

Building a Research Group in a Changing Scientific Culture

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Starting an independent research group today means learning to navigate the different rhythms of scientific work. Pressures associated with competitive funding environments and international visibility contrast with the slower, collaborative processes through which experimental knowledge is built.

In this short contribution, I will share some reflections on how these tensions play out from my experience of building an experimental research group in soft materials chemistry. I will discuss how the current funding landscape and expectations of strategic positioning influence the way research questions are framed and collaborations are pursued, and how the growing presence of data-driven and AI-enabled approaches is beginning to shape experimental cultures and everyday laboratory practice.

By sharing personal observations, I hope to spark an open discussion about how these changes are experienced at different career stages and how women scientists, in particular, navigate ambition, responsibility, and sustainability in contemporary academic life.