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Report kick-off workshop *Technology and the Making of Europe's Societal Crises/Challenges, a Transnational History ca 1850-Today* (Vught, 10-11 March 2016)

Jan Korsten & Erik van der Vleuten

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On 10-11 March 2016, representatives from 13 out of currently 19 partner institutions in the Tensions of Europe /SHT Grand Challenges program met at a workshop in Vught (the Netherlands).



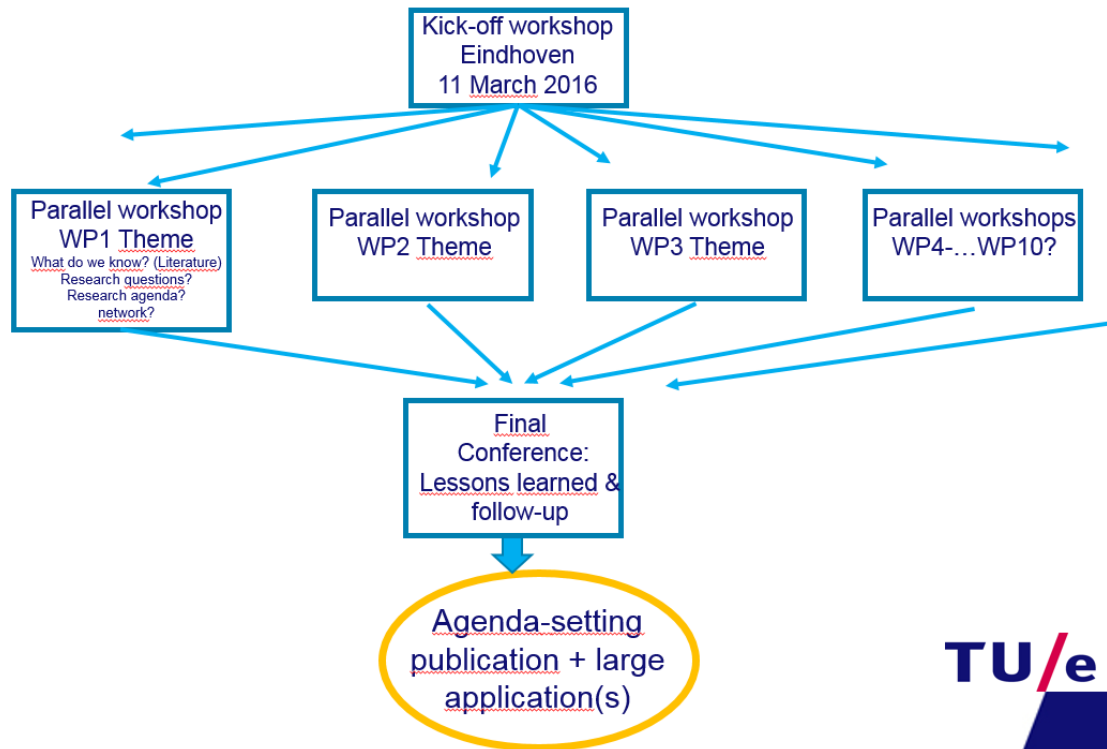
The aim of the workshop was to kick-off the new flagship research program ***Technology and the Making of Europe's Societal Challenges*** (see the time-line in the annex), using our past research experience to address the big issues and crises of our time.

The first phase is an explorative phase (ca 2 years) on how to develop and organise this program, and identify and explore (inter)national funding options for the second phase. The second phase will be the in-depth research phase facilitated by different sources of research funding.

At the workshop,

- All partners expressed their engagement and commitment with the program, which they find urgent and timely (for ToE, for Europe and the world in crisis, and for themselves).
- They also felt that now is the time to take off and create momentum by getting the research program (workshops) going.
- A number of partners presented their take on particular societal challenges or research approaches for inspiration (see workshop program in the annex).
- We discussed long and short term goals, research questions and sub questions. In the coming year we would like to ask, and find ways to investigate,:
 - **How are societal crises/challenges (or even Ages of Crisis) shaped/mediated by technology?**
 - Sub questions:
 - What is the role of technology, as cause, medium, and solution, in the making of crisis understandings and realities?
 - **How are meanings of crises generated?** Notions of crises and challenges are situated, contested, negotiated, interpreted, remembered, enacted. How does that work? What counts as a crisis, for whom, and why? How are current crisis meanings shaped by past ones?
 - **Crisis across sectors: How does technology mediate interdependencies between crises/challenges?** Our Age of Crisis, like past Ages of Crisis, is characterized by multiple, interdependent crises (Beck 2009). What is the role of technological processes/actors in that, do these historically link up crises in different sectors (e.g. through common infrastructure, media, user experiences, governance priorities, expert preferences etc.?) and why?
 - **Crisis across time: How can we understand the temporality of crises?** Can we distinguish caesura and continuities? How far should we go back in time? 20 years, 50, 150, 500? Or should we work with multiple time temporalities (Braudel) like some crises (climate change) are long in the making, others conjunctures or events? Or is crisis a permanent/latent human condition (the 1962 Cuban missile crisis was a 'crisis', but did not feed into a sense of an Age of Crisis)?
 - **Crisis across space: How can we understand the spatiality of crises?** Can we draw on transnational history again, i.e. the mutual constitution of global, European, national, local, individual crises? Can we use connections and b/orders? (the 1987 financial crisis bounced across the world and hit the New Zealand Stock Exchange hard; but the 2010 flash crash strangely never left the US, borders). How do crises of Europe link up to the Global South (e.g. biofuels make us more sustainable but the jungle gets burned and local communities/biodiversity harmed in Indonesia)? What about center-periphery relationships in crises? What is the role of Asia?
 - **How govern crises?** How did actors historically anticipate to, react to, or govern crises? What is the role of science and technology diplomacy? (Technology as a soft power political tool in the context of crises)?
 - **More? What key questions are we missing?**

- We designed a workshop structure that undergirds the program :



- First phase with parallel theme workshops:
 - Work packages: expert teams explore research questions for a chosen theme. They build: an expert team, a short literature review (what do we know about the theme already? What are key references?), a research agenda, some good examples, a report → a publication.
 - WP Workshops: pending on funding. Some are guaranteed because partners want to fund/organize them anyway using ongoing local projects. Others need external funding. We will work on this.
 - The list of themes below is not finite. This is an **open project**: if scholars want to join and add and develop a theme, great!
 - The table below is showing the results of the brainstorm session.
 - We'll create a google docs excel document with these themes, so partners can subscribe researcher names to them (and possibly add themes) (Jan/Erik)

Research themes:

In Vught a first list of possible research themes emerged: Resources and Colonialism, B/order, Security, Migration, Discourses of Crisis, Science Diplomacy, Disruptive Technologies, Urban Challenges/Urban Mobility, Labour, Health, Financial Crisis, Environment. This list serves as starting point. Scholars and institutions are invited to get involved and join developing theme groups or propose new themes.

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