

Belgian Operations Research in Three Movements

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Abstract

Allegro : The international key role played by the Sogesci-BVWB for the promotion and the developments of OR in Europe and in the world

Jean Pierre Brans

The role of the Belgian OR Society on the international scene is sketched. An overview is given of the activities of the Sogesci-BVWB and some of its members in EURO. Names and places are given of participations and organisation of the EURO-conferences, the mini EURO-conferences, the Euro Summer Institute and the Euro Gold Medal.

Andante : A look to the past : Happy Birthday Jorbel

Jacques Teghem

The Sogesci-BVWB written channel to the outside world is its journal. The history of the journal is drawn from its roots started by three societies to its current state, 35 years later, with its name JORBEL, its current committee and its changed policies.

Adagio : Origin and history of the ORBEL congresses

Fernand Broeckx

Scientists like to join each other at conferences. Our societies' conferences got the name ORBEL. The author being president of the society both at the first Orbel conference as at the tenth jubilee makes a report on the various locations, chairmen and invited speakers. The origins to the conference series is highlighted by drawing up a list of one-day conferences organised earlier, known under the name of Round Tables.

**THE INTERNATIONAL KEY ROLE PLAYED BY THE SOGESCI-BVWB
FOR THE PROMOTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF O.R.
IN EUROPE AND IN THE WORLD**

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During the last 20 years, from 1975 to 1995, the SOGESCI-BVWB played a key role in the development and the promotion of Operational Research in the world.

Before 1975, despite some interesting O.R. activities, the cooperation and the communication between Operational Researchers in the different European Countries was extremely weak. After the 6th IFORS triennial Conference (Dublin 1972), the presidents of the National European O.R. Societies agreed to investigate how to improve this bad situation. Professor H.J. ZIMMERMANN, at that time President of the German O.R. Society, took the initiative to call together the representatives of the European O.R. Societies in Dusseldorf in September 1973. 11 countries were represented. The challenge was critical: to have a European O.R. association or not. To be or not to be!

After extensive and productive discussions it was decided to institutionalize better European cooperation in the field of O.R. The discussions were so long and so intense that the participants had no time to have a dinner in the evening. They had only a sandwich in a pedestrian street in the center of Dusseldorf. Marc ROUBENS and Jean-Pierre BRANS, both representing the SOGESCI, were positively impressed by the promising character of the discussions. They decided, just as a joke, to suggest to their colleagues to organize a first European O.R. Conference in Brussels. They did not realize at that time that it was not a joke, but a point of major importance for the future of Operational Research in Europe. Everybody accepted the suggestion with enthusiasm and the decision to hold this first conference in January 1975 in BRUSSELS was agreed upon.

Only a few months were left to organize this first International Conference. H.J. ZIMMERMANN was Chairman of the Programme Committee and J.P. BRANS had the great pleasure to conduct the Organisation. Several members of the SOGESCI participated actively: M. ROUBENS, P. VINCKE, L. KAUFMAN, C. DE BRUYN,...

The challenge for the SOGESCI was considerable. We had no money, no experience, only good will and enthusiasm. As we were terribly anxious, we worked very hard. The label "EURO" was introduced. A financial loan, not a gift, was offered by Denmark, Germany, the U.K., Norway, the Netherlands and Sweden. The representatives of these countries confessed afterwards that they considered the money as lost! In fact it was not! Everybody has been refunded after the Conference.

EURO I started on January 27, 1975. It was a considerable success! Over 500 participants attended the Conference, 170 papers were submitted for presentation, the registration fee was 30 US\$. 30 US\$ only! The organisation of such a conference with such a small amount has only been possible thanks to the dynamism and the enthusiasm of the early EURO pioneers, most of them members of the SOGESCI.

Clearly there was a need for a European O.R. association. During the conference 10 European Working groups were spontaneously established, the first discussions on the creation of a European Journal of Operational Research took place, and at the closing session of the Conference the agreement stating EURO as the association of European O.R. Societies was signed by 9 European Countries.

After these three days, thanks to the SOGESCI, the O.R. landscape in Europe was completely modified. Starting from nothing, the European O.R. community suddenly disposed of three powerful instruments

- *The EURO Association*
- *The EURO K Conference*
- *The European Working groups.*

Since that time the cooperation and the communication between O.R. searchers in Europe became effective. A EURO bulletin, announcing all the European activities was edited quarterly by J.P. BRANS, later on by M. DESPONTIN and now by Ph. VAN ASBROECK. Several Working groups meetings were held in Belgium, such as the first and the second meeting of the Working group of B. ROY on Multicriteria Decision Aid. All the other EURO K Conferences which took place in other European countries were still successful. Thanks to the SOGESCI many important activities in the field of O.R. was launched.

Ten years later, in 1984, J.P. BRANS, at that time President of EURO, had the privilege to propose the creation of three additional instruments to the European O.R. community.

- *The EURO Summer Institutes*
- *The Mini EURO Conferences*
- *The EURO Gold Medal.*

The idea of the EURO Summer Institutes was to establish an effective instrument for the most promising young scientists in Europe. An Institute of two to three weeks is now organized every year in the summer period in a particular O.R. field. Each institute is covering another topic so that each promising young scientist, in any field of O.R., will have the opportunity to join an Institute once in his life. The participation is considered as a considerable honour. Nobody will be accepted more than once. The main purpose of the Institutes is to establish, in each O.R. field, a network of outstanding researchers working together. The participation is limited to a group of about 20 scientists, of maximum 35 years old, having all a thorough experience in the selected field. Every applicant has to be the author of an unpublished good paper. No special courses are organized. During the Institute every participant is giving a well prepared presentation of his work as starting point for deep discussions. Invited lectures are included in the programme. A special issue of EJOR, the European Journal of O.R., is devoted to the Scientific activities of each Institute. An extended social programme is offered in addition to the participants in order to develop friendly links between them. No fee is requested, it is completely free for the participants.

Again the SOGESCI played a key role in launching this activity. The first EURO Summer Institute was held in Brussels in 1985 and was devoted to Location theory. As no other European country was prepared to take it over, the second EURO Summer Institute was also organized in Brussels in 1986 and was devoted to Multicriteria Analysis. After this generous offer of the Belgian O.R. Society, other European countries accepted to host an Institute. It is now the most *beautiful* instrument offered by EURO. It is unique in the world. No similar activity has been developed elsewhere, not even in the U.S.

The *Mini EURO Conferences* consists of specialized conferences on particular O.R. themes. Besides the large EURO K Conferences treating all possible O.R. topics, in many parallel sessions, for large audiences, the Mini EURO Conferences offer the possibility to organize a meeting on a particular O.R. topic for a limited audience of specialists. Mini EURO Conferences can be organized by everybody at any time. It is therefore a *democratic* instrument giving opportunities to all the members of EURO.

The first Mini EURO Conference was organized in Bruges in 1984 on Dynamic Modelling of Complex Systems. Again the SOGESCI launched this activity. Several Mini EURO Conferences now regularly take place in Europe. The 5th one was also organized in Belgium in 1993 in Liège on Risk Management and the 7th one will take place in Bruges on Decision Support Systems, Groupware, Multimedia and Electronic commerce in March 1997.

The EURO GOLD MEDAL consists of the EURO Award. It is now considered as the highest O.R. distinction in Europe. It is conferred to prominent scientists or prominent Institutes for the role they played in the promotion and the development of the O.R. Science. It is not only significant for the laureate but it is also important for the promotion of O.R. by making leading persons and their contributions better known in the public field. In 10 years, three Belgian scientists were awarded the EURO GOLD Medal: Pierre HANSEN in 1986, Jean-Pierre BRANS and L. WOLSEY in 1994.

Besides the key role played by the SOGESCI in the creation and the launching of all these EURO activities, one must also underline the important role played by several members of the SOGESCI.

J.P. BRANS was Chairman of the Organisation Committee of EURO I and Chairman of the Programme Committee of EURO IV (Cambridge), Marc ROUBENS was Chairman of the Programme Committee of EURO II (Stockholm), Ph. VINCKE was Chairman of the Programme Committee of EURO IX (Paris), J.P. BRANS, M. DESPONTIN and P. VAN ASBROECK were editor of the EURO Bulletin, F. PLASTRIA was Chairman of the EURO Working Group on Location, Ph. VINCKE was Chairman of the ESIGMA Working Group, J.P. BRANS was organizer of the first and the second EURO Summer Institutes in Brussels, P. ALLEN was organizer of the first Mini EURO Conference in Bruges and G. COLSON of the fifth Mini EURO Conference in Liège, J.P. BRANS, L. GELDERS and M. ROUBENS were members of the Editorial Board of EJOR and finally at the IFORS level, J.P. BRANS has been twice Vice-President of IFORS in 1975-78 and in 1989-1992 during the last period the IFORS-SPC (IFORS Specialized Conferences) were initiated and the first one took place in Bruges in 1991.

All this and many other activities which were not mentionned here due to the lack of space constitutes an incredible and beautiful contribution of the small Belgian SOGESCI Society to the International O.R. landscape. The SOGESCI and their members may be particularly proud of this considerable contribution.

A look to the past: HAPPY BIRTHDAY JORBEL

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The ancestor of JORBEL, the "Revue Belge de Statistique Appliquée et de Recherche Operationnelle--- Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Operationeel Onderzoek, Statistiek en Informatica" was created at the end of the year 1960 and began to appear in 1961; so this is 35 years ago.

The oldest issue we found is the one numbered "8 September 1960" and contains an editorial (in French and in Dutch) by J. Wanty explaining why three different associations took the decision to join their efforts to merge their own publications in a unique journal. From the scientific point of view he emphasized the "convergence of interest and the relationships between Operational Research and Applied Statistics".

The three associations were:

- *A.B.S.I.* (Association Belge pour les applications industrielles de la statistique --- Belgische Vereniging voor Industriële Toepassingen van de Statistiek);
- *A.G.E.S.C.I.* (Association Belge pour l'Application des Méthodes Scientifiques de Gestion --- Belgische Vereniging van de Wetenschappelijke Methoden van Bedrijfsbeheer);
- *S.B.S.* (Societe Belge de Statistique --- Belgische Vereniging voor Statistiek),

and a "Direction Committee" of the new journal was formed with a representative of each association: S. Mornard (*A.G.E.S.C.I.*), Jean Teghem (*S.B.S.*) and J. Wanty (*A.B.S.I.*). Moreover a "Screening Committee" of three persons --- A. Heyvaert, Ph. Passau, J. Teghem --- coordinated the publication and the secretariate was held by mrs. J. Crochelet-Ghislain.

The first issue in 1960 (with a white and orange colored cover) contains four papers:

- *Le caractère aléatoire des processus nerveux* by J. Schlag (U.Lg.);
- *De wiskundige achtergrond van de statistische gevolgtrekking* by E. De Wolfe (Gevaert N.V.);
- *Structure et reseaux d'information* by J. Wanty;
- *Quelques aspects statistiques des études consacrées productivité a la forestière* by P. Dagnelie (F.A.Gx).

This new journal began really to appear in 1961 with an issue numbered "vol.2 -- no. 1 -- January 1961". In this first volume, we found (in both national languages) papers of well known professors in very various fields like an econometrical study by Jean Waelbroeck (U.L.B.) and "*L'utilisation de la théorie de l'information en psychologie*" by P. Bertelson (U.L.B.).

Further on some reports on several international conference:

IFORS II (Aix en Provence -- September 1960) ;
the first conference of the "Association française de calcul" (Grenoble --- September 1960) ;
E.O.Q.C. IV (European Organisation of Quality Control) (London --- September 1960)
and also a report of the working group of AGESCI on "Management of Equipments".

Already in 1962, some changes appeared in the publication: the journal was now a joint publication of the SOGESCI (newly created in 1961 by merging ABSI , AGESCI and SBS, with a new Direction Committee (E. De Grande, S. Mornard, R. Sneyers), a new screening committee (A. Heyvaert, R. Sneyers) and a new secretary (J.H. Lentzen), this time the SOGESCI-secretary.

The journal continued to appear regularly, with three or four issues per year, with papers exclusively in French or in Dutch. It is funny -- but interesting -- to point out some particular papers:

- a first paper on linear programming: "*P.L. par l'algorithme de Dickson et Frederick sur l'Univac solid state computer*" by R. Broucke (Remington Rand -- Bruxelles) in vol. 5, no. 1, June 1964;
- a report on a SOGESCI seminar on "*Aspects linguistiques de la traduction automatique des langues*" by M.O. Houziaux (U.Lg) in vol. 4, no. 4, February 1964;
- "*Usage du PERT/COST pour l'établissement des plannings de fabrication*" by Rousseau (MBLE) in vol. 5, no. 2, October 1964; and

- the oldest paper of a present member of the Administration Council of the SOGESCI-BVWB: "*Le controle de la production dans l'industrie des panneaux de particules*" by ... Marc Roubens (U.L.B.) (in 1966 (vol. 7, no. 1) ...dear Marc !)

From the issue vol. 9, no. 1 (1968) the Direction Committee was formed by J. Federwisch (replaced by P. Genard in 1970), S. Mornard, R. Sneyers, J. Teghem (till 1969) and the Screening Committee by F. Lambert and R. Sneyers.

In the vol. 9, no. 2, january 69, we found a "In Memoriam" of Ir. (U.C.L.) Nicolas Basilewsky (Sidmar) president of the SOGESCI died in a car accident.

We think that the first paper in English appeared in vol. 10, no. 4 (January 1971): "*Description of median game theory with examples of competitive and median competitive games*" by J.E. Walsh and G. Kelleher (Southern Methodist University U.S.A.). Is it the begin of an international audience of the journal ? In any case, the number of English papers increases slowly; let us note for instance:

- "*Variation parameters of a quadratic fractional functionals programming*" by S.P. Aggarwal (Calgary University, Canada) in 1972 (vol. 11, no. 4);
- "*An algorithm for non convex programming*" by G. Graves and A. Whinston (Purdue University, U.S.A.) in 1972 (vol. 12, no. 2).

In 1972, the first "SOGESCI PRIZE" was attributed to Ph. Dumont (F.P.Ms) for a study "*Le probleme du bibliothecaire*" (vol. 12, no. 3). Let us note that J.P. Brans (V.U.B.) becomes member of the Screening Committee in 1972 and that in 1973 L.A. Wolsey (C.O.R.E./U.C.L.) published in the journal a paper "*Groups, bounds and cuts for integer programming*" (vol. 13, no. 1): 22 years later, our two colleagues will receive the "EURO Gold Medal".

Other future EURO Gold Medals published papers at this period: P. Hansen in vol. 11, no. 3, 1971 and vol. 13, no. 4, 1974 ("*Un probleme d'affectation avec contrainte*" -- Second SOGESCI PRIZE) and H.J. Zimmerman in vol. 14, no. 4, 1974 (the two other papers in this issue are respectively from M. Roubens and ... J. Teghem Jr (your first paper: in 1974, dear Jacques !)).

Let us also note at this period the first paper in the journal from our present president Fernand Broeckx in vol. 14, no. 1, 1974.

In 1974, a more narrow "Direction and Screening Committee" was formed with J.P. Brans and R. Sneyers; Ph. Vincke will join the committee in 1975 (his first paper in the journal in 1976, vol. 16, no. 1) and later M. Despontin in 1977.

From 1980, this "Redaction Committee" decides to publish in each issue a tutorial: the first one is entitled "*Industriële vestigingsproblematiek overzicht van de wiskundige benaderingen*" by J.P. Brans (vol. 20, n 1, 1980). The others are due successively to M. Roubens (II); L. Gelders, F. Roode and M. De Bodt (III), P. Allen (IV); F. Driesbeke (V);, J.L. Kiehm and Ph. Vincke (VI), J. Fichet (VII), J. Lemaire (VIII), M. De Bodt and L. Van Wassenhove (IX), E. Balas (X), W. Herroelen (XI), M. Noirhomme-Fraiture (XII), F. Broeckx (XIII), F. Driesbeke (XIV), G. Libert (XV), M. Despontin, J. Moscarola and J. Spronk (XVI), A. Kemna and J. Van Vliet (XVII).

BIG CHANGE IN 1985: JORBEL is really born, published now exclusively by the SOGESCI-BVWB.

It is a new name for the journal (I think that I personally suggested such name at the Administration Council after the first successful ORBEL conferences) which has now

- a new editorial policy: in particular, only papers in English will be accepted for publication;
- a Belgian committee of associate editors is constituted with a representative from each university;
- an international committee of associate editors is created (which at present is still the same) with famous colleagues in different fields of Operations Research and from different countries;
- a new cover, still in orange color, representing a wise head, a design by Gerrit Janssens (University of Antwerp).

The principal editors are Ph. Vincke, M. Despontin and J.P. Brans (replaced by J. Teghem Jr. since 1986).

The publication of the tutorials continues in several issues:

L. Gelders and P.F. Groenweghe (XVIII), J. Teghem Jr (XIX) (in a dedicated issue (vol. 5, n 2-3, 1985) in honour of professor Jean Teghem at the occasion of his retirement and his seventieth birthday), G. Libert (XX), D. Tuytens and J. Teghem Jr. (XXI), A. De Palma, F. Driesbeke, C. Lefevre and C. Rosinski (XXII and XXIV), R.O. Keefe and V. Belton (XXIII), H. Muller (Malek), D. Matthijs and E. Nelis (XXV) and the last one in vol. 27, no. 3, 1987 by M. Fischer and P. Nijkamp (XXVI).

JORBEL became more and more international with at least the half of papers coming from countries outside of Belgium. The present and dynamic team of principal editors --- Jan Leysen (K.M.S.), Marc Pirlot (F.P.Ms), Frank Plastria (V.U.B.) and Philippe Van Asbroeck (U.L.B.) --- took over from 1992. They introduced several innovations like

- an improved presentation with new design for the cover;
- special issues on "*Combinatorial optimization in applications*" (vol. 32, nos. 1-2, 1992) and "*Production management*" (vol. 34, nos. 1-2, 1994).

Origin and history of the ORBEL congresses

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Before starting to describe the origin and life of the National Congresses of the Belgian O.R.Society (SOGESCI-B.V.W.B.), known under the name of ORBEL, it is worthfull spending some attention to what existed before and has been organized before, in the field of conferencing.

Smaller conferences were organised, the so called "Tables Rondes - Ronde Tafels" (English: Round table meetings), mostly one-day meetings. We will necessarily but unwillingly forget to mention some topics, discussed before 1974, as we were not member at that time. From 1974, the Round Table conferences dealt with following subjects:

"Ordonnancement de la Production-Planning des Ateliers (Brussels, June 6-7, 1974) ; "Applications de la Théorie des Ensembles Flous", avec Arnold Kaufmann (Univ. Grenoble) (Brussels 1975) ; "Distribution and Localisation" (Brussels, 1975) ; "Wetenschappelijk Beheer van Ziekenhuizen" (Antwerp, 1975) ; "Analyse des Données" (Brussels 1976) ; "L'Aide à la Décision", avec AFCET, Association Française pour la Cybernétique Economique et Technique, the French O.R.-Society with which our president *Christian De Bruyn* signed a "protocol d'accord" (Brussels 1976) ; "Econometrie ten dienste van het Bedrijf", with the SOR, the Dutch O.R.-Society (Antwerp, 1977) grown from a cooperation between Bernhard Tilanus and *Fernand Broeckx*; "La Science des Systèmes en Gestion publique et privée" (Liège, 1977) ; "Energie en O.R." (Maastricht '78, with the SOR) ; "Etude sur les méthodes de prévision" (Mons, 1978); "Master scheduling and Material Requirements Planning" (Antwerp 1980, with APICS, American Production and Inventory Control Society) ; "Optimization of Computer and Telephone Networks" (Brussels 1980, with the Union of Belgian Enterprises); "Methoden van Beslissingsvoorbereiding in complexe organisaties via simulatie, gaming en multicriteria-analyse" (Scheveningen, 1982, with the SOR); the 20th

anniversary of our society at IBM's Education Centre, La Hulpe in November 1982, where John P. Imlay, president of the board of M.S.A.(Management Science America) thanks to our member *Paul d'Aubioul* spoke and announced the birth of what we now call the "Information Society"; "Software for linear and integer programming" (Brussels, 1984) ; "Waarden en Performantie-criteria in de onderneming" and "Microcomputers and Decision-making" (both in Brussels 1986) ; "Forecasting" (Brussels 1987, with the Industry-University Foundation).

In the mean time a close cooperation existed with the "Koninklijke Vlaamse Ingenieurs Vereniging", by organizing midweek courses on O.R. and Applied Statistics (Antwerp, in 1985, 1986 and 1987). With the engineers association seminars were organised, e.g. "Simulation on Microcomputers" (Antwerp 1989), "Globale Optimalisatie en Neurale Netwerken" (Brussels 1993, organised by *Gerrit K. Janssens*), "Recente strekkingen in discrete-event simulation" (Antwerp 1993, organised by *Gerrit K. Janssens* with the NFWO-contactgroup on Quantitative Methods and Simulation), and "International Colloquium on Fuzzy Logic" (1994, with Teleport Brussels), under the presidency of our past-president *Marc Roubens*).

Let me remark that the Sogesci-BVWB was the first and only member to represent Belgium within IFIP (International Federation of Information Processing). We invited several other societies to join, what is now called FBVI-FAIB, Federation of Belgian societies related to the theme of information processing. Several of our members had an important functions in it, from mr. de Wasseige to prof. Gennart, and the current past-president *Jean Navez*. This joint organisation held their first congress at the Royal Military Academy in 1977, where our society now organises the ORBEL-congresses.

Under the impulse of *Jean Pierre Brans* the first national OR congress was organised, called **ORBEL1** because everybody agreed to continue the effort, aiming to give our young members a forum to speak in public and to exchange better information between French speaking and Flemish speaking scientists in Belgium.

This congress was organized in the auditoria of the Brussels university VUB, with *Fernand Broeckx* as the conference chairman and *Jacques Teghem* as chairman of the program committee. The congress joined 180 participants with 60 papers presented in three parallel sessions on December 9 and 10, 1981. The Belgian Science Foundation (NFWO-FNRS) sponsored this first event and has been a regular sponsor till this jubilee event, the Tenth ORBEL. Philippe Maystad, being Minister of Science, accepted to address the opening of ORBEL1. Invited speakers were Egon Balas (Carnegie-Mellon University, USA) and K. Boudwin (Exxon Corp., London).

ORBEL2 was organised two years later on December 10 and 11, 1983, with *Jacques Teghem* as conference chairman and *Ludo Gelders* as chairman of the programme committee. Invited speakers were L. Lions (Collège de France and INRIA-president), A.H.G. Rinnooy Kan (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam), K.B. Haley (Univ. Birmingham) and D. Vercruysse (Sidmar N.V.). For the first time a book exhibition took place, with the booksellers Wouters (Leuven), Presses Universitaires (Bruxelles) and North Holland Publishers, now Elseviers Science Publishers (Amsterdam).

The importance of the ORBEL conferences now was a fact. Some members thought of a decentralisation towards cities other than Brussels. A special commission was installed including *Christian De Bruyn* (Liège), *Jacques Teghem* (Mons), *Vincent Simonart* (IBM, Brussels), *Jacques Jansen* (ULB, Brussels), *Fernand Broeckx* (Antwerp), and thanks to *Walter Baets* (RTT, now called BELGACOM), ORBEL3 was held in the Brussels Belgacom tower on December 4 and 5, 1985. Ph. Naert (INSEAD, Fontainebleau) and R. Checkland (Univ.Lancaster,U.K.) were invited as plenary speakers. Due to a friendship with Ken Haley of the British OR Society an exchange took place. At ORBEL 3 two young British researchers, Mary Kelly and Nigel Mason, were invited. The year before *Gerrit K. Janssens* was cordially hosted by the British OR Society at the Young OR Conference in Durham.

It was our member *Hugo Pastijn*, professor at the Royal Military Academy in Brussels, who kept ORBEL in the Belgian capital. We will keep it there as long as the future generals of the Royal Military Academy (KMS-ERM-RMA) will invite us in their excellent location. It is now our secretary *Jan Leysen*, professor at the RMA, who is asked to defend that position .

With **ORBEL4** the congress date was shifted from the end of the year to the beginning of the year, which from then up to now has remained the new tradition. It took place at the RMA in January 1988, with *Marc Despontin* (VUB) and *Hugo Pastijn* (RMA) as resp. presidents. Invited speakers being Heino Adelsberger (Economic High school, Vienna, Austria) and Valerie Belton (Univ.Kent, U.K.).

Philippe Vincke (ULB) and *Gerard Colson* (Université de Liège) were presiding **ORBEL5** in January 1990. M. Ranyard (president of the British O.R. Society), P.Raynaud (IMAG, Grenoble) and P. Korhonen (Finland) were invited speakers.

ORBEL6 with *Yves Pochet* (U.C.Louvain) and *Hugo Pastijn* presiding, in January 1992, with R. Junger (Univ. zu Koln) and Luc Van Wassenhove (INSEAD) as invited speakers. During 1992 the decision was taken to make the ORBEL conferences a yearly event. This makes a reality the proposal of *Jean Pierre Brans*, made during the council meeting of January 1986.

Bertrand Maréchal (ULB) is the conference chairman of **ORBEL 7** in January 1993, and J. Barcelo (Univ. Politecnica de Catalunya, Spain), T. Ciriani (IBM Semea,Italy), J.H. Paelinck (Erasmus Univ., Rotterdam) and N.I. Gould (Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, U.K.) as invited speakers.

ORBEL8 with *Dirk Cattrysse* (K.U.Leuven) as conference chairman, and H.P.Williams (Univ. Southampton) and Marius Sinclair (Stellenbosch University, South Africa) as invited speakers.

ORBEL9 was organized and presided by *Yves Crama* (Univ. de Liège), who invited Jacek Blazewicz (Poznan Univ. of Techn., Poland), J.L. Guerrero (Georgetown Univ., Washington, USA), and A. Haurie (Univ. de Genève, Switzerland).

With **ORBEL10** its president *Gerrit K. Janssens* (Univ. Antwerpen) hopes to do as well as the previous versions in January 1996. Following the tradition well-known guest speakers are invited: Francesco Maffioli (Politech. Milano, Italy), Jan Karel Lenstra (TU Eindhoven, The Netherlands) and Gert Zulch (Univ. Karlsruhe, Germany) to address the plenary sessions. The jubilee event is completed with this special issue of the journal JORBEL, which you now have in hands.

Since the beginning the ORBEL series has offered the opportunity to researchers and industrials to present their advances in quantitative methods. The promotion to young researchers always has been an important point: this is proved by the yearly presence of the winner of the Sogesci-BVWB price. This price is awarded to a young graduate stressing a practical application of OR in her/his thesis. The winner is invited to present her/his work to the ORBEL public in a plenary session and is also welcomed to submit the work in a written form to our journal JORBEL.