



## **BLUG / UBLG & Geologica Belgica**

### **Mineral extraction vs Ecology: adversaries or allies ?**

In Belgium as in other Western countries public resistance to extraction of minerals is seriously complicating quarry operations; particularly opening new quarries or extending existing quarries is a considerable challenge and a long time endeavour. Both the public and authorities have different motivations to oppose the mineral industry, from NIMBY (not in my backyard), NIMEY (not in my electoral yard), LULU (locally unwanted land uses) and irrational fears to more rational objections to loss of biodiversity, ecosystem destruction, downgrading property value. Ecologists are often among the hardliners opposing mineral extraction, whereas geoscientists rely on geodiversity created by human interference with the subsurface.

However, practically all (semi-)natural ecosystems and associated biodiversity in western Europe are man-made, and the result of changes in land use due to past agricultural practices and mineral extraction. Particularly abandoned extraction sites provide environments for rare species of plants and animals. Taking a time perspective, it is safe to say that active quarries of today will provide the best nature reserves of tomorrow. Geodiversity creates biodiversity. Biologists tend to emphasise continuity in land use as a condition for preservation of biodiversity, geoscientists tend to focus on the anomalies in the distribution of minerals as source of geodiversity; both may discuss about the same territory which could make them allies, but they apply different paradigms making them adversaries. A dialogue between ecologists and mineral producers seems hard to realise but could be productive and of mutual benefit. There are examples of fruitful cooperation between nature conservationists and mineral producers but they are rare and often met with suspicion. Is there a strategy for improving relationships between ecologists and geoscientists for the mutual benefit of quarry and nature reserve?

This is an essential step for engaging in a dialogue with other stakeholders to maintain mineral extraction activity for the future in Belgium and neighbouring countries. As a first step, BLUG/UBLG and Geologica Belgica invite you to participate in a brainstorming session with the purpose of defining the agenda for demonstrating the benefits of geodiversity for biodiversity to the public. The meeting will start with presentations on the clash of geo-bio paradigms, success stories and failures of geo-bio cooperation to end with the creation of a working group and discussion on the next steps.

**Meeting time:** Friday 27 November 2015, 14–16 h

**Meeting place:** Small Auditorium, RBINS, Vautierstraat 29, rue Vautier, B-1000 Brussels

**Registration:** participation is free, but inform secretary [karine.wuyts@naturalsciences.be](mailto:karine.wuyts@naturalsciences.be) beforehand.

**Convenors:** Michiel Duser (Geologica Belgica) & Robrecht Schmitz (BLUG/UBLG)