WUR from within: straight, sharp, transparent

No 04

Resource

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The journalism platform for all at Wageningen University & Research

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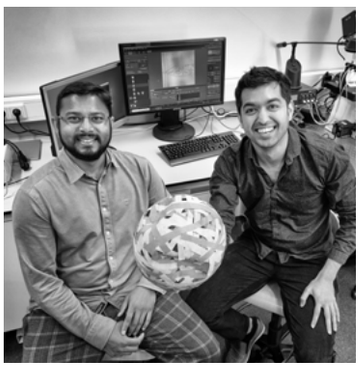

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FOREWORD

Seven pieces

'It's only seven pieces, right. Seven!' Thanks. Like I didn't know that myself. There I was, struggling with a jigsaw puzzle even though I knew you didn't exactly need to be a rocket scientist to solve it. But I couldn't do it. The underlying logic wasn't my kind of logic. The key was in the shape of the pieces, not the example picture, which turned out to be some random illustration. I'd been wrong-footed. And then that comment... Trainer Wichert denied he was being denigrating. That was my interpretation, he said. His comment about the seven pieces was meant to be encouraging. Right.
I knew Wichert was doing this deliberately. My confusion and his response were all part of the Autism Experience Circuit, an event in Diversity & Inclusion Week. I found it quite insightful. But that feeling of being 'lost in translation' was something I kept experiencing that week. There seemed to be confusion about what is needed for diversity and inclusion. When people ask for protection, WUR often responds by introducing procedures. That is not necessarily the same thing, as became clear in a session on sexual and gender-related violence — more on that in the next issue. What we do have in this issue is an article on page 23 about 'privilege expert' Joris Luyendijk. Whatever your opinion of him, do read it.

Marieke Enter
Editor

SHELTERED

A garden is taking shape between Omnia and Orion. It was designed by former WUR Landscape Architecture students Thamar Zeinstra and Raidun Schott. The NL2120 map was the starting point. Schott: 'It will be a sheltered place for recreation or work, open to everyone on campus. In the middle is a wadi that makes optimum use of the water.' The two bikes fixed to the spot that let visitors operate a fountain have now been installed. There will also be 'sunbeds' for recharging devices. The indigenous plants have been put in, with a herb-rich section of grassland and a meadow with flowers. The garden will probably be finished early November, with the official opening next spring. WA

Scan the QR code to read more online.

Photo *Resource*

Birgit Boogaard is Teacher of the Year

This year's Teacher of the Year competition was won by Birgit Boogaard, who teaches Knowledge Technology & Innovation.

A total of 150 teachers were nominated for the prize on the basis of course evaluations. Students could then vote for their favourite teacher, resulting in a top ten. They were all interviewed by a student jury, who picked the top five and the final winner.
The prize was handed out in Impulse on Tuesday afternoon, 11 October, together with the Excellent Education Prizes. As this was after Resource had gone to press, we are unable to include the winners and their comments

'I try to broaden our own Western worldview'

in the magazine (for this, see www.resource-online.nl). Boogaard had previously told us she saw her nomination as a sign of recognition for two of her main courses: African Philosophy and Social Justice Technology & Development. 'In these courses I introduce philosophers and scientists with African perspectives in an attempt to broaden our own Western worldview.' She

Teacher of the Year 2022 Birgit Boogaard. Photo Anna Green

describes her approach to teaching as 'based on dialogue: together we create a safe environment in which we learn from one another.' Boogaard uses her background as an illustrator by drawing pictures on the board while she teaches to illustrate the sociological and philosophical concepts. By the end of the series of lectures she has one large, clear illustration. 'That helps to understand and remember the abstract concepts.' LZ

WUR and the Remkes report

After a summer of talks and searching for a way out of the nitrogen deadlock, last week 'nitrogen mediator' Johan Remkes presented his findings. *Resource* analyses the press conference from a WUR perspective.

1 Did WUR also get to talk to Remkes this summer?
No, scientists were not invited. That may be because Remkes decided the scientific status quo was sufficiently well established, in line with the plea from 36 scientists in *Trouw* newspaper to stop sowing doubt and divisions. 'There is more than enough scientific consensus to take speedy action now,' they wrote.

2 What was WUR hoping or expecting from this report?
Officially nothing. WUR's role in the nitrogen debate is to provide facts, figures and scenarios as input for the decisions taken by administrators and policy makers. However, it is clear that WUR does not see doing nothing as an option; nature is under a lot of pressure. WUR has also long called for a combined approach to tackling nitrogen, water quality and the climate.

3 Is there recognition for that call?
Yes, Remkes noted 'an urgent need for an integrated perspective on the future of our rural areas'. He believes it is crucial to deal with challenges such as nitrogen, the climate, water and animal welfare in conjunction with one another, both for the restoration of nature and for a future-proof agriculture sector. The approach should be tailored to the specific area, as the Nitrogen Taskforce advocates, but less rigid than in the notorious nitrogen map.

4 Did Remkes' presentation offer other opportunities for Wageningen research?
Plenty. For example, he criticized the way the critical deposition values are seen as sacrosanct – although he had no problem with the values as such – and thinks the Netherlands should look more seriously at alternatives. Remkes also argued for 'an end to the caution' in embracing innovations: he wants a national innovation programme. He expressed concern too about the growing divide between the urban centres in the west and the rural areas 'where people see the last bus stop and the last cash machine going at the same time' – an ideal topic for rural sociologists. ME

550

WUR and the property developer Gebroeders Blokland plan to build at least 550 new homes on the grounds of the former Dreijen campus. This is phase 2 of the construction project: the site with the Chemistry and De Valk buildings, Computechnion and Agrotechnion. Thirty per cent of the homes will be social housing. The possibility of keeping parts of the old buildings is being investigated. RK

Resit policy vote postponed

The plan was that the Student Staff Council (SSC) would vote this month on a proposal by the Executive Board to reduce the number of permitted resits per course from two to one per year. The SSC has now asked for the vote to be postponed so it can discuss the proposal with the rank and file. 'This is a major topic so it's important to have broad support, among both staff and students,' says Student Council chair Sanne Vermeij.
At present, WUR has the most lenient resit policy in the Netherlands. Students tend to like this but staff are less keen: compiling new exams and marking papers adds considerably to their workload. The vote will now take place in early November. LZ

In formation:

Scientists4Future Wageningen

Scientists4Future, a 'coalition of concerned scientists', is getting a Wageningen branch.

That at any rate is the intention of the initiators Ignas Heitkönig (assistant professor at Wildlife Ecology and Conservation) and Susanne van Donk and Geert Aarts (researchers at Wageningen Marine Research).
According to the three initiators, S4F Wageningen should be seen as 'a joint group and shared network of peers who are concerned, but focused on the future'. They have been considering the idea of a Wageningen branch for a while. The recent protest by Dutch scientists at plans for further gas drilling was what finally persuaded them to take this step.

Regarding their motives, Heitkönig writes: 'Wageningen's education and research enjoy a high reputation in the Netherlands and abroad, but lectures and publications do little to speed up the transition to a sustainable world. It is irritating to see the economic agenda still determines policy when all the climate and biodiversity indicators are darkest red. Apparently we are not doing enough.'

Meeting

Anyone with a WUR connection is welcome to join: students, PhD candidates, support staff, scientific staff (research and teaching) and alumni. A first meeting is planned in Gaia 1 on 25 October. Its aim is to get to know one another and brainstorm about what shape Scientists4Future Wageningen should take. You can register via the S4FWageningen Teams group or by emailing Heitkönig.

'It is irritating that the economic agenda still determines policy'

Photo Unsplash / Christian Lue

Scientists4Future is a global movement of scientists united by their concerns about climate change and the way planetary boundaries are being exceeded. The Dutch Scientists4Future alliance was founded in summer 2019 and already has local branches in Amsterdam, Delft, Deventer, Enschede, Nijmegen and Utrecht. ME

Two WUR students in Farmers' Calendar

Fabian van Grevenbroek (25) (l) and Rick Baats (31) (r) both study at WUR and feel a connection with the farming sector. The two students were photographed last summer for the 2023 Farmers' Calendar, a calendar with a hot photo of a different farmer for each month. Van Grevenbroek: 'There is a lot of talk about farmers and the sector, but not about the innovations that will help us solve the problems. Yet we do have those innovations. This calendar is a fun way of drawing attention to them.' LZ

Municipality helps students get through winter

The municipal council wants to make sure no residents, including students, end up in the cold this winter or get into financial problems because they are no longer able to pay the bills. Any inhabitants in this situation can contact the municipal service centre Startpunt (Rooseveltweg 408A, Wageningen).

Startpunt has experts who can help residents find the right assistance. For example, the centre has people who can help you fill in an application for an allowance to cover your energy bill. The municipal council is also offering Special Support for local residents who don't qualify for that allowance. This scheme applies as well to students who get into financial difficulties due to the current situation.
Green-Left councillor Marre Adu-Ampong posted this news on the Wageningen Student Plaza Facebook group in the hope of reaching a lot of students. 'Don't hesitate to ask for help. If you know anyone who could use this information, please share this with them.' So here you are. LZ

More information at www.wageningen.nl/startpunt

Papua women fight land grabbing

At the end of September, five Papuan women visited campus during their campaign tour of the Netherlands. It was their last stop before returning home.

The women's story is harrowing. The large palm-oil companies are trampling on the rights of the indigenous people in their urge for expansion. That is clear not just from the women's accounts (told in Bahasa Indonesian and translated into English) but also from the report 'All the Birds are Gone'. This study gives a detailed description of the practices.
It is an account of corruption, deception, exclusion, racism and intimidation, based on interviews with 100 Papuan women. A million hectares of rainforest have already been felled, and there are plans to clear far more. Plans that 'make some members of the indigenous population rich, but most members poor,' as Magda Kafiar sums up.

Pension fund

Deforestation and land grabbing affect the womenfolk most of all. The tree felling means they have to travel further to get food and medicines. And if any compensation is paid at all for the land that has been taken, the money goes to the men. In the dramatic words of Rosita Tecuari, 'The forest and the land are our beating heart. Take them away and we disappear too.'
There is a reason for the Papuan women's decision to visit WUR. They were invited by Bas Verschuuren (Forest and Nature Conservation Policy), who along with others is trying to persuade the ABP pension fund to become more sustainable. ABP invests in the companies Posco and Salim Group, which are responsible for deforestation in West Papua, among other places. RK

Four of the five Papuan women in Forum. From the left: Natalia Yewen, Magda Kafiar, Sornica Ester Lily and Veronika Manimbu. Right: Vien Savor of Solidarity with Papua. Photo Roelof Kleis

Checking out the campus cows

You could use the pH meter to test which was most acidic: milk, vinegar or coke. You could see whether your breath contained methane. You could find out what a freemartin is*, or how much the heaviest cow in Barn 1 weighs**. You could discover that the campus cows produce valuable data in addition to milk. And last but not least, you could go gooey at the sight of a new-born calf.

The Dairy Campus in Leeuwarden held an open day as part of Science Weekend. Some 450 visitors turned up, a lot less than the 1250 who came last time it was organized in 2019. The downpours probably had something to do with this.

But it was dry and cosy inside the barns. Researchers talked about their projects and let the visitors get involved where possible. For example, they were taught how to 'look a bovine in the butt', i.e. assign body condition scores. Visitors could also get hands-on experience with measuring methane and CO_2 in barn systems or learn more about the research on the relationship between diet and nitrogen emissions.

Of course, the dairy farm continued its regular business as well. The lactating campus cows looked for the milking robot or did their rounds in the milking carrousel, the only difference being that they now had a lot of spectators.

Another routine event at the dairy farm also went ahead: calf number 4419 was born that Saturday at 11:53, thereby giving visitors an insight into an aspect of dairy farming that is increasingly in the public eye, namely the relationship between milk, calf and cow. ME

Photo Marieke Enter

* *A calf from a multiple birth that is genetically female but also has some sexual characteristics of a male, is infertile and therefore unable to produce milk.*
** *About 850 kilos.*

Medicine in a stable shell

PhD candidate Riahna Kembaren has made a micelle that protects medicines as they travel through the bloodstream.

Proteins such as insulin and antibodies can be injected into the blood as medicine. The effect of these therapeutic proteins depends on their three-dimensional structure. Without a shell protecting the protein, the structure changes and the protein loses its effectiveness when it enters the bloodstream. Riahna Kembaren (Physical Chemistry and Soft Matter) obtained a doctorate for chemical shells known as micelles that surround the protein and protect it as it travels through the bloodstream.

The micelles Kembaren used are complex coacervate core micelles (C3Ms). These core micelles form easily from a solution of polymers (chains of units) and the protein that needs to be protected, thanks to a difference in the electric charges of the protein and polymer. The polymers have a positive charge at one end and the proteins a negative charge. When you mix them, they bind together in the core of the micelle. The opposite ends of the polymers stick outwards and form a protective shell around the core. But dilution and contact with salt can still cause the micelles to disintegrate in the blood, so Kembaren added amine groups to the polymer chains. A cross-linker was used to make the amine groups form crosslinks in the core of the micelle. That network made the micelle much more stable.

The micelle only disintegrates in certain conditions

Destination

Once the micelle has reached its destination, for example a tumour cell, it should disintegrate so that the protein can do its work. Tumour cells have a low pH and a high concentration of glutathione. The micelle can be designed specifically to disintegrate in these conditions. That lets cancer be treated in a precise manner by packing antibodies in micelles that only open up when they encounter a cancer cell. SS

[You win some, you lose some]

A failed experiment, an error in your model, a rejected article: in academia such things tend to be labelled failures. As for talking about failure? Not done! But that's just what WUR co-workers do in this regular feature, 'You win some, you lose some'. Because failure can be useful. In this instalment, we hear from Gerlinde De Deyn, Personal Professor of Soil Ecology. Text and illustration Stijn Schreven

'In February 2006, I went to Lancaster University in England for my second postdoc. I was determined to prove myself as a researcher. I immediately started setting up a large field experiment involving 6000 plants. The aim was to see how the diversity and combination of the plants could promote carbon and nitrogen storage in the soil. I was under some time pressure because in April the seedlings – which I had painstakingly grown in the preceding weeks – had to be planted out. With the help of five colleagues, the planting of the different plant communities was done in less than a week.

'But then things went wrong. While it normally rains almost non-stop in that part of England, that particular spring was bone-dry. My nickname became Gerty Hosepipe because I kept going into the field to water the plants. To no avail. I kept going for a month, even though I knew it wasn't going to work out. I felt like a real failure then. I wondered whether I should go back to Belgium and switch careers.

'Then I realized: whatever comes out of this doesn't reflect what those little plants can actually do. In the end, I took the decision to repeat the whole experiment. I got a lot of support from the technical assistant, who I saw as a mother figure. She emphasized that the research was my responsibility. I was no longer a PhD student and I had to make my own decisions now, including difficult ones like deciding to redo the trial. But once the decision was made, I went all out again.

'My nickname became Gerty Hosepipe'

'You cannot control everything and no matter how well you plan things, something always goes wrong. The experience taught me to think in scenarios as a researcher. There is always a solution.'

Glyphosate ban is possible

A ban on certain applications of products that contain glyphosate is legally possible, concludes Hanna Schebesta, associate professor in the Law group, in a second opinion requested by the parliamentary standing committee on Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality.

Back in 2018, a majority of MPs voted in favour of a motion to no longer allow glyphosate in products for spraying grassland, green manure crops and catch crops. However the minister of Agriculture said the motion could not be implemented because the ban would violate EU rules. The State Advocate also concluded it was legally untenable.

Schebesta, who had advised on the topic in the past, draws a different conclusion. After a new analysis of the legislation and case law, she concludes such a ban is possible. She points out that the Plant Protection Products and Biocides Act lets ministers draw up their own rules and that this does not affect the independence of the Board for the Authorization of Plant Protection Products and Biocides. She also explains why the term 'permissibility' in European law should not be interpreted as a duty on the part of the member states to permit something. In this way, she picks holes in the various legal grounds.

'Legally, a ban is certainly possible'

No assessment

She explicitly does not discuss the substantive arguments for or against a ban. As she writes, 'This report cannot assess the technical and scientific need for a restriction on certain applications of glyphosate-based crop protection agents. It only answers the question of whether the motion can be implemented from a legal perspective. This is certainly possible legally, regardless of whether it is desirable, effective or necessary.' ME

Bioveterinary Research starts bird flu vaccine trials

The Ministry of Agriculture has asked Wageningen Bioveterinary Research (WBVR) to investigate the efficacy of three vaccines for bird flu.

The requirement to keep birds indoors has applied in some places since October 2021 because of the persistent bird flu infections. Photo Unsplash/ Henrique Ruzon

The trial, which will take about three months, is of vaccines to protect against the H5 virus in laying hens. The first results are expected in December. The vaccine trial will take place in the research facilities of the High Containment Unit in Lelystad. According to the press release, it should give an idea of the effectiveness in preventing disease symptoms and the spread of the virus. The trial involves new types of vaccines from three pharmaceutical companies.

'For the first time, the bird flu season continued after the migratory birds left in April'

Calls for an effective vaccine are growing louder as infections continue to be reported. 'In the past, we wouldn't see bird flu infections in the summer,' explains WBVR bird flu expert Nancy Beerens. 'But this year for the first time, the bird flu season did not come to an end when the migratory birds left in April. The virus survived by infecting birds that live in the Netherlands in the summer. That meant commercial poultry farmers were having to deal with bird flu in the summer too'. The persistent infections have far-reaching consequences for the poultry sector: birds have to be culled at farms with infections, transport bans are in place, and the requirement to keep birds indoors at all times has not been lifted in many areas since the first cases of bird flu in October 2021.

Not straightforward

But getting the right vaccine is not straightforward. A vaccine should not only protect against the disease but also stop the virus from spreading. If birds are infectious but don't show symptoms of illness, there is a risk of the virus spreading unnoticed. That is one reason why the EU has guidelines that restrict trade in vaccinated poultry. WBVR says that the new types of vaccines being tested in this study are expected to give better protection against the spread of the virus. According to WBVR, it is also possible to distinguish between vaccinated and infected birds using specific diagnostics.

WBVR's vaccine trial is the first step in research on the possible use of vaccination to combat the bird flu virus in the poultry sector. The outcomes of this study, which will finish in December 2022, will form the basis for follow-up studies in which vaccines will be tested in the field.

Vaccine studies are being conducted in various European countries at the moment. Beerens says the results from these studies will be important in getting support from all EU member states for vaccination. ME

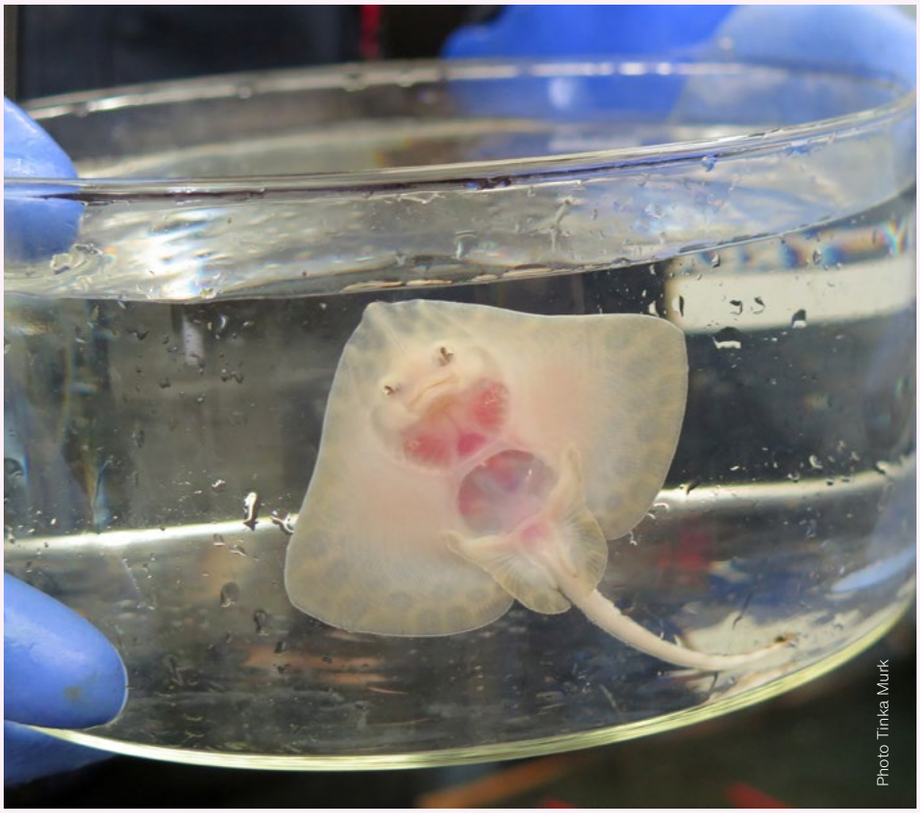


Photo Tinka Murk

Accident

Sharks and rays have an extra sense, the ampullae of Lorenzini, that lets them 'feel' electromagnetic fields. In the ElasmoPower project, PhD candidate Annemiek Hermans studies how these creatures perceive the electric cables that connect the increasing number of offshore wind farms to the land. Do the cables affect how they hunt or navigate, and is their reproduction influenced? In a lab experiment with ray eggs, an interesting 'accident' happened when two baby rays were born earlier than expected. The reproduction of rays is often a source of surprises. Last year, the Dolfinarium reported a case of parthenogenesis, a form of asexual reproduction, in a whiptail stingray. ME

THE PROPOSITION

For PhD candidates, their thesis propositions are an opportunity to publicly express their professional and personal convictions about science and society. In this feature they explain their most thought-provoking proposition. This time, a proposition from Katherine Barragán-Fonseca from the Laboratory of Entomology, who defends her thesis on 14 October 2022.

'Knowledge transfer in the natural sciences is inefficient due to the lack of recognition of languages other than English.'

'People are not aware that it is a privilege to be able speak English. In the Netherlands you get English lessons right from primary school. But as a Colombian, I had to learn English as an adult. I needed it for my university degree course, but I had to invest my own time and money in learning it. And some of my classmates could not afford that. That is a shame for these people, but also for science. I know brilliant scientists who speak Spanish but not English. Others will never get to benefit from their ideas.

'In the social sciences, there is more awareness of knowledge among speakers of other languages. In the natural sciences, we still need to take that step. A lot of information gets missed because scientists do not consult non-English literature. Conversely, I sometimes come across useful research for organizations in my home country, but the studies are not in Spanish. That makes it difficult to share that knowledge. Whereas non-English journals always include an English abstract, English journals rarely include a summary in Spanish or other languages.

'High-impact journals have a big responsibility to set an example. They could publish one article in another language every issue. The *Journal of Applied Ecology* already allows abstracts in a second language. And I can do my bit as a researcher too: I now ask the journals I submit to if they could publish my abstract in Spanish. Some respond positively.' SS

What's in a name

Sjoukje Osinga

At the end of my eldest son's first month at the nursery, I received an alarmingly steep bill. I didn't know what had hit me. Was childcare that expensive? When I took a closer look, I saw the names of three Osinga girls. Osinga is my surname, but not my son's. I had been accidentally linked to the children of another WUR employee who also happened to be called Osinga.

That was nearly 25 years ago, but it is still deceptively easy to mix up names. Every teacher knows how you have to bend over backwards to record your students' grades accurately. All the more so when you have to combine grades from various assignments that have been recorded differently.

'You can even make a mess of it with something as mundane as an email'

But you can even make a mess of it with something as mundane as an email. As soon as you type in the first few letters of someone's name, suggestions immediately appear. Microsoft Outlook gives you the names of people you have recently corresponded with, as well as the names of other WUR account-holders – including people you have never exchanged emails with. Convenient, when you click on someone's name and their email address appears. Or inconvenient, if you accidentally click on the wrong person. If the email goes to multiple recipients, the person who shouldn't be getting it can end up being plagued for a long time by all the subsequent reply-all responses. Worse still, someone might unintentionally share information that is not meant for their eyes at all.

I know this from personal experience. For about four months, there has been a WUR employee, someone fairly high up in the hierarchy, who happens to have the same first name as me. When I alerted an equally high-ranking sender to his mistake, namely that I am another Sjoukje but that I would obviously delete the mail, I received friendly apologies. But the apology was a second reply to the very email I had just deleted. So I got it again.

Sjoukje Osinga (55) is a university lecturer in Information Technology. She sings alto in the Wageningen chamber choir Musica Vocale, has three sons at university and enjoys bird-watching in the Binnenveldse Hooilanden with her husband.

‘TAKE SOME PARACETAMOL AND WAIT A FEW DAYS’

The Student Medical Centre (SMC) has a bad name among some students. Negative experiences are being shared both in the Facebook group Wageningen Student Plaza and in Google Reviews. What’s going on?

Text Luuk Zegers

An anonymous student who was dissatisfied with the SMC started the Facebook account ‘*SMC Wageningen Stories*’ last summer with the aim of collecting patients’ experiences, exposing the problems and instigating change. *Resource* got access to the complaints, two of which we have highlighted here (see insets). The respondents mention long waiting times, poor accessibility, how difficult it is to see a GP, and bills for advice that patients did not appreciate. ‘My toe was probably broken so I called the SMC,’ says one student. ‘The advice was “get some rest, take paracetamol and bandage the toe tightly.” A month later it was still hurting, so I called again. Same advice. No one helped me or showed me how to bandage a toe. I did get billed, though. To my mind, I was denied medical help but I still had to pay for it.’

International students are also baffled by the role of the assistant. ‘It is weird that you discuss what you think is wrong with the assistant and get treated without seeing the GP at all,’ says one student. Says another: ‘From my French perspective, it is not good for the secretary to screen you on medical matters.’ And even if you do manage to get an appointment, not all the experiences are positive. One of the complaints concerns a lack of privacy: someone sitting in the waiting room could listen in when a student was given an explanation about blood loss during a heavy period. Nevertheless, a glance at Google Reviews shows that many students who did get an appointment were positive. Disappointed 1-star

Student Medical Centre

- Six GPs work part-time at the SMC, the equivalent of two FTEs
- About 5000 students are on the books
- The norm for a fulltime GP is 2150 patients. At the SMC, there are 2500 patients per FTE. On the other hand, the 18-25 age group has lower than average healthcare needs
- Students can also register with other GPs, but they usually say ‘We are full, go to the SMC’

Illustration Valerie Geelen

reviews (‘terrible’) are interspersed with lyrical 5-star reviews (‘the best GP in my life’).

Understaffing

How do the staff at the SMC view all the criticism? Some of the complaints are familiar to GP Suzanne van Dinther and assistant Angela Hobé. While they cannot comment on all the individual stories, they would like to respond to the most frequently voiced complaints. ‘Waiting times are a big problem,’ says Van Dinther. ‘Unfortunately, we are understaffed. Currently, there are always two GPs and two assistants present, whereas we aim for three assistants: two to answer the phone and one to be at the reception desk.’ During the Covid period, staffing was even more difficult due to staff absences. ‘We have been looking for another assistant for some time. It’s almost impossible to find them these days.’ Due to understaffing, the SMC can temporarily only be contacted by phone in the mornings. ‘There is no other option for now.’

‘To my mind, I was denied medical help but had to pay for it’

To enable it to continue helping students, the medical centre is focusing increasingly on online consultations. Van Dinther: ‘Patients can consult us online. Or you can email us with a photo, of a skin condition for example. The GP looks at it and tells you which ointment you need. We think of this as a modern way of helping people and keeping surgery hours free for more severe ailments. A lot of Dutch students like it because it’s so quick. But it can give the wrong impression and that’s a shame. We also hear that students get the feeling that the doctor doesn’t want to see them. Even though there really are two GPs in the practice every day from eight to five.’ Hobé adds: ‘International students arrive here with expectations based on what healthcare is like

in their home countries. Here it just works differently. Sometimes we get the feeling we start out 1-0 down from the moment someone registers with us.'

The assistant

Much of the criticism from students focuses on the gatekeepers: the assistants. Van Dinther thinks this is partly due to a lack of understanding about the role of the assistant in the Dutch healthcare system. 'All assistants are medically trained and follow the triage guidelines, an instrument for asking questions to determine the urgency. This way, you quickly find out whether the situation is an emergency. That's good because there are a limited number of appointments and medical emergencies get priority.' For some conditions, an appointment is made with the GP, but assistants can often provide immediate advice, says Van Dinther. 'As an international student, you might think: I want to see a doctor, so why is the receptionist telling me what to do? But an assistant is really not the same as a receptionist.' Any advice given by assistants is subsequently discussed with a GP, Hobé says. 'And if a patient really disagrees with our advice and there is time, we schedule an appointment with the GP. Even if we think she will only reiterate what we just said.' Then there are the bills some students get. Hobé: 'There are three types of health insurance: Dutch insurance, other European insurance and AON insurance for students from outside Europe. With the Dutch and AON insurance policies, we can claim directly, bypassing the patients. But with European insurance, you get sent the bill, which you then have to claim from the insurance organization yourself.' Van Dinther: 'A telephone consultation is a consultation too. I understand that that can be frustrating if you didn't expect it. But that's just how our healthcare system works.'

Role for WUR?

The anonymous student behind the *SMC Wageningen Stories* account thinks the university should intervene. Could WUR play a role? Yes and no, says student welfare manager Door van der Sloot. 'We do not own the practice and we can't make them hire an extra assistant.' However, she does see a role for WUR in explaining how things work. 'In other countries, it can be easier to see a doctor and you get antibiotics prescribed more quickly. Here, you will often be told: just wait a bit, you are not well but you will probably get better on your own. If you're not used to that, you

'A telephone consultation is a consultation too; that's just how our healthcare system works'

'Medical care is not part of a university's remit'

Lisa's experience*

'In three years, I have had at least six ear infections. I call the SMC every time and they always tell me to take ibuprofen or paracetamol and contact them if it is not gone in a fortnight. Painkillers help slightly, but then I am out of action for about 10 days. One of the times, I was given an appointment. The diagnosis was that it was indeed an ear infection and I was given antibiotics. Since it is a recurring problem, after yet another ear infection, I asked if they could refer me to an ENT specialist. They said they couldn't do that because I had only been diagnosed with an ear infection once. That makes me feel I am not being taken seriously.'

Van Dinther: *'If that is what happened, it is not right and I'm very sorry about that. I would ask Lisa to lodge a complaint with us, and then we will sort it out.'*

Federico's experience*

'In my first year as a Master's student, I felt very unwell, I had a high fever and it was hard to eat and breathe. I had already heard about the Dutch healthcare system, so I decided to wait three days before I called the doctor. When I called, the assistant told me to wait a few more days and take paracetamol. After the weekend, the situation had deteriorated, so I called again and because I was very sick, I asked for a home visit. That wasn't possible, but at least I was finally able to make an appointment. Then it turned out I had bacterial bronchitis that was developing into pneumonia, and I had two weeks of antibiotics ahead of me. This might have been avoided if they had helped me right away.'

Van Dinther: *'In Federico's age group, you expect flu and it can make you feel very unwell for five days. If you go on running a fever for more than five days, a bacterial superinfection might have set in and you start considering the possibility of pneumonia. Federico called us after three days. If he had come in to the surgery, we would probably have said the same thing. If the phone call had given any reason to suspect pneumonia, he should have been given an appointment on the same day or the next day at the latest.'*

might feel you haven't been listened to. But that's just how the Dutch healthcare system works. It's up to us to explain that to new students properly.' Since last academic year, an informative talk has been given on the Dutch healthcare system, the role of the GP and what WUR has to offer. 'We are also working with the vaccination centre and the SMC on a new information desk where students can go with questions about common illnesses, lifestyle, the Dutch healthcare system and how it may differ from their home country.'

Can't WUR go back to employing its own doctors as it used to? Not a good idea, thinks Van der Sloot. 'Medical care is not part of a university's remit. Yes, we offer our students a broad package of support, with training courses, workshops, coaching and psychotherapists. The focus lies on your area of study and on short-term assistance. We try to give students the tools to prevent them from getting stuck or burned out, but we are not a healthcare institution. If they need more than these tools, we refer them to the regular healthcare system.'

Complaints? Tell us

To students with complaints about the SMC, Van Dinther and Hobé have a clear message: tell us. 'Then we can sit down with the patient,' says Hobé. 'That way the patient feels listened to, and we can see if there's something we need to improve.' A complaint can be submitted via the complaint form on the website or by email. Three complaints have been submitted so far this year, Hobé says. 'With each complaint, the management looks at whether the practice made wrong decisions, and then we always contact the complainant.' Students who prefer to submit their complaint to an independent complaints officer can contact the primary care complaints board SKGE. Hobé: 'You can find more information about that on our website.' ■

**The students' names have been changed for privacy reasons.*

FROM TREE TO THEATRE

It all started at the big oak tree at the end of the Paradise Walk in Droevendaal. Training, brainstorming about shows, thinking about themes, the first performances with an audience. Now that summer is over, rehearsals have moved indoors for the aerial acrobats, jugglers and drag artists. The students who train here emphasize that they are not professionals, but they do have a big show planned in the near future. Curious? Keep an eye on the BeaTreece Circus Instagram! CJ

Photo Clara Vinyeta Cortada

HUMANS NEED TO REWILD TOO

When we talk about 'rewilding', we tend to talk about spectacular predators such as the wolf. But at the biennial international Pathways conference, held in Wageningen from 19 to 21 October, the talk is mainly about the interaction between humans and wildlife. Because you can rewild to your heart's content, but 'you've got to have people on board.' Text René Didde ◆ Photo Shutterstock

We long to live more in harmony with nature, because the outdoor life is healthy and relaxed. Yet at the same time, our increasingly urban society is pulling us further away from nature. Because staying indoors is comfortable, warm and safe, says Koen Arts. And he should know because he is not only a researcher on 'human-nature interactions' but also garnered much publicity with his book *Wild jaar* (Wild Year), in which he recounts 365 nights of sleeping out of doors.

It is often said that there is no nature left in the Netherlands, and people wonder what rewilding could look like in this country where every square metre seems to be managed and neatly raked or tiled. Yet even in the Netherlands, there are more possibilities than we think, and we really don't have to go to Alaska or Siberia to find wilderness, says Arts. 'Roughly 16 per cent of the Netherlands' land surface is nature and forest. Earlier research by what was then Alterra showed that there are several areas that are potential locations for wolf packs. Wilderness is a bit like with cold water: you dither and procrastinate, but once you're in it, it's great.'

Arts is organizing a workshop on the tensions in the human-nature relationship at the Pathways conference. Besides authoring his own book, he is also one of the editors of the book *Rewilding in the Netherlands*, a collection of essays on 'a more offensive nature strategy', published earlier this year. 'If we want more wilderness in the Netherlands, we've got to get people on board,' is his conviction. 'And preferably not just offer people a bird-watching spot on the dyke passing Oostvaardersplassen, but give them more of a chance to really experience nature. Oostvaardersplassen still reflects the old-fashioned mentality: "nature is over there and people are over here".'

Wilderness experience

Such an experience is already on offer in the Markerwadden, the archipelago of islands in the Markermeer designed and constructed entirely by engineers and ecologists. And it's even better in the Gelderse Poort nature area, says Arts, because that is accessible to more people. 'You can get there without a boat and you are allowed to go off the beaten track. And schoolchildren are allowed to roam freely and get mud under their nails.'

Large grazers play a big role in the wilderness experience and in ecology. The wisent, for example, the largest living land mammal, died out in the wild a hundred years ago. Now this European bison has been successfully reintroduced to the Netherlands, although it has bitten the occasional day-tripper.

But 'smaller stuff' such as food forests, 'guerrilla gardening' and even nature in a digital environment (such as visiting a virtual nature reserve with 3D glasses) can enhance our experience of nature and help develop 'a greener ethos', the researcher says. 'In the process, we need to take more account of different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Nature is experienced differently by different people. There are parents who are members of Natuurmonumenten and IVN and take their children to nature areas, you have people who

want to harvest from nature and there are people with physical disabilities. Everyone should be able to experience wilderness.'

The wolf is proof that the largely man-made nature of the Netherlands is apparently suitable for wildlife. 'The wolf likes it here and we humans will have to get used to it. This will be accompanied by incidents that go with the adaptation process, such as dead sheep. Sheep farmers in wolf territory are suddenly being urged to install fencing. Incidentally, a survey by a Master's student on attitudes to the wolf in Germany and the Netherlands shows that after a few years, farmers' attitudes become more positive.' Arts himself conducted research into farmers' opinions on the bald eagle in Scotland. 'It was initially accused of killing lambs. But there, too, attitudes eventually changed for the better. But it doesn't happen by itself. It calls for good dialogue and tools such as compensation schemes.'

Wildlife businesses

Possibly opportunities for rewilding in the Netherlands could be part and parcel of solutions to the many current spatial issues, such as adaptation to climate change, flooding, drought and the nitrogen crisis. Farmers still occupy more than half of the rural land in the country. 'In the short term, they are not likely to go along with it, as many are stuck with their bank loans. But we do need to move in the direction of seeing rewilding as a potential business model for farmers, perhaps in combination with food production and climate buffers, so that water is better retained.' Researchers can contribute by, for example, analysing settlement factors for wildlife and mapping what is possible where and in what combination. For example? 'A beaver can benefit a farm in terms of water retention and offer new opportunities with regard to bulrush cultivation, for example.'

'THE WOLF LIKES IT HERE AND WE HUMANS HAVE TO GET USED TO THAT'

Finally, when we think of wilderness, we often think of large grazers and predators like the wolf and the bald eagle. But more wildlife and wild nature is possible in the garden too. Through a project called 'The wild garden', Tilburg University and Wageningen University are trying to get readers of the Dutch newspaper *NRC* to rewild one square metre of their garden. It is a success, with more than 7000 people taking part. What do they have to do? 'Actually nothing, just leave that square metre alone,' says Koen Arts. 'There are even possibilities on a balcony.' ■

'If you want more wilderness in the Netherlands, you've got to get people on board' Photo Shutterstock

‘Our food system must become circular’

What will we eat?

Eating a little meat from livestock fed on waste from food supply chains is more sustainable than eating no meat at all, Hannah van Zanten has demonstrated. She is still working every day on perfecting the model for calculating this accurately. She herself has been eating an almost entirely vegan diet for a year now. ‘That’s the small step that I could still take to help reduce overall consumption of meat and dairy.’ Photos Duncan de Fey

Text Tanja Speek

Hannah van Zanten, associate professor in the Farming Systems Ecology chair group, was one of three science speakers at the opening of the academic year. As head of the Circular Food Systems research team, she explained how the European landscape and our diet will change if we shift to a fully circular food system.

Can you briefly explain what the essence of your story is?

‘Well, briefly? I can at least explain my research question briefly. I am analysing how we can feed the whole world healthily, while respecting the planet’s limits. What would we eat if we did that? The answer to that question, and how I arrive at it, can’t be explained so briefly, though. The key change involved is that our food system needs to become circular. That means we minimize the amount of food we give to livestock that we humans can eat ourselves. We feed livestock on waste streams from the food supply chains, such as wheat groats, a by-product of flour that makes excellent livestock feed. We will have to eat a lot less meat, a little less grain and potatoes and a lot more vegetables and legumes. So says the EAT Lancet diet, a description of a healthy and sustainable menu published by other researchers in 2019.’

Is the EAT Lancet diet circular?

‘No, the EAT Lancet diet is based on what the food system looks like now. But if you rearrange the system, everything changes with it. Especially if you make it circular. If you want to feed all chickens in a circular system, there won’t be enough waste products for other livestock. The total livestock population is going to have to shrink and the numbers of chickens, cows and pigs affect each other. It is like a Rubik’s cube: if you change one part of the picture, the rest changes too. With my group, I have developed a mathematical model, the Circular Food Systems model (CiFoS), which incorporates all these dependencies. So you can calculate the effects of different choices regarding land use and food security. And then you can ask other questions about the food system of the future. For example, for our health it is better to eat rather more chicken than beef. But in terms of land use, beef from dairy cows is actually very efficient. So there’s a conversation to be had about what our priorities are.’

Your career began with a completely different animal-related theme.

‘True. After finishing secondary school in Zutphen, I went to study Animal Management in Leeuwarden. I was always a real outdoor kid and I spent a lot of time around animals. I decided to go vegetarian when I was four. I was particularly interested in animal behaviour, so in the course of my degree I spent a year in Africa studying animals. I saw there how illegal hunting was driven by poverty and hunger. I wanted to get a fuller understanding of how our world works and the role of our food system in it. So I decided to take the Master’s degree in Animal

Sciences at Wageningen. I chose the Animal Production Systems track, where researchers calculate things like the environmental impact of livestock farming.'

Did that feel like a big change?

'The education in Wageningen was so different. It wasn't about learning facts here, but about analysing complex issues. That gave me a lot of energy. I graduated cum laude. And then I went on to get my PhD cum laude. I surprised myself by doing that. At secondary school, I was more interested in being out of doors and my books usually stayed in my bike bag'.

You were already studying waste streams in your PhD research.

'Yes, indeed. I wrote my proposal on one side of A4. My supervisors gave me a lot of freedom. It had to be about using waste streams for animal feed, that was all. And that turned out to suit me perfectly.
I started by calculating the environmental impact of feeding pigs with more by-products. But before long, I thought, I can calculate this for pig farming, but if such a system uses up all the by-products that are currently fed to cows, what use is it? I didn't want to devote my entire PhD to that. So I decided to do the calculations for the whole livestock sector, linking everything together. What would be feasible in that case? It turned out that we would have to eat much less meat than we currently eat on average.
After my PhD came the questions that resulted in my VENI research. Suppose we all switch to a healthier diet, such as eating wholemeal bread instead of white bread. Then a massive waste stream disappears, and what is the effect of that? And I have many more questions.

'I surprised myself by getting my PhD cum laude'

I would also like to look at the likely impact of a transition to strip farming, or what the economy needs to look like.'

Do you expect that we really will eat differently in the future?

'Yes, and it's got to happen. Fortunately, I see lots of initiatives. A company like Kipster, which I work with, now feeds their chickens entirely on waste streams, mainly bread scraps from large bakeries. And the trend towards more plant-based food is already evident. Just take a look in the supermarket. Two years ago you hardly saw any vegan products, but there is much more attention to that now. Another example is how fast the development of in vitro meat is moving. But we must look at the overall picture critically and keep a close eye on whether alternatives are genuinely sustainable and healthy.'

Have you never considered starting to eat a bit of meat again yourself?

'No, in fact I've been eating almost exclusively vegan for a year now. That might seem like a contradiction, but I would like to see us all taking a step in the right direction. A big meat eater could at least go without meat one day a week. And the step that was still possible for me was to give up dairy products. That way I can compensate for the meat and dairy that someone else finds too hard to do without. To me, that seems a much more useful approach than judging each other. Besides, as long as we're faced with infectious animal diseases and animal welfare issues, I'm very happy to eat vegan.
Another reason for me to do it was just to see what it is like to take such a step. I used to love eating cheese, on a sandwich or in a lasagne. For a while, I found it very hard to give that up, especially when I went into the canteen and smelled and saw those delicious things. But that ebbs away after a few months. Now I don't miss it anymore.'

Do you actively engage in the debate?

'The debate is often tricky, it revolves around extremes, and we forget to look at each other and really listen. I would much rather look at what the other person needs in order to change. I don't think in black and white terms, but look for solutions. I want to understand the mechanisms at work, and then you see that it is actually quite logical that the sector has become the way it is.
Where I am active is in organizing meetings for stakeholders, giving lots of lectures, and making videos or infographics about our research. Because helping to get that ball of change rolling is very important to me.' ■

Hannah van Zanten (1983)

Born in: Rotterdam
Lives in: Wageningen
Education: Animal Management in Leeuwarden; Animal Sciences in Wageningen
Job: Associate professor Farming Systems Ecology
Research: Circular Food Systems model (CiFoS), a computer model for calculating options in land use and food security
Plus: Collaboration with Kipster to develop the Netherlands' first climate-neutral laying hen farm with a circular food system

How privileged is WUR?

There was widespread outrage when journalist Joris Luyendijk published *De zeven vinkjes* (the seven ticks), his book on the seven dimensions of privilege. Once a popular speaker, now he did not even manage to fill the room at WUR. But he did stir up something.

Photo Guy Ackermans

Who does Joris Luyendijk think he is? Why should he of all people criticize privilege?! That was roughly the response to the publication of Luyendijk's book on 'how men like me get to be in charge', in other words how privilege works. Half of his critics asked how Luyendijk had the nerve as a privileged white man to lay claim to ideas that so many less privileged people had tried to voice before him. The other half were furious that an 'ordinary white man' had become so woke he was attacking them — what had got into the man?

Not everyone at WUR was pleased either that he of all people was invited to speak during Diversity & Inclusion Week. Indeed, the room at Omnia was three-quarters full at best. But something did happen that evening. Not when Luyendijk observed that the higher up you get in an organization, the more boring the hair styles and outfits. Nor when he gave some figures: that the Netherlands has as many people who are functionally illiterate as it does people with a university degree. And that statistically, the audience members should have at least two functionally illiterate people in their circle of friends. 'But you don't, do you?'

Zero ticks

And so Luyendijk continued with his sharp insights. For example, the uncomfortable truth that social class is incredibly important, even if we pretend otherwise. 'Just ask people from working-class or farming families,' said Luyendijk. 'And ask the people who with an iron will have worked their way up through the educational hierarchy from lower technical school to university because the school system always recommended too low a level — rather than being overly ambitious like in my case. And the people in academia who are still underrated because they once attended an applied sciences university.' He also mentioned university-going migrant children who get ignored by head-hunters because of 'a lack of international experience'. 'As if a life spent switching between cultures doesn't count for more than six months on an exchange.'

'Some people don't tick any boxes'

'The world is designed by them, for them' is how he summarized the position of power held by the men who tick seven boxes and the women who tick six. The implications were made really clear when Luyendijk got everyone in the room to stand and he then counted down: 'Everyone with seven ticks, sit down. Now six ticks. Now five.' He was planning to stop at one tick but then a woman — a WUR student — spoke up. 'Some people don't tick any of those boxes,' she said. 'I'm one of them. People have no idea how difficult that is, how many barriers you have to overcome.' She gave a number of examples and turned to Luyendijk: 'I'm so grateful that someone like you is addressing this issue. People listen to you, not to me. Everyone always says the Netherlands is so fair, open-minded and full of equal opportunities. But believe me, that is absolutely not the case if you don't tick enough of those boxes.' ME

‘We were looking for something else’

Building cells in a test tube

A find you weren’t looking for. That happened to researchers at Physical Chemistry and Soft Matter when they accidentally discovered a new and simple way to make containers as small as cells. Which could be the basis for replicating a living cell. Text Stijn Schreven

They had never seen anything like it. Physical chemists Ketan Ganar and Siddharth Deshpande studied the properties of droplets in water, but got a big surprise during the research: the addition of the protein actin to the droplets suddenly created cell-sized containers in which the researchers could conduct cellular processes. And so they stumbled upon a simple method of creating a complex structure. An example of serendipity.

PhD candidate Ganar set out to research condensates, droplets floating around in water. The droplets do not mix with the surrounding liquid because they have a high concentration of certain substances. Such droplets occur in living cells as well as elsewhere.

‘The condensates (droplets) in the cell play a role in neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s,’ explains assistant professor Siddharth Deshpande. A defect in proteins in the condensate can change its physical properties and cause the cell structure to collapse.

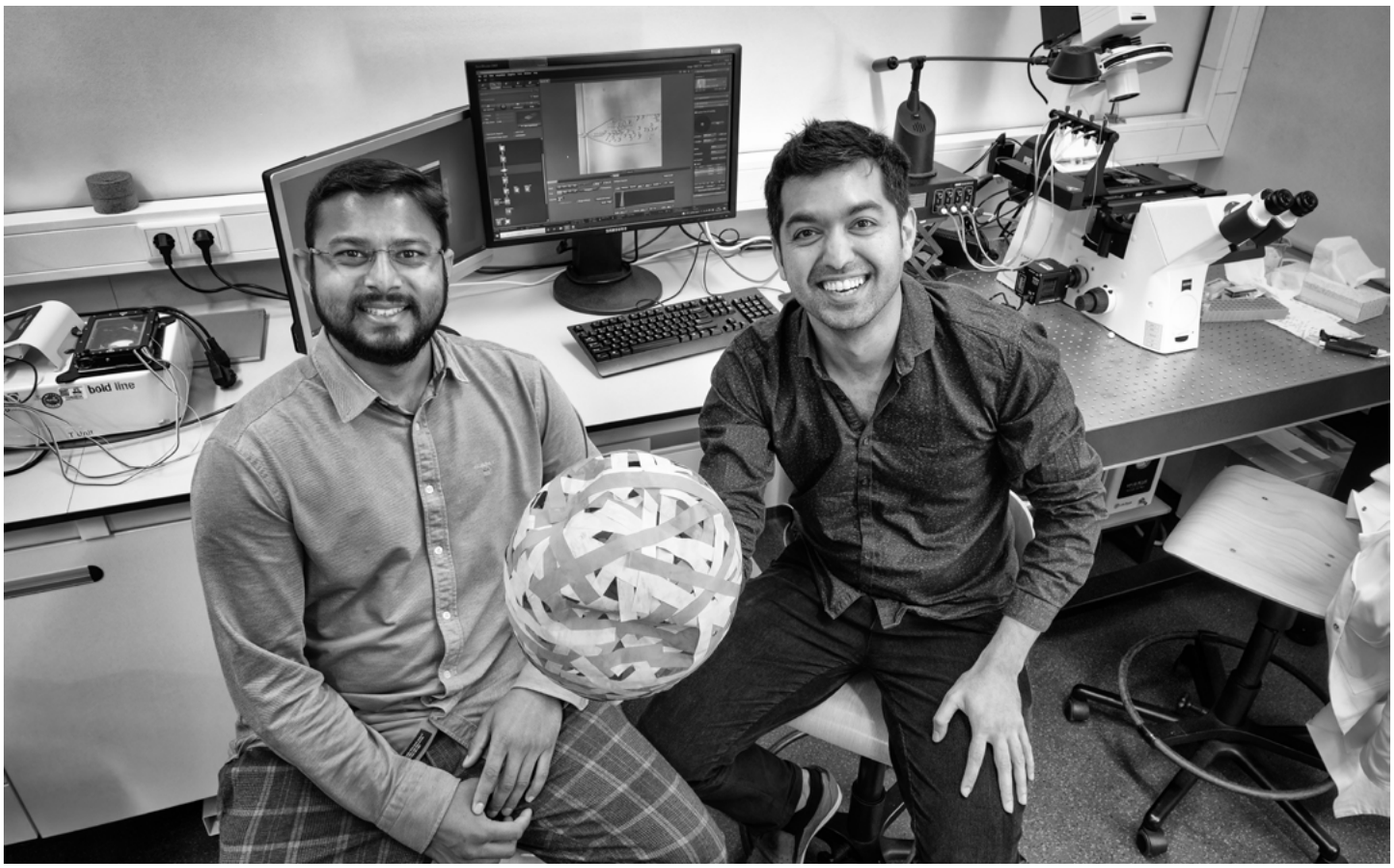
In a test tube, Ganar created droplets similar to those in the cells in order to study their behaviour. He added the positively charged protein polylysine and a negatively charged energy carrier (ATP) to water. The positive and negative charges attract each other and form droplets.

‘Funnily enough, we then saw a small hole in the droplet’

Droplet with a hole

The researchers’ goal was to study the interaction between the condensates and the cytoskeleton. The cytoskeleton is partly made up of filaments of the protein actin, which give the cell strength and form its ‘highways’, along which many substances are transported. ‘To form the protein filaments, actin needs energy,’ Ganar explains. ‘We wanted to know whether that energy was drawn from the condensate.’ When it was added, actin was found to coat the outside of the condensate. It then extracted the energy (ATP) from the droplet, causing it to shrink.

‘In our experiments, we used a control test with a different energy carrier (GTP), which actin cannot use,’ Ganar explains. So now the droplet did not shrivel up. ‘But we also tested a condensate with half GTP and half ATP. Funnily enough, we then saw a small hole in the droplet.’ This discovery was made by Bachelor’s student Liza Leijten, co-author of the paper in *ACS Synthetic Biology*.



Ketan Ganar (left) and Siddharth Deshpande with a papier-mâché model of their actinosome. ◆ Photo Guy Ackermans

At first, the researchers ignored the hole in the droplet. 'We didn't understand it and were looking for something else,' says Deshpande. Until they got stuck. Ganar: 'We wanted to control the shrinkage of the droplet, but there were so many factors you could change. Then we looked at this weird intermediate situation and I tried to reproduce the BSc student's results.' That worked: a hole appeared in the droplet every time if both ATP and GTP were present. A ratio of 70 per cent GTP to 30 per cent ATP was optimal for forming holes.

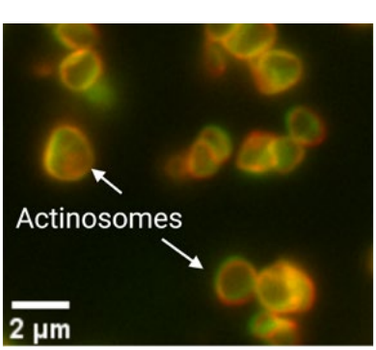
With that ratio of ATP to GTP, actin formed filaments around the droplet in a short time, at the expense of the ATP. As a result, the polylysine proteins also moved to the edge of the droplet and intertwined with the actin filaments. The inside had become empty and the outside was a rigid layer of protein. The droplet had changed into a hollow container the size of a cell, about two to five micrometres.

Making proteins

'I had never seen anything like it before,' says Deshpande with great enthusiasm. 'It was a microcontainer that we could make in bulk by pipetting substances together.' The actinosomes – as the researchers call the containers – form in five to ten minutes. 'We have worked with microfluidics to achieve the same goal, but that is very tedious. Suddenly there was a simple method for doing the same thing.'

For Ganar, the euphoria came later. 'I got excited when we succeeded in setting off biological reactions in the hollow space of the container.' The chemists tested the 'central dogma in biology', says Ganar: protein synthesis from RNA. 'It is a complex reaction, and especially difficult to achieve *in vitro*. But it worked.' With that, the container constitutes a piece in the puzzle of a larger ambition: to make a synthetic cell. A cell built by humans from a variety of parts, like Lego bricks.

The researchers see several potential applications for the containers: in medical science, for example. 'The interactive membrane of the actinosome makes it interesting for encapsulation purposes,' Deshpande says. 'If we can make even smaller containers, we could package medicines in them and deliver them in a targeted way in the body.' ■



Microscopic image of actinosomes made up of polylysine (green) and actin (red). ◆ Photo Ketan Ganar

THE WOLF AS AMMUNITION

Can the new nature film *Wolf* win over opponents of the iconic animal? Not really, think Wageningen experts.

Text Roelof Kleis

Two weeks ago, animal ecologist Hugh Jansman arranged a special screening of the film *Wolf* for a WUR audience at the Heerenstraat cinema, with the maker of the film Cees van Kempen. A home game for the wolf. 'My spontaneous reaction was: how cool that the wolf is back in the Netherlands,' says cultural geographer Maarten Jacobs a few days later. 'But then again, that's what I thought before seeing the film.' Animal ecologist Jansman is also full of praise. 'The footage Van Kempen has managed to obtain in five years, of an animal that you only get rare glimpses of, is impressive. And he also manages to put together a good story with that footage. It's extraordinarily clever.'

The film draws the viewer into the story of a young wolf who leaves his pack, moves west and settles in the Netherlands. '*Wolf* is a romantic portrayal of a wolf's life,' says Jacobs. 'And it's a success, as far as I am concerned. I got emotionally involved with the wolf as I watched. I think the film can do a lot of good for support for this animal from the average viewer because they can empathize with what it's like to be a wolf.' Jansman agrees. 'But the question, of course, is who is going to see the film,' he says. 'Viewers will undoubtedly gain a better understanding of the wolf, how it lives and what dilemmas the animal faces. But the question is whether opponents of the wolf will go to see the film too. I doubt it, frankly.'

Social conflict

And even if they do see the film, Jacobs doesn't think it will win over opponents of the wolf. He puts that down to the way the wolf has become part of identity politics. 'The wolf has got caught up in existing antagonisms and polarization, such as the conflict between city and countryside, between citizen and farmer. And more generally, the polarization between the elite and the people who feel they no longer belong. For this identity politics and polarization, you need ammunition, fuel to feed the flames of conflict. The wolf is the perfect fuel for the purpose, and that has changed the dynamics. The issue is no longer between support for the wolf or fear of the wolf, but an ongoing social conflict. If opponents of the wolf see the film at all, they will mainly home in on things that fit their viewpoint. After all, that's

'THE WOLF HAS GOT CAUGHT UP IN EXISTING ANTAGONISMS AND POLARIZATION'

A still from the film *Wolf* by Cees van Kempen. ◆ Photo Holland de Film

‘THE FILM COULD DO A LOT OF GOOD FOR WOLF SUPPORT’

what you do when you polarize. You see, the wolf eats deer and wild boar, it’s a predatory animal.’

‘The wolf always comes off badly in fairy tales,’ says Jansman. ‘We fear the unknown. Most people have no idea how dependent we are on nature. The wolf belongs here, it’s as simple as that. If there is one lesson we ecologists have learnt over the past century, it is this: wolves and other large predators are of great importance in maintaining populations of ungulates. In this country, we don’t see that ecological significance at the moment. Partly just because it has not yet been studied, but also because the influence of humans here is far greater than that of the wolf. Research elsewhere does show the effects clearly: the wolf plays a major role in the behaviour of other animals.’

One such effect is shown in the film. Jacobs goes so far as to call it an eye-opener. For fear of the wolf, grazing deer tend to avoid fallen trees. ‘They don’t want to graze there anymore because they don’t have a good view of the surroundings. This fear gives saplings a chance to sprout and grow. The mini-ecosystem around such a fallen tree changes as a result. It is nice that you get an insight like that in story form. That sticks.’ ■

Wolf packs

The first wolf settled in the Netherlands in 2019. And at the last count, according to Hugh Jansman, there were at least 30 wolves. The bulk of them live in four packs: three in the Veluwe and one on the border of Drenthe and Friesland. The largest pack is the one that settled in 2019. Having given birth to pups several years in a row, the pack includes yearlings and consists of more than 10 wolves. In addition to the packs, loners roam around who have settled somewhere to start their own packs, or are about to do so. Balancing out the influx, there have been 11 (investigated) casualties so far. One of these is known to have been shot, while the others were killed by traffic. One wolf was run over, but survived.

Students have their say on resit policy

Students turned up in large numbers for a meeting organized by the Student Council to let them have a say on the proposed resit policy.

On Friday 7 October, in a packed room in Forum, the Student Council discussed the proposed new policy on resits with students. According to that proposal, the number of resits students are allowed per course each year will be reduced from two to one. The Student Staff Council, which includes the Student Council, will vote on the proposal in November. Dean of Education Arnold Bregt and education policy officer Jetske ten Caat were at the meeting to answer questions.
During the session, students voiced their concerns. They pointed for example to the risk of an accumulation of failed courses and 'problem courses' — courses where lots of students require several resits to pass the exams. Even now, those courses can lead to delays in completing the degree, say the students. They therefore think consideration should be given to how to deal with such courses. But the policy-makers hope it won't take students so long to pass courses with the policy change. 'Research shows that a less lenient resit policy reduces the tendency for delays and improves grades,' says policy officer Ten Caat.
Then there are the exceptional circumstances. What if you only need to resit one more course but still have to wait a year? The Student Council thinks special rules are needed for such cases.

Workload for teachers

The main reason for changing the policy is the workload for teachers. It costs them a lot of time and effort to compile and mark multiple resit exams a year. And because the current policy is so lenient, there are quite a few students who don't prepare as well as they could for their resit exams; after all, they can always have another go. That adds to the frustration among teachers, who are already very busy. While most of the students present showed understanding for teachers' frustration and work pressure, there were also concerns about a possible increase in the work pressure for students.

During the session, students voiced their concerns

The students at the meeting gave some suggestions on how to improve the proposed new policy. For example, they would like one of the resit weeks to be available for resitting all courses. Another suggestion was to delay the proposed resit period now scheduled immediately after period 6 by one week to give teachers more time to mark the exam papers and students more time to study.

Evaluation

Afterwards, Dean of Education Bregt concluded that the students had a lot of questions and were quite critical, but they could also understand why the proposal had been made. Ten Caat: 'It is useful to hear what concerns and ideas students have about this complex issue.' Student Council chair Sanne Vermeij: 'The students were willing to listen to the teachers' arguments and point of view, but they were also able to have their say, in particular with regard to exceptional cases, for which clear procedures need to be drawn up. As the Student Council, we represent the students. This evening, we functioned as a bridge between the students and the board.'
The Student Staff Council will soon be organizing another meeting to get input from staff on the proposal. The council will vote on the proposed new resit policy in November. IB

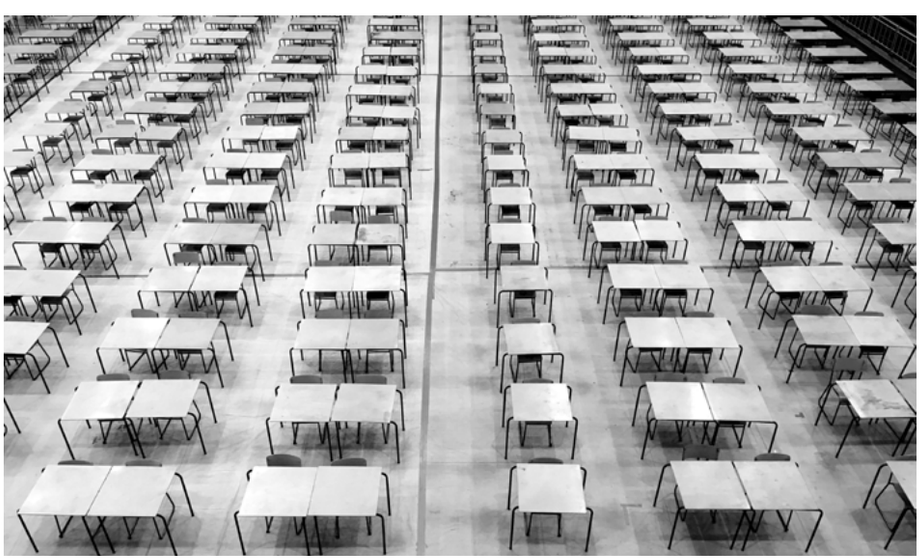


Photo Unsplash / Akshay Chauhan

Flower hunting

In this series, student editor and MSc student of Plant Breeding Julia van der Westhuyzen (photos and text) and professor of Plant Ecology Joop Schaminée (stories) go looking for the loveliest campus flora.

Himalayan blackberry

Common name: Himalayan blackberry
Scientific name: *Rubus armeniacus*
Flowering time: late summer to late autumn
Where to find it on campus: Next to the entrance to Gaia/Lumen

'This blackberry is an exotic, invasive species that was brought to the Netherlands because of its large, sweet fruit. What seems like a single berry is in-fact a bunch of tiny berries. The plant grows into a natural hedge, inside which dead branches and leaves accumulate. A hedge like this is a serious danger during wildfires.
Apart from this exotic blackberry variety, there are around 200 *Rubus* varieties which are native to the Netherlands. Interestingly, only three of these reproduce sexually. The others are what is known as 'apomictic', which means the plant forms seeds without combining DNA from both parents. So the new plant is actually a clone of the mother plant.
For a more detailed look at all the species on offer in the Netherlands, explore the work of Wageningen's Rense Haveman, whose PhD thesis *Concealed Diversity* is available from the Wageningen library (online). In his book, Haveman poses the philosophical question of what makes a species a species.'

The WUR community is home to all the flavours of the world. Stefano Fazzari is an exchange student from Italy. He shares a recipe for pasta al forno.

Flavours of WUR

Pasta al Forno

'Pasta al forno is one of my favourite dishes because it reminds me of Sunday lunch, when all the family is at home enjoying a meal together. This is really a recipe for using up left-overs and you can use anything you've got in your fridge. My mum's version uses minced meat but as I said, any type of sauce works in this pasta dish.'

1. Chop the onion, carrot and celery. Make '*soffrito*' by frying them in a pan.
2. Add the meat, and once cooked, a dash of wine.
3. Once the wine has evaporated, add the tomato puree. Simmer for at least half an hour. Season to taste.
4. Once the sauce is ready, cook the pasta in salted water. Cook the pasta for a shorter time than suggested on the packaging.
5. Drain the pasta and add the sauce and the sliced mozzarella.
6. Put everything in the oven dish with more mozzarella on top and sprinkle with Parmigiano.
7. Put the dish in a pre-heated oven for 5-10 minutes at 180/190°C. Then turn on the grill and grill the dish for another 5 minutes. *Buon appetito!*

Ingredients for one small oven dish (30x20cm)

Pasta
- 500g pasta
- 2 or 3 mozzarella cheeses, sliced
- Grated Parmigiano Reggiano to taste

Sauce
- 500 ml tomato puree
- Half a carrot
- Half a head of celery
- Half an onion
- 200g minced meat
- A dash of olive oil
- A dash of red wine

Stefano Fazzari
an exchange student from Italy

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

THE SIDE JOB

You've got to make ends meet somehow. We can all borrow from Uncle Duo, but there are also students who earn money in unusual ways. In this series, we put some interesting side jobs in the spotlight. This time we meet Robin Bredero (28), a Master's student of Forest and Nature Management, and of Ethnobotany, who earns a living as a Campus Tour Guide. Text Steven Snijders

Robin leads guided tours

Who: Robin Bredero
What: giving guided tours of the campus
Why? the campus is full of interesting things to tell people about
Hourly wage: 20 euros

'A wide variety of groups sign up for a tour, from business partners of the university to government delegations, university alumni or high school students. I once showed staff from the South Korean Ministry of Agriculture around. A tour lasts an hour and the content depends a bit on the group. With business contacts, I mainly focus on the commercial activity on the campus. If they are prospective students, I also tell them about student life. Schoolkids tend to run around and all they really want to do is to eat burgers. The really nice groups are the international guests who have never been to the Netherlands before. I have to work hard to keep those people alive, because they nearly get run over by cyclists all the time.

'Schoolkids tend to run around and all they really want to do is to eat burgers'

'During a tour, I talk about the history of the university, and about current Wageningen issues as well. The sustainability of the campus comes up too. We've got a thermal energy storage system, for instance, in which excess heat is pumped 90 metres underground in summer and brought back up in winter. And there are so many fun facts to tell people about the buildings, such as how the names are related to the architecture or the purpose of the building: Omnia means everything and this building is the big central meeting place, while the building called Lumen has a lot of glass and light. I also talk about mistakes in building designs: Atlas was supposed to be covered in plants, but there was too much of a risk that the plants would damage the concrete. And do you know why the toilets in Leeuwenborch are in such odd places? Because, the story goes, they weren't included in the original building plan.

'As a campus guide, I represent the university. Sometimes I find it hard to keep my personal opinion to myself, especially when people ask for it. Concerning all the companies that are on campus, for example. Personally, I have some reservations about that, but I can still explain why WUR opts to have them here.'

Photo Guy Ackermans

Do you have an unusual side job or know someone else who does? Send an email to steven.snijders@wur.nl

Colophon

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

Editorial staff Willem Andrée (editor-in-chief), Helene Seevinck (managing editor), Roelof Kleis (editor), Ilja Bouwknegt (student editor), Luuk Zegers (editor), Marieke Enter (editor), Stijn Schreven (editor), Coretta Jongeling (online coordinator), Thea Kuijpers (secretariat).
Translations Clare McGregor, Meira van der Spa, Clare Wilkinson
Design Alfred Heikamp, Larissa Mulder
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ADEMA: ‘WORK AND PRIVATE LIFE ARE EASY TO COMBINE’

Piet Adema became the new Minister of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality last week. A great leap forward in his career, given that his previous posts were as acting mayor of Achtkarspelen and chair of Schoonmakend Nederland, the branch association for cleaning and window-cleaning companies.

Resource spoke to Adema after the nitrogen debate in Parliament. Dressed in a sky-blue Oger suit nicely paired with a matching Corneliani tie, he managed to look fabulous even after a heated debate.

Minister Adema, you have four children. How do you plan to combine being a minister with your family?
‘That is a challenge, yes. We have taken on a house-keeper to cook for the children on weekdays and my wife has a day off on Fridays. It will be an adjustment for everyone, but fortunately my children are all grown up so we hope they won’t find this new situation too hard to get used to.’

How does your wife feel about this?
‘She was a bit taken aback at first, because of course I am now the real breadwinner in the house. She will have to take on some of the housework.’

Did you always aim for a career or did you also consider staying at home after the children were born?
‘If I’m honest, my career always came first for me, but it was not easy. My parents pushed me to be at home a lot. They believe fathers should quite simply be there for the children. I am glad that I can talk through these kinds of issues in my men’s support group, which is really empowering.’

You used to be president of the association of the cleaning branch. What have you learnt from that job?
‘I learned there that no matter how much of a mess has been made, it can always be cleaned up with the right tools and enough effort. The whole of the Veluwe is full of nitrogen, but I think we can get it clean again. After that, it is a matter of making sure we absorb the new nitrogen before it is emitted.’