

Networking in the Netherlands: reflections on the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) PhD Seminar 2018

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(originally from [this blog post](#))



From 8th-10th July 2018, the fourth ISTR PhD seminar was held at Vrije University in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Immediately preceding the society's conference, the seminar was an excellent opportunity for students to meet other third sector PhD researchers and ISTR faculty members, and benefit from each other's insights. This year, the seminar was attended by 50 students from over 20 different countries.

The seminar began Sunday afternoon with an opening talk from Professor Taco Brandsen of Radboud University about the history of the third sector in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has a strong history of collaboration and civil engagement, primarily due to the country's geography – about a quarter of the country is below sea level, presenting a high flood risk to its inhabitants. With water as the common enemy, the Dutch people had to work together to benefit each other. Whilst perceptions of the third sector have changed over time with industrial, economic and religious developments, the Netherlands still has proportionately the largest non-profit sector in the world. This short but engaging talk set the scene for the variety of perspectives, themes and aspects of third sector research that we would cover over the course of the seminar.

The majority of the seminar was spent in smaller working groups, formed on the basis of our research topics. Within these, every student had the opportunity to briefly present their PhD topic and current progress, before highlighting any issues or questions they wished to put to the group. The following discussion sought to help the student, providing advice and recommendations ranging from alternative methods to useful reading material.

On Monday afternoon there was a brief pause from group work for some small workshops. Three workshops were run in parallel for students to choose from: Scholarly Identity; Surviving the Tenure Track; and Getting Published. The Scholarly Identity session had insights for early-stage researchers in carving out their own niche area and presenting their identity to different audiences both in person and online. Surviving the Tenure Track offered (mainly USA-based) advice for not only achieving tenure, but also 'surviving' the process. Recommendations ranged from

publications and presenting, to achieving a healthy work-life balance. The third session – Getting Published – went through the publication process including a step-by-step guide of what happens when you submit a paper to a journal, and how to manage different reviewer comments. All of these talks were well attended and warmly received.

At this year's seminar, there was a new addition to the schedule: the 3 Minute Thesis competition (3MT). This competition challenges PhD students to present their thesis in just 3 minutes and using only one slide. Whilst 3MT is an international competition, this was the first year it had been run at ISTR. Ten students entered the competition, with the winner presenting their speech at the conference opening plenary the next day. The event was a great success and will continue to be run at future seminars.

Whilst the seminar formally concluded on Tuesday morning, there were further PhD activities throughout the conference. These included a range of professional development seminars primarily relating to the academic and non-academic job markets and applications processes. The PhD party on Thursday evening was also a welcome opportunity to relax with new friends after a busy week.

Overall, the seminar was a fantastic opportunity for meeting and connecting with other students with similar research interests from across the globe. These connections will hopefully continue into the future through the PhD Seminar Alumni Network and following ISTR events.