Yearbook 2014
Sustainable Society
University of Groningen

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Yearbook 2014
Sustainable Society
University of Groningen
From the beginning the vision of the University of Groningen in selecting Sustainable Society as one of its core topics, has been to focus on the grand societal challenges. Both the challenges on a global scale as well as those close by in the region. We made a big step putting issues of societal transition at the core of Sustainable Society. 2014 was a year of transition for the topic in itself.

During the year, big steps have been taken in contributing to further develop the focal area at the University of Groningen. The profile of Sustainable Society has been sharpened, new research projects arose, existing research groups expanded in an interdisciplinary way. The governance within the University was further implemented, project support has been further professionalized and an increasing number of SSH projects were submitted for funding. The position of Sustainable Society in Brussels was strengthened and external networks expanded, both in the region and in the world.

This yearbook represents our work through what we have done and what we advocate. By reflecting we identify the charachteristics of Sustainable Society and build upon that in order to make the topic sustainable in itself.

Sharon Smit
Director Sustainable Society
Vision
‘Throughout its 400 years of existence, the University of Groningen has been heavily involved in the field of fundamental scientific research. Given this long tradition, the University of Groningen regards itself as a natural contributor to the process of making society more sustainable with the final aim of promoting a balanced society.’

Mission
‘The University of Groningen’s Sustainable Society mission translates in concrete terms into an active contribution to promoting a balanced society through fundamental research. In line with the classical identity of the University of Groningen, it wants to function as a responsible player in the process of making society more sustainable.’
Reflection and development of the programme

Reflection: how it all started

During the Opening of the Academic Year 2011 Rector Magnificus Elmer Sterken announced the birth of the third spearhead of the University: Sustainable Society. The thinktank led by Rafael Wittek presented their report in May 2012. The academic basis for Sustainable Society was laid down. At the core were Governance, Transition and Media. In the year 2013 the Executive Board of the University of Groningen appointed the Management Team of Sustainable Society: Oscar Couwenberg as interim Academic Director for one year, and Sharon Smit as Managing Director of Sustainable Society.

Together they further explored the academic content of Sustainable Society within the University at the same time the external network was being expanded. End of 2013 this lead to the kick-off presentation of Sustainable Society in Brussels in the presence of the European Commission. It was being appreciated that the University of Groningen had made a head start by organising interdisciplinary research within the University, aiming at tackling the grand societal challenges through its research.

At that time, six research groups were formed to serve as a dynamo in the organisation to further stimulate the development of cross-disciplinary research. Sustainable Cooperation (Rafael Wittek), Diversity, Inclusion & Pluralism (Kocku von Stuckrad), Sustainable Landscapes (Han Olff / Johan Woltjer), Sustainable Citizenship (Liesbeth Korthals Altes), Quality of Life (Marcel Timmer) and Good Governance (Oscar Couwenberg).
2014: a year of progress

In February 2014 Sustainable Society was further embedded in the organisational structure by the establishment of the Steering Committee Sustainable Society. The Steering Committee is formed by the deans of the Faculties of Behavioural and Social Sciences, Economics and Business, Theology and Religious Studies, Philosophy and Arts. The Steering Committee meetings are every four weeks and are open to all members of the Board of Deans. The main task is to literally steer the spearhead in the right direction, by looking into aspects of long term ambition in both research and education.

In May 2014 the interim position of Oscar Couwenberg ended, so there was a smooth transition towards the Steering Committee. This one year assignment led to a broad inventory of all research throughout the University of Groningen involved in Sustainable Society. A roadmap was being prepared to further develop the profile of Sustainable Society. In July 2014 the Steering Committee approved the sharpened profile.

Sustainable Society chose a profile with a strong focus on societal transitions. The three main areas we focus on are Inclusion, Cooperation and Resilience. We have chosen this profile by looking from outside in. Not the supply-side of research within the University of Groningen is at the core, it is the demand-side from societal challenges that are out there that form the starting point.
Connecting with Society

In our mission we stated that Sustainable Society wants to take on a responsible role within society. With our knowledge we want to contribute to addressing societal issues now and those that might occur in the future. Research in the field of Sustainable Society should create societal impact. We have an urge to contribute to global complex issues and contribute to creating new insights with an interdisciplinary approach.

In 2014 we organised several expert meetings. Not only to share our knowledge, but also to start a dialogue with stakeholders operating in the field. Issues that we amongst others looked into were: social inclusion, pluralities of knowledge, anti-social behavior, the human dimension in energy transitions, EU-Russia developments after MH17, the role of society in the increasing demand of care and addressing the asylum crisis. These meetings took place both in a regional setting and in an international setting. Read more on these events on page 18-21.
Left to right
Henk Kiers, Hans van Ees, Lodi Nauta, Harry Garretsen, Kocku von Stuckrad & Gerry Wakker
Within the University of Groningen, the societal theme Sustainable Society has in only a few years grown into an important binding force between its eight Social Sciences and Humanities Faculties. Starting by a bottom up approach, a lot of dynamics was generated in the development of ideas for collaboration on interdisciplinary research themes and clustering of such themes. With the appointment of a managing director as well as a temporary academic director in 2013, essential networking and lobbying activities were started, and for internal backing, an inventory of research expertise’s was accomplished, and university wide activities and events were organised.

By the end of 2013 it was recognized that, in order for Sustainable Society to get a strong position within the university, board level commitment from the many faculties involved would be needed, and as of January 2014, a steering group consisting of the deans of the faculties was installed. To be precise, the rector defined the steering group as a subset of the deans, but some others feel so strongly involved that they join all meetings (for which all deans are openly invited) and have effectively become members of the steering group as well.

The steering group meets every month, together with the director, and has so far come up with a more concrete and simplified profile of Sustainable Society, plans for support of researchers in obtaining external (big project) funding, an investment plan submitted to the University board, and plans for education on the themes of Sustainable Society.

Henk Kiers
Dean of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences
and chair of the Steering Committee Sustainable Society
The team of 2014

Sharon Smit
Sharon Smit is the Director of Sustainable Society. Since September 2012, Sharon is working on the Sustainable Society program. Under her supervision, the former Institute for Integration and Social Efficacy was blended in Sustainable Society. Sharon has given the development of Sustainable Society a major boost both within the University and externally.

Kina Wiersema
Kina Wiersema is head secretary of Sustainable Society. For 25 years now, Kina is working at the University of Groningen. Not only is she a great practical support to the team, she also serves as the so-called team-“mother”.

Jaliene Kwakkel
Jaliene Kwakkel is Communications Officer at Sustainable Society, since January 2014. She studied Communication at the University of Groningen and graduated in the summer of 2013. With a great deal of enthusiasm Jaliene is further professionalizing the communication of Sustainable Society.
Oscar Couwenberg
Oscar Couwenberg was the Academic Director of Sustainable Society from April 2013 till May 2014. For two days a week, he concentrated on the academic agenda of Sustainable Society. Together with Sharon, he brought Sustainable Society to a higher academic level.

Justin Richardson
Justin Richardson is a Sociology student at the University of Groningen. He is student-assistant at Sustainable Society. For Sustainable Society he is writing several articles and is supporting Sustainable Society with several activities.

Ingrid Brouwer
Ingrid Brouwer is secretary of Sustainable Society for two days a week. Ingrid was also student-secretary of Sustainable Society from September 2013 until September 2014. She strongly supports the team with the organisation of many events, among others in Brussels.
**Govert Buijs**
Govert Buijs is EU liaison officer of the University of Groningen and the UMCG for the three spearheads: Sustainable Society, Healthy Ageing and Energy. He has made a firm contribution in enhancing our visibility in Brussels and in putting our SSH topics on the Brussels agenda.

**Jacques Wallage**
Jacques Wallage is appointed as honorary professor “Transitions in the public administration”, connected to Sustainable Society. He is of great importance in the further development of the content and direction of Sustainable Society. Next to a number of moderating activities, he is actively involved in the educational program of the University College Groningen.

**Wouter Asveld**
Wouter Asveld is student-assistant of Sustainable Society. Wouter studied IBIO at the University of Groningen and he earned his Bachelor’s degree in 2014. Wouter has conducted several interviews for the first Sustainable Society brochure. And he carried out a number of practical assignments to support the team.
Strategic networks

Partnership between the University of Groningen and the University of Bremen

‘The Sustainable Society project of the RUG has given a new dimension to the longstanding partnership between the University of Groningen and the University of Bremen. Being invited to cooperate on the challenges of a sustainable society is a great chance for our researchers and institutions to work in interdisciplinary and multinational teams on relevant topics for our neighbouring regions and our society. As Vice President for Intercultural and International Affairs I am very pleased that the cooperation between our institutions has received a new drive, as researcher on Intercultural Education I am happy to be personally involved in the research cluster ‘Diversity, Inclusion and Pluralism’. I am looking forward to our upcoming conferences and am convinced that we will be able to develop innovative approaches to this and other joint fields of research.’

Prof. Dr. Yasemin Karakaşoğlu, Vice President for Intercultural and International Affairs, University of Bremen
On 19 March 2014 the cooperation agreement was signed between the national demographic institute of the Netherlands, NIDI (the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute) and the University of Groningen.

Several interfaces exist between NIDI and RUG research: a strong link exists between NIDI and the RUG pillar Sustainable Society. There is a strong need in both society and in academia for demographic research with high societal relevance.

In September 2014 NIDI and RUG colleagues met at the “NIDI-Sustainable Society expertmeeting” in Groningen. Strong links were build between the researchers and specific agreements were made on cooperation, lobby and the co-organisation of policy briefings. 2014 can be seen as the beginning of a fruitful cooperation between NIDI and Sustainable Society.
## Events

### In the spotlight February 4

**Project Preparation Day**

On February 4th 2014 Sustainable Society organised a Project Preparation Day, together with Research & Valorisation. This meeting gave researchers the opportunity to present their research ideas and to ask questions concerning Horizon 2020. About 20 researchers from 6 faculties participated actively and received information about the challenges, topics and procedures of the European Horizon 2020 program. Building networks and other sources of funding like Interreg were also returning topics. The most discussed topics concerned the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities disciplines, the societal challenges 1 to 7 of Horizon 2020, with special attention to challenge 6.

Geert Jan Arends, Project Manager European Grants at Research & Valorisation

‘A really wonderful example of supporting researchers finding their way to Brussels were the SuSo Project Preparation Days. It turned out to be a golden formula to bring together people who are active in the same domain and see that they learn not only from us, but also from each other. And people really prepared themselves. Some of them are now active in funded projects, others are well underway to develop concrete ideas. To me the Project Preparation Days offered the chance to support many people in a short period of time. And I had a great time too!’

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In the spotlight March 27 & 28
Incoming visit University of Bremen

March 27 and March 28 a delegation of the University of Bremen visited the University of Groningen in the field of Sustainable Society.
The meeting was organised around one of the six research clusters of Sustainable Society: Diversity, Inclusion & Pluralism. The central theme of the gathering was:
Workshop: Dilemmas of social sustainability and cultural diversity. Several concrete research projects and activities were the result of the visit: - Cooperation projects on Sustainable Knowledge, Health Interventions and Anonymity - Joint research in the field of Conflict (related to diversity) and Grief cultures - An experiment with setting up a cross regional policy lab. This meeting strengthened the relationship and cooperation between Groningen and Bremen.

Kocku von Stuckrad, Dean of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies and Professor of Religious Studies
‘A delegation from the University of Bremen visited Groningen on the 27th and 28th of March, 2014. This was a follow-up meeting of our visit to Bremen in November 2013. For the meeting in Groningen, we brought together an interdisciplinary group of 35 researchers from the Sustainable Society profile area “Diversity, Inclusion and Pluralism.” We had very productive conversations about shared interests and concrete possibilities of cooperation, which resulted in fruitful exchange of knowledge in more than five fields of research. Sustainable Society is playing an important role in facilitating interdisciplinary conversations, both among researchers at the University of Groningen and with international partners.’

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<td>April 10</td>
<td>May 11–15 Conference Religion and Pluralities of Knowledge (Diversity, Inclusion &amp; Pluralism)</td>
<td>June 24 The Human Factor in Energy Transitions, Sustainable Energy Week, Brussels</td>
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In the spotlight June 24
The Human Factor in Energy Transitions
Sustainable Energy Week, Brussels

On June 24th 2014 Sustainable Society and Energy organised a seminar in Brussels during the Sustainable Energy Week together with Energy Valley and the Energy Academy Europe.

The seminar named Promoting successful energy transition: the human factor gave insight in the importance of looking into the human factor in order to make energy transitions more sustainable. Experts from research, policy and the field shared best (and worst) practices of behavioural change in relation to energy and sustainability. Under coordination of Linda Steg an Advisory Group was formed after the Brussels meeting to be of further advise to the European Commission about this topic. The success of this event also heralds an increased role of SSH-research in the working programmes 2016 and 2017 of Horizon 2020 that are currently being prepared by the European Commission.

Linda Steg, Professor of Environmental Psychology at the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences

‘During the Brussels Sustainable Energy Week in June 2014, Sustainable Society organised an expert meeting on the Human Factor in Energy Transitions. Together with the University spearhead Energy and other expert organisations, the University of Groningen presented the newest research insights in this field. A great opportunity to feed and inspire the European Commission, DG Research with our interdisciplinary approach. A European Advisory Group arose as a result of this Brussels expert meeting, which I coordinate on behalf of the University of Groningen. The main aim is to further advice the European Commission on a research agenda on the Human Factor in Energy Dimensions. In choosing an interdisciplinary approach, and by looking into transdisciplinary implementation purposes, we aim create impact with our research insights.’

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In the spotlight November 19
Policy meeting Brussels
“Addressing the Asylum Crisis”

On 19 November the University of Groningen, University of Kent and the British Council organised a Brussels policy meeting called ‘Addressing the Asylum Crisis: Religious Contributions to Rethinking Global Protection’. The event was hosted by Dennis de Jong (MEP) at the European Parliament. Important input for the discussion was the policy paper which included 19 policy recommendations how to address the asylum crisis from a policy perspective. This paper outlines insights and recommendations from both US and European experts on issues concerning the asylum crisis. De Jong received the paper with a great deal of enthusiasm. He wishes to bring the recommendations one step further by enclosing them in an official policy letter addressed to the EU European Asylum Support Office. A great example of how Social Sciences and Humanities can create policy impact on European level.

Erin Wilson, Director of the Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies

‘Sustainable Society provide amazing support and guidance for researchers who want to contribute to important debates. Their work enabled me to do what I do best - research and write - while providing a platform through which I could share the insights from my research with a wider audience. Policy events like the one we had in Brussels are invaluable for researchers. Through such events you meet other researchers, policymakers and practitioners. They tell you what is useful (or not!) about your research and can give you feedback. At the same time, the emphasis is on the research. That is what is so appealing about these events - that you can contribute to policy and practice without having to compromise your research.’
Werkt diversiteit? 
Arbeidsintegratie en sociaal vertrouwen in een kleurrijke samenleving

Voorbereidingen, conclusies en implicaties uit twee jaar onderzoek aan de RUG, gefinancierd door het NWO ZRAM.

Een positieve relatie tussen arbeidsintegratie en sociaal vertrouwen

Arbeidsintegratie is een belangrijke factor die samenhangt met identificatie met Nederland. De conclusie is dat niet etnisch-culturele afkomst, maar juist arbeidsintegratie een cruciale bijbehorende studie (de Vroome, Verkuyten & Martinovic, in druk) bovendien dat de samenhang tussen identificatie met Nederland, een positievere houding ten opzichte van autochtonen en de Nederlandse samenleving, meer politiek vertrouwen, en een grotere levenstevredenheid. Identificatie met Nederland, een positieve houding ten opzichte van autochtonen en de Nederlandse samenleving, meer politiek vertrouwen, en een grotere levenstevredenheid. Dit was het uitgangspunt in een viertal studies. Sociaal vertrouwen werd hierbij gedefinieerd als het gevoel erbij te horen in de Nederlandse samenleving, gemeten door een sterkere identificatie met Nederland, een positieve houding ten opzichte van autochtonen en de Nederlandse samenleving, meer politiek vertrouwen, en een grotere levenstevredenheid. Identificatie met Nederland, een positieve houding ten opzichte van autochtonen en de Nederlandse samenleving, meer politiek vertrouwen, en een grotere levenstevredenheid. Identificatie met Nederland, een positieve houding ten opzichte van autochtonen en de Nederlandse samenleving, meer politiek vertrouwen, en een grotere levenstevredenheid. Identificatie met Nederland, een positieve houding ten opzichte van autochtonen en de Nederlandse samenleving, meer politiek vertrouwen, en een grotere levenstevredenheid.
Communication

Lustrum uitgave
Sustainable Society
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Promoting successful energy transition: the human factor.
Johan Woltjer is professor of Spatial Planning and Regional Development at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences.

A large number of researchers is intensely involved in Sustainable Society. To give you an insight in the richness of our research, we present 4 University of Groningen researchers from different disciplines.

Johan Woltjer has been involved in the further development of the Sustainable Society profile area called Sustainable Landscapes. He has brought together several disciplines within the University to stimulate an interdisciplinary approach towards the use and developments of Landscapes. Projects and meetings have been established aimed at sustainable development for the North Netherlands-Northwest German region (including Groningen-Oldenburg-Bremen). Woltjer has his own research has a focus on urban and regional governance, capacity-building, sustainability of urban and coastal regions, resilience, policy making and institutional design.
Greetje Timmerman contributed to Sustainable Society research with her research project “Sustainable Youth Interventions”. Using the method of participatory research her research team actually integrated in the Groningen outer-region to learn from the communities themselves how they envision a healthy lifestyle for the young people and their families. In this research program new types of interventions are at the core, also by looking into the institutional side of health interventions.
Michel Vols works as a lecturer on the field of public order and law and he is assistant professor at the Centre for Public Order, Anti-Social Behaviour and Security.

Michel Vols is focusing in his research on Anti-Social Behaviour. As a result of rapid population growth and urbanisation, citizens are increasingly living more densely together. These denser living conditions may cause severe social problems and social polarisation. Anti-social behaviour in housing areas is particularly problematic. Vols is conducting research that contributes to find new solutions and instruments how to deal with these urbanisation trends, both from the perspective of law and of human rights.
Sjaak Swart participates in the research project STINGS: Science, Technology and Innovation Network Groningen for Sustainability. Swart focuses on social aspects around the introduction of biotechnology in Africa in the context of food security. As an example, the introduction of genetically modified crops into certain African countries requires capacity building with respect to regulation, education, and public participation and communication. STINGS aims to develop initiatives in cooperation with African colleagues and policy makers by research projects, workshop and course development.

Sjaak Swart is associate professor Science and Society at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences
Education

Summer and winter schools

The University of Groningen organises multiple summer schools in June, July and August. Also during the winter, courses take place. These research-driven and multidisciplinary summer and winter schools give students and researchers the opportunity to gain knowledge about a wide variety of disciplines.

As one of the three research focal points of the University of Groningen, Sustainable Society supports several of these summer and winter schools. We think it’s important that these schools exist. International students and researchers share their knowledge and ambitions, and come up with important questions and discuss relevant societal issues. By stimulating these summer and winter schools, knowledge will be shared and participants have the opportunity to expand their networks.

Sustainable Society supports the following six summer and winter schools, from different faculties and disciplines:

- **Beyond Horizons** - Transmitting and Writing New Identities. Strategies and Empowerment of Minorities and Migrants in Europe
- **Microfinance Experiments** - Methods & Applications
- **Political Economics**
- **Things that Matter** - Material Culture in Historical Studies
- **Transformations of Religion and Culture in Contemporary India**
- **Uses of Narrative**
Sustainable Society a part of bachelor education at UCG

At September 1 2014, University College Groningen (UCG) opened its doors. The University College Groningen offers selected students from across the globe an English language bachelor program in Liberal Arts and Sciences. Education at UCG is grounded upon a vision that in the 21st century it is increasingly clear that no single discipline can answer the big questions facing (academic) leaders. Moreover, it is expected that they will be increasingly held accountable for their contribution to a sustainable society. More than before, education needs to be tuned towards these big questions in society, demographic transitions and wellbeing and health care, globalization and the effect on the distribution of wealth and income, sustainable economic growth and respect for the environment. Such problems require a solid collaborative interdisciplinary approach and an innovation–focused orientation on education.

From this vision it follows that UCG will develop its core activities in close cooperation with the societal profiles of the University of Groningen, Sustainable Society, Energy and Healthy Ageing. The UCG student will meet the Groningen academic experts in their classroom, in courses or through guest lectures. In addition, students of UCG will have the opportunity to shape their own societal profile by setting up projects that examine concrete complex societal challenges. From e.g. the experts involved in Sustainable Society, they will learn to conduct research into these complex issues and integrate knowledge across disciplines, while working towards the development of possible solutions. In their research they collaborate with specialist experts: developing a solid grounding in their major of choice, as well as a multidisciplinary outlook.
Consequently, UCG welcomes the active cooperation with the three societal perspectives in general and with Sustainable Society in particular. An important part of the Groningen Liberal Arts and Sciences curriculum will be shaped through this cooperation and through active participation of researchers of Sustainable Society in UCG. In addition, since these academics meet at UCG and jointly develop (education) projects, UCG does also provide an opportunity for the University of Groningen’s society profiles as such and for Sustainable Society in particular. By exploring existing connections and linkages UCG can develop as a platform for ongoing interdisciplinary exchange. That way, UCG will be able to re-enforce the strength of the ties that link researchers in e.g., Sustainable Society and to contribute to further development of the University of Groningen’s society profiles.

Hans van Ees
Dean University College Groningen
Ambition 2015

Sustainable Society will be further developed to serve as the most important Social Sciences and Humanities pillar of the University of Groningen. We aim at further integrating research programs by stimulating cross-disciplinarity within the University. In strong cooperation with the Faculties the program is strengthened by taking a bottom-up approach. An educational side of Sustainable Society is planned to be developed together with the University College Groningen.

An important step will be taken in 2015 in creating impact. In the past year we already were in the opportunity to practice with various forms of impact (a public debat, expertmeetings eg.). In the upcoming year we aim at bringing impact one step further. We expect to organise policy briefings for decision makers, expertmeetings on regional level and explore the role of the University as an important stakeholder in the region. We also will continue to create impact on the European level, for both the European Commission and the European Parliament level.

An international network of Sustainable Society Universities is part of the ambition for 2015 as well. This is supposed to develop into a global network in which we bring universities together that play a strong role in SSH research, aim to create impact and play an important role as a stakeholder in their region. First steps will be made to develop a common charter and to attract universities that qualify.

In general, Sustainable Society hopes to contribute to a way of positive and future-proof thinking and acting, both in academia (in research and amongst the RUG employees) and within society.
Universities are complex organisations. Their qualities are closely watched. In an international context they are ranked according to their overall performance. But taxpayers have a more national and regional orientation. So universities have to compete worldwide for international students on one hand and have to be recognizable organisations in a national and regional context on the other. Profiling universities have become an effective way of making clear towards the wider public and government which subjects are regarded important. Without neglecting fundamental research and always watching closely the international assessment of quality, universities try to development recognizable research programs that match real societal questions.

In choosing Sustainable Society as one of its three university wide programs Groningen University recognizes the importance of gathering knowledge on crucial transitions in society. The labor market, housing and social security, tensions between the young and the elderly, between the healthy and the sick, between people who participate and those who feel excluded, rapid change everywhere requires insight to ensure sustainability. It is the core business of a university to provide that necessary insight through solid research. Groningen University has taken up this challenge.

Jacques Wallage
Honorary professor ‘Transitions in the public administration’ and former mayor of Groningen
Colofon

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University of Groningen

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