

Masterthesis

A Walk in the Park  
-  
Experiencing and Negotiating  
Natural Values in the National  
Park Dunes of Texel



Martina Sendwicki

Leiden University

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*Extract of J.C Bloem "De Dapperstraat"*

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*Natuur is voor tevreden en of legen.  
En dan: wat is natuur nog in dit land?  
Een stukje bos, ter grootte van een krant,  
Een heuvel met wat villaatjes ertegen.*

*Geef mij de grauwe, stedelijke wegen,  
De' in kaden vastgeklonken waterkant,  
De wolken, nooit zo schoon dan als ze, omrand  
Door zolderramen, langs de lucht bewegen.*

*Alles is veel voor wie niet veel verwacht.*

## Foreword

I was a frequent visitor to the Netherlands long before I decided to emigrate permanently. One thing that always caught my attention when arriving or going back to my native Germany was the change of landscape. Though I come from one of the most cultivated (in the agricultural sense) regions, the Westphalian Münsterland, there is a great difference in the landscape and the emotional connection that I experienced with it. I pondered long why my emotional reaction when arriving in the metropolitan area of the Netherlands (Randstad) was often one of subdued depression. Something was missing. At length I arrived at the conclusion that this reaction was caused the very high visual permeability of the landscape. I feel like anywhere you go in Holland you can see a human dwelling, large, glittering greenhouses, the tower of the next village church, the towering cranes of harbours, tower blocks or factory chimneys, which still depresses me at times though this country has been my home for many years. The high visual permeability has not only to do with the fact that the land is extremely flat, but especially the lack of trees and forests. Though my native Münsterland is called the greatest park-landscape of Germany and by no means densely forested, there are enough forests and coppices to obscure large parts of the landscape from view and (in my opinion) give it an almost cosy and intimate feel.

On Texel I learned that only wealthy people on the island used to have trees, because only they could afford to ‘waste’ land with large and non-productive plants, though they were much appreciated as natural screens to prevent the neighbours living a mile off from looking onto the patio. This seems to be a wide-spread sentiment in the Low Countries. Trees are used to line roads or surround houses with enough ground to afford it, but other than that, trees seem to mostly be valued for practical purposes. This theory of mine did not develop purely from my research on Texel, but also from more than five years of experience of working as an amateur gardener in the Netherlands. Over the years, I developed an increasing passion for (British) horticulture and an ever-larger pool of horticultural knowledge which was of great use to me as I came to job as an amateur gardener in private households in and around The Hague. Though I still long for the wooded landscape in which I grew up the horticultural work helped me to reconcile with my new habitat.

My personal background pushed me towards the discourse of sustainability with its ecological, social and economic aspects. After writing my BA thesis on social sustainability in the Dutch (social) housing sector, I had planned to focus on the larger field of sustainability

when continuing my studies with a master course. I had wanted to study Sustainable Development in Utrecht, but due to the simple fact that non-Dutch students cannot apply for a student train ticket (studenten-ov) if they have not officially lived in the Netherlands for at least five years, I was unable to pursue this academic career and applied for Cultural Anthropology in Leiden instead. Hence I was delighted when I saw the opportunity to conduct a research internship in the National Park Dunes of Texel as it was very close to my original purpose and also brought me to a rural setting. My time on Texel has given me not only (academic) experience, but also insights about my own personality as well as providing a varied and interesting setting for my research.

In this place I would like to thank H. J. Lindeboom who advertised the internship on the Leiden University website and supported me during the research as well as the members of the National Park Dunes of Texel organisation and all participants of my research who welcomed and collaborated with me. Without you this research could not have happened. I would also like to thank my tutor E. de Maaker and supervisor M. A. Postma for helping to shape and sharpen my academic mind and work. Special thanks to Maarten for his support, patience and countless cups of tea to keep me going.

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## Chapter 1: The enthusiasm of a young researcher

### 1.1 Introduction

I have been engrossed in matters of (ecological) sustainability in my private and professional life for several years. Hence, all the pieces seemed to fall into place when I first saw the advertisement for an internship at the National Park Dunes of Texel (NPDoT) foundation on the University's website. I was delighted when I was quickly and warmly accepted as trainee researcher by the (former) chairman of the National Park, H. J. Lindeboom, and started to work on my research proposal and preparations with eager enthusiasm. The National Park itself was still rather young. Though parts of the area had a historical status as areas of outstanding beauty, the NPDoT foundation had only been installed in 2002.

From the outset onwards my main research interests were centred around perceptions and (e)valuations of nature and its intrinsic value and properties by different groups of stakeholders. Furthermore, my affinity with history had motivated me to research the history of the Wadden Sea Region. I wanted to find out whether the motivations and positions of locals and conservationists related to historic patterns and events. When writing the research proposal, I found out that there seemed to be a traditional rift between conservationists from the mainland and local nature supporters. I therefore planned to research whether that traditional rift could still be seen today.

As my background is located in social sciences I was drawn towards mixed-methods research. It seemed sensible to me to support the traditional qualitative data that anthropologists accumulate by conducting participant observations and interviews with additional quantitative data. I therefore opted for fairly traditional participant observation and semi-structured interviews as well as additional surveying, literature research and photo elicitation- and rating to gather quantitative- and qualitative data. Furthermore, I wanted to represent as many parties as possible and hence decided to incorporate visitors to the National Park as well as locals and conservationists.

I was also inspired by a series of lectures and seminars on sustainability and the Millennium Goals that I had visited in Amsterdam in the summer of 2016 to include a fourth group. I therefore planned to include a large case study children's perspective of nature by handing out small digital cameras and let them make pictures during guided excursions of the things they found most interesting. While the idea seemed good and my contacts within the NPDoT organisation were taken with the idea, my plans were

discouraged by my supervisor who pointed out that I would have neither time nor resources to conduct the sort of research that I had in mind and would do better to focus on my adult target groups only. After evaluating my situation and overall research plans, I yielded to my limitations and abandoned these plans.

My own situation proved to be not quite as comfortable as I had expected it to be when the internship came closer. The chairman of the National Park Dunes of Texel organisation had been suspended and after a short trial that was led in his absence had been discharged for good, mere weeks after I was accepted as a trainee researcher. While he assured me that my position would not be jeopardized I felt rather awkward and somewhat disconcerted as to the future and fruitfulness of my research. The incident also indicated underlying social/power structures of the organisation and a strong difference in characters between some individuals. While these structures were not in the core focus of my research, I was acutely aware of them and paid great attention to the motives and content of the participation of individuals.

All in all, I was still quite excited about the embarking to this new adventure that would be the biggest research of my academic career. I had my plans carefully laid out but was prepared to adapt them wherever necessary. So when I finally stepped on to the train that was to bring me to Den Helder from where I would take the ferry to Texel it was with a mixture of excitement and trepidation that I departed.



Picture 1: The TESO Ferry "Doktor Wagemaker" departing from Den Helder towards Texel.



### 1.1.1 Motivation and Social Relevance

My specific research interests are nature conservation, land use conflicts and the perceived (intrinsic) value of nature/the environment. Nature conservation has come into the focus of the nature discourse in the 1960s and 70s, in which environmentalists strove for the protection of ‘undisturbed’ natural areas<sup>1</sup>. Other sources like the Waddenacademie also describes this phenomenon, but identified the conflicting groups to be nature conservationists from ‘outside’ and the local population which have conflicting visions on (the utility of) nature conservation<sup>2</sup>.

Taking my lead from Noel Castree<sup>3</sup>, I have tried to avoid using the actual word ‘nature’ as much as possible when interacting with participants, leaving it to the participants of the research to define the collateral concepts they associate with nature. Because ‘nature’ is such an extensive concept (see Ch. 3.1), the literary framework of the research will chiefly look at nature as a social construct based on Western values and experiences<sup>4</sup> and examine how nature and in particular natural values are (physically) created, expressed and perceived.

The core problematic of conservation policies is summarised very aptly by West et al., who state that “conflict is often at the heart of protected area establishment and maintenance.”<sup>5</sup> Land management techniques of protected areas aimed at preserving wildlife have long been known to be a source of conflict and can lead to hostility towards conservation efforts among local people, and disrupt local agriculture<sup>6</sup>. This also seems to be the case in the National Park Dunes of Texel where there are conflicting views on the value of nature and how to measure it<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, it has been proven that visitor’s perception impact on the political commitment to establishing or rejecting national parks. As Rossi et al. note: “If people do not believe that a national park meets their needs, or if they feel unwelcome in or excluded from these parks, they may be unlikely to support such parks, with potential ramifications for biodiversity conservation and social equity”<sup>8</sup>

This research intends to be valuable for the national park, and possibly also for the other stakeholders, because it aims to illustrate which qualities are valued most by those different

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<sup>1</sup> Robinson 2004

<sup>2</sup> Waddenacademie 2009:5

<sup>3</sup> Castree 2016

<sup>4</sup> Robbins et al. 2014:121

<sup>5</sup> West et al. 2006:260

<sup>6</sup> West et al. 2006

<sup>7</sup> Stichting Samenwerkingsverband Nationale Parken 2011, Jacobs et al. 2017, Engel et al.

<sup>8</sup> Rossi et al. 2015:42

stakeholders, as well as in the public perception of the environment. It may reveal a special appreciation of some areas that have hitherto been less regarded by the park administration than the public interest would demand. Furthermore, the research might find new or changed (land use) needs by specific parties and thereby point out whether certain conservation policies would benefit from being adapted to the new situation. Additionally, my research intends to point out current conflicts among the stakeholders in question and to offer a representation of their views by a relatively neutral party. By doing this the research, I may be able to point out ways of solving conflicts and potential schemes for collaboration of the stakeholders. Since the park itself is also still very young, the research will strive to evaluate the history of the Park and its policies and contribute to the currently very limited academic literature about the park itself, thus adding a piece of recent history of the Wadden Sea Region to a hitherto small pool of knowledge. I hope that this research will not only benefit the park and conservationists, but also the environmental discourse taking place within social sciences. It may do so by showing the social impact that the establishment of a protected area has in a European setting and how it influences the relationships between the park management and different other stakeholders.

## **1.2 What am I doing here?**

As part of my Master Programme “Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology” I took part in an internship at the National Park Dunes of Texel (NPDoT) and conducted anthropological research among three different groups. These groups were: Visitors to the National Park (mostly tourists), conservationists who were actively involved in nature conservation efforts, and ‘locals’. This last group contains different people that are in some way involved with nature on the island of Texel without identifying as conservationists. This group could be divided into locals that were/are directly involved with the National Park and those who are not. During my time on Texel I conducted surveys among tourists, interviews with conservationists and locals, and participant observations, photo elicitations and ratings with all groups. Due to restraints on time and manpower I focussed on three different key areas of the National Park Dunes of Texel: de Geul, de Dennen, and de Muy and Slufter. I did so by accompanying many excursions into de Geul, de Muy and Slufter, and making de Dennen a key interest during my literary research and interviews. This field work research, during which I aimed at determining how visitors, locals and conservationists perceived

nature on the Island of Texel, and the National Park specifically, was conducted from March to July 2017.

### 1.2.1 Research Question

My specific research interests and personal background have motivated me to compose my research question(s) with a focus on valuing and perceiving nature in and around the National Park Dunes of Texel. Since I recognized the emotional impact that the environmental experiences and surroundings can have on an individual (like myself, see foreword), I was wondering how the participants of my research would feel about environmental factors and perceptions. As I am following the track Policy in Practice and was conducting the research internship within an organisation it was of course important to also look at policy factors and stakeholders that influence the management and perception of the national park.

Therefore, the research question of this master thesis is:

*How are natural values experienced and negotiated by stakeholders of the National Park Dunes of Texel and what effect does this have on the use and perception of the Park?*

This is a revised research question as I retrospectively felt that the initial research question did not catch the essence of my object and field of study.

My initial research question was: “What qualities do different involved stakeholders value about the National Park Dunes of Texel and how do these different points of view affect or contradict the policies with regard to the organisation of the management of the Park and the relationships among the stakeholders?” While it was very suited for my fieldwork, I think that the initial question is too specific and focussed on the Park’s management to be applicable as thesis question. The revised research question encompasses the perception and reception of qualities of the National Park as well as the issue of (mental) ownership of the geographic area. Therefore, I will use the aspects concerning policies and management in sub-questions and have reformulated my thesis question to suit my object and field of study. After some peer-discussion and rereading I realized that my object of study was the (difference of) perception and negotiation of natural values. Natural values in this case encompasses all qualities of the natural environment of the National Park that are valued for ecosystem services and/or intrinsic environmental value by the stakeholders.

The perception of the environment does not just entail visual aspects, but is a process of gaining information by engaging with the surroundings through visual and multisensory stimulation and behaviour<sup>9</sup>. Perceiving is the base for actively exploring the environment and ascribing value and meaning to it. It also relates to the communicative context, as the perception entails the sharing, presenting and teaching of ecological information to others by the perceiver and is an important factor in the cognitive development of humans<sup>9</sup>. By perceiving and communicating the environment, skilled vision is created, which will be elaborated upon in chapter four.

The theoretical field of my research encompasses the political and societal discussions about the value of national parks as well as the nature conservation discourse of Western Europe. My physical field of study are the stakeholders, the people and organisations who participated in my research, which geographically took place mostly on Texel, but also in The Hague and Leiden where I did my initial research as well as the processing.

The research question that guided my internship contained the following sub-questions:

*(1) What vision of nature conservation does the park organisation have and in how far is this vision shared by the different stakeholders?* It is concerned with the social and physical construction of nature in the national park and how this influences the different parties involved. Since the park was not only largely constructed by humans, but is also managed by them, for instance by dividing it into different zones and managing the vegetation by introducing great grazers<sup>10</sup>, the park itself is actively physically constructed. Additionally, the park has a role as social-cultural ‘place’ (e.g. emotional attachments to the landscape) as well as an economic one. These different functions may result in different, and potentially conflicting, visions on nature conservation as conducted by the park organisation and how it should be managed according to other stakeholders. It will involve all stakeholders, but focus on the ‘official conservationists’ and ‘locals’, as the tourists are not expected to have major concerns about the conduction of conservation efforts by the park organisation. The sub-question is analytical as well as descriptive. The results are based on literary research as well as personal contact with the participants as mentioned above.

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<sup>9</sup> Grasseni 2004

<sup>10</sup> Natuurgebieden 2017

The second sub-question asks: (2) *What causes conflict between the different stakeholders and how are the conflicts expressed?* It will look at the effects of different visions, valuations and kinds of utilization of the national park area in the domains of conservation, tourism and for instance agriculture. It will elaborate on conflicts that might be caused by different opinions about conservation between the park organisation and other stakeholders, but also look at conflicts due to e.g. tourist behaviour, different land uses and ownership. The sub-question is analytical as well as descriptive and the results will be based on literary research as well as personal contact with the participants as mentioned above.

As the national park is a protected area, special legislative procedures are applied to it which might be a source of either conflict or consolation thereof, the third sub-question asks: (3) *What influence does legislation have on the stakeholders and their perception of the National Park Dunes of Texel?* This sub-question is chiefly descriptive and will mostly concern the second and third group of stakeholders ('conservationists' and 'locals'). The results will be based on literary research as well as personal contact with the participants as mentioned above.

The fourth sub-question asks: (4) *Can the traditional rift between local conservation and conservation efforts from 'outside' still be seen today and is this possibly mirrored in the stakeholder's relationships? If so how?* It is analytical and will examine the role that the (creation of the) national park and cultural heritage plays in the perception and forging of the locals' identity. As described previously, the view on the best way of nature conservation used to be influenced by different perceptions among the local Wadden Sea Region population and urban researchers<sup>11</sup>. This can result in tensions between conservationists from the 'outside', e.g. the urban mainland, and the locals, even though both parties strive for the conservation of nature. This research question focuses on the second and third group of stakeholders and aims to show whether this traditional rift can still be seen and what factors influence this. By knowing these aspects, consolation of visions and improved collaboration might be achieved. The question will be researched via semi-structured interviews with the participants of the different stakeholder groups.

As the aspect of management and organisation remains an important part of my research, I also retrospectively added a new sub-question: (5) *How do different points of view on natural values affect policies with regard to the organisation of the management of the*

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<sup>11</sup> Waddenacademie 2009: 5

*Park and the relationships among the stakeholders?* It relates to the third sub-question as management processes are heavily impacted upon by the national and international legal framework, but further elaborates upon the managing and organising aspects of the National Park Dunes of Texel organisation.

### **1.2.2 Mixed-Methods Research**

As mentioned previously, I conducted mixed-methods research that contained quantitative as well as qualitative methods. I utilised surveys which I developed myself, semi-structured interviews, participant observations of different situations among all target groups, studied literature and local media, and conducted photo elicitations and ratings of pictures that I took myself in the first week of my fieldwork. Additionally, I cycled the width and breadth of Texel to get to know the island as well as possible and visited all places of significance within my research.

I employed the qualitative research methods of participant observation, photo elicitation and semi-structured interviews, to see how people give meaning to their environment. Qualitative research enables the researcher to do so, because in that instance the researcher is part of the research and grounded in the worldview of the researched, and therefore can give unique insights into the matter as well as a voice to the participants<sup>12</sup>. The pictures for the photo elicitation were made by myself in Stage 1, and discussed during Stage 2 and 3 with participants from all groups of stakeholders. Photo elicitation and rating might be considered the least biased of my research methods, because it enabled me to discuss ‘nature’ without having to use the actual word and therefore be burdened by the notions and discourse that comes with it. From these methods I gained insights into the participant’s point of view on the National Park Dunes of Texel which allowed me to conclude which aspects they value most. The semi-structured interviews allowed me to build up a relationship with some of my participants in which they opened up to me about sensitive issues like conflicts and burdened relationships among the stakeholders.

The quantitative methods that I employed were questionnaires that I developed myself as well as the rating of my Photo Elicitation photos for which the participants picked their favourite picture in four categories. The questionnaires only concerned the first group of stakeholders (‘tourists’) and were used to obtain as much information as possible on basic

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<sup>12</sup> Bryman 2012

questions concerning the aims and views of the participants as well as general information on the participants themselves.

By conducting these research methods, I hoped to be able to,

- a) Gain insight into how different stakeholders view the natural environment of the National Park Dunes of Texel;
- b) Get to know what the stakeholders appreciate about the Park;
- c) Get to know what the stakeholders dislike about the Park;
- d) Get to know what legal implications the Park has for the different stakeholders;
- e) Find out what qualities and (ecosystem) services the Park offers to the stakeholders;
- f) Learn about the (historical) circumstances that led to the instalment of the Park;
- g) Find out in what ways the Park might influence the socio-historic cultural landscape of the island of Texel;
- h) Learn whether the ways that the organisation National Park Dunes of Texel acts impacts on the environment;
- i) Find out if (and if so, what) conflicts the different views, needs and perceptions cause among the stakeholder;
- j) Find out which positive relationships, e.g. collaboration exist among the different stakeholders;
- k) Identify situation-specific patterns of goals and perceptions, for instance “all families like the beach and want to visit the Ecomare centre”, which would help to understand the motivations leading to specific behaviour and/or perceptions

The mixed methods were especially well suited to my research, because it allowed me to approach subjects from different directions. I thereby gained information and insights that I would have missed had I taken on a unilateral approach. An example of this is the participants’ stance on sheep grazing in and around the national park that did not appear as a matter of interests in the surveys, but was emphasized during participant observations and the photo elicitations and ratings.

My research was divided into three different stages during which I focussed on different aspects. During Stage 1 I designed the surveys and took the photographs that I needed for my research. I then started to test my materials and conduct the first Participant observations. To learn how the National Park was used, represented and perceived, I accompanied a number of excursions in the areas of de Geul, de Muy and Slufter. During the

excursions I observed the participants to determine their perceptions and interests, and after the excursions I asked for voluntary participants of the surveys and interviewed the guides. Furthermore, I conducted my first interviews with conservationists and locals and started sourcing literature.

During Stage 2 I conducted the majority of my surveys with a slightly changed survey according to the findings of the testing period of Stage 1 and continued with the photo elicitations and ratings. Additional to the excursions in my target areas, I accompanied an excursion to the Natuurmonumenten (another nature protection organisation) area of Waalenburg for comparative purposes. I continued with the interviews and literature research and was soon notified of a conflict between locals and the local authorities concerning the demolition and closure of an area which contained a little beach called 'Ceres' on the Wadden Sea side of the island in the course of dyke maintenance works. As it seemed to me to illustrate tensions among the locals and nature conservation efforts on Texel.

Hence, during Stage 3 I also included a question on the participant's opinions on the Ceres beach in my interview questions. I also ceased to accompany excursions and instead focussed more on the way that the NPDoT is promoted and organised. For this purpose, I took part in the promotion of the National Park on the Sail festival in Den Helder and participated in the meetings of the workgroups of the Park. I also managed to interview most members of the board of the NPDoT. Furthermore, I continued with the literature research, conducted photo elicitations and ratings and obtained about a dozen more surveys. To illustrate the extent of my research I included a map of Texel with the location and amount of contact with my informants as well as the sites of my participant observations (Fig.1). Please note that this map does not include Den Helder where I conducted an additional interview and observation.





Figure 1: Sites of Observations that were conducted during the field work & Contact Points with informants, labelled with the amount of informants that I contacted in said location.

The participant observations, interviews, surveys and photo elicitations went quite smoothly and according to the methodology of the research proposal. I was surprised at the widespread willingness of participants to be interviewed. Of the ca. 46 interview requests only three were refused. To my great regret two of those refusals were by fairly important parties in the contested usage of the National Park: a local club for dog owners and the local cycling and mountain-biking club. A downside of the interviews was, that my role as researcher and interviewer was obvious and especially the participants who had experience with being interviewed were choosing their statements with care and skilfully avoided delving into potentially controversial topics despite my best efforts. Nevertheless, the observations and interviews with ‘regular’ participants gave me access to many different topics, even those avoided by some participants. Also, my own slightly English-tinted accent seemed to place me in the ‘city people corner’. Though many people took it as just another of the many Dutch local accents from an unknown area, some locals commented on it being ‘posh’ (NL “bekakt”) and occasionally had trouble understanding it. Nevertheless, most interviews were very successful and invaluable for my research.

By conducting surveys, I managed to get enough quantitative data to give a certain amount of validity to the statements of the surveys/participants and claims of the research itself. It also allowed me to include the stakeholder group of tourists which are the major economic drive of the island and generally did not have time or motivation to participate in an interview or even photo elicitation. Surveys however were easy and fast enough to be accepted by them, as were the photo ratings.

The photo elicitations gave the participants time to contemplate each of the ten pictures that I had made during Stage 1. They were particularly interesting, because it enabled the participants to address topics without my influencing them with too many of my own words. They often seemed to evoke memories, which no other research method did to the same degree and therefore offered insights that I would have missed otherwise.

As I decided that I wanted some more quantitative data relating to my photo elicitation, I set up a photo rating system in which the participants were asked to pick their favourite picture (out of ten pictures) in four different categories<sup>13</sup>. I exceeded my self-

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<sup>13</sup> 1) Which picture do you like best?  
2) Which picture do you think is most natural?  
3) In which picture is human influence most pronounced?  
4) Which picture represents Texel best?

imposed minimum of valid questionnaires (100) by 15 and conducted a total of 89 photo ratings with locals and tourists.

Although the initial idea of my giving guided tours of my own was not operational, my introduction by the guide and role as national park trainee gave me a certain authority and credibility that seemed to encourage the participation of tourists in my research. Though I quickly obtained the knowledge necessary to give excursions myself, guides were required to participate in a special training as well as first aid courses that were not given during my internship. I did not manage to conduct quite as many covert participant observations as I would have liked, because the main source of observations were the excursions in which covert observation was neither necessary nor plausible as I mostly walked about scribbling into my notebook and asked for participation in my survey afterwards. The observations gave me information about the geography, history and ecology of the national park and the island of Texel, about the way that the park is received and perceived by different groups as well as information about the NPDoT organisation and its social- and power structures. Though my subject was not highly controversial it did contain some points of (social) tension and I realised that some disputes were either unknown or glossed over by members of the NPDoT board. However, most members of the organisation as well as ‘regular’ participants did not seem constrained by social- or other obligations.

### **1.2.3 Research Population**

My research population consisted of three groups, ‘tourists’, ‘official conservationists’ and ‘locals’ as mentioned previously. I chose these three groups of participants, because they are representative for the issues that I researched and because they are the main stakeholders on the island. The ‘official conservationists’ and ‘tourists’ are major influences on the island’s landscape, the ‘official conservationists’ because their reports and decisions influence the policy makers and the landscape, and the tourists because they are the major source of income and hence must be catered for. The ‘local’ group is a very open one and involves local participants with a specific interest or engagement with nature in the island (not necessarily in the park itself) without being conservationists. I chose this broad category to allow the admission of different groups that are neither ‘classic tourists’ nor ‘official conservationists’.

The units, e.g. participants of the research were sampled by making contact with the locals, using contacts among the NPDoT organisation and conservationists that were my

professional environment, approaching tourists in touristic venues as well as accompanying excursions through the national park. Accompanying excursions through the park gave me the opportunity for first-hand participant observation of tourists and enabled me to take on different roles, covert as well as overt. It also enabled me to create connections with the tourists and facilitate their collaboration by consenting to photo elicitation and/or ratings, and filling in my quantitative questionnaires. Most (tourist) participants only participated in one way, due to time constraints, but I used photo elicitations and ratings along with quantitative questionnaires wherever possible.

Each research participant was given an individual number under which his or her personal information as well as research contribution were saved. These data were noted down in the List of Participants, which the participants were asked to sign (voluntarily of course) to prove that they really took part in the research. Tourists were 'labelled' as T000, the digits changing with each person. The same applies to conservationists (C000) as well as the 'locals' (I000). The questionnaires as well as the list of questions for the semi-structured interviews can be found in the appendix.

#### **1.2.4 Research Site: The National Park Dunes of Texel**

I chose the research internship opportunity in/at the National Park Dunes of Texel (Dutch: Nationaal Park Duinen van Texel), because it is an extremely interesting landscape, location wise, historically, biologically and due to the multitude of uses. It is a peri-urban national park on the outskirts of the metropolitan area of the Netherlands (Randstad) and heavily influenced by anthropogenic activity; starting from the ground which was chiefly created by embankments to much of the vegetation and even the fauna, because much of the park was originally used for utilitarian purposes, namely timber and flower bulb production. There is farmland bordering the land-sides of the reserve which means that the national park and related legislation have a very direct impact on the permitted agricultural practices of the local farmers. Since, the park as officially protected nature reserve is just over ten years old, it was possible to talk to the people who arranged this status to get to know what circumstances led to it and why it is so important. Furthermore, it offers many different natural environments which are used and protected in different ways<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> NPDoT 2017



*Figure 2: Geographic Outlines and Zoning of the National Park Dunes of Texel According to the NPDoT Foundation.*

To narrow down my research area, I chose three sites from the national park, which are most representative of the different environments/ landscapes and conservation zones that the park offers (see Fig.2).

Firstly, De Dennen, the ‘oldest’ and biggest forest of the island. This area is part of the ‘orange zone’, which contains many recreational paths. Secondly, the Eijerlandse Duinen, which are extremely diverse and used to be a separate island and is the oldest part of the reserve. This area is part of the ‘yellow zone’, which has less paths and may be used for specific purposes only. Thirdly, the Zuidpunt van Texel, which consists of the areas de Mokbaai, de Hors, de Geul, and Horstmeertjes en Kreeftpolder. These areas are (partly) part of the ‘green zone’ in which everyone can roam freely. Furthermore, it contains a third

landscape, the beach/Wadden. It is managed by employing great grazers to keep the vegetation short, which is a major intervention into the natural development<sup>15</sup>.

However, when discussing my plans with the former chairman and another local scientist we decided that I should focus on the area of de Slufter instead of the Eijerlandse Duinen as those dunes are fairly remote and less used than de Slufter, which is one of the main attractions of the island. De Slufter includes yellow as well as green zones and is partly zoned off to protect the local ecology. There were guided excursions that I could accompany which offered me not only a fascinating scenery, but also opportunities to conduct surveys and photo elicitations and ratings with tourists. Additionally, there is a birdwatcher's hut in which voluntary conservationists spend time to monitor the area and a cosy spot for me to conduct interviews with locals and conservationists working there.

As mentioned previously, the three areas of the National Park, the Zuidpunt, de Dennen and de Slufter, involve all kinds of landscape and zoning that the park has to offer and therefore should also cover all kinds of activities that are conducted within the National Park.

The island of Texel is a moraine island, meaning it has a Pleistocene core of boulder clay<sup>16</sup>. This core was enlarged by naturally washed up sand as well as by anthropogenic influences like embankments, building of dykes and adding of soil and fertilisers. The oldest polders were embanked by local communities from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, with farms and cottages being located near or on dykes. The 'new' polders were embanked in the sixteenth century. One of those expansions in the sixteenth century resulted in the connection of the barrier island of Eijerland, giving Texel its current shape<sup>16</sup>. The open fields on Texel were enclosed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to clarify land ownership, resulting in a patchwork of small fields, embedded by a grid of sod banks (tuunwallen), which have become a characteristic of the island<sup>16</sup>.

The idea of nature conservation has a fairly long history on the island. In 1926 the areas of Muy, Slufter, Geul and Mok came under the protection of an official government nature reserve. Ten years later the nature conservation organisation Natuurmonumenten rented the area de Schorren from the Water Administration (waterschap). In 1961 a seal reserve was installed at the Eijerlandse Gat (area around Eijerland) and in 1975, the Dutch Government

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<sup>15</sup> NPDoT 2017

<sup>16</sup> Vollmer et al. 2001

Institution for Nature Management (Rijksinstituut voor Natuurbeheer) settled on Texel<sup>17</sup>. The first idea for a large scale nature reserve on Texel was voiced by Jac P. Thijsse in the 1930s, but despite previous efforts to protect specific small areas on the island, attempts to create one unified stretch of protected nature were not successful. The National Park Dunes of Texel (NPDoT) in its current form was only installed on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2002<sup>18</sup>. The most important goals as stated on the official NPDoT website are the conservation and maintenance of nature, stimulating of information, education, scientific research and nature-oriented recreation.

The nature reserve on Texel currently consists of 4300 hectares which are owned by private landowners, government, the military and the park foundation. It contains very diverse habitats like wet dune valleys, heather, forests and extensive coastline with every area having its unique flora, determined by for instance ground structure and components (e.g. salt, chalk, nutrients). Because the southern parts of the park are exposed to very strong winds and temperature changes (up to 50C) they are only scarcely vegetated. The northern parts are much more shadowy and therefore humid and lush. The nature reserve is partly managed by letting animals graze on it. There are several forests on Texel, but all of them are man-made. The forest area 'de Dennen' was planted in the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, designed for wood production, but now is part of the national park and used for nature- and recreational functions. Apart from the initial planting, the forest is still heavily man-managed, for example by replacing many of the old firs by other trees to increase the diversity<sup>18</sup>. The forest was originally used to cultivate plants like snowdrops, which were imported from France and now make up a vital part of the forest's biodiversity. Another major forest area, 'het Krimbos', is a mixed woodland and was planted in the 1980s as recreational area with plenty of cycling and walking paths and recreational grasslands. The island's fauna consists of only a few mammals, mainly rodents, some amphibians, and large populations of birds. Most mammals like cats, rabbits and ferrets were introduced by humans for different reason<sup>18</sup>.

All in all, it can be noted that Texel is highly influenced by anthropogenic activities. However, though there is plenty of literature about the Wadden Sea Region in general, there is a significant lack of academic literature about the socio-cultural role that the National Park Dunes of Texel plays for the island and its inhabitants.

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<sup>17</sup> Wolff 1996

<sup>18</sup> Natuurgebieden 2017

## 1.2.5 What Park? - Organisation and Management Structures of the National Park

### Dunes of Texel

The potentially most unexpected find of my research was the fact that the “National Park Dunes of Texel” was nothing like I anticipated. When hearing the words ‘national park’ I was inclined to think of a clearly defined area, perhaps even surrounded by some sort of border, that is monitored and maintained by a certain organisation. This however, was not the case with the National Park Dunes of Texel, and also the general structure of national parks in the Netherlands seem to be rather different from those in other countries. I tried to explain what exactly the national park is in the abstract of my research report with the following sentences:

“Contrary to popular belief, the National Park Dunes of Texel is neither a self-contained area nor an independent organisation. It is a consultative body aimed at representing and consoling the demands of nature, sustainable natural development and the interests of local stakeholders within a mapped out territory.”

Based on the knowledge about the organisational structures of the Park that I obtained in interviews and observation, I designed a graph to illustrate the organisational structure of the National Park Dunes of Texel Foundation (Fig.3). The Park itself, like all Dutch National Parks, used to be directly connected to the national government, but for various reasons has since become detached and was transformed into a foundation. This ‘Foundation National Park Dunes of Texel’ is being supported by its province (Noord-Holland), the municipality of Texel, and Nature organisations like the IVN (Instituut voor Natuureducatie en Duurzaamheid) and the National Forest Authority SBB (Staatsbosbeheer) by subsidising the Park and sending employees to work in its management and workgroups. There used to be three different workgroups: “Communication and Education” (C&E), “(Nature) Management and Recreation”, and “Research”, but the “Management and Recreation” workgroup has been combined with the “Research” workgroup, resulting in the workgroup “Management, Research and Recreation” (Beheer, Onderzoek en Recreatie- BOR). Hence, there are two workgroups, but three workgroup coordinators. The workgroups officially meet about once every three months, and the board about twice a year unless urgent matters need to be discussed, though they also occasionally have informal get-togethers. The foundation is financed with subsidies by the province and municipality, but also requested to generate some revenue itself. During my research I encountered at least three different people who were said or claimed to be the treasurer, though none of them seemed to have access to the foundation’s bank account. Hence, figure 3 shows two different treasurers.



The NPDoT seeks the communication and support of the local population by offering official brainstorming sessions ('Klankbord') and courses for local accommodation owners (gastheren). Accommodation owners (NPDoT hosts) who completed a course on the NPDoT are awarded with the title "Gastheer/vrouw van de National Park Dunes of Texel", which is generally used for PR purposes, and have the contact details of their accommodations placed on the Park's official website. The hosts can participate in extra courses/information sessions that are organised by the Park.

The employees of official organisations work for the Park as part of their regular jobs. Additional members of the Park's management and workgroups are (paid) volunteers from local stakeholders. They participate in the work groups as representatives of specific stakeholder groups and do so either as part of their paid function or at their own time and costs. The paid members of board and workgroups who work in the NPDoT as part of their regular jobs are employees from mayor organisations like the Forest Authority (SBB), the municipality of Texel, the Dutch Institute for Nature Education (IVN), the Dutch Tourism Organisation (VVV), the Dutch Water Authority (Hoogheemraadschap), and the Scientific Maritime Museum of Texel (Ecomare). The unpaid members are mainly representatives for the local sports and nature organisations as well as the representative of the Nature Excursions Texel (NET) voluntary group. However, the lines are not always drawn clearly, as members of the workgroups might be representing more than one stakeholder or organisation. Also, some members of the workgroups are active in several workgroups at the same time, sometimes in different capacities. Hence, a member of one workgroup might be representing one organisation in that workgroup, and another organisation in the other workgroup. Additionally, some members of the board are active in workgroups, leading to a partial overlap of board and workgroups and fluent transitions of member activities.

The chairman of the park is hitherto not being paid, but as the Park is currently looking for a new chairman they are contemplating to install a compensation for the work done by the chairman.

The board of the NPDoT foundation is headed by the chairman and a secretary and has an additional six regular board members. They meet biannually to discuss issues concerning the park and decide on management, representation and maintenance strategies that should be employed. To do so the board requests the workgroup to conduct/organise research and advise the board accordingly.

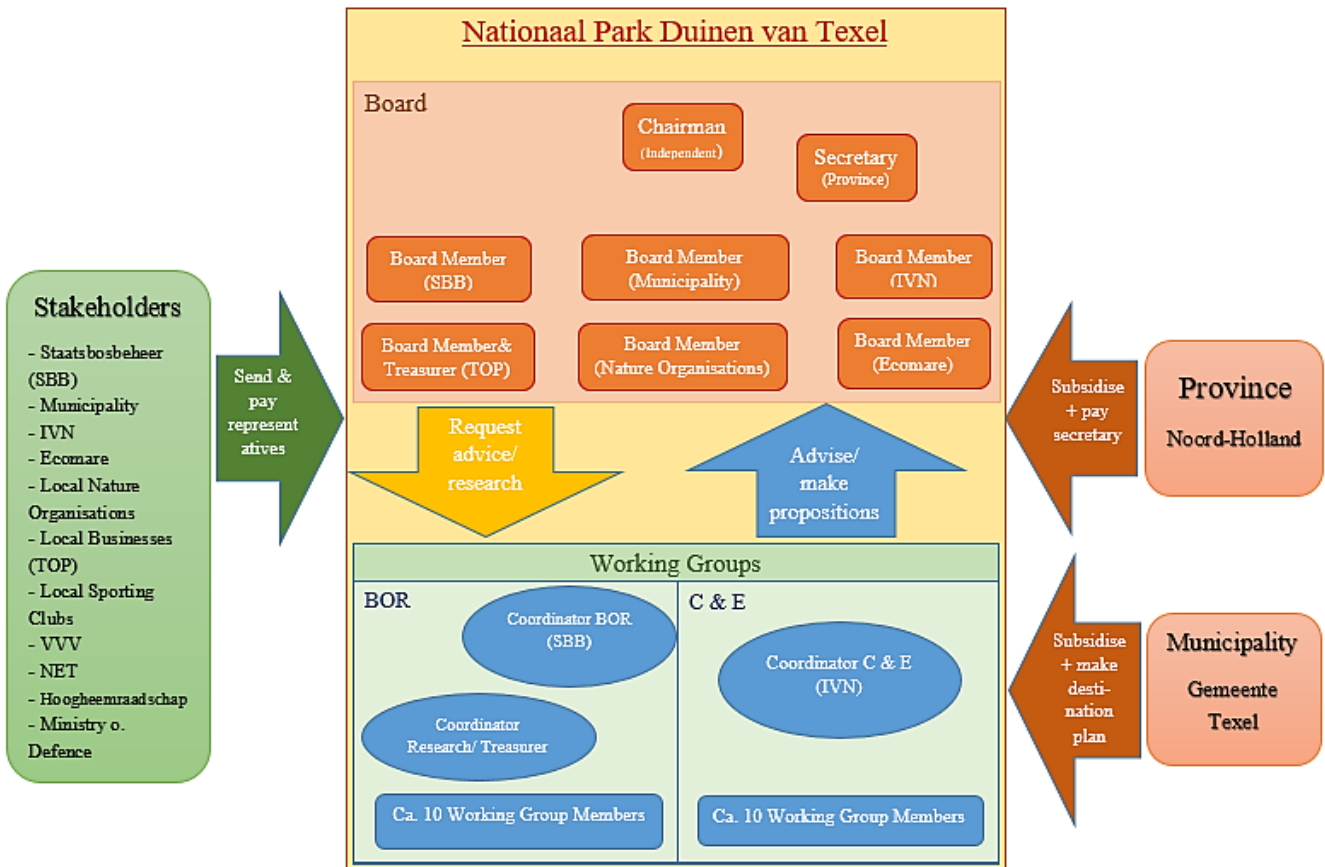


Figure 3: NPDoT Organisational Structure as Determined During the Research.

The workgroups therefore meet quarterly to discuss the requests of the board as well as the advice that they want to give. The workgroups might additionally propose aspects or issues that the board should consider.

When a stakeholder of the park, for instance the municipality wishes to impact the area of the park or has questions concerning (ecological) processes within the park, it poses a question to the NPDoT board which in turn asks for the advice of the workgroups. The board then makes a recommendation for a (management) strategy for the stakeholder (e.g. the municipality) to employ. I was told that the board’s recommendations are usually followed, though they are not binding in any way and without legal backing.

### 1.2.6 Legal Influences on the National Parks in the Netherlands

An important notion in the context of conducting research in a national park, are ‘protected areas’. While West et al. use the term in a seemingly general context to talk about areas in which natural resources and wildlife are protected, Orlove and Bush point out, that ‘protected area’ is a cover term that was coined in 1978 to end terminological confusion about sanctuaries, national parks, nature reserves and the likes<sup>19</sup>. It consists of eight subcategories (see figure 11, appendix) which in turn have different implications for the use and right of the protected area and its inhabitants. This knowledge is very important because it points out the exact status (as defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature) of the park that I have conducted my research in and therefore can be used to conclude for instance the intention that it was built with and the value that was ascribed to it.

The National Park Dunes of Texel is a national park and therefore falls into category II of the protected areas, which is the second highest status. It means that the park is supposed to serve to protect natural and scenic areas, which are deemed of “national or international significance for scientific research, education and recreation”<sup>20</sup>. Due to its legal aspects this concept relates to sub-question three which examines the impact of legal aspects on the stakeholders. It also relates to sub-question four<sup>21</sup>, because the conservation efforts from the ‘outside’ are usually arranged by governments.

In the Netherlands, a national park has no official legal status and therefore does not have any powers of for instance law enforcement. However, there is a large amount of national and international laws and guidelines that regulate and protect a protected area. Of the more than 15 laws and statues that influenced the park during its instalment, the Flora&Faunawet which dictates the kind and degree of legal protection of certain species, as well as the EHS (Ecologische Hoofdstructuur- ecological mainstructure) which determine for instance what the landscape is supposed to look like might be considered as major legal influences of the NPDoT<sup>22</sup>. As all Dutch national parks are parts of the “Kerngebieden van de Ecologische Hoofdstructuur (EHS) van Nederland”, agricultural areas surrounding the park become part of the EHS and therefore subject to certain restrictions. During my research, the legal aspects named most frequently were the newly revised (January 2016) Flora&Faunawet and the

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<sup>19</sup> Orlove & Bush 1996

<sup>20</sup> Orlove & Bush 1996: 332

<sup>21</sup> (4) Can the traditional rift between local conservation and conservation efforts from the outside still be seen today and is this possibly mirrored in the stakeholder’s relationships? If so, how?

<sup>22</sup> Kelderman& Leermakers 1997

European Natura 2000 legislation. Furthermore, the EHS meant that an ecological buffer zone had to be installed around the National Park in which certain agricultural substances and practices like pesticides and hunting are forbidden. Furthermore, the “Recreatiebasisplan”<sup>23</sup> which states that there should be no more than 47.000 beds on Texel, an objective that was much discussed during my time on the island. The extensive list of legal influences on the national park can be found in the appendix.

### 1.3 Ethical Considerations of doing Anthropological research

As most participants (except those of covert participant observation) were aware of my role as researcher and participating voluntarily and without being at risk, the potential for ethical considerations of my research are limited. The main aspects of the AAA ethics code to consider regarding my research, concern the motives of my participants, especially those of the conservation and opposition groups have for contributing to my research. Furthermore, I will carefully evaluate my own role, to determine whether I managed to maintain a certain degree of objectivity. Sensitive issues like conflicts which may involve aspects like personal reputation were treated with utmost care and discretion, participants are always named by their number and without referring to specific traits that would identify them. Additionally, there of course is the matter of privacy/ security of personal information of the participants who wrote down their names and potentially e-mail addresses to enable me to send them my research report and/or thesis if interested. All participants were asked for their name, nationality, age group, contact information and signature to be noted in the List of Participants (see appendix), to give a solid foundation to my research, e.g. prove that the research is based on the opinions of existing participants. If the participants refused to give some of this information, it was either estimated (e.g. nationality, age group) or left blank. On each List of Participants is a footnote stating “I hereby declare that I will use the information above for no other purpose than my academic research. All information and personal details will be treated confidentially.” The list itself will not be published in any context. I hope that I inspired confidence in my participants by clearly stating my purpose and showing my honest and academic intentions. Other than the aspects named above I see no issues that can lead to a breach of the anthropological code of ethics.

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<sup>23</sup> Plan for recreational activities, Kelderman & Leermakers 1997

## 1.4 Arriving: The Odour of my Childhood

I started my journey by shouldering my heavy bags and mounting my trusty collapsible bike that would accompany me throughout the research. It being collapsible means that it can be taken onto the public transport for free (in its folded form). Only I had not anticipated the strict rules of the TESO ferry that runs to Texel; even a collapsible bike only counts as luggage (and therefore travels for free) if it is actually carried onto the boat. While it is usually very easy to carry, my attempt to carry it simultaneously with my additional five bags was a gross overestimation of my powers and saw my falling down flat after stumbling on the ship's threshold. Lying with my back on the floor like a beetle, handicapped by the heavy bags and a meanly stinging knee I had to rely on the help of other passengers to get back on my feet and eventually stumble to a seat. With my self-esteem already deflated I arrived on Texel with a limp and promptly took the wrong road when I came to my first junction, thinking that the NIOZ research institute in which I had a meeting with the former chairman would have its main entrance facing the sea. With only a minor delay I eventually stumbled into the NIOZ and was greeted warmly by the former chairman. His part-time occupation at the NIOZ enabled him to introduce me as a freelance trainee, which gave me access to a desk to work on, printing and scanning facilities and an accommodation in the NIOZ guesthouse 'De Potvis'.

The first thing one usually notices when coming to Texel is the wind. While the Netherlands are generally rather windy due to their geographic relief and proximity to the sea, Texel is quite a different story. It has its own climate, more sunshine than the mainland, but also a lot more wind. The clouds are swept over the island without them noticing that there was land that they could have rained upon. The climate usually is several degrees colder than on the mainland which causes the entire ecology to be about two weeks behind the schedule of the mainland ecology. This is especially troublesome for people suffering from hay fever like myself, because when the pollen season is just over on the mainland, it is merely starting on Texel which resulted in my having a runny nose for more than a month. When I first arrived however, it was only the end of March, and the smell that first met my sensitive nostrils had nothing at all to do with spring flowers. After crossing the short stretch of sea, the first note in the air (apart from the sea itself) was the smell of manure. This to me was very familiar as I had grown up on the German countryside. It almost felt like an olfactory hug, a throwback to my youth. Little did I know that it was to accompany me wherever the island paths would lead me for the entire duration of my research. While the odour matched the

idyllic rural scene, it became stronger and nothing short of pungent by the end of April. It was not without problems either. Though the stench of manure may be associated romantically with the countryside by the city dwellers, it can have drastic consequences for the environment and fuel the eternal struggle between farmers and conservationists. Farmers spread manure on their fields to increase the productivity of their land while the conservationists keep taking the fertile topsoil layers of, because nutrient poor soil encourages biodiversity.



*Picture 2: Rural spring scenery that greeted me when I arrived on Texel: A pile of manure and flowering daffodils next to a ditch along the Pontweg*

## **Chapter 2: A Crazy Little Thing Called Environmental Anthropology**

This chapter elaborates on the framework that was used for this research. For this purpose, I first elaborate on environmental anthropology and the cultural concepts that place this research in the realm of anthropology. Afterwards, I place this research in the environmental (anthropology) discourse and seek to explain the importance of (valuing) our environment by elaborating on the key concepts of the research. For this purpose, I have divided the key concepts into two main concepts; natural values and ecosystem services. While all concepts are of course relating in one way or another, these two can be considered anchor points. The cluster that is anchored by natural values is mainly concerned with the non-tangible aspects of perceiving and valuing nature, while the cluster of ecosystem services is concerned with the tangible concepts.

### **2.1 Environmental Anthropology and Cultural Concepts**

It might be considered self-evident that ‘environment’ and ‘anthropology’ belong together like summer and sun, but as the rainy Dutch summers show, things do not always go according to plan. The two have drifted apart with ‘anthropology’ becoming increasingly focused on sociology and culture, until ‘environmental anthropology’ assumed an individual identity. It is now understood to be anthropology that contains a biophysical analysis and emphasises the connection between cultural and biophysical factors. Therefore, to conduct environmental anthropology research, it is necessary to understand the needs and demands that humans make to the biophysical resources of their environment as well as spatial and ownership claims that arise from these needs<sup>24</sup>.

Intrinsically linked to environmental anthropology is the term ‘environment’, which can relate to either things or relationships between humans and biophysical factors. Because it contains such a large scope of concepts and concerns, ‘environment’ is a concept that demands an interdisciplinary approach<sup>24</sup>, for which I was very well equipped due to a very broad academic background and varied personal interests in the area of biophysical sciences. The concept of environment can be found throughout the research, but especially in relation to the first and fifth sub-questions as ‘visions’ and ‘natural values’ are usually concerned with

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<sup>24</sup> Barnard & Spencer 2010

broad areas e.g. landscapes and the surrounding area as whole. Originally a medieval French word, ‘environment’ described a state of being surrounded by someone or something. It then developed to describe “the area surrounding a place or thing”<sup>25</sup> in the eighteenth century, until it slowly started to represent the natural world in the twentieth century. Pellow and Brehm show that terms like ‘environment’, ‘nature’ and ‘natural’ are heavily influenced by the Western hegemony of the environmental discourse. ‘Environment’ still clings to the western-colonial notion of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, when it was used to describe wilderness, nonhuman animals, and landscapes that were untouched by human activity<sup>26</sup>. In this research, ‘environment’ refers to the outdoor surroundings on Texel in which my research took place, and entails ‘wild’ nature as well as the aspects and effects of anthropologic activities. As my research revolves around the dimension of values and qualities that nature of the National Park Dunes of Texel offers, my concepts are centred around the aspects of natural values and ecosystem services.

### 2.1.1 Nature

Since nature is the key component of this study, it is necessary to engage with the (development of) the terminology and concept of the word itself. To place this concept in its context one must keep in mind the discourse of environmental anthropology. As environment-related studies are always highly interdisciplinary<sup>27</sup>, the influence of other disciplines on the environmental anthropology discourse needs to be taken into account. When the social sciences entered the environmental discourse stage in the 1970s, the discourse was already heavily influenced by other disciplines<sup>28</sup>.

One of these disciplines was philosophy. To give some background information to the discourse I therefore examined Arthur Lapan’s *Preface to a Theory of Nature*. Arthur Lapan pointed out, that the meaning of ‘nature’ as an environmental concept is inseparably intertwined with the meaning of the word itself. The use of the word dictates the meaning of it<sup>29</sup>. He distinguishes between ‘nature’ as noun and the adjective ‘natural’. ‘Nature’ is “a collective name for events which have a cause and are logically bound together”<sup>30</sup> and

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<sup>25</sup> Alston 2015:93

<sup>26</sup> Pellow & Brehm 2013:232

<sup>27</sup> Waddenacademie 2009, Jansen et al. 217

<sup>28</sup> Castree 2016: 153

<sup>29</sup> Lapan 1938: 397

<sup>30</sup> Lapan 1938: 400



includes everything that is not man-made. ‘Natural’ on the other hand is a description of all components of nature, material as well as immaterial<sup>31</sup>. Though written in the 1930s, this historic document is decidedly valuable, because it provides me with an understanding (of the importance) of the word itself, before entering the tangled debate of ‘nature’ within more recent discourse in anthropology and other social sciences.

When social scientists entered the nature discourse in the 1970s, their attention was focussed on research into “nature’s ‘social constitution’” i.e., how the understanding of nature as a concept is constructed and whether the word itself is actually suited to describe the phenomenon or entity that they sought to portray<sup>28</sup>. The term ‘nature’ was found to have several distinct meanings, for instance “collateral concepts of nature” like race, sex, biodiversity, genes, wilderness, animals, environment etc., which are often present in a discussion without the term itself being mentioned<sup>32</sup>. To this, anthropology added the notion of nature as ‘place’ that is represented in a specific way, influenced by cultural and political factors<sup>33</sup>.

However, there seemed to be more inventing of new terms to describe nature than actually defining the term itself. This dilemma of terminology still exists, and many authors prefer to avoid the problem of terminology by avoiding to use ‘nature’ and even ‘environment’ by using different words or creating new ones<sup>34</sup>. An example of this is the use of ‘surroundings’ as term to describe the natural environment that surrounds humans and to which they have material, symbolic and intellectual access<sup>35</sup>.

Lately, there appears to be a new development within the environmental anthropology discourse. It increasingly shows a separation of people and surroundings into different categories, namely nature, culture, environment and society<sup>35</sup>. “Nature” in this context is often simultaneously used with “wilderness” and understood to be protected areas of conservation efforts that should not be developed commercially<sup>35</sup>. This research will relate to these notions and might be able to update the discourse as well as offering new definitions for these diffuse concepts.

A more modern definition of the concept can be found in *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Raymond Williams defines three different areas of meaning of ‘nature’.

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<sup>31</sup> Lapan 1938: 399

<sup>32</sup> Castree 2016: 154

<sup>33</sup> Gupta et al. 2012

<sup>34</sup> Castree 2016

<sup>35</sup> West et al. 2006

Firstly, nature as “the essential quality and character *of something*”<sup>36</sup>. Secondly, nature as “the inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both”<sup>36</sup>. And thirdly he determines nature as “the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings”<sup>36</sup>. However, the precise meanings of the word are variable and occasionally opposed, as the vague definitions show. For instance, the question whether human beings are included or excluded, which also was a recurring point of discussion within my research. Barnard and Spencer add to the debate by defining ‘nature’ as the opposite of ‘culture’ and mark it as a purely Western notion that is based on the Western discourse<sup>37</sup>. Robbins et al. add to this by observing that ‘nature’ in itself is a social construct based on Western values and experiences<sup>38</sup>. Castree goes a step further and describes nature as “collateral concept” encompassing a multitude of aspects like race, sex, biodiversity, genes, wilderness, animals, environment and the likes. He also observes that meanings of ‘nature’ are often present in a discussion without using the actual word<sup>39</sup>. “Nature” nowadays is often understood to be protected areas. West et al. describe that “protected areas are the material and discursive means by which conservation and development discourses, practices, and institutions remake the world”<sup>40</sup>. This brings us back to the notion of ‘nature’ as a social construct which will be the main focus of this research.

In my own research I have tried to use the term ‘nature’ as little as possible to abstain from the heavy discourse surrounding it. Therefore, I utilised ‘natural values’ in the main research question and ‘qualities’ in the initial research question. However, I felt it necessary to use ‘nature’ in the first sub-question<sup>41</sup> in combination with ‘conservation’ to clarify which conservation efforts I was interested in.

### 2.1.2 Place

The other aspect to be discussed in the context of environmental anthropology and cultural concepts is ‘place’, which is described as “a crucial source of meaning and thus a basis for the interpretation of cultural practices”<sup>42</sup>. After the notion of ‘place’ was disregarded by social

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<sup>36</sup> Williams 1983: 219

<sup>37</sup> Barnard & Spencer 2010:500

<sup>38</sup> Robbins et al. 2014:121

<sup>39</sup> Castree 2016: 154

<sup>40</sup> West et al. 2006:255

<sup>41</sup> (1) What vision of nature conservation does the park organisation have and in how far is this vision shared by the different stakeholders?

<sup>42</sup> Barnard & Spencer 2010:540

sciences for many years, it has been recognized since the last part of the twentieth century as having “intrinsic importance in the theory and practice of the social sciences”<sup>43</sup>. ‘Place’ is a mental social construct that different groups of people employ to refer to one aspect of their identity. It relates to socio-historic aspects of identity as well as to socio-historic landscapes as cultural ‘place’<sup>44</sup>, which makes it a valuable concept for this research. It relates especially to sub-question four<sup>45</sup>, which is concerned with the disparities of (visions of) conservation efforts conducted by locals and non-locals. I expected to find different visions of ‘outside’ conservationists and local ones, because the one is rooted in the connection with the land and identity that is created by the landscapes as cultural ‘place’, while the other is not.

## 2.2 Why Care?

*“If human existence has any verifiable meaning, it is that our passions and toil are enabling mechanisms to continue that existence unbroken, unsullied, and progressively secure. It is for ourselves, and not for them or any abstract morality, that we think into the distant future. The precise manner in which we take this measure, how we put it into words, is crucially important. For if the whole process of our life is directed toward preserving our species and personal genes, preparing for future generations is an expression of the highest morality of which human beings are capable. It follows that the destruction of the natural world in which the brain was assembled over millions of years is a risky step. And the worst gamble of all is to let species slip into extinction wholesale, for even if the natural environment is conceded more ground later, it can never be reconstituted in its original diversity.”<sup>46</sup> –E.O. Wilson, 1984*

In his book *Biophilia*, E.O. Wilson has aptly summarised why humans care about nature and in turn, what threats to our livelihood and mental well-being are posed by carelessness. In this sub-chapter I will elaborate upon the key concepts of this research that are concerned with value as well as ethical considerations. They show the impact and importance of various aspects of the nature (conservation) discourse and will be used to

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<sup>43</sup> Barnard & Spencer 2010:541

<sup>44</sup> Gupta et al. 2012

<sup>45</sup> (4) Can the traditional rift between local conservation and conservation efforts from ‘outside’ still be seen today and is this possibly mirrored in the stakeholder’s relationships? If so how?

<sup>46</sup> Wilson 1984:121

analyse the findings of the research. I speak of natural values, because they entail the intrinsic cultural experience of the environment. As values are defined differently by the stakeholders it is important to work out how experiencing and perceiving are related to each other and the concepts in order to understand the differences and effects of nature perception and valuation.

### **2.2.1 Natural Values**

Caring about nature and the continued existence of natural areas seems to have increased in recent years, fuelled by a heightened interest in natural values and debates about nature conservation. Urbanisation and changing social and ecological values have led to a different perception of national parks, and the experiences that visitors have when visiting a national park can influence their stance towards nature conservation<sup>47</sup>. Rossi et al describe that the values the national park visitors hold impact their beliefs (ideas thought to be true) and attitudes, i.e. learned predispositions, which in turn affect and alter the interpreting of sensory data, otherwise known as ‘perception’<sup>47</sup>. Figure 4 shows the intricate underlying factors that impact on the perception (of a national park). While I will not go into detail about the background of perceptions it is important to note, that according to Rossi et al. the perception significantly impacts the behaviour of national parks by moderating and guiding it<sup>47</sup>. Hence, by understanding and potentially influencing the visitor’s perception, the national park organisation can utilise this knowledge to regulate the visitor’s behaviour within the park.

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<sup>47</sup> Rossi et al. 2015

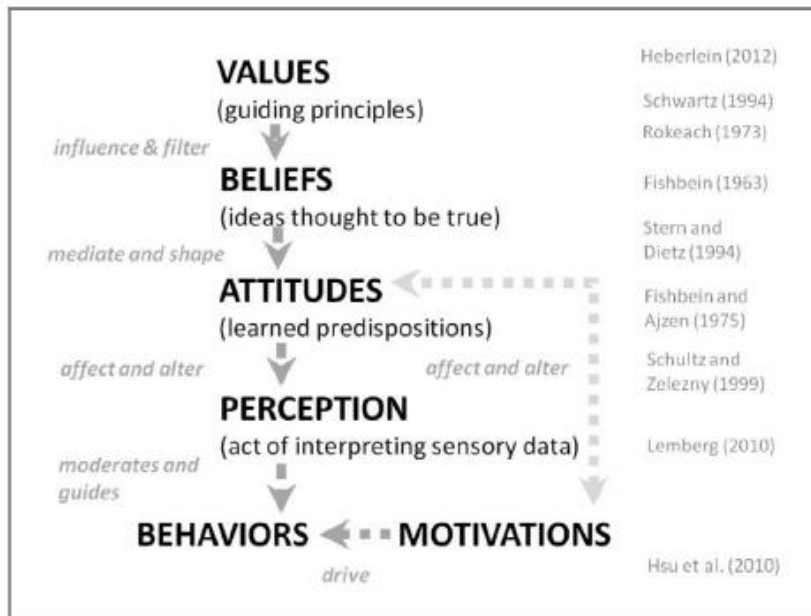


Figure 4: "Conception of values (the guiding principles construct) in a conceptual hierarchical model of factors that mediate behavior- such as park use" Rossi et al. 2015:43

Values in relation to the environment are constructed within three different social spheres, the egocentric, anthropocentric and ecocentric sphere. These spheres, though distinct, can overlap, resulting in groups or individuals that hold values from different groups. The individuals oriented within the egocentric sphere are to some extent self-centred and mostly concerned about their own interest<sup>48</sup>. The individuals moving in the anthropocentric sphere cherish an interest in the overall well-being of humanity and share values like tradition, social justice and benevolence. The concept of ecocentric values has emerged more recently and is ascribed to individuals who care especially for the intrinsic values of nature and the environment as a whole. Members of this sphere share values like ecosystem protection and environmental aesthetics. It is important to acknowledge these different values when considering issues like access to public and/or protected spaces and which activities are deemed appropriate<sup>48</sup>.

## 2.2.2 Cultural- and Aesthetic Values

Cultural values are major components in the perception and construction of natural values as they are determining factors in the relationships that humans have with their environment. For instance, they determine which ecological needs a society has as well which

<sup>48</sup> Rossi et al. 2015

landscape aesthetics are appreciated<sup>49</sup>. However, a basic Biophilia seems to be ingrained into the human being. Though the view on scenic beauty is influenced by the inhabitant's understanding of utility, even diverse ethnic and/or stakeholder groups mostly agree on assessments of aesthetic beauty of landscapes, showing that aesthetic beauty is perceived in similar ways across cultures<sup>49</sup>. Furthermore, landscapes associated with cultural heritage are often highly valued by their society, as “cultural landscapes are vessels of cultural values and contribute to the identity of communities”<sup>50</sup>, which can also be seen in the maintaining and managing of historic cultural landscapes like turf walls on Texel by organisations like de Liew (see chapter 4). Societies and cultures also often have a strong bond with specific individual species of e.g. plant or animal, in the case of Texel, there is a strong affinity with avian species, especially meadow birds. In a further connection between cultural values and landscape, knowing the aspects of cultural heritage that are especially important to specific stakeholders is vital knowledge for effective policy and decision making in the ecological context. Furthermore, cultural values are essential in the valuing of ecosystem services and is also a determining factor in the monetary value of landscapes. This is expressed in for instance housing prices that increase in the proximity of natural areas, because nature is valued as asset to the location<sup>49</sup>.

### 2.2.3 Intrinsic Value

Another key concept for ethical consideration is ‘intrinsic value’. It describes the non-instrumental value of non-human beings in the natural world. Instrumental value describes the value an object has as being useful to achieve a specific goal<sup>51</sup>. ‘Intrinsic’ means that something has a value in itself without needing to be useful or achieve something. Occasionally ‘intrinsic value’ is associated with something that ensures the well-being of non-human actors. In relation to the environmental discourse, intrinsic value is being understood as non-human beings and objects having a value that is not determined by its utility for human purposes. In this context it is assumed, that nature has an inherent pattern or order that “humans are bound to understand, respect and preserve”<sup>52</sup>. Though originating in philosophy, it plays a vital role in this research, because intrinsic value is a key component in perceiving nature and determining whether we like something because it is useful, or because it seems

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<sup>49</sup> Daniel et al. 2012

<sup>50</sup> Daniel et al. 2012:8814

<sup>51</sup> O’Neill 1992

<sup>52</sup> O’Neill 1992: 120

valuable in itself without any utility attached to it. This concept relates to how people view and appreciate the world around them and therefore is of major importance for the main research question and the first sub-question.

#### **2.2.4 Biophilia**

A theoretical framework that offers an explanation as to when and how these ‘natural values’ are embodied is notion of ‘Biophilia’, i.e. the “nature-friendliness”<sup>53</sup> that humans have for their natural environment. It entails valuing the intrinsic properties of nature and acknowledging its right to exist without being productive<sup>53</sup>. It especially relates to sub-question five as the degree of Biophilia of an individual is one of the factors determining the individual’s natural values. Relating to the Biophilia concept is the Biophilia Hypothesis was developed by E. O. Wilson, a biologist/bio-geographer with strong anthropological leanings. The hypothesis states that humans have “the innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes.”<sup>54</sup>. This hypothesis implicates that humans develop a strong bond with ‘life’ from early childhood onwards and will gravitate towards it wherever they see it. Hence, Biophilia is also relating to the nostalgic relationship that people often have with nature or certain areas and landscapes as Biophilia was the course of personal experiences that translate into a kind of skilled vision due to nostalgia in adulthood (see chapter 4).

#### **2.2.5 Conservation Ethics**

E.O. Wilson describes the aim of conservation ethics as the joining of emotion and rational analysis of emotion.<sup>55</sup> Conservation ethics are based on the values of individuals, and therefore are dependent on temporal as well as social and spatial factors. The appreciation of species, landscapes and relating factors are impacted by the cultural values that societies hold which are linked to the concepts of intrinsic value, aesthetic value and Biophilia as described previously.

Wilson considers the major concern of conservation ethics to maintain the balance between personal securities and amenities like health, freedom and pleasure, and the well-being of future generations<sup>56</sup>. Though mankind wishes to ensure the well-being of these

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<sup>53</sup> Van den Born et al. 2000

<sup>54</sup> Wilson 1984:1

<sup>55</sup> Wilson 1984

coming generations, they are not willing to ensure these at great personal cost. “The difficulty created for the conservation ethic is that natural selection has programmed people to think mostly in physiological time.”<sup>56</sup>

As many environmental effects take a very long time to manifest themselves, for instance the increase of global warming or radiation, societies are rarely willing to fight these effects, because they will not affect the generations of the near future (i.e. children and grandchildren)<sup>55</sup>.

### 2.3 Ecosystem Services and ‘Qualities’

Related to the environmental values are ‘ecosystem services’ which are based on anthropocentric desires and needs like societal demands and human benefits<sup>57</sup>. They are a set of concepts that were developed by the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment process of the United Nations (UN) to describe the relationship between mankind and the environment<sup>58</sup>. Ecosystem Services (ES) are organised in four different groups, provisioning services, regulating services, cultural services and supporting services. The provisioning services provide the earth and its inhabitants with nourishment while the regulating services protect the inhabitants from e.g. floods and diseases. Cultural services provide spiritual, recreational and cultural benefits, and supporting services “maintain the conditions for life on Earth”, for instance nutrient recycling. All these services are inextricably linked to the global ecosystems of which the humans are a major component<sup>59</sup>. Cultural Ecosystem services are generally acknowledged as part of the ecosystem services, but often neglected as least important part of them. However, they are valued most by cultural sciences who have often worked with them independently of the general ES discourse<sup>58</sup>. As ecosystem services are based on ecological factors they are partly controlled by humans, i.e. where natural areas are, how large and what sort of species inhabit it, but also relying on factors outside human control like meteorological factors. As the National Park Dunes of Texel is largely managed (and owned) by the national forest authority (SBB) it could be said that they are the main provider of ecosystem services of the park.

The concept of ecosystem services is at the core of this research as it encompasses most of the aspects and qualities of a natural environment. Virtually all of the qualities that are

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<sup>56</sup> Wilson 1984:120

<sup>57</sup> Bernués et al. 2016

<sup>58</sup> Daniel et al. 2012

<sup>59</sup> Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005



appreciated about the National Park Dunes of Texel can be related to ecosystem services provided by it, namely the cultural and supporting services. However, in the research question I used the term ‘qualities’ to make the question understandable for a broad audience and to be able to incorporate aspects that are named by participants, but not officially part of the ecosystem services. Retrospectively, this turned out to be unnecessary as most participants were familiar with the term ecosystem services and no aspects out of the scope of ecosystem services were named.

### 2.3.1 Biodiversity

A key focus of conservation efforts is placed on ‘biodiversity’, which may be considered as the intrinsic value of nature. Every species has its own intrinsic value which can be either appreciated or neglected by conservation efforts. The term was coined by E. O. Wilson in 1988 as a condensation of ‘biological diversity’ and used to describe all living organisms on the planet<sup>60</sup>. It is commonly used to describe all species that are not humans, which creates a dichotomy and automatically places humans in a superior position. Its utilitarian value to support human superiority is aided by the term’s close relation to the concept of ecosystem services. Biodiversity is a main asset for human as it provides “economic, aesthetic, and health benefits” to the human economy<sup>60</sup>. This notion means that ‘biodiversity’ is an intrinsic part of the way that humans measure the (material) value of nature, which will be a key component of my research. The loss of biodiversity increasingly attracted scientific and political interest, starting in the 1970s, which coincides with the start of the interest in environmental anthropology, but anthropologists have only started contributing to the debate since the 1990s<sup>61</sup>. They are mainly involved in the agricultural and protected area resource conservation, as researchers on indigenous knowledge and management, practitioners in managing conservation programmes and advocates for indigenous peoples’ rights. Though ‘biodiversity’ mostly covers undomesticated plants and animals, domesticated organisms can be an important subset to biodiversity<sup>61</sup>. The value of sites and landscapes is often measured in biological diversity, especially in the case of plants, because genetic diversity of plants is a primary mean of protection in low-input farming systems<sup>61</sup>. Landscape differs from the environment because ‘environment’ is often defined in terms of its function, while

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<sup>60</sup> Adamson 2016:17

<sup>61</sup> Orlove & Bush 1996

‘landscape’ emphasizes the visual aspects<sup>62</sup>. Tim Ingold defines the concept of landscape as neither ‘land’ nor ‘nature’ or ‘space’, but as something that is qualitative and heterogeneous. It cannot be defined in terms of geographical area, because it is a mental representation of an area that has no clear boundaries: “you can ask of a landscape what it is like, but not how much of it there is”<sup>63</sup>. According to Ingold, landscape is the intermediary between humanity and nature as points within landscapes become ‘places’ by attaining a character from the people who engage in activities in it, which brings us back to the concept of ‘place’ as described in the previous chapter. Visual, audial and olfactory stimuli create a particular atmosphere that is experienced by those engaging with it, but like the landscape itself, the points have no boundaries. Even if solid objects create tangible obstacles, they do not segment the landscape as they are an intrinsic part of it<sup>62</sup> which can be seen on Texel for instance in the appreciation of the dunes on the Southpoint or landmarks like the church of Den Helder and the lighthouse of De Cocksdorp. Meaning is gathered from the landscape as people “place themselves in relation to specific features of the landscape, in such a way that their meanings may be revealed or disclosed”<sup>64</sup>.

Therefore, this concept will be related to sub-question one, but also sub-question two and three, because I suspect the struggle for biodiversity to be a source of conflict between different stakeholders and legal obligations.

### 2.3.2 High Nature Value Farmland

A national park never is an isolated environment, but in constant contact and communication with its surroundings. Since the National Park Dunes of Texel is bordered by farmland on much of its eastern side, and many of the birds live and/or feed in the Park as well as in the surrounding countryside, therefore, my research entails a small-scale study on local farmers as part of the local stakeholders. A concept to be discussed in the context of farmers and environmental value is ‘High Nature Value Farmland’ (abbreviated HNV farmland). The term was introduced by Baldock et al.<sup>65</sup> to describe “the general characteristics of low-input farming systems in terms of biodiversity and management practices”<sup>66</sup>. It is the EU agri-environmental policy response to decline of farm-related biodiversity and is based on

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<sup>62</sup> Ingold 1993

<sup>63</sup> Ingold 1993:154

<sup>64</sup> Ingold 1993:171

<sup>65</sup> European Environment Agency (EEA) 2004

<sup>66</sup> EEA 2004:4

a conservation concept that aims to link three separate domains: ecology, farming, public policy. Farming is concerned with the perceptions of farmers about their own activity and the environment while public policy entails the views of citizens about agricultural-environment relationships and the agri-food system. HNV farmland areas deliver a range of public and private goods like conservation and resilience of the land<sup>67</sup>. The characteristics of High Nature Value farmland are low-intensity land use, presence of semi-natural vegetation, existence of land-use mosaics, support of high species and habitat diversity or species of interest<sup>67</sup>. It mainly consists of semi-natural grasslands in the mountains, steppes, wetlands and permanent and dryland crops and covers approximately 30% of all agricultural areas in Europe- The notion of HNV farmland is used to implement EU policies and subsidies as part of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)<sup>67</sup>. This concept is mainly connected to the third sub-question as it is based on legal-scientific notions that the EU employs to determine and justify its funding to support conservation efforts. This can also be seen on Texel where a local organisation is funded to subsidise a number of farmers with national and European subsidies to support the local wildlife by for instance not mowing their grass for a certain amount of time.

### 2.3.3 Conservation

One of the aims of conservation is to maintain and support biodiversity and natural values. It is concerned with consumption and usually refers to the use of resources “within a certain biological limit”<sup>68</sup>. This utilitarian approach to the environment demands that the natural growth of a resource is not exceeded by the use of it. This annual increment that must not be exceeded is often referred to as “maximum sustainable yield”<sup>68</sup>. It can be used on a broader scale than preservation efforts, because it is sustainable and protects the environment to some extent, while still allowing resource extraction for human use. As I strove to find out whether the traditional rift between local conservation efforts and efforts from the ‘outside’ can still be seen today, this concept is mainly connected to the first and fourth research questions, though underlying the entire research which is concerned with the efforts of the conservationists.

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<sup>67</sup> Bernués et al. 2016

<sup>68</sup> Moseley 2016:41

## 2.4 Connecting the Dots

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the core concepts of this thesis are ‘natural values’ and ‘ecosystem services’. Figure 5 attempts to put these concepts into context by showing the core concepts (green), main concepts (blue) and the corresponding supporting concepts (yellow). This graph (fig. 5) also shows the complexity and interconnectedness of the concepts. As can be seen in the graph, the main concepts of natural values are cultural values, intrinsic value and aesthetic value. These concepts in impact each other as well as on the conservation ethics which is the foundation of conservation of nature.

While natural values and ecosystem services in a way are two faces of the same coin, natural values being the theoretical side and ecosystem services being the physical side. Of course, many more concepts could have been added to this framework, but the concepts named in this chapter were deemed the most relevant and sufficient to support this research thesis.

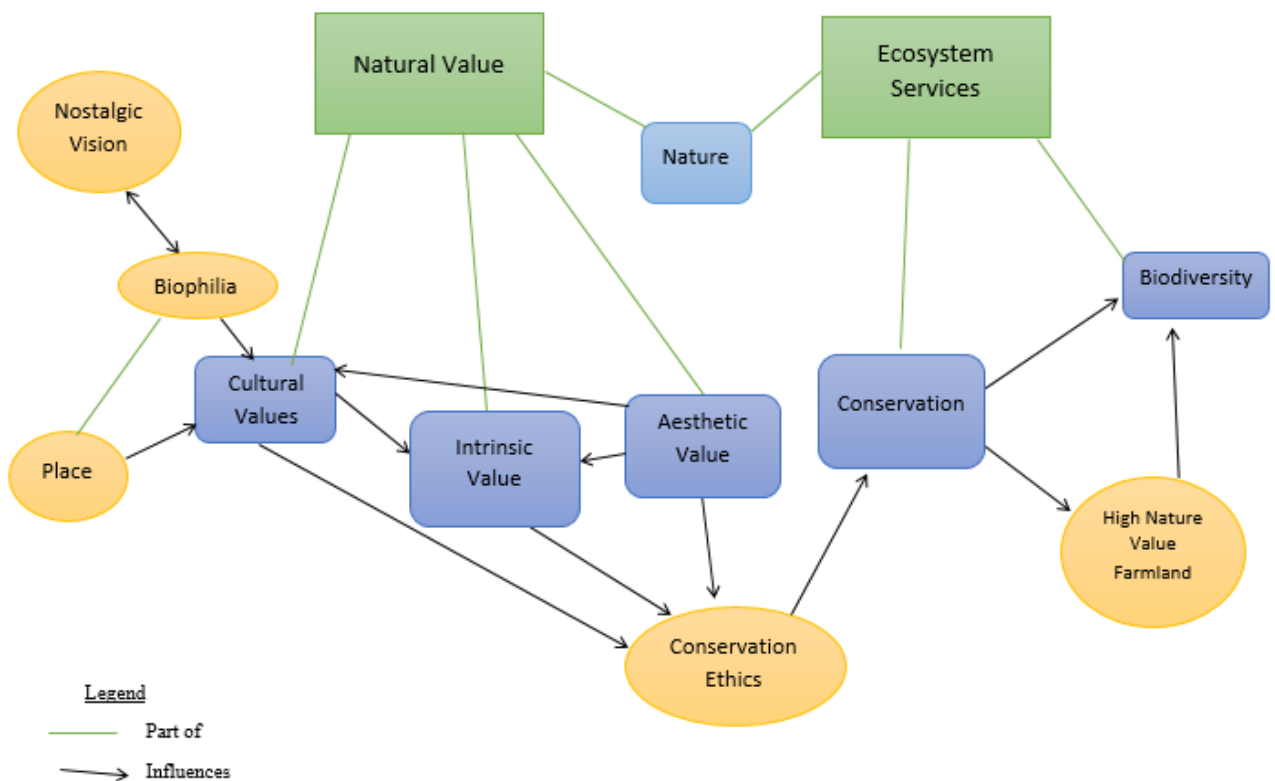


Figure 5: Concepts in Context- showing the (value-) concepts of this thesis in relation to each other

## Chapter 3: Experiencing Natural Values

In this chapter I will analyse which natural values that the different participant groups of my research held and how these values were experienced by utilizing quantitative as well as qualitative findings of my research. Since tourism is the economic engine of the island I will start by elaborating on this stakeholder's view on nature and perception of natural values. As I myself was a visitor (albeit somewhat longer than the average tourist) I also conducted a personal experiment (Selbstversuch) to observe how the perception of natural values might change from the regular one if the participant is in a touristic mind-set. Afterwards I will elaborate on the stance of the locals of Texel on natural values and eventually elaborate on the position conservationists that are involved with nature conservation in and around the national park.

### 3.1 The Force of Nature

One morning in late April 2017, I accompanied an excursion in the National Park Dunes of Texel that was titled 'Ontwakend Duin' and took place at 6 am at de Mui. It was extremely cold, 4°C according to the weather forecast, but due to the icy wind it felt like sub-zero temperatures. With rain marking the start of the tour, most group members gathered in the bird watcher hut for some shelter while waiting for the last participants to appear. A middle-aged couple and I had been the first to arrive. When I asked them what had motivated them to join a tour that early, they answered: "Het is wel leuk om even mee te maken" (it is a nice thing to experience), which is an answer that I encountered frequently. Most tourist participants of my research seemed to participate in the excursions for two main reasons: to learn some facts about the island (there seemed an overall consent that a visitor should learn something about the place that he/she visits) and to be entertained. It seemed to me that nature was consumed as a sort of intellectual commodity in the same way that visitors in a museum might. The participants often had a faint interest in nature and came to be shown around and preferably see some top exhibits like a rare species of bird or plant. Additionally, a two-hour walk was appreciated as form of exercise with the national park as scenic backdrop. One accommodation owner described it this way "There are some people that go deeper than seeing nature as a backdrop. Those are the people who go into nature to discover and experience little plants, the birds, and the natural properties. Those aren't many, but those

who do go venture into nature purely do so to enjoy what nature has to offer.”<sup>69</sup> His experience of many years in the tourist sector had shown the participant that the limited amount of tourists that were interested to engage with nature were still looking for some sort of entertainment which was also confirmed in my observations of tourist excursions in the national park. For instance, the ‘family’ excursions offered in the Slufter were almost solely used as children entertainment by their parents and as opportunity to snap the perfect holiday picture in a natural setting, which often resulted in interruptions of the excursion as children were asked to pose or show off their catch. This tendency can also be seen in Question 6 of the tourist survey<sup>70</sup>. It served to determine the role that nature played in the holiday planning of the participants.

As the environmental values of visitors affect their plans and behaviour within the park<sup>71</sup>, Question 6 of the survey can be seen as an indicator for the participant’s (natural) values. Surprisingly, going to the beach was only a minor interest of the participants, as was the option ‘relaxing’. While the high scores of walking/ hiking and cycling are not unexpected, it is very interesting that walking was the preferred option. As the aim “watching animals”, which mostly concerned birds, also scored very high it might be that (environmentally conscious) tourists prefer a slow walking tour during which they are at leisure to observe their surroundings over a speedy cycling tour. Additionally, 55 of the participants indicated that they were planning to visit an educational centre, i.e. a museum. These data indicate that most participants of the survey planned an active holiday on Texel in which they wanted to be stimulated physically as well as intellectually. The nature of the national park was valued accordingly, mainly for providing cultural ecosystem services like recreation and education as well as its aesthetic properties.

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<sup>69</sup> “Er is een beperkt aantal mensen die iets dieper het decor in gaat. Dat zijn mensen die meer de natuur in gaan om daar de plantjes, de vogels en de natuurlijke eigenschappen te ontdekken en dat te beleven. Daar zijn niet zo heel veel van, maar de meeste mensen gaan puur naar de natuur om te genieten wat het biedt.” - I018

<sup>70</sup> “What are you planning to do on Texel?”

<sup>71</sup> Rossi et al. 2015

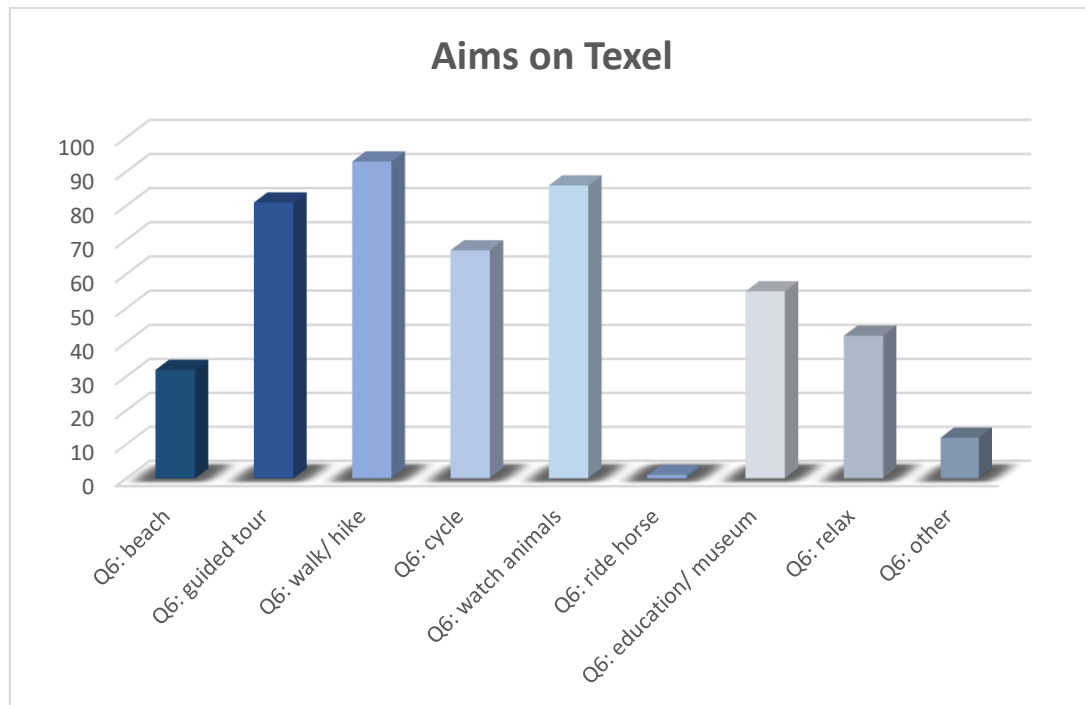


Figure 6: Survey Question 6 for Tourists of Texel, (n=115)- "What are you planning to do on Texel?" - multiple choice.

The group of participants that had gathered in the hut was in good spirits despite the unaccommodating weather, and fragments of conversation about the weather kept coming up. Most poignant was "Texel and wind belongs together"<sup>72</sup>, showing a commonplace acceptance and appreciation of the local meteorology which differs from the mainland. Prompted by the chill, the discussion then turned to discussing the effects of winter on Texel, for instance the guide told how in a snowy winter she cannot access the main road due to snow dunes on the driveway. The phrase "het is ook natuur" (it is part of nature) was used by the guide when talking about the snowstorms she encountered on Texel. In total there were 14 participants including two families with two boys and two girls respectively. All adults seemed to be couples between 45 and 55, and of course there was the compulsory professional photographer among them (professional camera with standard). I pinpointed the family with the two girls to be city dwellers (an assumption that was verified later) as they were woefully underdressed for the occasion. Especially the elder of the girls who might have been 11 or 13 at the most looked cold already in her tight jeans that did not quite touch the fashionable bootees and fancy short leather jacket that left almost an inch of skin exposed at the waist.

The guide was very knowledgeable about birds and their sounds and behaviour, but explanations were often cut somewhat short by the shivering of the audience. After about

<sup>72</sup> "Texel en wind, dat hoort bij elkaar"

2/3rds of the tour, the customary elaboration on cormorants and spoonbills was cut short by a hail shower during which the group effectively huddled together for warmth, rather like penguins. The coincidence of extreme cold and wardrobe malfunction caused the older of the two 'city girls' to collapse with blue lips shortly after. The group rallied around her and made her drink a few sips, while the guide produced an insulation sheet from the first aid kit. The atmosphere was fairly calm despite the incident. Eventually the girl was put back on her feet and dragged on by the parents, resulting in a splitting of the group. The parents with children walked fast ahead, but often waited because they did not know the way. The guide was trying to keep up the tour while proceeding a lot faster than usually. By the end of the tour the girl was standing on her own feet again and had some colour back in her face and the other participants were very understanding of the shortened latter part of the tour.

This incident posed a couple of interesting subjects. The first is the degree to which people associate with nature. Although the turn of the weather was neither new nor unexpected (it had been cold for several days), it seems that this family was unaware of the natural forces and the impact that they can have. This dissociation and potential loss of Biophilia does seem like a very negative development. Being an immigrant myself and hence not as used to the extreme proximity of the sea in most parts of the country, I would think it crucial to not lose sight and understanding of natural forces and the dangers related to it, especially in a country like the Netherlands where flooding seems to be a real danger. However, when I spoke to several elderly participants of an excursion by the local water authorities along the dyke construction in Oudeschild in the same month, it seems that even those who experienced the disastrous flooding of the 1950s have an enormous confidence in modern technology. It might have been because they were young during the floods and experienced it as something of an adventure, but the general opinion of potential flooding was "well, that was a long time ago, the dykes and technology are so much better nowadays". A contradicting point could be made by citing some of the local participants who stated that they respect and enjoy the display of natural forces and have fond memories of for instance walking on the beach during a heavy storm. Several participants stated that the one natural event that they admire most and experience as humbling is the filling of de Slufter during spring tides in autumn storms. "That is the one time you realize how small and insignificant humans are" was a statement relating to this spectacle. These examples seem to point out a different emotional connection to the landscape and natural forces. While especially city dwellers seem to be losing touch with it, those with access are appreciating natural forces. It



would be interesting to conduct further research into this cleavage of emotional perception of nature and natural forces.

The second and relating question that comes to mind is: What is it that people like so much about the display of natural forces? Is it because it reminds us that there is still something ‘out there’, something that remains mysterious and out of our control? I feel inclined to agree with the assumption that experiencing natural forces make us feel alive. Wilson writes about ‘the machine’, meaning human society as well as economic mechanisms<sup>73</sup>. Humans are trapped in it despite romantic notions or ambitions to live, what nowadays is called ‘off-grid’. According to Wilson it might be save to say that the Anthropocene is ingrained into our very being. The feeling of being ‘trapped’ in a society following a destructive economic pattern was also expressed by several conservationists who lamented the loss of habitat and appreciation for biodiversity in favour of economic development. This is a further indicator of the emotional cleavage of emotional perception as mentioned above and leads to a different perceptions of stakeholders. Concerning the research question of this thesis it can be said that the touristic stakeholders seemed to experience the nature of the national park as a cultural and recreational value, while many locals and conservationists particularly ascribe emotional value to their natural surroundings.

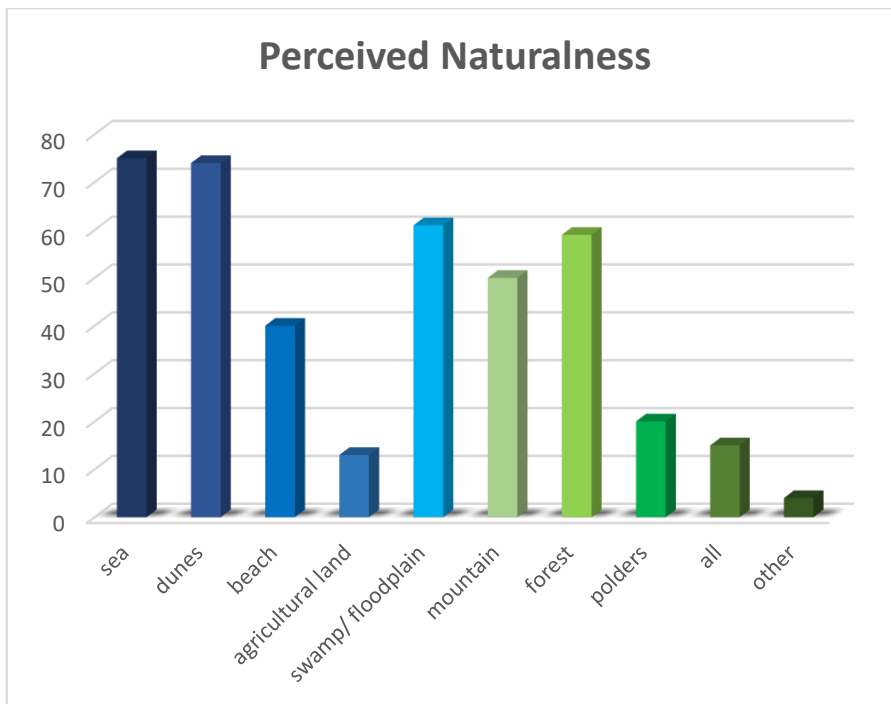


Figure 7: Survey Question 12 for Tourists of Texel, (n=115)-"Which landscape do you find most natural?"- Multiple Choice

<sup>73</sup> Wilson 1984

As I was very interested to learn which landscapes tourists would perceive as ‘natural’ I asked the participants which landscape they found the most natural in a multiple choice question (fig.7). I was quite surprised at the fact that while the sea and the dunes were perceived as something very natural, the beach was not. Furthermore, there was a smaller but significant amount of people who perceived all of the named landscapes equally natural, a finding which is expressed in my ‘nature paradox’ theory. This theory, which is based on the findings of this research is concerned with the paradox of nature perception between conservationists and the general public. Relating to the matter of naturalness of landscapes is the research of van den Born et al. with their research on a modern take on Biophilia who state that “[...], it may be inferred that Dutch people apply two dimensions in their assessment of what nature is. The primary and abstract dimension appears to be the degree of self-organization. A secondary and much more concrete dimension appears to be whether something is alive and yet non-human“.<sup>74</sup> This assessment corresponds with my own findings in which there was large awareness on ecosystem services and the fragility of ecosystems and species.

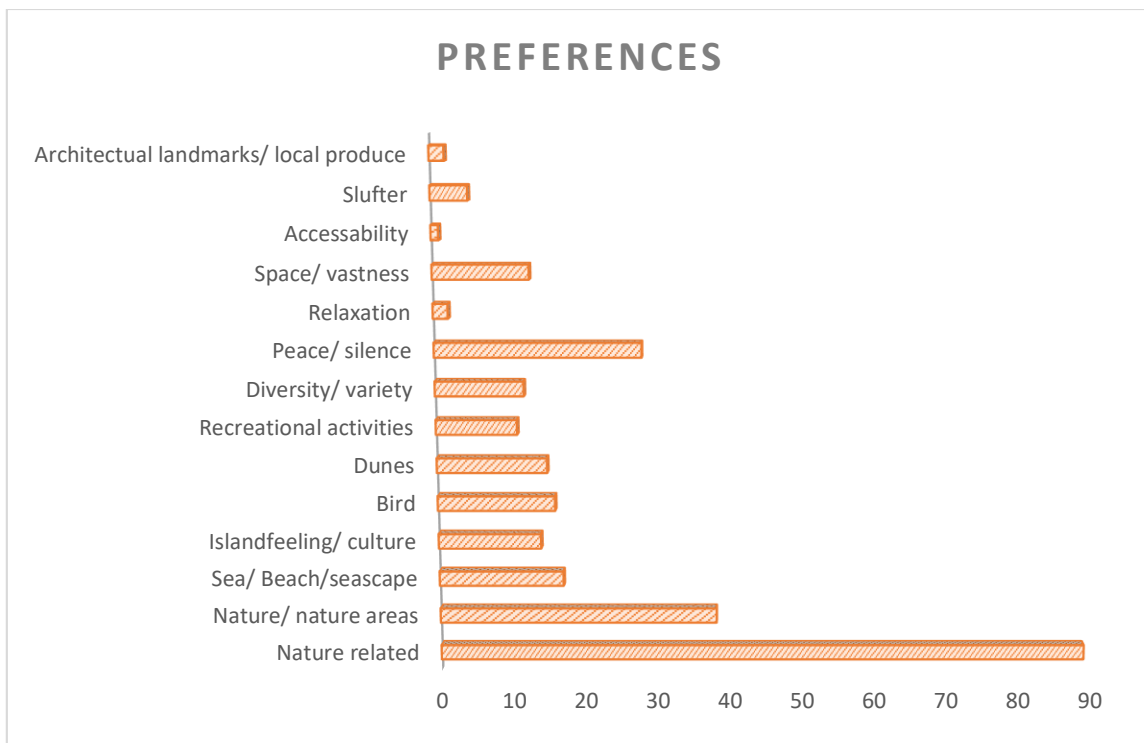


Figure 8: Survey Question 8 for Tourists of Texel, (n=115)-“What do you like best about Texel?”- Open Question

The importance of nature and biodiversity for the tourist sector is emphasized in Question 8 of the survey: “What do you like best about Texel?” (fig. 8). This open question encouraged the participants to state their individual preferences for Texel. While peace,

<sup>74</sup> Van den Born et al. 2000:68

silence and experiencing the island (-culture) were much appreciated by the participants, the majority of comments concerned the landscape. I depicted the individual aspects that were named, such as ‘birds’, ‘dunes’, ‘sea/beach/seascape’, but also the mere mentioning of ‘nature’. Most comments on diversity and variety concerned the variety of landscape. Additionally, several comments about recreational activities also involved an appreciation of nature on the island, for example “the peace during jogging, very different than in the city”<sup>75</sup>. I summarised all previously mentioned natural aspects as well as additional comments that were made about ecological- or biodiversity in the last bar of Figure 8 (‘Nature related’). This bar shows, that 89 of the 115 participants stated that what they liked best about Texel was (also) nature related. Furthermore, it seemed to be vital to be active within the landscape in order to experience it. This corresponds to the research of T. Ingold who states that though seemingly solid, landscape is a living process and generated in movement. Therefore, landscape is experienced by moving through it<sup>76</sup>.

Figure 9: Survey Question 13 for Tourists of Texel, (n=115)- "Are humans allowed to change landscapes?"

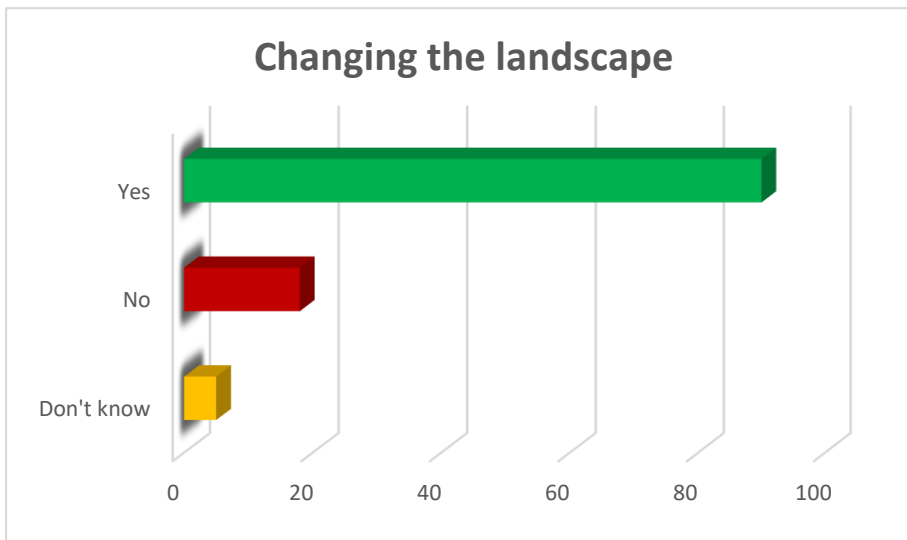
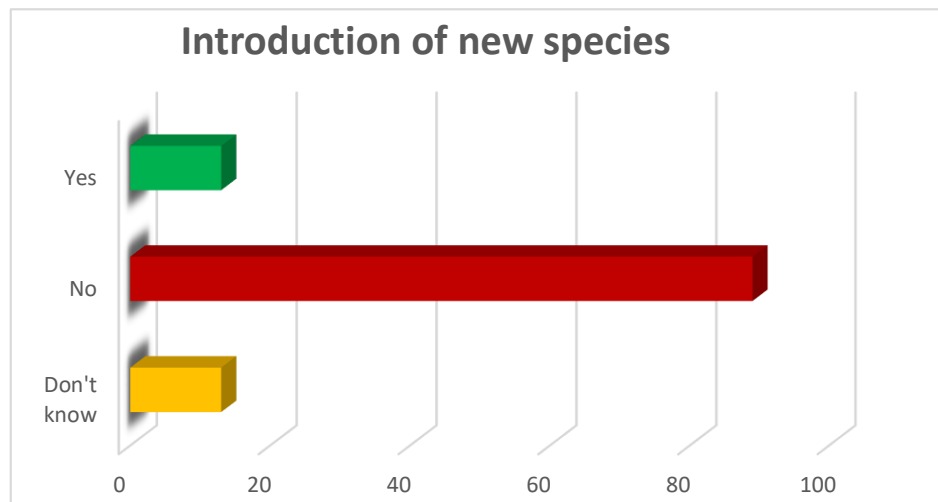


Figure 10: Survey Question 15 for Tourists of Texel, (n=115)- "Are humans allowed to introduce new (wild) animals to an area in which they were not native and have no natural enemy?"

<sup>75</sup> T054

<sup>76</sup> Ingold 1993

Another significant point illustrated by the survey was, that while the participants were in favour of changing landscapes, they were very averse to the introduction of new species (fig. 10). As these questions both had an open space to add explanations, I also got more details on the opinions of the participants. Their main reason in favour of changing landscapes (fig. 9) was the adaptation of landscapes for safety measures, which is a thought that the Dutch seem to be most familiar with, but also a large array of comments on changing landscapes for the benefit of nature, i.e. to increase biodiversity. The main drive of the negative answer of Question 15 (fig. 10) was the fear of exotic species to displace or extinguish native, local species. There was an extremely high awareness on the destructive effects of invasive/exotic species among the participants that was quite unexpected for me. This phenomenon can be linked to Harper who describes how “cultural production of knowledge about environmental problems” is gathering momentum and helps to shape the identity of the environmental discourse<sup>77</sup>. The answers of tourist participants who were very aware of the destructive effects of invasive species and loss of biodiversity show that the Dutch culture has taken to the environmental discourse. This knowledge and the realization that large parts of the public are aware of environmental issues and the environmental jargon can be utilized to strengthen the Dutch environmental discourse, because information can be broadcast without the need of much simplification. Relating to sub-question one of my research it can therefore be said, that the vision of nature conversation by the NPDoT organisation which has a strong focus on individual ecosystems and maintaining and increasing biodiversity (see chapter 1) is largely shared by the touristic stakeholders.

### **3.1.2 A bumpy ride- Experiencing de Dennen as a horse-backed tourist**

On a fairly overcast but warm day I cycled to de Koog which is the most touristic city of Texel and located right next to the forest de Dennen which was one of my target areas. I had an appointment with a stable owner who offered organised riding excursions through the forest and the beach. Apart from a birthday-ride-activity induced childhood trauma I did not have any experiences with horses though I knew the basics from reading. After interviewing the stable owner, I decided to assume the role of a tourist and participate in a horse riding tour for inexperienced riders. This tour took about an hour and led through the forest de Dennen. I wanted to experience first-hand what people see and feel when they take part in this tour as

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<sup>77</sup> Harper 2001:101

well as inconspicuously interrogate my guide, a local girl who had been working part-time in the stable. My horse (Sjasa, a Haflinger) was very calm and enduring, used to this kind of work. Despite being very afraid of horses as a child, I could quite enjoy the ride, also due to the pleasant setting and gentleness of the horse. The attractive smell of pines reminded me of my childhood climbing adventures in the large, lopsided pine at the bottom of my parental garden.



Picture 3: Experiencing de Dennen as a horse-backed tourist, july 2017, de Dennen

My guide explained that most people that she encounters are very excited to see a horse.

She especially commented on “city people” who seemingly had never seen a horse from nearby and therefore became overly excited when they saw one and even took pictures of her. When I asked her whether she had had unpleasant encounters before she told, that she is usually met with a lot of respect, only very rarely is she bothered by mountain bikers illegally using the horse path or not stopping when they cross their paths despite horses having the right of way.

I managed to ride very well while the horse was walking, following its movements without much trouble, but during the two times that we tried trot, I bounced up and down most miserably and soon stopped. The muscle ache that I obtained from the trip stayed with me for the remainder of the week. The riding paths were very well laid out, and only seldom crossed footpaths or streets. We encountered another riding group and a few pedestrians, all road users were very friendly and respectful and we were often followed by delighted calls of children. It was apparent that there were a lot of different paths in the forest, but I felt that there was just about enough distance between them to not feel encroaching or too crowded. Despite being an inexperienced rider I felt quite safe and enjoyed a very nice ride in the forest, listening to the birds and occasionally waved to a calling child. Interestingly enough, when I visited de Dennen a few weeks later while being my usual, nature-loving self, I felt almost a sense of depression at the openness of the forest, the lack of undergrowth and ecological variety as well as the closely-knit road net. I felt quite distinctly that the excitement of riding a horse changed my perception of the surroundings and let me appreciate and value things differently than I normally would have. In this place I would like to apply Christina

Grasseni's concept of skilled vision, i.e. a trained way of looking and perceiving specific aspects of our environment and comparing them to what the object generally looks like/ should look like, to explain my position and findings<sup>78</sup>.

Due to my rural childhood and lifelong engagement with the native flora and fauna I have been trained to look at the landscape that surrounds me in a specific way. I immediately notice whether a plant looks healthy or not, has an irregular growing pattern, or whether a forest is planted as a monoculture like the Dennen, and relate it to anthropogenic actions and history. When I went to a viewing point in de Dennen a few weeks after the bumpy ride, I met a group of young international tourists who came to Texel for a daytrip.



Picture 4: Viewing Point on the Fonteinsnol, de Dennen

We engaged in a conversation on the viewing point and I told them that the forest was 'obviously artificially planted' (as opposed to natural growth). The students were surprised at this fact and asked me how I could tell, upon which I pointed out the monoculture and lack of undergrowth. In an additional parallel to Grasseni, I later found myself in the same situation as the students I encountered on the viewing point, when a farmer explained to me that he picks the cows that he wants to use for breeding according to their markings. I could barely see a difference between the fairly identical markings of the cows, much less which ones were deemed 'ideal' for the race. I also agree with the concept of skilled vision that there is a

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<sup>78</sup> Grasseni 2004

“strong relationship between skill, belonging and identity”<sup>79</sup>. I experienced it in my own case as well as on various occasions. While I immediately recognize most native trees, whether their growing pattern is typical or not, and often also connect it to the specific smell of the bark, leaves or needles, I also am emotionally impacted by it. The same applies to for instance local birdwatchers on Texel who were able to spot and determine the local birds from miles away and took great pleasure in the sighting of the rarer species. They also seemed to take a certain pride in the fact that ‘their’ island was native to species like the blue harrier and communicated bird sightings via special apps on their mobiles.

When examining the tourists’ answers to the question “What do you think of when you hear ‘nature’”, the topics that stand out immediately are ‘landscapes/ecosystems/geographic areas’ and ‘fauna’ (fig. 11). This seems to imply not only a strong focus on landscapes as described previously, but a very interesting focus on the category of fauna while the category of fauna is far smaller. Furthermore, it is interesting to point out that of the mention in the category ‘fauna’, 24 out of the total of 25 were relating to birds. Although these results might partly be influenced by the marketing of Texel as bird-island, this focus on fauna seems to imply that the Biophilia concept of van den Born et al. who describe an anthropological focus on the secondary dimension of Biophilia of everything that is “alive and yet non-human”<sup>80</sup> is not entirely accurate. Apparently, the degree of self-organisation as described by van den Born et al. is not experienced and/or valued so much in the flora, but in the fauna, which might be relating to the aspect of movement. Though plants actively move for instance by following the sun with their heads (think of sunflowers) and spreading their roots and seeds, these movements are far less obvious than a running rabbit or bird in flight. This focus on the animalistic aspects of the environment was a recurring topic within my research.

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<sup>79</sup> Grasseni 2004:42

<sup>80</sup> Van den Born et al. 2000:68

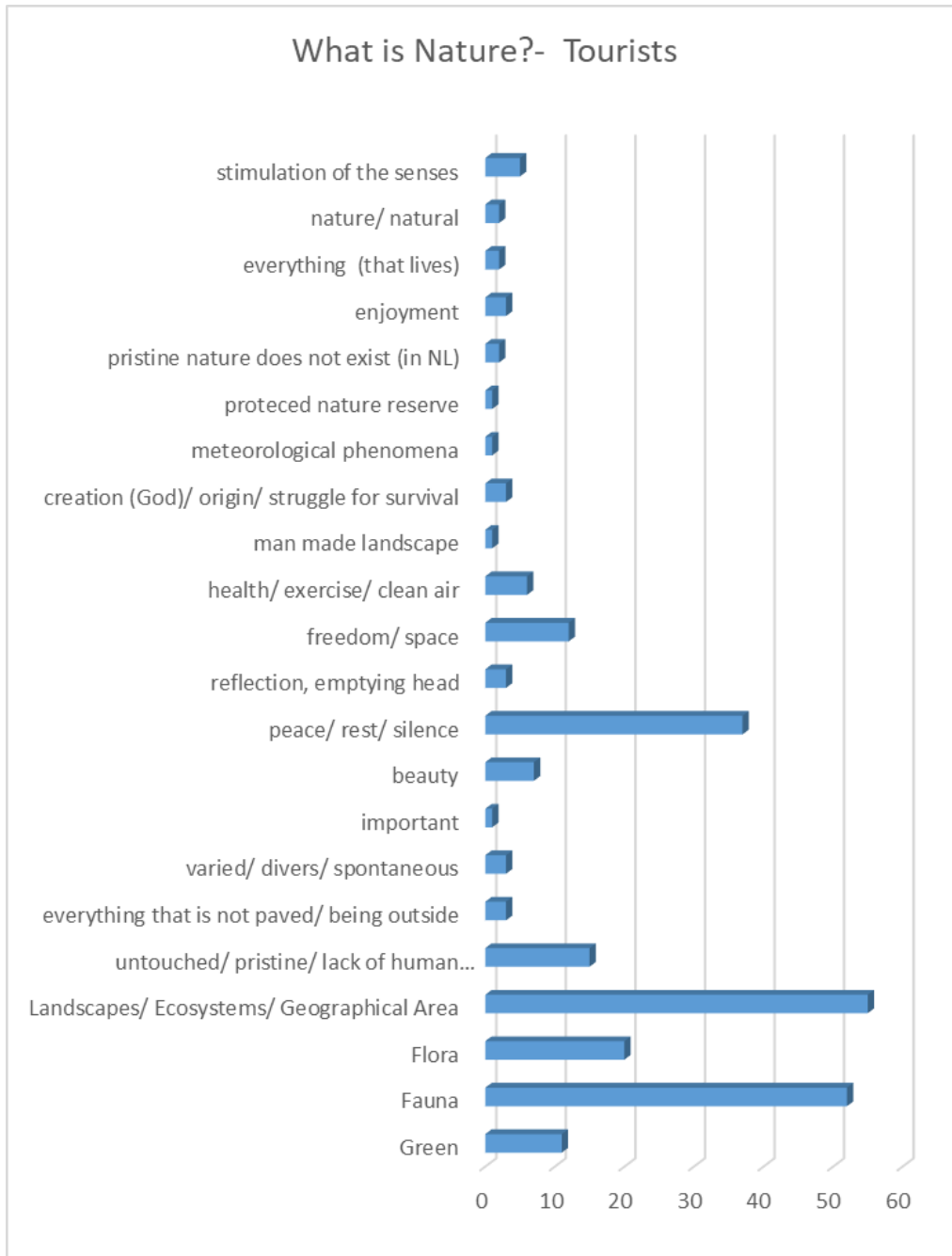


Figure 11: Survey Question 11 for Tourists of Texel, (n=115)-"What do you think of when you hear 'nature?'"- Open Question

The bulk of references in the category ‘landscapes/ecosystems/geographic areas’ was relating to trees and forests, which seems to support my own affinity with trees as a common anthropogenic trait. This is further supported by the research of Daniel et al. who found that scenic beauty is highly dependent on the existence and density of trees<sup>81</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Daniel et al. 2012



During my research I found that many others appreciated the openness and accessibility of de Dennen. Although the locals were aware that it was an ‘unnatural’ forest, they especially liked it for its potential for outdoor activities like jogging and mountain-biking. The appreciation for the ‘unnaturally’ open forest might be related to our primeval instinct as Wilson describes. Since humans probably evolved in Savannah regions, we are naturally inclined to gravitate towards natural areas that are open but lightly forested, preferably slightly elevated and near water<sup>82</sup>. All of these aspects apply to de Dennen which are located in the dunes near the sea. More recent research shows that Wilson’s hypothesis might be correct. In 2002 researchers of the University of Sheffield conducted an experiment to examine the interaction between spatial arrangement and vegetation structure in an urban park. It took place in an impoverished area of Sheffield in the United Kingdom where local residents were asked to rank digitally altered pictures of the park in regard to safety and preference. The different photographs depicted different spatial arrangements of mature trees and edge treatments<sup>83</sup>. The outcome of the study showed that the participants felt most comfortable in a relatively open, albeit naturalistic landscape with high visual permeability that ties in with Wilson’s notion that humans, if given the choice will always prefer the Savannah-like setup as described above and will try to imitate it in their choice of natural surroundings.

### **3.2 Locals vs. Nature Conservation- The never ending cycle**

During my research, I learned a lot about the history of the island and the influence of tourism. It seems to have been the core driver of economical and sociological change. Until about the 1960s, the main source of income on the island seems to have been agriculture and fishery. Due to young people leaving the island, the lack of population growth on Texel, and to prevent too intertwined gene pool, the island has a long history of attracting people from the mainland by offering jobs and (farm-) land. The trend of intra-national migration was boosted when tourism developed on the island, as ever more guest accommodations were built, and hoteliers, and related trades like cooks were needed to man them. Additionally, the island tries to attract civil servants and employees for organisations like the National Forest Authority (SBB) to boost the local workforce and prevent nepotism. When speaking to several of these ‘economic immigrants’ I usually encountered the combination of “I came to

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<sup>82</sup> Wilson 1984

<sup>83</sup> Jansen et al. 2002

Texel for work and because I like the natural surrounding”. This was only one of several points that seemed to indicate that there is a difference in perception of born-*Texelaars* and ‘new’ ones which relates to sub-question four of my research which asks “*Can the traditional rift between local conservation and conservation efforts from ‘outside’ still be seen today and is this possibly mirrored in the stakeholder’s relationships?*” As many of the new-comers made the local landscape one of their main criteria for moving to the island, they often seem to be more invested in its maintenance as can be seen in the local conservation efforts which are dominated by the non-born *Texelaars*.

On the whole, the born-*Texelaars* seem to have a more utilitarian relationship with the island and its natural environment as can be seen in multiple answers to the interview question “Did tourists change the local landscape?”. One answer of a local participant to this was: “Tourists made the landscape here! Otherwise this would be purely production land. We have protected nature here because the tourists like it. For example, the turf walls, tourists like them so they are being maintained. The typical *Texelaar* would not have cared for nature otherwise.”<sup>84</sup>

A more consoling tone comes from the conservationists: “The *Texelaar* as a whole has become more aware of the value of nature and the landscape. We need to maintain and use this interest to plan ahead and look at the larger picture. We need to work together when realising future plans create a sustainable vision for future development. We can all win if we work together though some parties will need to lower their sights.”<sup>85</sup>

These statements show that the locals seem to be mainly interested in the revenue that could be generated either in the agricultural or the tourism sector as well as the practical purpose of the landscape instead of the intrinsic values of species and landscapes. While none of the locals wanted to change the landscape, they also had a clear focus on the beach as site for family excursions as opposed to for instance the forest which was perceived as a more functional place for working out or sheltering from the wind. I did, however encounter an

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<sup>84</sup> “Toeristen hebben het landschap hier gemaakt! Anders was hier puur productie. Omdat toeristen het leuk vinden hebben we hier beschermde natuur. Bijvoorbeeld Tuunwallen vinden toeristen leuk, daarom worden ze in stand gehouden. De typische *Tesselaar* had anders niet om de natuur gegeven.” – I004

<sup>85</sup> “De *Texelaar* als geheel is meer de waarde van de natuur en het landschap gaan beseffen. We moeten dat interesse houden en gebruiken om vooruit te plannen en naar het grote geheel te kijken. We moeten elkaar bij het realiseren van een toekomstvisie goed vast houden en met verschillende partijen samen werken voor een duurzame visie voor de toekomst. Gezamenlijk kun je winst maken, maar verschillende partijen moeten wel inleveren” (C007)

underlying appreciation for rough landscape and natural spectacles. All participants were unfazed and often appreciative of displays of natural forces like thunderstorms despite living on an island.

The interviews and photo elicitations that I conducted showed that the overall favourite part of the island's nature by most participants was considered to be the area of the Hors at Texel's most southern end, where dunes are permitted to develop freely. The locals, born and new Texelaars alike, highly appreciate the dynamics of those particular dunes (even if they did not go there frequently). Apart from the appreciation for the dune formation processes, this was partly related to the remoteness of the area which meant that the most southern part was seldom frequented by tourists (most tourism focusses on de Koog, de Cocksdorp en den Burg). This wish of the locals to move in an area with little other visitors has been confirmed by local participants which links back to the typical utilitarian approach, as serenity is a rare good on the island during the ever increasing tourist season. Additionally, there might be a sense of ownership relating to that specific landscape that is ingrained in the local culture as can be seen in the comment "as a Texelaar you are kind of obliged to love the Hors"<sup>86</sup>, though no one could tell me the exact reasons for this shared appreciation. It seems that there was a general emotional connection among the locals that resulted in an overall consent on the aesthetic value of the landscape. The participant highly valued this landscape due to the dynamic dune forming processes that were taking place without human regulation. Also, the outlook from the viewpoints were especially appreciated as they allowed for a long-distance view over the lakes (Horsmeertjes) and all the way over the sea to the mainland. It seemed to have an almost spiritual appeal as one participant told me: "I would like my ashes to be scattered there when I die"

I decided to explore the dunes of de Hors for myself, and was happy to find that at last I had found a little landscape that broke the monotony of the horizon and permitted me to experience a sense of comfortable enclosure. I understand why the locals appreciate de Hors, for it has a very varied flora and fauna (despite the lack of trees). However, the sense of cosy enclosure only lasts a short while. As soon as one exits the dunes onto the marsh, the skyline of Den Helder with its towers and industrial structures takes up the entire horizon and at least destroys any sense of a 'pristine' natural environment.

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<sup>86</sup> Als Texelaar *moet* je eigenlijk van de Hors houden.



*Picture 5: Standing on the Southernmost Point of Texel, View on the Harbour (with oil rig) of Den Helder*

### 3.3 Spoonbills and Cormorants- About the Perception of Key Species

For my research I conducted 89 photo ratings and 10 photo elicitations in various locations. I took the pictures (Pic. 6-15) in and around the NPDoT during my first week, which meant that nature was still fairly dormant. Nevertheless, I feel that I have managed to capture a number of important images that served well to illustrate differences and encourage opinions, emotions and memories in the participants. I purposefully tried to have as little artistic composure as possible within the pictures to not deter from their statements.



*Picture 6: PE1, Seals at Ecomare*



*Picture 7: PE2, View onto the Slufter from its North Point*



Picture 8: PE3, View from the Dunes onto the Polder of Eierland



Picture 9: PE4, Faeces of Wild Cats Proofing the Ingestion of Birds. Taken in de Geul.



Picture 10: PE5, Flower bulb Fields of Eierland



Picture 11: PE6, Pastoral Scene near de Waal



Picture 12: PE7, Remnants of a Seagull-chick Eaten by Predators



Picture 13: PE8, Dunes of de Geul, view onto den Hoorn



Picture 14: PE9, de Dennen



Picture 15: PE10, Sea and Beach near Ecomare

The research has shown that all species may be equal in a setting like the National Park Dunes of Texel, but some seem to be more equal than others. The PR machine of the National Park and the island is promoting Texel as a birdwatcher's paradise and hence attracts visitors expecting to see specific species of birds, chiefly spoonbills and cormorants, but also harriers and oystercatchers, and pay little attention to species like the little yellow turf ant, which in my opinion is one of the most fascinating creatures inhabiting the park. This relates to sub-question one<sup>87</sup> and shows that while the park organisation aims for a broad conservation and overall increase of biodiversity, it chiefly focusses on species that are 'pet-able', i.e. appreciated as valuable species by other stakeholders (mainly tourists) and therefore attract a lot of interest and sympathy from visitors.

During the tourist excursions that I accompanied in the national park I especially observed which aspects of the nature/landscape the participants appreciated by noting down the questions that were asked to the guides and the subjects of the participants' discussions. From these observations it appeared, that the majority of tourists are chiefly interested in the bigger picture, the landscape in general and the diversity of flora and fauna, but are much motivated by advertisements and the guides to be interested in birds. The few 'specialist' tourists with specific interests were solely birdwatchers. The guides too, were very fixed on the subject of bird species, and often excelled at determining species by sound. I did however feel, that this narrow focus excluded other interesting aspects of flora and fauna, for example insects. Of these, only two species were named regularly: the yellow turf ant ants (*Lasius flavus*) and the brown tail moth (*Euproctis chrysorrhoea*) whose caterpillars could be seen in the sea buckthorn all through the dunes. In May, the blossoming wild orchids took centre

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<sup>87</sup> What vision of nature conversation does the park organisation have and in how far is this vision shared by the different stakeholders?

stage of the plant-directed attention. Other than that, the explanation of the local flora was mainly limited to sea buckthorn, elder and lichen and the occasional dune flowers.

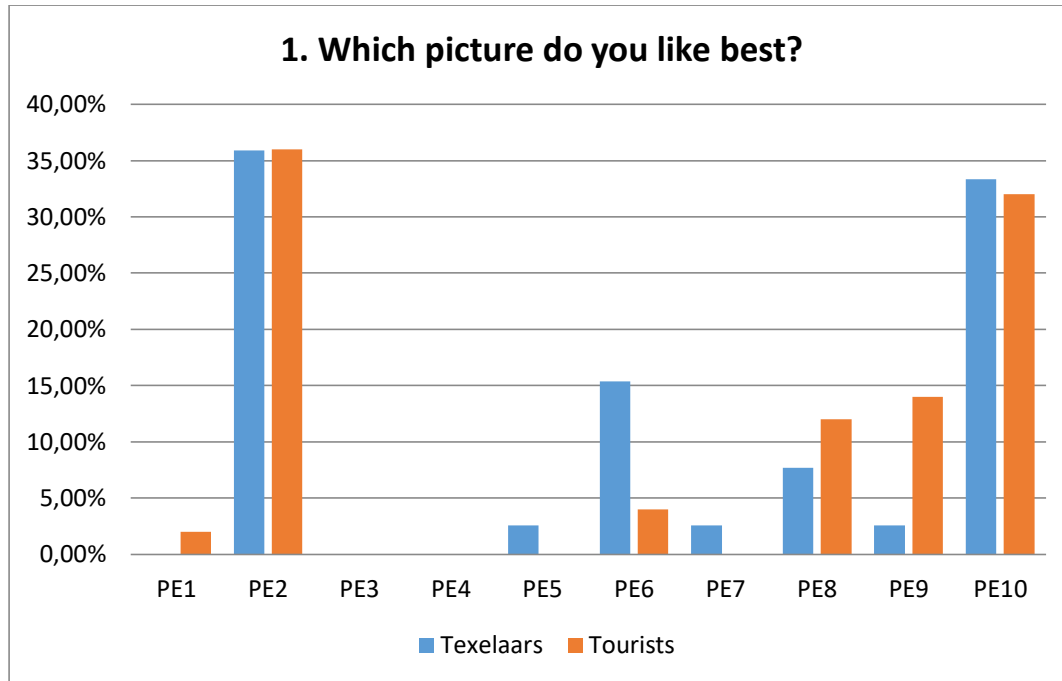


Figure 12: Photo Rating Question 1 - "Which picture do you like best?" asked were two groups of people: 'Texelaars' (n=39) and tourists (n=50), there were ten pictures to choose from, results are shown in percent

Of the 89 photo ratings that I conducted after excursions, interviews and in a couple of other settings, 50 participants were tourists and 39 were locals that I termed 'Texelaar' in the graphs. Due to the not quite equal distribution of participants I depicted the two groups in percentages. I asked the participant to choose one picture for every of the four questions that I prepared. I started my questioning with the easiest question: Which picture do you like best? (fig. 12). I was interested in the reasons for which people might like a picture, but especially in comparing the first with the second question: Which picture do you find most natural? I wanted to find out whether there was a correlation of what people find generally pleasing and what they find natural. As can be seen in figure 12 and 13, there seems to be a clear correlation of the two questions concerning PE 2.

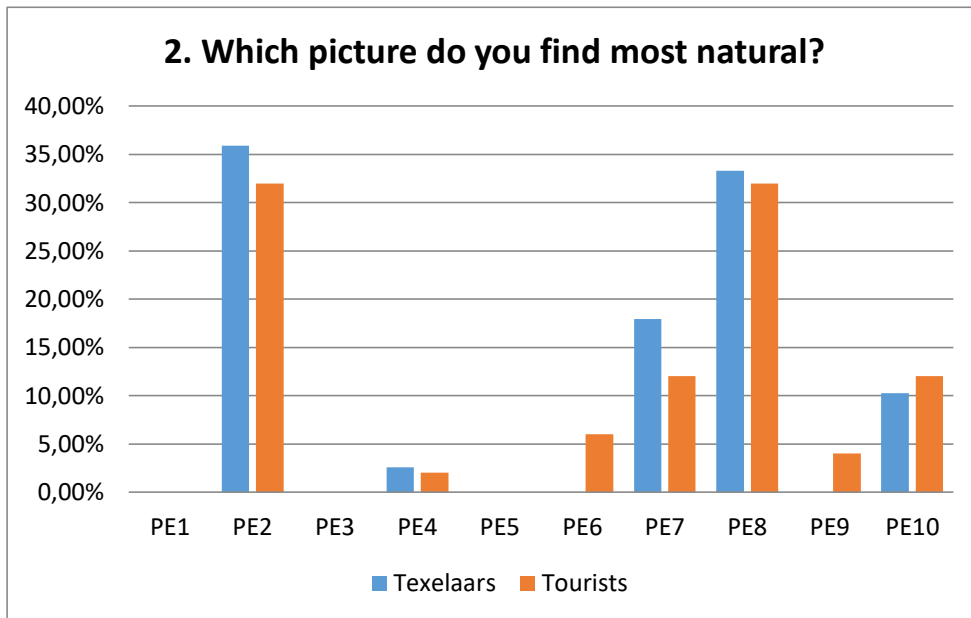


Figure 13: Photo Rating Question 2 - "Which picture do you find most natural?" asked were two groups of people: 'Texelaars' (n=39) and tourists (n=50), there were ten pictures to choose from, results are shown in percent

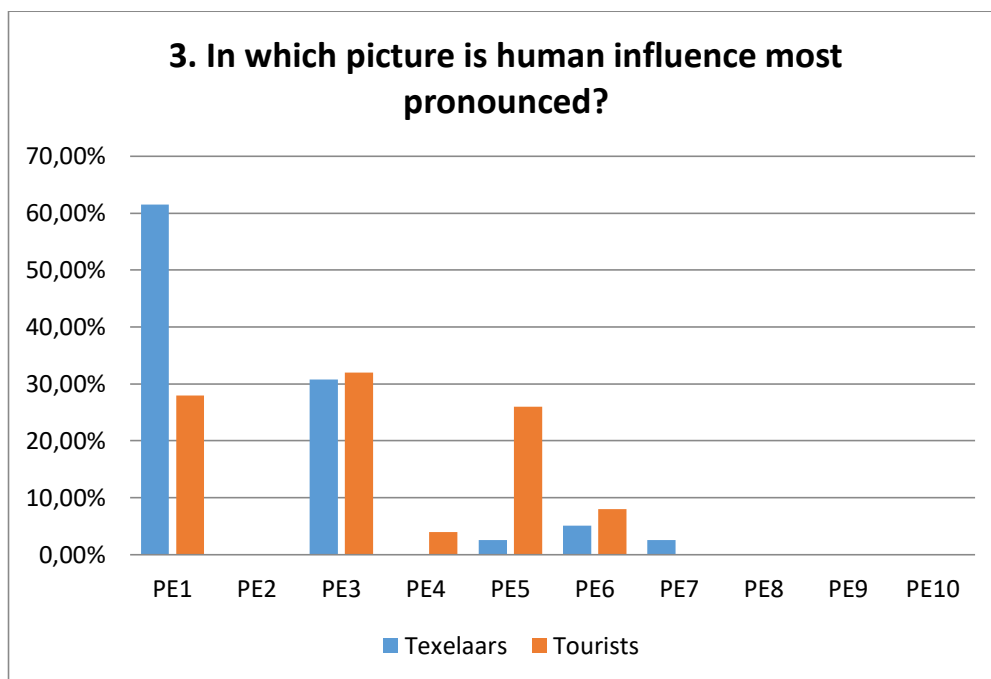


Figure 14: Photo Rating Question 3- "In which picture is human influence most pronounced?" asked were two groups of people: 'Texelaars' (n=39) and tourists (n=50), there were ten pictures to choose from, results are shown in percent

Another aspect that becomes visible with question 2 is the importance of dunes in the perception of what is natural. The depicted dune landscape of de Slufter and de Geul/Hors (PE3 & PE9) are perceived as most natural by a very clear majority of participants. This also illustrates the necessity to keep and maintain the dune landscapes and the importance of the NPDoT. Furthermore, this question illustrates the fact that natural decay still is generally accepted as a natural process (PE5 & PE8). A very interesting and (to me) somewhat strange



find is, that a number of tourists perceived the pastoral scene of PE6 with the village in the background as a natural one. This and the perception of an unnaturally open forest (PE10) as something natural is a small but significant indicator of the acceptance of man-made landscapes as natural nature, which may be interpreted as disregard for biodiversity. Another curious contrast that I found was the fact, that despite the fact that the participants agreed that the caged animals of Ecomare were extremely unnatural, there still is a great support for it. Visitors love seeing the animals from close by, and Ecomare is on the third place of the picture that is most representative of Texel (see fig. 15). This lack of ‘natural nature’ is part of the general trend within national parks, as wilderness has been mostly banned in national parks in favour of a multifunctional park model which integrates conservation, recreation and sustainable development<sup>88</sup>. The global sustainability agenda tries to combine environmental with economic land use and agriculture which has resulted in a recent interpretation of “National Park” as a label to market the countryside and commodify natural landscapes. This commodification of the countryside has resulted in the exploitation of natural areas for recreational activities and tourism as source of income, especially for regions on the periphery, with little other sources of income like Northern Ireland<sup>88</sup>. Texel too falls into this category of an area on the geographic and economic periphery of the country, with little skilled labour and high dependency on the tourist industry.

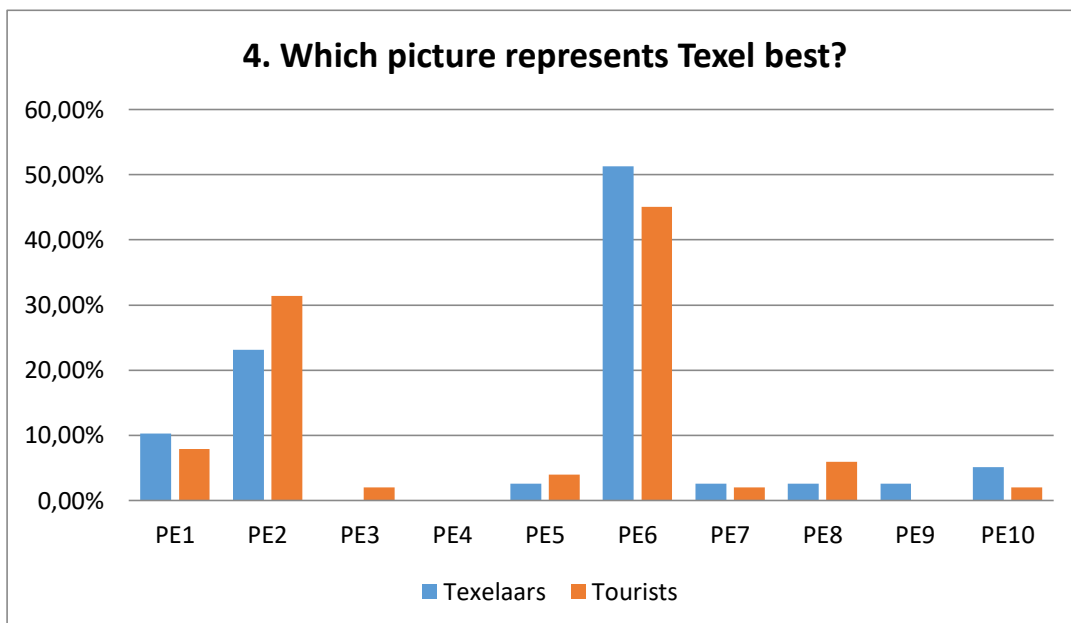


Figure 15: Photo Rating Question 4- Which picture represents Texel best?" asked were two groups of people: 'Texelaars' (n=39) and tourists (n=50), there were ten pictures to choose from, results are shown in percent

<sup>88</sup> Bell & Stockdale 2015

During the first part of my research with photo ratings and elicitations, de Slufter was the clear favourite for the category ‘most representative of Texel’, but towards the end came a very strong surge towards the pastoral landscape. Despite interviews and photo elicitation showing that de Geul and Hors were the most beloved areas for most local participants, they still voted for the pastoral scene as most representative for Texel. In the course of my research I learned a lot about the strong bond that locals have with their sheep and pastoral scenes. Sheep grazing on a dyke are considered one of the most iconic things of Texel, despite the fact that this scene might take place all over the country while a unique landscape like de Slufter was seen as less iconic, albeit very impressive. This difference can also be seen by the divergence of perceptions between locals and tourists in figure 15, the tourists valuing the uniqueness of the Slufter more than the locals while the locals value the sheep picture more than the tourists. The local leanings towards sheep were also expressed during interviews and photo elicitation, where a general desire for an increase in sheep grazing, especially in the dunes and on the dikes became apparent. During the photo elicitations and interviews, verses from the poem “de Dapperstraat” by J.C. Bloem were pointed out several times and seem to encompass a deeply rooted sentiment towards nature in the Netherlands<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> Bloem 1945

## **Chapter 4: It's not like we can get away- Negotiating Natural Values in an Island Setting**

In this chapter I set out to explore how natural values are negotiated by different stakeholders in and around the National Park Dunes of Texel. To do so I will look at the dynamics that play a role when making decisions and the potential motivations behind it (money, value, power).

### **4.1 What the tourists like- Value Negotiation of Accommodation Owners**

Tourism on the island has undergone many changes. In the beginnings, around the middle of the twentieth century, visitors were only coming during a few summer weeks. The thrifty locals tapped this source of income by leaving their houses to tourists and live in their own sheds and garages during the summer months. The tourism itself developed from tourists being houseguests of the locals, to families coming for a cheap and rustic holiday in the summer on the increasing amounts of camping lots, to modern and increasingly demanding tourists staying in increasingly sophisticated and expensive hotels, bungalows and caravan parks all year long. One part of my research was to examine what role the National Park has played in the increase of tourism/as marketing strategy to attract tourists.

While the National Park itself was not very well known, and indeed a number of tourist participants of my research were not aware that they were in the National Park while filling out my survey, the landscape as a whole deserves to be called the main attraction of Texel. However, the National Park has found a clever way to engage locals while at the same time advertising the Park itself. It does so by utilising the concept of 'hosts', i.e. employees or business owners in the tourism sector that received some informational training on the National Park and agreed to promote it by for instance offering free NPDoT folders to their guests. To qualify as official host, the participants must follow some educational courses and agree to inform their guests about the Park. As a reward they are permitted to advertise their business with the title of 'Host of the NPDoT' and a plaque to distinguish them as such, that can be put up in or on the business. Furthermore, they are entitled to attend the NPDoT events like workshops or excursions.

I spoke with several NPDoT hosts to determine how they perceive the National Park, what kind of advantages or disadvantages they see in it and what prompted them to become

NPDOT hosts. The results were somewhat sobering as it appears that most became hosts because their employer/organisation asked them to in order to gain an asset for advertising their business and offering the best service to their customers. Though they did appreciate the natural beauty of the area they did not seem to have a strong affinity with the park as such. Only two of my host informants were involved with the National Park, one of them being a non-born Texelaar and active conservationist, the other a born-Texelaar and partly dormant member of a workgroup. While the conservationist host had a very strong area of expertise and interest within the park that he cherished greatly, the other had a general interest in conservation but decided not to be an active part of it until he retired. The appreciation of the local landscape was once more focussed on its utility as tourist magnet by born and new Texelaars alike, which shows that among the accommodation owners, the tourism economy is the main factor in negotiating natural values. As one host put it: “To many people, Texel is a natural backdrop/setting in which they like to stay”<sup>90</sup> The word ‘decor’ which is used in the original quote is also used to describe for instance the set-up of a theatre stage. It seems to describe nature as a sort of inanimate pleasant scenery in which people like to move (and potentially stage themselves). This perception of nature as a backdrop for humans to move through was one that I frequently encountered, mostly with accommodation owners, but also among some tourists.

Therefore, it can be said that the owners appreciate the aesthetic value and cultural ecosystem services of the national park for the benefit of the tourists. As Daniel et al note, “recreation and tourism represent a major opportunity and nexus for managing the interaction between ecosystems and people, including the development of a constituency that appreciates and supports protection of ecosystems.”<sup>91</sup> Many parties consider recreation as an opportunity to experience cultural ecosystem services. Human health is notably improved by stays in nature<sup>92</sup>, which is a fact that is widely known and was mentioned frequently by the participants of this research. Daniel et al. also found that the appeal of natural (recreational) areas is improved by high biodiversity and variety of landscapes<sup>92</sup>, which is mostly known and accepted by the accommodation owners. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing discussion on the island concerning the amount of touristic bedsteads, which relates to the third sub-question<sup>93</sup>. The biggest aspect of legislation is the municipality-imposed maximum on tourist-

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<sup>90</sup> “Texel is voor heel veel mensen een natuurlijk decor waar iedereen graag in verblijft.”- I018

<sup>91</sup> Daniel et al. 2012:8814

<sup>92</sup> Daniel et al. 2012

<sup>93</sup> What influence does legislation have on the stakeholders and their perception of the National Park Dunes of Texel?

accommodation bedsteads (beddenstop<sup>94</sup>) to avoid overcrowding of the island and dilution of the local culture. This measure is welcomed by many locals, especially the conservationists that I spoke with, but the local businesspeople and some related groups would not mind even more visitors to further increase the economic benefit. As research in national parks of the UK by Bell and Stockdale shows, the key problem of national parks is bridging the cleavage between “maximising economic potential while at the same time maintaining or conserving the natural resource base”<sup>95</sup>. This knowledge is elaborated in the resource paradox, also called ‘Creative Destruction Idea’ which states, that “natural areas, for example, offer a resource to be marketed, yet overuse (potentially through tourism) could destroy the natural beauty upon which the tourist experience depends, thereby jeopardising future tourism potential.”<sup>95</sup>

To determine the actual importance of nature for tourists I included the open Question 6: “What are you planning to do on Texel?” It served to determine the role that nature played in the holiday planning of the participants. Surprisingly, going to the beach was only a minor interest of the participants. While the high scores of walking/ hiking and cycling are not unexpected, it is very interesting that walking was the preferred option. As the aim “watching animals”, which mostly concerned birds, also scored very high it might be that environmentally conscious tourists prefer a slow walking tour during which they are at leisure to observe their surroundings over a speedy cycling tour.

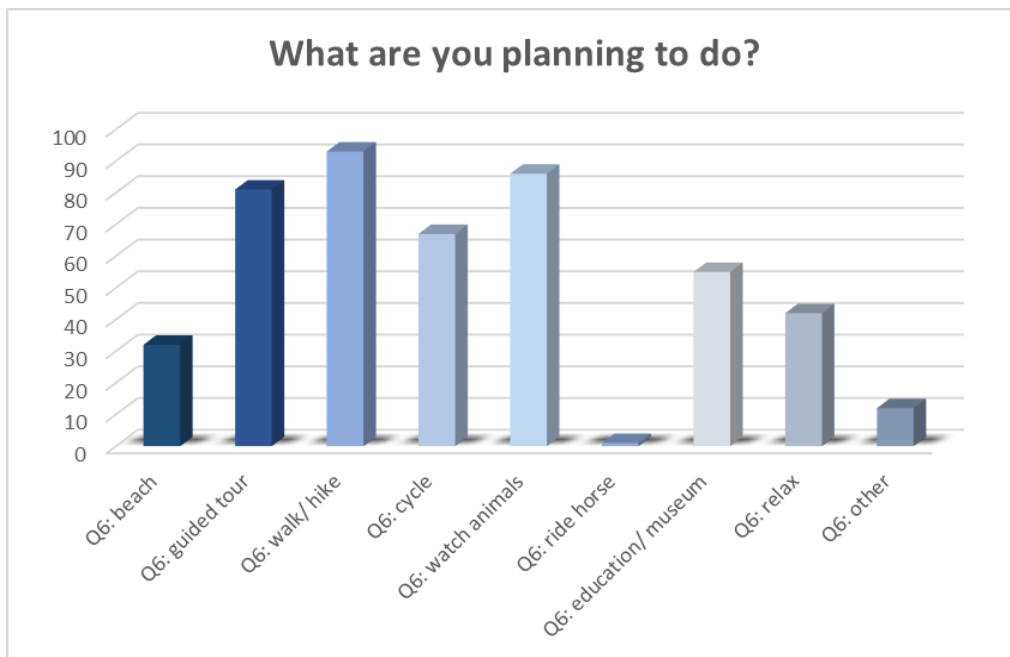


Figure 16: Survey Question 6 for Tourists of Texel, (n=115)- “What are you planning to do on Texel?”- multiple choice

<sup>94</sup> Gemeente Texel 2014

<sup>95</sup> Bell & Stockdale 2015:214

To determine how the general public, perceive and negotiate natural values, I gathered literature on the National Park as well as local disputes in the Media. From this a clear discontent of locals with the local (nature) authorities became visible. Many locals seem to resent the closing off of ever more areas on Texel for the benefit of nature/wildlife. This was expressed in several letters to the editor in the local newspaper as well as in the fierce protests of locals against the closing of the ‘Ceres Beach’ to install a bird sanctuary that is closed to the public. This beach, on the east-side of Texel, though geographically very small, seems to have played a big role for the locals and I frequently encountered statements like “why do they keep closing off areas to the public”, “we already have enough nature areas” and “all Texelaars learned to swim at that beach, they can’t take it from us!” It seems like this little beach means a lot more to the locals than outsiders realized, and functioned as the focus of overall discontent against nature reserves on the island. I followed this thread during Stage 3 of my research where I tried to discern whether it is an isolated case or indeed an expression of discontent against protected nature areas in general, and whether there is a difference of perception between born- Texelaars and (relative) newcomers and outsiders. The knowledge obtained from this research was processed in the following case study.

## **4.2 Case Study: Ceres Beach**

The matter of the Ceres Beach was brought to my attention when following the local news. This modest beach that might be referred to as a mere stretch of sand along a concrete dyke on the Wadden Sea side of the island will be closed to the public for the benefit of local bird populations and has sparked a (moderate) public outcry in written reactions as well as a physical manifestation in front of the city hall. This public protest surprised me (and the local authorities), especially as there is an area called Waalenburg where entire farms were expelled, the houses broken down and the farmland converted into a high-nature-value area owned by the Natuurmonumenten organisation. While this process seemed to go fairly smoothly and without public protest, the Ceres-beach-protest made local news and was a discussion topic in every household that I visited in the following time. I therefore used the interviews in Stage 3 to determine the differences between these cases. I soon learned, that the three major differences were time, information and negotiation. The acquisition of the farmland by Natuurmonumenten has happened over the course of more than 20 years. During this time, compensations were negotiated and businesses moved to the land of e.g. retiring farmers without heirs. There was a very close contact between the organisation, authorities

and local landowners. Though many farmers initially objected, the persistence of Natuurmonumenten, the offered compensation and some measure of coercion led to a fairly peaceful exodus that was completed entirely in 2017. As far as I heard, all active farmers were content with the agreements, though some older ones struggled to leave behind their (ancestral) land and homes. However, they could stay on the island and often moved their businesses to land that was actually more profitable. Therefore, the slow process and economic mindset of people enabled this fairly smooth transition. The matter of the Ceres Beach on the other hand came as a surprise to most of the population. Though the dyke construction works had been planned for a long time, hardly anyone of the general public seemed to have delved into the exact plans, and the local authorities failed to explicitly communicate the change of landscape that would take place. As the dykes need to increase in width, there were only two possibilities: extending outwards or inwards. Extending inwards would have caused the loss of arable land and properties, hence the decision to extend outwards. Another aspect of the local discontent is the fact that the outward dyke extension will be according to a pilot programme where sand is disposed near the coast and then it will be 'wait and see' what the currents will make of it. This uncertainty about the future of the landscape is another snare in the minds of the locals. Furthermore, the emotional attachment of the local population towards the little beach was grossly underestimated by the authorities. My research has shown that the discussion about Ceres Beach, which incidentally was already named by Jac P. Thijsse in 1927<sup>96</sup>, has touched a large amount of locals, whether they actually used the beach or not. As the beach in itself is rather unremarkable for the unaware passer-by, the relatively high value that locals ascribe to it is fairly unrelated to its physique. Hence it can be concluded that the Ceres Beach incident is an example of miscommunication, and underestimation of the role that landscape can play in the lives, experiences and history of the local population. This perception of the locals is translated into an affective vision in which a natural site is seen not only as a physical site, but as a place that is significant to the community. It proves that nature is part of the collective memory of the people, and that some areas therefore might be of disproportionately large importance that is incomprehensible to outsiders and e.g. planners who lack the same affective vision, which also points out the necessity of anthropological research for the planning of ecological issues like landscape alterations.

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<sup>96</sup> Thijsse 1927



*Picture 16: Ceres Beach as seen from its most northern point, the dyke construction works are visible in the background.*

### **4.3 The Land of our Ancestors- Combining Farming and Nature Conservation**

As farmers were reported to be a major political and economic influence on the island of Texel I decided early on that I would like to include them in my local research population. Originally, I was interested in how the farmers neighbouring to the park were influenced in their work by the park, but as it appeared that there is only little if any mutual influence, I decided to focus on ecologically oriented farmers instead. Hence, the connections with agriculture and conservation are made in the examples named in this chapter and not in direct relation to or with the National Park, but as nature conservation does not adhere to geographical borders they are a major factor within nature conservation on Texel and I felt justified to include them. Many species of bird for instance depend on the park as well as the agricultural surroundings for food, resting- and breeding habitats, hence the agricultural areas are in direct ecological relation to the park even if they are not included in the organisational structures.

Ecological farming is still in its infancy on the island of Texel with less than a handful of actual ecological farmers. However, there is a well-established local environmental farming organisation called de Lieuw. This organisation is funded by the province and the



municipality and tries to maintain agricultural heritage like the traditional sheep pens (schapenboeten) and turf walls (tuunwallen) as well as support and promote biodiversity. The organisation organises and controls means to promote biodiversity, with a special focus on meadow birds, by requesting their members to convert their land into High Nature Value Farmland. They do so for instance by not mowing the grass during breeding season and maintain the turf walls and sheep pens on their land. The farmers are compensated for their work by the organisation. Though I do not know the exact numbers, a participant quoted the money earned from ecological nature maintenance and heritage restoration as second largest source of income. When talking to the heads of the organisation as well as some members, I felt that they had a real passion for ecological farming and the natural environment. The compensations that the members of the organisation receive for supporting the local biodiversity and cultural heritage of course are major incentives, but the ecological farming members also seemed to be really invested in the well-being of their livestock as well as the cultural heritage of the pastoral landscape. It appears that ecological farmers have a stronger emotional vision than regular farmers which is the cause for their focus on animal and economic wellbeing instead of maximum profit. With this skilled vision (see Grasseni) in combination with emotional vision the farmers are able to gauge how the land and ecology are doing as well as appreciating positive ecological and biodiversity development.



*Picture 17: Ecological farmer on Texel leading part of his livestock to their pasture*

There seemed to be a fairly widespread willingness of landowners as well as conservationists to maintain the cultural heritage of the island (chiefly the sheep pens and turf wall) and the ‘old land’ of Texel where most of this agricultural heritage is located was the subject of a number of appreciative and even romanticised comments. Despite sites like the Slufter or the lighthouse of de Cocksdoorp, the area of the ‘old land’/‘high mountain’<sup>97</sup> was often referred to as the quintessential Texel landscape. This relates to Tim Ingold’s findings of perceptions of (cultural) landscapes. The statement “it has always been like that”<sup>98</sup> was a

<sup>97</sup> So-called ‘Hoge Berg’, the Pleistocene clay mount that is the origin of the island. The ‘old land’ largely corresponds with the ‘Hoge Berg’

<sup>98</sup> “Het is van oudsher zo”

statement that I often encountered in this context. It was usually used to explain and validate the appreciation for the historic landscape. As Ingold states, the process of human life involves the temporal changes over which it stretches itself, and as such also the process of forming landscapes in which the humans have lived. Therefore, landscapes tell the story of human habitation<sup>99</sup>, which the local population of Texel clearly appreciates.

De Lieuw seems to be quite influential on the island and successfully created an awareness and interest of the local agricultural sector in biodiversity, ecological values and agricultural heritage. This success might be related to the fact that it is a local organisation without the involvement of outsiders and hence accepted as part of the community by the local population, unlike large organisations like SBB or Natuurmonumenten. This could also explain why the National Park seems to have no impact on the farmer's agricultural activities as they are not directly involved with the park or the park's conservation efforts. Of course, the farmers that participated in my research did not have land bordering the National Park, and I heard that there was a so-called buffer zone around the park in which certain substances like pesticides are forbidden as is hunting animals. Unfortunately, I was unable to learn more about this. It seems that farmers generally do not engage with the NPDoT as there are no agricultural representatives in the Park's board, and to my knowledge not even on the workgroups. Hence it seems like de Lieuw takes care of all agricultural ecological and conservation activities without (close) collaboration with the National Park organisation.

What caught my eye when looking at the homepage of de Lieuw was the fact that even this organisation apparently felt the need to justify its work by pointing out the benefits to recreational activities that are achieved by maintaining the traditional Texel landscape. The organisation's statute states that their two primary aims are to enable the local farmers to take care of the agricultural cultural heritage on the island based on a sustainable and environmentally responsible agriculture, and to stimulate the recreational use of the agricultural landscape among tourists and locals<sup>100</sup>. This brings us back to the general perception of nature, in this case in combination with cultural heritage, as a utility to support the tourism sector. Although the organisation seems to have a real passion for their work, the intrinsic value appears not to be enough reason to justify their work which causes them to relate to the tourism sector to prove that their work and visions are relevant.

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<sup>99</sup> Ingold 1993

<sup>100</sup> "De Lieuw"

Relating to the agricultural activities on the island is sub question three: *What influence does legislation have on the possible actions of stakeholders and their perception of the National Park Dunes of Texel?* My research shows that legislation relating to agricultural activities (see appendix) and especially the destination plan of the municipality has clearly impacted the perception of protected nature areas on Texel, as can be seen in for instance the Ceres debates. Additionally, ‘Natura 2000’ and ‘Natuurbeschermingwet’ were frequently named as sources of discontent and increased bureaucracy. However, these laws are only of concern for nature organisations and the agricultural sector and seemed to be of no concern for the general public. While farmers are influenced especially by the Natura 2000 law, this does not seem to colour their perception of the National Park, of which they seem to have a fairly good and rather indifferent opinion (though it must be noted that I did not have the chance to interview farmers living directly next to the park). The only perceived nuisance seems to be the so called buffer zone, a legally determined area containing a stretch of land along the park in which some activities like hunting and use of certain substances are prohibited to prevent the effects from leaking into the protected area. The major issue of the lack of a clear legal definition of the National Park, its purpose, responsibility and ties to the province and government, is something that the general public is completely unaware of.

#### **4.4 Because I like it- Value Negotiation of Conservationists**

During the course of my fieldwork I conducted 25 participant observations in different settings. The first participant observation that I conducted was joining a group of conservationist volunteers that were building ‘Tuinwallen’ (‘Turf Walls’), long walls made from grass sods, a day of observing that immediately introduced me to a major part of Texel’s ecological and cultural heritage. These traditional turf walls, though somewhat ineffective and even inconvenient for modern agriculture are still cherished and painstakingly maintained by local and non-local voluntary groups as well as official nature conservation groups like SBB and de Lieuw. Despite the negative effects on modern agriculture (the walls are protected and hence farmers cannot alter the size of their plots) and the costs of maintaining them, these walls are not only ecologically valuable as habitat for e.g. rare species of digging bees and ants, but also appreciated as intrinsic parts of the island’s geographical history. “I really love the ‘old land’ of the Hoge Berg (‘high mountain, the Pleistocene clay mount that is the core of Texel’) with all its garden walls and sheep sheds” seems to be a popular local perception of that specific area. This affinity proves the cultural significance that even heavily managed

ecosystems can obtain in the course of time as well as the notion of Daniel et al. of cultural landscapes as “vessels of cultural values and contribute to the identity of communities”<sup>101</sup>. Hence, the local landscape is not only appreciated for its aesthetic beauty or provisioning ecosystem services, but also for its cultural services.



*Picture 18: Volunteers of Purmerend and the local SBB & IVN building a tuinwal, March 2017*

The value of it seems to be negotiated by participating in voluntary organisations and attracting voluntary organisations from the mainland like the volunteers from Purmerend who get a subsidised weekend on Texel for the conservation work they do. Furthermore, a factor of voluntary engagement seems to be the social interaction that takes place during and around the conservation work. Hence, a combination of appreciation for nature and a sense of achievement when contributing to conservation efforts, and the social factors of interacting in a group were crucial in the discerning and negotiating of natural value.

This could also be seen in a group of IVN voluntaries who came to Texel for a weekend in June and were given a tour through the polder of Waalenburg to increase their knowledge about local flora and fauna and be able to pass on that knowledge to the wider public as guides themselves. A point of notice was that although some younger people were involved in the conservation efforts on Texel, most members of voluntary groups seemed older than 40 years, the members of the NPDoT organisation were even older with an estimated average age of about 58. According to Rossi et al. older neighbours may have

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<sup>101</sup> Daniel et al. 2012:8814

developed a stronger identification with – or attachment to national parks, based on their sense of place<sup>102</sup>. Furthermore, research in the United States and the Canary Islands has found that environmental values seem to be related to the development of a sense of place<sup>102</sup>, which might explain why most conservationists on Texel are in- or nearing pension age. Another contributing factor might be that only the retired have enough time to engage with nature. Additionally, it seems like Biophilia in individuals increases exponentially to their environmental engagement, which might explain why people living in the cities are far less connected with nature.

A point of interest in the negotiating of cultural heritage in and around the national park that I picked up during the meetings of the NPDoT workgroups that I attended were the rules and opportunities of sheep grazing in and around the National Park. The sheep grazing discussion was something very new to me. It concerned the question whether sheep should be grazing in the (dunes of) the national park and on the dykes. I was surprised, that there seemed to be quite a lot of emphasis on increasing the amount of sheep and letting sheep graze in and around the park, because sheep are “the epitome of Texels” and “tourists love them so very much”, as none of the 115 tourists that filled out my survey had mentioned ‘sheep’ anywhere, for example at the question “What is your favourite thing about Texel?”. Also in the Photo Rating, the picture with sheep (pic.20) is only second place in the category “Most Texels Picture”, with a strong majority vote for the picture of de Slufter.



Picture 19: PE6 of the Photo Elicitation- Grazing sheep on a pasture near de Waal.

<sup>102</sup> Rossi et al. 2015

Therefore, I decided to identify whether there is a difference in perception of the importance of sheep on the island between tourists and locals. It appeared that the tourists had a basic appreciation for the sheep, but no emotional connection, while the locals had incorporated the sheep into the affective vision of the landscape and found that they added beauty to it.

Main points of discussion between ‘regular’ locals and conservationists were relating to the damage that grazing might do to breeding birds and how to avoid building permanent fences which would spoil the landscape. A strong desire for sheep grazing in the dunes was expressed by most parties, with comments ranging from “they are such a pretty picture” to “tourists love seeing them” to “from a cultural-historic viewpoint it would fit in the dunes”<sup>103</sup>. The representative of the municipality expressed his wish for the NPDoT organisation to give a clear signal about what can and what cannot be done within the Park and offered to organise a designated area for sheep-grazing without much bureaucracy to ensure local sympathy. All agreed that they favour a fast and un-bureaucratic solution, but are hindered by guidelines and discussion about funding and two of the conservationists lamented the lack of support from the local businesses and tourist sector.

Being situated on an island means that the parties of stakeholders need to negotiate their interests carefully as the geographical and social space is limited. As one participant put it: “It’s not like you can get away. At the end of the day we are still sitting on the same island and will meet each other in the supermarket”. For the NPDoT organisation this means close collaboration and open discussion of topics. “It’s a partnership so you will need to find each other”<sup>104</sup> This was one of the main issues that led to the dismissal of the previous chairman as his passionate but fairly uncompromising stance pointed out the disparities of values and visions of the park’s stakeholders and polarized during discussions. According to the board members that I interviewed it has become easier to negotiate these values and visions after the (forced) departure of the chairman, though it has become clear that the voicing for the demands and intrinsic value of nature has weakened.

These observations relate to sub-question two which is concerned with the causes and expressions of conflict between the stakeholders of the National Park and shows that some

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<sup>103</sup> “cultuurhistorisch past het in de duinen”

<sup>104</sup> “Het is een samenwerkingsverband dus je zult elkaar moeten vinden.” –C021

conflicts are concerned with the (financial) support of the locals and recreational sector as well as legal obligations. Additionally, the desire for a landscape that was unspoiled by fences was a major objective. This shows that values in the national park are partly negotiated on a base of cultural values, but aesthetic values are in higher esteem. Apart from an appreciation of aesthetic value the extreme aversion to fencing that I encountered frequently during my research might also relate to the local sense of ownership that would be restricted by clearly marking the landscape as a certain party's property.

## Chapter 5: How do we get where we want to be?

In this chapter I will try to discern how values are translated to organisational structures of the National Park Dunes of Texel Organisation. This will be done by analysing meetings of the work groups that I attended as well as the issues that the park and its stakeholders are currently dealing with.

### 5.1 “I don’t know what they want”- Aims and Policies of the NPDoT Organisation

In the context of participant observations, I observed the two meetings of NPDoT workgroups that occurred during my internship, which gave me the opportunity to get to know the personal and professional dynamics within the workgroups as well as the favoured topics and grievances.

One major topic in the discussions was the impact of legislation on the work of the workgroups. Grievances were aired concerning restrictions on the monitoring and inventory work that is done by conservationists (namely employees of SBB). An example of these restriction-related grievances relates to the counting of rabbits in the park to determine whether action needs to be taken to control or encourage the population. While regular car traffic is allowed on the roads within the park, the conservationists are forbidden to count rabbits while driving in a car, because the headlights would disturb them. The sarcastic comment “if you don’t count it’s alright (to driver there)”<sup>105</sup> gives an impression of the sentiment of the workgroup members. The topic was continued by a discussion on how to understand and find options to deal with the official guide lines. More negative/sarcastic comments followed about the fact that pleasure planes from the local airport near de Cocksdorp are allowed to fly over the park, but research planes need to ask official permission. This relates to sub-question three<sup>106</sup> and shows that some legislative restrictions in relation to the National Park result in a negative perception of the Park by several stakeholders, for example conservationists employed to monitor and inventory the development of species within the park.

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<sup>105</sup> “Als je niet telt mag het wel”

<sup>106</sup> (3) What influence does legislation have on the stakeholders and their perception of the National Park Dunes of Texel?



The discussion on legal restrictions and related grievances was followed by the comment “can’t we put our problems concerning the official (legal) permissions to the Park’s Board?” by one of the conservationists present, after which the workgroup members discussed whether the Park’s Board could plead their case, but no one seemed much convinced. It appears that the members of the workgroup have no confidence in the ability or willingness of the NPDoT board to mediate between the workgroups and the authorities. Another related issue that came up during the meeting was the discussion of obligations towards the authorities, for instance whose job it is to report e.g. spoonbill colonies which officially need to be reported, but the people on Texel are legally forbidden to count/monitor them. As mentioned previously, official nature conservation often hinges on numbers and scientific values instead of affective or intrinsic ones. The participants of the workgroup meeting came to the consensus that Province is responsible for monitoring the e.g. spoonbills and therefore needs to ensure that the people of the National Park are able to do their jobs. One participant noted that there are “very large disparities in the management and the maintenance plans of the different National Parks”.

Another important topic was addressed by a representative of the local sporting clubs. The representative commented on the miscommunication concerning illegal activities. He had been informed that mountain bike paths were opened again by SBB, although those paths were actually illegal roads in forbidden areas of the National Parks that had been forcefully created by local members of sporting clubs who afterwards informed the sporting club’s management that the paths for mountain bikers had been opened again (despite SBB having closed the areas). Those local people (from mountain bike clubs) had even cut down trees with chainsaws to make new (illegal) paths for themselves. This situation illustrated the constant struggle between recreational organisations and the National Park, namely SBB in its role as administrator of the Park. It was followed by a discussion about how to deal with the situation (“Handhaven... maar wie?”), with the conservationist pleading for officially reporting destruction of SBB property to the police and therefore making the issue more official while a representative from the municipality pleaded for a compromise. Positive collaboration of stakeholders was illustrated by the friendly discussion between the conservationist and municipality representative about the possibility to use existing paths to connect mountain bike tracks as intermediate solution until a better mountain bike track has been built, and meanwhile crack down hard on illegal activities. The representative of the sporting clubs commented on the fact that mountain bikers may feel mistreated because other parties can use certain parts and they cannot, and personally admits that he sometimes cycles

on broad paths that bikes are actually forbidden to cycle on, because he thinks they are broad enough to accommodate several parties of road-users. This discussion illustrates the difficulties of reconciling recreational- and economic values with aesthetic and intrinsic values of nature. Furthermore, this discussion sheds light on the positions of stakeholders within the park organisation. The conservationist's efforts are contradicted by recreationist's wishes while the official landowner and law-enforcer (SBB) is restricted by personal shortages. The municipality in this case takes on the role of a mediator but lacks the absolute objectivity that it might be expected to have, because the economic well-being is a major concern of the policy makers.

From the observed meetings it appears that there is a conflict of interests between conservationists and recreationists. This of course is a familiar problem in protected areas, and as authors like Ballantyne, Bell & Stockdale and Pickering show, outdoor recreation has a widely documented negative impact due to the destruction of flora and disturbance of fauna as well as a reduction of soil quality<sup>107</sup>. It also illustrates the stance of the municipality as stakeholder of the NPDoT. The municipality seems eager to ensure the benevolence of the local population and is often closer to the local businesses and tourism sector than conservation efforts, an impression that was confirmed in later interviews. This point relates to sub-question five which is concerned with the views of natural values and their effects on policies regarding the organisation and management of the park. Though generally amenable and willing to support conservation schemes by reducing the bureaucracy, the main drivers of political actors are the local popular opinion and economy which ascribes nature conservation a status as mean to an end for economic wellbeing and political favour instead of intrinsically valuable. Therefore, the island and national park are in danger of being subjected to the 'Creative Destruction Idea', e.g. the overuse of a natural resource like aesthetic beauty by the very party that relies on this natural value as attraction (tourists)<sup>108</sup>.

A final discussion of the workgroup meetings revolved about the fact that the National Park is not an executive organ (uitvoeringsorgaan) and therefore cannot enforce any measures, and even cannot replace signs that have been destroyed by vandals, because they are not officially in charge of the management of the land. Therefore, the National Park has to request another party like SBB to replace the signs. One conservationist comments on the current situation of the NPDoT organisation (change of chairman and potential restructuring

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<sup>107</sup> Ballantyne & Pickering 2015

<sup>108</sup> Bell & Stockdale 2015

of the organisation) that he is pleased that the Park structures are being tidied up, and laments that it were “very unsatisfactory working conditions” due to lack of communication and the ensuing miscommunication<sup>109</sup>.

From these observations it is also apparent that personal dynamics of the workgroups seem to work fairly well. Like in most organisations, there are some prominent figures that lead the conversation and more reserved ones who chiefly listen. I found that the more reserved participants of the workgroups were mainly representatives from stakeholders who are not part of the board, but involved in the workgroups to include them with the management of the park. Often they were representatives that weren't living on Texel themselves. As can be seen in figure 3, the workgroups advise the board and make propositions concerning policies and actions for the board to undertake. Therefore, it might be said that the workgroups conduct the majority of the work within the NPDoT organisation, as they do the majority of the work, for instance they organise (and occasionally conduct) research in order to counsel the board. However, to do so efficiently, the workgroups would like and need clearer guidelines of the aims and management of the National Park as well as a board that is kept in the loop of current topics concerning the Park and willing to represent and plead the Park's course to the public authorities, which is currently not the case. Additionally, I would also like to mention the fact that most members of the workgroups were older than 50 years of age and predominantly male. This illustrates the overall senescence of conservationists that I encountered throughout my research. As one participant lamented: “We are slowly dying out”. To encourage ‘new blood’ into the NPDoT organisation it might be necessary to improve the communication and management processes as well as utilising targeted advertisements to entice the young generation.

## 5.2 Troubled System

As I am following the anthropological master track “Policy in Practice” I have paid special attention to issues that have been caused by the policies of the NPDoT Organisation, the municipality and general legal restrictions that hinder (and even) translation of natural values into organisational structures. Though often concerning only certain groups of stakeholders within and around the National Park, the cohabitation, use and ideas about the Park are not always unanimous. During my research I have found a number of issues

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<sup>109</sup> „Ik weethelemaal niet meer waar ik aan toe ben.“

concerning the NPDoT and its organisation and relation with stakeholders and the environment itself, which I have summarised in the following.

Firstly, there are different visions about (the future of) the Park due to different perceptions of values as named previously. These are potentially conflicting and need to be closely examined to avoid discontent.

Secondly, the park organisation comprises of only very few ecological experts and representatives of nature organisations, which shows a certain amount of disconnectedness to the matter. As the major aim of the NPDoT is to “give a voice” to the nature to protect it for the future, this aim could be hindered by the lack of affective values, ecological knowledge and/or opportunity to fully engage with the park by its representatives. Most representatives and workgroup members come from a specific function or background and therefore have a personal agenda. Additionally, the people that work for the park (e.g. the secretary and some board members) have too little time for it and could not develop the way they might like to. As the PR strategy of the Park is to build up the Park as a marketable character, the members of the organisation need to be able to build up a relationship with that character if they want to be able to represent it properly. Additionally, it might be useful to also promote the regulating services of the national park like flood protection, oxygen production and biodiversity.

Thirdly, the fact that the conservation efforts are led by ‘new-comers’ means that those responsible for making plans like the municipality destination plan and the vision and role of the National Park might lack the necessary access to the collective memory and/or knowledge of the socio-cultural-historic importance of certain sites. A closer connection and research into the affective vision of the local population is therefore recommended.

Fourth, the lack of legal power and their own facilities, paired with the lack of a clear definition of the NPDoT are cause of much uncertainty and inefficiency. It also results in a lack of publicity, and awareness of visitors. As publicity and educating are some of the main aims of the National Park, this issue is a serious one as these are some of the main legitimisations of the National Park, without which it would be entirely purposeless. Also, the restrictions and guidelines that have hitherto been implied or considered are solely based on the needs of people<sup>110</sup> instead of adapting the ecological perspective. However, as cases like the proposed national park in Mourne, North Ireland shows, people might oppose a

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<sup>110</sup> “On Texel there are no restrictions that originate in (the needs of) nature” - I016

management body with legal powers that has not been elected<sup>111</sup>. Though a balance between an empowered and non-empowered park management may be difficult to achieve, I do not feel that it has been accomplished in the National Park Dunes of Texel and the lack of legal power is hampering the conservation aims and law enforcement within the park.

A related fifth topic is the issue of income. As the Park's main sources of income are subsidies from the province and the municipality (with some additional income generated from advertisements), the Park is highly dependent on the political climate, which might impact the future development of the Park. Furthermore, the NPDoT organisation is encouraged and urged to generate more independent income, which increases the focus on human users i.e. cultural ecosystem services of the park over the needs of flora and fauna which might lead to a diminishing of the aesthetic value and result in the creative destruction of the environment.

Additionally, there is a very narrow focus on key species. To attract publicity, the Park relies heavily on advertising a few selected (mostly bird) species, like the spoonbill, cormorant, harrier and other bird species. Though some ecological aspects like the symbiosis of sea buckthorn and elder or the survival strategies of the yellow turf ants (*Lasius flavus*) are considered (e.g. during excursions), they play a very subordinate role, leaving out major potential for educating and exciting visitors.

Sixth, the incorrect use of paths and roads and conflicting recreational activities have been discussed previously. The problem is amplified by the haziness of the Park's boundaries. Signs are not understood by all visitors as they are mostly in Dutch and not very imposing, which is related to the sentiment that especially locals strongly object to fences cutting through the landscape and spoiling the view. Though some members of the park organisation seemed to disregard this problem, research done in Australian national parks by Rossi et al. has shown that trail bike riding and motorized activities were perceived as having the greatest impacts on the visitors as well as the park's environment such as harming flora and fauna and scaring the local wildlife<sup>112</sup>. They also were reported to behave recklessly and uncooperatively, which proves that it is not merely the local population, but the general culture of the sport that is prone to encourage inadequate behaviour. Furthermore, dog walking was perceived as negative due to the disturbance of wildlife and left-behind animal

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<sup>111</sup> Bell & Stockdale 2015

<sup>112</sup> Rossi et al. 2015

faeces<sup>112</sup> which shows that the conservationists claims that dogs (especially off the leash) can negatively impact other recreant's perceptions of the national park.

A seventh issue is, that the official (municipality) vision for the future of Texel is fundamentally flawed, as it is focussed on maintaining economic growth and combining it with the needs of nature and increase of natural value. Ecologically seen, there should not be a focus on economic growth. Especially, since the population does not want any more tourists during the summer months and there supposedly is a stop on creating new accommodations for visitors ('beddenstop')<sup>113</sup>. However, the visitor numbers of people being transported by TESO already do not correspond to that alleged rate anymore. Constantly striving for economic growth ultimately sends the economy and society itself in a downwards spiral. An economy that is based on growth is extremely vulnerable to sudden changes and at some point, future growth is impossible. This economical model causes a vicious circle of demands in which nature always loses, which is widely acknowledged by conservationists, but somewhat less by other stakeholder groups.

While cultural values are largely accepted as can be seen by for instance the restoring efforts of the local agricultural heritage, the intrinsic and aesthetic values are less acknowledged. The public has shown that it understands the fragility of ecosystems and could be motivated to be understanding and support of conservation efforts. However, there also are conflicting personal interests, as for example several members of the NPDoT organisation being mountain bikers themselves, and relying on an increasing tourist influx for their economic well-being. Finally, there is the issue of being an island community: You cannot get away from each other, which means that there is a stronger need to compromise, weighting interests against each other, and if possible avoid confrontations.

### **5.2.1 The Nature Paradox**

This theory, which is based on the findings of this research is concerned with the paradox of nature perception between conservationists and the general public. While the perception of the general public is very much focussed on the big picture and general outlook of landscape, nature organisations and conservationists are almost frantically trying to support or even reintroduce species that seem to be dwindling, and are prepared to change entire landscape to revert it to its 'natural' or 'primeval' state. This difference can lead to major conflicts, as the

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<sup>113</sup> Gemeente Texel 2014

general public does not understand or acknowledge the need to invest time and money into a conservation scheme, while the conservationists experience a sense of powerlessness and futility of their schemes, which might demoralize them and result in the loss of species and biodiversity due to a lack of conservation efforts. This finding correlates with the research by van den Born et al. who found that the Western nature conservation discourse is less aware of the disparities in perception of nature between the general public and the conservationists than for instance in developing countries where such disparities are anticipated<sup>114</sup>. Also part of the nature paradox is the fact, that many people perceive all ‘green’ space as natural area (even among members of the NPDoT board). The fact that ‘green’ does not equal nature and grass does not equal biodiversity seems to be ignored or confused by a large part of the general public.

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<sup>114</sup> Van den Born et al. 2000

## Chapter 6: Looking Back

### 6.1 Do not Crush the Orchid!

Though the start of my internship involved some (literal) stumbling blocks, on the whole it went quite smoothly. I learned a lot about the local flora, fauna, geography and history as well as the mentality of the locals and their stance towards nature. One point that stands out to me and is elaborated upon in the Nature Paradox Theory is the extreme focus of conservation efforts on a small range of species. These species are protected with all means and efforts and natural processes are being halted or even reversed to allow for them to thrive. One instance of this are the wild orchids which grow in formerly salty marshlands. While accompanying an excursion with special focus on the orchids, I saw how the participants carefully stalked through the marsh, desperate to avoid stepping on the carpet of orchids while carelessly stepping on any other plant. This to me appears as the epiphany of the overall perception of (key) species; the intrinsic value of species depends on the conservation efforts and publicity that a species receives, which in turn is influenced by aspects of utility, aesthetic beauty and the ‘petting factor’.



*Picture 21: In the focus of conservation efforts: The wild orchids. The unsuspecting participant was scolded heavily the moment this picture was taken for almost crushing an orchid.*



*Picture 20: Not in the focus of conservation efforts: The addertong (Ophioglossum). When the guide pointed this plant out as rare species, the participants were disappointed by the lack of colourful flowers.*



## 6.2 Ethical Reflections

Considering the ethical implications of my research, I feel quite comfortable on the whole. As most participants (except those of covert participant observation) were aware of my role as researcher and participating voluntarily and without being at risk, the potential for ethical dilemmas of my research are limited. Sensitive issues like conflicts which may involve aspects like personal reputation were treated with utmost care and discretion, participants are only named by their number or an alias and without referring to specific traits that would identify them. Nevertheless, as the island population is limited and certain characters are very well known and unique, they will always be identifiable by locals no matter how much I might try to obscure their identity. My research topic in itself is not overly sensitive and the participants themselves are very open about their opinions. Potential conflicts of interests and problems like understaffing or lack of legal authorities are also widely known. Hence, my research will hardly bring to light unexpected or discriminating issues. Also it is questionable how many people will actually read the entire thesis (though I offered all major participants to send it to them). An important aspect to consider in regards to the AAA code of ethics might be scrutinizing the motives that participants, especially those of the conservation and opposition groups had for contributing to my research. During the workgroup meetings that I attended it was pointed out that the participants of a guided tour are not the standard tourists of the island. Since I have accompanied excursion for different target groups (general tourists, children, birdwatchers) and different times of the day (early morning, noon, evening), I think that I still have a fairly broad selection of tourists and therefore feel justified to claim that it is representative for those visitors that have a (general) interest in nature, which is a key group for the NPDoT organisation.

The biggest ethical issue to consider relates to discussing of the deselection of the former chairman Han Lindeboom who had accepted me as trainee but was discharged shortly after. As I am following the track 'Policy in Practice' I found it necessary to research the inter-organisational struggle that had taken place just before I started my internship which will be described in the following. Personal conflicts within the NPDoT organisation were caused mainly by a strong difference of visions on nature and the course that the national park should take to conserve it as well as the powerlessness due to the lack of executive power and the sluggish development relating to these issues. In such a testy situation, different character traits of members of the organisation emerged more prominently. From my research I learned that the former chairman who is an energetic and passionate conservationist struggled with the

slowness (and alleged unwillingness) of other board members to engage more with the park, draw up new plans for conservation purposes and execute plans that had been designed already. Subsequently, the board of the NPDoT decided to deselect the chairman. As the one strong conservationist in the board refused to participate in this act, the board came together in his absence to change the organisation's statute which enabled the board to deselect the chairman without an absolute majority. This acting has been called illegal by some members of the organisation. Though I did not find prove of illegal acting by the board, changing the statute to discharge a chairman seems questionable at the least.

### 6.3 National Park as provider of Ecosystem Services

*“Nature has become a utility area for humans. But it is not for the people, it is precisely for everything non-human, in its extreme form. As soon as humans let go of an area and let vegetation and birds come as they may, then it becomes nature again. But the (European) law is mainly concerned with numbers, for instance of plants and birds, things that one can hardly influence.”<sup>115</sup>*

As mentioned previously, the national park area used to be valued for its provisioning ecosystem services when it was used as a source of wood, animal food and peat, it is now almost solely valued for its cultural services as recreational area, aesthetic beauty and site of cultural heritage. Even the regulating services for instance as flood protection are hardly known. As the quote above shows, some parties (mainly conservationists) find that it should also be valued for the regulating ecosystem services that it might provide if human influence was minimised and biodiversity regulated naturally. Demands of utility are often overlapping the emotional and aesthetic value of the landscape as the comparison of landscape perception between locals, tourists and conservationists show. It seems that the current (Dutch) society scarcely appreciates and/or acknowledges affective values and always needs to tie it to e.g. biodiversity, water-management, and recreational revenue to ascribe values to it. Emotional values are mostly used for public relations and marketing of the park, for instance as a

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<sup>115</sup> “Natuur is een gebruiksgebied geworden voor mensen. Maar het is niet voor mensen, het is juist voor alles andere dat geen mensen is, in zijn uiterste vorm. Zodra mensen een gebied loslaten en je laat de vegetatie en vogels komen zoals ze komen, dan wordt het weer natuur. Maar de (Europese) wetgeving gaat heel erg over aantallen, bij voorbeeld van plantjes en vogels, dingen die je nauwelijks kunt beïnvloeden.” - I018

romantic pastoral landscape or bird island, and shaping the image of the landscape to fit the narrative.

While locals are mostly relating to their environment with regards to its utility and occasional affective visions/values and nostalgia-tinted Biophilia, tourists most appreciate the aesthetic values, diversity of landscapes and opportunity for recreation. Conservationists on the other hand, though often sharing the local's affective vision, usually have a clear focus on particular species. Many conservationists have their own area of expertise and are considering other species and ecosystems more as means to an end to support 'their' species. They are interested in scientific values and research, and often everything hinges on numbers as those numbers determine e.g. the amount of subsidies or protection that a specific area or species can receive. Furthermore, in the branding of Texel and the national park as bird-island, plenty of research on improved mental well-being in relation to nature is not paid great attention.

As a fate shared with most other national parks, traditional local structures and (perhaps to some extent also customs) are being rebranded as tourist attractions. The traditional role of national parks was to prevent natural areas from becoming personal property and enabling the general public to access the area<sup>116</sup>. As such it was also supposed to serve as a form of islands of wilderness that are set apart from society. However, this does not work in most of Europe due to geographical limits<sup>116</sup>. As European parks are mostly IUCN category II landscapes (see appendix), their primary aim is that of conservation of uninhabited and inhabited landscapes on public- and privately owned land. Since the 1990s, national park organisations must strive for economic and social well-being of the local residents according to the Environmental Act (1995) which can lead to conflicting interests. In several cases like the one of Scotland's Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, planning decisions have started to prioritise economic development and will even turn to means as drastic as the re-opening of a goldmine. The new conservation paradigm favours "the market as the saviour of biodiversity"<sup>117</sup>, an economic focus that contradicts the traditional conservation goals of wild landscapes. Relating to this also is the previously mentioned resource paradox, also called 'Creative Destruction Idea' which states, that "natural areas, for example, offer a resource to be marketed, yet overuse (potentially through tourism) could destroy the natural beauty upon which the tourist experience depends, thereby jeopardising future tourism potential."<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Bell & Stockdale 2015

<sup>117</sup> Bell & Stockdale 2015:260

## 6.4 Research Questions Revisited- Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

To conclude this thesis, I will revisit the research-questions that guided the research, analyse them, and give my policy recommendations accordingly. The research question of this thesis is: *How are natural values experienced and negotiated by stakeholders of the National Park Dunes of Texel and what effect does this have on the use and perception of the Park?*

I will strive to answer this question by progressing through the sub-questions that examined parts of this question. The first sub-question asked: *What vision of nature conservation does the park organisation have and in how far is this vision shared by the different stakeholders?*

The National Park Dunes of Texel states that it has a clear vision on nature conservation and the aim and purpose of the National Park itself. These have been worked out under the previous chairman (H. J. Lindeboom) and have the guiding principle “Passing the National Park (unique nature) on to the following generations in an improved state”. It focusses on four main aspects. These aspects are nature conservation and development, nature-oriented recreation, informing and educating, and research to support the management of the Park<sup>118</sup>. The “Strategic Goals” of the NPDoT Foundation for the future are to establish the NPDoT as a strong brand, making it a piece of “nature with international allure”, improve the distribution of the public within the park, improve the embedding of the Park into the socio-economic landscape, and improve the Park’s governance<sup>118</sup>. The Park’s visions and prospects for the future include an expansion of the Park surface area to include areas of other nature/conservation organisations (SBB and Natuurmonumenten), and becoming more financially independent. This vision shows a clear focus on the cultural ecosystem services that the park provides and the most efficient way for economic exploitation of these resources to benefit the park and the island population. As described previously this puts nature in the park in a precarious situation of being the main attraction in danger of being diminished by overutilization.

Though not all protected areas on Texel are part of the national park, all share the characteristic of being designed and maintained by human stakeholders. “It has been a very long process to determine how much nature is permitted on Texel and where it has to be

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<sup>118</sup> Lindeboom 2017

located.”<sup>119</sup> As this quote by one of the locals shows, nature on the island is very much controlled and commodified to suit human needs. Almost all of the local participants stated that they are content with the natural areas as they are and would not like any more protected areas on Texel. As mentioned previously, this lack of ‘natural nature’ is part of the general trend within national parks, where wilderness has been mostly banned in national parks in favour of a multifunctional park model which integrates conservation, recreation and sustainable development<sup>120</sup>. The global sustainability agenda tries to combine environmental with economic land use and agriculture which has resulted in a recent interpretation of “National Park” as a label to market the countryside and commodify natural landscapes. This has led to an exploitation of natural landscapes for recreational activities and tourism as source of income, especially for regions on the periphery, with little other sources of income<sup>88</sup>. Texel falls into this category of an area on the geographic and economic periphery of the country, with little skilled labour and high dependency on the tourist industry. Therefore, the vision of the NPDoT organisation of the national park label as marketing aspect and the exploitation of the cultural ecosystem services for recreation and tourism can be said to be widely shared among the local population.

However, not all members of the NPDoT organisation hold the same natural values and appreciation of ecosystem services. Though different sources have confirmed that it is very beneficial to work in a comparatively small organisation like the NPDoT which involves only one municipality (Texel) and one terrain manager (SBB), the tumult that surrounded the dismissal of the previous chairman shows clearly, that it can also enable the (board)members to unify against individuals within the Park Organisation. The sole driver of this fall-out seems to have been an incompatibility of characters between the chairman and the board. The former chairman, being a very passionate and energetic nature conservationist, was dissatisfied with the lack of drive and engagement of the NPDoT board who had failed to take the measures and decisions that the chairman expected, and continued to allocate the workload to the workgroups. Hence strong differences of opinions on the role of the NPDoT board and vision for the future development of the Park has led to the dismissal of the chairman in a procedure whose compliance with the official guidelines has been questioned

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<sup>119</sup> “het is een heel lang proces geweest om vast te stellen hoeveel natuur er op Texel mag komen en waar het moet liggen.” –C019

<sup>120</sup> Bell & Stockdale 2015

by different parties. It can therefore be said, that this conflict illustrates the political instability of the relatively young foundation and the lack of influence from the ‘outside’, i.e. the province or the government who have “abandoned the Park and left it to its fate”<sup>121</sup>. Though outside the scope of my research, this knowledge might be useful for the current negotiations<sup>122</sup> about the relationship between the authorities and the National Parks, in which also members of the NPDoT board are participating. From the local media I gather that a new chairman has been found, unfortunately I did not have a chance to interview him on his motivations and plans for his new role.

When considering the plans for the future development of the national park, the board might benefit from considering ecological anthropology research and theories, for example on cognitive processes. Rossi et al state that there are three interrelated cognitive processes that influence the visitor’s experiences when visiting national parks. Firstly, “perceptions of adverse environmental impacts in parks”, secondly, “perceptions of the appropriateness of the behaviour and activities of other users”, and thirdly, “appraisals of the efficacy of park management”<sup>123</sup>. According to these experiences, a sense of place within the park may be created or prevented which is the reason why visitors may feel attracted to some parks but not to others which validates further research into the experiences that users of the park have.

This research has shown that locals as well as visitors have a lot of appreciation for divers and dynamic landscapes in which nature is left to itself and is free to develop naturally. This could be factored in when creating new schemes for the management of the national park and result in a less controlled management in which areas can develop without human influence. Though the natural succession of plants might replace some key species like orchids, the investment for management could be reduced and the successive plants might bring unexpected surprises which could become new features of the national park. This would also create more diverse attractions for the many recurring visitors who would not visit the same area or excursion twice, but would be interested to follow the change of landscape over time.

According to Rossi et al, people need to be able to feel a sense of place and identify themselves with a park for them to accept the significance of the park and the policy means that are necessary to maintain the park as the visitor’s perceptions impact on the political

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<sup>121</sup> Quote C007

<sup>122</sup> Information obtained from I016

<sup>123</sup> Rossi et al 2015:42

commitment to establishing or rejecting national parks. As can be seen in Figure 10, the participants of the research strongly objected the introduction of new species. The NPDoT had introduced Exmoor Ponies and Scottish Highlanders (Galloways) to manage the grass in the national park. As they are no native species (which is very clear to most visitors), they might prevent an identification of visitors with the national park and a feeling of place. In the view of the spirited discussion in favour of sheep grazing in the national park, this research points out that despite potential higher costs, substituting the ponies and cattle with native Texel sheep might improve the valuation of the national park by locals and tourists alike.

*2) What causes conflict between the different stakeholders and how are the conflicts expressed?*

On the whole, most informants within the NPDoT claimed to be fairly content with the way that the Park is organised, and that the constrictions that are caused by living on an island encourages healthy discussions aiming at finding mutually acceptable compromises. Nevertheless, there are a number of discussions and conflicts among the larger group of stakeholders of the National Park, of which not all member within the organisation seem to be equally aware.

The most prominent of conflicts has of course been the detrimental effect of different visions based on an appreciation for either ecological or economical value of the national park as well as a somewhat idiosyncratic take on introducing and managing non-native species which was solved by parting ways with the non-compliant chairman. This in turn might lead to speculations over the democracy of a nature conservation organisation in which nature organisations are represented by a minority in a very small board of only eight members and therefore can easily be overruled.

A related issue is the one of definition and purpose of the Park. Although there is the previously named guiding principle and main aspects, there is no clear definition of the tasks and responsibilities of the Park. In connection with the lack of legal status and lack of authority for law enforcement, this leaves the NPDoT organisation somewhat purposeless, powerless, and entirely dependent on the local terrain manager, which is the Forest Authority (SBB). This is also confirmed by the frequently occurring perception among the locals, that the National Park is actually a SBB project. Especially an organisation that is as heavily

reliant on volunteers as the NPDoT needs a clear definition and focus to clarify the roles of all parties and avoid a repetition of the previous conflict.

A conflict that is much related to the lack of authority and law enforcement is the issue of access and road use. It concerns the recreational use of the NPDoT by numerous parties, the most prominent of them being mountain bikers, dog owners, and to some extent equestrians. The NPDoT has a scheme to build a 100km mountain bike path, of which parts are already in use. These are mainly in the forest de Dennen, which is criss-crossed by a very dense net of paths, pedestrians, equestrians, regular cyclists and mountain bikers, which all have their own designated tracks. This neat organising of uses would in theory prevent incidents and disturbances among the users, but in practice it is not, due to “reckless mountain bikers going off the designated paths and even create their own paths by vandalism”<sup>124</sup>. The extremely limited capacities of the local Forest Authority are severely strained by this, forcing the NPDoT to use a large part of their budget to hire additional law enforcers<sup>125</sup>. Several sources have confirmed, that the offensive mountain bikers are almost solely locals who are bored with the existing routes and therefore create their own, while visitors usually adhere to official paths. The other conflict concerning the recreational use of the NPDoT arises from the behaviour of users of the National Park. Dogs that are off the leash or in areas that are forbidden for dogs, and frighten other users create dangerous situations for cyclists and equestrians. Though incidents generally seem to be without severe consequences they do have a very negative impact on the experience of other recreationists and therefore their perception of nature in the National Park. Unlike the mountain biking issues, these offences appear to be caused by locals and tourists in fairly even measures. Unfortunately, my attempts to contact the local cycling organisation and dog club for interviews were unsuccessful.

These observations are supported by the concept interpersonal conflict theory which states “that conflict occurs when there is goal interference due to other recreationist’s behaviour.”<sup>126</sup> The social value conflict theory elaborates on this and explains that even conflicts or activities from other users that cannot be observed directly can result in conflict and perceived problems for other users.<sup>127</sup>

Other discussions concern the hunting of ‘damaging’ animals like the wild cats, grey geese, and predatory birds. The protection of meadow birds currently is a hot topic in the

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<sup>124</sup> C007

<sup>125</sup> C014

<sup>126</sup> Rossi et al 2015:44

<sup>127</sup> Rossi et al 2015



National Park as well as the Netherlands in general. Fighting their decline has become the main object of many nature and bird protection organisations. Though the meadow birds themselves do not breed in the National Park, their predators, harriers and seagulls do, which leads to discussions among different stakeholders on the ethics and effects of hunting those animals.

Another unexpected find was the rather limited interest of the local population towards the national park, meaning the geographic area as well as the NPDoT organisation. Although the area of de Slufter and de Hors, which have a very impressive scenery was widely appreciated, the rest of the park was often valued most as a tourist attraction, as tourists are the main source of income on the island and have an impact on every single aspect on the islanders lives. Most comments regarding the park were along the lines of “I pass it on the way to the beach”. Some locals were using the park as workout/exercise area, but on the whole the park did not seem to affect the local participant’s lives. I found this quite disappointing because I had expected a more spirited stance, either for or against the park and its foundation.

The local conservationists obviously were in favour of the park and at least the fiercer ones seemed to be engaged in a constant struggle to keep people out of certain areas to allow the wildlife to be undisturbed. However, this group was marginal and composed almost entirely out of people who had moved to Texel at some point of their adult life.

Lastly, there seems a looming overall discontent of the local population against the installing of protected areas that also influence the local perception of the National Park. Changing existing zones to e.g. close off a specific area or extending the Park therefore would need to be prepared very carefully in a gradual and public process. Furthermore, socio-historic ties need to be taken into consideration to avoid a ‘Ceres-Situation’. Previous research has shown that national parks can play major roles in the building of regional or even national identities<sup>128</sup>. Cultural Ecosystem services have “the potential to motivate and sustain public support for ecosystem protection”<sup>129</sup> and the landscape and/or wilderness can be used to represent national identity<sup>128</sup> which is hitherto not utilized to its full extent as the little acknowledgement and publicity of the NPDoT among the locals shows.

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<sup>128</sup> Bell & Stockdale 2015

<sup>129</sup> Daniel et al. 2012:8813

*3) What influence does legislation have on the possible actions of stakeholders and their perception of the National Park Dunes of Texel?*

Legislation and especially the destination plan of the municipality have clearly had an impact on the perception of protected nature areas on Texel, as the Ceres debacles shows. Additionally, ‘Natura 2000’ and ‘Natuurbeschermingswet’ (see appendix) were frequently named as sources of discontent and increased bureaucracy. However, these laws are only of concern for nature organisations and the agricultural sector and seemed to be of no concern for the general public. While farmers are influenced especially by the Natura 2000 law, this does not seem to colour their perception of the National Park, of which they seem to have a rather indifferent opinion (though it must be noted that I did not have the chance to interview farmers living directly next to the park). The only perceived nuisance seems to be the so called buffer zone, a legally determined area containing a stretch of land along the park in which some activities like hunting and use of certain substances are prohibited to prevent the effects from leaking into the protected area. The major issue of the lack of a clear legal definition of the National Park, its purpose, responsibility and ties to the province and government, is something that the general public is completely unaware of.

Another issue is the restriction on tourist accommodations on the island (beddenstop). Though everyone seems to agree that the aim is to get more ‘quality’ tourism instead of large quantities, for example by upscaling from camping to ‘glamping’ (glamorous camping with luxurious tents and all mod-cons) opportunities the general perception seems to be that those are high-income tourists who are cultivated and spend a lot of money. The national park could bandwagon that trend and engage even more in specialised PR and improved collaboration with accommodation owners to engage in ecotourism and attract visitors with a passion and high esteem for nature instead of the currently prevalent ‘nature consumer’. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the dwindling support of the national government and provinces was a recurring subject during this research. National parks are now obliged to offer providing ecosystem services to their surrounding by generating revenue for the local population as well as maintaining the parks themselves (to some degree). The need to look for alternative funding can lead to a shifting of values within the park’s management<sup>130</sup> which arguably is already taking place in the NPDoT and has led to a shift in values from intrinsic- aesthetic to economical ones.

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<sup>130</sup> Rossi et al. 2015

*4) Can the traditional rift between local conservation and conservation efforts from 'outside' still be seen today and is this possibly mirrored in the stakeholder's relationships? If so how?*

I have not seen a discrepancy between the conservation efforts of 'locals' and 'outsiders', i.e. people who have lived on the island their entire life and those who moved there in later life. The reason for this might be that the conservation efforts seem to be almost solely coordinated by the 'new-comers'. As a matter of fact, only one of the 21 participants that were classified (by myself and themselves) as 'conservationist' was born on the island. I was told on several occasions, that "Texelaars simply do not care much for nature (conservation)" and therefore are only concerned if areas are "taken away" from them. On the other hand, I often heard that one reason for people moving to the island (apart from a job opening) was the island's rich and scenic nature. It therefore seems that the local conservation efforts are dominated by non-*Texelaars* while the *Texelaars* are mostly uninvolved and that the local nature is much more appreciated by outsiders and 'new'-locals than *Texelaars*. Hence, though the *Texelaars* have a clear connection with the landscape of the island and have a number of significant places like *de Hors*, *de Slufter* and the *Ceres Beach* that are ingrained in the collective memory of the population, the dominating sentiment that I found in my research was: Leave everything as it is, it is good exactly the way it is now. Therefore, the local perception of the NPDoT is somewhat indifferent as long as no great changes take place and the (mental) ownership of locals is not contested. It seems necessary for the NPDoT organisation to conduct further research into the local's feeling of place within the national park to decide on managing strategies that agree to the ecological as well as socio-cultural aspects of the park.

In regard to sub-question five (5) *How do different points of view on natural values affect policies with regard to the organisation of the management of the Park and the relationships among the stakeholders?* it can be said that the stakeholders seem to hold values of different social spheres (egocentric, anthropocentric and ecocentric sphere<sup>131</sup>). Despite partial overlap, these disparities in values have caused different perceptions of activities that are acknowledged as being appropriate to be conducted within the park. While most of the local participants seem to be moving within the egocentric and anthropocentric sphere, most conservationists seem to be moving in the ecocentric and anthropocentric sphere. Though the

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<sup>131</sup> Rossi et al. 2015

parties might ‘meet’ in the anthropocentric sphere, the differences in values are in some cases too drastic to be reconciled, as the case of the discharged chairman shows. Obviously, general character traits and ability (and willingness) for political manoeuvres play a major role. Nevertheless, these traits are at least partly founded in the personal values of an individual which confirms that a too strong disparity of values can have negative impacts on protected areas and the management and organisation of said ones.

Another example of the effect of different value spheres is the perception of recreational activities, namely mountain bikers, in the national park. As one conservationist put it: “I think the most important discussions currently still refer to which recreational activities belong or don’t belong in the National Park.”<sup>132</sup> The term ‘belong’ (NL: ‘thuishoren’) indicates a strong (emotional) connection to values which shows that the speaker (and by association his fellow conservationists) have a strong stance within the ecocentric sphere. While some member of the general public and especially from cycling and sporting organisation feel that the national park, namely de Dennen create the ideal natural environment for outdoor sports, other locals and especially conservationists consider these activities inappropriate. These different perceptions should be consoled, if necessary for instance by moving the activities of some stakeholders to the periphery of the park where they might have less impact on other visitors. As Rossi et al put it: “Knowing what types of visitors are likely to use a protected area, and the values that those visitors hold, is crucial for successful management and for engendering public support for conservation.”<sup>133</sup>

Relating to the stakeholders’ values is another issue that was a recurring theme throughout my research: A shift in public behaviour that results in a lack of social control. The general public seems to become increasingly egocentric and unwilling to exercise or accept social control over others. This comes in combination with a sense of entitlement which I have experienced myself many times in the Netherlands: If individuals feel that they have the right to do something or be somewhere, they often do not take kindly to reprimands. As one of my local contacts stated: “There is an increased, nationwide tendency to abstain from reprimanding someone’s behaviour because they are afraid to be assaulted verbally or physically.”<sup>134</sup> The phenomenon described by this conservationist can also be seen in regards

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<sup>132</sup> “Ik denk dat de belangrijkste discussies altijd nog wel gaan over welke recreatieve activiteiten wel of niet in het Nationaal Park thuishoren.”-C007

<sup>133</sup> Rossi et al. 2015:50

<sup>134</sup> “Landswijd is er veel meer de tendens dat mensen niet durven iemand om zijn gedrag aan te spreken omdat ze bang zijn verbaal of fysiek te worden aangevallen.” –C007

to the mountain bikers: “Mountain bikers are not the nicest of folks around here. If you tell them off they verbally harass you.”<sup>135</sup> It seems like the lack of social control is also lowering the *Hemmschwelle* (‘inhibition threshold’) of individuals which in turn results in damaging activities like the illegal creation of paths within the forest or dogs running off the leash in protected areas. More research into (the lack of) social control might be necessary to determine the causes and effects of it and potentially remedy them. “If people do not believe that a national park meets their needs, or if they feel unwelcome in or excluded from these parks, they may be unlikely to support such parks, with potential ramifications for biodiversity conservation and social equity<sup>136</sup>”

In regard to the research question<sup>137</sup> one can conclude that natural values are experienced by physically moving in the area of the national park. The interpretations and negotiations of this experience are guided by culture-based value concepts and skilled visions that often relate to Biophilia and nostalgic vision that were acquired during the formative years of childhood and youth. This might explain why the stakeholder group of conservationists seemed fairly static and led by non-born Texelaars, many of which stated that they had been interested in nature since their childhood. The underlying values are different for members of different stakeholder groups. Despite partial overlap, these disparities in values have caused different perceptions of management strategies and activities that are acknowledged as being appropriate to be conducted within the park.

While it is difficult to change people’s values, knowing them can enable an organisation to improve its management and decision making as well as their long-term planning<sup>138</sup>. Therein lays the value of this research as it points out disparities in perception and valuing nature of different stakeholders of the National Park Dunes of Texel. By using this knowledge, the NPDoT organisation could make better informed decision on topics like zoning and planned infrastructure. Nevertheless, there still is a large scope for further research, for instance on how the perceptions and values of visitors are translated into behaviour.

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<sup>135</sup> “Ja, mountainbikers zijn niet zo gezellig volk hier, hoor. Als je daar wat van zegt, dan krijg je toch een grote smoel!” –I015

<sup>136</sup> Rossi et al. 2015:42

<sup>137</sup> How are natural values experienced and negotiated by stakeholders of the National Park Dunes of Texel and what effect does this have on the use and perception of the Park?

<sup>138</sup> Rossi et al. 2015

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## 8. Appendix

### 8.1 List of relevant legal aspects/ laws etc. impacting on the NPDoT:

- \* Flora- en Faunawet
- \* Meerjarenplan Bosbouw, regeringsbeslissing 1986, Bosbeleidsplan, regeringsbeslissing 1994
- \* Core area of the EHS, NB, regeringsbeslissing 1990
- \* Groene Koersgebied VINEX, deel 1: ontwerp pbk 1990
- \* Onderdeel van het Nationaal Landschapspatroom Kustzone (Nota Landscha, regeringsbeslissing 1992)
- \* Onderdeel van het recreatief-toeristisch gebied Waddengebied binnen de RRS (Nota Kiezen voor recreatie, regeringsbeslissing 1993)
- \* Natuurlijk zelfregulerend duinlandschap, natuurdoeltype A en B, Ecosysteemvisie Duinen voor de wind, 1994
- \* Military exercise area for amphibian exercises
- \* Streekplan Noord-Holland Noord
- \* Recreatiebasisplan -> states that there should be no more than 47.000 beds on Texel
- \* Wildbeheerplan
- \* Wet op de ruimtelijke ordening (streek- en bestemmingsplan)
- \* Waterhuishoudingsplan (anti-verdrogingsbeleid)
- \* Ammoniakreductieplan
- \* NPs are parts of the “kerngebieden van de Ecologische Hoofdstructuur (EHS) van Nederland”

## 8.2 Table of IUCN Categories of Protected Areas

**Table 1** Categories and management objective of protected areas

IUCN <sup>a</sup> category number	Category name	Management objectives
I	Scientific reserve/strict nature reserve	To protect nature and maintain natural processes in an undisturbed state to permit scientific study, environmental monitoring, education, and the maintenance of genetic resources
II	National park	To protect natural and scenic areas of national or international significance for scientific research, education and recreation
III	National monument/ natural landmark	To protect and preserve nationally significant natural features because of their special interest or unique characteristics
IV	Managed natural reserve/ wildlife sanctuary	To protect nationally significant species, groups of species, biotic communities, or physical features of the environment where these require human manipulation for their perpetuation
V	Protected landscapes	To maintain nationally significant natural landscapes that are characteristic of the harmonious interaction of man and land while providing opportunities for public enjoyment through recreation and tourism
VI	Resource reserve	To protect natural resources for future use and to prevent or contain development activities that could affect the resource pending the establishment of further management objectives
VII	Natural biotic area/ anthropological reserve	To allow the way of life of societies living in harmony with the environment to continue undisturbed by modern technology
VIII	Multiple-use management area/managed resource area	To provide for the sustained production of water, timber, wildlife, pasture, and outdoor recreation

<sup>a</sup>International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Figure 17: Orlove & Bush 1996: 332

## 8.3 Survey Questions

### **Questionnaire Nature (Please circle the appropriate answer/s)**

1) **What is your favourite type of landscape?**

-

2) **Where are you from?**

- Netherlands
  - ➔ Which province?
- Germany
- Other (please specify)

3) **Where do you live?**

- City
- Suburb
- Village/ rural area
- Other (please specify)

4) **With whom are you visiting Texel?**

- On my own
- With a partner
- With my family

- With friends
- Other (please specify)

**5) Which age group are you in?**

- 8-12 (1)
- 13-18 (2)
- 19-25 (3)
- 26-35 (4)
- 36-45 (5)
- 46-55 (6)
- 56-64 (7)
- 65+ (8)

**6) What activities do you do here/ expect to be doing? (please circle all appropriate answers)**

- Going to the beach (swimming/ surfing/ diving etc.)
- Take part in a guided tour
- Hiking/ walking
- Cycling/ mountainbiking
- Watching animals (birds, mammals, marine animals etc.)
- Riding horses
- Going to a museum/ educational centre (e.g. Ecomare)
- Relax
- Other (please specify)

**7) Have you been to Texel before?**

- Yes
- No

**8) What is your favourite thing about Texel?**

-

**9) Do you know the Nationaal Park Duinen van Texel/ have you heard of it?**

- Yes
- No

**10) Have you ever been in the Nationaal Park Duinen van Texel?**

- Yes
- No

**11) What do you think of when you hear ‘nature’?**

-

**12) Which of those landscapes do you find the most natural one?**

- Sea
- Dunes
- Beach
- Farmland

- Wetlands/ flood plains
- mountain
- Forest
- Polders
- All of the above
- Other (please specify)

**13) Are humans allowed to change landscapes?**

(e.g. plant forests, build dunes, erase hills, create more land, close/ build lakes and rivers)

- Yes
  - No
  - Not sure/ no opinion
- **Why?** (please elaborate on your opinion)

**14) Are humans allowed to introduce new (wild) animals to an area in which they were not native and have no natural enemy?**

(e.g. non-native fish, frogs, lizards, rabbits, horses)

- Yes
  - No
  - Not sure/ no opinion
- **Why?** (please elaborate on your opinion)

**15) What does nature mean to you?**

-

**16) Please summarise nature in the Netherlands in a few words**

-

**Thank you for helping me with my research!**

### 8.4 List of Participants Example

<b>Number</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Methods</b> (Place, Participant Observation/ Questionnaire/ Interview/ Photo Elicitation/ Inverted Elicitation)	<b>Contact</b>	<b>Date, Signature</b>