



‘Wageningen, cherish your activists’

‘Spontaneous protests prohibited’, we read in *Resource*. Several sweet, creative protests, such as pop-up gardens and a blindfold around the head of a statue on campus, were cleared before students and staff could take notice.’

‘No action is allowed on campus without consultation, for reasons that have to do with ‘safety’. And for that reason, a cute little pop-up park (which students spent weeks on) is immediately sawn in half? What is the danger of a blindfold around the Sower (a statue made of stone!)? What actually compromises safety is intensive use of cars and our addiction to fossil fuels.

As a society, we are obsessed with productivity. Most people are far too busy with their daily concerns to think critically about our future. That is precisely where our role as a university lies, as a breeding ground for new and different ideas. Instead of vandalizing the students’ creations, we should consider the point they are trying to make. With all that students in Wageningen read and learn about climate change, the environment and decolonization, it is surprising that the students’ actions are so loving and poetic, harnessing the power of imagination to prove a point. Suppressing protests is something we usually associate with authoritarian regimes with a certain fear of their own people. But this does not seem to be the case here. Our hypothesis is the opposite. It is not the students who instil fear but the mirror they hold up to us. After all, many of us working in Wageningen know very well that we must do everything we can to make the transition to a much more sustainable society. We also know that universities



The statue of Ceres in the Atlas lobby got a blindfold in mid-May. The sheets of paper say ‘This is a climate emergency’ and ‘Why study if WUR doesn’t listen to the educated?’. ♦ Photo *Resource*

with their knowledge and free thinkers can help accelerate these kinds of change processes, or should even lead them.

‘It is not the students who instil fear but the mirror they hold up to us’

the two-faced Janus head of the university: the organization in which we seek change toward a better future is also very good at legitimizing and perpetuating the status quo. Protest is a communication tool that questions what we take for granted. This is something the university should welcome, rather than punish.

When we look in the mirror that the students hold up to us, however, we also see

That is why Scientists 4 Future say emphatically: *WUR, stay with the trouble and look in the mirror a little more often.*’

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