

Ancien Speaks – Pascal Delheye



Pascal, what do you like most about your job?

Well, there's actually nothing about my job that I don't enjoy. I love conducting research and organizing events in collaboration with the field, and for the field, with the support of funding partners who prioritize corporate social responsibility. From a political science perspective, sport is a fascinating topic because it intersects with various policy areas such as health and well-being, education, youth work, equal opportunities, integration, urban planning, intermunicipal cooperation, and more. Through the Frans Verheeke Ghent University Chair (www.detoekomstvandesport.be), we advocate for a more connected, intersectoral approach. Co-creation is our key concept. Book projects with over a hundred 'co-authors' are challenging but also very rewarding, as they allow for collective impact. We will present our next book on 30 September 2024. You're most welcome to attend! (laughs)

Who is your favorite political scientist or author?

Bruce Katz and Alnoor Ebrahim are tied for first place. While they may not be considered political scientists by traditional standards, their insights are vital for the current generation of political leaders. In 2017, Bruce Katz, along with the late Jeremy Nowak, published *The New Localism: How Cities Can Thrive in the Age of Populism* (Brookings Institution Press). The book reveals where the true power to create change lies – at the local level – and how it can be leveraged to address our most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. However, alongside this approach, there is also a need for evaluation and performance measurement. Alnoor Ebrahim offers valuable insights on this in his book *Measuring Social Change: Performance and Accountability in a Complex World* (Stanford University Press, 2019). In our projects, these ideas converge.

What's your favorite compliment that you've ever received?

It's difficult to choose, but a message from Frans Verheeke on 10 October 2023 was especially heartwarming:

"On my part, and on behalf of Lina as well, I wish to thank you most sincerely for the way in which you have given substance and envergure to the Chair, with which I had the privilege to associate my name. This may sound somewhat formal, but it is written with very warm appreciation. Your enthusiastic commitment, your style of presentation, the always fitting context, and the ever-original and topical subjects were a revelation to me."

It was also the last message I received from him; Frans Verheeke passed away on 30 December 2023.

What childhood memory makes you smile?

As farmers, my parents were rather 'thrifty'. Growing up, my brother and I often wore hand-me-downs from friends. In fact, we lived a circular lifestyle before it became fashionable. (laughs) When I was finally able to play football in a pair of old – but new to me – Nike shoes, I overheard a classmate quietly say behind my back: "He probably stuck that Nike swoosh on himself." It gave me extra motivation to kick even harder

toward the goal, and it's ironic that now, through the study and support of sport-related social projects, I can give that anecdote a deeper meaning.

What book should everyone read at least once in their lifetime and why?

Le Petit Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, because it's full of wisdom. *On ne voit bien qu'avec le cœur. L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux* [One sees clearly only with the heart. What is essential is invisible to the eye]. It's a philosophy everyone should keep in mind.

Who do you nominate as the next Oldtimer?

I would like to nominate Katrien Van Poeck, though she's more of a 'youngtimer'. (laughs)