

The benefits of being a section

Hans van Trijp, chair holder Marketing and Consumer Behaviour, chairman section Business Science

The Social Sciences Group has been working hard on a new Strategic Plan across the University side (DSS) and the Wageningen Research (WEcR, WCDI) branches. For the Department of Social Sciences this is also a good starting point to work on the governance side to make the strategic aims happen, with an emphasis on further development of the Sections. This also has impact on the Business Sciences.

In my view, organising ourselves as a section allows us to do a number of things. One of them is that we unburden staff by rethinking what tasks we can do at section level rather than re-inventing the wheel at the individual chair group level. This also holds for our relations to the support staff. What I think to notice is that often people have to do tasks that I would not consider central to their talent and core job that they are hired for. This is a crucial thing in which we try to unburden them by strengthening support. This will allow them to focus on the things that are important for them. In this way, the section takes care of people. It frees up time to do what they like.



The section Business Science is organised around the value chain. That is what we have in common. All of our chair groups are involved in a part of this chain. We cover it 'from seed to shopping cart and even beyond to food waste and reverse logistics.' Different chair groups study different parts of the chain. Together, we have the pieces of the puzzle. What I would like to see is that people from different chair groups even further extend their collaborations. Together we have the expertise and talents to create integrated solutions for problems, to which we all add our unique disciplinary focus. I am positive about that as increasingly I see a willingness; a growth towards the collaborative mindset beyond the more competitive mindset that unfortunately has characterized academia in the past.

One of the upcoming things on the agenda of the section is formulating our success stories and defining a shared strategy, as for the first time ever the peer review will be at section rather than chair group level. It is important that we start thinking from the perspective of the section; what binds us together? Where can we build on each others' shoulders? It is tempting to stereotype the section as "yet another administrative level in a bureaucracy." But be reassured that we will build it as an "airconditioning" for the primary process, to reduce distraction and to strengthen collaboration. How? Maybe a good first start would be a "dating app" for Business Science to ensure we find each other on the basis of content and research interest, to move our collaborative research to yet a higher level.

Ellen Slegers wins an Aspasia grant

Assistant professor Ellen Slegers of Operations Research and Logistics has received a grant from the WUR Aspasia Fund. She is one of several female scholars who will receive this grant.

Ellen will use the grant to fund an intensive coaching trajectory focussed on presenting her research in an inspiring and convincing way, within science but also to the general public. Together with her team, she develops models that help to optimise a new product or production chain even when data is scarce. With these models, it should be possible to predict for example the profitability of a chain or its environmental impact even based on uncertain data.

The grants for the Aspasia Fund have been awarded to the university of Wageningen by the Dutch Research Council as part of the NWO Aspasia program. The Aspasia Fund aims to improve the balance between male and female top scientists, higher up on the career ladder. They have announced a second call for this year. If you are a female scholar, you can apply for the grant. More information can be found on Intranet.

Call for papers: Food for the Future. Challenges and New Forms of Collaborations for Agri-Food Supply Networks in the Context of COVID-19

Join the IFAMA-WICaNeM November 2020 Conversations on how COVID-19 impacts agri-food supply networks! What new forms of collaboration in agri-food supply networks are emerging, and how to sustain those in the future?



Our efforts are directed towards offering a hybrid event, combining on-site and online participation. As such, we and our partners, follow the measures announced by the Dutch government to prevent any further spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus in creating a safe, responsible and hospitable event. Extended call for papers and submission guidelines are published on the conference webpage. The submission deadline is 30 September. For more information, contact Mustafa Hasanov or go to: <https://wur.eu/covid19-agri-food-challenges>



A work in progress

by Jacco Leguijt, Website and Communications Support SBS

When I interviewed Hans van Trijp for his article in the Local Business, he talked about the shared story of the section Business Science. This peaked my interest. The subject of my thesis was how storytelling can create a sense of community in growing organisations. Stories are a powerful social glue, and are used by humans since the dawn of time to organise ourselves. Whether we gather around a campfire, go to the movies or listen to Bible stories in church – stories connect people.

After the interview, I kept thinking about the story of the section. It's a year ago that I started to work for the section. That's when I became part of its story. In the beginning, my job description was to manage the website for the different chair groups of our section. With a Bachelor of Communications, my job description was rather easy. This was necessary because I was recovering from the effects of burnout. So, starting easy was the right way to go.

In my own eyes, I was doing a humble job. This made me sometimes feel a bit intimidated by all the smart people surrounding me. And yet, my humble job was a necessary one, as I discovered. People needed my help. When I helped them, they were kind and grateful. To this day, this is still the best part of my job. It's you. As I am writing this, I realize that a lot has changed. Over the course of a year, I have begun to do more diverse tasks, that are related to my education background.

Telling the story of the section has always been part of my work. By publishing news items, for example. They are small stories about what is happening within the different chair groups. By doing so, I am quite aware of what is happening within the individual chair groups. People get grants, they innovate, they receive awards. The question that keeps me thinking is how I can ensure that people from different chair groups find out what is going on on the other side of the fence.

Simply increasing the information that is being shared, well, that is too simple. When you service a group of hard-working people, the real challenge is to do more with less. To communicate in a way that is personal and informative. With the right frequency, so that people stay informed about the section. Yet, without sending a barrage of emails that overloads already busy people. This is a work in progress. Meanwhile, I am working on that dating app that Hans wrote about. Well, no, that's a joke, of course. However, part of my work in progress is finding ways to connect you with your coworkers from other chair groups in a way that is easy and that increases research quality.

Data Management

by Laura de Graaf, Executive Secretary Section Business Science

Data Management is important, because it concerns our valuable research data. Everyone knows 'we have to do something' to store our research data. Until now, every chair group and in some cases every researcher worked in a different manner, sometimes storing data in a proper way, sometimes not storing data at all. Now, working from a section perspective, we have a benefit of scale. It won't be necessary anymore that every chair group invents the wheel by itself!

Why Data Management? Being aware of Data Management makes you think in a structured way of your research data from scratch. In the end this makes your data understandable to other scientists, who may want to work with it as well. It also helps you stick to the FAIR principles as much as possible. As a group you will have a thorough data archive, which gives you something to be proud of. Lastly, we all have an obligation to store our research data in a proper way for at least 10 years. WUR is paying more attention to Data Management right now.



Of course all this takes time and may feel a little bureaucratic. That's why we tried to make things as easy as possible for you. New in our Data Management policy on section level is that we store our research data underlying publications primarily at online repository DANS EASY. A copy of this, as well as raw data and theses of students are stored centrally at WUR through your Data Management Team (DMT). By the end of September all information and forms will be available to you. I will be available for questions and I will support all groups in getting used to the new way of working and getting rid of the backlog in data archiving.

I would like to thank all data stewards and other members of the DMT's for their critical thinking and especially Arnout Fischer and Ivo van der Lans, who invested a lot of time in setting up the new structure.