

Research Board Prize 2021 – Herman Deleeck

Laureate:
Dr Kathleen Beckers

Nominator:
Prof. Peter Van Aelst

I am very pleased that Kathleen Beckers has won this award named after one of my academic heroes: the late Herman Deleeck. I could talk at great length about this special professor, but now it is important that I talk about Kathleen.

Kathleen's research initially focused on citizens in the news. The man and woman in the street who are suddenly faced with a microphone. She is currently doing international comparative research on the role of public opinion in the news. The project is innovative and multi-disciplinary. It is not only interesting and fun, but it is also very relevant. The discussion about which people should have more of a say in the news than others is about power relations in society. It is also very topical. The fact that journalists and social media often put the most extreme opinions in the foreground is part of the reason for the growing polarisation in society. This polarisation is very visible in the United States today. The fact that Kathleen was able to spend a year doing research there with a prestigious scholarship has certainly raised her profile. Being able to work together with international top researchers has made Kathleen grow into a scientist who is ready to pursue a career in academia.

Kathleen Beckers is a very sensible, committed and dedicated researcher. I have had the pleasure of working with her on a few publications. And those were very pleasant experiences. They were intellectually stimulating, but also super efficient and smooth. Kathleen is a very social colleague who is much appreciated by the colleagues in Political Sciences and Communication Sciences. She proves that being ambitious and successful is not contradictory to being loved.

For the aforementioned reasons, I ask Rector Herman Van Goethem and Vice-Rector Ronny Blust to honour Kathleen Beckers with the Research Board Prize 2021 – Herman Deleeck of the University of Antwerp.