

New Year's Speech 2020 FSW

By prof. dr. Paul Wouters, 7 January 2020, Leiden

Dear students, colleagues and guests, welcome to this celebration of New Year!

I'd like to give a special welcome to the Counciller of our lovely city Leiden, Marleen Damen.

Also a special welcome to the member of the CvB, Hester Bijl as well as the Dean of the LUMC, Pancras Hogendoorn. And of course we are very happy that we have Erwin Muller, dean of the Faculty of Governance and Global Affairs in The Hague as our second speaker today.

When I started as Dean a year ago, I had been part of the FSW for 8 years as director of CWTS, but I had never really lived in this building. I must admit, it has been quite an experience. From day one, I was not only struck by the friendliness of the hosts at the reception, but also, somewhat unexpectedly, by the tremendous energy that both students and staff in this house radiate. Notwithstanding the obvious shortcomings of a building which is only slightly younger than its Dean, and the sometimes admittedly cramped housing of our staff members and students, I enjoyed your good vibrations every day!

The energetic attitude of social scientists was clear to all of us at the meeting in our Wijnhaven Building in The Hague on 17 December where we discussed the results of the 13 working groups which dedicated themselves to brainstorming about, and designing of, components of our new vision and strategy which we will put together by the end of 2020. In these working groups 90 staff and students have worked together. Not only is this already

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an impressive number of participants (after all - aren't we already far too busy and overloaded with work?) - but even more important has been the experience of crossing the boundaries between institutes, disciplines and professional roles. Teachers and scholars, students, information professionals, researchers, institute managers, personnel advisers, financial specialists, and research policy advisors worked together *and they liked it (often more than they had anticipated)*! We now have about 80 slides with ideas about the following topics, all relevant to both the purpose of the social sciences and the way we organize daily life in our house: developing high-level career paths for scholars who wish to put teaching first; how can we use this building more creatively as a communication device?; open science and scholarship as the future way of working in research as well as teaching; new ways of evaluating and rewarding in research and teaching (and getting finally rid of the one-sided dominance of the Journal Impact Factor and other mindlessly implemented indicators); the future of interdisciplinary social science; societal impact of science or science and the city; what infrastructures do we need in the behavioural and social sciences?; how can we innovate our teaching methods?; wellbeing and working climate for students and staff in our faculty - and how inclusive as a culture are we really?; how does the identity of our teaching look like in the future?; and last but not least: how can we increase the fit of the services we provide as bureau of the FSW to the needs of our institutes, staff and students?

In the next few weeks we will sort these sometimes *very* creative ideas in three piles: low hanging fruit that we can harvest immediately; great ideas that need further development; and components we can carry to higher levels and include for example in the Strategic Plan of the university (which will also be formulated by the end of the year). To do this

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thoroughly, we will expand the circle of staff and students involved in the vision and strategy project (in the end all of you will be part of it!) (but rest assured - in a gradual and relaxed way in order to keep it all doable.) But three themes already struck me as emerging from all groups. First: we have the luxury of an overload of creative people and linking them across boundaries does really generate additional value. Second: we have by far not enough connections with each other. For example, many great initiatives in our institutes are virtually unknown even one floor lower. And activities in one pillar of our services are not always well-known in neighbouring departments. Third: to free up this huge potential of synergy (which would give a strong boost to the quality and impact of our work), we need to make time, in other words: we need to slow down in order to reach a higher level of quality and perfection. Slow science is in the long term much better than science in haste.

An important dimension which we currently do not make visible enough is the interdisciplinary nature of our research. Although our institutes carry field names (such as political science, or psychology), if we look closely into for example the externally funded projects, they are strikingly interdisciplinary. This is relevant, because the future of the social sciences will be shaped by the nature of its interdisciplinary connections, both within the domain of the social sciences and humanities and with technological, medical and nature science fields. As John Brewer, former chair of the British Sociological Association, has argued in his book "The Public Value of the Social Sciences", our complex knowledge and technology intensive societies need a new kind of social science. It is no longer enough to produce publications in specialized top-tier journals, we need to build on these small pieces of the puzzle to solve with colleagues from other fields a piece of the puzzle. And scholars and experts from the social sciences are needed to give meaning to the sometimes

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baffling political, economic, and technological developments both in the Netherlands and internationally. For example, it does not make any sense to invest heavily in artificial intelligence and new types of robots without an advanced understanding and analysis of how these devices will become embedded in, and give rise to, complex institutional and social relationships. To put it even stronger: without a thorough social-scientific understanding, we wouldn't even know what technologies we should want to develop and create a market for. Not everything that is technologically possible is socially desirable.

Happily, our current research is already strongly interdisciplinary. To give this an even stronger stimulus, we have engaged in five new interdisciplinary research programmes in which we cooperate with all other faculties of Leiden University. They focus on respectively: migration and social citizenship; population health; artificial intelligence; liveable planet; and social resilience and security. This is part of a stimulus package funded by our own university of in total 21 million euro from 2020 to 2024. In these programs we will be able to create new intellectual partnerships with colleagues in the LUMC (with whom we have longstanding collaboration and also collaborate in the Campus The Hague), the faculties of the humanities, archaeology, and law, the natural sciences, and last but not least our colleagues from FGGA in The Hague. Expanding and further developing these initiatives will help us to overcome the pillarised nature that still characterizes the social and intellectual culture in some of the social sciences.

I would like to emphasize that I see these developments in the framework of the larger scale collaboration with the universities of Rotterdam and Delft, LUMC and Erasmus MC in the LDE consortium. We are already quite active in the LDE centres and programs, such as

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Medical Delta, and Bold Cities, and we aim to contribute in the near future even more to LDE activities, for example around AI and sustainability. Looking at the faculties of social sciences in these three universities, it is striking how nicely they complement each other and how smooth already existing relationships between our social scientists and their colleagues in Rotterdam and Delft already are (such as shared supervision of PhD students).

If the future of social science lies in many important ways in its interdisciplinarity (with strong foundations in specialized methods and theories of course), then we also need a fundamentally open epistemic culture and an open attitude to society, in our case especially the cities of Leiden and The Hague. In other words, in open science and scholarship. Leiden University will launch a new approach to open science in March this year and this new program will be very compatible with, and give support to, the activities our Open Science Community Leiden has already developed in our faculty. In addition, we will intensify our effort to prepare the Leiden City of Science happening in 2022 which will occur together with the European Open Science Forum.

A fundamentally open and pro-active attitude has also characterized our response to the breach of scientific and academic integrity by a former assistant professor in our psychology institute. As I'm sure you will have read in the newspapers or on the web, the Academic Integrity Committee of the university published a harsh report on 11 November. Four breaches of academic integrity have been confirmed: (1) research with blood samples taken from test subjects without the approval of the Medical Ethical Committee (METC), (2) negligence in listing co-authors, (3) data manipulation, and (4) submitting grant applications with incorrect (incomplete and manipulated) research data. The complaint about this

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behaviour was brought forward by three early career researchers who had been able to finally overcome their understandable hesitations to come forward with a complaint against their colleague and supervisor. On this basis, the scientific director of the institute was able (and willing) to file the formal complaint to the integrity committee.

As our emeritus professor in sociology Kees Schuyt makes clear in his recent book *Scientific Integrity. The Rules of Academic Research* (2019), transgression of academic norms is often linked to deficient or insufficient leadership and mentorship. The most important lesson we must draw from this case, which is by the way a human drama for all involved, is that we need to work on a more open and inclusive work ethic and work culture in our faculty and in the universities at large. As faculty board we have done our best to contribute to this, by *not* falling into the trap of three default responses that organizations often display when confronted with integrity complaints. The first response is not to take the complaints as serious as they are and/or not give whistleblowers the protection they need. We have taken the complaint very seriously indeed including all the consequences this has for our faculty. And we have done our utmost best to create a fair process for all and where it was in our sphere of influence to give the whistle blowers all the protection that is needed. The second trap for an organization is to adhere to the bad apple theory and pretend that this is just a case of a bad person while the rest of the university is quite OK. The problem with this approach is that the underlying systemic and cultural mechanisms which make it difficult to address possible breaches of integrity are not tackled. Each integrity problem is always the result of a complex interaction between system, culture, and personality characteristics. And certainly as social scientists we need to address this problem in its entirety. The third trap, and one we will need to evade in the next few years, is to try to implement a total

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form of total control by installing a kind of integrity police through routines and procedures. We need to find a fine balance between trust and checks and balances. We will need to improve the ways of working, especially when human subjects are involved, but we need to put this in the perspective of an open and trust-based academic culture.

This is also the spirit in which we are developing our collaboration with the FGGA. Thus, before we lift the glasses for our New Year Wish, I'd like to give the floor to Erwin Muller.