

LANDSCAPE AND HERITAGE STUDIES

Edited by Linde Egberts and Meindert Schroor

Waddenland Outstanding

History, Landscape
and Cultural Heritage of
the Wadden Sea Region

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Waddenland Outstanding

Landscape and Heritage Studies

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*History, Landscape and Cultural Heritage
of the Wadden Sea Region*

*Edited by
Linde Egberts and Meindert Schroor*

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Preface

The Wadden Sea is a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its outstanding universal value as an area of natural beauty. It is situated within the maritime-agricultural Wadden Sea region, which has a settlement history of about 2500 years and as such has extensive experience in coping with the environment, essentially being an interface and transitional area between salt and fresh water as well as between land and sea. The trilateral Wadden Sea region or Waddenland is part of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. It includes the Frisian or Wadden Islands, the Wadden Sea itself and the adjacent marshes – endiked as well as salt marshes – on the mainland, which owe their existence to marine sedimentation. Humans have always played an important role in and around the Wadden Sea. For that reason, as well as for safeguarding the World Heritage label, it is imperative that we garner insight into the present and past involvement of the people living in the Wadden Sea region.

This is what motivated the Dutch Waddenacademie (in Leeuwarden) — together with the German Nordfriisk Instituut (in Bredstedt) and the Danish Fiskeri- og Sjøfartmuseet (in Esbjerg) — to organise the symposium *Waddenland Outstanding* on the history, landscape and cultural heritage of the Wadden Sea region. This 17th symposium of the Waddenacademie took place from 1-3 December 2016 in Husum, North Frisia in Germany and was the first symposium of the Waddenacademie that was held outside the Netherlands. During the symposium, over 30 presentations were delivered to an audience of about 150 participants. The selected contributions included in this book offer a unique overview of the state of the art in cultural-historical research in the Wadden Sea region. By bringing together ongoing work by researchers from a wide span of disciplines and from all three countries involved, this book provides starting points for a more coherent and well-funded dialogue to overcome the nature-culture divide and to contribute to further developing public awareness and more integrated policy and management approaches.

Prof. Jouke van Dijk
Chair of the Waddenacademie

About the author

Prof. Jouke van Dijk is professor of Regional Labour Market Analysis and chair of the Department of Economic Geography at the Faculty of Spatial Sciences of the University of Groningen. He is also President of the Board of the Waddenacademie-KNAW, an institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences that sets the agenda and coordinates research activities in the field of ecology, geology, economics and social sciences in the Wadden area. Van Dijk graduated in 1981 from the Faculty of Economics of the University of Groningen with a degree in regional science. In 1986, he obtained his doctoral degree with his dissertation entitled *Migration and the Labour Market*. From 1981 to 1991, he held several positions in the Department of Spatial Economics at the University of Groningen's Faculty of Economics.

1 Introduction

Linde Egberts, Meindert Schroor and Jos Bazelmans

The Wadden Sea region encompasses the embanked coastal marshes, the islands and the Wadden Sea of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. It has an exceptional common history in many respects: naturally, archaeologically, economically, socially and culturally. These histories, however, are not well known, largely because it has never constituted a political unity. Nonetheless, the region shares coastal landscape and cultural heritage features that are unique in the world. Its settlement history of more than 2,000 years is still mirrored in its maritime-agricultural landscape. The approaches to water management and their related societal organisation developed in this region during the last millennium have set worldwide standards for land reclamation. The Wadden Sea itself has been placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List for its outstanding universal value as an area of natural beauty since 2009. In this book, we focus on the *Waddenland* — the mainland marshes and the islands — and address the heritage, landscape and history of this area, which is closely interlinked with that of the Wadden Sea.

The objectives of this book are fourfold. First, we set the scene by describing what exactly is meant by the *Waddenland* and the Wadden Sea region, both apparently obvious but in reality barely perceived adjacencies of the actual Wadden Sea, from a geographical, historical and cultural viewpoint. The book ponders the question of whether and for what reasons the *Waddenland* could be perceived as a region based on its historical and landscape qualities, despite governmental fragmentation and a strong focus on the natural values of the Wadden Sea as opposed to the land.

Second, the book aims to take stock of the research in this field with a view to promoting further interdisciplinary and transboundary research. As yet, no overview exists of what problems are being studied in ongoing research on the Wadden Sea region in the field of history, landscape and heritage. By bringing together ongoing work by researchers from a wide span of disciplines and from all three countries involved, this book offers

a new state of the art of the knowledge and foci of academic research in these interrelated fields. By doing so, it provides a valuable update and expansion of the scarce literature on the landscape, heritage and history of the Wadden Sea region (see Bazelmans et al. 2012; Common Wadden Sea Secretariat 2007; Frederiksen 2012; Vollmer 2001).

Third, this volume aims to further the integration of research into and management of the cultural and natural landscape heritage. As will become clear from the contributions, the dichotomy between natural and cultural heritage in the perception, research and management of the Wadden Sea region is experienced as an obstacle in developing sustainable strategies for the future of the area. A main problem in this regard is the lack of coherent and applicable knowledge of the historical landscape and common cultural traits to feed transboundary discussions and cooperation between nature conservationists and cultural heritage experts. By offering an overview of recent research on the history, landscape and cultural heritage of the region, this book provides starting points for a more coherent and well-funded dialogue to overcome the nature-culture divide in research as well as in practice.

Last but not least, the book aims to contribute to further developing public awareness and relevant common policy and management approaches. Especially the last part of the book provides critical reflections on the ways in which citizens are engaged and addressed in the planning, development and management of the Wadden Sea region. Moreover, the book's ambition is to develop a stronger degree of coherence and cooperation between the area's currently fragmented management structures.

Cross-cutting themes

This book discusses several themes that bind together the chapters of this book in all their diversity in terms of disciplinary background, uses of concepts, and geographical or temporal scale.

The first two contributions in the book address the Wadden Sea region from a geographical and historical perspective as well as from a cultural viewpoint. The general question is whether there are any common denominators that define this area from a landscape, historical and cultural perspective, apart from the fact that geologically it owes its existence to the sea. Answering this question is a prerequisite for an integrative and inclusive approach to the Wadden Sea within the context of its immediate surrounding islands and mainland. Meindert Schroor argues that the

Wadden Sea landscape is as much man-made as it is natural. He makes a first attempt to define the Waddenland and, based on the history of the Frisians as a foundation, he pleads for an investment in raising public awareness and encouraging the engagement of citizens. He regards this as a prerequisite for the World Heritage label to become a broadly supported success. Hans Renes underscores the need for an integrative approach by focusing on the ways in which societies have interacted with the natural circumstances of the area in the course of their presence in the Wadden area. He argues that regarding the Wadden Sea region as a maritime cultural landscape could help to establish management approaches that integrate both natural and cultural heritage values.

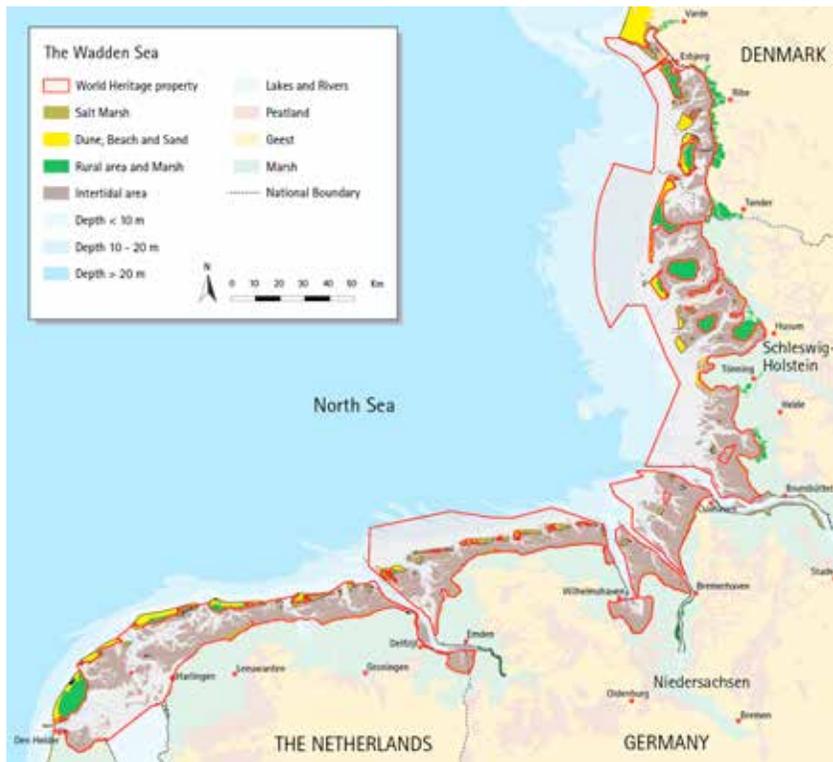
Apart from these introductory chapters, this book centres around four cross-cutting themes:

- *nature and culture*: the relationship between natural and cultural heritage;
- *immaterial heritage*: myths, ideologies, and memories through the ages set against the background of reality;
- *the history and archaeology of the Waddenland*: the historical dimension of an agrarian-maritime landscape;
- *cultural heritage management*: political, economic and social challenges.

Nature and culture

In different chapters of this book, the Wadden Sea and Wadden Sea region are either called a natural landscape, a bureaucratic natural landscape, a half-natural or half-cultural landscape, a maritime cultural landscape or a maritime agricultural landscape. In using these different names, the authors stress different aspects of this landscape that together encompass the Wadden Sea and its surrounding mainland and islands. Some of the contributors attempt to find characteristics that are recognisable in the nature, culture, heritage, landscape and governance of the area, while others mainly focus on the process in which the image of this region is constructed.

Some provocatively consider a discussion among researchers on the area's defining characteristics waste of time. However, in one way or another we have to deal with the fact that the area is officially designated by UNESCO as natural heritage based on existing protection regimes at the national and regional levels. The ability to put an exclusive label on something is always an expression of a successful claim by a certain group on the object being labelled. In the case of the Wadden Sea (region), this is the successful

Figure 1.1 Wadden Sea World Heritage Site

Courtesy of Common Wadden Sea Secretariat

claim of nature conservationists and their supporters, who have indeed revolutionised our view on the area since the 1960s. Many contributions to this book can be seen as a response to this: a theme throughout many of the chapters is that the area has been partly or largely given shape by people and has always been intensively used by people. Therefore, the traces of their presence should be regarded as an integral part of the governance and protection of the region. In chapter four, Jens Enemark, Ludwig Fischer and Karsten Reise press for a paradigm shift by arguing that “the old dualism needs to be overcome, foremost at a coast challenged by embracing globalisations and sea level rise of some metres in the Anthropocene”. Hans-Ulrich Rösner argues that the nature-culture dichotomy is mirrored in and outside the dikes and points to a coexistence in which flexibility is a central theme.

At the same time, the nature-culture divide is deeply ingrained institutionally, in politics, in society, in public discourse and, let’s not forget, in science itself. Moreover, the relationship between nature and culture

is not only a pragmatic issue regarding governance and policy, it is always linked to the values regarded most highly by people: core values that guide relationships within society and the relation/exchange between society and the outside world. In our highly diversified society, there is no consensus on this. On the one hand there are people aiming to recreate wilderness to re-establish a proper relationship with 'mother nature'. And on the other hand, others regard themselves as age-old responsible users of what is their *Heimat*. These views are incommensurable. Nevertheless, Martin Döring and Beate Ratter consider how the place-based values of citizens could be integrated into the region's heritage management and governance based on their empirical research in North Frisia, Germany.

Thomas Steensen addresses the same area and the relationship between its inhabitants and its cultural landscape, arguing that a stronger recognition of cultural heritage in the context of the World Heritage status of the larger region would do more justice to the connection of the inhabitants to the Wadden Sea area in the past as well as in the present.

Immaterial heritage

An important aspect of this book is the focus on the immaterial or intangible heritage of the Wadden Sea region. The formation of identities — for example in literary writing, music, myth, ritual, mass media or the visual arts — should be studied in the complex interplay of economic, social, political and cultural relationships and processes. The contributors carefully illustrate how people in the area — both in the past and the present — define themselves in relationship to significant others, in relationship to the sea and its inherent dangers, or in relationship to nature as defined in the many religious or intellectual traditions of early modern times up until today. Ludwig Fischer explains the impact that the Dutch experience and perceptions of diking, for a large part implemented in the Wadden Sea region, have had on Europe's history of mentality. The Wadden Sea area provided useful imagery for Nazi ideology, as Nina Hinrichs shows on the basis of an analysis of paintings from the National Socialist period. Goffe Jensma shifts our attention to the present and reveals how much modern society and technology are moulding older Frisian ways of myth formation. These older myths are often constructed around language and history and are now transformed into myths based on tangible, material heritage. This allows them to fit well into a new reality of global tourism as well as the need in modern humans for a vague, mythical past.

The Wadden Sea region is perforce associated with salt water. That fresh water was as much a constituting factor is proved by Anne Marie Overgaard in her analysis of two coastal marshes on both sides of the Danish-German border. Norbert Fischer investigates the ultimate fate linked to the rages of the sea: drowning and death by shipping disasters and floods and their impact on the landscape of the Wadden Sea coast and the islands.

As is shown, no self-definition of a group can be taken for granted. In every instance, one should look not only for the dominant perspective but also for subversive opponent 'voices'. Taken together, these contributions address the construction of a region, a landscape and a shared past through means that range from the instalment of monuments along the coast, the appropriation of older myths in newer forms, monumental works of writing, or politically charged works of art. Academic research could also have been among the subjects of study in this part of the book. In this respect, we need to be aware of how we as researchers contribute to processes of identity formation ourselves.

History and archaeology

The historical and archaeological research on the Waddenland shows that the area shares many sometimes internationally unique characteristics as regards its physical geography. Throughout its millennia-long history of human presence, the area has been intermediate and somewhat peripheral, but it has also known prosperous phases, as Meindert Schroor argues. This is in stark contrast with the present situation, in which most of Waddenland belongs to the poorer parts of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. We should, however, be cautious about thinking of the area as a coherent whole in a socio-cultural sense, as expressed for example in the new label 'Waddenland'. In the past, the ways of life of many communities shared common traits, the building of dwelling mounds being of course the most outstanding and unique example. Similar means of livelihood developed in the marshes and were related in similar ways to the labour demands of a changing world system. In early modern times, as Mette Guldberg argues, this system had Amsterdam and later Hamburg at its centre, in some ways tying both commercial metropolises to the Wadden Sea region. The maritime culture coinciding with the regional is also treated by Jan C. Oberg, who focuses on nineteenth-century Bremen from an ethno-historical angle. Older aspects of the maritime character of the Wadden Sea region are reflected in the chapter by Hanna Hadler et al. on the archaeological

traces of the late-medieval trading centre of Rungholt, which was submerged in 1362. The rural side of the Wadden Sea region is addressed by Carsten Porskrog Rasmussen, proving how early modernity could have entirely different impacts even across short distances, especially in North Frisia. Anna-Katharina Wöbse and Hans-Peter Ziemek analyse the way in which a trilateral conservation was initiated after conservationists in the three countries discovered the outstanding values of the Wadden Sea as a region of ecological importance and natural beauty.

Phenomena and developments as described in the contributions do not necessarily make the area stand out as compared with other peripheral coastal or wetland areas in Europe. Nor should we be blind to the strong variation within the trilateral region as regards the economic and societal makeup of the many communities. Some areas that were neglected by science altogether — submerged landscapes in North Friesland, for example, or the peat areas in Dutch Friesland — are now getting the attention they deserve, and this is leading to quite spectacular new insights into the history of habitation. Nevertheless, international comparison is very much needed in the study of the Wadden Sea region.

Management of cultural heritage

We seem to be confronted with a strong combination of an ever-expanding number of challenges to natural and cultural heritage management, many of which are already visible today but will be more influential in the future. There is no need to create or raise a sense of urgency regarding the issues we should address, for example sea level rise and climate change adaptation, the *Energiewende* (energy transition), and demographic and economic stagnation or decline. However, we seem to be in the middle of an uncertain and unfinished paradigm shift with regard to natural and cultural heritage management: from one that is driven by research-based knowledge to one that incorporates 'sense of place' and public participation, from institutionalised approaches that involve only specialists and professionals to more informal, networked, interactive approaches that involve stakeholders and society too.

With his background in ecology, Karsten Reise addresses coastal zone management with regards to future sea level rises. He argues that new approaches are necessary to adapt to the rise in sea levels, some of which go back to historical strategies of living with water rather than fighting it, such as living on dwelling mounds. Peter Südbeck and Jürgen Rahmel turn

our attention to the management of heritage in Lower Saxony (Germany), expressing their wish for more integrated heritage management strategies for this particular part of the Wadden Sea region. They propose a three-step process to implement a transition zone around the biosphere reserve, which may do more justice to the current and historical presence of people. A similar regional approach is adopted by Ulf Ickerodt and Matthias Maluck, who discuss Germany's energy transition, or *Energiewende*, and the challenges it raises for sustainable cultural heritage management in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany. Linde Egberts also focuses on heritage management in one particular area within the Wadden Sea region. She analyses the changing discourse on cultural heritage and history in the current and future Dutch spatial planning policies and comes to the conclusion that the increasingly developmental perspective could open up new opportunities for including cultural and landscape values in national spatial planning.

Discussion

With the term *Waddenland*, the title of the book captures the editors' ambition to address the landscape aspects of the Wadden Sea area, which figure less prominently in conservationists' discourses than the ecological qualities of the sea. But by doing so, the title itself becomes a recognition of the dichotomy between nature and culture that its authors so dearly want to overcome. Another divide that the book aims to address is the fragmentation in research and especially governance of the region. But whereas the contributions in this book contain concrete analyses on how to improve this situation at the national and regional levels, concrete measures for solving the issue on a trilateral level remain virtually invisible.

All in all, the book does not quite succeed in practising exactly what it preaches. Stemming from the wish to formulate cultural historical narratives on the Wadden Sea region, the authors nonetheless end up confirming the practice and discourse that is dominant in nature preservation: the Wadden Sea is the realm of ecosystems and geological heritage, while the land in between and around it is *grosso modo* not part of the protected zone. By entitling this book *Waddenland*, the contributors are almost suggesting that they agree with this dichotomy: they accept that the sea is nature and seem to argue that the land should then be addressed in cultural terms. Nevertheless, this book is intended to be an important step in the direction of opening up discourses on nature conservation by offering culturally rich counternarratives.

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Dr. Meindert Schroor is a freelance geographer and historian at his own Bureau Varenius in Leeuwarden. Active since 1976 in researching and writing on the landscape, urban history, demography, water management and cartography of Fryslân (Friesland) and Groningen, he has developed into the most prolific researcher and writer on cultural history in the Northern Netherlands. Schroor received his PhD in 2014 on the demographic and economic history of the town of Groningen and is editor-in-chief of the *New Encyclopaedia of Fryslân* (published on paper in 2016). Since 2014, he has been a member of the board of the Waddenacademie responsible for the cultural history and society portfolio.

Prof. Jos Bazelmans studied cultural anthropology and received his PhD with honours in 1996 with his dissertation entitled *By Weapons Made Worthy. Lords, Retainers and Their Relationship in Beowulf*. From 1995 to 2000, he worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Amsterdam and the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. He supervised the Frisia project, a study of the social-political development of tribal communities in the Dutch-Frisian coastal area in the Roman era and the early Middle Ages. This engagement resulted in several critical reflections of the political geography and development of the early medieval Frisian kingdom. Towards the end of the 1990s, he played an active role in encouraging research into the dwelling mounds in the northern Netherlands. Since 2000, Bazelmans has had various coordinating positions at the National Service for Archaeological Heritage (Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek, ROB), the National Service for Archaeology, Cultural Landscape and Built Heritage (Rijksdienst voor Archaeologie, Cultuurlandschap en Monumenten, RACM) and the National Agency for Cultural Heritage (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, RCE). Since 2003, Bazelmans has been endowed professor of monument conservation. From 2009 to 2014, Bazelmans was a member of the board of the Waddenacademie.