



Illuster

Oct 2019

FUTURE FOOD

Tomorrow's menu

Rens Voesenek on the
future of our food



Changing eating habits

Discussion between council
member and researcher

Playing with genes

The ethics of food

FOREWORD

Dinner stories

What's for dinner tonight? For me, that's basically the most important question on any given day. I spend my holidays exploring French supermarkets, and I love discussing the latest recipes with my friends.

The other day, I found myself wondering why Utrecht University doesn't have an Eating Sciences faculty. After all, food plays an important role in many scientific disciplines. For example, a biologist might be working to develop a future-proof lettuce variety, while a historian might want to find out what the 17th-century nouveau riche ate for dinner. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, I got a call from my former alma mater, University College Utrecht, asking whether I would be willing to host a lecture as part of their new interdisciplinary course on food. Turns out my idea was right on the nose!

For me, food is all about storytelling, and I wanted to share that with my students. I told them lots of food-related stories, and waited to see whether I'd got the message across. Suddenly, a student raised her hand and said, 'A guy came over for dinner the other day, and I wanted to impress him, so I decided to make a risotto.' We all looked at her with bated breath. 'So then what happened?' She sighed and said, 'Turns out he was a far better cook than me.'

We spent the rest of the afternoon sharing food stories. What do you eat when you've run out of money? What do you eat at four in the morning? I'd love to know which food stories you'll be sharing at the dinner table this evening. Naturally, I hope you'll get inspired by this food-themed edition of Illuster first.



Sake Slootweg writes a regular recipe column for the De Volkskrant newspaper and works in Utrecht University's Sustainability programme.



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RELIGIOUS STUDIES

You are what you eat

Pig's feet from Europe sold at a market in Madina, a multi-ethnic neighbourhood in Accra, Ghana. It seems a bit of a provocation at first sight, since all that pork on prominent display might upset the delicate balance between Muslims and Christians. Food offers an interesting starting point to examine the differences and potential for conflict between people. After all, what we do and don't eat reflects our identity. Would the sale of pork at a market where meat sales were previously largely controlled by Muslims cause tensions between ethnic groups? This photo was taken by Rashida Adum-Atta, a Ghanaian who conducts research on food and religion in pluralistic societies in collaboration with Professor Birgit Meyer (Philosophy and Religious Studies).

Visit religiousmatters.nl for more information on the Religious Matters in an Entangled World research project.

Short

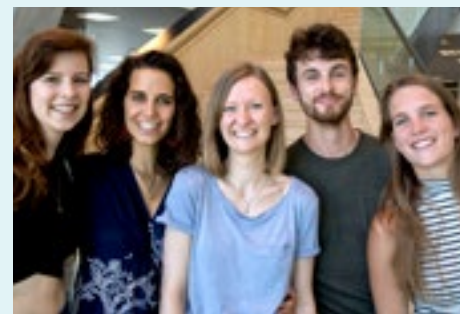


AWARD

Vliegenthart Thesis Award goes to Felix Kümmerer

The Utrecht University Fund traditionally presents the Vliegenthart Thesis Award during University Day, the annual reunion event for Utrecht University alumni. The previous edition this March saw the prize presented to Felix Kümmerer (24), Molecular and Cellular Life Sciences student. The jury unanimously selected his thesis from among twelve nominations, citing the effective presentation and discussion of his results and the clearly-worded summary for laypeople. Adriana Martínez Silgado and Esther van Loon also got honourable mentions.

See bit.ly/vliegenthartscriptieprijs for details, and make sure to save the date for the next University Day: Saturday 28 March 2020.



CUTTING CONSUMPTION

Simply vegetarian

Excessive meat consumption is generally bad for the environment. So how do we reduce meat consumption, both in society at large and here at the university? A group of students participating in an interdisciplinary course developed the 'Simply Vegetarian' project. The group came up with various strategies to increase the appeal of vegetarian alternatives. Their efforts proved successful, as the project led to a rise in vegetarian product sales at the various UU canteens. Last year, the group received the student award for Outstanding and Societal Contributions at the official opening of the academic year.

SPECIAL

Illuster, graduation edition



What do all UU alumni have in common? They graduated from Utrecht University — either recently or longer ago — and receive Illuster twice a year. We have created a special, festive edition of Illuster for our most recent graduates, which will be presented along with a special alumni tote bag at the official graduation ceremony. The special edition is our way of welcoming new alumni to our community.

Check uu.nl/alumni to make sure your details are up-to-date and receive your copy of Illuster by regular mail or email.

QUOTED

“I believe everyone working to treat and understand anorexia should read anorexia memoirs.”

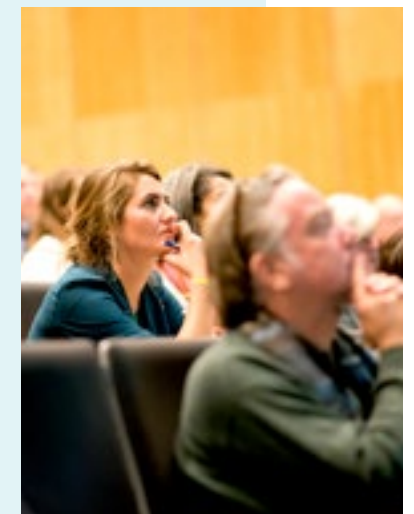


Laureanne Willems

Comparative Literary Studies alumnus (2018) and winner of the 2019 Best Master's Thesis award. Willems' research focused on improving current treatment methods through a better understanding of anorexia.

CARTOON

Argibald



EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

Got a thirst for knowledge?

New knowledge is developing at an extremely rapid pace. In our current knowledge-intensive economy, there are always new things to be learnt. Our Education for professionals helps you acquire all the knowledge and skills you need to ensure sustainable employability throughout your working life. From short courses to Master's degrees or diplomas, Utrecht University offers a wealth of opportunities for lifelong learning. We offer programmes in a wide range of disciplines and in various formats: classroom-based learning, online, or a combination of both. Amongst other fields, we offer a wide range of programmes in the area of education and didactics.

See uu.nl/professionals for a complete overview.



RESEARCH

Words for wine

Earthy, nutty, tight... Wine reviews can seem like mumbo jumbo to those of us that aren't wine connoisseurs. But are they? Research by Ilja Croijmans (Social and Behavioural Sciences) and others suggests this is not the case. The researchers analysed a large number of wine reviews and concluded that the authors — despite differences in their use of language — consistently recognised and described the same qualities in the same wines. They also identified 146 terms specific to wine reviews. While these terms partially overlapped with the glossaries that wine experts study during their training, other words did not feature on these lists. The article includes a proposal for an updated and improved list.

The researchers also developed a 'wine wheel', which is featured on bitly.com/wijnrecensietaal.



EXPERIMENT

Future Food Lab

How does my lunch impact biodiversity? How can we climate-proof our crops? What is nature-inclusive agriculture? Utrecht University's Future Food Lab offers students, researchers, employees and catering staff the opportunity to explore these and other questions. The Educatorium Restaurant recently introduced a special Future Food island with experiments, activities and exhibitions on the theme of healthy, tasty and sustainable food.

Come taste the future! The Educatorium Restaurant is open from 08:30–20:30 from Monday to Thursday and from 08:30–15:00 on Friday.



RESEARCH

Resolutions

Less sweets, more exercise — we all make resolutions to change our behaviour from time to time. However, sticking to them can be difficult in practice. This is not actually that surprising, given the amount of unhealthy temptations we are faced with on a daily basis. Like Denise de Ridder, see page 10, Marieke Adriaanse (Social and Behavioural Sciences) is conducting research on healthy lifestyle and dietary choices. According to Adriaanse, the best results can be achieved by coming up with positive, realistic alternatives to bad choices rather than focusing on what we don't want.

So how do we go about this in practice? Listen to her lecture at bit.ly/sg-goedevoornemens

Utrecht University is proud of its graduates, and our alumni are an important part of Utrecht University's academic community. But where do they all end up? In this section, Illuster presents some major appointments from the last six months.



Lard Friese
Master's degree in Law (1986) has been appointed CEO of Aegon.



Boukje van de Lecq-Meijssen
Master's degree in Dutch Law (1993) has been appointed director of supervisory policy at the State Supervision of Mines.



Han Haitjema
Master's degree in Physics (1985) has been appointed member of the Board of Experts for national measurement standards. Haitjema serves as professor of Dimensions and Surface Metrology of Complex Products at **KU Leuven**.



Hester Duursema
Bachelor's degree in Biology (2004) has been appointed director of Detailhandel Nederland.



Suzanne Hulscher
Master's degree in Physics (1991) and PhD in Physics and Astronomy (1996) has joined the Scientific Council for Government Policy. Hulscher serves as professor of Water Engineering and Management at the University of Twente.



Désirée Majoor
Master's degree in Theatre, Film and Television Studies (1989) has been appointed director of Theater Kikker and Podium Hoge Woerd. Majoor previously served as vice-chair of the Utrecht School of the Arts Executive Board.



Janine Vos
Master's degree in Law (1996) was appointed member of the KLM Supervisory Board.



Emily Ansenk
Master's degree in Art History and Archaeology (1995) was appointed director of the Holland Festival. Ansenk previously served as director of the Kunsthal.



Mieke Ansems
Master's degree in Dutch Law (1994) was appointed director of marketing and communication at the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO-NCW) and the Dutch Federation of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MKB Nederland).



René Bekkers
PhD in Sociology (2004) was inaugurated as professor of Philanthropy at VU University Amsterdam.



Erik van Schie
Master's degree in Physics (1994) was appointed financial director at engineering consultancy company Movares.



Janet Helder
Master's degree in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences (1987) was appointed member of the Employee Insurance Agency Executive Board.



Caspar van den Berg
Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences (2002) was appointed member of the Council for Public Administration.



Hilke Grootelaar
Bachelor's degree in Law (2012), Master's degree in Legal Research (2014) and PhD in Law (2018) took up a position as consultant at Andersson Elffers Felix.

Want to be included in our Hall of Fame?

Email us your new position at alumni@uu.nl. Who knows? You could see yourself in the next edition of Illuster, or be named Alumnus of the Month (posted monthly on Facebook). Follow us on facebook.com/AlumniUniversiteitUtrecht.



FOOD

Council member and researcher work to change behaviour

Double interview

Professor of Psychology **Denise de Ridder** assesses how people can be subtly persuaded (nudged) to make healthy choices. Utrecht council member for Public Health **Victor Everhardt** closely follows her research and, where possible, applies the results to improve the health of his city and residents. A conversation between two alumni.

text **Ronnie van Veen** image **Bas van Hattum**

Upon entering Utrecht's municipal offices, De Ridder points out that the stairs leading from Jaarbeursplein square to the main entrance are difficult to navigate due to the low, deep steps. The Utrecht council member agrees. "They do look nice, though", De Ridder hastens to add, "and I'll keep taking the stairs. It's a routine I try to internalise — always take the stairs."

De Ridder and Everhardt have known each other for several years. They have met on multiple occasions to discuss ways of stimulating healthier lifestyles and changing unhealthy eating habits. Amongst other methods, De Ridder applies nudges to achieve these behavioural changes. 'We apply nudging to push people towards healthier choices. Ultimately, we want them to reach a point where healthy options seem entirely natural and familiar. We recently launched a research project in supermarkets. Every time a customer approaches the vegetable section, a screen lights up showing a face looking down at the fresh produce. When the customer picks up a product, the person on the screen nods approvingly. It may sound

simple, and it is, but the strategy works in practice. People don't experience these nudges as patronising or condescending, and even tend to find them enjoyable and inviting. That's exactly what we're aiming for. We want to respect people's autonomy, while familiarising them with the idea of healthy choices.'

Earlier this year, the researcher and alderman attempted to persuade hungry travellers at Utrecht's Central Station to choose healthy snacks. 'There really isn't that much healthy food on offer at the station', De Ridder concludes. 'You're basically surrounded by unhealthy options, from cheese snacks to deep fried meat. In order to provide some counterbalance, the psychologist and her research group set up a food car in front of the stairs on Jaarbeursplein square. Passengers were offered the option of several healthy pies for the price of 1.75 euros.

De Ridder: 'We obviously did some research in advance to figure out what people might be interested in buying. In the end, we decided on two healthy pies: an apple pie and a savoury pie filled with ratatouille. Everyone agreed those would be healthy, tasty and affordable snacks. The Jaarbeursplein square also seemed like a suitable location: a great place to get a quick bite before taking the train. Ultimately, we didn't sell many. People just walked past our stand without buying anything.' 'So it wasn't the right location then?' Everhardt asks. 'We're still trying ►►



Denise de Ridder (1959) is a Psychology alumnus. She obtained her doctorate in 1991 and was appointed professor eleven years later. De Ridder leads various research projects in the area of self-regulation, behavioural modification and nudging. She serves as director of the Self-Regulation Lab and as senior editor at *Health Psychology Review*, a leading psychology magazine. She also writes a monthly column on behaviour for the NRC Handelsblad newspaper.



» to figure out what went wrong, but that might very well be it. However, people who did buy the pies really liked them. So maybe we need to get even closer to the action...’ ‘What about the main station hall?’ the alderman suggests. ‘I can’t just walk into the station and say: we’re going to open a store that sells healthy pies. The municipality doesn’t get to decide what the retail space is used for. Obviously, we could always invite Utrecht Central Station and



NS (Dutch Railways) to discuss the options and find out whether they would be open to the idea. That’s also part of what we do: facilitating, supporting and opening doors. We have a large network at our disposal, and we can employ it to get these kinds of things done. I think it could be an interesting dialogue.’

De Ridder likes the idea of meeting with NS. Ultimately, the UU professor hopes healthy snacks will become integrated in the existing range of options. ‘That’s the direction we should be taking. I’m not necessarily talking about our pies, but it would be good to have healthy alternatives. For example, you could sell them through automatic snack dispensers. It’s not about replacing unhealthy foods — we don’t want to ban deep-fried snacks. People wouldn’t like that; they want freedom of choice. Still, a better balance between healthy and unhealthy options is definitely desirable, especially in places like train stations, where people eat on the go. It’s an achievable goal, as the example of the Vegetarische Slager (Vegetarian Butcher) illustrates. Since its acquisition by

“There really isn’t that much healthy food on offer at the station. You’re basically surrounded by unhealthy options, from cheese snacks to deep fried meat.”

“It might be a while before we see scooters delivering vegetarian pies across Utrecht.”

Unilever, the company’s products have been on display in supermarkets between the meat products.

‘Alcohol-free beer went through the same stages’, Everhardt adds. ‘These days, there are numerous alcohol-free options. The TivoliVredenburg concert venue sells alcohol-free beer on tap, which would have been unthinkable just five years ago. It’s now become a regular alternative to other beers, and isn’t seen as a replacement. Most importantly, there’s demand for the product, which is always the bottom line for any business. There has to be a potential for profit.’

As the council member points out, the successful modification of eating habits — especially amongst young people — also depends on another key factor. ‘Young people expect products to be delivered straight to their doorstep. That leads to the question: what sort of products are meal delivery services selling? In many cases, the range of options is limited to fast food. The term has a negative connotation, which isn’t necessarily justified — there is such a thing as healthy fast food.’

De Ridder: ‘I agree. I think we should try to latch on to the popularity of fast food. We need to get past the notion that fast food is necessarily unhealthy.’



Victor Everhardt (1968) is a Law and History alumnus. Amongst other positions, he served as a policy advisor at the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and as chair of the Trimbos Institute Youth Centre. Everhardt has represented the D66 political party as a council member for the municipality of Utrecht since 2010.

Everhardt: ‘It’s a process. Although it might be a while before we see scooters delivering vegetarian pies across Utrecht, you can tell things are changing. I have a 17-year-old son. Not that long ago, I practically had to force him to eat healthier foods. Kids don’t have much patience when it comes to their meals. At some point, he discovered a trendy new fast food you can order from home: poké bowls, filled with raw fish, rice and vegetables. He loves it. It’s fast food, but it’s healthy. All of a sudden, my 17-year-old son is experimenting with rice and seaweed at home, all thanks to a healthy fast food. If we can make healthy eating accessible, we can get people to change their diets. I genuinely believe that.’

‘Me too’, De Ridder concurs. ‘We need to offer people healthy options without pointing fingers or judging. Last but not least, healthy options need to taste good, so that people are inclined to make the right choice. It should come naturally, like taking the stairs to the municipal offices.’ «



Same degree ...

Jurjen Greep (40)

Degree programme: Veterinary medicine

Position: senior inspector at the Netherlands Food and Consumer Product Safety Authority (NVWA)

Slaughterhouses are familiar ground for me. I'm a veterinary medicine alumnus and veterinarian, so I realise that might come as a bit of a surprise to most people.

On the other hand, it's not that far-fetched: the degree programme isn't just about healing sick animals. You also learn about animal well-being, food safety and food quality. Those are all key aspects of my job as NVWA inspector. After all, animal health and food quality go hand in hand with public health. Still, I must admit the transition from veterinarian to inspector may not have been the most obvious career path. Although I'd always dreamt of being a veterinarian as a child — I ended up taking care of any wounded birds in our neighbourhood — I was unable to combine the night and weekend shifts with my personal life. I decided I needed a good alternative, which I found at the NVWA. My background as a veterinarian helps me to quickly assess the animals' well-being and determine whether they are ready for slaughter.

Aukje Geurtsen (36)

Degree programme: Veterinary medicine

Position: product manager at De Heus Voeders

As a child, you could always find me hanging around the young calves. Looking back, my parents' farm was a real veterinary training ground. I learned how to tell healthy animals from sick ones at an early age and got to watch the veterinarian work from up close. Once I got my degree, I could finally start work as a veterinarian myself. Having treated every animal disease under the sun for eight years, I now work as product manager at an animal feed manufacturer. I focus on product development and innovation. Although it might seem like a big career switch at first, animal health is ultimately all about diet. Cows can develop all sorts of health problems if you give them the wrong type of feed. That means livestock farmers need to know what type of feed each animal needs during the various phases of its life. I currently travel around the country as part of my job, advising farmers on feed to help them prevent animal health problems. Veterinary medicine still plays an important role in my day-to-day work, and I get a wonderfully nostalgic feeling every time I see young calves in a cattle shed.

... different career



text Sabine de Lucht
image Ivar Pel

Jan Beuving

2009

Obtains his Bachelor's in Mathematics

Obtains his Master's in History and Philosophy of Science

2010

Graduates from Konings-theateracademie in Den Bosch.

2013

Finalist in Leids Cabaret Festival

Winner of Annie M.G. Schmidt Prize.



2014

First cabaret show 'Don't count on anything' (with UU alumnus Dan van Eijk)



2016

'Tangent' cabaret show (with Tom Dicke)



2017

Wins Neerlands Hoop cabaret prize for 'Tangent'

2018

'Rotation' cabaret show (with Tom Dicke)



2019

Utrecht University Alumnus of the Year



'Mathematics is a recurring theme'

'A genuine bright mind who is not afraid to verge off the beaten path and contributes to society.' Jan Beuving is honoured to have been named Alumnus of the Year. Still, he's quick to put things in perspective: 'I make people laugh, but plumbers do more useful work.' One thing is for sure though, the comedian and songwriter is not afraid to go off the beaten track.

I remember telling my secondary school dean I just wanted to solve puzzles all day. He said I should definitely study mathematics. As it turned out, he was right. I really fit in with my fellow students, especially at the A-Eskwadraat study society.'

However, Jan also dreamt of the stage from an early age. Mesmerised by school plays, he decided to join the theatre group. 'Giving presentations in class scared me to death, but I've always felt comfortable on stage. Despite my love of theatre, I couldn't bring myself to audition for theatre school. I was the good boy who went off to study mathematics like he was supposed to.'

Jan must have visited the local theatre over a hundred times a year during his student days. 'I was fascinated by the stories and language they used. A performance by comedian Kees Torn proved life-changing. I thought: 'hang on a minute, I didn't know you could do that on stage?!' As time

went on, I found myself performing songs at more and more parties. For years, I'd perform a musical overview of the year at the annual Faculty of Physics Christmas drinks.'

Six years in, his parents enquired whether Jan was actually planning to finish his studies, so he did just that. 'I would have regretted it for the rest of my life if I hadn't. I'm really proud of that degree: it was the hardest thing I've ever studied for.'

However, mathematics wasn't his true calling. 'I remember seeing another student working his head off to get a PhD position, and I realised I'd never have that much passion for the subject. Instead, Jan decided to study as a lyricist. During one particularly stressful translation assignment, he suddenly recalled that fellow student slaving away for a PhD position. 'That's when it hit me: "I actually do have that level of passion, just in a different area."'

Jan signed up for the Leids Cabaret Festival in 2013. He made it to the finals and got to go on tour with the other finalists. 'I remember getting my driver's licence. The driving instructor told me, "You think you know how to drive now, but you don't. You're just allowed to, that's all." The same applies to the theatre. I may have finished my studies, but you don't really learn how to perform until you've spent time on stage. Just try performing in front of people who would rather be doing something else at some drab conference hall. You'd be surprised how much you learn.'

Jan has some advice for recent graduates: 'Try and keep a broad perspective. Here at the university, you learn how to gather and channel knowledge. Unfortunately, you also run the risk of getting tunnel vision.'

"I try to bring some science to the stage."

Try to connect with the people around you: talk to the baker and the people at your local ice cream place. That kind of interaction automatically broadens your vision. Although I ended up doing something completely different in the end, I've managed to put my studies to good use. I try to bring some science to the stage. Mathematics is a recurring theme, that's also reflected in the structure of my songs. The things I learned at university and — more importantly — my own personal development during my time there really keep me grounded. I'm very grateful to have had that experience.' «



Jan Beuving (1982) Having obtained a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics and a Master's degree in History and Philosophy of Science at Utrecht University, Jan Beuving studied to become a lyricist at the Konings-theateracademie theatre academy in Den Bosch. Since his graduation, Jan has worked as a lyricist and performed as a comedian and cabaret artist in theatres throughout the country. He also writes a regular science column for the Trouw newspaper and hosts a weekly language item on NPO Radio 1. Jan Beuving's songs have received various awards, including the Annie M.G. Schmidt Prize (2012 and 2018) and the Willem Wilmink Prize (2017).

text Hanneke Olivier
image Robin Alysha Clemens

Raw meat: a safe pet food?

text **Sanne van de Grift**
image **iStock**

A growing number of pet owners are feeding their dogs or cats raw meat-based pet foods instead of dry food on the assumption that this diet is more natural. However, this carries risks for both pet and pet owner. Dr Ronald Jan Corbee is currently working to identify these risks. The K.F. Hein Fund has been supporting his efforts through the Utrecht University Fund. ‘Raw meat can contain all sorts of harmful bacteria, parasites and hormones. While carnivores are somewhat equipped to process these unwanted elements, humans can get seriously ill if they fail to observe the necessary hygiene. We aim to give pet owners

effective advice, so that they know what to look out for when feeding their pets raw meat. For example, how should you store and defrost raw pet foods and clean the feeding bowls?’ This summer, Corbee and his team visited supermarkets across the Netherlands to buy frozen raw pet foods.

They then conducted extensive culture tests at the lab in Utrecht. ‘We found harmful bacteria in every product, although the concentrations varied widely. We also found salmonella, and some products even contained thyroid hormones. That happens when the manufacturer doesn’t remove the thyroid glands and can be extremely hazardous to our pets’ health.’ While many veterinarians recommend avoiding raw meat-based pet foods altogether, Corbee doesn’t take such a hard line: ‘Some animals do very well on raw meat. Still, pet owners need to be cautious. For example, you should always clean up your pet’s faeces, as they contain these harmful bacteria. Keep in mind that the bacteria are also on their tongue every time they lick your face. The same goes for their fur, which they obviously clean with that same tongue.’ Corbee is grateful for the funding provided by the K.F. Hein Fund. ‘From my perspective as a researcher, multiple financiers offer greater independence than industry funding.’ ◀

In addition to providing financial support, the Utrecht University Fund also supports academic projects by submitting grant applications to other funds. The Utrecht University Fund has a long-standing relationship with the K.F. Hein Fund.

“You’ll find bacteria on the tongue, in the fur and in the faeces.”



RIGHTTOLEARN FUND

Talent deserves support

Everyone should get the education they need to shape their own future. Talent should be the deciding factor, not the amount of money we have or the family we were born into. Former Rector Magnificus Professor Bert van der Zwaan and his wife Wilma Wessels established the RightToLearn Fund (ROLF) in an effort to provide talented students with the support they need. ROLF is one of several registered funds operating under the overarching Utrecht University Fund. The fund aims to eliminate the barriers that keep people in disadvantaged groups from making the most of their talents. Wilma Wessels: ‘Everyone has the right to learn. It doesn’t matter what kind of programme you’re taking; education is a basic need.’

Want to help make sure that everyone gets an opportunity to develop their talents? Support the ROLF via uu.nl/rechttoplern

SWEATERS

Record number of new Student Friends



Friends of the Utrecht University Fund are not limited to alumni. Thanks to a special promotional campaign during the introduction

weeks in September, close to 1900 new first-year students signed up as Student Friends. As new fund ambassadors, the students all received a UU sweater. Their modest contributions enable us to organise activities by and for students. Naturally, we hope they will continue to support us as alumni. Our Friends’ annual 30-euro contribution enables us to set up grants and other special projects. As a Friend, you will also enjoy other great benefits, such as free access to the Botanical Gardens and the University Museum and a discount on membership at the Olympus sports centre. Are you interested in becoming a Friend of the Utrecht University Fund as well?

Visit uu.nl/vriend to read about the benefits and sign up as a Friend

USC alumni join Utrecht 1636

The Utrecht University Fund manages a total of 27 registered funds, each of which is dedicated to a specific objective determined by the founder. One of these funds is the USC Scholarship Fund, which provides grants to Utrecht Student Corps (USC) members seeking to carry out a special study or research

project. The fund was established by USC alumni, who provide the necessary financial resources together with various sponsors and the USC. Their regular contributions (a minimum of 500 euros per year) also entitle them to membership of the Utrecht 1636 network: the exclusive club for loyal Utrecht University Fund donors.

Want to join Utrecht 1636 and donate to the USC Scholarship Fund or another registered fund? Visit uu.nl/utrecht1636



Food

The future of our food

'We'll have to produce seventy percent more food by 2050 in order to feed the global population, which will have grown to 10 or 11 billion people by that point', explains Professor of Biology **Rens Voesenek**. Some 150 researchers at Utrecht University are currently developing solutions to this monumental challenge.

text Armand Heijnen *image* Ed van Rijswijk

**“Producing
more food as
sustainably as
possible.”**

“Our appetite for quinoa salads means we have to import these grains from developing countries.”

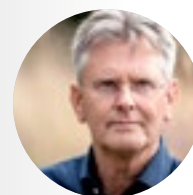
We conduct a great deal of food-related research at Utrecht University. Five years ago, this prompted an effort to prioritise food-related research at Utrecht University and seek out structural interdisciplinary collaboration. These efforts have since led to the establishment of our Future Food hub. A hub is defined as a specific research area in which the university collaborates on societal issues with businesses and institutions.

‘There’s still so much research to be done when it comes to food’, explains Future Food hub chair Voeselek. ‘The imminent food shortage presents an especially serious problem. While we need to produce more food, we must also do so in a sustainable manner. Obviously, climate change is not exactly helping in that regard; extreme heat, droughts, floods ... There are clearly some major challenges ahead.’

Voeselek’s own research focuses on immunising crops against the extreme weather patterns caused by climate change. ‘Once a potato has been underwater longer than 24 hours, it is no longer fit for consumption. If we can modify potatoes to the point where they can survive water for 48 hours, we’ll have made a major breakthrough. We do so by

carefully examining natural processes, learning from nature. Various existing plants flourish in underwater or desert environments. Which specific qualities allow them to thrive in those circumstances? Could we ultimately introduce these to our food crops? Our researchers recently described a new mechanism that could lead to the development of flood-proof crops. The resulting article has been submitted to a renowned scientific journal. We’ve spent six years on the project so far, and we’ll have our hands full with the next steps for years to come.

Still, many of the solutions developed by biologists tend to make people a bit uncomfortable. Industrially grown cucumbers, genetically modified strawberries, lab meat, insect proteins. ‘There’s still a lot of ignorance and scaremongering in that respect’, Voeselek suspects. However, he also admits that the scientific community could do better in terms of communicating with the general public. ‘I think biologists could have done a better job of explaining what they do. For example, we’ve made great strides in terms of genome editing. We can now insert specific genomes with great precision, which is far more reliable than traditional cross-breeding. There’s also no scientific evidence that genetic manipulation is harmful to the global ecosystem or human health. Explaining that narrative carefully is absolutely crucial.’



Professor Laurens Voeselek studied Plant Ecophysiology at Radboud University Nijmegen and obtained his doctorate with a thesis entitled ‘Adaptations of Rumex in flooding gradients’. He has served as professor of Plant Ecophysiology at Utrecht University since 1999. Voeselek serves as vice-dean of the Faculty of Science and as chair of the Future Food hub.

However, plant physiologists are not the only group of researchers collaborating in the Future Food hub. ‘All our faculties are taking part’, Voeselek explains. ‘The hub has evolved into a genuine academic community. Our programmes focus on issues that affect the entire food chain, “from soil to plate”. Ultimately, we aim to achieve that seventy percent increase in food production by 2050.’

Voeselek mentions the example of grasslands, a dominant landscape element throughout the Netherlands. ‘They might look nice and green, but those meadows are basically biodiversity deserts. The associated lack of insects is causing a dramatic decline in meadow bird populations’, he explains. ‘We submitted a grant application to the National Science Agenda in order to study whether more herbaceous grasslands would improve the climate for insects and birds. Existing evidence suggests that more diverse vegetation can improve the grasslands’ tolerance for stress. For example, this would make it easier to survive the kind of drought we experienced last year. There’s also evidence that it would considerably improve the health of grazing cows and the quality of their milk.’ This is just one example of interdisciplinary collaboration that would not have been possible without Future Food.

So, will we hit that seventy percent target? Voeselek is optimistic: ‘Our ability to solve new problems is part of human nature. I think we’re on the verge of a global transition. We don’t really have a choice; we’ll destroy the planet if we don’t change

course. Thankfully, our food has become far more diverse and healthy over the years. Manufacturers and retailers are contributing to these processes in response to popular demand. Consumers are also far more aware of their diets these days. People are choosing more vegetarian alternatives and watching their carbohydrate intake, while large segments of the population have sworn off industrially farmed chickens. Thirty-five percent of global food production is currently wasted, even though it could have been used to feed a lot of hungry people. Greater awareness of that fact will inevitably lead to different production and consumption patterns. We’ll have to develop social innovations as well as technical and product-related ones.’

“Our grasslands are basically biodiversity deserts.”

Obviously, the freedom to eat vegetarian meals twice a week is somewhat of a luxury. Many segments of the population have no access to food whatsoever. ‘Our appetite for quinoa salads means we have to import these grains from developing countries. The soil they’re cultivated on should probably have been used to grow food for the local population. Shorter food supply chains will therefore also play a role in the necessary solutions; as part of this effort, Future Food has joined forces with Sodexo to set up an experimental restaurant in the Educatorium. This Future Food Lab offers us the opportunity to test lots of new processes and products.’ »



“We’ve made major strides in terms of genome editing.”

» The food problems facing our world are so monumental they cannot be solved by a single scientific discipline or university, thus cooperation is more crucial than ever. Voesenek: ‘That’s why we’re collaborating with so many different disciplines. We’re conducting joint projects within the university as well as various trans-disciplinary collaborations. In addition to Wageningen and other universities, we are also working with a lot of small and larger businesses, ministries and civic organisations. We’ll need them all if we are to achieve the desired transition.’ «



May contain traces of..

Around half a million Dutch citizens suffer from some form of food allergy. As those with a peanut allergy are only too aware, foods containing even the smallest trace of peanuts can be deadly. That means carefully reading the ingredient list and warnings, which aren’t always clear. Does a chocolate bar that ‘may contain traces of peanuts’ have a smaller chance of containing nuts than one with the warning ‘may contain peanuts’?

While consumers tend to think so, this does not prove to be the case in practice, as Associate Professor Bregje Holleman explains. ‘There can be huge differences between what manufacturers originally intended to communicate, what retailers print on labels and how consumers then interpret these warnings.’ Holleman and a team from Utrecht University’s Faculty of Humanities, University Medical Centre

Utrecht and the research centre of the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) are working to assess various aspects of food allergy information. For example, the team identifies the various types of allergy information on food products and determines how this information is then interpreted by consumers (with and without allergies).

As initial results seem to indicate, there are vast differences of interpretation between manufacturers and consumers. ‘Manufacturers often mean the same things with different warnings, but fail to realise how they are interpreted by actual consumers.’ The team is currently interviewing food manufacturers, retailers and industry bodies in an effort to determine how the allergy information on food products is developed and formulated. According to

Holleman, ‘This should help us identify the various processes and decisions underlying these allergy warnings. We also want to find out which knowledge and follow-up studies will be needed in order to ensure more consistent allergy information in future.’ «

”How many peanuts does your chocolate bar really contain?”



Dr. Bregje Holleman (51) is Associate Professor of Language and Communication and an alumnus of the General Arts programme.

FREE ONLINE COURSE

In-depth look at the global food problem

The issue of inequality is key to the food problems facing our world. For example, United Nations (UN) figures show some 800 million people in 88 countries are suffering from ‘acute’ hunger. However, we also know over 650 million people are suffering from obesity.

In an effort to explore the main causes and potential solutions to our current food crisis in greater depth, the Future Food hub has developed a free online course on food production and consumption issues. The course features more than ten Utrecht University researchers discussing a range of issues, including the food shortage and healthy dietary choices. With varied videos, reading materials,



quizzes and tests, participants will acquire broad knowledge of the factors underlying our global food problem.

Are you ready for an in-depth look at the global food problem? Want to find out what you can do to help? Sign up at coursera.org/learn/solutions-future-food-problem.

Language: English **When:** throughout the year, with an official start date on 11 November **Duration:** ± twelve hours (five weeks of study time, three/four hours per week) **Cost:** free

Making the Netherlands a bit healthier



Birgit Vulkers studied Interdisciplinary Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam (2015) and obtained her Master's in Social Policy and Social Interventions at Utrecht University in 2016. She currently serves as a policy consultant at the nationwide JOGG foundation, which strives to keep young people at healthy weight levels.

text **Lisanne van Sadelhoff**
image **Robin Alysha Clemens**

Health and sports are important to Birgit Vulkers (27), who also has a strong sense of social responsibility. These qualities are all crucial to her current job. As a consultant at JOGG, she strives to build a better society in which every child can grow up in a healthy environment.

I'm assuming you never decided: I'm going to work for JOGG when I grow up. 'You're right. I didn't really have any big dreams as a child. I did spend a lot of time playing sports and exercising. I did a lot of rowing, and I currently play tennis and cycle. I knew I wanted to help build a better world from an early age, and I get the opportunity to do just that at JOGG.

So what does JOGG do? 'Obesity is a social problem that urgently needs to be addressed. I advise municipalities at both strategic and process level, helping them to create a healthy environment for young people. In addition to healthy sports programmes and school canteens, that involves making sure there are enough water taps and playgrounds in every neighbourhood. In many places, young people simply don't have any healthy options. I'm not saying people should necessarily limit their diets to fruit, vegetables and water, but you do need to

make sure that healthy alternatives are available. Unfortunately, that's not always the case right now.'

How does your academic background help you in your current job? 'My Master's degree has been really valuable. I thought it was important to make sure I had a lot of theoretical knowledge before starting work as a consultant. Still, I realised early on that I want to apply all that theoretical knowledge in practice. I'm just not the type to stay in a research bubble all the time. I want to connect people, make things happen in the real world and see the concrete results.'

What do you enjoy most about your work? 'Encouraging people to connect with each other and other parties, such as care professionals — physiotherapists, family doctors, dieticians — and people from the business sector or neighbourhood, such as neighbourhood coaches. I enjoy the challenge of linking theory and practice. Research can tell us how to do things, but it's not that easy to bend the real world to your will in practice.'

What's next?

'I'm happy where I am for now. We'll be assessing our projects in the short term to figure out what can be improved on. I also want to rise up the ranks as a consultant here at JOGG; I'm quite ambitious. I don't know where I'll be in ten years, but I do hope the country will be a bit healthier by the time I retire.' «

“Obesity is a social problem.”

A longer version of this interview will also be published on DUB, Utrecht University's independent news site. Visit dub.uu.nl for all the latest news and background information on our academic community.

Playing with genes

Should we breed cows without horns? Are free-range chickens actually good for the environment? When it comes to ethical issues — especially food-related ones — there are no simple yes or no answers. This became abundantly clear to alumnus and Associate Professor Franck Meijboom over the course of his research on livestock gene editing.

text **Sabine de Lucht**
illustration **Flow design**



In addition to expressing our individual preferences, our dietary choices have a social, ethical and ecological impact. One thing is abundantly clear, as Meijboom explains: integrated collaboration will be crucial in future if we aim to produce enough food without harming the environment. No one-issue debates. ‘If you exclusively focus on animal rights, you may lose sight of the food safety and environmental aspects. Making sure we take all those aspects into account is the most important ethical issue when it comes to food, alongside distribution and waste. In other words, how can we ensure more sustainable and animal-friendly production methods while respecting individual freedom of choice?’



Dr. Franck L.B. Meijboom is 43 years old and studied theology and ethics at Utrecht University and the University of Aberdeen (United Kingdom). He serves as associate professor at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and works at Utrecht University's Ethics Institute.

“It is ethical to combine pig and spinach genes?”

The latter issue is proving especially difficult to navigate. After all, the individual freedom to eat what we want is rooted in both society and other existing traditions. For example, vegans and vegetarians are generally outspoken about their preferences, while many other Dutch citizens are eager to get their barbecues out on the first day of summer. That diversity is valuable, Meijboom explains. ‘The things we eat and the way we eat them reflect our personalities. However, we didn’t always have this much freedom of choice. Fish used to be a staple food for people who lived near seas or rivers. Those that lived further from the water simply didn’t have that much access. These days, you can buy anything you want.’ However, western consumers are becoming increasingly discerning. ‘Now that we no longer have to worry about food security, we are free to focus on food quality. We have high standards when it comes to food, and these standards are not limited to safety aspects. They also concern the parts of the animal we do and don’t eat; here in the Netherlands, we’d rather throw a pig’s snout in the rubbish bin than eat it.’

Careful cross-breeding

Our discerning views on food are also reflected in our approach to cross-breeding and genetic modification, Meijboom points out. ‘Our chickens would be a good case in point. They’ve been cross-bred to grow large breasts, which is the kind of meat we like eating most. However, we haven’t really given much thought to the resulting

effects on animal welfare. These questions are more pressing when it comes to genetic modification: is it really ethically and socially responsible to combine spinach and pig genes?’ Conversely, ‘playing with genes’ can also be beneficial to animal welfare. For example, gene editing — the process of modifying animal genes — allows us to breed hornless cows, eliminating the need for dehorning (and thus a great deal of animal suffering). This example was drawn from Meijboom’s own research, which focuses on the responsible modification of animal genes. Meijboom: ‘We’re working with Wageningen University & Research to assess whether (and, if so, under which conditions) gene editing can be socially embedded in a responsible and acceptable manner. It’s a tricky debate, all the more because gene editing is far more accurate than existing breeding methods. At the same time, it raises ethical questions that never have a purely ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer.

Amongst other goals, the project aims to develop an assessment framework to help us discuss and evaluate the targeted modification of animal genes. The does not relate to the assessment of a single case or procedure. The future of livestock farming and technology’s impact on our farmers will also have to be examined. In addition to breeding farms, the assessment framework must therefore also factor in the interests of NGOs, farmers and government authorities. In other words, integrated collaboration is set to be the most important ingredient of our future food. ◀



EATING TOGETHER

What’s for dinner?

1990 Many people will fondly remember the days when they shared meals with their housemates in a student house. However, this wasn’t always a part of the student experience. The kitchens in the Ina BoudierBakkerlaan student complex — completed in the late nineteen sixties — were originally only intended for preparing and eating breakfast. Students were expected to have dinner at a student cafeteria or student society. The kitchens were then expanded in the nineteen seventies, enabling students to share communal meals. The students in this photo lived in a student house on Goedestraat, and were immortalised as part of a photo series on the Wittevrouwen neighbourhood. They have just finished eating, and we have no way of knowing what was for dinner. Perhaps they enjoyed some Italian food, which was just becoming popular in the Netherlands at the time, or maybe some other world cuisine?

2019 Food trucks at Utrecht Science Park, crowded terraces on Neude square and bustling coffee shops. Students in Utrecht seem to be making good use of the city’s many culinary options. Still, the students in this student house at Ina Boudier-Bakkerlaan usually eat at home, often together. They don’t really have any specific arrangements in place — things usually come together spontaneously or are decided through the house WhatsApp group on the day itself. Once the food is on the table, the conversations start, from jokes about their ongoing mouse problem to more serious issues such as gender equality. So what sorts of food do they cook? ‘It’s basically always some form of pasta or rice.’ The latter is also on today’s menu: rice and curry. It might seem a bit monotonous, but things aren’t that bad in practice. ‘We’ve also been eating a lot of pancakes since Paula moved in.’

text Jurgen Sijbrandij
image Ellen Kok,
Jurgen Sijbrandij





Tips

COMPETITION

New University Song

Do you have it in you to write the new University Song? The Executive Board is seeking a new sing-along for academic ceremonies. Students, staff and alumni are welcome to submit lyrics or an entirely new song. The song should communicate a sense of fun and pride and describe UU's significance to our entire academic community. Before you start, check the website to see which conditions the new song must meet.

Check uu.nl/universiteitslied. You can submit your entry up until 15 November 2019.



PARNASSOS ANNIVERSARY

Forward Festival

2019 marks the 25th anniversary of Parnassos, Utrecht University's cultural centre. To celebrate this special occasion, we will be organising the future-themed Forward Festival. Enjoy music, theatre, dance and visual art by Parnassos teachers and students. Look ahead, explore — or lose yourself in — the future, and leave a message for 2044 in our time capsule.

11 through 14 December 2019
<http://bit.ly/parnassos-forwardfestival>

REUNION

University Day 2020

Save the date: Saturday 28 March marks University Day, the annual reunion for all Utrecht University alumni. Meet your fellow alumni and hear all about the latest UU research projects! The event's theme and programme are still under wraps for now. Check uu.nl/udag for updates.

FACULTY CLUB

The university's living room

Did you know all Utrecht Alumni are entitled to membership of the Faculty Club, the university's 'living room' in the heart of Utrecht's city centre? The venue offers plenty of space for both business meetings and informal get-togethers, and regularly hosts jazz nights and specially-themed dinners. For example, the Faculty Club will be organising a wine tasting session on the evening of 20 October and a wild game dinner on 20 November. Specially-themed happy hours are held every first Thursday of the month from 17:00 to 19:00.

Utrecht University Fund alumni and donors receive a discount on membership. Become a member at uu.nl/organisatie/faculty-club



STUDIUM GENERALE LECTURE SERIES

Food Challenge

How do your daily routines and habits affect your diet? Various researchers will be exploring this question over the course



of a Studium Generale Science Café on Monday 18 November. The event will feature health scientist Dr Maartje Poelman (UU), brain researcher Dr Floor van Meer (LEI) and cultural historian Jon Verriet, MA (RU). To make things a bit more interesting, Studium Generale challenges you to assess your own eating habits in the run-up to the Science Café.

Monday 18 November, Tivoli-Vredenburg (Hertz). Free, no registration (first come, first served)



Photo: Simona Estrella

NEW MERCHANDISE

Wear your alma mater!

Utrecht University’s range of sweaters, T-shirts, tote bags and gifts has been renewed, and is now available for sale. The products are manufactured in a responsible manner with consideration for people and the environment. All the more reason to wear your UU sweater with pride! We also offer romper suits for the alumni of the future.

Available online at utrechtuniversitystore.nl. The merchandise is also on sale at the University Hall and the Administration Building.

BOOK

Philosophical recipes

Communal meals offer an opportunity to connect, talk and exchange ideas. This notion inspired UU researcher Jeroen Hopster (Philosophy) to write *Food for Thought: Global Philosophy at the Kitchen Table*. The philosophical cookbook is based on a meeting of minds between philosophers from around the world and a group of young people. The group discusses some key 21st century issues: choice overload, human connections and loneliness in a Facebook age and staying true to yourself. The book was based on the Food for Thought television series, available on NPO Start.

Illustrer is giving away three copies of *Food for Thought* (in Dutch). Answer the following question before our 30 November deadline: what is the title of Hopster’s book on ‘what if’ questions? Send in your answer to bitly.com/illustrerwinactie. See uitgeverijtenhave.nl/boek/foodforthought for more details on the book and purchasing options

ALUMNI ACTIVITY

Themed dinners

What better way to get to know your fellow alumni than a delicious dinner. The Hague alumni network organises three specially-themed dinners for alumni every year. In addition to the three-course menu, guests can look forward to a lecture by an exciting guest speaker and a lively debate. A food-themed alumni

night will also be held in Amsterdam. Dr Ilja Croijmans will be holding an exclusive alumni lecture on smell, taste and language on Thursday 24 October. His observations should come in handy during the subsequent dinner in the dark. After all, what happens to your sense of taste if you can’t see a thing?

If you live in the Amsterdam or The Hague area, you will have received an email inviting you to these events. If you did not receive an invitation, please let us know via alumni@uu.nl. The dates are also featured in our calendar: uu.nl/alumni/agenda.



Win this book!

Solving the global food problem

text Jurgen Sijbrandij

“My name is Emanuela Cattaneo. I learned the value of sustainability from an early age. My mother is an agronomist, my father is an engineer for green buildings, and my brother works as an engineer in the renewable energy sector. In other words, it’s no wonder I ended up in my current job!

Ensuring a sustainable food supply for a global population is a complex challenge. We can resolve the issue more effectively if we invest in strong, resilient communities that produce food in a more efficient, environmentally friendly manner, reach trade agreements and teach consumers to adopt more sustainable habits.

We don’t really have ‘typical work days’ here. Sometimes I do office work, other days I do fieldwork. I end up in all sorts of remote locations. The people I deal with in my work are going through hardship and pain, but they still have the strength to look ahead.

You need an adaptable and open attitude to migrate to another country. Moving to Kenya was an exciting adventure, and it feels like a second home now. Nairobi reminds me of Rome in many ways, with its friendly atmosphere, good weather,

great food and chaotic traffic. On the other hand, it is a lot further from my friends and family in Italy compared to the Netherlands.

My favourite memories of Utrecht include barbecues in Wilhelminapark, King’s Day celebrations and moving house with a cargo bike. A lot of the skills I learned at UU come in handy at work: doing research and applying the results in the real world, working hard without giving up and using sustainability-related methods such as carbon footprinting, lifecycle analyses and cost-benefit analyses. My Master’s education really helped me get a foothold in the sustainability sector.

Most importantly, the Master’s helped me build my current social network. I haven’t met any UU alumni in Kenya yet, but I’m still in touch with graduates from around the world. Not only are they good friends, they also help me develop professionally.’ «

Message from ... Kenya



Emanuela Cattaneo completed her Master’s programme in Sustainable Development in 2015. She currently works in Kenya as a Regional Environmental Consultant for the UN’s World Food Programme, where she originally started as an intern focused on ecological sustainability.

Moving house with a cargo bike

The way to a man's heart ...

I heard this story about a man who said the same thing after every dinner: 'Wife, I've never before eaten anything this delicious!' (As you can tell, the story is set in an age when men expected to be fed. It's also set far later than the hunter-gatherer period, so it's safe to assume he hadn't been out shopping for ingredients either.)

That's an interesting statement from a mathematical perspective. Assuming the man's sense of taste — like his statements — was consistent, the woman's cooking would have to improve on a daily basis. That's quite a feat.

Could we also argue that the woman's cooking was the same every day? After all, if the wife were to cook at the same Michelin-star level every day, the man would enjoy the best food of his life on a daily basis. But does that make the statement 'I've never eaten anything this delicious before' true?

It does not. The man says: 'Wife, I've never eaten anything this delicious before!', which must be a lie if the woman's cooking is the same every day. (The only exception would be the very first day she cooks for him. On that day, however, she could not

have cooked as well as the previous day.) This is basically the linguistic version of the difference between $>$ (greater than) and \geq (greater than or equal to). ' $1 \geq 1$ ' is an accurate statement, ' $1 > 1$ ' is not. If he had said 'Wife, I've never eaten better' or 'Wife, this was the most delicious thing I've ever eaten', his compliment would basically have the same value. However, he would have relieved his wife of the obligation to improve her cooking on a daily basis. In other words, mind your language when you're praising your partner's cooking.

Although there's no accounting for taste, the word 'delicious' is subject to comparison, in that something can be (or be perceived as) more delicious than something else. This doesn't apply in the case of 'vegetarian'. The statement 'that was the most vegetarian meal I've ever had' can only be true once. A vegetarian diet may be good for the environment, but it also makes for less exciting mathematics.

Jan Beuving

Jan studied at Utrecht University for nine years, completing a Bachelor's programme in Mathematics (2008) and a Master's programme in the History and Philosophy of Science (2009). After that, he became a comedian and cabaret artist. See janbeuving.nl for his performance schedule.

