

De Gelder on trial

The young man who killed three in a Dendermonde crèche in 2010, goes on trial this week

► 5

Sweet success



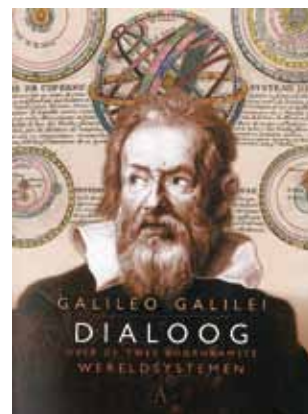
Damhert Nutrition in Heusden-Zolder has hit the jackpot with sugar alternative tagatose

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Astronomical allegations

Galileo's theory-busting 17th-century *Dialogue* has finally been translated into Dutch

► 9



Heaven sent

From frozen yogurt to nursing bras, business angels are pumping new life into the start-up scene

Linda A Thompson

The number of entrepreneurs using “business angels” – private investors who not only provide money but also advice and even hands-on work – has increased significantly in the last few years in Flanders. Business Angels Network Vlaanderen works to pair investors with new entrepreneurs – and to make sure the path runs smoothly

Standing on a small, makeshift stage at the Vlerick Management School in Ghent, Greet Buytaert had 15 minutes to pitch her business proposal to sell frozen

yogurt in Flanders. In front of her were two dozen poker-faced investors.

It was mid-February of last year, and Buytaert brimmed with confidence; she was convinced that Belgium would embrace frozen yogurt as a fat-free, low-calorie alternative to ice-cream, just like the rest of Europe and the United States had. Alternating with her husband and business partner, she presented their proposal, one slide at a time.

Nine investors rushed over to her during the subsequent reception. She knew they were in.

Just three months later, the first Moochie frozen yogurt shop

opened in the heart of Ghent (pictured). A second will soon open in Antwerp, and five more are planned across Flanders by the end of 2014.

Buytaert is one of 12 new entrepreneurs competing in the één channel reality show *Topstarter*, which premiered on 4 February. Crucial to the speed at which Moochie has moved from business idea to physical store was the backing of four private investors, or “business angels”.

“I don’t think I would have gotten so far without them,” says Buytaert. “I’m responsible for most of what Moochie has become ... but it’s the final touch that makes it perfect, and

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope

André Vandorpe



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André Vandorpe, the new director of the Flemish book industry association Boek.be, began with a promise to support independent businesses in the books market, as well as the more literary book, at a time when best-sellers like cookbooks are taking up an ever-larger share of book sales.

Boek.be brings together booksellers, publishers and importers associations, with a mission "support and advance book sales in Flanders" by representing the political and economic interests of their members. The organisation also administers a number of prizes, most notably the Herman de Coninck Prize for poetry and the Golden Owl for literature in Dutch, as well as organising the annual Boekenbeurs in Antwerp, the region's largest book fair.

Vandorpe studied sociology, government administration and management at the Free University of Brussels (VUB), followed by marketing management at the Vlerick Management School in Ghent. He went on to do research into the organisation of work with the social-economic council of Flanders (Serv) and in communications. He is currently

director of training for the union ABVV-Metaal.

There does lurk a cultural side to him: He was for many years a board member of the Ghent theatre group Compagnie Cecilia and has worked as an account manager for book printers. He is also a lover of literature. "My love for books has always been huge," he told *De Standaard*. His new position, he says, will combine both management and literature. Vandorpe, 54, takes over in April from Geert Joris, who was recently appointed director-general of the Dutch language union Taalunie. "My predecessor was brilliantly successful in offering new hope for everyone interested in the sector," said Vandorpe. "I look forward to following the trail he blazed, together with the remarkable Boek.be team, in the years to come. Thanks to my very varied negotiating experience, I intend to represent the smaller as well as the larger players in the book business, to encourage them on every level and to bring them together. We can get through these ominous years of crisis if we're all heading in the same direction."

► www.boek.be

News in brief

The Brussels-Capital Region's environment minister, Evelyne Huytebroeck, will come forward with a new proposal on GSM radiation before the end of the month, in an effort to make it possible for telecommunications companies to install the latest **4G mobile internet services in the capital**. At present, Brussels applies stricter radiation limits than other cities, some of which are already providing services for 4G. The restrictions were the subject of recent strongly worded criticism by Belgacom CEO Didier Bellens, who claimed foreign investors would avoid the capital as a result.

Flemish long-distance speed skater **Bart Swings took the bronze medal** last weekend in the all-round event at the World Championships in Hamar, Norway. Swings came in just five-hundredths of a second behind the winner, Sven Kramer of the Netherlands, in the last leg of the event, which the 22-year-old Fleming described as "the best 10,000m I've even achieved".

Ghent city council has decided to no longer **use the word allochtoon (immigrant)** in official communications. The use of the word, according to alderman Resul Tapmaz, excluded residents rather than uniting them. Later, the city council of Roeselare said it planned to do the same. Genk, Kortrijk, Leuven and Brussels, meanwhile, said that the word was already out of use in its policy documents.

Five Flemish youths accused of an attack on a man in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, last month have been **handed over to Dutch authorities** by a court in Turnhout. Video images of the attack were posted on YouTube, leading to the identification of the teenagers. The five will be charged with attempted

murder.

Liesbeth Homans, alderwoman for integration in Antwerp, has no intention of taking part in talks with other city councils on a **new €250 charge for foreigners** moving to the city, she said, declining an invitation from Mechelen, Ghent and Bruges. The new charge, which comes into force in May, has been called an "immigrant tax", with other Flemish cities claiming it will force newcomers to register with them instead. Homans said that the tax, which applies to anyone moving into the city who is not a Belgian citizen, was originally the idea of former socialist mayor Patrick Janssens but had apparently been scrapped after failing to find support from other city councils. According to a legal expert at the University of Leuven, the measure is in conflict with EU regulations.

Ghent University professor **Marleen Temmerman** has been awarded this year's Free-Thinking Humanism Prize from the Antwerp-based organisation of the same name for her "years of effort on a world-wide scale for the rights, health and emancipation of women". Temmerman recently stepped down from the Senate to continue her work on women's health and fertility issues at the World Health Organization. The prize will be handed over at a ceremony in Brussels in June.

Dr **André Gyselbrecht** has been taken back into custody, after investigators said they found new evidence in the so-called "castle murder" case. Gyselbrecht is suspected of having ordered the murder of his son-in-law, Stijn Saelens, in January of last year at Saelens' castle home in Wingene, West Flanders.

The medical faculty association Medica has spoken out against a call from the fertility centre of the University of Leuven inviting **students to become sperm donors**. The fertility centre is facing a drastic shortage of donations, but, according to Medica president Frederik Deman, "not enough students have a clear idea of what they're getting into. A sperm donation is a serious responsibility."

Families of the **victims of the train accident at Buizingen**, Flemish Brabant, in February of 2010 held a private memorial ceremony last week. The accident, in which 19 people were killed and 190 injured, happened when a train ran a red light and crashed head-on into another train.

The main suspect in the **murder of 14-year-old Priscilla Sergeant** last summer was released from jail last week. The 41-year-old neighbour of the girl in Huizingen, Flemish Brabant, had been brought before a court after three months to have his detention prolonged; the defence argued that should have happened after one month. Antoon Boyen, president of the Brussels court of appeal, said that there had been no error but that the law in such cases was unclear. Two minors are also charged in connection with the death of Priscilla, whose body was found in a field in Dworp. Her family said they were "shocked" at discovering in the press that the suspect had been released.

Icy road conditions were behind **an accident involving more than 30 vehicles** on the E403 between Roeselare and Bruges last week. A 40 km/h speed limit was being imposed, and police said motorists were not driving too fast. Several people were injured in the crash.

FLANDERS TODAY

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Alan Hope

Right at home

You might not think, on these freezing winter nights, that people with too many homes would be the most pressing problem facing society, but it's apparently quite a big problem, according to the professional organisation of estate agents (BIV).

The 5,500 members of BIV are being called on to check more thoroughly the credentials of potential purchasers of holiday homes who may later decide to move into the house or apartment permanently. The cabinet of Flemish minister for planning and finance, Philippe Muyters, will work with BIV on ways to make the association's members more aware of the pitfalls. The law in Flanders does not allow dwellings designated as second homes to be used as permanent residences. Someone who buys a holiday or weekend home, then decides to move in full time, faces



Your home away from home – and you'd better keep it that way

an order to desist, a fine if they don't move out and an order to return the property to its originally intended use. "Given the often onerous consequences, we would do best to avoid this sort of problem in the first place," Muyters said. According to the West Flanders economic study bureau WES, 7% of the Belgian population owns a second home, for a total property value of €50 billion. Ten years

ago there were 310,000 second residences, a number which has now gone up to 350,000. Most of those are apartments, bungalows or villas.

Another 80,000 are chalets or fixed trailers on campsites, and no fewer than 25,000 are habitable boats. One-third are in other countries, so are not affected, with France the most popular site. In Belgium, the coast is by far the most popular area, with 110,000 second homes.

Heaven sent

Business angels step in where banks fear to tread

► continued from page 1

that's because of the experience and help of our investors."

"Driven to growth" in crisis

Business angels are wealthy entrepreneurs or ex-entrepreneur who invest in start-ups in return for a stake in the company. Unlike venture capitalists, they invest their own money, typically between €25,000 and €250,000. After seven to 10 years, they usually cash out through a trade sale by selling their shares to another company at a profit.

Angel investors have never been more popular in Flanders. Business Angels Network Vlaanderen, a non-profit that matches cash-poor entrepreneurs with prospective

financiers for start-ups, says Veroniek Collewaert, professor of entrepreneurship at Vlerick Management School. "Venture capitalists tend to become more risk-averse, and so they tend to go toward later-stage and older companies," she explains. "As for banks, they're generally not big fans of financing the kinds of companies angels tend to finance because they're too risky for them." Angel-backed companies typically have high-growth potential and are often found in the IT, energy or environmental energy sectors.

Easing the doubts

For Buytaert, the pooled investment of her four business angels has been every bit as useful as their advice. One investor, for instance, helped with accountancy, while another

"This is about money; playtime is over"

investors, received more than 600 applications for projects seeking angel-backing last year, a 26% increase from the previous year.

"I think a lot of entrepreneurs are driven to growth and to starting up because of the crisis," says Reginald Vossen, managing director of BAN Vlaanderen. "We're really seeing a lot of people taking matters into their own hands and saying: 'OK, I'm going to try to get my thing done.'" And angel investors have been crucial in helping these businesses get off the ground. Business angels are closing a funding gap in the start-up ecosystem by helping fledgling companies spread their wings at a high-risk moment. That is, when budding entrepreneurs need capital to grow their business, but find themselves in a catch-22. On the one hand, they need more money than they can raise from family and friends (generally up to €100,000); on the other, they need less than the large sums venture capitalists typically inject (€500,000 and upward).

The economic crisis has only deepened that funding gap, making business angels the go-to

offered his franchising know-how. Having someone around who has been through the works has also abated the nagging fear that goes hand-in-hand with the start-up experience.

"As a young entrepreneur, sometimes you don't know what to do. You always doubt every decision," she says. The entrepreneurial experience of one of her angels, businessman Walter Schoenmaekers, provided much-needed encouragement. "He really knows what he is doing, and that's something that's given me the confidence to continue on the path we are on. Because you're always scared of so many things, and then he says: 'Yeah, that's normal.'" Lured by the return (around 16%) and driven by a love of entrepreneurship, Johnny Kegels has been active as a business angel since 2008. He has bankrolled seven projects so far. "I love doing business; I love being an entrepreneur. And as a business angel I can be involved in dealing with all that, while avoiding having to work again 80 hours a week like I used to, when I was an entrepreneur myself." Kegels founded a PR agency in the 1990s, which he sold in 2002.



Moochie mobile: Ghent's frozen yogurt shop can take to the streets in its bright pink van

Do what I say

Critical to the business angel relationship is that entrepreneurs accept not only their investors' money but also their coaching. Some angels, for instance, insist on receiving a 25% share so that they can veto decisions. Others insist on weekly meetings, monthly updates or reviews of financial reports.

Kegels says he wants to help entrepreneurs avoid the mistakes he himself made: "I'm like a *good* mother-in-law – because there are different kinds of mothers-in-law."

It can be a challenge for both entrepreneurs and business angels to arrive at an understanding. One of the earliest investment Kegels made, for instance, quickly went awry. The entrepreneur was initially co-operative and open to advice. But once they had sealed the deal, says Kegels, "he just wanted to do his own thing." That's why, after 12 months, Kegels pulled out of the company. Now he always takes a blocking minority so that entrepreneurs can't bypass him when making important decisions. He also has the shareholders' agreement stipulate that if the entrepreneur wants to make later changes to the business plan, Kegels' approval is required. Both measures help him ensure that the entrepreneurs he backs will walk the walk. "Trust is good, but control is better," he says. "Again, this is about money; playtime is over when you're entering the next phase."

The business of bras

Like for most angel-funded entrepreneurs, ceding control of their business was a real concern for Martine Boonen and Eva Boonen (no relation). In 2007, the two friends and new mums came up with an idea for a bra with an adjustable design that allowed women to choose how much they exposed their breasts during



Eva Boonen (left) and Martine Boonen found an angel investor for their special brand of nursing bra

nursing.

After winning two awards for start-up entrepreneurs and making the finale of the één programme *De bedenkers* (The Creators), they had to make a decision: sell the concept to one of the different companies that were showing interest or begin manufacturing the bra themselves. They wanted to opt for the second route but had no start-up capital. So they teamed up with a business angel.

Management consultant Bruno De Pauw took a 49% stake in the company and has been heavily involved from day one. During the first year, he came in several days a week, answered phone calls and lent a hand with back-office management. Martine admits that ceding control over their project wasn't easy. "But otherwise, we wouldn't have been able to grow," she says. "It would have remained just an idea, with no advice or capital."

Mammae is now available in three models, in 300 stores across 10 countries, and you'd be hard-pressed to find a local celebrity mum who hasn't endorsed the bra. De Pauw's investment has enabled the two



Mammae is the first bra ever made with a removable insert that allows mums to show less when nursing in public

women to devote themselves full-time to Mammae rather than treat the business as a side gig. That, in turn, gave them the leeway to aggressively pursue international markets and to develop additional models.

Over the next months, the Boonens will decide if they're going to open a Mammae office in the US. "Without Bruno, we would probably be just a small, local company active in Flanders, and maybe in the Netherlands," says Martine. "Now, everything went so much faster and we grew so much over such a short period."

BEYOND THE BANKS

While the concept of business angels is gaining popularity, much work remains to be done. A 2009 study by Ghent University and the Vlerick Management School looked at Flemish entrepreneurs' understanding of financing methods. The researchers found their test subjects' knowledge of financing options both "limited" and "worrying".

"When an entrepreneur thinks money in Flanders, he still thinks banks. And if the bank says 'no', a lot of these companies think it stops," explains Reginald Vossen of BAN Vlaanderen (pictured). "It's very important for us to let people know that there is an alternative."



Culture ministry defends Aalst Carnival

Unesco condemns group that dressed as Nazis at annual heritage event

Alan Hope

Culture minister Joke Schauvliege has defended the satirical tradition of the Aalst carnival in a letter to the director-general of Unesco. Last week Irina Bokova wrote decrying the appearance in the carnival parade of a group dressed as Nazis. Aalst carnival is included on Unesco's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. During the parade, which typically features floats carrying caricatures of political figures, a group of men dressed in SS uniforms handed out flags marked "SS-VA: Deportation train for French speakers", while a group of "deportees" were herded aboard a float decorated to look like a train. According to the leader of the group, Alain De Ruyck, a lawyer



Political satire is a central part of the Aalst Carnival

and stand-in justice of the peace in Ghent, the float was aimed at mocking "exaggerated nationalism". Bokova said she was "shocked" at the display. "The history of the Holocaust must not be trivialised

for the purposes of a local political situation," she wrote. "This testifies to the deeply worrying belittling of the Holocaust and the deportations, in the very heart of the continent where this tragedy occurred. I

condemn firmly this violation of the spirit of the Aalst Carnival, characterised by freedom and satire, which cannot justify the recourse to anti-Semitic stereotypes."

"We condemn every form of anti-Semitism and race hatred, but carnival remains an occasion of satire of a grotesque nature, and exaggerated stereotypes," said minister Schauvliege in a statement. Despite that, the Aalst carnival this year was the calmest since 1975, according to police. More than 10,000 were present on the streets of the city on Tuesday evening when effigies are burned, with only seven administrative arrests made. Emergency services treated 102 people over the weekend, most for the consequences of alcohol.

Antwerp man dealt in horsemeat

According to inspectors for the federal economics ministry, none of the suspect ready-meals containing horsemeat are on sale in Belgium. However, there is a local connection to the scandal sweeping Europe.

Jan Fasen is a Dutch national living in Antwerp and head of Draap Trading, the Cyprus-registered company at the centre of the horseflesh trade. Fasen has admitted that he bought horsemeat



from a slaughterhouse in Romania and sold it to the French trader Spanghero, which then sold it on to food processing companies – without proper labelling – for use in meals sold by Picard in France and Findus in the UK.

Draap issued a brief statement saying that "clients were sold what they asked for". Spanghero denies asking for it. Fasen was last year convicted of fraud in the Netherlands for selling horsemeat from South America in Germany and France as halal beef and was sentenced to 12 months. Among the questions now facing authorities is whether Fasen or Spanghero are telling the truth.

Unicef criticises school system

Children's rights organisation Unicef has warned that the school system in Belgium discriminates against children from the most vulnerable sections of society. The school system, a report from Unicef Belgium said, is "an obstacle course which injures and excludes the most socially disadvantaged children and young people". The report claims that the disadvantaged are treated as "victims rather than participants" and excluded from any dialogue on their

interests. It also points out that four times as many poor children find their way into special-needs education compared to other children. Ingrid Lieten, the Flemish minister charged with anti-poverty measures, responded that inequality within schools could not be tolerated. "We must not economise on our children," she said. "A society that leaves children to their fate will later pay the cost in looking after drop-outs, unemployment benefits and so on."

Sentences handed down to anti-GMO activists

Ecology party Groen has described the sentences handed down last week on eight activists who took part in a demonstration against genetically modified crops as "excessive". The demonstration was organised by the Field Liberation Movement in

2011 at a site in Wetteren, East Flanders, used by Ghent University and Flanders' Institute of Biotechnology (VIB) for testing GMO potatoes. In court last week, the accused were given sentences of six to eight months, suspended in the case of six of those

on trial. The group will also be liable for damages of around €25,000. The treatment of political activists as criminal conspirators is "a dangerous precedent", according to Bart Staes, member of the European Parliament for Groen.

Call for hearings on surveillance of politicians

Federal interior minister Joëlle Milquet has rejected calls for the state security agency to be scrapped, following a dispute over the shadowing of politicians. The controversy centres on allegations by Bart Debie, former security advisor to Vlaams Belang leader Filip Dewinter, that he acted as a mole for the intelligence

services for three years. Alain Winants, head of the security service, accused Debie of lying; Debie in turn accused Winants of covering up his service's activities. N-VA spokesman Ben Weyts, meanwhile, has called for parliamentary hearings on the question of official surveillance of politicians.

FIFTH COLUMN

Anja Otte

Shaking the pillars

With the ACW, the organisation that is accused of tax evading, yet another institution that shapes our society loses its credibility. The ACW, which originally stood for Algemeen Christelijk Werknemersverbond (General Christian Workers' Alliance) is an umbrella organisation that includes unions, mutualities, youth and women's groups. It is a remnant of the pillared society Flanders was until some decades ago. Up until then, people belonged to one or other "pillar" from the time they were born. The largest was the Christian, with socialist pillar a second, followed by a liberal pillar. Pillars took care of people from the cradle to the grave. Schools, hospitals, unions, political parties, cultural organisations, even newspapers, could all be attributed to one or other pillar. Pillars gave people a sense of direction in an ever complicated world, keeping them close to the like-minded at all times. To many people of humble backgrounds, the pillars were empowering, allowing them to get ahead in life, without losing their idealism. The flipside of this is the pillars' stifling influence and their informal power, which was less-than-transparent. To this day, ACW possesses this informal power as some CD&V politicians, including vice prime minister Steven Vanackere, openly have an "ACW label". Still, it is very much a grassroots organisation that includes hundreds of thousands of volunteers. These volunteers are now shocked to learn that "their" ACW was involved in risky high finance, through Dexia, and craftily avoided paying taxes. This does not sit well with the idea of social justice, which it has promoted from its very beginnings in the late 19th century. It originated, after all, as a Catholic answer to the rise of the (secular) socialist workers movements. That N-VA should be the one to expose ACW's financial hocus-pocus should not come as a surprise, as the Flemish nationalists were never part of a pillar. To this day, they regard unions and mutualities as part of an older Belgium with which they want little to do. Whether ACW actually got involved in illegal activities remains to be seen, but it has lost the respect of many people. This a moral bankruptcy, *De Standaard* wrote. In the aftermath of the revelations, ACW, the trade union that is part of the ACW, distanced itself from any "reprehensible practices". If the age of individualism has already eroded the pillars, this may be the final shake that tumbles them down.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

46

giant Gambian rats among 130 animals seized by police in the Brussels commune of Etterbeek from an apartment dweller, following a complaint from neighbours

95%

of young people in Flanders should be vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella, according to a new target set by Flemish health minister Jo Vandeurzen

1,083

people in 100,000 visited the doctor in the week from 4 to 10 February complaining of flu symptoms, a new peak in the current epidemic

30%

chance of recovering belongings left on the train, according to an undercover investigation by the VRT programme *Volt*

€2.5 million

damage caused by a storm that hit Oosterzele in East Flanders 10 days ago, according to the town council

Crèche murder trial begins

A jury will rule on Kim De Gelder's state of mind at the time of attack on child-care centre

Alan Hope

This week the assizes court in Ghent began the trial of Kim De Gelder on four charges of murder and 25 charges of attempted murder. The main question facing the jury in a trial expected to last a month is whether De Gelder was responsible for his actions at the time of the crimes.

On 23 January, 2009, De Gelder, then aged 20, attacked workers and children in the Fabeltjesland crèche in Dendermonde, East Flanders, armed with a knife, a small axe and a replica pistol. He killed three: caregiver Marita Blindeman and two nine-month-old babies. Two more adults and 10 children were seriously injured. De Gelder, from nearby Sint-Niklaas, was arrested shortly after and later accused of the murder of an elderly woman at her home in Vrasene a week before the Fabeltjesland attack. De Gelder confessed on 5 March, though he didn't provide a motive.

According to defence lawyer Jaak Haentjens, De Gelder heard voices in his head ordering him to commit the crimes. If the

jury accepts that, De Gelder, now 24, will be judged not to be responsible for his actions and interned, possibly indefinitely, in a psychiatric institution.

Insanity defence

Belgian law contains a "dichotomy" in considering an insanity defence, according to Lieve Dams, a forensic psychiatrist who regularly testifies in assizes trials. That means that the jury is "faced with the choice of whether someone is wholly responsible or wholly not responsible for his acts," she explains. "Whereas our evaluation covers a variety of moments before the act, during and after. If the jury judges De Gelder to be responsible before, during and after, he is liable to be convicted."

But if he is judged at any of those points as not being responsible, "he is liable to be interned," Dams confirms.

This dichotomy in Belgium leads to a high number of internees compared to, for example, the Netherlands. "There, relatively few people are judged to be



Defence lawyer Jaak Haentjens will spar with psychologists over the fate of Kim De Gelder

completely not responsible," notes Sarah Matkoski of the Institute for Criminology at the University of Leuven. "They work on a sliding scale, which allows for a more accurate interpretation. If you suffer from a condition that interferes with your ability to judge or to control your own actions, then your actions cannot be considered criminal. In that case, the person is interned."

The prosecution has the opinion of five psychiatrists that De Gelder was responsible at the time of the killings. The defence will offer evidence to counter that opinion, backed up by De Gelder's behaviour in prison and at a hearing in January.

The case will be heard before a jury of 12, with six retained as reserves. An unusually large jury pool has been summoned – 180 rather than the usual 60 to 90 – because of the difficulty of finding objective jurors in the case. The court will hear the evidence of 170 witnesses, including De Gelder. A verdict is expected on 22 March. If convicted, De Gelder faces four life sentences.

A woman's world

deBuren lecture series tackles contemporary feminist issues

Katy Desmond

Men make up just under half of the population. But by a long shot, they make more money, hold higher positions and take more of the major decisions than women anywhere in the world. Despite all this, when it comes to feminism, men are often surprisingly silent – especially considering the role they played in making the women's movement one of the larger social successes of the 20th century.

So where are all the men in feminism today? Can they find a place in this women's world? And should they be allowed in at all?

On 27 February in Antwerp, the conversation titled "Male Advocates" will take up these questions and more in the second instalment of the lecture series Who's Afraid of the F-Word, hosted by feminist think tank Vrouwen Overleg Komitee (VOK) and the Flemish-Dutch culture house deBuren.

Moderated by feminist journalist Francesca Vanthielen, Who's Afraid of the F-Word? is a series of four lectures and debates about important questions in feminism. The first took place in Ostend on National Women's Day on 11 November last year, featuring the theme of feminism in times of crisis and protest. Touring around



Flemish author and professor Kristien Hemmereichs adds her voice to "Male Advocates"

Flanders, the next three will be panel debates that will tackle the hottest topics shaping feminism today: men in feminism, the sexualisation of society and nature, nurture and gender.

A man's place

But wait, you say, feminism? Wasn't that a bunch of angry women who stopped yelling in, like, the 1990s? A quick survey of the landscape shows that feminism and the women's movement are greatly



The role of men in women's rights issues is on the agenda next week in Antwerp

changed since the heyday of second-wave feminism in Belgium in the 1970s and 1980s.

Across the world, feminism has become a mixed movement, with men standing alongside women exploring how feminism can help both genders. With questions of inequality in education leading to shortages of workers, parental rights and parental leave, as well as the growing popularity of movements like International Men's Day on 19 November, it

is clear: Men are knocking, and it's time for feminists to decide whether to open the door.

The goal of "Male Advocates" is to open up a dialogue on a man's place in feminism today. VOK is bringing together three movers and shakers from the world of gender theory, including Kristien Hemmereichs, feminist author and scholar of the Brussels University College; Henk de Smaele, history professor at the University of Antwerp and co-president of the Archive

Centre for the History of Women in Brussels; and Jens van Tricht, coach and consultant working in the field of (men's) emancipation, diversity and youth participation. Together, they will try to untangle how men and women can help each other move forward in rights and equality movements.

Next in the series

After "Male Advocates", two more panels will be held in March (Ghent) and April (Brussels). The first is "Sexualisation of Society", in which VOK member Marjolein Van Bavel, media studies professor Liesbet van Zoonen and lingerie designer and author Murielle Scherre will look at sexualisation since the sexual revolution of the 1960s and ask: Are women really sexually free?

But the final debate, "Men from Mars, Women from Venus?", is likely to be the liveliest, as Griet Vandermassen, a philosopher studying the evolutionary basis of gender, and science journalist Asha ten Broeke, who has written a book compiling research suggesting gender is socially constructed, debate whether femininity and masculinity are products of nature or nurture.

The sweet taste of success

Limburg nutrition specialist makes breakthrough with alternative to sugar

Diana Goodwin

A small Flemish health food company may have the answer to every dieter's prayers: a low-calorie sugar substitute that actually tastes like sugar. Limburg-based Damhert Nutrition, known for its organic, diabetic-friendly and gluten-free products, is the sole global manufacturer of the sweetener tagatose, which is poised to become the next big thing in the diet and health-food sector.

Tagatose has only 1.5 calories per gram compared to sugar's four calories. It has a low glycaemic index, making it suitable for consumption by diabetics. And unlike high-intensity sweeteners like aspartame, it can be substituted in equal amounts for sugar in recipes, making it ideal for baking. It has no bitter aftertaste like artificial sweeteners and doesn't promote tooth decay.

It's a naturally occurring substance and, although it is derived from lactose, the sugar in milk, Tagatose is lactose-free. Compared to Stevia, the plant-based sweetener that has become a popular alternative to artificial sweeteners, it tastes much more like sugar.

A slow and quiet ascent

Tagatose was patented 25 years ago by an American entrepreneur named Gilbert Levin. His initial tests showed that the substance could be used to treat patients recovering from bowel cancer and other gastrointestinal diseases. It acts as a prebiotic, encouraging the growth of healthy intestinal flora. But medical testing requirements



Damhert CEO Grete Remen perched atop piles of the sought-after tagatose

and the pharmaceutical approval process hampered its entry to market.

In 1996, Danish dairy concern Arla Foods acquired the right to produce Tagatose as an additive in foods but had difficulties commercialising a substance that had been developed in a pharmaceutical context. Production costs proved too high to be profitable, and in 2006 Arla stopped production. At that point, Nutrilab – the sister company of Damhert Nutrition – based in Bekkevoort, Flemish Brabant, bought up the remaining stocks.

A year later, Damhert patented an enzymatic process for extracting Tagatose from lactose. This procedure is considerably cheaper than the previous chemical

process, giving Damhert a distinct advantage in bringing tagatose to market.

Damhert has also adopted a different business model to previous manufacturers, according to Clio Hendrickx, the company's development manager. Arla tried to convince big manufacturers to try the new sweetener in their products, opting for a top-down approach to building market share. Damhert, on the other hand, has slowly and quietly introduced its own products containing Tagatose over the past six years, building consumer confidence and market share from the ground up. The tagatose product range now accounts for 30% of Damhert's profits.

PepsiCo and Yoplait calling

Other companies have started to take notice. "We received a lot of requests from the food industry – from very small companies to very large multinationals – interested in tagatose," says Hendrickx. But given the limited amounts that Damhert was able to produce, it was not feasible to supply other manufacturers. That's about to change.

With a potential infusion of cash from investment partners, including the Boerenbond (Farmers' Union), Limburg Reconversion Company and the Agri Investment Fund of the Flemish government's GIMV, Damhert is preparing to scale-up

production of tagatose at its facility in Italy, from 800 tons to 2,500 tons per year. For the first time, Damhert will have a surplus of tagatose to sell. It hit the headlines earlier this month that both PepsiCo and Yoplait have expressed interest in using tagatose in their products. However, Hendrickx warns that Damhert intends to continue its policy of building market share gradually. "I can already tell you that our strategy will be to start with small-to medium-sized companies. We prefer to have several clients that can grow with us," instead of one or two giants requiring large volumes from the start.

The second phase of Damhert's expansion is the building of a 10,000-ton capacity plant in 2015. "Then we can start looking at those big contracts for the bigger volumes, but we need to do it step by step," says Hendrickx. The new factory will be built somewhere in Belgium, but its exact location has yet to be determined. Since Tagatose is made from whey, a by-product of cheese, it makes sense to locate the new factory close to a source of raw materials – next to a cheese manufacturer, in other words.

"We see a lot of future in this sweetener," concludes Hendrickx. "Western society has huge problems with diabetes, with obesity... For now, Tagatose is part of a niche market – the sugar-free business and sugar-free products – but we see a future with less sugar and more alternatives, of which I think tagatose will be a very interesting candidate."

► www.damhert.be

At your service

Four cutting-edge companies present smart ways of working at the next Plan C conference

Alan Hope

Next week, four groundbreaking companies will explain their innovative ways of changing business to meet the demand for sustainable and environmentally conscious practices. Tot uw Dienst (At Your Service) is a gathering of business people organised by Plan C, the Flemish transition network for sustainable materials management. "We have several pillars to our own work, one of which is product-service combinations as a means of more sustainable use of materials," explains Plan C programme manager Jan Leyssens. "The four companies all have an innovative business model within that product-service area."

Econation in Ghent will be familiar to regular readers; they were chosen as one of the top 10 innovative companies in Flanders and recently won second prize at the World Future Energy summit in Dubai

for their LightCatcher skylight, which tracks the sun to provide a maximum of natural light for large spaces.

Tabachem, which stands for "take back chemicals", is an association of companies working on a pilot project for the leasing of chemicals. Instead of selling a product, chemicals manufacturers lease the use of the product to the end-user, encouraging both ends of the chain to work towards reducing the amounts of chemicals used. The concept has been common practice in the paint industry for years.

"This is on a very specialised level, and the companies involved have a reasonably wide range of business models," says Leyssens, "but the common point is that ownership of the product is no longer the goal. Instead, it's more about what the product does. So you buy and sell the service provided by the product rather than the product itself. It



The founders of Floop2 from left: Kim Tjoa, Will Robben and Rob Haenen

would be interesting to see how that could be applied in other sectors."

Floop2, based in Luxembourg, is a new take on a practice that's been going on in farming since the time when machinery meant horses and oxen. They began operating in the construction and agricultural industries, acting as an intermediary between companies who have equipment (and crew) standing idle, and companies who need a piece of equipment

temporarily. Floop2 brings the two sides together, and now covers the mining and transport industries, too. The supplier and the customer set the price and other terms; Floop2 simply brings them together.

"There are very few business-to-business product-service combinations, and they are one of the few who have really worked out a business model," explains Leyssens. "The B2B market is perhaps even more important than

the business-to-consumer market in reducing the use of materials and in making them more sustainable."

Taxistop is a non-profit, now with offices in Brussels and Ghent, launched in 1975 as the Centre for Positive Use to organise cost-sharing hitchhiking across Europe. Since then, they've expanded into car-sharing, flight tickets (Airstop), house exchange and more – in fact, anything that falls under the category of "making best use of existing means".

"We found their story of car-sharing and so on extremely logical and very easy to understand," notes Leyssens. "They've been around a long time, and they've more than proved their value. They're also very well known."

The Tot uw Dienst conference is free and open to the public on 26 February at 15.00 in Brussels

► www.plan-c.eu

ACW accused of tax fraud

Controversial shares present ethical problem for longstanding organisation

Alan Hope

The General Christian Workers' Alliance (ACW) is prepared to offer its full co-operation to an inquiry by the federal government's special tax investigation service, announced last week by secretary of state John Crombez. The announcement came after allegations that the organisation had broken the law by evading tax on dividends paid to ACW by the former Dexia bank. The allegations revolve around the so-called *winstbewijzen*, a peculiar kind of share which allowed ACW to receive dividends from Dexia before the bank was broken up and nationalised. (The bank division of

Dexia in Belgium is now known as Belfius.) Dexia has now bought back the shares from ACW, with ACW then lending the money to Dexia in return for interest.

According to an analysis by the business magazine *Trends*, ACW received €102 million in this way between 2003 and 2011 but paid only €58,000 in tax. According to ACW, the construction that allowed this is entirely legal. However, the organisation is faced with the problem of ethics, especially given its previous criticism of companies that did the same thing.

ACW has close connections with the CD&V party of finance minister



Steven Vanackere (pictured), who moved quickly to distance himself from any allegation of wrong-doing,

stating he felt "betrayed" along with the 800,000 ACW investors who had little or no knowledge of what was happening with their money. "The co-operative spirit and high finance are simply not good partners," he said. "It's not only the ACW people on the board of Dexia who should have realised that."

Crombez, meanwhile, played down calls, from Groen and N-VA, among others, for a parliamentary enquiry. "The best thing to do with accusations and evidence is take them to the courts," he said. "This difficult subject would cost a committee a great deal of time and work."

ING to cut 1,000 jobs

ING Belgium, the subsidiary of the Dutch banking and insurance group, has announced it will cut 1,000 jobs, or 10% of the workforce, by 2015. The job losses, brought about by the growth in internet banking and low interest rates, are to come about by natural wastage, CEO Ralph Hamers said, and would involve no compulsory redundancies.

Christian union ACV claimed that the explanation of internet banking was "a facile excuse". ING enjoys a strong position on the local banking market, said ACV secretary Herman Vanderhaegen. "But I would point to the cut-throat competition between banks. Because the other banks are making cuts, ING is under pressure to do the same." Last December, BNP



Paribas Fortis announced the loss of 1,800 jobs.

In 2012, ING Belgium made before-tax profits of €1.15 billion, 10% up on the previous year. Pre-tax profits for the group were €3.5 billion, with banking alone accounting for €3.2 billion of that, a decrease of 22%.

Telenet pays out to shareholders

Mechelen-based telecommunications company Telenet has announced a pay out totalling €950 million to shareholders. The deal comprises a dividend of €7.90 per share and a buy-in plan worth €50 million. Last year the company also paid out €50 million to buy in its own shares and paid out a dividend of €1 per share, with a capital reduction payment of €3.25. Whether a similar capital reduction will form part of this year's dividend will be decided at the general meeting in April.

The deal will bring most benefit to the US-based Liberty Global,

which recently failed in a takeover attempt. The company, owned by media magnate John C Malone, still holds 58.4% of Telenet shares. In the past year, Telenet saw sales and profits both rise by 8%, while its number of mobile clients doubled to more than 500,000. According to CEO Duco Sickinghe, mobile internet will be the company's main motor for growth in the years to come: only 11% of Telenet's cable customers are so far mobile clients. Elsewhere, broadband internet customers rose by 6%, while cable TV clients went down by 3%.

Tobacco ads not allowed, says foundation

The Foundation against Cancer has called on the federal government to ban all tobacco advertising in line with international obligations, after a survey found that two in three retailers were still displaying advertising that should have disappeared two years ago.

In 2005, Belgium signed an international convention within the World Health Organisation banning all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. Belgium asked for a five-year derogation in which retailers would be allowed to display posters and neon signs inside

and outside their shops.

That extension ran out in 2010. The Foundation surveyed 126 points of sale in 38 municipalities, all of them within a short distance from schools. Almost half had some advertising on the outside, and nearly two out of three had advertising inside.

Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed, warned against a "witch-hunt" of tobacco retailers, most of whom are newspaper shops where tobacco makes up half of all profits. "For the time being, they are selling a legal product," Unizo said in a statement.

Q&A

Jos Burgers is the author of the most popular Dutch-language management book of 2012, *Gek op gaten*. He gives a seminar in Ostend on 26 February

The title of your book literally means "crazy about holes". What's that about?

The book uses the metaphor of drills and holes. I've been using it for more than 25 years, and I've noticed that companies find it useful to get an internal discussion going. The metaphor is really simple: The client seems to be looking for something, and you think that by filling that gap, you'll give them what they need. But the message is: Don't give the client what they ask for; give them what they need.

You've written a number of other books. Is there a thread running

through them, a message you think needs to get out?

One of the messages I'm trying to get across is that customers don't want to buy something, they want to be helped. And if you can provide them with the help they need, they'll end up buying a lot from you. It might seem to be the same thing, but the feeling the customer has is that here is someone who's trying to help me, rather than someone who's trying to get my money off me.

You're Dutch, but you're addressing a Flemish audience. Is there a difference between the business cultures?



I speak quite often in Flanders, but that's usually in-company. The day in Ostend is open to anyone. Of course the Fleming is a different sort of person from the Hollander. He is more reserved, while the Dutchman is more direct. The Flemish don't give much away, but that's not to say that they're less enthusiastic. There's no difference between the two in enthusiasm, but the difference lies in how they express it. That also applies to self-esteem. The Dutch are much more ready to pat each other on the back, which is something you see less often in Flanders. Interview by AH

► www.kursaalostende.be

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Air ► Aviapartner

Budget airline Jetairfly has awarded its contract for baggage handling to Belgian company Aviapartner, to take effect in mid-April. The contract covers Brussels Airport, as well as Liège and Ostend. Aviapartner, meanwhile, warned workers at Swissport, which currently holds the contract, that they would not automatically be found jobs after the changeover.

Autos ► Ford

Unions at Ford Genk have walked away from talks with the company's European management over a social plan for the 4,500 workers to be made redundant when the factory closes at the end of 2014. Ford has offered redundancy payments of up to €13,600, as well as a payment of €900 for each year of service – a proposal unions called "bordering on the unbelievable".

Credit ► Moody's

Ratings bureaux Moody's and Standard & Poor's have declined a request by the Flemish government to have Flanders rated separately from Belgium, as the region is not, they said, a sovereign entity. Flanders hoped its record of balanced budgets might earn it a better rating than that afforded to Belgium, allowing cheaper borrowing on international money markets.

Food ► Ijsboerke

Belgian Icecream Group, better known by its trade name Ijsboerke, has revealed the identity of a possible buyer for the troubled company, which applied for protection from creditors two months ago. Last week staff at Ijsboerke voted in favour of a takeover by Glacio, based in Beerse, Antwerp province.

Supermarkets

► Makro

Hypermarket chain Makro will stop selling meat from castrated pigs in June. The chain said it was "the logical choice" no longer to support the practice of castrating piglets without anaesthetic, which farmers claim improves the taste of the meat.

Media ► Alfacam

The media services company has triggered the so-called alarm-bell procedure, after its own resources fell drastically as a result of depreciation in a number of subsidiary companies. Shareholders will now meet to decide on the future of the company, which is currently the subject of takeover talks with the Indian group Hinduja.

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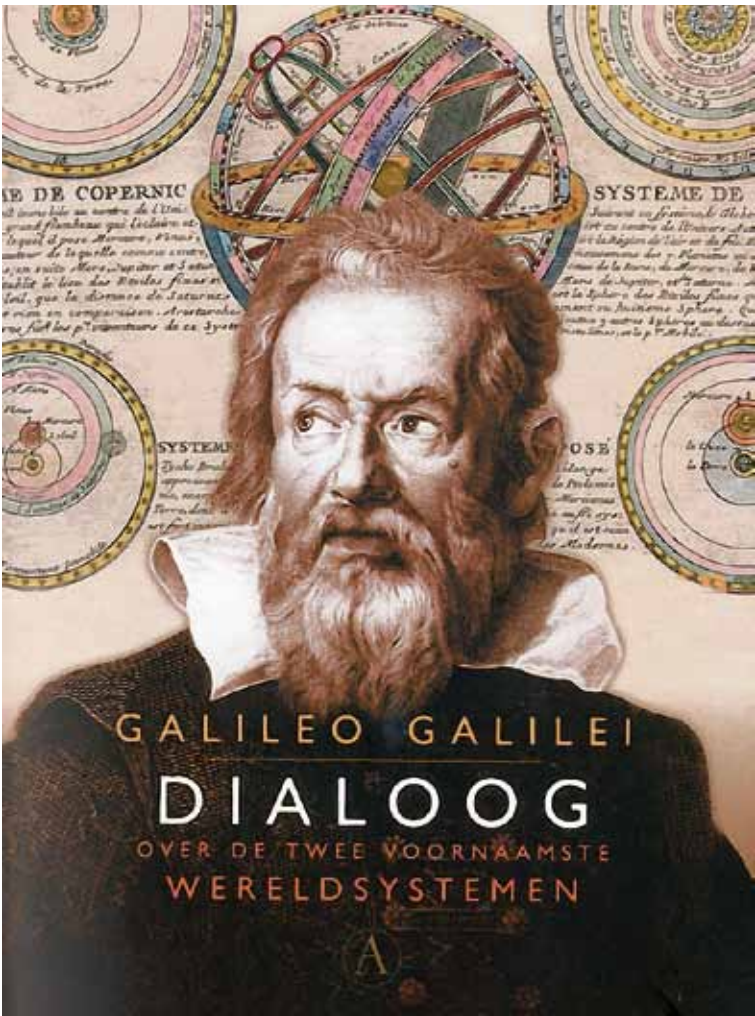
The dangerous dialogue

Galileo’s groundbreaking book is finally translated into Dutch – and it’s a good read

Senne Starckx

There are some persistent misunderstandings about the Italian physicist Galileo Galilei and his historic “argument” with the Catholic Church. After his trial for heresy in 1633, in which he was condemned to house arrest for the rest of his life, 69-year-old Galilei is said to have uttered the famous phrase: “And yet it moves.” Almost four centuries have passed since the trial, and the idea has become generally accepted that Galilei was a true martyr of science, prosecuted by the Inquisition and, according to many historians, even tortured. Some say that it was not

In *Dialogue*, Galilei introduced his “new” world view, with the earth moving and spinning around the sun – taking away the former status of the earth as centre of the universe. It was a clear rejection of the philosophy of Aristotle, which was, in Galilei’s time, the main theory on how nature worked. “Above all, Galilei wrote his book in a very understandable manner, so that even the common man could understand his ideas,” says Hans van den Berg, who has translated the *Dialogue* into Dutch. “Maybe that was why the church was so concerned about it. Also, the



Galileo Galilei's *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* got him into trouble with the Catholic Church

at that time the Catholic Church’s ‘house philosopher’. The science in this book really was revolutionary. Galilei’s ideas about movement, speed and acceleration were totally new – and, most importantly, they were backed up by evidence, thanks to the many observations he made with his self-constructed telescopes.” And the book is, says the Dutch translator, “astonishingly well written. Galilei limited the pure maths to a minimum. And, like the title says, he wrote in a highly polemical way. He presents his ideas during a fictional discussion between three people: Salviati, who shares Galilei’s point of view; Sagredo, a neutral moderator; and Simplicio, a dedicated follower of Aristotle.” As you might have guessed, *simplicio* means “simpleton” in Italian. “As the discussion progresses, Salviati has no mercy with Simplicio’s arguments, and in some excerpts he just makes a fool of him,” continues Van den Berg. “It was this merciless style of writing that got Galilei into trouble. In the years before the publication of the *Dialogue*, he had quite a good relationship with Pope Urban VIII. So if he had written his ideas in a more conciliatory way, he might have avoided a trial – however, we can’t know for sure. Nevertheless, thanks to his polemical style, Galilei’s *Dialogue* remains one of the cornerstones of Italian literature – quite exceptional for a science book.”

become a professional translator.” And what, according to Van den Berg, makes the *Dialogue* so special? “First of all, it’s the content: Galilei gives fierce opposition to the theory of Aristotle, who was

“The book is astonishingly well written.
He limited the pure maths to a minimum”

only Galilei who stood trial, but science in general. In reality, Galilei was put under house arrest in his Tuscan villa, where he could spend the rest of his life (he died nine years later) in relative luxury. The subject of the trial, a book, was put on the infamous Index, the church’s list of forbidden books, from which it was only removed in 1835. That “pagan” book, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, was originally written in Italian in 1632. Only now, after nearly 400 years, has it been translated into Dutch.

original is in Italian and not in Latin, which made this book accessible for everyone in Italy who could read – and not only for academics and priests who understood Latin.”

Revolutionary reading

Presumably it takes a background in science, not just linguistic expertise, to translate a book like this? “Yes, I trained as a scientist,” explains Van den Berg. He lectured for decades in mathematics at the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands until he retired a few years ago. “In 2001, I started to learn Italian as a hobby, which led to training to

Political priorities

An Antwerp University professor wins grant to investigate how politicians make decisions

Andy Furniere

According to the cliché, politicians are primarily concerned with increasing their popularity and are not in touch with the real needs of the people. Political scientist Stefaan Walgrave of the University of Antwerp is shedding all prejudices to examine how policymakers in Belgium, Canada and Israel decide on their priorities. The European Research Council (ERC) awarded Walgrave a budget of €2.5 million through a rare Advanced Investigators Grant. Every day, local, regional and national politicians are overwhelmed with information and demands from activist groups, knowledge centres, media and average citizens. Facebook and Twitter have made them more accessible than ever. “We realise it is inevitable that they have to make choices,” says Walgrave, “but we are keen to find out their most important news sources and how exactly they select the issues that seem most relevant and urgent.”



So much information, so little time: How do politicians process the constant flow of news?

Under Walgrave’s leadership, a team of about 15 researchers is studying how politicians process information and which facts lead to action. The three countries were targeted because of their “relatively small populations, where politicians are hopefully not overly questioned and are fairly easy to approach,” explains Walgrave. “They have extremely different electoral systems, which causes Canadian politicians to focus

strongly on local demands, while Israeli policymakers are mainly preoccupied with national matters. In Belgium, the system is balanced.”

Looking over their shoulders

The ERC granted Walgrave a budget for five years, which began last September. In these first five months, the team questioned several former Flemish politicians. Next, they plan a preliminary survey in the Flemish and federal parliaments during a plenary session this spring. MPs will be asked which topics have recently attracted their attention and tested on the variety of subjects they encountered. Then starting this autumn, researchers will conduct in-depth interviews with about 50 MPs. In a second phase, scientists will try to look closely over the shoulders of politicians to observe the complete decision-making process in their

daily working life. “We want to know where they get their input from and why they attach more value to certain data. Information can come from anywhere: from an advisor, but also from their hairdresser, for instance,” explains the political scientist. The results will be used to compile a list of questions for all Flemish and Dutch-speaking MPs and ministers. This general survey will be carried out in two years. All testimonies will be anonymous.

The business of problem solving

Why is this research so crucial? “Because it concerns the core of our democratic system,” says Walgrave. “It is essential that the leaders of our society act on the most important issues that determine the future of all of us. Politicians are in the business of solving problems. It is key to know how they select the

problems that will be solved, or at least attended to.” The professor thinks his work may prove that MPs need more support and staff to process this constant stream of news. He also feels it might provide arguments to further reinforce the professionalisation of politics. One raw idea is a new research facility for the parliament, one that filters complex scientific topics into quickly understandable summaries. The project carries a lot of prestige for the University of Antwerp, as it is only the third Advanced Investigators Grant for one of its researchers in the history of the university. “This is the Rolls-Royce of research grants,” says Walgrave. He has lectured at Antwerp since 1996 and in 1999 founded the Media, Movements and Politics research group at the university. He also spent a year each at the American universities of Harvard and Stanford.

“

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Kaat de Corte (BSB alumna, Harvard College Class of 2014)

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The wonders of water

With a non-chlorinated approach to wellness, Waer Waters is a welcome addition to the sauna landscape

Katrien Lindemans

Short days, cold temperatures and hardly any sun: When the winter blues kick in, it's time for drastic measures. The warm pool of Waer Waters will make you remember what it's like to feel warm, both inside and out

In the 1980s, Sarah Coppens' father opened an event centre in Halle and a decade later acquired Salons Waerboom in Groot-Bijgaarden, just outside the west side of the Brussels ring road. "The banqueting rooms, seminar and conference centre are built on the foundation of the old Waerboom farmstead," says Coppens.

Waerboom has a brisk business, which sparked the Coppens family to think about expanding. When the recreation site on nearby Rodenberg street went up for sale, the family's initial idea was to build a second Waerboom with a congress centre. "Gradually the idea shifted towards wellness," says Coppens. "And when the Rodenberg tennis club came up for sale, too, the idea of a complete wellness and sports centre made perfect sense."

As the area is on a hill, the centre was faced with a few planning problems, so Waer Waters has been six years in the making, most of which was spent creating space for the many pools. Which sounds promising. "A wellness centre is a big investment," says Coppens, "so we wanted to optimise the space to accommodate up to 250 people at a time."

Spread over about 6,000 square metres, you'll find pools, saunas, showers, a beauty salon, a brasserie and more. Much more. "We found inspiration in the thermal baths of Vals in Switzerland, of which my father is quite fond," Coppens explains. "We've used similar stones in our baths. We have a unique range of warm-water baths, in which the temperature never drops below 33 degrees. Outside, you'll find our salt bath, a large pool heated to 36 degrees where you float on the water."

Authentic Kelo sauna

The advantages of water and heat are diverse, from easing muscular pain to cleansing and sanitising the skin. One of Coppens' favourite heat sources is the Kelo sauna. "They always have a fireplace and are made of a certain kind of pine wood that only grows at a particular circle of latitude. The trees used for Kelo saunas are over 300 years old and give off



Get lost in the massive new Waer Waters sauna complex in Groot-Bijgaarden, Flemish Brabant



a very nice heat, with the temperature inside a nice 85 degrees." Authentic Kelo saunas are rare in Flanders, but you'll find one at Waer. A few hours in and out of the water can see you work up an appetite. "We want people to enjoy their stay as much as possible, that's why we added Brasserie Rodenberg," Coppens says. "The food on the menu is of the same culinary level as at Salons Waerboom. Although Waer seems to have everything, "there's one thing most wellness centres have

and we don't: a Jacuzzi," Coppens reveals. "They are difficult to maintain and, as we don't use chlorine in our water, we decided not to install them. Instead, our water is kept clean by a special kind of salt, which splits up into sodium and chloride and keeps the water hygienic and fresh." And while, at the moment, the main focus of Waer Waters is all about relaxation, the addition of the sports centre come spring will give visitors the option to work out as well.

"There will be tennis courts both indoor and out, a squash court and a fitness centre with personal trainers. We also plan to run aquafitness sessions in the big pool. The idea is to offer customers a complete choice in health and well-being. People can stay as long as they want. We had one couple who spent the entire day at Waer Waters, from 11 in the morning until 11 in the evening!"

► www.waerwaters.be

A SAUNA NEAR YOU

There is a sauna (or two or three) in every tiny village across Flanders, but some are certainly more memorable than others. Along with Waer Waters, these addresses will keep you coming back for more.



Visit the **thermen in Londerzeel** (pictured), between Brussels and Antwerp, for a unique sauna experience. The Austrian Alp sauna has an open fire and a temperature of a steady 80 degrees. But the best part is: It's in a wooden cabin surrounded by artificial snow. With a temperature of -4 degrees, it's the perfect spot to cool down after a hot sauna session.

► www.thermenlonderzeel.be

Nooz in Grobbendonk, Antwerp province, is an indoor/outdoor wellness spot for a couple of hours or a couple of days. Everything is possible in this place with saunas, an outdoor hot tub, private lounge garden with pool, massages, rain showers and more. Never mind the weather (more snow, anyone?), the hot water will keep you warm.

► www.nooz.be

Seanooz is run by the same owners as Nooz, but in a different location. Stay at an old fisherman's house in Nieuwpoort and relax with a sauna session, Jacuzzi, cinema and more. The wellness experience takes up at least half a day. If you come in the morning, expect a luxurious breakfast; if you arrive in the afternoon, you'll get a tasty dinner. Or stay for a couple of days if you need to escape from the daily grind for a little while longer.

► www.seanooz.be

Last year, **Aquamarijn in Lanaken** (Limburg province) was voted by Horeca Flanders as the best wellness centre in Flanders. It's part of La Butte aux Bois, an old manor turned into a four-star hotel. From anti-ageing treatments to a couple of hours in the whirlpool or jet stream, relaxation is the key ingredient of your stay.

► www.aquamarijn.be



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Driven by melancholia

A comforting, minimalist second album by the contemplative Jan Swerts

Christophe Verbiest

Three years ago, Jan Swerts surprised Flanders with his debut album *Weg* – a title that can be translated as Road or Gone, and in this case, refers to both). Last week, the 36-year-old released his sophomore effort, *Anatomie van de melancholie* (Anatomy of the Melancholy). Again, he deals in minimalistic piano songs, sparsely adorned with instruments (strings, horns and once even an electric guitar). He sings them with his high-pitched, sometimes androgynous voice.

Swerts (*pictured*) thought that *Weg* was going to be the only album he would ever release. “I worked on it for almost a decade and paid for everything myself,” the musician tells me at his home in Heusden-Zolder in Limburg. Cost, he says, is “the main reason why it took me so long. Sometimes I had to save money for a year to pay for studio time or the artwork. Though, I must admit, I’m also an extreme perfectionist.” Unexpectedly, the record would alter his life. It was released in 2010 and got favourable reviews from some Flemish webzines. But that was it. Then several months later, a rave review in the Flemish weekly *Humo* changed everything. “Suddenly all the leading newspapers and magazines wanted to review the album. And it started to sell. It taught me that, although there are great writers working for webzines, they don’t have remotely the same impact as the print media.”

Stage spite

Swerts was happy, naturally, with all the praise, but it had one annoying side effect. “People were begging me to play live. Flattering, without any doubt, but I could not accept the offers, because I hate playing live,” he says. “I find it unnatural, like taking a plane. Making music is expressing your emotions. It has to come from deep inside you; if not, it’s a mere reproduction, and that would be dishonest to the songs.” Unless, he adds, “like Bob Dylan or Keith Jarrett, you have the talent to keep reinventing your music every time you play it.” However, “speaking in public and



transmitting information, I really like.” Luckily, because he’s a lecturer at a university college. “I want to keep doing that,” he confirms. “I’m certainly not aspiring to a musical career.”

However, one thing has changed: He is giving concerts! “I think I have done five shows so far,” he says. “It was [artistic director] Kurt Overbergh of the Ancienne Belgique in Brussels who lured me into it. I accepted the offer because I don’t want to wake up one day regretting that I never tried it. It will remain a necessary but sporadic evil that places me on the thin line between love and hate.”

Inspiration at hand

The artist’s new album is named after a 17th-century book by the English scholar Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. Swerts, who describes his work as contemplative, was trying to capture melancholia in his songs. “My whole life, melancholia – an extreme awareness of how everything is transient – has been my driving force. In Burton’s time, it was seen as a sickness. Only during the Romantic era did melancholy – spleen, *Weltschmerz* or *mal-du-siècle* – get, thanks to artists and philosophers, a positive connotation. I totally agree with Joni Mitchell, who sings on *Hejira*: ‘There’s comfort in melancholy.’”

The 10 tracks on the new album were inspired by nine Flemish artists and philosophers whose work, according to Swerts, is driven by melancholia, including director Michaël R Roskam (*Bullhead*), composer Wim Mertens and visual artist Thierry De Cordier. In the CD’s liner notes, all nine have been portrayed by painter Stijn Felix



with black bile being extracted from their bodies.

The song titles all refer directly to them, which is why they are in Dutch. But the lyrics are in English – impressionistic lyrics that don’t tell a story as much as try to create a mood. “Let me reveal something,” Swerts proclaims: “The songs don’t have lyrics. When I was young, I thought good music didn’t need lyrics. I realised that was oversimplified when I discovered albums like *The Ghost of Tom Joad* by Bruce Springsteen, *Blood on the Tracks* by Dylan or *Hejira*.”

Subsequently, he started singing,

clearly influenced by Mertens, who had also shown him the way to minimal music. “He often sings meaningless lyrics; their sounds have to express an emotion,” says Swerts. “I’m working in the same vein, though I noticed that I always use English, without thinking about it.” Singer-songwriters, he concludes, “have the reputation of being huge narcissists. ‘Listen to me! I’m sad and want to tell you about my misfortunes! Poor me!’” He laughs. “I’d never do that. When I hear such songs, I think: Quit whining.”

► www.janswerts.be

WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

The Broken Circle Breakdown from Flemish director Felix van Groenningen (*De helaasheid der dingen*) won **two prizes last weekend at the Berlin Film Festival**: the Europa Cinemas Label and the Panorama Public Prize. The former is awarded to films not in competition to support promotional efforts, and the latter came as no surprise after the film garnered a standing ovation. Stars Johan Heldenberg and Veerle Baetens were also on hand to give a live performance of music from the film after the screening. The film was subsequently sold for release to several territories, now numbering 27, including France, Germany and Brazil.

► www.thebrokencirclebreakdown.be

This year’s edition of **Mind the Book**, a series of readings, debates and a book fair in Antwerp, begins on 28 February with a presentation by Arnon Grunberg of his new book of essays *Buster Keaton lacht nooit* (Buster Keaton Never Laughs). The Dutch author is also the curator of this year’s film retrospective and has chosen films that he covers in the book, including *The Believer* (2001), *The Conversation* (1974) and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987). See next week’s issue for a full story on Mind the Book.

► www.mindthebook.be

Standaard Uitgeverij, publishers of *Suske en Wiske*, are celebrating the 100th birthday of the comic strip’s author, Willy Vandersteen (who died in 1990), with *Suske en Wiske helpen kinderen* (Suske and Wiske Help Children), a special comic for kids staying in hospitals. With every “like” their endeavour gets on Facebook, the publishers will send one copy to a local hospital.

Antwerp designer **Christian Wijnants** has won the **International Woolmark Prize** at London Fashion Week. The coveted prize comes with a cash award of \$100,000 (£75,000) and the inclusion of the collection, made of merino wool, in fine department stores across the world. Wijnants’ collection consists of seamless dresses, which he hand-dyed (*pictured*). The jury, which included Victoria Beckham and Diane von Furstenberg, said that the work was “unpretentious and timeless”.

► www.christianwijnants.com



Contest requests music to park cars by

The Concertgebouw in Bruges and the car park company Interparking have launched the competition Music for Car Parks, whereby composers – budding or otherwise – are invited to create a soundscape for parking garages. The first prize is €2,500 and your composition played in 600 parking garages all over Europe.

The idea germinated when the Concertgebouw booked Bang On A Can to play Brian Eno’s *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* this May, explains Bert Vanlaere, director of marketing

at Concertgebouw. Eno’s album was one of the landmarks of electronic ambient music. “He had the idea when he was stuck at Cologne airport,” says Vanlaere. “Eno wanted to create music to counter-balance the restlessness in public spaces.” The project also corresponds to the venue’s Do It Yourself motto of the 2012-2013 season, and it blends in with their Sound

Factory, “an interactive seedbed for sound art and creativity”.

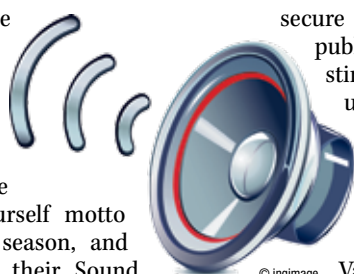
The composition, the rules stipulate, “has a functional character: It creates a calm, comfortable and secure atmosphere in a public car park, subtly stimulates the car park user and provides an added value not offered by the ubiquitous and hackneyed muzak.”

Vanlaere adds: “The

new composition will be integrated in the other music that plays in the car park. It won’t be on endless repeat.”

The buzz word “soundscape” often refers to electronic music, though, strictly speaking, the term is much broader. “It could be a choir, a musician with one instrument or a rock group; you name it,” says Vanlaere. “As long as it follows the rules and is created especially for the occasion, anything goes.” CV

► www.musicforcarparks.com



© ingimage

A meeting of minds and bodies

Performatik

Katy Desmond

Performance art, that curious thing that happens when the visual and performance arts meet, is gaining steady ground in world's great art institutions, from the Tate Modern in London to MoMa in New York. Enter Kaaithheater's Performatik 2013, the Brussels biennale of performance art: This whirlwind festival that offers dozens of exhibitions and performances over 10 days is making sure that Brussels is among those leading the trend.

Performatik is all about creating a meeting space for visual and performing artists from all over the world. Most of the pieces are short, usually lasting around 30 minutes, making them perfect for mixing and matching two or three to see in an evening. Prices are kept at a minimum, with most entries costing €5.

Originally created by Kaaithheater to provide a space to explore the borders between theatre, dance, music and performance art,

Performatik has become Brussels' premier festival for creating interactions between different artists, art forms and art houses. Kaaithheater shares the honour of hosting and curating the exhibitions with several of the city's museums and performance spaces, including Argos, Beursschouwburg, Bozar, Q-02 and Wiels.

"The idea is to have a real cross-over, to have links between the visual art world and the dance and theatre world, and to really do it together," explains Katleen Van Langendonck, programme director at Kaaithheater. Sometimes this interaction is through the meeting of minds, usually in the form of dancer-choreographer meets visual artist. So New York choreographer Maria Hassabi meets Brussels sculptor Jimmy Robert, French dancer Vincent Dunoyer meets Ghent artist Belinde De Bruyckere, and choreographer Trajal Harrel meets fellow American (and visual artist) Sarah Sze. Together these artists



© Meggy Rustamova

and performers interact, exploring their own practices and the ways they can take their work further than they could go alone.

Other times, artists work solo to explore their work within the context of other art forms. For example, British artist and Turner

Prize winner Martin Creed presents a piece on the five positions of classical ballet that is at once an artwork, a concert, a comedy and a video installation. Georgian-born visual artist Meggy Rustamova, meanwhile, has put together a performance that explores "the

in-between space" that you enter on your way to somewhere else (*pictured*).

Spectators are asked to take part in the interaction as well. Salons will give visitors the chance to talk directly with artists, and the festival will open with a debate between Jenny Schlenzka, associate curator of performance art at MoMa's P.S. 1, and Ann Demeester of the De Appel Arts Centre in Amsterdam. "I really wanted to open with a debate and then the performances, not the other way around," explains Van Langendonck, "in order to give festival-goers a kind of frame of reference to see the performances."

Performatik lands the visitor in a sort of in-between space – not quite a museum, where one is free to come and go and wander at will, not quite a performance where you are locked in for the duration. According to Van Langendonck, it is this meeting space that provides the perfect place to contemplate the role and use of performance art.

22 February to 2 March

Across Brussels

► www.kaaitheater.be

FESTIVAL

Puzzling America

Leuven celebrates the stars and stripes with a weekend festival featuring a range of American musical forms, from Broadway to New Orleans jazz to contemporary classical. Day one is dedicated to Broadway composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim. A lecture and debate on Sondheim is followed by a screening of his innovative musical *Company*. The next day, Flemish soprano Annelies Van Gramberen and pianist Jeroen D'hoë present a selection of Americana and folk songs old and new. The third and final day includes a triumphant send-off courtesy of Kris Stroobants' Collegium Frascati orchestra. The closing programme features works by Aaron Copland, Philip Glass and other modern American composers. Organisers have found just the right venue in OPEK, a fabulous specimen of 20th-century modernist architecture, which once served as the port of Leuven's customs house. **Georgio Valentino**



The Pajot Swing Jazz Band from Liedekerke

28 February to 2 March

OPEK, Leuven

► www.30cc.be

MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Mind the Book: Literary festival featuring a diverse array of readings, debates, concerts, film and a book fair

FEB 28-MAR 3 at deSingel, Desguinlei 25

► www.mindthebook.be

Brussels

Interlitratur: Annual event aimed at showcasing the rich and varied literary traditions brought by the many communities of Brussels, including poetry readings, concerts and more

Until FEB 28 across Brussels

► www.interlitratur.be

VISUAL ARTS

The Golden Cabinet

Antwerp reached the height of its fortunes as a trading power exactly 400 years ago. The city's merchants, flush with gold, set about accumulating some of Europe's most impressive art collections, many of which have been dispersed in the intervening centuries. But the Golden Age of Antwerp lives on in the house of 17th-century mayor and benefactor Nicolaas Rockox. The new, long-running *Golden Cabinet* collects under one roof the treasures of Rockox's own collection and many important works borrowed from the city's Royal Museum of Fine Arts, which is currently closed for renovation. The house itself is one of the works of art on display, recreating the brute opulence of Golden Age Antwerp. Even centuries after his death, Rockox boasts a formidable collection, including works by Jan Van Eyck, Peter Paul Rubens and Anthony Van Dyck. **GV**



© Jean Fouquet, 'Madonna Surrounded by Seraphim and Cherubim'

Until end 2016

Rockox House, Antwerp

► www.kmska.be

MORE VISUAL ARTS THIS WEEK

Bruges

The 17th Century Through the Eyes of Jacques Callot: A selection of works by the French printmaker best known for his large graphic oeuvre depicting early 17th-century society, including etchings chronicling the lives of soldiers, clowns, gypsies, beggars and aristocrats

Until MAY 20 at Arentshuis, Dijver 16

► www.brugge.be

Brussels

Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) - The Music Lesson: Works by the early 18th-century French painter, including paintings, drawings, prints and musical instruments

Until MAY 12 at Bozar, Ravensteinstraat 23

► www.bozar.be

Hasselt

Axelle Red - Fashion Victim: The Flemish singer's selection of works by photographers, artists and collaborators who illustrate her passion for selected pieces from her wardrobe

Until JUN 2 at Fashion Museum, Gasthuisstraat 11

► www.modemuseumhasselt.be

DANCE

What the Body Does Not Remember

The residents of Flanders should drop to their knees and give thanks to whatever force they see fit that Wim Vandekeybus was born – and set up shop – here in their midst. “One of Europe’s top choreographers” is an easy phrase to keep repeating, but the energy, originality and sheer wow-factor of his productions have recruited non-theatre types to the wonderful (and in his case weird) world of contemporary dance. It’s the 25th anniversary of Vandekeybus’ troupe Ultima Vez this year, and this is a revival of his very first show, the one that shot him into international stardom in 1987. *What the Body Does Not Remember* won him New York’s Bessie Award and led *The New York Times* to gush: “Rough, wild, playful, ironic, stunning. Adjectives that sound far too weak to describe this highly innovative dance performance”. After running at KVS in Brussels last weekend, it’s on a new international tour, with stops in Dilbeek and Ostend, then later on in Ghent. If you haven’t seen it, don’t wait another 25 years.

Lisa Bradshaw



27 February, 20.30 | CC Westrand, Dilbeek
2 March, 20.00 | De Grote Post, Ostend

► www.ultimavez.com

MORE DANCE THIS WEEK

Antwerp

Mixed Bill: The Ballet of Flanders’ first performance of the season, a three-part production, including an energetic ode to New York, a new work by Jacopo Godani and Wayne McGregor’s award-winning *Infra*
Until FEB 24 at Theater ’t Eilandje, Kattendijkdok-Westkaai 16
► www.balletvlaanderen.be

Raw Circles: International break dance competition, including hip-hop, popping, locking and house at the highest levels of skill
FEB 23-24 at Hangar 26, Rijnkaai 96
► www.rawcircles.be

Ghent

Elena’s Aria: Star Flemish choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker’s 1984 production, a slow and meditative look at love and betrayal
FEB 22-24 at Vooruit, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 23
► www.vooruit.be

SPECIAL EVENT

Bal Rat Mort

Ostend’s Koninklijke Cercle Cœcilia was formed over a century and a half ago to support widows and orphans of fishermen lost at sea as well as the city’s urban poor. Since 1898, the charity has thrown a gala inspired by the cafés and cabarets of Belle Epoque Paris (the site of some epic carousing by Cercle members, including painter James Ensor). Every year the charity selects a theme and goes all out to decorate the halls of Ostend’s Casino from top to bottom. The theme of this 115th edition of Bal Rat Mort is Land of the Maharaja. The crowd will groove to exotic sounds while surrounded by fire-eaters, snake-charmers and costumed performers. Party-goers themselves should dress to impress as the best dressed wins a JetAir vacation. **6V**

2 March, 22.00 | Kursaal Oostende

► www.kursaalootende.be



MORE SPECIAL EVENTS THIS WEEK

Brussels

Batibouw 2013: Annual international fair that’s all about construction, renovation, decoration and interior design
FEB 21-MAR 3 at Brussels Expo, Belgiëplein
► www.batibouw.com

Ghent

Anima Gent: Brussels’ annual film festival travels to Ghent for animated features from across the world, including Belgium, Japan, Denmark and Argentina
Until FEB 24 at Sphinx, Sint-Michiëlshelling 3
► www.sphinx-cinema.be

DUSK TIL DAWN

Katrien Lindemans

Museum Night Fever

2 March, across Brussels

What do you need to get about 14,000 people to visit museums in one night? The answer: 25 museums and twice that many super-fun activities. And it also helps to have a wicked Bulex after-party. This year, a few more establishments have joined the Museum Night Fever fray: the Museum of Manuscripts, the Parlamentarium and Cinematek. With about 20 other institutions spread all over Brussels, they will be the scene for some unusual museum activities between 19.00 and 01.00. How about an interactive chess game at the museum for musical instruments? Visit the Museum of the National Bank for some hot cocoa, or watch a fashion show at the Museum for Natural Science.

Don’t forget to hop on the shuttle bus to the Brussels Event Brewery for some dance floor action at the Bulex after-party. With no less than six rooms to choose from and a dazzling line-up of more than 40 artists, this promises to be a good night out. There will be electro, there will be dubstep, radio station FM Brussels will take over a room with their DJ squad and much more. dEUS frontman Tom Barman will show off his DJ skills, as will the 40 family members of the Orkestar Braka Kadrievi, a Macedonian gypsy-style brass band. Get your tickets for both the night and the after-party now: They sell out quickly.

► www.museumnightfever.be



BITE

Robyn Boyle

Al Barmaki ★★★★★

As anyone who lives here realises, most of the restaurants on or around Brussels' Grote Markt are tourist traps. You know them by their giant photos of mussels and fries with descriptions of the dish in three or more languages. Walk on by, because there's a surprising gem of a restaurant just around the corner. Al Barmaki is not only Belgium's first Lebanese restaurant, but it also has more than 30 years under its belt and a loyal clientele.

My first impression is positive, based on a warm reception and the dining room's intricate Moorish decor and cosily busy atmosphere. Our server leads us to a table at the back where my only complaint is the number of mirrored walls. Other than that, my partner and I are pleased to be at a roomy corner table decked in all-white linens, while soft rock music sets the tone for what is to be a really enjoyable evening. Here's the catch with a non-touristy place, though: The menu is half in French, half in Arabic. I recognise things like hummus, tabbouleh and falafel and all sorts of grilled and skewered meats. But the rest is a mystery, so we're relieved to find they offer *mezze*, a selection of several small dishes to share between two (€55).

We decide to pair this with a bottle of wine from the region: Château Kefraya (€35). I'm

not familiar with Lebanese wines, but if this bottle is representative, the mountainous country produces very good vintages indeed. This particular red has a rich body and complex flavours like prune, raspberry and a hint of tobacco. We enjoy the first glass with a bowl of black olives and pickled peppers.

Out comes a basket of flat bread and a whole procession of little dishes. My favourite is the aubergine caviar, a smoky dip made of roasted aubergine, which my partner succinctly describes as having the taste of "peated whiskey". Our favourite, though, is the hummus for its nutty flavour and creamy, whipped consistency.

We're also bowled over by the deliciously simple white cabbage with lemony garlic vinaigrette. The tabbouleh, too, is a tasty and refreshing salad of parsley, tomatoes, bulgur and mint. Four light and fluffy balls of crisply fried falafel are scrumptious, and even better dipped in earthy sesame seed sauce.

Herbs and spices are a recurring theme: Fresh mint turns up in the salads, cinnamon inside the little beef-and-pine-nut-filled pastries. Another pastry is stuffed with soft white cheese and fragrant oregano. As for the grilled meats, the minced lamb is soft and juicy in a mixture of mint and onion.



The chicken couldn't be more tender, either; it's coated in lemon and paprika and grilled to perfection.

We are grateful to Al Barmaki for making our first introduction to Lebanese cuisine in Brussels a very pleasant one. We settle the €94 bill over two coffees and agree to return the next time we're in the neighbourhood.

- 📍 Spoomakersstraat 67, Brussels; 02.513.08.34
- 🕒 Mon-Sat, 19.00-midnight
- 💶 Mains: €10-€15
- 📖 Brussels' first and finest Lebanese restaurant specialising in authentic Mediterranean *mezze*

▶ www.albarmaki.be

TALKING SPORTS

How bad is match-fixing?

There is something so cheap about the idea that football matches might be fixed that we almost refuse to believe it. Aren't athletes supposed to be driven by the noble notion of victory rather than filthy lucre? Yet as fans, we delude ourselves. We should know better; Olympian ideals have been sullied since sport began, and still are, as the Lance Armstrong saga testifies. Match-fixing has returned to haunt the game in the past fortnight, with Europol, the European police agency, revealing evidence of the activity in top international games. Attempts to fix about 380 professional matches were identified, involving up to 425 match and club officials and players and criminals from more than 15 countries. These included qualification matches for the World Cup and the Champions League. Of these, 19 were fixed in Belgium.

Match-fixing has long haunted the local game. The worst scandal of all occurred in 1982 when Standard Liège manager Raymond Goethals, Belgium captain Eric Gerets and Standard president Roger Petit bribed Waterschei to lose the last game of the season to Standard, who thus won the championship. Europol says Belgium's 19 match fixes were masterminded by the Asian mafia, who managed to corrupt some 11 Belgians in the efforts. It could well be the same people behind the 2006 betting scandal that shocked the game: Players and management of First Division sides Lierse and La Louvière and were revealed to be complicit in fixing results on behalf of a Shanghai-based betting syndicate.

The then-Lierse coach, Paul Put, has since resurfaced to claim that match-fixing is still widespread. "Match-fixing has always existed in football," says Put, who also managed Flemish clubs Geel and Lokeren and is currently coaching Burkina Faso. "If you look at cycling, at Lance Armstrong, it's always him who is pointed at, but everybody was taking drugs. It's unfortunate, but I think in every sport you have to face those things. That is reality." Merksem-born Put was one of the very few coaches to have been banned for fixing games, serving a three-year ban in Belgium that expired in 2011 after being found

guilty of fixing two matches while at Lierse. He still denies involvement and says he was acting under duress after being threatened by those leading the scam. "I was threatened by the mafia," he said. "My child was not safe." But his success since returning to football – guiding Burkina Faso to their first Africa Cup of Nations final last month – suggests he may earn some redemption.

As for the local game, one can only hope that Put is wrong and that it can change. But for that, everyone needs to be realistic about the problem, and hard-headed in tackling it.



Paul Put during the Africa Cup of Nations final earlier this month

Leo Cendrowicz

The last word...

Leaving the nest

"It's a real challenge for me. I'm very attached to home and wanted to prove to myself that I could stand on my own two feet."

Fran Thielemans from Schepdaal is one of a growing number of Flemish students taking part in the Erasmus exchange

First time for everything

"I have nothing against alcohol, I just never felt the need. The only drawback is that I can't go on partying after about midnight."

Film director Erik Van Looy, 50, drank the first beer of his life last week on the TV show *Scheire en de schepping*

The big picture

"I'm able to live from what I love doing. A prize is an unexpected bonus, so I have no trouble at all giving that extra money away."

Flemish photographer Stephan Vanfleteren donated the prize money from his winning World Press Photo to the sick people of Ghana who figure in his portraits

Mystery meat

"Spaghetti sauce is so heavily seasoned, they could put anything in there, and even I would have no idea which meat it was."

Michelin-star chef Stéphane Buyens of Le Fox in De Panne

NEXT WEEK
IN FLANDERS TODAY

Cover story

Are you worried about your kids' activities on the internet? Do you wonder if a photo you want to post on your own website would be an infringement of copyright? Do you want to advertise your company's services online but have no idea how? The Flemish government has launched a Knowledge Centre for Media Literacy to help address all these concerns and more

Business

Last year, we reported on dairy farmers from Mali coming to Flanders to discuss the common problems of their industry. Now the situation is reversed: Flemish cattle farmers have visited Rwanda to see first-hand how farmers there are tackling issues such as weather conditions and market values

Living

You know about the options for getting your news in a simplified version of Dutch, but have you ever been frustrated that you can't go to Flemish theatre? Now you can, as Fast Forward presents plays in simple Dutch for those of us for whom the fast-paced, complex sentences of the Dutch-language stage can prove to be a bit too much