

Less, not more

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RESOURCE [EN]

For everyone at Wageningen University & Research

no 7 – 5 December 2019 – 14th Volume



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The best university for 15 years

BUT HOW? | p.22


INTERNATIONAL EDITION

Ilse + the D8 ADVANCE XRD X-ray diffractometer

WUR staff work with all kinds of equipment. Meet Ilse Gerrits, an analyst at Environmental Technology.



LIGHT DETECTIVE

Everyone knows about X-rays from the photos you get at hospital. Scientists also use them to investigate the composition and structure of solids. That information can be deduced from the directions of the X-rays diffracted by the material. Manufacturer Bruker's XRD is a state-of-the-art device in that area. Ilse Gerrits is set on becoming an expert in the machine. Here, she is working on determining the composition of fat crystals by measuring various angles at which they diffract the beam.  RK, photo Sven Menschel

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CLIMATE

Last month, I was in the Amazon to find out from Brazilian scientists what is happening with the forest fires, deforestation and climate change. That is not a cheerful story (see page 12). But I was particularly struck by how enthusiastic the Brazilian researchers were when talking about their research, given that they are under so much pressure. The Bolsonaro government is cutting an ecological research fund by 80 per cent as of 1 January while the budget for the agricultural research institute Embrapa is being reduced by 40 per cent. Several of the researchers I spoke to did not know whether they would still have a job or a grant a year from now.

The climate conference in Madrid this week is all about implementing the Paris Climate Agreement. In my opinion, the government leaders should also give a big round of applause for the climate researchers.

Albert Sikkema

AND MORE...

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>> WUR getting the top slot as the best university for the 15th time was celebrated with chocolates and a photo booth on campus | p.22

WUR TO DO MORE FOR THE GIFTED

A group of gifted WUR students is working on a project to make the university more 'gifted-student friendly'.

Being gifted is about more than having a high IQ, says Food Technology student Liselore Marcuse (23). 'It's a combination of different aspects, with intelligence as just one of them. It can manifest itself in different ways, for example mental agility, complexity and richness. But there is often also a particular sensitivity to the outside world. So it's a misconception to say gifted people are all Einsteins. There are gradations too: someone with an IQ of 160 will be different to someone with an IQ of 130.'

NORMAL

Marcuse is involved in the 'Giftedness' project along with four other gifted students. 'It might sound weird but there is actually a large group of gifted students who get stuck or run up against problems,' explains

Marcuse. 'They struggle with a fear of failure, concentration problems or loneliness, for example. Others are afraid of success: they don't want their grades to be too high because they want to be normal. So being gifted has an effect on students' welfare and their results. If you're gifted, it doesn't necessarily mean you'll get top grades every time.' Lecturers also don't always know how to deal with gifted students, says student counsellor Ruur Boersma, who is involved in the 'Giftedness' project too. 'That can be tricky when supervising a thesis, for instance. One lecturer emailed the rector to ask whether the university was already doing anything for gifted students. That prompted us to start this project. Because I had been looking at the gifted issue as a student counsellor for a few years now, I took the initiative to ask some students to work on this project.'


SAFE MEETING PLACE

The project group has asked gifted

students what problems they face and how the university could help them. A survey is also underway to find out what questions lecturers have. Marcuse: We also plan to organize events such as lectures

'It's a misconception to say gifted people are all Einsteins'

and talks on giftedness, including for students who have never had an IQ test but recognize themselves in the description. The first will be in January.' An online platform will also be set up in MS Teams where gifted students can talk to one another and ask questions. 'A kind of safe meeting place,' says Marcuse. Boersma: 'Gifted students can help one another. But they need to be able to find one another first. And it's good for lecturers to know how to recognize

a gifted student and how best to deal with them. I ran a workshop on this in July but it would be nice if this could become part of the training programme for thesis supervision. Lecturers need to know that gifted people take a slightly different approach to things.' 



Commemorative book back on campus

The commemorative book that the celebrated Wageningen scholar Gerrit Grijns received on his departure in 1935 is back on campus. It was returned last week to mark the launch of the Gerrit Grijns Initiative.

The GGI is a new collaborative venture between chair groups working on nutrition and human and animal physiology with the aim of improving the health of humans and animals through innovations in the food and feed industry. The idea is that these innovations should come from intensive collaboration between WUR, public authorities and the private sector. 25 WUR professors are taking part in the GGI. The GGI is named after Gerrit Grijns, the first

professor of Animal Physiology in Wageningen (1921 to 1935) and the man, along with the later Nobel Prize winner Christiaan Eijkman, behind the discovery of vitamins. The naming is apposite, says rector magnificus Arthur Mol. 'What the GGI wants to do is precisely what Gerrit Grijns did back then: investigate how diet contributes to health.'

At the launch of the GGI, great-grandson Dirk Grijns donated to WUR the commemorative book that Gerrit Grijns received on his retirement in 1935. The book was an initiative of a large group of Dutch and international scholars, who all signed it. This exceptional book has now been handed to the Special Collections department of the Forum Library. 



OUR MAN IN MADRID

Martin Herold, professor of Geo-information Science, is at the climate conference in Madrid this week. The biggest challenge for the conference is how to put the Paris Climate Agreement into practice. WUR is mainly involved in discussions about improving climate data and reporting.

What is WUR doing at the climate conference?

'I'm pleased that WUR has got quite a large delegation at the conference this year. There are academics from various science groups, people who work on climate change in relation to agriculture and forestry, and on climate policy. WUR is involved in about a dozen meetings at the conference and in the sidelines. I'm looking forward to the meeting on forestry and farming on Thursday, when President of the Executive Board Louise Fresco will be joining us in Madrid. There are also Wageningen MSc students helping the UN conference secretarial office with their day-to-day work.'

What is at stake?

'The key task is to implement the Paris Climate Agreement. We will undoubtedly be debating the role of forests and agriculture in achieving the agreed goals. I am expected heated

discussions about the trade in CO2 emission rights, market instruments and legislation aimed at combatting global warming, and how to finance those measures. All the countries need to have their amended climate plans ready next year. It will be clear at this conference how ambitious the participants' plans are and how quickly they intend to implement them. I hope this will also provide pointers for WUR's research agenda.'

What role does science play in Madrid?

'There will be discussions about the transparency of climate policy and about the quality of the measurements and reporting on greenhouse gases. Our research on how to make better use of scientific data in climate policy can play a role here. We will definitely be highlighting this in the various discussion panels. We will talk about multi-year climate data in land use and how improvements to these datasets could benefit climate change models and predictions. Finally, I'm interested to see how the discussion goes on national reporting on greenhouse gas emissions. I was the lead author of an IPCC report on this subject, in which we proposed improvements. We will be discussing those proposals with the UN countries.' 



FOTO: HANS LEYER/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM


COLUMN|VINCENT

Cat crisis

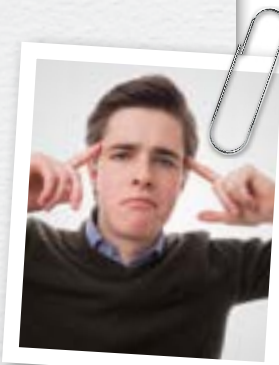
For as long as I have been studying here, there have been notable felines wandering around. You had the Haarweg cat, there was the black campus cat last summer and of course there's the Jumbo cat. Her name is Joshi and she is usually to be found sprawled next to the entrance of the Tarthorst Jumbo. These cats are all very well, but they are contravening European nature conservation rules according to two lawyers from Tilburg University. Domestic cats are such keen hunters that they form a serious ecological threat when they roam freely.

The Dutch government is leaving the rogue kitties in peace for the time being. But before you know it the Council of State will be onto its case and we'll be going from a nitrogen crisis to a cat crisis. Something clearly needs to be done.

The obvious solution is to no longer let cats roam freely. After all, dogs aren't allowed to. But if I've learned one thing from the nitrogen crisis, it is that you can never be too creative with your technological solutions. So I have another idea. Not all cats are keen hunters. While some are busy plucking birds out of the air, others are lazily lying in front of a supermarket. That is precisely the kind of cat we need and if we spend long enough breeding those idlers we will get a puss we can let loose with a clear conscience. 'Council of State proof', as they call it in the civil service.

The Animal Breeding and Genomics group can undoubtedly set up a breeding programme with promising kitties. Of course I can't be sure what Joshi does after the Jumbo closes but I'm guessing she'd be eligible feline material. 

Vincent Oostvogels (24) is exploring the delicate interface between nature management and food production through his two Master's programmes, Forest and Nature Conservation and Animal Sciences



COMPANIES HAVE LESS INFLUENCE, NOT MORE

The opening of Unilever's R&D centre on Wageningen's campus has led once again to concerns being voiced that WUR is becoming too close to the food industry. In practice, however, the trend is in the opposite direction: the university is doing less and less contract research for companies.

Every time a company opens an innovation centre on campus, worried Wageningen students and staff start warning about how the university is being influenced. That happened with the opening of FrieslandCampina's Innovation Centre in 2013, and now Unilever is opening its brand-new Global Foods Centre on campus people are once again saying that Wageningen science is not independent and is too closely interwoven with the interests of businesses. Follow the money. The figures, however, show the reverse trend. The university's income from contract research has been falling for years. WUR's annu-

al financial reports show that academic contract research declined by 24 million euros between 2013 and 2016. In 2013, the university secured 84 million euros in contract research but in 2016 it only received 60 million. One year later, the figure was 59 million.

The most interesting item in that contract research is the 'bilateral market', the one-on-one research projects for companies and organizations. That item fell too. The bilateral item was not specified in 2013, but it accounted for 50 million in 2014, 45 million in 2015, 39 million in 2017 and 41 million in 2018, compared with total revenue of 360 million euros.

No more top institutes. The annual accounts do not give specific information on Wageningen's research for Unilever but it is likely that this has fallen too. A significant pointer is that the university produced 35 PhD theses in 2013 on research for the 'technological top institutes', in which businesses and researchers jointly determined



the research questions. These institutes were prime examples in which the interests of companies and the university were intertwined. Take the Top Institute Food and Nutrition (TIFN), where the university collaborated with companies such as Unilever. But these top institutes have been closed down. That is one reason why contract research has fallen at

WUR. Why does the notion persist that companies have so much influence? Possibly because public research funding organizations such as the Dutch Research Council and the EU increasingly demand co-financing by companies. Researchers complain about this but no one is criticizing the decline in contract research in Wageningen. **AS**



XR IN ACTION

A hunger strike and blocking traffic by cycling continually round the roundabout at the entrance to the campus: in the past two weeks, the members of the Extinction Rebellion Wageningen action group made their point in a number of ways. 'We want WUR to declare that there is a crisis, just as the EU has done or cities such as Groningen, Amsterdam and Utrecht,' says Joep Gevaert, who is doing a preparatory programme for admission to the Master's in International Land & Water Management. 'So far, the university has said nothing formally. We want to discuss the matter with them.' Those discussions will take place in January, with rector Arthur Mol. **WA**

TACKLING INTEGRITY

WUR is going to give more priority to the issue of integrity, with workshops for staff and modules for students on academic and professional integrity.

One of the reasons for paying extra attention to integrity is the new code of conduct for scientists that came into force a year ago. The code lists 61 norms for ethical academic behaviour. WUR has its own general integrity code besides this. 'But those codes are not enough by themselves,' says rector magnificus Arthur Mol. 'Integrity is an interpersonal matter. We must tackle it actively.'

GREY AREA

What this means in practice is that many employees will take a course with the new Integrity Officer, Astrid Mars. Workshops are being developed for both management and staff in which specific situations will be discussed that raise issues of integrity and group culture. 'The codes are clear,' says Mars. 'But there is always a grey area, where different things can conflict. Then it is important that decisions have been properly weighed up. And the only way to do that is to discuss them thoroughly.'

QUITE CHALLENGING

Such discussions can be quite challenging, says Mars, who has already trialled the workshop with several groups. 'You might discover, for instance, that other people take a completely different view of things that you have always done in a particular way. But I have also noticed that such discussions can lead to new shared insights emerging, so that some kind of consensus does come out of it in the end. One of the groups even said: we should do this again. We are going to put it on the agenda.' And that is precisely the outcome

that is hoped for, says Mars. 'The message is that we should discuss these kinds of things on a regular basis. Make sure you are prepared for, say, a situation in which a client puts pressure on you in an unethical fashion. So that you know how to deal with it.' Staff don't find it easy to make the right assessment of that kind of situation, says Mars. 'I recently attended the opening of a team-building day for one of our research institutes. Three out of the six questions I was asked were about how to deal with a client who tries to influence the results of a study.'

NOT COMPULSORY

It is the directors of the science groups who decide who goes on a course. The Executive Board has made nothing compulsory. According to Mol, that wouldn't work in an organization like WUR.

'What do you do, for instance, if a client tries to influence the results of a study?'

'We think the science groups are responsible for implementing the integrity policy among the staff. And for PhD students, it is the Graduate Schools.' But, adds Mol, people are not free to ignore the issue of integrity, either. 'Staff and PhD students signed the integrity codes when they were appointed. The board offers everyone these workshops, but I don't think it works to make it compulsory. In the end, the responsibility for ethical behaviour lies with the individual.' Students as well as staff will experience the increased priority given to integrity. According to Mol, both Bachelor's and Master's students will take compulsory modules on ethics and academic

integrity in the coming academic year. 'Issues of ethical conduct will be addressed in the programme too. And we've agreed with the Graduate Schools that academic integrity will be included in the compulsory part of the education programme for PhD candidates.' **RK**



CAMPAIGN AND WORKSHOP

A new campaign on integrity started this week: 'Doing the right thing, even if nobody's looking'. As part of this campaign, on Monday 9 December you can join a short, interactive integrity workshop in Speakers' Corner at Impulse. You can also meet Astrid Mars at this event, which starts at 12:30.

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SOIL PROFILES FOR DUMMIES

Some everyday tools and a couple of litres of Bison sealant: that's all you need to produce a robust soil profile in the Wageningen style.

Or to be more precise, in the Peek style, named after the celebrated Wageningen soil science lecturer Gert Peek. The former Teacher of the Year has now retired, but his adapted method for producing a soil profile has recently been recorded scientifically for posterity in the journal *Soil* and in an online instruction video. For several decades, Peek used this method in his soil profile weekends, practicals in which students learned how to make their own profile. But the technique had never been recorded, so there was a danger of that knowledge being lost to posterity. Cathelijne Stoof, the lead author of the article in *Soil*, can remember making her own profile 18 years ago. But

what did you have to do exactly? After she moved to Ede, she went investigating. 'I had a large wall in my new home that was just right for a soil profile. And I'd seen a nice profile of a push moraine at the end of our street that would be perfect for that wall.' Stoof asked Peek (who was still working then) for the manual. There turned out not to be one. Peek had never got round to writing down the process. Now that he was retiring, that know-how was in danger of disappearing. Stoof has been able to avoid that with the help of some colleagues (and Peek himself, of course). The various steps are clearly explained in the article and the instruction video. Anyone can do it, says Stoof. 'And who wouldn't want a soil profile above their bed? That comment didn't come from me, by the way — Gert Peek always used to say that.' **RK**



▲ The aesthetics of a podzol profile

SOFTWARE SPEEDS UP SEARCH FOR NEW ANTIBIOTICS

WUR researcher Marnix Medema and colleagues have developed software that hugely speeds up the search for new antibiotics by screening the genes of thousands of bacteria in one go.

Antibiotic resistance is increasing worldwide. At the same time, it is taking longer to find new antibiotics. 'The low-hanging fruit has already been plucked,' says Bioinformatics researcher Marnix Medema. Most antibiotics are based on substances that bacteria and fungi produce naturally to protect themselves, mainly from other microorganisms. While many antibiotics have already been discovered, they only make up a small proportion of all the potential substances. For the DNA of bacteria shows that they are capable of producing many substances that are as yet unknown. But finding the most valuable substances is like looking for a needle in a haystack: until

recently, researchers could only discover new antibiotics by testing bacteria one by one in the lab.

Now Medema and his Mexican and American colleagues have developed software that goes through that haystack at lightning speed. The software, called BiG-SCAPE and

'The software shows at a glance which genes have the potential to produce antibiotics'

CORASON, automates the process of genome mining. First the DNA is determined for various bacteria and entered into the computer. Then the software searches for gene clusters that are known to be involved in the production of antibiotics. It compares

the clusters with one another and groups them so that they can be searched effectively to find new genes with the potential to make antibiotics. Medema: 'The software shows at a glance which bacteria and genes have the potential to produce as yet undiscovered molecules.'

'In the past, such computer analyses could only be performed on the genes of one individual bacterium,' says Medema. 'Our programme can analyse thousands of bacteria in one go.' That was quite a challenge because it requires an awful lot of processing power to compare those millions of genes. That would normally take a computer months but smart programming has brought it down to less than one day. Medema says the software has other applications too, such as searching for new anti-cancer drugs, nutritional supplements or crop protection agents. The software is available free of charge. **TL**

ON ANIMAL WELFARE AND SELF-INTEREST

Producers that want to sell animal-friendly products would be wise to stress what's in it for the consumer, concludes Lenka van Riemsdijk, a Marketing and Consumer Behaviour PhD candidate who received her doctorate on 2 December.

Consumers care about animal welfare but that is not always reflected in their purchasing behaviour. 'Consumers | experience a social dilemma, a conflict between their own interests such as a cheap price and the interests of society

'It's harder to steer consumers who experience dilemmas towards a particular choice'

such as animal welfare,' explains Van Riemsdijk. 'In most cases their own interests take precedence because people are naturally inclined to do what is best for themselves.'

Van Riemsdijk studied how this self-interest could be used to encourage consumers to buy animal-friendly meat and thereby improve animal welfare. In an online survey, she showed 575 consumers chicken products that she recommended using different approaches. This showed that the most appreciated

products were those where the marketing keyed into emotions or curiosity.

'Yet curiosity in particular is rarely used. Producers could add "fun facts" on animal welfare to the packaging, for example. Or highlight an improved flavour thanks to more animal-friendly husbandry. The important thing is to make the link between personal benefits and animal welfare.'

'Marketing strategies geared purely to emphasizing animal welfare are not effective for most consumers,' says Van Riemsdijk. The government's current campaigns don't help either. 'They mainly stress the negative aspects of meat, so they actually make the social dilemmas worse. And we know it's harder to steer consumers who experience dilemmas towards a particular choice. Perhaps it would be better to change the message to: Eat less meat and when you do, choose an animal-friendly product.' Producers can use Van Riemsdijk's insights to set up their marketing in such a way that it removes this social dilemma that consumers struggle with. She thinks there are big welfare gains to be made with the right marketing. 'You still see supermarkets selling discounted factory-farmed meat. I think supermarkets should act more responsibly and take animal welfare seriously. Give animal-friendly products a fair chance.' **TL**

VISION

'It's time for realistic nitrogen targets'

Nitrogen professor Wim de Vries says the Netherlands should revise its nitrogen targets and stop 'the detailed focus on nature areas'.

What is wrong with the current nitrogen targets?

'From a scientific perspective, nitrogen emissions need to halve to even come close to the average critical load in the Netherlands. That still won't be enough to get down to the critical deposition value (CDV). That is not really doable. In some areas, even the nitrogen blown in from other countries — about 35 per cent of the nitrogen deposition in the Netherlands — is enough to exceed the CDV.'

What does that say about the nitrogen policy?

'In my opinion, we need to take a more realistic look at our nitrogen targets. Set a national emissions ceiling for agriculture, for example, that gets as close as possible to the average critical load. If you divide that by all the agricultural land, you get the maximum emissions per hectare. Then you will have the same target for all provinces, which will also encourage land-based farming.'

What about the vulnerable nature areas?

'There is too much detailed local focus on deposition in nature areas. The National Institute for Public Health and the Environment says that 21 per cent of the ammonia falls within 20 kilometres. So most of it, 79 per cent, doesn't — it is blown to other provinces or abroad. That local focus on nature areas also fuels the debate about whether they should be kept. I think the government should concentrate more on a national and provincial policy on emissions where there is potential for major steps.'

A national and provincial policy, such as...?

'Maximum emissions per hectare, so that you get a level playing field between provinces. We know that only part of the ammonia is deposited within a province. So farmers in Brabant are responsible for nitrogen deposition in Groningen and vice versa. Then it's only logical for all provinces to have to achieve comparable emissions per hectare. And of course that means most reductions will be needed in the provinces with the most intensive agriculture.' **ME**

See Resource online for a longer interview with Wim de Vries about nitrogen targets.

TALKING, NOT BRAWLING

The Colombian Indigenous Guard is combatting the violence in their area by descending on the place of conflict in large numbers, putting people on trial rather than killing them and – above all – having lots of discussions. Paola Chaves (Strategic Communication chair group) spent a good year with them to study their strategy. She received her PhD for this research on Tuesday 3 December.

Choosing non-violence is a striking move in a country with a lot of armed conflicts, hold-ups and kidnapping. While on paper there has been a peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian government for the past three years, the violence has certainly not stopped. The south-western province of Cauca in particular, where Chaves did her research, still has numerous conflicts. About 100,000 Nasa live in the area; they are an indigenous people to which the Indigenous Guard belongs. The Nasa's non-violent strategy sets an example for others and the Indigenous Guards are often seen

as heroes. Chaves wants to put that into perspective, though. 'They are just ordinary people. They don't always agree with one another by a long way. They arrived at their policy through endless discussions with each other, taking the group's norms and values as their starting point. It is often said that a revolution inevitably has victims. But the Nasa just don't see killing people as an option. If there is a problem, they organize daily meetings to talk about the best solution. Shared values and lessons from their own history are the determining factors then.' Chaves says it was not easy to do research in a dangerous area. 'I often felt unsafe. My initial reaction was usually: I have to get out of here. It was good to see that the Indigenous Guards were scared too sometimes. But when there is an emergency situation, they prioritize the group over the individual. And that works. Together they are strong. They are respected and they are one of the few peoples in Colombia with their own land and administration.' **© CJ**



▲ Paola Chaves saw from close by how the Indigenous Guard acts in a crisis situation when two people were shot dead.

3D CAMERA SPOTS THE SICK COWS

It is possible to use a 3D camera to find out what condition a cow is in. This will help prevent diseases. PhD candidate Xiangyu Song developed a method that lets external signs of health in cows be determined automatically.

If a cow is under the weather, it doesn't eat so well, loses weight and becomes thinner. You can see that with the naked eye but a 3D camera is even better at spotting it, Song found. He recorded images of the cow's left flank, which is where the rumen is, just under the skin. The camera

records the fullness and how often the rumen contracts. The fullness tells you how much appetite the cow had in the previous few days while the rumen contractions are a measure of whether it is processing the feed. Song was also able to estimate the subcutaneous fat reserves and the state of health of the rumen, says his co-supervisor Rik van der Tol of the Farm Technology group. He and Eddie Bokkers of the Animal Production Systems group supervised Song's PhD research. The camera was also able to detect the decline in rumen movements in the spring, says Van der Tol.

That is when cows switch from silage and concentrates in the barn to fresh grass in the field. The grass contains more moisture, which means the cows' nutrient intake declines. The 3D camera registers this change about two weeks before there is an alteration in their physical condition. 3D cameras in barns are not a new idea. For example, milking robots have a camera to help keep the robot arm in the right position for the teats. In pig farming, 3D cameras are used to estimate the weight of the pigs. Van der Tol now wants to use this technology to manage animal health better,

for example through the early detection of metabolic disorders. During his PhD, Song worked at Lely Industries, a company that supplies machinery to dairy farms. The company could incorporate this application in a milking robot, for example, so that the cows' health can be monitored on a daily basis. But we are not there yet, says Van der Tol. 'First, follow-up studies are needed to validate the method. Then the measurement analysis needs to be automated. I would expect this concept to be on the market in five to ten years.' **© AS**

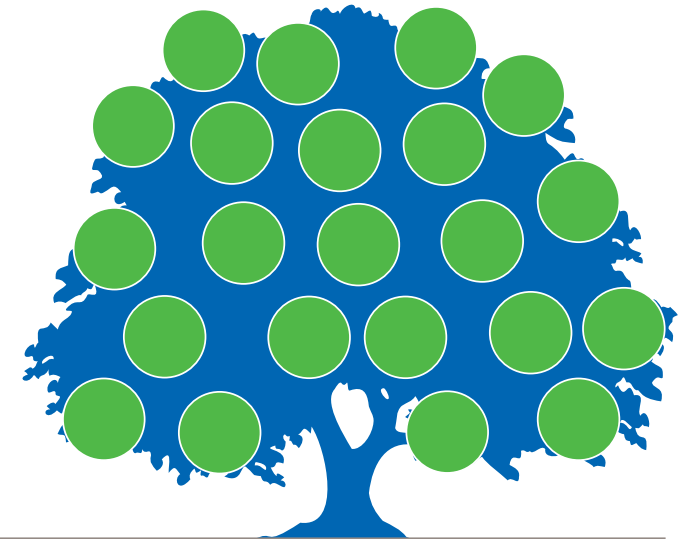
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PROPOSITION

'Swap retirement for lifelong part-time work'

Work pressure is high and many young people are ending up off work with a burnout. On the other hand, there are older people who would very much like to go on working but are sometimes forced to retire. Peter Kalverla sees the potential for a new system and proposes: 'Retirement should be phased out in favour of lifelong part-time careers'.

'There is a need to work fewer hours, especially among young people, both men and women. Having a Daddy day every week is becoming increasingly popular, for instance. At the same time, there are a lot of older people who feel they don't count anymore, feel excluded from society, and sometimes get lone-

ly. Some people are not ready to retire at 67 at all – you can see that in the university as well, for example.

The discussion about retirement and pensions gets too bogged down in the details, if you ask me. Like the question of whether the retirement age should go up by a year or by three months. That is a much too limited field of vision. Why has the system been set up this way in the first place? And why do we get so fixated on that particular age and act as though you then get to party away the rest of your life?

Of course, a builder cannot go on working until he is 80. But I think we are on the way towards a more flexible approach to our work-



PhD candidates are required to submit a handful of propositions with their thesis. In this feature, they explain the thinking behind their most thought-provoking proposition. This time, Peter Kalverla, who was awarded his PhD on 13 November for his study of offshore winds aimed at improving the design of offshore wind farms.

ing lives, in which we no longer do the same work for 40 years. We are going more and more in the direction of lifelong learning. You might sell solar panels when you are 30 and

'The discussion about retirement and pensions gets bogged down in the details'

have an advisory role when you are 80. I think a lot of people wonder why we still work such long hours in spite of our high standard of living. Working part-time throughout your whole career would take the pressure off and enable more people to be in work.' **© TL**

Alarm in the Amazon

While nature conservationists try to stem human infiltration of the rainforest, other NGOs and businesses are working on developing a sustainable forest economy in the Amazon. Albert Sikkema saw this on a visit to the Amazon region to talk to Brazilian scientists about the recent forest fires and the ongoing deforestation.

text Albert Sikkema photos Albert Sikkema and Maryane Andrade

Manaus is a metropolis with 2.5 million inhabitants in the middle of the Amazon region. Late afternoon, there are long traffic jams throughout the city; my taxi driver winds his way through the labyrinth of bumpy motorways and handy back streets, but the traffic comes to a standstill there too. And yet within half an hour's drive or boat trip on the Amazon river, you find yourself in the middle of the rainforest. The immense Amazon forest stretches for hundreds of kilometres in all directions around Manaus. But how long will this be the case? Maryane Andrade, a Master's student at the University of São Paulo, is doing research with the National Institute of Amazonian Research (INPA) in Manaus on Highway 319. This is a dirt road that runs for nearly 900 kilometres between Manaus and Rondônia, where very little forest has been left standing. Andrade wants to know whether this road, seen from the air just a thin brown strip through endless green, gives landless farmers and agro businesses a stepping stone to colonizing the rainforest.

The road crosses an area of unique biodiversity between two great rivers, says Andrade. Many Indian tribes live on the banks of these rivers. The previous government decided to designate part of this river basin a reserve where deforestation and mining would be banned, but Jair Bolsonaro's new government wants to tar the road. That will cost about 1.5 billion dollars, which the gov-

ernment does not have as Brazil is in an economic crisis. But Andrade has no doubt that the road will be tarred one day.

SPREADING DEFORESTATION

Her research is not without its dangers; she is studying illegal tree felling along the road. Every 50 kilometres, she measures the amount of biomass in the forest. Although the research is still going on, the Master's student has noticed that deforestation is spreading from the south, where many valuable trees have already been felled for timber. Once there are no commercially interesting trees left, and there is a lot of dead wood lying in the forest, tracts of land are set alight in the dry season. In Rondônia, where Highway 319 starts, there were a lot of forest fires last summer.

Is this road a stepping stone to colonizing the rainforest?

During her research, Andrade saw who was organizing the illegal land-grabbing in the forest. She met traders who sell tracts of forest to small farmers with forged ownership documents. These 'grileiros' were offering one hectare of land for just 20 Brazilian real (less than five euros). The buyers fell all the trees of species with expensive wood on their plots and use their earnings to con-

FOREST FIRES: WORSE THAN EVER?

Were the forest fires of last August really as bad as the media made them out to be? There is a debate going on about that among Brazilian researchers. According to the INPA researchers Lucas Ferrante and Philip Fearnside, the fires and deforestation doubled last year, and President Bolsonaro is a danger to the environment, the traditional inhabitants of the Amazon, and the global climate. They cite space organization INPE, which published figures on the fires. As 'thanks', the government fired the director of the INPE.

But other researchers tone down the alarmist reports. According to Bruce Nelson, also of the INPA, the INPE works with two satellite systems. The second system – fast but imprecise – serves to warn about where illegal tree-felling is going on. This is the source of his colleagues' claim of a doubling of the fires. Only when the figures from the first system – precise but slow – have been evaluated, will we know if they are right, says GIS researcher Nelson. One thing that is certainly true, he says, is that the environmental service has had its budget cut by 30 per cent this year and hardly has any money for the work of detecting illegal logging.

Researcher Alessandro Araujo of the agricultural institute Embrapa puts the alarmist figures on the forest fires in perspective too. They may have been high in August, says Araujo, but in October – after Bolsonaro deployed the police – the area of forest was burned was the smallest in years. He too bases this assertion on INPE figures. According to Nelson and Araujo, we shall only know at the beginning of next year by exactly how much the fires and the deforestation increased.

▲ In Maryane Andrade's deforestation research, she measures the amount of biomass in the forest every 50 kilometres.

tinue exploiting the plot. The Brazilian government is oblivious to what is going on, because this first phase of deforestation cannot be seen by satellite and the environmental service does not have the human resources to monitor it.

CLIMATE CHANGE

On the advice of Bart Kruijt, the Wageningen climate researcher who has been doing research in the Amazon for 25 years, I also visited the Amazon-Face project, in which INPA and WUR are studying the effect of climate change on the growth of the rainforest. The research station lies 100 kilometres north of the busy city of Manaus, in the middle of the rainforest. INPA has built two 40-metre-high towers there, full of equipment for measuring the diameter, photosynthesis and respiration of the trees, as well as CO₂ levels and root growth. INPA has also built eight 'Open Top Chambers' with trees growing in them, in order to study how the expected climate change affects the forest. Extra CO₂ is pumped into four of these mini-greenhouses; the other four form the control group. The newly started study is far from theoretical because the large-scale deforestation is already leading to climate change in the Amazon



► An Open Top Chamber with which INPA will study how the expected climate change affects the forest. In four of these mini-greenhouses, the trees get extra CO₂; the other four form the control group.

The large-scale deforestation is already leading to climate change in the Amazon

region. Brazilian researchers from INPA and the agricultural institute Embrapa have noticed that the dry season is getting longer and drier, the rainy season a bit wetter, and that the amount of heavy rainfall is increasing. These changes are reducing the rainforest's resilience. The Amazon needs an average of 100 millimetres of rainfall per month, says the INPA researcher Bruce Nelson. In extremely dry years such as 2015, when El Niño reared its head, a lot of trees died and the forest could catch fire more easily.

PALM OIL PRODUCTION

But agriculture, one of the causes of deforestation, is affected by climate change too now. I noticed this when I visited the research institute Embrapa in Belém, at the mouth of the Amazon. Here, forest has already given way to grassland for livestock and plantations for oil palm and timber production. Researcher Ales-

sandro Araujo, another WUR research partner, is studying an oil palm plantation of 8000 hectares. He notices that the plantation's oil production has fallen by 20 per cent in recent years, partly due to increasing drought. The palm oil company that Araujo is studying is over 20 years old and cut down rainforest in order to plant the oil palms. But most of the palm oil companies started later and bought up exhausted land from livestock farmers. It was compulsory for them to replant 50 or even 80 per cent of their land with trees. That is why remnants of rainforest and new timber plantations can be seen around Belém. In the old days, oil palm production went hand in hand with deforestation; now it is combined with reforestation with teak and timber.

ROBUST MIXED CULTIVATION

Araujo is also doing research on agroforestry systems. In the village of Tomé-Açu, 20 kilometres south of Belém, he is studying a company that intercroops cocoa palms with pepper, the 'superfruit' açai, or rare tree species. Just as he does on the oil palm plantation, Araujo takes measurements at this company of the CO₂ storage, water use, plant respiration, water consumption and soil quality. His first impression: the agroforestry system is more robust than the monoculture, because it can resist drought better.

This makes intercropping a potential alternative to the dominant slash and burn method of developing the Amazon. While nature conservationists try to stem the human infiltration of the virgin rainforest, other NGOs and companies are working on developing a sustainable forest economy in the Amazon. In Tomé-Açu, for example, I met Debora Castellani of the Brazilian cosmetics firm Natura. The owner of The Body Shop, Natura uses palm oil, cocoa, wood extract and passion fruit in its cosmetics. These ingredients are still sourced from large monocultures in the Amazon, but Natura is now opting for sustainable development and small farmers, says Castellani. The 50 hectares of agroforestry in Tomé-Açu are a start.

BUSINESS MODELS IN THE FOREST

There are other places, too, where organizations are working on projects for combining economic development with nature conservation. The basic principle is that living trees are more lucrative than felled trees, says Virgilio



◀ Regenwoud-brandt niet; het is te nat. De branden in de Amazone veroorzaken geen ontbossing, maar zijn een gevolg ervan. Onderzoekers zien een vast patroon: eerst worden de waardevolle

feasible. The colonization of the area, with the deforestation and fires that entails, just goes on. Greenpeace's remedy – stop eating soya and oppose free trade – does not affect the colonists and gold-diggers. So what does? Viana has a piece of advice for the EU. He is all for the Mercosur trade agreement, but that agreement should first and foremost regulate the trade in sustainably produced food from the Amazon to Europe. 'Sustainability and the conservation of the Amazon must be reflected in the price of products from the rainforest. Then European consumers can simply help pay for the conservation of the Amazon.' ①

Viana, director of Amazonas Sustainable Foundation (FAS) in Manaus. You don't stop deforestation by policing the forest, says Viana, but by helping the local population find business models in the forest. FAS develops local food supply chains. For example, the NGO invested two million dollars in a supply chain for the pirarucu, one of the main fish species in the Amazon. FAS encourages Indian tribes to start farming the fish in ponds, provides installations for cooling the fish in the villages, and organizes the sale of the fish on a market in Manaus. This way FAS has cut out the middlemen, so that the fish farmers got twice the price for their catch. The organization is working on comparable production chains for nuts and cassava flour from the forest.

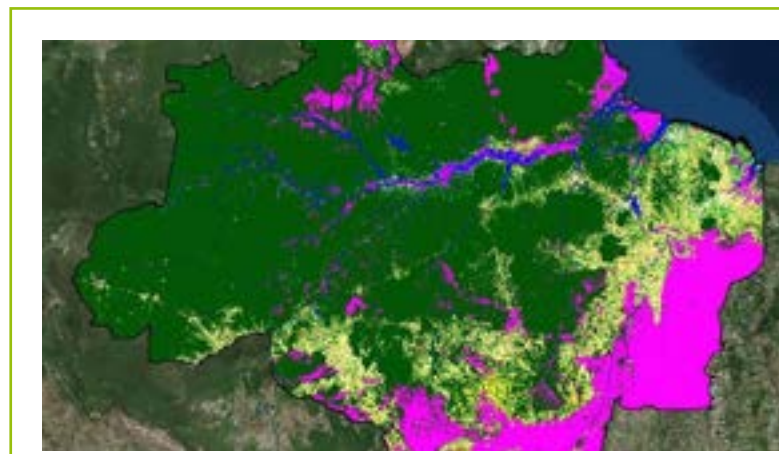
FAS is already reaching 40,000 inhabitants in nearly 600 villages in the Amazon. If you strengthen these local communities, they can make a fist against land grabbing, says Viana, former professor of Forest Management in São Paulo. When he was Secretary of State for the Environment and Sustainable Development 10 years ago, he succeeded in reducing deforestation in the Amazon region by 70 per cent. At FAS, he gets support from companies such as Coca-Cola, Samsung, the oil company Petrobras and the bank Bradesco.

HELPING PAY FOR CONSERVATION

How can we save the Amazon? It's complicated. Banning new settlement of the Amazon, as ecologists would like to do, does not seem

Amazon research in trouble


Since 2015, the Brazilian government has cut funding for education and research. A federal research fund for ecologists will be reduced this year by 80 per cent, and the number of research grants for MSc and PhD students will be halved. The agricultural institute Embrapa's budget will be cut by 40 per cent.

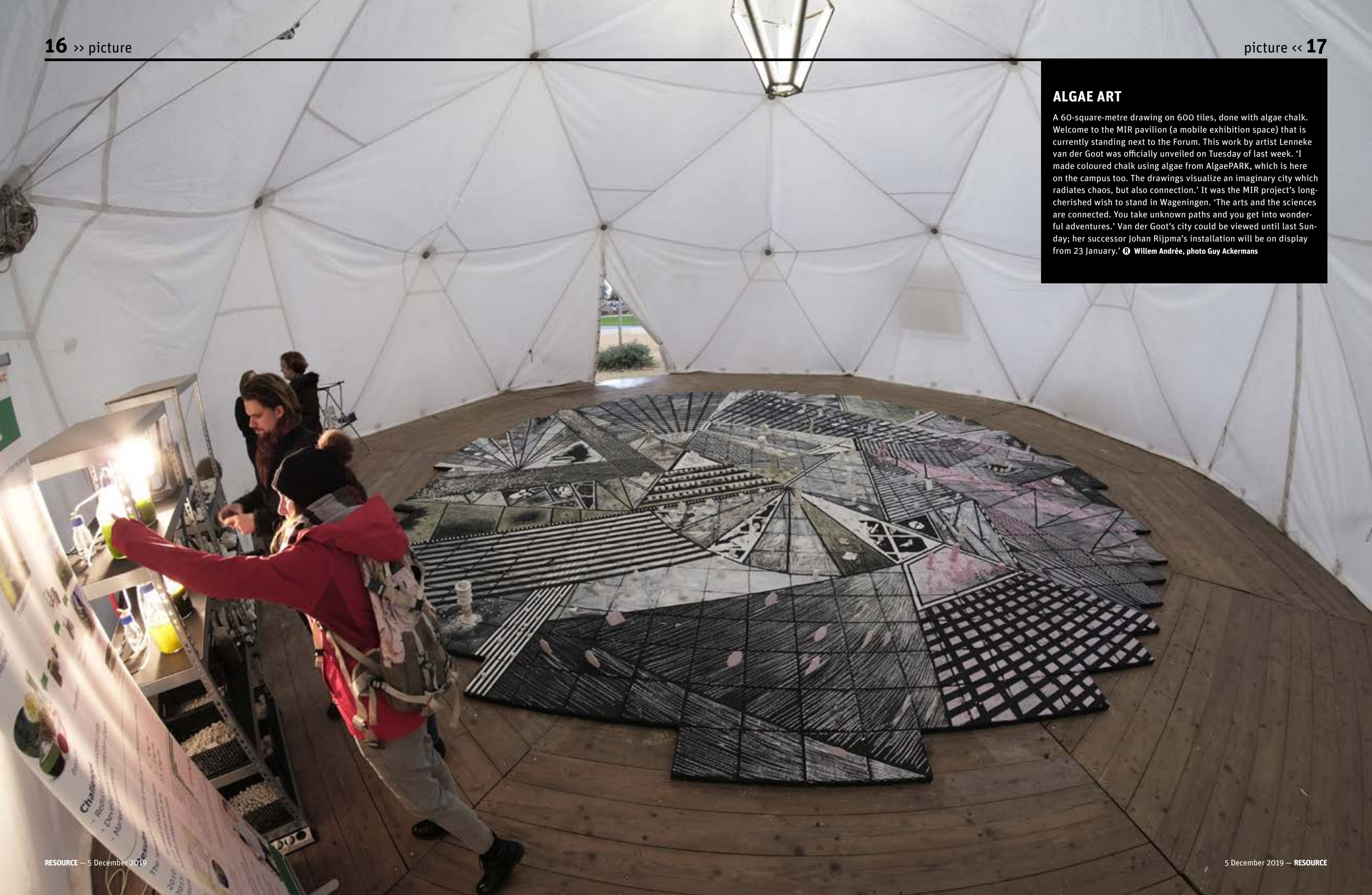


DEFORESTATION

According to the Wageningen climate researcher Bart Kruijt, 20 per cent of the Amazon region is now deforested. Most of that deforestation takes place on the edge of the Amazon region, in the 'Arc of Deforestation' (the yellow area on the map). That is also where soya cultivation is still increasing, but according to the environmental institute Imazon in Belém, that is not the main cause: by far the most forest is felled for pasture for livestock. The link that organizations such as Greenpeace make with soya cultivation is largely unfounded. Partly thanks to Greenpeace, a moratorium has been declared on soya farming in the Amazon. Another, bigger cause of deforestation is mining, says researcher Lucas Ferrate. People speculate that there are minerals and gold in the ground in nature reserves, and that attracts gold-diggers and land grabbers.

ALGAE ART

A 60-square-metre drawing on 600 tiles, done with algae chalk. Welcome to the MIR pavilion (a mobile exhibition space) that is currently standing next to the Forum. This work by artist Lenneke van der Goot was officially unveiled on Tuesday of last week. 'I made coloured chalk using algae from AlgaePARK, which is here on the campus too. The drawings visualize an imaginary city which radiates chaos, but also connection.' It was the MIR project's long-cherished wish to stand in Wageningen. 'The arts and the sciences are connected. You take unknown paths and you get into wonderful adventures.' Van der Goot's city could be viewed until last Sunday; her successor Johan Rijpma's installation will be on display from 23 January.  Willem André, photo Guy Ackermans



Calling on the neighbours



Unilever's new home is as good as ready. Tomorrow sees the house-warming for the most sustainable business premises in the world, which will be opened by none other than King Willem-Alexander. *Resource* popped in for a sneak preview.

text Roelof Kleis photos Guy Ackermans and Unilever

You could call it a sneak peek at the neighbours. But that's not really the right term, as you don't have to be sneaky about it. Anyone can just walk in to Unilever's brand-new Global Food Innovation Centre on the campus. That is the first thing that strikes you on entering the gigantic atrium with its solar roof. You can just walk in. No visible security, no gates, not even a receptionist at a counter to report to. There is a 'receptionist' though: the hostess

serving at the bar. The bar *is* the reception, explains press officer Sanne Snieder. 'We consciously want to avoid a 'corporate' image here on the ground floor. So no receptionist sitting behind glass, and no security gates. We want to give off an aura of openness and transparency.' There is the same hospitality in most of the spaces on the ground floor, including the company restaurant, which leads off the entrance. It is run by Eurest Compass, which also does the catering for Friesland Campina next door. An interesting fact for students and research-

ers looking for a change at lunchtime. They are welcome, Snieder confirms.

SEARCHING FOR ANSWERS

Unilever announced three years ago that it wanted to house its R&D activities on the campus. Until then, its research and development was spread over three locations: its head offices in Vlaardingen (Netherlands), Heilbronn (Germany) and Poznan (Poland). WUR came up as a suitable location for the new building and the desired collaboration, as it is the heart of the

increasingly high-profile Food Valley. After Friesland Campina, Unilever is the second big food company to have moved its R&D to the campus.

'The world is changing,' is how R&D Food Transformation director Serpil Tascioglu explains the relocation. 'The current food system is no longer adequate. The system is out of kilter, partly due to climate change and overpopulation.' This conclusion led to the question: where next for the company? Unilever

seeks the answer in collaboration – with universities, startups and other businesses in search of innovation. Tascioglu: ‘And in concentrating those activities at one location, in a building that stimulates collaboration and gives of an aura of openness to the outside world.’

MORE THAN A PR PITCH

The emphasis on openness, transparency and collaboration is more than a PR pitch. Unilever literally lets you see what it’s working on. In the large entrance hall, the visitor can see the factory to the left, where new concepts from the lab are tested on a factory scale. Through a vast wall of glass you can see what is going on behind it. To the right, a similar wall of glass provides a peak in the kitchen. This is the testing kitchen, the largest of five kitchens on the premises. The other four are behind the gates to the part of the building that is not open to the public.

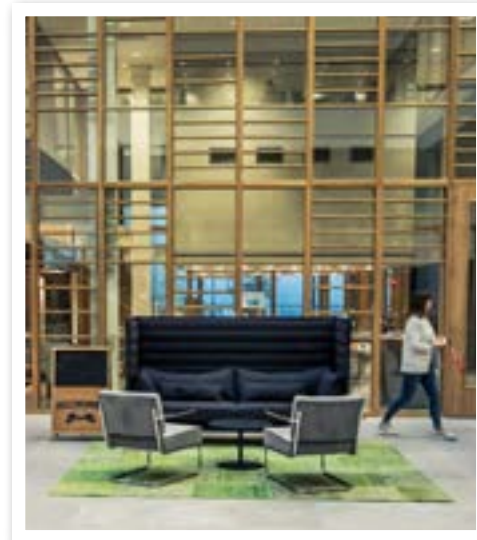
Glass symbolizes the new openness and transparency, Tascioglu believes. ‘Forty per cent of the walls in the building are made of glass. That openness is not just towards people from outside; it also encourages internal collaboration among the 500 employees in the building. ‘You are more likely to run into each other,’

‘Together with WUR, we want to make sure that Wageningen becomes the global centre for sustainable and healthy nutrition’

says Tascioglu. On the prominent and eye-catching wooden staircase in the middle of the hall, for instance, which connects the four storeys and invites you not to take the lift for a change. In fact, the lifts are deliberately tucked away in a corner of the hall.

BOOSTING COLLABORATION

The appointment of Peter Haring as Ecosystems Foods director underlines Unilever’s seriousness about openness and collaboration. His task is to crank up collaboration between Unilever and WUR. ‘In this context, “ecosystem” refers to the ecosystem of companies and activities, with an emphasis on the campus,’ explains Haring. ‘WUR’s ambitions for sustainability largely match ours. The food system has got to change fundamentally. That calls for big steps. Not just in replacing animal products with plant-based ones, but also in terms of adding less salt, sugar



▲ Forty per cent of the walls in the building are made of glass. That symbolizes the openness and transparency.



‘As a foodie I feel quite at home here’

Julia Kleine
Food engineer

‘My favourite spot? The kitchen. The kitchens here are great,’ says food engineer Julia Kleine. ‘Although I’m not a cook, I am a foodie. And everything we do here is directly connected with

the work of cooks and the way professional kitchens and consumers use our products.’ Kleine (38), from Germany, has been working for Unilever for 15 years, having started in Heilbronn after graduating from university in Berlin. After five years in Brazil, she came to Vlaardingen four years ago. And then came the bombshell that Unilever was moving to Wageningen. ‘I was dumbstruck,’ says Kleine honestly. ‘When I was working in Heilbronn, Vlaardingen was where it all happened. That’s why I wanted to go there. But Wageningen? I didn’t know then that there was such a big university here.’ That has changed now. ‘Unilever organized several trips to Wageningen to have a look around. I got a good feeling about it.’ So Kleine and her husband, who works for Unilever too, started house-hunting. ‘We have two young children so commuting wasn’t an option.’ They found a house in Veenendaal. And Wageningen? ‘The building is fantastic. As a foodie, I feel quite at home here. The building fits what we want to be. We want to be open to the outside world. We want to be part of the ecosystem here.’

‘Started with an empty box’

Kees Montanus
Process engineer

Kees Montanus has worked for Unilever for 38 years. His move to Wageningen has been a major transition, involving a career switch from Home & Personal Care to Foods. ‘Home and Personal Care moved to the UK due to a change in the organization, so I was mentally preparing myself for the possibility of moving there. Until they announced that everyone who wanted to move to Wageningen could do so.’

Montanus opted for Wageningen and was given the job of designing the new testing factory. ‘We started with an empty box. And this is what we ended up with,’ he says proudly, pointing at the prominent pilot plant to the left of the entrance hall. So he got to design his own factory? ‘Yes, that’s what it amounted to. In collaboration of course. Now the design phase is over, I am the manager of the testing factory.’ Montanus got straight on with his new life and now lives in Wageningen. ‘I saw a new-build project in Nieuw-Kortenoord. Houses in the 1930s style, just what I wanted. The house was ready in April this year. I love it here. The river and the woods, the liveliness of the town and the campus.’ And he is certainly happy with the new workplace too. ‘It is spacious and I think they used beautiful materials.’



and saturated fats to food products. So we are working a lot with the Agrotechnology & Food Sciences Group and the Plant Sciences Group. We have also had contact with several startups through Startlife.’

In practical terms, too, there is already plenty of interaction. An electron microscope of Unilever’s is located in Radix, and several NMR instruments in Helix. This is Unilever’s contribution

to the shared research facilities envisaged by WUR. And while the move is going on, the company is renting laboratory space from WUR, as its own labs are not yet in use.

GLOBAL CENTRE

‘The whole concept of collaboration is new,’ says Tascioglu. Staff are even being offered a training programme on collaboration. ‘Rather than trying to do everything yourself, we are joining

forces and exchanging ideas with universities, students, startups and other companies. ‘Together we want to make sure that Wageningen becomes the global centre for sustainable and healthy nutrition.’



▲ The prominent, eye-catching wooden staircase in the middle of the hall that connects the four storeys and invites you not to take the lift for a change.

‘I believe in the Food Valley ecosystem’

Rik Stuart
Management trainee

‘Nice, isn’t it, this building? It gives me so much energy every day when I come in here.’ Rik Stuart (26) has been a trainee at Unilever for 10 months, and has nothing but praise for his workplace. ‘It is very open and inspiring. You can look right into the kitchens and the testing factory through the glass. That gives people a good sense of what we are working on. Because of all the glass, you can see people at work everywhere around you. That makes you feel very connected.’ As a trainee, he is working on a three-year talent programme intended to lead to a first management job. It wasn’t a difficult decision to work for Unilever after a Wageningen degree in Biotechnology. ‘I always thought Unilever was a cool company. Especially because of their commitment to sustainability. And I’m a foodie: I love eating and cooking.’ A management traineeship was a less obvious choice. ‘I used to want an academic career. But I gradually realized that wasn’t really me.’ So here he is at Unilever, and back in Wageningen. ‘Very nice, actually, because I think it’s a great university. I am pleased we’ve moved here. I believe in the Food valley ecosystem.’ But he isn’t living here yet. ‘I’m not sure if I’ll stay here. The next phase of the training programme could be at another branch.’



REUSE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The main materials in the building are glass, wood and metal: recyclable and therefore sustainable. Much of the wood used is already having a second life, even though it looks brand new. Much of the furniture in the building is second-hand, too. Which is to say, it has come from the old premises in Vlaardingen, Helibrunn and Poznan. Tascioglu: ‘We reused whatever we could.’ This attention for reusing things is part of a complete package of sustainability. The building is energy-neutral thanks to thermal energy storage and 1800 solar panels. Rainwater is used for flushing the toilets. Infrared sensors continuously measure the temperature of ceilings, walls and floors so as to heat the building optimally. All this sustainable technology earned the building a BREEAM Award for sustainable construction in London last spring. The building can count itself the sustainability world champion in the business premises category.

WORRIED ABOUT THE NEIGHBOURS

Unilever on campus, is that really a good idea? The organizations Boerengroep (Farmers’ group) and OtherWise are holding a discussion on Friday 6 December on the collaboration between Wageningen University and large multinationals such as Unilever and Campina. Is such collaboration desirable or a danger to the university’s autonomy? How sustainable are these companies and how do they contribute to the ‘quality of life’?

Would you like to join? The discussion will take place from 12:30 to 13:30 in Impluse. You can read a report on it that afternoon on [Resource](#) online.

THE BEST FOR 15 YEARS BUT HOW?

It is both predictable and unique: for the 15th time in a row, Wageningen University has been pronounced the best university in the Netherlands by the higher education guide *De Keuzegids*. What is Wageningen's secret?

text Albert Sikkema and Luuk Zegers illustration Henk van Ruitenbeek

Fred de Boer



Teacher of the Year 2019

'I think it's because the lines are short between students and teachers. In Wageningen students get individual attention, the groups are smaller than at other universities, and we pay sufficient attention to supervising the students in their group work, internships and thesis-writing. **That individual attention is part of the educational quality that students evaluate so positively.** It also helps that the student population and Wageningen are relatively small. So students and teachers recognize each other on the street, in the shops, and at the cinema. That reinforces the feeling of belonging and getting individual attention.'

Eva Heijne



Editor of *De Keuzegids*

'Wageningen has a clear focus in terms of academic domain. There is a lot of expertise there in the areas of agriculture, nutrition, the environment and sustainability. Within this domain, Waga-

ningen offers small-scale and innovative education. Also, the university offers disciplines that score well at other universities too: economics programmes and the social sciences. **Disciplines that never score as well are not offered in Wageningen.'**

Pim Brascamp



Former Education Director at WUR

'For a start, students are taken seriously in Wageningen, by the teachers and by the board. They have a say through the various programme committees and the Student Council. Students appreciate that. **Secondly, the teachers are committed to their teaching, because the programmes have a big influence on the education policy.** For example, the way these are supervised and evaluated was once thought up by teachers, and then embraced by the Education Institute. It is bottom-up. Thirdly, everyone in Wageningen thinks education is important, probably because we had so few students 20 years ago. The culture is: if you don't fancy teaching, don't come and work here. And lastly, the teachers get a lot of freedom in how

they teach their subject. They have a free hand. As a result, our teachers are always thinking up new ideas and creative teaching methods. And that motivates the students too.'

Perry den Brok



Professor of Education and Learning Studies

'We have a couple of trump cards, I think. First of all, we are relatively small, which makes close contact between teachers and students possible. That is one of the prerequisites for satisfied students, research shows. Secondly, in Wageningen education is financially important to the chair groups. And because it brings in a lot of money for the groups, it gets real priority. The third trump card is the continuous improvement to the education. **We do a tremendous amount here in the area of educational innovation.** We have a really unique position in the Netherlands in that regard. And Wageningen is not afraid to adopt non-traditional teaching methods. Another thing that helps is that we don't have faculties, so there are no barriers between the different groups. That promotes collaboration, which is



fruitful for the students as well. And lastly, WUR concentrates on one domain. It is harder for a broad university to become the number one, because you can never do well right across the board. A clear focus makes that easier. And apart from all that, we have hardworking teachers who really care about their students. I have worked at other universities, but I find that really striking here.'

Sophie Kuijten



Chair of the Student Council

'I think the secret lies in the small scale. Teachers here are very approachable and there is an open atmosphere, thanks to which problems can be solved quickly. Teach-

ers try to think things out with you and to really help students struggling with something. That makes students feel understood. **A lot of teachers know their students' names.** Also, students consciously choose Wageningen because they are interested in the subjects and issues studied here. When teachers and students share a genuine interest in a subject, that makes for a certain 'click'. And that makes it nicer to be a student here.

Michiel Kohne



Anthropologist involved in universities lobby organization WOinActie

'There are so many lists. In the past, I have worked at the universities or Tilburg and Rotterdam, and they were always top too. Those rankings are essentially a PR exercise. Take the *Keuzegids*, for which students evaluate their degree programme. There are very few students who study at two universities, and Wageningen has different students to Delft and Amsterdam. So you can't compare the student evaluations, can you? The main purpose of these lists is to help recruit more students. That is what WOinActie, which I sympathize with, opposes. **We've got to stop growing for growth's sake, which has nothing to do with real quality** and only increases the pressure, especially on tenure trackers and people on temporary contracts. These lists are just about money and have nothing to do with genuine quality.'

Annik Van Keer



Teamleader at the Undergraduate School, Utrecht University

'As a member of the education visitation committee, between June 2018 and April 2019, I had a number of discussions at Wageningen University. What struck me about those discussions was the pleasant atmosphere. **Students, teachers and management all talked openly with us and there was an atmosphere of mutual respect.** We noticed an open mind and willingness to learn from peers. You sense a down-to-earth mentality. Of course, Wageningen has excellent degree programmes and a tremendous international reputation, but I think the decisive factor is that spirit of openness.' 🗨️

Heading for the 2024 Olympic Games

Student rowing club Argo is going in for coastal rowing, a spectacular variant in which wind, currents and waves play a big role. 'We want to make coastal rowing big in the Netherlands. And get Argo coastal rowers to the 2024 Olympic Games.'

text Luuk Zegers illustration Alfred Heikamp

W.S.R. Argo's last Olympic medal dates back to 1964, when Argonaut Jan Just Bos got a bronze at the Games in Tokyo as the cox in the coxed pair event. That performance has never been surpassed. One of the reasons is the poor rowing water, says Argo chair Joris Bergman. 'Ever since Argo was founded, there have been problems with Wageningen's rowing water. We issue a rowing ban about 80 times a year. Two times out of three, that's because there's too much wind, strong currents and waves in the Rhine. Our normal boats sink in such conditions. Sometimes we can use the harbour canal instead but that is one of the busiest harbour canals in the Netherlands, so we try to avoid this.'

The Argonauts want to turn that disadvantage into an advantage by focusing on coastal rowing, an up-and-coming variant of the sport in which wind, currents and waves are in fact crucial elements. 'If we use a coastal boat, we can still row on the Rhine even when it's very windy and choppy,' explains Bergman. 'Boats like that don't sink when the waves get bigger. It's an interesting option for us for that reason alone.'

ROWING MEETS SAILING

'A coastal boat is heavier and much more manoeuvrable,' explains Bergman. 'Rowing feels different too compared with a normal rowing boat. Normally you feel what the other

crew members are doing but you get that less in a coastal boat, especially in strong currents and waves. So you need a different way of working together in the boat.' The races are different too. More spectacular for spectators, says Bergman. 'An ordinary race means rowing as hard as you can in a straight line for two kilometres. A coastal race is more like a yacht race: there is a route with buoys, everyone starts *en masse* and the distances are greater. So the coxes become much more important. As in sailing, you have to allow for the wind and waves, so your tactics can make much more difference.'

IN ITS INFANCY


Coastal rowing has its disadvantages too, says Bergman. The biggest downside is that it is still a relatively minor sport. 'There are about 350 coastal rowers at the moment in the Netherlands. It's also in its infancy in the student rowing scene.' He wants Argo to change that. 'Argo will lead the way in the growth of coastal rowing. We're getting in on the game early and putting a lot of effort into it. We want Argonauts to take part in a Dutch championship coastal event in a four and if that goes well, we'll go to the world championships. We also want to share what we learn in a number of clinics for the other student rowing clubs. We hope that eventually they will become as enthusiastic as we are about coastal rowing so

we get a student league because it'll be no fun if the sport only takes off in Argo. Then we'll be competing against guys 20 years older, who'll be no match for us in our early twenties. If more student rowers take part, it becomes more exciting and you push one another to new levels.'

COASTAL FERRARI

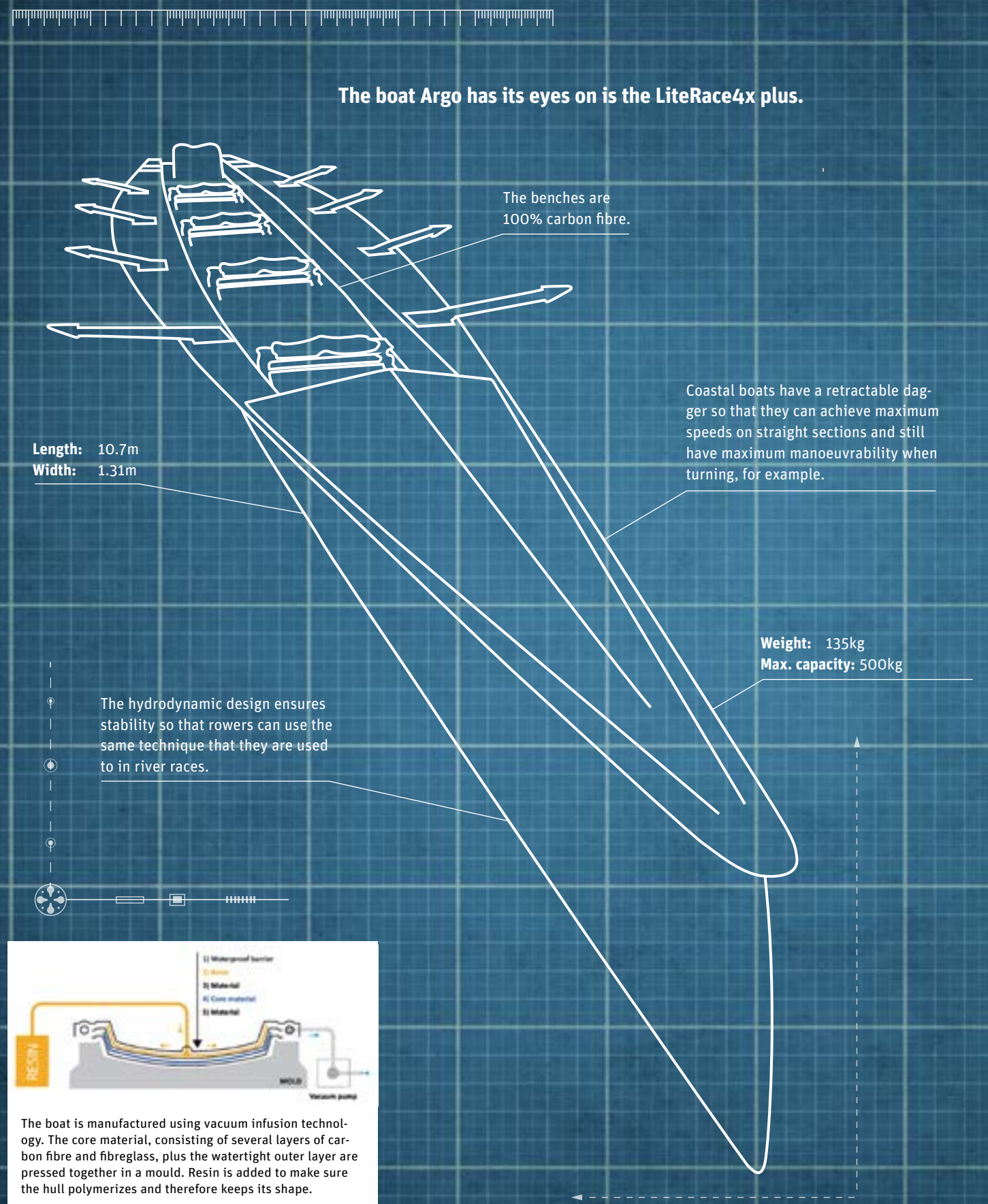
The Argonauts are not alone in their enthusiasm for coastal rowing. They recently won the Aegon Committee Cup, an annual competition for pitches aimed at improving student rowing clubs. The cup comes with 3500 euros for implementing that plan. A nice start, but a long way short of the money needed to buy a good coastal boat, says Bergman. 'It varies between manufacturers, but the Ferrari among the coastal boats costs about 26,000 euros. There isn't a second-hand market as yet because the sport is still so small. That's why we are now looking to see whether we can arrange a boat with regional partners.'

OLYMPICS

There is a big chance that coastal rowing will be a demonstration sport in the 2024 Olympic Games, says Bergman. 'That decision will be made in 2020. If that happens, the sport could grow fast. And we will have a head start.' 



Argo chair
Joris Bergman



IN OTHER NEWS

LIFELESS

Life is swarming in every corner of the planet. Every corner? Not quite: a small volcanic crater in the north of Ethiopia is holding out. The water in this crater is so toxic, acidic and hot that not even extremophile bacteria manage to survive in it, a study by the Université Paris-Sud established. As far as we know, this is the only place on earth that is completely dead. It's nice and quiet, mind you.

BEATING HEART

The blue whale, the largest mammal in the world, has an extremely slow heartbeat. During a dive in search of food, its heart beats four to eight times per minute, discovered biologists from Stanford University. Once the animal surfaces to catch its breath, its heartbeat goes up to 25-37 beats per minute. Totally-useless-but-fascinating knowledge.

GREEN PASTURES

A happy cow produces more milk. A cow in the meadow is happy. So how can you make sure she produces a lot of milk in the shed as well? By making her think she is still out in the meadow. To this end, Russian technologists have come up with special virtual reality glasses for cows. They look ridiculous but the Russians claim they work. The VR impression of green pastures improves the cow's general emotional wellbeing. Whether she then produces more milk is still to be studied.

Climate summit after all

WUR student Pippi van Ommen (23) was involved in Sail to the COP from the start but did not have the time to join the trip by sea to Chile. Now she will be at the climate summit after all. 'Our campaign will only really have succeeded when it becomes cheaper to take the train to Madrid than fly.'

When the Sail to the COP sailors heard that the climate summit was relocating to Madrid because of the unrest in Chile, they did not have the option of turning back. The wind was unfavourable and they had already made a lot of arrangements in South America. So they switched to

'People from all over Europe are working together to put our message on the agenda'

Plan B: using the hashtag #railtotheCOP, they called on European attendees to travel by land to Madrid rather than taking the plane. And another 20 or so campaigners were added to the 'home team' so that Sail to the COP could be represented in Madrid. 'I know Moon Weijens, one of the Sail to the COP initiators, through my degree study,' explains International Land and Water Management Master's student Pippi van Ommen. I was involved in the project from the start, mainly as a fan offering moral support, but I also helped decide what ship they should use. Only I didn't have the time to join them on the crossing.' When the summit was moved to Madrid, Van Ommen got a text message. 'Could I take a break from my thesis work and go with the new delegation to the climate



▲ Turning back was not an option for the sailors.

summit to help spread the Sail to the COP message?' Van Ommen arrived in Madrid on Sunday 1 December.

APPROACHING POLITICIANS

With the rest of the new Sail to the COP delegation — young people from all over Europe — she is organizing a debate on slow travel, a panel on climate change and the aviation industry, and an event on how to calculate the CO₂ emissions produced by flying. 'What is more, there are a lot of politicians here who we can approach. Our aim is to get our message about sustainable travel across and to reach as many people as possible. People should realize there is a lot of low-hanging fruit. We have good infrastructure in Europe for travelling by land but it's still cheaper to fly to Madrid than go by train. That needs to change.' Every morning and evening, Van Ommen and the rest of the new delegation call the people on the ship. 'To discuss strategies and figure out how best to tell our story. We are also investigating whether the ship people can call in during our events.'

SUCCESS

'Sail to the COP is a movement that was badly needed. To have it at all is already a success. People from all over Europe are working together to put our message about sustainable travel on the international agenda. The next step is to make sustainable travel actually happen — to make the train to Madrid a cheaper option than flying. Only then will our campaign be truly successful.' **© LZ**



▲ Pippi van Ommen (left) at the climate summit in Madrid.

A taster day at Uni

When did agriculture first start? The 30 secondary school students shadowing an undergraduate in Plant Sciences look at each other questioningly. 'Two thousand years ago?' hazards one of them. Five times that, reveals the teacher, Arjen Schots.

In the next hour, Schots provides a whistle-stop tour of the history of humans and agriculture, emphasizing that people started improving plants as soon as we planted them in order to eat them. There is a real challenge ahead for future students: 'In the coming 50 years we shall have to produce as much food as we have in the whole of human history up to now,' says Schots.

'Shadow students' Sterre Brouns and Joep Willems are not sure yet if they want to study Plant Sciences, but they certainly think the university is 'very friendly'.

Wageningen's small scale appeals to Joep. 'I'm at a small secondary school now, so I think this university would suit me. And my brother is here too.' But Sterre sees it as a drawback that Wageningen is on the small side. 'I keep hearing that everybody knows everybody. I'm not sure I like that. I'm going to go to two other student-shadowing days too.'

Schots is happy with today's turnout. The classroom is full and there will be another 'shadowing day' in February. 'We get nearly 100 first-years every year these days. And we need to, because the plant-breeding sector has been growing by about 10 per cent per year for years now. We could even grow a bit more,' says Schots. So is it important to provide an appealing class on the student-shadowing days? 'Well, I don't try and make it extra attractive. I usually just give a class from a first-year course. Of course I adapt it a little bit, but this was a realistic class.' **© CJ**



PHOTO: CORETTA JONGELING

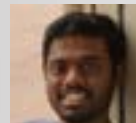
▲ A full classroom during a Plant Sciences student-shadowing day. Sterre Brouns on the left and Joep Willems on the right.

MEANWHILE IN... INDIA

'We need more people to care'

Oxygen bars are opening up to give the people a chance to breathe clean air for a stipulated amount of time. WUR student Varun Dinesh shares his first-hand experience with the severe emergency levels of smog in Delhi.

'When my flight to Delhi was landing, I was waiting for when the plane crossed the clouds and I could see the city from above — but it never did cross the clouds and yet it landed. What appeared to be thick clouds was actually the air itself. That was the time I realized that the smog was indeed a serious problem. The smog is not primarily because of the pollution from the vehicles or even the crackers of Diwali, a very big festival in India when many people burst crackers. It is caused by the agricultural practices in places around Delhi: farmers burn the remaining crops after harvest and all the smoke from this flows into the city due to the wind channels. As a result, the city gets heavily polluted. Common people acknowledge that the current situation is a problem. But they also have the mindset that nothing can be done unless the government intervenes. Apart from



Varun Dinesh (24), Master's student of Biotechnology, shares his first-hand experience with the severe emergency levels of smog in Delhi.



PHOTO: AMIT KGS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

distributing free masks to everyone, the state government has come up with the odd-even rule to minimize the people on the city roads. The licence plates of the cars with odd numbers work on the odd dates of the month and the even licence plates on the even dates. It seems to be working to bring down the pollution, but it is not a long-term solution. I strongly believe all man-made issues can also be solved by man. So if people come together to take appropriate action right now, it is still not too late. Cooperatives should arrange awareness drives for farmers about the burning practices and try to educate them about the harmful effects of what they are doing. As for the common people's responsibility: we need more people to care.' **© KR**

YOU ON CAMPUS

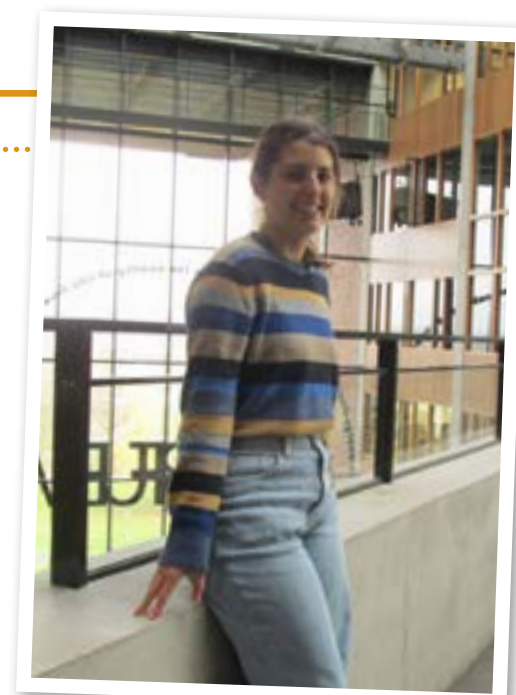
On 5 December, Sinterklaas evening, or pakjesavond (parcels night, ed.), is celebrated throughout the Netherlands. Anna Celli, an MSc student of Biotechnology from Italy, already knows a thing or two about this phenomenon through a Dutch friend. She recognizes the warm feelings it gives people from a similar tradition at home: Santa Lucia.

Santa Lucia, like Sinterklaas, is about a saint who visits once a year to pamper children. The way in which Santa Lucia is celebrated, however, varies enormously per region. 'I come from Brescia, a region in the north of Italy, near Milan. We celebrate Santa Lucia on 13 December, Santa Lucia's day. She comes by your house at night on her donkey and hides presents if you have been a good child. The next morning, by following a trail

of candy, you can find your presents.' Contrary to Sinterklaas you will never really see Santa Lucia. 'If you look at her, she will put soot in your eyes. And everyone knows, even the children, that the Santa Lucia in the parades on 13 December is not the real one.' Like Sinterklaas, Santa Lucia is especially for

'If you look at Santa Lucia, she will put soot in your eyes'

the children who believe in the existence of the saint, although it remains an important tradition for everyone: 'Even if you have grown up and know that Santa Lucia doesn't exist, it's still a day that everyone is attached



to. In my high school, for example, there were classmates who brought candy to celebrate the day.'

Anna is pretty sure that someday she will celebrate Sinterklaas. For this year she is still doubtful: 'I don't know yet if and how I will celebrate pakjesavond. On 5 December I might go to a special event with friends. At least I don't think my parents will fill my shoe!' **HB**

'The smell of smoke and beer hit me in the face'

DIARY OF A CARETAKER

Eugene van Meteren works for Idealis as a caretaker. He writes about his experiences for *Resource*. You can read all his columns on resource-online.nl.

Nothing wrong with a good party, thinks Eugene van Meteren. Until the partying gets out of hand.

When Wageningen's new Rijnveste student residence was ready, I handed out keys to four young ladies of about 18. They couldn't wait to leave home. 'My parents are lovely, but now it's time to spread my wings,' said one of them. 'And I get to share a brand-new house with three girlfriends. How cool is that? We are having a housewarming party this evening to celebrate.' I wished them a fun evening and, like a concerned caretaker should, I told them not to disturb the peace.

Early the next day, I was walking past the same house, and I saw a lot of rubbish outside it, which made me a bit suspicious. When the door opened after I had rung the bell a few times, the smell of smoke and beer hit me in the face. Tired and no doubt hungover, the resident asked me if there was anything wrong. I explained that I suspected something had been going on in this house, and could I have a little look inside? Hesitant and irritated, she let me in.

When I went into the living room, my mouth fell open. Yesterday this house was sparkingly

clean; now it looked like a battlefield. Several people lay on the floor, asleep. The names of dozens of partygoers were written in felt pen on the walls. It looked as though there had been some kind of tomato fight: there was red pulp everywhere. The Tomatina festival in Valencia was nothing to this. The residents of the house burst into tears. They hadn't expected so many people, and certainly hadn't thought it could get so out of hand, they tell me. Without my needing to say anything, they promised that within a couple of days, the house would look the way a new house should once again.

Everything was covered in red pulp; the Tomatina festival in Valencia was nothing to this

A few days later I passed by again to see if they had kept their promise. And to be fair, I have no idea how they managed it, but everything looked perfect again. **IC**

Wageningen Master's students do internships and thesis research all around the world, getting to know their field and other cultures. Here they talk about their adventures.

An oasis of contradictions

Doha feels like Dubai as it was 10 years ago. Because Qatar is hosting the World Cup in 2022, the Qataris are constructing building after building and modernizing their infrastructure at incredible speed. Everywhere I walk I see construction sites. In the few weeks that I've been here, I can already notice differences in the city plan.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DESERT

Qatar is trying to find sustainable alternatives to its current fossil fuel industry, as it wants to become less dependent on oil. That is why I am currently doing research for Qatar University on growing native microalgae. The site where we grow them is in the middle of the desert. It's a surreal feeling when you can see nothing but sand, sky and the sun, and then suddenly a few white buildings appear in the desolate landscape. I had this type of mirage feeling again on a kayaking excursion to the north of the country. We had been driving across the desert for miles and miles when suddenly we saw a purple-looking island in the middle of the dunes. It was a beautiful place with shallow water covered by very low mangroves and with flocks of flamingos all around it. Kayaking in this desert paradise is definitely one of my highlights so far.

'Low-intensity work days make sense if you know locals don't need to work for a living'

LAZY WORKDAYS

The wealth of the country due to its oil and gas reserves is clearly visible not only in the magnificent buildings and big cars, but also in the work culture. My workdays have been quite lazy so far. I wake up at 8:30, work till 14:30/15:30 and at that time everyone is already leaving the lab. These low-intensity work days make sense if you know locals don't need to work for a living. Qatar natives receive a living allowance from the moment they are born and are even gifted a house by the government.

EXTRAVAGANCE AND SEMI-SLAVERY

Qatar is truly a land of contradictions. The country follows Islamic law and alcohol is difficult to buy, but it is very liberal at the same time. Most of the university staff and students are female for example. There is another contradiction surrounding the boycott of Qatar by other Arab countries. It was meant to damage Qatar economically and socially, but actually it made the country stronger and more independent. I've noticed extravagance rather than shortages.

The South-East Asian migrant workers working in semi-slavery conditions are a stark contrast to that wealth, however. You encounter them everywhere in the city, working full days outdoors in the hot sun for very low pay. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to talk with locals about this issue. I'm mostly surrounded by expats (only 12 per cent of the Qatar population is local), and it is also seen as a bit of a taboo subject. Colleagues have told me that things are changing. The approaching World Cup has prompted a lot of criticism of the harsh labour conditions, and now the government is trying to bring in legislation to improve these workers' situation step by step. **IC**

THE WORKS

Who? Tommaso de Santis (23), Master's student of Biotechnology
What? Research thesis at Qatar University
Where? Doha, Qatar

Do you too have a nice story about your internship or thesis research abroad? Email resource@wur.nl.



Irregular Opening Hours Christmas Holidays 2019/2020

Forum

	2019/2020	The Building	The Library	Student Desk	IT Service Point	WURshop	Restaurant	Grand Café	Wageningen in'to Languages
Monday	23 December	8 am - 8 pm	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Tuesday	24 December	8 am - 8 pm	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Wednesday Christmas	25 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday Christmas	26 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Friday	27 December	8 am - 8 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Saturday	28 December	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	29 December	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday	30 December	8 am - 8 pm	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Tuesday	31 December	8 am - 8 pm	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Wednesday New Years Day	1 January	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday	2 January	8 am - 8 pm	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	10 am - 2 pm	10 am - 2 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Friday	3 January	8 am - 8 pm	8 am - 6 pm	10 am - 12 pm	10 am - 2 pm	10 am - 2 pm	11.30 am - 1.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Saturday	4 January	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	5 January	10 am - 6 pm	10 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed

During working hours, the building is open to the public. After working hours, entrance is only possible with a WUR card.

Orion

	2019/2020	The Building	Bike basement	The Spot	Restaurant
Friday	20 December	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 9 pm	8 am - 2 pm	11.30 am - 2 pm
Saturday	21 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	22 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday	23 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Tuesday	24 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Wednesday Christmas	25 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday Christmas	26 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Friday	27 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Saturday	28 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	29 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday	30 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Tuesday	31 December	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Wednesday New Years Day	1 January	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday	2 January	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Friday	3 January	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Saturday	4 January	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	5 January	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed

Leeuwenborch

	2019/2020	The Building	Coffee Bar / Restaurant	Library
Monday	23 December	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed
Tuesday	24 December	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed
Wednesday Christmas	25 December	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday Christmas	26 December	Closed	Closed	Closed
Friday	27 December	Closed	Closed	Closed
Saturday	28 December	Closed	Closed	Closed
Sunday	29 December	Closed	Closed	Closed
Monday	30 December	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed
Tuesday	31 December	8 am - 6 pm	Closed	Closed
Wednesday New Years Day	1 January	Closed	Closed	Closed
Thursday	2 January	7 am - 10.30 pm	10 am - 2 pm	Closed
Friday	3 January	7 am - 10.30 pm	10 am - 2 pm	Closed
Saturday	4 January	8 am - 5.30 pm	Closed	Closed
Sunday	5 January	Closed	Closed	Closed

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



In memoriam

Cees Kwakernaak



Our former colleague Cees Kwakernaak passed away on Sunday 17 November 2019. After having worked for over 21 years at Wageningen Environmental Research and its predecessors, Cees left on 1 September 2016 in order to enjoy an active retirement. Unfortunately he was not able to do so for long. Cees, whose background was in physical geography, was a passionate scientist working at the interface of water and spatial use. Cees was a positive,

calm and highly motivated researcher. He was the key figure in major projects that brought together multiple disciplines, in which he worked with the commissioning parties and other stakeholders. Cees was good at putting the research results into words, both in talks and in his highly readable reports, articles and essays, which are still frequently cited. The book *Waarheen met het veen* ("What to do with peat?") is a prime example. In addition to his work, Cees played an active role in politics and as a volunteer. His political activities in Renkum resulted in the Renkums Beekdal nature area. On 18 September 2018, Cees proudly gave the Soil, Water and Land Use team a guided tour of the area. At the end of June this year we received an email from Cees saying he had health problems. The doctors were unable to give a prognosis for his life expectancy. At the time, Cees sounded optimistic. He wanted to carry on doing enjoyable things with his wife Roos for a while yet, such as touring in their campervan and spending time with the grandchildren. Sadly, however, their allotted time turned out to be short. Our thoughts go to Roos, his children, grandchildren, family and friends. We will remember Cees as the amiable and positive colleague he always was.

On behalf of Cees's former colleagues

Agenda

FORUM LIBRARY: TWAN DE VOS EXHIBITION

As a tribute to Twan de Vos (1961-2019), a well-known, versatile artist from Wageningen, Forum Library is hosting a small exhibition of his work. His colourful, expressive figurative art is on display until February 2020.

5-9 December

WAGGERS COMEDY FESTIVAL 2019

Wageningen's first Comedy Festival ever! Five days of all types of comedy, from improv and stand-up to musical. You can even dabble in the art form yourself and join a workshop in stand-up or improv comedy. Check out our agenda and get a Festival Pass of 28 euros (+1 euro service fee) here: <http://eehproductions.com/waggers2019/>

Friday 13 December, 20:00

SAUDADE - STORYTELLING NIGHT

Stories of nostalgia, love and longing this Christmas time. Venue: THUIS Wageningen Stationsstraat 32, Wageningen. Admission: 5 euros at the door.

Wageningen **in'to** Languages
opens up new worlds

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- English Presentation & Performance
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- French & Spanish
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www.wur.eu/into

Colophon

Resource is the independent medium for students and staff at Wageningen University & Research. *Resource* reports and interprets the news and gives the background. New articles are posted daily on resource-online.nl. The magazine is published every fortnight on Thursday.

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Marc Lamers, Corporate Communications & Marketing, Wageningen University & Research



>>TYPICAL DUTCH



ILLUSTRATION: HENK VAN RUITENBEEK

Cute eating habits

Where do you suppose a Dutch person would sit for a meal at home? Well, Dutchies are pretty cute when it comes to choosing a cosy spot to have their meal.

The first time I noticed that the Dutch love to have dinner on the sofa, I was in the shared kitchen of my corridor, and the smell of tomato sauce was coming from the oven. When the timer pinged, my Dutch housemate came into the kitchen, took plates from the cupboard, pulled a steaming dish of homemade lasagne out of the oven and... put it on the coffee table. She called her boyfriend to join her, grabbed two forks and they sat side by side on the couch. I should have taken a picture of this cute Dutch homeliness.

Now I'm used to seeing them eating on the sofa and I'm not as surprised as I was the first time. Actually I've realized that eating on the sofa is handier because you sit closer to each other and you can move more freely, since you are not bound to a chair and physically separated by a table.

🇮🇹 **Elisa Bongiolatti, a double degree student of Agricultural and Food Economics, from Italy**

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 and earn 25 euros and Dutch candy.

Side by side on the couch – a picture of cute homeliness