

# Amsterdam Young Academy



Annual Report 2020

# Preface



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The year 2020 will be one to remember. It was our second year of existence, in which we refined our mission to empower and represent young researchers in Amsterdam academia. We started out as a collection of individuals in 2018, but it has become increasingly clear that Amsterdam Young Academy is more than just a sum of its parts. We are a connected network, unified in our wish and need to interact with each other, with diverse concepts and ideas, with society and the city of Amsterdam. Indeed, we have only just begun to unlock the powers of this network. As you will see throughout this annual report, we have initiated action and change within our own ranks, but have seen how the spread of these actions and changes throughout our broader network may continue to impact Amsterdam academia and vice versa.

There was of course also that other spreading phenomenon: the Covid-19 pandemic. As of March, all of our interactions became virtual. The events we had lined up were cancelled. Work pressure and (mental) health issues rose. At the same time, connection and sharing increased: amidst the daily academic hustle of having to digitize our teaching and continue our research without having books or human subjects to investigate, our meetings provided support and energy to many members.

As our network continues to grow, we gladly present our annual report to mark this stage of our evolution. Although 2021 may prove another challenging year for the world and our Academy, we are committed to further represent our constituents and empower young researchers in Amsterdam.

On behalf of the board of Amsterdam Young Academy,

**Linda Douw**

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# AYA and Covid-19

## The impact of Covid-19 on early career researchers.

Throughout the year, we have used our platform to stay in touch with our own members and other early career researchers in order to offer support, and translate our and their needs to the university executive boards. In stimulating this conversation, we joined the Spui25 Deelgenoten-series in sharing how we navigate through Covid-19 challenges. Looking back, the impact of the pandemic has unfolded in phases. During the first lockdown in March, a survey amongst AYA members revealed that uncertainty was a major issue, whether it concerned being unsure about how to have students take exams virtually, not knowing when research with human participants would resume, or having to recover an already difficult balance between work and personal life. There was a growing need for support, which prompted 'AYA coffee chats': informal, virtual

gatherings that focused on sharing experiences and information on the main topics of work-life balance, teaching and research.

During the summer months, the drop in infections offered some essential breathing room for early career researchers to reorganize and recover somewhat. However, the second lockdown and subsequent closing of schools have evidently led to continued issues, particularly for those with mental health issues and/or kids to take care of. AYA, and others, have voiced concerns about the increasing pressure on particularly early career researchers to maintain the same workload in this context.

## The impact of Covid-19 on AYA

In addition to having an impact on individual AYA members, the pandemic meant that we as AYA were forced to seize all live interactions. Although work



pressure increased for many members, we are very glad and proud that we were able to maintain a stable attendance and active participation of most of our members throughout the year. For example, the online inauguration of ten new members had a charming grassroots quality to it, with sustainable goodie bags and a thematic focus on free havens eliciting both academic and personal stories to be shared.

We also had to cancel most of what we saw as our key outputs for 2020, namely organizing events and being more visible across campus. Instead of manifesting ourselves physically, we focused on our online presence. This resulted for instance in a Twitter campaign on work pressure in academia, a magazine on recognition and rewards that came out in both paper and digital editions, and of course our Science <+> Society Tour and Podcast that can readily be enjoyed from home. As will become clear in this



annual report, we have used this year to source new ideas within our group and carefully take action on them, with the aim to further spread these in the coming year regardless of the ongoing pandemic.

### Covid-19 research within AYA

Several AYA members have refocused their research towards Covid-19, be it on treatment of the disease, the impact of the pandemic on society, or on the changing care landscape (see our website for a full overview). Having these members in our midst and learning from their experiences has been inspiring to all.

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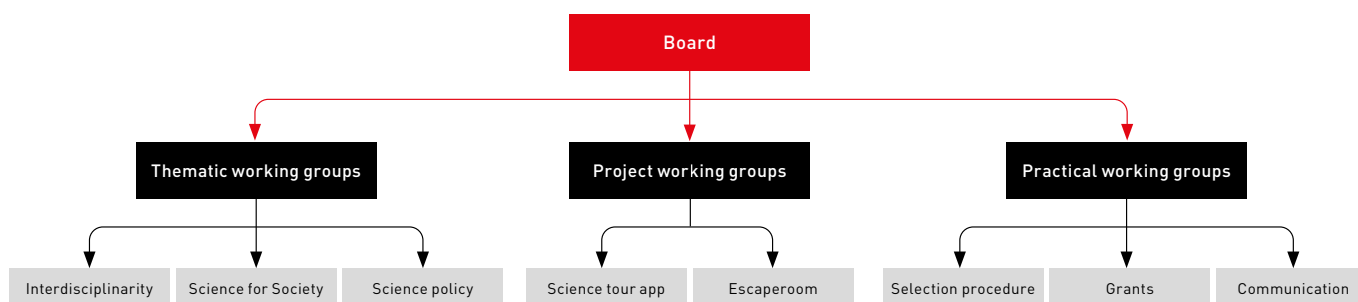
# Facts and numbers

AYA was officially launched on November 6th, 2018 with the inauguration of the first 30 members. Each year, 10 new members are inaugurated. Since the start of AYA, 4 AYA members resigned. The total number of AYA members as of December 31, 2020 is:

University of Amsterdam		VU Amsterdam	
Faculty of Science	4	Faculty of Science	2
Faculty of Humanities	5	Faculty of Humanities	3
Faculty of Law	1	Faculty of Law	4
Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences	6	Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences	3
Faculty of Economics and Business	0	School of Business and Economics	3
		Faculty of Social Sciences	4
		Faculty of Religion and Theology	2
		Academic Center for Dentistry Amsterdam	2
		Amsterdam UMC	7
<b>Total number of AYA members: 46</b>			



Inauguration 2020



## Board & Support

AYA Board composition in 2020

- Linda Douw (chair, Amsterdam UMC)
- Denise Duijster (vice chair, ACTA)
- Katinka van der Kooij (Faculty of Behavioral and Movement Sciences, VU)
- Eddie Brummelman (Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences, UvA)
- Hanneke Stuit (Faculty of Humanities, UvA)

AYA is supported by a team of two VU and two UvA staff members. They together share 0,6 fte allocated for support for AYA by the executive boards of both universities. The 2020 members of the AYA support team were:

- Barbara Coolen - Creative Director SPU125 UvA
- Adriana Jansen - Management Support UvA
- Nataša van de Laar - HR policy advisor VU
- Fernie Maas - Institutional Affairs VU

The AYA board follows a structure of monthly meetings and had twelve board meetings in 2020. In addition to building an organizational structure, the board discusses the vision and direction of AYA. Also, the board formally approves grants and appoints new AYA members, advised by the respective committees.

AYA's organizational structure is based on working groups in which AYA members commit to themes and projects, or deal with the more practical implications of building and maintaining a platform for young academics. The working groups are chaired by AYA members and often meet before or after General Assemblies or other AYA (online) events.

AYA members met formally in five so-called (online) General Assemblies in 2020. The meetings offered ample time for discussing the project groups' activities and for a broader discussion about themes such as diversity and equality in academia and social safety. In 2020, the General Assembly elected two new board members, provided feedback on the 2019 cohort's year project, ratified a revision of the rules and regulations and discussed ideas for using the grant programme more efficiently. As part of a reading assignment to further build and strengthen

AYA as a successful group, all members got a copy of *The Culture Code* by Daniel Coyle, often quoted as a 'food for thought' during the general assemblies.

## Inauguration 2020

'What are we supposed to do for new members joining AYA, during a global lockdown?' It's not a question we would have imagined having to deal with in previous inauguration preparations. Due to the increasing lockdown restrictions, the inauguration committee decided to organize an online inauguration as interactive and celebratory as possible. Free Havens was chosen as topic for the inauguration: what does a Free Haven mean?

The inauguration was kicked off with a social roulette: an informal session in which new members got to know each other and AYA better. Rectors magnifici Vinod Subramaniam and Karen Maex joined the formal session for the official inauguration of the new members. In line with the Free Haven theme, new members introduced themselves by elaborating on the theme and by sharing personal experiences with Free Havens, literally or metaphorically.

## Finances

Apart from having 0,6 fte available in support staff (making up a support team of 4 members), AYA has an operational budget allocated for a grants programme, the year cohort's project, and other costs. As can be seen from appendix A, the main expense has been, as planned, the grants programme. The budget was also used to host several events and workshops, both exclusively for AYA members (Active Bystander Training, TEDtalk training) and for the entire academic public in Amsterdam (interdisciplinary lunches).

	Budgeted	Actual	Difference
Grants programme	€ 57.500	€ 43.120	€ 14.380
Yearly activity	€ 10.000	€ 10.000	0
Other costs	€ 30.000	€ 13.485	€ 16.515

# Working groups

## Interdisciplinarity

The Interdisciplinarity working group fosters interdisciplinary exchange within UvA and VU and functions as an interdisciplinary platform within AYA, encouraging its members to find common ground between their respective disciplines. From September 2019 until the start of the pandemic, the working group organized four interdisciplinarity lunches at the VU campus and the UvA campus, focused on the institutional and cultural preconditions for successful interdisciplinary interaction.

Although the Covid-19 measures put the Interdisciplinarity Lunches temporarily on hold, the working group has been using the insights gained from the meetings as a steppingstone for the AYA Interdisciplinarity Guide. This guide will be targeted at early career researchers and aims to inform and inspire researchers with regards to interdisciplinarity, provide an overview of the interdisciplinary landscape in Amsterdam and disseminate personal insights and experiences of interdisciplinary researchers to a broader audience. Thirteen interviews with stakeholders have been conducted so far and the group aims to publish the final version of the guide in 2021.

Furthermore, the Interdisciplinarity working group organizes monthly Sharing Science meetings among AYA members, intended to encourage them to find common ground between their individual research interests. The meetings are usually organized and attended by a small group of approximately five or six AYA members with shared research interests, while the Interdisciplinarity Group takes up a facilitating role.

## Science for Society

During 2020 the Science for Society working group developed and implemented several projects: 1) AYA Guide for Sustainable Meetings, 2) Training for TED Talks, 3) Publication of a series of opinion articles in Het Parool. Future actions are being discussed to engage with specific targets, such as schools and prisons, in order to bring science where it is currently under-represented. Furthermore, ongoing discussions focus on enhancing the impact of the sustainability project as well as on new projects on this topic, and on the possibility to collect and publish blog articles and columns by AYA members in a booklet.

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## Science policy

The Science Policy working group worked on activities and projects related to Recognition and Rewards, Diversity and Social Safety. Activities related to Recognition and Rewards include the AYA-zine, the 2020 first year project on career paths and the event which was hosted at Spui25 on November 18, 2020. The group is also working on the young researchers' Survival Guide, which will be combined with the 2019 first year projects output.

The activities of the project groups Diversity and Social Safety are described below.

### Diversity

The September general assembly was devoted to discussing 'diversity in academia' in which perceptions of diversity, challenges, aims and good practices within faculties were discussed. A general conclusion was that gender, cultural and other types of inequalities in academia remain an issue, and that this is a theme that concerns AYA as well. Subsequently, two actions have been taken. Firstly, in the invitation to deans to nominate new AYA candidates for 2020, attention was paid to diversity within AYA. Especially the beta domain and the postdoc level were underrepresented, and AYA has a lack of diversity in cultural backgrounds, reflecting a larger lack of diversity within the UvA and VU communities. Hence, deans were requested to take this into account in their nomination process. The board and the selection committee also made use of the option to nominate two additional members, for which diversity was an important consideration. Second, a diversity working group was formed in November 2020. The group will discuss AYA's role in promoting diversity and equality in the university, and aims to organize projects within this context.

### Social Safety

One of AYA's main missions is to help young researchers flourish. It is widely recognized that young academics are often in vulnerable positions, under pressure to perform and to please in order to qualify the demands of tenure tracks, make themselves eligible for permanent positions, et cetera. Speaking up is not straightforward under such circumstances.

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AYA wishes to empower young academics, and to this end strives to increase the inclusivity and social safety within their professional environments. Social safety has become a regular topic on AYA's General Assemblies, resulting in starting up a new project group on social safety within AYA's Science Policy group. In the fall of 2020, the group organized two online Active Bystander Trainings in which AYA members were introduced to ways in which they can act as a bystander to address undesirable behaviors which have become normalized. These trainings not only raise awareness and thus help AYA members themselves develop towards ambassadors, but insights from these trainings provide important input for future AYA activities on this theme.

## Communication

The communication group set up a campaign focusing around work pressure during the corona crisis. Twitter was used to post thought-provoking images and polls on what tasks academics were able to drop to allow for the sudden digitalization of education (#watlaatjijvallen). In a widely spread and liked video clip, AYA members shared tips on how they managed work pressure and dealing with the impact of the corona pandemic. The communication group continues working on the theme with a Mythical Super Hero campaign which is currently being set up. The campaign aims at revealing the human consequences of striving to be an academic super hero who is an excellent researcher, passionate teacher, money making machine and future leader.

## Grants programme

AYA has funded seven projects in 2020, which will be further discussed below and can also be found on the website. These projects were predominantly evaluated with regards to collaboration within AYA and fit with the main vision and missions.

### 1 – AYA Guide for Sustainable Meetings

This project focused on developing a manual to help organize sustainable, low-impact meetings. The project group focused in particular on food and drinks, which are an important component of workshops and meetings in general. Together with the UvA catering company CIRFOOD, a sustainable catering option was developed, aimed at making this

available to all UvA staff. In these times of social distancing, this resulted in a 'borrel-pakket' to be delivered at home. At the same time, the project groups has made a life cycle assessment to compare the environmental impact of a regular vs. sustainable catering option. The results obtained showed that choosing local producers, favoring a circular approach and relinquishing animal sources allow to reduce the most relevant indicators of environmental impact (e.g. water usage, CO2 emissions) by over 95%.

## 2 – Assessment motor expertise restoration students

When looking at a restored painting, we see the work of a conservator with much practical skill. In the master of Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage at the UvA, teachers transmit their expertise using a combination of instruction and demonstrations. In this project, AYA members observational knowledge and expertise in quantitative assessment of motor learning were combined to investigate whether it can be defined how restoration experts and novices learn to apply the right amount of pressure to a surface. Budget was used for hiring student assistants, recording a dissemination video and participants funds and for buying Wacom tablets to be able to perform experiments at home and a student assistant who could run these experiments. The project will continue in 2021. and might enable them to continue their research despite the corona pandemic.

## 3 – Pandemic nursing: Audio Recordings as a Window into Nursing during COVID-19

There is a lot that is unknown about how nurses work in the context of a pandemic. Past work suggests that this is stressful, emotionally demanding work that requires multicultural teamwork and adaptability in addition to technical expertise. The pandemic nursing project has now collected diary entries from 21 nurses from across the U.S., working while the Covid-19 pandemic is ongoing. Eight of these were recorded as audio diaries and 13 were written entries. Participants (all women except for one man) range in age from 27 – 67 years old, are from a variety of facilities and units (emergency room, labor and delivery, neonatal intensive care, intensive care unit), and are racially diverse.

Despite challenges in recruiting test subjects during a pandemic, the project group has been able to work



on an analysis of the findings over the past three months. The audio-recorded entries have now been transcribed. Preliminary findings were presented in October 2020 during a talk at the Amsterdam University College's series on the Emotional Turn in Contemporary Public and Academic Debates.

## 4 – AYA TEDtalk

Science communication is a growing priority for many academics and one of AYA's core activities. How does one approach broader audiences effectively with the questions that preoccupy scientist? How can others be inspired and encouraged questions they may have themselves? When approached with care and with the necessary training, the TEDtalks format can offer an accessible yet thorough platform for breaching gaps between science and society. This is why the Science and Society group has organized a set of advanced presentation skills trainings during which AYA members learned how to connect to various audiences by tapping in what drives them to do their jobs in the first place. In this way, AYA worked on enhancing the quality of researchers' outreach by facilitating individual members to improve their own presentation skills. In the future, these skills can be used live during an AYA event, or used to create online webinars.

## 5 – AYA-zine Recognition and Rewards in Academia: Young academics offer a new perspective

AYA organized a symposium on Recognition and Rewards to show the many perspectives and pitfalls in implementing a new system for recognition and rewarding academics at the VU. By choosing a local perspective, AYA hopes to facilitate the step from ideas to practice. Due to corona restrictions, the symposium was cancelled and transferred into a paper alternative: a magazine with young academics' perspectives on recognition and rewarding. The

magazine contains a lead article based on an online discussion with VU policy makers and academics, a discussion whether Open Science needs a system for recognition and rewarding that focuses less on quantitative output and more on collaboration, a sneak peak of the AYA survival guide for young academics and an article on how sustainability could be incorporated in a new system for recognition and rewarding. The magazine was well-received amongst key players in the debate on recognition and rewarding.

### **6 – The costs of covid-19 for Dutch shopping streets**

In this project, the effect of Covid-19 on footfall in shopping streets is studied, as well as what kind of shopping streets are most heavily affected by the pandemic. The AYA grant was used to buy data related to property prices and gather data on pedestrians passing by 200 points for an extensive period of time. Currently, the process of gathering the data and putting together the analysis is ongoing.

### **7 – Parental Love During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted children's lives. Faced with quarantine, school closures, and social distancing, many children are deprived of the everyday social experiences that normally build their feeling of being loved by others. Feeling loved is a fundamental psychological need that emerges early in development, is shared across cultures, and is a critical ingredient of mental and physical health. How can we ensure that children feel loved by others, especially during times of crisis? This project developed an experimental task that leads children to feel more loved by their parents, studying underlying mechanisms (e.g., what happens in parent-child interactions during the experimental task that makes children feel more loved). Based on this understanding the project hopes to provide parents with guidance on how to make children feel more loved during this challenging period.

## **Cohort's year projects**

### **AYA Science Tour**

On October 13, 2020 the AYA Science Tour was launched. The AYA Science Tour was developed as part of the 2018 first year project, in collaboration with OORKRAMERS and Science on Air. The aim of the tour was to present AYA to the citizens of

Amsterdam and to build bridges between science and society. The tour takes listeners (students, tourists, citizens of Amsterdam and the general public) to eight locations in Amsterdam. For each location, an audio tour and podcast is available in which AYA members provide insights on the connection between science and social issues (related to that particular location) based on their own research. The tour is available in English and in Dutch, and can be downloaded or listened via the izi.TRAVEL app or via Soundcloud, iTunes or Spotify. Radio 1 aired an interview with the chair of AYA on the Science Tour and the Parool recommended the tour in its column 'Weekend Tips'.

### **2019 Year group project: intended, implemented and perceived career paths @ UvA and VU**

Preliminary discussions within the 2019 AYA Year Group showed that differences exist in career paths within UvA and VU faculties and departments. Knowledge about these paths is not easily found and has not been extensively compared and discussed, neither has a study been made about the relation between *actual* and *perceived* career paths. How do scientific researchers get promoted, what 'counts', which titles are given, how are promotion trajectories organized, what do researchers think about chances for promotion within their environment? Do feelings match what usually happens? The 2019 year group's project proposal on this topic was granted and the group has been working on the first phase of its execution in 2020.

In this phase, data was gathered from the different faculties/departments/institutes on formal rules and procedures for promotion. This data was analyzed and a first report is currently in preparation. Subsequently, focus groups and interviews were organized with representatives from both universities (current and former scientific staff, HR employees, department heads). These had the goal of gathering qualitative data and recording individual impressions on planned, implemented and perceived career paths. The situation with COVID-19 resulted in some delay to this project and activities on this theme continue in 2021. The group aims to work towards a position paper and a scholarly paper, drawing additional attention to this theme in university magazines and possible an event/discussion form. AYA funding allowed for the hiring of a post-Master's level project assistant, who played an important role in this project.

# Partners and other activities

## De Jonge Akademie and other local Young Academies

Regularly, the Dutch local Young Academies get together to discuss shared focal points, policy making and developments within academia. This has led to AYA joining the KlimaatHelpdesk, initiated by Utrecht Young Academy. KlimaatHelpdesk is a platform where the audience can submit questions related to climate change, to be answered by scientists and scholars representing the entire spectrum of academic disciplines. (Amsterdam-based) DJA members have been consulted on several topics, in order to facilitate the feedback and feedforward between the national and local young academies. AYA co-signed a letter by De Jonge Akademie, NN and PostdocNL asking the Minister of Education, Culture and Science for financial support to enable extensions for PhD and postdoc projects.

## VU, UvA and Amsterdam UMC leadership

Throughout the year, the AYA board has been in contact with the leadership of the academic institutions in order to discuss opportunities and challenges. Of course, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on early career researchers was a theme both the AYA board and the executive boards sought to exchange information about. At different phases of the pandemic, AYA provided the university boards with input about the experiences of early career researchers and calls for action. Next to the annual meetings, the AYA board was regularly consulted by both rectors about major policy themes and initiatives.

## Amsterdam metropolitan area

AYA continued working with the chief science officer of the municipality of Amsterdam (Caroline Nevejan) in 2020, discussing, amongst other topics, the Open Research Amsterdam platform. The municipality and AYA keep aspiring to facilitate collaboration on topics that matter to both AYA and the city.

AYA has intensified its contacts with Amsterdam based institutes as the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study (NIAS) and the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in hosting several events at their sites.

## Representation

AYA members joined several public and academic debates on behalf of AYA in 2020:

- participated in the debate 'How to portray a professor?' at 3D@VU, the VU debate center, on February 25.
- joined the VU Diversity Office's strategic session
- AYA has teamed up with Het Parool regularly publishing opinion pieces. AYA members reflect on news events and thereby translate their work to a broader audience.

## Advisory board

After the establishment of AYA, the AYA board has asked the AYA founders to offer their advice in current affairs.

## Colofon

### Contact

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