

# Growth Analysis Memo



**FRONT**

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

12th december 2018

## Introduction

Tilburg University has included an ambition for 'controlled growth' in their Strategic Plan. This means that the growth of the university is subject to consistent evaluation and that it should not lead to undesirable situations on campus. To accompany this, the university included this ambition in the Real Estate Vision that was presented just before the summer holidays. In this document, it was promised that the actual growth in student numbers would be the prime decision element on which real estate expansion would be weighed. Steeper growth would result in faster infrastructural changes on campus to accommodate all the new students. However, recent numbers have shown that the number of students is rising beyond expectation. In the Strategic Plan, it was predicted that the number of students on September 1st 2018 would be 15.000. In the recently published 'Provisional 1 October Count 2018-2019' (UR2343) it was stated that, as of October 1st 2018, Tilburg University had already exceeded this number by 862 students. The growth number has risen from 9,5% tot 11,2% in just one year. Simultaneously, the new budget for academic and support staff was revised downwards. These numbers and actions do not stroke with the vision expressed in the Strategic Plan and Real Estate Vision, where it is stated that the university aims at a 40% increase of student population in the period from 2017-2025, and a similar growth in academic staff (40%) and supporting staff (30%).

As a student party, Front is in direct contact with students at Tilburg University. This gives Front a realistic view of student perspective and at the moment the prevailing concern among students is that the university is acting overambitious on the topic of growth. Over time, Front experienced that the current facilities on campus are under a lot of pressure and that it is necessary to take certain steps if the university wants to live up to the promised ambition for 'controlled growth'. Therefore, Front has compiled a list of current problems, along with photo evidence and possible solutions to the problems stated. Front would like to ask the Executive Board to enter dialogue with Front about the situation.

We have categorized the problem areas as follows:

- Workplaces
- Education
- Other Facilities

### Workplaces

A problem that has risen due to the growth of the number of students, is the problem with workplaces.

#### Problem 1: Lines in Front of the Library - Overcrowded Library

In the morning, there is a line of dozens of meters in front of the library building to enter the building. See the pictures below:



Students know that if they are not in time and do not have a good spot in the line, they will not be able to secure a workplace in the library building. Last weekend, the library was opened even 20 minutes earlier than its opening time, due to the long line outside. The library is seen as a nice place to study, with the silence rooms on floor 1 and on floor -1. However, there is no room for all the students that want to study there. Of course, there is also a silence room in the Bunker in building C but this location does also not provide enough study places for the demand. Moreover, study associations are even reserving rooms for their members here at the university so they can study there (because they cannot find enough places). Front think this is undesirable.

Most of the times, the self-study places in CUBE, the Restaurant building, Goossens, Academia and Prisma are being allocated to study. However, there are study places in the Restaurant and Prisma that are not available for studying between 11:30 and 14:00 and you can therefore not study comfortably in peace. Moreover, these buildings do not have silence rooms, while there is apparently a high demand for this kind of study places.

### **Potential solutions - Overcrowded Library**

Extending the opening hours of buildings with study facilities in and before the exam period, might help to reduce the peak moments in general of students studying in the library.

#### Opening Mensa restaurant

Opening the restaurant from an earlier time on a Saturday and/or Sunday during exam periods will provide more workplaces for students. The Mensa can then only be opened for study places, and not for lunch. Of course, the students can eat their own provided lunch there, but there will be no catering in the weekends for lunch. Students will have the whole day (till at least 16:00 when the Mensa does open for dinner) to study in the Mensa.

#### CUBE open in weekends

Opening the digital examination rooms in CUBE as (potential) silence room for (at least) in and before the exam period, might help to reduce the peak moments of students studying in the library.

#### Use digital examination rooms in CUBE as study places

Start to use the digital examination rooms in CUBE as study places during regular weeks (so also outside exam periods). Of course, there is a peak of number of students who want to study at the university in and around the exam periods, but the library is crowded all the time due to a larger number of students at TiU (because of growth in number of students).

Opening these examination rooms in CUBE when possible would be a nice alternative for students. If the university would also record the availability of the study places in CUBE in the app, students also have an overview of how many study places are still available in CUBE. So far, Front has heard mixed signals in meetings on whether this is going to happen or not.

#### *Clear communication about available computer rooms*

The availability of the computer rooms in for example buildings Prisma and Goossens could be included in the TiU app. Front has already proposed a reformation of the app in SALIS. Here students can see which rooms at the university are available for studying at that moment. In addition, there should also be clear communication about the use of computer rooms in building Prisma and Montesquieu since a lot of students have the impression that it is not allowed to use these rooms, even if the rooms are not in use for lectures.

#### *Search for alternative study places*

There is already a location outside the Tilburg University campus where students can study and have lectures: the Deprez building in the city center. The university could also try to find other external locations, just like the Deprez building. An example could be Gebouw 88. This is a building next to the Central Station (and close to the Deprez building), which will open its doors in January 2019.

### **Problem 2: 'Handdoekje Leggen' - Overcrowded Library**

Besides the problem of the overcrowded library and the lack of comfortable (silent) study places/silence rooms, there is this typical Dutch problem that arises called 'Handdoekje leggen'. Students claim a spot upstairs behind a computer, or in the basement of the library for a laptop work place. After they claim their spot, they leave it immediately to go and have a nice breakfast with their friends (who, thus, do the exact same thing). Front has video footage of last week early in the morning on which can be seen that the library has just opened, and all the students have already left their spot to have breakfast or go to a lecture. They will be gone for approximately an hour. For lunch they do exactly the same. They will leave their spot for sometimes even two ours to 'go and have a break' or go to a lecture. These two hours could be very useful for another student who could sit on that spot for those two ours. Of course, it is necessary to take a break, but not to take a break of more than 45 minutes or so.

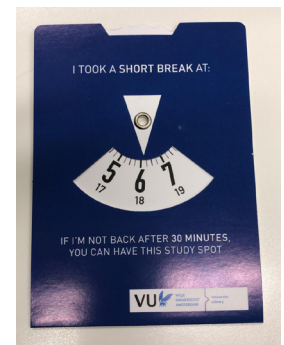
## Potential solutions - Handdoekje Leggen

### Automatic logout on computers

When a student is having a break, and has left his/her computer, an automatic count down should be introduced. When the student has not logged into his/her computer within 30 minutes (or another time, for example 45 minutes), the computer will automatically log this person off. This will make sure that another student is able to log in to the computer.

### Blue card

An initiative that was introduced at other universities in the Netherlands was a card like shown here on the right. On this card, students can indicate at what time they leave their study place for a break. So, every other student knows that when for example 30 minutes (or another time, for example 45 minutes) have passed, they can make use of the study place. It is then the responsibility of the student to be back in time, before the set time is passed.



## Education

### Problem 1: Full Lecture Halls

The growth does not only put pressure on study places, but also puts pressure on the lecture halls. Due to the growing number of students, lecture halls are extremely full. Sometimes students have to sit on stairs to follow their courses. Moreover, during tutorials, students have to 'run' for a spot in the lecture room. If they are not present early enough in the room, there might not be a seat left and therefore they feel like going home. Due to this, some students do not even go to their lectures or tutorials anymore, since they do not have a seat. Front thinks that this is unacceptable.

## Potential solutions - Full Lecture Halls

### Clear communication about tutorials

Students should be made really clear that if they sign themselves up for a tutorial group, they are not allowed to go to the lectures of another group. Of course, there are exceptions. However, this should not become usual. Lecturers should also act strictly on this.

### Divide student group in lecture halls

When a cohort of a certain study is too big for one large lecture room, why not reserve two smaller rooms that have a bigger capacity when adding up the seats? If this is not possible, a possibility could be that the lecturer is giving his/her lecture in one room and is being live recorded, so that in the other room, students can follow the lecture live (this is an emergency solution).

### Problem 2: Evening Lectures and Exams in the Evening

Furthermore, Front noticed that there are more and more exams and lectures in the evening hours. This in itself is problematic, since students have less time to do other things such as: sports, working or being a member of a student association. Front also heard that these exams in the evenings sometimes take place under circumstances that are not quite ideal. A situation that came to Front's attention was that there was an exam taking place in the Dante building, where at the same time there was a reception in the foyer with a lot of music. Students were able to hear the music while writing their exam. Front thinks these kinds of situations are unacceptable and students should not be harmed by this.

### **Potential solutions - Evening Lectures and Exams in Evenings**

#### Video lectures

Front knows that at many faculties, there is the free option to record the lectures. Many lecturers do not want this, because of various reasons (e.g. telling personal matters about for example family in class). At least the lectures in the evening should be recorded more often, since some students are not able to attend them.

#### Scheduling

As a student party, Front knows that the scheduler does his/her very best to plan everything correctly. However, more attention needs to be directed to scheduling exams in the evening since some students now have exams at 19.00 till 22.00, which is not the most convenient time, in the sense of concentration level and the possibility to get home after exams. Also, attention should be paid to the planning of exams near a foyer where there are graduation celebrations, receptions and drinks. These include buildings such as Cobbenhagen, Academia, Dante, and Warande.

## Other facilities

Front notices that other facilities, especially in the Library, are under pressure as a result of the growth of Tilburg University. Several problems arise, which obviously should be taken care off.

### Printing Computers

The first problem Front observes is the shortage of printing computers. Lines of students develop behind the print computers and our students have to wait a long time until they are finally able to 'quickly' print their documents. However, unlike the above-mentioned problem, most problems arise during the weekend when Tilburg University is closed and the Library is the only building open. Throughout the exam period, the Library is well visited by students in the weekends. The crowdedness has its repercussion on several facilities.

### Bathrooms

The second problem Front notices are the toilets. In the weekends, many toilets are clogged and overflow, which is obviously disgusting. Other than that, students are unable to go to the bathroom or have to wait a long time, what they experience as very disadvantageous. Front wants to spare the Executive Board the pictures, but asks the Board to solve this problem as soon as possible.

### Coffee Corner

Another issue is the Coffee Corner, because the Restaurant is closed until 4 pm during the weekend, all students are forced to eat their lunch in the Coffee Corner. As a result, the Coffee Corner is a large mess, almost all students are unable to have a seat, and some students need to wait before they can lunch since the Coffee Corner is the only place where they are allowed to eat. In addition, the coffee machines and vending machines are empty on Sundays or there are big lines in front of the vending machines.

We have compiled the possible solutions to the problems stated above in a list on the next page.



## **Possible solutions - Other facilities**

As outlined on the previous page, the Library building, especially during the weekends, is a big mess and this problem must be tackled quickly because many students lose their patience. Therefore, Front suggests several actions the Executive Board can take to solve the above-mentioned problems:

*More printing computers should be installed in the Library;*

*Cleaners must be deployed in the weekend to take care of the bathrooms, or plumbers should take a closer look to the bathrooms in the Library building*

*The Restaurant building should be opened earlier, so students are able to lunch there and the Coffee Corner remains clean. Sodexo does not have to open; students are already bringing their own lunch.*

*The coffee and vending machines should be refilled on Sunday morning in the Coffee Corner.*

## **Conclusion**

We ask the Executive Board to take note of the problems mentioned in this memo. We would like to emphasize our willingness to help on these issues. If any questions or need for clarification should arise after the reading of this memo, we kindly ask the Board to contact us and we would be glad to help.