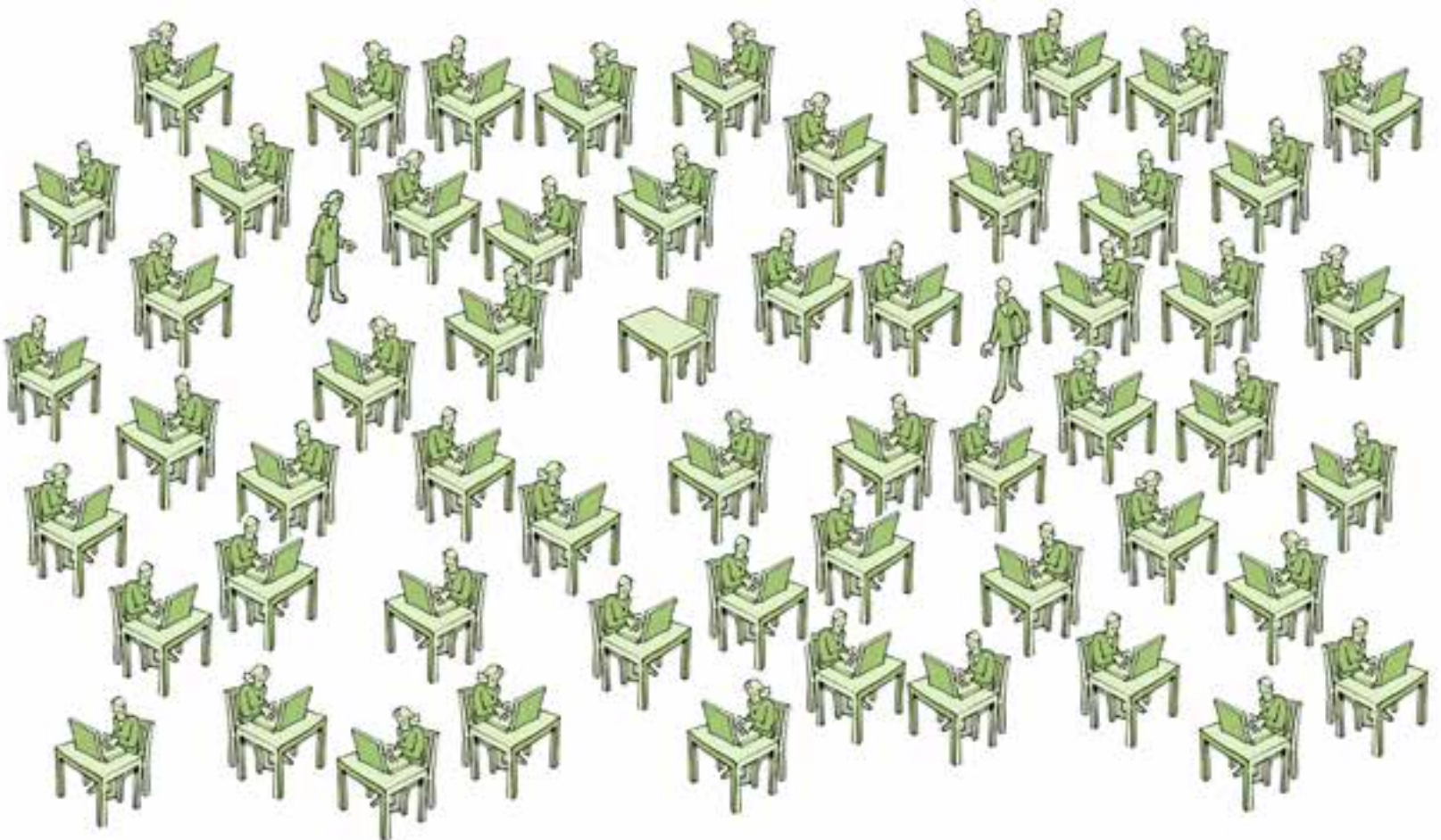


MyWURSTspace?

A new office design concept is being introduced to solve the space shortage on campus and facilitate cooperation. But myWURspace also spells the end of having a desk of your own. The Open and Transparent Work (OTW) environment on the fourth floor of Atlas showcases the idea. Are staff eager for it?

text Tessa Louwerens *illustration* Henk van Ruitenbeek



Margaret Bosveld



Lab technician at Food Chemistry

'I don't think it's realistic to appoint more staff – without having enough workstations for them – and then switch to MyWURspace. Ten years ago, I was on the buildings committee of the Joint Works Council, and we did some research on the flexible workplace. It will cost a lot of money to implement myWURspace well, and I wonder whether that is cheaper than a new building. What is more, the way we work here is not like a big administrative office, for example, where they are positive about this concept. Many of us need lab space, an office, and places to meet with students. I am not in favour of flexible working, but I think it should be made possible if a department or research group wants it. **I've heard a lot of people saying they don't like it. What annoys me is that people dismiss them as inflexible and old-fashioned.** I hope the WUR Council will study this properly and come up with a solid report that weighs up the pros and cons.'

Nico Bondt



Researcher and project manager at Wageningen Economic Research

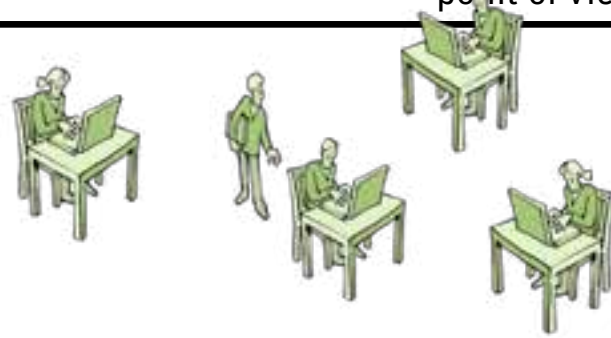
'The introduction of this new way of working (OTW) met with a lot of resistance from staff at Wageningen Economic Research, but ultimately the discussion was only about how and not about whether it would happen. It was approached with care and a lot of thought went into it. The office in Atlas is attractive and some of our colleagues think it's fantastic. **But I'm not sure the goals – more cooperation and better communication – have been reached. People mainly aim for peace and quiet.** The idea is that people move around in the different zones, depending what kind of work they need to do. In practice I notice that people still pretty much have fixed places, and sometimes they come to work extra early so they can occupy a quiet spot for the rest of the day. Working at home might be the solution for them. But in that regard, WUR is in two minds: people should work "any time, any place", but working from home is discouraged. For me personally, it's annoying when I want to make a phone call without being disturbed, and I need my computer for it. The suitable places for that are usually occupied.'

Wieke Pot



Lecturer and researcher in Public Administration and Policy

'During my career as an interim manager, I have worked in various places and I have seen positive examples of flexible workplaces. In those cases, there were more workstations than staff, and lots of different kinds of spaces to work in, including enough rooms you could withdraw into. But usually it means fewer workstations and a noisier working environment. **For researchers and teachers it is especially important that they have a place where they can concentrate, see their students and keep up with their literature.**



I don't think flexible working necessarily means more interaction. In fact I think the opposite is more likely to happen. And that worries me, especially for the rather individually minded university professions. I think myWURspace is going to mean a big fall in productivity.'

Yuca Waarts



Senior researcher on sustainable chain development

'We've been working with OTW at Wageningen Economic Research in Atlas since June 2019. The different zones work well. What I think is a pity is that my team members are now scattered all over the place. I've lost my herd. If we want to talk to each other we have to make arrangements for it. On the other hand, I have found a new herd. Because you do find that people still look for a place of "their own". **I'm happy with it now. But I can understand that some people feel very lost. I felt that at the start too.** This concept doesn't work for everybody and it doesn't necessarily lead to more cooperation either. You do sit close together, but you don't want to disturb each other too much. The work has become more individualistic compared to when there were three of us sharing a room.'

Sjaak Wolfert



Senior Scientist, Wageningen Economic Research

'**Coming from the Leeuwenborch, I've already been enjoying working on the fourth floor of Atlas, where OTW has been introduced, for some time. It's a pleasant, open and transparent space that invites cooperation.** I'm involved in a lot of international projects and I hold regular consultations through conference calls. In the past I often used to find it difficult to find a place to do that. Here there are several rooms where you can link your laptop to a television screen with USB. There are silent zones and focus rooms where I can work on proposals and reviews, and places where I can sit with guests. I can understand why some people are negative. I think it's because the concept has been badly implemented in many places, and that is counterproductive. But here it was well thought-through and there is enough space for everyone. In an ideal world, perhaps we would all have had a room of our own where we could put our personal effects, as well as enough facilities for meetings, video conferences and so on. But there is a shortage of space at WUR and we shall have to make efficient use of our space. To all the people who are doubtful, I'd say do come and have a look at our office.'