

The Future of Past Reefs

Annet Pauwelussen



I am a marine social scientist with long-term experience working with communities and stakeholders in marine conservation and restoration research and practice, in tropical and temperate zones.

As assistant professor I work with the Environmental Policy Group, Wageningen University (Netherlands) and I am a visiting fellow at the University of Rhode Island Dep. of Marine Affairs (2024).

My **The Future of Past Reefs** project (2024-2028) focuses on oyster reef/bed restoration across the Northern Atlantic (US/Europe), funded by the Dutch Research Council (Veni grant).

Brief description of the research: There is growing interest in oyster restoration to reverse the on-going decline of ocean health. Networks of collaboration emerge across sectors and disciplines to bring back from the brink of extinction the oyster beds/reefs that once covered North Atlantic coasts. The majority of studies and programs in oyster restoration is of a technical and ecological nature. Yet, the realization is taking hold that oyster restoration is also inherently social, and politically conditioned. Oysters are uniquely entangled with transatlantic cultural history and maritime heritage, and local communities and aquaculturalists may have deep-seated knowledge and traditions around oysters. Also, upscaling from pilot projects requires broad societal and intersectoral engagement and enabling governance conditions.

In this context, I explore how different values, local histories and knowledge are part of current endeavors to restore oysters, and/or how this could be enhanced or made more visible.

Aim: To advance an empirically grounded understanding of the different values, knowledge and social histories related to oyster care in current restoration programs across the Northern Atlantic, to contribute to the development of inclusive and constructive collaboration networks across such differences.

Planned output:

- 4 (co-authored) academic articles
- 4 papers in outlets for wider public
- Audiovisual installation on human-oyster relations and heritage in different places
- Interactive workshops with stakeholders

Prospected field site regions:

- New York and Rhode Island
- The Solent and Mersea/Essex (UK)
- Voordelta, Zeeland (Netherlands)
- Brittany (France)

Collaboration: I'm reaching out to explore options for collaboration. This could range from an interview to a more in-depth site visit study. I am open to discuss how my work may be useful in return, e.g. sharing insights across sites, organizing stakeholder workshops, and raising public awareness through publications and the planned audiovisual exhibition.

Contact: annet.pauwelussen@wur.nl

website: www.annetpauwelussen.nl