



Interview with Robin Geitenbeek (UU)

Project: Catalyst Particle-embedded Luminescent Nanoparticles for Temperature Sensing

Temperature is one of the most critical reaction parameters to determine yield and selectivity in catalysis. To accurately determine the temperature with a spatial resolution of micrometers we are investigating temperature dependent luminescence of $\text{NaYF}_4:\text{Er}^{3+}/\text{Yb}^{3+}$ nanoparticles.

Can you do a short presentation about you?

Hello! My name is Robin Geitenbeek. I am doing a PhD in Utrecht within the MCEC program and I enjoy (watching) sports and playing board games.

Would you advice a friend to come to the Netherlands?

Of course! We have a lot of different things to offer in the Netherlands. We have beautiful cities, which still feel like small towns with the canals and the rich architecture, and of course the great ambience.

Why did you finish in Utrecht?

The first 14 years of my life I grew up around Gouda. From there it was 30 minutes by train to either Leiden or Utrecht. I guess my parents decided for me by taking me to Utrecht when I was young. I still remember the grandeur of Utrecht from the perspective of a little kid. Of course the visits to the 'pannenkoekenhuis' also really helped! From that moment on, Utrecht was something special for me and that it why I returned there.

How did you become interested in science?

Most likely the boring and generic way. During high school my favorite subjects were chemistry, physics and biology. Usually if you like something, you are good at it (or is it the other way around?) and so for me it was logical to continue with science after high school. After careful consideration I decided to opt for chemistry over biology. Weird enough, after my first year of chemistry (involving a lot of biochemistry as well) I was completely over biology. So I guess I made the right choice 😊.

Did you know right away that you wanted to be a research scientist?

No. For me going to university was just a logical continuation of high school. When I started university I really liked the experimental part of the chemistry program. At the end of every year we had a research project at different research groups and those were my favorite subjects in the program. From that moment on I knew that I like to investigate stuff.

What do you enjoy the most about your research?

Working together with people. I have a lot of students which I have to supervise and I really like to do that. Collaborations are also something I am actively looking for. At the moment I am supervising a student together with Anne-Eva. Jeroen, Anne-Eva and myself are looking at the possibilities for collaborations between our projects (you'll most likely hear about that later on! 😊).

What is your biggest motivation?

Being able to convince others (and myself) that the research I am doing can be directly used in society. Until now, most of my research has been more on the fundamental side of science. Of course fundamental research is great and necessary, but I really like to be able to explain to my parents why I am doing the research I am doing.

How do you see yourself fitting in the MCEC project?

I guess this questions has been answered in the previous questions. My project is preparing tools for diagnostics. And tools are meant to be used. I therefore see it as my goal to make the life of other scientists (both within and outside of the MCEC consortium) easier.

If you had a time machine and 2 beers, with which scientist would you like to meet?

Pffft. Very good question. Maybe I would go back to Einstein and point out that it's quite a coincidence that he made a lot of interesting theories and was also working at a patent office. Maybe some other scientist came with interesting patentable ideas and Einstein just 'borrowed' them? I would most likely need more than 2 beers to get him to admit that though...

Which scientific term/phenomena you think is the most misused by media?

Organic/Biological. Every time I see organic peanut butter I wonder if there also exists inorganic peanut butter made of heavy metals. I can understand that you want to label certain products as to be free of pesticides or stuff like that, but don't just use terms which already have a different meaning.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like running, (watching) cycling and watching hockey. Next to that like to play board games. Furthermore, I am a big fan of BBQ'ing and hanging out with friends.

Is science the answer to everything?

Nope. Life is much more complex than being able to verify/falsify things. For instance, darkness and cold are just the absence of light or warmth so therefore do not exist. However, these words appear in everyday life and literature and therefore must exist and have meaning.

What do you want to do after finishing your PhD?

I am deliberately waiting with thinking about this question. Once the third year of my PhD starts I will start investing more time in gathering information about working for a university or company or institute or whatever. Hopefully after gathering that information I am able to make a well-balanced decision 😊.