

I spy

Due to a ruling by the European Court of Justice, digital data storage could be phased out

► 2

Party pods

A sheltered workshop in Ghent has introduced a brilliant idea in music festival camping

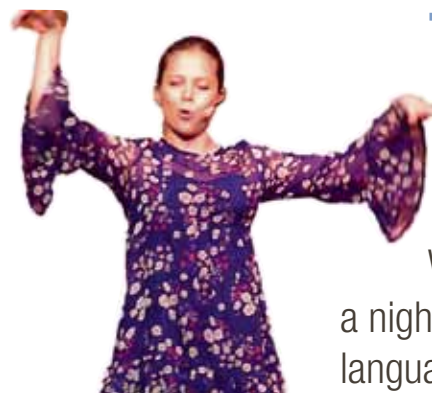
► 7



Tall tales

Alden Biesen's annual Storytelling Weekend features a night of English-language stories

► 11



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No more teachers

International experts present a remarkable vision of Flanders' schools in 2030

Andy Furniere

A group of educators, artists, entrepreneurs and policymakers have spent the last year brainstorming how to build the perfect Flemish school system over the next 20 years. Their conclusion is Learning Park, a school that blends more into its community and focuses on a student's whole experience, both in and outside the building.

Will schools be able to use "edus", or virtual coins, 15 years from now so they can launch new initiatives without having to complete several administrative steps? Will some teachers become project managers of sorts? And what about school reports – will they also include experience in youth associations with schools completely embedded in local communities? A Flemish-led project is hoping to start a debate about just these kinds of questions.

In 2012, together with the King Boudewijn Foundation and the Flemish Education Council (Vlor), education minister Pascal Smet launched the project "The school as a learning and working space in 2030" to collect ideas about how to improve the schools of the future.

"Our purpose wasn't to design models that could concretely be implemented in the near future, but to develop inspiring ideas for policymakers," explains Tinne Vandensande, project leader at the King Boudewijn Foundation.

In the preparation phase, the project team first asked Joseph Kessels, a Dutch professor in human resources, to complete a literature study and come up with some crucial focus areas to rethink the Flemish educational system. The next phase consisted of in-depth interviews with 26 stakeholders with different kinds of expertise – from pedagogues to entrepreneurs and artists.

Students, teachers, school heads and parents were also

surveyed about the educational challenges lying ahead. In the final phase of the project, 15 people actively involved in social development sketched the different trends they concluded would form the backdrop for the school of the future.

The insights, experiences, expectations and challenges for the education sector in 2030 bundled in that report formed the basis for a special brainstorming session last August, dubbed the Learning Lab. For five days, 10 creatives from a variety of professional and national backgrounds discussed visions for learning and teaching in the future. The Learning Lab took place on a remote castle farm in the countryside near Landen, Flemish Brabant.

Some of the participants from Flanders were secondary school student Lorenzo Ramalho Pestana, writer Rachida Lamrabet, psychiatrist and polar explorer Sam Deltour and educational ICT specialist Bram Bruggeman. International participants included researcher Tony Booth from Cambridge University

Groen calls for repeal of digital surveillance law

Decision by European Court of Justice calls Belgium's law on data storage into question

Alan Hope

Flemish opposition party Groen has called for a repeal of Belgium's law on telecommunications data, after a ruling from the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in Luxembourg. The ECJ said that an EU law, in force since 2006, obliging telecommunications companies to stock information on emails and telephone calls was in breach of the right to privacy. Until yesterday, the EU's Data Retention Directive forced telecommunications companies to store what is known as meta-data – the details of digital communications, including the phone numbers of both caller and recipient, duration of a call and

email addresses but not the actual content of the conversation – for up to two years. Meta-data had to be stored, according to the law “for the prevention, investigation, detection and prosecution of serious crime, such as, in particular, organised crime and terrorism”. There were two challenges to the law: one from Ireland and one from Austria. The courts asked the ECJ to examine the validity of the directive, and the court has now said it is in breach of the EU treaty. The ECJ stated that the Data Retention Directive made no distinction among people. Rather, it “applies even to persons for whom there is no evidence capable



of this law that it was an attack on privacy,” said the party's fraction leader in parliament, Stefaan Van Hecke, in response to the ruling. “Fortunately, there are still European institutions prepared to guarantee privacy. The government should repeal this law as soon as possible.” Internet service providers, meanwhile, called on the government for clarity on the impact of the ECJ's ruling for Belgium. The Internet Service Provider Association said that its members have invested heavily in equipment to allow them to meet the demands of the law and store the massive quantities of data involved.

of suggesting that their conduct or remote one, with serious crime”. “Groen warned before the passing might have a link, even an indirect

New Brussels prosecutor promises more court time

The newly appointed prosecutor of Brussels, Jean-Marc Meilleur, has promised to improve the rate of cases that go to court. Currently about 80% of all crimes and offences are processed without a suspect appearing in court, and most of those are simply shelved. In 2013, the Brussels prosecutor's office dealt with 116,551 cases, mainly criminal offences, including theft, assault and disruption to public order. Of those, 93,730 resulted in no charges. The percentage is

constant, despite the decline of the number of offences since 2008. In 9% of those cases, the suspect paid an administrative fine. About 5% were turned over to another jurisdiction, and 9% were joined to another case. The rest were shelved for reasons such as “suspects unknown”, “other priorities” and “inopportune to prosecute”. Meilleur is in charge of the new judicial area of Brussels, now split off from Halle-Vilvoorde. The above figures relate to the

previous joint area. He made it clear that his goal is to double the number of cases that come to court. “That's good news. We're very happy,” said Ilse Van De Keere, spokesperson for the Brussels police. The change will mean less overtime for the police, she said. The legal profession is also not complaining, according to the head of the Dutch-speaking bar in Brussels, Hugo Vandenberghe. “We have more than 3,000 lawyers. We will be able to cope.” AH

Parents of Sierre bus crash victims hire own investigators

The clash between some of the parents of victims of the Sierre school bus crash and the local prosecutor continues, with the announcement that parents have brought in a team of independent experts to review the entire Swiss investigation. The crash took place in March of 2012 in a motorway tunnel as a coachload of children and staff from two schools in Flanders were returning from a ski holiday. Twenty-eight people were killed, including 22 children and both drivers. The Swiss have completed their investigation and concluded that, while the exact cause of the crash could not be determined, certain theories, including a suicidal action by one of the drivers, could be ruled out.

A group of parents have consistently refused to accept this conclusion and recently asked a court to force Swiss prosecutor Olivier Elsig to investigate a mobile phone the driver in question owned but did not have with him at the time of the crash. Elsig said that investigation had been carried out and had provided no evidence. Now the parents have retained the services of an independent forensic research bureau to go over the investigation again with the possible suicidal act in mind. They were due to seek a court order on Monday, as *Flanders Today* went to press, for DNA



Swiss prosecutor Olivier Elsig, pictured at a news conference in Brussels in 2012

evidence to be handed over. “It is impossible to hand over to third parties documents or other objects that have formed part of a judicial investigation,” said Elsig. “However, it is always possible to request a second expert opinion within the framework of our investigation.” The parents are concerned at news that Geert Michiels, the younger of the two bus drivers, was taking medication that can be prescribed for depression. According to research, they claim, this medication can cause suicidal feelings in people with a particular DNA defect. Michiels' widow said it was beginning to feel like a “personal vendetta”. “These are serious questions,” said the parents' lawyer, Job Knoester. “I think you have to show parents the respect of saying ultimately we have done everything that could be done, and that is not yet the case.” AH

Massive speed checks on 17 April

Motorists have been warned of the likelihood of massive speed checks on roads across Belgium in the 24 hours from 6.00 on Thursday, 17 April – a mission now being referred to in police circles as “the great *flitskrieg*”. The 24-hour period is being organised by the Belgian Institute for Road Safety (BIVV) and was announced on 1 April, when they launched the website www.ikflitsmee.be, where members of the public could nominate any

location they thought should have extra speed checks. In 10 days, the site gathered more than 51,750 nominations. Police won't say exactly where extra speed checks will take place, but a majority of the 195 local police zones are taking part, and the federal police has up to 20 teams standing by to form a sort of flying squad of mobile speed controls. According to one report, that could add up to as many as 100,000 individual

checks in the 24 hours. “The nominated locations could see a check taking place during the marathon, or could be kept in mind for a speed check at some later date,” said federal police spokesperson Michael Jonniaux. “It's also possible that no checks could follow, if it's considered unnecessary or unsafe, although a decision could be taken to improve the signals or the state of the road at that spot.” AH

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

1,251

people suffered from carbon dioxide poisoning last year, with 26 deaths, three more than in 2012. The Anti-Poison Centre received an average of 147 calls a day, mostly about products irritating the skin

33 million

visits to a general practitioner took place last year in Belgium. Flemish GPs are asking the government for more administrative help, including incentives to form group practices, and the ability to work part time

34.2%

of all workers in Belgium are employed by the public sector, according to Unizo, which represents the self-employed. Since 2008, the public sector has created 91,000 jobs

30

harbour porpoises washed up dead at the Flemish coast in the first three months of the year, at least 10 of them as a result of injuries caused by nets used by sports fishermen

115

trains passed a train station without stopping last year, 22 more than in 2012. The problem was worst in Harelbeke and Beveren, with seven incidents each

WEEK IN BRIEF

Former minister **Jos Chabert has died** at the age of 81. Chabert, a member of CD&V forerunner CVP, was a minister in the Brussels-Capital Region from 1989 to 2004, the longest-serving minister of the post-war period. During his career, Chabert also served as minister in the federal government, from 1973 to 1981. In his long career, he served as minister of culture, Flemish affairs in Brussels, mobility, post and telegraph, public works and institutional reform. His most notable post was as minister of mobility, during which time he introduced the mandatory wearing of seat-belts, set the alcohol limit for drink-driving and brought in the maximum speed limit of 120 km/h.

The **port of Antwerp set a new record** for the quantity of freight handled last year – 190.8 million tonnes, or 36% more than in 2012. Container freight fell slightly, but the loss was more than made up for by an increase in liquid bulk – oil and petrochemical products.

Nuclear power facilities Doel 2 in East Flanders and Tihange in Wallonia **ought not to have been re-opened** following an investigation into tiny cracks in the concrete reactor casing, according to a report from the European Greens/European Free Alliance. The report concludes that the reactors should not have been restarted in June last year following a year-long closure caused by the discovery of defects. Both stations closed again in March when tests uncovered irregularities.

Brussels Airport handled **8.3% more passengers in March** than in the same period last year, to reach the highest number in 10 years. Part of the increase was due to the arrival of Ryanair, but Brussels Airlines also carried more passengers, with numbers up by 5% for the month. The quarterly total for the whole airport was up by 6% to 3,972.000.

Véronique Pirotton, the wife of Walloon MP Bernard Wesphael, who **died in an Ostend hotel room** last autumn, died as a result of a combination of antidepressant pills and alcohol, according to a toxicology report. Wesphael was arrested on suspicion of murder soon after Pirotton’s body was discovered but has continued to maintain his innocence while in custody.

The main **supermarket chains are not going to implement** the new rule that allows prices for cash purchases to be rounded up or down to the nearest five cents. The supermarkets claim they would lose some €1.5 million a year as customers opt for cash payments when the price has to be rounded down, and payment cards to avoid any rounding up. “Two cents might seem extremely little,” a spokesperson said, “but if it happens millions of times in a year, it soon adds up.”

The car park on the E40 at Westkerke, between Bruges and Nieuwpoort, will close in June for six months, Flemish mobility minister Hilde Crevits said, in an effort to put an end to illegal activities taking place there. The car park has no services or sanitary facilities, making it the perfect spot, Crevits said, for “illegal practices such as **human trafficking and theft of cargo**”. Human trafficking is particularly common, as the road leads to the French Channel ports and is used by traffic heading ultimately for the UK.

Motoring organisations VAB and Touring have called for an immediate change to road signs to make **arrows point up instead of down** to indicate straight ahead. The change leads to shorter waiting times in traffic jams and faster speeds, according to research carried out in the Netherlands. The change is already under way in the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden,

and a test project has been launched in the Antwerp area. “We can only hope we get such positive results here, too,” said Ilse Luybaerts of the roads and traffic agency AWW.

Brussels public transport authority MIVB has started implementing the system whereby passengers are only allowed to **exit a metro or pre-metro station** if they have a valid ticket. The first two stations, Albert and Horta, are already operating, and the North-South axis will follow in the next few weeks.

Mayor of Ghent Daniel Termont has found an **alternative to the controversial GAS fines** handed out to young people under the age of 16: He plans to send a stern letter instead, to offender and parents, with the threat of a visit from the police if the behaviour – matters such as littering, public urination and noise nuisance – continues. The plan comes into force in June and will be evaluated after the summer.

The number of **accidents involving the coast tram** last year fell to 71, compared to 80 in 2012 and 111 in 2011. Deaths have also fallen from 156 in 2011 to 56 last year. Flanders’ mobility minister, Hilde Crevits, said that the improvements stem from a new system of traffic lights influenced by the approach of the tram and better signaling.

The VTM programme **Telefacts is taking legal action** against an injunction ordered last week by a court in Brussels to prevent the broadcast of a programme investigating allegations of corruption against a former magistrate in Veurne, West Flanders. The decision to block the broadcast, granted with no hearing given to the *Telefacts* editorial team, was described as “unconstitutional” by the Flemish Union of Journalists.

FACE OF FLANDERS

Alan Hope



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Wijven

Wijven, plural of *wijf*, is a Dutch slang word, corresponding more or less to the English bird or broad. Though it sounds like “wife,” the word, generally meant as an insult or at least condescending, denotes no marital status. As for Ghent youth theatre Ontroerend Goed, when they take the production of *Wijven* on the road in England later this spring, it will be known as *Sirens*. The six sirens pictured star in the production *Wijven*, with the tone set by the opening words: “We’re the weaker sex, but there are more of us, and we live longer”. The cast is a who’s who of the best and brightest young women on Flanders’ stages and screens: Anemone Valcke (*Adem, Offline*), Charlotte De Bruyne (*Flying Home*), Ontroerend Goed regular Aurélie Lannoy, Marjan Deschutter (*Little Black Spiders*), Karolien De Bleser of Compagnie Barbarie and stage actor and fashion blogger Verona Verbackel. The play intends to examine what each of the six thinks about feminism, so it’s perhaps a surprise that the idea for *Wijven* comes from Alexander Devriendt, the company’s artistic director. The actors themselves, he explains, were on the whole

pretty satisfied with their lives in Flanders, and since none are older than 29, perhaps the struggles and theories of classical feminism didn’t seem relevant to them anymore. “Their experience with sexism often involved little things, but if you put them all side by side, something bigger emerges. I have no lessons to teach the audience; they know only too well how sexism works. My job as a theatre director is to create the image of that knowledge.” De Bruyne, who you can currently see in cinemas in the English-language movie *Flying Home*, agrees: “We’ve got it so good that it’s easy to bypass those couple of times it happens to us, when we get called a dumb blonde or people laugh when we try to park the car. The anger only really took over when we discovered the website everydaysexism.com, which asks women to post that sort of everyday annoyance. When you see thousands upon thousands of examples, the problem suddenly seems impossibly huge.” The production premieres in Ghent on 17 April, with later dates in Hasselt, Antwerp and Leuven.

► www.ontroerendgoed.be

OFFSIDE

Alan Hope

Hairy Houdini

A new species was seen for the very first time in Flanders, but it’s not a cause for celebration, according to environmental organisation Natuurpunt. The sighting took place in the Kortelake reserve near Geraardsbergen, East Flanders. The newcomer is one raccoon, a rapacious little devil that is, in some ways, the most cartoon-like of animals. It’s intelligent and cunning, with front paws like hands, sporting four “fingers” and a “thumb”. Being the night-time thief that it is, it wears a burglar’s black mask of fur. The racoon is native to North and Central America and was brought to Europe in the mid-20th century. It’s mainly concentrated in



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Germany and has never before been seen in Flanders. Raccoons have no natural enemies and feed on frogs, lizards and birds, which presents a threat to local wildlife. So it’s got to go, said Natuurpunt, which has set a trap to capture the beast. If captured, the raccoon will be taken to the wildlife shelter at Geraardsbergen. “As bait, we’re using things like fish and cat food,”

said the shelter’s director Filip Berlengee. “But in fact the raccoon will eat anything, and studies have shown you can even catch it with peanut butter or chocolate.” Easier said than done: As *Flanders Today* went to press, the raccoon, by now nicknamed Geraard, continued to evade capture. The cage set up to trap it was positioned at the crossroads of a path it was known to use, but since reports of its presence got out, humans have been wandering about in the area, leaving their scent and possibly scaring Geraard off, said conservationist Willem Boonen. “I’m afraid it could be some time before he shows himself again.”

FLANDERS TODAY



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Plan V

Exactly what will parties do in terms of the budget, purchasing power and social security once they get to power? To the average voter, this often remains a mystery, no matter how many numbers politicians cite in debates.

To end questions like these once and for all, the Planning Bureau is going to look into all of the political parties' programmes after the next election on 25 May. But for this one, voters will have to decide, as they always have, based on gut feeling.

Last week, though, one party was exceptionally clear about its programme. NVA's V-plan for the social economy leaves no doubt where the party stands. N-VA's proposals are in fact radical in a country where social-economic policies have mostly been the result of a broad consensus.

N-VA wants to alter the index mechanism that automatically links wages to the cost of living, long considered the cornerstone of Belgium's social-economic policy. Some even say that the index was one of the reasons Belgium got through the economic crisis relatively unharmed.

To cut labour costs, the indexing should be skipped in 2015, N-VA proposed. Moreover, in the long run, it should be abolished altogether and replaced by agreements between workers and employers, industry by industry. To compensate, N-VA wants to lower taxes on the lowest wages. N-VA also wants to freeze government spending for two years, and anyone unemployed for more than two years would be cut off from benefits.

SPA's Johan Vande Lanotte calls it "a return to the anti-social recipes of the 1980s". Groen-president Wouter Van Besien says family incomes would drop by €800 annually.

The workers and the unemployed would pay a heavy price, said Gert Peersman, while entrepreneurs and those with savings would be spared. Peersman, an academic who takes an independent look at all party programmes, responded positively to N-VA's budgetary plans, though.

The plans may send shivers down the spine of the left, but they are also bad news for the liberals. N-VA is targeting Open VLD's voters. As they were preparing their election congress last week, the liberals feared that European commissioner Karel De Gucht's continuing fight with the taxman might overshadow what was meant to be an event full of hope and optimism. In the end, it wasn't De Gucht but N-VA's V-plan that distracted media attention away from the congress.

Now, which is worse?

Cutting red tape saves Flemish government €197 million

Scrapping unnecessary admin is saving agencies, businesses and taxpayers

Derek Blyth

The Flemish government's plan to cut down on needless administration has saved companies, organisations and citizens a total of €197 million, according to administrative affairs minister Geert Bourgeois.

The plan to cut red tape called on every government minister to submit proposals to simplify and streamline their administrations.

Some 538 projects were put forward to make government departments more efficient. Two-thirds of the projects have been realised, covering a diverse range of activities. One in five projects involved the scrapping of needless regulations, while one in three involved a digital dimension such as the introduction of online forms to speed up procedures. The simplification plan affected



a wide range of organisations, including schools, social welfare organisations and cultural bodies. Private citizens also benefitted from the plan due to initiatives such as the simplification of the Flemish tax system. But the biggest financial gains were made by companies, where overall cost savings due to simplified administration amounted to €133 million.

Housing association protests at plan to cut board members

Flanders' housing minister Freya Van den Bossche is facing opposition to her announcement last week that she wants to cut one in three board members in the social housing sector. The Flemish Housing Association (VVH) immediately condemned the minister and threatened to take legal action to have the decision struck down.

Van den Bossche said in a statement that the largest housing associations with more than 1,500 properties would in future be allowed a maximum of 13 board members, while organisations with 500 to 1,500 houses on their books would have to work with nine administrators. The smallest organisations would be allowed five people on the board. At present, the largest housing association in Flanders has 31 board members, while the average number is 14.5. The plan, which would be implemented gradually, would

ultimately cut the number of board members from 1,433 to 975. Van den Bossche points to the energy sector, where the number of board members was cut drastically without having any impact on efficiency. "You don't necessarily do a better job just because there are more of you," she said.

The minister also wants to cut down the number of board meetings held every year, monitor expenses more closely and allocate top jobs to people with relevant professional qualifications. She also said that at least one-third of posts should be held by women.

The VVH argued that the decision was made without consulting its members. "This is a slap in the face for the thousands of board members and their associates whose work makes a difference to the lives of 150,000 families," said VVH director Björn Mallants. **DB**

Minister calls for halt on house building near Zaventem

Flanders' environment minister Joke Schauvliege wants to stop new houses being built in the areas around Brussels Airport where aircraft noise levels are excessive. She has drafted a plan that would halt all building in zones affected by the highest noise levels (above 70 decibels), while restrictions would apply in other areas where the noise level is lower.

The plan involves reclassifying land in areas of high noise levels so that local municipalities would no longer be allowed to issue building permits. For years, residents living in the municipalities of Flemish Brabant that lie under the airport's main flight paths have complained of noise nuisance. With the arrival of Ryanair, even more air traffic is travelling over the cities. In 2010, the

airport signed an agreement with the state to limit take-offs at night and to route more flights over less populated areas.

Machelen mayor Jean-Pierre De Groef has criticised Schauvliege's new plan because it would lead to a drop in the supply of affordable housing. "We need to have enough new housing and renovated buildings to maintain the dynamic nature of the municipality," he argued. "Under these proposals, we would no longer be allowed to build any houses anywhere in the centre of Diegem."

De Groef said that the government should be tackling the problem at its origin by spreading flights over a wider airspace and forcing airlines to use quieter aircraft. **DB**

Government criticises top civil servants for endorsing ING

The government of Flanders has asked ING bank to withdraw an advertisement published in *De Standaard* in which two senior civil servants in the finance ministry praise the bank for its "good service" and "impeccable co-operation".

The two members of staff provided a further glowing testimony on the bank's website, in which they said that ING was responsible for "€30 billion in cash flow in and out of the ministries and a further €5 billion that was paid to various government bodies, such as Flemish Opera and the VRT broadcasting authority". "We are not happy about this," said finance ministry spokesperson Liesbeth Van Biesen. "We don't like that ING used the Flemish government's logo, which creates



the impression that this is a joint campaign by ING and the government."

The logo used in the ING advert was an obsolete Flemish government logo that was replaced some weeks ago by a more modern brand image. Flemish finance minister Philippe Muyters stressed that civil servants were expected to be neutral and free of any allegiance. **DB**

Positive reactions to idea of covering Antwerp Ring

BAM, the mobility company that is to build the Oosterweel Scheldt crossing in Antwerp, has reacted positively to a plan to cover over the current Antwerp Ring, by directing traffic through four new tunnels. This would reduce particle and noise pollution and create new land roughly equal in size to 800 football pitches, which could be developed.

The plan was proposed by activist group Ringland as an alternative to the BAM plan, which the government of Flanders approved in February after years of uncertainty. The plan is to complete the Ring with a series of roads and tunnels to ease congestion. According to Ringland, the Scheldt crossing that the BAM plan includes is not a priority. "We should tackle the problem where it exists today, on the current ring road," the group said on its website. Ringland's plans were welcomed by most of Flanders' political parties. Now BAM has also reacted positively. "It is a good thing that the plans are being examined in an environmental



study as an alternative to R11-bis," Rudi Thomaes, president of BAM, told *Gazet van Antwerpen*.

The R11-bis, or Krijgsbaan, is an older ring road around Antwerp; the plan is for this to pass through a new tunnel. According to Thomaes, the covering of the Ring and the Scheldt crossing, which is needed to ease congestion, are not mutually exclusive.

Ringland reacted sceptically to Thomaes' words. "If he says Ringland can be complementary to the Scheldt crossing, we need hard proof. Earlier studies have called our projects non-compatible." **Anja Otte**

No more teachers

School of the future will be a “learning park”, where students and the community meet

► continued from page 1

and Francesca Caena, a teacher and teacher educator at the University Ca'Foscari in Venice and education consultant for the European Commission.

“The mix of completely different people first made it seem improbable that we would ever find common ground,” says Caena. “But this variety finally proved energising and stimulated our creativity. We didn’t just talk around a table but also during walks outside in the forest, which helped open our minds.” She adds that the ideas developed in the Learning Lab also proved fruitful for her work at the European policy level. During their stay, the participants were visited by the leading figures behind several local and international initiatives, who presented their projects to the team and also bounced around ideas with them. Flemish inspiration sources included the Let’s Go Urban dance organisation in Antwerp, the independent Sudbury school in Ghent and the Tander secondary school in Leuven.

The group also met with the driving forces behind the worldwide non-profit movement CoderDojo, the South African initiative SpringAge and the education department of the city of Rotterdam. The result of their brainstorming efforts was a compilation of concepts, united under the term “Learning Park”.

The creative team did not paint a concrete picture of the infrastructure of the school of the future but feels it is essential that the school is more embedded in the local community. Instead of being led by umbrella organisations, schools should be more organised according to the co-operative model.

“The Learning Park would be co-owned by local stakeholders, like parents, entrepreneurs, non-profit organisations, government representatives and school staff,” explains Vandensande. “This should create a strong commitment to set up collaborative activities and projects, to the benefit of students.”

The Learning Park would also be a hub for community life, where cultural, social and sports activities take place. This way, it would serve to foster co-operation and exchanges between diverse social stakeholders, individuals and organisations – of all ages, backgrounds and professions.

“There shouldn’t be a bell signalling that school is out,” says

“*There shouldn’t be a bell signalling that school is out ... the school gate should always stay open*”

Vandensande. “Instead, the school gate should always stay open for both students and the broader public.”

The informal activities of youngsters in sports, cultural or youth associations would also be taken into account on



Lorenzo Ramalho Pestana, a student of human sciences in Aarschot, is an opinion leader on educational systems

school reports, which would be more like portfolios. “Instead of sanctioning tools, these school reports would emphasise and strengthen students’ various competences,” explains Vandensande.

As is already the case in certain alternative schools, like the Sudbury schools, education would be more personally oriented. “Students would be encouraged to map out their own trajectory,” says Vandensande. The curriculum would, therefore, also be much more broad in scope than at present. “Of course it would remain essential to teach basic skills in, for example, mathematics or language but students should also learn more about the real world outside the school walls through a project-based approach,” declares the project leader. In the Learning Park model, you would have three kinds of teachers: facilitators, coaches and project managers. The facilitators would be similar to the classic teachers of today, with the role of helping children to plan their activities and acquire the minimum competences, like language skills.

Coaches, meanwhile, would give children personal feedback and guidance on their individual learning paths and also support the other teaching staff concerning the psychology of learning. Project managers, finally, would be in close contact with organisations or companies to collaborate on projects for

the students.

“Teachers would also be part of a so-called learning team, in which experiences and knowledge are regularly and thoroughly exchanged,” explains Caena. “Teachers could also count on so-called Learning Academies, institutions that would help them with their continuous professional development during their whole career.”

“*Cultural diversity would be regarded as a source of intellectual wealth, instead of a problem*”

One of the most intriguing concepts is that of a new virtual coin, called the “edu”, which would help to reduce bureaucratic red tape in setting up projects, and thus encourage teachers to take initiatives. Companies and non-profits could pay edus to the Learning Park for projects in which students are involved. Teachers could then re-invest them to organise field trips, buy learning materials or set up new projects involving stakeholders and partners. The Edu Bank could be managed by the Flemish education ministry.

A last main concept revolves around the values of inclusion and diversity. “Cultural and linguistic diversity in the Learning Park would be regarded as a source of intellectual wealth instead of a problem, as is sometimes the case now,” summarises Caena. The school staff would therefore not only be culturally diverse but this aspect would also be key in the curriculum of teacher studies and of learning activities with students. Efforts would also be made to encourage all parents and members of the community to participate in the broad variety of activities at the Learning Park.

Last November, the project team organised a participative conference to refine the results of the Learning Lab. Among the experts were the staff of the collaborating partner organisations King Boudewijn Foundation, Vlor and the Flemish government’s education department. Also invited were all those who took part in the first, exploratory phase.

Finally, during an event last month, the final reports were handed over to the ministry and an appeal was made to use the concepts in a broad debate. The results are also available to the public, via a short video that explains the main Learning Park concepts.

The project team is now waiting until the end of the year to take further action, when it will set up activities to further involve civil society and policymakers to work out strategies for the future. The purpose of this social dialogue is to raise public awareness and get commitments for possible reforms.

► www.ond.vlaanderen.be/onderwijs-2030



Learning Lab participants broke into smaller groups to work on certain areas



EU education consultant Francesca Caena (right) brainstorms the school of the future during the Learning Lab

WEEK IN
BUSINESS

Air ► VLM

Cityjet, the short-haul flight affiliate of Air France/KLM, has been sold to Germany's Intro Aviation. The move impacts Antwerp-based carrier VLM, which has services to London City Airport, Guernsey and several destinations in France and Germany.

Biotech ► TiGenix

The Leuven-based bio-tech company has sold the marketing rights of its innovative ChondroCelect knee cartilage regenerating therapy to the Sweden's Sobi in exchange for a 22% share of all sales in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Cars ► Sales

New car registrations decreased slightly (0.42%) in the first three months of this year to 148,352 vehicles. Market leader was the Volkswagen group, followed by Peugeot and Renault. Heavy trucks sales, however, surged 33% in March while motorbike registrations increased by nearly 16%. Meanwhile, the auto repair federation Federauto said that its members are seeking up to 3,000 employees this year to replace retiring workers.

Cement ► Holcim

The Swiss-based cement manufacturer, with 11 production outlets in Flanders, is merging with the French Lafarge group to create one of the world's largest cement and building materials groups.

Ports ► Zeebrugge

Local energy transport and supply group Fluxys has signed a co-operation agreement with Russian gas producer Yamal to supply west European distributors through the Zeebrugge GNL gas terminal from 2017. Meanwhile, Fluxys has signed a letter of intent with the Italian Snam group to create a joint venture to regroup both company's international operations. The move would create one of Europe's largest gas transport and supply companies.

Property

► AG Real Estate

The Brussels-based property group has acquired Antwerp's 130,000 square-metre Kievit-plein development, close to the city's Central Station. AG bought the property from the German Kanam company for €200 million.

Retail

► & Other Stories

The up-market retail division of Sweden's H&M group is opening stores in Brussels and Antwerp this spring.

Increase in organic farming

Organic farming and sales are steadily increasing across Flanders

Alan Hope

The acreage given over to organic farming in Flanders has almost doubled in the last six years, since the beginning of the government's first strategic plan for organic agriculture, minister-president Kris Peeters announced. Peeters, whose portfolio also includes agriculture, was presenting the sector's annual report.

Since 2008, the acreage of organic farming has risen by 45%. There are now 319 certified organic farms in Flanders, covering 5,065 hectares – 2.5% more than in 2012 and an average of 15.9 ha per producer. In 2013, 35 new producers began farming organically and 15 retired, giving a net growth of 20. West Flanders accounted for half of the increase.

The government launched its first strategic plan for the sector in 2008. A new strategic plan was introduced last year, with more of an emphasis on the short food-chain – cutting the number of steps and the number of kilometres between



producer and consumer.

Support in 2013 amounted to €3.57 million: 38% for direct support to producers, 25% for research, 21% to market development and 16% to promotion. At the same time, the organic market, including non-food items such as detergents, amounted to €403 million last year, a market

share of 1.6%.

Vegetables are the most common organic purchase by consumers, with two out of three families buying organic vegetables. The single product with the largest market share (23%) is meat substitutes such as tofu and seitan, while the smallest share of the market goes to organic meat, with only 0.7%.

"The annual report shows that 44% of all organic purchases in Flanders take place in average supermarkets," Peeters said. "Specialist shops come in second place, with 31% of purchases. And it's notable that the local supermarket is increasing in importance, with a share of 13.5%." The minister emphasised that the government intends "to continue investing in this remarkable sector to allow it to offer more home-grown products, so that even more consumers can enjoy our top-quality products more often."

NMBS loss doubled to
€330 million in 2013

The national rail authority NMBS has reported a loss for 2013 of €330.7 million, double the loss of 2012. The figure is mainly the result of writing-off NMBS interests in the freight subsidiary NMBS Logistics, for a value of €134.4 million. NMBS Logistics has long been a loss-maker, but now appears to have turned the corner. The NMBS hopes soon to come forward with a new plan for the future of the subsidiary, the authority said. In addition, a fine imposed on the Italian constructor Ansaldo Breda for late delivery of three of the ill-fated Fyra trains remains unpaid, adding

a further €12.7 million to the losses, which the NMBS has now written off. Other Fyra costs amounted to €3.7 million.

The authority's debts rose slightly, from €2.79 billion in 2012 to €2.85 billion in 2013. 2013 was the last year in which the NMBS reported as a three-part structure: NMBS Holding ceased to exist on 1 January this year, leaving only infrastructure authority Infrabel and the NMBS proper, in charge of rolling stock. Last year the NMBS turned over €2.1 billion in sales, and carried a total of 223 million passengers. AH

Supertrucks banned from
Kennedy Tunnel and Brussels Ring

A new generation of supertrucks will be appearing on roads in Flanders from 1 July as part of a pilot project. But they will not be permitted in the Kennedy Tunnel under the Scheldt in Antwerp nor on parts of the Brussels Ring Road.

The supertrucks can measure up to 25.25 metres in length, compared to a normal truck length of 18.75m, and weigh up to 60 tonnes, compared to the usual 44 tonnes. They are restricted to major roads outside of built-up areas and 30 km/h zones and may ride no more than 10 kilometres before reaching their main route on the motorway.

On the Brussels Ring, sections banned to the vehicles include the Vilvoorde viaduct and the section between Jette and Zellik, according to the project specifications published last week. Other sections of the ring are closed to the supertrucks, including between exits 5 and 6,



Machelen-Vilvoorde, and between 13 and 18, Dilbeek-Ruisbroeck. In practice, it will be impractical for the trucks to try to use the ring at all.

"We'd have preferred being able to run on the whole territory," commented Lode Verkinderen of the industry association Transport & Logistiek Vlaanderen, "but this gives us enough possibilities." A number of haulage companies are ready to take part in the project, he said. AH

First stone laid at EnergyVille

Flemish innovation minister Ingrid Lieten has laid the first stone of Campus EnergyVille at the Thor science park, a former mining area in the Waterschei district of Genk.

The research centre, which is focused on intelligent and sustainable energy solutions, is one of the cornerstones of the SALK recovery programme for Limburg

province that was drawn up after the closure of the Ford factory in Genk was announced. Campus EnergyVille will be built using the latest knowhow in energy-conscious construction, with solar panels, heat pumps, an innovative heat network, heat storage and building automation.

Andy Furniere

► www.campusenergyville.be

Albert Heijn agrees to code of conduct to avoid price wars

Albert Heijn, the Dutch supermarket giant making inroads into the Flemish market, has agreed to sign a code of conduct aimed at ensuring fair relations between suppliers and buyers in the agricultural food chain leading from farmer to customer.

The decision follows talks last week between Albert Heijn's general manager, Corné Mulders, and Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters. Peeters was responding to complaints from the Belgian food sales industry, which feared Albert Heijn would resort to the sort of

deep cost-cutting that has led to price wars in the Netherlands, and from food producers, who feared that the supermarket chain, which has enormous buying power, would force down their already slim margins.

The code of conduct, signed by all of the major players in the food production line, contains a number of rules, including a commitment to provide local products where economically possible, a pledge of respect between the various links in the food chain and a promise of fair

business relations at all levels.

According to Albert Heijn, the code is fully in line with the company's business philosophy. The company will adhere to the code, as well as participate in regular discussions involving all parties.

"I am pleased that I was able to convince Corné Mulders, general manager of Albert Heijn, to sign the Belgian code of conduct," Peeters said. "Another positive step is that Albert Heijn will take part in coming discussions on the creation of a more balanced agro-food chain. The more

participants there are, the more balance there will be, which can only be good for producers, retailers and distributors alike."

The decision of Albert Heijn was welcomed by the farmers' union Boerenbond, which also took part in the discussions. "This is the first step in the direction of an agreement on economic sustainability of the food chain," the union said in a statement. "For us, the code means more respect for each other and fair trade relations between the various partners." AH

Sleep like the bees

Local festivals are enthusiastic about an innovative summer accommodation

Tom Peeters

Probably at least once in your lifetime you found yourself stuck at the end of an exhausting music festival, not in the mood to get yourself all the way home but left without a choice since you couldn't find any decent accommodation.

The same thing happened to Barbara Vanthorre during the Gentse Feesten almost 10 years ago. The difference between you and her is that she took a few practical steps to solve her (and maybe your) problem. Both festival organisers and visitors are embracing her idea of outdoor private berths, cutely stacked up to resemble a honeycomb.

The prototype of B&Bee will premiere at this summer's Gentse Feesten. "A media partner will introduce a competition in which everyone can win a night at the Gentse Feesten," Vanthorre explains. As the operational manager of Con-Brio, a sheltered workshop in the Ghent district of Sint-Amandsberg, Vanthorre is always looking for niches to keep her workers and staff active, especially during crisis periods. With Ron Hermans, the director of the Labeur sheltered workshop, she pitched this "honeycomb hotel" at an innovation meeting in Antwerp. "It really started off as a joke," she says, "but to my surprise it won the first prize of €1,000."

It was only the beginning. "The



The pods contain six cylinder-shaped sleeping cells and can be stacked four high

unexpected victory gave us the opportunity to appear in front of a professional committee that would judge the idea on its potential. If they found it interesting enough, a consultancy would have a longer look at it." To prepare for this test they got in touch with a few organisers and mayors of festival cities, who were all very enthusiastic.

The committee's approval brought the duo together with Marc Bogaert, the innovation manager at business consultancy One Small Step in Lennik, Flemish Brabant. Simultaneously, Ingrid Lieten, the Flemish minister of innovation, put out a call for innovative projects. Again they were picked as showing great potential, this time winning €50,000.

"As a sheltered workshop we have know-how in the cleaning and construction industry, but not in design," Vanthorre says. So they used the money to do business with the Mechelen-based bureau Achilles Design, developing their B&Bee prototype with six cylinder-shaped sleeping cells. "It will be evaluated by future festival clients before we make the definite version, which should be ready for the 2015 festival season."

With 1.4 x 2-metre mattresses that unfold into a sofa, space under the bed for luggage, sound-protected walls, electricity, light and a locker for your valuables, the pods provide everything you could need during a festival. Cells will be stacked up to four high.

The project is now entering one of the most exciting stages. "At the end of the month, we are meeting a bunch of risk investors from Business Angels Network Vlaanderen," says Vanthorre. "We can tell them that festival organisers are already calling us about the product. I can't tell you yet which festivals are interested, because we're still negotiating."

Future festivals can all order their own cells. "Depending on their policy, they decide about the price and the outside decoration," Vanthorre explains. "Some festivals will probably want to keep the costs for a night as cheap as possible, putting the names of the sponsors upfront, while others will ask for more competitive rates."

Con-Brio and Labeur will always provide the basic construction, setting up and breaking down the honeycomb and doing the maintenance. With a roster of 50 employees each, they are looking forward to the job. "Most of our workers don't go much further than their own street, so working at a festival site could be a big adventure and motivation for them."

Vanthorre is thinking even further ahead. "We also want to attract foreign festivals such as Glastonbury in the UK and Sziget in Budapest. Why not? We probably won't cross the Channel for one festival, but if we can combine 10, we only have to do the transport once."

Returning home alone

Flemish technology helps new ESA spacecraft find its way back autonomously

Andy Furniere

QinetiQ Space in Kruike, East Flanders, has gone where no spacecraft company has gone before: It has invented a system that allows a craft to return to Earth on its own. The company designed and installed the innovative computer on board the ambitious Intermediate eXperimental Vehicle (IXV), a new unmanned spacecraft.

In October, the European Space Agency (ESA) will launch its new IXV (*pictured*) from a base in Kourou, French Guiana. After 90 minutes and 32,800 kilometres, the craft will return to Earth autonomously, landing in the Pacific Ocean thanks to a water-landing system that includes a parachute, flotation balloons and a beacon.

The vehicle, which weighs about two tonnes and is roughly the size of a car, will then be picked up by a salvage vessel.

It is anything but a routine operation – rather, it's a first. The most critical phase of this test flight is the return to the Earth's atmosphere, during which the heat shields of the spacecraft need to withstand temperatures of up to 1,600 degrees



Celsius.

Although the ESA is a global market leader in the launch of satellites, it has succeeded only once in bringing a spacecraft back, with the Advanced Re-entry Demonstrator in 1998. The ESA has been working on its successor since 2002, with the unique addition that it should work autonomously. The XVI will thus receive no directions from the flight control centre in Turin, Italy.

For this pioneering operation, the ESA needed the most innovative computing technology available, which was in part provided by QinetiQ Space. Specifically, QinetiQ Space developed the computer and basic software on which all the specific applications rely.

"We have the most powerful system in Europe," says Koen Puimège,

business development manager at QinetiQ Space. "Our experience in this field has been demonstrated by the successful Proba satellites."

QinetiQ Space also worked with the ESA on the development of the Proba-V, a European microsatellite launched last year that is currently monitoring the status of global vegetation, providing information on, for example, crop yields and desertification. Tests show that the QinetiQ Space computer system for the IXV is 99.9% reliable in the most extreme conditions, which is necessary to make sure that the craft lands in the planned area after re-entry into the atmosphere.

The IXV cost about €170 million, and the project is being carried out by a consortium of about 40 companies and institutions, led by the principal contractor, the French-Italian Thales Alenia Space. Seven countries, including Belgium, are major participants in the project. Sabca, with plants in Brussels, Charleroi and Lummen, has delivered the IXV's actuators, a sort of hydraulic lever used to manoeuvre

two flaps essential for re-entry flight control. Space Applications Services in Zaventem is involved in the ground segment. Thales Alenia Space Belgium, the Belgian branch of the head contractor, co-operated in the development of electric systems on the ground and the spacecraft's electronic memory.

The IXV's brief journey serves as an important test flight, during which the functioning of the craft will be constantly monitored to examine how it can possibly be improved for later mission. The IXV's successor is already in the works: Pride (Programme for Reusable In-orbit Demonstrator in Europe).

Pride's technology will be based on the know-how gained through the tests with IXV, but it should be able to land on the ground like an aeroplane and should be able to carry cargo. Pride could be ready in as few as three years.

These ESA programmes are steps along the way in reducing European dependence on Russian technology, currently necessary for transports to the International Space Station.

► www.esa.int

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Limburg growers fear Asian fruit fly

The population of Asian fruit flies has grown alarmingly since 2011, according to Limburg's Fruit Test Centre. In that year, the fly was seen at just one location in Flanders; last year there were 57 reported locations. The centre, which carries out research and advises fruit growers across Limburg, is warning of an explosive increase of the insects. Researcher Tim Beliën said: "We expect that the mild winter didn't kill many flies and that large, harmful populations grew in the first months of this year." Unlike most other fruit flies, the Asian variant – also called the Suzuki fruit fly – lays its eggs in ripening fruit instead of in overripe or rotting fruit, damaging it before the harvest.

Bee mortality highest in Europe

Last week, the European Commission presented the findings of the Epilobee study, the most comprehensive research project ever on the mortality of cultivated bee colonies in Europe. According to the research, 33.6% of bees in Belgium did not survive the winter of 2012-2013, which was the highest mortality rate in Europe for the period. Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia and Great Britain also had mortality rates higher than 20%, a score considered worrying. In Greece, Italy, Spain, Hungary and Slovakia, less than 10% of bees died. Researchers examined 32,000 cultivated colonies. Experts believe the cause of death in many European bee colonies was related to insecticides called neonicotinoids.

Extra €45m for innovation

The government of Flanders has earmarked an extra €45 million for research, development and innovation. The government's agency for innovation through science and technology (IWT) gets €4 million more to support companies in research and development. The Hercules foundation, which supports companies and research centres in installing advanced infrastructure, will receive €10 million more. To encourage eco-innovation, Vito, the Flemish Institute for Technical Research, will see an annual budget increase of €2.6 million, while the Environmental and Energy Technology Innovation Platform receives €2 million extra. The Industrial Research Fund, which universities and colleges use to carry out applied research, gets an extra €7 million. The government is also contributing €400,000 more to science and technology centre Technopolis in Mechelen. **AF**



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MAY 14 - 15

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MAY 15

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MAY 17

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With tireless city explorer Derek Blyth

MAY 19

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MAY 20

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A garden on every rooftop

Students in Kortrijk work to solve problems faced by urban gardeners

Daan Bauwens

Around one-third of the food produced in the world for human consumption each year – almost 1.3 billion tonnes – is lost or wasted. Consumers in rich countries waste as much food every year as the entire net food production of sub-Saharan Africa.

It's an absurd state of affairs, but there are ways to beat the system – tackling waste in the global food supply chain by simply shortening it, for instance. In other words: Go local. It is happening already. "Food teams" – self-organised groups of consumers collecting all they need from local farms and storing it in refrigerators, for instance – are becoming more and more popular all around Flanders.

In cities, an increasing number of young adults are now growing their own vegetables on terraces, roofs or balconies, while lots of them jump on their bikes on Saturday afternoons to get their hands dirty at the city's allotments. City gardening has become a hot topic in local and national media.

But gardening in a city has its challenges. Often space is quite limited, pigeons will feed on your crops, garden waste has to go somewhere, and watering systems for rooftop gardens are hard to find. As the trend is still in its infancy, city gardening techniques are not readily available. But this might change soon.



Students had to come up with simple solutions to problems faced by city dwellers who want to grow their own food

one of the project leaders. "Each year we organise an intensive programme for our students. Classes stop for the duration of the programme, and the students are given the chance to work and concentrate intently on one theme. We want them to get out of their comfort zone and explore the outside world."

This year, De Couvreur and co-leader Jelle Saldien chose to focus on urban gardening "because it's relevant and tangible," De Couvreur explains. "Urban gardening is gaining momentum across Flanders for two main reasons: It's relaxing, and it's ecologically responsible. It shortens the food supply chain."

But that's not all. "As we see it, the role of product designers is changing," De Couvreur continues. "Designers are required to see the bigger picture of what they're doing. Industrial designers these days focus less and less on products and more on the specific communities, situations and

interactions in which their products are used. That's what these students have experienced in these two weeks: Their products have served the needs of a community."

Before the start of the project, the leaders launched an appeal to all Kortrijk-based organisations involved with city gardening to send in their most frequent problems. During the programme – organised at Kortrijk's Buda centre in the last week of March and the first week of April – a group of 50 industrial design students developed 12 innovative projects to answer the community's needs. Among these were a mobile greenhouse, a city water collector, a growing potato pot – which works thanks to tennis balls – and a giant worm composter. All of these were developed with a budget of around €30.

A community project using coffee grounds was among the most innovative projects. De Couvreur: "The students designed a system to collect coffee grounds from all the bars in the city of Kortrijk. Coffee grounds make very nutritious soil for plants and vegetables. There was a service in return: The bar owners who donated coffee got spices in a pot made from coffee grounds and flour."

"The mobile kitchen was another one of my favourites," he adds. "The students built a small kitchen on a bicycle. The kitchen was provided with gas canisters to make it possible to cook directly after harvesting at the city allotment gardens."

The project didn't just aim to find creative solutions for city gardening problems. The two project leaders are academic researchers, and, in their day-to-day work, "open design" is one of the main research topics.

"Open design refers to an alternative circuit of product development without any need for companies," says De Couvreur. "That's what we wanted these students to experiment with. Everything they came up with had to be designed as simply as possible, to make it possible for others to copy what they had done. The manuals for building the products were published and can be found on the web. Others should be able to copy the concept and build it into their own city garden instantly."

► www.tinyurl.com/city-gardening

“Everything they came up with had to be designed as simply as possible so others could copy it”

For two weeks, industrial design students from Ghent University's campus in Kortrijk and Hogeschool West-Vlaanderen (Howest) teamed up with passionate city gardeners to come up with creative solutions to their most frequent problems.

"It's a recurring event," says Lieven De Couvreur,

Q&A

Naïma Lafrarchi is a lecturer in the new Master's programme in Islamic theology and religious sciences at the University of Leuven

What can students expect from the new programme?

They will learn about the different areas of Islamic sciences, with a focus on the way Islamic theology is formed in the contemporary Western European context. Among the obligatory courses are history of Islamic theology, Koran sciences and Islamic law. Students can also choose one of three optional courses on applied theology concerning ethics, spiritual care and religious education. The rest are general courses from the Master's in world religions, interreligious dialogue and religion studies. The degree has been developed in close co-operation with the Muslim community and the universities of Ghent and Antwerp.

What career options does the degree lead to?

It provides graduates with the

necessary skills to become teachers of Islam, consultants, project co-ordinators in socio-cultural organisations or staff members in local governments, for example. Giving teachers of Islam an academic education should also improve the quality of Islamic education in schools. The programme is open to all students with an academic Bachelor's diploma, while people with professional Bachelor's diplomas – such as teachers in Islamic education – can follow a preparatory programme. We are expecting around 10 or 20 students for our start-up year.

Does the degree also help students to become imams?

No, but the university hopes to set up in the next five years a fully fledged Bachelor's and Master's programme that should give students the necessary knowledge and Flemish

academic background to exercise the imam profession in Flanders. These religious leaders, however, can only be appointed by the Muslim community.

What is your role in the degree?

I will be responsible for the practical courses, like seminars and work colleges, and assist students with their papers and final thesis. I will also keep in touch with partner organisations in the professional sector and hope to provide internships in the coming academic years after our start-up year. I was also involved in the run-up to the creation of the degree, as one of the experts providing advice to policymakers. I have around 10 years of experience in the education sector, including as an Islam teacher, and I work as a researcher at the Higher Institute for Family Sciences of the Brussels University College. **interview by Andy Furniere**

► www.theo.kuleuven.be/islam-studeren/programma



WEEK IN EDUCATION

Prohibition of headscarves rejected

The auditor of the Council of State has announced that the general ban on wearing religious symbols, which community education agency GO! implemented this school year, is incompatible with the right to religious experience and freedom of expression. The auditor rejected three of GO!'s four basic arguments: that the ban is necessary to guarantee equal education opportunities and to ensure pluralism and neutrality. The auditor accepted that a ban can be legitimate in the case of peer pressure or a breach of conduct, but only in individual cases. The Council of State usually follows the advice of the auditor, but the final decision could take several months.

Change needed in teachers' attitude

In an interview with Flemish newspaper *De Tijd*, the chair of the Association University of Leuven said the average teacher was conservative and insufficient on an intellectual level. "The education reform will never succeed if the next education minister doesn't first reform teacher education thoroughly," said André Oosterlinck. In the same article, education minister Pascal Smet agreed that more and better educational programmes for teachers needed to be introduced and that more academically inclined students should be encouraged to enrol. "We also need more people who have previously been active in the business world," he said. Raymonda Verdyck, managing director of GO!, admitted that education studies could be improved but said attitudes towards teaching need to change.

Call to stop embryonic stem cell research

A European civil initiative is asking the EU "to end the financing of activities which presuppose the destruction of human embryos". A European citizens' initiative is a new instrument of participative democracy. Because the proponents collected more than a million signatures in at least seven member states, the European Commission must take their demands into consideration for the creation of possible legislation against research using human embryonic stem cells. In an open letter in Flemish daily last week, the rectors of the five Flemish universities warned that research into treatments for diseases like Parkinson's and diabetes would be in grave danger if the Commission complied.

WEEK IN
ACTIVITIES

Pilgrim's Table

The hospice of St Julian in Antwerp was founded in 1303 as a way station providing lodging and meals to pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela. Their custom of serving a meal to 12 needy people on the Thursday before Easter started in the 16th century and continues today. A richly bedecked table laden with food is on view all day, but the doors close when the 12 diners are invited to partake. **17 April, 10.00-18.00. Hoogstraat 70, Antwerp; free**

► www.stjulianus.org

Scheldt Happening

The nature and recreation area known as Scheldeland stretches along the banks of the Scheldt, Dender and Rupel rivers between Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. An annual festival on Easter Monday opens the tourist season with free guided biking and hiking tours and other activities. Guided boat tours on the river are offered for a mere €2. **21 April**

► www.scheldehappening.be

Stroop Festival

Stroop is the Dutch name given to the thick, dark fruit spread made from apples and pears that's a specialty of the fruit-growing region of Haspengouw. Every year, a festival kicks off the growing season with music, wine tasting, a market featuring local products, guided tours and delicious treats made with *stroop*. **21 April, 13.00-18.00. Stroopfabriek, Stationsstraat 54, Borgloon; free**

► www.borgloon.be

Digital Week

This annual campaign focusing on digital literacy offers more than 1,000 free workshops, lectures and other activities across Flanders. **19-27 April**

► www.digitaleweek.be

Royal Greenhouses Open

These beautiful 19th-century glass greenhouses, full of exotic and flowering plants, are open to the public for just a few weeks every spring. There are no reservations for this popular event, so be prepared to wait in line. **18 April to 9 May; €2.50/under 18 free**

► www.tinyurl.com/royalgreenhouses

Start to Golf

Want to learn how to play golf but never held a golf club before? On Easter Monday, the Flemish golfing association is hosting a day of free introductory workshops at clubs across the region. Register via the website for a lesson in your neighbourhood. **21 April**

► www.starttogolf.be

The Great War from all sides

Actors dodge flying debris while the audience rotates in the epic 14-18

Tom Peeters

With its enormous stage, moveable seating and large, remote controlled set pieces, *14-18*, the Studio 100 musical about the First World War, isn't shy about wanting to outdo its general entertainment competitors.

With a €9 million budget and 110,000 tickets sold two weeks before opening night, *14-18* is doing everything big. "We're taking the concept of musicals to another level," says director Frank Van Laecke.

"Tomorrow, the horses will arrive," he continues with sparkling eyes, before he takes me on a tour of the 18,500 square-metre Nekkerhal in Mechelen, where the production is taking place.

Van Laecke is known as the godfather of Flemish musicals. He has directed musical, theatre and opera productions, but he has never done anything quite as complex as this. The cast and crew come from across Europe and represent one of the few factors not controlled by computers in this hybrid spectacle. After the major success of the *Daens* musical, which attracted 220,000 spectators over 2008 and 2009, Van Laecke was eager to work with the same team for this production: composer Dirk Brossé, songwriter Allard Blom and the Studio 100 duo Gert Verhulst and Hans Bourlon.

Three years ago, with the centenary of the First World War creeping closer, Van Laecke went to Verhulst to bounce ideas around. Verhulst immediately embraced Van Laecke's plan to "make it big and epic", the director remembers. "Pretty soon, we wanted to go for seating and scenery that could move, to give the audience the impression that they were part of a live film set."

The show, continues Van Laecke, is not a history lesson. "We're not a school, or a book. We will focus on the lives, the dreams and the ambitions of a bunch of young



people, suddenly confronted with war and its impact on those very same dreams and ambitions."

To respect the historical details as much as possible, the director spent months talking to experts, watching documentaries, scrutinising photos and reading books and letters.

"Reading letters from soldiers, I got closer to the human story I wanted to tell"

"It was through reading the letters from soldiers and the answers from their friends and family that I got closer to the human story I wanted to tell," Van Laecke says. "It's always my ambition to tell stories people are moved by. Storytelling is the foundation of this rollercoaster of emotions. We all know what it means to miss someone."

But, he continues, "it's not only a story about hardship. There is love, unconditional friendship and the compelling human ability to rise up from catastrophe."

Van Laecke's desire to tell moving stories also posed a challenge to the musical's cast and crew. How

would they make this massive set, with actors and audiences separated by large distances, feel personal? "Everyone knows it's not an intimate play; it's a spectacle," Van Laecke explains. "The music replaces the close-up of a camera. Dirk's symphonic score gives you a peek inside a character, generating

the same basic emotions."

Van Laecke and Brossé have been friends and creative partners for almost 25 years. "We don't need words to understand each other," says Van Laecke.

14-18 isn't the most expensive musical that Van Laecke has ever worked on. In 2006, he directed the €12-million musical *Rembrandt* in the Netherlands. But this

is certainly the most complex production he has ever worked on. "Connecting the script to the technology was a very slow and nerve-racking process," he admits. "First, we made computer simulations, with special attention to safety since the interaction between actors, scenery, lights, sounds and effects is strictly timed." Van Laecke leads me through one of the four-metre streets on both sides of the stage. "The actors have exactly two seconds to cross it. Otherwise, they could be hit by a moving tree or trench."

Instructions given to the cast and extras are precise and firm. "Don't smile while you're dying." Or: "That's over the top." But also: "Good job falling."

Many extras were recruited as cannon fodder and have to run across a large battlefield while firing blanks at an imaginary enemy. Divided in three groups, they all have one thing in common: They will die in the scene and set the mood for the scenes to come.

14-18 will also be performed in English during its run at Nekkerhal, and Van Laecke travelled to London to cast actors for this one show.

As a former opera and theatre director, he doesn't want to compare the present *tour de force* with musicals such as *Grease*, which he describes as "enjoyable but one-dimensional entertainment." No, Van Laecke, whose next project will be Verdi's *La Traviata*, mentions Puccini as a model.

"He wrote the same sort of music, he tells the same multi-layered stories. I'm not so pretentious as to say we're breaking new ground, but we are taking the concept of musicals to another level here."

From 20 April
English show on 22 May

Nekkerhal

Nekkerspoel-Borcht 9999, Mechelen
► www.1418.nu

Alan Hope

BITE

Belgian Fresh Food Institute

Now is the time of year when fruit and vegetable sellers really come into their own; displays in supermarkets, shops and markets explode with colour as we exchange old winter faithfuls like parsnips, turnips and cabbage for the more varied hues of peppers, tomatoes, berries and lemons.

Nature, however, can only do so much – at least according to Jan Prinsen, who's behind the Belgian Fresh Food Institute (BFFI). Now retired after a career in which he rose to become director of fresh food for Colruyt, Prinsen calls his initiative mere "volunteer work". "As the grandson of growers, I've



always been interested in fruits and vegetables," he says. "And as a patriot, I'm proud of our Belgian products. However, I've noticed that a lot of the old trade knowledge in the selling of produce has been lost." The BFFI website is his answer to the

problem. Every week, he visits shops and markets at home and abroad looking for examples of best – and worst – practices and taking photos as an example for sellers in Flanders. The site, which is in Dutch, is a treasure trove of information not just for shopkeepers but also shoppers. For example, there's advice on choosing the best apples (hard to the touch, beware of a greasy feel to the skin) or lemons and other citrus fruits (the juicier fruits will sink when placed in a bowl of water). Asparagus, at its best in May and June, can be kept several days in the fridge wrapped in a damp cloth. Tomatoes become watery and

tasteless if kept under 12 degrees, so don't put them in the fridge at home. If you have to, take them out in time to allow them to warm up to at least 16 degrees, when the natural flavours will be released.

"We have to support the last link in the chain – the shopkeeper or stall-holder – if we are to increase consumption," Prinsen told the Flemish government's food and agriculture newsletter *Vilt* in an interview. "And not least, I want to give young people back a feeling of wanting to go into this business and to improve the know-how of young business people."

► www.belgianfreshfoodinstitute.be

Celebrating the power of stories

Multilingual storytelling festival in Limburg unites performers from Flanders and abroad

Diana Goodwin

Who doesn't love a good story? And yet the art of telling stories seems to be disappearing in an age where most of our stories come pre-packaged from television, movies and other media.

The International Storytelling Festival at Alden Biesen, a historic site in Limburg province, has been celebrating and promoting the art of live storytelling for nearly two decades. Originally conceived as an initiative aimed at school groups, the eight-day programme now includes a weekend festival for the general public. Visitors can expect a mix of story genres: folk tales, travel adventures, ghost stories, real-life experiences and, naturally, fairy tales and legends.

"When you listen to a story, you feel at ease; it gives you a kind of joy," says the festival's organiser, Katrijn Beelen.

The three-day Storytelling Weekend begins with a thematic, English programme on Friday evening, with stories from a specific foreign land and culture. For "Twist in the Sari: Stories from India", Kamini Ramachandran, a storyteller from Singapore, will share folk tales from the countryside of southern India. Peter Chand, who lives in England, has been collecting traditional stories from his homeland in northern India for many years.



Storytelling Weekend ends with a programme of activities for families

On Saturday evening, five storytellers from Flanders, Austria, France and Great Britain will share the stage, telling their stories in Dutch, French, German and English. The weekend concludes with a family festival on Sunday afternoon. "We have a combination of storytelling sessions inside the rooms of the castle, and we have

storytelling entertainment outside, on the grass," explains Beelen.

An activity that was very popular with kids last year will be back again: The Poetic Hair Salon. The unusual hairdressers, wearing fancy clothes and lots of makeup, tell jokes and recite poems while keeping up a constant patter. Elsewhere, a roaming tree hung

with lost toys and other treasures tells stories about the objects in its branches.

The colourful Story Bus doesn't actually travel anywhere, but a group of storytellers on board keep passengers entertained with tales and games. At the same time, storytellers inside the castle will tell stories in several languages

for adults, and in Dutch only for children. Both Ramachandran and Chand will also be on hand for the family festival.

Storytelling Weekend is part of the larger International Storytelling Festival, which brings together 35 professional storytellers from Flanders and abroad. During the week, programmes aimed at primary schools offer sessions in Dutch, while secondary schools can choose between Dutch and foreign-language programmes in simple English, French and German.

A newer feature of the festival is the weekday evening programme for adult foreign-language learners. Students can choose between storytellers in eight different languages, including Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Swedish. This is the first year that Swedish will be represented at the festival.

Alden Biesen, a Flemish cultural centre housed in an 18th-century castle complex, organises several other storytelling activities, including Sheherezade: 1001 Stories for Adult Learning, a European project that encourages storytelling as an educational strategy and pedagogical tool for adult learners, and TALEs (Tales and Learning in European Schools), a project to introduce storytelling techniques in the classroom.

STORYTELLING WEEKEND AT A GLANCE

Twist in the Sari: Stories from India (in English)
Friday, 25 April, 20:00
Tickets €10/€8
Reservations required

Big Story Evening (NL-FR-EN-DE)
Saturday, 26 April, 20:00
Tickets €10/€8
Reservations required

Big Family Festival
Sunday, 27 April, 14:00-18:00
Admission €5
No reservations required

25-27
April

Landcommanderij Alden Biesen
Kasteelstraat 6, Bilzen
► www.alden-biesen.be

Arts and ecology get together at Brussels festival

It might seem odd – children's author Laila Koubaa talking climate policy with world climate expert Jean-Pascal Van Ypersele and Mathias Bienstman, president of the Bond Beter Leefmilieu, a coalition uniting 140 Flemish NGOs working on nature and the environment. But Dirk Holemans, co-ordinator of environmental think-tank Oikos and organiser of Het Groene Boek, couldn't imagine the conversation taking place without her.

"The first question I often get from writers and artists who I ask to participate is: 'but why me?'" says Holemans.

This is the whole jumping-off point for Het Groene Boek, which opens up the tables and stages of Brussels' Kaaithheater to debates and performances that explore our biggest environmental challenges.

The annual day-long event, now in its fourth edition, strives to show that people from different social sectors – say an academic expert and a fiction writer – can have

a fruitful dialogue on ecological issues. "We live in a complex society with complex challenges, and I think the only way forward is to put people together from different angles and domains," Holemans says.

"The arts is one of the last domains where there is still freedom of expression"

Together with Kaaithheater, environmental information centre Argus, Youth Coalition for Nature and Environment, the VUB's Crosstalks, publisher EPO and Flemish Theatre Institute VTi, Oikos this year brings together academics,

NGOs and people from the cultural sector to read, debate and create art that examines how we can transition to a more ecological society.

The programme, most of which takes place in Dutch, leaves it up to the participants and the public to decide which ecological questions we need to be asking today. Events will range from technical talks on climate policy and transition economics, to Flemish authors Anne Provoost and Pieter De Buysser discussing whether our pragmatic times are in need of a new idea of utopia, to Michaël Pas presenting his new theatre piece *ANGST*.

Het Groene Boek also asks the audience to get involved in what they call *trage transitie tafels*, or slow transition tables. These tables bring two or three people who have already started social or ecological projects in their communities around a table with 20 members of the public who are interested in starting similar projects. Holemans explains that these tables are meant

to be learning spaces rather than discussion panels, where people can learn more about the nuts and bolts of starting up initiatives like collective gardens, co-housing and renewable energy co-operatives.

At its foundation, Het Groene Boek believes that the answers to ecological challenges will not be found in technology or economics, but through cultural change. "We will see a change where we desire different things, where we have another vision of the good life," explains Holemans. For this, he says, we need the arts: "The arts is one of the last domains where there is still freedom of expression, of thinking wildly, and I think that is what we need to develop new answers."

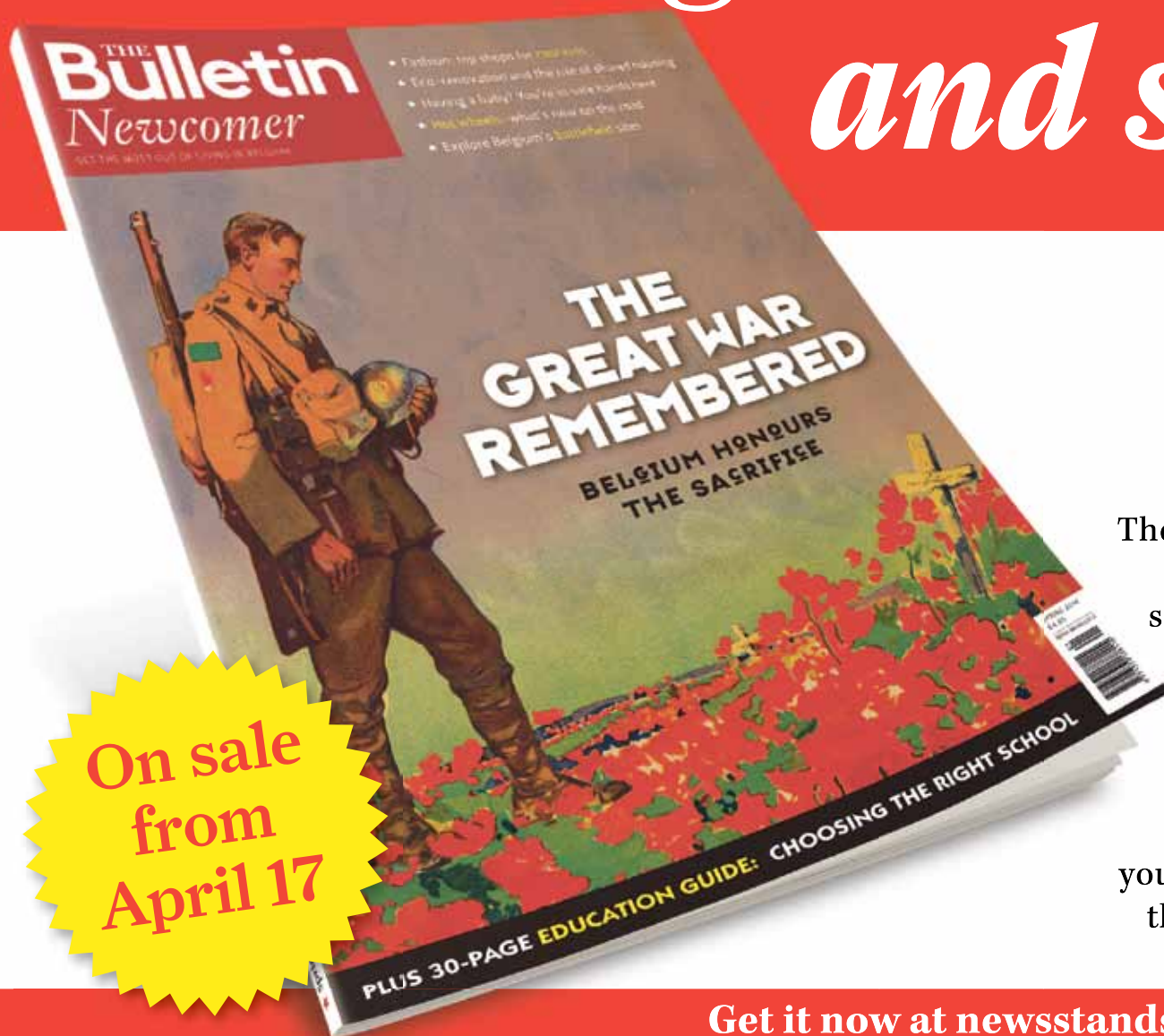
Katy Desmond



27 April,
11.00-19.00

Kaaithheater
Saintelettesquare 20, Brussels
► www.hetgroeneboek.be

Latest guide to life and schools



The Bulletin Newcomer is the new-look definitive magazine on settling in Belgium, with an extra 30-page Education Guide. Mixing essential practical information with lifestyle features on property, having a baby and top fashion tips for your kids, it's your guide to making the most out of living in Belgium.

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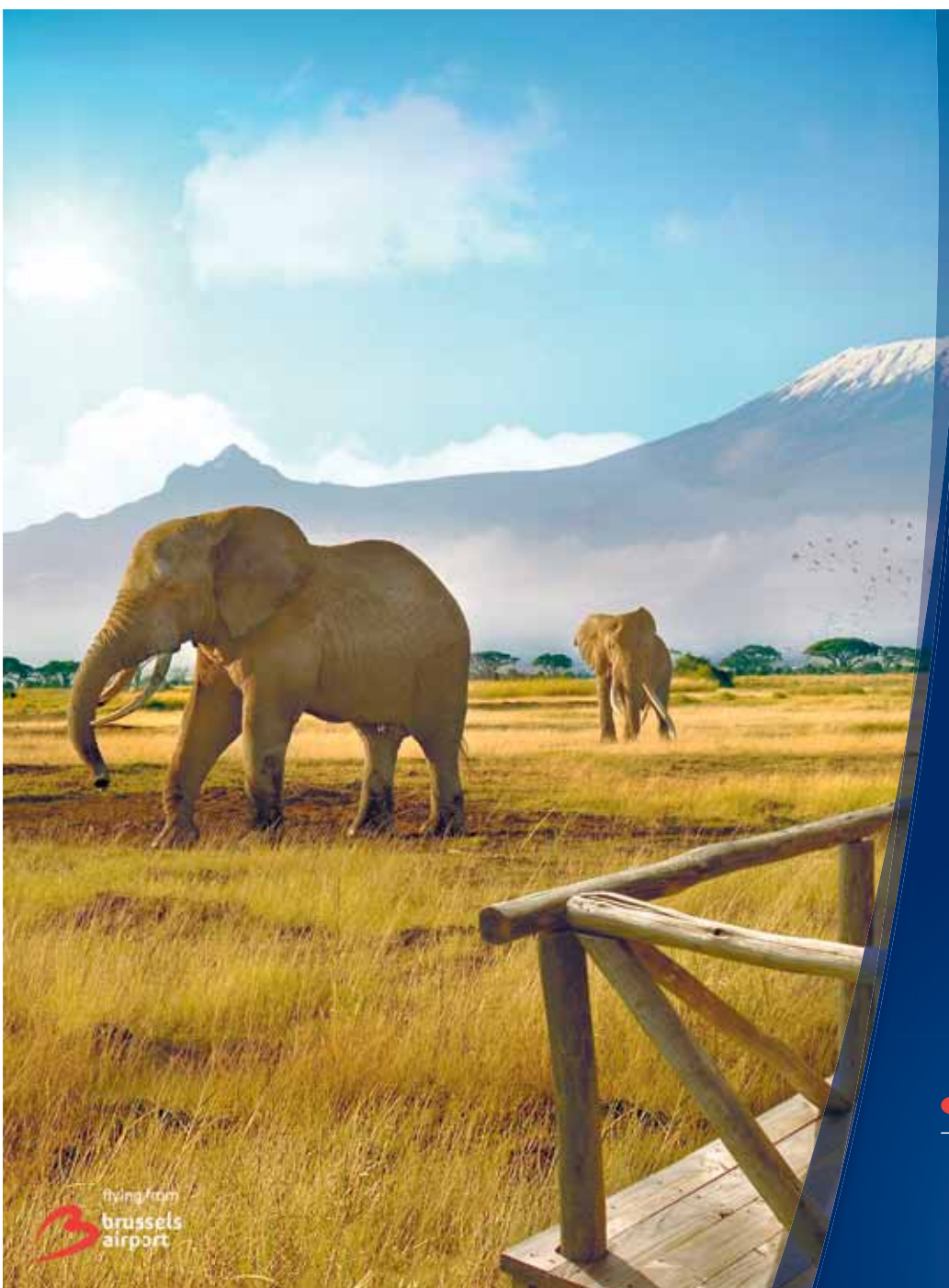
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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 



Who's afraid of Becky Shaw?

Ghent's Het KIP serves up an oh-so contemporary play about love and failure

Daan Bauwens

Director Yahya Terryn tells *Flanders Today* how he fell for *Becky Shaw*, a sizzling contemporary tale by a New York playwright that his theatre company, Het KIP, is bringing to Flanders.

Love is all you need. Some need a lot of it, others only a tiny bit. Most don't know how to handle it. Where does that leave us? *Becky Shaw* – a play as innovative and sharp as the 10 previous productions by Ghent theatre company Het KIP – is all about love, in its most contemporary sense: Arrogant, adopted brother has sex with desperate sister, sister gets married shortly after to dotty bearded do-gooder, do-gooder feels all too concerned with the fate of naive and empty-headed intern at work, intern at work is invited to a dinner party to be coupled with the adopted brother.

The plot – or soap opera, if you will – unfolds, showing just how fashionable it is for modern 30-year-olds to rave about their misfortunes in love, be devoured by passion or just simply be looking for money. Things often work out if we listen to mum – but in this case, she appears to not be such a moral authority either.

Becky Shaw was written by New York City-based playwright and TV writer Gina Gionfriddo. At the play's premiere in early 2009, *The New York Times* asserted that it “lifted the gloom shrouding the theatre district a little ... as engrossing as it is ferociously funny, like a big box of fireworks fizzing and crackling across the stage from its first moments to its last”.

So how did it end up in Ghent? “A few years ago I was visiting a friend who was studying at a theatre school in New York,” says Yahya Terryn, director of *Becky Shaw*. “We had decided to try to write a play together. One of the things I absolutely wanted to do was visit the New York Theater and Film Bookstore to find new, fresh plays by young writers. I asked the lady at the counter if she could recommend



© Thomas Dhiers

a family. The meaning of a family's communication changes drastically from the moment others enter the picture. That is the beauty of it.”

While the play is all-American in its build-up and plot, it is fully applicable to a Flemish urban setting. But Terryn has smartly introduced some truly American elements. Large screens stand behind the actors, projecting the name of the play or the names of the actors in quirky colourful fonts between scenes.

While members of the audience are scratching their heads about whether they are watching first-class theatre or an ordinary sitcom, Terryn teases them even more by shamelessly projecting one of the scenes on the screens, in which the acting, editing and decor barely reach Flemish sitcom standards.

“In the original play, the actors always sit or stand somewhere, and they have a conversation,” says Terryn. “That's the American way of telling a story. It's as if you were watching a movie or a sitcom. It's nice to preserve this element if you want to stage an American play in Flanders. But there's also a practical reason behind the sitcom form: In American plays, the audience has to wait several minutes between scenes for the set change. We solved that problem by using the screens to project the setting.”

Becky Shaw is a feast for those with a sincere love for people's failings. “Romantic relations are the pairing of equals,” is said more than once – but only by those who have shown they are not able to love. “I promise: I will never leave you and always care for you. Because you need me,” says the intolerable writer with the messiah complex to a crying Becky Shaw. In the meantime, the complacent sister and adoptive brother discuss porn. It's truly a feast.

something sharp. She almost immediately pulled out a copy of *Becky Shaw*.”

It was love at first sight. “I bought 13 plays in total,” Terryn says, “but I threw away most of them. *Becky Shaw* hit me like few plays ever have. For me, it fits in with legendary plays like Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* or Patrick Marber's *Closer*.”

Becky Shaw starts in a way that couldn't be any more classic: two people facing the audience in the midst of an argument, introducing the story line. But that is easily forgiven, as the rest of the play – even in Het KIP's version – crackles and sizzles. “Its form is all too classic,” explains Terryn, “but the characters' personalities unfold from scene to scene, slowly and intricately, just like the conflict the play is headed toward.”

Becky Shaw couldn't be more contemporary. Who among us hasn't encountered a girl with low

self-esteem, left behind by lovers and attached to her own misery because she has nothing else on which to build her personality? That girl is Becky Shaw.

them quite well, and, at the end, it's impossible to judge. You can't say who's the good guy and who's the bad guy.”

Becky Shaw is about, continues

“*Becky Shaw* hit me like few plays ever have

And who hasn't come across successful and cynical businessmen who know how to handle money and women, but refuse to take responsibility in an almost compulsive way? That is the adoptive son, Max.

Everyone knows that when these two meet, there's going to be trouble. “Still, each character consists of many layers,” says Terryn. “Over the course of the play, you get to know

Terryn, “how people sometimes follow and agree with each other's ideas, while other times, they just can't. But there's also the important element of communication within

19, 25-26
April

Becky Shaw
Across Flanders

► www.hetkip.be

MORE PERFORMANCES THIS WEEK

Tell Me Love is Real

Zachary Oberzan

After spending a few years with New York's Nature Theatre of Oklahoma, Zachary Oberzan (pictured) went solo. In the winter of 2011, he survived a Xanax overdose – about the same time Whitney Houston died of hers. *Tell Me Love is Real* is the tale of his quest for healing, during which he reawakens the spirits of Buddy Holly, Bruce Lee and Serge Gainsbourg (in English). 18 & 19 April, Beursschouwburg, Brussels

► www.beursschouwburg.be



Wijven

Ontroerend Goed

Is there truly such a thing as female identity? In this performance, six young actresses do absolutely everything they can to oppose feminism, confirm stereotypes and be as anti-emancipatory as possible (in Dutch). 17-19 April, Vooruit, Ghent

► <http://vooruit.be>

De stoelen

Theater aan de Stroom

Marc Cnops, Bob Snijers and Magda Cnudde present their version of French-Romanian playwright Eugène Ionesco's *The Chairs*. In a round tower on a deserted island, an old couple receive many guests who come to listen to the old man. He's now reaching the end of his life and has a message for the whole world (in Dutch). 17-27 April, Theater aan de Stroom, Antwerp

► www.theateraandestroom.be

Bite the Hand that Feeds You

Kloppend Hert

“Some have to have their hair cut every day, or it would choke them. Others can play the guitar wonderfully well, even with clawed fingers.” Four actors reverse the clichés about gypsies. Together with young Roma musicians, they make a fairytale that bites (in Dutch). 18-19 April, CC Berchem

► www.ccberchem.be

WEEK IN ARTS
& CULTUREIvory stockpile
crushed in Tervuren

More than 1.5 tonnes of illegal ivory was destroyed at the Colonial Palace of the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren last week. The destruction of the ivory from the museum's collection was intended to send out a message about Belgium's stance on elephant poaching and ivory smuggling. "By this act of destruction, we want to spread a message of hope and solidarity," said social affairs minister Laurette Onkelinx at the event. "The hope that our combined forces will help to perpetuate the survival of one of the oldest species of our universal heritage." Customs authorities have regularly seized illegal ivory at Brussels Airport for the last 25 years, most of it coming from African countries, in particular the Congo.

Silver museum
closes with party

The Silver Museum in Antwerp marks its last day in its present location in Sterckshof Castle on 1 May with the annual silver market, free entry to see the museum's collection and an evening party. The museum will be closed until 2016, when it will reopen in its new location on Suikerrui near the city's central Grote Markt. This 10th edition of the outdoor silver market on the castle grounds offers live music, kids' activities and silver pieces for sale, including jewellery and antiquarian books. Free tours of the museum's collection in Dutch are offered throughout the day. The museum then closes from 17.30 to 19.30 before re-opening for a final party, with performances and storytelling. The party is free for those attending the silver market.

► www.zilvermuseum.be

Lauwers honoured
at Venice Biennial

Needcompany co-founder Jan Lauwers, 57, has been awarded a Golden Lion at the Venice Biennial for lifetime achievement. Lauwers is the director of the Brussels-based Needcompany, which works to fuse performance with film, music and the visual arts. Lauwers launched Needcompany with choreographer Grace Ellen Barkey in 1986, in the full flow of the new wave of Flemish theatre. The company has a reputation for pioneering work, and Lauwers has been the recipient of awards from festivals in Hamburg and New York. In 2006, he received the Flemish Community Culture Prize for playwriting, and in 2012 the gold medal for services to the Republic of Austria.

► www.needcompany.org

Art meets cinema

Ostend's Mu.Zee showcases the little-seen work of artist Paul Joostens

Bjorn Gabriels

"Snobs have a snobbish art, and the people don't need art because they have film." Antwerp avant-garde artist Paul Joostens (1889-1960) could be as recalcitrant in word as in image. And he was a genuine cinephile whose passion for film and its female superstars permeates his entire artistic praxis, although he never veered toward filmmaking himself. Suffice to say that *Cinema Joostens* is an aptly chosen title for a retrospective in two episodes of Joostens' visual artwork.

The first chapter, on show now at Ostend's Mu.Zee, focuses on Joostens' drawings and paintings. Its chronological arrangement follows the artist's biography from bustling city life in Antwerp around the First World War to his gradual retreat from public life in the 1930s and, finally, after a lifetime of poor health, his last years in dire circumstances.

The oldest selected works date from around 1914, when Joostens was 25. Born into a well-off family, he enjoyed a solid education, including an internship with architect Max Winders that fed his interest in gothic art. Later, Joostens attended Antwerp's Royal Academy of Fine Arts, where he met upcoming artists such as Jozef Peeters and the brothers Floris and Oscar Jespers.

Shortly after his first book illustrations were published, Joostens befriended poet and art critic Paul van Ostaïen, a leading figure in the Antwerp avant-garde art scene, with whom he shared a penchant for the novel and immensely popular medium of film, as well as the flourishing nightlife.

During this period, Joostens drew "Cinema Zoologie", a radiant impression in ink of one of his favourite cinemas, near Antwerp zoo – hence the elephant, giraffe and monkeys that burst into the scene. The dynamic, modern city with its theatres, bars and brothels continued to inspire him. Two drawings called "De stille stad" (The Silent City) show similar compositions of an abandoned, slightly curving street still brimming with movement. The city never sleeps, least of all at night.

In the hours of darkness, after sunset or during film screenings, Joostens encounters a world populated by confident and defiant divas who thrive in the push and pull of attraction. He painted and drew prostitutes and film stars, often creating mystical, erotic female figures that reflected his own obsessions.

The appearance of Danish actress Asta Nielsen,



Paul Joostens' "Femme Méphisto", 1919

one of the first stars in the history of cinema, had a lasting impact on Joostens. In a poem dedicated to her, he calls her "Queen of Eroticism" and "Kino-Queen par excellence", but his is not an idealising, incorporeal fascination; he wanted to possess and devour her.

The traditional set-up of *Cinema Joostens* leaves no room to explicitly demonstrate the cross-fertilisation of various media that characterises the artist. Imagine if one of Mu.Zee's white cubes had hosted the sensual dance scene from Nielsen's debut film *Afgrunden* (The Abyss), which was a direct influence on both Van Ostaïen and Joostens. Or if the interplay between Joostens' visual art and his poems, letters and prose had been more prominently present.

Still, an exhibition of all the works together is a *tour de force* in itself. And Joostens' paintings and drawings themselves tell a fascinating story of a genuinely obstinate artist. Throughout his entire career, Joostens clung to these female

figures and continued to shape them, inspired not only by street women and film stars such as Nielsen, Marlene Dietrich and Greta Garbo, but also by more traditional representations of biblical or historical figures.

After meandering through almost all the "-isms" the historical avant-garde had to offer, from cubism and futurism to dadaism and back, Joostens sought to combine modern approaches with compositions that revisit Flemish Primitives such as Hans Memling and Jan van Eyck.

The triptych *La visionnaire* (The Visionary) has a central piece that dates back to the early 1930s. It has three almost stoic figures and is clearly inspired by gothic architecture and Flemish Primitive paintings. The figures on the two wing panels are more horrific, including a skeleton. The triptych's poisonous green and blood-red smears invoke illness. Death and decay have an ever more prominent presence in Joostens' work. "The end of my career is a glorification of death, partly inspired by the impasse of an obligatory life," he wrote.

Joostens' earlier work already had a grim tone, but his final drawings and paintings breathe despair. Black drowns out the already sickly colour palette. His scorn is no longer playful, like in the satirical and erotic pencil sketches that remind the viewer of Ostend's James Ensor.

As early as his highly influential 1918 essay "Expressionism in Flandres", Joostens' first and foremost defender, Van Ostaïen, wrote: "The entire oeuvre of Paul Joostens moves between the same two extremes as that of the Master [Ensor]: the mystery of the ordinary and the ordinarily mysterious. And he also follows the Ensorian tide of optimism and pessimism."

An impoverished Joostens finally sank into pessimism, bitter about the reception of his work. Long overdue, *Cinema Joostens* at last pays homage to his peculiar iconography of agitated individuality in times of expanding mass culture. And if recent, smaller-scale exhibitions of Joostens' collages can serve as an indication, the second episode, which begins in late June, will be no less bewitching.

Until 15 June

Mu.Zee

Romestraat 11, Ostend

► www.muzee.be

Eavesdrop on strangers at Hasselt's
Sense of Sound exhibition

Sound reigns supreme in the Hasselt *begijnhof* that houses the z33 contemporary art centre. Organised together with the Brussels-based Overtone platform for sound art, *Sense of Sound* is an exhibition with works where the "sounds can always be traced back to friction that makes the world move".

That world-spinning tension can come in the form of a hoist dragging a heavy piece of miked stone over grains of sand extremely slowly ("Time Is a Technology" by Gert Aertsen), or a series of pipes that produce feedback when you walk past them (Jeroen Vandesande's



Gert Aertsen's "Time is a Technology" at Sense of Sound

"Circuit 03"). Or how about a table covered with copper shavings that

crunch, crackle and move under the influence of a constantly changing electric current ("Vonkveld#3" by Jeroen Uyttendaele)?

The unquestionable highlight is "Rear Window" by Stéfán Piat, an installation consisting of two empty rooms – one bordering the *begijnhof*'s garden, the other a bustling square. The windows are airtight, but thanks to microphones and loudspeakers, visitors can hear the street sounds from outside.

In Piat's work, we watch the outside world from a window that becomes a screen, like in Hitchcock's classic *Rear Window*. But unlike Jimmy Stewart's character in the film, we can actually hear what we're seeing. We're not only voyeurs, but also eavesdroppers, since we can discern the conversations of passers-by.

Sense of Sound is a small but intriguing show presenting a type of artwork not often on display.

Christophe Verbiest

Until 25 May

z33

Zuivelmarkt 33, Hasselt

► www.z33.be

Vinyl junkie heaven

Record Store Day

21 April | Across Belgium

► www.recordstoreday.be

Still looking for that rare Joy Division debut EP? Curious to hear new tracks from the highly anticipated Damon Albarn solo record, or from the dreamy shoegazers of Mazzy Star? Then Record Store Day is for you.

The idea was conceived at a gathering of independent record store owners and staff in the US, all eager to celebrate their unique culture, claiming the digital era can never erase the physical joy of shopping for music amid the proper atmosphere. Metallica officially kicked off Record Store Day at Rasputin Music in San Francisco on 19 April, 2008. It has been celebrated worldwide on the third Saturday of April ever since with a plethora of special releases, performances and meet & greets.

Between new and re-releases on vinyl from David Bowie, LCD Soundsystem, Bob Dylan, Echo & the Bunnymen and The Rolling Stones,



our favourite is *Live At Silver Platters, Seattle*, a new four-track EP from singer-songwriter Jake Bugg, a recording from an acoustic in-store show.

The biggest event here, meanwhile, takes place at Vooruit in Ghent, not a record store but with the time and space for 17 bands. Balthazar, Intergalactic Lovers, Amatorski, Marble

Sounds, Dans Dans and Mauro Pawlowski are all coming out in support of independent record shops. Pawlowski's "mothership", Evil Superstars, are even enjoying a special release, courtesy of Ghent record label Musicmania: *Galaxian Regression* is a live recording of their concert at last year's Laika event in Brussels' Ancienne Belgique.

For more intimate, in-store fun, you can drop by Fatcat in Antwerp, The Vinyl Touch in Mechelen, Compact Center in Ostend or Pick-Up in Heusden-Zolder, among others. Antwerp's Coffee & Vinyl is offering a free Seefbier to anyone who buys a record.

To reward the bigger spenders (€70 or more), all shops are offering a free copy of the limited-edition English-language book *Belgium: The Vinyl Frontier*, a look inside the homes of the country's most obsessive vinyl addicts.

Tom Peeters

FILM

Mooov Film Festival

22 April to 5 May | Across Flanders | ► www.mooov.be

Don't let the strange name put you off: Mooov is one of Belgium's best film festivals, with a healthy selection of both world cinema's festival darlings and little-seen gems. Mooov focuses on films with a social theme, which can mean anything from single mums to immigrants on the run to kids saving animals from hunters. There are many good choices here that have already shown in cinemas, such as Israeli filmmaker Hany Abu-Assad's Oscar-nominated *Omar* and the brilliant Cambodian film *The Missing Picture*, in which the terror of the Khmer Rouge regime is told using clay figures.

But most of the programme you'll have not yet seen. *The Amazing Catfish* is a quietly quirky drama by Mexican director Claudia Sainte-



Luce about a lonely hospital worker who gets involved with the five rowdy kids of a dying patient (pictured). Also recommended is Indian director Avinash Arun's *Killa*, a coming-of-age story about a boy who loses his father. The Mooov festival is based in Turnhout and Bruges, but several indie cinemas across Flanders also take part.

Lisa Bradshaw

FAIR

Brussels Design Market

26-27 April | Tour and Taxis, Brussels

► www.designmarket.be

The month-long extravaganza that is Design September is still a season away, but you can get your springtime fix of the applied arts at the 17th edition of Brussels Design Market. More than a mere stopgap, this fair annually attracts 100 international exhibitors and thousands of visitors. You'll find loads of furniture, glassware, cutlery

and ornamental objects from the 20th century, particularly the 1960s, '70s and early '80s. It doesn't matter if you're not a collector; the fair is open to trade professionals, passionate amateurs and curious punters alike. The event spans the entire weekend, but be warned: The best finds will surely have been found by Sunday. **GV**



VISUAL ARTS

Maps for Getting Lost

Until 7 June | Hors Format, Brussels | ► www.horsformat.com

Don't ask John Ryan Brubaker for directions or you'll likely end up on a circuitous, conceptual (albeit undoubtedly scenic) track. It's not that the Brussels-based American photographer is ill-intentioned; he's just more of a journey than a destination kind of guy. Brubaker has been exploring Europe in his own inimitable way for years and has the photo albums to prove

it. This exhibition showcases his wanderings in Belgium and elsewhere, each of which he begins with a unique idea. He might use a map of Brussels to navigate Rome or follow arbitrary sidewalk markings to destinations unknown. The result is a fresh perspective of some of the Continent's most well-trodden paths.

Georgio Valentino



CONCERT

Triggerfinger

6 December, 20.00 | Vorst Nationaal, Brussels

► www.vorstnationaal.be

Hard-rock trio Triggerfinger have been styling themselves as "the loudest band in Antwerp" for over a decade and, if concert receipts are any indication, audiences are hungry for more volume. The band have just released their fourth album, *By Absence of the Sun*, and announced their first headliner appearance at Vorst Nationaal. This isn't Triggerfinger's next concert in the capital, however. They're set to play the AB in May but it's too late to book your tickets; the hall sold out within eight minutes. So you might want to reserve your seats at Vorst Nationaal sooner rather than later. **GV**



Concert

Ghent

Reena Riot: Ghent singer Naomi Sijmons and her band present their latest EP, which was produced by Flemish alt rock luminary Mauro Pawlowski

24 APR 19.00 at Minard, Korianderstraat 13

► www.minard.be

Classical

Brussels

St John Passion: This annual performance of Bach's epic, 18th-century composition is becoming a tradition at the Anglican Holy Trinity church. Entry is free but online registration is required

18 APR 19.00 at Holy Trinity

Anglican Pro-Cathedral, Kapitein Crespelstraat 29

► www.passiontoperform.eu

Performance

Antwerp

Betrayal: World premiere of contemporary Belgo-Turkish stage director Mesut Arslan's take on Harold Pinter's classic drama about love and deception (in English)

24-26 APR at Bourla, Graanmarkt 7

► www.toneelhuis.be

Brussels

Métamorphoses: Three European choreographers (one Belgian, one Italian and one Polish) and a host of other artists collaborate to present a multidisciplinary meditation on transformation

22-26 APR at Les Brigittines, Korte Brigittinenstraat 1

► www.brigittines.be

Film

Brussels

Forbidden Voices: Muntpunt's Thursday documentary series combines screenings of international films and discussions with related guest speakers. This week it's Barbara Miller's 2012 doc *Forbidden Voices*, about activist bloggers in Cuba, China and Iran, and an in-person chat with Dutch change agent Kirsten van den Hul (in English and Dutch)

17 APR, 18.00 at Muntpunt, Munt 6

► www.muntpunt.be

Event

Groot-Bijgaarden

Floralia: The annual spring flower show takes place on the grounds of a scenic Flemish castle. A highlight this year: Hundreds of varieties of Dutch tulips and rhododendrons on loan from Britain's famed Exbury Gardens

Until 8 MAY at Groot-Bijgaarden Castle, Isidoor Van Beverenstraat 5

► www.floralia-brussels.be

Talking Dutch

Lost for words

Derek Blyth

I don't know about you, but I find it difficult to define myself. I have lived in this country for more than 20 years, but I wouldn't call myself Belgian. On the other hand, I wouldn't say I was a foreigner, since I speak French and Dutch, vote in local elections and get quite distressed when a coffee is served without a Lotus biscuit on the side. So I was quite intrigued back in 2012 when daily newspaper *De Morgen* announced that it was banning the word *allochtoon* – a foreigner. I didn't like being called an *allochtoon*, although I knew very well that I wasn't the other available option – *autochtoon* – a native. I felt more like I was in the middle, an *alloautochtoon*. The city of Ghent liked the idea – *In Gent wonen ruim 160 nationaliteiten, die via heel verschillende migratiekanalen in de stad terechtkomen, om heel uiteenlopende redenen* – some 160 different nationalities live in Ghent who have moved to the city via various migration routes for all sorts of reasons, said equality



alderman Resul Tapmaz in an interview with *De Morgen*. *De Gentenaars van andere origine zijn geen homogene groep* – the Gentenaars from other places are not a homogeneous group. So the word *allochtoon* was too narrow. *Zij voelen zich Gentenaars, geen allochtonen* – they consider themselves Gentenaars, not foreigners. *De noemer allochtoon verbindt niet, maar sluit uit* – the word foreigner doesn't connect

them, but excludes them. But what should these people be called? They aren't pure *Gentenaars* because they have roots in a different country. But they aren't totally foreign either. It was a tricky problem, requiring serious discussion. *Een speciaal opgerichte werkgroep heeft er een jaar over moeten nadenken* – a special working group spent a year thinking about it. A year seems a long time, but it was a difficult issue. It was so difficult, in fact, that they failed to find a single word that did the job. *Het resultaat is niet één alternatiefwoord, maar een richtlijn met opties* – the final result is not one alternative word but a directive with options. *Als het echt niet anders kan, mag het Gentse stadspersoneel nog wel een overkoepelende term gebruiken* – if there is really no alternative, city staff are permitted to use a general term. And here it is – *personen met een migratieachtergrond* – people with a migrant background. So if you are not a real Gentenaar, but you live in Ghent, that's what you are going to be called. Until they find a better word.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

- **Little Bxl Sunshines @Elena_de_Marco**
Parking 58 rooftop, one of the best panoramic views of Brussels
fb.me/1XN8yGUbW
- **Chris Christensen @chris2x**
Remembering 100 Years Since WWI in Flanders Field <http://ow.ly/vKnZC> #travel #wwi @VisitFlanders pic.twitter.com/5p4IH6Wfug
- **UK Cycling Expert @ukcyclingexpert**
Hard to believe we have to wait a whole year for another Round Van Flanders. Surely it would be better if there was one a month?
- **VH History @VH_History**
This Day in VH 4/14/93: @VanHalen plays Flanders Expo in Gent, Belgium. Good video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iChwu9zL1us...>
- **flandersnews @flandersnews**
Two gold medals for Flemish brews at World Beer Cup 2014: Two beers from Flanders have picked up gold medals a... <http://bit.ly/1htFIJ6>
- **Team Sky @TeamSky**
On your lunch break? Then check out @modcyclingphoto's awesome Flanders photo gallery at <http://po.st/ScottFlanders> #RVV pic.twitter.com/Ufqj0FwGQV
- **Pieter Ghijsels @valiesje**
Parking w #bluebadge in coastal municipalities in Flanders? Check regulations here. @VisitFlanders <http://www.accessibleflanders.be/index.php?id=42&L=3...>
- **Handsome Steve @Handsome_Steve_**
Drinking a Monk's Café Flemish Sour Red Ale by Brouwerij Van Steenberge at @paddyobeers — <http://untp.it/1gVatlq>

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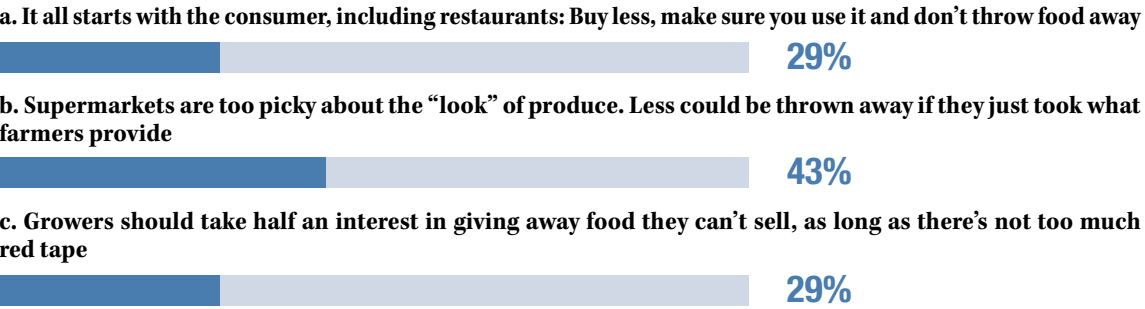
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Poll

The government has launched an ambitious plan to tackle food waste. Who is most responsible for edible food being binned?



Not much difference between the three positions this week, and that's probably because all three are related. We're all responsible for food waste: Consumers who buy too much, shops that reject blemished fruit that is perfectly edible, and growers who find it easier to toss excess crops than give them away. At every step in the process, savings could be made to prevent the huge amounts of food waste in Flanders – 120,000 tonnes per year, which amounts to €300 worth of groceries per household. The initiatives the government announced last week recognise that spread of responsibility, and there are representatives of all of the players involved: farmers, producers, retailers and caterers. The only level missing is consumers, and that means you. You know what you need to do: buy less, waste less.

Next week's question:
Organic farming is growing in popularity, but remains a tiny part of the market (see p6).
Do you buy organic products?

No more need to log in! Just go to the homepage of the Flanders Today website and cast your vote:
www.flanderstoday.eu

THE LAST WORD

- Swingin' daddy-o**
"I'm totally down with the music of today. Rihanna, Katy Perry, Stromae. You don't need to look so amazed. I'm trying to stay with it. That's my job."
Edouard Van de Wijngaert, 87, still turns up on weekends at Ibiza, the Blankenberge disco he's run for 50 years
- Slipped disc**
"Singles are almost only available for download these days, and mostly it's young people who buy music on the net. Fans of music in Dutch are less keen on downloading."
Ultratop director Sam Jaspers explains why there hasn't been a Dutch-language song on his chart since December, when Clouseau hit number 46
- Baby steps**
"The crèche has an important influence on the daily habits of the children and their parents. The same rule applies for healthy eating and exercise: Start early."
Brussels minister Brigitte Grouwels on plans to address the increasing number of overweight toddlers in day care
- Careful what you wish for**
"The very worst that can happen to you is to win an election. Or worse still, to become prime minister."
N-VA president Bart De Wever, speaking in a debate in the Netherlands

