

# THE IMPACT OF COLLABORATION

IRLW  
FOUNDATION

REPORT AFTER THE EVENT SERIES "THE IMPACT OF COLLABORATION "

September 2021, Wageningen

Disclaimer: the content of this report includes statements and opinions from anonymous participants of the process. It does not reflect the point of view of any organization or individual but collects opinions of a diverse group of members of the WUR community.

Report elaborated by Rural Wageningen Foundation (RUW) with the Collaboration of OtherWise Wageningen.

Special thanks to Simone Ritzer and WUR Dialogues for the guidance and advice during the whole process



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## INTRODUCTION

Rural Wageningen Foundation aims to bring life to science, through a series of interactive events and projects that inspire critical thinking and lively debates in the Wageningen community.

RUW Foundation has a long tradition - since 1978 – of organizing activities for students in Wageningen. In the early years, RUW foundation was mainly focused on organizing activities related to rural food production and agriculture since WUR was fully profiled as an agricultural school. In more recent years, RUW foundation has organically evolved in synchrony with the University to cover almost all topics and themes related to Life Sciences in Wageningen.

RUW practices a critical/collaborative attitude. We feel that well-intended, scrutinous, but most of all, shared reflection is the basic idea behind the scientific method, and therefore we

want to facilitate it. Our work stems from the desire to collaborate, to make an impact on our shared ambitions, while purposely maintaining a critical attitude.

On a day-to-day basis, RUW engages with students. All of our activities are rooted in student life, as we aspire to appeal and connect to all 'shades of students' at the University. Although students are our primary focus, we also provide substance for more seasoned academics and citizens of Wageningen, as they gather around and co-evolve with student life. The RUW team consists of students and alumni who wish to gain experience in a board or coordinator functions while learning freely.

Our activities are very diverse, from publishing The Jester magazine, to organising a book & philosophy club, citizen science projects, and being a leading critical voice towards the collaboration between WUR and the private sector.



## THE IMPACT OF COLLABORATION

Triggered by the arrival of Unilever on campus, a process of reflection around the collaboration between WUR and the private sector started, leading to the series of events “The Impact of Collaboration”. The first event was a panel discussion with distinguished members of the WUR community, and a large online audience through an interactive streaming platform. This was an introductory event, with the aim of triggering reflection about the topic. The second and third events were discussion workshop sessions, where participants engaged in in-depth reflection sessions about the topics that arose during the panel discussion. Moreover, a survey was designed and disseminated to the wider community to gather a broader spectrum of opinions.

This report presents the information gathered during this series of events, including the opinions of many members of the community surrounding WUR. The content of this report aims to put on paper what we heard during these events, so that the critical voices in the WUR community can be heard. The Impact of Collaboration analyses the relationship between WUR and the private sector, particularly between WUR and large companies, identifying potential risks and benefits, and suggesting potential solutions and guidelines or giving advice about the topic.

This report will be presented to the executive board of WUR and distributed around the community of WUR. The main goal of it is to trigger a response that reviews the regulations around collaborations with the private sector, activating mechanisms of self-reflection in an inclusive and participatory way.



## THE PROCESS

For the last two years the discussion around the collaboration of the WUR with the private sector has been an active topic within RUW and other student organisations. The joining of Louise Fresco to Syngenta’s Board of Directors in April 2019, followed by the arrival of Unilever on campus in the same year, raised concerns and questions about WUR’s independence and what influence these would have on WUR’s education and research. This triggered multiple students to protest against Unilever on campus and WUR’s collaboration with multinational (agri)businesses in general.

We felt that a discussion where all perspectives are heard was missing, and that there was a strong need from both the students’ and University’s side to have an in-depth conversation about this topic. RUW’s aim was to bring together

all the different perspectives and to get a better understanding of the link between WUR and the private sector. On the one hand, we wanted to understand why there are companies on campus, why it is necessary for WUR to collaborate with the private sector, how these collaborations are formed and what benefits they bring and to whom. On the other hand, we wanted to create a complete picture about the concerns that WUR’s students and researchers have, and the potential risks these collaborations bring to education, research, and science in general.

To gather all the perspectives, we contacted several WUR professors, other student organisations, as well as the head of WUR’s integrity committee and WUR’s campus developer. Simon Vink put us in contact with Simone Ritzer (WUR dialogues) with whom we decided to collaborate in the organisation of a panel discussion, to broaden the reach of the event.



A discussion group including representatives of OtherWise, Boerengroep, Extinction Rebellion and S&I was formed, to hold weekly meetings about the topic. It was notable that students and professors shared the same concerns, and that there was great interest in discussing this topic. By going into the topic in-depth of the complexity of the issue became apparent. When we began to understand different elements such as the role of the Dutch government in incentivizing public-private collaboration, we realized the topic was much more complicated than we initially thought.

Initially, the Impact of Collaboration event series was planned for Spring 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic meant the events had to be postponed. We decided to wait until it was possible to hold the event on campus again, as we found the topic too important for an online event.

In the meantime, to keep the discussion alive, a focus group on this topic was formed, which Otherwise joined. A survey was created and shared on social media channels such as Facebook, to gather opinions concerning WUR's collaboration with the private sector, companies on campus, WUR's transparency, difference between WU and WR, and the influence of private companies on education and research. Furthermore, we randomly interviewed students on campus asking about their opinion on this topic and edited it into a short video to share on social media. We also aimed to interview professors, but except for one we did not manage to find professors that were willing to share their view on camera. We got the impression that they felt that the topic was too sensitive to share their opinion openly on camera.

In May the event finally took place in a hybrid format, with the panel members offline and an online audience. The panel discussion was preceded by a month of promotion through

different channels. Flyers were handed out, banners were hung and advertised on the screens around campus, and different promotional materials were shared on social media, including short videos, background information in the form of articles, presentation of the panel members, etc. The events got a lot of attention which translated into a very large online audience.

## THE EVENTS

### Panel Discussion

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> of May  
 Hour: 17:30h – 19:15h  
 Format: Hybrid  
 Location: Plus Ultra II (Bronland 12 Building Plus Ultra 6708 WH Wageningen)  
 Platform: Crowdcast

**Aim of the event:** to trigger reflection among the academic and non-academic communities about the implications and dynamics of collaboration between WUR and the private sector.



**Panel discussion on**  
**The impact of collaboration**  
 how far do we want to go?

Are you concerned about companies on campus? What about the independence of research? Should WUR adopt ethical guidelines?

**Tuesday May 25th**  
 17.30-19h  
 streamed online

**For more information:**

- Otherwise Wageningen
- RUW Foundation / Stichting RUW
- www.otherisewageningen.nl
- www.ruwfoundation.nl



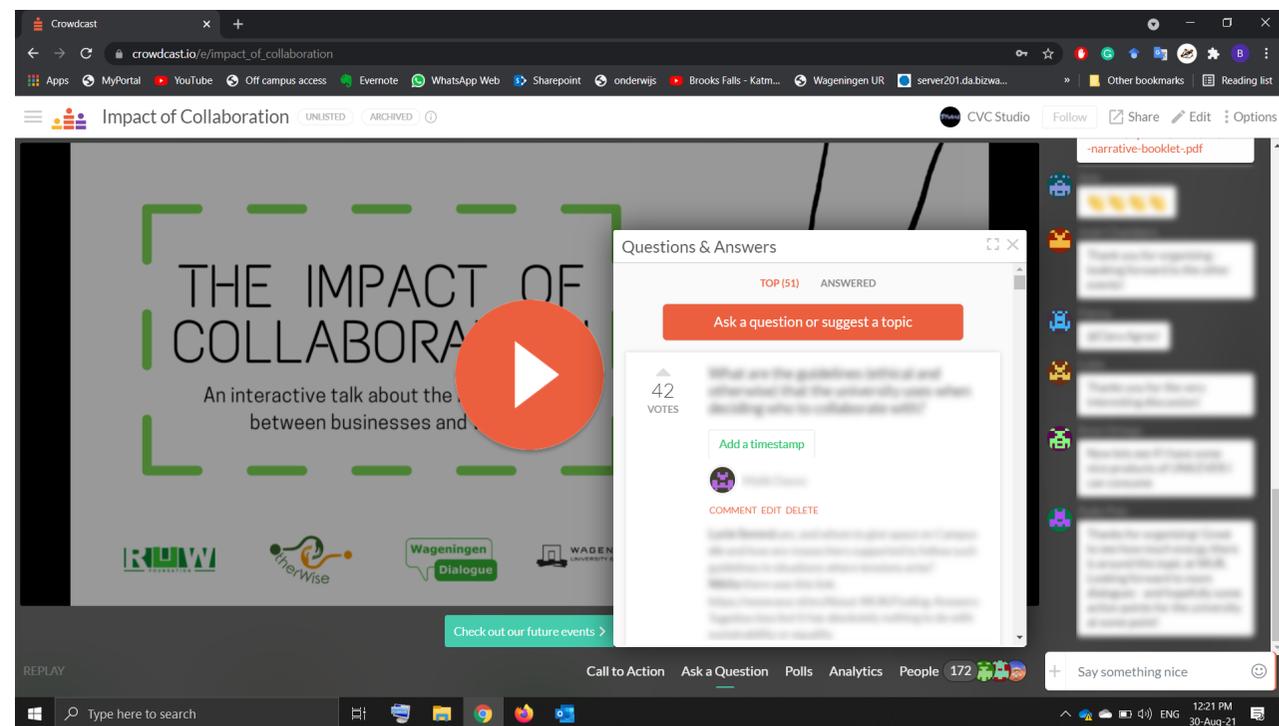
### Event Outline

- Opening RUW Foundation and OtherWise (10 min)
  - o Welcoming guests & explanation of event's goal.
  - o Main points addressed in the event:
    - Explore benefits & risks of collaboration.
    - Inform current WUR vision & regulations.
    - Debate current and future developments.
  - o Introduction of panellists and moderator.
- Moderator explains the event.
  - o Introduction on dialogue.
  - o Explanation of event set up.
- First round Panel Discussion (30 min)
  - o Panellists present their general view on the topic based on a question from the moderator.
  - o Audience sends in questions through "Ask a Question" and vote for the questions they would like to be answered.
- 5 min break
- Q&A session (30 min)
  - o Questions received from the audience through a live chat will be asked to panellists.
- Round-off (10 min)
  - o Closing remarks from panellists.
  - o Follow-up event explanation.
  - o Closure of event.

**Sigrid Smeele, external moderator.**

The panel discussion was moderated by Sigrid Smeele, from the Droomfabriek. The goal of having an external moderator was to obtain a more professional environment, with a neutral external moderator that was able to guide the discussion in a fruitful direction without being influenced by their own ideas or perspectives on the topic.  
<https://www.dedroomfabriek.nl>

**Crowdcast:** Interactive streaming platform that enables interaction of the audience through a general chat. Feature “Ask a Question” allows to send questions to the panel members. Audience can up-vote those questions they would like answered.



The panel members



**Dr. Anne Mensink, Business Developer, Wageningen Campus**

Anne studied Molecular Sciences in Wageningen. After obtaining her PhD at the Department of Toxicology she obtained (R&D) management positions within the food industry (Numico Research) and the Centre for Infectious Disease Control (National Institute for Public Health and the Environment / RIVM). In addition, she has worked as Senior Scientific Officer and Director International Affairs at Foodvalley NL and has provided research and consultancy services on science, technology, and innovation (strategy) at Technopolis Group. Anne has been working as a business developer at Wageningen University & Research for two and a half years, focusing on the thriving ecosystem of Wageningen Campus.



**Dr. Ernst van den Ende, Director Plant Sciences Group, WUR**

Ernst van den Ende is the Managing Director of the Plant Sciences Group since 2009 and member of WUR's board of directors. He studied in Wageningen (Plant Pathology, MSc & PhD) and worked several years as a scientist in applied research institutes (focussing on biological production & IPM in several horticultural sectors). In his role as head of Plant Sciences he sees it as a great responsibility to create impact on a global scale with a combination of fundamental and applied plant sciences and he really enjoys working with a broad spectrum of stakeholders that want to use their knowledge to create a more sustainable agriculture/world.



**Prof. Bram Büscher, Chair Sociology of Development and Change Group, WUR**

Bram Büscher is Professor and Chair of the Sociology of Development and Change Group at Wageningen University and holds visiting positions at the University of Johannesburg and Stellenbosch University. Bram has published widely on the relations between nature, development and politics and is the author of 'The Truth About Nature. Environmentalism in the Era of Post-Truth Politics and Platform Capitalism (University of California Press, 2021) and co-author, together with Robert Fletcher, of 'The Conservation Revolution: Radical Ideas for Saving Nature Beyond the Anthropocene' (Verso, 2020). Bram is one of the senior editors of Conservation & Society ([www.conservationandsociety.org](http://www.conservationandsociety.org)).



**Solina Diallo, WUR student & activist**

Solina is a BSc International Development Student that has been advocating with different student collectives to raise awareness on the lack of transparency and democracy in the private sector collaboration of our university. Their actions have never been against collaborations with the private sector as such. They know that they are necessary and sometimes also valuable. Yet, private sector collaboration puts into question some very fundamental values and functions of science.



**Manfred Aben, Global Vice President Science & Technology and Site Leader Food Innovation Centre Wageningen, Unilever**

Manfred Aben was appointed Global VP Foods and Refreshment S&T in 2018, overseeing the development and application of new science and technology across the foods, ice-cream and tea business. He leads teams in the UK, The Netherlands and India. He is Site Leader of the Unilever Global Foods Innovation Centre, which opened in 2019 in the heart of the Dutch Food Valley, Wageningen. In 2020 he joined the Supervisory Board of Unilever Nederland B.V. Manfred spent eight years in Asia. From 2011-2013 as R&D Director Foodsolutions across Asia, Africa and the Middle East, based

in Singapore. After that as Personal Care R&D Director in Indonesia, and from 2016-2018 as VP R&D North Asia, heading the Global R&D lab in Shanghai. Between 2004 and 2011, Manfred held a variety of senior Foods R&D roles. Manfred joined Unilever in 1995 in The Netherlands as a Knowledge Engineer. He holds an MSc in Computer Science and a PhD in Artificial Intelligence from the University of Amsterdam.

## Discussion Workshop Sessions

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of June

Hour: 17:30h – 19:30h

Format: Online

Platform: ZOOM

Supporting platform: MIRO

**Aim of the events:** to delve deeper into the topics that arose during the panel discussion. To understand all perspectives, as well as coming up with practical guidelines or practical advice for the executive board of WUR on how to establish/communicate these collaborations.

Session 1 - 8<sup>th</sup> of June

Topic: Transparency and decision-making process

Subtopics:

- Decision-making process, how is it & who is involved?
- Kind of companies for collaboration? Ethical guidelines?
- Transparency. What, how and when should be shared?

Session 2 - 22<sup>nd</sup> of June

Topic: Influence on research and role of the university

Subtopics:

- Fundamental vs applied science – profit vs non profit
- Role of the university – research results ownership
- Presence of companies on campus

## Event Outline

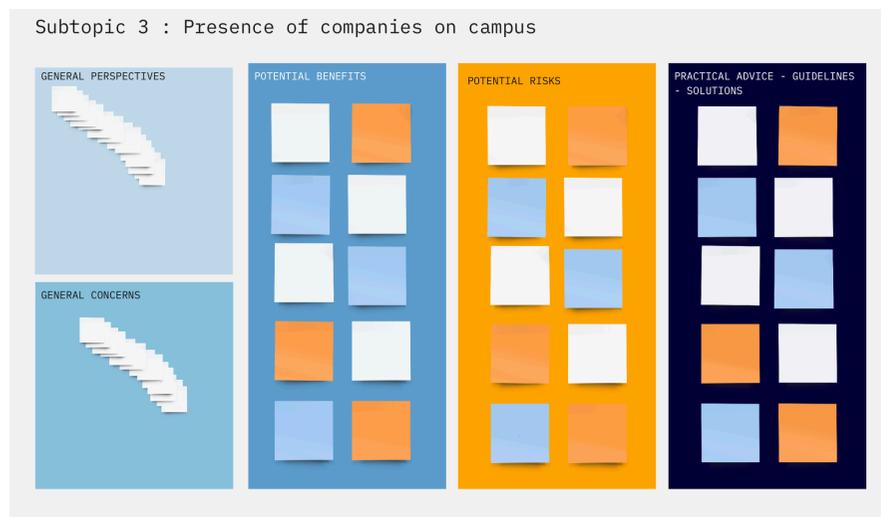
- Introduction and structure (15 min)
  - o Welcoming of participants.
  - o Introduction on the topic and explanation of the structure of the event.
- Break-out rooms – Perspectives, concerns, risks, and benefits (40 min)
  - o Participants were divided in break-out rooms, discussing different subtopics.
- Break (10 min)
- Break out room – Practical guidelines and advice (40min)
 

Second round of break out rooms, where participants tried to translate the perspectives discussed previously into practical guidelines or advice on how this topic could be addressed in the future.
- Plenary session (15 min)
 

Participants were brought back to the general meeting. The final MIRO poster was shared, and the final results were commented to understand the collective view on the topic.

**ZOOM + MIRO:** These online events were held via ZOOM, starting with a general meeting with all the participants for the introduction of the event. Afterwards, small groups worked in breakout rooms on subtopics, so they could discuss in depth that part of the topic in depth

MIRO, an online collaborative platform was used to collect all the points reached in each of the break-out rooms, and to finish the session with a visual representation of the reflection and discussion that could be shared with all participants.



Picture of the MIRO board section for one subtopic

These events were designed in a co-design session led by Sigrid Smeele, from the Droomfabriek. Representatives from both RUW Foundation and Otherwise assisted to discuss the goals of the event and decided on its shape and structure in a collaborative way.

## Survey on the Impact of Collaboration

Date: Responses gathered during August

Format: Online

Platform: Microsoft Forms

During summer a survey was designed and sent out, with the aim of grasping major opinions on the collaboration between WUR and the private sector. It was important for the process to try to include as many people as possible in a format that was less pressuring to the participant. We identified during the discussion workshop sessions, that having someone actively participating in a discussion for two hours was intense and excluded people that might feel insecure about expressing their opinions. For this reason, we designed a survey where respondents could answer without pressure.

This survey was designed as a final tool to round-off the reflective process, not as an initial survey to understand the general opinion of the public. The questions and answers were based on the discussions from the follow-up event. After the discussion workshop sessions took place and were analysed, the outcomes were translated into a survey that allowed us to quantify and understand which opinions were more supported by the community. Moreover, the survey also offered the space for participants to suggest new points and give their perspective and opinions on the topic, in case some people had different ideas from those who had participated in the previous events.

## PARTICIPATION AND IMPACT

### Participation and Impact

The Impact of Collaboration event series and reflective process got a lot of attention within the WUR community. During pandemic times, when everyone was in front of a screen for long hours, we managed to create events that attracted people to participate and get involved.

Panel Discussion **161 participants**

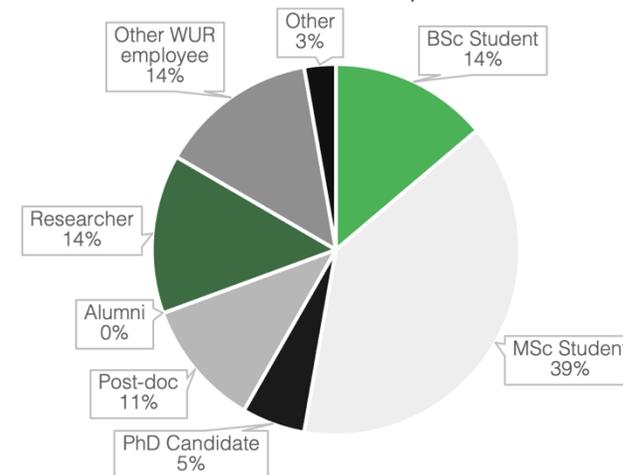
Discussion Workshop Sessions

- 8<sup>th</sup> of June: **17 participants**
- 22<sup>nd</sup> of June: **11 participants**

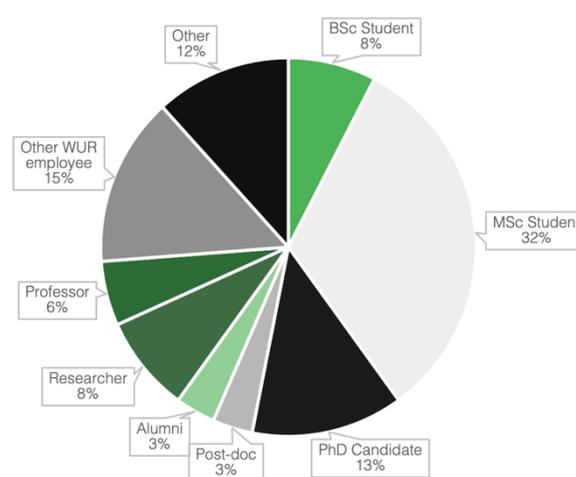
Survey **85 participants**

The following graphs show the diversity of participants based on their level of studies or occupation, based on the registration forms for each of the events.

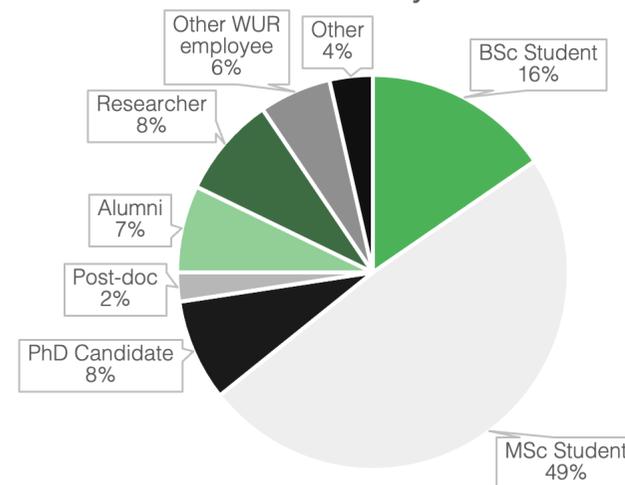
Discussion Workshop Sessions



Panel Discussion



Survey



## Panel Discussion Highlights

During the first round of the discussion the panel members took their stances, giving their general view on the topic one by one. The most revealing was the differences between the stances of Ernst van den Ende (Director Plant Sciences Group, WUR) and Bram Büscher (Chair Sociology of Development and Change Group, WUR), both being WUR employees. Ernst van den Ende thought private collaborations were vital in order to apply research in society and industry, while Bram Büscher argued that universities should be morally and intellectually independent from any political influence and/or economic interest.

Manfred Aben (Global Vice President Science & Technology at Unilever) expressed that WUR's collaboration with Unilever made it possible to scale up sustainable solutions, while Solina Diallo (student and activist) said "it is strange to have one of the world's largest polluters on campus in the first place".

Solina expressed her concern that collaborating with such companies would influence how Food systems are taught and perceived, and that in her opinion solving the environmental and societal challenges should not be done next to big corporations that have profit as a goal. Büscher agreed, saying that to solve the world's challenges, not all actors in society need to be included, giving Shell as an example.

Despite all the differences between panel members, they all agreed that transparency is important. When Anne Mensink (Business Developer Wageningen Campus) was asked on what the requirements for organisations that want to settle on campus were, she explained that there has to be an added value to the campus 'ecosystem' and an intrinsic motivation to collaborate in the topics WUR finds important for the future".

The evening of discussion and dialogue continued, and a lot was said on the needs and benefits of private sector collaborations, the need for transparency and the need to remain a trustworthy independent university. The event ended when time was over, even though the audience was enthusiastic for more since there were still a lot of unanswered questions.

Via: The Jester Wageningen

<http://www.thejesterwageningen.nl/2021/05/28/highlights-of-the-panel-discussion-on-wurs-ties-to-the-private-sector/>

# RESULTS

## Introduction to the results

The opinions about the collaboration between WUR and the private sector that have been observed and gathered during this reflective process are structured in this report based on the sub-topics the discussion workshop sessions were organized around. Sub-topics were needed since the collaboration between WUR and the private sector is a complex topic with many domains. Organizing around sub-topics allowed for a more nuanced and focused discussion on the topic.

### TRANSPARENCY

What, when and how to be shared

### DECISION-MAKING

Process and kind of companies for collaboration

## THE IMPACT OF COLLABORATION

### CAMPUS

Presence of companies on campus

### INFLUENCE

On research agenda, and research results ownership

Categorization of subtopics

From each of the subtopics, the participants of the workshops identified potential **risks** and **benefits**, and afterwards proposed **potential solutions, advice or guidelines** for future management. The survey was used to quantify how important or popular each of the identified risks, benefits, or potential solutions were amongst the community of WUR, represented as a percentage (%). New concerns or suggestions came up from the survey, which have no quantification.

### SUMMARY OF RESULTS

#### Transparency

- Risks, Benefits, Practical advice & guidelines

#### Decision making process and kind of companies for collaboration

- Risks, Benefits, Practical advice & guidelines
- Ethical Guidelines for Collaboration

#### Presence of companies on campus

- Risks, Practical advice & guidelines

#### Influence on research

- Research agenda
- Research results ownership

## Transparency

Throughout the process, we have identified transparency as one of the key elements that needs to be considered, both because there is much room for improvement, and because it is one of the topics that the WUR community is most concerned about. Participants of this process have shared different flaws in WUR's transparency policy, expressing how important it was to them. However, transparency has been included in many of the suggested solutions to address the topic, which indicates that it is part of both the problem and the solution.

In general, the community is concerned about what should be shared, how, and when. Regarding the collaborations between WUR and the private sector, it seems that nothing is shared until all agreements are finalised. Participants understand that business secrecy is important, however they feel the decision-making process should be more open and transparent, involving councils and other under-represented collectives. The division between WU and WR adds to the complexity of the topic. Because one is a public institution and the other a private one, they have different regulations regarding what has to be shared and what not. Over one third of the survey respondents expressed they were not aware of this division, and 85% of the respondents agreed that this division made transparency more complex.

The following were identified as potential **risks of not being transparent**

1. Non-transparency can paralyze participation.
2. Participation can be a façade.
3. Lack of trust in WUR and science
4. Benefit companies and their profit rather than society and the pressing global challenges

These are the **benefits** we have identified would come with **WUR being a more transparent** institution

1. Enable a more critical debate about the different pathways towards sustainability, in which WUR can be recognized as a controversial actor. (84%)
2. Show commitment to tackle risks of research integrity. (76%)
3. More awareness of the dynamics at WUR. (67%)
4. Enable participation. (59%)
5. Engage WUR community. (48%).
6. Improvement of public image and gain of trust from both the academic and non-academic community.

## Practical advice – guidelines – how to address it in the future?

1. Open public information on planned collaborations, with justifications, contract details and money flows. Easy accessible online information. (85%)
2. Open the discussion of which organizations are suitable to enter campus, creating consultation systems before new company buildings on campus are planned. (74%)
3. Address critical/ethical/self-critical discussion during courses or other academic activities. (72%)
4. Give more importance to the councils during decision-making that can influence the environment of students and/or staff. (54%)
5. Clarify WU-WR split when discussing collaborations, which rules hold for the university and which for the research parts. (58%)
6. Open policy on collaborations – creation of ethical guidelines and install a commission to review existing and future collaborations.
7. Specify clear outlines on how WUR deals with keeping its integrity and organise annual reflection/discussions to inform interested parties and give space to critical debates.

## Decision making process and kind of companies for collaboration

The decision-making processes surrounding these collaborations are rather unknown and closed. We have identified this process as one of the key elements to address the controversy. Participants of the process have expressed their concerns in different aspects of the decision-making process, such as how it is made, who is involved, or what criteria establishes the kind of companies that WUR collaborates with. On the other hand, many of the alternatives that participants have suggested rely on a revision of the decision-making process.

Regarding the kind of companies that WUR collaborates with, there seems to be a lack of guidelines or policy, or transparency on how these choices are made. It is known that companies that can bring value to students in the form of internships or ACT projects are considered, as Anne Mensink, (WUR Campus Developer) explained during the Panel discussion. However the guidelines or criteria on the kind of companies that WUR collaborates with, is still something we have not been able to find information on.

These are the potential **risks** that have been identified from the **collaboration between WUR and the private sector** (big companies)

1. Funding influences research agenda, threatening independence, and credibility. (89%)
2. Limitation of critical thinking, questions asked to answer at interest of companies. Influence imagination of students, society, and political institutions on what a sustainable future looks like. (80%)

3. University that declares itself as “sustainable” promoting mainly a capitalistic/profit-oriented version of sustainability, reinforcing capitalist-realist idea that companies are the right institutions suitable for addressing societal issues. (78%)
4. If collaboration is money-dependent, risk of lack of diversity and enhance unequal power balance between big and small companies. (75%)
5. Reduced ownership of research carried out at WUR if funded by the private sector (issues linked to IP) (66%)
6. Public resources (human capacity and funds) used to benefit profits of a private company.

On the other hand, these are the potential **benefits** identified from these **collaborations**

1. Funding of expensive equipment – more research possibilities (72%)
2. Internship opportunities for students. (58%)
3. Connecting research to markets. (47%)
4. Teaching students to address practical problems in a (future) work context. (49%)
5. Incentive for big companies to research sustainable topics of interest to WUR. (42%)
6. Having these collaborations allows for receiving governmental grants.
7. Have a positive impact on companies regarding their sustainability.

**Practical advice – guidelines** – how to address this in the future?

1. Shift: look at world's problems and decide on companies that work on these problems instead of reacting to a demand. (78%)
2. Establish clear guidelines for collaboration in a participative way. (74%).
3. More clarity and better documentation of the decision-making process and procedures, so that more can be discussed. (69%)
4. Establish continuous reflection sessions on the topic, how are we doing? Where are we going, do we want to go there? (65%)
5. Transform the decision-making process into a more inclusive and participative one, involve the WUR community, councils, students, and staff actively.
6. Work with local companies that engage in organic agriculture or sustainability instead of large destructive companies.
7. Create opportunities for non-profits to enter these collaborations and/or find ways to enlarge the (intellectual) commons instead of privatized knowledge hubs.

Having a clear set of **ethical guidelines** is something the participants of the process expressed they found fundamental. We not only identified it as a potential strategy to address the topic of future collaborations, but also explored how these guidelines could look like. These are the points that the participants of this reflective process considered should be included in the ethical guidelines for collaboration:

1. Ratio of values/impacts created by companies (including societal and environmental impacts). (82%)
1. Aims of the company for establishing collaboration. (79%)
2. Open-data sharing – enhance transparency and research reputation. (80%)
3. Narrative and action of the company, including incentive of being sustainable. (69%)
4. Historical records. (62%)
5. Size of the company (26%)
6. Money flows, patents, an ethical framework based on SDG's and human rights.
7. Company with policies on inclusivity (BIPOC, LGBTQI+, etc.)
8. Guides for reflection and evaluation with clear terms on termination of location

## Presence of companies on campus

Collaborations with the private sector have extended to having companies such as Unilever or Friesland Campina present on campus. Participants have expressed their concern about the image that having such companies on WUR's campus portrays.

The reason behind this is that proximity benefits both parties, being able to share facilities and increase communication. However, in this campus ecosystem, as described by Anne Mensink, not all societal actors are equally represented on campus, with under-representation and lack of visibility of NGOs, for example.

These are the **risks** identified from the **presence of companies on campus**:

1. Greenwashing, giving big multinational companies a more sustainable image by being on WUR's campus, when they might not be sustainable. (74%)
2. Influence results and/or research design. (68%)
3. Conflict of interest between being a public institution but the private sector wanting things to remain private. (74%)
4. Influencing students by offering them only a certain type of visual stimulation (no trees, big corporations) in a space that should, ideally, include different types of actors and organizations. (61%)
5. Scare smaller companies or NGOs to also settle on campus or collaborate with WUR.

**Practical advice – guidelines** – how to address this in the future?

1. Establishing active channels of communication (not only website publishing) to communicate collaborations and engage in participatory decision-making process. (71%)
2. Creation of guidelines with involvement of other actors than the Executive Board. (73%)
3. Increase involvement of participation council in campus development, including students and staff for such impactful decisions. (60%)
4. Making MoUs and funding arrangements public. (55%)
5. Setting up an independent review board to assess existing and potential collaborations of companies engaging with WUR either via providing capital or physical presence on campus.
  - o Establish a set of criteria to be used by the review board through a consultative and expert-led process.
6. Establish regulations regarding brand display on campus.
7. Include other organisations in equal spaces

## Influence on research

A point of concern regarding the collaborations is about fundamental vs applied science, profitable vs non-profitable research. Corporations fund both fundamental and applied science but have more interest in funding applied science since it has a clearer outcome, and it is more profitable. The question here is on the independence of research: do corporations influence research by deciding on the questions or framing problems and potential solutions? On top of that, large companies can do more research, resulting in monopolization of science; money creates the facts?

Another point in the discussion is the research results ownership, who owns the research results? WUR research results can be owned by private companies, or should they be publicly accessible? The difference between WU (public) and WR (semi-private) might make this a little bit more complex.

These are the identified **risks** in the collaboration regarding the **research agenda**:

1. Narrow research framework focused on continued economic growth and technological solutions. (81%)
2. Outcomes of applied research are more vulnerable to corporate influence. (73%)
3. Going too far in working with the private sector to optimize its processes/products (48%)
4. Disadvantaging long term fundamental research, critical thinking, and applied research on non-marketable solutions.

**Practical advice – guidelines** – how to address this in the future?

1. Develop a policy on public-private collaboration. (73%)
  - o Suggestion: The policy should contain a rule that at least 30% of the research budget is spent on public issues e.g., open call for proposals, PhD fellowships, etc.
2. Trainings with researchers who work with private sector regularly to avoid influence on research. (52%)
3. Having an independent board that annually inspects and publicly reports on companies social and environmental records (with members that change frequently). (68%)
4. Be more selective choosing companies to collaborate with
5. Substantial collaborations with companies should adhere to policy regulations. For occasional projects it might be okay to collaborate with controversial organizations (31%)
6. A system of funding division – a company does not fund specific research; it only supports the institution and WUR is the one responsible for allocating funds fairly.
7. Trainings for scholars who regularly work with private sector to develop their own moral framework and stimulate them to actively advocate for this rather than acting neutral. Create a safe space where researchers can discuss openly about the topic and help each other. Active protection for whistleblowers.

We asked the participants of the process under what circumstances they thought it would be acceptable for WUR to collaborate with controversial companies. Almost half said that never, while 35% said that occasional collaborations for specific projects were acceptable. Only a 20% of the participants thought that the collaboration was acceptable if it brought academic opportunities for students in the form of ACT projects or internship opportunities.

Other participants suggested that the collaboration would be acceptable if it was aimed at improving the issues that make that company controversial, changing their practices to become more sustainable (environmentally and socially).

However, participants agree that if these collaborations happen, they should do so with full transparency, through clear and open communication.

These are the identified **risks** in the collaboration regarding **research results ownership**

1. Results can be suppressed by private sector if they do not agree with the outcomes. (78%)
2. Accepting patenting as a way of keeping certain things confidential for a certain amount of time is problematic. (66%)
3. Research is becoming output oriented. (68%)
4. Students sign off their ideas to companies (44%)

**Practical advice – guidelines** – how to address this in the future?

1. Publication of results of knowledge produced, regardless of outcomes. (84%)
2. Increase accessibility of information, improve website and increase communication and introduction to the structure of WUR. (66%)
3. Establish ownership rules for research data. (61%)
4. Discussions on patenting, is confidentiality okay under the guise of patent laws? (42%)
5. Discussions on patenting should also consider the ethical impacts of privatization of solutions that can benefit many people and ecosystems.
6. Results produced by a public university should not be up for private patenting. Potential solution working with embargo's – temporary halt on publication to give a company the chance to get a head start with patenting or other market options (embargo max. for 1 year).
7. Promote open access and open source.

## CONCLUSIONS

If we must come up with a single conclusion from this process, it is clear; this topic needs **more discussion**. We cannot leave it here, the WUR community is concerned about the impact of the collaboration between WUR and the private sector, and they have shown so by getting involved in this process and sharing their views and opinions.

There is not one opinion, there are many, and they all deserve to be heard and considered. Moreover, everyone needs to shape their opinion, which requires more information about this topic. A general opinion is that certain information is 'hidden' on the website and is not easily accessible.

The conversation needs to be **continuous, transversal, inclusive and relevant**. It is not a one-day thing, but a routinary system needs implementation. Everyone's perspective is needed, so we need a system that listens in an inclusive way, involving students and staff. And finally, people don't only want to give their say, they want to do so and receive a response.

**Transparency is key**, transparency is the problem and transparency is the solution. The participants of this process have actively expressed how they feel WUR has a lack of transparency regarding this topic. However, becoming a more transparent institution is what most participants identify as a solution, having open communication about the collaborations and their implications (aim, contracts, money flows).

WUR represents a very large community, and everyone wants to be consulted when important decisions are made. The decision-making process regarding these collaborations

should become more **open and participatory**, involving the councils of students and staff. Most of the participants agree that a set of ethical guidelines should be established to decide upon the kind of companies that can collaborate with WUR, or under which circumstances. These guidelines should be designed in a both participatory and expert-led process.

Furthermore, WUR represents many people, their studies, or their research. It is important to pay attention to the **image** that WUR portrays with its collaborations and corporations present on campus, since it can affect the **independence and credibility** of the institution. If the campus aims to be an innovation ecosystem, it is unbalanced to only have these very large corporations, there is under-representation and lack of visibility of local small companies and NGOs.

Regarding the **influence of research**, regulations on patenting should be reviewed to ensure that research results that have been financed with public funds are not used for the profit of a private company. The institution needs to establish mechanisms to ensure its scientific independence, enhancing fundamental research, and research that is not only market-oriented, but that aims at finding solutions for the social and environmental challenges of the planet. Researchers that work closely with the private sector should be trained to maintain their independence and integrity and have available channels to notify irregularities in a safe way.