

DHST Manifesto

- A Draft -

What does the future of the history of science and technology as a field look like? More than that, what can be the role of the history of science and technology for the future [of humanity?]? Today, as is felt by many of us, the value of our disciplines and the humanities at large is put into question by a world that places more emphasis on economic, military, and nationalist ideologies than on any shared inheritance – scientific, artistic, technological, educational etc. – and the possibility of achieving, through its investigation, a more livable future for all.

Recently, Kostas Gavroglu argued that we, historians of science and technology, managed to become a respected academic discipline despite the possible disapproval of the scientists. However, now we are facing a new threat anchored in a politics of short-term utilitarianism. Again, we must find a way out, not just to survive, but to thrive - this much we owe to ourselves and to the future generations. It is in that context that we would like to briefly think about the role of international organizations like the DHST *in* the future and *for* the future. Any vision of these futures should center on early career scholars and, beyond them, college and university students. They are the ones who will lead and guide the Division with their own successor generations in mind. It is key that they do not feel excluded or, worse, alienated from international organizations like the DHST. In this respect, when we imagine possible futures for the Division, they should not simply mirror what the leading figures in our midst are most familiar with, but must include the visions and concerns and ideas of each one whose future is also at stake. If we do not make that effort, the DHST does not have a future beyond inertial institutional reproduction. Such effort requires from us, on the one hand, a permanent commitment to the tradition of internationalism that lies at our own historical roots, and, on the other hand, to rethink this tradition so that anyone, whatever their power position, sees its potential, rather than to feel excluded.

For that to happen, those who have power in the Division, in its member countries and commissions, need to step back from the structures and hierarchies they are familiar with and embrace the needs and aspirations of every person in our community. The obvious example here is our relation towards programmed technologies, but it also relates to other styles of communicating and collaborating with one another; other motivations for scholarship; other ways of decision making; other approaches to science diplomacy; other kinds of conferences, etc.

Such change is not and should not be intended as change for its own sake. Rather, it should be aimed at sending out a clear signal to the generation who is now making their first steps into research, making it clear to them that all are welcome and that they can speak up and have a voice.

Doing that is not a trivial nor easy task. The DHST Council has been trying to take steps in that direction, but we know that there is much yet to be done. We need to involve the whole community we are supposed to represent. Real change requires every individual member of our community of researchers and teachers to make a gesture toward one another. But for this to happen we need to foster opportunities to meet, listen, and talk to one another in ways that go beyond the traditional structure of academic conferences, which is of necessity exclusionary,

even if unintentionally. This is the rationale behind this event: to come together as a very diverse community not only in terms of research subjects, but, above all, in the differential access to resources that is rooted in the lived experiences of gender, ethnicity, career stage, linguistic competences, national origins and so many other sources of power imbalances. In the planning of the festival, we strove to be as non-hierarchical as possible, avoiding the privileging of senior scholars over early career ones, one time zone over another, colleagues with access to travel funds over those without it. The use of digital technologies for the festival is then a concrete exploration of one of Gavroglu's suggestion for a possible way out: instead of regarding digital technologies with suspicion as a necessary evil, we might see them also as providing opportunities to increase global togetherness, diversity and discussion

It is our sincere hope that this initiative is experienced by you all as an opportunity to be more involved and to help us in our endeavor to rethink internationalism towards the future.