

A Multi-Sector-Partnership in transnational risk management – Challenges for the Wadden Sea Forum

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Research Question

Climate change is perceived as future risk and is a transnational challenge, which does not stop at national borders. Risk management processes therefore require transnational perspectives, whose developments might induce institutional challenges and potential for new governance arrangements. We address these implications for the trilateral Wadden Sea Region (WSR) (figure 1) by enhancing trilateral risk management activities by focusing on benefits and challenges of enhanced involvement of stakeholder from public, private and civil sectors in form of a Multi-Sector-Partnership (MSP).

Methodology

In collaboration with the Wadden Sea Forum (WSF), a transnational stakeholder forum established in 2002, we developed an integrative risk management approach obtaining the MSP's contribution to transnational risk management. In a three-step workshop series we addressed the crucial steps of enhanced risk management: I) risk perception (visioning approach), II) risk structuring (bow-tie analysis), III) risk management visioning (scenario development). Resultant findings enabled us to discuss the WSF's capacity to deal with the new tasks as a MSP in trilateral risk management.

Findings for the Wadden Sea Region

The WSR is a multi risk area, facing risks resulting from natural hazards such as storm surges, as well as socio-economic risks such as demographic change and conflicting spatial uses. The last two demands high priority for enhancing risk management activities. To cope with these risks we identified the need for **greater attention to sectoral and societal perceptions** of these risk as much as the need to **keep a superordinate view on interlinkages and cascading effects** between multiple risks. Strengthening these issues through the WSF on a transnational level will constitute a major benefit for risk management processes in the WSR. Figure 2 highlights the capacity of the WSF for this new role – some key characteristics are well developed (green boxes), others need to be strengthened (yellow boxes).

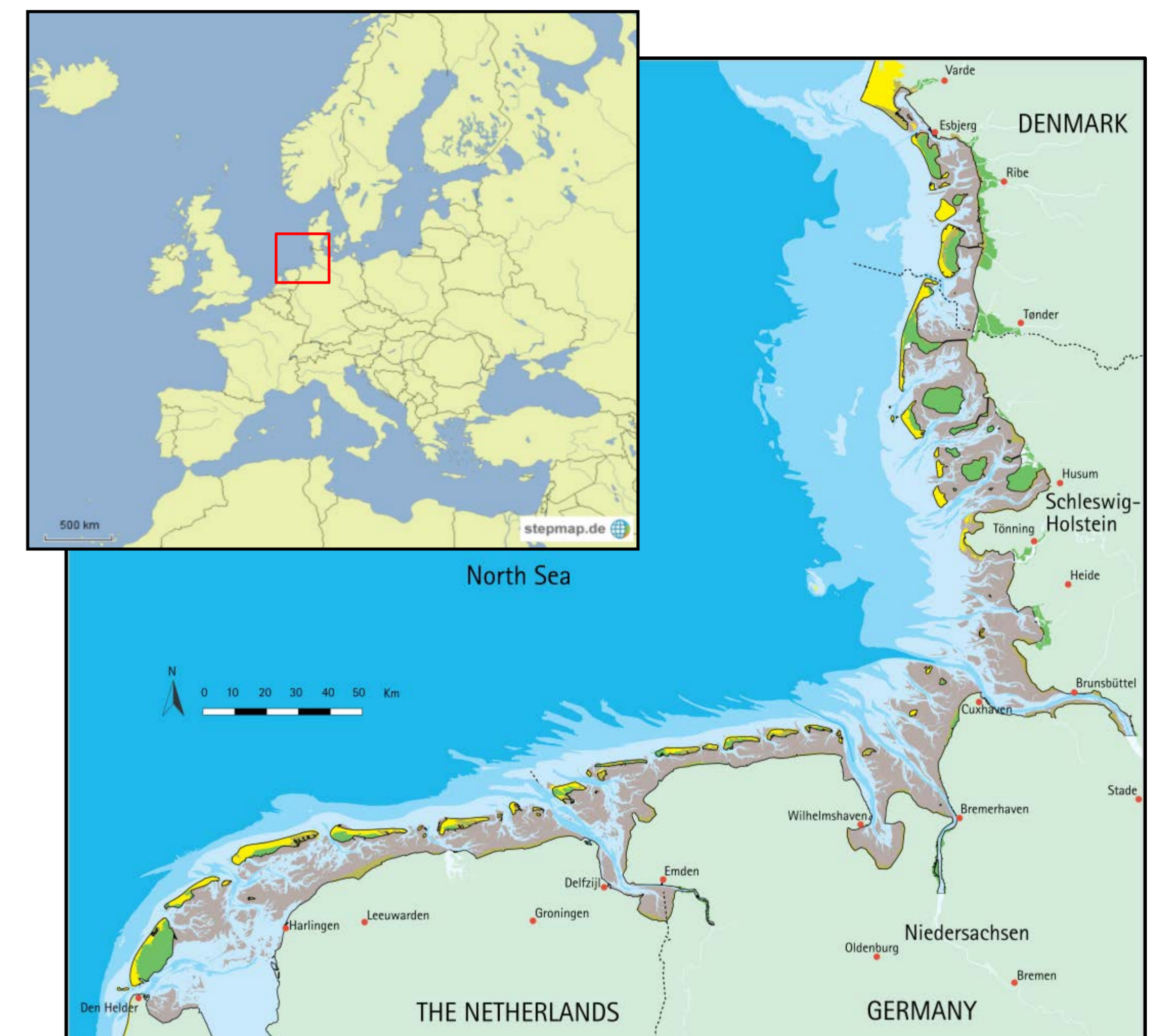


Figure 1: The trilateral Wadden Sea Region; Source: Common Wadden Sea Secretariat

Challenges for a Multi-Sector-Partnership

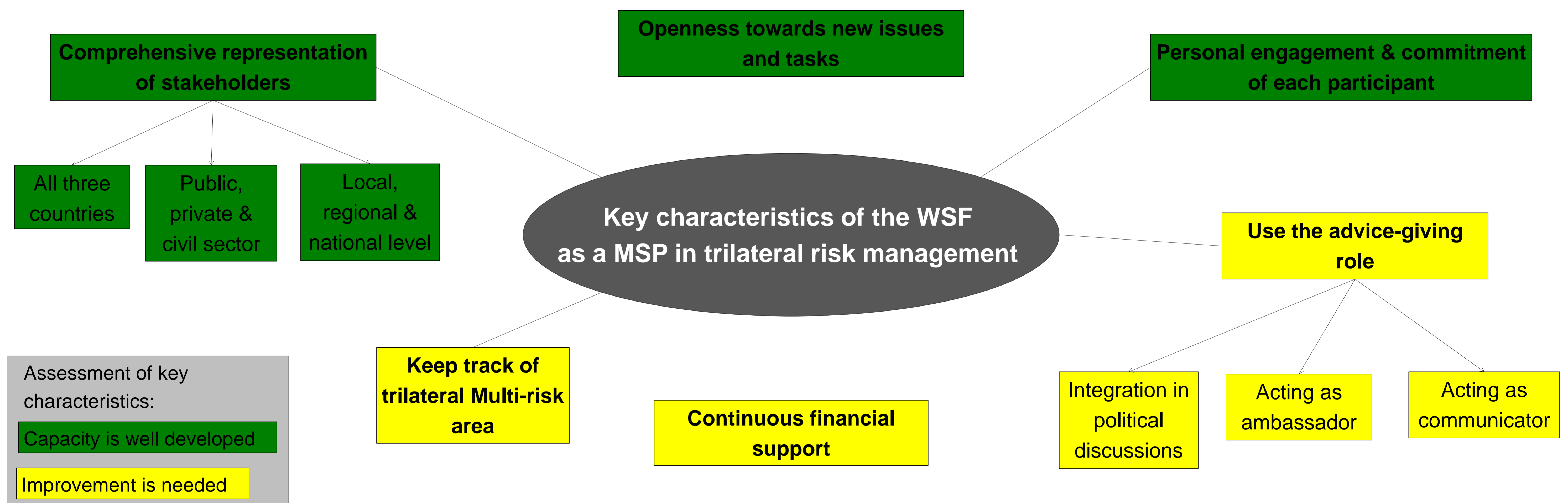


Figure 2: Assessment of key characteristics of the WSF as a MSP in trilateral risk management in the WSR

Findings

A MSP can take on a decisive role in transnational risk management by facilitating a re-conceptualization of risk management as a **continuous, collaborative, and communicative governance process**. The key role of the WSF as bridging organization facilitating **communication, cooperation, and awareness-raising** among stakeholders across the Wadden Sea Region was recognized. With a powerful and committed MSP (figure 2) the WSF as well as sectors and institutions in the WSR will benefit from close cooperation and gain improved acceptance of decisions and management measures.

Conclusion

A MSP represents multifaceted opportunities to deal with the challenges of disaster risk governance and is suitable to a wide range of different situations in natural hazard risk management as shown by the example of the WSF. The MSP can enhanced risk management strategies using its networks to communicate new developments as well as to support the implementation of already existing strategies. Once established, a MSP can work as a long-lasting supportive institution, provided that stakeholder commitment, as a fundamental pillar of collaborative, societal-based risk management, is continuously present.