

BY PAUL KLINT, DEDICATED TO ANNEKE GROOS

## Unmentioned partners in research

**Our mostly unmentioned partners are more important for research than ever.**

Every I/O column has passed Anneke's scrutiny. 'This too sarcastic?' or 'I don't think this is funny' or just 'It's acceptable, but this isn't one of your best columns' are examples of her totally honest feedback. After Anneke suddenly passed away in November, one of the many things I did while grieving and trying to explore the black hole in which I suddenly found myself was to start reflecting on Anneke's influence on my professional life. She often questioned the wisdom of applying for yet another grant proposal or starting yet another project. The times she helped me to say 'no' to unreasonable demands of the academic system. The questions she asked about the people I was dealing with professionally. The times she wanted to know about the scientific problems that kept me awake. The times she encouraged me when I did not see how to bring certain activities to a good end.

All of a sudden, I realised that as researchers, we try to meticulously give credit to co-workers, colleagues, or students who have contributed even the tiniest of ideas to our professional work. Or to the sponsors of our research. At the same time, we tend to forget or do not sufficiently recognise the important immaterial contributions of our other partners in research. Be it life partners, family members or friends. Our unmentioned partners.

The pressure to innovate, to publish, to collect citations, to collect prizes, to write grant proposals, to teach, to review, to manage, to supervise, to popularise, and to compete for jobs is enormous. The academic system has evolved to a state where researchers are reduced to lab rats. On many occasions, we just hope that we manage to press the right lever to get some food or drink. This has a negative impact on the quality of research and on researchers' quality of life. It is obvious to me that this system is not sustainable and has to be changed. In the meantime, while enduring the current very stressful academic system, our unmentioned partners are more important than ever for us to survive and hopefully to change the system. And this is even more the case in these pandemic times.

Our unmentioned partners in research: appreciate, acknowledge, cherish and love them.

Thank you Anneke.