

The Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation – A model for transnational cooperation in MSP and MSFD?

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Introduction

The Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (TWSC) was founded by Denmark, The Netherlands and Germany in 1978. The aim of the cooperation is to protect and conserve the Wadden Sea covering management, monitoring and research as well as political matters [1]. During its existence important benefits for the Wadden Sea have been achieved by TWSC [2,3].

For this research the TWSC was analysed along two major questions:

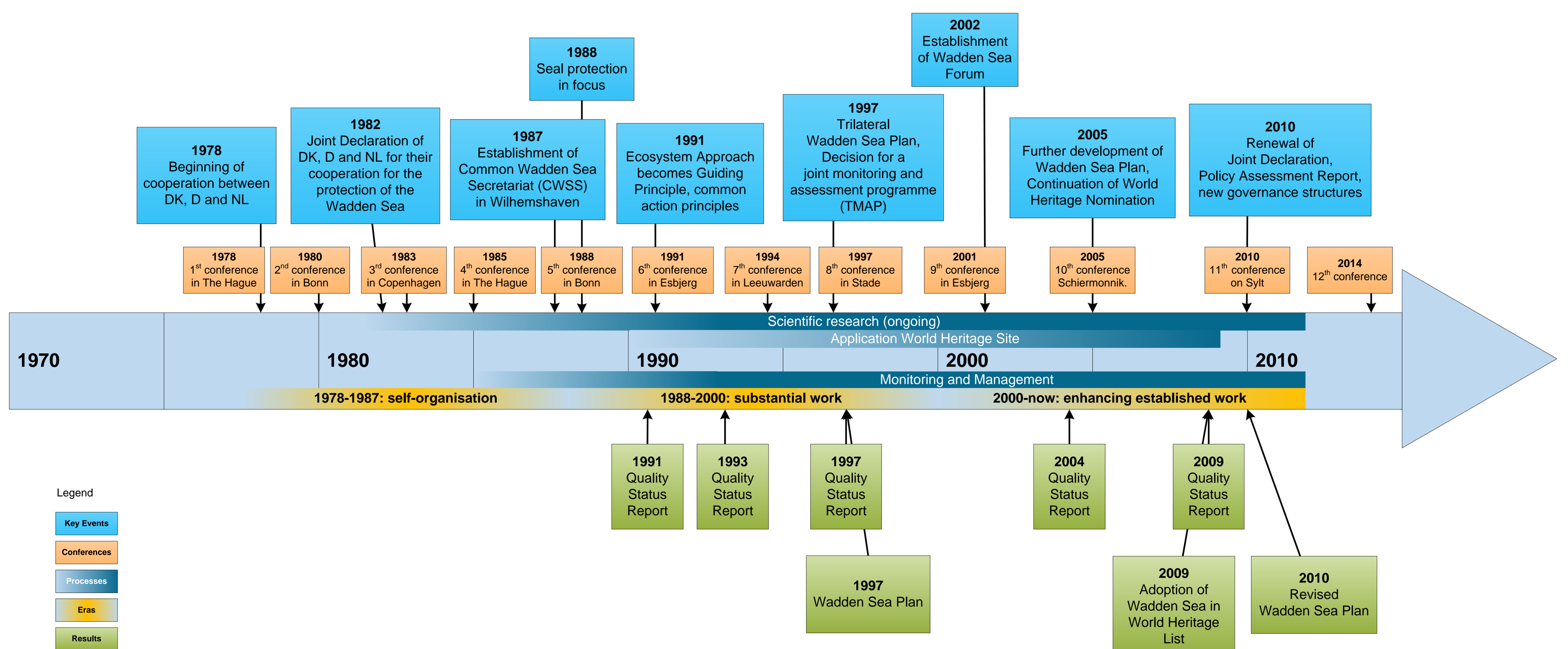
- Which factors of cooperation played an important role in the evolution of TWSC?
- Can TWSC be regarded as good example for transnational cooperation?

Method

In order to answer the central questions, three analytical steps were taken:

1. TWSC was analysed based on the Governance Baseline Method (GBM) by Stephen Olsen [4]. GBM rests on the assumption that ecosystem changes cause governance responses. Therefore, TWSC's institutional development has been reconstructed by document analysis (cf. Fig.).
2. The document-based results were checked and completed with four expert interviews which enabled insight into the cooperation outside the documents.
3. The third step outlined lessons for Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Key Events, Processes and Results of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation



Results

Important cooperation factors that influenced the transnational cooperation of TWSC:

- common interests (Joint Declaration 1982, 2010)
- thematic limitation
- small size of group
- spatial and emotional identity with Wadden Sea area
- responsible node of coordination (with long-time staff)
- legally non-binding character (flexible solutions possible)

All the factors result in a successful cooperation of over 25 years.

Discussion and Recommendations

Transferability of the TWSC approach to other contexts such as MSP and MSFD is conceivable but limited in practice. Other areas often have more neighbouring countries and therefore more diverse interests. Due to greater spatial variety there may be less spatial and emotional identity as in the TWSC case.

For transferring the success of the TWSC to other contexts one suggestion is to use existing conventions for Europe's regional seas as nodes of coordination. Within these conventions smaller groups could be built based on common interests and spatial identity/similarity. An interesting question is whether ecological regions coincide with regional identities.

Another suggestion is to start with non-statutory (non-governmental) cooperation, e.g. BaltSeaPlan.

References

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