

Illuster

Sophie van Gool

Fighting for equal pay

The economy is an ecosystem

According to Nicolas Poolen

WEALTH

Should we be setting limits on wealth?

Ingrid Robeyns on the legitimacy
of a wealth threshold



FOREWORD

Revealing the levers

Money is like water to a fish for us. As far as we're concerned, it's just always been there. If it weren't for money, we wouldn't have access to entertainment, housing or food. The sooner you learn to manage it, the better, in other words.

However, hardly anyone ever stops to wonder how it's actually created. That also goes for economists. Classical economists tended to view money as a 'veil' draped over the economy, covering the things that actually matter: machinery, factory halls and labour. A veil of no consequence, not worth examining. I used to be one of those economists myself. That was before I witnessed booming Asian economies being crushed by the financial crises in the late 1990s. Crucial sustainable investments were unable to find funding. Then, the global economy almost collapsed due to financial engineering in 2008.

Since those events, many have come to view money as an important 'lever' controlling social developments. Driven by the urgent need for a more sustainable world, Dutch banks, insurers and pension funds are now endorsing

the Paris climate goals and the European Central Bank is moving to introduce more sustainable monetary policies.

These efforts will be crucial if we aim to keep our feet dry here in the Netherlands. If we stop behaving like goldfish now, we might not have to live underwater in the future.



Rens van Tilburg

Sustainable Finance Lab Director
Utrecht University

"Happiness doesn't have to come at the expense of profit, on the contrary"



26 Money can buy happiness, right?!

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COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

Glass treasures

These ornate and lifelike glass models of sea creatures are 140 years old and were once used as teaching aids. They were created by Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka, father and son. The University Museum (UMU) has a unique collection of these 'Blaschka models'. They were acquired by the university in 1882 following Professor Hubrecht's appointment as professor of zoology. Hubrecht wanted to use the models as teaching aids so his students could get a sense of life underwater.

Marine invertebrates like jellyfish and snails contain a lot of water and are difficult to store as specimens; they tend to quickly lose their form and natural colour when suspended in formaldehyde. Glass offers a perfect medium to portray these translucent and shimmering sea dwellers. The models were made to order for museums and educational institutions in several countries, and are all unique.

The Utrecht University Museum will be restoring and exhibiting this extraordinary collection in its new Blaschka Cabinet, which will be fully customised to accommodate the models. Each model will be showcased like a valuable item of jewellery, offering visitors the chance to admire their beauty from close up and marvel at the wonders of the underwater world, just like Hubrecht's students once did.

words **University Museum**
images **Guido Mocafico**



Help out

The University Museum is set to restore these Blaschka models, but needs the financial support of third parties to do so. Why not help out? Donate via Tikkie by scanning this QR code or visit umu.nl/illustrer for more information. You can adopt your own Blaschka starting at €500. For details, email info@ufonds.nl



Short



DONATE A BENCH

Support the Botanical Gardens:

Looking for a unique, sustainable and personalised gift? If so, why not consider donating a bench to our Botanical Gardens? For example, your donation could mark a birth, anniversary, marriage or retirement. Perhaps you would like to commemorate a beloved friend or family member who passed away. In addition to the bench itself, your €5,000 contribution will also go towards environmental education and biodiversity projects in the Gardens. Dividing your gift into five annual donations will make it tax deductible. Finally, your bench will also feature a nameplate as a sign of gratitude for your donation.

If you would like more information or want to adopt a bench right away, please visit uu.nl/botanic-gardens/friends/donate-a-bank-in-the-gardens

UU RESEARCH AGENDA

A single question can change the world

How can we make sweets less appealing? Why do children scream and shout? Scientific research always starts with a question! Utrecht University and UMC Utrecht engaged with Utrecht residents from all age groups and backgrounds in 2021 to discuss the questions that mattered most to them. The resulting 1,200-plus questions form the basis for the UU Research Agenda. Our researchers are currently working to answer these questions along various lines. This includes a series produced in collaboration with RTV Utrecht, a website and the themes covered in our Studium Generale programme. A magazine with more details on the development of the UU Research Agenda and the various questions has also been published.

Many of the original research questions have already been addressed, and are featured at uu.nl/en/organisation/utrecht-research-agenda



QUOTED

“3.5 million euros for multidisciplinary research is a great boost for our research”



José van Dijck

Distinguished university professor of media and the digital society



AN OPEN OUTLOOK

Unusual collaborations

Challenging future generations: the official motto of the alliance between Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research, Utrecht University and Utrecht University Medical Centre. The Centre for Unusual Collaborations (CUCo) established by the four institutions' respective Young Academies dovetails perfectly with that notion: CUCo researchers seek out unexpected collaborations across disciplinary lines. They are driven by a desire to address social challenges and their own personal sense of curiosity. CUCo encourages researchers to learn from collaborations based on an attitude of openness and humility. The centre supports the unique teams with financial resources, applying an innovative approach to research funding and collaboration.

For more information on CUCo's research, visit unusualcollaborations.com

CARTOON

Argibald





SHARING

Thank you for sharing


The first edition of Sharing Days took place in May 2022. A new initiative by Utrecht University and the Utrecht University Fund, offering various opportunities to contribute to Utrecht University’s growth and prosperity. The event programme included various special encounters in inspiring locations.

Over 400 alumni, students and staff collectively raised €15,000 for a

variety of projects. In addition to financial support, contributors also donated more than 100 hours of volunteer work. President of the Executive Board Anton Pijpers: “I’m proud we’ve managed to organise the first ever edition of Sharing Days. Our academic community can engage with the university and broader society all sorts of ways, and this is an important first step towards raising awareness. I’m looking forward to the next edition in 2023.”

The 2023 edition of Sharing Days is set to take place in the week from 5 to 11 June. For the latest details, visit uu.nl/sharingdays


Utrecht University is proud of each and every one of its graduates, and 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.


 **Marjan Minnesma**
MA in Philosophy (1996)
received the prestigious international Goldman Environmental Prize 2022. The award is considered the Nobel Prize for conservation and climate.


 **Jorissa Neutelings**
MA in General Arts (1995)
has been appointed member of the AT Osborne Advisory Council on Sustainable Infrastructure.


 **Hendrik-Jan Kranenburg**
MA in Veterinary Medicine (2007) and PhD in Veterinary Medicine (2012) has been appointed member of the Financial Services Complaints Tribunal (Kifid) Disputes Tribunal.

 **Ingeborg de Wolf**
PhD in Veterinary Medicine (2001) has been appointed general secretary / director of the Health Council.


 **Eppo Bruins**
MA in Physics (1991) and PhD in Physics (1995) has been appointed chair of the Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation.

 **Marieke Bredenoord-Spoek**
Bachelor of Law (2005) has been appointed counsel at De Brauw Blackstone Westbroek.

 **Niki de Jonge**
MA in Arts Policy and Management (2013) has taken up a new position as fund manager at the TivoliVredenburg Fund.


 **Esther Pijs**
MA in History (1997) was appointed programme director general for Groningen and Subsoil at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate.


 **Andries Kok**
MA in Sociology (2006) and MA in International Relations in a historic context (2008) has been appointed director of Local Government and the Information Society at the Association of Netherlands Municipalities.


 **Beatrice de Graaf**
MA in History (1995) and PhD in Art History (2004) has been appointed chair of the 2023 Libris Literature Prize professional jury. She also won the Arenberg Prize for European History for her book ‘Fighting Terror after Napoleon’.


Want to be ‘named’?

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.

 **Joyce Sylvester**
MA in Communication Science (2004) has been appointed chair of the State Commission against Discrimination and Racism. She was also appointed chair of the Amstel, Gooi and Vecht Water Board.

 **Bertine Lahuis**
MA in Medicine (1994) and PhD in Medicine (2008) will be assuming the role of chair of the Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU) as her predecessor **Margriet Schneider, MA in Medicine (1983) and PhD in Medicine (1998)** takes on the role of vice-chair.

 **Susanne Schilderman**
BA in Governance (2015) and MA in Economics of Public Policy and Management (2017) has been serving as alderman for the municipality of Utrecht since June.

 **Ferry Hagen**
PhD in Life Sciences (2011) has been named Professor by Special Appointment in Fungal Functional Diversity at the University of Amsterdam.

words Tessa
images Bas van Hattum

Help students from the asylum centre to the lecture hall



Ragna Senf (MSc), Inclusion project manager: “I worked as a teacher for many years, my heart’s in education. I think it’s incredibly important that people can keep developing, especially if they end up in a new country due to unforeseen circumstances.”

“We offer refugees education, but they also add value to the university. They broaden our horizons and contribute knowledge, skills and perspectives that we don’t have,” Ragna Senf explains. Senf works as project manager at Inclusion. Inclusion is a Utrecht University programme offering education to refugee students. At Inclusion, it doesn’t matter whether you’ve been in the Netherlands for one day or a bit longer: all refugees are welcome. Asylum seekers with a residence permit can also take part in a traineeship programme.

Inclusion offers students who have fled their countries the opportunity to take undergraduate-level English courses free of charge. Participating lecturers offer one or more refugee students the opportunity

to attend their courses. “Quite a lot of lecturers take part every year and they really appreciate Inclusion students,” Ragna explains. “I’m happy they appreciate the value of Inclusion.”

A normal life

The programme is called Inclusion for a reason; students taking part in the course are welcomed into the UU community. “The students really appreciate the fact that they can immediately pick up their studies here in the Netherlands.” As Ragna explains, it’s also important that they can just be students. “We want them to be able to develop themselves as students, regardless of the situation they happen to find themselves in.”

Over 1,100 refugee students have taken a course at UU in the six years since Inclusion was launched. Inclusion introduced the two-day Restart induction

programme earlier this year to help students prepare. “Just imagine being a student and a refugee. You’re suddenly surrounded by mainly Dutch students who know exactly how everything works: Teams, Blackboard, interacting with the lecturer. It all takes some getting used to.” The students can be in for quite a culture shock: “For example, there are countries where you have to stand up when you address the teacher. If you did that in the Netherlands, you’d definitely get some strange looks. We also expect our students to be critical thinkers, and that applies to everything their lecturers teach them as well. That’s certainly not common practice in a lot of other countries.” Restart tries to prepare the refugee students for these unfamiliar situations.

Like a rolling stone

“As a refugee, you don’t get to choose which part of the Netherlands they’ll send you to. You might be staying in an asylum centre in Groningen, get transferred to Zwolle three weeks later, then have to go somewhere else again when your procedure starts. That’s why we can’t and don’t want to limit our focus to refugee students living in Utrecht. For example, there’s a large group that doesn’t have any cash in their pocket or can’t access their bank account. Travelling to Utrecht can obviously be a problem under those circumstances. Thanks to the Utrecht University Fund donors, we can cover part of their travel expenses.”

Recent developments

For the past two years, Inclusion has also been targeting asylum seekers with a residence permit, who are able to attend traineeships at a UU department. The aim is to help trainees gain work experience in the Netherlands and improve their Dutch along the way. “We hope they will then find paid positions within or outside the university. After all, even highly educated people struggle to find suitable work if they don’t have perfect Dutch language skills or a network here.” The efforts are starting to pay off: Of the five first-wave students to complete a traineeship, four found jobs and the fifth decided to do a Master’s. «

Contribute!

Want to help out too? Contribute to Inclusion, so that even more refugee students have the opportunity to pursue an education at our university. Go to uu.nl/en/organisation/donate/pay-it-forward or scan the QR code to make a direct donation.



FREE TO BE YOURSELF

Elias fled from Lebanon

“Taking a course through Inclusion has opened so many doors for me. I want to let everyone know that such a small thing can make such a huge difference.” Elias Abou Chaaya is from Lebanon and decided to flee to the Netherlands because he wasn’t free to be himself in his native country due to his sexual orientation. Having first started his journey at Inclusion as a refugee student, he is now pursuing a Master’s degree and is proud to be an Inclusion trainee at Utrecht University’s EDI (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion) programme.

While Elias is free to be openly gay here in the Netherlands, he also lost part of himself during the asylum process: “I went through seven asylum centres in two years’ time. That was really tough, and I didn’t really have a lot to do. For example, I wasn’t allowed to get a job. Inclusion gave me the opportunity to be a student and a professional. Inclusion made me feel like I had value as a person again, even though I only started doing it to escape life in the asylum seekers’ centre for a while.”

As an Inclusion trainee at EDI, he worked with Utrecht University of Applied Sciences to organise a shared boat for the Utrecht Canal Pride. As he stood there on the deck of the boat he helped organise, Elias finally felt he could both be himself and contribute something meaningful through work.

Same degree ...

Lisanne Born (27)

Degree programme: Law & Economics
Work: Forensic & Integrity Services consultant at EY

I'm equally interested in law and economics, so taking the Master's in Law & Economics was an easy choice. I applied for an EY selection day while I was graduating. I definitely didn't want to end up working in a skyscraper on the Zuidas, but it was a chance to practice my job application skills. I got there late, but the day itself was a lot of fun. Everyone I talked to reassured me that the workplace culture wasn't anywhere near as rigid and performance-oriented as I thought. I ended up spontaneously signing the contract they offered me at the end of the day. I'm good at setting limits at work. I don't work in my free time. I can achieve everything I want there just fine in 40 hours. I work at the Forensic & Integrity Services department, where we investigate alleged inappropriate behaviour and integrity violations. I have an inquisitive mind and like to get to the bottom of things. I do stumble upon some pretty remarkable stories sometimes, but I obviously can't share them here for confidentiality reasons...

Lars Molenaar (27)

Degree programme: Law & Economics
Work: Director / Co-founder at Goin'

I missed a sense of creativity when I was studying Law, so I decided to take a second Master's in Business Development & Entrepreneurship. At the time, I had no ambitions to set up my own business. It did sound like fun, but also seemed really challenging. I soon discovered how much you can achieve if you just find the right people. A study project with a fellow student evolved into a business. We immediately realised we were kindred spirits have been partners for three years now. Our platform connects new students before they even start at university. They can start connecting with future fellow students as soon as they're admitted. That way, they'll already have 20 friends on the very first day at university. We work for several universities, including Utrecht University. We want to be an ethical platform that doesn't use students' data. That's why universities pay an annual fee to use our service. It's great to make a visible social impact: we help create a better university experience for some 100,000 students. I also really love the freedom that comes with being an entrepreneur!

... different career

2012

Bachelor of Arts, Liberal Arts and Sciences, University College Utrecht



2013

Master of Science in Economics, University of Amsterdam

2018

Established Moonshot

2019

MBA, ESADE Barcelona and University of California, Berkeley



2020

Established Salaristijger, Top Voice LinkedIn, co-host of *I'm Speaking* podcast



2021

Publication of *Waarom vrouwen minder verdienen* (Uitgeverij Business Contact), nominated for Joke Smit incentive award, Prinsjesboekenprijs, longlisted for Most Important Book of the Year, shortlisted for Management Book of the Year 2021, columnist at *Het Financiële Dagblad*

14 November: join us in support of equal pay

Sophie van Gool is co-founder of *Stichting Gelijke Beloning*. The foundation will be organising a national day of action to highlight the gender pay gap on Equal Pay Day (14 November). If you would like more details or are interested in taking part, go to ikverdienmeer.com



Sophie van Gool (1991) obtained her Bachelor's in Liberal Arts and Sciences from University College Utrecht in 2012, followed by a Master's in Economics at the University of Amsterdam. Following an internship at The Boston Consulting Group's Amsterdam office, she served the firm as a consultant from 2014 to 2019. She earned her MBA in 2019. Sophie van Gool established Moonshot in 2018 followed by Salaristijger in 2020. She is an independent economist and author of *Waarom vrouwen minder verdienen* (Why women make less), columnist for *Het Financiële Dagblad* and co-host of the *I'm speaking* podcast. She is focused on equal labour market opportunities and equal pay.

If you are also interested in using your experience to help a new generation, email alumni@uu.nl

‘Number devil’ on a mission

Sophie van Gool loved the Number Devil — a maths book for children — in primary school and was already something of an entrepreneur as a teenager. Her current company Salaristijger and work as an author all bring together her love of numbers, data analysis and social engagement.

Sophie van Gool (30) stresses that she doesn’t have a master plan for her career during our video call. The statement almost sounds a bit strange coming from this successful young economist with a book, newspaper column, podcast and own business to her name. Last but not least, she’s also been a mother for the past nine months. “I’m definitely ambitious and I work really hard,” she laughs, “but I tend to think in small steps.” She showed signs of an entrepreneurial mindset from an early age. “I used to organise parties for the kids at my secondary school. Sometimes we sold as many as 700 tickets. I still get a kick out of building something out of nothing.”

Seeing connections

She always had broad interests and decided to attend University College Utrecht (UCU). “I liked the fact that I didn’t have to limit myself to one subject; you learn to look at things from an interdisciplinary perspective. I took economics, psychology and journalism and also

spent six months studying in Madrid. That international aspect also appealed to me.” Sophie is fascinated by figures, data and their broader social significance, and eventually decided to take a Master’s in Economics. “That was pretty challenging coming out of UCU because I didn’t have enough background in economics.” Nevertheless, she managed to graduate in 2013 and started working as a consultant at Boston Consulting Group in Amsterdam. “At first, it was interesting to quickly gain insight into all sorts of companies’ finances and strategies. You got to learn about all the power dynamics and see how people work together. In the end, though, those companies only wanted my recommendations to help them make or save even more millions. That wasn’t something I was really interested in.”

Addressing injustices

“I also started getting really annoyed about the issues facing women in the corporate world — there are hardly any women at the top, they’re intimidated, discriminated against in terms of pay rises and bonuses, and most organisations don’t have a female-friendly culture. Once I saw how bad it was, I just couldn’t let the issue go. I launched Moonshot as part of a study project during my MBA in Barcelona. I advised companies on creating equal opportunities for women and closing the wage gap. I noticed there was definitely demand for our services and didn’t really feel like going back to the office at all. I ended up resigning from my job, which was a pretty big step at the time. Moonshot’s services were primarily targeted at companies. Salaristijger, the company she runs with UCU alumnus

Erwin Hieltjes, mainly provides support to employees. For example, it helps them navigate salary negotiations.

‘Run wild and raise hell’

In addition to Salaristijger, Sophie’s book, column and podcast have created a pretty big platform for her message. So what is she planning to do next? “I’m developing a new

“I feel really proud when my book inspires someone to address injustices”

podcast where people can share their stories about unequal pay. I actually interviewed some of the women who took part in the nationwide strike in Iceland in 1975 to protest against unequal treatment.” Their stories, combined with an appeal by MEP Agnes Jongerius (‘It’s our right. We need to run wild and raise hell!’) inspired Sophie to organise a campaign in November. She might still be that same old ‘number devil’, but this time she’s on a mission. «

words
Ulrike Schmidt
images
Robin Alysha Clemens

Wealth

Should we be setting limits on wealth?

An economist and philosopher, Ingrid Robeyns is an ethicist before all else. All her work revolves around values. As part of the Fair Limits Project, Prof. Ingrid Robeyns explored the moral justifications for setting limits on the amount of valuable and scarce goods, such as money and ecological resources, any individual may use or own. She also assessed the potential for imposing such limits in practice.

words **Ulrike Schmidt** *images* **Ed van Rijswijk**

“Political philosophers have a role to play in fuelling social debate”



“We are stealing from our grandchildren and great grandchildren and harming people in vulnerable areas”

T

he world’s 10 richest people (men) collectively own six times more wealth than the poorest 3.1 billion, according to a statement by Oxfam Novib in early 2020.

Even here in the relatively egalitarian Netherlands, ten percent of the population owned over 60 percent of total private wealth in 2020, according to Statistics Netherlands. The situation is much the same when it comes to the distribution of ecological resources. Almost half of global emissions are caused by the world’s wealthiest 10 percent.

We are all familiar with the idea of a poverty line. We agree that everyone should be able to meet their basic needs. So isn’t it time to set some limits on wealth? Prof. Ingrid Robeyns explored this question as part of the Fair Limits Project. “We examined two types of resources: money, in the form of income and wealth, and our atmosphere’s capacity to absorb carbon dioxide — the global carbon budget. Both resources are scarce. On a philosophical level, my research team and I wanted to explore whether the notion of limitations should be approached from a purely moral perspective, or requires actual regulation at a governmental level. Once you approach things that way, it tends to open up political divides. You might agree on the ideal outcome, but completely

disagree on how to get there.”

Robeyns: “In the case of the climate, it’s quite easy to make the case for a cap on individual consumption. After all, we’re talking about a common resource — the atmosphere. As a matter of principle, every global citizen should be entitled to an equal share”. Since our planet’s resources are finite and climate change is urgent, we need to reduce our consumption. The main question is how?

“When it comes to the climate, injustice is a big factor. The richer people and countries are, the higher their emissions. The ultra-wealthy might even emit as much as two hundred tonnes a year.” Now contrast that with the global average of about four and a half tonnes per person per year. “In other words, the primary source of injustice is the inequality between rich and poor people, and rich and poor countries.” Countries from the global south, with low living standards and low CO2 emissions are basically being punished twice: the global carbon budget is running out, impeding their economic development AND they are suffering the greatest damage from climate change.

The second injustice in terms of the carbon budget is a generational one. “When it comes to the environment, we’ve been living beyond our means for decades



Prof. dr. Ingrid Robeyns, Faculty of Humanities, is professor of Institutional Ethics. The latter term refers to the basic tenets of society, such as services or policy. A philosopher and economist, Robeyns explored the moral grounds for imposing limits on the distribution of scarce, valuable economic and environmental resources as part of the Fair Limits Project. Her upcoming book *Limitarianism. The case against extreme wealth* will be published in late 2023 and translated into Dutch, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Korean and Japanese. She recently received a VICI grant for new research (see box on p. 23).

here in the West, but we don’t want to acknowledge that. We’re borrowing, or rather stealing, from our grandchildren and great-grandchildren’s future. We won’t be able to go on two holidays a year by plane in future until we can operate low-emission flights.” The injustice is pretty obvious in this case, and Robeyns believes there’s no question as to whether an individual cap on the consumption of ecological resources is morally justifiable.

So how do we overcome this unequal distribution of natural resources? Do you opt for voluntary measures and appeal to people’s sense of morality or do you actually legislate? Do you focus on individuals or other entities such as companies or societal structures? And which instruments do you use? As far as the latter is concerned, Robeyns suggests the following options:

- Voluntary rationing, in other words making a moral appeal and urging people to cut down their consumption. A case in point would be the appeal on consumers to stop using plastic bags. “Unfortunately, we know from behavioural research that ‘preaching’ isn’t a very effective tool on its own.”
- Rationing, or curbing consumption, but in a regulated way. A case in point would be the concept of an individual carbon budget.
- Banning, through laws and regulations.

This instrument was previously used to ban CFCs. Today, we might consider banning gas or cars running on fossil fuel.

- You can also leave it all up to the market. For example, market players could develop a technology that allows us to extract CO2 from the air and store it in an affordable way.
- Finally, you can also incentivise desired behaviour. This could take the form of subsidies for solar panels or the elimination of VAT on low-emission food.

Time to focus on extreme economic wealth. Here too, Robeyns believes there are definitely moral justifications for imposing a cap. “However, the reasoning is more complicated in this case. Unlike natural resources, financial wealth — if we discount oil and diamonds — is something that individuals accumulate. As a result, people feel they are entitled to it.” However, that doesn’t negate the moral

“When it comes to the environment, we’ve been living beyond our means for decades”

concerns. “Extreme wealth undermines democracy because it gives extremely wealthy companies or individuals access to political power.” Money allows you to lobby, buy policies through donations, fund universities, set up think tanks or media outlets and influence public opinion. Those



» options aren’t open to people without money. “That leads to power imbalances. Some companies have more money than the entire Dutch or Italian economy. That’s obviously pretty worrying in terms of the balance of power.”

Robeyns offers another argument. “Wealth tends to be unearned. Why do we find it morally acceptable that privileges are passed from generation to generation while inheritance taxes are so low? After

all, you can’t claim any credit for your parents’ or grandparents’ achievements. That’s a prime example of inequality.” As Robeyns sees it, the extent to which you can attribute all of a

company’s success to the individual merits of a handful of people at the top is also highly questionable. “That view is shared by a growing number of wealthy people. In the words of McKenzie Scott, Jeff Bezos’

ex-wife: “Any wealth is a product of a collective effort. The social structures that inflate wealth also present obstacles. And despite those obstacles, they are providing solutions that benefit us all.” In line with her beliefs, she donates at least half of her assets to charities. “There are also groups like The Patriotic Millionaires and Millionaires For Humanity who advocate for measures such as a fairer tax system that would impose much higher taxes on their own wealth.”

Besides, Robeyns argues, the current system — whereby a few individuals have extreme amounts of wealth — is a form of waste. “Distributing that wealth more equally will create greater prosperity for more people around the world. Mind you, prosperity isn’t limited to money and includes aspects such as good health, security, education, technology and rights.”

The relationship between wealth and climate offers another argument for a wealth cap. “Wealth creation tends to harm the environment, which is also negatively impacted by almost every form of consumption. Why should the extremely »

“We need to make sure new policy proposals are also based on values”

“Some companies have more money than entire national economies — that’s obviously worrying”



“As an ethicist, I feel it’s part of my job to speak out about injustice”



► wealthy have more of a moral right to use natural resources than others?”

So what can we do to curtail extreme wealth? Ingrid Robeyns distinguishes between three types of measures:

- A fairer distribution of wealth upfront (‘pre-distribution’). Raise the minimum wage or open the debate on the vast disparity between public and private sector wages.
- Wealth redistribution; examples include tax measures and our social security system. For example, we could introduce higher taxes on capital (profit and interest) and reduce those on labour (income and work).
- There’s also the ethical aspect, or potential for a moral appeal. Robeyns passionately argues that we should view wealth as a moral as well as an economic issue.

She stresses that her research doesn’t provide any recommendations for concrete measures. Those are ultimately political decisions. “You need to broaden your

mental horizons. As an ethicist, I feel it’s part of my job to speak out about climate injustice and economic inequality. I present my analysis and I feel strongly that political philosophers need to contribute arguments to the social debate.”

The Fair Limits Project touches on so many issues, including our economic system. Robeyns: “We had a ‘mixed economy’ back in the 1960s and 1970s. The last few years have seen us move towards the kind of hyper-capitalism common in the US; that inevitably sets back the fight for equal opportunities. Studies show that people in the US enjoy a lower quality of life and have far higher CO² emissions. I think we need to move to a different form of capitalism where we clearly define which aspects of ownership and production should be controlled by the government, which should be in private hands, and which should be organised around some form of joint ownership by collectives or citizen cooperatives. Ultimately, wealth is always created through collaboration in contexts shaped by lots of different people.” ◀

RESEARCH

So what does extreme wealth really mean?

Ingrid Robeyns uses the concept in her work on the Fair Limits Project. The question is: when does wealth qualify as ‘extreme’? Robeyns conducted a survey among the Dutch population with her colleagues from Sociology in 2018. The study’s primary aim was to determine whether people believe in a distinction between the ‘wealthy’ and ‘ultra-wealthy’. A whopping 96.5 percent of respondents felt that we can actually make such a distinction. The study’s secondary objective was to find out where people would actually draw that line. According to the outcomes, respondents estimated that a family’s quality of life would not be further improved if their family assets exceed €2.3 million. Respondents disagreed as to whether government measures were needed to ensure more equal distribution.

VICI GRANT

Researching economic visions for the future

Our current socio-economic system is creating some major problems: it is not ecologically sustainable, is purely focused on economic growth rather than wellbeing and perpetuates several unjust structures such as inequality. Citizens and scientists have been criticising this state of affairs for years, both locally and globally. A wide range of thinkers have proposed alternative visions for the future such as donut

economics, common good economics, wellbeing economics, and the universal basic income society. So how can we compare and evaluate these visions for the future? Ingrid Robeyns was recently awarded a VICI grant from the NWO in support of her work in this area. “We’ll be developing a framework that allows us to compare those visions in a structured and integrated way. That will help us to identify their strengths and weaknesses and do a kind of audit on them. The outcomes will help citizens and politicians make more informed decisions about the economic visions they want to embrace.” Robeyns and her research team will also be exploring hybrid approaches and entirely new visions.

SCHEDULE

Attend the 2023 edition of the Utrecht Day of Philosophy

In 2018, Ingrid Robeyns launched the Utrecht Day of Philosophy, a day filled with philosophical lectures and talks for a broad audience. The event is currently organised by fellow philosopher Naomi van Steenberg in conjunction with Studium Generale. The next edition is set to take place on Saturday 22 April 2023. Come to TivoliVredenburg, immerse yourself in philosophical thought experiments, listen to interviews and join philosophers in contemplating the big issues of our time. Admission is free and everyone is welcome to attend.

Book your free ticket from 1 April onwards at: utrechtsedagvandefilosofie.nl





New knowledge is developing at a phenomenal rate. Your job undoubtedly requires knowledge that was not covered during your studies. Utrecht University's Continuing Education programme provides the up-to-date knowledge and skills you need to remain permanently employable on the labour market, all based on the latest academic insights. From short courses to Master's degrees to diplomas, Utrecht University offers a wealth of opportunities for lifelong learning.

words Isha van der Gouw
image Aad Goudappel



Mathijs Konings (37)
Degree programme: Design for virtual theater and games (HKU)
Position: Chief Product Officer at Tover
Course: uu.nl/socialondernemen

“You can always explore a subject in greater depth”

Mathijs Konings has been an entrepreneur since his graduation. He works at Tover, which develops serious games for people with cognitive problems. A company with a social mission, in other words. This inspired him to take part in Utrecht University's Social Entrepreneurship course.

“Refresher courses really help you to identify your skill set and communicate ideas more effectively. Lifelong learning can help you push yourself and your team to the next level. You should never assume you’ve learned all there is to know, and you can always explore subjects in greater depth.”

Why did you want to pursue further education at the university?

“I was already an entrepreneur when I started this course. That meant I could immediately apply everything I learned in practice. The course was well-structured — you study the learning materials first and then get time to apply them. I also pass on a lot of the things I learnt during the course to others.”

Connecting at a human level

“At Tover, we always manage to connect on a human level. That creates a strong sense of mutual trust, which I also noticed during the course. You’re in a group with other entrepreneurs and there’s a really open atmosphere that makes it easier to discuss challenges, be vulnerable and ask for help. The curriculum isn’t limited to practical knowledge and taps into a deeper shared human experience.”

Want to keep learning?

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Traditional and social media training for the public sector

START: Spring of 2023
DURATION: 4 fortnightly meetings on Fridays
COST: € 2,500

Public sector professionals have to deal with the media on a regular basis. For example, they may have to answer questions about energy transition measures, the opening of a new asylum seekers' centre or the roll-out of an infrastructure project. With major interests at stake, emotions can run high and the associated societal risks will inevitably become evident.

uu.nl/omgaanmetmedia

Professionalism in times of change (English)

START: TBA
DURATION: 6 weeks, 3–4 hours per week
COST: free

Participants in this Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) will learn how information technology, the rise of managerialism and social, cultural and demographic changes have impacted professionals and forced them to respond. In addition to an in-depth understanding of these challenges, participation in the course will yield a road map for a new perspective, a paradigm shift and a way forward.

uu.nl/professionalism



Money can buy happiness, *right?!?*

Can money really buy happiness? It's certainly an age-old question. At the very least, money provides us with a bed, bath and bread and gives us the freedom to make certain choices. However, we do tend to overestimate its influence on our wellbeing, according to happiness professor Martijn Burger, who has been researching the subject for years.

words **Ulrike Schmidt**
image **iStock, modified**

Before we even start talking about money ... what is happiness anyway? “In my field, we define happiness in terms of life satisfaction or perceived quality of life,” explains Professor by Special Appointment of the Economics of Happiness Martijn Burger. The Economics of Happiness isn't about pleasant moments: a nice night out or a good glass of wine. “We study long-term happiness, preferably across the whole spectrum of human life. That said, we also examine key aspects of life individually: work, relationships, the place you live. How do they contribute to our long-term happiness?”



Prof. Martijn Burger (40) took a broad Bachelor's in Social Sciences at University College Utrecht and a research Master's in Sociology and Social Research at Utrecht University. He obtained his PhD in Spatial Economics with honours from Erasmus University Rotterdam in 2011. He went on to join the Erasmus Happiness Economics Research Organisation, where he has served as director since 2014. He also serves as associate professor of the Economics of Happiness at the Open University. He grades his own sense of happiness an 8+.

“Are richer people generally happier than poorer people?”

So: To what extent does money affect our sense of happiness?

“We need to start by asking: ‘Are richer people generally happier than poorer people?’ The answer is yes. Income is a crucial prerequisite for meeting our basic needs. If you can’t manage to earn a decent income and are experiencing financial worries, that will inevitably have a negative impact on your sense of happiness.” On the other hand, as economist Richard Easterlin discovered way back around 1970, people don’t keep getting happier as they become richer. Burger quotes some Dutch statistics that support this: “The richest 20 percent of the Dutch population rated their happiness at 7.8, while the poorest 20 percent ranked theirs at around 7.” That’s certainly not a major difference. We also tend to get used to having more money. “We examined what happens when people suddenly have a lot more to spend. As it turns out, our sense of happiness initially improves at both individual and national levels. But after a while — say a few years — it completely wears off. We refer to that process as the adaptation effect.” The more you have, the more you spend. You just get used to it in the end.

‘That’s not fair!’

“There’s also another key factor in the relationship between money and happiness: social comparison. It’s not just about the amount of money you have, it’s also about how much other people have. If you’re surrounded by rich people and

make a lot less money yourself, that won’t make you any happier. We always compare ourselves to people ‘like us’, but oddly enough we always compare upwards, never downwards.” As Burger explains, our sense of happiness is also influenced by another factor: fairness. Is the amount I’m making fair in comparison to others (within the organisation)? If the answer is ‘no’, that will have a negative impact on our sense of happiness.

Richer, but not happier

While Western countries have only become richer in recent decades, studies suggest we haven’t become any happier as a result. “Again, that’s due to adaptation and social comparison,” Burger explains. “The distribution of wealth has also become more unequal. The ‘elite’ has reaped most of the benefits while the median income of working and middle class households has remained stagnant. A comparison between countries shows that developing countries are on the losing end. Our social capital has also deteriorated. We have fewer social contacts and are less likely to trust institutions. Other aspects of what we refer to as broad prosperity have also been neglected, with a negative impact on happiness.”

Taking a broader view

So how can Happiness Economics contribute to a solution? “We don’t always recognise what makes us truly happy. I want to help people, organisations and governments make informed individual decisions. Money affects our sense of happiness, but we overestimate its importance and tend to underestimate the importance of things like social contacts, feeling appreciated, work-life balance and health. If you invest in those things on a structural basis and focus on each individual’s needs, you’ll actually increase your profits. Happy individuals, employees and citizens are more productive and creative and tend to rate their boss or country more highly.” ◀

The economy is an ecosystem too



Nicolas Poolen (27)
Graduated in Future Planet Studies at the University of Amsterdam followed by a Master's in Sustainable Business and Innovation at Utrecht University (2016–2018). As a Green Finance Advisor at WWF Netherlands, he advises Dutch financial institutions on investing in a more sustainable future.

words **Inge Oosterhoff**
images **Robin Alysha Clemens**

An investment in nature is an investment in the future, according to Nicolas Poolen (27). Poolen advises financial institutions on green investments.

So how did you choose your degree programme?
I wanted to do something focused around the future and innovation, but I wasn't quite sure what. I specialised in Business Management during my Bachelor's in Future Studies at the University of Amsterdam. The Sustainable Business and Innovation Master's at Utrecht University allowed me to combine business management and sustainability, which really appealed to me. Helping to make the corporate world more sustainable seemed like an exciting idea.

How did you end up in your current job?
I did a work placement at the WWF and volunteered at Follow This, an organisation that influences large companies to operate more sustainably through their shareholders. When I asked the finance director about the sustainability of WWF staff pensions, he asked if I wanted to be part of a green finance team that examined those kinds of issues and questions. The team hadn't been established yet at the time.

What do you enjoy most about your work?
I like the fact that it's challenging and multidisciplinary. The economy is basically also an ecosystem that's interconnected with other ecosystems like the environment and climate, and we need to make sure it stays resilient. I try to convince financial institutions to prioritise those issues and challenges. For the sake of their company's future as well as the planet.

So what would you recommend to students who will be looking for a job soon?
Involve others in your career planning and ask for feedback. I actually found people who were already working in the field or involved in relevant initiatives through my own network of family and friends. They helped me figure out what to expect and gave me specific advice that helped me a lot.

What's next

There's plenty of room to grow in my current position, so I'll stay with WWF Netherlands for now. I also dream of setting up an initiative for international collaborations. I work on global issues and the Netherlands can feel too small at times. ◀

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.

“I wanted to do something involving the future and innovation”



“I love people!”

words **Ulrike Schmidt**
images: **Rachel Morssink**



Janne Willems

studied Cognitive artificial intelligence (BSc 2005, UU), Philosophy (MA 2009, UU, cum laude) and Cognitive neuroscience (MSc 2012, Radboud University). She initiated the international social art project seizeyourmoments.com which also includes her book *Pluk je momenten* (Seize your moments).

In Dallas, I asked a girl from a deprived neighbourhood to share a ‘beautiful moment’ from her life. She drew herself with a tearful face, and said: ‘My 12-year-old sister threatened me with a knife and I decided to leave home. Closing the door behind me, that was my beautiful moment.’ Beautiful moments aren’t always happy ones. A beautiful moment is a moment you can draw something good from. A moment that stays in your heart, as they say in Japan.

In the period from 2013 to 2019, I got people in 30 countries to draw 11,134 beautiful moments. I’d been doing that myself for years and it always made me feel happier. I wanted to help other people reflect on their own beautiful moments as well. If you can get people to tell their stories and share them with each other, that helps to build mutual trust.

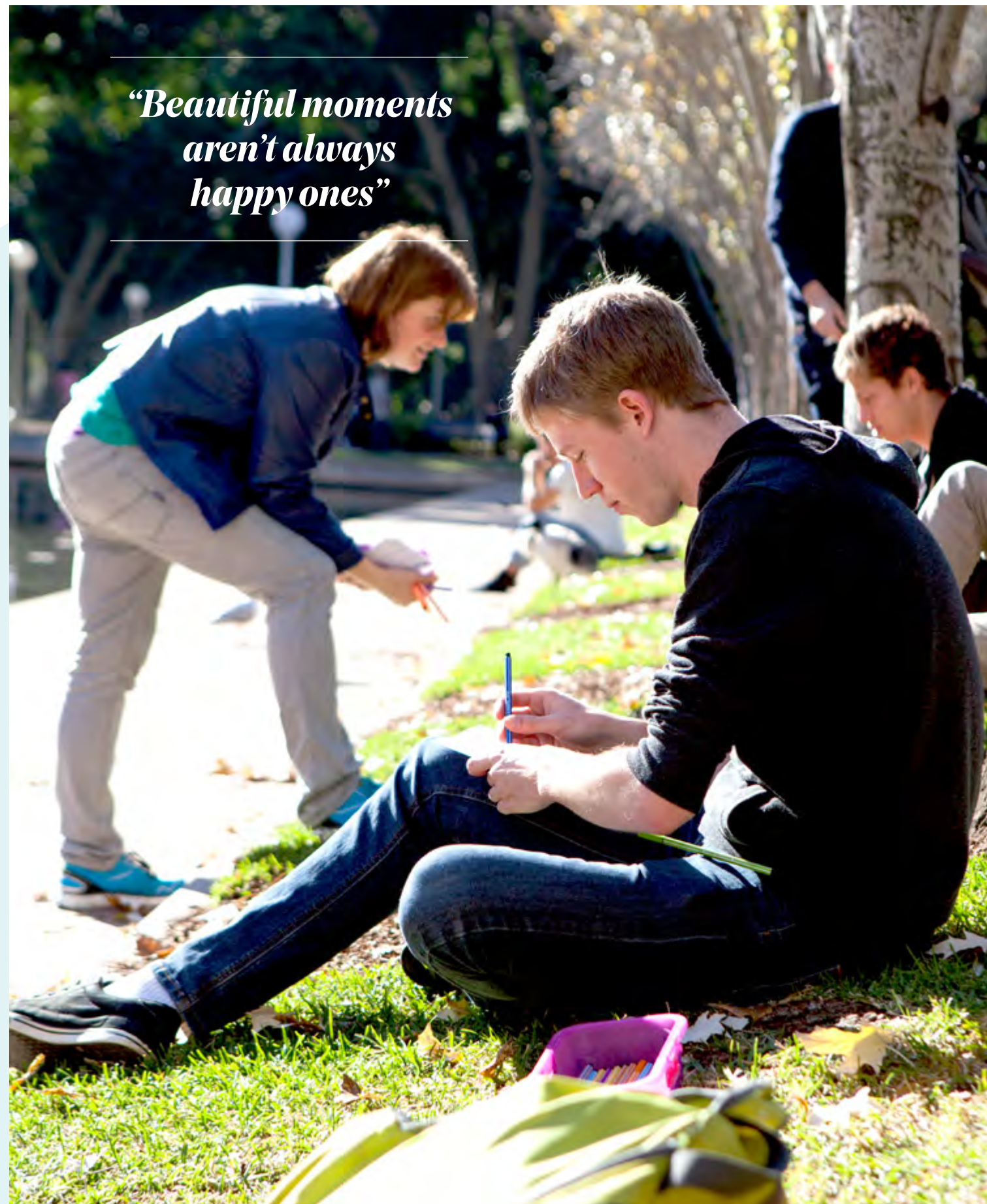
“You can trust people a lot more than I thought”



I set out with a backpack, five hundred blank postcards, a laptop, a scanner and a hundred felt-tip pens. I’d crowdfunded the money I needed to travel one continent. As it turned out, I had enough to travel three. The people I met along the way were so generous. I arranged free accommodation through couch-surfing websites. The Dutch Railways, KiwiRail in Australia and MTrack in the United States sponsored my train tickets in exchange for articles about my adventure, people donated and I also gave lectures about the project. Those talks actually brought in quite a bit of money.

Never knowing where to find things in the supermarket got a little tiresome at times, but I didn’t miss any material things. If you actually live in poverty, you can’t think straight; you need to avoid that. Still, my bank balance doesn’t define my worth. I also don’t rate other people based on how much they have in the bank. Before I started travelling, I used to think ‘I must be really naive to believe that people are good’. Now I think they’re great! You can trust people even more than I thought. «

“Beautiful moments aren’t always happy ones”





ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Interview with Marion Koopmans

She graduated in Veterinary Medicine in Utrecht in 1976. Leading virologist Marion Koopmans became a household name overnight when she joined the Dutch Outbreak Management Team (OMT) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) research team during the COVID pandemic. This year, she was named Utrecht University's Alumnus of the Year and invited to take part in the annual College Tour last October. Want to learn more about her student days in Utrecht, her fascination with viruses and her experience of being a public figure during a major pandemic?

You can watch the College Tour with Marion Koopmans — organised as part of Utrecht Science Week — at [interview College Tour Marion Koopmans](#)

LETS GO OUTSIDE

The wind in your hair

The wind in your hair, a relaxed state of mind and the smell of the outdoors in your clothes ... What's not to love? If you enjoy getting off the beaten track, why not explore the Klompenpaden in Utrecht? Enjoy a walk through the countryside with its charming farmhouses and beautiful estates. The relaxing, relatively short hikes (5 to 25 kilometres) combine cultural history and nature. The Klompenpaden are an initiative of Landschap Erfgoed Utrecht. Utrecht University has partnered with the heritage organisation in an effort to strengthen its ties with the region.

Visit klompenpaden.nl for an overview of all 35 hiking paths



TALKSHOW

The Futurists — Out of control

Our current culture is based around a neoliberal, individualistic sense of freedom. We basically do and say whatever we want and consume like there's no tomorrow. The question is: is this notion of freedom really

sustainable in the long run? The Futurists is a theatrical talk show in which theatre makers and scientists explore the future. This unique combination of interviews and theatre sees musicians and writers

translate a high-profile guest's vision into a theatrical performance within the space of a single day. It doesn't get any fresher! On 14 November, a performance by Nieuw Utrechts Toneel & the Utrecht University Descartes Centre.

You can order free tickets at uu.nl/agenda/sg-de-futuristen-van-god-los





YOUTH

A focus on mental health

The recent Youth in the 21st century symposium saw researchers from Utrecht University headed by Gonneke Stevens present their Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) report to Her Majesty Queen Máxima. The report presents the results of 20 years of research on the well-being and health of young people in the Netherlands. You can hear Gonneke Stevens discuss the results of the survey with Henk Hagoort, chair of the Secondary Education Council, in the JongGeleerd podcast. So what can schools and teachers do to help young people cope with the mounting pressures of schoolwork and mental health issues?

Listen to this episode of the JongGeleerd podcast by clicking the links at uu.nl/podcast/jonggeleerd



LISTENING

A flower’s tale

A flower’s tale — that is the title of the poem written especially for the *Kinderboekenweek* (Children’s Book Week) last October by award-winning author Bibi Dumon Tak. The poem ties in perfectly with the theme of this year’s *Kinderboekenweek*: Let’s go green! As an extra added bonus, Bibi personally recited the poem in Utrecht University’s Botanical Gardens surrounded by the butterflies and buzzing bees featured in her work. Bibi Dumon Tak studied Dutch Language and Literature at Utrecht University. Listen to her poem and enjoy the beautiful gardens for a real taste of summer.

The video of Bibi reciting her poem can be found at hebban.nl/kinderboekenweek/gedicht-kinderboekenweek-2022

BOARD GAME

Gaming out the energy transition

Last March, maths alumni Wouter Vink, Milo van Holsteijn and Jöbke Janssen launched a new board game called GigaWatt — a Power Play for the Future — through crowdfunding platform Kickstarter. The game combines Risk, Monopoly and Catan, according to a rave review in the Volkskrant. The first player to complete the energy transition in their own region wins. As demand for electricity increases with each round, players must replace their coal and gas plants with CO2-free alternatives. Exciting!

The faculty club will be hosting a GigaWatt games night on 2 February. For more information and registration, visit uu.nl/facultyclub. For more on the creators and the origins of GigaWatt, see uu.nl/achtergrond/business-in-beeld-gigawatt-spelen-met-duurzame-energie

Visit gigawattgame.com in order to find out more or order the game.



Philosophers’ Café: An ecological mindset

22 November Modern-day man tends to have a destabilising impact on the ecosystems that sustain our environment. So how are we supposed to deal with this reality? Assistant professor Arjen Kleinherenbrink (Radboud University) explores this question in greater depth.

uu.nl/agenda/filosofisch-cafe-ecologisch-denken

Game night at the Faculty Club

23 November 2022 The Faculty Club is hosting an Autumn-themed evening with game, unusual vegetables and delicious wines.

uu.nl/agenda/faculty-club-wildavond

Transforming Cities Debate

24 November 2022 The final debate in a series exploring new approaches to radical innovation. This edition's theme: Not accepting a tradeoff between equality and sustainability.

uu.nl/en/events/transforming-cities-debates-politicizing-science

Pathways to Sustainability Conference

4 April 2023 This edition of the conference is set to be completely different. The year 2060 provides a starting point for new insights on the challenges of transformation — the impending paradigm shift towards sustainability.

uu.nl/en/events/see-the-future-at-the-next-pathways-to-sustainability-conference

For all alumni events, please see uu.nl/alumni/agenda

Non olet ...

Pecunia non olet. Since some of our readers may not be classical languages alumni, I'll add the translation here: money doesn't stink. We owe this particular nugget of wisdom to historian Suetonius, who recorded the story of emperor Vespasian. The latter reintroduced the tax on urine abolished by Nero in order to replenish the Roman empire's treasury after its finances had been run into the ground. (Here in the Netherlands, the Roman Empire can mainly be found underground, but that's another story). Vespasian's son Titus (I hope you'll forgive me the long list of Latin names) (and all the comments in brackets) complained to his father about the money's odious origins. Vespasian (also history's first ever scooter rider, but Suetonius never mentions that) tossed a coin and told his son: 'Do you feel offended by the smell? No? Yet it comes from urine.'

Pecunia non olet is a paraphrase of this historical story. The logical, mathematical equivalent of this expression would be: if something stinks, it can't be money. After all: shit isn't money. Rotten fish isn't money. And 'Love is a stinking miracle' [*Liefde is een stinkend wonder*], in the words of poet Leo Vroman. Obviously, he was trying to say: it isn't money.

Still, there's definitely something fishy about a lot of financial transactions. There's also something paradoxical about money: there's more than enough of it, but lots of people don't have enough. Inflation is skyrocketing, food banks have never been busier, winter gas prices are cause for serious concern. Still, Michelin-starred restaurant De Librije in Zwolle is fully booked until July 2023. Cafe terraces and festivals are packed. People willingly pay 110 euros (or more, on the black market) to watch Max Verstappen racing at the Zandvoort track.

I don't begrudge anyone the right to enjoy divine food or sustenance for the heart and mind. Still, money needs to flow. The only problem is it always seems to flow in the same direction. If the richest 10 percent of the Netherlands were willing to live on 10 percent less, we could eliminate poverty from this country. Money may not stink, but the way it's distributed certainly does.

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 and is currently touring through the country with his newest show, *Rotatie*.

