

# NEKST

VOL. 25  
NO. 2

WINTER 2016  
NEKST-ONLINE.NL

## DEPARTMENT INTERVIEW

UPCOMING  
CHANGES TO THE  
BSC. AND MSC.  
PROGRAMS



## ALSO FEATURING

- ▶ RESEARCH SPECIAL
- ▶ LET'S TALK: LEADERSHIP
- ▶ COLUMN: THE MISUSE OF MODELS

ASSET



Econometrics



# “Wil je net als ik data analyseren om klanten betere keuzes te bieden?”

**Celine Brouwers**  
Customer Intelligence Analyst

lees het blog van Celine op  
[werkenbijaegon.nl](http://werkenbijaegon.nl)

[Lees het blog](#)

## Preface

# Recovery and Preparation



True to tradition, this second issue of Nekst marks the half-way point of another year in our studies. As the days have grown colder and the days have become shorter, a period of recovering by the fireplace has inevitably been accompanied by the need to prepare for exams. As always, the Nekst editorial staff has been working night and day to provide you with another issue packed full of interesting content, ideal as a much welcome distraction from your exams, or simply to pass the time on a day off.

Evidently, econometricians love to travel, whether it be by plane, by train or even in the process of having dinner! Indeed, this edition of Nekst features an extensive report our fellow econometricians' adventures in the far-away country of Japan during the International Business Tour, as well as articles about the Finance Expedition and the Cycling Dinner. Moreover, this issue features the story of a young woman who fell in love during her travels to Indonesia; read all about it in The Parents Of Ridho Hidayat!

Furthermore, this issue of Nekst pays special attention to the ongoing changes in the bachelor and master programs, through an interview with program director Anja De Waegenaere and Ruud Hendrickx. Additionally, you can read about life after Tilburg University in an interview with recent alumnus Pieter-Jan van Kessel, and professors Juan Vera and Martin Salm tell us all about their current research in the annual Research Special.

This issue also pilots an exciting new addition to Nekst's recurring articles: *Let's Talk*. While econometricians do love science and beer (in no particular order), Let's Talk aims to take a break from those omnipresent subjects; in this edition, we talk to seven of our peers about what they think makes an excellent leader. Lastly, on behalf of the entire Nekst editorial staff, I would like to wish you all the very best for 2017, and of course a lot of fun with this issue of Nekst!

**Pepijn Wissing**  
Editor-in-Chief

## COLOPHON

Nekst is the quarterly magazine of Asset | Econometrics ©2016  
Insertion of an article does not mean that the opinion of the board of Asset | Econometrics or the editorial staff is verbalized.

### Correspondence

Asset | Econometrics  
Tilburg University  
Room E 1.10  
P.O.Box 90153  
5000 LE Tilburg  
Telephone: 013 466 27 47  
[info@Asset-Econometrics.nl](mailto:info@Asset-Econometrics.nl)  
[www.Asset-Econometrics.nl](http://www.Asset-Econometrics.nl)  
[www.Nekst-Online.nl](http://www.Nekst-Online.nl)

### Editorial staff

Zoë Connell  
Bas Dietzenbacher  
Julia de Kogel  
Aurel Macías Minambres  
Charlotte Nijman  
Claire Vink  
Pepijn Wissing

### Lay-out editor

Steffi van den Hanenberg

### Contributions

Riley Badenbroek  
Dominique Bavelaar  
Servaas van Bilsen  
Bernard van den Broek  
Vince Dentener  
Nathalie van Diepen  
Hein Fleuren  
Tijn Fleuren  
Senna Jansing  
Amy Kieboom  
Wenxin Lin  
Loes van der Linden  
Thomas van Manen  
Rick Noij  
Irmgard Oude Alink  
Ennia Suijkerbuijk  
Linda Torn  
Guus Vlaskamp  
Mike Weltevrede

### Printing

Gildeprint

### Circulation

1400



# Table of Contents

## IBT Japan

10

On October 24, 24 econometricians flew to Japan for the International Business Tour. During this tour, they visited Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto!



39

55 Freshmen know how to have fun!

## Finance Expedition

40

28


Check out page 28 for some exciting active members' adventures!



30

## The Passion Of Floor



 al woman imports 3000 soda can tabs from China and you will not believe the reason why..

## ADVERTISEMENTS

Cover	Aegon
4	Career Portal
16	Aegon
Cover	Willis Towers Watson


## ARTICLES

1	Preface
5	From the Board
6	Special: Department Interview
9	Column: Hein Fleuren
10	International Business Tour
14	Orientation and Connection Day
17	Committee Profile
18	Special: Alumni Interview
20	Let's Talk
23	Research Special

28	Active Members Day
29	Asset Gala
30	The Passion of: Floor van Helsdingen
32	Column: Servaas van Bilsen
33	25 Years of <b>NEKST</b>
34	Archived
36	Practical Report
38	Cycling Dinner
39	Freshmen Activity
40	Finance Expedition

42	AFAM Dinner
43	St. Nicholas Drink
44	The Parents of: Ridho Hidayat
46	Exchange Report
49	Graduates
50	Quatsch
51	Puzzle
52	Agenda



A man with brown hair and a beard, wearing a dark pinstriped suit, is aiming a bow. He is looking intently at the target. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# Aim for success, visit our Career Portal!

[www.Asset-Econometrics.nl/CareerPortal](http://www.Asset-Econometrics.nl/CareerPortal)

● FROM THE BOARD

NEKST WINTER 2016

## Dear Members,

**“Time flies when you are having fun” is what they say, and I can imagine that your holiday is going way too fast. I hope you all had a great Christmas and that you took the time to be with your family and friends, or to just sit down and do nothing. Personally, I think the Christmas break is a really nice time to escape from your every-day activities and to just do what you want to do, enjoying the feeling that you do not have to go anywhere while it is so cold outside.**

Unfortunately time goes on, also in the Christmas break. And although the break is a really nice moment to sit down and relax, this time also has its less fun side. We are in the middle of the exam period and most of us also have to study during these days for the upcoming exams after the break.

But also in this stressful time of exams, Asset I Econometrics can offer you some relief from your studies. Of course we have the Monthly Afternoon on January 12, and on January 17 we will organize a new concept of the members meeting. We will start with a formal part during which we will give you more insights in the association. Afterwards, we will go on with the second part, which will be more interactive. We would like to have your opinion about the association. What is going well? And what can be done better? Do you have some great ideas to bring Asset I Econometrics to the next level? We would really appreciate your input and we hope you will share this with us during this evening. Of course, the night cannot end without a nice drink, so after the members meeting we will go to Café De Nachtwacht and start the new year together with the one and only New Year's Drink. Furthermore, the freshmen will not be forgotten in the upcoming month: on January 24 they can expect the next freshmen event, which will also be accessible for second-year students.

If you still feel bored beside your exams and these activities, and so have some extra time, we are also very willing to help you fill this time. In February the new committees will start, so feel free to join one! If you want to help the upcoming freshmen to feel welcome at our association, then join the Introduction Activity committee. If you like to improve your InDesign- and Photoshop-skills, then join the Book of Faces committee. But, of course, you

can also start organizing a great formal event, for example, this January the Orientation and Connection Day 2017 will start. If you are interested in one (or more) of these committees, then let us know for example by sending a mail to [info@Asset-Econometrics.nl](mailto:info@Asset-Econometrics.nl).

Last but not least I would like to end this piece of writing with a cliché, but that does not imply that it is less sincere. Firstly, of course, good luck with your exams! And besides that I wish you a happy 2017; I hope it will be even better than 2016 was!

On behalf of the board,

Linda Torn  
*Chairman Asset I Econometrics  
2016-2017*





# Changes Within the EOR Program

We have come a long way since the EOR program was set up. Back then, you had to make phone calls or even go outside to talk to people, there were no Snapchat filters available to make you look pretty in pictures and #tbt was only a random arrangement of symbols and letters. Especially due to the evolution of the internet in the recent past, those days are gone and have become merely a depressing #tbt. If we want, we can now spend our time inside our homes behind a screen, tagging our moms in pictures of dogs on Facebook all day. Most students obviously have no issues with adapting their lifestyle in this way, but how does the EOR program keep up with technological developments? Charlotte and I talked to Ruud Hendrickx and Anja De Waegenare about what they are doing to keep the program up-to-date.

Text by: Julia de Kogel

## Data Science in master's programs

Most of the changes that are currently being made are changes to the master programs. The master programs that EOR offers are BAOR, EME and QFAS. BAOR is a new specialization of the master ORMS. BAOR is an abbreviation of Business Analytics and Operations Research and it deals with methods and models for decision making and data analysis. The EME (Econometrics and Mathematical Economics) master focuses on economic theory (game theory) and econometrics, and QFAS (Quantitative Finance and Actuarial Science) focuses on measuring and managing risks, for example at banks, insurance companies or pension funds.

Over the recent past, each of the three master programs has gradually been revised so as to offer a balanced mix between theory and modern applications. The programs are designed such that students acquire advanced knowledge combined

with strong practical skills. Another important development within these programs is that all of them include data science methods now. Due to technological developments over the past years, there are now huge amounts of data available to us. Each of the three EOR master programs teaches data science methods that help us to deal with and make optimal use of this data. Big data is used in some way or another by many companies nowadays, and as more methods become available to deal with it, this use is only increasing. Therefore, knowing how to handle big data gives you a huge advantage on the job market.

Although the results have yet to prove the success of the renewed programs, the reactions have been positive so far. This is no big surprise, considering that the field of data science has gained so much popularity lately and data scientist is predicted to become one of the most influential jobs in the near future.

## Why EOR?

So why should you study econometrics instead of data science? Ruud Hendrickx explained that the two are not entirely compatible. First of all, if you have passed the EOR bachelor, you can enroll in a Data Science master's program, but if you want to do this the other way around, you first need to pass several extra courses to gain additional mathematical skills. The biggest difference between the two bachelor programs is that the EOR program includes many more technical mathematical courses to allow for specialized, more advanced approaches to data science as well as to a broad range of other quantitative fields. The Data Science bachelor program, on the other hand, teaches (as the name suggests) only data science, albeit from more angles, such as legal and social issues, than the EOR program. Hendrickx concluded this explanation by saying that the EOR bachelor provides you with a more diverse background and thus a larger pool of master's programs to

choose from. These include, but are not limited to, several Data Science master's programs.

One of the foremost changes in the EOR bachelor's program is a pilot, which will start in the spring of 2017 for the first-year students. If it is a success, the pilot will be extended and become available for students in higher years as well. The pilot consists of a mentorship arrangement that aims to make it easier for students to talk to someone from the EOR department about their struggles with the program. Besides this, in a mentor system, students can get better guidance in for example the selection of electives and the choice of a thesis subject. Setting up a new mentorship system was commissioned by the university and has to be done by all programs the university offers, although they do get to work it out in different ways. In short, the mentorship arrangements are being put in place to help students with whatever study-related questions are on their mind.

The EOR department has therefore chosen to draw up a system in which bachelor students get the opportunity to talk about their struggles with a teacher, in addition to the already available mentorship systems that MAK and the program coordinator offer.

## 'One should always strive for excellence'

In the spring, first-year students will receive an invitation to talk about their experiences with the program so far. The MAK mentor groups formed in the TOP week do not always stay close, and responding to an invitation is a smaller step than making an appointment with the program coordinator. Therefore, the members of the department hope that sending out invitations and giving students the opportunity to talk to one of their teachers will make mentorship more approachable for students. In the upcoming years, the mentorship system should evolve to fit the needs of students best.

## Job market preparation

The last changes that we will discuss are changes to the curriculum. Although it is not difficult for econometricians to find a job, one should always strive for excellence. That is why the BSc EOR program is offering new courses to better prepare their students for the

future. First of all, last year, the two-year course Improving Society Lab was introduced. Students need to take this course in their first and second year and the classes are sessions in which they need to apply their mathematical knowledge to practical cases, often presented by a company. This gives students a clearer image of what they can do after their studies and is supposed to keep them motivated. Since the course only started last year, there are no numbers available yet to show whether the program achieved this goal, but feedback on the course has been mostly enthusiastic. →





Another extremely important skill to have in one's toolbox is the ability to present. Most EOR courses are very theoretical and substantive, but gaining the ability to get ones knowledge across to others is at least as important when working at a company. This also holds true for presenting in writing. Academic writing is not yet taught to econometricians, but it would make ones writings look more professional and therefore more convincing as well. Most programs of Tilburg University already offer courses that teach communication and writing skills, and the EOR bachelor's program will offer one such course as well, starting next year. This course will teach students to present well, write academically and to find accurate information in academic databases. The course will start in the second year, meaning that one of the second year courses will be moved to the third year and one of the optional courses will be removed from the bachelor program.

companies as well, so they can have a broad view on the available career possibilities. For each master, so BAOR, EME and QFAS, four to six sessions are held each year. During these non-mandatory sessions, a representative of a company will present their company and discuss their projects, activities and innovations so that students get a sense of whether they would fit in with that company's work attitude.

line of work, there is always the option of combining two master's programs. Popular combinations are EME with QFAS or BAOR, and EME with Marketing Analytics. Should one choose to do this, one will effectively be obtaining two master's certificates, without having to take the full course load that would normally come with a double master's. One would still have to write two theses, but instead of 14

## 'The ability to get ones knowledge across to others is at least as important'

In sum: these sessions may help master's students determine what kind of company may suit their interests and personality best and they are also quite helpful for

mandatory courses for two single-year master's programs, one would only have to take 10 courses, making it a rather attractive option for those looking to go above and beyond.



Lastly, sessions are offered to all master students and third-year bachelor students to give them an impression of their possibilities once they have finished their masters. When they have finished their studies, many econometricians start to work at the company at which they did an internship, but they may have several other options. In these sessions, the students are introduced to different

third-year students, as they may help students to decide which are to specialize in, and, hence, which master program to choose.

While on the topic of choosing a master's program, an interesting prospect was mentioned. For those that want to diversify their skillset or for those that are looking to find employment in an interdisciplinary

The changes to the EOR bachelor and master programs sound promising so far, so we are eager to see the results of the department's efforts in following couple of years! ●

# Optimization is by definition change!

Last column, I gave you insight in my career so far, and what intrinsically motivates me: the application of OR/BA in industry and in humanitarian contexts. To explain a bit more and maybe help you for your future decisions I will start with a question: do you think that application of OR/BA is easy after you have successfully studied all the complex models and algorithms in Econometrics?

My answer would be a 10% yes and a 90% no. About the 'yes', I can be short: some of the techniques you have learned (or will learn) at the more advanced classes are really state of the art. In practice you will only in some cases come close or above this level. In the other cases you will be working with easier models and algorithms, which makes your life relatively easy in this respect.

But then the 'no'... there is so much to say about this. One of the main aspects that are really underestimated by most OR/BA practitioners is 'change'. Optimization is (nearly) by definition change: the chance that after optimizing you get the same solution is almost zero. Let me give an example. If you just calculated the optimal depot infrastructure in a country, probably some depots will disappear and new ones will appear. Such a study is analytically and from a modeling point

of view challenging, but well doable. After successfully having finished it, we tend to lend back, feel relieved, take a good beer or wine and feel satisfied.

But do we realize what we just finalized? And what does it imply? A few years ago, I did such an infrastructure study in Italy and to be honest, I did feel relieved and satisfied: all the numbers spoke a clear story and management was happy with the work we did and the big savings we achieved. My relieve did not last very long. Two weeks after our presentation I spoke with the Italian project leader. He just returned from a session with a couple where he had to tell them that they were both fired: they were both working in (different) depots that were closing due to our study. That truly was a shock for me: I never realized so closely that my (our) work changes the lives of other people.

The same, but less dramatic, holds for changing vehicle routing schedules, rounds 'around the church' for train operators, other production schemes, new energy mixes, etcetera. After we have done our calculation exercises and a positive decision is taken based on the recommendations, most of the time somebody or a team needs to implement it, and for what I have seen so far, this is the real work; especially when you want to do it with some sensitivity and not like a bulldozer.

For the people affected it means change and they will resist to it. There is a whole scientific and applied area called Change Management that deals with this phenomenon. In the redesign of the OR/BA masters we have decided to give this aspect some attention. Therefore I am proud to announce that in the new course "Professional Business Analytics Skills", given by prof. Goos Kant, prof. Kuno Huisman and myself in the spring semester, we will pay attention to nearly all aspects of applying OR/BA and also to change management. We will also reflect on the ethics of our optimization work.

For me, this column is a first step (but please do not tell my boss prof. Henk Norde). I would also like to include more on psychology of change but this is a change process in itself, which I would like to take step by step in an ethical way! ●



## Hein Fleuren

Hein Fleuren is part time full professor at the department of Econometrics and OR, as well as partner and founder of BlueRock Logistics in Den Bosch. Since September 1, 2016 he has a special chair on Data Science for Humanitarian Innovation together with Prof. Conny Rijken from the Law School.



# Touring the Land of the Rising Sun

Last October, 23 fellow students and I got the opportunity to go with the International Business Tour (IBT) to Tokyo. We had a busy schedule and did a lot of formal and informal activities. To make our trip to Japan even more complete, we also visited Osaka and Kyoto. It absolutely was a trip to never forget and I am happy to tell you about my experiences there.

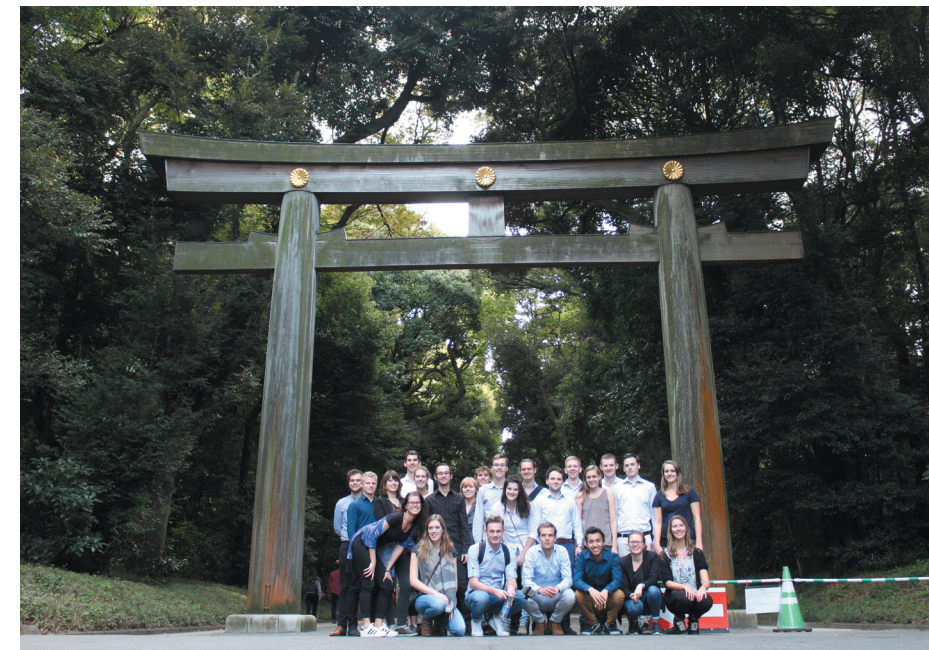
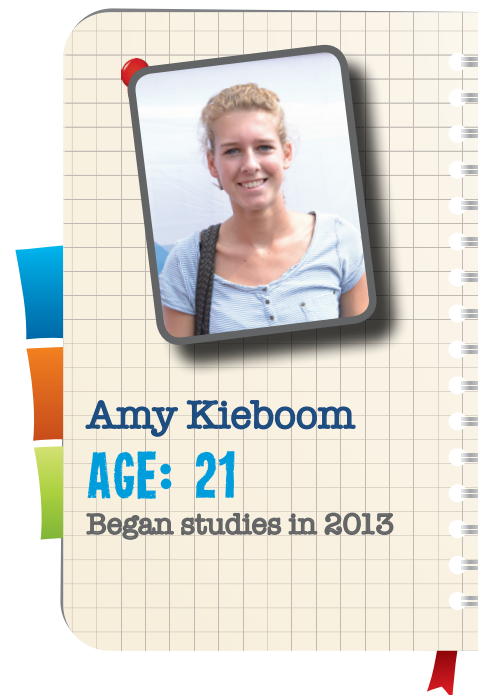
Our trip started on October 24, when we gathered at 9.30 hours at the central station in Tilburg. We travelled by train to Schiphol, where we had our flight to Tokyo. It was my first long flight, which took eleven hours. However, with the in-flight entertainment system all participants have probably enjoyed themselves while watching movies or playing games. I also tried to get some sleep (which unfortunately failed), since we flew in the evening and arrived in Tokyo in the morning, due to the 8 hour time difference.

After we had landed, we had to wait a while for our public transport cards. When there was enough money on our cards we could travel to our hostel and get the first impressions of Tokyo. In the subways and trains we got a first impression of the Japanese people, who are very good at sleeping while standing in the subway and playing

short games on their telephones. Also they stand neatly in line when waiting for the train. Arrived at our hostel we again had to wait a while, since our stay had to be paid in cash. When we finally could go inside, we were confronted with the first Japanese habit: taking off your shoes when entering the hostel. When everyone had put their stuff in their rooms, we could go for our first Japanese lunch where we could practice eating with chopsticks. After the lunch we travelled to the Senso-Ji temple and the Tokyo Skytree, which has a height of 634 meters. We went up in this building where we had a beautiful view over Tokyo. We ended the day with a quick dinner and went back to the hostel to get a well-deserved night's rest.

While still recovering from our jetlag, we started the third day at the Dutch embassy. This was a nice first formal activity to get to know Japan better.

Afterwards, we travelled to the Tokyo Tower where we had some free time to look around and get some lunch. The second formal activity of this day was the Tokyo Stock Exchange, where we got a guided tour, a presentation (which was not that interesting, causing some of us to take a little nap, but luckily the presenter understood that they were having a jetlag) and we played an interactive game where we could buy and sell stocks. We ended the day at Odaiba, which is a manmade island in Tokyo Bay. From Odaiba there is a stunning view over the skyline of Tokyo. After everyone took his pictures, we had free time for the rest of the evening. Together with Lieke, Steffi and Charlotte, I first went for a dinner. In front of the restaurants in Tokyo you find a lot of plastic dishes, such that you can easily see what they have in the restaurant if you could not read Japanese. Afterwards we went to another restaurant where



we ate a delicious Dutch Baby (some kind of pancake with ice, strawberries, banana and chocolate) while having a beautiful view over Tokyo. When our stomachs were filled, we further explored Odaiba. We first went to Venus Fort, a shopping mall in Venice style. Afterwards, we tried to find Leisure Land, a large entertainment hall. We walked in a remote area and thought we were never going to find it, until we entered another remote parking garage. We saw a billboard with happy things on it, which said we should go to the second floor of the parking garage. Since Japan is very safe we tried it and went to the second floor, where we entered the large game hall. Very happy music and lots of pink overwhelmed us. It was a really nice place, so we went in a photo boot. We made the pictures and could adjust our photos in hundreds of ways with a lot of filters and backgrounds. There was already a big filter over our photo such that everyone looked perfect, so we didn't make use of the extra opportunities, because we only had two minutes to do so, and we couldn't read Japanese.

On Thursday we first visited Deloitte, where we got a presentation about what it is like to work at Deloitte as a foreigner. Afterwards, we went to the Shinjuku Gyoen Park where we had some lunch. It was nice to see that there was lots of greenery in this park with high buildings in the background. We ended the day with a visit to the Meiji Jingu temple

and Harajuku, a district that is known for the extreme culture and fashion of the Japanese youth.

The next day, we started at ING. At the in-house day in the Netherlands we were already told that the office in Tokyo is really small. Luckily, everyone could sit and the office turned out to be even bigger than Deloitte's. Furthermore, the lunch and the view made it even better! At ING, they told us that there is a big difference between the Japanese and Dutch people, since the Dutch people are very direct and say what they think, while the Japanese are more introvert. The second activity of this day was

the Waseda University where we got a lecture about game theory (the prisoner's dilemma) and experimental economics. The presenter (I unfortunately do not know his name anymore) also attended Tilburg University earlier and wants to say hello to Jan Potter, Peter Borm and many others! Furthermore, there were two students who are going to study in Tilburg next year. After the lecture we did a quiz where we had to predict what number is equal to 0.7 times the mean of all numbers written down (ranging from 1 to 100). The prize, which was won by Denise, was a self-made cherry blossom origami. We ended the visit with a campus tour. Personally, I think the campus looked very nice and we also saw some cute young students walking in their uniforms. After this tour we went back to the hostel to dress up to go to Shibuya in the evening. This is the place to go out in Tokyo. We started the evening with eating sushi from the assembly line with half of the group and after that went to a British pub. After some drinks some of us went back to the hostel and others went to a big club, only arriving home at around 6am. I did not go to the club that evening, so with a small group I got up earlier the next morning to go to the Imperial Palace, which was skipped from the program. After the others had had some sleep, we went to the Ueno Park where we visited a zoo with pandas! We continued the day in Akihabara, an area known as the electronic town and ended the day with something typically Japanese, →





namely karaoke! We were put in a very small room, so I did not know exactly what to expect from this evening. There was no space to let a group come forward and just sing a song, so we started to sing together. Unlimited drinks were included and had to be ordered by telephone, which was quite difficult since you could not hear anything due to our loud voices. Although I do not know whether the employees were very happy with us, since we were standing on the benches with our shoes on (normally it is common to put your shoes off), and we completely finished all of the gin, rum and vodka that was available, but it certainly was a memorable evening!

The next day was marked by our trip to Osaka. We travelled with the Shinkansen, a train which reaches speeds up to 300 kilometers per hour. When we arrived in Osaka and were settled in the hostel, we continued and ended the day in Dotonbori; a neighborhood with many lights and shops along a canal. We directly noted that people from Osaka are somewhat different from the people in Tokyo, since they are more open and dressed differently.

On Monday we visited the sights of Osaka. We first went to the Shitennoji temple where we got some free time to look around. There was one four-floor building, which looked very nice from the outside. We told each other in jest that it is definitely worth it to go in and look inside. However, when we climbed all the stairs it turned out to be very disappointing and it was not looking nice from the inside at all. After we were done in the Shitennoji temple we went to the Osaka castle, which has a museum on the inside and a beautiful view over Osaka at the top of the building. Afterwards, we went to the Kaiyukan aquarium, which has a series of aquaria built around a huge water tank. Here we could (among others) find Dory and see a whale shark.

The next day, we made a trip to Kyoto, a city with a lot of temples and Japan's former imperial capital. We started the day at the Kinkaku-ji temple, also known as the golden pavilion due to the top two floors covered in gold leaf. The sun was shining on the building and the reflection of the building in the water made it a very beautiful place.



Our visit to Kyoto also included the Fushimi-Inari Taisha temple. It is famous for its thousands of red wooden Torii gates. You can follow a network of trails underneath the gates up to the mountain which results in a beautiful view over Kyoto. The network of trails is very large, so we only climbed halfway up the mountain. When we were back downstairs and had rested from the climb we went to the Gion District, a well-known geisha district with typical Japanese streets. There we attended a Geisha Show with a tea ceremony, flower arrangement, geisha dances and classical Japanese music. Although it was not really what I expected it to be (since I expected a lot more Geishas and dances), I am happy that I have seen this show. Realizing that this was already our last cultural activity of our IBT, we travelled back to Osaka.

The next and unfortunately last day of our trip was marked by formal activities. We first went to the Osaka University. They have three educational programs (minor programs), namely finance and insurance, mathematical modeling, and data science. We first got a lecture and afterwards got a very nice and tasty lunch! The buildings of the university however did not look very nice compared to the Waseda university we had seen before, since it looked very abandoned and we did not see any students in the building. After this visit we went to KPMG, where we got a guided tour and could talk with some employees who were very kind and open people. There was a very informal atmosphere which made it really nice. In the end they organized a quiz and because there was a tie between two teams, a role-playing on how to exchange business cards in Japan would reveal the winning team. As long as you bow a lot, it is quite okay. To end our trip all together, we would have dinner together. We knew that it is hard to find a restaurant where we fit with 24 people. Luckily, someone from KPMG knew a nice restaurant and he made the arrangements for us!

On Thursday we left our hostel early in the morning and flew back to the Netherlands. Back in Holland we immediately had some delays and problems with the trains. I immediately missed Japan, since the trains there are always on time! ●



# Expanding your Mind..

To prepare the second- and third-year students of the Bachelor Econometrics and Operations Research for their future choice of Master program, Asset | Econometrics organized the Orientation Day. Since I am also in my second year of this Bachelor and I am still looking for the direction in which I would like to go, I was delighted to hear that this event was going to take place. In this short article, I will give an overview of this day in the way that I have experienced it.

The day started with a warm welcome and a little bit of socializing, after which we were led to the presentation room. First of all, an introductory talk was held by the overall coordinator of the Master programs in econometrics at our university. After that, the three main Master programs: Econometrics and Mathematical Economics (EME), Business Analytics and Operations Research (BAOR), and Quantitative Finance and Actuarial Science (QFAS), were one by one presented in more detail by corresponding experts and guides in that field at the university. All of them delivered some cases, from which it was made clear what skills you will be able to develop during that program and in which way you will be using this expertise in your future career. Since the programs do in fact overlap quite a bit, some aspects of the presentations were similar. The three programs at least have one particular and, for us econometricians, important thing in common, namely the use of (big) data.

At this point, we were all warmed up for the presentations of the companies and organizations that would be visiting our university in the afternoon. But, before that, a few students would be telling about some of their, not necessarily study related, experiences. One of them told us about her board-year at Asset | Econometrics. The second in line told us about his job at Aorta as a working student. The last student guided us through her journey to Madrid as an exchange student. Although these

stories were very interesting, it was not really important to me since I was purely visiting this day to orientate for the Master programs and potential fields to work in after that.

As already mentioned, a trio of presentations was scheduled in the afternoon, but first, we had a nice lunch. The first organization to present their case was the 'Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS)', who connected their case to the Master program EME. They told us about the different opportunities they can offer for econometricians. CBS is the number one independent distributor of statistics in The Netherlands and therefore really appealing for those of us who would like to work with all kinds of data and also do research in that field.



The second company to present their case (in light of the program BAOR) was BearingPoint, a relatively unknown name for most of us. It is a business consulting firm. One of their most rewarded workers in The Netherlands had taken some time off to tell us about his experiences as an econometrician at BearingPoint. He has been able to do some great things the past two decades, including fixing a part of TNT's distribution problems at the time it almost went down, as well as helping the World Food Programme to supply twenty percent more refugees in Ethiopia.

The last company to present was Rabobank, of course relating the QFAS program. Two recently graduated econometricians gave us a little insight into the work as a risk evaluator/manager at the bank. On the basis of more explicit examples, they guided us through the steps they take when evaluating certain types of risks. They also elaborated on the opportunities for graduated and non-graduated students, like, for example, traineeships and internships.

At the end of the day, there was time for a drink and opportunity for some networking. All of this was very interesting and has at least given me a lot more understanding of the Master programs that are offered by Tilburg University, as well as the career perspectives with respect to these. Therefore, I would also like to send out my rewards to the organization of this year's edition of the Orientation Day. ●



# ..And Brightning your Future!

On Thursday November 24, the Connection Day took place. On this day, several companies were present for us to connect to; SAS, Milliman and Aegon were present to tell us something about each company and to have lunch with us. Pointlogic and Deloitte were present to present us a case, which we had to solve.

Before the day started, I was really nervous. I am a pre-master student and I am currently following two second year courses. At the connection day, only third year and master students would be present, so I would not know anyone there. Also, I was a bit scared of the case, because I only completed 7 Econometrics courses, and the rest of the people already completed 2 or 3 years full of courses.

The day started at 9.45 hours with the registration and a cup of coffee or tea. We got a name tag with information about which presentation and which case we would attend. I attended Milliman's presentation and Pointlogic's case.

At 10.15 hours, before the company presentations would start, René Peeters talked about the Master Thesis. He told us, for example, how you could do a master thesis at a company. I really learned a lot there! After that, Simone Hofland from TiSEM career services came to talk to us. She wanted to know who already had a good C.V. or used Linked-in and whether we already knew where we would want to work. She also told us about how TiSEM career services can help us. She really pointed things out I did not know existed at the university.

After these general presentations, the company presentations started. Everyone had to go to the presentation on their name tag, so I went to Milliman.



At first, I was not very excited, because as a BAOR pre-master student, I thought that going to a Milliman presentation would be useless. Milliman is a company that is more suitable for QFAS students. They told us about their student life, about what they do on a daily basis, how many hours they work etcetera. After the presentation, we went to Boerke Mutsaers where we enjoyed a 3-course lunch with the men from Milliman. That was really nice, because now it was a conversation instead of a presentation. It was also nice to hear about the working life, because that is coming closer.

After the lunch, we all went to the company that would present a case to us; I went to the Pointlogic case. The case was about tune-in on a drama series. So we had to find out, what

made a person watch that series. We got a big Excel file with a lot of data on different variables. We had to choose which variables we thought would be the reasons for a tune-in. With these variables we did some regression analyses. After that we had to give a presentation with advice about how they could improve the number of tune-ins.

After the case, there was a networking drink, at which you could talk to the employees of Pointlogic and Deloitte. Unfortunately, I was not there.

All in all, the day was definitely better than expected. The case was not as hard as I had expected and it did not really matter that I did not know anyone. So it was a good day and I can advise you to come next year! ●





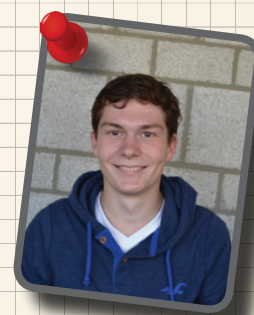
## Eeuwige student... én data talent?

Wil jij de studieboeken achter je laten en de stap zetten naar een eerste baan? Óf blijf je liever verder leren? Misschien wil je nog niet kiezen. En dat snappen we bij Aegon heel goed! Daarom bieden wij analytisch talent een traineeship aan. Dan breng je kennis en kunde meteen in de praktijk. En leer je de fijne kneepjes van het vak met trainingen en opleidingen. Zo blijf je als analytisch talent – nog héél even – die eeuwige student.

Meer weten? Ga naar:

[werkenbijaegon.nl](http://werkenbijaegon.nl)

### ● COMMITTEE PROFILE



**Guus Vlaskamp**

**AGE: 19**

Began studies in 2014

Asset Strategy & Logistics is the department of Asset with an interest in strategy and logistics. They support students in the (pre-)master programs Strategic Management and Supply Chain Management. In addition to this they also support students from the bachelor of Business Administration.

The scope of this department is therefore a great match with ours. In our event this translates to the Econometrics students generally having the same interests, only deviating in a mathematical approach instead of a more theoretical one.

The Strategy Tour will take place on the 6th and 7th of March. During these days a group of roughly 20 to 25 students will visit four different companies. The group of students consists of both Econometrics and S&L students and is selected partly by using CV selection. We are not able to provide a strict CV selection since all students need to visit all four companies.

During these visits an introduction to the company will be presented, followed by a case prepared by the company giving the students insight in the daily dealings. On both days two companies will be visited, giving the companies the chance to accompany the visit with either a lunch or drinks. In between these days an overnight stay will be provided.

The new connection between S&L and Econometrics provides new insights especially concerning the case and

# Old Challenges, New Connections

A new addition to the arsenal of events is the Strategy Tour. The former Asset Strategy & Logistics committee is now a joint venture. This merger faces new and old challenges under the new committee.

COMMISSIE FOTO KOMT NOG DOOR VIA CHARLOTTE

the selection of companies. A strict econometric case would be prone to be more focused on the mathematical and analytical part of business, where the cases presented to our mixed audience generally will have a broader scope. Combining the perspectives of both our department and S&L we hope to achieve the best solutions for these cases.

Furthermore the selection of companies is affected by this new collaboration. At least, we hope so. At the current stage of our committee we are not able to provide a comprehensive list of companies. We are however aiming at the traditional branch of econometrics-oriented companies as well as more "alpha"-companies, since we do see possibilities for an econometrics-perspective in business there as well.

As the title suggests we have run into the well-known traditional problems with acquisition, "Nobody answers!", "Why do they answer so late?" as any other committee does. And as always, perseverance is victorious. Another challenge is the marketing towards students, which is influenced by our

collaboration because we have to make sure that a healthy mix of students from both departments is present. The marketing also has to take place at multiple lectures and times to ensure that students from both departments are reached. This new dimension to the marketing is not too heavy but is something to keep in mind.

In addition to this we also face some new challenges, for example we have spent quite some time to find out what branches and companies to actually focus on and how to combine strengths from both our departments to increase the value of our event in the eyes of the company.

In the next section we would like to present the solutions to these challenges, this however is a still ongoing process.

In conclusion, we hope to present you at a later date with a beautiful event. And hope that you have become interested in the collaboration with other departments of Asset, such as Strategy & Logistics to make our events even better. ●



# Life After University

**On a Tuesday afternoon, Julia and I went to see Pieter-Jan van Kessel in Utrecht. You might not know him, but only half a year ago he was still studying at the same lovely university as many of us do. After his graduation he started working full-time, and therefore we checked up on him and asked him about his experiences during the last half a year.**

**Text by: Aurel Macias**

Pieter-Jan was born in Den Bosch. He was raised in Kerkdriel, a town near Den Bosch. For a long time, his biggest hobby was playing tennis (something that was also featured in a past issue of Nekst, because he was pretty good at it). He started studying in Tilburg in 2010, and he also was an active member of Asset in those years. He liked the idea of studying Econometrics and OR because he wanted to do something with mathematics rather than with physics or chemistry. Pieter-Jan evaluated different options, such as technical mathematics in Eindhoven, but he did not like the atmosphere there. Econometrics and OR still has that practical view, and the city of Tilburg was also appealing to him.

For his Master's degree, he chose QFAS. He cannot really state why he chose that master, though. Everything was 'just fine' for him, because in his opinion, it does not matter much which master you do anyway and all the master programs were quite enjoyable for Pieter-Jan. In this period, orientation on the job market became more important. Joining in-house days at, for instance, insurance companies and banks was not that rare for him those days. Eventually, before finishing his studies, Pieter-Jan went on exchange to Canada for half a year.

In the end, he found that strategy consultancy and consultancy were

interesting because you see many different things in these kind of jobs. Strategy consultancy was not mathematics-oriented enough for his taste, though. A short time ago Pieter-Jan started as a consultant at PwC in the so-called "PAIS" department, which stands for pensions, actuarial and insurance services. It needs little intuition that this department has insurances, pensions and risk management as pivotal subjects, but also data analytics is very important and, not surprisingly, a somewhat new subject. Actually, Pieter-Jan started off as a working student at PwC when he was writing his master thesis, and kept being on the premises afterwards as a consultant. The range of clients is very broad: all sorts of companies from the finance sector are possible clients.

**'In business, the output is eventually for the client rather than for you'**

His perspective on the job has changed significantly since Pieter-Jan started his job, basically because 'you just do not know how it works when you start the job', according to him. The contact with clients and just working altogether changes the entire perspective on the job.

Pieter-Jan himself is mainly working on the topic of data analytics, a

topic that is pretty new. This means that there is a lot of freedom in his work. Machine Learning is one of the important elements at the moment, for which Pieter-Jan works together with mathematicians and some fellow econometricians. Apart from that, there are many conversations and connections with different clients.

The connection between Econometrics and OR and the job of Pieter-Jan is pretty obvious. In the actuarial part of his department it is very easily seen, but in data analytics there are quite some connections too, especially in knowledge and way of thinking. The biggest difference to EOR in theory is that usually you cannot

apply theoretical situations one-to-one on a case study. The analysis of these cases remains the same, but an answer is not found that easily. One has to, more or less, search for the solutions by applying different, to Pieter-Jan still unknown theories or case study solutions. Still, the way of thinking remains the same and is the most important core of the study.



The workload can be pretty high for Pieter-Jan right now. For instance, he sadly does not play that much tennis anymore. It is difficult to combine this with his work, although he wants to play more in spring. The scarce weekend days he has, he likes to spend with his girlfriend, friends or family.

**'You just do not know how it works when you start the job'**

A working day consists of many different things and because of the nature of Pieter-Jan's job, it can be vary hugely from day to day. At least he always spends the biggest part of the day behind his computer, looking up different things or programming. Apart from that, there is the client contact and different meetings, both internal and external. He has a meeting once a day on average. Client contact can vary a lot though, sometimes they want more contact, sometimes even to the point that that he works for the client for some weeks, though other times one or two presentations do suffice.

Pieter-Jan is very interested in his newest client, he said: "This is very awesome!" He cannot give us the name, but some bank needs a new

server with software containing two new algorithms. Pieter-Jan and his partners have been asked to create this server and the algorithms (or rather, the machine learning algorithms are already written) etc. They need to work with large data for cluster analysis and anomaly detections, which consists of roughly two terabyte of data. Therefore, a server is needed. Internally, the bank also does nice things, according to Pieter-Jan. For instance, he likes that they forecast who can or cannot repay their debts and try to detect the laundering of money (which is where the importance of his project comes in), and quite some more different things. Another important part of his job is translating 'uninteresting' data (at least for someone who did not study up on econometrics for five years) to something that is understandable for clients, especially in the management sections. One interesting way to do this is using smartphone

applications. He rarely writes reports and also does not like that, really. The client is usually not interested in 'long and unappealing' reports while they just need the insights and core of the story. This project is full-time because of the large scale of the project, but this is not always the case. Sometimes, Pieter-Jan is working on three or four projects at the same time. He likes to work on different projects in the long run, but prefers to work on one project at a time.

For those that like to do different things, there are options aplenty in the company. In addition, many different training options and event options are possible. For instance, there are trainings on presentation skills, trainings on

becoming an actuarial and Pieter-Jan also joined in on a big data exposition. Moreover, there are events in Europe for the whole European part of the company to discuss about all the knowledge.

As already stated, Pieter-Jan uses the analytical basis which he learned at Tilburg University. Many other important things you do not learn there, though. In part this is just on the interpretation side, so you know more about different companies and can advise them better, but there are also some main skills which are a little lacking. While it is very important to be able to present your projects in company life, it is not too common at the university. Programming is also very different at a company: at the university Matlab is used, while Python and R are mainly used in business. If you only participate in the studies themselves, organizing and having meetings is also a skill one possibly lacks, but many students join in on some study or student association or, for instance, travel. All of this enhances these skills and companies like that. One final notion is that in the studies, you work alone a lot of times and for yourself as well, usually. In business, the output is eventually for the client rather than for you.

All in all, Pieter-Jan is looking like he is really having fun. Especially talking about the aforementioned upcoming project at the bank really makes him get all fired up. He misses some things about his student life, such as the student residence he lived in. Still, other good things come to you in the end; Pieter-Jan almost has his own house right now. As a final tip, Pieter-Jan came up with something interesting: He stated that everyone should go abroad. His experiences in Canada were great, and before starting to work is the ideal moment to do this. You still have many foreign opportunities when you join a big company as Pieter-Jan did, but going on exchange during your studies really is the perfect moment and it is good for your eventual job, too. ●





# Let's Talk!

Text by: Claire Vink & Zoë Connell

With science or beer related articles aplenty, the moment is right for a section that gets our devoted econometricians involved in society. For this section, we invite a few students for a brief talk about a certain topic in an informal environment. Since we have the Dutch elections coming up in March of 2017, we asked our guests what they think makes a good leader and, more specifically, what they expect from a minister president, focusing on the attitude a minister president should have and what he/she should change or keep unchanged during his ruling period. Unsurprisingly, everyone invited had their opinions ready and was not about to let go until their point had been made. We thank each and every one of them for their contributions, though due to the finite amount of space available, we have had to restrict ourselves to printing the highlights of our talks.



**Maarten van Hooft**  
Age: 25  
Began Studies in 2014

While talking with Maarten, it became clear that his ideal leader would be someone who truly cares about the welfare of the world; he advocates for someone who sees different cultures as empowerment and definitely wants to create a better place for everyone. Besides that, he considers it to be important that a leader always sticks to his true beliefs and should never do something against his beliefs to gain votes. Caught up in his train of thought, Maarten says: "As we all know, many elections are won by tactical plays, which means that someone with a true good heart will most likely not reach the top." Shortly after, he provides an example of what might happen when someone like that does climb out of the political snake pit, talking about the enormous influence Nelson Mandela has had in South Africa. Maarten also sees Bill Gates as a great example of good leader who has personally had a great impact on third world countries through the Gates foundation. He considers himself not to be the right fit for a politician. However, he will always try to have a positive influence within his community.



**Ridho Hidayat**  
Age: 22  
Began Studies in 2013

In Ridho's view, a minister president should keep a country together; we should form oneness. One of the most important tools for doing so, according to Ridho, is the attitude with which he takes the wheel. Ridho feels that a leader should never trigger anxiety and other negative emotions, but should always keep a positive attitude. In addition, he should keep people together on a social and on an economical basis; levelling is very important. Also, it is of utmost importance that the different levels of society are not too far apart. That creates tension in a society, which may unpredictably escalate otherwise harmless situations. "A great leader can be recognized from his positive attitude and his clear vision on what the country should become; he has to know what he wants and share his (realistic) goals. Also, he should have a humble personality, so he stays close to the population. Moreover, he strives for his goals. He should try to make changes in positive a way and not use personal attacks. Think about Obama, for instance. I think he did check most (if not all) of those boxes."

## ● LET'S TALK

NEKST WINTER 2016



**Christel Opheij**  
Age: 20  
Began Studies in 2014

"A long term vision, the ability to take other opinions into consideration and the ability to make compromises" are key characteristics that Christel seeks for in a good leader. Besides that, it is also of great importance that a leader has the ability to admit his/her own mistakes or to adapt his/her vision if a misconception has been made. To really get her vote in the upcoming elections, a leader should definitely have a clear vision about how to improve integration. Not only with respect to how immigrants could improve to integrate but also how Dutch people themselves can contribute to a better integration process. Christel is not planning on pursuing a political career since she is not in favor of the political games that are constantly played. Furthermore, she would rather get things done instead of having endless discussions and struggling with the long procedures of changing things. Therefore, she would rather consider becoming some kind of activist or lobbyist that fights for a certain point of view.



**Linda Torn**  
Age: 21  
Began Studies in 2015

Linda expects a minister president to stay humble at all times. He/she should not want to put himself in the spotlight, he should be able to take a step back to see the whole picture and analyse which steps have to be taken to improve the situation. A leader should bear in mind that his actions have to be in line with the interest of the majority of the population. He should think before he speaks and consider all consequences of saying certain things. Linda really dislikes frontmen of political parties that make promises they know full well they cannot keep, or make claims just in the interest of causing a stir. An example of this is that some parties say that we should change the retirement age back to 65. You can imagine the amount of people that would directly benefit from this change and they are likely to vote for this idea. However, if you calculate the costs associated with this statement, this is not achievable at all.



**Pierre Verhulst**  
Age: 19  
Began Studies in 2015

In Pierre's opinion, "A great leader should be a strong speaker who has the ability to get his message across and is believable." This implies that a great minister-president should know his facts and should stick to his beliefs. Besides that, he considers it essential that a leader has higher priority for the country's own inhabitants' welfare than he has for international aid. This is of importance to him, since he considers it to be quite counterintuitive that oftentimes, when help or financial aid is provided to other countries, we could also put some of those resources to work to deal with unsolved domestic problems. For example, we should not forget that in the Netherlands, there are families living in poverty too. Additionally, a minister-president should also try to protect the Dutch traditions. Last but not least, Pierre hopes that any further minister-president focuses on ensuring that other countries consider the Netherlands as an important and powerful country within the world's economy.



# Let's Talk!

Text by: Claire Vink & Zoë Connell

With science or beer related articles aplenty, the moment is right for a section that gets our devoted econometricians involved in society. For this section, we invite a few students for a brief talk about a certain topic in an informal environment. Since we have the Dutch elections coming up in March of 2017, we asked our guests what they think makes a good leader and, more specifically, what they expect from a minister president, focusing on the attitude a minister president should have and what he/she should change or keep unchanged during his ruling period. Unsurprisingly, everyone invited had their opinions ready and was not about to let go until their point had been made. We thank each and every one of them for their contributions, though due to the finite amount of space available, we have had to restrict ourselves to printing the highlights of our talks.



**Maarten van Hooft**  
Age: 25  
Began Studies in 2014

While talking with Maarten, it became clear that his ideal leader would be someone who truly cares about the welfare of the world; he advocates for someone who sees different cultures as empowerment and definitely wants to create a better place for everyone. Besides that, he considers it to be important that a leader always sticks to his true beliefs and should never do something against his beliefs to gain votes. Caught up in his train of thought, Maarten says: "As we all know, many elections are won by tactical plays, which means that someone with a true good heart will most likely not reach the top." Shortly after, he provides an example of what might happen when someone like that does climb out of the political snake pit, talking about the enormous influence Nelson Mandela has had in South Africa. Maarten also sees Bill Gates as a great example of good leader who has personally had a great impact on third world countries through the Gates foundation. He considers himself not to be the right fit for a politician. However, he will always try to have a positive influence within his community.



**Ridho Hidayat**  
Age: 22  
Began Studies in 2013

In Ridho's view, a minister president should keep a country together; we should form oneness. One of the most important tools for doing so, according to Ridho, is the attitude with which he takes the wheel. Ridho feels that a leader should never trigger anxiety and other negative emotions, but should always keep a positive attitude. In addition, he should keep people together on a social and on an economical basis; levelling is very important. Also, it is of utmost importance that the different levels of society are not too far apart. That creates tension in a society, which may unpredictably escalate otherwise harmless situations. "A great leader can be recognized from his positive attitude and his clear vision on what the country should become; he has to know what he wants and share his (realistic) goals. Also, he should have a humble personality, so he stays close to the population. Moreover, he strives for his goals. He should try to make changes in positive a way and not use personal attacks. Think about Obama, for instance. I think he did check most (if not all) of those boxes."



**Christel Opheij**  
Age: 20  
Began Studies in 2014

"A long term vision, the ability to take other opinions into consideration and the ability to make compromises" are key characteristics that Christel seeks for in a good leader. Besides that, it is also of great importance that a leader has the ability to admit his/her own mistakes or to adapt his/her vision if a misconception has been made. To really get her vote in the upcoming elections, a leader should definitely have a clear vision about how to improve integration. Not only with respect to how immigrants could improve to integrate but also how Dutch people themselves can contribute to a better integration process. Christel is not planning on pursuing a political career since she is not in favor of the political games that are constantly played. Furthermore, she would rather get things done instead of having endless discussions and struggling with the long procedures of changing things. Therefore, she would rather consider becoming some kind of activist or lobbyist that fights for a certain point of view.



**Linda Torn**  
Age: 21  
Began Studies in 2015

Linda expects a minister president to stay humble at all times. He/she should not want to put himself in the spotlight, he should be able to take a step back to see the whole picture and analyse which steps have to be taken to improve the situation. A leader should bear in mind that his actions have to be in line with the interest of the majority of the population. He should think before he speaks and consider all consequences of saying certain things. Linda really dislikes frontmen of political parties that make promises they know full well they cannot keep, or make claims just in the interest of causing a stir. An example of this is that some parties say that we should change the retirement age back to 65. You can imagine the amount of people that would directly benefit from this change and they are likely to vote for this idea. However, if you calculate the costs associated with this statement, this is not achievable at all.



**Pierre Verhulst**  
Age: 19  
Began Studies in 2015

In Pierre's opinion, "A great leader should be a strong speaker who has the ability to get his message across and is believable." This implies that a great minister-president should know his facts and should stick to his beliefs. Besides that, he considers it essential that a leader has higher priority for the country's own inhabitants' welfare than he has for international aid. This is of importance to him, since he considers it to be quite counterintuitive that oftentimes, when help or financial aid is provided to other countries, we could also put some of those resources to work to deal with unsolved domestic problems. For example, we should not forget that in the Netherlands, there are families living in poverty too. Additionally, a minister-president should also try to protect the Dutch traditions. Last but not least, Pierre hopes that any further minister-president focuses on ensuring that other countries consider the Netherlands as an important and powerful country within the world's economy.



# Let's Talk!

Text by: Claire Vink & Zoë Connell

With science or beer related articles aplenty, the moment is right for a section that gets our devoted econometricians involved in society. For this section, we invite a few students for a brief talk about a certain topic in an informal environment. Since we have the Dutch elections coming up in March of 2017, we asked our guests what they think makes a good leader and, more specifically, what they expect from a minister president, focusing on the attitude a minister president should have and what he/she should change or keep unchanged during his ruling period. Unsurprisingly, everyone invited had their opinions ready and was not about to let go until their point had been made. We thank each and every one of them for their contributions, though due to the finite amount of space available, we have had to restrict ourselves to printing the highlights of our talks.



**Maarten van Hooft**  
Age: 25  
Began Studies in 2014

While talking with Maarten, it became clear that his ideal leader would be someone who truly cares about the welfare of the world; he advocates for someone who sees different cultures as empowerment and definitely wants to create a better place for everyone. Besides that, he considers it to be important that a leader always sticks to his true beliefs and should never do something against his beliefs to gain votes. Caught up in his train of thought, Maarten says: "As we all know, many elections are won by tactical plays, which means that someone with a true good heart will most likely not reach the top." Shortly after, he provides an example of what might happen when someone like that does climb out of the political snake pit, talking about the enormous influence Nelson Mandela has had in South Africa. Maarten also sees Bill Gates as a great example of good leader who has personally had a great impact on third world countries through the Gates foundation. He considers himself not to be the right fit for a politician. However, he will always try to have a positive influence within his community.



**Ridho Hidayat**  
Age: 22  
Began Studies in 2013

In Ridho's view, a minister president should keep a country together; we should form oneness. One of the most important tools for doing so, according to Ridho, is the attitude with which he takes the wheel. Ridho feels that a leader should never trigger anxiety and other negative emotions, but should always keep a positive attitude. In addition, he should keep people together on a social and on an economical basis; levelling is very important. Also, it is of utmost importance that the different levels of society are not too far apart. That creates tension in a society, which may unpredictably escalate otherwise harmless situations. "A great leader can be recognized from his positive attitude and his clear vision on what the country should become; he has to know what he wants and share his (realistic) goals. Also, he should have a humble personality, so he stays close to the population. Moreover, he strives for his goals. He should try to make changes in positive a way and not use personal attacks. Think about Obama, for instance. I think he did check most (if not all) of those boxes."



**Christel Opheij**  
Age: 20  
Began Studies in 2014

"A long term vision, the ability to take other opinions into consideration and the ability to make compromises" are key characteristics that Christel seeks for in a good leader. Besides that, it is also of great importance that a leader has the ability to admit his/her own mistakes or to adapt his/her vision if a misconception has been made. To really get her vote in the upcoming elections, a leader should definitely have a clear vision about how to improve integration. Not only with respect to how immigrants could improve to integrate but also how Dutch people themselves can contribute to a better integration process. Christel is not planning on pursuing a political career since she is not in favor of the political games that are constantly played. Furthermore, she would rather get things done instead of having endless discussions and struggling with the long procedures of changing things. Therefore, she would rather consider becoming some kind of activist or lobbyist that fights for a certain point of view.



**Linda Torn**  
Age: 21  
Began Studies in 2015

Linda expects a minister president to stay humble at all times. He/she should not want to put himself in the spotlight, he should be able to take a step back to see the whole picture and analyse which steps have to be taken to improve the situation. A leader should bear in mind that his actions have to be in line with the interest of the majority of the population. He should think before he speaks and consider all consequences of saying certain things. Linda really dislikes frontmen of political parties that make promises they know full well they cannot keep, or make claims just in the interest of causing a stir. An example of this is that some parties say that we should change the retirement age back to 65. You can imagine the amount of people that would directly benefit from this change and they are likely to vote for this idea. However, if you calculate the costs associated with this statement, this is not achievable at all.



**Pierre Verhulst**  
Age: 19  
Began Studies in 2015

In Pierre's opinion, "A great leader should be a strong speaker who has the ability to get his message across and is believable." This implies that a great minister-president should know his facts and should stick to his beliefs. Besides that, he considers it essential that a leader has higher priority for the country's own inhabitants' welfare than he has for international aid. This is of importance to him, since he considers it to be quite counterintuitive that oftentimes, when help or financial aid is provided to other countries, we could also put some of those resources to work to deal with unsolved domestic problems. For example, we should not forget that in the Netherlands, there are families living in poverty too. Additionally, a minister-president should also try to protect the Dutch traditions. Last but not least, Pierre hopes that any further minister-president focuses on ensuring that other countries consider the Netherlands as an important and powerful country within the world's economy.



# Let's Talk!

Text by: Claire Vink & Zoë Connell

With science or beer related articles aplenty, the moment is right for a section that gets our devoted econometricians involved in society. For this section, we invite a few students for a brief talk about a certain topic in an informal environment. Since we have the Dutch elections coming up in March of 2017, we asked our guests what they think makes a good leader and, more specifically, what they expect from a minister president, focusing on the attitude a minister president should have and what he/she should change or keep unchanged during his ruling period. Unsurprisingly, everyone invited had their opinions ready and was not about to let go until their point had been made. We thank each and every one of them for their contributions, though due to the finite amount of space available, we have had to restrict ourselves to printing the highlights of our talks.



**Maarten van Hooft**  
Age: 25  
Began Studies in 2014

While talking with Maarten, it became clear that his ideal leader would be someone who truly cares about the welfare of the world; he advocates for someone who sees different cultures as empowerment and definitely wants to create a better place for everyone. Besides that, he considers it to be important that a leader always sticks to his true beliefs and should never do something against his beliefs to gain votes. Caught up in his train of thought, Maarten says: "As we all know, many elections are won by tactical plays, which means that someone with a true good heart will most likely not reach the top." Shortly after, he provides an example of what might happen when someone like that does climb out of the political snake pit, talking about the enormous influence Nelson Mandela has had in South Africa. Maarten also sees Bill Gates as a great example of good leader who has personally had a great impact on third world countries through the Gates foundation. He considers himself not to be the right fit for a politician. However, he will always try to have a positive influence within his community.



**Ridho Hidayat**  
Age: 22  
Began Studies in 2013

In Ridho's view, a minister president should keep a country together; we should form oneness. One of the most important tools for doing so, according to Ridho, is the attitude with which he takes the wheel. Ridho feels that a leader should never trigger anxiety and other negative emotions, but should always keep a positive attitude. In addition, he should keep people together on a social and on an economical basis; levelling is very important. Also, it is of utmost importance that the different levels of society are not too far apart. That creates tension in a society, which may unpredictably escalate otherwise harmless situations. "A great leader can be recognized from his positive attitude and his clear vision on what the country should become; he has to know what he wants and share his (realistic) goals. Also, he should have a humble personality, so he stays close to the population. Moreover, he strives for his goals. He should try to make changes in positive a way and not use personal attacks. Think about Obama, for instance. I think he did check most (if not all) of those boxes."



**Christel Opheij**  
Age: 20  
Began Studies in 2014

"A long term vision, the ability to take other opinions into consideration and the ability to make compromises" are key characteristics that Christel seeks for in a good leader. Besides that, it is also of great importance that a leader has the ability to admit his/her own mistakes or to adapt his/her vision if a misconception has been made. To really get her vote in the upcoming elections, a leader should definitely have a clear vision about how to improve integration. Not only with respect to how immigrants could improve to integrate but also how Dutch people themselves can contribute to a better integration process. Christel is not planning on pursuing a political career since she is not in favor of the political games that are constantly played. Furthermore, she would rather get things done instead of having endless discussions and struggling with the long procedures of changing things. Therefore, she would rather consider becoming some kind of activist or lobbyist that fights for a certain point of view.



**Linda Torn**  
Age: 21  
Began Studies in 2015

Linda expects a minister president to stay humble at all times. He/she should not want to put himself in the spotlight, he should be able to take a step back to see the whole picture and analyse which steps have to be taken to improve the situation. A leader should bear in mind that his actions have to be in line with the interest of the majority of the population. He should think before he speaks and consider all consequences of saying certain things. Linda really dislikes frontmen of political parties that make promises they know full well they cannot keep, or make claims just in the interest of causing a stir. An example of this is that some parties say that we should change the retirement age back to 65. You can imagine the amount of people that would directly benefit from this change and they are likely to vote for this idea. However, if you calculate the costs associated with this statement, this is not achievable at all.



**Pierre Verhulst**  
Age: 19  
Began Studies in 2015

In Pierre's opinion, "A great leader should be a strong speaker who has the ability to get his message across and is believable." This implies that a great minister-president should know his facts and should stick to his beliefs. Besides that, he considers it essential that a leader has higher priority for the country's own inhabitants' welfare than he has for international aid. This is of importance to him, since he considers it to be quite counterintuitive that oftentimes, when help or financial aid is provided to other countries, we could also put some of those resources to work to deal with unsolved domestic problems. For example, we should not forget that in the Netherlands, there are families living in poverty too. Additionally, a minister-president should also try to protect the Dutch traditions. Last but not least, Pierre hopes that any further minister-president focuses on ensuring that other countries consider the Netherlands as an important and powerful country within the world's economy.



Thomas expects a minister president to keep the overview and to be able to provide a clear direction in which the country should go. His role could sometimes be compared with a manager; he has a long-term vision and people that work for him take care of day-to-day activities. At the moment, it is quite popular that frontmen of political parties shout about subjects that people are emotionally attached to. Think, for instance, about the *zwarte piet*-discussion. This is a clear example of something that is absolutely not relevant for a party's plans, but one could gain a lot of votes by making bold statements about this subject in a way that many people will want to hear. Since many people are emotionally involved in this subject, they want to know what is going to happen with this tradition. Unfortunately, it is likely that these people do not check for which other subjects the party stands and just vote for them. Just having finished our talk, Thomas leaves us thinking about a quite possibly harder question: should everybody be allowed to vote?



To Melissa, being a great leader is all about actions. "It is essential that a leader does not spend his time pointing out problems without doing anything about them. Instead, he should actively look for solutions and find ways to get all involved parties on board." Moreover, Melissa feels that someone in charge should not doubt himself at every corner. Once the course has been set, one should be willing to see it through, at the very least until the dust has had a chance to settle down. Furthermore, Melissa thinks that being a leader will not work without sticking to one's promises. If one does not, his underlings will eventually lose trust in their leader and leading will have become impossible for him.

Melissa thinks that solidarity and the positivity of a multicultural society are important issues and as such, she values a minister-president who understands them. Although she would want a leader who helps the ones in need, she feels that it is also of true importance that they focus on limiting the abuse within the system. In her opinion, only those who truly need it should get the benefits. These points, combined with the characteristics mentioned above combined add up to a specific example of a leader who has done an excellent job: President Obama. "He is (was) a great example of a great leader who tried to include everyone and who embraces different cultures."



**Thomas van Manen**  
Age: 22  
Began Studies in 2012



**Melissa van Wingerden**  
Age: 18  
Began Studies in 2016

## Till NEKST Time!

Taking all of the above into account, we feel that there are two key characteristics of a good leader that we can draw away from our interviews. Firstly, a good leader is reliable: he keeps his promises, does not set unrealistic expectations in the interest of gaining an advantage for himself, and stays humble at all times. Secondly, a good leader should be effective: he should be able to keep the big picture in mind and he should be solution focused, without being afraid to compromise at times.

It has been a pleasure to talk with students about their perspective on a good leader. We felt truly enlightened after hearing all of these different perspectives and we hope that you have experienced the same after reading this article.

**Do you have an interesting question or would you like to share your opinion with your fellow econometricians? Let us know via [Nekst@Asset-Econometrics.nl](mailto:Nekst@Asset-Econometrics.nl)**

# Research Perspectives of Teachers

**Although most members of the academic staff of our department are probably best known by their teaching to students, this generally covers only a part of their job. Next to this time-consuming task, they devote much of their working to research. Conducting research consists of several activities, such as reading, discovering, computing, writing, and presenting. We were interested in the view on research of our teachers, so we visited two prominent members of our department to ask them about their research perspectives.**

**Text by: Bas Dietzenbacher**



**Juan Vera – Associate Professor**

Professor Vera obtained his PhD degree in mathematics at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh and after working in the USA and Canada he joined Tilburg University some years ago. Similar to several of his colleagues, he works in the very theoretical side of applied mathematics which looks for optimization algorithms. Contrary to some researchers coming from industry, he is mostly interested in

the math behind applications instead of the applications themselves. These applications usually contain optimization problems which are abstracted into a mathematical problem which captures the initial problem. Some of these mathematical problems are known to be hard to solve and there is need for a decision on what to do with these problems. Others can be shown to be easy to solve and such an answer is then easily given.

abstract sides of mathematics, he switched after two years to a program in algorithms, combinatorics and optimization for this reason.

When he was a PhD student, Juan Vera published a scientific article about a very compact and general theorem in polynomial programming of which he was very proud. Unfortunately, this paper did not attract much attention. On the other hand, there has been a project with a colleague where they

**'Practical research is not of less theoretical importance or less challenging'**

As a mathematician, Juan Vera has also studied several areas of math in which there is no practical relevance. Some mathematicians are actually proud of doing research in areas which cannot be applied. Juan emphasizes that he is not that kind of mathematician. He likes to think about the practical relevance and he is convinced that practical research is not of less theoretical importance or less challenging. Although he started his PhD in logic, one of the most

wanted to solve a very general problem for which they needed to compute some parameter. Although they failed to solve the problem, this specific parameter appeared to be unknown, so they published about this parameter. Since it was related to a very important family of graphs, this publication is very well-cited and can even be found on a webpage of Wikipedia. This shows that it is very difficult to predict the impact of your results, and only experience seems to teach you what is really important. →



Currently, Juan Vera is working on a project in polynomial programming, a research area which tries to solve the class of optimization problems which can be written in polynomials. In this project, he focusses on symmetry. Where symmetry usually makes it easier to solve convex problems, symmetry makes it harder to solve some nonconvex problems. These nonconvex problems can be approximated by convex ones. Symmetry makes these approximations easier to solve, even though it makes the original problems harder to solve. The main question is how symmetry can help you to solve the nonconvex problems. Juan has been thinking about this project for quite some time now, and currently works on it together with his PhD student.

Juan Vera really likes to collaborate with colleagues, PhD students, and scientists from other universities. Therefore, he does not have a single-authored publication. He thinks that one is more creative when one collaborates by sharing and merging each other's ideas → and correcting each other's mistakes. Research is produced by talking to others in his case. Besides that, he really likes having a PhD student, especially since she is a hard worker. Juan also thinks that research is going towards more collaboration nowadays. More and more papers are written by multiple authors and research is getting a more interdisciplinary form.

Already since he was a teenager, Juan Vera wanted to become a mathematician. Within mathematics there are roughly two career paths: becoming a teacher or becoming a researcher. At that time, being a mathematics teacher was not considered as prestigious in his homeland Colombia, which made him want to become a researcher and do a PhD in math. Although he planned this career path around the age of 15 years, he is convinced that it was the right one for him since he is pretty happy with his current job.

As a researcher at our university, one still has to spend some time working on teaching activities. The perfect

balance between research and teaching is different for any member of the department. In a perfect balance, Juan would spend most of his time on research. This does not mean that he does not want to teach at all. He likes teaching, preferably one or two courses per year, because of the interaction with students. Besides, he thinks that teaching is an important part of his job.

Juan has really ambitious plans for the future. They are about particular open problems in mathematics, of which one has even been open for more than 300 years now. Juan does not think that he will solve this problem, but he might try once. These ambitious plans serve more as a utopia point to which he wants to get as close as possible. Research is something that never stops. The hardest part of research is to continuously ask the right questions.

## **'Research is something that never stops'**

Putting such a utopia point can help you to keep asking questions to get further on the path towards it.

As a final remark, Juan wants to comment on the recent president election in the United States and its implications for science and research. The new president Donald Trump once stated that research is not important and that innovation is created at companies. A common discussion around the world is about whether it is really worth to put money into research. In addition to the evidence that countries which put less money into research usually underperform, Juan thinks that companies generally cannot afford the research universities are doing since companies cannot set research goals which they may never achieve. And even though some of the research at universities cannot be applied in the near future, we do not know its impact in subsequent years. What we do know is that research as a whole has a huge impact on society.



**Martin Salm – Associate Professor**

After studying in Germany and obtaining a PhD degree in economics at the Duke University in Durham (USA), Professor Salm worked at the University of Mannheim before he came to Tilburg University. He mostly works in the broad field of health economics which tries to answer questions like "How do consumers make decisions about smoking?" and "Why do poorer people die much sooner than rich people?", but also studies the design and the financing of health care systems in an aging population, e.g. questions like "How do hospitals react to different payment schemes?" and "How do patients react when they have to pay deductibles (NL: 'eigen risico')?". Since health care expenditures are very heterogeneous, there are not always easy answers to these questions.

There are only a few other people within the department and faculty who are also interested in health questions. Martin Salm works together with Tobias Klein on a project which tries to answer the general question "How do people react to deductibles?" There are a number of interesting questions arising from these deductibles, since some people have to pay within this system and others do not. Moreover, people seem to react very differently on a payback system than on a →

deductible system, although they are economically almost identical. This project is funded by the Rijksinstituut voor Volksgezondheid en Milieu (RIVM) and they have a lot of detailed data from a health insurer to work with. Again, it is not so clear what the results will be.

The field of health economics is quite applied. Although a lot of research questions come from applications, they touch theoretical questions about the behavior of human beings. For example, the questions on reactions to a payback system and a deductible system have a direct relation to prospect theory. In general, health decisions are based on expectations for the future, which is strongly related to theoretical questions on rationality and how people form expectations. The empirical theory of health economics can teach us also about these general patterns of human behavior. Martin Salm thinks that application and theory should always go together.

Lots of questions on the health care system are part of the current political debate. As a researcher, you like situations in which your research is relevant. Although Martin Salm is not directly involved in this current political debate, he of course likes that there is interest in his research field from ministries and other institutions. One of his other projects which tries to explain the regional variation in health care use in Germany attracted a lot of attention from politicians, so his coauthor was very active in presenting the results to them. Martin emphasizes that none of his research projects is based on a contract with some political party; he can objectively obtain and publish the results, and present them to interested people.

## **'Application and theory should always go together'**

In contrast to theoretical research in which obtained results have a low direct impact but remain valid forever, empirical research provides results which may have a high direct impact but remain valid for only a certain period of time. According to Martin Salm, this is not precisely the



way you should distinguish them. Of course, health care will be very different in a hundred years and its system will change, but at the moment we can learn which things do matter for its framing and what its consequences are for human behavior. Empirical research is used to shape a body of knowledge. It is used to test theoretical models and theories.

## **'Empirical research is used to shape a body of knowledge'**

Since his PhD, Martin Salm has always been interested in health care questions because health care is such a challenge for societies. On the one hand it is so great, since people live longer and can do more things. On the other hand, it is so expensive and can drive out all other public expenditures. Besides, there are a lot of these fundamental aspects involved in the corresponding

it was a lot of fun to work on them. In Martin's opinion, research and teaching really complement each other. He is convinced that the teaching load of professors in the Netherlands is not too much. There is enough time to prepare and set up a good course next to the research activities. Teaching is important for his research and it is nice to do.

Besides, he likes to work with other colleagues and other scientists on research projects. Martin has some single-authored papers, but all his current projects are with coauthors. He likes the intensive discussions coming from cooperation, and prefers to spend a lot of time with his coauthors. He is very glad that he recently started having two PhD students and is currently exploring the ideal supervising style.

We thank Juan Vera and Martin Salm for their interesting words on research and wish them good luck with their future projects. ●



# International Business Tour 2016: Japan!





# Guns, Goats and Mini Golf

## Active Members Day Taken to a Whole New Level

Just before the start of the autumn break, Asset | Econometrics decided that it would be great to plan some awesome activities for all active members. The main goal was for everyone to have a fun day, where they could meet other active members and get to know the association better."



everything in order to prevent their team captain from being shot (which would lead to an instant-win for the enemy), but despite some heroic deeds, the lack of proper battle tactics became fatal to our team: the foe defeated us in a sneaky way, which caused us to retreat. After we healed our casualties, we played a variety of games involving paintball like *Free for All*, which comes down to just shooting everybody in sight, and *Team Deathmatch*, in which the main goal was to completely spray the enemy with paint filled bullets until they almost drowned in a vicious yellow liquid. In the end, all soldiers were exhausted by the fight and after a short revitalization break, we went to the nearby mini golf track, where we could display our aiming talent once more.

Again, groups were formed and this time equally divided across the mini golf terrain. Although some tracks were very hard, most of us succeeded in at least putting the ball into the hole after a few attempts. Despite everyone's eagerness to succeed the tracks using the smallest amount of attempts, the competition did not become as intense as during the paintball match, but still most of us were quite determined to win the game.

In my opinion this is a great mindset, which deserves to be rewarded by some food. That is why we gathered in the restaurant of *De Zeven Geitjes* to satisfy our gastronomic needs and make the AMD end as nicely as it began. ●



**Dominique Bavelaar**

**AGE: 19**

Began studies in 2015

The day consisted of four main parts: food, paintball, mini golf and more food. We first gathered for a lunch in Dante Building, after which we headed for a paintball alley in the neighborhood called "*De Zeven Geitjes*". This name finds its origin in a Grimm Brothers' fairytale "*Der Wolf und die sieben Geißlein*" and the setting of the terrain is inspired by this story. However, to prevent children from freaking out, a supplementary goat had replaced the wolf in the original story.

Despite the peaceful environment, the atmosphere turned a bit more hostile quite abruptly: after we split up into groups, everyone received their battle equipment. This equipment included some very light but camouflaged armor and a mask for protection. In addition, paintball guns were handed out so we could show our *quick-scoping* talent, lying in wake after years and years of training behind gaming consoles, to the outside world. After a few instructions by two experienced warriors, we marched in a queue to the battlefield. Upon arrival, both teams picked a team captain and searched for some cover, but this time span of relative tranquility would not last too long...

A few moments later, a battle horn was blown and this gave rise to a fierce hunger for battle among all fighters. Almost immediately the air was filled with paintballs, shooting sounds and passionate screaming, and the first casualties were inflicted. The warriors who were still in the game gave



**Irmgard Oude Alink**

**AGE: 21**

Began studies in 2013

To start the evening of the Asset Gala with a good meal, Nikkie, Linda, Anouk and Julia came to my place to eat pizzas from Happy Italy. It was a typically Dutch Thursday with too much rain, so everybody was looking like a drowned cat upon arrival. Fortunately, we were not wearing our dresses yet, except for Julia. Her dress was a little bit wet, but she looked beautiful regardless. After our delicious pizzas, Nikkie already went to Dudok to make the last things ready for the gala, because she is part of the organizing committee. Also, Anouk went home to dress up at her own place.

Linda, Julia and I had a real girls evening including doing our make-up, choosing which dresses, tights and shoes to wear and styling Linda's hair. When we were ready, we



# Could You Play this Song?

November 10 was a night to dress up nicely for the members of all Asset departments. The girls wore their most beautiful dresses and the boys took their tuxedos out of their closets. For only 25 euros we could enjoy an evening with friends at Dudok with music alternately by a band, The Manatees, and a DJ: the Asset Gala.

first checked 'buienalarm' to see whether we could go to Dudok between the rain showers. Upon arrival, we got a bright green strap to show we paid for our ticket and could get free drinks. This green color did not match at all with the dresses and tuxedos! Although it was already later than 21.30 hours (the gala started at 21.00 hours), it was not yet crowded inside. We got a drink and had some small conversations with other people.

**'It was a typically Dutch Thursday with too much rain, so everybody was looking like a drowned cat upon arrival'**

Of course, there is one thing that cannot be missing at a gala: a photo booth. When more econometricians had arrived, we took

pictures in all possible formations. However, it was very unfortunate that the background was burgundy red, because there were many girls wearing red dresses (including me). Enjoying some more drinks and mini snacks, we danced to the music of the band and the DJ and talked some more with our fellow students. At this time, it was pleasantly crowded in the room.

Julia and I went to the DJ several times to ask him to play some really beautiful songs like 'Angels' by Robbie Williams, 'I want it that way' by The Backstreet Boys and 'Ademnood' by Linda (not Linda Torn, although we were hoping she would sing along), Roos & Jessica. Every time he said he would play our songs, but at 01.30 hours, we were still waiting for them, while the gala ended at 02.00AM. I proposed one last song, namely 'Brabant' by Guus Meeuwis. He could not ignore this request! But then, I think it was five minutes before 02.00 hours, Julia and I were shouting from happiness, because we finally heard 'Angels'. Ten minutes later, it was announced that the gala was over, but that the DJ would play one last song, which everybody knew: 'Brabant'. These last songs made my evening even better than it already was. Just a little bit after 02.00 hours, the gala was really over and the lights were turned on. Everybody went immediately to the wardrobe to get their coats to go home or to go to the Boekanier. ●



## THE PASSION OF... FLOOR VAN HELSDINGEN



When Floor participated in the TOP-week last summer, she was in dire need of a new hobby to undertake this year. She did not know where to look, until her amazing TOP-mommies Nikkie and Linda introduced her to Café De Boekanier – more specifically, to the pole on the small stage in the back of Café De Boekanier. Floor immediately knew that she did not need to look any further. Without any second thoughts, she decided right then and there that in the upcoming year, that was where she would spend her nights, dancing until the bar closes its doors.

Text by: Julia de Kogel



Floor  
van Helsdingen

AGE: 20

Began studies in 2016

# Recycling 2.0

Local woman imports 3000 soda can tabs from China and you will not believe the reason why

Sadly, the Nekst aims to uphold its sensible image. It was therefore decided that a hobby that is this susceptible to injuries should not be promoted, and the intriguing story behind the before mentioned passion did not make it to the press. Luckily, Floor is a girl of many interests, and Claire and I still got to interview her about another passion which is equally interesting, to most people more inspiring, and definitely more appropriate for this magazine: she makes and sells handbags of her own brand, Flishes.



Floor makes no ordinary handbags. As you can see in the pictures, they are not made of leather or cotton, but of the tabs of soda cans! As a teenager, she always lost her keys, so whenever she had a can of soda, she took off the tab and put it on her keychain to make it more recognizable. When her collection grew so large that it was no longer practical, she decided to make something out of the tabs. After googling her options, she decided to try and make a bracelet, but she ended up hating the result; she

found it ugly and it did not look original. A further search led her to crocheted bags of wool in which some tabs were incorporated. She did not like the look of them, but the images of these bags gave her the idea to create her own design for a handbag entirely made of tabs.

This idea emerged about three and a half years ago. She was suffering from Pfeiffer's disease at the time, which meant that she often had to stay at home for two years, and as she humbly

phrases it, "making handbags was just a way to kill the time during that period". However, as the interview progressed, it became clear that even though these activities could be described with the same wording, Floor's way to kill time should be taken a bit more seriously than having Netflix marathons or practicing one's Mario Kart skills. After doing her research and realizing she would need more than just the tabs from her keychain, Floor ordered 3000 tabs online and started working on her

## THE PASSION OF

first bag. After a year of adjusting the design, it was finally finished. Since then, she has come up with six new designs!

As you have probably concluded by now, just sitting around doing nothing is not one of Floor's talents. As a child, she was already quite bold and creative, and she would sell apples from her own backyard to her neighbors. This entrepreneurial mindset might be inherited from her father, who is currently the owner of three companies. It is no surprise that she kept with the time and after a year of making handbags and lots of positive reactions,

hear her talking about them, you can immediately sense that she puts her heart into everything she creates. In only a few years, Flishes has become a brand with a remarkable personal identity. It is recognizable and unique because of the unconventional choice of material and because all the bags are handmade by Floor herself. No two bags are the same, as Floor keeps slightly altering her designs. The handbags do not look like the typical handcrafted accessory, but rather more sophisticated. Potential customers are usually surprised to hear that the bags were handmade, and this often makes them even more interested. Especially upon finding out that Floor

**'In only a few years, Flishes has become a brand with a remarkable personal identity'**



she used her expertise as a saleswoman to create a web shop to sell her bags: [www.flishes.nl](http://www.flishes.nl). Floor is a perfectionist, so her designs are never truly finished. She keeps adjusting them to be even more pretty and practical, and she will not stop until she is completely satisfied. Both making new designs and altering old ones typically happens through a process of trial and error. Moreover, all designs are entirely made by Floor herself. You can rest assured that Floor will not let a bag exit the production process until it is perfect, and as a result, she has never gotten any negative feedback from a customer. When you see her designs or even just

is so dedicated to her brand and has accomplished so much already at the age of twenty, many people are eager to aid her business. Her parents are her greatest supporters. Her father is an accomplished business owner and her biggest inspiration, and her mother is the one to keep her on track when Floor tends to neglect her business to focus too much on her studies, for example. Her friends have also been of great help, as one of them assisted her to set up a web shop and another one made business cards for her, both voluntarily. She has even done a professional photoshoot for free with her friends and sisters. Moreover, some shops

have been very generous and have let Floor display her collection for free and let her keep the profits! Her bags are currently on display and for sale at a luxury optician. However, so far, most of Floor's customers were people who saw Floor or her mom with the bag and asked them where they got it. Because most people became more interested in the brand when they heard the story behind it, Floor would like to exhibit her collection at fairs rather than shops more often, since that would give her a chance to speak to the potential buyers.

Last year, Floor joined Vidar and became a coxswain for a competitive rowing team for which she had to practice almost daily, which meant that she had little time left to work on Flishes. This year, she wants to get back to business from where she left off. She has only just started studying Econometrics, so she knows it will be hard to focus on both, but luckily she finds making bags relaxing and enjoys doing so in her spare time while watching TV or a movie. She hopes that advertising at fairs will help her gain recognition in the sector in general, since that has been her greatest struggle so far. While production can be done anytime, she does not always have time to attend fairs. She uses Facebook and Instagram (@flishes) as well to promote her bags, but she knows that she should post more for these channels to help her gain customers.

In contrast to her enthusiastic way of speaking about the origins of her small company, Floor gets very modest when she talks about her hopes for its future. She admits she would like to expand her audience a bit, but she is not worried about the future of Flishes or about not making high enough profits. Flishes is still more of a hobby than a career, so as long as she enjoys it, she would not mind if the demand stays as it is. Especially looking at how stressful her dad's job seems at times, she does not think that becoming a big business owner is the direction for her. If demand does increase, she thinks that the most important values of the brand are its uniqueness and personal character, so she would rather put customers on a waiting list than outsource production work. ●



# The Misuse of Models

**Econometricians love models. They use models to make predictions and to acquire a better understanding of the world. Many people (such as CEOs, journalists and politicians) use the predictions of models to inform the public or make decisions. Therefore, models and their predictions play a prominent role in society. This brings with it a huge responsibility: the shortcomings of models need to be emphasized to prevent social unrest.**

The election of the 45<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America provides a recent example of the prominent role of models. Almost all opinion polls pointed to a win for Clinton. One of the very few who predicted a Trump win was Professor Elmer Sterken from the University of Groningen. So why were so many predictions simply wrong? What did these polls overlook? Immediately after the election results, numerous experts appeared in the media speculating about the possible explanations: people had not been honest and were afraid to say they would vote for Trump; the voter turnout of some groups (Latinos for example) was lower than in previous elections; 'angry' white men were underrepresented in the polls. Many polling agencies will now certainly undergo a period of reconsidering their research methods. 'How could we get it so wrong?' A question many agencies will probably ask themselves. However, I am sceptical as to whether new research methods will deliver any better predictions next time. The world is dynamic and something that happened in the past may not happen again in the future. I would argue for a less important role for polls in future elections. Make people aware that polls are just models; explain the potential risks inherent in these models; communicate not only the 'best estimate' but also confidence bounds. If the media take on this role, then perhaps major disappointments when the polls turn out to be wrong

(such as protests and riots following a presidential election) can be avoided.

Models also play a significant role in the financial industry. Banks and insurers need to manage risk as accurately as possible. The 2008 financial crisis clearly showed that some (or perhaps many) assumptions underlying financial models are far from accurate. At the time, who would have predicted that the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, which is a relatively small bank, could have seriously endangered the entire global financial system? Many models clearly missed a critical aspect of reality: the interdependency of financial institutions and financial markets. So we must start a diligent search for alternative models. One promising alternative is the so-called Hawkes model: a crash in one region of the world (e.g. United States of America) leads to a higher chance of crashes occurring both in the same region and in other regions (e.g. European Union). The search for better models is both a fascinating and challenging task for econometricians. However, at all times they should make it clear that no model is perfect and will always have inherent shortcomings.

Regarding pensions, models should start to play a different role as well. Currently, pension funds only tell workers what the expected pension payment will be. This gives many the impression that payments are guaranteed. However, the opposite

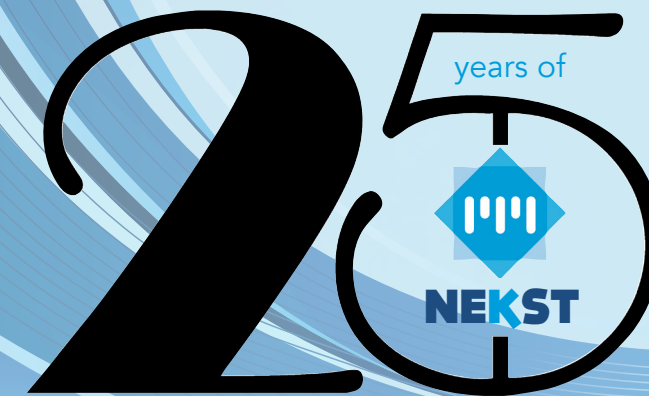
is actually true: pensions are risky and they can even be reduced when pension funds are in financial distress. The fact that pensions are not guaranteed has only recently become clear to the greater public, as many pension funds have lowered their payments in recent years. This has resulted in extremely low levels of trust in pension funds. The trust in pension funds can perhaps only be restored if funds start communicating honestly about pensions. Funds should answer questions such as: what is the risk of my pension being reduced? What is the chance of my pension being 10% lower than the expected pension outcome?

The above stories demonstrate that models play a vital role in society. Econometricians must not only look for the 'best' model, but also clearly explain how models should be used and interpreted. ●



## Servaas van Bilsen

Servaas van Bilsen is assistant professor of actuarial science and mathematical finance at Tilburg University (NETSPAR) and the University of Amsterdam. His research interests include pension economics and behavioral finance.



**Text by: Pepijn Wissing**

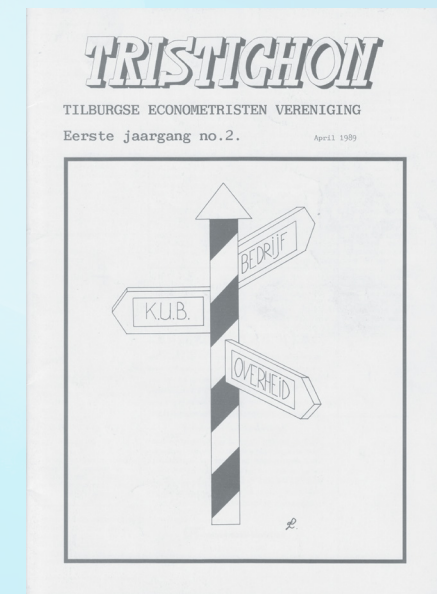
**In the last issue of NEKST, we dove into the magazine's history; learning about the period from the time on which the very first newsletter-like unnamed magazine was published until the 'rebirth issue' of De Cirkel. In this issue, we will pick up the story right where we left off.**

In 1988, TEV decided to publish a new kind of magazine, in which all articles should have an econometric nature. This magazine, that was going to be called "Tristichon", was supposed to appeal to a wider public of readers. As you might imagine, the editors of De Cirkel were not particularly happy with this prospect and they had no intention of keeping that quiet. In one of the last issues of De Cirkel, The following passage was published.

*"It was almost the case that there would not have been a Cirkel next year! After having survived the possible end of Econometrics in Tilburg, some budget cuts and even the merger of the sub-faculty of Econometrics with the faculty of Economics, Cirkel would now perhaps come to an end because of refusing the proposal of TEV to merge our magazine with theirs, the first of which had yet to be published. The articles in that magazine were supposed to have an 'econometric justification', which differs from the style adhered to by Cirkel. The huge amount of money that appears to be necessary for this publication (approximately fl2,000 per issue) makes it very difficult financially for that magazine to survive" (Cirkel, May 1988).*

Clearly, their efforts have not had the desired impact, as Tristichon was founded and De Cirkel ceased

to exist. As no issues of Tristichon have been preserved, little is known about this magazine. What we do know is that it was printed in black and white, on relatively poor quality paper. Moreover, while its content was interesting for the econometrics students at the time, it was not too interesting for readers outside the university. As such, after a mere four years of existence, Tristichon was reinvented as "Nekst", a name that originates from "Nieuw EKonometrieS Tijdschrift" (EN: new econometrics magazine). Together with the name change, the magazine was given a more 'glossy' lay-out.



Joost Rongen, the first Editor-in-Chief of Nekst, paraphrases the reason for the short lifespan of Tristichon as follows: *"In our opinion, Tristichon was a stapled piece of paper with no charm whatsoever; quite characteristic for our image as econometricians at the time. So we decided it was time for something new: a glossy magazine from and for econometricians. If business economists and marketers could do it, so could we!"* Evidently, they could indeed.

The sitting TEV board was initially very reluctant to support the initiative: starting up a new, full-color magazine would require a substantial investment; a financial risk the board was not willing to take. Eventually, Joost and his partner in crime Patrick managed to get some commitments on advertisements to support the running costs and some guarantees from the Econometrics department. This meant that after taking a few final hurdles, the TEV board was convinced and the conception of Nekst could be realized.

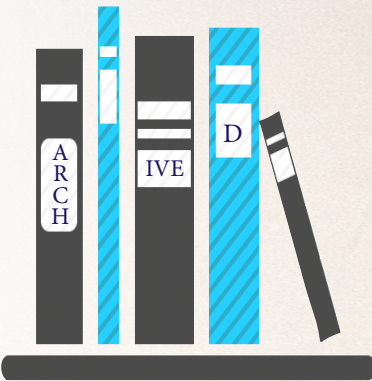
That is not to say that actually creating the first issue of Nekst was smooth sailing from there on out. As a matter of fact, the first ever issue of Nekst was accompanied by a year full of insecurities, frustration, balancing on the edge of an early bankruptcy and even a threat of police intervention. ●

**The next edition of NEKST will feature the next chapter in this thrilling story: the evolution of NEKST!**



# CentER, een Nieuw Instituut aan de KUB

Door prof. dr. A.P. Barten,  
directeur van CentER



Op het gebied van het theoretisch economisch onderzoek op micro- en macroeconomisch gebied gebeurt er echt wel het een en ander in Nederland.

Toch meende de Verkenning-commissie Economie, ingesteld door de minister van O&W, in 1986 dat de internationale uitstraling daarvan te wensen overliet. Voeg daarbij het feit dat er nogal wat succesvolle economen in het buitenland zijn gaan of blijven werken en men komt snel tot de conclusie dat er ruimte is voor verbetering van de huidige toestand. Zoetermeer wilde daarvoor wel wat middelen inzetten en Tilburg zag er wel brood in. Zo werd het initiatief genomen om aan de KUB een centrum voor economisch onderzoek van internationale allure op te richten, waarvan de kosten worden gedeeld door het Rijk en de KUB. Na vijf jaar vindt een evaluatie plaats, die over de verdere financiering zal beslissen.



Het is op zijn zachtst gezegd een ambitieus plan om zo maar een Centre of excellence uit de grond te willen stampen. Anderen zouden hier zelfs van arrogantie spreken. Maar je kunt beter hoog mikken; de pijl daalt wel in de vlucht. In eerste aanleg zal het erom gaan een goede ploeg bijeen te krijgen en deze in optimale voorwaarden te laten werken.

tot ongeveer een jaar op CentER verblijven om aan het onderzoek deel te nemen. Het gaat hier om mensen die hun bekwaamheid voor research duidelijk hebben bewezen. Daarnaast zijn er Visiting Researchers die voor een kortere periode op CentER zijn. Deze twee categorieën personen zijn door-gaans uit het buitenland afkomstig.

## ”Je kunt beter hoog mikken; de pijl daalt wel in de vlucht”

Zo is CentER dan op 1 september 1988 aan de slag gegaan met Frederick van der Ploeg afkomstig van de London School of Economics, John Driffill, halftijds gedeeld met de University of Southampton, Anton Barten uitgeleend door de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Vanaf 1 februari hoort daar ook Eric van Damme bij, tot dan toe hoogleraar aan de Universiteit van Bonn. Drie van dit viertal zijn oorspronkelijk uit Nederland afkomstig. Wie wil kan in deze constructie een stukje “reversed” brain drain zien.

Rond deze kern groeperen zich Research Fellows, die voor een periodegaandevan enkele maanden

Zij representeren een deel van de band tussen CentER en de internationale wetenschappelijke gemeenschap. De band met de nationale wetenschappelijke gemeenschap komt tot uitdrukking in het netwerk van CentER-Fellows aan de verschillende Nederlandse universiteiten. Zij participeren in CentER activiteiten zonder daarom noodzakelijk op CentER gehuisvest te zijn. In het bijzonder geldt dit voor een tiental Tilburgse CentER-Fellows.

De band naar de toekomst komt onder meer tot stand via AIO's. Het CentER contingent zal zo'n vijf tot acht AIO's omvatten,

afkomstig uit Nederland of uit het buitenland. Zij worden uiteraard geselecteerd op hun verwachte bekwaamheid. De research oriëntatie van CentER, begeleidings-mogelijkheden en wetenschappelijke contacten zijn voorwaarden die een verdere ontplooiing van hun talenten alleen maar kunnen versterken.

De uitkomsten van wetenschappelijk onderzoek zijn moeilijk te meten. Zij worden neergelegd in Discussion Papers, die een vorm van voorpublicatie zijn. In de eerste zes maanden van zijn bestaan heeft CentER 18 Discussion Papers laten verschijnen. De faculty Research Seminars zijn een andere vorm van communicatie. Wekelijks vinden er minstens twee plaats: het Economics Seminar en het Econometrics Seminar. Het laatste wordt georganiseerd samen met de vakgroep Econometrie van de KUB. Daarnaast zijn er nog incidentele voordrachten door gastonderzoekers

Het voornemen bestaat om tenminste eenmaal per jaar een conferentie rond een bepaald onderwerp te beleggen. Zo was in 1988 het thema “Dynamic Policy Games in Economics”. Een dertiental sprekers, meestal afkomstig van buitenlandse universiteiten, hebben er voor een groep van ingewijden de, of liever gezegd hun, nieuwste ontwikkelingen op het gebied van die onderwerp uiteengezet. Van 15-17 juni dit jaar organiseert Eric van Damme een conferentie over “Information Economics”. Ook dit maal gaat het om een betrekkelijk kleine maar selecte groep van sprekers en toehoorders.

Bij de oprichting van CentER is met niet zozeer uitgegaan van bepaalde onderzoeksthema's als wel van de beschikbaarheid van personen van een zeker gehalte. Dat sluit overigens niet uit dat er toch via een keuze van deze personen een zekere identificatie met de onderwerpen plaatsvindt. Zo kan met onderscheiden:

- Speltheoretische benaderingen in de economie: analyse van markten met asymmetrische informatie, industrial organisation, consistentie over de tijd en de geloofswaardigheid van macroeconomische politiek. Relatie overheid-vakbond, internationale coördinatie van economische politiek.

- Grondslagen van macroeconomie: analyse van de markten voor arbeid en kapitaal, verschillen tussen financiering voor middel van belastingen of leningen, het Mundell-Tobin effect, dynamica van lopende rekening van de betalingsbalans, het modelleren van de tijdsvoorkeursvoet en van de structuur van de rentevoeten, de conjunctuur en niet-lineaire dynamica

- Internationale macroeconomie: in het algemeen de macroeconomische interacties tussen landen en tot verschillende mogelijke vissekoers regimes of monetaire stelsels.

- Toegepaste econometrie: meerlanden modellen, modellen van de arbeidsmarkt, consumentengedrag en portefeuille beheer.

peil en de onafhankelijkheid van CentER veilig stellen is de globale leiding van CentER toevertrouwd aan een Wetenschappelijke Raad samengesteld uit vijf vooraanstaande buitenlandse geleerden en vijf geleerden uit Nederland waarvan drie aan de KUB. De Raad bepaalt de onderzoeksstrategie en de keuze van de permanente leden. Van dichtbij wordt CentER bestuurd door een Dagelijks Bestuur (Board). Hiervan maken deel uit de in het begin van dit artikel genoemde personen en Arie Kapteyn. Deze laatste mag wel beschouwd worden als degene die de CentER kar aan het rollen heeft gebracht. Hij vertegenwoordigt in zijn persoon de band van de FEW. Samen met de administratief directeur, Marie-Louise Kemperman, en de directeur zorgen een viertal secretaressen er voor dat de CentER kar blijft rollen en wel op het juiste spoor.

De hamvraag is uiteraard of het CentER project aan de verwachtingen zal beantwoorden, of met de niet-onaanzienlijke middelen het gestelde doel zal

## ”Zo is het de bedoeling te zijner tijd de aandacht ook op “financiering” te richten, een thema dat op het ogenblik zijdelings al aan de orde komt”

Deze thema's vertonen een aanzienlijke mate van overlap. Zij weerspiegelen een momentopname van een zich ontwikkelend proces. Zo is het de bedoeling te zijner tijd de aandacht ook op “financiering” te richten, een thema dat op het ogenblik zijdelings al aan de orde komt.

CentER is formeel een onderdeel van de Economische Faculteit van de KUB. Om het wetenschappelijk

worden bereikt. Op het gebied van wetenschappelijk onderzoek kan men wel vanaf bovenaf ruimte scheppen, maar het opvullen daarvan laat zich niet eenvoudig organiseren. De KUB en het O&W hebben met veel enthousiasme deze ruimte geschapen. Of deze op aantrekkelijke manier zal worden gebruikt is een zaak van afwachten.





# Adding Robustness to WFP's Supply Chain Optimization

In recent years, the World Food Programme (WFP) has developed a supply chain optimization model. This model determines, given beneficiary requirements, the most cost-effective food basket and its sourcing and routing strategies. We expand this model to incorporate uncertainty in two factors: procurement prices and port delays. Reduction of these uncertainties may be inexpensive, and thus attractive for WFP's decision makers. From the business requirements, we derive an approach for each of these two factors, where both approaches investigate the trade-off between expected cost and risk. The robustness analyses are demonstrated on a real life WFP operation. This case study demonstrates that substantial risk reduction is sometimes possible for only very modest cost increases.

## Introduction

WFP is one of the world's leading humanitarian organizations. In 2014, it distributed 3.2 million metric tonnes of food, coordinated an average of 5000 trucks, 20 ships and 70 aircraft on any given day, and managed a network of 650 warehouses around the globe [3]. It was only a few years ago that WFP began to develop optimization software, commonly referred to as Optimus, to aid in planning this highly complex supply chain. Recent application of this software to an Iraq case study has led to a cost saving of 17%, or an additional 85,000 beneficiaries that can receive food assistance.

Without going into too much detail about the formulation of the underlying model, it attempts to solve the following problem: given a network where a subset of locations holds a number of beneficiaries, and given the nutritional requirements of these beneficiaries, determine

- which commodities to procure to satisfy these requirements;
- where and when to procure these commodities;
- where and when to ship them to ensure timely arrival,

such that the total cost is minimal. This problem is formulated as an MILP (Mixed Integer Linear Program). The main decision variable  $x_{ijkt}$  is the amount of commodity  $k$  one should send from location  $i$  to  $j$  in a certain time period  $t$ .

There are two sources of uncertainty integrated into the software so far: uncertainty in procurement prices and uncertainty in port delays. Rather than focusing on the worst case behavior of these factors, WFP's business needs required us to focus on steady behavior and risk reduction. For a number of reasons, the standard deviation (or, equivalently, the variance) was the most suitable measure for our project. We will now discuss how we approached each of these uncertainties separately below.

## Robustness against Price Uncertainty

WFP has been working on forecasts of the procurement prices of commodities, and these served as input for our project. Importantly, we were supplied with a covariance matrix  $\Sigma$  of the price estimates, which can be used to quantify the uncertainty of a solution. Denoting the relevant  $x_{ijkt}$  as residing in a vector  $x^P$ , the variance of a solution would be  $(x^P)^T \Sigma x^P$ . Since any covariance matrix is positive semi-definite, including a constraint on this variance would make the problem convex quadratic.

To visualize the trade-off between risk and costs, we use the following procedure based on [1]: run the MILP we described above to find the minimum cost solution, and calculate the associated variance  $\sigma_0^2$ . Then, add the constraint  $(x^P)^T \Sigma x^P \leq \beta^2$ , where  $\beta \in \{0.95\sigma_0, 0.9\sigma_0, \dots, 0\}$ , and solve the problem for each  $\beta$ . For each solution, plot the 95% confidence interval on the cost axis.

This procedure can result in figures such as Figure 1. Please note that the data was scaled for confidentiality reasons, but the shape of the picture is the same as was obtained on real life data. As one can see, there are some attractive risk mitigation strategies available. For example, we could reduce the standard deviation by a third at an expected cost increase of around 1%. Further examination of these solutions showed that this was due to one volatile market that was relatively inexpensive to substitute.

## Robustness against Delay Uncertainty

Besides procurement price uncertainty, there are many more types of uncertainties in humanitarian logistics. The second uncertainty type one that we discuss is the uncertainty in handling capacity, specifically of ports. When the flow through a port exceeds its handling capacity, ships will have to "queue" to be offloaded. The space they occupy in a port during this time will have to be rented, and the associated costs are referred to as demurrage. The demurrage cost is obviously highly correlated with the lead time extension due to that port.

We started with a data analysis. It turned out that in a considerable number of historical cases, there was no delay, and shipments would be discharged immediately after arrival. Therefore, we model the observed delay as  $\max\{0, d_{it}\}$ , where  $i$  is the port and  $t$  is the time period. This makes the total demurrage cost, which we want to include in the model:

$$\mathbb{E} \left( \sum_{i \in \mathcal{N}_T, t} \sum_k dmr_k \sum_{j \in \mathcal{N} \setminus \{i\}} x_{jik, t - \tau(j, i)} \max\{0, d_{it}\} \right), \quad (1)$$

where  $dmr_k$  is the demurrage rate for commodity  $k$  and  $\tau(j, i)$  is the amount of time periods it takes to send a shipment from location  $j$  to  $i$ . There was not enough data on hand to accurately estimate the distribution of  $d_{it}$  for all ports and time periods, so we decided to use a recently developed distributionally robust optimization technique.

We estimated the expectation  $\mu_{it}$ , support  $[a_{it}, b_{it}]$  and mean absolute deviation  $v_{it}$  of all  $d_{it}$  with a tobit regression. The family of probability distributions with these characteristics is denoted by  $\mathcal{P}$ . Let  $\mathcal{D} = \{d \in \mathbb{R}^n : d_{it} \in [a_{it}, b_{it}], \mu_{it} \in [a_{it}, b_{it}]\}$ . [2] uses the fact that for any convex function  $f : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ :

$$\max_{d \in \mathcal{D}} \mathbb{E}_{\mathbb{P}_d} f(d) = \sum_{\bar{d} \in \mathcal{D}} f(\bar{d}) \prod_{i \in \mathcal{N}_T, t} \mathbb{P}_d(d_{it} = \bar{d}_{it}),$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}_d(d_{it} = a_{it}) &= \frac{v_{it}}{2(\mu_{it} - a_{it})} \\ \mathbb{P}_d(d_{it} = b_{it}) &= \frac{v_{it}}{2(b_{it} - \mu_{it})} \\ \mathbb{P}_d(d_{it} = \mu_{it}) &= 1 - \mathbb{P}_d(d_{it} = a_{it}) - \mathbb{P}_d(d_{it} = b_{it}). \end{aligned}$$

Since the inner expression of (1) is convex in  $d_{it}$ , we could use this result to formulate the tractable robust counterpart of (1). Besides this expected demurrage cost, we also derived the robust variance of the demurrage cost. In this way, we could generate graphs similar to Figure 1 for delay uncertainty.

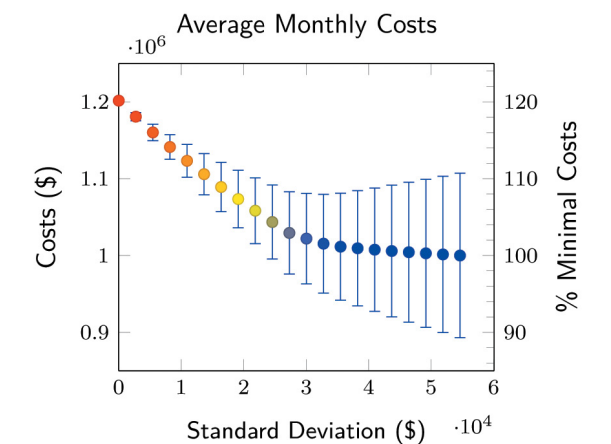


Figure 1: Pareto frontier with 95% normal confidence intervals for the price uncertainty robustness analysis (data manipulated)

## Conclusion

Given the datasets these approaches were tested on, the results seem to offer cost-effective risk mitigation strategies. However, the input from experts "on the ground" could still be very helpful in improving the quality of the port delay estimates. ●



**Riley Badenbroek**

Age: 21

Began studies in 2012

## References

- [1] Marglin, Stephen A, *Public Investment Criteria*, MIT Press Cambridge, MA, 1967.
- [2] Postek, Krzysztof and Ben-Tal, Aharon and Den Hertog, Dick and Melenberg, Bertrand, *Exact robust counterparts of ambiguous stochastic constraints under mean and dispersion information*, CentER Discussion Paper Series, 2015.
- [3] WFP, *WFP Logistics in 2014: Excellence in Service Provision*, 2014.



# Variety is The Spice of Life!

On Tuesday November 8, the first activity organized by the Drinks and Activities Committee of this year took place: a cycling dinner! All econometricians could explore the city on their bikes, meet other members whilst enjoying a delightful meal together and show off their cooking skills to compete for fantastic prizes. After everyone had satisfied his or her hunger, it was time for our monthly drink in Café De Nachtwacht.



We, as the new D&A committee, decided to have a competition for best starter, main dish, and dessert amongst the groups participating, so everyone would give their dish all their love and attention, instead of some people just buying a ready-to-eat salad (as Jaron had suggested). When the cycling scheme was made, the prizes bought, and all other preparations had been made, it was time for the food! Since the theme of the activity was 'MasterChef' all groups were assigned a special ingredient which they had to use in their dish. Not all groups were very happy with this...

Rachel and I teamed up and were assigned a starter with the ingredient 'whipped cream'. After thinking for some time, we found the perfect dish: creamy zucchini soup! While we were cooking, our first guests, Maud and Nina, arrived and a bit later Bas and Joris arrived as well. We decorated our soups with croutons and crispy bacon; took a photo of our beautiful creation and sent it to

Jaron to compete for best-looking starter. Unfortunately, Jaron could not appreciate the looks of our dish and said it looked like the stomach content of Dominique, the chairman of the D&A committee, after a night of drinking. After being very disappointed by this message, we all ate our soups and came to the conclusion that it actually tasted very good! We were chatting away with our fellow econometricians, so we totally lost track of time! After cleaning up very quickly, we left for the next house where we were going to eat our main dish.

On our way to the house where Tim and Thomas live, we ran into Christel and Manon, who were also going to eat there. We were all a bit lost, but luckily we had Google Maps! When we arrived, Tim and Thomas were still cooking. They had been assigned the ingredient 'wraps', and since we heard that Tim had won the cycling dinner all previous years, we were wondering what kind of special dish

we were going to have. Unfortunately, Tim was aware that he could not win the competition this year, since he is a board member, so they didn't really make an effort to make the dish look picture-perfect. Anyhow, the wraps they prepared were still very delicious, and we had a really nice time together.

Our last dish was at Charlotte's house, where Charlotte and Erik were going to cook for Ennia, Lotte, Rachel and myself. This dish was especially difficult, since there were a lot of allergies among the guests. It had to be a strawberry dessert that was lactose-free, gluten-free and did not contain any nuts and stone fruits. Luckily, Charlotte and Erik were very creative and we had a very tasty chocolate fondue with strawberries, mango and raspberry sorbet ice cream. While having some very fun conversations about stuffed animals and baby pictures of Charlotte, we lost track of time again!

We all rushed to Café de Nachtwacht. After a long and difficult discussion, the committee came to a decision and the award ceremony could take place. Dominique gave a very funny talk (he had had a few too many drinks) and announced that Lotte and Ennia won best starter, Anouk V. and Floor won best main dish, and Anouk C. and Pepijn won best dessert. After having a very good time, everyone showing off their dance moves, and singing along with songs from Guus Meeuwis, we called it a night. ●



# Pizza, Pooling and Making Friends

On Tuesday November 22, this year's first Freshmen Activity for the Asset | Econometrics students took place. For only €5,- per person, we had dinner at Happy Italy and 2 hours of pooling with drinks and snacks, with a total of 55 participants. For me, this was the perfect opportunity to get to know my fellow first year students even better and to make new friends.



At 19:45 we arrived at the pool hall. After the explanation of an employee and practicing, we could start the first round of the competition. The competition was divided into five rounds and you played 2 against 2 most of the time. There was

all: participating is more important than winning. At least, this was my mindset at that moment. Besides that, other people got a bit of fun out of me trying to play pool. I think this was the most important thing of the evening: having fun with fellow students. In round three, I played with Luuk Beele, Nienke and Linda Torn, but we spend more time talking than playing. Since it was Linda's birthday, some students brought garlands to decorate her. The final round seemed to have passed quickly, while I enjoyed a beer and a snack.

After everyone finished their games, it was time for the awards ceremony with symbolic and funny prizes. Annabel and Anouk both ended in second place and Jaron was the winner of the night, so he received the first prize. Afterwards, everyone went to the center of Tilburg. To properly close the evening we went to the Boekanier, where we stayed the rest of the evening.

I am glad Asset | Econometrics organizes such activities for the freshman students, because I do not know that many people quite yet, and this was a nice way to get in touch with fellow students. ●

We started at 17:30 at Happy Italy. I sat at the table with Floor, Luuk Beele, Bernhard, Melissa and Sannerien. Coincidentally, Floor and I were also sitting at the same table when we had last visited Happy Italy. This previous time we both could not make the choice which pizza to choose, therefore we shared two pizzas. Now we doubted about executing the same idea again, but I wanted my own pizza. While pondering my choice of pizza, we talked about various topics including the committees of Asset | Econometrics, student associations and rowing contests.

**'I think this was the most important thing of the evening: having fun with fellow students'**

I am always surprised how quickly the pizzas at Happy Italy are ready. Before I knew it, I had my ordered salami pizza in front of me. The large pizzas at Happy Italy are delicious; it was too bad that I could not finish whole pizza. There was enough time to sit and talk at the restaurant, since we had to be at the pooling center at 20:00. So, I now know that Floor makes bags of soda pull tabs and that a Facebook page exists called Every Day the same picture of Frans Bauer. The more you know, right?

a schedule on each table, which made it clear against or with whom you were playing. In the first round I played with Luc Haafkes, whom I did not know before this game. Against my expectations, we won our first round against Eva and Rianne. I did not expect this because I had played pool before but generally I am quite bad at it.

That I do not master the game of pooling that well became painfully clear in the rounds that followed. For one, I was able to miss a ball that was lying right in front of the white ball. But after



# Have You Got What It Takes?

It was a rather cold day about 10 months ago, somewhere in February. The exam period had just finished and I had just returned from my exchange to Hong Kong; in other words, I had nothing to do and was just wondering what extra activities I wanted to do during the upcoming semester. That is when I got a call from boss B. Floor asking how my exchange had been and if I was not homesick for a better climate. "Good, and yes," but that was not the only reason he called. He asked whether I would like to organize the Finance Expedition 2016. "Hmmm ok, sounds cool, I'm in." That was that, and together with Wouter de Hond, Vera van der Lelij, Daan de Bruin and Stan Beulen the committee of 2016 was born!

For the financial illiterates among us, a short explanation of the event. The Finance Expedition is a four-day and three-night long event in the Amsterdam area, where several different companies are visited, each specialized in their own respective field within finance. This diversity is exactly the goal of the event: to give students the opportunity to explore different aspects of the financial landscape in order to find out what they like, but also most certainly do not like. Application is free of charge, and all the expenses of the participants during the event, including hotel, travel, food and several activities will be paid for by the committee. I was proud of the fact that we had 124 applications this year, which was an absolute record. Out of all the applicants, 24 fortunate students will be so lucky as to be selected to join the expedition. The selection is done by the participating companies, who will each send us their top 10. This year, the expedition took place from Tuesday November 15 until Friday November 18. We had four participating companies respectively specialized in the fields of Risk Management, Asset Management, Treasury

Management and Mergers & Acquisitions. Furthermore, we had some interesting casual activities to blow off some steam in between company visits. Sounds awesome? Wished you were there? I can imagine, but do not worry, by reading this article you might feel like you embarked on the expedition yourself! And if not, there is always next year...

Let us begin at the beginning: Tuesday November 15. Around 18.30 hours, we met up at the Tilburg train station to depart to our countries beloved capitol. Our treasurer, de Hond, made an airtight itinerary, and the NS decided to actually be on time for a change, so the trip went very smoothly. After a short walk, we arrived at Hotel Amsterdam Arena, a four-star hotel located in Amsterdam Oost. It looked beautiful and luxurious which immediately got us into the right vibe for the event. After a short briefing regarding the program and schedule, we decided to casually hit the bar of the hotel. We had some drinks and some laughs and got to know each other a bit better. Unfortunately, we had to get up as early as 6.30 hours the next day, so most of us decided to retire early.

Even though getting up this early is not my forte, and as a committee member, one has to get up even earlier. Good thing we had a proper four-star breakfast waiting for us, which made things a bit better. Before we knew it the expedition was in full swing, we were heading for the Zuidas. More specifically, to Deloitte for a M&A session! The exact content of the case is only for insiders I am afraid, but it is safe to say it was pretty exciting. For many it was a chance to experience M&A outside of the traditional setting of a bank. Afterwards we had a nice lunch in their fancy office building and before we knew it we were heading towards het Gooi, to Zanders for a Treasury Management session. We arrived there without any problems once again; the NS is upping their game! While the subject was planned, just like most I did not really know what Treasury Management was exactly. Basically, it entails all activities related to making sure the company stays solvent, which includes identifying and managing risks, spotting opportunities and organizing the financial structure of a company. Zanders is a global leader regarding consultancy in this field, and has projects across the globe. After

their unique case we were treated to a nice Turkish barbeque in their office building. The atmosphere was really homely, everyone was enjoying their drinks and reflecting on the first day of the Finance Expedition. Arriving back at the hotel we did a few drinks but since most were pretty exhausted most decided wisely to go to bed in order to shine another day.

Amsterdam? Or that we had the first bubble, a time at which you could buy a house in downtown Amsterdam for a single tulip bulb? Except for that last one, neither did I, but the Dutch pride was definitely reawakened. After this we once again headed to the Zuidas to visit our third company of the Expedition: Kempen & Co Asset Management.

## 'Luckily, this time we could 'sleep in'; we only had to get up at 7.30 hours'

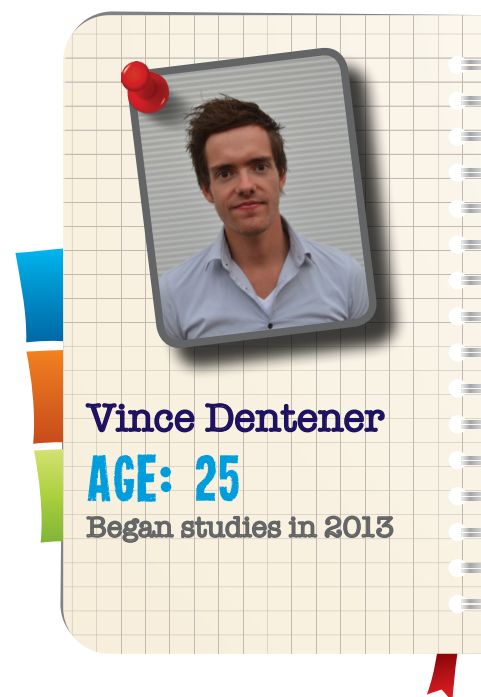
Thursday was upon us, which arguably was the most fun day of the expedition. Luckily, this time we could 'sleep in', since we only had to get up at 7.30 hours. We started the day a bit more relaxed, since the first casual activity of the expedition was about to start: A grand tour through the Amsterdam Stock Exchange. A first time for many including myself, so a good opportunity to learn more about this unique piece of Dutch history. For instance, did you know that the AEX is the oldest stock exchange on the planet? Or that the first investment fund was founded in

Their beautiful building near the train station was impressive and made you want to spontaneously clean your shoes and walk upright. During the case however, the atmosphere was relaxed, but nonetheless everyone wanted to show that they had what it takes. Afterwards we were treated to a very luxurious and fancy buffet in Kempen & Co's renowned café 'De Zon'. This of course went with unlimited beer, so a good opportunity for everyone to unwind and reflect on the experiences so far. If you think this is where the day ends, unfortunately you are

mistaken because a second surprise activity was about to start: Holland Casino Amsterdam! Only a 20 minute travel from the Zuidas, we were there before you know it. For all 24 participants we had a Holland Casino 'Try-Out' package which basically means you get a drink, a snack and 35 euros of vouchers with which you can actually play on the higher stakes tables at the casino. Of course all participants wanted to show that they had what it takes to be smart investors and bring home the big bucks. The winner of the day was Casper Joling, who brought home a cool 120 euros. For privacy reasons, we will not disclose the loser of the day, but it suffices to say that their 'profit' was substantially below zero. Now this is actually where the day ended and it was time for us to head home. You would almost forget that we still had one day to go! Some brave warriors made their way to the bar at the hotel, some went to bed, all that is left to say is that the third day of the expedition was a great success.

All good things must come to an end; the final day was finally upon us. Being able to get up another hour later, at 8.30 hours, felt like a blessing. For our final company, we had to travel a bit further, to Den Haag to be precise. We were visiting the Netherlands' fifth largest company, AEGON, for a Risk Management case. This company is so huge it is situated on a square that is named after them, 'het Aegonplein' and it even has its own train station. It feels more like a small village than a company to be honest. Anyway, upon arrival, we were treated to a nice lunch buffet to refuel the reserves. The case itself was in the form of a competition and hence was quite exciting. We closed the day with a healthy dose of beer/wine and snacks in their auditorium, which in my opinion was a fitting ending to the Finance Expedition 2016.

As chairman, on behalf of the entire committee, I would like to thank all participants for the amazing experience! I hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. Cheers! ●







Senna Jansing

AGE: 25

Began studies in 2009

Many of you have seen parts of the city center of Utrecht, which is of course very beautiful. However, if one knows where to go, there are also nice places to go to in other parts of town. The board of Asset | Econometrics managed to arrange a delicious three course dinner at 'De Veiling', which is a restaurant with a beautiful view over the harbor of Utrecht. I have come across this restaurant in during daytime, which already made the location of the restaurant already seem awesome. However, I never took the time to visit it. As the days are getting shorter, we started our dinner already by nightlight. This made the view from the restaurant and hence the dinner setting even better than expected.

With about 30 former active members we filled three long tables in the restaurant. The waiters were running around trying to take our orders while the old active members took the time to catch up with each other. The three long tables gave us the opportunity to maintain the table traditions at our FAM dinners. At every course, everyone switches places and the table setting is mixed up. This makes for a good opportunity to catch up even more with your old friends.

While enjoying a nice tapas plate as a starter some of the young old active members told me about their student lives in Tilburg. Them telling

# Taste the Winter in the Harbor

As all the old members of Asset | Econometrics are leaving Tilburg, Utrecht is becoming the standard location of the Former Active Members Activity. This central meeting point is easily accessible for everyone, but also has a lot of beautiful and cozy places to offer.



and so switch to different stories. The coziness of the interior of the restaurant gave some extra atmosphere that prevailed that night. The candlelight on this cold night gave some extra taste to the venison steak served with some wild mushrooms and delicious gravy.

To end this three-course dinner, all participants could choose between a cheese and a sweet platter. And I of course choose the sweet platter, because every woman knows that the more chocolate the better always holds.

Some of us decided that the evening was not going to stop at this restaurant, but that it should be continued in the city center of Utrecht. The nice wines served during the dinner were traded for some

## 'The more chocolate, the better'

about their student lives made me reminisce my own memories from Tilburg. Even though I only graduated about a year ago, their fresh stories made my student experiences seem like they were made a very long time ago.

Switching to the main course meant switching to new dinner buddies

beers at the bar. A few hours and a few bad songs later it was time to call it a night and go home on this cold winter night. I think I can speak for all participants when I say thank you to the board of Asset | Econometrics for organizing this awesome dinner. I am looking forward to the KOALA weekend in the spring and I hope to see you all there. ●

# St. Nicholas' Poem

St. Nicholas, a friendly man from Myra, who brings candy and presents to the children of the Netherlands, came to visit a little café in Tilburg called "De Nachtwacht". Everyone was super excited to see St. Nicholas. Together with some Black Petes he came into the café at around half past 10 in the evening. They brought poems and presents for the students in them, and even wrote a poem about the drink!

Dear Econometricians,

The St. Nicholas drink is always a mess  
Nevertheless, it was still a success  
In this poem I would like to stress  
Not every secret is one to confess

Although that I mean we all would miss  
A great opportunity to reminisce  
About the story of that one great kiss  
Through a poem just like this

Or about the time it all went wrong  
When you were gone for an entire song  
Because you had been drinking along  
But the liquor was simply too strong!

Know that this jest is surely well meant  
And this is why I always spend  
Some time to find a good present

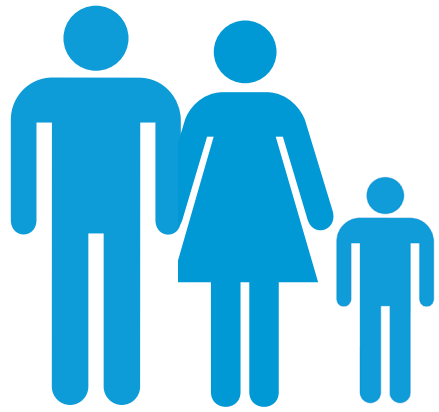
To make sure that you are all content.

It is time to say goodbye I fear  
Have fun and drink another beer  
I will see you all again next year  
At the drink with the best atmosphere.

Best regards, Saint Nicholas







# In Between Cultures

**For the column The Father Of, Pepijn and I travelled to 's-Hertogenbosch together with Ridho to talk with his parents. As you probably already figured, Ridho is not 100% Dutch; he is half Dutch and half Indonesian. His father Fauzi is Indonesian and currently works in a printing office. His mother Hannie is Dutch and works in a nursery with toddlers. He has an older brother Ivan, who is involved in professional filmmaking.**

**Text by: Zoë Connell**

When his mother Hannie was 23 years old, one of her friends advised her to travel to Indonesia since she had already travelled there and had enjoyed her trip a lot. Hannie decided to follow up on this advice and travel around the country to experience it herself. She already had a job in the Netherlands at that time, but she knew very well that if she would not do it at that moment, she would never do it. At some point during her stay at a hotel in the eastern part of Java, she met Fauzi. After only knowing him for less than 24 hours, he asked her to come with him to meet his parents. It was that particular night that he told his parents that this was the woman he would marry. Less than three months later they actually got married. Luckily, Hannies parents and her brother could make it to the wedding. She decided to stay with Fauzi in Indonesia after the marriage. They both affirmed that they both had the feeling that it was meant to be this way.

## **Moving to save money, moving back and moving again...**

During the period of 1989 until 1992 Hannie and Fauzi had a tough financial situation. Shortly after Ivan was born, they decided to move to the Netherlands to save money to have a better life in Indonesia. By 1998, they wanted to move back to Indonesia; especially Fauzi was very keen on moving back as he was quite homesick sometimes. However, in that particular year the situation in Indonesia was very unstable and they decided to delay moving to Indonesia until things would have calmed down. Eventually, in 2000, when Ridho was about 6 years old and Ivan was 9, they moved to Indonesia. For Fauzi, it was very difficult to find a job there, but Hannie was asked everywhere to teach English despite the fact that she did not have any of the appropriate certificates. She also noted that in general people positively discriminated her and this sometimes brought her in a difficult position. She is a very humble human being and acknowledges that she is just a person, just like everyone else, apart from which culture people are from. She always taught her children that everybody is equal as well.

At that time Ivan went to primary school, but because of the language barrier he had to attend classes of children that were two years younger than he was. He remembers this very well and during the interview he commented that the hierarchy there and here in the Netherlands is very different. "In Indonesia, everybody obeys the rules of the teacher, while in the Netherlands it sometimes seems to be the case that the

students call the shots instead of the teacher." Ridho said that he could not remember a lot of this year; he only has vague memories about how things looked, not about his feelings or opinion on things.

## **What do we want for our children?**

Hannie tells us that this was not the happiest year of her life. At some point, she was feeling very unhappy about the future that they would be able to provide for their children if they would stay in Indonesia. She mentioned that it was quite difficult for her to see everybody around them struggling to make sure that they earned enough to survive and then thinking about the fact that this would be the future of their children as well. In addition, it was difficult to send their children to school there and she wanted to be sure that they studied and exploited their talents to the fullest. An example where she felt that the culture there was driving her to move against her own norms and values, was that a teacher of Ivan told her that he had to stop writing with his left hand (since this is the hand people use after going to the toilet) and had to learn writing with his right hand. Hannie herself is left-handed and refused to let him be forced to write with his right hand. She understood that she had to adapt to a new culture, but she did not want to take it too far.

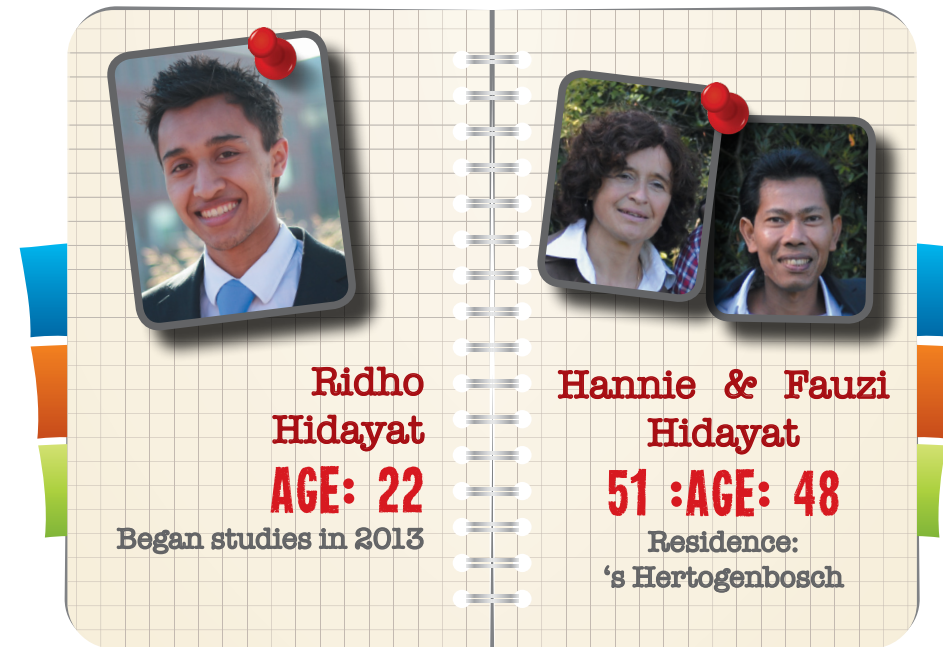
Eventually, after eight months in Indonesia, Fauzi and Hannie decided to move back to The Netherlands to provide a better future for their sons. When they returned, both Fauzi and Hannie were able to get their old jobs back from before they left. Initially,

## ● THE PARENTS OF

they talked Indonesian with each other, but since they moved back for the long run, Fauzi had to learn Dutch and do an integration course. He knew that his Dutch would improve a lot if he only spoke Dutch with Hannie and the children, so that is what they did. Now, they sometimes regret this decision a little, because Ridho and Ivan do not speak Indonesian fluently. Ivan still remembers quite some things and when they travel to Indonesia for vacation, he picks it up quickly, but for Ridho this is more of a challenge as he was younger when they were there for a longer period of time.

## **Plans for the future**

For Fauzi, it sometimes still is difficult that he left his home country to raise the children in The Netherlands. At the moment, they are planning on staying in Indonesia during the winter and in The Netherlands during summer when they are both finished working and enjoying their pension. Although he sometimes still misses Indonesia, he has fully integrated in the Dutch society and shared his idea of pros and cons of this society. Perhaps he mentioned it five (!!) times; he really thinks that being in the Netherlands is harsh. "People in the Netherlands are extremely direct and upfront about their opinions. Also, there is not a lot of social control in the neighborhood and people are so very individually focused; it is not common to help others as everybody has resources to take care of their own." In Indonesia, it is widely accepted to ask someone about his salary, but this question will probably not be appreciated around here. Also, it is very common to bring a plate of food to the neighbors after you cooked a meal, but in The Netherlands people sometimes look weirdly when they do that. In the neighborhood they lived before moving to the house where they currently live, the neighbors really appreciated the food and sometimes even brought a plate of food back. In the house where they live now, they do not do that anymore. Pros include wealth and therefore being able to provide a pension for his mother (Ridho's grandma) and being able to fly to Indonesia every once



in a while. Hannie grew up in The Netherlands, but since she has been in Indonesia for longer periods, she is more conscious of what she has right now and has seen how life can be without the resources that we all find so normal.

Perhaps the most tangible piece of Indonesian culture that Hannie has picked up is her religion. In Indonesia, most people are Moslim (except for Bali, where the biggest part of the popularity is Hindu). Hannie was raised a Catholic, but when she married Fauzi she became to Moslima and said that she nowadays prays about once a day. She says that she thinks that it is very important for her to have this moment at least once a day and also looks forward to the Ramadan every year. Fauzi is Moslim too, but he said that religion for him is something that does not have to be practiced in the generally accepted way, but that he has his own way of being religious.

In sum, Ridho comes from a very interesting family and that has made him to the respectful and smart guy he is. After reading this story, I hope that everybody agrees with me on one thing: I would like to conclude that real love stories do exist after all... ●





# Living In The World's Next Superpower

During high school I had the opportunity to have a cultural exchange with an English speaking country. I have already seen several parts of Europe and topped off with 10 days in the US of A. All these experiences were amazing to have had. As a consequence, I knew for sure that I wanted to take a semester to study abroad during my years in university as well. Since I wanted to broaden my horizon and see a completely different part of the world, I decided to go to Asia. Eventually, I ended up at Peking University in Beijing, this seemed to be the perfect place to experience a completely different life style than the one I had in Tilburg.

**Rik Noij**  
**AGE: 22**  
Began studies in 2013

Peking University or Beida is the number 1 university in China and within the top 50 schools in the QS world ranking. Perceived as the Harvard of Asia, it's the dream of any Chinese student to get into this school. Each year, approximately 200 students per province get into this university. This number is next to nothing on a population of 1.4 billion.

But enough boring facts for now; how is life in Beijing? It is hard to properly answer that question. The people of China and, even more so, of Beijing are so different in so many ways that it is hard to describe in words. Beijing is rich, yet poor. Beijing is huge, yet small. At night you are standing in a club where towers of champagne reach 2 meters high and tables full of food are untouched. But in the morning when walking around the city you see beggars in the street and families of 5 coming out of their 8 square meter home.

Wudaokou, the area where I live, has basically everything you could wish for. In a mere 5 minutes, the subway brings me to a huge shopping mall and the bar street is only 500 meters away from my home. So you can best think of Wudaokou as a small city center like Tilburg. However, if I ride the subway for a few more stops, I will

end up in a different city center with a completely different look and a whole new atmosphere. Beijing is so big that it is hard to define a particular spot as the city center since there are so many, each with its own strong feats. Nevertheless, being part of such a big city is awesome. There is so much to see, to do and to explore; there are few days on which I have to think about what to do next.

My first few days in Beijing were very interesting. I saw hordes of people with

umbrellas against the sun, children without undergarments and weird smells everywhere. During the day, multiple people wanted to take a picture with me and one time, when I was having dinner with a friend, a small Chinese kid tried to take a sneak pic with his iPad. Being a 'Waiguoren' (foreigner) was certainly going to be interesting. Luckily, I have gotten used to all this, it does not shock me anymore to see someone in the subway openly inspecting his nose or holding their child above a bin when number two is due.



However, there are two things that I will never get used to, namely smog and the Great Chinese Firewall; both these things have a huge impact on my life. Imagine your life right now, how often do you check your Facebook, your Snapchat, your Instagram or Google? Now think about not having either of these and having to rely on Bing or Yahoo for your searches and seeing only what the Chinese government wants you to see. For me, it was hard to realize how much I depend on services by Google, my calendar, my apps and all my e-mail are handled by them. Here in China, I cannot even access my UVT-mail without using a VPN. Luckily, the latter is readily available. Nevertheless, I did not realize this when applying for an exchange in China.



Living with smog is also something that is harder than I thought, it is something I prepared for but never truly understood. 80% of my days here are smoggy days where there is a yellow mist lingering in the sky while the air can be as thick as it is in a smoky café. Foreigners wear a mask as soon as the PM2.5 rates hit 150 (approximately 5 times as much as in the Netherlands) but Chinese people do not bother to wear one before the levels get as high as 250. They start wearing a mask at this level, since at those levels; the consequences of not wearing a mask to one's health are hazardous and can lead to nausea and headaches.

Peking University is located in the North-West part of the city in a district called Haidian. This is where most technology companies in China also have their headquarters. This attracts a lot of talent which makes this area very vibrant and home to a number of



universities. The campus is huge and features a lot of things such as about a dozen restaurants, two gyms and a park with a small lake. The dorms on campus are mostly filled with Chinese students. As such, the majority of the exchange students are living in apartments 5 minutes away from the university in the area known as Wudaokou. This is also where I live in 3 bedroom apartment with a basic kitchen and balcony which I share with two Swedish girls. While the rent of an apartment in Beijing is really expensive, the prices for food and other general living expenses are really low. Consequently, most

of my meals are either takeout or dinner in a restaurant. The food in China is fantastic and nothing like the "babi pangang" you get at your local Chinese restaurant.

All of the courses that I am taking here are business related and are quite easy compared to the ones we have in Tilburg. Although the difficulty level is low, a lot of work still has to be done such as attendance, regular assignments and presentations; all of which form the basis for most of my grades. However, I still have a lot of time to explore the city and →







other parts of the country. However, the same does not hold for my Chinese classmates. Since this university is so hard to get into, there is a lot of pressure for the ones who actually do. The students have to put in a lot of work to become the best of their class. While I am only following 5 courses, they are doing between 10-15 courses per semester. Therefore, it is not surprising to see some students taking naps during class. Even as I am writing this article, there are at least 5 Chinese students sleeping in my near vicinity.

During the evening, I mostly spend my time in bars or clubs around Beijing. The exchange student body is much bigger than I expected it to be and a lot of us often meet up in the bar street of Wudaokou. After a few beers we sometimes go to Sanlitun, the neighborhood where most fancy clubs are located. I already touched on the kind of over the top things you will see in those places but it is hard to really explain. There are a lot of rich Chinese youngsters sitting around tables full of untouched liquor and food with the sole purpose of displaying their wealth. A big part of the clubs is dedicated to such tables with only a small area to dance; it is a really weird sight. I would recommend watching the VPRO series "Langs de oevers van de Yangtze" to get a better idea what happens in these clubs.

Travelling is another thing I do often: small trips during the weekends and longer trips during holidays. I have seen the Terra-Cotta army and its nearby city of Xi'an, the grasslands of Inner-Mongolia and a part of the Gobi desert. During Golden Week, a national holiday, I also went to visit Shanghai which is nothing like Beijing. It is a clean modern city much like any capital in Europe while Beijing is more like the real China where no one speaks English and seeing another foreigner outside of the student district is a rare occurrence.

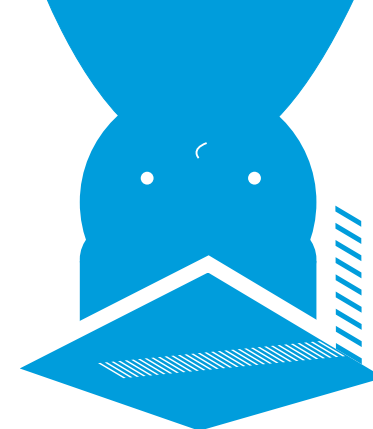


However, while travelling, I noticed how big China actually is. On a map, Xi'an - the place where the terra cotta army is - seems rather close. But in reality, we had to do a 1400 km train ride which took us 14 hours. That is more than travelling from Tilburg to Barcelona! As for other trips I am planning to visit Seoul and the border of North Korea as well, after which I will go to Osaka in Japan to explore the south of that country for a bit in December.

So far, life in China is and has been a wonderful experience. Although the crowded dining halls, high pollution levels and the infinite photo requests remain challenging, Beijing is an amazing city where there is so much to do and learn. I have experienced how Chinese people use their phones and how they use WeChat for everything. From buying gas and electricity to clothes and grocery deliveries within the hour through Alipay, nothing is unthinkable in Beijing. I have seen how a hair salon apparently needs 20+ hairdressers to sit around and do nothing all day or how a bar has 10 waitresses hanging around at 10 in the morning. As far as optimizing and efficiency goes, China can learn a lot from us Econometricians.

To anyone who likes a challenge and who wants to take a dive into Chinese culture I would say: go for it! ●

# Asset | Econometrics congratulates...



Name: Ivo Lagarde  
Title: Optimization of the Labor Mix at Hitachi Data Systems  
Supervisors: Dr. K.J.M. Huisman, Dr. R.C.M. Brekelmans

Name: Peggy (Pei-Hua) Hsieh  
Title: Prediction Intervals for Macroeconomic Variables Based on Uncertainty Measures  
Supervisors: Prof.dr. B. Melenberg, Dr. P. Cizek

Name: Max de Ruijter  
Title: Optimizing Univariate Forecasts Through Aggregation of Time Series in Large Data Hierarchies  
Supervisors: Dr. R.C.M. Brekelmans, Prof.dr.ir. H.A. Fleuren

Name: Wouter Smeenk  
Title: Tactical Cut-Off Time Decision Making in Time-Definite Express Networks  
Supervisors: Prof.dr.ir. H.A. Fleuren, Dr. R.C.M. Brekelmans

Name: Ruonan Fu  
Title: Long-Term Volatility of Stocks under Long Memory Processes: A Bayesian Approach  
Supervisors: Prof.dr. B. Melenberg, Dr. N.F.F. Schweizer

Name: Monique Timmermans  
Title: Cyclical Patterns in Risk Indicators Based on TARGET2 Data  
Supervisors: Prof.dr.ir. H.A.M. Daniels, Dr. F.C. Drost

Name: Daan van Oosten  
Title: Assortment Composition Determination in Stores: A Case of a Construction Wholesaler  
Supervisors: Prof.dr.ir. J. Ashayeri, Prof.dr.ir. R. Sotirov

Name: Cheu Thai Shing  
Title: Estimating Multiple Longevity Trends  
Supervisors: Prof.dr. B. Melenberg, Dr. A.G. Balter

Name: Pieter Driessen  
Title: Integrated Modelling of Interest and Credit Risk  
Supervisors: Dr. F.C. Drost, Dr. P. Cizek

Name: Daniël Walet  
Title: The Optimization of Automated High Bay Deep Freeze Warehouses  
Supervisors: Prof.dr. G. Kant, Dr. R.C.M. Brekelmans

Name: Roel Nagy  
Title: Tactical Planning of a Service Network: An Application to the Air Network of TNT Networks  
Supervisors: Prof.dr.ir. H.A. Fleuren, Prof.dr.ir. E.R. van Dam

## ...on obtaining their Master's degree.



# Quatsch!

All-time favorite:  
"De statistiek moet in de  
wetenschap fungeren als een  
lantaarnpaal voor een dronkaard:  
als steun en niet als verlichting"  
- Onbekend

Ferry in Tokyo:  
"Ik ben  
wasa-biseksueel"

"Oh wacht..  
ik was even aan  
het bufferen"  
- Ennia Suijkerbuijk

Baco de Jong in Tokyo:  
"Ja, ik had echt een  
voorsprong van hier tot  
Tokyo!" Anouk Verhagen:  
"Ja dat is nu dus niks"

"Ik heb wel een  
creditcard, maar ik weet  
mijn pincode niet"  
- Pepijn Wissing

"ik was 9 maanden  
geleden jarig, ik vier  
mijn verwekking"  
- Nikkie Damen

"Een echte Duitser heeft saus  
op z'n worst en een echte  
ridder heeft bloed aan z'n  
zwaard"  
- Jeroen Pars

John Einmahl (class ends  
5 minutes early): "I must  
disappoint you, since you  
paid tuition fees for  
90 minutes, not 85"

Tim van der Heijden over het  
Finance portfolio van Linda Torn:  
"Het is Linda's babytje en ze  
maakt er geen miskraam van"

Maud Lich terwijl een commissie al  
eten heeft en zij nog een half uur moet  
wachten: "Ik voel me net als bij Expeditie  
Robinson"

## Quatsch?

Over the past few months, the editorial staff of **NEKST** received many quotes that relate to the study of Econometrics and to the activities organized by Asset | Econometrics. Therefore, we present to you a selection of some striking and funny quotes! Please mail all remarkable quotes you have heard to [Nekst@Asset-Econometrics.nl](mailto:Nekst@Asset-Econometrics.nl)!

# PUZZLE

**There is nothing like winter. Gorgeous nature, an abundance of family holidays and plenty of time to huddle up by the fireplace and enjoy Nekst! For when the inevitable moment that you will have to get back your studies comes, Nekst even provides you with something to spark you brain back into action. Can you crack this puzzle?**

An econometrics student spends his Christmas holidays high up in the mountains. Every year, he spends at least six months looking forward to a time of skiing and, naturally, après-skiing. He particularly enjoys long tours through the tiniest villages, which are only reachable by going off-piste. Normally, doing so costs almost no effort.

One fateful day, he makes a mistake, loses one of his skis and crashes into a tree. In what comes next, he hardly knows what is up and down: in a giant, ever growing snowball, he tumbles down the mountain. After what seems like a few hours later, he wakes up without any idea where he has ended up. He quickly rustles through his coat in an attempt to find the notes he made earlier.

When he finds them, the sudden flash of joy dies away quickly: the snow that ended up in his coat has blurred an essential part of his notes so much that it has become unreadable. And that is not all: looking at the numbers, they do not appear to have any structure to them whatsoever! The sequence reads:

16 06 68 88 ... 98

Can you help him find the missing number? Please send your solution to [Nekst@Asset-Econometrics.nl](mailto:Nekst@Asset-Econometrics.nl) before March 10. A crate of beer or a delicious pie, whichever the winner prefers, will be waiting for whoever has sent the best (partial) solution. Please note that, as before, every recipient of this magazine is eligible to send in their solution, so members of the department are invited to participate as well Good luck!

For elaboration visit  
**NEKST-ONLINE**

**Martijn Tervelde** is the winner of the previous puzzle.

As a reward, he can come and pick up a crate of beer or a pie at room E1.10. The solution of the previous puzzle was 67794.



# Agenda

Autumn 2016

## Monthly Afternoon

Thursday January 12

Did you miss all your econometrics friends during the Christmas break? The monthly afternoon on Thursday January 12 is the ultimate excuse to catch up!

## Members Meeting & New Year's Drink

Tuesday January 17

This year, the Members Meeting will be presented to you in its new format. Are you curious about this new format or do you want to know more about our department? Then make sure you attend this meeting! The evening will be followed by the traditional New Year's Drink.

## First- & Second-Year Activity

Tuesday January 24

All first- and second-year students are invited to the second Freshmen activity of the year, which will take place on Tuesday January 24. We hope to see you all there!

## Trip

Friday February 3 – Sunday

After the (maybe somewhat stressful) exam period, we offer you the perfect opportunity to relieve your stress. In the first weekend of February, we will visit one of the most beautiful cities Europe has to offer us: Brussels!

## Landelijke Econometristen Dag

Wednesday February 8

You definitely do not want to miss the biggest career event for econometricians of the year. This year, more than thirty companies in various fields will participate. Furthermore, keep in mind that you have the unique possibility to organize this event in 2018!

## LaTeX Training

Monday February 13

Are you familiar with the document preparation program LaTeX, in which you will probably have to write your thesis? Asset | Econometrics

## Après-Ski Drink

Tuesday February 14

Do you want to drink beers out of a wonderful Asset | Econometrics beer mug, while being dressed as Heidi or Anton? Then swing by at the Après-Ski Drink!

## Freshmen Information Day

Tuesday February 16

The Freshmen Information Day provides all the first-year econometrics students with the perfect opportunity to further explore their future possibilities. The day will be especially for freshmen, so you do not have worry about your level of experience.

## General Members

Monday February 20

The General Members Meeting of Asset is the perfect event to get to know all ins and outs within Asset. The Asset board will update you about their portfolio and will give you an overall picture.

## Monthly Afternoon

Thursday February 21

On Thursday February 21 the Monthly Afternoon of February will take place. Drop by for a drink, a game or a chat with your fellow econometricians.

## Asset Party: Pre-Carnaval

Thursday February 23

Do you want to dress up as crazy as possible, without being the only one? Then make sure you attend the Pre-Carnaval Party of Asset, where there will be 500 liters of free beer!

## Strategy Tour

Monday March 6 – Tuesday March 7

Are you interested in the field of Strategic Management? Then the Strategy Tour is perfect for you! You get to visit four fascinating companies during a two-day trip.

## Members Day

Friday March 10

On March 10, the yearly Members Day will take place. The activity is still a secret, but previous editions have proven that it will be fun for sure, so save the date!

## Board Information Session

Monday March 20

Are you curious about the responsibilities of the board and how they spend over 40 hours a week at the Asset | Econometrics rooms in the Esplanade Building? Or do you just want to know whether a board year is something for you? Then visit the Board Information Session!

## Econometrics in Practice Day & Drink

Thursday March 23

Are you interested in the practical side of all your econometrics courses? Then the Econometrics in Practice Day is your chance to learn more with the help of presentations

## Active Members Day

Wednesday March 29

All active members are more than welcome to participate in this activity, where you can get to know more members from other departments and simply have a good night!







# Together, we unlock potential.

Willis Towers Watson is a leading global advisory, broking and solutions company that helps clients around the world turn risk into a path for growth. Our clients recognise the need for, and actively seek, the best ideas from the brightest minds in business, giving our consultants and brokers challenges and opportunities that are difficult to find anywhere else.

Willis Towers Watson is large enough to offer you the breadth of work to choose your own path, yet focused so you can make an impact on our clients' success – and ours.

Learn more at [careers.willistowerswatson.com/students-and-graduates](https://careers.willistowerswatson.com/students-and-graduates).

Connect with Willis Towers Watson

