

People and the Sea Award 2009

The Netherlands based investigative reporter Wouter Klootwijk receives the *People and the Sea Award 2009* for his outstanding contribution to the dissemination of knowledge about Dutch fisheries by popular media.

Starting in 2009, MARE in close cooperation with the Dutch Fish Product Board has the honor to present Wouter Klootwijk the first People and the Sea Award 2009.

The Dutch Fish Products Board, a cooperative effort of the Dutch fisheries sector, is not unknown to you. MARE is an interdisciplinary social-science institute studying the use and management of marine resources. Its objective is to provide a stimulating intellectual climate for academics and policymakers in Europe as well as in the South. Although MARE limits itself to the social sciences, it seeks active collaboration with other disciplines. It strives to maintain a balanced mix of academic and policy-oriented research. The purpose of Mare's research is also to create a stimulating intellectual environment in which academics and policymakers from the North and the South meet and exchange ideas.

The jury composed of Marloes Kraan MA (PVIS), Dr. Maarten Bavinck (MARE) and Dr. John Kleinen (MARE) wrote in its report for the award the following:

“The People and the Sea Award is a recognition of the contribution of a person or a group of persons who have made various aspects of coastal zone and maritime questions accessible and understandable for a broad audience. The TV series “Klootwijk aan Zee”, broadcast on Dutch national television during three seasons between 2007 and 2009, is a good example of the contribution for which the Award is presented.

Every episode of the series shows examples of compact and meticulous craftsmanship based upon sound and pedagogically responsible principles. The story

of the Dutch and the European fisheries is told in a straightforward manner, with critical attention to the consequences of the globalization for the fisheries. Complicated technical issues like the trawler fisheries and the use of dragnets are explained by the presenter of the series in simple terms with a lot of humour.

At every moment, there is interest in the consumption of fish and the tasteful presentation of meals, moments that remind the viewer of Klootwijk's former life as Ben de Cock, a nickname for a series of columns in Dutch journals and newspapers. Long before the world of food and restaurants became a fashionable topic in leading newspapers, it was the combined efforts of Wouter Klootwijk and his colleague Adriaan de Boer that gave this type of journalism a special flavour with their restrained description of mirthful scenes in restaurants and diners.

Wouter Klootwijk is well known for his journalism, but he is also the author of a great number of books for children. A few of these books betray his sympathy for Dutch fisheries with titles like *De uitvinding van de zeekoek* (2002), *The discovery of the sea cake* (2002), *Vissen met een vlieger* (2002), *Fishing with a kite* (2002) and *Noordnoordwest* (2003). *Northnorthwest* (2003).

Klootwijk is a well informed local incarnation of Ralph Nader, though without any aspiration for political power: his column in the magazine of the *Groene Amsterdammer* in the 1980s and 1990s under his penname of Ben de Cock and his way of asking critical questions in the RVU television series *Keuringsdienst van Waarde*, all shows his commitment to being a critical food consumer. His current feature in the Dutch quality paper *NRC-Handelsblad* about homely objects is written in the same style and of course, again good reading.

Yet Wouter Klootwijk is also committed to the health of fish, not just eating fish. In 2003 he published together with Adriaan de Boer the book "Haring en zijn Maatjes" which only can be ill translated as "Young Herring" or "Green Herring", a book that contains everything that one would want to know about the silver darlings and which maybe can compete with Mike Smylie's book on Herring (2004). Better known than this book on herring is the elegantly written "The good guide for fish" which is subtitled as "Eating fish with a good consciousness".

It is a sign of the work of a good reporter to see that Klootwijk's research for "The Good Guide for Fish" included serious scientific data from the The North Sea Foundation, fishery experts, fisher people and breeders. The "the good guide for fish" is a good read and is very much in the Klootwijk style. It has many similarities to the TV series "Klootwijk aan Zee" and, indeed, must have been the basis for it.

Klootwijk is a modest personality: his television program is like his books, which are often the product of team work. He shows it in the way he ends each trip with a good meal together with the "fish biologist" Niels Daan who poses as the scientist with real knowledge. Director Joost Engelberts, who is also present here tonight, and cameraman Maarten Kramer have together created a beautiful programme.

"Klootwijk aan Zee" was produced with a lot of love and empathy for the fisher folks and their catch by somebody who wonders about the gifts of the sea and his inhabitants along the waterfront. The TV series did not imitate its parallel programme "Keuringsdienst van Waarde" about consumer needs, nor was it investigative journalism about the sector or a way to discover the "Secret of Urk", a

reference to a famous muckraking piece about the ill-gotten gains in the beam trawling industry of Urk during the 1970s.

In a relaxed way Klootwijk works in the world of fisheries. He walks or goes by bike, takes a transport truck, but he is mainly his own captain on board of his ship when he visits people and places. He wonders about the way sardines fit perfectly in cans or shows the many ways the famous French coquilles St. Jacques are transformed into something else like chicken meat.

He tells stories in a nearly anthropological way as when he relates the tale of the lifecycle of the Dutch eel that goes through a conversion process in Ireland to become Catholic but then returns to Protestant Holland. These kinds of stories keep an attentive eye to the consequences of globalization and still show the worldwide situation of declining fish populations.

This all makes Wouter Klootwijk and his series a perfect teaching tool. Most of us who teach maritime anthropology are happy to refer to this knotty, shy big man with a duffel coat who explains in a simple and clear manner the intricacies of fisheries for many students whose experiences often do not reach further than the safe beaches of the Dutch coast in summertime. This People and Sea Award 2009 is a well deserved token of respect from the scholarly world to the Award winner, Wouter Klootwijk.

On behalf of the Jury, John Kleinen.