

Food transition in performance

Lara Sibbing translated her PhD research into a fairy tale about food policy, which she performed last week in the Loburg café.

Lara Sibbing was a food policy officer for Ede municipality and a parttime PhD student in the Public Administration and Policy chair group until early 2021. She decided to write a play based on her research. In the play, *Sita and the hamburger war*, Sita goes on a quest to find out how to save her town, which is in danger of slowly being wiped out by a broken food system. Along the way, she meets 'cowardly politicians, brave officials and everything in between.'

Apolitical

More and more Dutch municipalities are addressing food policy. In the course of her doctoral research, Sibbing examined whether local governments succeed in implementing a food policy. She concluded that the municipalities often set abstract goals without taking solid measures. As a result, the transition to

a healthy and sustainable food system doesn't get off the ground.

One of the reasons for this, explains Sibbing, is the 'food system approach', which is popular in Wageningen. 'A nice concept, because it covers all the elements making up a sustainable food policy. But the risk with this systems-thinking is that municipalities identify abstract aims and activities, linking up issues like food waste, animal welfare and the environment, but that they fail to identify the specific problems. This renders food policy apolitical and means that no difficult policy decisions are taken.' For effective policy you need to have the courage of your convictions, she concludes. She graduated with a PhD on 5 November; her supervisor was professor of Public Administration and Policy Katrien Termeer.

Fairy tale

Writing a play saved her PhD, says Sibbing. 'During the Covid crisis, all I did was to work on papers at home on my computer, and I was on the verge of giving up my PhD research. Then I drew



Lara Sibbing: 'We ought to treat PhD researchers more like heroes.'
Photo Guy Ackermans

on my creativity to find some pleasure in it again. I wrote a fairy tale in the form of a hero's journey in which the main character has to overcome all sorts of problems. That's how I see PhD research too: we ought to treat PhD researchers more like heroes.' AS