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## Close encounters of the third kind? Neanderthals and modern humans in Belgium, a bone story

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## **Close Encounters of the Third Kind?**

### **Neanderthals and modern humans in Belgium, a bone story.**

Grégory Abrams

1. The scarcity of early Upper Palaeolithic human remains in Europe is intriguing, especially as bone implements (bone points and pendants) are numerous and sometimes very well preserved.
2. Palaeolithic research has developed particularly rapidly in Belgium, which is a prime area for the preservation of the archaeological sites (caves). However, the preponderance of research in caves in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century is now causing many issues as most of the major sites have been almost completely excavated.
3. The Middle to Upper Palaeolithic transition is often considered to have been a long process, lasting almost 20,000 years. However, the most recent chronological data in Europe seem to reduce the window of the replacement of Neanderthals by Anatomically Modern humans to a shorter period, between around 45,000 to 42,000 years ago.
4. The Middle to Upper Palaeolithic Transition is a complex phenomenon depending on the geographical areas. So far, in north-western Europe, there is no evidence of a contact between the Neanderthal and the modern populations.
5. When comparing radiocarbon dates, it is essential to ensure that the analytical protocol used to produce them is the same. The results of HYP and UF dates, for example, are not comparable.
6. It is essential in publications to mention uncalibrated radiocarbon ages because calibration methods evolve relatively quickly, and it is important to be able to have access to the raw data.
7. I would like to develop further research on the impact of carnivores on the preservation of hominin remains.
8. The focus of archaeology in Belgium is mainly on preventive excavations. The technical, financial, and human resources devoted to field research in prehistory are limited and do not allow the discovery and excavation of other sites which could, like Goyet, be very promising.
9. Access to research and data can be too expensive for researchers who are not employed by larger institutions and/or universities.
10. It is important to increase the dissemination of our research results to all audiences, making our work a true service to the public. These missions are part of the ambitions of museums and should be generalised to all scientific institutions.