

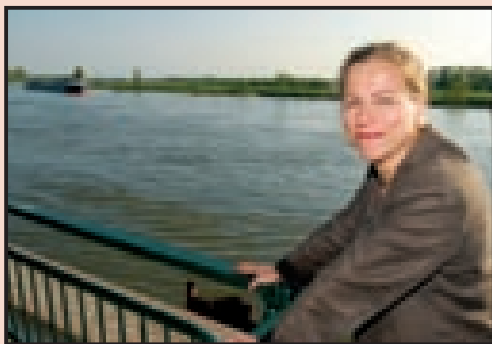


ALUMNI

MAGAZINE



University of Twente
Enschede - The Netherlands

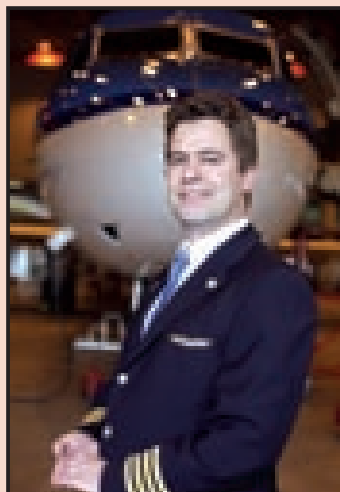


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Dear UT Alumnus,

While many of us are off enjoying a well-earned summer break over the next few months, others at the University of Twente will be working flat out on a Strategic Plan for 2009-2014. The Strategic Plan will address the themes that have crystallized out in the past few months during strategic talks, local reconnaissance surveys and UT-wide discussions on our profile and ambitions for the next five years.

The combination of engineering, social and behavioural sciences emerged unequivocally as one of our unique strengths, which we intend to develop and use much more in the future. We are an enterprising and pioneering university that distinguishes itself by a strong orientation towards design in the development of solutions to societal and industrial problems. The social and engineering sciences play a crucial role in this mission. Together, this will make UT a leading-edge, modern 'University of Technology'.

The Strategic Plan will set out how we can emphasize even more explicitly the unique profile of UT in our education and research programmes. It will also address the strategic alliances that can strengthen our position and suggest ways of ensuring that the UT campus continues as a welcoming and challenging place to study, live and work in the years ahead. I will keep you posted on the progress via the publications from the Alumni Office, including the Alumni Magazine.

Already, eight issues of the Alumni Magazine have appeared in Dutch. As the numbers of foreign students are rising all the time at UT, we are bringing out an abridged English version of the ninth issue online. The stories about your alma mater and fellow alumni will make excellent holiday reading.

I wish you a happy and sun-drenched summer.

Anne Flierman,
President, Executive Board

Suzanne Hulscher

Name: Suzanne Jacqueline Marie-Hélène Hulscher

Date of birth: 25 November 1966

Graduated in: Theoretical Physics from Utrecht University

Post: since 2002, Professor of Water Engineering and Management, with a specialization in water systems

Photo: Arjan Reef

Suzanne Hulscher: 'If I make a career step after that, it will be in management. I'd enjoy that as well, but at the moment I prefer to stay where the action is.'

World topper

Water plays an ambivalent role in our lives. Though it satisfies one of our basic needs, it is also one of our greatest enemies. As Professor of Water Management, Suzanne Hulscher (41) works out smart solutions for water problems and develops physical knowledge to assess them. We asked her about her role as a member of the National Innovation Platform and her vision of the future.

UT professor Suzanne Hulscher found herself in the spotlight this spring when she presented an action programme to Dutch Prime-Minister Balkenende at the Coast Conference of the National Innovation Platform. The programme relates directly to the construction of a large island off the Dutch coast to generate energy and to protect the coast against rises in seawater levels. The island would take the shape of a giant tulip. And that is how Hulscher came to add a new term to the Dutch language: tulip island.

'Really? I'd love it if tulip island were in the list of new terms for 2008', smiles Hulscher. 'But I didn't think it up. The credit goes to Hans de Boer, another member of the Innovation Platform with whom I presented the programme. Tulip island is, of course, a metaphor for entrepreneurship, like a pebble in a pond. Here in the Netherlands, we tend to seal things off; but you need to look ahead, to what the world will be like in twenty or thirty years. It looks as if we set something in motion at that conference.'

The 'sand engine' is due to kick-off soon. Hulscher: 'That's one of the other projects we've presented in the platform. Huge volumes of sand are placed off the coast of South Holland. These are then swept away by the current from the North Sea a little at a time and dispersed farther along the coast. The aim is to gradually strengthen the coastline. At the moment, the dunes give us enough protection, but this extra sand will ensure that they continue to do so in the future.'

Are you a number-one authority on water? Do you belong among the world top?

Hulscher does not need to think long about this question. 'Yes, my group is among the world top in its field. That was the conclusion of the visitation committee.'

How do you know that?

'Because you can publish in the leading academic journals and because people invite you to speak at congresses and teach courses at summer schools. Once you get a name for yourself, the invitations start rolling in. It takes off from there. It's harder to climb to the top than to stay there.'

As a professor, you head a department of fifty researchers. What kind of leader are you?

'I am responsible for my team, so I try to create an environment that gets the best out of education and research. You have to orchestrate things. That's totally different from doing good research on your own. You have to motivate and encourage others. I am very ambitious, so I demand quality from my team. A PhD is not the same everywhere; it's the professor who sets the standard. In my department the bar is high, but I try to make things clear by introducing structure. I see myself more as a coach in PhD projects. The students are responsible for their own research, but they have to be able to count on me for support.'

Because of an ambition to be best in everything?

'I have a broad range of interests and my department covers many themes. Seas, coasts, rivers... and the physical processes that occur within them. I can't stand at the cutting edge in all aspects of the discipline but there are, of course, areas where I want to stand out.'

Hulscher would also like to work with other disciplines:

'I find it exciting. And I have learned that you need other disciplines. I need to make sure that my findings get through to the Dutch advisory world, that they reach the people who will eventually apply them.'

Is your research therefore oriented to practical application?

'Research and application are very close together in this domain. Before summer, one of my students will be awarded a PhD for the development of sand dunes on riverbeds. These are not yet part of the models, but they do have an influence on, for example, water levels. In that kind of research we often work with a user group that looks at what it can do with our knowledge. These user groups make you think in terms of application, because you want institutions and advisory bodies to use your knowledge to tackle problems with water.'

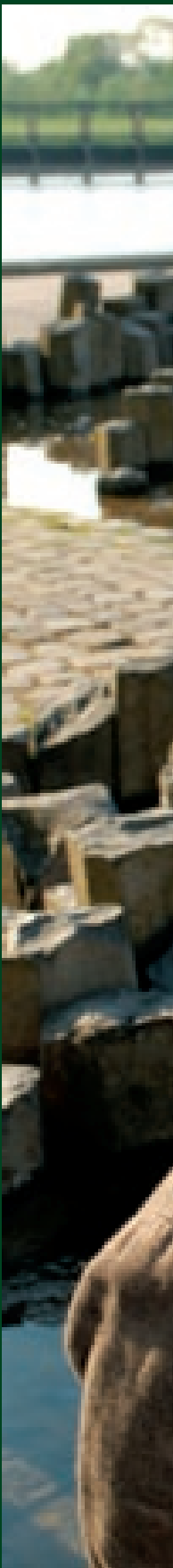
In this case the institution was the Department of Waterways. Sometimes you approach potential users yourself; but often they approach me with requests for research.'

Does it help when people know who you are?

'Of course, it helps. They find you a lot sooner, but I want them to know about my work. Then they understand what I stand for.'

Should 'water' be one of UT's main profiling themes?

'My answer to that question is not entirely objective, but yes, I do think we should accentuate water. It is a very relevant



in water



theme for the future. Water plays an ambivalent role in our lives. Though it satisfies one of our basic needs, it is also one of our greatest enemies. And the fight will get tougher with climate change. Some people say you shouldn't intervene till you have to. True, our dykes will last a bit longer, but you still need to think ahead. I am trying to play a key role in this process. I want to find smart solutions to water problems. Not just here in the Netherlands, but also in other parts of the world where people are at risk.'

You have attracted a lot of media attention, especially after your presentation of the Tulip Island. How do you feel about that?

What matters most is that I get my message across. Do I enjoy the attention? Well yes, because it gives me the feeling that I have something to say. A sense of success, I suppose. But it also consumes a lot of time.'

What do you mean?

'Almost every day I get requests for interviews or to chair discussions. No, not to open garden fêtes, but who knows? Maybe that will come. I try to keep it under control by delegating someone else, if I think they are more suitable. Apart from that, I organize my own diary.'

How full is that diary?

'I spend an enormous amount of time on my subject, but that goes without saying. I knew that the work would be time-consuming, when I started. But it doesn't really feel like work. There are, of course, less enjoyable moments. I do get annoyed with substandard lectures and inefficient meetings.'

How do you relax?

'If I don't get around to jogging, it's a sign that things are not going well. My diary is too full and I need to make time for myself. Even if it means cancelling appointments. I try to run three times a week. I also play water polo, but haven't done much this season because of an injury. My team was champion this year, maybe because I was out of the running some of the time.'

How do you see your future?

'I have never really planned my career. But a professorship should last at least ten years. You need time to build up a department. Only then can you produce something really worthwhile. So, I guess I still have a few years to go. Actually, a professorship is the ultimate job. If I make a career step after that, it will probably be in management. I'd enjoy that as well, but at the moment I prefer to stay where the action is. Maybe, I'll move on in five or ten years, but right now I'm having too much fun coaching PhD students and giving lectures.' ■

Boycot

In December and January the delegation of the UReka student party did not attend the meetings of the University Council, because UReka was locked in a heated conflict with the Campus Coalition about the chairmanship of the Council. UReka wants an independent Chair, while the Campus Coalition is pushing for an internal candidate. At present Dick Meijer is the Chairperson but he will be stepping down this summer. Eventually, UReka returned to the council in January and managed to reach a compromise with the Campus Coalition in April. The decision whether to appoint an internal or external Chairperson will be based on the choice of candidates.



Photo: Gijs van Ouwerkerk

partnership agreement was signed with the World Wildlife Fund. The Scientific Council of the Twente Water Centre is chaired by Arjen Hoekstra, Professor of Multidisciplinary Water Management.

Water

Twente gained a new expertise centre in December. UT and the International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ICT in Enschede) are going to collaborate in the Twente Water Centre. The institute will study the management and technology of water systems and drainage. During the opening seminar a

High Tech Factory

In 2009 Mesa+ research institute will move to new premises at the NanoLab. At that moment work will start to convert the old clean room into a High Tech Factory, a production facility for businesses specializing in nanotechnology and microtechnology. The project entered its first phase in December. In April of this year the High Tech Factory was awarded a grant of 4.4 million euros from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Province of Overijssel.



Iranian students

2008 had scarcely begun when a row erupted in the academic community about the admission of undergraduates and PhD students from Iran. UT decided, like Eindhoven, to stop admitting Iranians after the IND (Dutch immigration authority), which issues the visas, asked the universities to sign a guarantee that Iranians would not come into contact with any knowledge of nuclear technology. 'And that is a guarantee that we cannot give,' says Pieter Binsbergen, Secretary of UT. Without this guarantee Iranian students would be denied a visa. After talks between the technological universities and the Ministries of Education, Justice and Foreign Affairs, the IND withdrew its demand. At the end of January UT started re-admitting Iranian students. The University Council was scathingly critical of the university and said that the Executive Board should have responded more forcefully and stressed that UT is an open university that welcomes Iranian students.

Veni grant

Last December UT assistant professor Pascal Jonkheijm was awarded a Veni grant of two hundred thousand euros by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research to engage in a research project on artificial cell surfaces, which starts at the molecular nanofabrication research group in January. The organization did not announce the award of any Vici grants, worth 1.25 million euros, to UT researchers.



Caterers

This summer the catering at UT will be outsourced to an external business called Sodexo. The range of products in the canteens and restaurants will be extended. The fate of the current staff, who are employed directly by UT is still uncertain. In principle, all the catering staff will be transferred to Sodexo, but the unions and the Executive Board have not yet agreed on a social plan.

Profile debate

This spring UT found itself in the throes of a debate on how to profile itself. Initially, it looked as if UT would again profile itself as an engineering university. But after various discussions with staff and students and letters to UT Nieuws, the Strategic Council (comprising the Executive Board, deans and directors of research) came up with the predicate, University of Technology, in March.

The combination of engineering, social and behavioural sciences must become one of the unique strengths of UT. Technology is a unifying factor in all the programmes. Various work groups are now discussing how this is to be realized in practice and are concentrating on, amongst others, education, entrepreneurship and research fields. They will present their plans before the summer and set out the domains in which UT should bundle its strengths in order to re-assume a leading role at national and international level.



Photo: Gijs van Ouwwerker

Megajump for Hennie

First-year mechanical engineering students are designing a thrilling attraction for one of the theme parks of mega-businessman Hennie van der Most. It will be called the Megajump and it is sure to become a huge crowd-puller in a new German theme park on a former NATO military site. The Megajump will make people feel as if they are flying.

Concern about nano particles

In January the FNV federation of Dutch unions voiced concern about the safety of employees who come into contact with nano particles. These particles are found in chemicals, amongst others, and can be harmful to human health. Often, people have no idea that they are working with substances that contain nano particles. Dave Blank, Director of Research at nanotechnology institute Mesa+, acknowledges that there are risks, but says that the FNV is exaggerating: 'The FNV is tarring the entire domain of nanotechnology with the same brush. It is true that some nano particles may be dangerous, but protective measures are taken. The risks are the same as for existing chemicals and we research these extensively.'



Photo: Gijs van Ouwwerker

ITC to become the sixth faculty

In January 2010 UT welcomes its sixth faculty. The International Institute for Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation (ITC) will be incorporated in UT as a faculty which is unique in its kind, but will have the same powers as the other five faculties. The ITC will provide UT with an opportunity to significantly expand its international education network. Around ninety percent of ITC students come from abroad, particularly countries in Asia, Africa and South America.

Tulip Island

UT Professor of Water Management Suzanne Hulscher is a member of the National Innovation Platform. During the Coast Conference in February she presented an action programme for the construction of a multifunctional energy island in the North Sea. This island will be presented in the shape of a tulip. It was greeted with enthusiasm by Prime-Minister Balkenende, Chair of the Innovation Platform.



NanoLab off to an official start

Though building activities have been underway for a while, the construction of the new NanoLab and Carré was given the official go-ahead in February. Carré will accommodate the offices and laboratories of TNW and EWI and the NanoLab will be the new home of Mesa+. A few days after the official presentation Wouter Bos (Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime-Minister) paid a working visit to UT and was shown around the new NanoLab.



Photo: Gijs van Ouwerkerk



Photo: Gijs van Ouwerkerk

Exam furniture

The exam furniture is to be replaced before the summer. And not before time. The students are fed up with the rickety tables and chairs according to a survey conducted by the student party UReka during the January exams. Eighty percent of students experienced the old furniture as uncomfortable during exams. UReka is hoping for adjustable tables.

Van der Linden off to the US

In March we said good-bye to Wim van der Linden (59) Professor of Measurement and Data Analysis at the Faculty of Behavioural Science. After over thirty years at UT Wim decided that he had had enough of red tape and economies of scale. He is emigrating to America where he will work for the research arm of McGraw-Hill, the largest academic publisher in the US. He will assume the prestigious position of chief research scientist at the department of science.



Photo: Arjan Reef

Master plan for Knowledge Park

UT and the Municipality of Enschede have agreed on the development plan for Twente Knowledge Park (Kennispark Twente). The plan includes all manner of physical interventions to turn the business & science park and the campus into one knowledge-intensive domain. Hengelosestraat will be lowered to eliminate the dividing line between Kennispark and the campus. Two hundred thousand square metres will be needed to create space for new innovative businesses. This can be achieved by, amongst others, demolishing the houses on Drienerbeeklaan and Calslaan-oud. Operation Kennispark is expected to generate ten thousand new jobs by 2020.

Three Olympic hopefuls

Three UT-ers are vying for places on the Olympic team bound for Beijing this summer. Researcher Joost van Bennekom (decathlon), mechanical engineering student Simon Glazenberg (rowing, men's eights) and TBK student Tom Fugers (Paralympics, 400 metres) will try to qualify in May and June. Rower Marjolijn Stenneke dropped out of the race for a place in the Olympic team at the end of April. Unfortunately, a fifth UT athlete, Susan van den Heuvel, failed to qualify for the national volleyball team.



Photo: Jan Hesselink

Zijm to stop as rector

On 30 December 2008 Henk Zijm (56) steps down as Rector Magnificus. He has held the post for four years and plans to return to his first love – scientific research. Since 1990 Zijm has been attached to UT as Professor of Operational Research and Management. In 2002 he was appointed Dean of EWI and in 2005 Rector Magnificus. Zijm describes the position of Rector Magnificus as a 'wonderful job, though it places a heavy strain on one's personal life'. After nine years in executive posts he reckons it is 'time for a change'.



Bats

The demolition activities at Ravelijn had to be stopped suddenly in March when construction workers discovered bat droppings. As the bats belong to a protected species, the demolition cannot proceed without special dispensation. This could take months and it is feared that everything will have to be put on hold until after the young fly away in September. All in all, a heavy financial setback.

E-health research centre

The Institute for Behavioral Research (IBR) at the Faculty of Behavioural Science is to get a new research centre. The Center for E-health Research will collect technological knowledge on healthcare. Initiative-taker Lisette van Gemert fervently believes that UT should play a pioneering role in e-health education and research.



Photo: Gijs van Ouwerkerk

Agora too small for Luyendijk

In March Studium Generale interviewed Joris Luyendijk about his bestseller *Het zijn net mensen* (They are just people). The continued huge popularity of this book and its author two years after the initial publication was reflected in the turnout – almost three hundred. Another hundred had to be turned away.



Pieper in South of France

At the end of March Professor of E-commerce Roel Pieper moved to his second home in France because the man responsible for stabbing his wife in 2003 had been unexpectedly granted unsupervised leave from a forensic psychiatric clinic without Pieper's knowledge. The former Philips top executive has an appointment for approximately one day a week at UT and will continue to give lectures.

50% of students active

For the first time in its existence the Student Union has measured student activism. It appears that fifty percent of students are actively involved in at least one UT association or sport club. From now on, the activism landscape will be mapped out every year to measure changes. With this baseline measurement the Union will advise clubs and associations on how to canvass students for committees.

Groningen wins 36th Batavieren Race

This year's Batavieren Race (a running relay race), was again won by the team from the University of Groningen, with Wageningen and Utrecht as second and third respectively. UT came in fourth and just missed a place on the winners' rostrum. The best competitor in the general category was Aeolus, a team from Enschede, that was second last year and was now the fastest non-university team to complete the 185 kilometres.

Julianapenning

In April Charles Liednbaum was awarded the Julianapenning, a special distinction for dedicated service to UT. Liednbaum (64), a financial officer, leaves the university after 43 years.



Photo: Jan Hesselink

Off to a flying start at KLM

Boss of the fleet

Dutch airline KLM has a fleet comprising one hundred medium-sized and large aircraft. The 'owner' of these Boeings and Airbuses is Aart Slagt (34), Vice-President of KLM Fleet Services: 'Every new aircraft that we buy needs to be more profitable, more comfortable, more economical, and quieter than before.'



It was during a post-doctoral programme in logistical management systems in Eindhoven that Aart Slagt, UT Business Administration graduate in 1997, joined KLM. While working at the Network Planning Department he invented a method that enabled the schedules to cope more effectively with disturbances.

'I never thought that as a fresh graduate I could contribute much to the schedules of a huge corporation like KLM. But my method was implemented straightaway because it raised punctuality by ten percent. That was, of course, a fantastic way to get started'

And, it did indeed mark the launch of a meteoric career at KLM. After a period at the Operations Control Center, Aart became head of Cockpit Crew Planning in 2003 with responsibility for scheduling, amongst others, the trips, training and holidays of the KLM pilots. In 2006 he was appointed Deputy Head of Air Traffic Management and one year later assumed his current job as Head of the KLM Fleet. The budgets that Aart has to manage are mind-boggling. A Boeing costs many millions of euros. Aart: 'In this job I am also accountable for the airworthiness of the fleet. I have to be able to show at all times that our aircraft are properly serviced and maintained'. Aart and his team are also responsible for the interior: 'We decide on all the specifications for new models, including the seats and the cockpit lay-out. Even whether the passengers each get their own video screen.'

When purchasing a brand new model a balance needs to be struck between what is available on the market and improving the profitability of the fleet. This is the job of another department. Speed is scarcely important nowadays: 'We have definitely left the Concorde era behind us. New models need to be quieter and more economical and comfortable. Economy is the most important factor, because lower fuel consumption has two benefits. It cuts the costs and it is more environmentally-friendly. The first composite aircraft have already been built. They are thirty percent more economical because they are made of synthetic materials and are lighter. The first test flights have been postponed time and again, so they're not in the air yet.'

'Sometimes the environmental aspects clash with the noise regulations at Schiphol', says Aart. 'To conserve the environment flight paths need to be as short as possible, but to prevent noise pollution we have to make all sorts of detours around growth centres.'

It gets worse, says Aart: 'Sound is measured at many different places and the cumulative noise from all the flights may not exceed a specific level. Compare it with basins with a certain capacity. When they are full you may no longer fly over them. If a low-energy aircraft flies over, it leaves fewer drops in the basin than some old crate that flies over at night. If KLM flies more quietly and more economically, it will take longer for the basins to fill. This creates space for corporate growth, but it is forfeited to other airlines that make more noise. Then, if a dirty old cargo plane also makes a landing, the efforts to protect the environment are useless.' ■

Aart Slagt above the Front Office, the beating heart of KLM Operations Control Center.

Marcel Klaver, KLM pilot after graduating in mechanical engineering

I'll stick with Europe for the time being

Now he divides his time between flying a Fokker 70 and a Fokker 100 to destinations all over Europe and assisting at the technical ground services unit of KLM Cityhopper.

Marcel: 'This combination is precisely what makes my job so enjoyable. I'm on the flightdeck two or three days a week and the rest of the time I work in the office as an assistant technical pilot. I concentrate primarily on the technical condition of the fleet and represent the pilots in the discussions. Another of our tasks here at technical services is to prepare the phasing in and out of aircraft and to answer any technical questions from pilots. I know the Fokker 70 and 100 pretty well, but I still run into surprises now and then. Well, a plane is a complicated piece of engineering. Recently, I went on a course at Fokker and again learned all sorts of things. We always take a plane on a test flight above the North Sea after an overhaul. We call it an acceptance flight. There are no passengers. You check all the systems, find out if you can re-start an engine in mid-air – stuff like that. I do these flights regularly.'

During my last year at UT, I was admitted to the selection procedure for the Flight Academy. It took nine whole months. Two months before my graduation I heard I had been accepted. I was over the moon of course. KLM had guaranteed me a job, so I was able to finance my study programme. At that time, 1996, it cost around 175,000 guilders. I qualified in 1998, but had to wait another three years before I could sit in the cockpit. I spent the interim time at KLM technical services. To keep my pilot's licence up to date, I flew a lot in private planes. For a while I even flew TU Delft students around for a first-year practical. Eventually, I could start as a co-pilot on a Fokker 70, a jet plane, an eighty-seater. I flew within the European network, mainly with transfer passengers on board. It was great. No jetlag, plenty of take-offs and landings and no night work. Just what you need, when you have a young family.

I spent five years as a co-pilot, then I was trained as captain of the same type of aircraft. So, now I'm the one in charge on these European flights. I'll definitely do long-haul flights again some time, but that is a different area altogether. There is always something exciting about far-flung destinations but I'll stick with Europe for the time being. For a plane enthusiast, this is the best job. I'll stay on as captain till at least 2010, when the next logical step will be to co-pilot long-haul flights. What is so great about flying? The ultimate sense of freedom, of course! But also the challenge of selecting the flight path that consumes the least amount of fuel. Or landing smoothly in a strong wind. No, it isn't the excitement that matters, but the professional challenge. I don't experience fear. Or stress. My resistance to stress has been well tested in this

job. Unexpected technical hitches are especially interesting because the ground job has given me more technical knowledge than the average pilot.

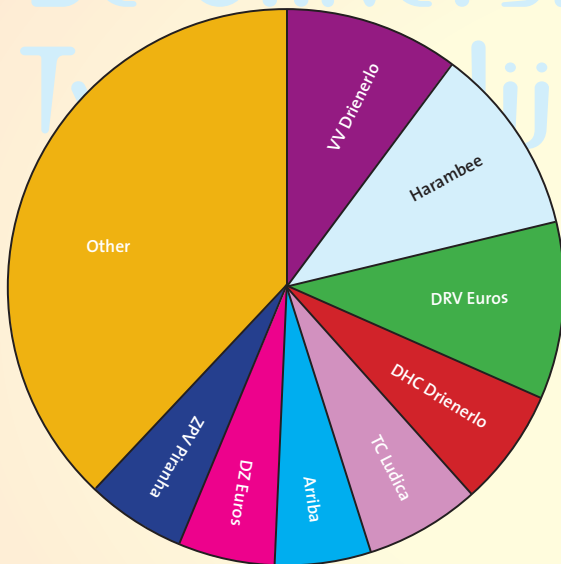
Bologna is my favourite destination. Not so much in terms of the flight, but because it is such a beautiful city. I can also recommend Tallinn in Estonia, especially for a weekend. Turin was a fantastic place to fly to, but KLM has scrapped it as a destination. You have to fly over Mont Blanc to reach the airport. You can see all the way down. Magnificent.' ■



Alumni portal brings UT alumni into contact

Since the end of March this year, the University of Twente has been running a portal where its alumni can network digitally with one another. Under the maxim of "Add past friends to present networks" all 23,000 graduates from the 45-year history of UT can get in touch via this innovative alumni portal, which has been developed in association with two UT spin-offs.

UT launched the alumni portal in response to the growing need for (digital) networks. UT purposely opted to develop its own digital network alongside existing facilities such as LinkedIn and Hyves, where people can build their own personal network by adding friends and contacts. Essentially, the UT alumni network has existed latently for years: the 23,000 potential contacts simply needed to be activated.



As the network is accessed via a personal profile, the alumni decide for themselves how they want to be presented. Besides providing 'routine' info on their graduation year, study programme, career and current location, they can describe, for example, the company or sector they are now working in. Or list the on-campus sport or culture clubs that they were members of. Alumni can look for friends from their on-campus football team who share an interest in, say, nanotechnology. The two charts below show the distribution of sport clubs and career sectors among the visitors to the portal.

Once alumni have found one another they can exchange emails with the alumnus 'life long e-mail address'. They can add names to their contact book and share files via file management. In the future the portal will include facilities for establishing (knowledge) communities so that UT and its alumni can reap even greater benefits from sharing knowledge and expertise.

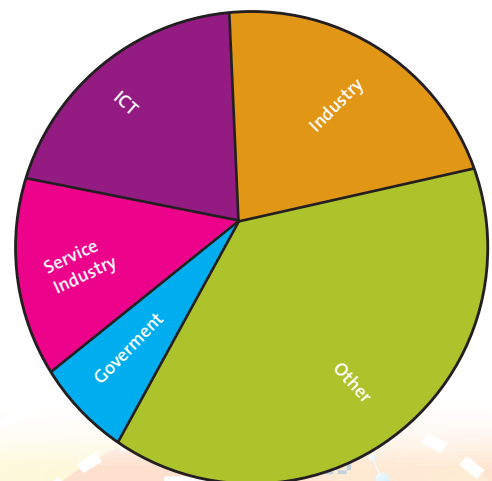
Distribution of alumni profiles according to sport club (total 1,457)

The portal shows the number of alumni who were former members of an on-campus sport club and the most popular clubs so far.

For a visual impression see www.alumnus.utwente.nl/alumniportal/demo

You can access the alumni portal at the alumni office website, www.alumnus.utwente.nl. Users can also request their own log-on details here.

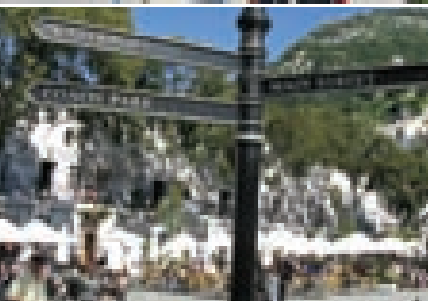
Two UT spin-offs were involved in the development of the alumni portal. Axis Media-ontwerpers b.v. built the Alumni Network application and B-Lex Information Technologies developed all the technical aspects. The director of B-Lex Information Technologies, UT alumnus Jeroen de Vin has played a key role in developing digital platforms for alumni since the first version appeared in 2004. B-Lex will now collaborate with UT to find ways of making the portal even more user-friendly. Thanks to user feedback, extensive updates have already been implemented.



Distribution of alumni profiles according to career sector (total 2,658)

The University of Twente is investing in this digital portal, because it values its relationship with its alumni and regards them as important ambassadors. Alumni can promote the interests of UT from their role in society and provide important feedback on how the teaching and research at UT relates to the business community in general. The portal will prove an important channel for exchanging this kind of knowledge and information in the future.

The portal seems to be well on track. Whereas, in the past four years 11,000 alumni used their account, in the short space of time that the new alumni portal has been up and running, no fewer than 5,000 visitors have logged on. A quarter of all UT alumni!



Working in the tiny British territory of Gibraltar on the southern tip of Spain is a unique experience. Twenty years ago Gibraltar had a reputation as a smugglers' paradise, now it is a thriving economic hub. The business climate is good and taxes are low. The current government is working on ambitious plans to place Gibraltar even more firmly on the map of Europe. UT alumnus Erwin Westra is working in Gibraltar as a project developer.



Building on



The British captured Gibraltar from Spain in 1704 and turned it into a crown colony. Gibraltar lies on and against a 426-metre-high rock on a busy shipping route between Europe and Africa, the exact spot where the Mediterranean Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean. Gibraltar has a Mediterranean climate and a population of 30 thousand, packed together on 6.4 square kilometres of territory (the perimeter is 16 kilometres). Inhabited by Gibraltarians, Portuguese, Spaniards, Maltese and English, Gibraltar is a cultural melting pot. It has a Jewish Quarter and next to the lighthouse in the south is a minaret. And they all get along great together, says Westra. The traffic drives on the right side of the road and the official language is English, but most of the people speak Spanish as well. The tourists are mainly day-trippers who arrive in cruise ships or who have crossed the border from neighbouring La Linea. They come mainly for the cheap liquor, cigarettes and perfume –

though Gibraltar has a lot more to offer than that.

Westra (30) studied Civil Engineering and Management at UT. His tutor in his graduate year was Geert de Wulf. On campus he was chairman of the Drienerlo football club ('I was better at chairing meetings than kicking a ball') and played the trumpet in the Nationaal Jeugd Harmonie Orkest and the Frysk Fanfare Orkest. After leaving UT he found a job with project developer Credo in Oosterbeek (Netherlands), which is part of the VolkerWessels construction group. He worked for a while as project assistant at Strijp-S in Eindhoven, the 'fascinating' redevelopment of the former Philips site.

Since the start of 2006 Westra has been employed as director/ project manager for Credo Gibraltar and is working on the development of a residential/commercial/leisure area in the Midtown project, situated along the old sea wall of the city. Offices and



apartments as well as a public park will be built on an area of around 35 thousand square metres. In February, amid great festivities, the Midtown team delivered their first building: the King's Bastion Leisure Centre – an old fort complete with the original facade, cannons and other legacies from the past, which has been expertly converted into a modern complex with a bowling alley, cinemas, disco, ice rink, restaurant and bars.

Westra explains: 'As project manager for Credo Gibraltar, I have been directly involved from the start of the design process to the completion of the construction. The client is the government. I am still supervising the last jobs in and around the leisure centre, such as the lay-out of the cinemas, the offices and the gym.' Work has been underway for some time on the next phase of the project. Everything is ready and waiting. Westra could have started building the four office and apartment blocks – called Rock Tower – a while ago, but he is still

a rock



waiting for the official handover of the site, which could take another few months.

'The red tape is horrendous, it takes ages to get permits, everything here is so tightly organized. But once you know how things work, you can turn them to your advantage. Generally speaking, the business climate is fine here. The lines of communication are short, thresholds are low, and people stick together. Crime is low; so it's pretty safe. My sparring partners are just around the corner. You do, however, have to work with local businesses.'

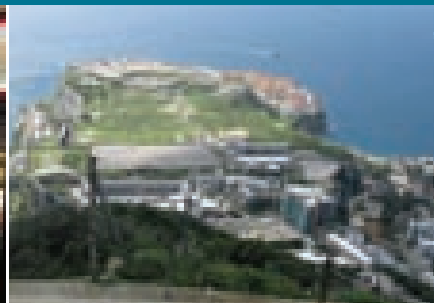
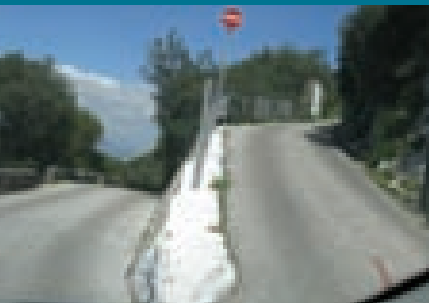
The height of the towers is still to be decided: 'There's a lot of resistance because of the flight paths of planes. The flats will not be built in these zones, but at the moment the maximum height for buildings is still 45 metres. We hope to get this changed during the project – we want to build twice as high, in preparation for later phases'.

The whole project could easily take six years to complete, depending on the demand from the market. So, Westra and his girlfriend can look forward to a long stay at the southernmost point of the Iberian Peninsula. But that's no problem: the climate is temperate and the work is challenging. They do work long days but there are plenty of chances for weekend trips to Andalusia. And the wonderful cities of Seville, Granada and Ronda are only a few hours' drive away.

Westra explains that since 1995 the Gibraltar economy – under Governor Caruana, now in his third term of office – has undergone a true metamorphosis. Before then, it had a dubious reputation. In the 1980s it hosted a flourishing trade in the illegal export of alcohol and cigarettes: 'It must have been a bit like the Wild West. Rumour has it that black speed boats unloaded the contraband on the beach at La Linea.'

But these shady transactions are a thing of the past. Gibraltar definitely wants to start afresh and is now profiling itself as a European financial centre with a tax regime and a business climate on a par with Andorra, Liechtenstein and Luxemburg. La Linea, where Westra and Annemarie have their own apartment ('costs half as much as Gibraltar'), is basking in the spin-off from neighbouring Gibraltar, where the economy is growing at a rate of eight to ten percent a year.

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Besides the annual seven million tourists, scores of foreign investors, large Internet gaming and gambling companies and insurers and banks are profiting from the attractive tax regime, the absence of VAT, the stringent financial supervision and the fact that Gibraltar (as part of the EU) can offer financial services anywhere in Europe. Four hundred millionaires have made their home there. The bunkering (re-fuelling) of ships in the Straits of Gibraltar is blossoming as never before (environmental activists keep a close eye on these activities). Large-scale development projects with a strong Dutch input are sprouting like mushrooms. And the government has some extensive, ambitious plans in the pipeline to tackle the infrastructure of the colony. Not before time, because the city has nowhere to go except skywards (limited because of the flight paths) and seawards.

Westra: 'The building sector is doing well from these growing business sectors. Capital is flooding in. Offshore businesses and the very rich benefit from the low tax rates and have settled permanently here. This accounts for much of the demand for offices and luxury homes. What we need to do is develop Midtown flexibly so that we can tap into other markets if the economy takes a downturn.'

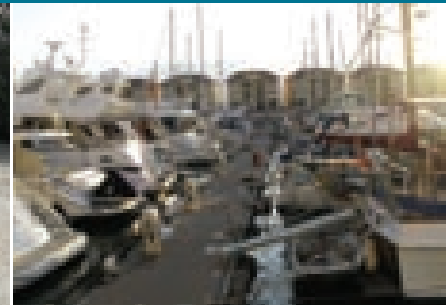
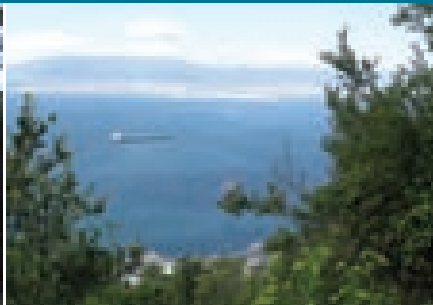
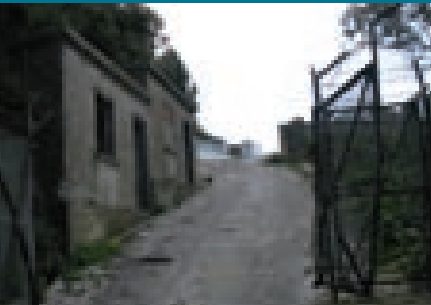
'The more you explore Gibraltar – which many tourists fail to do – the lovelier it becomes,' says Westra. Most of the tourists hang around Casemates Square, the central meeting place that opens onto Mainstreet, where alcohol, perfumes and jewellery compete for the attention of the passers-by. Westra prefers to take his guests to the quieter spots on the south coast where the panoramic views are breathtaking. As the road gets bumpier, tunnels hacked in

rocks, moss-covered bunkers and huge black cannons bear witness to a heroic past. Dozens of ships lie anchored in the Straits of Gibraltar, waiting for fuel from small tankers.

In the distance, scarcely thirty kilometres away, looms the mountainous coast of Morocco. To the right, a stone's throw away on the other side of the bay, is the Spanish port of Algeciras, which was the first stopping point for African boat refugees. Westra: 'This point is situated more or less at the very end of Europe and that is what makes it so special.' He says that investors are becoming increasingly interested in countries like Morocco: 'We might be on the verge of an economic boom.'

The world-famous Barbary apes, so characteristic of Gibraltar, have a story all of their own. Only recently, Gibraltar made headlines when it announced its intention to cull twenty-five of the two-hundred semi-wild primates. According





to spokesperson Francis Cantos, the government had no choice because the apes were causing a serious nuisance by rummaging in bags, stealing food and entering hotel rooms through open windows. One thing's for sure: these apes have no problems with vertigo. They swing gleefully from tree to tree above a sheer drop of a several hundred metres. The ape colony lives in the higher, wooded parts of the rock, accessible via a steep path that you pay to enter. Or by cable car for people with a good head for heights.

While Erwin crouches and makes a call on his mobile, he is stalked from behind by a young ape who is clearly drawn to this fascinating toy. But he knows the drill and immediately chases it away: 'The government in Gibraltar meddles with everything. Not just the apes but even traffic lights and parking problems. The political horizon is around four years, driven by opportunism and with no coherent spatial planning vision.'

Westra believes that the lack of spatial planning vision was partly caused by the gradual withdrawal of the army, which left plots of land for project development. There is still a garrison comprising 400 men, some on their way to hotspots like Darfur. Occasionally, British and sometimes American nuclear submarines touch in at Gibraltar. Then the Spanish environmental activists invariably come into action, but they are largely ignored by the authorities.

Westra finds it hard to imagine that the British government will ever return the rock to Spain: 'It is far too important strategically. And it would certainly suffer economically.' With an average income of 31 thousand euros per head of population, the colony is among the top ten richest territories in the world. The Gibraltarians do not feel particularly British. There is no university, so aspiring graduates head for Spain, or Britain – if they get a grant. Many return to Gibraltar or stay in Spain. The inhabitants value their independence and even have their

own judicial system.

Recently, in Córdoba, Spain, the UK and Gibraltar agreed that the airport at Gibraltar would be used collectively, but there has been little evidence of this so far. The accessibility of Gibraltar by air is a matter of concern. The current military airfield is desperately out-of-date and receives only a few scheduled and business flights a day (from London). EasyJet recently acquired the national airline Gibraltar Airways. A new terminal, which is also accessible to Spanish passengers, should bring extra momentum to the economy. Spain will never relinquish its claim to the colony, but it is now adopting a more pragmatic approach. In any case, the southern regions of Spain can only benefit from further economic growth in Gibraltar. According to Westra, agreement has also been reached on the flow of cross-border traffic. The Spanish Customs are not exactly friendly, he says. And he's

right. A flustered official refused to allow us to take photos of the long queue of cars and pedestrians who are checked out one by one as they try to cross the border. Not for drugs. Drugs are not an issue. No, these are all just part of the usual game of cross-border tit for tat. This access route, from La Linea to the centre of Gibraltar, crosses the airport runway. As soon as a plane is due to take off or land the barriers close and the cars and people have to wait patiently till they open again. This happens about six times a day. A tunnel is to be drilled under the runway in the near future – a huge undertaking. Westra and Annemarie are used to this rigmarole. If possible, they cycle to work. Annemarie also works for Credo Gibraltar in an administrative capacity. It takes less than twenty minutes to drive from their flat to their office. The beach is only two hundred metres away. No wonder they get so many visitors from Holland... ■



