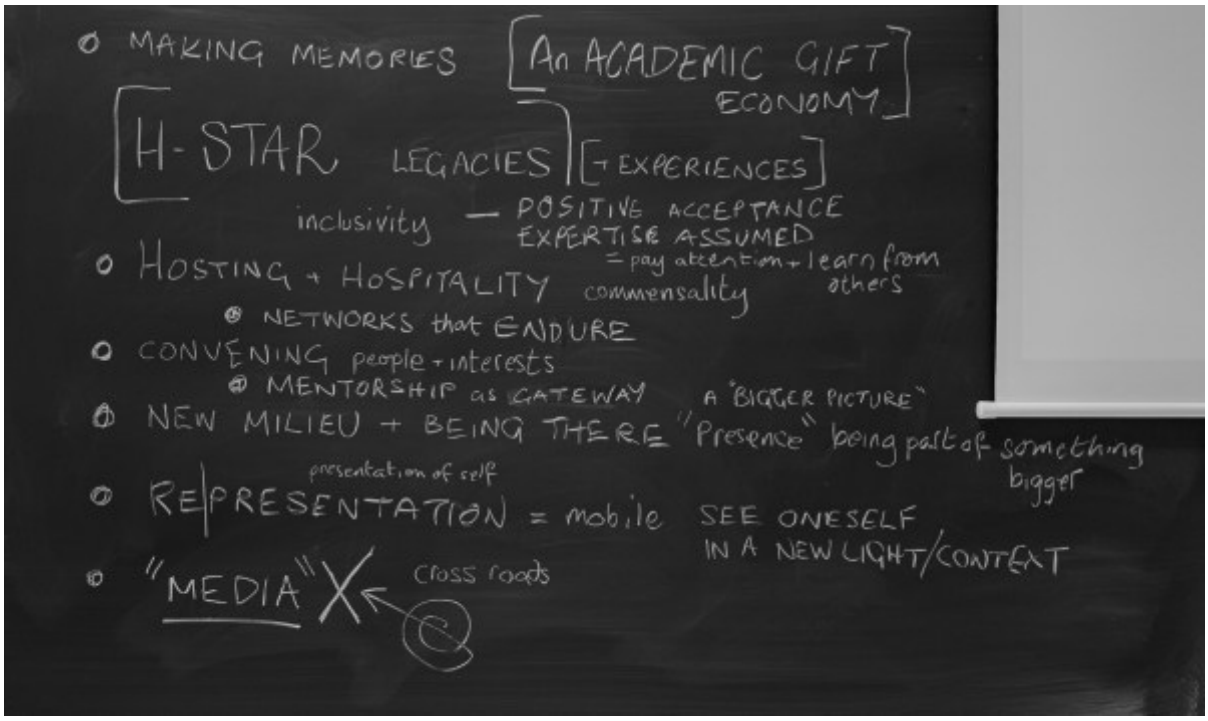
AI AND COLLABORATION – LESSONS FROM STANFORD



Here is the keynote I presented at our reunion last week in Odense, of Danish alumni of the Stanford H-Star fellowship program (2010 to 2015). Keith Devlin (H-Star director emeritus) and Connie Svabo of the STEM Education Research Center – FNUG at University of Southern Denmark [Link], were our hosts.

The program enabled about 50 scholars from Denmark to spend a few months with us at Stanford in what turned out to be a remarkably successful exercise in research collaboration and exchange. So much so that about 25 thought it worthwhile to gather to look back at the experience and look forward to the future of research collaboration that crosses disciplinary and institutional boundaries.

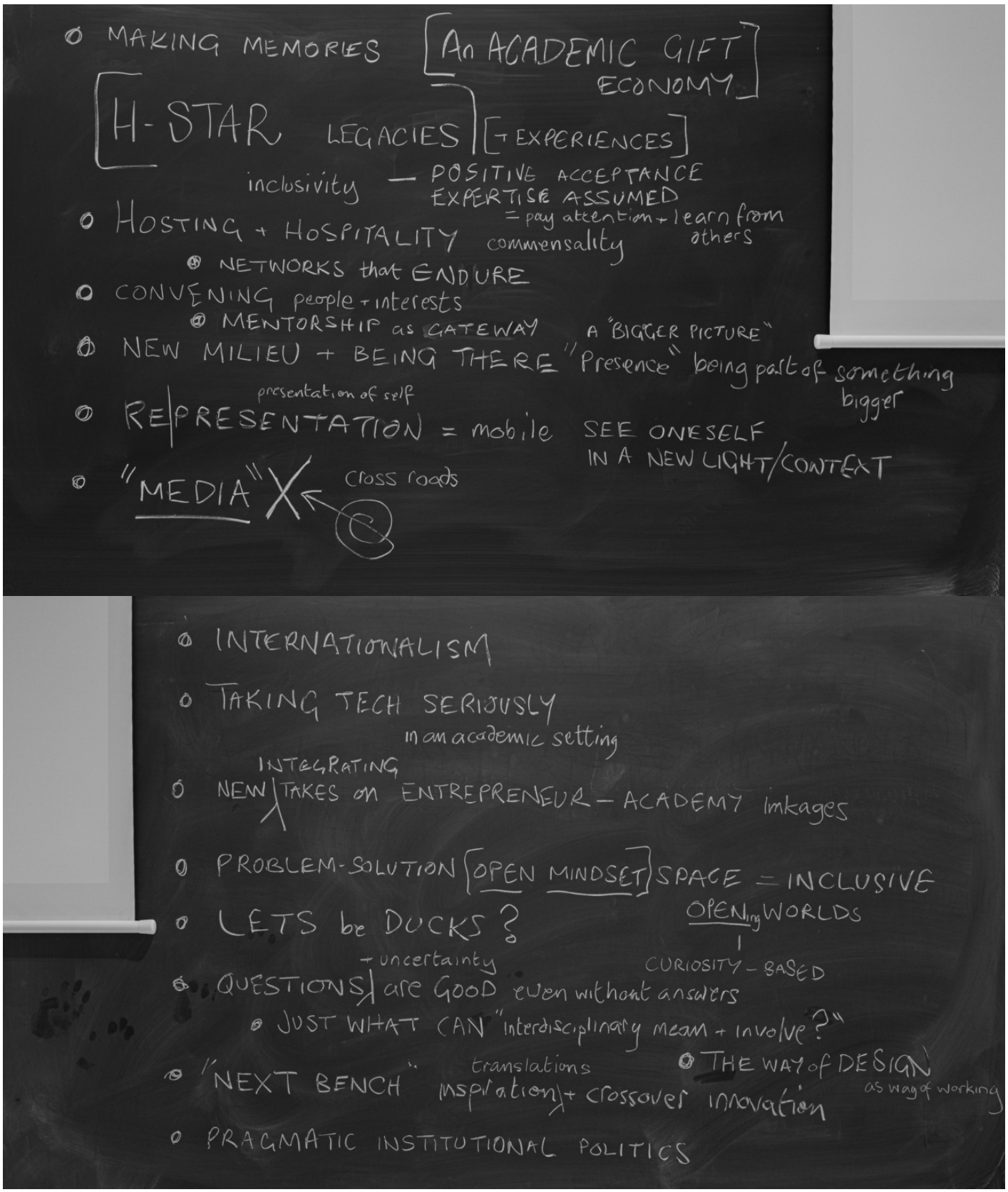
My keynote offers an assessment of what H-Star, and its associated program mediaX, did, and then looks forward to the potential of AI assistants and agents to enrichen research collaboration and networks.

You can find more context in another post where I review H-Star and mediaX more generally – [Link]

The keynote was followed by a long discussion of what we recalled as the great features of our experiences through H-Star – experiences that we might take forward as legacies and lessons for delivering great research collaboration.

Here is the list we came up with:

An academic gift economy

- HOSPITALITY – a culture of hospitality and hosting (one might call it commensality)
- INCLUSIVITY – inclusivity and flat hierarchies – hosts and guests were assumed as equals in expertise and experience
- PERSONAL GROWTH – visits to H-Star have played a key instrumental and inspirational role in personal development
- CONVENING INTERESTS – a key feature of the fellowship program was convening people interests, aptitudes, experiences, aspirations
- INTELLECTUAL CROSSROADS – both H-Star and mediaX were cross roads for people to meet new interests and make new connections
- VISION alumni describe positive experiences of being part of a bigger project and vision than just a fellowship program
- SELF-UNDERSTANDING – alumni found the program enabled them to see themselves in new and positive ways
- INTERNATIONALISM – genuine internationalism
- HUMAN-CENTERED TECH – taking tech in research and education seriously (in an academic setting)
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP – new and actionable angles on entrepreneurship in an academic setting
- OPEN and GROWTH MINDSET – an inclusive and open mindset, rooted in curiosity, focused on problem-solution linkages and (transdisciplinary) matters of concern
- TOUGH QUESTIONS FIRST – embrace of uncertainty and of questions that entail no easy solutions/answers
- CROSSOVER INNOVATION – “next bench” experiences in research – crossover innovations/translations from one research field into another
- PRAGMATIC “CAN-DO” PROJECT MANAGEMENT – finding pragmatic workarounds in complex institutional politics of the academy
- The power of “THE WAY OF DESIGN” – embracing design-features such as context-

specific research, experimental exploration, ideation, prototyping, iterative testing