

The Sultan Qaboos Academic Chair for Quantitative Water Management

Inaugural Lecture and International Water Seminar.

On 2nd March 2009 the Foundation Academic Chair Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said (SQAC) and Roosevelt Academy/University of Utrecht organized the Inaugural Lecture of Prof. Dr. Ruud J. Schotting, Extraordinary Professor of the 'Quantitative Water Management in Semi-Arid Regions' Academic Chair, in the University Hall in Utrecht.

Preceding this ceremony the seminar 'The Sultan Qaboos Academic Chair – Quantitative Water Management: Relevant Contributions to Society' was held, opened by then SQAC Chairman and former Dutch Prime Minister Mr. Dries van Agt. During the seminar academics, the Netherlands Water Partnership (NWP), the Sultan Qaboos University and the Dutch Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management shared their experiences and insights regarding water management with the audience.

In honor of His Majesty the Sultan

"The seminar and the Inaugural Lecture are an important step in the development of the Sultan Qaboos Academic Chair which was personally presented to the Sovereign of Oman, Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said, by Dutch Prime Minister Dr. Jan Peter Balkenende during his visit to the Sultanate in November 2005. The Academic Chair, a Dutch initiative, was established in honor of the Sultan's 35-year reign and is sponsored by Dutch and international companies and organizations. Since his appointment as Sultan Qaboos Academic Chair Professor in September 2007 Professor Schotting has been involved in several water projects, not only in Oman but also in among others Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Bangladesh", said Mr. Van Agt.

'Academic catalyst'

The seminar was also a first concrete cooperation opportunity for the Academic Chair with the NWP. "During my most recent visit to Oman at the end of January 2009 – in the framework of the official visit of Dutch Crown Prince Willem-Alexander and Princess Máxima to the Gulf State – the Netherlands Water Platform suggested me to act as an 'academic catalyst' in the relations with the Omani authorities and Dutch investors", stated Professor Schotting, who was among the nominees for the Utrecht University 2009 Teacher of the Year Prize.

Experts

The 'Quantitative Water Management: Relevant Contributions to Society' seminar, chaired by **Prof. Dr. Hans Adriaansens**, Dean of the Roosevelt Academy,

included presentations by a wide range of high-level international experts:

Professor Dr. Sanmugam A. Prathapar, Director of the Water Research Center at Sultan Qaboos University of Muscat: 'Oman's 2007 flood in semi-arid areas: lessons learnt';

Mr. Dick van Dijk, Senior Consultant of the Netherlands Gulf Region Water Platform: 'Creating a sustainable water chain in densely populated coastal areas';

Prof. Dr. Hans Bruining, Faculty of Civil Engineering & Geosciences, Delft University of Technology: 'The Bangladesh project and its significance for society';

Prof. Dr. Ir. Majid Hassanizadeh, Faculty of Geosciences, University of Utrecht: 'The 'unconventional' applications of water management';

Ir. Leo Adriaanse, Senior Advisor of the Directorate General of Public Works and Water Management of the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management: 'From fighting against to creating with water after the 1953 flood';

Drs. Guus Willemsen, Director Business Development at IF Technology: 'Management of hot and cold water: knowledge for the growing geothermal business';

Prof. Dr. Ing. Rainer Helmig, Institute of Hydraulic Engineering, University of Stuttgart: 'Carbon capture and hydrology in the GCC and in the EU'.



Prof. Dr. Sanmugam A. Prathapar



Prof. Dr. Ir. Majid Hassanizadeh (center)

Condensed transcripts of the latter three presentations are available on the Academic Chair's website: www.sqac.org.

The Academic Chair's principal sponsors are C. Steinweg Handelsveem B.V., InterContinental Hotels Group, PA International, Shell Representative Office Oman and Damen Schelde Naval Shipbuilding. Alcan Inc., Vitol Holding B.V. and Van Oord are co-sponsoring.

Minister of Higher Education of Oman Dr. Rawya bint Saud bin Ahmed al Busaidiyah and Dutch Minister of Education Ronald Plasterk are the Chair's Honorary Patrons.

Prof. Dr. Schotting's Inaugural Lecture is presented further down in this EurOman Magazine in a removable booklet.

Oman Revisited

By Prof. Dr. Ruud J. Schotting, Sultan Qaboos Chair of Quantitative Water Management, Roosevelt Academy/Utrecht University

To be honest, I really don't like to be on an airplane. It is in general dull, boring and unpleasant. However, when last March 21, my plane took off from Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands and headed for Muscat, I noticed something really special: my heartbeat was accelerating! Not because I am afraid to fly. Not at all! It was because of the fact that I was heading for Oman again! Since my first trip to Oman in 2008, which was truly excellently organized by H.E. Mrs. Khadija Al-Lawati, the former Omani Ambassador in the Netherlands, I feel this excitement.

The reason I visited Oman again was because of the WSTA 9-th Gulf Water Conference in Muscat. On behalf of the Dutch Water Platform (NWP) I was invited to give a keynote lecture on a water management related subject. Moreover, the kick-off meeting of the Sohar Harbor water availability management study, which is a joint Omani-Dutch project, was part of the program. In addition I had the opportunity to meet some of my former PhD-students who work currently with Shell STO and PDO, and MSc students who do their research at Sultan Qaboos University. I hope to realize more exchanges of students between Sultan Qaboos University and Utrecht University in the near future. It is not just a matter of scientific exchange but in particular a cultural exchange.

I feel honored and privileged to own His Majesty's Academic Chair for Quantitative Water Management in Semi-Arid Regions. The chair aims at bridging the gap between the wet-deltaic water world of the Netherlands and the (semi-) arid water world of Oman. Although our climate might be completely different we have a lot of water-related problems in common. Floods, groundwater and surface water pollution, seawater intrusion, aquifer overproduction, desalination, excessive agricultural irrigation, etc. etc. Fortunately, many of these issues were addressed at the WSTA conference.

Maybe the most impressive and interesting moment was the meeting with H.H. Sayyid Fahd, the Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers of Oman. Several heads of delegations present at the WSTA conference were invited to meet His Highness. I was truly impressed by his knowledge about and interest in water management related issues in Oman. He emphasized the importance of water resources and its impact on life. He stated that the Sultanate will give top-priority to development of water resources for sustainable development. In my opinion: wise words.

This makes my heartbeat accelerating. I hope yours too!