

WSB Farewell dinner, Wilhelmshafen Nov. 22, 2023

By Janne Liburd

Thank you for the invitation, and for welcoming me into the Wadden Sea (WS) family 8.5 years ago, in 2015. As per tradition, I will take the opportunity to share a few reflections on the past, present and WS future.

When looking around the room tonight, and recalling my very first meeting, WSB14, members of the WSB were quite different. The Chairman of the Board was Co Verdaas, and the CWSS secretariat manager, Rüdinger Stempel. The Dutch delegation was headed by Jaap Verhulst, Germany by Christiane Paulus, and DK by Peter Ilsøe, who was only accompanied by Bent Rasmussen. Only two WSB board members remain: Vera Knocke and Hans-Ulrich Rösner!

I also recall a sense of scepticism: What was the point of a tourism professor heading the Danish WS NP, if not simply speeding up commercialization, selling the WS to as many tourists as possible? And this at a time when finally, the Danish part of the WS had been inscribed on the WH list.

Since then, I am pleased to have contributed to the Wadden Sea family, and what I will describe as a movement from primarily being as longstanding cooperation between states, to also encompassing collaboration between WS partners.

Collaboration distinguishes itself from cooperation and other forms of coordination. Collaboration rests on the hypothesis that the sum of the work is more than its individual parts, where the joint outcomes could not be achieved by a single organisation or individual entity.

The SIMP, which at WSB14 was introduced as a request by the World Heritage Committee, is a good example of collaboration between many parties who care about the WS. I will return to the notion of care shortly.

Collaboration also comes with a sense of humility and willingness to listen to and learn from others. I have learned a lot from NPs Schleswig Holstein and Niedersachsen, particularly about nature projects, partnership, and differences in governance structure. Hubertus Heppelman once took interest in explaining to me that he too had been inspired in the Danish and Dutch 'bottom up' way of getting things done. He ended by saying something along the lines of "And once everyone I think should be heard is done, I make the decision". Later, the Danish WS Board visited partners in the Netherlands, cycled the island of Schiermonnikoog, and were introduced to the CWSS' work at the secretariat in Wilhelmshaven. This excursion truly brought home our mandate to work internationally.

Another good example of collaboration is the ProWadLink project, with a focus on nature protection as a driver of sustainable growth and innovation in the Wadden Sea area. I had the opportunity to convene a half-day co-design workshop for PWL (with the European Tourism Futures Institute of NHL Stenden University) held on the island of Fanø. Participants were asked to share why they'd chosen to work (and/or live) in the Wadden/North Sea area. From this emerged a joint understanding based on similar values associated with the WS – that they all cared in different ways about the WS. During PWL, SMEs started to collaborate with other NP partners, who they never worked with before - based on shared

values. And they were able to keep the PWL project going despite Covid-19 lock downs and closing of joint borders.

This brings me to the notion of stewardship.

Stewardship can be defined as “caring and loyal devotion to an organization, institution, or social group. The concept of stewardship puts emphasis on the people involved in conservation efforts, their (business) values and dynamic interrelations.

From my own research in the WS, Norway and Australia, it is clear that nature protection and informal governance are carried out by stewards who care, as they display loyal devotion and identify with the Protected Areas *beyond* their own and state interests.

I am proud to have contributed to the Trilateral Research Agenda, where I (among other) have argued for integrated understandings of nature and culture, of the WS and its hinterlands. It was an honour to contribute the Lead article to the *CWSS 2022 Trilateral WS Cooperation Annual Report* with Dr. Cormac Walsh.

I thoroughly enjoyed serving on the evaluation committee of the first international joint call for proposals on “Understanding complex pressures on the Wadden Sea and options for action” opened jointly by the Dutch research council (NWO), the German federal ministry for the environment, nature conservation, nuclear safety and consumer protection (BMUV) and the German federal ministry of education and research (BMBF). My only regret in the area of research is the lack of Danish funding and thus trilateral collaboration, which I urge the Danish Presidency to pursue by reference to current practice, where the respective national rules and procedures of Germany and the Netherlands are met.

Looking further into the WS future, I welcome collaboration with the youth. I am delighted to see them standing up for their generation as WSB representatives. It is a clear commitment to sustainable development both withing and across generations, as professed by the Brundtland Report (1987), *Our Common Future*.

However, and returning for moment to the *CWSS 2022 Trilateral WS Cooperation Annual Report* simply aiming to sustain what currently is does not suffice in the Anthropocene. The triple planetary crisis, the interdependent and ever-evolving nature of socio-ecological systems together with the uncertainties, inequalities and ‘unknowns’ that characterise contemporary reality evidence how sustainable development is no longer enough.

After more than 20 years of working with STD it appears to me that sustainability is oriented towards the past, trying to maintain or presence a status quo that no longer is. And meanwhile, in attempts of ‘sustaining growth’, we have forgotten that humans are nature too! We need to start replenishing and restoring what the planet has lost. We need to show that we care about the WS, be stewards of the WS World Heritage and even: a “Fight for the WS” on Sunday Nov 26, 12 noon! (see p. 3)

I will end by a quote by the late, Sir Ken Robinson, who said:

*“The lesson we most need to learn is that there is more to life on Earth
than human beings
and more to human beings than self-interest.
Our futures all depend on learning this lesson by heart.”*

Fight for the Wadden Sea

This is a call to all, especially our youth, as our future, our heritage and our nature are at stake. Let us unite, show your support of the Wadden Sea, in a symbolic demonstration

Sunday November 26, 12 noon – approx. 1pm the Ballum marsh, Denmark.

An uprising reverberates across Denmark against the plans to build a colossal industrial plant in the Wadden Sea area - an international icon of natural heritage and our nation's pride. People of all ages, united in their love of nature and in the desire to protect our heritage, are calling for action.

We will stand together on the perimeter of the proposed industrial test centre for several 450 meters tall offshore wind turbines, and adjacent infrastructure, a place that Danish politicians and Green Power Denmark appear ready to sacrifice.

The Danish Government, Liberal Alliance, Danish People's Party, The Green Left, and the Conservative People's Party are expected to decide on the location of a national test centre for offshore wind turbines in 2023. The Ballum marsh is the preferred location. The Ballum marsh is an essential part of the natural heritage of the Wadden Sea – a 500 km coastal strip along Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands.

The Wadden Sea is Denmark's largest National Park. It is UNESCO World Heritage, which means that it belongs not only to Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands, but to the entire world. An industrial plant will threaten the unique nature and iconic flat landscape that has been part of our heritage for centuries.

This fight is about much more than a local threat in someone's backyard - it is about our collective responsibility to preserve UNESCO world heritage and protect our nature amid a global biodiversity crisis. It is high time to unite our voices and stand together against the destruction of our Wadden Sea, our heritage, our future.

We will make a human chain along the Ballum marsh along Kystvej. The chain starts from the parking lot before the dam to Romo, by the crossroad of Kystvej and Hjerpstedvej. Join us Nov 26, 12 noon and hold hands with another Wadden Sea fighter.

Greetings from Asbjørn, William, Jannik and Helena

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