

Cancer, Stem cells & Developmental biology

Newsletter December 2016

Introduction

Dear reader,

Welcome to the first CS&D newsletter of this academic year, offered by the new StuCom! All of our StuCom members are fresh CS&D students, eager to organize some great activities, seminars and the annual retreat for all of our fellow CS&D master's students! Therefore, we will start this newsletter with a brief introduction of our new members.

In the past few months, we have already provided you with a SinterKerst&Nieuw event, as well as with an interesting seminar by Martijn Gloerich. However, since not all of you could join these activities - or maybe because you just want to relive the moment - we will give a short recap of these activities, accompanied by some pictures!

Speaking about pictures... Science is more than working out a protocol and answering interesting questions. Science is also fun, and scientists have humor as well! Since we like to stimulate humor in science, this new topic of the CS&D newsletter will be introduced with some fun pictures drawn by one of our first year's students. If you feel like it, please be free to send in your own (scientific) jokes and claim a spot in the next newsletter!

Next on the to-read list in this newsletter are the experiences of Maarten and Marlies, who both went abroad for their minor internship. They talk about their life and research at the Harvard University and the University of California. It is interesting to read about these universities and the research in the United States!

We really hope you'll enjoy this newsletter as much as we enjoyed making it, and we are looking forward to seeing you on our upcoming events!

Love,
Elisha

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New StuCom

Name Rosan Heijboer
Function Secretary
Country Nederland
Internship de Bruin, Veterinary Medicine
Dilemma **Your home is always foggy inside** OR moss is growing in your bed

Name Madita Reimer
Function Social Media Admin
Country Deutschland
Internship Derksen, UMC
Dilemma All the money you have ever been given for your birthday turned out to be a loan you have to pay back OR **every time you see a clingy couple, you have to force yourself between them and ask for a kiss**

Name Elisha Verhaar
Function Chair
Country Nederland
Internship van Rheenen, Hubrecht Institute
Dilemma **If you are happy, you sound like a baby** OR you always have a pacifier in your mouth



Rosan

Madita

Elisha

Marek

Lotte

Angela

Femke

Name Marek Oostrom
Function Handyman
Country Nederland
Internship Kops, UMC
Dilemma **If you see someone running, you have to join for 100 meters** OR you have to announce out loud if you are going to take a shit.

Name Lotte van den Bent
Function Treasurer
Country Nederland
Internship van Rheeën, Hubrecht Institute
Dilemma **You have to pronounce every vowel veeeeryyyy loooong** OR you only have one day weekend

Name Ángela Sedeño Cacciatore
Function Minutes secretary
Country España
Internship van den Heuvel, UU
Dilemma Once a week, you have to eat out of the trash from your neighbour OR **your farts get visible**

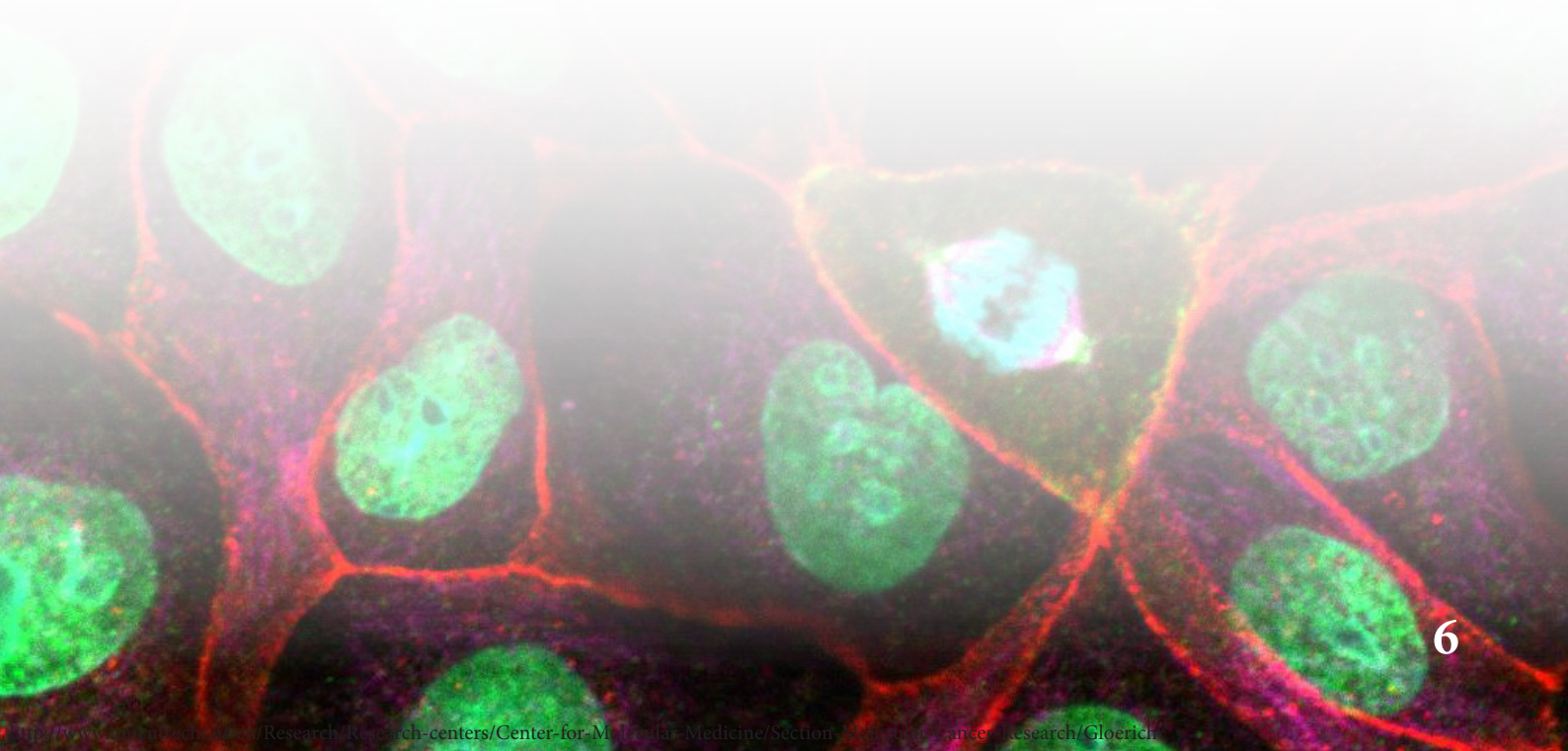
Name Femke Groenveld
Function Editor-in-Chief Newsletter
Country Nederland
Internship van Rheeën, Hubrecht Institute
Dilemma Your clothes are made out of crepapier OR **you talk like you are drunk**

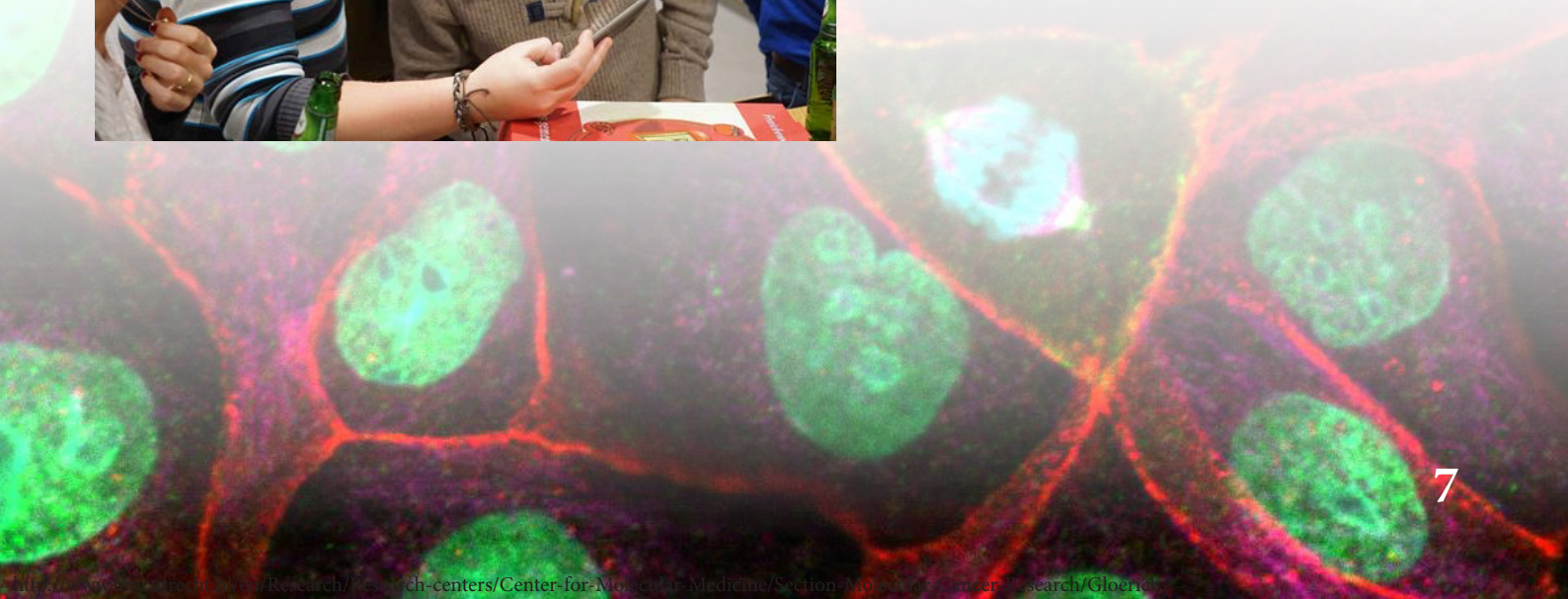
Seminar

Martijn Gloerich

Regulation of Cell division by cues of the local environment

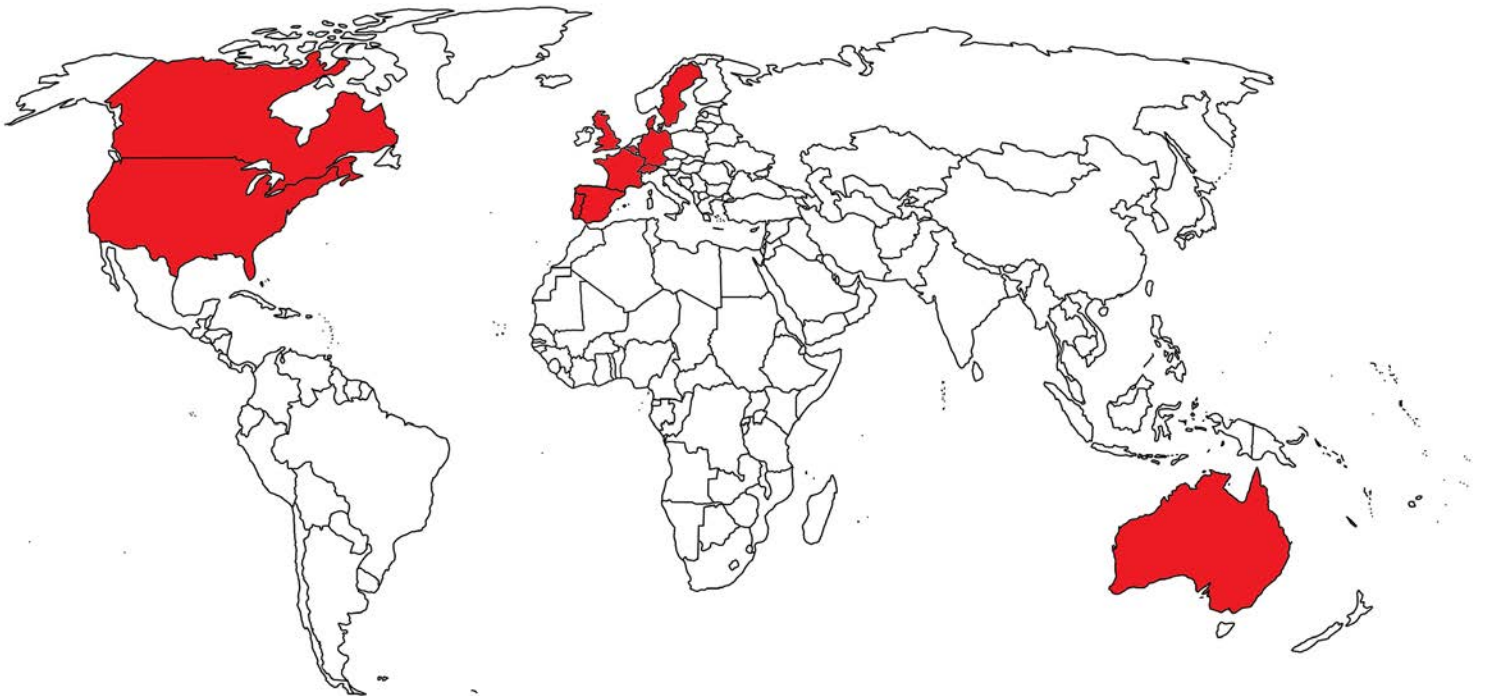
On the 8th of November the first StuCom Seminar of this academic year was held. For this seminar Dr. Martijn Gloerich, group leader at the department of Molecular Cancer Research at the UMC Utrecht, was invited to talk about his research. During his talk he focussed on his work during his Post-Doc position and of his own research group. This research group was recently established when Gloerich returned to the Netherlands in 2016 to set up his research group at the UMC. His research mainly focusses on understanding the regulation of cell division by instructive cues from neighbouring cells. They want to understand the contribution of individual extrinsic cues to the regulation of different aspects of cell division. By using a lot of different examples of experiments and clear explanations of the methods, he gave a very clear and informative seminar. It was nice to see everybody enjoying the seminar! After the presentation, the pizza arrived quickly and we could all enjoy the food and drinks in the Hubrecht canteen. We would really like to thank Dr. Martijn Gloerich for his interesting talk!





CS&D

An international perspective

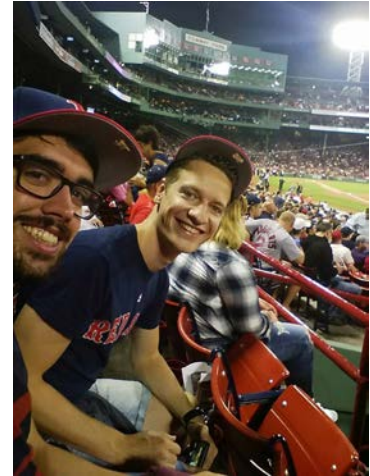


Places in the world where you can find CS&D students

Student Abroad

Maarten Geurts - Boston

My name is Maarten Geurts and I am a second year CSnD Master student. For my minor internship and electives I have decided to go to Boston for eight months to join the lab of George Church, well known for his efforts to revive the woolly mammoth and his work on the Genome editing technique CRISPR/Cas9. When I arrived here I found out that my daily supervisor is also doing work in the lab of David Liu, known for his work on protein evolution, and therefore I joined his lab too. Boston is an extremely inspiring city to be in when you aspire to be a scientist. Big well-known universities and institutes are scattered across the greater Boston area with (PhD)students and staff scientists from all over the world.



Red Sox

I am working on some very interesting projects concerning the evolution of Cas9 to increase the specificity of the genome editing possibilities of this well-known enzyme. The fact that both labs I work in are well-funded gives me a lot of freedom to do whatever I want in the lab, which results in the perfect learning environment. I have experienced that science, here in Boston, is conducted very differently from the way we perform science in Holland. Sometimes it feels like experiments are less well planned, and brute force - in the form of money - is the way to go here to get to the desired results. At times this has led to frustrating discussions with my supervisor but now we've reached the right balance between both worlds. Thus, so far I am really enjoying myself in lab and I am very confident that the next few months will be just as nice and productive.



Besides the inspiring scientific surroundings, Boston is a great city to live in. I live in a very nice house in one of the more upscale neighbourhoods together with i.e. Daniel Groeneweg, who is in the same phase of the CSnD master. Boston is known for its famous sports teams like the Red Sox (Baseball), Bruins (Ice hockey) and Celtics (Basketball), and the Boston tea party. An important fact to know about the life in a big American city like Boston is the expensive lifestyle you are forced to live. Rent is about 3 times as high as in Utrecht, just like food in supermarkets and beers in a bar. Americans typically do not cook themselves but order delivery or take-out every day, which is also pretty expensive. However, once you are accustomed to the way of life and you truly start to integrate in the American culture, Boston is a great place to be for your Minor Internship!



Chipmunk



Skyline

Student Abroad

Marlies Ludikhuize - Berkeley

While I am writing this, I realize that it has already been almost a year ago that I left Utrecht to perform my minor internship at the University of California, Berkeley (UCB). Last year, I was stressing out about whether I would find a room, about whether the people in the lab would be nice, about whether I would find some friends, about what to pack in my suitcase, actually about everything. Now, one year later, I can conclude that I found a room, my colleagues in the lab were amazing and super helpful and that I met many awesome Americans and other internationals (and that I could buy everything that I forgot to pack in America as well).



Although many of my fellow students decided to go to Boston, I wanted to go to the West Coast, to California. After I had had a very nice skype conversation with Roberto Zoncu, who has his own lab at UCB that focuses on nutrient sensing, I was sure that I wanted to go to Berkeley to perform my internship in his lab. And that decision appeared to be a super good one! Every day started with a sunny five-minute bike trip to the lab. Here I almost always arrived as one of the firsts, and I saw the other lab members coming in: my colleagues that were always willing to have (scientific) discussions, regardless the time of the day and that I became super close with. During the rest of the day I was running my experiments, which were mostly biochemical assays and confocal microscopy to study nutrient sensing and mTORC1 signaling in cancer cells. Sometimes, at the end of the day, me together with Claudia, an Italian Master's student in the lab next to ours, ran upstairs to the fifth floor of our building to watch the amazing view of the sun setting behind the Golden Gate Bridge. Besides the stunning views from our building, I really enjoyed doing science in the Zoncu lab, as I was seen as an independent researcher with my own responsibilities. Moreover, UCB is a very inspiring environment as there is many top researchers and a lot of money which offers a many opportunities: decisions are made very quickly and I could run very expensive experiments on my own. And last, but not least, every day I could join very interesting seminars and talks given by the world's leading scientists.

Besides my colleagues and Claudia, I met many other international and American students. After our long working days, we spent a lot of our spare time together. We went for surfing to Santa Cruz, for hiking in the mountains in the neighborhood, for biking on the Golden Gate bridge. We also were going out in San Francisco, playing board games and beach volleyball, watching the NBA finals and of course the European world soccer cup! Because it felt like everything was possible, I even met some fellow students in New York City for a weekend, which was one of the best decisions that I took during my time in Berkeley.

So all together, being in Berkeley was an amazing experience and I would recommend going to America for your minor internships to all of you!

Cheers,
Marlies
m.c.ludikhuize@students.uu.nl

P.S. When you would like to know more about the Zoncu lab and/or Berkeley, you can always shoot me an e-mail!



Surfing at Santa Cruz



Hiking with international and American friends at Mount Diablo

Student Abroad

Mar Burgaya & Angela Sedeño - Utrecht

Ángela: Hey Mar! I'm writing about the experience of being an international student, but I'm stuck... Maybe you could help me. How did you decide to come to Utrecht?

Mar: Uff... That's a good question. I actually had a few friends that did an Erasmus in the Netherlands and they had a great time! I was told that although the food wasn't the best, people and landscapes were worth it! I was also very enthusiastic about the fact that you can bike everywhere here! I'm not a sportive person, so I thought this could be a nice workout! But of course... I also read that Utrecht University has a very good reputation and they offered the best master in the Netherlands according to my interests, so it was an easy choice!

Okay, so for the party and the people, huh? No need to hide it, Mar! My case was totally different! I first decided what I wanted to learn more about - which already gave me a bit of a headache - and then searched for a related Master. When I saw the one offered in Utrecht I was finally convinced: not only it was what I wanted to study, but it was also near home and I loved the city itself. I had already been in the Netherlands and the canals simply amazed me! The weather, however, was not very encouraging when I first arrived. It was rainy and dull... I couldn't miss more the sun back home!



Really? I expected rain and clouds every day, but when I arrived it was sunny for three weeks at least! I think Dutch people are very exaggerated! What I didn't expect was to integrate that much to the Dutch culture and to meet that many international people. When I first arrived I was overwhelmed! I was in a new city where I knew no one... so I was expecting to meet a bunch of Spanish people in the same situation and stick together! Luckily, I didn't meet that many! Instead, I had the opportunity to live with people from all over the world, which has been challenging but enriching as well. I was also a bit stressed the first day of our Master... everybody except us was Dutch and seemed to know each other! I thought it was going to be extremely hard to socialize... but again I was wrong! They are very friendly and a lot of activities have been organized in order to keep in touch and get to know each other better. This is actually one of the things I like the most here, they know how to balance work and leisure.

I agree! Everything seemed better once I started meeting people. Truth be told as an international I always tend to meet other international students, so it is also nice to actually socialize with Dutch people in the Master. Although I feel bad when they have to switch to English just because of me... But I do not think I'll ever be able to pronounce their language. It still sounds to me as if they are choking on the syllables.

I know!!! Sometimes I wonder if they are actually speaking or they just make random sounds very fast. However, I'm trying to learn Dutch. I love learning languages and I feel it's a great way to better understand and integrate into a culture. I can't say that many things so far... and apparently I learned a useless future form (zullen)... but step by step! People in the Master are very supportive and enthusiastic about it, which makes it easier!

Well, getting to participate of the culture while living in a place is a totally different experience than being a tourist. I could not have lived my first Sinterklaas (and second with the StuCom's event) otherwise. I'm even starting to feel more comfortable when biking among the crowd in here, which is not as easy as Dutch people make it look like. However, I still do very touristy things (and plan to do more) like one-day trips to other cities or visiting monuments.

I've also been sightseeing around the Netherlands and nearby countries, trying new food (Anne is doing a great job making me try all Dutch typical foods) and living new experiences, such as ice skating. I had a lot of fun with Dorine, Anne, and Nik trying not to fall in the ice skate ring with a Penguin for kids! The best part was afterwards, chilling and drinking "Chocomel". But this experience is being very worthy for my future as well, since I'm learning a lot in the lab! Speaking of which... Do you also feel that how they teach here is truly different from the Spanish system? People

already told me before coming that here is more about hands-on learning. That was also one of the arguments for deciding to move here.

Same here! I was very curious about the teaching system in the Netherlands, since I read a lot of positive reviews. I think it's great that they try to make the learning process a bit more dynamic, instead of the classical "sitting - making notes - exam". Also this master gives the opportunity to do a lot of real lab work, where I've realized, is when you learn the most!

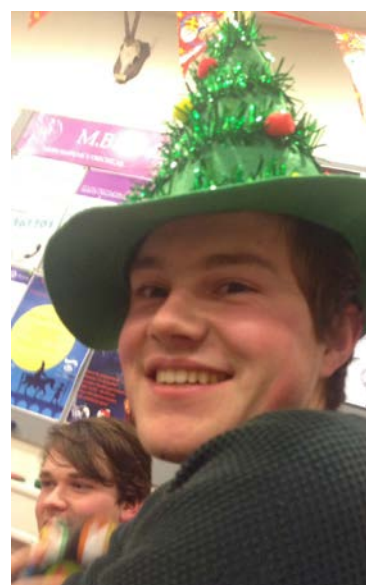
So, all in all, would you do it again? I bet we should encourage the others to also venture and go abroad for their second internship. I myself was a bit tempted when everyone was talking about it during the introduction week. But I still feel like there is so many new things to do here... I think I will stay... At least until I manage to ride my bike with a crate of beer and get people to understand which street I am asking for!

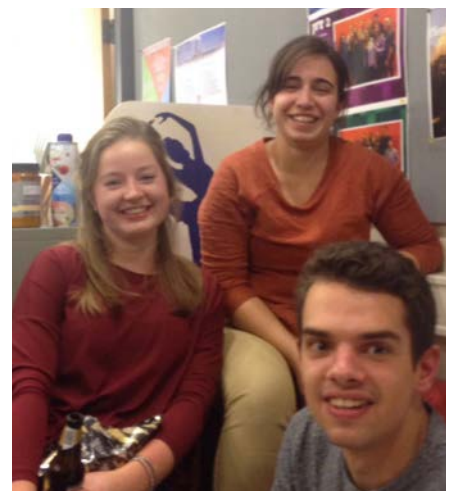
I would definitely recommend going abroad if you can! At the beginning I didn't think about doing my second internship abroad, but now I'm really considering it! Coming to the Netherlands is being a great experience on a personal level, but also professionally speaking, since I'm learning many skills I'm sure I wouldn't if I hadn't moved!

SinterKerst&Nieuw

In December, two lovely man arrive in the Netherlands. With the presents and joy they bring, they brighten up the dark and cold winter days. We as the members of the new StuCom figured that the joy and happiness (and presents!) Sinterklaas and the Kerstman bring would serve as a great theme for our first social event this year. Therefore, we wrote both man and asked them to combine their generosity to help us celebrate a SinterKerst@Nieuw-event with our fellow CSnD-students. They responded positively, and that's how we ended up in the Mebiose-room on the 7th of December, with 30 students! We were prepared with Chinese dinner, a big pile of presents, theme-related snacks and of course a dice. With that, we played a game to decide which present would end up with which participant. After several hours, we had a room full of shredded wrapping paper, empty containers of Christmas chocolate and most importantly: happy people. We would like to thank everyone who was present at our first social event to celebrate the December holidays! We had a wonderful evening and hope to see you on our next events as well!







StuComics

PoRygon



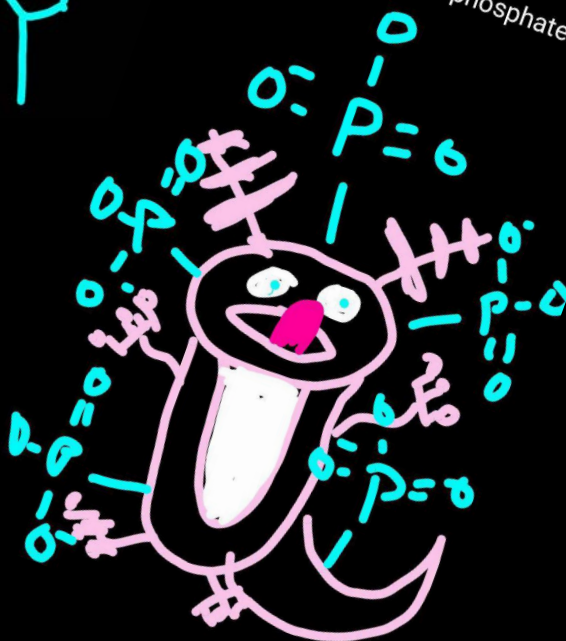
Nanoporygon



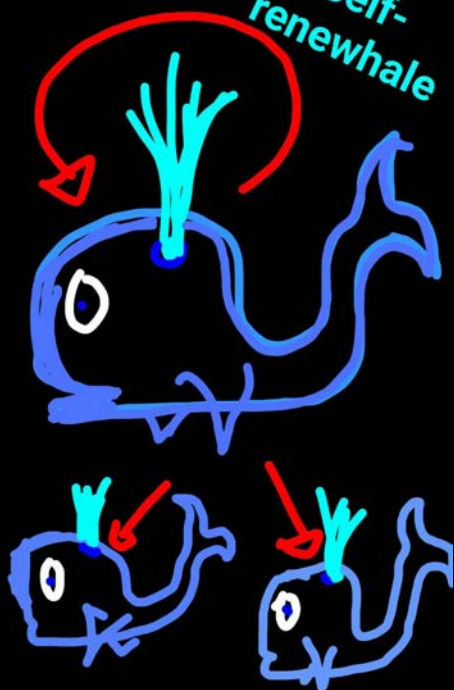
kRastafari



Peridoaxolotl 5 phosphate



Self-renewhale



Are you also as creative in making your own scientific comics? Send them in and you might see them back in the next newsletter!

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We wish you a
Merry Christmas!

