"Nature protection schemes in the Wadden Sea are the result of the recognition of the area's outstanding natural values"
In fact, it may be the other way around...
"The recognition of the Wadden Sea's as an area of outstanding natural values is (largely) the effect of expanding protection schemes."
The pitfalls of ‘anti-modern’ thinking
(the voice of public concern)

Wrong ideas  →  Failing plans  →  Ongoing Damage

"Revenge the damage!"

"The Wadden Sea is more impoverished than ever before"
(Freriks 2015)
This is what actually happens...
More protection scheme's knowledge required

"Failing protection"

"We do our job" (Governance)

"We have the knowledge"

"Failing protection"

Claims of morbidity

Claims of pragmatics

Public concerns

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth

Claims of thruth
This is what historians have to face
Reclaiming the past?

We cannot reverse anything, because the past (as such) does not exist

(Re)writing the past is interaction

- with the unknown
- with the hardly known
- with the all too obvious
We want to avoid the all too obvious!
So what ‘really’ happened in 50 years?

- Spectacular recovery of waterfowl, raptor and seal population
- Substantial reduction of pollution and eutrophication levels
- Reclamation plans skipped
- Declining biodiversity (waders, bentic species)
- Decreasing fish and bentic stocks
- Emergence of ‘exotic’ species
- Destruction of river estuaries due to dredging
- Rapid extension of protective regimes and monitoring schemes
Protective Regimes in the Wadden Sea and North Sea offshore area, 1975-2015
Why was the Wadden Sea protected?

• Not because it was such a good idea!
• General concerns about the world-wide destruction of natural and environmental values caused a demand for public action
Why was the Wadden Sea protected?

- Not because it was such a good idea!
- General concerns about the world-wide destruction of natural and environmental values caused a demand for public action.
- Mass-tourism to the Wadden Sea area created massive public involvement (think global, act local!)
- Nature protection became part of electoral strategies and political competition.
- Previous ways of exploiting, managing and defining the coastal area began to wear off.
- The demand for more nature could be easily met on publicly owned terrains.
## Who owns the Wadden Sea world heritage site?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State and federal authorities*</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal states (Germany)</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns and Water-boards</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature protection organizations (Netherlands)</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately owned</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,084 km²</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: CCWS    
*Netherlands since 1981*
Has protection been successful?

- Many of the threats are world-wide
- Many of the solutions did not come from the Wadden Sea region alone
- Intended results, unintended results and side effects
Redefining the Wadden Sea

- In the 1970s the Wadden Sea area was a rather diffuse and heterogenous landscape with 3.5 to 5 million human inhabitants and an interesting natural and cultural heritage that was very much under pressure.

By 2016 the Wadden Sea is a clearly defined homogenous natural landscape with explicit boundaries, surrounded by a ring of human settlements and by ‘cultural’ landscapes still under pressure. They are recent constructions.
The Wadden Sea World Heritage is now largely a land without people (45 inhabitants in 2012, mainly on Neuwerk)

It’s boundaries were carefully adapted to exclude people and human activities

The inhabitants of the Wadden Sea Region are living ‘outside the fences’

The boundaries, moreover, are often heavily contested
Ecotypes in the Wadden Sea & North Sea Coastal Zone

Cooperation area: 15,000 km²
Wadden Sea: 10,000 km²

Outer boundaries have been more or less arbitrarily set

North Sea Coastal Zone 34%
Subtidal flats & gullies 25%
Shoals & mudflats 31%
Dunes, beaches & sandy shoals 4%
Polders 4%
Salt marshes & summer polders & estuarine banks 3%

(own calculations)
• Island, polders and river estuaries are largely excluded from the World Heritage site

The human fringe
Unintended results

• By defining the Wadden Sea as ‘nature’ ‘culture’ was banned towards its fringes and beyond
• And the other way around: ‘culture’ became a line of defense against perceived infringements by ‘nature’ and its allies
• Balances of power shifted
• In the 1990s traditional rural elites in Schleswig-Holstein reverted to 19th-century populist rhetoric, blaming outsiders, making scapegoats and silencing critics within the community
The sad story of Lancewad, or: the invention of ‘Wadden Land’ (2001)

- **Strategy:** to embed the natural reserves in a cultural environment & cultural discourse
- **Goals:**
  - to counteract resistance against nature & culture protection
  - gain public support for the World Heritage Nomination
  - comply to UNESCO rules, prescribing the involvement of the public
- **Outcome:** more reluctance to heritage
- **Nature & culture:** got disentangled and became object to bargaining
- **The follow-up projects ended up as tourist marketing (PROWAD)**

The sad story of Lancewad, or: the invention of ‘Wadden Land’ (2001)
So let’s avoid the all too obvious. The Wadden Sea is not merely nature, it’s culture as well: a bureaucratic-natural hybrid newly shaped by administrative procedures, scientific knowledge claims, and public concerns.
The ‘invention’ of the Wadden Sea was to a large extent a ‘Baby Boomer generation’ project

- Political activists
- Scientists
- Tourists

Generations alternated since then, but institutions took over

- It was all about progress or about discontent with progress
- What we need by now is a paradigm shift and radically ‘non-modern’ ways of thinking
What about science?
Governance action and knowledge production are increasingly entangled.

International conferences and scientific reports concerning the Wadden Sea area, 1975-2014 (150 reports; 19,000 pages)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trilateral government conferences (TWSC)</th>
<th>International Scientific Wadden Sea Symposium (ISWSS)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schiermonnikoog 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Hague 1978</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bonn 1982</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Kopenhagen 1984</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The Hague 1985</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Bonn 1987</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Esbjerg 1991</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Leeuwarden 1994</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Stade 1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Esbjerg 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Schiermonnikoog 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Esbjerg 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Schiermonnikoog 2005</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Netherlands 2018 (scheduled)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ribe 1979</td>
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<td>Norderney 1981</td>
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<td>Texel 1983</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Esbjerg 1986</td>
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<td>Sylt 1988</td>
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<td>Ameland 1990</td>
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<td>Esbjerg 1993</td>
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<td>Norderney 1996</td>
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<td>Groningenen 2000</td>
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<td>Esbjerg 2005</td>
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<td>Wilhelmshaven 2009</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leeuwarden 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denmark 2017 (scheduled)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Anthropologist Werner Krauss explored the "tribe of coastal researchers" in 2007: scholars have been largely unaware of the interaction between their own work, governance, and the general public.

• A recent governance survey: “Peer review mechanisms are lacking. The number of experts on certain specific topics is too limited”

• The objectivity of the scientific process in Wadden Sea issues is ‘eroded’ by “increasing stakeholder and policy maker involvement in expert groups”

(Adriaan Slob et al., ‘Governance of the Wadden Sea’, Marine Polity 2016)
What about tourism?

• 1970s ‘mass tourism’ perceived as major threat
• 1990s fisheries and fossil fuel industries were discovered as the new ‘enemy’
• By 2016 ‘sustainable’ tourism has become a major opportunity and an important ally for nature protection

• There may be some reason for skepticism however, as window dressing and marketing strategies are also involved
• 10-12 million overnight visitors each year
• Major differences between countries
• Since the 1980s a radical expansion of coastal tourism on the German and Danish mainland
• Numbers doubled since 1990s, but length of residence cut in half (hence, complaints about mounting pressure might be unjustified)
• 3 million visitors to nature education centers
• Exploring the German mainland has become part and parcel of the Wadden Sea experience
Different perceptions

- **For the Dutch the Wadden Sea is a transitional zone**
  - It belongs to the public domains
  - The Dutch perceive the Wadden Sea largely as the islands’ hinterland
  - Much recreational boating and a large historical fleet
  - Limited access to the Wadden Sea shore-lines
  - Only guided mudflat hiking

- **For Germans (and Danes) the Wadden Sea is part of the North Sea coast**
  - It belongs to the state domains (at least in Germany)
  - Germans and Danes perceive the Wadden Sea largely as an extension of the mainland coast
  - Limited recreational boating and a small historical fleet
  - Shore-lines often freely accessible
  - Also many private visits to the mudflats
What about governance?

• There is a considerably reluctance to incorporate social, political and cultural sciences in the Wadden Sea institutions
Contradictory tendencies

A recent governance survey (Slob 2016):

• “the Trilateral Cooperation is widely regarded as successful ... as indicated by the officially recognised effectiveness of related designations”

• Policy making and knowledge production are fully transparent

• Stakeholders may raise their voice in the Wadden Sea Forum (though the actual impact on governance and management is “hard to measure”)

(Adriaan Slob et al., ‘Governance of the Wadden Sea’, Marine Polity 2016)
Another study about the Dutch Wadden Sea (Munaretto & Klostermann 2011):

- High transparency and accountability
- Low level of adaptive capacity (to climate change). This is due to lack of authority and leadership

The Dutch Court of Audit was extremely critical (2013):

- 13 institutions involved in managing the Wadden Sea show a lack of coordination
- Improper use of funds
Different attitudes (tentative)

- **The Dutch perceive the Wadden Sea as a quasi maritime environment, belonging to the public domains**
- Management is relatively sloppy, adhoc and open to discussion
- Protestors and offenders take an anarchistic stand and defend their individual right to go ‘into the wild’

- **The Germans perceive the Wadden Sea as an extension of the coastal mainland (‘Wadden Land’), and belonging to the state domains**
- Management is relatively strict, standardized and top down
- Protestors and offenders take a conservative stand and defend ‘communal rights and privileges’
These national differences apparently go back a long way...
Dutch islands were lying ‘at the seaside,’ German and Danish islands ‘in the sea’

Vriesse / Hollandse Vooreylanden 1706

Øer udi Vesterhav 1570

Insulln auff der Nord-See 1693

Zuiderzee
Was the heroic struggle against nature a Dutch design?

No, during the 17th and 18th centuries the Dutch generally had a pragmatic attitude towards the sea.
Politicising the coastal domains

Danish Royal Anthem (1778)
North Sea! a glimpse of Wessel rent
Thy murky sky! (tykke skye)
Path of the Dane to fame and might!
Dark-rolling wave!
(sortladne hav)

Vesterhavets Kyster
1802

Nordseestrand
1794

Nordseeküste
1766
Napoleontic Wars (1795-1815)

Continental Blockade 1814

"From the Alps to the North Sea Beach" (1807)

(which foreshadows the later wars against France)

Vesterhavets Kyster

Nordseeküste

Nordseestrand

Alkmaar

Leeuwarden

Groningen

Emden

Oldenburg

Bremen

Hamburg

Glückstadt (1615)

Stade

Altona (1601)
Germany Unification

Nordseeküste

Vesterhavets Kyster

Nordseeinseln

Waddeneilanden 1819

Nordseeinseln 1830

Nordseemarschen 1819

1848-1849
Georg Beseler in the Frankfurter Parliament 1849

- “The German movement has advanced as far as the sea, and the sea-air, blowing from there, will spread a freshness over the German lands, and strengthen and invigorate our conditions.”
Conquering Schleswig-Holstein
• The heroic role model of the Dutch was a late 18th-century German product (Goethe, Schiller), which was brought to the extremes by radical nationalists around 1900 (Julius Langbehn, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*)

• Holland (and England) were idealized as a blueprint for Germany’s future

• After the middle of the 19th century Frisians often took their place
• Tellurem fecere Dii, sua littora Belgae (Archibald Pitcairn, before 1709)

• Deus mare, Batavus litt(tera)ra fecit (Otto Reinhold, Leer 1830)

• Deus mare, Friso litora fecit - Gott schuf das Meer, der Friese dessen Grenze (Georg Weigel, Altona 1873)

• Gott schuf den Raum und wir machten Deutschland daraus (1935)
The German (martial) attitudes towards the sea largely reflect 19th-century military thinking.

- ‘Sniffing free air’ was a metaphorical experience that connected the individual to the soul of the nation longing for freedom.
- The desire for ‘free air’ coincided with the nation’s desire for a free access to the North Sea.
- Bathing resorts became hotspots of patriotism.
What goes for the sea goes for ‘coastal nature’ and ‘coastal culture’ in general.

- As cultural and social scientists we should be more reluctant and try to avoid 19th century romantic connotations
- They are prone to misunderstanding and abuse, as recent history shows
The past is a grotesque animal

(Of Montreal)
The past is a grotesque animal

(Of Montreal)

Thank you!