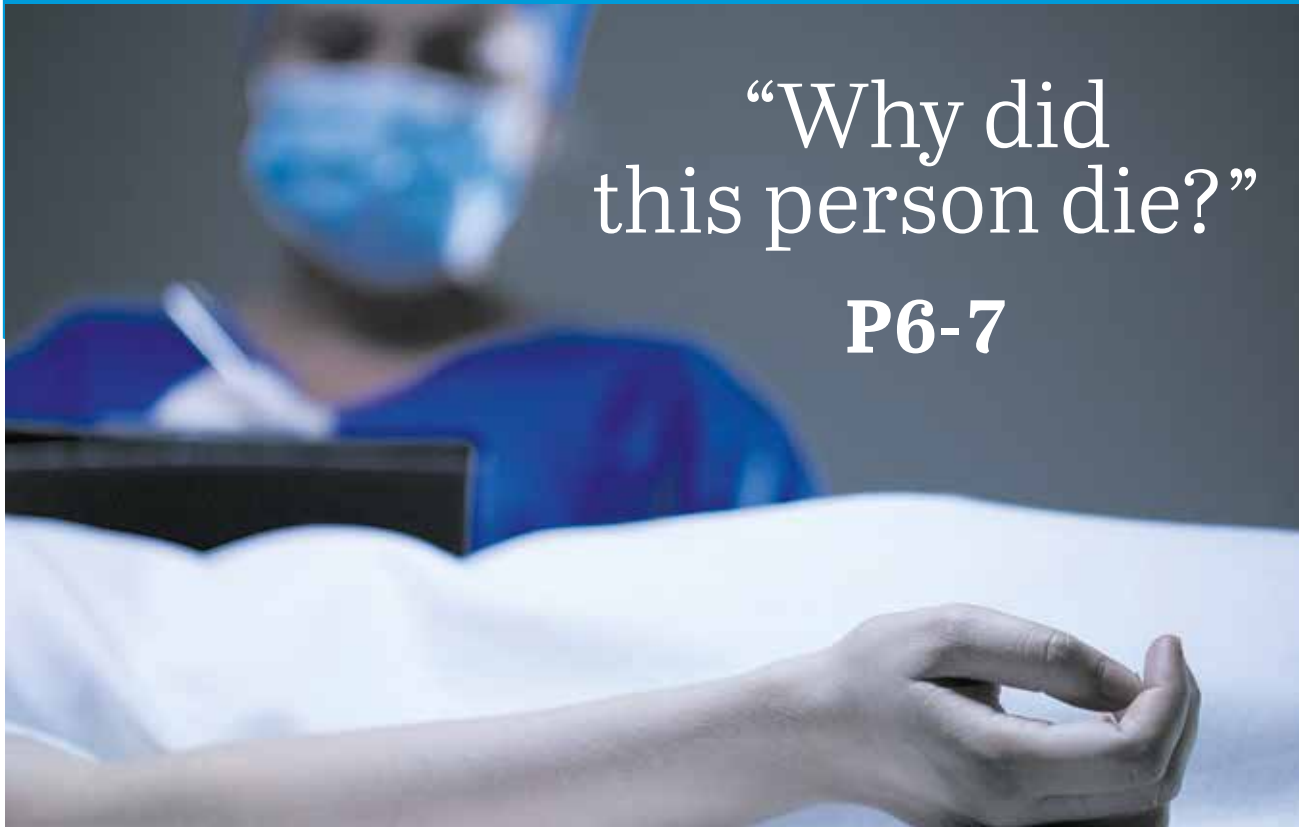


observant

INDEPENDENT WEEKLY MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY

VOLUME 45 / OCTOBER 31, 2024 **Nr8**



“Why did this person die?”

P6-7



“I prefer having a few good friends I can always count on to being surrounded by people I barely know”

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American students on the upcoming elections

Trump or Harris?

“I’m not a big Harris fan, but I will vote for her” **P3**



Some line up at the MECC, others have an intimate gathering at the theater - not every graduate gets an equally celebratory graduation ceremony

P5



editorial

The Monday hurdle

On Sunday evenings, I often find myself already in work mode. It's like something inside me has decided that's when the working week begins, making the Monday hurdle a bit easier to clear. That hurdle seems highest after a few days or a week off, as was the case last Monday. I'd already caught up on my emails, but I still felt a pang of anxiety during our weekly editorial meeting after autumn break. The list of topics we urgently need to tackle (read: write about) in the near future seemed endless. Writing the articles usually isn't the hard part; that part tends to go quite smoothly. It's the research and interviews beforehand that often take up a lot of time.

Take the proposed merger between the university and the hospital, which quite a few people – if they even know about it – mistakenly refer to as a possible merger between MUMC+ and the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences. We've been hearing very little about it, so it's high time to look into this. Any volunteers? A few hands go up.

Then there's the perpetual problem of high workloads at UM. For starters, we need an overview and analysis of all the working groups and initiatives set up over the past 25 years to combat this hydra, with little success so far. Who would like to take this one on?

Or consider the challenges faced by the average lecturer: the official time allocated to teaching duties doesn't reflect the actual hours spent (those cursed "norm hours"), not to mention other obstacles like students complaining about grades, accusations of failing to provide trigger warnings for lectures and tutorials, parents getting involved, and terrifying student evaluations. Who has time to look into this over the coming weeks? Last but not least, we need to take stock of the unnecessary procedures and bureaucracy adding to workloads at UM. It's a long list, from what we heard in a recent University Council committee meeting. UM President Rianne Letschert was immediately interested, and so were we. We need to get input from academic staff across faculties to identify the bureaucratic beasts we're dealing with here. If you know what we're talking about, please don't hesitate to get in touch. We're considering a series of articles on this, possibly running until summer 2025 if needed.

Right then, enough talking. Time to get to work.

Riki Janssen

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



series everything you want to know about sex



Collage: Simone Golob

"The person in the position of power should set the boundary"

You're in love with your tutor, who's only a few years older than you. The feeling is mutual. But is it wise to start a relationship? What problems might arise? UM sexologist Marieke Dewitte shares her thoughts.

"This is a complex issue, as it involves power dynamics and the question of whether true consent can be given," says Dewitte. "It's important to stress that the person in the position of power is the one who must set the boundary. In this case, that's the tutor. They should say, 'I have feelings for you too, but we shouldn't act on them', or, 'Let's go for it, but you'll need to move to a different tutorial group.' "You won't hear me say these relationships should be banned. Love is a beautiful thing, and it's something that can just happen to you. It's quite common for students to fall for their tutors or the other way around. Sometimes the age difference is minimal. As long as things go well, I think it shouldn't necessarily be a problem. But if the relationship ends, there's always the risk of retaliation from the rejected party. A tutor who didn't want to break up could start acting inappropriately, blackmailing the student, and so on. At the same time, no relationship is without risk. It's an extreme example, but we're all aware of the phenomenon of revenge porn – when ex-partners post nude photos online out of spite." Maastricht University doesn't ban relationships between students and staff, as stated in its Code of Conduct on Integrity. However, the employee must inform their supervisor of the relationship. "I know that at some American universities, teacher-student relationships are strictly forbidden. They're seen as inherently unequal and can lead to favouritism, or at

least the perception of it. As a couple, you need to be conscious of this. It affects the dynamics of the entire tutorial group, and other students might feel like they're being treated unfairly or otherwise disadvantaged.

So, my advice is: if the student

doesn't move to another group and stays in their partner's class, disclose the relationship. Otherwise, it'll be the elephant in the room."

Dewitte also cautions that being in love can interfere with a student's academic progress. "Are you coming to campus because you're eager to learn or because you're hoping for attention from your new lover? Are you able to speak freely in tutorials, or do you feel self-conscious? At the very least, make sure the tutor is no longer in a position to assess your academic performance. You can always request a different tutor. But even then, your learning could still be affected. You'll inevitably be more distracted, especially in the early stages of the relationship."

Wendy Degens

Marieke Dewitte is a clinical psychologist and sexologist at Maastricht University. In this weekly series, she answers questions about sex from students. If you have a question, you can submit it anonymously, scan the code



UM students from the US on the upcoming presidential election

“I’m worried about the future of the democracy”

The 2024 United States presidential election is nearing its final stretch. How do American students at Maastricht University feel about the events unfolding in their home country?

Twenty-year-old **Nina Engerman**, a second-year student at University College Maastricht (UCM), mailed in her ballot in early October. “To make sure it arrives on time. This is my first time voting, and I think it’s important to vote.” Not all her friends in the US feel the same way, though. “I hear a lot of pessimism. Even though we talk a lot about politics, they don’t see the point in voting. I grew up in Massachusetts and later lived in Connecticut, both strongly Democratic states. ‘One vote won’t make a difference’ is something I hear a lot.”

Not voting

Things are different in the swing states, where relatively small groups of voters are likely to decide the election. **Isaiah Smith** (21), a third-year European Studies student, is eligible to vote in a state all eyes are on – Pennsylvania, perhaps the most crucial battleground this election. But he has chosen not to vote. “The absentee voting process is so complex, it almost feels like they’re actively discouraging voters from abroad. Plus, I don’t feel like I have the right to vote in this election. I don’t live there anymore, and I don’t plan on ever moving back to the US.”

Most of all, Smith – who is religious and describes himself as “moderate, somewhere in the middle” – is of the opinion that both Harris and Trump are “bad” candidates. “As for Trump, I think it goes without saying. He’s a horrible person, a narcissist with no values. Even though I agree with him on some points, I couldn’t in good conscience vote for him. Harris, on the other hand, is a normal and decent person, but I disagree with her on some key issues. It’s so frustrating. I’d much rather have multiple parties to choose from, like here in the Netherlands.”

Support for Israel

Ella Leffler (20), another second-year UCM student, is eligible to vote in Maryland, a ‘Democratic’ state. Although she’s “not necessarily Harris’s biggest fan”, she still marked Harris’s name on her ballot last weekend. “Her support for Israel in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict really bothers me. But every



Photo: Shutterstock

option is hopeless on this issue – Israel is a US ally, and Trump would only back them even more strongly.” Engerman also disagrees with Harris on this issue, but it didn’t stop her from voting for the Democratic candidate either. “This vote feels right. I like that she’s younger, a woman and a child of immigrants.”

For both Leffler and Engerman, there really is no other option. A vote for Harris is also a vote against “anti-democratic, sexist, xenophobic” Trump, who has promised to

stage “the largest deportation in US history” if elected. “It’s incredibly frustrating to hear all his fake news about immigrants”, sighs Engerman. “I really value immigration; I grew up in a very diverse environment.” Leffler is worried about Trump’s “dangerous policies” for women, gay people and transgender people. “A lot of my friends in the US are part of these groups. It’s not looking good if Trump is elected.”

Read more on page 8

Time off for demonstrating against budget cuts

Like other university administrations, the Executive Board of Maastricht University is “whole-heartedly” encouraging all staff and students to participate in the demonstration against budget cuts in Dutch higher education on Thursday 14 November. Staff and students will be given the day off to travel to Utrecht; staff will not need to take leave, and students will not be required to attend classes.

However, there are a few caveats and exceptions: staff members must consult with their supervisors beforehand, and students must attend any previously scheduled exams, man-

datory practicals or patient work. Everyone else is free to head to Utrecht, where the Federation of Dutch Trade Unions (FNV) and the General Education Union (AOB), alongside the academic protest movement WOin-Actie, are organising a protest march from Moreelsepark to Domplein.

How staff and students will get to Utrecht is another matter. While staff members can claim their second-class train fare, no arrangements have been made for students without a free student travel pass, says spokesperson Koen Augustijn. “From an administrative point of view, it may be quite difficult to allow them to claim travel expenses; we still need to

look into that.”

Perhaps the bus is an option. Some faculties are providing bus transportation; at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the School of Business and Economics it is already a certainty (provided there are enough applications). “And the Faculty of Science and Engineering is working on it.”

It remains uncertain how many UM staff members and students will make the journey to Utrecht on 14 November, but Augustijn is optimistic. “We’re hearing from quite a few people that they’re interested in attending.”



Lucky
to be
Unlucky

“

During the week of the 21st to the 25th of October, I found myself battling one of the most intense exam periods I’d ever experienced during my time at university. I had five days (give or take) to write three essays. One ethnography proposal of 1,500 words. One literary theme essay of 3,500 words. And most dauntingly, one media case study of 4,500 words.

To say I was stressed would be a severe understatement. By Friday evening, I’d reached a state somewhere between exhaustion and mania. My head hurt, my hands were jittery from the overabundance of caffeine I’d consumed, and the words on the screen were starting to run together. Suddenly, as I sat at my desk, frantically editing my case study- it hit me. A wave of exhaustion, mostly. But also a profound realization. I was *lucky*.

To clarify, I’m aware of how ridiculous that sounds. Why on earth would I consider a splitting headache and nearly overwhelming state of panic something lucky?

Well, let’s examine the root of the issue. The exam week. Specifically, the essays that I had to write during that exam week. I was stressed because I had to write essays - for my courses that I got to choose for my university degree. Immediately, the context appears to shift. Looking beyond the emotional (and even physical) toll that the exam week had, I was lucky to be a student, with the choice of pursuing a higher education. And I wasn’t just lucky in that particular scenario. In fact, most of my everyday ‘hardships’ are, at the very root, lucky. I’m lucky, stressing about which outfit I want to wear the next day.

I’m lucky, feeling miserable when I have to bike in the rain to get to the nearest grocery store.

I’m lucky, experiencing frustration when the cosmetics I wanted to buy are out of stock. I’m lucky, encountering first-world problems that only served to highlight my privilege.

That being said, I won’t end this column with some absurd claim that exam seasons are wonderful, and that my outlook on life has changed entirely to sunshine and rainbows. Because it hasn’t. And that last exam season, despite all of the underlying luck, was horrible.

”

Robin van Wasen,
student at UCM

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

/ Guido Gaudio
(Rome, Italië, 1988)

/ barista in the SSC
and teamleader
Blanche Dael
Coffeelovers UM

/ relationship status:
single

/ lives in Maastricht



Photo: Joey Roberts

“

We often think, ‘This is my life, I have to do everything myself’, but we’re part of a community

”

Once a Roman, always a Roman. I was born and raised in Rome, and it will always be my favourite city. Outsiders might see chaos, traffic and litter, but I see romance, history and monuments. Whenever I visit, I take an early morning walk through the city centre to soak up the atmosphere and recharge. But would I ever move back? I came to Maastricht in 2014 to see what it’s like to live outside Italy, following my sister who had moved to Eindhoven to study. My parents were happy for me until they started to feel my absence – I’d always been very present. Every now and then my mother asks if I’ll ever move back, but it’s not going to happen. I wouldn’t be able to adjust anymore. Recently, I had to renew my Italian ID card. The process was unclear, they kept sending me from one municipal office to another, and I had to argue to get anything done. It took the whole day. “That’s just how things are here”, my parents said, but I’ll take Dutch efficiency over that any day.

What makes you grumpy? Dreary weather gets me down. When that happens, I’ll meet up with a friend to

have drinks and cook whatever’s in the fridge. Eating isn’t just about feeding yourself; it’s about spending time together and sharing what’s going on in your lives. Friendship is very important to me. I have a few close friends here that I can always count on. I prefer that to being surrounded by people I barely know, or having to schedule plans well in advance – and settling on a date three weeks later if you’re lucky.

Car or bicycle? Can I pick something in between? I have a motor scooter, a Vespa, very Italian. And of course I have a bike, and I love cycling in nature, but sometimes a car is just more convenient. Do I really have to choose? Fine, I’ll say car. I’m not lazy, but sometimes it’s nice when things are easy.

Which book do you like to reread? *Siddharta*, a novel about Buddha’s life. On a flight to Rome for my grandmother’s funeral, I got talking to the woman sitting next to me. She recommended the book, saying it might help me. I thought, “We’ll see”, but she was right – it changed my

life. It taught me that life isn’t one fixed path you have to follow. Instead of doing what others want, you need to take time to discover what you truly want deep down. I’m very present and talkative, but I meditate once or twice per week. Not sitting cross-legged on a blanket or anything, just quietly reflecting on what’s going on in my life. I need that to be able to enjoy my work and my relationships with other people.

My ideal partner... makes me feel at home. Being open and honest is essential, no matter how difficult it can be. My longest relationship lasted ten years, and we thought we’d be together for the rest of our lives. But I ended it; the love was gone, and you have to be honest about that, to keep a clear conscience and not toy with the other person’s emotions. I also think it’s important to give each other space to live your own lives, without worrying that they’ll leave. [Laughs] And a passion for food wouldn’t hurt either.

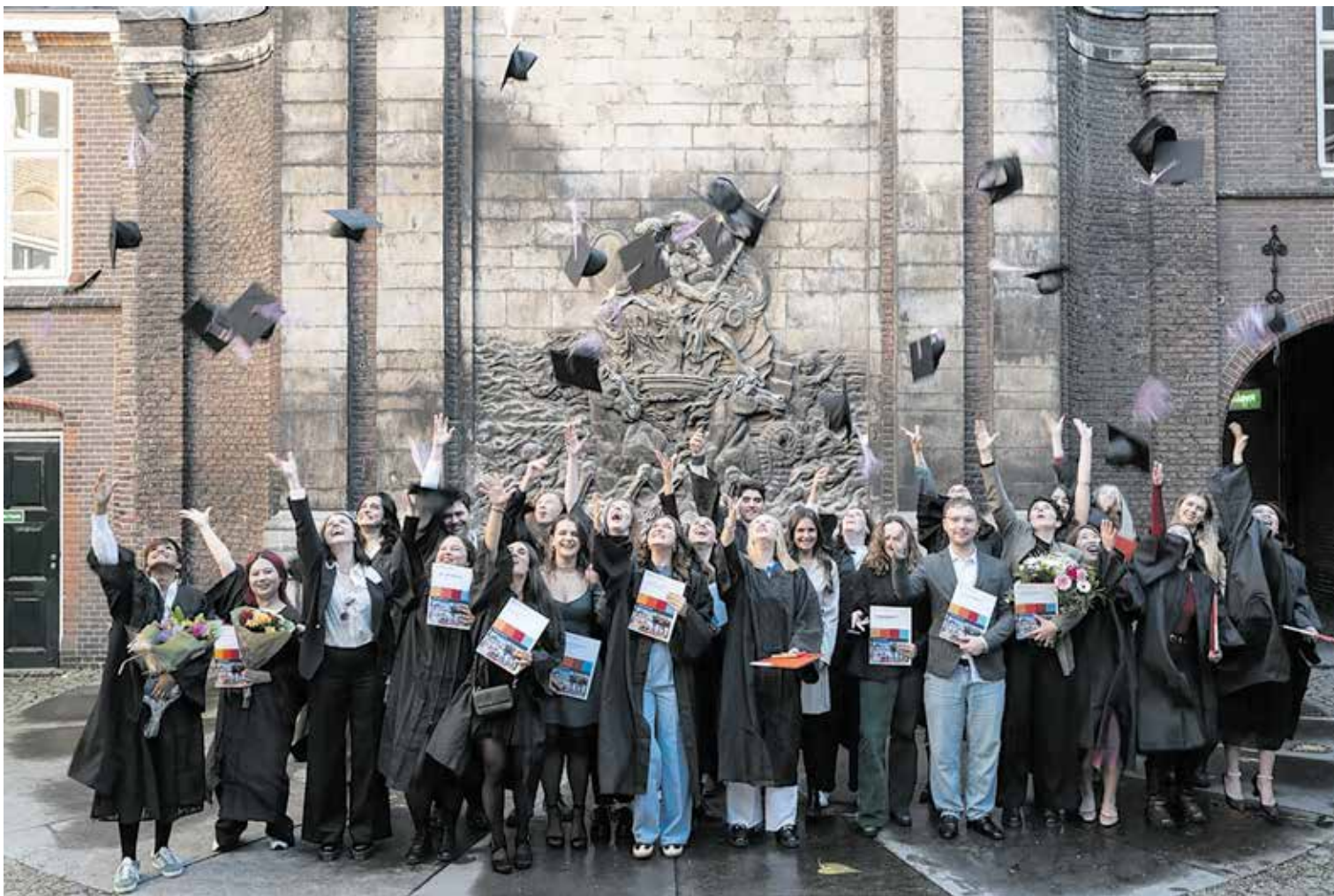
Optimist or pessimist? Optimist! I love helping people. We often think, “This is my life, I have to do everything myself”, but we’re part of a community. Last week, there was a 26-year-old guy at the coffee bar who was going back to university. He was nervous about it, so I told him, “You’ve taken a brave step, keep it up!” I’m sure that once he realises that, he’ll pay it forward. Of course, there are days when I just want to stay in bed and never get up again. In 2016, a friend and I opened an Italian coffee bar here in Maastricht. It was a dream I worked so hard for and sacrificed so much to achieve. When we had to close due to the pandemic, I found it really difficult to accept. It took me a year to realise that complaining is easy, but I’d done everything I could. If life says “no”, you have to accept that. And since you never know what the future holds, you might as well get back up and try something new.

Peter Doorackers

Weekly personal interview with a student or employee

Graduation ceremonies are increasingly similar, small differences remain

Caps in the air, finally graduated



tional students): “Most of them, 80 percent, show up.”

From Vrijthof to MECC

Not every UM graduate is handed their certificate in the same place. Up until this summer, the University College was allowed to use André Rieu’s large, open air theatre at Vrijthof, but that time has gone now. For financial reasons, they will now have to follow the same regime as other FSE programmes and use the MECC, like the psychology, economy and business students. There is room for more than a thousand people, everything can be done more or less continuously in one day, and there are various time slots for Bachelor’s and Master’s ceremonies. Partly due to costs, FSE has a limit of one drink per guest. “Our primary goal is research, so any money that can be saved goes to that”, explains Cleij. For large ceremonies, the Faculty of Law and FASoS turn to the Vrijthoftheater or the Sint Janskerk. Smaller FASoS Master’s ceremonies are held in the Turnzaal on the Grote Gracht. Global Studies, an interfaculty programme, is one of the few that holds a “closing ceremony” as soon as students have acquired the necessary study points. This ceremony last all day, rather than just two hours. After a ceremony in the Theresiakerk, there is a reception in the Harmoniezaal on Bredestraat.

Caps, gowns and drinks

Academic caps, live music, speeches by the deans, and most importantly, receiving your degree are all now traditional parts of a UM graduation ceremony. The cap and gown were originally more of an American tradition, but have since become very popular among graduates. For about €30, you can order one online through a link provided by the faculty. Although it’s often worn just for that one group photo moment when caps are joyfully tossed into the air, no one wants to be the odd one out by not wearing one. Future psychologists and economists can conveniently rent the outfit for half the price. The cap is a gift only for those studying at the Faculty of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences. The Faculty of Law also provides a sash as a memento. And what about the drinks afterwards? The difference are notable, and unlimited drinks are usually not included. Most faculties provide one or two drink tokens. FHML is more generous, and FASoS graduates can enjoy plenty of food and drinks at the Vrijthoftheater or Thiessen Wijnkoopers after the ceremony.

Hooray, you’ve finally graduated and now you’re getting your degree! There’s an official ceremony, but where? In your own faculty building, the Vrijthoftheater, the MECC? And when? Straight after graduating, or months later, so that all the internationals have to travel back specially? Every faculty is different, but the differences are getting smaller.

Text: Lena Reichel **Photo:** Photostique/Peter Müllenberg

Let’s start with that last one: many graduation practices that developed spontaneously per faculty, or even per programme, have had to come to terms with the reality of increasing class sizes and consequently, more expensive ceremonies. So while differences remain, most ceremonies are starting to look more and more similar.

Take the time of the graduation ceremony, for example. Logic dictates that the ceremony should be straight after you complete your

degree, so in June or July. Everybody’s still in the right mood then. But there are some complicating factors: resits, deadlines getting pushed back, students who are already on holiday. “It’s hard to set anything in stone so early; I only get the official number of graduates four weeks before the ceremony”, says Chantal Meertens, event coordinator at the Faculty of Law. Thomas Cleij, dean of the Faculty of Science and Engineering, highlights another issue: “You need to sort everything very quickly in

the summer, which can easily lead to errors like writing the wrong name on the certificate.” This is why more and more faculties are opting to move the whole thing to autumn. The autumn does also have its downsides, especially for international students who have already returned to their own country and would need to travel back specially. However, according to event coordinator Mandy Walls, this seems not to be an issue for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (majority interna-

The Dutch system of postmortem investigation has serious

NATURAL OR UNNATURAL DEATH? “THE QUESTION SHOULD BE, ‘WHY DID THIS PERSON DIE?’”

Text: Deborah Blekkenhorst

Photo: Shutterstock

When someone dies, a doctor must not only confirm their death but also determine its cause – at least that’s what the system expects. But errors in death certification are surprisingly common in the Netherlands, says forensic physician Cécile Woudenberg-van den Broek. In her recently completed PhD thesis on the subject, she concludes that the Dutch system of postmortem investigation is unclear, prone to errors and even violates European regulations.

The problems begin with the very first question a doctor must ask: was it a natural or unnatural death? “The former category includes deaths resulting from illness or complications after surgery”, explains Woudenberg-van den Broek. “The latter includes deaths due to suicide, euthanasia, medical error or a crime – some external cause.”

The Dutch postmortem system traditionally distinguishes between natural and unnatural deaths. But this distinction isn’t as straightforward as it may seem, says the PhD graduate, who spent eight years researching the subject for her thesis *Death in Denial*. “Bacteria and viruses also come from outside the body”, she points out, illustrating how much room there is for error.

Death certificates

“Let’s start with the basics. Dutch law requires that a postmortem be conducted when

someone dies”, explains Woudenberg-van den Broek. This means that the person’s GP or treating physician must perform an external examination of the body to confirm the death and establish its cause. “Only if the doctor is certain that it was a natural death can they issue a death certificate.”

But this is where things often go wrong. “If someone has died at home, the GP might just stand in the doorway, glance into the room and sign the death certificate without properly checking. But the body could have unexplained injuries, and it may not have been a natural death at all.” And things can get even stranger. “I’ve even witnessed a case where someone was declared dead when they were still alive.”

Another flaw is the lack of independence in the system. “If someone dies in hospital, for example, their treating doctor conducts the postmortem and determines whether

flaws, says forensic physician and PhD graduate



the death resulted from a medical error or a complication.” If it’s the former, it’s classified as an unnatural death – something a doctor may be reluctant to admit. “It’s like marking your own work – or, as the Dutch idiom goes, ‘the butcher inspecting his own meat.’”

Forensic medicine

If there is any doubt about whether a person has died of natural causes, a different process is set in motion: a forensic physician, like Woudenberg-van den Broek, takes over. “I might be called to a crime scene if a crime has been committed, or brought in if there are any concerns about a death. Of course, I could still conclude that nothing is amiss and determine it was a natural death,” she explains.

“But if I believe further investigation is needed, I’ll contact the public prosecutor and recommend a judicial autopsy.” At that point, her role ends, and the Netherlands Forensic Institute (NFI) takes over. “Just to be clear, I

don’t perform internal autopsies myself; I only carry out external postmortem examinations.” Woudenberg-van den Broek’s field isn’t as well known in the medical community as you might expect, as forensic medicine isn’t part of the standard medical curriculum in the Netherlands. “Some doctors don’t even know we exist,” she says with exasperation.

This lack of awareness is evident in practice, where it’s all too common for a natural death to be declared without proper investigation. “That’s where the system fails. Only 6.7 per cent of doctors fill in death certificates correctly. They don’t know any better, because it’s not covered in their training. They just follow the example of their mentors, who often don’t know either.”

Violated regulations

In Woudenberg-van den Broek’s view, the Dutch postmortem system needs a complete overhaul, and the terms “natural death” and

“unnatural death” should be abandoned altogether. This distinction, she argues, violates Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights. “The article states that everyone has the right to life, and the state is obliged to protect that right”, explains Woudenberg-van den Broek. “This includes the duty to investigate whether that right was violated in the case of a death and whether the death could’ve been prevented.” To comply with this obligation, the facts, causes and nature of the death must be properly recorded. “And we’re doing a terrible job of that.”

She points to England as an example of how things could be done differently. “There, the question a doctor must ask is, ‘How did the person come by their death?’ In other words, why did they die?” This is an essential question, she says, because only when you know the answer can you determine the next steps to be taken. If a crime is suspected,

for example, a criminal investigation must be launched. “But you can also advocate for wider change in society, which I think is important – looking beyond the case at hand.” Woudenberg-van den Broek cites a case from England involving a rugby player who died after a blow to the head. “He wanted to keep playing, insisted he was fine, but eventually collapsed and died. Everyone understood what had happened, but after an investigation by a coroner – a judicial official who investigates sudden or suspicious deaths – an important guideline was introduced.” It was recommended that a nurse be present at all rugby matches to assess whether a player can continue after a hit. “It won’t prevent every tragedy, but I think it’s great that positive change came out of the situation.”

background

“Our political system is robust”



Photo: Pixabay

Continued from page 3

Engerman is also deeply concerned about the future of “the democratic system, especially as it’s already been weakened and undermined by Trump’s cult.” She’s worried about potential violence around the election. “It feels like a real threat after January 6 [the US Capitol attack by Trump supporters]. It’s a strange feeling, because I always felt safe in the US. Now,

I can’t even imagine where we’re headed.” Leffler shares her concern. “If Trump loses, he’ll likely claim victory anyway. His rhetoric has only grown more extreme. I have no idea what might happen.” Smith, however, doesn’t think it’ll get that bad. “Our political system is robust. The president’s power is limited; they can’t just become a dictator.” Not even if the president is someone like Trump, who calls his

political opponents “enemies from within” and suggests that the military could be used against them “if really necessary”? “There are enough Democrats and competent Republicans to keep him in check... I hope. Actually, I’m a bit nervous too. I’ve never heard such far-right rhetoric in the US before. And some people say they’re prepared to use violence to support Trump. Even a family member of mine feels that way. It’s scary.” Whoever

wins next week, Smith hopes the result will be clear enough to leave no room for doubt. “Trump in particular might do some crazy things if he lost by a narrow margin... You know what, if I still lived in the US, perhaps I would have voted for Harris.”

Dennis Vaendel

Agenda academic ceremonies Aula Minderbroedersberg 4-6

31-10, 10.00h	Yanchao Zhang	15-11, 16.00h	Laura Nießen (Niessen)
01-11, 10.00h	Britt Bente Schuurman	18-11, 10.00h	Maria Gabriella Fois
01-11, 13.00h	Shaiv Amit Parikh	19-11, 10.00h	Chiara Stival
01-11, 16.00h	Prof. dr. Wouter D. van Marken Lichtenbelt afscheidscollege	19-11, 13.00h	Andrei Utina
04-11, 10.00h	Kiki Waeijen-Smit	19-11, 16.00h	Rald Victor Maria Groven
04-11, 13.00h	Johannes Tobias Reckweg	20-11, 10.00h	Lieke Maas
04-11, 16.00h	Maria Martha Suverein	20-11, 13.00h	Erin Barry
05-11, 10.00h	Susan Buhrs	20-11, 16.00h	Benson Ku
05-11, 16.00h	Martina Coli Double Doctorate degree Maastricht University - University of Florence	21-11, 13.00h	Koen Willem Frederik van der Laan
06-11, 10.00h	Gabriele Addario	21-11, 16.00h	Maud Simone Hevink
06-11, 13.00h	Tuğçe Schmitt	22-11, 10.00h	Wendy Nuis
07-11, 10.00h	Kailiang Zheng	22-11, 13.00h	Rudolf Theodoor Tolsma
07-11, 16.00h	Thales Felipe Costa Bertaglia	22-11, 16.00h	Xinxin Zhu Double doctorale degree maastricht university - dongbei university of finance and economics
08-11, 10.00h	Chaira Serrarens	25-11, 10.00h	Florencia Jaccoud
08-11, 13.00h	Maud van Dinther	25-11, 13.00h	Aygül Zengin
08-11, 16.30h	Dr. Desirée Joosten-ten Brinke inauguratie	25-11, 16.00h	Sinead Grealley
11-11, 13.00h	Hanxu Liu	26-11, 10.00 h	Syed Muhammad Mueez Aizaz Double Doctorate Degree Maastricht University - RWTH Aachen University
11-11, 16.00h	Dewi Elisabeth Wilhelmina Peerlings	26-11, 16.00h	Jana Viktoria Nysten
12-11, 10.00h	Koen Martin Frederik Gorgels	28-11, 13.00h	Jennifer McDonald Double Doctorate Degree Maastricht University - Western Sydney University
12-11, 13.00h	Tobias Michiel Hommels	28-11, 16.00h	Ahmad Malkawi
13-11, 10.00h	Giulia Spanò	29-11, 10.00h	Olesia Nikulina
13-11, 13.00h	Ece Kaya	29-11, 13.00h	Merel Margaretha van der Thiel
13-11, 16.00h	Marie Carla Ternes	29-11, 16.30h	Dr. Maja Brkan inauguratie
14-11, 13.00h	Mélanie Nadège Winanda Monfrance		
14-11, 16.00h	Eric Lambertus Maria Dumont		
15-11, 10.00h	Benson Mutuku Muthama		
15-11, 13.00h	Mauro Cavarra Double Doctoral Degree Maastricht University - Università degli Studi di Messina, Italy		



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www.maastrichtuniversity.nl

achtergrond

“Ons politieke systeem is robuust”



Foto: Pixabay

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homoseksuelen en transgenders. “Veel van mijn vrienden in de VS behoren tot die groep. Het ziet er niet goed uit als Trump wordt verkozen.”

Engerman is bovendien bevreesd voor de toekomst van “het democratische systeem. Zeker omdat dat al verzwakt en ondermijnd is door de sekte rond Trump.” Ook is ze bang voor geweld rondom de verkiezingen. “Sinds ‘6 januari’ (de Capitoolbestorming door Trumpaanhangers, red.) voelt dat als een reële dreiging. Een vreemde gewaarwording, want ik heb me altijd veilig gevoeld in de VS. Ik kan me simpelweg geen voorstelling maken van waar we precies op afstevenen.” Ook Leffler sluit gewelddadigheden niet uit. “Bij een verlies zal Trump waarschijnlijk toch de overwinning claimen. Zijn retoriek is nog extremer geworden. Het is erg onvoorspelbaar wat gaat gebeuren.”

Smith verwacht dat het niet zo’n vaart zal lopen. “Ons politieke systeem is robuust. De

macht van de president is beperkt, die kan niet zomaar een dictator worden.” Ook niet als dat iemand is als Trump, die zijn politieke opposenten de ‘vijand van binnenuit’ noemt, waartegen ‘in het uiterste geval het leger’ kan worden ingezet? “Er zijn genoeg Democraten en competente Republikeinen die hem in het gareel kunnen houden... hoop ik. Eigenlijk ben ik toch ook een beetje nerveus. Ik heb nog nooit zulke extreemrechtse retoriek gehoord in de VS. En sommige mensen zeggen bereid te zijn geweld te gebruiken om Trump te steunen. Zelfs een familielid van me denkt er zo over. Dat sentiment is eng.” Wie volgende week ook als winnaar uit de bus komt: Smith hoopt in elk geval dat het verschil in stemmen geen ruimte voor twijfel laat. “Zeker Trump is bij een nipt verlies tot gekke dingen in staat... Weet je, als ik in de VS woonde, zou ik toch op Harris hebben gestemd.”

Dennis Vaendel

colofon

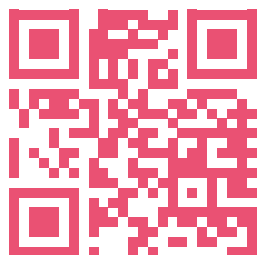
Redactie Riki Janssen (hoofdredacteur), Deborah Blekkenhorst, Wendy Degens, Peter Doorakkers, Cleo Freriks, Marion Janssens (redactie-assistent), Lena Reichel, Dennis Vaendel **Telefoon** 043 3885390
E-mail observant@maastrichtuniversity.nl **Website** www.observantonline.nl **Aan dit nummer werkten mee** Wammes

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