

THE DUTCH WADDEN SEA

A Marine Protected Area with
decreasing social concerns?

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THE PEOPLE'S ROLE IN WETLAND MANAGEMENT

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON WETLANDS

THE NETHERLANDS
LEIDEN
5-8 JUNE
1989

No successful
wetland
management
without taking
care of the
concerns of
local people!



Wadden Sea

Juist Langeoog

Hamburg

Bremen

Niedersachsen

(Hanover)

Hannover

Amsterdam

Netherlands

Rotterdam

Dortmund

Essen

Düsseldorf

Germany

(Brussels)

Brussel

Belgium

(Cologne)



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tidal range 1.5 – 3 m

2,500 km²

50% shallow water and
channels

45% tidal flats

5% saltmarshes







Wadden Sea protection

- Based on:
 - Policy document (PKB) for harmonizing policies at various governmental levels
 - Application of Nature Conservation Act to regulate activities of citizens

PKB

(“Planologische Kernbeslissing”
or Key Planning Decision):

- Proposal 1976
- Government decision 1978
- Approved in Parliament 1980

PKB decisions

- Coastal protection maintained
- No large embankments unless important national or regional concerns
- Shipping remains possible but speedboats and hovercrafts to be regulated
- Pipelines still possible with restrictions

PKB decisions (2)

- Industrial developments at harbours will remain possible
- Only “major” extractions of natural gas
- No discharge of sewage and pollutants
- Sand extraction to be investigated
- Military activities to be stabilized and if possible reduced

PKB decisions (3)

- Sailing with leisure craft to be stabilized
- Tidal flat walking to be stabilized
- Mussel culture to be maintained at least at 1976 level
- Shrimp fisheries will be regulated
- Sports fisheries to be regulated

PKB essentials

- Political collaboration by various stakeholders had to be bought
- Resulted in very few strict protection measures

1981: Application Nature Conservation Act

- About 50% of the area of the Wadden Sea was designated as protected area (“MPA”)
- Fishermen got a general exemption
- Tidal flats near villages were not protected

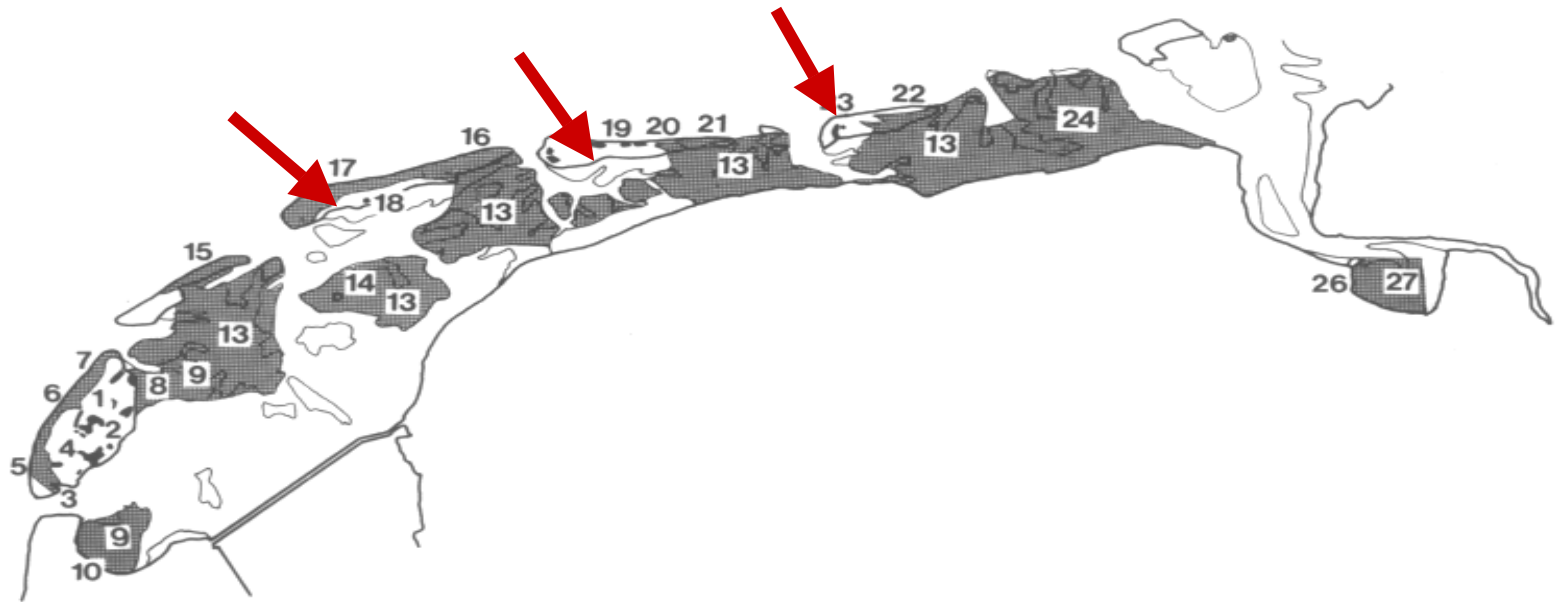


Fig. 16. Survey of existing nature reserves in the Dutch Wadden Sea as per December 1982.

Mörzer Bruyns & Wolff, 1983

Decreasing social concerns?

- Three case studies
 - Access to area by local population
 - Cockle fisheries
 - Shrimp fisheries

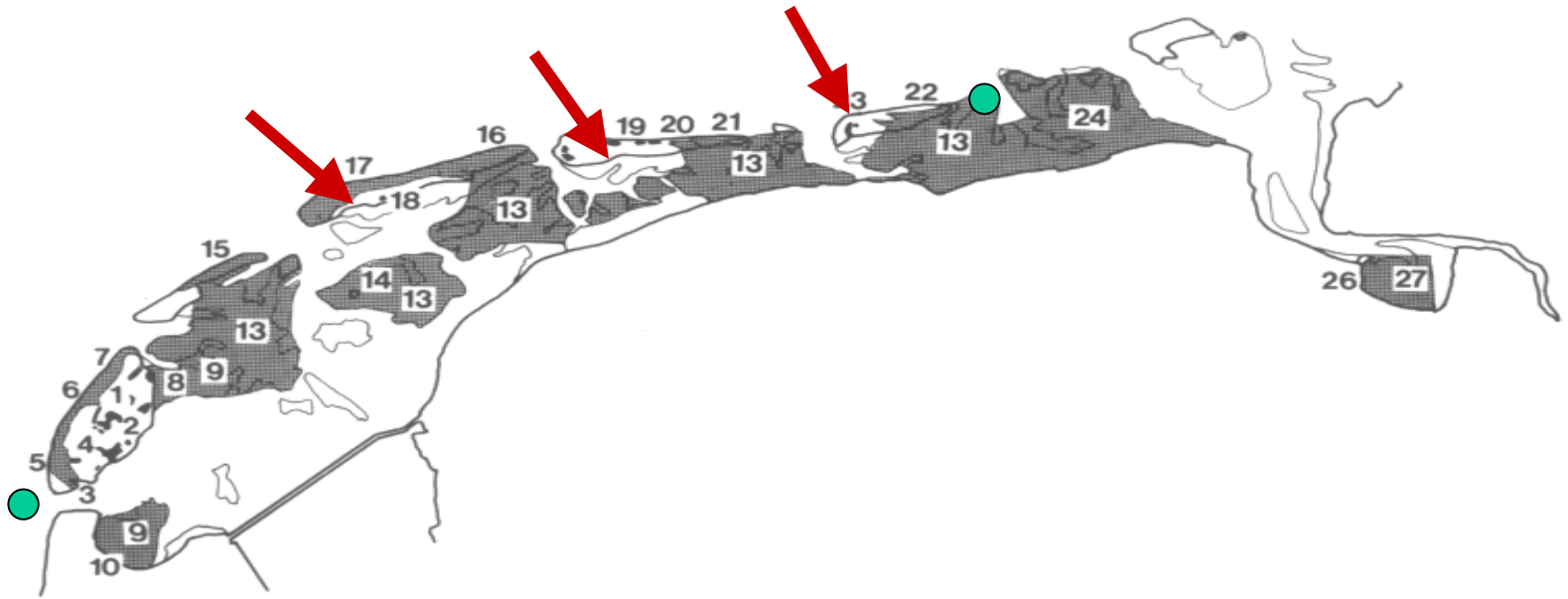


Fig. 16. Survey of existing nature reserves in the Dutch Wadden Sea as per December 1982.

Mörzer Bruyns & Wolff, 1983

Access for local population

- All areas still unprotected in 1981 got protected status in 1993 under Nature Conservation Act: access possible, but no small-scale fishing etc.
- Conservation regulations were maintained more strictly (e.g., no bait digging)

Access for local population - 2

- Entrance to high-lying sandbanks became prohibited for local people



Den Burg

Den Helder



Access for local population - 3

- Privately owned salt marshes were sold to conservation organisations
- Restrictions of access for people, also bureaucratic

Cockle fishery



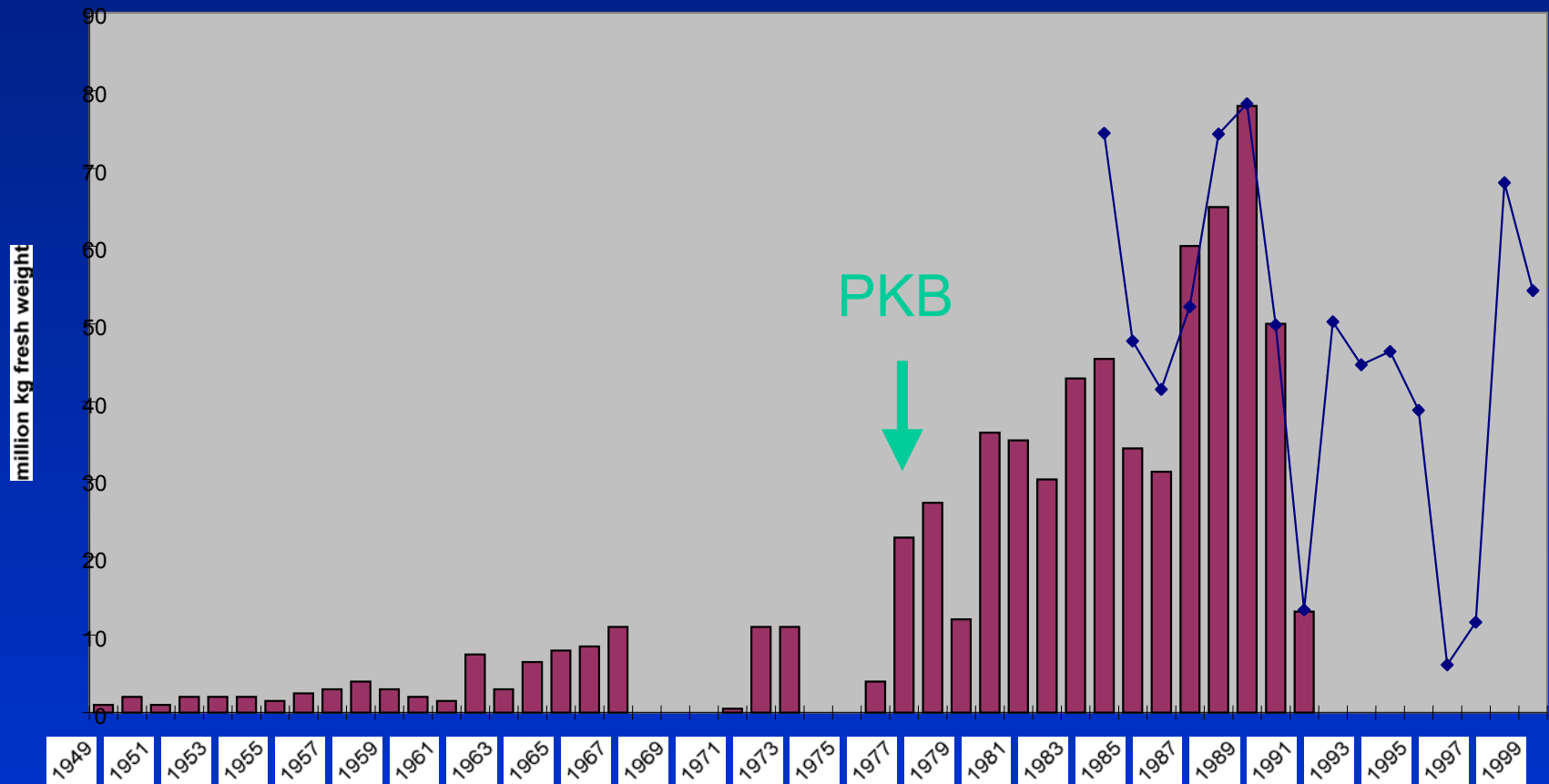
Cockle fishery in the PKB (1978)

- Attention is drawn to potential damage by cockle fisheries
- Fishery is regulated by a license system
- Investigation into ecological effects is announced

Cockle landings

Cockle landings

Dijkema 1997 PVIS 1999



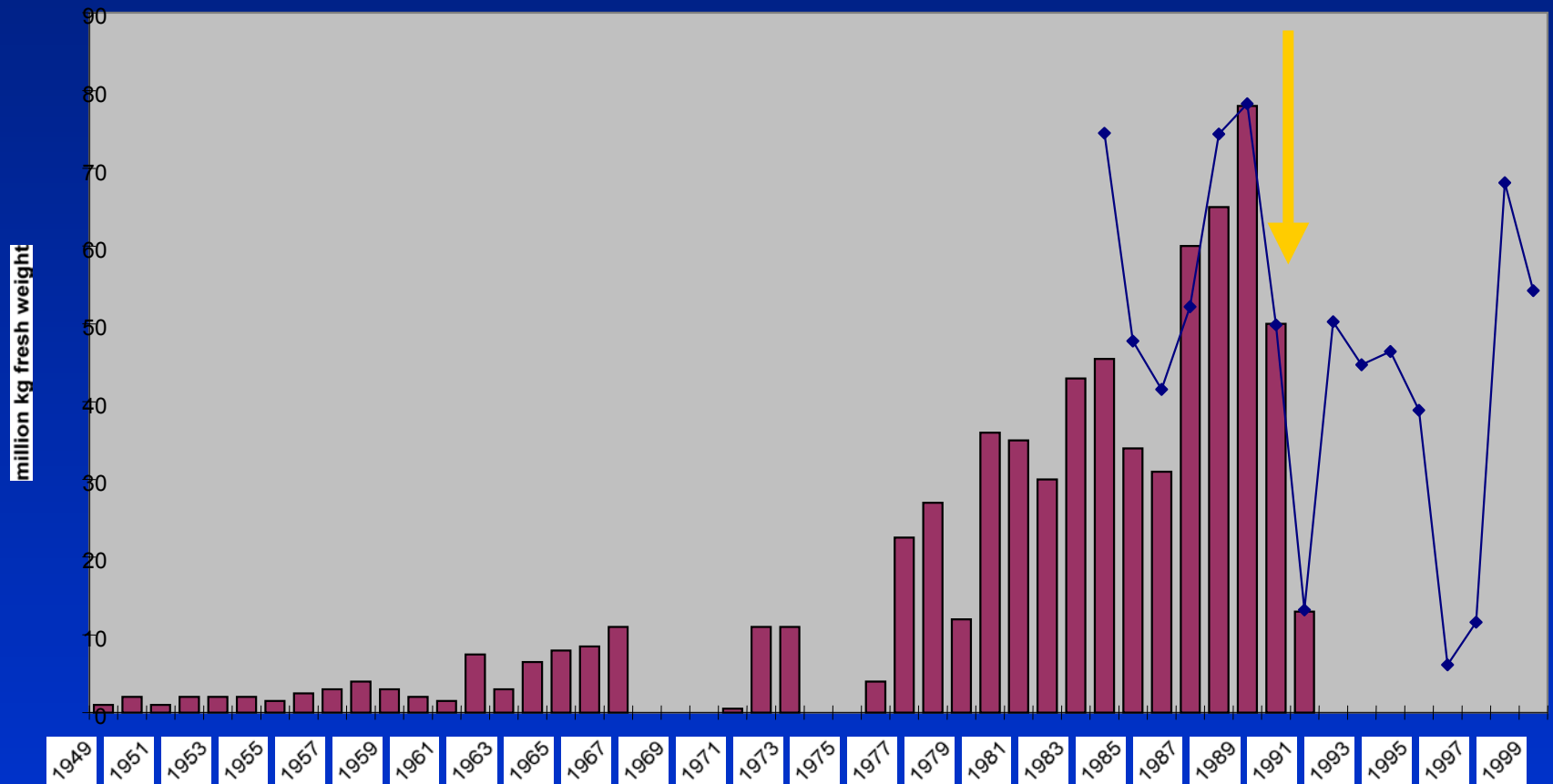
1978-1992

- Research announced in PKB: cockle fishery no major problem
- 1990-92: all time low in shellfish stocks; fishers enforced the right to continue fishing
- Shorebird mortality
- 1993: new fisheries policy

Cockle landings

Cockle landings

Dijkema 1997 PVIS 1999



Cockles: 1993-2006

- New fisheries policy
- Research to find out whether new way of cockle fishery is sustainable
- Fishers willing to accept compromises
- Conservation organizations aiming at total ban on fishery
- EU Habitat Directive put an end to fishery

Social concerns?

- 38 license holders
- Most licenses owned by multinationals
- Homeport of most fishers in Zeeland area (SW Netherlands)
- Fishers have been compensated financially

Shrimp fishery



Shrimp fishery

- About 90 licences
- Small enterprises from various Wadden Sea ports hold licenses
- Fishing in Wadden Sea and North Sea
- No restrictions in PKB 1978
- Supposed to cause little ecological damage

Future of shrimp fishery

- 2004: Ruling of Netherlands' Economic Competition Authority >> more competition >> lower prices >> more fishing
- Conservation organisations demand study of ecological effects
- If effects can be demonstrated, measures will be demanded



Conclusion

- Tendency to give absolute protection to Wadden Sea
- Interests of relatively small numbers of local inhabitants are considered less important and are sacrificed
- So ... do we observe a case of decreasing social concerns for the local population?

What is the local population?

- We tend to view the inhabitants of the barrier islands and the villages bordering the Wadden Sea as the local population
- However, I suggest that the entire Dutch population should be considered the “local population”

The larger local population

- Wadden Sea is largest Dutch nature area (about 8% of Dutch land territory)
- In the Netherlands the Wadden Sea is immensely popular: radio, tv, books, newspapers; the press is pro Wadden Sea
- Barrier islands are very popular as destination for (short) holidays

The local / Dutch population

- Hundreds of traditional barges sail with groups of people (12 – 60) on the Wadden Sea
- Large numbers of people (80,000 per year) have walked the tidal flats
- These people come from all over the country (and from abroad)

The real local population

- Protection of the Wadden Sea has strong political support in Parliament; this reflects the common opinion in the country
- Politicians tend to sacrifice small-scale local interests to the perceived interests of the entire Dutch population