

Resource

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The journalism platform for all at Wageningen University & Research

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What next?

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FOREWORD

Change

Change costs time. That is a recurring theme in this final *Resource* of the academic year. It is evident for example in the interview with Ernst van den Ende, director of the Animal Sciences Group. The group is known for its work in livestock farming and, as Van den Ende acknowledges, is sometimes treated with suspicion as a result. But the greater the tension, the greater the need for a transition and the more important the research, he argues. Go to page 18 to read what he means by that and how 'respect for animals' needs to be prioritized. On page 24, Esha Shah explains that the decolonization of education is an uncomfortable process: 'We need to ask hard questions'. And columnist Joshua Wambugu reflects on the new coffee at WUR in his column. 'It shouldn't take ages due to unnecessary bureaucracy to introduce good quality, sustainable coffee.'

Meanwhile, there has still not been a formal rapprochement with the people behind the demonstration against *Resource* following the article 'We need to talk about China'. On pages 12-15, three Chinese PhD candidates explain the commotion caused by the article. This is followed by an editorial comment on the matter..

With all this change, one constant is that many people will be winding down as the academic year ends, and heading off on vacation. Regardless of any differences of opinion, we wish everyone happy holidays. We will be back with a new issue of *Resource* on 31 August.

Willem Andréé
Editor-in-chief





RAIN DANCE

About one thousand party animals braved the rain for the new Summervibes campus festival on 22 June. On stage were Kenny B, Jazzalike and the MiniCulture DJs, among others. Festival goers could also enjoy food trucks and a swing ride. Unfortunately, the persistent rain put paid to any lounging about in the grass. Co-organizer Chris van Kreij hopes it will be sunnier next year. 'I reckon we've had enough rain for the next ten editions.' CJ

Photo Sven Menschel

Agriculture talks collapse – what now?

Hopes for an Agriculture Agreement were dashed last week when the Dutch Agricultural and Horticultural Association LTO withdrew from negotiations. A recent Wageningen essay on agriculture offers suggestions for a way forward.

Wageningen agricultural expert Roel Jongeneel was closely involved in the efforts to bring about the Agriculture Agreement. He is a member of the so-called Reflection Group, who provided scientific input and reflection on the agreement. The group also

investigated the economic prospects of various possible solutions in the Agriculture Agreement on a number of occasions. In addition, Jongeneel was involved in the assessment WUR was asked to give of the draft agreement, estimating the effectiveness of the arrangements (see WUR.nl for more on this topic).

‘The parties have managed to move beyond the polarization’

Jongeneel thinks it is a pity the negotiations collapsed. ‘Although it

was clear beforehand this was a virtually impossible task,’ he says. According to him, it is so difficult partly because of the huge interests at stake, especially in the agricultural sector. He also suspects administrative ambiguities played a role. Although there is no sign of the hoped for Agriculture Agreement, Jongeneel is still positive about the process during the past few months. ‘The parties involved have managed to move beyond the polarization. That has brought big benefits, including a better feeling on both sides for the bottlenecks and possible solutions.’

It is not clear to Jongeneel either what will happen next. Perhaps the next stage will include the area-specific and farm-specific solutions set out in a recent essay he wrote together with Wim de Vries, Martin van Ittersum and Gerard Ros, sketching a new future for Dutch agriculture. ‘Both the farming organizations and the minister told us they have read the essay and they see interesting leads,’ says Jongeneel. ME



Photo Thomas Konings / Unsplash

Rectification

No 18

In the article ‘New perspective thanks to slavery tourism’ in Resource #18, the position of cultural geographer Emmanuel Akwasi Adu-Ampong was incorrectly translated in the print edition as ‘university lecturer’. Akwasi Adu-Ampong is an assistant professor.

Thesis of the Year on photosynthesis

Student Dana Verhoeven won the Thesis of the Year Award for her research on photosynthesis. She received the prize on 20 June.

According to the jury, her research on the light-absorbing mechanisms during photosynthesis in the leaves of plants is ‘dogma defying’. Why? Verhoeven: ‘During the day, light contains all the colours of the spectrum but there is more far-red light (just before infrared, ed.) as the sun sets and in the shade. Plants use various tricks to adapt and absorb the different light colours. My thesis was about that adaptation mechanism. It is not known how that works exactly at the molecular level, but there are hypotheses. My research shows that certain common hypotheses are not correct.’

Verhoeven exposed plants to blue and far-red light. In a ten-minute period, the plants adapt in order to be able to better absorb the new colour. When adapting to changing light conditions, a protein travels back and forth between two ‘photosystems’ in the plant cell to create the ideal balance for photosynthesis. ‘We don’t know how that protein moves between the two photosystems,’ says Verhoeven. ‘One hypothesis is that the protein breaks down in one place and then moves. Another hypothesis is that the whole organization in the chloroplast changes during adaptation. I have shown that at any rate does not happen.’ LZ

128

On 19 June, 11 WUR employees from the Meteorology and Air Quality group cycled 128 kilometres of the 375-kilometre Climate Classic route. The route runs from Breda to Groningen along what is known as the NAP line: that is where the Dutch coastline would be without human measures such as dykes and pumping stations. The WUR team cycled from Brabant Delta Water Authority in Breda to the Royal Dutch Meteorological Institute in De Bilt. DU

Run on basic grant ▼

Students and future first-years have applied *en masse* for the new basic grant, says the Education Executive Agency DUO.

Students recently became able to apply to funding organization DUO for the new grant. DUO has promised that if they apply before 1 September, they will get their first payment in September. Tens of thousands of current and prospective students therefore applied as soon as they could after the application procedure opened.

DUO has started a campaign with the slogan 'Your basis, your grant' to inform students about the changes. From September, students can get 110 euros per month if they live with their parents and 275 euros if they live on their own. The latter group will get an extra 164 euros next academic year to compensate for inflation. HOP

Teacher of the Year: Ignas Heitkönig



The winner with the other nominees and the jury • Photo Resource

Wildlife Ecology and Conservation assistant professor Ignas Heitkönig has won the Teacher of the Year (TOTY) award. The jury says he is 'authentic' and able to make abstract ideas comprehensible through his creative teaching methods.

The result was announced in Impulse on Tuesday 20 June. At that point, five teachers were still in the race for the prize. The TOTY jury praised Heitkönig for his 'student-centred approach' in

which he encourages students to adopt leadership roles and gives them the confidence they can do that. 'Ignas's passion for teaching and science is contagious. But the most important element of his teaching is his love of nature.' When accepting the award, Heitkönig spoke on behalf of all five nominees: 'We think winning any teaching award, including the Teacher of the Year, is only possible through the support of everyone at the university!' He asked the audience

to think for a moment of 'all the others who at the very least deserve a part of this prize', from teaching assistants to technicians and from the receptionists to library staff.

Nature conservation

Heitkönig dedicated the prize to the Future for Nature Academy. 'Wild mammals account for barely three per cent of all mammals on the planet; livestock, humans and pets make up 97 per cent. We started the Future for Nature Academy to get young students involved in nature conservation science and nature conservation in general!' The new Teacher of the Year will donate the prize money to the Wageningen branch of Scientists4Future, which he helped establish. 'The money will let us work on our objectives on and off campus.' LZ

In addition to the Teacher of the Year Award, the Excellent Education Prizes were handed out. To find out who won, see www.resource-online.nl



White and grey

Every year, mute swans brood on campus. This year they have produced eight cygnets: two white ones and six grey ones. The colour of their feathers is determined by a single gene, with grey dominant over white. As the white cygnets grow older, the parents see them as intruders and chase them off, sometimes even killing them. Grey cygnets (which eventually turn white too) stay with their parents but have to wait longer before they can reproduce. So you need to hurry if you want to see the complete family. (With thanks to ecologist Jente Ottenburghs.) Photo Resource

New Marine Sciences BSc is popular

Some 90 students are due to start the new Bachelor's degree next September. Marine Sciences is the first Bachelor's programme in the Netherlands to focus on the broad marine domain. The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) gave permission for the programme in January. Marine Sciences programme director Karen Fortuin: 'Applications poured in as soon as registration opened last March.'

Although not everyone who applies to be registered will start in September. Dutch candidates first have to pass their school exams. Also, some students enrol for more than one programme and only make a final decision later. Based on what usually happens with other degree programmes, Fortuin expects about 90 students in the first cohort, with 75 per cent from the Netherlands, 20 per cent from Europe and 5 per cent from the rest of the world. The people behind the new degree programme were originally hoping for 50 students. 'The level of interest shows what a good idea it was to set up this degree,' says Fortuin. LZ

Read more at resource-online.nl

'The damage is huge, but we saved the biobank'

A short circuit led to a power cut in Helix last Friday. Urgent action had to be taken to rescue the frozen research material. 'Staff formed human chains throughout the building in the middle of the night to get the samples to safety as efficiently as possible.'

Much of the material used by the Nutrition Science cluster is kept in the freezer in Helix at a temperature of -80 degrees

'On Saturday evening, staff brought samples to the freezer container in the car park'

Celsius. 'This biobank contains samples collected during numerous long-term scientific studies,' explains Sander Kersten, head of the Human Nutrition & Health department. The material is worth tens of millions of euros. 'One of my colleagues said, "If the contents of the biobank go, you might as well abolish my chair group". Samples

of entire cohorts are stored there. If they were to be lost, the damage would be inconceivable.'

Human chains

'We called up staff in the weekend,' explains Kersten. 'They spent Saturday evening rapidly transferring samples in human chains from the biobank on the first floor of Helix to the freezer container in the car park.' After midnight, they were able to get the biobank's cooling system working on power from the emergency generator. 'We decided then not to continue moving the samples. So about half are still in the biobank. The other half are in the freezer container. We won't be disturbing

them for the time being because we want to keep the temperature stable in the cooling systems.'

Impact

The damage is huge but it could have been a lot worse, says Kersten. 'Unfortunately we were not able to rescue everything by a long way, but we did save the biobank, which we're very relieved about.'

The full impact can only be assessed once Helix opens again properly. Then the biobank samples can be returned to where they belong as well. 'Fortunately we took great care and used a system when transferring everything on Saturday.' DV

How fungi discriminate

Different cultures of the same fungus fight one another, which is a problem for growers, says geneticist Ben Auxier.

He discovered one of the genes that play a role in the recognition of another fungus as 'non-self'. This opens up possibilities for a solution. Auxier, a researcher in the Laboratory of Genetics, recently obtained his doctorate with distinction for this work. 'When we started the project, we didn't know which genes would be involved in that recognition,' says Auxier. Working with the Mushroom Research group, he tracked down the gene by crossing fungal spores with the parent fungus in sexual reproduction. 'So a kind of inbreeding,' he explains. Repeating this a number of times produced offspring that are genetically highly similar to the parent but are still recognised as different by the parent.

'When we started the project, we didn't know which genes would be involved in recognition'

'We compared the genetic make-up of those individuals and were able to identify the gene in the small section of the genome where there were differences.' The

'recognition gene' looks like known 'NLR genes' that are found in other organisms and are related to immunity. Auxier: 'In other words, reacting to individuals that are different to you. A crucial difference is that our gene is divided into three parts on the genome, while in other organisms the gene is a single whole.'

Knowledge of how the recognition mechanism works opens up new possibilities in fungi breeding. Auxier: 'In a breeding programme, you could select individuals that have the same recognition genes but differ in their growth properties. They would then be compatible, meaning you can mix them. But we're not that far yet.' RK



Photo Shutterstock

Fast learners are slow to unlearn

Learning is essential to survival. But you also need to be able to alter the behaviour you learned when the conditions change. PhD candidate Krista van den Heuvel has shed some light on how that works with her research on the cognitive flexibility of great tits.

Cognitive flexibility is essentially the ability to relearn something, says Van den Heuvel. The official term is 'reversal learning'. Ordinary (associative) learning means learning and then not forgetting. Reversal learning involves unlearning and applying new knowledge. An example is birds' feeding behaviour with a bird table in the garden. 'If you put out food every day and then suddenly stop, how long does it take the birds to figure that out? That is reversal learning.'

Van den Heuvel developed a test using bird feeders to assess the reversal learning skills of great tits. The great tit can choose from three feeders with freeze-dried mealworms, but only one is open. Van den Heuvel: 'First the bird learns which feeder is open. Then the feeder closes and another one opens, and the reversal learning process starts.'

There are big differences between individual tits in their ability to

adapt. But strangely enough, hereditary traits don't play a role. That is evident from experiments with different generations of tits. The offspring of birds that are fast reversal learners are no different in terms of learning capacity from the offspring of slow learners. Van den Heuvel has an explanation for this. 'I think cognitive flexibility has various components, each of which is genetically determined, but they offset one another.'

Mystery

There were other surprising results from the experiments too. Fast learners turned out to be slower at reversal learning, and vice versa. 'If you are quick to learn a preference, it is harder to unlearn that behaviour,' explains Van den Heuvel. 'If you learn something slowly, you get experience with negative rewards and disappointment. Reversal learning is a tricky phenomenon to study, but I've shed a little light on the mystery.' RK

[Live&Learn]

A botched experiment, a rejected paper: such things are soon labelled failures. As for talking about them — not the done thing! But that is just what WUR scientists do in this column. Because failure has its uses. This time, we hear from Jente Ottenburghs, a lecturer at Wildlife Ecology & Conservation and Forest Ecology & Forest Management.

Text Nicole van 't Wout Hofland • Illustration Stijn Schreven

'I can laugh now about my moment of failure as a Bachelor's student. When I was in Belgium researching flatworms, after one experiment I somehow ended up with the DNA of a cow. My supervisor and I couldn't work it out.

There I was, a newbie in the lab, ready for my first independent study. My aim was to map the genetic diversity of flatworms in Doñana in Spain. The first step was to isolate DNA from flatworms. Then I used the PCR technique to replicate a piece of DNA to confirm whether the isolation process had been successful. I made sure I had a negative control: water instead of a sample. To my surprise, I also got a result from the negative control. I knew experiments could fail, but a failure with this simple technique...?

If I couldn't even manage this, how was I supposed to do the more complicated experiments? I repeated the in a sterile environment to avoid contamination. It made no difference: the control still contained DNA. When we analysed it, the DNA turned out to be from a cow.

The penny dropped later when my supervisor opened the fridge in the lab. There were the materials for my experiment: buffers, enzymes, and cow's liver to feed the worms. That cow's liver had probably contaminated our materials.

'If I couldn't even manage this, how could I do more complicated experiments?'

Because we were looking for a gene in the DNA that is found in all animals, we were replicating not only DNA from flatworms but also from cows. I was able to continue with my research after that, using fresh materials. After all that effort, it turned out that there wasn't any genetic diversity in flatworms in Doñana, as far as we could tell. Even so, my Bachelor's thesis was useful. It showed once again how important it is in any experiment, whether large or small, to have the right control'



More sustainable food by thinking about 'spreadability'

Anouk Lie-Piang, who recently received a PhD in the Food Process Engineering group, developed a model for predicting how 'enriched ingredients' influence the structure of food products.

Most food products consist of multiple ingredients. These ingredients are necessary to give the final product the desired shelf life, flavour or texture. They are usually made from agricultural crops such as wheat and soya beans. During the production process, the crop is split into pure ingredients known as isolates. Examples are wheat flour and soya protein.

Lie-Piang: 'If you buy a bag of isolates, you always get exactly the same standardized product. That makes them an attractive option for the food industry to use in recipes.' The disadvantage of isolates is that lots of resources — such as water, chemicals and energy — are needed to produce these pure isolates.

Backwards

Lie-Piang studied slightly less pure enriched ingredients, which contain several components. They are more sustainable because they undergo fewer fractioning processes, but they are harder to use for the food industry because the end result is less standardized.

She developed a method whereby product developers can screen enriched ingredients to determine their functionality. 'If you can predict the functionality of such ingredients, and see for example what the resulting 'spreadability' or 'gel structure' will be, you can use them in food products just like isolates,' explains Lie-Piang. Product developers can use the model to work backwards, as it were. 'You have a particular product in mind and based on that, you figure out which ingredients you need and in what concentrations. Less pure ingredients are often just as effective, and you can achieve the same functionality using a different approach. The end product is then almost the same, but the production is more sustainable.' DV

Inclusive education: less tension with intercultural knowledge

Increasing diversity in vocational secondary education (MBO) is leading to value-driven tensions that teachers can't always deal with. This finding comes from PhD research by Kennedy Tielman (Education & Learning Sciences).

Tielman has worked for years as a teacher trainer at Fontys University of Applied Sciences. He sees many teachers struggling with inclusion. They feel tension whenever 'difficult topics' are addressed in their multicultural classes, such as sexuality, politics or religion. Discussions sometimes get so heated that teachers prefer to avoid certain topics altogether, says Tielman. His research focuses on vocational secondary education, but he doesn't rule out parallels with higher education.

Teacher training

Cultural diversity has increased rapidly in MBO schools in recent years. In some cities, 80 per cent of students have a multicultural background. That

'Teachers who are prepared to consider behaviour from various perspectives experience less tension'

means teachers not only have to be good as teaching their subject but also need to be able to manage a culturally diverse class. That is not an easy task, especially because there are now so many aspects to cultural diversity. 'You don't just need to take someone's cultural background into account, but also whether they are a first-, second- or third-generation migrant,'

explains Tielman. 'That is why people sometimes talk about superdiversity'. For his research, he surveyed 900 teachers in 20 MBO schools where at least 60 per cent of the pupils have a migration background. Half of the teachers reported experiencing value-driven tension at times, and 13 per cent felt this regularly. Tielman found a clear link between knowledge and tension: the more multicultural knowledge a teacher has, the more relaxed they feel. 'If you know a student doesn't make eye contact for cultural reasons, you can still say, "I prefer it if you look at me". But as a teacher you feel less tension if you know the reason for that behaviour.' Tielman therefore thinks the teacher training programmes should pay more attention to multicultural knowledge. Tielman also found another association: the higher a teacher rated their own multicultural skills, the more



Photo Sam-Balye / Unsplash

tension they reported. That might seem surprising, but Tielman doesn't think so. 'As people become more skilled in multicultural matters, they are more likely to recognize areas of tension. Also, such skilled teachers are more likely to be allocated the "difficult" classes.'

Best intentions

He is convinced nearly all teachers stand in front of the class with the best intentions. He doesn't think they do many things wrong either. 'But there are things they could do better.' In addition to multicultural knowledge, he sees an open, inquiring mind as a key factor. 'That doesn't mean you shouldn't set limits as a teacher. But talk to your students, show curiosity about their reasoning. Teachers who are prepared to consider behaviour from various perspectives experience less tension.'

Best intentions

ME

Cum laude for cell factory builder

Biotechnologists can alter bacteria in ways that allow industrially useful compounds to be produced sustainably. Lyon Bruinsma obtained a doctorate with distinction for his attempts to modify the metabolism of *Pseudomonas putida*. The method he used is called growth-coupled selection.

The title of his thesis is *Restoring Life*; the cover illustration refers to *The Creation of Adam* in the Sistine Chapel. 'I restore the life of bacteria,' says Bruinsma, explaining the cover. 'First I remove life by disabling part of the metabolism, and then I restore it by inserting different DNA so they can grow again. Growth is the selection criterion.'

One of the successful interventions in his study was to have the bacterium

run entirely on what is known as the shikimate pathway. The cell uses that route to make the aromatic amino

'Metabolic pathways are often assumed to be very stable'

'But the yields are low,' says Bruinsma, 'as production is regulated rigidly in the cell. That's a shame, because in principle this pathway will let you make hundreds of high-grade products.'

Perfume

Bruinsma developed a strain of bacteria that processes 90 per cent of the carbon in the food (glycerol) using the shikimate pathway. That makes it a

acids
tyrosine,
tryptophan and
phenylalanine.

promising vehicle for making aromatic products. Another success was the development of a bacterial strain that makes anisole from phenol. Anisole is used in the production of perfumes and medicines.

Previously, anisole could only be made using chemical processes. Now, Bruinsma has made it using natural processes. The enzyme he used comes from basil. 'Metabolic pathways are often assumed to be very stable,' says Bruinsma. 'An enzyme turns substance A into substance B. But you can easily modify it to turn substance C into substance D. You can exploit that promiscuity of enzymes.'

THE PROPOSITION

PhD candidates explain the most thought-provoking proposition in their thesis. This time it's Janneke Elzinga, who received her PhD in microbiology on 31 May. She investigated the modelling of host-microbe interactions in the intestinal mucus layer *in vitro*.



'Adding extra flavour to peanut butter requires very special grounds'

'You can find numerous peanut butter flavours on the market, but most of the flavour combinations fail to create a more satisfying blend than the original taste. I use peanut butter as a metaphor for fundamental science. Scientists increasingly add buzzwords to their paper title or link their proposals to current trends to attract attention and increase the chances of getting a grant. For example, when COVID hit, scientists from different fields tried to incorporate COVID into their research, even if it was outside their area of expertise. And I've seen fellow researchers try to integrate the hot topic AI into their study, even though it's a

completely different field that doesn't fit with their research.

Before incorporating a trendy element, scientists should ask themselves whether they possess the necessary knowledge in that field, and whether these subjects can genuinely complement each other. Which peanut butter flavour do I like most? Well, I particularly enjoy cucumber and apple flavours as they can truly enhance the original taste of the peanut butter. Whereas I am not a big fan of chocolate sprinkle flavour. Both peanut butter and chocolate sprinkles are already fine on their own. When combined, their flavours tend to detract from one another.'

Coffee bureaucracy



Joshua Wambugu

WUR aims to provide its staff and students with good, sustainable surroundings so that they can excel in their studies and work. Sometimes the changes needed to achieve this are immediate, but others take ages. While WUR advocates for an inclusive process, offering its constituents opportunities to contribute ideas, suggestions and criticisms, in practice the process is full of bureaucratic hardliners.

A good example is the coffee vending machines. Unlike in the office buildings, there are different coffee vending machines in the education buildings dispensing coffee and other beverages of varying quality in single-use plastic cups. Over five years ago, during my tenure in the Student Council, S&I and the Green Office had a continuous campaign to reduce single-use plastic on campus. The

‘It shouldn't take ages due to unnecessary bureaucracy to introduce good quality, sustainable coffee’

The campaign involved engaging staff from different departments and units. The process was tedious and filled with hardliners. Often, supplier contracts were cited as the barrier in changing the vending machines. Suppliers were equally reluctant to provide data on the amount of single-use plastic cups supplied in education buildings, asking questions like ‘What do you need these data for?’

vending machines are among the main sources of single-use plastic waste, and the campaign aimed at having the same machines in all WUR buildings.

The worst was being barred from a working committee because it would have been a struggle for the committee to shift from Dutch to English. At the end of my council year, the only promise that was made was that changes in the contract would be considered in the following year. Unfortunately, this never happened, and it has taken five years to hear good news about the new coffee vending machines. While this effort took too long, we can still celebrate the rapid introduction of the Billie Cup that evolved from the KeepCup campaign, and an extensive single-use plastic survey that saw over 700 responses, with the majority in favour of eliminating single-use plastic on campus. This was thanks to the WUR Sustainability Committee, made up of individuals who are actively committed to a sustainable campus.

We can all agree that everyone needs good coffee or their own choice of beverage to refresh or re-energize. However, the process for getting good quality, sustainable coffee — or changes to ensure a fair and inclusive WUR — shouldn't take ages due to unnecessary bureaucracy or hardliners.

Joshua Wambugu (40), from Kenya, is a PhD candidate in the Marine Animal Ecology and Environmental Policy groups. He is a Social Safety Guide with the DARE Project and a member of the project's coordinating team. He loves cooking, hiking and birdwatching.

Chinese PhD candidates have their say:

‘IT FEELS LIKE THERE IS AN INSTITUTIONAL BIAS AGAINST US’

The *Resource* article ‘We need to talk about China’ prompted a lot of criticism, especially from the WUR Chinese community. *Resource* spoke to three Chinese PhD candidates about the article and the reactions. Text Roelof Kleis • Photo *Resource*

In the article (*Resource* #16), the graduate schools express concerns about the collaboration with China. The article caused widespread anger and led to demonstrations and a petition demanding an apology from *Resource*. That demand is preventing a rapprochement (see the editorial comment on page 15). However, three Chinese PhD candidates were prepared to be interviewed. Two approached the editorial board spontaneously and a third accepted our invitation.

Business model

They talked to us on condition of anonymity. Li, Zhou and Zhang (not their real names) say they cannot allow their identities to be known. ‘You don’t know what words will be seen as offensive by the Chinese authorities,’ explains Li. ‘The regime has become a lot stricter in recent years.’ Even so, he wants to let his voice be heard. ‘I have read a lot of comments about the article and most were very negative. I want to make it clear that not all Chinese PhD candidates have this attitude. I too think the article is one-sided and lacks information from the Chinese PhD students themselves, but that doesn’t

mean the article is wrong.’

Zhou is even pleased in some sense that the article was published, he says. ‘It addresses important issues. But the article links too many topics together. The structure isn’t good and as a result it creates the impression that Chinese PhD students are a nuisance and only cause problems.’

Zhang agrees. ‘The real subject of the article, as I now understand from you, is WUR’s business model, which exploits scholarship PhD students. But then the article goes off on a tangent and people are quoted saying negative things about Chinese PhD students, for example that we don’t have any social or academic freedom. But there are no quotes from the PhD candidates themselves. That makes the article one-sided. Also, the quotes that are used are discriminatory. It is insulting and unfair to say I’m

misusing Dutch tax money to pay for my education. As a group, we Chinese are turned into scapegoats. That’s how I see the article.’

Racist

‘The article only mentions Chinese PhD candidates, not candidates from other countries,’ says Li to explain the criticism. ‘The Chinese community wonders why that is. What is behind it? That is why the article is being called racist. I read in WeChat (the Chinese WhatsApp, ed.) that some people think the *Resource* editors are being made to write this. Some Chinese people don’t understand the concept of a free press

‘WE DON’T DESERVE TO BE VIEWED SO NEGATIVELY’

‘I ACCEPT THAT I EARN A LOT LESS’

‘BEFORE I CAME TO WAGENINGEN, I DIDN’T KNOW WHAT THE WORLD WAS LIKE OUTSIDE CHINA’

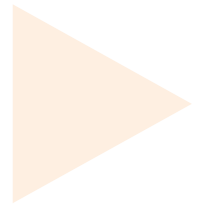
here. In China, the media is influenced by the people in charge and you can’t just publish whatever you want.’ Dutch universities also have independent media that report on the university. ‘But *Resource* belongs to WUR, doesn’t it?’ adds Zhang. ‘WUR tries to project an image of an inclusive and international organization. This article doesn’t help that image. It feels as if there’s an institutional bias against the Chinese. If the organization thinks an article with the title “We need to talk about China”

is acceptable, then there’s something wrong with the organization.’ According to Zhou, much of the resistance to the article can be explained by Chinese culture. ‘China is not a democracy like you have in the West. Nationalism is the central ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. China, the Chinese government and the Chinese people are ideologically intertwined and inseparable. This nationalism is an essential part of your upbringing in China, from primary school to university.

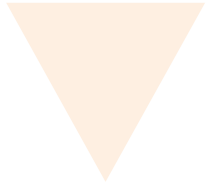
Ideology is a powerful weapon. If someone says something negative about China, all Chinese people feel they have been attacked. That is not a coordinated response; it’s a reflex because that is how you grew up.’

Culture shock

‘Before I came to Wageningen, I didn’t know what the world was like outside China,’ says Li. ‘To be honest, we were indoctrinated in China. That starts at primary school. The Chinese Communist Party is fantastic, China is fantastic and the rest of the world is dangerous and bad. We are influenced to protect our



Banners in response to the article in *Resource* • Photo *Resource*



country, our government and the leader of the CCP. Coming to Wageningen was a culture shock for me and it has helped me to understand the world outside China.’ Li says his view of the world has changed, but he finds it difficult to talk to Chinese friends about this. ‘They see it differently and their view of China and the world is fixed.’ When asked whether that is a lack of freedom, Li answers cautiously: ‘Everyone is different; they have their own standards and values, which are fixed. It’s not for me to judge them and say whether that’s good or bad. They don’t think they are not free to think what they want. I feel that is what is behind the conflict with *Resource*. It’s difficult.’

A lot of the criticism from the Chinese community concerns what the article says about the lack of academic freedom for Chinese PhD candidates. That lack of freedom definitely exists, says Zhou. ‘But whether you encounter it depends a lot on your field. The article isn’t specific enough. That lack of academic freedom isn’t an issue in the natural sciences, but it plays a role if you study social problems and question the policy of the Chinese authorities, especially if your conclusions are negative. I recently showed a Chinese friend a paper I had written. His response was: “Are you really going to publish that?” I am — my supervisor takes a really strict line on that. But it could indeed harm my academic career in China.’



Demonstration in response to the article in *Resource* • Photo *Resource*

‘IF SOMEONE SAYS SOMETHING NEGATIVE ABOUT CHINA, ALL CHINESE PEOPLE FEEL THEY HAVE BEEN ATTACKED’

‘AS A GROUP, WE CHINESE ARE TURNED INTO SCAPEGOATS. THAT’S HOW WE SEE THE ARTICLE’

Zhou is cautious in the use of WeChat too. ‘You need apps like WeChat to keep in touch with family and friends back home. But the apps are monitored by the Chinese government, so it’s better not to talk about sensitive topics. That also applies to files you store in the free cloud of the Chinese search engine Baidu. Baidu scans the files automatically. If they contain sensitive things, you are not allowed to use them. These are things I have experienced.’

Despite his criticisms, Zhou is pleased the article has raised issues such as the underpaid scholarship PhD students and how this is linked to WUR’s business

model. He sees the academic business model — and therefore WUR’s too — as a so-called Ponzi (pyramid, RK) scheme. ‘The normal market mechanism is based on supply and demand, on costs and benefits. Society makes money available for research that is meaningful. You can then appoint PhD candidates for that

COMMENT

research. But that money isn't available for a lot of research, so cheap labour is recruited in the form of scholarship PhD students. After they get their PhD and are appointed to an academic position, they in turn recruit more scholarship PhD students. That's a pyramid scheme. And it is institutionalized in the Tenure Track system. If you want to get promoted, you need to supervise a lot of PhD students. I recently read a WUR job ad for an assistant professor where one of the requirements was that you should be able to attract PhD candidates. That says it all.'

Salary

Li is less concerned by the fact that scholarship PhD students are underpaid. 'I accept that I earn a lot less than my colleagues who are WUR employees. I don't find it unfair either. After all, I signed up for it. For Chinese students, a scholarship from the China Scholarship Council is a good opportunity to experience the world beyond China. Internet in China is blocked, which means outside information is limited.' 'When converted into Chinese currency, scholarship PhD students don't have a particularly low salary at all,' says Zhang. 'If it isn't enough to live on despite this, the university should help out. After all, WUR gets a lot in return with our papers and our research. We don't deserve to be viewed so negatively.' 'I really wanted to go abroad,' says Li. 'I worked hard to get my scholarship. The Chinese government pays me. They don't pay the bench fee though. My chair group pays it, and receives a bonus from the Dutch government after I get my PhD. So we both benefit. Is that wrong? I appreciate the fact that the article raises this issue but I would think it a real shame if this were to disrupt the collaboration between WUR and China. For scholarship PhD students, the collaboration is a good opportunity to see the world outside China.' ■

The article 'We need to talk about China' (*Resource #16*) sparked off a barrage of complaints. It led to two demonstrations and a petition that was signed 773 times. The petition demands an apology and the retraction of the article. *Until these demands are met, the demonstrators do not see any point in talking to Resource.*

Of course we cannot fail to be affected by the anger and sorrow. But from a journalistic perspective, the editors see no reason to apologize for the publication of the story or to retract the article.

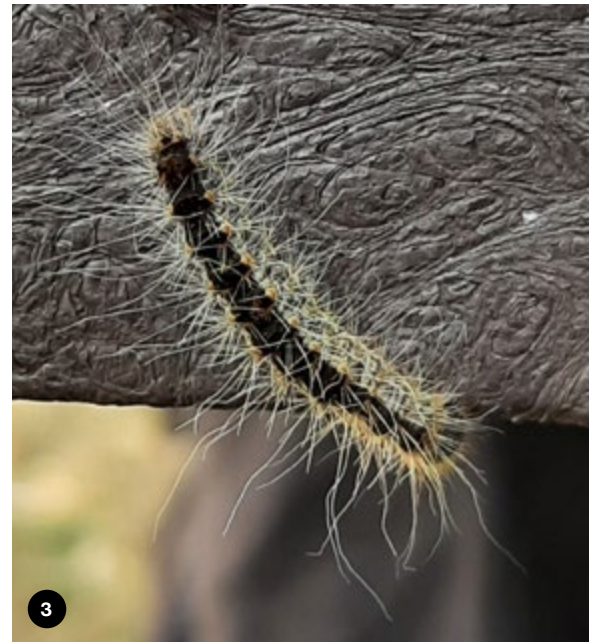
The article was based on reliable sources, and no factual inaccuracies have been demonstrated. That many people were unhappy with the content and tone of the article cannot and must not be a reason for the editors to back down. The issues raised in the article are too important for that. But unfortunately, they have been lost sight of in all the commotion. There is still no discussion about the substance. Perhaps that is *because* of the commotion, which is putting people off commenting (at least in public). That may be why the Wageningen Graduate Schools (WGS) — which produced the internal evaluation the story is based on — have yet to respond six weeks after the publication of the article. The rector too has yet to say anything about the WGS evaluation, although he was prepared to criticize the tone of the *Resource* article ('one-sided, generalizing and discriminatory') and its impact on the Chinese community.

We will be talking to the Editorial Council, to which two formal complaints have been made. To be continued, in other words. It is good that the holiday season is due to start — time for reflection.

The *Resource* editors



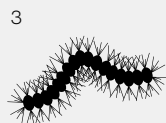
Read the article "We need to talk about China" from *Resource* #16.



1
Hungarian vetch
(Vicia pannonica)
 The 2023 BioBlitz revealed 28 rare plants including this Hungarian vetch, which Martijn van Sluijs found on Kielekampsteeg.



2
Grey heron
(Ardea cinerea)
 It is a typically Dutch scene: a heron next to some water. Nina Fatouros took the photo at the Zodiac pond.



3
Oak processionary caterpillar
(Thaumetopoea processionea)
 Some species we'd rather not have, but this caterpillar still counts. Photo 'Roghorst'.



4
Common blue
(Polyommatus icarus)
 The list includes 18 butterflies, with this one spotted by no fewer than 89 people. This photo by Roel Hoekstra is from the small pond next to Lumen.



5
Firebug
(Phyrrcoris apterus)
 The firebug is a species that is easy to recognize. This one was spotted by 'Jolijn' near Vitae.



6
Dark whiteface
(Lheucorrhinia albiufrons)
 The search has turned up five extremely rare species, one of which is this dragonfly. The spotter is keeping the location a secret. Photo 'anonymous'



ALL EYES AND EARS

The campus looks greener and more luxuriant than ever this summer. And that is reflected in the 2023 BioBlitz. Students and staff have counted almost 1200 species. We highlight ten of them in this spread.

Open search on 1 July

To celebrate WUR's 105th anniversary, on Saturday 1 July the university will open up the campus to everyone in Wageningen to roam around and discover biodiversity for themselves. There will be excursions focusing on insects, birds, plants, aquatic species, green roofs, a sustainable campus, soil life, tropical crops, food forests, macro photography and gardening. See the QR code for the programme.



Field speedwell
(Veronica persica)
WUR's satellite locations also joined the search. Marianne Noordam found this lovely flower at the Greenhouse Horticulture site in Bleiswijk.



Common chicory
(Cichorium intybus)
The bright-blue flower is easily spotted and is found in large numbers. 'Sander' took this photo on Droevendaalsesteeg.



Hedgehog
(Erinaceus europaeus)
Dassenbos means 'badger wood' but it doesn't actually have any badgers. However, it does have hedgehogs, like this one spotted by Gijs Koomen.



Clorismia ardea
Some species have to make do with their scientific name. That includes this fly, a member of the *Therevidae* family. It was seen near the Lumen pond by Ties Kemme.

Animal Sciences Group (ASG)

Respect for animals is key

Ernst van den Ende switched from Plant Sciences to Animal Sciences over one year ago. His new field of work is rather more sensitive and controversial, as illustrated last year when a protest by meat-lovers at the vegetarian AID barbecue caused a fuss. But enough has been said on that subject. It is time to consider the other dilemmas facing the Animal Sciences Group (ASG) and its new director, and see what the future has in store. Text Willem Andrée & Marieke Enter

‘Do you know what question I got asked most after moving to ASG?’ says Van den Ende at the end of the interview with *Resource*. ‘What I would be doing with my shirts.’ As the director of the Plant Sciences Group, he was known for wearing shirts with botanical prints. He has them in all kinds of variants: with flowers, leaves, trees, tendrils — you name it. He still wears them in his new job. ‘I can’t really imagine myself walking around in a shirt with cow or pig patterns. Although I do now have a nice one with shells on it,’ he laughs. So his wardrobe does reflect his new field of work a little. But enough small talk. Van den Ende has plenty to say about more serious topics too. Because perhaps more than any other WUR domain, Animal Sciences is a field in flux with changing ethical perspectives and fierce public debates. From nitrogen to bird flu, from lab animals to barn fires, from having the North Sea full of wind turbines to using artificial intelligence on farms, ASG has to deal with these issues and the associated dilemmas every day. Van den Ende has been in his new

job as director for some 18 months now. Before then, he was already involved in certain animal-related affairs as a member of the Wageningen Management Board. For example, he addressed the Farmers Defence Force when the campaign group turned up on campus demanding answers. Time to talk about the topics that have defined his role at ASG to date.

Reputation

‘The Animal Sciences Group is mainly known for its work for and on livestock farming. I know some people within WUR and elsewhere see that as suspicious. Staff sometimes feel that they have to justify the fact that they work here. That makes me uncomfortable. The way I see it, the greater the tension, the greater the need for a transition and the more important our research is. Also, the people at ASG are much keener on change than they

‘In the Netherlands, we are quite capable of making the transition to new kinds of agriculture’



'In my opinion, respect for animals in pig farming means no more tail docking, for instance. But how do you then deal with the underlying problem of tail biting? To resolve this problem, you need both a profound understanding of the function and behaviour of the animals and knowledge of the various pig farming systems.' • Photo unsplash/diegosan

get given credit for. It really is an image thing. So we should be more proactive in telling other people what it is we do, what we want to do, why that matters and what we see as the future for animals and animal systems.'

Ambition

'I want ASG to be recognized as a partner for animal-friendly, sustainable livestock farming. And as an expert in the function and behaviour of animals – not just farm animals but also animals in ecosystems. That is already the case for marine ecosystem management and biodiversity, where Marine Research is doing inspiring and relevant work. I have a similar role in mind for ecosystems on land, as our expertise in animals is also hugely valuable in that context. In addition, ASG knows a lot about what happens in human-animal interactions with respect to health. Take bird flu, Q fever and various other health problems. These are the three themes ASG plans to work on in the next few years, often in partnership with other players.'

Linking knowledge

'If we get better at linking knowledge, WUR can make more of a difference. For example, we need the ethics specialists of Social Sciences for issues surrounding animal-friendly livestock farming. And next time there is a commotion about the food situation in the Oostvaardersplassen, how about bringing in our Animal Nutrition experts as well as the ecologists of

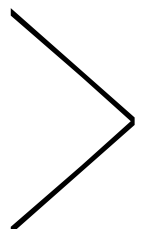
Environmental Sciences? I'm currently putting out feelers to get such collaborations set up. The more pressure there is from society, the more reason for us to join forces.'

Independent research

'We need to constantly safeguard our independence. If you ask us what we think about a particular topic, you will get an honest answer. In my experience, that wasn't always easy in the past, especially in assignments for the government. Sjoukje Heimovaara recently raised this issue in the *NRC* newspaper. When you do projects for companies or NGOs, you can have your independence documented in the contract. But when we work for the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, it's through a grant and it's more common then for policy officers to want all kinds of things. But I stand up for my staff and I won't allow that to happen. It is not always easy, but it is extremely important. Independence is the be-all and end-all, especially when the public debate heats up.'

Unwelcome attention

'People whose research touches on emotive issues can be under a lot of pressure and attract unwelcome attention. I understand it when people say they just want to carry



‘We need to constantly safeguard our independence’

‘I no longer put my mobile number under my emails’

on quietly with their research in the institute. I too have changed my views on this after a few unpleasant experiences. I no longer put my mobile phone number under my emails, for example. I don't do TV interviews from home any more either, whereas I wouldn't have given it a second thought in the past.’

National versus international

‘In my opinion, this is *the* big difference between Plant Sciences and Animal Sciences. In the Plant Sciences Group, I could easily use the same narrative for the national and international contexts, whereas they are two completely different worlds in Animal Sciences. Internationally, we are seeing an incredible increase in the demand for animal protein. Should we then start proclaiming it's not possible, that everyone needs to become vegetarian? Or should we be the scientific partner that helps think up ways to minimize the harmful effects? I find that quite a dilemma. I feel a different responsibility in the national debate. Here in the Netherlands, I think we are quite capable of making the transition to new kinds of agriculture as long as we can get consumers on board. If not, we'll end up shifting the problem abroad.’

Less meat

‘I see animal protein as one component of a desirable consumption pattern. But we need to eat much less of that than we do now. We need to eat less, full stop. The Dutch currently eat 130 grams of protein per day and that needs to come down to 70 grams. What's more, two thirds of our protein is from animals and that needs to be one third. So that would require a completely different setup for your food system, putting animals in quite a different position.’

Animal-friendly livestock farming

‘Many people criticize intensive livestock farming for a variety of reasons, and that is fine. For a long time, efficiency and productivity were prioritized. I want that to stop: respect for animals needs to get top priority. That has lots of implications for the design of barns, how we treat animals and how many animals are farmed. There are no simple solutions. Take respect for pigs in pig farming. In

my opinion, that means no more tail docking, for instance. But how do you then deal with the underlying problem of tail biting? People assume the problem will disappear of its own accord on a nice organic farm with fewer pigs per square metre. But it's not that simple. All sorts of factors play a role, such as the climate, diet and social structures, which are much more complex in pigs than we thought in the past. To resolve this problem, you need both a profound understanding of the function and behaviour of the animals and knowledge of the various pig farming systems. I want to get people on board with this.’

Students

‘You'd expect them to stop coming given current attitudes to livestock farming, but nothing could be further from the truth. The latest forecast is for 140 first-year students, and that's without our marine Bachelor's. That makes Animal Sciences one of the biggest Wageningen degree programmes, with the biggest growth — although I should point out that includes 30 to 40 students who weren't selected for veterinary science, and some of them will probably leave later. The latest figure for the new Marine Sciences BSc is 85 applications. That degree is clearly meeting a need. I think that's fantastic, especially since it's a programme that involves several science groups.’

Sleepless nights

‘I'm good at switching off from my work. My work's never finished, but I call it quits at the end of the day or in the weekend. What does keep me awake at night is when something awful happens to one of our people. Human dramas really affect me.’ ■



Ernst van den Ende (60)

Studied Phytopathology at Wageningen University and obtained his PhD in the Phytopathology chair group in 1992. He initially worked as a researcher at various research stations (for fruit, flower bulbs and tree nurseries). Starting when Applied Plant Research was set up, he had various management roles, including as managing director of the Plant Sciences Group (2009–2021). In 2022 he became the managing director of the Animal Sciences Group. He is a member of the Wageningen Management Board.

Legendary Wageningen excursion: from adventure to project

PYRENEES 50 TIMES

In the excursion to the Pyrenees, Biology students delve into the biodiversity of this mountainous region. This year sees the 50th edition of an excursion that first took place in 1972. Roel Lemmens may well have been on it most often, first as a student in 1979 and then on numerous occasions as a guide and teacher. He takes a trip back in time with *Resource*. Text Luuk Zegers



Photo Nina Fatouros

For him, the Pyrenees excursion was one of the reasons to choose Wageningen for his degree. And even though he is now retired, botanist Roel Lemmens (68) is not about to give up: he is joining this year's trip too. 'The new generation of excursion guides are already pretty experienced: they know the place well and where you need to be. My role is mainly for in an emergency. For example, if it turns out a lot has changed at a particular excursion location, I come up with a plan B. But really they can manage fine without me.' The Pyrenees veteran has seen the excursion change over the course of time. 'The Biology degree programme started at what was then the Agricultural College in 1970-1971,' says Lemmens. 'The excursion was a module for second-years and took place for the first time in 1972. The men who came up with the idea were professor of Plant Taxonomy and Geography Hendrik C. D. de Wit and his colleague André Baudière, a respected botanist at



‘THE PYRENEES ARE GREAT FOR BIODIVERSITY’

Toulouse University, who knew the flora of the Pyrenees like the back of his hand.’ Their idea for this module was based on a certain philosophy, explains Lemmens. ‘In this part of the Pyrenees, you have the whole range of fauna and flora communities from coastal to high mountains close together. You can cover a distance of less than 100 kilometres and travel from sea level to mountains of 2600 metres. You find Mediterranean communities, Alpine communities and everything in between. The Pyrenees are great for biodiversity.’ Entomologist and shorebug specialist René Cobben joined from the second edition in 1973, laying the foundation for the fauna component of the course.

Sangria parties

What does Lemmens remember of those early days? ‘I took part as a student in 1979, which was still the Baudière era. Like now, it was about flora and fauna, but it was also an introduction to French culture. There was always a wine-tasting event. Baudière knew a baron who lived overlooking a valley on the Spanish border so he would organize a sangria party for us. We were also invited to drink wine with the mayor of the place where we were staying. He taught us how to fillet a trout properly so you don’t get too many bones when you’re eating it.’ The agenda was less pre-planned



Photo Nina Fatouros

in Baudière’s day. ‘He would say at breakfast: the weather looks good so let’s go *here*. If the next day was cloudy, we’d have to head off *there*.’ The excursion was more of an adventure than it is these days, says Lemmens. ‘For many students, it was their first time in the mountains and their first encounter with many of the plant and animal species. These days, students have seen more of the world so it’s less of an adventure for them.’

Research project

The module looks very different nowadays, explains Lemmens. ‘In the past, students would obediently traipse behind a teacher who called out the names of the plants he spotted. Now they have their own project and do their own research. That’s a big improvement.’ What do these projects look like? ‘Students might compare a north-facing slope with a south-facing slope,’ says Lemmens. ‘They look at what organisms they find and how that differs between the two slopes. Then they have to explain those differences. In this example, you could argue the snow melts earlier in the spring on the south-facing slope

Spectacular views

Biology student Leonie Postema (20) on this year’s Pyrenees excursion:

‘We spent the first week on the coast near Tuchan. Now we’ve arrived at Bolquère, our second location, which is higher up in the mountains. The food is not quite so good here but we have unlimited wine. Some people are having trouble adjusting to that. On the other hand, you soon get over your hangover with the fresh air up in the mountains.’

‘We had the afternoon off the day we moved to Bolquère. I explored the local area and I found myself immediately going into biologist mode: before I knew it I was identifying plants.’

‘Today we were at our best location yet, an amazing valley. I was walking a bit faster than the rest so I was able to take a lot of stops while they caught up. Then you look around you and just enjoy the spectacular views. Because even though we’re basically busy all the time, it’s so beautiful here you can’t fail to enjoy it.’

Read more via the QR code.





Photo Nina Fatouros

because it gets the sun earlier. That means the vegetation and animals are exposed and suffer more from the severe frosts you sometimes still get at night. On the north-facing slope, the snow stays longer and plants and animals are therefore better able to survive because the snow has an insulating effect. As a result, you see differences both in the plants and animals above ground and in the nematodes and fungi below ground.' After returning to Wageningen, the

students spend another week in the lab to identify the nematodes and insects for their project, using DNA analyses. The assessment of the students has also become more professional. 'Before, we would sit down with the whole group, all with a glass of wine, and discuss who should get what grade.' These days, students are assessed on their

Facts

- The module that once began as 'Flora and Fauna of Europe' is now called 'Webs of Terrestrial Diversity'. It is coordinated by Casper Quist and Nina Fatouros of the Biosystematics group.
- During the excursion, students develop determination skills and learn microscope and DNA techniques that they can then use to answer ecological questions.
- Since 2014, when the Nematology group joined the course, students have looked at biodiversity in the soil as well as flora and fauna.
- The course was cancelled in 2020 because of COVID. In 2021, an alternative programme was organized in South Limburg. Students who had missed out were able to join the excursion in 2022.
- The Pyrenees excursion is always rated highly by students and was nominated again this year for an Excellent Education Prize.

contribution, their own projects and how good they are at identifying insects and plants. 'In the exam, they get open questions on various ecological aspects,' says Lemmens. 'You need to be able to explain why a particular insect lives in one place and not in another, for example.' ■

If you are curious to know how the current students are finding the excursion, check out resource-online.nl



Photos Theodoor Heijerman



‘DECOLONIZATION IS ABOUT ALL OF US’

One of the demands of the students who recently occupied Forum was the decolonization of education. What exactly does that entail, and what does it mean for WUR? Esha Shah, one of the driving forces behind a teachers' initiative on decolonization, explains. Text Marieke Enter

What is the decolonization of education?

‘In brief, there are two different aspects of decolonization in higher education. One is to challenge the claimed superiority and universality of Western perspectives and to open up and cherish a plurality of knowledge forms. The second important question in the decolonization debate is to ask: Who is speaking? Whose voice is heard, on whose behalf? Whose voice is

Decolonization collective

Esha Shah is a lecturer in WUR's Water Resources Management group and one of the initiators of the Deliberation on Decolonization, a collective of teachers and researchers that was formed in early 2022 to facilitate mutual learning, shared thinking and collaboration. *Resource* readers who would like to contribute can contact her.

considered as authentic and valid? Whose voice is *not* given space? Colonialism was not just about conquering and dominating foreign territory, people and resources. What we should not forget is that racialized hierarchies were at the heart of colonialism. Colonial power was exerted by asserting a certain superiority of Western European culture and civilization, which devastated other cultures and ways of knowing and existing by declaring them as invalid and inferior.’

What is the ‘White Man’s Burden’ and how does it affect higher education?

‘The “White Man’s Burden” is an important term in decolonization. It comes from a poem written by the British author Rudyard Kipling in 1899 in relation to the Philippine-American War. In the poem, Kipling exhorts the Americans to own up to their moral responsibility to civilize the Philippines by conquering it. That perspective, “it is a white man’s burden to go to the uncivilized cultures and civilize them”, became a colonial norm that still dominates our culture — very subconsciously, almost unnoticed. It also repeatedly shows up in higher education curricula. For instance, researchers and students may think that it is their “job” to identify a problem somewhere in the Global South and to find a solution,

“to help them”. When I talk about this with students, I always have to ask the questions: Who are “they”? Who am I? What is the nature of our relationship? This deeply ingrained mentality of the white man’s burden constantly needs to be questioned.’

So the decolonization of education is not just a numbers game?

‘It is about being conscious of what kind of knowledge is being given representation and what is not. Counting the numbers of scholars from the Global South included in the literature list is very important, but it is not going to solve the problem. Decolonization is not as simple as that. On the other hand, we do need to count the numbers in our hiring policy. WUR is an

‘WE SHOULD ASK HARD QUESTIONS ABOUT WHY THE NUMBER OF STAFF FROM OTHER CULTURES IS SO LIMITED AT OUR UNIVERSITY’



'By rewriting colonial history, decolonization is essential in building a different future.' ♦ Photo Guy Ackermans

international university with international courses, and 23 per cent of our students have an international background. Why then are the staff predominantly white and male? We need to ask very hard questions and look at why the number of staff from other cultures, especially from the former colonized regions, is so limited at our university. Who is hired for what kind of position, who is not and why?

What about the critics? Is decolonization a denial of history, maybe even woke-ism?

'There are still parts of Dutch culture where Dutch colonial history is seen as a golden period. Challenges to such perspectives might be very disturbing

to certain people, but decolonization is a very uncomfortable process. It is going to ruffle some feathers if deeply entrenched mentalities and sensibilities are questioned. And people who are privileged and who hold power are going to react to such challenges. We have to be aware that they will probably try to turn such decolonization efforts into something insignificant, for instance by creating all this politics

'THIS DEEPLY INGRAINED MENTALITY OF THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN CONSTANTLY NEEDS TO BE QUESTIONED'

around woke-ism. Originally, "being woke" was a term used by the Jamaican philosopher Marcus Garvey in 1923, and in the course of a century it has become a powerful symbol of the African-American movement for justice. It means "to stay self-aware, to be alert to social and racial prejudice and discrimination". It saddens me that this term is being simplified as "an excess of political correctness". But as I said, decolonization involves a protracted struggle over a long time and it will require several generations of scholars and students to strive for it.'

What is the importance of decolonization?

'That is a very fundamental question. Why do we bother? First of all, there is no birth of consciousness without pain, said Carl Jung. To build a different future we have to give birth to a different consciousness by understanding and rewriting our history. And for that, we need pluralistic forms of knowledge, including the ones that colonialism wiped out. Secondly, decolonization is about all of us — not only about the cultures which were previously colonized. Decolonization is about rethinking and reimagining all of our futures, including those of the former colonial powers. By rewriting colonial history, decolonization is essential in building a different future.' ■

Why consumers are angry about Lidl's meat substitute trial

'Eating meat is cultural'

The Lidl supermarket chain is running a pilot in which meat substitutes are placed on the shelf next to their 'meat equivalent'. Some consumers are angry about this. Two WUR Social Sciences PhD candidates who are researching consumer responses to the protein transition comment on the commotion.

Earlier this month, Lidl started a trial in 70 branches in Noord-Holland and Almere in which they put four of their best-selling meat substitutes on display right next to the equivalent meat product. Lidl is working with WUR to see what effect this new shelf display setup has on purchases of meat products and meat substitutes. The supermarket chain is carrying out the test to introduce more consumers to vegetarian options and help the protein transition.

But after they announced the pilot, they were inundated with negative comments. The supermarket was accused of duping consumers into buying the 'wrong' product and telling consumers what they should be eating. Monique van der Meer, a Marketing & Consumer Behaviour PhD candidate, is involved in the pilot. She thinks the negative reactions are premature. 'The pilot has only just started and will run for three months. Only then will we be able to analyse the results. We'll be able to see whether consumers are more likely to choose vegetarian options if they are displayed right next to the meat options.'

Meat is an emotive topic, says Yolie Michielsen, a PhD candidate in Consumption & Healthy Lifestyles.



Text Dominique Vrouwenvelder

Michielsen studies the protein transition from a sociological perspective. 'Other changes by Lidl to supermarket displays would never cause so much fuss and in most cases wouldn't even get reported in the media.'

Freedom of choice

'Supermarket assortments already have a big influence on the choices consumers make,' says Van der Meer. This trial doesn't change the product range; it only changes how the products are displayed. 'The pilot is mainly aimed at consumers who aren't yet considering meat substitutes. The supermarket is using the slogan "It's your choice" to emphasize the fact that consumers do have a choice. It's a kind of reminder.'

A lot of the comments have mentioned freedom of choice, says Michielsen. 'Nowadays, a lot of people see the freedom to make your own choices as paramount, but less importance is attached to the implications of that choice. Initiatives to get people eating less meat are often approached in terms of choice and self-determination. People don't appreciate top-down interventions.' Van der Meer: 'The pilot isn't trying to mislead customers. The packaging is different and there are recipes on the shelf for the products where you can

'People with strong convictions often make more of a fuss'

'Lidl doesn't decide what I should eat'

use either the meat substitute or the meat product.’ But is Lidl trying to tempt consumers? ‘Yes, to some extent. But mainly consumers who are already open to this option, such as flexitarians who visit the meat section through force of habit. We hope to make the choice easier for them.’ ‘People are becoming more hostile to the government,’ says Michielsen. ‘You see that in these reactions. For example, it was suggested the pilot is aiming to dupe consumers into buying meat substitutes instead of meat. That may be based on a general idea that elites act in their own interests rather than the interests of “ordinary people”.’

Some consumers seem to be afraid they will choose the wrong product due to the new setup. ‘But the meat substitutes have different packaging to their meat equivalent, so there is not much chance of consumers getting them confused,’ says Van der Meer. ‘The main reason to make meat substitutes look like meat is to make them familiar to consumers in terms of their appearance and taste and how to cook them. That may make it easier for consumers to switch to vegetarian alternatives.’

Michielsen: ‘The negative comments show that people find eating meat normal and appropriate, and they see the meat substitutes as “wrong”. While consumers still have a

choice, pilots like this do raise the question of what it means for the future of meat. Consumers might be wondering if the meat substitutes are going to take over the meat section, or whether there’ll soon be no more meat at all on the shelves. That can cause resistance.’

Making a fuss

Michielsen says this issue, of whether or not to eat meat, is not an isolated instance. ‘Other habits and traditions are also gradually shifting, in part due to policies. Examples are the Saint Nicholas celebrations and fireworks on New Year’s Eve. Some groups in society feel misunderstood by policymakers and think people high up are undermining traditions they set great store by. Placing meat substitutes next to the meat is seen as another sign of a cherished tradition under threat.’

‘But the fierce reactions aren’t necessarily representative of how everyone feels,’ Michielsen points out. Van der Meer agrees: ‘People with strong convictions often make more of a fuss. Especially on social media, people vent their general frustration more or less at random on whatever topic turns up. But these extreme reactions only come from a small proportion of the Dutch population.’ Michielsen: ‘Being flexitarian is increasingly popular. And while there is no scientific proof as yet, there are signs that most Dutch people agree that policy instruments should be used to reduce meat consumption.’ ■



The meat substitute is displayed next to the equivalent meat product. Above them is a recipe that can be prepared with either the meat or its substitute. ‘The supermarket wants to emphasize that people do have a choice, as a kind of reminder!’ ♦ Photo Lidl



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 from unusual side jobs, such as Lisa van Malssen (24), a Plant Sciences Master's student. Lisa teaches pole dancing at De Bongerd and the Easy Active gym.

Text Steven Snijders

'I give private lessons, competition training and group lessons. It's taken off fast because I only started pole dancing three and a half years ago. Before that, I did an awful lot of weight training and modern dance. Pole dancing is actually kind of a combination of the two, so I was able to

'Pole dancing is fun, but also painful'

pick it up quickly. Wageningen's pole dance association Allegra organizes mentor lessons where advanced members coach beginners. That gave me a gentle introduction to teaching pole dancing. I've been an instructor for two years now. It's great to be able to share my enthusiasm and help others progress in this sport. I often use choreography in my lessons. It looks a lot like modern dance, only with a pole added. Other key elements of my sessions are flexibility and weight training. Flexibility is important if you want to prevent injuries. I'm actually hypermobile, which means my joints are too flexible. That might sound useful, but it's not in practice as it makes me

more susceptible to injuries. Recently I dislocated my kneecap while doing a backflip on the pole (which is a really cool move). So I need to watch out. I teach various groups, with people of all ages and backgrounds. But I can count the men in my classes on one hand. Why is that? Pole dancing is fun but it can also be painful. I think women's higher pain threshold could explain the small number of men. Of course there is also pole dancing's image, because it originated in strip clubs. The "sexy side" is also artistic — an art in its own right. All forms are valid. I personally see pole dancing mainly as a sport combining strength and dance. I also like the thinking that is required for the techniques. Sometimes, after a long day at the university, I arrive at the class pretty exhausted, but I always come home totally energized again.'



Photo Sebastiaan Ploemacher

Lisa teaches

Who: Lisa van Malssen (24)

What: Pole dancing instructor

Why? Lisa can share her enthusiasm in the lessons

Hourly wage: 20 euros (net)

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



There are some great-looking individuals wearing the coolest outfits on campus. In this regular column, we put one of them in the spotlight. This time, it's Imme Koster, who is doing a customized Bachelor's.

'My style is what is now called Y2K, meaning fashions from the early 2000s: low-waist trousers, colourful clothes and lots of glitter. Really feminine but so exaggerated you can't take it seriously. Britney Spears is a source of inspiration, as are designers like Alexander McQueen and Miu Miu. For a while, I considered studying fashion but I think it's a pretty toxic scene. I find it energizing to go around looking like this. I always try to be a bit of a character. In fact, I'd only just been born when these clothes were in fashion. I think you do you pick up something of the fashions around you when you're growing up. And when they have a revival — because they're quite hip again now — you have a certain association with them.



In general I only buy second-hand. Very occasionally, I'll invest in a new item. That's a bit restrictive. Sometimes I'll see something cool on Instagram but I won't be able to find it second-hand, which is frustrating.

I got the dress I'm wearing now from Marktplaats. I really like it. It's got that glittery aspect but it's low-key enough to wear during the day. The shoes used to belong to my mother. She's a real style icon and I've got a lot of her old clothes.' CJ

When life gives you lemons limes... make cocktails!



In the heat of the summer, nothing beats an ice-cold drink with limes. Or even better: an ice-cold drink with limes and watermelon.

Flavours of WUR



Cocktail : Caipirinha

Here's how to make it:

- 1 Put the sugar and lime wedges in a glass and mix them together with a cocktail masher or the back of a wooden spoon.
- 2 Fill the glass with ice cubes.
- 3 Pour in the cachaça.
- 4 Shake or mix the cocktail and serve with a straw.

Ingredients : (for 1 drink) :

- 50 ml cachaça (Brazilian rum)
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 lime (in 8 wedges)
- Ice cubes



Mocktail : Melon&Lime

Here's how to make it:

- 1 Put the watermelon cubes in a blender and blend to a smooth puree.
- 2 Add the lime juice, honey and a couple of finely chopped mint leaves, and blend again.
- 3 Put some ice cubes in each glass. Pour in the watermelon mixture until the glass is three-quarters full. Top up with sparkling water.
- 4 Garnish with mint leaves and serve immediately. Cheers!

Ingredients : (for 4 drinks) :

- Quarter watermelon, cubed and with the large pips removed
- Freshly squeezed juice of 2 limes
- 1 teaspoon honey
- Ice cubes
- 1 litre sparkling water
- Fresh mint

Irregular Opening Hours Summer 2023

Forum

		Monday to Thursday	Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Building	26 June - 21 July	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 11 pm	9 am - 7 pm
	22 July - 3 September	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 11 pm	10 am - 6 pm
Library	26 June - 21 July	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 10 pm	9 am - 7 pm
	22 July - 3 September	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 6 pm	closed
Student Service Centre	10 July - 27 August	12:30 pm - 2:30 pm	12:30 pm - 2:30 pm	closed
	28 August - 3 September	10 am - 2:30 pm	10 am - 2:30 pm	closed
Servicepoint IT	10 July - 3 September	08:30 am - 5 pm	08:30 am - 5 pm	closed
Restaurant	10 July - 3 September	closed	closed	closed
Grand Café	10 July - 3 September	10 am - 2 pm	10 am - 2 pm	closed

		Monday to Thursday	Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Wageningen in'to Languages				
Desk Forum	10 July - 20 August	closed	closed	closed
	21 August - 3 September	10 am - 14 pm	closed	closed
Online Desk	10 July - 3 September	9 am - 5 pm	9 am - 5 pm	closed

Orion

		Monday to Thursday	Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Building	10 July - 30 July	8 am - 7 pm	8 am - 6 pm	closed
	31 July - 27 August	closed	closed	closed
	28 August - 3 September	8 am - 6 pm	8 am - 6 pm	closed
Start academic year	4 September	8 am - 7 pm	8 am - 6 pm	closed

		Monday to Thursday	Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Bike basement	10 July - 30 July	8 am - 9 pm	8 am - 7 pm	closed
	31 July - 27 August	closed	closed	closed
	28 August - 3 September	8 am - 7 pm	8 am - 7 pm	closed
Start academic year	4 September	8 am - 9 pm	8 am - 7 pm	closed

		Monday to Thursday	Friday	Saturday and Sunday
The Spot	10 July - 30 July	8 am - 5 pm	8 am - 5 pm	closed
	31 July - 27 August	closed	closed	closed
	28 August - 3 September	Flexible opening hours		closed
Start academic year	4 September	8 am - 7:30 pm	8 am - 7 pm	closed

		Monday to Thursday	Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Restaurant	10 July - 30 July	11:30 am - 2 pm	11:30 am - 2 pm	closed
	31 July - 27 August	closed	closed	closed
	28 August - 3 September	Flexible opening hours		closed
Start academic year	4 September	11:30 am - 2 pm	11:30 am - 2 pm	closed

Aurora

		Monday to Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Building	10 July - 27 August	closed	closed
	28 August - 3 September	8 am - 6 pm	closed
Bike basement	10 July - 27 August	closed	closed
	28 August - 3 September	8 am - 6 pm	closed
Coffee corner	10 July - 27 August	closed	closed
	28 August - 3 September	flexible opening hours	closed

Leeuwenborch

		Monday to Friday	Saturday and Sunday
Building	10 July - 27 August	7 am - 8:30 pm	closed
Library	10 July - 27 August	8:30 am - 6 pm	closed
Coffee Bar / Restaurant	10 July - 27 August	10 am - 2 pm	closed

WEEKLY UPDATES ON STUDENT LIFE AND WORKING AT WUR?

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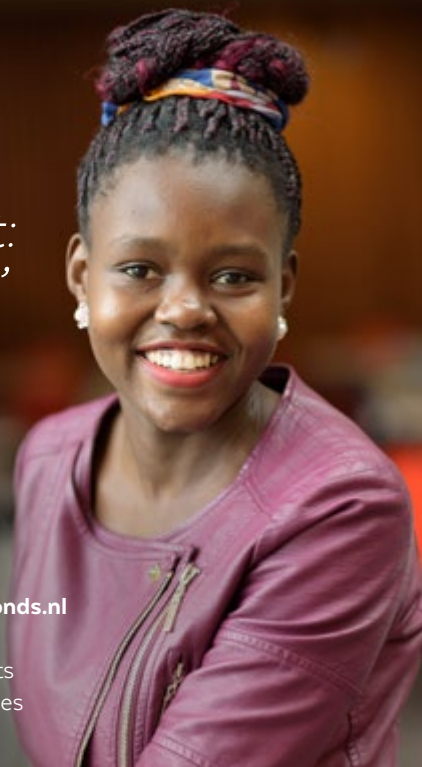
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Photo Guy Ackermans



AND THE STUDENT OF THE YEAR IS...

Emma Nalan, third-year Food Technology student. In addition to the annual Teacher of the Year award, a Student of the Year (SOTY) prize has been given for the first time. Emma won based on her grades, evaluations by her teachers and her attitude to her studies. Last Wednesday, the jury handed over the prize: a crate of De Klok beer.

Emma was rather surprised when told she had won. 'Wow! I really hadn't expected it! After all, I only just scraped through the first year and my grades are pretty middling.' That is precisely what made her such a good candidate, says Barnold Echt, Dean of Education and chair of the jury. 'The pressure to perform is driving many students to distraction. The combination of a packed social life, sports twice a week, remembering to phone your parents regularly and still getting good grades is too much for them. We see a lot of students suffering from stress and burnout symptoms. It's much better for your mental

health to be just about good enough on all fronts without excelling in anything. In that respect, Nalan sets an example for all students.'

Teachers are impressed with Emma's attitude in classes. Food Microbiology teacher Henk Kebab: 'Emma takes notes during lectures and asks occasionally whether this is something you need to know for the exam. Sometimes she hands assignments in late, but she just says honestly it's because she was too late starting, rather than coming up with some lame excuse like "my grandma died". On Fridays she often looks quite hungover, and

that's fine. Sitting through a class feeling queasy is a crucial part of the student experience. Many people look back nostalgically on that later.'

Emma doesn't know yet what she will do with the prize. 'I'd really like to drink it all up with my housemates this evening, but perhaps I should wait until the end of the month when my bank account is almost empty.'

'Sometimes she hands assignments in late, but then she is honest about it'