



E-Gazette



Journey to 'the Emerald Islands'

Last December Charlotte Groven and Rally Schwachöfer of the marketing department and associate academic director Dr. Annemarie Rima, visited the Holland Education Fair in Indonesia. This fair was organized by the Netherlands Education Centre (NEC) and it is one of the most important instruments for Indonesian students to orientate themselves on the higher education possibilities in the Netherlands. The HEF 2006 was organized in four cities: Surabaya, Jogjakarta, Jakarta and Bandung; the total number of visitors was around 8716. Next to recruitment activities, the 'ladies in white' explored the possibilities of the collaboration for dual degree programmes with Indonesian universities (Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta and the University of Indonesia in Jakarta) and training activities for governmental institutions. Next to the sparkling white Maastricht University shirts, the tuition waver lottery (two tuition waiver to be rewarded to two ambitious, talented HEF visitors who are interested in to following a master's programme at the School) was a big success! A total of 599 of future students showed a general interest in studying at Maastricht University. Maastricht is still a popular university for many Indonesian students, especially due to the international image and the PBL system and therefore it is important to maintain the existing relationship between Maastricht and Indonesia. Luckily, there is an increase in the amount of scholarship opportunities like the UM high potential scholarship fund and the the Indonesian Government Scholarship that enable students to actually come to Maastricht for a year. This week, two lucky applicants will receive an official letter with the news that they have won the MGSOG tuition waiver lottery 2007! The students will start their master's programme in September 2007.



Who is making the rules in microfinance – maybe the gods?

A report by 'our girl in India', PhD fellow Britta Augsburg

Microfinance can be broadly defined as the provision of loans to the poor for the purpose of supporting an income generating activity.

Unfortunately, in most cases, it can be seen that loans are not actually used for the purpose they were initially (or officially) intended for. Study cases show that about 60% of the loans are used for domestic purposes, such as payment of wedding expenses, religious festivals, consumption, or even the repayment of other debts. Quite logically, this is seen as a big problem, since it usually entails a deterioration rather than improvement of the poor clients' living conditions.

During one of my last field visits, I saw something similar – while one of the clients used the loan for its intended purpose, the reason behind it cannot really be related to the general idea of microfinance. Nevertheless, this story shows that in some cases, it might be more important to satisfy a higher goal than to stick too close to the established rules. Let me tell you the story:

The client I am talking about is a farmer in the State of Andhra Pradesh in the South East of India. This client took a "housing loan" – a loan that is, as the name suggests, provided to improve the condition of the home or business. His intention was to build a toilet and, considering that many households in rural India do not have one, this is a perfectly viable reason for taking a loan. So, why am I telling this story? Things became puzzling when observing that the client in fact already *had* a toilet. Looking at his living situation more closely, the roof could actually use some repairing and the new toilet was built about 3 meters closer but was in a perfectly usable condition nonetheless.

So, why then did this man decide to get into debt while being poor? The answer is simple: building a new toilet would resolve all the problems which he had with the neighbours and the fights within the family that were going on over the last decade - both of which, to be mentioned, did not evolve around the toilet. Still unclear? The secret is the principle of 'Vashtu Shastra' which is comparable to the Chinese idea of 'Feng Shui' – an ancient philosophy of how the design of one's environment, let's say a house, can influence the flow of energies, i.e., luck. About ten years ago, an expert in Vashtu had already told the farmer that the water tank of the toilet was built in the wrong corner of the garden. Being "young and stubborn" at that point in time, the farmer did not listen and did nothing to change the position of the water tank. The result was that over the years, more and more difficulties began to arise. Ten years later and much wiser, the farmer finally decided to do something about it and build a new toilet. And, surprise, surprise, for this he needed a loan. At the time of my field visit, the old toilet was still in use and the problems were not solved yet. Whether they will be solved in the future needs to be seen.

But then – who are we to judge? Maybe, one should not always look for

rational explanations – 'rational' as defined in the west that is. It is important for this man and his family, for them it is a legitimate reason; he is paying back his debt, building his toilet and feeling happier. And, is feeling happier and hence having improved living conditions not the ultimate goal? Definitely, the ultimate goal of a field visit is the realization that we need to overcome our preset 'western assumptions' in order to understand and study other cultures.

The story might put a smile on your face – it did for me.



International Student Night

From March 25th until April 1st, the Lumière theatre will be the principal venue for the Film Festival Maastricht. Up and coming in its third year (in its full independent guise) the 2007 edition will be bigger, better and more buzzing than ever. Presenting the cream of contemporary world cinema, the programme this year will comprise an exhilarating mixture of special import-productions. Coinciding with the 50th anniversary of The Treaty of Rome, 'Europe's new frontiers' is the overall theme for the 2007 edition of the festival. Within this theme, the festival quite literally will cross many borders. A small number of films will also be shown in Aachen, Germany, and the Belgian city of Tongeren. Within the Film Festival programme, the Maastricht Graduate School of Governance will organize an 'International Student Night' on March 26. During this evening a colorful mélange of classical and new films in English or with English subtitles will be shown. There will also be a special programme on Romania within the 'new European frontier' theme which will be introduced by the School's very own Research Fellow, Bianca Buligescu. Movies which will be shown this evening will be the opening movie of the Rotterdam Film Festival 'The Paper will be Blue' about the madness that ensues after the 'fall' of Romanian leader Ceaușescu. Other movies that will be shown are: 'Goya's Ghosts', the new David Lynch 'Inland Empire', 'Rescue Dawn', 'Catch a Fire' and a very intangible yet most probably surprising Finnish production 'Star Wreck'. In short, it will be an evening to enjoy, be surprised, shocked and maybe even flabbergasted but all within the good company of fellow movie lovers and a nice drink! You can find more information on the 'International Student Night' via www.governance.unimaas.nl. You can register for 'the Romanian programme' via movienight@governance.unimaas.nl



First and Last Snow

In case you are wondering whether the staff of the School is actually present at the School and not off roaming the most exotic places on earth, here is at least some proof that we actually really 'work' in Maastricht, in between 'snow fun of probably our first and last day of winter in Maastricht' that is!

**Nice to meet you... Melissa Siegel
(Research fellow ESPP)**

I decided to start my Dutch adventure three and a half years ago after finishing my bachelor's degree in Charleston, South Carolina. I moved to Maastricht a year and a half ago to start the ESPP PhD program.



I had previously been studying and working at Utrecht University (Utrecht School of Economics). For my first two years in the Netherlands, I had the opportunity to study two masters and work on some very interesting projects for the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Finance. I am now living in Maastricht and trying to take advantage of every bit of this lovely city and challenging school. My research is on migration and remittances (money that migrants send back home to their families) and specifically focuses on the determinants of remittances and the way in which migrants send their money. I am currently involved in the fundraising initiative of MGSOG which has been initiated to help create numerous scholarships to allow those students who deserve to be at MGSOG the opportunity to fund their studies. We will be initiating several charity events through out the year (including a charity Marathon team and bike race team). I look forward to meeting many of you at these events!

More information about the **MGSOG fundraising** initiative will be available on our website soon and in the next Gazette.

To learn more about the activities of the School please check our online agenda:

[Maastricht Graduate School of Governance agenda>>](#)

Please let us know if you no longer wish to receive our newsletter via info-gov@governance.unimaas.nl

Also we would appreciate your comments and recommendations.

© Photography Maurice Bastings and Franco Gori
Maastricht Graduate School of Governance
Universiteit Maastricht
P.O. Box 616, 6200 MD Maastricht, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 43 3883822, Fax: +31 43 3884864
E-mail info-gov@governance.unimaas.nl
Website www.governance.unimaas.nl

