

Laudatio and Introduction:

Prof. Dr. Dr.h.c.des. Caspar F. van den Berg

Professor Caspar van den Berg is one of the most important representatives of Dutch academics today, both generally and in Public Administration and Governance specifically. A full professor at the famous Groningen University and an adjunct one at his earlier academic home, Leiden, he was Dean of the Campus Fryslân of the former until 2024, when he became President of the Association of Dutch Universities. This makes him the representative of the universities in the Netherlands, an office he will hold for four years. Given the key role of Dutch academics – in Public Management, one of the three leading countries globally – this is an impactful position even beyond Europe.

In parallel, Professor van den Berg was elected as a Dutch Senator, i.e. a member of the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament (*Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal*), for the Liberal Party in the parliamentary mandate of 2019–2023 and then re-elected in 2023. At the beginning of the 2024–25 parliamentary year, however, he voluntarily resigned from the Senate in order to dedicate more time, i.a., to the aforementioned presidency. Based on this function of Senator, he also served as the Head of the Dutch Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, since 2021. In this office, as is perhaps particularly mentionable in the Estonian context today, he has stood out in promoting from very early on European concrete support for Ukraine.

With these two stellar careers at an early age, both in academic administration and government, one would expect Professor van den Berg to go a little easy on scholarly production. This, however, is not the case at all; rather, this aspect of his life would be to about any full-time colleague's distinguished credit. His PhD, at the beginning of the journey, was awarded the well-known prize as the best one in all Dutch and Flemish universities, and he has certainly kept the promise of that accolade. Especially in his focus areas of local and regional governance and management and their reforms, he has authored articles in every single top global and national PA journal that exists, as well as written and edited a cornucopia of books. He has advised and is advising an enviable plethora of PhD students. And most recently, just last month actually, he won as co-PI an EUR 5.5 million grant from the Dutch Research Council for the project, "*Fertile soils for future generations: Integrated spatial strategies and effective governance for coherent rural regions.*"

I will refrain from calling him the perfect family man as well, so as not to attract the Gods' wrath as in the story of the Ring of Polycrates.

TalTech, the School of Business and Governance, and the Ragnar Nurkse Department especially are profoundly happy and honoured to have an unwavering and consistently committed friend in Professor van den Berg since many years. A decade ago exactly, he started to serve as a highly successful Visiting Professor of Public Management here (substituting a full professor during her sabbatical), just after having returned from a Visiting Research Fellow position at Princeton University. Even earlier, as the representative of Leiden University, in the EMPA

consortium in which we also participate – the main European integrated MPA – he became our key supporter early on, and he has remained so until he left his position there.

Since then, Professor van den Berg has been on numerous panels, in projects, and as a decisive reviewer and promotor of such research projects of ours in which he did not co-participate himself. He has served as the main opponent in our PhD defences, and – most important for the following publication – he has been on the advisory board of *Halduskultuur*, until he became one of the co-editors.

In light of all these merits, TalTech – Tallinn University of Technology, upon recommendation by the Ragnar Nurkse Department, therefore conveyed upon Professor van den Berg the *doctor honoris causa*, one of its highest academic honours, on 19 September 2024 in the context of the University Day celebrations.

The following lecture was delivered by Professor van den Berg one day earlier, on 18 September, at the Ragnar Nurkse Department in the form of an open departmental lecture, in anticipation of the award ceremony.

Wolfgang Drechsler

On universities and society: renewing the strained contract in times of societal polarization

CASPAR VAN DEN BERG, PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN AND PRESIDENT OF UNIVERSITIES OF THE NETHERLANDS

Dear Mr. Rector, dear Excellency, dear colleagues of the Ragnar Nurkse Department, what a great pleasure it is to be here in Tallinn for this wonderful occasion. I think you can imagine how incredibly honoured I am to be the recipient of an honorary doctorate from TalTech, a place of world-class research and teaching in my field, Public Administration. But for me personally it is also a place where academic curiosity, research excellence and friendship come together. When I was working on my doctoral thesis in the mid-2000s, I first came across Wolfgang Drechsler's by now classic critique of New Public Management, which made a huge impression because I had never seen the claims and practise of NPM seen be debunked with such lucidity and conviction as in that piece. Also during my time as a PhD researcher, I came across the great work by Tiina Randma, whose contribution to comparative public administration and comparative public management is known and highly reputed all around the world. In later years, I have come to learn from and to cite also the excellent work of other members of the Tallinn team, such as Kulli Sarapu 's work on small states, the seminal work of Rainer Kattel, Erkki Karo and Wolfgang Drechsler on How to Make an Entrepreneurial State and last but not least, Wolfgang Drechsler's pathbreaking work on Non-Western Public

Administration, where in particular his advances in understanding the value of both Confucian and Islamic PA have been major contributions to our disciplinary field.

And then to be here this week to receive an honorary doctorate, in a line of earlier recipients that are true giants in our field, really is a dream for me. And to my mind, receiving this doctorate is also a testimony of the strong bond between Dutch and Estonian scholarship in the administrative sciences, that has existed over multiple generations of academics now. My promoters professor Theo Toonen and professor Frits van der Meer have also collaborated with the Tallinn team from the mid-nineties onwards. And I strongly believe that as we see the world change societally, technologically and geopolitically, such cross-border academic ties are becoming more important now than ever.

So thank you for having me here, it truly means a huge deal to me.

In this lecture today, I want to touch on a few points that have kept me busy both in my roles as a public administration academic, as a member of the Dutch senate and as president of the Universities of the Netherlands, our country's Conference of Rectors.

The first point is to reflect critically on the notion and practice of the so-called Enabling state, a state conception that has been used and in some ways promoted strongly by the Leiden University Institute of Public Administration that I have been a part of for 20 years now (Van den Berg and De Vries 2024).

Then I want to share some thoughts on the place of the university in society and vis-à-vis politics, where do we stand and how do we move forward.

I will conclude that universities, at least in the Netherlands, are standing on the threshold of a new era in which they will have to close a new contract with society, if they want to maintain both their globally leading position in science and maintain a high degree of domestic societal legitimacy and support. Two domains that traditionally would not be contrary or competing, but have become so in recent years.

Let's start with the Enabling State. According to most scholars who use the concept, the enabling state is a type of state that is different from active and producing state, and also unlike the minimal or night watch state. It centres on a limited number of key tasks, notably on creating and providing the necessary preconditions for the optimal operation of the market economy and civil society (Page and Wright 2007). Intuitively, this involves a considerably smaller government than that of the welfare state, but a somewhat larger one than that of the night watch state. In Van der Meer's view, however, a specific size of government is not an essential characteristic of the enabling state, and the size of government should always be a function of (a) the types of tasks that the government takes on, (b) what a government needs in order to be reliable in terms of expertise and quality, and (c) what a government needs in order to operate effectively and efficiently and well within the framework of the rule

of law. According to Van der Meer, the enabling core tasks of the government in an enabling state focus on four broad areas: justice and administration, the economy, infrastructure and system responsibility (Van der Meer 2012).

First and foremost, the government must ensure a reliable and transparent legal and administrative system. In this way, citizens, the business community and foreign investors are assured that the legal system works predictably, effectively and efficiently. This includes a well-functioning constitutional state, a neutral and independent judiciary, free access to justice and clear laws regarding property rights and contracts. In addition, this requirement means that there must be (independent) supervisory bodies that monitor free competition and full market conditions.

Secondly, the government in the enabling state must also guarantee a reliable financial and monetary system. For the smooth running of economic transactions, and thus for the development of prosperity, the government must ensure a stable policy environment to guarantee legal certainty and enable the business community and civil society to plan for the longer term and to be able to assess the risks of obligations they enter into.

Thirdly, the government will perform tasks that relate to infrastructure, both on a physical and technical level (transport and mobility, energy and ICT infrastructure) and on a social level (a well-educated and productive workforce). Finally, within the philosophy of the enabling state, it is one of the core tasks of the government to bear system responsibility. This means that if vital parts of society and the economy fail, the government will intervene effectively.

The next question is how successful the enabling state has proven to be as a new type of state that was supposed to offer the golden mean between the completely free market and the classic welfare state. Cope et al. (1997) stated that there would be two conceivable scenarios with regard to the enabling state. If the balance were to shift from a government that is actively producing, to a government that mainly facilitates markets and networks, a scenario of either a hollowed-out or a filled-in state could occur. The hollowed-out state scenario assumes a withered and dismantled state that is decreasingly able to govern society, both in terms of the capacity to make decisions and in terms of the capacity to implement them. In contrast, the filled-in state scenario assumes a reinvented and rejuvenated state that is increasingly able to govern society, with both the capacity to make decisions and the capacity to implement them increasing.

Moreover, Cope et al. (1997) argue, in order to be enabling, a state must first be enabled itself. If the state is not enabled but disabled, then it will not be able to create the conditions for markets and networks to produce public goods and services. They theorize that only a state that is filled-in rather than hollowed-out will be able to facilitate others. And on top of that, they project an inherent improbability that an enabling state will emerge that actually empowers markets and networks. For, they argue, if the enabling state develops towards a hollowed-out state, it will indeed be forced to facilitate others, since it can no longer deliver itself, but it will prove unable to do so, and if the enabling state develops towards a filled-in state, it may well be able to facilitate markets and networks, but it will feel no urge to do so, since it is itself well able to deliver and has no interest in organising its own competition.

To my mind, these are useful to come back to towards the end, in assessing what the transition towards the enabling state has brought universities.

Then on the evolving relations between the state and academia, I want to start with some lyrics from King Crimson, *In the Court of the Crimson King* (Sinfield and McDonald 1969):

*On soft grey mornings widows cry,
The wise men share a joke.
I run to grasp divining signs
To satisfy the hoax.
The yellow jester does not play
But gently pulls the strings
And smiles as the puppets dance
In the court of the Crimson King.*

In these eight bars, Peter Sinfield, King Crimson's wordsmith, sketches an eerie picture that sadly echoes the state of the world we find ourselves in today – even though Sinfield wrote these lyrics in 1971. In good psychedelic tradition, the lyrics are open to interpretation, but it is not difficult to project them onto today's world.

It is not an optimistic view, I admit, and perhaps you will have expected something slightly more lighthearted for this talk. However, I am afraid you will have to agree with me that the situation we find our world in today is grim. Grim, but not hopeless.

The reality is – we are facing great unknowns. Climate change, the effects of information overload via social media, shifting power dynamics in the world, war on our continent – these are only some of major transitions society is facing. We all know that these major transitions are challenges that can be overcome, but that we will need to study, research and innovate to overcome them. We do not have the technology to overcome climate change – yet. We do not know how to deal with the effects of the overconnectedness and spread of misinformation via social media – yet. Our institutions – the universities – have a vital role to play in innovation and research in order to successfully adapt and thrive in a changing world.

However, these very same challenges pose a problem for our institutions as well. Increasingly, core academic values, and in particular academic freedom are threatened, either by direct interference from governments, such as we have seen in Hungary, or indirectly, for example because of increasingly hostile attitudes towards scientists from the public, such as in research in nitrogen disposition in the Netherlands.

More than ever, it is vitally important to protect these core values. But these same values oftentimes conflict with the most straightforward solution. For example, protests within our universities, as seen worldwide in response to the conflict in the Middle East, may be intimidating for staff and students. At the same time, we firmly stand in the Voltairean tradition that holds that we may deeply disprove of what someone has to say but will fiercely defend their right to say it (Hall 1906). So prohibiting protest and discussion conflicts with our core value of open exchange of ideas, and freedom of expression. Our present-day reality is full of such dilemmas. In this talk, I will explore these dilemmas further.

Let us first return to the Court of the Crimson King, as it is an interesting allegory to think about the role of academia in present day society. Obviously, the Crimson King is an allegory for the state. The crying widows and the prophesising storyteller are the general public. Which leaves the wise men and the court jester – either of which could represent academia, I would argue.

But before I answer the question whether our universities are indeed wise men (of any gender) of mere jesters, let us explore the other characters a bit further, starting with the general public.

Present-day Western societies are facing a set of wicked challenges. The rise of authoritarianism in the Western world is a topic of deep and wide concern. Not only core academic values, but core values of liberal democracy are not as self-evident as they were twenty years ago in our part of the world. One interesting approach to a deeper understanding of the appeal of authoritarianism comes from an emerging theory in brain science – the concept of "free energy." Very simply put, our brains are hardwired to reduce the amount of uncertainty or "free energy" in our environment. As organisms, we do not like uncertainty and unpredictability. Our actions – from basic reflexes to complex social behaviours – are all adapted to uncertainty reduction. According to some psychologists, this is what drives our innate curiosity. We strive to understand the unknown for the simple reason it reduces our uncertainty about the world. Humans strive to learn and understand, in order to get a grasp on an uncertain world.

If we now take this principle, and apply it to the present day, in some ways overconnected world, we see the issue: the world has become extremely complicated and unpredictable, while the sources of often conflicting information have grown exponentially. For the majority of citizens, it has become extremely difficult to satisfy the need for uncertainty reduction. Easy solutions – conspiracy theories, strong men – are ever-tempting. Hence the lure of divination for our storyteller in *The Court of the Crimson King*, even though he knows he is perpetrating in a hoax.

Obviously, this is at odds with the nature of academia. We are dealers in uncertainty in our quest for knowledge and breakthroughs. The scientific method, one of the most powerful tools in our arsenal for understanding the natural world, is deeply paradoxical in nature. We ask questions, and keep on asking questions, never finding a true answer, and when we do, we leave a lot of space for doubt and future refutation. Science itself is a perpetual question engine, that only produces intermediate answers, and always has new questions to ask. Of course, science leads to solutions and innovations, but the core of the academic enterprise is to keep on asking, to find new unknowns to satisfy our curiosity.

In an uncertain world craving for answers and reduce uncertainty *now*, this is very unsatisfying. The problems we have are urgent, the transitions are frightening, and thirst for uncertainty reduction is not satisfactorily quenched by more questions. Even though we know and have shown for centuries that asking more questions is – paradoxically – the best way to satisfy our curiosity in the long run. We need a new way to communicate this. But how? A question I will get back to later. For now, let us turn our attention back to the Court of the Crimson King.

What about the Crimson King himself? The State, and our thinking about the state, has significantly changed over the past decades. Firstly through the emergence of the neo-liberal state and its concurrent thinking about public administration in terms of New Public Management, and then by the concepts that emerged in response to it, such as the neo-Weberian and the Enabling state (Hood 1991, Drechsler 2005, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2017, Van der Meer et al. 2012). While both of the latter are very promising in themselves from the perspective of the "ordinary citizen," carry a perhaps unexpected potential to pose a threat to academic values in university governance at the same time. Classic bureaucracy was slow

and offered little room for individual initiative or diverse profiles but provided some safety from political interference by being able to "hide" behind a ministry. New Public Management offered much more room for new initiative, whilst limiting accountability to the numbers: if the finance was sound, the complaints were few and far between.

We are at a crossroads now. Do we enter a new paradigm with new rules? Or do we accumulate public perceptions and government interference? At this moment, universities – in the Netherlands at least – seem to get the worst of both worlds. A government that increasingly micro-manages the financial dimension of running a university by making funding temporary and conditional, which increases bureaucracy and limits flexibility. But at the same time the political debate – and as a result: more rules and legislation – is increasingly involved in policies within the university: is it OK to host a protest? Can we still work together with scientific colleagues in non-likeminded-countries and if so, under which conditions?

Dutch academic institutions therefore feel threatened. Threatened in their institutional autonomy, and in their legally given right and task to provide academic freedom to their employees. For most university boards, academic freedom is a given. Even discussing it is taboo, out of fear that the ministry or parliament might use the opportunity to alter the definitions or scope of academic freedom. This tactic works – but only so far. Both the general public and the academic community ask of their academic institutions that they take a political stance. The enabling state, despite all its advantages, offers little protection for the independent academy.

Interestingly, Weber himself engaged with the question of state-academia relations in the early 20th century, on the backdrop of the Great War: can a university or an academic be truly politically neutral? In Weber's view, institutions as well as individual academics have an obligation to be as neutral as possible. Even though in the end, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, absolute neutrality may prove to be unattainable, it is the responsibility of the scholar to always stretch themselves to approach the object of their study in the least biased and most objective way, and to report on their findings in the most neutral way (Weber 1905). In his 1905 paper, *"Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy,"* Weber shares his experiences with an academic journal he edited, and in which he – as an editor – strived for political neutrality. However, because of the 'character' of the journal, it attracted mainly non-revolutionary economic progressives who submitted papers. As a result, the journal only solidified its particular character, and even though its policies were neutral, and its editors strived for neutrality, the journal was not. I think most of us would agree that to a large extent, this also applies to our universities. While at the institutional level, we are highly committed to neutrality, we also encourage a climate for societal engagement for the members of our academic community. And the success of our scholars and students in engaging with society and making an impact in the real world, is increasingly seen to go counter the notion of the "neutral" academy.

Despite this almost fundamental impossibility for institutions to be neutral, Weber felt strongly about the need for a strict segmentation between roles when operating in the academic arena – one's opinions as a person or a politician need to be separated from one's views as an academic. About colleagues who in Weber's eyes failed to make this distinction, he wrote:

An unprecedented situation exists when a large number of officially accredited prophets do not do their preaching on the streets, or in churches or other public places or in sectarian conventicles, but rather feel themselves competent to enunciate their evaluations on ultimate questions "in the name of science" in governmentally privileged lecture halls in which they are neither controlled, checked by discussion nor subject to contradiction. (Weber 1905)

"In the name of science" – it is used as a seal of approval here. An endorsement by science or scientists is often seen and abused as a quality stamp, a claim to truth, a way to silence criticism. The potential weaponization of "the name of science" is one the reasons it is important to segregate our roles as academics from our personal views.

However, the pursuit of truth itself is also vulnerable for political interference. Science can be politicized to a surprising degree. This is obvious for a field like ours – the administrative sciences. However, quantum physics has been purged from German universities under the Nazi government as "Jewish physics," and several decades later, in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, from Chinese academic curricula because the probabilistic nature of quantum physics clashed with Maoist thought.

In our free European universities, we strive to be free of such government interference in academia. We do not want the Crimson King to tell us what to do and how to do it. But even within the EU, this is not a given, as we have seen, for example, in Hungary, or even in Denmark. As I argued before, the Enabling state paradigm does leave academia in particular in a vulnerable position.

At present, the guarding of this neutral quality of the truth is no small feat. The pressure to take position in all kinds of issues is enormous and yet still growing. Often times, internal and external pressure are in indirect conflict with each other, increasing the tension for university leadership. One only has to remember the hearing of the presidents of Harvard, MIT and Penn, about (among other things) antisemitism on university campuses. While being responsible for the governance of big institutions like universities brings with it many tensions and pressure, having to defend oneself to the population on prime time for allowing protests is a challenging experience. Even more so when the protesters demand much more action in exactly the opposite direction of what the politicians are asking you to do.

This same thing happened in my country this summer. A faction of students and staff deemed further academic cooperation with Israeli institutions unacceptable, at least as long as an armed conflict is going on in the region. At the same time, politicians are asking us to limit these protests, to invite law enforcement onto the campus and force a part of our academic community to keep quiet. Never mind the choice you end up making, you're not just disappointing someone – the normal cost of administration – you are bound to enrage all involved and risking the public credibility of your institution. It has been over 50 years since the famous Kalven report, officially named the *Report on the University's Role in Political and Social Action* was first published. The document affirms the University's commitment to the academic freedom of faculty and students in the face of suppression from internal and/or external entities while also insisting on institutional neutrality on political and social issues. Its contents have also become known as the Chicago Principles and is still so useful and topical that I'll quote a crucial passage from it:

A university faithful to its mission will provide enduring challenges to social values, policies, practices, and institutions. By design and by effect, it is the institution which creates discontent with the existing social arrangements and proposes new ones. In brief, a good university, like Socrates, will be upsetting. The instrument of dissent and criticism is the individual faculty member or the individual student. The university is the home and sponsor of critics; it is not itself the critic. (Kalven Committee 1967)

In other words: for researchers, students and all other members of an academic community to speak up and speak out about all the things they deem wise – the university as an *institution* by definition needs to remain neutral. Enticing theory; who would object to it? However, universities like those in the Netherlands, but the aforementioned Ivy League members as well, have run into serious issues with public trust by maintaining this political neutrality. Which begs the question: is this a sort of short-term discomfort we just have to face, or endure? Or do we have to reconsider this principle and be a more active participant in the public debate – including the great risks involved?

The safeguarding of our freedom requires a renegotiation with the Crimson King. But to renegotiate, we need to know our position in the court.

It seems self-evident that the role of academia is that of the Wise Men. The wise men and women of old were advisors to their kings and queens in all matters of the state, or helped their countries with new inventions and new weapons. Leonardo da Vinci, for example, for all his genius, was at large a contracted arms inventor, selling his genius to the highest bidder.

In the present day, we see a very similar position of academia. Universities are expected to create societal impact with their research, and to directly to contribute to societal problems and rightly so. Over 65% of the general audience believes that the results of scientific research should directly benefit society. Moreover, the majority of university rectors agree to this position. Moreover, we see a long trend in increasing funding for thematic research at the expense of funding for curiosity-driven research.

Public universities are paid for by the tax-payer, as an often-heard argument goes, and should therefore work to the benefit of the tax-payer. It is easy to see how the "wise woman" or "wise man" persona fits this role. And let me be clear – the argument is a strong and justified. Our universities are in a unique position to contribute to the major societal transitions we face. With great power comes great responsibility, and therefore we do have an obligation to contribute to solving the many problems and challenges our societies are facing.

However, it gets more interesting when we delve on the question if this commitment to society in theory and in practice limits our academic freedom. In my view, the answer here strongly depends on the perspective one takes. On the one hand, one might argue that academia is a sanctuary for research, where no external steering whatsoever should take place. However, taking up the role of the Wise Men in the Court of the Crimson King is at odds with that particular view. Mission-driven research, research requiring a guaranteed and immediate societal impact: it involves an obvious transactional relation between academia and society. Society becomes our client, and the client is king. And such a role also requires academic freedom, but a different aspect of it than discussed before – we need academic freedom as

a safeguard for the quality of our research. Academic freedom also means freedom for the researcher to publish results, even if they do not suit the client.

The obvious problem is this model is that the object of the transaction is a very tangible one. Innovations, solutions, direct impact – they are all prone to be subjected to KPIs, with a risk of investments being withdrawn when project goals are not met. And this carries a risk. The wise man carefully weighs his words, advises his King, but is careful not to aggrieve his Majesty, lest he loses his client. The Wise Man is essentially unfree. It sounds disappointing. But moreover – it is also not how most academics would view themselves. At the core of academia is freedom and curiosity, not contracts. Could it be that our allegory is wrong?

There is one character at the Crimson King's court we haven't explored. The court jester. The court jester might not be the first character we might think of when thinking of metaphors for academia. But I believe there might actually be a very good case to make for the comparison between academia and the classical court jester.

A court jester at the renaissance court was often the only person who could insult the King, who could freely speak his mind without any fear of repercussion. Court jesters were influential at the courts exactly because they could tell the King things the King's advisers did not dare to tell him. The court jester could make the King laugh, but more importantly, challenge existing views and make the King and the court think and rethink. In a sense, this is much closer to how academics view themselves. Universities play a broader role in society than that of innovation factories. The university has a role to play as court jester as well: society needs to have institutions that challenge existing views, where one can freely speak one's mind, where the freedom of thought is practically absolute and without repercussion. Society needs such places – not as a playground for an elite of academics, but because our culture, our thinking, and our philosophies also need innovation and rejuvenation.

Our role as court jesters provides just that. Academia plays a vital role in rejuvenating thought in a broader society, a counterweight to the king's thirst for easy solutions to difficult problems. Interestingly, although this might feel less transactional than the innovator-for-hire allegory of the Wise Men, I would still argue there is a transaction here. The kings of old recognized the value of a court jester and paid such men and women generously for their services. However, contrary to a solution or innovation-based service, the worth of being challenged to give a new insight can hardly be expressed in KPIs, let alone financial terms.

So there we are. In the Court of the Crimson King, academia plays two roles. Sometimes we are the wise men, but sometimes we are the court jester. I believe that this duality of roles is at the core of the oftentimes difficult relation we are in presently with our clients – politics and society. Both functions are vitally important for society, but in the present-day climate, our wise man-role is under pressure because we have to protect our academic freedom, and our jester role is under pressure because parts of society seem less and less willing to grant us this role.

In addition, the discrepancy between the two roles does presents us with a difficult dilemma. The Wise Man cannot speak the words of the Jester, because he will not be taken seriously. But the other way around, if the Jester speaks the words of the Wise Man, he will not be taken seriously either. Herein, I believe, lies one the great challenges for academia in our time. How can we be true to both our natures? How can we balance the responsibilities of the serious

Wise Man, the contractual nature of research that is supposed to solve practical problems and aid with transitions, with the playful, free and intentionally confronting attitude of the Court Jester?

How do we reconcile these? Interestingly, Weber may have already given us a solution in 1905. Weber already recognized that modernity requires segregation of roles. As academics, we need to clearly distinguish between our roles, and be transparent and clear on the two roles we play in society.

But what Weber did not foresee, was the tensions that universities in the Netherlands, but similarly in the UK and Denmark are currently facing. Since the 1990s, NPM-style reforms and incentives have put these universities on a path of competition with their fellow institutions in their country, a path of growth through attracting international students, and at least for the Netherlands, a path of Anglicizing taught programmes, thereby also attracting an increasing share of international scientific staff.

This approach worked great in terms of attracting global talent, increasing the quality of education, broadening and deepening the range of taught programmes and research areas, and greater success in international research grant competitions. It also enjoyed a broad societal and political support from left to right for about 25 years, as internationalization was rightfully seen as strengthening the modern knowledge economy, strengthening the innovation ecosystem and creating more prosperity. For society as well universities it was a no-brainer. Universities did not mind the competitive mechanisms, because more new students could always be found abroad and growing programmes meant increasing resources. Until, the societal and demographic wind turned. A large influx of international students is currently seen as part of the immigration problem, putting unjustifiable pressure on the already tight housing market and public services. The Anglicization of higher education is no longer interpreted as an opportunity to lead globally in the academic world, but as sacrificing Dutch as an academic language and undermining national heritage. And as the influx of international students is currently being capped, it turns out that competition becomes destructive for the universities, as the number of domestic pupils graduating from high school is slightly going down each year. So we are looking at competing institutions in a shrinking environment and strong restrictions to compensate this with foreign students.

We are already seeing what this means in the UK. Institutions are heavily reorganizing, consolidating, merger and some will go under. In the Netherlands, our challenge is to remain amongst the leading countries in the world of science, against a backdrop of politically enforced de-internationalization and a shrinking domestic market and a general political environment that looks unfavourably to academia and intellectualism as a whole. So next to resistance, sharp choices will have to be made. Universities will have to close a new contract with society, renew their societal proposition, while doubling down on their values and promise of academic freedom, excellence, and contribution to societal progress and economic growth. Steering a course where no institutions will go under, no scientific fields will disappear, and excellence will stay key. This will be our challenge for the years ahead. As universities, we must and we will do it, we've been around for 450 years in our country, we've been through worse and have always come out stronger. But we will need all the resources, knowledge and intellectual as well as communicative power to get there. And we need our friends and partnerships inside our country and abroad.

The friendship and academic partnership that has existed for over a generation between the Dutch and Estonian administrative sciences is strong and productive, and if there is one thing that I'm *not* concerned about, it is that that will stay that way.

Thank you very much.

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