

Radboud University Independent Magazine

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VOX

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**INTERVIEW
SPECIAL**
ENGLISH
EDITION



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EDITORIAL

UNCONVENTIONAL THINKERS

Leon Wecke. Last year his name appeared for weeks on end on our editorial whiteboard. He was one of the interview candidates for the summer edition. Possibly *the* interview candidate. The 83-year old Radboud polemologist, who refused to retire and continued to shine his unique light on every war that appeared in the media, deserved more of Vox's attention. Unfortunately, he passed away on 13 June 2015, before we could arrange to meet with him.

A year later, his name still appears on our board. Leon Wecke continues to inspire. Urging us to think for ourselves, to refuse to follow the crowd. Which is why we decided to include an article about him in this year's special summer edition. Chronicled by our colleague Paul, who interviewed Wecke's wife and colleagues.

We also went in search of other unconventional thinkers. In search of those who swim against the current, Vox editors travelled to Brussels, Copenhagen, and Leuven.

They interviewed researchers and students with Armenian, Iraqi, Dutch, Danish, and Canadian roots. "When everyone thinks the same, talks the same and looks the same, how can you ever develop something new?" asks philosopher and activist Anya Topolski on page 34.

The recurring question running through many of these stories is whether our University provides enough scope for alternative perspective. The answer lies with you. We wish you all a great summer!

Annemarie Haverkamp
Editor-in-Chief Vox

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is getting WhatsApp messages from Raqqa: "We are coming to get you!"

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"I don't think I've ever thought: 'I would love a beer right now!'"



Every month Vox raises its glass on the occasion of some Radboud University celebration. The occasion this time: the University's **official party** in honour of two Spinoza Prize winners: **Wilhelm Huck and Mihai Netea**.

Text: Tim van Ham / Photography: Nick van Dijk

WHERE? In the Aula
WAS IT BUSY?
Approximately fifty people attended. A bit meagre for two Spinoza Prizes.

These three gentlemen work for Wilhelm Huck, who thanks to his Spinoza Prize now has € 2.5 million to spend. Not that they expect a raise, but still. **Aigars Piruska** (Right): "If we do come up with a crazy project, there is now some funding that we could potentially use."



Sjoerd Postma (Right) also harbours secret plans on how to spend his boss' € 2.5 million. Huck. "I wouldn't mind a new machine for separating molecules. It only costs € 100,000..."



Trees Jansen (Right) is extremely proud of Mihai Netea, with whom she has worked for years. "And Mihai and I appeared on the NOS Journaal last week!" The woman who appears here twice is lab assistant Anneke Heijmans.

Mihai Netea (Right) is not the type to bang his fist on the table. He usually misses by a hairbreadth.



Marties Noz (Left) and **Charlotte van der Heijden** arrived as the party was coming to a close. Fashionably late? "No! Tuesday is by far the busiest day in our lab. They couldn't have planned this get-together at a worse time..."



IN THE NEWS

Mega-cinema Next year, students will be going to the CineMec mega-cinema not only for the latest blockbusters, but also to attend first-year psychology lectures. The expected increase in student numbers is such that even the largest lecture hall will not provide enough seats. Nijmegen seems to be particularly attractive to German students, who have enrolled en masse for the new English-language Bachelor's programme. The Psychology Department is working on the assumption that most students will cycle to the cinema in Lent, bus transport will also be provided.

New Dean The philosophers, theologians and religious studies experts have a new leader. On 1 July Christoph Lüthy will succeed Hans Thijssen as Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies. Lüthy's research focuses on the scientific revolution between 1600 and 1800, and on the concept of 'matter' in physics, chemistry and natural philosophy.

Student Council The University Student Council (USC) will maintain its status quo in the coming year. The results of the elections are the same as last year: four seats for asap, three for AKKURAad, and one for De Vrije Student. What is striking are the eight hundred blank votes. "In the end what matters is not the party's views, but the popularity of the candidates", as one blank voter explained his choice to Vox.

Thesis It's every student's worst nightmare: losing your thesis a week before the deadline. And it happened to Sebastian, only with his girlfriend's thesis. She had left her USB stick at his place and asked him to back-up her thesis file. Off he went to the University Library, when he suddenly realised that he was running late for a lecture. "I rushed off to my lecture and forgot the USB stick in the computer." Sebastian carried out a search, but so far no luck.



Photo: CineMec

First-year psychology students will be attending lectures at CineMec next year.

Campus poet Merel van Slobbe is Radboud University's new campus poet. You can now enjoy her poetry every month in Vox. The psychologist-philosopher will also be shining her poetic light online, reflecting on special events taking place in and around the University. Keep an eye out on voxweb.nl.

Association life It is not always easy for student organisations to recruit new board members. A Vox survey shows that a number of organisations are experiencing difficulties: of the 33 associations that took part in the survey, six are currently unable to form

a new board. The reason? Students prefer to limit their study debt now that the new loan system has been introduced. And they are expected to fulfil efficiency criteria such as the binding study advice.

Nijmegen The Waalstad is a great place to live! This is not just the author's personal opinion, but also that of the *Atlas voor Gemeenten*. 'We' score eighth in the top ten most attractive cities to live. Ten years ago Nijmegen was still in fifteenth position. The top three have remained unchanged: Amsterdam, Utrecht and Haarlem, in that order.

CALL FOR UNCONVENTIONAL THINKERS

The Centre for International Conflict - Analysis & Management (CICAM) is introducing a new award: the Leon Wecke award, to be presented every two years to the Radboud University man or woman who distinguishes him/herself in the public domain as an unconventional thinker. This award is named after the man who led the Institute since 1968, and remained affiliated with it until he passed away last year, aged 83. Wecke was a model unconventional thinker who never shied away from controversial positions and uncomfortable truths.

See p. 36 for a full feature on Leon Wecke.

Photo: Erik Schothuis

DULY NOTED

“The middle and upper classes have absorbed the language and ideology of what used to be called the weaker social classes. Members of the House of Representatives now talk the same way as people from an average working-class district.”

Jan Derksen, Professor of Clinical Psychology, reacts to volkskrant.nl on the polarisation of the debate on discrimination, racism and integration.

SPEAKING UP STAN GIELEN



Photo: Bert Beelen

Stan Gielen (63) has a difficult task ahead of him. As of 1 September the Dean of the Faculty of Science will become chair of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). This will make him the leader of the largest Dutch funding

organisation for scientific research. Gielen is clear on one thing: it's time to make some changes. NWO needs to become more transparent and less bureaucratic. "Now we have lots of sub-disciplines, each with their own committee, working alone and following their own rules. It's incredibly confusing for researchers applying for funding."

Read the complete interview (in Dutch) with Gielen at www.voxweb.nl/nieuws/stan-gielen-gaat-vernieuwd-nwo-leiden

"YOU
THINK
I'M
SCARED?"

He gets WhatsApp messages from Raqqa: "We're coming to get you!" External PhD candidate Montasser AlDe'emeh went to Aleppo to visit Dutch and Flemish Jihadists. To the rage of the IS he then proceeded to stop dozens of radicalized young people from fighting in Syria.

Text: Tim van Ham / **Photography:** Artur Eranosian





"9/11
THE FIRST
DAY OF
THE REST
OF MY LIFE"



Montasser AlDe'emeh (1988) sits in a Brussels café, casually scrolling through his WhatsApp list. "Look," he says. "These people are all in Syria, joining the IS." He opens an old conversation about a Syria fighter from Kortrijk who blew himself up last year in Iraq. His mother was worried and informed AlDe'emeh, who tried without success to get the nineteen-year old to change his mind. To the rage of the IS, as is apparent from the messages he received at the time: "How dare you talk to him about his suicide attack? Are you trying to brainwash him? You dirty *kuffar* dog (infidel, eds.)!"

Another WhatsApp message from Raqqa: "We're coming to get you!" AlDe'emeh's responded with "Well, come on then! Do you think I'm scared?" And "Real men don't send insults from behind a screen." Chatting with suicide terrorists and countering death threats is not part of the standard job description of Radboud University researchers. Who is this external PhD candidate? And how did he end up at the Syrian front?

Vox looked him up in the Brussels Sint-Jans-Molenbeek neighbourhood where he lives. On this sunny afternoon there is nothing to indicate to the outsider that this is the district described by *The New York Times* as the 'Jihad centre of Europe'. Children are playing, people greet each other, and the only police officers on the streets are there to ensure that an ongoing demonstration proceeds peacefully. And yet, at least three of the eight terrorists in the Paris attacks came from this neighbourhood.

Jihadist beard

It's the perfect spot for Montasser AlDe'emeh. As an external PhD candidate at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, he studies radicalizing young Muslims. "I investigate how these young people interpret certain concepts within Islam," he says. "Terms such as 'Jihad' and 'Caliphate' are often given an ultra-radical interpretation. I compare various interpretations. It's too soon to draw conclusions, but it seems that the radicalized youth are following Jihad ideologists who were already popular when Jihadists were fighting against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s."

The way in which AlDe'emeh conducts his research is unique. Rather than looking to ancient writings and learned men, he examines how today's radical youth views Islam. AlDe'emeh has spent a lot of time with young extremists. The closed radical Muslim community accepted him as a fly on the wall.

"I am a Palestinian, I come from a prominent tribe, and I know the Quran like the back of my hand," he says. "That's why I was more easily accepted than other researchers. But I still had to pretend to be someone else. For two years, I was fully integrated in those circles. I was not allowed to have a girlfriend, and I wore a huge Jihadist beard. I said things to the media that I didn't mean, and I had to pretend to be much more radical than I was." It was probably around this time that his name first appeared on the radar of the intelligence services.

Al-Qaida

AlDe'emeh does not think of it as putting on a show, but rather as a research method that increased his survival chances. And it worked. Via ex-members of the now illegal Salafist and Jihadist organisation Sharia4Belgium, he managed in the summer of 2014 to get invited to a house in the Aleppo countryside where Flemish and Dutch Jihadists were residing. The group was fighting for the Al-Qaida-related Al-Nusra Front, primarily against Assad.

"I simply had to go. I thought: 'If I don't do this now, I never will. If I go, I will either die, or become the only researcher in the world to have been right at the heart of this. I don't want to spend my life writing research papers. I have greater ambitions."

He left without telling his family. It turned out to be a surrealistic trip. "Already on the plane from Istanbul to Hatay I saw people thinking: 'That guy with the beard is going to Syria.' In Hatay I took a taxi to the border. There were Jihadists everywhere. Ten metres from the border someone was distributing ID cards to fighters who wanted to enter Syria – right under the nose of the Turkish police. This guy looked at me and searched through his stack for a photograph that looked like me. Suddenly the gate opened and I could walk through – without a fake ID. I only had to bribe a Turkish policeman with a few dozen dollars."

Once 'inside' he travelled to a villa with a swimming pool where Flemish and Dutch Syria fighters were residing.

He saw things he will never forget. Hospitals with children covered in flies. Bombs exploding a few hundred metres away. Entire neighbourhoods nearly erased from the surface of the Earth.

Things became really scary when AlDe'emeh ended up in the rebel prison. He had asked everywhere whether he could speak to Abu Mohammad al-Julani, the highest Al-Nusra chief in Syria. This caused some suspicion. He was arrested, blindfolded and put into a car. When his blindfold was removed, he found himself facing two masked men with Kalashnikovs, in a sweltering room somewhere in the desert.

"It was such a bizarre situation – only the day before I had been sitting in a Brussels café – that I fell asleep waiting. In the end I was interrogated by the highest chief of the Al-Nusra intelligence services. After a very long day, I was allowed to leave. The boys at the villa were happy to see me; they didn't know whether they would ever see me again."

Once back in Belgium, AlDe'emeh tried to return to his old life. He helped young delinquents and gave lectures. This has led to him having quite a reputation in Brussels. On our walk to and from the café, he is accosted four times by people wanting to shake his hand. These meetings all have the same form: "How are you? When will you drop by again?" The people asking turn out to be staff members from schools where AlDe'emeh speaks on a regular basis.

After his return from Syria, the traumatic images kept haunting him. He had lost his faith in mankind. AlDe'emeh became suicidal. His plan was to walk into a forest in Norway and freeze to death.

In the end, he managed to conquer his depression without help from a psychologist or drugs. The smiling children's faces at the schools where he lectures really helped him. Bit by bit he picked himself up again. In between nightmares and bouts of depression, the sun would shine from time to time. Strangely enough his recovery was boosted by last year's Paris attacks. "This kind of attack is just too crazy for words. That was the moment for me to really stand up for what I believe. I knew then that it had to stop. Before my trip to Syria, I had remained vague about Muslim extremism, but since the attacks, I no longer mince my words. I openly say what I believe, think and feel. This has freed me. I am slowly turning into the Montasser I was meant to be."

Since then, AlDe'emeh has become the greatest IS critic in the Flemish media. Newspapers, magazines and television crews know where to find him. For a long time, he ran a deradicalisation centre in Mechelen, and later also one in Molenbeek. This did not go unnoticed by the IS. Via Flemish Jihadists in Raqqa he found out that his name appears on a 'list' of targets. "Some of these guys probably know where I live."



READING TIP BY ALDE'EMEH

Intisar Umm Mansur en Montasser AlDe'emeh My Liberation from Evil

"Read it to find out how girls radicalize, why they require guidance and how they ultimately can succeed in distancing themselves from the IS."

Montasser AlDe'emeh shares his own story in a book co-written with Pieter Stockmans: *The Jihad Convoy*.

But AlDe'emeh is not afraid. "I've decided to ignore threats. I don't want police protection, and I don't spend my time looking over my shoulder. I just say what I want to say, and that's it." He falls silent for a moment and clears his throat. "Is your recorder still on? Good, because I have a message for the IS: I won't stop. I have single-handedly prevented dozens of young people from going to Syria. You may be able to kill my body, but not my ideas. I will go on."

He smiles as he says it, but he is also deadly serious. He swears that this is no empty promise. "These guys are radical, which means we have to be radical too. I don't believe that love conquers everything. But courage does, and power. And a clear vision. How can you feel love for someone who wants to blow himself up in a theatre full of people? These people have to stop making death threats. If they come after me, I will have the Belgian flag fly over Raqqa in memory of the victims of the Brussels attacks. I mean it. How? They will find out soon enough."

9/11

Montasser AlDe'emeh was born in a refugee camp in Jordan in 1988, after his Palestinian parents had fled Israel. The AlDe'emeh family ended up living on a farm in a village near Dendermonde. The young Montasser never felt at home there. He was the only immigrant of his age in the small Flemish village. And the only Muslim. AlDe'emeh knows from experience about the rift that radicalising young Belgians can fall into.

He became really conscious of it on 12 September 2001, one day after the 9/11 attacks. He refers to this as the first day of the rest of his life. Belgium was polarised, and the thirteen-year old Montasser was called names because he was a Muslim. He felt misunderstood, and began to radicalise. As a teenager he made plans to go and fight for the cause in Palestine. The walls of his room were covered in posters of Che Guevara, Fidel Castro and Osama bin Laden. He devoured radical Islamic texts.

In the end AlDe'emeh saw the light in a lecture on the History of Judaism at the university in Leuven. "When the professor began his lecture, my mind quite literally opened. I have never since come closer to the experience of 'enlightenment'. All the soap bubbles I had believed in burst." AlDe'emeh went on a study trip to Auschwitz, where he found out about the Holocaust, which his father had always told him was 'not such a big deal'.

Secret service

Based on these experiences, AlDe'emeh went on to work hard in his own deradicalisation centre to help young people who felt lost in radical Islam. He told them a different, more nuanced story, and tried to put them back on the right track. He was recently forced to stop. "It's over. I am not allowed to do it anymore."



For a long time I have worked to create a better world, but the authorities are clearly not interested in cooperation. I now plan to focus on my PhD research at Radboud University, so that I can come back stronger.”

But letting go is not easy. On his phone screen, he shows me a message from Syria: “My son is dying. Please help him come back to Belgium.” From a mother stuck in Syria with her young son. There is a photograph too, sent from the hospital. “There is nothing I can do,” answers ALDe’emeh. “You have to get in touch with the Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office.”


He explains: “What if I help someone come back and then they commit an attack here? I cannot risk endangering an entire country out of a feeling of empathy for a single individual. I have had to harden my heart, and I no longer help these people. Besides, if after seeing images of the horrors perpetrated there, a person is still stupid enough to want to go to Syria, they have to bear the consequences.”

ALDe’emeh doesn’t know what he wants to do after his PhD. He is being head-hunted by a number of American institutions. Various intelligence services have already paid him a visit. “There I am, on a terrace in Paris, and I get a phone call from the French secret services. Asking me whether I want to drop by for a chat. How did they know I was in France? My phone is probably tapped. Don’t get me wrong: I think I have more contacts in radical circles than any other person in the Netherlands or in Belgium.”

He is not interested in a career as a spy. “I like to help. I am often approached on Facebook by people who want to talk. The deradicalisation centre had to be dismantled, but I don’t send people in Belgium away. I am always open to dialogue. If someone is stuck and I can help, why shouldn’t I?” *

ALDE’EMEH ARRESTED

Montasser ALDe’emeh was arrested in January of this year. According to the Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office, he was accused of having written a counterfeit certificate for suspected terrorist Jawad O. ALDe’emeh is supposed to have falsely claimed that Jawad O. had completed one of his deradicalisation courses. According to the Prosecutor’s Office, ALDe’emeh’s statement was used to try and get Jawad O. released. What happened? “I am not allowed to say anything about it. But I am not worried at all. It will turn out all right.”

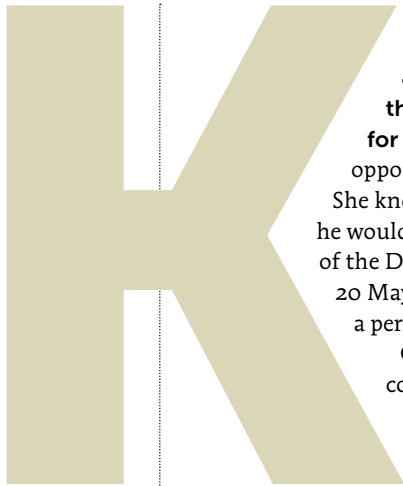


ENGLISH-LANG
STUDY PROGRA
'NEJ TAK!'

Are universities really better off with English-language Bachelor's programmes? Lotte Jensen, Associate Professor in Dutch Literature, doubts it. She advocates preserving the Dutch-language Bachelor's programmes. And the funny thing is: She is Danish.

Text: Martine Zuidweg / Photography: Thomas Tolstrup

LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES?



King Willem-Alexander extends his hand. Lotte Jensen feels a lump in her throat. She is totally not prepared for this.

Only a select group gets the opportunity to speak with the King.

She knew, of course, that as a patron he would be attending the anniversary of the Dutch Literature Society on Friday 20 May, but she certainly did not expect a personal meeting.

Ok. No staring. "I've taught courses on Dutch identity," she tells the King, "at the University of the Netherlands." Willem-Alexander, in a dark-blue suit and orange tie, nods. And then grins widely.

"Then you probably know that a famous Dutch person once said something on this topic?"

Ha-ha. She does know. Of course. Máxima once said – nearly ten years ago now – that there is no such thing as the Dutch. And she was right: the Dutch come in all shapes and sizes. "Then you probably also know," the King leans forward, "that only foreigners are allowed to make statements about Dutch identity?"

Of course. We don't like nationalists. But now she's got him. "I am Danish," she says.

Jordbærtærte

Lotte Eilskov Jensen (44) pricks her fork into a *jordbærtærte*, a strawberry pastry. Location: Café Europa, on the Strøget, the best-known shopping street in Copenhagen. The café looks out on a church tower with Danish flags flying from its spire. Red with a white Scandinavian cross, the oldest national flag in the world. We are on our way to the house of her grand-mother, *farmor*, as the Danish call their father's mother (not to be confused with *morfar*, the mother's father). She lives in Trondhjems-gade, the Amsterdam-Zuid of Copenhagen, less than ten minutes' walk away from the Little Mermaid.

The purpose of this walk through Copenhagen is to obtain an answer to the question of why the most vehement advocate for the preservation of Dutch-language Bachelor's programmes on the Nijmegen campus is a Danish citizen. Because if there is one person who really fights the

University Board's plans of creating more English-language Bachelor's programmes, it is Lotte Jensen. She takes part in debates and writes editorials. Her message is always the same: it's OK to use English in scientific publications, but let the study programmes remain in Dutch. After all, lecturers teach better in their mother tongue, and most graduates end up on the Dutch labour market anyway.

Last November, just before a debate with Jensen, President of the Executive Board Gerard Meijer expressed his delight at the fact that the University would be extending its range of English-language Bachelor's from two to eight. And he is not planning to stop there: as far as Meijer is concerned, in five years' time, half of all Bachelor's programmes will be taught in English.

Jensen remembers how nervous she was before the debate. Meijer is not only the University's boss; he is also in many ways her counterpart: an exact sciences man, a lover of hard figures. But she was well-prepared. She always is on such occasions. "I didn't find what he said particularly convincing. He was defensive and kept emphasising that this move would lead to higher student numbers. But what about the quality of our teaching?"

Proud

Lotte Jensen was ten months old when she came to the Netherlands with her mother and twin sister (now a famous philosopher, writer and television producer). Their father had already started working in his new position at the European Space Centre ESTEC. In their home in Oegstgeest father and mother Jensen recreated a mini-Denmark. A Danish au-pair took care of the twins and Danish was the only language spoken at home. Even when the twins went to school, *mor* and *far* made sure that their Danish remained up to standard. Mistakes could cost the girls pocket money.

Every summer the twins flew to Copenhagen with a card around their neck. There they were met by their *farmor*, bearing two little Danish flags. For four weeks, all they heard was 'Velkommen', 'Goddag' and 'Vi ses!' Back home the twins once again spoke Danish fluently.

Her Danish is no longer what it used to be, says Jensen in perfect Dutch at Café Europa. But she does still have a Danish passport. And she has no trouble communicating with the Copenhagen waiters, even though she is aware

that her Danish is not like theirs. "I speak the Danish of my grand-mother. A kind of Polygoon Newsreel Danish." She still visits Copenhagen on a regular basis to see her father, who moved back there with his second wife after his retirement. *Farmor* passed away at the age of 97, but for Lotte, Copenhagen still breathes the spirit of her grand-mother.

Take for example the strawberries in the pastry in front of her. Strawberries, potatoes, turnip tops, her grandmother only ever bought Danish products. Why would you buy your food elsewhere when your own country produces such high quality? Her grand-mother was no exception. Danes are proud of their design, their film culture, and their mentality of mutual trust and positive attitude to life. "I don't know a single people who are as proud of themselves as the Danes," Jensen laughs.

We climb a tower, and not any tower, as it turns out. We are following in the footsteps of Jensen's grand-mother, who used to bring the girls to the top of this building, a former observatory, more than thirty years ago.

The view from the top is stunning: spires of the castles and houses owned by the many Christians and Frederiks of Denmark's two royal families, parks and gardens with their ponds, the blue of the Sont River. "Look, there's Ven Island", Jensen points to the distance. "That's where the Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe built his observatory. We named our youngest son after him."

Jensen studied Dutch Literature and Philosophy at Utrecht University, in line with her grandmother's credo: "You have to get the most out of your education; it's a privilege to be allowed to study." *Farmor* herself always dreamed of studying French, but she was expected to take care of her family. Her husband, a general in the Danish army, had his hands full. In silent protest, she always had a French book lying open on her table at home - *Lettres de mon Moulin* by Alphonse Daudet. "I can see it still."

Jensen graduated *cum laude* in Dutch and her philosophy thesis was published in its entirety in the History of Philosophy Journal.


Vondel

We pass a row of bright orange houses. A bus with Danish flags drives by. We hear later that today is the Crown Prince's birthday.

The Dutch are not a proud people, unlike the Danes. "I simply don't understand that there is so little attention



"I DON'T KNOW
A SINGLE
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ARE AS PROUD
OF THEMSELVES
AS THE DANES"



"THERE MAY NOT BE SUCH A THING AS THE DUTCH, BUT THERE IS CERTAINLY SUCH A THING AS A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY"

for the Dutch language in the Netherlands. Vondel is amazing. Why aren't the Dutch proud of having such a poet? After all, the English don't make it a secret that Shakespeare was the greatest poet of all time. There are at present more students of Dutch abroad than in the Netherlands. Surely that's strange!"

Jensen has received awards (including a gold medal of honour from the Teylers Association for her study showing that the Dutch did resist Napoleon) and grants (a VIDI grant from research funding organisation NWO which she is using to fund her project on Dutch identity, entitled Proud to be Dutch). And she is making a career for herself within academia: she was recently appointed Vice Chair of the Young Academy, the national think tank for young top researchers.

She has plenty of drive; that much is clear. And she has a point when she argues that most Nijmegen lecturers are not ready to teach in English and that most students will end up working in the Netherlands. But her plea also conceals the story of someone who experienced first-hand what it is like to be uprooted. "You should try living abroad; you will quickly find out what you miss about the Dutch."

Immigrants often have it, she notes: an awareness of the value of their own background. They are even more attached to their origins than the inhabitants of their homeland. And Danes are already so proud to begin with, so you can imagine what Danes abroad are like, she laughs. Language plays a key role in this context, because it is an ideal tool for expressing national identity. "At home we only ever spoke Danish, and it certainly wasn't because we couldn't speak anything else. The language gave us a sense of connection with our homeland."

Jensen knows better than anyone that language is not only a communication tool, but that it also plays a role in forming people. This is a recurring theme in her research. She analyses poems, pamphlets and plays that were written at key moments in the history of the Netherlands: disasters, wars, peace negotiations. Odes to national heroes such as Michiel de Ruyter, William of Orange and Joost van den Vondel, all of which show that there is such a thing as a feeling of Dutch identity. This also applies to *De Hollandsche natie* by Jan Frederik Helmers, a poem published during the French Annexation (1812). Written

COLUMN

PH-neutral

PH-neutral is a staff member at the Radboud University Faculty of Arts.

Camp Site Radboud

I may not be the sharpest dresser at the University, but I'm increasingly surprised by the dress choice of many Radboud students. The sun only has to show its face and students appear from every corner dressed more for a day on the beach than for consuming their daily portion of academic knowledge. It may be an age thing – next month I will be celebrating 25 years of being employed by this university, and that certainly has had its impact – but I firmly believe that things were different in my student days. Not necessarily better – baggy overalls and hand-knitted jumpers were certainly not to my taste – but different. I remember a fellow student being thrown out of a lecture on administrative law for wearing a cap in the lecture room (a sanction he incidentally contested successfully, in response to which the professor in question appeared at his next lecture wearing a full hunting outfit, including hunting cap), whereas nowadays, the basket ball caps are too numerous to count. Worn back to front, it goes without saying. And then there is the absence of clothing. With the first sun rays they all start taking things off, and one can't help noticing the high percentage of shorts. To make matters worse, this camping outfit is usually completed not with sandals, but with flip-flops. Flip-flops! Those things that you wear in the shower of the sports centre to avoid catching athlete's foot or some other transmittable disease. I always wonder what these lightly clad students are thinking when choosing their clothes. Appropriate for the occasion? Matching their goals for the day? Not that I care that much, but surely there must be limits. Last week, for example, my colleague and I were joined in the lift on the eighth floor by a bearded gentleman in full summer regalia, and barefoot! Is there a swimming pool somewhere on Camp Site Radboud that I don't know about?

as a poem of resistance and intended to protect the Dutch identity against invasion by the French.

There may be no such a thing as 'the Dutch', but there is certainly such a thing as a collective identity, says Jensen. And language plays an important role in this context. An administrator who teaches the politicians, managers and lecturers of the future to speak English is failing to understand the added value of linguistic diversity. And so he must be stopped. *Nej tak* (No, thanks!), as the Danes would say.

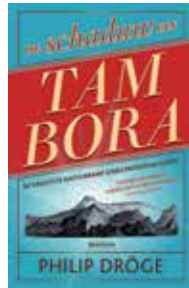
Number 4. This was *farmor's* house. Jensen looks up at the fourth-floor apartment. An old-fashioned lift used to bring her to up to where it was cosy and spacious. You could just catch a glimpse of the stately embassy houses on the other side. "We had such good times here," she says softly.

From this house they visited the many city parks, went to the cinema, or ran through attraction park Tivoli, behind Rådhuspladsen. Afterwards they ate *gammeldags isvaffel*, a Danish delicacy made of ice-cream covered with a *flødebolle*, meringue with chocolate.

Jensen sees herself as a bit of a modern Helmers. "Because I am naturally suspicious of developments that lead to too much Anglicisation. And because I sincerely believe that someone has to protect Dutch heritage. And I believe in the importance of language diversity in general. I do feel a little like Helmers standing up to the French and saying: 'The Dutch language should not be lost!'"

We are walking towards Nyhavn, the canal that leads to the harbour of Copenhagen, with colourful houses on both sides. Jensen grins. "It's a bit easier for me as a Dane to say these kinds of things. A Dutch person might be dismissed as nationalistic."

"Hej far!" There, on Nyhavn, we run into Lotte Jensen's father, sitting on a bench in the sun. "I thought you might be around here," says father Niels in Dutch with a strong Danish accent. On the terrace the tables are covered in white and red tablecloths. Grey blankets are draped over the chairs. "Skål!" says *far* raising his beer glass. He laughs when his daughter tells him about her meeting with King Willem-Alexander. That's a good opening for your story, he nods to the journalist: "Only foreigners are allowed to talk about Dutch identity. That means only Lotte and what's her name... Máxima. Ha!" *

READING
TIP BY
JENSEN**Philip Dröge
Shadow of
Tambora**

"An exciting and intriguing book about one of the largest volcanic eruptions in history. This disaster has given us Frankenstein and some beautiful poetry by Byron. Oh, and the invention of the bicycle."

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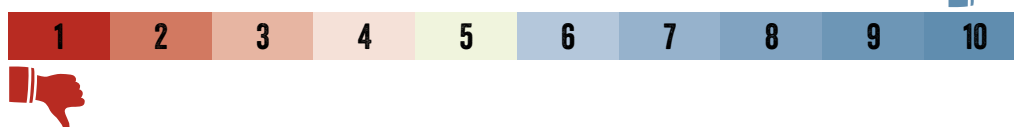
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'MY FATHER INSPIRES ME'

Inviting Diederik Stapel to the University is asking for trouble. Caspar Safarlou (22), first party leader of the Nijmegen branch of the Free Student Party, did it anyway. An interview in his parental home in Boxtel, where at weekends he talks long into the night with his Armenian father.

Text: Annemarie Haverkamp / Photography: Duncan de Fey

B

Boxtel, Sunday 6 March 2016. Sitting at his parents' kitchen table Caspar Safarlou tells them about his party inviting Diederik Stapel to speak at Radboud University. His father's response is "Fantastic!" His mother looks doubtful. Is this really necessary? Surely this will lead to trouble. Why can't they leave her 'little man' alone?

Caspar has no doubt that there will be trouble. In the academic world, Stapel is *persona non grata*. After all, he has tarnished academia's reputation by committing fraud. Honours students previously tried to invite the social psychologist to lecture in Nijmegen, but they had to retract their invitation. This was when Caspar – together with his party The Free Student (De Vrije Student, DVS) – decided to send the pariah a friendly e-mail. "Everyone should be free to speak. I think we can learn a lot from Stapel's story."

Father Serjik Safarlou remembers clearly Caspar leaving their house on that Sunday night. Alone, on his way to Nijmegen and a university that was displeased with him. But determined nevertheless. That weekend they had gone in great detail through all the arguments and damage control strategies. "I didn't send him any more messages after that," says Serjik. "If I'd called him, he might have lost concentration. Any move on my part would have damaged his authenticity."

The next day, his son appeared on the site of national newspaper *De Telegraaf*. Mother Lisette, who works in the social sector, printed out the article. By that time Caspar had had a good talk with the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, who was also against Stapel's visit. "We couldn't agree," Caspar told his parents. But this did not prevent the research fraudster from addressing a roomful of Nijmegen students on the evening of Monday 7 April. "I was secretly very proud of my son," says Serjik. "But I didn't tell him that. I wanted Caspar to keep thinking autonomously."

A bad holiday story

Three months later we are sitting at the same kitchen table in a corner house in Boxtel. Plastic tablecloth, laptop, books. Here, in front of the window with a view of the Dommel River, father and son often talk long into the night. About philosophy, science, politics, and human behaviour. "I learn so much from him," says Serjik. "He is my inspiration", says his son.

It was in this house that Caspar learnt to think. His father is Armenian. He arrived in the Netherlands in 1984 as a refugee from Teheran. Under Khomeini's leadership, Serjik could no longer say what he believed.



As a Christian, he lost his freedom after the Islamic Revolution. He told his two sons – Caspar and his older brother Robbert-Jan – very little about his flight. "They know bits and pieces," he says. "Like a bad holiday story."

This was a conscious choice on his part. He doesn't want to burden his children. They should be given the space they need to become who they are meant to be. Caspar developed an interest in politics. In 2015 he became party leader of the Nijmegen branch of a new student party: The Free Student (DVS). A liberal voice in left-wing student politics. Serjik was enthusiastic and supported his son's plans.

While mother Lisette – blond curls, blue eyes – asks in perfect Brabant dialect whether the visitors would like some coffee, Caspar explains how he ended up in politics. "In secondary school I formed a debate club with some friends. We saw debating as a form of sport. It was all about exchanging ideas. We were liberal, but we didn't feel at home in the VVD. We talked about

"PIM FORTUYN IS ONE OF MY GREATEST ROLE MODELS"

THE FREE STUDENT

The Free Student (DVS), supported by the JOVD (youth branch of the VVD party), entered student politics in 2015 when it won one seat in the Nijmegen University Student Council (ASAP has four seats, and AKKUraatd three). One of the party's first actions was to go around the university handing out pieces of cheese and sausage after the University had announced its intention to hold meat-free Mondays. Because students should always be able to choose for themselves. In the May 2016 elections, DVS once again won one seat. Caspar Safarlou was the party's leader in the first year.

digital possibilities and privacy. That's how we ended up joining the Pirate Party."

Serjik: "I liked the Pirate Party. A couple of young anarchists thrown together. I tried to find out more about them so that I could join in the discussion. I was relieved that my son didn't go around throwing Molotov cocktails or occupying ministry buildings."

But those boys were bullies. They knew a little more about programming than their teachers, so they disabled a few school computers. They also built a shadow website where pupils only had to press one button to access their timetable. Caspar laughs as he talks about it. Yes, it's true, people did get mad at them, like the time when the Dean demanded that the site be taken offline – otherwise they wouldn't get their diplomas! In the end the boys sold the website to the school.

For Caspar, who plans to study artificial intelligence, The Free Student represents a logical next step after the Pirate Party. Students have to

make themselves heard within the universities, he says. He sends an editorial to the *NRC*. "Plush-sticky university politicians incapable of making any impact whatsoever," is how he refers to the current student board members.

He discusses his ideas for higher education with his father, and prepares upcoming debates for the first student council elections at home. He is in Boxtel every weekend. "I taught him a few tricks and interview techniques," says Serjik, who like his wife also works in the social sector. "But ultimately, he is the one who has to conduct the debate."

Until two years ago, Serjik sat on the municipal council of Boxtel. First on behalf of the CDA, later for the local party Balans. He stopped when one day he heard himself "nagging like an old woman." He had become boring, was no longer able to contribute a fresh perspective.

At home, his sons surprised him. First Robbert-Jan, who announced at dinner one night his intention to

"I REALLY
DON'T MEAN
TO STEP ON
PEOPLE'S
TOES"

join the the Royal Military Academy. “And that in a left-wing pacifist home!” exclaims Serjik. “What had we done wrong?” He is joking. It came as a bit of a shock (to say the least), but his oldest son was given all the support he needed. And then there was Caspar. Who showed up one day with Pim Fortuyn. In that very same left-wing pacifist home.

“Fortuyn is one of my greatest role models,” explains Caspar. “What an amazing man, and what an amazing life.” Caspar was eight years old when the flamboyant Rotterdam politician was murdered. He only found out about him when a school friend gave him a book about Fortuyn for his birthday. What does he find so appealing about Fortuyn? “His liberal ideas and his rhetoric.” He has watched Fortuyn’s debate videos on YouTube hundreds of times. He even knows one of his speeches by heart. And no, he does not find Fortuyn’s ideas extreme (Fortuyn was critical of Islam and the ruling political elite, eds.). “He was an academic and he wrote very normal books.”

His father agrees with him. Fortuyn was an intellectual. Was he right-wing? Left-wing? “He had backbone,” says Serjik. “I once attended one of his lectures. He could sometimes say bizarre things. He really made people uncomfortable, and he was often misunderstood.”

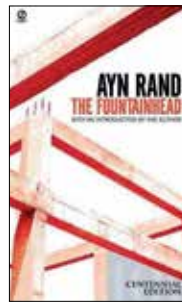
Mother Lisette joins in the conversation. “I identify with Pim Fortuyn’s mother,” she says. “I once saw her on TV. ‘Keep your head down,’ she would sometimes tell her son. That boy meant well. And people were so mean to him.” She points to Caspar. Another good boy. But because he does unconventional things, he sometimes gets into trouble.

According to Serjik you can use this kind of response to your advantage. If someone calls you an asshole, you can thank them. Apparently you’ve touched a nerve. It can be the start of a dialogue: where did this allergic reaction come from?

Caspar is not a troublemaker, he says. “I really don’t mean to step on people’s toes.” What he wants is to wake people up. Make them think about why they do what they do.

Earlier this year, he was proclaimed ‘most inspiring student’ by the student website Nultweevier. The editors were of the opinion that the DVS party leader was creative and hard-working. Caspar Safarlou, they said, was not only active in university politics, he also followed an interdisciplinary honours programme and completed the grant programme of the Thomas More Association. “Nice” says Caspar about his title. It’s quite a compliment to be inspiring to others.

After the summer he plans to switch study programmes. Philosophising suits him better. He has enrolled in the Master’s programme in Political Theory. But he is not looking for a career in politics. “My year on the student council is coming to an end. I know now how things work there. I thought it was great fun, but I’m done with it.” Caspar wants to go deeper. Right now he is fascinated by



READING TIP BY SAFARLOU

Ayn Rand The Fountainhead

“About architect Howard Roark, who refuses to compromise between his artistic vision and other people’s judgment. This novel is the ultimate ode to the autonomous individual, and it makes short shrift of every-day pragmatism. It’s the most inspiring book I’ve ever read.”



Caspar and his father Serjik in a boat on the Dommel near their house. Photography: Annemarie Haverkamp

the ideas of American writer and philosopher Ayn Rand. Next to his laptop is a book about her theories that he didn’t yet share. He found a copy last weekend in an Eindhoven bookstore. It was Rand who gave him a final push in the direction of philosophy. He may do a PhD later.

His father doesn’t think he will stay in the Netherlands. Caspar agrees. “I would like to live in a big city: Los Angeles or New York.” He has been to the US twice, on holiday. A lot of his father’s relatives live there.

What about Armenia? Is that an option? “No,” says Caspar. He’s been there, together with his father. But he doesn’t speak the language, and he doesn’t know much about the country. “For me, these were sentimental journeys,” says Serjik with a dreamy look on his face. “I thought: ‘Here in Armenia everyone is nice to me’. Of course it’s not true, but when I see those mountains, I feel a lump in my throat. I love to see the clouds dance above the land.”

In the Netherlands he is used to being discriminated against. If there is a terrorist attack somewhere, he wears a beret when he leaves the house. Let people think he is French. And what about Caspar? “People often think I’m Greek. Safarlou. Souflaki. Then I start saying ‘ons mam’ and ‘ons pap’, and they think: ‘Oh, he’s from Brabant’.”

Mother Lisette was born and bred in Boxtel. The house where the family lives was her parents’ home. When the boys were still living at home, there were visitors all the time. Now she waits to see where Caspar and Robbert-Jan will settle down.

Caspar is not worried about his future. He can always fall back on his knowledge of ICT. He has already been approached by employers via LinkedIn. Father Serjik refuses to tell us what profession he thinks will suit Caspar. He doesn’t want to influence him. Autonomy, that’s the most important thing in the Safarlou family. ✪



NEW BUILDING FOR THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

The maze of grey 1970s buildings that currently house the Faculty of Social Sciences will be replaced in four years' time with a brand-new building. A real eye-catcher, with lots of glass, straddling a walkway. This building will include lecture halls, independent study rooms, practical areas and catering facilities. The demolition of the old Thomas van Aquinostraat complex, which will be replaced by more green, is due to start in 2017. Not everyone is enthusiastic, however. A campaign has been launched against the disappearance of the old building complex, entitled 'Save the Seventies'. Initiator Noël Spauwen believes that the current building has more of a "village feel" and is "ideal for meetings".

Artist impression: INBO (Institute for Nature and Forest Research)





THE MAN BEHIND MR MANIFESTO

Three years ago scientific sociologist Willem Halffman made a name for himself as one of the greatest troublemakers in the Dutch academic world.

Who is this man who makes it such a priority to criticize research and education? "In my lectures I try to make the heads of my students spin."

Text: Paul van den Broek / Photography: Erik van 't Hullenaar



S

Science historian Christoph Lüthy said: "You should ask him about horses and music." Is that your guilty pleasure?

"Over the past three years I have been kinder to myself. I used to spend too much time in my head, and you can't do that when you work with horses. They have an uncanny sense of social intelligence: if you walk into a stable they immediately pick up on your mood, and if you are stressed you can be sure that you will run into trouble with your horse. He simply will not accept it. You have to give your horse your full attention, and be patient. It's not for nothing that horses are used in therapy to calm people down."

Your passion is horses and music, so that means dressage, right?

"Riding through the woods turned out to be more boring than I thought, so yes, nowadays I practice dressage, but the music aspect will only be added once I am more advanced. Dressage is an amazing interaction; when it goes well it is almost like a dance, a sport with an incredible depth of experience that brings you to another world."

Your colleague and friend Tamara Metze mentioned another passion: playing records. Did you ever have to choose between being a DJ and a researcher?

"No, music is my hobby. Once a month I DJ in a café in the Staatsliedenbuurt. I enjoy finding out about music: how musical styles vary across cultures and periods, how a Greek merchant brought Cuban music to Congo, and how Ska emerged in Jamaica in the 1950s and 1960s, long before Bob Marley became famous with his reggae. It's fascinating!"

So we can reassure Tamara that you are not likely to be lost to science?

"Yes, you can reassure her. Music is fun, but it's not important enough, I can't really get angry about it. I always tell my students: 'Only do things that you can get really angry about.' You need inner turmoil to really commit to something."

Knowledge factory

We know what does make you angry: universities that are no good. But after last year's manifesto (see box) you have been rather quiet. Aren't you angry anymore?



THE ACADEMIC MANIFESTO

Last year, Willem Halffman (Antwerp, 1966), affiliated with the Faculty of Science as scientific sociologist, published *The Academic Manifesto* together with his Amsterdam colleague Hans Radder. This manifesto emerged within the researchers' action group H.NU, and rode on the waves of the student protests of last May, paving the way for a new, ideal university. In a nutshell: away with needless and expensive bureaucracy and the expensive PR campaigns used by universities to compete with one another, an end to study programmes that rush students towards their diploma in cookie factory style, and an end to meaningless publication quotas and time-consuming competitions for

research funding. Vox asked five people who know Halffman for input for this interview: his Amsterdam colleague Hans Radder, his Tilburg colleague and friend Tamara Metze, science historian Christoph Lüthy and two of his students, Serge Horback and Twan Joosten. Halffman, who previously worked at the universities of Twente and Amsterdam, publishes, among other things, on the difficult relationship between politics and science. Willem Halffman lives in Amsterdam.

The Academic Manifesto, from an Occupied to a Public University. See www.platform-hnu.nl

"PUTTING GRAINS OF SAND IN THE MACHINE IS SOMETHING WE CAN DO RIGHT NOW"

"No, we wrote the first draft of the manifesto in 2013, and I'm not angry anymore. After years of criticizing, last year I decided to put my energy into something more constructive: together with the students of the Honours Academy, I decided to explore what an ideal university would look like. We see it as a kind of commons: a knowledge community where researchers and students exchange ideas, where we work together with organisations to deal with urgent problems, and where regular citizens can attend lectures."

Which of the problems facing the universities today can be resolved with this commons concept?

"The commons model is intended to replace the business model that universities are currently caught in: the knowledge factory, cookie factories for students. Why would regular people not be allowed to walk in and attend lectures? Why is the University being so difficult about making classes available online? Everything has to be paid for first, and society is saying: 'We have already paid for this, via the tax system.' The business model plays right into the hands of populists. 'Why aren't you there for us?' they ask the universities that keep their doors shut. And rightly so."

What makes you angry right now at Radboud University?

"The argument we keep hearing for why we have to promote the inflow of international students that we hope to attract with new English-language Bachelor's programmes. Why? 'Because we have to grow.' You can offer any number of counter-arguments, but the growth model, the revenue model, is so hard, that it's almost impossible to counter. Teaching in English is nonsense: most students end up working for Dutch organisations, and by that time they can't even express themselves properly in Dutch. It's bizarre!"

Will this discontent lead to new protests, similar to those of last year? There seems to be a deafening silence on the frontline.

"In Amsterdam the problems have been partially resolved in two committees. And there has been some improvement, for example with respect to the participational bodies. But I still hear students complaining all the time. What are we doing, for God's sake?! Why are we cutting up what we teach into small bite-size pieces? Why are we setting such strict requirements, rushing people through the system? In my lectures, I try to make my students' heads spin. I want them to forget everything they think they know, even if this means a study delay of six months. Not because I want them to be delayed, but because we need more time and space in our education system. I am certain that there will be a new crisis, but

don't ask me where and when. There are too many people, and not enough money."

Tomatoes

Your Amsterdam colleague Hans Radder thinks you are brave for standing on the barricade last year for the new university, in particular since you were on a temporary contract at the time. Did you feel brave doing it?

"To be honest, last year, I was scared. But I also thought: 'If I can't say this, then there's no point in me working here.' And then this year I was finally given a permanent contract. At last! I finally have the feeling that I'm welcome in this community. That I can claim my space, even though they know that I am likely to enter into a debate. That's great! That's how it's supposed to be."

The manifesto objects to the proliferation of temporary contracts. Is this also the reason that staff members are not feeling so brave?

"It does make people less brave, but that is a side-effect, it's not done on purpose. Universities are trying to grow using contract funding, and this means hiring people on a temporary basis."

Christoph Lüthy refers to you as the epitome of the public intellectual. Do you plan to continue expressing yourself in this way, even if it has a negative impact on your academic career?

"There are other things that get in the way of my career. I don't publish much, because I only publish when I have something to say, and when I feel that I have understood a topic in depth. It also doesn't help that I invest so much time and energy in teaching. I've designed a total of twenty courses. This is also not good for my career."

And teaching is something that you are incredibly good at. Serge Horbach, who is writing a thesis under your supervision, is wondering whether you are not more committed to teaching than to research.

"I truly love both, and teaching is very important. Above all, students have to learn to think critically. The best moments for me are when I see someone having an Aha! moment in one of my lectures. 'Oh, now I understand what you mean!' That really makes my day."

As a theatrical person you use all the tricks in the book. Twan Joosten followed your course on the History of Biology and he told us about a suitcase full of tomatoes that you used to bring the material to life.

"Yes, I find that important. After spending an hour talking about tomatoes, I take them out of my suitcase and share them with the students. I tell them: 'These tomatoes are really good for your memory.' You can see the students think: 'Tomatoes! Good for your memory?' 'Yes,' I say, 'because this is one lecture you are not likely to forget.'"

Modesty

You have a remarkable duality. You are both an activist and a modest person. Lüthy calls you ‘the leading unnoticed talent of the University.’

“Modesty suits us. All our claims are temporary truths, the best we could come up with so far. This is something the general public doesn’t like, because people want certainty. This is precisely the kind of business logic that forces scientists to make claims in the media that they know are not quite right. One of the problems of the current university system is that it rewards people who excel at promoting their own ego.”

And then one day the modest man suddenly ends up on a podium as Mr Manifesto. Does this role scare you?

“The man behind the words is still just as modest. Although I have to say that I occasionally like to stick my neck out. DJ-ing is also a bold act, as is teaching. You have to dare to show yourself. But now that the manifesto is done, I am just as happy to step down from the podium. I don’t want to be a demagogue anymore. I’m now working on an ideal commons model, and when the time is ripe, I will once again spring into action.”

A commons is also made of people, including ego-trippers, busybodies, and bossy troublemakers. How can we prevent our commons from quickly turning back into a ‘regular’ university?

“Right now too much power lies with the control systems and indicators. Even administrators have the feeling that they can’t break free. We have to shift the balance of power to professionals and their social networks.”

Do we have to wait first for a definition of the ideal commons, or can students and researchers already start to build it today?

“Everyone can do something right now. Throwing grains of sand into the machine is something we can do immediately. Invite people to attend your lectures, ask critical questions about your work or study programme. The university system is stubborn, but we are never just victims of the system.”

Vera Jansen, the manager of your department, would like to know the reason behind your incredible drive. What is it that motivates you?

“Pride in my craftsmanship. Just as a carpenter enjoys a beautiful cupboard, I really enjoy a successful lecture. Or a well-written article. Then I can go home happy.”*

HOW
MUSIC
WORKS

DAVID
BYRNE

READING
TIP BY
HALFFMAN

David Byrne
How Music Works

“Erudite yet reader-friendly exposition of how music ‘works’ on a podium, in a band, on the market. David Byrne is a versatile musician and artist who gained fame as the lead singer of the band Talking Heads. Compulsory reading for any music lover who wants more than the standard celebration of super stars.”



ABOUT HE-SHE AND WE-THEY

She is against *Zwarte Piet* and battles sexism in the academic world. While her parents were anxious to keep their Jewishness a secret, she lives her religion out in the open. Canadian political philosopher and Radboud lecturer Anya Topolski (39) from Leuven stands up against any form of exclusion. With hate mail as the result.

Text: Annemarie Haverkamp / **Photography:** Duncan de Fey



| bio | **Anya Topolski** | born in | Toronto (1976) | education | Biochemistry and Philosophy

Hers is the only one in the row of Leuven houses with a flower box in front. On the front door a sticker: "Zwarte Piet is racism."

Anya Topolski opens the door in her socks. Lightly, she steps away towards the kitchen. Graceful as a dancer.

Me: "'Zwarte Piet is racism' it says on your door. You invite your visitors to start a discussion right away..."

Topolski: "A Flemish person would not dare to start such a conversation."

"They wouldn't?"

"The Dutch are more direct."

Topolski is also more direct. She comes from Canada. She has Polish parents and is Jewish. And she wears her heart on her sleeve. She talks about things. For example in the schoolyard, around Sinterklaas time, when she tells a Belgian mother that Zwarte Piet is racism. Look at all these children with their blacked-up faces. This immediately provokes a fight. "Are you accusing me of racism?" shouts the mother. Topolski: "I am not accusing you of anything. But do you realise what lesson you are teaching your children? Imagine what it must be like to be the only black child in the classroom."

She is not interested in stories about 'traditions'. Colonialism was also a tradition. As was antisemitism. Where are the arguments?

In the Netherlands, there is at least a debate. For. Against. With a lot of noise, maybe, but at least we are talking about it. It's a start. In Belgium, Zwarte Piet is black. Full stop. End of discussion.

Anya Topolski is an activist. Against racism. Against sexism. But at heart she is a philosopher. A philosopher who hasn't yet had breakfast. "It's always like this," she says as she moves around her kitchen. "When I work I forget to eat." Just as well that she has children. They force her to have some regularity and to sit down to eat a meal as a family.

She opens a kitchen cabinet. "Would you like some coffee? I don't like those little cups. In Canada, they give you a soup bowl. With milk? I have lactose-free milk. Did you know that lactose tolerance diminishes with the number of children a woman nurses. It's true at least for Ashkenazi Jewish, African and Asian women. What shall I eat? ..."

There is a child's drawing on every door. She thinks that it is rude to eat while talking, but is it OK just this once? Her laugh is broad and disarming. She curls her sock-clad feet around her wooden chair legs. Let's talk about sexism.

Copy-paste

She once had a male colleague at the University of Leuven. He was the same age as Anya Topolski and had also recently had a baby. "Does the boss also keep asking you how your baby is?" Topolski asked him one day. "I wish he did!" he answered. It was striking: whereas Topolski was fed up with her boss only ever asking her about her family (and never about her research), her colleague was frustrated that the same boss never asked him about his family life. They decided to conduct an experiment. On the same afternoon they both started a conversation with their boss. Using the same opening sentence. And what did they discover? The talk with Topolski immediately switched to children, while the talk with her male colleague was all about work.

"Of course, this was not a scientific experiment," says Topolski after taking a mouthful of cornflakes. "But this is really what is going on."

When it comes to gender issues, says the Canadian, Europe is behind, to put it mildly. Just look at the percentage of female staff members. What ratio was she used to at universities in her homeland?

Approximately fifty/fifty. And at faculties where there are fewer female students a percentage that is representative of the gender ratio among students.

In Belgium and the Netherlands there is still a lot of subconscious sexism. To counter this, she has launched a website, together with her colleagues: academicsexism-stories.be – SASSY for short. Their objective is to share their experiences – she calls it 'empowerment' – and to make people aware of their own behaviour. That's where it all starts. "I've seen it happen so often. Colleagues assume that I would choose my children above my career. They make decisions for me, for example by not telling me about a vacancy."

Nijmegen pays more attention to gender equality than Leuven, says the lecturer, who teaches at both universities. Twenty-two percent of female professors is a good start. That is why she feels more at home across the border. "In my lectures I constantly make my students aware of their language use. They often say where it might just as well be she. I don't accept that kind of thing. Inclusion begins with language."

COLONIALISM WAS ALSO A TRADITION

The philosopher is letting her cornflakes go soft. The spoon is leaning, forgotten, on the rim of the bowl. She is often surprised, says Topolski, by the response of academics in Belgium and in the Netherlands to her approach. "Gender-neutral language use is the standard in academic texts." Nothing revolutionary about it.

The reason she combats sexism is not only that we place people at a disadvantage by pigeon-holing them. Another equally important reason is the interests of science itself. What do we want to find at universities? Creativity, originality, and intellectual challenge. "It has been shown in companies that more diverse teams come up with more original ideas. When everyone thinks the same, talks the same and looks the same, how can you ever develop something new? All you do is copy-paste.

If you really want people to think and come up with new possibilities, you need to integrate different perspectives and experiences. This is how we can create a better university and ultimately a better society, since that is where all our students are headed."

If we need a female quota to give this flywheel a push, then that's what we have to do, but she would rather achieve this goal through raising awareness. Topolski tells about how she almost missed a promotion because of being a woman. It was some years ago, and she was still breast-feeding her second child. "I had just completed my PhD and I was looking for a postdoc position. There was a meeting in Nijmegen with philosophers from various faculties. I simply had to attend."

She found it very difficult to ask whether there was a room where she could feed her baby. This was about something really intimate, her breasts. And could someone watch her baby for an hour while she gave her presentation? She had to battle a thousand internal demons before finally sending an e-mail to one of the professors. "I found it so scary. I was the only foreigner, and the only woman. I was making myself so vulnerable." Luckily his answer was warm. And it ended up playing a determining role in her career. Someone took care of her baby and she was able to give her presentation.

"It shouldn't be necessary, this kind of e-mail," says Topolski. "This month I have a conference in Oxford. The invitation says 'If you want to bring your children along, they will be taken care of.' That's how it should be. A disabled person should also not have to ask whether there is a lift at the conference centre. That's what I mean by real inclusion."

Jewish dog

Anya's Polish Jewish grand-parents were married in 1941. They had their honeymoon in the East of the country, a choice that saved their lives: that very same week all the Jews in their region were deported. Anya's grand-parents spent the rest of the war as exiles in Russia. By 1945 they were the only survivors of the family.

Anya's mother was born in Warsaw. Her father in Katowice. In 1968 both Jewish students fled – unbeknownst to each other – from a new wave of antisemitism, via various European countries to Canada. "My father and mother barely knew that they were Jewish," says Topolski. "Their parents had kept it hidden. They were too afraid of persecution."

But it said so in their passports: Jewish. It even said so in the dog's passport, says Topolski with a cynical smile. And so they were deported from Poland. They ended up settling in Toronto, where a large Polish community was formed.

Topolski sighs deeply. "I sometimes wish that I was less 'interviewable,'" she says. "That would mean my history was less emotionally charged."

In the Belgian press she is often heard speaking about modern-day racism. This is the theme of her academic research. She sees signs of it everywhere. Nowadays the Muslim community and refugees bear the full brunt of it. Europe's new black sheep.

"As a child in Canada when I first heard about the Shoah and the death camps, I thought there must be something really wrong with people's brains in Europe. It was the reasoning of a five-year old, but as I grew up, I continued to believe that through science we could find out how people are able to commit such horrors. I decided to study biochemistry and neuroscience. It was only later that I realised that I would not find the answers there. I switched to philosophy and left for Leuven. I am still driven by the question that occupied me as a child. How can we fix this world, so that such horrors can never happen again?"

The answer is less simple than the question. Genocide was made possible by systematically excluding groups of people, not only Jews, but also homosexuals and gypsies. What preceded this step was the dehumanisation of these groups. And that, says Topolski, is what is happening once again in today's society.

"Yesterday in my lecture I spoke about the refugee crisis. A student said: 'We have to be able to track them at any moment as long as they are in our country.' I asked: 'Why? We don't have to track you, do we?' And he said: 'Well, because...'. And then he stopped. He understood that in his mind, he had made a link between refugees and criminals. This is called 'framing'."

When she first came to Leuven, Anya Topolski studied Jewish philosophy, which she found increasingly appealing. At home in Canada, she had not been taught anything about Judaism, from a deeply engrained fear of reprisals. "I found it so rich," she says – pushing her breakfast bowl away. "For me, Judaism is about two things: ethics and rituals. That's what I want to pass on to my children."

She remembers the birth of her first son (he was followed by three siblings). Her grandmother came over from Poland for the naming ceremony. On the Friday



before they celebrated Shabbat. Grandma cried when she heard the prayers and songs. She had not heard them for fifty years. "Everything came back to her. That moment made a really deep impression on me."

Her parents and grandparents are proud of Anya because she dares to live a life true to her origins. But they are also sometimes angry, furious even. "They fear that I am endangering my children's safety."

Topolski is a progressive Jew. And she is publicly critical of the Israeli State. Because the Israeli government dehumanises and excludes people. She has no wish to be associated with it. In Belgium she is one of the initiators of the group An Alternative Jewish Voice (www.eajs.be), an organisation that speaks out against discrimination and racism towards any group, whether Palestinians in Israel or Muslims in Europe.

"Last year I gave a lecture in Amsterdam. I had already lectured hundreds of times in Belgium, but people here can really be so rude: I received terrible hate mail! For the first time in my life, I was really scared."

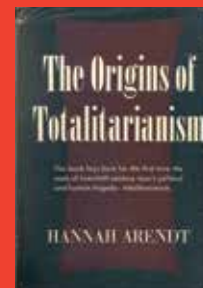
She was called a self-hating Jew, and an anti-Semite. She was advised to leave her baby, whom she always took with her, at home. "This was before I even gave the lecture; They didn't know what I was going to say yet." The threats probably came from Zionist circles.

It did not stop her. In the evening, when she puts her children to bed, she asks them what good deed they have done today – mitswa. And who did something good for them.

The doorbell rings, and the Canadian chatterbox skates in her black tights towards the door. It's the photographer. Time to put on some shoes.

I compliment her on her colourful dress. Her beautiful posture. "Very feminine."

She laughs. "If you were attending one of my lectures, I would ask you: 'What does 'feminine' mean?'" *



READING TIP BY TOPOLSKI

Hannah Arendt
The Origins of Totalitarianism

"For me personally and as a researcher this is one of the most important books. It explains how antisemitism and imperialism emerged in the political and economic context in Europe and it offers insight into the racism and Islamophobia of our times."

"FOR THE FIRST TIME I WAS REALLY SCARED"

UNCONVENTIONAL PROFESSION



| **bio** | **Leon Wecke** | **born in** | Arnhem (1932) | **died in** | Nijmegen (2015)
| **education** | Political Sciences and School for Journalism



BY

How contrary can a person be? With his unconventional lectures on conflict and images of the enemy, Leon Wecke, who passed away last year at the age of 83, remained faithful to the University almost until his last breath. A profile of a man who will be remembered by many. "Unconventional thinkers like Leon are unfortunately becoming increasingly rare."

Text: Paul van den Broek / **Photography:** Archief Leon Wecke and CICAM

On 19 May 2015 Leon Wecke was still teaching the course he himself had introduced to Nijmegen fifty years earlier: Legitimation of Security Policy. In short: why are we so afraid of bombings when we are much more likely to die in a traffic accident or in hospital? He stimulated his students with these unconventional ideas up to three weeks before he passed away, on 13 June 2015, aged 83 and the University's oldest lecturer by far.

Vox spoke to seven people from Wecke's circle to flesh out the man and his intellectual legacy, and in all seven interviews laughter constantly bubbled up to the surface, no matter how much they missed him. His intense passion for work was the subject of many anecdotes. For instance for his wife, Janny Wecke, who remembers Leon's many hospital visits: he was hospitalized at least seven times in the last twenty years, all due to his increasingly fragile heart. "On visits to the cardiologist he always brought along his departmental reports. Half the conversation was about that; only then would it shift to his heart."

According to Janny Wecke, Leon preferred to be hospitalized at Christmas time. "He couldn't go to work then anyway. Instead he would lecture surgical assistants on polemology."

Work, work, and more work. Jan ter Laak, who joined the Study Centre for Peace Issues (now CICAM) as a volunteer 25 years ago, tells us an anecdote about Leon's holidays – they were non-existent. "Holiday? There's nothing to do on holiday!" Leon used to say about the free weeks that offer such pleasant distractions to regular mortals. When Wecke did finally decide to go away, to

Cattolica on the Roman Coast in 1990, the fun was of short duration: the First Gulf War broke out on 2 August. "He ended up spending all his days analysing, making phone calls and writing," says Ter Laak. His wife Janny was there, and she can laugh about it. That was Leon. "He barely made it to our son's birth." In 2006 they took the same trip again, to celebrate their 35th anniversary, together with their children and grandchildren. "That time everything went well, and luckily no war broke out."

Action Group RaRa

What drove this man to constantly want to share his vision on war and peace? To not want to miss a single development? To continue to prepare lectures with one foot in the grave? His hunger for news was legendary. Ben Schennink tells us about the television Wecke has installed in his car back in the 1970s, so that he didn't miss the news on his way to work or to a lecture. "Whenever something happened, Wecke immediately called to give us a preliminary analysis of the news. We often first heard about important events from Leon," says Schennink, who arrived in Nijmegen in 1969 to strengthen the academic staff of the recently launched Study Centre.

Wecke was driven by a mission to enrich the world with his vision on every new war that threatened to break out. The insights into polemology acquired in Paris in the late 1950s formed the foundation for his (often sharp) commentary on every new conflict – and the public response it engendered. For example in 1991, when the

country was shocked by a bomb exploding at the residence of Minister Aad Kosto (Asylum Policy). The attack was claimed by the Action Group RaRa, who for a few years advocated, in a rather un-Dutch aggressive way, the rights of illegal asylum-seekers.

A 'terror group' according to the community at large, but not to Wecke, who once again took an alternative stance: "Didn't they always politely warn everyone before the explosion? Although they say that Kosto's cat may indeed at some point have been in danger." Since a couple of RaRa supporters were following Wecke's lectures, and Wecke himself was working on a publication about the group, the secret services conducted a night raid on Wecke's office at the University, looking for the bombers' names. Names that Wecke did not know. Wecke enjoyed telling this story: it strengthened his reputation as an unconventional polemologist.

Unconventionality with a serious undertone, emphasizes Ben Schennink. "He fought against the legitimization of conflicts that cannot be legitimised."

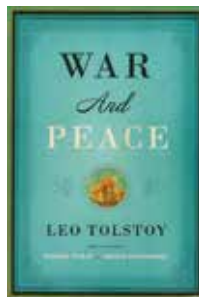
"He invited people to look at conflicts from all perspectives," says Maarten Cras, who was introduced to Wecke in the early 1990s when he followed courses at the Study Centre as a student. "He always said: 'William of Orange was the greatest terrorist the Netherlands has ever known.' It's all a question of definition: a freedom fighter to one is a terrorist to the other."

Rebellious

Where did Wecke get his unconventional ideas about war and peace? What drove him to testify to this day in day out for half a century? Ben Schennink reflects on Wecke's youth in Arnhem, on the frontline in 1944. While citizens fled to the shelters, twelve-year old Wecke went out to witness the Battle of Arnhem with his own eyes. An even more important incident according to Schennink occurred in the following months, as the Wecke family fled and found shelter in the Achterhoek, near a farmer who was a Dutch Nazi (NSB), but nevertheless helped an English pilot who was shot down. The farmer was later tried and exonerated by Wecke's father – active during the war in the Red Cross. What is right? What is wrong? "This plea of his father's was a real eye-opener for Leon," says Schennink.

During his own military service, Wecke discovered that every conflict situation has a false bottom. In 1953 he carried sand bags during the floods in Zeeland. Later, he refused to go on refresher exercise and became one of the first atomic conscientious objectors of the Netherlands. Autonomy was more important than blindly following authorities, as Leon learned during the war. "This ambiguity towards authority is something that Leon carried with him for the rest of his life," says Schennink.

Maarten Cras remembers an important episode from Leon's military service, when he was locked up for ignoring



READING TIP BY JANNY WECKE

Leo Tolstoj War and Peace

"I don't know whether Leon loved this book, but our daughter Natasja was named after one of the main characters at a time when Russians were not very popular. Our son Ivan's name doesn't come from the book; we just wanted a name to match his sister's."

an order to remain in the camp, even though the division had been promised a free weekend. "In Leon's eyes this was unjust. His twin brother, a corporal, went to visit him in prison." This brother – a few minutes older than Leon – has played an important role in his life, says Schennink. "The elder of a pair of twins is often very law-abiding, so the second one has to do something different to attract attention. Leon had a tendency to rebel from an early age," analyses Schennink.

"He absolutely hated authority," says Jan ter Laak. "At the Institute, the conscientious objectors who came and went had as much say as the permanent staff." Helma Jacobs, Wecke's secretary since the 1980s, praises his leadership style, armed with generosity and humour, and averse to performance. "Other bosses liked to show off that they had studied, but not Leon." Maarten Cras mentions Leon's dislike of academic bureaucracy. "He believed that there were too many rules." Leon was dedicated to his students, not to the university authorities.

Performer

The fact that Leon favoured the media above the scientific podiums was part of his unconventional attitude, says Bert Bomert – Director of the Institute following Wecke's 'retirement'. "He considered research to be a party trick: you had to write the right publications with the right hypotheses, which according to him nobody ever read." In the media and in debates he could express alternative opinions. "Even though he did it for fun, his unconventional approach often did lead to better insights."

The performer in Leon Wecke also craved attention. In his younger years he had wanted to go to drama school. "Not follow the masses, but get on stage and let the message of protest be heard," that is how Maarten Cras summarizes Leon's calling. He never refused a request for an explanation or a lecture. For years, twice a week he recorded a column for Gelderland Broadcasting, and he was home columnist for Radboud Reflects. Until his heart forced him to say 'no' more often. "He really struggled with this," says Cras. Jan ter Laak knows that Leon was afraid that if he said 'no', people would stop asking him. "Leon couldn't do without company, he was addicted to people." He so much wanted to share his vision with the public, says his wife Janny. Helma Jacobs notes that Leon remained unconventional until the very end. He "was hurt" when invitations to perform became less frequent. But all her advice – Work less! Eat better! Exercise more! – was lost on Leon. "It was nobody else's business."

In the last fifteen years, his wife Janny drove Leon to work; he didn't want to drive anymore himself. "Leon was afraid that there would be no one to take over his work, so he had to be at his post." Nor did he rest at home. "In the evenings and the weekends he would often sit in his study." And yet he was not good at being alone: "Even when he worked, he wanted me to stay at home." "He was not the



Leon studying birds in the Ooij. Leon may have been well-equipped for birdwatching with his enormous Leica binoculars, but he was never fanatical about it. "His only hobby was his work," says his family.

LEON WAS A VEGETARIAN WHO HATED ANIMAL SLAUGHTER, WHICH RESULTED IN A RABBIT PLAGUE



He hardly ever drank wine or beer. Leon's addiction of choice was smoking. In the early days cigarettes and cigars, later only cigars, and towards the end, when he was forced to stop for health reasons, the occasional pipe of tobacco.

With Joeri in the mid-1980s. Leon loved his dog; he used to order steak in restaurants and feed it to Joeri.



kind who wanted to do things together, just the two of us,” says Janny. Work and children came first, followed far behind by animals, like the birds he studied in the Ooij Polder, or the rabbits in the garden. Leon was a vegetarian who hated animal slaughter, which resulted in a rabbit plague. Which in turn led to a fight with the neighbours, and uncontrolled hordes of rabbits being released by Leon near Malden.

Incredibly relevant

How time-proof is Leon Wecke’s intellectual legacy? He did not leave any books, not even a PhD. This was partially strategy, says Ben Schennink: “If we had taken the time to write PhDs, the Institute would not have survived.” We made a name for ourselves through media attention, fund raising, and securing research assignments, he explains. “We were very good at it, and that’s what saved the Institute.”

Jan ter Laak knows that Leon began working on at least three PhDs, one of which he very nearly finished. “The manuscript is still somewhere in a drawer. He also

had enough articles that only required a staple, but he never got around to it.” Approximately ten years ago, Leon’s employees reserved a room for him in the Erasmus Building for three months: “Now get to work on your PhD!” Ter Laak: “He was back at the Institute within ten days; ultimately he wasn’t interested in a PhD.” Janny Wecke: “He hated sitting alone in his room. He wasted away when he didn’t have an appointment.”

Maarten Cras does not regret this missing PhD. “Leon has left enough of a legacy: an incredible collection of lectures, articles and columns. Once all this material has been put in order, it will form a beautiful legacy.” Bert Bomert adds: “Generations of students were raised on Leon’s intellectual legacy. When he died we got messages from people who had studied with him twenty years ago: “What a loss!” This is also a way of leaving a legacy: all these students will carry his vision forward for many years to come.”

This is certainly true of Laura van den Vrijhoef, Master’s student in Political Science, who followed a Minor with Leon in 2014, his last year. Once she became used to “his

unique style of teaching and somewhat old-fashioned language use”, she enjoyed “fantastic lectures”: “He would subtly lead us towards a new way of looking at things.” What do we miss now that he is no longer among us? Ben Schennink mentions the trips they used to take together, the last one to the German military war cemetery in IJsselsteijn, Limburg, where Leon stumbled on the graves of two Weckes unknown to him. Leon’s grandfather was German, and these two new-found members of the Wecke family touched him, says Schennink. “For a moment it turned his world upside down: Nothing can be taken for granted, you always have to remain open towards people, as he showed in his attitude towards the Russians in the Institute’s early days.”

Jan ter Laak misses Leon as “the grown-up child that he always remained.” So playful! For instance at the annual party at the Wecke’s home – attended by everyone, from military personnel from the Defence Academy, where Leon taught, to conscientious objectors – and where the traditional roulette game was once disturbed by three police agents barging in. “Leon had organised this himself; the costumes came from the drama school.”

Bert Bomert remembers the man “with whom it was impossible to fight”, “who took your arm when it was needed” and who was as much part of the Institute as the furniture. “He was always there, the man whose door was always open for an exchange of ideas. This is what we have lost.”

“I miss working days that started with the appearance of a cheerfully muttering man”, says Maarten Cras. “It usually turned out that Leon had heard something on the news, which, being him, he simply had to comment on.”

Helma Jacobs misses the “scatterbrain” whose secretary she became 37 years ago. “The day would only really start once I had had a chat with Leo. Luckily he was always there. Even when his health was failing, he still considered the Institute more important than the hospital. We even had to take exam papers to him in hospital because he wanted to grade them himself.”

The woman whom you would expect to miss him most, Janny Wecke, finds it a difficult question. Of course she misses the “nice boy” she met 63 years ago. “But you know what’s strange: in some ways I don’t miss him. I still talk to him nearly every day. When I see something on TV, I sometimes say: ‘Did you hear that? That’s what you always used to say!’”

The final word goes to the student, just as Leon would have wanted it: “I think he made a lasting impression on me,” says Laura van den Vrijhoef. “His style may have been old-fashioned, but what he had to say was incredibly relevant.” *

“HE WOULD TURN
THE WORLD
UPSIDE DOWN”

COLUMN

STUDENT2016

Eilidh Turnbull is a Master’s student from Schotland, who writes about Nijmegen and international life.

It’s coming to the end of the academic year. For many people it’s the last few days in Nijmegen, luckily for me I have another six months. But for many of you poor unfortunate souls it is time to say goodbye to Havana on the Waal. So here is my Nijmegen bucket list, my recommendations for must-do’s before you leave.

1. Go to the river beach at the Waal, bring a barbecue or some beers or a book or all of the above. Sit, chill and say hello to the cows for me.
2. Go to at least one party at Waalhalla and Doornroosje.
3. Eat an awful (yet delicious) snack from a vending machine in Febo.
4. Go on the Pannenkoekenboot and eat your own body weight in pancakes.
5. Watch a film at LUX.
6. Attend some kind of street party.
7. Spend a sunny afternoon people/duck watching at Kronenburgerpark.
8. Attend a festival in a park.
9. Infiltrate a fraternity/sorority party.
10. Go to the Grote Markt and eat some haring (or falafel if that’s more your thing).
11. Drink a fancy beer in ‘Café Samson’ and in ‘In de Blaauwe Hand’.
12. Check out the Honigcomplex, and visit the monthly market or drink some hipster coffee.
13. Go to a party in Onderbroek.
14. Go to at least one museum.
15. Spend a day chilling at the Berendonck lake.
16. Join a communal meal at De Klinker.
17. Check out the view from the top of the Erasmus Building.
18. Go window shopping in Lange Hezelstraat.
19. Watch the sun set behind the bridges from Valkhof Park.
20. Cycle home drunk (if you have not done this yet, what have you been doing!?).
21. Cycle to Germany, so you can impress your friends back home (even though it only takes half an hour).

I’m sure I am missing some, if you have any ideas please comment as I have another six months to fill!

voxweb.nl/author/eilidh

THE PRESIDENT

Last year Jafar Alhashime was President of the Catholic Student Association Carolus Magnus despite the fact that he is Muslim and does not drink alcohol. He personally does not find it that strange. "The fact that I could become President just goes to show that you don't need to drink to belong." His response to six preconceptions on ideas about life in a student association.

Text: Tim van Ham / **Photography:** Bert Beelen

A photograph of a bar interior. In the foreground, a red, curved bar stool with a metal frame is visible. The bar counter is dark wood. In the background, a television screen displays a website. To the left, a shelf holds several bottles of alcohol. A person's arm in a dark suit is partially visible on the left side of the frame.

DOES NOT DRINK



First preconception: The president of a student association comes from a white family of lawyers, has a double first name, and has played hockey his entire life.

“I am living proof that this is not true. My mother originally came from Kazakhstan and my father is a political refugee from Iraq. My father’s family was destroyed by Saddam Hussein’s regime and they fled the country during the Iran-Iraq War. On his way to Europe, my father spent some time in Moscow, where he ended up in hospital with hypothermia. The doctor who treated him introduced him to my mother, who was writing a PhD at the time. They got married. Not much later, in 1992, my father moved to the Netherlands, where he believed they had a more promising future. Six months later my mother was allowed to join him on grounds of family reunification. I was born in 1994.

I can’t say that I suffered growing up in an immigrant family. I had a pretty normal Dutch childhood: we spoke Dutch at home and celebrated Sinterklaas. I did learn about Islam, its main ideas and practical precepts: no smoking, no drinking, no pork and no tattoos. My parents’ attitude was: ‘It’s all very well that we have these beliefs, but you should also be given a chance to develop your own ideas.’ I don’t practice my religion actively. I do follow the precepts though, partly for religious reasons, and partly because I got used to it and it feels good. Do I find it difficult? Not at all. It helps that since I have never tasted alcohol, I have no idea what I’m missing. I never think: “I would love a beer right now!”

"THERE ARE SUCH CRAZY STORIES GOING AROUND ABOUT HAZING"



Student associations are all about drinking, partying and sex.

"I won't deny that there is drinking at the association. The beer is cheap and students like it. But it's certainly not the case that we expect our members to drink, or that it is considered to be socially desirable. The fact that I could become president goes to show that you don't have to drink to belong. This is something I checked before I signed up. It was not a problem, they said. I still remember the first time I had to refuse a beer. A senior member came up to me after the hazing period and offered me a beer. I refused and told him the reason why. I think he was a bit surprised, but he went off to get me a Coca-Cola and that was the end of it. No one has ever made any nasty comments, although my close friends sometimes joke about it. I believe that this shows that you don't need alcohol to belong in a student association. As for sex, I honestly couldn't say whether there is more of it within a student association than elsewhere.

A student association allows you to meet lots of people, so you are quite likely to meet someone you fancy. I don't find it surprising that there are many relationships within our association. I am single myself, although not by conscious choice. Will my future girlfriend have to be a member of Carolus Magnus? Of course not. Nor do I care whether she is a Muslim or whether she drinks. That's up to her."



Carolus Magnus is home to all Nijmegen 'frats'.

"I understand why people would think that, and I won't deny it: we do have a lot of members who like to dress more formally. But they are not in the majority. The idea that all Carolus Magnus members are frats is mostly propagated by people who have never attended one of our parties and who only know us from a distance. It's a bit like Dutch people thinking that all Chinese people look alike, and vice versa. As soon as you get to know each other, you can see the variety. We have our own building a few kilometres from the campus and as a rule our association building is closed to non-members. As a result some people never get to know us. But if you attend one of our open parties, you'll soon discover that our members are very diverse. We are much more than a collection of frats with a side parting and rich parents."



Hazing is hell on earth.

"There are such wild stories going around about hazing. People ask lots of questions about it during the introduction week. The wildest rumour I ever heard was that you get a small chick at the start of the hazing period and that at the end of the week you have to smash it against the wall. How crazy can you get?"

"We are quite an open association, but hazing is an internal tradition that is kept secret from the outside world. Some members worry about their health, so we tell them what precautions we take to make sure that everything goes well. We don't talk about the programme, though, except to say that we are quite sure they will make it to the end. You may find this hard to believe, but hazing can also be fun. But if we tell people beforehand what we will be doing, it takes away all the fun. Hazing is much better organised than people think. We have never had any excesses. I know that this is an idea that's going around, but members look back on it later with a smile: they don't die, and nothing bad happens to them."



Carolus Magnus and Ovum Novum are arch-enemies.

"Every year we compete for members during the introduction week. We have a long tradition as the largest student association of Nijmegen, and we intend to keep it that way. It's not only a question of prestige. The more members, the more fun. Our budget grows and we have a lot more opportunities without having to ask our members to contribute additional funds."

Are you referring to last winter's assault? (Two members of Carolus Magnus were badly beaten by a member of Ovum Novum, eds.) It was certainly talked about then. But everybody sees it as an unfortunate excess, which could just as well have happened independently of the associations. Clearly someone lost it, but that



doesn't necessarily have anything to do with the fact that the victims were members of a different association. At least, that's my assumption. You can settle rivalry in a number of ways, but not in that way.

A few times a year, members of one association try to break in and take over the other association's building. They nearly always fail. That's all there is to it. It's all a very innocent part of student life."

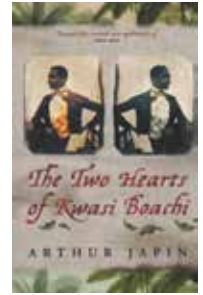


Former members form an old boys' network; They help each other for the rest of their lives.

"The outside world seems to believe that once you become a member of a student association, you don't even have to have high grades anymore to become a partner in some fancy firm on the Zuidas. But that's not how it works. As a former member you have to earn your place like anybody else. It is, however, true that you may be at an advantage if you run into someone from the association while applying for jobs. Even if you don't know them personally, it will give you something to talk about, to break the ice."

"I am not yet sure where my personal ambitions lie. I am studying law, but after my year as president I want to travel first. Then I would like to do two internships: one in a large law firm on the Zuidas and one in a smaller company to find out where I feel more at home. Then I plan to do a Master's. In the end I might end up working in a top law firm or in a small firm in Wijchen.

Who knows?" *



READING
TIP BY
ALHASHIME

Arthur Japin
The Two Hearts
of Kwasi Boachi

"This is not meant to be ironic or relevant. I just really enjoyed this book!"

AGENDA

RADBOD SUMMER SCHOOL

SUNDAY 31 JULY UNTIL SATURDAY

13 AUGUST

Radboud Summer School is intended for both Dutch and international students and includes a large variety of high-quality courses at Bachelor's, Master's and PhD level.

Interested in joining and spending your summer the smart way?

www.ru.nl/radboudsummerschool/

ORIENTATION

SUNDAY 14 AUGUST UNTIL SUNDAY

21 AUGUST

Exchange students and international (pre-)Master's students can take part in Radboud University's Orientation Week.

This fun-filled week is organised by Radboud International Students/International Office.

www.ru.nl/ris-orientation

OPENING ACADEMIC YEAR

MONDAY 29 AUGUST FROM 14:00

Stevenskerk. Featuring Aleid Truijens and other speakers.

DUTCH DAY: ORIENTATION FOR NEW INTERNATIONAL STAFF

THURSDAY 25 AUGUST FROM 11:00

Welcoming day for new international members of staff.

Are you a new international colleague? Would you like to meet fellow colleagues and learn more about our university? Please join us and register now! We look forward to hearing from you.

www.ru.nl/dutchday

Global Lounge

The Global Lounge is a meeting point for all Radboud staff members who wish to participate in the Radboud international community. It is located in Books by Roelants across from the CultuurCafé, Thomas van Aquinostraat 1a. In the Global Lounge, you'll find coffee, free wifi for staff and visitors, and space for lounging and working.

The Global Lounge is closed for summer vacation: 18 July - 31 July 2016. Regular opening hours: Monday - Friday 10:00 - 17:30

COLOPHON

Vox is the monthly independent magazine of Radboud University.

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