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Varsity For the first time in ten years, four men from Saurus will appear again at the start of the main event of the national student rowing competition
Photo: INMYND Productions



P4

Jos Hamers Leadership styles: "I would say that 90 per cent of my job as associate dean was about policy. As a department chair, you're more focused on the well-being of your people" **Photo:** Joey Roberts



P6-7

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SBE delivers a book to commemorate the School's 35th anniversary. *Observant* had an interview with the three compilers



P3

Unwell

Members of Circumflex became unwell during their winter sports in Risoul (France). They are possibly drugged.

Illustration: Shutterstock

Academic personnel section remains silent during meeting Majority of the University Council does not want to condemn the cyber-attack on *Observant*

*An attempt to move the University Council towards condemning of the cyber-attack on *Observant* last week, stranded due to silence of most of the council members. The academic staff even remained collectively mute. The Executive Board, on the other hand, did speak out again.*

It was during the question round at the end of the latest University Council meeting on 23 March, that Maarten van Wesel, council member on behalf of the administrative and support staff, asked for the floor and started to read a statement. In it, he praised the UM for all the space it provided for expressing all kinds of different opinions; it is essential within our "educational approach" and "that is how we learn and grow". That freedom of expressing one's opinion, he argued, requires an environment in which it is safe to do so. When that freedom is threatened, the university community and the University Council should speak out against that. "People may not agree with what a newspaper writes," Van Wesel continued, but it has "the fundamental right" to write about all kinds of topics, even if that might hurt some people. The DDoS attack on *Observant*, because of which the newspaper's site was down for three days, "is not just a crime, it affects the essence of the values that we cherish as a university". Van Wesel ended with an appeal to the University Council to "condemn the attacks on *Observant* in the strongest possible terms" and to speak out "against those who applauded those attacks".

Unsafe

What followed was a deafening silence. In answer to the question by council chairperson Amanda Kluvelde whether there were any reactions, only Collin

Prumpeler, member for the administrative and support staff answered: he supported Van Wesel's opinion wholeheartedly. One student, Freddy Leppert, also had something to say. She felt that what happened to *Observant* "should not have happened" but immediately added that the newspaper had created an unsafe atmosphere with its articles, not a safe space.

Disagreement

There was no sound from the academic staff section, neither in agreement, nor in disagreement. President Rianne Letschert then dived into the vacuum, "then I would like to say something". She emphasised once again, "as I have previously been quoted in *Observant* and in a national newspaper," that the Executive Board condemns this attack on the freedom of press in every possible way. Subsequently, Letschert reacted to the remark made by student member Leppert, which mainly referred to the disagreement between *Observant* and student group Feminists of Maastricht (FOM) after the newspaper had refused to comply with a particular use of words as demanded by FOM. Instead of 'women menstruate' *Observant* should have used menstruating people. Since then, the university newspaper has been accused of being 'transphobic'. Letschert said that she hoped that a dialogue between both parties would be set up; she offered her support in that.

Front

A few days after the University Council meeting, it appeared that the academic staff did not form as united a front as had previously appeared. Council member Mark Govers contacted *Observant's* editor in chief by telephone with the message that he had not understood what Van Wesel's statement was about

at the time, but that he also condemns the cyber-attack. Moreover, he supports the previous appeal in *Observant* (in the editorial of 15 March) for an open debate about the freedom of the press, freedom of speech, wokeness, inclusivity, the cancel culture, et cetera, where swords can be crossed on the basis of mutual respect and arguments.

Riki Janssen

*A little week after the meeting, and after the publication of this article on the *Observant* website, the delegation of the scientific staff announced the following by e-mail:*

"Importantly, our silence should not be interpreted to have been the expression of an opinion. It is not customary to initiate a discussion among UC members during the round table. Usually, questions are posed to the Executive Board which are then picked up directly in writing or placed on the agenda of a future meeting. The fact that an individual member posed the question directly to other council members surprised the delegation because it had not been addressed in our preliminary discussion and we therefore decided not to respond in an ad hoc and uncoordinated manner. Earlier this month, we had also decided not to put the cyber attack on the agenda because, in our opinion, it was adequately handled by the Executive Board. In case there was any doubt with respect to the cyber attack, we would like to emphasize that we absolutely reject the restriction of free speech and hope for a safe and inclusive environment for all."

Read the opinion on page 8
Has the U-Council forgotten that democracy requires a free press?

SPLINTERS

A funny incident, a striking piece of news, something interesting that happened elsewhere in the country: it is in this column.

Nijmegen in Maastricht



You will soon be able to bump into students in Maastricht buildings who claim to actually be studying at Radboud University. From the next academic year, it will be possible to train as a fully qualified teacher – allowing you to teach in final years of Higher General Secondary education and pre-university education – from the ‘Radboud Docenten Academie’ (Radboud Teaching Academy) at the UM, as was reported by the RU. This is a learning-working track of a maximum of two years, in which students spend three days a week teaching at a school in Limburg. The other two days, they spend in the lecture hall; at least one day in Maastricht, the rest in Nijmegen or online. The final certificate comes from the RU.

The track is the result of closer collaboration between the two universities. By having a programme closer to home, they hope that more people from Limburg will be enticed to re-train (lateral entry teacher) or ‘further schooling’ (teachers without a first-degree qualification). This is badly needed as many university-trained teachers in the province are going to retire in the next few years.

Funny babies



What sense of humour do babies have? And what do they think about acrobatics and juggling? That is what Sabine Hunnius, professor of Cognitive Psychology at the Radboud University in Nijmegen, is going to research. To this end, she is working with dancer Emilie Weisse, who - together with her juggling husband - puts on a circus act. The two of them recently received the Mingler Scholarship 2022 for their project *Be Kind*. The amount of 10 thousand euro is made available once a year for collaboration between a scientist and an artist. Weisse and Hunnius will use the money to put on an interactive performance for children from six to eighteen months. In doing so, they are going to use the knowledge about perceptual and cognitive development of babies that is already available and they will look at the preferences of their young audience in order to learn more about the baby brain.

An English seagull



International students who want to go to the theatre again after all the lockdowns, are in luck. On Sunday, 24 April, Toneelgroep Maastricht will put on *A Seagull*, an adaptation of Anton Chekhov’s famous piece by Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer, with surtitles in English. They will receive an English translation of the script beforehand and an introductory video. In it, the director and the actors talk more about the performance. Those who want to chance their arm at playwriting, can participate in a

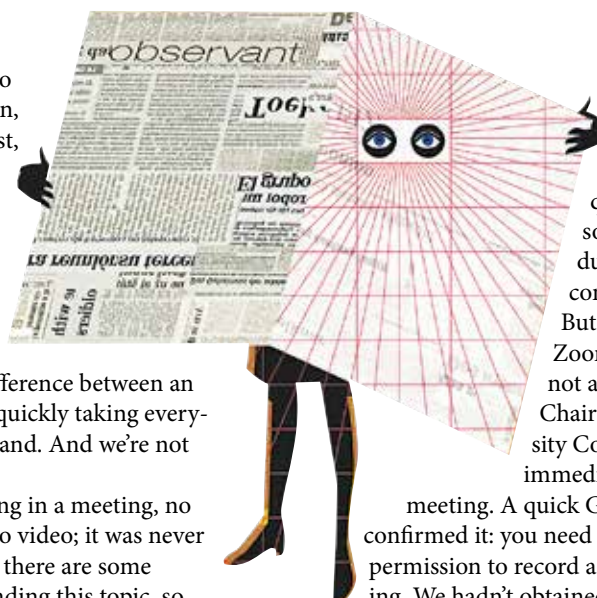
workshop in English. Led by playwright Timen Jan Veenstra, twelve students will get to work on short scenes. At the end, they will be read out by actresses Emma Buysse and Esther Scheldwacht. The workshop is included in the entrance fee of 10 euro, but there are a limited number of places, so registering beforehand is required. To do so, send an e-mail to dionne@toneelgroepmaastricht.nl before 17 April.

Foto: Ben van Duin

A mistake

Managers and leaders are not gods; they, too, make mistakes. I wrote that here last week. The ink was barely dry on the page when I proved this again. It happened last Wednesday, at the most recent meeting of the University Council. Maarten van Wesel, council member on behalf of the administrative and support staff, spoke up during the any-other-business section of the meeting. He addressed the council directly – “dear fellow council members” – and began to read a statement that, as my colleague YM and I realised a few sentences in, was about the DDoS attack on

Observant. We tried to write everything down, but it all went very fast, we couldn’t keep up, and so in a split second we decided to record his statement. It was a public meeting, after all, and we reasoned that there is no fundamental difference between an audio recording and quickly taking everything down in shorthand. And we’re not stenographers. I never record anything in a meeting, no audio and certainly no video; it was never necessary before. But there are some controversies surrounding this topic, so we wanted our record of his statement to be



100 per cent accurate, especially as the audio quality was sometimes poor due to our spotty connection. But recording a Zoom meeting is not allowed, the Chair of the University Council told me immediately after the meeting. A quick Google search confirmed it: you need the host’s permission to record a Zoom meeting. We hadn’t obtained permission in advance. In other words, we made

a mistake. We didn’t know the rules when we should have. We deleted the recording and I contacted Van Wesel that evening, asking him to email me his statement. The next day, I sent a letter of apology to the University Council. Of course we would like to avoid making mistakes, but making mistakes is part of life. I always tell my team that it’s OK to make mistakes, as long as you learn from them. And I just hope that Zoom meetings will soon be a thing of the past and we will return to face-to-face meetings, where you can (usually) hear each other better, see each other’s faces and have an informal chat before or after.

Riki Janssen

Every week, the editor-in-chief writes about what has been happening at the *Observant* office

letter of the editor

Circumflex students possibly drugged at a French ski resort

Three members of the Circumflex student association became unwell during their winter sports holiday in Risoul (France). They were possibly drugged. The French police has started an investigation.

Circumflex set off for Risoul with 65 members on 5 March. Things went wrong on the third evening in the pub. One of the members collapsed, started to shake and suffered memory loss, says Circumflex chairman Simon Hoek. "We thought that was suspicious, so we

immediately contacted the tour operator and impressed upon our own members to look after themselves carefully." Then, on day four, another two Circumflex members reported in: the same pub, the same complaints. Hoek: "We have been going to Risoul for a number of years and there have never been any problems."

The three who fell ill did not go to the hospital. A number of medical students took care of them. "At the time, it seemed like the best thing to do. Looking back, it might have been better if blood and urine had been tested to see if they

might have been drugged."

Several rumours about this are going around, because other student associations that were on a winter sports holiday in the French ski village with the same travel organisation, also saw a total of around twenty members becoming unwell. Some even had to be taken to the hospital. Some had blood and urine samples taken. The results of these will be available next week. The French police have started an investigation. Hoek himself has an idea in which direction the gendarmes should look. "There

were three men of roughly forty years' old, so slightly older than the others. They didn't drink anything, didn't dance. They walked around and observed. The women found them intimidating." After reporting this to security, the students felt that they were not taken seriously. The Circumflex members involved have all recovered. It is now mainly shock, said Hoek. Risoul again next year? "Most likely not. The next board will decide on that, but I will advise them against it."

YM

Saurus is again starting in main event Varsity

For the first time in ten years, four men from student rowing association Saurus will appear again at the start of the 'Race of the Old Four' this Sunday. That is the main event of the Varsity, the national student rowing competition on the Amsterdam-Rhine Canal near Houten.

An association should think carefully about participating in the main race, explains Saurus chairman Amber van Els. "If you start and can't deliver a team the following year, you can't participate for three years." Saurus last participated in 2012. "After that, there has been no 'Old Four'-worthy team for a number of editions. In recent years, the focus has been on building a training program."

Last January, Van Els received a request from a group of male members and their coaches. It then became clear that the association had a few rowers this season "who could move a boat a bit", says Karel van Melle, who will be at the bow next Sunday (at the very front of the boat). So they row at a high level, train hard (eight, nine or even ten times a week), feel fit and ready to start. Van Els: "We present such a major decision to the members during a general members' meeting."

"Besides the fact that the Varsity is the competition of the year, it draws attention to the association", says Van Melle. "You can already feel that the club is coming to life. That started last week, when the Old Four was presented." Saurus will travel to Houten with a large, full bus on Sunday. Van Melle is extra happy: "As a former chairman, I think it's fantastic that the association has something great to look forward to after corona."

Winning during the Varsity means eternal



From left to right: Luc Cornielje, Nykle Krijgsveld, Mats van Sabben, Karel van Melle (Annelies Van Engelen, cox, is not in the picture)
Photo: INMYND productions

fame, it was previously stated in Observant. Van Melle does not dare to make any predictions. "I think we are not inferior to the rest, but there are Olympians in the boats of some other associations. Our goal is simply to row as hard

as we possibly can. That's all we can control." Should Van Melle and his teammates win coming Sunday, the large number of present Saurians will jump naked with only a tie on in the water. In addition, according to tradition,

Saurus is obliged to throw a large open party, the so-called 'pub jool'.

Yuri Meesen

#whataboutism

Yesterday I saw a post from the secondhand shop Kringloop Zuid. Upon showing their passport, Ukrainian refugees could pick up clothing and toys, free of charge. 'What a beautiful gesture', I thought. Yet, the first comment under this post was from a person who wrote (at length) of how they could not respect this decision, that the Netherlands needed to "doe normaal," and that for years people have suffered from war and the Netherlands "did not care."

I have seen similar comments elsewhere online, and even in personal conversations. Usually someone shares an action that they are taking to support Ukrainians in Ukraine, or those who leave their country. Then, there is one person to point their finger and the message can be summed up as "What about



X? We did not care then, why are we caring now?" The tone is often negative and deni-

grating. One person aptly called this #whataboutism.

I have a few overarching thoughts in response to this #whataboutism. From a basic level of psychology, it makes sense that we see more people taking action now. According to *implicit egotism*, we are simply more inclined to like and to care about the things and people that *resemble us*. That could be as small as having an immediate liking for someone who shares your name or, in this case, feeling more concerned about people in Ukraine because we see them as fellow Europeans. Similarly, research shows that we care more when a situation feels closer to home, and has a perceivable impact on our own lives.

Admittedly, people who use #whataboutism often have a point, and it is important to reflect on the times that we care more vs. less about what is happening in the world. Yet, I

wonder whether *now* is the right time to have these discussions, and what exactly we aim to achieve with them? Afterall, #whataboutism draws away from the immediate task at hand, and can discourage or shame people from taking positive action. Further, research shows that when we observe other people being 'punished' for any action, we will be less likely to do the same action ourselves.

It is all too easy to become overwhelmed by the sadness and despair in the world, but we can choose to step back from participating in that, and to instead uplift and contribute to the good in the world, and in each other. What about that?

Jessica Alleva, assistant professor at the faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

This column reflects the personal views of the author

series leadership styles



Photo: Joey Roberts

Jos Hamers

“I like that, having direct contact with people”

“My role model?” He furrows his brow, clearly somewhat unimpressed with the question. But Jos Hamers (55), professor of Company Law and chair of the department of Private Law, prepared his answer “while walking the dog this morning”. It reminded him of the Krauthammer training programme he followed at Maastricht University years ago, a multi-day leadership course. There, too, he was asked who his leadership role model was. “I said, ‘My mother is my role model’. The instructor was so confused.”

Hamers’s mother was a garment cutter from Brabant who decided to run a local pub after her husband from Limburg mentioned the idea to her “over Sunday afternoon drinks”. “She’s the one who taught me how to interact with people. It’s very important to listen. I think that’s the essence of leadership.”

Group of professors

Hamers has held several leadership positions over the years: twelve years as a faculty board member at Law, always of education, alongside deans such as Aalt Willem Heringa, Hildegard Schneider and Jan Smits. He was a member and the (deputy) chair of the faculty council, and since the summer of 2021 he has chaired the department of Private Law (more than 60 staff members). Hamers can no longer remember why Aalt Willem Heringa asked him. “But I definitely didn’t think, ‘Hey, this will be good for my career.’” He has an aversion to power, high positions and hierarchy. “When I became a professor, someone said, ‘Oh, you really are part of the group now!’ I asked, ‘What group?’ ‘The group of professors.’ Nonsense.” He waves

his hand dismissively.

Front line

The first year of the ‘Heringa administration’ was a challenging one. The faculty had just undergone a major reorganisation to make it viable again, people had been fired. It was financially necessary, but it didn’t go down well. “AW [as Heringa is known to colleagues] and I were often at odds with each other. We’re so different. He’s very business-like and rational. I’m more of an emotional person. I still remember when he asked me to present a plan to the staff.” That was about reducing the elective courses in the last phase of the bachelor. It wasn’t the first time that Hamers was pushed forward to do the talking. He guesses it was because he has a way with people. “You can’t be blunt when delivering a negative message. All it does is produce anger and incomprehension. I sometimes blamed him for putting me on the front line in difficult situations. Later, I came to see it as a compliment.”

Schedule

In October 2020, he passed on the baton of associate dean to Sjoerd Claessens. “My term was over and I felt like my time was up. I wanted to go back to teaching and publishing. This may sound odd – I was board member for twelve years – but every ‘leader’ has an expiration date. You have to go after six to eight years, tops. You get out of touch with your employees over time. You no longer see what is happening in the departments.” Is that why he decided to chair a department next? “No, certainly not. Jan [Smits, the

current dean] asked me to take over from the previous chair, who wanted to quit. I had been enjoying not being in the board for a few months. No one setting your schedule for you – I’ve always hated that part. I had to think it over for a bit. I wasn’t thrilled about it, but now, ten months later, I’m glad I said yes.”

Christmas card

“My job now is much more about people than policy. I would say that 90 per cent of my job as associate dean was about policy, about looking ahead. As a department chair, you’re more focused on the well-being of your people. You listen to them, support them, coach them. I like that, having direct contact with people.” His door is always open, he says. “People can come in with questions, but they don’t always do that. It’s quite remarkable. I usually hear things through the grapevine, and then I approach people to ask them what they think about something.” Just before Christmas, he flew to Aruba to teach there. He wrote every staff member a Christmas card with a personal message. “They appreciated it.”

Stubborn

What is his leadership style? He has no idea. “My style is being who I am. I like to manage by walking around, not by email”, he laughs. He’s a people person, but he’s also a person who makes decisions and puts things in order. “I’m very stubborn. I want things to go the way I picture them. But I do listen to people and I’m open to other opinions. I’m not afraid to ask for advice. I can be vulnerable if I don’t know the answer. But in the end, I will say, ‘This is how we’re going to do it’, based on my

own feelings and other people’s advice.” And there is something else he finds important: “Your staff members must be able to understand your decisions. That doesn’t mean they always have to agree with them, though.”

Direct

Hamers wouldn’t call himself a dominant leader, but he can be very direct. Take one of his first meetings as department chair. “The official language in recent years had been English, initiated by my predecessor because a small number of staff members didn’t speak Dutch. I said, ‘We speak Dutch here. Anyone who doesn’t speak Dutch can speak in their own language, but I do expect everyone to be able to understand and read Dutch. I’m willing to help anyone struggling with it.’”

Three-course lunches

Is there a big difference between being in a leadership position twenty or thirty years ago versus today? “Everything has become much more business-like. When I was a PhD student working under Kid [Schwarz, red.] – he was dean for a while, and the dean was the chair of the faculty council back then – I would go for three-course lunches with him in the afternoons, with drinks and all. I’d stumble home and he’d still have to chair a faculty council meeting. That was all possible back then. It was a different culture. It’s almost impossible to imagine now; today, we have much more responsibility. A faculty is more like a company you manage. And that’s fine, as long as the human factor comes first.”

Wendy Degens

This is a weekly series in which we interview people in leadership positions at UM about their leadership style. In January 2022, Maastricht University launched the Leadership Academy as part of the Recognition & Rewards programme, which aims to create more diversity in academic career paths and foster quality academic leadership.

Maastricht ‘**unlucky students**’ happy with the return of the basic grant, but disappointed about the low compensation

“In the end we are the victims of a failed experiment”

Last Friday, Minister of Education Robbert Dijkgraaf announced the cabinet’s plans for the return of the basic grant: from September 2023, all students will be entitled to a monthly amount from the government, while the ‘unlucky generation’ will be given compensation for the years without a basic grant. Is this what Maastricht students were hoping for?

Text: Dennis Vaendel Illustration: Simone Golob

The reactions among Maastricht students in the University Library were not wildly enthusiastic on Monday afternoon. Most of them feel that it is good that the basic grant is coming back, but at the same time the question arises: why is it so low? The suggested amounts – a 91 euro a month for those living at home and 255 euro for those in digs – is almost one fifth lower than when the grant stopped in 2015 (see text box). Not to mention the compensation that they will receive according to the cabinet’s plans: a pittance compared to the study debt accumulated by the ‘unlucky students’, they calculate.

“Anyway, low compensation is always better than nothing,” says second-year student of Psychology Marieke Godding, who is at the University Library together with fellow student Marjolein de Coninck. The two students, still living at home, feel especially bad for those who rent rooms. “They most likely have higher debts,” says De Coninck. Although that was not the reason for them to stay living with their parents. “We don’t need to travel far,” says Godding. “Although maybe how it worked out for my sister unconsciously played a role in my decision. She suddenly accumulated high debts when they went from the old system to a borrowing system.”

That one year that they, according to how plans are looking at the moment, will now receive a basic grant is scant consolation for the two second-year students (all students who are still in their nominal study duration in the academic year 2023/2024, can from that moment make use of the new system). “That will help somewhat, but it won’t make the world of difference,” says De Coninck.

Fifty thousand euro debt

For two students who are sitting a couple of tables away, the new basic grant is, at any rate, too late: they will already have graduated by then. So, the real ‘unlucky students’, because the old basic grant was already abolished when they started studying. “In the end, we are the victims of a failed experiment by the cabinet,” student of International Business Jop Kissels concludes. “We have high debts, while we hardly benefitted from the investments made in education as compensation for the abolishing of the basic grant.” More so, because of the online education, the quality was actually worse for two whole years, Jules Bonfrère (master’s of Globalisation and Law) adds. “Of course, you can’t completely blame that on the government, but it makes it extra bitter.”

They feel it is a good thing that the basic grant is returning for the next batch of students. “Certainly because young people are having a lot of misfortune already, for example with the present housing market,” says Kissels.

They had, however, hoped for more for their own ‘unlucky generation’. Bonfrère: “It is a bit strange that you get a couple of thousand euro compensation for more than a 50 thousand euro debt. I still haven’t heard from the gov-

ernment why it is so little.”

So, was the ‘failed experiment’ all bad? Both of them do see a positive point. “I think that our generation took studying slightly more serious,” says Bonfrère. “Because there was more pressure behind it, fewer people will have made a half-assed job of it.” But was the extra pressure not at a cost to other activities alongside the study? “I fortunately didn’t have that experience,” says Kissels.

Full compensation

The Maastricht students are not alone in their disappointment about the level of the proposed basic grant and the compensation. Lianne de Roos, chairwoman of the Dutch National Student Association, already stated that students will indeed be better off financially, “but their problems and worries will remain with the proposed basic grant.” The National Student Union is also critical. “This way, there will be no end to the unlucky generation,” writes the representative on Twitter. In their petition #nietmijnschuld (not my fault), signed almost 88 thousand times, people demand full compensation for students to whom the borrowing system applied and a basic grant with which it is possible to complete a study without collecting debts (if combined with a side job). It was handed over to the House of Representatives last Tuesday, which will discuss the cabinet’s plans with Minister Dijkgraaf coming Monday.

Cabinet’s plans for the reintroduction of the basic grant:

- The basic grant will return from the 2023/2024 academic year. Students who have already started their studies and are still within the nominal study duration by then, can from that moment make use of it too.
- For students living at home, the basic grant will be 91 euro per month (this was 112 euro when it was abolished in 2015); students living in digs can count on 255 euro a month (this was 312 euro).
- The additional grant for students with parents earning under a certain income level will remain, the same as in the present borrowing system, a maximum of 419 euro per month.
- Anyone who studied for at least one year without the basic grant under the borrowing system, will receive compensation of 359 euro per year, with a maximum of 1,436 euro (or four study years). This only applies when they acquire their diploma within ten years.
- From 2025, the first four batches of students in the borrowing system can subtract a one-off 1,770 euro from their study debt, or receive the same amount on their bank account in the case of them not having a study debt.



Book to commemorate SBE's 35th anniversary

“We didn't want a staid anniversary book”

It took some time – the School of Business and Economics celebrated its 35th anniversary back in 2019 – but now the book has arrived: *Together we are more than 35 years of SBE*. It contains, as befits an anniversary book, space for the history and the pioneers of the faculty, but also for the various experiences and the critical view regarding the present day-to-day running.

The three compilers - Wim Gijselaers, Jos Lemmink and Tom van Veen - quickly agreed on the fact that it shouldn't be a traditional anniversary book. “We are not historians,” says Van Veen, emeritus professor of Economics. “There are books that describe the development of a faculty almost day by day, but we can't do that. We don't even have all those documents any longer.” What they did want to do, was to tell the faculty's story. “Who we are, what do we stand for, and how we got there.” What they now have is “is almost a classic book about leadership and change management,” says Gijselaers, professor of Didactics. The story of the small group of obstinate economists (the term ‘young dogs’ is used regularly), led by dean Wil Albeda and director René Verspeek in “organised anarchy”, which set up a faculty, is given context in eight short essays by Wil Foppen, professor of Strategic Leadership. “We thought it would be good if someone could put the history into a management perspective, says Gijselaers. “First, it was only a small group – I remember we used to get together in the teacher's lounge/library with a cup of coffee. Later, we had to move into what is now Ad Fundum (under the stairs in the hall of Tongersestraat 53, ed.), and at one particular

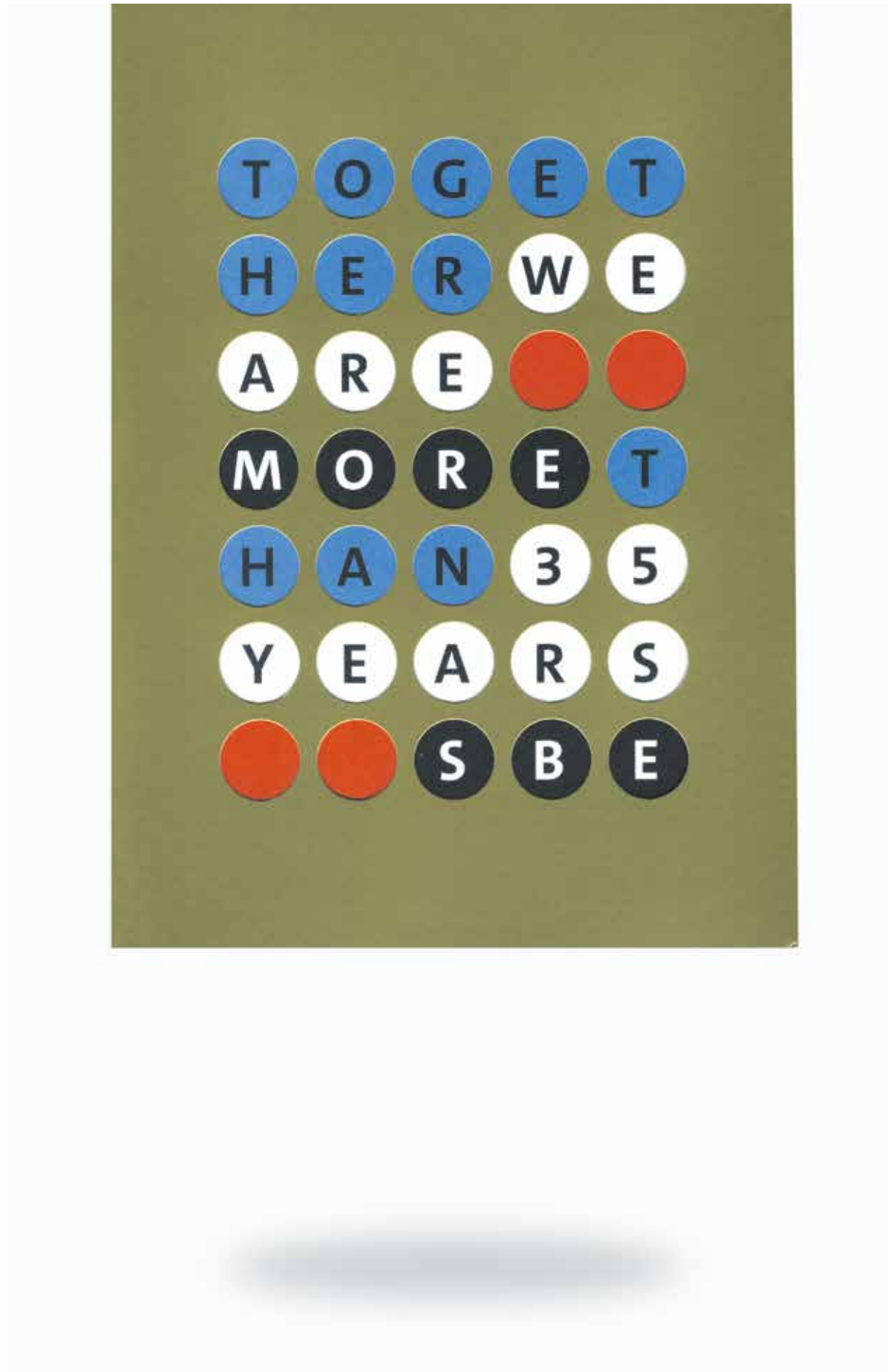
time the group became too large to meet in such an informal manner. Wil takes you along in that thought process. In terms of writing style, his essays remind me of Simon Carmiggelt: a little contemplative.”

There are also interviews with present and former staff members and alumni, as well as with ‘outsiders’ such as former dean of Law Hildegard Schneider and beer brewer Paul Rutten, who allowed students to have a taste of entrepreneurship in their first years as students as well as giving them tours of the Gulpener brewery. What is noticeable is that nobody holds back. For example, Dirk Tempelaar, associate professor of Econometrics, emphasised that in his opinion director René Verspeek was the real ‘building dean’, not Wil Albeda. “Albeda never said anything, he just listened. Economics committee meetings lasted days because he never came to a conclusion.” Head of the education office, Joël Castermans, poured out his heart: “Even if lots goes wrong, it is still presented as a good news show. Take the online Open Day for the bachelor's recently with all kinds of log-in problems. It took our own dean no less than two hours to log in, and then later there is the jubilant message from UM Marketing & Communication about how many visitors there were! While it just didn't work.” Authors Gijselaers, Lemmink and Van Veen think this is fine. “We didn't want a staid anniversary book,” says Van Veen. That was also the choice of the interviewer; former *Observant* editor Wammes Bos. “Wammes is of course not a neutral interviewer,” says Gijselaers. “He knows the faculty, has written about it in *Observant* for years. He gets people talking and the more interviews he did for the anniversary book, the better he knew where to dig deeper. There are some real gems among them.”

Did the criticism – even the alumni, interviewed by *Observant* editor Maurice Timmermans, weren't all positive – not hurt even a little? “When brewer Paul Rutten said that the university was a bit of an island and that he never noticed much regarding our presence in the region, I did think for a minute: ouch, that hurts,” says Gijselaers. Eventually pride rules. “When I read the book, I thought; we did manage to do something,” says Gijselaers. Van Veen nods. “I came from Groningen, where they said: sure, sure, an Economics faculty like that in Maastricht, it won't last more than a couple of years.” Gijselaers: “Whereas now if you attend a conference and you are wearing a badge from Maastricht, that means something, people respect it.”

Cleo Freriks

SBE employees have already received a copy or they can still collect it. Others who are also interested, may send an e-mail to Tom van Veen: t.vanveen@maastrichtuniversity.nl The book is published in English, but by using QR codes in the book, Dutch texts can be downloaded.



Review

The most important question is whether such an anniversary book is also interesting for those who were/are not involved with SBE? The answer to that is 'yes', that is, if you are interested in the subject: building a faculty. It helps if you are a somewhat informed outsider; the names and abbreviations (although they are always explained) are multifold. Those who start on the book with a blank slate, will regularly have to return to the history description at the

beginning. Wil Foppen sometimes repeats himself in his essays – maybe eight was too many – but adds colour to what would otherwise have been dry facts. As appears from the interviews later on, he really knows how to capture the atmosphere. What mainly makes the book a pleasure to read, are the personal stories. Good choices were made in selecting the interviewees. It is a great mix of old and young and from

different disciplines (both for the staff members as well as the alumni) and – more importantly – everybody had a lot to say.

The QR codes are exceptionally helpful – an idea from Jos Lemmink – and refer to the Dutch texts. A nice solution for a bilingual faculty. The layout – made by Buro Zuiderlicht, with illustrations by Cyprian Koscielniak – is lively and complements the text.

CF

Opinion



Has the University Council forgotten that democracy requires a free press?

Tuesday afternoon, 29 March: "Observant's website contains the latest message from the University Council: only a few of its twenty members dare to speak out against the DDoS attack on the newspaper. The others remain silent, the academic section collectively stays as quiet as a mouse. What has happened to the Council's democratic awareness?" This is the question that Wammes Bos, who followed the University Council for more than thirty years in his (former) capacity as Observant editor, asks in this opinion piece.

Last year, a nice book was published about 50 years of university newspaper (UK) in Groningen. In it, the UK was called "the first modern and independent university newspaper in the Netherlands. That might well be true (although *Folia Civitatis* in Amsterdam had been independent much longer, but perhaps it was not as modern then...). It is stated in a chapter entitled 'On the waves of democratisation'.

The latter is a twofold concept in this case. In those years – the late 60s, early 70s – there was a process of *external* democratisation in universities: a huge influx of students from all strata of society. And there was *internal* democratisation, of the management model, with the introduction of university councils and faculty councils. This had been preceded by a hard fight, with the occasional occupation of university building, until finally the matter was resolved in legislation.

The introduction of the councils and the emergence of independent university newspapers were more or less parallel processes. And that was no coincidence: the maxim that a democratically organised community cannot exist without a free press, was widely endorsed.

Statutes

In Maastricht, everything happened a little later, as there was no university yet in those days, but in the late 70s and early 80s, this model also took root here. Not without a struggle either: the initial executives thought little of a University Council, or an independent newspaper. But both were introduced and became more or less natural allies in the ideas of many: after all, both kept a check on those in power.

No, no hand in glove, that would have gone too far. *Observant* had taken the UK as its example, the statutes from Groningen were more or less adopted literally, with the emphasis on the newspaper's independence. The tenor was: *Observant* should sound a multi-form note and not be the spokesperson for any interest or other group within the university. So, neither for the Executive Board, nor for the Council. Not for anyone. Partly for that

reason, the newspaper's legal status was that of a foundation, avoiding a direct relation of authority with the Executive Board.

There was animosity between the University Council and the university newspaper too. We often discussed the same topics, we kept close track of each other, the roles being different, of course, but still, there was a sort of connection.

When education minister Ritzen greatly dismantled the democratic university structure in 1997, all Councils protested vehemently, also the one in Maastricht. *Observant* wrote about it. The flaming conflicts with the Executive Board about the interpretation of the new regulations, how much power the University Council was left with: we wrote about it, made room for opinion pieces.

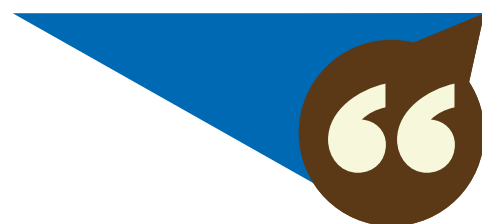
And if executives within the UM got it into their heads to curtail the editorial independence, or tried to achieve the same by cutting *Observant's* budget, then there was always the University Council to thwart those plans. For a long time, this applied to all sections in the Council: students, support staff and certainly the academic staff. Although each of those groups occasionally had trouble with the newspaper, when it had published something that didn't suit them.

Silence

The question is now whether this is definitely a thing of the past? Have University Council members lost the awareness that they are a democratic body and that democracy without a free press – see Putin – cannot exist? Because my goodness, the silence has been deafening lately after miscreants had blocked access to *Observant's* online publications by launching a DDoS attack and loudly claimed it because *Observant* was supposedly 'transphobic' (as well as a few other bad things). This reproach is in itself not very precise, intellectually rather lazy, and in this context completely nonsensical, but suppose it was true. Suppose that *Observant* did indeed publish articles of a 'transphobic' nature, is that then reason enough to silence the newspaper? Using cyber terror and brute digital force? Is a free press not an almost sacred principle? Should 'dubious' publications not be challenged with other publications? Debate, letters to the editor, opinion pieces? Rhetorical questions, I would say. But no, apparently not for the present University Council. Not even for the academic staff section. A section that in all those more than thirty years that I followed them, never let themselves be bullied when it came to issues of principle. That always took care of the core of forming an opinion. But that now appears to be caught up in either lack of attention and/or disinterestedness, or has ended up on the slippery slope of 'it is probably their own fault'. Or is it a case of fear to speak out? Let's hope for better times.

Wammes Bos

In the meantime the academic staff section has responded, see page 1



colofon

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agenda academische zittingen Aula Minderbroederberg 4-6

31-03, 10.00u	Lars J.J. Bolt	14-04, 13.00u	Cristina Altrocchi
31-03, 13.00u	Nick C.J. van Osta	14-04, 16.00u	Afscheidsrede Prof. dr. Geert-Jan Dinant
1-04, 10.00u	Jolien Pieters	19-04, 10.00u	Ilse H. de Lange
1-04, 13.00u	Ennie Bijkerk	20-04, 10.00u	Christophe Leclerc
1-04, 16.30u	Inauguratie Prof.dr. Frits M.E. Franssen	20-04, 13.00u	Annelies van der Ham
4-04, 13.00u	Mohit Manoj Nair	20-04, 16.00u	Jeroen Bruinsma
4-04, 16.00u	Tamara L.F. De Beuf	21-04, 10.00u	Esther van Barneveld
5-04, 13.00u	Hassan Nasser A Moafa	21-04, 13.00u	Anna E. Goldberg
5-04, 16.00u	Pomme L.H.M. Theunissen	21-04, 16.00u	Julie Isabelle Romane Labau
6-04, 10.00u	Dinah Gutermuth	22-04, 10.00u	Veronique M.M.M Schiffer
6-04, 16.00u	Ahmed Hosney	22-04, 13.00u	Anouk E.M. Hendriks-Hartensveld
7-04, 10.00u	Rob G. H. Driessen	22-04, 16.30u	Inauguratie Prof.dr. Bram Akkermans
7-04, 13.00u	Erik R. de Loos	25-04, 10.00u	Gamze Erzincan
7-04, 16.00u	Robin J. Lurvink	25-04, 13.00u	Juliane Hermann
8-04, 10.00u	Lina F. Wübbecke	28-04, 10.00u	Ngoc Pham Quang
8-04, 13.00u	Esther Janssen	28-04, 13.00u	Peter C.J. Cantillon
8-04, 16.30u	Inauguratie Prof.dr. Jascha de Nooijer	28-04, 16.30u	Inauguratie Prof.dr. Erik Schoon
11-04, 16.00u	Martien A. Würdemann	29-04, 13.00u	Maarten P.F. Janssen
12-04, 10.00u	Zahar Corețchii (Koretsky)	29-04, 16.30u	Inauguratie Prof.dr. John Heesakkers
12-04, 13.00u	Joyce Hayek		
12-04, 16.00u	Gabrielle L. ten Velde		
13-04, 10.00u	Anne Rose de Kort		
13-04, 13.00u	Kim Maasen		
14-04, 10.00u	Sabrina Grossenbacher-Eggmann		

Opinie



Is de universiteitsraad vergeten dat democratie een vrije pers vereist?

Dinsdagmiddag 29 maart: "Op de site van Observant prijkt het jongste bericht uit de universiteitsraad: slechts een handjevol van de twintig leden durft zich uit te spreken tegen de ddos-aanval op het blad. De rest zwijgt, het wp houdt zich zelfs collectief muisstil. Waar is het democratisch besef van de raad gebleven?" Die vraag stelt Wammes Bos, die als (inmiddels oud-)Observantredacteur ruim dertig jaar de U-raad volgde, in dit opinieartikel.

Vorig jaar verscheen er een aardig boek over 50 jaar Universiteitskrant Groningen. Daarin werd de UK "het eerste moderne en onafhankelijke universitaire weekblad in Nederland" genoemd. Dat zou best wel eens kunnen kloppen (ofschoon het Amsterdamse *Folia Civitatis* al veel langer onafhankelijk was, maar misschien toen nog niet zo modern...). Het staat in een hoofdstuk onder de titel 'Op de golven van de democratisering'. Dat laatste is hier een tweeledig begrip. In die jaren - eind '60, begin '70 - was er sprake van externe democratisering van de universiteiten: een enorme toestroom van studenten uit alle lagen van de bevolking. En er was de interne democratisering, die van het bestuursmodel, met de introductie van universiteits- en faculteitsraden. Daar was een harde strijd aan voorafgegaan, met her en der bezettingen van universiteitsgebouwen, totdat uiteindelijk de zaak wettelijk werd geregeld. De komst van de raden en de opkomst van onafhankelijke universiteitsbladen liep min of meer parallel. Dat was te goeden de adagium dat een democratisch georganiseerde gemeenschap niet zonder vrije pers kan, werd breed onderschreven.

Statuten

In Maastricht gebeurde alles wat later, daar bestond destijds de universiteit nog niet eens, maar eind jaren '70 en begin jaren '80 kreeg dit model ook hier voet aan de grond. Evenmin zonder slag of stoot: de eerste bestuurders hadden helemaal niet zoveel op met een U-raad, of een onafhankelijk blad. Maar beide kwamen er en werden in de beleving van velen min of meer natuurlijke bondgenoten: allebei controleerden ze de macht tenslotte. Nee, geen twee handen op een buik, dat nu ook weer niet. *Observant* had UK als voorbeeld genomen, de Groningse statuten werden min of meer overgenomen, met de nadruk op de onafhankelijkheid van het blad. De strekking: *Observant* diende een pluriform geluid te laten horen en geen spreekbuis te zijn voor welke (belangen)groep in de universiteit dan ook. Dus niet voor het college van bestuur, niet voor de raad. Voor niemand. Mede daarom werd het blad ondergebracht in een stichting zodat er geen directe gezagsrelatie met het college was. Er was ook animositeit tussen U-raad en universiteitsblad. We hadden het vaak over dezelfde onderwerpen, we volgden elkaar op de voet, de rollen waren uiteraard verschillend maar toch: er was een soort connectie. Toen onderwijsminister Ritzen in '97 de

universitaire democratische bestuursstructuur danig uitkleedde, protesteerden de raden overal heftig, ook in Maastricht. *Observant* schreef erover. De hooglopende conflicten met het college van bestuur over de interpretatie van de nieuwe bepalingen, hoeveel macht de U-raad nog werd gelaten: we schreven erover, maakten ruimte voor opiniestukken. En als bestuurders binnen de UM het in hun hoofd haalden om te willen knagen aan de redactionele onafhankelijkheid, of probeerden om hetzelfde te bereiken door in het budget van *Observant* te snijden; dan was er altijd wel de U-raad die bereid was daar een stokje voor te steken. Dat gold heel lang voor alle geledingen in de raad: studenten, ondersteunend personeel en zeker ook het wetenschappelijk personeel. Al had elk van die groepen van tijd tot tijd ook wel eens last van het blad, stond er iets in wat ze niet goed uitkwam.

Stil

De vraag is nu: is die tijd definitief voorbij? Hebben U-raadsleden het besef verloren dat ze een democratisch orgaan vormen en dat democratie zonder vrije pers, zie Poetin, onbestaanbaar is? Want o, wat bleef het stil, de afgelopen tijd toen onverlaten de online verschijning van *Observant* onmogelijk maakten met een ddos-aanval en die later met veel tamtam opeisten omdat *Observant* 'transfoob' (en nog wat erge dingen) zou zijn. Dat verwijft is op zichzelf al weinig precies, intellectueel nogal lui en in dit verband sowieso onzinnig, maar stel dat? Stel dat *Observant* inderdaad artikelen met een 'transfobe' inhoud zou publiceren, is dat dan een reden om een blad het zwijgen op te leggen? Met cyberterror, brute digitale kracht? Is een vrije pers niet een bijna heilig uitgangspunt? Dienen 'foute' publicaties niet bestreden te worden met andere publicaties? Debat, ingezonden brieven, opinieartikelen? Retorische vragen zou ik zeggen. Maar neuh, kennelijk niet voor de huidige U-raad. Zelfs niet voor de wp-geleding. Die in al die ruim dertig jaar dat ik de raad als journalist volgde, zich bij principiële punten nooit de kaas van het brood liet eten. Die altijd het zwaartepunt van de meningsvorming voor haar rekening nam. Maar die nu verstrikt lijkt in ofwel onoplettendheid annex desinteresse, ofwel op het glibberige pad is beland van 'ze zullen het er wel naar gemaakt hebben'. Of is het angst om zich uit te spreken? Het is hopen op betere tijden.

Wammes Bos

Inmiddels heeft de WP-geleding gereageerd, zie pagina 1

