

February 25, 2014

Prof. Dr. Frank A. van der Duyn Schouten,
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Cc: The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW): President Dr. Prof. Hans Clevers, president@knaw.nl

Cc: The Association of Dutch Universities: President Dr. Rrof. Karl Dittrich, dittrich@vsnu.nl

Subject: *Letter of support for Professor Peter Nijkamp*

Dear Rector of the VU University Amsterdam:

Through various media we have been informed that our colleague, Professor Peter Nijkamp, is under serious attack by the Dutch press. This news has spread all over the world. Apparently, Peter Nijkamp has been accused of “self-plagiarism”. We are pleased to learn that the VU University plans to start an academic investigation and that it has requested the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) to shed more light on the guidelines for self-citation.

From the information we have about the accusations against Peter Nijkamp, we can only conclude that we would all be "guilty" if the standards some people are trying to apply to him, were applied to any one of us.

As there does not seem to be any general, international rules agreed upon regarding self-citation, we would like to stress the following points:

1. Universities should not act on anonymous complaints, especially if they are being done in malice.
2. Academic research is a journey, not a destination. Research builds on past research and it is often necessary to paraphrase it and use existing data sets in order to advance our investigations and explain our new contributions.
3. There is a long history of working papers, conference proceedings, and conference presentations, and that using the results or words from these informal publication venues is normal when publishing a final peer-reviewed paper.
4. There is a long history of dissemination of published research in policy outlets that would rephrase technical research in something the public can comprehend.
5. One and the same paper can only be submitted to one journal at a time. Papers should not be replicated in other journals without the permission of the editors.
6. Clear guidelines about the re-use of extracts of previously published work by an author or by his or her co-authors should be drawn up generally. If the rules were not clear in the past, new rules cannot be applied retrospectively.

The undersigned have known Peter Nijkamp for many years as a solid and innovative scientist, who is one of the world leaders in spatial sciences. His intellectual and original contributions have been a guide for an entire generation of young scientists in the field. His publications — often in many prestigious journals and sometimes also in more popular publication channels — have had a world-

wide impact and have helped to shape a sophisticated research tradition in the field of geography, spatial planning, transportation science, and regional and urban economics.

We feel disturbed by various — sometimes anonymous — allegations against him, which as far as we can judge lack any solid ground. We encourage the VU University leadership to stand up and defend the good name of one of the true scientific leaders in our field.

Sincerely,

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