

Clean sweep

EnergyVille's novel trial project puts "smart" appliances in the homes of 30 families



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Hello, my dear

A new website that puts life stories and family histories online could help those with dementia

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Time will tell

Toneelhuis stages Virginia Woolf's story of the aristocrat who lives for 300 years



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© Angela Chambers

Home away from home

The Antwerp Seafarers' Centre provides counsel and care for sailors who arrive at the port

Angela Chambers

Hundreds of thousands of ship workers pull in and out of the port of Antwerp every year. Some of them need help, from a friendly face to talk to about missing their families all the way to legal counsel for poor working conditions. Organisations within The Seafarers' Centre have been their port of call for more than 125 years.

Taking a break aboard a ship in Antwerp's port, an Indonesian seafarer talks about his wife and two children. His tone becomes serious as he says: "I miss my daughters," which is followed by a reflective pause.

Mohamad Al Amin, like many seamen, spends nine months a year away from his family. Most sailors, particularly those from developing nations, choose this lifestyle only because it provides a much better income than jobs in their home

countries. As Al Amin says: "Good for money – worse for life." Antwerp, the second largest port in Europe, welcomes 15,000 ocean-going ships every year. The global economy is hugely affected by shipping, as 90% of international trade is shipped by sea. And yet, seafarers are a largely forgotten and isolated community, many of whom aren't even allowed to leave the ship when in port.

That's where the Antwerp Seafarers' Centre comes in, housing a dedicated group of organisations that serve the emotional and practical needs of these seamen in Flanders.

Marc Schippers, whose family name means "son of a shipman", comes from a line of seafarers. He never thought he'd work in the industry, but for the last 10 years, he's been a port chaplain with the Sailors' Society, the oldest of the handful of organisations working from the Seafarers' Centre. Five days a week, Schippers visits ships along Antwerp's left bank, while his

colleagues cover other parts of the large port. Since they meet people from various nationalities and religious affiliations, Schippers lets the seafarers dictate what they want to talk about, whether it's practical information about Antwerp, family concerns or spiritual guidance. The seamen often don't feel comfortable discussing personal issues with their co-workers.

"A port chaplain is an independent person. We aren't union inspectors," says Schippers. "We are seen and respected as someone they can trust, in whom they can confide."

Going on board

During a recent cold, rainy afternoon, Schippers parked his car near the port, and we rode bicycles to reach each ship. On one vessel, the sailors were busy with work and only had time to buy telephone calling cards, one service the chaplains offer.

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FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



Lynn Verrydt

Most Masters' students hope their thesis will be enough to get them through to graduation; Lynn Verrydt hopes one day that her ideas might "make a modest contribution" to a change in international law.

A law student at Ghent University, Verrydt was last month awarded the Flemish Thesis Prize, an annual award worth €2,500, which carries with it prestige and media attention. The prize started in 2002, when it was awarded to three winners. It has since gone to theses on subjects as diverse as sports reporter Karel Van Wynendaele, travelling to and from school in the 1950s and variety theatre productions in Ghent.

Verrydt's thesis deals with the legal liability of companies under criminal law. "Whenever people talk about genocide, war crimes or crimes against humanity, we automatically think of names like Radovan Karadzic, Ratko Mladic or Jean-Pierre Bemba," she said. "But do people also think of multinationals, like Shell, Chevron or Blackwater? Whether as perpetrator or accomplice, companies are also sometimes guilty of such international crimes. But a loophole in international law

makes it impossible to prosecute the entity behind such crimes, even though that is who profits the most."

A weighty question and also a topical one, whether it concerns the widespread use of military contractors in war zones or the inability of any country but Iceland to incarcerate bankers responsible for the financial crisis of 2009.

"I realise the legal liability of corporations will probably remain a judicial fiction," Verrydt admitted. "But it would be nice if my thesis were able to make a modest contribution in support of a new legal model."

Verrydt received the award in the city hall in Ghent from vice-premier Johan Vande Lanotte, himself a jurist by education who has taught part-time at Ghent since 1988. "Here in Flanders we have an extremely valuable raw material with which we can do a great deal: brains and knowledge," he said at the ceremony. "But knowledge can only develop if we share it with each other. The Flemish Thesis Prize allows the remarkable work of young and ambitious researchers to be shown to the wider public."

FLANDERS TODAY

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Hans De Loore

News in brief

Belfius Bank has agreed **not to sell off works from its impressive art collection** until after talks with Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege at the end of January, she told the Flemish parliament. The bank last month said it was considering selling some works to raise money and concentrate the collection, which includes art by Rubens, Magritte and Luc Tuymans, on modern Belgian art. The collection also includes three works listed as top works subject to special protection, Schauvliege said. "Those can't leave the country without my permission, and I have no plans to give it," she said.

An orthodox Jewish girls' school in Antwerp has been ordered by a court to **admit boys or pay a fine of €1,000 a day** for as long as they refuse. The court was ruling on a case brought by a father of three children, two of them boys, who wanted to enrol all three in the school. The director of the school said the premises were not suited to the arrival of boys, and the necessary changes could not be carried out in time.

Major Brigitte Van den Broeck has been appointed **company commander of the Army's medical service**, in charge of 223 medical officers based in Lombardsijde, West Flanders. The first woman to hold the position, major Van den Broeck previously served in Germany, Bosnia and Lebanon, as well as the military hospital in Neder-Over-Heembeek.

Police in Zeebrugge are **searching for a man who went missing** after escaping from a minivan which drove into the sea at the town's harbour. Five other occupants of the vehicle died in the accident. The 22-year-old Romanian was admitted to hospital suffering from hypothermia and

shock, but later disappeared.

The Flemish government has approved a proposal from housing minister Freya Van den Bossche to set up a fund to help **protect tenants threatened with eviction**. The fund would allow a justice of the peace to order landlords to be paid rent arrears in whole or in part, as long as they had signed up to the scheme at a cost of €75 for each tenancy contract. The proposal still has to be approved by the Flemish parliament.

The port authority in Ghent said there was **no risk to public health and safety** from the leak of 200 cubic metres of sulphuric acid, which escaped from a tank in the canal zone, flowing partly into the Ghent-Terneuzen canal. The leak also released fumes into the air, which, according to the fire service, were dangerous within a circle of 10 metres, but were rapidly dispersed by the wind. Water samples taken later 2.5km upstream showed a neutral pH.

More than 100 cafe terraces in the **centre of Brussels could be under threat** from an ordinance from the Brussels-capital Region, obliging cafe owners to obtain a planning permit before putting tables and chairs on the pavement. The rule covers terraces of more than 50 square metres. The regional rule is tougher than the municipal rule operating in Brussels, which imposes a gap of 1.5m for pedestrians to pass unimpeded.

The In Flanders Fields museum in Ypres has **received a bequest of 3,000 photos** from the collection of the brothers Maurice and Robert Antony. The photos date from the first three decades of the 20th century and show the city of Ypres

and the surrounding area as it was before and after the First World War. The museum intends to digitise the glass plate negatives and make prints for exhibitions, the first of which is planned for 2014 as part of the centenary commemorations.

An epidemic of mumps that appeared last Easter among students at Ghent University has now **spread across the country**, with 1,974 cases reported in Flanders to the end of November, the Scientific Institute for Public Health reports. In children, mumps is harmless but can lead to fertility problems in young men. The latest outbreak involved 83 cases from secondary schools in Kortrijk in November.

Emma and Lucas were the **most popular baby names** in Flanders in 2012. With respectively 357 and 327 newborns, the two names held on to their number one slot for a second year.

The Dutch-owned retail chain Hema will not **appeal a ruling from a labour tribunal** in Tongeren awarding six months' salary in compensation to a former employee who was sacked for refusing to work without a head scarf. The tribunal rejected the company's argument that the decision was taken as a result of complaints from customers.

A **baby koala born six months ago** in Planckendael animal park in Mechelen made a public appearance last week, when it peeped out from its mother's pouch for the first time. The baby, whose sex is not yet known, is expected to emerge completely by April, when he or she will be given an Australian aboriginal name beginning with the letter O – the initial for all of Planckendael's new arrivals in 2013.

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Winter wildlife too warm

The weather is a constant cause of complaint, but for those who were here during December, that complaint was justified: The Royal Meteorological Institute (KMI) has confirmed that the last month of 2012 was the wettest December ever. It was also uncharacteristically mild, with an average temperature of 5.1°C, thanks to something called the North Atlantic Oscillation, which measures the fluctuations in atmospheric pressure between two relatively stable end-points: the Icelandic low and the Azores high. Every two or three years, climatologist Luc Debontridder of the KMI recently told VRT, the balance is positive, leading to warmer temperatures



with increased precipitation (commonly known as rain).

Now, while that explanation may cause the eyes to glaze over, the consequences of the phenomenon are more concrete. Bird

watchers,

for instance,

have

should by rights be in the Sahara by now, according to conservancy organisation Natuurpunt.

Natuurpunt is also concerned about the effect of the mild weather on the toad population. Toads that have already come out of their winter sleep to make their way to breeding grounds may not have enough energy to lay their eggs when they get there – if they get there at all. Mild winters in 2006 and 2007 saw the toad population plummet by 40%.

Another possible victim is the brimstone butterfly, which has also been seen already, though it usually doesn't make an appearance before the end of February. The bright yellow butterfly is on the red list of endangered species, and the danger lies in a possible cold snap following the mild spell.

Home away from home

The security code introduced after 9/11 makes it harder for sailors to leave ships at port

► continued from page 1

Aboard other ships, a few sailors on break joined us for coffee and conversation. One seaman shared the strong contrast between his time on another ship and his current employer. Filipino Junrey Mejos says his contract on a previous ship was for \$500 (about €380) a month, and there was little food. The contract, originally for nine months, was extended to 18 months at sea. Hearing this story, Schippers kept repeating: "That's criminal."

While international laws regulate sailors' working conditions, Schippers says that many cases have shown companies taking advantage of seafarers to cut budgets. Mejos' new employer pays more than twice as much as his previous contract, and he can have all the food he wants during meals. Unfortunately, however, this isn't the case for all sailors, and the chaplains are some of the few who hear about the working conditions on board.

"In Antwerp, we keep in contact with local authorities, with companies and with all kinds of services that are involved in maritime in order to help sailors improve their conditions," says Jörg Pfautsch, chaplain with the German Seamen's Mission, also housed in the Antwerp Seafarers' Centre.

A sailor's advocate

This isn't an easy task, since many sailors don't want to come forward with their concerns for fear of being fired. But if a seafarer specifically asks for help, then the chaplains use their connections and become advocates for sailors' rights.

Schippers recalls one case that was "extreme" where "everything went wrong". The living and working conditions were so poor that the crew decided in Antwerp not to get back on the ship. After talking with the shipping company, the crew agreed to go on board again if Schippers stayed with them overnight.

"I spent the night in the third engineer's cabin, and in the morning, my German and English colleagues relieved me," says Schippers.

Something significant or traumatic

may happen to sailors' families while they're at sea, but there isn't anything they can do about it, thousands of kilometres away. This is when confiding in chaplains becomes particularly useful. Schippers has heard stories such as: "We've had a typhoon in the Philippines, and my house is flooded, and I lost all my belongings."

Recently, a shipping company asked Pfautsch to visit a ship after a seafarer died on board. "During certain emotional moments, we stand by them, and they can count on us," says Pfautsch.

Other events are joyful, but the sailor isn't at home to experience it in person. "We met a guy whose wife had a baby five months ago, and he's not going to go home for another four months," says Niklas Borchers, a volunteer with the German Seamen's Mission.

Schippers says he regularly confronts sailors who deal with marital problems, many who become "like strangers" with their spouses.

Medical care and sport

To better cope with these stressful situations, Antwerp doctors and the chaplains are working to promote sailors' physical well-being. Robert Verbist, a doctor at Antwerp's Mediport, which provides medical services to seafarers, has collaborated with the chaplains, asking them to bring preventive health-care information on board the ships.

"We've had great support from the welfare committees in Antwerp," he says. Verbist also teaches at the Antwerp Maritime Academy and has been affiliated with the International Committee on Seafarers' Welfare; he would like to see more opportunities for sailors to exercise.

"It's not easy to stay in good physical condition, not with the work they have to do, and there are not many facilities on board," explains Verbist. One way the Seafarers' Centre is tackling this issue is by collaborating with the Antwerp Port Authority to offer sports near the port from



Deacon Jörg Pfautsch (right) helps lead traditional German holiday songs at the Seafarers' Centre on Christmas Eve

mid-April to mid-October. While it's not always easy getting sailors to play sports with what little free time they have, the chaplains have had some success in organising matches. "It is just amazing to see how much sport is reducing their stress," says Borchers. "They take part with their co-workers and have a really good time. Sport is exertion on a completely different level than work."

As a sailor's work also can be dangerous, sometimes they seek medical care after an accident. "If a seafarer is hospitalised in Antwerp for any reason, we always get in touch with one of the chaplains or volunteers, so they can visit them regularly and offer support," explains Verbist.

Even the chaplains have to be careful, as Schippers learned when he first started his work in Antwerp. "When my port vehicle was only four months old, a forklift slammed into it," he says. "It was quite dramatic."

Evolving industry

With increasing technology, security regulations and cost-cutting



Ship workers have access to free Wi-Fi at the Antwerp Seafarers' Centre

measures, the shipping industry and the work of the chaplains have seen significant changes in the last few decades.

About 25 years ago, ships were at the port for longer periods, meaning seafarers had more time to go into the city for fun, says Pfautsch. Now, since many ships have a 24-hour or less turnaround, sailors might not go ashore for months at a time.

The Antwerp Seafarers' Centre, located in the centre on one of the city's busiest streets, the Italiëlei, used to have longer hours, but now it's only open in the evenings from 19.00 to 23.00. With fewer hours, the chaplains spend more time on

the road trying to visit most of the 30 to 50 ships coming to Antwerp every day. This makes the work more "dynamic," says Schippers, as he doesn't know ahead of time how many ships will be at the port on a given day.

"You never know what you're going to encounter," he says. Schippers believes that the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, introduced after 9/11, has also contributed to restricting sailors' ability to enter cities their ships visit. This code now makes it more difficult to get in and out of ports.

► www.tinyurl.com/antwerpseafarerscentre

CHRISTMAS IN PORT



Chaplain Marc Schippers (left) of the Sailors' Society talks to Indonesian seafarer Mohamad Al Amin, who is away from his family nine months of every year

While not as many sailors get a chance to visit Antwerp when at port as in the past, there are still those who find some time to leave their ships. Thanks to a free nightly bus service financed by the Port Authority, seafarers can go to the Antwerp Seafarers' Centre to have a drink, buy a few commonly needed items, talk with chaplains and fellow sailors and go online. Many sailors don't have access to the internet on board, so this allows them to video chat with their families.

The chaplains also organise events, the biggest being the annual Christmas Eve service. In December, about 100 seafarers attended a mass led by the chaplains, who are from a variety of Christian denominations. After the service, Schippers dons a Santa suit and goes around the room asking sailors to sing songs from their home countries. Volunteers also hand out gifts and food.

While being far away from home during the holidays is particularly difficult for many sailors, they could be seen smiling and laughing together on that recent evening in the centre of Antwerp.

© photos: Angela Chambers

Funding for digital heritage archive

Institute will look after a “treasure trove” of audio-visual material

Alan Hope

The government of Flanders has announced funding in the amount of €11.8 million for a Flemish Institute for Archiving and Retrieval of Audio-visual Heritage (VIAA). The project will be coordinated by the non-profit Waalse Krook in Ghent and the work carried out by iMinds. iMinds will receive a one-time subsidy of €7.8 million, while the infrastructure costs will be picked up by the culture and media ministries.

“We have such a treasure trove of audio-visual material in Flanders; it’s high time we kept it in a systematic and sustainable manner for this and future generations,” said media minister Ingrid Lieten.

Culture minister Joke Schauvliege, meanwhile, paid a visit to the Fine



Arts Museum in Ghent last week to see the restoration of the Van Eyck brothers’ masterpiece “The

Adoration of the Mystic Lamb” (pictured). The altarpiece is being restored at a cost of €1.4 million,

80% of which is paid by the Flemish government. The rest is being financed by Sint-Baaf’s Cathedral, where the painting is normally housed and where it will return after the five-year project is completed. Members of the public can follow the restoration work at the museum during opening hours.

In other heritage news, Herita, the Flemish heritage association launched last September, has named Kristl Strubbe as its director-general. Strubbe was until recently the IT and finance alderwoman in Mechelen. Herita brought together three previously disparate organisations in the field: Heritage Flanders, the Forum for Heritage Associations and Open Monument Day.

Poverty test to apply to new legislation

The government of Flanders will apply a “poverty test” to all new measures introduced to consider possible detrimental effects of legislation on those living on lower incomes. The so-called “quick scan” will consider the impact of any new measure particularly on single-parent families.

“The test will examine systematically whether new measures help cause social exclusion or create poverty,” said minister Ingrid Lieten, whose portfolio includes the fight against poverty. Following

the results of the quick scan, further more detailed analysis of the impact can be carried out.

According to figures for Belgium as a whole, some 15% of the population lives at or below the poverty line, with the figure jumping to 24% among young people in cities. “Very worrying,” commented Flanders’ minister-president Kris Peeters. “That sort of polarisation shouldn’t be happening here ... So many young people with no prospect of work, a family and a normal life is a betrayal of the future.”

Brussels’ new parking policy open for discussion

The Brussels-Capital Region has proposed a new parking policy that would create one single system, throughout the 19 communes. The plan divides parking policy into four zones. The red zone is for busy shopping areas, where parking is limited to a maximum of two hours, at a price for the first hour of €2. The orange zone is for local shopping areas, with a two-hour limit, but at a price of only €1 for the first hour. The green zone covers all other areas, with no time limit and a price of €1 for the first hour. Finally, the blue zone is reserved for otherwise green areas where there is regular rotation of parking. Here, there is a two-hour limit,

but parking is free with the blue parking disc.

“This plan provides for a fair and equitable treatment for all drivers in Brussels,” said the region’s mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels. “I’m absolutely convinced that better mobility increases the quality of Brussels life, improves the accessibility of the city for commuters and improves the quality of the shopping experience in the city.” The proposed policy is open to public comment from 21 January to 21 March, and can be consulted at any town hall in Brussels or online.

► www.tinyurl.com/parkingbrussels

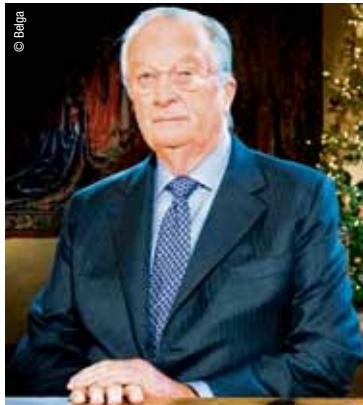
Majority of Flemings critical of king’s speech

Two-thirds of Flemings think that King Albert was specifically referring to the N-VA when he warned of “populist discourse” in his annual Christmas speech, while more than 60% thought the sovereign’s reference to the danger of a repeat of the experience of the 1930s was inappropriate.

The king, who is supposed to remain politically neutral, said: “We have to remain vigilant and see clearly through populist discourse, which always looks for a scapegoat for the crisis, whether it’s among foreigners

or among compatriots from the other half of the country ... The crisis of the 1930s and the populist reactions it gave rise to, cannot be forgotten.” A slim majority of the respondents to a poll carried out for *Het Laatste Nieuws* agreed with a call from N-VA president Bart De Wever that the king should no longer play a role in negotiations to form a new government. When the federal parliament returns to session this week, prime minister Elio Di Rupo will be pressed for an explanation of how he could commit his

government to statements only he was aware of and which his own cabinet chief later denounced. Following the speech, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters stated that he had been taken by surprise by the passage and that Di Rupo should be prepared to have a “good explanation” for the remarks. Di Rupo has so far declined to give an explanation, other than to point out that no party was referred to by name. In an interview with *De Zondag* newspaper last weekend, he called N-VA a “dangerous party”.



THE WEEK IN FIGURES

€643,000

funding from the Flemish Programme for Rural Development for eight demonstration projects on an integrated approach to crop protection, antibiotic use and alternatives to the surgical castration of piglets

€3.19 million

for increased security on the Brussels public transport network MIVB, announced by mobility minister Brigitte Grouwels. The measures include an increase in staff numbers, as well as equipment including security cameras

235,000

jobs in the tourism sector in Brussels and Flanders, or 6.7% of all jobs in the two regions, according to figures from Flemish tourism minister Geert Bourgeois. The figure includes 51,000 self-employed people and 2,500 student jobs

50,000

new blood donors to give blood up to four times a year, sought by the Flemish Red Cross in a new campaign. Some 70% of people need blood at some point in their lives, yet only 3% of Flemings give blood regularly

66,822

births in hospitals in Flanders in 2012, compared to 67,803 in 2011. Only in Flemish Brabant did the total number of births increase, from 9,452 to 9,534, according to figures from the Study Centre for Perinatal Epidemiology

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

The cordon, again

The recent local elections have made the far-right Vlaams Belang nearly irrelevant, with only 10% of the vote. Paradoxically, in some towns this has made the party the centre of attention, making it relevant again.

Vlaams Belang has long been a fascination to people outside of Belgium. Here, the party has raised many questions, too, mostly about how other parties should behave towards it. Because of its views on immigration and Islam, Vlaams Belang has always been excluded from power by the other parties. This is called the *cordon sanitaire*: an informal agreement between all of Flanders’ other political parties not to sign a coalition agreement with Vlaams Belang, for ethical reasons.

The *cordon*, which has been in place since the 1990s, has had a double effect on Vlaams Belang. For a long time, it was its lifeline. The *cordon* made the party an outcast, giving it an anti-establishment appeal that attracted more votes (similar to what is currently happening to N-VA).

Over time though, some Vlaams Belang politicians grew tired of the opposition (and lack of opposition internally) and left. One of them, Karim Van Overmeire, is now an alderman in Aalst for N-VA, although he remains a controversial figure. The internal turmoil and the competition of N-VA on issues such as nationalism have left Vlaams Belang gasping for breath. The fact that Gerolf Annemans, one of the founding figures, took over as president recently says much in this respect. Vlaams Belang no longer attracts ambitious young politicians.

Still, even after receiving a near knockout, the *cordon* is again the talk of the town. In several towns, Vlaams Belang representatives managed to gain a seat in the social or police councils. This can only happen with the support of representatives of another party, which is promptly accused of a breach of the *cordon sanitaire*. A grave accusation, although the impact is minimal, and, strictly speaking, the *cordon* remains intact.

In Denderleeuw, East Flanders, the situation is slightly different. Two possible coalitions (SPA/Open VLD and N-VA/CD&V) both lack a majority. Because the water between the respective parties is too deep, Vlaams Belang has offered to “support” N-VA/CD&V “from the opposition”, much like Geert Wilders’ party supported the previous – short-lived – Dutch government. The Dutch experiment shows that there is little hope for success in this. And knowing that the *cordon* has lasted for over two decades, we would not bet on this scenario either.

The future's bright

The Living Tomorrow project provides a vision of innovative homes, products and services

Alan Hope

What's the essence of the shop of the future? "Give the customer what they want," replied Jef Colruyt, CEO of the supermarket chain. The line got a laugh from those gathered for the launch of a new programme of investment announced by Living Tomorrow, but it perfectly encapsulates the simple vision of Colruyt, the no-frills supermarket that has won numerous awards.

In practice, the store of tomorrow is already upon us: You probably spent more this year on Christmas presents bought online than at picturesque Christmas markets, and the trend is for more and more shopping – including grocery shopping – to move online.

Colruyt is one of the strategic partners of Living Tomorrow, set up in Vilvoorde in 1993 as a sort of practical think-tank where businesses could work on innovative products and services. From their original House of the Future (*pictured*), they've turned their attention to the shops, hotels, offices and care homes of the future.

"Living Tomorrow was a pioneer in open innovation, offering a platform where companies call on each other's strengths to launch new products and services," explains Frank Beliën, founder and chair. Since its beginnings, the centre (with offshoots in Amsterdam and Hasselt) has worked with 400 companies and welcomed more



than three million visitors.

Hotel experience

The discussion with Colruyt took place at an event last month, addressed by prime minister Elio Di Rupo and attended by other partners as well as former prime minister Jean-Luc Dehaene, also

former mayor of Vilvoorde and a supporter of the project since its inception. The group announced an investment of €61 million and the creation of 120 jobs. One of the first signs of the new Road Map 2020, as the project is called, will be the first Care Centre of the Future in Heusden-Zolder in Limburg,

opening in June as home to 200 elderly residents in a facility of 16,000 square metres.

"We're putting the emphasis on comfort; we want to provide a hotel experience to the 200 seniors living in the centre," says Joachim De Vos, director general of Living Tomorrow. "In the next

three years, we'll be putting at least 40,000 policymakers from the health-care sector in contact with 70 companies, so they can co-develop new products and try them out in the Care Centre of the Future. Through this Living Lab, we want to connect with companies, policymakers and senior citizens to tackle the challenges of the future." In his speech, the prime minister stressed the importance of innovation, which he said, "provides the added value that turns a good product into an excellent product. Innovation makes the difference between a high-quality product or service and a high-quality product or service that consumers desire. Our products and services should not always be the cheapest, but they should be the most innovative, most efficient and most customer-oriented."

Belgium needs "more entrepreneurs who take the leap", he continued, "who innovate and invest in their staff. Today we see the start of a new chapter in the innovative success story that Living Tomorrow is. I am convinced that Living Tomorrow will act even more as a hub, bringing together everyone seeking to turn innovation into the driving force behind our economy. I hope that this Living Tomorrow project will continue to act as a catalyst for new ideas and innovative cross-fertilisation for many years to come."

Streamlined energy

A trial project connects intelligent meters and household appliances in Genk

Thirty families in Genk will do their dishes and laundry with the highest standards of energy efficiency this year thanks to smart meters and appliances. The trial project by grid manager Infrax and energy research institute EnergyVille is part of the broader Linear initiative that streamlines the use of renewable energy in Flemish homes. In future, the spread of electricity consumption should lead to different energy rates during the day and lower costs for both households and suppliers.

Electricity is becoming more expensive, and suppliers are predicting problems during peak times if we don't change our behaviour. Combining smart meters with smart appliances can be part of the solution. This intelligent technology network figures out when there is a surplus of renewable energy – when energy should be at its cheapest – and then starts, for example, the



Wim Dries, mayor of Genk, where 30 households are trying out the intelligent energy system

dishwasher or washing machine. The boiler heats the water at the most favourable moment, while making sure there is always warm

water available. As energy suppliers currently only apply simple day and night rates, the financial advantages for participants will be limited to the energy they save thanks to the efficiency of the modern appliances. But the method should encourage suppliers to establish different energy rates during the day, which would reduce energy costs.

Infrax spokesman Jos Liebens explains the advantages: "We cannot control the natural elements, but we can better balance the energy production and consumption of solar and wind power. Spreading the usage makes green energy cheaper and avoids the current peaks in demand that create expensive problems for providers and during which energy supply could be put in jeopardy."

Smart thinking

The trial project in Genk, where EnergyVille is based, is now

testing how households adapt to this technology. Infrax and EnergyVille have installed smart meters, dishwashers, washing machines, tumble dryers and boilers in 30 homes in the district of Bret-Gelieren. The team of the large-scale Linear project, which integrates intelligent electricity networks in Flanders, will evaluate the impact of the appliances on their daily lives.

"The technology is user-friendly – just as easy as obtaining money from a cash dispenser – but requires better planning," says Liebens. Instead of doing a quick wash whenever you have time, you should programme the machine in advance to finish at a certain point, for example when you return from work. At the end of the experiment, the households can buy the appliances at a considerably reduced price and will receive a detailed breakdown of their consumption behaviour. Genk mayor Wim Dries adds:

"The choice of Bret-Gelieren is not accidental. Besides the fact that many households have solar panels, there were also all the technical conditions of the electricity mains." Apart from the appliances, the participants will have an electric car at their disposal for 10 weeks. They can programme the efficient charging of the battery with a tablet computer. The car is provided by the Living Lab Electric Vehicles programme, which facilitates and accelerates the innovation and adoption of electric vehicles in Flanders.

Since October, Infrax has been installing 10,000 smart meters at households in 16 municipalities across Flanders, while its larger counterpart Eandis is installing 40,000. The Linear project runs from 2009 to 2014 and unites about 20 partners. The total budget is €40 million, of which the Flemish government has contributed €10 million. AH

THE WEEK
IN BUSINESS

Autos ▶ Sales down

Approximately 487,000 new cars were sold last year in Belgium, a 15% drop on the record 2011 result. Market leader Volkswagen was 15.8% lower, while runners-up Renault and Peugeot dropped 25 and 18% respectively.

Chocolate
▶ Leonidas

Brussels-based chocolate and praline producer Leonidas is to open outlets in several Middle East and Asian airports to capitalise on fast-growing demand worldwide for Belgian chocolates. The company will develop a range of duty-free products to sell in the new stores.

Electronics ▶ Barco

The Kortrijk-based cinema electronics and video equipment producer has acquired a 61% stake in the Norwegian Projectiondesign company, which specialises in projection technology.

Ports ▶ Antwerp

The Oman-based Port of Duqm company, a 50%-owned affiliate of the Port of Antwerp Consortium, has won a 28-year lease to further develop a port, an airport, a new city and associated tourist activities in Duqm. Dredging company Jan De Nul has already cleared the port's access channel, and additional contracts worth some \$600 million are in negotiation.

Produce ▶ Univeg

Fruit and vegetables handling and distribution company Univeg is seeking to further develop its activities in France, Britain, the US and Asia. The company, based in Sint-Katelijne-Waver, Antwerp Province, already has supply contracts with 19 of the 20 largest European supermarket groups.

Retail ▶ Neo

The war between three competing shopping centres in the northern Brussels area is hotting up with the presentation of the 72,000 square-metre Neo project. Three international developers have been shortlisted: the UK-based Hammerson group, the French Klepierre and the Franco-Dutch Unibail-Rodamco. The other projects Uplace centre in Machelen and Just Under The Sky near Laken – are at various stages of the administrative approval procedure.

Telecom
▶ Mobile Vikings

Hasselt-based mobile telecoms company Mobile Vikings is expanding its operation in Holland and expects to reach a 2% share in mobile internet services over the next two years.

Freight down last year in Flemish ports

Antwerp and Zeebrugge plan closer cooperation in 2013

Alan Hope

The port of Antwerp handled slightly less freight in 2012 compared to 2011 – a reduction of 1.8% to 183.8 million tonnes, according to figures released by the port authority at the end of December. The main reasons for the slowdown were a fall in the amount of break bulk cargo and the temporary closure of Belgian Refining Corporation. Traffic in steel products was also down.

Fewer ships – 14,593 compared to 15,206 – called at Antwerp in 2012, though more of those were bigger as a result of the dredging of the Westerschelde channel leading from the sea to the port, providing access to larger ships.

For Eddy Bruyninckx, director-general of the port authority, the results are a translation of the overall maritime economic climate but show that Antwerp is still doing better than many other ports. "We



have strengthened our competitive position, and massive investment in tank storage will ensure growth in the coming year," he said.

At Zeebrugge, meanwhile, things were worse, with a 7% fall in the amount of freight handled, to 43.6

million tonnes. All three main sectors showed a decrease: 4% in roll-on/roll-off freight (such as cars), 10.6% in container services and 7% in liquid bulk. Managing director Joachim Coens said the result was "a combination of various factors,"

notably a corresponding decrease in activity in the UK, Zeebrugge's main partner. The port was also affected by a 21% drop in trade coming from Asia.

On the upside, the volume of cars passing through Zeebrugge remained stable, while break bulk – mainly paper and pulp coming from Brazil through Zeebrugge to Scandinavia for processing, then back for export to the US – increased by 17%.

The two ports plan to work together more closely in the future, Bruyninckx said, for example by presenting integrated services to customers in Asia to better compete with Rotterdam and Hamburg. Rotterdam, the main competitor to Antwerp, saw a record 442 million tonnes of freight passing through in 2012, an increase of 1.7%. The main source of growth was an increase in the traffic in petroleum products.

Government produces economic "quick win" list

The Flemish government has drawn up a list of 27 "quick-win" suggestions intended to provide a stimulus to the local economy. The list includes suggestions from outside sources, following an invitation issued by minister-president Kris Peeters last September. Peeters asked unions and employers to generate ideas that could be implemented quickly and have rapid effects.

"I received dozens of suggestions," said Peeters. "It was a very useful exercise, and I greatly appreciate the suggestions submitted. As promised, I've studied the suggestions. Some of them have already been adopted by the government. We intend to go to work on others."

A selection of the 27 quick-win ideas:

- The government pledges to pay its own bills within 30 days of receipt – a perennial problem for small businesses. In the first quarter of 2012, according to the

government's own figures, just over 19% of bills were still unpaid after that deadline, down from 33% in 2010

- Delineate commercial city centre areas and establish an investment fund to help keep centres alive and functioning
- Launch a system of crowdfunding in Flanders on the model of Kickstarter in the US, which has seen spectacular results in the funding of new products and services
- Improve bankruptcy protection, an issue for which Flanders has already set aside €5 million for a call for projects
- Increase the scope of the win-win loan system, which gives a tax break to anyone making a loan to the business of a friend or relative, up to a value of €50,000. The scheme was extended last year from start-ups to all small businesses, and now Peeters wants to extend the amount a business can raise in this manner from €100,000 to €200,000

NMBS data leak was breach of privacy

The Privacy Commission is investigating a leak of customer information from the rail authority NMBS that left the personal details of thousands of members of the public open online. Nearly 2,000 people have so far lodged a complaint against the leak, which was caused, the NMBS said, by a data worker "clicking on the wrong button". Commission chairman Willem Debeuckelaere said that the explanation given by the NMBS "sounds plausible. But we will be examining this version, as well as a report commissioned from a consultancy by the NMBS, more closely, to see if this version of events is correct."

Whether by accident or not, the commission has stated that the NMBS is responsible for breach of privacy of the customers affected – an estimated 700,000 people – including names, addresses and email addresses. The data, which were open for consultation on

an unsecured server, were later copied by someone and placed on another site.

The commission will now file a report with the federal prosecutor, who must decide whether to take legal action and against whom. One of the copies was used by the site www.sncb.fredericjacobs.com to allow members of the public to check if their own details were part of the package leaked onto the net. The NMBS said the site was not an official initiative and stressed that any dissemination of private information was illegal.

Meanwhile, the ministry of defence was investigating another data leak, this time of an internal directory of about 500 staff at the ministry, giving names, functions and contact details. The leak was revealed by a blogger, who said he had been able to download the 37-page document simply via Google.

New laws and regulations for 2013

New noise limits come into force for concerts, aimed at protecting audiences from hearing damage. The rules impose a limit of 100 decibels, the use of measuring apparatus and the provision of free earplugs in cases where noise is louder than 95 decibels.

Unpaid traffic fines will now be passed along to the tax authorities to allow them to obtain the money owing, instead of passing through the police court, a procedure that often took years.

Duty on alcohol and cigarettes

goes up, adding 4c to the price of a bottle of wine and 20c to a pack of cigarettes. The price of postage also goes up, as does the cost of service cheques.

Flanders introduces a premium worth up to half of the employment costs for two years for companies who engage a worker over the age of 50. The premium varies according to the employee's age and length of unemployment.

Federal government services must give preference to handicapped applicants in cases where

questions of competence are equal. The rule covers all ministries, including defence, as well as the federal police.

The over-65s lose their right to free travel on the Brussels public transport network MIVB. From February, seniors will have to pay €60 for an annual pass. Meanwhile, the over-65s in Flanders will later in the year receive a new Omnipas giving access to De Lijn, MIVB, the rail network and the Walloon TEC network. Existing travel passes will be extended automatically.



Double indemnity: wine and cigarettes

Clean transition

i-Cleantech Vlaanderen unites innovative projects that use clean technology

Andy Furniere

Flemish companies and policymakers are already undertaking various innovative cleantech initiatives, but the umbrella organisation i-Cleantech Vlaanderen is pooling this experience to improve cooperation and inform the public about the results.

i-Cleantech Vlaanderen, which was launched in October, has the task of making sure that scientific breakthroughs lead to more products for the market. By advancing the integration of this technology into society, the organisation aims to stimulate the transition towards a more sustainable world.

Flanders is recognised abroad as an influential region in the development of cleantech – technology that reduces the use of natural resources, lowers emissions and cuts wastes – as recent international awards and media attention (see sidebar) show. “But until now, the cleantech actors have been floating under the radar here,” says Bart Vercoutere, managing director of i-Cleantech.

With the Flemish government and about 50 cleantech players, i-Cleantech focuses on four areas: energy, materials, mobility and water management. “We bring together government figures, research organisations, the business world and civil society to create an efficient collaboration network,” says chairman Peter Tom Jones.

From lab to market

Flanders excels at innovative

research but often fails to bridge the gap to the market. “It’s remarkable that, for example, revolutionary fuel cells, which create clean electricity, are developed here, but there is no company producing the technology for the market,” says Vercoutere. This lack of enterprising activity is the reason that Flanders did not rank higher than (a still respectable) 15th place in the first Global Cleantech Index.

To make sure more breakthroughs in research materialise into concrete products and measures, i-Cleantech will encourage demonstration projects to test whether an idea is suitable to be implemented or commercialised.

The ultimate goal is to make the planet more sustainable. “To integrate cleantech in our mobility system, a thorough reorganisation will be necessary, which also requires considerable involvement of policymakers and a mentality change among the general population,” says Vercoutere. He also foresees a future in which each community has its own 3D printing shop where you can manufacture objects in an eco-friendly way.

“Local initiatives towards a cleaner world, such as the Limburg Climate Fund, can easily be applied on a broader scale if experience is exchanged at our forum,” adds Jones. The Limburg Climate Fund invests in projects that contribute to the realisation of a climate-neutral Limburg. All *Limburgers* can become



Chairman Peter Tom Jones at the i-Cleantech Vlaanderen launch event

a shareholder by investing at least €100 and benefit from the resulting profits. The umbrella organisation has established specific cooperation frameworks with partners in each province: so-called Cleantech antennas.

Rising to the challenge

Why is cleantech so essential for the coming generations? “Everybody is already noticing how energy is becoming more expensive and how the current mobility systems create huge problems. Many raw materials are becoming increasingly scarce, especially in Europe, and soon the price of water will also rise,” says Vercoutere.

However, cleantech is not only a solution to prevent difficulties: It also provides economic possibilities. “Many large companies in classic

industry sectors, such as car manufacturer Ford, will be replaced by smaller, flexible and innovative companies that will be less inclined to just move their activities to other countries in challenging times.”

The Flemish government has attributed an annual budget of about €900,000 to i-Cleantech Vlaanderen in the first years. The idea is to become self-sufficient, through membership fees. The organisation will also manage the €24 million budget of the Flemish government’s Environmental and Energy Technology Innovation Platform, which puts out calls for projects in the cleantech field in need of funding. The main offices of i-Cleantech are at the GreenVille incubator in Houthalen-Helchteren, Limburg.

► www.i-cleantechvlaanderen.be

THE WEEK IN SCI & ED

Nanotechnology research centre imec has signed a cooperation agreement with Kuwait University for the creation of **innovative silicon solar cell technologies**. Researchers from both institutions will work at imec’s campus in Leuven. Kuwait University has expertise in simulation and technology-modelling, which are essential to determine the best research policy for future technology. The scientists of imec will organise training sessions and seminars in Kuwait on solar cells and renewable energy in general.

Walter Van Doninck, physics professor at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) started his term as **vice-president of the board** of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) on 1 January. Located in Geneva, CERN is the research laboratory in the field of elementary particles that owns the world’s most powerful particle accelerator, the Large Hadron Collider. Last summer, the centre made international headlines with the discovery of the Higgs boson particle. Van Doninck has been involved in experiments at CERN since 1992.

Research from the Laboratory of Toxicology at the University of Leuven shows that the venom of sea anemones could be used to develop **environmentally friendly insecticides and painkillers**. After testing proteins from the venom, researchers discovered that its natural toxins were far more deadly for insects than artificial insecticides such as DDT, and they had a pain-relieving effect on mammals. The venom could also be useful in the treatment of diseases such as epilepsy and multiple sclerosis.

Education minister Pascal Smet is investing €4 million in a trial project that examines ways to **improve the marks of students in so-called concentratiescholen** – schools with a high percentage of students with a foreign background. Over the next five years, a team of coaches will work with 13 primary schools.

Two new colleges have been created in Antwerp and West Flanders. Artesis and Plantijn join together to become the AP University College in Antwerp, which will house more than 9,000 students next year. In West Flanders, the new Catholic University Vives unites Katho and KHBO, providing education for about 13,000 students. Vives is a reference to Juan Luis Vives, an influential Spanish scholar who lived in Flanders for much of his life.

FRONTRUNNERS FROM FLANDERS

Leuven-based venture capitalist **Capricorn** received the Cleantech Fund of the Year award at the 10th Investor AllStars Awards in London. Capricorn’s Cleantech Fund, with €112 million under management, invests in European growth companies developing innovative breakthrough technologies in a range of cleantech areas. Capricorn played an important role in bringing American chemical company FRX Polymers to the port of Antwerp.

Three Flemish companies specialising in clean technology – Waterleau, Ducatt and Emrol – were finalists for the Global Top 30 Later Stage Awards 2012 of the Global Cleantech Cluster Association. **Waterleau** – in Herent, near Leuven, and dealing in water, air and waste treatment and energy recovery – was named the world’s best cleantech company in the category of water treatment. The company’s new water treatment plant in Marrakesh was a decisive factor, with the jury

describing it as “the most advanced plant of its kind on the African continent”.

The Economist dedicated an extensive article to the first magnet-free engine for the electric car industry, created by **Inverto**, a technology spin-off of Ghent University. The engine is made of brass and tin, while current electric engines need magnets made of neodymium, which is mainly derived from China and is becoming more expensive.

Q&A

Jorg Sacré is coordinator of the studio engineer programme at the new campus of Limburg University College (PHL Music), Flanders’ only school dedicated to rock and pop music

Why did Limburg University College start this programme?

The idea was inspired by the music industry. The recording business has become more and more professional, and the education we offer is a catalyst in this process. Many people working in studios have eventually acquired a professional profile by following lots of different paths of specialisation and training. The education at PHL Music leads students to that market with the correct profile right away. Classes include recording, mixing, editing, studio techniques – and the right attitude, like working with strict deadlines.

How did you train students before the new campus opened?

PHL Music’s engineer education kicked off in 2008 – at that time, students only had limited possibilities for studio practice, and PHL Music rented studio time with professional recording studios. In 2009, the school management started thinking about investing in a professional studio environment for PHL Music’s students. The new music campus, with an area of 1,600 square metres, features classrooms, meeting rooms, fully equipped rehearsal rooms and a double recording studio. Students can record sessions with bands from PHL’s pop/rock education as working material.

How many students are taking the classes?

The PHL Music studio engineer course is quite popular – only a selection of 13 to 15 students out of 200 entries are allowed in the first year of the three-year course, costing €500 per year, excluding manuals and equipment. A group of six lecturers lead the students through the dos and don’ts of studio life. And that’s the strength of the education: We actually don’t have professors in the classical sense – the lecturers switch their own studios with the classrooms, giving first-hand practical advice. This was also specified in the mission statement: a relevant, down-to-earth education that

is on top of new developments.

Interview by Marc Maes

► www.phl.be





ARRIVING AT ELLIS ISLAND

RED STAR LINE MUSEUM GRAND OPENING

ANTWERP, SEPT. 27TH 2013

Between 1873 and 1935 more than 2 million passengers boarded the Red Star Line in search of a better life on the other side of the ocean. On the historical site where the ships left the continent behind, the city of Antwerp is restoring the original buildings that will tell the story of those courageous emigrants. Help us keep alive the memory of the Red Star Line and its passengers.

**HELP US BUILD A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE USA AND EUROPE.
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More information: www.redstarline.org



STAD ANTWERPEN



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Hello, goodbye

Users of the new social network Hello My Dear can create diaries, biographies and life stories

Andy Furniere

Over the holidays, you probably looked back on last year with friends and family and may have reminisced about someone no longer present. On the website Hello My Dear, you can now gather these memories together and illustrate them with pictures and home movies.

The founders have developed an "intimate media" platform, a serene spot for a close-knit circle of friends and family, without the superficial likes or tweets of other social media.

When a friend and colleague of Karolien Emmers passed away, she looked in vain for a digital place where she had more space to honour his inspiring life than in a condolence register or card. "Both of us also felt a strong need to preserve the life stories of our grandparents," says Sarah Callens, who established Hello My Dear with her friend Emmers.

The two Flemings felt that social media such as Facebook were inadequate because of the flippancy of the conversations, the gathering of "likes", the advertising and the games. Their website, launched two months ago on 1 November, is an example of "intimate media", where you share emotionally valuable information with a limited group of family and friends on a platform without commercial or entertainment elements.

They discussed the project among their own circles and visited rest homes, where they were met

with much interest. "The need to transmit your life story is universal and timeless," says Callens, who lives in Brussels. "Just as cavemen left rock inscriptions, we now leave an advanced digital print."

Getting to know you

You can structure a lively timeline on Hello My Dear with photos, slides, postcards, audio fragments and video. By inviting people to comment, you expand everybody's knowledge of the subject's personal history, while at the same time improving contacts within the circle. Callens, for example, discovered that her grandmother once worked at a factory producing Cuban cigars and at a company creating tan products from chicory. "Such tales bring more colour into her life story," she says.

Hello My Dear brings together people who can't often talk in person. One woman created an online portrait of her grandson, who lives in the United States, as a Christmas gift. "They could reminisce about his childhood at Christmas dinner and, when he is away again, he can keep family and friends up to date with his own illustrations of life over there," explains Callens.

Apart from holidays, occasions for making a portrait are weddings, anniversaries and funerals – when life is celebrated or mourned. To help the mourning process, Callens and Emmers are also collaborating with Kamo, a Flemish company that



Create your own digital scrapbook or one for a loved one who has passed away on Hello My Dear

provides QR codes for gravestones or urns. When scanning the code with a smartphone, you are directed to their portrait on Hello My Dear or the person's own website.

Digital diaries

The website can serve as a meeting place, but there are many different possibilities. The family of a woman with dementia, for instance, is using the website not only to provide the children with a multi-layered view of their grandma's life but also to stimulate her memory. A woman in her 30s uses it as a modern diary, documenting the important events of her life in a private portrait that only she can access.

Emmers and Callens are creating an interactive biography of the contemporary Flemish cartoonist Gerard Alsteens (better known as GAL), and museums and universities are interested in



Preserving life stories: Hello My Dear founders Karolien Emmers (left) and Sarah Callens

using Hello My Dear as a tool for visualising history.

The founders regularly organise workshops for anyone interested and start projects in schools where children can create a portrait

for and with their grandparents. Currently, the website is only in Dutch, but an English version is in the works.

► www.hellomydear.be

Snoozing on the Scheldt

People are flocking to a pop-up hotel that puts you inside a cargo container for the night

Dan Smith

Since they were first introduced in the 1950s, shipping containers have revolutionised the transport of cargo. Today millions of containers are in service, transporting goods back and forth across the globe. But as Europe's economy stagnates and exports diminish, more and more containers are being stockpiled in ports such as Antwerp.

While the containers can be scrapped for their steel, some clever entrepreneurs are looking at ways to reuse them for other purposes. One of the most innovative is Geoffrey Stampaert who has founded Sleeping Around, a four-room pop-up hotel which, for now, can be found on the banks of the Scheldt in Antwerp.

The idea grew when Stampaert, who owns the boutique hotel Les Nuits in Antwerp, saw that his cousin had refurbished an old shipping container and used it as a hospitality suite at events. That container now forms the "kitchen



pod" of the first Sleeping Around hotel. With its view of the wide bend of the Scheldt and St Anna's Beach, the pod is the perfect place to enjoy a leisurely breakfast and watch the world sail by.

Sleeping Around consists of seven pods, or pods, which can be installed and functional within about five hours of arriving at a site. The bedrooms are complemented by the kitchen pod, a sauna pod and a

technical container, which includes a 3,000-litre water filtration plant. The kitchen and rooms have been created from open-sided containers that have sliding glass doors on one side. Furnished to a high standard, the bedrooms include a large double bed and en-suite bathrooms. Each of the spaces is centrally heated, making them comfortable and relaxing, even on the cold winter's day of my visit.

About 100 people have stayed at the hotel so far. "It's been a mix of locals and tourists," says Stampaert. "Wherever they come from, the reaction has been overwhelmingly positive."

While this is the first time Sleeping Around has been fully deployed, it surely will not be the last. "Our objective with this location has been to start slowly and prove the concept," says Stampaert. The "village" of pods will stay on the Scheldt for a couple more weeks before Sleeping Around moves to a new site, probably in a different

city. With its own water system and the possibility to run on solar or wind energy, there are no limits on locations.

"We want people to suggest local places that they know of with a great view or something unique to offer – and not just in Belgium," says Stampaert. "For example, it would be very easy to establish the hotel in a vineyard in Spain or on a beach in Africa."

Event organisers who need accommodation for visitors are also welcome to get in touch. "All we need is a willing landowner, and we can set up." While the current village has four rooms, the Sleeping Around concept can be easily scaled-up to accommodate more people.

With travellers seeking new experiences and locations, the concept is sure to be popular. Keep an eye on the website in case Sleeping Around pops up in a place you've always wanted to stay.

► www.sleepingaround.eu

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TESTAMENT

She She Pop (Germany)

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PERSONA. MARILYN

Krystian Lupa (Poland)

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Selir Tiyatroları

Prints charming

Meet the Anglo-Saxon publisher putting Flanders on the ultra-competitive literary market

Nicholas Hirst

Dalkey Archive Press, a niche literary publishing house with offices in the US, Dublin and London, has an unusually large collection of Flemish literature. It has translated and published several books by both deceased and contemporary local heroes such as Louis Paul Boon, Daniël Robberechts and Paul Verhaegen, as well as a short story collection made up of past and present Flemish authors.

Dalkey was founded 30 years ago by American John O'Brien, initially to publish works that were out of print during those years when publishing houses were merging and streamlining their catalogues. It has since become renowned for its international stable, with more than 550 books in print today from 40-odd countries.

"It was clear to me that most innovative literature, especially that from other countries, was doomed," on the international market, O'Brien tells me from his office in Champaign, Illinois. He had "the brilliant idea," he says tongue-in-cheek, "to start a publishing house dedicated to non-commercial books!"

In 2007, Dalkey published Verhaegen's celebrated *Omega Minor*, which was described as an "exuberant, pyrotechnic, toweringly ambitious epic" and "probably one of the most ambitious novels about the past century" when it won the UK's Independent Foreign Fiction Prize, one of many it has carried off.

Dalkey is, says Verhaegen, "a great archive of 20th- and now 21st-century literature". For example, Louis Paul Boon is only available in English through Dalkey. "He is without a doubt one of Europe's major writers," Verhaegen continues. "His *Chapel Road* from 1953 is the first truly postmodern novel, interweaving narratives from different periods of history with mythical stories and a very significant description of post-war society. Boon was the real deal."

Flanders' "wild fiction"

O'Brien is a big admirer of Flemish literature. "I think that it is some of the wildest fiction from the modern to the contemporary period," he says.



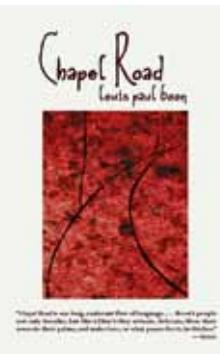
John O'Brien founded Dalkey 30 years ago to publish the world's lesser-known literature

"But the irony is that I cannot read the books until they are translated." Indeed, Dalkey has been looking to publish more Flemish literature, though to do so it needs help from the Flemish Literature Fund. "The original plan was that Dalkey would publish four literary works per year, which is an astonishing number in view of how many [Flemish books] are currently being published in English," he says. Discussions between the two organisations, however, have stalled.

Yet having a book published in English can be a great boon for an author, says O'Brien. "Many of the books we translate are then published in other languages because publishers around the world can read English and have a full text in front of them."

Not that Dalkey and the Flemish are on bad terms. "It's very nice to work with such a good and interesting publishing house as Dalkey," says Els Aerts from the Flemish Literature Fund. Though the fund has worked with Dalkey in the past, the grants available fall short of what Dalkey says it needs to put an author into print. "We're not saying that we have no future plans; we just need to look at the possibilities carefully," Aerts explains.

The Flemish Literature Fund, supported by the Flemish government, promotes local authors abroad. It represents them at the major book fairs in London, Frankfurt and China, introduces them to foreign publishing houses



Dalkey is responsible for many Flemish authors staying in print in English, including Louis Paul Boon's masterpiece *Chapel Road*

and subsidises 60% of translation costs. But, notes Aerts, "it's very difficult to get into the English market, as they publish very little foreign fiction."

Flemish author and critic Stefan Hertmans, one of the authors O'Brien plans to publish with Dalkey, understands this. "Penetrating the English-speaking market has proven to be the most difficult; authors who have translations in Spanish, French and German are still not getting translated into English."

Literature of the underdog

But Flemish literature, says Hertmans, is distinctive – even from Dutch literature. Flemish writers have been more influenced by French literature and are linguistically more eclectic due to the ability to speak other languages and to the use of so many dialects in the region. Not forgetting the Catholic-Protestant

divide: "Flemish poetry as well as prose is said to be more copious, more inspired by iconographical richness, allegory and imagery, while Dutch poetry is much more sober," reckons Hertmans.

Others make a similar distinction. For O'Brien, Flemish literature is characterised by a greater degree of "irony, comedy, and darkness" compared to Dutch literature, which is less ironic. As for Verhaegen, he believes that "Flemish literature is often a literature of the underdog, the little man, who goes to war against the system and often, but not inevitably, gets crushed".

Much Flemish literature is poetic, continues Verhaegen, because of "the use of language – language games, playing with the different language registers. It is very singable prose. Our best writers, Boon and Hugo Claus, are very hard to translate exactly for that reason."

► www.dalkeyarchive.com

Paper tiger

The elaborate settings in Isabelle de Borchgrave's new exhibition are made entirely of paper

Alan Hope

A magnificent tent fit for a Bedouin chief, its walls of diaphanous gauze, the floor strewn with rugs and cushions and, standing around, robes and dresses in the most delicate fabrics, dresses without wearers, their flow and folds reminiscent of the drapery of classical statuary. The scene is majestic and yet restful; it could be a recreation of Old Araby or the set for scenes among the Dothraki in *Game of Thrones*.

But in fact it's all a recreation by a Brussels artist. And everything you see, from the wall hangings to the Murano-glass beads studding an opulent gown, is made of paper.

Fortuny: A World of Paper is an exhibition of work by Isabelle de Borchgrave in a space adjoining her atelier in the Brussels commune of Elsene. A tribute to the artist and designer Mariano Fortuny (1871-1949), it's a stunning example of how fantasy, atmosphere and



nostalgia can be turned into three-dimensional art. Fortuny was born in Granada, Spain, the son of a painter. His parents collected materials of all sorts, including textiles and metalwork, and the boy inherited

this fascination. After living in Paris and Venice, he became one of the most versatile artists of the turn-of-the-20th century: painter, photographer, sculptor and designer. A friend of Marcel Proust, his imagination turned towards

the East, from the simple pleated elegance of his Grecian-inspired signature gown to the rich Oriental tableaux recreated here.

De Borchgrave, who describes Fortuny as her "spiritual father", was born a countess into old nobility and studied at the Centre for Decorative Arts and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Brussels. She moved into clothes and interior design, and finally into paper costumes. Since then, she has staged exhibitions based on Renaissance fashions, the Ballets Russes, the wardrobes of Elizabeth

I and Empress Eugénie, and even a recreation of the wedding gown of Jackie Kennedy for a museum in Boston.

Visitors to the current exhibition will also get a glimpse of her workshop, where she and her staff create her designs, starting with the plain paper that comes in four-kilometre rolls and passing through the various stages of cutting, folding, sculpting and painting, each piece handmade and unique, each more breath-taking than the last.

UNTIL 15 MARCH

Isabelle de Borchgrave studio

73A Vleugtsesteenweg, Brussels
Guided visits of the studio are available for groups

► www.isabelledeborchgrave.com



ing.be

ING 

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ING 

Points of contention

Toneelhuis stages the famous British novel that spans 300 years and two genders

Lisa Bradshaw

Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* is a novel of ideas – about gender, death and the passage of time – woven from historical fact and fantastical drama. Guy Cassiers of Toneelhuis has taken up the enormous challenge of staging the story of the aristocratic man who turns into a woman and lives the course of 300 years.

“With the twelfth stroke of midnight, the darkness was complete. A turbulent welter of cloud covered the city. All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion. the Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun.”

Anyone familiar with Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* knows that this memorable passage isn't even the most dramatic transformation in the 1928 novel. That would be earlier on, when the title character, a young noble and would-be poet, turns from a male into a female. Not only does *Orlando*'s life span hundreds of years, it spans a complete change of identity – and with it, the loss of legal rights and privilege for its ever-young hero(ine).

The character of *Orlando* was based on Woolf's friend and lover Vita Sackville-West, and the mock biography was, according to Sackville-West's son, “the longest and most charming love-letter in literature”.

Orlando was adapted to film in 1992 by British director Sally Potter to much-deserved acclaim; its landscapes were sumptuous, its metamorphoses creative, its lead – Tilda Swinton – luminous (in either gender). The story has rarely been adapted to the stage, for obvious reasons: Much of its power lies in abstraction, and it would seem to require rather sweeping pastorals.

But the imagination is mighty, and it can certainly handle this, says Guy Cassiers, artistic director of Antwerp's Toneelhuis and the director of a new Dutch-language production of *Orlando*. He adapted the story to the stage together with actress Katelijne Damen, and it premieres at the Bourla theatre this week.

Words first

“With the medium of film, you can focus on the realism and the historical facts that are in the novel,” Cassiers tells me from his office in the Bourla. “But one of the nice things about *Orlando* – and about theatre – is that it forces you to use your imagination. The language stays at the centre.”

The beauty of the book, says Cassiers, is its combination of history and fantasy, such as *Orlando*'s immortality. “At its heart, it's a bildungsroman; it's the development of a person building up his, or her, own identity – and taking a very long time of it.”

Woolf facetiously sub-titled the book



Katelijne Damen carries the weight of time in the Toneelhuis production of *Orlando*

A Biography, which pointed to the reality of the social and historical politics in play if not to the actual character. “She plays with the ambiguity of whether things are real or not, using a historian in the text to tell the story,” says Cassiers. “When is it the historian talking and when is it *Orlando*, and where do you feel the ideas of Virginia Woolf behind all that? It's a book in a book in a book. Woolf opened up the possibility of how a novel can be written, and that's also ideally what we do in theatre – to offer the audience a new experience where they are seduced into believing certain things, even though they know they cannot be true.”

Old stories, new technology

This is a Cassiers production, however, so it indeed employs multimedia to achieve its goals. Projections of visuals cover the stage floor, out of sight of the audience; the actress manipulates them, and the images show up on a screen behind her. “We are constantly zooming in and out with the visuals – always images inside images inside images,” says Cassiers. “In that sense, we use the same system as Virginia Woolf did with a book in a book in a book.” The visual style also emphasises the power of suggestion. “If we give a little visual detail, it should help the audience to further paint the picture that's outside the eye of the camera.” In his more than 25 years of stage directing, Cassiers has become known internationally as a brilliant adapter of literature to the stage. He's taken on Duras, Tolstoy, Proust. His debut production at Toneelhuis was *Onegin*, based on Alexander Pushkin's 1832 novel in verse, and his first production as the company's artistic director in 2006 was *Mefisto*

for ever, based on Klaus Mann's 1936 adaptation of the Faust theme set during the Nazi regime. The works are rarely straightforward; Cassiers' often scaled-back productions feature few actors, place the emphasis on ideas rather than on costumes and elaborate sets and use video to help bring the story into the 21st century. Old stories forced into contemporary trappings require audiences to consider how little we might really have changed.

Honouring the individual

Cassiers' works are popular both at home and abroad, going down particularly well in France and at the country's Avignon Festival, one of Europe's most prestigious and respected theatre festivals. Many of his new productions are invited there for an international premiere, including last year's *Bloed & rozen* (*Blood & Roses*), a tale about Joan of Arc and her fellow soldier Gilles de Rais, a notorious serial killer of children. The play was performed in its original Dutch, a first for the festival's main stage.

Earlier this year saw the premiere in Antwerp of *De misdaad* (*The Crime*), the third in the Cassiers-directed triptych based on characters from Austrian writer Robert Musil's unfinished epic *The Man Without Qualities*. Penned by Flemish author Yves Petry, *De misdaad* focuses on the rapist and murderer Moosbrugger.

“We have dealt with some very horrible characters in the last few years,” admits Cassiers. “We put some very cruel people on stage.” *Orlando* is reasonably light in comparison. “Although Woolf is very critical about society and about relationships between men and women, she uses a style that is very playful,” he explains. “We don't neglect the difficulties, but we are honouring the individual. We want to communicate that you have the ability to think about the future and to do something about it. It's a production that looks at the positive elements of the future and how one person can change things.”

That puts a lot of pressure on just one set of shoulders – Katelijne Damen's. This production of *Orlando* is in fact a one-woman show, putting language ahead of action. Damen, most recently seen in Flemish films *Noordzee*, *Texas* and *Offline*, and Cassiers have been working on the production for about 18 months. “That's the advantage of having a theatre company,” says Cassiers. “You can work on something like this and digest it. And this is a production that needs to be digested. Virginia Woolf's language is very beautiful, but it's also very complex. To make it your own, it takes time.”

After Antwerp, the production tours to Hasselt, Turnhout and Brussels. Check the website for dates

10-12 & 16-20 JANUARY

Orlando

Bourla theatre, Orgelstraat 7, Antwerp

► www.toneelhuis.be

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

The Belgian Film Critics Union has selected first-time director Benh Zeitlin's *Beasts of the Southern Wild* as the best film of 2012. The American film received the prize, said the organisation's chair, for its “original approach, its fervent humanitarianism, its soul and its avoidance of standard cinema conventions”. In other film news, four Flemish films or co-productions have been selected to screen at the Palm Springs International Film Festival this month: *Allez, Eddy!* by Gert Embrechts; *Kid* by Fien Troch; *Tot altijd (Time of My Life)* by Nic Balthazar and *La cinquième saison (The Fifth Season)* by Peter Brosens and Jessica Woodworth. The selected films were all produced with aid from the Flemish Audio-visual Fund.

Five poets, all in their 30s, have been nominated for this year's Herman De Coninck Prize for a published collection: Miguel Declercq (*Boven water*); Annemarie Estor (*De oksels van de bok*); Delphine Lecompte (*Blinde gedichten*); Xavier Roelens (*stormen, olielekken, motetten*); and David Troch (*Buiten westen*). Members of the public may vote online from 18 January, and the winner will be announced on 29 January.

► www.boek.be

A new fiction series now showing on Één has been signed for a remake in English by Skyline Entertainment. *Salamander* stars Filip Peeters (*Loft, Dossier K*) as a police inspector on a case that goes to the highest levels of society. It was written by Ward Hulselmans (*Witse*) and directed by Frank Van Mechelen (*Aspe*). The remake has the backing of Canadian writer/director Paul Haggis (*Million Dollar Baby, Crash*).

A group of Flemish filmmakers including Michaël R Roskam (*Rundskop*), Jan Verheyen (*Los*) and Geoffrey Enthoven (*Hasta la vista!*) have launched a directors' union to represent the interests of Flemish film and TV directors in dealings with the government and other media representatives. “Our sector has become much more professional and now requires daily management that can act as a point of contact for other players,” explains Roskam.

The Flemish Audio-visual Fund has approved the first 13 projects for the development of computer games, under a plan launched last year by education minister Pascal Smet and media minister Ingrid Lieten. The departments have contributed €750,000 each to the Game Fund, which will finance entertainment, training and educational

Sign of the times

Clear Tears/Troubled Waters

Georgio Valentino

Belgian choreographer Thierry Smits' latest production begins a marathon run this week. Smits and his company, Thor, are currently staging *Clear Tears/Troubled Waters* in Brussels; after a week-long engagement there, it's off to Genk's C-Mine for a one-nighter. Then the mighty Thor continue to dance their way across Belgium and the Netherlands until March. Dates in France and Romania are already booked for the summer and autumn too. The anticipation is not surprising, as Smits has been garnering accolades on the contemporary dance scene for decades.

Clear Tears finds him working with a trio of similarly celebrated experimental musicians: American multi-instrumentalists Steven Brown and Blaine Reininger (founding members of the cult avant-garde collective Tuxedomoon) and French electronic musician Maxime Bodson. Brown and Reininger are strangers to neither Belgium nor dance. The perennial exiles were based in Brussels

throughout the 1980s, having left the US – as legend has it – after Ronald Reagan's election. In the capital they crossed paths with another vagabond, Swiss choreographer Maurice Béjart, who invited them to score his contemporary ballet *Divine* in 1981.

They continue to collaborate despite the fact they now reside in different hemispheres (Brown lives in Oaxaca, Mexico, and Reininger in Athens, Greece). Not only have Brown, Reininger and Bodson composed the music for *Clear Tears*, but they also perform it live on stage alongside Smits' dancers. If nothing else, the interplay between Bodson's synthesiser, Brown's sax and Reininger's virtuoso violin is alone worth the price of admission. But there's much more.

The trio's soundscapes are complemented by scenographer Simon Siegmann's minimalist (or *minimalising*) aesthetic. *Clear Tears/Troubled Waters* flows in the direction of subtraction; the stage is progressively emptied. Sound and vision combine to create

© Fabienne Louis



an atmosphere that is tense and melancholic. The tension reflects a world in transition, boom times giving way to crisis on several fronts: economic, social and ecological. The melancholia marks the passage from yesterday's hope to today's despair. This is where Smits takes over. His

seven featured dancers perform the pervasive unease of our times, defined as they are by crisis. The suffering of the poor, the indifference of the rich and the shrinking middle ground between these two extremes are communicated by form and gesture.

Smits aims to do more than just flaunt these signs of the times. He hopes that a new community might form around the shared experience of an unflinching, head-on reckoning with our anxieties and sufferings in the troubled waters of this 21st century.

Until 16 January | Les Halles de Schaerbeek, Brussels | ► www.halles.be
19 January | C-Mine, Genk | ► www.c-mine.be

WORLD

Music from Crete

Despite its geographical and cultural proximity to mainland Greece, the island of Crete has its own distinctive musical tradition, favouring the lyre rather than the bouzouki. Brussels' intercultural nexus Art Base hosts an evening of traditional Cretan music with singer and lyre virtuoso Nikos "Pathiaris" Gounakis. From his home base in the northern (a relative term, if ever there was one) Cretan city of Rethymnon, the young artist has earned an island-wide following. The nickname "Pathiaris" means "The Passionate" and gives an idea of his warm style. Gounakis's special guest for the evening is Giannis Markogiannakis, who, aged 85, can safely be considered the elder statesman of the Cretan scene. In his long career, Markogiannakis has shared the stage with the island's top musicians, including the late master of the genre Thanassis Skordalos. Gounakis and Markogiannakis are joined by Manolis Arfaris to complete the lyre, laouto and vocal trio. **Georgio Valentino**



12 January | Art Base, Brussels | ► www.art-base.com

MORE WORLD MUSIC THIS WEEK

Brussels

Forróbodo: Discover the Forró, a rhythm and dance from northeast Brazil
JAN 12 20.00 at Viavia Travellers Café, Steenkoolkaai 9
► www.viaviaxbl.be

Torhout (West Flanders)

Irish Night: Irish folk music by The Swigshift, accompanied by KH Jongelingskring Orchestra conducted by Nico Logghe
JAN 12 19.30 at De Mast, Industrielaan 2
► www.jongelingskring.be

EXHIBITION

Inside the Station

Some 35,000 visitors flocked to Tour & Taxis in 2007 to see the Princess Elisabeth Antarctica before Belgium's polar research station was shipped way south. The station is now onsite and providing valuable data, but the public has another opportunity to discover the project without ever having to leave our hemisphere. This interactive exhibition lets you experience what it's like to live and work in one of the world's most extreme environments. The logistics of getting machinery and crew members to the Antarctic is a story in itself. The station's cutting-edge technology is another focus. The Princess Elisabeth Antarctica is, after all, the world's first zero-emission polar installation, powered by wind and solar energy. Visitors will also learn about the research conducted by the international scientists aboard the station. One important aspect of their mission is helping us understand how climate change operates and how we can deal with it at the community and even personal level. **gv**



Until 31 May | Tour and Taxis, Brussels | ► www.tour-taxis.com

MORE EXHIBITIONS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Do Not Use: Contemporary works in silver by silversmith Dries Dockx
Until MAR 3 at Sterckshof Silver Museum, Hooftvunderlei 160
► www.zilvermuseum.be

Ghent

Shiro Kuramata (1934-1991): Transparent design objects in acrylic, glass and steel wire by the revolutionary Japanese designer
Until FEB 24 at Design Museum, Jan Breydelstraat 5
► www.designmuseumgent.be

FESTIVAL

24 Hours on Stage

Dozens of Antwerp venues are participating in the second edition of 24 Hours on Stage. The festival begins with what one hopes is a hearty breakfast at the Flemish Opera on Saturday morning and lasts, well, 24 hours. One ticket gives you access to over 100 performances at 25 hotspots. There's something for everyone, from music to dance to theatre to literature and poetry (and more besides). There's even a workshop for kids, although we don't recommend that anyone keep the young ones up for all 24 hours. We do, however, recommend that you bring them to children's theatre Het Paleis for some Saturday afternoon fun with Wiejoow (ages six and up) and Princess Turandot (ages four and up). Kids aged 10 to 12 are welcome in Het Paleis from 19.00 with their pyjamas, mat and sleeping bag in hand for a real sleepover! **GV**



12 and 13 January | Across Antwerp

► www.24uurvanhetpodium.be

MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Djangofoollies 2013: Annual festival dedicated to the famous manouche gypsy jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt

JAN 16-27 at venues across Brussels

► www.djangofollies.be

WinterJAZZ: Sixth edition of the jazz festival featuring dozens of concerts by international musicians, plus film and art

JAN 15-26 at Flagey, Heilig Kruisplein, and Marni, Vergniesstraat 25

► www.winterjazz.be

PERFORMANCE

Dance Adventure

Antwerp's De Singel is kicking off the New Year with a special dance programme. The adventure begins with *Vita Activa*, a week-long workshop led by resident artist Daniel Linehan. The American dancer/choreographer borrowed the title from influential 20th-century philosopher Hannah Arendt, who questioned commonly held distinctions between different kinds of work. Lineman will encourage 40 participants to integrate various "work"-related activities into a performance to be staged on Saturday in De Singel's Theatre Studio. The adventure continues later in the month when acclaimed Frankfurt-based American choreographer William Forsythe brings his Forsythe Company to De Singel's Red Hall to present their ever-evolving production *Yes We Can't Park* finds German choreographer Shila Anakari performing with Belgian musicians Stefan Prins and Zwerp. Finally, another German choreographer, Nicole Beutler, closes out the month with *Shirokuro*: Japanese pianist Tomoko Mukaiyama and lighting designer Jean Kalman collaborate with Beutler to breathe new life into classic chamber music by Galina Ustvolskaya and Schumann. **GV**



Until 31 January | De Singel, Antwerp | ► www.desingel.be

MORE PERFORMANCES THIS WEEK

Bruges

Australian Dance Theatre – Proximity: Breathtaking acrobatics choreographed by Garry Stewart, set to electronic music and stunning visuals by French video-engineer Thomas Pachoud

JAN 11-12 20.00 at CC Brugge (MaZ)

► www.ccbrugge.be

Brussels

A Delicate Balance: The American Theatre Company presents this Pulitzer prize-winning classic by Edward Albee, a gripping family drama set in 1960s America

JAN 17-19 & 23-26 20.00 at Warehouse Studio Theatre, Waelhemstraat 69A

► www.theatreinbrussels.com

DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

Libertine Supersport

We've survived the end of the world and digested many Christmas dinners and drinks. It's time to get things back to normal: Bye bye mulled wine and festive jingles, hello good old beer and fresh dance tracks.

How about a night out at Mirano in Brussels? The Libertine Supersport parties always guarantee a good vibe. On Friday, for instance, crowd-pleaser Erol Alkan (*pictured*) is back for more. The London-based electro DJ has played in Brussels before, and is back in our capital after a tour of Australia. Also behind the Mirano decks will be Daniel Avery. Experts call him the creator of one of the most forward-thinking electronic sounds today, and he's also part of Alkan's record label, Phantasy Sounds.

There will be a live set by Flume, too. The Australian DJ – actually called Harley Streten – is visiting Europe for a small tour. He's only in his early 20s, but has already become one of

Australia's most in-demand producers. Pretty impressive... but let's not forget about our own local talent, like Libertine Supersport's Brussels-based resident Rick Shiver. He's known and loved for his eclectic music style, which has only one aim: getting the crowd moving on the dance floor. Sofie from DJ duo L-Fêtes adds a female touch to the line-up. Expect a mix of disco, funk, '80s music, house and more. It's a rhythmic concoction that has spiced up many clubs and parties in and around Brussels and is just what we need to get through the winter weekends.

Tickets cost €8 before midnight; €13 euro if you show up later. Should you still feel festive, the bar serves cocktails and champagne. The latter is "only" €50 if you grab a bottle before 1.00. Don't say we didn't warn you.

► www.libertinesupersport.be



BITE

Kartini ★★★★☆

After nursing a beer and a basket of shrimp crackers for an hour and a half, my partner I get up and walk out of a popular Antwerp restaurant which shall remain unnamed (okay, it's Fong Mei) to search for dinner elsewhere. Luckily, we stumble upon Kartini, easily one of the city's cutest restaurants. The little white house is wedged in between a number of other fine-looking establishments, but we notice it because we have our hearts set on something out of the ordinary.

Indonesian cuisine it is, then, that mysterious mix of spices and flavours influenced by Indian, Arab and Chinese cooking traditions, among others. Kartini (named after a pioneer for women's rights in Indonesia) specialises in *rijsttafels*, or rice tables. This Dutch-Indonesian invention is a fun and communal way to dine that consists of lots of little dishes, including flavour-packed stewed meats and surprising salads.

We order the Kartini rice table for two and a couple of local De Koninck beers. The tiny space is full, upstairs and down, but nonetheless we are served in a quick and friendly manner that couldn't contrast more with the place we just left.

Our server diligently places 20 small plates over every inch of the table while explaining the contents of each: pork and chicken satays smothered in peanut sauce, pork and sweet soy sauce, pungent hunks of beef stewed in nutmeg, incredibly spicy grilled drumsticks, beef *rendang* with coconut and – so as not to scare away any vegetarians – plenty of fresh salads as well, which follow along the same sweet, sour and spicy theme, with here and there some toasted coconut tossed in



for good measure. To my surprise, the meatless tofu dish ends up being my favourite for its fluffy texture and the delicious way it soaks up the surrounding peanut sauce.

My partner and I take our time to relish the vast range of flavours and textures that are so foreign to us, offsetting the heat of the homemade *sambal* with the crisp coolness of the ginger, carrot and cabbage salad or sweet-and-sour cucumbers. The dish with shrimp, courgette and vermicelli in chicken broth is at first a bit strange, but by the end of the meal we're slurping it down. Similarly, we don't quite know what to make of the ginger- and coconut-infused string beans until a few bites in, when we conclude that they're simply mouthwatering.

Finally, fried banana and two strong espressos provide a perfectly sweet and exotic ending to our culinary adventure. And the bill comes to a mere €56.

► <http://www2.resto.be/kartini>

► Oude Koornmarkt 61, Antwerp; 03.226.44.63

🕒 Tue-Sun, 17.30-22.00

€ Mains: €10-20

ⓘ Pleasant little restaurant in Antwerp centre with well-spiced Indonesian rice tables

TALKING SPORTS

Fresh starts?

As we shake off the holiday slumber and shuffle back to work, it's inevitable that we ponder what's in store for 2013. That goes for Flemish sportsmen and women as much as anyone else. The signs are mixed, but they suggest there are chances for Flanders' finest to make their marks.

Football is where the most hope is currently invested. The Red Devils last reached a major tournament in 2002, but this year they could finally justify the hopes and expectations surrounding the current generation by qualifying for the 2014 World Cup. The talent has already been recognised by Europe's big-name clubs, with England in particular poaching Flemish stars like Thomas Vermaelen (Arsenal) and Moussa Dembele (Tottenham), and Brussels-born Vincent Kompany (Manchester City).

But Flemish clubs have enjoyed reasonable success in European competitions recently – or, at least, not the ritual humiliations that have been so frequent in the past decade. There are occasional mishaps – Everton's Marouane Fellaini recently headbutting an opponent; Gent's Ilombe Mboyo stepping down as captain after taking the world's worst penalty – but the football renaissance still looks solid.

It could be that Flanders might never regain the tennis glory it basked in during Kim Clijsters' reign, so recently ended. But try telling that to Yanina Wickmayer (pictured), who reached the final of the Auckland Classic on Sunday. Wickmayer lost to top seed Agnieszka Radwanska. Indeed, along the way, she

defeated fellow Fleming Kirsten Flipkens, showing there is life after Clijsters.

In cycling, Flanders is home to some top names, notably Jurgen Van Den Broeck, Jürgen Roelandts and Tom Boonen. None have yet been close to the biggest prizes, from the Tour de France and the Olympics to the Vuelta a Espana and the Giro d'Italia. Having shown their mettle in one-day classics, the Flemish flyers now have to challenge for more, and this could be the year (in cyclo-

cross, the mud-caked bastard son of road racing, the Flemish are giants, with Sven Nys currently enjoying an imperial period – however this discipline rarely takes up much sports coverage). There are other Flemish sports stars poised to grab some of the biggest prizes available to them, from Nicolas Colsaerts in golf to Luca Brecel in snooker. None have yet scaled the summits to declare themselves undisputed world champs, but Flanders lives in hope that this year could change that.



Leo Cendrowicz

The last word...

House rules

"We expect newcomers to recognise our culture and to take part in it. It's just as important that Flemish society allows them access and encourages them to do that."

Integration minister Geert Bourgeois plans a new single integration agency for the whole region, with eventual language tests for immigrants seeking social services

Monkeying around

"Someday I'd like to travel the world to work for animals. Helping out in an animal hospital seems like a good thing to do."

Matthias Schoenaerts, on the brink of Hollywood stardom, will narrate the Dutch-language version of the Disney docu-drama *Chimpanzee*

"Warm" is relative

"It's never been so warm before. We're walking barefoot in the sand and don't feel the cold at all."

Roger Comeyne from Werken, West Flanders, was one of 5,000 brave souls to take to the Ostend surf last weekend for the traditional New Year dip

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

You hear a lot about charity during the holidays but often don't think about the less fortunate the rest of the year round. We talked to two organisations who were busier last month than usual, but make it their regular business to fight poverty in Flanders

Science

Later this month is European Privacy Day, and Brussels is at the heart of activities, including hosting the Computers, Privacy and Data Protection conference and the exhibition *A Look Inside*, in which artists explore the clashes between privacy rights and technology. We'll tell you what both technicians and artists have to say about this hot-button issue

Tourism

Museums are continuing to find cunning ways to get new visitors, and BELvue in Brussels is no exception: the museum dedicated to the history of Belgium has special accessibility for the blind. We talk to the curator about why and how, and to some visitors about their experiences