

Retirement of Niels De Pauw: a tribute

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Role as editor and aquatic ecologist

The appearance in September 2007 of this Special Issue of *Aquatic Ecology* on 'Ecological Informatics Applications in Water Management' (Guest Editor: Peter Goethals) coincides with the formal retirement in this period of Niels De Pauw. Niels retires from his present job as Professor at the Department of Applied Ecology and Environmental Biology, *Laboratory of Environmental Toxicology and Applied Ecology*, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium. Niels has also decided to step-down as Associated Editor of *Aquatic Ecology*, which he has served for ten years i.e., since the journal's reorganization in 1997. Niels De Pauw, Karel Essink and I had started concurrently as the new management editorial team of *Aquatic Ecology* in 1997 (Vol. 31) when the *Netherlands Journal of Aquatic Ecology* was given a face-lift, and was 're-christened' as *Aquatic Ecology* and got an international publisher (Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht) and a complete new editorial board. I think Niels as an associate editor contributed enormously to the journal during its formative, first few years. He was actively involved in another parallel development in aquatic ecology in the lowland

countries, The Netherlands and Belgium. Niels' efforts, among others, contributed to the expansion of the *Netherlands Society for Aquatic Ecology* (NVAE), such that the NVAE could embrace its somewhat less recognized Flemish counterpart. Together, the two moved further to form the *Netherlands-Flemish Ecological Society* (NEVECOL). The NVAE and NEVECOL decided to merge to form NECOV (Dutch-Flemish Society for Ecology) in March 1999. Niels served as chairman of the NECOV for several years, when he continued to play a crucial role in bringing the ecology and ecologists in The Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium) closer. Thus, the journal's reinstatement and the reorganization of the national aquatic societies went virtually hand in hand, and Niels' presence was a vital factor in promoting greater cooperation and interaction among the aquatic scientists in our two countries.



Niels De Pauw (Summer 2006)

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Academic and professional career

While I pay here a tribute to Niels De Pauw and thank him on behalf of the NECOV and on my personal behalf, I would like to reflect very briefly on Niels' long and inspirational academic career and impressive achievements as an aquatic biologist. Niels completed his *Licenciaat* (M.Sc.) with honours at the Gent University in 1966, as well as received his *doctoraat* (Ph.D.) in Animal Ecology at the same university in 1975. He obtained his D.Sc. (Agrégé) in Applied Ecology in 1986 at the Ghent University. After doing several teaching and research assignments at the universities of Antwerp and Ghent, Niels was appointed in 1991 as full professor of aquatic ecology within the department 'Applied Ecology and Environmental Biology' of the Faculty Bioscience Engineering of the Ghent University.

Niels' research activities dealing with environmental pollution span over three decades. He worked specifically on the monitoring of the aquatic ecosystems for developing biological water quality assessment methods (ecological indices) for surface waters in Belgium and several other countries (Indonesia, Vietnam, Ethiopia and Ecuador). Niels was actively involved in the applied water quality assessment issues in Flanders and in particular in the development of the *Belgian Biotic Index*. This index has been employed by the Flemish Environment Agency (VMM) to evaluate surface waters in Flanders since 1989. Other areas of his favourite research pursuits concerned integrated water management, recycling of bio-degradable wastes through aquaculture and wastewater treatment using both microphyte and macrophyte ponds. Nature restoration, nature development, environmental studies and environmental impact studies (EIA), related to both fauna and flora and water quality, are also among Niels' research hobby horses. Niels' aquaculture research related mainly to mass culturing of micro-algae and invertebrates as feed for molluscs, larval crustaceans and fish. He has been coordinating scientific research at the Laboratory of Environmental Toxicology and Aquatic Ecology at the Ghent University, which includes research projects that were financed by the EU, BTC, VLIR, FWO-Flanders, Flemish Government (VMM, AMINAL),...

Niels is a widely traveled person as he has been a visiting-professor at various universities and scientific institutions in Europe (England, Hungary, Italy,

Portugal, Spain), Africa (Algeria), Central and South America (Costa Rica, Bolivia, Mexico, Ecuador, Brasil) and Asia (Indonesia, Vietnam, Nepal). In addition, Niels organized a number of international courses on aquaculture, biological monitoring, assessment and management of surface waters in Europe, Africa, Asia, Middle-East and South America. He served as a secretary of the Centre for Environmental Sanitation at the Ghent University from 1983 to 1995. He also participated in the EU (PHARE, TACIS, SOCRATES, ERASMUS) and Flemish Community programmes dealing with development of specific course material for environmental protection. He attended over 100 national and international symposia as a speaker or as an invited speaker, and as a session chairman.

Scientific papers and books published

Niels has published more than 150 scientific papers, reports and books on aquatic pollution, biological monitoring, recycling of biodegradable wastes, natural systems for wastewater treatment, and aquaculture. Over the years, he was author of several chapters on water pollution in 'State of the environment reports for the Flanders, Belgium' (MIRA), as well as in a diverse set of other books on sustainable development, and ecological informatics. He edited books on diverse aspects of applied aquatic ecology, among others:

Claus C., N. De Pauw & E. Jaspers (Eds), 1981. Nursery culturing of bivalve molluscs. EMS Special Publ. 7, European Mariculture Society, Bredene, Belgium. 394 p.

De Pauw, N., E. Jaspers, H. Ackefors & N. Wilkins (Eds), 1989. Aquaculture A biotechnology in progress. European Aquaculture Society, Bredene, Belgium. Vol 1 & 2. 1222 p.

De Pauw, N. & R. Billard (Eds), 1990. Aquaculture Europe '89. Business joins Science. European Aquaculture Society, Special Publ. No 12. Bredene, Belgium. 464 p.

De Pauw, N. & R. Vannevel (Eds), 1991. Macro-invertebrates and water quality. Dossier Stichting Leefmilieu, Antwerp, Belgium. 316 p.

De Pauw, N. & J. Joyce (Eds), 1992. Aquaculture and the environment. Reviews. European Aquaculture Society. Special Publ. No. 16. Gent, Belgium. 536 p.

De Pauw, N. (Ed.), 1996. Environmental Impact Assessment in Water Management. Special Issue European Water Pollution Control. 6(1):7–69.

De Pauw, N., D. Van Damme & D. Van der Veken, 1999. BISEL Manual for application of the biotic index at the secondary education level. EU-COMENIUS 3–1. 74 p. + Appendix

Tack F.M.G., N. De Pauw, G. du Laing & D.P.L. Rousseau (Eds), 2007. Contaminants in natural and constructed wetlands: pollutant dynamics and control. Special issue of Science of the Total Environment 380/Vol. 1–3, Elsevier. 258 p.

Gulati, R.D., E. Lammens, N. De Pauw & E. Van Donk (Eds), 2007. Shallow lakes in a changing world. Developments in Hydrobiology 196. Springer. 466 p.

Important positions in the national and international organizations

- Secretary (1984–1988) and Vice-President (1988–1990) of the European Aquaculture Society
- National representative of the International Association of Limnology (since 1984)
- Member of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Biological Assessment Methods for Rivers of the Commission of the European Community (since 1976)
- Member of the Belgian Institute for Normalisation – Committee on Biological methods for water quality assessment (since 1976)
- President Group for Applied Ecology (1996–1999)
- President Netherlands-Flemish Ecological Society (since 2000–2005)
- Member Editorial Board International Journal ‘Hydrobiologia’ (since 1981)
- Associate Editor of the International Journal ‘Aquatic Ecology’ (since 1997–today)
- Associate Editor of the International Journal ‘Annales de Limnologie – International Journal of Limnology’ (since 2000).

Membership of different research societies and groups

Belgian Centre for Oceanography (BCO); Institute for Marine Scientific Research (IZWO); Flemish

Marine Institute (VLIZ); Group for Applied Ecology (GTE); The Netherlands-Flemish Society of Ecology (NECOV); International Society of Limnology (SIL); European Aquaculture Society (EAS); World Aquaculture Society (WAS); and International Water Association (IWA).

National and international awards

Laureate Jodogne-prize Biology (1960); Laureate J. Kets-prize Biology (1961); Award by the Royal Flemish Academy of Science (1967); Certificate of appreciation from the European Aquaculture Society (1985); Award of the European Aquaculture Society for distinguished service (1991); Officer in the Order of King Leopold II (1988); Award Civil Service (1993); Award Civil Service Cross (2002); and Commander in the Order of King Leopold (2002).

A personal tribute

While Niels, Koos Vijverberg and I, as members of the editorial management team, have been working intensively together, our main aim has always been to improve and espouse our journal *Aquatic Ecology* internationally. It has been both an exciting and challenging work all the time. Our discussions were invariably centered on defining the journal’s scope and core interests, looking for good editorial board members, and streamlining the review process in order to attract more good quality manuscripts. An important motto behind all this was in earlier phases to achieve the much coveted *impact factor*, a cliché of some kind to measure a journal’s quality level. Consequently, we were very pleased to meet this goal some years ago.

It has been a pleasure to work with Niels: strikingly, despite some differences with Niels on some occasions in handling editorial matters, I do not recall any unpleasantness that stood between our very amicable relations. I think a major part of the credit for our cordial working relationship goes to Niels who has always shown a cool, composed and pleasant personality. I think we formed a good, complementary editorial team. Niels’ wide experience in aquatic ecology but especially his expertise in the fields of applied ecology and toxicology, made my task certainly much less exhausting, if not much easier.

While paying our rich tributes to Niels, I also like to use this opportunity to express on behalf of the editorial board our gratitude and indebtedness to Niels for his unrelenting help in the journal's editorial work. I wish Niels and his spouse Francine Moonen, a great time ahead in the midst of their three children

and six grandchildren. Niels, I'm sure you and Francine are going to explore even more the beautiful world around you. Last, please do not panic or refuse if you (sporadically) receive with an email request to 'review the attached manuscript' for *Aquatic Ecology*.