PaTHES welcomes you as a member and any ideas and initiatives you may have. Please write to the Board, pathes2018@gmail.com, with your ideas and how to be further involved in our activities.

The Executive Board of PaTHES consists of a range of international scholars:

President: Professor Ronald Barnett, Emeritus Professor, University College London, Institute of Education, UK

Chair: Associate Professor Søren S.E. Bengtsen, Aarhus University, Denmark

Secretary: Professor Wesley Shumar Drexel University, USA

Treasurer: Associate Professor Sarah Robinson Aarhus University, Denmark

From the President of PaTHES

In the whole history of the world, we are at one of those rare defining moments and, if the world is to emerge through its present difficulties in good order, higher education - in all of its institutional and educational aspects - is bound to have a major part to play. But what it is to be a university and what it is to receive a higher education are surely going to need new ideas for their development. And surely, too, a community such as the Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Society can have a role to play in such re-thinking.

It is difficult to believe that the first discussions in the PaTHES core group started in 2016 and that PaTHES was established only in 2018. Under the inspirational leadership of its first Chair, Søren Bengtsen, made possible by the tireless energies of the core group, PaTHES has embarked on an extraordinary array of activities, to which this first newsletter is testimony. PaTHES is already vibrant.

The home page in the PaTHES web-site starts with these words: ‘The idea for the Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Society originated with meetings and discussions between a small group of scholars who all saw the need for a society that could help promote and sustain the efforts of scholars working in the field of philosophy and theory of higher education.’ PaTHES is setting its sights on even larger aims, playing its part in helping to develop the public debate about higher education. Still, at its heart, PaTHES is a community of scholars concerned to understand between the nature of higher education in the contemporary world, and its possibilities for the world.

Do, please, take a few minutes to read this Newsletter. The idea itself has matured within the Board over the last year, as one arena for building PaTHES as a community. This is also why we have named it a Quarterly Community Forum. It is a forum especially for the community of PaTHES members.

If you are a member of PaTHES, you may wish to think about ways in which you can be actively involved in it; and if you are not, do please join us, and help take the Society really to take off over the next few years. Do, too, write to the Newsletter Editor, Dagrun Engen, dagrun.engen@ntnu.no, with any ideas you may have for the next issue.

Ronald Barnett
President
Conference - PHEC 2021

*Universities under siege?*

Our annual *Philosophy and Theory of Higher Education Conference (PHEC)* will be postponed until October 2021 due to the Covid-19 situation. It will be hosted by Uppsala University, Sweden, as planned. The Uppsala team will contact all presenters directly with more info about next year’s conference.

*A crisis requires a new thinking about what we are doing, how we do it and why we do it.*
- Professor Sharon Rider, Uppsala University

**Keep the dates 19-20 October 2020**
The organizers have received over 70 submissions (papers and symposia) debating the question of whether the universities are facing threats, and if so, what is being threatened?

The theme of the conference has been made even more topical during the current pandemic situation, which has created new challenges and crises globally. Therefore we plan to host, together with the Uppsala team, a webinar on either one or both of the original dates. More info will follow soon via email and the PaTHES website.

**Blog**

Every other month or so, international scholars are invited to contribute to the PaTHES blog with an engaging, timely and thought provoking piece. So far we are happy to share with you:

Where have all the conflicts gone?
Prof Emeritus Ronald Barnett, University College London, UK

Is democratic education undermining public safety?
Associate Prof Scott Webster, Deakin University, Australia

A hopeful tale - to be published in June
Prof Nuraan Davids, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

PaTHES is associated with the *Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education* journal – an international, refereed scholarly journal committed to advancing understanding of the role(s) and purpose(s) of higher education.

You are all welcome to submit your papers to the Journal.

The journal is notedly philosophical in approach, while aiming to include diverse theoretical orientations including, but not limited to, critical theory, existentialism, feminism, queer theory, post-colonialism, Marxism, liberalism, poststructuralism, and posthumanism. The journal strives to stimulate critical analyses of policy and practice in higher education, with an emphasis on inter-disciplinarity and international perspectives.

The journal is published three times a year (spring, summer, and fall) and is open access. Members of PaTHES may receive a hard copy of the journal, by request, as part of their fully paid dues. The Executive Editor is Professor John E. Petrovic, The University of Alabama, petrovic@ua.edu. Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education (PTHE) is published by Peter Lang

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**Philosophy and Theory in Higher Education - Special issue:**

*Imagining the Future University*

The special issue arose originally from the first annual PaTHES conference ‘The Purpose of the Future University’ (PHEC 2017), at Aarhus University in the autumn 2017. The great efforts, patience and support from all the contributors of the special issue, and the continued work and efforts from executive editor John Petrovic, has ensured that we now see the result of their work as a team.

The guest editors, Søren Bengtsen and Ronald Barnett, pose the bold question (in the introduction): *Do universities have a future, and can we imagine it?* They asked for scholarly efforts to engage constructively in conceptualizing, imagining, and venturing forward with new meanings and purposes of higher education and the university. "Accordingly, this issue brings together scholars who dare to speculate and intellectually conjure possible university futures which also offer rigor and critical depth in probing deeper meanings and purposes that might attach to the future university” (p. 3).
The PaTHES conference in September 2019 gave me the inspiration to revitalise a study practice that we reclaim: “let’s make time to read together”. I am thrilled with the openness and engagement of every participant despite the pandemic. The reading group has created an intellectually stimulating environment and a friendly and ‘safe’ space to debate different perspectives, share ideas and reflections. Some participants of the group have successfully submitted a panel on ‘Social Imaginaries of Doctoral Education in the Global Knowledge Economy’ to the Uppsala PHEC Conference. We will start a new season with a new theme soon, and would like more PaTHES members to join us.”

Dr Que Anh Dang, Coventry University, UK
- initiator and organiser of the reading group.

**Virtual Reading Group**
- an idea hatched over a dinner in Leuven

Since November 2019 the first PaTHES virtual reading group of colleagues based in England, Scotland, South Africa, Norway, Australia, Iran, Ireland, Japan, has met every month to discuss research papers around the theme of ‘Doctoral Education: Philosophies, Policies and Practices’.

All participants, coming from diverse disciplines, suggested texts and compiled a range of them in an interesting compendium. The group studied one paper from the compendium each meeting, and discussed different conceptual approaches to doctoral education, ambiguous discourses, conflicting policies, culture and the university, agency of learners and supervisors in training practices, pedagogical change and academic identity formation, peer mentorship, transformative learning and internationalisation of doctoral education.

“The PaTHES conference in September 2019 gave me the inspiration to revitalise a study practice that we reclaim: “let’s make time to read together”. I am thrilled with the openness and engagement of every participant despite the pandemic. The reading group has created an intellectually stimulating environment and a friendly and ‘safe’ space to debate different perspectives, share ideas and reflections. Some participants of the group have successfully submitted a panel on ‘Social Imaginaries of Doctoral Education in the Global Knowledge Economy’ to the Uppsala PHEC Conference. We will start a new season with a new theme soon, and would like more PaTHES members to join us.”

Dr Que Anh Dang, Coventry University, UK
- initiator and organiser of the reading group.

Join a PaTHES Reading Group. What would you like to read together and discuss with others? Please write to Dr Que Anh Dang, ac8627@coventry.ac.uk
You can join and manage your membership by visiting PaTHES membership page

**If you are already a member**, we need your ideas and your energies! Here are some ways in which you can be active:

- Giving a paper at the annual conference
- Contributing to the PaTHES Blog
- Taking part in the PaTHES reading groups
- Speaking at PaTHES Webinars and Online Meetings
- Promoting the publication of your recent book on the website
- Initiating and hosting PaTHES events
- Being a guest editor of a PTHE journal special issue

Perhaps you have ideas about additional ways in which PaTHES can develop or you have suggestions for other activities. Do please be in touch with Søren Bengtsen (Chair), or Sarah Robinson (Membership Officer).
What made you interested in philosophy and theory of higher education?

I became interested in philosophy in high school (Gymnasium) in the mid-late 90s. I remember being obsessed with Kierkegaard from early on, and almost sadistically enjoying the fact that I couldn’t understand much of what he was on about. But discovering that freedom in philosophy was important for me – that there’s room for you to explore, investigate, and risk your own interpretations. To me, philosophy has always been a way to relax and find solace – perhaps tinged with a bit of escapism due to a general alienation. Existential philosophy and Metaphysics have been my main interests, both during student days and afterwards. Even though I enjoy reading widely around, I keep returning to the same philosophers again and again; Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Heidegger, and Levinas.

Meeting Ron Barnett was essential for me. Through his work, and later in our discussions and collaboration, I learned how to combine philosophy and educational research. Also, Ron draws from many of the philosophers I have always found most important, so I was hooked right away. Yes, reading Ron’s work made me aware of the possibility of a philosophy of higher education – and how to philosophically explore, discuss, and debate the university and its past, present, and future conditions, challenges, and possibilities.
- What small or large utopias or plans do you hold for the future?

Academically, that universities would become places for community and coming together around shared ideas and projects — so a move away from the individualization and fragmentation that dominates many universities today. And from there, for new generations of students to realize that the community, and what connects them, is not ‘only’ a social form they engage it, but is the realization of the very meaning of university.

Paradoxically perhaps, many would probably say that I’m an idealist and a bit of a dreamer (not living in the socio-political now). On the one hand, it’s not entirely true as I keep feeling the urge to build communities and networks around very pressing socio-cultural issues. Perhaps as a strange and the least likely person to do that. But I keep doing it, because it’s important to me. On the other hand, and going back to the point about philosophy, philosophy to me is a looking behind the veil (yes, Plato hit me hard in the study days too) — and I feel that I’ve managed to grab hold of the curtain. And now I need to muster the courage to pull it away.

- What excites you the most right now?

I think I discover, as I develop myself and as an academic too, that building communities and, hereby, giving form and outlet to creative energies, otherwise stifled or restrained in our institutional structures, is what means a lot to me. I start to realize how much can be achieved through informal and community-based engagement. If people find a cause worth joining, there’s almost an unlimited reach. Seeing how much momentum may be build, and how far the community reach may be, is what fuels me at the moment.

- With all this engagement for your work, do you have any spare time? What do you do then?

Yes, good question, and often my work and ‘spare time’ (whatever that means) merge. Besides spending time with my family, friends, and going for my runs, and playing a little music from time to time, I read. Right now, I’m reading Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, as I’ve only read it in bits during student days, and Hegel’s work is a central undercurrent in today’s embracement of the notion of ecology. Hegel and Nietzsche, to me, form the philosophical backdrop of how we’re able to think into ecologies and the Anthropocene.

As my friends and colleagues often mention, I’m stuck in the 90s music wise, and when others have continued to develop their musical taste and expand their horizons, I’ve been stuck in the same trails that I keep walking, over and over again. But it gives me peace. I grew up with grunge, punk, softer forms of metal, and the brit-pop wave. I’m still circling around these genres.

- What small or large utopias or plans do you hold for the future?

- Academically, that universities would become places for community and coming together around shared ideas and projects — so a move away from the individualization and fragmentation that dominates many universities today. And from there, for new generations of students to realize that the community, and what connects them, is not ‘only’ a social form they engage it, but is the realization of the very meaning of university.

Thank you for the contributions!

A warm thank you to all who have contributed to PaTHES first Quarterly Community Forum with texts, images and ideas.

This is a collaborative newsletter, and we warmly invite all members to write to Newsletter Editor Dagrun Engen, dagrun.engen@ntnu.no, with your news (events, publications, etc.), wishes and ideas for the next issues.

PaTHES – Engaging thinking on universities and higher education