

VOX



**How Nijmegen
became (and will stay)
a university city**



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Nijmegen wouldn't be Nijmegen without a university. But how exactly has this large academic community influenced the city?

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One hundred years ago, the university had a clear mission: to emancipate the Catholic population. But what is Radboud University's mission for the century to come?

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Since 1953, Nijmegen professors have been taking walks together in the woods. It was only in 2017 that the first female member was invited to join the club.

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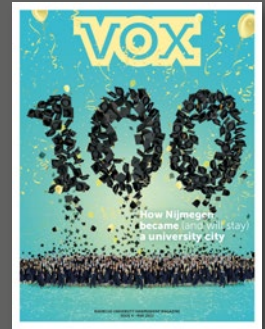
In Slavic countries there is a chromosome abnormality that is named after Nijmegen. Former paediatrician Corry Weemaes explains how this came to be.



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THE UNIVERSITY IN 1923

Nijmegen came perilously close to having no university at all. There was also some squabbling about the name: Charles V University was a serious contestant. Want to find out what preceded the university's foundation in 1923?

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'I thought it would be fun to study in Amsterdam, but that was clearly not going to happen'

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FOREWORD TEXEL

What do potato farmers on Texel have to do with the establishment of Radboud University 100 years ago? Quite a lot, according to this *Vox edition*, dedicated to the university's centenary. Of course, we reflect on the past 100 years, but most of all we take a look at the university of today – and if you want to understand that, you automatically end up digging in the archives.

Take the professors' walking club. Seventy years ago, this club was created by a number of priest professors, and to this day, a group of professors continues to don their hiking shoes every fortnight. Critics call them an old boys' network, but the members themselves beg to differ. If only because in 2017 – after some bickering, it's true – the first female professor was invited to join the club.

Another contemporary phenomenon with historical roots: the Reinier Post Foundation. This foundation manages assets that have their origins in the dimes and quarters donated by Catholics to establish a Catholic university 100 years ago. The foundation's assets – currently amounting to tens of millions – consist mainly of investments, but also farmland.

For this *Vox* edition, we visited the De Lugt family on Texel, whose family business has been farming land owned by the Reinier Post Foundation for four generations. The lease money flows into the foundation's coffers. This, in turn, is used to fund projects and facilities on the Nijmegen campus. Think of the University Chaplaincy. The idea is that only the return on assets is used for projects. Theoretically, this allows the Reinier Post Foundation to remain an investment fund forever. But will the foundation be there to witness the university's second centenary? Only the future can tell.

Mathijs Noij,
 Editor in chief *Vox*



Carolus and Ovum purchase buildings of their own

31 March 2023 will go down in the books as an important date in the history of student associations Carolus Magnus and Ovum Novum. On that day, they officially bought their own association buildings. From now on, the two associations on the corner of Canisiussingel will no longer have to rent their premises from the Nijmegen Student Facilities Foundation. Carolus Magnus reportedly paid around €300,000 for the house, while the neighbours spent approximately €200,000.

The joy at the two student associations was great. 'We actually have our own building,' Ovum Novum President AJ Dons said with justified pride. 'Just think that this association was started 33 years ago by four students, and now we have some 700 members, and we are getting our own building. That's really something, you know.'



Women harassed

In the last two weeks of March, at least three reports came in of women being harassed on campus by an unknown young man. In response, Radboud University created a temporary hotline, which led to more reports. They are also urging people to pay extra attention to each other. The university spokesperson we contacted was unable to tell us more about the incidents or whether all three cases involved the same perpetrator.



END TO THE BSA

The much-feared **Binding Study Advice (BSA)** is being scrapped. This has led to a variety of responses: many students expect less stress for first-year students, while others appreciated the extra motivation. You can watch Vox's video via the QR code.



THE FIGURE



180,000
DISPOSABLE CUPS

From July onwards, free disposable cups may no longer be provided in the Netherlands. At Radboud University, the Billie Cup has already led to a significant reduction in the use of disposable cups: its introduction has apparently already saved as many as 180,000 cups.



NOTE TAKEN

'The Dutch Research Council (NWO) and Radboud University are currently exploring the possibilities of continuing the **collaboration and funding of HFML-FELIX.**'

Robbert Dijkgraaf is aware of the million-euro shortfall facing Nijmegen-based magnet and laser lab HFML-FELIX, after two long-term contracts with the Dutch Research Council (NWO) recently expired. This is apparent from the answers of the Minister of Education to written questions submitted by Nijmegen MP Lisa Westerveld (GroenLinks) on the subject. Dijkgraaf promised to inform the House of Representatives about a solution to the financial problems this year.





PHOTO: JOHANNES FIEBIG



IN THE PICTURE

GARDENING IS FUN!

The strawberries and lettuce have been planted; now we just have to wait for the first harvest. One year after the idea was first launched, the university vegetable garden, or community garden, at the back of Park Brakkenstein, is a reality. 'I dream of this garden becoming an outdoor meeting place one day,' says Hannah Markusse, Student Wellbeing Coordinator and one of the initiators of the garden.

IN THE NEWS

SHORT

AI employee leaves following reports of undesirable behaviour

An employee from the Artificial Intelligence (AI) department is leaving following reports of undesirable behaviour. The employee's actions were already under investigation. Their employment contract ends on 1 August. The university cites 'an irreconcilable difference of opinion concerning the interpretation and performance of the employee's position.' The employee's employment contract was terminated 'by mutual consent'. The employee's name has not been disclosed.

New student parties

The university has acquired two new student parties: V.O.S., which stands up for the Nijmegen umbrella associations, and the Knokpartij. The latter says it wishes to be a radical voice of dissent,

calling for student referendums, cheaper food in the Rafter, and free period products, among other things. Student council elections will be held at the end of May.



1,200 permanent jobs

Dutch universities have been awarded €200 million a year for mutual cooperation and more permanent jobs. These funds will go to so-called sector plans, in which universities agree together on what they will do. Last autumn, the Minister already distributed €60 million, to which another €140 million will now be added.

Among other things, the money is intended to help universities hire more permanent staff. In total, some 1,200 permanent jobs will be created.

Walk of Wonder

The university is home to a new art trail: the Walk of Wonder. The tour, which saw the light of day in early April, includes seven stops where artworks can be viewed or listened to, and is inspired by the Passion of Jesus Christ. At present, only the first two artworks have been completed; the rest will follow later.



Van Vroonhoven resigns

Merel van Vroonhoven is to resign as chair of the Supervisory Board due to personal issues. While the search for a successor continues, Mario van Vliet will act as interim chair. Van Vroonhoven started in January 2021.

Boathouse transferred

In mid-April, Phocas was handed the keys to the Bastion, its new home on the Spiegelwaal. In addition to Phocas, De Loefbijter, Aeolus, De Batavier and the Nijmegen Rescue Brigade are also moving into the Bastion. Most of the construction has been completed, but furnishing is yet to happen.

Text: Annemarie Haverkamp / Photo: Mona van den Berg

'We had the kind of professors that you really looked up to. Icons.'

There was only one Catholic university in the country, so the Brabant brothers Van den Hoogen had no choice but to go to Nijmegen. Nina, Frank's daughter, followed in her father's steps and opted for Medicine.

When the brothers wanted to go home at weekends, they would hitchhike. It was a perfectly normal thing to do. You walked to the hitchhikers' spot at the start of the Graafseweg, held up your sign, and made sure you got to Bladel. 'You see, we didn't have an OV-card in those days,' says Paul, the youngest.

'No, and the bus was terrible and too expensive,' Marc, the eldest, adds.

'Two and a half hours by public transport!'

Frank exclaims. He's the middle brother.

Marc: 'If you were a hitchhiking couple, the girl went in front so you would be more likely to be picked up.' The brothers laugh.

They gathered for the photograph at the Nijmegen home of Frank, who works as an ENT doctor and trainer at Radboud university medical center. His daughter Nina also grew up under this roof (Frank is a father of four). Like her father, she studied Medicine in Nijmegen and is now also training as an ENT specialist, but in Maastricht. 'We teach an emergency airway course together,' she says. 'I used to go with my dad as his driver, but now I am a full-fledged member of the team. Like my younger sister, by the way, who is studying Medicine in Rotterdam.' Frank and his two daughters therefore teach medical specialists how to perform an emergency airway intervention on a patient. There they go, armed with pigs' throats. On the sofa, Paul

and Marc have to chuckle at that image.

The three brothers didn't really have a choice about studying in Nijmegen. Frank: 'I can still hear my mother say:

"There's only one Catholic university, and it's in Nijmegen."

Marc: 'Yes! I thought it would be fun to study in Amsterdam, but that was clearly not going to happen.'

The Brabant brothers come from a Catholic family, and education runs through their veins: their father and grandfather were school headmasters, and the three brothers all ended up in education themselves. During their studies at three different faculties, they spent a lot of time together. Billiards, nights out, outings to the Wylerberg lake. Studying was quite different back then.

Paul: 'We had the kind of professors that you really looked up to. Icons.'

Marc: 'When I see how my children interact with their professors now, it's really different, you know.'

Frank: 'In our time, you just had to sit and learn. None of that interactive teaching stuff.'

Nina, his daughter: 'The biggest difference, I think, is that we can just watch our lectures later if we want to.'

Marc and Frank lived opposite each other in a flat on Galgenveld. To earn money, they set up a painting company (Het Schone Ruitje) together in the late 1980s.

'It was a great success,' says Frank, smiling again.

Marc: 'We had two rates: 15 guilders an hour for people we didn't know and 10 guilders if we did know them, but ...'

'... then we did want to eat with them,' Frank says. *

RADBOUD
families

On the photograph:

Marc van den Hoogen (62), studied Social Geography from 1978 to 1986 and was enrolled in a Master's study programme in Management of Education from 2001 to 2004. Marc worked as a geography teacher and is now team leader for the senior VWO (pre-university education) years. He lives in Twello. **Frank van den Hoogen** (59), studied Medicine from 1982 to 1990. Obtained his PhD in Nijmegen and is now an ENT/head-neck surgeon at Radboud university medical center. He lives in Nijmegen. **Paul van den Hoogen** (57), studied Aquatic Ecology from 1991 to 1995. Worked as a biology teacher at St Maarten and is now a teacher trainer and institute biology trainer at HAN University of Applied Sciences. He lives in Doornenburg. **Nina van den Hoogen** (Frank's daughter, 27), studied Medicine from 2013 to 2020. Since January 2023, she has been training as an ENT specialist in Maastricht, where she also lives.



Frank

Paul

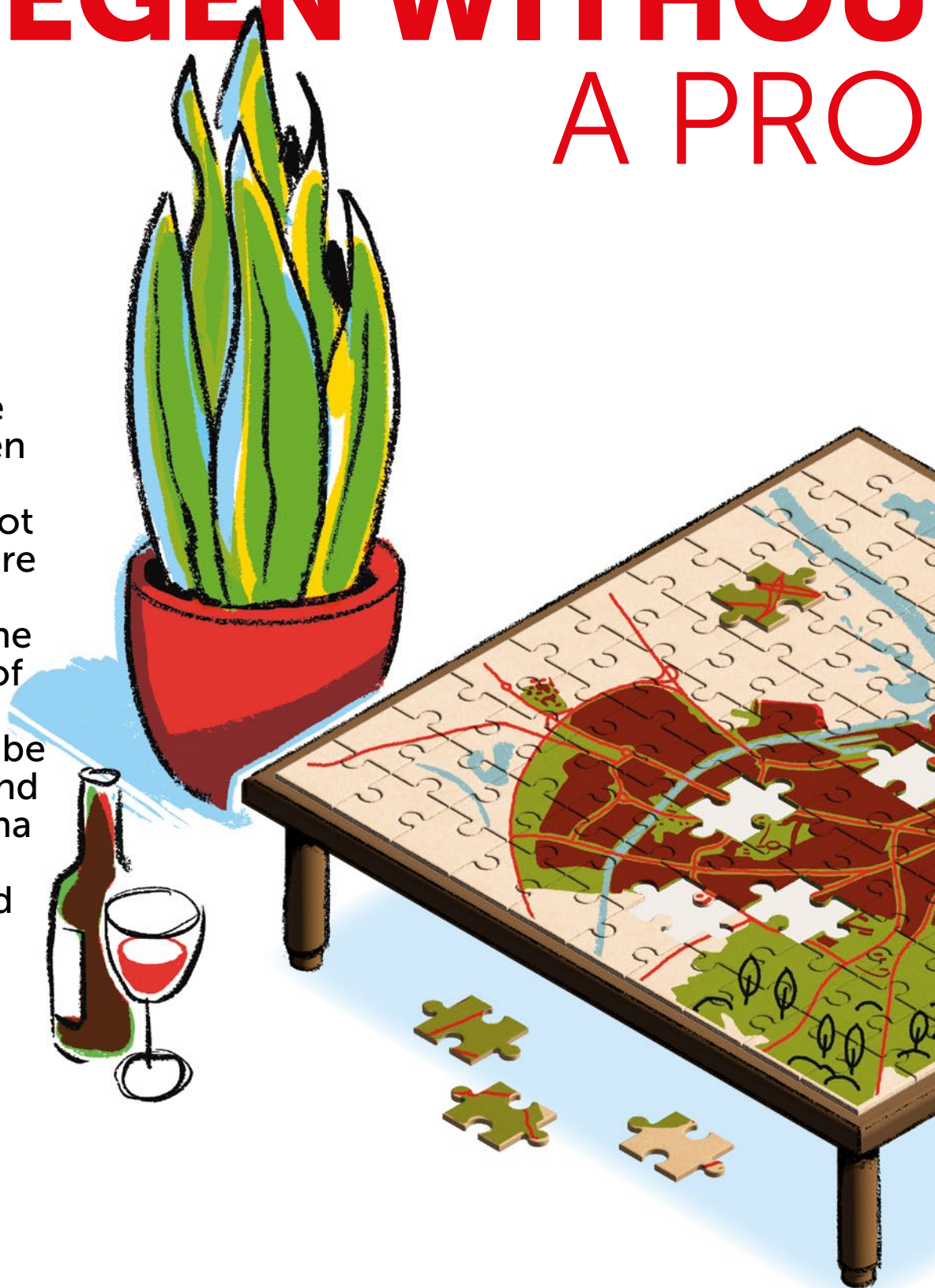
Nina

Marc

NIJMEGEN WITHOUT A PRO

Venlo, Deventer, Zutphen: That is the kind of city Nijmegen would have been if the university had not been established here in 1923. There wouldn't even be one hundred thousand of us *Nimwegenaren*, Lent would still just be a separate village, and the nickname Havana on the Waal would never have occurred to anyone.

Text: Vincent Decates and Paul van den Broek
Illustrations: Roel Venderbosch



WAS IT A UNIVERSITY? OR A PROVINCIAL TOWN ON THE RIVER WAAL



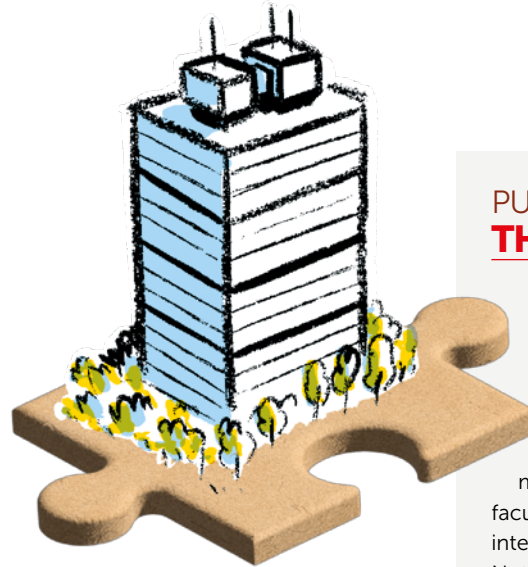
'Of course, you never know how a city would have developed over the course of one hundred years without a university,' says Mayor Hubert Bruls. He starts philosophising out loud. 'I see a merchant city of some importance, given its location between the Randstad and the German Ruhr area. Transshipment and logistics would have been the key sectors.'

The Mayor's reticence is not surprising. The question of what Nijmegen would have been without one hundred years of Radboud University is a tricky one. After all, the educational institution is inextricably linked to the city, and it has had a major influence on the character of Nijmegen.

It's easy to make comparisons. 'I see a kind of Zutphen,' says Professor by Special Appointment of Gelderland History Dolly Verhoeven. 'Or maybe a city that was formerly in Gederland, such as Venlo, because of its size and location next to a river.' Other interviewees also come up with comparisons: Harderwijk, Deventer, Ede, Zwolle. A provincial town on the river Waal, in other words.

Professor Emeritus, sociologist and public administrator Nico Nelissen tackles the question differently. On the table at which he sits, he draws an imaginary map of the city. 'If you take a jigsaw puzzle of the map of Nijmegen, I can take away pieces here and there that only exist thanks to the university,' says Nelissen. With his hand, he picks up some of these imaginary pieces off the table. 'Let's undo this puzzle!'

'THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN THOUSANDS FEWER JOBS'



**PUZZLE PIECE 2:
THE PHYSICAL CAMPUS**

An obvious one, but still important to mention: the campus would not have been there either, of course. Nelissen starts daydreaming. 'The Heyendaal estate as part of one large green strip from the Goffert-park to the Mariënbosch. That's what it would have looked like, were it not for the fact that the medical faculty settled on the estate in 1951, with other faculties soon following suit. Erasmus Tower is now an integral part of the campus.'

Not only can you erase the university buildings, but also all kinds of businesses and agencies in the area. No Max Planck Institute. No HAN University of Applied Sciences, which settled in the university's shadow. No Technovium, on the other side of the rail tracks. And no Heyendaal railway station. Without thousands of commuters using the Maaslijn every day, the station would have been redundant.

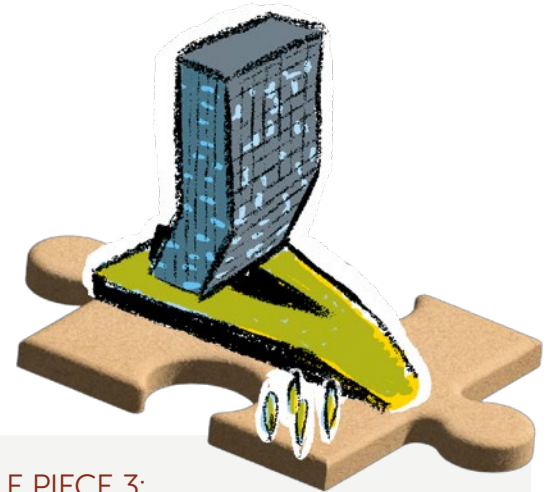
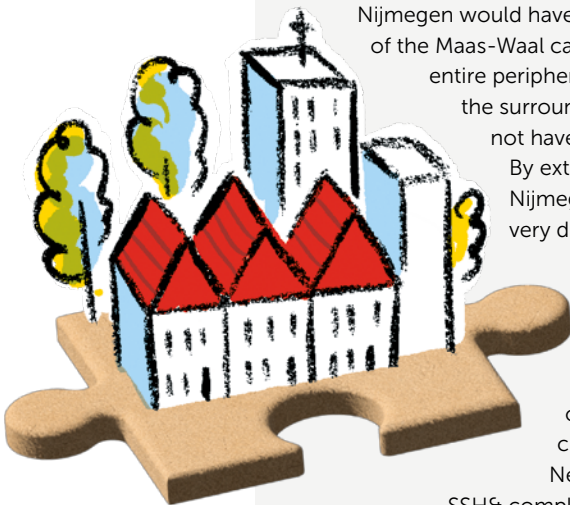
**PUZZLE PIECE 1:
THE CITY LIMITS**

Nijmegen would for sure have had far fewer inhabitants. There are currently over 183,000 *Nimwegenaren*. According to Nelissen, that number could be roughly halved without a university. 'The Waalsprong would have been completely unnecessary. In fact, Dukenburg and Lindenholt would probably not have been built either.'

Nijmegen would have remained on the east side of the Maas-Waal canal. You can think away the entire periphery of the city. And what about the surrounding villages? Malden would not have been nearly as big.'

By extension, the demography of Nijmegen would also have looked very different. With far fewer young adults in the city, far fewer student houses would be needed. Nijmegen is home to approximately 45,000 students, the vast majority of whom rent rooms in the city.

Nelissen points to the many SSH& complexes. Well-known locations like Hoogevelde or Jacob Canisstraat would not have been there. But we can also take away Talia's immense residential tower that dominates the skyline near the railway station. And then there are the many smaller complexes and student houses rented out by SSH&. The demographic composition of Nijmegen-Oost, home to thousands of students and recent graduates, would also be completely different. While Oost now has many student houses, those houses would not have been split into rooms then on such a massive scale.



**PUZZLE PIECE 3:
BUSINESS**

Thanks to the university's presence, business is also flourishing in Nijmegen. Without the university, the tertiary sector, i.e. the service sector, would have been much smaller, says Nelissen. There would have been thousands fewer jobs in the area.

Through the university, knowledge flows into the city, Nelissen explains. 'It's attractive for companies to settle in Nijmegen because of the outflow of university-educated staff that remain in the region. Think of the Novitech Campus near the Goffert – or the Science Park on the campus itself. They're taking full advantage of this.' President of the Executive Board Daniël Wigboldus underlines the importance of economic activity in the city and wider region. He mentions the many spin-offs from Radboud University research. 'There are now dozens of companies based in the region, accounting for seven thousand direct employees.' Examples include Novo-learning (language courses), pharma company Byondic,

THE UNIVERSITY IN 1923

'One of the most important events in our national history.' This was how the Dutch bishops referred to **the opening of the Roman Catholic University Nijmegen** on Wednesday 17 October 1923. The day began with a service at the Molenstraat church. Then a procession of brand-new professors headed to the main building, a stately white villa on the Keizer Kareplein. After lunch, official speeches followed across the street, at De Vereeniging. Students held a torchlight procession through the city in the evening, and cannon shots were even fired. The opening of the Nijmegen university was impossible to miss.

WITH THANKS TO UNIVERSITY HISTORIAN JAN BRABERS



and SNP Naturreizen. 'All this activity naturally attracts new young people to the city.' And it's not only direct jobs that are created in this way, adds social geographer Peter Vaessen. 'The more students and employees there are in the city, the more people end up joining various boards and voluntary organisations, which benefits everyone. This also makes for an attractive cultural and living environment.'

PUZZLE PIECE 4: **THE HOSPITALITY AND CULTURE SECTOR**

A vibrant nightlife without a university? Forget it. Former Radboud University student Simon Mamahit works behind the scenes at various music organisations and mentors young people in the Nijmegen music scene. He himself lives in the Molenstraat. 'Every night there's a coming and going of young people partying, living, dancing, and arguing. Without a university, the hospitality sector, with all its student cafés, would really have been much smaller.' And what about the cultural sector? Many venues and institutions would not have existed without the university. Nelissen makes a list: 'No LUX, no literary organisations like De Wintertuin, and Museum Het Valkhof probably wouldn't have been there either. Also, no social debates at Radboud Reflects.'

Many graduates from cultural programmes end up in policy positions at cultural institutions, says Mamahit. 'Not to mention the fact that students are keen consumers. Pop venues Doornroosje and Merleyn organise lots of parties that are incredibly popular among students,' says Mamahit. The same is true of the NYMA site near the Oversteek, home to event venues De Vasim and Strandbar Stek, among others.



PUZZLE PIECE 5: **THE POLITICAL CLIMATE**

Who hasn't heard of the much cherished nickname 'Havana on the Waal'? A left-progressive wind has been blowing in Nijmegen for many years. This red character and nickname would not have existed without the university.

'The city's leftist image has its roots in the student protests of the 1960s and 1970s,' says historian Dolly Verhoeven. 'That's where the rebellious and youthful image of the city was born. This in turn attracts people who have an affinity for such topics.'

This political wind is partly due to the university: in exit polls at polling stations on campus, left wing parties such as GroenLinks and D66 are consistently the largest parties. Other progressive parties, such as PvdA and Partij voor de Dieren are also doing well – and Volt has attracted a remarkable number of votes on campus in recent years.

PUZZLE PIECE 6: HEALTHCARE

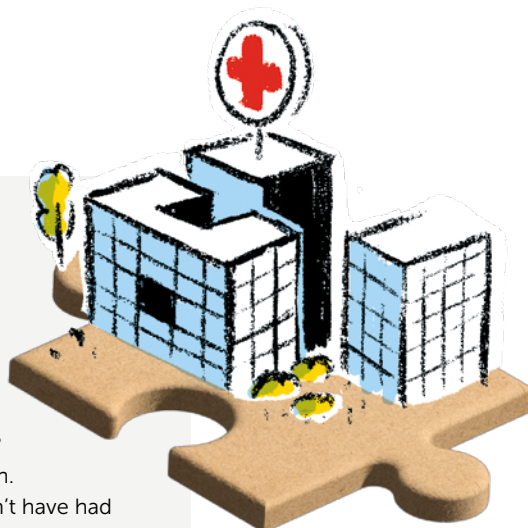
With three hospitals – Radboudumc, CWZ, and the Sint Maartenskliniek – there is much to choose from in Nijmegen when it comes to healthcare. What is the connection with the university?

‘The Radboudumc is obvious,’ says Nelissen.

‘Without a Faculty of Medicine, you wouldn’t have had an academic hospital next door,’ he says.

Whether the Maartenskliniek would also have been located in Nijmegen remains to be seen. The rehabilitation care now taking place there could also have been located in a place like Arnhem, where the necessary health and rehabilitation care can be found at Rijnstate and Klimmendaal. The CWZ would most probably have been there, although, according to Nelissen, it would possibly have been smaller and less specialised.

However, this piece of the puzzle cannot simply be removed from the Nijmegen map, because the connection with the university is not as obvious as with the other pieces. ‘Perhaps without the university, Nijmegen would have made a name for itself as a healthcare city,’ Verhoeven thinks aloud. As an example, she recalls that Nijmegen already tried once to put itself on the map as this kind of city in 2007 – without success. ‘The CWZ is a big regional hospital anyway. Who knows, maybe without Radboud university medical center, it would have been even more important for the region.’



And everyone agrees that this has to change. That gap must be closed. ‘Researchers need to go into the city. To visit people in community centres,’ says Bruls.

Historian Verhoeven agrees wholeheartedly. ‘Every faculty can add value to the city with its knowledge.’ She cites the research studies conducted for several years now by Radboudumc among Four Days Marches participants. ‘It’s a good example of how you can keep research in the region that benefits a wide audience.’ She suggests the idea of holding annual city lectures, throughout Nijmegen. ‘In this way, we can activate neighbourhoods where the university doesn’t normally come easily, and we can develop initiatives that benefit the whole city.’

This is music to Mamahit’s ears. Among the young people he works with every day, he sees that the divide is growing. ‘The university is seen as something far away from them. That’s a shame. It’s precisely in today’s society, where misunderstanding and polarisation are the order of the day, that the university must assume its responsibilities. As a research institute, you can’t afford to sit in your ivory tower and have discussions just among scientists, instead, you must engage in discussions with “ordinary people”.’

As an example, he cites Radboud Reflects. ‘They organise incredibly interesting debates, but the subject matter is far too lofty for people without a university degree. You shouldn’t talk about people but with people.’

Back to the jigsaw puzzle of Nijmegen, through which the Waal and the Maas-Waal canal meander like attractive blue strings. If all the plans to bring the city and the university closer together work out, how will it affect Nelissen’s puzzle? How many pieces will have to be taken away if we play this game again at Radboud University’s 150th anniversary?

A smile appears on the Professor Emeritus’ face. ‘Then we would have to take away so many pieces, that there will be nothing left of the puzzle.’ ★

‘THE UNIVERSITY BENEFITS SOME GROUPS IN THE CITY MORE THAN OTHERS’

With so many holes in the puzzle, it is clear that we are left with a battered town. Over the past century, Radboud University has been pivotal in creating the complete Nijmegen as we know it today.

And yet, we must not overestimate the value of this kind of higher education institution. ‘The university benefits some groups in the city more than others,’ concludes Mayor Bruls. Nelissen speaks of an ‘island that those who don’t need to be on campus experience as a fenced-in area’. President of the Executive Board Wigboldus even talks about a ‘gap in society’.



RADBOUD UNIVERSITY IN SEARCH OF **A MISSION**

Once founded to uplift the Catholic population, Radboud University is searching for a different identity in the run-up to its centenary. Sustainability is the new holy grail. How can this new direction be reconciled with the university's history as an emancipation university?

Text: Mathijs Noij

As if the Netherlands had won the World Cup, that was what it must have felt like in Nijmegen's city centre on 17 October 1923. Catholics from all over the country had travelled to the city on the Waal river to sing and drink together, while flags were waving and cannons were even fired in the area.

The reason for all this celebration was the establishment of a Catholic university – the first one in the Netherlands. After Leiden, Groningen, Utrecht, and Amsterdam (twice), the country's sixth university opened its doors in Nijmegen.

For years, there was much debate – for example about where the new university was to be located. Scraping together a start-up capital also took a lot of effort. Money raised during collections among Catholics finally made the foundation possible. Crowdfunding *avant la lettre*.

As university historian Jan Brabers writes in *Een kleine geschiedenis van de Radboud Universiteit (A Short History of Radboud University)*, the idea of triumph was fuelled

by a collective sense of subservience among Catholics. Hard facts also pointed to Catholics as second-class citizens: they were much less likely to become doctors or lawyers, partly due to discrimination.

At the same time, other motives also played a role: some Catholics saw the establishment of a Catholic university as a means of halting the rising number of mixed marriages. After all, what better place than a Catholic university for handsome, young boys and girls to find their Catholic life partner?

The establishment of the university was the crowning achievement of Catholic emancipation. A victory of sorts, then, even if played out on completely different terrain than a football pitch.

Power relationship severed

One hundred years after its foundation, the Catholic faith has been pushed into the background on the Nijmegen campus. Students and staff members now come from all walks of life and adhere to many different faiths, or to none at all. The University Chaplaincy on Erasmuslaan still stands proud and tall, but students with no interest in religion are unlikely to set foot in it in the course of their studies.

And yet, the announcement in October 2020 that the Dutch bishops had suddenly decided to rescind the university's Catholic predicate still made the national news. The university, whose original mission was to propel Catholics up the social and public ladder, lost a small piece of its soul overnight.

Although the Dutch bishops got a slap on the wrist from the Vatican – the Pope still sees Radboud University as a Catholic institution – the formal power relationship

THE UNIVERSITY LOST A SMALL PIECE OF ITS SOUL OVERNIGHT



PHOTO: KDC NIJMEGEN



PHOTO: J.F.M. TRUIM (FOTOPERSBUREAU GELDERLANDER)

between the diocese and the university had really been cut. The bishops no longer have a say in the appointment of university supervisors.

The actual moment of the split was salient, and for some people definitely a little painful, so close to the university's centenary. Moreover, it was not the only major event in recent university history.

Indeed, the rift with the bishops resulted from the decision of the university and the hospital to go their separate ways – under two separate foundations. Because of this 'administrative demerger', each institution now has its own supervisors, instead of being watched over by a single guardian, like siblings.

Remarkably quiet

And so there the university stands, on the eve of its centenary, on its own. Scratching itself behind the ears, it wonders: who am I really?

'This is a perfect opportunity to reflect on it for a moment,' says Walter Breukers, who lectures at the Radboud Honours Academy and forms one half of a duo with his old student friend Jaap Godrie. The two are not easy to pigeonhole. They write books, produce paintings, and help organisations to 'break through set thinking patterns'. Breukers trained as a philosopher and biomedical scientist, Godrie as a historian and artist.

In the run-up to their Alma Mater's centenary, they applied for a grant from the Reinier Post Foundation (see p. 32) to outline a future vision for Radboud University. What makes Radboud University what it is? That is the question they wanted to answer in their book. To this end, they spoke with dozens of students and staff members.



PHOTO: DICK VAN AALST
The Prior General of the Order of the Carmelites with a censer in front of a portrait of Titus Brandsma. Rome, May 2022.

PHOTOGRAPHS BELOW, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Early celebration of the first Dies Natalis. The academic senate on the stairs in De Vereniging. In the upper right-hand corner, Bernard Molkenboer can be seen leaning through the opening in the wall. | Blessing of the crucifixes by the later Archbishop Mgr. Bernard Alfrink at the opening of the Faculty of Medicine on 17 October 1951. Alfrink is being assisted by Professor of Missiology Alphons Mulders. | Transfer of Rectorate from Sipke Geerts to Ton Vendrik, 1966, at the Aula on the Wilhelminasingel. | Dinner at the De Gong fraternity. Presiding at the table: Jo Cals. Standing, third from the left (leaning against the door): Godfried Bomans.



PHOTO: KDC NIJMEGEN



PHOTO: KDC NIJMEGEN

BACKGROUND





PHOTO: KDC, NIJMEGEN

During the celebration of the first Lustrum on 17 October 1928, students ride past the Keizer Karelplein as part of a 'rijjool' (festive carriage ride).

In these conversations, one thing stood out. 'A centenary is a time for looking back and looking forward,' Godrie explains. 'Much has been said and written about the history of Radboud University, but when we asked people about the future, they remained remarkably silent.'

But a university needs a vision of the future. Something to aspire to, the two say. Breukers: 'The university's foundation was born out of this kind of dream. That dream made it possible to take risks and show courage. You need a vision of the future to inspire extraordinary acts.'

'AS STEWARDS, IT'S OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAVE THE WORLD IN A BETTER STATE THAN WE FOUND IT'

The current times, according to Breukers and Godrie, once again cry out for courage – and a leap of faith. After all, we live in a time when one crisis succeeds another. 'Society is changing at lightning speed,' says Godrie. 'It's useful for the university to consider how it wants to engage with this process. Who am I and what can I do? Reflecting on such matters is in Radboud University's DNA.'

Stewardship

The university has worked on these questions for the past 18 months in what is known as dialogue sessions, as part of an identity process. Staff members, students, and other stakeholders were invited to talk with each other about the university's identity and uniqueness. With the input from these sessions, the Executive Board plans to present a story about the university's identity and future shortly.

'One hundred years ago, we were created by the St Radboud Foundation with a special mission: to emancipate the Catholic population,' says President of the Executive Board Daniël Wigboldus. 'To me, that also means thinking now about what our mission is today. That's how we came up with our current mission: to contribute to a healthy, free world with equal opportunities for all.'

This is not just a slogan that looks good for the PR department. Wigboldus: 'It is grounded in the idea that the world doesn't belong to us, but that we are responsible for it. Catholics have a good word for it: stewardship. As stewards, it's our responsibility to leave the world in a better state than we found it.'

'GIVEN ITS CHARACTER, RADBOD UNIVERSITY CAN BE AN INSPIRING EXAMPLE FOR OTHER UNIVERSITIES'



PHOTO: DICK VAN AALST

Pope Francis at the canonisation of Titus Brandsma, May 2022.

Clearly, this mission will have a prominent place in Radboud University's new story for the future. Moreover, the university has already anticipated this in recent years by strongly highlighting its own sustainability ideals.

Eye-catching advertisements appeared in newspapers and on social media, and there were even ads on national TV and in cinemas. Viewers were confronted with turtles entangled in nets, a burning globe, and posters of child labour, invariably ending with the slogan 'You have a part to play!' and the Radboud University logo.

The response to these advertisements was not unequivocally positive. Some critics wondered out loud whether it was the role of a university to play at saving the world. 'Since when is a university an influencer who shames you for buying things?' journalist Enith Vlooswijk wondered in *De Volkskrant*. She believes that

this is bad for the independent image of an academic institution.

Wigboldus knows this tension all too well. 'Don't get me wrong. Academic freedom is our number one priority. Researchers can and must follow their own curiosity. This is crucial. But the research they conduct and the teaching they offer are intended to make the world a better place. That's something we make explicit. Moreover, selecting a profile for a university acts as a guide in making future decisions.'

Making sacrifices

Radboud University's focus on health in its mission is easy to explain, say Breukers and Godrie. The term that often recurs in their book is 'the whole'. The English word health originally also means whole, Godrie points out. Breukers: 'It's typical of the Catholic perspective on science to try and see the whole within all disciplines. Not splintering, but rather trying to see the link between disciplines.'

Young doctors at Radboud university medical center are particularly fanatical about this, the authors noticed. Every day, these doctors are confronted with patients' health problems that are the result of stress, poverty, poor diet, and not enough exercise. Breukers: 'They prescribe drugs, but can't solve the underlying problem, because the underlying problem is in society. That's why doctors are searching for a broader perspective on health.'

This seems to stem partly from Catholicism, argue Breukers and Godrie. 'The idea that there's something that transcends the individual, and the willingness to make sacrifices in its name, to do or forego something for it, that is something that is woven into the history of Radboud University.' They point to the university's foundation, made possible with Catholic money, but also, for example, to the acts of resistance by Professor of Philosophy Titus Brandsma during the Second World War, which ultimately cost him his life.

Juriijn Timon de Vos, a PhD candidate conducting historical research on the university's Catholic identity, also sees bridges being built between Catholic tradition and today's sustainability ambitions. 'You can see Catholic emancipation as adding something extra to society. Previously, this took the shape of training Catholic doctors and lawyers. Now it takes the shape of a concern for Divine creation - whether you call it sustainability or stewardship.'

De Vos points to *Laudato Si*, a 2015 encyclical, in which Pope Francis advocates for treating the Earth and the poor well. A new Radboud University institute that brings together researchers and clergy to reflect on sustainability, has been named after this Papal publication.

Then again, you don't have to stick a Catholic signature on everything the university does, says De Vos. 'Clearly, the university's mission and the accompanying terminology are interchangeable.' He means that even at

THE UNIVERSITY IN 1923

Nijmegen University was almost called **Charles V University**. Scholar and priest Jos Schrijnen, who largely shaped the new university, advocated for this name, which was derived from Charlemagne. He wanted the name to indicate the university's worldliness and emphasise its connection with the city of Nijmegen. But the bishops disagreed, opting for a much tamer name: Roman Catholic University Nijmegen. Rector Schrijnen was so stubborn that until the end of his life, his business card listed him as 'Premier recteur de l'Université de Charlemagne'. In 2004, the word 'Catholic' disappeared from the university's name; students henceforth attended Radboud University.

WITH THANKS TO UNIVERSITY HISTORIAN JAN BRABERS



the university, they know about business administration – and how to market their institution.

What matters to him, though, is that sustainability and Catholicism need not get in each other's way. On the contrary, they may even reinforce one another. De Vos suspects that this is what the university administration is aiming for. 'If you look carefully, you see that at no point is Catholicism traded for sustainability. As the university puts it, it is simply reshaping its Catholic-inspired, emancipatory character, as it has always done. All this may not be that earth-shattering, but it's quite a Catholic thing to do: create a contemporary emphasis from tradition.'

From a pulpit

And it will always continue to do so, if it is up to Godrie and Breukers. In fact, as far as they are concerned, the university could take things a step further still. 'Precisely because of this university's DNA, the coming decades could well be a perfect fit for Radboud University,' says Godrie. 'Given its character, Radboud University can be an inspiring example for other universities.'

This requires some explanation. Breukers: 'Over the past 40 years, society has become highly individualised. Individual interest has taken precedence over the collective.' One of the nefarious effects of this development is hypercompetition – also between universities. 'That's why Radboud University included an Olympic podium in its logo for the new administration building.' Radboud University had to go with the neoliberal flow. 'But that doesn't suit it, traditionally. It's better to leave things like this to Erasmus University.'

Breukers and Godrie see that there is once again a need for an inspiring vision of the future. Society as a collective wants to once again go somewhere. And it just so happens that Radboud University feels extremely comfortable at the pulpit, calling for the preservation of the planet. 'That is where it feels comfortable.'

But the university doesn't just want to preach, it also wants to act. Since we cannot save the climate or eliminate social inequality on our own, we would be well-advised to aim for cooperation rather than competition. Radboud University is ahead of its time in this respect, argue Breukers and Godrie. 'All kinds of qualities that Radboud University attributes to itself – informality, modesty, friendliness, collegiality – may be labelled soft in the west of the country, but they are crucial if you want to work together.'

You could almost compare it to a game of football, where the best team isn't always made up of the 11 best individual players. It's also about whether teammates can bring out the best in each other. But we should not take the analogy much further – after all, something far more important than a championship title is at stake in the competition played by Radboud University; and you know it: that healthy, free world with equal opportunities for all. ★

'OVER THE PAST
40 YEARS, SOCIETY
HAS BECOME HIGHLY
INDIVIDUALISED'



BOOK

The book *Wat maakt Radboud?* (What makes Radboud?) By Walter Breukers and Jaap Godrie can be accessed via this QR code.



HISTORY

A person wearing a dark green jacket, blue jeans, and a backpack is walking away from the camera on a rocky path. The path leads through a forest with trees that have sparse, yellowish-green leaves, suggesting an autumn setting. A small stream flows through the forest floor in the foreground. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

THE MYTHS

SURROUNDING THE
PROFESSORS' WALKING CLUB



For seventy years, Radboud University has had a walking club for professors. Outsiders call it an old boys' network where major decisions are made, but insiders say it's just an informal hobby club. 'The university is really not run from the walking club.'

Text: Ken Lambeets / Photography: Johannes Fiebig

It was about nine years ago: Professor of Economics Esther-Mirjam Sent was drinking coffee on a Saturday afternoon on the terrace of Tante Koojsje on the Berg en Dalseweg, when she saw a group of male hikers walk in.

She recognised several Radboud University professors and a member of the Executive Board.

Sent soon realised that this was most probably the famous professors' walking club a fellow professor had once told her about. A few of the hikers whom Sent knew seemed a bit embarrassed when they recognised her. 'I'd already said previously that I thought this kind of club was out of date,' she says.

Mysterious answers

More on Sent's criticism of the professors' walking club later. Its existence is an open secret at Radboud University. In my five years as Vox editor, the club has come up a few times in the margins of an interview, so I know some of the members' names. But when I send them a request for an interview, I get a series of mysterious answers back:

'I am indeed a member of the walking club. I enjoy it very much, by the way, but I've also promised not to talk about it too much.'

'The walking club cherishes a tradition of confidentiality. In the public domain, people usually pretend that the walking club doesn't exist.'

One member even tried to convince me not to write a piece about the walking club.

'[...] there has been some sort of myth that sometimes makes this particular club look like a secret and powerful union. If an [...] article were to be published about it, this myth would only increase.'

Fortunately, not everyone turned me down. Charles de Weert, Professor Emeritus and former Dean of Social Sciences, was willing to tell me more about the club's history and organisation. 'I also don't advertise the fact that I'm a member,' he says. 'But I do think it's important to dispel a few myths.'

Hub Hennekens is also open to a chat. The 84-year-old Professor Emeritus of Constitutional and Administrative Law and former member of the Council of

**'I DON'T
ADVERTISE
THE FACT
THAT I'M
A MEMBER'**

State has been a member of the walking club since 1991. He says he hasn't regretted it for a second. 'When I'm buried, I hope my walking brothers and sisters will attend my funeral,' he says.

Special bond

Walking club de Vogelstruys, named after the eponymous café in Maastricht, was founded on 17 October 1953. The eight *founding fathers* included professors Willem Asselbergs (better known under his pseudonym Anton van Duinkerken), Bernard Hermesdorf, and Sipke Geerts. The club's motto, 'We have no obligation to care about the impression we make', still seems relevant 70 years after its foundation.

'Every fortnight we go for a walk in the Nijmegen area,' says De Weert. They start out with coffee and cake at one of the

members' homes, followed by a two-hour walk in the woods near Beek or Plasmolten, or in the Ooijpolder. They end the day off with a beer at the pub, after which everyone goes home. One of the members creates an annual calendar - that's the extent of the administration. Drinks and food are paid for by the club members themselves; there is no annual membership fee.

During the walks, says Hennekens, members mostly talk about recent events. 'This is how you stay abreast of what's going on at the university. Not just at your own faculty, but at all the faculties. When I joined the Council of State in 2001, I moved to The Hague for seven years. Whenever I could, I came to Nijmegen on Saturdays. It was important for me to know how things were developing here.'

When people talk, they often sit facing each other, Hennekens explains. 'But that doesn't mean they are really speaking with each other. When discussing a problem on a walk, you both look in the same direction. As you think, reason, and talk, you come closer together. This creates a special bond, which is hard to put into words.'

Looser etiquette

Has he seen the walking club change? Hennekens thinks for a moment. 'No more than the world has changed,' he says. 'In the early days, we still walked in suits, that was the standard for professors back then,' he says. He laughs: 'But when you see what some professors wear these days, they might as well be students.'

Even at the annual dinner, which the members' partners are also invited to, etiquette has loosened up. 'It used to have to be a six or seven-course meal, but that



has loosened up a bit,' says Hennekens. Nevertheless, official table arrangements are still made, and there is always a good bottle of wine on the table. During dinner, all members are expected to wear their tie, featuring an ostrich. Female members wear a pin. 'Those who fail to do so are called out on it.'

Once a year, on Palm Sunday, the members of the walking club go on a retreat. De Weert explains how this tradition came about. 'In the early days, there were several priest professors in the walking club,' he says. 'During Lent they were not allowed to eat too much, which was not to everyone's liking. But that rule applies only within one's own diocese.'

Therefore, members walked a little further one weekend a year, out of the 's-Hertogenbosch diocese. Previous walking club weekend retreats took place in the Ardennes, South Limburg, Zierikzee, and

Texel. Last April, the hikers went to Roermond. During such weekends, members attend a mass celebration, there is a big dinner, and often a cultural outing.

Member for life

The walking club currently has 30 members: 16 professors and 14 emeriti. Each of the university's seven faculties provides two or three active professor members. In addition, the walking club has a group of emeriti, which is growing in size in line with increasing life expectancy. Membership is for life.

The procedure for becoming a member has been the same for 70 years, explains De Weert. A person who becomes emeritus member puts forward a successor from their own faculty. 'Their proposal is considered,' says Hennekens. 'If a member of the walking club doesn't get along with the proposed candidate, another professor

is sought. But the number of publications someone has to their name, for example, isn't a factor.'

Incidentally, De Weert says, there are also quite a few people who kindly turned down the invitation to join. 'When you've got young children, it's not easy to go out once a fortnight. That's why our youngest member is over 45.'

This form of co-optation, combined with the fact that for a long time the club consisted solely of men, led to lots of wild stories circulating about the walking club. It was rumoured to be an association where important decisions about the university were taken, such as who would be the next rector. Current members also include several former deans, a former rector, and a current member of the Executive Board. Approximately half of the members have managerial experience. Those who do not have this kind of experience have considerable scientific merit.

Yet current members deny that important decisions are taken at the club. 'The walking club started out purely for fun, and that's still what it is about,' says Charles de Weert. 'We don't have meetings, there are no minutes, everything is purely informal. Of course, we know what goes on at the university, but there's no magic involved. And no decisions are taken.'

Women or not?

Esther-Mirjam Sent, herself not a member, has a different perspective. She calls the walking club a typical networking organisation. 'Of course, this kind of club is all cosy and friendly, but there's also a lot of peer review and coaching taking place,' she says. The Professor of Economics and chair of the Labour Party gives an example. 'Suppose there's a vacancy for a new dean. If anyone in the club is interested in the position, they can ask one of the former deans from the walking club how it went for them. What are the areas of concern, what is happening in the Council of Deans? Thanks to these chats, this candidate will already have a big head start.'

Since the 2000s, the increase in the number of female professors at the university has led to lengthy discussions

IN 2017, THE FIRST FEMALE MEMBER JOINED THE WALKING CLUB



THE UNIVERSITY IN 1923

Dutch Catholics in the early 20th century had good reason to complain: they really were underrepresented in the more prestigious professions. That is the conclusion of a 1900 pamphlet drafted by Nijmegen Dutch Language and Culture scholar Maarten Poelhekke. He wrote that of all the doctors in the 10 largest cities in the Netherlands, only 11% were Papists, while Catholics represented one third of the Dutch population. Among lawyers, it was 19%. Of all 238 professors at Dutch universities, only two were of Catholic persuasion. Poelhekke blamed the Catholics themselves: they were too conservative, and reluctant to embrace modern science. He felt they should take action. **In 1904, Catholic intellectuals founded the 'Vereniging van de beoefening van wetenschap door katholieken' ('Association for the promotion of science by Catholics');** a year later, the Saint Radboud Foundation was launched, with the aim of giving Catholics their own university. *The rest is history.*

WITH THANKS TO UNIVERSITY HISTORIAN JAN BRABERS



COLUMN

Lucy's law

Lucienne van der Geld is a lecturer of notarial law and director of Network Notarissen.

Academic freedom

'A university should be a place of light, freedom and learning.' I read this quote by Benjamin Disraeli, author and former Prime Minister of the UK, and I have never forgotten it, because it describes exactly what I believe a university should be. I especially find the word 'freedom' in this definition hugely important.

However, it seems that academic freedom is no longer taken for granted in the Netherlands. This is the conclusion of a recent research report by the European Parliament. There are concerns about matters such as the polarised social debate and the increased power of university boards, and the hierarchical structure of institutions.

How does Radboud University fare when it comes to academic freedom? We might ask, for example, whether students and lecturers can still say anything they want in the lecture hall, or whether the focus lies primarily on making sure that the lecture hall is a safe space. After all, these days, all lectures are filmed. And while you can in principle say anything you want in the lecture hall, people might feel that because of those recordings and the fact that everything that is said is recorded for eternity, it is not always wise for students and lecturers to actually speak their mind freely.

My wish for our university, on the occasion of its birthday (after the party, of course), is that we have a discussion on the topic of academic freedom. That we take the time to talk about it without cameras, note-takers, and policy memos. Let us explore in all sorts of ways how we can keep our university a place of light, freedom and learning. Or, if necessary, how to make it so again! Then we can move forward together in health and happiness: *In Dei Nomine Felicitur.*

among the members of the walking club: should women be allowed in or not?

'We wondered if having female members would change the atmosphere of the walking club,' Hennekens says. He gives an example of the discussion at the time. 'My wife chaired the circle of professors' wives for a few years,' he says. 'The talks there centred mostly around children and grand-children, the relationship with the husband, and the household. These kinds of topics weren't discussed in the walking club. I didn't even know whether most of the other members had children or not.'

At some point, this masculine exclusivity also came under criticism from outside the club. In several interviews, including in *Vox*, Sent spoke out against the walking club. 'When I became a professor, the percentage of female professors was still low,' she explains. 'Men have an advantage anyway. When I met the walking club members at Tante Koojsje, I wondered what century I had landed in. It was literally and figuratively an old boys' network; you only leave the club when you die. That's why this kind of club goes against my sense of what belongs at a modern university.'

Eventually, Hennekens and the other

members of the club relented: in January 2017, Didi Braat, gynaecologist and Professor of Reproductive Medicine, became the first woman to join the walking club. The club now has six women members. 'I was invited to join by two professors I knew,' says Braat. 'Since I enjoy hiking and I thought it would be fun to meet colleagues from other faculties, I agreed.'

What was it like being the first woman in the walking club? 'Not hard at all,' says Braat. 'In 2001, I was appointed the first female Professor of Reproductive Medicine in the Netherlands, and in the course of my career I have on many occasions been the first or only woman in groups and committees. I don't think being the first woman in the walking club was such a big deal.'

Esther-Mirjam Sent has never been invited to join the club, but she says she doesn't mind. 'I would never want to be a member of a club of people who were placed in a privileged position just because they were invited to join a particular association. I have serious issues with organising things for each other by invitation and in the context of a small club. I'd rather go hiking with junior staff members and students.' ★



Hanneke

Jos

Catie

'At family parties, we get into robust discussions with each other'

Radboud University's name is heard on a daily basis in this Nijmegen family. Father Jos Joosten is a professor there, daughter Catie studies at the European Law School, and mother Hanneke, who studied philosophy, has ancestors who left a strong mark on the university's history.

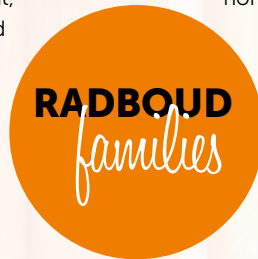
Catie was never able to talk to her grandfather, Jos van der Grinten, about legal matters, something she regrets. 'He died when I was four.' So he never knew that, like him, she went to study law in Nijmegen, and that she still occasionally comes across his name in a ruling. Or that she sees the portrait of her grandfather's brother – her great-uncle Wim van der Grinten (Rector from 1969 to 1972) – hanging in the Aula. Law student Catie comes from the well-known Van der Grinten lawyer family. In addition to her grandfather and great-uncle, many of her uncles, aunts, cousins, and nieces also studied law. 'At family parties, we get into robust discussions with each other,' she says with a laugh. Without her great-grandfather Jos (1885-1932), Nijmegen might not even have had a university. It was he who, as a lawyer and town clerk, brought the plan for a Catholic university to the attention of the Nijmegen mayor and politicians. The outcome was that the university was actually founded in the Waal city in 1923. 'And that's something special,' says Catie's mother, Hanneke van der Grinten. 'I did think about it a lot when

I first decided to study in Nijmegen myself.' Just to be clear, mother Hanneke did not opt for law, but for philosophy. She enrolled in a study programme in Nijmegen in 1998, after finishing the conservatory and working for a few years. By the time she completed her degree, she was already a mother. The mother of Catie, among others, who did follow the family tradition and chose law.

Radboud University's name is heard on a daily basis at their home, also because Catie's father, Jos Joosten, works at the university as a Professor of Dutch Literature. 'As a Nijmegen-born boy, I actually wanted to study in Amsterdam,' he says. 'But I didn't get a scholarship, so I ended up studying here after all. I liked it so much that I didn't want to leave. I completed my PhD and became a professor here.'

Here is a fun detail: Jos Joosten's father also worked at the Nijmegen university, but not as a scholar. 'He was a skipper. When we came ashore in 1972, he started renting out properties and worked as a sort of handyman at the university.'

Jos Joosten and Hanneke van der Grinten met in their youth; Jos was a friend of her brother. They live in Jos' father's house in Nijmegen-Oost. In the context of Radboud University's centenary, Jos Joosten is currently working on a portrait of his wife's grandfather for the Numaga historical society, in which he is involved. Thus coming full circle. ✨



On the photograph:

Hanneke van der Grinten (50) studied philosophy from 1998 to 2002, is an oboe teacher, choral conductor and founder of the Nijmegen Gregorian Institute. **Catie Joosten** (21) has been studying at the European Law School since 2020. **Jos Joosten** (58) studied Dutch from 1983 to 1989, completed his PhD at Radboud University, and is now a professor of Dutch Literature.

Corry



THE NIJMEGEN BREAKAGE SYNDROME

LITTLE KNOWN IN NIJMEGEN,
BUT RECOGNIZED FAR AND WIDE

The name of Nijmegen is widely known among doctors in Slavic countries. Not because of a university celebrating its centenary, but because a chromosomal abnormality that is particularly common in those countries was named after Nijmegen. Former paediatrician Corry Weemaes discovered this abnormality, which is all but forgotten in her own city, in the late 1970s.

Text: Vincent Decates / Photo: Collection Corry Weemaes

I know Nijmegen,' says a Polish medical student in a bar in Wrocław's cafe district excitedly. Moments before, the Vox reporter, who is visiting a friend in Poland, got talking to her. 'I know the city because of the Nijmegen Breakage Syndrome,' the medical student continues. She heard about it in a lecture at university.

The Nijmegen Breakage Syndrome? Never heard of it. A quick survey among a number of medical students and doctors affiliated with Radboud university medical center (Radboudumc) reveals that they have not heard of the disease either. An online search yields only a few results. Finally, an English-language Wikipedia page turns out to offer a short description of the disease. There is no equivalent Dutch-language page, but there are Polish, Czech, Russian, and even Ukrainian versions.

Long list of conditions

The syndrome appears to have been named after Nijmegen in the 1970s. Why is the disease included in the Polish medical curriculum, but virtually forgotten in the city on the Waal? Corry Weemaes, former paediatric immunologist at Radboudumc, knows all about it. It was Weemaes (now 82) who spearheaded the discovery of the Nijmegen Breakage Syndrome (NBS) almost fifty years ago. 'The simple answer is: the syndrome is more common in people of Slavic origin. Especially in Poland, relatively many people have it.' She shows a publication on NBS on which she collaborated: Thirty-one out of 55 respondents were of Polish origin.

People with NBS have a translocation, meaning that a piece of one chromosome has ended up on another chromosome. In this case, the 7th and 14th chromosomes, to be

precise. This translocation is a defect in the gene, leading to patients developing a long list of conditions. Characteristics include a deformity of the forehead and chin, large ears, and a large nose. The condition may also cause growth retardation, mild intellectual disability, and various skin conditions. Patients also have issues with their immune system.

Discovered by accident

Why does an Eastern European disease bear Nijmegen's name? 'I actually discovered the condition by accident,' explains Weemaes. 'I took part in a nationwide study on children with IgA deficiency [a condition that causes

'PEOPLE WITH NBS HAVE AN INCREASED RISK OF CANCER'

the immune system to malfunction, Eds.]. One of these children was then 10-year-old Bertie. The study looked at abnormal genes. This was done by growing chromosomes, which contain genes, and then detecting abnormalities, such as breaks, in those chromosome cultures. And that was the case with Bertie as well.'

Other doctors thought Bertie suffered from Ataxia-telangiectasia, a better-known genetic disorder in which children have difficulty moving, and a weakened immune system. But Weemaes did not believe in this diagnosis because of Bertie's physical features. 'I could

see that he didn't have Ataxia-telangiectasia. When I learned that he had a younger brother with the same problems and that his parents were also related, we decided to publish it as a new syndrome.'

And so the 'Nijmegen Breuksyndroom', as it is known in Dutch, was born. Why did Weemaes not name the condition after herself, as is common in medicine? 'I'm not a disease, and Bertie even less so,' she says firmly.

But what about the Eastern European connection? 'A colleague happened to see that research was being done in Prague on people with similar conditions. But the Czech doctors didn't know exactly what these people were suffering from. When we looked at these patients' blood samples, it was immediately clear that the same chromosomal break was involved.'

All Berties

Weemaes continued her research on the NBS in the 1980s, travelling around the world in the process. 'Prague, Berlin, several cities in Poland and in the United States. I even went to Japan.' She laughs. 'I remember visiting a colleague in Poland to examine some children who might have NBS. When I entered the room, I knew straight away. All Berties, I thought when I saw the children.'

Attention to the condition subsequently declined in the Netherlands due to a lack of patients. But in Eastern Europe, research continued. 'And just as well that it did,' says Weemaes. 'People with NBS have an increased risk of cancer. But because of their faltering immune system, they can't just be given radiation therapy - it could kill them. Neither can they just undergo chemotherapy. So it's important that the syndrome is recognised.'

Since her retirement in 2006, Weemaes has had little to do with the Breakage Syndrome, which does not mean she has left healthcare behind. She still volunteers to help with research on Ataxia-telangiectasia at Radboudumc.

And how did young Bertie fare? For someone with NBS, he had a great life, Weemaes says. 'At age 18, he developed cancer. After successful treatment, he was able to resume his life. In the end, he lived to be 30, which is older than most NBS patients.' ★

WE TAKE ACTION

Nijmegen developed into a stronghold of left-wing activism in the 1960s; in the 1970s, students did not hesitate to occupy a university building. What's left of all this activism? And who are today's activists?

Photography: Duncan de Fey



STEFANIE VAN DE HATERD (24)
CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY STUDENT,
ACTIVE AT AMNESTY AND OTHER
ORGANISATIONS

'I'm not a real activist; I'm more the liaison behind the scenes. I'm particularly committed to issues of inclusivity and sexuality. That's why I'm also a member of Amnesty Nijmegen's women's rights group. Our aim is to put women's rights issues on the agenda for a wider audience. During International Women's Day, we organised a meeting on what has been achieved over the years in the field of women's rights. While many things have improved, there's also still a lot to be gained. In 1978, feminists in Nijmegen, led by Bep Dijkhuizen, held a witches' night, to 'seize back the night'. They took to the streets at night with torches and pans to make themselves heard, and to show that they weren't afraid to walk the streets. Recently, Catcalls of Nimma also organised such a night. But instead of torches, they had pavement chalk, which they used to write hundreds of sexual remarks shouted at women on the pavement.

I was there too, but I didn't really know what to write. I was given a list of examples sent in by other women and I was shocked at how many comments I had heard myself. It's interesting to see how feminism has changed over the years. Back in the days of Bep Dijkhuizen, feminists were mostly concerned that certain rights should only apply to women. These days, it's much more about equality. There's also more openness and dialogue.

In this context, it is especially important that people learn more about sexuality and how to deal with it. Even in childhood, things go wrong: the sex education we receive isn't good, even though that's the key to ending transgressive behaviour – or worse: sexual violence. This kind of education should be based on equality between all sexes, and not just focus on STD prevention. I hope sexuality becomes an open topic of discussion, so that we become more considerate of each other and everyone ends up feeling more comfortable.'

Text: Vincent Decates

**'I WAS
SHOCKED AT
HOW MANY
COMMENTS
I HAD HEARD
MYSELF'**



**'ALONG WITH
HUNDREDS OF OTHER
CLIMATE ACTIVISTS,
I TOOK PART IN THE
ACTIONS ON THE A12
MOTORWAY'**

KIKI* (24)

SOCIOLOGY STUDENT, ACTIVE AT
EXTINCTION REBELLION

'I personally try to live as consciously and sustainably as possible, but I wanted to do something extra to combat climate change. When I started my Pre-Master's programme in Nijmegen in September, I met some students in activist circles. They told me about Extinction Rebellion.

I come from a small village in southern Limburg, where it's not common to speak out as an activist. That's why I thought long and hard about whether I should join. Extinction Rebellion stands for peaceful and disruptive action. That peaceful approach is very important to me. Along with hundreds of other climate activists, I took part in the actions on the A12 motorway in The Hague in January and March. The media called them blockades, but that wasn't true: people could still get to their destinations via other routes. On the spot, we held a sit-in until the police came to arrest us.

I've been arrested a few times. That was really scary. Although I had had some action training beforehand, still, you never know what will happen at the police station. Fortunately, I was allowed to go home that same day.

It's overwhelming to realise the crises that are happening right now and that will be upon us globally in the future. This is not only about climate change, but also about inequality. It feels like all of this will fall on our and future generations' plates. In the short term, I find it difficult to remain optimistic, but in the long term, I hope we're heading in the right direction. I try to hang on to the fact that the government is finally taking steps to combat climate change. The latest result of our actions is that private flights will be banned at Schiphol from 2025, and there will be no more night flights. We hope we can make something happen with every action, so that Extinction Rebellion can in the long run contribute to countering climate change and biodiversity loss.'

Text: Ken Lambeets

* Her full name is known to the editors.

A portrait of Mo Quirijnen, a young man with long, wavy, light brown hair and a mustache. He is wearing a blue denim jacket over a dark t-shirt. He has a gold nose ring and is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

**'WE NEED LOTS
MORE SOCIAL
HOUSING UNITS'**

MO QUIRIJNEN (25)
HISTORY STUDENT, PRESIDENT OF
AKKU STUDENT UNION

'I wouldn't call myself an activist. That term has too individualistic a connotation. Rather, I see myself as part of a social movement fighting for change. I'm a proud member of AKKU student union. We have to work together to really make the students' voices heard.

For the first few years of my studies, I mainly wanted to have fun studying. I wasn't doing much with my ideals yet. Then came the pandemic, which gave me time for reflection. I saw how hard students were hit and that was when I became an active member of AKKU.

As President, I'm involved in the housing protests in Nijmegen. Every summer, students are forced to sleep on the streets. Housing is seen as a way to make money rather than a right. International students are particularly affected. We need lots more social housing units, but there's not enough political will to really come up with solutions. What I'm most angry about is the debt that students are facing. The fact that so little attention has been paid to the consequences of the loan system is beyond me. There's so much stress and performance pressure. The longer it takes, the more students drop out. Plus, it's bad for education: many students are no longer intrinsically motivated to learn, but they don't want to accumulate more debt. So when I hear the Minister of Education say that students shouldn't complain so much because the jobs are there for the taking, I can only laugh.

I feel strongly about the Nijmegen tradition of student protests. The student activists of old took to the barricades to be heard. Because they organised themselves, they achieved a lot. For example, it's thanks to those protests that we now have a participational structure. The fact that student parties are now struggling to fill their candidate lists is a symptom of a wider problem. Students are allowed to the table, but they don't get to decide anything. Too much power lies with the Executive Board. Having said that, I'm a born optimist. There will be solutions for the crisis on the housing market, as well as for the climate. It's just that the longer it takes, the more people we lose along the way. This is why it's time for a change. Now.'

Text: Mathijs Noij



WHY RADBOU OWNS LAND

For four generations, the De Lugt family on Texel has been farming land owned by the Reinier Post Foundation. This foundation's assets, worth tens of millions, were raised thanks to a major fundraising campaign for the establishment of the Nijmegen Catholic University 100 years ago. But where does this money go?

Text: Ken Lambeets and Mathijs Noij / **Photography:** Johannes Fiebig

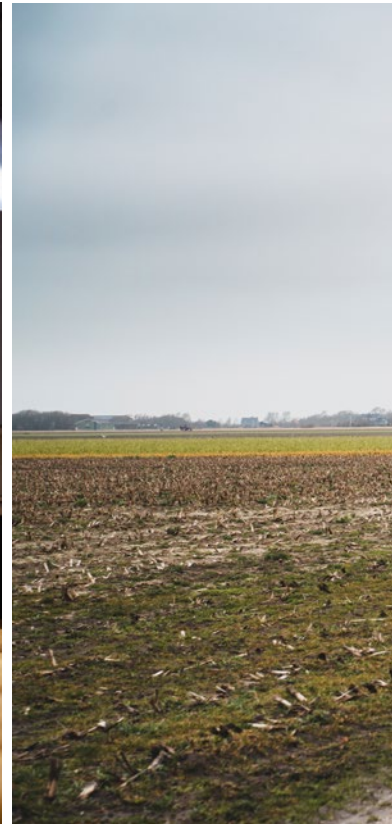


Hoeve Padang

D UNIVERSITY ON TEXEL



Matthijs de Lugt



The weather on Texel is horrible. On the largest Wadden Island, the wind is blowing strong, and the rain is coming down hard on this late March day. Farmer Bart de Lugt isn't impressed, he says, standing amidst the vast farmland. 'It does tend to get windy around here.'

There are large puddles of water on the fields. Winter crops are growing on some fields, while others seem to have remained untilled after the harvest.

Later this year, beet and potatoes will be growing here, says De Lugt. He and his cousin Matthijs will be working the land with their tractors. Together, they are the fourth generation of the De Lugt agricultural company. After harvesting, the seed potatoes are shipped all over the world, as far away as Syria and Brazil.

Old Catholic money

Sixty-six of the Texel farm's 270 hectares of arable land are owned by the Reinier Post Foundation, a foundation with old Catholic money managed by Radboud University and Radboud university medical center supervisors. The money continues to fund a lot of activities of both institutions.

The foundation's assets have a long history, dating back to the early 20th century. In 1905, Roman Catholic priests and bishops started holding collections with the aim of establishing a Catholic university. The assets, which included donations and bequests, were collected in the St Radboud Foundation. Following a major fundraising campaign in 1921, the

THE FOUNDATION DOES NOT INVEST IN WEAPONS

assets totalled three million guilders. Two years later, the bishops used this money to establish the Catholic University Nijmegen, now known as Radboud University.

From its inception until 1960, the university received subsidies from the municipality of Nijmegen. This was later replaced by a state subsidy. For a long time, people continued to donate part of

their property or inheritance to the foundation. 'We still have a few bequests that are spent very specifically,' says current secretary Ingrid van Deelen.

In 1972, the university's supervisors decided to transfer some of the assets to a separate foundation, the Reinier Post Foundation (SRP), named after priest, Professor of Medieval History, and former Rector Reinier Post (1894-1968). The statutes state that the foundation funds identity-related activities, such as the University Chaplaincy.

In the autumn of 2020, Radboud University and Radboud university medical center lost their Catholic predicate after a protracted dispute with the Dutch bishops. This also affects the Reinier Post Foundation. Until then, the Board of the SRP consisted of the supervisors of the Stichting Katholieke Universiteit – the joint supervisory body of the university and the hospital – who were appointed by the bishops. Since 2021, the Board has consisted of an independent chairman and representatives of both supervisory boards.

The current SRP chairwoman is Lilian Gonçalves-Ho Kang You. The Surinamese lawyer and human rights activist was



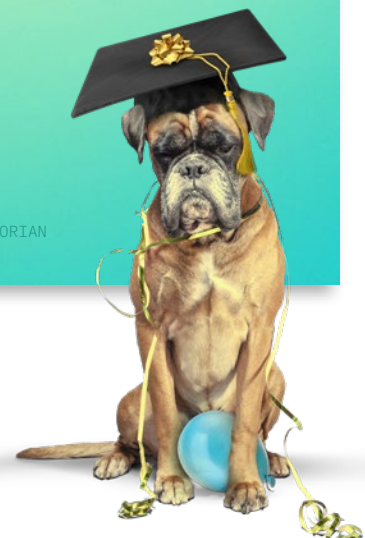
THE UNIVERSITY IN 1923

That the Catholic university would be established in Nijmegen was anything but a foregone conclusion. Once the plan was in place, Tilburg, Maastricht and Den Bosch did their best to attract the new university. The Radboud Foundation, a catalyst of the plan for the first Catholic university in the Netherlands, was offered large sums of money.

In the end, Nijmegen emerged victorious, because the biggest proponents of the new educational institution – including Jos Schrijnen, the first rector – had a strong preference for the city on the Waal, due to its central location. However,

non-Catholics opposed the municipality's intention to bribe the university with 100,000 guilders a year. They organised signature campaigns. But so did the proponents. In the end, a vote in the city council decided the matter: a narrow majority of 16 Catholics voted in favour, with 15 against.

WITH THANKS TO
UNIVERSITY HISTORIAN
JAN BRABERS



previously a member of the Board of the Stichting Katholieke Universiteit for 12 years, and in that capacity also acted as a director of the Reinier Post Foundation. She informs us that the foundation's assets were approximately €59 million at the beginning of 2023. But this amount fluctuates, says Gonçalves, as some 80% of the assets are invested in funds whose value can go up or down from day to day.

No more Shell

The archives of the Reinier Post Foundation, which Vox was allowed to peruse at the Catholic Documentation Centre, reveal that in the 1970s and 1980s, the foundation held shares in Unilever, Dordtsche Olie – later Shell – and Koninklijke Hoogovens, a forerunner of Tata Steel.

That is no longer the case, Gonçalves explains. The foundation's money is managed by asset manager Aegon Asset Management. 'They have an investment policy that is aligned with SRP's values.' The investments are in line with the United Nations' corporate responsibility goals and the Dutch climate agreement, Gonçalves stresses. Nor does the SRP invest in weapons. 'Our investments are

diversified and therefore less risky.'

Another part of the assets is in the paintings hanging in Huize Heyendael, the Aula, and the reading room of the University Library. And then there are the estates. All in all, the Reinier Post Foundation owns some 326 hectares of land across the Netherlands – in addition to Texel, in Alphen aan den Rijn, the Beemster, Brummen, Den Helder, Oss, Ravenstein and Schipluiden, among others.

There is regular contact with the farmers who have their farms on this land, Gonçalves says. 'Because farming is becoming increasingly complicated and is a fairly intensive asset, we sometimes think about selling some of the land. We do so occasionally when the opportunity arises. But during the financial crisis [of 2008, Eds.] we were really glad we hadn't, because there was a dip in the assets.'

Last battle

In the coffee room on the Texel farm, we are joined by Bart's father, Dirk de Lugt. Dirk remembers how the farmland came into the possession of the Reinier Post Foundation. 'My grandfather, C.J. de

'EVERY YEAR WE WERE VISITED BY A STEWARD OR CLERGYMAN'



Lugt, was the son of a contractor in The Hague,' he says. 'During the 1920s economic crisis, instead of taking over his father's contracting business, he moved to Texel to start a new career as a potato farmer.'

World War II passed relatively peacefully on Texel. The sting was in the tail: In April 1945, Georgian troops rebelled against the Germans on the island, in what came to be known as the last battle of the war. From Den Helder, the Germans bombed the area around the Texel airfield to prevent the mutinous soldiers from escaping.

Several farms were hit, Dirk says, including Maurick farm, close to Dirk's grandfather's farm. The farmer at the time did not manage to rebuild his farm after the war. This was when the university must have bought the land, as an investment. 'They asked my grandfather, who had a large potato business by then, to lease the farmland. And this is what we do to this day with our family business.'

The journalists visiting the De Lugt family today are not the first to have come to Texel on behalf of Nijmegen university. When Dirk and his brother Cor were little, Dirk recalls, their parents were visited every year by a steward and a Catholic clergyman from the university, and later by representatives of the SRP. 'The priest wore a collar,' says Dirk. 'They didn't mind us being Protestants. They drove around the farm and had a quick look at the land from the car. Afterwards, they had some food, and then they went back to Nijmegen.'

Later, when Dirk and Cor were owners themselves, they were the ones to host the annual visits. 'We told them about the latest developments in the company. That we no longer ploughed the fields, for example. This is due to the Texel farmland, which is naturally very dry. We only lift the topsoil layer with a machine, which is better for soil life and makes crops more resilient to longer periods of drought. The members of the Reinier Post Foundation were always very

interested in our news, and they also enjoyed seeing our sons take over the business.'

University Chaplaincy

Farmers rent the land through the leasing principle: the more the land yields, the higher the price. The idea behind it is that the land produces a high return for the owner, but also a good income for the farmer. 'We mainly look at the long term,' Dirk explains. 'Because we have the trust of the foundation, we can invest in our business.'

The money raised by the lease flows back to the SRP. 'Our policy so far has always been that we don't spend all of the assets, to avoid having nothing left one day,' says Gonçalves. 'In recent years, we've managed to fund the projects from our returns, keeping the assets fairly constant,' adds secretary Ingrid van Deelen.

These days, the aim of the SRP is to contribute to activities of the university or Radboud university medical center that strengthen their image, identity or position, Gonçalves explains. These include projects with a distinctly Catholic character, such as scholarships for foreign theology students, a biography of Titus Brandsma, a PhD dissertation on the Catholic identity of Radboud University, and the current identity programme (see page 13).

The University Chaplaincy also receives funding from the SRP, even though Radboud University no longer has a Catholic designation. 'We've agreed with the bishops that as long as the SRP exists, we will continue to fund the University Chaplaincy,' says Gonçalves. 'Up to a certain amount of course; nothing is unlimited.'

Healthy Data Program

It is striking that in recent years, the SRP has also funded projects without a clear link to the Catholic Church or identity. Take the Radboud Excellence Initiative or the Healthy Brain Study, a large-scale research study into the brains of people in their thirties from Nijmegen and the surrounding area. Over a five-year period, between 2018 and 2023, the study received some €8 million in funding, 56% of which came from the Reinier Post Foundation.

THE UNIVERSITY IN 1923

The university started out in 1923 with 189 students: 38 girls and 151 boys. There were 32 professors and lecturers (none of them women) and three faculties: the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Theology. In 1951, on the occasion of the university's 28th anniversary, the Faculty of Medicine was added to the list. The medical faculty was the first to settle on the current university campus, the Heyendaal estate (the other faculties had buildings in the city). This was followed in 1957 by the Faculty of Science - in the same spot as where it stands to this day. The Faculty of Social Sciences was added in 1963, and the Faculty of Policy Sciences saw the light of day in 1988. The number of students at the Nijmegen university grew from 189 in 1923 to 600 before the war, 3,000 in 1960, almost 13,000 at the turn of the century, and 23,000 today. The first female professor was classicist Christine Mohrmann, who was appointed professor in 1953.

WITH THANKS TO UNIVERSITY HISTORIAN JAN BRABERS



A new large-scale initiative that received funding is the Healthy Data Program, which consists of several projects aimed at improving the data infrastructure on campus so that health data are stored better and available for reuse. Spread over a period of six years, researchers and various support services of Radboud University and Radboud university medical center will receive a grant of €21 million for this purpose, 16 million of which will come from the SRP.

Not just any researcher can apply for a grant from the Reinier Post Foundation, says Lilian Gonçalves. There is no set script on how to write an application. 'Depending on who applied, the projects are submitted to the Radboud University Executive Board or to Radboud university medical center Executive Board,' she says. If they aren't confident about the value of the project for both the medical center and the university, the pitch will not reach the foundation's desk. 'This is based on a thorough investigation,' says Gonçalves. 'We almost always take the boards' advice.'

Subsidy applications to Reinier Post are therefore different from those of regular research funding agencies, explains Alain van Gool (Radboud university medical center). He is project manager of the Healthy Data Program, together with Berber Pas (Radboud University). 'Application rounds to the Dutch Research Council (NWO) or European grants are large-scale and competitive: you have to describe in detail what you plan to do over the next five years. An application to the SRP is more like a pitch for a start-up.' It is much more about winning the trust of the boards of Radboud University and Radboud university medical center, says Van Gool.

The main advantage of this, he believes, is that the SRP is much more flexible than other research funding agencies. 'We already know very precisely what we're going to do the first year, but for the subsequent years it's hard to predict. We have regular meetings with the boards of the university, the hospital, and the SRP. There is no other administration or reporting. It's a very pleasant way of working.'

Good relationship

The SRP has a long history, but will it still

be around by the time of Radboud University's bicentenary? 'It's a great fund and our policy has always been not to spend all of it, so you don't eat it up too quickly,' says Gonçalves. 'It's about weighing up what you want each time. But one thing is certain: once you've used up a fund, you won't get it back.'

At least on Texel, they hope that the good relationship with the Reinier Post Foundation will continue. 'We never felt the need to buy the land, and it was never an issue for the foundation either,' says Dirk de Lugt. 'It's in both our interests that the land is well managed, as this increases our earning power and the value of the land. If it's up to us, we'll be happy to continue in this way for a long time.' *

'AN APPLICATION TO THE FOUNDATION IS LIKE A PITCH FOR A START-UP'

Vox made a video report about the Texel farm, which you can view via this QR code



*I would not call this book, a letter
to scientists, but an earnest
appeal to all thinking people*

With his index finger, he draws a map of the campus on the tabletop. 'There,' Ad van der Ven taps on the wood, 'that was where he parked his Volkswagen van, in a dead-end street near the Psychology Lab. A van in which he also slept. He used to shower at the Animal Psychology department. They did experiments with rats and monkeys there, and they needed a shower on the premises for hygiene reasons.' In the 1980s, psychologist Van der Ven worked at the Mathematical Psychology department. It was during this time that he first became acquainted with L. León, who was working from his van and the campus terminals on completing three books. Three books that, even if you really put your mind to it, you can't read from cover to cover.

What you can do, however, is browse through them, and in the process get a glimpse of what L. León was about. He was a freethinker, a utopias, and also a bit of a guru. 'But,' Van der Ven says, despite appearances 'he was extremely down-to-earth.' The psychologist often thinks back to his daily conversations with León. This must have been sometime in the late 1980s. Every day, Van der Ven saw the man sitting on a bench near the reception. 'He had a book in his hands, which he pretended to read.'

Everyone just walked past him. 'Staff, students, everyone saw him sitting there', Van der Ven remembers, 'but they just ignored him.' León did look quite shabby, wearing the same jacket and tie every day. 'He had been a lecturer in architecture at a university of applied sciences in Den Bosch,' says Van der Ven. That was back in the days when León was still wealthy. 'He even had a motor yacht, with which he used to go cruising on the Meuse.'

By the early 1980s, however, León had had enough of his luxurious, comfortable life. It may have been a midlife crisis, since León must have been around 50 at the time. To better understand what the human mind was made of, the architecture graduate decided to go back to the university and study Psychology in Nijmegen. However, he was not accepted onto the study programme. Van der Ven: 'He was rejected because of his English. Even though his English was amazing. He was really proud of it. He even went to England every year. On the ferry, a customs officer once couldn't believe he was Dutch, that's how well he spoke English.'

'He was really good at languages anyway,' Van der Ven continues. 'He read a Spanish magazine every day, and also had a strong command of Turkish. He thought Turkish was the most logical language he knew.' Such details show León to have been a quirky character. Like the fact that after six months of attending lectures in Pedagogy - where they did accept him - he walked out of the lecture hall never to return. But he didn't leave campus.

ENLIGHTENMENT

Van der Ven is now 87. We are sitting in a small meeting room in the Maria Montessori building. The psychologist pushes his ears forward with his hands when I ask him a question. He has an appointment with the ear specialist soon. Other than that, he is still spry for his age. His gaze is sharp, and the gestures he makes with his trembling hands are wide. What keeps him so energetic? Van der Ven mentions golf and scientific research. He even combined the two: in 2012, he published an article in a renowned journal on the statistics behind golf scores. He is all too happy to lecture me on it, as well as on quantum mechanics, intelligence testing, and the psychology behind erotica. But he grows even more enthusiastic when he starts talking about León.

Back to the 1980s. One day, after lunch with his colleagues, Van der Ven sits down next to León. 'I still remember thinking: what should I talk to him about? But that turned out not to be a problem. He did all the talking.' This chat with León soon became a habit. 'A completely new world opened up for me. The way he thought was so different from what I was used to. It's hard to describe, but it was unlike anything else.'

'At that time, I was really interested in Bhagwan,' Van der Ven says. Bhagwan was an Indian spiritual leader with many followers in the US and Europe. 'I also spoke to León about Bhagwan. But he had a very different perspective on such things. He was extremely pragmatic. When I asked him about enlightenment, he looked up. At the fluorescent tube lights.'

to believe in things that
there, how on earth is a child
going to distinguish what really is,
from what really isn't?

LECTURE IN 'PSEUDOLOGY'

Readers may not so easily recognise this pragmatism in León's writings. I discovered his writings by accident while searching for a sociologist on the Radboud University website. Google's unfathomable ways brought me to a minimalist, black-and-white page hosted on the domain of the Faculty of Social Sciences. It turned out to be a book, printed in the 1980s and put online in 2007. I was curious, so I clicked through. Each page was more bizarre than the one before. As if the sentences had been dashed off in a furious trance, filled with capital letters and sentences in bold, full of academic and literary quotations, jumping from anecdote to anecdote. What was this? And who was the author?

León wrote three books. The first appeared in 1988 under the title *The World Solution for World Problems: The Problem, its Cause, its Solution*. In this book, León advocates for a 'randomly drawn' world government, consisting of one thousand individuals, who are solely in contact with one another via computer. Nation-states, party politics, elite formation: all these problems would be remedied, according to León, if world leaders were chosen at random from the mentally healthy population. León was also extremely concerned about the environment. He looked for the cause of nature's degradation in a human population overshoot. Everyone therefore had a duty not to have more than one child, León argued. The book has almost 200 pages, including 72 appendices, which in turn have their own sub-appendices.

León's second book was published in 1990, and entitled *Tao Stoics: Late Twentieth Century Lessons in Wisdom or Subjects for Discussion*. The author was inspired by the US TV series *Kung Fu*, in which an apprentice learns all sorts of Eastern wisdom from his master. León's *Tao Stoics* consists of 256 short question-answer interactions between an apprentice and his master. You can learn more from this wise teacher than from lectures at the Psychology department, León argues. Nevertheless, the master advises his pupil to attend a lecture in 'pseudology' sometime. But don't ask any difficult questions there, the master advises, or you can forget about getting a diploma.

León's third book is equally critical of science and academia. The slim volume, entitled *Negen criticatastrooffjes: Gesprekken met een stupidoloog (Nine criticatastrophes: Conversations with a Stupidologist)* is not available online, but can be found in the catalogue of the University Library (UB). The book is highly critical not only of psychologists, but also of sociologists. Instead of assuming that people are rational, León argues, the fundamental premise of sociology should be that people are incredibly stupid.

Negen criticatastrooffjes was an 'in-between project' for León, says Van der Ven. The author was still working on a thick final volume. It was supposed to be about the philosophy of science, but the author did not get beyond the beginning and was never able to complete the work.

We owe it to Van der Ven that León's unfinished oeuvre is still accessible today. 'Not everyone had their own PC at the time,' the psychologist explains, 'but there were terminals at the university, connected to the big computer. I said to him: "Everything you say is getting lost. You have to write these things down." At first he didn't want to, but eventually I got him to do it. Then he started typing it all out himself, on the student terminals.' León spent days, if not weeks, at those terminals. Not only did he produce an impressive amount of text, he also added substantial annotations. All of which are correct. León refers with equal ease to science-fiction author H.G. Wells, philosopher William James, and Homer's *Iliad*.

Van der Ven published León's writings for him. 'I made something out of it, sorted and ordered it a bit.' The books first appeared in print in a limited edition, and later became publicly available on the internet. The digital version of the *Tao Stoics* contains some more information about the author. Under the *About the Author* heading, there are three sentences about L. León:

'The author was born in Nijmegen (The Netherlands) d.d. 9 August 1931 and died in Nijmegen d.d. 13 February 1992. His real name was Johannes Leonardus Mijling. His given name was Jan.'

PESSOA SYNDROME

Why do writers use pseudonyms? Until well into the 19th century, female authors used to hide behind male names. It was only around this time that publishers became willing to print their work. In modern-day dictatorships, a secret pen name is the only way dissidents can voice their criticism. However, a pseudonym is not always required for publishing. For some authors, an alias is not something under which literary work appears, but a part of the literary work itself.

American literary scholar Katia Mitova writes about the Pessoa syndrome, named after Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935). Pessoa used many pseudonyms. He published poems, novels, even crossword puzzles under aliases. Pessoa himself preferred the term heteronym – other name. He used about 75 in total, although of course we don't really know this for sure. Pessoa formulated a few rules for his heteronym production. The first rule was simple: tell as few people as possible about your heteronyms. And if you have to say something about it, make sure it's not the truth.

Literary expert Mitova argues that all these secret pen names were essential to Pessoa's creativity. For the poet, a heteronym was not just a name to publish his work under. It was a real personality, one that Pessoa was allowed to channel. For instance, the writer thought some of his heteronyms were more shrewd than himself. They were simply better writers. The heteronyms were more creative and produced more extraordinary work, because they were different from Pessoa.

Was something similar going on with Mijling? Van der Ven starts laughing when I ask him about Mijling's pseudonym. The psychologist doesn't want to look so deeply for the reasons behind the alias. 'I think Mijling didn't want to become famous. He used to say: "There's nothing as terrible as fame. It only brings disadvantages." I do recognise that.' Van der Ven pauses for a moment. 'With this interview, I will get a bit of fame, of course. But I'm doing it for him. I think it's too important.'

The psychologist also published León's real name. Why did he do that? 'I asked Mijling about it, and he agreed. Maybe he also thought at the time that no one would read it.'

PSEUDONYM

'I'm going to be really honest with you: I didn't read it all the way through either,' Van der Ven confesses. 'Bits and pieces of course.' He is talking about *The World Solution for World Problems*. But the author's entire work is tough going, as even his publisher acknowledges. 'I can understand people reading it and thinking: what's this crazy thing?' Did any readers ever contact Van der Ven about Mijling's books? 'No, not a single one. You are the first. In all these years, I've never had any reactions to it.'

Mijling's work is inaccessible. What also doesn't help is that he developed his own mysterious terminology. In his books, Mijling uses a number of self-invented concepts, such as the above-mentioned 'pseudology', 'Mind science' and 'ideation'. The latter concept in particular occurs a lot. 'I never really understood what he meant by it myself,' says Van der Ven. 'But Mijling said that if you really want to understand humans, you have to do it from their ideation, their auto-imagination. Another, simple word for that is "thinking".'

Van der Ven explains that Mijling believed that humans were essentially different from other species because humans could imagine things. 'In your imagination – your auto-imagination – you can travel to New York just by thinking about it. Then you can walk among the skyscrapers. But you can also think about Beijing, or the future or the past.' In this state of imagination, ideas arise. 'It's always the idea that drives human behaviour,' Van der Ven continues, 'so if you want to understand behaviour, you have to understand the idea behind it. But this idea is what people are often unaware of.'

What ideas drove Mijling? Why did he remain on campus for years after walking out of the lecture hall? Van der Ven: 'I don't really know. He just stuck around here; he didn't go back to Den Bosch.'

Happiness is synonymous with the
absence of superstition.

The more I explore Mijling's work, the less I understand him. Not only is his work unfathomable, but so is his life. Indeed, he is untraceable on the internet and in newspaper archives. 'Mijling' is a common surname in the Nijmegen area, but 'Johannes Leonardus' and 'Jan' produce no hits for the period of his life. In the 1930s, the *Provinciale Geldersche en Nijmeegsche Courant* published any changes in the civil registry. Every few weeks, the newspaper carefully listed all deaths, marriages and births in the city. However, there is no record of the birth of Johannes Leonardus Mijling, not even in the August 1931 overview.

Pessoa created 75 heteronyms during his lifetime. For some, the Portuguese poet even wrote horoscopes, since he was an avid astrologer. But just as astrologers draw lines between celestial bodies to turn them into constellations, Pessoa also drew lines between his pen names. Indeed, his writing personalities knew each other. They even corresponded. The pseudonyms simply fitted together like Russian dolls. And I'm increasingly starting to wonder whether the same is not true for L. León and Mijling, as well as Van der Ven. Could it be that the mystery author was born not from a womb, but from a brain? A brain that needed someone who was different – different from others? The brain of a now 87-year-old psychologist?

Van der Ven talks imperturbably on about giving a speech at Mijling's cremation. More than 30 years have passed since the psychologist had to say farewell to the eccentric writer. And yet, the way Van der Ven speaks of him, you would think Mijling was alive and kicking. Their relationship as described by the psychologist is much like that of apprentice and master in *Tao Stoics*. Doesn't he recognise something of Mijling in himself? Van der Ven: 'A student is still learning something. I'm not.' He sighs. 'I haven't moved on an inch since our talks. And that while all the while I was listening to him. In essence, I've learnt nothing from him. But that wasn't his fault; rather it was mine.'

As the interview comes to an end, I've got more questions than answers. I walk past the Spinoza Building. What do I see there at the end of the path? Is it my auto-imagination, or is that a Volkswagen van parked there?



Only you yourself can do it,
nobody else

POINT TAKEN!

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT COUNCIL AND THE WORKS COUNCIL

www.numedezeggenschap.nl



2023 Works Council (OR) and Representative Council (OC) elections

#youhaveaparttoplay for the participational bodies! You can still stand for the Works Council (OR) elections until 5 May and we warmly invite you to stand as a candidate! For more information on the various parties and Works Council members, see <https://www.ru.nl/afdelingen/medezeggenschapsorganen/ondernemingsraad>

Do you prefer to work locally for your own faculty or department? The subcommittees could also use some help! Find out more about how to stand for election at <https://www.ru.nl/verkiezingen/personeelsverkiezingen-2023/kandidaatstelling/>

The candidates will be announced on 17 May, and you can vote from 7 to 16 June.

News from the Works Council

Housing

A recent Works Council survey among employees showed much dissatisfaction with the campus plan; the university has pledged, through dialogue, to customise the campus plan per department and, where necessary, per employee. Share your experience and concerns with us!

Big Tech

Wherever possible, we try to counter the grip of Microsoft in particular on our computer systems. We are not always successful, but we urge the Executive Board to take an active role in exploring alternatives.

Extended opening hours

At the request of the UVG, the university is exploring a general opening of all buildings in the evening hours. Currently, almost every building has its own closing time; the idea is to equalise this

more, in the hope that longer opening hours will contribute to a livelier campus.

Measuring room occupancy via Wi-Fi

The university wants to roll this project out further, but the participational bodies are not in favour of further extending this type of technology, for reasons of privacy protection and lack of clarity on how this data will ultimately improve room occupancy.

Collaboration with Maastricht University

This project can count on broad support.

Local Council

The Local Council has a union secretary to support all four unions, including the AO_b, in their work and to act as a contact person for employees. You can find out more about this in a recent article on voxweb.nl: 'Unions are also for employees on temporary contracts.'

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN THE DISCUSSION?

Contact us via www.radboudnet.nl/personeel/diversen/medezeggenschap/leden/ or www.ru.nl/usr/over_de/de_raad_stelt_zich_1/

Text: Annemarie Haverkamp / Photo: Mona van den Berg

'I was the first in my family to go to university'

Lidewij Nissen and her partner Fons Meijer have an agreement: in the bedroom, they don't talk about university. They talk about it enough at other times. For example with Peter Nissen, Lidewij's father, who has been involved with Radboud University since 1977.

Theologian Peter Nissen has witnessed nearly half of Radboud University's centenary history. The Limburg native, who was once a monk for a year, came to Nijmegen to study in 1977. 'I was the first in my family to go to university,' he says. 'Nijmegen had a broad Catholic cultural tradition, to which I've always felt strongly connected. It was the university of big names like Anton van Dunkirk and Gerard Brom.'

After being appointed professor, Peter Nissen often cycled to campus in the morning with his daughter Lidewij, who had in the meantime enrolled in a study programme in History in Nijmegen. And it was there, in the Erasmus building, that she met her partner Fons Meijer, who has been visiting the Nissen family for eight years now. 'Fons and I were both members of the study association,' says Lidewij.

Fons: 'Lidewij was one year ahead of me.'

Fons was living in Oss when he came up with the idea of studying in Amsterdam. But already during the introduction week, he noticed that he was out of place there. 'I felt like I was sinking and disappearing into that big city, so I quickly switched. I was just in time to be able to start in Nijmegen. The small scale here suits me much better.'

He obtained his PhD last year and now has a job at the Centre for Parliamentary History on campus. Lidewij works as a PhD candidate on the same floor in the

Erasmus Building. They occasionally drink coffee together, but prefer to have lunch with their own colleagues.

Fons, laughing: 'Otherwise, we won't have anything to talk about in the evening. We already talk so much about the university at home.'

Lidewij: 'We have agreements about that. We're not allowed to mention it in the bedroom.'

Fons and Lidewij are always each other's first reader. 'We help each other sharpen our ideas,' says Fons.

Lidewij is currently working on her PhD thesis. She occasionally asks her father Peter, who, like her, is adept at reading seventeenth-century writings, whether she can use a particular word in a particular context, but she didn't ask him to be her co-reader.

Peter: 'Her PhD dissertation will be a big surprise for me.'

He rarely meets his daughter in the Erasmus building anymore, since he took early retirement last year. He no longer felt comfortable in an academic world where bureaucracy and competition reigned supreme. 'Thankfully I'm free of all that now.'

During his time as a student, PhD candidate, and lecturer, the university was much smaller. 'Theology was in a side wing of the Albertinum monastery, and the atmosphere there was very personal and relaxed.'

He didn't get much of a taste of student life, preferring to read a book. His daughter and son-in-law weren't really party animals either. From the head of the table, he looks at them questioningly. Right?

They exchange looks. Fons: 'Well ...'

Lidewij answers diplomatically: 'Studying and partying can go together very well.' *



On the photograph:

Peter Nissen (65) studied Theology from 1977 to 1984, and is now Professor Emeritus of Theology. He is the father of three daughters and lives in Nijmegen. **Lidewij Nissen** (Peter's daughter, 30) studied History from 2011 to 2017. She is currently working on her PhD at the Department of History, Art History and Antiquities. She lives in Arnhem, together with Fons Meijer. **Fons Meijer** (28) studied History from 2012 to 2017. He obtained his PhD in 2022 and recently joined the Centre for Parliamentary History (CPG).



Peter

Fons

Lidewij

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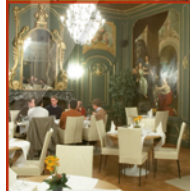
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Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen



COLUMN

21ST CENTURY WOMAN

I am, by nature, an optimistic person. I believe in the good of people – and things in general. When life goes south, it must eventually go north again (or wherever ‘up’ is), right? Tides turn. Bad days get better. But even I have instances so comically terrible that they cannot be salvaged.

Something I recently learned about myself, for example, is that I hugely appreciate modern plumbing. A functioning toilet? Great.

A sink to wash your hands afterward?

Amazing. A shower where the water flushes away, never to be seen again? Hugely underappreciated.

As is the nature of comically bad days, I learned this standing under the shower, hair soaked in rosemary oil for hair health purposes, at approximately 10 pm on a Monday evening when my entire plumbing system just gave up. Or, more precisely, the water pump that is the backbone of my basement apartment’s plumbing system did.

It’s interesting how thin the layer of modernity really is. Take away the electricity-powered shower, sink, and toilet, and you, too, can observe a rather quick descent into pre-industrial society. I already had an icky feeling about the 18th century when I had to study it for my early modern history course. This simply solidified the assumption.

Antonia Leise is an editor at Vox and writes a monthly history column.

Sure, the 21st century has its issues – the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, climate change, the general feeling of doom looming on the horizon. But I am a 21st century woman through and through. I was born just in time – neither too late nor too early.

My parents grew up in a socialist dictatorship and lived through its collapse.

My grandparents grew up in post-war East Germany. The generation before that? World War Two.

The one before *that*?

World War One. And as we have already established, every century that did not involve proper plumbing generally doesn’t work for me.

If the *Back to the Future* trilogy had happened to me, I would have driven right off the cliff by the third movie when Michael J. Fox lands in the Wild West. There is no way I could have made 1885 work. I lived without a functioning toilet once and it was enough. Now, the plumbing is fixed, my apartment doesn’t smell anymore, and it’s been a while since I last cried because of a shower. Bad days do get better, and, at the very least, you can always walk into the office the following morning and say: ‘You will never believe what my next column is going to be about.’

‘It’s been a while since I last cried because of a shower’



COLOPHON

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