

Botanical bounty

The Flemish region takes control of the National Botanic Garden in January

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Salty success

Centho Chocolates won Belgium's only prize at the International Chocolate Awards

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Dance me

Wim Vandekeybus curates next month's December Dance festival in Bruges

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What lies beneath

For the first time, a geological 3D model shows us what it looks like below the Flemish soil

Andy Furniere

According to a common saying, residents of Flanders live "on Flemish clay". But in addition to just clay, the region's soil packs multiple layers of rock formations, some of which formed hundreds of millions of years ago. For the first time, a new geological model is rendering this entire underground landscape visible in 3D.

A new 3D geological model, which can be consulted on Databank Ondergrond Vlaanderen (Flanders Soil Database), divides the Flemish soil into 38 coloured layers according to the age of the rock. The oldest and hardest layers of rock are more than 400 million years old and can be found up to a depth of 6,400 metres. The most recent layers belong to the geologic Quaternary Period, which began about 1.8 million years ago.

The 3D model casts the Flemish soil as a pistol of sorts. The pistol grip is located below the eastern province of Limburg, and the barrel ends with the coast of West Flanders. Below the visualised layers, the Flemish soil is composed of old rock. It was deposited more than 400 million years ago and wasn't incorporated into the model.

"In Limburg, both the deep basin of the Kempen and the Roer Valley Graben are responsible for the large variety of old rock," explains geology expert Roel De Koninck, who co-ordinated the model's final development phase at the Flemish Institute for Technological Research (VITO). "In the basin of the Kempen, many layers date from 400 to 150 million years ago." It took VITO six years and a team of five scientists to create the 3D model, which is part of a long-term assignment of the Natural Resources division of the Flemish government's Environment, Nature and Energy department. For this task,

VITO's Flemish Knowledge Centre Soil receives an annual budget of €900,000 from the government of Flanders – half of which was spent on developing the model.

During the six years of research, the researchers assembled and digitised all the existing data on Flemish soil. "Among our sources were maps more than 60 years old, drilling data dating from two centuries ago and seismic analyses," says De Koninck.

While fragmented, much of the knowledge was already accessible through the government's database, but the team also searched the archives of research bureaus and private companies. One of the organisations that provided helpful info was gas transport and distribution company Fluxys.

To visualise the 3D model's enormous amount of data, the Natural Resource Division uses the freely downloadable programme 3D SubsurfaceViewer. Developed by the German

Plan to restore Botanic Garden

National garden will be managed entirely by the Flemish region starting in January

Alan Hope

The National Botanic Garden of Belgium in Meise, just outside Brussels, will cost the government of Flanders €4.6 million a year when it comes under the region's control in 2014, the government's financial auditors have reported. After more than a decade in which much of the infrastructure of the garden deteriorated because of an unresolved question of which region was responsible for which upkeep, this week will see the establishment of the Flemish Agency for the Botanic

Garden, which will take over the running of the institution in January. The Botanic Garden is considered one of the 10 most diverse in the world, with 18,000 species of plants and a scientific institution of international calibre. In addition, the government faces a bill of €71 million for repairs to buildings, which are suffering from years of neglect. The two expenses for 2014 come to €11.1 million, of which €6.5 million will come from the federal government, leaving Flanders



with €4.6 million. "The Botanic Garden will present the Flemish government with a major budgetary challenge, thanks to federal under-financing and dilapidated infrastructure," the report concludes. Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters said that "the amount we will have to pay to make up the difference will of course have to come from general resources. We always knew the Botanic Garden would come with extra costs."

Brussels opens winter shelters for the homeless

Brussels minister Brigitte Grouwels and Evelyne Huytebroeck reached an agreement last week with social security organisations on providing emergency shelter for the homeless during the winter months. The various organisations had originally planned to open a night shelter last Wednesday, but the opening was delayed until Friday due to administrative problems. The chair of the OCMW, Yvan Mayeur, finally gave the green light after the budget had been approved. Mayeur, who becomes mayor of Brussels city next month, went on to criticise Grouwels and Huytebroeck for announcing that the centre would open before he had given his official approval as head of the city's social security department. One politician described the events last week as a "ping pong game". The centre, which will remain open until the end of March, occupies a building on the Koningsstraat owned by the social security department of Brussels City. It offers homeless people a bed, meals and toilet facilities. The building in Koningsstraat is currently also occupied by squatters who were recently evicted from the Gesu convent in Sint-Joost-ten-Node. But the Sint-Joost district



hopes to find permanent homes for those evicted soon. Brussels has gradually increased the budget spent on the winter shelter, from €92,000 in the winter of 2004-05 to the current figure of €1.1 million. The number of places has also risen sharply from 45 then to 400 now. City authorities also want to devote more resources to psychiatric help as well as extending the opening hours of day centres for the homeless. **Derek Blyth**

London's Flanders Fields garden opens next weekend

Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters will travel to London on Saturday to attend the official inauguration of the Flanders Fields Memorial Garden. The ceremony will begin on Friday with the arrival of a Belgian naval frigate in London carrying 70 sandbags filled with soil gathered from First World War military cemeteries in Belgium. The sandbags will be transported on a military gun carriage through

the streets of central London on Saturday to their final destination near Wellington Barracks. The soil will then be deposited in the memorial garden, designed by Bruges landscape architect Piet Blanckaert and intended, according to the Flemish government, to serve as a "lasting memorial of hope, peace and international solidarity". **DB**

Flanders producing less household waste

Every resident of Flanders was responsible for a pile of household rubbish weighing in at 513 kilograms last year – 11 kg less than in 2011, and the fourth year in a row when the quantity of waste has declined. That's according to figures from the Flemish waste management company Ovam, reported to the Flemish parliament last week by environment minister Joke Schauvliege.

Flanders has cut its per capita waste production by 21 kg, or 4%, over the course of 10 years, Schauvliege said, but there remain improvements to be made – in sorting, for example. "Far too much recyclable material is still finding its way to general waste," she said. Ovam will now carry out a study into sorting practices. **AH**

Road accident victims take message to schools

Flemish transport minister Hilde Crevits has approved a €270,000 budget to continue the programme that sees road accident victims giving talks to secondary school students. The two-year project Getuigen Onderweg (Witnesses on the Road) was launched by the Flemish victims' assistance organisation Rondpunt to allow those who've suffered road accidents and their families to talk to young people about the consequences.

On the basis of a study carried out by the government's policy institute Steunpunt Verkeersveiligheid (Traffic Safety Support), Crevits decided that the project was worth supporting for a further two years. The researchers found that young people were more aware of road safety after listening to the victims. The report also said that girls were more influenced than boys. Some 18,000 Flemish students have already taken part in the project. **DB**

Flanders reaches new record for Michelin stars

Two restaurants – one in Knokke-Heist and one in Brussels – have been awarded a second Michelin star in the latest edition of the prestigious *Michelin Guide*. Chef Christophe Hardiquet of Brussels restaurant Bon-Bon showed "characteristic creativity and technical skill" to raise the level of his menu, according to the guide. In Knokke-Heist, meanwhile, chef Bart Desmidt was lauded for the "harmony of flavours" on offer at his Bartholomeus restaurant. The two restaurants join 12 others in Brussels and Flanders with two stars. At the same time, Michelin awarded one star to 14 restaurants in the regions for the first time. That includes Ciccio in Knokke-Heist, a family restaurant run by the son of the original owner, who happens to be Claudio dell'Anno, the winner of the 2009 season of TV show *Mijn Restaurant!*. Another new star goes to Michael Vrijmoed for his Ghent restaurant Vrijmoed. The chef was once sous chef to Peter Goossens of the famous Hof van Cleve in Kruishoutem, which kept its three Michelin stars this year. "It gives me great pleasure to see him get a star," Goossens said of Vrijmoed. "He deserves it. He has a great deal of talent."



Flanders' other two three-star restaurants, both in Bruges, also kept their three stars. "The new selection is a perfect reflection of the developments on the Belgian culinary scene," commented Michelin's international director Michael Ellis. With 19 stars, he said, the capital now has more stars than Berlin, Rome or Milan. "Brussels can take its place at the top of European gastronomy." **AH**

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

3,300

pupils, 2,000 in secondary school and 1,300 in primary classes, skipped the last day of school before the autumn vacation to leave on holiday early, according to the education ministry

108,000

tonnes of road salt stockpiled by the Roads and Traffic agency of Flanders for the winter. In previous years, the agency spread a maximum of 84,000 tonnes

23%

of the 363 first-year students enrolled in political sciences at KU Leuven list Groen as their favourite party, edging out Open Vld, which came in second at 22%

66,800

more people resident in Belgium on 1 January this year than the year before, according to Eurostat. The population of Belgium is now 11,162,000

3 in 10

houses in Flanders are equipped with smoke detectors, according to the interior ministry – far fewer than in Brussels (78%)

WEEK IN BRIEF

The government of Flanders has been given the green light by the EU Commission for a plan to provide government aid for the construction and **renovation of football stadiums**. The plan offers support to first- and second-class clubs and would provide a 10% subsidy up to a maximum of €2.5 million for new construction, and €750,000 for renovation works. The total budget for the scheme is €8 million. The support is conditional on the owners opening the facilities up for other groups around fitness and health, education and culture.

The Bruges prosecutor has confirmed that the man found dead in the Bruges harbour on Thursday is that of **Dries Scherrens, the football captain** who had been missing from his home in Oostkamp for 10 days. Criminal action has been tentatively ruled out, pending the autopsy report.

Architects Jaspers-Eyers, who have offices in Brussels, Leuven and Hasselt, have been awarded the **contract to design a massive office complex** for Nongfu Spring, China's largest producer of bottled water, in the city of Hangzhou. The complex will provide accommodation for more than 4,000 staff, with office space of 68,000 square metres and underground parking of 25,400 square metres. It will include a restaurant, day-care facilities, a swimming pool and gym, a supermarket and a ballroom.

The government of Flanders needs to do more to help young couples with the purchase of their first house, the Flemish confederation of real estate professionals (CIB) said. According to the industry congress last week in Ostend, three out of four estate agents have had deals fall through because **young couples cannot get loans**. The organisation proposed the introduction of a

starter-mortgage, an idea imported from the Netherlands, where the government portions part of the house price, repayable only after three years, to allow young couples to take their first steps on the property ladder.

Flemish cyclist Sven Nys, the cyclocross world champion, has picked up the Kristallen Fiets (Crystal Bicycle) award as **outstanding Belgian cyclist of the year** for the second time in his career. Nys won the award, given out by Flemish daily *Het Laatste Nieuws* and usually won by road riders, in 2007. "I'm very happy to win, because it's not such an obvious thing to win it as a crosser," Nys said.

A **17-year-old who lost control of his car** and rammed a tram-stop in the Coupure in Ghent, injuring eight people, has been kept in detention under a clause of the law that allows minors to be imprisoned if they commit a hit-and-run accident. The teenager panicked, his lawyer said, and he now regrets leaving the scene of the accident. The charges he will face depend on the condition of the victims, the Ghent prosecutor's office said.

The latest **Albert Heijn supermarket opened its doors in Sint-Truiden** last week – and promptly closed them again. Such was the public interest in the arrival of the Dutch retail giant for the first time in Limburg that security guards were forced to close the doors and only allow customers to enter when previous customers left the store, installed in the stadium of the local football club STVV. The store is the 19th opened by Albert Heijn in Flanders, currently providing more than 1,000 jobs.

The British low-cost airline EasyJet is to begin twice-weekly **flights**

between Brussels Airport and London Gatwick, bringing its number of destinations out of Brussels to 10. The service will begin on 30 March, the company said, and is likely to provide stiff competition for both Brussels Airlines and British Airways, both of which fly from Brussels to Heathrow.

More than one person in three would go back to paying for household help in the black if **service cheques were made more expensive**, according to the results of a poll carried out for Netto, the personal finance supplement to *De Tijd*. The cheques were introduced in 2003 to make it easier for customers to pay cleaning people legally, but the cost of the cheques has gone up constantly, with another 50-cent increase due on 1 January, bringing the price to €9 each for the first 400 cheques, and €10 each for the 100 after that. The cost of the cheques is tax-deductible.

Flemish singer Ozark Henry has composed a new song to front a campaign by the Belgian Institute for Road Safety (BIVV) to draw attention to the need to reduce the number of youth fatalities on the roads (*see p2*). **The song, "21 Grams Short"**, is based on the story of Kevin, who died in 2006 at age 22, and whose parents helped steer the new campaign. The accompanying video includes footage of Kevin and other young accident victims.

► www.youth.goforzero.be

A 16-year-old girl from Kinrooi, Limburg province, who **went missing on 14 November** after leaving home to cycle to school in Maaseik, has been found safe and well in Germany, the Tongeren prosecutor said. Olga Pisters was suspected of having gone off with an acquaintance, at whose address she was discovered by German police.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



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Marieke Vervoort

King Filip has only been in the job for a few months, so he's undoubtedly less experienced in giving awards than Marieke Vervoort is in receiving them. Last week she was in Brussels to receive the title of Grand Officer of the Order of the Crown from the new king. Vervoort is the Paralympic athlete who lifted the country's spirits in September last year when she took the silver medal in the 200m wheelchair race for women, coming second to the Canadian Michelle Stillwell and ahead of the American Kerry Morgan. Four days later she picked up gold in the 100m sprint, this time defeating the two North Americans. Vervoort, nicknamed Wielemie, was born in Diest, Flemish Brabant, in 1979, and at the age of 15 was diagnosed with a rare degenerative muscle condition that soon put her in a wheelchair, paralysed from the waist down. Despite that she played basketball and began her athletic career proper in triathlon, winning world championships in 2006 and 2007, and taking part in Ironman Hawaii in 2007. However, deterioration in her condition made the gruelling triathlon training impossible

and she had to retire. Instead she took up first blokart – a sort of land yacht – and later wheelchair racing. The medals and other prizes started flowing again, for marathons and world and European championships. In July this year she fell during a race in Lyon in France and injured her shoulder. The following month she underwent a serious operation on her shoulder and arm, and had to pull out of the 100m sprint organised for her benefit as part of the Memorial Van Damme in Brussels. After a 10-day break in Lanzarote she was faced with nine months to a year of revalidation therapy to return to form. She intends to try for the 2016 Paralympics in Rio de Janeiro. "Getting to Rio in absolute top form is my mission now," she said at the time. "Whatever it takes." For her visit to the palace in Brussels this week she was accompanied, as always, by her dog Zenn, who began as a pet and was later trained as a help-dog. "Without him I'm much too dependent on other people," she said. "Zenn makes it possible for me to function completely independently, but he's also an indispensable companion."

► <http://site.wielemie.be>

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

The pursuit of happiness

'Tis (almost) the season to be jolly, and what could be jollier than a survey carried out for the health insurance provider CM by ISW limits that shows how the Flemish are looking forward to the future. According to their figures, only 21% of people fear for their jobs in 2013, compared to 31% last year; 61% on the contrary are completely unconcerned, up from 54%. It's enough to bring a smile to any journalist's face, to find out that the Flemish are such a happy lot. The papers often give an opposite impression. Bart De Wever may be happy to be out of the hospital, while Maggie De Block is delighted to be the most popular politician in the country, but most stories in the media are, let's face it, pretty depressing. Despite that gloomy picture thumping daily onto the doormat, six out of 10 Flemings are pleased to describe themselves as happy, compared to 46% last year. The mutuality has now created a Top Ten list of recommendations on how you can improve your own happiness index.

- 1 Wish people "Good Morning" more often
- 2 Don't be in a rush
- 3 Cull some appointments out of your calendar
- 4 Write down your goals
- 5 Make sure you drink enough (water, we imagine)



© InImage

- 6 Give yourself a compliment from time to time
- 7 Laugh out loud
- 8 Get more sleep
- 9 Breathe consciously in and out
- 10 Replace the words "have to" by "want to"

And there you are: the recipe for happiness. And if that doesn't work, CM is also offering the services of a happiness coach, free to members. Non-members pay €25. Isn't that good news?

► www.plukjegeluk.be

FLANDERS TODAY



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Mega Maggie

"The condolences arrived too soon." Guy Verhofstadt found his party, Open VLD, once nearly pronounced dead, in excellent shape this weekend. For years, Verhofstadt, with all his enthusiasm and rhetorical talent, was the shining star at every liberal party congress. With Verhofstadt, Open VLD was a driving force in Belgian politics for decades. By the time he finished as prime minister, though, his party was in tatters, with a reputation for irresponsibility and infighting. Yves Leterme (CD&V) and Bart De Wever (N-VA) respectively became volatile voters' new heroes.

Open VLD's Toekomstcongres (Congress for the Future) this weekend demonstrated the rise of a new liberal generation and a revived self-confidence. Maggie de Block, the party's new star, is very different from Verhofstadt. She is modest and soft-spoken. Still, she is the most popular politician in Flanders, according to a new poll, seemingly perfectly timed to coincide with the congress she presided.

De Block is secretary of state for migration and asylum. After a shaky start in 2011, she is now perceived as one of the few politicians who has managed to halt immigration, a touchy subject in Flanders. Sticking to her guns in a number of high-profile cases in which she sent young people back to countries such as Afghanistan, has given her a tough image and the nickname Iron Maggie.

Lately, the media has dubbed her Mega Maggie, crediting her with bringing Open VLD back to the centre of attention. At her side are two other female politicians: party president Gwendolyn Rutten and justice minister Annemie Turtelboom. This is remarkable, as Open VLD was long considered the macho party, dominated by the testosterone trio of Verhofstadt, Patrick Dewael and Karel De Gucht.

If this new confidence will bring Open VLD electoral victory remains to be seen. In the same poll that propelled De Block to the top of the list, Open VLD as a party lags far behind N-VA.

Further, last Monday Open VLD received a blow as Flemish MP Annick De Ridder announced she was leaving the party for N-VA, citing the discrepancy between the party's words and its record in the federal government.

As for the next government, the liberals demand that it focus on the economy alone. Open VLD wants to convince the electorate with a plan for less government, lower taxes, a simplified tax system and a system for flexible (small) jobs. And with Mega Maggie, of course.

Schauvliege back from climate change talks in Warsaw

Greenpeace criticises Flanders' steps to cut carbon dioxide emissions

Derek Blyth

Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege arrived back at the weekend after representing Belgium at the UN Climate Change Conference in Warsaw. Schauvliege joined about 200 national leaders meeting last week to try to forge a deal on global warming by 2015. The conference ended after a marathon all-night session with a watered-down agreement that gives governments until the first quarter of 2015 to publish their plans for cutting greenhouse gas emissions after 2020.

Schauvliege (pictured) went to the Polish capital to represent the collective position of Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels-Capital Region. She told *De Morgen* before leaving that it was essential



to reach agreement on capping the rise of global temperatures at two degrees Celsius.

"Global warming has disastrous consequences

for all of us," she said. "Just think of the scale of the natural disasters that have hit in recent years. Typhoon Haiyan makes it clear that there are serious problems with our climate."

The government of Flanders has already agreed on a Climate Plan for 2013-2020. But organisations such as Greenpeace remain critical of the steps taken by the government to cut CO2 emissions and develop a sustainable energy policy by 2020. In a Greenpeace "report card", Flanders scored just two out of 10 for its climate change efforts, while Wallonia received five to seven out of 10. Schauvliege dismissed the report as "poorly compiled" and points out that Wallonia has not yet drawn up a climate plan.

Flanders needs "super minister of innovation"

The Flemish Council for Science and Innovation (VRWI), which advises the government on science-related issues, published a memorandum last week addressing the next government, which will form after the elections in May. The "election memo" contains a list of priorities the VRWI thinks are indispensable to bringing innovation in Flanders to a higher level.

The VRWI's main priorities are

extra funding and an improved co-operation in policymaking. "Flanders needs to invest more in science and innovation," said Dirk Boogmans, president of VRWI. "The regional government needs to shift up a gear – at least, if Flanders wants to become a top region by 2020."

Flanders also needs to fulfil its engagement to spend at least 1% of GDP on Research and Development.

The number currently stands at 0.7%. The VRWI suggests that the next government incorporate the 1% standard into its legislation. Boogmans: "Without the extra effort, which would mean an extra annual investment of €150 million, Flanders will be overtaken by the emerging countries from Asia."

VRWI also talked about unification at an administrative level of the competences of economy,

science, innovation and education. Currently, these concerns are led by three different ministers – of three different political parties. "That doesn't help our performance any further," said Boogmans. "It's better to make one person responsible. You could call this person a 'super minister' of innovation." **Senne Starckx**

► www.vrwi.be

Woodland Indicator questioned by environmental groups

Last month, Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege announced that Flanders had gained 8,262 hectares of new woodland during the last two years – bringing the total surface covered with forests to 185,686 hectares.

Environmental organisations Bond Beter Leefmilieu and Bos+ voiced concern over those numbers almost immediately. Without any extra budgetary resources and after only two years, they said, Flanders would have made the biggest turn-around ever in woodland policy.

Now Bart Muys, professor of forest management at the University of

Leuven, has evaluated the Boswijzer, or Woodland Indicator, used by the Flemish administration to measure the amount of woodland. According to Muys, the Indicator, which was introduced in 2011, doesn't measure woodland properly.

"It classifies residential areas or wide lanes with a lot of trees as forests," he said. "It even takes in greenhouses that are full of tomatoes. And it sees trees where there are surely none, like in the wide open spots in the Sonian Forest. The incidents of inaccuracies accumulate, so the margin of error of the entire measurement is enormous." **SS**

De Block "most popular" politician

Maggie De Block of the liberal Open VLD party has been chosen "most popular politician" in Flanders in a poll carried out by *De Morgen* and VTM. The tough-talking state secretary for asylum and migration knocked previous winner Kris Peeters into second place (with 65% approval to Peeters' 62%), with N-VA president Bart De Wever in third position (57%). Prime minister Elio Di Rupo was ranked in fourth place in the poll.

"I'm very pleased that people appreciate my work," De Block (pictured) said on hearing the result. Speaking at last weekend's party congress, De Block said her new



position was an encouragement for Open VLD. "It's good to have a liberal back at number one and that the glass ceiling is lying in pieces. The future for the liberals has never been so bright."

Former Vlaams Belang chair Frank Vanhecke leaves politics

Frank Vanhecke, the former chair of the far-right Vlaams Belang party, has announced that he plans to quit politics. "It's very simple," he said on the TV programme *Politica* earlier this week. "I don't have a party; therefore I don't have a place."

The Bruges-born politician has been active in Flemish nationalist politics since his student days. An early member of the nationalist Vlaams Blok, he won a seat in the European Parliament elections in 1994. He was elected chair of the party in 2001 and continued in that role after the party reinvented itself as Vlaams Belang in 2004.

Vanhecke finally left the party in 2011 but held onto his seat in the European Parliament as an independent. The 54-year-old told *Politica* that his "heart and soul" now lay with the nationalist party N-VA, but that he could not play a role in the party because of his past connection with Vlaams Belang. "They haven't asked anything of me, and I haven't asked anything of them," he said.

Vanhecke said that, although he won't be standing in the May elections, he would continue to work for the Flemish nationalist movement in some way. **DB**

De Wever discharged from hospital

N-VA president Bart De Wever was discharged from hospital last Friday following a serious lung infection. The Antwerp mayor was rushed to hospital on Wednesday after he became ill during a session in the Flemish Parliament. He has been prescribed antibiotics and told to rest. De Wever (pictured) explained his collapse had followed a harrowing interview with the parents of 23-year-old Hodei Egiluz Diaz, who has been missing since mid-October. "When I came out of my office after that interview I felt completely wretched," he said.

Alan Hope



What lies beneath

The new 3D model can assist industry, architecture and research organisations

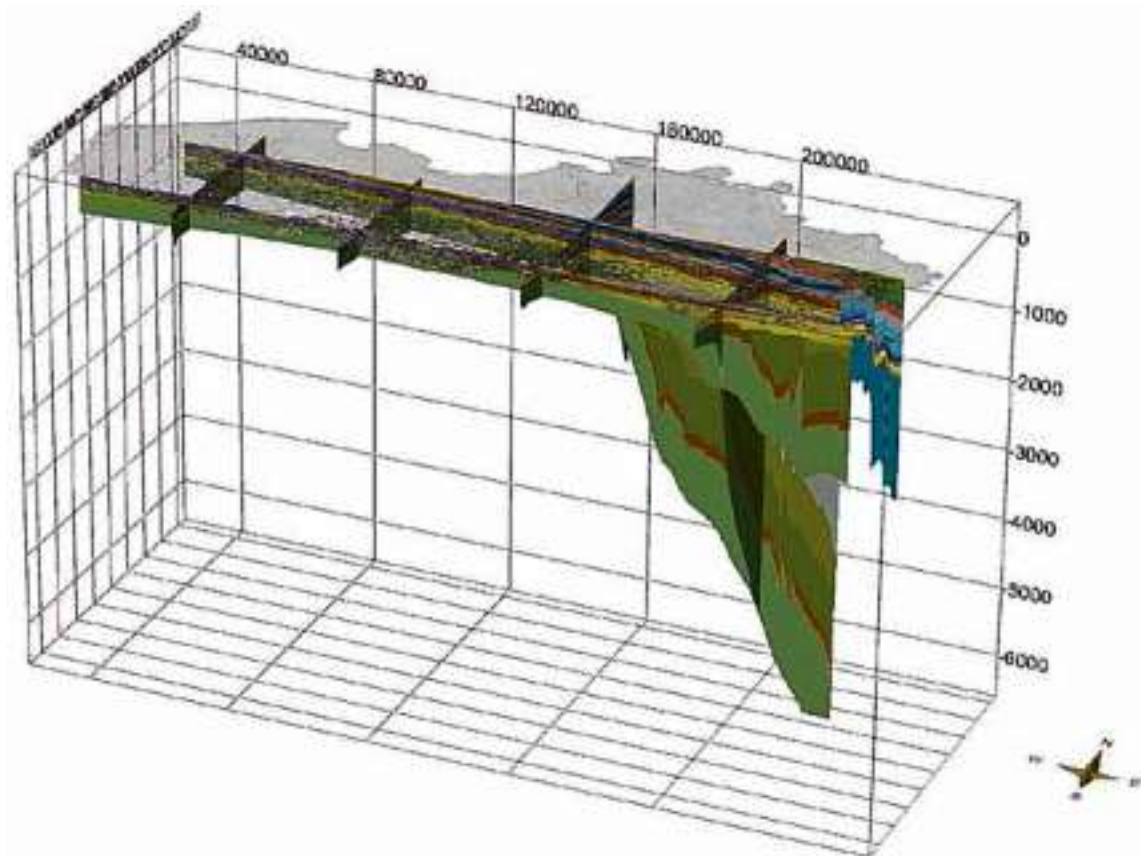
► continued from page 1

company INSIGHT, this viewer makes consulting underground information in 2D and 3D easy. The software tool also allows users to make vertical and horizontal cross sections across the entire region.

Among those who will most benefit from the model are research bureaus that study soils for large infrastructure projects for buildings, bridges, roads and tunnels, for example. The model can help them get an initial idea of the soil, which can be useful for analyses of the required stability conditions.

Research bureaus could also use the model for studies on the presence of groundwater and possibilities for natural gas storage or geothermal energy use. Among the research centres that will use the model are the Geological Survey of Belgium, the Dutch Organisation for Applied Scientific Research, the Royal Meteorological Institute of Belgium and the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre (SCK-CEN). The SCK-CEN could use the model as a data source for its own specialised research – to examine the possibilities for underground storage of radioactive waste, for instance.

But consulting the model should just be the starting point for any research process, says Griet Verhaert from the government's Natural Resources division. "Experts will always need



The 3D model can be manipulated to provide different ways of understanding Flanders' sub-strata

way that layers spread throughout Flanders over the course of time," Verhaert says.

University professors could also use the model in their classes, as

into Flanders millions of years ago, when the region was partly underwater. The Kempen basin and the Roer Valley Graben, both clearly visible in the model, are shown to be made from rock that washed in during that period. The model also illustrates how rivers and valleys formed during the previous ice age. According to Verhaert, the model could be particularly useful for final year students in secondary schools and those in higher education because it requires a certain basic knowledge of geology.

In 2010, the Natural Resources division launched the website Ik Doorgrond Vlaanderen (I Get to the Bottom of Flanders), which targets secondary school students of all ages. The site features playful videos by Flemish celebrities, like comedian Gunter Lamoot, on, for instance, how raw materials such

as clay are used to make roof tiles. Verhaert is considering linking the new geological model to this existing website.

Still, the 3D model ought to be

considered not as a finished product but as a foundation for a more refined tool. By 2017, the VITO team is scheduled to complete an updated version that shows the characteristic differences between the underground clay, sand and loam layers.

"Professionals who need info on the groundwater could, for example, benefit from the data on the permeability of rocks," explains De Koninck.

"The new model will also considerably help advance our own expertise on raw materials," Verhaert adds.

Geologic structures of course don't end with the borders of a region. "But the current models of different regions and countries are not yet attuned to each other," Verhaert explains. The Flemish Natural Resources division is currently working with partner organisations in the Netherlands to address the problem. The idea is to connect the regions on the Flemish-Dutch border so that the two models can be joined in one underground landscape. The first project, which tackles the Roer Valley Graben models, should be completed by next spring.

► www.dov.vlaanderen.be

“By replacing abstract maps with the engaging 3D SubsurfaceViewer, we could help teachers interest students

to combine the general knowledge of the model with detailed maps or precise drilling," she explains.

Although the model only offers a broad overview of the underground layers, scientists could also use the online tool for their research. "It, for example, provides insights into the

could secondary school teachers. "By replacing abstract maps with the engaging model on the 3D SubsurfaceViewer, we could help teachers interest students," says Verhaert.

The model could show students, say, just how far the sea reached



The VITO modelling team at work

URBAN MINING

Together with public waste management agency Ovam, the Flemish government's Environment, Nature and Energy department recently organised a congress on urban mining – the process of recycling materials from products, buildings and waste. About 300 participants exchanged experiences at the congress, called "The quest for resources in Flanders", which was held in Mechelen.

Urban mining is especially interesting for regions and countries with no large natural reserves in silver and lead – like Flanders. The region has already experimented with several innovative strategies to recycle materials with the aim of becoming less dependent on imports. In her address, Flemish environment minister Joke Schauvliege (pictured) highlighted the results of the Flemish Materials Programme, which started in 2012. In September, the department of environment



© Yorick Janssens / BELGA

also signed an agreement with industry federation Agoria to halt the illegal export of waste through Flemish ports. The advantages run in two directions – preventing damage to environments abroad and promoting the recycling of valuable materials in Flanders. The minister also pointed out that the government has adjusted the legal framework to make collection of small electronic waste

easier. Co-ordinated by environmental organisation Bond Beter Leefmilieu, the "consusharing" project will also encourage residents of Flanders to "consume together" through sharing, lending or letting.

One of Ovam's contributions was the development of the SIS Toolkit, an instrument to better integrate sustainability principles into the design and innovation processes of businesses. Together with the Enterprise Agency, Ovam also developed the Materials Scan for small- and medium-sized Flemish businesses.

A European hub

The Flemish Symbiose platform was also established at the initiative of, among others, essenscia, the Belgian umbrella organisation for the chemistry and life sciences sector.

Symbiose enables businesses to exchange waste, so that what one company discards, another uses as a resource. The CORE Business project has a similar intent but targets industries that use synthetic materials and textiles.

In her speech, Schauvliege said that attention should shift to Europe and that every effort should be made to make Flanders a European hub for the management of sustainable materials. Schauvliege, also Flanders' culture minister, also emphasised the need for a "sustainability culture" in Flanders. "By translating the principles from the sustainable materials policy to culture and education policy, it's possible to introduce their essence in families' homes," she said.

WEEK IN
BUSINESS

Banking ▶ Cera

The Leuven-based co-operative financial group, one of the leading shareholders of Flanders largest bank, KBC, has cut its stake from 6.1% to 2.7% for €500 million. The move allows Cera to repay all its loans and strengthens KBC's capital ratios.

Chemicals
▶ Tessenderlo

The Brussels-based chemical and fertilizer producer has sold its Aliphos feed phosphate production activities to the local Ecophos company. The move includes a production unit in the Netherlands and sales offices in Germany, Spain and Poland. Tessenderlo will also phase out its phosphate plant located in Ham, Limburg province, for environmental reasons.

Dredging ▶ Deme

The Antwerp-based dredging company has won a major share in the €625 million contract to expand Jurong Island in Singapore by 148 hectares, including the building of dikes, roads and sewers. The move will allow the expansion of Singapore's petrochemical and oil refining activities.

High Tech
▶ Materialise

The Leuven-based 3D printer developer, founded in 1989 as a spin-off of KU Leuven, is said to be considering a quotation on the New York Nasdaq market to raise up to €75 million.

Retail
▶ & Other Stories

The & Other Stories up-market retailing division of Sweden's H&M group will open an outlet in the Korte Gasthuistraat in Antwerp next spring.

Retail ▶ Primark

The Irish apparel group will open stores in Brussels and Ghent shortly as part of its continental European expansion. In Brussels, the 2,900 square-metre outlet is expected to open before year-end, while the Ghent store will be inaugurated in the spring.

Software
▶ Softkinetic

The Brussels-based movement recognition software developer has become a leading supplier for Sony's recently launched Playstation 4 as part of a multimillion euro contract.

BA pilot strike suspended

Unions will meet this week to discuss the remaining two of four complaints

Alan Hope

Normal service resumed at Brussels Airport on the afternoon of 19 November, as unions representing the pilots of Brussels Airlines suspended industrial action until at least the end of this week. After striking for about 30 hours, unions accepted the principle of an agreement reached with management.

The agreement covers the four main areas of concern to unions: pilots over the age of 58, overtime payments, pension contributions and days off. The company had wanted to retire pilots on reaching the company's retirement age of 58, allowing the employment of younger – and cheaper – pilots. Instead they will be allowed to stay on, though they will work fewer hours. Days off accumulated through overtime can now be spread indefinitely and need not be taken



About 6,000 passengers were redirected or put up overnight last week when Brussels Airlines pilots went on strike

in the same year, which often proved impossible before, meaning pilots were sometimes unable to take days off owing to them.

Agreements are still to be reached

on the other two points. A further meeting will be held with management on Friday; until then, pilots have agreed to go back to work. "The strike notice has

not been withdrawn," one union representative said. "What we have is a cease-fire."

Brussels Airlines CEO Bernard Gustin said he was "satisfied" with the outcome and hoped the discussions could continue "in a serene manner".

The action began at 5.30 on 18 November and led to 98 of the day's 1,134 scheduled flights being cancelled. Brussels Airlines said it had found alternatives for about 6,000 passengers. "Most managed to reach their destination," a company spokesperson said. For others, an overnight stay was arranged.

The action continued on Tuesday morning, and BA said about 170 flights were affected by the two-day stoppage. According to the company, the cost of the action was about €5 million.

Two killed in Antwerp refinery explosion

Two workers were killed last week in an explosion at the Total oil refinery in the port of Antwerp. The incident, described by the company as "a steam explosion", took place at about 15.00 in a part of the refinery that produces petroleum ether.

A steam explosion takes place when pressure inside a vat increases and has no means of escape. Such an explosion can create a huge blast and also a great deal of heat –

estimated in this case at 350 degrees Celsius.

The site was evacuated and part of the refinery shut down. One of the victims was employed by a subcontractor; the other was a Total employee. According to company spokesperson Vera Remans, "there was initially talk of another missing person, but luckily that proved to be unfounded".

An inspection of the site was delayed



to allow a large cloud of steam on the scene to disperse. There was no fire and no release of hydrocarbons into

the atmosphere, the Antwerp fire service said. Neither the municipal nor provincial disaster plan was launched.

The precise cause of the explosion is under investigation, and the company declined to speculate. "It's far too early for that," said Remans. "Our first thoughts go out to the families of the victims." AH

Free Record Shop remains open despite bankruptcy

The administrators of Free Record Shop (FRS), which last week was declared bankrupt by the commercial tribunal of Antwerp, hope this week to complete takeover talks with the British investment company Hilco, administrator Thierry Van Dosselaer said.

Earlier this year, Dutch investment house ProCures bought the Belgian division of FRS, but the sale was overturned by a court in response to an action by the Dutch division. ProCures then acquired the entire group and proceeded to close some

Dutch stores and lay off personnel, while the Belgian division remained untouched. In Belgium, the CD and games retailer employs 230 people in 68 stores.

ProCures requested and received the bankruptcy order, after rumours that the company was unable to organise the supply of stock for the shops. According to reports, several major suppliers such as Disney and Studio 100 declined to deliver content to FRS after a loss of confidence in the company's financial situation.

The court appointed three

administrators, who received immediate interest from Hilco. Hilco recently rescued the British CD and DVD chain HMV from receivership. Van Dosselaer said at the weekend that talks were at too early a stage to comment on specific plans. FRS stores remain open this week until talks conclude.

Some clue, meanwhile, might be available from the new website launched last week by HMV, which includes a music store for downloading paid content, as well as entertainment-related news and

music and video clips. Bricks and mortar stores still, however, have their place, with each one listed in full detail with opening times, directions and more. AH



EU grants €50 million for conversion of Ford Genk

The European Parliament has approved a €50 million package of support measures for Ford Genk, as part of the 2014-2020 budget. The money will go to a reconversion of the Ford site as part of the SALK relaunch plan set up by the government of Flanders to help the province of Limburg recover from the loss of about 5,000 jobs at the factory, and as many again in the local economy.

Limburg has already received €17.5 million from the European Social Fund. The new money comes from the European Fund for Regional Development, which funds the repurposing of former industrial sites.

The government of Flanders, meanwhile, has approved €139 million in aid for Limburg, as well as a line of credit guarantee of €100 million for the Limburg investment agency LRM to aid investment in growth sectors as well as small- and medium-sized enterprises. The city of Genk gave €20 million and the province of Limburg €50 million.

Last summer, Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters announced the government's ambition to create 10,000 jobs in the province to replace those lost by the closure of Ford Genk, which shuts down definitively in December 2014. AH

Start-ups down 10% on last year, says Unizo

In the months to 1 September, 45,685 people in Belgium started a new business – 6.8% fewer than in the same period in 2012, according to Unizo, the organisation that represents the self-employed, based on figures from consultancy Graydon. However, based on preliminary indication taking into account the months of September and October, Unizo said, the fall in start-up numbers this year is likely to go over 10%.

Flanders suffered more than Brussels: a fall to August of 9.6%, compared to 2.3%. West Flanders was the province hardest-hit, down

16.1% followed by Limburg on 11.9%.

"This is yet more evidence of a sombre climate for enterprise," commented Unizo director-general Karel Van Eetvelt. The organisation placed the blame on high salary costs for employers and a continuing economic crisis. "The continuous increase in bankruptcy figures is also not particularly encouraging for the spirit of enterprise," he said and called on the government to offer "full support in every area" for those wishing to set up their own businesses. AH

Living smart

Ghent hosts EuroCities, dedicated to innovative approaches to urban life

Ian Mundell

This week, mayors and other municipal leaders from across Europe will gather in Ghent to discuss how digital technology and other innovations can turn all of us into “smart citizens”. Organised by EuroCities, a network of 130 major urban centres, the conference is a chance for Ghent to demonstrate some of its own innovative approaches to modern living.

Ghent’s community ideas range from an initiative to reorganise traffic around school gates for safer drop-offs, to community projects taking over a factory site awaiting redevelopment, providing allotments, a bread oven and a children’s farm.

But the most advanced of them all is the Ghent Living Lab, part of a movement that aims to involve people more closely in the process of innovation. This is necessary because, when you ask people how they might use a new technology, the answers they offer seldom reflect reality.

“People cannot imagine the kind of uses they would have for a technology or a product that doesn’t exist yet,” says Pieter Ballon, who will be discussing the concept of living labs at the EuroCities conference. He is the international secretary of the European Network of Living Labs and a professor at the Free University of Brussels (VUB). The solution to this dilemma is to give people a prototype they can play with – not in an artificial setting or simulation but in real life. “This makes them aware of what it really is, to see how it would change their routines and also allows us to discover the unexpected uses that people come up with.”

The same goes for business people, who traditionally begin thinking about commercialising new technologies only when research and development is drawing to a close. So a living lab brings potential users together to test new technologies in real life and provides a secure platform for businesses to work on new commercial ideas. Ballon first got involved with living lab projects in 2005, through the Flemish government’s Interdisciplinary Institute for Broadband Technology, now known as iMinds. Early partners for the living lab projects were mainly large companies, such as network operators. “But the cities, which are very important hotbeds of innovation, were mostly out of reach for us,” he recalls. “They weren’t used to playing an active role in innovation. Ghent was among the first to realise this and develop its own activities.”

Cities are the perfect setting for what living labs are trying to achieve since the challenges new technologies attempt to address – from mobility and environmental sustainability to social cohesion and economic growth – are often most acute in



Ghent Living Labs’ successful Zwerm project brought citizens together in friendly competitions around artificial trees (top); Another Ghent project sees residents of the Rabot neighbourhood doing odd jobs for Toreke, its own currency

urban environments.

“The elements of the solution are also concentrated in cities,” Ballon adds. “It’s there that you have this very intense interaction, both in real life but also on the virtual level, because people are carrying smartphones and all sorts of other devices.”

The GhentLivingLab was established by the city authorities in 2011, and it involves companies along with most of the city’s academic institutions. iMinds, where Ballon is director of Living Labs, has also been a regular collaborator in projects that attempt to bring new technologies up to city scale.

One example being presented at this week’s meeting is Zwerm (Swarm), an attempt to use digital technology to reconnect people to their communities. The project set up two major neighbourhoods in Ghent, Ekkergem and Papegaai, as competitors in an online game.

Points were earned when people from each neighbourhood “checked in” with sensors built into strategically placed artificial trees. More points could be earned if they checked in at the same time as someone they didn’t know. “Sparrows”, bird-shaped boxes

full of sensors, were also scattered around the neighbourhoods, logging points (and changing colours) when passers-by whistled at them. People playing the game could also get real-time updates about how their respective neighbourhoods were doing.

Being a living lab project, the researchers had no idea if people would get involved. “You put some tools there, you create this atmosphere in real life, and you see what happens,” says Ballon. Despite taking place in the freezing weather of February and March earlier this year, people loved it.

“It was a huge success, beyond all our expectations,” Ballon says. “People would take elderly neighbours to go and check in at their local tree; they would have parties and barbecues around them. In the end, hundreds of people actively participated in the game. After two months we could show that, among the participants, everyone on average knew 14 people

from their neighbourhood that they didn’t know before.”

Another initiative making use of the living lab is the 9K project, which allows people living in Ghent (postal code 9000, hence the name) to make observations and suggestions about the urban environment. One element of the project is the 9K Spotter, a mobile application that allows people to make comments using photos, location data and so forth.

Comments can be positive or negative, from praising parks to highlighting a traffic snarl-up, but should always be constructive, with suggestions for solving problems or spreading benefits. People can then vote on these issues and the most important will be passed on to the responsible authorities.

“Most of the 9K Spotter is functional, albeit early in development,” explains Nico Verbruggen, one of the young developers involved in the project. “Now we need feedback from the city itself, as well as more feedback from other parties.”

Another element of the project is the 9K Builder, an application along the lines of the city-building simulation game SimCity. It will allow Ghent residents to recreate their neighbourhoods online and suggest improvements in the process. Ultimately, the Spotter and the Builder should work together to generate new ideas for improving the urban environment.

Delegates to the EuroCities meeting will see a presentation of the 9K Project and then have a chance to become living lab rats for a couple of hours by trying out alpha versions of both 9K apps.

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Mice produce own insulin at VUB

Scientists at the Free University of Brussels (VUB) have succeeded in getting diabetic mice to produce their own insulin, enabling them to balance their blood sugar levels. Future research has to demonstrate whether the technique can be applied in therapies for diabetes patients. Researchers focused on acinar cells in the pancreas that normally produce digestive substances, though not insulin, which is produced by beta cells. Mice that barely had beta cells left, due to long-term diabetes, were treated in such a way that their acinar cells were transformed into beta cells. Patients with a similar shortage of beta cells need regular insulin injections to balance blood sugar levels, but this breakthrough could lead to a change of therapy.

KU Leuven resumes testing on monkeys

The University of Leuven board has approved two studies requiring tests on rhesus macaque monkeys. The experiments will take place between 2014 and 2017 and are financed by the independent Science Research Fund (FWO) for total of €793,500. The experiments on the macaques’ brains are intended to find possible treatments for neurological diseases such as Parkinson’s. University rector Rik Torfs has said he is troubled by the matter but is unwilling to limit the freedom of his researchers if the FWO has taken its decision. Last week he received members of the Dutch-Flemish animal rights group Anti Dierproeven Coalitie to discuss the matter.

UGent scientist wins Golden Pipette

Philippe De Smedt, a soil scientist at Ghent University, has won the first Golden Pipette award with his innovative self-made subsoil scanner. The prize will be awarded each year to a young Flemish scientist who has made a remarkable achievement. De Smedt received the award last week in Leuven from Ingrid Lieten, Flemish minister of innovation, as part of Dag van de Wetenschap, Flanders’ annual science day. The award is an initiative of science magazine *Eos*, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. De Smedt was chosen from five finalists because of the “innovative way in which he applies modern techniques to archaeology”. Entirely independently, he improved a soil scanner with which archaeologists can now study subsoil in detail, without digging or demolishing.

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► www.eurocities2013.eu



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Farming for the future

New lamp technologies could turn city blocks into farms of fresh produce

Senne Starckx

Plants need water, sunshine and carbon dioxide to grow – everybody knows that. A lesser-known fact is that fruits and vegetables can be pretty picky when it comes to the kind of light that they convert into energy.

The photosynthesis process of plants favours light with a longer wavelength (into the red and near-infrared) over shorter, bluer wavelengths. In addition to that, every plant has its own preferences for the light that it can best absorb. And as if this weren't enough, these plant-specific light preferences vary during the several growth phases.

For over a decade, plant researchers around the world have been studying which “light recipe”, or light mixture producing the best and highest yield, matches best with particular crops. Many of these researchers don't work for the traditional agricultural industry, but for technology companies like, for instance, Philips.

A couple of years ago, the Dutch electronics multinational established its own research division, Philips LED Horticulture. The name explains it all – instead of using natural light from the sun or conventional artificial light like in greenhouses, LEDs or light-emitting diodes are used to give crops the best “light treatment” inside modern greenhouses and futuristic-looking plant breeding rooms.

LEDs are best known for their energy-saving properties – that's why they're used in traffic lights – but they boast other interesting features. Depending on the material they're made of, LEDs can emit any colour of the rainbow and more, including ultraviolet and near-infrared. Philips – which became famous with the light bulb – uses LEDs to reach the highest possible “daily light integral” (DLI).

“The DLI refers to the number of light particles received during one day,” says Udo Van Slooten, director



Alain Lutz says Philips' new lamps have been good to his strawberries and to his energy bill

of the LED Horticulture division. “The DLI can have a profound effect on root and shoot growth of seeding plugs, root development of cuttings, and finish plant quality attributes such as thickness, plant branching and flower number.”

In traditional greenhouses, the DLI received from the transmitted sunlight is low, 3 mole per square metre per day during autumn and winter time. According to Van Slooten, 4 to 6 mole is recommended for the propagation of cuttings, with a minimum of 10-12 advisable for most bedding plants, perennials and potted crops. “In general, plant quality generally increases as the average DLI increases,” he says.

Philips has developed the GreenPower LED, a lamp that allows the spectral output or the “growth light” to be tuned. “This makes it possible to apply the optimum light recipe for every stage of a crop's growth,” Van Slooten explains. “This capability, together with effective heat management, long lifetime, high luminous efficiency and energy efficiency opens up tremendous opportunities for growers and breeders. For the commercial horticulture market, this means increased yield, early

flowering, faster (root) growth, and more economical use of space.”

Under the umbrella of its City Farming project, Philips has helped vegetable, fruit and even flower producers across Flanders and the Netherlands try out the new LED technology. “A city farm is a closed room where plants are grown in several layers to make the best use of space,” Van Slooten explains. “Since

they exist today to the next level. One example – ensuring the daily vegetable and fruit consumption of the 8-million New York City population, would require just 20 skyscraper with city farms on every floor. In fact, such “plantscrapers” are already being built as proof of concept, with the first one opening in Linköping, Sweden, next year. The 54-metre high building will produce spinach, mustard greens and salad leaves.

One of the city farmers Philips has helped is Alain Lutz, who runs a strawberry farm in Melsele in East Flanders. He got rid of his traditional incandescent lamps and now uses GreenPower LED flowering lamps to illuminate his 10,000 square metres of strawberries. “I grow an early variety of strawberries and therefore I use a flowering lamp with a spectrum made up of deep red, white and far red,” Lutz says. “We found out that far red is essential to ensure good stem elongation. Besides that, the yield of strawberries is higher and I have less malformed fruit.”

In addition to improving the

“The LED lamps open up tremendous opportunities for growers and breeders

there is no influence from outside, the conditions can be kept constant and hygienic in the farm room. So people can enjoy safe vegetables all year round, independent of seasons and weather. The city farm is designed to minimise the use of valuable natural resources; it requires only 20% of water, space and energy compared to traditional ways of growing.”

With its smart use of space, city farming might take traditional land-devouring agricultural practices as

strawberry quality and yield, the flowering lamps have also been good to Lutz's energy bill. “They deliver an energy saving of almost 85% compared to traditional lighting.”

So why include white light in the spectrum? “Strawberries may favour red light, but my employees clearly do not,” Lutz explains. “That's why the light still resembles natural light. However, it has a totally different composition.”

► www.lighting.philips.com

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Antwerp trains jobless to teach

To combat the major shortage of teachers in Antwerp's education system, the Flemish employment and training service VDAB is offering the unemployed a Bachelor's education to become a teacher in nursery or primary schools. Figures show that the city will need 3,500 extra teachers by 2020 and that there is a risk of a shortage of up to 1,600 teachers by then. Jobseekers who participate in the programme can keep their unemployment benefits and receive a reimbursement of education costs. In return, they are obliged to start working in a school in Antwerp after their training. Twenty-two people took part in a pilot project during the last academic year, and 61 have enrolled to start this year.

Student group sets political priorities

The Flemish secondary school student organisation VSK has asked students to submit their view on the future of the education system in a new project called Switch 2014. After the government elections next May, the organisation will present the new Flemish education minister with the results. Until February, students can voice their opinions on the most important issues for the term of the next education minister via the online “Switch box”. The Switch team will also set up meetings in every province where students can share their thoughts and have launched a campaign to encourage students to start discussions in their classes and student councils.

► www.switch2014.be

One in 20 Antwerp students uses psychostimulants

Research at the University of Antwerp shows that one in 20 students there use psychostimulant drugs such as Ritalin or Concerta, often without a prescription, to improve exam results. The study is part of a large-scale research project by universities in Antwerp, Ghent and Leuven. The final results will be published next year. According to professor Guido Van Hal of Antwerp's department of health sciences, the use of stimulants – often used to treat attention deficit disorder – during exam periods is comparable to the use of performance-enhancing drugs in sports. It also leads to comparable health hazards, including heart problems, headache, hypertension and addiction. A study in 2009 showed that at least 3,000 students at the universities of Ghent and Antwerp used stimulants daily during exams.

Record numbers in Dutch-language schools

The number of students in Brussels' Dutch-language schools has reached an all-time high, with nearly 41,000 students in nursery, primary and secondary education. The education system is growing much faster than its French-speaking counterpart, which, while increasing in general, is seeing a reduction in its growth rate.

The figures are based on a report by the Flemish Community Commission (VGC), a government body that represents the interests of the Flemish region in the capital. The record number of students in Dutch-language schools points to a rise of 2.15% compared to last year. The increase is spread quite evenly across all levels of education; only the special education system decreased – by 3.3%, or 48 students.

Part of the reason for the rising numbers is the population increase in the Brussels-Capital Region in general. French-speaking education is also seeing a rise in registrations, but the trend is less extreme. According to sociologist Dirk



More students than ever before are enrolling in Dutch-language schools in Brussels

Jacobs of the Free University of Brussels (ULB), the other reason is the perception of better quality in Dutch-speaking schools.

What is also notable about the figures is that most pupils spend their entire education in the Dutch-speaking system. More than 90% of children went from a Dutch-speaking nursery school to a primary school in the same network. Only 2.1% switched to a French-speaking school. The same trend can be seen in the transition from primary to secondary schools.

It's a drastic change from previous figures; in 2000, 7.3% of nursery school children were switched to a French-speaking school. In the same year, 6% of primary school students went to the other language network. “But most parents today feel that Dutch-speaking education provides the best guarantee of a bilingual or trilingual education,” Jacobs told brusselnieuws.be. “In the past, parents often compromised by splitting their children's school careers among the two education networks. This mentality is disappearing.” **Andy Furniere**

WEEK IN
ACTIVITIESSkating on the
Badboot

The world's largest floating ice rink is open for the season in Antwerp. New this year: Submarine, a party concept with DJs, food and drink, and of course ice skating (Fridays from 17.00 and Sunday afternoons). The Badboot is anchored at the Kattendijk dock in the Eilandje district. *Ice rink Wednesday, Saturday, Sunday, 12.00 to 17.00 until 26 February. Skating €5 per hour including skate hire*

► www.badboot.be

The White
Queen tour

Are you a fan of the BBC miniseries about English royal women in the middle ages? Then you probably know most of it was shot in and around Bruges, with Flemish architecture standing in for Westminster, London and other locations in England and France. Now there's a map of all the filming locations so you can take a self-guided tour of medieval England through the streets of Bruges. Download the map or pick one up at the tourist office.

► www.tinyurl.com/white-queen-tour

Zingpaleis

Grab Grandma and come to Hasselt for the fifth annual sing-along show featuring Flemish crooning trio The Romeos and their musical guests. Not sure what to expect? Picture a giant arena filled with people singing along to feel-good pop songs in Dutch and English. (It's a Flemish thing.) *30 November, 20.00, Ethias Arena, Hasselt, tickets €34-€38*

► www.hetzingpaleis.be

Art Nouveau
board game

Bruxelles 1893 is a new board game in which players are architects in late 19th-century Brussels trying to construct a building in the Art Nouveau style. Play this game and others for free at a monthly game night hosted by Muntpunt in Brussels. *4 December, 19.00-22.00, Munt 6, Brussels. Free. Registration required via the website*

► www.muntpunt.be

Art Gent

It's the second edition of this international fair featuring contemporary art, with separate sections for local artists and design. *30 November to 3 December, 11.00-19.00, Flanders Expo, €10 in advance, €16 at the door*

► www.artgent.be

Thinking outside the box

Why was Centho Flanders' only representative at the International Chocolate Awards?

Denzil Walton

Last month, the annual International Chocolate Awards were held in London, to recognise excellence in fine chocolate from around the world. International judges evaluate bars and filled chocolates – bonbons, pralines, ganaches, chocolate spreads etc – in national and regional rounds, with a grand final judging the best of the best. This year more than 800 entries were received.

You would imagine that these chocolate Olympics would be where Flanders' finest chocolatiers receive their rightful acclaim. After all, as Flanders Investment & Trade proudly proclaims in its brochure *Belgian chocolates and confectionery*, "...chocolate is a true Belgian/Flemish icon the world over. Year upon year, over €1.2 billion worth of the world's best chocolates made in Flanders is shipped to chocolate-loving palates across the globe."

But how many Flemish chocolatiers – makers of the "world's best chocolates" – made it to the final of the International Chocolate Awards? One. Flanders' sole award-winner at these prestigious games was Geert Decoster, master chocolatier at Centho Chocolates in Duisburg, a village on the outskirts of Tervuren.

Decoster is one of Flanders' leading chocolatiers. He studied for six years at the renowned Elishout School in Brussels where he acquired his basic knowledge of chocolate. This was followed by a postgraduate course in Paris' Ecole de Bellouet. He started Centho Chocolates in 2002, with the goal of hand-making top-quality chocolates based on the pure concept of origin chocolate. This is chocolate sourced from a single country; often in Fairtrade and environmentally sustainable plantations.

After years of experimenting, Decoster has become known as a chocolate trendsetter. His Speculaas chocolate won a gold medal in the UK's Great Taste Award and he has made a range of pralines for TV chef Jamie Oliver. His winning entry at the International Chocolate Awards



© Dieter De Beus

was his Salin chocolate, which took first prize in the filled chocolates/caramel category. The judges said: "Salin is a praline that excels in its simplicity. It is extremely tasty and unique in

flavour and texture. Salin is thinly coated, and has a pure and full caramel flavour."

But why was Flanders so poorly represented in the final? Decoster is mystified,

but suggests it could be because local chocolatiers haven't evolved in line with the industry. "Chocolatiers in many countries

without a great tradition of chocolate have now caught up with Belgian chocolatiers and are creating new and exciting flavour combinations. If you visit chocolate shops throughout Flanders you will find that more or less the same assortment is

sold at each of them. And it's an assortment that hasn't changed much over the last 10 years."

Decoster realised how high the bar had risen when he submitted two entries for the European round of the International Chocolate Awards. One of them was his three-layered Fragola chocolate – a ganache of single origin chocolate from Peru with kaffir lime, wild strawberries and yogurt marshmallow. Fragola won silver at last year's Belgian Chocolate Awards, but didn't get past the preliminary round for the international competition.

His other entry – the Salin caramel – was nominated for the grand final, but even then the judges presented Decoster with a list of suggestions for improvements. "It was eye-opening to go through this list and see how Salin could be improved," he admits. "But I accepted the judges' comments – they are experts after all – and I went back to my workshop to fine-tune Salin."

What Decoster was attempting to do with Salin was unique for a caramel praline. This was to make the inside caramel the same consistency as the outside layer of chocolate. Normally caramel is runny and the outside chocolate is harder. The key was to find the right temperature when cooking the caramel to obtain the perfect consistency. At the same time Decoster had to get the optimal balance between savoury and sweet, which he did with a careful addition of sea salt and the use of chocolate originating solely from Costa Rica. The result clearly wowed the jury.

Decoster is keen to keep on innovating and developing chocolates and is a great fan of food-pairing. "Food-pairing is a way of scientifically analysing flavours to combine foods that share major flavour components," he explains. "It's a really useful tool for chocolatiers to discover new ingredient combinations that we might not have considered."

Consequently, in the Centho assortment you can find chocolates with mouth-watering combinations of fennel and blood oranges; tomato jam and basil; and pepper and mango.

► www.centho-chocolates.com

BITE

Grandma's Design

Shooting the breeze with my in-laws in Eeklo often brings us to the subject of food. To hear them recite not-quite-yet-forgotten regional recipes, I can't help but think what a shame it would be if these East Flemish specialties were lost forever.

Fortunately, the people behind a project called Grandma's Design had the same thought, and have spent the past two years inviting people to connect with heritage through food culture. With the support of the European Commission's Culture Programme, the project has succeeded in drawing the public's attention to the wide variety of baking traditions across Europe and, more specifically, in Belgium, Italy, Turkey, Finland and the Netherlands.

Last year, Grandma's Design filmed and interviewed 84 grandmothers who happily agreed to share their baking secrets and prepare a recipe that typified their country, region

or family. Discover all the recipes and stories on the website, which is chock-full of great recipes, their history and even step-by-step videos with subtitles in English.

The project's aim was not only to preserve a number of cooking traditions, but also to keep them alive by putting a twist on the original concept. It may sound like an odd combination, but tradition and innovation make great bedfellows, as do grandmothers and design. That's why this project combined the two for a unique food and design competition, inviting professional designers, chefs and artists to let one of these recipes inspire them to create a concept or product. The winners were then featured in the book *Food Inspires Design*, published by Design Vlaanderen this month, a compilation of the most original collaborations between grandmothers and designers. Participants include Flemish



designer Caroline Dobbs, who came up with a trendy new waffle iron, inspired by Grandma Goedele's recipe for Flemish waffles. It bakes waffles in two flower shapes. Then there's Grandma Rosa's apple pie with

apricots (*pictured*), which inspired French designer Amelia Desnoyers to create Homemade/Handmade, a rolling pin made out of a log of wood and other naturally beautiful raw materials found around a farm. Desnoyers was selected as one of the winners of the international design competition. So, too, was Léa Bougeault from France for her miniature interpretation of Grandma Gaby's Jan in a bag (a traditional Meetjesland recipe for bread dough wrapped in kitchen cloth and boiled until soft and chewy).

Whether you're interested in design or food, or both, the book and website are great sources of inspiration and a worthy effort to immortalise traditional recipes. I know I'll be consulting them when I try my hand at chocolate pound cake from Antwerp or *Limburgse vlaai* with plums.

► www.grandmasdesign.com

Robyn Boyle

Those magnificent men

Aircraft museum at Antwerp airport is legacy of Flemish wartime pilots

Toon Lambrechts

The first thought that comes to mind when you see the aircraft in the Stampe & Vertongen Museum is how exciting flying used to be.

Today, the most unpleasant aspects of flying are delays, queues and bad food. But for the first pilots 100 years ago, airspace was an unknown territory where humans had never been before. "At that time, pilots usually just built their own aircraft," says Paul Soons of the museum, which is located next to Antwerp's airport, "with often no more than a simple engine for a motorcycle. Like one of those." He points to a few unimpressive engines that don't look like they could lift anyone off the ground.

They are beauties, though, the aircraft from the early days of aviation. In the museum are a dozen of them, shiny and looking like they could take off at any moment. "In theory, that would be possible," says Soons. "Until two years ago these machines took off from time to time, but it became so expensive to insure them that it's no longer feasible. Also, they're very sensitive to wind. The wind must come from the right direction and not blow too strongly." Jean Stampe and Maurice Vertongen of Antwerp were two pilots who had flown for the army in the First World War. Their dream was to set up a flight training course in Belgium, something that existed only in England in those days. For potential pilots, learning to fly was a matter of trial and error.

Stampe & Vertongen started with a few old planes from the German army, the then-famous Fokkers. So they wouldn't cause panic among people whose memories of the war were still fresh, they painted them in the Belgian colours. "We have one of these Fokkers in our collection; it's a replica built for the [1960s British] movie *The Blue Max*, a classic war film," says Soons. "It then somehow ended up in a shed until we brought it here."

Later, Stampe & Vertongen started to build aircraft themselves: first English models, then their own



Among the museum's collection is this Fokker, used in *The Blue Max*, a 1966 British war film about a German fighter pilot on the Western Front during the First World War

designs, which they called SVs after their initials. One of those planes, the SV4, became something of a legend. "A total of 11,000 SV4s were built," Soons explains. "The production here in Antwerp stopped just before the Second World War. The SV4 was a popular military aircraft, but Belgium was not allowed to produce machinery with military applications in order to preserve the country's neutrality. Today there are about 110 SV4s still flying."

The museum opened in 2001, founded by an association of pilots who would not let the SV4 aircraft fade from Flanders' collective

memory. The SV4, and the period in which the plane was used, is the thread linking the museum's installations. In addition, part of the collection covers the flight training that Stampe and Vertongen created. Hence there is a Fuga – a jet plane used for training by the Belgian army in the 1960s – and a primitive flight simulator, built from wood. "We have here two original SV4s, another one in dismantled condition and the Fuga," explains Soons. "In addition, there are six replicas made by an American whose hobby is rebuilding old planes. And the Fokker from *The Blue Max*."

In the corner of the museum, there's yet another unique piece: an intact V1, the first unmanned jet. The V1, and later the V2, were used in the aftermath of the Second World War by the Germans to bomb England and the liberated areas. Their name comes from the German *vergeltungswaffe* (revenge weapon). As a major port, Antwerp was severely affected by the V1 and V2 offensives. There are many replicas of these weapons, but the V1 here in the Stampe & Vertongen Museum is one of the few originals still intact. "It does not really fit in our collection," says Soons, "but the weapon hit

Antwerp hard back then. Many older people who lived through the war come to see it for real here. And it's better than to let it rust away somewhere in a communal stock house."

Visitors are welcome at the Stampe & Vertongen Museum every weekend from 14.00 to 17.00 and groups can visit on appointment

► www.stampe.be

Celebrities sing for charity in Stars For Life

For three weeks in December, a dozen Flemish celebrities will perform on TV in the charity singing competition *Stars For Life*. Over the course of 12 live shows, *bekende Vlamingen*, or famous Flemings – none of them professional singers – will sing for a charity of their choice. The competition is this year's version of Music For Life, the annual fundraiser organised by radio station Studio Brussel.

Usually, Music for Life chooses a charity, people call in a song

request for which they pay, and all the money goes to the charity. This year, listeners are being asked to raise money for the charity of their choice through fundraising actions they carry out themselves.

Stars for Life is TV channel Eén's contribution. TV viewers tune in to hear celebrities sing four evenings a week starting next Monday. A panel of judges will give their opinion, but it's up to the viewers to decide who ultimately wins, with the prize money raised from sms votes going



© VRT, Lies Willem

to the winner's chosen charity. The line-up is: comedian Gunter Lamoot, TV hosts Ben Roelants, Hanne Troonbeeckx and Sien Wynants, reality show celebrity Lesley-Ann Poppe, actress Veerle Malschaert, TV chef Sofie Dumont, fashion designer Tim Van Steenberghe, radio presenter Nasrien Cnops, Groen party leader Wouter Van Besien and *Thuis* stars Bert Verbeke and Mathias Vergels. Regi Penxten of electronic duo Milk, Inc and singer Koen Buyse,

meanwhile, will compose the theme song "Song For Life". Part of this song will be played in each live show, with the full version revealed during the final programme. The winning celebrity will be the face and voice of "Song For Life".

Studio Brussel's Sam De Bruyn (pictured) will host *Stars For Life* on Eén from Monday to Thursday at 21.30, starting on 2 December.

Els Mertens

► www.tinyurl.com/starsforlife

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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

Reading between the lines

Slam poet Carmien Michels turns her master thesis into a debut novel

Rebecca Benoot

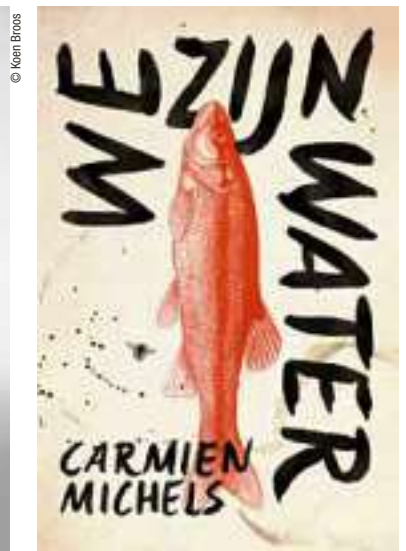
Poet, performer, presenter and now novelist: Leuven-born, Antwerp-trained writer Carmien Michels is branching out from the immediate experience of performance to the solitude of creating a character-driven novel

The 23-year-old Leuven native Carmien Michels graduated this year from the Royal Conservatory in Antwerp. What started out as her master thesis soon became her debut novel, *We zijn water* (We Are Water). “I had a writing course from author Bart Moeyaert during my studies,” Michels says, “in which we always wrote short stories, but during my third year I wanted to write

different experience. I like the solitude and getting to know your characters over time. It’s a very intimate experience, being submerged in your own world for so long.”

But her background did have a big stylistic impact. “My work as a slam poet is totally different; it’s more poetic and eloquent,” she says. “You’re also used to writing short and quick texts, which result in short and neat chapters in this novel, as well as colloquial language.”

We zijn water is a character-driven story revolving around seven people, each of whom tells his or her story in their own chapters. Elena is a teenager coming to terms with her sexuality; then



It was a challenge to make her real seeing as she is merely a perception, making it easier to identify with the others who tell their own tale. But in the end we are all passers-by in each other’s lives.”

She also found it interesting that the characters she liked were easier to write than the others and noticed that “you have to make every character unique and let go of clichés if you want to make them credible.”

We zijn water is about people who are looking for that missing piece of the puzzle, in life as well as in themselves. What’s so clever about the novel is that Michels has actually constructed the story as a puzzle, leaving the reader to connect the dots. It’s a bold choice of style for a debut novel.

“The novel took me two years to write,” she says, “but the content changed a lot during that time. It’s not just the characters who are looking for something; I as a writer was also searching for answers. I changed the structure a lot to make sure everything eventually falls into place, but the characters evolved quite gradually. I had an idea but not a clear-cut story from the start.”

Ultimately all lives are linked in what can be best described as an unsuspecting snapshot of daily life. Michels confesses that she “loves it when you have to read between the lines and draw your own conclusion. It feels like you’re being rewarded”.

Michels has a keen eye when it comes to observing her surroundings as well as conveying what lurks beneath the deceptively smooth surface. Adapting her style with each character, her prose is minimalist and straightforward. There are no sumptuous sentences of superfluous scenes, creating a great contrast with her work as a slam poet. The narrative is carried by an eclectic canvas of vibrant characters, showing us that Michels is a promising Renaissance woman.

► www.carmienmichels.be

“In the end we are all passers-by in each other’s lives

something longer, so I approached him with the idea of writing a novel, which eventually became the creative part of my thesis.”

Before this novel, Michels was already an award-winning slam poet, performer, presenter and radio maker, winning the NTR radio prize in 2011. “With slam poetry,” she explains, “you write something and three days later you perform it. You live in the here and now, and it’s very dependent on an audience that reacts immediately. It’s exhilarating, but I also love writing for readers. It’s a totally

there’s the elderly Maddy who killed her cheating husband, immigrant Fabrizio who meets his granddaughter for the first time, Rolf who decides to build an ark, little inquisitive Max, the unfaithful Clara, and Joseeke, who runs the local cafe and is still trying to process her past. And at the centre of the story is Sue, the only character who doesn’t get her own chapter but subtly flows through all of them.

“I wanted to write about how you always look at things from your own point of view,” Michels says.

“So I wanted to examine the world through the eyes of seven different characters. I wanted to look at how

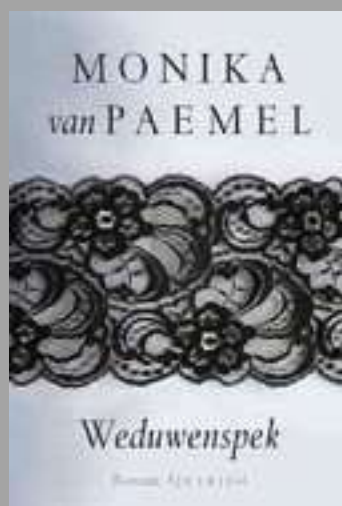
these characters relate and how a main character could be perceived without actually giving her a voice.

FRESH FICTION

Weduwenspek (Widow's Bacon)

Monika van Paemel • Querido

Olivia hasn’t seen her husband in years when she is suddenly called to the hospital because he is dying. In a sterile hospital



room, she recalls their past, their arguments and brutal demise as she waits for his final breath. Van Paemel’s new novel is an intimate yet harrowing portrait about the battle between the sexes. Guilt, shame and anger are subtly woven into an eloquent yet flawed story about a woman who is left with the consequences of a love gone bad.

Trein met vertraging (Delayed train)

Christophe van Gerrewey • De Bezige Bij

After winning the debut prize for his novel *Op de hoogte* last month, Van Gerrewey is back with a new novel that deals with a group of passengers whose day is disrupted due to a train that is stuck between two stations in Ghent. Each

handles the situation quite differently and yet all of them contemplate the aftermath of this unexpected and unexplained delay. Although there isn’t a lot going on, the result is a whirlwind of baroque and beautiful interior monologues.

Vel (Skin)

Joost Vandecasteele • De Bezige Bij

Vandecasteele loves writing about contemporary issues. In this case, it’s society’s dissociative view of sex. The main character in *Vel* is an anonymous man, a cynic, comedian and serial womaniser. The novel chronicles his escapades, some brutal, some technologically enhanced, all of which reduce sex to a recreational and anonymous act where anything goes, questioning the

true meaning of the deed. *Vel* is ultimately a mix of delicious dialogue, eye-opening statements and confronting scenes.

Bloed, zweet en tranen (Blood, Sweat and Tears)

Bob Mendes • Manteau

Renowned 85-year-old crime author Mendes has, according to him, finally written the novel he longed to write. *Bloed, zweet en tranen* is a novel about Bram Meijer, an adolescent with Jewish roots who grows up in Antwerp during the Second World War. Here he meets Klaus Dohna-Schlodien, an ambitious Young Nazi, who will change the course of his life. Inspired by his own experiences in Antwerp during the war, Mendes has written a highly personal and epic tale.

WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTURECulture Prize
to Citizenne

Brussels social education centre Citizenne was awarded this year's Flemish Culture Prize in the category of social-cultural work with adults. Citizenne is part of a network of Vormingplus centres across Flanders that help residents develop new personal and social skills. The centre organises courses, debates, workshops and excursions. It targets Dutch speakers in Brussels but also sets out to create co-operative partnerships with other groups. Citizenne differs from other Vormingplus centres in Flanders, said culture minister Joke Schauvliege because of the social, ethnic and linguistic diversity of Brussels, which presents special challenges but also gives the group a unique dynamic.

► www.citizenne.be

Van der Weyden
expo closes early

A major exhibition at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts in Brussels has been forced to close two months early because the safety of the paintings cannot be guaranteed. *The Heritage of Rogier van der Weyden: Painting in Brussels 1450-1520* opened on 12 October and was due to run until 25 January. A temporary closure was announced two weeks ago when construction work near the museum proved more disruptive than expected, threatening the structural integrity of the exhibition space. Last week the museum announced that the closure would be permanent. "Contrary to what we were assured, it is no longer possible to guarantee that the building housing the exhibition is watertight," read a statement.

Het Anker debuts
new whisky

Mechelen brewery Het Anker presented its newest drink to the public last week: The Gouden Carolus Single Malt whisky. Distilling alcohol is in the family tradition: the Van Breedam family of millers made gin in Blaasveld from the mid-17th century until 1927. One branch of the family went off to Mechelen in 1872 to brew beer in what is now the Het Anker brewery. The whisky has been waiting for this moment since 2010, when the first oak barrels, which had previously been used to age Bourbon, arrived to mature in Mechelen. The raw materials for both beer and whisky are the same – grain and water. The distillery starts with the mash from the multiple award-winning Gouden Carolus Tripel. The Gouden Carolus Single Malt is a whisky described by Het Anker as having "a full, balanced flavour with subtle fruit aromas."

► www.hetanker.be

Body talk

Wim Vandekeybus curates this year's December Dance festival in Bruges

Lisa Bradshaw

The audiences of Bruges are a little traditional, according to Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus and need to be shaken up. So the curator of this year's edition of December Dance plans to wow them with rock music, raw emotions and a Jan Fabre opera

A Flemish actor once told me something I found very intriguing. "There's no such thing as talent," he said. "Talent is wanting to do something." In the year that I've been mulling this over, I've come to the conclusion that he is only partially right. And this view is emphasised as I talk to Wim Vandekeybus.

Vandekeybus did not study dance, or theatre, or any other kind of performing arts. In the early 1980s, he left his hometown in Antwerp province for Leuven to study psychology. He became so caught up in the relationship between the body and the soul that he wanted to put some ideas to the test. With no formal training, he auditioned for a part in a Jan Fabre production and got it. Just one year later, he founded his own company, Ultima Vez. And one year after that, he debuted his first production, *What the Body Does Not Remember*. Against any odds one might be able to conceive in this situation, the work was a huge, international success. Not only because everyone loved what they saw but because they had seen little before with which they could compare it.

The piece is often described as "raw", meaning it's loud and aggressive. It manifests physical interactions that are interdependent to the point of making them dangerous and communicates societal interactions that are brutally honest – sexism, profiteering, threats of violence. Not every hard-working choreographer becomes a dance pioneer with the first production. This early success was a combination of youthful revolution, timing – European dance was still looking for the choreographers who would bridge the postmodern and the contemporary – and intuition. Talent, if it exists, must be a kind of intuition. *What the Body Does Not Remember* turned 25 this year (while Vandekeybus turned 50) and toured the world to both repeat and new audiences. "It's a sure thing," he says, and that's why he's chosen it to open this year's December Dance festival in Bruges. (He's not wrong. As we went to press, there was just one lone ticket left.)

Bruges' annual festival of contemporary dance features a specific country or regional area one year and a famed curator the next. Its six previous editions have seen London's Akram Khan and Flanders' own Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui set the programme. Now it's Vandekeybus' turn. The festival begins and ends with Ultima Vez.



© courtesy of Meau



© Jan Dikmans



© Danny Willems

Lemi Ponifasio's *Stones in Her Mouth* is the highlight of December Dance (top); street artist Bonom creates ghostly images in *Meduses* (above left); curator Wim Vandekeybus (above right)

"People need a hook," Vandekeybus tells me from his studio in the Brussels district of Molenbeek. "Because we are there – because they know us and trust us – they will also take a look at other productions that they might not know."

And there is plenty of that on the programme. One of the highlights is *Meduses*, an ingenious blend of dance and graffiti art. Not just the people of Bruges have never heard of choreographer Vincent Glowinski – no one has. He was a street artist known only as Bonom – Belgium's answer to Banksy, if you will – until Vandekeybus saw what he could do in a late-night, back-room setting a couple of years ago during Brussels' Kunstfestival des arts.

"It was the most interesting thing I had seen in years," says Vandekeybus. He eventually took Bonom in, and *Meduses* is the result of a year-long residency. Through the use of software specifically developed for the practice, Bonom makes ghostly drawings appear through the movement of his body – though sometimes it seems that the images are making *him* dance.

Stones in Her Mouth, meanwhile, has only ever been performed once – for an avant-premiere in Los Angeles. The Bruges performance is the official world premiere of the tour. By New Zealand choreographer Lemi Ponifasio and his MAU company, it features 10 women, who tell the story of the indigenous Maori people and their suffering under oppressive

European settlers.

"It is an amazing show; it's so weird," says Vandekeybus. "It's really a culture shock. Lemi works very rigorously with his dancers, and sometimes it's like they're not even people. They transform. They slide over the stage as if they have wheels under their feet."

The performance is arguably the highlight of the festival and fits in perfectly with Vandekeybus' goal of introducing a new dynamic to sleepy Bruges – better known for tourists and cobblestones than cutting-edge arts. "The dances of the Maori people, which Lemi bases the show on, we don't know it at all," says Vandekeybus. "New Zealand is very far away. It's even far away from Australia. We just don't know them."

It also fits in with a general theme running through this year's December Dance – music and soundscapes. "Ponifasio doesn't use music, but he's super musical," explains Vandekeybus. "The dancers themselves create the sound. It was important to me to have this link between all the performances – those who are working with voice and sound."

In keeping with his own priority, he's re-choreographed *What the Body Does Not Remember* to stage it with

live music, provided by the Brussels-based Ictus new music ensemble.

The festival ends with Ultima Vez in *Spiritual Unity*, a kind of compilation of the last five years, weaved together in a brand new production, also with live music. Vandekeybus is putting the group of musicians – including Mauro Pawlowski and Roland Van Campenhout – on a stage in the middle of the crowd. "Like a rock show," he smiles. "But it's a big risk. I'm doing it especially for this festival. Bruges is a bit of a serious audience; they're not super interactive. So you have to put your hands in the fire and say: 'Hey people, wake up!'"

Spiritual Unity essentially tells the story of the last half-decade of Ultima Vez; the rest of the productions – which also includes Jan Fabre's three-hour opera *Tragedy of a Friendship* and Canadian Frédéric Gravel's behind-the-scenes look at show business – tell their own unique stories. Because "dance in itself doesn't exist," insists Vandekeybus. "It's always part of something else. You have to transport something with it; it's a communication medium. People are dancing because they are expressing their happiness or their sadness. That's how I work with dance."

4-15
December

Across Bruges

► www.decemberdance.be

Quality, not quantity

Leuven Int'l Short Film Festival

29 November to 7 December | Across Leuven
www.kortfilmfestival.be

The Leuven International Short Film Festival is home to the Wild Cards, awards granted by the Flanders Audiovisual Fund to help a select group of film students begin their professional careers. Directors, cast and crew of films in the running often turn up to screenings, creating a unique atmosphere of expectation. The buzz will reach new heights this year, as a record 86 short films are competing for just six awards across all categories. The winners are revealed and screened on

the last day of the festival. The beneficial effects of winning a Wild Card can be seen in Sahim Omar Kalifa, who is the festival's artist in focus this year. His graduation project at the Sint-Lukas film school in Brussels, *Nan*, won a Wild Card in 2008, and he used the prize money to make the darkly humorous short *Land of the Heroes (pictured)*, about children's games in the Iraqi war zone. It has won prizes at film festivals around the world, as has his follow-up, *Baghdad Messi*. All three

films screen in the festival this year, along with his new short *Bad Hunter*. This new film also appears in the festival's Flemish competition, alongside the year's best student films and work by more established filmmakers. Make sure to catch the atmospheric *Houses with Small Windows* by Bülent Öztürk and *Mia*, a delightfully inventive animation by Wouter Bongaerts, another past Wild Card winner. Other festival highlights include the international competition and thematic



programmes, plus a short history of Belgian shorts, from the silent films of Alfred Machin and Charles Dekeukeleire to *Carlo* by Michaël R Roskam, currently the hottest director in Flemish cinema.

Meanwhile, in the experi-

mental programme is a chance to see *Tokyo Giants*, the latest from award-winning Flemish artist and film director Nicolas Provost. **Ian Mundell**

VISUAL ARTS

**Thomas Raat:
The Experimenter's Dilemma**
Until 22 December | Transit Gallery, Mechelen

www.transit.be

The irony of the avant-garde is that it's not really avant-garde. The modernist movement had its truly radical moment (a century ago) in which it smashed icons and generally made itself misunderstood by surpassing existing definitions. Now it's too well understood as an established visual language, which may remain interesting but can no longer be considered subversive. Indeed, it has become conventional in the strictest sense – artist and audience communicate through conventions that bind their community together under the sign of modernism. Dutch artist Thomas Raat revisits the turning-point decades of the 1950s and '60s, when modernism was domesticated once and for all. His nuanced, original works appear to be period pastiche but on closer inspection prove so much more. **Georgio Valentino**



FAMILY

Pret-à-Marché
1 December, 10.00-18.00 | Seven, Eeklo

www.pretamarche.be

Flemish webshop Billybo is once again hosting the family-friendly pop-up market Pret-à-Marché. Joining them are dozens more local designers and artisans. You'll find products for all ages, but especially for the young ones: kids' clothes by Happy Hippo, knitwear by FilDADA, handmade hats by Jo Chapeau, vintage-style threads by Sweetdress.

When you're done shopping, you can sit your toddlers down in the portrait stall, where photographer Géraldine Requier will immortalise their youthful whimsy. They grow up fast. Food and drink are provided by fresh soup shop Chémique and Flanders' only retro-flavoured, mobile catering caravan, Koek en Zopie. **GV**



FILM

Mediterranean Film Festival
5-12 December | Botanique, Brussels

www.cinemamed.be

The 13th edition of the Mediterranean Film Festival promises eight days of cinematic magic from the region. The programme features more than 70 new films, produced in 20 countries. Many are in the running for a prize, some have already won awards, and some will be seen here for the first time. Not to be missed are the multiple-award-winning *Circles*, based on a true story that came out of the Bosnian war (*pictured*), and *Rock the Casbah*, which follows the stories of young Israelis during their required military service.

There's more too: concerts, exhibitions, lectures, debates, meet-and-greets galore as well as a Mediterranean market. This year the festival celebrates 50 years



of immigration from Turkey and Morocco to Belgium. One full day of the festival explores how these newcomers changed the face of Belgium demographically, culturally and economically. **GV**

SPECIAL EVENT

Nocturnes van de Zavel
28 November-1 December | Grote Zavel, Brussels

www.zavel.org


This four-day block party has become a seasonal tradition in the capital's chic gallery district. The theme of this year's Nocturnes is "Surrealism", and at its heart is a surreal exhibition of 35 festive fir trees, each designed by an art student from La Cambre, sponsored by a local business and submitted for the prize jury's consideration

(winners to be announced on closing night). A centre stage provides nightly chamber music and DJs. Foodies are welcome, too. Every night a different team of four gourmet Brussels chefs are on hand to hustle their haute cuisine in street food form – with a little visual help from yet more of La Cambre's finest artists-in-training. **GV**

Performance

Tervuren

Jesus Christ Superstar: British School of Brussels' production of the rock opera by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice (in English)
4-7 December 19.30 at BSB, Leuvensesteenweg 19

www.britishschool.be

Ghent

Meneer Afzal: Circa and LOD muziektheater present politically tinted slapstick humour by Pieter De Buysser and Lieselot De Wilde, on location inside Ghent living rooms (in Dutch)

1-8 December across Ghent
www.circagent.be

Festival

Brussels

Fenêtre Ouverte op het Baskenland (Open Window to Basque Country): Second edition of the festival taking a close look at the Basque culture through its people, food, music and traditions, featuring a diverse programme of concerts, films, exhibitions, workshops, talks, dance and more
Until 4 December across Brussels

www.fenetreouverte.be

Family

Brussels

Sinterklaasstoet: Annual parade through the centre of the capital in preparation for the Saint's name day on 6 December, featuring fanfares, giants, dancers, stilt walkers and, of course, Saint Nick and his helpers

30 November 14.00-17.30 on and around the Grote Markt
www.tinyurl.com/sinterklaasparade

Special event

Ghent

Museumnacht (Museum Night): Special night-time opening of nine Ghent museums with free entrance and activities, exhibitions, concerts and parties

28 November 20.00-1.00 at museums across Ghent, including STAM, De Wereld van Kina and Dr Guislain Museum
www.gent.be/museumnacht

Fair

Bruges

Magical Winter Moments: Annual holiday fair, featuring festive décor, table settings and more, plus wreath and flower workshops and ideas for making the home more cosy during the holiday season
Until 1 December 10.00-18.00 at Oud Sint-Jan, Mariestraat 38

www.happenings.be

Talking Dutch

Farewell, old frietkot?

Derek Blyth

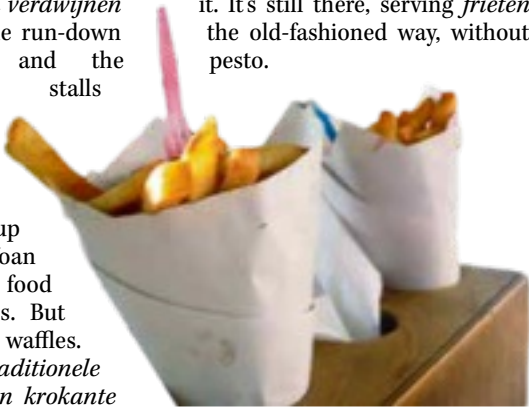
A couple of years ago, we started to see food vans at street markets in Brussels. Now they are everywhere. *Food trucks zijn de laatste jaren uitgegroeid tot een vaste waarde op de markten van Flagey, Kastelein en Van Meenen* – food trucks have in recent years become a common sight at Flagey, Kastelein and Van Meenen markets. The city of Brussels wants to encourage them, but only if they offer the right sort of food. *Het stadsbestuur wil immers een meer gevarieerd en kwalitatief aanbod inzake street food* – the city government would like to see a more varied and upmarket range of street food. And that of course means there has to be more regulation. *Een nieuwe jury beslist voortaan wie nog eten mag verkopen op straat* – a new jury will decide who is to be allowed to sell food on the street. This is bad news for the cheerful people who serve double-fried *frietjes* with a dollop of mayonnaise and a plastic fork. *“Ik denk dat er al meer dan voldoende aanbod is van wafels, frieten of durum en kebab”* – I think that we already have enough places serving waffles, frites or durum and kebabs, said Marion Lemesre, the councillor responsible

for business in central Brussels. Lemesre told TV Brussel that she finds the old food stands an eyesore. *“Ze beantwoorden niet meer aan de verwachtingen op het vlak van esthetiek en kwaliteit van de openbare ruimte”* – they no longer meet the standards that we expect in terms of the aesthetics and quality of the public space.

No more snails?

So does that mean that the friendly old lady selling boiled snails in front of the Katelijne church is going to be quietly moved on from the spot where she has stood for as long as anyone can remember? *Mogelijk zullen immers nog meer avondse karakollenkramen en ouderwetse frietkoten verdwijnen* – it’s possible that the run-down periwinkle stands and the old-fashioned *friet* stalls will increasingly disappear. Lemesre prefers to encourage cool young start-up entrepreneurs like Yoan Argence. He runs a food bicycle selling waffles. But not old-fashioned waffles. *“We gebruiken de traditionele deeg van de lichte en krokante*

Brusselse wafel maar verkopen hem op een stokje” – we use the traditional dough to make a light and crisp Brussels waffle but then we sell it on a stick, he told TV Brussel. *“Daarnaast bieden we ook hartige wafels aan met een tiental smaken, zoals kerstomaat met mozzarella en pesto, chorizo met ricotta of geitenkaas met thym”* – in addition we offer 10 different tastes, including cherry tomato with mozzarella and pesto, chorizo with ricotta or goat’s cheese with thyme. But it might not be that easy to get rid of the old *friet* stands. When the council of Brussels’ Elsene district tried to get rid of Frit Flagey (pictured) a few years ago, a petition was launched on Facebook to save it. It’s still there, serving *friet* the old-fashioned way, without pesto.



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VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

 In response to: Lessons for pupils on the dangers of social media
Emma Hanssens: I think this is a very good initiative. So many young people underestimate the power of social media and do not realise how public their profile is. It’s good that they are warned in this way and at this young age.

 In response to: Flanders producing less household waste
Kristof Buntinx: If you have less money because of the crisis and budget cuts, then you can buy less. Logical that there’s less waste
Hugo Schellekens: Consumption is also on the decline, a worried economist once told me

 In response to: One in 20 Antwerp students uses psychostimulants
William Testaert: The pressure to perform just keeps getting worse...

 **Diana Goodwin** @usatobelgium
Want to know more about CSAs in #Flanders? Watch this – Community Supported Agriculture:
<http://youtu.be/oCn2Q1NrLD8> #healthyfood

 **Peter De Wilde** @peter_de_wilde
#Gastronomy & chefs top level in #Flanders #Belgium 2/3 of Michelin stars @Benelux in Flanders #proud #craftsmanship @VisitFlanders

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Poll

The controversial Uplace is busy renting out spaces three years ahead of opening. Critics argue that the mega shopping centre will increase traffic on Brussels’ Ring Road and drive city centre retailers out of business. What do you think?



There will soon be three major shopping centres in the immediate vicinity of Brussels, each kitted out with hotel, leisure and conference facilities. Whatever the NIMBYs may say, there’s no fighting them. One in three of you said you’re against them, and you have a point. They’re not as charming as little towns, and they do suck the life out of local businesses. But that doesn’t stop people flocking to them in droves, especially at the beginning. The reason is simple, as a majority of you recognised: convenience. You take the kids, and you take the car. You stroll in traffic-free, rain-free peace. You can stop for a bite, a drink or an “Australian” ice-cream without worrying about the parking meter. And one-third of you use them in cavalier fashion, perhaps reflecting that the opposition or reluctance of your fellow shoppers doesn’t seem to change much either way.

Next week’s question:
The city of Brussels wants to have fewer run-down *friet* (french fry) stands and more up-market food trucks like other modern metropolises (see article above). What do you think?
Log in to the Flanders Today website and click on the VOTE button on the homepage!

THE LAST WORD

Hitting the high notes

“It was the most wonderful moment of my life. We even got a four-minute standing ovation. My mum sat crying in the audience.” Jasmine Binders, 15, was one of four girls with cystic fibrosis who sang as guests with Flemish choir Scala

Like oil and water

“Four years of scientific work in the rubbish bin.” Michel Draguet, director of the Brussels Museums of Fine Arts, after an exhibition on the legacy of Rogier van der Weyden had to be closed early (see p14)

Speaking in tongues

“So you have the blue pedal, the blue pedal is the stop, *de frèng om te frèngen*. Then you have the silver pedal, that’s the *ambraaiage*.” The distorted English spoken by one of the characters in the Eén comedy *Eigen kweek* has its own Facebook fan page

Heroes homecoming

“People came from far away in the mountains to be looked after. For them we worked 18-hour days with a smile on our faces.” Geert Gijs of Belgium’s B-Fast team, back after 12 days of disaster relief in the Philippines

