

Social impact @ sciences: the end of the ivory tower?

Peter A.G. van Bergeijk and Linda Johnson (eds)

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The Standard Evaluation Protocol 2015-2021: A reality check

Wilfred Mijnhardt

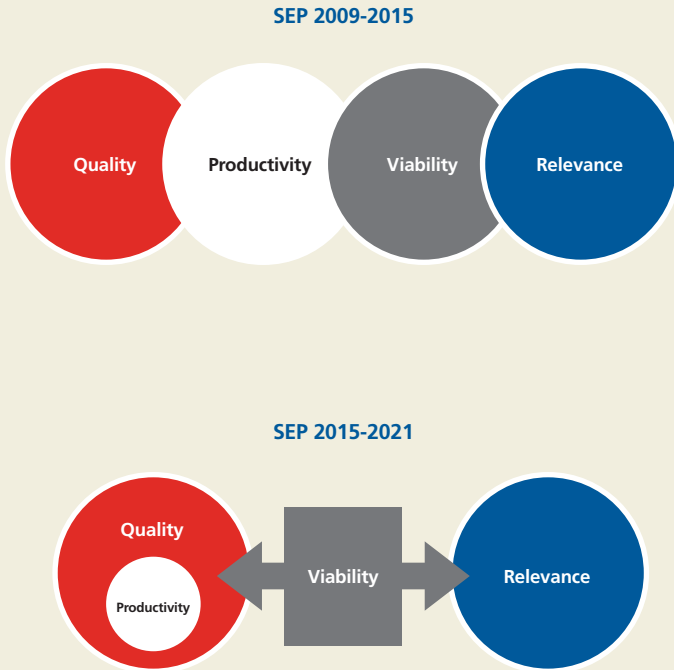
In this chapter, I will look at the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP) from the institutional perspective and will focus on the importance of strategic choices and academic leadership to achieving and maintaining excellence in research performance. Academic leadership refers to the role of the dean (at ISS: the rector), the research director (at ISS: the deputy rector for research affairs) and the research program leaders. I will discuss three topics. First, I will discuss the new definition of excellence in the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP). My impression is that the SEP aims at science in 'excelleration' rather than science in transition. The requirements for excellence have definitely increased. Second, I will take a closer look at the ranking of fields of research at Erasmus University. That will be a sobering

view on our position in global rankings and will show that there is much to be done if excellence is to be achieved. Third, I will analyze the position of ISS, its strategic options and its journey to excellence.

The new excellence; a new balance in assessment criteria

Whereas previously the criteria in the evaluation were mentioned in the SEP as separate norms, the new definition of excellence integrates the measures. Excellence in research, so to say, has developed from a 'promise' (SEP 2003) to a 'Dual challenge' (SEP 2009) to become a 'Triple challenge' (SEP 2015) and that means: performing against all criteria. Figure 9 illustrates how the balance in the SEP criteria has shifted over time. At first glance productivity is no

Figure 9 Shift in balance of old and new SEP criteria



longer a separate criterion, but although correct, actually that is a misleading and naïve understanding: if you want to achieve excellent quality in the new SEP, you need to be very productive but not in terms of quantity (that is: the number of publications) but rather in terms of quality. So, productivity is now included in the quality criterion. And the viability criterion is also very important as it focuses on the (strategic) capabilities and resources of the research units over time.

The new SEP definitions 2015-2021 have made excellence in research a huge challenge. Indeed the challenge has become a triple challenge: In order to score the highest category in the assessment (category 1), the research unit has to prove:

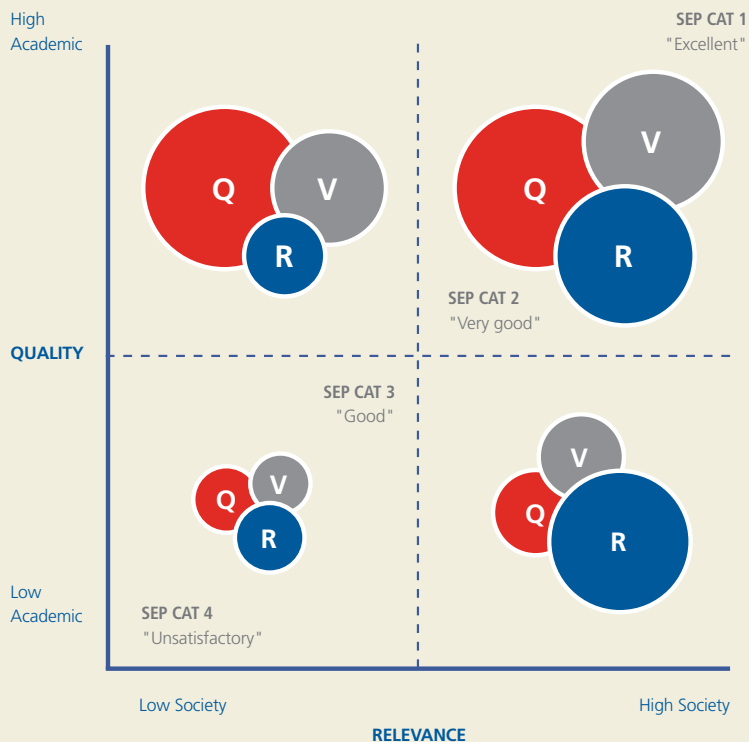
1. that it is *“one of the few most influential research groups in the world”*,
2. that it makes an *“outstanding contribution to society”* and
3. that it is *“excellently equipped for the future”*.

It may be that only a very few groups at Erasmus University will get the label excellent in the research evaluations in the coming years. If a unit aspires to achieve the excellence category, there is no other option than to run the research program as a business and to develop a selective and consistent strategy towards achieving excellence.

A matrix for excellence

Based on the two major criteria in the new SEP (Quality & Relevance), I have developed a 2*2 matrix. Figure 10 shows this matrix. I distinguish two dimensions: on the vertical axis I put (‘low academic’ versus ‘high academic’) quality and on the horizontal axis (‘low society’ versus ‘high society’) relevance in order to clarify the strategic options for Erasmus University and in particular for ISS. The idea is that a trade-off may exist and that one can position a research programme and its strategic journey over time against these two dimensions, for example opt for low(er) quality and high(er) relevance (or the other way round. Now let us see how this scheme can be used. I have plotted four archetypes, basically using the same colors as in Figure 9. The SEP criteria would seem to be located on the central axes, as quality and relevance theoretically go hand in hand with viability increasing from bottom left to the top right in the diagram. The reality, however, is that groups differ in their achievements on these dimensions. For example, quality might be high but relevance relatively low, as in the North West quadrant. Only in exceptional cases will we see groups that excel on all dimensions. It is in the top right hand quadrant that we find the viable groups and universities with strong societal impact and high scientific quality. Here all drivers are in balance: the groups or universities are capable of re-invention and strategic repositioning, management

Figure 10 Matrix for excellence



is supportive, (international) faculty is involved, resources are in order. In short, viability is strong in these mature groups and universities.

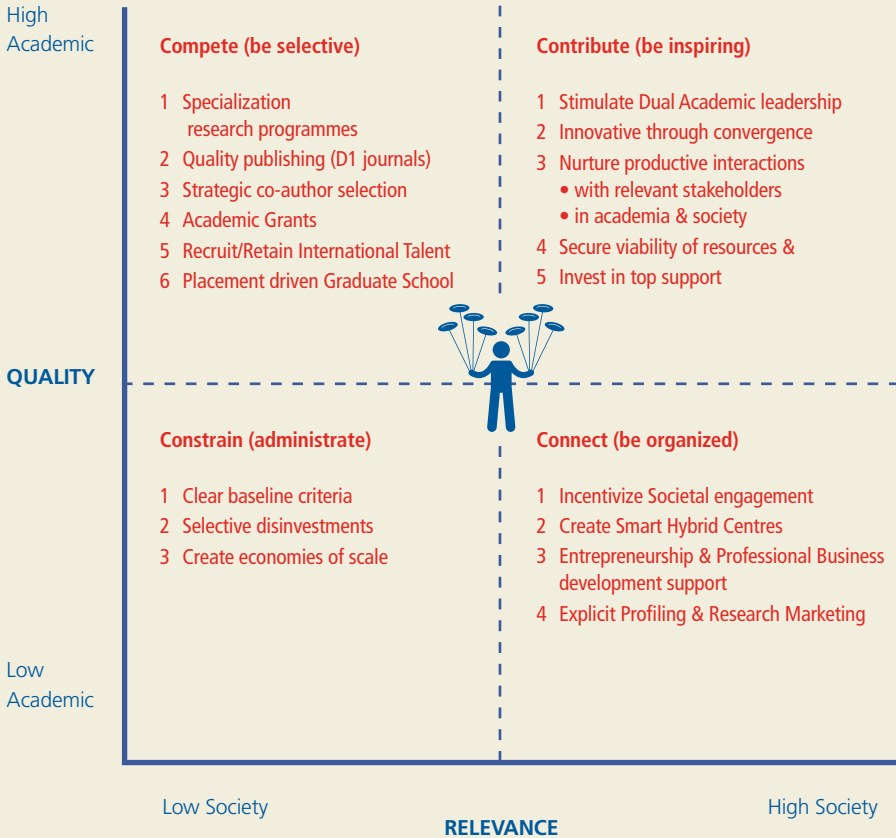
Strategic options for academic leaders (Figure 1)

Option 1: Compete

In the North West competition and selectivity is the tune of the day: you have

to compete for the best journals, for the prestigious academic grants, for international top talent, the best possible academic placements in other top institutions (academic reputation building) etc. This is what I would call the classical or dominant approach of the past decade. It is where my institution, ERIM, has located itself in response to the previous SEPs in the mid nineties, when the research in management at

Figure 11 Strategic options for universities & research groups



Erasmus University was evaluated as being of 'average quality'. ERIM was founded in 1998 as a joint research institute of RSM and ESE to create a solid research base for the field of research in management and to create joint international visibility. The competitive and selective research strategy was needed to make quality a systemic feature of research and publishing in the field of research in management. The result of this long-term strategy can be witnessed today; ERIM is now ranked number 3 in Europe for research and has over 350 research & doctoral affiliates.

Option 2: Constrain

In The South West we find the institutions that are inefficient and need to be constrained; this is where strategies failed. It is the place where one does not want to find oneself: no impact on society and no academic contribution. The economies of scale and the viability are low. There is no systematic quality management. The focus is mostly internal and is concerned with administering the research.

Option 3: Connect

The South East is all about connecting: if one wants to be relevant one needs to be able to organize the interfacing between science and society, communicate and reach out to the 'external' world. To connect in a professional and systemic way, we need new incentive systems that reward this kind of behaviour. We need

organizational forms like centres to function as instruments for knowledge exchange. Universities need to invest in capabilities for business development and entrepreneurship. For example, Erasmus University has recently established a special Valorisation centre.

Option 4: Contribute

The final quadrant describes what I would call the 'new excellence' category. Behaviour here is characterized by contributing and inspiration. So it is not only the publishing of the article that is important but also the impact of its contribution on society that matters. Of course this is not a binary black and white situation. Deans, research directors and research programme leaders will be involved in the balancing act of 'academic leadership'. The focus shifts from competition to 'productive interactions' with external knowledge stakeholders (see Jack Spaapen's chapter in this publication). Researchers start to collaborate across disciplinary borders and convergence starts, aimed at innovation and at helping to solve societal problems.

Implications for Erasmus University

Our University has three major fields:

A: Economics & Business/Management

B: Biomedical Science & Health

C: Social Sciences & Humanities

Excellence according to the SEP definition implies: you have to be amongst the few

Table 2 Tilburg University Top 100 of Economic Schools 2008-2012

Global rank	EURO rank	University	Score	Country
1	-	Harvard University	582	USA
2	-	University of Chicago	387	USA
3	-	Stanford University	327	USA
4	-	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	314	USA
5	-	University of California, Berkeley	301	USA
11	1	LSE	244	UK
13	2	University of Oxford	220	UK
19	3	Tilburg University	171	NL
20	4	University College London	169	UK
23	5	University of Amsterdam	139	NL
23		University of Bonn	139	GE
25	7	University of Warwick	124	UK
26	8	University of Zürich	118	CH
28	8	Universite Catholique de Louvain	114	BE
28		University of Cambridge	114	UK
30	9	Toulouse School of Economics	113	FR
33	10	Maastricht University	109	NL
36	11	University of Nottingham	105	UK
37	12	Pompeu Fabra University	104	SP
38	13	Erasmus University Rotterdam	99	NL

Source: <https://econtop.uvt.nl/rankingsandbox.php>

Table 3 University of Texas Dallas Ranking, 2008-2012

Global rank	EURO rank	University	Score	Country
1	-	University of Pennsylvania (Wharton BSchool)	192	USA
2	-	Harvard University (Harvard Business School)	123	USA
3	-	University of Michigan at Ann Arbor (Ross BSchool)	119	USA
4	-	New York University (Stern BSchool)	119	USA
5	-	Duke University (TFuqua BSchool)	115	USA
14	1	INSEAD	89	FR
24	2	London Business School	63	UK
34	3	Tilburg University (Faculty of Econ & Bus. Admin.)	52	NL
42	4	Erasmus University (RSM BSchool) (Excl. ESE!)	44	NL

Source: <http://jindal.utdallas.edu/the-utd-top-100-business-school-research-rankings/index.php>

(one to three) most influential groups in the world. Let us take a look at two highly selective rankings: the Tilburg University Ranking of Economic Schools (Table 2) based on articles published in 70 top journals in economics and the University of Texas Dallas Ranking of Business Schools (Table 3) for publications in 24 leading journals in major business disciplines.

According to Table 2 Erasmus University will have a difficult case if it wants to argue that it is world-leading for research quality (i.e. quality publishing in top journals), both in the field of Economics and in the field of Business and management. In the field of Economics, Erasmus University ranks 13 in Europe. So, Economics is very good, but not excellent – at least not according to the new SEP definition of excellence.

Table 4 Leiden Ranking 2013: Compare EUR with top 10 and top 11-20 ranked Universities in Europe: EUR scores in sub-top Europe

	Biomedical & Health Sciences				Social Sciences & Humanities			
	Average score Top 10 Universities Europe	Average score Top 11-20 Universities Europe	Score EUR	Rank EUR Europe	Average score Top 10 Universities Europe	Average score Top 11-20 Universities Europe	Score EUR	Rank EUR Europe
PPtop10% = proportion of the publications that belong to the top 10% most frequently cited	17.1%	14.2%	13.4%	23	14.2%	12.2%	11.5%	24
MNCS = Mean Normalized Citation Score	1.50	1.28	1.21	29	1.28	1.15	1.10	23
PP(int collab) = International collaboration %	65.2%	53.2%	46,2%	93	61.2%	52.4%	40.3%	83
PP(UI collab) = Industry collaboration %	13.4%	11.5%	8.2%	81	5.9%	3.9%	3.0%	33

Source: <http://www.leidenranking.com/ranking>

As to the business & management field, the University of Texas Dallas (UTD) Ranking is very selective with a very narrow definition of the field (only 23 journals). We can celebrate the fact that Erasmus University is number 4 in Europe, but it is sobering that we are only number 42 in the world. So Erasmus University also delivers very good quality in the field of business and management, but

not excellent according to the new SEP definition of excellence. Now let us take a look at the level of the Erasmus University for the two other major fields in which we specialize, i.e Biomedical and Health Sciences and Social Sciences & Humanities, based on the Leiden Ranking 2013 (Table 4). The Leiden Ranking is based on Web Of Science (WOS) data and measures the following

four metrics (all focused on quality publishing in WOS journals):

1. PPTop10% = proportion of the publications that belong to the top 10% most frequently cited
2. MNCS = Mean Normalized Citation Score (world average = 1.0)
3. PP(int collab) = International collaboration %
4. PP(UI collab) = Industry collaboration %

According to Table 4, challenges to increase the score are evident on all accounts even if the goal is 'only' to be in the top 20 of European Universities. Indeed, very substantial improvements are necessary to become excellent in terms of the new SEP criteria. What does this mean in terms of the matrix for excellence? If the challenge is to compete, then the challenge is to increase the proportion of publications that are world class. If the challenge is to contribute, then the strategy should aim at increasing the citation score (MNCS). For non-viable schools with non-performing research, we need an exit strategy. Finally, for a connect strategy international collaboration needs to increase at least beyond a share of 60% – that is a comparative increase by 50%!

Implications for ISS

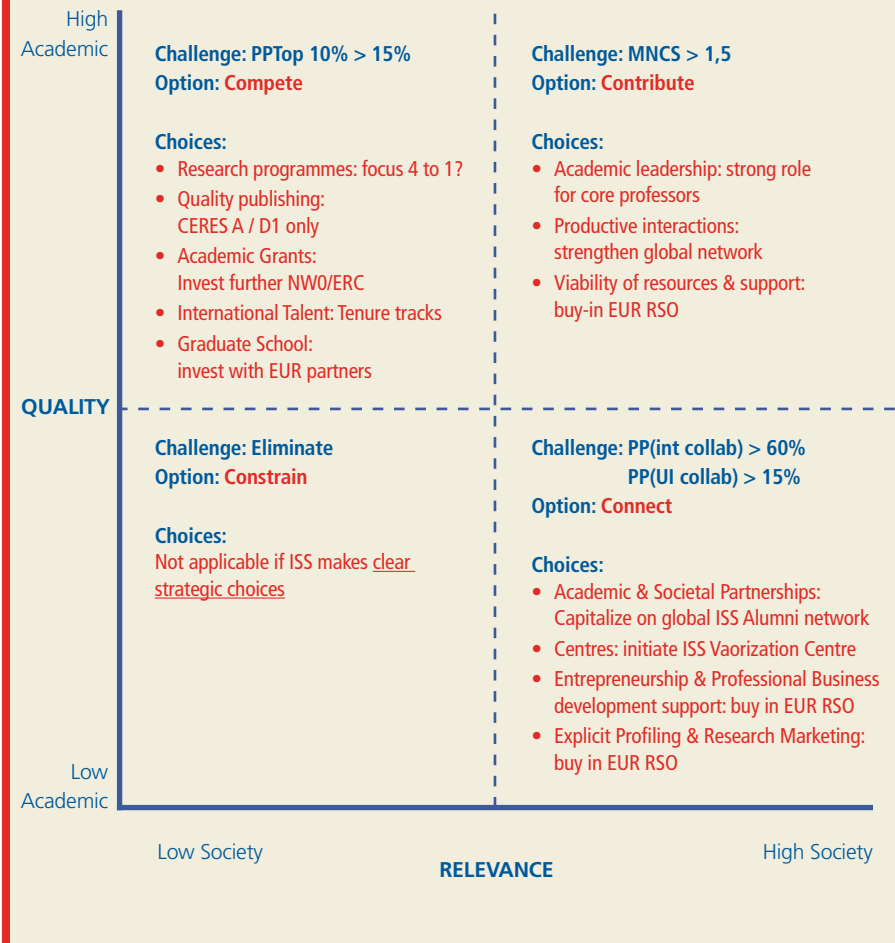
The matrix for excellence also applies to ISS. ISS has moved from being an essentially 'teaching driven' institute in

the mid 1990s to an 'impact driven' institute as envisioned in its latest mission statement. In terms of the matrix, in the mid 1990s ISS was positioned in the South East with good research and high societal impact. Presently it is moving up on academic quality. This in itself is the reflection of a maturing process and a serious attempt to increase the research quality of the ISS. While this is to be commended it is no reason for complacency. Indeed, the new SEP provides fresh challenges for ISS. It may very well be that ISS has to opt for 'compete' first before it can become excellent. Let us take a look at Figure 12, that shows the major options.

Compete:

If ISS wants to compete (focus on high academic quality), then the first observation is that it does not have sufficient mass and focus for serious international competition. It will be necessary to reduce the number of research programs and it would seem inevitable that this reduction will result in a single research program, given the availability of no more than around 20 FTE for research. It is important to look at the implications of the fact that ISS as a development studies institute, presently evaluates its research using the CERES/ EADI methodology. This is a problem because only one fifth of what CERES labels A is actually in the top decile of ISI and focusing implies that you have to be

Figure 12 Challenges, options & choices for ISS towards 2021



highly selective in your outlets. Equally important is the attainment of more academic grants from ERC, NWO and other such bodies, as these testify to recognition in and by the field. Tenure tracks are vital to attract new talent and in

order to organize this and develop the next generation of professors, you need a good professional program and, of course, some funding. In addition, the graduate school of social sciences and humanities needs input from ISS and will at the same

time help to integrate PhDs, into the broader university environment. Actually, this creates good opportunities to build a joint global visibility. Indeed, the history of ERIM that acted as a bridge between Economics and Business Science, illustrates this potential.

Connect:

ISS sees its major strength in the South East quadrant (Connect strategy). Indeed, this is where we find one of ISS's key assets: its use of an international network of partners and alumni. Again, however, this is no reason for complacency. Capitalizing on connections with people in government, NGOs and universities all around the world will support viability not only for ISS, but also for the graduate school and its partners and thus for Erasmus University. In this context, an ISS approach to valorisation based on excellent research is also perfectly possible and sensible (see also the contribution by Eric Claassen in Chapter 4). One implication would be that the Research Support Office needs further strengthening in order for ISS to become more entrepreneurial regarding its business development capacity. A strengthened Research Support Office could also help with research profiling and marketing. With good results in place, based on the the "connect and compete" strategy, the final journey of ISS towards 'contribution' can start. There is no need to make that journey alone: Connect to

other parties at Erasmus University, businesses, financiers and stakeholders. The journey towards Excellence is not a certainty – it is within reach, but only for a few.

Conclusions:

1. Balance in SEP criteria has changed and will probably result in more differentiation in institutional and school profiles
2. 'Excellence' according to SEP 2015-2021 may only be possible for a very few groups
3. Positioning on the Quality – Relevance dimensions is key
4. Size and collaboration can make the difference
5. Journey to excellence needs fundamental choices and consistent strategic positioning, orchestrated by research directors as academic leaders

The case of the 'Nationalization of natural resources, cooperation and conflict in Latin America'

Duration: 5 years (2011-2016)

Countries: Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru

Partners: ISS (lead, The Netherlands), University San Francisco of Quito (USFQ, Ecuador), Hivos (NGO, The Netherlands), LIDEMA (NGO, Bolivia)

Budget: 1,300,000 euros

Latin America has a long history of conflict engendered by the capturability of extractable natural resources. In this context, the impact of left-leaning politicians implementing a variety of policies increasing the states' presence in the extractive sector, such as 'nationalisation', can now be observed in the ways hydrocarbons and mineral resources are implicated in conflictive or co-operative outcomes. This project tackles these research issues within an environmental justice framework with a participatory and action oriented approach. The project contributes new insights to the political economy of extraction and the management regimes of natural resources – including compensation, redistribution and consultation policies and practices. In terms of practical engagement, it provides a platform to promote dialogue between stakeholders and help bridge information and communication gaps. It also adds to discussions on post-extractivist transitions by studying the impact of new redistributive policies promoted by Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. Furthermore, it contributes to the formation of academic and research capacity, but also of local knowledge-creating capacities – such as the implementation of a socio-environmental information system and participatory monitoring – that provide inputs for both research and community action. Overall, the project directly contributes to processes of change in Latin America that seek to transform the political economy of extraction-led development with a view to achieving environmental justice, which would improve the material conditions of indigenous communities and ensure the sustainability of vital ecosystems.