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# RESOURCE [EN]

For students and employees of Wageningen UR

no 14 – 10 March 2016 – 10th Volume

## Erwin Bulte

Experimenting with  
development aid | p.12





# >> MARIEKE + WATER

Marieke de Lange, ecologist at Alterra

## ‘Fanaticism is in my nature’

Once a competition rower, always a competition rower. Having started as a student with Argo, Marieke de Lange (second rower from the right) has now been rowing with Vara for years. ‘It’s lovely being out of doors on the water. Strength, technique and stamina. If any of these is not up to scratch, you don’t win.’ At the World Championships last autumn she just made third place in the coxless pair race. ‘The most exciting finish of my career.’ In the photo she’s in the women’s eight. Fancy trying it? It’s open day at Vara on Sunday. See [www.vada-roeien.nl](http://www.vada-roeien.nl).  RK / Foto: Guy Ackermans

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‘People assume that you think you are better’

## PLAZA FUTURA

In one month’s time *Resource* is moving to Atlas and our stories will come to you from the first floor of that building. Until then I can sit at my desk in the relatively modest Nexus building and see the imposing Campus Plaza going up. The large white letters on the black wall seem to burst through our office windows. How will it look soon, when all the café terraces are open and students have moved into their flats upstairs? Which shops and catering outlets will the new building house? Which ones belong here, actually? The familiar high-street names or companies that set a good example? That’s a moot point. Personally I don’t pine for a big yellow M or a New York metro-style sandwich bar on campus, but nor do I feel the need for an organic supermarket. Who knows, perhaps this will be where unhealthy lifestyles and the healthy living ideal cross paths. Whatever the case, the planned pub with live music is definitely music to my ears.

Edwin van Laar



>> **Bored pig starts gnawing tails | p.8**



# USING BIG DATA TO BREED PERFECT POTATOES

- Laxmi Parida from IBM Research gave a talk on Foundation Day
- Joint plan for Watson Potato computer program

The university celebrated its birthday again on 9 March. This year's Foundation Day talk was given by Laxmi Parida, head of the Computational Genomics Group at IBM Research. She explained how smart methods for linking large numbers of databases can help us treat cancer more effectively or grow better potatoes. Wageningen UR wants to collaborate with her institute in the area of precision agriculture and breeding.

Laxmi Parida works at IBM Research in the US on how to combine large amounts of data to answer specific questions. To do that, they use the Watson computer program. The research institute has developed IBM Cancer, for example. Together with five academic hospitals in the US, the institute has collated lots of information about cancer from hospitals, the scientific literature and social media. IBM is able to use this to make an analysis of the syndromes. Furthermore, doctors can enter their patients' complaints into the application and it then produces a list of the conditions that the patient is most likely to have. That helps the doctors make the right diagnosis more quickly and draw up an appropriate treatment plan.

Richard Visser, head of Wageningen UR Plant Breeding, visited IBM Research last year with his Wageningen colleagues Thomas Been and Richard Finkers. Wageningen UR will be collaborating with the American institute to develop a Watson Potato, a computer program containing all the scientific and practical information on potatoes. Visser: 'We have an aw-

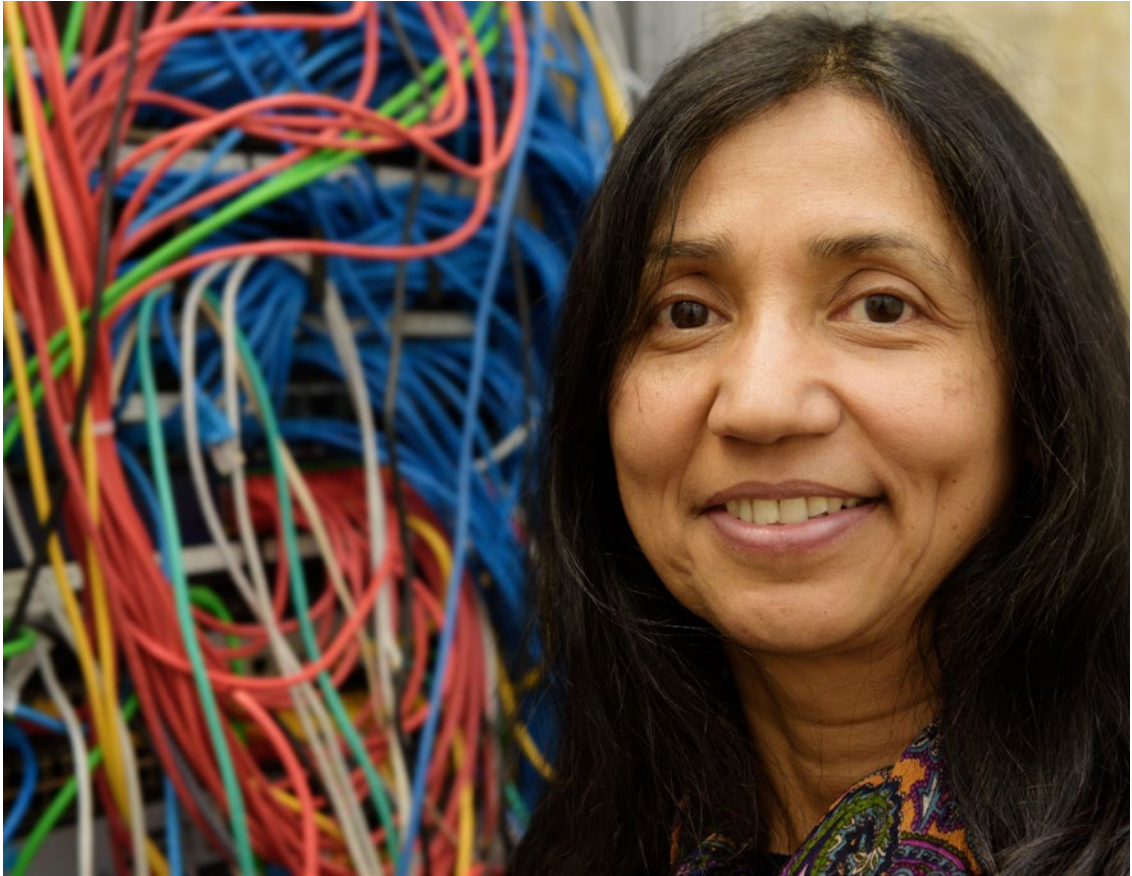


PHOTO: GUY ACKERMANS

ful lot of information and datasets on potatoes and they know how to link those databases.'

Parida says that using large amounts of data requires in-depth knowledge of data management and integration. 'The computer is unable to see a lot of the data so you have to build computers that function in the same way as the human brain and are able to understand and interpret unstructured data. This is known as cognitive computing. For this, you need language processing and learning methods for the computer. We also use topographical data analysis to detect hidden patterns in the data.'

The idea is that the cooperation with IBM Research will speed up the breeding process for Wageningen's potato researchers and make it more targeted. Visser: 'We

know all the genes in the potato genome but we don't yet know what they do exactly. Let's say we want to develop a potato that's resistant to drought. There could be 500 genes that are correlated with drought resistance but which are the most important ones? By linking datasets, Watson can show which ten genes are most promising for further research and possibly even for trying out in breeding programmes.'

Visser sees many applications for the computer program in Wageningen. 'In biology you have a lot of unstructured datasets that you have to combine to answer complex questions. Think of personal dietary advice and environmental issues. You need a lot of computational power and smart software for that.' Ultimately, the crucial fac-

tor in the use of big data is not so much the amount of data — which is still growing exponentially — as asking the right questions, says Visser.

Parida wants to work with Wageningen UR because it is the global leader in the field of agriculture and environmental sciences. 'To develop computer programs that can reason, understand and learn how to solve complex problems, you need the combined know-how of IT experts and specialists in the subject matter. Those two groups need to constantly work together on software programs such as Watson to 'learn' how it should solve that problem.' That makes Data Sciences a new scientific discipline, says Parida, one that involves researchers and companies from different fields. **AS**

# CULTURAL CAFÉ IN CAMPUS PLAZA

- And an international bakery and fast food restaurant
- Café will host live music and lectures

In the almost completed new Campus Plaza there will definitely be a cultural café, a fast food restaurant, a pasta place and a 'student supermarket', says Jos van Schriek of Ten Brinke property developers. There will also be a kiosk, a copyshop,

a greengrocer's and an international bakery, run by a Dutchman with overseas roots 'who will bake foreign breads and bread-based meals'.

One of the initiators of the cultural café, which will host live music and lectures, confirms that talks are going on about the proposed business. 'We want to be a link between the campus and the town. The café will be a kind of outpost.' The café is to have the feel of an American diner, and be a place where

singer-songwriters and jazz musicians perform and where films and cultural events in Wageningen are advertised on big screens.

This package fills 70 percent of the Campus Plaza, reckons Van Schriek. For the other 30 percent he is exploring options with potential tenants. The property developer expects to announce names in a few months' time. **RK**

Read also: the discussion on page 11.

## in brief

### >> BREXIT LEI to study consequences

The British National Farmers Union (NFU) has commissioned a study by the LEI of the likely consequences of a Brexit for British agriculture. The British people will express their wishes on whether Great Britain should remain in the European Union in a referendum in June. The NFU wants to decide its position in advance of that poll. 'The Wageningen study will identify which elements of agricultural and trade policy the NFU will lobby for,' explained an NFU director in the British press. The LEI study has to be submitted by the end of March. **AS**



PHOTO: MEDIAPICTURES.PL / SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

is second to last, just above the Technical University of Delft (*Where innovation starts*). **RK**

### >> SLOGAN Least silly

At last, a ranking in which Wageningen UR brings up the rear: the selection of the silliest publicity slogan. *For quality of life is not too bad, according to the platform for reform in Dutch universities (H.NU).* The H.NU organized the silliest slogan selection at the end of last year as a criticism of the commercialization of the universities. The silliest slogan, says H.NU, is that of the University of Groningen: *Born leaders reach for infinity*. The University of Amsterdam comes second with *We are U*, and the University of Leiden is in third place with *Excelleren in vrijheid* (Excelling in freedom). Wageningen

### >> OFF-PEAK 'Not much scope'

Wageningen University feels it has 'little scope' for helping fulfil the NS's wish to keep students off trains and buses in the rush hour, says Tijs Breukink of the executive board. 'Wageningen University understands the wish to cut the number of commuters on public transport at peak times,' he says. But most Wageningen students come by bike, says Breukink. Also, they often come to the campus to study in the library or a computer room, not just for lectures. Moreover, the university does not wish to further complicate the ongoing discussions with the student council about extending class times. **RR**

## COLUMN|KEES

### Social side effects

There is a story behind every foodstuff. Every foodstuff should therefore come with its own leaflet telling us about its primary and side effects. Just like the ones you get with medicines and financial products, but then including effects on society.

If you buy standard milk, you are buying a product of increasingly controversial quality. This drink is calcium-rich, but the proportions of omega fatty acids it contains could be better and if the story about A2 milk is true, it is a bomb under the health claims made for milk. But apart from that: every time you buy standard milk you stimulate the pollution of surface water, drive farmers deeper into debt, fill the air with more greenhouse gases, give the godwit and the lapwing even less chance of hatching out eggs, give cows even shorter lifespans and cause the deaths of 'superfluous' bull calves. We euphemistically call it euthanasia but it is simply killing calves because they are not profitable. Since the abolition of the milk quota in April 2015, dairy farmers have enlarged their herds, with all the disadvantages that entails. The only beneficiary is FrieslandCampina. Overproduction pushes down the purchasing price, while the retail price stays the same. 2015 was the firm's best year ever! But they do admit to mixed feelings about it. With so many wise men and women at our WUR, the best university in the Netherlands for 11 years now, can we really not design a more sustainable milk production system? **R**



Kees van Veluw (57) teaches Permaculture and is active in organic agriculture networks. His vision stems from his work with African farmers, his networks with Dutch farmers, his family life with his wife, three sons, dog and chickens.





# DLO RESEARCH FACILITIES RUNNING AT A LOSS

- Maintenance and renovation costs not covered
- Other research institutes have shortfall too

The Dutch institutes for applied research, including DLO, are short of about 300 million euros for the maintenance of their research facilities. This is apparent from a survey by the ministry of Economic Affairs.

DLO needs 83 million euros for the maintenance of existing research facilities and another 9 million for investing in new facilities. DLO allocates budget to this, but the allocation is not sufficient. ‘The exploitation of these research facilities never covers it,’ says manager Petra Caessens of CAT-Agrofood, ‘because not all the running costs of the facilities cannot be charged to research projects.’ How many millions short DLO is, she does not know.

The DLO facilities concerned are the High Containment Unit

for research on highly contagious animal diseases in Lelystad, the Dairy Campus in Leeuwarden, the Swine Innovation Centre in Sterksel, Imares laboratories in IJmuiden and Den Helder, Uni-farm greenhouses and trial plots scattered around the Netherlands, and the AlgaeParc and Rikilt laboratories in Wageningen. A few Wageningen University facilities are included in the inventory too: CAT-AgroFood on the campus and the horticulture research units in Bleiswijk. DLO estimates the maintenance costs for these facilities for the next few years at 83 million euros. On top of this, DLO needs a further 9 million euros per year for a new building at the Central Veterinary Institute in Lelystad.

In total, the institutes for applied research – besides DLO these are TNO, Deltares, Marin, ECN and NLR – are short of 166 million euros for the maintenance of existing facilities. The institutes need a further 165 million to build new laboratories for future



research. And they shouldn’t wait too long: the institutes say most of the investment needs to take place between now and 2020 if they are to stay competitive.

Among the facilities run by the six institutes are those where researchers test new generations of solar panels or simulate dyke breaches. Such facilities are often funded from the natural gas revenue fund FES, but this funding does not cover maintenance costs. ‘The idea that these large and often unique facilities are profitable is unrealistic,’ says Deltares director Martin Smits. Since the top

sector policy was introduced five years ago, the institutes have received less government funding.

According to Bas Wessels, director of Corporate finance & control at Wageningen UR, the research facilities exist in a kind of no man’s land. ‘The government is spending less and less on research facilities, private sector clients only pay the cost of the research, and research funding bodies such as the EU only pay a small proportion of the indirect costs. This means there is no one covering the fixed costs of equipment and facilities anymore.’ **AS**



PHOTO: SPREAD THE WORD

## PITCH YOUR RESEARCH

Three minutes. That’s how long the 15 contestants in the preliminary round of FameLab had on Friday 4 March to explain what makes their research so great and relevant. The subjects ranged from the side effects of cleaning up oil pollution to breeding chickens that are less likely to become sick. The latter pitch was made by Tom Berghof, who amused the audience by giving his impression of an antibody (photo). Tim Hofmeester and Nikki Mascarenhas won the preliminary round and will go through to the national final in Utrecht on 22 April. **KG**

# INCREASE IN ANIMAL TESTING

- Rise of 9 percent
- Still more chickens than fish or pigs

In 2014 Wageningen University used more than 14,000 animals for experiments, almost ten percent more than the previous year. The figures come from the latest *Zodoende* report from the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority. Wageningen University used nearly 5000 chickens in experiments in 2014. In clear second place were fish (more than 3700) and in third place, pigs, at over 1700.

But there is no cause for concern about the increased use of animals, according to animal testing expert Rob Steenmans of Corporate Education, Research and Innovation. The

numbers fluctuate from year to year, with a drop of more than 13 percent recorded in 2013. ‘We are a relatively small licensee. If there happen to be more PhD projects in a particular year, the total immediately goes up.’

Steenmans also points out that the total doesn’t tell you anything about the discomfort caused to the animals. As an example, the number of cows used doubled in 2014 to 1106. Steenmans: ‘But this was a case of taking a single blood sample for a genetics study.’

Wageningen University is somewhere around the average when it comes to animal testing. The Radboud University in Nijmegen makes much more use of animals, at almost 50,000. However, the picture changes if animal experiments by DLO institutes are included in the statistics. DLO does not have the lat-



est figures to hand yet, but in 2013 it used twice as many animals as the university. And that immediately makes Wageningen UR the biggest

user of animals in research in the Dutch academic world. The use of animals has been going down in DLO too, though. **RK**

## SIXTEEN MSC PROGRAMMES ARE TOP NOTCH

- One more than last year
- Organic agriculture no longer top

Of Wageningen’s 32 Master’s programmes, the Dutch degree guide *keuzegids*, which came out last week, put 16 in the category ‘top programmes’. That is one more than last year.

From today Climate Studies and International Development Studies are top programmes too. Organic Agriculture, on the other hand, now narrowly misses the top category. Programmes can describe themselves as ‘top’, says the *Keuzegids*, if they get a score of at least 75 out of 100 points. Organic Agriculture got 76 last year and 74 this year.

The Wageningen programme which least impresses students and experts is Landscape Architecture and Planning. This has been the case for years, which is why the pro-



gramme got a makeover this year. It will take time before the *Keuzegids* reflects whether the change of course has had the desired effect.

The scores in the guide are always partly based on the results of the National Student Survey – this latest edition uses scores from 2013, 2014 and 2015 – as well as the expert judgement of accreditation organization NVAO. The last time this organization visited Wageningen was at the start of this academic year. **KG**

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# FORECASTING EXTREME WEATHER

**What is extreme weather actually? What does climate change mean in that regard and how can we best inform the general public about this? Albert Klein Tank of the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI) will be researching these issues as Wageningen's new professor of Climate Services.**

*Professor of Climate Services doesn't sound very extreme.* 'It's true that the name is rather cryptic. We are used to weather forecasts and warnings. Those are services and to provide those services, you need a huge flow of data. The crux is to develop that data and make it work for climate change as well. This is a young discipline and there is still plenty of research to do.'

*Such as?* 'What is the interrelationship between the trends we see in the weather and climate extremes? Can we create climate scenarios that say something about extreme weather in the future? Will we get more coastal storms or flooding in a certain area? What are good indicators for agriculture to take into account?'

*What is normal weather actually?* 'Meteorologists around the world all adopt the same standard: normal means a 30-year average. At the moment, the normal period is 1981-2010. That period will change again in 2020. So normal is an agreed standard, no more and no less.'

*And how do you know when weather is extreme?* 'That's a difficult question to answer scientifically. You can make models of the weather without climate change and use those to estimate the probability of extreme weather. You can compare that probability with the extremes we are seeing now. Based on that, you can make statements about weather extremes. But of course you can never say whether an individual extreme is because of climate change or not. What is more, an extreme is not always down to the climate. Sometimes it can just be a combination of circumstances. A north

If you say rainfall will increase by four percent, what does that mean for the sector? What are the implications of an increase in heavy showers for sewer pipe dimensions? Which crops would be suited to the climate of the future?'

wind, water coming in from Germany and rain can, in combination, cause our rivers to flood.'

*Looking forward to your new job?* 'Yes, working with students re-energizes you. Students are highly inventive and innovative. And that gives me good ideas in turn. Working at a university will let me explore the subject in great depth, which I never get around to at KNMI.'

**Read more interviews**  
in the dossier on  
resource-online.nl.



# ONE IN TEN PIG'S TAILS IS BITTEN TO PIECES

**Applied experiment with non-docked pigs**

One in ten pigs raised for meat suffers bite injuries if farmers stop docking the tails. This result comes from applied research by Marion Kluivers at VIC Sterksel.

Tail biting is an old problem in pig farming and to combat it, the tails are docked. Given the call in society for improvements to animal welfare, farming organizations are looking at how to phase this out.

Kluivers tracked 1428 piglets that had not been docked over a period of two years. She looked at whether the pigs had wounds on their tails. That turned out to be the case for ten percent of the animals. Kluivers found that good management can help reduce tail biting on farms. Pigs held in stalls with plenty of 'toys', such as bits of wood, rope, a jute sack and roughage, concentrate on that material and are less likely to bite one another. Placing extra feed troughs in the stalls also helps because that stops one pig chasing the others away from the feed trough by biting their tails.



A surprising find was that piglets sometimes start gnawing on tails when aged only three to four weeks. Pig farmers can take measures to prevent this by placing objects to distract the piglets in the farrowing pen.

**AS**

**RR**

# OK TO SET LIMITS TO BLOOD SAFETY

**Testing donor blood costs millions  
Philosophers see no difference from other healthcare costs**

It is not unethical for blood banks to set limits to the costs for safe donor blood, say Marcel Verweij and Koen Kramer of the Philosophy group in the *Journal of Medical Ethics*.

In 2012, there was a controversy about the expensive drugs used to treat Pompe disease and Fabry disease. A plan to stop reimbursing the costs foundered but the debate continued. Some experts say that an extra year of life in good health (QALY) should cost no more than 80,000 euros. However, that is not yet a generally accepted standard.

Until now, the price of safe donor blood has never been at issue, says Hans Zaaijer, professor of Blood-Transmitted Infections at the University of Amsterdam. This is surprising because the blood bank Sanquin already performs tests that are much more expensive than 80,000 euros per QALY. For instance, all donor blood is screened twice for viruses: once using a cheap test and once with a more expensive and more sensitive test. The additional in-

fections found by the expensive test are so few that the costs amount to millions of euros per QALY. Zaaijer: 'In fact, the HIV test has never detected an infection that the cheap test hadn't found.'

Verweij and Kramer looked for ethical arguments for the idea that blood safety deserves more resources than other forms of healthcare. But none of the arguments were convincing. For instance, the philosophers do not see a blood transfusion as a 'risk imposed' on patients; it is a medical intervention like any other, with a proportionate risk. There are also no identifiable individuals needing rescue who will profit from safer blood, a moral argument for spending more resources.

In addition, say Verweij and Kramer, the money that is saved can do much more good elsewhere. There are huge opportunity costs from high healthcare expenses that deliver few results. 'It is not about money versus ethics,' says Verweij. 'A cost-benefit analysis is also ethics.'

Incidentally, Verweij does not think it is up to philosophers to make the decision. 'Blood has a special significance,' says Verweij. 'If society wants blood to be as safe as possible whatever the cost, it may be irrational but it is still legitimate from a democratic perspective.'



# VISION <<

## 'The lynx and the raccoon dog are coming'

**We have already – briefly – had a wolf and this month the first golden jackal was spotted in the Netherlands. According to Alterra ecologist Hugh Jansman we can expect a lot more new or returning wildlife in the near future.**



*Which animals are we talking about?*

'It is highly likely that the lynx will come. There have already been some reported sightings but they are of doubtful reliability. But sooner or later it will turn up in the Netherlands. The numbers in the border regions of Germany are increasing. The fish eagle will probably start breeding here too. It already migrates over the country every year and spends the summer here more and more often. Actually I'm surprised the sea eagle got here first.'

*Why are wild animal species increasingly spreading out over Europe?*

'There are several trends behind that. European legislation offers better protection for the species and their habitats. And then a lot of farmland is being abandoned, especially in eastern Europe. It is being given back to nature and the rewilding movement is supporting that process too.'

*Is this always a positive development?*

'Sometimes there are exotics in question too, like the raccoon and the raccoon dog. These were brought to Europe for fur-farming. The habitat of the raccoon dog here is now larger than its original habitat in east Asia. There have already been dozens of sightings in the Netherlands, but reproduction is still incidental. In the countries to the east of us tens of thousands of these animals are culled every year. We shall face that problem eventually too.'

*Will any really large animals come here too?*

'It's a bit of a wild guess, but the eland is already in Poland and eastern Germany. I don't rule out the possibility that it will arrive here within the foreseeable future. But it will just be a few solitary individuals: a permanent population strikes me as unlikely. Our water-rich country might be a suitable habitat but it is crisscrossed by an enormous number of roads.'





# NEGATIVE LABELS WORK BETTER

- Consumer avoids 'bad' products
- Solution for gap between ideas and behaviour

We all think we should act sustainably. But as soon as we get into the shop, there is not much to show for it. Yet there is hope. Because negative labelling – ‘this custard is not organic’ – does appear to work. This is the conclusion drawn by researcher Ynte van Dam in his thesis Sustainable Consumption and Marketing.

‘For the vast majority of people positive labelling has very little effect,’ explains Van Dam. ‘It can even be counterproductive because it sets a standard which most people can’t live up to, and that is demotivating.’ So instead of singing the praises of sustainable items, it is much more effective to point out

the least sustainable option. ‘Naming and shaming. If you do that, the least sustainable products soon disappear from the shelves. I am a great believer in cleaning up from the bottom up.’

The yawning gap between sustainable theory and sustainable action comes about, thinks Van Dam, because we think about sustainability on different levels. On the one hand, sustainability is an abstract concept, a goal to strive for which lies somewhere far into the future. On another level, though, sustainability is a tangible choice here and now. And it’s not easy to make that choice.

The underlying psychological mechanism at work is described in the construal level theory of psychological distance, which Van Dam translates as the ‘yes of course, oh no effect’. Everyone is in favour of sustainability - ‘yes of course’ – but when it comes to specific behaviour, it’s another matter – ‘oh no’.

But something can be done about this. Tangible sustainable behaviour is a product of intrinsic motives, says Van Dam. By appealing to those motives you can promote sustainable behaviour. Van Dam studied the role of self-esteem and self-image in this context. ‘If people see themselves as acting sustainably and ethically, they behave accordingly and sustainable

behaviour becomes a form of self-affirmation.’ And negative labelling can help with this too. Negative labelling makes use of the fact that when we make decisions we are most strongly influenced by outcomes we want to avoid. We avoid a product labelled ‘not sustainable’ more readily than we buy something labelled ‘sustainable’. Van Dam’s experiments demonstrate this. **RR**



# HERBS REPLACE ANTIBIOTICS IN THE COWSHED

- New edition of natural remedy guide
- Use of natural remedies rising

Maria Goot at Rikilt is working on a new edition of *Melkvee*, a 2011 dairy farmer’s guide to herbal and homeopathic veterinary treatments. These medicines, intended to reduce the use of antibiotics, are gaining in popularity. Last year 61 percent of dairy farmers were using them, showed market research among 400 dairy farmers. This was up on just 45 percent the year before.

Groot knows most of the natural products used by livestock farmers, such as the homeopathic

remedy Pyrogenium, which contains snake venom said to be effective against udder infections. Another popular natural treatment is mint ointment for the udders. The peppermint stimulates the circulation, calms inflammation and provides pain relief in the udder. Large pills made of garlic are popular too. ‘You inject them into the cow’s rumen,’ says Groot. ‘Garlic has antibacterial and antiviral properties and it breaks down the protective layer around the bacteria so that the cow’s antibodies can wipe them out more easily.’

For her new edition of *Melkvee*, Groot is asking producers about the composition of their products. ‘If they don’t want to give it, the product



doesn’t get into the book. They usually do tell me what their product contains, and about their own research on its effective-

ness. Then I use the literature to assess whether it makes sense that a substance has an effect.’ **AS**

Two students see a solution to the cow-and-calf dilemma. Meanwhile, readers online are discussing the planned shops in the new Campus Plaza. Got an opinion too? Join in the online discussion or email [resource@wur.nl](mailto:resource@wur.nl).

**REACTIONS ON...**



# RESOURCE-ONLINE.NL

## COW AND CALF

The Dutch parliament wants to investigate whether cows can be kept with their calves for longer. Animal welfare expert Hans Hoster says that is not a good idea because it actually has an adverse effect on animal welfare. Two students have sent a letter saying they see a solution in an alternative stall.

‘Even though calves are “extremely self-reliant” from birth, the bond between the cow and its calf didn’t just happen. It must have had a function and we can imagine that a calf can learn a lot from its mother. We therefore had the following thought: are there examples of (small-scale) farms where the cow and calf stay together until the calf is independent? On the large farms that we’ve helped out on occasionally, the calves drink cows’ milk but from a bucket. So the argument that the calf uses up too much of the milk can’t be the rea-

son for separating them. We also see a solution for the argument that calves catch diseases in cubicle stalls. We are thinking of a stall layout in which the mother can join the calf but the calf can’t join the mother. With the transmitters cows wear around their legs in modern stalls, it should be possible to develop a system where the mother cow can open the door with its individual transmitter. This replicates the natural situation Hans Hoster mentioned where the mother hides its calf and checks up on it from time to time. The calf can then still be fed colostrum manually. The closer you stick to the natural situation, the better, we reckon. Studying this option seems to us an interesting way of improving animal welfare – and possibly production too.’

*Natalie van Dis, Environmental Biology Master’s student at Utrecht University, and Annelies Beniers, Plant Sciences Master’s student at Wageningen University and research assistant at Agrosystems Research*

## FAST FOOD

The new Campus Plaza building is taking shape. In addition to student accommodation, it will house shops, a cafe and restaurants (see p. 5).

The planned fast-food restaurant in the Plaza in particular attracts comments. **Fastfood** is pleased with the new options. ‘Yes! A new regular lunch haunt! Finally!’ Others don’t think an eatery like that is appropriate for a university that aims to promote a healthy lifestyle. Sarcastic remarks are made about the ‘quality of life’ that Plaza will be offering. ‘If you constantly have to eliminate everything from your life that might be a little bit wrong,’ counters **ZLG**, ‘then I have my doubts about the “quality of life”.’ The occasional French fry should be possible in a healthy diet. Others wonder what impact the new building will have on the rest of the campus. ‘What about [...] the other supermarket and canteen at the uni [...] itself?’ asks **X**. We shall see. Campus Plaza is scheduled to open later this year. **RR**



**PROPOSITION**

‘After experiencing the Dutch health system, foreigners realize that the Dutch have undergone intense natural selection.’

Marcos Soares Lopes, who graduated with a PhD on 19 February in Wageningen



# Wageningen's leading lights: Erwin Bulte

## Top economics at village level

A corrupt chief generates more progress than a village council. This was one of the surprising findings from Erwin Bulte's study of power relations in African villages. The celebrated development economist thinks there is room for improvement in Wageningen. 'We don't have the capacity here to assess academic talent properly.'

text Albert Sikkema photos Guy Ackermans

In 2011 the Dutch science institution NWO gave professor of Development Economics Erwin Bulte one and a half millions euros to find out which institutions - including formal and informal rules and organizations - contribute to agricultural development in Africa. Professor Bulte's approach to this task includes experiments in which a few African villages received a certain drug or a bag of money, and others didn't. Researchers then recorded what happened. This is a controversial new approach in the field of development aid, where 'people often just muddle along', in Bulte's view.

Not that the development economist has come up with a new blueprint for how things should be done in development cooperation. He is a micro-economist who studies economic interactions at the village level. His research is a series of theses in which PhD students expose processes and power structures.

### SOFT GET-TOGETHERS

'One of my PhD researchers has looked into whether stakeholder platforms play a role in local development in eight African countries. In these platforms we encourage producers, transporters and processors in the food chain to collaborate, so that they obtain better access to artificial fertilizer or the market, for instance. Those platforms may sound like soft get-togethers but to my surprise they proved successful. Villages with a platform achieve more innovation and higher levels of food security than those without.'

In another experiment a number of villages were given 600 dollars. Bulte: 'In half the villages this money went to the chief, and in the other half it went to a village council set up by us. The money was intended for facilities such as a school, a community centre or communal latrines. We had heard the stories about moneygrubbing chiefs and we expected that the democratic village councils would make a better job of spending the money. But our experiment revealed that the village council achieved less with those 600 dollars.'

### Is that blasphemy in the ears of the donors?

'Yes. Many development organizations make that kind of democratic governance a condition for their projects,

and yet they do not perform well. The chief has an extensive network. He gets things done and pockets less money than we thought. But a year later we discovered something else. The village council didn't achieve much because its projects were being sabotaged by the chief. He did things like discouraging villagers from working on a voluntary basis on latrine construction.'

Bulte's group did this research together with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. 'Inspired by our experiment, this nature organization decided to run its projects in Africa through the chiefs from now on. The development organizations and the World Bank have created hundreds of village councils in Africa which were supposed to replace the existing power structures with a chief, in the interests of development. But when the project money was spent, these new parallel institutions stopped too. We came to the conclusion that it is better to build on existing institutions. That is why I want to understand how those informal governance systems in the villages work and how you can adjust the system to ensure that poor villagers and potential entrepreneurs get the most benefit out of them. Those informal power relations are crucial in rural Africa, where the state is hardly present at all.'

### ERWIN BULTE 1968, Amsterdam

1992	Degrees in Tropical Forestry and Development Economics at Wageningen Agricultural University
1997	PhD in Development Economics, Wageningen
1998-2005	Researcher at the University of Tilburg
2005-2014	Professor of Environmental Economics at Tilburg
2005-present	Research fellow at the University of Cambridge
2006-present	Professor of Development Economics at Wageningen
2007-present	Research fellow at the University of Oxford
2014-present	Professor of Institutions and Development at Utrecht University

Bulte is married and has three sons.





‘I want people to see that there is serious economics going on in Wageningen’

**Do you want your research to have social impact?**

‘I could claim that my research leads to better use of development funding. But that is not the main reason I do this research. I really enjoy learning to understand these sorts of processes better. One of the things I have found out is that we have no idea how people learn. We make the assumption: I go to a village, I tell you how to use artificial fertilizer and then you tell others, and the knowledge spreads like wildfire through the village. Very many development projects work on this principle. But that’s not how it works. In Rwanda we gave some of the villagers in what are known as ‘village banks’ lessons about money matters. They used the knowledge and improved their way of working. But when we later brought other people from these village banks together, it turned out they hadn’t learned anything. Conclusion: the course participants didn’t pass on the knowledge. We noticed the same thing in an agricultural project in Malawi. Farmers don’t pass the knowledge on unless they are paid to do so. An awful lot of development projects fail because we assume that our knowledge automatically spreads. And it doesn’t.’

**This is more like anthropology than economics.**

‘We are in the border zone between economics and anthropology. But unlike much anthropology, all our research is quantitative. We count and measure and put

the results into a regression framework so as to calculate correlations and causal relations. This sometimes amazes anthropologists.’

**In 2014 the economics journal The Economist called you the best economist in the Netherlands.**

‘I’ve been in the top 20 in economist rankings for years but that year The Economist placed more emphasis on quality instead of production and then, to everyone’s amazement, I was suddenly at the top. It makes no difference to me. I know the limitations of these sorts of lists. I do place some importance on being in the top 20, so that people see that there is serious economics going on in Wageningen. My high position is the result of teamwork, and above all the efforts of PhD candidates who collect data under difficult conditions.’

**What is Wageningen’s status in the world of economics?**

‘In our field, development economics, we are clearly on the radar. But I am often in Oxford and Cambridge too. In Oxford there are two seminars a day for economists; in Wageningen there is one a week. In Oxford nearly everybody attends, to learn from others; here in Wageningen half the staff don’t show up. Let me put it this way: there is plenty of room for improvement in Wageningen. I notice that in tenure track too. At the top universities the staff play a major role in assessing and appointing

talented academics. There the staff discuss the quality of the candidate and the significance and innovativeness of their work. We don’t have that here because in Wageningen the staff don’t have the capacity or the authority. So we fall back on spreadsheets and point-counting – this many publications, this many PhD students. I am pleased that tenure track now gives talented people the prospect of an academic career, but we don’t have the capacity here to assess them properly.’

**What is your ambition as a scientist?**

‘I don’t feel a great need to be the best, but I do want to work in a visible group in a global context, because that raises your chances of new and interesting collaborative projects. In development economics there are top groups at MIT, Yale and Berkeley. If they were to be invited to pick three European research groups they wanted to work with, and we were one of them, then we really would have made it.’

**How do you work on quality?**

‘I have a young group. One has just come back from Yale, another is at Berkeley, and a third is currently in Oxford. Let them have a good look round and see other ways of doing things. I hope that will be their frame of reference. We shall never be in the same league as those institutions but to be in the European top three in our field is a nice goal. I try to appoint good people from outside Wageningen; only if a Wageningen graduate really is better than the rest do I appoint him or her. Last week we had a Research Day, and four members of staff on tenure track were present. We talked about our publication strategy. Are we going to scratch around for points from Q1 journals which publish a lot of junk, or do we go for the top journals with the best reputation in the field? Only those top journals count if you want to work anywhere else.’

‘I sometimes take one of the children along if I go to a meeting in Africa’

**Where does your interest in Africa come from?**

For the first time he has to think a moment. ‘I enjoy working there. It’s wonderful there – the people, the landscape and the work. Last summer I went to Uganda on holiday with my wife and three children. And I sometimes take one of the children along if I have to be in Africa for a meeting. Then you take three days extra, to go on safari perhaps. There is something I want to put across to my children. The world is big and very varied – explore it.’

**You have three sons and they all play football.**

‘Yes, on Saturdays I’m on the sidelines at ONA53 to cheer on my sons of 10, 12 and 15. But above all, I’m a Feyenoord fan. The boys often come along to the Kuip sta-

dium. We’ve got all sorts of Feyenoord merchandise around the house – bedlinen, underwear, scarves. And if Feyenoord performs badly, as it has recently, it affects my mood. Actually it’s quite surprising that I’m a Feyenoord fan, as I come from Amsterdam. My whole family supports Ajax, but my granddad was a Feyenoord man. At birthday parties Granddad was always sent to Coventry by the rest of the family. As a little boy I must have shouted out, ‘I support Feyenoord too! I’m siding with the underdog.’ He laughs. ‘Otherwise, you won’t support Feyenoord for long.’

**Is football your main hobby?**

‘Well, I played football till I was 20, but I was never much good. I run and I work out. And every year I go walking in the mountains with a group of men, and I love that. Something else I love is birdwatching. When I travel to Africa I always take my binoculars with me. Other than that, I enjoy cooking and good food.’

**How do you find the time?**

‘I don’t work as hard as I used to. Now I work 40 hours rather than 55. Work just comes to me, I have nice projects, so I don’t need to keep running. As well as that, I want to have time for my children. And I agree with Marten Scheffer, who said in a previous interview: you need time to mess about, to wander around, to ponder.’

**What makes you happy in your work?**

‘Sometimes I get the chance to close the door in the afternoon and write three pages of a scientific article. Those are my nicest afternoons. There are heaps of ideas and insights in my head at such times, which have come to me while riding my bike or walking the dog. I have to write them down so that I can put them in order and then let go. If I’ve spent an afternoon doing that, I’m a contented person.’

Interested in other interviews ?

Look in the Leading Lights dossier on [resource-online.nl](http://resource-online.nl).

**‘HE DOESN’T PLAY THE BRILLIANT PROF, BUT THAT’S WHAT HE IS’**

**Ruud Ruben**, professor of Development in Nijmegen and research coordinator at LEI Wageningen UR: ‘Bulte is among the top economists in the Netherlands and that is exceptional because he operates in a non-fundamental scientific field. He studies the effectiveness of development aid, but doesn’t spend time trying to convince politicians to improve their policy on it. He is an experimental researcher. The results of his research are often counter-intuitive: development doesn’t work the way most people think it does.’

**Gerdien Meijerink**, now working at the CBS, until last year a LEI researcher working with Bulte. ‘He always had time for me. He doesn’t play the brilliant prof, but that’s what he is, because he was very quick to pick up the issues that were bothering me, put his finger on the sore point and make suggestions for improvement. He also writes well and fast. His papers and research proposals stand out for their clarity; he writes effortlessly, almost nonchalantly.’





## THERE IS HOPE

The Campus Run on 24 February gave grounds for hope. 'Seeing the standard, I think there is a chance of a medal in the Batavieren race this year,' says organizer Martijn van der Vis. 'Both the men and the women ran faster than in previous years.' During the Campus Run athletics association Tartlétos was looking for runners who would like to run for Wageningen UR in the Batavieren race, a relay race on 23 April. Van der Vis: 'The last time we won was four years ago already, and it's three years since we were among the prizewinners, coming in third. 📷 KG/ photo Sven Menschel



# ‘No women in the bar after eleven o’clock’

Student society KSV Franciscus is celebrating its 105th anniversary this year. *Resource* met the current president, Matthijs Verburg (21) and the 1965 vice president Harry Geenen (75). We talked about girls in the bar, initiation rituals and the luxury of spending seven years at university.

text Linda van der Nat photos Sven Menschel en archief KSV

## What were the hot items for the KSV board 50 years ago?

**Harry Geenen:** ‘There was a novelty in 1965: a woman on the board. KSV was a men’s society. There was a separate women’s society, which was a kind of sub-department of KSV. The ladies were sort of semi-members. They weren’t allowed in the bar after 11 o’clock at night. Towards 11 the lads would start singing a lullaby about “bedtime for little girls” and carried on until the ladies left the building. The board was all men, which was usual then. But in 1964 they asked a woman for the position of secretary. Apparently they couldn’t find a suitable man. Appointing a woman as secretary to a board was something that just didn’t happen in those days, but the woman in question didn’t want anyone mistaking her for a typist so they adopted Latin for board positions and she was the club’s first abactis. She also said, “I’m on the board, for goodness sake, and yet I’m not allowed into the bar in the evening. That’s not on.” So the rules were changed. This led to a lot of discussion but that is always the case when something changes in a society.’

**Matthijs Verburg:** ‘I take it for granted that women are fully involved in the society. Nowadays there are more women members than men. The board is always roughly fifty-fifty too, and we have had female presidents. What I do find, especially now I am on the board, is that people are indeed very resistant to change. But

that has its uses, too, because it forces you to examine your plans even more carefully.’

## What was society life like in 1965?

**Geenen:** ‘In my day students didn’t live in student houses or flats like they do now, but in lodgings with a landlady. Usually you weren’t allowed to cook there, so you were dependent on the canteens at the student societies for your hot meal. So students were at the society at least five days a week. And for the same reason 95 per cent of the students were members of a society. What is more, the only entertainment in Wageningen was at the student societies; there weren’t many pubs. So society life was more central. That was where you made friends and met people.’

**Verburg:** ‘There are a lot more options nowadays. There are members who are extremely involved in the society and come several times a week, but there are also members who don’t feel the need to be here regularly. Students also have the facilities now to cook in their own rooms or flats. We renovated our canteen last summer. The kitchen was far too big for the number of people who eat here. Something else that has changed is the attitude of students. They have to get through their degree very fast and they also want to do as many career-oriented activities as possible, to put on their CVs.’

**Geenen:** ‘In my day it was completely normal to take seven years over getting your degree. Passing the first



year was a major hurdle, but after that it was normal to do all kinds of extra-curricular activities.’

## What were the ‘hazing’ initiation rituals like in the 1960s?

**Geenen:** ‘I did my military service first and joined KSV at 21. And then you get mucked about by kids of 18 lording it over you. I found that extremely irritating because I thought it was so childish. In my day the new students still had to have their heads shaved. They had to walk on all fours and beer was thrown at them. It was all so humiliating that I thought it was really borderline as a way of treating people. I still feel uncomfortable when I meet people involved in my hazing. I still don’t get how you can behave so... sadistically, almost.’

**Verburg:** ‘Nowadays the initiation rituals are subject to strict regulation. The university wants guidelines drawn up which include the proviso that the prospective members get enough sleep.’

## In 1965 the foundation stone was laid at the current clubhouse on the Stadsbrink. What is the state of the building 50 years later?

**Verburg:** ‘The balcony had to be fixed three years ago and the renovation of the canteen last summer was another major investment. This year we need to keep track of the finances and see whether we can afford to stay here.’

**Geenen:** ‘Back then the board wasn’t involved in the management of the building at all; that was done by a building committee. Before we moved we were in a former parsonage on the Heerenstraat, which we probably rented for next to nothing. It was a dilapidated building and not a cent was spent on it. The idea was that the new building should be robust. The lamps, for instance, were all designed to be strong enough to hang from them.’

**Verburg:** ‘That was our approach to our renovations too. The contractor came along with several sample floors and we tested their durability with keys and nails. There was only one floor that withstood the test. That’s the one we chose’. ®

## JUBILEE

To celebrate its 105th anniversary, student society KSV Franciscus is holding an Electric Run through the Binnenveld on Friday 18 March. A running event taking participants past laser shows and light installations, with a musical accompaniment. The Run is open to all. Curious about the Electric Run or other anniversary activities? Look on [lustrum.ksvfranciscus.nl](http://lustrum.ksvfranciscus.nl) or email [secretarisluc@ksvfranciscus.nl](mailto:secretarisluc@ksvfranciscus.nl).





# CROSSING THE RUBICON...

Two years abroad to get experience, both academically and personally. This is made possible by the now ten-year-old Rubicon grant awarded by Dutch science organization NWO. Three young Wageningen PhD graduates talk about their experiences.

text Rob Ramaker and Bas Belleman (HOP) illustration Geert-Jan Bruins

‘Without my Rubicon I don’t think I would have got my present job,’ says Annelies Veraart. After getting her PhD at Wageningen University, the NWO grant gave the ecologist the chance to work for two years at the Max-Planck-Institut für Marine Mikrobiologie in Bremen. There she explored a new field and worked in a team with a range of different expertises and nationalities. ‘You learn an incredible amount in those two years. It is the first time in your scientific career that you really think up your own line of research.’

Veraart is one of the 781 Dutch researchers over the past decade who were able to spend up to two years abroad on a Rubicon grant. The grant is named after the river that Julius Caesar crossed to embark on the victory march on which he would later say, ‘Veni, vidi, vici’ - ‘I came, I saw, I overcame’. For the researchers too, the Rubicon is a first step on a journey that could lead to bigger grants such as the Veni, the Vidi and the Vici – and then perhaps to a glittering academic career.

KICK-OFF

What the researchers are looking for abroad is a scientific challenge. ‘I knew that a postdoc position would be hard work and mean a lot of time in the lab,’ says plant researcher Thomas Liebrand. ‘That’s why I wanted a place where I would be 100 percent motivated.’ At a conference he got talking to his current supervisor, a

professor at UC Davis in the United States, and then wrote a proposal. This was the kick-off for a highly educational period. After the first year had flashed by – ‘I thought: have I already been here a year?’ – in his second year he could take bigger steps in working on his project and academic network.

Given the positive experiences of Veraart, Liebrand and countless others, it is not surprising that the Rubicon grant is much sought-after. For every application that is honoured there are four rejections. Nevertheless, the continued existence of the grant was uncertain for a long time. When the economic crisis was at its height around 2010, cuts in scientific research were a real threat. In the end, the NWO’s budget remained intact, but the ministry scrapped a number of small subsidies, including the one for the Rubicon grants. ‘We decided then to carry on with the Rubicon programme anyway,’ says NWO chair Jos Engelen. ‘Somehow we had to find the funding for it, and we managed to do so. The Rubicon grants are now in a secure position.’

There might have been a bit of nostalgia underlying this resolute decision. ‘There were a few people on the board of the NWO – in fact I think this went for all of us – who remembered how important experience abroad had been for them,’ says Engelen. ‘Personally, I went to the particle accelerator in Geneva as a physics student, and went abroad again straight after getting my PhD. It was a tremendous stimulus for all of us.’



OTHER CULTURES

And the stimulus provided by a stay abroad is not just on an academic level. Young researchers are often also curious to see how they’ll cope in a foreign country. Pleunie Hogenkamp went to Uppsala in Sweden to work as a nutrition researcher in a broad team with a lot of neuroscientists on it. She learned a lot, and not just as a scientist. ‘When you collaborate across cultures and disciplines, the communication has to be even clearer,’ says Hogenkamp. ‘In the first six months I often thought, “that must be clear”, and then it would turn out I had been making assumptions after all.’ Also, Swedish people found Dutch outspokenness hard to take; they prefer to avoid conflict. All in all, it was very pleasant to work in a country with hardly any hierarchy and with generous childcare provision – Hogenkamp had two babies in that period.

Liebrand too was keen to experience the frictions involved in a stay abroad. ‘Here at UC Davis I noticed that the culture is more individualistic and hierarchical,’ he says, ‘but the attitude to money is more easygoing.’ Cliches about the American work ethic turned out to be true. Where in the Netherlands Liebrand was sometimes reminded to take some time off, in Davis it is perfectly normal to work all weekend. A short explanation by Liebrand about the limited opening times of the Wageningen research building Radix (recently a subject of discussion in Resource) caused some shaking of heads among American colleagues.

CAREERS

For the NWO the Rubicon grants are a way of fostering academic talent. Yet the recipients of the grant do not automatically steam on towards the top jobs in Dutch science. Only 14 percent of them go on from the Rubicon to get a Veni grant, the next rung on the grants ladder. The people involved are not sure why that is, but they do know that by no means all ex-Rubicon holders apply for a Veni. Some of them stay abroad. ‘One of the ideas behind the grant is to give you a chance to see whether research is the right thing for you,’ explains Engelen. ‘You could also decide to say goodbye to the academic world.’

That is not what the Wageningen Rubicon trio have in mind though. They like the idea of a scientific career. Veraart knew in fact as a PhD student that she wanted to work for the Netherlands Institute for Ecology. And thanks to her Rubicon, that is what she is now doing. 6



**Annelies Veraart**  
Got her PhD in the Aquatic Ecology chair group at Wageningen University

**Where to:** Max-Planck-Institut für Marine Mikrobiologie in Bremen, Germany

**Now:** Postdoc microbial ecology at the Netherlands Institute for Ecology (NIOO)



**Thomas Liebrand**  
Got his PhD with the Phytopathology chair group at Wageningen University

**Where to:** UC Davis in California, US

**Now:** Got an extension to stay one more year



**Pleunie Hogenkamp**  
Got her PhD with the department of Human Nutrition at Wageningen University

**Where to:** Uppsala University, Sweden

**Now:** Moving back to the Netherlands in two weeks, looking for a job in academic nutrition research or research & development





# WARNING! LANGUAGE BARRIER II

These days most Wageningen Master’s programmes are taught in English. The question is, does the average teacher have a good enough command of the language? Or do they get away with their ‘coal English’\* anyway?

text Lucas du Pré and Rob Ramaker illustration Henk van Ruitenbeek

### Kris Deveria



**Minorstudent International land and water management uit Schotland**  
‘On a huge billboard by the roundabout, Wageningen proclaims itself to be a fantastic university. **I am shocked, though, by the poor English of some teachers and of the course material**

**they use.** I think better course material could reduce stress among students and lead to higher grades. Teachers sometimes use Dutch words in class, too, often forgetting to translate them into English, especially when the majority of the students present are Dutch. Foreign students can feel inhibited to say something about that. Teachers should make more of an effort to include everyone. In general Wageningen University is doing very well, of course, and that includes the use of English. But that doesn’t mean there isn’t room for improvement.’

### Tiny van Boekel



**Director of education institute OWI, from the Netherlands**  
‘Overall, the average standard of English among the teachers is high. And it is certainly good enough for them to teach their subject. But it does vary. It is interesting that in the

past teachers who are native speakers used to get more negative evaluations from students. Apparently they speak such fluent English that students can’t follow them. **A little bit of ‘Dunglish’ is not such a bad thing. It is slow and clear.** I don’t get many complaints about the command of English. And the executive board has decided to give everyone the chance to take a test, after which you can de-

cide whether to take a refresher course. Language remains an issue that needs attention because you get the odd teacher who doesn’t speak English very well. But as a rule it’s good enough.’

### Dominique Sinopoli



**PhD candidate and teacher in the Law and Governance chair group, from the US**

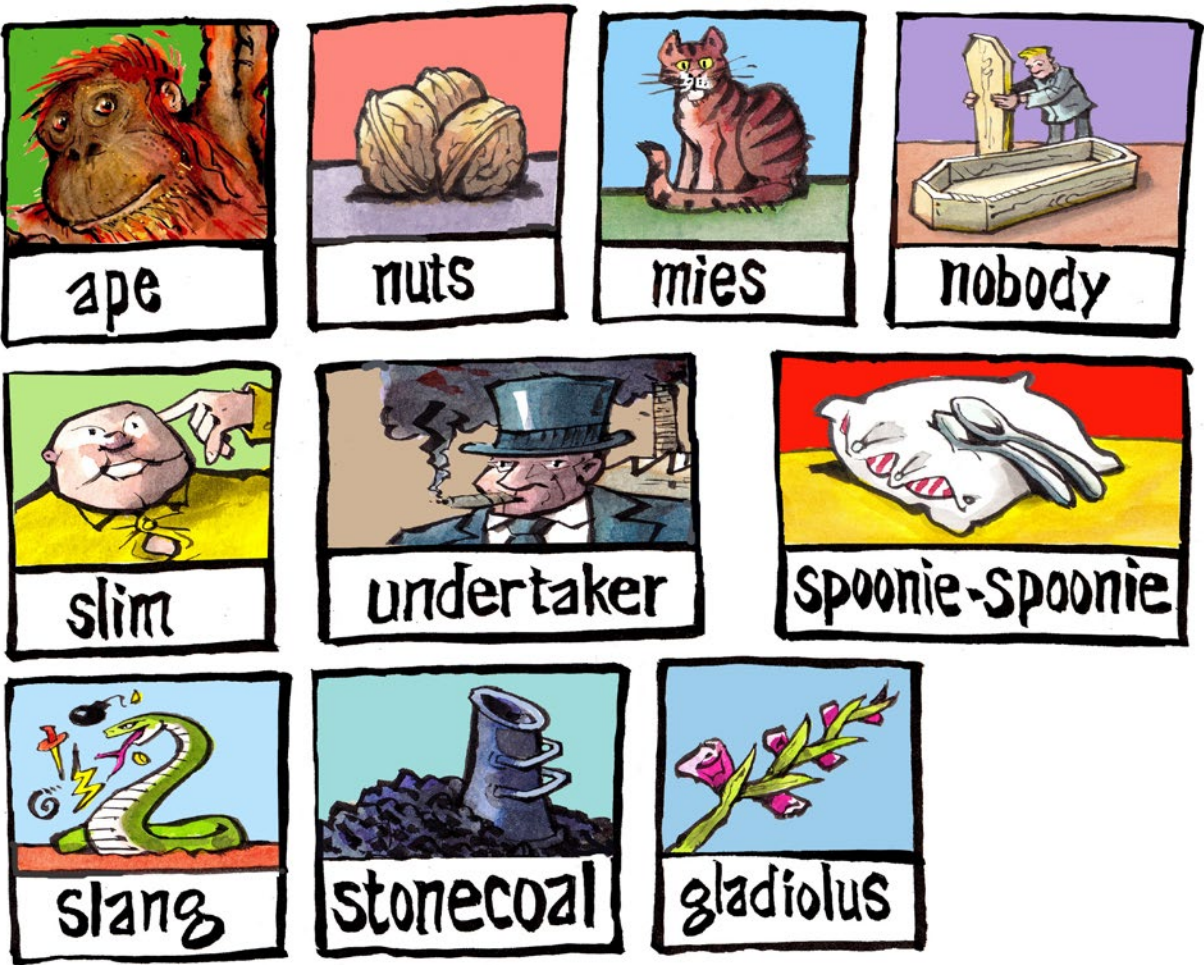
‘The teachers’ English is generally very good. Occasionally I come across translations from Dutch which don’t work in English. A recent example was “to hit two flies with one swat”. The English expression is “to kill two birds with one stone”. Teachers have to watch out that they don’t put information or illustrations in Dutch in their presentations. If it is appropriate to do so, for example when citing something from the news, there should always be a translation as well. **The first time I taught in Wageningen myself I got a few low scores for my English in the course evaluation, even though it’s my mother tongue.** That’s because I talk too fast and students couldn’t keep up. Since then I make sure I speak more slowly and clearly.’

### Nina Fieten



**Exchange student of Marine Biology, from the Netherlands**

‘Here in Wageningen I think the teachers speak very good English. I’ve been studying here for two months now and nothing about the English has bothered me so far. At the University of Groningen (RUG), where I am doing my Master’s, I sometimes see grammatical errors in presentations. And



exam questions are not always well formulated. There are fewer international students at Groningen, so maybe that’s why the standard of English is lower. It does vary per course, though. In Groningen I take science courses. A lot of the science teachers are good researchers but are not so used to teaching, so their English is not always up to scratch. On the other hand, **in class in Wageningen there are international students with poor English, and that is not something I’ve encountered in Groningen.**’

### Bram Kerssemakers



**Student council member for VeSte, from the Netherlands**

**‘The standard of the teachers’ English is generally high. But we do occasionally hear that a course would have been better if the teacher had been more fluent in English.** These are isolated cases but we do pass them on to the programme committee so that teachers can get support. The use of English is not constantly on the agenda of the student council. We look at the general trend of using English more. We want there to be enough opportunities for

teachers to improve their English. We sometimes get complaints about the English of international students in group work. Some students really don’t speak English very well, but I think cultural differences are often a factor as well. Dutch and foreign students often have different ideas about group work.

### Gerlo Borghuis



**Master’s student of International Land and Water Management, from the Netherlands**

‘All the teachers in Wageningen speak English. They write academic articles in English and their presentations are free of errors. So overall I think the teachers’ English is good. Their pronunciation sometimes leaves something to be desired. **You get some Louis van Gaal English: literal translations from the Dutch. But I don’t know how much of a problem that is.** It does make it less easy to follow. Or it just makes you laugh and that’s distracting because you are more focused on the funny translation than on the subject of the class. I have sometimes mentioned a teacher’s so-so English in the online course evaluation.’ ⑥

\*Steenkolen engels, or Coal English refers to the broken English of Dutch dock workers communicating with sailors on English coal ships in the early 1900s.



# Highly gifted. Then what?



They get 10 out of 10 all the time and they are arrogant. Just two of the prejudices up for discussion in the Week of the highly gifted, from 11 to 19 March. The organization wants to make it known that highly gifted people don't just have high IQs; many of them are also highly creative, sensitive and driven. Resource asked three students what being highly gifted means for them.

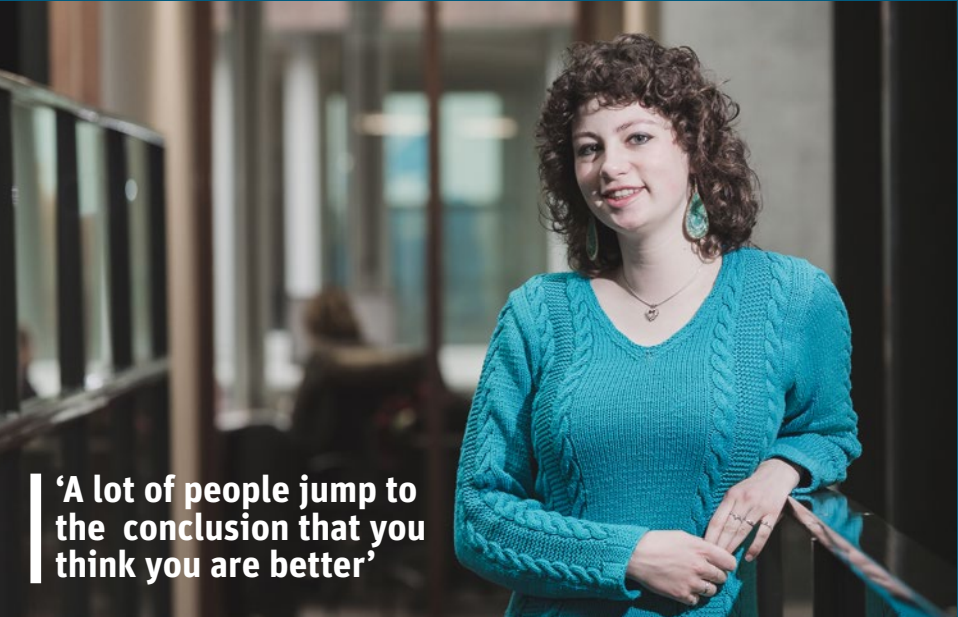
text Carina Nieuwenweg photos Sven Menschel

## Sarina Versteeg MASTER'S STUDENT OF AQUACULTURE AND MARINE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

'I've known I was highly gifted since I was at primary school. I was an underachiever at school. When I ended up in hospital with joint pain, an alert doctor guess that the underlying cause of the problem wasn't physical. He sent me for an IQ test. After

that my parents and I had quite a job to get me through primary and secondary school. The main thing I notice is that I have broad interests and can sometimes be terribly driven and perfectionist. I am involved in a lot of extracurricular activi-

ties. But even in class I sometimes notice I'm different to other students. I process information a lot faster and in fewer steps. Sometimes I only need one slide to grasp steps A, C and F. If the teacher then carefully explains A, B, C, D, E and F, I switch off. I can't concentrate anymore and I take out my mobile or do something else. Highly gifted people are often highly sensitive as well. That is something I notice in my university life. I am quicker to notice a subtle tone of voice or a change in body language – things that no one usually notices. That can be useful but it can be difficult too. For example if a person is bothered by something but would rather keep it to themselves. There is a lot of prejudice, unfortunately. When you say you're highly gifted a lot of people jump to the conclusion that you think you are better than other people. They expect you to understand everything instantly and get all top grades. I am perfectly satisfied if I pass my courses at the first go, as long as I can do a lot of extra-curricular activities and express my creativity.'



'A lot of people jump to the conclusion that you think you are better'

## Angelina Horsting BACHELOR'S STUDENT OF MOLECULAR LIFE SCIENCES



'I was always complaining of being bored at school'

'I don't delve particularly deeply into my textbooks, but I do look for a lot of extracurricular activities. That is quite a difference from the average student. Studying is more something I do on the side than my main activity. My interests are very broad too. Ecology, economics, art. I could study any subject really. That does make it difficult to make decisions. But there too I notice the highly intelligent aspect of being highly gifted. I manage to juggle a lot of balls at the same time, and to do a lot of other things as well as my courses. Committees, photography, organizing events. Just as long as I can express my creativity in them. Not everyone understands that. Some people think I do too much and they are quick to judge me for it. Do people know I'm highly gifted? I think the people who know me well do. But I don't think about it a lot. It came up when I was a child and was often at the pediatrician's because of allergies. He noticed it and set the ball rolling. My mother had realized early on that I wasn't the same as other children. I was always complaining of being bored and that I didn't learn enough at school. I seemed to be insatiable. It plays a bigger role at times. A little while ago I was having a hard time finding the right balance in the things I did. I couldn't say no to things. Even though my agenda was absolutely full, I kept on actively looking for things to do. In a situation like that it helps me to know where that urge comes from and how to deal with it.'

## Teun Fiers MASTER'S STUDENT OF EARTH AND ENVIRONMENT, AND CLIMATE STUDIES

'Highly gifted is a tricky term, I think. It sounds like something purely positive which gives you a certain status. But actually it has its limitations as well as its advantages. There is not much room for creativity in the education system. Creativity is encouraged but at the end of the day, it has to fit within the system. You are taught to think along specific lines, so that you can pass the test later. Logical, but a pity too sometimes. What I notice about myself is mainly that I am good at absorbing a lot of information at the same time, and making connections between things. I make links that other people don't make so easily. I also do a lot of extracurricular activities. I am active on the student council, where I am on a lot of committees as well. I thoroughly enjoy the activities I do in Wageningen, but I do notice that it is less creative than I would like it to be. This year I've been focusing on talent development in Wageningen University: I want to give students options for developing themselves optimally. This is based on my conviction that people must do something with their highly giftedness, otherwise it's of no use to you. Personally my satisfaction comes from the fact that I do something with my talents, not from the fact that I have them.



'It has its limitations as well as its advantages'

I am convinced that highly giftedness is not purely inherited. That is why I'm not sure I would really call myself highly gifted. A test I did at 15 indicated that I was. But I think part of that is thanks to my environment. My parents

stimulated me to develop outside school. They were proud of the fact that I had the most sanctioned time off school, because I took part in a mathematics competition and went to India on an exchange.'

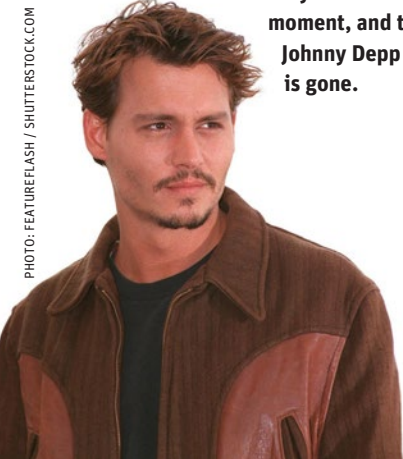


**WILLIE**  
Only 4 percent of all industrial inventions are the work of women, says a study by the Bocconi University in Milan, which looked at nearly 10,000 inventors in 23 countries. And those female Willie Wortels earn an average of 14 percent less than their male counterparts. Women and technology: still a thorny issue. Couldn't those 4 percent of women invent a solution?

**Y**  
Men are more like gorillas than chimpanzees, at least as far as their Y chromosome is concerned. This has been discovered by geneticists at Penn State University in the US. It is a remarkable finding because, genetically speaking, chimps are the closest to humans. Except in the matter of the male Y chromosome, apparently. The significance of this is not clear. But of course you can always speculate.

**SCAM**  
Sustainable Consumption and Marketing was the name of the thesis with which Ynte van Dam graduated with a PhD in the Marketing and Consumer Behaviour chair group this week. Which gives the acronym SCAM. A joke, says Van Dam, who describes himself as an anarchist 1970s fan. But he is upset that so far no one has noticed his statement. The scam is not his thesis, by the way, but the world of marketing and consumption.

**DEPP EFFECT**  
Women fall for men with feminine facial features. But this Johnny Depp effect doesn't always work, scientists from universities including Otago University in New Zealand discovered. If women are first asked to identify the sex of the face, they will then find it less attractive. So, women: use your head a moment, and the Johnny Depp effect is gone.



# Student writes book about losing weight

He watched his mother struggling with her weight and he wanted to help. That is how third-year student of Nutrition and Health Rens Stokman came to write his book *Dietless*.

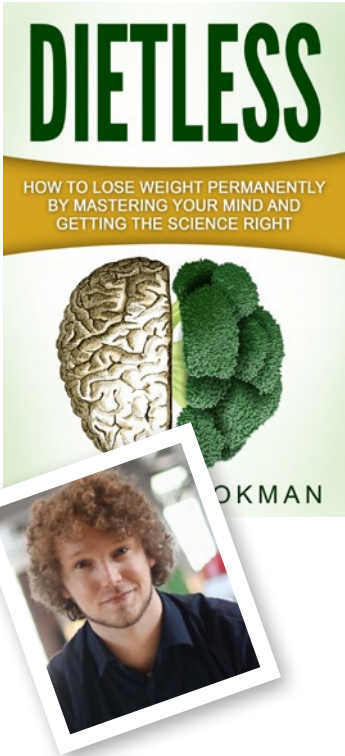
The book is 100 pages long and cost him six months of student life. 'I frequently got up at six o'clock to start writing. I still went to a party now and then but most days I went to bed early.'

Watching his mum, Rens Stokman saw how hard it can be to lose weight. 'And how incredibly discouraging it can be to find yourself back at your former weight after a while.' In his degree programme in Nutrition and Health, Rens has already learned a lot about nutrition and physiology. For his book read up on psychology and behaviour change as well. The

latter, he is convinced, is the key to permanent weight loss. 'Have you heard of ego depletion? That means that it gets harder to make sensible decisions the more demanding your day has been. Your body uses up glucose when you make difficult decisions, but at the end of the day that glucose is finished. That makes it harder to choose something healthy to eat when you get home because a pizza is so tempting and so quick. My book is all about making a habit of healthy eating so that it becomes easy to make good choices.'

These insights are not new, acknowledges Rens. 'But it is not general knowledge.'

Dietless will be published on 13 March. For the first two days it can be downloaded free from the Amazon Kindle Store via [rensstokman.leadpages.co/dietlesspromo](https://www.amazon.nl/dp/B08LNDN). **LvdN**



## This is it

In the night of 1-2 March, using a remixed version of 'This is what it feels like' by Armin van Buuren, the AID board announced the theme of the next Annual Introduction Days (AID): This is it. 'We wanted a theme that was loud and clear', says board member Rinske de Vries. 'So the new first-years know this is the moment when their new life begins, and they should seize it with both hands.' **LvdN** / photo Sven Menschel

# EPISODE 66 - MORTIERSTRAAT 14B<<



The story so far: After a period of tension Vera didn't normally get visitors on a Sunday getting on well again. They are doing lots and quent visitor in the Mortierstraat.

## Crumbled crisps

'Rrrriiiiiingggg!' Vera looked up in astonishment. She didn't normally get visitors on a Sunday. 'Are you expecting anyone?' she asked Bianca, who was sprawled on the sofa. Bianca shook her head and went up to open the door. When she came back into the room she gave Vera an anxious look. Suddenly her mum and dad appeared behind her. Startled, Vera dropped the book she was reading. 'Hello darling,' exclaimed her mother enthusiastically, giving her daughter a kiss. 'We were in the area and we thought... Oh!' She looked as she took in the table, which displayed the evidence of a fun night. Half a meal, beer bottles that had been used as ashtrays, and a dried wine stain. 'We've just finished breakfast,' Vera lied quickly. 'Would you like some coffee?' Her parents nodded. 'I'll make it,' called out Bianca, fleeing to the kitchen while Vera tried to kick a bra under the sofa. Where on earth did that appear from? Her mother started some small talk but Vera could see her glancing at the cigarette stubs and crumbled crisps on the coffee table. 'How are your courses going, dear?' she continued. Vera told her proudly about her results, hoping that would help her forget the pervasive smell of beer. Hadn't her parents heard of the unwritten rule that you didn't turn up on the doorstep unannounced? At last Bianca came in with the coffee. Vera's mum gratefully accepted a mug, only to comment that it was extremely sticky. 'And how is



Vera could protest her mother was making a bee-line for her bedroom. 'Mum, I really don't think that's a good idea!' Vera tried. But her mother had already opened the door. A waft of the mixed smell of beer and sleep hit them. In the middle of a heap of bedding lay Bobby stretched out on Vera's bed. Her parents gazed speechless at the half-naked boy with dreads. Vera hid her face in her hands. At that moment Willem-Jan emerged in his pyjamas and stood between Vera's parents. Shaking his head he put his arms around them. 'I understand: we are not that keen on Droevies either.'

Resource follows events at Mortierstraat 14B

## No more voting on tablet

In this year's Student Council elections, council members and candidates will not be approaching voters with digital ballot papers. There will be polling booths in Forum, Orion and Leeuwenborch from Monday 23 through to Thursday 26 May.

Student Council members and candidates have to keep a distance of at least 2.5 metres from voting students. The three student parties have decided on this because of the comments last year about campaigning

candidates who went around with laptops and tablets on which students could cast their vote. If a student is handed a ballot paper by a candidate wearing a party shirt, this could influence voting behaviour.

Incidentally, it will still be possible to use any computer to vote. Students will be sent an email with a link to the voting system. That voting system has changed this year. There will now be photos of all the candidates, possibly with an accompanying short description. The Student Council is also starting a 'passive campaign' one week before the elections.

Neutral information about the impending elections will be spread via posters and narrow-casting. 'The message is: make sure you are well informed about the available choices,' explains Student Council chair Nick van Nispen. 'The only point during that week when there will be any rivalry between the parties will be on the Thursday evening, during the election debate.' **KG**



>> PARTIES

The best parties according to Wageningen Uitgaans Promotie. Check [www.wageningenup.nl](http://www.wageningenup.nl) for all parties.

WAGENINGENUP

**HET GAT – HELEMAAL KNETTER**  
**Saturday 12 March from 23:00 to 04:00**  
There's not usually much going on in Wageningen on a Saturday night, but this week promises musical fireworks at Het Gat, with performances by Dave Roelvink, Dondersteen, Dion & Joey and El Redana. Unfortunately the cheaper presale tickets are sold out. Tickets at the door cost €10.

**KSV FRANCISCUS – TRINITY TRIBUTE**  
**16, 17 and 18 March from 23:00 to 05:00**  
For three days KSV will be turned upside down and there is an open party every night with good DJs. Thursday 17 March will probably be the busiest day, with a performance by

Willie Wartaal, familiar from *De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig*. But it will be full on Wednesday and Friday too. The entrance fee of €4 is well worth it.

**THE SPOT – WAGENINGEN'S GOT TALENT**  
**Wednesday 23 March from 19:00 to 22:00**  
An evening full of musical talent in Wageningen. With Wageningen's international talent and cultural diversity we expect an extremely varied evening. Do you have talent too? Waste no time in signing up for this show then! (At [thespot@wur.nl](mailto:thespot@wur.nl)) Admission is free and for just €5 you get a meal and a drink. But you often have to queue up for that so there's no harm in eating at home before you come. **Ⓜ**

>> THE WORKS

'AFTER 5 O'CLOCK WE HAD THE PARK TO OURSELVES'

**Who?** Kevin Geurts, Master's student of Forest and Nature Conservation  
**What?** Thesis on grazing by wild goats  
**Where?** Bonaire

'I spent three months in the Washington Slagbaai National Park on Bonaire, together with three other students of Forest and Nature Conservation. We measured the growth of the goat population and their impact on the vegetation. Grazing by wild goats has a negative impact on the natural vegetation, causing the *Cereus* columnar cacti to disappear, for instance. That is why it is importance to seriously reduce the numbers of goats in future.

By walking 250 transects of 100 metres and counting the goats on them, I established the density of the goat population in the park. The original idea was to walk longer transects. That plan was adjusted as soon as we saw how dense the vegetation was. We had to hack our way through it. I liked the fact that we embarked on this project in a group of four students, even though I didn't know the other students beforehand. After just a few days we were getting on fine and we helped each other a lot with the fieldwork. During our research period we lived in a little house at the entrance to the park. After 5 o'clock we had the park to ourselves. That really was supercool. We felt like kids in a playground. It meant we could do things in the evenings too, like climbing hills, fishing and barbecuing. If we were tired after a long day's fieldwork we often went to an idyllic

beach to relax and go snorkeling. There were countless species of small fish there, as well as sharks, stingrays, turtles and gorgeous coral. The night skies were tremendous too. I lay looking at them for hours. The atmosphere on the island was relaxed and people were very friendly. They always say poco poco, which means 'take it easy'. That is not so practical if you want to get something arranged, but you do get used to that relaxed atmosphere. When I got back to the Netherlands the busyness took a bit of getting used to, especially on the roads.

I would certainly like to go back to Bonaire one day. I thought the island had a magical atmosphere and I wasn't bored for a single moment.' **Ⓜ NJ**



MEANWHILE IN... <<

Meanwhile in... India

**In the news:** The arrest for 'sedition' of student union leader Kanhaiya Kumar led to protests in India. The speech he made on his release went viral.

*Commentary by Manjunath Prasad, PhD candidate at PRI Bioscience*

'One busy day in early February, I received a disturbing video showing a group of students at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) shouting anti-India slogans and idolizing Afzal Guru (sentenced to death for the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001). The video provoked unrest and violence. Subsequently, three students were arrested on charges of sedition, among them Kanhaiya Kumar, president of JNU's Student Union. Kanhaiya was beaten up while awaiting trial.

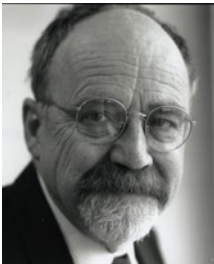
Later enquiry established that the video that caused violent unrest had been doctored. A few hours after Kanhaiya was released on bail, he enthralled an enthusiastic audience with brilliant rhetoric full of confidence, sincerity, humour and passion. This speech too went viral across the country. The speech came from the heart and represented the voice of hope and aspiration, addressing issues like social justice, economic inclusion and the empowerment of women. I was interested to learn how Kanhaiya rose from a poor farming family to pursue a PhD at one of the nation's premier universities.

He often used the term 'azaadi' (freedom). This was not, as some claim, a call for an independent Kashmir. He was talking about freedom from things like corruption, poverty, inequality, etc. He also said 'Satyamev Jayate' (truth alone prevails), referring to the case against him.

This JNU controversy will end with a court verdict on there was any question of sedition or whether the charges were an attempt to malign Kanhaiya and his friends. I hope this verdict comes before I get sent another controversial video. **Ⓜ KG**

In memoriam

Henk van den Hoofdakker



Last week, we heard the sad news that former member of the board of Wageningen University Henk van den Hoofdakker LL.M. passed away together with his wife on Saturday 27 February in his home in Rhenen. The mourning card states that they passed away peacefully, holding hands. Henk van den Hoofdakker took early retirement in 1996 at the age of 59. That was the year that saw the merger at the board level of DLO and Wageningen University, with Cees Veerman taking over as chairman of the Executive Board. Under Van den Hoofdakker, the university's organization had become more streamlined and departments had been created to enhance

control and cohesion. In an interview on the occasion of his retirement, Van den Hoofdakker said: 'I think Wageningen University is a fantastic institution. It would be nice if we could all be more aware of the fantastic opportunities and expertise we have here. Of course we need to remain alert and not rest on our laurels.'

Van den Hoofdakker was born in Goor in 1937. Trained as a lawyer, he joined the agricultural university in 1970 as the head of General Studies (GS). During the turbulent, politicized 1970s, 'his' GS organized countless meetings and debates in their home base of Hotel de Wereld. He played a key role in the preservation of this historic building. Van den Hoofdakker went on to become head of Human Resources and then secretary to the university, until he joined the board in 1992.

*Executive Board, Wageningen UR*

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# Forum Irregular Opening Hours March and April 2016

	2016	The Building	The Library	Student Desk IT Service Point	WURshop	Restaurant	Grand Café	Wageningen in'to Languages
Good Friday	25 March	8 am - 11 pm	8.30 am - 5.30 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Saturday	26 March	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Easter Sunday	27 March	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Easter Monday	28 March	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday	25 April	8 am - 12 am*	8 am - 12 am*	9 am - 4 pm	9 am - 4.30 pm	10 am - 2 pm 5 pm - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Tuesday	26 April	8 am - 12 am*	8 am - 12 am*	9 am - 4 pm	9 am - 4.30 pm	10 am - 2 pm 5 pm - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Wednesday Kings Day	27 April	8 am - 12 am*	8 am - 12 am*	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday	28 April	8 am - 12 am*	8 am - 12 am*	12 pm - 2 pm	9 am - 4.30 pm	10 am - 2 pm 5 pm - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Friday	29 April	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 10 pm	12 pm - 2 pm	9 am - 2.30 pm	10 am - 2 pm 5 pm - 7 pm	8 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm
Saturday	30 April	9 am - 7 pm	9 am - 7 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	1 May	9 am - 7 pm	9 am - 7 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed

\* Attention 12 am is midnight During working hours, the building is open to the public. After working hours, entrance is only possible with a WUR card.



# Orion Irregular Opening Hours March and April 2016

	2016	The Building	Bike basement	Restaurant	The Spot
Good Friday	25 March	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Saturday	26 March	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Easter Sunday	27 March	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Easter Monday	28 March	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday	25 April	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 10 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm	8 am - 10 pm
Tuesday	26 April	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 10 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm	8 am - 10 pm
Wednesday Kings Day	27 April	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday	28 April	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 10 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm	8 am - 10 pm
Friday	29 April	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 10 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm	8 am - 10 pm
Saturday	30 April	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	1 May	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed



# Leeuwenborch Irregular Opening Hours March and April 2016

	2016	The Building	Coffee Bar/ Restaurant	The Library
Good Friday	25 March	7 am - 6 pm	9.30 am - 3 pm	Closed
Saturday	26 March	8 am - 5.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Easter Sunday	27 March	Closed	Closed	Closed
Easter Monday	28 March	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday	25 April	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 6 pm
Tuesday	26 April	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 6 pm
Wednesday Kings Day	27 April	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday	28 April	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 6 pm
Friday	29 April	7 am - 10.30 pm	8 am - 5 pm	8.30 am - 5 pm
Saturday	30 April	8 am - 5.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Sunday	1 May	Closed	Closed	Closed

After 6 pm entrance is only possible after registration at the reception desk.



## Announcements

**Popcultuur seeks enthusiastic treasurer with a love of music**  
Would you like to help with the financial side of organizing concerts in Wageningen, giving your CV a boost at the same time? Then this is for you! Interested? Email [popcultuur.wageningen@gmail.com](mailto:popcultuur.wageningen@gmail.com).

**€500,000 for the best business plan for combatting climate change**  
Calling all enterprising students and alumni! Registration has started for the tenth edition of the Postcode Lottery Green Challenge. Green startups from all around the world can submit their promising sustainable business plans by 1 June. A condition for entry is that the product or service reduces greenhouse gas emissions. [www.greenchallenge.info](http://www.greenchallenge.info)

## Agenda

**Thursday 10 to Wednesday 23 March FILMS FOR STUDENTS**  
At filmhuis Movie W: *The Big Short*, an Oscar-nominated black comedy about four men who speculate on the stock market crash; *Black*, a raw Romeo and Juliette story set in a disadvantaged Brussels suburb; *The Postman's White Nights*, a tragicomic portrait of a remote village in northern Russia; *Problemski Hotel*, a comedy about a lovelorn asylum-seeker with memory loss; A Time to Live, A Time to Die, a classic about a family that moved from China to Taiwan in the turbulent 1940s. Venue: Movie W, Wilhelminaweg 3A. [www.movie-w.nl](http://www.movie-w.nl)

**Thursday 11 March, Friday 12 March, 10.00-17.00 HELP LEEFFESTIVAL DURING NLDOET**  
Come and help Wageningen's LEEF-festival with some gardening or with making material for the 34th festival this summer. You could do some physical labour pollarding trees, pruning overgrown blackberry bushes or cleaning street paving stones. Or make a big scrabble or other outsized games. The LEEF-festival is an annual street theatre festival held in Wageningen town centre, with music, singing, dance, theatre and visual art – and combinations of all these art forms. [www.nldoet.nl](http://www.nldoet.nl)

**Saturday 12 March, 13.00 WATERSPORTS ASSOCIATION VADA OPEN ROWING DAY**  
Fancy doing some rowing (again), and want to know what's possible at Vada Rowing? Come to the open rowing day. Doesn't matter whether you can row. Venue: VADA, Jachthaven 1 Wageningen. Registration and info: [www.vadaroeien.nl](http://www.vadaroeien.nl)

**Sunday 13 March, 16.00 – 19.00 DANCING: SUNDAY SALSA PARTY**  
Come for a couple of hours' dancing to swinging salsa from several Latin American countries: merengue, romantic bachata, Zouk and reggaeton. Music courtesy of several DJs, each with their favourite Salsa style: Cuban salsa, salsa LA, the merengue and bachata from the Dominican Republic... Venue: Café Loburg, Molenstraat 6 Wageningen.

**Thursday 17 March, 12.30-13.20 LUNCH WORKSHOP WAGENINGEN WRITING LAB 'PLAN FOR SUCCESS'**  
How to start your writing assignment in an effective way? That's the question we aim to answer during the workshop organized by the Wageningen Writing Lab. We will provide you with the theory behind the writing process and help you to put it into practice in your own assignment. Don't forget to bring your assignment to the lunch-time workshop! Venue: Forum, CO408. [info.wageningenwritingLab@wur.nl](mailto:info.wageningenwritingLab@wur.nl)

**Tuesday 26 April, 9.00-18.00 3RD WAGENINGEN PHD SYMPOSIUM**  
'Diversity in Science' will be the topic of this year's PhD Symposium with two exceptional keynote speakers: Prof. Arthur Mol (Rector Magnificus) and Prof. Scott Page (University of Michigan, USA). This symposium is your chance as a PhD candidate to increase your network and promote your research and ideas! Submit an abstract (deadline 13 March) and register at the Wageningen PhD Council (WPC) website.

**VENUE: ORION BUILDING**  
[www.wageningenur.nl/en/education-programmes/phd-programme/services/wageningen-phd-council.htm](http://www.wageningenur.nl/en/education-programmes/phd-programme/services/wageningen-phd-council.htm)

Deadline for submissions: one week before publication date (max. 75 words)  
Email: [resource@wur.nl](mailto:resource@wur.nl)

## colophon

Resource is the magazine and news website for students and staff at Wageningen UR. Resource magazine comes out every fortnight on Thursday.

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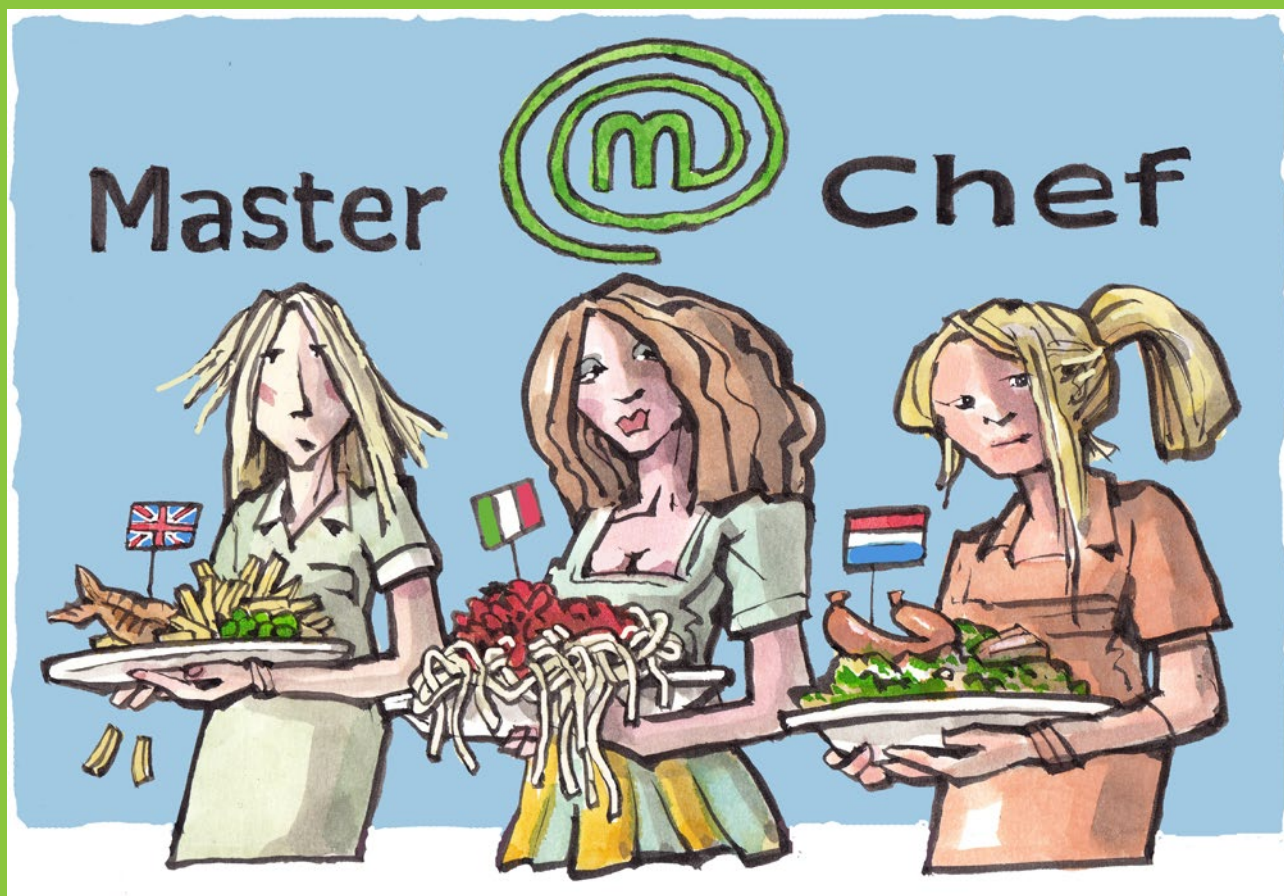
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# >>TYPICAL DUTCH



## It's all relative

Some time ago I was sitting in the kitchen and one Dutch roomy was telling us about his trip to the UK. He told us about all the places he went to and how beautiful it was. 'The only thing is that...well, you know, in the evening we had to make our own salad, otherwise it would have been hard.'

My other Dutch roommate nodded understandingly, but I had no clue what he was referring to. 'What are you talking about?' asked a puzzled me. 'Well, British food is awful! They eat really unhealthily, a lot of fats, no vegetables. We needed something light and nice to take a break from all that junk food.' I couldn't believe my ears! Dutch people complaining about food from another country?! This was greatly upsetting to me. For obvious reasons, also pointed out on many occasions on the back page of *Resource*.

The Dutch have a very bad reputation when it comes to their cuisine. When I told people in Italy that I was going to The Netherlands for my studies I often got the reply: 'How will you manage with the food over there?' Or again: 'A friend of mine is working there and he always eats alone, because his Dutch colleagues eat sandwiches at their desks. They don't take lunch breaks.' And of course: 'The food is awful, you'll only find peanut butter...' And so on.

This scene in the kitchen of my student house made me realize how relative things are. It explains so much about the stereotypes and prejudices the people in the South and North of Europe have about one another. Or rather, how everything seems to depend on perspective, even if it's not 'North' versus 'South'. I wonder, for instance, what people in the UK think of the Dutch focus on punctuality. **® Beatrice Landoni, an MSc student of Plant Sciences from Italy**

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*Do you have a nice anecdote about your experience of going Dutch? Send it in! Describe an encounter with Dutch culture in detail and comment on it briefly. 300 words max. Send it to [resource@wur.nl](mailto:resource@wur.nl) and earn twenty-five euro and Dutch candy.*