

## **Motivation for the award of the University Masters Paper Wadden Academy Prize 2012 to Daniël Postma MSc**

Since 2009, the Wadden Academy has been awarding the annual Wadden Academy Prize, with a value of five thousand euros. The Wadden Academy has instituted this prize to encourage research into the Wadden region by young researchers. This prize alternates each year between the best doctoral thesis on the one hand, and the best university masters paper and HBO final paper on the other. Two years ago, the prize for the best university masters paper was awarded to Bas van Leeuwen of the University of Twente for *Modeling mussel bed influence on fine sediment dynamics on a Wadden Sea intertidal flat*, a paper at the interface of geosciences, life sciences and civil engineering.

To assess the submissions for the 2012 University Masters Paper Prize, the Wadden Academy appointed a jury consisting of:

Prof. Pieter Hooimeijer, professor of social geography at Utrecht University;

Prof. Gilles de Langen, archaeologist for the Province of Friesland and holder of the chair of archaeology of the Northern Netherlands *terp* and *wierd* landscape at the University of Groningen;

Prof. Jack Middelburg, professor of geochemistry at Utrecht University and director of the Darwin Center;

Prof. Peter van Tienderen, professor of experimental plant systematics and director of the Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystems Dynamics at the University of Amsterdam;

On behalf of the Wadden Academy, I – Dr Hessel Speelman, responsible for geosciences – was chair of the jury.

For the 2012 University Masters Paper Prize, thirteen nominations were received representing all disciplines within the Wadden Academy. Even more than two years ago, the jury was very impressed by the quality of the papers, some of which could even serve as a basis for a splendid doctoral thesis. To be eligible for the Wadden Academy Prize, the paper must be related to the Wadden region. All thirteen submissions met this formal criterion.

The papers varied considerably with respect to structure, contents and size. In order to assess the submissions fairly, the jury applied the following criteria. The jury believes that these criteria should apply to every good paper, irrespective of the discipline:

- Originality;
- Method;
- Details;
- Conclusions;
- Clarity.

The jury members individually assessed the thirteen papers on the basis of these criteria and sent their findings to the jury secretary, without knowing the opinions of the other jury members. The winner was chosen during a meeting of the entire jury on 6 November at Huize Molenaar in Utrecht.

Although the level of the papers was high, the jury soon agreed that three papers were eligible for the prize. Two of these related to the creation and dynamics of tidal systems such as the Wadden Sea. Tidal systems research is important from both a scientific and social angle because of the immense ecological importance and the expected pressure on such systems caused by the rise in sea level and the human exploitation of these areas. The third paper related to the construction of houses in the Northern Netherlands in the early medieval period and the limited knowledge of this subject.

So as regards the content of the papers, it was clearly like having to compare chalk and cheese. Nevertheless, the jury soon agreed on the prize winner for the 2012 University Masters Paper Prize.

The winning paper presents currently known turf buildings in the Friesland and Groningen coastal areas in an extensive (146 pages) catalogue, supplemented by similar buildings in Noord-Holland. The various constructional aspects are subsequently dealt with and the typological development of turf buildings is properly substantiated for the first time. The winning paper also has an international character. By comparing the known archaeological remains with existing turf houses in Scotland and Iceland, the author has obtained countless new insights into the function of the wall and roof construction and the use of large buildings as stables. The winning paper has demonstrated the importance of turf architecture in the construction of prehistoric and protohistoric farmhouses.

However, the paper is important not only from a scientific point of view.

Just as remarkable perhaps is the fact that the winner is currently supervising a full-sized reconstruction of a turf stable in Firdgum in Friesland. Huge public interest is expected in this project (as is demonstrated by the presence of the Friesland Broadcasting Association – which is making a documentary about the reconstruction – at this award ceremony). The jury considers the winning paper to be a splendid example of the social relevance of scientific research.

The winning paper is original and interesting for the further development of knowledge with regard to the Wadden region. It is clearly arranged and is written in excellent English.

The jury has unanimously decided to award the 2012 Wadden Academy Prize – worth five thousand euros – for the best university Masters Paper to Daniël Postma for *Salt Marsh architecture. Catalogue, technology and typological development of early medieval turf buildings in the northern coastal areas of the Netherlands.*