

observant

INDEPENDENT WEEKLY MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

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DECISION FINALLY MADE: UM TO CUT TIES WITH HEBREW UNIVERSITY

“We wanted
to review the
evidence ourselves”

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REDISCOVER THE HOSPITAL

“What’s special about the
Maastricht hospital? That you
can enter the university on
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BIG CHANGE FOR INKOM

“A university organising
large parties where alcohol
is served, is that still
appropriate?”

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editorial

Prof X

In the dismissal case involving a Maastricht professor of Movement Sciences, which we reported on last week, we did not mention any names. He was simply referred to as Professor X. We opted for anonymity because we felt it was not in the greater public interest to reveal his identity. However, according to one letter writer, this makes *all* the professors of that department look suspicious. And of course, there is some truth to that.

What is our policy? At *Observant*, we are reluctant to publish names in sensitive (legal) cases such as this. You don't want to cause anyone unnecessary harm. At the same time, you want to be transparent, especially when it comes to long-term and serious misconduct. Which obviously begs the question, when is misconduct severe enough to merit publishing someone's full name? And is the severity of the offence the most important reason for us?

Not always, no. There was a case in 2023, where a professor at the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences had to appear in court for sexual misconduct. *Observant* spoke to four of his victims, the facts were very serious, and yet we still didn't reveal his identity. Not even after the court's verdict. The decisive reason was that he was not a public figure, not a director, dean, councillor or judge.

But there were doubts, of course. A few months earlier, *de Volkskrant* had published an article about a professor of Astronomy at Leiden University who had been dismissed, asking whether the decision by the Executive Board not to reveal his name was the right one. It had led to considerable criticism in the academic world, because as long as his name was unknown, he could simply apply for jobs elsewhere. Not to mention that *all* his fellow Astronomy professors felt like suspects. Some even chose to clear their names on social media as a precaution.

This time, in the case of the Maastricht movement scientist, we again opted for anonymity. Not only because he does not hold a high (public) position, but also because, as the legal documents show, he did not cross the line in terms of serious sexual misconduct and abuse of power. Ultimately, the reason for his dismissal was a disrupted working relationship.

Anonymity protects and anonymity conceals. As journalism relies on openness and verifiability, this will always be a difficult balancing act.

Wendy Degens

The editor-in-chief gives a look behind the scenes at the editorial office.



series the times they are (not) a changin'

Observant columnist Louis Boon feels pressured by rector to quit



2003

What do you get when you bring together two UM professors with sharp pens, quick wits and critical minds, and ask them to write about the pleasures and (mostly) pains of university life? A weekly exchange that many readers will look forward to, or so the *Observant* editors thought at the start of the 2002/2003 academic year. And the formula worked – until early 2003, when then-Rector Magnificus Arie Nieuwenhuijzen Kruseman called columnist Louis Boon to account, leaving Boon to feel he had no choice but to quit.

In his opening column in September 2002, Boon's fellow columnist John Hagedoorn cheerfully set the tone: "Now that we're starting to lose our own hair, we might as well start ruffling everyone else's." Boon took that to heart. The founding father and dean of University College Maastricht, newly energised by welcoming UCM's first cohort of students, was a born polemicist. University administrators and petty officials alike regularly felt the sting of his pen. And when something annoyed him, he said so in no uncertain terms. Take Premium, the computer program used to create timetables and record exam results. "Not exactly user-friendly", Boon wrote. "But if you always have a headache, you start thinking it's normal – so the poor souls forced to use it have resigned themselves to the misery." When faculties demanded improvements, Boon continued, "our industrious colleagues at ICTS were paid to teach the Premium mastodon some new tricks. Once ICTS started programming, I hear they created something of an electronic Chernobyl."

His fellow columnist Hagedoorn agreed whole-heartedly, launching into a rant about ICTS's poor service the following week. In his next column, Boon responded, "The incompetence and sloppiness that characterise this part of UM ensure that any sense steers well clear of this Soviet-style bureaucracy."

Then, on 9 January, *Observant* ran the headline "Criticism of Executive Board leads to columnist's departure". ICTS director René Kocken had complained to the Executive Board, prompting Rector Arie Nieuwenhuijzen Kruseman to call Boon to account. The columnist drew his own conclusions: worried that his writings might have repercussions for UCM, he decided to quit. Kocken denied making a complaint but spoke of "three worthless columns" and said it was "quite an honour" to be the catalyst for Boon's departure. "It's not my kind of humour, and I've got an excellent sense of humour", he told *Observant*. "And frankly, I practically had to hold my people back from marching over to confront Louis Boon. If they had, *Observant* would have been left without a columnist anyway."

Rector Kruseman maintained that he was perfectly within his rights to confront columnists about their writings. "If Boon is free to express his opinion, then so are we." In his view, freedom of expression wasn't at stake. "We didn't forbid him to do anything; he made his own decision." He denied that Boon's position at UCM had ever been under threat.

The *Observant* editors at the time expressed regret over Boon's departure and found the rector's key role in the affair troubling. "Even if the rector's remarks were as noncommittal as Kruseman claims, they still came from the university's highest authority." This, they wrote, gave them a "hierarchical weight that stifles open debate". While the editors sympathised with ICTS staff who felt aggrieved by the columns, they asked, "does that mean such criticism should no longer be written?"

Of course it doesn't. The columnist's freedom of expression – then as now – is far too valuable.

Riki Janssen

Maastricht University was founded fifty years ago. In this anniversary series, we delve into our own archives to rediscover memorable, funny, relevant and curious news stories from the past

50 Years of UM:
The Times They Are
(Not) A Changin'

"We didn't forbid him to do anything; he made his own decision"

Chair UM Human Rights Committee on advice to Executive Board

“Collaboration with the Hebrew University could not continue in its current form”

Maastricht University ended its collaboration with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This means an end to the exchange programme for students at the Faculty of Psychology and Neurosciences (FPN) and the Israeli university's Psychology department. “We are glad that the Board has followed our advice,” said David Shaw, chair of the Human Rights Advisory Committee (HRAC).

The committee found “considerable proof” that Israel “is committing serious violations of human rights, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and potential acts of genocide”. Because the Hebrew University is directly involved in training Israeli armed forces, the committee finds it indirectly contributed to those crimes, and so the committee’s advice was to end the partnership at an institutional level until the Hebrew University alters course, said Shaw, who is also an associate professor at FHML.

Why did it take so long for advice to be issued? Other universities had already taken decisions about ties to Israeli institutions.

“The difference here is that the Board decided not merely to react to the situation in Gaza, but to create a system that could also be used for other countries. In developing the Human Rights Due Diligence Framework (a framework used to assess sensitive collaborations with UM, ed.), the university wanted to involve the wider UM community, to allow everyone to have a say. The framework subsequently had to be approved by the University Council (which happened in February 2025, ed.). That process took the most time. Our committee was formed in April of this year, and the members have been working on this a day a week since, alongside their normal jobs, and then there was also the summer break. We did it as quickly as we could.”

Why is collaboration still permitted between individual researchers, for example, or within Horizon projects financed by Europe?

“Those don’t fall under the HRDD framework. We assess long-term partnerships between universities, institutions, or departments with strategic aims. We are aware of the concerns regarding academic freedom and want to steer well clear of telling individual researchers who they can and can’t work with. The HRDD pilot, which also looked at collaborations with Sudan and Turkey, will be evaluated at the end of the year. We will also be investigating whether the scope of the framework should be expanded.”

Have you not simply unnecessarily repeated the work of committees at other universities?

“Of course, we knew that other decisions had already been taken and we did read the reports from similar committees elsewhere. But due diligence is not the same as simply copying and pasting work done by others. We wanted to examine the evidence ourselves. Besides, the situation in Gaza is constantly changing and more evidence has come to light since a number of those reports were issued.”



Illustration: Shutterstock

Was the committee unanimous in its findings?

“There was, of course, a discussion about the evidence, how to interpret it and what our advice should look like. In the end, everybody who was involved in finalising the advice agreed that the institutional collaboration with the Hebrew University could not continue in its current form, which was our most important advice. At the request of a minority of the committee, the advice does contain an option to allow the exchange programme to continue in a diminished form: to allow students from there to come here, but not the other way round. My problem with that is that a one-sided exchange isn’t really a proper exchange. The Board has also chosen not to implement that option.”

Are you happy with the outcome?

“No, that is too strong a word for it, although I am glad that the Board has accepted our advice. It is a difficult situation, because the Psychology department in particular seems to be quite active when it comes to protesting the war. The chair is also conducting research into how you can reconcile groups, and they are not actively involved in training armed forces. In that sense, it is a shame that we had to issue the advice to end the exchange programme. But when you assess a strategic partnership, you have to look at the university as a whole.”

Peter Doorakkers



While The Hague waits

“

The election is over. The votes are counted. The country holds its breath again. The coalition talks have barely begun, but universities already feel the pause.

That is Dutch democracy. Careful. Polite. Measured to the millimeter. While The Hague negotiates, the rest of us also wait. But maybe we should not. Maybe it is time we start moving faster than coalitions can be formed. Dutch politics may move at glacial speed, but knowledge should not. Waiting is not a strategy. Not for a country. Not for our university.

I want to work at a university that stands for something. Not just against things. For too long we have gathered on the squares to say what we *do not* want: more cuts, more pressure, more bureaucracy. That mattered. But maybe it is time to say what we *do* want.

I cannot speak for everyone. But I can tell you what I want, and you can decide if that would be bad for our academic landscape. I want a university that moves. That knows what it stands for. That does not hide behind committees or wait for policy signals from above. That leads. While politicians debate budgets, we can teach and research with purpose.

I want a university that looks forward. One that embraces new technologies and experiments with them. That accepts the risk of failure instead of banning tools out of fear. If AI destroys our students’ ability to think critically, is it not our job to teach them to think critically *with* it?

I want an academia that grows in the real sense. One that invests in curiosity, not compliance. That offers PhD students a future, not anxiety. At UM, too many PhD graduates still leave with a degree but no direction, while talented teachers struggle to find contracts that last beyond a year. A university that builds real career paths for researchers and educators alike. Where Recognition and Rewards is more than a slogan in a glossy report. An academia that treats collaboration as success, that shares data, ideas, and credit, and listens before measuring.

Change will not come from The Hague. It will come from us, every student, teacher, researcher, and staff member who refuses to wait for permission, but who goes out and shouts out what we want. The university we want is not a plan. It starts now. This is why I will be out there protesting again. For the university.

”

Jonas Heller is assistant professor Marketing & director SBE DEXLab

series sing, fight, cry, pray, laugh, work and admire



Charles Ortjens
(Maastricht, 1998)

/ Coordinator of the UM
video team

/ Relationship status:
living together with Loes

/ Lives in:
Maastricht

Photo: Joey Roberts

“ The bond you have with family is different, more special ”

Image or sound? The combination is my favourite. I manage nine students who produce all kinds of videos for the university, from instructional videos to summaries of PhD defences. I handle everything around that, from scouting locations and finding the right shots to sending invoices. Making videos has always been a passion of mine, but my background is in music. I studied electronic composition and sound design, and I compose my own music. Not in the traditional way, writing sheet music at the piano, but on a computer, designing and editing sounds. I'm currently working on a score for a short film that's premiering in late November. I love switching between the worlds of image and sound. I wouldn't want to choose between the two.

When was the last time you laughed? [Thinks] Can it be a moment when I laughed and cried at the same time? That was when I heard my nephew, Sjefke, had been born. It made me so happy and emotional – new life, an addition to the family. It's too special to put in words.

My brother and sister are my best friends. I wouldn't call my family that. The bond you have with each other is so different, more special. Friends are special too, but family isn't something you can just switch off or let go of. You really have to make it work together, and we're very good at

that. We're a cheerful bunch. All three of us ended up in creative fields, which is something we got from our parents. My mother is an artist and my father has always been into music, just like my grandfather, a talented pianist. It's just something you absorb growing up.

What is your greatest fear? That we'll end up destroying the planet and making it uninhabitable. I'm quite an optimistic person, but I'm also realistic, and things are clearly headed in the wrong direction.

What is the best film you've ever seen? Well, the one I've seen most often is *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly*. You can really tell that some scenes were built around the music instead of the other way around, using the music as a starting point instead of adding it later. It's almost like an Italian opera in that sense. I also love *Twin Peaks* – not a film, but a series in which the relationship between image, sound and music is masterful. I wish I could watch all of it again for the first time.

Do you ever pray? Not in the traditional sense; I don't turn to God. The word "religion" carries a lot of weight, but I do think that believing in something can bring people together. I miss that in today's society, where there's so much division and so little compassion. I meditate. It's not the same as placing

your problems in God's hands, but I'd say there's definitely some overlap. I once did a course in transcendental meditation in Utrecht – it's about looking at all the things that occupy your mind, including the unpleasant ones, from different perspectives, and then letting go. You shouldn't avoid things; you have to face them, even when it's hard.

If you could be a fly on the wall anywhere, where would it be? I'd actually like to observe myself for a day, to see how I go about things, especially when I'm composing. When I'm working on music, I'm very much on my own. It's nice to work alone, but it can also be confronting, like when I get stuck and there's no one to ask for help. It's hard not to be overly critical of myself. It would be interesting to see that from an outside perspective.

My greatest love... is Loes. It's wonderful how we can spend whole days together without getting on each other's nerves. That's quite special, I think. It helps that we can talk about the same things and share a lot of the same interests. Loes loves music too, though she's even more into dance. They complement each other perfectly.

What's the best trip you've ever been on? I find it a shame that so many people think they have to travel far to see something beautiful, for example to Southeast Asia. There's so much to discover in Europe. You'd be amazed at what you can see here. I love England, Ireland and Scotland – not just the cultures, but also the stunning landscapes. After Christmas, my family and I are going hiking in Yorkshire, which I'm really looking forward to. It helps me unwind and process things, switch off for a bit. I sometimes struggle to turn my thoughts off at night. Instead, I worry about things or replay the day in my head.

What is your dream? To keep doing what I'm doing, in a way that feels right to me. To stay inspired, and for new things to emerge from that. And I hope we'll eventually manage to fix the world a bit and find some optimism again in the future.

Deborah Blekkenhorst

Weekly personal interview with a student or employee

Will the large MECC parties disappear?

INKOM revamp: faculty and city introductions to take place in the same week

Maastricht University is planning to redesign INKOM. From 2027, the introduction week for first-year students will be combined with faculty-specific introduction programmes, which usually take place in the final week of August. Whether the university will continue to host large parties at MECC Maastricht remains to be seen.



First-years during INKOM 2025 Photo: Observant

First, a word on the most recent INKOM. Feedback has been collected from first years, student volunteers, the municipality and the organisers. “We’re very pleased”, says Birgitte Hendrickx, deputy director of the Student Services Centre (SSC), joined in her office by INKOM project leader Jeroen Custers. The police and first aid teams had an uneventful time, they laugh. “No one had to be removed from a party – something that usually happens a few times each INKOM. There were no incidents in the city, and first years showed better control over their alcohol intake.” Overall, Hendrickx and Custers conclude that the atmosphere was warm and friendly. This year’s INKOM received a higher rating than last year’s, scoring between 7 and 8 out of 10. So what made this year different? “It’s a bit of armchair psychology, but this cohort had two proper years of secondary school after the pandemic”, says Hendrickx. “They’ve learnt how to behave.”

A demanding week

Even so, INKOM 2025 proved demanding. The small core team “had to put in more hours than we had hoped”, says Custers. Since 2024, the team has consisted of SSC staff members and a handful of students, supported during the busiest weeks by nearly 700 volunteers, helpers and mentors – mostly students. Recruiting them, however, is becoming increasingly difficult. This year, university staff voluntarily stepped in to fill the gaps. Until 2024, INKOM was organised by a group of four or five stu-

dents known as the INKOM Working Group (WGI). But things have become far more complex since the pandemic, says Hendrickx, from permits and finances to safety measures. “Take the opening event on Markt. There are now much stricter rules about sound levels, first aid and fencing off the square. We not only need security staff, but we also have to set aside two separate areas for potential protests and counter-protests.” Both agree that the responsibility for organising the introduction week has become too great to leave entirely to students. Students remain closely involved in shaping the programme (“They know much better which artists to book”) and in organising events and recruitment.

Paid by the hour

However, these roles are no longer full-time positions. Students have become far less willing to take a year out of their studies for a work placement, especially as compensation comes in

the form of “administrative months” (financial support from the university to compensate student board members for study delays) rather than a monthly salary. “We stopped receiving applications”, says Hendrickx. “Today’s students don’t want to fall a year behind in their studies and prefer to be paid properly, by the hour.” Custers, who was a WGI member about ten years ago, understands the change. “Everything is more expensive now – rent, groceries, life in general. Students want to complete their degrees on time and fit INKOM around their studies. They can now work sixteen hours per week during the year and full-time in July and August through the InterUM temp agency.”

Not sustainable

Even with all these changes, the organisers agree that INKOM needs revamping. “The current format is not sustainable”, says Hendrickx. Participation has stagnated; this year, 3000 students took part, 600 fewer than in 2023. The causes are not entirely clear, say Hendrickx and Custers. Controversy around student associations may have played a part: following several incidents, Tragos and Circumflex were excluded from participation and instead ran an alternative “Maasweek”. The Hotel Management School Maastricht also did not take part this year. But there are broader questions too: “Is it still appropriate for a university to organise large parties where alcohol is served? Should UM be doing this? Shouldn’t we leave it to the student associations?” In addition, INKOM is very expensive – the organisers decline to give exact figures – and costs continue to rise. Last but not least, Hendrickx points out that the academic year in the Netherlands begins weeks earlier than in many other countries, so a lot of international students only arrive in early September when teaching begins. “That’s why we are considering combining the city introductions and social activities with the faculty-specific introduction programmes in the final week of August.” Ideally, academic activities at faculties would run until 2 pm, followed by social events. The main benefit, according to Hendrickx and Custers, is that “you avoid redundancies in the programme. Faculties already tend to organise their own drinks, parties or city tours anyway. And importantly, this would allow us to reach all new students – not just the 3000 who sign up for INKOM, but all 8000 to 9000 first-year bachelor’s and master’s students.”

Soft landing

The SSC will soon start gathering feedback from faculties, students and associations. “We’ve already spoken to a few faculty directors, who weren’t opposed to the idea. We’re offering to take work off their hands, but we will expect faculties to contribute in return. We all want students to have a soft landing in Maastricht. INKOM belongs to all of us.”

Student associations may be concerned, as they currently organise first-year camps during faculty introduction days.

“We’ll discuss how to resolve that”, says Hendrickx.

One thing is certain: students will still have the opportunity to meet peers from other faculties. “We want to strengthen social cohesion within UM. We want people to meet and

connect – that’s all part of fostering global citizenship in our students”, explains Hendrickx.

By summer 2026, it should be clear what the new format will look like. “We’re excited to see how it turns out”, say Hendrickx and Custers. The revamped INKOM is due to launch in 2027.

A collection of 26 essays exploring hospital life through objects

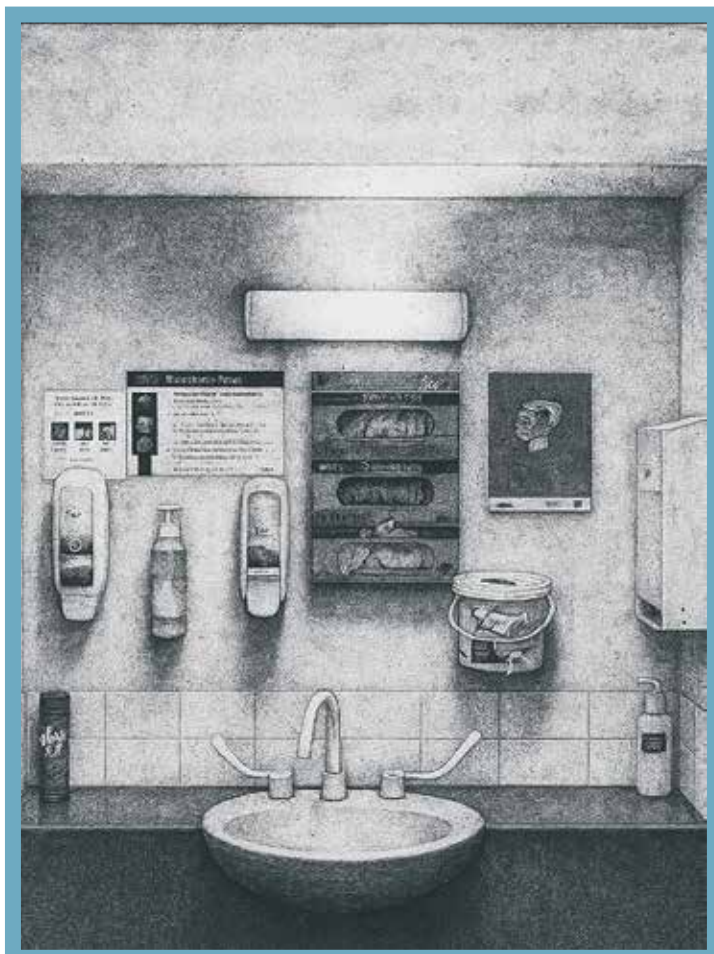
“Anywhere
in the world
you can
recognise
a hospital
by its smell”

A bed on wheels, a stethoscope, a latex glove – all objects that instantly evoke an image of what they look like, where they belong and what they are used for. But what if you looked at them with different eyes? That's what Professor of Anthropology and Medicine Anna Harris invites readers to do in her new collection of essays, *The Matter of Hospitals*.

Text: Cleo Freriks Illustrations: *The Matter of Hospitals*, essays 'Introduction' and 'Ventilators'



Serv-I-ventilator. Based on a photo by Wikimedia/BreathDiver, final refinements done using Adobe software



Nightside of hospitals, wash station. Based on a photo by Thomas Fuller, final refinements done using Adobe software

Children find it much easier to reimagine things we take for granted, as Harris knows from the workshops she occasionally runs. In these sessions, children are asked to redesign a hospital. "Imagine the world has been completely flooded and the only building

left standing is a hospital. The children are in charge, and the doctors must listen to them. They come up with the most extraordinary ideas." It would be wonderful, says Harris, if the adult world allowed more "time, space and appreciation for this kind of creativity and imagination."

What would happen if it did? Harris gives an example in her inaugural lecture, delivered just two weeks ago and included in the book. During the Covid pandemic, nurses in Brazil filled discarded gloves with warm water and placed them on ICU patients' wrists. This didn't just raise their body temperature, making it easier to monitor oxygen levels, but also felt like a comforting hand on their arm as they fought for their lives. An ordinary object, technically waste, creatively repurposed.

Distinctive smell

In a way, all hospitals are the same, says Harris. "You can recognise them by their smell, a particular mix of hygiene and illness. The smell isn't exactly the same everywhere – it might depend, for instance, on the cleaning products they use – but it's one of those things that instantly tells you where you are. Then there's the atmosphere, especially at night. Hospitals are both quiet – patients are resting – and busy, with work continuing around the clock."

But local differences are considerable. "For the book, I asked anthropologists, medical professionals and other writers from around the world to write essays about particular objects. That's when you notice that things like health-care systems vary greatly across countries. In the chapter on ventilators, authors write about shortages in African countries during the pandemic, whereas we in the Netherlands are used to always having enough of everything."

A door to another world

What strikes her when she walks into the Maastricht University Medical Centre (MUMC+)? "First, the incredible aeroplane sculpture in the entrance hall. I always pause

to admire it. And I still love how you can walk straight from the university to the hospital on every floor. You just step through a door into another world. I haven't seen that in many other academic hospitals."

And Harris has visited plenty of hospitals, both for her anthropological research and as a medical student and doctor. "I always knew I wanted to be a researcher, but I used to imagine myself discovering a new medicine with a microscope. When I asked our neighbour, a biologist, how to get into medical research, she advised me to study medicine."

Harris took her neighbour's advice, but it was only in the fifth year of her studies that discovering anthropology while doing an obstetrics assignment set her heart racing. "I later travelled through China and Vietnam during the SARS outbreak. I realised how important it is to observe how such situations are handled, and how much you can learn from that."

CliniClowns research

Anthropology and medicine might sound like an unusual combination to some, but Harris isn't the only one at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences combining the two fields. She works with a new interdisciplinary team on a project called The Upcycled Clinic, studying creativity in hospitals. "Also, for example, one of my colleagues studies the CliniClowns Foundation and has even trained as a health-care clown. And others focus on the history of medicine and nursing."

If the administrative integration between Maastricht University and MUMC+ goes ahead, Harris sees plenty of opportunities for collaboration. "And we can learn from each other's cultures. Here at the university, a conversation between a historian and a political scientist is called 'interdisciplinary'. At a hospital, it's perfectly normal for a physiotherapist, a dietician and a nurse to consult each other daily. I also think hospitals are excellent at prioritising. In turn, they could learn from us how to maintain a broader perspective – some medical professionals are so specialised they develop tunnel vision."

The Matter of Hospitals will be available to purchase or download for free from Maastricht University Press from Friday 7 November

news

What do the election results mean for students and higher education?

The future of higher education and research looks a little brighter again. D66 has won the parliamentary elections, while PVV has been dealt a blow by voters.

D66 and PVV both won 26 seats, but D66 received over 28,000 more votes and is therefore the winner of the election. The party will take the lead in forming a new government, a process that officially began on Tuesday. *Verkenner* (scout) Wouter Koolmees visits all parties to ask which coalition they prefer.

D66 is almost certain to form a government with CDA, which also made strong gains. The main question is which other parties will join them. Prime minister-designate Rob Jetten has made his preference clear: a broad centrist coalition with GroenLinks-PvdA and VVD. This combination would have a majority. Neither of these two parties is likely to jump at the idea, but they might be willing to set aside their differences to form a coalition with D66 and CDA.

Instead of VVD, JA21 plus one smaller party could also make such a centrist coalition with GroenLinks-PvdA possible. That might not be bad news for higher education and research, since JA21 opposed the education cuts. Or will the next government lean to the right? D66 could also govern with CDA, VVD and JA21. Together they would hold 75 seats. One smaller party - for example ChristenUnie or BBB - could give them a majority. A right-leaning coalition would, however, make policies less progressive than Rob Jetten and his fellow party members would like.

Student financing

The exact coalition agreement remains to be seen, but some outcomes can already be predicted. For example, it seems likely something will change in student financing. D66 wants to increase the basic student grant by 164 euros per month, at a cost of around 600 million euros. GroenLinks-PvdA supports the idea, but other potential coalition partners see no need for the increase. Compromises are easy to imagine. They might, for instance, raise only the supple-

mentary grant or only the allowance for students living away from home.

Also good news for interns. Three parties want to make internship pay compulsory: D66, GroenLinks-PvdA and CDA. VVD and JA21 are concerned that small businesses might stop offering internships, but that could be solved - for instance with a dedicated internship fund, which already has broad support in the House of Representatives.

Billions

D66 wants to allocate more than five billion euros extra to education and research, excluding spending on innovation in the areas of defence, healthcare and business. GroenLinks-PvdA is thinking of three billion, and JA21 has set aside about two billion.

CDA is more cautious: the party's plans don't include additional money for education and research. Still, the Christian Democrats are likely to accept that a D66-led government will spend more in this area. VVD still wants to make cuts, but apparently doesn't see it as a deal-breaker. In fact, the Rutte IV government actually increased public spending while VVD was the largest governing party.

Applied research

The precise allocation of research funding will likely be a major point of negotiation. CDA and VVD in particular want to focus first on research that benefits the labour market and society. JA21 shares that view. D66 and GroenLinks-PvdA are, of course, not *opposed* to applied research, but they also want to increase funding for funda-

mental research - where researchers decide for themselves what they find interesting.

Protests

The potential coalition parties have sharply different views on diversity policy. The same applies to the heated protests in higher education over links between research universities - and some universities of applied sciences - and Israeli institutions. Those decisions will likely be left to university administrators. Or perhaps they'll intend to make agreements with higher education institutions on safety and freedom of protest within their institutions. How those agreements take shape is for later care.

HOP, Bas Belleman



PODCAST
OBSERVANT

THE AUDIO SIDEKICK OF MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY'S WEEKLY, in which we keep you up to date on interesting facts, special features, and news about the university and student life.



THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY, FACULTIES, SERVICE CENTRES AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS CAN BE FOUND ON **WWW.OBSERVANTONLINE.NL**

Agenda academic ceremonies

Aula Minderbroedersberg 4-6



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