Amsterdam Young Academy

Annual Report 2019
Contents
1. Preface ................................................................................................................................................ 2
2. Facts and numbers .................................................................................................................................. 3
   Board & Support .................................................................................................................................... 3
   Members’ retreat ................................................................................................................................ 4
   Finances .............................................................................................................................................. 4
3. Working groups ................................................................................................................................... 6
   Communication ................................................................................................................................... 6
   Grants programme .............................................................................................................................. 6
      1 - Scientist of the future ................................................................................................................ 6
      2 - EADM Symposium .................................................................................................................... 6
      3 - Interdisciplinary project Viral Fear ............................................................................................ 6
      4 - Booklet for Early Career Scholars .......................................................................................... 6
      5 - Interdisciplinary experiment on children’s exploration .......................................................... 7
      6 - The AYA Science tour ................................................................................................................ 7
      7 - Escaperoom ............................................................................................................................... 7
   Interdisciplinarity ................................................................................................................................ 8
   Science policy ...................................................................................................................................... 8
   Science for Society .............................................................................................................................. 8
4. Partners and other activities ............................................................................................................... 9
   VU, UvA and Amsterdam UMC leadership ......................................................................................... 9
   Municipality ........................................................................................................................................ 9
   Participation in Dies VU Amsterdam .................................................................................................. 9
   DJA and other local Young Academies .............................................................................................. 9
   Advisory board .................................................................................................................................... 9
Appendix A: AYA Finances .................................................................................................................. 9

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1. Preface

Amsterdam Young Academy was founded in November 2018. AYA aims to be the positive, constructive voice of young academics in Amsterdam’s universities, in these challenging times for universities: replication crises, financial pressure, marginalization of the humanities, burnouts and stress among staff.

Privileged with resources and independence, we used 2019 to identify key challenges and opportunities regarding science policy, science for society, and interdisciplinarity. We spent time getting to know each other and setting up new, adventurous connections with each other and with key players in Amsterdam. This report provides an overview of projects we delved into and what is upcoming in 2020. We are excited about the opportunities we have been given and look forward to serving the city of Amsterdam and its academic community, young scholars in particular.

Thanks for reading our annual report.

On behalf of the board of the Amsterdam Young Academy,

With kind regards,

Rik Peels
2. Facts and numbers

AYA was officially launched on November 6th, 2018. The first 30 members were affiliated to all faculties of both VU and UvA. On November 8, 2019, 10 new members were installed. Over the year, 3 AYA members resigned. The total number of AYA members as of December 31, 2019 is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University of Amsterdam</th>
<th>VU Amsterdam</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Science</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Humanities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Medicine</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Law</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faculty of Economics and Business</td>
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Total number of AYA members: 37

Board & Support

AYA set out in February 2019 with five board members and four support staff members.

AYA Board composition over the year 2019
- Rik Peels, chair (Faculty of Humanities, VU)
- Silke Muylaert, vice chair (Faculty of Theology and Religion, VU)
- Linda Douw (VUmc School of Medical Sciences)
- Helmer Helmers (Faculty of Humanities, UvA) [until 4/12/2019]
- Maria Weimer (Faculty of Law, UvA) [until 4/12/2019]
- Katinka van der Kooij (Faculty of Behavioural and Movement Sciences, VU) [as of 2/10/2019]
- Eddie Brummelman (Faculty of social and Behavioural Sciences, UvA) [as of 4/12/2019]

AYA is supported by a team of 2 VU and 2 UvA staff members. They together share 0.6 fte allocated for support for AYA by the executive boards of both universities. The 2019 members of the AYA support team were:
- Nienke de Bruijn - HR policy advisor VU
- Barbara Coolen - Creative Director SPUI25 UvA
- Lisa Hardon - Secretary Academic Affairs UvA [until 1/6/2019]
- Adriana Jansen - Management Support UvA [as of 1/6/2019]
- Fernie Maas - Secretary Institutional Affairs VU

The AYA board follows a structure of monthly meetings and had ten board meetings in 2019. 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. During a board retreat at the beginning of the academic year, the AYA board took the time to elaborately discuss the vision and goals of AYA, and came up with a plan for the next year.

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 events.

AYA members met formally in five so-called General Assemblies in 2019. The meetings offered ample time for the working groups to report back and to discuss the steps forward. Also in 2019, the General Assembly elected two new board members, decided on financing the Science Tour project, and ratified the rules and regulations.

Members’ retreat
In November 2019, around AYA’s first anniversary, AYA held a members’ retreat at the Trippenhuis in Amsterdam. The focus was on the one hand strengthening the network of AYA members and facilitating further collaborations, and on the other hand offering hands-on training to our members towards the main pillars of AYA. The members’ retreat was concluded by the festive inauguration of AYA’s ten new members, an event open to the public.

In the morning, the new members introduced themselves and their envisioned contributions to AYA according to meaningful locations in Amsterdam. In several rounds of speed dates AYA members came to know each other better. In the afternoon, AYA members participated in workshops: (1) working in teams, on how interpersonal communication styles may impact collaboration and how to optimize team behavior, (2) scientific storytelling, on how to translate science and scholarship to a more general public, and (3) innovating education, both from a policy perspective and in terms of developing new educational methodology.

The day ended with the official inauguration, moderated by AYA co-founder Kristine Steenbergh. In a playful but provoking session, she interviewed members about our Science Podcast and gave away a scoop of the AYA Science Tour. Caroline Nevejan (Chief Science Officer Amsterdam) gave an appealing exposé of the municipality’s research and made the case for a new vision on (interdisciplinary) research. Vinod Subramaniam (executive board VU) and Jan Lintsen (executive board UvA) officially inaugurated the ten new members.
3. Working groups

Communication

An important platform for disseminating AYA’s activities, mission and points of view is the website: www.amsterdamyoungacademy.nl. In 2019, AYA has regularly published columns on the AYA website. Topics ranged from measles vaccination to a historical perspective on the continuing heated debate on Sinterklaas. In 2020, AYA will continue writing columns and focus on a common theme: main issues for the city of Amsterdam. AYA set up social media accounts on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram to share what AYA does, to get a feeling of current issues, and to connect with other young academies. AYA is exploring the most effective forms for communication, like the biannual newsletter, which in 2019 was created for AYA members only, but may be sent out to a broader audience in the future.

Grants programme

AYA has funded seven projects in 2019, 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 - Scientist of the future

During the Weekend of Science 2019, AYA organized a workshop on the ‘Scientist of the Future.’ An active workshop in which AYA members discussed with children and their parents whether and why scientists could be trusted. Subsequently, children provided input on their ideal scientists of the future by drawing their virtues, research questions, hobby’s, tools and identity.

2 - EADM Symposium

On August 20 of 2019, AYA member Shaul Shalvi organized a plenary panel discussion on “how the social sciences can have impact on society and policy?” at SPUDM (the bi-annual meeting of the European Association for Decision Making). SPUDM hosted 400 academics from 26 countries and a variety of disciplines all interested in human decision making. The panel was co-sponsored by a European Research Council grant and by AYA.

3 - Interdisciplinary project Viral Fear

AYA member Marci Cottingham, with help of a research assistant, drafted a paper on the role of humor in public reactions to the Ebola epidemic. The paper is tentatively titled, “Tweeting Jokes, Tweeting Hope: Black Twitter Humor in the Context of Ebola.” The preliminary results of this project were presented at an invited lecture at the Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg Institute for Advanced Study in October 2019 and will be presented again in February 2020 at a “Science Slam” event held at the institute.

4 - Booklet for Early Career Scholars

By the end of 2020 the AYA Science Policy working group aims to have a booklet finished with tips & tricks for early career scholars. This will first and foremost be a way to be of service to young
scholars trying to find their way in the academy, but will also be a showcase for AYA members, in which they (realistically) explain the pitfalls they encountered and the steps they took to overcome these. The content is partly based on a survey among AYA members, asking them to describe one major obstacle or challenge that encountered as an early career scholar, how they dealt with this, and what their most important advice would be to early career scholars.

5 - Interdisciplinary experiment on children’s exploration
In the ScienceLive program of science museum NEMO, AYA members Katinka van der Kooij and Eddie Brummelman performed an interdisciplinary study on the influence of parental praise on children’s motor exploration. Two student assistants from the UvA and VU were hired to manage the project. The research team used an innovative VR set-up that attracted many participants: in two weeks, 209 parent-children dyads were tested. AYA and NEMO co-funded a video on the project to promote the ScienceLive project that enables researchers to perform experiments in the museum. A publication on the results will be submitted in the spring of 2020.

6 - The AYA Science tour
For the year project of 2019, AYA members have been working on a Science Tour through the city of Amsterdam as a means to “build bridges between science and society”. The AYA Science Tour consists of an audio tour and podcast, and aims to guide listeners (students, tourists, citizens of Amsterdam and the general public) through the often overlooked scholarly relevance of ten locations in Amsterdam. At each location, two AYA members provide insights from their specific discipline on the connection between science and social issues related to that particular location – both in English and in Dutch. The audiotour and podcasts are meant to (1) present AYA to citizens and visitors of Amsterdam, (2) show society that science is everywhere, and (3) introduce listeners to the role of science in their everyday life. The audiotour and podcasts will be published on Soundcloud, iTunes, Spotify and via the platform iziTRAVEL. AYA is collaborating with OORKAMERS (Jeroen Dessauvagie) and Science ON AIR (Karin van den Boogaert) in producing the AYA Science Tour. The full AYA Science Tour and podcast will be completed in the first semester of 2020.

7 - Escaperoom
An escape room is the perfect field lab to study group dynamics. The popularity of escape rooms is rising rapidly and AYA wants to interact with society and perform interdisciplinary research in an Amsterdam-based escape room to decipher what factors determine the perfect escape. What is the best group composition for the perfect escape? How do group dynamics influence the escape success rate? And how do group dynamics change upon additional stressors during the escape challenge? These questions will be addressed by collecting baseline characteristics, personality traits and the relationships of the group participants using questionnaires. While playing the game, interaction between the participants is captured by video cameras with voice recording. The physical response of participants is collected by heart rate monitor watches. By coding the group interactions – e.g. who interacts with who, and for how long, and does that result in prolonged successful collaboration – the project group will construct a temporal network of group communication. This way, the communication structures of the group, while playing the game, thus while facing challenges, can be studied. Additionally, the project will collect quantitative data on escape duration, successful use of hints, and ultimately success or failure to escape. This will allow the researchers to associate group dynamics with outcome over the sample of escapes collected.
Interdisciplinarity
The interdisciplinarity group has had two focal points in 2019: (1) interdisciplinarity within AYA, and (2) interdisciplinarity for do-ers. AYA organized ‘sharing our science’ sessions throughout the year, in which recent projects with small groups of AYA members were informally shared and discussed. Not only was this fun, participants also found common threads in the difficulties of scholarship and research that crossed the traditional disciplinary boundaries. After a ‘soft launch’ within the interdisciplinarity group, these events were scaled up to include all members in the second half of the year. AYA’s mission is to provide academics with an interest in interdisciplinary research a community and the necessary guidance to organize and perform such studies. In the interdisciplinarity lunch events, we discussed the organizational preconditions for interdisciplinary work, the logistic hurdles, but also the more fundamental limitations of working together with scholars from different backgrounds. The experiences gained through these lunches will be captured in a publication on interdisciplinarity for doers in 2020.

Science policy
The Science Policy working group has begun working on its main project of creating an AYA young researchers Survival Guide, which is funded by several individual grants of the working group members and so far included a survey and editing of the collecting survey data. In 2019, AYA has been vocal with respect to the “Van Rijn report” on financing research and higher education. Also, AYA has formulated an opinion on the VSNU vision paper on rewarding and recognizing academics. Both statements are to be found on the AYA website.

Science for Society
Several activities have sprung from the Science for Society working group, such as the columns and AYA’s presence at the Weekend of Science, as detailed elsewhere in this report. The working group is currently looking into organizing a climate change and environmental awareness action for academic practice. The group is also enthusiastic about engaging children in science, either by visiting schools or by inviting schools to the university.
4. Partners and other activities

VU, UvA and Amsterdam UMC leadership
Throughout the year, the AYA board has met with the leadership of our academic institutions in order to discuss opportunities and challenges. These meetings were first off fruitful explorations of current initiatives in the institutions that AYA may get involved in, as well as testing the waters with regards to AYA’s own initiatives.

Municipality
AYA has been in close contact with the chief science officer of the municipality of Amsterdam (Caroline Nevejan) throughout the year, discussing, amongst other topics, the Open Research Amsterdam platform, resulting in AYA being visible as a knowledge network on this new website. Moreover, the municipality and AYA aspire to facilitate collaboration on topics that matter to both AYA and the city.

Participation in Dies VU Amsterdam
The theme of VU University’s Dies Natalis was framing, fact-free politics, populism and science’s vital role in democracy. During the ceremony on October 18, AYA members Sanne Kruikemeier and Antske Fokkens participated in a round table discussion on fact-free politics.

DJA and other local Young Academies
AYA has been in contact with De Jonge Akademie (DJA) and other local Young Academies throughout the year, both informally and formally. (Amsterdam-based) DJA members have been consulted on several topics, such as organization of events and invitation of DJA members, in order to facilitate the feedback and feedforward between the national and local young academies.

Advisory board
After the establishment of AYA, the AYA board has asked the AYA founders (Rens Vliegenthart, Kristine Steenbergh, Sjoerd Repping, Hilde Geurts, Jeroen de Ridder) to structurally offer their advice in current affairs through membership of the AYA advisory board. This has resulted in several consultations and a dinner meeting in 2019.