ABRI-VU Newsletter is a platform for knowledge creation and dissemination. It connects doctoral candidates, research fellows, and the Zuidas business community.

**WHAT MAKES A TOP DOCTORAL PROGRAMME DISTINCTIVE?**
Is the question with which Svetlana Khapova went to INSEAD. In this article she shares her discoveries during the Doctoral Programme meeting which took place at INSEAD in October of this year. What fascinated her most is that it is not the content of courses and teaching techniques of instructors that make a programme distinctive. She writes about motivated Doctoral candidates, heavily involved supervisors, focus on interesting research question, interdisciplinarity, strong alumni, and much more (p. 4).

**10 TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PHD**
Dorien shares some tips of how to survive a PhD trajectory. Useful for any researcher (p. 6).

**PHD BLOG**
In this issue Roel tells about his decisions to start PhD and what still awaits for him (p. 7).

**INTRODUCING PHD RESEARCHER**
Travel from the “back-corner” of the Netherlands (“de Achterhoek”) to Africa. Meet Astrid (p. 5).
The opening of ABRI-VU is a new chapter for the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, as well as for us, the PhD candidates. It marks yet another milestone in our trajectory towards getting a PhD dissertation and in our academic career. By now we have experienced two research methods courses, which enriched our knowledge about different research designs and methods. We also had the first Research Seminar (Doctoral FADO) and mentoring lunch, where we learned about the research and network resources of our PhD co-workers.

In the Study Guide 2009 – 2010, Svetlana Khapova articulates ABRI-VU’s aim to provide an umbrella for learning, career development and community. As we know, achievements are measured with time. I hope that with more courses and activities to come, the idea of an umbrella will become more tangible. Nevertheless, much more is required from us, PhD candidates, in order to benefit from what ABRI-VU offers.

Take for example learning. It is our privilege to be able to work while acquiring new knowledge and skills. However, one should aspire to do more. As researchers we have to opt for the values and behaviours we believe in. As learners we are responsible for being true to ourselves in the process of personal development. Roel van Anholt (p. 7) tells us about how he does it, while combining the role of a researcher and a consultant.

Such learning experiences are fundamental for our career development, the time when we can shape our professional identity. Focus and involvement are the keywords in this process. As career developers, we need to understand our strengths and focus on promoting these. By being genuine and substantive we gain credibility. Dorien Kooij suggests (p. 6) that taking initiatives is also important. Once we are involved in developing our own careers, we not only contribute to ourselves, but also to our community.

Being a community is about creating a common ground for us all to rely upon. It is a source of inspiration and power we all can feel comfortable to use along our journey. This also gives space for sharing personal experiences and ideas, as Astrid ter Wiel demonstrates (p. 5). Our task is to sow the seeds for a healthy collaborative workplace, so we can achieve creativity and success. I hope that the ABRI-VU Newsletter will help us create a strong community, allowing us to grow and evolve in our journeys. Enjoy reading!
Amsterdam Business Research Institute of VU University (ABRI-VU) and Amsterdam Bright City, together with its partner institutions University of Amsterdam and VU Connected invite business professionals, politicians, academics and consultants to join us at Amsterdam Business Forum 2010. This is an international business event aimed at bringing together the business community and academics. Its aim is to encourage lively debate on the most pressing business issues among diverse business stakeholders and to give rise to new collaborations. Located at the heart of Amsterdam Zuidas, the forum draws on inspiration from this dynamic and innovative business hub. The first forum aims to raise a debate about the ways in which we currently do business, and to prompt different stakeholders to join forces toward reinventing business and management principles for the future of business.

WHERE AND WHEN?

Date and time
20 January 2010
11.00 - 18.30

Venue
VU University Amsterdam
Aula

PRESSING QUESTIONS...

- What needs to be done to create organizations that are truly fit for the future?

- What should be the critical priorities for tomorrow’s management?

- How do you inspire employees to bring initiative, imagination, and passion to work every day?

Registration and information
www.businessforum-abri.com
From the very beginning of ABRI-VU one of my big wishes has been to see ABRI-VU's Doctoral education among the leading programmes in Europe. Time will show whether our initiative will turn into a successful institution. For now, we can only see great efforts invested by all involved parties including: Doctoral candidates, ABRI-VU Board members, FEWEB faculty and FEWEB Management Board. It is because of everyone's support, more and more initiatives are getting started under the umbrella of Amsterdam Business Research Institute VU. This newsletter is one of such initiatives and reflects collaboration between Doctoral candidates and senior researchers. In the nearest future more of related activities will emerge. Among these key activities are the Executive PhD programme which will begin in September 2010 and a Research Master programme (MPhil) which is planned for September 2011.

However, what has been concerning me most is that all these initiatives are structural. They do not necessarily suggest that ABRI-VU could become a leading player in the market of the Dutch and European Doctoral education. I am often occupied with the question: What makes top Doctoral programmes distinctive and of high quality? It is with this question I went to a Doctoral programme meeting at INSEAD at the end of October.

What became apparent is that it is not about the content of Doctoral courses or the use of teaching techniques that make a programme distinctive. Rather, it is about highly motivated Doctoral candidates and heavily involved supervisors and faculty. For Doctoral candidates it is a matter of prestige to get a PhD from such a reputable business school. Admission is highly competitive, and from hundreds of applications received from around the world, only about 10 candidates get positions each year. The first year of the four-year trajectory is dedicated almost fully to course work, which requires from Doctoral candidates high involvement and often result in sleepless nights.

It was surprising to see how much the school values interdisciplinarity. Doctoral candidates are working with professors from different disciplines and different research groups. They are encouraged to experiment and improvise. Unlike the traditional US universities that promote excellence in methods, INSEAD tries to balance between content and methods, and strongly promotes focus on interesting questions. It was also fascinating to hear how professors with "big names" are involved in the development of Doctoral candidates and in writing their papers. And while only 3-4 papers become part of the Doctoral dissertation, Doctoral candidates have many more articles submitted and published by the end of the programme.

The meeting gave me a feeling that INSEAD is a great learning place. But probably most of all, it is a community which values, and is proud of, its members. Their strong alumni association promotes INSEAD across the world allowing the community to cross boundaries and prosper. Furthermore, once a student receives an email account from INSEAD it remains with him/her also after graduation, allowing them to stay connected. I definitely learned a lot from visiting the school, and hope to bring to ABRI-VU the inspiration a good research institute requires. I also hope that one day international colleagues will come to ABRI-VU to learn from our experience.
FROM “DE ACHTERHOEK” TO AFRICA, AND BACK

Asking a PhD student to write one paragraph about her research, is like explaining to the doctor what is wrong with you: you try to be brief knowing that you might leave some interesting facts out…

October 15th 2008 I started my PhD studies at the VU University and more specifically at the Management & Organisation Department (Faculty of Economics and Business Administration).

In my research I address issues concerning different portfolios of interorganizational relationships, from the organizational level of analysis. I will look at relationship management, capabilities, interdepartmental integration and the like, in the health care sector.

Currently I am in the first (qualitative) phase of my research. I explore the field through interviews in hospitals with the heads of the procurement department and members of the board of directors. Thereafter a quantitative phase will follow in which I, preferably abroad, dig deeper into the interplay of the interorganizational relationship portfolios.

I have lived in Amsterdam for a year now and I love being able to ride my bike to work every day. Yet, I would not mind hibernating in a country where the sun shines more often than in our Low Countries. I got a bit of a taste of the ideal climate living in Uganda from 2005 to 2008. As a project manager I worked for two universities in this fascinating country in East Africa. Before that I worked as a consultant for 3 years after completing my Master studies (Industrial Engineering & Management at the University of Twente).

And now for the lame part of this narrative… the hobbies: in my spare time I like to hang out and go out with friends, play sports, play the guitar, visit the theatre, write songs and many things more. And not omitting: I like to travel, especially to remote places. Growing up in ‘de Achterhoek’ might have something to do with it…
DORIEN’S 10 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PHD

During one of the sessions of ABRI-VU’s first PhD course (Research Approaches and Design), Dorien shared with students her experiences, and provided some useful tips of how to survive a PhD project:

1. Make sure you are passionate about your research topic; you will focus on this topic for 4 years or even longer
2. Create your own deadlines. For example, by submitting abstracts or papers to conferences and special issues of journals. This will help you plan your PhD project
3. Try to use different methods to study your topic. This way you can learn about all these different methodologies and examine your research questions thoroughly
4. Read as much as you can about your topic, but try to start writing as soon as possible. This will help you structure everything you read
5. Start collecting data (through interviews, surveys, etc.) early in your project. This will help you to get preliminary insights into your topic and collecting data might take a lot of time
6. Attend courses, seminars, workshops, PhD consortia. This is your time to learn!
7. Meet new people (also the hotshots). For example, by attending conferences or joining networks. Meeting new people is fun and you can learn from them as well
8. Do other things than just your PhD project, such as organizing conferences or seminars. This is a good experience and a way to expand your network
9. Take some time to visit scholars in your field. You can learn a lot from them
10. Don’t forget to relax and have fun!

QUICK FACTS ABOUT...

Dorien Kooij

My age is... 30
I live in...Bussum
I was born in...Bussum
My research topic is...Motivation and Hr practices for older workers
An inspiring quote is...’You’re never too old to learn’
The book I am reading now is...1953 (about the storm in Zealand)
My next traveling destination is...Cuba, on the 22nd of November!
When I was little, I wanted to be...A singer?
This week I am working on...The HRM Network conference and finishing my thesis
Today I...Attended Tugba’s presentation

tkooij@feweb.vu.nl
By being a PhD student for seven months now, I realise that the path to dissertation is far from a fixed route. I think an important reason for many PhD freshmen to start with the trajectory is to have time and all the necessary tools within reach to focus on a specific research topic that have interested them for a very long time. For me, things are a bit different. While studying – I completed a Bachelor of Business Engineering at the ‘Hogeschool Utrecht’ and Master of Business Administration at the ‘VU University’ – I always kept focussing on the practical use of research. Actually, the practical applicability of research is what intrigues me the most. Although I didn’t expect to proceed as academic, I couldn’t resist the opportunity of starting as PhD student when Iris Vis (Associate Professor at the department of Information systems and Logistics) offered me this particular project. I saw the chance of combining my interest for practical application and having the chance of inventing something entirely new. And so I started in April this year as a PhD at the department of Logistics with Iris Vis, my former Master thesis supervisor as daily supervisor and Lorike Hagdorn as promoter.

During the first phase of my research, I am involved in a project with people from the major Dutch banks and the consultancy firm Boer & Croon. As project manager I am responsible for developing a new cash replenishment model for Automated Teller Machines in order to reduce logistical costs while maintaining required service levels. After several phases, like mapping the current supply chain and cash processes, data collection and development of the cash replenishment model, I’m currently busy with performing the pilot. The pilot must clarify how the model would perform in practice and what the savings would be if the model would be deployed instead of retaining their own systems. Understanding and explaining why specific results are obtained is another challenging problem yet to come.

The funny thing is, up till now I’ve been acting more like a consultant, rather than being a researcher. But this is where ABRI woke me up. After the first three sessions of the first course ‘Research Design and Approaches’ I’m seeing the bigger picture, which is great (continued on p. 8).
The period of being project manager is almost finished and my focus upon delivering an efficient model to the banks needs to be shifted to my PhD objectives. There are so many directions I can take, but one thing is for sure: I'll be using the massive amount of both qualitative and quantitative data which I obtained during this first phase, as a foundation for my entire PhD project. I think for me, the major added value of following ABRI-courses is that all these directions I can follow get more structured. This is because I'll be obtaining a lot of useful skills and knowledge and because of the networking aspect; getting to know other PhD students who are suffering the same problems. I noticed that almost everything is possible; each PhD student I met does something entirely different and each of them chooses an approach that fits best. Although we get advice of how to approach this 4-year experience, we are definitely not bounded in our research-focus. Time flies because I really enjoyed my PhD up till now. I'm excited to proceed and very curious for all challenges that I'll be facing!
We would like to use this opportunity to congratulate our research fellows with receiving their Doctoral degrees earlier this year:

1. **Dr. Martijn Schoute**, *Antecedents and consequences of cost system design choices*
   Promotor: Prof. dr. T.L.C.M. Groot \ Research programme: Accounting and Control
   Graduation date: April 6, 2009

2. **Dr. Selmar Meents**, *The influence of sellers and the intermediary on buyers’ trust in C2C electronic marketplaces*
   Promotor: Prof. dr. Y.H. Tan \ Research programme: Information Systems for Organisational Networks
   Graduation date: April 6, 2009

3. **Dr. Matthijs Bal**, *Age and psychological contract breach in relation to work outcome*
   Promotor: Prof. dr. P.G.W. Jansen \ Research programme: Human Resource Management
   Graduation date: May 28, 2009

4. **Dr. Saïd El Aoufi**, *Economic evaluation of information security*
   Promotor: Prof. dr. A.A.I. Holtgrefe & Prof. dr. J.A. Oosterhaven \ Research programme: Information Systems for Organisational Networks & PGS Management Consultant
   Graduation date: June 11, 2009

5. **Dr. Luc Quadackers**, *A study of auditors’ skeptical characteristics and their relationship to skeptical judgments and decisions*
   Promotor: Prof. dr. T.L.C.M. Groot \ Research programme: Accounting and Control
   Graduation date: June 23, 2009

6. **Dr. Egbert Dommerholt**, *Corporate sustainability performance: constructs, measures and investors’ responses*
   Promotor: Prof. dr. T.L.C.M. Groot \ Research programme: Accounting and Control
   Graduation date: September 30, 2009

7. **Dr. Marius Rietdijk**, *Organisaties conditioneren : De invloed van beloning en straf op werkprestaties*
   Promotor: Prof. dr. T. Elfring & Prof. dr. P.G.W. Jansen \ Research programme: Strategy, Organisation & Entrepreneurship
   Graduation date: May 28, 2009

8. **Dr. Marco Bijvank**, *Solution techniques for inventory systems without backorders*
   Promotor: Prof. dr. G.M. Koole & Dr. I.F.A. Vis \ Research programme: Distribution and Supply Chain Logistics
   Graduation date: October 22, 2009

Congratulations!
Statistical Quantitative Research Methods

This course offers an overview of advanced statistical quantitative methods in different research design settings. Students will be taught to make informed decisions regarding choices of statistical analysis techniques. The emphasis is on advanced and recent techniques that are used in top business journals including Accounting, Organisations & Society, Organisation Science, and The Journal of Marketing among others.

The course takes place every Wednesday, between 11 November 2009 and 2 December 2009.

Academic Paper

One of the most critical points in one's doctoral appointment is the first year evaluation. Having written a high quality academic paper is the main criterion for getting positive evaluation.

The purpose of this course is to support Doctoral candidates to go through the writing experience successfully, with a tangible outcome that is a publishable article available by the end of the first year. First meeting will take place on 30 November 2009.

For more information about PhD courses please see the ABRI-VU website and BlackBoard. For updated class dates/times and locations, please see ABRI-VU schedule.
**Researchers’ Toolbox**

8 December, 2009

The Information Literacy - Researchers Toolbox is a two hours session organised by the VU library. It includes:

- How to find literature efficiently
- Where to find Data for your research
- Stay up-to-date in my research area
- How to organize and manage research literature

For registration please email mrs.Montserrat Prats (m.pratslopez@uhvu.vu.nl).

**Time**: from 10.00 to 12.00  
**Location**: 3A05

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**PhD Social Drink**

2 December, 2009

Socialising in informal settings is an important aspect of any PhD programme. The PhD Social Drink organised by ABRI-VU every two months aims to provide doctoral candidates the opportunity to get to know peers, share experiences and develop one’s career.

On December 2nd at 16.45, ABRI-VU invites PhD candidates, their supervisors and co-researchers for the 1st PhD Social-Drink at The Basket! After an intensive day at the Statistical Quantitative Methods, come and join us for a relaxing get-together with inspiring conversations and exchange of experiences.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the borrel!

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**PhD Mentoring Lunch**

8 December, 2009

In the session “Finding Your Academic Path” we will look at the academic career unfolding as you move forward. Your decision to get your PhD entails a commitment to continuous reading and writing, identifying new questions and answers, and to intellectual excellence. While everyone develops individual approaches to their work, it is helpful to learn from people who have walked this path before us. This session offers the unique opportunity to hear two faculty members share their experience, insights, and advice from a mid and a late career perspective. Paul Vlaar (associate professor) and Tom Elfring (professor, department head) will share how they master the most relevant challenges that define the current stage in their career, how they got to where they are now, and how they manage their future aspirations. Which were key situations on their path, how did their decisions turn out, what would they do differently now? And what is their advice on what you can do to excel as you advance on your academic path? All PhD students are encouraged to attend and contribute to the discussion.

**Date**: from 12.00 to 13.00  
**Location**: 0G-08
Established in 2009 under the name Amsterdam Business Research Institute VU (ABRI-VU), the institute builds on a long history of research and teaching at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the VU University Amsterdam. The institute was founded as a response to the faculty's increasing importance in the academic arena of business studies, as well as its growing influence in the knowledge creation in the business area of Amsterdam Zuidas.

ABRI-VU's mission is to serve as a centre of knowledge creation and dissemination in eight business domains:
- Accounting and Control
- Human Resource Management
- Information Systems for Organisational Networks
- Knowledge, Information, and Networks
- Distribution and Supply Chain Logistics
- Strategy, Organisation, and Entrepreneurship
- Marketing
- Operations Research