

Independent magazine of Radboud University



5 MYTHS ABOUT REFUGEES / EINSTEINS ON THE RUN / TIPS FROM OTHER REFUGEES / THINGS TO DO IN NIJMEGEN / A STORY OF THE DUTCH WRITER ABDELKADER BENALI

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SPECIAL EDITION FOR REFUGEES

VOX



New
neighbours



**Refugees can
count on us**

Help ook mee!
vluchtelingenwerk.nl


**VluchtelingenWerk
Nederland**

EDITORIAL



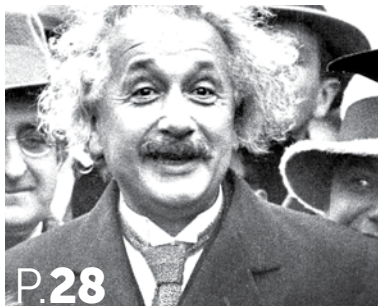
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Photo cover: Erik van 't Hullenaar

NEW NEIGHBOURS

Zaatari, Oncunipar, Ayn al-Hilweh; these are the huge reception centres for Syrian refugees in Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon respectively. We had not heard of them up until a few months ago. It is very likely that the asylum seekers now residing at Heumensoord came from these centres. Nijmegen, Heumen, Radboud University. How must these names sound to the newcomers? Probably just as exotic as the names of the aforementioned refugee centres sound to us. The Vox editorial team would like to make the unfamiliar a little more familiar. And so we decided to publish a magazine in English for and about our temporary neighbours at Heumensoord. It contains information about Nijmegen, tips for things to do in and around the city, and stories from refugees who have been in Nijmegen for some time now (page 24). But it also includes portraits of the newcomers (page 8). Who are they? Where are they from?

Vox is the independent monthly magazine of Radboud University. We write about science and studying. Themes which, by definition, cross boundaries. What would the world of knowledge look like today if the Jews Albert Einstein, Karl Popper and Thomas Mann had not found safe havens on different continents in the previous century (page 28)?

In 2013, the German Chancellor Angela Merkel was awarded an honorary doctorate from our university. This summer, as one of the first European leaders to do so, she opened up her heart to the refugees. Germany offered them hospitality, safety and opportunities. Nijmegen appears to be following her example, with countless new aid initiatives being organised, including those by Radboud University, HAN University of Applied Sciences and students themselves. Perhaps in twenty years' time Vox will be writing about a top scientist who started life as a refugee. One who took his or her first tentative steps on Dutch soil as a child at Heumensoord, not far from Radboud University.

Annemarie Haverkamp
editor in chief Vox

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'EUROPE BEING FLOODED BY REFUGEES? NOTHING OF THE SORT'

P.25 / **SCIENCE**





MACEDONIAN CAMP

In late September, photographer Mona van den Berg was in Macedonia. She took photographs of Syrian refugees, many of whom had arrived in Europe by boat and were placed in a camp on the Greek border. "It was chaotic," she said. "The camp had just opened." The Macedonian camp became packed to the brim after Hungary closed its borders and refugees could not get any further due to problems at the Croatian and Serbian borders. Mona van den Berg is one of the regular photographers for Vox. She has already photographed a huge number of refugees and camps. "It angers me that the borders even exist; that we just happen to be born here and they there."

Photo: Mona van den Berg



Photo: Dick van Aals

Heumensoord is only separated from Radboud University by a few streets. The university was founded in 1923 as a Catholic university. In the 1950s construction began on the present-day Heyendaal campus, starting with new buildings for the medical and science faculties. In the last few decades many new buildings have been added to the campus. Radboud University is home to nearly 20,000 students, distributed across seven faculties (Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, Arts, Management,

Medical Sciences, Science, Law, and Social Sciences). The campus has its own church, restaurant, sports centre and café, as well as an academic hospital, a guest-house and a student residential flat. Adjoining the university is the campus of the HAN University of Applied Sciences. Radboud University is known as an international university that offers a number of English-speaking degree programmes. There are thirteen universities in the Netherlands in total. More than 30% of Dutch citizens are highly educated.

HEUMENSOORD

On Wednesday 16 September, it was announced that the Heumensoord nature reserve will be used to provide emergency accommodation to three thousand asylum-seekers. Construction lasted a little over a week. In 1998, the area was

already home to a refugee camp. At the time, the asylum-seekers came from Poland, Rumania, Iran, Sri Lanka, Angola and China. They had to sleep in tents (in 2015 these have been replaced by pavilions, which are sturdier and warmer).



Photo: Ger Loeffen

In 1998, the asylum-seekers arrived to Heumensoord too early. The emergency accommodation was not ready yet.

WELCOME TO NIJMEGEN



"Radboud University warmly welcomes you to Nijmegen. After a long journey full of hardship you have now arrived in a country and a city where you are safe, but of which you probably know little to nothing. You are not familiar with the local customs and habits, and you do not yet speak the language. Finding your way and creating a new life for yourself will be a real challenge. This is why we want you to know that our university, our staff and students are here to help you in every way we can. We want to be good neighbours to all of you."

Gerard Meijer, president of the Executive Board, Radboud University Nijmegen

HOW THE UNIVERSITY HELPS

Campus and Heumensoord

The university is providing all kinds of services to help run Heumensoord. Centre of expertise for language and communication Radboud in'to Languages has translated the shelter's welcome folder into Arabic, and took care of the printing and translation side of various other publications. The Department of Pedagogical Sciences has devised a special schooling programme for the children at Heumensoord, and the Faculty of Law offers courses to the volunteers working for Stichting Vluchtelingenwerk, who provide legal and other assistance to the refugees. The university is also housing the shelter's kitchen, which prepares and serves thousands of hot meals per day.

Student Chaplaincy

Muslim students are welcome to use the small Muslim prayer room (mescid) at the Student Chaplaincy and take the opportunity to meet other Muslim students. Christian students and students of other faiths are warmly invited to attend Holy Mass in English on Sunday afternoon at 5 pm.
Opening hours: Monday to Thursday, 9 am - 5 pm; Friday, 10 am - 3 pm
Church services: Sundays, 5 pm: Catholic Eucharist in English. Wednesdays, 12.45 - 1.15 pm: Taizé prayers in English.

Gay or bisexual Refugee and gay, bisexual or transgender? COC Nijmegen invites you to come and talk to, listen to and meet other LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender)



Photo: Erik van 't Hullenaar

The university houses Heumensoord's kitchen, in which thousands of hot meals are prepared each day. Construction workers were still building the kitchen until the end of September.

refugees. The LGBT asylum seekers group organises regular meetings, individual meet-ups and support in Nijmegen. Please contact us with any questions. *For more information, dates and times, send an email to: info@cocnijmegen.nl. You can contact us anonymously. We respect your privacy and security and never share information with others.*

Donating clothes and other items

The Nijmegen branch of the Red Cross has opened eight locations where people can donate clothing and other items for the refugees at Heumensoord. Everything is sorted before being taken to the Welcome Shop, where refugees can collect a package. There is currently a huge shortage of clean winter clothing, good shoes and articles for personal hygiene, such as soap, shampoo and toothpaste. The Red Cross is asking people not to donate stuffed animals and food, as these items are not in short supply. We would prefer clothing to be sorted before it is donated. Small and medium men's sizes are particularly welcome.

More information: www.hulpvoorvluchtelingen.nl. Opening hours and location of the collection points: www.noodopvang.stipnijmegen.nl/hoe-kunt-u-helpen. Collection point closest to the campus: HAN, Professor Molkenboerstraat 3. Student association Carolus Magnus has opened its own collection point at its Sociëteit, Hertogstraat 142. Open most weekdays from 12 noon to midnight.

Refugee Day On Monday 9 November, university language centre Radboud in'to Languages is organising a special day for refugees. Some 150 refugees are currently taking a Dutch course at Radboud in'to Languages; three-quarters of them are Syrian and have an academic background in their home country (studying or working at a university). On 9 November, all participants are invited to come and get acquainted with the centre's courses and other faculty activities that might interest them. The main idea behind this special day is to show refugees that the campus has more to offer than just language courses.

NIJMEGEN: FACTS & FIGURES

Oldest city

Nijmegen was founded more than two thousand years ago by the Romans. This makes it the oldest city in the Netherlands. That is, at least, what we say. There is another Dutch city that also claims to be the oldest in the country: Maastricht, in the southernmost tip of the Netherlands.

in Nijmegen. In an interview with Vox on the occasion of his installation into office in 2012, he explained how he copes in a left-wing city hall. "It's important to listen to each other and to keep your actions transparent". The mayor is appointed by the parliament, and the citizens elect the municipal council.

Multicultural

As of this year, Nijmegen has 170,000 inhabitants (the Netherlands counts nearly seventeen million inhabitants). One quarter of the Nijmegen population comes from an ethnic minority, and slightly more than half of this group comes from a non-Western minority. Turks constitute the largest ethnic minority.

War

In May 1940, Nijmegen was the first Dutch city to fall into German hands. The city remained unscathed for a long time, until the bombing of its centre a year before the end of World War II. Hundreds of people died and many historic buildings were razed to the ground.

Four Day Marches

The Nijmegen Four Days Marches is a world-famous event. Every year in July, this walking event attracts forty thousand participants from all over the world. Regular city life is put on hold, in particular on the last day, Friday, when the marchers are welcomed with gladioli by their family and friends. Last year, the week of festivities surrounding the march attracted 1.5 million visitors.

Havana

'Havana on the Waal' is a recurring nickname for Nijmegen. A left-wing politician, Wouter van Eck, launched the term in 2002. Later politicians tried to get rid of it, but the name stuck. It refers to Nijmegen's long-standing tradition as a left-wing city.

Mayor

The mayor of Nijmegen is called Hubert Bruls and he represents the Christian Democratic Party CDA. He studied political science



A close-up photograph of a woman and a young girl. The woman, on the right, is wearing a pink hijab and a light-colored jacket. She has a gentle smile and is looking towards the camera. The young girl, on the left, is wearing a bright pink jacket with a white fur-lined hood and a pink headband with white polka dots. She is looking slightly away from the camera with a soft expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

The first asylum seekers hoping to build a new life in the Netherlands have been in Nijmegen for a few days now at the temporary asylum seekers centre at Heumensoord. Vox introduces three of these newcomers. "Hopefully I can be reunited with my family very soon."

Text: Paul van den Broek and Mathijs Noij / Photos: Erik van 't Hullenaar

WE ARE THE
NEIGHBOUR




SUHAD SHAIKHANI (36)
FROM IRAQ:
"PEOPLE ARE VERY HELPFUL"

Following a difficult journey of almost one month, Suhad arrived in the Netherlands with her husband and daughters Fatma (10) and Asel (5). She hopes to resume her profession as a blood analyst soon.

"It is okay at Heumensoord, I just miss the washing machines and there still isn't much in the way of comfort. I hope that our procedure won't take too long. People are very helpful and we're happy about that. It is especially important that my daughters Fatma and Asel can return to school quickly. There is just too little for them to do at the moment. They are bored. If you could bring along an educational book about your country in English, I'd be very grateful. I would read it to them. And a football would also be great. They love playing football. In Baghdad, I worked in the hospital as a blood analyst and I'm hoping to resume this work here in the Netherlands. At the moment, I don't care where in the Netherlands that is. We are happy to live in any city that is safe. I don't see us returning to Iraq any time soon. A life of freedom there is still a distant dream, and that is one of the most important things in life."

**E NEWS
RS**



MOHAMMED RAMADAN (43) FROM SYRIA: "I AM WORRIED ABOUT MY FAMILY"

Mohammed, forklift driver in Damascus and father of three children, hopes to be reunited with his family as soon as possible.

"Here in this video you can see my family during better days in Damascus. My wife and three children are still there and I'm worried about them. Recently, in the town where they lived, fifty kilometres from Damascus, rockets rained down from all sides; the Syrian army, from the Iranians and from Hezbollah. My family was able to escape and now lives closer to the capital where things are somewhat safer. Once I get through the procedures here, I want to bring my family to the Netherlands as soon as possible.

I chose the Netherlands because family reunification is relatively easy here. But it will still take a lot of time; I can understand this given that so many people want to apply for asylum, including some people posing as Syrians and applying under false pretences with fake passports. I was a forklift driver at Nestlé, in a factory that now lies in ruins. I hope to work again at the same company, but I'm open to anything else that may come my way.

It was a long journey, through Turkey on a rickety boat and a far too dangerous crossing to Greece: the vessel was just over seven meters with sixty people on board. Human traffickers brought us further into Europe, through Hungary, Macedonia, Serbia, Austria, Germany and finally here. If I have to, I will stay in the Netherlands, but I would prefer to return when it's safe again. Syria is the country where I belong."



ALAA (33) FROM SYRIA: "ANYTHING BUT BEGGING"

Alaa (preferred to withhold his last name) is trying to rebuild his life in the Netherlands after four years on the run.

"Of course I miss Syria, but I had no choice other than fleeing. I lived in Damascus, the capital. We were stuck in the middle of it all: we were on the frontline with bombs coming in from all sides. I've seen

it all, after all it is war. I saw people die and knew we had to leave. I fled with my wife, three children and parents, through Turkey, Greece, the Balkans and now we have finally arrived in the Netherlands. Hopefully we can stay here. I feel safe now. I worked at a supermarket in Syria. Perhaps I can also work at a

supermarket in the Netherlands. But I would be happy to do another job. Anything but begging. People in the Netherlands are really very kind, as in the rest of Europe. The facilities at the asylum seekers center are unfortunately less than satisfactory. It stinks and we have to share rooms. That is complicated in our culture, since

women often wear headscarves which must not be removed in the presence of men. However, this does not detract from the friendliness we have experienced here. It was wonderful to see how many people welcomed us when we arrived at the center. The Dutch are very friendly people."



FIVE MYTHS ABOUT REFUGEES

“Refugees are expensive.” “We can’t handle this flood.” “These uneducated foreigners are useless.” A torrent of biased views about asylum seekers is all around us, in the media and at informal gatherings. What are the facts? Vox consulted five Radboud scholars.

Text: Paul van den Broek, Tim van Ham and Mathijs Noij / Illustrations: Emdé / Graphics: Marjolein van Diejen

MYTH #1

Europe is being flooded by refugees

Refugees are more visible than ever in Europe. They arrive in ramshackle boats, spend days and nights at a Hungarian railway station, or show up in large numbers at the German border. On top of that, the number of asylum seekers that head for Europe in 2015 will break the post-war record set in 1992. Clearly, Europe is being flooded by migrants.

Nothing of the sort, says Tineke Strik of the Centre for Migration Law. Yes, it is true that post-war Europe is facing a record number of asylum seekers, but Strik chooses to see the numbers in the right perspective. According to OECD, the organisation of affluent countries, one million asylum applications may hit the books this year. With a European Union population of 500 million, that is not an unmanageable number, is Strik’s message. “But you do need to invest in relief facilities. Europe could have expected this influx, but was caught off guard, so that people now get the impression that they are being flooded.”

The situation is the worst in refugee camps in Syria’s neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon. “These camps lack everything: food, basic amenities, education. If the European Union wants people to stay there, it will have to supply lots of

money.” The donor countries have only committed themselves to 40 percent of what is needed, and the United Nations has received only half of the money promised.

It is vitally important to relieve the pressure on Arab nations, Strik says. “This can be done by inviting the weakest – children, the elderly, the sick – to travel to Europe safely and legally. What you see happening now is that Turkey and Lebanon are closing their borders to Syrians. They can simply no longer handle the numbers.” A very threatening situation, Strik asserts. “It would be devastating if people are no longer able to flee from the violence inflicted by Assad and ISIS.”

The fact that the EU member states have reached an agreement about the distribution of refugees who are now in Southern Europe is, according to Strik, a good first step. It has become clear that the current system no longer works. “Under the Dublin Regulation, refugees could be sent back to the country where they entered the EU. That system is no longer workable since it would only increase the pressure on Southern Europe further.”



MYTH #2

The refugee problem would be solved if the borders were protected better

The external borders of Europe are protected so poorly that it is far too appealing for refugees to risk the crossing to the continent. The solution: better protection of external borders. As soon as potential refugees realise that they cannot enter Europe, they will put the dangerous crossing out of their minds.

“That’s a common misconception,” says political geographer Henk van Houtum, who heads the Nijmegen Centre for Border Research. “Firstly, it is next to impossible to rope off and guard the external borders of the entire EU. That border extends for 13,000 kilometres – so forget it. The only country succeeding in this is North Korea. And even there, people regularly manage to escape.”

Aside from that, why would you want to? Van Houtum explains: “Ninety per-

cent of the Syrians who come to the Netherlands will ultimately be granted asylum here. They are allowed to be here, so why not provide for a safe route? I plead for an EU application desk close to the countries of origin. A safe way of transport should be arranged for people who are allowed access to the EU.”

“Current policy does the opposite and constructs hurdles that encourage human traffickers. No fence will restrain a refugee; it will at most ensure that the refugee takes greater risks. In a way you could say that that the millions of euros that circulate in the border protection industry encourage human traffickers. The refugees will keep coming in anyway, so why don’t we ensure a safe crossing? Right now you can argue that people die as a direct result of European border policy.”



MYTH #3

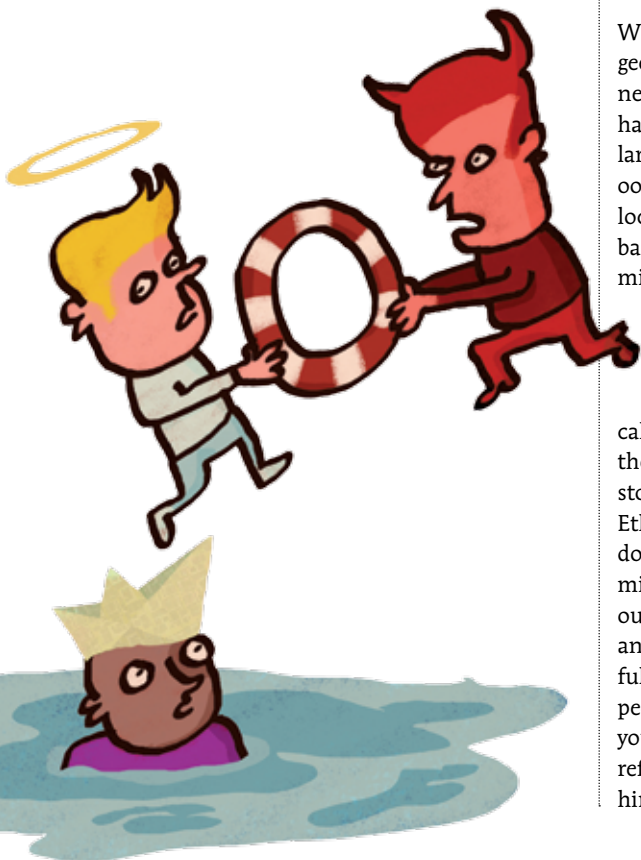
Everyone should help people in need

What is the proper way to welcome refugees? Should we all reach out to people in need? Or can we also turn our backs, as happened in Nijmegen in 1998, when a large group of refugees settled in Heumensoord, leading to discontent among many local residents? The facilities in the camp back then were even purposely kept minimal – not a problem if the tents let water through – to discourage even more refugees from coming to the Netherlands.

Have yesterday’s critics been called out for the hypocrites they are? Is there an absolute obligation, carved in stone, to help people in need? Professor of Ethics Paul van Tongeren believes that doing nothing is no option. He holds a mirror up to us, in which we can see ourselves as refugees hoping to find safety and rest in the Middle East after a dreadful journey. “You would then expect people to be ready to reach out and help you. Whoever does not reach out to refugees now grants personal rights to himself that he denies to others.”

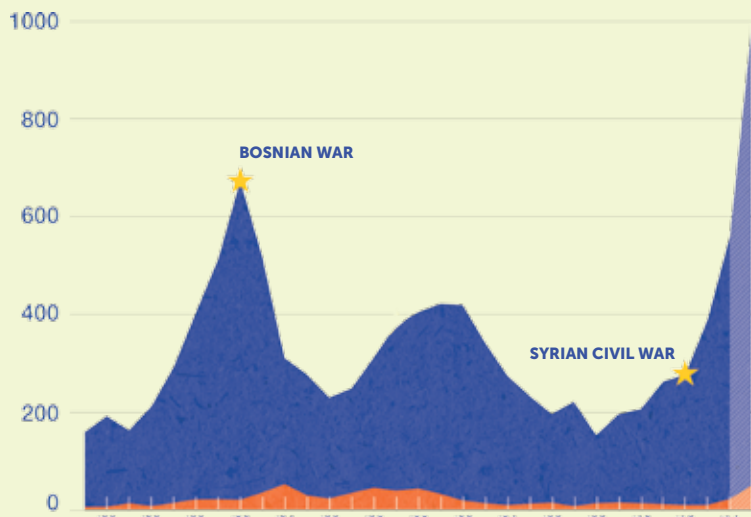
But there are exceptions to the rule: doing nothing is not by definition morally reprehensible. Van Tongeren reasons that you cannot force people to do the impossible. What is a reasonable sacrifice that we can require of ourselves? And another doubt that may be expressed: is the refugee that you want to help really in need, or is he or she acting as if? So the rule set in stone reads as follows: “We must help people who are truly in need, in so far as we are reasonably able to.”

Van Tongeren considers it important that people consider their doubts in all honesty against the actual situation. Because, before you know it, you are endlessly weighing the pros and cons in your mind while the disasters continue. “Your doubt then becomes an excuse to hide behind.” So take the plunge and provide the help that you are capable of. And that is more than a moral issue. Van Tongeren: “This is not just a moral or rational obligation, but rather a question of whether you find it in yourself to be triggered by the need of the other.”



NUMBER OF ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE NETHERLANDS (X1000)

The number of people applying for asylum in Europe was not higher following World War II than in the year 1992. In that year, millions of Bosnians fled from former Yugoslavia. This European record will be surpassed by the number of applications in 2015. According to the OECD, the number of applications might exceed a million. Do all these refugees come from Syria? Most certainly not. This group is relatively visible because it is forced to use illegal trafficking routes, but it does not represent more than a quarter of the entire group of asylum seekers. The orange part of the graph shows applications in the Netherlands.



Source graph: IND

MYTH #4

The Middle East is a small blip on the academic radar

Has every asylum seeker exchanged a land of academic sterility for a paradise of science? In the university ranking we find the first schools of higher learning in the Arab world somewhere between position 300 and 350 (Sharif University in Iran, according to Times Higher Education). Where does this academic scarcity come from, and has it always been this way?

An expert in this subject has recently become a professor at Radboud University. Maaïke van Berkel, professor of Medieval History and specialised in the Arab world, speaks enthusiastically about the academic spirit of the Abbasid caliphate, an Islamic glory period that set the tone in the Middle East in cultural and academic terms for at least five centuries from the year 750 onward. We owe it to the scholars, interpreters and translators of that time that many Greek and Roman sources were preserved, to mention just one of the merits of this caliphate.

But these Islamic scholars were much more than just conduits, according to Van Berkel. Take Aristotle, for example. His texts became known in Europe thanks to Arab philosophers. "They did not just produce literal translations but also added a lot." Old medical sources that reached Islamic scholars also bear the mark of the



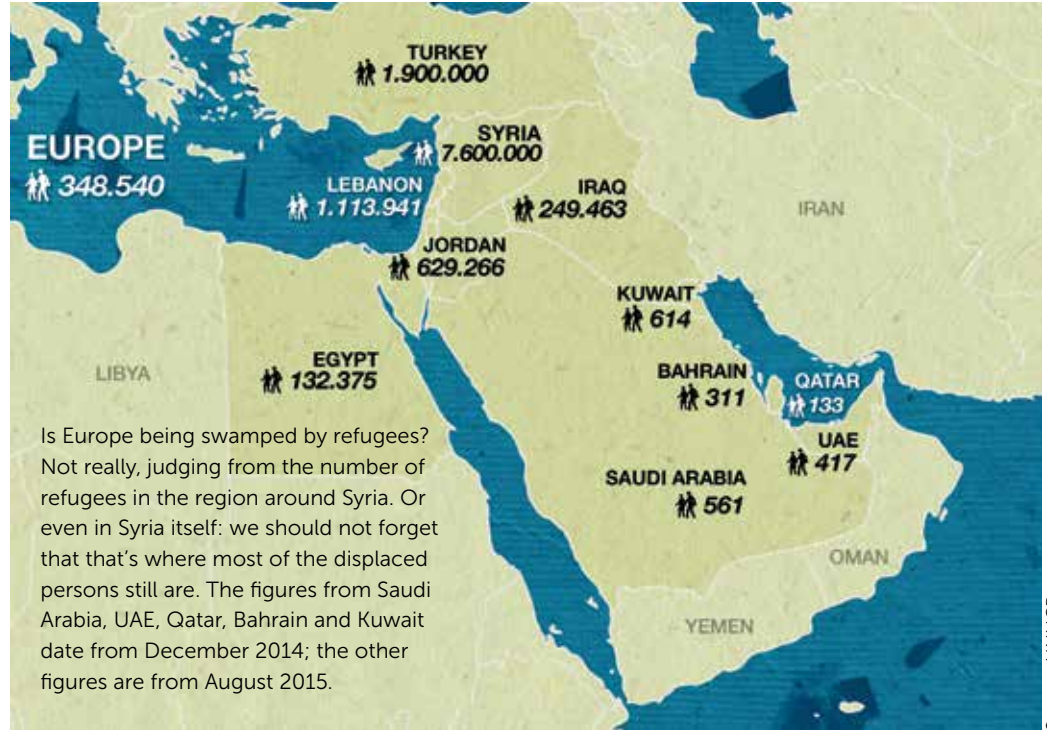
Abbasid caliphate. "These texts contain much added knowledge and were important manuals at Western schools up until the 1600s."

Nothing remains of that cultural and academic wealth in the caliphate now under construction by ISIS. Van Berkel talks of a warped interpretation that does no justice to the past and that is also opposed by many in the Arab world. "At the most important Sunni academic bastion, Al-Azhar University in Cairo, a manifest has been published that proclaims itself against the caliphate of ISIS."

Van Berkel seeks to balance the view that today's Arab world is an academic desert. She has important contacts at the American universities in Beirut and Cairo, with Lebanese and Egyptians. "Many talented people have left, especially for American universities." This, according to her, explains the current arid situation at Arab universities. Language problems also play a role, along with the fact that much of Western science follows the Anglo-Saxon approach. As a result, the qualities present are poorly visible. "But they definitely exist, and we should not be surprised if a historian arrives at Heumensoord who has authored worthwhile publications."



ASYLUM IN THE ARABIC REGION



Source: UNHCR



MYTH #5

A difficult civic integration test leads to better integration of newcomers

Refugees who want to stay in the Netherlands will have to undergo it at some point: the integration examination. Since 2007, newcomers need to demonstrate they have sufficient knowledge of Dutch language and society by means of this examination, within three years after receiving a temporary residence permit. Why? So that they integrate better in the community at large.

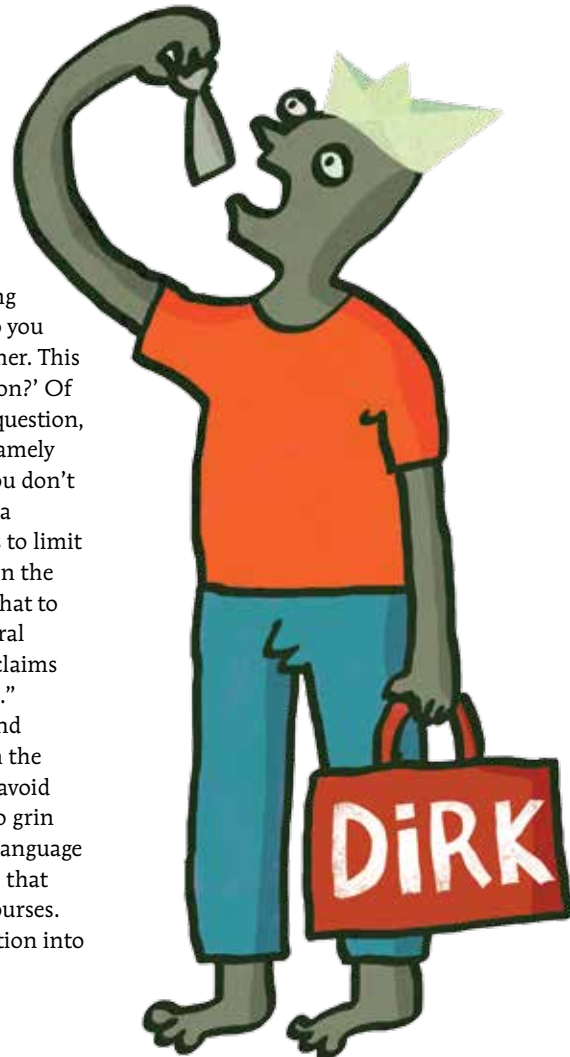
“Still, the test in many cases does not contribute to integration,” according to legal expert Ricky van Oers. “My research shows that the test leads to selection. Immigrants with a certain intellectual capacity will pass the test, while others, who are not used to studying and taking exams, will fail. Or they don’t even try.” People who fail the test do not get a permanent residence permit or will not be entitled to Dutch citizenship. If return to the country of origin is no option, as is the case with Syrian war refugees, then the refugee is fined.

The goal of integration, which the test was originally intended for, is not achieved at all. On the contrary, Van Oers says. “Putting up barriers condemns people to a temporary residence status and the

accompanying uncertainty. A solid residence status would instead contribute to integration.”

Aside from this, Van Oers criticises the content of the civic integration test. “Take the following question: ‘A gay couple sits next to you in a sidewalk café, kissing each other. This bothers you. What is the best option?’ Of the three possible answers to this question, only one is judged to be correct, namely ‘you remain seated and pretend you don’t mind.’ The test thereby prescribes a specific social norm and thus tries to limit candidates in their freedom, within the boundaries of the law, to decide what to do for themselves. However, a liberal country such as the Netherlands claims to be should not aim for this at all.”

What does Van Oers recommend to refugees who currently arrive in the Netherlands? “There is no way to avoid the test if you want to stay here. So grin and bear it. And benefit from the language skills and from the social contacts that you gain during the integration courses. Because they do stimulate integration into Dutch society.”



POEM

By Qader Shafiq

Allochtonie

Toen ik vijf jaar was
wilde ik graag maatjes hebben, buiten spelen
Niemand wilde met mij spelen
Ze sloegen mij, ze scholden mij uit,
want mijn moeder droeg geen sluier
Maar ik was trots op mijn moeder

Als leergierige van tien jaar
die de wereld wilde verkennen, begrijpen en
nieuwe mensen leren kennen,
werd ik gewantrouwd en genegeerd
Ik was een zuiderling en niet welkom in het Noorden
Toch ging ik door tot het Noorden mij begreep

Als vijftienjarige,
die bekend was met het dwaas gelijk van Noord en Zuid,
gezichten van de dragers van de heilige maskers en
de wortels van mensenwurgend onrecht,
kreeg ik stelselmatig klappen op mijn kop
Geen blad kon mijn rebelse mond bedekken
Ik gaf niet op

Als twintiger,
die een menswaardige vrijheid nastreefde,
werd ik vertrapt net als een grashalm onder een geweldslaars
Ze smoorden mijn mond, vermoordden mijn dierbaren
en bezorgden mij de vernedering van de vlucht
Ik was graag een doorn in de ogen van despoten

Op mijn vijftwintigste,
stond ik met een dienblad in de lange rij
van blanke, gele en zwarte asielzoekers,
die als onzekere ontwortelden op elkaar leken
Hier maakte ik kennis met de keuken van gulle Polderlanders
Het leven van de vrijheid smaakte toch beter

Nu ik grijze haren krijg
Verlang ik met opgewektheid
van een kind,
naar een morgen van bevrijding

Misfit Migrant

When I was five,
I wanted to have pals, to play outside
No-one wanted to play with me
They hit me, they called me names
because my mother didn't wear a veil
But I was proud of my mother

When I was ten, I was keen to learn
to explore the world, to understand things and
meet new people,
no-one trusted me, I was ignored
I was a loner and not welcome in the North
And yet I persisted until the people in the North understood me

When I was fifteen,
I understood the crazy ethnocentrism of North and South
The faces of those who wore the holy masks, and
the roots of devastating human injustice,
I received constant blows to the head
Nothing could quiet my rebellious voice
I didn't give up

When I was twenty,
and in search of a humane sort of freedom
I was stamped upon like a blade of grass under a callous boot
They smothered my mouth, murdered my loved ones
and caused me the humiliation of having to flee
I was happy being a thorn in the side of the despots

When I was twenty-five,
I stood with a tray in the long queue of
white, yellow and black asylum seekers,
all looking equally insecure and uprooted
There I tasted the fruit of the generous Polder Folk
A free life tastes sweeter

And now that my hair is greying,
I long with the cheerfulness
of a child,
for a freedom-filled tomorrow

DISCOVER NIJMEGEN

Nijmegen is not a large city, but it has lots of parks. It takes 15 minutes by bus to the city centre from Heumensoord. Whether you want to explore the city, are looking for a place of worship, wish to wander through the market or just have a day out, the Vox editors have some tips for you.

Illustration: Roel Venderbosch

 OPEN-AIR HOTSPOTS

 FOREIGN SUPERMARKET

 CHURCH

 MOSQUE

 PUBLIC LIBRARY

 HEMA (MOST FAMOUS DEPARTMENT STORE OF THE NETHERLANDS): GROTE MARKT 5

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 ABU BAKR MOSKEE (MAINLY FOR THE MOROCCAN COMMUNITY): PASTOOR ZEGERSSTRAAT 75

 AL MOSLIMIN-MOSKEE (MANY MOROCCAN VISITORS): KLIMOPSTRAAT 15

 BOSKAPEL (OECUMENICAL): GRAAFSEWEG 276

 ISLAMIC BUTCHERS WILLEMSWEG

 TURKISH SUPERMARKETS WILLEMSWEG

 PATOSAS (AFRICAN FOOD AND SPICES): GROENESTRAAT 247

 EYUP SULTAN CAMII MOSKEE (MAINLY FOR THE TURKISH COMMUNITY): VONDELSTRAAT 11

GOFFERT PARK

2


8






 WAAL BEACHES

 DE KAAIJ
(ONLY IN SUMMER)


 ST. STEVENSKERK (LARGEST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL CHURCH
IN NIJMEGEN, OECUMENICAL) SINT STEVENSKERKHOF 62

 KRONENBURGER PARK

 BIBLIOTHEEK DE MARIËNBURG
(FREE WIFI) MARIËNBURG 29

 ANUSHKA (ARMENIAN AND RUSSIAN FOOD AND SPICES)
VAN 'T SANTSTRAAT 169

 BAKKERIJ BEREKET (TURKISH BAKERY)
DAALSEWEG 230

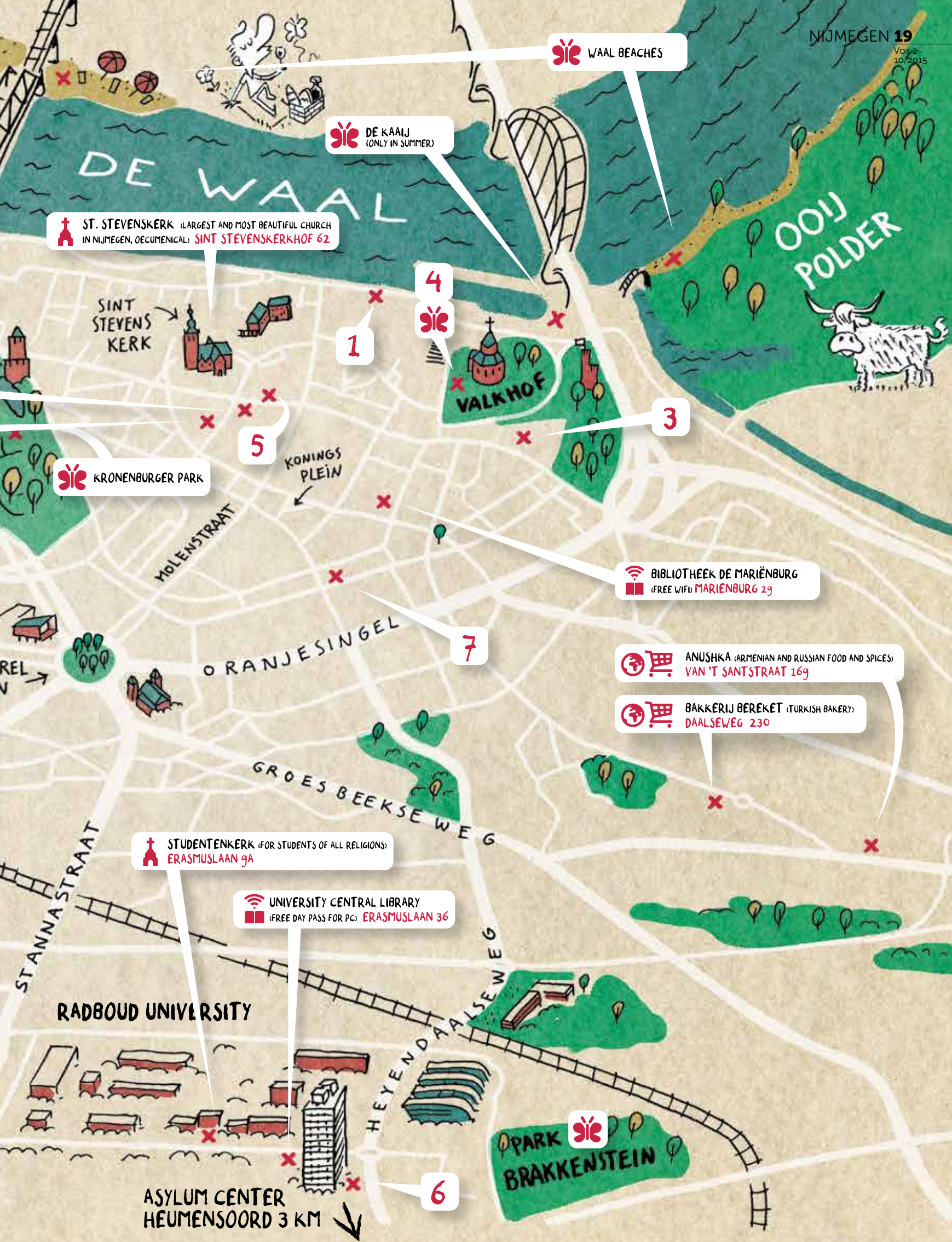
 STUDENTENKERK (FOR STUDENTS OF ALL RELIGIONS)
ERASMUSLAAN 9A

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RADBOUD UNIVERSITY

ASYLUM CENTER
HEUMENSOORD 3 KM

 PARK
BRAKKENSTEIN



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4

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6

TIPS



1 Waalkade

The Netherlands is a country of rivers. The river flowing through Nijmegen is the Waal, an important river leading to the Port of Rotterdam. From the city centre it is only a short walk to the Waalkade, where you can admire the river and the Nijmegen bridges.

Every year on 14 November 'Sinterklaas' lands with his ship on the Nijmegen Waalkade. Sinterklaas is the Dutch version of Santa Claus: an old man with a long beard, wearing a mitre and often surrounded by his black or colourful Piet helpers. They distribute pepernoten (small gingerbread cookies) and other sweets. On 5 December, many Dutch families celebrate Sinterklaas' birthday and children receive gifts. According to the legend, the next day Sinterklaas leaves again for his home in Spain.

2 Piano at Central Station Stationsplein

At Nijmegen Central Station, there is a piano that anyone can play if they feel like it. While trains arrive and depart, people make music together. Not a good singer or pianist? Then you are sure to find someone to chat with.

Market on Mondays

3 Kelfkensbos

Do you feel like wandering through stalls selling fish, Dutch cheeses or novelties? The centre of Nijmegen is home to a number of markets. For example, you can buy vegetables on Mondays from 9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m. At the same time there is also a flea market around St. Steven's Church.

4 View from the Valkhof

A few minutes' walk from the major shopping streets you will find the Valkhof, a city park with a beautiful view over the Waal. Here you can admire the remnants of a twelfth century palace as well as the inside of the renovated St. Nicholas Chapel.



5 Grote Markt Grote Markt

The cafés on the Grote Markt are full pretty much all the time. Full of people with shopping bags in the afternoons, and full of partygoers at night. The various specialty beers and affordable student meals are particularly popular.

6 20th floor of Erasmus building Heyendaalseweg

The highest building of Nijmegen can be found on the university campus, not far from Heumensoord. Take the lift to the twentieth floor and enjoy the view from this specially designed observation point. Try to look as far as Germany.

STUDENT CHAPLAINCY



The Student Chaplaincy includes a *mesjid* where Muslim students and staff can pray. On Sundays

at 5 pm, there is a Christian Eucharist service for students and staff. A Taizé prayer service is held every Wednesday from 12.30 pm to 1.30 pm. Everyone is welcome to join these worship services.

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 9 am to 5 pm; Friday 10 am to 3 pm

CITY CENTRE

In May 1940, Nijmegen was the first Dutch city to fall into German hands. The city remained unscathed for a long time, until the bombing of its centre a year before the end of World War II. Hundreds of people died and many historic buildings were razed to the ground. Traces of that devastation are still visible in the city centre; the historical building De Waagh on the Grote Markt opposite the HEMA store, for example, and the contrasting post-war V&D department store building.

7 Eetcafé de Klinker Van Broeckhuysenstraat 4

This meeting place is located in Grote Broek, a former squat and breeding ground for cultural and leftist political ideas. Come on Wednesday night, starting from 6.30 p.m., and enjoy a meal at the soup café in exchange for a voluntary contribution!



8 Petting zoo at De Goffert Slotemaker de Bruineweg 268

Fun for children! The Goffert Park is home to a petting zoo with goats, deer, chickens and other animals. The lawns of the Goffert Park are perfect for a walk, or a game of football or tag. The Goffert Stadium is home to the local football club, NEC.

SENSOR

HAN UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES | SPECIAL REFUGEE EDITION



REFUGEE IN TOUR DE FRANCE?

Many students and inhabitants of Nijmegen are helping by collecting relief goods for refugees. Gudo Kramer, employee of the HAN sports academy, is contributing in his own particular way: he created a cycling team for talented refugees. This will help them integrate in Dutch society and maybe even earn some money. Kramer: 'This way young talented refugees are able to meet people who share the same passion.' Therefore he is looking for athletic refugees with talent for cycling. And if all goes well, maybe in a few years the first 'Dutch' refugee will be peddling among the professionals. Kramer: 'It would be nice if eventually one or two riders were racing in the Tour de France!' **SA**

More information: www.marcopolocyclingteam.com

HAN UNIVERSITY READY FOR REFUGEES

Students and staff of the HAN University of Applied Sciences help refugees with sports, music and good conversations.

After the large groups of refugees started to arrive and camps were built in Nijmegen (Heumensoord) en Arnhem (Koepel), several initiatives to help the refugees were organized at the HAN-schools. The HAN worked with the university and together they contacted mayors in the region. Now they are communicating with the COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers) and UAF (Organisation for Study and Work support for highly educated Refugees).

At the HAN, Sabine Maresch is the central organizer for refugee affairs. The policy officer for international affairs works together with the Radboud University, COA, and the city government. 'We try to stand together and help. We also collaborate with citizen initiatives in neighbourhoods and at high schools. At this point we don't know exactly what the city and the COA need. The HAN will listen carefully to their demands, but even they don't know how long people will stay in Nijmegen or Arnhem. Will we host single men, families, others?'

Sabine Maresch: 'The HAN will offer music and sports activities. A lot of Nursing and Social Work students want to contribute and help. Not in teaching Dutch, but with 'meet and greet' projects, where we help people get settled in our city and society.' RJ



Photo: Annemieke Zaat

EX-REFUGEES HELPING REFUGEES

HAN-students Naireh and Helan, children of refugees, support residents in welcoming 100 Eritrean youths in Lent.

How do you react when 100 Eritrean boys with a permanent status come and live in your neighbourhood? Will it be a welcoming reception or a suspicious look? Second-year HAN students are going to film how Lentse residents react to the arrival of newcomers. Naireh Naseri (right on picture) and Helan Ali (left) are both Social Work students with parents who have fled from Iraq and Iran respectively.

'I was four when I came to the Netherlands. My parents were political refugees, my father had even been detained, they were in danger and had to leave. But I personally don't remember anything about it,' says Naireh Naseri. Helan Ali's parents have fled from Iraq; Helan was born in the Netherlands. They both feel very involved in their project and in the entire refugee debate, which is currently dominating the media.

Naireh: 'What frustrates me is that refugees are often better educated than the people who say that they are only gold diggers.' Helan nods: 'My mother studied social sciences at a university in Iran. In Holland she studied Social Educational Care at the HAN. Refugees add something to the Netherlands.'

Helan and Naireh are planning to make short films of the dreams and talents of the Eritrean boys as well as of local residents, both active and inactive. 'We also want to film people who have problems with refugees and ask them how they feel and think about it.'

When asked if they benefit from their experience as children of refugee parents, Naireh confirms: 'I know that refugees often do not show what their really feel and think. Anything you tell can be used against you; that is the greatest fear.' RK

NOT SAFE IN YOUR OWN HOME

Two years ago Ilona Shemuon (31) escaped her home country Syria together with her husband and first son. In Holland, her second son was born. This academic year she started a part-time course in economics at HAN University of Applied Sciences.

‘In Syria you are not safe in your own home. Life was hard. It got worse day by day.

A car might explode anywhere and at any time. From the moment we decided to leave we knew that we wanted to go to the Netherlands. My husband heard the Dutch Foreign Minister say that we would be safe in Holland.’

‘After our escape we were stuck in Turkey for months. The Dutch embassy told us that we could only apply for asylum in Holland. So we continued our journey to the Netherlands. At the time I was pregnant with our second child.’

‘When we finally arrived we were immediately taken to a refugee centre in Ter Apel, in the north. There were a lot of police officers, just like in Syria, but my husband told me not to worry. The Dutch police were not dangerous. After that everything went great. People helped us with all kinds of procedures. Within twenty days we had a residence permit. After that we moved to another refugee centre in Schalkhaar, near Deventer, where our second son was born.’

‘Since November 2014 we have lived in Millingen aan de Rijn. From the moment we arrived in Holland we decided to continue studying. That is why we decided to find a place close to a university. We succeeded in that. And now we have a house with a garden. We furnished the house with second hand stuff. Hooray for Marktplaats.’

‘At the University I took four classes in Dutch, my best spent Euros ever! We receive money from the UWV and UAF to cover travelling expenses, tuition fees and books, partially as a loan. They also helped us find the right education.

In September I started Business Economics at the HAN University of Applied Sciences.

I studied a similar course in Syria. Let’s just wait and see how things will go language-wise. I am sure we will settle down in our village. We already know people in the neighborhood and we are getting to know the parents of our sons’ friends.

It is hard to put into words how grateful I am. I am surprised by this active community. That is one of the benefits of this free country. Later, we are going to contribute ourselves. I am really happy with this safe place and with all the help we have received.’ RJ





Photo: RS

‘THEY AREN’T ALONE IN THEIR STRUGGLE, WE ARE HERE FOR THEM’

Warm sweaters, comfortable boots and lots of toys: many residents of Nijmegen have donated clothes and goods to help the refugees in Camp Heumensoord. Students of the HAN University of Applied Sciences have initiated a collection.

Bas van Lonckhuijzen (19) is one of those students. He studies Social Work & Services, so organizing a campaign to help the refugees was almost an automatic response to the crisis. ‘One morning I sat down with fellow students and decided to start collecting goods. We initially asked students of the HAN to donate, but once word got out through the internet (Facebook) and even national radio, it spread like wildfire. People from around the neighbourhood started flooding in with bags of clothes, shoes and other items. It’s been heartwarming and wonderful to see the community give. They badly want to help, and care about our fellow human beings. The refugees have been through so much, and own next to nothing. We want to make them feel welcome and looked after.’

The church next door to the school has offered its storage space to keep up the flow of donations. ‘We are starting to run out of room to pile up all the bags that are brought in’, explains Bas. ‘The pastor came in one day and offered to help. A generous and compassionate gesture.’ Bas hopes the donated items will be useful to the refugees. ‘Winter is coming, so the many sweaters we collected will come in handy. We also plan to visit them soon, and see if there is anything else we can do. We just hope they know they aren’t alone in their struggle. We are here for them.’

The Red Cross co-ordinates the collection of goods, collected by HAN-students, and takes care of distribution in Camp Heumensoord and other places. OH

INFORMATION FOR REFUGEES

A lot of refugees are highly educated in their original country. Unfortunately their diploma isn’t always valid in Holland. Here the EP-NUFFIC looks at internationalization of education and the value of diplomas.

www.nuffic.nl, The Hague, 070 4260 260

Refugee students in the Netherlands get assistance and financial support from the UAF, the Union of Refugee Students. At the HAN, 23 students are enrolled in this programme. Like other students they can get scholarships or study loans from the government, although in the Netherlands 44 per cent of them are too old for study loans. The UAF can give extra support with gifts, loans for college fees, language courses, books, computer and travelling arrangements.

In 2015 around 19 Syrians started as students in Holland, including 2 at the HAN University of Applied Sciences; last year 42 per cent of all international UAF-students were Syrian. This percentage is growing quickly.

www.UAF.nl, Utrecht, 030-252 08 35

In Nijmegen at the HAN we have special facilities for all students: student societies and sport clubs. There is also a student church and a muslim student society.

Every student has a personal mentor for study and career planning. Student psychologists help with mental problems.

HAN (University of applied sciences in Arnhem and Nijmegen)

Office for international students,
Kapittelweg 33

Nijmegen, tel. 024-353 05 00

SENSOR is the independent biweekly magazine of HAN University of Applied Sciences. The magazine is free for all students and employees.

Contact: sensor@han.nl
www.sensor-magazine.nl

The asylum seeker's route in the Netherlands

An asylum seeker applies for asylum because of the (personal) situation in his/her country of origin. An asylum seeker is eligible for a residence permit if he or she fears persecution or inhuman treatment in his/her own country. This assessment is made in the procedure outlined below.

Application and registration

The asylum seeker has to report at the Aliens Police (Foreign Nationals Identity and Human Trafficking Department (AVIM)). The asylum seeker's identity is then established on the basis of documents and information. The asylum seeker signs the application for asylum at the application centre and is interviewed about his/her reasons for application by the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND).

General Asylum Procedure

The asylum seeker goes through the general asylum procedure at the IND. This procedure takes max. 8 days. In this procedure the asylum seeker gives his/her account and the application is assessed by the IND.

Extended asylum procedure

Sometimes 8 days are not enough for this procedure, because more time for investigation is required. In that case the asylum seeker proceeds to the extended asylum procedure.

Decision to grant the application

In the event of a positive decision, the asylum seeker gets a temporary 5 year residence permit. Amongst other things, the permit includes rights and duties regarding housing and civic integration.

Decision

The asylum seeker is informed by the IND whether he/she qualifies for a residence permit or not. In consultation with his/her lawyer the asylum seeker can decide to appeal this decision.

Rejection

In the event of a negative decision, the asylum seeker must leave the Netherlands. The Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V) supports him/her in returning to his/her country of origin.

Rest and preparation time

The asylum seeker is given shelter, which is arranged by the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA). The asylum seeker is also assisted by a lawyer and is medically examined. The IND also plans the asylum procedure.

Source: IND, Communication Department

"Why do we have to wait so long?"

"Questioning looks from people in slippers who are cold and have little money left. People who do not understand why they have to wait so long for their asylum procedure to start and who have to subsist on a sober bed-bath-and-bread allowance. This is what we see in the emergency shelters filled with asylum seekers," says IND information officer Carolien. The IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) visits groups of refugees to offer explanations for the waiting period.

Carolien: "On 27 August, we started giving information briefings in the IJsselhallen in Zwolle. We give four to six briefings a day. There is always an interpreter to translate what we say on the spot. This works well. Every briefing is different, but there are some recurring questions. For example, people want to know what documents are required for the asylum procedure and what family members they can bring to the Netherlands when. We also hear questions such as 'How can it be that someone who arrived at the shelter later nevertheless starts the asylum procedure earlier?' We try to answer these and other questions. Sometimes people find them

difficult to grasp: 'Why do I first have to wait until I get a residence permit before I can start the procedure to bring my family over?'"

More briefings

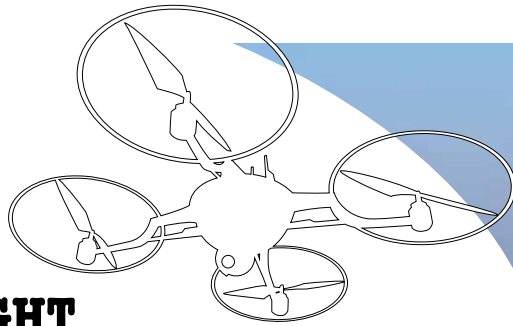
"We can see how useful these briefings are," says Carolien. "But we also realise that the message we bring is not particularly good news. The asylum seekers expected to have a clear answer to their request for asylum within eight days, which corresponds to the duration of the General Asylum Procedure. But the waiting period between the arrival of an asylum seeker and the start of the asylum procedure has by now lengthened to four or five months. The information we provide does give asylum seekers a realistic perspective on their situation. You can see that it gets them thinking and calculating. 'What does this mean for me and my family?' 'Do I have enough money to make it through the waiting period?' This makes it possible for them to decide what to do. Some return to a location they were in earlier; others remain and wait.

Our priority is to make sure that we shorten the waiting period. This is where we focus all our efforts."

How is the asylum procedure managed in the Netherlands? In the book *Een uit Duizenden (One in a million)*, the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND), the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) and the Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V) provide a unique insight in the process. Download the free publication at www.ind.nl.

Een uit duizenden





DRONE FLIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHER GERARD VERSCHOOTEN LOOKS AT NIJMEGEN FROM THE SKY. VOX EXPLAINS WHAT HE SEES.

An aerial view of the emergency accommodation as it is being built. Every year, in July, the Heumensoord nature reserve witnesses another village rise from wood and plastic. It houses soldiers taking part in the Nijmegen Four Days Marches, a world famous multi-day long distance walking event. Around forty thousand people walk in and around the city for four days in succession. On the last day, Friday, spectators hand out gladioli to the participants. In 2016, the Marches will take place for the hundredth time. The grey tower in the upper right corner of the photograph is the Erasmus building on the university campus.





WORRY ABOUT SURVIVING FIRST, THEN WORRY ABOUT STUDYING

Getting used to a new country, making sure your memories don't drive you mad. Starting a degree programme or a new job at a university is not easy for a refugee. Two refugee-students with first-hand experience tell their stories. And a social scientist from Yemen, now appointed at Radboud University, has a message for the asylum seekers at Heumensoord. "Become agents of change."

Text: Paul van den Broek, Annemarie Haverkamp and Martine Zuidweg

STUDYING WITH HELP FROM THE UAF

The Foundation for Refugee Students UAF supports and offers counsel to highly skilled refugees. We advise refugees about their choice of study programme and counsel them while they are studying and looking for a job. We offer limited financial support for their studies (like tuition fees, language courses, books, computers and travel expenses). The UAF is an independent non-profit organisation

financed by gifts and funds. In order to be able to study in the Netherlands, you first have to master the Dutch language. If you are granted a residence permit, you can take a language course using a loan from the Education Implementation Service (DUO). If you like to find out where you can take a good Dutch class, the UAF will provide advice about language courses in your

area. Call our Admission Office (030-2041504) or send an email to taal@uaf.nl stating your name, address and telephone number. One of our colleagues will then contact you. You will be given advice so that you can start a language course well-prepared. If you would like to study with UAF aid, check our website for the terms and conditions: www.uaf.nl/home/english



NICKY KERIMOVA (24): “SECURE YOUR FUTURE!”

Kerimova comes from Azerbaijan. She is a physician training to be a specialist.

Whenever Nicky Kerimova sees images of refugees adrift on TV or the internet, she looks away as quickly as possible. She knows that otherwise she will spend the entire night in tears. Again.

It has been more than ten years since she fled to the Netherlands from Azerbaijan with her father, mother and younger sister. Her situation was different from that of today’s refugees: her country of origin was facing political problems, not a war, and she did not arrive on foot. But she does remember all too well how it feels to leave your home and arrive in a strange new country: panic, anger, sadness.

The young Kerimova – she was twelve at the time – did adjust quickly and this is what helped her through the first, uncertain period. “I wanted to go to school, but I found the Dutch language incredibly difficult. I remember using comic books – Jan, Jansen de kinderen – and a dictionary to start building a vocabulary for myself.” And then there were all those outspoken Dutch children, who really ‘had their hearts on their sleeves’. Kerimova was not used to this.

As the oldest child in the family, and the first one to master the Dutch language, she was required to consider and discuss matters that children are usually spared from. There was for instance the time when deportation loomed and her family could not remain at the asylum seekers centre. “I had to find a new place for us to live, so I just started to randomly email and telephone people. That is a responsibility you would rather not have as a teenager.”

She has now been in the Netherlands for twelve years, half of her life. It was only two years ago that her family was told that they could stay in the Netherlands. It’s really kind of impossible, she says, to study when you could be deported any moment. Her strategy was to keep moving forward and to do her best. And it worked: she is now halfway through medical school.

Her advice to asylum seekers is to do as she did: resume their normal lives as soon as possible. “Learn to speak Dutch. Don’t let yourself be affected too much by the insecurity of whether you will be allowed to stay or not. It will drive you crazy! You shouldn’t put your life on hold, but instead start working now to secure your future.”

KON KELEI, FROM CHILD SOLDIER TO LAWYER

Kon Kelei is one of the most famous refugee students at Radboud University. At the age of four he was drafted into the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). In 2000 Kelei fled to the Netherlands. Ten years later he graduated cum laude in International and European Law at Radboud University. He was 26 years old.

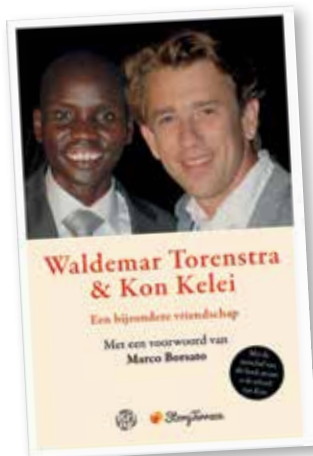
"This diploma brings my dreams a step closer," he said at the time in an interview with *Vox*. "I've always dreamt big."

From the moment he arrived in the Netherlands, Kelei wanted to do something for his country of origin. He thought he would achieve most by studying medicine, because Sudan only has one doctor per 100,000 inhabitants. "But after the asylum procedure had taken what felt like forever, I couldn't take on such a lengthy programme. I decided to study law instead. I am now a lawyer, a title that makes it possible for me to realise my dream of making a difference in Sudan."

In the Netherlands, he established the Cuy Machar Secondary School Foundation (CMSF), which is currently building a secondary school in Sudan. "Education is our weapon against ignorance and, by extension, against war and suffering. My personal success forces me to remain involved with this foundation. If I stopped, it would feel like joining the ranks of the Sudanese elite who try to dumb the people down. It would mean once again betraying the boys I left behind when I fled Sudan." This is how Kon Kelei experienced his escape, as a betrayal. By leaving, he left the other boys to their fate. Kelei wants to settle this debt by doing something for his country. He also acted as spokesperson for War Child, a foundation helping children who are victims of war.

After his studies, Kelei went back to South Sudan, which has been an independent country since 2011. Having taught at the university for some time, he now works for the Ministry of Information. He has a wife and two children. A tribal war is currently raging in South Sudan.

*In early October, the book *Een bijzondere vriendschap* ('A Remarkable Friendship') will appear, about the friendship between Kon Kelei and the Dutch actor Waldemar Torenstra. Half of the proceeds from the book will go to the Cuy Machar Secondary School Foundation.*



SAWSAN MAHER (31): "KEEP YOURSELF BUSY"

Sawsan is from Syria and has been studying in Nijmegen since 2010.

When Sawsan Maher came to Nijmegen in 2010 as a philosophy student, she had to explain to people where Syria was. That is no longer necessary. Over the last few years, Maher has travelled to Turkey several times in order to teach Syrian child refugees or help them put on a theatre performance. She wants to do something. "If you ask children in the refugee camps to draw a house, they draw a tent or a tree, or they just make something up." Now the refugees are coming to Europe, and even to Nijmegen. That makes sense, she says. The hope that refugees in camps in Turkey or else-

where once had of the war ending and their being able to return home is now gone. Moreover, living conditions in the camps are poor.

"I was in Turkey last winter. I strongly urged the people not to cross the sea in boats. But when all is said and done, what's the alternative?" There is none, not even in the European Union. Europe does not have a clear strategy, Maher says. "What is the policy for current refugees? What is the long-term asylum policy? Everyone's doing what they can, but there's no structure." Maher came to the Netherlands to study; she was curious about the world. It was in Nijmegen in early 2011 that she first heard about the Syrian uprising. The protests against Assad

had already begun. Syrian students in Europe formed a united front and tried to help the insurgents from a distance. This was how Maher became personally involved in the conflict. To cut a long and horrific story short, she ended up in a Syrian prison where she was tortured. She was eventually freed and was able to flee back to Europe. In 2012, she requested asylum in the Netherlands and in 2014 she was granted a residence permit. Despite the psychological and physical damage she endured during her imprisonment, she is now trying to get on with her degree programme at Radboud University. She has recently taken two young Syrian asylum seekers into her home. They are learning

Moosa Elayah has been away from his homeland Yemen for six years now.

There is extreme poverty in Yemen. "People are dying of hunger, and from bombings," says Elayah. Fleeing the country is almost impossible, with the sea on one side and the impenetrable borders of Saudi Arabia on the other. If the country wasn't such a prison, thousands of asylum seekers would also be making their way to Europe from Yemen. Elayah has been working at Radboud University for a year now, conducting research into the effectiveness of western development policy, or, to put it more precisely, ineffectiveness. This is not caused by any lack of funding that western governments and aid organisations are sending to Arabic and African countries. Yemen alone has been able to

add four billion dollars to its economy since the 1950s. Elayah himself can hardly believe it: so much money, yet still so much poverty. Where's it going wrong? In a constant stream of publications, Elayah has put his finger on the problem: western policymakers are affiliated with the very institutions that are sustaining the poverty. "Time and again, corrupt leaders and dictators are in a position to misuse the aid." In his

view, the aid policy itself is one of the causes of the growing asylum flows. It is not that the Dutch government is not doing anything; dozens of aid concepts have emerged over the last few decades. But it only grants money to governments that promote privatisation, 'good governance' or social equality, and then it's women's emancipation that is high on the western aid agendas, or youth issues, or decentralisation. The

jargon changes, but not the effectiveness, Elayah explains in his analysis. "Here, what we understand by 'good governance' is not the same as breaking down the structures that maintain poverty. And privatisation in Yemen has in fact encouraged corruption." He thinks that western policy should stimulate social change and get involved with more informal, local initiatives. In the future, should this work, fewer people would have

to flee their countries in search of what the governments are currently failing to provide: safety, food and a roof over their heads. Elayah hopes that as well as being victims of failing governments, the asylum seekers at Heumensoord will also become 'agents of change'. "Their time here will perhaps give them the opportunity to examine the structures in this world that perpetuate the misery in our countries."

MOOSA ELAYAH: "BECOME AGENTS OF CHANGE"

Dutch so that they, in time, can also study in the Netherlands. "It's great that we can live together, not only for them but for me too," she says. She encourages new asylum seekers arriving in Nijmegen to be patient. "Be glad you're still alive and don't expect miracles." She has another piece of advice: "Keep yourself busy. Get on with some drawing or handicrafts." Anything to prevent your traumatised mind from running away with you. She hopes that the refugees' asylum requests are dealt with thoroughly, and that war criminals do not get a foothold here. The fear of meeting one of her torturers face to face in the Netherlands is something that keeps Maher awake at night.



Photo: Duncan de Fey



EINSTEINS



ON THE RUN

The academic community has a long history of solidarity when it comes to helping refugee scientists. And this has brought our society great riches: from penicillin to the literature of Thomas Mann, and from modern computers to the scientific methods of Karl Popper.

Text: Tim van Ham / Photos: Hollandse Hoogte

In the autumn of 1933, an agitated Albert Einstein ascended to the pulpit of a packed Royal Albert Hall in London. The scientist was worried and came to express his concern at the first large-scale meeting of the recently established Academic Assistance Council – an organisation for helping scientists in Nazi Germany.

The help was badly needed. Six months earlier, despite his already growing world fame, even Einstein himself had stopped feeling safe. Adolf Hitler had come to power and Einstein's Jewish background had made scientific activity of any kind impossible. Einstein was not the only one – all of the country's Jewish researchers found themselves out of work.

This troubled the Nobel Prize winner. The ten thousand people present in the Royal Albert Hall that day heard an eloquent plea for the necessity of academic freedom and rewarded Einstein with a standing ovation. Einstein and his speech contributed in no small measure to the later success of the Academic Assistance Council (AAC). In its first years, this institute would find new accommodation for 1,500 scientists who were at risk in Germany. Sixteen of them would go on to win a Nobel Prize in their new country of residence. The AAC also gave a scientific boost to the allied armies, which ultimately led to their victory.

Private funds

This was preceded by a long period of painstaking lobbying and politics, however. The 1930s were a time of global economic crises and researchers at British universities were afraid of losing their jobs. 'Why would we allow all

Walter Kohn Nobel Prize Winner against all odds

In 1998, Walter Kohn was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his work on the density-functional theory. No one could have deserved this prize more than Kohn – and not only because of his academic achievements. He seemed to have been born for misfortune, but managed, despite an incredible portion of bad luck and suffering, to make his way to the academic top.

The misery began in 1933, when young Walter was ten years old and still lived in his hometown of Vienna. In that year, Hitler came to power in neighbouring Germany. The Jewish Kohn family owned an art shop and suffered tremendously from the increasingly intensifying antisemitism. The situation came to a head on the Crystal Night in 1938 when the shop was completely destroyed by rioting vandals. This made Walter's parents look for ways to get their son out of the country. They succeeded in the spring of 1939, and the 15-year old boy was smuggled via the Netherlands to England through the so-called Kindertransport. His parents were unable to join him – they were

REFUGEE RESEARCHERS AT RADBOLD UNIVERSITY

Radboud University in Nijmegen also hosted refugee researchers in the past. One example is **Benedek Elemér Vidos**. In 1940, this Jewish Hungarian was working as professor of Romance Linguistics at Radboud University when on the orders of the German occupiers all Jewish researchers were fired. Vidos ended up on the street and moved back to Hungary. Throughout the war, Radboud University

continued to pay his monthly salary – this was not allowed by the German occupiers – and when peace came, Vidos was immediately reinstated.

Another, more recent example is that of **Béla Vitányi**. In 1956 he was appointed professor at the University of Pécs in Hungary. In the summer of 1959, he fled 'for personal reasons' to the Netherlands. The Stichting Nederlandse Federatie

voor Vluchtelingen hulp ('Dutch Foundation for Refugee Assistance') happened to have good contacts with Syward van Wijnbergen, professor of Administrative Law at Radboud University. Van Wijnbergen made sure that Vitányi was given a position as lecturer in Nijmegen. He was later appointed professor of International Public Law and remained in Nijmegen until his retirement.

these foreign researchers into our universities?' they reasoned. In addition, there were at the time many stereotypes in Great Britain about Jews. The AAC approached all British universities to ask them whether they wanted to donate money for Jewish scientists in need. The University of Sheffield clearly did not think this was a good idea. "The opinion has been strongly expressed that, as there are many rich men of the Jewish religion whose individual incomes are larger than the whole income of the University, it would be appropriate that they be asked to support the teachers in the first instance." In other words: those Jews have enough money already. Let them sort it out.



later arrested and deported to Auschwitz. In England, Walter Kohn was cared for by business relations of his father: Charles and Eva Hauff, who lived in the South of the country. In England, Walter went to school and worked on the land – the plan was that he would eventually become a farmer. This did not materialise because Kohn caught meningitis while walking in the fields. There was no medication for this condition at the time, and sixteen-year old Kohn barely survived. But his bad luck was not over yet: in 1940 Germany invaded the Netherlands and Belgium. The British were afraid that they would be next and took rigorous measures. Many German-speaking refugees living in England were incarcerated in internment camps –

out of fear that they would help potential German parachutists. Walter Kohn was also arrested. He ended up on the Isle of Man, where there was a serious shortage of food. The still only seventeen-year-old Walter Kohn lost fifteen kilos.

Canada

In the summer of 1940 Kohn was brought to Canada by cruise ship. The passengers could consider themselves lucky that they were not torpedoed on the way by a German U-boat. Kohn spent

the following eighteen months in various internment camps in Canada. There he met a number of highly educated young men who had studied in Cambridge, an encounter that would change the course of his life. Kohn already had some knowledge of physics and chemistry from his school time in Austria and England, but the lessons the interns organised among themselves at the camp were a true feast for the senses. During the day, Kohn had to work like any other intern. He worked as a lumberjack for ten cents per day. This kept him warm and gave him enough time to think about physics. He saved all the dimes he made and used the money to buy physics books. Kohn had a new mission: to become a scientist.

In 1941, Kohn's luck took a turn for the better. His talent for physics came to the attention of the camp commander, who allowed him to take an entrance test for McGill University's Matriculation Examination. Kohn scored well in all subjects: algebra, geometry, trigonometry, physics, chemistry and coordinate geometry. Via a detour, these results reached the University of Toronto. Although Kohn did not have any of the required diplomas, in 1942, following some creative book-keeping, he was nevertheless allowed by the dean to start at the university. A gesture for which Kohn would be grateful for the rest of his life.

Harvard

In the following years, Kohn excelled in his studies, but in 1944 he was drafted into the Canadian army. During his service, Kohn completed his studies and published a paper that would soon find its way to the best scientists of the country. He served until the end of the war and finally heard what he had feared all these years: his parents had died in Auschwitz. After the war the physicist applied for different PhD positions in Canada, the US and England. He had already agreed to go to Birmingham when he received a great offer from Harvard. This was an easy choice: Kohn went to Harvard. It was the start of a flourishing career that led him, via a number of universities, to the highest possible achievement for a scientist: the Nobel Prize. Today, Kohn, aged 92, enjoys a well-deserved retirement in California.

In the end, the required funds came primarily from private individuals. Up to the start of the War, the Council collected nearly one hundred thousand pounds – the equivalent of eight million modern dollars. The money was spent well. In total, 2.541 refugee scientists were registered with the AAC (and its successor the Society for the Preservation of Science and Learning – SPSL).

It was, however, clearly not the case that every Jewish scientist could count on a new position at a different university abroad. There was a strict selection procedure. The AAC/SPSL was initially established out of altruism, but funds were limited, so they focused primarily on the

very best researchers. This had the positive side-effect that the guest countries could profit from the work of excellent scientists.

Outstanding scholars

All outstanding scholars were thus assured of a new position. Max Born, one of the founders of quantum mechanics, left for Cambridge. He would later contribute to the Manhattan Project, which would in time produce the atom bomb. And he was in good company: the world-famous Otto Frisch, Leó Szilard and Lise Meitner fled Nazi Germany and also worked on the atom bomb in strict secrecy shortly afterwards. After some wandering,



“THE CURRENT GENERATION OF REFUGEES MIGHT MAKE ITS APPEARANCE AT DUTCH UNIVERSITIES”

HOW HITLER DESTROYED GERMAN SCIENCE

Around 1900 German was the uncontested scientific centre of the world. The universities of Berlin and Göttingen were the Harvard and Oxford of the time. Consider the following: of the hundred Nobel Prizes for exact sciences awarded prior to 1932, 33 ended up in Germany. “Germany was the absolute leader in exact science,” says Ronald Kleiss, professor of Theoretical Elementary Particle Physics at Radboud University. “The international language among academics at the time was German, not English.”

This German dominance had a clear origin. In 1871 Prussia had managed to unite a fragmented Germany into one strong empire. This immediately made the new nation into a great military power. Its leader, Otto von Bismarck,

understood that this achievement would be worthless without a sound economy and industry. He therefore invested substantially in research and science.

Von Bismarck was also lucky because a number of brilliant minds lived nearby and knew how to make use of these new opportunities. They included, of course, Albert Einstein, but also Max Planck, Hans Krebs, Niels Bohr, Max Born and Johannes Stark, all of whom brought physics to new heights with their revolutionary ideas and insights.

At the time, approximately twenty percent of German natural scientists were of Jewish origin – while only one percent of the German population was Jewish. “Antisemitism was already widespread in the Middle Ages,” says Kleiss.

“Traditionally many professions were closed to Jews. They were, however, allowed to do science, with the result that in the following centuries, Jews were consistently over-represented in academia.” For this reason German science was hit particularly hard in 1933 when Hitler had all Jews fired from government institutions. There were no private universities at the time, so all Jewish scientists ended up on the street. Hitler himself couldn’t care less. “If firing Jewish scholars leads to the demise of modern German science, then we will manage for a few years without science,” he said of the consequences of this measure. This prediction came true: by the time the war ended, England and the US had jointly taken over Germany’s role as the world’s scientific hub.

Biochemist Ernst Boris Chain went to Oxford where he co-invented penicillin – a discovery which allowed him to indirectly save millions of lives. Following his escape to Princeton, John von Neumann produced groundbreaking work in quantum physics – work that later made it possible to create mobile telephone and computers.

The AAC/ SPSL primarily focused on natural scientists. “But there are of course many examples of researchers from other fields who had to flee and later made a career for themselves,” says Jan Brabers, science historian at Radboud University. An accurate observation. The list of prominent refugees is much more extensive: Karl Popper, Thomas Mann and Hannah Arendt were also forced at some point to pack their bags because they no longer felt safe.

And these are only the famous names. For every household name, there were many researchers who never made it into the history books. Yet solutions were sought for them too. “There is a certain academic tradition of taking care of each other in case of need,” says Brabers. “Not only for the absolute world-class scientists, but also for regular researchers and students.” This was also true for Radboud University. In 1948 the University hosted scientists fled from Czechoslovakia. In 1956, Nijmegen welcomed researchers from Hungary.

“In the long term it is certainly quite possible that the current generation of refugees will make their appearance in Dutch universities – as students or staff,” says Brabers. “For now the priority clearly lies on providing emergency assistance. But in the long run I think it might happen – after all, it would not be the first time.” ★

In every issue, Vox examines a statement made in the media. This time it was a statement made by Gerard Bakker, chief executive officer of COA (Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands), about the educational level of asylum seekers. Is it really as high as he suggests?

Text: Paul van den Broek

THE STATEMENT:

“Generally speaking, a third of the people now arriving are university educated, one third have studied at a university of applied sciences or have been educated at senior secondary vocational level, and one third are educated at a lower level”

Who says so? Gerard Bakker, chief executive officer of COA. He made this statement on 18 September in *nrc.next*, in response to the question of whether Dutch society is able to absorb this large influx of refugees. Bakker thinks it can. He applauds the “huge potential” that refugees can bring to society, thanks to the good qualifications that the refugees are bringing with them.

Which sources does COA use?

No idea. During the few days prior to the asylum seekers arriving at Heumensoord, we weren’t able to get hold of COA, so we turned to the Dutch Council for Refugees. Do they know of any such sources? No, says spokesperson Annemiek Bots. She knows that IND, the organisation that registers asylum seekers, does not ask about their educational level. “What we do know from our contacts is that the Syrians generally have a high level of education.” Atiyeh Re-integratie in Den Bosch, which focuses on the integration of well-qualified refugees, does not have any statistics either. The most recent figures are from last year from CBS (Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics): half of all refugees are highly educated, a quarter have had little or no schooling. “The latter group might include child soldiers, for instance,” says the Atiyeh spokesperson. The UAF (Foundation for Refugee Students) operates on the assumption that a quarter of the refugees are university educated. That percentage is now higher due to the large number of Syrians,

says Mariëtte Flipse from the UAF. “Over the last few years, we’ve been dealing with the first wave of refugees from that country, and it is always the relatively highly educated people that come first; the less well educated follow later.” Everyone we spoke to was keen to point out that it is important not to generalise; many Somalis and Eritreans have been deprived of education, so compared to them the Syrians have much better CVs to offer.

But what exactly is ‘highly educated’? In general, a university degree from elsewhere is not the same as what we understand by a degree here in the Netherlands. It is with good reason that Nuffic (a Dutch organisation for international cooperation in higher education) keeps a close eye on the differences between diplomas from a wide range of countries. And that’s good news for the Syrians; the UAF reports that Syrian Bachelor’s degrees provide relatively easy access to Dutch universities.

Do the more highly educated indeed integrate better? What is at least clear is that being poorly educated does not help. Read this excerpt from the 2014 report by the Dutch Council for Refugees: “In the last few years, increasing numbers of refugees are poorly educated, and cultural and other differences between them and Dutch society are significant. These groups are often far less able to integrate without outside help and to find their own way in an increasingly complex society.” The report refers primarily to the Somalis (“the most vulnerable group within the refugee population”). The Syrians, however, can help reverse this scenario, although a good education does not guarantee employment, certainly not at a high level. Atiyeh and the UAF say that we can’t afford to rest on our laurels; learning the language and receiving extra education are still a must. Mariëtte Flipse of the UAF was recently asked whether “we could provide a couple of refugees to work in the glasshouses. But that is not what we’re looking for.” Flipse advocates a much better assessment of the talents people bring with them, right from the start of the asylum procedure. “We don’t have a good indication of this, and it shouldn’t be about the more highly educated refugees. We would like to see everyone provided with suitable work.”

fact checking

A man with grey hair, wearing a black and grey athletic shirt and black shorts, is captured in profile while running on a gravel path. The background is a dense forest with tall trees and fallen leaves on the ground. The title 'Running in a war zone' is overlaid in a large, light green, sans-serif font.

Running in a war zone

Abdelkader Benali (1975) is a Dutch writer with Moroccan roots. In 2013, the marathon runner ran his first Zevenheuvelenloop ('Seven Hills Run'), a well-known 15 km-long run around Nijmegen in which 25,000 people take part every year. He interviewed seven participants, including Slobodan Jesic, a refugee from Bosnia-Herzegovina. This is a story about survival and running.

Slobodan Jesic's story reads like a boys' adventure book; a horrific boys' adventure book. It is about

survival in a civilised country that changes into a place of horror. This boys' book started 22 years ago in a country called Yugoslavia which quickly fell apart after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The Serbian part of Yugoslavia wanted to place the surrounding countries under its authority; things were to take a very different turn. The other ethnic groups, Croatsians, Bosnians, Montenegrins and Macedonians, rebelled against this quest for dominance and instead pursued self-rule. It was then that the turmoil began. With practically no other ethnic groups, Slovenia managed to escape the unrest, but the Croatsians, Bosnians and Serbians would spend the following years in bitter conflict. It was a war that tore countries and families apart.

It was also during that war that a young math teacher, known in his home town in the north east of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a considerate, kind and somewhat idiosyncratic young man, found an excuse to go running. In his apartment, Slobodan recounted the beginning of the beginning; the time that Slobodan was forced to become an adult. "In my town, nobody went running. The Yugoslavians are good at team sports, very good in fact. That's why it was so strange that people who got on so well together in a team were unable to form a united front at national level." When you talk about the Balkans, you talk about paradoxes and contradictions. Visitors to Sarajevo can find a church, mosque and a synagogue together on one street. Five hundred years of Islamic Ottoman rule put a stamp on the city, but it is also passionately Eastern Orthodox. They make the best coffee in Europe there, and their Burek, pastries filled with meat, are better than they are in Istanbul. Slobodan Jesic folds his arms and says nothing. It is too painful, too chaotic; he has seen too much misery. He doesn't want to talk. But appearances can be deceiving. He waits in silence for a moment, because he knows that what he's going to say will cause astonishment and incredulity. His silence speaks a thousand words.

But let's start at the very beginning. "My town had a population of 30,000. Six thousand of them were Serbian, the rest Muslim and Croatian. Without knowing it, we were a multicultural city. When the war began, we

became a Muslim city, which meant that the Serbian minority were looked upon with suspicion. Which side were we to choose? That of the people we shared our lives with, or that of Serbia, to which we were ethnically related? That suspicion later turned into mistrust and eventually into hate. The feeling that we were different was there to stay."

"What was it like for you? Were you confused about your position?"

"For me there was no sense of hate. In my family, my brother was married to a Croatian and my sister to a Muslim. We were a mixed family. You see, before the war, where you came from was just not important."

Their town was now on the front line of the war. Muslim men were mobilised, and the Serbian inhabitants began to feel increasingly isolated. The first group of men left, either voluntarily or under the pressure of growing resentment.

"Did the war change you as a person?"

"I would never point a weapon at someone. I would never hurt anyone because I believe that the war was pointless, whatever caused it. This conviction does not go without saying. Most people regarded the war as a necessity. It was a case of drowning or swimming." With respect to his pacifism, Slobodan was influenced by the anti-war books he read as a boy. *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque, the shocking story of a front-line soldier during the First World War, showed me the fact that war is hopeless."

His gentle world vision made him a misfit in the eyes of those who were preparing for war. Slobodan quotes a Bosnian saying that describes how different things were during that period: "In times of war, the crazy ones are normal and the normal ones are crazy." Members of the Serbian minority began arming themselves against a possible confrontation in the city. The tension rose. Friendships fell apart.

"The limitations the war imposed on us drove me mad. The growing hate surrounding us meant that we couldn't leave our house. It was a life-threatening situation."

"What did you do to keep physically active? To carry on breathing?"

He points to the home trainer in the living

room. "We had one at home. I cycled miles and miles. Uphill, downhill again." While increasing numbers of Serbian inhabitants were leaving the city, Slobodan became increasingly adamant about staying. In retrospect, he attributes that decision primarily to a lack of sense of reality. "I was naive. I thought we wouldn't be in danger. That staying would somehow prevent anything from happening to us." That hope turned out to be in vain. "At the end of the war, my uncle, who had returned from Germany as a pensioner, was shot dead. Out of revenge. He thought he was safe."

Staying home was suffocating. Slobodan thought up a way of being able to go outside. "Like many other occupied and war-torn Bosnian towns, ours was situated in a valley. On one side of the mountains were tanks armed with mortars for attacks. The other side was safe. I wanted to go running there. Going alone was out of the question because it would look as if I were spying for the enemy. I would have been able to tell them where to shoot in order to hit their target. Fortunately, I had a Muslim neighbour who I knew from high school. His name was Zio. One day he arrived at school with long hair and his teacher had made a comment about it. Furious, he took out a pistol and shot the man dead. It was all very tragic. Zio was well-read, he read Dostoyevsky for example. He became paranoid. When Zio came out of prison, he returned home suffering from depression. In order to get out of the house, Zio went to pick mushrooms in the woods. We cheered each other up like this." Slobodan came home with bags full of mushrooms, hiding the fact that he had been out running. This is what war does to your morale: activities you always took for granted have to be covered up with a story to make them acceptable again as normal.

Just when Slobodan thought it couldn't get any worse, disaster struck again. Another moment of silence, then Slobodan starts to speak. The words do the work. "The Muslims took revenge on the Serbians by humiliating them, by treating the people like dirt. When the war had been going on for a year, the commandant got all the Serbian men to gather in the town. There were only 100 of them left.

"All this time, the war had seemed so far away. The commandant made it clear that it



was now our turn to make sacrifices. So many Muslims had been killed since the war began; now us. We would be taken to the front to dig trenches."

He remembers the day clearly. "It was July; the weather was gorgeous. The woods looked so beautiful. We were loaded onto lorries and were taken to an area of no man's land between the Bosnians and the Serbians. To the Bosnians, we were potential enemies, and to the Serbians potential traitors. It was terrible." They were offloaded and given spades. It happened as they were digging the trenches: in a moment of light-heartedness, they started making jokes about the situation. "Just imagine: we could have been shot down at any moment, either by Serbians or by Bosnians. We were quite literally a shooting target. The idea that we had hit rock bottom had made us somehow frivolous. This was not my war. Nothing mattered. And the idea of being face to face with death had a liberating effect. I had nothing left to lose and could therefore laugh out loud. And perhaps laughing was the strongest way possible of resisting death." Slobodan spent three days in a lorry, three days digging, and three days laughing. On the fourth day, the commandant took him to one side. "The driver I had spoken to had told the commandant that my sister was married to

This is a condensed version of an interview in Abdelkader Benali's anthology entitled De 7 van Nijmegen. Zeven en één verhalen over leven, overleven en hardlopen ('The 7 of Nijmegen: Seven Plus One Stories about Life, Survival and Running')

his boss – a Muslim. He worked for my brother-in-law’s bus company.” Slobodan was allowed to stay at home.

The war raged on; genocide was committed. The smell of disintegration wormed its way through the Balkan mountains. Slobodan decided it was time to flee. The situation had become unbearable. He was putting his life on the line by staying. “The Muslims detained us in the city because they knew that the more Serbians they had there, the less chance there was of the Serbians bombing the town. We were hostages.”

Slobodan engaged the help of his brother-in-law, who arranged that he could flee to Germany. He picked up his travel visa in Zagreb. “There was a long queue and everyone was being turned away. But I got my visa. The ticket clerk threw it at me as if it were some filthy rag. Once he had arrived in Munich, he had to make the most important decision of his life: continue on to Haarlem, where friends would be waiting for him, or stay in Germany. “I would be in danger in the German asylum centres because all Serbians there were looked upon with suspicion.” Slobodan bought a ticket to the Netherlands and boarded the train.

“As soon as I arrived at Amsterdam Central Station, I started to feel better. There were street artists playing music. It felt as if I had been liberated. In this country I will be able to find love and leave the war behind me.” He had to register at the asylum seekers centre in Zevenaar. “There was a policeman standing at the entrance. I only knew two Dutch words: “Bosnia. Asylum.” to which he answered, “Welcome to the Netherlands.” To pass time, Slobodan did what he was best at, running.

The love he felt for his girlfriend, Marina, is what brought him to Nijmegen. “I loved the city right from the very first day. I could cycle here and run to my heart’s content, just like in the hills in Bosnia. This city breathes the sense of normality I have been looking for so long.”

He ran his first Zevenheuvelenloop in 2001 and now he is in training for his second. As I was leaving he strongly urged me not to run on asphalt. “Go out to the hills and the woods where the ground is soft, it’s better for your legs.”

COLUMN

PH-neutral

PH-neutral is a **lecturer and researcher** at Radboud University

Pride

It’s something I try to imagine every now and then, but only fleetingly, and not too often. Sometimes though, very occasionally, very tentatively, I try to imagine what it must be like to have to flee. To have to leave everything behind and face an uncertain future – if there is any future to speak of. To have to flee with your entire family. Would I put our fate into the hands of human traffickers if that were the only option? Would I get on such a rickety boat? Would I dare to take my *children* on a boat like that? Would I get into one of those lorries? Or would I simply stay where I was, with my family, and hope for the best? Too afraid to flee? I don’t know.

But our new neighbours do. They know exactly what they would do; what’s more, they did it. They have known what it is like to be somewhere where you fear for your life, and they understand the risks you are then prepared to take for a better existence. And no, I’m not naive. I know full well that some people come here for questionable reasons. People who use this massive exodus as an excuse to come here too. But is that any reason not to help those who really need it? For most people in Nijmegen and at the university it is not, fortunately. Now it is time for this left-wing city – and this still predominantly Catholic university – to do its duty and help. Left-wing solidarity and Catholic compassion; sometimes it’s a fine combination.

There is also a group of people who are opposed to providing asylum because in their eyes, some of the refugees are wearing trainers that are just a tad too expensive-looking. It’s a group that is very active and loud on internet forums, so you could be forgiven for thinking that it is a large group. But it’s not really. A demonstration that was announced last week had to be cancelled because there were too few people to take part. At the same time, Heumensoord is being swamped by offers for help. And then, for a moment, though I don’t feel it often, I feel proud of my city and of my university.

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COLOFON

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AGENDA

RADBOUD REFLECTS

Lectures, films, debates at Radboud University or the city of Nijmegen. Free for refugees!
www.ru.nl/radboudreflects/english

Brain, Mind and Philosophy. Lecture by philosopher Patricia Churchland

MONDAY, OCTOBER 26 2015 | 19.30 – 21.30 H | COLLEGEZALENCOMPLEX, RADBOUD UNIVERSITY



Patricia Churchland reflects on what happens when we accept that everything we feel and think is not produced by an immaterial mind, but by electronic and chemical activities that take place in our brain.

Hello cyborg! InScience Big Idea by cyborg Kevin Warwick

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 5 2015
 19.00 - 20.30 HRS | LUX, NIJMEGEN
 Kevin Warwick, professor of Cybernetics at Coventry University, experiments with the usage of implant and electrode technology to create biological brains for robots, to enable human enhancement and to diminish the effects of certain neural illnesses. NB Not free! This lecture is part of InScience movie festival. For prices visit <http://www.insciencfestival.nl/en/>

The Death of God and the War on Terror. Edward Schillebeeckx Lecture by literary theorist Terry Eagleton

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6 2015 | 19.30 - 21.30 HRS | AULA RADBOUD UNIVERSITY
 According to Eagleton, religion can never be replaced by culture, as culture creates differences where religion creates unity. But can religion survive today's secular society and consumerism? And is a completely atheistic society a realistic scenario?



Still from the film Ex Machina

The Dangers of Religious Freedom. Lecture by religious sociologist Linda Woodhead

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2015 | 19.30 - 21.30 HRS | COLLEGEZALENCOMPLEX RADBOUD UNIVERSITY

It is important to give spirituality and religion a place in society according to Linda Woodhead. We value both individual freedom and living in a free society. But can we talk about a secular society that is free when there is in fact a restriction on religion and religious expressions?

CULTUUR OP DE CAMPUS

WEDNESDAY 7 OCTOBER
Film | Ex Machina

We are all humans. Or are we? What if some of us are actually robots that are virtually indistinguishable from ordinary people? In Ex Machina, a software engineer is asked to carry out a test on the artificially intelligent female robot that his boss created. In his efforts to distinguish robot from human, he suspects he might be there for more than just a test. Pim Haselager, associate professor and researcher at the Donders Institute and general AI expert, will give an introductory lecture about artificial intelligence in the real

world, in collaboration with CognAC. 19:30, CC3, CollegezalenComplex, Mercatorpad 1, entrance €1.50

TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER
Band | Half Way Station



When guitarist Rikke Korswagen discovered a desolate bus station in the American South named Half Way Station, a band was born. He and four other musicians from his hometown of Rotterdam released their first album in 2012. The album was well-received and gigs in major Dutch concert halls like Rotown and Paradiso soon followed. Their success even took them to countries like Albania and France. Their new album, DODO, will be released this October. The combination of psychedelic synth-drones, pointy guitars and the intense voice of singer Elma Plaisier will create an overwhelming experience of sound and visuals. Think: Pink Floyd meets Americana. Come and

enjoy this talented and unique band! 20.00, CultuurCafé, Mercatorpad 1, free entrance, www.halfwaystation.com

WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER
Film | A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night

Are you a good boy? You'd better be if you find yourself in Bad City. You and many others may not be aware of the evil that lurks in this place, a place that reeks of death and loneliness. This film, directed by Iranian-American film director Ana Lily Amirpour, made its debut at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival. The director described the film as 'The first Iranian Vampire Western'. A fascinating yet undisclosed guest speaker will introduce the film before it is screened. So be there, if you dare. 19.30, CC3, CollegezalenComplex, Mercatorpad 1, entrance €1.50





MEREDITH

LENNART

domestic circles

Sometimes a person just wants to make a difference. Students of Islamic Studies Meredith Thompson and Lennart Proot are on their knees on the floor, their hands full of coloured chalk. On large sheets of white paper, they write words of welcome in Arabic.

"I want the refugees at Heumensoord to truly feel welcome," says Meredith Thompson. Together with her fellow student Lennart Proot she is making banners to put up at the refugee camp. In Arabic, the banners say 'Welcome to the Netherlands, welcome in our hearts' and 'Your hearts are in Syria. Your bodies are safe'. Thompson saw on TV how refugees arrived at a camp in Weert. 'Welcome fellow human!' it

said on one of the banners. She thought this was such a beautiful message that she decided to do something similar.

For these two it's a piece of cake to write their message in Arabic, since they both follow the Master's programme in Islamic Studies. "This way, many of the refugees will understand our message. And I think they will feel even more welcome if they are being addressed in their own language."

Thompson wants to display her colourful banners as soon as the refugees arrive. The fact that there might be demonstrators who are less happy with the presence of the shelter does not bother her too much. "I will try not to react. I don't want there to be a negative atmosphere. Luckily we don't have to say or shout anything – our banners will do all the talking."

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

In Domestic Circles, a reporter and a photographer visit a student house to find out what the inhabitants are up to.