

# Campuskrant

## INTERNATIONAL

MAY 2008 | INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE OF K.U.LEUVEN | REVISTA INTERNACIONAL DE LA K.U.LEUVEN

KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT  
**LEUVEN**

**7** Evolutionary psychiatry  
**WHY DOES MADNESS CONTINUE  
TO PLAGUE US?**



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**ALUMNUS AND ELITE ATHLETE  
KIM GEVAERT**



(© Rob Stevens)

## Square vocals

The cantus is one of the essential ingredients of Belgian student life: students gather to fraternize, sing, and – could it be any other way – to drink beer. Normally, a student association privately organizes such a cantus for its members. But on April 10, LOKO, K.U.Leuven's student council, organized a huge cantus for all students. On the Ladeuzeplein square, two thousand students gathered to sing along with the carillon. You can spy the student codex in their hands, the book containing all of the traditional cantus songs.

A more than encouraging barometer

# International students give K.U.Leuven overall good evaluation

**W**e wanted to know how the international students perceive our university," says Professor **Mart Buekers**, internationalization coordinator. "And for an extensive range of elements: from the quality of the courses to the city's quality of life. All these aspects are in the International Student Barometer, which is an instrument of I-Graduate, a research service for higher education. The great advantage of the ISB is that you receive a benchmark: in each case our results are placed next to the result of ninety-one other educational institutions participating in the barometer. Among these are included elite universities from around the world, and thus it is also a very meaningful benchmark."

The entire international student population – undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate – received an invitation by mail to take part in the research. With 1749 respondents – more than 60% – Leuven obtained one of the highest response scores. Buekers: "The spread of participants across countries and faculties also accurately reflected our registration figures – that makes the data relevant."

### Word of mouth

The first part of the barometer gauges

"Is everybody happy?!" With these three words, a rock star has enough to organize a public satisfaction survey. A university wanting to investigate the satisfaction level of its international student public should approach this somewhat more thoroughly. With an International Student Barometer, for example.

Reiner Van Hove

the how and why of the choice of destination. For 80% of the respondents, K.U.Leuven was the first choice. "A realistic score," Buekers finds. "Students often compose a preference list, and traditionally, they still place an American or British university at the top. But Europe's momentum is clearly on the upswing. For us, location is thus certainly a trump card: Belgium is the political heart of Europe and an ideal base for exploring Europe. Still, 85% of the respondents chose according to the institution, and only 15% according to the country. The majority of the students thus consciously chose the quality of what we offer." That is also evident from another question in the barometer: what were the criteria for the students' choices? The quality of education and research, alongside institutional reputation, comprise the top

three. Employment and friends in the host country are less important.

The barometer also asked the students who or what helped them decide upon their choice of educational institution. Agents, advertising, and parents seemed to play a relatively small role. The most important advisors are friends, alumni, and the university's Web site. Buekers: "We have recently done a lot of work on the Web site. From the English homepage, for instance, one click gives you access to the complete catalogue of our English-language master's programmes, and via the doctoral schools, openings for doctoral students are presented in overview."

"The importance of friends and alumni is not new: word-of-mouth advertising has always played a large role in recruiting. That is also not surprising: you expect trustworthy informa-

tion from friends, while brochures usually sing praises to the university. Can we respond to that? Only indirectly, I think, by offering people what they have a right to: a good education in a good social setting. If you have a delicious meal in a cosy restaurant, then you go on to spread the word. Well, if our international students are satisfied with the mental food that they have received, we also automatically get a strong recruiting story." And they are certainly eating well, or so it appears from another result of the barometer: 89% of the respondents would recommend others to study at K.U.Leuven.

### Satisfaction with priorities

Satisfaction with how quickly registration requests were handled lies above the benchmark in almost every group. Buekers: "Only in the post-initial master's programmes is the processing time somewhat longer, and satisfaction a bit lower. That has to do with the credentials evaluation: for this group, we must verify visas and diplomas. Certainly this could be done more quickly for the visa, but here we are imbedded in a larger framework, and need to seek a solution together with the government."

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CAMPUSKRANT INTERNATIONAL

ADDRESS

Campuskrant International  
Communications Office  
Oude Markt 13 - bus 5005  
3000 Leuven  
Belgium  
phone +32 16 32 40 18  
fax +32 016 32 40 14  
campuskrant@kuleuven.be  
<http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/ck/international/>

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Reiner Van Hove

CONTRIBUTORS

Sofie Bas, Jaak Poot, Katrien Steyaert, Henk Van Nieuwenhove, Tim Vuylsteke

TRANSLATORS

English: John Hymers  
Español: Beatrice Schotsmans, Paula van Eupen-Lavrysen, Joaquín J. Sánchez Gázquez

DESIGN

Catapult

LAYOUT

Wouter Verbeylen

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rob Stevens

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Joris Snaet

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Dear Reader

I have a date with you in every issue of *Campuskrant International* on this second page, but this time you'll encounter me on the cover as well. To investigate how our international students perceive the different aspects of living and learning in Leuven, we recently carried out an extensive survey. I am happy to report the results of the *International Student Barometer*. Our over-all score was very good: our students clearly appreciate how we combine high-quality education with a pleasant living environment, which motivates us to keep our level high and to improve upon what we learned in the barometer.

Also motivating was the reaction of the three researchers receiving honorary doctorates from K.U.Leuven in February. Criminologist John Braithwaite, for instance, did not hide his enthusiasm under a bushel: "I can't think of any university anywhere in the world from which I would appreciate receiving this more than K.U.Leuven. I am mad about your city, of your history, and my colleagues in Leuven are each individually fantastic people." We, in return, found it a real honour to be able to welcome Professor Braithwaite and his fellow honorary doctors — environmental epidemiologist Bert Brunekreef and fishery biologist Daniel Pauly. And also to be able to interview them: three fascinating conversations with inspired researchers are the result.

Concerning K.U.Leuven's own research, you receive — as usual — a sampling in your *Campuskrant International*. In his doctoral thesis, historian Fabian Van Samang showed how language was one of the crucial motors of the Nazi murder machine. And of a whole different order is research within the new Leuven Medical Technology Center: you will be introduced to the camera pill and the intelligent dental prosthesis.

So, now I leave you to sink your own teeth into this issue. We hope that you find it to your liking, and come back for more ...

Professor Mart Buekers  
Vice-President International Policy



Estimado Lector

En cada número de *Campuskrant International* tengo una cita con Vd. en esta segunda página, pero esta vez Vd. me encontrará también en la portada. Para ver cómo nuestros estudiantes internacionales perciben las diferentes facetas de la vida y de los estudios en Lovaina, les presentamos hace poco una amplia lista de preguntas. Con mucho gusto le presento los resultados de este *International Student Barometer*. Globalmente tenemos mucho éxito: obviamente nuestros estudiantes saben apreciar claramente la combinación entre una oferta educativa de alto nivel y un ambiente acogedor. Esto nos motiva para mantener alto el nivel y mejorar los asuntos menores que el barómetro marca.

Lo que también nos motivaba era la reacción de los tres investigadores a quienes la K.U.Leuven otorgó en febrero un doctorado honoris causa. Por ejemplo, el criminólogo John Braithwaite no ocultó su entusiasmo: "I can't think of any university anywhere in the world from which I would appreciate receiving this more than K.U.Leuven. I am mad about your city, of your history, and my colleagues in Leuven are each individually fantastic people." Para nosotros también fue un gran honor poder recibir al profesor Braithwaite y a sus colegas — doctores honoris causa — al epidemiólogo ambiental Bert Brunekreef y al biólogo pesquero Daniel Pauly. Además poder entrevistarles: nos proporcionó tres entrevistas cautivadoras con investigadores muy motivados.

Como siempre Vd. recibirá un muestrario de nuestra propia investigación en su *Campuskrant International*. En el artículo en español Vd. puede leer por ejemplo por qué el comportamiento del gallito puede ser considerado como la fuerza motriz de nuestra economía. De otra clase muy diferente es la investigación efectuada por el nuevo centro *Leuven Medical Technology Centre*: Vd. entra en contacto con la nueva píldora-cámara y con la prótesis dental inteligente.

Bueno, ahora le dejo hincar el diente en este número. Esperemos que le guste y nos metemos de lleno en la cocina para preparar una nueva receta...

Profesor Mart Buekers  
Vicepresidente Política Internacional

campuskrant international quiz

WIN A COPY OF 'LECTURES FOR THE XXI<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY'

Once again, Campuskrant International has been seized by a fit of generosity: take part in our contest and you will have a chance to win a copy of the book 'Lectures for the XXI<sup>st</sup> Century' (based on the interfaculty course with the same name — see article in our September 2007 issue).

To be eligible to win the prize, just send us the correct answers to the following three questions. Two of the three answers can be found in this issue of Campuskrant International; the third answer is in the previous issue (December 2007). If you have already recycled the previous issue, you can consult it online at: <http://www.kuleuven.be/ck/international/>. Good luck and happy hunting!

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



THE ANCIENT SPORT OF WOMBATMINTON...

The correct answers to last issue's questions:

1. The acronym VISICS stands for **VISION for Industry Communications and Services**.
2. The wombat is professor Sampaolesi's favourite animal.
3. The archaeological site Dayr al-Barsha is located in **Egypt**.

An impartial outsider picked out the winner from among last issue's quiz contestants: **Marcelo Espinoza**. He receives an etching of a university location.

Our heartfelt congratulations!

**1. What is the length of the camera pill developed at ESAT-MICAS?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**2. In which city did athlete Kim Gevaert win gold in the 100 and 200 meter?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**3. What does the acronym SOLFA stand for?**

\_\_\_\_\_

## Engineering prize for thesis on cranial reconstruction

## “Our technique has already helped a patient”

For their engineering thesis, Leen Lenaerts and Katrien Baeck developed a computer procedure for the automated design of cranial implants. Together, they won first place at the Engineering Awards organized by KVIV (Royal Flemish Society of Engineers).

Sofie Bas

**K**VIV awards the most socially relevant theses of graduating bio- and civil engineers from every university in Flanders. Alongside technological knowledge, communication skills and scientific dedication play a role. With their thesis, entitled ‘Automated design of a defect-filling implant for cranioplasty,’ Leen and Katrien won first place.

“The design of a cranial implant begins with a CT-scan,” Katrien explains. “The cranial contours are filtered from the scan data, and serve as the basis for the implant.” Because the form of the skull is not known around the defect, the interior and exterior surfaces of the skull are reconstructed in comparison with a database of healthy skulls. “We use an active shape model for this,” Leen explains. “That is an intelligent statistical model that can determine, based on a set of healthy skulls, the average anatomic form of a skull and can determine mode shapes. Thanks to these data, the model can reconstruct a damaged skull according to the characteristics that bear the closest resemblance to the skull in question.”

Based on the obtained cranial surfaces and the detection of the interjacent fracture zone, the computer model of the entire implant emerges. By means of this model, a press mould is reproduced,



Proud prize winners Leen Lenaerts and Katrien Baeck.

(© Rob Stevens)

out of which the polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) implant is pressed. Finally, the sterilized implant is implanted and fixed to the skull with the help of small screws and mounting plates.

**Successful application**

“Thanks to our procedure, it is possible for the first time to automatically and preoperatively design defect-filling im-

plants for small and large defects in both cranial hemispheres,” Leen emphasises. “That is revolutionary because until now the surgeon has had to shape a PMMA implant manually during the operation, a method that is very labour intensive and not always equally effective. Therefore, to reduce costs, covering rather than filling implants are often used, which drastically raises the risk of infection.

Moreover, for unilateral defects – defects in one cranial hemisphere – the intact cranial hemisphere is mirrored on the defective hemisphere, an approach that is not always effective because no skull is perfectly symmetrical. With the assistance of our computer procedure, all these difficulties can now be avoided.”

To investigate the quality of the designed implants, the researchers have simulated a number of defects in healthy skulls. “After we ran the computerized procedure for these skulls, the anatomic reconstruction of our implants appeared to deviate no more than 1 to 1.5 mm from the intact skulls – a result that is remarkably better than with earlier procedures.” “In addition, we have also checked the force-resistance of the skulls,” says Katrien. “This is the first time that the sturdiness of cranial implants has been researched, and our design seems to be more than sufficient.”

The computer procedure was immediately applied with success: “In a ten-year-old girl, the cranial bone was partially reabsorbed when doctors had removed and replaced a section of bone after an accident,” Leen says. “At Leuven University Hospital, she received a defect-filling implant, designed with our procedure.”

Translation: John Hymers

## Cooperation between forty research groups

## Leuven Medical Technology Centre presents ingenious projects

In the near future, the doctor will give you a camera pill that provides images of your stomach and intestines and, if necessary, even stops and creeps backwards to investigate the risk zone more closely. Or you will wear an intelligent dental prosthesis that vibrates with a warning when you bite too hard. These and many other medical devices were introduced during a launch event of the Leuven Medical Technology Centre (LMTc), which connects engineers, doctors, and biomedical researchers.

— Henk Van Nieuwenhove —

**M**ore than a thousand researchers manning forty research groups attached to six faculties are working on the most advanced research programmes in medical technology. Their research is concentrated on five domains: medical imaging, bionic systems, biomaterials and tissue repair, biomonitoring and control, and controlled release of medicine in the body. Among other things, a surgical robot, a prototype for an ankle-foot prosthesis, a 3D facial scanner, and a computer-guided



Bob Puers

(© Rob Stevens)

bed that completely adjusts to your body have been developed within the LMTc.

**The intestinal TV channel**

Painful and unpleasant – that is the least you can say about an endoscopic exploration, wherein the intestines are investigated with a tube. Soon enough, that will be complete history. “The camera pill with built-in TV transmitter is already used orally, but has a number of disadvantages,” says Professor **Bob Puers** of ESAT-MICAS (the Microelectronics and Sensors Division of the Electrical Engineering Department).

“The pill runs on a battery that has in-

sufficient strength to follow the whole path through your body. We have developed a camera pill that can receive energy beamed in from outside. Now we are investigating how to best steer the pill, how to stop it in a suspicious zone, and how to have it creep backwards using built-in micro-legs.”

The camera pill developed in Leuven has a diameter of 1 cm and is 2 cm long and can send ten to fifteen images per second. For gastroenterologists, the camera pill is a wonderful instrument for collecting life-saving information, while the patient is spared a very unpleasant exploration.

**Smart prosthesis**

Technology is also supplying dentistry with increasing comfort: for instance, in the placement of dental prostheses. “Until now, it is normal procedure to let implants heal in place for three to six months before the definitive support structure is placed on top, says Dr. Eng. **Siegfried Jaecques** of the BIOMAT research group.

“That timeframe of three to six months is bridged with a temporary solution in anticipation of the installation of the definitive prosthesis. With certain patients, the waiting period can be shortened, or the definitive prosthesis can even be installed immediately. However, that is not completely without risk for everyone. We have now developed a prosthesis with a built-in safety that can be installed immediately.”



Siegfried Jaecques

(© Rob Stevens)

The most important condition for the durability of the implant is not to bite too hard, Siegfried Jaecques explains. “To measure the pressure caused by biting, we have built ‘intelligence’ into the metal arch of the support structure. By means of electronics, the deformations – measured by strain gauges on the implants – are converted into the deformations in the bone around the implants. If you go above the safe threshold value, a small motor – like that found in your mobile phone – vibrates your smart prosthesis.”

<http://www.kuleuven.be/lmtc/>

Translation: John Hymers

Every year, K.U.Leuven confers honorary doctorates upon persons of exceptional academic, social, or cultural merit. For 2008, the Academic Board chose the theme 'Environment, Environmental Policy, and Sustainable Development.' On February 4, Professor John Braithwaite, Professor Daniel Pauly, and Professor Bert Brunekreef received the honorary degree. On this page and the next, you can get further acquainted with these distinguished thinkers.

## Fish(ery) biologist and Honorary Doctor Daniel Pauly “Industrial fisheries still receive too many subsidies”

Professor Daniel Pauly (61) is the authority on fish, fishery, and ecosystems biology. He has developed models and instruments used worldwide to analyse fishery and marine ecosystems; he is the man behind FishBase, the world's largest online fish encyclopaedia; he has taken up the cause of sustainable fisheries for decades, which he has researched since the 1970s; and he pays great attention to the situation in developing countries. Currently he works at the University of British Columbia in Canada, where he is the director of the UBC Fisheries Centre.

Tim Vuylsteke

Daniel Pauly: “This honorary doctorate was unexpected recognition. I work very closely with Jos (Snoeks, one of Professor Pauly's promoters – ed.) and with the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren on the FishBase Consortium, but what we do there is – in the end – teamwork and it feels somewhat strange now to be plucked out as the only member of this group. But naturally I am very happy with the title, and I find Leuven an especially beautiful city.”

### Know-how

Daniel Pauly is a cosmopolitan. He has now lived and worked in Canada for a good thirteen years, but before that he had to call quite a lot of different places home. “That's right. I am a Frenchman, born in Paris, but I spent my youth in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. When I turned sixteen, I moved to Germany, where I completed high school,

and, at the age of twenty three, began to study fishery science at the University of Kiel – relatively late, thus.”

“I wanted to work in a developing country, and did not plan to stay in Europe after graduation. In 1974 I left for Jakarta, where I collaborated in an Indonesian-German project in connection with bottom fishing. And after I completed my doctorate in 1979, I left Germany for a second time and became a postdoctoral researcher in ICLARM – the International Centre for Living Aquatic Resources Management in the Philippines. In 1986 I became the director there, and would stay there until 1994 when UBC offered me a position as professor.”

“I have always remained interested in the situation in developing countries, and one of my foremost goals was to ensure that they could also make use of our know-how and the instruments that we developed. FishBase, the large fish encyclopaedia that you can now also

consult on the Internet, is an example of this, and Ecopath, a modelling package to analyse ecosystems, is also used all over the world. Because that last package also contains a full-text database of publications, it is pre-eminently useful in developing countries, where people usually have no access to libraries. Additionally, we have offered courses in many of these countries, and they were very successful. A number of people who now run research centres and the like were once our students.”

### Sea Around Us

“Since I have worked in Vancouver, I have particularly aimed my research at maintaining biodiversity, because most people who talk about fisheries take no account of the ecosystem, while fishing nevertheless has a very large influence on fish stocks. I am now studying how the impact of fisheries on biodiversity can be reduced, and one of the possi-



(© Rob Stevens)

ble measure is, according to me, supporting the small-scale fish catch. At this moment, industrial fisheries still receive too many subsidies, which thus must change.”

“Since 1999, the ‘Sea Around Us’ project has collected and presented world-wide data about marine ecosystems and fish stocks, and – among other things – has also charted the development of the fish catch. The Web site of that project ought to make our message to the larger public clear. Can we really direct policy with it? No – not directly, but NGOs such as the WWF naturally listen to us, and they indeed directly influence politicians.”

<http://www.fishbase.org>, <http://www.ecopath.org>, <http://www.seaaroundus.org>

Translation: John Hymers



(© Rob Stevens)

## Specialist in environmental epidemiology and Honorary Doctor Bert Brunekreef

# “There is still too little being done to fight air pollution”

Air contamination has a nefarious influence on our health. Naturally, everybody knows that, but Professor Bert Brunekreef (54), director of Utrecht's Institute for Risk Assessment Sciences, one of the leading European centres for environmental and health research, has also proved this scientifically. For this reason, and also for his community work in different committees and forums such as the World Health Organization, he received an honorary doctorate from our university.

Tim Vuylsteke

Professor Brunekreef: “It is my very first honorary doctorate, and I find it a real honour to receive it from such a famous and renowned university as K.U.Leuven. I consider it as a token of appreciation for the work of my entire research group.”

Brunekreef's career began at the University of Wageningen, where, after his studies in environmental sciences, he specialized in air pollution and the environment and health: “Almost immediately I paid attention to the interior climate and environment, and I researched their influence on health. During the first oil crisis, in the 1970s, everybody suddenly began to use insulation. I was already interested then in the consequences of this for people.”

“The intention of insulation is to reduce the displacement of air from in-

side to outside, and vice versa, as much as possible, but in so doing, the interior climate of a building certainly turns to the worse. Thus, exhaust-free combustion devices, for example, but also tobacco, dust mites, pets, and mould brought about an increase in allergies, bronchial infections, and asthma, especially among children.”

“I have also devoted many publications to air pollution, especially to the consequences of traffic-related exposure. An important investigation in that domain concerned a study of chronic respiratory problems in children living in the neighbourhood of highways. And shortly we are starting a large European project that is to verify the relation between air contamination, cancer, heart and vascular disease, and respiratory disorders in adults.”

“Alongside my purely scientific work, I am also active in the community. I sit in a number of advisory committees, such as the Dutch Health Council and the World Health Organization, and slowly but surely these activities are also bearing fruit. The emission norms for motorized vehicles are becoming ever stronger – a process that still needs to continue for some time – and gradually stricter rules are being made for less obvious but equally polluting means of transportation, such as ocean-going vessels.”

### Lobby

Does Professor Brunekreef find that he has sufficient influence on policy? “In the end, it is up to society to decide what it does with our results, what steps it takes. We, as scientists, as health experts, can only objectively establish

what the consequences are of a certain exposure, but democratic organs must make the final decisions, and they must naturally also take into account other interests and wishes than ours. That is inherent in politics.”

“I have certainly noticed the lobbying in Europe over the last few years on these sorts of affairs, with the result that still too little is being done to fight air pollution and the like. Nevertheless, in this day and age, politicians are happy to be advised by scientists, but that does not mean that they always do precisely what these scientists propose. Now, as I already said, I find that completely understandable, but that certainly doesn't stop me from thinking personally that still more should be done.”

Translation: John Hymers

## Criminologist and Honorary Doctor John Braithwaite

# “Justice is the least effective of all the post-industrial institutions”

The Australian John Braithwaite (56) is widely known for his research and publications on restorative justice, but over the past few years he has also looked beyond strictly criminological topics. Thus, for example, there is the Peacebuilding and Responsive Governance project, in which Braithwaite and his team are working out how peacebuilding can be carried out in concrete cases after armed conflicts.

— Tim Vuylsteke —

**J**ohn Braithwaite: “I can’t think of any university anywhere in the world from which I would appreciate receiving this more than K.U.Leuven. I am mad about your city, of your history, and my colleagues in Leuven are each individually fantastic people. No visit to Leuven has yet disappointed me.”

“But there’s a second reason why I have a special connection to Leuven. Hilary Charlesworth, my immediate colleague in the peacebuilding project, and consequently my steady co-author for the coming years, was born in your university hospital. Her father was staying in Leuven then for his doctorate.”

### Creek

“My career began in the University of Queensland, and actually I have always remained in Australia, except for a few short periods of research in the United States. After I earned my doctorate in 1977, my first book was published in 1979, *Inequality, Crime, and Public Policy*, indeed after being rejected by nineteen

publishers. Currently I am active in the Australian National University in Canberra.”

“My primary research topic has always been restorative justice, and the result of all these projects was always the same: recidivism occurs much less often following restorative justice proceedings than after a traditional criminal trial. Moreover, there is greater satisfaction among both perpetrators and victims, and feelings of revenge emerge less often among the victims.”

“The approaches that we research in Australia are comparable to what our colleagues in Leuven are doing. Concretely, for example, I am talking about restorative group conferencing, wherein a meeting is organized between the perpetrator and the victim, who, together with family members, lawyers, and a mediator, seek a solution. Additionally, community work remains a greatly used form of restorative justice.”

If restorative justice has so many advantages, why is it not always applied?

“Presently, most if not all developed countries have a certain form of restorative justice — even America, Russia, and South Africa, the countries with the highest prison populations. Still, there is much to be done, for restorative justice remains an alternative option, not the standard procedure. It is but a creek, and not yet the river.”

### Vicious circle

“At a UN conference in Vienna a few years ago, I was happily surprised that all present countries were in favour of improving and making the judicial system more humane. I, to say the least, had expected some opposition, but it seemed to go over well. And everything taken together, a lot has occurred in the last decade. But we still have a long way to go. In an ideal world, the intention should be that the criminal justice system heals the pain that the crime causes, but in reality the adage is far too often different: because the crime caused pain, we must inflict still more pain on the perpetrator. In this manner,



(© Rob Stevens)

we end up in a vicious circle. It is not for nothing that of all post-industrial institutions, justice is the least effective. We must really do something about this!”

“Do you want to hear something about the peacebuilding project? Well, together with my colleagues, I am studying how peace is restored after armed conflict in at least sixty case studies spanning twenty years, and what the conditions for success are. We are looking at how soldiers are re-integrated into society, but also how the children are helped to resolve the traumas of war. This last issue is extremely important. If you do not counsel children after an armed conflict, then in due course they become an ‘angry generation,’ with all the consequences of such.”

Translation: John Hymers

## Tesis doctoral sobre el estado social

# El comportamiento de gallito es la fuerza motriz de la economía

El despilfarro está (desgraciadamente) en la naturaleza del hombre. Cuando compramos un Ferrari de color rojo chillón lo hacemos sobre todo para seducir a la mujer y para infundir respeto a los espectadores. En esto no somos nada mejor que el pavo que despliega su totalmente inútil, pero — admitámoslo — magnífica cola de plumas. Esta tesis no es nueva. Lo que sí es nuevo es que un equivalente de este proceso biológico, que está vigente como una realidad económica importante, ahora se ha plasmado en unos modelos matemáticos. Ése es el trabajo del economista Tom Truys, que no por casualidad estudió historia y filosofía en su vida anterior.

— Henk Van Nieuwenhove —

**¿**Entender el sexo como pauta de la economía? “Efectivamente, es divertido comprobar que estos mecanismos biológicos se desarrollan exactamente de la misma manera que los mecanismos sociales y económicos que quiero estudiar”,

dice Tom Truys. “Gracias a la teoría del juego disponemos desde hace algunas décadas también de métodos matemáticos que nos permiten aplicar estos mecanismos a unos modelos rigurosos.”

La teoría del juego es el análisis matemático de conflictos estratégicos y tiene su origen en gente como John Von Neumann, quien más tarde ayudará en la elaboración de la bomba atómica y servirá de modelo para el Dr. Strangelove de Kubrick. “También podemos servirnos de esta teoría matemática para entender la evolución del sentido y de los conflictos estratégicos entre consumidores a la búsqueda de un status. La teoría del juego tiene unas posibilidades casi infinitas en las ciencias sociales, pero también en la física y en la informática”, según Truys.

### Ruina

Por lo tanto el comportamiento de gallito es un motivo importante para nuestras actividades económicas y mercantiles. Hombres y mujeres despliegan sus plumas de pavo para conquistar a posibles socios — patronos, clientes, parejas sexuales... — o para mejorar su status social. Sin embargo, si todos desplegamos los mismos esfuerzos por subir en la escala social, todo el mundo sigue pataleando. Es decir, allí está el aguijón del modelo matemático que nos pinta Truys. Cuando uno sube en la escala social, algún otro tiene que bajar necesariamente.

La dinámica de las plumas del pavo (léase: Ferrari) lleva a un despilfarro colectivo que puede arruinarnos. “Esta dinámica ‘sexual’ es un móvil impor-



tante de nuestra sociedad de consumo. Parece ser una visión pesimista, y lo es. Demuestra por qué los deseos humanos parecen ser insaciables, aunque más consumo tampoco nos hace más felices,

y posiblemente también por qué nos dirigimos a un desastre ecológico” filosofa Tom Truys. Sin embargo esa historia también nos da esperanza. “Este mecanismo de la elección libre del socio es asimismo uno de los elementos más importantes para explicar el altruismo y el comportamiento social. Por lo tanto se puede favorecer el deseo por un status social para fines sociales o para proteger el futuro de la humanidad.”

### Rosa

El trabajo de investigación de Tom Truys se vuelve totalmente original cuando está convirtiendo la competencia social de un problema en una oportunidad para los líderes políticos. La historia de la rosa es uno de los mejores ejemplos: “Un hombre en un entorno pobre puede mostrar su amor a su mujer regalándole una rosa. En un entorno rico este hombre tiene que comprar por lo menos una docena de rosas para transmitir con éxito el mismo mensaje. Pero, si a las rosas se les fija una carga fiscal suficientemente alta, también en un entorno rico una rosa será suficiente para declarar su amor. Después de la recaudación de impuestos sobre la rosa, tanto el hombre como la mujer serán tan felices como antes y los impuestos recaudados serán lucro puro.” Ah!, cómo la economía puede adquirir también un matiz romántico.

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

## International researchers teach at local colleges

# Firsthand contact with another culture

'Sharing Knowledge' invites researchers from developing countries to lecture at one of the colleges of the K.U.Leuven Association. "This project is framed within the sensitization initiatives of VLIR-UOS to turn the attention of students toward the North-South question and the cultural and academic riches of these countries," says **Klaartje Proesmans** of the International Office.

Jaak Poot

**V**LIR-UOS – responsible for University Development Cooperation within the Flemish Interuniversity Council – has funds available to sensitize students to the question of development," says Klaartje Proesmans. "Last year we concentrated on the millennium development goals. This year we asked the colleges to propose a list of topics that fit within their programmes and for which a third-world approach would be meaningful. We sent this inventory to students and researchers. The result? Twenty-three candidates from a broad selection of cultures: China, Pakistan, India, Algeria, Bolivia, Congo, and others. We are offering sessions on a broad selection of topics, from water collection to business ethics, music and art history, and on to themes for engineers and doctors."

Mexican **César Manrique** immediately signed up for two lectures. He stayed in Leuven in 2004-2005 with a scholarship to earn his master's degree in modern history. Professor Werner Thomas invited him to continue his work in Leuven with a doctoral dissertation under his supervision. The theme: the commercial and artistic relations between Flanders and Mexico in the sixteenth and seventeenth

century. He received a SBA (Selective Bilateral Agreement) scholarship from K.U.Leuven and started his four-year term in September 2007. In between, César worked in the National Art Museum and as a history assistant in his home town, Mexico City. That gave him a rich background for his first lecture, given to the students of the art department at Groep T (teacher training): the influence of pre-Hispanic art on modern art in Mexico.

"I spent a long weekend preparing a presentation with lots of images to underline my point of view on the influence of old on present art in my country," says César Manrique. "I started from the stereotype people gave me of Flemish students: they are very quiet and rather inactive. The experience proved the contrary. It was a small group of about sixteen students, and they asked questions galore, which resulted in an interactive exchange of views and ideas."

### Belgian friends

"In May, I will travel to Mechelen to talk with students of KHMechelen about colonial Mexican history," says Manrique. "The Belgian view of colonization is strongly influenced by their Congo experience. That's quite different for us. Our colonization period started in the sixteenth century and lasted for three hundred years. Quite a bit more than your seventy-five years with Congo."

"The Spanish introduced a completely new order of life. They taught us Catholicism and the Spanish language. Both cultures really merged into one new culture. We speak Spanish, but it is Mexican Spanish, with a lot of Indian words intermixed. That is really our language, like the Canadian French for Quebec. The Spanish people also mixed with the Indian natives to create a new Mexican population that has both native American and European characteristics. Some people see the Spanish colonization as a terrible process of exploitation of Indians. But I am more of the view that it helped create a very



(© Rob Stevens)

rich new culture. I intend to make the students in Mechelen reflect on what colonization can imply."

"I think *Sharing Knowledge* is really an excellent project," César Manrique states. "Students get firsthand contact with another culture and international professors. And that's enriching. For some of my colleagues, it is also their first real contact with Flemish culture and language. It helps us to integrate and enjoy our stay. Indeed, international students and researchers tend to mix more with other ex-pats. That is so much easier. But I think you must make local friends. In my experience, making Belgian friends proved to be a slow process, but the results are excellent!"

For more information:

[klaartje.proesmans@int.kuleuven.be](mailto:klaartje.proesmans@int.kuleuven.be)  
<http://www.kuleuven.be/vesta/Intercultural/Sharingknowledge.htm>  
[http://www.kuleuven.be/international/development\\_cooperation/index.html](http://www.kuleuven.be/international/development_cooperation/index.html)

Translation: John Hymers

### INSHORT

#### Programmes & application deadlines

K.U.Leuven offers an extensive range of programmes in English. You can find an overview at <http://www.kuleuven.be/admissions/>.

Non-EEA citizens must apply before February 1 for the Dutch-language programmes, and before March 1 for the English-language programmes. We prefer to receive the applications of EEA students before June 1. There is no deadline for predoctoral and doctoral programmes, nor for international and visiting scholars and specialization programmes.

Information about the application procedure and about our university, its admission policy, study and research programmes and their diploma and language requirements, etc., can be found on our Web site <http://www.kuleuven.be/english> or at the International Office: International Admissions and Mobility Unit, (t) +32 16 32 88 07, (f) +32 16 32 37 73, [admissions@kuleuven.be](mailto:admissions@kuleuven.be).

#### Alumni database online

The alumni association maintains an online database to improve communication between K.U.Leuven and its alumni, and to allow alumni to get in touch with one another. After registering, alumni can consult the database, update their personal details, and search for other alumni. To register, you simply enter your e-mail address and a password will be sent to you. Using your e-mail address and password, you can then log in to the database and search for alumni. It is also possible to send an e-mail to your former classmates and to look up lost friends. You can choose whether or not your personal information will be visible to other alumni members, and you can enter your current employment details. <http://alumni.kuleuven.be>

continued from page 1

## International students give K.U.Leuven overall good evaluation

Next, the students were asked what they liked upon arrival in Leuven, and what they found less appealing. Buekers: "E-mail and internet access score high: indeed, we act quickly on this. Registration, the housing service, and the formal welcome also receive a good score. The item host friends received the lowest score. I think that we are warm and friendly to our international guests, but that we often don't go much deeper than the surface. The buddy system – which has been running now for a few years – is certainly a step in the right direction, but above all we must still see to it that we reach the doctoral students better."

And if we are talking about studying per se, the respondents report that expert lecturers, class content, and the library are their priorities. Buekers: "It is wonderful to see that they are also most

satisfied with precisely these topics. And moreover, for instance, research opportunities and the level of English receive scores between 'satisfied' and 'very satisfied.' The results were lower for work experience and career advice:

we must pay even more attention to guiding the careers of our students."

### Feeling of security

And how do they find the quality of life? Buekers: "Recently, I spoke with an inter-

**No less than 89% of the respondents would recommend others to study at K.U.Leuven.**

national student who told me that Leuven is 'too good to be true.' The barometer confirmed our social quality: for almost every topic, we outperform the benchmark. Security and internet access – the two topics that they find most

important – receive the highest satisfaction numbers, and transportation and sports facilities also score well."

important – receive the highest satisfaction numbers, and transportation and sports facilities also score well."

"Concerning support from the university, the barometer has good news for the International Office: satisfaction with their service is quite a bit above the benchmark. Student administration, the medical centre, and catering also score better than the benchmark: international students have clearly found their way to the Alma student restaurants. Then again, the score for student unions is below the benchmark, probably because these are not as well worked-out here as they are in the Anglo-Saxon countries."

And the final conclusion? Buekers: "With our over-all score, we settle into the top five of the benchmark, and for a number of topics even in the top three. It is thus not surprising that we are happy with these results. But they must motivate us to improve upon the weaker points that came to light through the investigation. Not surprisingly then, we intend to repeat this investigation regularly and to see if we are progressing within these parameters."

Translation: John Hymers

## A critical look at evolutionary psychiatry

## Madness continues to fool evolution

“The shoddy work of natural selection is most visible in the human susceptibility to all sorts of diseases,” postdoctoral researcher Pieter Adriaens (Institute of Philosophy) writes in the introduction to his book *Het nut van waanzin (The use of madness)*. With a critical stance, he looks at the attempts of evolutionary psychiatry to find a place for mental illnesses within Darwin’s picture.

Reiner Van Hove

With its invisible hand, natural selection preserves genetic variations that are useful to organisms in their drive to survive and reproduce. But since the beginning of written history, we find descriptions of mental illnesses that are at first sight anything but useful. Why aren’t the genes that code for these illnesses ‘deselected,’ and why do these selfsame disorders continue to plague us? It is a paradox that has kept evolutionary psychiatry busy now for over fifty years.

Beginning in the 1950s, various solutions for the paradox were put forth. Thus, the ‘mismatch’ model holds that some mental illnesses emerge in the discrepancy between our current and our ancestral environment. Adriaens: “This theory is particularly invoked to explain phobias: in the ancestral environment, some fears offered a survival advantage that they no longer have. This can explain why we are more easily frightened by spiders, heights, and enclosed spaces



Vincent Van Gogh's *Wheatfield with Crows* (1890). Some evolutionary psychiatrists see schizophrenia and creativity as two parts of a package deal.

than by cars and weapons, even though today they are more dangerous in our lifeworld. But the explanatory power of the model is limited: there is still a difference between a healthy fear and a serious phobia, and the theory offers absolutely no clarification for more severe disorders.”

#### Side effect

Other evolutionary psychiatrists believe in the ‘trade-off’ model. Adriaens: “Thus, the English psychiatrist David Horrobin saw a link between schizophrenia and creativity. Small mutations in the genetic code of the fat metabolism of our ancestors could have ensured an enormous increase in brain volume and mental capacity. These same mutations could also lie at the origin of schizophrenia. Horrobin thus sees sickness as a side-effect, the price that humanity has paid for its intelligence and creativity. This is an intriguing theory, but the connection is fiercely contested: the results of

investigations into creativity among schizophrenic patients contradict one another. There is more evidence *against* than *for* the model.”

Adriaens has more faith in the ‘polygenic selection-mutation’ model: “That is an atypical model in evolutionary psychiatry because it says that mental illnesses offer absolutely no advantage: they are harmful dysfunctions that have always been harmful. The hereditary material responsible for the activity of our brain is very vulnerable to mutations. The effect of each of these mutations apart is, in itself, so small that they cannot be deselected. But when the mutation load increases in descendants, for whatever reason, the chance increases for deviant cognitive and behaviour patterns — and the chance of a mental illness.”

#### Term of embarrassment

In evolutionary psychiatry, Adriaens contends, there is a drive towards romanticization and speculation that often surpasses the facts. In his book’s

last chapter, he even asks if schizophrenia involves a paradox. Can it indeed be true that this illness is an attack on reproductive success and that it, nevertheless, has ravaged us for thousands of years? Adriaens: “For example, the first proposition is unnuanced, to say the least. It applies above all to men — studies show that female patients are rather successful in building up happy and fruitful lives, and thus in having children. It is also doubtful if the illness has existed long enough to have been controlled and regulated by the process of natural selection. In written history, we certainly find no description of schizophrenia as we now know the disorder. But for other mental illnesses, such as manic-depression, we do.”

“The enormous heterogeneity of the patient population is also striking. Take a glance at any psychiatric hospital in the world, and you will see: no two schizophrenic patients resemble one another concerning the nature and severity of their symptoms — and sometimes there are even no minimal similarities. I think that schizophrenia seems to be an artefact, a term of embarrassment covering different disorders for which psychiatrists are at a loss. In my book, I thus argue that we should divide up the syndrome into more categories, and then catalogue the genes better. Currently, it makes no sense at all to provide all sorts of evolutionary explanations for the illness.”

In conclusion, what if we place a question mark after the title of Adriaens’ book: *The use of madness?* “That can be a comforting thought for patients with a mental illness, and I would not like to take away this illusion, but to be honest, I fear that there is no use to be

Historian Fabian Van Samang investigates Hitler’s discourse

## “At the origin of the Shoah lie ordinary words”

Language is one of the elements — perhaps the most important — that primed *and* legitimized the Nazi murder machine. This is the conclusion of historian Fabian Van Samang, in his doctorate *Ordinary words: Nazi language and the Shoah*.

Henk Van Nieuwenhove

“Then the opportunity to speak to a larger public was offered to me. And what I had earlier always assumed purely based on my feelings — without knowing it — suddenly became clear: I can speak,” wrote Adolf Hitler in *Mein Kampf* while introducing the first public speech he gave shortly after World War One. The thirty-year-old Adolph Hitler had thus far only known misfortune and was a bundle of frustrations. At school, home, and in love — everywhere he ran up against a wall, and World War One topped this all off. Until he finally discovered that he could do something: he could speak, he could captivate a public. As no other person, Hitler illustrated how the gift

of language can lead to war and destruction.

“He indeed had his eloquence to thank for his quick rise to prominence, and naturally also the anti-Jewish themes that he manipulated,” says Fabian Van Samang, who not only semantically investigated all of the texts that Hitler left behind, but also his speeches, recorded discussions and table-talk, remarks from others, and his political testament. But there is more than that. Hitler understood the art of manipulating what Nietzsche had called ‘the lie consciously repeated until it becomes true.’ “We’re talking about a true/false statement that can no longer be recognized or known as a lie by the speaker,” according to Van Samang.

“In a way, the speaker creates an expanding possibility of interpretation in the listener. The lie is so disguised that it is no longer recognizable as a lie. Phenomenologists call this the organic lie. Every ideology has a place for such a lie. The more rigid the ideology, that much more room it gives; the more vague the discourse, that much more place there is for organic lies.”

#### Exterminate the pests

Fabian Van Samang investigated twenty-nine concepts, whose use and meaning he worked out from the rise of Nazism to the end of World War Two. From *ausrotten* and *ausschalten* to *Endziel*, *entfernen*, *erledigen*, *ermorden*, *erschliessen*, *evakuieren*, *liquidieren*, *vernichten*, and *zerstören*. ‘*Die Endlösung der Judenfrage (the final solution to the Jewish question, ed.)*’ or ‘*Vernichtung der europäischen Juden (destruction of the European Jews, ed.)*’ are examples of expressions from Hitler’s discourse that can lead to a variety of interpretations.

“These different interpretations are also the cause of a Shoah with different speeds,” says Fabian Van Samang. “People with an outspoken anti-Semitic conviction could justify their actions by pointing to the employment of these self-same phrases, but by giving them another interpretation. In this manner, it became possible for divergent initiatives to be taken at the grass-roots level that, each in their turn, were legitimized by divergent interpretations of similar expressions. More than once were personal initiatives that were taken at lower policy levels given strength by appealing to the expressions of hierarchical superiors, which in all likelihood originally did not have a genocidal scope. The Shoah chiefly emerged through the interaction of a specific discourse construed by National-socialist policy makers long before the Second World War — expressions such as: ‘the final goal must in any case be that we completely

exterminate this pest’ — and the way in which this had been interpreted by others, given form, and carried out in its most extreme forms. At the origin of the Shoah lie ordinary words.”

Van Samang also refuted the idea that Hitler and his like-minded colleagues employed a coded language to carry out their anti-Jewish policy. “Hitler’s discourse was obscene: his language often offered so much that there was no longer anything visible of the essence of that which was spoken about. This obscenity functioned as ‘ring of Gyges,’ which offers the speaker the chance to become invisible and to escape from any ethical appeal.”

The researcher also dealt with other slogans, such as ‘*Das haben wir nicht gewusst (we did not know this, ed.)*.’ “Replace this with: ‘We did not want to know this.’ Through language, Hitler gave the people a way to close their eyes.”

The most relevant question that can be posed in this connection is whether this history can repeat itself. “The conclusions of my research are also applicable to our current age,” says Fabian Van Samang. “A politician’s every word can be interpreted differently if it is taken out of context. This is why one-liners are such a great danger. Not only politicians, but also journalists have a great responsibility. On January 30, 1939, Hitler gave a speech wherein he loudly and clearly announced what will happen to the Jews. Not one cock crowed.”

Translation: John Hymers

## PictureTHIS



(© Rob Stevens)

## Toga time

The traditional parade of togati — professors in their official dress — proceeded towards Saint Peter's Church during the celebration of K.U.Leuven's Patron Saint's Day, which was held exceptionally on February 4 this year. On that same day, three distinguished thinkers received an honorary doctorate, this year themed around 'Environment, Environmental Policy, and Sustainable Development.' You can find interviews with the new honorary doctors on pages 4 and 5.



(© Rob Stevens)

## Handy rector

At the end of last year, the Belgian radio station Studio Brussel launched a large-scale fund-raising promotion for the Red Cross, this time around the theme "drinking water for everybody." K.U.Leuven chipped in through different initiatives. And thus K.U.Leuven's Rector Marc Vervenne, son of a plumber-carpenter, offered his handyman skills. Neckerman, a tour operator, had the highest bid at €790. Rector Vervenne went to the Neckerman Vacation Store to repair a leaky faucet. "We had never dared to hope that he would do such a great job," the customer said with satisfaction.

## 500 words

Alumnus and elite athlete Kim Gevaert (29)

### "Sport vents off an enormous number of emotions"

Interview

Katrien Steyaert

**Kim Gevaert** is one of K.U.Leuven's best known alumni. After her studies in speech therapy and audiology, she built up an elite career in athletics, whose highpoint so far has been the European gold in the 100 and 200 meter in Göteborg, 2006. During the world championships in Osaka last year, she reached the final of the 100 meter and won the bronze with the 4 x 100 meter relay team. Belgium hopes for yet another illustrious performance from her during the Olympic Games in Beijing.

**"I HAVE WONDERFUL MEMORIES OF STUDENT LIFE.** The study of speech therapy and audiology, which I began in 1996, fit me like a glove. I loved the combination of science and language, and was looking forward to working with children. Starting my second year, I spread my exams. Taking them throughout the entire year, I was constantly studying. But that meant that I could keep training and competing abroad. I certainly enjoyed student life enough — but staying in a bit more often did not weigh against so many enjoyable moments in athletics."

**"EARLY IN MY CAREER, I FOUND IT FRIGHTENING TO TRAVEL** to competitions by myself. Now I enjoy being together with athletes from all over the world. It is hilarious how everyone speaks English with their own accent! Training camps and competitions have brought me to very beautiful places. I will miss many people and trips when I retire from athletics."

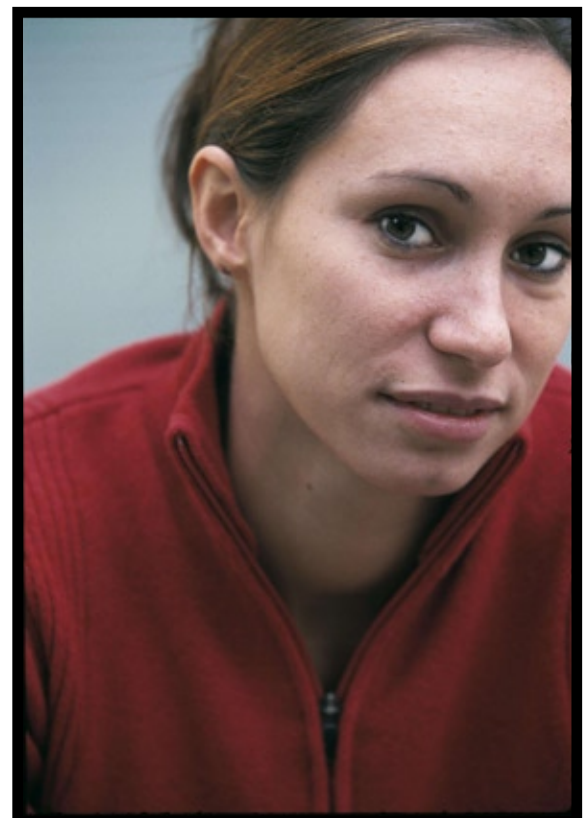
**"AT A CERTAIN MOMENT I ASKED MYSELF:** 'Does life revolve around who can run the fastest in the world?' Still, I quickly sensed that sport is also important; it vents off an enormous number of emotions. When a mother tells me that her daughter does sports thanks to me, I am happy that I was able to motivate and inspire a child. I remember that I too needed people to look up to and to help me make choices."

**"IT'S SUPER THAT I CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE OLYMPICS** once more! It puts me at ease that I have already been able to meet quite a lot of expectations in my career. I will work hard, try to get through the heavy training periods, and hope that it works out for the best. However, the competition is very stiff, and I will not utter the word 'medal.' If I can re-live or improve upon my performance in Athens (sixth place in the 200 meter and the semi-final in the 100 meter, ed.), then I will already be unbelievably satisfied."

**"PRECISELY WHEN I RETIRE, I DO NOT KNOW** — but this is certainly my final Olympics. My body and spirit will no longer be willing when I am thirty-four. I have a lot of respect for inexhaustible athletes, but everyone must do what they want with their own life. What that will become for me after athletics is still a question mark."

**"MY BOYFRIEND (EX-ATHLETE DJEKE MAMBO, ED.) AND I HAVE LONG WANTED CHILDREN.** I want a large family, with my own and adopted children. The country of adoption does not play a large role; every child deserves a warm family. Still, it would be extra special if we could adopt a Congolese child. For Djeke and his family, who still talk a lot about their country and travel there, it would maintain contact with their roots. To travel to the area where Djeke was born, you need to take malaria pills and that worries me. It would be a shame to train hard and to realize that it's all for nothing because of those pills. But we plan to travel there very shortly; I really want to go! My own family life at home was a great example, and I want to pass that on to my children. To have a happy and healthy family — my greatest wish will be fulfilled!"

Translation:  
John Hymers



(© Belga Picture)