

# Protected Area Management and Island Sustainability

DR. CORMAC WALSH 17.02.2025

FREIIA

**Interreg**  
North Sea



Co-funded by  
the European Union



# About FREIIA

- ▶ **Facilitating Resilience Embracing Island Innovation**
- ▶ Interreg North Sea (2022-2025)
- ▶ Lead Partner: Province of Fryslan, Netherlands
- ▶ Focus on Governance for Innovation

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# Schedule

## 17th February: Today!

- ▶ Current trends in protected area management across Europe
- ▶ Breakout sessions (small group discussion)
- ▶ Protected Areas and local communities (Wadden Sea)

## 24<sup>th</sup> February

- ▶ Islands and sustainability
- ▶ Governance and Participation

# Housekeeping

- ▶ Please raise hand to ask questions
- ▶ Short break halfway through
- ▶ Breakout sessions and group discussion
- ▶ Schedule is flexible

# Protected Areas in Europe

- ▶ **EU Biodiversity Strategy** (2020) and **UN Montreal Protocol**:
  - ▶ at least **30% of the land** and **30% of the sea** should be protected in the EU
  - ▶ **10% strictly protected.**
- ▶ Recent focus on designation of marine protected areas
- ▶ **EU Restoration Law** (2024): binding targets for the restoration of marine ecosystems

# Protected Area Management – Shifting Perspectives

## ▶ **What is protected?**

- ▶ Spectacular wildlife
- ▶ Iconic wildlife
- ▶ Wilderness
- ▶ Endangered Species
- ▶ Ecosystems
- ▶ Biodiversity
- ▶ Cultural landscapes
- ▶ 'National' nature
- ▶ Natural and cultural heritage

## ▶ **For whom?**

- ▶ Visitors and tourists
- ▶ 'Mankind' / future generations
- ▶ Local communities?
- ▶ Science?

# Types of Protected Areas

- ▶ National Parks
- ▶ Nature Reserves
- ▶ UNESCO Biosphere Reserves
- ▶ Nature Parks
- ▶ Natural Monuments
- ▶ Landscapes
- ▶ Geoparks
- ▶ Marine protected areas

# Traditional Model

## Objectives

- ▶ land set aside for conservation, taken out of productive use
- ▶ Mainly for scenic protection, spectacular wildlife – how things look
- ▶ Emphasis on ‘wilderness’

## Management

- ▶ Top-down management, expert-led
- ▶ Often displacement of local people
- ▶ Managed for visitors and tourists



Phillips (2003) [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/43599027.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Aac665e6dc2697cf0e238fb31ed51a0c8&ab\\_segments=&initiator=&acceptTC=1](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/43599027.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3Aac665e6dc2697cf0e238fb31ed51a0c8&ab_segments=&initiator=&acceptTC=1)



# Modern Paradigm

## Objectives

- ▶ Social and economic as well as conservation and recreation objectives
- ▶ Established for scientific, economic and cultural reasons
- ▶ Recognition that 'wilderness' areas are often culturally important places
- ▶ About active restoration as well as protection

## Management

- ▶ Inclusion of local communities, indigenous groups, NGOs and other stakeholders
- ▶ Diverse skillsets – scientific input plus people skills

# IUCN Definition and Categories

Protected Area: “An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and management through legal or other effective means”

- ▶ I – Strict protection (1a strict nature reserve, 1b Wilderness area)
- ▶ II – National Park - ecosystem conservation and protection
- ▶ III – Natural monuments – conservation of natural features
- ▶ IV – Conservation through active management (habitat species / management area)
- ▶ V – Protected Landscape / seascape – conservation and recreation
- ▶ VI – Sustainable use of natural resources

IUCN (1994)



## Breakout Session: 15 mins

- ▶ **What are the core objectives of National Parks and/ or other large protected areas in 'your' country? What is protected?**

e.g. biodiversity, scenic landscapes, attractive nature, natural and cultural heritage, sustainable development?

# Breakout Session: 15 mins

## Group 1

- ▶ Jacqueline
- ▶ Emma
- ▶ Jack
- ▶ Luise

## Group 2

- ▶ Ruth
- ▶ Mathilda
- ▶ Daniele
- ▶ Albert
- ▶ Frode

## Group 3

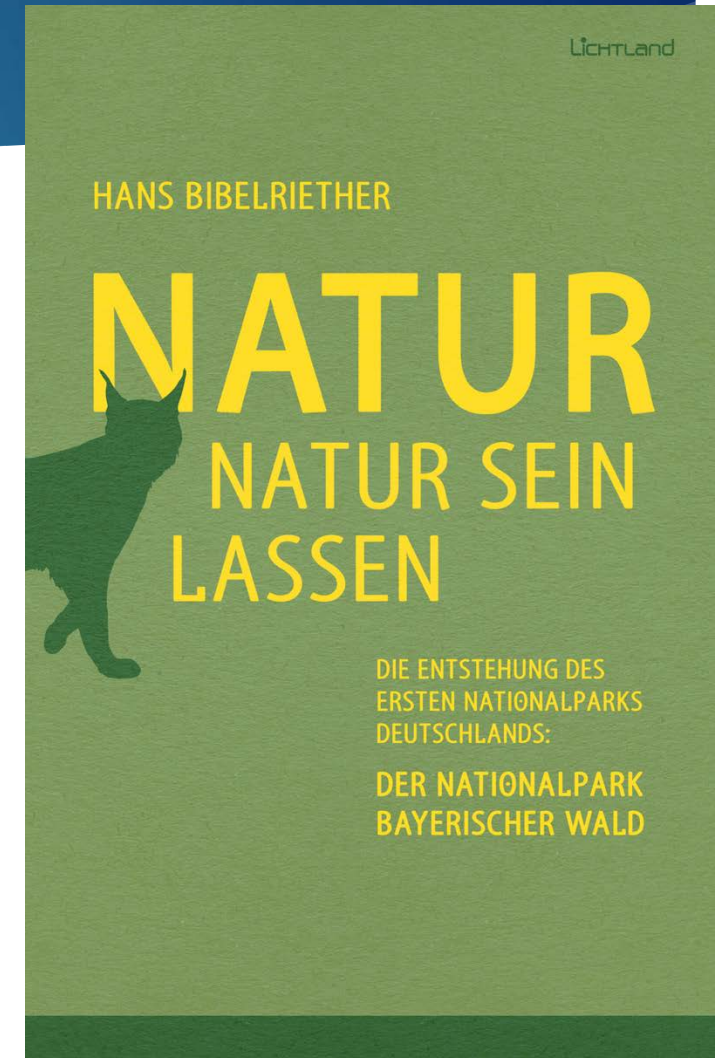
- ▶ David
- ▶ Donal
- ▶ Amber
- ▶ Monika

# Prevailing conservation paradigms in Europe?

Country	Conservation Paradigm
▶ Germany	Letting nature by nature, traditional paradigm
▶ Netherlands	Modern paradigm, small national parks, inclusive approach
▶ Ireland	Visitor attraction – strong emphasis on consultation, people vs nature
▶ Sweden	Nature, values, habitats, species, increasingly local stakeholders involved, sustainable use, adaptive protection
▶ Norway	Nature, values, habitats, species, increasingly local stakeholders involved, sustainable use, adaptive protection, local politicians directly involved

# Germany – Traditional Paradigm

- ▶ First national park introduced in 1970, currently 16.
- ▶ Massive local opposition, top down designation and management
- ▶ **Objectives:**
  - ▶ 'Letting nature be nature'
  - ▶ Intrinsic value of nature, pristine wilderness, rewilding
  - ▶ Informed by science
- ▶ Also 14 Biosphere reserves, 98 nature parks



# Wadden Sea

## Transboundary 'trilateral' cooperation since late 1970s

- Common Secretariat
- Agreed Definition of Conservation Area
- Agreed Conservation Objectives
- Definition of Wadden Sea Region

## UNESCO World Heritage site

- NL & DE - since 2009
- NL & DE & DK – since 2014/3



Protected Area	Protected Area Type	Established	Area (Current extent, km <sup>2</sup> )	Country
<i>National</i>				
Danish Wadden Sea Nature Reserve	Game and Wildlife Reserve (national regulations)	1979	1,243	DK
Planning Key Decision Wadden Sea	National planning regulations	1980	<sup>1</sup>	NL
Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park	National Park (IUCN II)	1985	4,415	DE
Lower Saxony Wadden Sea National Park	National Park (IUCN II)	1986	3,450	DE
Schiermonnikoog National Park	National Park (IUCN II)	1989	72	NL
Hamburg Wadden Sea National Park	National Park (IUCN II)	1990	137.5	DE
UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea and Halligs	UNESCO Biosphere Reserve	1990	4,431	DE
UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Lower Saxony Wadden Sea	UNESCO Biosphere Reserve	1992	4,171	DE
Dunes of Texel National Park	National Park (IUCN II)	2002	43	NL
Danish Wadden Sea National Park	National Park (IUCN V)	2010	1,466	DK
<i>International</i>				
Trilateral Intergovernmental Declaration on the Protection of the Wadden Sea	Political Declaration	1982	14,950	DE / DK / NL
Wetland of International Importance	Ramsar Site	1984	2,710	DE / DK / NL
Wadden Sea World Heritage	UNESCO World Heritage site	2009 / 2016	11,434	DE / DK / NL



# Wadden Sea: Germany

- ▶ National parks at *Länder* level established 1985 and 1986
- ▶ Coastal and island municipalities voted against (SH), minimal participation
- ▶ Inhabited islands not part of national parks
- ▶ Strict separation of natural and cultural landscape



# Wadden Sea: Germany

- ▶ The Wadden Sea is not “a free space for nature” but “a living space for people”
- ▶ The state government and NGOs should help the local people in developing ways to manage and take responsibility for their environment rather than ‘chasing large-scale projects with fancy names’

(Hollander 1984)

# Wadden Sea: Germany

## *God created the sea, the Frisians coast*

“The Wadden Sea is not an original natural landscape but a **cultural landscape lost to the sea**. So, in one form or another, the Frisian inhabitants have paid for the Wadden Sea.

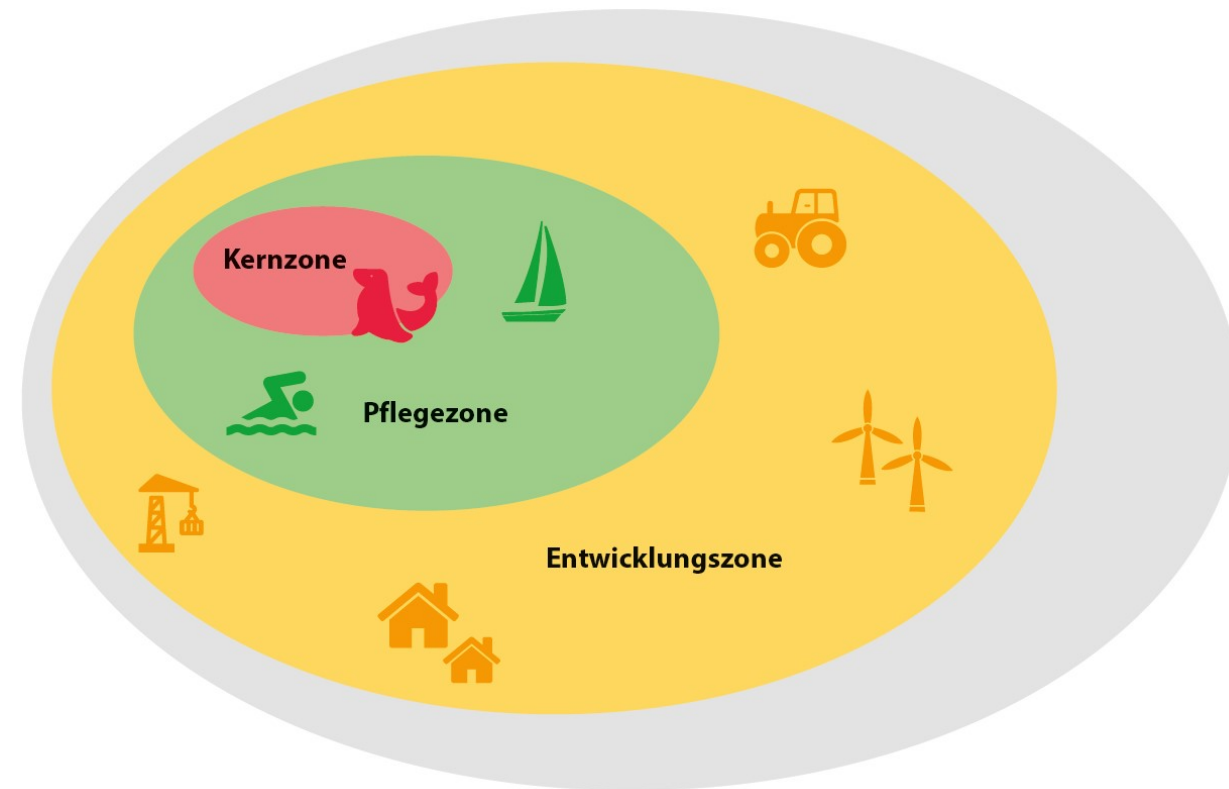
That is why they primarily are entitled to decide about the Wadden Sea”.

(Paulsen 1974, in Steensen 2018)



# Wadden Sea Biosphere Reserves

- ▶ UNESCO: model regions for sustainable development
- ▶ S-H: Development zone: Hallig Islands and Pellworm
- ▶ L-S: Development zone: certain municipalities in coastal hinterland



# Germany Wadden Sea: Hallig Islands

- ▶ Low-lying marsh islands not protected by dikes (5 inhabited – total 230 people)
- ▶ Surrounding by Wadden Sea National Park (Schleswig-Holstein)
- ▶ Since 2004: development zone of UNESCO Biosphere Reserve
- ▶ Combined focus on natural and cultural heritage
- ▶ Unique and special relationship between Hallig communities and their natural environment



# Wadden Sea: Schiermonnikoog (NL)

- ▶ Very small size
- ▶ NP as 'brand', common umbrella
- ▶ Shared responsibility between municipality and NGOs (Natuurmonumenten)
- ▶ Focus on land rather than sea
- ▶ Close link between NP and island sustainability but also some conflict...

'the National Park should belong to everyone on the island'

'the connections between nature and ecology on the one hand and the local economy, cultural history, recreation and tourism and community on Schiermonnikoog' ... should be strengthened

(NP Schiermonnikoog 2024)



Nationaal Park  
Schiermonnikoog

# Danish Wadden Sea

23

- ▶ Protected area since 1979,
- ▶ National Park since 2010, following extensive open-ended consultation process

“The WSNP brings together **many interests**. We are passionate about a common goal. To **use, protect** and **develop** the area with respect for the **past**, the **present** and the **future**” (2019 NPP, 24)



# Danish Wadden Sea

“The WSNP is a very broadly based unit aiming... to create a mutual understanding – with both the locals and visitors – that the Wadden Sea is a unique place” (NP secretariat)

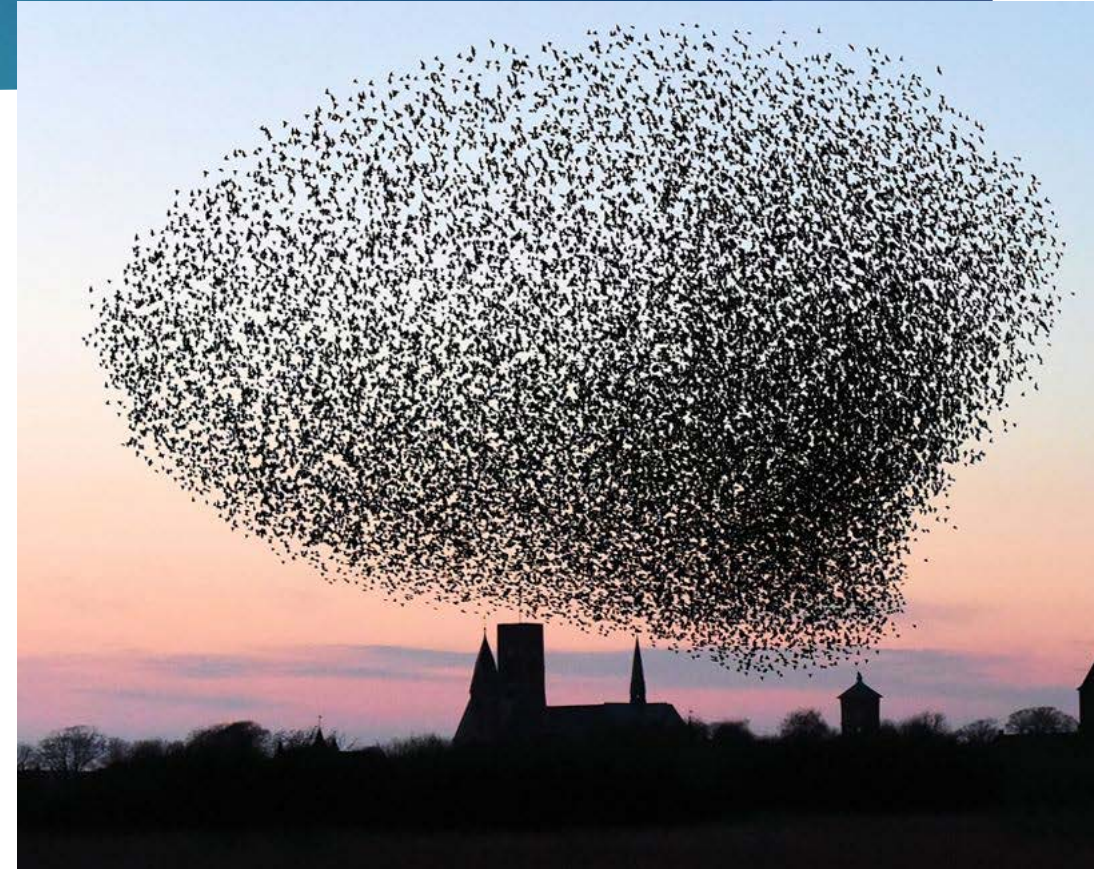
“The national park is a **sort of a frame** put down on this area... And also the neighbouring area” (I\_N9)





# Danish Wadden Sea

“You can stand... where we have our church and our old city hall... and you can **walk 200 metres and then you are in the national park.** That’s, of course, something we would like people to know in this municipality... that we are **proud of having the national park so close to our [town]...**” (I\_L1)



# Danish Wadden Sea

“a hunter was interested in hunting the birds and an ornithologist was interested in looking at the birds... So, saving the birds was one thing that both parts could [agree to]...

and then afterwards we can discuss if we should shoot them or look at them!.” (I\_N6)



# Danish Wadden Sea

“We don't want sand to move. We are really afraid of sand moving and flooding. It's in our blood in this part of the country...

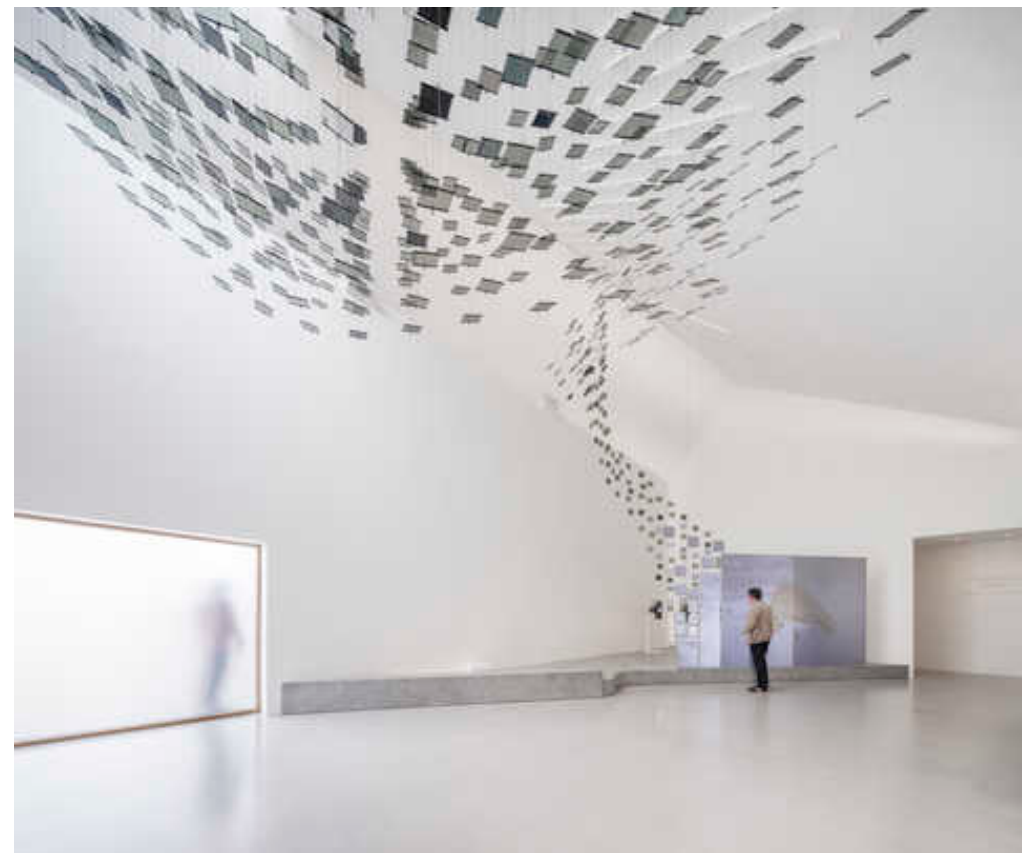
We can set some dunes free, so to speak...  
But, it's, again, a change in our minds that,  
Uh oh oh oh. Sand is moving” (I\_N8)



# Danish Wadden Sea

“Because the migration birds, for us, was the biggest nature telling story about the Wadden Sea... That is our story... So, we can see the global meaning of this area and the global value in the story...

But, we had to bring the birds near the people... I think it's very important to understand that you must see and feel the beauty of the Wadden Sea to understand it”  
(I\_N7)



# A New Generation of National Parks?

- ▶ Increased emphasis on sustainability objectives and appreciation of nature
- ▶ Working with rather than against local people
- ▶ Natural and cultural heritage
- ▶ But, also increased emphasis on strict protection and rewilding

## **Examples:**

- ▶ Cairngorms, Scotland
- ▶ Danish National Parks

# Failed National Park Proposals

- ▶ **Parc Adula, Switzerland** - rejected by local municipalities in referendum 2016
- ▶ **German Baltic Sea** – proposals debated 2023 and 2024, abandoned due to lack of local support



# Relevance for Small Islands

- ▶ Protected area management can only be effective with the **support of local communities**
- ▶ National Parks need to **understand and reflect local understandings** of nature, landscape, the coast and the sea
- ▶ Need to engage local communities to **avoid polarised debates**
- ▶ National Parks provide an **opportunity for small islands**

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## 24<sup>th</sup> February

- ▶ Islands and sustainability
- ▶ Governance and Participation



# Contact Details

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