Hesource

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The journalism platform for all at Wageningen University & Research

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FOREWORD

Déjà vu

I was born and brought up in Wageningen so, like my classmates, when I finished school I chose a university somewhere else because we already knew this little town on the Rhine inside out. I left to study journalism in a real city on a branch of the Rhine downstream. Ten years later, in 2018, I ended up in Wageningen after all as a journalist at Resource. In that first year, I was able to go on one of the last field trips with soil scientist and fieldwork legend Gert Peek. He let students analyse soil types by biting the sample. 'If it's not sandy, it must be clay.' The students hung on his every word. I too immediately felt a great urge to study Soil, Water, Atmosphere even though I'd never had any interest in soils before then.

Last week, I was able to accompany another excursion, this time to southern Limburg with first-years who were researching how the landscape can be altered to better protect the region from flooding disasters, such as the one last summer (page 22). I saw enthusiastic teachers and inspired students. And on the way home, I found myself considering the option of studying International Land and Water Management.

Luuk Zegers

Student & Education editor

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HORSE SKILLS ON WE DAY

Last Tuesday, 2311 WUR employees left their labs, offices and classrooms to join in sporting activities on We Day. 'Spend a relaxing afternoon with your colleagues', as the intranet put it. Options ranged from belly dancing to learning Chinese in two hours (?!) and from macramé to driving a horse-drawn carriage. 'A kind of try-out,' says the instructor because of course you can never become a professional coachman in two hours. The equine in question did indeed look pretty relaxed as the trainees learned how to use the reins to start, stop and steer. CJ

WUR has agreed with the municipality on the construction of a road for cars on the south side of the bus lane. Up to 700 cars a day are expected to use this route, says Lex Roders (Facilities & Services). The figure is based on estimates by traffic experts involved in the provincial project Beter Bereikbaar Wageningen. Access may be regulated with a permit system.

If you're coming to the campus by car

from the western side of Wageningen,

you have to drive right round to the

Mansholtlaan. There is no western

entrance to the campus. But there

But it is not yet certain that the road will be built. The route is currently a cycle path, which will have to be widened for shared use by cars and pedestrians.

Campus access from west for 700 cars

Dassenbos

A new cycle path will then be built on the north side of the bus lane. There is already a path from the Bornsesteeg to Aurora, but the building of the missing section (along the Dassenbos thicket) is being opposed by the lobby group Mooi Wageningen.

This protest was triggered by WUR's felling of 14 trees last year to make way for the cycle path. According to Mooi Wageningen, this has irreparably damaged It is not yet certain that the road will be built the old forest soil. The organization demands replanting on the same spot, but WUR wants to compensate for

the felling by expanding the Dassenbos on its northern edge, where there is still a bit of meadow.

Whether WUR will get the go-ahead from the province is not yet certain. Meanwhile, until the cycle path has been constructed, students can earn a little extra in the rush hour by keeping the temporary bicycle crossing at Aurora safe. BK

Young Academy survey on research funding

How do researchers feel about the future of science and the allocation of budgets? Should more money be spent on permanent contracts, grants for outstanding researchers or team-based research? The Young Academy is organizing a national survey to find out. The survey puts researchers in the position of policymakers in an online environment where they have to choose what proportion of the available budget goes where. Each option shows the chance of success, how much time the application process costs and what can be achieved.

According to the Young Academy, this gives scientists the opportunity to advise politicians and university boards on the future of science funding. The deadline for the survey (dejongeakademie.nl) is 1 July 2022. HOP



Win Louise's bike

President of the Executive Board Louise Fresco is due to go soon. In addition to her intellectual legacy, she will also be leaving her bike behind in Wageningen. If you are a student or doing a PhD and lack a decent bike, you can win hers. Take an original photo of yourself on campus that shows why you badly need that bike. On the back of someone else's bike or running after a cyclist — you name it. The person with the best photo will be able to cycle round Wageningen on Louise's bike. Send your photo to louises.bike@wur.nl and a jury will select the best photo. wA

soon will be.



Education minister Robbert Dijkgraaf wants to create a 'firm foundation' for science communication in the Netherlands. There will be a new national centre to boost confidence in science. Dijkgraaf has earmarked 10 million euros in funding over the next 10 years for the centre, which will be set up together with scientists. wa

VeSte grows at CSF's expense

Student Council party VeSte will get one extra seat on the council as of next academic year, giving it eight of the twelve seats. Sustainability & Integration (S&I) will keep its three seats and the Christian party CSF will go down from two seats to one. Dean of Education Arnold Bregt announced the election results in mid-May. The turnout was quite a bit higher this year (at 35.3 per cent) than last year (27.6 per cent). This year's turnout was on a par with before the pandemic. Lz



PYRENEES IDEAS

DO NOT HURT A FLY SKEETER'S QUICKIE LEAVES A HICKEY INSECT'S MAKE OUT TRY

Herscho Duds

'Dear women of WUR' open letter sparks big response

'Overwhelming and very positive' is how Stacy Pyett describes the response to her open letter to the women of WUR, which she published on the intranet last week.

Pyett, 'female, international and a highly skilled professional - the rest doesn't matter', wrote the five-page letter straight from the heart, after being moved by the many stories of biased and inappropriate behaviour that women still have to endure - even at WUR. Her letter triggered a huge reaction. In her letter, Pyett shares four personal stories - 'big and small, but all of it matters'- on what she has had to deal with during her work at WUR. Her motivation for this openness: 'Change starts with transparency. We all need to start openly sharing our stories. Ignoring or denying implicit bias is the most counter-productive thing we can do.'

She emphasizes that it's not just about gender. 'My story resonated broadly. I received supportive messages from men who are foreign, gay, dark-skinned, or lack an advanced degree who have very real experiences of implicit bias in the workplace.'

Sjoukje Heimovaara, Louise O. Fresco's

'lf you meet inappropriate behaviour, speak up'

WUR President, was among the over 100 colleagues who responded

successor as

to Pyett's letter. 'I have now spoken to her,' says Pyett. 'We both feel that this issue needs to be addressed from the top down *and* bottom up. WUR needs to make sure that organizational aspects such as processes and structures are



Photo Unsplash

fully bias-free, but individuals also play an important role. If you meet biased or inappropriate behaviour, speak up. Don't let your inner fear hold you back from raising these issues. It's time to have a dialogue? ME

Uni CAO: more pay and permanent jobs

According to the new collective labour agreement (CAO) for universities, pay will increase by four per cent, employees will receive a one-off extra payment of 400 euros and parental leave will be improved. On another sensitive point, more permanent jobs for lecturers, agreements are still to be reached.

The four per cent pay rise will take effect on 1 July. The bonus of 400 euros is in proportion to employees' hours, so part-timers receive less. However, the amount is higher for those on the university's minimum wage of 14 euros per hour: 750 euros. The agreement also includes an improvement to parental leave, in anticipation of the new rules coming into force on 1 August. Parents will be paid 70 per cent of their salary (it was 62.5 per cent) and are also entitled to leave in their first year on the job.

'Flex culture'

The much-criticised 'flex culture' at universities, where many lecturers go from one temporary contract to the next, will also be addressed in the new collective agreement: the negotiators' agreement

Parents on leave will get 70 per cent of their pay and be entitled to leave in their first year

states that unions and employers will draw up agreements on this issue. The universities speak

of a 'joint study' of the scope for more permanent contracts. The negotiator on behalf of the universities, VU executive director Marcel Nollen: 'The universities and employee organizations see a need for clear career prospects for lecturers that do justice to what they do for the universities.'

The new CAO for universities is valid until 1 April 2023. Employers and union members still have to ratify the agreement reached by the negotiators in mid-May. Negotiations on the CAO for Wageningen Research are also expected to be concluded shortly. HOP



'My bike is now my home'

Recent graduates Aisha Hassan and Lukas Paltanavicius will be cycling 7000 kilometres from Wageningen to Tanzania to learn and raise awareness about regenerative agriculture. 'In 10 months' time we plan to have visited 10 farms practising regenerative agriculture and made 10 mini-documentaries,' explains Paltanavicius (28, Biobased Sciences). 'We are now in Germany. It's a slow process but that's the intention: it gives us time to reflect on what we see and experience.' Hassan: 'You become a kind of little snail. My bike is now my home, which is fun.' svw Scan the QR code for the whole story.



Support group for WUR parents

Wageningen postdocs, PhD students and Tenure Track staff who have or are expecting children need more information and support, says Experimental Plant Sciences education coordinator Juliane Teapal. Now she has started up an informal parents support group. The group - consisting of over 50 men and women - met recently for the first time.

The aim of the support group is to share information, experiences and networks. Teapal: 'Parenting can get quite complicated in the competitive academic world, especially for international staff and the many scientists who don't have a permanent contract. A lot of them have practical questions. What are your rights to maternity leave and parental leave? How do you manage if you don't yet have a social network to lend a hand? How do you find a suitable family home if you can't get a mortgage because you're on a temporary contract?'

Teapal speaks from experience as she turned down a postdoc position in the UK after the birth of her first child for just such practical reasons. 'I simply couldn't see how I would be able to combine an academic career and young children in a country where we didn't know anyone who could show us the ropes,' she admits.

Experience shows that having children is a breaking point in the careers of a lot of academics, a point when they drop out or stop progressing. Teapal believes that is a loss for science and a truly inclusive academic world. The aim of the parents support group, which is open to all WUR parents, is to change this. One form of support planned is lunch gatherings in Impulse every two months. ME

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In search of 1000 species

How species-rich is the campus? On 24 and 25 June, groups of students and staff members, led by experts, will go in search of the answer to this question.

The Biodiversity Challenge, as the event is called, is a project run by the Wageningen Biodiversity Initiative (WBI). Last year, the event was cancelled due to Covid, but there

A sneak preview yielded over 750 species

was a sneak preview, involving a small group of people, who produced more than 750 species. So now, according to WBI head Liesje Mommer, the bar is being set at

a minimum of 1000 species. 'And that doesn't include bacteria and soil fungi. They don't count. Otherwise a spadeful of sand is enough to reach that number.'

About 30 guides will lead the excursions across the campus. The earliest expedition, a bird tour, is at six o'clock on Saturday morning. Participation requires no special prior knowledge. 'Not at all,' says Mommer. 'Anyone can join in. The event is also a great opportunity for students and staff to meet each other "in the wild".'

Bioblitz

After Saturday 25 June, the inventory will continue for a week on the website Waarneming.nl, where a special page is available for campus observations. This so-called Bioblitz includes WUR locations off-campus. Mommer hopes to make the challenge an annual event. The Biodiversity Challenge will be launched on Friday 24 June at 12:00 in Omnia by Rector Arthur Mol. Besides excursions, there will be five half-hour lectures by WUR professors, and displays bout biodiversity research in Wageningen. Participation is free, but you do need to register. RK



event.wur.nl/biodiversitychallenge

Viewpoint



'Slimming pill won't solve problem

The National Healthcare Institute has advised including the Mysimba slimming pill in the basic insurance package. WUR professor Renger Witkamp is critical: 'It's a primitive fix'.

The slimming pill Mysimba is already authorized for the treatment of obesity. Now the Healthcare Institute is advising the minister to have it included in the

basic health insurance package. Professor of Nutritional Biology Renger Witkamp

is critical: 'The control of your eating behaviour is complex. This is a primitive fix with a big risk of collateral damage, i.e. side effects.' Mysimba acts on the brain and consists of two substances. 'Naltrexon reduces the reward from eating; it inhibits the brain's pleasure centres. That is drastic because they are involved in other emotions too. The other substance, bupropion, is an old antidepressant, and how exactly it inhibits your appetite is not yet clear.' In that regard, the pharmacologist sees more of a future in the new drugs that came on the market last year, the GLP-1 agonists. They simulate a saturation hormone that makes you feel you have had enough to eat. 'They

act on a level below the pleasure centres, so they are more specific. They look more promising.

Vomiting

Mysimba's side effects are an issue. Many users experience nausea, vomiting, dizziness or constipation and half eventually abandon the treatment. The National Healthcare Institute therefore says that patients who have not lost weight after four months should stop taking the pill. The recommendation is also only for two patient groups: people with obesity (BMI over 30) who are taking part in a combined lifestyle intervention and people with overweight (BMI between 27 and 30) who are taking part in a slimming programme and suffer from diseases such as type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular diseases.

Witkamp does not see this slimming pill as the solution. 'The group of patients who genuinely benefit is small. It won't solve the real problem. Once you stop taking the pill, you revert to your old habits because they are mainly caused by social and economic factors. In the end, the best medical solution is a stomach reduction or gastric bypass.' ss

'Once you stop taking the pill, you revert to your old habits'



A Little Wiser

Why does urine smell funny after eating asparagus?

 χ pring is in the air – and that's true in the toilet too. Not so much the smell of blossom, but of asparagus. Why is that? Asparagus doesn't smell of anything until you go for a pee. The smell is often in the urine within ten minutes of eating the vegetable. 'That smell is caused by asparagusic acid,' says Renger Witkamp, professor of Nutritional Biology. This is a substance produced by the asparagus plant as a defence mechanism against fungal infections. Our bodies cannot use it, so they break it down into various sulphur-containing substances which are then excreted by the kidneys. These waste products give rise to the typical smell. Which, incidentally, some people don't smell: 'About 30 per cent of people have a genetic mutation that prevents their nose from detecting these odours. This phenomenon also occurs with other substances such as vanilla.' Asparagus is not the only substance that leaves traces in urine. Witkamp: 'Vitamin pills, especially those containing vitamin B1 and B6, give off a typical odour, as does bouillon or basil?

Paying attention to urine odours goes back centuries. In the seventeenth century, for example, there were quacks who thought they could diagnose patients from the colour and smell of

their urine. In that period, a doctor examining a patient's urine was also a regular subject of paintings, such as one by the famous Dutch artist Jan Steen. We would call it quackery now but, according to Witkamp, you can actually extract a lot of information from urine. 'In the past, doctors tasted urine to determine whether someone was suffering from diabetes. And a ketogenic smell, which is a kind of acetone smell, occurs in diabetics whose insulin levels are too low, or when someone is following a - currently popular ketogenic diet.' Urinary tract infections or venereal disease can also lead to strange odours. 'Generally speaking, urine should be odourless,' says Witkamp. 'And colourless too, with the exception of morning urine. Unless you have just eaten beetroot, pills with vitamin C and B2 or certain medicines. If it is a bit whiffy, and especially if it is persistently so, it's time to see a doctor.' TL

'Doctors used to taste urine to determine whether someone was suffering from diabetes'

Renger Witkamp, professor of Nutritional Biology

Every day we are bombarded with masses of sometimes contradictory information on pressing issues. In this feature, a WUR scientist gives you something to hold on to. What are the facts of the matter?

Every question makes you a little wiser. Do you dare to ask yours? Email us at redactie@resource.nl

Illustration Marly Hendricks

WUR to study its colonial past

A new historian will be appointed to investigate WUR's past activities in Indonesia and Suriname.

The initiative for the three-year study came from WUR's Executive Board. It fits with a nationwide trend of Dutch organizations investigating their links with colonialism.

The new historian will join Professor Ewout Frankema's Rural and Environmental History chair group. 'We are constantly doing research on colonial history but we don't usually take a particular institution or university as

'The idea is not to assess people's actions according to some moral yardstick' the starting point for the study. In this case, we will explicitly be examining ourselves.'

Frankema says the intention is not to make moral judgements. 'We want to avoid that. The idea is not to assess people's actions according to some moral yardstick. The aim is rather to learn more about our own past. The initiative is driven primarily by a healthy academic curiosity and desire



Growing tea plants on Java in about 1926 • Photo Tropenmuseum

to reveal something of our own history.'

Publicity

The study should answer various questions. Frankema: 'First there is the "what" question: what were the Wageningen scientists doing there and who did they collaborate with? So that's about the facts. Then there is the "how" question: how was it all organized and financed? Thirdly, there is the "why" question. What were the motives driving certain programmes and preventing alternatives. Finally, what has been the legacy of all this activity?'

The study period starts in 1876, the year when agricultural education began in Wageningen, rather than in

'What did the Wageningen scientists do and who with?'

1918 when the Agricultural College was founded. Frankema: '1876 is the

first year in which we could have had activities abroad, because agricultural research was already being done in the tropics before 1918 and Wageningen people were gradually brought in for that.'

The intention is to publish the findings in a book. The candidate needs not only to be a good researcher and write well, but also to be able to deal with the 'public attention' the study is expected to get. The deadline for applications has now passed. RK

visit companies & organisations at the Campus

Join the Wageningen Campus Expedition



Jun 13-23 | 12:00-14:00h | register at www.wageningencampus.eu/expedition |

Seed maturity determines strength of spinach

Spinach plants are affected by more diseases now that pesticides are being phased out. In her PhD research, Kim Magnée investigated which seeds are best able to cope with disease.

Spinach production has quadrupled over the past 20 years. Young 'baby leaf' spinach is becoming particularly popular. This young spinach is harvested within six weeks of sowing. Moreover, the sowing density is high and several crops are grown over one season. This trend is causing a massive increase in the demand for spinach seeds, while giving disease more chance to take hold – especially now that the European Union is banning chemical pesticides. Researcher Kim Magnée (Plant Breeding) looked at which seeds were most resistant to infection and how she could improve this tolerance.

Seed vigour

One of the main diseases in spinach is 'damping off': the failure of seeds to germinate and the wilting of seedlings. Several fungi and oomycetes (moulds) cause this disease, in particular the oomycete *Pythium ultimum*. Magnée found variation in disease tolerance between spinach varieties, but the variation between batches of seed of the same variety proved greater. This was partly due to the variation in the size and maturity of the seeds, as the flowers grow all up the stem. The seeds at the bottom of the stem are the largest and ripest, yet all the seeds are harvested at the same time.



Riper spinach seeds have proven more resistant to moulds Magnée exposed seeds from five varieties of spinach to *P. ultimum*. The riper seeds were found to be more resistant to the oomycete. Magnée improved the disease tolerance of seeds by temporarily increasing the moisture content of the seeds or by

removing the pericarp (spinach seed is actually a fruit with the real seed inside). The seed vigour of the treated seeds was greater, so the disease had less impact on the plant. This kind of seed treatment will be relevant now that chemical treatments for plants are set to disappear. ss

In other news science with a wink

🔶 BANANAS

Pregnant mice scare off males of the species by smelling like bananas. This has been discovered by researchers at McGill University (Montreal). The odour (n-pentyl acetate) is released into the urine of by it and keep their distance. According to the researchers, this is how females protect their offspring. So if you've got a mouse problem, buy a banana.

DON'T LOOK UP

If you are reading this, it has ended well. Asteroid 1989, with a diameter of over 1.5 km, will be on its way back into space, without having hit us. The lump of stone will have missed us by a hair's breadth. Well, actually by 10 times the distance from the Earth to the Moon. Close enough to make it 'potentially hazardous' according to the experts. It will come back in 172 years' time.

🔶 TOYS

Vibrators are not sex toys but medical equipment. Doctors should therefore prescribe them more often, conclude researchers from the Cedar-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. They selected 558 studies on the use of vibrators for medical purposes. Regular use improves the pelvic floor, and reduces both vaginal pain and stress. Just what the doctor ordered.

SPIDERS

Most people prefer to avoid spiders. But not everyone. Researchers from Thailand's Suranaree University of Technology found that 1264 species from 66 families are for sale online. And that's not counting social media. Most of these spiders are caught in the wild. Making the trade harmful to the wild population, according to the scientists. RK

'WUR, it's okay for art to be provocative'

With the removal of his photographic exhibition about the informal recycling industry in the Ghanaian city of Kumasi from Impulse outdoor gallery last October, WUR chose the easy way out, according to the photographer and alumnus Jurrian Veldhuizen. In this letter to the editor, he deplores WUR's decision not to reinstall the photos as 'unworthy of an academic institution.'

'In light of the ferocity of the debate, I hesitated to write this letter. But I'm doing so after all, because it's important to me that everyone can - and perhaps should - always have their say. And that conviction was behind this process from the start. Six months ago, my first exhibition opened on the university campus. And how proud I was. It was a co-creation by waste-pickers from Kumasi (Ghana) and me. It felt like an honour to give these strong, beautiful people the platform they deserve. In addition to many positive responses, there was disapproval as well. Critical comments that were very welcome. Was this the right place for this exhibition? Was I trying to make money out of the waste pickers? Was this a fair representation of Africa? Welcome and fair questions. So I entered into dialogue with this group, together with the university.

At the same time, the university decided to remove the exhibition. I did not agree with that. As far as I was concerned, it was okay for it to cause discomfort and friction. Not for the university, though. It soon became clear that the discussions were not really about the content of the exhibition, but more about deeper and existential feelings and pain. Pain I have never felt, given that I am not a person of colour. But I did try to empathize with these feelings. I learned a lot from that. But it also cost me a lot. The debate - and particularly the atmosphere around it was very aggressive and personal from the start. Baseless accusations based on falsehoods about the exhibition, stalking behaviour, it felt almost threatening. And yet, two months later, a modified exhibition was ready; the product of the



The empty exhibition space at Impulse • Photo Guy Ackermans

various dialogue sessions. Some people still insisted on getting rid of the exhibition. Accordingly, the university chose not to put the exhibition back. As a result, the beautiful people in the pictures are seen as a "negative" and "ugly" representation of Africa. That hurts. I don't yet know how to tell this to Sherriff, Baba, Kenneth and Mohammed (the people I photographed and with whom I lived and worked for months).

But above all, I find it a painful and worrying development that an academic institute like WUR gives in so easily to one-sided, aggressive communication. WUR let me know that they no longer want to fight. I think that says enough. Therefore, I'm very curious about the future of WUR, after such a decision. I decided to make a different choice: the adapted exhibition, created in cooperation with the waste pickers of Ghana and with the help of a few Wageningen students, is back online on my website: www.jurrianveldhuizen.com. I would like to end with a message: it might be uncomfortable, it might be painful, it might be absurd, but let it be the start rather than the end of a conversation.

Jurrian Veldhuizen, photographer

Scan the QR code for previous articles on this topic and to comment



Being distracted is work too'

Now that working from home is allowed rather than compulsory, a kind of balance is slowly emerging. Working from home is pleasant but it has its downsides too, as a tour of the campus on a typical Thursday showed.



he nub of the Strategic Housing Plan adopted last year is the idea that employees will work from home and share desks. That combination was supposed to tackle the lack of workstations. But that shortage doesn't seem to be too bad at the moment. Due to Covid, working from home has been so whole-heartedly embraced that there are enough workstations to go round. The campus car parks, however, are just as full as they were before Covid. Inside the buildings, you get mixed impressions. In the corridors of Lumen, it is quiet and only the odd room is occupied. Jan den Ouden (Forestry and

Ecology) is present, and that is not by chance. 'I always work here. Home is home. I find it difficult to combine these two roles. I do enough work at home in the evenings and at weekends, because otherwise I wouldn't get the job done. Here I'm in my working mode, I have all my stuff here as well as the colleagues, who I can drop in on from time to time to ask them something.' According to Den Ouden, there are no strict rules about working from home in his group. 'We get to judge it for ourselves. Only the chair group meeting is in-person, with an online option

for anyone who can't make it. I would estimate that about three quarters of the people are there in person.' Den Ouden views the changes that have been made with surprise. 'Before Covid, you could work from home on one or two days, after consultation. Now it's the other way round. It seems as if we are *allowed* to come to work, as an exception. Now I still have my own room. But if that becomes

We work from home half the time

Over two months after the recommendation to work from home was lifted, WUR staff seem to have got into a new routine. That is the cautious conclusion based on the use of IT facilities. Those figures show that on an average Tuesday or Thursday, about 3600 people access WUR services via VPN. That is half the total number of employees.Since 16 March, we have been able to work on campus or at any other WUR location, but it took at least one and a half months before a new equilibrium was found. At the request of *Resource*, network manager Floris Jan Zwaan has monitored the figures — which are normally only kept one month. They showed an initial steady decrease in VPN usage (by three per cent) but usage has stabilized over the past month.

That equilibrium is also reflected in the number of 'authenticated clients', devices that are connected (wireless or plugged in) to the network on campus. Zwaan does however point out that the picture is distorted by the many public holidays and days off in the last while. The growth in connections on campus matches the decline in VPN usage.



Employees are allowed to work at home for part of the week and share desks in the office • Illustration Valerie Geelen

impossible, I'm going to work at home, too. I can't work with someone else in one room. That's just the way I am. So I'll just have to work at home; that's the price I'll have to pay.'

Concentration

'I work three days a week here in Zodiac and one and a half at home,' says associate professor of Cell Biology and Immunology Christine Jansen. 'It's quite busy here today. We all work part of the week from home,' she continues. 'But as time goes by, I get the impression that more and more people are working in the office. There have also been periods when hardly anyone was here. Nothing has been formally agreed as to who is where on what day. We try to be on campus for the meetings on Mondays as often as possible.' Jansen started at WUR at the end of 2020, in times of Covid, and was forced to work from home a lot. 'So I like being here and meeting people. Most of my colleagues spend at least two days at the office. The combination of home and office is nice, but I prefer working at the office. I can concentrate well at home, but I miss the interaction and the spontaneous chats at the coffee machine. The agreement is that we will

'Most colleagues are in the office for at least two days'

work partly at home, because of the shortage of workstations. There is still room for everyone now, but when it gets busier, not everyone will be able to be here all the time.'

Always at home

In Gaia too, lots of rooms are currently empty. But that is also a 'seasonal thing,' says Professor of Soil Geography Jakob Wallinga. 'A lot of people are out in the field for research or teaching purposes. This is the season for that. And many are working from home. That's allowed; I leave my staff free to



decide for themselves,' says Wallinga. 'As long as it doesn't interfere with the work and people feel comfortable, I think it's fine.' There are big differences between people on this point. 'I have one PhD student who always chooses to work at home. She has to write her thesis and she can concentrate best at home. And other people are almost always here.'

'I'm still figuring it out myself,' he continues. 'I spend three days here and two at home. Sometimes I go back and forth, because I live nearby. I prefer holding online meetings from home. The group meets every Monday in the lunch hour, in principle in person.

'It has come to feel so normal to work in isolation'

'I can do my job very well at home in a quiet environment' I think we get together enough to do things again the way we used to. But especially for supervisors, the challenge is to be here regularly and not only for appointments. Most PhD students work on campus and they need to be able to drop in on their supervisors for a quick chat. The same applies to thesis students. It is a lot easier to ask a question if your supervisor is here than if they are at home.'

Atlas

One place that has stayed quiet since Covid is Atlas. Most of the time, the building that houses the Executive Board and others was deserted. **Business Information Specialist** Annette Breemer (Wageningen Economic Research) happens to be there today. She hasn't been in the office much since Covid. 'I don't normally come in unless I have appointments. I can do my job very well at home in a quiet environment.' But she does admit to missing the contact at home. 'It's nice to meet other colleagues here again. I've just joined a new team here in Wageningen. My previous team was in The Hague. I expect I will be in the office on about two days a week. On the other two days I'll work at home.' 'In theory, we're allowed to come in to the office every day,' says Breemer's

colleague in Atlas Mireille van Hilten, a researcher in Agrifood Business Informatics. 'But if everyone does that, there won't be enough workstations. That is not yet the case.' Van Hilten is critical of working from home. 'My experiences in the Covid time were not pleasant, to put it mildly. Neither physically nor mentally. At home you sit still much more than at the office, where you have all kinds of social interaction. I really missed that social interaction. Things that other people say they get too distracted by at the office. But being distracted is work too! It's all part of the job. I'm very happy that I can come in to the office with no restrictions again. I prefer to work three days at the office and two half-days at home.' Van Hilten thinks that too much work is being done at home. 'I get the impression that a lot of people only work at home. It's always the same people who come in to the office. From the organization's point of view, that worries me. Of course, it depends on the kind of work you do, and on your personality and home situation, but on the whole, I think not enough people come in to the office. How does that affect your health and your sense of connection with the work, and how will working from home affect the quality of the work in the longer term? We may find it very comfortable to live a more secluded life, but I don't know if it's a good thing. And it also has implications for other people who do seek social contact at work. Who with, then? It has come to feel so normal to work in isolation that we underestimate how good it is to be together again.'

COLUMN

McDonald's bees

It was announced last week that the municipality of Amsterdam wants to limit the number of beehives, and is even considering a ban in some parts of the city. The reason? More and more people are taking up beekeeping as a hobby and their honeybees could pose a threat to other bee species because they compete with them for the same food.

The media fell upon the news eagerly. A

Beekeeping helps people feel connected to their environment and the seasons

typical example was a report on the NOS news, where the scientific director of Naturalis natural history museum spoke about the issue. He called

honeybees 'McDonald's bees', because of their generalist feeding habits. Other bee species were 'wild bees'. He also suggested that honeybees had nothing to do with biodiversity, as they were 'just agricultural animals.'

Is all this likely to help nature? Is it effective to always see human activities only as a threat, as something to be kept out of nature, urban or rural? Does this artificial distinction between culture and nature, wild and tame, help us? Do we benefit from experts who tell the public



Vincent Oostvogels

what they can and cannot understand by biodiversity?

It is a good thing that attention is being paid to the impact of honeybees on other bee species. But let us not lose sight of the positive aspects of beekeeping. Beekeeping enables people to be involved in nature, just as an activity like picking wild plants does. It helps people feel a connection with their environment and the seasons. All these things contribute positively to a sense of responsibility for looking after nature.

It is right that experts are given a platform to tell the public about non-honeybees and the threats they face. But at the same time, let us not forget the shared history of humans and honeybees. Let people marvel at honey gatherers who became beekeepers, at wild honeybees that still live in hollow trees in the forest today, and at beekeepers who keep all sorts of different working methods alive.

I hope they will find a solution in Amsterdam. Together with the new beekeepers and without creating counterproductive divisions between humans and nature.

Vincent Oostvogels (26) is in the second year of his PhD research on biodiversity restoration in dairy farming. He dreams of keeping a few cows himself one day.

A CIRCLE OF FISHAND LETTUCE

A circular system that provides cleaner water in which fish and lettuce can be farmed. Sara Pinho did her PhD on this system, which is called FLOCponics. So how does it work, exactly?

Infographic Pixels&inkt | text Stijn Schreven

Half of all the fish we eat is farmed. Intensive fish farming is often a one-way street from feed to fish, and results in polluted water. In aquaponics (the combination of aquaculture and hydroponics, growing plants on water), you reuse that wastewater as a source of nutrients for plants. In this process, bioflocs – flocs, or clumps, of a mixture of bacteria and plankton – can maintain the water quality and serve as extra fish food. This circular system is called FLOCponics, and Sara Pinho did her PhD on it. She compared the combined growth of tilapia and lettuce in FLOCponics with the separate existing options: hydroponics, bioflocs and recirculating aquaculture systems. She also modelled the efficiency and sustainability.

Biofloc and fish: Inside

the fish tank are bioflocs, flocs of bacteria and plankton. They live off leftover fish food and fish droppings and are themselves food for the fish. The tilapia grew 24 per cent better in FLOCponics than in traditional recirculating aquaculture systems and needed eight per cent less protein in their feed.









better use of nutrients



Plants (hydroponics): The nutrient-rich water from the fish farm flows into a tank in which the roots of lettuce plants are suspended. The roots extract nutrients such as ammonium, nitrate and phosphate from the water. The lettuce grows just as well as in other soilless systems.

Conclusion

What the fish doesn't eat, the plant can use. The FLOCponics system utilizes water 10 per cent better and nutrients 27 per cent better than current biofloc fish farming without plants. However, FLOCponics does require a larger scale to make optimal use of nutrients, with minimal fertilizer use. It is also vulnerable to power cuts: since both fish and flocs consume oxygen, a supply of fresh air is crucial. This intensive aeration makes the system less energy-efficient. Renewable energy sources could make the system more sustainable.

Fish

With a view to improving farmers' market opportunities, Pinho looked for South American fish species that could be a lucrative alternative to the cheap tilapia in FLOCponics. The top three were pacu, jundia and tambaqui. These species grow fast and are sought after on the South American market. Some of them can live in colder and more acidic water, which is better for plant growth in the system.



Tilapia
tolerant and widely used
low price, not always in demand, require antibiotics and steroids



- in demand, tolerant to lower pH and temperature
- low price, not yet farmed intensively in biofloc systems



Jundia

- high price, tolerant to lower pH and temperature
- not yet farmed intensively / on a large scale

The fight against poaching is a fight against inequality

CHOOSING BETWEEN PEOPLE AND RHINOS

'As long as there is poverty, the rhino is a lost cause,' says Herbert Prins, emeritus professor of Resource Ecology. WUR is developing a new technique for tracking down poachers, but nature conservation is first and foremost a social issue. Technique alone is not the solution.



ou want to prevent crime, not fight it, which is a fundamental difference,' Herbert Prins states. Until 2019 he was professor of Resource Ecology (now Wildlife Ecology and Conservation). He has since retired but is still active in the field. 'Most poachers are people like you and me, not criminals.' His sentinel animal technology is a new nonviolent system that detects poachers, hopefully before they shoot a rhino or elephant. Herd animals such as zebra and impala are collared with trackers. From the behaviour of these animals, the researcher can locate the poachers (see inset).

Impala for sale

South African Bradley Schroder obtained his PhD from Wageningen University (for another study) and is now a senior project manager of Limpopo National Park in Mozambique, bordering Kruger National Park in South Africa. He was involved in the field trial of tagged herds in Welgevonden Game Reserve. 'It's a big step forward, although I suspect it's financially unfeasible for large parks.' Welgevonden is 38,000 hectares, Limpopo over a million hectares.

WE WANT TO PREVENT THEIR EXTINCTION. HOW MUCH IS THAT WORTH TO US?

The sentinel system need not be expensive, explains Herbert Prins. 'If you buy the transmitters from specialized ecological research stores you pay top dollar, but African farmers also use transmitter collars for their cows. Those are just as good.' Herd animals are also for sale, at least in South Africa: 'At auctions you can buy zebras and impalas. An impala costs about 72 euros. You buy a herd, equip them with a transmitter and release them in a park.' In countries like Kenya and Tanzania, there is no such wildlife market, and you have to dart and tag animals in the field. That involves a vet, and is more expensive. But whether the technique is expensive ultimately depends on the price of a rhino, as far as he is concerned. 'We want to prevent their extinction. How much is that worth to us?'

Living together sustainably?

Several thousand people live within Limpopo Park's boundaries, with some 15,000 cattle. There are eight communities, which project leader Schroder wants to resettle outside the area. 'The people have cattle and farm on the fertile land in the park, just where the wildlife

Sentinel animal technology

The sentinel system was devised by Herbert Prins and developed by researchers from the Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation in collaboration with IT company IBM. It was tested with tagged zebras, impalas, wildebeests and eland antelopes in Welgevonden Game Reserve in South Africa, where rangers mimicked the behaviour of poachers on foot and by car. A second field trial is now underway in Tsavo National Park in Kenya. The Kenyan WUR PhD researcher Moses Lekishon Kenana is doing his research in Tsavo. In addition to prey animals (zebra and Coke's hartebeest), he has also tagged five lions and five hyenas. The question is whether zebra and hartebeest react differently to these predators than to poachers. Kenana is also a park ranger. 'I see this technology as an additional component of the toolkit against poaching, but there is no silver bullet.

also prefers to graze and where the tourists want to go. Tourists don't pay a fortune to see cattle and corn. We move the community, give them houses, a piece of land for irrigation and other benefits outside the park. Only then can we reintroduce the rhino and get tourism up and running in the park.' So far, five communities have moved out.

Do the people really want to leave? Schroder: 'Most of them are happy to resettle and this is a voluntary resettlement process in line with World Bank standards. They are better off outside the park and get compensation for things they leave behind like fruit trees. We help them move. Together with the government we build churches, health centres and schools, things we can't do inside the park.'

Professor Bram Büscher (Sociology of Development and Change) does not see technology as the solution. 'It depends very much on the social context. In most African game reserves, conservation goes hand in hand with social inequality and injustice.' He is therefore annoyed by the approach of park managers like Schroeder. This kind of nature conservation, he says, has many neo-colonial traits. 'Who are we as white or western people to tell local people how and where they should live?' He points at much research that has shown that communities in the Limpopo Park in Mozambique are not happy to leave voluntarily.

Büscher advocates a new vision in which humans live with wildlife within a society that no longer aims solely for economic growth. This 'convivial conservation'



A park warden guards rhinos in National Park Mosi-oa-Tunya in Zambia + Photo ANF

'THIS IS A VOLUNTARY RESETTLEMENT PROCESS IN LINE WITH WORLD BANK STANDARDS'

advocates, amongst other things, for a basic income for communities in and around nature parks. A project exploring this idea is already underway in South Africa, and there are others in other countries. 'Money is not the problem,' Büscher argues. 'The basic income can come from governments or international organizations, and through redistribution. The key is that it is necessary to address historical injustices and conduct a dialogue on new ideas to protect wildlife.'

Not the solution

Prins does not think relocation practices such as those in Limpopo are desirable, but neither does he see a harmonious coexistence of people and rhinos as realistic. 'It is romantic nonsense, a false nostalgia. It has been shown time and again that it doesn't work, as long as there is inequality. People around the parks often live in hunger and poverty, and they have to survive. They plough parts of the park, and shoot an elephant if it comes into the village. You can't blame them if such an animal kills their mother or child.'

According to Prins, this inequality cannot be tackled everywhere. It's better to work locally on equality and help people find a job, he thinks. 'Welgevonden reserve employs 700 people in conservation and tourism. Those people get a middle-class salary. By doing that you give the local people an interest in protecting the animals.' Welgevonden is guarded with three shields, explains Prins: firstly the sentinel animals, the technology; secondly informants from the villages; and finally all access roads around the park are controlled by manned barriers in a radius of 20 kilometres, with camera surveillance up to 100 kilometres away. The police are on standby for reports of anything suspicious. Prins: 'These cameras also make the area safer for the local communities. There is less burglary, theft and rape.'

Buying time

Prins is not blinded by the technology. 'Maybe it won't work well enough, and we'll find out that it's better to just survey all access roads with cameras. That's unfortunate for science, but ultimately the goal is to find something that works for wildlife protection.' 'I'm realistic,' says Prins. 'You see some countries and parks give up on the rhino, because protection doesn't work. Uganda is probably going to scrap the Murchison Falls National Park, and there's no stopping that anyway because of oil and gas development. The inhabitants



Some countries are giving up on protecting the rhino • Photo Shutterstock.com

will plough the land and hunt the game. In Kruger National Park we will probably lose the rhino. The rhino will become extinct, there's no way around that. But I can buy time, hopefully 30 years.' African population growth is expected to peak in 2050. Prosperity is growing, and poverty is disappearing. You can already see that in Nairobi and several other cities, Prins says. Then the attitude towards nature will change. So is he optimistic after all? He smiles, 'That's why I say 30 years.'■

Algae inspire poetry in blue

Extreme

For Studium Generale's Spring Festival, the Delft researcher and poet Bauke Steenhuisen wrote a sonnet on Pedro Moñino Fernández's algae research project. The poem (in English) is printed here. 'It is always nice when someone looks at your work from a totally different perspective and background,' says the PhD student. 'The reference to Mars was particularly surprising to me. But he does have a point. Extremophile micro-organisms are used in research into possible extraterrestrial life. The atmosphere on other planets may prove to be toxic and extreme, so life there might be related to biochemical processes, as it is in extremophiles on Earth.'



Galdieria Sulphuraria

Mixotrophic algae cultivation can produce us phycocyanin quite likely better known as protein as well as biofuel application

This greenish creature needs a sound foundation

for us to use it in our own cuisine. Perhaps it will surpass the soya bean but first we need a new investigation

The little wonder shows how to survive in settings that are acid, hot and mean. The harsher life, the more it seems to thrive;

a metabolic minikin machine. On Mars, they'll likely even stay alive. Is that why aliens are often green?

ery few natural blue pigments exist for use in food. But the extremophile microalga Galdieria sulphuraria produces the goods, in the form of the protein phycocyanin. This pigment even remains stable in acidic environments (up to a pH of 3) and at high temperatures (55 °C). PhD researcher Pedro Moñino Fernández has designed a new type of bioreactor to optimize the production of this alga. The usual method of cultivating algae is based on photosynthesis. The algae, which are really small plants, convert CO₂ and water into sugar and oxygen. But this process has its limits, says Moñino Fernández. 'Growth based on light alone is rather slow. And once the algae are too highly concentrated, light no longer gets through. What is more, CO₂ has to be added from external sources, which costs energy and therefore money.'

Moñino Fernández's bioreactor combines growth through photosynthesis with growth through respiration. During the latter process, the alga burns (eats, effectively) added sugars, releasing CO_2 in the process. An advantage of this combination is that, if conditions are right, a closed system is created: 'The oxygen from the photosynthesis is used for the respiration of the sugar. And the CO_2 from the respiration is used for the photosynthesis.'

Volcanic

The development of this 'mixotrophic cultivation system' is the goal of Moñino Fernández's study. He aims to scale up his reactor to an industrial scale. The Galdieria merely serves as a model, demonstrating what is possible. And the alga has not disappointed him. On top of its high production of blue pigment, the alga also produces proteins with high levels of essential amino acids.

Two of these amino acids, cysteine and methionine, contain sulphur and are important for humans. 'And they are rare in the major crops,' says Moñino Fernández. 'Galdieria contains incredibly high levels of both amino acids. This is probably because the alga naturally occurs in hot springs in volcanic areas. I think that is what makes this alga an interesting prospect as a vegetarian/vegan source of those amino acids.' RK

I his is one bathtub, reallv'

First-year students of International Land and Water Management went to the south of Limburg province for 10 days to find out how the landscape was affected by last summer's flooding and to ponder possible measures the region could take to be better prepared for the consequences of extreme weather. *Resource* went along for a day in the sweltering south.



Text Luuk Zegers

he van slows down and comes to a stop on a dirt road running past a field of sugar beets. Course coordinator Teun Vogel and teacher Katinka van Buuren get out of the van. The Canadian exchange student Katie and her Dutch teammate are crossing the sloping field with a 50-metre measuring tape. In the middle of the field is a strip of bushes: a 'graft' in Dutch. 'Graften' can be found on many sloping fields in Limburg. They have multiple functions, such as counteracting erosion and stimulating biodiversity. The students halt their measuring activities for a brief consultation with their teachers. Katie: 'We are looking at whether graften mitigate the effect of flooding.' Van Buuren: 'What do you think the answer is?' Katie: 'I would say yes. If the water infiltrates the ground there, that slows down the flooding and reduces the amount of water that ends up in the streams and creeks.'

Back in the bus, Vogel tells us that 11 years ago, he too went along to South Limburg as a student. 'At that time, it was still a shorter excursion of five days, and the focus was on taking measurements. We didn't have to do any research yet; it was more about learning to measure.' Over the years, the course grew into 10 days of fieldwork in which students had to formulate a research question and conduct research themselves, Vogel explains. 'Some first-year students find it quite difficult to come up with a good research question. Last year there was flooding here and the team of teachers knew at once that we should relate the course to that.'

The appliance of science In the summer of 2021, after days of extreme rainfall, disaster struck in

'If you look at the Geul now, it's just a small stream'

Germany, Belgium and the south of Limburg in the Netherlands. Rivers and streams were transformed into raging torrents that took the lives of more than 200 people and caused tens of billions of euros worth of damage. Miraculously, there were no fatalities in the Netherlands, but here too, fear is now rife. How could it go so wrong? Where are the bottlenecks? And what measures can be taken to ensure that every drop of water that falls or flows stays within the banks of the rivers? At the invitation of the mayor of Valkenburg aan de Geul - the worst-affected municipality in the



Mayor Daan Prevoo tells students about how the normally so peaceful River Geul turned into a raging torrent last year • Photo Bert Janssen

Netherlands – 63 first-year students set about tackling these questions during the Design in Land and Water Management 1 course. In this course, students get to apply pretty much everything they learned in their first year. They do research in an assigned area upstream of Valkenburg. Among the things they examine is the impact of agriculture, nature conservation and landscape design on the soil and water.

Reading the landscape

The students take measurements, talk to stakeholders, 'read' the landscape and make transects. 'A transect is a cross-section of the area, the aim of which is to understand it better,' says Vogel from behind the steering wheel as he and Van Buuren drive through the rolling Limburg landscape to check in with the groups of students in the field. 'With a transect you can map how steep the hills are, what is growing where, whether the soil structure changes with your altitude in the area, and so on. You can take measurements along a transect and see, for example, where water infiltrates better or how people living in different places in the area think the landscape should be managed. It is a nice way of making your research more tangible and getting it across to people.' A little later, we are driving through one of the longest valleys in the Netherlands. 'This is one big bathtub, really,' says Vogel. 'We are high up in the bathtub now. When it pours with rain here, all the water runs downhill. That is why there are basins all along the road to catch the water. They are meant to slow the water down. Only there were too few of them, because if it rains hard for too long, the basins

overflow and the water just pours downhill like crazy.' He points out a cycle path under construction. 'You can see that they are building a drain next to it. It's important to give a lot of thought to how to collect water.' After a short pause: 'This is the purpose of the course, really: to get students looking around them like this. So that they ask themselves how high the highest point is and how low the lowest point, which direction the water flows and what interventions might be possible to slow that water down.'

Vogel and Van Buuren leave by bus for the meeting point to pick up students for the afternoon programme in Valkenburg. Along the way, we regularly encounter groups of young people cycling with one hand on the handlebars and the other holding an auger, a tape measure, or ranging rods (red and white measuring sticks), pedalling fast to reach the agreed location on time.

Fleeing the water

That afternoon, Mayor Daan Prevoo led a sizeable delegation of WUR students and lecturers through his city. He showed them the places that were the hardest hit, such as the houses with low-lying back yards where the water forced its way in with great violence, and one of the listed buildings where a fire broke out due to a short circuit. Shocking, says student Emiel. 'It's amazing to see how high the water was. If you look at the River Geul now, it's 'When you see the damage with your own eyes, you know why you are doing this degree'

just a little stream.' Emiel enjoys doing research in small groups. 'Because you actually go into the field with measuring instruments and your own research question.' It's not all plain sailing, though. 'We assumed we would be able to take water samples, but it has been dry for a long time now. We are hoping for rain. The forecast is for rain today and tomorrow, which would be good for our research. And for me personally too, because I'm hot.' The group arrives at the Geul. Where the historic Emma Bridge stood until last year, there is now a temporary bridge made of steel tubing. The stone bridge was not strong enough to withstand the force of the water. While the mayor is talking about this, dark clouds are gathering. Suddenly,

a strong wind blows up and it starts to rain. The group quickly retreats into a passageway in an apartment block. After a short break, they attempt to resume the tour, but the thunderstorm soon breaks and the rain comes down in torrents, with a deafening clatter. Those who do not find shelter are completely soaked in a matter of seconds. Chaos ensues: students and teachers start hurrying, one group tries to take shelter under a roof, others run for it. After a while, the sheltering students give up and start running too, the mayor leading the way and shouting: 'Back to the town hall!'

Squeaky shoes

As the storm rages outside, the sodden group drips into the council chamber with squeaky shoes. 'Just imagine,' says Prevoo. 'What you have just experienced, but going on for days on end. And in the middle of the night, things go wrong: the water pours in unceasingly, in some houses up to a height of 1.80 metres. There is no light



Looking at the calm water • Photo Luuk Zegers



A group busy earth drilling • Photo Jeroen Poelert



Students in the field • Photo Jeroen Poelert

because the power is out. You stand there in cold water up to chest height. You can hear the roar of the water and people screaming and shouting.' Rescue workers have post-traumatic stress from it, Prevoo says. 'There was a father standing in the water with a nine-month-old baby in his arms. He handed the child to his partner and a few moments later he was knocked down by a scooter that was floating past. He survived, but imagine if he had still been holding his baby when he was pulled underwater.' All things considered, it is a miracle there were no fatalities, says Prevoo.

'The stories just say that the Geul flooded, but this was an absolute tsunami of rainwater from a very large area. The soil was waterlogged, the basins were full. Once the water starts moving, there's no stopping it.' He calls the extreme weather a consequence of climate change. 'Can we still prevent that? No. But with the right measures in the landscape, we can manage the consequences better.'

Own eyes

The tour and the mayor's story made a big impression on student Youssef. 'You can read about it in books, but when you see the damage with your own eyes, like the fact that the bridge is no longer there and how high the water was in the houses, then you know why you are doing this degree.' He can see himself working in this field later. 'Here the problem is water, elsewhere it might be drought or food shortages. I think it would be great to be able to do my bit. I'll take the basic skills that we learn here with me.'

'Rescue workers have post-traumatic stress'



The emergency bridge over the Geul • Photo Jeroen Poelert



Sheltering from the storm • Photo Luuk Zegers

Know your inner critic



5x how to fail in style

Woe to the scientist whose path is not paved with perfection. Whose lot is blood, sweat and tears, but not always success. Your stomach ties itself in knots, you can't sleep and you're full of self-reproach. *Resource* has had enough of all the pressure and sought relief at the Great Failure Festival. Five tips. Text Marieke Enter & Stijn Schreven • Illustration Ilja Bouwknegt



You can't (and yet you can) help it

Why does one person succeed and another fail? And what factors are decisive? Bad news: in science more than anywhere, openness about failure is often still a no-go. And there is hardly anywhere you

are judged for it as severely as in the scientific world. An experiment that doesn't turn out as expected, a hypothesis that is disproven, a mistake in your data set, a rejected article: in science, these things are soon labelled failures, not least by yourself. If you feel under pressure, it is not your fault, because science is not yet a forgiving environment. But there *is* a lot you and your team can do about it: share your failures, with those higher up the hierarchy preferably setting a good example in this. Less criticism, more compassion. And you can dial back your self-criticism.

SHARE YOUR FAILURES, WITH THOSE HIGHER UP THE HIERARCHY PREFERABLY SETTING A GOOD EXAMPLE



There isn't always an upside

Learning from mistakes requires the mental agility to see them for what they are. Do not assume that there must be an upside to everything. Sometimes failure is just failure. If you freely acknowledge

this, overcoming 'failure cramp', as it was called at the Great Failure Festival, you gain room for reflection: what went wrong, what could you have done differently, which stumbling block will you avoid next time round? Sometimes you were just unlucky, and there is nothing you can do about it, except pick yourself up and carry on. And if it's any consolation: the feeling of failure always has a function, namely as a 'third eye' which detects the bar you have not reached, and where the standard lies.



Fit to fail

Things do go wrong, of course. And, sad but true, sometimes it really is your own fault. Then you have two options: look away in shame and start again as soon as you can, hoping that nobody notices your failure. Or admit that you have failed, with

your head held high. Difficult? Certainly. Embarrassing? Quite. But the more you do it, the easier it gets. Just know that it's the same with failure-fitness as it is with the gym: you won't get substantially fitter if you're only open about mini-failures. Train yourself by also acknowledging mistakes and failures that you find more painful. Until you are so fit that you can forget about almost anything and fear of failure will never stand in your way again.



Fuck-you yoga

Have you tried your level best to come to terms with your failures, only to fail at that too? Don't despair, there is always the solution of a serious session of 'fuckyou yoga' - also learned at the festival.

This is how it works: stand firmly upright. Slow down your breathing. Breathe in, slowly move your right arm up and make a fist. Hold your breath for a moment. Then, as you breathe out, raise your middle finger. Think of your inner critic and say 'FUCK YOU' out loud. Repeat as often as it takes to dim that annoying little voice in your head to an acceptable background level.



Lay off, will you?

'You are not intelligent enough to ... [fill in the blank]. Other people are much better at it. You'll be found out one day. You don't belong here.' That nagging voice in your head is not only extremely irritating, but can also paralyse you so badly that indeed, hardly anything goes well anymore. And so your inner critic tightens

their grip on you: 'Told you so, you can't do it.' A lesson from Great Failure Festival: you can break through this by seeing your inner critic as a character. Give them a name. Describe their voice, clothing, motor skills. And what do they say? The better you get to know this sourpuss, the better you will recognize that grumbling voice in your head next time it pipes up. You can't switch it off completely – and you don't have to, because deep down, your inner critic has your best interests at heart and actually wants to protect you from something. But it could be a bit less loud and in your face than it is now. Try to imagine it as the sound of a radio in the background. It is there, but you don't have to pay attention to it all the time.

Great Failure Festival

Students, teachers, researchers: almost everyone in academia reports high levels of performance pressure. And that is precisely the kind of situation in which it pays to learn to take failures and disappointments on the chin. The Great Failure Festival, organized by associate professor of Rural Sociology Jessica Duncan and others, offered plenty of starting points for this. Although the festival was a one-off event, it was such as success that it will probably be repeated, in a form yet to be determined.

Key people: Pim van Dalen

Everyone on campus is indispensable, but not everyone is in the spotlight every day or gets much of the credit for the hard (team) work that goes on. *Resource* puts these colleagues in the limelight in the Key People series. This time, meet Pim van Dalen, a research assistant at Wageningen Marine Research in Yerseke. Text Julia van der Westhuyzen • Photo Guy Ackermans

'I have been working at Wageningen Marine Research in Yerseke for six years now, as a research assistant on various projects. One of those projects is about the survival chances of rays that end up as bycatch in the nets of commercial fishermen.

A new EU policy requires fishermen to land all bycatch, but for rays an exception is made. Rays grow extremely slowly, so if they are all landed, it will have a negative effect on stocks. We use two species of ray in this study: the thornback ray and the spotted ray. These fish are native to the North Sea and I think it is very important that they remain there.

We are now doing research to see if the rays can survive being caught and released again. I think a few rays end up in most fishing nets. We don't have space

for all of them, so we have collected about 50 from different fishing expeditions. We try to keep them in the most natural conditions possible - and those change, depending on the time of year. For example, the outdoor water temperature is currently around 10 degrees. We also monitor things like acidity, ammonium levels and oxygen in the water to ensure that our facilities have the right conditions for the fish. If the rays survive three weeks in our facility, we assume that they will survive when they are released too. Then they "pass" the test and we release them back into the Eastern Scheldt estuary.

I also enjoy working with microalgae. We are monitoring shellfish production sites for the presence of toxic micro algae. This involves using a microscope to identify the various types of micro algae and spot any toxic ones. I also cultivate algae for shellfish food because at the moment we have mussels from different countries that need to be fed live algae. What I love about my job is that every day is different. One day I'm at my computer, the next in a boat, the day after that in a muddy meadow and the next day I'm working with the microscope. That variety is really nice!'

'These fish are native to the North Sea and I think it's important they remain there'





Banabar

Banabar got off to a flying start in 2019, after supermarket chain Lidl selected the startup's energy bars for a themed week and sold 17,000 of them straightaway. But then came Covid-19, which was a blow commercially. Because who are the main consumers of energy bars? People who are on the move.

But Banabar pulled through, and even managed to grow. In retrospect, founder Marco Mega, a Food Technology alumnus, sees the Covid period as a 'two-year soft launch'. Now he wants to pick up speed. Next year, two new flavours of energy bar will be added, bringing the total to six, and the product line will be expanded. Not with an energy bar, but with a different tasty and healthy product, also based on dried rejected organic bananas. Because this is what Banabar is all about: the realization that after cotton, bananas are the most chemically intensive crop in the world. And it's not getting any better: the use of fungicide is increasing, due to the growing resistance of two pathogenic leaf moulds. Banabar wants to offer farmers an alternative and therefore only uses organic

In Scandinavia, the Banabar is on sale in regular supermarkets

bananas that do not meet the standard quality requirements for export. Not only is that good for the planet, but the

Banabars taste good too – try them yourself, they are for sale in Aurora. You can also find them at health food shops such as Odin. Mega is finding that regular retailers are hanging back, but fortunately that is less the case across the border, where the organic food market is more mature. In Scandinavia, the company has managed to get Banabars onto the shelves of a major regular supermarket. Now for the rest of the world. ME

There are about 100 companies on the campus. We introduce them to you in *Resource*. This time: Banabar

The WUR community is home to all the flavours of the world. Natalia Grabarczyk (23), a Master's student of Biotechnology and a member of the Vegan Student Association, shares a typical Polish summer dish



Flavours of WUR

Strawberry dumplings

'When the strawberry season starts, summer has come. My grandmother would always buy lots of strawberries and together we would make 'knedle' for the whole family. I come from Łódź province in central Poland, where they serve these dumplings with young cabbage in a roux, seasoned with dill. Everywhere else they are eaten with cream and sugar.'

The cabbage

- 1 Remove the stalk and chop the cabbage finely. Put it in a large pot.
- **2** Add 0.5 litres of water, a teaspoon of salt, some pepper, one bay leaf and the allspice. Simmer for 15 minutes.
- **3** Meanwhile, heat 3 spoons of butter with 3 spoons of flour in a pan for 3 minutes.
- **4** Add this roux to the cabbage, mix it to thicken and then add the fresh dill.

The dumplings

- 1 Boil the potatoes until they are done. Strain and mash them.
- 2 Add ½ cup of flour and ¼ cup of potato starch, and mix well. Knead until you have a pliable, non-sticky dough.
- **3** Form flat cakes out of pieces of dough. Put the strawberry on the dough and sprinkle with sugar. Fold the dough over the strawberry.

Ingredients for 2 portions:

- half a cabbage (preferably a young, green one)
- 3 tablespoons of butter or margarine
- 6 tablespoons of flour
- fresh dill
- 1 bay leaf
- 3 corns of allspice
- salt & pepper
- 1/4 cup potato starch
- 0.5 kg peeled potatoes300g strawberries
- **4** Put the dumplings in boiling water for five minutes until
- they float to the surface.
- **5** Serve with the cabbage.



Natalia Grabarczyk (23) MSc student of Biotechnology and a member of the Vegan Student Association

10-euro lunch voucher

Share your recipe with *Resource* and get an **Aurora voucher worth 10 euros.** resource@wur.nl



UNIque houses

There are student houses and then there are weird and wonderful student houses. In this feature we visit those UNIque houses.

Nienke: 'From up here you can hear exactly what is happening in the clubhouse downstairs. The open party on Thursdays goes on till four o'clock, and on the other nights the club is open till two.' Nicole: 'Sometimes you are already in bed, in your pyjamas, but then you hear a nice song and you get up again. Unfortunately, it also happens that you are already asleep and are woken up by a karaoke session. And even from here, you can hear that they can't sing.'

Nienke: 'When I'm sitting at my desk, I see my desk lamp being shaken by the sound of the bass.'

Nienke: 'The boardroom is on our floor. So during the day, we actually have six housemates.' **Nicole:** 'You're never alone here. There are always members coming over, there are meetings, and you see someone you know and have a chat.'

Nienke: 'And it's just really great not to have to cycle home after a party.'

Emma: 'And another advantage is that you don't have to take a coat. I always used to lose my coat! I'd be looking for it for 15 minutes...'

Nienke: 'Traditions? There were back in the day, before Nicole and Emma moved in...'

Nicole: 'Back in the day, haha – three months ago!'

Nienke: 'Well, back then, one of the house rules was that there should always be cheese soufflés in the house, but the deep fryer is so grubby... I did try to clean it, but we abandoned that rule.' Nicole: 'What we do keep up is the

Huize de Hemel

Residents:

Emma Corten, Nicole van Dijk, Nienke Hilgen

UNIque becauce: They practically live *in* the Nji-Sr



tradition of the house shot. If all three of us are downstairs, we have to drink a shot together. Blue Curacao and Gold Strike: the blue of the sky and the gold of the stars.' $_{\rm CJ}$

If you too want your UNIque house in *Resource*, send an email to resource@wur.nl



From the left: Nicole, Emma and Nienke + Photo Guy Ackermans

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IN MEMORIAM

JANE CHEGE

Very sadly, at the lowest point in a personal struggle, Jane Wambui Chege, MSc, passed away on Tuesday 26 April. She was 35 years old.

Jane Chege studied Agricultural Economics at the University of Nairobi, after which she started her PhD in Wageningen. She developed new ideas on how consumers in developing and emerging countries cope with food safety issues and showed that consumers in this context perceive food safety labelling as a useful feature that they are willing to pay for.

Jane was an engaged researcher who eagerly learnt new

perspectives and methods. She did not hesitate to join in the scientific and societal debates. She was an energetic and active networker and spoke enthusiastically about her plans to start a social enterprise aimed at supplying Kenyan consumers with safe fruit and vegetables. She was also a caring person, for her family, her colleagues and other people around her. Our thoughts are with Steve, David, Clement, and Lawrence.

On behalf of the Marketing and Consumer Behaviour Group, Paul Ingenbleek and Arnout Fischer

Colophon

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

Contact Questions and comments for the editors: resource@wur.nl | www.resource-online.nl

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[no]WURries

Flight shame

'I am planning a holiday with my girlfriend in the summer. We want to go to a hot country with great beaches but we have a real problem with the idea of flying there. My parents offered to lend us their car but we were shocked when we worked out how much the journey would then cost us. What should we do: ignore our flight shame or go by car and spend lots of money?'

Bram, MSc student

The real price

'Hey Bram, we have all faced this dilemma! From an environmental standpoint, I believe you can't argue for short haul flights for trips that can easily done by car, bus or train. I understand that spending more money does suck when you know that the price of flying is so much lower. Especially today, when prices are unrealistically cheap. Maybe it's easier for you to justify paying more to get to your holiday destination if you keep in mind that the "real" price of flying will be paid by future generations and people less fortunate than you. In the end I believe affording a holiday also means affording a sustainable way to travel there.' Paula, MSc student of Biotechnology

Take more passengers

'There are many ways to reduce your carbon footprint! Being aware of the problem is great, but it's not necessarily a "must" not to travel by plane. Personally, I'd rather support local initiatives that help offset carbon emissions, instead of spending time raising more money for the trip. This could even be more effective than shifting your transportation method. But if you decide to go by car, an interesting solution would be to offer other people a ride and split the costs. This will reduce both the costs and the emissions per person!'

Renato, Exchange Student of Agricultural Engineering

Take the train

'Book a train journey. In spite of its reputation for being expensive, it's not too bad in practice, especially if you book early. If you buy an interrail ticket for a number of days per month, you're also nice and flexible. You can plan a nice train journey throughout Europe on www.bahn.de. And otherwise, the "treinreiswinkel" is good too. NS Internationaal isn't great, so I try to avoid it.' Janne Kool, Agrosystems researcher

Compensate

Here's my tip: go by plane – it saves lots of money, fuel (which is scarce either way at the moment) and time – and compensate for your CO_2 emissions through a platform such as Atmosfair (www.atmosfair.de). It doesn't solve the problem 100 per cent, but you can appease your conscience by investing in CO_2 reduction projects and it's probably still cheaper than going by car. The platform calculates your CO_2 emissions based on the distance, number of passengers, kind of plane, flight class etc.' Judith Epping, MSc student of Environmental Sciences

Carbon credits

'I think if you are travelling for pleasure or as a luxury and you're not pressed for time, taking a few hours extra to travel doesn't make a big difference. Most of us would only use that time to scroll through Instagram. I recently faced a similar dilemma and resolved it by allocating myself a specific number of carbon credits. This really helped me make a travel itinerary that was realistic for my time and budget. It actually does include a flight, but I still managed to minimize my footprint to a level I am comfortable with.' Gloria, MSc student of Biotechnology Moving house 'As an international student who can't drive in the Netherlands, I often wonder how people like me move from Wageningen to other places in the Netherlands or Europe. I have heard from friends that it can be expensive and complicated to hire a removal firm or even just a van. Does anyone have advice or tips on this topic?'

Julia van der Westhuyzen, MSc student of Plant Science Do you have advice or tips for this WURrier? Or could you use some good advice yourself? **Email your** tips or your question (100 words max) by 7 June to resource@wur.nl subject noWURries.