Evaluation of the Institute for Science in Society (ISiS)
Faculty of Science, Radboud University
Executive summary

An external committee of peers (henceforth the ‘Committee’) evaluated the research quality of the Institute for Science in Society (ISIS) of Radboud University during a site visit in March 2023. This executive summary contains a brief overview of the Committee’s main findings. More detailed findings and recommendations can be found in the report.

The Committee assesses ISIS as a fully-fledged and internationally competitive institute with a clear identity of its own. It is a relatively small, but thriving research institute. The recognition of ISIS’ expertise, relevance and research quality is demonstrated by a variety of indicators. ISIS has succeeded in developing a rational and highly synergistic approach to conduct research at the interface between science and society, which allows the Institute to set itself apart from other research institutes with a similar research focus.

The Committee is impressed with ISIS’ relevance to society. Its commitment to societal relevance is evident in its projects and strong collaborations with diverse societal groups.

ISIS has the important fundamentals of PhD policy and training in place, and has made important improvements in this regard over the past years. The PhDs are well-supported by policy, supervisors, training, and group culture.

The Committee concludes that ISIS is well-positioned for the future, thanks to the substantial efforts that have been made in the review period. ISIS’ research revolves increasingly around its four research themes, with its researchers collaborating across disciplines. The Institute is developing unique inter- and transdisciplinary science-in-society approaches, leading to significant scientific and societal contributions in addressing timely societal controversies. This makes ISIS attractive as an inter- and transdisciplinary partner in research projects. With its growth in recent years and the planned further expansion of its staff with three to four extra positions, ISIS staff has reached the critical mass required to further build the Institute. Importantly, ISIS’ academic culture is warm and inclusive, making the Institute an attractive environment to work in.

While all these elements bode well for ISIS’ viability, the Committee has also identified some challenges. First of all, ISIS’s inter- and transdisciplinary approach requires a significant amount of extra time and effort compared to more ‘traditional’ scientific work. Therefore, the Committee encourages ISIS to work on quality criteria that complement traditional research quality criteria. The Committee also highlights the need for customized career tracks. In acknowledgement of the time and expertise needed for building and managing long-term relations with different societal groups, the Committee moreover encourages ISIS to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of possibly specialising in certain societal groups. Also, additional support could enable ISIS researchers to focus more on planning transdisciplinary approaches, method development, and publishing, thereby enhancing the visibility and codification of their transdisciplinary expertise.

Second, thematic coherence and a common narrative are essential for ISIS to focus its research efforts effectively. The Committee advises ISIS to keep working on the clarity of the four research themes and to continue using them as guidance in strategic choices. The Committee also encourages ISIS to further develop its unique approach, and make its defining elements more visible, both internally and externally.

Third, the current excellent academic culture is largely ensured through informal practices. The Committee recommends putting in place more formal policies codifying what works for the culture
of ISIS, not to replace current practice with a more formal approach, but to make current good practices explicit and, if necessary, safeguard them.

Fourth, ISIS’ limited size, and the pressure this puts on its core staff, make it challenging to take the lead in newly emerging topics. This is why the Committee strongly supports the strategic goal of ISIS to attract a third full professor to work on research ethics and scientific integrity, as it will further support the Institute in realizing its ambitions.

Finally, the Committee emphasizes that in view of ISIS’ viability, there is a clear need to become a formal research institute, as this will help ISIS gain further visibility and seize all the opportunities that arise.
# Table of Contents

**Executive summary**  
**Table of Contents**  

1. The review committee and the review procedures  
   1. The System of Quality Assessment of Research in The Netherlands  
   2. The Members of the Peer Review Committee  
   3. Scope of the Assessment  
   4. Data provided to the Committee  
   5. Procedures followed by the Committee  

2. Aims, strategy, organization of ISIS  

3. Assessment of ISIS  
   3.1. Organization and performance of research at ISIS  
      3.1.1. Academic culture  
      *Openness, (social) safety and inclusivity*  
      *Research integrity*  
      3.1.2. Human Resources Policy  
      *Diversity*  
      *Talent management*  
   3.2. Research quality  
      3.2.1. Profile, objectives and approach  
      3.2.2. Indicators of research quality  
      3.2.3. Open science  
   3.3. Relevance to society  
   3.4. PhD Policy and Training  
      3.4.1. PhD supervision  
      3.4.2. PhD training/education  
      3.4.3. Atmosphere and culture  
   3.5. Viability  

4. Recommendations  

**Appendices**  

Appendix 1: Program site visit  
Appendix 2: Quantitative data on composition and funding
1. The review committee and the review procedures

1. The System of Quality Assessment of Research in The Netherlands

An external committee of peers (henceforth Committee) evaluated the research quality of the Institute for Science in Society (ISiS) of Radboud University.

This quality assessment (peer review) is part of the assessment system for all publicly funded Dutch research organizations, as organized by the Universities of the Netherlands (UNL), the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) and the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO).

In accordance with the Strategy Evaluation Protocol 2021-2027 for Research Assessment in the Netherlands (SEP), the Committee’s tasks were to assess the quality of ISiS on the basis of the information provided by the Institute and interviews with management, the research leaders, staff members, PhD programme management and PhD students, and to advise on how it might be improved.

2. The Members of the Peer Review Committee

The Committee consisted of:

• Prof. dr. Mieke Boon, Twente University, the Netherlands
• Prof. dr. Marianne Penker, University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria
• Dr. Koen Beumer, Utrecht University, the Netherlands
• Prof. dr. Sarah Davies, University of Vienna, Austria
• Mr. Keje Boersma (PhD student), Wageningen University & Research, the Netherlands

Dr. Jetje De Groof (Antwerp, Belgium), independent higher education quality assurance project manager, was appointed as secretary to the Evaluation Committee.

All members of the Committee signed a statement of impartiality to ensure that they would judge without bias, personal preference or personal interest, and that their judgment is made without undue influence from persons or parties committed to the institute or programmes under review, or from other stakeholders.

3. Scope of the Assessment

The current assessment covers the period 2016-2021.

The scope of the assessment was set by the Terms of Reference (TOR). In the TOR, the Committee was requested to assess the quality of ISiS, as well as to offer recommendations in order to improve the quality of its research and strategy.

The Committee was requested to carry out the assessment according to the guidelines specified in the Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP). The evaluation includes a backward-looking and a forward-looking component. Specifically, the Committee was asked to judge the performance of the unit on the main assessment criteria and offer its written conclusions as well as recommendations based on considerations and arguments. The main assessment criteria are:

1. Research Quality
2. Societal Relevance
3. Viability
During the evaluation of these criteria, the Committee was asked to incorporate four specific aspects. These aspects are as follows:

1. Open Science: availability of research output, reuse of data, involvement of societal stakeholders.
2. PhD Policy and Training: supervision and instruction of PhD candidates.
3. Academic Culture: openness, (social) safety and inclusivity; and research integrity.

The Committee was also requested to specifically reflect on the following questions:

1. Does the Committee assess ISiS as a fully-fledged and internationally competitive institute with a clear identity of its own?
2. Does ISiS cover what it should cover? And if so, would the Committee consider this feasible?
3. How does the Committee assess the future of ISiS as a research institute, taking into account:
   a. research focus
   b. size and structure of the research staff
   c. organizational embedding in the faculty and the university as a whole
   d. other criteria?

4. Data provided to the Committee

The Committee members received a documentation package well in advance of the site visit. This contained the self-evaluations of ISiS, with a description of the mission, objectives and results achieved in the reporting period, as well as developments anticipated in the future. The documentation included quantitative data about staff composition, PhDs, publications, and financial resources. The Committee also received the SEP and TOR for the assessment. In the period leading up to the site visit and during the site visit, the Committee received, upon request, further information on the organizational structure of Radboud University and the Faculty of Science, on the funding of the Institute, and its PhD policy.

5. Procedures followed by the Committee

Committee members were asked to read the complete information package and provide their preliminary appraisal of ISiS prior to the site visit. This was used as input for a preparatory teleconference that was held a week prior to the site visit.

The Chair of the Committee assigned specific focus areas to each Committee member, based on their expertise. This enabled Committee members to pay particular attention to their designated task areas during preparation and take the lead in interviews and discussions during the site visit as well as in the subsequent reporting.

Appendix 1 shows the programme of the site visit. Between the interviews, time was available for the Committee to discuss the various findings. At the end of the site visit, a closed Committee session was held so that all members could come to a consensus on the final assessments of ISiS. At the conclusion of the visit, the Committee presented its main preliminary conclusions to the ISiS community orally.

After the site visit, the evaluation report was prepared, with each Committee member taking the lead in composing the sections they had focused on. An integrated version of the report was then circulated to the Committee for comment. A final version, that took these comments into account, was then drawn up and sent to ISiS for a check on possible factual errors. Finally, the report was delivered to the Executive Board of Radboud University.
2. Aims, strategy, organization of ISiS

Through the preparatory documents and the site visit, the Committee received a clear view of the mission, strategy and organization of ISiS. A summary is given below.

The Institute for Science in Society (ISiS) at Radboud University developed from the Department of Philosophy, which has been part of the Faculty of Science from its creation in 1957. The Institute was formally established within the Faculty of Science in 2005. ISiS is a relatively small research unit that features about five permanent research FTE, distributed among 12 permanent staff members (two full professors, five associate professors, four assistant professors, one senior researcher), 31 PhD students and 8 postdocs) (as counted in October 2022). ISiS is part of the Faculty of Science, yet it develops its own research programmes, often in collaboration with other academic research institutes within and outside the Faculty of Science and/or with societal stakeholders. The Institute consists of two groups: Philosophy of Natural Sciences and Socio-Ecological Interactions. The Director is supported by a secretariat, the ISiS managing director and a secretariat. The ISiS Board includes the director, the managing director, the coordinator of ISiS education, and two academic staff members.

ISiS conducts research and provides education at the interface between science and society. Its mission is to analyse, assess and improve the societal embedding of science and technology, and to gain in-depth understanding of how related issues and problems are given meaning in society and how they can be handled. This is done through four cross-cutting research themes: (1) Understanding scientific understanding; (2) Dynamics and dependencies in socio-ecological interactions; (3) Science, ethics and integrity; and (4) Science-society communication. Research at ISiS is both disciplinary and interdisciplinary, combining a plurality of research methods.

In the past reporting period, the unit’s strategic aims have been (1) to develop a common narrative for ISiS for thematic coherence of the research programme; (2) to strengthen cooperation with other institutes of the Faculty of Science; (3) to replace staff with short-term, temporary contracts with young career trackers with permanent full-time contracts, thus exploiting opportunities for growth; (4) to actively search for opportunities to obtain prestigious grants; (5) to develop expertise in research on multi-stakeholder dialogues in transdisciplinary research projects and in training societal actors in dialogue skills; (6) to document and classify research output in view of the next research assessment; (7) to develop mixed methods in interdisciplinary research settings; and (8) to keep and further develop the ethics theme in research and education.
3. Assessment of ISiS

In this section, the Committee evaluates the performance of ISiS on the three criteria of research quality, relevance to society, and viability. In line with the requirements of the SEP, the Committee also considers how the Institute organizes and performs its research with special reference to Open Science, PhD Policy and Training, Academic Culture and Human Resources Policy.

The Committee makes its assessment on the basis of the documents received and the interviews during the site visit.

The following structure will be followed:
- The specific aspects of Academic Culture and Human Resources Policy will be considered first (3.1. Organization and performance of research at ISiS) as they provide the necessary context for the Committee’s further assessment.
- The specific aspect of ‘Open Science’ will be discussed as part of the section on ‘3.2. Research Quality’ (considerations related to open access of data and publications) and ‘3.3. Relevance to Society’ (considerations about stakeholder engagement).
- The specific aspect of ‘PhD Policy and Training’ will be discussed in a separate section (3.4.).
- The considerations of section 3.1. to 3.4. will form the basis to then evaluate the Institute’s Viability (section 3.5.)

An overview of the Committee’s recommendations is given in section 4 of this report.

3.1. Organization and performance of research at ISiS

3.1.1. Academic culture

Openness, (social) safety and inclusivity

The Committee concludes that ISiS has a supportive and inclusive academic culture. The interviews confirmed that researchers at all levels of seniority experience the atmosphere as warm, open and caring. Importantly, the Institute’s leadership is seen as the embodiment of this culture. Various social meetings are organized to support researchers to feel ‘at home’. That these activities were carried forward during the pandemic was much appreciated.

There are also institutional safeguards to ensure openness, safety, and inclusivity. There is a well-functioning system of confidential advisors, who ISiS staff regard to be visible and approachable. For PhD candidates there is also a PhD coordinator and monthly PhD committee meetings for voicing needs and concerns. More details on the academic culture as experienced by the PhD students will be given in section 3.4.

The supportive academic culture is largely ensured through informal practices. While the warm and open culture is carried throughout the organization and is thus sufficiently anchored, it may be worthwhile to institutionalize parts of these practices to ensure consistency in the face of potential future personnel changes and retirements. The new strategy on authorship in the Introductory Guide for PhD candidates that was drafted with input from different levels at the organization is a good example.

Research integrity

ISiS has an open culture where it is relatively easy to discuss research integrity issues and where few
conflicts occur. Research integrity is also a research topic at ISiS, and the Institute actively contributes to teaching ethics and research integrity at Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD levels. This reflects the Institute’s expertise in research integrity, which comes with the responsibility to “practice what they preach”. This commitment is recognizable throughout the organization.

3.1.2. Human Resources Policy

Diversity

The Committee concludes that ISiS has a reasonable gender and age balance. It sees potential in further promoting diversity among senior scholars in terms of nationalities/ethnic backgrounds and gender, particularly in the assistant professor position, and in the Institute’s philosophy group. The language barrier for international staff is a point of attention in a predominantly Dutch Institute and Faculty, where some communication (still) occurs in Dutch. The Committee encourages being even more sensitive to language used to create a more inclusive environment for non-Dutch scholars. Nevertheless, it values that language training is available for foreign staff.

The Committee values that diversity and implicit bias courses are now mandatory for members of hiring committees. Also, attention is paid to diversity in the membership of hiring committees.

Talent management

The Committee was pleased to learn that talent management has been a strategic priority in the review period. Whereas ISiS previously employed quite a few people on small part-time contracts, it has focused successfully on engaging staff on full-time contracts, which has resulted in two full-time career track assistant professors coming on board. At the time of the site visit, ISiS was in the process of recruiting three junior researchers in newly created permanent positions, aligned with ISiS priorities (see section 2.1). There are plans to further strengthen the theme ‘Ethics’ by attracting an extra chair. The rationale behind this plan is convincing: several staff conduct research on it, and there is increased research and educational demand on the theme. Also, ISiS only has two full professors (0.9 fte), leaving the professors at risk of overload by management tasks, which is why ISiS has made strengthening the core staff with a third full professor a priority. The Committee agrees with ISiS that the growth that has been realized in the review period, as well as the planned growth, are important in attaining critical mass as an Institute. The Committee learned that ISiS wants to grow moderately. The Committee supports this ambition.

The Committee applauds that several associate professors have received the Ius Promovendi, which helps the Institute to supervise the growing number of junior researchers (PhDs, postdocs) that goes together with the extension of the permanent staff.

Career progression for ISiS staff was another topic that featured prominently in the interviews. As explained in more detail below, the nature of ISiS research means its staff invests a lot of time in stakeholder engagement and building bridges between disciplines. In this sense, ISiS staff can be regarded as trailblazers for new kinds of academic careers. The Committee highly values that customized trajectories for career progression are increasingly supported, with a Faculty Board that provides the room for ISiS to play a leading role in shaping the new standards and trajectories. The Committee urges ISiS to seize the opportunity to formally develop standards and criteria, including for stakeholder engagement and interdisciplinary work, so that they can be recognized at the faculty level for career progression.
3.2. Research quality

The Committee has assessed the quality of the unit’s research over the past six-year period in its international, national and regional context based on the self-evaluation report and interviews with ISiS staff.

3.2.1. Profile, objectives and approach

The Committee is of the opinion that ISiS has succeeded in developing a rational and highly synergistic approach to conduct research at the interface between science and society, which allows the Institute to set itself apart from other research institutes with a similar research focus. The Committee observed that the ISiS approach revolves around a number of key components. First, ISiS is in the process of developing a unique mixed methodology, which integrates social sciences and philosophy in inter- and transdisciplinary research. In particular, it combines empirical analysis and ethical analysis. Second, ISiS fosters interdisciplinary research by bringing together researchers from various disciplines, including philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, and interdisciplinary scientists. Importantly, it works with embedded researchers from the natural science domains, including physics, life sciences, mathematics, and informatics. Also, the extensive collaboration with the Faculty of Science, and ISiS’ own MSc Science in Society specialization open to all science students, facilitates knowledge exchange. Third, ISiS operates in a transdisciplinary manner, with a strong focus on stakeholder engagement in its research projects.

The Committee encourages ISiS to further develop this unique approach, and make its defining elements more visible, both internally and externally. In particular, it sees room to further finetune the integration of social sciences and philosophy in inter- and transdisciplinary research, to make it increasingly part of the ISiS shared identity, and to implement it in ISiS projects and education.

During the site visit, the Committee spoke at length with different groups of interviewees about the common narrative of ISiS, the further development of which has been one of the Institute’s strategic objectives of the review period. The four research themes provide an overarching framework that fits ISiS’ current expertise and research topics. From the interviews it became clear that the collaborative search for these themes has been important in developing a common narrative. The Committee was pleased to learn that ISiS researchers recognize the four cross-cutting research themes that were developed to provide more direction and focus to ISiS’ research (see section 1). The four themes are increasingly used as a compass to decide on which projects and collaborations to engage in. ISiS management also convincingly explained how the assignments of the new assistant professors are aligned with ISiS research themes, and that future hires are done in light of this strategy.

The Committee highly values the initiatives that have been taken to evolve towards more integration within the Institute. The Committee discussions and the tour of the facilities showed to the Committee that the social scientists and philosophers at ISiS truly collaborate, rather than operating as separate silos. The Committee appreciates that the weekly colloquia are well attended by junior as well as senior researchers, as they are an important lever towards more integration. Also, the practice of PhD supervision by at least two senior staff members from different themes, is crucial. The Committee sees further room for improvement in establishing the ‘ISiS’-approach as a linking pin between the researchers.

3.2.2. Indicators of research quality

ISIS is a relatively small, but thriving research institute, that is very active in several domains. The Institute produces a considerable number of publications per research fte. The selected ISiS
publications provided the Committee with an insight in the wide variety of topics and research collaborations. The recognition of ISIS’ expertise, relevance and research quality is also demonstrated by the staff’s membership of journal editorial and advisory boards. Additionally, staff is regularly invited to join research projects in other research groups. The Committee noted that ISIS is highly visible in the Faculty of Science as an interdisciplinary partner, for example for NWO projects. The Committee concludes that leadership and reputation in the field appear to be strong, with different members of the Institute clearly having a niche where they are recognized as relevant experts. In its preparation, the Committee noted that the personal websites of individual ISIS researchers could be more informative on their research output. The Committee recommends making this information available to improve visibility of the Institute.

The increase in third-party funding and the shift from smaller contracts toward prestigious and bigger research grants in the core fields of ISIS, is another important indicator of ISIS’ research quality. Still, the Committee also noted that a relatively high percentage (approx. 50%) of ISIS’ funding comes from ‘direct funding’, while 26% originates from research grants. The Committee does not have a strong opinion on this division. It can be argued that ISIS’ objective, its way of working (flexible, responding to topics that emerge, connecting between research and education, stakeholder involvement, societal outreach), and the extra time needed for this approach, justifies the relatively high percentage of direct funding.

The Committee concludes that ISIS meets the standards of common indicators for research quality.

3.2.3. Open science

Publishing in open access is a standard practice at the Institute. The Institute also takes conventional steps to make data available (data management plans, FAIR principles). While the Institute has a data steward offering support in making data openly available, only two datasets have been made available thus far. It was not entirely clear to the Committee whether the Institute tracks the share of publications that are made available in open access.

In conclusion, the Committee is of the opinion that ISIS’ research focus and its specific approach distinguishes the Institute from other research institutes with a similar research focus. The recognition of ISIS’ expertise, relevance and research quality is demonstrated by a variety of indicators. Taken together, the Committee assesses ISIS as a fully-fledged and internationally competitive institute with a clear identity of its own. The Committee believes this can be further entrenched by further developing, articulating, and making visible this unique approach.

3.3. Relevance to society

Based on the self-evaluation report and the interviews, the Committee would like to commend ISIS for its inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to science in society, which have led to significant contributions in addressing timely societal controversies. The Institute's strong foundation in ethics and philosophy has laid the groundwork for its focus on societal impact. As mentioned above, one of ISIS’ key strengths is its convincing integration of philosophical and social sciences analysis. By combining empirical with ethical analysis and strong stakeholder interaction, ISIS scholars are able to generate context-sensitive results that are characterized by broad societal legitimacy. Importantly, ISIS is ideally positioned to interface with the “hard” sciences of Radboud University, thereby further contributing to bridging the gap between science and society. Taken together, this ISIS approach allows for nuanced and impactful knowledge on controversial societal issues related to science, such as climate change, biodiversity restoration, COVID-19, rewilding, and emerging technologies.
The Committee noted that the Institute actively involves stakeholders in different phases of the research cycle. This is visible in terms of outreach – research staff produce a substantive number of publications for professional magazines, for the general public, and other outputs. And the involvement of stakeholders is also visible in the earlier phase of the research cycle, both in terms of organizing stakeholder dialogues and in institutionalizing such interactions. One noteworthy example is the Centre for Connecting Humans and Nature, which is partly financed by organizations and societal actors that are potential users of the research results, highlighting the practical applicability and relevance of ISIS’s research in addressing real-world challenges. Stakeholder involvement neatly fits the Institute’s research strategy - involving stakeholders in research is encouraged at the institute level, and valued in the yearly appraisal of staff. ISIS’ expertise in stakeholder involvement plays an important role in enabling open science at the Faculty of Science at large.

The Committee acknowledges ISIS’s commitment to reflection, analysis, and publication of their transdisciplinary research methods and science-in-society approaches. This contributes much-needed knowledge to the development of transdisciplinary methods and theory, and to the dissemination thereof.

In sum, the Committee is impressed with ISIS’ relevance to society. Its commitment to societal relevance is evident in its projects and strong collaborations with diverse societal groups. The Committee emphasizes that building impactful interactions with society requires specific expertise and is time-intensive. As already mentioned above (see 3.1.2.) the Committee feels there is room to better recognize this in career progression. The Committee will also further elaborate on this below (section 2.6., ‘Viability’).

3.4. PhD Policy and Training

ISIS has the important fundamentals of PhD policy and training in place, and has made important improvements in this regard over the past years. The PhDs are well-supported by policy, supervisors, training, and group culture. The PhD students the Committee spoke to were passionate about their research and pleased with the warm and collaborative atmosphere they experienced at ISIS.

3.4.1. PhD supervision

The Committee observed a culture of investing a lot of time in PhD supervision. ISIS recently broadened the number of people with promotion rights, which allows senior staff to divide the workload of functioning as promoters. The Committee supports the Institute’s policy to have at least two supervisors per PhD. Moreover, the deliberate attempt to select two (or more) supervisors from different research themes seems appropriate in light of the group’s future ambitions, and the Committee recommends keeping this focus. The Committee also applauds the newly developed co-authorship guidelines and the welcome guide for PhDs that ISIS has put in place.

One point of attention is that the focus on inter- and transdisciplinarity and the unique ISIS methodology make it likely that PhD projects are supervised by staff who do not have all the relevant (methodological) expertise necessary to assess and guide the PhD-candidates in their research. This requires clear conversations between PhD and supervisors during the beginning of the project: is all the needed (methodological) expertise present in the supervision team, and if not, how do we find a way to include it?
3.4.2. PhD training/education

PhDs expressed their appreciation of the PhD training. While membership of existing national research schools is a good option for many (most prominently WTMC), flexibility and tailor-made programs are the default, allowing for relevant programs for all PhDs. The recent establishment of the ISiS Graduate School provides additional guarantee for supporting external PhDs and other PhDs who desire a tailor-made solution in designing a relevant training programme.

Finding the appropriate teaching opportunities for PhDs interested in pursuing a career in education appears to be a challenge. The Committee recommends exploring how training in education can become a clearer part of the TSP.

The PhDs expressed that desires for and views on their career after the PhD are part of the ongoing conversations with their supervisors. The Committee received a list of where former ISiS PhDs are working now, which looked compelling.

3.4.3. Atmosphere and culture

In addition to supervision, PhDs are supported through a peer group (InterVision), regular social events, a culture of open conversations, and weekly colloquia. Part of the rationale behind the colloquia is that PhDs have the opportunity to develop their presentation skills. The Committee recommends the Institute to stay attentive to how to improve participation of PhDs in presenting at the weekly colloquia.

PhDs are aware of where to go in case of conflicts. It is positive that the Committee received no indication of current or recent conflicts.

A consequence of the diversity of research topics and methods in ISiS is that PhDs sometimes experience distance from each other’s work, and from the work of the rest of the staff. The Committee recommends ISiS to stay particularly attentive to a sense of substantive “belonging” — based on content and/or approach of research – in addition to the social belonging that seems well in place. Further developing the unique ISiS approach could play an excellent role in achieving this sense of belonging, and reducing the perceived distance between each other’s work.

3.5. Viability

ISiS is well-positioned for the future, thanks to the substantial efforts that have been made in the review period. ISiS’ research revolves increasingly around its four research themes, with its researchers collaborating across disciplines. The Institute is developing unique inter- and transdisciplinary science-in-society approaches, leading to significant scientific and societal contributions in addressing timely societal controversies. This makes ISiS attractive as an inter- and transdisciplinary partner in research projects. With its growth in recent years and the planned further expansion of its staff with three to four extra positions, ISiS staff has reached the critical mass required to further build the Institute. Importantly, ISiS’ academic culture is warm and inclusive, making the Institute an attractive environment to work in.

While all these elements bode well for ISiS’ viability, the Committee has also identified some challenges. Although most of these challenges were already addressed above, the Committee further elaborates on them here, as they impact the Institute’s viability.
First of all, ISiS's inter- and transdisciplinary approach requires a significant amount of extra time and effort compared to more 'traditional' scientific work. Therefore, the Committee encourages ISiS to work on quality criteria that complement traditional research quality criteria and guide quality management and the visibility of their societally relevant science within the faculty, Radboud university and beyond. The Institute's commitment to engaging with stakeholders and their expertise on empirical and ethical analysis are valuable assets for this task of assessing the societal relevance of research.

In acknowledgement of the time and expertise needed for building and managing long-term relations with different societal groups, the Committee encourages ISiS to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of possibly specialising in certain societal groups. Additional support in the form of communication experts, facilitators, or other professionals could enable ISiS researchers to focus more on planning transdisciplinary approaches, method development, and publishing, thereby enhancing the visibility and codification of their transdisciplinary expertise.

Additionally, the Committee highlights the need for customized career tracks that allow for specialization (for example in transdisciplinary research, or teaching or careers in "pure" science) to avoid pressure on individuals to over-perform across multiple criteria.

Second, thematic coherence and a common narrative are essential for ISiS to focus its research efforts effectively. The Committee advises ISiS to keep working on the clarity of the four research themes and to continue using them as guidance in strategic choices. Also, the unique ISiS method of combining philosophy and social sciences (the reflective and the empirical) in inter- and transdisciplinary research should be further developed, and established as a linking pin between ISiS researchers. The Committee noted that the large diversity of disciplinary backgrounds, epistemologies, and themes within ISIS can be disorienting for some, which is why the necessary support should be provided to navigate this complex reality.

Third, the current excellent academic culture is largely ensured through informal practices. The Committee emphasizes the need to sustain the ISiS approach in the face of future retirements of the two professors in early 2025 and 2028. It recommends putting in place more formal policies codifying what works for the culture of ISiS, not to replace current practice with a more formal approach, but to make current good practices explicit and, if necessary, safeguard them. These policies could include career progression, distribution of tasks, and incorporation of societal engagements in research and teaching. The Committee believes that further codifying the different ISIS practices will ensure continuity beyond the individual leadership of the current management.

Fourth, ISiS’ limited size, and the pressure this puts on its core staff, make it challenging to take the lead in newly emerging topics. This is why the Committee strongly supports the strategic goal of ISiS to attract a third full professor to work on research ethics and scientific integrity, as it will further support the Institute in realizing its ambitions.

Finally, the Committee emphasizes that in view of ISiS’ viability, there is a clear need to become a formal research institute, as this will help ISiS gain further visibility and seize all the opportunities that arise. The Committee finds the reasons for wanting recognition as a research institute convincing. Also, it noted that ISiS is de facto already considered as such by all partners and stakeholders. In order to substantiate its particular qualities, ISiS needs specific quality and performance criteria, as already pointed at above. The Committee advises to work towards an agreement with the faculty so that these quality and performance criteria are formally recognized.
4. Recommendations

The Committee recommends ISiS to

1. keep working on the clarity of the four research themes and to continue using them as guidance in strategic choices;
2. further finetune the integration of social sciences and philosophy in inter- and transdisciplinary research, and make its defining elements more visible, both internally and externally;
3. provide the necessary support, especially for junior researchers, to navigate the Institute's complex interdisciplinary reality, staying particularly attentive to a sense of substantive “belonging”;
4. stay attentive to how to improve participation of PhDs in presenting at the weekly colloquia;
5. continue the active involvement of stakeholders in ISiS’ research, including at the early phases of the research cycle;
6. reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of possibly specialising on a more limited number of societal issues and types of inter- and transdisciplinary collaborations;
7. consider providing additional support to ISiS researchers for their transdisciplinary work in the form of communication experts, facilitators, or other professionals;
8. continue sharing ISiS expertise in stakeholder involvement within the Faculty of Science;
9. continue investing in its supportive and open academic culture;
10. identify strategic elements of the academic culture that can be further institutionalized to ensure their continuity in the face of personnel changes;
11. ensure that internal communication is (also) in English.
12. develop quality criteria that complement traditional research quality criteria and guide quality management and the visibility of their societally relevant science within the faculty, Radboud university and beyond;
13. maintain the ambition to grow moderately;
14. attract a Chair in Ethics and Scientific Integrity;
15. explore how teaching and training in education can be a clearer part of PhD students’ TSP;
16. explore options to make research data openly accessible, including qualitative data, and implement this in day-to-day research practice;
17. keep track of ISiS open access publications, and strive at making open access standard publication practice;
18. make the personal websites of individual ISiS researchers more informative on their research output.

The Committee recommends the Faculty of Science to
1. recognize ISiS formally as a research institute;
2. support ISiS in its plans to attract a Chair in Ethics and Scientific Integrity, considering the increased research and educational demand on the theme;
3. recognize the specific quality criteria for ISiS' socially engaged inter- and transdisciplinary research (see ISiS recommendation 12);
4. consider providing additional support to ISiS researchers for their transdisciplinary work in the form of communication experts, facilitators, or other professionals;
5. ensure that internal communication is (also) in English.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Program site visit

Thursday, March 23, 2023
Hotel Van der Valk, Hertog Eduardplein 4, Nijmegen-Lent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16:30</td>
<td>Closed committee meeting; site visit preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:30</td>
<td>Welcome reception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present on behalf of Radboud University:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof. dr. Han van Krieken (rector magnificus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof. dr. Noelle Aarts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof. dr. Henk de Regt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Luca Consoli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Simon Lohse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:30</td>
<td>Dinner and further preparation of the site visit (committee only).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Friday, March 24, 2023
Huygens Building, Heyendaalseweg 135, Nijmegen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Taxi from hotel Van der Valk to the Huygens building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Welcome to the Faculty of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof. dr. Sjibbrand de Jong (dean of the Faculty of Science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ISIS board members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:10</td>
<td>Interview with ISIS board members, including a short introduction to the institute (5 min).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof. dr. Noelle Aarts (director of ISIS, professor of socio-ecological interactions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prof. dr. Henk de Regt (professor of philosophy of science)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Verhagen (managing director)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:50</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05</td>
<td>Interview with senior staff members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Rylan van den Born (associate professor of socio-ecological interactions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Luca Consoli (associate professor of science and society)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Martin Drenthen (associate professor of environmental philosophy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Lotte Krabbenborg (associate professor public participation in science and technology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:40</td>
<td>Interview with early- and midcareer researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Wessel Ganzewoort (postdoctoral researcher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15</td>
<td>Break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30</td>
<td>Interview with PhD candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Sabine Baumgarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Vincent Coumans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Bernadette van Heel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Jill van der Kamp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Jing Wang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:05</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00</td>
<td>Tour of the Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30</td>
<td>Interview on PhD program and supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dr. Martin Drentsien (associate professor, PhD coordinator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dr. Willem Halfman (associate professor of science and technology studies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00</td>
<td>Interview with board members of the Faculty of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prof. dr. Sijbrand de Jong (dean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prof. dr. Richard van Wezel (vice dean of research)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:30</td>
<td>Break + preparation of points for final discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>Final meeting with ISIS board (Aarts, De Regt and Verhagen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:30</td>
<td>Committee meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:15</td>
<td>Presentation of preliminary results by the committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prof. dr. Han van Kriezen (rector magnificus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Prof. dr. Sijbrand de Jong (dean)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Board and staff members ISIS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:45</td>
<td>Drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:30</td>
<td>Dinner at Huize Heyendaal, Geert Grooteplein Noord 9, Nijmegen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Members of the assessment committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- ISIS board members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:00</td>
<td>Taxi to hotel</td>
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</table>
Appendix 2: Quantitative data on composition and funding

1. Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#pers</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>#pers</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>#pers</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>#pers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scientific Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant professors (1)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate professors (1)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full professors (1)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers (2)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD candidates (3)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External PhDs (4)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total research staff</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Comparable with WIDPI categories assistant professor (UD), associate professor UHD) full professor (HGL); tenured and non-tenured staff.

Note 2: Comparable with WIDPI category ’Postdocs’.

Note 3: Standard PhD employed.

Note 4: External PhDs do not have formal FTEs.

Note: Research staff FTE is the nominal time spent on research (# indicates the number of people involved).

The nominal division of tasks is 40% teaching, 20% management and 40% research. Tenure-track scientists have a reduced teaching load for the first three years of their appointment (20%). Postdocs are assumed to do 90% research and 10% teaching. PhD candidates are assumed to spend about 75% of their time on research, 15% on training and 10% on teaching.
2. Funding and expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISIS Funding</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>FTE</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct funding (1)</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research grants (2)</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract research (3)</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (4)</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total funding</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>k€</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>k€</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>k€</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>k€</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>k€</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>k€</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personnel costs</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>1,469</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>1,897</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>1,945</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>2,077</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other costs</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1,629</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1,847</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2,081</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2,117</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 1: Direct funding (basisfinanciering / lump-sum budget).
Note 2: Research grants obtained in national scientific competition (e.g. grants from NWO and NAW).
Note 3: Research contracts for specific research projects obtained from external organisations, such as industry, government ministries, European organisations and charitable organisations.
Note 4: Funds that do not fit into the other categories.

3. PhD candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starting Year</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>M+F</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T-8 2013</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-7 2014</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-6 2015</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-5 2016</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-4 2017</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>T-3 2018</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Response of the Institute for Science in Society to the Research Assessment Report 2023

Introduction

We would like to thank the committee for a clear analysis of our research with related recommendations to strengthen the position of ISiS in the near future. In this document we present our reaction to the report, including how we plan to deal with the recommendations.

We are very pleased that the committee assesses ISiS as a fully-fledged and internationally competitive institute with a clear identity of its own, well-positioned for the future. The committee also concludes that ISiS has succeeded in developing a rational and highly synergistic approach to conduct research at the interface between science and society, with significant scientific and societal contributions in addressing timely societal controversies. Moreover, the committee considers ISiS' academic culture warm and inclusive, with PhDs feeling well-supported by policy, supervisors, training and group culture.

The Committee encourages ISiS to work on quality criteria that complement traditional research quality criteria.

We welcome this recommendation. ISiS researchers often work on societal issues in inter- and transdisciplinary research consortia. Traditional criteria to assess research quality, such as peer-reviewed publications, impact factors and citation scores fall short here. The resulting impact of research in society must also be evaluated. To this end, qualitative and, where possible, quantitative indicators should be developed. ISiS is currently doing research with NWO on impact of transdisciplinary research with the aim of developing new criteria to assess impact. Because of the importance of this topic, ISiS recently hired a postdoc and a PhD to investigate various aspects of inter- and transdisciplinary research (including evaluation criteria).

The Committee highlights the need for customized career tracks.

The ISiS Board is very much in favor of customized career tracks for its staff members. The national policy of Recognizing and Rewarding differences among people (Erkennen en Waarderen) is an important guideline for us.

ISiS feels very much supported in this by the policy of the faculty in which tenure track for academic staff was recently replaced by customized career track. Every year, ISiS discusses with all employees how they would like to develop further, what their ambitions are and what needs to be done to realize them. In addition, an annual conversation takes place with the Faculty board in which all staff members and their career track is discussed.

Customized career tracks invite to appreciate differences between people. Partly for this reason, we steer towards a more international composition of the institute. Since we now
indeed have several nationalities on board (e.g. Germany, India, China, Indonesia), all key communication within ISiS is nowadays in English.

**The Committee encourages ISiS to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of possibly specializing in certain societal groups.**

ISiS conducts research into various aspects of the processes that should lead to change and improvement in the positioning of science in society. To avoid overloading ISiS staff members, it is wise to focus on a limited number of societal domains, that include specific societal groups, and to nurture and increase our visibility in those domains. The four research themes guide our choices in this respect.

In order to be able to manage the amount of work coming our way, the institute is steering towards moderate growth with the arrival of three new UD.s. Our research themes again help to select people with a clear focus on one or more of these themes.

At the same time, we find it important to continue to identify new developments in society and include them in our research. For example, we recently started a project on AI, and several PhDs are studying interspecies interactions in various contexts. On the latter theme, the NWA project Wildlife NL was launched in January. New subthemes can be attached to the four research themes: for instance, interspecies interaction can be placed under socio-ecological interactions and AI under scientific understanding. In addition, ISiS will always need to consider whether the research themes, with the involvement of specific societal groups 1) are still relevant, and 2) generate sufficient opportunities for research.

**Additional support could enable ISiS researchers to focus more on planning transdisciplinary approaches, method development, and publishing, and thereby enhancing the visibility and codification of their transdisciplinary expertise.**

ISiS is mostly involved in transdisciplinary research in which scientists from different disciplines collaborate with societal stakeholders. We agree with the committee that transdisciplinary research places high demands on our researchers. It is complex and time-consuming. Therefore it is important to organize additional support to ISiS researchers in the form of communication experts, project managers and facilitators. In the WildlifeNL project, for instance, support of a communication manager and a project-coordinator has been guaranteed through the budget, to the great satisfaction of all researchers. This good example will be followed.

In addition, a good research practice that improves our visibility as well as our mission to improve the societal embedding of science in society is our open access publication strategy. The university and library are very supportive in this. ISiS continues to collaborate with the library to optimize this.
The Committee advises ISiS to keep working on the clarity of the four research themes and to continue using them as guidance in strategic choices.

The four research themes emerged from our deliberate efforts to cluster the research of ISiS staff in relation to the mission of ISiS and to what is going on in society. We have found that the research themes help us maintain focus, make strategic choices and thereby strengthen our identity. Therefore, it takes little encouragement to use the themes as guidance in strategic choices.

The Committee encourages ISiS to further develop its unique approach, and make its defining elements more visible.

Our unique approach is the integration of social sciences, philosophy and ethics in inter- and transdisciplinary research with the aim to contribute to better science in a better world. Our intensive collaboration with natural scientists in the faculty contributes to our uniqueness.

ISiS staff members have invested a great deal in relation management in recent years. This has resulted in wonderful collaborative projects with almost all institutes of the faculty. It is of great importance to continue investing in visibility and relation management, through joint research, but also through active participation in various committees.

The organization of the ISiS website will be improved, especially the personal websites of individual researchers, to increase visibility. We are proud of our research posters, as well as the design of ISiS as a whole. Recently, we started an ISiS Twitter account and a LinkedIn account. The number of visitors and exchanges is growing steadily!

The Committee appreciates the excellent academic culture and recommends to make current good practices explicit, and, if necessary, safeguard them.

The Committee has observed that in recent years an excellent academic culture has developed organically on the basis of informal rules and practices. For example, several reading clubs have emerged on the basis of self-organization in which researchers of all levels discuss specific topics with each other. In addition, there is also a particularly pleasant culture in the social sphere, characterized by recurring joint activities, and above all by attention and concern for each other’s wellbeing. The so-called TAC (The Activity Committee in which staff members, PhD and MsC students participate) plays an important role in this.

In early 2022, a retreat took place in which ISiS researchers gathered for two days at the Soeterbeeck Conference Center to discuss current and future research. Because this retreat was widely appreciated as a great social event, and provided great insights into our shared identity and new lines of research that are a perfect fit for ISiS, the ISiS board has decided to organize such a retreat every two years.
All in all, ISiS attaches great importance to continuing to encourage and facilitate such bonding initiatives and archive these for the sake of our institutional memory.

The committee indicates that it is very important to provide junior researchers in particular with the necessary support to navigate the Institute's complex interdisciplinary reality, staying particularly attentive to a sense of substantive "belonging."

We very much agree. We have, for example, recently adapted and updated an already existing document of guidelines for PhDs, with an eye on this issue. We are currently working on a similar document for postdocs and new employees. ISiS staff members have very frequent meetings with their PhDs and postdocs. It cannot go unmentioned how ISiS PhDs themselves have developed a culture of having lunch together, organizing social activities and helping each other. This is highly appreciated by all PhDs as well as by the ISiS board and facilitated whenever possible.

We continue to encourage staff members as well as postdocs and PhDs to not only attend the weekly colloquia, but also present their work-in-progress themselves. In addition, PhDs are encouraged to contribute to teaching by giving them the opportunity to support courses close to their research object. PhDs have recently taken charge of organizing this themselves. We are monitoring how that is progressing.

The Committee strongly supports the strategic goal of ISiS to attract a third full professor to work on research ethics and scientific integrity.

We are very pleased with this recommendation, reflecting our own wish. ISiS is happy to work with the faculty to explore options in this regard.

The Committee emphasizes that in view of ISiS' viability, there is a clear need to become a formal research institute.

Again, of course, we very much agree. As the Committee has concluded, ISIS functions as a full-fledged research institute and is seen as such by the outside world. In line with the steady developments within ISiS, to be continued in de coming years, we would very much appreciate the formalization of ISiS as a research institute.