

HSS Distinguished Lecture: Thomas Kuhn, Ear Witness. Fieldwork and the Making of a New History of Science (Prof. Dr. Anke te Heesen, 25.07.2019) – Abstract

What are the narratives that guide the history of science? For sure one of the more recent ones was 'science in action', the emphasis on practices and the imperative on studying science as performed. Perhaps not surprisingly, this story has itself a history, which starts in the early 1960s, when the project "Sources for History of Quantum Physics" was established. The main task of Thomas Kuhn's, John Heilbron's and Paul Forman's work, lasting three years, was to interview old heroes of Quantum Mechanics and to archive the spoken word. While giving an account of the project's history, this talk will focus on analyzing the process of interviewing and characterize its wider context. Not only does their approach offer us important insights into the shaping of the persona of the scientist, it also presents an important step towards the post-Kuhnian way of doing history of science.