

Social Historical Centre for Limburg/Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Profile report extraordinary chair, established by the Foundation of the Social Historical Centre for Limburg: ‘Comparative regional history, in particular of Limburg and bordering regions’

1. Background and motivation

In 1982, the Foundation of the Social Historical Centre for Limburg (Stichting Sociaal Historisch Centrum voor Limburg) established an extraordinary chair at Maastricht University (then named State University Limburg). In 2007, the establishment of such chair at Maastricht University (UM) was formally included as a goal in the foundation’s statutes.

In 1998, when the last chairholder was appointed, this chair was moved from the (then) Faculty of Health Sciences to the (then) Faculty of Arts and Culture. In 2008, after approval by the UM Executive Board (CvB), the academic assignment of this chair was reformulated. The phrase from the profile report (*structuurrapport*) of 13 May 1997 on ‘The historical changes of society in relation to the typology of social forms, with an emphasis on Limburg and its bordering regions’ (commonly abbreviated as ‘the social-economic history of Limburg’) was changed into: ‘Comparative regional history, in particular of Limburg and bordering regions’. In the view of this chair’s Supervisory Board (*College van Toezicht*), this formulation of the assignment is still adequate today.

This change was motivated not only regarding the primary (geographical) research focus (Limburg and bordering regions, and the concomitant research programme on ‘historical border studies’), but also methodologically, including an explicit reference to the comparative method as ‘an analytical tool derived from the social sciences for distinguishing general historical processes in terms of time and place from special circumstances’.

This perspective allows for a closer connection between this chair and the European profile of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASoS) and the UM research profile on 'Europe in a globalizing world'. In order to strengthen the link with the research of the faculty, the chairholder is also a member of one of the faculty's research groups.

2. Formal relation of the extraordinary chair with the Social Historical Centre for Limburg

From the outset, this extraordinary chair has been linked up directly with the position of director of the Social Historical Centre for Limburg (SHCL). The SHCL is an autonomous research and documentation centre, affiliated with, but no formal part of, Maastricht University. As mentioned in the statutes of the SHCL (founded in 1949), the primary aim is 'to collect, preserve, organize and catalogue source materials concerning social and economic life in Limburg in present and past, and making these materials [publicly] available', and this is followed by the aim of 'promoting and performing autonomous scientific research in this area and publishing its results'. To facilitate these activities, Maastricht University subsidizes about 50 percent of the SHCL's structural operational cost. In the formal job description of the SHCL director (January 2011; see annex), this position is labelled as 'director-professor'. This assumes that the SHCL's extraordinary chair is held by the director of this organization. Based on holding this chair, the director-professor provides co-supervision to the SHCL's research programme, in close cooperation with the head of research and other research staff of this facility.

The close interconnection of this chair and the SHCL's director position has specific advantages for both FASoS and the SHCL:

For FASoS:

- The chairholder contributes to strengthening the FASoS research profile through his/her own (international) publications as well as those of SHCL research staff, through attracting PhD candidates and other researchers via indirect funding or contract research and through establishing links with similar areas of expertise within FASoS.
- The chairholder broadens the faculty's teaching effort by contributing specific themes from his/her discipline and by teaching classes on them; the SHCL may play a role in facilitating classes on historical methodologies and sources and offering facilities in this respect to researchers and students of FASoS and other UM faculties.
- By publishing a yearbook on the social and economic history of Limburg (*Studies over de sociaaleconomische geschiedenis van Limburg*) and the Maaslandse Monographs dissertation series,

the SHCL provides a platform for publications by (talented) UM students and staff on regional-historical issues.

- The specific regional basis and many contacts of the SHCL with regionally active communities and other heritage organizations in Limburg allows the UM to strengthen its regional ties, also in the context of valorisation of research results in publications, symposia, lectures, media contacts and other forms of public presence.

For the SHCL:

- By appointing a professor as director, the SHCL is capable of realizing its statutory ambitions in the field of academic research; this may also strengthen the quality and appreciation of the SHCL's heritage function.

- The chairholder should be deemed capable to develop, together with the head of research of the SHCL, research lines and programmes of their own and also to obtain resources for them.

- This makes it possible for the SHCL to hook up with a number of the faculty's scholarly themes, programmes and activities, such as those of the Centre for Gender and Diversity (CGD), the Maastricht Centre for Arts and Culture, Conservation and Heritage (MACCH), the Maastricht Centre for Citizenship, Migration and Development (MACIMIDE), and the extraordinary chairs in 'Language Culture in Limburg', 'Historical Demographics' and 'Limburg and Europe'.

- This will allow the SHCL to wield more influence in national and international contacts and collaborative networks, such as Dutch-Flemish research schools.

- This will also allow the SHCL to get students interested in its research themes and its specific heritage function.

In practice, the SHCL director-professor has always operated in this way during the past period, as reflected by the positive evaluations of SHCL research output in formal research reviews of FASoS.

The Supervisory Board is of the opinion that for these reasons having a combined position of SHCL director-professor works well and should be continued. Although the chairholder has an office in the SHCL building, institutionally the chair is part of the FASoS Department of History while the chairholder is also a member of one of the research groups of FASoS.

3. Profile of the chair

Research of the history of Limburg and its prior territorial configurations derives its meaning from the province's unique past (in relation to that of other Dutch provinces). A distinct feature of

Limburg is its border geography, its international (European) connections and its specific political, institutional, industrial and cultural history. To account for this region's historical embedment in the Meuse-Rhine region, it is imperative to adopt a border-transcending perspective. The SHCL should continue its development into a centre of scholarly knowledge about the history of Limburg and its bordering regions and into an advanced knowledge partner for other institutions in the Meuse-Rhine Euregion.

Under supervision of the chairholder, the SHCL will continue its research tradition in the field of social and economic history, while also expanding it through initiating new lines of research, to be developed in interaction with the supervisory board and the faculty, on the basis of the chairholder's expertise and interests. The current research line on 'population and health in interregional comparative perspective', in which Prof. Angelique Janssens participates, will be continued as well. The chairholder is also expected to strengthen the academic workplace by attracting PhD candidates and other researchers through indirect government funding and contract research.

4. Positioning of the SHCL and the extraordinary chair within the domain of Limburg heritage

The SHCL combines scholarly research with its heritage function in the area of acquiring, preserving and opening up archival and library sources pertaining to the social history of Limburg and the development of a scholarly library in the SHCL's areas of expertise. This heritage function is co-supported by the Province of Limburg. The SHCL maintains close contacts with similar institutions devoted to Limburg heritage as regards to developing collections and public functions, in particular with the Limburgs Geschied- en Oudheidkundig Genootschap, Limburgs Museum, Centre Céramique and the Regional Historical Centre for Limburg. The chairholder stimulates province-wide cooperation in this field and serves as intermediary in the valorisation of research and publications at the service of regional history.

To ensure adequate operation of its archival and library functions, the SHCL is housed in the buildings of the Regional Historical Centre Limburg (RHCL), which was formerly known as the State Archive in Limburg and which today is operated in a common arrangement between the national government and the City of Maastricht. The library of the RHCL is managed by the SHCL, which also in archival matters closely cooperates with the RHCL. The new appointee is expected to be capable of connecting the UM supported historical-academic research of the SHCL with the library and archival functions of the SHCL and the RHCL.

In addition, the new appointee should be capable to further pursue the strategic deliberations on the positioning of the SHCL with the involved parties, as well as to secure the UM supported historical-scholarly research and support the Board of the SHCL Foundation in this effort.

5. Maintaining the SHCL's national and international academic relations

Given the chairholder's assignment and profile, he/she is a formal affiliate of a Dutch-Flemish interuniversity research school

The chairholder's formal assignment also makes it possible for him/her to establish connections and enter into collaborative networks with kindred research groups in other countries. This pertains first to the nearby universities of Liège and Aachen, but in the past period it also proved possible, based on shared interests in the chairholder's discipline, to develop common PhD trajectories, workshops, publications and other forms of collaboration with colleagues at various other European universities. The appointee is expected to continue and further develop this kind of cooperation.

6. Terms and evaluation

In accordance with the relevant UM procedures, the chair will be established for a period of five years, including the possibility to prolong its establishment for subsequent five-year periods. Every year a scientific report will be presented to the Supervisory Board, which consists of two members to be named by the SHCL and two members to be named by FASoS and is chaired by the dean of FASoS. This annual report will also include an account of all the research performed by the SHCL under the chairholder's responsibility. For periodic evaluation of the SHCL research effort in relation to its UM funding, a separate accountability procedure is in place.

7. Job requirements

The requirements for the job of SHCL director are described in the job description from 2011 (see annex). For the position of full professor, the following additional criteria apply:

- PhD degree in the field of history;
- excellent research skills, as demonstrated by publications in international peer reviewed journals;
- demonstrable editorial skills;
- proven competency to procure funding for PhD projects and other forms of academic research;
- ability to deploy scholarly knowledge in regional (Limburg) communities;
- experience with and interest in regional history is a plus.
- oral and written proficiency in Dutch is required.

8. Selection committee

The selection committee is composed of:

Prof. dr. Sophie Vanhoonacker, dean FASoS (chair)

Prof. dr. Theo Engelen, professor of Historical Demographics, Radboud University Nijmegen

Prof. dr. Harry Hillen, chair board SHCL

Prof. dr. Cyrus Mody, head of history department FASoS

Mr. Piet Creemers, member of board SHCL

One member representing the staff of the SHCL