

The Coast – “Heimat” & Region in Transition

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Concept of “Heimat”

The Concept of “Heimat” is closely related to ideas of place, place attachment and sense of place. Despite its difficult history, it is currently experiencing a renaissance in public interest and also in geographical, ethnological and psychological research [1].

“Heimat” is constructed individually and influenced by social norms and values. It refers to a place or a feeling of a person and relates to:

- **Social components (family, friends, ...)**
- **Emotional components (feelings, cultural background, language, ...)**
- **Spatial components (landscape, special places, natural phenomena, ...)**

Research area & empirical method

Several case studies on the European North Sea coast.

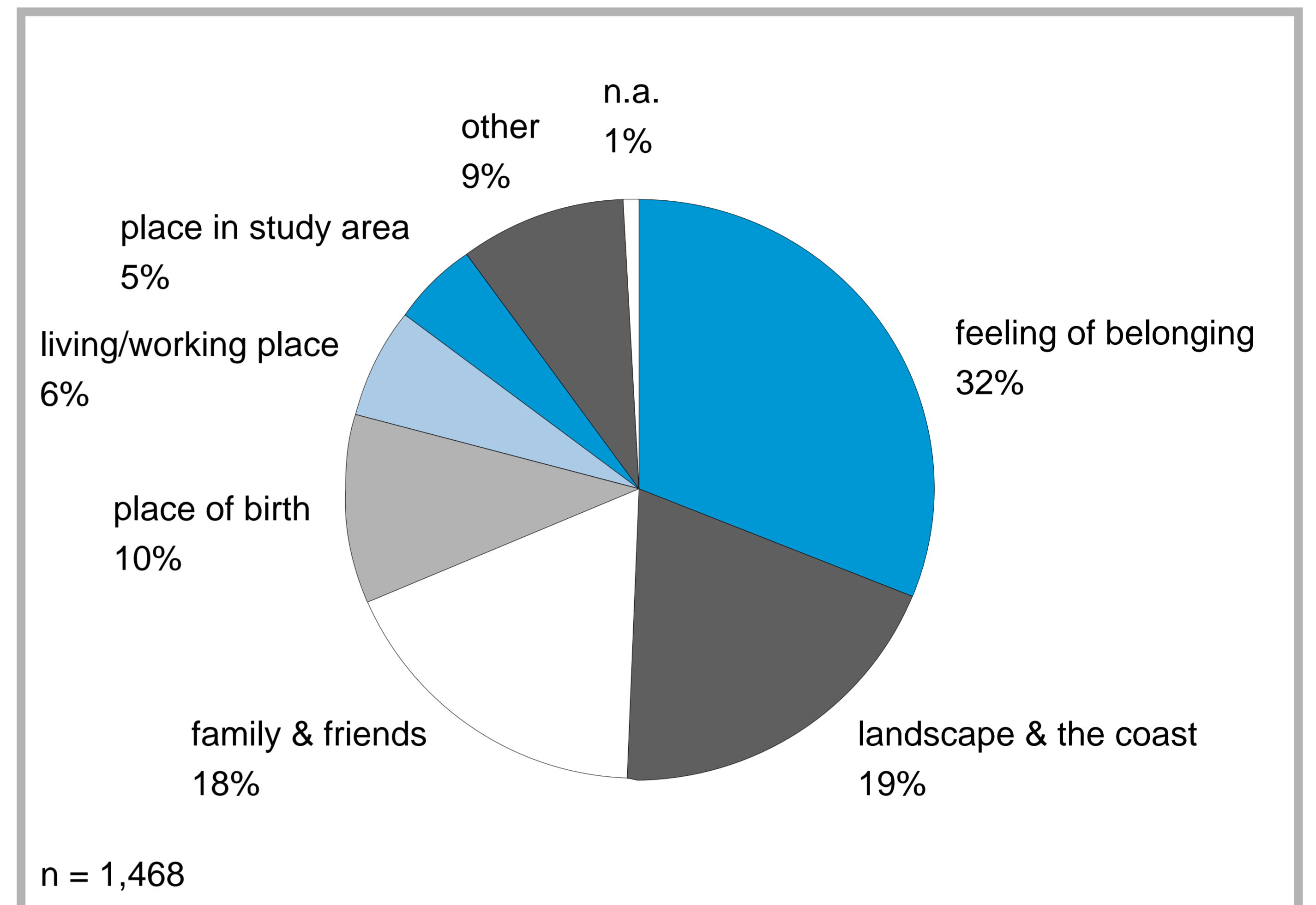
- **Germany (Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony)**
- **The Netherlands**
- **Denmark**

Quantitative household based questionnaires.

North Sea coast survey –

Schleswig-Holstein, Lower Saxony (2009, N=862) [2]

What does “Heimat” mean to you?



Space becomes place

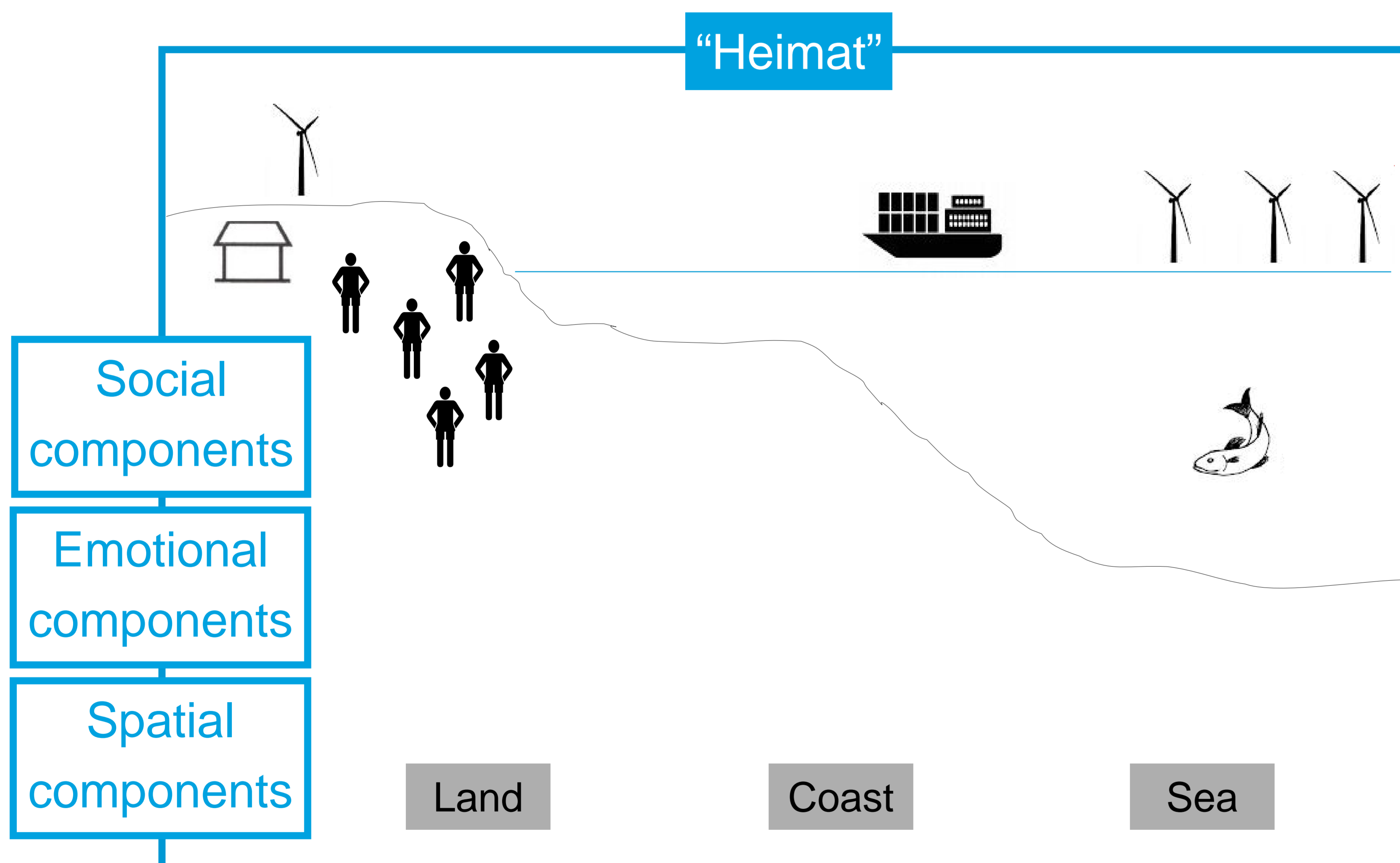


Figure: Daniela Siedschlag, Kira Gee

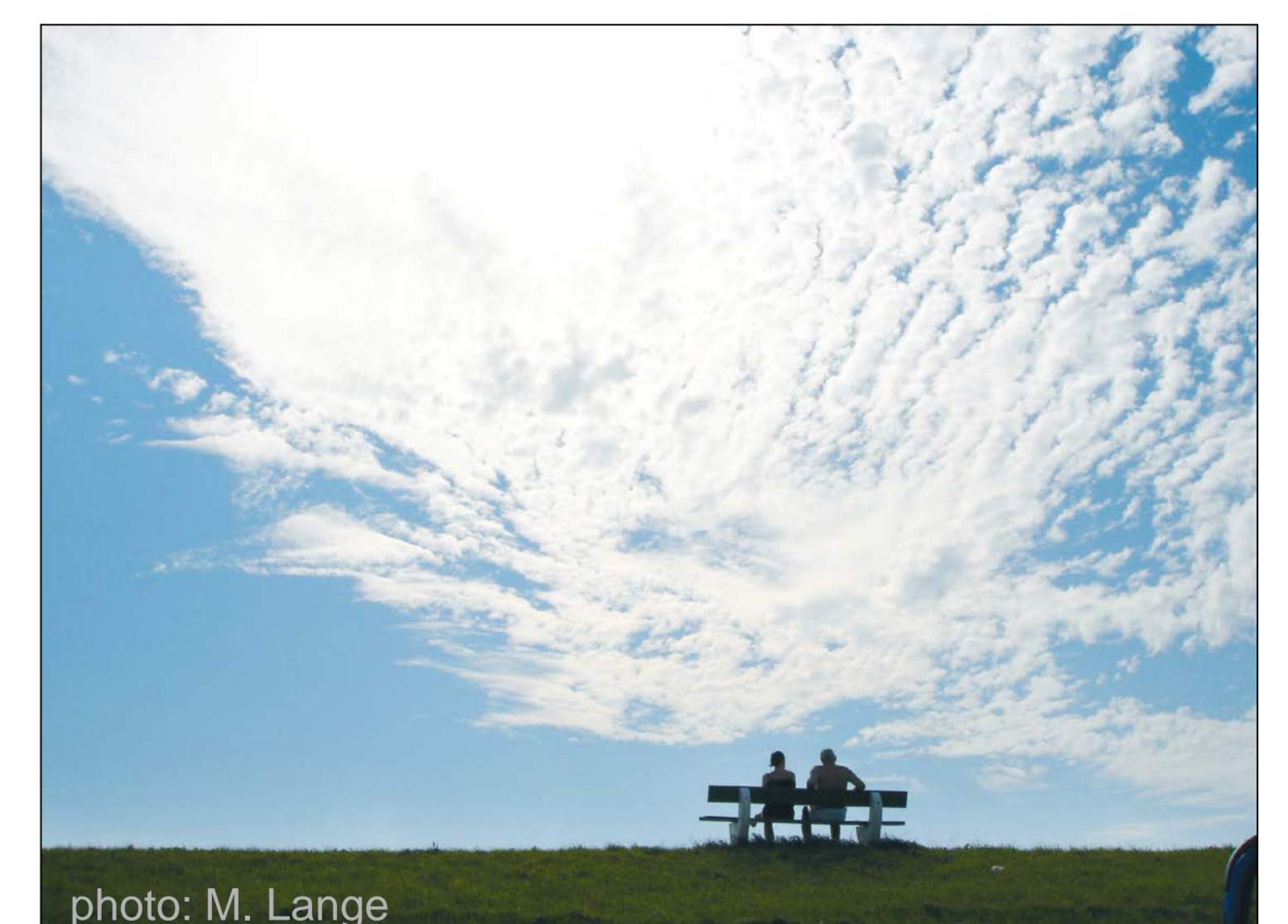
The European North Sea coast is much more than an abstract space or a planning place.

Transition processes like sea level rise, wind farming, demographic change, ... take place in a region that people call “Heimat”

Therefore regional planning processes in context of transition processes should include the view of coastal residents.

The concept of “Heimat” is an useful instrument for exploring peoples attachment to a region. It shows how coastal residents view the sea and shows the connections between people and their life worlds.

The concept of “Heimat” creates the basis for a suitable management strategy on the European North Sea coast.



References

- [1] Ratter, B. M.W. & Gee, K. (2012): Heimat – A German concept of regional perception and identity as a basis for coastal management in the Wadden Sea. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, doi: 10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2012.04.013.
- [2] Ratter, B., Sobiech, C. & Lange, M. (2009): Heimat, Umwelt und Risiko an der deutschen Nordseeküste. Die Küstenregion aus Sicht der Bevölkerung. GKSS Bericht 2009/10. Geesthacht.