



Mark Mobach, winner of the first Deltapremie award

‘Hats off to all my colleagues’

Facility management is an enormously fascinating subject to him. Ever since he graduated in the nineties, Hanze Professor Mark Mobach has always found his profession captivating. In this discipline, space and organisation come together. Too abstract? ‘Call it a meeting between business administration and architecture,’ he clarifies. ‘In other words, how can you use architecture to allow organisations and people to function more efficiently?’ And now Mobach has won the Deltapremie award, because his research has repeatedly made a difference to society.

‘Winning the Deltapremie award constitutes an important recognition of what we do at Hanze UAS,’ says Mobach. ‘Applied research is an important characteristic of our university, allowing us to prepare our students for their work in the real world and at the same time

contribute to society.’ Mobach and his colleagues have created four living labs (see the section on living labs) where research is performed by students and research group members. Mobach: ‘The purpose of this research is to help organisations function more efficiently. We do this by conceiving better buildings and services in cooperation with our clients, such as more convenient rooms for breastfeeding, a safe and reassuring place for people suffering from dementia or a room that is better suited for chemotherapy treatments. We work for as well as in cooperation with stakeholders. Rather than dreaming up new ideas behind our desks, we go out into the field where we gain real experiences and learn from each other.

Mobach said his nomination for the Deltapremie award was a great honour. ‘I felt very privileged to be chosen from among all my colleagues to represent Hanze UAS. Still, this award was not won merely because of my own merits – that would be impossible. We did it together, as colleagues, members of the research group and students. Additionally, let us not forget our partners from the professional field and knowledge institutions. Together, we feel the spark, the drive to perform brilliant research and have an impact on society. I am extremely proud of everyone I work with – hats off to them all.’

What’s next? ‘The Deltapremie’s purpose is to strengthen professorship activities. In short, it gives me the flexibility needed for investments. We must be extremely careful in considering how we can best use

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the award and how we can get the most out of it for the benefit of society. I think it is important that we also reserve some of the money for more exotic things. My principle is to apply a ratio of 80 to 20. Besides the 80 percent in core activities, we also devote attention to new, unusual things. These are things we think are interesting, but for which we do not yet know where they will lead us. For example, I am eager to perform research in places where you would not normally do so, in the hidden corners of society.’

Facility management is still a fairly new discipline. Mobach estimates that approximately only 10 to 15 percent of its potential is currently fully utilised. ‘The Deltapremie award presents us with an opportunity to inspire the world to further expand facility management; it has clearly placed our discipline on the international agenda. In addition, this award raises the profile of the role of the professor and of our university: look at what we can do; this is how we can have an impact on society.’



Living labs

Mark Mobach has created four living labs together with his colleagues at the School of Facility Management, the Research Centre for Built Environment NoorderRuimte and partners in his professional field. In these living labs, education, research and professional practice collaborate on multidisciplinary and design-oriented research at the cutting edge of space and organisation.

Health Space Design

A living lab where practical research is performed together with healthcare institutions. This concerns both short-term and long-term healthcare, such as that provided in hospitals and nursing homes. A good example is the research for the KwadrantGroep into housing for people with dementia. www.healthspacedesign.nl

Healthy Workplace

Here, research is done into stimulating healthy work behaviour and improving office environments. The research is subdivided into five focus areas: movement, concentration, relaxation, indoor climate and sensor technology. www.healthy-workplace.nl

Healthy city

This living lab focuses on the influence of the built environment on the behaviour, health and well-being of the residents of Groningen. What spatial interventions promote a healthier lifestyle for the residents of Groningen at city, district and street level?

Campus Design

This living lab focuses on research in higher education. This ranges from campus hospitality, building layout and building technology (what lecture rooms promote learning performance?) to the campus as an area (what buildings and facilities stimulate cooperation between knowledge institutes and companies?).

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Cutting-edge research with impact

Hanze Professor Mark Mobach wins Deltapremie award 2019

This year, Mark Mobach – professor at the School of Facility Management of Hanze University of Applied Sciences Groningen (Hanze UAS) and leading professor of the Research Centre for Built Environment NoorderRuimte – has become the winner of the Deltapremie award, a new research award for applied research performed by professors. ‘The Deltapremie award was created for professors who repeatedly make an extraordinary difference to society with the impact of their research.’



Stefan Lechner, lecturer and researcher

‘This man deserves a medal’

Stefan Lechner is a lecturer and researcher who is involved in one of the living labs that Mark Mobach has set up at Hanze UAS. In the Health Space Design living lab, lecturers and students work together with professionals from external organisations to realise practical solutions for healthy ageing.



‘We are always focused on the same question: how do people fit in the building and how does the building fit the people? We are currently working with a Frisian healthcare institute with a question about accommodation. They purchased an old town hall and want to convert it into a place for people with dementia. In our workshop, a fruitful cooperation has developed between students of various study programmes: facility management, real estate, built environment and law. Together, they focused on the question of how the premises could be converted in order to meet the needs of the target group. A second question has now come up regarding how we can connect this nursing home with the village where it is located. Once again, students from various study programmes, such as real estate and social work, are cooperating.

The great thing about the research performed at our university is its impact on society. Our students get things

moving with their research. Furthermore, we continuously acquire new knowledge and expertise by working together with various external organisations. We are currently working extremely intensively on the subject of dementia, though we will soon be dealing with a new topic. The interaction with the actual practical situation is educational, and the fact that we receive open assignments from various organisations keeps things dynamic.

‘Working with Mark Mobach is a delight! He is incredibly open-minded and gives us a lot of freedom in the performance of our own work.’

Working with Mark Mobach is a delight! He is incredibly open-minded and gives us a lot of freedom in the performance of our own work. He is always open to new ideas. Mark will tackle anything; no job is too big. I have no idea where he finds the time, but he is always present, no matter the time or the place. At the same time, he remains critical and always knows when to apply the brakes. His knowledge of facility management is enormous; he is – in a positive sense – an incredible glutton when it comes to his work. In the six years that Mark has been at Hanze UAS, he has already achieved a great deal, such as the living labs and the fact that more than 10 PhD students and 20 researchers are now on the job. Mark really makes a difference with his work for our university of applied sciences. I always like to say the man deserves a medal. He may not have gotten one yet, but the day will come...’

Deltapremie award

Through their research, professors of universities of applied sciences have an impact on society, professional practice and education. The Deltapremie award recognises the valuable contribution that professors make to society, together with their research groups and their extensive networks. It also stimulates the further reinforcement and expansion of this contribution. The Deltapremie award is a joint initiative of the Netherlands

Association of Universities of Applied Sciences and the Taskforce for Applied Research and is awarded to two professors once every two years. In addition to Mark Mobach, Anneloes van Staa of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences also won the Deltapremie award this year. The award includes a monetary prize of €500,000. More information can be found on www.deltapremie.nl



Elizabeth Himmans, former student of Facility Management

‘Mark is clever, and also sympathetic’

Elizabeth Himmans graduated from Hanze UAS with a bachelor’s degree in Facility Management in 2013. Mark Mobach was her professor.

‘When I talk about Mark, I always say he is very intelligent, as well as sympathetic. He has a gift for always providing precisely the right advice and insight. He is also empathic and has the patience to continue teaching until you really understand what he is talking about. If you don’t understand something, he’ll explain it again. If you still don’t understand it, he will explain it a third time. He teaches what he knows in a serious, but playful way. For instance, Mark uses art in his facility management lectures. He sometimes invites guest lecturers who can provide input for your final assignment. As a result, you think very carefully about what you are going to do, and you also remember things better. Furthermore, I discovered a new talent – that I can draw well.

Mark’s enthusiasm is infectious. With his positive energy, he knows how to motivate the people around him. He made me feel like I could take on the whole world. When I graduated from Hanze UAS, I had no idea what I should do next. Mark told me to deepen my knowledge and investigate the scientific side of this profession. Based on this advice, I did a master’s degree at Wageningen University & Research. I never thought I would be capable of doing that. I’m from England and sometimes find the Dutch language difficult, but Mark said: you can do more than you think. He was one of the first people to say that to me so specifically. I’ll never forget that.

Mark continued to support me, even when I was at Wageningen. He encouraged me from the sidelines, including when I found things difficult. When I got stuck on my thesis, we talked for two hours. He gave me a long pep talk: you can do this! A week later, I was able to successfully defend my thesis. I am extremely thankful to Mark, as he never stopped believing in me.’



Peter Booman, Managing Director of the Facility Services Unit of Wageningen University & Research

‘Mark’s research is of great value to us’

Peter Booman is the Managing Director of the Facility Services Unit of Wageningen University & Research. He is the link between a number of collaborating universities and Hanze Professor Mark Mobach, who are involved in a four-year research project into the chances of ‘collision’ on university campuses. The funding for this research comes from the universities, and the research is being performed by a PhD student under the supervision of Mark Mobach.

‘Universities are increasingly located on campuses,’ says Booman, ‘a combination of university buildings and companies. As a university, we encourage companies to set up shop on our campus. Of course, we have a reason for doing so; it should ultimately result in cooperation. However, this will only happen if the staff of the companies and our researchers come together and interact strongly with each other. These “collisions” are essential for the success of a campus, but how can you ensure that people leave their buildings and come into contact with

each other? And how can you make the “chance of a collision” between the two parties as high as possible? That is what Mark and his PhD student are currently researching.

Mark’s involvement in this research provides great added value. He has considerable knowledge relating to the pragmatic side of housing and knows how to efficiently translate this to the building and campus level. He is also quite familiar with the university world, and knows exactly how things work here. This means he understands why we want to do something in a certain way and how our needs can be translated into appropriate research questions.

Universities jointly funding a PhD student position at a university of applied science is a new development. Of course, we could perform such research at the university ourselves without any problem, but then we would only get a purely scientific story, whereas the practical situation is very important within the theme of housing. By collaborating with Hanze UAS, we create a link between the practical situation and science. This is a nice addition for us as universities. This collaboration is a great example of how two worlds can cooperate in an effective way.’

Henk Pijlman,
Chairman of the Hanze UAS Executive Board

‘Mark is a great example to others’

Henk Pijlman is the Chairman of the Hanze UAS Executive Board. He sees it as very appropriate that ‘his’ professor, Mark Mobach, won the Deltapremie award.



‘This award is fantastic. For Mark, it is a well-deserved recognition, as well as a very appropriate one. Mark is a great example to everyone in his research group. If you look at the impact he has already had for people in the healthcare sector, for example, you will hardly begrudge him this award. Mark acquires knowledge that can be directly translated into action. Examples include relaxing waiting rooms for patients who are nervous because they are about to undergo important treatment.

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The Deltapremie award is the most important award for professors. It is great news that Mark is the first person in the Netherlands to win it. It is an achievement for the entire research group, but also a great stimulus for Hanze UAS as a whole. This award is proof that the education we offer is on the right track. It is about the impact that research has on society. And that is exactly what we at Hanze UAS are aiming for. It is not for nothing that we refer to our teaching method as “engaged” – teaching for, with and in the community.

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That connectedness with society is essential. In truth, we do not come up with our research assignments ourselves; they come straight from industry. In the living labs, we design innovations that make a difference, together with external companies. We achieve meaningful results with our research, although we actually knew this already. The good thing about winning the Deltapremie award is that the outside world now knows this as well. Now, more than ever before, we can show what we have to offer as a university of applied sciences.

On what will we spend the award money? That is entirely up to Mark. This award is his achievement. We will give him all the space he needs to come up with clever proposals. Knowing Mark, he already has a long list of ideas. Am I proud of him? Absolutely! He very much deserves this award.’