

**ONE DOWN**

CD&V's Marianne Thyssen has been appointed European Commissioner, leading to speculations about who's going to Wetstraat

\ 4

OLD IS NEW AGAIN

This weekend's Open Monument Day across Flanders takes a look at heritage buildings repurposed



\ 10

STAR POWER!

Pierce Brosnan and Adrien Brody will be entertaining audiences at Ostend's film festival this month

\ 14



Here comes the neighbourhood

A group of residents have transformed a notorious dumping ground into a green community space



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

At one time, the rubbish dumped over the railings of the Jubelfeest bridge in this long-neglected corner of Brussels was visible from space. Now an urban park has brought new life to this entire neighbourhood on the Tour & Taxis site in the Molenbeek canal area.

“When we started to develop the park, it was horrific – rubbish everywhere,” says Martine Cantillon of the regional government agency Leefmilieu Brussel. And the agency has noticed an improved level of respect since the biennial Parckdesign festival has been lodging there, “with all of the dynamic it brings – no vandalism, no damage. People seem quite happy; they’re all mixing very well.”

The new park on the Tour & Taxis site is now developing its second phase, while the first phase, stretching from railway line 28 and the Pannenhuis metro station to the Jubelfeest bridge, is up and running. The installations put there for this year’s Parckdesign festival, an urban planning event organised every two years, are to stay in place for another year and are now being run by the non-profit ParckDesign T&T, a local neighbourhood association.

“The association was created to prolong the installations of Parckdesign and to manage them in a durable way after

the festival is over,” explains Driss Kasri, one of the non-profit’s administrators.

By day, Kasri runs a comic book store in the centre of the city. The rest of the time he is kept busy by the demands of the park, as are some 60 other locals who are about to take over maintenance of the Parckdesign infrastructure. That decision was only recently made, but the group has been working towards it for two months. “Ever since we saw the installations and were convinced that it’s absolutely essential to have some kind of activity in the park for the benefit of the neighbourhood and the city,” says Kasri. Parckdesign used to be a competition, more aimed at designers of urban furniture. Later it was transformed into a sort of experimental laboratory. In 2012, the theme was how to reform the vacant and deserted spaces in Brussels. This year’s edition, which will end later this month, took over a project that was already in the planning stages: the creation of a park stretching from the NMBS Line 28 to the canal. The park follows the line of the cutting that used to bring trains to the customs sheds and Tour & Taxis warehouses. “We thought it would be good to have the synergy and to install Parckdesign there and get the local residents really involved,” explains Cantillon.

The part about the rubbish seen from space is true. When

Google Maps first introduced its satellite view of Brussels, you could clearly see the white Brussels rubbish bags, hundreds of them. They had been tossed over the bridge railings, sometimes by locals.

Kasri’s partner, Tessa Poldervaart, became involved in the ParckDesign T&T project after renovation mishaps. “We decided to renovate our house, and after we’d renovated it was damaged, which is something that happened to a lot of houses around here,” she says.

“

One day we just started cleaning the streets

She was so upset that she began going outside more, wandering around the area, which was then still vacant land. “I came across some people, two or three really interesting people, with whom I seemed to click right away. Then one day we just started cleaning the streets.” The bridge had the worst kind of rubbish, Poldervaart

Winter brownout plan announced

Most large cities unaffected by power outages, Ghent mayor complains of inequity



Alan Hope

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The federal government's plans for selectively turning off the electricity supply to certain areas this winter – the so-called brownout – have been announced by state secretary of energy Melchior Wathelet.

The brownout plan is a precaution in case power supplies run short this winter, as a result of the closing of three nuclear reactors. Doel 3 and Tihange 2 closed down in 2012; Doel 4 closed last month after an oil leak was discovered, which authorities say was an act of sabotage. Doel 4 will take at least until the end of the year to repair.

The brownout plan divides Belgium into six zones, each representing consumption of 500 megawatts. If a blackout threatens, zone six will be turned off. That zone includes municipalities across the country, with the exception of the provinces West Flanders, Namur and Luxembourg.

The next time a blackout threatens, zone five will be turned off. In this way, the government aims to ensure that the measure does not always affect the same people. Brownouts will take place in the early part of the evening, between 17.00 and 20.00, and last no longer than three hours. Network manager Elia will issue a warning seven days in advance, to allow resi-



The port of Ghent will go dark if a brownout affects zone six this winter

dents to make arrangements.

The larger towns and cities are largely not included in the plan, partly because of population density and partly because electricity cabins in cities are more difficult to turn off. The free zone also includes most of the country's Seveso plants – industrial installations subject to strict safety rules, where an arranged switch-off of electricity would be too dangerous.

Meanwhile Ghent mayor Daniel Termont complained that the federal government's plan for switching off power is "unfair" because Ghent has more chance of being affected than other cities, such as Antwerp.

A large part of Ghent, including the economically vital port area, lies in zone six, which will be the first to be switched off if need be. Some other cities, Termont complains, are not listed for a brownout at all.

"I note that not a single light has to go out in the port of Antwerp, while the whole of the port of Ghent will be shut down," he said on VRT radio. "No-one in Antwerp will be affected, while 70,000 people in Ghent are sitting in the dark. There may be a valid explanation for this, and, if so, I'd like to hear it."

Meanwhile, two out of three people in Flanders have already approached their municipal authorities for information about the brownout plan, with one in four taking practical measures in the event of a brownout, according to a poll carried out by Ivox.

Reyers viaduct in Brussels to be demolished

The Reyers viaduct on the inner ring in Brussels between Montgomeryplein and Meiserplein will be demolished before next summer, the Brussels-Capital Region government announced.

Last month, Brussels' mobility minister, Pascal Smet, called a halt to repair works to the road surface after it was revealed that the works would take longer and cost double the initial estimate of €2 million.

"Given the deplorable state of the structure, we have to ask whether the current renovation work will be enough to keep it in working order over the long term," said Smet. "Local residents will definitely benefit if the viaduct is demolished and replaced by a city boulevard."

The viaduct, built in 1970 to allow traffic to bypass the busy crossroads between Schaarbeek, Etterbeek and Sint-Lambrechts-Woluwe and the approach to the E40, will now be dismantled and the boulevard relaid.

Those works will cost an estimated €21 million. According to the region, the viaduct has a capacity of 3,000 cars an hour but in fact only carries 1,400 – traffic that could easily be supported by a boulevard of two lanes in each direction. Brussels minister-president Rudi Vervoort said that a mobility study will be carried out, which will be followed by a timeline for works. The works are certain to be a major source of traffic disruption, and any study will also have to take account of plans to develop the nearby VRT-RTBF site and a proposal to build a tunnel under Meiserplein 700 metres away. \ AH

Fabrice Mels claims UCI mountain bike gold

Flemish cyclist Fabrice Mels stormed to victory in the UCI Mountain Bike Championships in Norway last week, after breaking through a crash-strewn final that claimed two rivals in the cross-country eliminator (XCE).

Mels – already World Cup champion – fell to the back of the pack in the early stages, while favourite Daniel Feder Spiel from Austria was knocked from his bike by France's Kevin Miquel on the first climb. Miquel later collided with Sweden's Emil Lindgren in the approach to the final bend, opening the door for Mels (pictured) to ease

through and take the gold medal. The 22-year-old from Sint-Niklaas acknowledged he had been fortunate. "I saw those two getting into each other on the last corner, and then it was like an open field for me to take the win," he said. "I got really lucky. I thought it would be hard for me to win from third position, but it worked out quite well." The eliminator was held at the Maihaugen Museum in Lillehammer, with a course winding through the forested grounds and around a peaceful lake. Mels rated his win in Norway far higher than his World Cup triumph earlier



this year. "This is way above it," he said. "You have the rainbow jersey, and you can wear it the whole year. You work so hard for it the whole year and then the hard work pays off." \ Leo Cendrowicz

Free wi-fi on Ghent and Antwerp trams

Flemish public transport authority De Lijn has announced the introduction of free wireless internet on trams operating in Ghent and Antwerp. The installation is the result of a joint venture between De Lijn, LijnCom and Hello Bank.

Testing of the connection is already taking place in Ghent, where 15 trams are currently equipped, rising to 45 by November. The same number of Antwerp trams will also be connected.



© Courtesy De Lijn

"Wi-fi trams offer an extra service to our passengers," said director-general Roger Kesteloot. "This will make it easier for

them to use our real-time travel information applications, which require a data connection."

Using the system is simple: trams equipped with wi-fi have a Hello Bank alien logo on the side. Instructions to log on are posted inside. Users have a limit of 250 MB per month. Pornographic and "extremist" websites will be blocked, as will sites offering downloads of copyrighted material. \ AH



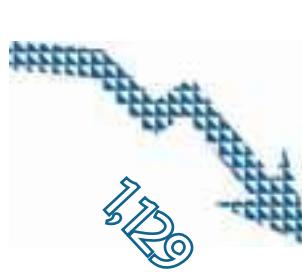
3.7 million



of small businesses are expecting "very serious consequences" from power cuts this winter, according to a poll by Unizo. Eight in 10 have no insurance against loss of power

505,928

MUNT.
PUNT



4.7%



passengers carried this summer by the coast tram, an increase of 3% on the same period last year. Plopsaland in De Panne, the sand sculpture festival in Ostend and Sea Life in Blankenberge were top destinations

visitors to the Flemish library and culture centre MuntPunt in Brussels in its first year of operation, including 245 events organised for 27,500 participants

companies went bankrupt in Belgium in July and August, 18% fewer than the same period last year. Each month this year except February returned a lower total than the same month last year

more overnight stays by tourists in Brussels in 2013, the tourism observatory reports, with the largest increase (+22%) among Irish nationals thanks to the EU's Irish presidency

WEEK IN BRIEF

The number of visitors to **this year's Gordel Festival**, staged to promote the Flemish connection to the *Vlaamse rand* – the periphery of municipalities around Brussels – was nearly double last year, at more than 23,000. The main attractions this year were a circus-themed walk for children in the Hofstade sports centre, and the 120km Gordel Classic cycle route around Brussels, which found more than 1,000 cyclists taking part.

Brussels' iconic **Manneken Pis statue was vandalised** early last week with spray paint, causing damage to the legs and face. Police said they would examine security footage to try to identify the vandals. The statue has since been cleaned up.

Nearly 1,200 shops across Flanders will open on Sunday, 5 October, and another 51 in Brussels, under a **Sunday Shopping** initiative spearheaded by the retail industry federation Comeos. West Flanders, with 309 shops taking part, will be the busiest, largely due to the coastal resorts.

www.sundayshopday.be

Three of Flanders' top lawyers surprised a trial in Hasselt last week by calling for the case to be thrown out of court because of illegalities in collecting evidence. Jef Vermassen, Sven Mary and Walter Van Steenbruggen are defending members of the **Aquino family in the mega-trial**, in which 32 individuals and six companies are accused of drugs trafficking between Belgium and South America. According to the defence, evidence from an undercover infiltrator and from telephone taps was obtained illegally.

Belgium clinched a silver medal in the team reining discipline at the **World Equestrian Games** in Normandy, France, which ended

at the weekend. The Belgian team was beaten to the gold by the United States, which has long dominated the discipline, loosely based around cattle ranching. Belgium's Michèle George, meanwhile, won two gold medals in para-dressage.

The internet taxi company **Uber has announced a 20% price cut** in a new move to become a mainstay of the Brussels taxi industry. The average ride will now cost €9. "This price cut brings us one step closer to a city where it is no longer necessary to own a car," said Uber Belgium manager Filip Nuytemans.

Parents are more and more resorting to the Council of State to **appeal against their children's school results**. In the last 18 months, 45 decisions have been handed down in cases where parents think the grade is too low. Between 1994 and 2012, the average cases was 15 a year. A survey by *Klasse* last year suggested that teachers are finding parents more assertive and sometimes even aggressive.

Belgium has been ordered to pay **€90,000 in damages to Nizar Trabelsi** for extraditing him to the United States at the end of last year. Trabelsi, a former Tunisian footballer, had just served a 10-year sentence in Belgium for planning a terrorist attack on the military base at Kleine Brogel in Limburg. The European Court of Human Rights said he should not have been extradited. He faces life imprisonment in the US for planning terrorist offences. The Belgian state can appeal.

American rapper and entrepreneur William Adams, better known by his stage name **will.i.am, has been confirmed as a keynote speaker** at the Creativity World Forum to be held in Kortrijk on 5 and 6 November, organisers Flan-

ders DC announced. As well as his work with the Black Eyed Peas, will.i.am is a creative innovation director at microchip company Intel and active in the development of wearable technologies.

Customers will soon be able to **pay for shopping by smartphone** in the stores of the Colruyt Group, which owns not only the no-frills supermarket chain but also Okay, Bio-Planet, Spar, DreamLand and DreamBaby. The app will be available in the first half of next year but can be used already for online shopping with Collishop, Dreamland and DreamBaby.

The American diamond dealer Lazare Kaplan has begun legal **proceedings against the Antwerp Diamond Bank** and parent institution KBC, accusing them of acting in bad faith by storing a client's art collection and diamonds in a safe deposit box in Switzerland, where creditors, including Kaplan and the Belgian tax authorities, cannot lay hands on it. The dealer has debts of €58 million to creditors who also include Antwerp Diamond Bank. Kaplan alleges the bank put the fortune out of reach so as to be sure of getting its own share to the detriment of other creditors.

Brussels' **Sint-Katelijne church will re-open** on 20 September for religious services, while a decision is still pending on a new secular role for the building. The building is owned by the Catholic church, which intends to continue holding services there after the main part of the building has been re-purposed. The services will give the church an indication of how much space needs to be retained for religious activities. In the meantime, five projects are waiting to hear the result of a competition for how to use the city landmark.

viewed time after time. I've had to suffer the uncertainty for nine years and have had a lot of sleepless nights. All while we were only doing our jobs and trying to save someone."

The good news in all of this? It hasn't deterred anyone from doing their duty. Last spring, 31-year-old inspector Ward Cuvelier of the same police zone was called to a report of a man drowning. "We didn't hesitate for a second. I took off my shoes, laid my belt to the side and jumped in in the hope of saving him," Cuvelier told the *Krant van West-Vlaanderen*. "I managed to keep his head above water until the fire service arrived and took over." \ Alan Hope

OFFSIDE To protect and to serve

On 12 September, 2005, a man on the Noord bridge in Kortrijk (pictured) appeared to be about to throw himself into the river Leie. Police officers Mikaël V and Aline V rushed to the scene and found the man, Paul M, standing on the railing.

The officers were finally able to overpower him and bring him to safety. Both officers had to be hospitalised for injuries sustained in the struggle; Mikaël V suffered a fracture to the eye socket. Paul M also suffered injuries.

Paul M proceeded to file a complaint alleging assault by the two officers and alleging that their superior, chief inspector S, falsified the incident report. The tribunal of



© Speha02/Wikimedia

first instance in Kortrijk found the three officers guilty, sentencing them to six months suspended and a fine of €275 each. That conviction has just been overturned by a court of appeal in Ghent.

"The acquittal is a relief, but we're disappointed that the case dragged on for so long," said chief inspector S. "The file is more than 1,000 pages thick. Witnesses were inter-

FACE OF FLANDERS



© Bart Musschoot/VRT

Andrea Croonenberghs

ken brought Croonenberghs to the attention of a wider audience, in both Flanders and the Netherlands.

As tends to happen with well-known Flemish media personalities, success in one field led to invitations to perform in others.

So she regularly sings with her band, La Piovra (an Italian word meaning "octopus", used to refer to the Mafia). She compiled a book of the favourite recipes of her fellow celebrities for Doctors Without Borders. She raises money for charity and never stops making guest appearances on TV, whether it be quizzes, talk shows, music programmes or current affairs shows. She also does voice-overs for children's movies.

Her big breakthrough, however, came in 1996 when she joined the cast of the air-sea rescue drama *Windkracht 10*, which led two years later to one of the leading roles in the hugely popular police drama *Flikken*, playing Detective Britt Michiels in seasons one through seven. The character popped up again in season 10 and in the spin-off series *Flikken Maastricht*. *Flik-*

Last week she was the toast of the VRT, as she celebrated her 25 years on air. Colleagues sent Twitter messages of congratulation and made a video anniversary card. "It's unbelievable how she's been a permanent fixture all these years," said actor Geena Lisa Peeters, who described her as "an example for all presenters who came after". \ Alan Hope

FLANDERSTODAY

 Flanders
State of the Art

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Former future prime minister

Belgium has named its new European commissioner: Marianne Thyssen of CD&V. This decision was reached only after Kris Peeters, Thyssen's compatriot, gave up his ambitions to become prime minister.

He did this after the French-speaking liberals MR said the Christian-democrats, given their electoral strength, could not claim both the prime minister and the European commissioner.

The party was serious about its support for Thyssen, for several reasons.

An MEP for more than 20 years with an excellent European network, and a friend of Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker, Thyssen is more than qualified for the job. Also, being female in a Commission short on women, she is promised an important portfolio.

Within her own party, Thyssen has gained almost saintly stature, after she took on the presidency during the years Yves Leterme was prime minister. She did this from a sense of responsibility and with the prospect of certain electoral defeat. After this "sacrifice", many party members felt the party owed her.

There is another reason why CD&V relinquished the premiership. In coalition governments, the prime minister has to keep the peace between the parties. This inevitably means compromising on many issues. Bart De Wever once famously said: "Whoever gets the 16 [the prime minister's office], ends up with 16 [% of the vote]". In recent years, the party with the prime minister in its ranks has been almost destined to lose the elections. Not a pleasant prospect for CD&V, which has been shrinking for years.

CD&V, centrists by nature, also felt cornered by the other future coalition parties and their right-wing economic policies. Not claiming the 16 has "freed" the party when it comes to economic and social demands.

The result is that no one really knows who will be the next prime minister. De Wever, leader of the largest party, N-VA, has refused from the start. The post is now promised to "the liberal family": MR or Open VLD. Charles Michel, Maggie De Block and Gwendolyn Rutten have been named, while even Peeters, the former future prime minister, has not been ruled out completely. The bets are on – once again.

Thyssen named EU Commissioner

CD&V gives up prime minister post as government negotiations continue



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

Marianne Thyssen has been named as Belgium's candidate for European Commissioner. The decision was part of the negotiations to form a new federal government. Belgium had been told by the European Commission president to submit a candidate for the EU post by Thursday last week.

Thyssen (*pictured*) has been a member of the European Parliament since 1991. She is vice-chair of the European People's Party and sits on the committee for the internal market and consumer protection. She was the president of CD&V for two years, from 2008 to 2010.

The decision to appoint Thyssen came after Kris Peeters (CD&V) announced that he would support his party colleague for the EU post. This meant that Peeters was willing to give up any claim to the post of prime minister, since it is considered unlikely that his party, one of the smaller parties of the coalition, could obtain both key

posts.

Thyssen later met European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker but declined to reveal whether she had been offered a particular post within the EU administration. "We had an interesting discussion, but I think it's best to keep it confidential," she said.

The decision to appoint Thyssen as Belgium's first female commissioner has been widely praised by Belgian politicians. Outgoing prime minister Elio Di Rupo said she was highly competent. "I think she will be given an important post within the European Union," he added.

Former Unizo director

Thyssen, 58, comes from a relatively modest background. Her father was a baker in the East Flanders town of Sint-Gillis-Waas. After completing a law degree at the University of Leuven, she worked



© Belga

for the small business federation Unizo, where she became director. She entered politics as a legal adviser to a CD&V health minister and won a seat in the European Parliament in 1991. She became the first woman president of CD&V in 2008, when she was asked to step in during problems with the Leterme II government, but resigned after the party

performed badly in the 2010 elections.

Political analysts are now speculating on who will become Belgium's next prime minister. Co-formateur Charles Michel of the French-speaking liberal party (MR) is one of the obvious candidates, but Gwendolyn Rutten, president of the Flemish liberals (Open VLD) said her party is still in the running.

Negotiations continue this week to form a federal government. The negotiators are currently looking for ways to secure €20 billion in cuts to ensure a balanced budget and reduce salary costs for businesses.

Outgoing finance minister Didier Reynders of MR, the French-speaking party leading negotiations with CD&V, said that the new government would need to cut the budget by €5 billion next year. He said that he would prefer this to be achieved by reducing costs but acknowledged that new sources of revenue would also have to be found.

Flemish ministers open first public-private school expansion

On 1 September, the first day of school for primary and secondary school students, education minister Hilde Crevits and minister-president Geert Bourgeois officially opened the fully renovated Municipal Technical Institute in Londerzeel, Flemish Brabant. The renovation and new addition is the first in Flanders funded by public-private financing (PPF).

The new sustainable building on the campus is home to a science lab and a sports hall, measuring 4,400 total square metres. It is the first of a planned 165 PPF school

projects. The first stone was laid in March this year by Crevits' predecessor Pascal Smet, now a member of the Brussels regional government. The financing was provided by a partnership of the Flemish government, AG Real Estate and BNP Paribas Fortis. The private sector partners finance, design, build and maintain the building, which the education authority then leases for 30 years. The system will see the creation of more than 200 new schools between now and 2017, for a total investment of €1.5 billion.

The system has been criti-

cised by the Flemish Secretariat of Catholic Education, which argued that the cost of schools rises continually; the sum paid by education authorities increases every year by one percentage point above inflation. In addition, changes are often made to plans after permits have been granted, in order to cut costs.

Speaking on VRT radio, Crevits said she was "disappointed" at the criticism, as it did not address that the PPFs have been good for €500 million in much-needed funds for new schools. \ Alan Hope

Government of Flanders approves €400,000 aid for Iraqi refugees

The government of Flanders has approved a €400,000 subsidy to the Flanders International Red Cross to help provide emergency aid to refugees who have been driven from their towns by the conflict in northern Iraq.

The fund will support the Red Cross in providing humanitarian aid to thousands of refugees in the Iraqi Kurdistan area of the country, according to minister-president Geert Bourgeois. The refugees have been forced to flee from IS

facilities, cooking utensils and basic household equipment. The refugees are suffering acutely due to the lack of drinking water combined with temperatures that can reach 45 degrees, Bourgeois said.

The aim is to reach 27,000 homeless refugees, including some 20,000 living in the heavily bombarded town of Sarsing, and a further 70,000 living in the Khanki refugee camp. The total cost of the operation is estimated at €2.6 million, according to Bourgeois. \ DB



© David Honl/ZUMA Press/Corbis

militants, and the number is expected to rise considerably in the coming weeks. Flanders Red Cross is working alongside the French Red Cross in providing urgent aid, including water supplies, toilet

Plan to create 15 cycle superhighways in Flemish Brabant

The province of Flemish Brabant is working with the Flemish and Brussels-Capital regions on an ambitious plan to create a network of 15 cycle superhighways by 2025. The new routes were announced last week by the Flemish Brabant mobility project Vlot Vlaanderen.

The superhighways aim to tackle chronic traffic congestion around Brussels by encouraging commuters to use bicycles. Some 36% of Flemings live less than 7.5 kilometres from their work, according to Tom Dehaene of the Flemish Brabant provincial government. "There is enormous potential for the use of bicycles," he said. The first phase of the project will be the creation of a cycle superhighway along the route of the high-speed train line between Zaventem and Machelen, including a new cycle bridge over the Brussels Ring. The project, due to cost about €13.3 million, will begin in late 2015.

Dehaene hopes that the high-speed line will serve as a model for the rest of the network of rapid cycle routes in the region. Flemish mobility minister Ben Weyts emphasised the importance of the different authorities working together. "We will only get the region moving again by implementing a smart transport policy that focuses on public transport, bicycles and cars," he said. Other projects in the region include the creation of a suburban train network and the construction of a suburban tram route to the north of Brussels connecting Jette, Heizel and Vilvoorde with Brussels Airport.

Meanwhile, the roads agency is planning major improvements on the northern stretch of the Brussels Ring, which is frequently blocked due to vehicles entering and leaving the motorway. \ DB

There comes the neighbourhood

Parckdesign festival joins the Tour&Taxis site park to create a dynamic atmosphere

continued from page 1

\ WWW.PARCKDESIGN.BE

remembers. Since the town council wouldn't take action, they decided to clean the place up themselves, and they even got their kids involved. "That's the kind of activity that brings you together, and in fact it was enjoyable," she says. "Instead of concentrating on our own problems, we turned outwards to something more social. And the problem that at one point seemed so dramatic and insurmountable then moved into second place."

A glass house situated between the two bridges, the Farmhouse, is the central spot in the park. It's a meeting house that also houses workshops and can transform into a cafe with food and drinks. Just across is the communal table, long enough to seat 20 down each side, with gaps in the centre through which potted herbs and other aromatics grow. Locals can eat what they've bought at the cafe or bring their own picnic.

KotKot is the chicken run where hens are free to root around. It was recently augmented by the arrival of two sheep. The park also houses six beehives in brightly-coloured geometric blocks. A mobile beehive that can go around the city, Beecar gives bees the opportunity to feast on flowers and plants from different areas, while spreading the message of the importance of urban bees to the population.

One side of the park also features the kitchen gardens, run by the project's "farmers", as they call themselves, all of them local residents. The vegetables are grown in raised beds, a technique that allows cultivation on hillsides. The farmers are assisted by the Nos Pilifs farm, a sheltered workshop in Neder-over-Heembeek, Flemish Brabant.

Farmtruck is a mobile kitchen,

restaurant, classroom and even a sound-stage for performances, that takes the Parckdesign idea out into the surrounding city.

It's been proved time and time again that projects that get local people involved repay their investment many times over by reducing crime and vandalism, helping people feel more secure and eliminating problems like litter and graffiti.

Kasri confirms those findings. "At the outset, the project had one specific aim: to create a park," she says. "Research has also shown that people's emotions are intensified in connection with a park: people feel better. The well-being it brings is clear."

For Kasri, it's about more than just the greenery, the open space and the fresh air. "There's the sense of taking ownership of a space," she says, adding that the site is owned by rail infrastructure company Infrabel, which is donating it.

"We've made it a public space," Kasri continues, "and are allowing the local people to manage it for themselves. People realise they're being offered something magnificent – not just a place to stroll with the children, but the ability to create a local dynamic, and they step up."

The local residents taking part in the project span a variety of cultures and origins as well as social classes. One man who's very involved speaks only a mixture of Romanian and Spanish and had been discreetly sleeping rough in the area before the transformation began. When Parckdesign moved in, he signed up.

The chicken run was originally kept illegally on the land, but it seemed a shame not to have one, so the owner was encouraged to submit an application for funding as part of the project, which was



Growing their own in the Parckdesign Farmhouse, which can transform into a cafe

“
People
realise they're
being offered
something
magnificent

approved. The Farmhouse and most of the other installations that are part of Parkdesign will remain in place for another year, and this might be more than the residents

bargained for. "How they manage things is not going to be easy," says Cantillon. "The initial enthusiasm was huge, and everything was going well when we were there to help, but we'll have to see how things work out when they're on their own."

The project is five months old now, which means that the participants have yet to go through a winter. "That's part of the problem when you have a festival and all sorts of installations that are supposed to last for five months," Cantillon says. "Then you have to transform it from something ephemeral into something more durable. There will need to be changes. There won't be anything like the number of activities in winter as there were this summer." The association is ready to take on the challenge, the first part of

which will be how to make the Farmhouse usable during the winter. The second part will be raising funds to keep things going. "This is a job that has to be done," Kasri says. "It's not always easy to find the time but, look, it's a job that means something in many different ways – for the neighbourhood, for the quality of life, for our children. Getting people involved isn't always easy, but it's the only way to go about it."

How to get to Parkdesign: Take metro line 6 to Pannenhuis, cross the road from the exit and follow the fork-and-spade stencils on the ground. There's also an entrance from the end of the bridge on Jubelfeestlaan



Visitors mingle with the resident sheep at Parkdesign



The Farmhouse, communal table, community gardening and mobile cafe made Parckdesign a popular summer spot

WEEK IN BUSINESS**Imaging**
\ Agfa Gevaert

The Mortsel-based imaging group is seeking opportunities to invest some of its €144 million cash on hand.

Media \ Mediahuis

The Antwerp-based media group, publishers of several titles, including *De Standaard*, *Gazet van Antwerpen* and *Flanders Today*, has entered into negotiations to take over the Dutch NRC Media group for an estimated €100 million.

Metals \ Nyrstar

The Brussels-based mining and non-ferrous metals producer, is looking to raise €600 million to refinance its operations and invest in new developments, including €68 million for its Port Pirie foundry in Australia.

Pharmaceuticals
\ Omega

The over-the-counter pharma group, based in Nazareth, East Flanders, is expected to fetch up to €4 billion following the recent decision by owner Marc Coucke to sell the company. Bidders are said to include Germany's Boehringer Ingelheim and Bayer groups, the Irish Perrigo and the Swiss Novartis.

Retail \ Uniqlo

The Japanese textiles and apparel group, an affiliate of Fast Retailing, is to open its first local outlet on the Meir in Antwerp early next year. The company, dubbed the Japanese Zara, has plans to open a store in Brussels later.

Software \ Clear2Pay

The Mechelen-based developer of financial software has been taken over by the US FIS payments technology services group for €375 million. Clear2Pay was launched in 2001 by entrepreneurs Jürgen Ingels and Michel Akkermans, who owned 20% of the company.

Steel \ ArcelorMittal

The group's Ghent-based steel mill is one of the sites selected to produce the high-resistance Fortiform range of steel for the car industry. The new product is lighter, with the promise of improved petrol use.

Flanders' Entrepreneur of the Year nominations announced

Katoen Natie and Kinopolis on shortlist for annual prize



Alan Hope

More articles by Alan \ flanderstoday.eu

The nominations have been announced for the Entrepreneur of the Year prize, to be awarded on 14 October. The short list for the 20th edition includes the privately owned shipping company Katoen Natie and cinema chain Kinopolis.

The annual prize is administered by accountants Ernst & Young, together with financial daily *De Tijd* and BNP Paribas Fortis, and goes to a Flemish company that has invested in growth at national and international levels, as a reward for ambition, effort and vision. Last year's winner was the Mechelen-based property developer Willemen Group.

Katoen Natie is a logistics company based within the Port of Antwerp, employing 9,300 worldwide, including 3,000 in Belgium. The company was set up in 1854 and now has just one shareholder: the irascible and individualistic Fernand Huts, who started his business life



as a grower of organic produce.

Ghent-based Kinopolis was formed in 1997 by the fusion of two family companies and now has 34 cinema complexes in Europe, including across Belgium and in Spain, France, Switzerland and Poland. Half of all cinema tickets sold in Belgium is for entry to Kinopolis.

Ontex in Zele, East Flanders, is the world's

largest private-label manufacturer of disposable nappies, sanitary towels and incontinence protection. It has 15 production sites in 10 countries. The company was sold in 2010 for €1.2 billion to Goldman Sachs Capital Partners. Van De Velde, based in Schellebelle, also in East Flanders, started in 1919 as a corset factory and is now a lingerie company selling under the labels Marie Jo, Prima Donna and Andres Sarda. The products are designed in Flanders, and the brand has its own stores in Belgium, Germany and France.

Vyncke from Harelbeke, West Flanders, is a family-owned company run by fourth-generation CEO Peter Vyncke. The company manufactures and installs industrial energy products based on biomass.

The award jury is chaired by Paul Buysse, formerly chair of Bekaert. The prize is handed over by King Filip.

Belgium number 18 in World Competitiveness rankings

Belgium has slipped one place in the World Competitiveness rankings, compiled annually by the World Economic Forum in Geneva. The country retains its spot in the top 20, however, dropping from 17 to 18.

The rankings are based on a survey of more than 14,000 business managers in 144 countries. In Belgium, the survey is carried out by Vlerick Business School. Belgium scores extremely well in many of the categories, achieving second in health care, primary education and management schools and fifth in higher education and training.

The overall score is dragged down by the tax system, the regulatory burden on businesses and restrictive labour market regulations, in all of which Belgium ranks below 120th.

"The technological readiness, the creation and adoption of new technologies and the global orientation of Belgian companies show their commitment to operating successfully in globally competitive markets," said Vlerick professor Leo Slewaegegen. "It is a pity that restrictive labour regulations and the negative effect of taxation on incentives to invest and work, continue to hinder new entrepreneurship and the growth of local companies."

Switzerland held on to its place at the top of the rankings, with Singapore again in second place and the US coming up to take third. The highest place held by an EU member state is Finland in fourth, followed by Germany in fifth place. \ AH

Consumers want to know source of meat, says Test-Aankoop

Nine out of 10 shoppers would like to know more about where the meat they buy comes from, according to a survey carried out by the Belgian consumer organisation Test-Aankoop. Under European law, all fresh meat sold has to be labelled with the country of origin, but the directive does not cover processed meat such as sausages and hamburgers. Last week Test-Aankoop launched a campaign together with the EU consumers' organisation BEUC, called Can We Trust Our Meat?

Test-Aankoop argues that transparency is the basis of trust between manufacturer and consumer and is calling for the country of origin rule to be applied to processed meat.

"The European Parliament will soon be questioning the commissioner in charge of the issue," said Test-Aankoop in a statement. "The voice of the consumer has not yet been heard on this issue, so we want to turn the tide and make origin labelling the norm." \ AH

Ablynx signs deal with Chinese pharmaceutical market leader

Ghent drug company Ablynx has expanded its co-operation with Eddingpharm, one of China's leading pharmaceutical companies. Eddingpharm will be responsible for the clinical development, registration and commercialisation on the Chinese market of the anti-inflammatory agent ozoralizumab. Ablynx will receive up to 20% of annual net sales. Ablynx was founded in 2001 as a spin-off of the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB). The firm discovered and developed Nanobodies, a novel class of therapeutic proteins based on so-called single-domain antibody fragments. These antibody fragments were first detected by VIB scientists in the blood of camels.

Camels and llamas are still used in Ablynx's production facilities. Nanobodies can help against a range of serious human diseases, including inflammation, blood disorders, cancer and respiratory disease. Ablynx has six Nanobodies in clinical development, one of which is ozoralizumab. This Nanobody has proven to be an effective anti-inflammatory agent, which could be used in treatment of arthritis and Crohn's disease. China's pharmaceutical market is expected to grow in the coming year by nearly 19% a year, and to rank number two in the world in 2016, just one place behind the United States. \ Senne Starckx

Apple and veggie growers also get EU aid not to harvest

Flemish Agriculture minister Joke Schauvliege has given the go-ahead for apple and vegetable growers to leave their crops unharvested, following the example of pear growers. The growers will also receive compensation for crops taken off the market. The farmers are facing the loss of the Russian export market. The pear harvest comes earlier than the apple harvest, and pear growers were awarded compensation of €6,400 per hectare of fruit withdrawn from sale, or roughly 16 cents a kilo. In the end, about one-tenth of the harvest was destroyed.

The deal is now being offered to growers of apples, plums, grapes and red fruit, as well as the vegetable sector, including growers of carrots, cabbage, peppers, broccoli, cucumbers and

mushrooms. The EU's share in the compensation has been increased from 50% to 75%.

Tomatoes are the largest of the Belgian crops concerned in this round, worth €19.5 million in total in 2013, with Russia accounting for 21,000 tonnes, or 79% of all exports. Apples were worth €15.8 million, with 84% of exports going to Russia. The carrot crop was worth €5.2 million, with Russia taking 15,000 tonnes, and peppers €4.1 million, with Russia buying 2,000 tonnes.

"The extra support is absolutely necessary to get a handle on this unprecedented crisis now that growers are unable to dispose of their produce at normal market prices," said Schauvliege. \ AH

Combined strengths

Scientists set the record straight on mainstreaming disabled workers



Daan Bauwens

More articles by Daan \ flanderstoday.eu

No fewer than 58 delegations, 2,000 athletes, 1,000 coaches, 2,500 relatives and another 40,000 spectators from across Europe and Asia will descend on Antwerp this month to attend one of the most prestigious sports events in the world for athletes with disabilities.

The 11-day Special Olympics European Summer Games, which kicks off on 9 September, typically garners much more attention than its accompanying scientific symposium. Drawing some 300 participants from 20 countries, the Special Olympics Scientific Symposium typically focuses on social or legal issues.

This year's edition – on 15 September at Antwerp Management School – addresses a difficult theme – the inclusion of workers with intellectual disabilities in the workplace.

"We generally focus on future forms of employment," says Bart Cambré, research director at Antwerp Management School and co-ordinator of the symposium, "and the inclusion of people with disabilities is a logical part of that. Most of them are hidden away in sheltered workshops for the handicapped; too few of them get jobs in regular sectors."

In a new study that will be the key presentation at the symposium, Cambré and fellow researcher Joke Schrauwen studied the opportunities and roadblocks to giving individuals with intellectual disabilities access to normal workplaces. "There are companies that already employ a few of them because of government programmes and subsidies," explains Cambré, "but voluntarily incorporating larger groups of the intellectually disabled is a step too far for most



From left: Antwerp researcher Joke Schrauwen, Special Olympics athlete Evy Ploegaerts and André Schepers and researcher Bart Cambré

companies."

Cambré says that such reticence from companies is typically tied to management fears about the future of their own workers. "Intellectually disabled people cannot perform just any task and will be employed where low-skilled employees are at work," he says. "There's always fear among these low-skilled workers that their jobs will be taken from them."

But the researchers discovered that such apprehensions shouldn't deter employers. "The interviews we conducted show that these fears quickly disappear," Cambré says. "Low-skilled workers even turn into the biggest ambassadors for inclusion. Most stress the pleasure and fun the intellectually disabled bring to the work floor."

Janssen Pharmaceutica's experience with the inclusion of workers with disabilities is a case in point. For almost two years now, eight workers from the sheltered Amival workshop in Turnhout have been spending one-third of their work days in the manufacturing workshop of the powerhouse pharmaceutical company.

Leen Van Eylen, business unit director for liquids and creams,

can attest to Cambré's findings. "Our workers were indeed concerned at first," she says. "Some saw the arrival of employees from Amival as a threat to their employment. However, they soon realised that the newcomers wouldn't deal with our core business and would perform tasks the Janssen workers don't like."

That sounds less than positive, but Van Eylen continues. "For instance, our workers don't like to do repetitive jobs. They get bored, which increases the risk of them not paying close attention. The Amival workers love to do repetitive work and don't get bored by it. Their strength is our weakness."

In addition, she says, "it is very inspiring for our workers to see how proud the Amival employees are to be allowed to work for Janssen."

Still, Cambré and Schrauwen's research shows that the inclusion of workers from sheltered workshops can also create difficulties for supervisors and managers. "Most of the tasks that are allocated to these people are simple and heavily standardised," says Cambré. "This doesn't always fit with the particular needs and talents of a

person with an intellectual disability. Companies also have to do their part; they need to be more flexible." Along with identifying difficulties and ways to overcome them, the Antwerp researchers and the symposium aim to bring about a general shift in how people approach disabilities. "When thinking about people with a handicap, we always focus on their limits and what they are not capable of doing," says Cambré. "It is striking that even people with disabilities themselves always focus on what they lack. That needs to change. We need to ask: 'What are their competences? What can they contribute?'

Cambré says that his own research did just that. "To my knowledge, this is the first scientific research ever in which part of the interviews were conducted by people with intellectual disabilities," he says. "We needed to do this because they look differently at the same reality and ask the managers questions that we wouldn't. Our research is better and richer because of their contributions. We hold the pen, but the conclusions were written together with them."

The day-long event will also include panel discussions on entrepreneurial initiatives to reinvent solidarity and a policymaker's perspective on inclusion from László Andor, the European commissioner for employment. The CEOs of Janssen Pharmaceutica and Coca-Cola Operations Benelux will also talk about their visit to a sheltered workplace.

Antwerp governor Cathy Berx will close the event by offering 10 recommendations for policymakers, companies, organisations and employees, based on the research results.

WEEK IN INNOVATION

Workplace smoking ban saves 425 a year

Hasselt University scientists have compiled figures for the number of fatal heart attacks in Flanders from January 2006 – when the smoking ban in workplaces and public buildings came into effect – to December 2009. They found 1,715 cases, a reduction of 425 a year compared to previous years. The effect is strongest in women under 60, with a 34% decrease. There was a 13% decrease in men under 60. For Flemings above 60, the researchers reported a decrease of about 9% in both men and women. Since January 2007, when the ban was extended to bars and restaurants, the number of fatal heart attacks has been falling in the younger age group by 4% a year.

Health Council scraps food pyramid

The food pyramid – with its emphasis on carbohydrates, meat and dairy – is being altered and reissued. In 1992, the United States department of agriculture launched an update of its food pyramid, with grain products in the bottom section, fruit and vegetables in the lower middle, meat and dairy in the upper middle and fats, oils and sweets on top. In 1997, the pyramid was adopted by Belgium's public health ministry as the official dietary guideline. But opinions on food have changed over time. Belgium's Superior Health Council has announced that it will formulate new dietary guidelines by the end of 2015; the Flemish Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention will translate the advice into a new dietary model.

Sewer water to determine drug use

For three months, Antwerp University scientists will take daily samples of sewer water, to see if citizens are being honest about their use of illegal drugs. The fieldwork in Lier, a medium-sized city just east of Antwerp, is part of a European project to map the presence of drugs in the sewage of several European cities. Drugs (both soft and hard) leave traces in sewer water in the form of metabolites that leave users' bodies via their urine; this is an objective way to measure the drug use in a city. The other goal is to "calibrate" answers given in anonymous surveys concerning drug use. \ SS

Q&A

Professor Floris Wuyts is the head of the Antwerp University Research Centre for Equilibrium and Aerospace (Aurea), which is co-ordinating a study on the human vestibular system – where we get our sense of balance – using astronauts

Why did you begin this research on astronauts?

Equilibrium is a very important characteristic in people and animals. Without it, we can't survive. We have a robust vestibular system that keeps us stable, allows us to orient ourselves and enables us to stabilise our gaze, which acts as a perfect visual lock-on system when we're moving. This system is very intricate, and when it goes wrong it really diminishes quality of life. Imagine waking up in the morning feeling drunk and staying like that the entire day. Our goal is to use models of space

and parabolic flight to search for bio-markers of the equilibrium function in the brain that will allow us to help patients on Earth.

What kinds of test are you performing?

We have been testing patients with vertigo and astronauts to learn how the vestibular system reacts to micro-gravity. When astronauts return from six months in space, they feel like our patients for a couple of days. We use that time to look at what is happening with their neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to adapt



to something, like learning to ride a bike.

We use a very advanced diffusion MRI to map the connectivity in a cosmonaut's brain before and after space flight, then compare them and examine the changes. These

changes show me where to look in a patient. It joins the world of imaging and the world of vestibular research in a tremendously multidisciplinary approach.

What could this research lead to?

Once we have the bio-markers, we can go to the next step – developing methodologies and therapies to help this group of patients, who are sometimes very difficult to help. Our brain may be much more dynamic than we think, and, if that is the case, we could try to find tools, medications and therapies that could allow us to influence, enhance or suppress the vestibular cortex. We are at the edge of a new frontier of medicine. \ Interview by Daniel Shamaun

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The Ayurveda gospel

Ghent's School of Ayurveda celebrates 15 years and a shift in thinking



Daan Bauwens

More articles by Daan \ flanderstoday.eu

Tired of hasty doctors prescribing drugs that only fight the symptoms of your complaints and leave the underlying cause untouched? Western medicine has its flaws. Dating back only a few centuries, it's surprisingly young, too. Compare that with Ayurveda: an Indian system connecting body and mind, with roots that go back five millennia. Yet there's no need to cross the continent to enjoy its benefits; practitioners can be found across Flanders. And here's the really good news: You can become one too.

At the Internationale School van Ayurveda in Ghent, for instance, which offers a two-year course to become an Ayurveda practitioner. The institute celebrates its 15th birthday this month.

“

You have two choices: Go with your natural flow or swim upstream

Lies Ameeuw, founder of the school, explains that the etymological roots of the word also explain the system's guiding principle. "It's Sanskrit for knowledge about life," she says. "It's actually the study of the logic of the natural flow. You have two choices in life – either you go with your natural flow or you choose to swim upstream. Ayurveda shows how you can follow the natural flow and live in harmony.



Lies Ameeuw (right) teaches others how to practise Ayurveda techniques

Harmony leads to happiness, the highest plane we can achieve in life, according to Ayurveda."

That means that Ayurveda is about more than medicine. "Ayurveda is not a medical school as such," Ameeuw explains. "It's only when someone's harmony is severely disturbed and he or she falls ill that we provide therapy, with herbs, massages and thorough cleansing of the body."

Ameeuw has studied Ayurveda for 20 years – a learning journey that began with her first trip to India. "I was 30 and just wanted to travel," she remembers. "I didn't necessarily want to go to India; I didn't have any affinity with the country, but somehow I ended up there."

Back then, Ameeuw was running a nature shop, so she already knew a lot about herbs. At the same time, she was taking courses in communication, including lessons on achieving harmony in the mind. "In India, I came across the one thing I had so desperately been looking for: the connection between what happens in the head and the body.

I found it in Ayurveda."

This critical connection, she continues, is under the influence of three basic *doshas*, or energies. Even those who don't know much about Ayurveda have possibly heard of *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*. "When a psychological or physical problem arises, we assess the quality of the problem," she explains. "We ask ourselves: Is this a *vata*, *pitta* or *kapha* kind of problem?" Ameeuw gives the example of a painful knee. If the pain is dull, and the joint cracks, it is a *vata* pain. *Vata* is associated with dryness, agility, coldness and roughness. If the pain feels hot, and there's an inflammation; it's *pitta*, which stands for heat. If the knee feels stiff and looks swollen, it's *kapha*, which represents heaviness, greasiness, coldness and immobility. "Now, here's the fascinating part," says Ameeuw: "Each of the *doshas* is associated with an emotional state. *Vata* is fear, *pitta* is anger, and *kapha* is apathy. We typically see a clear link between the physical pain and the emotional state

of the person. If you want to solve the problem, you have to deal with both."

After Ameeuw's first visit to India, 14 more trips followed. She followed courses in the Netherlands and consulted countless practitioners. In 1998, she opened her school, which has trained some 100 students who are now practitioners. "They are Flemish and Dutch, from a variety of backgrounds: medical personnel who couldn't find gratification in Western medicine, business people who want to chart a new course, midwives whose children have just left the nest... but also osteopaths and Indologists."

The biggest change she has seen has been societal, she says. "Acceptance for Ayurveda has become much greater in the West. The reason is simple: There's an ever-growing body of scientific evidence for many of the treatments and teachings."

She points out that the herb *ashwagandha*, also known as Indian ginseng, improves memory performance and reduces stress, and has also been proven to dramatically increase neurogenesis. "The same is true for turmeric and velvet bean," she says. "These things have been known for thousands of years in India. But their knowledge stems from tradition, not science." The school will celebrate its anniversary with a party on 27 September, followed by an English-language international symposium the next day. Medical doctors, scientists and practitioners from India and Germany will deliver presentations on Ayurveda and oncology, arthritis and liver dysfunctions.

WEEK IN EDUCATION

Waiting list for homework help

Homework classes for children in Brussels schools offered by 220 non-profit associations are oversubscribed, the organisers say. The groups organise after-school classes in Dutch and French to allow children a quiet, supervised place to do their homework. Some children lack such a space in their own homes or the help they need when parents speak another language. Yann Conrath, co-ordinator of D'broej, the only group in Molenbeek for children from Dutch-speaking schools, recognises that many non-Dutch speaking parents send their children to Dutch-speaking schools to offer them the advantage of being bilingual. "But it's more complicated if the language is never used at home."

Flemish teachers some of Europe's best-paid

Teachers in Flemish schools earn more than the European average, and sometimes substantially more than in other European countries, according to figures from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). A teacher starting out in Flanders earns €24,018 a year for the first three years. After 15 years, the salary is €33,984. In both cases, that is more than the OECD average; only Germany, Ireland and Luxembourg pay their teachers more. Teachers of classes in the last three school years are paid more: €30,010 to start and €43,701 after 15 years. \ Alan Hope

Students enrol on UGent's Korean campus

Koreans can now enrol in Flanders' largest university without having to move to the other side of the world. In the new Songdo district of Incheon, near Seoul, Ghent University's section of the Incheon Global Campus welcomed its first students last week. The project is a unique collaboration between Ghent University, the Korean government and Berkeley, Harvard and Utah universities. Ghent is responsible for a large part of the educational provision at the campus, with courses in biotechnology, food and environmental sciences – fields in which it is among the world's top institutions. The campus also houses research facilities for Samsung. For the academic year 2014-2015, 53 Korean and Chinese students have enrolled. \ Senne Starckx

Q&A

Nele Pinket is the head of the new ecotechnology Bachelor's degree at Vives University College, set up at its campus in Kortrijk. The programme will train students to become experts in green technology

Is this programme the first of its kind in Flanders?

Our team is the first in Flanders to set up a programme that enables students to deal with the different aspects of various ecotechnological projects. We will introduce the students to a broad spectrum of areas related to sustainable entrepreneurship and ecological product management, while existing programmes focus on things such as energy technology and materials management. The purpose is to develop students' technical and management skills so they will be able to have a "helicopter view" of projects.

Is it a practical programme?

Our courses always contain both theoretical and practical elements. We definitely want students to acquire a very project-based approach, so concrete assignments are essential. We have also chosen to include an internship in every study year, so students are well prepared for the labour market. Students will observe professionals on the work floor in their first year, get more responsibility in their second year and lead their own project during their final internship.

How can this be applied in graduates' future jobs?

They will have the expertise to make sure projects have a positive social, ecological and economic impact. More and more companies realise that initiatives should be beneficial for the environment and for society, but they also need to remain economically feasible to be successful. With their multidisciplinary skills, our graduates should be the ideal intermediaries between the technical departments and company directors.

Do you also prepare students for possible international careers?

The first semester of the first year includes lessons to improve students' English- and French-language skills, as part of the

\ WWW.VIVES.BE/ECOTECHNOLOGIE



management course. Throughout the degree, language lecturers will coach students to write certain reports and presentations in English or French. \ Interview by Andy Furniere

WEEK IN ACTIVITIES

Auto-free Antwerp and Ghent

September 16-22 marks Mobility Week in Flanders, with the city centres of Antwerp and Ghent going car-free on Sunday, 14 September. Other cities, including Brussels, will be car-free the following Sunday. See websites for a full list of activities \WWW.ANTWERPENAUTORVRIJ.BE \WWW.MOBILITEITGENT.BE

Hex Garden Days

The extensive gardens of Hex Castle near Tongeren are open to the public, including the rose and vegetable gardens. Wide variety of plants for sale, plus demos, lectures and workshops. 13-14 September 10.00-18.00, Hexlaan, Heers (Limburg); €8

\WWW.HEX.BE

Weekend on the Slope

A two-day maritime festival on the shores of the Scheldt river with boat tours, nautical crafts demonstrations, sea shanty singing and a maritime art exhibition. 13-14 September, Scheepbouwersstraat 16, Rupelmonde (Antwerp province); free

\WWW.TOLERANT.BE

Scottish Weekend

Annual Scottish festival on the grounds of Alden-Biesen castle with highland dancing and pipe band competitions, a Scottish marketplace, Highland games, live music, sheep herding demonstrations, kids' entertainment and more. 12-14 September, Kasteelstraat 6, Bilzen (Limburg); €18-20

\WWW.SCHOTSWEEKEND.BE

Dragon Boat Festival

Dragon-boat racing is a traditional sport from ancient China involving long boats decorated with dragon-heads and powered by a dozen or more paddlers. This is the fourth annual race at Antwerp's port, with amateur teams competing for fun and entertainment, concerts and food and drinks. 13 September, Kempische Dok, Het Eilandje, Antwerp; free

\WWW.DRAKENBOOTFESTIVAL.BE

Battle of the Golden Stars

Bring the kids to see medieval knights in action, jousting on horseback and fighting with sword and shield. Other activities include falconry shows, a page school, medieval crafts, a tent village and more. 13-14 September, De Ster recreation park, Lange Rekstraat, Sint-Niklaas; free

\WWW.TINYURL.COM/L6UORHD

A window on Flanders' past

This year's Open Monument Day looks at just how we treat our heritage



Daan Bauwens

More articles by Daan \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.OPENMONUMENTEN.BE

Open Monument Day is the largest and most popular one-day cultural event in Flanders. Every second Sunday in September, more than 500 activities draw 450,000 visitors. This year's edition – the 26th since its start in 1988 – is called "Heritage past, now and in the future", and it will involve some 650 monuments across Flanders opening their doors to the public. "This year, we want to focus on the heritage itself," says Stefanie Hap, supervisor of Open Monument Day at Herita, the Flemish heritage organisation. "What we consider to be a monument today has changed a lot over the years. In the past, only large buildings like castles and cathedrals counted as monuments. Now small chapels next to the road, old industrial sites, archaeological sites and even landscapes have been added to the list."

But this year's edition is not aimed just at demonstrating just how the definition of monuments has altered. "We also ask ourselves: How do we treat our heritage and how has that changed? In the past, restoration of old monuments was aimed at restoring the splendour and glory of the old times, with gold leaf and white marble. Nowadays we don't do that anymore." And Herita questions why. "The monuments have been there for hundreds of years," says Hap. "They have their own history. It is our aim today to preserve not just the monument, but the traces of its history as well."

Take the banquet hall of the Royal Atheneum in Antwerp, a stately building erected by Napoleon in 1807 to break the church's monopoly.

oly on education. In January 2003, a fire destroyed most of the front part of the school, including the hall. The restoration was finished recently and the hall is only now reopening to the public.

"What's so interesting about it is that traces of the 2003 fire have been preserved," says Hap. "That is a conscious choice. At the same time, a painting by Luc Tuymans will be placed into one of the alcoves. The restoration shows the past and present of a place." Then there's the future. This year's edition focuses largely on the reuse and allocation of monuments.

“Why shouldn't they serve for another couple of centuries?

"They have survived for centuries, serving their purpose," says Hap. "Why shouldn't they get new functions and serve for another couple of centuries?"

Huis Proot in the West Flemish town of Koekelare is one of the best examples of the adaptive reuse of monuments. Originally built as a doctor's residence in eclectic style in 1896, it clearly illustrates the important social status of a doctor in a small countryside town. Declared a protected monument in 1998 by the Koekelare municipality, it was restored and now serves as a cultural centre with



© Photos courtesy Herita

Bank J Van Breda in Antwerp is housed inside an Art Nouveau treasure

exhibition rooms and conference halls. The old carriage house has been modified into a project for social housing and the garden turned into a public park. But the original woodwork, wall coverings and colours have been preserved or restored. Huis Proot is one of the four laureates for this year's Flemish Monument Prize. Examples of reuse can be found throughout Flanders. There are the housing units in the oldest brewery of Sint-Lievens-Houtem, and the conversion of an old Dominican cloister into an administrative centre in Vilvoorde. Last but not least, there's the exquisite bank J Van Breda in Antwerp, built in a 1901 Art Nouveau goods station. And it might be hard to imagine, but Flanders does still have quite a few unprotected monuments, such as the red brick station buildings from the 1900s that are now vanishing at an enormous pace. Or

the nostalgic inter-war commercial murals in West Flanders advertising tobacco or coffee. The organisation De Muren Spreken ("the walls can talk") tries to protect 80 of these murals. This project has also been nominated for the Flemish Monument Prize and is spotlighted by Open Monument Day.

"It reinvigorates the original idea behind it all," says Hap. "We open monuments to the public to raise awareness, to show how valuable they are. Of course we are not the only factor in this equation – there are a lot of volunteers on the ground protecting heritage, but by showing threatened heritage to the public, we force the government to rethink their plans." Of course, there's much more: walks in forests, guided visits to cathedral reconstruction sites or the classic visit to one of Flanders' many castles. And it's all free.

14 September

Open Monument Day Across Flanders

\ BARRIO CANTINA

BITE

Barrio Cantina

Food trucks: all the hippest cities have them. From New York to Bangkok, food trucks are pulling customers from the restaurant into the street.

Street food is not only fast, easy and affordable, it can also be tasty and inventive – and occasionally even healthy. Now the organisers of Flanders' famous Polé Polé festival want to get Ghent and Antwerp in on the mobile food trend with a brand new festival: Barrio Cantina.

As a meeting point for more than a dozen diverse food trucks, Barrio Cantina is a dream for foodies, and it brings together some of the most creative entrepreneurs. A taqueria joint sells tacos and empanadas, a scooter that doubles as a kitchen offers Vietnamese noodle soup and travel guides, and at Microbar you



can try edible insects (cricket on a stick or mealworm spring roll, anyone?).

The Pura Vida truck is the place to be for cheese – cheeseburgers, salads with cheese, cheese platters, cheese croquettes... Meanwhile, the guys at Choripan prepare their version of this typical Argentinian grilled sausage sandwich on the back of a bicycle food cart.

The Crêpes Company whips up 15 different types of thin, Normandy-style crêpes out of an old-timer Citroën. Köfte Kanto is a tip of the hat to 1920s Istanbul, a time of dance and music and... köfta. Their Turkish meatballs are juicy and spicy and come with a variety of fresh vegetable toppings and sauces.

For the less adventurous, there are also your classic curries and hot dog and hamburger stands, including Curryup, Bulls and Dogs and Ellis Gourmet Burger.

Luckily, nobody forgot about us sweet teeths. Only with the inclusion of Fiona's Baking Avenue is

the festival complete, with dessert in the form of freshly baked blueberry muffins, walnut cakes, chocolate chip cookies, tiramisu and raspberry mousse.

There will be no shortage of entertainment either, with the slackline walkers of Born 2 Balance dangling overhead and vintage tunes emanating from the speakers of mobile Radio Barkas. Kids are invited to try their hand at turning cupcakes into small works of art. And everyone will enjoy listening to brave souls hammer out a tune on one of the pianos available to the public. \ Robyn Boyle

12-14 September

Zebrastraat, Ghent

19-21 September

Scheldekaaien, Antwerp

Flanders off the beaten path

Smugglers, brutish crusaders and twin lighthouses: The secrets of West Flanders



Toon Lambrechts
More articles by Toon \ flanderstoday.eu

The rich heritage of Flanders has left many traces behind. Some are touristic highlights, others remain virtually unknown. Flanders Today went in search of its quirkiest historical spots for our five-part series, Flanders off the beaten path. This week we visit the province of West Flanders, where, not so long ago, border security – and smuggling – were serious issues

In the West Flemish town of Wervik, France is never far away. In the streets, you hear as much French as Dutch, and half the shop names are written in French. It's not surprising, really: If you cross the bridge over the Leie, you're in France. Should you wish to do so these days, there'd be no paperwork required. But formerly, the customs officers at the border would give you a stern look. And with good reason; the area was famous for its smugglers. In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht put an end to a long period of war in Europe and drew a number of new frontiers in what was then called the Southern Netherlands. The current border between France and Belgium is a legacy of this agreement, and the new boundaries had major consequences for the region that is now West Flanders.



A lone sculpture is all that's left to tell the story of the once-strong smuggling trade in Wervik (above); Heist's beautiful High Light is a breath of fresh air in the apartment landscape of the coastal city (right)

In the region around Menen, for example, the Leie was the new frontier. That seems logical, but as a consequence, the town of Wervik was brutally cut in two. Suddenly there was such a thing as Wervik and Wervicq Sud, now on the other side of the border in France. The *schreve*, as the borderline is called in West Flemish dialect, was born. Such a place was a haven for

smugglers. It began in the 18th century, and by the 20th century Wervik had grown into a smugglers' nest *par excellence*. Everything that was more expensive in one country was smuggled across the border: tobacco, playing cards, wine, perfume, coffee, textiles, cows, jukeboxes... The smugglers were nicknamed *blauwers* (blue-ers) because of their typical dark clothes.

The custom officers – called *komiezen* – would spend their nights hunting for smugglers. Until the Second World War, smuggling was done mainly by foot, at night, under the cover of darkness, using heavy backpacks. After the war, smuggling took on even greater proportions, as lorries with smuggled goods made the trip back and forth between France and Belgium. One of the most famous group of smugglers was the Coudron gang, with the whole Coudron family said to be involved in the illicit trade. Everything was smuggled across the border in that period, but especially tobacco. That should not come as a surprise, since the region around Wervik was – and remains – the centre of tobacco cultivation in Belgium. It was already growing here in the 17th century, and today 90% of all Belgian tobacco comes from Wervik, though its cultivation has diminished sharply. Back then, it was heavily taxed by the state and was therefore a worthwhile product to smuggle. The unification of Europe and the removal of borders brought an end to smuggling in the border regions. The Wervik customs office closed in 1992 and has now been demolished. On the banks of the Leie, a statue recalls the town's past, representing a *blauwer* with his dog on the run from *komiezen*, while a second smuggler lies in the water.

The tobacco museum of Wervik tells the whole story of tobacco smuggling, and there are also some walks in the region along the former smugglers' trails.



© Photos: Toon Lambrechts

A tale of two towers

Heist, better known as the latter half of Knokke-Heist is now mostly visited by tourists seeking sun and sea, but it used to be an important fishing village. The first mention of a lighthouse in Heist dates from 1365. It's likely to have been a wooden one, which is somewhat risky given that a lighthouse back then was simply a tower on which a fire was lit.

Later, Heist got a stone lighthouse, but it was destroyed in the 17th century, before a light beacon was installed in the 19th century. But in 1907, two lighthouses were built there at once: Laag Licht (Low Light), a small lighthouse of 14m, and its big brother, the 34m Hoog Licht (High Light). The reason two lighthouses were suddenly needed lies just a little further, at the port of Zeebrugge. Now this port is largely on the sea, consisting of artificial dock, but until the 1970s most ships sailed in along the channel Pas van 't Zand. At night, Hoog Licht and Laag Licht indicated the entry of the channel by emitting beams of light. Hoog Licht was built by the Grondels brothers. The tower, decorated with Art Deco motifs, rises gracefully above the landscape, its elegance contrasting with the uninspired apartment blocks on the seawall.

The designer of Laag Licht is not known, but the style is completely different. The tower is more robust, built to defy the sea breeze. Nowadays, both towers have lost their original function and are protected as monuments and connected via a walkway.

LISSEWEGE: BUILT BY GIANTS



The fierce William of Saeftinghe on Lissewege's central square

Lissewege, a district of Bruges, is sometimes known as the White Village because of its small, white-washed houses. Just outside the medieval village lies the abbey of Ter Doest, which dates from 1106. But history has not spared much of the abbey. Most of the buildings date from a later period, and only the barn, built in 1250, is still original.

Monumental is the only label suitable for this barn, at 50 metres long, 23m wide and 30m high. Inside, the structure is supported by an impressive truss made of oak beams, with two rows of oak pillars supporting the whole. The size of the barn shows how rich the abbey was back then: Ter Doest had a lot of land, and the revenue from that land was stored here.

The most famous – or infamous – inhabitant of the abbey was William of Saeftinghe. He must have been a big, strong guy and was a first-class fighter. During the Guldensporenslag, or the Battle of the Golden Spurs, he knocked the French captain Robert of Artois from his horse and killed him. He later led a revolt in the monastery that claimed the life of the abbot.

Seeking forgiveness for his deeds, Saeftinghe went on a crusade, where they could always use a bit of brute force. He was killed in the siege of the Greek island of Rhodes. On the square of Lissewege is a statue that portrays him, broad-shouldered with sword in hand.

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DATE: 11 October 2014 | **TIME:** 10.30 - 16.30

VENUE: Vlerick Business School - Place Rogier (Manhattan Centre) - 1000 Brussels



The intuitive cuckoos

Birds That Change Colour take a back-to-basics – and back-to-nature – approach



Christophe Verbiest
More articles by Christophe \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.BIRDSTHATCHANGELOUR.COM

Four days. That's how long it sometimes takes to record an excellent album. You don't even need a recording studio; in some cases, the simple open air will do. The proof is *On Recording Birds*, the second album from Birds That Change Colour, the Antwerp band led by singer, guitarist and songwriter Koen Kohlbacher.

In June, Kohlbacher headed to the Ardennes with his bandmates, Nathalie Delcroix of Laïs fame among them, and a couple of guest musicians, including Tomas De Smet from King Dalton. They set up their recording equipment in a valley and began recording without much further ado.

"I had no back-up plan for rainy weather," says Kohlbacher. Luckily for the band, it didn't rain, but the weather conditions certainly weren't ideal. "At times a cutting easterly wind made our fingers grow numb." Fortunately, that wind mostly blew from the right direction, as he also wasn't aware that their impromptu recording spot was situated close to the Spa-Francorchamps racing circuit.

Very attentive listeners might discern a revving motor in some of the new album's tracks. But Kohlbacher is fine with that, and he also doesn't mind the occasional tweet of a bird.

If Kohlbacher is so relaxed about the intrusion of natural sounds on his album, it might be because he's every inch a nature kind of guy. "I go to the Ardennes as often as possible. I feel great when I know there are animals around."



© Nathalie Van Riel

Koen Kohlbacher (sitting in tree, far right) and the rest of Birds That Change Colour recorded their new album in the Belgian woods

The band's name illustrates Kohlbacher's love of nature, but it also points to his love of the Beat poet Jack Kerouac; it's a phrase lifted from his 1954 poem "San Francisco Blues". "For me the band name first and foremost reflects a state of mind," Kohlbacher says. "That there's some nature in it is a bonus."

After a long day of open-air recording, Birds That Change Colour continued working during the evening hours in the house where they were staying. "One evening, a friend of mine who was filming the endeav-

our had prepared a tray of mojitos and other cocktails for us when we returned to the house. Rock'n'roll, he thought, equalled alcohol." To the friend's surprise, the musicians left the drinks untouched.

Kohlbacher opted for the surprising, back-to-nature recording approach for good reason. "I wanted to get closer to the feeling I have when writing the songs.

They needed to sound fresh and not overthought. I think this record is more spontaneous, rougher and more honest than the first one. You can hear the musicians' performances, which was missing in our debut."

He emphasises that he is still proud of that first album, but, he says, "I'm at my best if I don't ponder too much and navigate on my intuition."

11 September 20.30

Birds That Change Colour
De Roma
Turnhoutsebaan 286, Antwerp

NEW ALBUM REVIEWS

Nele Needs a Holiday It's My Party • Compagnie Cornelius

Nele Van den Broeck, who goes by the moniker Nele Needs a Holiday, has firmly planted her flag at the crossroads between 1960s girl groups like The Shangri-Las and The Ronettes and anti-folk bands like the Moldy Peaches. Ironic and heartfelt at the same time, she writes the kind of songs you don't often hear in Flanders and isn't afraid to call them "I Love You But I Google Other People" – song title of the year, anyone? – or "One Fan in Japan" or "I'm Not Famous But I'm Free". Her debut album *It's My Party* offers songs about girls and guys, about (happy) girls without guys and about (unhappy) girls without guys, and songs about herself. To sharpen her song-writing skills,

Van den Broeck recently left Flanders to enrol in a music program in London. Move over, world! ★★★★

\ www.neleneedsaholiday.com

Star Club West

My Ill Women • Fons

Star Club West started their career at the heyday of the Antwerp scene (dEUS being the most famous name), but they never garnered the recognition they deserved. Twenty years later, Nico Jacobs and his band are still going strong. Their sixth album, *My Ill Women*, is a double with almost 70 minutes of mesmerising songs. German *krautrock* was reportedly the inspiration for the hypnotising tone of the new album and its sonic experiments, but it actually reminded me of the Hoboken, New Jersey, luminaries Yo La Tengo. Let it be crystal

clear: Star Club West are entering their third decade with what is probably the best album it has ever made. ★★★★

\ www.starclubwest.be

Eléonor

Erros • -I-C-U-B4-T-

"Tandem venit amor," Elly Aerdin sings on her first album, which she released under the stage name Eléonor. Aerdin has a rich past in the folk scene, but with *Erros* she is embarking on a remarkable new journey: to sing songs in Latin. The language sounds surprisingly like Portuguese, I learned, though this is also because of Aerdin's musical sensibilities, with fado a strong presence on *Erros*. The singer is much less convincing when she uses electronic beats, but luckily that doesn't happen often. Some of

the album's songs are based on writings from the ancient Latin poets Sulpicia and Catullus, while for others Aerdin used contemporary poems. That's right, even in this day and age, people still compose love poems in Latin. ★★★★

\ www.eleonor.be

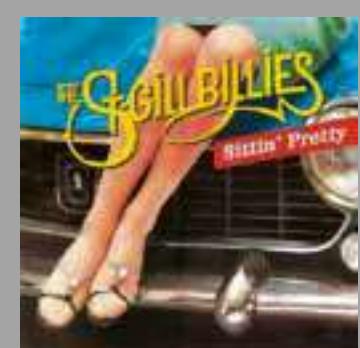
The St-Gillbillies

Sittin' Pretty • Saroyan

The Brussels sextet The St-Gillbillies – with Texan Matt Graves on the mike – deal in twangy rock, raunchy country and hot-blooded rockabilly. Their debut album, *Sittin' Pretty*, offers nine songs, many of them indebted to Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash, that make you wanna shake, rattle and roll. "Devils in Rio" revisits the high hopes for the national team at World Cup ("It's been

years in the making / And that cup's there for the taking") and includes a sample of sports commentator Tim Long talking about Jan Vertonghen's own goal against South Korea. Yet the biggest surprise was "the Billies" rockabilly take on the Grandmaster Flash hip-hop classic "The Message". ★★★★

\ www.stgb.be



WEEK IN ARTS & CULTURE

Tom Barman to make second film

Tom Barman, frontman of Flemish rock band dEUS, is planning to make a second film, he announced on the TV talk show *Reyers laat* last week. Barman's 2003 ensemble drama *Any Way the Wind Blows* showcased a wealth of acting talent, including Matthias Schoenaerts, Natalia Broods and Frank Vercruyssen, and introduced both Sam Louwyck (*Rundskop*) and Titus De Voogdt (*Small Gods*) to the big screen. Barman won't release many details yet but confirmed that he has received funding from the European Commission's Creative Europe programme. He has also applied for further support from the Flanders Audiovisual Fund. According to *De Standaard*, producer Bart Van Langendonck of *Rundskop* fame has signed on to the project.

Sigrid Bousset leaves Passa Porta

Sigrid Bousset, general director of Passa Porta, will leave the organisation to take up the post of advisor to Brussels' new culture minister Sven Gatz. Her advisory post will be specific to books and letters. Passa Porta is an international bookshop that co-ordinates readings in multiple languages, hosts residencies and stages the popular annual literature festival of the same name. Bousset has been active in Passa Porta since its launch in 2004 and has been the director since last year. "I have had the privilege ... to help Passa Porta grow into a quality house of literature," said Bousset. "With its residencies, festival and international exchanges, it serves as an example to the whole world."

New FC De Kampioenen film on the way

It's official: *FC De Kampioenen* will be back in cinemas as early as next year, as plans are made to shoot a second film based on one of Flanders' longest-running TV series. The series stopped in 2011 after 21 seasons. All the lead actors in the comedy series, which followed the lives of players of a (very poor) football club and the on-going shenanigans of their family, friends and football bar patrons, have signed on to the project, and director and producer Eric Wirix will return to helm the film. The first *Kampioenen* film enjoyed the best opening weekend ever for a Belgian film and counted 750,000 ticket sales over three months.

Throwing down the gauntlet

Ostend Film Festival welcomes Adrien Brody and Pierce Brosnan



Lisa Bradshaw

More articles by Lisa \ flanderstoday.eu

\ WWW.FILMFESTIVALOOSTENDE.BE

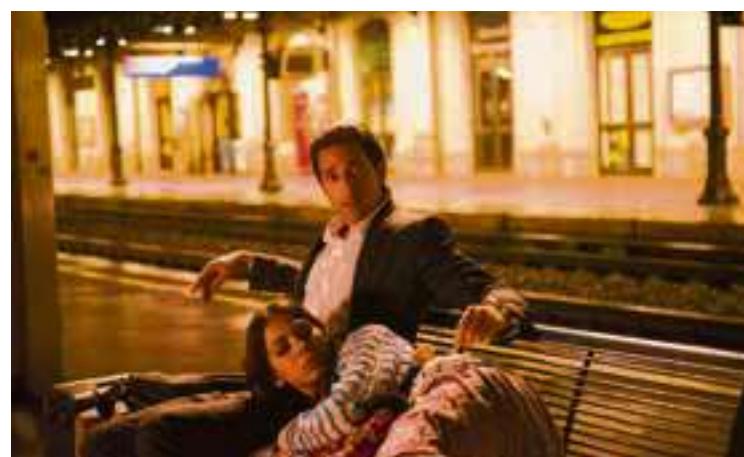
The Ostend Film Festival has taken it up a notch this year, veritably throwing down the gauntlet to other festivals when it comes to special guests. Not only did it secure Adrien Brody to present his new film, *Third Person*, it announced a couple of weeks later that Pierce Brosnan would be on hand to talk about his new political action thriller, *The November Man*.

Not bad for an eight-year-old festival in a small coastal city better known for being chilly than being swank.

"We have been working for years to get the word out about the credibility of our festival," said festival chair Peter Craeymeersch. The media attention continues to grow, and we are well received. After Pierce Brosnan's appearance, we'll be giving him his own star on the promenade. In short, this is wonderful news for the festival." It will also convince not a few people to head to the coast this month. Flanders isn't short on film festivals or festival guests. But, aside from Ghent, what most of them lack is heavy star power. While one can find dozens of interesting guests at all of the local festivals, major celebrities are harder for them to come by.

And, like it or not, those are the ones who get the festival on TV and the most tickets sold. They also improve ticket sales elsewhere; people coming to see Brody might stay to see another movie or two with an equally talented but lesser-known actor on hand.

"With Adrien Brody and Pierce Brosnan, are we now bigger than the Ghent Film Festival?" asks



Adrien Brody will introduce the new Paul Haggis film *Third Person* on 19 September in Ostend

Craeymeersch. "I really don't want to create a competition over who gets which actors. We want to stage a good festival and offer value to the public."

A friendly gauntlet, but a gauntlet nonetheless.

While Brody and Brosnan are certainly event highlights, neither of their films are highlights of the film programme. A better political thriller is Anton Corbijn's *A Most Wanted Man*, a nicely crafted adaptation of the John le Carré novel about a worn-out spy focusing on one man in Germany in the never-ending war on terror. It has the added intrigue of being Philip Seymour Hoffman's final leading role before his death earlier this year. A posthumous Oscar is not out of the question.

The Dark Valley, another Belgian premiere, is a welcome return to the big screen from Austrian director Andreas Prochaska, who has concentrated on TV for the last 15 years. In classic western style, it finds a 19th-century American (Sam Riley) riding into a remote

village in the Alps, where he soon finds himself in an inexplicable conflict with the local baddies.

On the lighter side is the highly entertaining *The Trip to Italy*, Michael Winterbottom's follow-up to *The Trip*, with Rob Brydon and Steve Coogan now joking their way through the country of wine and pasta.

But one of this festival's strengths has always been its focus on local talent, and this year is no different, with a number of Flemish productions on the programme, as well as the annual Ensor awards for the best in Flemish cinema.

Premiering at the festival is Flemish writer/director Roel Monde laers' *Plan Bart*, a romantic comedy in which Wine Dierickx, desperate to have a baby, convinces her juvenile ex to get her pregnant (before he heads off to the Air Guitar World Cup).

More bizarre is *Liebling*, Flem-

ish theatre collective Het zesde bedrijf's film debut, based on their stage play of the same name. Absurd comedy abounds as the arrogant Remsk (Steven Aernouts) and his pot-addicted partner Sarah (Ellen Schoenaerts) head off on holiday to France with reluctant friends.

The Filmcafé on tour programme features recent Flemish flicks in bars across town, including the Rocco Granata biopic *Marina*, the gruesome police drama *De behandeling* (*The Treatment*) and the broad comedy *Los Flamencos*, among others.

The Look! competition, meanwhile, collects international features that beg to be seen on the big screen amid all the obsessive internet streaming and iPad viewing. Visuals are key to the selection, which includes Argentinian director Damián Szifrón's *Wild Tales*, a gleefully dark series of sketches on the satisfaction of revenge, and French director Bertrand Bonello's *Saint Laurent*, starring Belgium's Jérémie Renier as the legendary fashion designer.

As for the Ensors, they are handed out for shorts, documentaries and features. Of the 12 films in competition for best feature, there is no obvious break-away hit this year, like *The Broken Circle Breakdown*, which makes the competition a bit more interesting. The jury will probably be looking closely at Bart Van den Bempt's drama *82 Days in April*, as well as Caroline Strubbe's *I'm the Same, I'm an Other*.

12-20 September

Ostend Film Festival
Across Ostend

Artists take inspiration from polder village history

\ WWW.AIRANTWERPEN.BE

On March 13, 1567, a band of *gueux*, insurgents from the Netherlands, were slain by their Spanish rulers at Austruweel, a few miles north of Antwerp. The renowned *Cambridge Modern History* once described how "the Rout of Austruweel ... broke down the spirit of resistance in the country".

Soon, however, the rebellion sparked the Eighty Years' War, which would eventually result in the split between the Spanish Netherlands and the northern Dutch Republic. Over time, the port of Antwerp gobbled up the polder village. In 1956, it was evacuated to allow for further expansion of the docks. Only the protected but largely ignored Saint John the Baptist church remains. And today, the vanished village is the namesake of the modern-day saga Oosterweel – the controversial plan to close the



© Ria Pacquée, AIR Traces: Austruweel, 2014

Antwerp Ring Road.

This brief descent into history is part of the experience when visiting the first edition of *AIR Traces: Austruweel*, an exhibition at several locations near the former lock-keeper's home where organiser AIR Antwerpen houses its residential artists.

"Oosterweel sits on the border between the city of Antwerp and the harbour," says artistic director Alan Quireyns. "It might seem empty, but there are all sorts of activities going

on here, legal as well as illegal."

While the heavy industries here fuel the Flemish economy, and construction is all around, the vacant lots invite littering and loitering. "People can go about their business here without interference," says Quireyns, "but no one actually lives here. I consider this environment a topographic translation of alienation: You are in the middle but feel like you don't belong anywhere."

The 14 Flemish and international artists of *AIR Traces* all drew inspiration from this ambiguous locale. Antwerp artist Chloé Dierckx delves into the history of Austruweel, only to find that it's still alive in recent weather forecasts.

Limburg's Reg Carremans replaces

litter with blank objects according to a self-invented typology. And Antwerp artist Dennis Tyfus has created his own cheese croquette, available in a famous local *frietkot*. Other artists play with urban legends. One is British artist Paul Becker, who has conjured up a text that blends facts about Oosterweel and myths of his own making. Or local artist Ria Pacquée, who presents nine little tales in photos (*pictured*). "I've been roaming the streets of Antwerp for years. Stories are up for grabs there," she says. "I've visited Oosterweel regularly, too. It has a mysterious atmosphere, which always brings to mind thriller kinds of stories." \ Bjorn Gabriels

Until 5 October

Start at Oosterweelsteenweg 3, Antwerp

There will be blood

Elektra

12 September to 3 October

After staging the comic crowd-pleaser *Der Rosenkavalier* last season, Opera Vlaanderen is now taking on the dark and twisted side of Richard Strauss with a new production of *Elektra*. First staged in 1909, it was the composer's most significant venture into modernism, pushing into the fringes of atonality. It even contains the "Elektra chord", famed for its dissonance. The subject matter is also a lot stronger than the romantic *Der Rosenkavalier*, exploring the dark psychology of a family caught in a vicious circle of murder and revenge. This is Greek tragedy

Opera Antwerp & Ghent
WWW.OPERABALLET.BE

filtered through the sensibility of Freud's Vienna, in the person of playwright and librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal.

King Agamemnon has sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to the goddess Artemis before sailing for the Trojan War. When he returns victorious, his wife Clytemnestra takes revenge by having him killed. As a result, their daughter Electra swears vengeance, but since she is now marginalised in the court she needs an ally. When her exiled brother Orestes also appears to have been killed, she must try to persuade her remaining sister to help. But Chrysothemis would rather forgive and



move on.

Tightly focused on Electra, the opera explores her desperate struggle against forgetting and her hidden desire for power. It can also be read as a tale of youthful rebellion, an uprising against the older generation. *Elektra's* jagged music often inspires productions to adopt an expressionist look, all tilting floors and heavy eye-shadow. But hints dropped about the approach

taken by rising German director David Bösch suggest a setting that combines a torture chamber and a child's bedroom. There will be blood. Swedish soprano Iréne Theorin takes the title role, with Lithuanian soprano Ausrine Stundyte as Chrysothemis and German alto Renée Morloc as Clytemnestra. The opera will be sung in German with Dutch translation. \ Ian Mundell

FAMILY

Int'l Street Art Festival Trezart

13-14 September

Recreational Domain Zilvermeer, Mol
WWW.TREZART.BE

Can Jesus' Miracle Lab change water into wine? Is the ice-cream man from Crèmeerie Marcel really a DJ with an obsession for 1950s music? Can the choreography of Helder Seabra from Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Ultima Vez fame really merge two dancers into one? Is Bruce Springsteen right about his compatriot Al Millar being the best street artist in the



© Jan Dierckx

FOOD&DRINK

EAT! Brussels

11-14 September

Ter Kamerenbos, Brussels
WWW.EATBRUSSELS.BE

Discovery food from every continent at this third edition of Brussels' open-air restaurant event. Along a picturesque route through the Ter Kameren forest, 20 local restaurants spoil your taste buds with their gastronomical talents. Dip, for instance, into vol-au-vent with snails from the Atomium

restaurant or the fillet of North Sea sole with emulsion of Hoegaarden rosé beer from Martin's. Or go international with a chicken masala, Brazilian-style scampi or a mixed Basque tapas platter. For the first time, Bordeaux Fête le Vin joins the party, so there's no problem if you don't like beer. \ TP



EVENT

Belgian Air Force Days

12-14 September

Air Base Kleine-Brogel
WWW.BELGIANAIRFORCEDAYS.BE

There are the air power demonstrations and some historical exhibitions, celebrating over 100 years of military air history and 40 years of the F-16, but above all, the tens of thousands of enthusiasts who visit these yearly Air Force Days come to see the spectacular flight display of the aerobatic teams of fighter jet pilots. The largest aviation event in Belgium starts with a



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Stadsschouwburg, Antwerp
WWW.PROXIMUSGOFORMUSIC.BE

"World Peace Is None Of Your Business": It's the title of the new Morrissey album and of a single – and a pretty good one at that. On his 10th solo effort after the demise of The Smiths, 27 years ago, you can still catch a glimpse of genius songwriting craft behind Morrissey's well-cultivated self-pity and irony. "Mozzer" recorded the album in France with his touring band and with a more central role for the talented multi-instrumentalist Gustavo Manzur. New live tracks such as "The Bullfighter Dies" and "Earth Is The Loneliest Planet" join the old Smiths gem "Meat Is Murder". Come early to see opening act Anna Calvi, a furious British guitarist and sensual singer



CONCERT

Brakel (East Flanders)

Backseat Boppers: Energetic, crowd-pleasing rockabilly, surf, rock and golden oldies band from nearby Zottegem. 13 September 20.30, 't Hoppunt Brakel, Rondplein 8 \ www.facebook.com/Hoppunt

PERFORMANCE

Brussels

Theatre Open Day: Free performances by Brussels' amateur English-language theatre groups in celebration of the new season, beginning with a child-friendly performance of *Aladdin* by the English Comedy Club, followed by presentations on theatre skills and guided tours, and culminating in an improvised session by the American Theatre Company. 14 September 14.00-20.00, Warehouse Studio Theatre, Waelhemstraat 69a \ www.ecc.theatreinbrussels.com

FAIR

Ghent

Cultuurmarkt: Annual open-air fair to kick off the new cultural season, with information and activities from more than 100 venues and organisations, such as De Munt, Handelsbeurs, Design Museum Gent and the Ghent Film Festival, among many others. 13 September 13.30-18.00, Kouter \ www.uitbureau.be

FESTIVAL

Brussels

Apertura: Flagey teams up with Cinematek and the Brussels Philharmonic to kick off its new cultural season with evenings of film and music. 12-15 September, Flagey, Heilig Kruisplein \ www.flagey.be

Marni Jazz: Concerts by a diverse range of musicians and bands, this year with a special focus on the trombone, featuring Israeli trombonist Reut Regev, Why Not Samba and Wild Boar & Bull, among others. 11-20 September, Théâtre Marni, De Vergniestraat 25 \ www.theatremarni.com

Ghent

Odegand: Annual opener of the Ghent leg of the Festival of Flanders, with diverse concerts across the city centre from world to jazz to classical, all accessible with one pass on foot or via canal boats. 13 September, across Ghent \ www.odegand.be

Talking Dutch

In praise of ugly



Derek Blyth

More articles by Derek \ flanderstoday.eu

I don't go out of my way to look for ugly houses. But some people do, like Hannes Coudenys, who spends his weekends tracking down the most hideous constructions he can find. He launched a blog in 2011 called Ugly Belgian Houses, which has become something of an internet sensation. *Hannes Coudenys uit Kortrijk bundelt op die site de meest wanstaltige, lelijke en mislukte bouwsels van ons land* – Hannes Coudenys from Kortrijk posts the most ridiculous, ugly and catastrophic buildings in the country on his website, explains *Het Nieuwsblad*.

Coudenys has now published a book that brings together photos of the 50 ugliest houses in the land. *Als je door het volgebouwde Vlaanderen rijdt, dan valt de lelijkheid van veel huizen onmiddellijk op* – If you travel across overcrowded Flanders, you immediately realise that many of the houses are extremely ugly, he told *Het Nieuwsblad*. *We gaan hier wel heel losjes om met onze ruimtelijke ordening* – we're very casual when it comes to our spatial planning. As you might imagine, not every-



© Courtesy Hannes Coudenys

one is delighted to find their precious pile of bricks listed as an ugly Belgian house. *Rudy Joseph schrikt toch even wanneer hij hoort dat het huis dat hij in 1983 ontwierp in de Stanleylaan in Oostende op de website 'Ugly Belgian Houses' is beland* – Rudy Joseph was shocked when he heard that the house he built in 1983 in Ostend's Stanleylaan was posted on the blog, the paper noted. Joseph defended his decision to build his bizarre terraced house. *Ik wilde eigenlijk net tonen hoe lelijk, gelijkvormig en eentonig de rest van de buurt is* – I wanted precisely to show how ugly, repetitive and monotonous the rest of the street looked.

You could almost say that ugly is cool. But maybe not always. One of the strangest photos in the book shows two neighbouring houses that should never have been built next to one another (*pictured*).

De buurman links bouwt een strak, modern blok van een huis; de buurman rechts bouwt iets wat op een exotische Spaanse villa lijkt – the neighbour on the left built a sober modern box of a house; the neighbour on the right built something that looks like an exotic Spanish villa, Coudenys explains.

Dat staat dan tegen elkaar geplakt, en de één bouwt dan nog een half metertje hoger dan de ander, om de harmonie helemaal te verpesten – they stand next to one another, and one is half a metre higher than the other, just to destroy the harmony absolutely.

Coudenys, however, insists he isn't setting out to make fun of these monstrous houses. *We willen allemaal zo graag onze eigen stempel drukken op ons kleine stulpje* – we all want to make our mark on our little patch of land, he says. *Omdat lelijk altijd beter is dan saai* – because it's always better to be ugly than to be boring.

VOICES OF FLANDERS TODAY

Stephen HAAS @HAAruns

Leuven, I love coming back to you even if it was only for 2 days. <http://instagram.com/p/sfWlkhITH9/>

The History Girls @history_girls

Today on our blog, Sarah Gristwood on Bruges, the modern and the late medieval. <http://the-history-girls.blogspot.co.uk/2014/09/bruges-by-sarah-gristwood.html> ... #hist-novsoc

Paul Reed @sommecourt

Interesting month ahead with @LegerHolidays battlefield tours: Flanders, Normandy, Arnhem & then Tommy & Fritz with @GERArmyResearch #busy

Tom Hartmann @97Tom

Before the colour run! #colourrun #brussels #thinkpink <http://instagram.com/p/sp8VQDBRdM/>

 In response to: Crevits "shocked" by amount of admin teachers face

Geraldine Doyle: My husband is a teacher and spends a considerable amount of time filling in papers about papers and has to attend more meetings than I'm sure they do in the UN.

Hannah Trigwell

 Hallo ANTWERPEN! Nick Howard and I will be performing LIVE in your city on October 7th!!

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Poll

Should someone recording police activity with a mobile phone be forced to stop if police ask them to?

a. Police are public servants, and they were operating in a public place. They have no right to privacy while on duty

25%

b. Police have just as much right to privacy as anyone else, and we should be legally obliged to stop filming them if they object

13%

c. If you're filming something that might obviously be evidence in a criminal case, public interest overrides any right to privacy

63%

The story of the two police officers in Bruges who were considering taking legal action against a member of the public who refused to stop filming them as they questioned patrons on the terrace of a bar forced us to consider whether the police can expect privacy when on duty in a public place.

The privacy commission thinks they can, but our readers don't quite agree. Most of you turned the question around and came at it from the angle of public interest. A large majority thinks a legitimate public interest – a situation where police are involved in violence, for example, or an incident that

might later be the subject of legal proceedings – overrides any individual right to privacy. Which makes sense, considering that the justice system films all of us, every day, on all the main streets of the city, with or without our permission.

Next week's question:

Insurance companies like the idea of dashcams, which record what happened in an accident, but police court magistrates aren't so keen. What do you think?

Log-on to the Flanders Today website at www.flanderstoday.eu and click on VOTE

