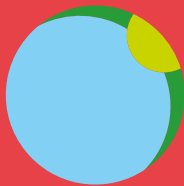




## EVERYDAY FARE

Promoting a sustainable and  
healthy food system for the city



**AERES**  
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Aeres University of Applied Sciences Almere  
Tel +31(0)88 - 020 63 00

### Author:

Sigrid Wertheim-Heck

### Orders:

Marketing & Communicatie  
y.dijkhof@aeres.nl  
Tel. +31 (0)88 - 020 063 00  
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## Dr. Sigrid Wertheim-Heck

*Professor Food and Healthy Living*

Sigrid Wertheim-Heck is professor Food and Healthy Living at Aeres University of Applied Sciences since 1 October 2016. Besides, she is associated with the Environmental Policy Group of Wageningen University as a senior research fellow.

Sigrid has over 20 years of international experience in business and value chain development, market and consumer research, and distribution and marketing strategy with a focus on food. She has a PhD from Wageningen University in sociology with a study on healthy, safe and sustainable food consumption within the rapidly modernizing urban context of Vietnam.

Her interest in global urban food security informs her research agenda on the relationship between metropolitan development, food provisioning, food consumption and healthy living. Leading various research programs, she stimulates interdisciplinary and cross continental learning on sustainable food security for metropolitan areas between the global north and the global south. Main areas of interest are: everyday consumption practices and social equity in access to sustainable, safe and healthy foods.

Central to the research group Food and Healthy Living are the everyday, often routine, consumption practices of different population groups in the context of the dynamic Amsterdam metropole region, with a specific focus on the city of Almere as a living lab for metropolitan food security issues.

# Everyday fare

## Promoting a sustainable and healthy food system for the city

## Inaugural speech by Dr Sigrid Wertheim-Heck Professor Food and Healthy Living at Aeres University of Applied Sciences Friday, 8 December 2017

Translation from the original inaugural lecture read in Dutch.

# Introduction

Dear members of the Executive Board, colleagues, family, friends and others present, we all eat, day in day out, preferably several times a day.

I consider it special and an honour to address you today as Professor of Food and Healthy Living. An honour, because I have been entrusted with the development of the professorship, and special, because with initiating this research group, the city of Almere clearly expresses the priority it gives to food on its urban agenda. In this inaugural speech, I would like to take you to the mundane and often inconspicuous nature of our daily food consumption: our everyday fare. I believe that this holds an important key for a successful transition towards a more sustainable, healthy and inclusive food system for the city.

Let me start by giving you a historical perspective with a personal slant. Then I will elaborate on the specific context of cities in transition towards a more sustainable, healthy and inclusive food system. This will be linked to the specific context of Almere and the brief for my professorship. I would like to share with you the research agenda and the chosen approach. I am fully aware of the role of higher education in the field of applied research and will therefore end by drawing on the responsibilities of the research for education and society, and how the professorship Food and Healthy Living will contribute to this.

## Food and Healthy Living in Perspective

A professorship of Food and Healthy Living may not seem very special, but rather logical today, but do we remember how things were about twenty years ago? I then made the switch from the 'sexy' commercial business world to the agro-food sector, a step that caused a few raised eyebrows. After all, the agricultural sector was fuzzy and boring. This was the heyday of seemingly 'endless consumption', in which marketing - the commercial success of the 20th century - reached its peak. For a posh-looking bottle of water, consumers were prepared to pay thousand times the price of tap water. Advertising was used to entice people to consume as much food as possible. Often by means of offers such as "two for the price of one", or by broadening the offer through the introduction of new food products - either as a result of innovation or by supply from the world market. It was the period in which the supply of food changed from seasonal to year-round and food consumption widened from the local to the international cuisine, also described as routine exoticism (Warde, 1997). It was a period that was not only characterised by the expansion of the selection of food products, but also the period of the expansion of consumption times and places to eat. As a marketing strategist, I have personally helped think up products with easy 'one-handedness', for example for 'snacking and grazing' in the car. Food needed to keep well, be present everywhere, look attractive and most of all, easy to consume. The more, the better.

At the end of the 1990s, however, this hyper-commercialisation was increasingly criticised, being blamed for promoting materialism, exploiting underprivileged populations, causing environmental damage, and contributing to an overall deterioration of culture. Terms such as McDonaldisation and Disneyfication refer to the globalisation and homogenisation of the mass consumption culture (Ritzer, 1993; Pine, & Gilmore, 1999). From various quarters, consumption was increasingly regarded as a problem (Schudson, 1993; Klein, 2000). Initially, this criticism came in particular from moralistic anti-consumption movements. But gradually, the craving for consumption was also denounced in a more balanced way. There were appeals for a curb on consumption.<sup>1</sup>

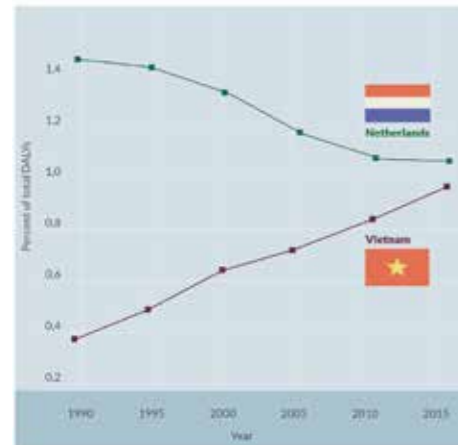
This was the context in which I - searching for meaningfulness and feeling the need to no longer contribute to the increasing consumption of crisps and snacks - was filled with amazement about the undervaluation of healthy and sustainably produced food, and in particular fresh fruit and vegetables. It seemed to me that the more ubiquitous the availability of food products had become, the more mindlessly we had started to consume. My fascination for a specific segment of the sociology of consumption had been kindled: everyday fare!

<sup>1</sup> At this stage, it is interesting to dwell briefly on the original meaning of the Latin verb *consumere*, which refers to actions that use or take up resources altogether. Considering the current criticism of consumer society, the term seems to have reverted to its original connotation.

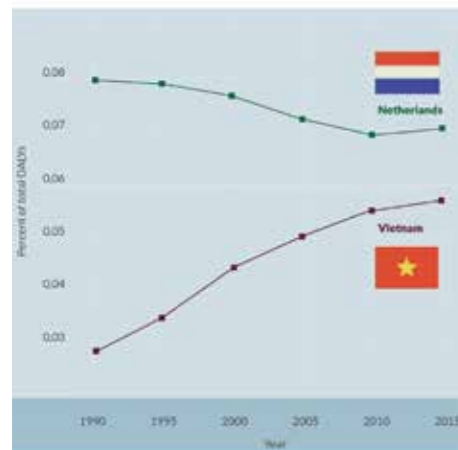


Figure 2: Globalisation of consumption patterns  
(<https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-compare/>)

Diet high in processed meat



Diet high in sugar sweetened beverages



the organisation of the daily food provision became. Historically, we see the most productive agriculture in the most urbanised areas. However, since the second half of the last century, food has increasingly shifted from the field of urban politics to the domain of business economics and marketing. Within the broader, more generic, context of privatisation and reduction of government tasks, the free market principle gained importance in the 1980s, in the traditionally government-regulated food domain. Globalisation and the growing complexity of food networks made it increasingly difficult to clearly define responsibilities, such as guaranteeing food safety. This meant that the role of private parties in traditionally public tasks became more important. Within the context of the unintentional side-effects of the present consumption culture, this increased private sector dependence has become matter of debate and demands a re-evaluation of roles and responsibilities regarding the safeguarding of a sustainable, healthy and secure food system for the future. We can observe a clear trend towards broader involvement of citizens and consumers in food and nutrition on the one hand, and the nature and extent of the role of the authorities as regulators of food production and consumption on the other. The latter is increasingly shifting from the national to the urban domain.

There is a trend in which city authorities put food more explicitly and pressingly on their urban agendas. City authorities face three challenges in their (renewed) food tasks: (1) eroding confidence in the dominant, global and scale-oriented food system, (2) the limited social reach of sustainable and healthy food, and (3) the unruly everyday food-related behavioural routines and the question how these can be changed.

### Eroding confidence in the dominant food system

The first challenge concerns the eroding confidence in the food system, represented to a considerable extent by principles of economic rationality and increase in scale. Doing the shopping and cooking take time. Time is scarce and solutions aimed at decreasing the number of actions and the required time, are popular. However, the greater the convenience, the larger the distance to food production and preparation. The increasing distance between production and consumption and the increasing complexity of the global food system, have led to a kind of food alienation. Fewer and fewer consumers know where the food that they consume comes from, how it was produced, or what the exact ingredients are. Let alone that they understand what the food that they eat may do for or with them. The growing interest in and attention for food, shows that people want to know more about their food again. However, more and more studies and recommendations that are published, seem to contradict one another. This creates confusion. In addition, the constant stream of articles in the media about scandals in the food chain does little good to the credibility of food quality, resulting in a decline in the trust in current food production and quality control systems.

Authorities, businesses and citizens all see and acknowledge that food regulation has become less unequivocal. Increasingly, societies around the world are challenging the authorities, and expertise, either political or scientific, is no longer 'sacred'. Articulate citizens demand a greater say in their food, and in reaction to the dominant system, we can see an advance of alternative, often local food initiatives (Block et al., 2012; Bowen, 2011). Parallel food systems emerge - at local, regional, national, and global levels - in which the degree of citizen participation and the way in which trust is organised, are set up differently. This raises questions concerning the role of the authorities in the field of tension between centralised regulation and the autonomy of citizens, or to put it differently between,

on the one hand, maintaining the established system and, on the other hand, providing room for reform and embracing new practices and 'citizen power'. A complicating factor in this process, is the fact that the interests of health, sustainability, animal-friendliness and fair trade do not always match. In addition to sustainability and health themes, technological developments also lead to more and more ethical questions being put on the social agenda. Topics include genetic modification, protein transition, food printing and personalised dietary advice. The way in which the dialogue with society should be conducted, is a complex issue for urban policy makers. After all, local and regional interests need to be weighed up against national and supranational interests.

### Social inequality – access to healthy and sustainable food as a challenge for cities

The second challenge concerns social inequality in our everyday fare. In cities, the supply of food has diversified. This diversity, however, poses a major challenge of social inequality in the practical access to healthy, safe and sustainable food. According to the United Nations definition, food security exists when all inhabitants of a city or country, at any time, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences in order to live an active and healthy life.<sup>6</sup> Although "access" is a "right" for all groups in society, practical access to food in cities appears to be less fair. Healthy, sustainably produced and safe food often hardly reaches the most vulnerable groups in society. This is something I observed during my research in Hanoi, where modernisation strategies to improve food safety hardly reach lower-income and lower educated population groups (Wertheim-Heck et al., 2015). In the Netherlands, and here in Almere, we can see similar inequality. Thus, healthy and sustainable food is sometimes labelled as left-elitist, and socioeconomically vulnerable groups suffer from demonstrably poorer health and less healthy dietary patterns. Overweight and obesity, for example, are strongly correlated to lower income and

6 "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". FAO (2009). Declaration of the World Food Summit on Food Security. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

lower education levels, and we can see a higher prevalence in specific areas and among population groups with a non-Western background<sup>7</sup>. Cities worldwide are facing the challenge of making sustainable, healthy and safe food available to all of citizens (OECD, 2017).

### Unruliness

This brings us to the third challenge concerning the unruliness of our everyday fare. To promote a healthier and more sustainable diet, awareness and information campaigns were introduced in the past few years to inform people and to convince them on the basis of rational grounds to change their dietary behaviour. Labelling, to distinguish healthy and more sustainable products from 'bulk' products, is used to improve recognisability. Differentiation of sustainable and healthy products assumes that products are selected on the basis of rational grounds.

This is the essence of the problem, because in our hectic daily lives, we prefer to contemplate as little as possible about our everyday fare at the time of purchase. Effecting behavioural change appears to be a challenge. All over the world, authorities struggle with similar discrepancies between their citizens' intentions and their actual behaviour, between valuing and consuming.

Within the complexity of daily life, food consumption is to a high degree determined by everyday routines (Lindsay, 2010; Evans, et al., 2017). Influencing choices within routine behaviour on the basis of limited rationality, such as offering snack tomatoes at the cash desk, also known as nudging, has received a great deal of attention in this context (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008; van Kleef, E. et al., 2012)<sup>8</sup>. The effectiveness of such interventions can be seen in the strong increase of sustainable and healthy products in supermarkets and "on-the-go" channels (Logatcheva, 2017). This increase appears to be rooted in anticipating routine purchases, where popular



Figure 3: Cathy Thorne: [everydaypeoplecartoons.com](http://everydaypeoplecartoons.com)

articles are replaced by more sustainable alternatives. But as indicated above, the impact to date is limited. With a ten per cent market share, the sustainable and healthy food category remains a niche. More radical changes in our everyday fare are required to ensure a sustainable and healthy food system for the city.

As I have tried to illustrate, this is not an easy task. There is no set menu for meeting the growing appetite of cities in a sustainable, healthy and safe way. On the one hand, we can see top-down interventions within established structures and systems, and on the other hand, there is the emergence of alternative bottom-up food initiatives. Both have an impact,

but insufficient to effectively deal with future problems: the process of making the system more sustainable is lagging behind and public health is at stake. A challenge for cities worldwide. To break down the wall of everyday routines and eroding confidence, and to promote innovative, inclusive food arrangements aimed at sustainability and health, urban authorities, businesses and citizens need to enter into a dialogue. A regional food system as a switching point for cities between local initiatives and daily practices of citizens on the one hand, and abstract global food systems on the other, offers an informative platform.

### Professorship – healthy and sustainable food for people in the city

And here we are, in the centre of the young and 'makeable' city of Almere, created just over forty years ago in the new and uncultivated Flevoland polder on the basis of a planning philosophy aimed at a green infrastructure for a healthy society. In the meantime, Almere - with more than 200,000 inhabitants - has grown to become the fifth largest city in the Netherlands and is preparing for another large-scale expansion, in which the city will experience accelerated growth to 350,000 inhabitants by 2030 (Almere 2009; 2017). Almere is very much aware of the metropolitan challenges and as a co-signatory of the Urban Food Policy Pact (UFPP) in Milan<sup>9</sup>, it is determined to set a meaningful example in the transition towards a sustainable food system for the city.

The city also faces an urgent challenge when it comes to healthy lifestyles. The scores for a number of health risks are not so good for Almere and above the Dutch average. Almere has the ambition to set up the food provision in such a way that it promotes the health of its inhabitants. With its explicit attention for sustainable and healthy food, Almere presents itself as a 'Living Lab' for research into and the implementation of innovations aimed at food and the city: "Feeding the City"<sup>10</sup>. Within the framework of the professorship, we are going to address

urban food issues in the experimental city of Almere. The aim is to contribute to the practical accessibility of sustainable and safe food in everyday life, to promote healthy food consumption patterns for all inhabitants of the city.

**The key question is:** How can we promote sustainable, safe and healthy food consumption patterns among all groups of the population within the dynamic urban region of Almere? And what can we learn from the practical experiences in Almere for cities around the world?

### Regional focus

Regional food supply is a major pillar under Almere's large-scale expansion and hence in the research agenda of the professorship. This proposition is not unique for Almere; other cities are also focussing on regional food systems. The argumentation is based not only on sustainability, but to a large extent on restoring confidence, by decreasing the physical and psychological distance between consumers and food production. However, this proposition is a fairly recent one. Some ten to fifteen years ago, it was discussed in the Ministry of Economic Affairs whether the production of food should take place outside the Netherlands as much as possible. It was suggested that the Netherlands should restrict itself primarily to high-quality agro-food innovations. Today, however, the ministry promotes urban food strategies with a focus on "regional products, urban farming, food parks and vegetable gardens" (MinEZ, 2011), a trend that can be recognised worldwide. The location of Almere in agricultural Flevoland, which was originally created for agriculture and is now responsible for thirty per cent of the agricultural production in the Netherlands, seems eminently suited for a breach with the traditional dichotomy between the city and the countryside, or the production and consumption of food. It is important to note here that Almere offers a highly relevant context for the accelerated urbanisation in Asia, which is also taking place within an agricultural context.

7 Among immigrant population groups, diabetes is proportionally more prevalent than among native Dutch population groups (Diabetes Fonds: <https://www.diabetesfonds.nl/over-diabetes/diabetes-in-het-algemeen/diabetes-in-cijfers>).

8 In 2017, Richard Thaler - the founder of the nudge theory - received the Nobel prize in Economic Sciences.

9 Voedsel op de Stedelijke Agenda Staatscourant Nr. 11558, 3 March 2017: Almere signed the Urban Food Policy Pact (UFPP) in Milan on 15 October 2015.

10 A Living Lab offers opportunities for learning in and from practice, in preparation for the future. A Living Lab, or an application- and experience-oriented environment, facilitates the co-creation of change. In real-life situations, innovative ideas and concepts are developed and tested together with 'users', starting from the idea that the potential impact of innovative ideas in daily practice can be interpreted more quickly.

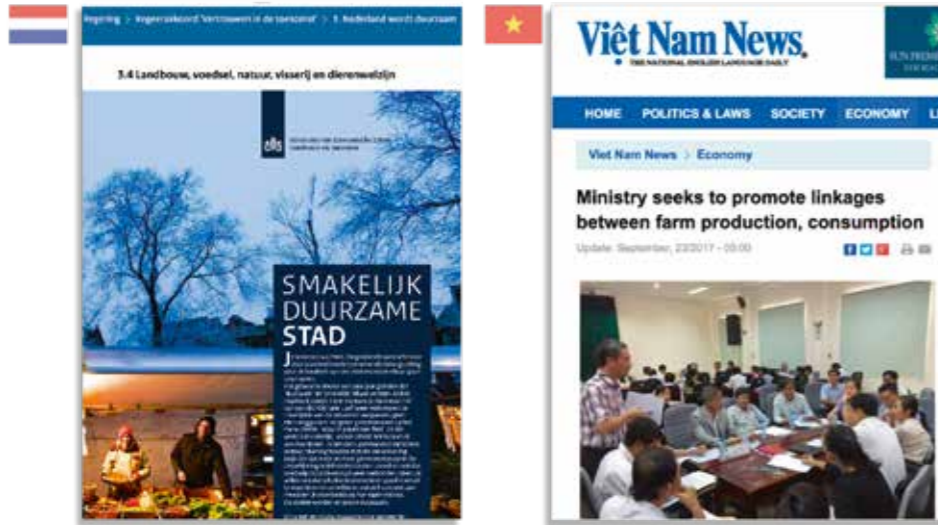


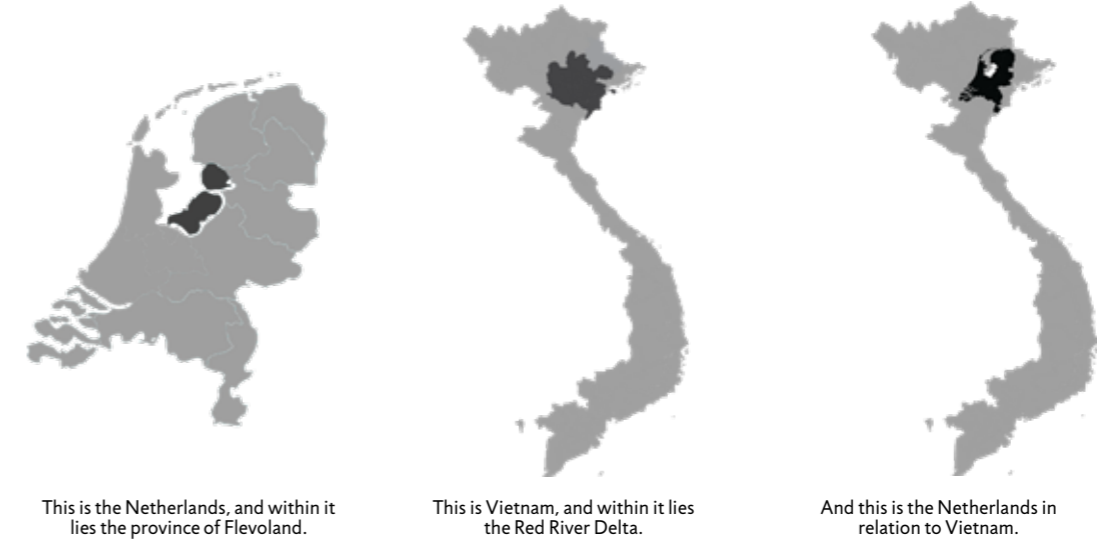
Figure 4: Regional food system

As long as a regional food system is not dogmatically and predisposedly labelled as “better”, the reconsideration of local food is useful. In the case of Almere, various targets are mentioned, the most dominant one being: twenty per cent local food provision in 2022. Whatever the exact target percentage may be - ten, twenty, fifty per cent or more - it provides a concrete reference point. It forces us to think about what it means in terms of sustainability and health. Because local food is not entirely undisputed.

In the Netherlands, we are quite capable of growing even tropical crops almost year-round. The question is, however, if locally produced crops from greenhouses are more sustainable than imported ones. To what extent can products such as milk and cheese be considered ‘local’ if the cows have been fed with feed from outside the Netherlands? May we consider food local, if it

was grown in the province of Flevoland, processed in the province of Zeeland and ending up in a supermarket in Almere?

The radius of what constitutes regionality is arbitrary. Local and regional are relative concepts. At this stage, it is good to dwell expand briefly on the concepts of local and regional. The dividing lines are not unequivocal, but one can say that local, including urban farming, has a smaller geographical scope than regional (Opitz et al., 2016). A regional food system includes several localities. Regional food systems are related to other regions, as well as national and global food systems. Within the professorship, we use the regional perspective. This concerns the Metropolitan Region of Amsterdam (MRA), with a specific focus on Almere in the agricultural countryside of Flevoland. We relate this regional perspective on the one hand to local initiatives, and on the other hand to national and global food



This is the Netherlands, and within it lies the province of Flevoland.

This is Vietnam, and within it lies the Red River Delta.

And this is the Netherlands in relation to Vietnam.

Figure 5: Arbitrary regionality

networks. A good example is the food flow study, in which we map out the Flevoland production flows and the Almere consumption flows.

Several years ago, calculations were made of the capability of Almere to meet the actual food supply demands. The study showed that, given an unchanged diet, from a production point of view nineteen per cent of the required food supply could be sourced within a twenty-kilometre radius (Sukkel, et al., 2010). But what is the significance of such a focus on regional food supply within the framework of sustainability and health? Aiming for sustainability on the basis of transport kilometres proves nothing more than a drop in the ocean, in particular given an unchanged meat-based diet (Weber & Matthews, 2008). After all, more than fifty per cent of the greenhouse gas emissions related to our food system, originate

from meat production and cattle breeding.<sup>11</sup> As far as CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are concerned, a local steak is less sustainable than beans from Kenya. A shorter distance is not necessarily more sustainable and if the diet does not change, the population of Almere will not become any healthier either. After all, the intention is not that more potatoes from the Flevoland soil, processed into chips in Lelystad, are consumed as fast food in Almere. If local and regional production were to cause a dietary shift towards a less animal-based, more plant-based, more seasonal and less processed type of food, then sustainability and health benefits can be expected (Westhoek et al., 2014). This presupposes that a regional plant-based food system does actually incite healthier consumption patterns.<sup>12</sup> It is this change in everyday fare that is the main challenge.

<sup>11</sup> About 25% of the worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases is caused by the food system; 14.5% of the worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases is caused by meat production and cattle breeding, against 13% by traffic and transport (Gerber et al., 2013). In the Netherlands, due to the efficiency of factory farming, this percentage is considerably lower, but even here, the meat sector is responsible for more than 50% of the total emissions of greenhouse gases from food production (Šebek et al., 2008).  
<sup>12</sup> By promoting awareness, consumers would appreciate their food more, have a better understanding of where their food comes from, and thus have a closer bond with those who produce our food (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

These are intricate issues, and their value is not so much in wrong or right, or good and better, but rather in the fact that such discussions force us to define clearly what we mean and what we intend to achieve, and to reflect critically on the possible impact and consequences. Within the professorship, we will constantly reflect critically on this regional ambition. Questions that will be dealt with, include:

- How to set up a regional food system that is economically viable?
- What does a regional food system contribute to the improvement of sustainability?
- To what extent does it encourage healthier consumption patterns?
- What population groups can be reached?
- How can the food security of regional systems be guaranteed?

### Change of everyday fare

Within the professorship, we will study the potential of food transitions initiated by citizens as creative agents within their well-established everyday lifestyle patterns, as well as the potential for upscaling niche innovations by local and regional entrepreneurs. We intend to inform feasible solutions for the food sustainability and health issues in Almere. Solutions that fit in the daily lives of all different kinds of individuals. This relates to the food provision structures and systems, it relates to the context and the way in which food is offered and consumed, it relates to the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds of food consumers, and converges in and is expressed through the daily food consumption practices within the wider context of daily life. The world is full of facts and truths about sustainable, safe and healthy food, but essentially, it is all about the actual daily food consumption practices. The latter constitutes the core of the professorship. To promote healthy lifestyles, it is vitally

important to visit and get to know people in their own settings, their own cultures and their own neighbourhoods. Why do people eat what they eat? This brings me back to what I started the speech with, my fascination with ordinary, everyday life and how food consumption practices are routinely embedded in this life: Everyday fare.



Figure 6: Everyday fare at the core of the professorship of Food and Healthy Living



Figure 7: Professorship's lines of approach

The research focuses on studying situated activities. Based on my personal background, the emphasis is on theories of social practice and normalisation processes. (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2011; Shove et al., 2012; Warde, 2014). The essence of the above-mentioned unruly daily practices is that change processes, such as those that we try to achieve in the case of food consumption, are historically and culturally rooted and contextually defined. There is a dynamic relationship between people as social beings with a variety of backgrounds, lifestyles, motives, and the world in which they live. The transition task demands contextually system thinking, with room for the creativity that consumers display when shaping their daily consumption patterns and thus the food system. Daily practices are subject to change and these changes do not all follow the same beaten tracks; they are subject to contextual interpretations. In Hanoi, I have been able to observe how a wide range of culture-specific hybrid food provision and shopping practices emerges when the urban authorities are blind to existing routines

(Wertheim-Heck & Spaargaren, 2015). In the Netherlands, we can see how urban authorities explicitly want to include citizens in their policy-making, but are still trying to find out how and to what extent they should do so. Daily consumption patterns constitute an important key in the transformation towards a more sustainable and healthy urban food system. In the Netherlands, food consumption among various population groups within the practical setup of daily life is hardly addressed. This is a task that we will pick up in the professorship.

Whereas theories of social practice constitute a major theoretical perspective for me personally, in the research group I will explicitly aim for connection with other domains and encourage broader theoretical explorations in order to guarantee as holistic a perspective as possible. After all, the transition towards a more sustainable and healthy food system requires a multidimensional view on food in the city. With its focus on everyday food consumption practices,



the research within this professorship has three lines of approach:

Firstly, our research covers to a great extent the system of food supply in the urban region of Almere and the challenge of a reorganisation of this supply aimed at sustainability, circularity and health. The research also explicitly touches upon the dynamic urban context of Almere and the redefinition of urban structures, including the blurring dividing lines between the city and the countryside, as well as the revaluation of public spaces for urban food. And lastly, the research focuses on the diversity of households and lifestyles of Almere's population groups and the change of consumption patterns.

The research agenda concentrates in particular on the three interfaces:

1. The interactive relationship between food supply and urban setup and structures in the continuum of the two opposite perspectives of the food-consuming and food-producing city.
2. The interactive relationship between city and man, or the urban setup and lifestyles in the continuum between the extremes of the city shaping man and man shaping the city.
3. The interactive relationship between people and food, or the citizens in various - shifting - roles with regard to their food supply in the continuum of food-consuming and food-producing man.

Within the research agenda of the professorship, there are three main PhD tracks. With a regional view on everyday fare, each PhD research project approaches the complex relationship between citizens with their lifestyles, the urban setup and food provision from a specific perspective.

1. The first research project Food and 'do-it-yourself' urban planning - Co-creation for 'Feeding the City', concentrates on the question how urban planning in which citizens themselves get a major say in the spatial setup, may contribute to a more sustainable and healthy food system for the city.
2. The second project 'Lifestyles and Regional Food Systems - Inclusive Strategies for 'Feeding the City', studies the food consumption practices of various socioeconomic and cultural groups within the population of Almere and investigates the potential sustainability and health benefits of a regional food system.
3. The third PhD project, 'Food for whom, by whom?' - innovative business models for 'Feeding the City', focuses on the transition towards a sustainable regional food system that builds on a mix of local, regional and global arrangements in feeding the city.

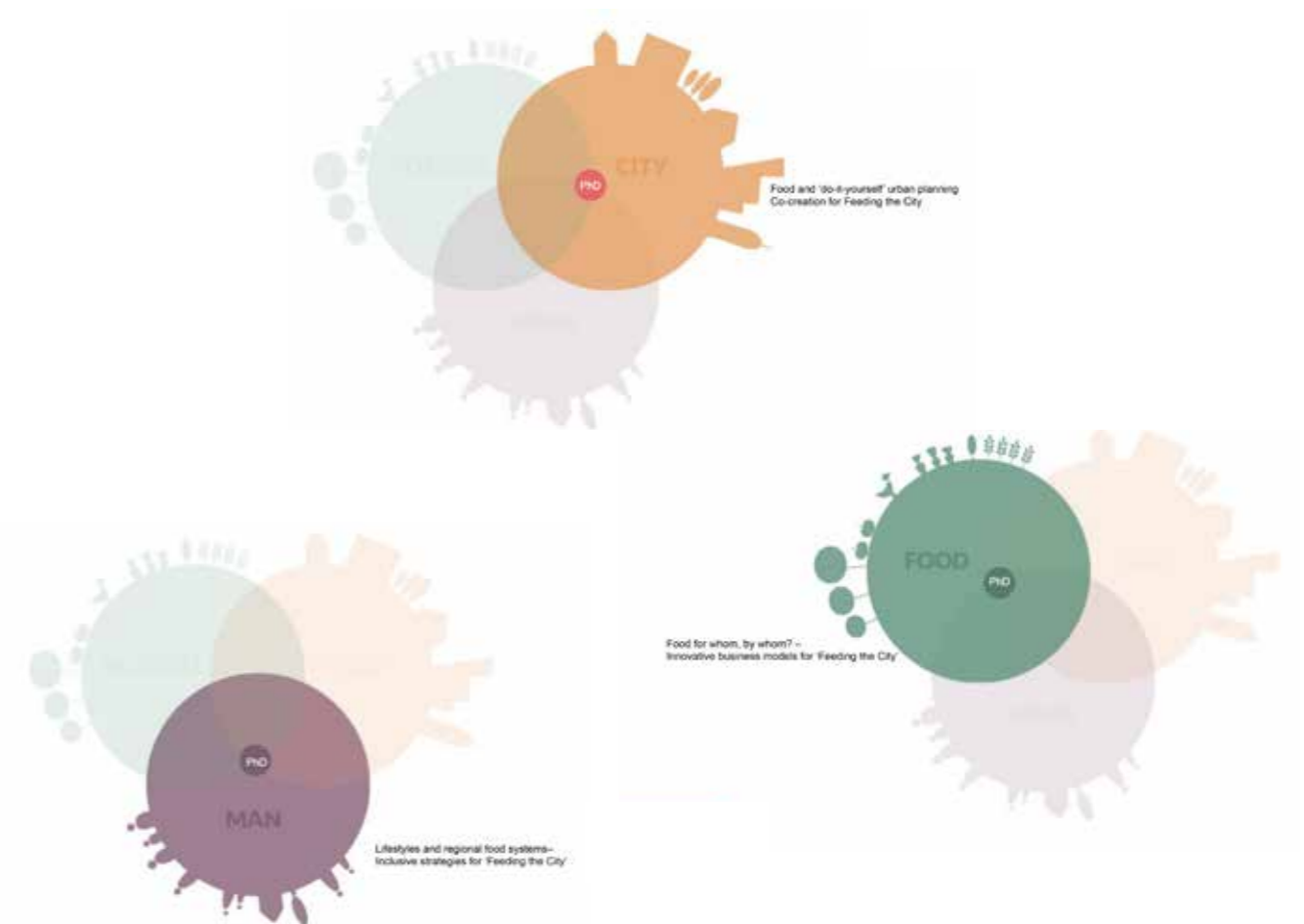


Figure 8: PhD projects

### Research on the basis of civilian power

With a socially committed research agenda, we have gathered here this afternoon in the town hall reception room. Civilian power, or the active involvement of citizens, is essential for steering and shaping appropriate food supply structures that make a healthy lifestyle accessible for all inhabitants of the city. Citizens play a major role in shaping their living environment and society. This is a challenge, because Almere is also a multicultural city. Almere includes 134 nationalities and 164 ethnic groups (Almere, 2013). Almost a third of the population is of non-Western origin. With this diversity of lifestyles, Almere has the ambition of promoting a sustainable and healthy lifestyle among all of its citizens. Creating more inclusive food systems has the attention of cities worldwide and Almere provides a relevant research context for this topic. In co-creation with citizens, local entrepreneurs, social organisations and authorities, parties will work on the transformation of existing practices and the development of alternative ones. In doing so, we will explicitly appeal to the cultural diversity of Almere. Organisers of citizen participation often refer to concepts such as the democratisation of food and social capital. What is meant is tapping into the intellectual, creative and innovative power of citizens. This co-creation approach, however, also meets with criticism, in that it implies a demographic, often left-elitist, limitation (Bourdieu, 1984). Actively involving citizens with a rich diversity of lifestyles in innovations in daily life, presupposes new organisational paradigms. Within the professorship, we will look for appropriate food system-oriented paradigms.

An example of how we have already done so, is the 'UI in hUIs' (Onion in the home) project, of which the 'Almere aan tafel' (Almere at the table) exhibition has just been opened. It is a collaborative project with the Agro-food Cluster, the Flevo Campus Veldacademie, and students and researchers from

Echnaton VMBO, Aeres MBO and HBO, and Wageningen University. The onion, a value-free and everyday product that is consumed around the world and constitutes an essential ingredient of many national dishes, provides an attractive starting point to unravel - on the basis of a rich diversity of cultural backgrounds - everyday consumption patterns and to explore the separate worlds of global and local food networks.

### Social relevance and responsibility

The professorship of Food and Healthy Living is financed with funds from the Almere Urbanisation Fund within the framework of the broader programme objective of Feeding and Greening the City. I am aware of the fact that the professorship is of instrumental importance for realising Almere's objectives, with the Floriade exhibition in 2022 being a major milestone on the horizon. This means that the professorship also has a direct responsibility for the societal relevance of its research. This social responsibility fits well within the profile of the school of higher professional education, internationally also called a university of applied sciences, acting as a link between scientific knowledge and the world of everyday practice. However, this also includes the important challenge to ensure that the research is flexible and dynamic as well as enterprising, while preserving sufficient academic distance and independence. As a professor, I am very much aware of the responsibility to guarantee academic quality, to safeguard social relevance and applicability, and to translate the outcomes into input for education.

Naturally, all of this cannot be done in isolation, and I am very grateful for the broad range of forms of cooperation to make full use of the dynamics between situational learning and generic reflection, and between disciplinary knowledge

development and multidisciplinary valorisation. Solid academic cooperation is guaranteed by the active involvement of a team of professors from Wageningen University.

Through the PhD programme, there is a direct link with urban planning, and sociological and economic disciplines in the field of food production and consumption, the crucial spearheads being healthy living, sustainability and social equality. At the same time, this professorship is firmly embedded in the broader collaborative frameworks within the Feeding the City programme, together with the Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Metropolitan Solutions (AMS) and most emphatically also within the Flevo Campus. The Flevo Campus offers an interdisciplinary meeting point, where the field academy can play an important role as a bridge between education and practice: learning and innovating in practice. From multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary applied research, we will increasingly aim for setting up transdisciplinary research within the framework of the Flevo Campus and AMS, because the tasks that we face demand a holistic approach.<sup>13</sup> Within the professorship, we work together with the innovative agro-food sector in Flevoland, for example in the 'Floriade Works!' programme, where entrepreneurs, knowledge institutes and students work together on pioneering innovations to give the provincial economy a sustainable boost. The importance of integrated cooperation was underlined yesterday by the foundation of the MRA Food Council and the signing of the manifesto that calls for a joint effort during the Flows of Food conference in Amsterdam.

The collaborative frameworks of the professorship extend beyond the Metropolitan Region of Amsterdam/Almere (MRA). At the national level, the professorship works together with fellow

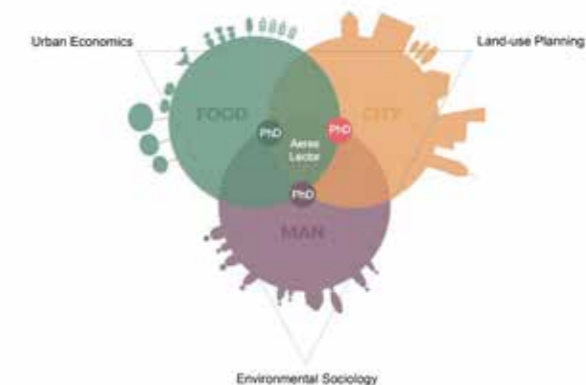


Figure 9: Academic cooperation

professors and schools of higher professional education, for example within the Centre of Expertise Food. An instrumental development will be the creation of the professors of universities of applied sciences platform Food and Health, funded by SIA. As chairwoman of the platform, I am committed to shaping the concrete societal role of the platform in the field of sustainable food and health.

A key aspect will be the development of a joint research agenda that closely follows the Dutch National Research Agenda (NWA) and has strong links with government and the business community, in particular through Floriade Works and the top sectors (TKI Agri & Food and Horticulture & Base Materials). In addition, we will try to join in with new initiatives, such as the research agenda linked to the World Food Centre theme park, to be set up in Ede under the management of TiFN or participating in innovative projects, such as EFRO Green Health Solutions, aimed at exploiting the market potential

<sup>13</sup> The different approaches can be characterised as follows: Multidisciplinary research is additive, interdisciplinary research is interactive, and transdisciplinary research is integrated.

of plants with health-promoting characteristics. In doing so, I look forward to working together with my colleagues within the Aeres Group.

As you may have gathered by now, my personal interest is in global metropolitan food security issues. We can see simultaneous processes of globalisation and regionalisation. Around the world, we observe existing structures coming under pressure and flexible alternatives emerging. Relationships between centralised regulation and autonomy are shifting. On the one hand, this creates a sense of insecurity, but on the other hand it is accompanied by enthusiasm for new opportunities. Many of the developments can be related to globally recognisable mechanisms. I will link the professorship's research agenda, which concentrates to a great extent on the Western context, to my international field of work and research.<sup>14</sup> I am convinced that cross-continental contextual learning may promote an acceleration of the transition towards a more sustainable and healthy food system.

We live in a fascinating time of urgency and innovation. I consider it a privilege to be able to work with young people within a university of applied sciences. Young people are pragmatic, concrete and solution-oriented. Society is dynamic and the insights on food and health are subject to rapid change: today's knowledge will be (partly) obsolete tomorrow, and advancing technology offers new opportunities and often surprising perspectives. The students that we train today, will live in a different world by 2022. It is therefore important that we, in our dynamic society, help young people to develop an independent capacity for creative and critical reflection on food- and health-related issues. Beyond knowledge, this importantly involves skills: the ability to apply analytical tools in order to investigate and solve food- and health-related issues, where practical reality, creativity and research rigor go hand in hand.

Changes in food consumption affect many aspects and facets of our lives. Our daily food is not a clearly demarcated field and this makes food a highly complex policy and research domain. It is unlikely that we will solve the complex issue concerning the transition towards more sustainable and healthy food systems for cities within this research group. But with our research projects, we do intend to make meaningful contributions. A regional food system, the key focus of this professorship, provides an instructive context, as a point of exchange between local initiatives and global networks. The city of Almere, with its prominent food policy, located in a food-producing countryside and with a multicultural population, constitutes an informative Living Lab for the exploration of solutions based on the diversity of everyday food practices. Embedded in Almere, the professorship is ideally positioned to use research and education to tackle the multidimensional everyday context of a feeding city. That is my everyday fare.



Figure 10: Urban farming before the term existed Horticulture project, Sigrid Wertheim-Heck 10 years old.

<sup>14</sup> Retail Diversity for Dietary Diversity (RD4DD) preventing nutrition deserts for the urban poor, funded by the Drivers of Food Choice (DFC) Competitive Grants programme, which is financed by the British Department for International Development and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and supervised by the University of South Carolina, Arnold School of Public Health, USA.

# Closure and a word of thanks

This brings me to the end of this speech: a word of thanks. It goes without saying that there are many people to whom I would like to express my gratitude for cooperation in the past, the present and the future. At the risk of leaving anyone out, I will refrain from doing so. Please, do all feel personally addressed by my word of thanks!

However, there are a few people I do like to give a special mention:

My colleagues within the Applied Practical Research team, working with whom is both delightful and inspiring, with a special mention for Dinand and Nicolette - partners in crime from day one - and Lisa and Anke for all you have done with the students for this day.

And of course, all my other Aeres colleagues, in particular Wil, because after the first introduction, full of positive ambition and future-orientedness, I am grateful for the opportunity that was given to me to give shape to the professorship. Teaching colleagues and students, we have only just started working together. The fitting of research into education is sometimes a bit of a juggle, but what we have already achieved in such a short space of time, offers perspectives for the future.

Almere is a unique city and I have not hesitated for one second when I was offered the professorship in Almere. It is a city with a vision and with courage, and as far as I have seen, with room for an open and constructive dialogue. I thank the provincial

authorities of Flevoland and the city of Almere for their visionary ambition, the financial means and their trust.

Friends of the Flevo Campus, both the professorship and the Flevo Campus have only just been initiated, but our collaboration so far makes me look forward to more!

I started this speech with some personal reflections and I would also like to end on a personal note. Those who know me well and have known me for a long time, know that I have ended up where I began.

Dear mum and dad: you have allowed me to set my own course, I have been able to explore the world from several perspectives and literally from all sides, but in the end, blood will tell.

Lara and Peer, working in Almere from Nijmegen, I cannot always guarantee a carefully prepared and balanced evening meal. In this, I have failed you many times as a mother, but fortunately, you are now able to prepare your own meals. Thank you for letting me share them with you.

Heiman, life with you and the children is 'vurrukkulluk' (delightful), even in a cabin in the woods. Now all we need is a greenhouse in the garden.

*Thank you.*

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Stadhuisstraat 18  
1315 HC Almere  
The Netherlands  
+31 88 - 020 6300

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