

WHY THERE ARE NO FAMOUS BELGIANS

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There are famous Belgians, except that nobody knows they are Belgians. I will give a few examples to start off. But there are very few famous scientists, let alone famous Belgian scientists. Everybody (I guess) knows Albert Einstein. All Belgians know Eddy Wally, but nobody else in the world knows Eddy Wally, I guess most marine biologists in the world will know Carlo Heip but hardly anyone in Belgium does. Science is a lonely business. As to my career, it can be mostly summarized in one word: luck. Being on the right moment at the right place. But you have to enforce your luck sometimes. Start off with writing at least one good paper that attracts attention. Be proud and confident of your work and go to meetings to present it and talk to people when you are young. When you are older: attract and educate good students (your students have to be smarter than you). Convince but also trust people, your peers, your scientific friends, science policy makers. Have a sense for where your science is or should be going. Above all be honest, you can cheat all of the people some of the time, some of the people all of the time, but not all of the people all of the time, after Bob Dylan, one of the heroes from my generation.