

# Shop for Societal Driven Research Experience Engaging students in Community Based Research

Meng Ai, Hanny Jongstra, Ayolt Mansholt, Kim-Quy Tran

## Introduction

The Science Shop of Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR) in The Netherlands considers the contribution of students of major importance: students increase its strength, dynamism and impact. But it often takes too long to find students for Science Shop research projects. A group of MSc. students of Wageningen University investigated the Science Shop' recruitment strategies and the engagement of students in the Science Shop.

## Methods

We investigated the recruitment strategies of the Science Shops at three Dutch universities: Wageningen, Tilburg and Groningen. Furthermore interviews were taken with students and researchers who were involved in the Science Shop of WUR. We asked questions about their experiences within the Science Shop and their recommendations towards the engagement of students in the Science Shop of WUR.

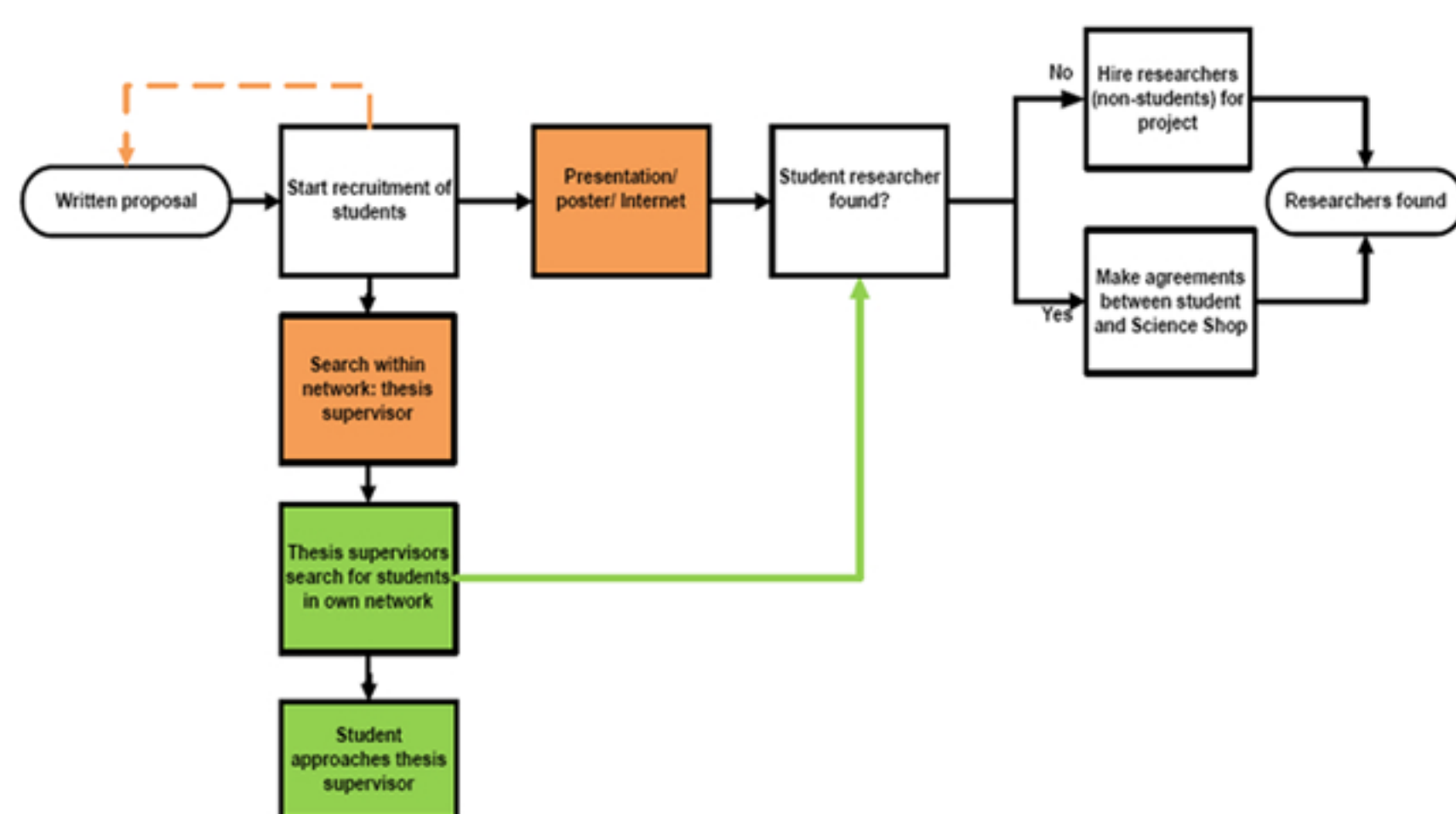


Fig. 1 Strategies Science Shop use to find students and students' strategies for finding a project

This figure shows which strategies the Science Shop of Wageningen University and Research Centre and students use to find a project. A mismatch is shown, because Science Shop of WUR does not make optimal use of their network and the thesis supervisors of students.

## Results

This explorative study concludes that networking is the most effective activity: both for students to find research subjects as for the Science Shop to fill vacancies. However, students and the Science Shop seem to have a different perception on Community Based Research (CBR).

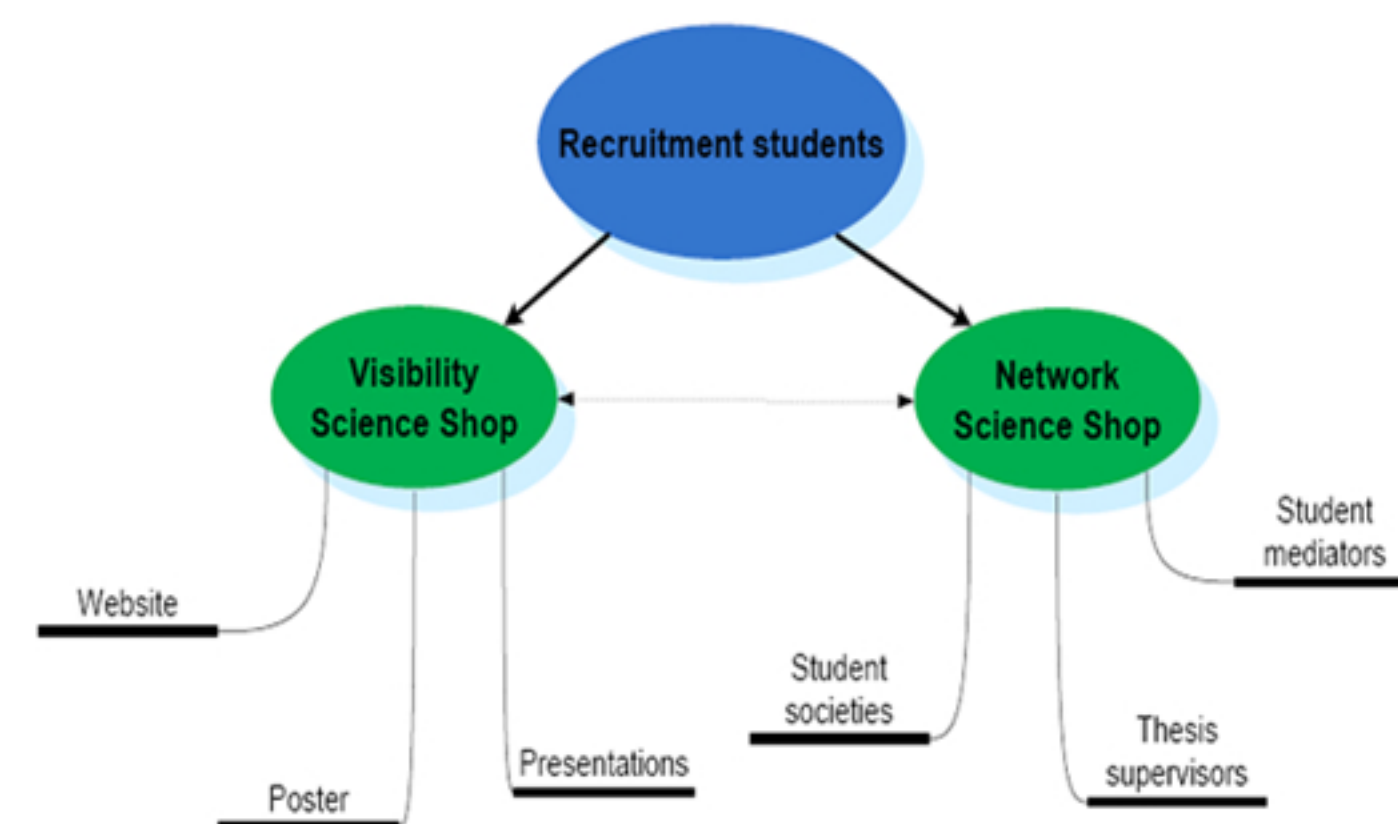


Fig. 2 Recommendations given by interviewees

Students described that they were attracted by the practical research topics offered and by the commissioner's aim and willingness to implement their research findings. Students did not mention that they were appealed by conducting CBR or by "bridging the gap between science and society", the core philosophy of each Science Shop.

## Conclusion

The study recommends the Science shop to increase its visibility of and to use its network in a more intelligent way to improve the recruitment and engagement of students. The network also relates to visibility: the more visible, the easier the network can be improved. Furthermore the Science Shop should emphasize more that their research projects contain a practical angle.



## Discussion

Is the Science Shop a shop offering students practical research subjects or is it a formula bridging the gap between science and society?

Do students engage in the Science Shop because they are interested in performing CBR or because they just want to earn their study credits?