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© Photos: AC Moleneek

Before and after: the renovated Westplaats in Molenbeek

# Extreme makeover

Brussels' flagship urban renewal programme is beginning to pay dividends

NICHOLAS HIRST

For the last four years, streets in the Brussels' commune of Sint-Joost-ten-Node, near North Station, have been buzzing with activity. Builders, architects, urban planners, social workers and landscapers have descended on the Meridian neighbourhood, giving Belgium's poorest municipality a complete makeover. Their presence cannot be missed: trees have been planted, a day care has been built, pavements have been widened, street lights have been installed, buildings have been

scrubbed, façades have been restored and some of Belgium's finest architects have thrown up some exemplary ecological buildings. All of this has happened thanks to a *wijkcontract*, or neighbourhood contract, a flagship policy of the Brussels Region since 1994 that seeks to improve the quality of life of the capital's residents and combat the social exclusion and poverty into which Brussels was manifestly sinking at the time.

"When places are cleaned up in this way, your life changes," says Christian Doat, president of the Meridian neighbourhood committee in Sint-Joost. "The residents were able to make suggestions, which were listened to. For example, a day care in particular was necessary as people here have a lot of children. The neighbourhood contract aims to make life more pleasant. Security has improved, and people are starting to move back into the area."

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## Kiwi berries on the march

The fresh produce departments of shops are about to be invaded by a new, small, bald fruit which has been around since at least the 19th century, but is now being given the big sell by Flemish growers.

The kiwi berry, also known as the hardy kiwi, is a cousin of the kiwi fruit. However, it's smaller – about the size of a grape – and its skin is hairless, meaning the whole fruit can be eaten. You'll most likely be seeing them in plastic pots of 12 berries, costing around €2.50.

The whole effort is the work of the fruit auction market in Hoogstraten, Antwerp province, and the bio-engineering department of Ghent University College, who have together developed and streamlined everything, from planting and harvest to marketing and distribution.

"This innovative, home-grown product deserves a place in the gastronomic world," said Wouter Van der Veiren, chef and owner of the restaurant Clandestino in Temse, who has lent his name to the campaign as ambassador. He's developed recipes using the fruit in combination with pork, shrimp and coconut.

Flanders now has 16 kiwi berry producers, and the harvest is expected to be around 20 tonnes this year. "The kiwi berry is good news for the fruit sector, which is having a hard time these days because of bad weather, international competition and high energy prices," commented Gaston Opdekamp, director of the Hoogstraten auction.



## Universities bursting at the seams

**KUL Association argues that there are still too few students in the sciences**

ALAN HOPE

As this year's intake of students in higher education readies itself for the new academic year, universities in particular were sounding the alarm: If numbers keep increasing the way they have been, they may soon run out of space.

Exact numbers for the new intake are not yet available, but universities have seen growth of 5% a year in recent years and are preparing for the same increase this year. In West Flanders, that means keeping the student restaurants open all day to ease the lunchtime pressure, renting parking spaces from the private sector and extending the

lecture day by one hour. In Ghent, a new auditorium has been inaugurated, and the college is eyeing other sites for new buildings. The Catholic College Bruges-Ostend moved to a new campus, but already that space is too small.

"It's very odd, because there were fewer children born 18 years ago," said Filip Clarisse, communications director of the University College of Brussels. "The intake remains unbelievably high. Today we saw our 1,000th new student, and we've already exceeded the numbers for last year."

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ALAN HOPE

### Isabel Albers

The media pages of the newspapers these day are full of news of changes at the top of the industry, with much activity at *De Morgen*, VRT, VTM and elsewhere. But only one of the new appointments is making history: this week, if all goes according to plan, the foundation behind *De Tijd*, the Flemish financial daily, will confirm the appointment of Isabel Albers as its new editor-in-chief. Albers will become the first woman ever to take the helm of a daily Flemish newspaper.

Albers, 39, studied Germanic languages at the Catholic University of Leuven, followed by economics at Ehsal in Brussels. In 1997 she joined *De Standaard* as an economics reporter, before moving across to political reporting, where she became chief political reporter earlier this year.

The move means not only taking on the job of editor of a major daily, it's also a little like leaving the nest. "I had a great time," she tells *Flanders Today*, "and this is just a great opportunity to gain a new focus."

*De Tijd* is planning more changes, including the switch away from broadsheet to the Berliner format used by *De Morgen*. That will also involve a reorientation of the printed

version of the paper to reflect the great success of the website – one of the first in Belgium to introduce a pay-wall. "People tend to have the impression it's a newspaper about Euronext [the stock market]," she says. "But it's not that at all."

In fact, *De Tijd* covers a wide range of fields, not only share prices and annual results. "I go along with the *Financial Times*' slogan: 'We live in financial times,'" she says. "There's hardly an area of modern life where economy is not important."

*De Tijd* editorial director Frederik Delaplace: "De Tijd's ambition is to be up there among the sharpest multi-media newsrooms in the business. We want to produce a newspaper that's modern, exciting and essential reading. Isabel's personal qualities fit seamlessly with that ambition."

Albers replaces Pierre Huylenbroeck, who will continue to write for the paper. "We want to bring together the best economic writers in the country in our newsroom," said Dirk Velghe of Mediafin, the joint venture between Persgroep (*De Morgen*, VTM) and Rossel (*Le Soir*, *L'Echo*). "Isabel and Pierre are two of our standard-bearers in that quest."

→ [www.tijd.be](http://www.tijd.be)

## FLANDERS TODAY

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FLANDERS TODAY  
AUGUST 31, 2011

## News in brief

The Flemish Region has launched a brand new website dedicated to its work with the world education, scientific and cultural organisation Unesco. In 1998, the Flemish Region signed a cooperation agreement with Unesco. A year later, the Flanders Unesco Science Trust Fund (FUST) was set up, and in 2001 the Flemish Unesco Trust Fund (FUT) was established for other policy areas. This puts Flanders in the top 10 of bilateral donors to Unesco in terms of Funds-in-Trust extra-budgetary contributions.

→ <http://unesco.flanders.be>

Supermarket chain Delhaize has recalled a batch of bio eggs that came from a Dutch company, which may have breached the limits for dioxins. The measure concerns Delhaize BIO eggs in packs of six or 10 that have a sell-by date of 25 August, 1 September or 7 September. Consumers can return them to the place of purchase for a refund.

The new film by Flemish director Geoffrey Enthoven has won both the top prize and the public prize at the Montreal World Film Festival. *Hasta la vista*, which releases in Belgium in September, is about three physically handicapped 20-somethings who decide to take a road trip to Spain, where they heard about a brothel that takes care of "guys like them". Also a prize winner at the festival is *Noordzee, Texas (North Sea, Texas)*, Bavo Defurne's film about gay adolescents on the Flemish coast. It won the Silver Zenith for First Feature and the Fipresci critic's prize for first feature. Last year, the top prize in Montreal went to the Flemish film *Adem*, and in 2007 to *Ben X*. "It's definitely a good place for us," says Christian De Schutter of the Flemish Audio-

Visual Fund. "Audiences here seem to understand our films."

→ [www ffm-montreal.org](http://www ffm-montreal.org)

Last year saw the issue of 94.4 million service cheques, an increase of almost 20% on the 78.5 million used last year. The cheques can be bought for less than their face value and used to pay for domestic work like cleaning and ironing. The aim of the project is to make it easier for service workers to operate within the law. The introduction of the cheques has given rise to a new sector of service agencies. Last year 760,000 people made use of the system, providing jobs for almost 137,000 people.

Patients suffering from an irreversible psychological condition have requested and received euthanasia 52 times since 2004, when the law was changed, the federal evaluation committee has reported. Euthanasia laws apply not only to severe and incurable physical conditions, such as cancer, but also to conditions like Alzheimer's, multiple sclerosis and Huntington's chorea, which involve progressive debilitation. In the Netherlands, where a similar law has been in force since 2002, only two patients have made the request.

Traffic on the Vilvoorde viaduct expanded to three narrow lanes in each direction at the weekend, in preparation for the return to full capacity on 7 September. However, delays are expected on the E19 between Kontich and the Craeybeckx tunnel: on the Brussels-bound carriageway from 2 to 5 September, and on the Antwerp side from 9 to 12 September. In each case, the exits to Wilrijk and the Antwerp university hospital UZA will be closed on one side.

Federal mobility minister Etienne Schoupe has denied a charge of discrimination after announcing plans for Brussels airport security to start carrying out inspections according to whether passengers are coming from a high-risk country. The new system is part of an experiment by the International Air Transport Association. Checks will be carried out according to intelligence information, a spokesman for Schoupe said, and not solely on nationality.

According to a report by the I Committee, which oversees the work of the intelligence services, Belgium is a sitting target for a coordinated cyber attack due to the lack of experts in the intelligence services and the lack of a clear federal policy. The report looks at the possibility of a large-scale attack being carried out over the internet by the espionage services of a foreign country and concludes that civilian and military intelligence have no clear idea of their roles and are unprepared to work together. The committee suggests turning the problem over to State Security.

Ann Demeulemeester, Martin Margiela, Raf Simons and Dries Van Noten have been selected for the *Wallpaper\** 150, the pioneers who have most impressed the über-trendy design magazine since it was launched in 1996. The four Flemish fashion designers are joined by such world notables as Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, Chinese artist and political activist Ai Weiwei, Spanish chef Ferran Adrià and Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales.

## OFFSIDE

ALAN HOPE

### Stoned out of their clothes

Visitors to the "living museum" at Bokrijk in Limburg province are accustomed to seeing, amid the restored farms and village buildings, a cast of characters of people of a bygone era, clad in homespun and linen, breeches and petticoats.

Not underwear, and certainly not underwear made of cannabis. But that was what was on show last weekend at Bokrijk, during its biannual Wereldfeest: underwear from designers in Belgium, Germany, Canada, the US and South Africa, all of it made from hemp, a sub-species of the cannabis plant. In case you missed it, go to YouTube and search for "Canna Bizondergoed". Though be warned: it's not entirely SFW (safe for work). The history of hemp is a long one, dating back to the Stone Age when fibres were used to reinforce

clay pots. Hemp was used to make clothing, paper and ropes, including those on the ships that brought Columbus to the New World. It's also a protein-rich food source. Thomas Jefferson had a hemp plantation, but its use was later outlawed because of the link with the marijuana-producing subspecies of the cannabis plant.

The fibres used for the underwear promoted last weekend by the Workgroup for Fair and Responsible Agriculture (Wervel), which works to promote the use of hemp to make clothing as it uses no pesticides, takes up to 10 times less water to grow than cotton and produces four times more fibre.

"Hemp helps battle climate change because it grows four times faster than wood, and the CO2 taken up is contained



Everything comes in hemp: Enamore, a British company, also uses bamboo, soy and natural silk

"in durable produced goods," explained Patrick De Ceuster of Wervel. "The farmer is assured of a stable fibre prices, and the consumer gets a hemp garment that is a lot more comfortable to wear than the same garment in cotton."

→ [www.wervel.be](http://www.wervel.be)

## Chain gang

A proposal to use the unemployed to clean up storm damage to fruit orchards in Limburg has been attacked as a breach of international law by a former professor of labour law



© Shutterstock

# Entrance exams could help cut numbers

→ *continued from page 1*

According to André Oosterlinck, director of the Catholic University of Leuven Association, a group of 13 institutions of higher education in Flanders, the problem is not so much the number of new students, but the direction they take when they arrive. "Everyone talks about the knowledge economy," he said. "For that reason education is crucial, so we need to strive to have as many people as possible studying. Internationally we're nowhere near the top in that area. We don't have too many students; we have too few in the right disciplines: engineering and science, trained in skills the jobs market is crying out for." To guide students (and parents) in their choice, Oosterlinck has proposed cutting the fees for some courses in half or scrapping them altogether, while doubling the fees for other courses. "Double fees would still be lower than what is being asked in other countries," Oosterlinck pointed out. Flemish universities came fourth in a 2005 study on the affordability of higher education in developed countries, after Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands.

## THE WEEK IN FIGURES



**448**

missions flown by Belgian F-16s in Libya, dropping 365 bombs, of which 97 were said to have been on target. Total flying time: 1,890 hours

**400**

new GSM masts required in Brussels alone to guarantee coverage, according to Mobistar, thanks to new strict limits on the permitted signal

**136**

speeding offences incurred by one 29-year-old Antwerp man in less than a year, worth €15,510 in fines. The case against the man continues in September

**16,927**

same-sex couples have married in Belgium since 2003, when the law was changed to allow it. In the same period, 1,439 couples (both gay and straight) have divorced

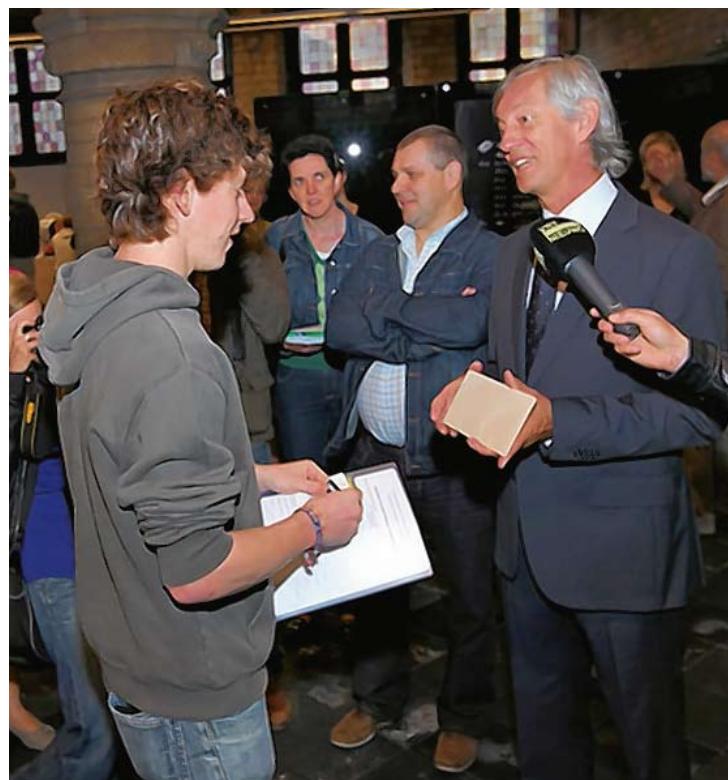
**54%**

reduction on the price of breast enlargement surgery offered by a clinic in Kortrijk on the French website of Groupon. The Order of Physicians is investigating the case; the code of conduct for Belgian doctors forbids advertising

Another idea gaining traction is an entry test, which would help reduce the problem of the number of students who drop out or change direction after their first year. Students would not only be guided towards a more suitable discipline for them, but also steered into areas the university considers important. For Carl Devos, professor of politics at the University of Ghent, the entry exam would work better on a voluntary basis, as a guide for incoming students rather than an instrument of policy.

"The mass is still manageable for the time being, but the day will come when we have to start cutting into what our limited staff numbers can provide," he said. "There are not only more students, they're also more demanding. They quite rightly look for more feedback."

The technology industry federation Agoria is keeping a running total of students who have signed up for courses in engineering, industrial sciences and technology at 19 higher education establishments in Flanders. Last year a total of 6,343 students opted for the courses covered – "far too few" for the



© Rob Stevens/KUL

needs of business, according to Agoria. As *Flanders Today* went to press, the running total stood at 2,832, far short of the targeted 9,000.♦

## Tribute to victims of Pukkelpop

The organisers of the Pukkelpop music festival are setting up a fund for the victims of the storm that raged through the festival site two weeks ago, killing five people and injuring more than 140. Last week it was announced that one of those hurt, a 24-year-old man from Brasschaat in Antwerp province, had died of his injuries, bringing the death toll to six. Pukkelpop founder and director Chokri Mahassine said that the fund would be entirely independent of the music festival itself, though he would be available for help and support if

required. A bank account has already been set up for donations: Steunfonds Slachtoffers Pukkelpopstorm 001-6498434-92.

Last Sunday, 28 August, about 3,000 people gathered in the centre of Hasselt in remembrance of the victims. White balloons and roses were handed out, and the participants then walked in silence to the festival site just outside of town.

Meanwhile, all the Flemish bands scheduled to play at the three-day festival agreed to return their payment for their appearance, which was paid

in advance. Other bands have until mid-November to decide if they will do the same.

In addition, Sabam, the performing arts agency that collects royalties on behalf of musicians, has announced it will not collect from Pukkelpop this year, leaving open the possibility that the organisation may even help sponsor the festival in future. Mahassine has vowed to "fight for the survival" of Pukkelpop, whose future, according to the mayor of Hasselt, Hilde Claes, is currently "uncertain".♦

## Police questioned over child murders

The prosecutor's office at Dendermonde is carrying out an investigation into police behaviour during an incident in Aalst last week in which two children were later found dead.

Police were called to the home of an Angola woman in the city last Thursday, 25 August, after neighbours complained about noise, reporting the woman was arguing loudly with a man inside the house. According to the prosecutor's office, at least six police officers arrived at the scene. They rang the doorbell but received no answer and decided not to intervene as all was quiet. The following morning, a local beat officer returned to the house and managed to gain entry. There he found the bodies of the woman's two sons, age six and seven.

Forensic tests revealed they had been beaten to death. The medical examiner also discovered evidence that the children had put up a fight.

It is not known whether the killings took place before the noise incident or after. If the latter, that would suggest that the police might have been able to prevent the deaths if they had reacted more forcefully.

An initial statement from the Dendermonde prosecutor said that the police made no fault in deciding that the reason for them being called out – the noise complaint – was no longer present when they arrived, and that there was no justification for forcing entry to the house. When the police arrived on the scene, a spokesman said, there was no indication of any danger.

The mother of the children has been arrested. According to a psychiatric examination, she is suffering from schizophrenic delusions that her children were vampires and is likely to be pronounced unfit to stand trial by reason of insanity.

Meanwhile in Kessel, Antwerp province, a woman and her partner have been released on bail after the body of a long-dead newborn was discovered in the building in which the couple were squatting until recently. The woman, 47, admitted that the baby had been stillborn some years ago and claimed that her partner knew nothing about either the pregnancy or the birth. The area around the building, a disused former cinema, is now being searched by the federal police's victim identification unit. The woman was earlier given a suspended sentence of three years for child neglect leading to the death of another child, who she buried in the garden of her previous home.♦



Antwerp's Sportpaleis has made it once again into the top 10 of music venues across the world, in a poll conducted annually for *Billboard* magazine. Sportpaleis, which, as the name suggests, opened in 1933 as a venue for cycling, was rated in third place in the world for the number of tickets sold and in sixth place in the world for total sales. The venue is currently being renovated to provide more places.

## FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

### Off the table

In Dutch, people who cannot wait to get ahead in their careers are called "table jumpers". Inge Vervotte, the CD&V minister who last week announced she is leaving politics, is anything but a table jumper. Still, at only 33, she has an impressive career to look back on, as a minister in the Flemish and federal governments.

She was "discovered" at the time of the Sabena bankruptcy by Yves Leterme, whom she would remain loyal to throughout the years. As a union representative, a trade seemingly dominated by greying 50-something males, she stood out – not just for her looks but also for her gift of rhetoric. Leterme saw in her – a young, female city dweller (Mechelen) – just what was needed to rejuvenate his ailing party. When he became minister-president in 2004, she became the minister for welfare.

Another high for Vervotte was 2007, when CD&V, still joined up with N-VA at the time, won the federal elections, marking the end of the Verhofstadt era. Not being a "table jumper", she ended up on a table anyway, as Leterme pulled her up on a desk to cheer of party officials.

The scene is memorable and not just for political reasons. Vervotte's elevated position gave full view of her full attire. On the hot summer day, she wore black stockings. Never the most trendy of her generation, those stockings coined her reputation for being something of a nun forever.

But Vervotte had no time for such shallowness. In the beginning of her career, she admitted to a love of motorbikes and the lead singer of rock band Zornik, but, apart from that, there was nothing frivolous about her. She preferred to concentrate on her job, recently describing herself as a "quiet worker ant".

With the highs, came the lows. One of those was the end of 2008, when, amidst the Fortis crisis, Leterme and Jo Vandeurzen – the two men with her on that table just one year earlier – resigned as prime minister and justice minister respectively. Vervotte, shocked by the roughness of the game, resigned, too. Like Leterme, she returned, only to see her party lose the 2010 elections and to remain caretaker minister seemingly ad infinitum.

Her leaving politics is these days described as typical of Generation Y, whose commitments are sincere, but limited in time. In this respect, Vervotte became trendy after all, stocking or no stockings.

→ [www.ingevervotte.be](http://www.ingevervotte.be)

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# Extreme makeover

## Neighbourhood contracts are “one of the region’s most successful policies”

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The success of that particular contract is confirmed by Imad Soweid, in charge of the Meridian *wijkcontract* at the commune. He is proud of how wide-reaching the contract has been – renovating the façade of the local school, erecting modern flats and office space, renovating Sint-Joost’s Art Deco swimming pool and training local youth to work in the construction and horeca trades.

The crown-jewel of the project, however, is a striking new-build combining a day care with housing adapted to the needs of mobility-impaired persons; the building was recently applauded by the Brussels environment agency. But four years, though not long in terms of neighbourhood renewal, can seem like a long time to local residents. “The input of the residents is important,” says Soweid, “but, since the procedures are relatively slow, they can become discouraged.”

To counter any fall in interest, Soweid and his team organised neighbourhood parties and markets “to remind people not only that the commune is looking out for them but also to remind them that the *wijkcontract* was still going on.” Through a separate, ongoing neighbourhood contract, the commune organises public meetings in the street to ensure as high an attendance as possible.

### Cast your mind back

“You need to remember the state of Brussels before – the old neighbourhoods had been neglected by public authorities for many years!” exclaims Marie Nagy, a member of the Brussels parliament and president of the planning and urban development committee. “They had been completely abandoned.”

Indeed, the Brussels Region had a lot on its plate when it came into existence in 1989. A steady exodus of residents was taking place in protest at the degradation of public spaces and the number of abandoned buildings, creating feelings of insecurity. Riots were breaking out in the poorest neighbourhoods and, as the middle classes left, Brussels’ tax revenues fell.

In response to this situation, the new government dug deep and came up with an innovative mechanism to invest simultaneously on different fronts to alleviate social exclusion. The idea was simple: by concentrating at the micro-level you can involve residents in the decision-making process, directly address their concerns and deliver changes that are visible and significant. The break from the monster projects of the post-war years couldn’t be clearer. With funds sometimes as high as €30 million, a neighbourhood contract has four years – and no more – to resuscitate the local area. Over half the money has to be invested in housing, while the rest goes to improving public spaces, resolving social problems and sustainability.

Emphasis is placed on the change being visible. Pavements



Townhouses in the Meridian neighbourhood near Brussels' North Station before renovations and after



are widened and traffic is slowed in order to make streets more welcoming for residents. Dilapidated buildings and empty terrains are revamped, while generous subsidies are made available to homeowners wishing to renovate their own façades. As the neighbourhood visibly becomes more attractive, residents are instilled with a sense of pride, and quality of life improves.

Sports facilities have also proved an effective way of connecting with local residents. With Brussels’ poorer neighbourhoods often short on greenery, sports centres are highly prized and provide an outlet for youthful energy that might otherwise be unleashed on the streets.

The importance of engaging with residents is not lost on Soweid. “If people participate, it becomes their project,” he says, observing that subsequently “there is markedly less vandalism.”

### Small is beautiful

Since its inception in 1994, €600 million has been invested in neighbourhood contracts, which at present is the city region’s main urban renewal programme. Approximately 1,500 houses and more than 100 facilities have been built or renovated. Now, after 60 projects (with four more in the pipeline) and 16 years, the policy is beginning to pay dividends.

“The neighbourhood contract is one of the region’s most successful policies,” asserts Nagy. “It is a very interesting example of renewal policy, with positive knock-on effects on the wider commune and on private households. It is widely accepted that many of Brussels’ older neighbourhoods have been revitalised as a result of the policy, even if there are still some areas to be worked on. In any case, Brussels has really changed a lot.”

Such claims are corroborated by the creeping in of gentrification in *wijkcontract* areas. If Doat concedes that the revitalisation of the Meridian neighbourhood will “probably have an effect on property prices”, others are more categorical.

Christophe Madam, president of the Maritime neighbourhood

committee in Molenbeek, recalls how, shortly after their *wijkcontract* was announced, people were “aggressive” in their attempts to invest in the neighbourhood. Since then almost all of Picardstraat in Molenbeek has been bought up by property developers.

“People were leaving Brussels in the 1980s,” he observes, “but since then graduates like myself have been moving back. People were able to live here [affordably] because the Tour & Taxis area had been abandoned: Now that tendency is being reversed.”

Another indicator of the success of *wijkcontracten*, as with the equivalent programmes in Antwerp and Ghent, is that it has generated considerable interest from across the continent.

Yet, according to Benoit Moritz, an architect and urban planner at the Brussels firm MSA, what distinguishes the Brussels case is the number of projects that have occurred. “What’s special,” he says, “is that you have so many little interventions that they build up, creating a critical mass.”

### Moving forward

The regulation governing neighbourhood contracts has recently been reformed placing greater emphasis on the projects being environmentally friendly, on bolstering citizen participation and on stimulating the local economy.

“The new sustainability element should further improve quality of life in Brussels,” says Nagy. “A large proportion of poor people in the centre are young, and they need space, more beautiful surroundings, improved health, less pollution and a better quality of life.”

Yet observers argue that by focusing too many resources on the *wijkcontract*, the government is losing sight of the bigger picture. “The neighbourhood contract,” argues Koen Drossaert of Antwerp-based architecture firm HUB “is a great initiative but cannot be the only one.” To really revitalise Brussels, he says, you need to introduce structural changes dealing with transport, public spaces, social housing and schools on a much larger scale than the *wijkcontract* allows.

In fact, points out Drossaert, those factors that facilitate working at the local level and that have made this form of urban renewal particularly suited to Brussels – namely, the number of privately owned houses and the decentralised commune system – are precisely what makes the challenge of implementing city-wide structural changes so daunting.♦

→ [www.wijken.irisnet.be](http://www.wijken.irisnet.be)



Street art done in connection with a *wijkcontract* in Molenbeek shows the old Belle-Vue brewery. The building will be converted into a hotel, hotel school and conference centre under the Cinema-Belle-Vue *wijkcontract*

# How bizar

New book looks at how the business world can learn from the art world

ALAN HOPE

If you want to get ahead in business, forget about aping Steve Jobs, Richard Branson or Warren Buffett: follow the example of Madonna, Tintoretto or Damien Hirst instead. That's the message of the challenging new book *The Fine Art of Success*, co-authored by Jamie Anderson, professor of management strategy at the Antwerp Management School (AMS). The book takes a conventional business-school approach in examining case studies of successful businesses for the lessons they have to teach us when applied to other businesses. What's unconventional is that the businesses examined in the book are not mobile phone operators or widget manufacturers, but a pop star, an upstart Venetian painter, a maker of über-kitsch art objects or the inventor of Cubism. There would appear to be a certain degree of hindsight in Anderson's analysis. Tintoretto, for example, didn't start off with a business strategy; his first aim was to be a great painter. Isn't his book ignoring the primary motivation of the people he uses as examples? "Artists of course begin with the art in mind," Anderson says, "but they also want their art to be shared and to be recognised.

And, let's face it, they want to make money. Those who are successful have a vision that is bigger than just the art itself. It's not just art for art's sake; it is also about how that art is going to change the world."

*"Those who are successful have a vision that is bigger than the art itself"*

Anderson talks about Madonna, who, when she was interviewed right at the start of her career, said that she was going to take over the world. "Or take Damien Hirst," he says, "who once said that his dream was to create really bad art and get away with it. It's a big idea that goes beyond the art. They don't just have a dream. They actually do the hard work to get there. It's not enough to have a strategy. Strategy is the easy part. The important thing is to be able to implement it."

The book reinforces the widely accepted idea that business management in general



From left: authors Martin Kupp, Jörg Reckhenrich and Jamie Anderson

suffers from a lack of creative thinking. Companies and even whole sectors seem to be fixed in their outdated modes, running along behind new trends, watching upstart enterprises spring up and eat their lunch. "I've worked with, studied and interviewed artists from different industries, like fashion, the performing arts and media," says Anderson. "These people work very, very hard. Their work needs to be focused, which is a problem with creative people – they often think that they should spend most of their time on the creative element of their work. Which is wrong, I think; they need to balance their investments in the business side with those in the creative side. Or partner up with somebody who can handle it for them."

Good artists often understand that balance better than others "and find complementary people to work with," says Anderson. He cites the example of Bernhard Wilhelms, a young German graduate from the fashion department of Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts "and one of the most successful graduates in the last 10 years in terms of international recognition. He used to have a business partner in school who was already laying the groundwork for the launch of the Wilhelms brand."

Anderson says that AMS is keen on bringing that creative activity together with the established business world. "My role is to facilitate that cross-pollination." One example is the young fashion designer Sofie Claes, who next month will be named as one of the school's artists in residence. Anderson hopes that her creativity and passion will rub off on his business students, while their business acumen will be of practical use to her. The institutional infrastructure in Flanders seems to timidly agree, with organisations like FlandersDC (for District of Creativity) and Flanders Investment and Trade. Those infrastructures are "very useful,"

says Anderson, "but I think the problem in Belgium is bigger than that. Most young people aspire to have a stable career with a contract in an established company. Belgium is way down on the list of global entrepreneurship. How can we change that? I think it starts in schools, where we can teach children that they can work for themselves, that they can start their own companies, that they can build something. How many parents in Belgium would encourage their offspring to leave a steady job, to take a leap into the unknown and start their own business? I'm not sure."♦

► <http://book.art-thinking.com>

Jamie Anderson, Jörg Reckhenrich & Martin Kupp



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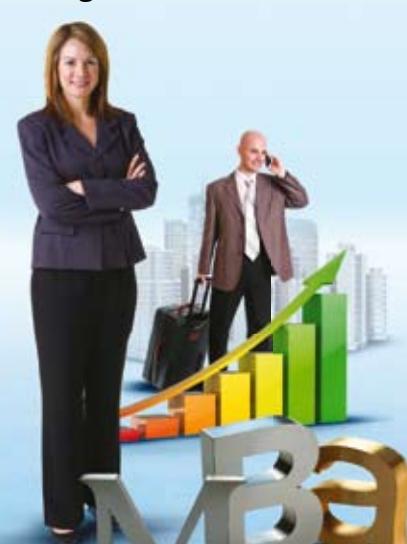
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## Illegal workers reach record figures

A worsening economy is to blame, says federal police

ALAN HOPE

The Social Inspection Services (SIOD), an independent federal service under the labour, justice and social affairs ministries, last year uncovered a record number of cases of employment of illegal immigrants. In 2010, the service uncovered 3,643 cases across the country, an increase of 22% on 2009, according to official figures reported by *De Tijd*.

Last week in *Flanders Today*, Heidi De Pauw, director of PAG-ASA, an organisation that provides support to the victims of human trafficking, explained how the agency's work is mostly concerned with the victims of economic exploitation. In 2010, PAG-ASA dealt with 164 cases, which De Pauw described as the tip of the iceberg.

Indeed, as the latest figures from SIOD show, the number of cases uncovered is more than 20 times greater – and the actual number of illegal immigrants employed here is sure to be many times greater still.

Last year the cleaning sector brought the largest number of cases – 829 compared to 48 in 2009 – ahead of construction (333 cases, mainly Brazilians) and food services (525 cases, mainly Chinese). Almost 70% of those found working in the cleaning industry illegally were from Brazil, with another 26% from Ecuador. The figures suggest that organised crime is involved in the sector.

The workers in general mostly come to Belgium as visitors and overstay their visas, rather than being physically trafficked here. Taking all industries together, Brazilians accounted for 784 of the cases uncovered. The other main countries of origin were Romania, Morocco and Bulgaria (see table).

"There will always be fluctuations between the nationalities," commented Wim Bontinck, head of the federal police's human trafficking division. "But the fact remains that they can earn €1,500 to €1,700 a month here in the black – a lot more than in their homelands. And foreigners who work here attract their compatriots by telling them how good life here is."

But many are working, continues Bontinck, "in conditions we would consider inhuman in terms of working hours, pay and safety. Analysis carried out by the federal police recently shows that economic exploitation is one of the most damaging forms of crime for Belgian society, even more than computer crime or armed robbery. And if the economy gets worse, the problem will only get bigger."♦

Country of origin	2009	2010
Brazil	238	784
Romania	402	326
Morocco	187	289
Bulgaria	394	224
Ecuador	5	223
China	154	185
India	96	90
Pakistan	68	90
Turkey	91	77
Algeria	46	44

Source: SIOD via *De Tijd*



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## Lining up for Libya

Flemish agency Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) is organising a three-day information seminar in September on Libya, to prime Flemish exporters for the re-opening of the market there following the recent hostilities.

Flemish companies have been active in Libya in recent years, either directly involved in oil extraction or with infrastructure projects in relation to the oil industry. Dredging company Deme, based in Zwijndrecht, Antwerp province, for instance, helped deepen the approaches and the harbour at the port of Misrata (pictured). Similarly, Frisomat of Wijnegem, also in Antwerp province and specialised in steel constructions, helped build the Great Manmade River, an underground network of water pipes. Last year, Belgium as a whole exported €226 million in goods and services to Libya, but since the start of the uprising against the government of Muammar Gaddafi, most international activity has stopped.

The information day will target ➤ [www.flanderstrade.be](http://www.flanderstrade.be)



those companies with their eyes on a revived Libyan market, including Antwerp shipping agent Neptumar, construction group Besix and energy group Fabricom. However, it will also be of interest to companies in less obvious sectors, such as yeast manufacturer Algist Bruggeman, which sells flour, sugar and rice in Libya.

And Cavalier chocolate maker, based in Eeklo, East Flanders, is a major supplier of sugar-free chocolate via Dubai to Libya. In Libya, as in many other parts of North Africa, diabetes is a leading cause of death.♦

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# The Passchendaele offensive

## War memorial museum gears up for the First World War centenary

ANDY FURNIERE

The trenches at the Memorial Museum of Passchendaele are full of hustle and bustle – peaceful hustle and bustle, beneath a pleasant summer sun. Around 15 volunteers, including British troops, are piling sandbags along the sides, preparing for the incoming tourist attack.

There's no time to waste at the castle of Zonnebeke in the Westhoek region of West Flanders, the location of the museum that commemorates the Great War of 1914-1918 and, more specifically, the Battle of

Passchendaele in 1917, when hundreds of thousands of British, Canadian and German soldiers perished in the mud for a meagre advance of eight kilometres. In the course of the next year, the museum garden will display a war scene with six types of trenches and five different hiding places. "We have ordered an extensive study to assure that they are as historically correct as possible," says curator Franky Bostyn. The walking path through the tight wooden gangways will be 400 meters long.



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- Poperinge Beer Festival  
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- St George's Memorial Church, Ypres  
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- In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres  
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Tour is in English

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Register by 7 September via email at [editorial@flanderstoday.eu](mailto:editorial@flanderstoday.eu)

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The trenches add to what is meant to be a realistic portrayal of the war. The museum already goes some way with the simulation of a dug-out, for now its greatest attraction, an underground passage similar to those where British soldiers used to live like moles underground because everything above was shot to pieces. Scenes with dummies demonstrate how they slept, congregated, communicated with the outside world and cared for the wounded. When asked whether this approach doesn't lean towards entertainment, Bostyn is clear. "Our priority is to explain the historical events as accurately as possible," he says. "But to attract a large crowd, the tour will also have to be lively and fun." During the year, he says, they organise historical debates at the castle, rugby matches and Scottish military music spectacles known as tattoos. "We want to get everybody hooked."

Also in full swing is the preparation of an exhibition of the Battle of Passchendaele. Photographs, films, paraphernalia and information panels explain the tale of the battlefield and the nations that fought on these grounds. The exhibition ends with a presentation of how people have kept the memory alive. "Ever since the war ended nearly 100 years ago," Bostyn says, "there have been remembrance initiatives and war tourism."

### Remembrance tradition

The expansion of the museum is part of "100 Jaar Groot Oorlog" (100 Years Great War), the Flemish government commemoration of the centenary of the First World War. All kinds of events will take place during the period of 2014-2018, and the Flemish tourism department is handing out subsidies for the renovation of war site infrastructures. The lion's share, of course, goes to the Westhoek region, where most of the battlefields are located. €800,000 went to the development of the Passchendaele museum and €1.9 million to the master plan "Legacy of Passchendaele" with a total budget of €4.6 million.

The master plan, to be completed in 2014, reorganises the tourism bureau and opens up the whole area of the battlefield for tourists. Starting from the castle of Zonnebeke, two walking routes will connect all the historical war sites of the region: one towards the south to Polygon Wood and one towards the north to Tyne Cot cemetery, the biggest military cemetery of the Commonwealth with almost 12,000 graves. It draws more than 180,000 visitors every year. There are also plans for biking routes and car facilities. "With moderate adjustments to the



Graveyards like Tyne Cot, above, are manifold across the fields of West Flanders

landscape, we hope to transform the former battlefield into a historical recreation area," explains Bostyn.

Furthermore, the castle park will be enlarged from 10 to 25 hectares and visitors from nations that fought in the battle will be able to walk around their own national Passchendaele garden, with particular vegetation, monuments and works of art.

*"Their dead have never been repatriated, so they come here to honour the graves of those who fought for their freedom"*

their former colonies, like Australia, New Zealand and Canada."

These nations were still fighting under British command from 1914 to 1918, but did achieve some form of independence during and after the war. Bostyn recalls the visit in 2007 of Helen Clark, the then prime minister of New Zealand. "She said that their history doesn't begin when the first British settlers arrived on their territory," he says, "but when New Zealanders fought as a separate unit in Flanders. Their dead have never been repatriated, so they come here to honour the graves of those who fought for their freedom."

The Memorial Museum Passchendaele even goes as far as to set up partnerships with those countries. The strongest bond today is with Australia. In July, the Australian MP Warren Snowdon paid a visit to the museum with a cheque of €200,000. Passchendaele has now joined the official Australian Remembrance Trail, which connects and improves visitor facilities at Australian war sites along the former Western Front in West Flanders and northern France.♦

→ [www.passchendaele.be](http://www.passchendaele.be)



Trenches are characteristic for the fighting in Flanders during the First World War

© Memorial Museum Passchendaele

© Andy Furniere

# Light is life

A 21st-century touch from Flanders on an 11th-century monastery in Italy

ANNA JENKINSON

**F**onte Avellana is an 11th-century monastery described in Dante's *Divine Comedy* as paradise on earth. Nestled in the hills of central Italy between the Adriatic Sea and the Apennine mountains, the monastery is still home to a community of Camaldolesian Benedictine monks as well as a guesthouse that receives about 20,000 visitors a year.

A few years ago, one of them was Joost Caen. A stained-glass artist from Schoten in Antwerp province, Caen discovered the monastery by accident while on holiday with his wife. They had travelled through Tuscany and Umbria, visiting the famous towns and cities renowned for their art history, such as Florence and Assisi. At the end of their journey, they found themselves with a bit of time left over. "We asked what else there was to see in the region and were told about the abbey of Fonte Avellana," says Caen. "It's a hidden secret. It's like paradise."

There was just one aspect that was troubling to Caen: the state of the windows. Made from ordinary glass, many had broken panes and were covered by torn curtains. Caen's wife mentioned that it was a real pity that such a beautiful architectural treasure like Fonte Avellana should have windows in such bad condition.

"We can't afford new ones," was the monk's simple reply.

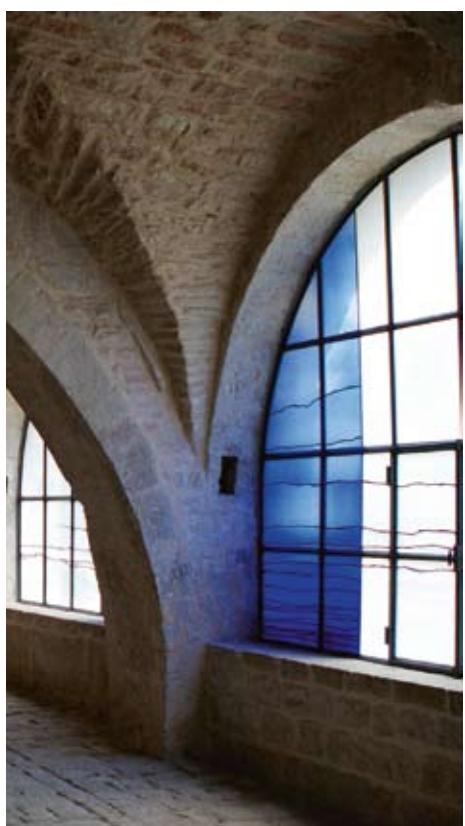
## Pray and work

So Caen set to work on window designs for the chapter house, the church and the scriptorium, a room once used for the writing and copying of manuscripts. Fonte Avellana is home to the oldest surviving scriptorium in the world.

"The monks were extremely enthusiastic about the window designs," Caen says, "which gave me extra energy to find a sponsor."

And the money was found. A family from West Flanders provided the funding for the first series, while an Italian sponsor was found for the second series.

Caen spent a lot of time with the monks at Fonte Avellana, not only to discuss the project but also to learn about their way of life and



Joost Caen: "I want to realise the stained-glass windows you've had in your mind for a long time"

discover what is important to them. "My work is not just about integrating into the architecture," he explains. "It's also about integrating into the life of my clients. I say to them: 'I want to realise the stained-glass windows that you have had in your mind for a long time.'"

For the windows at Fonte Avellana, Caen worked with the Latin phrase *ora et labora*, pray and work, words that are an inspiration to the monks who live there. "In my stained-glass windows, the vertical lines symbolise praying, the horizontal represents labour."

Counting more than 60 windows in total, the project, called *A Cycle of Inspiration*, is Caen's largest to date. It took four years to complete, with the last piece put in place earlier this year. The final window was perhaps the most difficult, Caen says. He was already packing away his materials when the monks asked him if he could make designs for windows in two doors, one in the entrance hall and one in the transept of the church.

"There was no time for discussion," Caen recalls. "I was forced to make a decision very quickly, and I don't like to work like that." But this time, he spontaneously knew what was needed. He took his watercolour brushes and painted two incomplete circles in a yellow-orange hue. "It opened up the cycle," he explains. The design speaks to the religious community, which believes in an afterlife, as well as those who don't hold the same beliefs. "I was very happy with the final result."

## The right light

To Caen, it is important that art works together with people, rather than against them. In the 19th century, he says, artists tried to detach themselves from their sponsors and sought to express individual emotions. In the 20th century, individual emancipation dominated. "Today, we must bring art back from pure individual expression towards a more common opinion," he says. The stained-glass window and the way it reflects the light, the artist explains, are supposed to touch people.

Given the tradition of stained glass, it is not surprising that many of Caen's designs have been made for places of worship. But he has also undertaken projects for civic buildings and private houses. In Deurne, for example, he integrated stained glass into solar panels for the town hall. In Kortrijk, he designed windows for a block of flats for retired people.

He would like to work on projects for schools, hospitals and city halls because those are the places where people spend either the important or the difficult times of their lives. "Having changing light in those places is just as important as in churches," he asserts. "Light is life. It can bring a positive moment into people's lives."

Caen has been working with stained glass for more than three decades. He first discovered the medium as a student at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Antwerp. "I was really fascinated by the material," he says. "Thirty-two years on and I'm still in love with it!"

It is that love for the material and the desire to touch people that drive him. "People have said to me that my work at Fonte Avellana is my *opus magnum*. I hope it isn't," he chuckles. "I hope to have many more inspiring and challenging projects in the future."♦



Joost Caen in front of one of the new stained-glass windows he made for the monastery



View of one of the new windows at Fonte Avellana from the outside



The idyllic Fonte Avellana monastery in Serra Sant'Abbondio, central Italy

# Going digital

Slowly but surely, Flanders embraces the e-book

REBECCA BENOOT

Last year, only four years after the release of their Kindle e-reader, Amazon.com announced that they had sold more e-books than printed books. Electronic books are no longer something for techies alone. Today, the latest Jo Nesbø, George RR Martin or Booker Prize nominees are just a few clicks away, leading to the demise of independent booksellers, and even eventually the big chain stores like Britain's Waterstones.

But what about Flanders?

The centre of the Flemish book industry is Boek.be, an association of publishers, bookstores and distributors. Boek.be is fairly unique in that it establishes a connection between the publication of a book and its eventual sale, which you don't see happening in most European regions.

Jef Maes, head of the association's knowledge centre responsible for innovation, research and training, says that "Flanders has been left standing in the cold" by the e-book industry. "We had to wait until 2010 before Sony made the first e-readers available here."

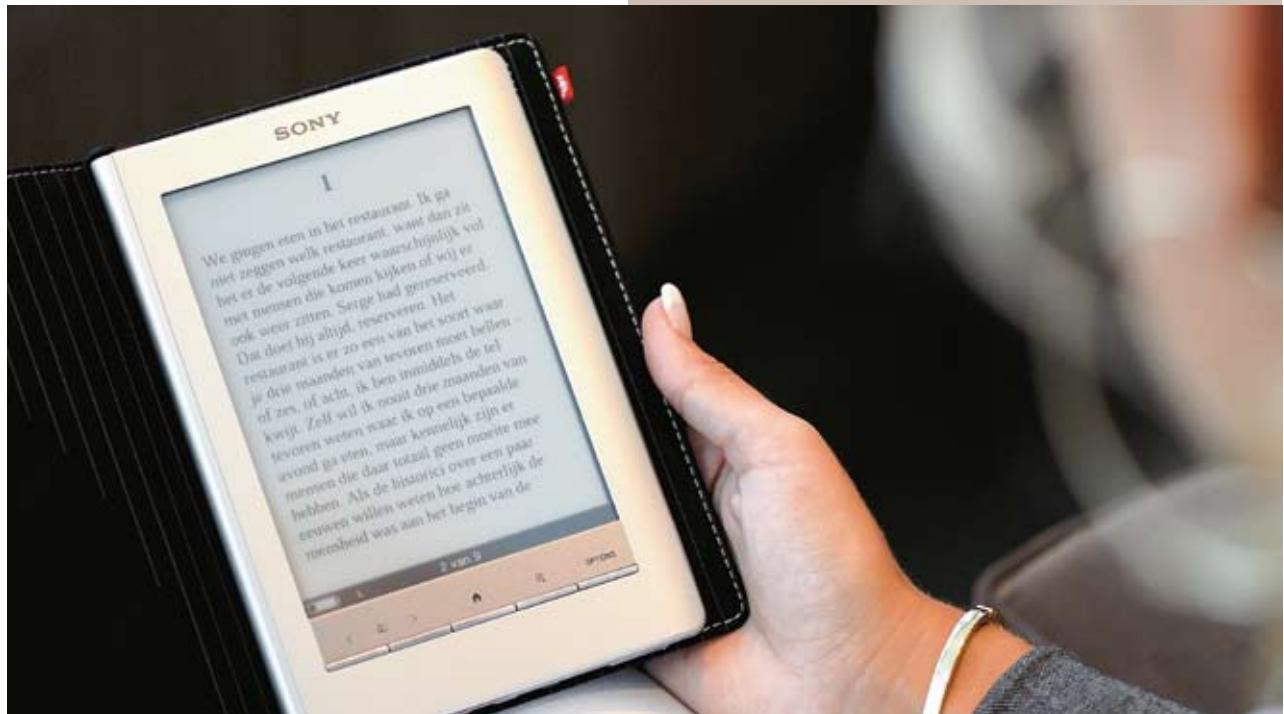
One of the main reasons for this digital delay is marketing, he says, which in Belgium has to be in two languages – a tall order for a small area. "The digital pioneers prefer to target the larger English and French-speaking demographics first."

Not happy with the lack of initiative from the part of the industry, Boek.be launched the website [e-boek.org](http://e-boek.org) and released an application for the iPad. "We feared that if we didn't launch our own platform to sell e-books, the relatively small Dutch-speaking market would become saturated by the big players of the English-language market, like Amazon.com or Apple," explains Maes. "With this website, we are also trying to encourage publishers to create digital versions of their upcoming releases. When we started in 2009, there were about 3,000 e-books available [in Dutch]. Today, there are 8,000."

But the Flemish as a whole haven't been early adopters of the technology. The percentage of e-books sold in Flanders is marginally low at 0.3% of total book sales, compared to 1.3% in the Netherlands. The launch last year of the iPad, though, helped a lot. Partially due to the popularity of the brand, the Flemish received it with open arms. By the end of this year, rival companies will release their own tablets, and e-book sales are expected to rise.

## Making the transition

At this point, about a third of Flemish publishers still don't publish e-books, and only a third of the 100 best-selling



© ANP/BELGA

Flemish books are available in digital. One of the reasons is that not all books easily make the transition from paper to digital. Some non-fiction, in particular, is troublesome to read on an e-reader, like cook books or children's books.

Some publishers release their new titles in both print and digital at the same time, but most don't digitalise their backlists, ensuring that bookshops and libraries will remain worthy contenders in our quest for knowledge and entertainment. But once a digital format does begin to take off, it does so quickly. According to GfK Retail and Technology Benelux, a noted consumer research company, by 2013 sales of new e-books in Flanders should equal that of new paper books.

Boek.be hasn't given up on regular bookstores. It offers them the possibility to sell e-books via its website and plans to launch a "Flemish E-Book Platform" (VEP). "Together with the association of libraries in Flanders and the Institute for Science and Technology, we are gathering all information available on Dutch-language e-books and will ultimately offer them for sale or to lend," explains Maes. "Bookstores usually have several thousand titles in stock – all the rest you'll have to order. With VEP, you'll be able to digitally leaf through books before buying or ordering them."

Many people are taken aback by the price of an e-book, which is about 80% of the price of a printed book. They expect it to be lower, since a digital file costs a fraction of print to produce. "That is mainly due to taxes," Maes explains, "which are 6% for a paper book and 21% for an e-book. E-books have production, hosting and security costs, making them a real investment for publishers within a small market where returns are low and prices high. We are working on having the taxes lowered. When that happens, we'll aim at half the price of a printed book."

The future of the paper book may be bleak, but Maes is optimistic about the future of reading: "I don't think that paper books will vanish that easily. Being able to touch, smell and leaf through a book is an important aspect for many people. Nonetheless, I am sure that digital books are the future. I can't say what the ratio will be, but it will surely depend on upcoming technological developments. Books in general will evolve into a combination of text, animation and interactive options, resulting in more people reading, especially since kids today are growing up in a digital age." \*

→ [www.e-boek.org](http://www.e-boek.org)

## Fresh fiction

### New on the bookshelves in Dutch



#### Een vrouw voor elk seizoen (A Woman for Every Season)

by Walter van den Broeck · WPG Uitgevers

At the age of 70, one of Flanders' most renowned authors is still on top of his game and offers us a diverse and quirky mix of short stories and plays in which women take centre stage. Whether he's having a go at the lost love of an aging rock chick, the lustful longing between two women or girls fighting over a German soldier in 1927, Van den Broeck never ceases to amaze with his uncanny eye for detail, lingering emotions and vibrant dialogue.

#### De wolken (The Clouds)

by Hugo Claus · De Bezige Bij

Journalist Mark Schaevers got permission from Hugo Claus' widow to delve into his notebooks, diaries and letters and has created a book that shines more light on the Flemish literary genius, who was famously – and purposely – a bundle of contradictions. Claus' ambitions, depressions, escapades and family life are all portrayed, along with his personal notes and several unpublished poems. Due to the personal nature of the posthumous publication, Claus' sons tried to stop the book from being sold. But it in fact has turned out to be a tender and authentic look at the inner life of an author during the second half of the 20th century. *De wolken* is an exceptionally beautiful book and a must for fans of the late Claus.

#### Bedlegerige (Bedridden)

Gertrui Daem · De Bezige Bij

Gertrui Daem is known for her tormented characters and naturalistic style in which the Flemish vernacular flourishes. Her latest novel is set in 1957 and tells the story of Basiel, a paralyzed young man who has been confined to his bed. His sole companion is his domineering mother who spoils him and at the same time deprives him of his privacy and opinions. When a miracle happens while he is at Lourdes, the media and even the Catholic Church are convinced that Basiel is a healer, giving him the strength to finally stand on his own two feet, figuratively speaking.

#### Monoloog van iemand die het gewoon werd tegen zichzelf te praten (Monologue of Someone Who Got Used to Talking to Herself)

by Dimitri Verhulst · De Bijenkorf

On 12 October, 2009, Flemish cyclist Frank van den Broucke died in peculiar circumstances. The well-known wild child, prone to drugs and depression, was found dead in a seedy hotel room in Senegal. The presence of a mysterious friend and a hooker make the story all the more sensational. Best-selling Flemish author Dimitri Verhulst (*De helaasheid der dingen*) was inspired by this unexplained turn of events and wrote a monologue from the viewpoint of the prostitute, who didn't know about van den Broucke's superstar status, but still considered him an exceptional man.

# JOB OPPORTUNITIES

## Sales Assistant - international and dynamic company

Caviar is an Integrated AV Content Provider telling Strong Stories (scripted content through commercials, feature films, TV series, virals ....) designed and realized by a pool of great international talents, distributing its products directly & indirectly under different brands through diversified channels (TV, internet, theatre, mobile, PC ...) to the consumers; relying on a strong backbone of Production Facilities

**Description:**

Our client, who is market leader in the audiovisual sector, is looking for their office in Brussels a:

**Commercial/Sales Assistant (m/f)**

Organizing and following up the sales administration including ordering, invoicing and delivery management

**This includes:**

- Processing and following up orders (by e-mail or fax)
- Preparing purchase orders
- Handling invoicing in ERP system
- Giving information regarding price & terms for products
- Preparing price offers to customers
- Managing the shoot planning
- Organizing the planning and preparing necessary documents
- Coordinating between supplier, transporters and customer to ensure a smooth service
- Preparing statistics and forecast figures
- Following up open accounts and overdue payments

**Profile:**

- You are fluent in English with a good level of Dutch and French
- You have a good knowledge of MS Office
- You have a first experience as Commercial or Sales Assistant, Customer Service, etc.
- A first experience in an audiovisual sector is a plus
- You are a true problem solver
- You have excellent communication and planning skills
- You are flexible and can take initiative
- You have a driver's license

**We offer:**

- An interim contract of 6 months followed by a permanent contract
- An excellent opportunity to work at an international company in full expansion
- A continuous training and great atmosphere
- An attractive salary with extra-legal benefits (luncheon vouchers, transport costs)

**Please send your C.V and motivation letter to [info@caviarcontent.com](mailto:info@caviarcontent.com)**

## General Accountant with ambition as financial controller

Caviar is an Integrated AV Content Provider telling Strong Stories (scripted content through commercials, feature films, TV series, virals .... ) designed and realized by a pool of great international talents, distributing its products directly & indirectly under different brands through diversified channels (TV, internet, theatre, mobile, PC ...) to the consumers; relying on a strong backbone of Production Facilities

**Function Description:**

- As a right-hand to the Finance Director, your main responsibility is the A to Z Accounting of 1 entity.
- Your main tasks consist of:
- Vouch invoices for payment. Verify pricing, quantity, taxability, and receipt, obtain approvals as necessary, assign general ledger account codes and cost centers. Take discounts according to company policy.
- Monitor and collect outstanding accounts receivables and report exceptions.
- Vouch employee expense reports for payment. Verify supporting receipts and approval, extend report, assign general ledger account codes and cost centers.
- Resolve problem invoices and expense reports in a timely fashion coordinating with vendors, buyers, employees, and supervisors.
- Accurately input vouched and approved invoices and expense reports into the Account Payable system.
- Cut manual and computer checks. Match with vouched invoices and obtain necessary signatures; file vouched invoices.
- Perform month-end closings and check run on a rotation basis
- Furthermore, you will gain responsibility within the controlling domain as well as extra growth opportunities based on your potential as finance professional.

**Profile:**

You have minimum a bachelor degree and 3 to 5 years of experience in accounting. Excel is your playground and knowledge of EPR system is an asset. You have excellent verbal and written communication skills in Dutch and French. You strive for a high level of accuracy and you work efficiently and organized with dependable follow through.

**Offer:**

In a nutshell our client offers a learning curve to boost your professional career. You will receive an attractive salary package with interesting fringe benefits and growth opportunities within an international environment.

**Please send your C.V. and motivation letter to [info@caviarcontent.com](mailto:info@caviarcontent.com)**

## Opera like you've never seen it SÁGA

TOM PEETERS

"Let's call it a modern opera." Those were the magic words that Antwerp-based singer Gregory Frateur needed to hear. His rock band Dez Mona had already made three intimate albums that merge Frateur's wide vocal range with jazz, gospel and drama.

But he wanted something bigger, something that could cope with his creative impulses and his artistic entrepreneurship, something with more artists involved and a major budget so that he'd be able to tell a grand story.

The project was eventually called SÁGA after the Norse goddess of history, known for her extraordinary storytelling. To bring it alive, Dez Mona first hooked up with the musicians of Baroque Orchestration X (better known as BOX). They then invited a painter, a writer and a fashion designer to join forces.

Author Jeroen Olyslagers, who is acquainted with ancient mythology, and designer Veronique Branquinho are no small names in Flemish culture. "Their motivation was intrinsic," says Frateur. "They all embraced our central theme: What does it mean to have a home in these times?"

The magic words, meanwhile, came out of the mouth of Jerry Aerts, director of deSingel, who came

onboard as a co-producer. For Aerts, SÁGA could be the ideal crossover project to highlight the new wing of his international art campus. Brussels music fest Klara and Opera Days Rotterdam also jumped on board. Frateur: "And if they say it's an opera, who are we to object?"

Preparing a concert opera gave the artists a broader perspective. "It inspired us to think bigger, as if suddenly we had more freedom," says Nicolas Rombouts, Dez Mona contrabass player, who co-wrote the music and the arrangements.

Pieter Theuns is a baroque musician who plays the theorbo, a string instrument with a rich, delicate sound. "All musicians had to back the story," he explains. "Their instruments were secondary to the central theme." His is a characteristically baroque instrument, he says, "but surrounded by rock musicians, it had a very contemporary feel."

The atypical environment was stimulating and "so different from the brown and smelly cellars where rock bands usually rehearse," Frateur says. "We were not used to such an intense and emotional trip. At the end of our month-long residency in deSingel, it felt as if we all belonged to the same family."

The opera, which is in English,



consists of 14 short stories, based around a larger concept something along the lines of having to accept where we come from. Witness "A Part Of Our Dreams", a ballad in which the singer states that grey can be beautiful. "It's a very confronting song," says Frateur. "We sweep away a tear in front of the television, but we don't see what's happening outside our window-pane."

Or take "She is A Haven", a burdened song about the good and the bad of Frateur's hometown, Antwerp. "A medal has two sides," he says. "That's what my father always says. A simple reality of life we often seem to forget." The première of SÁGA is part of

Brussels' Klara Festival of classical and new music. Other highlights on this year's programme are piano virtuoso Jan Michiels and concerts by the London Philharmonic, the London Haydn Quartet and the Akademie Für Alte Musik Berlin, conducted by René Jacobs.♦

**SÁGA**  
8 September, 20.00  
Flagey  
Heilig-Kruisplein, Brussels  
  
21 September, 20.00  
deSingel  
Desguinlei 15, Antwerp  
→ [www.dezmona.com](http://www.dezmona.com)

**Klara Festival**  
1-16 September  
Across Brussels  
→ [www.klarafestival.be](http://www.klarafestival.be)

## MUSIC FESTIVAL



The shadow of Pukkelpop is hanging over the late summer music festivals. Leffingeleuren in Leffinge, part of the coastal town of Middelkerke, is a fun and good-natured way to start getting back to normal. With stages both in a tent and in a club, Leffingeleuren is the bridge between the end of the outdoor festival season and the start of the new indoor concert season.

As ever, the line-up is strongly domestic, with godfather Arno, who mixes cubist rock with French chanson, as the main attraction. Another highlight is Das Pop, a band that fully lives up to what its name, albeit in fake German,

promises: catchy pop songs with sensational hooks and addictive choruses.

Intergalactic Lovers (pictured) is one of this year's sensations in the indigenous music scene, thanks to their mesmerising début *Greetings & Salutations*. Selah Sue is also on the bill, another new kid on the block, who even impressed Prince.

But Leffingeleuren also books a quirky array of foreign acts. G Love, the American singer and guitarist, known for the groovy roots music he cooks up with his band Special Sauce, earlier this year released the almost acoustic solo

outing *Fixin' To Die*. He travels to Leffinge for, indeed, an acoustic show. Contrary to the poetic Ivorian reggae singer Alpha Blondy, who'll be accompanied by a band that creates such low bass tones that they will make your trouser legs quiver. (No, really.) And if you're in for some jaggedy-edge rock music with a bluesy undercurrent, Brighton, England's Blood Red Shoes will be at your service.

Leffingeleuren's line-up is one of Flanders' most diverse – a treat for the musical omnivore. (Christophe Verbiest)

→ [www.leffingeleurenfestival.be](http://www.leffingeleurenfestival.be)

## MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

### Ghent

**Jazz in 't Park:** Annual outdoor jazz festival featuring free concerts and Jazz on Film documentary screenings  
Until SEP 4 at Zuid Park, Zuidparklaan  
[www.gent.be/jazzintpark](http://www.gent.be/jazzintpark)

### Tessenderlo (Limburg)

**Moulin Rock Festival:** 10th anniversary of the outdoor festival featuring young bands, including Les Truttes, Exit April, CPEX, The Opposites, more  
SEP 9-10 at Festival terrain Moulin Rock, Molenstraat  
[www.moulinrock.be](http://www.moulinrock.be)

### Stekene (East Flanders)

**Crammerock:** Outdoor rock and pop festival, featuring The Sisters of Mercy, Channel Zero, Das Pop, Black Box Revelation, K's Choice, more  
SEP 2-3 on Heikant  
[www.crammerock.be](http://www.crammerock.be)

# Agenda



## Boekenkaftdag

3-7 September  
Across Flemish Brabant

Did the start of the new school year greet your children with a nice big stack of books? Bring them, and some favourite markers, along to the free *Boekenkaftdag*, or Book Cover Day, where kids aged six to 12 get the chance to create their own unique protective book covers.

Each child can choose five sheets of paper from an assortment of colours and designs, good for about 10 books. Or take a plain sheet to the illustrators' table where a well-known artist will gladly give it a personalised touch.

But it's not all cutting and drawing and taping; each site will also invite fun musicians and performers for the occasion. (Robyn Boyle)

**Aarschot:** SEP 3 14.00-17.00 at CC Gasthuis, Gasthuisstraat 22

**Bierbeek:** SEP 3 14.00-17.00 at CC de borre, Speelpleinstraat 10

**Halle:** SEP 3 14.00-18.00 at CC 't Vondel, J Possozplein 40

**Sint-Genesius-Rode:** SEP 7 14.00-17.00 at GC de Boesdaalhoeve, Hoevestraat 67

**Ternat:** SEP 4 10.00-12.00 at CC De Ploter, Kerkstraat 4

**Wemmel:** SEP 7 12.00-16.00 at GC de Zandloper, Kaasmarkt 75

**Zemst:** SEP 3 14.00-17.00 at Zemst Library, De Griet 1

→ [www.ezelsoor.info](http://www.ezelsoor.info)

### MORE KIDS' STUFF THIS WEEK

#### Hofstade (Flemish Brabant)

Puppet Theatre with Pierke: Performance by theatre group Pedrolino for children ages three and up (in Dutch)  
SEP 4 14.30-16.00 at Parochiaal Centrum Hofstadedorp  
[www.pierke.be](http://www.pierke.be)

#### Maaseik (Limburg province)

Knapkoekfeest: Festivities around the Limburg specialty knapkoek, a sweet and crunchy biscuit, featuring the baking of a giant knapkoek (of three metres in diameter) in a traditional open-air wood-burning oven, plus music by folk group De Knapkoekers  
SEP 4 14.00 on the Markt  
[www.toerismelimbburg.be](http://www.toerismelimbburg.be)



## SPORT



Every year in September, Flemish people come out *en masse* to run, walk and cycle through the municipalities ringing Brussels, referred to in Dutch as *de gordel* (the belt). They may well be making a statement about keeping the Flemish belt Flemish, but the event is above all a peaceful family sporting event. Last year, more than 80,000 people participated.

This year, weather permitting, the turnout is expected to be even higher, as *De Gordel* has acquired the same reputation as a full-blown cultural festival, complete with food and drink stands, concerts and games for kids.

The best place to pick up information on starting points and happenings is in tourist offices and cultural centres in any of the communities at the heart of the belt: Sint-Genesius-Rode, Dilbeek, Zaventem or Overijse. (RB)

→ [www.de-gordel.be](http://www.de-gordel.be)

### MORE SPORT THIS WEEK

#### Antwerp

**Ronde van het Eilandje:** Bicycle tour through the water-dominated neighbourhood around the new MAS Museum; bike rental available  
**AUG 31** 10.00-12.00 starting at Nassaubrug, Hanzestedenplaats 5  
[www.antwerpenaverechts.be](http://www.antwerpenaverechts.be)

#### Malle (Antwerp province)

**Tripeltrap:** Five- to nine-kilometre walk through the most beautiful spots in and around Malle, including stops to taste regional specialities, such as Westmalle Trappist beer and cheese, Oostmals Drupke jenever, Taeymans coffee, gingerbread and more (registration required)  
**SEP 3** 13.00 starting from Scherpenbergmolen, Westmalle  
03.310.051.4  
[www.toerisme-malle.be](http://www.toerisme-malle.be)

#### Opwijk (Flemish Brabant)

**Skatefest:** Skateboarding weekend featuring triple mini ramp contest, workshops, BBQ and DJ sets  
**SEP 2-4** at Nijdrop, Kloosterstraat 9  
[www.nijdrop.be](http://www.nijdrop.be)

## FAMILY

For the third year running, Brussels' annual comic strip festival is paired up with a very special event that sees the Smurfs, Tintin and Lucky Luke take to the sky. The Balloon's Day Parade is an impressive assembly of giant helium balloons in the form of favourite comic strip characters.

Adults get to feel like kids for a day when the parade passes through downtown with its brass band fanfare and flamboyant colours. The whole city takes on a carnival-like atmosphere, especially leading up to the release of the balloons.

The parade itself lasts for a good three hours, from about 14.00 to 17.00. But the Paleizenplein will already be buzzing with activity from 10.00, everyone engaged in the arduous task of inflating thousands of balloons. By 14.00 the crowd-pleasing can begin, from Paleizenplein to Albertine, past De Beurs and finally to De Brouckere where the first balloon will be sent to the heavens around 16.30. (RB)

→ [www.balloonsdayparade.be](http://www.balloonsdayparade.be)

### MORE FAMILY FUN THIS WEEK

#### Nazareth (East Flanders)

**Brouwsels op Straat (Brews in the Street):** International street theatre and circus arts festival, with artisanal food and drink stands and antique market  
**SEP 3-4** at CC De Brouwerij, Stationsstraat 3  
[www.brouwselsopstraat.be](http://www.brouwselsopstraat.be)

#### Laarne (East Flanders)

**Heksenvandeling (Witches Walk):** Guided night walk with explanation of the historical link between Laarne and witches, plus detailed explanation of the herbs and plants they used  
**SEP 2** 19.30-22.00  
09.367.62.91

#### Wachtebeke (East Flanders)

**Rockabilly Day:** Family festival to the tune of the 1960s, featuring rocking concerts, classic cars and motorcycles, vintage dress and retro and art market  
**SEP 3-4** at Provinciaal Domein Puyenbroeck, Puyenbrug 1a  
[www.rockabillyday.be](http://www.rockabillyday.be)

Poor Norway has gotten a bit shunted aside when it comes to Scandinavian cinema in favour of the legendary Swedes and the ultra-hip Danes. But since the tragedy last month, there has been a renewed interest in all things Norwegian, including its art and culture. Cinematek hosts a much-needed Norwegian film cycle over the next couple of months, from silent films of the 1920s to Bent Hamer's most recent work.

The cycle kicks off with one of the oldest remaining feature-length works in Norwegian cinema: *Markens Grøde* (*The Growth of the Soil*) by Gunnar Sommerfeldt. A parable on

the founding of civilisation, it's based on the work of Nobel prize winner Knut Hamsun.

Also recommended is *Jakten* (*The Chasers*), a brilliantly realized film from 1959 by Erik Løchen. When a man is killed during a hunting party, everyone involved is questioned individually. Wouldn't you know it, a woman lies at the centre of things, and the film proceeds through testimony and flashback, calling into question truth and reality, memory and desire.

Memory is also at the heart of *The Bothersome Man* (which was released in Belgium as *No(r)way of Life*), the darkly

comic 2006 film about a man who arrives in a strange city with no idea who he is or how he got there. In the vein of Bent Hamer, *The Bothersome Man* (*pictured*) won 20 awards on the festival circuit, as critics raved.

The Norwegian film cycle is presented in collaboration with the Norwegian Film Institute, and the institute's editor, Jan Erik Holst, will be in attendance on 5 September to introduce the film *Jakten* and talk about Norwegian cinema in general. (LB)

→ [www.cinematek.be](http://www.cinematek.be)

## MORE FILM THIS WEEK

### Brussels

**Ecran Total:** Film festival with classics, recent releases and never released films  
**Until SEP 13** at Cinema Arenberg  
[www.arenberg.be](http://www.arenberg.be)

**Filmotek:** Annual garden screenings of shorts film, video art and works from Atelier 340's archives  
**Until SEP 9** 22.00 at Atelier 340 Museum, Rivierendreef 340  
[www.atelier340muzeum.be](http://www.atelier340muzeum.be)

### Ostend

**Ostend Film Festival:** Annual fest of local and international cinema and TV programmes, plus gaming and the Flemish Film Awards  
**SEP 2-10** at Kinepolis and other venues in Ostend  
[www.filmfestivalostende.be](http://www.filmfestivalostende.be)



## Balloon's Day Parade

10 September, 14.00-17.00  
Across Brussels



## FOOD & DRINK

Fifty cheese producers on one square; it sounds like a dream, but it's the annual Bruges Cheese Market. Last year, due to imminent success, the market moved to its current location on the large and central square 't Zand. Belgian and international cheesemongers set up in a giant oval, making it easy to wander from stand to stand while sampling (or purchasing) their delectables.

## MORE FOOD & DRINK THIS WEEK

### Brussels

**Beer Weekend:** The capital's biggest beer event of the year, featuring a wide range of large and small Belgian breweries, with plenty of tasting opportunities  
**SEP 2-4** on the Grote Markt  
[www.weekenddelabiere.be](http://www.weekenddelabiere.be)

**Boeremet:** Grand opening of the new twice monthly farmer's market at the abattoir featuring entertainment, samples from the 30 artisanal exhibitors and a Vedett beer stand  
**SEP 1** 15.00-19.00 at Ropsy Chaudronstraat 24  
[www.boeremet.be](http://www.boeremet.be)

### Kalmthout

**Tomato Festival:** Colourful display of hundreds of tomato varieties, plus information, tastings, recipes and cooking demonstrations by Chef Geert Van Der Bruggen. Opening night includes guided tour of the arboretum gardens, visit to the tomato exhibition, tomato snacks and a glass of wine on the candlelit terrace (registration required)  
**SEP 3-4** from 10.00 at Kalmthout Arboretum, Heuvel 2  
[www.arboretumkalmthout.be](http://www.arboretumkalmthout.be)

### Sint-Laureins (East Flanders)

**Smoked Eel Demonstration:** Eel specialists demonstrate how they smoke eel as we near the end of high season for this local delicacy  
**SEP 2** 17.00 at Taverne In Den Draaiput, Vlamingstraat 98  
[www.taverne-in-den-draaiput.com](http://www.taverne-in-den-draaiput.com)

## Cheese Market

4 September, 10.00-18.00  
't Zand square, Bruges

There's entertainment, too, in the form of music by folk group Barabas, a caravan of old-timer Cadillacs and a demonstration by Dutch cheesemongers Alkmaar, who will show how they've been weighing their cheese wheels since the Middle Ages. (RB)

→ [www.bruggekaas.be](http://www.bruggekaas.be)



# bite

ROBYN BOYLE

## De Boeremet

If you think Flanders is doomed to the same mass franchising schemes and sprawl of giant supermarket chains as in most parts of the western world, don't despair. The old farmer's market is making a comeback, proof of which is best witnessed in the Brussels commune of Anderlecht. Every weekend, tens of thousands of people gather here to do their grocery shopping at the historical *abattoir* (slaughterhouse).

Back in January, *Flanders Today* published news that Joris Tiebout, owner of Anderlecht *abattoir* and CEO of managing company Abatan, "intends to turn the whole complex into a new covered food market." With the €6 million in subsidy from the Brussels Region (the steel- and cast iron-covered market from 1890 is listed as a protected monument), the idea is for the *abattoir* "to become the major food market for shoppers, with all sorts of food stores: meat, fish, vegetables, fruit and everything else besides. We don't yet have anything like La Boqueria in Barcelona here in Belgium," Tiebout said.

Plans for turning the *abattoir* into a full-time market of this scale don't get under way until 2012, but there's already a detectable buzz about the place. "The revival of this neighbourhood has started!" exclaims Paul Thielemans of Abatan. "We hope by this

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initiative to reach people from all the 19 communities and from around Brussels."

More conscientious consumers are there to buy all fresh vegetables from local farmers and meat straight off the chopping block. Others come simply for a weekend stroll, to "sniff up the atmosphere", as they say, while enjoying a nibble and an aperitif.

In addition to the fresh fish market (frequented by top chefs), there's bread and other baked goods, wonderfully smelly cheeses and even wine and traditional Italian specialities like pastas and sauces. And true to its name, the *abattoir* still has active butchers and carvers on site, hence the wide range of top-quality meat on offer including veal, beef, mutton, pork, horse and venison. The *abattoir* is also now open every first and third Thursday of the month for the very first edition of the *Boeremet* (Brussels dialect for a farmer's market). The *Boeremet* differs from the weekend market in that the focus is on food – all artisanal, often organic and homemade food produced on a small scale. There are no textiles or antiques for sale as is the case during the weekend market, and the whole atmosphere is decidedly more festive. The grand opening on 1 September is a guaranteed feast with an array of 30 colourful, multicultural stalls manned by enthusiastic



vendors calling out their wares. Setting the mood are a walking duo of professional jazz musicians, a juggler/magician and his fortune teller/masseuse partner (look-alikes to the cartoon couple featured on the website) and a Vedett beer stand. Shopping really doesn't have to be a burden at all.

→ [www.boeremet.be](http://www.boeremet.be)

→ Ropsy Chaudronstraat 24, Brussels; entrance is in front of the Michelin Restaurant La Paix; free parking, nearest metro station is Clemenceau  
Market: Fri-Sun, 7.00-14.00  
Boeremet: Every first and third Thursday of the month, 15.00-19.00  
→ Excellent outdoor market on the atmospheric property of a 19th-century slaughterhouse

## TALKING DUTCH

### Sparkling conversation

Oh what fun, looking for English words of Dutch origin. Especially the dirty ones. You seemed to like it, judging from the amount of tips I received. The word *gas*, writes Franklin Mamo, which today means the same thing in Dutch as in English (and many other languages), was "created by alchemist Jan van Helmont from Neder-over-Heembeek [district in Brussels] in the 17th century by transliterating into Dutch the Greek word *chaos*." Never knew that.

"Americans also like eating cookies, from *koekjes*" writes Richard Tagart, "They like sitting on the stoop on a balmy evening, from *stoep*. When there's a bump in the night, they wonder if the house is haunted by a spook, from *spook*."

Off to something completely different, though, or we could be sitting here tomorrow, saying things like *boss!*, from *baas*, or *rucksack!*, from *rugzak* (*rug* means back, the body part).

Anne Barnes from Chicago has fallen in love with Belgium but has trouble ordering *bruisend water*, sparkling water. "I witness my Flemish friends say this with no problem," she writes, "but whenever I try it, the waiter looks at me as if I'm asking for fish." It's the sound in the middle – *ui* – that puts her off. "Is it BROY-sint? BROO-send?" she asks. Smiley couldn't convey her desperation. "Is there any hope for a hapless Midwestern American?"

Yes, Anne, there is. I could suggest ordering *spuitwater* instead, but that would hardly solve your problem. I could tell you that phonetically, it is [rey], but I'm not sure if that will help you much either. The thing is that these are sounds in the Dutch language that are rarely found anywhere else and therefore difficult to reproduce for newcomers. They are called diphthongs, from ancient Greek, literally meaning "two tones", and we have plenty of them. (English examples are cow, boy, or eye.)



The trick is to see them as two vowels in one. *Ui*, for example, starts off easy on the mouth with sort of a neutral sound, comparable to the *œu*-sound in French, as in *œuvre*, or, the closest it comes to English, to the sound in sir. Relax your lips and tongue and grunt. That's it. You got it. But you're only half way, because after the grunt, it evolves into a more delicate bouquet in the front of your mouth. It finishes somewhere between the sounds in the French *fûte* and the Scottish pronunciation of "you".

I could continue my description of *ui* with references to similar sounds in the south-western dialect of the Crimean Tatars, but, like wine, the only way to really understand it is to taste, to listen and to talk. (You'll find an audio clip on Wiktionary.org.)

Send your questions and quips to [philip.ebels@ackroyd.be](mailto:philip.ebels@ackroyd.be)

PHILIP EBELS

## THE LAST WORD . . .

**Lose some, win some**  
"Her departure is a loss for the party and for politics, but as welfare minister I can obviously only be delighted that someone with her experience should move to the health sector."

Jo Vandeurzen, CD&V party colleague of Inge Vervotte, who resigned last week (see "Fifth Column", p3)

### Keeping the faith

"I'm a Catholic. I've spent my whole life believing in crazy things, so why not in the revival of CD&V?"

Senator Rik Torfs at the weekend's 10th anniversary celebrations of his political party

### A blow to safety

"A stop by the police is a breath test; that has to become the principle. They do it in other countries."

Federal mobility minister Etienne Schoupe after a report that Belgian drivers involved in accidents are more often drunk or on drugs than other European drivers

### The big red one

"I knew it was a big one, but I got a surprise when I laid it in the scale. I'm not going to eat it myself. It's a birthday present for my daughter."

Vic Van Den Broeck from Grobbendonk, Antwerp province, grew a tomato weighing 1.6 kilograms

## NEXT WEEK IN FLANDERS TODAY #196

### Feature

International artists flocked to Mechelen this week to set up their installations for Contour: Art of the Moving Image. Coincidentally, excavation work in the centre of the city unearthed ancient skeletons, which can be seen by passers-by, creating one strangely intriguing atmosphere for the art parcours

### Living

Most of the hops grown in Flanders comes from the Poperinge area of West Flanders, which celebrates with its famous beer festival next month

### Arts

Do you know who is the best-selling author in Flanders right now? The same as it's been for years: comic strip artist Merho, creator of *The Kiekeboes*. We interview the living legend of Flemish strips