

## Being with the Wadden Seascape

Understanding How Inhabitants of Terschelling Relate to the Seascape and  
Negotiate Feelings of Belonging in the Context of Frictional Transformations

# **Master Thesis Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship**

**Student:** Jamie Juanita Denise Betz

**Student number:** 9785604

**Supervisor:** Gijs Cremers

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Haven

*A place where the wind blows through your head*

*Where you doing what makes your belly sing*

*where you dream, as much as you can*

*where you are who you are*

*a place of sand, of sea, of air, of earth, of fire*

*a place where you can never get lost*

*a place where freedom dwells;*

*I want to be there*

*And if I leave that*

*I'll take that place*

*Everywhere I go*

- Wende

Vrijplaats

*Een plek waar de wind door je hoofd waait*

*Waar je doet waar je buik van gaat zingen*

*waar je droomt, zoveel je kan*

*waar je bent wie je bent*

*een plek van zand, van zee, van lucht, van aarde, van vuur*

*een plek waar je nooit verdwalen kunt*

*een plek waar de vrijheid woont;*

*Daar wil ik zijn*

*En als ik daarvan vertrek*

*neem ik die plek mee*

*Overal waar ik nog komen ga*

- Wende

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## **Acknowledgements**

The sea and Wadden islands have always been present in my life. Growing up close to the beach I have spent many summers near the sea. Since I was little, we spend almost every summer on the island of Vlieland. When I grew older, I added the island of Terschelling to my summers. 2022 will be the 10<sup>th</sup> year I am visiting Terschelling. This year, though, I was more than just a badgast [tourist]. I had the opportunity to learn what it is like to live on Terschelling, which gave me a completely new perspective. Terschelling and the islanders are to be thanked for this experience.

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## Abstract

This thesis explores how inhabitants of Terschelling negotiate feelings of belonging with the Wadden seascape in the context of frictional transformations. The relationship with the Wadden seascape as a form of belonging is changing for inhabitants of Terschelling, the Netherlands. By focusing on engagement with the seascape as a form of belonging, I show how nature conservation and tourism-driven cultural realignment contribute to a feeling of collective displacement. Terschelling is situated within the Wadden Sea region which has been declared as UNESCO World Heritage in 2009 and has several designated Natura 2000 protected areas. These nature conservation efforts impact the daily life of people dwelling on Terschelling through legislation and promotion of the island. Because of legislation, islanders are afraid of losing their perceived authenticity, and as a result, specific cultural-historical rituals will be lost. The UNESCO World Heritage designation is thought to boost tourism and the number of residential houses, resulting in a collective sense of displacement. Politics of belonging is concerned with the division of society into "us" and "them." Any creation of borders that include or exclude people involves imagination. Inhabitants of Terschelling are expressing this way of thinking through disputes over who has the authority to interfere with daily life as they feel the island belongs to the seascape. Using the dichotomy of nature and culture to explain the differences in perceptions is another example of how dualistic thinking promotes a sense of belonging. The first chapter provides an understanding of Terschelling and its inhabitants and the Wadden seascape. The second chapter illustrates how islanders engage the seascape. The third chapter discusses how belonging with Terschelling is expressed.

Keywords: Politics of Belonging, Collective Displacement, Tourism-driven Cultural Realignment, Frictional Transformations, Nature Conservation, Wadden Seascape.





*Figure 1: The harbour of West-Terschelling, picture by author, June 28, 2022*

## **Introduction**

On Friday the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, I scan my regular passenger pass for the first time in the port of shipping company Rederij Doeksen in the village of Harlingen, Friesland. Along with countless other passengers, I travel from this location to Terschelling on the boat Ms. Willem Barentsz. The purser talks about the safety precautions on board before wishing everyone a wonderful day on Terschelling and a warm welcome home for islanders. All ages of travellers can be seen reading, conversing, and looking out at the Wadden Sea. People point at seals that are lying in the sun on a sandbank that is exposed at low tide. Some passengers gesture at passing trawlers and sailboats as they travel across the Wadden Sea. The water is calm, the sun is shining, and the air is filled with the screeching of seagulls. In the distance, one can see the windmills at the IJsselmeer in the south, and in front of the ferry, the contours of the Wadden islands Vlieland and Terschelling are becoming visible. The television screen plays a slideshow with pictures of nature and advertisements for activities, displaying what awaits the people on board. After almost two hours the ferry approaches the harbour, and the travellers start to move. While disembarking the ship I pass a big, brown welcome sign that reads ‘UNESCO Werelderfgoed Waddenzee’. I feel a breeze, it carries the salty smell of oysters, I have arrived.

## **Academic and Societal Relevance**

In anthropological work, islands, in general, are frequently described as having a level of inaccessibility, and cultural distinctiveness, with water as a natural and cultural boundary (Macleod 2001, 76). However, the Wadden islands are relatively easily accessible nowadays and over 400,000 visitors annually traverse the Wadden sea to visit Terschelling, which is located in the Wadden region (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 183). According to UNESCO, the Wadden region is one of the last large-scale intertidal habitats where natural processes are still substantially unaffected. Many plant and animal species call the area home, including marine mammals like the harbour seal, and grey seal<sup>1</sup>. Wadden [mudflats] refers to the natural shallow composition of the area and the islands’ scenery is a popular tourist destination. Terschelling has approximately 4,870 inhabitants<sup>2</sup> who share the seascape with other human and non-human species.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see [whc.unesco.org](http://whc.unesco.org), last visited on May 24, 2022

<sup>2</sup> For more information see [www.kadastralekaart.com/gemeenten/Terschelling](http://www.kadastralekaart.com/gemeenten/Terschelling), last visited on June 28, 2022

Many inhabitants of Terschelling, islanders as they call themselves, have been making a living out of tourism. With the establishment of a regular ferry service by the shipping company Rederij Doeksen in 1923 and the expansion of the road system between 1915 and 1929, tourism gradually increased on the island. Additionally, since the 1920s, many real estate development initiatives, including those for vacation houses, beach resorts, and hotels, have boosted tourism (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 183). During the second world war, tourism was prohibited but a few years later tourism grew exponentially under the influence of social change (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 184). Some islanders felt that the exponential expansion of tourism was undesirable since it had a negative impact on the island's culture. Later on, policies such as a fixed maximum number of tourist beds and attempts to extend the tourist season were implemented (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 180). Nevertheless, today the island of Terschelling is still a popular tourist destination, due to the uniqueness of the region. Accordingly, some islanders still feel the expansion of visitors is unwanted. As tourism is dependent on the attractiveness of the landscape there is an interaction between the two of them. However, as Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay (2018, 185) argue there was either a focus on socio-economic development or nature protection in policy on Terschelling. After the 1970s the focus on nature conservation got more standing in local policy and at the European level (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 187).

On the one hand, the nature protection policy has successfully managed to preserve the Wadden region. On the other hand, the Wadden region's inclusion as a World Heritage site in 2009 by UNESCO may have helped to broaden the scope and reach of tourism (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 182). The legislation and promotion of Terschelling have an impact on the daily lives of people who live on the island. Islanders fear of losing their perceived authenticity because of legislation, and as a result, distinctive cultural-historical practices might be lost. Moreover, the promotion of the environment in nature conservation is expected to increase tourists and the number of residential houses, causing a sense of displacement among inhabitants (Aa, Groote, and Huigen 2010).

Hence, in contrast to the level of inaccessibility, cultural distinctiveness is still relevant for Terschelling. This thesis explores how inhabitants of Terschelling negotiate feelings of belonging with the Wadden seascape in the context of frictional transformations, like tourism and nature conservation initiatives. The notion of friction is used to indicate that these transformations are informed by mutual motion (Tsing 2005).

## **Theoretical Debate**

Maritime anthropology is a field that studies the social and cultural dynamics of coastal areas. In the past, this field has recognized the significance of marine resources and their part in the emergence of social complexity (Prieto 2016, 19). Current coastal management is challenging and influenced by the international legal system, the market economy, and climate change (Hamada 2020, 27). The ocean, which was once thought of as a place apart from society, has evolved into a scene for geopolitical, economic, and environmental conflicts that frequently refer to the water as land. The environmental and socio-economic processes require a more holistic approach to conceptually appreciate the oceans' connection to humans since seas differ from terrestrial systems in function and space (Roszko 2021). Multispecies maritime anthropology can show that the lives of humans and nonhumans in water emerge through complex sets of relations (Hamada 2020, 38). This research adds to furthering knowledge on how the sea is experienced in the lives of local people on Terschelling as a material scape. In doing so, it contributes to the understanding of people's experiences of being with the sea (Brown and Humberstone 2015, 5).

Anthropologists have more recently concentrated on exchanges and interactions between humans and the environment (Roszko 2021). Nonhuman species that have coevolved with humans frequently take on minor roles in resource management, both in discourse and in actual practice (Hamada 2020). However, people, the sea, and organizations do not behave in isolation, but rather through relationships at various moments in time and space. The concept of seascape includes the non-human world's daily experiences, representations of being in and on the sea, as well as the historical and social components that make up individual and collective sea consciousness (Brown and Humberstone 2015, 19-20). Beings, objects, bodies of information, and processes that affect the environment are all part of the seascape (Hamada 2020, 29). I define the seascape as an area where islanders' perceptions of the environment and dwelling, their perceived identity, belonging, and their occupations interact with regulations, conservation efforts, policy and other external factors (Plaan 2018; Ingold 2000). To illustrate the use of seascape further, I do not mean to imply the seascape in the literal sense but I use the notion of seascapes to approach the Wadden sea region as a scientifically and strategically defined place, in which stakeholders seem to collaborate to protect the diversity and quantity of marine life (Atkinson et al. in Murphy et al. 2021).

Seascapes are created and shaped by a variety of actors, both live and non-living. Anthropologists describe how material items function as actors in this manner, influencing or assembling a series of events that human actors then interpret in various ways (Hamada 2020,

32). Seeing and thinking of water as a seascape – formed, alive, rich in natural diversity as well as ontological and complex – provides a fresh perspective on how people in coastal communities actively build their identities, sense of belonging, and histories (Cooney 2003). Exploring how notions of belonging are constructed is relevant in geopolitical contexts where political, economic, and social interests seem to be in conflict (Lovell 1998, 1), much like in the seascape of the Wadden region.

Diverse social contexts, identifications, and emotional ties to various assemblages and groups, as well as the ethical and political standards by which people assess their own and others' sense of belonging, can all be explored analytically. Politics of belonging is concerned with the political divisions between "us" and "them" in society. Any creation of borders that include or exclude people involves imagination. That creative ability to create communities is based on various levels of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006, 204).

Morley (2001, 425) explains home as both the symbolic ideas, the spaces of belonging and identity, and the physical place, the household. Thus, home can be explained as both a physical place and a rhetorical idea, like the idea of a home where 'everybody knows your name' (Morley 2001, 425). In this thesis, the seascape is conceptualized as 'home' for islanders, both in the form of a physical place and as a symbolic space. The idea of belonging to a place is evoked when one identifies with a particular community, but it is also largely characterized by a sense of experience (Lovell 1998, 1).

### **Research Question, Operationalization and Methodology**

Based on the above theoretical debate and considerations I have formulated the following main research question: how do inhabitants of Terschelling negotiate feelings of belonging with the Wadden seascape in the context of frictional transformations? This main research question will be answered in three chapters. The first is an ethnographic account of Terschelling. The second is a chapter about the Wadden seascape. The last is a chapter on the processes of frictional transformations in relation to notions of belonging with Terschelling. In each chapter, I connect my empirical data with anthropological concepts. In the last section 'thesis outline' of this chapter I will elaborate on the content.

This research was situated on the island of Terschelling during winter in February, March, and April 2022. Without knowing beforehand, the months I was doing fieldwork were the best time to conduct research, as the tourist season starts in April and ends in December and these three months were the least busy for inhabitants of Terschelling. This helped with the availability of research participants.

To answer the main research question, I have conducted twelve weeks of ethnographic fieldwork on Terschelling. A strategy to get insights into daily life on Terschelling has been developed through the triangulation of several data collection techniques. I have used multiple qualitative research methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and photo-elicitation. I have used pseudonyms for all the research participants to offer confidentiality and anonymity (O'Reilly 2012, 68).

The main objective of the semi-structured interviews was to understand how people on Terschelling construct their relationship with the Wadden seascape. To do so, I have conducted seventeen semi-structured interviews with inhabitants of Terschelling. This way of interviewing works as the cornerstone of the ethnographic method and allowed me to keep the dialogue flowing with conversational space for the participants (Madden 2017). I chose to concentrate my research on those who are directly impacted by tourism, and nature conservation, and who are actively involved in the seascape. All the interviewees were islanders who either worked in the tourism sector or at sea, for example as fishermen, lifeguards, or lighthouse keepers. These semi-structured interviews provided me with in-depth information about the daily lived reality of my participants, their perceptions, and their relationships.

Participant observation involves partaking in a group's regular activities, rituals, conversations, and events in order to learn about both the overt and covert components of their way of life and culture (DeWalt and DeWalt 2010). During my fieldwork, I have stayed with the couple Arend and Janet, who are respectively working as a police officer and civil servant and together own a bed and breakfast. They served as key interlocutors and gatekeepers (Hammersley and Atkinson 2019). According to O'Reilly (2012), key research participants can function also as gatekeepers, who ease access to other people on the island. This snowball method was used to establish contact with other research participants (Bernard 2011, 149). Living with islanders and being on the island for three months allowed me to experience the daily routine of Terschelling and on the seascape. Joining interlocutors during daily activities allowed me to establish rapport and build relationships (O'Reilly 2012).

Photo-elicitation (Pink 2015) turned out to be a useful tool in supporting the experiences my research participants shared with me. They used their smartphones to send me pictures. The sensory method of photo-elicitation worked as an alternative media for research participants to express their ways of knowing and provide a gateway to imagine engagement in an embodied practice or actual environment (Pink 2015).

## **Positionality and Ethics**

As an ethnographic researcher, I acknowledge my research is biased. However, by staying reflective during the research I tried to understand the effect of my position on the research (DeWalt and DeWalt 2010, 93). Therefore, I have been reflexive of my social position as a 29-year-old, non-religious, left-voting, higher educated, a conscious living (vegetarian) woman from Utrecht. Moreover, I have a direct and open personality. These factors shaped my research in the fact that I was more conscious about my way of communicating. As well as in discovering that my position could change, I have found myself eating shrimp in the middle of the night out at sea for example (as vegetarian).

I have stayed true to the American Association's Code of Ethics and supplied participants with information regarding the research. As part of the informed consent, I have always asked permission at the start of the interview and explained that research participants were always allowed to retrieve from the research. Additionally, I have informed my key research informants that my fieldnotes with information about daily live and informal conversations could also be used in the research. I have spoken to different people within the community of Terschelling, and many knew each other. Although I could not stop the fact research participants were aware of whom I had interviewed, I have never shared any details from my data.

## **Thesis Outline**

To analyse and answer the main research question this thesis is divided into three chapters as mentioned before. The opening chapter is an ethnographic account of Terschelling that first describes the field site followed by the setting of conservation efforts and tourism. It provides the reader with information about the environment, transformational processes, and the people who live there to understand the context of the thesis. The second chapter explains how inhabitants of Terschelling engage the seascape. It starts with the socio-historical ways of engaging the sea, followed by an account of contemporary encounters with the seascape. The chapter ends with a description of being with the sea, to explain how inhabitants give meaning to the environment. The final chapter explains belonging with Terschelling on different levels, by using the framework politics of belonging. In the conclusion the chapters are summarized, the main questions answered, and the research discussed.



Figure 2: The Wadden Sea region, Terschelling in red. Picture by researchgate.net.



## **1. An Ethnography of Terschelling**

This chapter introduces Terschelling and serves as background information for the reader. It opens with a description of the environment on Terschelling and the people who live on the island. By doing so, the reader is introduced to the close-knit community that lives on Terschelling and their traditions and ideas of authenticity. The next part of the chapter is about the context of frictional transformations, such as tourism and nature conservation efforts. The consensus on Terschelling against external processes is mostly negative, and to grasp the context actants and their role in the environment are presented. For a practical understanding of these relations, I use the concept of friction (Tsing 2005) as a framework to look at differences in encounters.

### **1.1 Understanding Terschelling**

Terschelling is one of the biggest of the five inhabitable islands that form the Dutch Wadden islands, geographically located between the North Sea and the Wadden Sea in the north of the Netherlands<sup>3</sup>. The elongated island extends 30 kilometres from east to west (see Figure 2) and has six villages, eleven townships, and three seaside villages.

Terschelling is separated from the mainland by the Wadden Sea and borders the North Sea. One of my interlocutors, Vrouwke, who was born on Terschelling, describes both seas poetically surrounding the island. She tells me she feels enclosed by two completely different seas, their features as rather gendered human characters. The North Sea as a tough man and the Wadden Sea as a fickle lady. Like other inhabitants she makes a clear distinction between both seas, attributing agency to the Wadden Sea as a connection with the mainland and sees it as a space of contestation (Vrouwke, interview, March 11, 2022). The main subject in this research is the Wadden sea(scape), however, the North Sea also acts as an existing subject in the lives of research participants.

The Wadden seaside of Terschelling mostly consists of polders, dikes, and mudflats. The ferry that commutes over four times daily between the mainland and the island sails through the deepened waterway called the Schuitengat [Boat hole], which passes along the West coast of the island. A wide-ranging beach called the Groene Strand [Green Beach] is located next to the ferry route, further away the sand dunes and nature reserve of the Noordsvaarder [Northern sailor] are visible. The only harbour on the island is at West-Terschelling, which has a natural

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<sup>3</sup> For more information see [www.terschelling-info.eu](http://www.terschelling-info.eu) last visited on May 17, 2022

occurring bay. An asphalted road connects West-Terschelling with Oosterend, the East side of the island, which can be reached by car in approximately fifteen minutes. The West of the island is more densely populated, the middle of the island contains many camping sites and holiday homes, while the east side of the island displays more farms and older buildings. The North Seaside has an extensive beach and a vast dune area. When you take a left turn on the main road one traverses a needle-leaved forest before entering the dunes. These pine trees were originally planted as social welfare project and to provide wood for the mining industry. Nowadays, these forests are seen as key characteristics of the islands' landscape and one of the reasons that tourists visit the island (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 183).

The island can roughly be divided into three parts: West, middle and East. The village of Hoorn is located on the island's East side, in a region known as 'om Oost' [Around East] where residents speak the local dialect of Aasters in addition to Dutch. This is where many inhabitants from the traditional generation live and where numerous farms are located. 'Mids' refers to the central part of the island, where Meslâns is spoken alongside Dutch. At the sizable settlement of Midland, various residential houses, and numerous campsites make up this section of the island. The village of West-Terschelling is where people speak both Dutch and Westers. This is Terschelling's largest village but not the oldest, it was destroyed during an assault. English troops burned down the settlement of West-Terschelling during the so-called tragedy of 1666, after destroying over 150 commercial ships off the coast of Vlieland the day before. According to folklore, on their route East, an old lady stopped the soldiers and told them, they are standing there by the hundreds, but laying by the thousands (Veen, van der. 2014). When the soldiers spotted the cemetery in the fog in the distance, they assumed she was talking about backup reinforcements. This legend is commemorated by the Stryper Wyfke statue in Baaiduinen.

Terschelling has a population of 4,870 people, some of them come from a lineage that has lived on the island for many centuries. Others have spent their entire lives, or a significant portion of their lives, on the island. Many vacation residences are spread over the island. The island was always self-sufficient with farmers, labourers, and seamen due to its distant location. As I have seen islanders are always busy and are hardworking people who always try to help each other. This is demonstrated by the apparel that is often worn by islanders, functional and suitable for various weather conditions: clogs or working boots and clothes imprinted with a company logo. Clogs are very popular; some people still wear old-fashioned wooden clogs, but the modern black leather clogs are very popular. Many farms have been preserved, however, they now serve a different purpose, such as a restaurant or vacation homes. Following WWII,

Dutch people had greater opportunities to go on vacation, and tourism to Terschelling increased. In the summer, farmers rented the stables or converted them completely into summer residences (Wal 2007). Fishing and agriculture were traditionally the main pillars of the island economy. However, tourism had become an increasingly important economic force since this shift. The types of visitors vary from youngsters who want to party to elderly tourists who come for nature.

I stayed with Arend and Janet for three months, they served as my key informants. Arend is born on Terschelling and told me many stories about Terschelling. I always detected a lot of pride about 'his' island in these stories, and he always explicated that living on Terschelling meant freedom to him. Vrouwke, who likes to enjoy walking and writes stories about the island, tells me that "elsewhere in the country you are not allowed to walk in nature reserves after sunset, but here you are" (Vrouwke, interview, March 11, 2022). Similar feelings of freedom are mentioned often when asks to describe why people choose to live on the island. Gerben, the forester confirms what Vrouwke says.

The fact that you can go strolling on Terschelling is unique, you are allowed to walk everywhere anytime. A lot of people are unaware of this or do not want to go through the bushes of sea buckthorns and wetness. The reason that you may walk freely on Terschelling is that the island has a huge area of nature with a diverse ecosystem. It is impossible to do so in a smaller region (Gerben, interview, April 18, 2022).

Gerben works for Staatsbosbeheer [State Forest Management], who owns and manages a large part of nature on Terschelling since 1910.<sup>4</sup> The environment is part of the reason that makes Terschelling appealing to people, additionally, the continued appeal of landscapes is crucial to the tourism industry (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 181). To create luxury vacation homes and seaside complexes, Staatsbosbeheer was compelled to provide prime coastal lots around the turn of the 20th century. Although, many of them were demolished or destroyed during the war (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 183) the church building that survived the war is the Sint-Janskerk in Hoorn.

On Sunday morning February 13<sup>th</sup> the church bells were ringing as I walked to the Sint-Janskerk. Iemke, the pastor wore a grey robe with a purple scarf, he had long, grey hair hanging on his shoulders and welcomed the people with a friendly smile on his face. Next to the pulpit in the church stood a miniature ship, a reminder of those who did not come back from the sea. Around seventeen people had gathered, I was by far the youngest in the church that day. During

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<sup>4</sup> For more information see [www.staatsbosbeheer.nl/terschelling/over-terschelling](http://www.staatsbosbeheer.nl/terschelling/over-terschelling) last visited on May 29, 2022

the service, several songs were sung from the songbook I received upon arrival. The sermon was about Lazarus, and the pastor played a song by U2 and referred to current affairs in the world, such as the war in Ukraine. The pastor, Iemke, used the biblical metaphor you are the salt of the earth, referring to the good nature of the group of people. He said that the people on Terschelling are often considered the salt of the earth/island. The salt of the earth metaphor exemplifies that next to the environment, the people are what makes up island life.

After the sermon finished and the faithful left, I sat down next to Iemke on one of the wooden church benches. The gospel player was practising and filled the air with dramatic sounds. Now and then, someone entered the church to ask something and Iemke seemed undisturbed, taking all the time for everyone. We had a long conversation about life and death on the island. He speaks about the community: "For me, Terschelling represents space and nature, as well as a stubborn community. Traditions are very important to us, and we are proud of ours." The traditions he refers to are typical characteristics of the Terschellinger society. That stubborn community is also a close-knit community who are used to making it work together.

You must do it together. Not that it is just peace and quiet here, mutual. Not at all, there used to be quarrels, so to speak, about a piece of land. In other words, quarrels have always existed, but in the end, you must get by together. And that was and is still very strong (Lynyrd, interview, March 1, 2022).

During my stay, I have learned about many traditions that affirm this solidarity like *burenplicht* [neighbourly responsibility], which means that neighbours take care of each other and for example do grocery shopping for the elderly. The special part of *burenplicht* is the tradition of arranging the funeral for your neighbour. The funeral is a rite that is organized by neighbours as part of their *burenplicht*. The funeral automobile or horse-drawn carriage departs from the house and proceeds to the church along a path through the village. Residents gather in front of their homes and join the parade as soon as the car or carriage arrives. This can sometimes be a half-hour procession, with all the village's inhabitants.

If someone has died on the mainland and the body is returned for their funeral, a lap of honour is flown over the house of the deceased by helicopter, or the boat carrying the body sails with the flag lowered to half-mast and the corpse is unloaded first with honour. For many elderly islanders, dying on Terschelling is highly significant; Iemke told me that his father hid everything, including his boat pass, so he wouldn't have to travel onshore. Because no more children are allowed to be born on the island, the Terschellinger truly born on the island is

almost extinct. When a lady is about to give birth, she must travel by boat to a hospital in Sneek or Leeuwarden, Friesland, or by helicopter in an emergency. Occasionally, a baby arrives so swiftly that it is born on the island without a midwife, and if everything goes well, it generates a lot of pride that the place of birth is officially Terschelling in their passport (Iemke, interview, February 13, 2022).

Shared traditions thus have always been present which strengthened the sense of togetherness, as Lynyrd, who works as a historian at the museum 't Behouden Huys and wrote books about the island, says. Buurschappen [neighbourhoods] are an age-old phenomenon on Terschelling, showcasing the naturalness of taking care of each other. Buurschappen does not mean neighbourhoods in the literal sense, it encompasses the community and how they work together. Lynyrd, explains how this works.

The interest of the community is carried out by indusmannen [spokesmen] who function as representatives for the buurschappen. Every buurschap has a different indusman every year, that changes according to a fixed pattern. They represent the community and act as the point of contact when decisions must be made about for example a new parking space. Every year on the first Friday of January the men of the buurschappen come together for the yearly *burenbier*, where they drink beer and *hete Ketel*, warm distilled alcohol, to meet traditionally. Two days later women and children are also welcome for *mantsje bier*, a folk festival (Lynyrd, interview, March 1, 2022).

Lynyrd is critical of when something becomes a tradition, like when people think certain customs have always been that way but then it might be only for ten or twenty years. He believes a tradition must also gradually change with time if you want to keep it. If you want to kill a tradition, then you must write the rules down he says (Lynyrd, interview, March 1, 2022). Thus, not all traditions are written down and sometimes traditions slowly disappear or change. A folk festival that is not propagated much but is one of the traditional celebrations that are still in use is *Sunderum* [no translation], where men dress unrecognizable and walk from house to house where the women are trying to unmask their identities on December 6. Originally used to ward off evil spirits and demons, it is today a popular party and particular to the island's community. Overall, the community on Terschelling has its own typical way of living. On one hand, there is a lot of solidarity. On the other hand, there is a lot of incomprehension between islanders and between islanders and other actants in the Wadden region, as I will explain in the next section.

## 1.2 Contextualizing Conservation Efforts and Tourism in the Wadden Region

On the main road, I already smelled the smoke. I went to pay a visit to Jan, who makes a living by smoking fish in his garden in Hoorn. He has responded to my call for participants on Fodzoeker, the local online marketplace. Jan wore a worn-out bodywarmer and jeans, he had curly white-grey hair and an impressive beard in the same colour. I placed my bike in the front garden and waved at him, as I would often do in the upcoming months. Jan just turned 80 that week, in his yard he has built two smoke closets for salmon, eel, and mackerel. I have spent the whole day helping him and he told me many stories about life on the island. He explained to me that having water surrounding him has always been the most important in his life. He and his wife have owned a pension for many years back in the day. Jan told me that back then there were still seasons of tourist visits, starting with easter and Ascension Day and gradually ending after the summer holiday. Now he thinks it is busy with visitors on the island year-round. Further on, he mentions that he still remembers when he got a text message in 2009, that UNESCO had come through. He recalls that since 2009 the attention to the Wadden Sea region has grown and visits to Terschelling have increased.

In the Wadden Seascape, many actants live, dwell, or execute conservation efforts, actions, and politics. According to Plaan (2018), the seascape is a space of friction, which informs motion between islanders, tourists and conversation efforts on Terschelling. Friction is a metaphorical image that is a reminder that diverse and unequal contacts can lead to new assemblages of authority and culture, according to Tsing (2005, 5). The results of interactions can be empowering or compromising, demonstrating that friction comes from both sides. As a result, friction is not synonymous with resistance, conversely, it informs motion as friction is the engagement and encounter through which trajectories take shape (Tsing 2012). Tsing (2005) underlines how global interactions across divides affect cultural forms in unforeseen ways. Interactions in a global society have unanticipated consequences, and unforeseen outcomes, and spread across vast distances and differences. This dynamic approach is all-encompassing in understanding human and non-human relations, as well as the creation of cultural forms. Hence, transformations are seen as frictional as they work in two directions and inform incomprehension as they have unforeseen outcomes and consequences. In the following paragraphs, these transformational stakeholders are being described, starting with nature conservation.

UNESCO designated the entire Wadden sea area as a biosphere reserve in 1986. The Wadden Sea's Dutch and German sectors were included on UNESCO's World Heritage list in 2009, and the Danish section was added in June 2014 (Lambooy, van de Venis, and

Stokkermans 2019, 787), rendering the entire Wadden sea area a maritime conservation area. As such, activities that are contradictory to the area's conservation have either been prohibited or are strictly regulated and monitored to ensure that they do not have a negative impact<sup>5</sup>. Since the region's territory is surrounded by a densely populated area, maintaining the preservation and conservation of the Wadden Sea is an important aspect of planning and regulation of usage policies for stakeholders. Fishery activities, building and maintaining harbours, industrial facilities surrounding the land, such as oil and gas rigs and wind farms, marine traffic, housing and tourism development, and climate change impacts are all key hazards that require continual attention according to UNESCO's World Heritage Centre.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, nature conservation efforts of the landscape on Terschelling are executed under Natura 2000 laws. Natura 2000 sites are chosen for their conservation value, which includes species, vegetation types, and landscapes (Dimitrakopoulos et al. 2010, 1847). Natura 2000 has classified the Dunes of Terschelling, the North Sea shoreline, and the Wadden Sea as Natura 2000 sites and has implemented a management plan with recovery methods. **Fout! Bladwijzer niet gedefinieerd.** The Natura 2000-management plan impacts the daily lives of inhabitants of Terschelling. This can be illustrated by protection measures in designated areas which means islanders are not allowed to fish or hunt seagull eggs, for example.

Together with governments, regional managers, rescue services, and social organizations, Rijkswaterstaat manages and protects the Wadden Sea, to ensure that the Wadden Islands are accessible and guarded. The fairways are maintained, dredged, and shipping is guided by buoys and the lighthouses managed by Rijkswaterstaat on Terschelling and Schiermonnikoog<sup>7</sup>. In addition, Rijkswaterstaat safeguards the islands from the sea by providing sand on and off the shore. Rijkswaterstaat monitors the state of the Wadden Sea area, same as the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation does, and executes the Natura 2000-management plan for the Wadden Sea region.<sup>7</sup>

The Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management and the Wadden Provinces of Noord Holland, Friesland and Groningen appointed the Beheerautoriteit Waddenzee in 2020. This was seen by the appointers as a solution against the lack of overview of many involved actors and governments. However, in 2021, the goal of developing greater cooperation had yet to be realized (Berg and Geelen 2021). Despite the lack of cooperation, over 50 actors such as governments and nature and

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<sup>5</sup> For more information see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/> last visited on May 16, 2022

<sup>6</sup> For more information see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1314/> last visited on May 16, 2022

<sup>7</sup> For more information see <https://www.rijkswaterstaat.nl> last visited on May 16, 2022

environmental organizations signed The Wadden Region Agenda 2050 which aims to maintain and develop the Wadden Sea as a nature reserve while also preserving the region's characteristic open environment. The Waddenzee Vereniging (Wadden Sea Association) is committed to better protection of nature and the open landscape. By uniting as the largest group of Wadden Sea enthusiasts in the Netherlands, they exert political pressure and take a position based on scientific research. They additionally realize projects that protect and improve nature.<sup>8</sup>

Many parties aim to safeguard 'nature' in the Wadden Sea region, and different organizations use divergent environmental policies to (re)construct the seascape. The fundamental issue in this context appears to be that organizations speak about the Wadden Sea rather than about the Wadden Sea and its people. As stakeholders of the population in 2001 had earlier expressed, so far Terschelling inhabitants strongly opposed World Heritage listing. Reasoning varied from unclear consequences to simply another law imposed on the region from outside and thus more interference from outside the region (Aa, Groote, and Huigen 2010, 294). I have explained the above actants and their role as my interlocutors mentioned them, as will be explained further in the upcoming chapters. The outcome of my fieldwork was that UNESCO, Natura-2000 and the Waddenzee Vereniging are mostly recognized as influential transformative processes by inhabitants of the Terschelling.

Moreover, the island attracts over 400.000 visitors annually (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 180). Iemke, the pastor thinks that badgasten [bathers] sometimes “see Terschelling as a place of pilgrimage” (Iemke, interview, February 13, 2022). As a result of the constant visits by badgasten, many islanders have a clear opinion about the tourists. Arie, a fisherman, thinks “tourists leave their mind in Harlingen” (Arie, interview, March 22, 2022). He feels as other research participants explained as well, that the visitors do not care for the island as he does. Subsequently, due to tourism frictions arise in relationships between islanders. As there are islanders who earn a lot of money with tourism, Janet calls them the godfathers.

It's mostly about not having a grip on the investors, that's why I'm talking about the godfathers of the island here. They participate just as hard, contributing to the destruction of their own island. And the future of their children, not for their own children because the path has been paved for that and houses are being built for them. But there is no more room for the others. They've screwed it up, just bigger, bigger, bigger. You saw that on Vlieland, you can now see it happening here as well. That is why the authenticity is lost at

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<sup>8</sup> For more information see <https://www.waddenvereniging.nl> last visited on May 16, 2022



a very fast pace, you see that the average islander young people no longer have a chance.

Only if your parents own it (Arend and Janet, interview, April 25, 2022).

Islanders that want to see the tourism industry grow so they can make more money are opposed by other islanders' who think the balance is missing. Like Arend explains: "People come here, and they turn the whole thing upside down to get and have fun, and especially to enforce what they like and like. And then they force people to join in too, while island life goes on as usual. And at some point, those people will leave again and what has it all been worth?" (Arend and Janet, interview, April 25, 2022). These opinions illustrate that there is a lot of incomprehension in interactions between islanders. There also seems to be a division between islanders and inhabitants that recently moved to the island. Noud, a sailor, who was not born on Terschelling but has lived there for over 40 years explained.

The cross-track on Terschelling has been built on the old dump, Nollekes [no translation].

People who settle here, will also intervene and then, I believe, leave a mark on anything.

They say things like, 'Yes, the motocross club can no longer do it.' I'm just saying, I'm not sure whether that's true, but you can see the folks from the shore who have settled

here start to stir every now and then. And I believe that is difficult at times (Noud,

interview, March 12, 2022).

### **1.3 Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter introduced the environment of Terschelling and the socio-cultural context of the close-knit islander community. The people on Terschelling have their own traditions, and ideas of authenticity and share the feeling of freedom. However, a 'us' versus 'them' feeling is present and expressed throughout interactions between islanders, islanders and tourists, and islanders and other actants in the seascape. I have explained the differences throughout interactions with the concept of friction (Tsing 2005). Frictional transformations, such as tourism and nature conservation efforts have an impact on engagements with the seascape and feelings of belonging. This will be explained in respectively chapter two and chapter three.



Figure 3: Decorated shed, picture by author



Figure 4: Jeep in North Sea, picture by participant Frans

## **2. Engaging the Seascape**

The previous chapter has illustrated the socio-cultural context of the islander community and the context of conservation efforts of the seascape and Terschelling. I have demonstrated how interactions between islanders, islanders and tourists, and islanders and other actants in the seascape are difficult in the context of frictional transformations. This chapter explains how inhabitants of Terschelling are engaging with the sea and seascape to illustrate how these engagements define the way islanders shape their socio-cultural positionality and feelings of belonging. Throughout this chapter belonging is used as an empirical term, in the next chapter I will elaborate on the conceptual analysis of belonging. First, this chapter shows how engagement with the seascape is expressed throughout history, certain objects, rituals, and shrines such as museums. Second, ethnographic examples of daily encounters with the seascape illustrate how engagements are constructed. Last, the landscape versus seascape perspective and lived experiences are discussed in being with the sea. In doing so, I examine the complex seascape in entanglements with humans and non-humans and things such as water (Hamada 2020, 29). In contrary to landscapes, which are mostly fixed and imaginable, seascapes are not static and speak to the imagination (Phelan 2007, 5).

### **2.1 Socio-historical Engagements with the Sea**

Almost 103 kilometres from shore, the island Terschelling is defined by the sea. The environment displays the dependence on the sea and the rich history of sea engagements. The sea is visually present on the island in objects such as shells, anchors, or fishing nets that decorate villages and houses (see figure 3), but as well as precautionary measures like dikes and flood defences. Moreover, the history of sea engagements is existent in sculptures throughout the island. The statue of Willem Barentsz has a prominent place next to the main road in the village of Formerum, for example. This life-sized statue shows him drawing a map while reading, he is wearing an old-fashioned long coat and boots. Willem Barentsz van der Schelling is a famous explorer from Terschelling who was stranded on Nova Zembla after his third quest and died on the way back in 1569 (Veen, van der 2019, 109). His crew built a lodge to shelter during the winter they were stranded on Nova Zembla, which they called *het Behouden Huys* [the preserved house] which is still the name of the historical museum on West-Terschelling. The museum houses an extensive collection of historical objects related to Terschelling and the sea, such as old equipment. Another museum called the *Wrakkenmuseum*

[wreck museum] showcases countless objects that washed ashore and display the rich history of sea engagements.

Engagements with the sea are visible all over the island, for example in ornaments from the sea that serves as decoration such as life jackets, plastic fishing gloves, lifebuoys, and many seashells in front yards and on facades displaying the close relation with the sea. (see figure 3). But also in more serious measures, like the wall on West-Terschelling that can be closed in times of floods. One of the most visible objects is the lighthouse de Brandaris, which still serves as a watchman over the sea. It is located on the town square in the middle of West-Terschelling, to be seen from all around the island and of course, from the sea. Freek, the lighthouse keeper, calls the crossing between the island Vlieland and Terschelling “a sort of roundabout in the middle of the Wadden sea, ships are coming from all corners” (Freek, interview, March 30, 2022). He explains that the Wadden area is vulnerable, and all those different ships that come together, within the summer also pleasure craft, need to be managed (Freek, interview, March 30, 2022). Freek explained to me that lighthouse the Brandaris is a part of Rijkswaterstaat, which has a number of these kinds of traffic centres in the Netherlands. The traffic controllers guide ships at sea from the tower. In addition, there is the central Wadden sea reporting station on top of the Brandaris, which is a Rijkswaterstaat counter for everything that happens on the Wadden sea. For example, birds smeared with oil, someone who gets caught or beacons that are not in the place where the deepest waterway is (Freek, interview, March 30, 2022). One of my other interviewees described the Brandaris as his own beacon: “if I only see the Brandaris again, I know I am home” (Kees, interview, March 2, 2022). The beacons at sea and the lighthouse on the island are contemporary witnesses of the rich history of sea engagements, and the lighthouse serves as an object of belonging.

In the past, many ships perished, when a North-western storm went by many islanders immediately went to the beach. “Guusjen!” meant ship in distress, and when it was shouted through the streets of Terschelling people rushed to the beach (Lynyrd, interview, March 1, 2022). Back in the day, beachcombing was a necessity to survive. With wood and other things that washed up, the islanders build everything. The old farm where I stayed is supported with old ship masts, for example. Ships do not perish as often as they have used to, however, there are still many items washing up, only nowadays they often come from big containerships. Beachcombing is an islander tradition, still executed today. Especially in the case of a North-western storm, many islanders go to the beach afterwards, looking for treasures. Kees has endless stories about beachcombing, his living room filled with artefacts he found on the beach, mostly glasswork. He tells me that back in the days, people went to the beach by horse and

carriage, sometimes even in the middle of the night. Nowadays, many people own a jeep (pronounced as j-i-e-b), with which people are allowed to drive on the beach between the first of October and the first of April with a permit.

## 2.2 Daily Encounters with the Seascape

The island is surrounded by the sea, and this influences the live on Terschelling. On one hand, the landscape is interacting with the sea. On the other hand, the sea is interacting with the landscape. Overall, the entanglements are apparent on different ways people build their daily lives. Many research participants described the sensorial part of living on the island, like Lynyrd for example.

You hear the sea, or you smell it, and you feel the presence in everything, that actually makes it the experience of the sea for me. Also, the fact that you live on an island. And, yes, the sound is still the same, and the smell as well *gelukkig* [no direct translation: similar here to luckily]. So yes, I myself think it is in fact the whole, your whole being is connected with the sea of course daily. Your whole world is surrounded by that sea, so it plays a role in everything in the background (Lynyrd, interview, March 1, 2022).

The proximity of the sea also ensures that many people are often at sea, like Freek, who works as a volunteer for the Koninklijke Nederlandse Reddings Maatschappij (KNRM) [Dutch Royal Rescue Company], next to his work as lighthouse keeper (Freek, interview, March 30, 2022). On a Wednesday evening, I went along with the KNRM on a practice. After we sailed away from the coast for an exercise like every Wednesday evening, a radio call came in: “We are stranded and someone on board is feeling unwell”. The lifeguards didn’t know from where the call came, therefore the tension was rising on our vessel. We listened on the radio to the coast guard that kept asking if the person could repeat their distress signal. Meanwhile, our vessel floated around aimlessly, waiting for a signal to act. The tension was rapidly fading: "It's most likely a false alarm, I know of a shrimp trawler which is doing an emergency drill." After the false alarm was confirmed, we sailed to Vlieland. The sky slowly turned orange as the sun was going down, it was a wonderful evening to go along with the *KNRM* and talk to the men on board. One of them told me that “other people who sail here often get in trouble because they do not know the sea as we do, the sea is unpredictable”.

Similarly, from Arend, I heard many stories about the people on Terschelling and their relationship with the sea. He always says that the North sea provides wealth and the Wadden

sea provides food. A remarkable thing I learned from him is that islanders always go swimming in the Wadden sea in summer, never in the North Sea (Fieldnotes, February 10, 2022). About this, Freek says that the North sea is considered dangerous, which to him is “something that people often overlook. The pool is for long-distance swimming, but the sea is not. You can play a little in the waves in the water, but just up to your hips. Many individuals are unaware of the distinction; they think, yes, but I can swim in the pool, so I'll just swim in the North sea” (Freek, interview, March 30, 2022). With Lobke I went to the beach in her jeep, and she talked with me about how she engages with the sea and what it means for her.

The sea always gives me peace. Despite the fact that it is sometimes very wild due to storms. If you look at how beautiful the waves are turning, and the sound too. I find it super soothing. It's always different, I really like that, the colour changes, sometimes it is completely green, well now it's a bit brownish here. But it is always different, I think that is, I think it is beautiful. You can really watch the sea for hours because you just see different things every time. Also, the idea, eh, that we as humans are really just very small beings, aren't we? We are actually nothing (Lobke, interview, March 3, 2022).

Many islanders state to have a close relationship with the sea, whether professional or in daily life. Marin, for example, works as a sailor on the Wadden sea for the bruine vloot [brown fleet], the historical wooden sailing ships that are now mostly being used for tourists groups. She thinks the Wadden sea is the most beautiful area on the planet and being at sea is a feeling that she cannot describe in words, “you have to experience that peace, that space, that freedom” (Marin, interview, March 24, 2022). Wattchow points out that the coast, the beach, and even the undersea world reveal themselves to people who are willing to immerse themselves in it and who will take the time to think about the meaning of those experiences, as we see Marin explains here (Wattchow in Brown and Humberstone 2015, 131).

The following vignette outlines the lived experience of Arie, a Terschellinger shrimp fisher, who I joined for several days out fishing. I am at sea. As the sun rises higher in the sky, the horizon in front of me begins to turn pink and orange. It is 06:08 in the morning and we are going towards the harbour with the shrimp trawler Mathilde Juliana. We have been fishing in the North sea and the Wadden sea since yesterday afternoon and have caught around 740 kilos of shrimps. The only sounds I hear are the engine's monotonous hum and the ruffle of the wind. The moon hangs low in the sky to the left, starboard, and reflects in the sea. After a long night

with little sleep and hard work, I am standing on the bow of the trawler listening to the rippling of the waves and I feel a sense of freedom.

Arie, an elderly fisherman, is the owner of the Mathilde Juliana, the trawler I went along with. He makes a living by fishing on shrimps until Thursday because on the weekends' fishermen, are not allowed to leave the harbour. This has a religious reason, as Sunday is supposed to be a resting day. Originally, Arie comes from Den Helder, a city in the province of North Holland. I went fishing with him and his spouse for a couple of days and experienced the daily life of 'sea people', as they call themselves. They make good money, but living is hard. Although, they both acknowledge this is their way of life and they would not want to live any other way. On a trawler you work in three-hour shifts, three hours awake and three hours asleep.

Arie told me how he negotiates the Wadden seascape, he describes several meanings to the sea. First, as a place of belonging expressed in his history and his family's history of fishing on the Wadden sea. Arie describes the water environment as something familiar, he knows the waterways by heart and because he is out at sea every day recognizes changes in the environment immediately. While sailing towards Harlingen haven the only thing I saw was water, he explained how he reads the depths according to the waves. Before we sailed further, he told me that the next part would be very shallow, and once we arrived, we saw on the depth meter that he was right. Moreover, as I heard from more fishermen, they know where the shrimps or other fish hide. To determine the position of the fish they exchange information with other fishermen, look at the data from previously successful routes and base their findings on experience and knowledge of the seascape. Second, Arie talks about the Wadden seascape as a place of contestation. According to Hamada (2020, 29), the seascape includes all entities, things, knowledge bases, and environmental processes. All these actors have their own perceptions about how they influence each other. Arie feels that his livelihood, which is dependent on the sea, is changed under the influence of nature conservation as it regulates fishing by law and impacts his livelihood (Arie, interview, March 22, 2022).

Sense of place refers to how we are both transformed and changed by the places we dwell (Ingold 2000). On Terschelling, a sense of place is not only affected by the feeling of belonging, but also a more fluent relation between people and the seascape. Therefore, the ways people are being with the sea define a sense of sea-place (Wattchow in Brown and Humberstone 2015, 137). Marin and Arie both explain how they navigate the sea.

I usually know where to go on the Wadden sea, although you have to keep track of it because it changes almost daily. It's just trying out, we have a small sailing boat and then

I'm going to try it. Yes, you just do that by feel. And you can see from the water how deep it is. You have those ripples, that is current, places where it flows fast, there it is deep. It doesn't flow like that on shallow parts there, so the water moves relative to each other. If you can recognize that, you usually know whether it is deep there or not (Marin, interview, March 24, 2022)

Most people I worked with, especially the ones with occupations at sea, feel at home both at sea and on land. Meaning that Terschelling is an environment they know by heart, but they can navigate the seas as well without technology if necessary. Their daily encounters with the sea construct their socio-cultural position and show human and non-human entanglements.

### **2.3 Being with the Sea**

I used photo-elicitation to discover meanings that islanders gave to the sea, and I received several photographs that picture the influence of the sea: floods, damaged roads, and impressive forces of nature such as the North-Western storm in figure 5. Moreover, I heard several stories about jeeps that got caught by the upcoming tide. Frans has sent me a picture of one of these events, as seen in figure 4. It shows that the sea interacts with the land, and the weather interacts with the people.

Nature, for islanders, is perceived as an external factor that is always present and explains certain changes. An example that illustrates this is spring tide when the water level is higher because of the full moon in combination with high tide. While I was away for a weekend Janet, with whom I lived, called me to say that she thought my boat back would depart later due to spring tide. And she was right, due to spring tide the boat could not dock and departed later from Harlingen Haven. The knowledge about the environment serves as a collective identity (Lovell 1998, 4) and islanders express they think differently than 'others' that are not from the island, as also was illustrated in the vignette about the KNRM.

Living with the seasons and weather influences is internalized by islanders as I observed during my stay on Terschelling. Seasons, storms, and salt for example are all-weather influences that are affecting the island and its inhabitants. I noticed, however, that the effects are not always recognized by islanders as exceptional. In comparison to my own experience, where every time the harbour flooded, or a road was damaged by seawater it left an impression and I went to look at it. Although the effects might not be recognized as exceptional, they are recognized as major events in the daily lives of people living on Terschelling. The sea is present in the landscape, as we see for example in the flooding of the harbour several times a year.



In her research among Aboriginal people in Australia Strang (2005, 110) points out how water may establish human nature entanglements and denote belonging in a variety of ways. She explains Aboriginal concerns about water as both social and environmental, inhabitants of Terschelling express social and geopolitical concerns about [sea]water. In both cases, discourses about [sea]water depict the concerns of invasions of ‘otherness’, water provides the basis for metaphorical depictions of socio-economic order (Strang 2005, 110). On Terschelling, water is not seen as a threat like a sea-level rise. The threat islanders recognize is that of outsiders who express their concerns about the Wadden seascape, regulations and environmental policies and the rise in visitors. As a place, the Wadden seascape is continually evolving and simultaneously growing on a cultural and environmental level. Consequently, the involvement of stakeholders is extended, and islanders feel as if their sense of place differs from ‘others’. Kees, for example, told me he is not worried about climate change or pollution.

All that talk about the environment, well it's so strict now, and you can't do anything anymore. And for what? I don't see anything from climate change on the island. And I cannot change it anyway, I cannot, you cannot, nobody can (Kees, March 2, 2022).

Rather, Kees and others claim that beachcombing with jeeps is also good for the environment as they keep the beaches clean, while environmental organizations want to stop this tradition (Noud, interview, March 12, 2022).

I like it when containers wash ashore because then there is a bit of hassle, nowadays they make such a fuss about the containers and pollution and this and that. Well, the containers, everything is cleaned up again. Yes, we love it when something washes ashore. Beachcombing, that is the more containers that go over the wall the better (Kees, March 2, 2022).

Indeed, climate change is usually not related to the seascape for islanders, and almost all my research participants stated they do not worry about climate change. Sea level rise is placed in a historical context and for example, the flooding of the harbour is explained as an event that happens every year (Lynnyrd, interview, March 1, 2022). Other explanations for not worrying about climate change given by islanders are not seeing it at all, thinking they are too old to experience the effects or attributing climate change to seasonal changes or for example North-western wind.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter showed how inhabitants of Terschelling interact with the sea and its surroundings and explained how these interactions influence how islanders build their sociocultural positionality and sense of belonging. By explaining historical engagements with the sea, it shows that traditions are connected with the seascape. Like beachcombing which was historically done with horse and carriage and now by jeep. Also, the sea is visually present in decorative items and shrines such as museums and statues. Thus, the relationality between the land and the sea is seen in the presence of the sea. But also, in the influence of the sea on the landscape of the island, for example with floodings. Islanders have a close relationship with the sea and negotiate the Wadden seascape as a place of belonging and a place of contestation. The next chapter explains belonging with Terschelling in the context of frictional transformations.



*Figure 5: North-Western storm, picture by participant Frans*



*Figure 6: 'Always Seals' advertisement on boat, picture by author*

### **3. Belonging with Terschelling**

The previous chapter explained engagement with the seascape and how the islander's identity is composed of entanglements and engagements with the seascape. This chapter will extend on how ideas of belonging on Terschelling are constructed. I explore how islanders' approach and give meaning to frictional transformations such as nature conservation and tourism and how these relate to a sense of belonging. These transformative processes are conflicting with feelings of belonging because they impact the daily life of inhabitants as I will explain further in this chapter. First, I will explain the framework politics of belonging that will be used throughout this chapter. Belonging is expressed in a sense of feeling at home, social and cultural constructions of identification with a group and political and ethical values that judge 'others'. Belonging often relates to the idea of a physical place or symbolic place. Moreover, identity is expressed through individual and collective perceptions of what a group, or the political and ethical values entail. Second, nature conservation and tourism-driven cultural realignment are explained as perceived by inhabitants of Terschelling. Last, contestations of the seascape in different perceptions about nature/culture and expression of 'us' versus 'them'. These contestations show the different views on nature/culture between islanders and other stakeholders in the Wadden Sea area. This is the last chapter of the thesis, bringing together contestations of the seascape, feelings of belonging and frictional transformations.

#### **3.1 Politics of Belonging**

Yuval-Davis (2006) outlined an analytical framework for the study of belonging and politics of belonging. According to her, belonging is attached to emotions and about feeling at home. Morley (2001, 425) explains home as both the symbolic ideas, the spaces of belonging and identity, and the physical place, the household. Thus, home can be explained as both a physical place and a rhetorical idea, like the idea of a home where 'everybody knows your name' (Morley 2001, 425). In this thesis, the seascape is conceptualized as 'home' for islanders, both in the form of a physical place and as a symbolic space. Place and area merge into one in the Wadden seascape, making the region a place unto itself (Phelan 2007, 13).

Belonging can be studied on different analytical levels: social places, identifications and emotional affection for various assemblages and groups; and ethical and political values with which individuals judge their own and other people's belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006, 199).

Social places can be important in constructing individuals' specific positionings, such as being an islander. That social position might not be relevant globally, however, rendering them visible can be important politically as a case of recognition (Yuval-Davis 2006, 201). Identity can be expressed through narratives that often relate to perceptions of what being a member of a specific group means, this can be produced collectively or, individual. The reproduction can be reproduced from generation to generation, although it is always carried out in a selective way (Yuval-Davis 2006, 202). This is present in representing yourself and being perceived as Terschellinger, a name of honour on the island which is only given to people who are born on the island and whose parents and grandparents as well been born on Terschelling. Yuval-Davis (2006, 203) points out that belonging is not just about social locations and productions of identity, but also about ideologies. This is where belonging shifts to politics of belonging. Politics of belonging concerns the political boundaries of 'us' and 'them' in people. Imagination is involved in any construction of boundaries that includes or excludes people. That imagination that constructs communities build on different levels of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006, 204). Thus, politics of belonging is about judging if other people are 'us' or 'them'. This thinking is clearly expressed by inhabitants of Terschelling, as explained in the next sections of this chapter.

### **3.2 Frictional Transformations**

The seascape of the Wadden region is a place of belonging but also a field of contestation. In the area, nature is regarded as in need of human assistance to be protected, mostly by NGOs such as the Waddenzee Vereniging or other actors such as UNESCO's nature conservation or the tourism industry. At the same time, nature is portrayed as an active subject that is reacting against climate change-related phenomena like drought and flooding by scientists (Eriksen 2016, 16-17). Conversely, inhabitants of Terschelling see transformations of the seascape and the environment in the opposite way and express their concerns more over culture. This section elaborates on the perception of these frictional transformations and the section that follows after will explain these concerning politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006).

I use the concept of friction (Tsing 2012) to explain motions through engagement and encounter. The Wadden seascape is created and shaped by a variety of actors, such as organizations, people and non-human beings (Hamada 2020, 32). Encounters between these actors are for example islanders-tourists, islanders-NGOs, or islanders-politics. These encounters are related to transformations of the seascape, therefore I use the notion of frictional transformations to explain them. The seascape, including its social, political, cultural, and

ecological elements, is a collection of distinct dimensions enmeshed in the question of understanding and managing maritime environments (Plaan 2018, 583). UNESCO, Natura-2000, the Waddenzee Vereniging [Wadden sea association] and tourism are recognized as influential transformative actors by inhabitants of the Terschelling. I have divided these into two fields: nature conservation and tourism-driven cultural realignment. First, I will explain perceptions by inhabitants of Terschelling on nature conservation, followed by what is perceived as tourism-driven cultural realignment.

The Wadden seascape is partly constructed by several nature conservation organizations. Fishing activities, building, and maintaining harbours, industrial facilities surrounding the land, such as oil and gas rigs and wind farms, marine traffic, housing and tourism development, and climate change impacts are all key hazards that require continual attention according to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre<sup>9</sup>. The region is being controlled and activities that are contradictory to the area's conservation have either been prohibited or are strictly regulated and monitored to ensure that they do not have a negative impact.

However, islanders feel that economic concerns have taken precedence over the interests of the people who live in the Wadden region. These nature conservation efforts have met resistance among residents of the Wadden sea region as exploitation of resources such as oil, gas, or fisheries and other economic interests continue (Aa, Groote, and Huigen 2010). Placing economic interests over ecological interests for big stakeholders contrasts with the strict approach toward the local population (Aa, Groote, and Huigen 2010, 296). My key informant Janet has a strong opinion about capitalists who make a profit from the islands' attractiveness. During one of our interviews, she explained why frictions occur.

So of course, it got worse later, well I can't say worse, but because of Natura 2000 and the imbalance between ecological and economic value. But especially the fact that this is determined by external parties. That is what you constantly taste here. And of course, there are, I always say the godfathers and godmothers of Terschelling, and that's just the way it is. There are people here who have become incredibly rich. With the tourist formula, that still works. And that works in such a way that there is also no room for many other initiatives, and that also works in my view that other godfathers from elsewhere easily gain a foothold here. Because they understand each other, they understand large land ownership. And whether it is Staatsbosbeheer or, well I won't mention a name, but families with a lot

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<sup>9</sup> For more information see [www.natura2000.nl](http://www.natura2000.nl), last visited on June 8, 2022

of property. And someone comes from outside with a lot of resources who generates a lot of property in a short time, that just happens (Janet, interview, March 30, 2022).

Under conservation laws and policies many activities are prohibited today, such as sailing in several parts of the Wadden sea that are listed as biosphere reserves (Noud, interview, March 14, 2022). Inhabitants feel it is unfair that preservation and conservation of the Wadden sea is an important aspect of planning and regulation of usage policies and they have to adhere to the rules. Compared to economic activities that are carried out such as windmills and gas extraction in the Wadden sea area. Hessel, a fisherman who has a shrimp trawler that he uses to take visitors on a tour and show them how it works, talked to me about his thoughts on windmills.

That's all bullshit. Windmills are subsidy consumers. All those people who put those things down, they make money from it and that's just a fact. It's just all nothing, all that junk is standing in front of our legs and it's not worth anything. Only the people who then earn money from it benefit from it and for the rest nobody at all. Oh well boy. The whole North sea is full, isn't it? Look at that, the IJsselmeer is terrible after all. If you drive over the dike with all that junk (Hessel, interview, February 27, 2022).

Arie, another shrimp fisherman, furiously challenges all stakeholders in the Wadden sea area. According to him they have double standards and do not tell the whole truth. He claims that if you participate in inventory and advice, there is always a hidden agenda and “that is lame and demotivating” (Arie, interview, March 22, 2022).

Contestations by inhabitants are focused on conservation and development debates on arguments from those who respond with not in my back yard, NIMBY, a type of opposition that stems from the belief that they stand to lose more than gain by being named to the list. It is suggested that UNESCO reconsiders the role of local opposition to the nomination process, as well as the opportunities it receives, especially since a vote that appears to oppose World Heritage listing may, in fact, reflect a different agenda and need not be considered direct opposition to UNESCO (Aa, Groote, and Huigen 2010, 301). However, in the research conducted among stakeholders and citizens of the Wadden region in 2001 already became clear that inscription was mostly opposed but the area was enlisted anyway. Therefore, it seems that other interests are placed above the interests of inhabitants. Accordingly, it seems that the prospect of drawing additional tourists because of being included on the UNESCO World

Heritage list is unappealing for inhabitants, as visitor numbers at such locations are already high but appealing to other stakeholders in the area. Before inscription on the heritage list, it already became evident that increased tourism to the Wadden sea is undesirable since it will reinforce the present tourism monoculture (Gerlings 2001) and harm the ecology (Aa, Groote, and Huigen 2010, 298). However, the enlistment was enforced and twenty-one years later, nature conservation is contested by islanders as it increases tourism and puts economic interest over their interest. Thus, the expenses of the inscription on the world heritage lists are increasingly seen as outweighing the advantages, particularly by people who live and work in nominated cultural environments.

However, inhabitants of Terschelling do feel part of the region and have difficulties understanding how external stakeholders view the presence of inhabitants in the Wadden sea area. Freek, who engages with the sea daily, answers honestly when I ask him what he thinks of nature conservation in the area: “Annoying. I think it irritates me immensely that people who live very differently determine for me how we should deal with nature. And it is too patronizing” (Freek, interview, March 30, 2022). I also asked Gerrit, the owner of a café I regularly visited, what he thinks about nature conservation projects on the islands. His reaction was: “Ach [well], it is what it is...” I ask what he meant and Gerrit explained that he thinks no islander agrees on conservation projects on and around their island. A common thought is that organizations only have capitalistic motivations and do not care for nature, let alone culture. (Fieldnotes, March 31, 2022). Other people similarly shared how they consider capitalism to be the basic motivation for stakeholders in the region to be active there.

In a conversation I had with Janet and Arend it became clear how they thought about the Natura 2000 and UNESCO and confirm the above mentioned. The difference between ecological and economic motivations, for example in gas drilling and nature conservation as a form of commercialization.

Arend: Natura 2000 imposes many restrictions in the legal sense, and when it comes to UNESCO and European nature reserve... Those aren't things we're really into here. In fact, there is only surprise when the Wadden sea is a World Heritage Site, and it is about drilling in the Wadden sea. How can you start drilling in World Heritage?

Janet: It's nonsense, that's how I really look at it. It's a nice one, I see it more as a commercial addition to stimulate tourism. It simply gives an impulse to a unique area like ‘that is where you should go’, if it simply contributes to the preservation of nature and



culture. I especially miss the culture, because it's all about nature, but I miss culture in every way (Arend and Janet, April 25, 2022).

The establishment of so-called national parks such as Natura 2000 or UNESCO areas can be seen as an example of cultural realignment, which involves imposing a cultural notion on a location and its residents, both human and non-human, and occasionally including the displacement of people from a region (Macleod 2001). This displacement is mentioned by several research participants as the feared possible outcome of frictional transformation, they dread that the island will either be a complete nature reserve or only available for tourist activities. International organizations, national governments, and local governments, as well as grassroots organizations, have all been mentioned as drivers of cultural realignment.

The concept of cultural realignment has made it easier to understand and connect the various processes involved in cultural change, especially those altering how people view islands and other locations through tourism (Macleod 2013, 86). Cultural realignment is concerned with the written description of a culture and its elements, as well as the work of those with political or commercial objectives (Macleod 2013, 77). Discourse, commercialization, and marketing are all topics that it connects to, for example with the marketing video for the Wadden sea World Heritage. In this video we see impressive video images of the region's natural scenery and species such as birds and seals, and towards the end of the video, people appear. Before this part in the video the sentence "An unforgettable experience for all" is shown, which is an example of using Wadden sea World Heritage as a marketing tool<sup>10</sup>. Processes of cultural realignment inform islanders' identities through dynamics of representation, descriptions, transformations and commodification (Macleod 2013, 74). Hence, the process of cultural realignment has a major impact on inhabitants as they attempt to 'transform something into a different position or state' to align it with a specific goal" (Macleod 2013, 75).

Nature-based tourism is a socio-economic activity that supports local people by providing revenue and other benefits. However, tourism has frequently had undesirable effects on the landscape and host communities (Heslinga, Groote, and Vanclay 2018, 181). The growth of tourist visits is mentioned by many research participants as undesirable. Additionally, tourism brings along otherness and potential for tying 'other' people to Terschelling, in this sense belonging evokes feelings of desiring to be in a specific location, emotions and sentiments by visitors (Lovell 1998, 1). To summarize, the situations described as above are what Macleod

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<sup>10</sup> You can watch the marketing video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqExtl5btuk>

(2013) coins cultural realignment. Cultural realignment from the perspective of Terschelling residents has an impact on their daily lives as they fear of losing agency over their environment. Belonging to a specific community invokes the notion of loyalty to a place, but it is also primarily characterized by a sense of experience (Lovell 1998, 1). It illustrates how tourism and nature conservation efforts impact this relationality to the seascape.

As mentioned before, the region and more specifically Terschelling pulls many tourists. Consequently, there has been a rise in tourist accommodations built and interest in buying houses by non-islanders. As Janet says the transformations come from within and without.

It is much more simply the degradation of the fragility of a small authentic community that, on the one hand, has arisen from within, with the godfathers. And on the other hand, from the outside now, because it is an attractive place where you can invest with relatively little, a few million. So that's a much bigger threat. For the authenticity of the island" (Janet, interview, March 30, 2022).

My research participants shared the feeling of losing agency over their environment, reasons given were mostly the rising number of tourism and nature conservation efforts. Janet has lived on the island for many years and her partner is born there, she has seen the island change with many new touristic accommodations and questions the value of an island. "Terschelling is a unique situation, a unique place in the Netherlands. Where you as an investor are very smart to indeed pump a lot of money into it. And whether it benefits the islands and islanders? Not at all" (Janet, interview, March 30, 2022).

The aforementioned worries and fears such as losing agency, social and cultural values and growing numbers of tourists already occur on Terschelling. Another uncertainty that islanders feel is the fear of collective displacement. Kees, the beachcomber, told me that it is already impossible for young islanders to find housing on the island. Most live still with their parents, or in temporary housing or the least desired: at the shore (Kees, interview, March 2, 2022). It is a concern shared by many islanders, that slowly the island will become a touristic attraction and islanders will have to live on the shore. Islanders are perceiving themselves as 'us' and project the other as 'them', the next section elaborates more on dualistic perceptions such as thinking in groups and the nature/culture distinction.

### 3.3 'Us' versus 'Them'

Politics of belonging is expressed throughout contestations by islanders of whom belong to the seascape and thus have the right to interfere with daily life. Others are seen as a threat to the community and as drivers of transformations. Who these others, or 'them', are is continually modified and contested (Yuval-Davis 2006, 213). Dualistic thinking is one of the ways how belonging is propagated, not only in us versus them thinking but also in explaining the different perceptions with the dichotomy of nature/culture.

One morning I spoke to Vrouwke, a storyteller that was born on Terschelling, about her observations of Terschelling, she recommended to me the movie *Silence of the Tides*<sup>11</sup>, directed by Pieter-Rim de Kroon (2020), which was released during my stay on Terschelling. The movie starts with a scene of a jet pilot that is training on the NATO firing range on Vlieland. Vrouwke indented to make a point about the Wadden sea area representations, whereas you mostly see the environment without people even though many people live in the area.

The first scene is very characteristic. It is what it is. People and human influence are and always have been present in the Wadden area. Good to put that more in the limelight, as opposed to a film about mudflats without people (Vrouwke, interview, March 11, 2022).

The dichotomy between nature/culture was used by islanders many times. An example that illustrates the politics of belonging is the seal, it is a subject that shows the boundary of 'us' and 'them' in people and their imagination. That imaginative ability to create communities is based on various levels of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006, 204). Kees, who was born on Terschelling claims seals are too many, in contradiction to conservation organizations who want to save them.

They [conservation organizations] want to ban everything. All quiet areas for the seals and for the I don't know what, well the seals make me feel sick. I personally think there are way too many. Look what they're eating. A few kilos of fish per seal. What to do with so many seals here?" (Kees, interview, March 2, 2022)

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<sup>11</sup> You can watch the trailer with this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zfl-UvTk6H0>

Also, Janet has a clear opinion on seals. The opinion about seals is exemplary for the dualistic nature/culture thinking and the various perceptions about the seascape by islanders, NGOs, tourists, and others.

Take a look at Europe's most powerful predator, the seal. Everyone had to battle with everything they had to save the beast. And utterly interfering with nature, because that is exactly what we do, and that is why we end up in such a disproportionate situation. What does it mean that there are now so many seals with no natural enemies, as you can see with such a seal? They consume the entire sea. Yes, no, but that is, of course, exaggerated. And it is extremely lovely, and a seal boat has returned, which is also very lovely and enjoyable. Sure, tourism is important, but in the meanwhile, they are eating the sea dry. As a result, the birds are no longer able to survive on it. And the fisherman can no longer catch anything (Janet, March 30, 2022).

Cor, a handyman, asks himself, “what is still nature? Meertje van Hee [a dune lake] has been excavated, the cross-track was a garbage dump and forests have been built for mining. Why do they have to save that now?” (Fieldnotes, April 14, 2022).

Islanders often give places in nature the meaning of culture, I suppose as a way to control their environment. The example of *verstuiving*, drifting dunes, is characteristic of misunderstandings between islanders and others, in this case, Staatsbosbeheer. Gerben, the forester explains.

In the past, the whole island was drifting dunes. People are very used to thinking here, oh we'll throw something over the sand. And suddenly we have a project in which it is safer to allow drifting into the foredunes and that we have created very large drifting areas in the dune areas such as Kaapjesplak and camping de Kooi, near Arjensdune, while islanders used to cover everything. So yes, that is difficult (Gerben, interview, April 18, 2022).

Overall, it becomes clear that contestations lie within indistinct knowledge and perceptions about nature/culture by islanders and other stakeholders. There are many parts of the islands that are part of the discussion, one of those being Baai Dellewal [Bay Dellewal], as I will show in the upcoming vignette where I visited Tjalf. On a Wednesday morning, I went to visit the harbour master. His office is in the corner of the harbour building, out of one window you have a view of the marina and Dellewal Bay and through the other window, you look out over the Wadden sea. The television was turned on softly and the news was playing during our

conversation. Tjalf sat opposite me, his dog was still a puppy and jumped enthusiastically against my chair. Tjalf has been working as a harbour master since 1987. He grew up on Terschelling and lives on West-Terschelling, where he overlooks the nature reserve Het Groene Strand [Green Beach]. The office seems to be an extension of his living room, with many personal items and photos on the wall. He wears a waterproof outdoor jacket and often looks outside. He tells me: “the sandbank, this area here is called Dellewal. The bank continues beyond the dike. That sandbank was once made by people to ensure that the water comes in and that it also flows back quickly so that the harbour remains at its depth. So, this is constructed. It's not nature actually. But they did make it nature. Of course, it is, the birds are there, but it is not nature. But we can't do anything anymore, we can't expand, we can't go anywhere.”

Free birds, caged people. It is a sticker from the 70s that sometimes is still seen on the occasional car or toilet on Terschelling. It summarizes the content of this thesis and illustrates how belonging to the seascape is embedded in dualistic perceptions.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This last chapter explained how nature conservation and tourism-driven cultural realignment are contested by inhabitants of Terschelling. It showed the fluid relationship between the seascape and its inhabitants, in contrast to how islanders perceive how ‘others’ experience the sense of sea-place as shown with the examples of seals and other nature/culture dichotomies. Nature conservation and tourism-driven cultural realignment as frictional transformations are contested and expressed through politics of belonging. Dualistic perceptions of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ and nature/culture are expressed as explanations of who belongs to the region and thus has the right and indistinct knowledge to construct the seascape.

## Conclusion

This thesis explained how inhabitants of Terschelling, islanders, negotiate feelings of belonging with the Wadden seascape in the context of frictional transformations. Nature conservation efforts such as the inscription on the World Heritage list by UNESCO and tourism-driven cultural realignment are perceived as frictional transformation by islanders.

The Wadden sea is an intertidal region consisting of shallows. To study the social and cultural dynamics of this coastal area the concept of seascape was used throughout the thesis.

In chapter one I described the environment of the Wadden seascape, and in particular Terschelling. The island consists of a scenic landscape with polders, dikes, and mudflats on one side, and dunes, beaches, and a pine tree forest on the other side. Historically the island consisted mostly of farmers, labourers, and people who worked at sea, later tourism become another source of income. Islanders have a certain depiction of tourists, they are for example seen as pilgrims or people who do not care about the environment on Terschelling. The inhabitants of Terschelling celebrate many traditions that are connecting to a sense of authenticity, such as beachcombing. The church still plays a central role in the community and funerals are a rite. The close-knit community connects value to togetherness, however, there are also disagreements under the residents. Stubbornness is one of the indicted parts of the islanders' prescribed identity. Furthermore, they are pride of their home and appreciate their freedom. The seascape is (re)constructed by various actors. Organizations such as UNESCO that role out conservation efforts aim to safeguard the region, just as the other stakeholders such as Natura-2000, Rijkswaterstaat and Beheerautoriteit Waddenzee. Moreover, tourism is there are different opinions of growing tourist numbers and the number of non-residential houses. This leads to frictions between islanders and islanders, islanders and tourists and islanders and other parties, as there is a lot of incomprehension. Opinions are expressed in dualistic thoughts such as 'us' versus 'them'.

Chapter two further explained the engagement of islanders with the seascape and how interactions shape the socio-cultural position and constructs feelings of belonging. The entanglement of the landscape with the sea is seen in different aspects. It is visually present in decorations such as shells, anchors, and sculptures but also in dikes and flood defences. Moreover, it is constructed in feelings and objects of belonging. Traditions such as beachcombing are shared as feelings of belonging and the lighthouse Brandaris is seen as object of belonging. Being with the sea is explained as a sense of peace and freedom, although these notions are giving to the Wadden sea and not to the dangerously perceived North sea. Sea

people, as shrimp fishers call themselves, know the sea by heart. The collective identity is perceived to entail sea knowledge, and accordingly, 'others' who do not have that knowledge do not belong to the seascape. Concerns of otherness are shared within the community, whereas the 'us' versus 'them' is used several times to question who is allowed to alter the seascape.

The last chapter places belonging in the context of frictional transformations. Belonging is approached with the framework politics of belonging that is explained with the dualistic 'us' versus 'them' thinking. The seascape is perceived as a space of contestations and a space of belonging. Frictional transformations such as nature conservation and tourism-driven cultural realignment create motion through interactions. For example, nature is seen by NGOs as requiring help. Therefore, activities such as fishing and sailing in certain areas are regulated and strictly controlled and monitored. However, islanders, express concerns over culture as fishing, for example, is part of their socio-cultural identity. This leads to incomprehension among islanders as they think economic concerns are placed over concerns over people. And the balance between ecological and economic concerns is missing. The exploitation of resources such as gas drilling or the placement of windmills in the area are mentioned as reasons of incomprehension. Islanders express they think actors have double standards, are patronizing and annoying on 'their' island. Thus, expenses of nature conservation are perceived as outweighing advantages. Also, the growth of tourism as socio-economic activity and the growing number of houses used for tourism are mentioned as undesirable. The fear of losing agency, perceived authenticity and social and cultural values is explained in politics of belonging. Additionally, islanders share their concerns over the fear of collective displacement. Contestation of who belongs are expressed through dualistic thinking and described with nature/culture examples such as how the harbour bay was built by humans and seen as culture by islanders but seen as nature by others. The sticker campaign that spread the sentence 'free birds, caged people' is an illustrative example of the dynamics on Terschelling.

The main question, how do inhabitants of Terschelling negotiate feelings of belonging with the Wadden seascape in the context of frictional transformations, is answered by the ways islanders construct their socio-cultural identity, engage with the seascape, and explain feelings of belonging. The ethnographic method of fieldwork is a helpful and holistic method in understanding the effects of environmental and socio-economic development on people. Moreover, exploring notions of belonging is relevant when political, economic, and social interest seem to be in conflict. This thesis added to knowledge about the seascapes and how the entanglements within construct feelings of belonging. As the scope of this research was limited, this would be an interesting starting point for further research.

## Epilogue

This thesis was written overlooking the church and village street of Midsland. I sat down at my desk by the window in the early hours of the morning before leaving for work and jotted down Terschelling's story. With the change of seasons, I saw the island change. After finishing the fieldwork period in February, March and April I left the home of Arend and Janet and moved to an apartment arranged by my employer. In May and June, I worked as a music producer for the Oerol festival, and therefore extended my stay.

During these months I witnessed what I already heard before, more and more tourists came to the island and the atmosphere changed. Whereas during the winter there were many events for islanders such as Burenbier and Goat club meetings, now I noticed the events stopped. Additionally, there were many other changes like the absence of greeting everybody.

Without knowing, I have chosen the best period one could think of to do fieldwork on Terschelling. I can imagine it would be difficult to get in touch with islanders during the busy spring and summer months. The island is running at a fast pace to cater for all tourists. This shift in-between seasons that change the daily lived experience completely is recognized by my research participants. It displays a contradiction; islanders think there are too many tourists, however, they provide for all of them. An interesting subject for another study.

There is certainly enough research opportunity for understanding the islander mentality and their perceptions of Terschelling and the role of the 'other'. Appendix 1 depicts how some islanders, primarily online, express their discontent. I wanted to share this Facebook post since it covers a lot of what I've heard is at stake in 2022. I haven't included any internet research; however, because there is a large community active online, this could be another possibility for (part of) a study.

With a full heart, I am looking back on the last five months of living on Terschelling. I sincerely hope that by reading this thesis you have experienced island life and the salt of the island as I did.



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