantine Studies, indicates that the 2021 International Congress to be held in Istanbul had to be postponed to 2022 and is currently planned as a physical meeting with some online elements while

most other activities have been either canceled or converted to online events (via Zoom or MSTeams)



International Association of Byzantine Studies

or postponed to 2021 or 2022. Most people, as far as he is aware, had technical support and had no substantial technical problem but complain about the increased workload which results from preparing large numbers of classes in advance and recording them for later access.

### International Commission for the History of Representative and Parliamentary Institutions

**Maria Sofia Corciulo** stated with regard to Italy that some conferences have been simply postponed to the summer of 2021, while others, in the past months and now, have been adapted to one of the many online formats. The members of ICHRPI are keen to continue conversation at the Poznań Conference and are very much interested in meeting in person.

### International Commission of Military History

On behalf of the ICMH, President **Massimo de Leonardis** reports that the annual congress in Poznań, scheduled the week after the originally planned date of the ICHS congress, had of course to be cancelled by the local organisers. Unfortunately, no online events were staged as a replacement. The last meeting in presence before the lockdown took place in early February 2020, when the editors and the publisher of the International Journal of Military History and Historiography met in Berlin to organise the regular appearance of the issues of both the International Review of Military History and the ICMH Newsletter. Board meetings were held online since, including elections during which the president, the secretary general, and the treasurer were all confirmed and the new board started its mandate for the term 2020-2025. The budget was approved and the Corvisier Prize for PhD theses in



Commission Internationale d'Histoire Militaire (CHIM)

Military History was awarded. A next congress of the ICMH is under preparation by the local organisers in Athens for September 2021 and the expectation is that this event will happen in presence.

The **Network of Organisations in Global and World History** (NOGWHISTO) has only held online board meetings, but can rely on the activities of the regional organisations that are part of this network, as President Jie-Hyun Lim from Sogang University Seoul reports. For example, both the Asian and North American organisations in world history held their congresses before the pandemic, and the European



organisation (ENIUGH) initially postponed its congress scheduled for June 2020 in Turku and will now hold it entirely online from 15 to 20 June 2021 which at least has the advantage of facilitating the participation of historians from other parts of the world.

#### **Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences**

In the statement sent by the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences we can read: During this period of pandemic, the Pontifical Committee's work contin-

ued with alacrity to prepare for subsequent events, waiting to be able to resume with our numerous conference and seminar activities. Of course, we had to postpone two international conferences until 2021.

Nevertheless, on June 30th, we inaugurated a small exhibition of papal relics from the Risorgimento period set up in Rome near the Vatican.

On 1st and 2nd October, we were able, albeit with strict restrictive measures, to organise a Study Conference, together with the Historical Office of the Italian Army Staff, on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the "Breccia di Porta Pia".

In these same months, we were proceeding with the editorial revision of five books published in our series "Santa Sede e Cattolici nel mondo postbellico (1918-1922)", "Cosa è stato il 1968", "Identità europea e radici cristiane", "L'Ostpolitik vaticana, l'Unione Sovietica e la Chiesa Ortodossa Russa", and "Europa cristiana e Impero ottomano. Momenti e problematiche". Thanks to the imminent use of vaccines, we are confident that in the coming months the situation will improve significantly and we will finally be able to resume our academic activities.





Content

Editorial

Part 1: Decisions taken by the ICHS Board during its meeting held online on 23 January 2021

ICHS Bord decision on the postponement of its XXIIIrd Congress in Poznań to 2022

Part 2: Experiences of CISH member organisations with the pandemic



Comité international des sciences historiques

CISH General Secretary: Catherine Horel

Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne  
1 rue Victor Cousin  
75005 Paris – France  
horel.c@wanadoo.fr

Editor of the Newsletter: Matthias Middell

Leipzig University  
Global and European Studies Institute  
Emil-Fuchs-Straße 1  
04105 Leipzig – Germany  
middell@uni-leipzig.de

