

# VOX



STUDENTS IN 2019  
**are reaching  
breaking point**

ENGLISH EDITION

RADBOUD UNIVERSITY INDEPENDENT MAGAZINE  
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# VOX

FEBRUARY  
2019

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## EVERYTHING WAS BETTER IN THE OLD DAYS. RIGHT?

Board members of today in dialogue with those of yesterday

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FRONT AND BACK COVER ART: JEROEN MURRÉ

# EDITORIAL

As soon as I saw the toilet door in my old student house, I remembered: on the back of that door there used to hang a railway map of the Netherlands. NS yellow, with all the stations and railway connections. My father – who was a carpenter – brought it home (or maybe stole it?) during a renovation of Zutphen station.

I asked the current resident whether the map was still there. "It is," he said, and opened the toilet door. And there I was, aged 22, walking up the stairs in my socks to my housemate's room. We'd have a cup of coffee as I petted Keuntje, his red tomcat. I really felt at home here.

For this Vox issue on being a student in 2019, editors were invited to revisit their student houses. What has changed? What hasn't? We also asked a student panel to tell us what it's like to be a student these days.

I haven't forgotten about the pressure. I used to be jealous of my dad: "When you come home in the evening, you're done. I always have some studying to do or I feel guilty because I'm not studying."

He didn't feel sorry for me: I got to go out three nights a week, and was headed for a brighter future. By the time I graduated in 1999, my study loan debt amounted to exactly 23,094 guilders and 74 cents. I made the last payment five years ago. I can now say my student years were worth every penny.

Annemarie Haverkamp  
editor in chief Vox



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## ABOVE PAR JASPER DE KORT



PHOTO: ERIK VAN 'T HULLENAAR

At the height of his addiction History student Jasper de Kort only left his bed to play video games, ate while playing, and went to bed only when he had finished playing. Until he decided that enough was enough. On 25 April 2018, De Kort walked into a clinic, only to come out ten weeks later, clean and cured. Now he is working to break through the stigma surrounding video game addiction. For example, by writing a blog about it (search for: Diary of a Video Game Addict).

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## DULY NOTED

**“Getting rid of German as a course subject, while it’s the largest mother tongue in Europe (...) is a really bad idea. Parents should take action.”**

Professor **Paul Sars** (German Language and Culture) in *De Gelderlander* on 31 January, in response to the decision of the Lorentz Lyceum in Arnhem to discontinue German as a course subject. According to the secondary school, fewer and fewer students are choosing to study the language of our Eastern neighbours.

# IN THE NEWS



**Language test** Future students who make occasional grammar mistakes in Dutch beware! Starting next academic year, Radboud University plans to test the language skills of all first-year students. The Executive Board want to use the test to stress the importance of linguistic competence. The Student Council emphasises that the test should not become yet another compulsory item on the first-year students' to-do list. "If it can lead to study delay, we are strongly against it," says President Gijs Kooistra.

**Flying** It still happens from time to time that Radboud University researchers take a flight to Berlin or London. This has got to stop: the University wants to reduce the number of flights taken by its staff members. In this, Radboud University is following the example of the University of Ghent, where the reimbursement of flights to relatively close cities was stopped six months ago. This measure is intended to stimulate staff members to use other means of transportation, such as the train.







PHOTO: DUTCH EMBASSY AT THE HOLY OFFICE

Kevin Schapendonk, student, with Pope Francis

**Painful jokes** As a rule, the hazing practices of associations and fraternities are carefully veiled in mist. But, at the independent fraternity Reinaert, things really went wrong earlier this year: someone accidentally left instructions for prospective members lying around in a printer on the Nijmegen Campus. *De Gelderlander* got hold of the instructions and published an article on the 'playful' tasks the new members were asked to complete, such as 'seduce the ugliest whore' and 'dress up a bicycle to look like a Stint', in reference to the deadly accident in Oss. According to anonymous fraternity members, the tasks were meant as a joke.

**Food Court** The old Refter – where you could choose from three warm meals and a selection of sandwiches – is gone forever. In its place a new Food Court will open its doors in late February. If we are to believe the Facilities & Services (F&S), de Refter will be transformed into a true food Walhalla: counters with Asian dishes, Mediterranean meals (yes, that includes pizza), and luxury fries and snacks. For real connoisseurs, there will even be a wine bar.

**Less traffic during rush hour** Since September, the lecture times of Radboud University and HAN University of Applied Sciences have been coordinated. Radboud University students start lectures fifteen minutes earlier, at 8.30 a.m., while HAN students get to stay in bed for an extra 15 minutes. The idea behind this? To spread the traffic better during rush hour. The measure

is proving to be effective: the number of train passengers at 8.15 a.m. has dropped by 22%. According to State Secretary Stientje van Veldhoven (D66), this measure makes Nijmegen an example for other university cities.

**Holy handshake** During his internship at the Dutch Embassy in the Vatican, student Kevin Schapendonk met none other than Pope Francis. "There I was, face to face with the Pope, shaking his hand, and I just knew: this is a once-in-a-life-time experience." Schapendonk didn't manage to say anything other than 'Holy Father'. At the Embassy, the student in Politics and Parliament supports Caroline Weijers, who was appointed Dutch Ambassador in August last year. Schapendonk was present when the Ambassador presented her credentials to Pope Francis.

**Well-behaved white girls** It's the nightmare of many first-year students: the Binding Study Advice. But does it actually work? Research shows that since the introduction of the BSA, students tend to drop out earlier, but the total drop-out rate has remained constant. You'd think it's a good thing, since the BSA seems to eliminate unnecessary struggling along. But the Student Council begs to differ. They point to another finding: male students, international students, students switching from Universities of Applied Sciences, and those with an ethnic minority background, are relatively less likely to meet the BSA requirements. "Those who make it are mostly well-behaved white girls," says Marek Voesenek from AKKUraatd.



# LIFE AS A STUDENT IN 2019: **TOO MANY CHOICES, TOO LITTLE TIME**

Don't look at the DUO website, and you won't see how much you owe. It's one of the survival strategies of students in the era of the study loan system. But how do you deal with the stress? There's a more complex issue. Vox invited a student panel to respond to some statements on what it's like to be a student in 2019. 'The more you do now, the more likely you are to get a good job later.'

**Text:** Stan van Pelt and Martine Zuidweg / **Illustration:** JeRoen Murré



Apparently, it matters very much whether you study Law or Biology. A world of difference, in fact, when it comes to performance pressure. Consider our first statement:

STATEMENT 1

# SUCCESS IN YOUR STUDIES MEANS GETTING HIGH GRADES

Arie Boel, second-year Law student, can only agree. "At the Law faculty, students are expected to get high grades, especially in the Master's programme. If you don't graduate with good grades, you won't be able to get into a good law firm. Or you have to find some other way to stand out, for example with a double Master's degree." Boel himself does his utmost to stand out among the huge flock of Law students – of whom there are currently 3264 at Radboud University alone. Working at a big law firm is definitely his ambition. "Better to aim high, you can always adjust your expectations later."

He's active at study association JFV, works at the legal advice centre in 's-Hertogenbosch and is faculty manager (a kind of location manager) for AthenaStudies, an organisation offering exam training to law students. "That way I can show my future employer all that I'm capable of. This attitude is common to many students at our faculty. It's hard to avoid being swept along by it."

What a difference with Lars van Dijk, second-year Biology student. "I study for myself and I think most of us have this kind of attitude. I don't care about grades.

## TODAY'S STUDENTS ARE MORE LIKELY TO LIVE AT HOME

**62%** Before the loan system  
2014

**70%** After the loan system  
2017

The study loan system was introduced in the academic year 2015-2016.

The percentage of students living at home has increased significantly since then, especially among first-year students (from 62% in 2014 to 70% last academic year). This figure is expected to increase further. Radboud University students are less likely to live at home than the average Dutch student.

Source: National Student Housing Monitor (2018) and Radboud University Fact Sheet

I'm very happy with a 5.5. After all, it's a pass." As long as he knows that he understands the material. If he later decides to go into research, this kind of book knowledge won't help him much anyway, he believes. "As a researcher, if you're the first to discover an unknown protein, you have to figure out what it is. It's all about insight, not lists of minor facts."

Put eight students with different backgrounds and interests around a table, and you're sure to get a lively discussion. One that gives a pretty good idea of what it's like to be a student in 2019 - the ever-present social media, the unavoidable study loan debt, the advantages of your parents' magical self-emptying laundry basket, the stress caused by the Binding Study Advice ("I actually find it quite motivating"), the idealism of today's students, the many available choices, and the break-down ("call it a burn-out") that sometimes follows.

Two panel members still live at home with their parents. Student of Political Science Mike van Diemen (third year) because as a Council Member for Groen-Links in Cuijk he's required to reside in that municipality. At the moment he kind of enjoys the ease of emptying his dirty washing in the laundry basket, only to find it neatly folded in his cupboard. As for Arie Boel, he doesn't really see the need to move out. "I live in Arnhem, and the commute takes me half an hour, door to door. I know someone who lives in Nijmegen and takes longer to get to class." Plus, his international travels in the context of study association JFV leave little money for renting a room. "In May I'm going to Toronto, and you can bet that it'll cost a pretty penny."

## THE PANEL



**MIKE VAN DIEMEN** (20)  
POLITICAL SCIENCE STUDENT  
AND COUNCIL MEMBER FOR  
GROENLINKS IN CUIJK:

'FOR ME STUDYING MEANS ...  
mostly doing what  
I enjoy.'



**ARIE BOEL** (21)  
LAW STUDENT, ACTIVE AT  
STUDY ASSOCIATION JFV:

'FOR ME STUDYING MEANS ...  
getting the most out  
of myself and really  
standing for what  
I can do.'



**SANDER VAN DER GOES** (20)  
STUDENT OF GEOGRAPHY,  
PLANNING AND  
ENVIRONMENT, AND PARTY  
CHAIRMAN OF AKKURAATD:

'FOR ME STUDYING MEANS ...  
preparing to help  
advance society.'



**SARAH KARSTEN** (20)  
LAW STUDENT AND  
CHAIRWOMAN OF THE  
NIJMEEGSE STUDENTEN  
HONOURSVERENIGING  
(NSHV):

'FOR ME STUDYING MEANS ...  
growing and  
developing as a  
person.'



## STATEMENT 2

# STUDYING IS A TIME TO ENJOY ONE'S FREEDOM

Willemijn Smit, who studies both Mathematics and Law, agrees with the statement. "Although I have some obligations at the Law faculty, in the Mathematics department I'm really free to organise my time as it suits me. All lectures are recorded and there are no compulsory seminars. Outside the exam periods I always have time to do fun things."

Thomas Keulemans, active at Changing Perspective and Philosophy student, has been enjoying his freedom to the full for seven years now. "For me, studying is one big voyage of discovery. I'm trying to gain as much knowledge as possible to help me shape my own vision of the world." He now finally feels ready to put an end to his studies and explore the world outside academia.

# 'WHEN I FIRST STARTED STUDYING, I FELT I HAD TO GRAB EVERY OPPORTUNITY'

But for Mike van Diemen, all this freedom can also be a bit problematic. "I find it hard to say 'no'," he says, a little embarrassed. This manifested last year in a long list of extracurricular activities, in retrospect too many.

"When the election results came in and I found out I'd been elected to the Municipal Council, I really had to set my priorities. My work as a Council Member has been my top priority ever since."

"The University provides lots of opportunities to do other things alongside your studies, which is a great freedom," says Sarah Karsten, Chairwoman of the *Nijmeegse Studenten Honoursvereniging* (NSHV). "You can join all kinds of associations, and develop and grow in so many different ways. I really like the Honours programme. It brings me into contact with other disciplines and people I would never get to meet otherwise. But the down side of all these opportunities is that you run the risk of becoming very busy. And the question is whether in the end, this helps you feel free."

Personally, she finds it quite difficult to make choices, and often ends up doing too much as a result. "Sometimes I think: what am I doing to myself?"

Ali Aljarrah, Public Administration student and top athlete in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, nods enthusiastically to Sarah. "It's exactly as you say: you have so much freedom and you don't want to miss out on anything. But when you give in to it, you automatically acquire a lot of obligations. Your student days are the time in your life when you have most freedom. Before that you're at secondary school, afterwards you get a job. Now you're free and you get to do all these fun things. When I first started studying, I felt I had to grab every opportunity that came my way."

And he did just that, with both hands. A year on the board of the Nijmegen Student Sports Council (NSSR),

## TODAY'S STUDENTS MORE IN DEBT THAN EVER

Total study loan debt:

**6,3** billion euro

2012

**11,2** billion euro

2017

The total study loan debt of university graduates increases every year. Seven in ten students have a study loan debt. When they graduate, students owe on average € 13,621. The real impact of the study loan system, introduced in 2015, will only become apparent next year.



**WILLEMIJN SMIT** (21)  
STUDENT OF MATHEMATICS  
AND LAW:

'FOR ME STUDYING MEANS ...  
simply having  
great fun!'



**LARS VAN DIJK** (22)  
BIOLOGY STUDENT:

'FOR ME STUDYING MEANS ...  
growing as  
a person.'



**THOMAS KEULEMANS** (24)  
PHILOSOPHY STUDENT AND  
ACTIVE AT CHANGING  
PERSPECTIVE:

'FOR ME STUDYING MEANS ...  
discovering myself  
and the world.'



**ALI ALJARRAH** (25)  
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
STUDENT AND TOP ATHLETE  
IN BRAZILIAN JIU JITSU:

'FOR ME STUDYING MEANS ...  
getting the maximum  
out of myself, both in  
my study programme  
and in sport.'

TODAY'S STUDENTS  
PERFORM BETTER  
THANKS TO THE BSA

Drop-out rates:

**25%**

BEFORE INTRODUCTION  
OF BSA

**19,5%**

AFTER INTRO-  
DUCTION OF BSA

The Binding Study Advice (BSA) in the first year ensures that most students dropping out do so in the first year. Students who meet the BSA criterion perform better on average than in the years before the introduction of the BSA. A survey carried out by the Nijmegen student union AKKU shows that first-year students do experience more stress as a result of the BSA.

Source: Research into the selective function of the BSA, Radboud University 2019

## 'I COULDN'T EAT ANYTHING. MY HEAD WAS SPINNING'

while he continued to study and train as a top athlete, led to a breakdown in his third year. "Call it a burn-out." And yet, in the end, it turned out for the best: "After a year like that, you have to take time to self-reflect: What really matters to me? This helped me set priorities, and grow as a student and as a person."

Sander van der Goes, Chairman of the AKKUraad party on the University Student Council (USC) and student of Geography, Planning and Environment, knows all about it. He was also forced to face his limitations. The reason was his work for the Council in combination with competition-level football. A year ago, he found himself completely exhausted. "I couldn't sleep, had stomach problems, and couldn't eat anything. My head was spinning. It was a really difficult period."

He quit some activities and now forces himself to take it easy. "People often have the idea that they should warn students against making mistakes. My parents also often tell me that I shouldn't take on too much. But it's not such a bad thing to really come up against a wall once in a while. If you're ambitious and you want to get the most out of everything, it's good to experience that there are limits to what you can do. Especially during your studies, as you're transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, it's good to get to know your limitations. And this is precisely

what happened to me." A level-headed perspective: "I think in that sense I've already succeeded in my studies."

### STATEMENT 3

## I DON'T MIND HAVING A STUDY LOAN DEBT

These days to study almost automatically means to accrue a debt. "You don't have much choice," says mathematician-in-training Willemijn Smit. "If you want to study, you need a student loan. Most students in the Mathematics department don't worry about it much. They believe that they will get a job that will allow them to reimburse their study loan," she says, "but they do worry about how high the loan is. I myself wouldn't want to borrow the maximum amount."

At the Law faculty, debts from study loans are also not an issue, as far as Boel can see. "Our motto is: stay away from the DUO website, so you don't have to watch your debt grow." The other students burst out laughing. The legal expert: "Seriously, this is pretty much our attitude. Just the other day I spoke to someone with a debt of €80,000. He didn't care a hoot."

Personally, he believes students should get the most out of their studies, even if this means a higher study loan debt. "The more you do now, the more likely you are to get a good job later."

Thomas Keulemans does worry about it. He says the study loan system is reducing the accessibility of university study programmes. "There are lots of people who can't afford to study at all, because their parents are unable to help them financially." Keulemans believes that this creates an ever more homogenous group of university students, which ultimately doesn't serve society.

## 'GIVE STUDENTS MORE TIME'

**In his farewell speech, former Rector Magnificus Bas Kortmann already warned about 'cut-price students'. Has his prophecy come true?**

Bas Kortmann was Rector Magnificus of Radboud University from May 2007 to October 2014. In this capacity, the Professor of Civil War was already worried about the decline in active student life. His concerns seem more relevant today than ever. "Just like chickens that are fed far too much and far too fast to make them ready for consumption

as soon as possible, we're making the mistake of rushing students through their degrees," he says. The study loan system and binding study advice are putting students under too much pressure, concludes Kortmann. As a result, students have less time for other useful learning experiences. "By actively engaging in social activities outside your study programme, you learn how to interact with and help others. Plus, it's fun to be part of the board of a sports club, a faculty association or a student orchestra. I'm still reaping the benefits of my active involvement

in student association Albertus Magnus in Groningen in my student days." He understands perfectly that governments and universities want to avoid students prolonging their studies indefinitely. At the same time, the system should not become too restrictive. "You have to make it possible for students to take their time studying. A lot of new students have lived with their parents most of their life, and they now have to learn to live on their own. They've got to get used to their new life, by trial and error." /KL



Sarah Karsten sees another consequence. She notices that students are less keen to engage in extracurricular activities. "People don't want to suffer any study delays, because that means borrowing more money." Smit adds: "For years now, we've had trouble finding candidates for the Faculty Student Council at FNWI (the science faculty, Eds.). Students have lots of ideas about how to improve things at the faculty, but they don't dare to commit for a whole year. I think it's a great pity." Sander van der Goes: "Many associations have trouble finding candidates for their boards and committees. It's a shame, because the associations play an important role in binding students to the University."

#### STATEMENT 4

## THE BSA IS AN INCENTIVE TO KEEP STUDYING

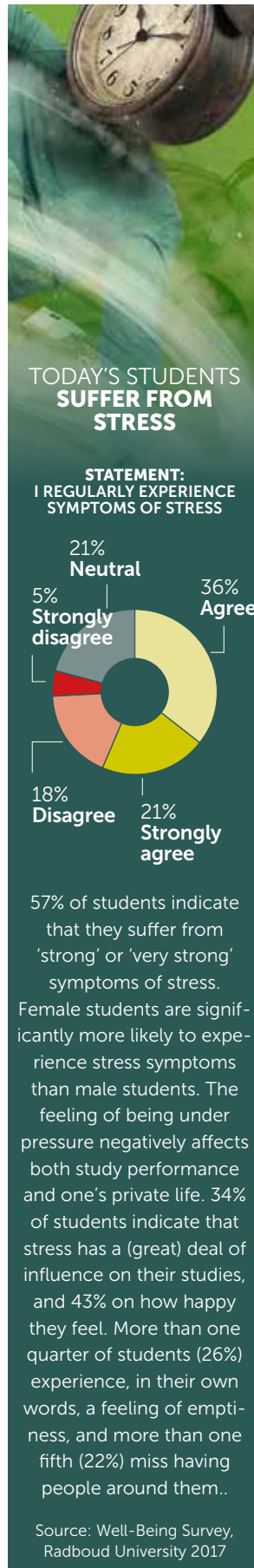
Another thing that prevents students from joining in extracurricular activities is the Binding Study Advice (BSA), says the AKKUraad Chairman. "And this while it's a great way to develop and grow." He also knows that the BSA causes additional stress for first-year students. "We carried out a survey at the AKKUraad. We found out that one third of first-year students experience stress in the first semester because of the prospect of the BSA. We were shocked to hear this. It's simply not a good way to motivate students."

Legal expert Arie Boel, on the other hand, does agree with our statement. "At our faculty, the BSA is set at 45 course credits. It makes you think: I have to show right away what I'm capable of. So you work hard on your study programme from the start. In this way the BSA can act as a motivator." Boel sees that the BSA quickly separates students into two groups: "Those who make it and those who can't handle the pressure or lack motivation."

This dividing line is much too sharp at present, says Van der Goes: "If you don't pass your BSA, you simply can't proceed with your studies. I'd much rather have a student advisor giving people an urgent recommendation in the course of an interview: 'Hey, you're missing two courses, how did that happen?'"

The Public Administration department has united these two approaches, says Aljarrah. "As early as January,

'SOMETIMES I SIMPLY TURN OFF THE WI-FI. I REALLY HAVE TO DO THIS'



if it looks like you might not make the BSA, you're invited for an interview with the student advisor."

"That's right", responds Van der Goes. "But imagine you end up not making it by a fraction? Then you have to leave. What a pity!"

The BSA and the study loan system make today's students "indifferent and apolitical", says Thomas Keulemans. No, it doesn't, responds Mike van Diemen. "At the Political Science department we sometimes organise seat polls for the House of Representatives, and both GroenLinks and D66 get fifty seats. So the leftist activist spirit is still alive. It's just that most students don't do much with it. Due to lack of time, I think." In the Biology department, Lars also notices the students' activism. "Plenty of our students are concerned about the environment and they make this very clear."

#### STATEMENT 5

## SOCIAL MEDIA DISTRACT ME FROM MY STUDIES

Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp. Social media is as normal for modern-day students as cycling and sitting exams. But they do have a love-hate relationship with it. "You always end up comparing yourself to others," says Ali Aljarrah. "All your friends show off on Instagram. The parties they go to, the travelling they do, but also the grades they get. It makes you think: Why can't I afford a trip to Thailand?" Aljarrah readily admits that he's guilty of the same. "You want to share everything you do, and you're curious how people respond."

All very recognisable, acquiesces Willemijn Smit. "Lots of my secondary school friends have now completed their Bachelor's programmes. They then take a year off or go abroad. When you see their pictures, it's hard not to compare yourself to them."

It's only when she consciously goes offline that Sarah Karsten notices how much stress social media cause. "Sometimes I simply turn off the Wi-Fi, for example when I'm studying for an exam. I really have to do this."

Council Member Van Diemen must always be reachable, he says, because of his political position. "If something happens, journalists must be able to get in touch and ask me for my opinion as a Council Member. You don't want them calling someone else."

Biologist Van Dijk seems to be the only one in the group not to suffer from FOMO or fear of missing out (according to Karsten). He frequently leaves his phone at home. "Why the hell would I take it with me to go shopping?" The Biology student even closed his Instagram account. "It was driving me nuts." He didn't like the app's exhibitionist streak. "What do I care what people eat?" But he does have another time-consuming hobby: computer games. \*

EVERYTHING  
WAS BETTER  
IN THE OLD  
DAYS

RIGHT?

# 'Cobo?' Sounds like fraternity lingo'

**P**ieter Colla (PC): "Wow! Your own canteen! We didn't have that in our day!"

Floor Hurkens (FH): "You can come here for coffee, and in the breaks we sell grilled sandwiches. We share the canteen with the other Science associations."

PC: "There's even a bar!"

FH: "Yes. We reserve it when we organise a get-together or a movie night."

PC: "When I was President, the Huygens building didn't exist. We partied in the BeeVee board room in the current Linnaeus building. Or downstairs in the UL, the University Laboratory that was still there in those days. It had those cellar corridors: really spooky!"

FH: "Ha ha, they're still there, under the Huygens. Really spooky indeed!"

PC: "How big is BeeVee these days?"

FH: "We've got around six hundred members. Biology is a big study programme; it attracts over two hundred new students a year."

PC: "Wow, we had something like 80 first-year students."

FH: "Last year, they even introduced a numerus fixus in the Bachelor's programme, which is now taught in English. We've got students from Latvia, the US, Vietnam... Internationalisation was a big deal for BeeVee this year. We translated our website and our general meeting are in English too."

PC: "In my year as President, I was busy with the Party Committee. We organised parties in the old Doornroosje, and always ran at a loss. Committee members manned the bar and were allowed to drink beer for free. So they just stood there drinking away all our profits! I tried to put an end to all that."

Slouched on the couches in the BeeVee canteen, two Presidents of the Biology association reflect on more than twenty years of association history.

Text: Stan van Pelt  
Photography: Bert Beelen

## WHO'S WHO?

**Floor Hurkens (21)** is a fourth-year Bachelor's student and the current President of the Biology association BeeVee.

**Pieter Colla (45)** was President of BeeVee in the academic year 1996-1997. He now teaches Biology at the Nijmegen Scholengemeenschap Groenewoud.

FH: "Nowadays, the Party Committee simply has to make a profit. We have our parties in cafés like Malle Babbe or Sjors & Simmie."

PC: "We once filmed a movie, entitled Sick. About a dangerous virus escaping from the lab. I was cast as the bad guy."

FH: "Sounds great, we'll have to screen it at an alumni party. We don't make movies anymore, but we did recently write a new BeeVee song, to sing at the cobo."

PC: "Cobo?"

FH: "The constitutieborrel. The get-together to celebrate the appointment of a new board."

PC: "Sounds like fraternity lingo to me. On the board photographs you're all wearing suits. Is that what Biology students look like these days?"

FH: "Luckily not! But board members are expected to look neat when visiting other associations."

PC: "We didn't have a dress code in my day. (Laughs:) in any case, I never followed any. Things were more informal in those days."

FH: "Except from the board, everyone is free to be themselves. It doesn't matter how you look or whether you are taking the animal ecology or the molecular medicine specialisation."

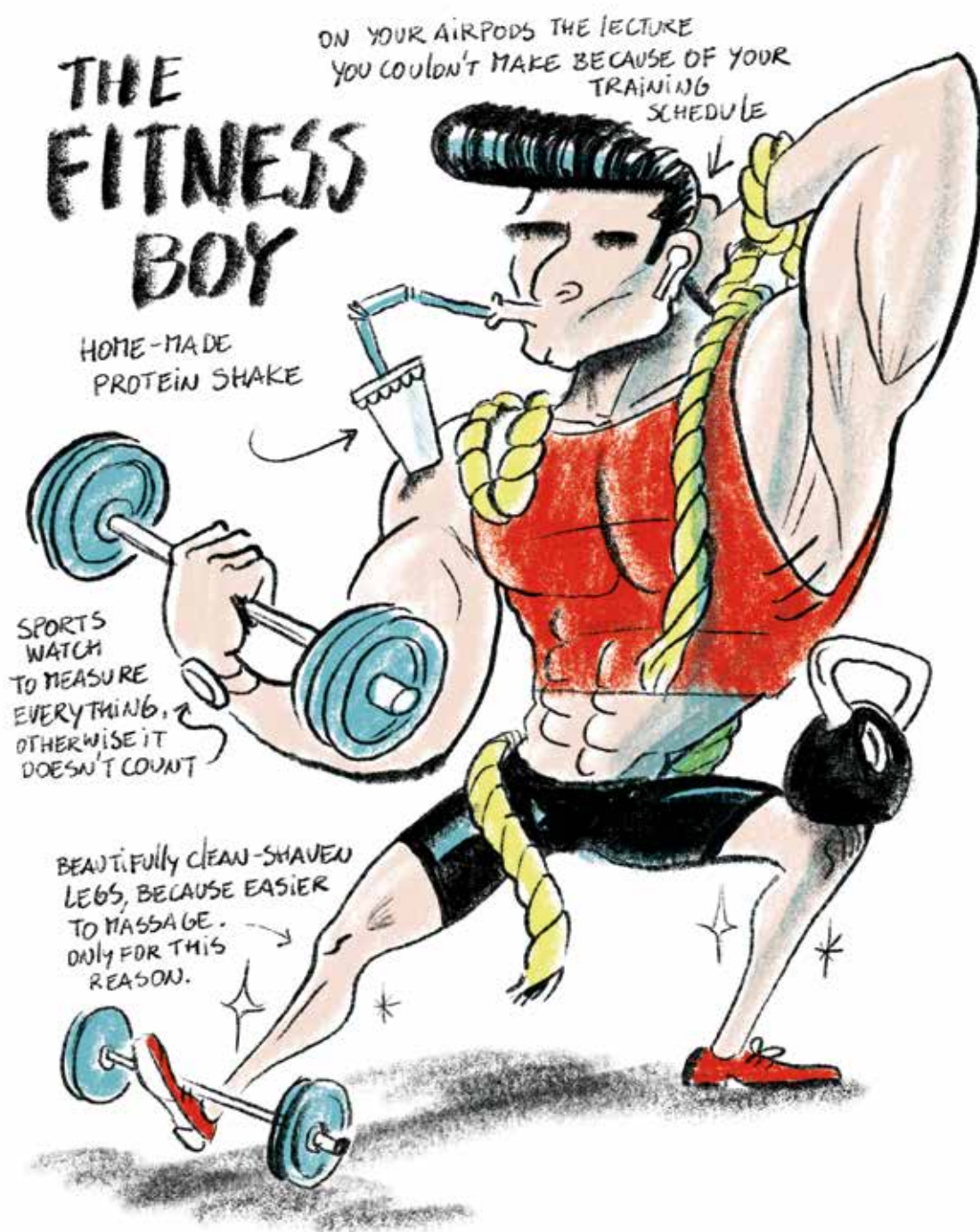
PC: "It used to be quite different. Ecologists thought of themselves as the only real biologists and looked down a bit on molecular biologists, who spent all their time in the lab. You also had to be alternative and a vegetarian. I would attend parties in the medical department wearing my black T-shirt and Doc Martens, just to provoke people. They would look at me like: What the hell are you doing here? I thought: At least here I can seduce a rich woman, ha ha. That plan didn't work out though." ★







# HI, I'M A FITNES



Fitness is becoming increasingly popular, with three million new gym subscriptions in 2018 (source: nlactief.nl). At the Radboud Sports Centre (RSC), subscription numbers are also growing steadily. "It's a positive development that so many students devote time to sports and exercise, and that some even see it as a lifestyle. But it can also lead to social pressure," says Daan Roelofs, Fitness Coordinator at the RSC. "The extremely toned bodies on social media suggest that lots of exercise is the norm, which sometimes results in students coming to us with unrealistically high goals."

Terms like 'fitness boy' and 'fitness girl' are misleading, emphasises Roelofs. They refer to a very small group who play an iconic role because they like to show off their bodies. The vast majority of sporting students train for themselves. Roelofs doesn't see any common denominator among sporting students. On the contrary, what strikes him at the sports centre is the diversity. "Outfits vary from tiger-print outfits to old-fashioned tracksuits. And just the other day, a boy showed up to a training session wearing a dress."

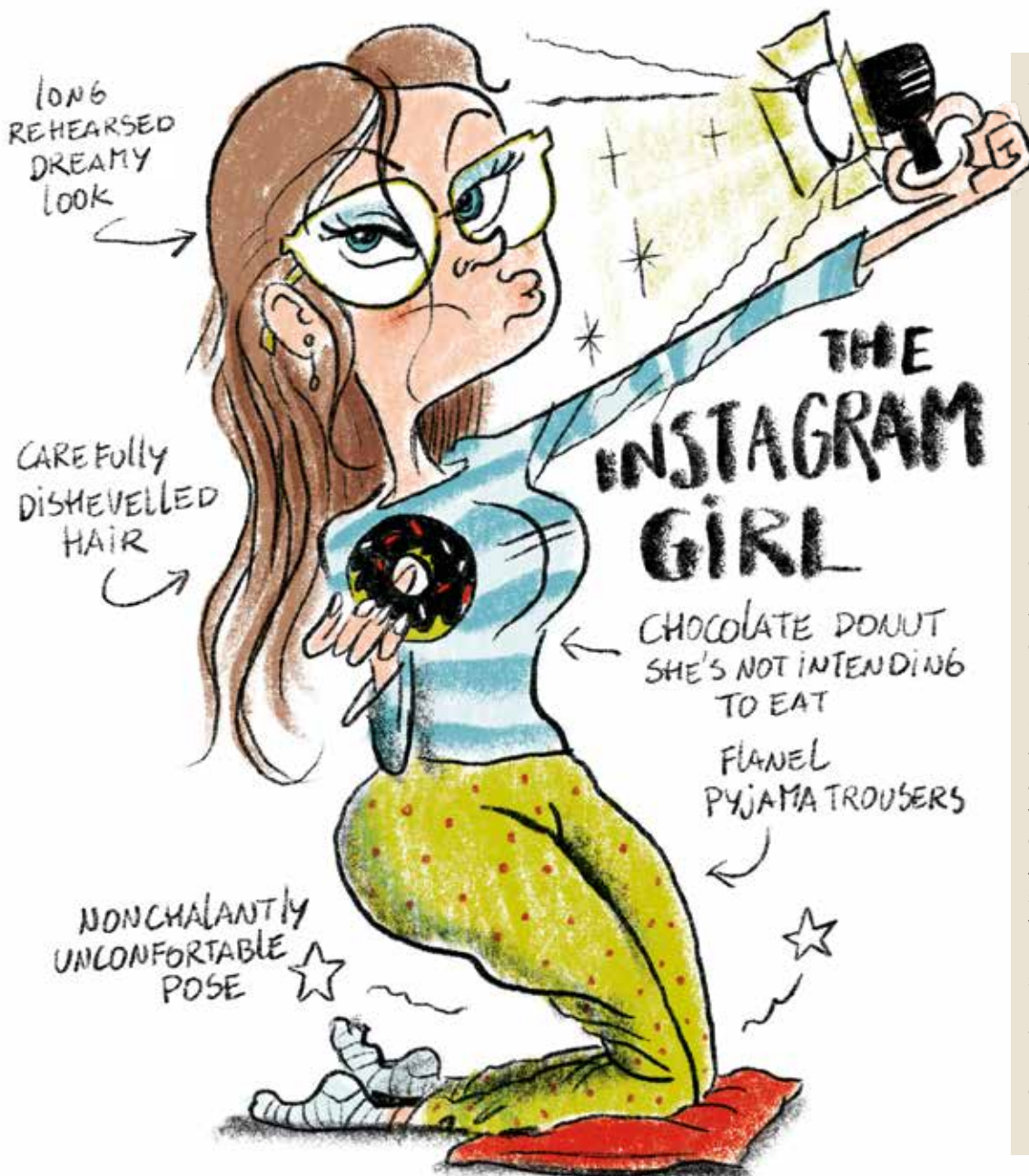
This diversity is characteristic of the RSC. "Traditional sports schools attract more stereotypical athletes like the fitness boy. Students, however, represent a broad section of society, so we get all kinds of people at the Sports Centre."



# S BOY!

Do you spend your time polishing your CV or lifting weights at the gym? Everyone claims to be unique these days, but Vox was still able to distinguish five types of students.

Text: Ken Lambeets and Stijn Zunneberg / Illustrations: Roel Venderbosch



**"Facebook is dead. Almost all students are now on Instagram,"** says Communication Science student Eline Keuven (18), who has nearly 11,000 followers. "More than half my followers found me through my thirteen-year old sister Emma. She has a YouTube channel with 130,000 followers, and as many as 330,000 followers on TikTok." On any given day, Eline spends up to two hours on Instagram. These days a bit less: "My room in Nijmegen isn't light enough, which isn't good for taking pictures (laughs). My mother or sister usually take photos of me: I feel most comfortable with them." Eline thinks of herself as extremely critical. "Most of the time, I have an image in my mind of what I want a photo to look like. On holiday in Italy, for example, I was holding an empty ice-cream cone under the Tower of Pisa, making it look like I was eating the tower." "I sometimes meet people who want their photo taken with me, for instance at the supermarket where I work, of when I went to Pukkelpop. It feels kind of strange, but of course I can't refuse." As a micro-influencer Eline is sometimes sent freebies. "According to my mother, who acts as manager for both me and my sister, I could earn up to € 200 per shot, but I'm not really interested in that. I want to focus on my studies now. In future I'd like to manage the social media of a political party or a big company."

## 'IN THE LECTURE HALLS, ALL STUDENTS LOOK THE SAME'

**Psychologist Maerten Prins finds the audience at his lectures fairly uniform. Students keep the real story for social media.**

Following a 1992 study, Cultural Psychologist Maerten Prins concluded that different faculties attracted different kinds of students. "Law students were primarily materialistic and politically right-wing, sociology students were strongly left-wing and socially involved, and medical students were very career-oriented," says Prins. "Why? Students are not only formed by what they learn in the lecture halls, but also by their environment. In those days, students had more time to engage and identify with a group than today."

These days, it's harder to distinguish between different types of students, says Prins. "In the Psychology department, all students look the same. The girls nearly all have long hair and wear the same kind of clothes. I remember a time when my lectures were attended by real hippies, goths and metalheads." Prins blames the decline in sub-cultures on the individualisation of society. Its no longer hip to be part of a group, he says. "Society demands that everyone be unique. On social media, every young person tries to tell their own story. On the other hand, students also use these media to contact each other."

The loan system leaves students pressed for time. Time they might otherwise have spent profiling themselves or forming their political or cultural world views. "They are blank canvases at the start of their studies, and they are still blank canvases by the time they leave. They're only 22 when they graduate. Innocents, suddenly propelled into the big bad world."



**The number of students renting rooms is falling as a result of the study loan system,** concludes the National Student Housing Monitor in its autumn report. "Renting a room is expensive. Living with my parents saves me a lot of money," agrees Milou Stokman, first-year student in Communication Science. "Plus, there's a good train connection with my hometown, Deventer, and I often travel with my best friend." In the lecture halls, students who

live with their parents may be slightly more withdrawn, but Stokman doesn't see much difference with those who rent a room. "Of course, I sometimes miss a party, but I still have a good connection with my fellow students and I take part in lots of activities organised by the study association." Stokman is not in a hurry to move out, in part because of her brother's experience. He moved to Nijmegen to study Law, only

to quit half-way through his first year. "That's why I'd rather wait a little. I like living with my parents, and my work and social life are in Deventer, so I don't see much reason to move out yet." Is she planning to move to Nijmegen eventually? "I haven't really thought about it yet. I want in any case to finish my first year, so I have a better idea of whether the study programme suits me. For the moment, Deventer is perfect."





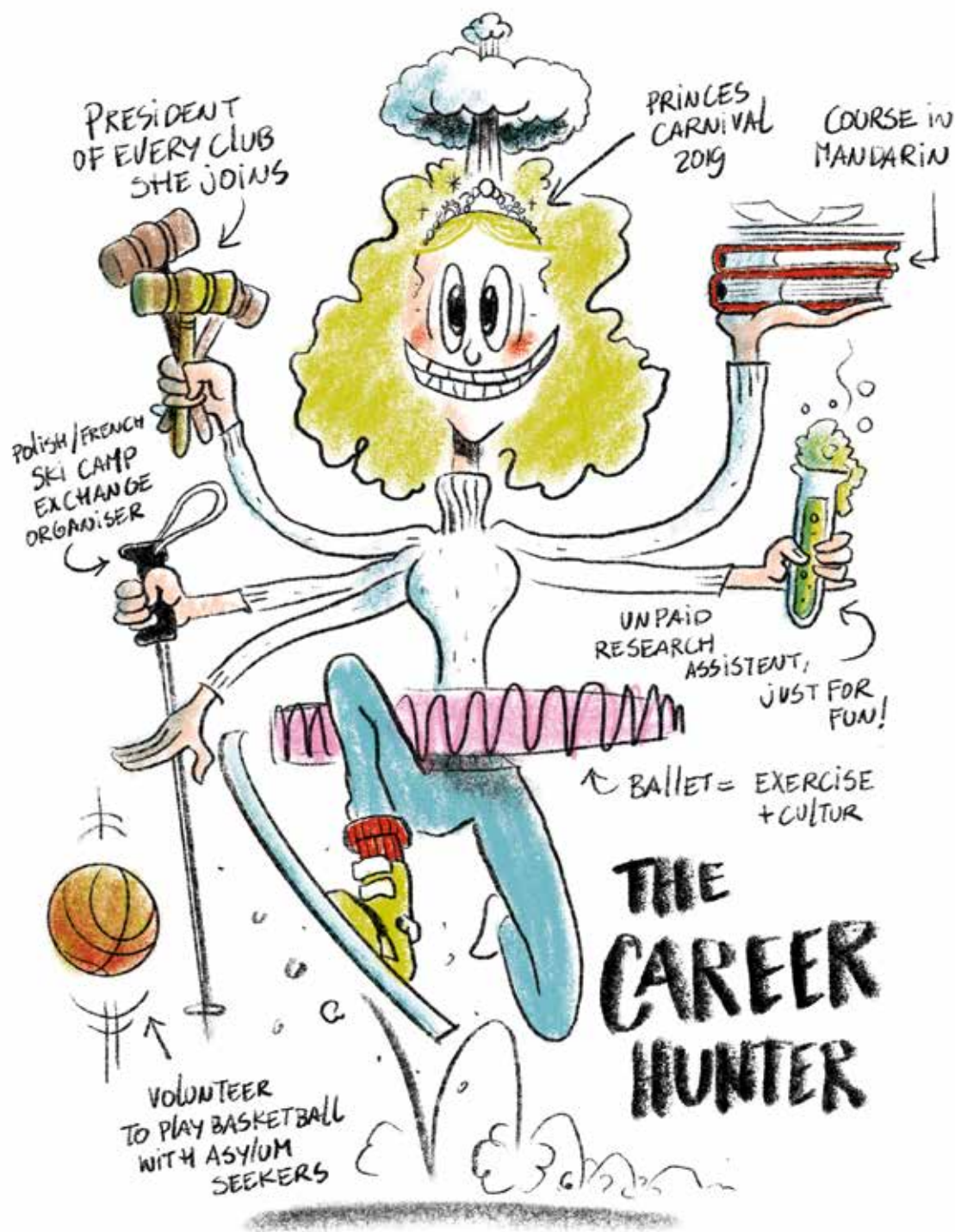
## THE GAMER

**Gijs Jacobs is President of Dorans. The Nijmegen e-sports association has between 80 and 100 members, mostly men.** "Although the women are our most active members," says Jacobs. The Dorans training rooms are located in the Huygens building, so most members naturally come from the Science Faculty. "But we also have members from other faculties!"

Dorans gamers mostly play League of Legends, a game in which teams can win gold coins by eliminating other teams. "It's highly competitive," says Jacobs, "and you have to think of a lot of things at once." As winner of the European League of Legends Championship Series, the Dorans 2017 selection team was invited to the LOL International Collegiate Championships in China.

The stereotype of the gaming nerd has shadowed Dorans members for years. "Of course, we talk a lot about video games: it's what we have in common," says Jacobs. "But it's not true that gamers are anti-social. We organise frequent get-togethers and activities with other associations. Plus, we always play in a group."

There are no real video games addicts at Dorans, says Jacobs. "Most members only play League of Legends during training sessions. We do play other video games at home, but we never let it get in the way of our studies."



**"It's important to seek knowledge in a variety of ways,"** says Public Administration student Xander van Ulsen. He personally did so by taking a seat on the boards of the Public Administration association, the Economics association, and student enterprise Start Up Mix Students, prior to being elected to the University Student Council earlier this year (on behalf of asap). "I started doing board work

to get to know people. The reason I continue to hold these positions is mostly because they're great fun and I learn a lot from them, but also because I've realised that it looks good on my CV." Does he think of himself as a career hunter? "Not really," says Van Ulsen. "At most, I might dress less casually than the average student, for instance when going to a meeting with the Executive

Board, but I don't wear a three-piece suit on Campus." Van Ulsen sees a lot of students who actively prepare for their future career alongside their studies. On the one hand, companies ask for more than study experience. On the other hand, students themselves also have higher expectations. "We sometimes forget that a university diploma is worth a lot

in itself. Plus: Why aim for the top if you're not actually interested in a top-notch job in the Zuidas?" Personally, Van Ulsen is not worried. "It helps to talk to potential employers and find out what they expect. If you can explain what you've learned from your experiences, it doesn't matter much whether you sat on a board or volunteered at the sports association."



## NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY STUDENT COUNCIL AND THE WORKS COUNCIL

[www.radboudnet.nl/medezeggenschap](http://www.radboudnet.nl/medezeggenschap)  
[www.numedezeggenschap.nl](http://www.numedezeggenschap.nl)

# POINT TAKEN!

## University Student Council

### Language test and drinking taps

Just like the New Year, the University Student Council got off to a running start: we're already working on lots of issues via our various working groups, assemblies, meetings and committees.

On Monday 4 February, the entire USC attended the Joint Assembly and in consultation with the Works Council, we put forward remarks and asked questions about a number of agenda items. One of these was the language policy, which is part of the internationalisation strategy Radboud International 2020-2025.

The language policy states that every first-year student will soon have to complete a test in the language of instruction of their study programme. What's more, every Radboud University student will have to obtain a *bewust taalvaardig* ('conscious language competence') certificate by the end of their study programme. We found this item to be so unclear that we asked some questions about it. Stay tuned for an update on this topic.

USC members also asked questions about the board membership certificate, as there is a lot of confusion about the matter. No one seems to know whether this certificate still exists or whether student board members qualify for it. We asked for more clarity, and argued that students should be able to apply for a board membership certificate retroactively.

Finally, we submitted a memorandum on the proposed changes in the BSA procedure. We're still awaiting a response, and will inform you as soon as we know more.

This may create the impression that we've mostly been reactive, trying to control policy plans. Yet nothing could be less true: our committees are working hard on realising our own plans and ideas.

For example, our sustainability working group investigated **waste sorting** on Campus and addressed the issue in the Joint Assembly. As we speak, we are also discussing the possibility of creating water points on Campus. And sustainability is just one example: the USC has more than fifteen(!) working groups who are all working on addressing issues proactively.

If you want to stay informed of our progress, you can follow us on Instagram or Facebook, or visit our website!



## Works Council

### Works Council (OR): Portraits of members

Usually, the Works Council uses this space to inform readers about the policy documents currently being discussed in the University Joint Assembly. But who are the Works Council members? And what motivated them to stand for election? We asked a few Works Council members to tell us a little bit about themselves.

**Nico ten Brink** is an information specialist at the ICT Service Centre and represents the FNV union on the Works Council. He's involved, among other things, in the Finances Committee and the spotlight on the field procedure. He's also the contact person for the Radboud Services Committee. Nico believes in sustainable development at regional level and is very much in favour of Radboud University's plans to create better and more environmentally friendly logistics in collaboration with HAN University of Applied Sciences and the Municipality of Nijmegen. He's also interested in social safety. Nico is glad that the Board focuses its efforts on remedying work pressure and ensuring more uniform reporting on the part of confidential counsellors, without jeopardising confidentiality.

**Marijtte Jongsma** is an Associate Professor in Psychology and represents the VAWO union on the Works Council. Marijtte is passionate about representing the interests of the staff, which is why she focuses her attention on labour conditions and personnel affairs. Themes such as performance pressure, temporary appointments, but also diversity, academic freedom and career perspectives are all matters close to her heart. As a Works Council member, she enjoys the opportunity to attend exceptional academic meetings with Nobel Prize winners, famous scientists, politicians or writers.

**Simone Lederer** is completing her PhD in Computer Science and represents PON on the Works Council. She's interested in co-participation, work and social life on Campus. Since she is herself part of the international Campus community, she'd like to contribute to creating a more inclusive Campus. She actively supports the use of English in official meetings and the translation of documents into English. Her greatest achievement within the Works Council has been the recognition of a mistake in calculating the salary of international employees. It took her months to obtain the information she needed, but once the mistake had been acknowledged in the Joint Assembly, employees were reimbursed five years' worth of arrears.

EVERYTHING  
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IN THE OLD  
DAYS

RIGHT?

# 'These days it's unthinkable to build a fire in the association building'

**B**art Verschure (BV): "In your day Ovum was just a small club."

Rein Ketelaars (RK): "We had 130 members, a historical low point. Apparently we did do something right, though, because after that the number of members grew fast."

BV: "We now have approximately six hundred members, and we've grown into the largest student association in Nijmegen. It's great to see how things have changed. On the photographs from your time, everyone's wearing bright yellow and purple; these days it's all suits and ties."

RK: "We were going through an identity crisis. We so much wanted to be different from Carolus, yet we looked more and more like them. That explains the emphasis on yellow and purple. Our posters were in those colours, we walked around the University wearing yellow and purple, and if you showed up at the bar in a purple-yellow jacket, you got free drinks."

BV: "Now the trend is more towards suits and ties at open parties. It's what most members wear."

RK: "We were constantly busy motivating people. We'd call up all the members on our list: we'll give you a free sweater if you come and help. Maybe that's why we grew so fast."

BV: "And twenty years ago it was normal to build a fire in the association building on club nights. Or to make a mess and jump over the bar."

RK: "It's true we were a bit wild in those days."

BV: "These days it's unthinkable to build a fire in the association building. We still sometimes take the fire hose down and spray people, but that's about the worst of it. Drinking beer, on the other hand, is timeless; we still do plenty of that."

RK: "It's completely crazy, when you think about it, to just build a fire next to the bar. Whenever it happened,

Good fun and beer are the two constants in the history of Ovum Novum, but lots of things have changed too, say the former and the current President.

Text: Mickey Steijaert  
Photo: Bert Beelen

## WHO'S WHO?

**Bart Verschure (24),**  
Law student, President  
of N.S.V. Ovum Novum  
2018-2019

**Rein Ketelaars (42),**  
anaesthesiologist at  
Radboud university  
medical center and on  
the trauma helicopter.  
President of N.S.V.  
Ovum Novum  
1999-2000.

we immediately intervened and put a stop to it."

BV: "What about throwing flour around?"

RK: "When we went to visit sister associations, we did take along bags of flour. Innocent but messy fun."

BV: "I think members today behave more responsibly. There's been so much media attention on excesses at student associations."

RK: "In my day you'd also sometimes read in the paper about a student drinking a litre of gin during an initiation ceremony. But things are under much more scrutiny now."

BV: "Student associations tend to have a bad reputation.

We have to do our best to gain some positive attention. Last week, I followed a media training programme, together with the other board members: we practised talking in front of a camera and then watching the recording."

RK: "I think that's really useful. When you ask people about student associations these days, they say: 'That's where they're disrespectful to women and pour fish sauce all over you.' That's not the kind of image you want."

BV: "We actually have a lot of positive things to show. At our last Christmas dinner, three year clubs from the period 1995-2000 showed up out of the blue to have a look around. That kind of long-term commitment is typical of our association and it's quite telling."

RK: "I see the same thing in my wife's year club. She was an Ovum member too. I also know lots of Ovum couples who are still together. I think it's great. Kind of a ... heritage piece?" (Laughs) "I wanted to say 'trophy'."

BV: "Something to hold on to, you mean?"

RK: "Yes. Student days are such a formative and exciting period. If you meet a nice woman during this time and then spend the rest of your life with her, that's something special. And now we're welcoming lots of Ovum babies.

I'm curious when the first of them will join up." \*





Bart

Rein

# A DEGREE IN THEIR POCKET

## AND STILL TOTALLY UNPREPARED FOR THE LABOUR MARKET

Why bother studying at a university for five years only to subsequently fall into a black hole? The question 'What do I want to be when I grow up?' is on the mind of many students. Shouldn't the University devote more serious efforts to labour market orientation?

Text: Mathijs Noij / Illustration: emdé

**V**ictoria Smeets (26) doesn't know what she wants to be when she grows up. Nor does she have much time left to ponder the question, busy as she is writing her final thesis for the Master's programme in Conflict, Power and Politics. "Yes, I do worry about it," she nods in agreement in the coffee lounge of the University Library. "I have no idea what I'm going to do next."

When she's not working on her thesis, the Political Science student is trying to find an internship. It's not a compulsory part of her degree programme, but something she wants for herself. In fact, during the first meeting of her Master's programme, she was told an internship would automatically lead to study delay. "I took this to mean we weren't encouraged to pursue an internship." As if all the coordinators wanted was for students to leave after one year with a degree in their pocket – never once taking into consideration the odds of these graduates actually finding a job.

Business Administration student Sam Oolbekkink (22) leans on one of the standing tables in the lounge, a steaming cup of coffee in front of him. He did manage to find an internship: he's due to start at a financial institution shortly. "I think it's good to check whether this company suits me. I may want to work there in future, although it depends of course on what vacancies they have."

Oolbekkink, who already has a degree from a University of Applied Sciences, sees it as the students' responsibility to orientate themselves on the labour market. He found his internship on his own initiative. He also took part in a number of orientation activities, like Career Week. "A university degree primarily trains you to be an expert in your field – the rest is largely up to you."

Still, Radboud University does devote more attention to labour market orientation than it used to, even though the initiatives in question are still in their infancy. Seven years ago, in response to an alumni survey that showed that people felt they had missed out on career orientation, the Career Service was created. Since then every Faculty has appointed staff whom students can turn to with questions about their future career.

At the Faculty of Science, students can contact Wencke Kieft. Sometimes she helps them put together a CV or negotiate a salary. Most students haven't reached that stage, though, she tells Vox in the Huygens building. "Many still have to discover what they want to do after their studies," says Kieft. "So I take them back through the basics. What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing? I help students answer these questions – the search for vacancies comes at a later stage."

### GRADUATES AREN'T MUCH OLDER THAN IN THE PAST

Studying used to be fun in the old days: students easily spent ten years on their studies. Right? Well, for that you'd have to go quite far back in time. Over the past twenty years, the average age of university graduates has remained remarkably stable – in spite of binding study advices, compulsory attendance, B-in-4s and other efficiency measures. In 1995, graduates were on average aged just under 25. The most recent figures available are from 2016 and reveal the average graduation age to be 24 years and 9 months.



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**COMPANY**  
SUITS ME'





## 'WE ARE DAMAGING THE FREE WILL OF SCHOOL CHILDREN AND STUDENTS'

The number of students who turn to the Career Service continues to grow, says Kieft. "In particular, an increasing number of students are facing choice overload. Due to information overload, students no longer have a clear idea of their options. They are drowning in online vacancies and job descriptions." The result, according to Kieft, is that students become paralysed. They don't do anything anymore. Or they go in search of even more vacancies, which only complicates things further.

The financial situation of today's students is no help. Nobody likes being in debt – whether to 'Uncle DUO' or to one's parents. Kieft: "You come home after a week of studying, and your father asks you at the kitchen table whether you know yet what you want to do after your studies. Parents want their children to do well – they want to know that their investment is paying off. Students feel this pressure."

And this while it's not strange at all for students not to know what they want to do with the rest of their lives. Kieft: "Of course they don't know. How could they? They've never set foot outside the university." What's more, says Kieft, a young person isn't yet capable of making life-changing decisions. "Our brain is only

equipped for this kind of decision by age 26. That's when our brains mature, yet we expect young people to make important decisions long before that."

But what's the alternative? Let students fool around until they're nearly thirty? "That's no longer socially acceptable," says Kieft. "Students used to take ten years to complete their degree and they had all the time in the world to find out what they wanted, but those days are long gone."

### Their own will

Some people refuse to accept this, for instance Jan Bransen. In his latest book, *Gevormd of vervormd?* (*Formed or deformed?*), the Professor of Philosophy pleads for a radical new form of education. In his vision, studying and work should be combined from day one. This would allow students to experience from the start which organisations they feel at home in, what's expected of them, and what knowledge and skills are required in the workplace.

"You already see large companies training their own personnel. 'Give us ten smart pre-university (VWO) graduates, and we'll train them ourselves,' they say. The same thing is happening at the Police Academy." Bransen argues that prospective educators, lawyers and municipal workers would all benefit from combining work and studies. He asks the VOX journalist: "Wouldn't you have learned much faster if you'd gone to work for a newspaper part-time straight after secondary school? If you'd started out reporting on fire incidents? Isn't that much



more useful than exploring endless abstract theories?”

In Bransen’s opinion, universities “fail completely” to prepare students for the labour market. In the old days, this made sense, explains the Philosopher. Universities were a small bastion for elite bright minds and they functioned as a kind of internal training programme, with the Professor training his own followers. “But these days, with tens of thousands of students per university, this is clearly no longer true. The vast majority of students will find work elsewhere.” As a result, students end up in free fall after graduation. “This is when they suddenly discover they still have a lot to learn, but they’re already 24 years old and have accrued a massive debt.”

Bransen is so critical of the university that it’s almost a miracle he himself is part of it. “What we mostly teach students here is to wait until an assignment comes their way, complete it, report on it, then move on to the next assignment. Check, check, check. But is this the kind of attitude you will need in your future job? I think lots of graduates are very good in a job simulation environment, but have no idea how to deal with the real thing.”

Incidentally, universities are not the only culprits. Things already go wrong in secondary school, says Bransen. Secondary school students are so tightly controlled that they have no opportunity to find out what they want. “It’s all about one thing: leaving school with as many qualifications as possible. Do what you’re told – it’s for your own good! That’s what we tell these children.”

Then, when they finally leave school after six years of hard work with a pre-university degree – are they free to explore what they want? “No,” says Bransen. “Now we change the question from ‘What do you want?’ to ‘What study programme do you want to follow?’ And that means choosing from a very limited menu. The question whether they have to study anything at all never gets asked.”

“In my book I once use the term ‘child abuse’, because I believe that’s what this is. We are damaging the free will of school children and students. We completely ignore it. And then we complain that school students lack motivation. Shouldn’t that set off some alarm bells?”

### Job guarantee

Back to the coffee lounge of the University Library, where Master’s student Victoria Smeets explains she was recently invited for an interview at an internship organisation, but was refused in the end. “Other candidates had more work experience than I did.” But how are you supposed to gain work experience, if you can’t even get an internship? “I know,” sighs Smeets, “I’ve got no idea how it works either.”

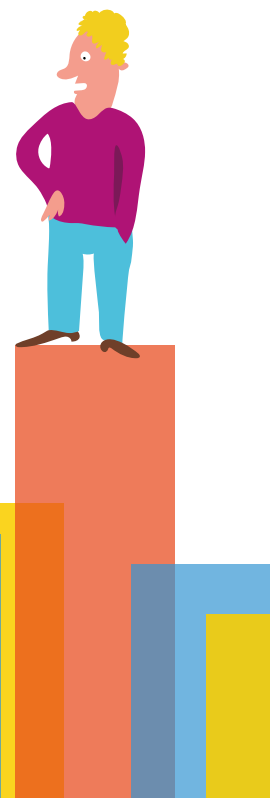
This summer, she’s committed to graduating at all costs. And then? She expects that without work experience it will be hard to find a job. “But I’ve got a Plan B: the Royal Military Academy. If you complete one of their degrees, you’re guaranteed a job. Maybe I’ll end up doing that – ultimately I do want security.” \*

## A DIPLOMA ALONE IS NOT ENOUGH

Upon graduation most students are experts within their own discipline. But is this enough to guarantee a job in the long term? No, says Beatrice van der Heijden. That’s why the Professor of Strategic Human Resource Management devotes time in her lectures to what she calls her students’ employability skills.

“The instrument I developed to measure employability distinguishes five dimensions that predict success on the labour market,” explains Van der Heijden. “Specialist knowledge is only one of them.” Employees need more than this to guarantee employability in the long run. For example, organisational sensitivity is also important – knowing how things work, having a feel for politics and communication lines – as is the ability to anticipate technological and other developments. Another tip by the Professor: don’t just focus on the targets that will satisfy your boss, but be critical about whether you can realise your own ambitions and goals.

Once at work, young people have one big advantage over their older colleagues. Van der Heijden’s research reveals that employers associate young employees with a greater career potential. Younger employees are seen as more flexible and innovative. “But,” warns Van der Heijden, “these are stereotypes.” In the end, employers are just as satisfied with the performance of older employees as with that of their younger colleagues. But the positive stereotypes associated with young people put them at an advantage.





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# 'Guys, when are you going to wake up?'

**J**oost Heilbron (JH) (surprised): "The office hasn't changed at all! The same kind of people, the same activists lounging around, and it's still more of a mess than you'd expect in an office."

Miranda van de Burgt (MvdB): "And we really did our best to clean up!"

JH: "We used to do that too, but it was even more of a mess in those days."

MvdB: "The office has to be a place where you can work efficiently, but also eat your grilled sandwich or bowl of noodles, or have a beer. A mix of conviviality and 'working our ass off' when needed."

JH: "That's the dilemma you face as a student union. You want to make optimal use of your time, but also create a comfortable space for students to enjoy their sandwiches. The same is true of your work for the board: you have to be able to talk to important people, as well as hang out with activists until the small hours."

MvdB: "All members have to know your face. Our board members are putting in so much time and effort, while everyone is just busy studying, that's something I'm really grateful for."

JH: "It's increasingly amazing that there are still activists around. Since the 1990s, there have only been cuts in higher education and student facilities. Every time it makes you realise: shit, we've been screwed over again."

MvdB: "For me it would also probably be smarter to complete my degree and get a job. But I can't accept the fact that so many students are suffering from these measures and that education is becoming less and less accessible."

JH: "If you're afraid to take out a student loan, you might

Put together two Presidents of the student union AKKU, and you get a dialogue about student activism today – and drinking beer in the office.

Text: Mickey Steijaert  
Photo: Bert Beelen

## WHO'S WHO?

**Miranda van de Burgt** (28), Philosophy student. President of AKKU 2018-2019.

**Joost Heilbron** (39), staff member at the VVM network for environmental professionals. President of AKKU 2002-2003.

end up not studying at all. And not get so far in life as a result."

MvdB: "And have less chance on the labour market. These days we also organise actions on behalf of the lecturers. In the old days, it used to be mostly against the lecturers, I think."

JH: "It depends where the counter-pressure came from. If it came from the government, then we formed a unified front with the whole university. But if it was about the binding study advice, then we were suddenly against the Executive Board. That felt more like fighting the grown-ups. Ha ha."

MvdB: "We often talk about whether we can count on student militancy. Were they more militant in your day? Because I'm involved in AKKU, I clearly have an opinion about it. I think: Come on guys, when are you going to wake up? Let your voices be heard."

JH: "You don't have to put up with all the shit thrown your way."

MvdB: "Exactly! I've spoken to lots of students about the WOinActie demonstration, back in December. Everyone said: 'How cool that you're doing this!' But they weren't actually planning to come, because they had deadlines."

JH: "That was always the case. You always have the feeling that students aren't interested. Clearly, that's not true, they simply have other priorities that are just as easy to justify."


MvdB: "I do notice that interest is growing. Lots of students who didn't attend the December demonstration now say they wish they had. And they ask how they can help prepare for the action week and the strike in March."

JH: "Well, there you go, that sounds very hopeful!" \*







A man with glasses and a black turtleneck stands in a modern interior with red chairs. He has his arms crossed and is looking directly at the camera. The background shows a white table and several red chairs on a grey tiled floor.

As a study advisor, Nol Vermeulen has spent four decades listening to the dreams and disappointments of students. And that while he only ever came to Radboud University to get a degree. Students have changed, he says. Glued to their iPhones, yet unable to search for information independently.

Text: Martine Zuidweg / Photography: Duncan de Fey

**'There's a  
lot more  
pampering  
these days'**





**Y**ou spend 37 years putting your heart and soul into your work as study advisor. And then one day, you reach the age of 65. One month before your birthday you get a letter, asking you to hand in your iPad and access pass. Your account is deleted; your staff ID number disappears. As if you're going to jail and are asked to empty out your pockets. Nol Vermeulen was quite upset. "Of course, it's all bureaucracy and no harm was meant. I get that. But still."

This was a year ago, and Nol Vermeulen is still around. In April, there'll be a farewell party for him at the Nijmegen School of Management. He isn't really looking forward to it. "I'm not one for farewells and speeches. Plus, I've got a new temporary contract at the Faculty of Arts. If it was left up to me, I'd like to continue working. Why not?"

#### **Accountant**

Radboud University's most senior study advisor isn't going to let them send him away just like that. Vermeulen sees that there's still a need for his services. Young colleagues often ask him for advice, pre-university (VWO) students look relieved when he tells them what studying involves, and students are encouraged by the way he puts things into perspective. He's been a study advisor for nearly four decades. First at the Law Faculty, where he came to study Law in 1979. He was 28 and had already spent five years working as an accountant. "I just wanted to get a degree so I could make a career in the corporate sector. I planned to go back to the world of Peter Stuyvesant." As a Law student, he worked evenings on the side, first as a student assistant, later as assistant study advisor. In his fourth year, he accepted a permanent position as study advisor at the Law Faculty.

#### *Were you still studying at the time?*

Laughing: "Yes, at a rate of one course per year. Because of my work, I can't say I was quick to complete my degree: it took me eleven years in the end. And I never did graduate in Law."

He switched to the brand-new Faculty of Policy Studies, forerunner of the Nijmegen School of Management. He talks about it using the corporate jargon so familiar to him. "You could say I was bought out by the prospective Faculty of Policy Studies."

Business Administration, today's mega study programme, didn't even exist then. "I had to create prospectuses, draw up timetables: you could say I was a jack of all trades."

"Why don't you graduate at our Faculty?" asked the first Professor of Business Administration, and Vermeulen took him up on his offer. After all, he already had some practical experience in business economics. "I opted for an 'open degree'. This allowed me to include the courses

I'd followed at the Law Faculty, so I only had to do a few business administration courses. These days it's called an Open Degree Master's Programme. It still exists, but students don't make use of it because they don't know about it. Because they don't look further than their iPhone."

### Jehovah's Witness

Oh, those iPhones! So characteristic of today's students, says Vermeulen. Because with their phones, students bring their entire social life along to Campus. "WhatsApp messages, Instagram, they're busy on it all day long: 'I've got to go to the movies, I still have to catch up with X, and post a photo here.'" In his day, things were different. Between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. you were a student and nothing else. "We parked our regular life to study. I only had ten hours of lectures a week, so I took on additional courses. After all, here I was, in a paradise of knowledge. It seemed like a pity to waste time."

With all the information available on the Internet, you'd expect today's students not to need a student advisor anymore. But Vermeulen spends all his time helping students navigate their study programme. There's information enough: about timetables, required literature, Open Degree Master's Programmes. But they don't look for it, despite Vermeulen's efforts to stimulate them. Just yesterday, at an information evening for secondary school students, he said: "Boys and girls, you'll soon be the director of your own company: Student Ltd. This means you will be the one responsible for your company. You have to find the information that's relevant to your company, and you have to keep knocking on people's doors, Jehovah's Witness-style, until they answer your questions."

Is it because of the way students are wrapped in cotton wool? All this information at their fingertips, all the things mentors organise for their charges right from the start? Vermeulen doesn't know. "There's a lot more pampering, even though the students themselves say they want even more facilities, and even more consideration for their individual situations."

The fact is that a large majority of students fail to plan their study programme and as a result end up in Vermeulen's office sooner or later. So he sits down with yet another third-year student, planning courses. "I can't help but think: 'Come on, you've been walking

## 'STUDENTS DON'T LOOK FURTHER THAN THEIR IPHONE'





around Campus for three years, can't you put your schedule together yourself?' 'Yes, but I want to go abroad, and it doesn't fit,' he objects. No, that's true, if you want to go abroad in your third year, you have to start planning in your second year. Make sure you complete all your second-year courses on time. Plan ahead!"

### Burn-out

This lack of autonomy is a problem, says Vermeulen. It worries him. "I think we should be careful not to pamper students too much. We're a university, not a school. I often tell people: 'You're the one who wants to study. I've already got my degree. You can't just bang your fist on the table and expect us to organise everything for you.'"

Burn-out? Vermeulen looks irritated. Yes, he's also read the reports about students today being more likely to suffer a burn-out. And no, he's not trying to deny the problem. "Well, it's not due to the study programmes, that's for sure." The first year may be a bit tough, with the binding study advice looming. But afterwards, it's not that much work. "Look, at the Science and the Medicine Faculty, things are different: most days are filled with practicals and seminars. But at the Nijmegen School of Management, or the Arts or Social Sciences faculties, students have lots of room to plan their study programme as they wish. I don't see how you can talk about 'too much pressure.'"

The real pressure is group pressure, in Vermeulen's experience. Friends and parents with high expectations, who want their child to

get a university degree even when the child in question is a 'doer' who'd be much happier at a University of Applied Sciences. Or girlfriends who claim you can forget about a career if you don't have an average grade of 8/10.

As they progress in their studies, and the labour market looms closer, students start telling each other they won't find a job unless they get high grades, a job on the side, and spend some time abroad. "We also contribute to this madness. Radboud University now issues students with a certificate – handed out together with their diploma – for doing board work."

He recently spoke to a student who had it all figured out: cum laude degree, lots of extra-curricular activities. He couldn't wait to start working at McKinsey, one of the top management consultancy firms. He got turned down because his secondary school grades weren't good enough.

Vermeulen: "I said to him: 'When you hear this, about those secondary school grades, do you even want to work there?' I mean, isn't that where you say: 'Get lost, I'm out of here!'"

### Debt

The fact that students have to borrow money also creates pressure. Parents are often not fair in this respect, says Vermeulen. They've got to be honest with their children: 'Darling, after you complete your degree you'll have a debt of €15,000 to €30,000.' It's not such a disaster – the study advisor knows how to put things into perspective. "You've got thirty years to pay it back. As soon as you're earning money, just repay €175 a month, and you'll be done in fifteen years! Gas, water, light, I always say. How bad is that? You now belong to the 10% of Dutch people with an academic degree, the 10% with the best chances on the labour market."

He doesn't have to think long when asked if he has a golden tip. "Take control of your studies." Precisely because today's students think of university as a school, with the accompanying compulsory programme, they tend to forget that they've got control over the programme. Or, as Vermeulen likes to say: they are directors of their own Student Ltd. The Economics student who recently came to him because he missed in-depth reflection is now taking a Minor in Philosophy. Vermeulen smiles. This is what he wants for them: to become curious explorers who aren't intimidated by scary stories about the grades they need or the internships they must follow. "Guys, it really is up to you, you know!" ★



COLUMN

## Lucy's law

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

### Party

I'd love to be a student in this day and age! With all those digital resources, studying is a lot easier. You can follow lectures on your laptop from under your warm duvet, while checking Tinder now and then on your smartphone. You can Google your essay or thesis and then use [www.synoniemen.net](http://www.synoniemen.net) to make sure Urkund, the online plagiarism police, doesn't raise the alarm when faced with your concoctions. And if you want to stay in bed all day, just have a Deliveroo guy or girl risk their life in traffic to bring you a meal.

Seriously, though: I don't know whether studying is such a party these days. A lot is expected of students in terms of study performance, and social pressure is high: without an exciting Instagram life, you're a nobody. As I write this column, a study has just been revealed that students with a student loan are more likely to feel extremely tired, emotionally exhausted, and worried about burn-out. Was everything better in the good old days? Not really. Without a smartphone and dating apps you depended for your dates on the communal telephone in your student house, which was always occupied. And when you did finally get a date, it was often not that great. Students still had pubic hair in those days, so there were a lot of lice going around. On the other hand: in my days compulsory seminars were not yet all the rage and I lived mostly for myself and not for my Instagram followers. As a Law student, I only had a few hours of lectures a week, the OV chip card was unlimited, and there was lots of time to party.

What it really boils down to is this: Can we, in 2019, offer students better-quality education than we got in the old days? I may be only one small cog in the larger machine, but I know I'll be doing my damned best to make sure we do!

## BIO

**Nol Vermeulen** was born in Gilze en Rijen (1952). From 1974 until 1979 he worked as an assistant accountant, before proceeding to study Law, Business Economics and Business Administration. He graduated in 1997. From the start of his student career, Vermeulen was called upon to give his fellow students study advice. First as an assistant study advisor, then after four years he took up a permanent position at the Law Faculty. For the past thirty years, he has worked as a study advisor and external information officer at the Nijmegen School of Management. He also currently works as a study advisor at the Faculty of Arts.





# High ceilings and a beautiful view

Today's students like to live in style.  
Still, few can afford a classy life in a studio in  
Mariënbosch or a big apartment in the centre.  
'The ceiling is 4 metres high here. I've still  
got no idea how to replace that light bulb.'

Text: Lara Maassen / Photography: Julie de Bruin

## LIVING IN A STUDIO IN MARIËNBOSCH

**The front door of the 'old' Mariënbosch won't open.**

"It should work now!" shouts Philosophy student Pam Tönissen down the phone. "At the end of the hallway, turn left, then go up to the second floor. I'll be waiting for you by the connecting door." The doors don't always work properly, she explains as she opens the door. "That's what happens with so many residents."

For the past four years Tönissen has lived in a high-ceilinged 18 m<sup>2</sup> studio in Mariënbosch, an old monastery that was renovated into a student complex in 2015. To the left of the entrance is her kitchenette, to the right the door to the bathroom. The floor sports a bright green carpet. "There was a bit of it left at the store, so I got it at a big discount," explains the Master's student. "Then I thought I'd paint the wall green too. This colour is called grasshopper green."

Seated at her neatly organised desk, Tönissen looks through a large window with a view of the forest. Next to her desk is a wooden bookcase, a small sofa and an

electric piano. To reach her bed, she must climb some stairs. A narrow staircase leads to the entresol where she sleeps. It's the details that show

that it's a student who lives here: the fake Christmas tree

half hidden behind the bookcase, the lamp that doesn't work. Tönissen laughs.

"The ceiling is 4 metres high here. I've still got no idea how to replace that bulb."

Apart from details like this, Tönissen's studio doesn't look like most people's idea of a traditional student room. No mould-covered dishes from three days ago lying amid empty beer cans. No clothes on the floor, no hordes of housemates walking in unannounced and no loud music from the neighbour downstairs. Instead, there is the serenity of a monastery, and a view.

The building is mostly inhabited by senior students. The waiting list at SSH& is four to five years – Mariënbosch is popular. Tönissen's studio costs € 485, but she does receive housing benefits, so in the end it costs her approximately € 314.

## 2019'S STUDENT

\* **IDEALLY WANTS TO LIVE IN A STUDIO OR APARTMENT IN A TOP LOCATION**

According to the 2018 National Student Housing Monitor, students would ideally like to have a private studio in the centre. If they could afford it, that is. The studios at Mariënbosch and the Gouverneur are mostly home to senior students, says SSH& spokesman Vincent Buitenhuis. "Most students still live in housing with shared facilities, which is usually cheaper, with shorter waiting lists. This appeals to the younger students in particular. Plus, they enjoy it: they can cook together, get to know new people, and explore student life."

\* **SLEEPS IN A TWO-PERSON BED**

\* **CARES ABOUT AMBIANCE.** Wants a living space that is decorated cheaply, but stylishly. No random collection of second-hand stuff, but a sleek IKEA kitchen, a long dining-room table, and matching colours.

\* **DOESN'T WATCH TV, PREFERRING NET FLIX ON THE LAPTOP**

\* **HAS ONE OR MORE HOUSEPLANTS FOR COMPANY**

\* **OWNS A CABINET FILLED WITH BOOKS OR, MORE LIKELY, INTERESTING OBJECTS ON DISPLAY**

\* **HAS EVERYTHING DELIVERED** (at the risk of packages getting lost among housemates)

\* **SUFFERS FROM THE HOUSING SHORTAGE.**

Doesn't want to wait too long for the perfect room, but has no choice in the matter. SSH& is not going to endlessly continue to build new studios and small apartments, explains Buitenhuis. "We see that a growing number of students want to live in studios, but in the end most still opt for shared facilities. You shouldn't forget that the average student has an income of € 900 a month. We want to keep the rooms affordable for them. Plus, we have to create another nine hundred student housing units over the coming years. If we only build studios, we won't achieve this."



## THE LUXURY OF A BIG ROOM NEAR THE STATION

**Fifth-year History student and co-founder of the *Nijmeegse Krachtsport Vereniging* (Nijmegen Body-Building Association) Maarten van den Nieuwenhuizen lives in Talia, at the heart of the city centre, next to the station and above *Doornroosje*.** The students

here don't have studios, but share an apartment with three other people. In an empty kitchen/living room – his housemates have all left to spend the weekend at their parents' – he pours coffee into two Radboud mugs. The space on the sixth floor looks more like a small apartment than a student house, even though the furniture is the typical random student collection of accidental finds: a wooden table, a sofa, a TV, a cupboard. "At first, we just made use of whatever we had," says Van den Nieuwenhuizen, "but over time, we've replaced it with better furniture. The table is new and we saved the chairs from the Thomas van Aquinostraat. We took them before the building was demolished."

It feels like a luxury for Van den Nieuwenhuizen that everything is new and spacious. "Everything is well cared for. We recently got a new washing machine and dryer, that's not something you can count on in a normal student house." He also likes the flat's perfect size: "Four is a good number. You don't have all the noise from dozens of housemates, but you can still eat together if you want to. Especially in the beginning we spent a lot of time hanging out on the sofa, but I still feel I've got enough space to do my own thing." His own room, with its 15 m<sup>2</sup>, is big enough to sleep, study and live in. The window sill sports no fewer than eight plants. A hobby that got out of hand, the student explains, laughing. "I bought them a while back as seedlings, but they've all big grown now." The arty posters on the wall are "just regular IKEA stuff", the wood stove is a gift from his parents. "This room is bigger than the previous two I lived in. It also feels more spacious. At the Galgenveld I had a tiny window facing a concrete wall – now I've got a view of the whole city."



THE WINDOW SILL SPORTS NO  
FEWER THAN EIGHT PLANTS. A  
HOBBY THAT GOT OUT OF HAND











# 'Monty Python always attracted a full house!'

**P**im Franssen (PF): "A theatre hall, that's what we were fighting for in my day. A fight we always lost, until ..."

Jory Strijbos (JS): "Until last year. That's when Theaterzaal C (in the Elinor Ostrom building, Eds.) opened its doors."

PF: "It's really turned out great! We used to stage performances at the Cultuurcafé. At the time, the podium was right in front of the bar. Lebbis and Janssen once did a show there. During the show, they said they were literally playing up against the bar. It was a really awkward set-up."

JS: "We still organise live music performances at the Cultuurcafé, but it's almost impossible to perform theatre there."

PF: "It was always a battle between culture and the beer drinkers. Is that still the case?"

JS: "Yes, that sounds very recognisable. We plan as many performances and shows as we can in Theaterzaal C, but we have to compete with the Radboud Reflects programmes. We often hear from students: That sounds like great fun, but I don't have time!"

PF: "I think students do have less time than they used to. In my day we still got five years' worth of student grant. And the university system has become much more school-like. I remember we were told at the start of a course: 'This is the material, this is the book we'll be reading, and this is the exam date. Good luck!' Now you have to attend seminars every week, prepare for everything. It's less flexible."

JS: "That's what we find when we look for committee members. Students say: I want to do it, but I don't want to accrue any study delay, because I've also got a job on the side, and I'm already in debt. We're already

What the former President of *Cultuur op de Campus* (in those days known as the *Studenten Programmerings-commissie*) used to dream about twenty years ago was finally realised last year: a theatre hall on Campus.

Text: Mickey Steijaert  
Photo: Bert Beelen

## WHO'S WHO?

**Jory Strijbos (25)**, Master's student in Health Care Psychology. President of *Cultuur op de Campus* 2018-2019.  
**Pim Franssen (43)**, cultural entrepreneur and Psychology lecturer. President of the *Studenten Programmerings-commissie* 1997-1998.

recruiting committee members for next year."

PF: "Well, we certainly didn't have to do that. Just before the summer, we'd be like: Oh yeah, we need a new committee by September. Maybe we should take action."

JS: "We have to find interested people and start telling them now how much fun *Cultuur op de Campus* is, sow the seeds. Otherwise we won't find anyone."

PF: "What a pity! I think students should get an additional year for their studies, the way we did in my day. Let students figure out what they want to do with this time. Some may spend half of that year in the pub. It doesn't matter. In the end, the gains will outweigh the costs."

JS: "We also see the effect of lack of time in the number of visitors. The other day we staged a performance, *Children of Aleppo*, by George Tobal, a fantastic theatre-maker. It attracted no more than fifteen students."

PF: "We also had performances that didn't attract much of an audience."

JS (laughs): "Phew! I was afraid it was just us doing a poor job!"

PF: "I can still remember a performance where only two people showed up, plus two committee members. It was absurdist literary theatre, amazing stuff! We had so much fun. But no one came."

JS: "We also have our successes: the film *Fantastic Beasts* was sold out."

PF: "We used to attract a full house whenever we screened a Monty Python film."

JS: "I shouldn't complain. We've got ourselves a good deal, with a great office and a beautiful theatre hall."

PF: "And don't forget that it's such fun work! And you learn a lot from it. I'm a good example of that: in the end, culture became my profession." ★

# IT'S AS NICE AND DIRTY AS IT USED TO BE!



VOX EDITORS REVISIT  
THEIR FORMER  
STUDENT HOUSE

Your old student room. Hard to think about it without getting a bit nostalgic. This was the place where you first lived on your own. Where you made new friends. But revisiting your old room may also be risky. What if it's a lot smaller than you remember or if someone's repainted what used to be your walls? Five Vox editors dare to go back in time.

Photo's: Bert Beelen





## SURPRISINGLY LITTLE HAS CHANGED

**Martine Zuidweg (53) lived on the Kroonstraat 100 in Nijmegen from 1988 until 1992.**

Would you believe it? On the very same spot where for four long years I enjoyed student life to the full, the same SSH& Doddendaal complex still stands. The only thing is: someone's been messing with the house numbers. The Kroonstraat only has 98 houses now. My good old number 100 no longer exists. Still though, the room on the fourth floor is still there. In the hallway of the apartment building there's a note with a request not to let strangers in. An unsavoury individual has apparently been lurking around. This immediately reminds me of a homeless person who used to sneak in and sleep on the stairs. We would carefully step over him on our way to lectures. What do you expect in a student apartment building with an open front door in

the heart of the city centre? We'd stumble out of our beds after a night of partying and *boom* we'd almost get mowed down by all the people out shopping in Nijmegen. Despite the note, I take the risk of ringing the doorbell. "Yes?" asks a girl's soft voice. "I used to live here more than twenty-five years ago..." I start hesitantly. Yes! I'm allowed upstairs to have a look at the 'living room'. We used to call it the kitchen, back in the 1990s, but what's in a name? Upstairs, I'm pleasantly surprised: very little has changed! The television is in the same spot. So is the couch, and the dining table. The wall used to sport a self-created artwork with portraits of all the residents, cut out of black paper and glued any old way on the wall. On the same spot you now see the names of the current residents, carelessly cut out from coloured paper.



Martine

What do you think happened to the telephone booth where we had to sign in to make a phone call, and then wait for our turn? Apparently it's still a booth, now minus the telephone and with an extra shower instead. When I leave, I grin and say: "The place is still nice and dirty," one of the residents looks at me, uncomprehendingly. Clearly, she hadn't noticed. Great, life in a student house!





## NO MORE EATING DINNER TOGETHER

**Mathijs Noij (29) lived at the Ubbergse Holleweg 2 in Ubbergen from 2010 until 2012**

It was nearly ten years ago that I first set foot in a quirky student house in Ubbergen. It was actually more of a commune. Most of the residents studied at the University of Applied Sciences or Radboud University, others worked in the catering sector. A few were mostly busy smoking marijuana. Everything was good. The small kitchen on the first floor functioned as a central meeting place. This was where we prepared our oven dishes and pasta with pesto – with varying degrees of success. There was a board hanging in the kitchen: Anyone who wanted to cook used it to inform the others of their plans. There were always people who wanted to join in for dinner. The dirty walls, painted kitchen cabinets and

sticky floors have made room for a neat built-in kitchen, probably from IKEA or some such place. Current resident and Linguistics student Pim Klaassen likes it that way. It's nice, isn't it, a clean kitchen? I nod.

At the same time I can't help but think back to the Hollehuis as it was eight years ago. We would sometimes complain to each other when someone had puked all over the toilet again. Or when the shower drain got clogged with hair. Still, though: it was kind of part of the atmosphere of the house. As were the doors that were always open, so that the corridor was always filled with the smell of coffee or the sounds of the neighbour fooling around on his guitar. Now the hallway walls are hospital white – the landlord doesn't allow tenants to hang anything on the wall. With the exception of a note in the



Mathijs

kitchen, detailing the house rules. Klaassen explains that people don't really eat dinner together anymore. The last time they did it was to celebrate Sinterklaas, but he wasn't there himself: too busy with other things. Times change. The inhabitants of the Hollehuis go their own way these days. Which is fine, of course. And yet, I can't suppress a wave of nostalgia as I think of all the good friends I still have from my Ubbergen time.



# NO IDEA WHO THE NEIGHBOURS WERE

**Mickey Steijaert (26) lived on the Professor Bromstraat 32 from 2010 until 2013.**

There are probably lots of welcoming and fun hallways in Hoogevelddt. Hallways where parties are held and residents eat together every night. But hallway 32, in the corner above the bicycle shop, was never one of them.

I climb the stairs. I was only 18 when my father and I dragged half my belongings up the stairs to the fifth floor – only to discover that there was a lift after all. More memories come flooding back: my attempts at conversation with flatmates who didn't want to know while we thawed frozen pizzas. The mouse plague of 2012, when all my crockery ended up covered in small rodents' piss. And the Indonesian girl who invited her sister and parents to stay with her in her tiny bedroom (12 m2) for months on end. But what I remember most of all is the anonymity. The feeling of having no idea who my neighbours were.

Back to 2019. The door is opened by Jeltje, a Mathematics and Physics student "who's looking for a place of her own", as she informs me. The kitchen has been renovated beyond

recognition, but in essence everything's still the same. "We hardly ever see each other," says Jeltje. "The other day, we tried to pick a date to have dinner together, but it didn't work out in the end." Two of Jeltje's flatmates only met for the first time after living next to each other for months. Some things never change.

What is it with these anonymous student hallways? Is it because residents can't choose their own flatmates? Does that have so much impact? Or do people simply not care, because they see Hoogevelddt as a temporary stop, a short period of anonymity while they look for a fun place to live?

After my own time at Hoogevelddt I moved into a fantastic student house in the centre. I wish the same for Jeltje. "You really don't have a single picture of yourself with your flatmates?" asks my incredulous VOX colleague. She doesn't understand the laws of the anonymous Hoogevelddt hallway. Jeltje and I, we do.

Mickey





## CHEATING MOTH AND FRIED RICE OR WRAPS

**Robin Oosthout (22) has lived in the Frans Halsstraat in Nijmegen since 2015**

Cheating Moth is a card game that encourages players to cheat, 'legally'. The goal is to get rid of your cards by letting them fall under the table unseen. If someone sees you doing it, you lose. Almost every day, one of us posts a message on the WhatsApp group: "Who feels like a game of Cheating Moth?" We play other games, too, but this one's sure to give rise to some hilarious moments.

There are seven of us sharing this house, all girls, divided over four floors. We go out together, sometimes eat together, and celebrate all our birthdays together. Christmas dinner is one of our traditions. And this year, we're even going away for a weekend together. We all have our own quirks when it comes to

food. Some are vegetarians, others suffer from allergies. So when we eat together, we always make fried rice or wraps. That way we're sure everyone can enjoy their food.

A few of my housemates smoke, so we also spend time outside on the pavement in front of our house. If we want to find out something about a housemate, we usually send her a WhatsApp message. Even if she's at home. But we also recently bought a board that hangs in the hallway so that you can indicate whether you're home or not. Kind of like the good old days.

In the four years I've lived here we've become very close. It's nice to always have someone to chat to about your day or to lend you something you need. My housemates have turned into my friends. I'm not even bothered anymore

by their half-empty coffee cups on the table, or the mess in the kitchen. On the contrary, these things make me feel even more at home.

Robin







## MY RABBIT IS BURIED IN THAT GARDEN

**Annemarie Haverkamp (43) lived on the Eerste Oude Heselaan 306 from 1993 until 1998**

"That old rug?" I shout from the bathroom, "You must be kidding!" In front of the toilet (seat up) lies the squalid purple item I bought at Xenos twenty years ago. I'm afraid it hasn't seen the inside of a washing machine since.

Steven, HAN University of Applied Sciences student and current tenant of my old room, grimaces. It's not his fault, he's only been here a month. I look up. There's still mould on the ceiling. Looking at the washing machine reminds me of my long-haired housemate, the one who used to do his laundry with conditioner because it made his clothes so soft. He didn't use the toilet very often, though: he preferred to urinate from his window straight into the gutter, his piss running down the drain-pipe, past my room, straight into the garden.

"The room isn't really soundproof," says Steven. I know. I used to sleep in a bunk bed, right under the floor of the very same long-haired housemate, a band singer with lots of female fans. There are few sounds I didn't get to hear. The room is smaller than I remember. The same white worn floorboards, the same three beautiful high windows. The house belongs to a residents' association, which means it's co-owned by the residents. As a result the rooms were and still are relatively cheap. Steven only pays € 250 a month.

I loved living in this house so close to the station. There were five of us in those days, and we used to eat dinner together from time to time. With some of the guys, we also drank beer every weekend in the Gonzo (now renamed NDRGRND).

From the window I can see the neighbour's



Annemarie

bright green Fiat 131, which was already an old-timer in my day. Apparently, it's still running. I sometimes see her chugging past, her hair grey now.

Steven informs me that the back garden is due for some serious remodelling. "My rabbit is buried in that garden," I tell him, as my heart suddenly fills with forgotten sorrow. "My rabbit."



# Art on the skin and on the wall

Students with a tattoo used to be a rarity, but these days many have an image or words on – or actually ‘in’ – their skin. Tattoos have become an art form and tattoo shops emphasise this with exhibitions, DJ workshops or even their own clothing range.

**Text:** Jozien Wijkhuijs / **Photo's:** Erik van 't Hullenaar

**I**f you have a tattoo, you've probably been told that 'they used to be reserved for criminals and sailors'. But the number of tattoo shops is growing, according to the Netherlands National Institute for Public Health and Environment (RIVM). Although an increasing number of Dutch people have one, not all potential employers are charmed by visible or invisible ink. In late January, De Volkskrant published an article about an association that helps homeless people find a job by removing tattoos from visible places such as their face, neck and hands. But there's also a



counter-movement: some shops try to use culture to raise their reputation.

"We've got an image problem, it's true," says Marianne Laarakker, owner of Dutch Harbour. The facade on the Lange Hezelstraat announces the shop's identity as a Tattoo Studio & Art Gallery. "We do what we can to make the display window look attractive. And we advertise. Even on screens at LUX, which would have been unthinkable a few years ago. Plus, we've started organising exhibitions."

Laarakker bought Dutch Harbour in mid-2018 and moved the business to the other side of the street. "We did lots of remodelling to prepare for our opening in September." The walls are painted light green, there's a vintage sofa, and visitors are welcomed by Laarakker's small black dog. Outside, a sign invites passers-by to 'Come in and have a look'. "Clearly, not everyone does," says Laarakker. "Just the other day, an older couple got curious and walked up to the door, but as soon as they saw the word 'tattoo', they turned around and walked out again."

#### Art form

Gone are the days when tattoos were done in shadowy backrooms. The Nijmegen tattoo shops look slick and welcoming. And they are usually located in places where cultural activities take place. Liquid Sky Tattoos, for example, shares the Paraplufabrieken in Bottendaal with a wine merchant, a publisher, artist studios and a photographer.

De Paskamer in the Bloemerstraat combines tattooing with other cultural expressions. A creative incubator, it combines a tattoo studio with a DJ school and its own clothing range.

"This kind of mix emphasises tattooing as an art form," says Laarakker. "The four artists who work for me create designs in their own very personal styles." She points to the folders with sample designs. Of course, lots of clients still come with their own drawings, she says "But these are great too."

At the moment the green walls display work by Andy Drissen. "He's an Arnhem-based artist who also happens to make tattoos. But the art we display doesn't necessarily have to have anything to do with tattoos," says Laarakker. She finds her exhibitors through word of mouth. "We're booked full until the autumn." Making wall space available

## 'A TATTOO USED TO BE A WAY TO REBEL, NOW IT'S A FORM OF SELF-EXPRESSION'

also serves another purpose: "There aren't many small exhibition spaces in and around Nijmegen. With art on the wall we try to attract visitors, but we also offer artists exhibition space that may otherwise be scarce."

Laarakker calls in studio manager Isabelle Walther. Walther, who's worked for Dutch Harbour for four years, sees the changes in the tattoo shop reflected in the visitors. "This space has a real living room feel and that's made it attractive to a wider public. And our customers are now on average a bit older." The reasons people have for getting a tattoo have also changed, she says: a tattoo used to be a way to rebel, now it's a form of self-expression – often artistic."

"This is precisely in line with what we've got hanging on our walls," says Laarakker with a satisfied tone. At that moment, a man walks in. "It says on that sign I should feel free to come in," he says, "So I thought I'd take a look around." \*

## TIPS

**Of course you can scour all the broad-sheets and websites for information or subscribe to some spam-like newsletter to find out what's happening in Nijmegen in the field of arts & culture the next few weeks. But it may be easier to just trust Vox.**

### GO!

**THIJS VAN BEUSEKOM** (25) IS EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF *NIJMEGEN CULTUURSTAD* AND WRITES FOR VOX.

### SINGLES PARTY



#### Friday 15 February, Doornroosje

Just imagine: boxes and boxes full of CD singles of all the songs you loved or loved to hate. Unearth your hit zone top hit and deliver it into the eager hands of the DJ! 11.00 p.m., € 13

### HOUSEJE BOOMPJE BEESTJE

#### Saturday 23 March, De Plak

'Houseje Boompje Beestje' will take you on a journey through all shades of the dance genre. A delight for eyes and ears! At the turntables you'll find residents, upcoming talent and established local and national names. The perfect place for both dance beginners and veterans to make new discoveries. 11.00 p.m., Free entrance

## LISTEN!

**TED VAN AANHOLT** (23) IS A PHILOSOPHY MASTER'S STUDENT, REVIEWER FOR 3VOOR12 GELDERLAND, AND CONCERT PHOTOGRAPHER.



### DIMITRI VERHULST & TOO NOISY FISH

**Saturday 2 March, LUX**

A music, film and literature tip all in one! The famous Flemish author Dimitri Verhulst has joined forces with jazz trio Too Noisy Fish and filmmakers Thrisha De Cuyper and Jan Lapeire. Is it a movie night, a concert or a poetry evening? Come and find out for yourself.

8.30 p.m., € 21.50

### LUCKY FONZ III

**Thursday 4 April, Doornroosje**

Nijmegen's most famous troubadour is here once again to delight his home audience with beautiful songs and his typical dry humour. Sing along to *Linde met een E*, dream away to *Ik Had Nog Willen Zeggen*, and dance with your loved one to *Ik heb een Meisje*.

8.15 p.m., € 15.50

### THIJS BOONTJES' DANCE AND SHOW ORCHESTRA

**Saturday 13 April, Merleyn**

Let yourself be seduced by the characteristic sounds of Thijs Boontjes and his Dance and Show Orchestra. You'll remember them as the house band on Margriet van der Linden's talk show, M. This cross between André Hazes and Herman Brood will carry on playing until the entire audience is on their feet slow dancing.

10 p.m., € 13

## WATCH!

**MARTHE KRUIJT** (27) IS FESTIVAL COORDINATOR FOR *CULTUUR OP DE CAMPUS* AND ALUMNA IN CULTURE STUDIES. SHE WORKED FOR FILM FESTIVAL *GO SHORT* AND IS NOW DOING AN INTERNSHIP AT NATLAB FILM THEATRE IN EINDHOVEN.

### DARKEST HOUR

**Wednesday 27 February, Theaterzaal C**

*Cultuur op de Campus* screens Oscar-winning films in February, including *Darkest Hour*, about Winston Churchill's first days as British Prime Minister. Gary Oldman gives a first-class performance in the leading role and provides us with an in-depth character study of Churchill.

7.30 p.m., € 3

### THE GREAT MOVIE MACHINE FILM QUIZ

**Friday 22 February, LUX**

Are you a film nerd? Come and join us for a film quiz full of movie excerpts, quotes, trivia and anecdotes from both arthouse and commercial films of all times and from around the globe.

7.30 p.m., Student fee € 6

### WHAT'S IN A FAIRYTALE?! BAMBI

**Thursday 7, Friday 8 and Saturday 9 March, Stadsschouwburg**

Drama group Oostpool plays Bambi like you've never seen it before. In this anti-fairy tale, the innocent young deer bares his teeth at six salacious hunters who are all after a piece of his sweet innocence. Performance with introduction and after-party.

8.00 p.m. From € 17.50



PHOTO: BAS DE BROUWER

# AGENDA

MESSAGES FOR VOX CAMPUS  
CAN BE SENT TO:  
REDACTIE@VOX.RU.NL

## GENERAL

[www.ru.nl/studentenkerk](http://www.ru.nl/studentenkerk)

**6 MARCH**, 7 p.m.: Ash Wednesday. Start your Lent with an Ash benediction. During the Eucharist celebration, ash crosses will be handed out to remind us of our mortality. Location: Student Chaplaincy.

## STAFF ASSOCIATION

[www.ru.nl/pv](http://www.ru.nl/pv)

**18 FEBRUARY**, 6 p.m.: Indian cooking workshop. From curries and chutneys to poppadoms and paneer – the list of Indian dishes is endless. Learn to cook with spices from this rich and diverse cuisine. Location: KOOCK, Honigcomplex.

## Radboud Reflects

[www.ru.nl/radboudreflects](http://www.ru.nl/radboudreflects)

**14 FEBRUARY**, 7.30 p.m.: The Hearing. Law students in dialogue with legal expert and former politician Piet Hein Donner. In the course of his career, Donner had to face some very difficult choices, such as whether to legalise marijuana. How did he handle it? Location: Lecture Hall Complex.



**18 FEBRUARY**, 7.30 p.m.: Why Grow Up? Lecture by Philosopher Susan Neiman. Why would anyone want to grow up? The American German Philosopher Susan Neiman pleads for a less boring perspective on adulthood. Location: Stadsschouwburg.

**21 FEBRUARY**, 7.30 p.m.: Fighting Q fever. Lectures by Infectious Disease experts Chantal Bleeker-Rovers and André van der Ven and Ethicist Joost van Herten. How can we combat bird flu, Ebola and Q fever? Join us for a debate on the tense relationship between humans and animals in the face of these infectious diseases. Location: Lecture Hall Complex.

**25 FEBRUARY**, 7.30 p.m.: The Secrets of Our Memory. Lecture, dialogue and mini-workshop with Neuroscientist Boris Konrad and Cognitive Philosopher Jolien Francken. Modern life requires us to remember so many things. How can we train our memory? Or are we already asking too much of our brain? Location: Lecture Hall Complex.

**26 FEBRUARY**, 8 p.m.: Greed - A Philosophical History. Lecture by Philosopher Jeroen





**20 FEBRUARY, 12.00 noon:** Lunch concert by Quarteto Aguamarina. The string quartet will take you on a journey through the work of famous Catalan composers, from Montsalvage to Toldrà. Location: Radboudumc Restaurant.

Linssen. We always want more, yet we also disapprove of greed. Join us in exploring the two sides of this human trait. Location: LUX.

**5 MARCH, 7.30 p.m.:** Monogamy: How Do You Do It? Philosophical workshop with Theologian Liesbeth Jansen. If your relationship no longer meets your expectations, do you work on it or do you look for what you're missing with someone else? Let's explore the various facets of monogamy. Location: LUX.

**5 MARCH, 7.30 p.m.:** How to Deal with Misery? Lecture by Czech Philosopher Tomáš Halík. He argues that we should look inwards to see and touch our own suffering, instead of running away from it. He explains how and why, based on the Biblical tale of Doubting Thomas. Location: Theaterzaal C.

**19 MARCH, 7.30 p.m.:** Against Identity Politics. Lecture by influential American Political Science expert Francis Fukuyama, who argues that we focus too much on identity. He pleads for less focus on race, religion, ethnicity and gender. Location: De Vereniging.

**23 MARCH, 9 p.m.:** Ode to Women Thinkers. Radboud Reflects @ Nijmeegs Boekenfeest with Philosopher Veronica Vasterling. Philosophy is not just a male preoccupation. Come and meet inspiring women thinkers who changed the way we see the world. Location: De Vereniging.

**1 APRIL, 7.30 p.m.:** Kant on friendship. Lecture by Philosopher Donald Loose. According to German Philosopher Immanuel Kant, we can never really understand another person and we shouldn't try to either, not even when it comes to our friends. How does this impact our friendships? Location: Lecture Hall Complex.

**2 APRIL, 8 p.m.:** The Dilemma: May I Still Be Religious? Inquiry and dialogue with Religious Sociologist Tom Bernts and Theologian Liesbeth Jansen. It's almost the new 'coming out of the closet': openly admitting that you believe in God. Come and join us to take a look at whether it's OK for us to be religious. Location: LUX.

# POEM

## Wel thuis

Nieuwe mensen ontmoeten is overrated.  
Mijn vriendengroep van nu is prima, ik hou m'n maatjes liever nog even hier en ook mijn schatje mag me niet ontnomen worden.

Maar ja ... masters roepen en ook stages elders tussenjaren of werk, gewoon meteen werken en wonen in de randstad, is ook een puik plan. Vrienden blijven we toch wel.

Of niet. We spreken voorbarig over de stand van zaken. Onze verstandhouding oogt onzeker deze allerlaatste maanden.

Dat ik mensen missen moet is evident. Mijn denken vertelt me dat niets zeker is in het leven, behalve verandering. Verre van een geruststelling.

Gelukkig weten zij dat ik ze de wereld gun met al het mooie dat die te bieden heeft en ik ze zon op hun paden wens.

Dat je wel thuis komt en mij dan vertelt over al jouw bevindingen.

**LEV AVITAN IS THE OFFICIAL CAMPUS POET THIS ACADEMIC YEAR. EACH MONTH HE WRITES A POEM (IN DUTCH) FOR VOX.**

## COLOPHON

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