

observant

INDEPENDENT WEEKLY MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

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SOUP

A weekly cup of homemade soup for the elderly, delivered to their front door. If they feel like having a chat, they can. That is the concept of Oma's Soep with which Maastricht students hope to alleviate the loneliness of elderly Maastricht residents.

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pressure

“The Minister of Education does not determine how much someone should publish – we, the scientists, put that pressure on each other. Sometimes formally but much more often informally, due to the culture in a field, faculty or department.”

Speaking is Rotterdam professor Robert Dur, who will give a lecture at UM's birthday celebration on Friday. [Page 7](#)



music

Even a symphony orchestra has to move with the times. Prof. Peter Peters (FASoS), together with musicians from PhilZuid, breathes new life into concert culture. [Page 4](#)





Riki Janssen

editorial

Were we being too negative?

If the Socialist Party (SP) had received the most votes in the Dutch national election, would we have asked political philosopher Jacques Koenis if their win could pose a threat to our democracy? This question came up in an animated discussion we had during our latest editorial meeting. No, of course not, said one colleague across the table. The SP's party manifesto doesn't contain any views that are in conflict with the constitution, unlike the manifesto of Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom (PVV).

Were we being too negative, though? Were our biased views against the PVV showing through when we asked Koenis "Does the PVV pose a threat to our democracy?" and "Does it worry you that Wilders might become prime minister?" But calling them "our biased views" is a bit too reductive, argued another colleague. After all, both the Dutch Council of State and constitutional law scholars have extensively argued that several of the views in Wilders's party manifesto

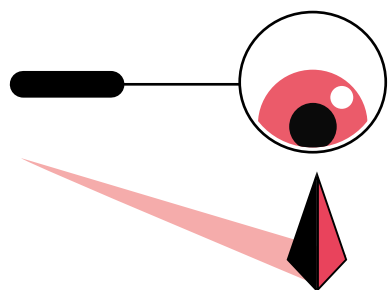
are incompatible with the Dutch constitution – and therefore pose a potential threat to our democracy.

The discussion was prompted by an email we received from a long-time reader. He wrote, "The next time you wonder why readers only want to leave anonymous comments, you might want to ask yourselves whether posting exclusively negative articles about the PVV creates a 'safe environment' for UM employees with different political views. They're undoubtedly already in the minority and being accused of all kinds of -isms and -phobias." He concluded with a suggestion: consider whether you could ask more nuanced questions. Well, obviously we could ask more nuanced questions, but they don't always yield the best answers. Sometimes you have to play devil's advocate to challenge your interviewee; sometimes you have to grill them; sometimes you have to take an empathetic and understanding approach. The goal remains the same – to get to the bottom of something.

And none of those questions are ever neutral. The journalist's background, interests, character and views on life and the issue at hand will invariably show through. It's impossible to eliminate that. However, it is crucial for journalists to be aware of this, as it's not our views that matter. That's what we always remind our junior journalists, students and ourselves. In this profession, it's convenient not to have overly strong opinions about a lot of things. That way, they won't get in the way of you doing your job.

There's one exception – one "opinion" that cannot be held strongly enough. Democracy is the foundation of the freedom of the press. If this foundation is threatened, we have a big problem.

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



Good book

Buying a cheap, fun book and at the same time supporting a good cause. That is the idea behind *Tradewave Maastricht*, an initiative by a group of Global Studies students. They have been selling second-hand books since the end of last year – "mainly popular books that everybody at one point wants to have read, such as *Harry Potter* or George Orwell's *1984*" – for a standard price of 9 euro; proceeds will go to charities.

It is a continuation of *Blueprint*, also founded by UM students, which was active in 2021 for a few months, but stopped due to the volunteers' lack of time. A pity, student Nick Douglas De La Torre thought when he just by chance, happened upon the *Blueprint* site. "I was looking for something to read, but book stores are very expensive these days. Too absurd for words that many students can't afford to buy books. When I suggested resurrecting *Blueprint*, I received many positive reactions."

And so it happened. Dozens of books have meanwhile been sold – "so far, we have been buying those books online, but the idea is that people can also donate books" – and they are working on a website. The proceeds will go – just like in the case of predecessor *Blueprint* – to Serve The City Maastricht, which, among other things, helps the elderly, refugees and underprivileged families. "We hope to expand on this in the future to more (local) charities."

splinters

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

Contributions: Lotte van de Loo, Dennis Vaendel

Studying in Almere

Maastricht may soon no longer be the youngest university in the Netherlands. Because the city of Almere also wants one. Why? The young city needs talent at all kinds of educational levels, says project manager Jochum Muurling from the Almere municipality to *Omroep Flevoland*. At the moment, students leave for other parts of the country and are not quick to return. Moreover, and contrary to many busy university cities in the area, Almere has "actual space", Muurling emphasises. However, Maastricht most likely need not fear losing the title of "youngest university": there are strict rules to setting up a university, so Almere is focusing on becoming an auxiliary branch of another university. Still, *Omroep Flevoland* contacted Maastricht for advice: Luc Soete, former rector of UM, is allowed to chip in. His advice: the institute must be able to distinguish itself. "For example, be a fully green campus. A university that is 100 per cent sustainable and fits in with the city and its surroundings."



Obstacle removed

"Fortunately, there are also problems that are easy to solve." A feeling of relief pervaded the council meeting at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS), last week. What exactly was the problem? The study spaces in one of the FASoS buildings on the Grote Gracht (GG76s) never appeared to be available for students in the online reservation system. A nuisance, because spaces for self-study or group work are scarce at the faculty, while the University Library is often busy too, students have been complaining for some time now.

During inquiries at the department of Planning & Scheduling, it simply appeared to be an error in the system, Karlijn Haagsman, chairwoman of the council, told during the council meeting. "The option to book the spaces were only open to staff members, not for students. This was adapted the very same day. Problem solved." It means that there are suddenly seven additional study spaces for students. In addition to the joy, council members also had questions. "How long have students been unable to reserve these spaces? And was there ever a reason to put this into the system in this way?" That remained unclear.

50-thousand-euro claim withdrawn

Dispute between UM and ScienceGuide solved

“Intimidation”, the threat of a court case; relations between Maastricht University and the national news site for higher education ScienceGuide reached an all-time low last year. But a solution has been found.

SG editor-in-chief Frans van Heest made the conflict with UM public in October 2023 on his own site under the heading: ‘When universities try to silence the press.’ There was a conflict in two areas: with respect to content as well as business matters. The first concerned an article by SG, last summer, about legal action taken by a Maastricht professor against UM. The profes-

sor had been suspended; he had, among others, unjustly accused another colleague of unacceptable behaviour. According to UM, SG had not written about the latter clearly enough. A letter was sent. With “the demand that the article be rectified immediately (...)”, SG editor-in-chief Van Heest reported on his own site. “This under a threat of further legal measures.” This did not go down well with him.

Van Heest, in turn – to the great indignation of UM president Rianne Letschert – suggested that SG had been intimidated by UM. She emphasised in one of the University Council’s meetings last autumn that the accusations of her restricting the freedom of press were however, “pertinently untrue”.

But there was something else going on: a financial dispute. UM had, by its own account, an agreement with SG as a ‘partner’ until 2021 (just like a few other universities and universities of applied sciences). They paid an annual amount of 25 thousand euro for this. Within the framework of this partnership, SG would write articles on themes that were important to Maastricht, such as internationalisation. However, due to an administrative error, UM continued to pay invoices after 2021. UM wanted

that 50 thousand euro back. But that could well mean the end of the news medium, Van Heest stated.

Meanwhile, a solution has been found. According to the UM spokesperson, “the demand for reimbursement has been dropped”; as of 1 April 2023, the two parties are no longer partners. With that, the option for UM personnel to have a subscription to the SG newsletter has also been discontinued. This is exclusively for partners’ employees. Does this also mean that SG will publish less or nothing at all about UM? Van Heest: “We will always write about UM if it is interesting, but we will no longer make multiple trips to Maastricht for meetings, or to make reports or to interview a lot of researchers, students and administrators, as we did in the past.”

Wendy Degens

Update:

Shortly before *Observant* went to press, it was announced that *ScienceGuide* has to shut down from 17 February 2024 on “due to insufficient financial perspective”. They hope to relaunch with reader subscriptions.

Women Tuna: “Singing skills are not required”

A documentary about the Spanish female student music group



Photo: Hil Oomen/Tuna

Saturday 20 January, Kumulus Theatre. The melody for *In d’n Hiemel* is started. But instead of the expected Maastricht dialect, the language is Spanish. Fifteen women, some with guitars or tambourines, are on stage. In a moment, the documentary about *Tuna Femenina de Maastricht* will have its premiere.

A documentary about a Maastricht student music group; that is quite special. Another thing that is special: Tunas always consisted of men, didn’t they? It is a Spanish tradition that has existed since the second half of the Middle Ages: male students who serenaded on the streets and played music in exchange for food, a roof over their heads, and money to pay for their studies.

The latter one is no longer a thing, but at Spanish universities the tunas are still a well-known phenomenon. Every faculty has its own group, characterised by the colours of the costume. It has become a modest export product and Maastricht has had its own group for decades. But this particular Maastricht tuna – to be true, trained by their ‘padrinos’ (godfathers) of the male variant – is much more recent and consists completely of women. Today, it is their turn. “We are the first to have our own documentary,” they say proudly.

Although they do sing in Spanish, not all the members are fluent in the language. “Some have no idea what they are reeling off,” says chairwoman Mathilde de Hennin de Boussu Walcourt. To become a member, you don’t need to speak Spanish. You only need to be able

to sing. Another member: “If you know how to laugh and have fun, you have everything you need.”

In addition to touring past the sidewalk cafes, the women also put on regular performances. For example, at the PAS festival, last summer. “That is where we were discovered by documentary maker Mark Stevens,” says Hil Oomen, tuna’s event coordinator. Why this group? “I wanted to make something about amateur groups commissioned by Cultuurmakers Maastricht. The music is fun and they also have a link with the university” was Stevens’ reaction on the telephone. Oomen: “The documentary can soon be seen on various (social) media and hopefully also on L1.”

Lotte van de Loo



Losing to the waves

“

What have you lost to climate change? My family used to live in a coastal community in southern Maine, with a small neighborhood beach about two blocks from our house. On a rocky edge of this beach, called Fisherman’s Point, sat three weathered shacks which had themselves been buildings used by fishermen a century or so earlier.

The shacks were always present on the rocks. They were picturesque and iconic in their splintering, peeling grandeur. How many photos did I take of my kids with them in the background. How many times did we climb around them on the rocks. Yet we never gave them much thought. They seemed as if they’d last forever.

On January 13, a storm coincided with a high tide, creating waves that snatched the shacks from the rock. I met the videos of the destruction with shock and sadness. It felt as if part of my life had been cut off, erased. A before and an after. This is climate change, of course – it was the largest storm surge in recorded history, thanks to rising sea levels.

For now, to lose some shacks, we should consider ourselves lucky. I could see how the rest would unfold. First we’ll lose things of sentimental value, like the shacks. Then personal things of peripheral importance, like the garage on a house. Then we’ll lose the house, then the road it sits on.

To many others, the loss of the shacks has been deeply felt, and there’s a movement to rebuild them. But for what? I wonder. Because we can’t accept what’s been taken from us, because we think it’s unfair. Because we think that if we stand up to the waves and wind that they’ll stand down. But they won’t. We’ll be the ones to stand down. The fisherman’s shacks of the future will be a kilometer inland, the background to someone else’s future, the echo of a drowned past.

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Michael Erard,
Funding Advisor at the Faculty of Law

series the societal impact of UM research



Peter Peters Photo: Ellen Oosterhof

"Symphony orchestras are well-oiled machines; they don't tend to initiate change"

In today's world, the societal impact of research findings seems more important than getting published in an academic journal like *Nature* or *The Lancet*. What impact has research conducted at UM had in recent years? This week: how a UM research centre is helping symphony orchestras bring classical music into the modern world.

"Sure, you could write a whole book and leave it on an orchestra's desk, but it'll just end up gathering dust in a drawer somewhere. Almost no one will read it. We want to be hands-on, working together with musicians. It's not about doing research *for* society; it's about doing research *with* society." Peter Peters, an endowed professor of Innovation of Classical Music at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS), has been leading the Maastricht Centre for the Innovation of Classical Music (MCICM) since 2018. This collaborative effort between

Maastricht University, Zuyd University of Applied Sciences and the Philzuid Philharmonic Orchestra aims to bring classical music into the modern world.

Inclusive canon

One of the goals of the research centre is to create social impact. From the very beginning, the MCICM's approach has been to test ideas in practice rather than formulate them completely based on existing academic literature. "You learn so much from it. We, as the university, don't claim to be the sole possessors of

knowledge. Knowledge resides in the orchestra, the audience, the conservatoire. We want to be a platform where all that knowledge comes together, followed by academic publications – not the other way around." The research output of the centre has included two PhD dissertations. But these are just some of the results they've achieved over the years, says Peters. "For almost six years now, we've been working with orchestras to find ways to innovate classical music. That perhaps wouldn't have happened otherwise. Orchestras are well-oiled machines

with fixed repertoires and packed schedules. They don't tend to initiate change. But innovation is essential for them to keep up with the times." Take social issues like diversity. Many orchestras exclusively perform compositions by European men like Mozart, Bach and Chopin. "How can we make the Western classical canon more inclusive? That's something both musicians and audience members care about. The same goes for sustainability. It's not only about practical matters – should orchestras still want to travel the whole world in this day and age? – but also about the relevance of classical music. It undeniably has historical value, but is there a way to connect it to contemporary issues like climate change? What does Beethoven sound like in a warming world?"

Testing ground

The MCICM explores these questions with an international network of orchestras. Just last week, the centre co-organised an online symposium. "We had about 70 participants. Not only academic researchers, but also musicians and teachers at conservatoires from all over Europe." The centre is also involved in shaping the education of future classical musicians: Peters is helping to revise the bachelor's curriculum at the conservatoire of Zuyd University of Applied Sciences, Conservatorium Maastricht. "We're especially focused on how the classical music profession is changing. For example, should future musicians be taught how to use social media to build an audience?"

The Philzuid Philharmonic Orchestra serves as the MCICM's living lab, testing innovative concert formats and conducting other experiments. In an era of ageing audiences and flagging visitor numbers, exploring new ways to engage people is crucial for orchestras. Not all of today's audience members are content to sit in silence for hours, listening to the standard repertoire. One experiment, "The People's Salon", focuses on storytelling and audience interaction, inspired by the 19th-century Parisian salons where people gathered to listen to music and engage in conversation.

"It's proved to be a success", says Peters. There have been three editions of The People's Salon, including one in the Heerlen theatre last year. The fourth edition will take place this spring in Mariaberg, a neighbourhood where the orchestra has recently established a new rehearsal space. "Orchestra members have been going into the neighbourhood to find stories. The key question is: which music must be on the Mariaberg playlist? We'll perform those works while local residents share personal stories and stories about the neighbourhood."

It's a unique experience for both audience members and musicians, says Peters. "It's fascinating to engage with people you wouldn't typically see in a concert hall and to experience that music is of tremendous value to them as well. It provides orchestra members with new ways to make their work meaningful to the audience." And it's paying off: "The orchestra plans to continue the format even after the experiments are completed."

Students help combat loneliness among elderly people with Oma's Soep

“By giving just half an hour of your time, you can bring people so much joy”



Students of Oma's Soep in the kitchen



Geertje Janssen and Mrs. Van der Brule Photos: Observant

“Tomato and courgette soup, how delightful”, says 97-year-old Mrs Van den Brule, standing in the doorway of her flat with a bright smile. “Some nice soup to keep you warm in this cold weather” is written on the paper bag she has just received from Geertje Janssen, a Biomedical Sciences student. She doesn't waste any time putting its contents in the fridge. “Would you like to come in for a chat?” It's Janssen's first time delivering soup to this address. Even though the two have never met before, they quickly become engaged in deep conversation. Mrs Van den Brule talks about how she met her husband, her life during and after the Second World War, and all the places she has lived. She also opens up about losing her husband, who suffered from dementia, and how you lose more and more friends and family as you get older. In other words, the conversation touches on loneliness. And that's precisely why Janssen has come here this Thursday afternoon. Besides Mrs Van den Brule, more than twenty elderly people in Maastricht will receive a visit from one or two students today. They'll bring soup, but, more importantly, they'll provide companionship for a bit. It's an initiative of the Oma's Soep Foundation, which sells soups and microwave meals in supermarkets across the country. Profits go towards activities to combat loneliness among elderly people, organised by student boards in various cities. The foundation has been active in Maastricht for three years, with a student board organising Cooking Days in care homes (making soup and playing games together) and events like Christmas lunches. And the almost weekly Soup-to-Door Day, like today.

Set a limit

For this activity, the Maastricht board uses the kitchen of the student association Circumflex every week, including this Thursday morning. “We get to decide what to cook”, explains Eline Bruinenberg, a board member and Medicine student, as she stirs a large pot. “We get our vegetables for free from a stall at the Wednesday market. In return, we bring the stall holder a cup of soup at the Friday market.” Three students walk in who are volunteering for the first time. They receive their routes for the day on their phones, along with photos of the people they will be visiting. “Aw, this lady looks so cute”, one of them says. “But what are we supposed to do, exactly? Should we stay and talk?” Yes, if they invite you in, says Bruinenberg. “And they usually do. Many of them look forward to our visits; they'll often be waiting for you. They're lovely people with a lot of stories to tell. Sometimes you need to set a limit for yourself and decide you won't stay longer than half an hour. If you don't, you'll end up spending the whole afternoon on their couch and running out of time to visit the others.”

Persuade

About twelve students are delivering soup today, each visiting two or three addresses. “We have a core group of 23 elderly people we visit weekly”, says Janssen, who is also a board member. “We're not currently looking to increase that number, although we'd love to help more people. But we would need

“We get our vegetables for free from a stall at the Wednesday market. In return, we bring the stall holder a cup of soup at the Friday market.”

more students to deliver soup, and they're difficult to persuade. After volunteering one time, however, they're usually convinced. It opens your eyes to

how much joy you can bring people with just an hour of your time.”

Life experience

Leila Zimmerman, a Medicine student who has just entered the kitchen, agrees. She recently became a “phone buddy” to 82-year-old Mrs Lampen, whom she first visited a year ago. “After that, I spent six months abroad. But when I brought her soup again recently, she remembered everything about me. Since then, we've been in touch every week. Her family lives on the other side of the country, so she doesn't have a lot of people around her. Still, she's very positive, which I admire. And she has so much life experience – I've learnt a lot from her. ‘You still have your whole life ahead of you, enjoy it, I am often told. It keeps me grounded.’” Back to Mrs Van den Brule. She gets out her iPad (“You have to move with the times”) to pull up photos of Oma's Soep Christmas lunch one year ago. “Look, here's me and Emma. This year, I couldn't make it due to a fall, so I called Sophie.” After a pause, she says, with a smile, “I've gotten to know so many students.” As Geertje Janssen leaves the flat, she is asked to repeat her name. No doubt Mrs Van den Brule will remember it.

“Miles ahead of the rest”:

Honorary doctorates for two political scientists and an economist

“They are way ahead of the rest in the field” and they carry out “pioneering and innovative” work that also has an impact beyond the university walls: Friday, during the Foundation Day celebrations, three scientists will receive an honorary doctorate from UM.

Text: Peter Doorackers



Liesbet Hooghe en Gary Marks Photo: Arjan Bronkhorst

Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks

Honorary supervisor Hylke Dijkstra remembers his first ‘meeting’ with Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks very well. That was 20 years ago and the current professor at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) had just submitted his bachelor’s thesis on European integration to professor Sophie Vanhoonacker. “She said: ‘Great, but it could be stronger on the theoretical side.’” In the University Library – “this was the time before the emergence of search engines such as Google Scholar” – he came across an article by the duo from 1996. “I can still see before me where it was.”

That article touched the core of the work by Marks and Hooghe, he says: “The study of European integration, the authority of states and how the power of decision shifted more and more: it came to be higher – at the European and international level – or lower, at the regional and city level. Because efficient governance is done at different levels: you deal with climate change internationally, while shovelling snow in a city is better left to the municipality.” They coined the term multilevel governance for this, ‘management at various levels’. They also pointed out a potential problem: “Namely, that there could be a conflict between the level at which you manage most efficiently and the degree to which the community is attached to self-management. People also feel it is important *who* make decisions about them. This involves questions about identity. The Dutch, for example, identify more with national politicians in The Hague than with European ones in Brussels. With their theory, Liesbet and Gary were miles ahead of the rest in the field at the time.”

The latter also applies to their work about the Maastricht Treaty, which was signed in 1992 and gave European unification a boost. “Before then, Europe was primarily a matter for diplomats and civil servants; after that, it also became a matter for national politics in member states. Liesbet and Gary described in 2009 how politicization put a restraint on European integration.” In 2024, that almost sounds like kicking down an open door, “but they published about this before the huge wave of Euroscepticism and before Brexit. They were there before the rest”.

Hooghe and Marks will receive the honorary doctorate together on Friday. That is special too, says Dijkstra, who will present the award together with Vanhoonacker: “Liesbet and Gary have been publishing almost exclusively together for 30 years: their work is team science *avant la lettre*.”

Christian Leuz

The Maastricht honorary doctorate for Christian Leuz is a first, says professor of Accounting and honorary supervisor Ann Vanstraelen. She doesn’t say it out loud, but reading between the lines, she seems surprised about the fact that UM is the first university to attribute this honour to the German economist. She feels that his work is “pioneering, theoretically and methodologically strong and innovative,” – and added to that, “very relevant: the impact of it surpasses his field and the academic world. He influences policymakers, advised financial supervisor PCAOB in the US and here in Europe the European Parliament”.

Leuz’ work is about the economic effects of rules and the role of transparency: does it help in any way if we compel businesses to be open about what they do? Leuz showed that in certain circumstances, it does. “The European Union introduced better, more uniform standards for financial reporting in 2005”, says Vanstraelen. “Christian showed that this only works in countries where the rules are enforced and businesses have an incentive to adhere to those rules.” This may sound technical, but the consequences are very tangible. Vanstraelen refers to the debate in the United States about fracking, an environmentally damaging way of extracting oil and gas from stone. “Christian mapped out the detrimental rises of salt levels in the water, and in 2021 published about it in the natural science journal *Science*. The American government did not want to prohibit fracking, but did wonder if compelled disclosure – transparency about the process and the chemicals used – could help to reduce the impact on the environment. In a follow-up study, Christian showed that this was indeed the case: businesses took the environment more into account the more they felt public pressure.”

Christian Leuz will give the lecture “Transparency as a policy tool: Does it work for societal and environmental problems?” on Friday at 10 a.m. at the School of Business and Economics. Admission is free after registering.



Christian Leuz Photo: Anne Ryan

Who are the winners?



Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks

are both professors of Political Science at the University of North Carolina and carry out research at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute.

Christian Leuz

is a professor of Accounting and Finance at the Booth School of Business at the University of Chicago.

It's all about the money? Science, workload and what to do



“We, the scientists, can release the pressure ourselves”

“The minister doesn’t determine how much anyone should publish,” so only pointing to The Hague when workload increases, is too easy, says behavioural economist Robert Dur. Scientists can do a lot themselves. The Rotterdam professor will give the keynote speech during Maastricht University’s Foundation Day celebrations on Friday.

Text: Peter Doorakkers Illustration: Bas van der Schot

The effects of performance rewards? Robert Dur understands that the reporter asks about it, but it still makes him laugh: “Is that still in my bio on the UM site?” The professor of Behavioural economics from Rotterdam had provided a different text, he says. Because even though he does research into those effects, his keynote speech for Maastricht University’s Foundation Day celebrations in the Sint-Janskerk on Friday will be about something different: “It is about the question how people and the organisations for which they work, can flourish. I want to broach three points: how you can make work more meaningful, how you can help upcoming students make better study choices and, if I manage to squeeze it into the 20 minutes I have, the discrimination on the labour market and how you can fight it. The Netherlands is not doing well in this area; labour market discrimination has increased in the past decade. There is no ready-made solution: diversity training for example, appears to have no or hardly any effect.”

Having said that, he would like to say something about performance rewards, and how this might work in a university context. Or not, he adds. “Research has shown that in order to

have a successful faculty, you need employees who do not overly specialise, but who are good at research, education and management. ‘Scientists with three legs’, is what we used to call them here in Rotterdam. Of course, nobody is equally good in all areas, but in your selection policy you have to strive towards not appointing just specialists. Most performance reward systems, on the other hand, are unilateral. They reward excellence in only one of those fields.” In doing so, they promote far-reaching specialisation.

In practice, the emphasis often lies on research. After all, there must be publications, preferably a lot and in top-notch international journals: that is success. The drawback is called ‘publication pressure and high workloads’. Dur grins. “Sociologist Willem Schinkel once wrote in *NRC* that researchers point to The Hague in the case of high workloads: the minister needs to pay more money! But the Minister of Education does not determine how much someone should publish – we, the scientists, put that pressure on each other. Sometimes formally – the regulations state how much you should publish in order to be eligible for a promotion – but much more often informally, due to the

culture in a field, faculty or department.”

The question is, he says, how to change that culture: “You don’t do that just by changing the regulations.” How do you do it then? Dur refers to the top 40 of Dutch economists that the trend-setting journal *Economisch Statistische Berichten* publishes annually. “It used to be a case of counting how many publications someone had had over the past five years. When it was decided to look at the quality of a selection of a person’s articles, this led to noticeable peace in the economic world in the Netherlands: the quantitative pressure was off, the focus was on quality.”

He feels that departments and faculties could do something similar. “You yourself could decide, for example, to not just celebrate publications in the absolute top-notch journals, but to also highlight ‘sub top-notch publications’: hard work like that should also be seen. Just like someone’s teaching performance. Do you only appreciate those who implement innovations? Or also those who teach in such a way that students still remember the lectures years later? Also, don’t allow yourself to be blindly led by a few student evaluations, but have someone who is a good judge of these matters

sit in on a lecture from time to time and spar with a lecturer. And be aware of what people contribute to the work of others, because research and education is almost always teamwork: even if you work on an article alone, you ask feedback from others. In fact, this is about rewarding good academic citizenship.”

‘Recognition and Rewards’, striving for a broader view of scientists’ work, with more attention for fields such as education and leadership, he therefore applauds. “As long as,” he emphasises, “it doesn’t ultimately lead to specialisation, such as ‘research professors’ who hardly teach anymore or ‘teaching professors’ who hardly do any research. There are times when I fear this will happen. Teaching and research reinforce each other, this must not be lost.”

Which brings us back to the question what is the best way to reward performance. Money could be a way to achieve this, says Dur, but it is not the only means. “That crude, unilateral performance culture was at its peak in the nineteen-nineties and at the beginning of this century. Things have changed since then: people also want attention and acknowledgment.”

48th Foundation Day is about economy

Maastricht University’s anniversary has an economic touch this year. The theme is *Talent unlimited: the labour we need, the potential we can’t waste*. In addition to the keynote speech by Robert Dur, various prizes will be awarded, as well as two honorary doctorates: one to professor of Economics Christian

Leuz and another one jointly to professors of Political Science Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks.

The Dies takes place at Friday 26 January at 15.30 hrs in the St. Janskerk

news

Municipalities can now issue fines and warnings

New complaints desk for rental abuse

Service costs or deposits that are too high, discrimination or intimidation by the landlord: since 1 January, tenants and those looking for accommodation can report such matters to the municipal authorities. Which, in turn, can issue warnings and fines to lessors.

As of this calendar year, every Dutch municipality is compelled to have a 'landlords good practices' ('goed verhuurderschap') reporting office. It is part of the act with the same name, which came into effect last July. It contains a number of rules for lessors, for example, in the field of costs (the deposit may amount to no more than two months basic rent, service costs must not be unreasonable) and behaviour (lessors are not allowed to discriminate against those who are looking for accommodation and are not allowed to threaten or intimidate tenants).

Tenants and those looking for accommodation who reckon that the rules have been violated, can take the matter to a reporting office. In Maastricht, this will be managed by the *Huurteam Zuid-Limburg* (Zuid-Limburg Rental Team), a project initiated by the city and Maastricht University. Tenants have been able to make inquiries here since 2015 (when it was called the Housing Helpdesk) or ask for free advice and help with tenancy problems. "The knowledge we acquired over the past years can now be used to set up and implement the reporting office," says project leader Rick Blezer, who emphasises that it will be a separate office. "It will have its own staff. So, we will also continue to carry out our other duties." In addition to Maastricht, the *Huurteam* also functions as a Reporting Office for nine other municipalities in the region where students live, including Heerlen and Sittard-Geleen.

Upon receiving a report, the team will first



Photo: Loraine Bodewes

check whether certain regulations in the Landlord Good Practices Act potentially have been violated. "If so, we will draw up a file which – with approval of the person who reported the case – we will send to the municipality. The latter will then decide which steps to take. This can be a warning or a fine – from 3,000 euro, running to even 90 thousand euro – for the lessor. In extreme cases, management of accommodation can be taken over." In addition, the *Huurteam* will help the reporting party with possible other steps, such as discussing the matter with the lessor or putting the case before the Rent Tribunal.

The fact that the municipality is now allowed to implement enforcement by itself, Blezer says, is a "unique situation. Take discrimination by a lessor, by refusing a person looking for accommodation because the person is, for example, male, or not Dutch. In such cases, until recently one had to approach the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights, but now you can also approach the city authorities. This has a much lower threshold."

People looking for accommodation who have to pay for viewings or for the drawing up of contracts can also approach the reporting office. It is against the law, but in the past, there were numerous agencies in Maastricht that charged considerable amounts for such tasks (and possibly still are). "You can reclaim this via a legal procedure, but the cost of doing so can be high. Now, there is another option: report the matter to the city authorities free of charge." In addition to lessors, it will also be possible to make a complaint against letting agents.

Dennis Vaendel

Reports can be submitted via www.goedverhuurderschapmaastricht.nl

Agenda academic ceremonies Aula Minderbroedersberg 4-6

24-1, 10.00 h Ankit Singh Tanwar

24-1, 16.00 h Marijo Silva Vargas

25-1, 10.00 h Karolien Baldewijns

25-1, 13.00 h Kevin M.R. Nijssen

26-1, 15.30 h DIES NATALIS

St. Janskerk Maastricht

29-1, 10.00 h Niels Andreas van der Baan

29-1, 13.00 h Shan Wang

29-1, 16.00 h Marvin T.L.J. Martens

30-1, 16.00 h Rebecca Farah

31-1, 13.00 h Claudia Cecilia Behrens Pérez

31-1, 16.00 h Mitch van Hensbergen

01-2, 10.00 h Lieve van Brakel

01-2, 16.00 h Tim A.M. van Loon

02-2, 10.00 h Renée J.H.A. Tillie

02-2, 13.00 h Claudia A.J. van der Heijden

02-2, 16.30 h Dr. A Iamnitshi

inauguratie

05-2, 13.00 h Alexander Trofimov

05-2, 16.00 h María del Carmen Torrejón

Guirado,

Double Degree Maastricht University and University of Seville

06-2, 16.00 h Daniela Fuchs

07-2, 13.00 h Jiska Jonas-van Dijk

07-2, 16.00 h Maria Antonieta Collazos Ortiz

08-2, 10.00 h Anita Bhandari

08-2, 16.00 h Janine Ziemons

19-2, 13.00 h Martine Else Bol

20-2, 10.00 h Mirella J.J. Haartmans

21-2, 13.00 h Shivesh Anand

22-2, 13.00 h Job Stoks

Double Doctoral Degree Maastricht University and University of Hasselt

22-2, 16.00 h Katinka E. Pani-Harreman

23-2, 10.00 h Ilaria Amodeo

23-2, 13.00 h Maurice J.L. Huizing

23-2, 16.00 h Prof. dr. Bela Kubat

Afscheidscollege

26-2, 16.00 h Esther Karen Pijl



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