

Campuskrant

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KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN



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500TH ANNIVERSARY**



(© Rob Stevens)

Barroso in 'Lovaina'

On November 26, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, was a guest at an international conference organised by K.U.Leuven's Center for Global Governance Studies (CGGS). In his talk Barroso had words of praise for K.U.Leuven: "In my country, Portugal, 'Lovaina' is one of the most prestigious names when we talk about universities." See full article on page 5.

Research calls for targeted prevention campaigns

Frequent video game playing can be a predictor of reckless driving

Accident figures show that people between the ages of 18 and 29 are at higher risk of dying in a road accident. This fact prompted Kathleen Beullens to carry out research into possible causes and connections. In 2005 she started a study of the influence of media on driving behaviour. In the influential *Journal of Adolescent Health*, the first results have been published of a survey of 2,200 pupils in the fifth and sixth years of fifteen Flemish secondary schools.

"There are two kinds of games," says Kathleen Beullens. "Racing games such as *Gran Turismo*, *Ridge Racer* and *MotoGP* challenge you to drive fast on racing tracks. In drive'em up-games such as *Carmageddon*, *Burnout* and *Need for Speed*, you don't just go fast, you get extra points for reckless driving. Over 40 percent of the young people in the survey play games of this kind several times a month, and a good 15 percent play as often as daily or several times a week. Looking at the personality characteristics of this group, they score above average on questions about sensation seeking and aggressiveness."

Chicken or egg
The first phase of the research revealed

Teenagers who often play video games in which they engage in fast or dangerous driving have a more favourable attitude towards reckless driving. One in three of the surveyed young people think that they will take risks on the road at least sometimes "to make driving more fun." This has emerged from research by Kathleen Beullens of the School for Mass Communication Research at K.U.Leuven.

Jaak Poot

a clear link between frequent playing and a favourable attitude towards fast and reckless driving. The figures are similar for both types of games and for

people play these games because they want to become road hogs? Or does playing create or reinforce a tendency to reckless driving? "One thing is abun-

"Only one percent of the young people say 'I'll never speed'. 27.5 percent are planning to speed often, while 15.5 percent say that they will do so very often or all the time."

boys and girls - apart from the fact that boys play this type of game significantly more often.

The study does not offer a solution to the chicken and egg question: do young

dantly clear: there is a link. This is an important conclusion in itself: by observing game playing behaviour, you can identify a group of young people with a significantly higher risk of dan-

gerous driving. This means you can create specific prevention campaigns for this group."

"My research has also produced some other interesting figures: only one percent of the young people say 'I'll never speed'. 27.5 percent are planning to speed often, while 15.5 percent say that they will do so very often or all the time. Moreover, nearly one in three young people say they think they will take risks on the road at least sometimes, in order to make driving more fun."

In the context of her research, Kathleen Beullens interviewed the same group of young people again two years later - by which time most of them had their driving licence and were using the roads. "The results are not yet cleared for publication. But I can give a sneak preview: there's nothing in the second part of my research that contradicts the conclusions from the first phase. However, my study is one of the first in this field, and there is still a long way to go. Thus experiments are needed to measure whether video games really do change attitudes or behaviour."

<http://journals.elsevierhealth.com/periodicals/jah>

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Dear Reader

"Everything in Leuven breathes history", says Rolando de la Rosa, Rector of the University of Santo Tomas in the Philippines, on the last page of this issue of *Campuskrant International*. It would not surprise us if he is thinking here, among other things, of Atrecht College. This superb historical building, home of our International Office for the past few years, is celebrating its 500th anniversary. One of the speakers at the celebrations was Taiwanese student Hsien-yang Tseng, who did a study of the college. He must have acquired a taste for it: he is shortly to start work on doctoral research at our university.

There are more highly promising young researchers in this issue: Lara Ramaekers and Nigussie Haregeweyn, who combine their interest in science with social commitment, were rewarded with a Development Cooperation Award. And in a competition in Boston, a team of twelve Leuven students won a gold medal for a bacterium that produces a drug when and where it is needed in the human body.

But our own university awards distinctions as well: the popular American scientist Jared Diamond was granted an honorary doctorate in November, and entered into debate with students on the occasion. It proved to be an inspiring afternoon, which you can read about elsewhere in this issue.

A great deal of inspiration: that's what we wish you for the New Year, too. Contributing to this with *Campuskrant International* is certainly one of our resolutions. See you in 2009!

Professor Mart Buekers
Vice-President International Policy

Estimado Lector

"Todo en Lovaina respira historia", dice Rolando de la Rosa, rector de la Universidad de Santo Tomás en Filipinas, en la última página de este número del *Campuskrant International*. No nos extrañaría que se refiriera entre otros al Atrechtcollege. Ese magnífico edificio histórico, desde hace algunos años la sede estable de nuestra Oficina Internacional, celebra este año su quinto centenario. El estudiante taiwanés Hsien-yang Tseng, que hizo un estudio sobre el colegio, intervino como ponente en los actos conmemorativos. Y le ha cogido el gusto: en breve llevará a cabo una investigación doctoral en nuestra universidad.

En este número también resaltamos a otros jóvenes investigadores prometedores: Lara Ramaekers y Nigussie Haregeweyn, que combinan sus intereses científicos con el compromiso social, fueron galardonados con un Premio de Cooperación al Desarrollo. Por otra parte, en un concurso celebrado en Boston, un equipo formado por doce estudiantes lovanienses recibió la medalla de oro por una bacteria que suministra medicación a la medida del paciente.

Pero nuestra universidad también otorga distinciones: el popular científico norteamericano Jared Diamond fue investido doctor honoris causa en noviembre, y con motivo de la ocasión celebró un debate con los estudiantes. Fue una tarde inspiradora, como podrá leer más adelante en este número.

Mucha inspiración es lo que también le deseamos a usted para el nuevo año. Contribuir en este sentido con *Campuskrant Internacional* es uno de nuestros buenos propósitos. ¡Hasta el 2009!

Profesor Mart Buekers
Vicepresidente Política Internacional



campuskrant international quiz

WIN AN ETCHING OF A UNIVERSITY LOCATION

Campuskrant International has been seized by a fit of generosity: take part in our contest and you will have a chance to win an etching depicting a university location.

To be eligible to win the prize, just send us the correct answers to the following three questions. The answers can be found in this issue of *Campuskrant International*.

E-mail your answers to: campuskrant@kuleuven.be, or send this page by regular mail to the editor (address see masthead).



1. In which year was the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, founded?

2. Who wrote the book 'Guns, Germs and Steel'?

3. From which university did Nigussie Haregeweyn receive his master's degree?

The correct answers to last issue's questions:

1. M3 stands for **Measure, Model, and Manage Bio-responses**.
2. The name of the library of the Faculty of Theology is **Maurits Sabbe Library**.
3. The huge 'cantus' was held on the **Ladeuzeplein** square.

An impartial outsider picked out the winner from among last issue's quiz contestants: **Shawn Keough**. He receives a copy of the book 'The Celestine Priory at Leuven'. Our heartfelt congratulations!

Supplement: International programmes

Along with this issue of *Campuskrant International*, we send you the supplement *International programmes - Tradition in Excellence in the Heart of Europe*. This contains a colourful, clearly organised and succinct presentation of the international programmes available at K.U.Leuven. The three recently established doctoral schools are also introduced. Finally, concise information blocks provide the main details on education, research, innovation, tuition fees, housing, and scholarships for students from developing countries. *If you would like to order further copies of this supplement, please send an e-mail to international@kuleuven.be*

Professor Jared Diamond receives honorary doctorate

“What are you waiting for? Go have babies!”

On 13 November, Professor Jared Diamond received an honorary doctorate from K.U.Leuven. The American physiologist, biologist, geographer and sociologist is one of the most popular scientists in the world today. In Leuven he entered into debate with around five hundred students about the future of human society.

Hendrik Lens

“Professor, you have studied the development and collapse of human societies. Tell us, would you still have children if you were twenty-five today?” asked one female student at the end of the debate. A hush descended in the hall, and Jared Diamond plucked at his beard for a moment. “If my wife agreed, I definitely would,” said the professor, who is the father of twins. “Most of the people in this hall are between twenty and twenty-five. What are you waiting for? Go have babies! But do it sensibly. It is your children and grandchildren who will have to solve the problems in fifty years’ time.”

That one simple question and that one simple answer nicely sum up the discussion which had taken place in the aula. The earth has a problem, and its name is the human, the only ‘animal’ capable of completely destroying itself. Human societies come and go. When a society disappears, it is usually to do with faulty decisions. “We shall be able to solve our problems, if we decide to do so!”

Third chimpanzee

Jared Diamond, a professor at the University of California, is one of the few scientists who in addition to his hundreds of scientific articles can also venture into popular writing without being taken less seriously as a result. For his work *Guns, Germs and Steel* he even received the Pulitzer Prize in America. Jared Diamond is also one of the few people who is at home in a range of diverse disciplines and can link them together in order to achieve a holistic vision, in this case about the human as the ‘third chimpanzee’ – in addition to the ‘common’ chimpanzee and the dwarf chimpanzee or bonobo, about human civilisations and the mechanisms that make them progress or implode.

Diamond’s greatest achievement – a characteristic shared by all great scientists – is that he manages to reduce a problem to an extremely simple question. He applies this method not just in his scientific articles, but in his popularising works too, and even on an autumnal Thursday afternoon in a question and answer session with students from a Belgian university. Jared Diamond did not mince his words, regretted some of his country’s actions as an American, but refused to comment when asked about political solutions or theories, preferring to stick to his areas of expertise.

“Of course there are reasons for hope,” said Professor Diamond, alluding to the new president of his country. “I am deliberately optimistic. Eight years of bad decisions do not mean the end of the United States. In terms of environmental awareness, I have noticed a shift over the last two to three years in the US which I would not have believed possible in such a short time. There are positive signs, too. The air quality in California is better than it was forty years ago, many of Europe’s rivers have fish in them again, which was also not the case back then, and the salmon stocks in Alaska are growing again.”

“But when you consider that there are 6.7 billion people alive today and that the world population will have doubled



Professor Jared Diamond talking to the press.

(© Rob Stevens)

yet again in the next 40 to 50 years, you have to keep your finger on the alarm button. The problems that this entails are not insoluble, but they are definitely not easy either. Science can come up with solutions, but the political will needs to be there to change things!”

Vikings

The debate was fuelled by a barrage of questions. Jared Diamond dug deep in his box of tricks, talking about the

Brazilian economy, the bird population in New Guinea, the disappearance of amphibians on earth, the bankruptcy of Iceland, the fall of the Roman Empire, frogs which hatch out their eggs in their mouth, the drama of Easter Island, where humans eradicated themselves, why Australians have not domesticated kangaroos and koalas, human migrations after the last Ice Age, the great leap forwards which was primarily due to geographical factors and

not in any way to differences between people, the cradle of our civilisation in the Middle East, and more specifically in present-day Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, the decline of the Vikings, and so on. Diamond is a gifted speaker and managed to forge the countless themes that he brought up in the space of an hour into a coherent vision. Perhaps his greatest achievement is that he is so quick to absorb what his new surroundings have to offer him.

“I spent years researching in New Guinea,” he says. “I went there to study birds, then worked on nature conservation, and eventually started researching the societies of the different tribes. A thousand languages are spoken in New Guinea, around a fifth of the languages recorded throughout the world. You can imagine the linguistic problems it causes. It must be a real relief for a country like Belgium that only two languages are spoken here...”

In *The Third Chimpanzee* Jared Diamond writes in detail about the tribes of New Guinea. The previous generation lived in the Stone Age, but today’s Papuans are modern people who can use computers and operate plans, he says. This is the best evidence that the differences lie not in the people, but in the circumstances in which they live. And perhaps that is the most important message that Jared Diamond has for us.

Honorary doctors 2009

Every year, our university awards honorary doctorates to people of especial merit in scientific, social or cultural terms. K.U.Leuven and UCL (*Université Catholique de Louvain*) have decided to celebrate their patron saints’ days together in 2009 and issue the degree jointly. This decision emphasises the two universities’ desire to strengthen the collaboration between them. On 2 February 2009, four distinguished people will receive the title of *doctor honoris causa* from the two universities. The two Academic Boards have opted for the theme: ‘multiculturalism, interculturality and diversity’.

Marjane Satrapi

Marjane Satrapi (Teheran, 1969) is an illustrator and graphic novelist. She won over the hearts of the public with her graphic novel *Persepolis*. In this autobiographical work, made into a film in 2007, she describes the different periods of the Iranian revolution, seen through the eyes of a young girl. In a critical but humorous manner she uses the book to educate Western readers about Iran, arousing interest in and empathy for the country and its people. At the same time, she debunks many of the myths about the Iranians and their culture. Marjane Satrapi now lives in France.

Promoter: Mr Thierry Bellefroid, journalist associated with UCL.

Sari Nusseibeh

Prof. Sari Nusseibeh (Damascus, 1949) is rector of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. He is known for his views on peace and dialogue in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Together with the Israeli politician Ami Ayalon, Sari Nusseibeh is co-author of the declaration *The People’s Voice*. On the principle of ‘two people, two states’, the authors call for a Palestinian state based on Israel’s 1967 frontiers and for a com-

promise about the Palestinian right to return. The aim of the declaration is to build up grass-roots support for a solution to the conflict.

Promoter: Prof. Helge Daniëls, Near Eastern Studies Unit.

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im

Prof. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im (Sudan, 1950) is professor at the School of Law of Emory University in Atlanta. Between 1993 and 1995, he was director-general of the African department of Human Rights Watch. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na’im is regarded as one of the leading experts on human rights in Islam. He rejects the idea that Islam and human rights are incompatible, and defends the position that the Muslim identity can be integrated with universal human rights. In workshops on human rights, he has introduced people to the principles of human rights in various African and Arab countries. His starting point is that human rights cannot be imposed from above with laws and formal rules if they are not supported from the bottom up by less educated people. In a recent work, he examines the possibilities for reconciling Islam with the

demands of the secular state. Here too, he attempts to build bridges between what are regarded by some as conflicting viewpoints on how human societies should be organised.

Promoter: Prof. Marie-Claire Foblets, Institute for Foreigners Law and Anthropology of Law

Paolo Dall’Oglio

Paolo Dall’Oglio (Rome, 1954) is an Italian Jesuit who cares deeply about faith, justice and truth. In 1992, he founded a mixed ecumenical religious community in the monastery of Mar Musa el-Habashi to the north of Damascus, which had been abandoned for centuries. The monastery of ‘Saint Moses’, Mar Musa in Arabic, is renowned for its hospitality and its involvement in dialogue with the Muslims. The community aspires to bring about a positive relationship between Islam and Christianity. The choice of Arabic as the language for everyday use and for the liturgical life of this ecumenical and international community is closely bound up with this purpose.

Promoter: Mr Benjamin Peltier and Mr Dries Deweer, students at UCL and K.U.Leuven

Multidisciplinary team receives prize in Boston

Students design a bacterium which gives medical treatment

In early November, twelve students defended the colours of K.U.Leuven at the fourth International Genetically Engineered Machines Jamboree competition in Boston. They received a gold medal for their Dr. Coli, a bacterium which administers medication in line with the patient's requirements.

Wim Troch

Synthetic biology is the biology of the future. It is the branch of science which builds or adapts living cells for specific tasks. For instance, bacteria can be developed which purify water or give off light at night. Juggling with DNA blocks – BioBricks – in this way opens up infinite possibilities.

On 8 and 9 November, 84 student teams from all over the world gathered at MIT in Boston for the International Genetically Engineered Machines (iGEM) Jamboree. Belgium was represented for the first time, with a team of twelve students from the faculties of Bioscience Engineering, Engineering and Science. The students were accompanied by professors, assistants and doctoral students from Leuven's BioSCENter, a platform created this spring which brings together all scientists conducting biological and biotechnological research within K.U.Leuven.

Tailored action

The students joined forces to develop Dr. Coli, a bacterium which administers medicines internally according to the patient's requirements. We asked three students from the team exactly how it does this.

Stefanie Roberfroid: "Dr. Coli is a self-regulating bacterium. The idea is that it receives a signal, for example from an infection, and then responds appropriately by producing a medicine. When it stops receiving the signal, in other words when the patient has recovered, it stops producing the medication and self-destructs."

Hanne Tytgat: "Dr. Coli can be taken in various different ways. It can be swallowed as a pill, but can also be used in yoghurt, for example. Its big advantage is that it is only active where it needs to be and for as long as it needs to be. That means medication which really is tailored to the patient's

needs."

"Dr. Coli – the name derives from *E. coli*, a bacterium found in the large intestine – has been developed for Crohn's disease, but in principle a bacterium can be developed for any disease. The type of medication which is produced will depend on the disease."

Is Dr. Coli something for the near future, or is building with DNA blocks a mere pipedream at present? Stefanie: "The project has not been completed yet – it is too big and complex. We have already obtained a lot of results, but a great deal of research is still needed." Antoine Vandermeersch: "Ethically, questions still remain about synthetic biology: what is possible, and what is permissible? There are enormous possibilities, but we have to use them sensibly and judiciously."

<http://www.kuleuven.be/bioscenter/igem/>

AC Milan measures players' fitness using Leuven technology

If football club AC Milan gets to raise another European cup in triumph sometime soon, it will probably be thanks in part to BioRICS or Biological Responses In Complex Systems, a very young K.U.Leuven spin-off.

BioRICS originated in 2006 as a spin-off from the Biosystems Department. It is developing a new generation of measurement and forecasting systems for the sports and wellness sector. One of these is a system that uses real-time measurements via sensors on the body to quantify people's mental and physical performance.

Football club AC Milan has bought the worldwide exclusive licence to use this technology. "In football it is often details which decide a match," says Jean-Pierre Meersseman, Belgian director of the Milan Lab at AC Milan. "A ball which hits the post, a player who starts his tackle too late, you name it... A lot has to do with mental and physical fitness. That's why it's crucial to know that the players we use are in top form. Thanks to this revolutionary method which we have developed together with BioRICS, we are now better able to assess how fit a player is physically and mentally. On the basis of this information, we can adjust training sessions individually, give players different support and even take tactical decisions."

However, this is not to imply that the trainer will be replaced by a laptop next

to the pitch. "Wearing sensors during matches is prohibited, and anyway the trainer is an integral part of the experiment and can't be left out," says Professor Daniël Berckmans, head of Research and Development at BioRICS, which developed the new technology.

After extensive tests, the system is

now ready to be used permanently at AC Milan. Ultimately, it is expected that the technology will be usable in fields such as track racing, motor sports, sports rehabilitation and sleep monitoring for drivers. (ff)

<http://www.biorics.com/>



INSHORT

Praise for Cardiology Department

The September issue of *Circulation*, the leading journal in the world of cardiology, sang the praises of the multidisciplinary research work of the Cardiology Department at the University Hospital Gasthuisberg. The department, led by Professor Frans Van de Werf, is regarded as a centre of excellence because of its pioneering work into areas such as thrombolysis and myocardial infarction.

"As Brussels is to European politics, so Professor Frans Van de Werf is to European cardiology," says the journal. Van de Werf is swift to play down this personality cult. "It's not my achievement, but the achievement of our team that we are among the forefront in Europe," he says. "What's unique is that a great many diverse research projects into different facets of heart conditions are gathered together on our campus, and that we are active in all areas of cardiology." Scientists from all over the world are attracted by the extensive possibilities offered by the Leuven research centre. Among other areas, the Cardiology Department excels in administering stem cells after a heart attack, research into systolic hypertension in older people, heart murmur in sportsmen and women and assist devices for terminal heart failure.

The team is also prominent in the field of imaging and the use of large test animal models. For example, a sheep model has been devised for research into atrial fibrillation. Tilt training as a treatment for recurrent neurocardiogenic syncope, in which the patient is placed on a table which can tilt to up to 60 degrees, is a Leuven-based technique. UZ Leuven also houses the largest centre for heart transplants in Belgium. Since the first heart transplant was carried out in our country in 1983, a total of some five hundred patients have received a replacement heart in Leuven.

UZ Pellenberg in top ten

The International Society for Orthopaedic Clinics has included the Pellenberg campus of UZ Leuven in the list of the ten best orthopaedic institutions in the world. Every three years, the ISOC selects the best orthopaedic institutions and assesses them in terms of innovation, service provision, teaching and research. The ISOC particularly praised the greatly extended UZ rehabilitation centre and the hospital's role as one of the largest training centres for orthopaedic surgeons in Europe.

European Commission President Barroso speaks at conference in Leuven

“Global Governance is being created now”

On November 26, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, was a guest at an international conference organised by the Leuven Center for Global Governance Studies (CGGS). Barroso said how pleased he was that the CGGS had been set up, and highlighted the major role played by K.U.Leuven in developing the European idea.

— Toon Cox —

The Leuven Center for Global Governance Studies is an interdisciplinary research centre set up last year in the Human Sciences Group. The centre's research focuses mainly on globalization, governance processes and multilateralism. At the end of November the CGGS invited an impressive gathering of academics and policymakers to join a debate on the role of the European Union on the international stage.

“Originally we had intended this as an inaugural conference”, says Professor Jan Wouters, director of the Centre. “However, we have now been operating for a year and a half and we have already organised about fifty conferences. Experience has shown that both policymakers and academics are in need of a neutral forum to bring together academic expertise and international practitioners on complex issues.”

Among other things, the international conference aimed to partly dispel the myth of a paralysed European Union. Wouters: “Traditionally the EU is presented as a player that is only able to exert soft power, and then brings into play its diplomatic persuasiveness and development cooperation. But the EU should not be underestimated. Next to its central role in the international trade system and in the global instruments for climate change and its normative influence in many areas of economic regulation, it has developed its own security



(© Rob Stevens)

and defence dimensions and is setting up more and more military and civilian operations. This is not without a struggle, but particularly over the past ten to fifteen years the Union has become increasingly important in the context of global multilateral processes and organizations, as is demonstrated in our book on the partnership between the UN and the EU.”

Excellent timing

Main speaker at the conference was José Manuel Barroso, the President of the

European Commission. In his talk he had words of praise for K.U.Leuven: “In my country, Portugal, ‘Lovaina’ (*Portuguese for ‘Leuven’ – ed.*) is one of the most prestigious names when we talk about universities. If we look at the history of Europe, we see that Leuven has played an important role in the development of the European idea. So it is an honour for me to be a guest here.”

According to Barroso the current juncture, with the world financial crisis, is exceptionally important for the development of the idea of Global Governance.

“I must congratulate the CGGS on the timing of this conference (*laughs*). You couldn't have chosen a better moment, just a week and a half after the Financial Summit in Washington. Because of the financial crisis we are now standing at the dawn of a new era for Global Governance, which is also becoming increasingly important as a mission for Europe: we have to devise answers to global problems on a worldwide scale.”

“This is precisely why the international summit in Washington was so significant. You could sense that history was in the making. The leaders of over twenty very different world economic powers – from the US to Brazil and Indonesia, to Russia, South Africa, China and, of course, the European Union – demonstrated huge determination there. In my view, this summit laid the foundations for a new form of Global Governance. I am convinced that, when the current global financial crisis is history, the books will say that this was the moment when Global Governance was created.”

In fact, Global Governance seems to be one of Barroso's pet subjects from his time as an academic. “I worked on this topic as a member of the academic world. In the 1990s, as a visiting professor at the University of Georgetown, I helped create the first international certificate in Globalization Studies.”

<http://www.globalgovernancestudies.eu>

85 year-old doctoral student Andrew Wilson

“Old men don't just do foolish things”

‘You're never too old to learn.’ Not everyone takes this as literally as the British former journalist Andrew Wilson. At the age of eighty-one, he started work on a doctorate – “Out of self-respect.” It's now over three years later, and his research should be complete by the end of this academic year.

— Wim Troch —

Andrew Wilson might perfectly reasonably have said at the age of sixty-five that he wanted to slow down a little. The Briton was a soldier during the Normandy landings, took part in the liberation of Belgium, travelled the world as a journalist for *The Observer* – he was Moscow correspondent at the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union – and has written numerous books on military subjects.

But the word ‘retirement’ isn't in his dictionary. Eighteen years ago, at the age of sixty-seven, he set up the *European Press Agency*, which specialises in reporting on Russia, and started his doctoral studies over three years ago. “I wanted to do something academic, out of a kind of self-respect. I wanted to do something really properly for once... Now and then I long for a bit of peace and quiet, but when it comes down to it I'm an energetic person. I like taking on a lot, that's the way I am.”

Not all butchers

“The subject of my doctoral thesis is the influence of age on the taking of military decisions. I'm focusing par-

ticularly on the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 and the First World War. I grew up in the shadow of the First World War. My father was wounded in it, so the war had a big impact on my life. Also, and more importantly, I have come to the conclusion that all later conflicts, such as the Second World War and the Cold War, can be traced back to the First World War. To the way it was approached, to the way it was settled, to the way in which peace was concluded, and so on. That's why I chose this subject.”

So does growing older have an effect on the taking of military decisions? “Well, the answer is more complicated than you would think. There's a tendency nowadays to think that old men only do foolish things. Of course they do, but my research has shown that the main factor is the commander's personality. In the case of some commanders the quality of their decisions did indeed decrease as they grew older, but not with others. Successful commanders – and this is a constant theme running through my study – remained young in their thinking. And this had the effect of avoiding a lot of unnecessary fight-

ing. Not all the commanders were necessarily butchers, you know.”

Gorbachev

Wilson divides his time between Brussels and Moscow. “Since Gorbachev's presidency I've been fascinated by Russia. I was there as correspondent for *The Observer*. By chance and totally unexpectedly, our previous correspondent had suddenly been expelled. But then I saw that something important was happening. That period of reform under Gorbachev was a fantastic period for me. I had never dreamt of becoming a journalist, but by writing about the events that affect our lives I opted for what is probably the most satisfying profession there is.”

Whether by chance or design, his home in Brussels is near the Royal Military School, in the heart of the European district. After all, where else would a citizen of the world such as Wilson live? “I really like living here. I'm seriously considering staying here for good should I retire – which of course I won't. You know, there's more history per square kilometre in Belgium than in any other European country. I also



(© Rob Stevens)

like the intimacy of Brussels. The city is actually a collection of villages, and everyone's friendly in such a village. And the fact that I'm married to a Belgian is the most important secret link, of course.”

His doctorate should be completed this academic year. And what's next? “I haven't thought much beyond the end of my thesis, but I think I'll take a break and spend more time on reading, music and poetry. I haven't had enough time for such things over the last few years, I'm afraid...”

You can consult the most recent news bulletins from the *European Press Agency* on <http://www.russia-eurasia.net>.

Atrecht College — home of the International Office — celebrates its 500th anniversary

From home for poor students to world heritage site?

“Atrecht College lives in my memory as Leuven’s city gate,” recounts Hsien-yang Tseng from Taiwan. “We came by bus from the railway station and the first thing we saw was that gate and that beautiful pagoda tree, the only bit of greenery in Naamsestraat. Then there was a reception in the salons with their beautiful décor. After registering, here we knew the new life in Leuven began. I was delighted when I was given that very college as a subject of study. And now I have had the chance to give a speech about it!”

Jaak Poot

Hsien-yang Tseng has a master’s degree in conservation of monuments and sites (K.U.Leuven and Cheng Kung University). He will be coming to Leuven next year to spend at least four years working on a doctorate. On 21 November he was the guest speaker at the celebration of Atrecht College’s five hundredth anniversary. “I talked not just about Atrecht College, but about the study I have carried out about 25 other colleges in the city centre, such as the Hollands College – now the Paridaens Institute. As a Taiwanese, I have received the chance to deepen my knowledge of world heritage sites and monument conservation at K.U.Leuven, a discipline which attracts little interest in my own country. This is hardly surprising, as we can’t even join UNESCO.”

Before he became bishop of Atrecht, Nicolaus Ruterius founded the college in 1508 as a home for poor students. From then until the 18th century, it was gradually converted into a residential college, with a reception hall, rooms, a library, a chapel, two courtyards and an interior garden. After the French Revolution it was sold, and the building passed through the hands of a succession of private owners until the twentieth century. It was repurchased by the university in 1921, which first used it for fifty years as a residence hall for female students, entrusting its management to the sisters of the Paridaens Institute. In 1977 the Student Services were housed there, and it has been home to the International Office for a number of years now.

World heritage

“Together with the Flemish government and the Flemish UNESCO Committee, the Flemish administration has been working for a number of years now on gaining world heritage status for the university colleges,” says Professor Koen Van Balen of the Centre for Conservation. “The problem is that 75% of recognised world heritage sites are in Europe. UNESCO is not particularly keen to accentuate the imbalance even further, but most of the applications come from here. This is because there is both the interest and the money in Europe to draw up applications. Therefore Atrecht College has been included in a request for recognition for all the university colleges. In this, we are following in the footsteps of the Leuven Beguinage. It is not recognised individually as a world heritage site either, but forms part of a group of thirteen beguinages.”

The colleges have been on UNESCO’s Tentative List for Belgium since 2002. “The recognition proposal also picks up on a new trend at UNESCO,” says Koen

Van Balen. “The preference now is for projects where the buildings are associated with the non-physical heritage, in this case the link between the university and the city. To this end, contacts are made with other countries, including in the Coïmbra group, as the chances of gaining recognition are higher if the application relates to the university/urban fabric at various locations in Europe.” First of all, though, the Flemish Community needs to recognise a number of colleges as monuments – at present, only the tree is classified.

Monument Watch

The Centre for Conservation has in the meantime received informal consent for a UNESCO chair at K.U.Leuven. Koen Van Balen: “We based this application on the concept of ‘Monument Watch’, which we have been working on for years, among other things in connection with our advanced master’s degree. The concept covers all aspects of preventive care and monument conservation. Hopefully we will receive the definitive go-ahead soon.”



Hsien-yang Tseng at the gate of Atrecht College.

(© Rob Stevens)

What then? A training course of one to two months, with research and lecture programmes, supplemented with websites and short seminars. The course will be aimed at international managers of world heritage monuments, among others. “Obviously, this means significant recognition for K.U.Leuven and the International Raymond Lemaire Centre for Conservation,” says Koen Van Balen. “It increases the international standing that the Centre has built up over the past thirty years.”

More international guests will be coming to Atrecht College soon, then. “I

think that K.U.Leuven should continue to welcome its international students in that unique setting,” says Hsien-yang Tseng. “As a new guest in Leuven, it is a special experience to find yourself in such a beautiful setting. Those stylish salons, the summer pavilion, the inner gardens, the passage leading through to the city park... it gives you a double sense: I am going to feel at home here, and I have come to a university that is building on centuries of experience in research and teaching.”

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists>

International students very satisfied with learning and living in Leuven

K.U.Leuven has achieved outstanding results in the second part of the International Student Barometer. At 89 percent, its score for satisfaction with the learning experience and with the support provided is four points higher than the international average across 150 institutions in ten countries.

In 2007-2008, K.U.Leuven took part for the first time in a survey of international students’ levels of satisfaction with their host university. “As well as giving us feedback about our performance, the survey also enables us to compare ourselves with prestigious universities worldwide”, says Trees Deloddere, head of the Admissions & Mobility Unit. In May, *Campuskrant International* reported on the results of the survey at the time of the student intake. The International Office now has the conclusions after a year’s study.

K.U.Leuven gained top scores for the expertise of its teaching staff, its libraries and the use of technology. It also scored better than the global aver-

age for the standard of academic English. Leuven teaching staff also scored well for their teaching methods and the academic standards they apply.

Safe city

Students are even more satisfied with the living conditions in our university city. With a score of 91 percent, Leuven comes eighth in the world, and actually ranks top of a limited selection of renowned universities. With the feeling of safety in particular, students in Leuven are significantly more satisfied than average. Other particularly highly rated aspects in this category are the outstanding sports facilities and the public transport using the free bus pass.

The services provided to international students also received an outstanding score: 89 percent compared with an average of 85 percent. The highest ratings go to the registration service and the International Office. The health services and student restaurants are also appreciated, whereas these support services receive rather mediocre ratings worldwide. On the other hand, satisfaction with career advice is low. “Traditionally, this is

an aspect in which universities in the English-speaking world invest a lot, whereas we don’t,” observes Trees Deloddere. “The academic authorities are now looking into whether a change of direction is called for here.” There is also enthusiasm about the meeting centre for international students, Pangaea. However, international students want even more integration and contacts with local students and their societies.

Do students feel so happy in Leuven that they would recommend the university? For this criterion, Leuven is ranked number three in the world, and is number one in the group of universities with which it primarily wishes to compare itself. Not a single student said that he would actively dissuade others from studying at K.U.Leuven, and only two percent confined themselves to saying “I will not encourage anyone to come here”. By contrast, 44 percent would actively advise others to choose Leuven and 42 percent would react positively to a question in that sense (12 percent had no opinion). In other words, some 90 percent say that it was a very worthwhile experience.

(jp)

Development Cooperation Prizes

Combating desertification in Ethiopia

Every year, a number of students and young academics receive the Development Cooperation Prize for their final dissertation or publication. This year, no fewer than five of the prize winners are from Leuven. One of them is Nigussie Haregeweyn, who looked for a solution to sedimentation in irrigation reservoirs in his doctoral research.

Lien Lammar

Nigussie Haregeweyn (35) is a prize winner from Leuven, but one with Ethiopian roots. He received a master's degree in soil science and water management from Alemaya University in Ethiopia. In 2002 he moved from Mekelle University, where he was a lecturer, to K.U.Leuven, to spend four years working on his doctorate in the Physical and Regional Geography Research Group led by Professor Jean Poesen. Nigussie's research formed part of the Zala Daget Project to tackle desertification in the Tigray Highlands in North Ethiopia, a cooperative venture between Belgium and Ethiopia financed by the Belgian organisation for University Development Cooperation (VLIR-UOS). Under the title 'Reservoir Sedimentation in the North Ethiopian Highlands: assessment and modelling of controlling factors and impacts', Nigussie looked for a solution to the sedimentation in irrigation reservoirs, which is a common problem.

"The north of Ethiopia is a dry area," he explains. "A lot of rain falls from June to September, but it is dry for the rest of the year. To give the crop fields the water they need, numerous dams have been created with water reservoirs. However, we are seeing increasingly rapid sedimentation in these reservoirs, which reduces their capacity. The sediment also binds with nutrients which are needed for the crops upstream. This causes problems, because the farmers are not always in a position financially to compensate for this loss with fertilisers."

Of the five hundred dams which were supposed to be built in the Tigray region in the period 1994-2003, only a tenth were finally realized. Nigussie

surrounding fields and improve the fertility of the soil. This may be an option for rescuing the existing reservoirs without high costs."

Nigussie Haregeweyn:
"We discovered that the deposited sediment is much more fertile than the original soil. Local farmers could use it to recover the surrounding fields and improve the fertility of the soil."



(© Rob Stevens)

subjected thirteen of these reservoirs to a thorough study. "Nearly half the reservoirs displayed a high degree of sedimentation, as a result of which their durability is much lower than was initially expected. We also discovered that the deposited sediment is much more fertile than the original soil. Local farmers could use it to recover the

Nigussie hopes to be able to publicise his research more widely. "Increasing soil erosion and the associated sediment-related loss of nutrients is a hidden but serious problem. Policy-makers and development organisations need to be aware of it. Hopefully, my research can help with this and offer solutions where necessary."

Familiar Leuven

What particularly surprised him in Belgium were the facilities at the university. "In Alemaya we did not have the facilities you find at K.U.Leuven. There is also much more interaction between teachers and students here. The lecturers are far more available than at the university in Ethiopia. The 'teaching/learning' process is completely different here."

He may have noticed that the students don't stop at just one drink when they go out, but Nigussie's main perception of Leuven is as a small, charming city with friendly people. "Leuven feels so familiar," he says. "During the time that I lived there, I made many friends. I even suffered from homesickness when I had to move to Brussels, where I'm taking a course at the Royal Museum for Central Africa. It was as if I had left my own home. Life in Brussels is completely different, but it's a fascinating experience."

Even more than Leuven, Nigussie misses his home country, where the two loves of his life await him: his wife and daughter. "My daughter is 18 months old. Now that I have a family, I suffer from homesickness far more. I phone home twice a week, sometimes more. It depends on my stress levels," he says with a smile.

There were four other Leuven prize winners: the students Lutgart Lenaerts (in Ethiopia on a travel scholarship), Lara Ramaekers and Katrien Descheemaeker, and researcher Carla Oporto. Full details about these prize winners and the Development Cooperation Prize can be found at <http://www.devoprize.africamuseum.be/en/>

Premios de Cooperación al Desarrollo

Abono barato para agricultores cubanos de frijoles

Cada año el Premio de Cooperación al Desarrollo se otorga a algunos estudiantes y jóvenes científicos para sus tesis finales o publicaciones. Este año hay nada menos que cinco premiados lovanienses. Uno de ellos es Lara Ramaekers, que ganó el premio por su investigación sobre el abono de frijoles en Cuba. Se fue allá en el marco de su formación de master en agricultura tropical y realizó su investigación con la estudiante doctoral Roseline Remans, bajo la supervisión del profesor Jozef Vanderleyden.

Lara: "Los frijoles son, en grandes partes de África y América Latina la comida: 'poor man's meat', es decir el sustituto de la carne para la gente pobre. Por eso es muy importante que los frijoles estén cultivados de manera eficaz para que sean suficientemente rentables. En nuestros países lo resolvemos utilizando abono artificial pero en muchos países pobres esto resulta demasiado caro o simplemente no llega a destino a causa de una red de carreteras defectuosas."

En Cuba Lara fue acogida con los brazos abiertos por los campesinos locales. "El respeto de los agricultores era grande, demasiado grande en sí mismo. Fuimos recibidos como los científicos importantes que iban a resolverlo todo. Aunque yo tenía la formación, para mí no era más que la primera vez que me encontraba en un campo de frijoles. Nosotros necesitábamos su experiencia, ellos nuestro conocimiento."

Buen provecho

"Examiné el uso de un abono natural por medio de rizobacterias para unas variedades de frijoles en diferentes regiones. Éstas son bacterias que viven en la superficie de la raíz o dentro de la raíz de la planta del frijol. Utilizábamos dos variedades, *Rhizobium* y *Azospirillum*. Se mezclan estas bacterias en tierra con semillas de frijoles, justo antes de sembrarlas en el campo, y desde ese momento las bacterias-*Rhizobium* entran en simbiosis con la planta del frijol. Transforman el nitrógeno del aire en nitrógeno para la planta y a cambio reciben de la planta elementos nutritivos. Las otras bacterias que fueron utilizadas, *Azospirillum* estimulan el desarrollo de los vellos de las raíces y fomentan así el crecimiento de la planta del frijol."

"Al menos, esto es la teoría. Resultó de la investigación que el éxito de este método depende de las variedades de

frijoles y de los factores ambientales. Con algunos frijoles creció la cosecha, con otros justamente disminuyó. Por eso este tipo de investigación es muy importante para la Cooperación al Desarrollo: uno cree haber encontrado a primera vista la solución para un problema de nutrición real, sin embargo ésta únicamente podrá ser eficaz si uno cuenta con las circunstancias locales, como la composición del suelo y las tradiciones de la población local."

Pues lo que no carece de importancia es que los frijoles deben tener buen sabor. "Hicimos una encuesta con noventa campesinos preguntándoles qué frijoles cultivaban y cuáles les gustaban más. Más o menos hay tres tipos de frijoles: negros, rojos y blancos. Los negros son los más apreciados porque a ellos hay que añadir la menor cantidad de ingredientes para hacer una comida rica. En el caso de los blancos hay que añadir carne



(© Rob Stevens)

para que sean comestibles. También importante: hay que remojar los frijoles antes de prepararlos. Una especie de frijoles que necesita estar a remojo durante mucho tiempo es de antemano menos conveniente, aunque reaccione bien con la bacteria – ése fue además el caso de una de las variedades de la investigación."

"Según eso es imposible aconsejar tarde o temprano un solo método a los campesinos locales. El paso de la investigación a su aplicación nunca es evidente." (wv)

Traducción: Beatrice Schotsmans, Paula van Eupen, Joaquín J. Sánchez Gázquez

PictureTHIS



(© Rob Stevens)

Elvis lives!

On December 7, the KADOC Chapel – which was transformed into a casino for the occasion – was the location for the comic murder mystery *Las Vegas Wedding*. Twenty actors of Janus Theatre, the international students' theatre group, engaged in an extravagant mafia war between Italians and Mexicans. The 250 attendants were asked to place a bet on which one of them would survive. As all good plays, *Las Vegas Wedding* featured Ali G and Elvis Presley impersonators. The play was directed and produced by Hassan Awada (on the far right of the picture). Janus Theatre is supported by Pangaea, the international meeting centre of K.U.Leuven. <http://www.janustheatre.com/>



(© Peter Adriaenssens)

Relief house

On November 8, Rector Marc Vervenne, Sister Jeanne Devos (second from the right) and Professor Peter Adriaenssens (in the back) officially opened the Gowpyatha house in Bangalore, where Sister Devos's National Domestic Workers Movement is able to offer relief in a crisis to 16 to 20 children. These are mainly young girls who have fled from domestic work because of serious mistreatment and sexual abuse. At the centre initial relief is provided, the situation is assessed and help is started. The house was acquired with the help of a great many gifts from Flanders and the support of K.U.Leuven-based Sister Jeanne Devos Fund for Children's Rights.

500 words

**Rolando de la Rosa (55),
Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila**
**“K.U.Leuven taught me to
see things from a historical
perspective”**

Interview
Reiner Van Hove

Fr. Rolando de la Rosa completed a doctorate in Higher Religious Studies and Sacred Theology at the K.U.Leuven in 1988. In April of this year, he was installed as the 95th Rector of the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas in Manila, Philippines.

“K.U.LEUVEN IS KNOWN ALL OVER THE WORLD as an excellent university, so when in 1985, I was offered a scholarship grant to study for a doctorate in Sacred Theology, I immediately accepted it. It was arranged by Fr. Paul Zwaenepoel, an excellent Belgian missionary, and Fr. Frederik Fermin, a Dutch Dominican who served as Rector of our university for many years.”

“EVERYTHING IN LEUVEN BREATHES HISTORY: the old market, the cobblestone alleys, the splendid buildings, the rare books in the library, the ancient convents, abbeys, and monasteries. I learned to appreciate how the past can be a source for understanding the present and predicting the future. Each of my professors in Leuven made a strong impact on my way of thinking and believing.”

“LIFE IN LEUVEN IS QUITE SIMPLE, BUT EXCITING. I love the changing of the seasons. It seems that nothing and everything stays the same. My recurrent visits to the beautiful Abdij van Averbode upon the invitation of Fr. Rony Ceustermans are unforgettable. What I disliked was the weather. It was often cloudy and cold. But precisely because of it, I finished my licentiate and doctoral studies very quickly – three years, including an intensive study of Dutch.”

“MY DISSERTATION WAS ABOUT THE HISTORY of the indigenous secular and religious clergy in Latin America and Asia, with a special emphasis on the native Dominicans in the Philippines. One chapter of my dissertation was translated into German and published in a German anthology of historical studies commemorating the 500th anniversary of the discovery of the Americas in 1992.”

“THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS IS THE OLDEST UNIVERSITY in Asia, having been founded in 1611 by Spanish Dominican missionaries. In terms of student population (40,000), it is the largest Catholic university in the world, located in one campus. It has three ecclesiastical faculties and sixteen civil faculties. Unlike K.U.Leuven, the University of Santo Tomas is a private educational institution. It does not receive any financial subsidy from the government to maintain a high quality of education that is both accessible and affordable to most Filipinos.”

“THE UNIVERSITY HAS SURVIVED SEVERAL BATTLES for colonial supremacy, including two World Wars. During the Second World War, the university campus was converted by the Japanese government into a concentration camp. Despite all of this, the university has survived and prevailed. It has remained a bastion of Catholic faith and morals. It has produced four presidents of the country, outstanding jurists, excellent priests and bishops both in the country and Asia, eminent educators, scientists, industrialists, statesmen, journalists and broadcast media practitioners.”

“MY MAIN PRIORITY IS TO MAINTAIN THE HIGH QUALITY of education that the university is known for, develop its research capabilities, and expand our outreach programs for community service. I would like to maintain a strong tradition of enlightened obedience to Catholic teachings on faith and morals, in our academic and personal life, as well as in our public presence. I have adopted a policy of participative management where everyone, from students to administrators, feels responsible and accountable for the future of the university. Since the university depends solely on tuition fees for all of its expenditures, the global economic slowdown is expected to pose a great challenge to the university. Many of our excellent teachers and professionals are lured to go abroad because of better economic opportunities.”

