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ENGLISH EDITION

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VOX

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FRONT AND BACK COVER ART: JEROEN MURRÉ

EDITORIAL

HOUSING SHAME

The worst thing about this whole housing crisis may well be the shame that people experience if they can't find a place to live. I'm thinking of the foreign student who emphatically asked me not to mention that he has been sleeping on sofas in friends' houses for months. "It's so embarrassing." Or the international student who for a while spent his nights in a sports hall with some friends. "We find it so humiliating."

As if it's their fault that the housing market has come to a complete standstill. Students aren't the only ones driven to despair by the housing shortage; university employees are also getting frustrated. Are you happy you got that new job in Nijmegen? Wait until you find yourself hopping from B&B to B&B with your wife, child and dog because you can't find anywhere to rent.

Will we recover from this acute housing shortage? Economists believe so. We just have to sit it out a little while longer, they say, and the market will cool down on its own. Houses will become affordable once more, and we'll all be able to breathe again. At the same time, Nijmegen has to keep building new houses, the experts say, and make sure that the neighbourhoods on the other side of the canal also become popular. What about the University? It should take its responsibility towards students and employees looking for somewhere to live more seriously, say the victims. Open a helpdesk where newcomers, especially from abroad, can find a helping hand. Build student houses on campus (says SSH&). The latter is in the pipeline, promises the Rector (see p. 4 and p. 43).

Annemarie Haverkamp
Editor-in-chief Vox

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HOUSING PROTEST IN NIJMEGEN CITY CENTRE

The housing crisis is not a problem for individual house hunters, but for the government. In an effort to convey this message, protests were organised in recent weeks in various Dutch cities.

In Nijmegen, hundreds of people came together on 31 October for a protest march. They gathered on Plein 1944 before marching through the city centre. They called for the

government to create more housing and to do something about the high prices on the rental and home-owner market.

"It's hard to find a room or you have to pay too much rent," explains Sander van der Goes (23), one of the protesters. "As a result, you borrow more money, which causes more problems once you want to leave your student room. Houses these days are almost

unaffordable, which leads to many graduates remaining in rooms intended for first-year students. Something fundamental has to change about this policy."

Student union AKKU and the national LSVb student union also took part in the housing protest in Nijmegen.

Photography: Bert Beelen

IN THE NEWS



Emergency housing It looks as if emergency housing might be erected on the University campus next academic year. Rector Han van Krieken is talking to the municipality, student housing agency SSH&, and other parties about whether, and if so where, these housing units could be placed. In doing so, he is responding to the acute shortage of student rooms, especially for international students. One of the potential locations is the area next to Mercator II (behind the Huygens building). In the long run, the Erasmus building could also be used to house students, but this also requires various parties to talk and agree (*Find out more on p. 43*).

staff member who happened to get a visit from one of these fraudsters. "He said he wasn't personally responsible for the research study, which would be carried out by students from a different minor. He then asked me whether I wanted to donate some money." This isn't the first time that Radboudumc has been the victim of fake fundraisers posing as hospital employees. "We really appreciate people reporting it," says a Radboudumc spokesperson.

Students have little interest in religion With the exception of a small religious minority,

Radboud University students are hardly or not at all religious.

This is the conclusion of a Vox survey among 340 students.

More than 75% of respondents identify as atheist (50%) or agnostic (25%). By contrast, a small minority (11%) consider themselves very religious. It should therefore come as no surprise that most students don't consider it very important that Radboud University wants to retain its Catholic identity, despite losing its official Catholic title last year. "It's

clearly not a topic that students find very interesting," says Psychology student Veroniek Kersten.

Afghan refugees Approximately 20 Afghan refugees currently living at the Heumensoord refugee camp are following lectures at Radboud University. The refugees are paired with regular students, who function as their buddy. They help the Afghans navigate the campus and the Dutch education system, as well as helping them with Brightspace and Osiris. "Participants are required to complete assignments and homework, and they receive a certificate at the end," says coordinator Saskia Paulissen. "The idea is to make education more accessible and to lower the threshold for Afghans to make contact and acquire knowledge."

Female deans Will there soon be only one female dean among the seven Radboud University faculties? It's certainly possible, now that two female deans have resigned within a short period of time. On 1 December, Lutgarde Buydens, from the Faculty of Science, will be passing the baton to Sijbrand de Jong. And Margot van Mulken, from the Faculty of Arts, has also announced her departure. This means that Heleen Murre-van den Berg, from the

Fake fundraisers In Nijmegen, fake fundraisers are posing as Radboud University medical students collecting money for cancer research. "A young man in a red Radboud University jumper rang the doorbell and asked me some questions about cancer research," says a University





It's mid-November, and things seem to have come full circle: face masks are once again compulsory on campus, maximum group size is back to 75, and employees are required to work from home as much as possible. The question is how long the COVID-19 winter will last this time. Thomas van Aquino, the statue next to the Comenius building, is prepared for any eventuality.

PHOTO: JOHANNES FIEBIG

Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies may soon be the only female dean left. Professor Agnes Akkerman, who specialises in labour relations, can't imagine that there will be a shortage of female candidates. "Radboud University certainly has enough suitable female professors."



Grand Dictation The Groot Dictee der Nederlandse Taal (Grand Dictation of the Dutch Language), which this year took place in the Radboud University Library, was won by Suzanne Voets. The second-year student in Dutch Language and Culture only made three mistakes in the text by author Wim Daniëls, which was read out loud by former Chairwoman of the Dutch Parliament Gerdi Verbeet. Voets wrongly spelled 'grand prix' and 'antivaxers' with a hyphen. "Looking back, you think: of course, I know those rules!" says Voets. "But in the heat of the moment, you still make mistakes." Earlier this year, Voets made her writing debut with a novel entitled *De toverlantaarn* (*The Magic Lantern*).

ABP stops investing in fossil fuels The ABP pension fund, which all Dutch university employees are automatically signed up with, has decided to stop investing in oil, coal and gas companies. ABP aims to sell all its fossil fuel investments by April 2023. According to climate expert Heleen de Coninck, member of the scientific committee advising ABP on sustainable investments, the pension fund is sending out a good signal with this decision. But De Coninck, who is also a lecturer at Radboud University, also points to the potential negative consequences of this type of decision. "It could, for instance, lead to a rise in energy prices."

Study delay for medical students Five to sixteen months. That's how long medical students in Nijmegen have to wait before they can start on their compulsory hospital internships. The reason: COVID-19. The strict lockdown meant that the Master's programme was put on hold for five months in early 2020, resulting in 300 students being temporarily unable to complete their internship. "We'll need approximately two years to catch up," says a Radboud-umc spokesperson. While they wait, many students choose to take on a job, or start following Master's courses.



Huize Barbarossa

Some student houses have a nickname. What's the origin?

The name 'Huize Barbarossa' comes from the hostel that was located on the St. Anthonius-plaats until 2020. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the building was transformed into a student house. Fourteen students are incredibly happy to be living in this old part of Nijmegen. On the door a white sign proclaims 'Barbarossa' in red letters. Five students, Ruben, Brook, Onno, Jesper and Samantha talk about their house.

"Our thing is 'bakkies trekken', i.e. doing shots. We're the most fun and notorious student house in Nijmegen, and we're famous for our parties. There's nearly always an afterparty at our place. We would kind of like to change the name of the house, but not too much. We had some brainstorming sessions, but we didn't get further than *Barbaramkoers* ['Barba-collision course'] and *Barbaosso*." Ruben jokes that they do a lot of sports together, but the others disagree. Drinking and partying is more the thing at this house. And they sometimes organise a games night. "Things usually get pretty heated when we play Ludo."

TEXT: MAARTEN NEUBAUER



OVERHEATED HOUSING MARKET

Students are reduced to sleeping on camping sites, and the prices of rental and owner-occupied properties are rising through the roof. A house advertised on Funda today will have a new owner within three weeks. Will the Greek tragedy that is the housing market ever end?

Text: Stan van Pelt / **Illustrations:** JeRoen Murré

Last March, it happened for the first time, and estate agent Attis van der Horst remembers it well. For the very first time ever, she had clients who bid €100,000 above the asking price. “I’ve been assisting house buyers for fifteen years, but I’d never seen anything like it.” These days, the asking price is not much more than an invitation to come and have a look, she sighs in her office on the Van Welderenstraat. “If you want to have a chance, you’ve got no choice but to overbid.” Van der Horst’s clients increasingly resort to searching in traditionally less popular areas like Dukenburg.

But there too, prices are rising dramatically. More than 85% of properties for sale in the Arnhem-Nijmegen region – with the exception of detached properties – are currently sold for more than the asking price, as apparent from the figures of estate agents’ association NVM. The average selling price is €383,000, nearly double what it was in 2013. That year marked the most recent low point on the housing market, which had collapsed as a result of the credit crunch. Between 2008 and 2013, houses lost on average 20% of their value. Recent university graduates and other starters on the housing market were in a luxury position in those days, remembers Van der Horst. “They could take their pick of houses.”

These days, the situation couldn’t be more different. A property advertised on Funda today will be sold within three weeks, says Paul de Vries, housing market researcher at the Dutch Land Registry Agency. “In normal market conditions it usually takes about three months.”

People looking to purchase a home are not the only ones who are stuck. To qualify for social housing in the region, you have to be registered for an average of 19 years, as apparent

A PROPERTY ADVERTISED ON FUNDA TODAY WILL BE SOLD WITHIN THREE WEEKS

from the 2021 Arnhem-Nijmegen Housing Market Monitor – and in principle earn no more than €40,000 per year. If your income is higher, and buying a house is not an option, your only recourse is the private rental market, where offerings are limited and prices high. What about students? They are sometimes forced to seek refuge in hotels or camping sites in and around Nijmegen. Throughout the Netherlands, there is a shortage of 26,500 student rooms, as calculated recently by Kences knowledge centre.

In other words, the difficult quest for a place to rest one’s head is affecting all generations and layers of society. And unsurprisingly, the first initiative for a ‘housing protest’ in Nijmegen in decades, on 31 October, was met with a great deal of enthusiasm. The overheated housing market is like a Greek tragedy in which mere mortals find themselves the play-

thing of higher powers. Some parties come out as winners, at the expense of powerless victims. Saviours flying to the rescue are sometimes revealed to be Trojan horses. And ultimately, nothing short of a powerful deus ex machina can still give the story a positive twist. What persons and organisations play a role in the key drama elements?

Higher powers drive prices up

The acute shortage of homes for sale is the result of a number of factors, which individual house buyers have little influence on, explains Paul de Vries from the Land Registry Agency. It starts with the fact that many people want to relocate. “This desire is something that’s always present of course, but many people who owned a property put their relocation plans on hold during the financial crisis, because their house dropped in value. Now that selling is profitable once again, they can finally make a move.”

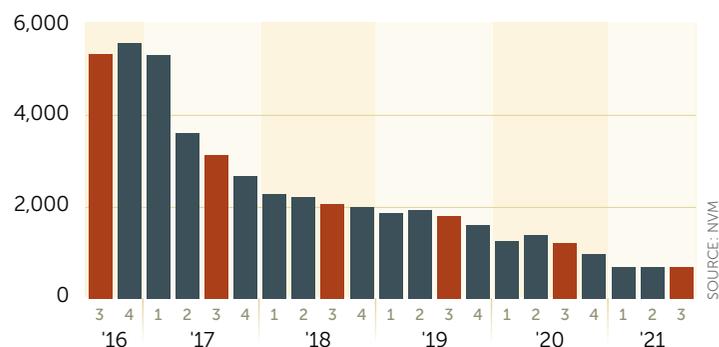
In fact, adds estate agent Van der Horst, due to the continuously rising house prices, even people with no relocation plans suddenly feel under pressure to turn the surplus value of their house into cash. “There’s this idea

going around that you’re shooting yourself in the foot if you keep all this money invested in bricks and mortar.”

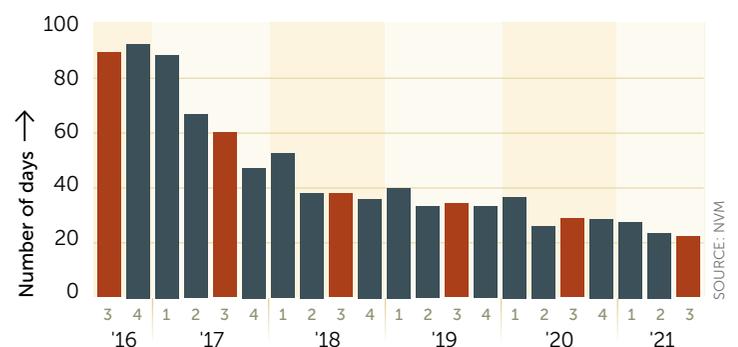
At the same time, private house buyers increasingly have to compete with investors who purchase houses only to rent them out or resell at a profit. “They can easily get funding thanks to the low interest rate, and they all want maximum return on their investment,” says political economy expert Angela Wigger,



Number of available houses in the Arnhem/Nijmegen region per quarter



Average time houses are on the market per quarter



who studied the housing market in Amsterdam and other places. Investors who used to put their money in companies that manufactured goods – the ‘real economy’ – now increasingly invest in property. Wigger: “The profit margins are high and the risks are low. Since 2013, the rental market has become more liberalised, which makes it easier to offer people temporary rental contracts.” It also makes it easier to get rid of tenants, for example by selling the property or raising the rent in the middle of the contract period.

Winners who risk nothing

The winners of this drama are mostly those who have no trouble putting money on the table. People with a well-paid stable job who already own their own home. They can easily get a new mortgage; having perhaps already paid off part of the old one, they have a substantial surplus value in their house, and in some cases even some savings. De Vries: “For the same monthly payment, they can suddenly afford to live in a much larger and more expensive house.”

A house that could easily be worth twice the value, as a quick calculation shows. Imagine that in 2013, as a PhD student, you purchased a terraced house in Hazenkamp with your partner for €300,000, with a regular mortgage in those days, at 4% interest rate, with a fixed rate for 10 years. This means that, thanks to the home mortgage interest deduction, you pay approximately €600 net per month in interest. At the current 10-year interest rate (approximately 1.5%), you would have to borrow €800,000 to pay a similar amount of interest.

Of course, you have to find a bank willing to loan you this money. But if, in the meantime, you’ve both been promoted to assistant professor, with a monthly salary of twice €5,000 (salary scale 12.4), then a loan of €700,000 is feasible. If you also manage to sell your house for €500,000 (a conservative estimate), you can move to a house worth a million, while your interest payments will remain the same or even decrease a little.

It’s a zero-risk operation, in other words. Clearly, there are other costs involved, such as the property transfer tax, potential renovations, higher energy costs and, of course, a larger debt. The latter, in particular, could become problematic once house prices drop once again.

Newcomers are the losers

So who are the losers in this game? De Vries: “Those who recently appeared on the stage: young people who need a full mortgage to buy

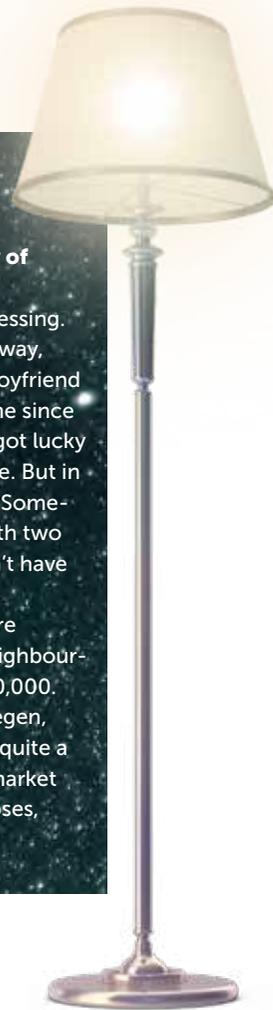
‘IT CAUSES A LOT OF STRESS’

Lara de Die (29), Communications officer at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies

“The search for a house to buy can be quite depressing.

You have to call or email for a visit straight away, otherwise you’re sure to be too late. My boyfriend and I have been looking for our first home since this summer. The other day, we almost got lucky when we bid €60,000 above asking price. But in the end, someone else got in before us. Sometimes I think: If we can’t find anything with two permanent jobs, what are people who don’t have stable jobs supposed to do?

Ideally, we’d like a corner house with a long garden. We are currently renting an apartment in Hazenkamp, but this neighbourhood is beyond our budget, with an average price of €400,000. This is why we’re also looking in the villages around Nijmegen, and we recently hired a buyer’s agent. It definitely causes quite a lot of stress. But you can’t put your life on hold until the market calms down. If we find a nice home and the market collapses, we’ll just stay put and wait for the storm to pass.”



OVER €1000 RENT FOR A TWO-ROOM APARTMENT

a house for €400,000.” They cannot compete against prospective buyers who put in the entire surplus value of their previous home, their savings, or a ‘jubelton’ – see below. Their living expenses are also higher because, unlike existing home owners, they have to repay the entire mortgage amount during the mortgage term.

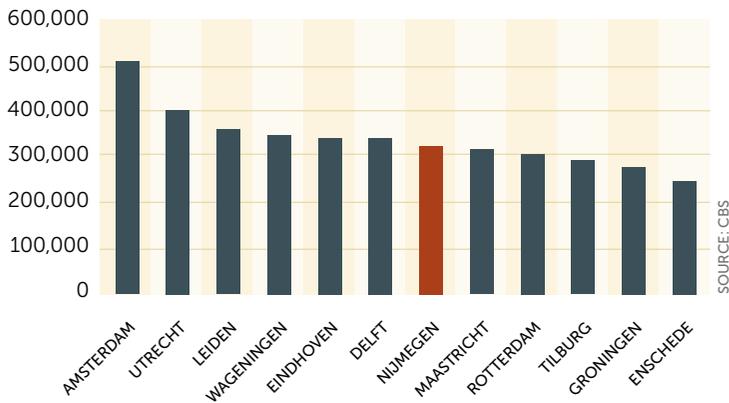
Even more hopeless are people who can get no or too little mortgage. For example because they are single or a freelancer, or because – like three out of five researchers at Dutch universities – they have a temporary contract. They are often reduced to searching on the private rental market, since they earn too much to qualify for social housing.

But in the private sector, offerings are limited and rents are high. Only one seventh of all housing units in Nijmegen falls within this category. According to Professor of Planning and Property Development Erwin van der Krabben, this is due to the fact that this ‘middle rental segment’ is not subsidised by the government, unlike people in social housing and home owners. “Both groups receive approximately €15 billion in subsidies per year, the latter via the home mortgage interest deduction.”

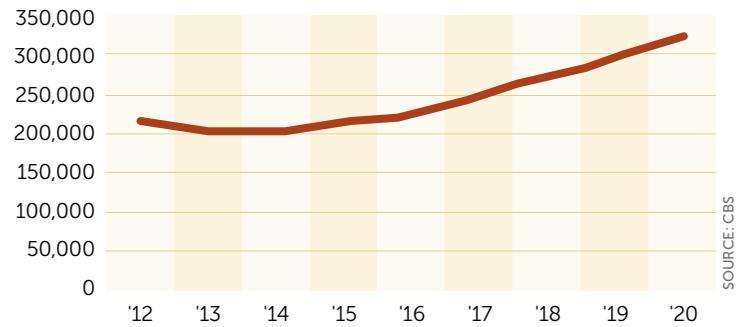
The result: in one ad on the Pararius rental site, someone is asking over €1000 rent for a two-room apartment of 50m² in Bottendaal. Maximum rental period: six months. And in cities like Utrecht, prospective tenants can now even outbid each other. This makes it even harder to save money: the divide between rich and poor is increasingly becoming a divide between tenants and home owners.

Ultimately, it is students and other young people who end up paying the price. People in cheap rental houses prefer to stay put, even if their income increases over time. University graduates are less likely to move on, and are

Average sales price 2020



Average sales price in the Nijmegen region



forced to remain in their student rooms. And this while the demand for student accommodation remains as high as ever, especially now that international students are once again finding their way to Nijmegen post COVID-19. There is no way SSH& can build enough housing units to meet this growing demand.

Saviours sometimes turn out to be Trojan horses

But wait a minute. Aren't we building lots of new houses, in the Waalsprong and the Waalfrent? Will the construction companies save the day? Yes and no. Between 2019 and 2024, Nijmegen will need to build nearly 10,000 additional housing units, according to the Housing Market Monitor. Half of these are supposed to be social housing units and houses for purchase for up to €310,000. But construction is running behind schedule – especially for cheaper houses worth up to €200,000.

“We’re building too slowly, and in the wrong way,” says Van der Krabben. With the rising house prices, construction companies are not always motivated to build quickly, he says, especially if they already own the site. The longer they wait, the more money they can ask for the houses they still have to build. “On the Metterswane location, across the street from the station, a new apartment building should have been completed a long time ago.” What’s more, project developers prefer to build expensive single-family units rather than the cheaper apartments and single-storey houses needed by starters and seniors. And as long as older people remain in their sometimes rather large houses, turnover on the housing market is slow.

The Dutch government also behaves more like a Trojan horse than a saviour swooping in to solve its citizens’ problems, explains econo-

‘HOUSES SHOULDN’T BE SPECULATION OBJECTS’

mist Wigger. Government measures only drive house prices up further. For example, after the credit crunch, the government lowered the property transfer tax from 6% to 2%. This is the percentage of the purchasing price you have to pay in tax when you buy a house. “It means that buyers now have lower costs, and they use this money to put in higher bids.” This is especially true for starters, who currently don’t pay any property transfer tax at all.

Young people can also afford to bid more thanks to the ‘jubelton’, a tax-free gift of €100,000 that parents can give their children. “For a large group of older people, this isn’t a problem. They have money left over when they relocate to a smaller house. And those who choose not to move can always raise their own mortgage based on the surplus value of their home.”

A deus ex machina to the rescue – or not

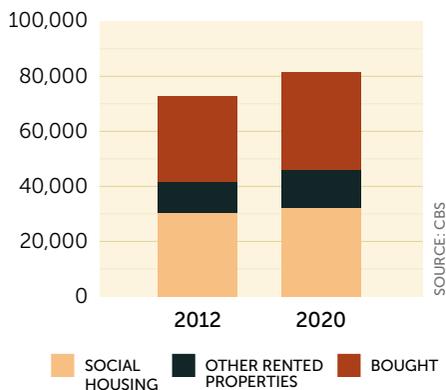
There is one thing that all experts agree on. A lot more regulation is needed to bring calm to the overheated market. If the government does its job well, it could still act as a deus ex machina and provide the necessary solution, just as in a

classical play. This could already happen at municipal level, says estate agent Van der Horst. “Increase the municipal starters’ loan [currently €225,000, eds.] for people who have trouble getting a mortgage.” She is also very much in favour of the Nijmegen plan for a purchase protection measure (‘zelfbewoningsplicht’, making it mandatory for house owners to live in the house themselves), to discourage investors. Wigger agrees with her fully. “Houses shouldn’t be speculation objects, but simply places where people live.”

Professor of Planning Van der Krabben disagrees. “We may regard investors as semi-criminals, but they do fulfil a need. They take one house and turn it into multiple housing units, thus increasing the total housing supply.” He is, however, in favour of housing corporations also being allowed to build housing units with higher rental prices, and the government finally introducing some form of regulation for rental units in the private sector – similar to the points system used in the social sector. The latter is something Wigger fully agrees with. She even goes one step further: this kind of system should also be used to regulate prices on the buyers’ market.



Nijmegen housing stock



The price of a house should be based on objective features such as living area and facilities, and not be driven by what someone is willing to ask or pay. “And levy a tax on the rental income of private lessors,” she adds, “instead of having housing corporations pay a lessor levy as they do now.”

We should also as quickly as possible dismantle financial incentives like the ‘jubelton’ and the home mortgage interest deduction, says Wigger. And while we’re at it, also levy a tax on the surplus value of selling a house, adds estate agent Van der Horst. “After all, this is money people didn’t have to lift a finger for.”

But even without measures like these, the market will ultimately calm down, says De Vries. “It’s a natural cycle. To starters, I want to say: don’t give up, in two years’ time, things will be better.” Rising interest rates and an economic downturn will make people more cautious when buying a house. The first signs of an approaching shift are already apparent. The mortgage interest rate is slowly rising and the Chinese economy is weakening, partially due to the problems of property giant Evergrande. Already house prices in Amsterdam have risen more slowly in the last few quarters than prices elsewhere in the country, says De Vries.

Are we on the eve of a new housing market collapse, like the one we saw during the credit crunch? It isn’t inconceivable, according to Wigger. “After Denmark, the Netherlands is already the country with the highest percentage of debt.” House owners who are forced to sell their homes – because they get divorced or lose their job – will be left with residual debts of sometimes tens of thousands of euros, while having to find a new place to live. And the Greek tragedy will start all over again with Act 1. ★



THE FIRST
SIGNS OF AN
APPROACHING
SHIFT ARE
ALREADY
APPARENT



Het Vaticaan

Some student houses have a nickname.
What’s the origin?

Since 2015, the Emmanuel Community, a charismatic movement within the Catholic Church, has rented this house on the Van den Havestraat to students. A group of earlier inhabitants christened the house ‘Het Vaticaan’ [The Vatican]. Why? The current inhabitants, Robert, Samuel and Jakob, have no idea. But the fact that all the house inhabitants are religious probably played a role. “When we eat together in the evening, we always pray before the meal,” explains Jakob.

Het Vaticaan could certainly do with better marketing. The name doesn’t appear anywhere on the outside of the house, and the only reference to the world’s smallest independent state is a sign on the kitchen wall. “Maybe we should have a sign or a flag outside with a reference to the Vatican,” says Jakob.

So what do people do at Het Vaticaan, apart from making the occasional sign of the cross? They eat, apparently. Pasta à la Michael, named after one of the inhabitants, is a classic. “We used to joke that the portions Michael made were too small, so one day, he cooked two-and-a-half kilos of pasta.”

In addition to praying and eating, inhabitants of Het Vaticaan enjoy playing video games. “We sometimes organise a FIFA tournament,” says Jakob. “We play for a beer trophy that we then display on top of the cupboard. Our house may not be as prestigious as the real Vatican, but it’s at least as much fun.”

TEXT: MAARTEN NEUBAUER



FROM CAMPING SITE TO MONASTERY

For seven weeks, Riis Kaak lived in a trailer tent on a camping site in Groesbeek. The student from Delft was unable to find a room. He has now exchanged his flip-flops for warm slippers and is living (temporarily) on SSH& complex Westerhelling.

Text: Vincent Decates / Photo: David van Haren



Riis Kaak in his new kitchen



“ I’m leading a kind of nomadic life,” says Riis Kaak (22), a smile spreading across his face. “First on a camping site, now temporarily in a small apartment. But I also have to vacate this place in February, so I still need to find somewhere for the last few months.”

Kaak studies Biomedical Engineering in Delft and this year he’s following an internship at the Orthopaedics department of Radboudumc. Last summer, like many others, he was desperately looking for a room. He didn’t find one, however, and since the daily commute from his parents’ home in Nieuw-Vennep (North Holland) was not doable, he fell back on his parents’ trailer tent. The tent was moved in early September to camping site De But in the Groesbeek woods. From there, the student made his way every morning to Radboudumc.

Having seen a video about Kaak’s predicament on the Vox website, a student contacted him. She was living in SSH& complex Westerhelling on the Sophiaweg. “She wanted to move back in with her parents for a while and was looking to sub-let her studio,” says Kaak. “She explained that it was fully furnished and that I could stay until February. It was ideal, especially since at the time the camping site was already starting to shut down for the winter. I had one week left to pack my things and find something else.”

And so, after seven weeks of sleeping in the woods, Kaak finally has a room. A luxury studio, in fact: 35m² with a private kitchen and bathroom in a former monastery. He has now exchanged the flip-flops he wore on the camping site for warm slippers. And when he cooks pasta, he can now drain it in the kitchen sink rather than in

‘IT FELT A BIT LIKE A HOLIDAY’

the bushes. Getting water from an outdoor tap or walking to the toilet buildings for a shower are now also a thing of the past.

And yet, he looks back on his time living outdoors with a good feeling. “It was really good for my peace of mind. It felt a bit like a holiday. And the owner of the camping site was very kind and considerate, which was nice.”

But Kaak is mostly relieved to sleep under a real roof, rather than canvas. “The nicest thing is that my stuff isn’t always damp and wet. And that I don’t have to cycle all the way to Groesbeek every day. Especially in the dark, it was no fun; there are no lights on that road.”

Kaak feels completely at home in his temporary abode. “The previous inhabitant had cats and fish. The cats she took with her,” he explains, pointing to the big scratching post in the middle of the room. “The aquarium had to stay, so I now feed the fish every second day.”

What are his plans beyond February? He’s looking for a new place already. “I’m definitely not going back to the camping site.” *

**'IN SUMMER, WE'RE ONLY
A MINUTE AWAY FROM
THE WAAL BEACH'**





Alissa Zennipman, 24 years old, Physiotherapy student

MY HOME

"I moved to Veur-Lent two weeks before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant I couldn't throw myself into real student life straight away. But I didn't find this to be a problem.

I don't think many students had the opportunity to work or study from home with so little background noise and such a gorgeous view.

Now, eighteen months later, things are very different. I have a really great time with my housemates. Especially in summer, it's fantastic here. We barbecue nearly every day in our back garden. When the sun shines, we're only a minute away from

the Waal beach. And if you feel like a cold beer, you don't have to drag a cool box around - you just go inside and get one. There aren't many students in this area.

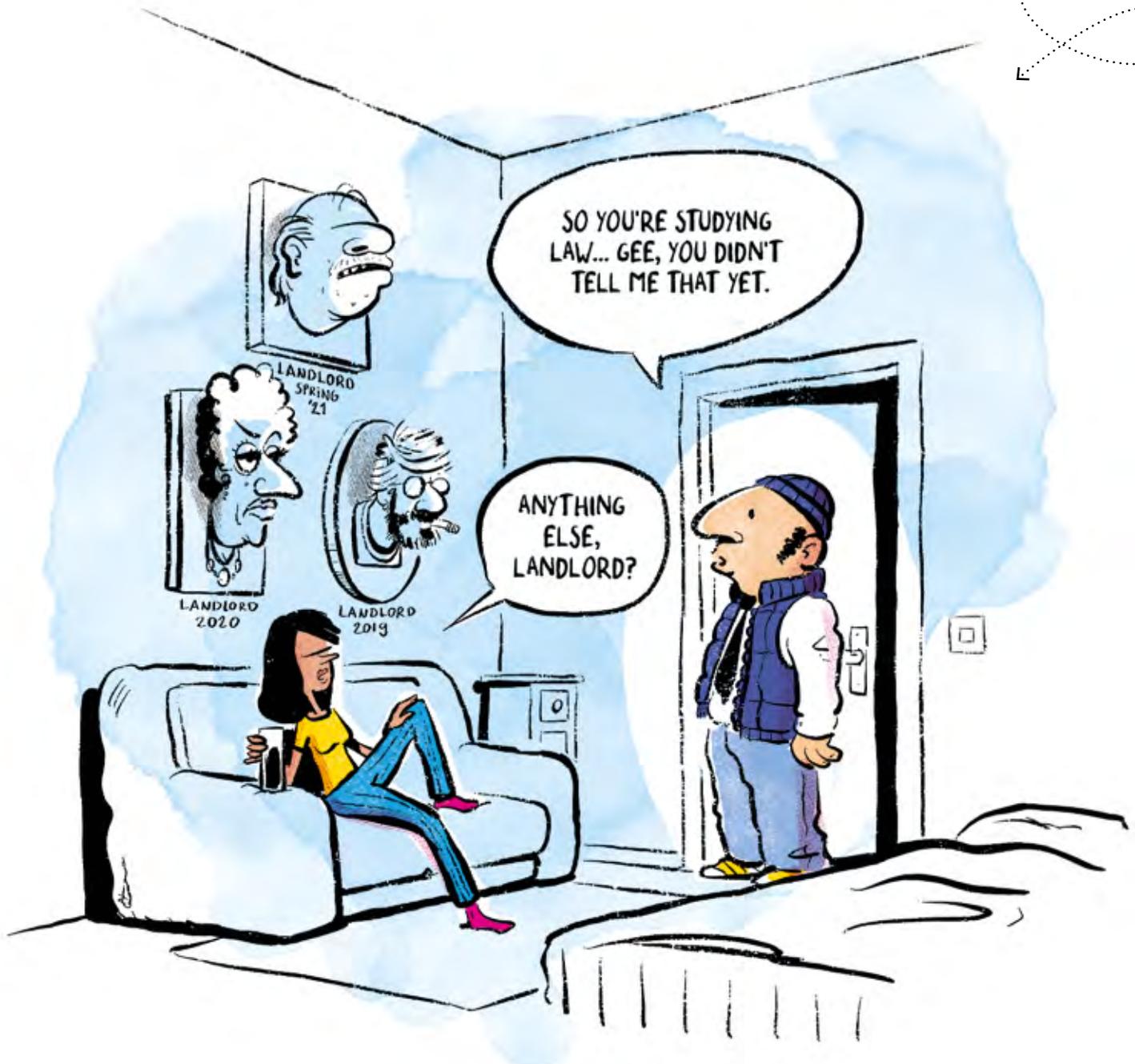
Our neighbour is our landlord. Some people would probably not want that, but our landlord is great! This winter, when the water of the Waal nearly reached our back garden and we had to clear out the garden, he even came around with some hot chocolate for us. This sense of conviviality inside and outside our house, the Waal beach, and our huge garden are all reasons I'm planning to stay put for now."

Text: Marieke Smid / **Photography:** Duncan de Fey

HOW DO I SURVIVE

As a student you're often happy to have a room at all, so you may well forget that as a tenant you also have quite a few rights. Vox submitted eight dubious situations to Irene van Setten, Director of Huurteams Nijmegen, with the question: Is this allowed?

Text: Joep Dorna en Jan Scholten / Illustrations: Roel Venderbosch



MY LANDLORD?

A landlord who does not accept law students because they supposedly look too closely at the small print on the rental contract. It happens. Can you be turned down because of your choice of study?

for turning someone down, and most of them don't. That makes it difficult to prove that discrimination is involved. But a landlord saying that they don't want law students to visit a room, that's clearly not allowed."

"Of course not; it's pure discrimination. But a landlord doesn't have to give a reason

There he is, suddenly, standing in the middle of your room. Your landlord wants to check that you haven't hung any strange things on the wall. In the meantime, you're desperately searching for a pair of trousers to put on.

"This is known as unlawful entry. A landlord is not allowed to simply walk into your room, which is your private domain. If you've repeatedly asked your landlord to leave and he refuses, you can even call the police.

Communal areas are a different story. Not that landlords are allowed to simply walk into these areas, but legally, there isn't much you can do about it."

The corridor in your house was recently repainted, which was long overdue. Now the landlord is trying to get you to pay for those nice white walls.

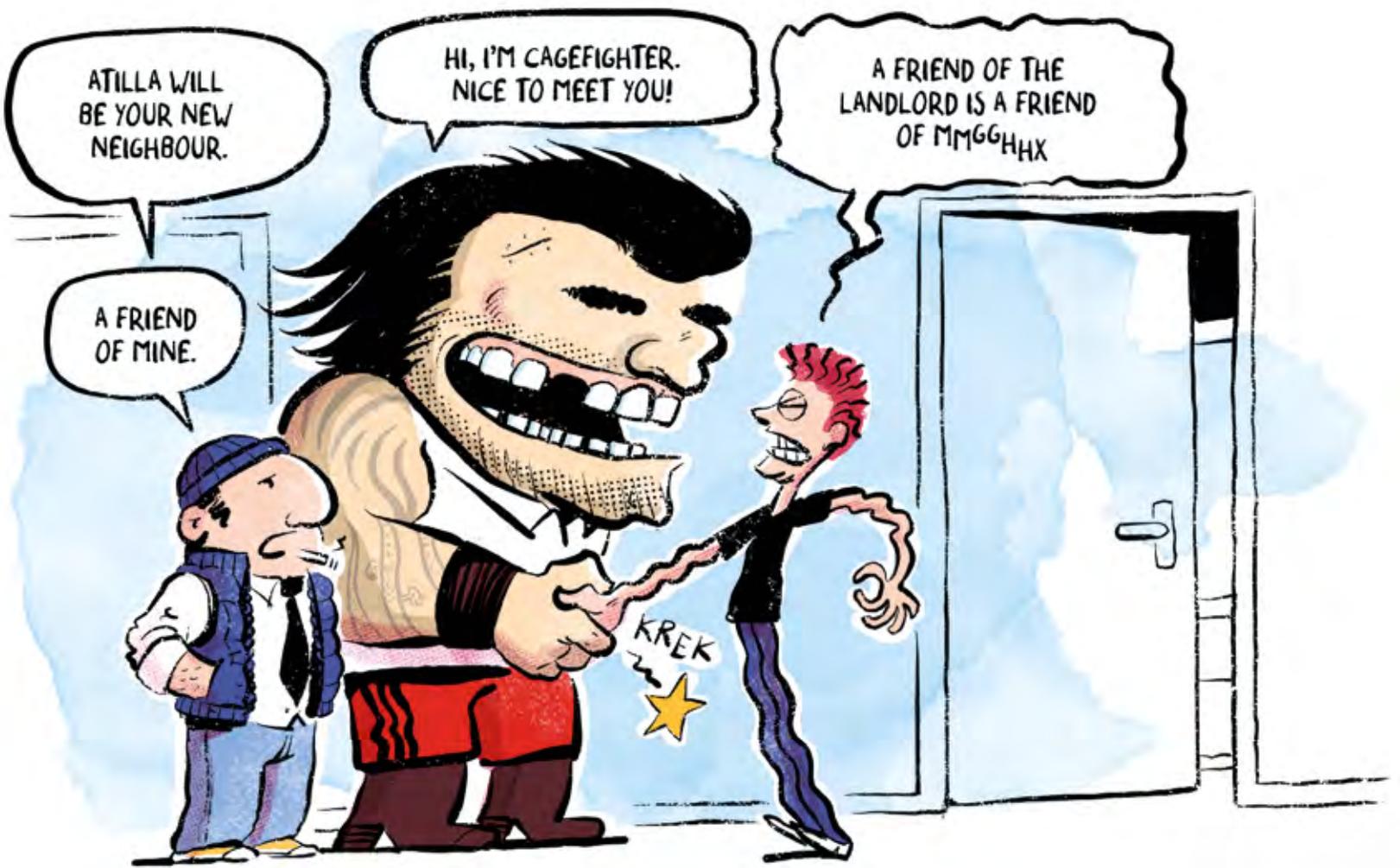
"In principle, that's not allowed, but it depends on what you agreed concerning service costs. As a rule, tenants are responsible for the maintenance of communal areas. But a landlord would probably prefer to hire a professional decorating company than hand six students a paint brush. So if your landlord renovates the kitchen, he or she is allowed to claim back these expenses by raising the rent. However, this kind of rental increase is only possible with your permission."

Having dreamt of that bigger room with a balcony for years, your turn has finally come to relocate within the house. You're a bit shocked when you find out how much rent you'll have to pay, though: apparently, the landlord raised the rent just as you were planning to move.

house. Clearly, landlords are not allowed to exceed the maximum rental price, which is based on the point system of the Huurcommissie (Rent Assessment Committee). If you think you're paying too much for your room, you can run a rental check on their website. You'll know immediately where you stand."

"If a room gets a new tenant, the landlord is allowed to raise the rent. This also applies to relocations within a

BACKGROUND



In the corridor you unexpectedly run into a new housemate. He says he's a friend of the landlord, but none of you were told that a new tenant was coming. Can the landlord rent out a room without informing you first?

"A landlord is allowed to rent a room to whoever he wants. After all,

no one can force a landlord to only rent out to students. The only exception is the right of cooptation – an agreement in the rental contract that states that you're entitled to put forward a new tenant when you leave. It's customary for the resident tenants to look for a new tenant by organising a moment where prospective tenants can introduce themselves."

"It is indeed money easily earned, and it's unlawful too. This is equally true if the fee is referred to as start-up costs, administration costs, or any other name. When you buy something in a shop, you don't pay for the receipt, do you? If a company really incurs expenses for drafting a contract, these expenses are for the company. Financially speaking, the best thing you can do is sign and later, if you have an open-ended contract, simply deduct these costs from the rent. But this is, of course, not the best way to build a good relationship with your new landlord."

Before you can sign your new rental contract, you're asked to pay € 40 for the drafting of the contract. What?!? € 40 to print out a couple of A4s? That's money easily earned.

You and your friend have found an amazing apartment, but you have to move in as early as next month. This means you'll have to pay double rent, since your current rental contract includes a two-month notice period.

"The notice period of a rental contract is always equal to the rental term. A two-month notice period is therefore only possible if you pay your rent every two months, something that never happens. You can safely assume that if you pay your rent on a monthly basis,

you only have a one-month notice. In such cases, the law takes precedence over the rental contract."

"This is only allowed if you signed a campus contract, and even then, it's not self-evident. Student housing association SSH&, for example, uses campus contracts. A landlord can ask you once a year to prove that you're still a student, and you have three months to provide evidence of this. So it's not the case that one day after picking up your diploma, you'll end up on the street, but graduation is definitely a good time to start looking for a new place."

At long last you've graduated. You get a WhatsApp message from your landlord: 'Congratulations on your diploma! Oh, and by the way, I expect you to have cleared your room within two weeks.'

I HAVE A CONFLICT WITH MY LANDLORD

What to do if you have a conflict with your landlord? "You can always call or email us at Huurteams Nijmegen for free legal advice, also if you're not sure about something," says Irene van Setten. "We can look into your situation, and offer advice. What you do with our advice is up to you. You could, for example, talk to your landlord yourself, but this very much depends on how good your relationship is with him or her. Sometimes, a conflict has escalated to the extent that a normal conversation is no longer possible. In such cases, we can put our findings in a letter and invite the landlord in for a chat. If our invitation is ignored, we can help you initiate a procedure with the Huurcommissie."

See also huurteamsnijmegen.nl





LONG STAY AT HOTEL OF MUM AND DAD

Students are taking longer and longer to move out, and starter homes are nearly impossible to find. This means it takes longer for parents to get the house back to themselves. A chat with Anja Leerink and Hans Stapel, who share their house in Nijmegen-Oost with their two adult sons. 'I use the family WhatsApp group to ask who plans to be at home that evening.'

Text: Annemarie Haverkamp / Photography: Bert Beelen

Situation sketch: Anja Leerink and Hans Stapel, both in their 50s, live in a modest terraced house in Nijmegen-Oost. They have no pets (the cat died years ago), but they do have two adult sons. The eldest, Job, aged 22, lived on his own for three years, but suddenly came back home last summer following a conflict with his landlord. The youngest, Abe, aged 20, still studies at Radboud University. From home to lecture hall is a mere 7-minute bicycle ride. He wants to move out, but only if this means an upgrade. And so far, Hotel of Mum and Dad is very comfortable indeed.

Does everyone have a room of their own?

Anja: "Kind of ... Job's room was still his, even though he'd been living for the past three years in Bottendaal. But then the pandemic hit. I could still go to work every day at my speech-therapy practice, but Hans, who normally works at the COOP headquarters, turned Job's room into his home office. Which was a bit of a problem when Job suddenly came back home to live this summer."

How did you solve it?

Hans: "Our son is a night owl. He works in a café, comes home late, and sleeps in. I start my working day at the kitchen table. Once Job wakes up, he comes down, and we switch places. It works out all right."

Did you make any agreements about how you wanted to reorganise your renewed cohabitation as a family?

Anja: "No."

Hans: "Job needed a place to stay, and of course he was welcome."

Anja: "Plus it was the summer holidays, so we went away pretty soon afterwards, and the boys had the house to themselves. It was quite a smooth transition."

Hans: "After that holiday, we did have a moment when we said: 'We need to make some agreements.' For example about the laundry."

What about the laundry?

Anja: "We came back from our holiday to find four enormous piles of laundry in front of the washing machine. I don't want the boys to just throw their laundry there, and then suddenly go: 'Hey, look at that, it's back nice and clean in the cupboard!'. So now we communicate about it on the family WhatsApp group: 'There's a load of laundry in the washing machine.' Or: 'Who can hang up the washing?' It works fine; they do help out."

Do the four of you sit down and eat together every night?

Hans: "Hardly ever. I'm the one who does all the cooking and shopping. The boys are lucky in that respect; I enjoy anything to do with food. On the family WhatsApp group I ask who plans to eat at home that evening, and who needs a plate of food for later. Usually, Anja and I end up eating together; the boys are away a lot."

As parents, did you have to adjust to having two adult children in the house?

Anja: "I find it surprisingly easy. But it's true that I'm



'WE HAD JUST GOT RID OF OUR BIG CORNER SOFA AND REPLACED IT WITH A TWO-PERSON SOFA'

away from home for entire days." Hans: "It's not too bad. Anja and I eat together, and we often spend the evening alone because Job and Abe are at work or out. But when the boys are home, they certainly make their presence felt. They spend a lot of time on social media, so there's always some video or other playing on their phones. Sometimes you can hear different music playing at the same time in the house. I do sometimes say something about it. 'Boys, earphones!' I sometimes have to remind them about it."

Anja: "When Job came back home, we had just got rid of our big corner sofa and replaced it with a two-person sofa."

Hans: "We thought we wouldn't need the corner sofa anymore. You could comfortably lie on it with two

people. Now I sometimes feel like crashing on the sofa, but it's already occupied. Oh, well..."

Is there anything that irritates you?

Anja and Hans exchange a questioning look.

Hans: "Not really. All four of us are pretty tolerant people. And as parents, we're quite easy on them."

Anja: "They're also quite easy on us."

Do you help the boys look for a place?

Hans: "I knew someone who used to own a few houses in the city, so I called him, but it turned out that he'd sold those properties a few years ago. Whenever I can, I do let people know that our children are looking for a house."

Anja: "Job was sharing a house with two friends. Ideally, they'd like to live together again, but it's really difficult. There is simply nothing available. Because Job has had a job for a few years now, he'd rather not rent a room in a student house. He'd prefer a studio with a private bathroom. Abe doesn't mind living in a student house, but he's quite picky."

Hans (laughs): "He's too comfortable here."

Anja: "Abe did go to a few viewings. If he'd been chosen, he'd have moved out."

Is it a problem that they still live at home?

Anja: "Yes. They're missing out on something very valuable by living with their parents. It's something Hans and I often say to each other."

Hans: "We'd like our boys to have what we used to have: the pleasure of living with other students, the freedom!"

Anja: "The fun! Oh, I laughed so much with my housemates. I was studying speech-therapy at the HAN University of Applied Sciences. There were eight of us sharing a house on the Pater Brugmanstraat and ..."

Hans: "... I get really wistful when I think about my student house. It was on the Weurtseweg. In 1986, I was studying Communication Sciences at Radboud University. The house was demolished some time ago; they're planning to build apartment blocks on the site."

Anja: "You learn so much by living on your own. Cooking, planning the washing. But also how to be financially independent and tolerant towards housemates that you didn't choose."

Hans: "It's an opportunity for growth."

How do you see the future?

Hans: "I'm hoping this is a temporary situation. That the boys won't still be living with us in three years' time. The city of Nijmegen needs to build more houses."

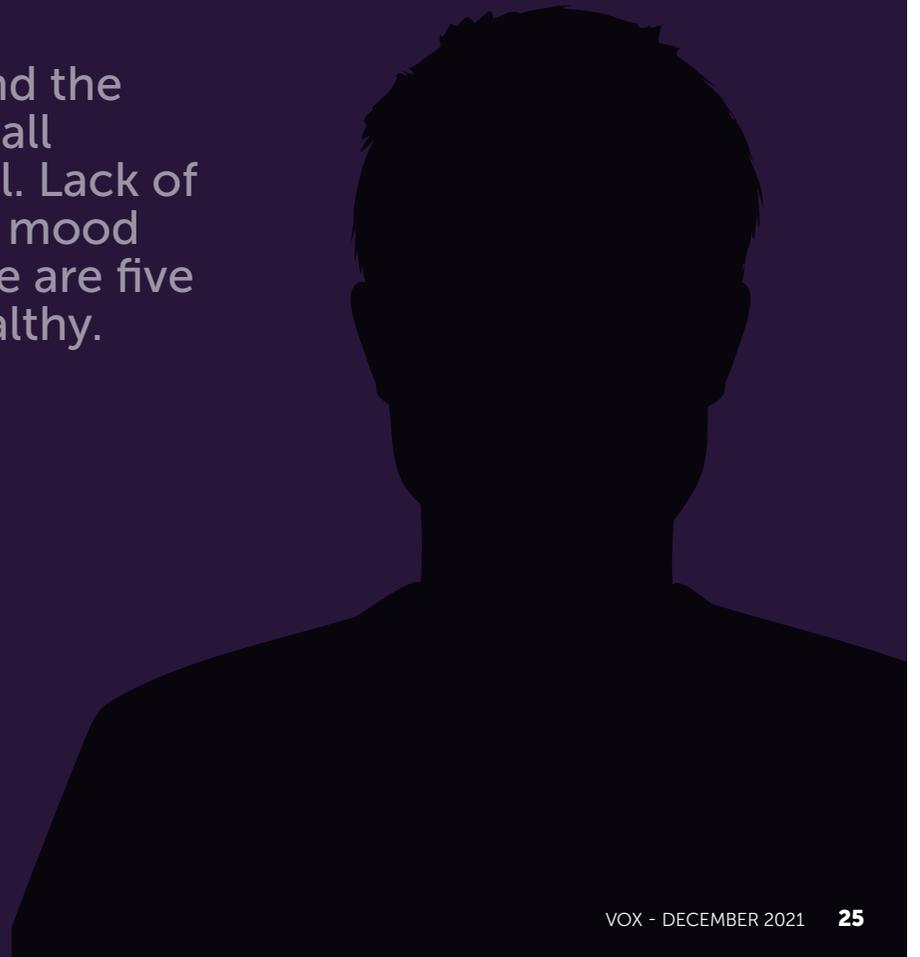
Anja: "I think the housing problem is far greater than people realise. Abe is registered at SSH&, but Job isn't registered anywhere. He's an invisible house hunter." ★

DON'T LET THE DARK GET TO YOU



Winter days are short and the pandemic is keeping us all indoors more than usual. Lack of daylight can affect your mood and productivity, so here are five tips to help you stay healthy.

Text: Stan van Pelt





1 Create a regular day and night rhythm

"I know that it's a very unpopular message as it sounds so boring," says Gerard Kerkhof. "But it really helps to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day." Because, explains the Amsterdam Professor Emeritus in Psychophysiology who specialises in sleep and wake cycles: people with a regular day and night rhythm perform better during the day. This is especially true if you're a night owl, if you have trouble getting out of bed in the morning, or if you tend to suffer from the winter blues.

This is confirmed by epidemiological research. People whose sleep-wake cycle is chronically disturbed are more at risk of developing depression and psychosis. They can even die younger because of heart problems, as concluded among others by a team of Maastricht researchers in April of this year. And a 2019 overview study in the *Trends in Cancer* journal showed that people who work nightshifts are more at risk of contracting hormone-related forms of cancer.



3 Buy bright lamps or a wake-up light

A CBS study revealed that 20% of Dutch people suffer from sleep problems. The fact that so many of us have a distorted day and night rhythm is partially due to the lack of natural light, says Kerkhof. During the day, we spend most of our time indoors, where it is often darker than outside, while our evenings are often too light due to artificial light from street lights and buildings. 99% of the European population suffers from light pollution, as apparent from a 2016 study in *Science Advances*. "Too little contrast between the light and dark moments of the day

is often associated with a weak day and night rhythm," says Kerkhof. "In other words: it disrupts our biological clock." This is how it works: our eyes contain special sensory cells that are sensitive to the amount of blue light – precisely the shade of blue that occurs most in daylight. The more blue light, the stronger the signal to what is known as the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) in the middle of our brain. The SCN is in turn connected to the pineal gland, which produces melatonin. Melatonin acts as a kind of pacemaker for various processes in our body that have a day and



2 Don't stay up all night to study for an exam

Staying up all night to study may seem perfectly normal to some students, but it's certainly not good for your performance, argues Kerkhof. "You wake up feeling hung-over and probably dissatisfied with what you actually learned during the night. Your body needs the night to recover, not to be active." It is better to go to bed on time and get up an hour earlier the next day. Preferably when it's already light outside – if this isn't possible, you can always use a daylight lamp. Or drink some strong coffee; it works best in the morning.





4 Be careful with melatonin (and sleeping pills)

Is it a good idea to take a few melatonin pills before going to bed? After all, melatonin makes you sleepy – the melatonin level in our blood rises sharply between 9 p.m. and midnight.

Scientists have not yet reached a consensus on the matter. Some studies show positive effects: it seems that melatonin can help people to fall asleep ten to twenty minutes earlier, and stay asleep a little longer. However, other studies show no beneficial and, in some cases, even adverse effects. Furthermore, melatonin can have side

effects, for example in combination with other medicines. This is why the American College of Physicians doesn't recommend these supplements for people with a sleep disorder – cognitive therapy is more effective. Kerkhof: "Melatonin pills probably only work well if you know very precisely your own melatonin levels, which vary from person to person. To determine these levels you need a medical laboratory setting, for example in a hospital." Sleeping pills also offer no solution, since they can lead to habituation, or even addiction.



5 Winter blues? Move to the tropics

The closer people live to the tropics, the less they suffer from winter depression, as researchers discovered as early as the 1980s. The link to sunlight is quickly made. In the Ecuadorian capital of Quito – located nearly on the Equator – on 21 December, the day lasts 12 hours and 8 minutes. By contrast, the shortest day of the year in Nijmegen only offers 7 hours and 46 minutes of daylight – less

than two thirds of that time. In other words, that sunny Christmas break on the Canary Islands may not be such a bad idea, after all; no daylight lamp can compete with that. And if that's not an option: St. John's wort can help alleviate winter depression – although you should be careful: it can affect the effectiveness of other medicines.



Het Melkhuis

Some student houses have a nickname. What's the origin?

On the Groesbeekseweg you can find Het Melkhuis [The Milk House], the house of fraternity The Gong. Inhabitants Dirk, Max and Sjoerd explain the origin of the name: "It refers to a nearly hundred-year-old tradition. In 1927, fraternity The Gong was established by members of De Heemvaart, which in turn arose out of the temperance movement that was popular in the early 20th century and whose adherents refrained from drinking alcohol for religious reasons. The fraternity founders were opposed to alcohol consumption among students. Later on, people joined the fraternity who did drink alcohol, so at parties, a glass of milk was drunk as a statement. In the 1980s, our fraternity acquired this house, and named it after this movement."

The milk-drinking tradition has lost much of its power these days, the students say. Sjoerd: "I bought milk for the fraternity night last year, but no one drank it."

The name doesn't appear on the facade. But the house slogan, *Vae Soli*, meaning 'Woe to the lonely', is written on the staircase. This slogan is intended to remind the inhabitants that people can sometimes feel lonely and that in a society, we have to care for one another. "Het Melkhuis is a place for living. Our house is a bit of a mess, but the atmosphere is very lively."

TEXT: MAARTEN NEUBAUER

PORTRAIT



Max Receveur, 29 years old, Philosophy student

MY HOME

"What makes this place unique is the stunning nature. When I look out of the window, I only see greenery. At night I can hear owls calling. The confrontation with the elements, in the form of rain or frost, sometimes makes living here challenging, but it also teaches you to be creative.

The locations where we live are always temporary: we move our wagons from place to place. We first lived in Lent near the Griftdijk, although I feel much more at home here in Dukenburg. And there's a lot more going on: almost every day,

people walking their dogs stop by for a chat, or the teachers from the school across from us come and pay us a visit. No day is boring.

The travelling aspect, combined with the feeling of being at home, that's what makes me feel really comfortable here living among the Stadsnomaden. Our animals also make my life here complete. We have three cats, two dogs, and some twenty chickens. Internet and a smartphone are things that I consciously choose not to have. I'd rather sit in the sun with a cup of coffee and a good book and think about life."

Text: Marieke Smid / **Photography:** Duncan de Fey

'I REALLY FEEL AT HOME WITH THE STADSNOMADEN'

STUDENTS DON'T WANT TO MOVE TO DUKENBURG (YET)

In Bottendaal and Nijmegen-Oost, student houses dominate the street scene. This may be great for students, but what about older couples, or families with young children? The call to spread students more evenly across the city has been sounding for years. But how can we make it happen?

Text: Mathijs Noij / Photography: David van Haren



NEERBOSCH-OOST



Neerbosch-Oost is a collection of typical 1960s houses, flats topped with satellite dishes, grass areas for dogs, and garages. Sandwiched between the Maas-Waal Canal and a number of busy traffic roads, with only one access road, the Nijmegen city centre feels a world away. Peering between the trees, you can glimpse the towers of the NXP chip manufacturer on the Winkelsteeg business park.

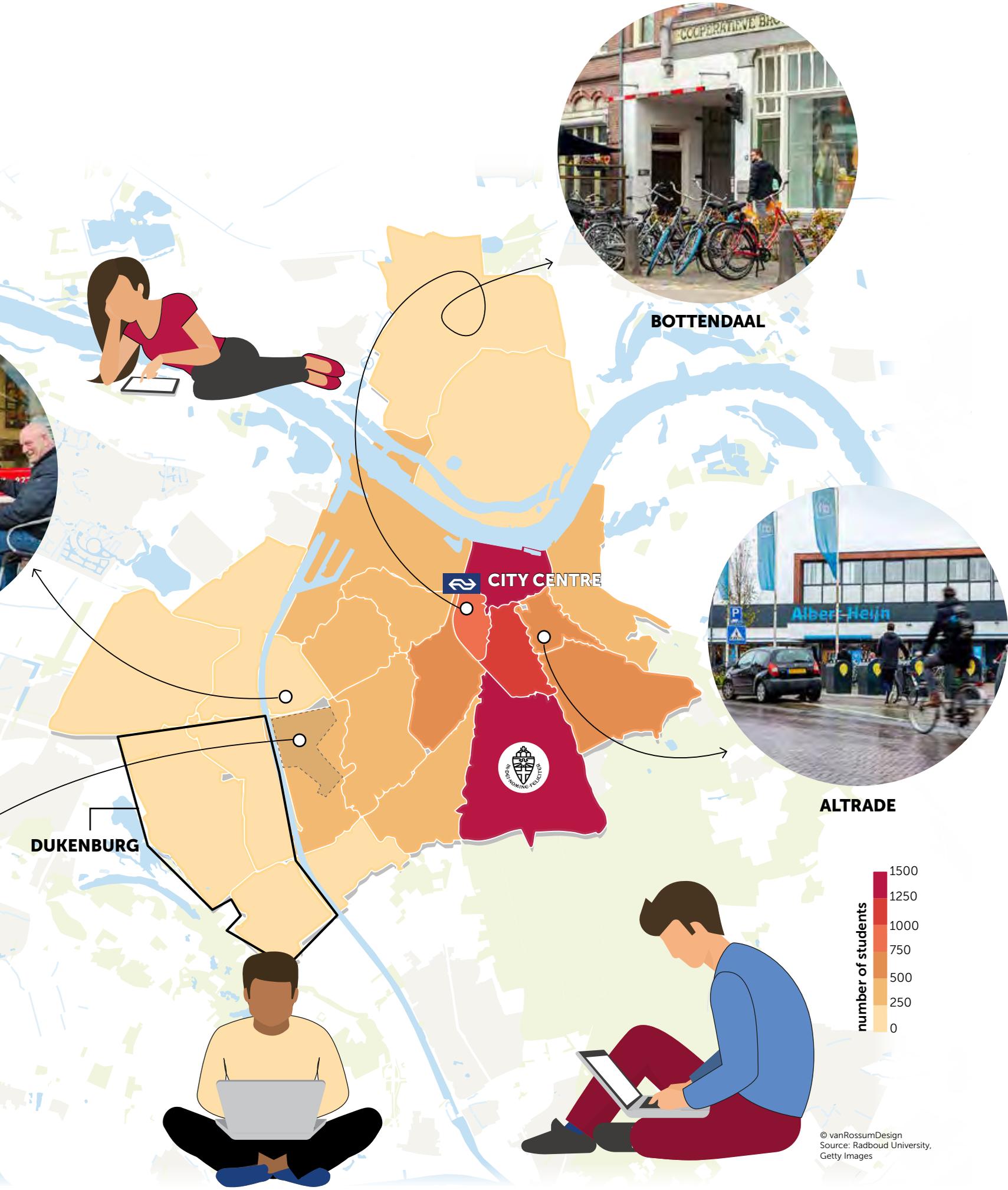
Stories about drug use, trouble-making youths, and a 'white exodus' colour the image of Neerbosch-Oost. The latter refers to the daily stream of cycling parents who apparently prefer to enrol their child in a school outside the neighbourhood.

As a rule, few students live here, the exception being Daniel Schömann's (22) house in the Triangelstraat: an ordinary Dutch family home, which he shares with three international housemates and their cat. Daniel himself is from Cologne.

"I'm aware of the neighbourhood's reputation," explains the Arts & Culture student at the communal kitchen table on the ground floor. "My housemates and I find it quite funny. One of them comes from Kansas City, where they have real no-go areas, places where you have to watch out for muggers at night. Here, the streets are always safe. Even children play outside after dark." Before settling in Neerbosch-Oost, Schömann had



WINKELSTEEG

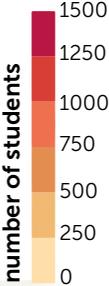


BOTTENDAAL

CITY CENTRE

ALTRADE

DUKENBURG



© vanRossumDesign
Source: Radboud University,
Getty Images

DANIEL SCHÖMANN

'I'M AWARE OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD'S REPUTATION'

already got to know quite a few places in Nijmegen and surroundings. In 2019, he embarked on his study programme without having found a room. Since he came from Cologne, close to the German-Dutch border, he was not given priority by student housing agency SSH&. He ended up staying for a week on camping site De But in the Groesbeek woods. This was followed by two bungalows, an Airbnb in Nijmegen-Noord, and finally an expensive room of barely 7 m² on the Wolfskuilseweg. Until he heard from a fellow student that someone was looking for housemates for a purchased house in Neerbosch-Oost.

An important perk of his current accommodation is the contact with his housemates. If he has any questions and remarks, Schömann can always contact his landlord – a friend of his Kansas housemate. It is quite a change from the situation on the Wolfskuilseweg. “That landlord just wanted to make as much money as possible.”

Swapfietsen

It is no mystery where Nijmegen students want to live. You need look no further than the countless Swapfietsen parked in the front gardens to conclude that neighbourhoods like Bottendaal and Nijmegen-Oost are popular among Nijmegen students. In preparation for this article, Vox consulted the post code data of Nijmegen-based Radboud students, which only reinforced this conclusion (see map).

Much has been said and written in past years about this student concentration, not least by residents' platform Kamerbreed, which has been criticising municipal policy since it was first founded, in 2013. According to platform members, having too many student houses too close together affects quality of life for other residents. In some neighbourhoods, residents have been complaining for years about parties and other nuisance.

In past years, the issue was also increasingly raised in the municipal council. In 2018, Nijmegen introduced a permit scheme, which many landlords failed to obtain, leading to students being threatened with eviction. This culminated in a long legal battle involving lessors and the municipality, which was settled this year when the Council of State threw out the permit scheme. The municipality was only entitled to demand a permit for houses with a value below the National Mortgage Guarantee (€325,000 in 2021). The judge ruled that there was insufficient proof of a housing shortage in higher price categories to justify such a requirement.

The municipality quickly came up with



an alternative to prevent proliferation of new student houses. Since October, if you want to transform a family residence into separately rented rooms, you have to apply for an environmental permit. Unlike the permit system that the court rejected, this is embedded in what is known as the facet zoning plan, which makes it legitimate.

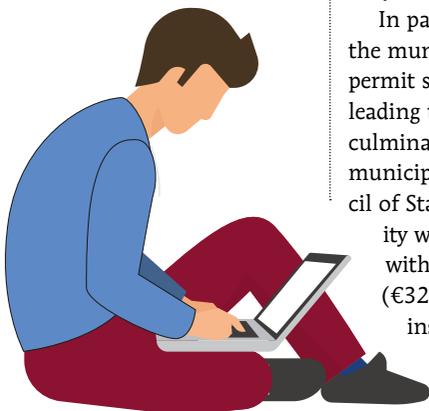
Room shortage

With this new permit system, the city administrators hope to protect quality of life in student districts. At the same time, Nijmegen still needs lots of extra rooms. Room shortage is already forcing students to fall back on hotels and camping sites, as Daniel Schömann did when he first arrived in Nijmegen. Others simply give up on the idea of moving out.

This is why, in early 2021, the municipality expressed the intention of creating an additional two thousand rooms. Half of these are to come from student housing agency SSH&, the other half from the private market.

But these figures are already outdated, says Marco Schoofs, Manager in Strategy and Housing at SSH&. In October, the Kences knowledge centre released alarming new figures forecasting a growing room shortage. Across the Netherlands, Kences estimates that there is currently a shortage of 26,500 rooms. It is expected that the number of students in the Netherlands living away from home will increase to 57,000 in the coming 8 years. The current construction plans are in no way sufficient to meet this future demand. “This is why we want to do more,” says Schoofs, “and we’re working hard to find new locations, which also means expanding our search to a wider radius around the centre. We’re certainly not excluding neighbourhoods like Nijmegen-Noord and Dukenburg.”

The municipality would also like to see students move to other neighbourhoods so they are more evenly distrib-





Neerbosch-Oost

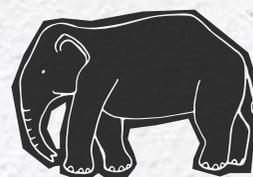
uted across the city. This means that new student houses should not all be located in the popular areas, says alderman Jan Wijnia from his office at the City Hall. However, the municipality is not enforcing this with a student house quota, as is the case in cities like Groningen and Amsterdam. “Our approach is to steer with policy regulations that lessors have to comply with to be granted a permit. For example, there should be enough bicycle parking space and other residents should not end up sandwiched between student houses.” The alderman hopes that these restrictions will ensure that student houses are more evenly spread across the city.

Wijnia is all in favour of a shared city, with different segments of the population mingling together, but he does not mention any areas where he would like to see a higher concentration of student houses. “We want to have a mix of population segments everywhere in the city. So we have to consider every single neighbourhood to see where we can house more students. We are in an ongoing dialogue with SSH& on this subject.” The private market is more difficult to steer, he points out.

Boat trips

To entice students to relocate to the outskirts of the city, these areas have to be made more attractive. And there is much that can be done in this area, says Rob Jaspers, social geographer and former city reporter for De Gelderlander. Especially the slightly outdated Dukenburg – across the Maas-Waal Canal – could use a boost, says Jaspers, who has been advocating for a re-evaluation of the area for years. He even suggested that the city organise boat trips on the canal, as it has been doing for years on the Waal. The goal: to highlight the area’s potential.

“A district like Dukenburg needs to have a story,” he says, as we cycle along the canal. “What does this area have to offer? Think of things like the Berendonck [a



Villa Olifant

Some student houses have a nickname. What’s the origin?

Villa Olifant (Villa Elephant) is the home base of the Olifant fraternity on the Straalmanstraat. Emiel is one of the nine students who live there. Their house dog is called Lulleaux. “The name ‘Olifant’ (elephant) comes from the horn of Knight Roland,” explains Emiel. “The poem *Chanson de Roland* tells the story of how Roland warned Charlemagne, who was retreating from a Spanish battlefield, that his rear-guard was under attack by blowing on his elephant horn. This cost Roland his life, because he blew so hard on his horn that his eardrums burst and his lungs were destroyed.”

Green letters on the window proclaim ‘Villa Olifant since 1965’, the year when the house was taken into use as a fraternity house. Above the door, you can see the horn of Roland. “There are small elephant figurines spread all over the house. And some walls sport images of elephants.”

What does the house stand for? “Conviviality is all important, and ‘less talking, more drinking,’” says Emiel. “We do a lot of things together, and we organise a weekly fraternity night.” During the ‘fleurtijd’, the period when the fraternity is recruiting new members, they always rent a big inflatable elephant.

TEXT: MAARTEN NEUBAUER



COLUMN

Lucy's law

Lucienne van der Geld is lecturer in Notarial Law and legal director of Network Notaries

Friends

How unfortunate that the housing crisis should erupt in all its fury precisely during the COVID-19 pandemic, thus putting even more pressure on students and remote workers. With no quick fix in sight, and the additional obstacle of a sluggish cabinet formation, some private individuals have decided to take matters into their own hands by opting for what the English call 'co-housing'. Buying or renting a house may be impossible on your own, but not if you join forces with others. At the moment, the most popular properties for such projects are vacant farms, followed by former schools. Although I'm not usually a fan of the anglicisation of the Dutch language, in this case, I find the English term very apt. Because 'co' means not only 'together', but also 'company'. And without some kind of legal form, there can be no co-housing. This applies both to the building – creating separate units – and to all financial and other agreements surrounding collective living. The latter is arranged through a kind of 'company', such as a cooperation or foundation. Which is where notarial law comes into the picture. The articles of association – i.e. the rules of the game – describe the regulations applying to the housemates, as well as how to deal with various situations. A good source of inspiration in this context is, of course, the 1990s TV series Friends. From the adventures of Ross, Rachel, Monica, Chandler, Joey and Phoebe, you can distil all sorts of situations that require clear agreements. Think of burgeoning love affairs between housemates, the search for new housemates, or the process of swapping housing units. To be honest, I only watched a few episodes of Friends back in the day, but I think I would look at it differently now, through my notary glasses. In preparation for the growing demand for legal support for co-housing projects, I've prescribed myself a few study hours on Netflix. In this way, I hope to make a small contribution towards resolving the housing crisis.



PHOTO: REIN WIJERINGA

Bottendaal



nature and recreation area, Eds.], the Triavium skating rink, or the climbing centre. Also, many people don't realise how green this area is."

The kilometres' long Maas-Waal Canal flows right through the heart of the city. "A greatly undervalued area," in Jaspers' opinion. From the cycle path on the Hatert side, he points to the houses, that back onto the Canal. The canal banks are certainly not very attractive: no more than an obstacle to navigate on your way to the furniture retail complex or out of the city. Jaspers' adage: "We must look at the city with new eyes."

Just before the Hatert bridge, the former reporter stops by a fenced-off area with an old

'NIJMEGEN IS QUITE A SPRAWLING CITY, WITH LOTS OF EMPTY AREAS'

factory, a silo, and a house in serious need of repair. Weeds are pushing through the pavement. It takes some imagination, but Jaspers sees in this former mixed-feed company a potential cultural hotspot. "Throw in some restaurants and cafés, make space for artists, and you've got a location reminiscent of the Honig factory."

Having passed the SSH& complex 'Vossenveld' and the sports fields of the Hatert football club, we enter the Winkelsteeg business park, soon to be the construction site of 500 temporary houses. The municipality has big plans for this area: Winkelsteeg will ultimately provide room for 4000 houses.

According to Jaspers, the transformation of Winkelsteeg is an ideal opportunity to connect the areas on the other side of the canal to the rest of the city. Currently it is a place people tend to avoid. Should this change, with the advent of new houses and good cycle routes, Dukenburg will suddenly feel much closer to the city. This is why Jaspers advocates for a new bridge for cyclists and pedestrians, linking Winkelsteeg to Dukenburg. "The big bridges we have now were built for cars, and they're not very attractive to cyclists."

Two worlds

Jaspers can count on support from freelance researcher Josse de Voogd, who lived in Nijmegen for many years. In his role as electoral geographer, he closely examined the last election results in Nijmegen and concluded that politically, the Maas-Waal Canal divides Nijmegen into two factions. On the Western side, inhabitants primarily vote for populist right-wing parties, while the other side is dominated by GroenLinks and D66 voters. It would be a good idea to create additional connecting routes between these two worlds, says De Voogd.

Bolstering Winkelsteeg as a residential area would also help. "Now it's a kind of hole in the middle of the city. I think it would be better to fill it than to build houses in the open areas around the city." Either way, Nijmegen offers enough opportunities for denser housing, says the geographer. "Now that I live in Utrecht, I'm even more aware of it. We have nearly twice as many people there, on nearly the same area. Nijmegen is quite a sprawling city, with lots of empty areas."

De Voogd does not see the benefit of randomly building a new SSH& complex on the other side of the canal, in Dukenburg. "The ultimate destination for students remains the Burghardt van den Berghstraat. Not Dukenburg - that's for people who want a big garden. Students are in a different phase of their life, and if they want to

go out, they'll just cycle to town." Students would end up living in Dukenburg, but separate from the rest of the population. At most, the local supermarket would reap the benefits of a bit of extra profit.

Rather than attracting students, it would be better to make sure the other side of the canal remains attractive for the current residents, says De Voogd. "Make sure you keep the people whose economic situation is improving. At present, this group tends to automatically move away from older post-war districts, for example to newer districts. This is not improving liveability in these older neighbourhoods."

For Neerbosch-Oost, with all its social housing, this is quite a challenge. But for the German student Daniel Schömann, it's a good place to live for now, after all his wanderings around Nijmegen. "I totally understand why students don't find this location ideal," he says. "But there's a bus stop, and a train station around the corner. And the campus is only a 20-minute cycle ride away." Another advantage: Schömann owns a car and he can park it in his own driveway. What student can boast of that? ★



SSH& WANTS TO BUILD MORE ON CAMPUS

In its search for new locations, student housing agency SSH& has set its sights on one location in particular: the Radboud University campus. "Living on campus is really attractive for students," says SSH& manager Marco Schoofs. "Last year, we delivered Nestor, a beautiful new complex next to Radboudumc. We'd like to create

more housing units on campus." It has, in the past, been suggested that the Erasmus and Spinoza buildings could be used to house students. The university has yet to decide on this but hopes to finalise temporary housing elsewhere on campus in the next academic year. (More on page 43.)

HANS & MIA

have lived in the same apartment
for 54 years

From friendly neighbourhood gatherings or frying some pork chops for a neighbour to a brief nod on the stairs. In half a century, a lot has changed in the Nijmegen flats where Hans (84) and Mia (87) van der Heijden have lived for the past 54 years. 'But I wouldn't dream of leaving; it's a lovely place to live.'

Text: Wies Bakker / Photography: Bert Beelen

Although 1950s flats are not known for the quality of their insulation, you don't need a thick sweater at Hans and Mia's, thanks to the carpeting, wooden ceiling covering and the gas heater turned up nice and high. And if Hans has to brave the cold to go shopping, he takes the car. "That wasn't possible in the old days. My father had to walk to his work as a railway clerk." He points to an old shiny signal lamp in the corner of the living room. "I still polish it on a regular basis."

Since Mia had a fall, she finds the steps to the outside door a little scary, but she doesn't want to leave. "I wouldn't want to live anywhere else." After their wedding, the two Nijmegen natives lived for a while in Arnhem, where Hans had a job, but Mia couldn't settle there. "I became incredibly homesick for Nijmegen," she says. "We're not Arnhem natives, and the people there aren't very friendly!"

International students

Hans and Mia have lived in the Nijmegen Hazenkamp district for 54 years. They have watched the neighbourhood change over the years. Apartments were increasingly bought up by investors and rented out to students. This made the Wolfstraat less pleasant. Less perso-

nal. Mia: "I'm not the type to drop by unannounced, but these days some people hardly even say hello."

Of the eight apartments on their staircase, two are home to students. The apartment above Hans and Mia's is also a student house. "There are three or four people living there," says Hans. "They often have parties, so we hear them until late at night, talking, playing music, moving chairs around." With some of them he has an occasional chat, but he hardly knows the international students who live just above them. "It's also because they don't speak Dutch."

The couple first moved to Hazenkamp in 1967, to the apartment next to the one where they live now. Hans worked for the Nijmegen branch of the Singer Corporation (famous for their sewing machines). "It was a three-room apartment, where we lived with our two daughters," explains Mia. "We bought two folding beds; it worked fine. These days all children have to have their own room, but that wasn't the norm in those days."

Ten years later, the family relocated to the adjacent four-room apartment, and the children did finally get their own room. Mia: "We could have bought it, do you remember? It was only 45,000 guilders, but we didn't have any money at the time." They're not sorry that they

never bought it. "Our rent isn't that high. It's shocking what young people have to pay these days."

In the early years, the area attracted a lot of young families, who spent a lot of time together. "Before you knew it, it was 'aunt Mia' this and 'aunt Mia' that." They helped each other in the household and with the children. "We even had the baby monitor from the neighbours across the street," Hans grins. They all became good friends, says Mia. "Every year at Carnival, we went to someone's house to celebrate. Those are happy memories."

Pork chops

In their spare time, Hans and his neighbour often did odd jobs in the apartments, replacing a bulb on the staircase or repairing a door. "I still do these little jobs from time to time," says Hans. Mia also helped the neighbours out. When their neighbour lived alone towards the end, she sometimes fried him some pork chops.

Unfortunately, most of their friends from the neighbourhood have moved away or died. "But my good friend Ria still lives with her husband a few houses down the street," says the Nijmegen native. "We've had good contact for over fifty years. She drops by every Monday for coffee." A time when Hans is usually at the church, where he does odd jobs. "On Monday



morning, I always go to church to have coffee." His wife laughs: "And to gossip!"

These days, there are fewer church-goers, although some still live in the neighbourhood. Hans takes out a brown leather briefcase and pulls out a sheet of paper with addresses. These are all the houses where he delivers the parish newspaper. He's happy that he still knows some of the neighbours, because apartments frequently change hands these days. "We always had young people starting out here, but these days, once they have children, they move on. They used to stay longer. Now they all come and go."

Lovely spot

Sometimes they're annoyed by the number of bicycles on the pavement. And the apartments have become less soundproof with everyone replacing the carpeting with laminate. But when you share a space with so many

people, you have to put up with some inconvenience.

"Apart from that, it's still a very nice neighbourhood," says Mia. "I wouldn't want to leave, if I'm honest. We're close to everything. It's a lovely spot!" She's happy that the neighbourhood association sometimes organises activities. A barbecue, or a fire pit on the street on New Year's Eve.

When they were young, they didn't have any luxuries. After their wedding, Hans initially moved in with Mia's mother and her nine children. "That's what you call a full house." But Mia has happy memories of her time at her mother's house. "For Sinterklaas, we used to get underwear. We were so happy with it that we took it out onto the streets to show off." In that respect, a lot has changed in Nijmegen, they say. "If our parents came back today, they wouldn't know what had hit them," laughs Hans. ★

'SOME OF
THEM DON'T
SPEAK
DUTCH'

**Devlin Oosterwijk (27) and Femke van der Pal (26),
graduates in Planning and Sociology**

MY
HOME

"We often see deer in our back garden, which is probably something not many students can say. We live in the woods between Nijmegen and Groesbeek, on the Dekkerswald grounds. It's incredible when you take a break from studying to be able to step straight into a nature walk. The biggest disadvantage is having to cycle to the shop, which is quite a distance away on top of a hill. Now that we're a bit older, we're lucky to have a car, but those years of cycling were pretty tough. Our house is a bungalow that used to house the Director of the

healthcare group. He spent a few days a week here when he had to work. His neighbour across the street, the local game warden, still lives here. Although he's retired, he still keeps an eye on things: we can't do anything without him knowing about it. Which is actually quite funny, and we have a friendly relationship with him.

Our status here recently changed to 'anti-squatters'. The zoning plan for student housing wasn't extended. Our house will soon be demolished, but we don't mind. Few people can boast having had a house for so little money. And we had some great years here."

Text: Marieke Smid / Photography: Duncan de Fey



**'OUR HOUSE
WILL SOON BE
DEMOLISHED'**



THE FLIGHT TO VIANEN



Okan Mollov now lives in Vianen

The housing crisis is particularly hard for international employees and students. They don't have the knowledge required to navigate the housing market and often hear 'no internationals'. This is why Professor Amalia Arvaniti moved to Oss, marketing officer Okan Mollov has settled in Vianen, and Psychology student Hannah Landbauer commutes every day from Eindhoven to the Radboud campus.

Text: Annemarie Haverkamp / **Photography:** Bert Beelen

“I'm afraid we can't meet in my house,” emails Amalia Arvaniti. “KPN was too quick to disconnect our internet connection so I can't work from home anymore. Let's meet at the Erasmus building.”

Professor of English Language and Linguistics, who comes from Greece, lives with her husband and son in Elst. Not for long, though, since they have bought a house in Oss. At this very moment, painters and plumbers are at work there. In Elst, the family has started to pack their belongings. While continuing to work, and, in the case of the Professor, making time for an interview with Vox.

“Clearly, we'd have preferred to buy a house in Nijmegen,” she sighs. “But we couldn't find anything.”

Her search for a house began in the summer of 2020 in Canterbury, England, where Arvaniti lived with her family when she accepted a job at Radboud University.

“At first, we looked for a rental. We weren't allowed to buy anything in the Netherlands because my husband's American. He first had to organise a residence permit.”

All right, a rental house then. But that turned out to be quite a challenge. Pickings on the private market were slim and the family had a small dog. “Many landlords don't allow pets. And most houses were already gone by the time the ad appeared online.”

Via Zoom (due to the pandemic), she attended a number of house viewings. The only house she qualified for was a semi-detached in Elst, and only because someone tipped her off before the house appeared on Funda. From her laptop in the UK, she said 'yes'.

'BUT THEY SAID THEY COULDN'T DO ANYTHING FOR ME'



Amalia Arvaniti has just moved to Oss

"We didn't know what to expect as we drove into the neighbourhood in August. But we were pleasantly surprised. We liked everything about Elst: it was green, we had a lovely garden, and the neighbours were friendly."

But Arvaniti didn't want to keep renting. Ultimately, she wanted to buy a house, which is, after all, a really good investment. She emphasises what a blessing it is that you can even get a mortgage in the Netherlands." In England, banks don't lend you money unless you can prove that you'll be able to repay it all before you retire."

After six months, her husband got his residence permit and the couple enthusiastically dived into the Nijmegen housing market, only to discover that it was a vipers' nest. They didn't even get a chance to attend most viewings, and the few times they bid on a house, someone immediately bid higher. Unfortunately, there was no one to help the newcomers navigate this bizarre housing world.

"We soon discovered that we stood no chance in Nijmegen. A great pity, as we'd have loved to live in the city, close to the University and close to all those great little restaurants."

The radius around the City on the Waal in which they were searching grew wider and wider. In the meantime, prices continued to rise. Waiting any longer would not be

to their advantage. This was when the house in Oss appeared. Also a semi-detached, with a garden, a garage and wooden floors. And less than €400,000. "The funny thing was that the estate agent pointed out to us that it was a neighbourhood with lots of foreigners. We're also foreigners, but somehow I don't think that was what he meant."

Her son, who goes to an international school, can commute via a direct train connection from Oss to Arnhem. And Arvaniti can commute to the University reasonably easily, even though it does involve a bicycle, train and bus ride.

Stress

Fifty kilometres further to the North West lives Okan Mollov. The Radboud University Marketing & Communications Officer – he organises virtual open days – settled this year in Vianen, near Utrecht. His laptop is open on the dining-room table. "Luckily I don't have to be on campus every day," he says. From door to door, it's a two-hour commute. He too would have loved to live in Nijmegen. But he couldn't find anything. "Nijmegen isn't very open for internationals," he says, as he strokes his cat Gijs.

Mollov, half-Bulgarian and half-Turkish, came to Radboud University as a pre-Master's student. In an attempt to find a place to live, he joined many different Facebook groups. To his great frustration, most ads specified 'No internationals'. He previously lived in Leeuwarden and Amsterdam, where he found the atmosphere to be a lot more international. "In the end, I found a room on Kamernet: a studio in someone's home in Ressen."

Ressen? "Near Bommel."

He shrugs his shoulders apologetically. It was really expensive too: €670. And there was no Wi-Fi. But what else was he supposed to do?

He had already registered at the International Office (officially: Student Life and International Mobility), where he was told that a room had become available via an intermediary, but he was not allowed to see it. He had to sign a contract based on photographs alone. "That room cost €700 per month. I said that I found it strange that I couldn't even visit the room. I'm sure they don't behave like that with Dutch students. I didn't want to take the risk."

Like Professor Amalia Arvaniti, he didn't know anyone at the University who could help him find a place. He almost missed out on the studio in Ressen because the landlord gave him a contract in Dutch, which he sent to a friend to translate. "That took a while. By the time I contacted the landlord again, he said they wanted to rent the room to someone else. I was really stressed out, and asked the International Office for advice. But they said they couldn't do anything for me."

Mollov still gets angry about it. "There's always something you can do. Even if it's only listening." He believes that if you invite students from all over the world to

RECTOR HAN VAN KRIEKEN:

'IN DIALOGUE ABOUT CREATING TEMPORARY HOUSING ON CAMPUS'

The housing problems currently facing international students came as a surprise to Rector Han van Krieken, he says. "Before the COVID-19 pandemic, our housing supply was pretty adequate, but that has changed very quickly."

Throughput seems to have stalled. Most international students can find a room for the first year of their programme; 1044 units have been reserved via SSH& and other parties specifically for this purpose. After this, however, they are required to find other accommodation via their own network. This has not always been possible this past year. Van Krieken reveals that the University is talking to housing corporations about the option of creating temporary accommodation on campus. If all goes well, this could be in place by the new academic year. "We're currently talking to SSH& and the municipal government." According to the zoning plan, there are a few locations where more construction is possible, for example behind the Huygens building, next to Mercator II. The Rector is unable to say yet how many housing units will be built or who will be renting them out. The plan also depends on contractors and the availability of building materials. There is currently a shortage of wood, steel and plastic.

In the longer term, Van Krieken sees possibilities for creating student housing in the Erasmus building. But this is only possible if all parties agree. The talks with participational bodies on this subject have yet to begin. Besides, this would require renovating the building which houses, among other institutions, the Faculty of Arts. The building

could theoretically be made suitable for housing, but it would take 8 to 10 years. At the Dies Natalis celebration in October, Van Krieken was extremely critical of student houses that refuse to consider international candidates for their vacant rooms. "This is not in line with our University's values," he repeats. But, he says, there is nothing he can do about it. These are usually privately-owned houses. "My wish would be on the contrary for students of different nationalities to live under one roof as this is an incredibly enriching experience."

Dutch students who go abroad via an exchange programme are issued a one-time bonus of €350 if they make their room available for an incoming student. This is yet another way in which the University hopes to create more accommodation for international exchange students.

Staff members coming from abroad can make use of temporary housing units at the Guesthouse, next to the Sports Centre. But there aren't enough of these units, admits the Rector. Radboud University has a Global Staff Information Desk where new international staff can go for questions and help. And there are well-advanced plans for a Life Port

Welcome Centre for expats in the region, where they can get help in finding their way around Nijmegen, and be referred to estate agents. "But finding a house is difficult right now, for Dutch people too. There are limits to what we can do." His advice to new staff members is to start looking as soon as possible.

The University has no plans to purchase properties to house international staff.



Het Vensterhuis

Some student houses have a nickname. What's the origin?

Het Vensterhuis (The Window House), on the corner of the Wilhelminasingel and the Sloetstraat, is the fraternity house of the Tempeliers. It has been home to students since 1957 and houses eleven members and prospective members. The house is named after the prominent glass window on the corner. Jorg, a prospective member, is enthusiastic about his house. "Social cohesion is strong. We get up together in the morning, we go together to the University, and at night we sit around the same dinner table." Since 1968, the Tempeliers have also organised the annual hockey tournament Coupe des Tempeliers, which has grown into a full-blown festival over the years. It's a national event bringing together fraternities from all over the country.

TEXT: MAARTEN NEUBAUER

Nijmegen, you should help them find accommodation. For years, he worked in the hotel sector. The hospitality that is inherent to this sector is something he really missed at the University. A lot of international students are offered a room via SSH&, but they are only allowed to stay in it for one year. After that, they are expected to find something else. "But how? There's nothing. Or the ad specifies 'no internationals'."

Dedicated helpdesk

Concerning the practice of barring international students from Nijmegen student houses, Rector Han van Krieken was very clear at the latest Dies Natalis (anniversary of the University). He referred to it as an 'extremely bad practice'. One that "... reveals a very nasty side of Dutch culture." However, the Rector did not talk about what the University is doing to help solve the dire housing problem.

'I MISS THE SOCIAL LIFE IN NIJMEGEN'

Arvaniti has lived in various places in the world. From friends in New York she knows that the University owns and rents out apartments. When she worked at the University of California in San Diego, she and all other employees were offered a low-interest loan to help them buy a house.

"My colleagues in Nijmegen were more than willing to help, but most of them had bought their houses years ago, and they were just as lost in the current housing market." She believes that a good start would be a dedicated helpdesk, manned by Radboud staff with knowledge of the housing market who could help new employees to find a house.

This kind of helpdesk could perhaps have prevented Okan Mollov - after an interim stop in Amsterdam ("where it was surprisingly easy to find accommodation last year) - from settling in a flat in Vianen. "My partner already lived here," he explains as we share coffee and biscuits. "Now we live together."

The Marketing & Communications officer is happy with the light, spacious apartment, although he would have preferred to build his social life in the city where he obtained his Master's diploma last October and where he now works. "The University should become more involved in this problem."

Fake ad

Hannah Landbauer, who prefers to appear under a fictitious name (her real name is known to the editors), also came up against a brick wall at the International Office.

Last spring, the student from Germany enrolled in a Psychology programme at Radboud University. At the time, she was studying in Berlin. She immediately joined various Facebook groups. Since her boyfriend lived in Eindhoven, she temporarily moved in with him. "As a result, I already had a Dutch address, which meant I didn't qualify for a room for internationals from SSH&," she explains via Zoom.

But Landbauer was set on moving to Nijmegen. She began her house search in April; it's now November, and she still hasn't found anything.

She's kept track of how often she's responded to ads. "In the past months, I've sent out 230 emails and responses. I was invited to four viewings. Every time, they chose someone else."

Landbauer also experiences discrimination on the student room market. Ads are more likely than not to include the phrase 'no internationals'. "The other day, I responded to a room that was open to internationals. They informed me that they'd received over two hundred responses. Ten candidates were invited for a viewing."

It makes Landbauer feel desperate. So desperate that she recently fell for a fake ad. It concerned a room in the city centre. She was asked to transfer an advance payment of € 700. The keys would be sent to her by post. "The keys never arrived, of course, but I did lose my money."

Next semester, her lectures will be starting at 9 a.m. two mornings a week, which means she will have to be on the bus at 5.45 a.m. How long will she manage to put up with this?

"Because I live in Eindhoven, I can't seem to make friends at whose place I could stay overnight. I miss the social life in Nijmegen."

Landbauer is thinking about going back to Berlin if she doesn't find a place in Nijmegen within a few months. It's not because of the programme, which she really enjoys. "I'm clearly not the only person facing this problem. The University should do something about it, otherwise international students will get discouraged and leave."

Professor Arvaniti hopes at least for more understanding for the situation of international students and employees. Starting with flexibility with respect to working from home, she says, also beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. "It's unlikely I will be on campus every day. It wasn't my idea to go and live in Oss."

She takes out the estate agent folder of her new 1970s house. A nice big kitchen, definitely something she wanted. She still has to practice pronouncing her new address. "Ruus-broec-gaarde ... Wow! That's hard to pronounce even for a Dutch person." *



POEM

Ruimte

Onze kamers krompen, de ruimte
die ze vroeger hadden verdween
en terwijl ik me neerlegde bij
het intrekken van mijn benen
besloot jij dat het ook anders kon -
op Wikipedia stond een foto van een astronaut
met de Aarde op de achtergrond

En daar was het begonnen
de angst dat je hier niks meer zou vinden
de hoop dat er buiten ons iets lag
dat ze in de Kamer debatteerden
over hoe de surpriseparty eruit moest zien

- planeten van papier-maché
- gedetailleerde schaalmodellen
- samenzang bij arriveren:

'Beste mensen, we hebben het geregeld
ons jarenlange werken wordt
eindelijk bezegeld met dit goede nieuws'
En jij natuurlijk speciaal gefeliciteerd
omdat je altijd hoop was blijven houden
je werd enorm bedankt
de mooiste slaapzak op Mars
werd voor jou gereserveerd

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

SAM THEUNISSEN IS THIS YEAR'S CAMPUS POET.
SHE WRITES A POEM FOR EVERY EDITION OF VOX.

COLOPHON

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**'THE OLD PEOPLE
ARE MY FRIENDS'**

Tirsa Prins, 24 years old, Psychology student

MY HOME

"Mr Verheijen (98) is one of my oldest house-mates. We sometimes go for a walk together in the morning. With another inhabitant I like to cycle; we stop off on the way to get an ice-cream. I live in a nursing home with three other students. We can live here cheaply, but in exchange we have to do thirty hours of volunteer work a month. It can be anything: cooking, painting, drinking coffee, or going for a walk. The concept already existed in Amsterdam and we were the first to try it out in Nijmegen. After three years, I can safely say that

it's been a success: everyone's enthusiastic about it. I've always wanted to do something for people who have been kind of forgotten, so coming to live here was a conscious choice. I enjoy bonding with the old people. The volunteer work has become a form of relaxation. After spending the whole day studying, it's lovely to work together in the garden for an hour. Nor do I see the old people here as work or a goal: they're simply my house-mates, and some of them are my friends."

Text: Marieke Smid / **Photography:** Duncan de Fey



