

By Dominique Berendsen, p. 13

“FOOD FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFIT”

HOW MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ARE TRANSFORMING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS



It's a Wednesday afternoon in Maastricht. In the sustainability hub, a group of Maastricht University (UM) students gather to unload fresh fruits and vegetables. Carrots, leeks, lemons, and more, sourced from an organic local farm, are carefully sorted to be sold to a list of pre-order customers.

This is the Food Coop. A student initiative that focuses on food for people, not for profit. Founded in 2019 by three UM Students, the Food Coop aims to make local and organic farming available to everyone. Through direct collaboration with *Goutte*, an organic farm on the Belgian border of Maastricht, the organization has become a sustainable alternative to corporate supermarkets. But then how does it work? Each weekend, customers can select their preferred items, from that week's variety of fresh seasonal vegetables and fruits, which are then prepared for pickup on Wednesdays between 15:30 and 18:30 at the Maastricht University Sustainability Hub.

HOW TO BRING DOWN A TYRANNY: LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO PALESTINE

A few days ago, I watched a documentary at Lumière titled Ernest Cole, Lost and Found, which explored the brutal history of Apartheid in South Africa. As I was struck by the horrors unfolding before my eyes, I couldn't help but notice a striking pattern — a thread connecting the political narratives, geopolitical dynamics, and the institutionalisation of racism of that era to the injustices we witness today.

By Léa Besnard, p. 7

HOW “THE GODFATHER” ALTERED OUR PERCEPTION OF THE MEDIA

Growing up in Sicily, I was inevitably made aware that my beloved land, even though beautiful, was haunted by an unspoken shadow: “Cosa Nostra”. The term literally means “Our Thing” and refers to the organized crime network rooted in Western Sicily, but it is also used to describe the Italian-American Mafia, commonly known as the Mob.

By Elide Saia, p. 10

BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL: KENDRICK LAMAR’S HALFTIME SHOW AND THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE

This year, the halftime show was performed by the renowned and, in my opinion, one of the best rap and hip-hop artists of our generation, Kendrick Lamar. His performance has been described as the “best halftime show ever...”

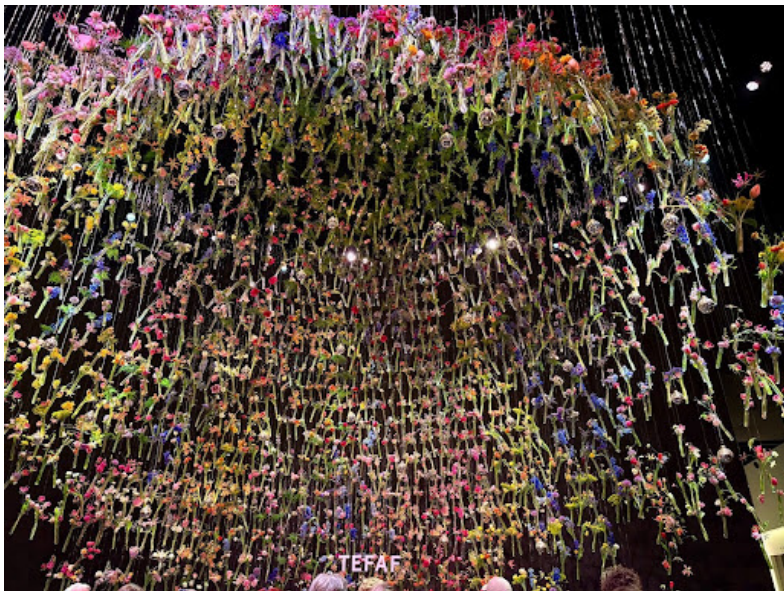
By Sarah Hourquet, p. 16

SPRING POEMS
CREATION
AUDIOVISUAL
POLITICS
PHILOSOPHY
AND MORE...

WHO BROUGHT TEFAF’S 2025 TROPHY?

[...] *Les Dormeurs* has hung on many museum walls over the years; it has seen the interior of the Louvre, the Stedelijk Museum, the Guggenheim, the Centre Pompidou and the Museu Picasso. What makes *Les Dormeurs* so special?

By Charlotte Godfried, p. 18



WELCOME LETTER

Journal Committee

Sarah Hourquet, Editor-in-Chief

After a few months since the release of the first MD Newspaper Winter Edition, our biggest project of the year, I am honored to present to you the second MD Newspaper: the Spring Edition.

As part of this general welcome, let me introduce myself.

My name is Sarah. I’m 22 years old, French, and a third-year student at University College Maastricht. This year, I’ve had the privilege to serve as Editor-in-Chief of the Maastricht Diplomat and Head of the Journal Committee at UNSA. One year ago, I was nominated and elected to take on this role, and ever since, I’ve been dedicated to helping our Journal grow.

I’m incredibly lucky to be supported by an amazing board of co-heads on this journey. These incredible, inspired, and inspiring people are: Vanille (Co-head of Foreign Correspondence and Development), Raquel (Co-head of Audiovisual), A.G (Co-head of Creation), and Elena (Co-head of Editing). Without them, I would be lost. None of this would have been possible without their dedication, and I am deeply thankful to have them by my side.

This year has been full of exciting initiatives and projects. Our team grew to an astonishing number of 42 members, including two more editors, Jaap and Léa, 2 Foreign Correspondents, an Audiovisual team of 5 members, and an editorial team of 31 writers!

Since mid-October, we’ve published over 130 articles, produced a five-part series and audiovisual content on the U.S. elections, released the Winter Edition newspaper, reported on budget cuts with the audiovisual team, attended Fashionclash as press, collaborated with the University Library Archives, hosted a talk and journalism workshop with our wonderful alumnus Jonathan Wijayaratne, covered TEFAF as press, organized a journalism talk with Jabeen Bhatti—editor-in-chief of The Global Post—attended and reported on Museumnacht, collaborated with the New Fashion Society, reported on anti-budget cuts protests in Maastricht, and participated in the EuroMUN conference both as part of the International Press Corps and through the EuroMUN Printed Edition.

So yes, a lot happened. And we are all immensely proud and grateful. But you might think that’s it? Not quite.

In addition to keeping the MD’s writing momentum going, one of our biggest and proudest achievements this year was the University Council Debate. For the first time, your yearly student politics debate was entirely organized and structured by our team from A to Z: setting up an info evening, training our MD moderators, coordinating with the university, creating the script, drafting questions, writing emails, and finalizing the debate topics. Making this event happen was a true milestone for us.

This year, our visibility has grown tremendously, thanks to the amazing work of our team. But most importantly, thanks to you, our dear readers, who follow and believe in our journey.

At the Maastricht Diplomat, we are committed to publishing high-quality,

Corner Café

THE UNTOLD STORY OF SUKKWAN ISLAND

Sarah Hourquet

[...] **Now**, for the part you should actually be interested in, the story. Sukkwán Island is not one story, but two. When you first dive into the book, you meet Roy, a teenage boy from California, and soon realise he is not in California anymore. In the deep wildlife of Alaska, on an oddly isolated island, far from everything, this is where Roy and his father Jim will be spending the next winter together. Roy will be far from his family, friends, home, and everything he knows, to live with his dad and their cabin, alone and in the middle of nowhere, with nothing else but each other.

As I dived into this book, I remembered asking my best friend again if she could give me a little more info about this book, instead of just telling me “*you just have to read it*”. Her answer was clear: “*I can’t tell you a lot... It takes place in Alaska where a father takes his son to a far and remote island, and at some point, something bad happens, but I can’t tell you more*”. [...]

Executive Board

Hey y’all! The Executive Board of the United Nations Student Association Maastricht wants to give the warmest of welcomes to you, the reader. Whether you’ve stumbled upon this paper at a cafe or you’re reading closely as a UNSA member, we want to say thank you so much for being here and supporting student journalism.

In case you’re new here, we hope to give you a brief introduction to the association which has produced the paper you’re reading. If you find a particular part intriguing then keep going, as you’ll find each committee has its own section of the paper to talk more about their work.

The United Nations Student Association was founded in 2006 right here in Maastricht, with the goal of bringing the values and initiatives of the UN to our lovely student city. Since then, our association has taken many forms, evolving into an ever-growing student community powered by seven active committees. Our delegations committee trains a collection of MUN-debaters each year, learning a new debate style, while practicing public speaking skills and facilitating dialogue along the way. In a similar vein, UNSA hosts its own Model United Nations conference each year, called EuroMUN, where students from Maastricht and across the globe spend four intense and wonderful days debating a variety of issues, including drawing proposals and resolutions.

The marketing & communications committee learns a wide variety of career skills throughout each year, and is the team to thank for ensuring UNSA’s visibility on instagram (@unsa.maastricht), our website (unsamaastricht.org), and in many special projects such as this newspaper. Our events committee brings a mix of academic and social experiences to our members and beyond, constantly building a stronger UNSA community. Similarly, the external relations team manages partnership, offering privileges and discounts to our members, as well as study trips, where students can visit new cities while gaining practical insight into life working in and around international institutions. Relating to institutional partnerships, our development committee facilitates relationships with Non-Governmental Organizations, locally and globally and works to raise funds and provide volunteers to these partner NGOs.

Finally, UNSA hosts the journal committee, the power behind The Maastricht Diplomat. This wonderful team of writers is entirely student-made and student-led, bringing you written and audio-visual content each week. The MD, together with the efforts of the UNSA Governing Board, has worked hard this year to bring a new vision to life, the Maastricht Diplomat Newspaper. This second-ever edition is an early piece of what will hopefully become an incredibly large collection. We encourage you to read this paper then pass it on, further spreading the words of our writers and the power of student journalism.

If the work of UNSA piques your interest, we encourage you to check out our instagram and website, join some of our events and fundraisers, and, especially if you enjoy this paper, get in touch with the much larger collection of the Maastricht Diplomat digital publications. We hope to see you around soon!

Addie, Isabel, & Luis

Creation: TEFAF

A DAY AT TEFAF 2025

For a second, the only sound you hear is the little beep of your ticket being scanned, your fingers grasping it gently in fear of wrinkling the paper. And then, you pass into the welcoming hall.

And your world breaks into noise, becomes colour.

The darkened walls give the space the endlessness of a night sky. In place of its stars, there hang from the ceiling a thousand vibrant flowers, cradled by water in glass, shaping a dome above you. For a moment, that is the only thing you gaze up at as you walk, enamoured by the honeyed scent of a waking world, almost bumping into the information desk. One blossom for each visitor here, all as curious as yourself.

The hall breaks into three pathways, and you make your choice.

The darkness of the room paves way to bright champagne light, which bubbles softly against your arms. Perfume of the passersby mingles with a more enduring scent of time, of old wood and older stories. Galleries of antiques spring around you, statues and tapestries, jewellery and books. One owner offers you a warm smile as you pass, amused by the awe expressed so purely on your face. You take one turn, and another, and finally, intrigued by a glimpse of medieval style illustrations, you make the decision to first enter *Dr. Jörn Günther Rare Books*.

Perhaps, you are already familiar with the intricacy of manuscripts from the Western European Middle Ages and the Renaissance. But seeing from up close such detail and creativity carved with unimaginable precision into each page, you grasp more than ever before the treasured nature of books. The invention of pouring one’s soul onto paper, and the art of preserving it throughout centuries. You cannot read the words or the notes, so you rely on the illustrations instead. Your eyes venture faith and tragedy, Spring flowers and bloodshed. Depicted scenes tangle with your own imagined explanations for them. Many minutes pass before you remember how much more there is to see, and urge your legs to take you back out into the hallway, wishing the gallerists a lovely day on your way out. [...]



IS IT THE END OF ‘THE END OF HISTORY’?

THE REARM EUROPE PLAN

Politics and Society

Lisa Volpin

The trend is becoming clearer: the EU is entering its 'rearmament era'.

On Thursday, March 6th, just hours after US President Donald Trump froze military aid to Ukraine, Ursula von der Leyen announced the ReArm Europe Plan. During a special meeting of EU leaders in Brussels, the 27 heads of state and government discussed the five-point response plan, named REARM Europe/Readiness 2030, proposed by the European Commission on Tuesday, March 4th. As the name suggests, the goal of the plan is a significant expansion of Europe's military capabilities. In her speech, Von der Leyen justifies the necessity of this initiative both with the short term goal of supporting Ukraine, and the long term goal to ensure the continent's strategic autonomy. Indeed, as Trump's repeated threats to refuse defense of fellow NATO members are no longer mere speculation, we can no longer afford to dismiss them.

BUT WHERE WILL WE FIND THE MONEY TO ARM THE ENTIRE EU?

The numbers are in, and they are staggering: €800 billion is the amount Member States aim to mobilise under 5 years to finance a massive ramp-up of defense spending. Even at the EU level, this is an enormous sum, so how could we reach a budget that would go toe-to-toe with the USA's? To help member states meet the targets, von der Leyen has given the green light to unlock public funds. The proposal activates the Stability and Growth Pact's escape clause to increase defense spending by €650 billion over four years. It also launches a €150 billion SAFE loan for defense investments, and expands European Investment Bank funding for defense, leveraging private capital. This move is unprecedented and calls for a brief explanation: EU member states are bound by strict economic and financial constraints set by the 'Stability and Growth Pact'. These rules, established by the EU Commission, ensure that national finances remain stable, preventing excessive public deficits and debt levels. These limits are very rarely suspended, as economic and financial stability is a fundamental prerequisite for EU membership. However, in the case of the rearmament, it seems that the EU is willing to turn a blind eye, perhaps even both, allowing countries to activate the national escape clause and, therefore, exceed these budgetary constraints. In fact, closing the second eye might soon become necessary, as even these funds may not be sufficient to finance the rearmament effort. De facto, the plan also includes the eventual possibility to utilize, on a voluntary basis and with limitations, the Cohesion Funds — yes, the European fund designed to support underdeveloped regions and promote sustainable development!

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT BEHIND THE EUROPEAN REARMAMENT: WHO IS BENEFITING?

In von der Leyen's speech of the 18th of March, there was a clear reference to the Russian threat, as the country “is on an irreversible path to creating a pure war economy.” Indeed about 7% of Russia's GDP is spent on defense. However, can we truly believe that allocating 1.5% of all the 27 EU Member States’ GDPs to the defense industry, and branding it with an EU slogan would shield us from acknowledging that we, too, are increasingly giving in to the anachronistic charm of war-economy? The specter of an arms race in Europe has been looming over the Old Continent for a long time — it didn’t come out of nowhere. The lobbying efforts behind it have been constant: since 2014, the 10 largest European defense companies have held hundreds of meetings with the European Commission, and the EU has begun taking notes. von der Leyen has recently emphasised how, at the movement, the European military industry is "too fragmented" to produce the equipment at the pace and scale required by member states. "We really need to turn the tide. It starts with investment in Europe. As we all know, today the majority of defence investment goes outside Europe. (...) This is not sustainable. We must buy more European. (...) We will set up a European Military Sales Mechanism to help make this happen” she said.

THE POSSIBILITY OF A EUROPEAN ARMY, WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS SMOKE?

We have the money, we have the justifications, thus the question to answer is the following: is it actually possible? The idea of a common European army has been discussed continuously since the European project began post WWII, and it makes a special appearance every couple of years when the role of EU in defense is brought up: German defense analyst, Ulrike Franke, aptly described the EU army as the “ghost in the system of the European Defense debates”. On the more technical side, for a true European army to exist, the EU would need to transform into a federal state with full control over foreign policy and the armed forces. Many Member States, however, have zero appetite for such a project.

We are then left with the idea of a hybrid force, a European Army that complements national defense forces without replacing them. The backbone of Europe’s defense would still primarily rely on major national militaries: France, Poland, Germany, and, if it chooses, the United Kingdom. The EU could establish a standing common force, one that doesn’t belong to any single nation but is collectively owned and operated by the European Union. This force could be around 100,000 soldiers strong, effectively replacing the 100,000 U.S. troops currently stationed across the continent. However, a few challenges remain. For instance, not all 27 EU member states are enthusiastic about an EU military force. It is likely that countries like Hungary and Slovakia would veto such a project. Moreover, the EU would have to create an integrated EU command that works alongside NATO without duplicating efforts. And last but not least, decision making could pose a challenge. Who decides when and where EU forces are deployed? The European Council could potentially take on this role. The idea of a ‘coalition of the willing’ might be the most practical solution: a group of countries voluntarily moving forward with deeper military cooperation, similar to the Schengen Area or the Eurozone.

THE END OF HISTORY, THE RISE OF MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

The term "The End of History" was popularized by political scientist Francis Fukuyama in the 1990s. He predicted that, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the world had reached its ideological endpoint with the triumph of Western liberal democracy, emerging as the final form of human government, and with the United States as its main champion. However, the end of history has now reached a crisis: the book was never really over, and it is possible that neither was its chapter on the Cold War. The "Cold War Never Ended" theory steer the focus back on the fact that the geopolitical and ideological tensions between major powers, particularly the United States and Russia, have persisted despite the formal end of the Cold War in 1991. It aims to remind us that the Cold War was not merely about ideological confrontation but also about global hegemony. While the Soviet Union ceased to compete for worldwide dominance, Russia has continued to focus on regional concerns, particularly along its bordering nations.This theory backs up its stance by mentioning the survival to our days of Cold War institutions, like NATO, and the lack of a new security architecture inclusive of Russia. We failed to put an end to this story by neglecting to exhaust all possible scenarios in which NATO and nuclear arsenals could be employed: this is how we enabled the spirit of Cold War competitiveness to remain dormant, only to resurface most visibly in the Ukraine-Russia war. The ideological clash between democracy and authoritarianism has emerged, once again, as a central theme in current international relations.★

Corner Café

Alexiane Francois

Ariadne auf Naxos: A Review

A Review of Ariadne auf Naxos, composed by Richard Strauss, performed by Nederlandse Reisopera in Theater aan het Vrijthof

[...] The production seamlessly blended humour and storytelling with deeper philosophical questions about the nature of art itself. It sparked questions about the difference between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art. The actors portrayed that duality perfectly, and with humour, bringing a refreshing modernity to an older piece. And as Sofia Jupither, the director, says, ‘if you are good at what you do, it does not matter if you are an opera singer or a comedy actor’.

By the time the final notes rang through the theater, I was impressed. Ariadne Auf Naxos, in this vibrant and compelling production, introduced me to the world of opera in the most remarkable way possible. As I stepped out of the Theater aan het Vrijthof, I realised that what began as a spontaneous outing had transformed into an experience to remember, and I also realised how many more secrets Maastricht has to unveil, even after three years. [...]

md02

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM THE NEW GERMAN GOVERNMENT

Politics and Society

Jule Frank

THE FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION'S DEFENSE STRATEGY

We've always been taught that large-scale international rearmament almost inevitably leads to war – one of the most recognizable domino effects in history. From there, all it takes is a single push, which can come from anywhere. But could it be that, this time, the sequence is reversed? We've already experienced the push – more than one, in fact. Trump's wavering commitment to NATO's Article 5, coupled with mounting geopolitical tensions at Europe's borders – not just in Ukraine, but also in Turkey – have put the proposal of an EU army back onto the table. This comes at a time when many Europeans had believed themselves permanently shielded from war after the fall of the Berlin Wall. In this context, the shift toward rearmament is not just a reaction to external threats but a stark acknowledgment that Europe's security now rests, to a significant degree, in its own hands. Long regarded as a bastion of diplomacy and economic power, the EU has historically struggled to align its defense capabilities with its political ambitions. Is that about to change? One thing is certain: history keeps writing itself.

Germany’s incoming government presented a coalition deal last Wednesday, pledging to boost the economy and military – but critics say it falls short on welfare and climate action.

After four weeks of negotiations, the new German government coalition between the conservative CDU/CSU bloc and the social democrats of the SPD agreed on a plan outlining the most important goals for the upcoming administration. The coalition deal, a 144-page document titled “Responsibility for Germany”, spans a list of measures aiming to spur economic growth, invest in military defence, and crack down on immigration. Further measures include efforts to lower rents, corporate tax cuts, bureaucracy reduction, and a general commitment to increasing the minimum wage.

The coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD is the result of February’s snap elections, after the previous government prematurely collapsed in November of last year, leaving the country to be ruled by a minority government. Coalition talks were shaped by the urgent need for a fast agreement to restore stability and decision-making power in the German parliament. Amid growing discontent among the German population and external pressure from the US and Russia, the newborn coalition encounters significant challenges. The rise of the extreme-right AfD party is a key topic of debate in German politics, and the coalition sees it as their responsibility to restore trust in mainstream politics while managing global crises and strengthening European cooperation.



At the official press conference last Wednesday, Merz claimed that “Germany is back on track” – words spoken in English for US president Donald Trump to understand. The new government’s representatives billed the new coalition deal “a signal for change”, which through reform and investment tackles the economy, security, and migration – issues that are currently perceived as Germany’s key challenges. The foundation for these changes was laid three weeks ago, when the parliament decided on new borrowings and a reform of the country’s “debt-brake”, a constitutional rule that limits government borrowing and has been a cornerstone of German fiscal policy since its introduction 16 years ago. Additional assumed state debt amounts to around one trillion euros over the next ten years, that will flow into infrastructure and the German military.

While this budget allows for greater financial flexibility and promises economic growth through investment, it has diminished support for Merz and the CDU across the political spectrum. Merz, who had explicitly and loudly opposed the Green party’s demands for reform of the debt brake over the past four years, is now being accused of voter deception and opportunism. And the coalition finds itself in a trust crisis, before their term of office has even started. In the latest opinion polls, the AfD for the first time claims first place, overtaking the CDU that had won the February national elections.

The coalition deal also triggered protest from the left, criticising tax cuts directed mainly at corporations, and that support for small and medium incomes is too little and too late. Ines Schwerdtner, head of the Left Party that is gaining popularity, points out that planned economic measures largely consist of “presents for corporations”. Her party blames the coalition for its unwillingness to mitigate the growing financial inequality in the country, and for cutting down on the welfare state instead of targeting the super-rich and tax evasion. Furthermore, it is hard to overlook the fact that even though Merz repeatedly emphasized the significance of protecting young generations and the future, the word “climate” was not mentioned once in his introductory speech. The word is equally missing from the three-page preamble in the agreed-upon document.

The climate crisis will not be a focus of the new German government. The coalition proposes carbon prices as the main instrument to curb the country’s emissions, and elaborates on the issue only through vaguely-formulated commitments. CDU/CSU and SPD even plan on introducing new natural gas capacities during their term of office – infrastructure that will be void in 2045, the year by which Germany committed to reach climate neutrality. Felix Banaszak from the Green Party criticises that the agreement “does not do justice to the current situation”. The newly assumed debt, according to the politician, was an important opportunity to invest in climate mitigation. “There is a lack of political will,” he continues, “which is bad news for the future of our country, our children and grandchildren”. The coalition deal has yet to be officially approved by both parties, which should, however, be a mere formality. In May, Friedrich Merz will officially be named chancellor, and the parliament will be sworn in for the next four years. This time will show whether the new German government under chancellor Merz can keep its promises, and manage the domestic and international turmoil it was born into. ★


CENTRAL DO BRASIL

Corner Café

Brooke Betten

A review of Central do Brasil by Walter Salles

[...] *In* a turn of events, Dora and Josué embark on a journey across Brazil to find his father. Central Station is a beautiful portrait of the country, trading the fast-paced station bustle for the idyllic countryside as the protagonists traverse it. Parallels are littered throughout; letter writing becomes a blessing for Dora rather than a curse. Josué and Dora adopt each other's mannerisms and turns of phrase. The unexpectedly ironic pair seem to exist on the same spectrum. Josué is the image of innocence, naivety, and youth, whereas Dora embodies cynicism and wisdom. However, rather than growing further apart, their dispositions draw closer together throughout the film. The character development for both is among the most masterfully articulated I’ve seen. Initially distant and guarded, Dora gradually allows herself to care for Josué and, in turn, be cared for by him. What first appears to be Josué’s childish bravado evolves into a genuine sense of responsibility as he dotes on her with the tenderness of a son toward his mother. *‘I long for everything.’* In its essence, this is a movie about longing. [...]



md03

THE FATAL FLAW OF THE DUTCH WELFARE STATE

Politics and Society

The Netherlands is a rich country. On a global, even European scale, it is extremely wealthy. It consistently ranks high in quality of life, education, and happiness, as well as GDP per capita and income. As a result, the idea of people living in poverty here is often deemed a non-issue, both by Dutch people and those from outside. And yet, 1 in 20 residents live in poverty, and 3 in 20 have an insecure income. Poverty carries heavy social stigma, and governmental attempts to reduce it have led to an impossibly complex bureaucracy. Measures meaning to do good and help people escape poverty have the unintended effect of keeping people poor.

After world war two, as is the case in most Northern European countries, the Netherlands expanded its welfare state. In the period from 1950-1970, citizens gained the right to unemployment benefits, childcare benefits, benefits for the elderly, disabled, and permanently sick, as well as a minimum wage and social welfare benefits. When in 1980 more than 20% of national GDP was being spent on these various subsidies, the government felt that this was too heavy of a burden and started rolling back certain measures, not removing them entirely but reducing them or placing higher requirements upon recipients. A person would either need to apply for the benefits or receive them automatically. Some, like the student or elderly benefits apply automatically, based on your status or age. Others, like the unemployment benefits, general welfare benefits, and disability benefits, require applications and further proof of necessity.

The individual had to make sure they applied for the correct benefits if they believed they were entitled to them, and the government bodies would then confirm that they indeed deserved it. This, however, was not without its problems. Citizens would miss out on benefits, and it could both be confusing to know what they could receive, and be embarrassing to have to demand it at their local benefits office, keeping them from applying. Furthermore, this system required a lot of bureaucracy to keep intact, which was expensive. Sadly, this is only the beginning of the woes the Netherlands has with its welfare bureaucracy.

In 2005, reforms to the system were announced, with the good intentions of making the system more transparent as well as cheaper. From now on in the 3 key areas of rental, childcare and healthcare subsidies, citizens would no longer need to apply but would instead receive the benefits automatically if they met the required criteria. In Dutch, this type of benefit would be called a ‘toeslag’. The tax authorities, the infamous Belastingdienst, would check for citizens if they were eligible. Age, income, the composition of a household, or your rent are among the many different criteria. Citizens previously ashamed of holding out a hand for help would now receive it automatically, thus increasing their living standards.

Things immediately went wrong in 2006. The Belastingdienst was unprepared for the new workload, as its IT system was not up to the task. By law, in case of inability to determine if a person would have a right to a certain toeslag, the Belastingdienst was to pay out anyway, and demand unrightful payments back in the future. Already at that time, warnings were issued that this could have negative impacts upon the most vulnerable recipients, since they would probably already have used up this money they had to pay back. Things improved with a new IT system, but in 2012 a total of 2.1 million demands for return of toeslag payments were still on the table, accounting for a total of 1.3 billion euro. So far, nobody was receiving much more clarity about their benefits than before the reforms.

Then, in 2013, the story starts taking a more tragic twist. Large-scale fraud by Bulgarian criminal gangs, where the Bulgarians were able to get up to 8000 euro by registering in the Netherlands and unlawfully demanding retroactive benefits, and immediately leaving to Bulgaria upon receiving them. This prompted politicians to impose a much stricter fraud-fighting policy in the Belastingdienst. Accordingly, the tax service started to demand repayment of technically illegal benefits, deemed to be wrongful as a result of small mistakes. These were often very bureaucratic, and in some cases based on the discriminatory assumption that dual nationality citizens were more likely to commit fraud. Resources for in-depth investigations were not available. The majority of these repayments were demanded for childcare benefits, and in many cases the amount to be paid back was in the tens of thousands, with the median debt to the government being 30,000 euro. The impacted families had to sell their houses, go into debt, and many affected people still struggle with psychological issues as a result. Over 70,000 children were directly impacted. This scandal, the toeslagenaffaire, led to the collapse of the government coalition in 2021.

The impact of this governmental mismanagement is still felt to this day. The impacted persons are to be compensated for the suffering they went through, but the process of determining how much they are to be compensated is also riddled with issues.

In this case, the governmental bureaucracy directly kept people in poverty, or brought them down into it. By direct fault of its complex systems, it was unable to do the duty it was assigned to do in the 2005 reforms, which was to provide people with the benefits they had a right to. However, also indirectly the bureaucratic systems keep people poor. This is due to two things. Firstly, the current availability of benefits following the post-covid inflation has increased to a point where it is extremely confusing for the average citizen to know what they have a right to. Secondly, people are disincentivized to work because by doing so, they might lose their right to a benefit, meaning a lower monthly income.

After the cost of living crisis, many municipal and national schemes were implemented to support Dutch people struggling financially. Here, one can think of initiatives like free lunches at schools, free public transport, but also compensation for higher food prices or gas costs.

Jaap Steunenberg



In order for the least privileged to make ends meet, these extra income sources are essential. The only issue is that, in order to benefit from them, individuals must apply for each initiative separately. It is not done automatically, resulting in many people who have a right to receive these supplements, do not know they could get them. This has created a maze of benefits, subsidies, and so forth, that people are easily lost in and confused by. Not only that, but needing to individually apply for each solution is time-consuming, and according to researchers is complex to the degree that one needs to be academically educated to adequately fill in the forms.

As previously mentioned, the different toeslagen are based on criteria like age, income, rent, and so forth. These criteria are not completely clear to most laymen, meaning it becomes hard to take them into account. For example, a person receiving disability benefits monthly, who decides to start working from home, might end up with less money in the bank at the end of the month because their income goes over a certain threshold. So, even though they want to work, it becomes disincentived to do, since it is hard to predict what will happen to one's benefits. Trying to figure out what the results of starting to work would be is a complex task, that also creates stress and confusion for many. Perversely, the system meant to help people while they can't work, doesn't allow them to work with ease.

The debate surrounding benefits, toeslagen, social welfare and how to fairly and equally distribute them will always be at the core of Dutch politics. However, what is clear now is that action needs to be taken to help those who are suffering, directly or indirectly, as a result of exactly the policies that are meant to help them thrive. It is sad that Dutch politicians now, instead of calling for a poverty crisis, call for an asylum crisis, without adequately addressing either societal issues.★

BACKPACKING WITH THE ELEMENTS

Clémence Bernard

Corner Café

Wiccans do not just look at a landscape, they tune into it. The stillness of a glacier feels different from the calm of a rainforest, and each teaches something unique. Traveling through different environments is like having deep, wordless conversations with the Earth itself.

In Corsica, I experienced a stark contrast between the mountains and the coast. In the high-altitude peaks, the dominance of Earth and Air was solid, unmoving rock formations shaped over millennia, combined with cold winds. Hours later, by the sea, the presence of Water and Fire was undeniable. The landscape was moving, waves eroding the shore with the sun heating so much. The stillness and rigidity of the mountains stood in opposition to the fluidity and warmth of the coastline, highlighting how the elements manifest in their purest forms within the same place.

There's also a deeply personal side to travel. It shakes you out of routine, forces you to be present, and makes you see yourself in new ways. Many people, not only Wiccans, find that being in nature away from the constant noise of modern life, brings a kind of clarity that's hard to achieve in a busy city.

LETTERS OF THE HEADS

Delegations Committee



Hello lovely readers, my name is Lena Hadžić and I am the Head of the Delegations Committee at UNSA Maastricht for 2024/2025!

As the end of the academic year slowly approaches, reflecting on the past year gives me a sense of nostalgia and accomplishment. So many things have happened, so many people to be thankful for, and so many things yet to come before I get to say goodbye!

Firstly, I must express my gratitude towards my co-heads. If it was not for Yoni, Elias, and Jaša, this entire committee would simply not be where it is today. There were issues, there were hurdles, and there were complications; however we managed to overcome them, and today we get to say that we successfully begged a pilot to let us into the plane headed for Barcelona, among other things (yes, this actually happened!).

Secondly, this entire experience could not have been possible without the lovely delegates in the Delegation! Seeing them put in the work week after week, working hard in debates and learning new things, makes me extremely proud of them and justifies all the work my co-heads and I put in behind the scenes.

Thirdly, reflecting on conferences we went to, once again I must express my utmost gratitude to the co-heads and the delegates. From St. Gallen and Barcelona to the general members conference in Munich, it has been an honor to lead a group of young, talented and motivated people across Europe to practice and showcase their skills, meet new people and grow as persons. However, our journey is not quite over yet, as we have one more conference to attend, EuroMUN, and we have some activities planned until the end of the academic year, both for our delegates and the general UNSA members.

Ultimately, I must express my gratitude to the UNSA Governing Board, for their unwavering support for all the heads, and sincerely thank them for their patience and efforts! It was a pleasure to work with such ambitious and talented people, and I cannot wait to see what they do next.

After so many expressions of gratitude, I believe it is clear how meaningful this experience was to me, and I cannot see what else we will achieve by the end of this academic year, and what the future holds for Delegations and UNSA.

With lots of love,
Lena Hadzic

Dear readers,

Welcome to this newspaper spring edition!

I am honored to present you this edition. The newspaper is of course made in collaboration between the Jounral Committee of UNSA (AKA Maastricht Diplomat) and the Marketing & Communications Committee of UNSA. This newspaper has a lot of additions compared to the winter edition. There are cute corner café's, poems and even a crossword puzzle!

I would like to thank Sarah, A.G and Raquel for the nice collaboration and all the help. I would also like to thank my co-heads Saskia and Tess and my lovely marketing team for keeping the committee going throughout the year. It would not have been possible without them.

This newspaper is a good end to my year as Head of Marketing & Communications. I am so grateful I got this opportunity. I learned so much over the past year and got to meet great people that soon became very close friends. I wish the next Head all the best and I hope they will have a good experience, like I did.

For now, enjoy the newspaper and enjoy your upcoming summer break!

All the best,

Nienke van der Meulen

External Relations Committee

Dear readers, the External Relations committee has been busy these last months organizing and conducting a study trip to Berlin and Geneva, as well as upcoming study trips to Brussels and Luxembourg.

The study trip to Berlin in February was a great chance for UNSA members to explore post-bachelor opportunities with an extensive program at the Hertie School of Governance. Members were able to learn about the masters available at the Hertie School, gain more information on the professional opportunities, and welcome a guest lecturer on the topic of environmental economics. In addition to the program at Hertie, trip attendees got the chance to meet and hear from representatives of UNHCR and the UNWFP, as well as UNSA and UM alumni located in Berlin.

The study trip to Geneva was also a great success. In collaboration with UNU Merit, students were able to visit and hear from professionals at the World Trade Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund, the Geneva Environment Network, the UN Development Program, the UN Institute for Training and Research, the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining, the International Labor Organization, UN Economic Commission for Europe, and UN Conference on Trade and Development. In addition to the packed schedule, trip attendees were also able to explore Geneva and meet with alumni from UNU Merit.

In the upcoming months, UNSA will be hosting study trips to Brussels (April 25th-26th) and Luxembourg (May 14th-15th). We will reconnect with UNSA alumni in these locations.

Finally, we gained a new partnership with Maares! happy to announce that we just acquired a new partner - Marres! This is a house of contemporary culture where you can enjoy a great program of contemporary exposition, many activities and workshops, a large collection art books and a city garden.



Marketing and Communications Committee

THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL: VICTIM OF INEFFICIENCY OR LACK OF LEGITIMACY IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS?

Jade Thiebaut

The United Nations was founded in 1945 with a clear mission: to maintain international peace, enforce international law, and prevent global conflicts. Nearly eight decades later, its ability to fulfill that role is under intense scrutiny. At the center of the debate is the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the body tasked with making key decisions on peace and security. However, with five permanent members wielding veto power and ten rotating members, the Council’s effectiveness is increasingly being questioned. Once considered the ultimate authority in conflict resolution, the UNSC is now struggling to assert its influence. Political divisions and power struggles have repeatedly stalled action, raising a fundamental question: is the Council’s failure due to a fleeting inefficiency, or does it signal a deeper crisis in the legitimacy of international law itself? Recent cases illustrate this dysfunction. Resolution 2728, which called for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas during Ramadan, and Resolution ES-11/1, which demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine, both failed to produce tangible results. These high-profile failures reignite concerns over the UN’s ability to act in moments of global crisis. Is reform possible, or is the system structurally incapable of fulfilling its purpose?



Resolution 2728 (2024)

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2728, adopted on the 25th of March 2024, aimed to establish an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas during the month of Ramadan, as a step to achieve a lasting truce. It was proposed by the Council's ten non-permanent members , after a similar US-backed resolution on 22 March was blocked by vetoes from China and Russia. This time, however, the wording was deemed more neutral and less tied to Washington's agenda, making it more acceptable to Beijing and Moscow. As a result, the resolution was adopted with 14 votes in favour and a single abstention, from the United States. However, instead of being a sign of unity, its adoption only served to aggravate diplomatic tensions, frustrating Israel, exposing the strategic manoeuvres of China and Russia, and raising questions about the UN's ability to enforce its own decisions.

This event highlighted the limits of the Security Council in terms of effectiveness and legitimacy in the decision-making process. Even worse, even though the resolution was adopted, the Council could not enforce it, underlying another issue about the gap between adoption and implementation. This problem is reinforced by the ambiguity of the council’s decisions’ binding nature . The United States takes the view that it is not binding because it falls under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, while other States point out that Article 25 of the Charter does not exclude the obligation to apply resolutions outside this framework. The term ‘requires’ suggests a binding scope, but without clear enforcement mechanisms, its impact remains limited.

Despite the intention to act, resolution 2728 ran into political tensions, mainly between the U.S., Russia, and China. This highlighted the ongoing struggle of the Security Council to put its decisions into action, especially when political rifts hold back decisive moves.

Resolution ES-11/1 (2022)

Another issue faced by the UNSC is the power held by permanent members through their veto, as highlighted by resolution ES-11/1 (2022), This resolution condemned Russia's aggression and called for the immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukrainian territory. Russia’s expected veto blocked the resolution at the UN Security Council, preventing any binding action. However, the General Assembly later passed it as a symbolic, non-binding measure.this phenomenon illustrated a profound contradiction within the UN system: the UN was created to guarantee international peace and security, but its key body, the Security Council, is locked in by the interests of its permanent members.

In such a context, using the General Assembly to override a veto, in this case, that of Russia, seems to be more of a symbolic reaction than a truly effective diplomatic response. While a massive condemnation may isolate a state on the international stage, it does nothing to change the balance of power on the ground realistically. The condemnation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine by the general assembly doesn't carry much weight by itself. The real issue here isn’t just whether it’s binding, but the fact that there’s no mechanism to enforce it. Without binding resolutions or a way to back them up, the UN struggles to maintain legitimacy and influence, often reduced to offering moral judgments instead of tangible solutions. Therefore, these two cases are not just setbacks, they expose a deeper, systemic issue within the UN. Time and time again, the organization finds itself trapped between its founding principles and the political realities imposed by its most powerful members. The Security Council, meant to be the guarantor of global stability, is regularly paralyzed by vetoes, while the General Assembly’s symbolic resolutions lack real weight. This raises a larger question: can an institution built to maintain peace still fulfil its mission when its own rules allow the most influential states to act with impunity? The crisis of legitimacy and effectiveness facing the UN today is not new, but each new failure makes it harder to ignore. How long can an institution tasked with maintaining global order remain effective if its actions are reduced to diplomatic gestures? In addition, the world order that the UN embodies is gradually losing its hold on its primary task of maintaining international peace and security, primarily due to persistent internal conflicts between its permanent and non-permanent members. Beyond these operational failures, there’s also the question of the UN’s broader influence pushing its vision of a liberal world order onto states, sometimes at odds with local realities and alternative paths to stability. Recent resolutions, though occasionally offering a sense of hope, seem increasingly like symbolic reactions to the growing complexity of global crises. Examples like ES-11/1 and those addressing Gaza demonstrate that, while the UN can still manage to broker diplomatic consensus, its actual mechanisms for action remain fragile and ineffective. However, this article does not seek to undermine the UN's overall purpose but, rather, to provoke reflection on its current structures, mechanisms, and main challenges/difficulties. The need for reform is critical without strengthening its ability to act decisively, the UN risks becoming increasingly marginalized in the management of global conflicts. ★

THE A69 PROJECT, OR THE INERTIA OF OUR CURRENT SYSTEM

Virgile de Maupeou

[...] *This* makes the A69 highway project emblematic of our system’s inertia – a system that continues to push for outdated projects and ideas, rooted in the assumption that tomorrow’s world will be the same as yesterday’s. It rests on the belief that what has worked in the past will keep working in the future.

The issue is that we know for certain that tomorrow’s world will be significantly different. Climate change will drive stronger and more regular climate catastrophes, causing millions and millions of climate refugees, impacting our food production and destabilising the insurance system as we know it, to the point where coverage becomes unaffordable or unavailable for many.

Meanwhile, our relentless hunger for resources will accelerate their depletion (water, rare earths, different metals, oil) shifting power dynamics between countries that control these resources and those that don’t. I will not attempt to list every challenge here, or this article will become an encyclopedia. But the point is clear: our impact on our planet will spark major geopolitical upheavals and reshape the world as we know it. [...]

Audio Visual



As a Maastricht Diplomat alumni and journalism student, French-Lankan Jonathan Wijayaratne has a unique view on the world. In this episode they talk with Fin Gerke about their journey from European Studies to journalism, the state of journalism and media in Europe, and their roots living in many cultures and countries. Listen now on Spotify, Apple podcasts or Amazon music!



HOW TO BRING DOWN A TYRANNY: LESSONS FROM SOUTH AFRICA TO PALESTINE

A few days ago, I watched a documentary at Lumière titled Ernest Cole, Lost and Found, which explored the brutal history of Apartheid in South Africa. As I was struck by the horrors unfolding before my eyes, I couldn’t help but notice a striking pattern — a thread connecting the political narratives, geopolitical dynamics, and the institutionalisation of racism of that era to the injustices we witness today. Most notably, it echoed through the widespread resistance to the ongoing Israeli apartheid, occupation, and genocide in Palestine. This parallel left me wondering: could the successful struggle against South African Apartheid hold valuable lessons for the future of Palestinian resistance? And what might we learn from the strategies that proved effective in dismantling such a system of oppression?

Impact of the BDS Movement

In 2013, at the death of Nelson Mandela, the British comedian and activist Mark Steel stated that Mandela managed to “prove that bastards and their bastard regimes can be overthrown, against seemingly impossible odds, by all of us, as no one knows which unsold grape was the one that finally brought down a tyranny.” This message perfectly encapsulates the appeal of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) movement, originally created by Omar Barghouti in 2005. This campaign has the purpose of putting pressure on large corporations doing business with Israel, or those possibly having a bigger implication in the ongoing genocide (such as McDonalds), to cut ties with the country, in turn undermining Israel’s financial ability to continue their violent military operations in Gaza.

The pressure to divest from and sanction Israel is not only reserved towards businesses and corporations, but also intended (geo)politically. For example, a report from Brown University from October revealed that the United States has spent approximately 17.9 billion dollars in military aid to the State of Israel, since October 2023 — an all-time record. This is in line with former US president Joe Biden’s refusal to put conditions on US military aid to Israel in May, despite public outcry. “Israel derives a lot of its power [...] from being armed, funded and shielded from accountability by the United States, the UK, and so on. Without those links of complicity, Israel cannot maintain its entire system of oppression”, argues Omar Barghouti in a recent interview for Al Jazeera.

Just like Western leaders such as the US and the UK refused to cut fiscal ties with or sanction the South African government due to its favoured geographic position in sea-trade routes and its production of diamonds and other rare earth materials, most of the same Western leaders today refuse to sanction the State of Israel for its documented war crimes in the Gaza strip, in part due to the geopolitical benefits of having an influential ally in the highly unstable region of the geopolitical benefits of having an influential ally in the highly unstable region of the Levant, but also because of the “holocaust guilt” invoked by some countries like Germany.

However, measures such as an arms embargo, or trade and fiscal sanctions, are not the only way to boycott a country. Cutting cultural and sports ties can be highly efficient as well, hence why South Africa was banned from participating in the Olympics from 1964 to 1988. However, while Russia was excluded from the 2024 Olympics due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, following the same logic as South Africa, Israeli athletes proudly competed under the Star of David flag in Paris this summer.

Therefore, as most Western governments cannot seem to enforce any real sanctions towards Israel, the BDS movement appeared as an alternative for many citizens around the world. This mode of activism gained worldwide popularity in 2023, in the wake of Israel’s violent retaliation to the October 7th attack, due to how easily it can be integrated into daily life. However, many critics of the BDS movement argue that it lacks efficiency compared to other modes of activism, and does not have enough of an impact to deter Israel from continuing its offensive against Gaza — but history says otherwise.

(Economically) boycotting a country or a company in order for them to change actions we view as immoral is not a new concept — quite the opposite in fact. In Britain, around the end of the 18th century, anti-slavery activists created a campaign to stop purchasing sugar produced by slaves. 300 000 people participated, leading to an immediate and enormous drop in sales. This campaign is estimated to have had an important impact on the abolition of slavery in 1807, and more generally on the abolitionist movement at large.

In South Africa, while it is difficult to fully measure the impact of boycotts on the fall of Apartheid in the mid-90s — partly due to classified documents still unavailable to researchers —, there is no doubt that international pressure played a significant role in dismantling Pretoria’s racist segregation laws, such as the previously mentioned 24-year ban from the Olympics.

Apartheid didn’t end because the South African government woke up one day and suddenly realized racism was wrong. It ended because the white minority started feeling the consequences of their actions in their own lives. They faced international sanctions, economic boycotts, and isolation. Their businesses suffered, their children lost access to European schools and universities, and unrest in the streets made their daily life unsafe, as a constant reminder of injustice. The anti-apartheid movement disrupted their comfort, their privilege, and their peace of mind. Oppressors don’t relinquish power out of morality, or overnight enlightenment — they change when their way of life, their access to comfort and privilege, are directly challenged. When resistance is so disruptive that the status quo becomes impossible to sustain.

But internal resistance can only go so far. External solidarity, whether at a governmental or non-governmental level, is also a pillar in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism. We tend to underestimate the power held by the people when it comes to boycotts — in fact, research conducted by Harvard political scientist Erica Chenoweth showed significant political change can be achieved with the active participation of just 3.5% of the population. This power of collective action is clearly reflected in the growing successes of the BDS movement, which has seen great progress over the past year and a half. By the end of 2023, just three months after the boycott began, Starbucks' market value had fallen by 12 billion dollars. Additionally, Norway's Sovereign Wealth Fund pulled its investments from the Israeli telecom company Bezeq in April, following allegations that Bezeq was providing services to settlements in the West Bank, which are deemed illegal under international law.

Activists in the BDS movement often argue that it is more effective to focus boycotting efforts on a few ‘target’ brands, such as McDonalds, Starbucks, Domino’s, Amazon, Airbnb or Disney+.

But in order to dismantle tyranny, multiple forms of resistance are crucial, and it goes without saying that boycotts should serve as merely one tool among many.

Spreading awareness through different forms of media to fight misinformation, holding elected officials accountable for their support of the genocide, non-violent civil disobedience, protests, and financial support to the victims are other tools that should be used alongside boycotting.

Ignorance as a social process

During the preamble to the movie, Doctor Uli Muller, tutor at UCM, introduced the concept of willful ignorance by Melissa Steyn (2012): how individuals, particularly Western citizens seemingly unaffected by most geopolitical conflicts, consciously learn to ignore certain truths or realities to align with the micro-politics of their time. However, when it comes to the struggle for Palestinian liberation, our generation offers an interesting contrast. Instead of embracing willful ignorance, we have internalised this conflict as emblematic of the imperialist systems we reject, integrating Palestinian resistance at the very core of our collective identity, thus in turn challenging the prevalence of willful ignorance in the West, as seen through student encampments across the Netherlands. After all, just as white South Africans were once Europeans, most white Israelis also have European roots — so what makes us believe we are so removed from the genocide unfolding on our screens?

As the world is celebrating the news of the recent ceasefire agreement in Gaza — which may lead to a permanent ceasefire, although Netanyahu’s declaration that Israel retains the “right to combat”, backed by the United States, does not seem to promise any tangible efforts towards peace from the Israeli government —, it is important to remember that Israeli Arabs and Palestinians across Israeli territory, as well as in the West Bank and occupied Palestinian territories, remain under the rule of Apartheid.

But if there is one lesson we should take away from South Africa’s anti-Apartheid movement, it is that no “bastard regime”, in the words of Mark Steel, can indefinitely withstand the united will of the people. ★

Audio Visual



Our AudioVisual team collaborated with NFS to explore the intersection of fashion, media and Maastricht’s student culture. This collaboration aims to document the different voices in this production, from the designers and first-time models to the

organizers behind the scenes and the audience the night of the final walk. Go to our instagram to see the event from our lens!

MONSTERS AND THEIR MORALS: THE DANGER OF DEMONIZING NAZIS

History
& Philosophy

In 1963, Hannah Arendt pointed out that portraying all Nazis as pure evil is incorrect. But next to incorrect, it is also incredibly dangerous.

EICHMANN IN JERUSALEM

Ever since the horror of the Holocaust, the Nazis have become the poster child of pure evil. They are the go-to comparison, the standard point of reference against which the severity or immorality of all other actions is measured – as a benchmark never to be surpassed or superseded. As the epitome of evil, Nazis have filled the position of villain in the story of human history, the antagonist to humanity itself.

Considering this, one can imagine the moral outcry that ensued when, in 1963, political thinker Hannah Arendt published *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. In this provoking and controversial book, Arendt reports on the trial of Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi official in charge of managing the deportation of millions of Jews to extermination camps and ghettos.

The controversy arose over the fact that Arendt argued Eichmann was not the wicked, evil, raging antisemitic mastermind behind the Holocaust that many contended him to be, but instead a rather dull, desperate-to-be-a-part-of-something, ambitious bureaucrat who committed horrible crimes not out of wickedness but out of sheer thoughtlessness. Consequently, many argued that Arendt defended this man that many considered a villain.

But amidst all this ruckus, Arendt gets to something incredibly important: it is inaccurate to portray Nazis as pure evil; men like Eichmann were not evil monsters but humans, thoughtless ones, but humans nonetheless. The importance of this point cannot be underestimated, as this demonization and dehumanization is not only inaccurate, it is also incredibly dangerous. For if we think of Nazis this way, we do not learn from atrocity but instead are doomed to repeat it.

Early in the book she writes: *“Those who today told Eichmann that he could have acted differently simply did not know, or had forgotten, how things had been.”* Arendt suggests that when discussing or judging Nazis, we must always keep in mind the vast differences between life as we know it and life under the Third Reich for these differences are vital to understanding the gruesome actions of those who carried out the Holocaust.

MORALITY

The most crucial difference to consider is that of morality. In the Third Reich, there was a completely different definition of what was deemed moral and what was not. The Nazi system meticulously manipulated its participants' moral framework until the 'normal' moral maxims that prohibit killing, lying, letting one's neighbor go off to their doom, etc. had virtually vanished and were replaced by maxims that demanded what had previously been prohibited.

This moral reversal was paired with a fundamental characteristic of totalitarian systems: the total absence of opposition. Consequently, as society in the Third Reich had essentially succumbed to Hitler at large, a complete reversal of moral norms had taken place with people ceasing to realize the nonuniversality of these new values. Eichmann himself pointed out, rightfully or not, that “he could see no one, no one at all, who actually was against the Final Solution.”



Moreover, some argue that Eichmann was merely a cog in this larger killing machine, unaware of its final product. While this is debatable in the case of Eichmann, the industrialization of killing undoubtedly mitigated the need for many Nazis to question the morality of their actions.

Instead of attributing the actions of the Nazis to some inherent wickedness, Arendt points to the moral collapse that took place in the Third Reich.

CONSCIENCE

In response to this argument, however, the matter of conscience is often raised. Many believe that at the end of the day, a 'normal', sane person must have this little voice in the back of their head saying that what they are doing is wrong, no matter how much the society around them seems to be okay with it. But Arendt rejects this idea that one can always fall back on their conscience to guide them. She writes that:

“To fall back on an unequivocal voice of conscience - or, in the even vaguer language of the jurists, on a “general sentiment of humanity” ... - not only begs the question, it signifies a deliberate refusal to take notice of the central moral, legal, and political phenomena of our century.”

Arendt essentially refutes the idea of an intrinsic steadfast conscience, the idea that all humans deep down know the right thing to do.

After all, it is more plausible to think that many Nazis were simply living under a system with completely different moral values that had tainted their conscience, than to believe that they were all just evil beings who purposefully did not listen to their conscience, if they even had one. Eichmann showcases this perfectly. Arendt explains he is not an evil monster but a 'normal' man that, despite being human and thus supposedly having this 'general sentiment of humanity' to fall back on, was complicit in atrocious acts.

THE DANGER OF DEMONIZING NAZIS

Arendt convincingly makes clear that many Nazis were not evil monsters but often thoughtless humans with a tainted conscience, succumbing to a moral collapse. This is important to remember because there is a grave danger in demonizing Nazis.

If we think of Nazis simply as pure evil beings, we see them no longer as humans. We cease to attribute any human qualities to them, such as having a conscience, which consequently creates a distance between them and us; we are humans, and they were not. And if we believe all Nazis to have been fundamentally different from us, we also believe we are inherently incapable of doing what they did which is where the danger lies.

If we see all Nazis as non-humans, we can always tell ourselves: *Well I would never cooperate or be complicit in such evil, for I am no monster, I am a human with a conscience.*

It essentially allows us to keep believing in the myth of the 'unequivocal voice of conscience' that we can always fall back on, the idea that we are human therefore our conscience will prevent us from being evil. This is a soothing, though an arguably stupid and outright dangerous thought.

But assuming most Nazis had a healthy psyche, like Eichmann did, there is no reason to believe that they did not possess a conscience in the same way we 'normal' people do. There is, from all appearances, nothing inherently different between the power of our conscience and theirs. And if their conscience was not strong enough to resist partaking in evil, what makes you think yours will be?

The belief that, at the end of the day, your conscience will save you, allows you to become a passive, uncritical and thoughtless citizen – a complacent one.

md

And if there is one thing the Eichmann case teaches us, it is that ignorance makes for a perfect cooperator in evil.

You do not have to be aware that those in power suppress opposition; you do not need to critically think about how they oppress parts of the population; and you will not see or simply not care about any other steps taken towards a totalitarian regime; you will remain under the illusion that you could never. But you will have realized that the idea of the ‘unequivocal voice of conscience’ is a myth only when it is too late. This might sound dramatic but Arendt’s attempt at breaking this narrative of all Nazis being evil, in light of current global sociopolitical developments, is more important than ever. Around the world, and in a certain country specifically, we are witnessing real time political suppression, reversal of minority rights and the normalization of political violence which are scary and crucial elements of regimes like the Third Reich. Not to mention some special government employee’s Nazi salute, of course. If we do not recognize the fact that many Nazis were not monsters but humans like us, we will likely succumb to the moral collapse that may lurk around the corner.

In short, in a sinister and ironic way, believing all Nazis to be pure evil opens the door for new evil. It is therefore of the utmost importance to change the way we remember and think of them. Arendt challenges this common narrative, acknowledging the moral collapse and tainted conscience that allowed for these ordinary humans to commit such atrocities. If we do not change this narrative, we will have learned nothing from the horror that was the Nazi regime, and we are doomed to repeat history. Instead of remembering this dark page in history as simply that, Arendt reminds us that it ought to be a cautionary tale. She reminds us to stay vigilant and aware, that the Nazis might have done monstrous things, but most were not monsters themselves, that they were humans just as we are humans. We must actively undertake the complicated task of looking at the evils of history and recognize the shared humanity between them and us. ★

Philosophy and Justice

Vanille Villez

“A FREE, CONSCIOUS AND CONSUNSUAL DEATH”

NICOLAS MENET’S ULTIMATE PLEA FOR THE RIGHT OF DEATH

Discussion with his tumor, moments of life with his friends, days in the hospital... faire le deuil de soi, or self-mourning, traces back the last year and a half of Nicolas Menet. This autobiography, published post-mortem in March 2023, is the ultimate life project of the author, and is, for us, a strange glimmer of hope, a new starting point, and a strengthened will to live through the journey that is life. Nicolas Menet is a French sociologist, who focuses his work on the aging of society in France. In February 2022, he is diagnosed with a glioblastoma stage 4, an incurable brain cancer, and given only a few months to live. Soon enough, doctors are not speaking about remission or healing, but only mentioning the goal of preserving his quality of life. And soon enough, Menet realizes his hopes of eradicating the cancer through his first operation must die, and that he can only hope to leave peacefully. With this, he decides to write his last book, a piece with a sociological and political front, crucial to the current French discussion on end-of-life laws, accompanied with a beautiful personal aspect, opening up about his last months. He focuses on his death, making his ultimate life project this book.

“Forced to live in a form of the present; what’s ‘to be’ holds no interest, the future has no use in my case.” - Nicolas Menet, interview with Konbini

Menet doesn’t try and hide the fear or curate a flawless image of himself; he admits to his fears, the way he doesn’t know what is to come, how he has to depend on his loved ones, and cannot rely on the future. Sometimes afraid of death, sometimes at peace with who he describes as an “old friend” (Nicolas Menet, faire le deuil de soi), he takes us through his difficult moments: the moment when he realizes he is going to die, his slow loss of functional capacity, the difficulty of seeing the anticipated mourning of his loved ones...

Less personally, he also focuses on the lessons that can be learned from his story. At the end of his book in December 2022, he writes a letter to the senators and deputies of the French government. Beautifully written, this letter takes from his first-hand experience with the end-of-life process, and how it can be used for future lawmakers. Describing himself as a “future deceased” he argues for a “free, conscious and consensual death” (Nicolas Menet, faire le deuil de soi & letters to the senators and deputies).

In the letter, he argues for the right to end one’s own life, especially in the case of incurable illnesses. Today, in France, the main end-of-life law that exists is that of Claeys-Leonetti (1999, 2005, 2016) which allows for a continuous and deep sedation until death, giving the ‘most comfortable’ death. Yet, this law is severely limited, and is not enough in a process as personal as death. Menet believes in the capacity and right of all of us to decide for ourselves, and turns the question of death into one of personal choice and freedom.

« If i am still cognitively capable, I should be the only one judging of my mental state, and determining if there is enough life in me to die or to live” - Nicolas Menet, letter to the senators and deputies

The issue at hand is not whether to legalize all euthanasia --importantly, he never makes a clear statement on this question throughout the book-- it is rather to give patients the right to have power over their lives and have everyone be a true actor in what he describes as their “end-of-life projects” (Nicolas Menet, faire le deuil de soi). For Menet, this right arises directly from the human dignity intrinsic to all, that starts at birth, and ends with death. This right would be heavily protected, framed by psychological assessment, a total right to change your decision until the last minute, and a consideration of the state of the illness. And yes, a right to die is an unpleasant truth to hear, as it forces us to confront the reality of our life, limited and hanging by a thread. And yet, Menet helps the reader reconcile with the idea of death through a book that shows that, just maybe, one should think about death, not as an ending point that is forced upon them, but as a last shred of human dignity, and the final line that one decides to write about themselves.

“ That is why, before I leave, I am allowing myself to make a few suggestions, as the aspiring member of parliament that I was before the attack of a type 4 glioblastoma” - Nicolas Menet, letter to the senators and deputies

This book falls within a larger question in France about end-of-life laws. For now, the country only allows refusal of treatment, and end-of-life care-encompassing both palliative care and deep sedation- only when the vital diagnosis of someone is engaged.

In February this year, an end-of-life law was reintroduced to the French assembly. This law, that aimed to facilitate assisted suicide and reinforce the palliative care system, can be interpreted as continuing the message carried in Menet’s book.

Yet, upon arrival at the assembly, the law was divided into two, one about end of life, and one about palliative care ; which can be seen as a move to push the latter forward while abandoning the former. Access to palliative care in France is restricted and not as secure as it should be, forcing certain people to leave their city and support system to have access to the necessary resources. In that sense, passing a law about it would be a solution to some of the issues that Menet mentions. Yet, this good step does not seem nearly enough to truly safeguard human dignity at a time as crucial as one’s death.

"At some point, one must fight against this life instinct that keeps us from dying at the right moment” - Nicolas Menet, interview with Konbini

Menet’s book also portrays a political combat, expanding far beyond his story and the French borders. The question of euthanasia and assisted death is heavily debated worldwide. The difference between the two on a terminological aspect has repercussions on the legislation around the issue. Assisted suicide consists of someone ending their life by themselves, most commonly through the self-administration of prescribed drugs. This does however mean that someone for the medical corps will prescribe such drugs, enabling the later suicide to happen. In the 40 countries where assisted suicide is illegal, the act of enabling such suicide falls under the criminal code, and attempting to end one’s life in such way is highly discussed. In France, suicide was illegal for long, and today, its assistance is highly question, making it harder to pass law on that topic than in countries where suicide was never a legal issue. Euthanasia on the other hand requires direct action of a third party on the person wanting to end their life, most commonly a doctor injecting a lethal drug. This leads to questions in certain countries about the role of the physician in the death, and whether doctors should then be considered as murderers. Legally speaking, ‘consented’ murder is not as penalized as homicide, but still has numerous repercussions, such as imprisonment for 14 years in the UK.

Hence, the right to euthanasia is much more debated than that of assisted suicide. In Switzerland for example, the first country to legalize assisted suicide, euthanasia remains illegal. Here, Menet’s book focuses on the case of France, but that does not mean that the questions raised about the right to decide about one’s life, and the end of it, are restricted to the French people. While different countries have decided on different rights, the questions about the right of death, and its relation to human dignity, are universal.

“I want now the freedom to die whenever I decide” - Nicolas Menet, faire le deuil de soi

Nicolas Menet’s story is his own, and he does not try to make it someone else’s, nor a global truth. He teaches us a hard lesson. His book, published after his death, was only part of his message, also shared through interviews on national television, YouTube channels... He gave to his loved ones the mission to help push forward this freedom of death, and through this article, I hope to help fulfill part of this work, in memory of the sociologist, academic, and friend that Nicolas was. ★

HOW “THE GODFATHER” ALTERED OUR PERCEPTION OF THE MEDIA

Elide Saia



Growing up in Sicily, I was inevitably made aware that my beloved land, even though beautiful, was haunted by an unspoken shadow: “Cosa Nostra”. The term literally means “Our Thing” and refers to the organized crime network rooted in Western Sicily, but it is also used to describe the Italian-American Mafia, commonly known as the Mob.

I was 8 when I first learned about Cosa Nostra by reading *This is Why My Name Is Giovanni* by Luigi Garlando. The author indirectly weaves his narration around the story of one of Italy’s most important judges, Giovanni Falcone, a dangerous nuisance for the Mafia, who exposed key figures of Sicilian organized crime during the violent 1980s. This costed him his life, as he was tragically killed on May 23, 1992, in the Capaci massacre. His notoriety also stemmed from his collaboration with the FBI on investigations into criminal ties between Sicilian and American organized crime.

For instance, in 1979, Falcone and American prosecutor Rudolph Giuliani initiated the “Pizza Connection” inquiry, which targeted drug trafficking

between Italy and the US. The appearance of the first Mafia germs in the US is closely tied to the migratory flows from Southern Italy between the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Among the young Sicilians who left for a better future, members of the Italian Mafia also infiltrated and took the chance to expand their businesses, subsequently creating the homonymous neighborhoods of Little Italy. Some of the most important names of the “expat mafiosi” in the US during the 1900s were Salvatore Lucania, a.k.a. Lucky Luciano, then Frank Costello, and mostly, Carlo Gambino, upon which was based the fictional character of Vito Corleone in *The Godfather*.

The film portrays the life of V. Corleone, who is busy with the hard and noble task of keeping the family together and the Mob empire compact, shaking hands in exchange for devotion and absolute recognition by his “friends”. I couldn’t help but notice how these characters are perfectly coherent with the standard American perception of the Mafia, such as appealing gangster characters, assertive and commanding, who carry themselves with confidence, almost with a positive connotation. In the film, every moral rule perished in front of the well-being of the family, contributing to building a heroic image of gangsters who would do anything for their community. A completely unrealistic narrative, far removed from reality, that it is harmful for the voices of those who are paying the consequences for trying to expose these criminal dynamics. The outcome of this glamorized narration was perfectly proven by how non-Italians often mention the Mafia with in an unexpectedly positive and frivolous way. So I wonder: How have people become so desensitized? Surely, not every school can teach Mafia history and stereotypes will always exist. However, it still amazes me how this piece of Sicilian history has been completely turned on its head. The contrast is outlandish: in the US, the Mafia is glamorized; in Sicily, it’s a harsh reality with which each Sicilian must come to terms, feeling the frustration of having to deal with something that is much more than an organized crime; it is a tumor embroidered in the society, a cultural problem, which influences also those who are not directly involved in the organization.

One of the Mafia’s cornerstones is the oath of omertà, namely the code of silence that’s meant to keep information about business dealings within the family, but it is not simply an oath, it’s a way of living, a phenomenon. Anyone who grew up or has lived in Sicily could support the fact that what’s really damaging to Sicily is the predominant mentality of those who pretend not to see, not to hear, and consciously decide not to talk before the organized crime, everyday problems, wrong things, betraying legality and ignoring one’s own conscience and the collective consciousness. “Omertà” is a wall that doesn’t enable Sicily to grow to its full potential, it’s a wound difficult to close. Today, the Mafia manifests itself through, for example, corruption, extortion, drug trafficking, with a strong tendency to permeate the socio-economic fabric and infiltrate or “control” local political-administrative structures. This inevitably weighs on Sicily’s economy and the overall quality of life, as criminal infiltrations in local public entities slow down bureaucracy, hinder the proper functioning of the public administration, and weaken the region’s ability to provide essential services, ultimately forcing young people to emigrate to northern Italy and abroad.

Judges like Falcone or Borsellino dedicated their whole lives trying to destroy this wall, and they weren’t the only ones. There are endless spine-chilling stories of people who decided to not withstand the wall of silence and to take action, paying with their lives. To name a few: Peppino Impastato, Rocco Chinnici, Walter Eddie Cosina, Carlo Alberto Dalla Chiesa, Giorgio Boris Giuliano, Piersanti Mattarella and Rita Atria. Therefore, I wonder again: Why doesn’t the world know about their stories? I then try to answer my own question: maybe we should stop investing in the glamorized gangster movies and give the same space and resources to tell the stories of those brave people who lost their lives to fight for truth and legality. ★

LETTERS OF THE HEADS

Events Committee

Hello, lovely readers. I am Laura Murer, and this year I am the head of Events for UNSA.

The year 2025 began with our first lecture series! After careful consideration, we decided to rebrand our lectures in a more engaging format that encourages audience participation. A big thank you to Lionel Stijns and Gabrielle Groeneveld for their efforts in making this academic event possible. Our series featured two distinguished professors, Dr. May Lee and Dr. Nava Tintarev, who offered insights on innovation in education and artificial intelligence, respectively, expanding our understanding of these vital topics. For our second series, we invited two professors, Pr. Lalaine Siruno and Pr. Serdar Turkeli, to discuss the future of Europe. Our lecture series is now enhanced by networking drinks, providing UNSA members with an opportunity to connect with our esteemed guests, making their networking experience truly memorable.

To continue our academic journey, I would like to express heartfelt gratitude to David, Amelie, and Sara for their remarkable involvement in our "Career Beyond Borders" event. This three-day conference was a blending invaluable academic guidance with practical insights into the working world. The event featured a diverse array of workshops, keynote speeches, and networking opportunities designed to empower attendees with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in their careers. Participants engaged with industry experts, gained insights into various career paths, and learned about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. We look forward to building on this success in future events and continuing to foster an environment where knowledge and career exploration go hand in hand.

In terms of collaboration, we had the opportunity to work with the Maastricht Asian Society (MAS) on a potluck event, where members from both organizations gathered to enjoy delicious food and engage in activities tailored to reflect the values of both organizations. We hosted a Dialogue Night with Omnium, where our members could come and discuss the impact of the UN on various themes, opening the floor for participants to share their thoughts and ideas. And, of course, with our Lovely Development, thank you to Tillie Morris and her amazing team for this incredible Masquerade Charity Gala, which raised € 1,714.50 for Kubuka.

I would also like to give a big thanks to Joana, Lina, and Agathe for their incredible work in creating social events tailored to occasions that provide reasons to celebrate for our members. Through a bracelet-making evening for Valentine’s Day, a pub quiz for St. Patrick's Day, or even a karaoke night for Eurovision, the events team always has the vision to gather our members to celebrate the nicest moments.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my two co-heads, Lean Dahlems and Nora Henye, for their incredible work and support this year. Not only was the work of the events committee successful this year, but most of all, their kind energy and amazing support really created a team. I am beyond grateful to have seen this little family blossom over the last year, and I sincerely want to thank you all for your hard work and eagerness to move forward.

Kindest regards,
Laura Murer.

LETTERS OF THE HEADS

Dear reader,

Welcome! I am Santi, the Head and Secretary-General for EuroMUN 2025. As of the day writing this letter, April 20th, we are officially less than 2 weeks away from our big conference. The journey that started in July 2024 is finally coming to an end, and this great reward is not only a product of the exhaustive effort which our Board, Secretariat, and Team Members across the Marketing, Academics, Registrations and Communications, and Logistics and Socials team have invested; it is also a moment of reflection for the whole path which we have embarked in.

The most prominent event throughout this academic year was, undoubtedly, the organization of MiniMUN on January 18th. This one-day conference was a simplified version of our full-scale conference from May 2nd to 5th. Participants got a glimpse of what we had to offer, and our team got used to the pace and organization which we aimed to adhere to so that we could offer a high quality MUN conference to participants. Ever since this event, it's been non-stop work with EuroMUN preparations, and, while the conference and final preparations still await, we have come so far together, and I am extremely grateful for all the development which me and my team have experienced. Against all adversity, and with the effort of 27 organizers and 9 other board members, we have pushed through and laid the foundation for our conference to take place. While there is certainly high expectations for our conference, not only do I believe this family is more than capable of meeting and exceeding them; I also believe we have already come so far not to be grateful and proud for all of us. As the conference draws closer, and we prepare ourselves to witness the fruits of this work, I am delighted to announce that EuroMUN has already gained a big spot in my heart, and that it has all odds in its favor to have a positive and meaningful impact on everyone that took part in it. Looking forward to sharing with you the joy of our success!

Best regards,
Santiago R. Salazar Martinez
Secretary-General and Head of the EuroMUN Committee



Hello, I am Tillie Morris, Head of Development at UNSA for 2024/2025!

Development Committee

As the year draws to a close, I must express my gratitude to Joana Gonçalves and Lara Regojo Catalan the co-heads of Development and, ofcourse, the amazing Development Committee; all of which have made this an unforgettable year. The Development Heads have worked tirelessly to reshape the committee to be more engaging and provide more freedom for members resulting in countless achievements. I wish not for our achievements to go unrecognised, but it must be said that they did not come without hurdles from losing venues last minute, issues scheduling issues and challenges in negotiating terms. However, this was all overcome to result in the following successes;

Starting with our annual winter market, led by Taira Sow, Elisa Zúñiga Park and Malu Haller with the Events Committee all in support of RCTC in Lebanon. Followed by a new partnership with Shelter City, a Maastricht based NGO, providing a place of rest for human rights defenders. Shortly followed by a bake sale organised by Sara Fornero and Shelter City to repair a radio station in DRC.

Next, we had a busy February with Denise Kuhn and Moira Zobel organising a fundraiser art night for Konojel, our partner in Guatemala. With relaxing music and home baked snacks this evening was at full capacity and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone in attendance. Shortly thereafter, Sara Oberrauch worked with a Drop in the Ocean, for a movie screening highlighting the challenges faced by asylum seekers as they flee their homes. This evening was followed by a panel discussion by experts from UNU merit. Then we finished the month with cosy Valentines evening organised by Taleja Heymel focused around combating loneliness.

In March we worked alongside Laura Murer and the incredible Events team to organise a Masquerade Ball for our new partner Kubuka. This new partnership, forged by Flor Estrada, helps foster entrepreneurship and education in Kenya and Zambia. We raised 1714.50 euros to support their work. This night brought together members of UNSA, and it was great to see the achievements of the two committees materialise.



Despite our time as a team nearing a close we are yet to slow down! Julia Tapella has been working on a neon party fundraiser for Serve the City, Tola Paturej on a Jam Session with Refugee Project Maastricht, Pau Villegas on a Maas river clean and Laurence Mortier on the Run for Save Future Youth in Palestine. All parallel to Carl Vimont and the social media team making posts on important topics, notably gender-based violence written by Chloe Grenouille.

Although I believe it is evident from this letter, I am beyond appreciative of the Development Team and I am grateful to have led them in their endeavors throughout the year. Finally, I must thank the UNSA Board, for the support, it has been a memorable experience.

Love,
Tillie Morris, Head of Development

SILENT SUFFERING: CHINA’S HIDDEN GRASP ON HONG KONG

Corner Café

Patrycja Tobola

How has China been displaying power over Hong Kong so far? Firstly, weakening the border laws between the countries. Access is easy, and “international” transportation and travel have become unnoticeable. “Hong Kong is treated as an extension of China”, Aryan said. Travel permits in the form of cards are being introduced, allowing non-Chinese citizens of Hong Kong to travel freely to the Mainland. The process is way smoother than earlier.

Another day-to-day thing that is slowly making Hong Kong unrecognizable as a separate entity from China is accepting different forms of payments, especially the typical Chinese ones, such as WeChat, or Alipay. Hong Kong is preparing itself for the diversity of remittances in the future.

The last one, probably the saddest, is language. Hong Kong's native language is Cantonese. However, nowadays in schools, Mandarin – the language of mainland China – is starting to be widely incorporated into the main language curriculum in Hong Kong schools. The younger generation learns to communicate in Mandarin despite it not being the prominent local language. “That is how China prepares Hong Kong for the inevitable. They want Hong Kong society to slowly become Chinese”, Aryan said. “We’re speaking like them, we’re paying like them. It feels now, more than ever like we live in China”.

LINGUA MAASTRICHT: HOW A CITY OF STUDENTS IS REMIXING ENGLISH

Culture

Introduction

Jet Brinkman

Communication is an integral part of human life. Since moving to a new city, about two and a half years ago now, I have been speaking my second language more frequently than my first. I am not the only student in Maastricht in this situation. Rather, many of us students — international and Dutch — share the same experience. Though we spend the day speaking English to one another, our mother tongues have never really left us; traces of what we grew up speaking are intertwined with how we speak to each other in English. Interestingly, the traces of our separate mother tongues have become intertwined with each other’s English as well — I do not speak how I used to speak in English class. I use new words, new sounds, new phrases, all borrowed from the languages and people who have shaped my experience in Maastricht.

In a way, my friends and I, but every other student in Maastricht in turn, are part of the process of language creation. The question then arises: If we are actively shaping a language, are we still speaking English? Have we created a new language through our shared and different cultures? Is there such a thing as Maastricht-English?

Through this article, I hope to show you what makes a language, and whether we have yet created our own — to answer the most important question of all: have we earned polyglot-bragging rights?

How do we acquire language?

To start our journey into the land of language theory, we first need to define what exactly constitutes a language. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, it can be defined as “a system of patterns and symbols used to communicate. It is defined as the comprehension and/or use of a spoken, written, and/or signed (e.g., American Sign Language) communication system”. Language is thus, in its simplest definition, how we communicate.

How we classify a language as such is not undisputed. The simplest way of deciding whether we are speaking the same language is if two speakers from different regions can understand each other, even though they speak with different accents or use slightly different wordings. This is, however, not true in every case: speakers of Norwegian and Danish can probably understand one another when both are speaking their native language, but we still classify the two as separate. This has to do with the other markers which make a language: standardisation, recognition, linguistic features, historical evolution, and sociolinguistic identities.

Together, these characteristics exemplify why languages are not something that has simply been given to humans, but rather something that we have actively created. In the creation of many different countries, the national language serves to unify the people: through shared history and the choice to make one language universal, culture and language reinforce one another and, in turn, create a national, sociolinguistic identity. This explains why we consider Danish and Norwegian to be two different languages: when Norway became independent from Denmark, so became its language. Politics decided that the standardisation of Norwegian would be different than that of Danish.

As with all things created through generations, a language must be passed on to be kept alive. The most interesting acquisition of language is, in my humble opinion, that of children: as with all things children learn, they develop their speaking skills mostly through play. Kids don’t worry about the words they use, or whether their textual compositions are grammatically correct. Instead, they listen to what they hear, and repeat what they find interesting, what sounds funny. As we will see, this playful quality has not yet truly left us young adults. My own vocabulary has expanded in the past three years, mostly by incorporating words that sound funny.



Maastricht-English

Now that we have looked at how languages form and evolve, let’s zoom in on Maastricht; it is time to look at our own language. Maastricht-English does not qualify as a language as it has not been standardised — no one has officially spoken it into existence. However, we can make a good case for the fact that our collective identity as students and our shared history in this city makes for a dialect of English. We can understand other English speakers and make ourselves understood to them, but we have our own cultural quirks.

Maastricht-English may not be codified yet, but it lives where all hybrid languages begin: in jokes, misunderstandings, and inside phrases that don’t translate.

As I am writing this, in real time, students from more than 50 countries are unconsciously building a hybrid dialect. Who among us hasn’t heard phrases such as the occasional “bah” or “boh” when the Italians feel doubtful, or “oui, oui” when agreeing with the French? Along the same lines, I have heard many a “hello” become a “ciao” and watched a “goodbye” turn into a playful “doei doei” — a Dutch staple adopted by non-Dutch speakers, purely because it sounds fun. Or even into “bisous” — goodbye kisses from the French.

Other words do not simply function to replace English phrases, but have been added to our shared dialect because some things just do not translate: when really not wanting to do something, the French express that they have “la flemme”. As there is no universal English word which describes it, we have adopted this remarkably useful word for us students. In the same vein, “basta”, meaning stop, but with a much more definitive cultural connotation, has been integrated by many. The final example, one of my personal favorites, is the integration of “bravo, brava, brave, etc.” — used by the Dutch, French, and Italians, and spoken in our common English with different accents. Our native languages also influence our grammar and phrasing: “whatever you want to do, it is fine by me” has turned into “as you want” — a phrase that is English, and technically correct, but one that I have never heard a native speaker say. The French speakers will immediately recognise it, however, as “comme tu veux” is a staple for them. Similarly, many French and Italians utter “we did this with my friend” implying for the English that a group of people did something, with the addition of their friend. In reality, what the speaker is expressing is that he or she did something with their friend — including the friend in both the subject pronoun and emphasizing their presence later on in the sentence.

Though it has made for some confusion, the avid attempt to include their friend in every part of the sentence is sort of wonderful, it makes things extra “gezellig” as the Dutch would say.

The interesting thing about these additions to our English is the fact that the words are as dynamic as the language they are included in: other speakers, from different countries, adopt the newfound words. This results in situations where the Dutch and Italians complain about having la flemme, and the French yell out basta when a joke has gone too far.

Conclusion

Maastricht-English is not in any database, it has not been officially created. Combined with the fact that it has not revamped English severely enough so that it is not understandable for other speakers, it is not its own language. However, it is very much alive: It lives in us, it lives through our sentences. We utter words we never would have known if it weren’t for the people around us. So even though we haven’t created a new language in the traditional sense, we’ve built a new way of speaking, one that reflects the messy mix of who we are.

Though my examples originate from my circles, mostly including the French and Italians, different friend groups from Maastricht will undoubtedly have countless examples to share. How beautiful that we now all carry pieces of each other’s homelands with us — how beautiful that the people we have met in the past years have become a part of something we do everyday, of our speaking. So maybe we are not exactly polyglots, but we are something just as rare. We are part of a people who built a common language without even trying, one borrowed phrase and mispronounced goodbye at a time. ★

THE FATE OF ZELDA FITZGERALD: THE PLAGIARISED MUSE

[...] *In* spite of all of this, she remained determined to write, and in 1932, she attempted to publish a semi-autobiographical novel, *Save Me the Waltz*. However, after she sent the manuscript to his editor, Scott heard of it and became furious. His anger stemmed from the fact that he had intended to use some of the same material for his own book, *Tender Is the Night*. He demanded that Zelda edit out the sections he planned to use. The revised version of *Save Me the Waltz* was published but met with little success. Scott himself dismissed her work, calling her a "third-rate writer." Discouraged, Zelda largely abandoned her literary ambitions, which only further deepened her struggles. In 1948, years after Scott’s death, Zelda perished in a tragic fire while locked inside a room, awaiting her electroshock therapy treatment.

Zelda’s life and tragic fate serve as a haunting reminder of the erasure of women’s voices in literature. Far from being merely Scott’s muse, a role she was relegated to for most of her life, she was a brilliant woman whose talent was overshadowed and ultimately stifled. While the use of the word ‘plagiarism’ is under debate in relation to their work, her influence in her husband’s books was in no way minor, and she significantly contributed to his literary success — though at the cost of her own voice and agency. [...]

SPRING POEMS

Requesting a Moment of Your Spring

Oh, will you not stay, just for a little while longer?
We have much of the day left, and so many ahead
Now that the Earth, though a mother to you, is young once more
And you, born and little again with each March that comes ‘round
Even when you are there on your doorstep
To greet it for the twentieth, the fiftieth, the seventieth time

With so many Springs yet unlive*d* in your pockets
Will you not come back in just for a few more minutes?
Just one more cup of honeyed coffee
Just until those flowers over there wake?

The Cherry Tree

A scent wild and floral drifts through my open window
Distant bells no longer announce hours but the blooming of
each branch
The graceful white of a January sky, of fresh snow
And now I know where the cherry pits in my throat went

I take my weary self out into the late afternoon
Sitting down beneath it, caressed by its roots
And tell it about the Winter
It unknowingly holds in its petals

”FOOD FOR PEOPLE, NOT FOR PROFIT” HOW MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ARE TRANSFORMING LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Dominique Berendsen

Culture

It’s a Wednesday afternoon in Maastricht. In the sustainability hub, a group of Maastricht University (UM) students gather to unload fresh fruits and vegetables. Carrots, leeks, lemons, and more, sourced from an organic local farm, are carefully sorted to be sold to a list of pre-order customers. This is the Food Coop. A student initiative that focuses on food for people, not for profit. Founded in 2019 by three UM Students, the Food Coop aims to make local and organic farming available to everyone. Through direct collaboration with *Goutte*, an organic farm on the Belgian border of Maastricht, the organization has become a sustainable alternative to corporate supermarkets. But then how does it work? Each weekend, customers can select their preferred items, from that week’s variety of fresh seasonal vegetables and fruits, which are then prepared for pickup on Wednesdays between 15:30 and 18:30 at the Maastricht University Sustainability Hub. The selection of available produce changes weekly, reflecting what’s in season. Their approach supports sustainable practices by allowing members to order based on actual demand, thereby minimizing food waste. In a world where corporate interests increasingly dominate grocery aisles, the Food Coop stands out as a vibrant community for conscious consumers. Dedicated to offering local and organic produce at prices that are aimed at students’ affordability, the Coop is more than just a place to shop - it’s a movement.

To understand more about how the initiative works, I spoke with Linn, one of the core members.



Shortening the Supply Chain: Local Food, Global Impact

Linn has been a dedicated member of the Food Coop for two years and took on leadership last year, following a significant turnover as many members completed their studies. Determined to rebuild, Linn successfully recruited a team of 15 enthusiastic students. Together, they operate in a “non-hierarchical” and democratic manner, ensuring the fruits are ordered and ready for the customers each week. As a non-profit organization, they rely on volunteers to help with weekly sales.

The Food Coop is a short supply chain initiative that offers consumers produce grown, harvested, and distributed close to their homes. By eliminating transportation and intermediaries, the Coop reduces carbon emissions. In contrast, a banana from Ecuador or an avocado from Mexico in Dutch supermarkets has traveled thousands of kilometers before reaching shelves. While produce in the Netherlands is also shipped abroad, Linn explained, “*Almost all of the fields surrounding Maastricht don't supply Maastricht with produce and food. And I found that so crazy.*” Linn highlighted that sustainability, while crucial, is just one facet of this movement. At its core, the initiative strives to forge vibrant communities through food, reestablishing a more human connection to what we consume.

“Not just in The Netherlands but beyond we are losing our connection to food and where food grows. Food is so connected to nature as well, and especially in cities that aspect is getting lost. I think we definitely try to be a counterweight to this movement.”

To support this ideology the Coop organizes events like farm visits. Students and Maastricht residents venture out to the fields of Riemst to visit Reinier at Goutte farms to see where their food is grown. Linn emphasizes the value of this direct connection: “*Just this nice aspect that we can go there, meet with him at his farm, or go there and look at the fields and touch the vegetables while they're growing or touch the soil in which my vegetables are growing...it's such a nice thing*” This hands-on experience not only deepens the appreciation for the food but also fosters a sense of community and responsibility.



Linn preparing an order at a Food Coop
Wednesday sale

Creation: Museumnacht

SPACE, SOCIETY, AND SPECULATION: A NIGHT OF ARTISTIC FEATURES

Ella Leffler

Notions of space, society, institutions and relational frameworks are all broad and complicated, yet important terms for interpreting and visualizing what our future can and should look like. Furthermore, a grounded understanding and visualization of such grand ideas can help inform what we can presently do to accomplish an idealized future. This is what both Bureau Europa and the Jan van Eyck Academie aim to tackle through artistic outlets and research on Museumnacht 2025.

Bureau Europa (BE) is a platform for architecture and design, in the Northern half of Maastricht, next to Lumiere, that was founded in 2006. The venue carries out exhibitions, workshops, lectures, city walks and so much more. What is unique about the venue is the philosophical lens with which they approach and present their projects. In such projects they aim to address the notion of space in conjunction with society; meaning the broader context of what it means to live in a city or community and how architecture influences and reflects this and the general space in which we reside. For BE specifically they take into account their positionality in Maastricht–the armpit of the Netherlands; being engulfed by Germany and Belgium and how this alters the cultural and regional experiences when contrasted to a city bordered by one or no countries. This Museumnacht, such broader notions of space and localized perceptions will be presented in two juxtaposing activities; the Maastricht Architect Bake Off and a photography exhibition of Chris Keulen’s Silent Song collection. Not too much will be given away here about their specifics, so stick around to find out what exactly these two activities entail.

The Jan van Eyck Academie is a multiform Institute for artistic research in various fields, such as fine arts, design and art theory. It was founded in 1948 and is located in the city centre. The Academie focuses on and encourages individual artistic exploration and collaboration among its researchers, who study there for 11 months. Researchers at the Academie display their expressions and projects in various events, symposia and more. This year for Museumsnacht, the institute is presenting within the broad theme of situated institutions, relational practices and liminal studios – an ambitious and vague theme. Essentially, this theme aims to address the question: How do the arts function in the time frame of social, political and ecological crisis? The exhibitions, lectures and performances will address how the arts play a role in this theme.

Jan van Eyck is presenting a very ambitious yet exciting schedule this year, as it encompasses two whole days rather than one evening. These three days are a jumble of creative learning and a little peek into what the Jan van Eyck Academie is all about – posing questions, alternatives and hands-on experiences for how we can resituate, reapproach and change what society perceives as normal. If you are ready to approach the evening with an open mind and consideration for how one can re-imagine our society as we know it through an artistic and sustainable lens, stay tuned for the unique yet alluring aspects. [...]

ALL THAT GLITTER ISN’T LOVE IN ANORA

A review of Anora by Sean Baker

[...] Despite the movie’s straightforward plot, there is a myriad of topics weaved into the background of every character and their arc: sex work, sexual violence, social class and status, and relations between Russia, Armenia, and the US. The exploration of those themes only happens through the behaviour of the characters as a product of their environment. Keeping your eyes peeled and ears sharp for the characters’ reactions to events is crucial to fully enjoy the politics of the movie and understand the protagonists more. Otherwise, the characters are never properly introduced. We know very little about them – especially Ani herself. All we know is that she knows Russian because her grandmother never learned English, that she lives with her sister, and that her mother lives in Miami with her boyfriend. This has been criticised by some reviewers, who argued that Sean Baker ought to focus on his main character more. On the contrary, I would argue that the mystery around Ani reinforces the credibility of her character. Just like with her clients, any personal information is given out on her terms. Ani only shows you what she has carefully curated for your experience with her – except when the camera catches her off-guard. We learn more about Ani through her reactions instead of her actions. [...]

Beyond shared ideology, their partnership with Goutte also makes organic produce more affordable, with UCM alumnus Reiner offering students a 30% discount. The Food Coop’s prices include only a small margin to cover transportation, keeping the produce affordable. However, as organic farming remains more costly and receives little subsidy, non-organic supermarket alternatives are often cheaper. To mitigate this Linn and her team are working on implementing a “solidarity system”. This is where non-students would pay slightly more to compensate and subsidize lower student prices.

Still, Linn argues that price isn’t the main appeal to buy at Food Coop—it’s about supporting local initiatives and knowing exactly where your food comes from.
The Path Forward: Increasing Visibility and Participation
While the Food Coop makes sustainable, local produce more accessible, many students have yet to discover it. Awareness remains a challenge, “We currently receive around 25 to 30 orders a week,” Linn noted, adding, “That could be so much more”. While the Food Coop advertises through social media and hangs posters, they find most success through word-of-mouth. Excited customers share the aesthetic appeal of the fresh vegetables and influence their friends to try it out, “It’s almost a nice ritual to order and pick up your vegetables each week,” Linn added. “Plus, they look very pretty.”

In addition to word of mouth, the Cooperative has been featured in UM’s Sustainability newsletter, bringing them some additional visibility. However, Linn expressed disappointment that the University does not offer more support to them, especially since they often highlight Food Coop’s efforts as an example of the University’s commitment to green initiatives, “*I don’t want to call it greenwashing, but they claim to support such wonderful green organizations... but the relationship is kind of difficult sometimes*”. The Food Coop operates independently of the University and does not receive any funding, unlike other student organizations.

Nonetheless, the Food Coop is not isolated; it has established a strong community by collaborating with like-minded organizations. “*These little links in the supply chain and other initiatives are super important for making it all work,*” Linn shared. “*It’s so nice that within this network, different initiatives support each other... we can empathize with one another and help each other grow.*” Reinier at Goutte Farm remains a key supporter, connecting the Coop to other organic farms that operate within short supply chains. Additionally, a valuable new collaborator, Calabi, is enhancing the Coop’s digital outreach. This innovative platform connects small sustainable businesses with their customers, making weekly orders more seamless. Linn was excited about this change, noting with a smile “*We have a very, very pretty web shop now. Which is nice for the people ordering but also makes it way more efficient for us.*” ★

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS X

MD: BRINGING THE PAST TO LIGHT

Carolina Scheuch and A.G Thor

Culture

Beneath Maastricht University’s (UM) Inner City Library, where sunlight and bird songs are shut out by thick walls and doors, lies a world of the past. This world has its own soundscape, composed of the buzzing sounds of temperature control units and air conditioning. Silver tubes run like veins over the ceiling, red metal shelves form narrow corridors of light. LED bathes the room in its yellowish glow but does not touch the fragile pages of the hundreds of thousands of books stocked between the shelves. Books, most centuries-old, exuding the smell of tobacco and dust, holding between their pages past stories and ideas, once based on the world their authors inhabited, now archived, sometimes interrogated, and judged based on a new world - the “outside” world, they rarely see themselves.

On the Maastricht Diplomat’s (MD’s) visit to UM’s Special Collections, the mix of wonder and sensory stimulation stirred up a bunch of stories and associations for Carolina and A.G, all explored hereafter.

In a different time and a different place, another set of books sat behind closed doors – this time in the storage space of a charity shop A.G worked at. There were comic books and textbooks and classics and much more weighing down shelves, filling cardboard boxes, and even covering the floor, tall stacks tucked in corners. New books could only be brought to the front gradually, as they moved quite slowly through the store, with the exception of pulp romance. But even with a temporary hold on accepting literary donations, low prices, and a dedicated volunteer who tamed the book corner in the front of the store, the storage room was slowly being buried.

Sometimes, calls would come in - hopeful voices asking whether the shop had the last volume of a series. Then, a staff member would usually squint at the book corner before admitting they were out of their depth. Other times, some bookish person would inspect that corner for a while, quietly prying out a selection that they’d lovingly store in a tote bag or backpack on checkout. In those instances, when people seemed to really search, whether for a classic to perfect their treasured collection or for another sci-fi novel to pore over on a pillowed windowsill, A.G found it difficult not to offer them to explore that buried storage room. But throwing people into a pile of books likely would not have been enough without tools for them to find what they wanted.

In contrast, the Special Collections prioritize accessibility, making it easier for a wider audience to access information. One of the tools for making literary sources more accessible is digitizing the collections. Seeing a yellowed tome sitting in a sleek metal scanner, with its pages carefully pressed down by a thick glass sheet, its pages being scanned one by one, can quickly put into perspective the work required to let us read one specific chapter of one specific book, possibly from an armchair halfway across the country.

If you can visit, digitization should not diminish any motivation to inspect the Special Collections in person. Just like some people go on treasure hunts in charity shops, or perhaps coincidentally stumble over an eye-catching publication, rehoming books discarded by others, the archive is a treasure trove for many different suitors. Researchers, teachers, students, and other seekers who find their way to UM’s Special Collections tend to express a certain delight, carefully caressing the pages and covers of books in recognition of their value and fragility. An experienced collector will know not to wear gloves because it has been found that tactile connection makes for safer handling.

Even though they can be accessed in these different ways, locking up books does something strange to how we perceive them. It evokes an air of mystery and gives books, as carriers of (written) knowledge, a special status.

It seems this perception starts forming early. Whether you’re a first grader in the 21st century erasing a spelling mistake from your notebook, or an ancient Greek student scratching your wax tablet clean, you might find that there is something different about your mode of writing and the book or papyrus scroll you’re working from. And for some, this is also when the desire to access special knowledge in books kicks in.

During her teenage years, Carolina was obsessed with reading. It all started with annual reading competitions, a program recording how many books she read and how much of their content she remembered. Young Carolina’s proudest moment came about when she logged her 100th book. Every year, there was a reputation to defend and a significant prize to win.

The village library opened on Wednesday evening for a few hours, a tight timeframe to scout the shelves for treasures. The librarian, acquainted with the little girl's indecisiveness, knew to occasionally make an exception and let her borrow an extra book. Soon, the small room above the town hall became a tad too small. Luckily, there was the high school library.

Carolina dreamt of building her own collection and even convinced her parents to furnish a whole wall in her room with bookshelves. When it came to filling those shelves, Carolina started to develop a list of must-reads, sometimes listing books mentioned within books.



desirability of a specific kind of knowledge.

“When society collapsed, the librarians didn’t.”

So opened the video by Luke Humphris, telling a hopeful post-apocalyptic story that centers librarians as key organizers, educators, and resource providers. They know how to find information, how to present it in a useful way, and how to help people turn theory into practice.

But this work takes a village, and the archives’ proper preservation requires heavy lifting from its caretakers. The headline collection at the Special Collections is the Jesuit collection, which has over 250.000 volumes and contains a broad range of materials, from early modern prints of anatomical atlases to a surprising number of travel books. Outside of the Jesuit library, the Special Collections also holds the private libraries of Maastricht physicist and Nobel prize winner Peter Debye and Maastricht poet Pierre Kemp, and correspondence and pictures of Limburg painter Charles Eyck.

On the MD’s visit, historian Melissa Prinz told them that even the staff there did not know everything that they had - there was just so much of it. This was surprising. Everything was so neat, the red push shelves pristine, each book in sight marked.

But it was also exciting, heightening a sense that was already there. The Special Collections preserves knowledge in the form of antique books, letters, articles, and manuscripts, the oldest one dating back to 1471. There is something about the space that inspires creativity, perhaps the thought about being amidst old souls’ and great thinkers’ legacy. There is a strange attraction to “discovering” the past, and the esteem in handling designated treasures.

The archive’s infrastructure and categorizing practices contribute to the feeling that we are gaining a sneak peek into a special world. We imagine knowledge and history as embedded within the pages of books and consider ourselves responsible for their preservation for future generations. Of course, the archive’s imperative is preservation, and as such, bearing witness to human history and culture. And in this statement lies the force that drives our appreciation for the Special Collections teams’ work - the reliance on visual, documented, tangible facts of human civilization.

In envisioning the past, however, we often forget to consider its less romantic aspects. We forget to insert a narrator different from us, with different values, ideas, and experiences, and who is, like their books, a product of their time. We forget that books are more than just vessels for knowledge. They are cultural artifacts conveying the context and craftsmanship of their time, telling a story of their own. Moreover, they represent a knowledge distribution system within our society, and they can be institutional tools to reinforce values and reproduce dominant discourses. However, books also have the potential to be sites of resistance, as book burnings and bans throughout history show. Accordingly, a key tenet of the Special Collections team’s work is that the archive should always be a place of active learning, of questioning our own biases, of being challenged and thinking critically about the traces of another time left by real people, now at our fingertips.★

BREAKING THE FOURTH WALL: KENDRICK LAMAR’S HALFTIME SHOW AND THE POLITICS OF PERFORMANCE

Unless you’ve been living under a rock, you couldn’t have missed the annual U.S. Super Bowl game, held in New Orleans on February 9th this year, and the explosion of reactions to its halftime show.

This year, the halftime show was performed by the renowned and, in my opinion, one of the best rap and hip-hop artists of our generation, Kendrick Lamar. His performance has been described as the “best halftime show ever…” by Ben Stiller, and was met with many other reactions on X such as “Just who else can do this?” from Taylor Swift, “This looks insane for everyone witnessing it in real life” from Eminem, “Definitely the right guy for the job.” from Jay-Z, “everything I needed and MORE” from Rihanna.

But what was so special about this performance? And how did Kendrick turn one of the most watched/televised shows in the United States into a political and cultural statement? And also why? Towards who? To all these questions, I will try to bring answers. Now let’s deconstruct the performance…



What is the Super Bowl?

At the end of the NFL season is the Super Bowl. The NFL’s 32 teams are split into two conferences, the AFC and NFC, each with four divisions: West, North, East, and South. Top teams from each division,

plus a few wild cards, make the playoffs to compete for the conference title. The winners face off in the Super Bowl. The Super Bowl is known to be THE major event of the year in the U.S., for sports but also entertainment. Some of the biggest-selling performers in history have performed on the field during the renowned halftime show, such as Michael Jackson, the Weeknd, Lady Gaga, Beyoncé, Rihanna, and many others. The Super Bowl is also known as a grand spectacle of commerce and cash flow.

Numbers

This year, Super Bowl 59 broke the audience record with over 127.7 million Americans’ viewers. That’s of the US population… For the halftime show alone, there was an average of 133.5 million viewers across TV and digital. The video of the show now accounts for 74 million views on YouTube.

As this game is also a major outlet to “make money”, advertisers spent 8 Billion \$ each to appear on the biggest live audience on TV. 800\$ Million is the total amount FOX generated in ad revenue for the “Big Game”. As stated by Lachlan Murdoch, executive chair and CEO of Fox Corp. “The clear winners Sunday night were the Eagles, the NFL and Fox.”

Regarding these numbers, you may think that the halftime headliner must be paid a fairly good amount of money. Maybe 1 or 2 Million? Maybe 5? Or 10?

Zero. Super Bowl headliners are not paid a cent as the organisers of the Big Game believe that the performance itself represents sufficient advertisement for the artists. This makes sense when you know that in 2023, Rihanna saw a 1,140 percent increase in music streams during Super Bowl weekend.

The Great American Game

However, apart from numbers and logistics of the game, this halftime show is considered to be more than just a performance. Kendrick turned this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity into a political and cultural manifesto. The many symbols and significances brought into the show were incredibly well played and audacious, especially in the current social and political context in the United States.

The first image of the performance already showcases the tone and aim of the whole spectacle: we see the stage depicting video gameplay, reminding us of what could be a PlayStation controller. For the next 13 minutes, Mr. Lamar will be the main actor of the Great American Game, showcasing the gamification of the American Dream.

Uncle Sam as a depiction of the federal government and White-Conservative America

The first character to give us a hint of this “game” is Uncle Sam, portrayed by Samuel L. Jackson. As he’s the first one we see, he introduces the show with: “It’s your uncle, Sam, and this, is the Great, American Game”.

Fans notably drew comparisons between Jackson’s roleplay and his famous role in Django Unchained where he played a slave loyal to a white master. Throughout the whole performance, Samuel L. Jackson gives hints of what “America wants”, criticizing the show. The role he plays is clear. First, a black Uncle Sam is a direct satire of “what America wants” and represents, especially since the start of Trump’s administration. In ‘Today’s America,’ Uncle Sam guides Mr.Lamar through the expectations of the American public, saying it’s “too loud, too reckless, too ghetto”, and how “this is not what America wants”, but rather something “nice and calm”. By these words, he directly targets afro-american culture and black people in America, showing their systematic marginalization and discrimination in society.

Still, there is the most resonant image of the performance. After hearing Uncle Sam say “M.Lamar, do you really know how to play the game? Then tighten up!”, we witness a living and animated U.S. flag embodied by Black dancers in red, white and blue, with Kendrick in the center, performing one of his most popular tracks, Humble. This stage play serves as a reminder of the backs that built the country of the United States against their will, and still keep being told to be “nice and calm” and never fully incorporated and acknowledged in American Society. The flag then follows by splitting in half, as a portrayal of what freedom looks like, through the lens of bold and unapologetic Blackness, and another representation of the country’s deep division.

Crip Walking

Among the guests on Mr. Lamar’s show, Serena Williams came as one of the major ones. If you follow the beef between Kendrick and Drake, most people say Kendrick invited her only as she is Drake’s ex-girlfriend. However, this might only be one of the reasons, as Mrs. Williams is also a fervent representative of the black community, and is, just like Kendrick, from Compton in L.A., California.

Most significantly, during Lamar’s famous song Not Like Us, Serena Williams performed Crip Walking, also known as the C-Walk. From a personal viewpoint, this was a way for her to celebrate Compton, and take vengeance on the racist commentary made by FOX (also organiser of this very SuperBowl) back in 2012 during the London Olympics when she won the gold medal and celebrated her victory by Crip Walking.

The Crip Walk is a dance move that was created in the 1970s by first-generation Crip members as a method of expression and communication and has since spread worldwide without its linguistic aspects. Crip Walking is also present during the whole performance as another reminder of the importance and significance of Compton culture.

“The revolution is about to be televised”

In the early stages of the show, Mr. Lamar said this: “The revolution is about to be televised, you picked the right time but the wrong guy”. This phrase is a direct reference to Gil Scott-Heron’s 1971 song “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised” written to highlight the disconnect between the consumerism celebrated on TV with the protests happening in the U.S.. Some also heard this phrase as a direct message to Trump who, in this case, would be the “wrong guy” (and also present during the Super Bowl). This message resonates perfectly with the rest of the performance where other hints from Kendrick aspire to a similar message.

“Forty acres and a mule, this is bigger than the music”, said before singing Not Like Us, was a direct reference to Special Field Order No.15, which was a promise to allocate 400.000 acres of land to former black slaves, broken and overturned in 1865 by Andrew Johnson (Lincoln successor). The song Not Like Us itself was not just about Drake anymore, but a sign of this revolution, breaking the fourth wall and speaking directly to the public, as a rallying anthem to unity in the context of a divided America. This is even more visible when we know that the following and last song, tv off, was also a direct call to all spectators that the tools for resistance and revolution are in our hands at our disposal, just like the game controller is.

More than a performance, a message

Kendrick Lamar’s Super Bowl halftime show wasn’t just a performance—it was a statement. Through powerful imagery, symbolic choreography, and sharp cultural references, he turned America’s biggest entertainment event into a thought-provoking critique of racial injustice, identity, and systemic oppression. From Uncle Sam’s commentary to the Crip Walk and the split American flag, Kendrick beautifully used the stage to challenge the audience’s perception of the “Great American Game.” More than just music, his show was a revolution in real-time—a reminder that art can disrupt, question, and inspire. And with millions watching, he made sure the message was impossible to ignore. ★

BRUSHES AND COMPUTERS: HOW THE ART WORLD IS ADAPTING TO THE RISE OF GENERATIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Augustin Forjonel-Legrand

[...] *I* had to walk through several galleries before finding works that fit my topic of technology-inspired art. The modern pieces always met the classic definitions of art, from oils on canvas to charcoal drawings. This is why I really liked discovering Anne-Karin Furunes’ work, from her “Paintings of Svalbard” collection, in Gallery K. This piece contrasts with the rest of the Modern Artwork, by its size and the technique used to realize it. Indeed, the Norwegian artist was inspired by photographs from the Svalbard glaciers, and realized works by manually reproducing the process of printing through perforation and pixel-like colors, giving the final result a photographic aspect. This photographic element helps to enhance sensitivity and creates thought-provoking works. This shows how modern means are inspiring artistic creation, changing the way artists create.

If finding technology-inspired pieces at TEFAF was hard, it was even more challenging to find an AI-generated creation. But, as I turned down an alleyway, I came across an animated work by the French artist Miguel Chevalier (Bella Donna, part of his “Fractal Flowers Series”).

Being quite surprised, I stood admiring this animation for several minutes. It was the first time I had seen this kind of work. After asking the person in charge of The Mayor Gallery about it, I learned that it had been created using artificial intelligence software and that the video lasted 58 minutes (having other galleries to visit, I unfortunately didn't watch it all...). Anyway, this work caught my curiosity and I decided to find out more about AI in art. This is how I came to ask my questions to Miguel Chevalier himself.

I started by asking him what his relationship was with AI when it came to his creative process. “For me, it represents a new territory to explore in my artistic research.” Indeed, he engages in a deep explanation about how AI enhances his creativity. Chevalier explains that AI acts as his “creative partner” that is the “mirror of his imagination”, opening new “perspectives” and exploring a world “full of surprises”. It is a “fascinating” world. To illustrate this, he takes the example of flowers, plants, or even trees that he created for some of his works. “Some tools even allow creating 3D shapes, opening up new perspectives.” Chevalier explains that creating AI pushes the boundaries of artistic creation further, “distorting and reinventing reality.” [...]

VAN CLEEF AND ARPELS: MORE THAN THE ALHAMBRA

Charlotte Godfried

[...] *Besides* this, the specific quality of resources which are required to create pieces like van Cleef’s are hard to come by. Not only does it cost money to purchase raw materials, the real problem seems to rest in the scarcity of the materials in the present day. I spoke with one of the sales advisors present at the Van Cleef exhibition. I am told that It is simply more difficult to come by the minerals seen in the Heritage pieces in part due to the closing of mines that extract these resources. I can't help but let this information feed my suspicion: Van Cleef must be more than the flashy brand that comes to my mind. It’s hours of skilled labour, it’s choosing quality over quantity, it’s patience and passion. Right? If I was still sitting on the fence, what I hear next pushes me over the edge. The lady I speak to at the Van Cleef stand mentions to me the phrase ‘poetic complication.’ -the term used when referring to watches. Van Cleef & Arpels watches exist in a side world to their jewellery. I am told about the ‘Lady Arpels Pont des Amoureux.’ Two lovers represented by a watch. The two lovers stand on the Pont des Amoureux in Paris, and when midnight strikes, they kiss. In other words, at midnight the two hands touch. It's sickly sweet but it's definitely a story.

Perhaps there are two dimensions to Van Cleef & Arpels. There is the side of the brand that is just that, the brand, the logo, worn to show off status. But under this commercial surface exists a Maison that represents Heritage, secrecy, art, craftsmanship, and romantic stories of love.

Pieces of jewelry created in such a unique manner that they are not even to be seen by most people in this world. If you want to see the archival pieces of the patrimony collection you need to be a serious collector. You need to be more than just a sniffer and you need to know to know. Seemingly, this second dimension of the Van Cleef & Arpels Maison is for the sophisticated rich art collectors of the world. Those collectors who refuse the Alhambra and want to see past it, who instead desire to purchase something more expensive than a diamond, crave the story behind the jewellery. Lovers kissing at midnight, a bracelet made of the seven oceans or 630 hours of unique work. I conclude: a true art collector likes a story, perhaps even needs a story. [...]



Crossword

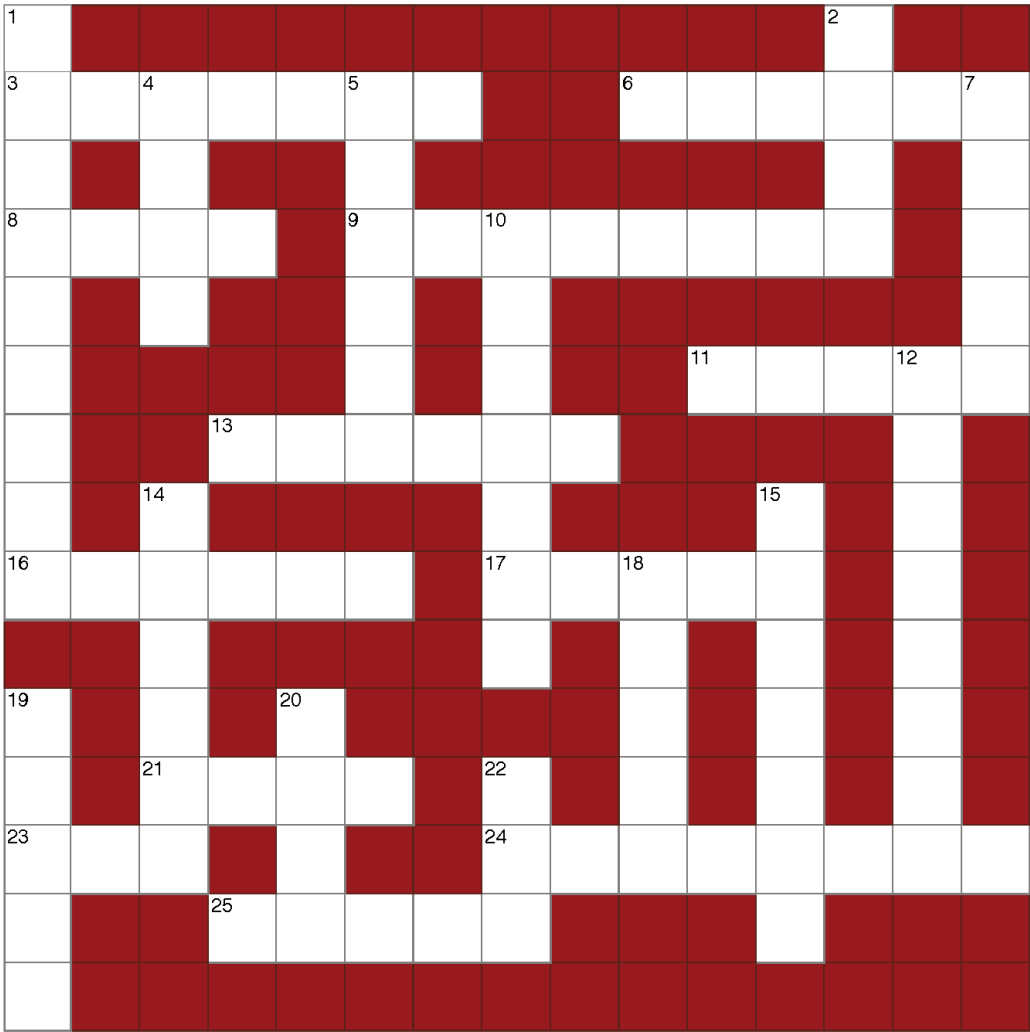
Spring Crossword

ACROSS

- 3 a spice, nicknamed "the red gold"
- 6 known by many
- 8 "immediately"
- 9 a narrative with moral or political meaning
- 11 first month of spring
- 13 a tree that blossoms pink in spring
- 16 trying to find something, like wild strawberries in the forrest
- 17 a place to listen to pop music and news
- 21 what you use to hear the spring leaves rustle in the breeze
- 23 anagram for "tea"
- 24 a reason for sneezing in spring time
- 25 where astronauts go

DOWN

- 1 a spring vegetable, nicknamed "the white gold"
- 2 a replica
- 4 an achievement
- 5 what you wear on king's day
- 7 editor-in-chief of the Maastricht Diplomat
- 10 a place you can take from without being a thief
- 12 what you need after losing an hour of sleep from daylight savings
- 14 the best place to buy strawberries
- 15 arranged flowers
- 18 the national flower of the Netherlands
- 19 a bird sound
- 20 what a leaky faucet does



22 a pronoun

See back page for the answers

WHO BROUGHT TEFAF’S 2025 TROPHY?

Creation: TEFAF

[...] *Les Dormeurs* has hung on many museum walls over the years; it has seen the interior of the Louvre, the Stedelijk Museum, the Guggenheim, the Centre Pompidou and the Museu Picasso. What makes *Les Dormeurs* so special?

The vibrant green background behind pink shards of a face. Rumoured to be painted just so because of Picasso’ severe migraines, his pain meant his vision was cut up a-nd this led to him seeing contortions in flashes of reality. Picasso, infamous for his many muses, paints Jacqueline Roque, with whom he spent his last 20 years in matrimony. Their age difference of 36 years kept him young, or so he said. Picasso had a dream about Jacqueline and this is what the painting is of. Hence the title. This piece hung on the back wall of Picasso’s art dealer and primary agent, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler’s office as he believed it to be one of Picasso’s masterpieces.

This is high praise in and of itself. Until he sold it directly to Robert Landau, the founder of Landau Fine Art, it had been in the Landau family’s possession for three generations. The 17th-century Spanish style frame around *Les Dormeurs* was purchased recently and cost as much as a small house.

Whilst TEFAF is open to the public, it is predominantly an art sale. Many of the other stands I spoke to were there with the sole intention of selling. Yes, the general public coming to take a look at Europe’s finest art was good for fostering interest and establishing an accessible connection with those unable to buy anything so that TEFAF may continue to exist in this rocky political climate where class difference is getting more and more pronounced, but this is extra. Gallery owners come to sell. Therefore it is significant to note that Picasso’s *Les Dormeurs* is not for sale at TEFAF. [...]

[...] Evans explains that the art at Landau Fine Art is for sale only to those who can properly appreciate the value of the art. I am explained that the value of art comes from the quality of its creation—not from its scarcity. This is what makes *Les Dormeurs* so special. Picasso’s love and captivation for Jacqueline Roque are palpable through the 1956 canvas. Only those who properly treasure and respect the art in the same way the Landau family does can be considered serious customers. *Les Dormeurs* has been bid on before, in the past with smaller sums, all of which have been declined. Art can be sold to make money, but those who understand the real value of the art can know that holding onto it could produce a fortune. Something that the Landau family has understood and actively employs in their business dealings. The art market is volatile but this fact can be overcome by procuring, cherishing and maintaining the correct investments so that generations may collaborate over time to build a fortune.

Charlotte Godfried

Augustin Forjonel-Legrand

Creation: Museumnacht

[...] *Filmhuis* Lumière is the perfect place to (re)discover gems of cinema, from the past and present. This year, the organizers chose to put David Lynch's works in the spotlight. The American filmmaker, who died in January 2025, is most known for movies like “The Elephant Man” or “Mulholland Drive”. The filmhouse will focus on a selection of short films, showing the development of Lynch’s artistic career. Lumière explains that the director introduces the short movies, explaining his choices and works (even if Lynch didn’t make it on purpose for Lumière!). Exploring David Lynch’s art is always a dive into a bizarre world, something that makes the audience think for a while after viewing. Because it is part of cinema heritage, this selection is essential to visit for all movie enthusiasts.

If you want to experience a screening on a different note, Lumière has you covered! The Kaboom Animation Festival proposes a selection of short animated films in different styles around the theme of freedom. This is the occasion to discover new styles and stories, from personal liberation to political resistance. The organizers explain that the “unique lens” through which freedom is presented is very enriching.

The last screening proposed by Lumière is a different type of experience. Indeed, the Dutch artist (from Maastricht!) Veerle Houben came up with a project of interactive screening. The audience is involved and contributes to making the story progress. Through applause, the people watching the movie help a female character grow, and ultimately, escape her condition (and the condition of the world?). This is a unique and exciting experience that confronts the audience with its role as an actor in the screening. Even the organizers confess to not having seen the final result of Houben’s work, so it is really worth seeing it yourself. [...]

A TAPESTRY OF SOUND AND STORY AT THEATER AAN HET VRIJTHOF

Clémence Bernard

Creation: Museumnacht

[...] *Have* you ever gone to a boring concert and left disappointed? This time, it will not be the case. If you’re a music lover, you may want to pass by the Theater aan het Vrijthof to attend a vibrant, and interactive experience! During the night of Friday 11 April, museums of Maastricht will keep their doors open all night for the 9th edition of the Museumnacht Maastricht.

Among them, the Theater aan het Vrijthof, a central figure in the cultural life of the city and the wider Euregio Meuse-Rhine.

Housed in a historic building on the Vrijthof square, the theatre has grown into one of the leading stages in the Netherlands. With a strong focus on music and performing arts, it has been bringing people together for decades through its broad programming and welcoming atmosphere. They gave us a glimpse into their Museumnacht program during an interview. [...]

[...] To ensure smooth transitions and great ambiance, the DJ duo Disco El Sur will rock it before and after the performances, playing old-fashioned CDs. Their creative energy will complement that of Anastasia Safona and Andrej van Brakel, as well as Sounds Like Juggling, with each contributing in their own way to the festival vibe of the evening. To wrap up the event, Disco El Sur will create a relaxed atmosphere with a selection of French and Italian music, while you might have the chance to interact with the artists.

Overall, this night promises to be unforgettable through its variety, merging the worlds of traditional and innovative music. [...]



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Crossword answers

Across: 3 saffron, 6 famous, 8 asap, 9 ALLEGORY, 11 march, 13 cherry, 16 SEARCH, 17 radio, 21 ears, 23 EAT, 24 hayfever, 25 SPACE.

Down: 1 asparagus, 2 COPY, 4 FEAT, 5 orange, 7 sarah, 10 library, 12 caffeine, 14 market, 15 bouquet, 18 daisy, 19 TWEET, 20 drip, 22 SHE.