



NEWS

“STS TURKEY Founding Meeting”, Orient-Institut Istanbul, 3-4 Oct 2017

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STS TURKEY’s founding meeting was held on 3–4 October 2017 in Istanbul, hosted by the Orient-Institute Istanbul, Turkey. The goal of the meeting was, first, to introduce scholars who are interested in STS in Turkey to each other, and secondly, to start constructing a common vision and road map that is based on the participants’ current scholarly interests.

In total, there were more than 46 participants of the event, of whom about 15 were graduate students. The rest comprised of scholars, independent researchers and NGO representatives. Represented areas included Science and Technology Studies, Medicine, Sociology, Anthropology, Philosophy of Science, History of Science and Technology, Engineering, Industrial Design, Science Communication, Law and the Life Sciences (“biolaw”).

First Day, 3 Oct

The meeting started with Dr. Melike Şahinol’s opening speech. She provided the audience with the details of how the core group got together, built their vision, and organized the meeting. Şahinol thanked EASST for the funding, the Orient-Institute Istanbul for the support and many others who supported the founding of STS TURKEY (e.g. Harvard STS, especially Prof. Sheila Jasanoff for providing the first podcast message to STS TURKEY, STS-CH, DASTS, de-STs, etc.). She also mentioned that STS TURKEY already has several social media channels where one can keep up to date with news and activities (<http://ststurkey.net>, facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ststurkey/>, twitter: https://twitter.com/STS_Turkey, youtube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGOQGkzklf4arKB-CEQ_EEA/videos) and reported the actual number of members. Afterwards, Dr. Aydınöğlü shared the agenda with the participants. Followed by 3-minute introductions by all participants in the room, even at this point the diversity of the group was highlighted, including interests as diverse as history of science, ethical and legal issues, medicine and biology, among others.

In the following session, the academic programs in Turkey that are relevant to broader STS topics were introduced by their department heads. Prof. Dr. Melek Dosay Gökdoğan talked about the newly established Science and Society Studies Master’s Program at Ankara University. Prof. Dr. Aydan Turanlı of Istanbul Technical University introduced their Science, Technology, and Society Master’s Program. The History of Medicine and Ethics Program (undergraduate and graduate) of Acıbadem University was presented by Prof. Yeşim Işıl Ülman. Lastly, Prof. Dr. Feza Günergun, presented activities and studies in history of science and technology at Istanbul University’s Department of the History of Science. Each presentation was followed by a Q&A session. The overall session was followed by a plenary discussion on the problems of academic programs in Turkey.

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The afternoon session was topical. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rainer Brömer (Medicine Faculty, Istanbul University) discussed the differences between Science and Technology Studies and Science, Technology, and Society, how to handle translations to Turkish in STS and the importance of building a medical terminology in Turkish. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hakan Ertin's (Faculty of Medicine, Istanbul University) presentation focused on the resistance of medical staff to collaborate with the STS community, and translation and academic publishing issues, especially in medical ethics. Prof. Yücel Sayman from Istanbul Medipol University made a provocative speech focusing on the relationships between law and life sciences, especially law and medicine. The categorical distinctions between, for example, person and thing, also with regards to biomedical hybrids was a core issue. Dr. Melike Şahinol ("Human, Medicine and Society", Orient-Institute Istanbul) briefly presented her research projects on Human Enhancement, Assisted Reproduction Technology and Enabling Technologies. She pointed out, that challenges and consequences due to actual developments in S&T, are hardly approached in Turkey. Therefore, there is a need to analyse these developments and interactions between science, technology, medicine and society in particular in relation to the historical and cultural contexts. Finally, Zeynep Karagöz (designer, pro-maker) introduced her "Robotel" (turkish: robot hand) initiative, which works with volunteers to provide 3D printed rapid-prototype prostheses to young children. Robotel Türkiye is also part of the worldwide network "e-NABLE" and follows its motto: "Enabling the Future – Giving the World a Helping Hand."

The first day was closed with a discussion session, which provided the participants with topics to discuss in small groups for the second day of the meeting. The outstanding issues that came up during the presentations and the Q&A sessions consisted of the following: institutionalization of STS in Turkey, issues of funding and academic legislation, and the need for catalogues and shared databases (such as news, paper repositories, dictionaries, etc.) as well as dedicated conferences and journals.

The first day ended with a joint dinner of the lecturers and organizers.

Second day, 4 Oct

The second day started with an overview of the first day by Asst. Prof. Dr. Harun Kaygan. Following a heated discussion on the purpose of the kick-off meeting itself, participants gathered in two meeting rooms; one dedicated on issues of vision and terminology, the other on preparing a road map. The sessions and a concluding session had the following short-term plans established, listed by date of expected accomplishment:

- Preparing an e-mail group following the meeting to facilitate planning and overall communication
- Preparation of a thematic session for EASST conference in Lancaster, due 1 November
- Improvement of the STS TURKEY website to include links to news of events and publications, as well as related university programs and persons
- Reading groups for key STS literature in the following months to help graduate students and interested scholars



- An STS research methods in action podcast in Turkish in the following months to help graduate students
- An STS glossary in Turkish in the following months to help establish and disseminate a Turkish vocabulary of key terminology
- Organizing a second meeting in September-October 2018 in Ankara in Middle East Technical University, possibly including a small conference and interest group meetings
- An STS journal, possibly bilingual, to be discussed further by a smaller group of potential co-editors

The participants have thought about setting up an association. As a result of the discussions, it was agreed that STS TURKEY would be continued as a self-organized network, depending on the efforts of its members (currently 75). It was decided that an annually changing core team could organize future annual meetings. It was agreed, that 2018 the annual meeting will take place at Middle Eastern Technical University, Ankara and will be mainly organized by Arsev Aydınoglu, Harun Kaygan (in collaboration with the Orient-Institute, Melike Şahinol).

The main founders, namely Melike Şahinol, Arsev Aydınoglu and Harun Kaygan, will be responsible for the coordination of STS TURKEY until an association is set up. They deal with correspondence, handle and distribute organizational tasks, and are responsible for managing the agenda. Activities, updates and further information will be provided via newsletter and social network channels.

Conclusion

The STS TURKEY founding meeting was a successful start of establishing a Turkish network among researchers with interests in the study of science, technology and medicine in society. This was the first event of this national and international significance with an STS orientation in Turkey. The event itself gave an excellent insight into the current scientific programs and discourses on very different aspects of Science, Technology and Society in Turkey. Every participant had the opportunity to present his or her research and interests related to STS. Finally, the participants have indicated a common vision and road map that is based on their current scholarly interests.

First steps were taken to improve scholarly communication and exchange in the field in Turkey, to facilitate contact amongst scholars, to promote STS in Turkey by organizing conferences, to increase the visibility and diffusion of STS approach in Turkey; to stimulate and support teaching on the subject at all levels, to aid in the development of STS-related skills amongst researchers and PhD candidates, including theoretical knowledge and methodological knowhow.

With this STS TURKEY founding meeting, which completes the preexisting Mission Statement of STS TURKEY as specified on the website, the network has now determined its structures. STS TURKEY represents the Turkish STS community at the national and international level. It further promotes reflection on the ever-increasing importance of science and technology in our society by encouraging a dialog between the social and natural sciences and also between scientists and society. The main founders are confident, that this meeting marks the beginning of a constructive dialogue between everyone studying or interested in Science, Technology and Society of Turkey.