Update Sustainable Society
October 2016

'Time flies when you're having fun' -
Sharon Smit, Director Sustainable Society
Lustrum celebration

During the opening of the Academic year of September 2011, Rector Magnificus Elmer Sterken announced the start of Sustainable Society. Now 5 years later, we celebrate our 5th anniversary! We did celebrate this memorable moment on October 6th 2016, but for those who have missed it: we still have an amazing lustrum film that will keep us reminding of our birthday.

Thanks to everyone who is somehow connected to Sustainable Society and worked together with us to shape Sustainable Society into what it is today.
The winners of the first Sustainable Society Impact Award competition are announced!

To celebrate Sustainable Society’s first Lustrum in September 2016, Sustainable Society decided to open up an Impact Award for PhD’s. This award was for all PhD’s at the University of Groningen to stimulate societal impact from scientific research. The award was also part of the Horizon 2020 project ACCOMPLISSH that is being coordinated by Sustainable Society (www.accomplissh.eu). To win this award, PhD’s were challenged to show in a 60-second video-pitch what his/her research is about and how society can profit from it. The Impact Award is all about creativity, innovation and of course impact.

The video’s were judged by our expert jury, consisting of: Nicol Keith, University of Glasgow, Renée van Kessel - Hagesteijn, Director Social Sciences of NWO, Peter den Oudsten, Mayor of Groningen and Sharon Smit, Director of Sustainable Society and coordinator of ACCOMPLISSH.

25 PhD’s from all faculties participated in the competition, and the jury has decided on the top-3. We are proud to announce the 2016 winners: 1) Steven Forrest, Faculty of Spatial Sciences 2) Daniël Postma, Faculty of Arts and 3) Stephanie Jurburg, Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

During the opening of the academic year on September 5, the Mayor of Groningen Peter den Oudsten, handed over the €1000,- cheque to Steven Forrest. Steven his research focuses on flood resilience:

‘Flooding is an issue that disrupts society: resulting in buildings being damaged, transport links being cut off, and people being injured or even killed. It is expected to get worse due to the twin challenges of urbanisation and climate change. It affects previously flooded areas, but also areas that have never experienced flooding before and are therefore unprepared for flooding and unable to respond and recover from its effects. Traditionally the focus has been on resistance and flood hazard control using not sustainable. There needs to be
a transition to a more sustainable future for cities, communities and society as a whole. This transition has started in the paradigm shift towards flood resilience, which takes a holistic approach to flooding that places a greater emphasis on people and the role of society in preventing, preparing, responding and recovering with floods. My research focuses on the role of society, namely local officials, communities and citizens, in making places more resilient and more sustainable for the future. As part of this, I am working on different strategies to reach both scientific and nonscientific audiences during the final two years of my PhD. Entering this competition is one of these strategies.' - Steven Forrest

All videos are show-cased on our [website](#).

KADO in Brussels on 'How to avoid politics'

On October 10 and 11, the ‘24 Hours of the Northern Netherlands' took place in Brussels, Belgium during the European Week for Regions and Cities. The ‘24 Hours of the Northern Netherlands' is an event where several organisations, scientists, and representatives of governments from Groningen, Friesland, and
Drenthe presented their projects or organisations and exchanged knowledge. There were also people from the Dutch national government and members of the European Parliament present.

KADO (Kenniscentrum Aardbevingen en Duurzame Ontwikkeling) hosted one of the workshops during this event. The title of our workshop was ‘How to avoid politics’, and during this workshop we aimed to address the difficulties universities face to take on societal responsibility in cases where national government interests are overly dominant. The speakers discussed the role and position of universities in their regions and how the situation can occur where universities suddenly become political entities when tapping into societal issues in the region.

In the workshop, Tom Postmes (Professor Social Psychology at the University of Groningen) presented a regional case; the situation in Groningen. Melanie Bakema (PhD at the University of Groningen) compared Groningen to Christchurch, New Zealand. She explained that although the situation in Groningen is unique, the organisational complexity is similar in different contexts around the world. Lidia Borrell-Damián (Director for Research and Innovation of the European University Association) gave us a European perspective on these problems. She showed that the threats and problems presented by Tom Postmes and Melanie Bakema are not local problems alone, but more general in Europe. She emphasised that in areas like Groningen, it is important that we find ways to talk to each other: interdisciplinary and independent research is essential to move forward.

Some conclusions of the workshop were that we need more interdisciplinary research on subjects like this, more coordination between different fields of research and different countries, and lastly, universities as well as governments need to make sure universities can maintain their independent role in society.

During the workshop we were able to interact with the audience and have a discussion (led by Govert Buijs, EU liaison officer of the University of Groningen) about the perspective of leaders in the province of Groningen on the problems presented.
We are happy we were able to present the problems we face in Groningen. Hopefully the workshop as well as the conversations we had will lead to more international attention for the issues in Groningen. We hope this visit to Brussels is a starting point to put Groningen on the agenda, not only in the Dutch national government, but also in the EU.

Upcoming events

1 December 2016
Sustainable Society reading Marli Huijer + theater play Intouchables*
Keynote Marli Huijer
MartiniPlaza, Groningen - Register
Language: Dutch

* for university colleagues only (researchers and support staff)

8 December 2016
Optimaliseren van Impact door Alf- en Gammawetenschappen
Tilburg University - Register
Language: Dutch

19 & 20 January 2017
Learning Histories for Sustainable Societies
University of Groningen - Register
Language: English

Horizon 2020 - ACCOMPLISSH
SSH Dialogue Conference
"SSH Impact & Action"
20-22 November, Rome, Italy

With keynotes from the European Commission:

Elisabeth Lipiatou - Head of Unit Open and Inclusive Societies at the European Commission's Directorate General for Research
Bror Salmelin - Adviser for Innovation Systems at the European Commission, Directorate General for Communications, Network, content and Technology (DG CONNECT), European Commission

Visit www.accomplissh.eu for more information and registration