

WUR from within: straight, sharp, transparent

No 07

Resource

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The journalism platform for all at Wageningen University & Research

'Focus on poll
decisive for PVV'

Deer sculpture
stolen

Martian soil in
Soil Museum

Idealis tries out
student manager

Peak time for
Crane Radar

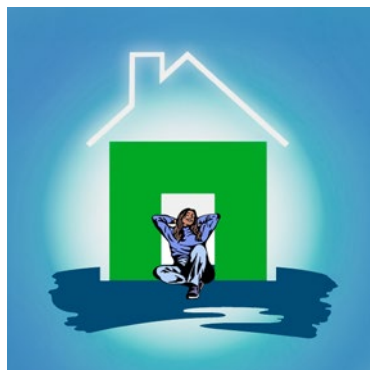
**The walrus in
the Netherlands**
Here to stay? | p.18

GREENWASHING?
Take the test!
p.16



Contents

NO 7 VOLUME 18



12

Internationals not worried (yet)



21

Ode to first virology professor



24

Book on Herenstraat 6
Falling pianos and Aunt Dien

4 Wageningen remains lefty stronghold

8 Live & Learn: trust in others

11 Sjoukje's column: Boomer gets BeReal

26 Marriage with a forest

29 The side job: Nicole dog-sits

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FOREWORD

Schizophrenic

It feels somewhat schizophrenic. On the one hand, WUR is becoming increasingly political and is taking a stand on the climate, while on the other hand it remains silent on the war in Gaza. That war set off a debate here. Two groups approached *Resource* to express their unease: why did WUR speak out when the war in Ukraine started, but not now? Rector Arthur Mol explained last week that was because the Dutch government at the time urged the universities 'to freeze all formal and institutional collaboration with Russia and Belarus'. No political statement has been made this time, 'but don't confuse that refusal to take a position with nonchalance,' writes Mol. WUR also said it would not be 'commenting' on the Dutch election results, in which the far-right party PVV won. This is in contrast to the University of Twente president Subramaniam, who immediately told his staff and students that UT would 'remain an open and inclusive community'. The WUR Executive Board did say the following in *Resource*: 'The world is facing major transitions such as climate change and sustainable food production. It is essential to work on these challenges together in an international context, whereby the diversity of our staff and students is crucial.' That is probably the key thing: Wageningen is prepared to speak out when it comes to WUR topics. Stick to what you know, I guess.

At any rate, internationals in the Netherlands have certainly been affected by the political climate surrounding the elections. *Resource* and five other independent university magazines conducted a survey that showed 30 per cent of internationals felt unwelcome. Only the Wageningen internationals were unworried (page 12). But this was before the election. Let's hope that is still the case.

Willem Andrée
Editor-in-chief





PLAYING RUMMIKUB IN CHURCH

Last Saturday, Wageningen residents of all backgrounds competed for the RummiCup in the Grote Kerk. The event brought townspeople and university folk together but initiator Jantien Klein Ikink doesn't want to overstress this. 'That makes it sound like the RummiCup is some kind of problem-solving venture, when it is simply intended as a fun, accessible event that makes it easy to get to know new people.' A lot of students joined in. 'It's a nice way to step outside your student bubble for once.'

Photo Belle Holthuis

‘Focus on poll a deciding factor’

A NOS TV news broadcast had a deciding impact on the election campaign, says professor of Strategic Communication Rens Vliegenthart. Vliegenthart’s chair group is studying the role of the media in the election campaign.

The NOS news programme on the Saturday before the election opened with the poll by Maurice de Hond showing Wilders’ PVV party gaining five seats and NSC losing five. ‘I have strong opinions about this, not just as a social scientist,’ says Vliegenthart. ‘I’m not saying PVV’s victory can be explained entirely by the news programme’s choice, but I do think it is clear the huge media attention paid to this one poll made a difference to the election result.’

Hyped up

Vliegenthart finds all that attention dubious, in part given the lack of information about the poll’s reliability. ‘De Hond barely gives any explanation of how he conducts his surveys, with what error margins and samples. The news item was also hyped up because journalists had been waiting for a game changer for some time. Any principles



A still from the TV news programme in question. ♦ Source NPO Start

on how the media should report polls seemed to have been completely abandoned, whereas we know the effect on campaign dynamics. This bandwagon effect, where people decide to vote for whoever looks to be the winner, influenced voting behaviour.’

PVV’s huge victory was also helped by VVD’s campaign strategy, says Vliegenthart. ‘VVD kept talking about immigration, and linked other issues such as the housing shortage to this topic. But according to our research panel,

this topic is owned exclusively by PVV — even more so than in previous years. Based on our panel, it looks as if VVD leader Yesilgöz helped Wilders’ PVV to victory.’

Vliegenthart’s research is still ongoing. The results will be presented at the 24 Hours of Communication Science conference in February. ‘Then we will show a number of findings based on data from this campaign period.’ ME

‘No opinion on outcome’

President of the WUR Executive Board Sjoukje Heimovaara does not want to comment on the election result.

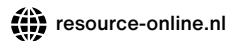
The good results for the PVV and NSC parties mean universities may be faced with new policy and with delays in tackling major issues in the WUR domains, such as nitrogen. PVV wants an end to the climate policy and NSC urges a reduction in the use of English in higher education. Shortly before the election, WUR President Heimovaara said the Netherlands needed brave leaders with vision. She admits the election result came as a surprise to everyone. ‘Regardless of who you voted for.’ But she is not prepared to go further than that. ‘Our job is to generate knowledge, provide education and share our knowledge widely. It is not fitting for an independent science institution to give an opinion on the result.’ wa

Wageningen remains lefty

There is little sign of the national shift to the right in Wageningen’s election results. To be sure, far-right party PVV doubled its share of the votes to 10 per cent but that is a lot less than the 37 per cent for the new left-wing coalition Groen Links/PvdA. PVV came second, just in front of D66 and VVD. D66 lost over half its voters. D66 and VVD are virtually tied third, ahead of Pieter Omtzigt’s NSC. Volt, a surprising newcomer last time with 8 per cent of the votes, lost nearly half that support. Farmers’ party BBB barely features in Wageningen, with 2 per cent of the votes. Party for the Animals is down slightly (5 per cent). As usual, the turnout was high at 83.65 per cent, but it was still down 2 per cent on the elections two years ago. RK

6,129

When Francerious Request ended its annual radio marathon this weekend, it had raised 6,129 euros (and 80 cents). Student society KSV Franciscus raised the money for Van Wal Naar Schip, a charity that helps low-income families get presents for their children. Wageningen mayor Floor Vermeulen announced the amount live during the final hour of the 72-hour-long broadcast. LZ



Idealis pilot with 'student managers'

Student accommodation provider Idealis is trialling a new role: the student manager. This is a tenant in an Idealis complex who welcomes new residents, takes leave of residents who are moving out, and passes on occupants' queries and comments to Idealis. The idea is also for them to create a welcoming atmosphere, for example by organizing games or film evenings.

The pilot will take place in the Droevendaal and Costerweg complexes. Student managers are employed by Idealis and work up to eight hours a week outside office hours. During office hours, residents can contact the regular complex managers.

Idealis hopes the student managers will help improve living conditions. The pilot will run until March 2024. LZ

Deer sculpture stolen

The artwork *Actaeon* by the Amsterdam sculptor Iris le Rütte has been stolen. The bronze sculpture, also known as *Deer Dichotomy*, stood in the grass next to Omnia.

A few months earlier, it was the victim of an act of vandalism — as has only now been revealed. Unknown culprits sawed off the deer's antlers. After discussions with the artist, it was decided to restore the sculpture. It was then relocated for this purpose to WUR premises at the end of Bornsesteeg, where it was stolen a few weeks later.

Actaeon was created in 1995 for the Physiology of Humans and Animals chair group on Haarweg. In 2010 it was moved to campus and installed near Atlas. When Omnia was built, it had to be moved again. The sculpture was inspired by the Greek myth of Actaeon the hunter. He spied on the goddess Artemis while she was bathing and got turned into a deer as a punishment. It is not yet clear whether the sculpture will be replaced by a replica. At the time, Le Rütte didn't make a cast for cost reasons. 'The only positive is that I still have

a smaller version of the sculpture. That will let me make it again to be exactly the same.' But it is not yet clear whether she will get that commission, says Joke Webbink of WUR's Art and Heritage Committee.

Actaeon is the first sculpture by Le Rütte to have been the target of vandalism. 'I

'It's so sad that people do this kind of thing'

have 30 sculptures installed in public spaces but not one has ever been damaged or covered with graffiti. It's so sad that people do this kind of thing. I wonder what someone like that feels. I try to breathe a soul into my work and I hope my sculptures are like living creatures. In that sense, I wonder whether the thief and my sculpture will be able to get along.' RK



Photo Resource

In brief

Fires to be restricted

Open fires will be banned on campus and the fire pit outside Forum will eventually be removed, says grounds manager Elike Wijnheimer after criticism of the fire pits on campus. 'We won't be banning barbecues entirely (or not yet), but we will no longer allow fire pits or campfires during events.' The fire pit and barbecue area outside Forum will be 'phased out', meaning any breakages will not be repaired or replaced. So both can still be used for

now. The barbecue has been used 42 times so far this year. RK

Ten more years of glyphosate

On 16 November, the EU member states voted to renew the approval for use of the controversial weed-killer glyphosate. The balance of the votes in favour, against and abstentions ended up supporting the advice of the European Commission, giving the go-ahead for renewal of the approval. Outgoing Dutch minister Piet Adema abstained, like he did before, but he did promise

further studies in the Netherlands. The European Commission based its decision on the analysis by the EFSA and the Dutch Board for the Authorisation of Plant Protection Products. They assessed the safety dossier for glyphosate and concluded the risks are minimal. ts

WUR: no political positions

WUR's Executive Board does not want to take political positions. Rector Arthur Mol says this in his reply to a call by 32 WUR employees of the chair groups Philosophy and Knowledge, Technology & Innovation for

WUR to make a statement about the war between Israel and Hamas. Mol says an independent scientific institution should not take positions in a political conflict. That WUR did so in the case of Ukraine was because the Dutch government insisted on it, says Mol. Also, that conflict is taking place in continental Europe and there is broad consensus within WUR and the Netherlands on the position taken. RK

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Mars soil in Soil Museum

Ten years ago, ecologist Wieger Wamelink started his first experiments growing crops in Martian soil. That Martian soil has now been included as one of the soil profiles in the World Soil Museum on campus.

An exhibition has been set up to accompany the Martian profile. The museum's 'Martian' profile actually consists of material from the Mojave Desert in the US, which is similar to Martian soil. This is the stuff Wamelink has been experimenting with for ten years. Mara Grandia (Soil Museum) and student Emke Mooney put together the exhibition with input from Stephan Mantel (head of the museum) and Wamelink

himself. The focus is not just on the Martian soil but also on Wamelink's research. The Forum library is also paying attention to ten years of Mars research at WUR. The second floor has four display cabinets about Wamelink's Food for Mars project with Lego models of spaceships, rockets and Mars rovers. Wamelink built the models himself. RK

Peak time for Koen de Koning's Crane Radar



Despite the unfavourable wind direction, falling temperatures last week led to a peak in the autumn migration of cranes. And that also meant a peak in visits to the Crane Radar developed by assistant professor Koen de Koning.

De Koning (Environmental Sciences Group) launched the Crane Radar last year. Since then, he has made various improvements to its predictive value. For example, the model now also uses wind forecasts, which lets it calculate more accurately where a group of birds are likely to fly over.

The Crane Radar makes use of data from waarneming.nl, the site for wildlife observations. De Koning was recently able to see for himself how accurate both waarneming.nl and his latest model are. 'This was the first time I was able to use the Crane Radar to catch a group of cranes,' he explains. 'I saw they were coming our way on the radar and they did indeed fly over the campus at the predicted time.'

De Koning was not the only person keeping close watch on the Crane Radar. During two peak migration days in mid-November, when tens of thousands of cranes were flying overhead, the radar got up to 1500 visitors at any one moment. 'I get a lot of enthusiastic responses,' he says. 'There are even people who tell me the whole family is following the radar.'

More tweaking

While the Crane Radar is a handy tool for migratory bird spotters, De Koning is mainly interested in the underlining science and the model's role as a digital twin of crane migration. The digital twin is a relatively new phenomenon in ecology and nature conservation. De Koning uses the Crane Radar to figure

out how exactly it works in practice and what is involved. He wants to gain insights that will help develop more digital twins in the years to come, both for scientific purposes and for nature conservation.

The assistant professor is also still busy tweaking his Crane Radar, which can be viewed at sensingclues.org/craneradar. 'I think it would be nice to give a prediction per town, for example,

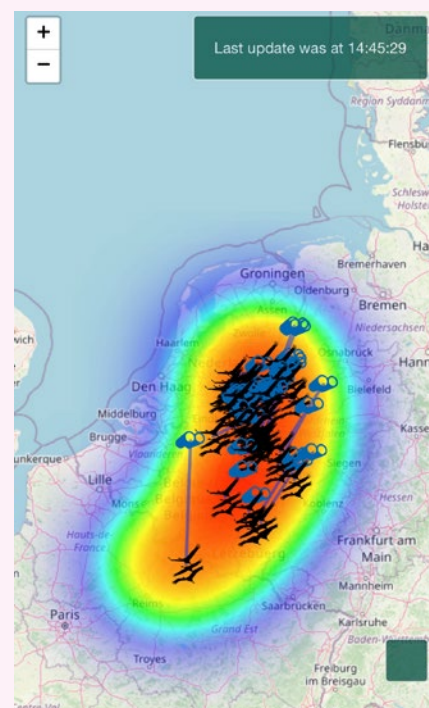
'I think it would be nice to give a prediction per town of when they can expect to see cranes'

of when they can expect to see cranes.' De Koning does not expect to have that ready yet for the spring migration, which already starts at the end of February or early March. 'But it should be possible for the autumn migration next year.'

Weird autumn migration

The cranes' autumn migration was a little weird this year. De Koning: 'For weeks, unfavourable weather conditions prevented the cranes from setting off. But once temperatures dropped last week, the pressure to start migrating increased.' He estimates that on one day this led to some 30,000 birds flying south from Germany. Some of them flew over the eastern and central Netherlands.

The autumn migration is now largely over, thinks De Koning. 'It seems as if a large group of birds have decided to stay in Germany and spend the winter there. Unless it turns very cold after all; then you can see birds setting off well into December.' ME



Screenshot of the Crane Radar on the 'peak day' 16 November.

A botched experiment, a rejected article: in the sciences these things are soon labelled failures. As for talking about them – not the done thing. But that's just what WUR scientists do in this column. Because failure has its uses. This time, we hear from **Bianca Zoletto, a PhD candidate in the Forest Ecology and Forest Management group.**

Text and illustration Stijn Schreven

'I went to Uganda for two months this summer to do fieldwork on lightning in tropical forests. Our team surveyed the mountainous Bwindi rainforest. For the first month, field assistant and botanist Aventino showed us the way. He taught me how to orientate myself in the forest, regularly asking me to point towards the north and the location of our camp. Every day we explored a different part of the forest.

After a month, I felt confident enough to lead the team myself. We set off at 9:30 and walked in a new direction from camp. After lunch, we planned to go back, but I didn't know which direction the camp was. The forest turned out to be much more complicated than I thought. I looked back at Aventino, whose smile betrayed that I was going the wrong way, but he let me carry on for a while. After half an hour of getting lost, I gave up.

It was hugely frustrating. I wanted to prove myself: I felt it was important to be autonomous in my PhD. That setback brought me back down to earth. It turned out I didn't know the forest

that well. Fortunately, Aventino was quickly able to find our way back. Now I realize how much expertise he has and how important he is in my research. You don't have to be able to do everything yourself: sometimes

'The forest turned out to be much more complicated than I thought'

you should just rely on others. PhD research is all about orientation too, just like finding your way through a forest. But back in the office in Wageningen, I get lost more easily than in the forest. The end point of your PhD is always your thesis after four years, but how you get there is different for everyone. I do ask my supervisors for help, but sometimes I don't know who is the right person to ask. Thanks to my experience in the forest, I can accept that I feel lost sometimes.'



Civilizations last 200 years on average

Like living organisms, states die sooner or later. Philosophers, historians and archaeologists have been pondering why for thousands of years and wondering whether there is some kind of law at work.

An international team of scientists headed by professor of Aquatic Ecology Marten Scheffer has now found one such law. The team considered the lifespan of 324 states from the past four thousand years up to 1800. They then analysed the data using survival statistics, a method Scheffer says is common in medicine. 'You use this method with mortality statistics to figure out how the risk of death varies with age.' By treating civilizations as living organisms, Scheffer reached a striking conclusion.

The risk of a state collapsing increases from the moment it emerges, peaks at 200 and then levels off. 'Some perish very early on, for example during turbulent times in China, but others survive for a long time.' The constitutional form doesn't have much influence, says Scheffer. 'The statistical probability of survival doesn't vary that much.'

Resilience

The statistical relationship doesn't tell us why civilizations die out. Scheffer thinks it has to do with the reduced resilience of ageing states. Reduced flexibility causes states to pass a tipping point, after which they inevitably perish. In other words, the tipping point theory that Scheffer made his name with could well apply here too.

'The constitutional form doesn't have much influence on the chances of survival'

A characteristic of this phenomenon is that reactions to disturbances are slower as the system gets closer to the tipping point. Scheffer

says there are indications this is also the case with states. In the article in *PNAS*, the authors give some examples. But that is not proof; there is insufficient data for most pre-modern states to show this. RK

Smart scales measure snacking behaviour

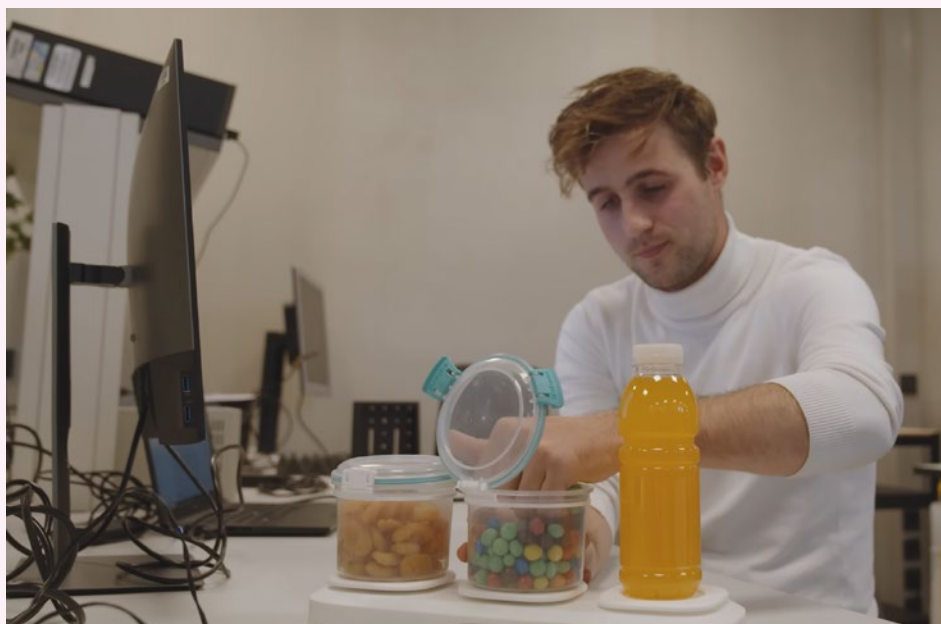
Nutrition researchers often ask participants to keep a diary logging what they eat. But this method is inaccurate, as people often forget or keep quiet about items. The SnackBox developed by PhD candidate Femke de Gooijer (Nutrition & Health and OnePlanet Research Centre) offers a solution.

In her PhD research, De Gooijer – who has a background in mechanical engineering – studies technological innovations for monitoring food intake, especially snacking behaviour. This led to the SnackBox. ‘I put the first version of the SnackBox together myself in my father’s garage,’ says De Gooijer with a laugh. She recently published the results of a validation study of these sophisticated scales.

Food diary

‘The gold standard for recording what test subjects ate during a trial was always the 24-hour recall, where a researcher phones you to ask what you ate the day before. Although we now have apps that let us ask sooner what people have eaten, we still depend on human memory, which happens to be far from perfect,’ explains De Gooijer.

That is not the only disadvantage of the food diary. ‘The main meals tend to be quite structured in terms of composition and times of the day, but snacking behaviour varies a lot more. That makes snacks more difficult to remember. Some people also don’t like admitting how much they have snacked, which is why snack are often underreported.’



The SnackBox in action with researcher Alex van Kraaij. • Photo University of the Netherlands screenshot

SnackBox

‘The SnackBox is essentially a small board with three little scales, on which you can put the snacks the test subjects consume. That can be a tray of M&M’s for example, or a soft drink. The SnackBox weighs constantly what is on it and therefore how much you take off it. We assume that you eat everything you take off it.’ The data De Gooijer col-

tion, she compares a 5-hour recall with an app on the participant’s phone with the data from the SnackBox. ‘We gave participants snacks that we had weighed out. What they didn’t eat, they handed back at the end so we could weigh the snacks again. We treated the difference in weight as the amount of snacks actually consumed. Then we compared that with the results from the SnackBox and the app.’

‘Human memory happens to be far from perfect’

lects shows her when someone ate a snack and from which tray. ‘That data goes straight to the cloud. We could even use it to send the person interventions or questionnaires – in response to the snacking – to ask them about their snacking or try to influence their behaviour.’

In De Gooijer’s most recent publica-

Housemates

Only 60 per cent of the snacks that were eaten were recorded in the app. The SnackBox managed an accuracy of 80 per cent. ‘So it isn’t perfect yet. We think this is because people aren’t using the equipment properly. For example, the device might not be turned on when they grab a snack, or a housemate might eat some of the snacks.’ DV

PhD theses **in a nutshell**

Poplar with a memory

The Lombardy poplar ‘remembers’ period of stress due to drought, cold or heat. Trees exposed to such stress are more susceptible later on to poplar rust. The Ecuadorian PhD candidate Christian Javier Peña-Ponton investigated how that memory comes about. He looked at whether methylation of the genome plays a role. Methylation involves attaching methane molecules to the genes. This ‘signal’ then changes the expression of the genes. Peña-Ponton’s experiments showed stress can cause methylation, but the interactions are complex.

Environmentally induced DNA methylation variation. **Christian Javier Peña-Ponton** ◀ Supervisor Wim van der Putten

Home test for pets

Are home tests suitable for nutrition trials with dogs and cats? Yes, shows research by Evelien Bos. She studied what a protocol for such a home test should look like. She also looked at the effect the pet owner’s ability to stick to the protocol had on the outcomes. After all, tests in a controlled lab are quite different to the home situation; dogs and cats get other food in addition to the test feed. But home tests do work. Bos plans to market her results in her own company. *Determining protocol requirements for in-home digestibility and palatability testing of pet foods* **Evelien Bos** ◀ Supervisor Wouter Hendriks

Yellower rice

Leaves are usually green. The greener they are, the more photosynthesis. But they can also be too green, which means not enough light penetrates to leaves lower down the plant. That problem can be resolved with yellower leaves, shows Chinese PhD candidate Zhengxiang Zhou. Rice varieties with yellower leaves ensure a better distribution of light over the plant and therefore a higher overall yield. The trick is that the rice plant creates less chlorophyll and more proteins that play a role elsewhere in the photosynthesis. The plant therefore makes more efficient use of its inputs.

Exploring the potential of modifying leaf colour to increase rice productivity via improving photosynthesis and sink-source relationships. **Zhengxiang Zhou** ◀ Supervisor Paul Struik

THE PROPOSITION

PhD candidates explain the most thought-provoking proposition in their thesis. This time it's Annika Mangold-Döring, who received her PhD on 13 November. Her study was about modelling the effect of temperature and chemicals at different levels of biological organization.



‘Experts are often not the best communicators for topics within their expertise’

‘People often assume that experts, being the most knowledgeable in their field, should also be the best at communicating their research topics. But in my opinion, experts are often too disconnected from their audience. An expert can easily become absorbed in every detail of the subject; in the end this is what makes them the expert. And as their daily communication about their topic is mainly with other experts in their field, they tend to forget not everyone has the same level of knowledge as they do, and neither is everyone interested in the same level of detail as they are.

Although science communication is crucial for society, the reality is that researchers are currently not properly trained

to communicate their findings to the general public effectively. This impedes knowledge transfer and threatens trust in science and scientists.

During the monthly meetings of the Science Communication Interest Group – we currently have 323 members – one piece of advice for effective science communication that is frequently shared is to know and connect with your audience. And to add my personal advice: I suggest doing so by reconnecting to your past self from say five years ago, or whenever you started to get interested in your topic. Think about the level of knowledge you had back then and try to remember what you were most curious about before you knew all the details you know today.’ NF

BeReal

Just before class, a student takes his BeReal. Even I, a boomer, recognize that app. BeReal asks you at a random moment every day to post a photo in the next two minutes. The idea is that you don't have time to smarten yourself up, but show your life as it is. Be real.

Some apps are vital to me, like Google Maps. Others are handy, like Buienradar. Or nice, like IMDb, where I can find out

'Why are you screenshotting me?'

where I know that actor from, causing me to only

half-watch the film. But BeReal is indispensable to me. Now all three of our sons have left home, they don't seem to see the need to keep their mother up to date with what they're up to. They never call – phoning is so last century anyway – and they only WhatsApp if they need something. But now I have BeReal, I get a photo every day because I'm their Friend. Triumphant, I tell my husband, 'he's in class!' or 'Is he gaming again?'



Sjoukje Osinga

It does have its disadvantages, though. If your son who's just moved to Sweden hasn't posted a BeReal all day, and no blue ticks follow the WhatsApp message you then send, you lie awake half the night. You dream up endless scenarios in which he gets beaten and robbed and tied up with duct tape and has been lying alone in his apartment for hours, calling for help. Suddenly you understand your own mother, who had to make do with that one-coin call from a telephone box when you were travelling for three weeks in some scary country.

Also, you can only see each photo for one day, and you can't download them for privacy reasons. So a burning question led me to make a screenshot and send it to my husband. "Is this the same girl as the one last week?" I immediately got a WhatsApp from my son: "Why are you screenshotting me?" Caught in the act! But how did he know? "I get an alert."

Some apps are just a bit too smart.

Sjoukje Osinga (56) is an assistant professor of Information Technology. She sings alto in the Wageningen choir Musica Vocale, has three student sons and enjoys birdwatching with her husband in the Binnenveldse Hooilanden.

The Hague is targeting international education, but:

Wageningen internationals still feel welcome

Foreign students and workers are starting to feel unwelcome at Dutch universities now that politicians are becoming more and more negative about internationals, shows a poll by five university magazines, including *Resource*. Wageningen seems to be an exception. Text Dominique Vrouwenvelder • Illustration Valerie Geelen

In debates in the run-up to the general election, the position of internationals at Dutch universities was on the agenda. Right-wing parties such as Pieter Omtzigt's New Social Contract are concerned about the number of international students coming to the Netherlands. Many other political parties supported his party's proposal to reduce the use of English at universities.

How does this discussion leave international students and workers feeling? Are they afraid that they are not welcome in the Netherlands? Spoiler alert: Wageningen internationals feel more at home than those at other universities. And there are other striking revelations too. But first: who took part in the survey? Groningen's *Ukrant*, Twente's *UToday*, Delft's *Delta*, Utrecht's *DUB*, Nijmegen's *Vox* and *Resource* here in Wageningen sent out the survey in the last couple of weeks, and a total of 1330 internationals responded, 130 of

them at WUR: 10 BSc students, 46 MSc students, 36 PhD candidates and 38 employees.

Less welcome

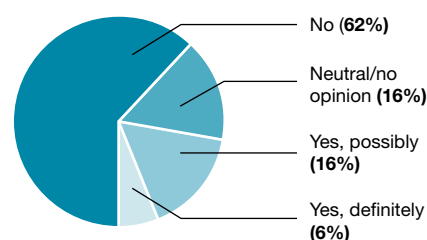
The results show that foreign students and staff at all the participating universities now feel less welcome than they did when they arrived here. That goes for Wageningen internationals too, although they feel more welcome in the Netherlands than internationals elsewhere in the country. On average, scores for all the respondents have gone down since they arrived by half a point

on a five-point scale, from 'more or less welcome' to almost neutral.

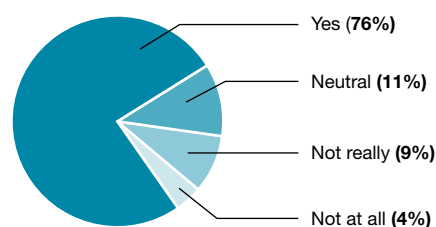
The reason for this given by about 50 per cent of the international students and staff is that Dutch politicians have become more and more negative about internationals. Those in Wageningen mention that much less frequently. If they don't feel welcome here, it is mainly because they don't speak the language and find it hard to make friends. Negative statements by politicians are in third place.

The language explanation is striking. Nearly half of the WUR respondents don't yet speak Dutch at all, but 90 per cent of them are considering learning Dutch. Of the WUR internationals who

Are you considering leaving the Netherlands because of all the discussions about internationalization?



Do you feel welcome to work or study at WUR?



The main reasons given by respondents who said they did not feel welcome were: the language (19%), hard to make friends (14%) and Dutch politics (14%).



Half of the Wageningen internationals in our sample said they felt more welcome within the university than outside.

say they speak a little Dutch, nearly three quarters would like to take Dutch classes. WUR's international character is mentioned by a lot of respondents as a reason to come here. That feature of the university would be lost if the government imposed measures for limiting the number of internationals. That is clear too from the responses of Wageningen's internationals, who would see that as a big loss with far-reaching consequences for the quality of education and research in the Netherlands.

Wageningen's character

'Look at Denmark,' writes a Portuguese PhD student. 'They have just reversed their restrictions on the number of internationals.' The number of English-taught degree courses was drastically reduced in Denmark in 2021, but last month the government decided to reverse that decision after employers complained about the rising shortage of graduate staff. About half of the Wageningen internationals feel more welcome within the university than outside it. About 40 per

cent don't experience any difference or have no view on the matter, and only 10 per cent feel more welcome outside the university. 'Outside the university people don't switch into English as easily,' a lot of Wageningen respondents report, and 'there are more activities for internationals around the university.' Both responses have to do with the sense of community on the campus. Nationwide, the majority of the respondents to the survey are aware of the fact that the Dutch parliament is pushing for measures to restrict the number of internationals at Dutch universities: more than 90 per cent of the respondents nationwide have at least heard of the measures. More than 80 per cent of the respondents are also aware of the strong movement in favour of cutting down on the use of English. Wageningen internationals are considerably less well-informed on this point: about 25 per cent of them say they are not aware of this political development. So far, internationals are not making

plans to leave the Netherlands because of the internationalization debate. Barely 30 per cent of the respondents are thinking of leaving. At WUR, about one third of the internationals are a little concerned about their position. But even fewer of them are therefore considering leaving the Netherlands.

Election strategy

So the majority of the Wageningen respondents are not very worried about this issue. 'This is part of an election strategy,' writes a member of staff who has been in the Netherlands for nearly 20 years and feels less welcome than when they first arrived. 'They use bold statements to persuade people to vote for them. Anyone who thinks rationally knows that this country needs internationals and has to be open to the international market: in the business world and in the sciences, it is usual to communicate in English.' The internationals in Wageningen see it as a massive retrograde step for the Netherlands to cut down on education in English. 'It will be counterproductive, and in the end a lot of Dutch students will go abroad to study.' ■

Parasites cause bizarre insect behaviour

On biting ants and liquid caterpillars

Ants that bite onto grass for hours on end, caterpillars that become hyperactive and climb to the treetops: these are the fascinating phenomena Simone Nordstrand Gasque studies. The weird behaviour is caused by parasites. How does that work? Text Rianne Lindhout • Photo Simone N. Gasque

As a Master's student of Parasitology in Copenhagen, Simone Nordstrand Gasque used to get up at three in the morning to look for ants exhibiting abnormal behaviour in the woods. An infection with the parasitic flatworm *Dicrocoelium dendriticum* (the lancet liver fluke) makes the ants crawl into the vegetation and bite onto it. That increases the flatworm's chances of getting inside the stomach of its next host: a grazing animal such as a deer.

As Gasque explains, that is good for the parasite because it needs different hosts for the various stages of its life-cycle. It starts out as an egg in a snail, which is transferred to the ant when it eats the slime secreted by the snail, and then the larva ends up in a mammal, where the parasite matures into an adult.

With her research, Gasque was able to confirm for the first time in the field what had been suspected for 50 years, namely that infected ants only bite onto plants when temperatures are low. Gasque: 'This usually happens at the start and end of the day, precisely

when deer are grazing.' If the ant is not eaten, it lets go of the grass when the temperatures rise again. 'But on cold days, I saw ants that didn't let go for almost the whole day.'

Treetop disease

The Danish ants are not the only animal to show a change in behaviour following infection by a parasite, and the liver fluke is not the only culprit. After her Master's in Denmark, Gasque came to Wageningen to study a similar form of zombie behaviour in caterpillars. In the Laboratory of Virology, where she is supervised by Professor Monique van Oers and Associate Professor Vera Ros, she is studying the caterpillars of the small mottled moth (*Spodoptera exigua*). The caterpillars turn into zombies after infection with a baculovirus. Gasque: 'The caterpillars become hyperactive, which helps spread the disease. Sometimes they get what is called treetop disease: they climb to the top of a tree, where they die and turn liquid. The liquid drips down onto leaves that are then eaten by other caterpillars. And so the virus spreads.'

In the Laboratory of Virology, researchers are figuring out the molecular mechanisms that cause this behaviour. Which genes are involved in the host's change of behaviour?

'Ants bite on tightly during grazing time for the deer'

The laboratory has years of experience in researching baculoviruses, which often cause deadly diseases in host insects. That is why these viruses are used in the biological control of pests in agriculture. Baculoviruses also make a good subject for research because they are easy to modify genetically and the effects of such modifications can clearly be seen in the changes in behaviour.

Blood-brain barrier

Gasque hopes to receive her doctorate in the spring of 2024 for her research on how the virus manages to reach the caterpillar's central nervous system. To do this, it has to cross the insect equivalent of the blood-brain barrier. Many different scientists are interested in knowing how that is possible. For example, this knowledge could help develop medicines that can reach a brain tumour. Gasque investigated whether certain proteins play a role here. 'We know from earlier studies by our group that protein tyrosine phosphatase is needed to induce behavioural change.' Gasque infected caterpillars with viruses where the protein had been genetically modified in a variety of ways. 'Whatever changes we made to the

protein, the virus always got inside the brain. That even happened when we removed the protein from the virus altogether.' So this protein does not hold the key to the blood-brain barrier.

Autoimmune diseases

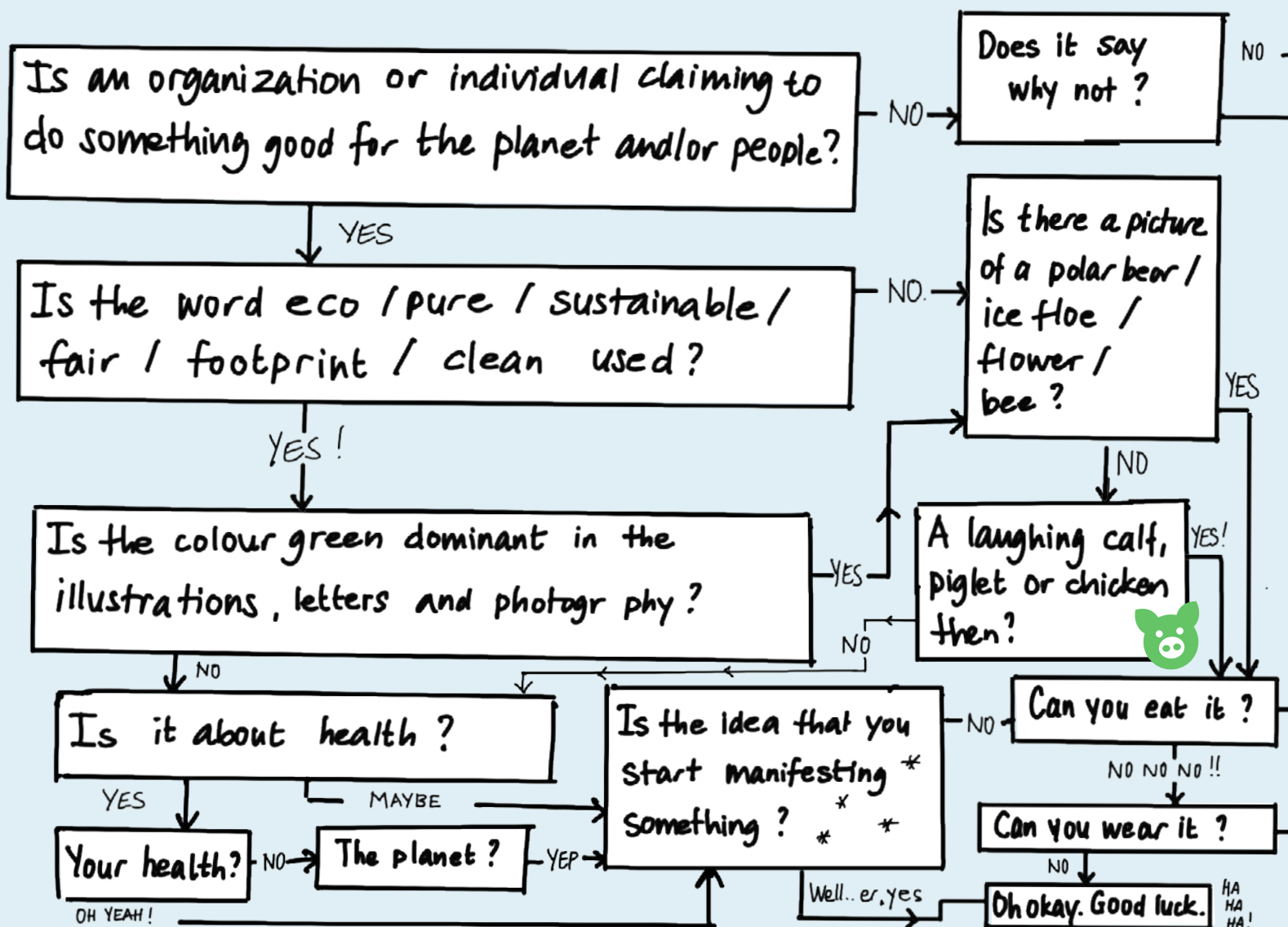
Incidentally, there are examples of behavioural change beyond the insect kingdom, says Gasque. Dogs become more aggressive when infected with the rabies virus, which helps spread that parasite. 'If a dog gets involved in more fights, that increases the chance of infecting other dogs.'

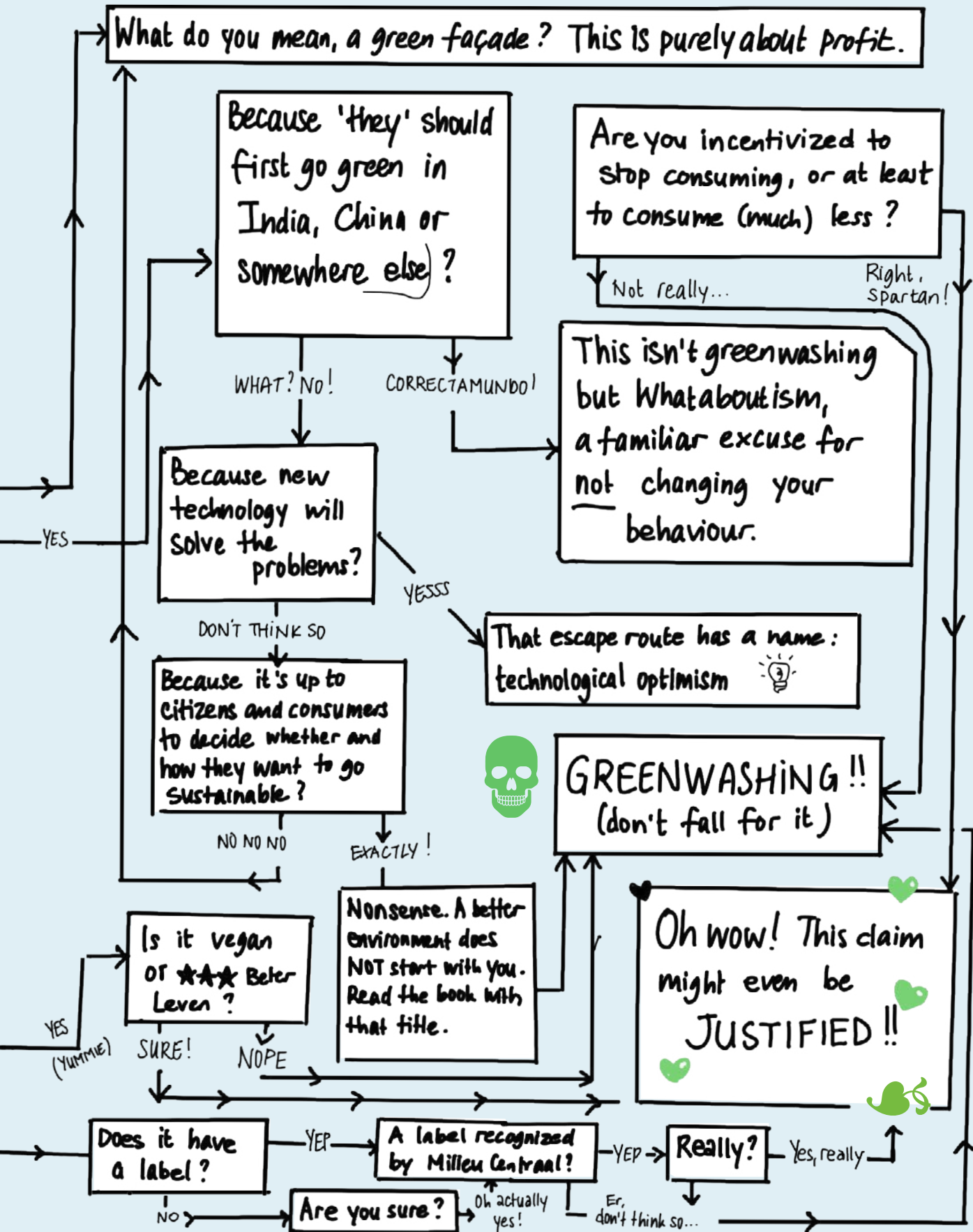
'Parasitism is a very successful approach,' she continues. 'It has existed for many millions of years.' The definition of a parasite is an organism that profits from the relationship with the host whereas that host does not benefit from the relationship. But that is a grey area, according to Gasque. 'There are indications that fewer autoimmune diseases are found in areas where a lot of people have intestinal parasites. That might be because the immune system is then too occupied to attack the person's own body.' One of Gasque's teachers in Copenhagen put this theory to the test by infecting himself with a pig worm to cure his psoriasis. 'That worked. There are now companies that grow pig worms for the treatment of people with an autoimmune disease.' ■



Here you see the underside of a big leaf, where many ants infected with *Dicrocoelium dendriticum* are displaying the behavioural change of biting on to the vegetation. The coloured number tags were glued onto the infected ants earlier.

An oil company that encourages motorists to donate money for tree-planting to reduce CO₂ emissions. A meat producer who advertises with images of happy piglets. Examples of greenwashing that are as cynical as they are hilarious, as we saw at the *Greenwashing Bullshit Bingo* recently organized by Scientists4Future Wageningen, the Green Office Wageningen and the Centre for Space, Place and Society (CSPS*). Here's how to see through it. Infographic Marieke Enter





* The Centre for Space, Place and Society brings together the Social Sciences chair groups Health and Society, Sociology of Development and Change, Rural Sociology, and Cultural Geography.

The walrus in the Netherlands: here to stay?

The North Pole is warming up faster than anywhere else in the world. Because the ice is melting, dozens of seals and walruses are losing their familiar habitats. Where are they going? That is what Sophie Brasseur and Geert Aarts are studying. Text Stijn Schreven

The submarine *Zr. Ms. Dolfijn* was anchored in Den Helder in October 2021 when the captain got an unusual phone call. It was Sophie Brasseur of Wageningen Marine Research. A walrus had just picked the submarine as its new 'haulout', or resting place, and might excrete on it. If the walrus did so, the marine biologist kindly requested the captain to collect the droppings and send them to her. The seafarer was amused, and agreed to collaborate. It's a rare event for a walrus to turn up in the Netherlands. In 2021, Freya was the first walrus to arrive on these shores in 23 years. A second walrus came the next year, and this spring a hooded seal – a species from the North Pole – gave birth on the beach on the island of Vlieland. This could be coincidental, or it could suggest the start of a trend. The polar ice in the Arctic, where

many seals and walruses go to rest, is disappearing due to climate change. In search of new habitats, the animals can end up here. The question is whether they will stay.

The Arctic region is warming up at least twice as fast as the rest of the world. All the ice in the Arctic Ocean is expected to disappear between 2030 and 2050, according to the IPCC's latest climate report. And that ice is precisely where millions of seals and tens of thousands of walruses find places to rest, breed and give birth to their young. If they disappear or move away, that could have a big impact on both their old and their new habitats: after all, they are

large predators and devour all sorts of fish, shellfish and lobsters. Walruses, for example, need to eat 80 kilos of molluscs a day, says Brasseur.

Squashed

'Freya the walrus probably came from the nearest population on the islands of Spitsbergen and the nearby Franz Josef Land archipelago,' says Brasseur. 'That population has grown since hunting stopped in the mid-20th century.' Their numbers grew from a few hundred to the more than 5000 ani-

Counting seals from space

Before climate change, researchers had a fairly accurate idea of the seal populations in the Arctic Ocean. The Norwegians do an annual count from an aeroplane of the hooded seals and harp seals on the ice floes. Now that the ice is melting and the seals might move off to other places, the search area is too big to scan by plane.

Reason for Jeroen Hoekendijk, who is doing his PhD with Brasseur and Aarts, to develop software that can count seals on satellite images. 'A seal looks like a dark grain of rice on a light background. You don't see enough detail to identify a species.' Instead, Hoekendijk gets the software to look at the way they lie. That worked for aerial photos of the Wadden Sea: 'The computer can distinguish between the grey and the common seals on our sandbanks because the grey seals lie closer together than the common seals. We hope the software can differentiate between the seal species on satellite photos of the Arctic as well using such differences in social distancing.'



A walrus chose the submarine Zr. Ms. Dolfijn in Den Helder as a place to rest (2021). ♦ Photo Jeroen Hoekendijk

mals living there now. In the summer most of the males live on Spitsbergen, and the females and young on Franz Josef Land. In the winter, the animals move onto the pack ice to mate and give birth. Walruses need to stay close to shallow waters where they can eat shellfish. The Arctic Ocean gets deeper further north, and they can't find food there. So it is not an option for them to follow the sea ice. Instead, walruses are increasingly looking for land, says Geert Aarts, another marine biologist and a colleague of Brasseur's. 'Many walruses stick together on small islands. They lie so close together that some of them get squashed.' With more and more walruses, and fewer and fewer haulouts, Brasseur is not surprised that the animals are turning up in the North Sea in search of new, less crowded spots.

'The hooded seal is used to giving birth on ice floes at sea. I'm not sure the Vlieland sandbank would be a good alternative.'

Even though the North Sea is quite a bit further south, it appears to be a suitable habitat for the walrus. Freya proved that, according to Brasseur. 'Some of the water she swam here in water was at nearly 20 degrees. It might be that the walrus can cope with warmth better than we think.' It may help that walruses don't have a thick hide like seals.

A year in the North Sea

And Freya the walrus also found enough to eat in the North Sea, as the analysis of her poop showed. As well as the droppings from Den Helder, Brasseur managed to get hold of some found on the island of Terschelling. Normally she

searches the specimen for bones and bits of shell, to determine the animal's diet, but that's not possible in the case of walruses. 'Walruses suck the flesh out





of the shells and blow the rest away. So you mainly find the soft tissues in the poop.' So Brasseur uses DNA techniques to identify the species of the prey. 'The surprising thing was that there was one dominant species in the diet: the Atlantic jackknife clam,' says Brasseur. Heaps of shells of this exotic shellfish are found on Dutch beaches. So there is food enough, and Freya ended up swimming around the North Sea for a year. In August 2022 the Norwegian government shot her dead in Oslo harbour: she posed a danger to onlookers who came too close to her.

So the walrus might find a new home in the North Sea, but Brasseur is not so sure about the hooded seal, a large, spotted species. The males of the species unfold and inflate a nostril during the mating season, creating a red 'hood' to show off with. 'The hooded seal is used to giving birth on ice floes at sea. That is a very mobile and unpredictable system, so the nursing period is extremely short: four days after birth, the pup has doubled its weight and the mother abandons it. I'm not sure the Vlieland sandbank would be a good alternative for such animals: in the Arctic you rarely see them on land.'

'The walrus might cope better with warmth than we think'



'Many walrus stick together on small islands. They lie so close together that some of them get squashed.'

♦ Photo Shutterstock

In spite of a ban on commercial hunting in 2007, hooded seal numbers are going down. The nearest population east of Greenland went down by 90 per cent in 50 years. Their continued decline in numbers is probably because the sea ice is shrinking and the seal nurseries are getting closer to land, making it easier for polar bears to seize the pups.

Out of options

As the sea warms up even more, Aarts expects that the hooded seal will move further north. The biologist wants to use a computer model to predict the behaviour of seals in a warmer climate. 'Most seal species are found around the polar regions. The theory is that they are faster in cold water than the fish they prey on.' Fish are cold-blooded and are therefore slower in the cold than the warm-blooded seal. 'In warmer water, fish outswim the seals. By moving further north, seals retain their advantage over their prey.' 'But there are limits to how far they can move, of course,' adds Aarts. If the warming continues, the habitat of the hooded seal – on the edge of the sea ice – will shrink further. 'I expect that animals will get lost more often and end up on our coast.' Brasseur doubts whether seals can move further north anyway. 'Besides warming, their movements depend on what humans do at sea. If the North Pole becomes navigable, there will be more ships, oil rigs and fisheries. And that will chase the seals away.' All in all, the times are changing for walrus and seals. But whereas the walrus seems to have the option of heading for warmer climes, it is not certain that the northern seal species like the hooded seal can do that. Nothing more has been seen of the mother and pup on Vlieland this spring. If we do see more hooded seals here, it would mean they can't find anywhere else to settle. And that's not a good sign. ■

Biography of Hiang Tjeng Thung

THE FIRST PROFESSOR OF VIROLOGY

The eldest son of a Chinese-Indonesian businessman became the world's first professor of Virology. His biographer Frans Glissenaar talks about how that happened. Text Roelof Kleis

'As far as I know, Holland now leads the world in being the first country to elect a professor exclusively for viruses,' said the British plant diseases expert and virologist Sir Frederick Bawden in 1950. The professor of Virology was Hiang Tjeng Thung, and the occasion was his inauguration in Wageningen, a frontrunner in virus research at the time. Which was thanks to Thung, a Chinese-Indonesian researcher who is hardly remembered here now.

But Thung has recently been rescued from oblivion with the publication by freelance journalist Frans Glissenaar of a hefty tome about his life and work: *Tussen de vier zeeën* (Between the four seas). The book's subtitle is *The life of Thung Tjeng Hiang (1897-1960)*, with the family name first, in line with Chinese custom. This is the first biography of a Wageningen scientist, so the Special Collections department of the library is dedicating an exhibition to Thung. WUR was given Thung's archive this summer: 10 boxes full of letters and documents, a goldmine that Glissenaar has studied exhaustively over the past few years.

The idea of a biography came from the professor's descendants, says Glissenaar. He was approached in the autumn of 2019 by Thung's daughter Mady Thung

(96). At that point, Glissenaar had never heard of the once eminent virologist. But there's a reason why Thung's daughter knocked at his door. 'I've written several books about the Dutch East Indies, including a biography of Ernest Douwes Dekker, a great-nephew of the famous Dutch author Multatuli, who played a key role in the nationalist movement in the Dutch East Indies. Initially, Mady's older brother Paul, a professor at Leiden, was going to write the biography. 'But he didn't manage. Paul, who had his father's archive, died in 2016.'

Glissenaar did not have time for the task immediately, but saw at once that Thung was a fascinating figure. 'Mady had told me a bit about who her father was and what he had done. I was intrigued by the fact that he was of Chinese origin, and had moved to the Netherlands and married a Dutch woman. At that point I had no idea that he had worked in Wageningen.'

Overseas

A few months later, when Covid-19 broke out, the fact that Thung was a virologist made the job even more interesting. And there was no lack of material. 'Thung kept all his correspondence, not only with his family but also with all the scientists he was in touch with. I think he rarely if ever threw out a letter, and he also kept a lot of copies of letters he sent himself.'

Hiang Tjeng Thung was born on West Java in 1897. He came from a well-to-do Chinese family that had been living on West Java for generations. His father was the youngest in a family of nine boys, and had a rice mill

'THUNG HAD INCREDIBLY GOOD SOCIAL SKILLS'



and a tea plantation. ‘Many of his uncles were rich and prominent Chinese businessmen,’ says Glissenaar. In 1916, Thung was sent to Wageningen to study agriculture at the National College of Agriculture, Horticulture and Forestry, the forerunner of today’s Wageningen University. Studying overseas was expensive. ‘His father couldn’t finance it alone. That’s why his uncles chipped in.’ This is a recurring pattern, says Glissenaar. ‘Thung often ran out of money throughout his life. He was a big spender and was constantly asking his family for more money.’ According to Glissenaar, that affected his relationships with his brothers and sisters. ‘They thought he’d been sent to the Netherlands for the sake of the family and would come back later to help them. But that never happened. He did work for the tobacco plantations in the Dutch East

Indies for a long time, but in a different area, not where his family lived. He got away with that because his uncles took him under their wing. They could see that he was clever and had a big network at several levels, which was useful for them.’

Thung completed his Wageningen degree in phases, with intervals in between. In his third year he took time off to study Philosophy and Sinology in Leiden, where he became overworked. To rest and recover, he went to stay in Gennep, in Limburg with the family of a pastor who knew one of Thung’s teachers in Leiden, and whose wife Fernanda was the daughter of a plantation manager in the Dutch East Indies. The couple had two young children, but it wasn’t a happy marriage, says Glissenaar. By contrast, Hiang and Fernanda got on very well and fell in love. ‘She then got a divorce, which was a major drama of course, particularly in those days. And her children were taken away from her by court order. She didn’t see them for a long time, although that worked out okay in the end.’ Thung took up his agricultural studies again after a few diversions, and graduated in 1925 from the Agricultural College, nine years after first arriving in Wageningen. Now married to Fernanda, he got a job as an assistant in the newly established Institute for Mycology and Potato Research at the Binnenhaven, led by Professor of Plant Pathology Hendrik Quanjer. With Quanjer as his supervisor, Thung got his PhD (with distinction) three years later for a groundbreaking study of the potato leafroll virus.

Postcards

His PhD research created the basis for Thung’s career as a virologist, which progressed further in the Dutch East Indies at the Royal Dutch Tobacco testing station and the Institute for Plant Diseases in Buitenzorg (now Bogor). Glissenaar: ‘He did a lot of research on tobacco viruses. Of course it was largely geared to combating and preventing viral diseases, but he also did his own research on how those viruses work. He corresponded



Visit of Queen Juliana to the Institute for Phytopathology on the occasion of 75 years of National Agricultural Education in September 1951.

‘HE DID HIS OWN RESEARCH ON HOW TOBACCO VIRUSES WORK’

'HIS PALLBEARERS WERE REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL THE WAGENINGEN STUDENT SOCIETIES'

about that with virologists elsewhere, particularly in England. That gave him a big international network.' After World War II, Thung was briefly professor of Agriculture at the new University of Indonesia, before he was invited to the Netherlands to lead the Virology department of the planned new Institute for Plant Pathological Research (IPO) in Wageningen. The job came with an Extraordinary Professorship in Virology at the Agricultural College, the pioneering appointment in 1950 with which this article began.

Six years later, Thung's 'extraordinary' position was exchanged for a chair-holding professorship and Virology became a degree subject in its own right at the Agricultural College. He no longer had much time for his own research, and was now primarily a manager and an organizer. 'He travelled a lot around the world, and lots of scientists came to Wageningen from other countries for varying lengths of time. There was a lot of exchange. The lab in Wageningen was highly regarded, as was Thung himself. It helped that he had very strong social skills. An American virologist who wanted to travel around Europe after doing some work in Wageningen found a postcard from Thung in every hotel room he stayed in. That was the kind of thing he did, and of course it was much appreciated. Everyone who knew him was crazy about the man. He liked a joke and messing around, and enjoyed socializing and excursions. He was good at all that.'

Cigars

Thung only led his chair group for four years. He died of a heart attack in November 1960. 'He had had a weak heart for a while,' says Glissenaar. 'He was a heavy smoker. A Chinese doctor friend of his wrote to him regularly to tell him to stop smoking, but he took no notice. And it wasn't easy of course: he was part of the tobacco lobby. He was involved in the tobacco industry's very first conference in Amsterdam. Whenever he visited foreign associates, he took them a box of Dutch cigars.'

Thung's popularity was reflected in the two-kilometre-long funeral cortege when he was buried in Wagen-



Photo WUR Library

ingen. His pallbearers were representatives of all the Wageningen student societies. All the papers reported his death and his wife Fernanda received hundreds of messages of condolence from all around the world. But he nevertheless got forgotten with the passing of the years. Now Glissenaar's book and the library's exhibition are finally doing him justice. ■

Tussen de vier zeeën. Het leven van Thung Tjeng Hiang (1897-1960). Frans Glissenaar | Uitgeverij Verloren | 29 euros

H6, a classic student house

FALLING PIANOS, 'DEN MATES' AND AUNT DIEN

A book came out last month about the student house H6 (Herenstraat 6). It's called *Heb je ooit zo'n stuk gezien?* (Ever seen a hunk like that before?) *Resource* paid a visit to the residents and delved into the history of the house with them. A house that the sign above the door says is 'exclusively for gentlemen', where a certain Aunt Dien still calls the shots 50 years after her death. Text Luuk Zegers

On the wall of the 'gentlemen's room' on the ground floor hangs a painting of a woman giving you a penetrating stare through her winged spectacles. She is Everdiena Hendrika van Laar, better known as Aunt Dien. 'An important person from our history,' says Wytse Doude van Troostwijk (23). Over a cup of coffee, he and his housemates Remus Bende (21) and Myko Lamers (19) talk about their house's illustrious history. 'Aunt Dien was the landlady who rented rooms to students from 1937. You didn't mess with her: apparently, she was very strict. H6 residents weren't allowed any women visitors, for example. And yet they loved her, because she had a heart of gold.'

Bende adds: 'Aunt Dien lived in part of what is now our kitchen. She made coffee every morning and everyone came down for it. She created a sense

of community among the residents.' In 1962, Aunt Dien was driven like a queen by coach to the Ceres clubhouse to be inaugurated as the 'society landlady'. When she moved out of H6 to Emmapark in 1962, she still dropped in every day to make the coffee. 'That became a typical H6 tradition,' says Doude van Troostwijk. 'Aunt Dien died in 1969, but everyone who's at home stills has coffee at 10:30.' And 25 years after her death, another generation of H6 residents succeeded in getting a new street behind the house named after her: the Tante Diensteege.

Cat and mouse

Notwithstanding her key role, the book is about more than just Aunt Dien. It starts with a brief history of the house itself, which was built in 1738-1739 for Lubbert Adolf Torck (mayor of Wagen-

ingen and namesake of the Torckpark). This is followed by chapters covering five-year periods, each written by people who lived in the house at the time, interspersed with chapters about important people in the history of H6. 'It provides glimpses of the spirit of the times and what student life was like through the years,' says Doude van Troostwijk. 'Our chapter is mainly

Centenary

The idea of a jubilee book came up in 2017, when H6 was celebrating its 100th anniversary. But the ball only really started rolling in 2022, when an editorial board was formed. When the book was written, it turned out that the 100th anniversary had to be taken with a big pinch of salt. As a matter of fact, H6 was a family home for a long time, and a baby was even born in the house in 1957. Since 1958, when a room becomes free, only (male) Ceres members are invited to take up residence. 'H6 has only been a student house in the true sense of the word since the 1950s,' say the editors.



From left to right: Myko Lamers, Remus Bende and Wytse Doude van Troostwijk • Photo Guy Ackermans

about H6 in Covid times. Games of cat and mouse with the police in order to go to parties during the lockdown, for instance.'

A lot has changed in H6 over the years. Before 1965, for example, no drinking was allowed – you did that at the clubhouse. By 1971, that had presumably changed, given that when the house song was written, its first line was '*H6, H6, H6 gaat aan de fles!*' (H6 is taking to the bottle, ed.). And whereas women were not welcome in the house in Aunt Dien's time, their presence later became more normal. Bende: 'There were traditions around that as well. As the girlfriend of an H6er, you had to "cook your way in" – i.e. cook for the whole house. WUR President Sjoukje Heimovaara did that in the 1980s.'

Sharing a room has been a tradition in H6 for 50 years, and is still the norm. Doude van Troostwijk: 'Of the 16 people living here, 10 share a room. Your fellow residents are your housemates, and your roommate is known as your "den mate".' Bende: 'I've been den mates

with Matt for three years. Room-sharing is unusual these days, but you do develop a strong bond this way.'

Falling pianos

Over the years, many H6ers have belonged to the rowing club Argo or to Malac Banda, the Ceres gypsy band. Doude van Troostwijk: 'Since the Argonauts had to get up early to train while the band members were playing into the small hours of the morning, they were often at odds with each other.' The link with Argo led to two boats being named after Aunt Dien. 'One of them is

up in the attic,' says Doude van Troostwijk proudly. 'The other one is at Argo and is still rowed in by H6ers in the Varsity race.'

When the last Malac Banda member left H6, his piano was ceremonially thrown out of the window. Since then, departing housemates find a free old piano somewhere and carry it up to the top floor with their cohort, and throw it out of the window. Doude: 'That's the reason for the sign outside saying "Beware: falling pianos". Of course we make sure people keep a safe distance.' ■

The book Heb je ooit zo'n stuk gezien is now for sale exclusively from Kniphorst bookshop, and can be ordered from maetschapH6@gmail.com or jevaner@xs4all.nl.

'Everyone who's at home still has coffee together at 10:30 every day'

Humans are part of nature too

MARRIAGE WITH A FOREST

'It's a flaw in our thinking that we treat nature and humans as two separate things.' Welcome to *The Forest that Belongs to Itself*. Two WUR students are volunteers there and are looking for a new etiquette for relations between humans and forests. Text Ilja Bouwknegt

Take a walk in the woods around Maarn in the Utrechtse Heuvelrug nature area, and you might walk straight past it: *The Forest that Belongs to Itself*. The trees and plants here are no different to those in the surrounding woods, and the birds sound just the same. But people have no say over what happens on these five hectares. *The Forest that Belongs to Itself* foundation (number 9 in the Dutch daily newspaper *Trouw*'s Sustainable 100 this year) has sought to legally establish nature's rights here for the first time in the Netherlands. WUR student Tobias Werner (25) and former WUR student Joke ter Stege (29) work here as volunteers. Werner is writing his Master's thesis on the forest, and Joke is involved at a 'more philosophical' level.

Act of redemption

The forest, which lies within the Utrechtse Heuvelrug national park, has been under the foundation's management for 10 years. Not that there is going to be any real managing: the foundation's aim is to grant rights to the forest via the legal route. To find a precedent for this they had to delve into the history books. 'We end up in the period during the Dutch Revolt [1568-1648],' says

Tobias Werner, a Master's student of Environmental Sciences who is writing his thesis on the forest. 'Just after the start of the war, William the Silent signed the Act of Redemption for the forest of The Hague, because the citizens of The Hague were worried that the forest was in danger of being felled. The Act irrevocably forbids any felling in the forest for economic gain.' The act is still in force. *The Forest that Belongs to Itself* foundation has used this precedent to draw up a legal document for the forest. Here too, felling for financial gain is forbidden for eternity. 'In practice, it means that we have two obligations: the owner commits to managing the forest in the forest's best interests, and that obligation remains in force if the forest changes hands. I see it as a kind of marriage contract between the land and the owner,' says Werner.

Joke ter Stege, an ex-student of International Land and Water Management, got involved in *The Forest that Belongs to Itself* after an inspiring talk with someone in the train on the way back from a climate protest at Schiphol. 'I don't have any legal background; I got involved more from the philosophical angle. My ques-

'PEOPLE ARE WELCOME
HERE, BUT THEY HAVE
NO SAY OVER THESE FIVE
HECTARES'

tion is always: how do we put the ecosystem at the heart of things, rather than humans? Humans are animals and are part of a greater whole. It is a flaw in our thinking that we treat nature and humans as two separate things,' says Ter Stege. 'I think it's great that *The Forest that Belongs to Itself* kind of questions people about how they look at the world around them. Then you are not just preoccupied with "me" and the individual: you shift from ego to eco.' According to Werner and Ter Stege, that people don't see themselves as part of nature is also the reason why so little is done about the climate problem, even though scientists come up with lots of solutions. Ter Stege: 'The problem is not that we don't have any technical solutions, but how we think about the world around us.'

Human-mushroom

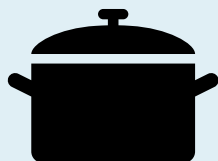
Although the forest belongs to itself, visitors are welcome. 'Our foundation works to establish a reciprocal relationship between people and the environment,' says Werner. 'Human-tree, human-plant, human-mushroom... That kind of relationship can't develop if you

keep people out of a patch of land like this. It's important that people can come here but at the same time, that they don't have any say over these five hectares. Everything in the Netherlands is so intensively regulated. But not this bit of forest. I like that idea. When I'm here, I feel the peacefulness of it.'

'*The Forest that Belongs to Itself* has been in existence for about three years now, but we are still working out what kind of rights "nature's rights" actually are,' says Ter Stege. 'There is no precedent in the Netherlands, so we've got to figure that out for ourselves,' says Werner. 'The search for new etiquette for relations with the environment which allow for more than just "being" nature is crucial if we are to establish "Rights of Nature" in the Netherlands on a larger scale.' Ter Stege adds: 'Conceptually, you can go in various directions, but at this stage we are just trying things out. We already know so much: now we want to go into action. That's what *The Forest that Belongs to Itself* means to me.' ■



Tobias Werner in the forest that's not his either. The sign says: 'I can manage without people; can you manage without me?' • Photo Ilja Bouwknegt



Flavours of WUR

Pizza Kiwi (Dutch Pizza)

You encounter all the flavours of the world in our WUR community. Student Serag* (27), from the Netherlands, combines his love of Italian food with his favourite fruit: the kiwi.

Ingredients (for 2 people) :

- 1 pack readymade pizza dough with pizza sauce
- 150g grated cheese
- 1 ball mozzarella
- 2 green kiwis (yellow ones are okay too)

'We love Italian cuisine in the Netherlands: it's easy, tasty and affordable. Personally I'm a big fan of kiwis, so I decided to combine these two favourites. And that's how this recipe came about: pizza with kiwi. About 10 of my friends have already tasted it, and they all liked it. Kiwis are normally sweet but baking them gives them a hint of sourness, which works well together with the other flavours. And by the way, did you know that just one kiwi provides your daily requirement of vitamin C? I get that this kind of adaptation of recipes could be a touchy subject for Italians, so I would like to challenge them to come up with their

own interpretation of a Dutch dish. We're calling this masterpiece Dutch Pizza.'

- 1 Heat the oven to the required temperature according to the pizza pack.
- 2 Lay a sheet of baking paper on a baking tray.
- 3 Slowly roll the dough out on the baking paper until it's rectangular in shape.
- 4 Flatten the dough with a rolling pin.
- 5 Use a fork to raise the edges of the dough so the sauce can't escape.
- 6 Spread the pizza sauce over the dough.
- 7 Wash the kiwis and slice them thinly. I keep the skin on for more flavour.
- 8 Spread the kiwi slices evenly over the pizza.

- 9 Sprinkle grated cheese over the pizza without burying the kiwis.
- 10 Tear the mozzarella and scatter it over the pizza.
- 11 Option (if the budget allows): sprinkle with Italian herbs.
- 12 Bake the pizza until it looks good to eat.

*Name and degree programme known to the editors



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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, like Nicole Samioti (24), a Bachelor's student of Food Technology who is a dog sitter.

Text Steven Snijders

'Through the Petbnb platform, I get in touch with dog owners who could use some help. I offer different services, such as just a one-off walk, pet-sitting at their house, or having the dog to stay at my house for a few days. The rate depends on the service too. For a

'In Greece we've got 15 dogs, all strays we kind of found somewhere'

walk, it's just six euros, while an over-night stay is 20 euros. There are both cats and dogs on this platform, but I just do dog-sitting. I have a profile in which I introduce myself and describe my experience with dogs. Owners then contact you. Sometimes we meet first to get to know each other and talk about the dog's needs. I started doing this in 2020 alongside my studies. It's easy to combine with my degree programme, which requires quite some self-study. I often work from home in the morning and go to the university after a lunch-hour walk.'

'I'm from Greece, where I live in the countryside with a big garden. We have

15 dogs there, all strays that we kind of found somewhere. Some of them have some kind of trauma and can be nervous or bark at every noise. I'm not a therapist who aims to "fix" those dogs, but I want to give them a better life. 'So I grew up with dogs, but I didn't bring a dog with me to Wageningen. To keep a dog myself, I would need more space than my current student room. Especially when a dog gets the zoomies, they need more space to run around. To be honest, I would also need a steadier income and a more settled life in general to give a dog the care and support it deserves. Right now, taking care of dogs also helps me bring some structure into my life.'

Nicole is a dog sitter

Who: Nicole Samioti (24)

What: Dog-sitting

Why? 'Simple: I love dogs'

Pay: Varying, e.g. 15 euro for a day's dog-sitting



Photo Nicole Samioti

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

Irregular opening hours

Christmas holidays 2023/2024



WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Forum is open for WUR employees and students

From Saturday 23 December 2023 until Monday 8 January 2024

		Building	Library	Student Service Centre	Servicepoint IT	Restaurant	Grand Cafe	Wageningen in'to Languages
Saturday - Sunday	9-10 December	9 am - 7 pm	9 am - 7 pm	10 am - 2:30 pm	closed	closed	closed	closed
Monday - Thursday	11-14 December	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 11 pm	10 am - 2:30 pm	8:30 am - 5 pm	11 am - 3 pm	8 am - 5 pm	10 am - 2 pm
Friday	15 December	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 10 pm	10 am - 2:30 pm	8:30 am - 5 pm	11 am - 3 pm	8 am - 5 pm	closed
Saturday - Sunday	16-17 December	9 am - 7 pm	9 am - 7 pm	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Monday - Thursday	18-21 December	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 11 pm	10 am - 2:30 pm	8:30 am - 5 pm	11 am - 3 pm	8 am - 5 pm	10 am - 2 pm
Friday	22 December	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 10 pm	10 am - 2:30 pm	8:30 am - 5 pm	11 am - 3 pm	8 am - 5 pm	closed
Saturday - Sunday	23-24 December	10 am - 6 pm	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Christmas	25-26 December	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Wednesday - Friday	27-29 December	8 am - 8 pm	8 am - 6 pm	closed	8:30 am - 5 pm	closed	10 am - 2 pm	closed
Saturday - Sunday	30-31 December	10 am - 6 pm	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
New Yearsday	1 January	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed
Tuesday	2 January	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 6 pm	closed	8:30 am - 5 pm	closed	10 am - 5 pm	closed
Wednesday - Friday	3-5 January	8 am - 11 pm	8 am - 6 pm	12:30 am - 2:30 pm	8:30 am - 5 pm	closed	10 am - 5 pm	closed
Saturday - Sunday	6-7 January	10 am - 6 pm	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed	closed

From 2 until 5 January, Actio building is open for WUR employees

Other buildings are closed during this period. Exceptions may apply to your own building for the performance of statutory tasks and/or necessary building-related work. Check local building communication.

Contact servicedesk.facilities@wur.nl if you have any questions regarding the arrangements made in your building.

Together we can save energy!

More information

wur.eu/energy-saving



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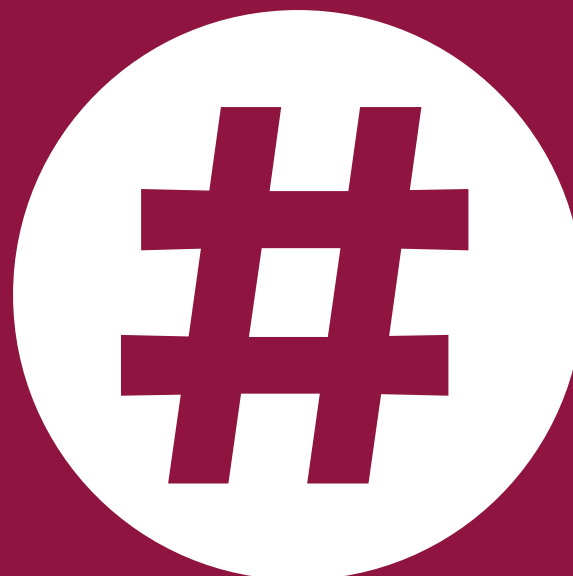
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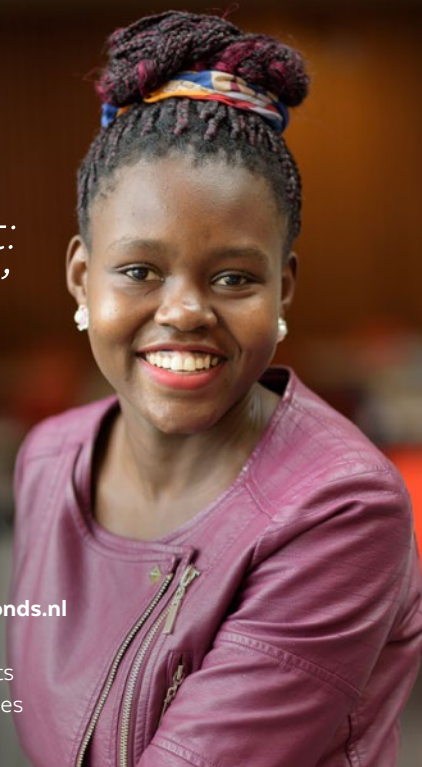
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Resource is the independent medium for students and staff at Wageningen University & Research. *Resource* reports and interprets the news and gives the context. New articles are posted daily on resource-online.nl. The magazine is published every fortnight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

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

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Pieter Nelleke (Human Nutrition & Health): 'I came across it by accident when I was performing an ultrasound test on a trial subject' • Photo Shutterstock



NEW ORGAN DISCOVERED

With the discovery of the part of the gut responsible for 'gut feeling', nutritional researchers at WUR have a possible explanation for obesity.

We thought we pretty much had the human body covered, but that turns out not to be the case. A team in Human Nutrition & Health have discovered a new organ hidden within our winding intestinal system, which they have dubbed the 'feeling' gut. The news has stunned the medical world.

'It is incredible that medics and spin doctors have failed to see this organ for so long,' says team leader Pieter Nelleke. 'Apparently it has been there all the time. It even makes sounds. I came across it by accident when I was performing an ultrasound test on someone in a trial. Suddenly I saw something on the screen that looked suspiciously like an exclamation mark.'

At first, Nelleke thought it must be a neglected stomach ulcer, possibly caused by festering feelings of dissatisfaction with the body politic. But further research revealed this was definitely something new. That was three months ago. The discovery has been kept under

wraps since then. But now a nationwide survey shows at least two million Dutch people have voted using the newly discovered organ.

It is not clear why not all Dutch have this same 'gut feeling'. 'We are still in the speculative stage but we are

wondering about a link with obesity. Not in the sense that only fat people have a functioning 'feeling' gut, but the two phenomena

might have the same underlying cause.' And that is good news. According to Nelleke, there is an obvious remedy: a proper diet.

'It is incredible that medics and spin doctors have failed to spot this organ for so long'