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Ecodynamic solutions for the protection of intertidal habitats

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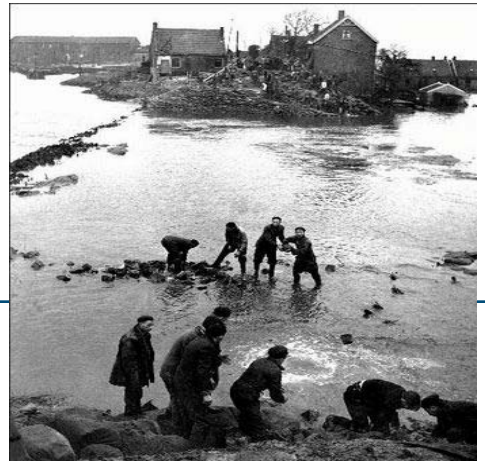
Coastal erosion: a worldwide problem

- a serious threat along many coastlines
- will increase due to human-induced changes and climate change (sea level rise, increased storminess)
- Oosterschelde (SW Netherlands)
  - Fast erosion of tidal flats due to infrastructural works



Oosterschelde

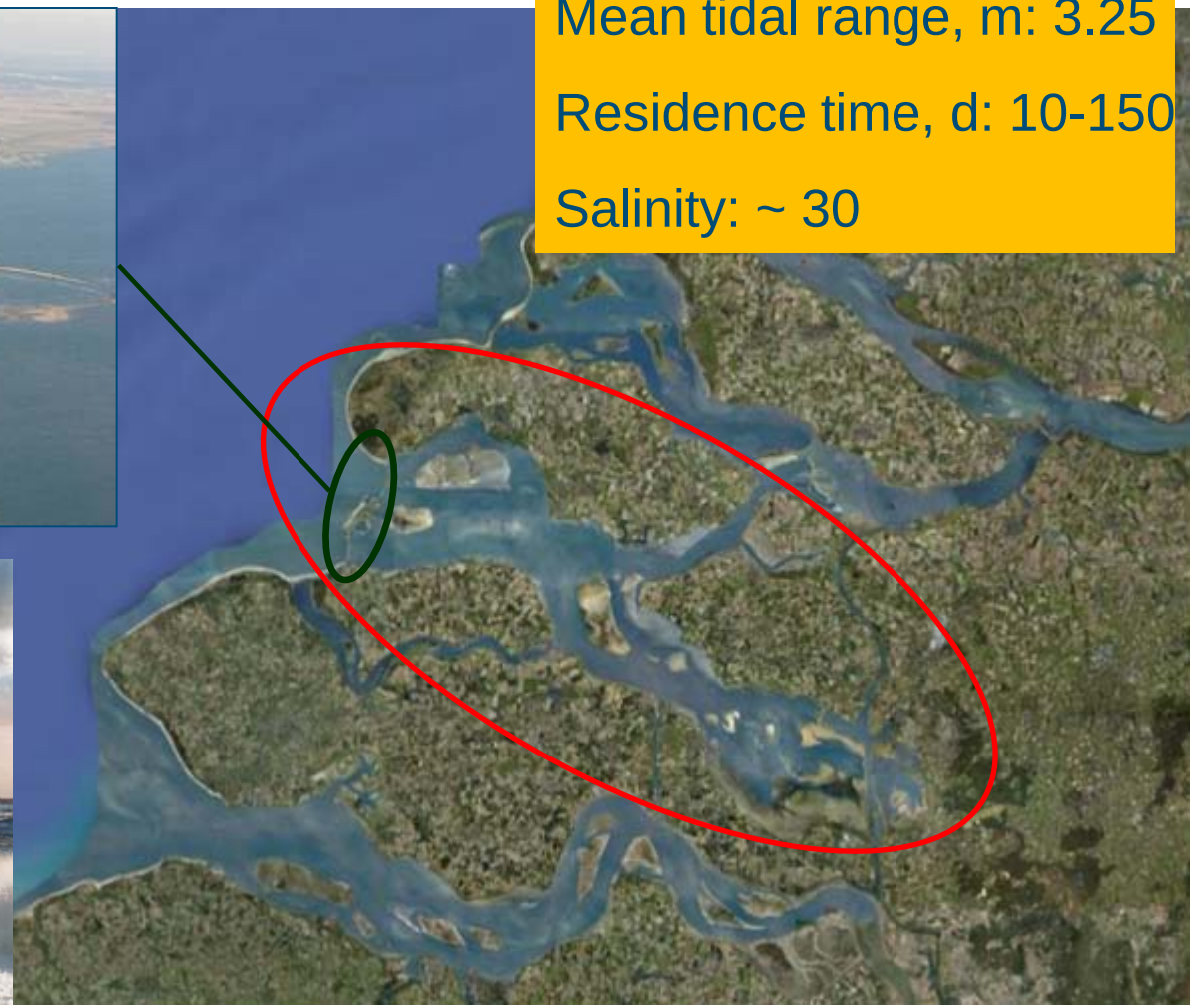
Total surface, km^2: 351

Tidal flats, km^2: 118

Mean tidal range, m: 3.25

Residence time, d: 10-150

Salinity: ~ 30



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“Sandhunger” Oosterschelde

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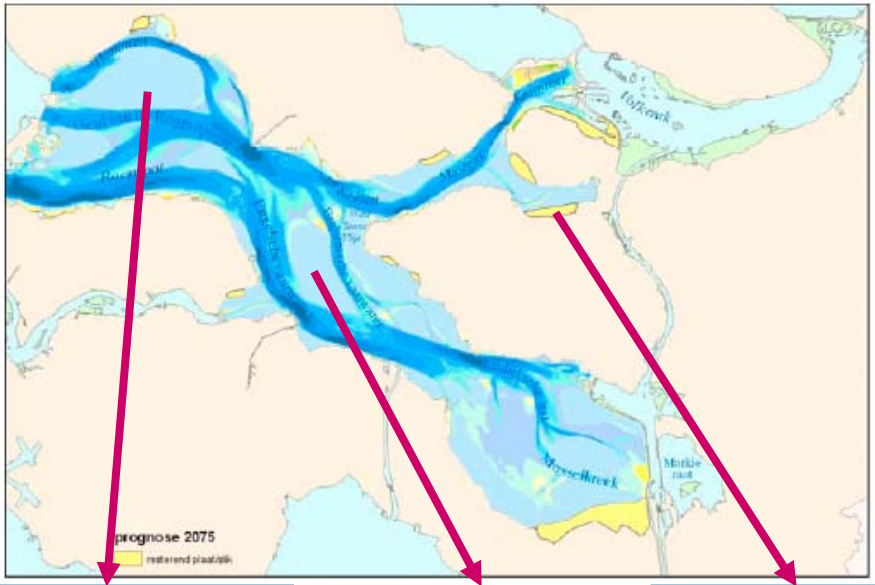
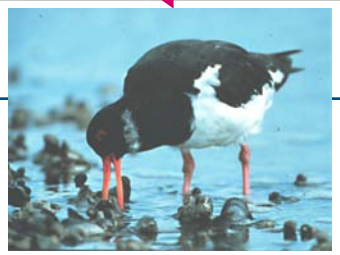
Consequences for nature and safety

- Loss of intertidal foraging habitats for birds and resting areas for seals
- Loss of protecting foreland (mudflats, marshes) for dikes





Building with Nature solutions

Short and medium term solutions:

Stabilize intertidal areas

- Sand nourishments for maintaining tidal flats
- Coastal protection by applying the concept of ecosystem engineers

Long term solutions: **sand import**

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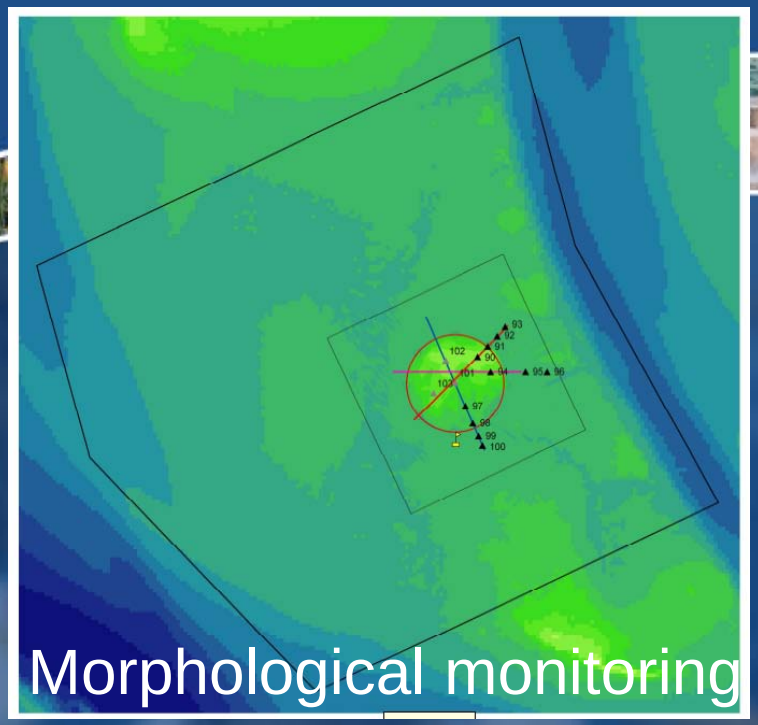
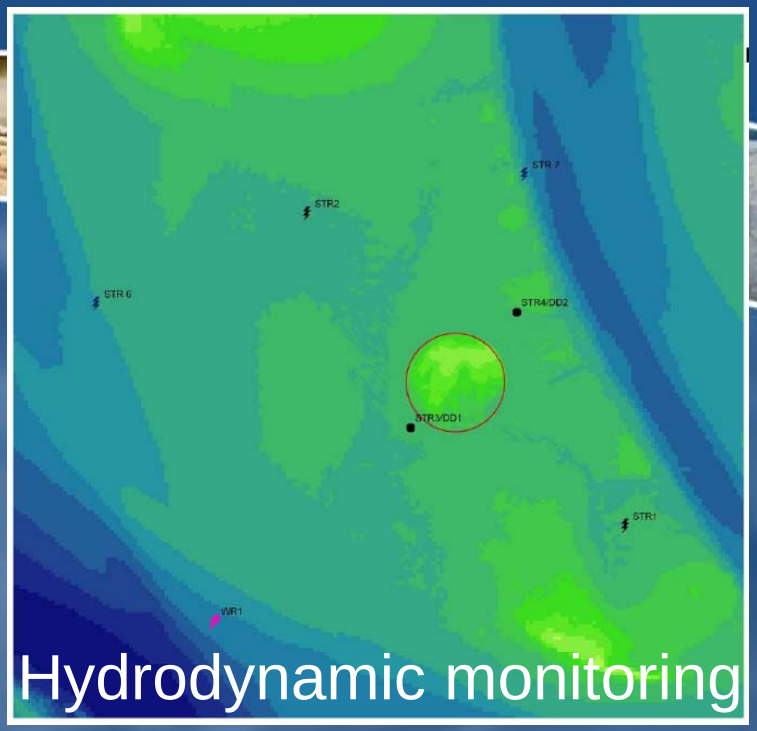
Nourishment Galgeplaat


Morphological monitoring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STR2
STR 6
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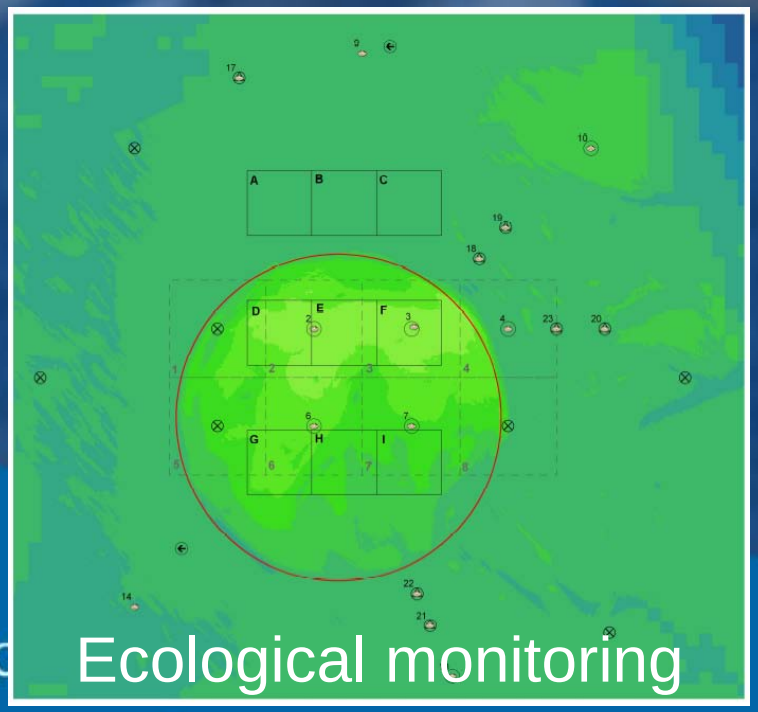
STR3/DD1
STR1
WR1
Hydrodynamic monitoring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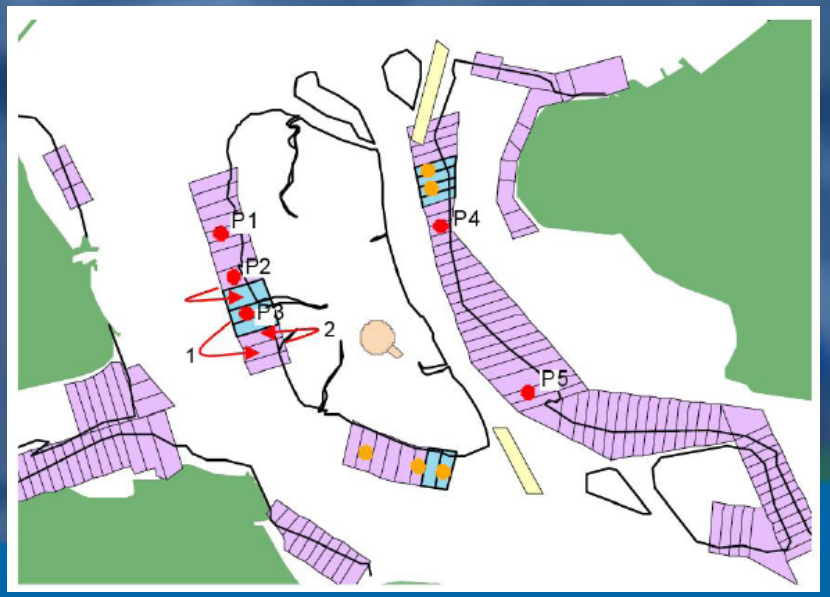
Ecological monitoring


P1
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2
Monitoring mussel beds

Argus-bio

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Argus-bio

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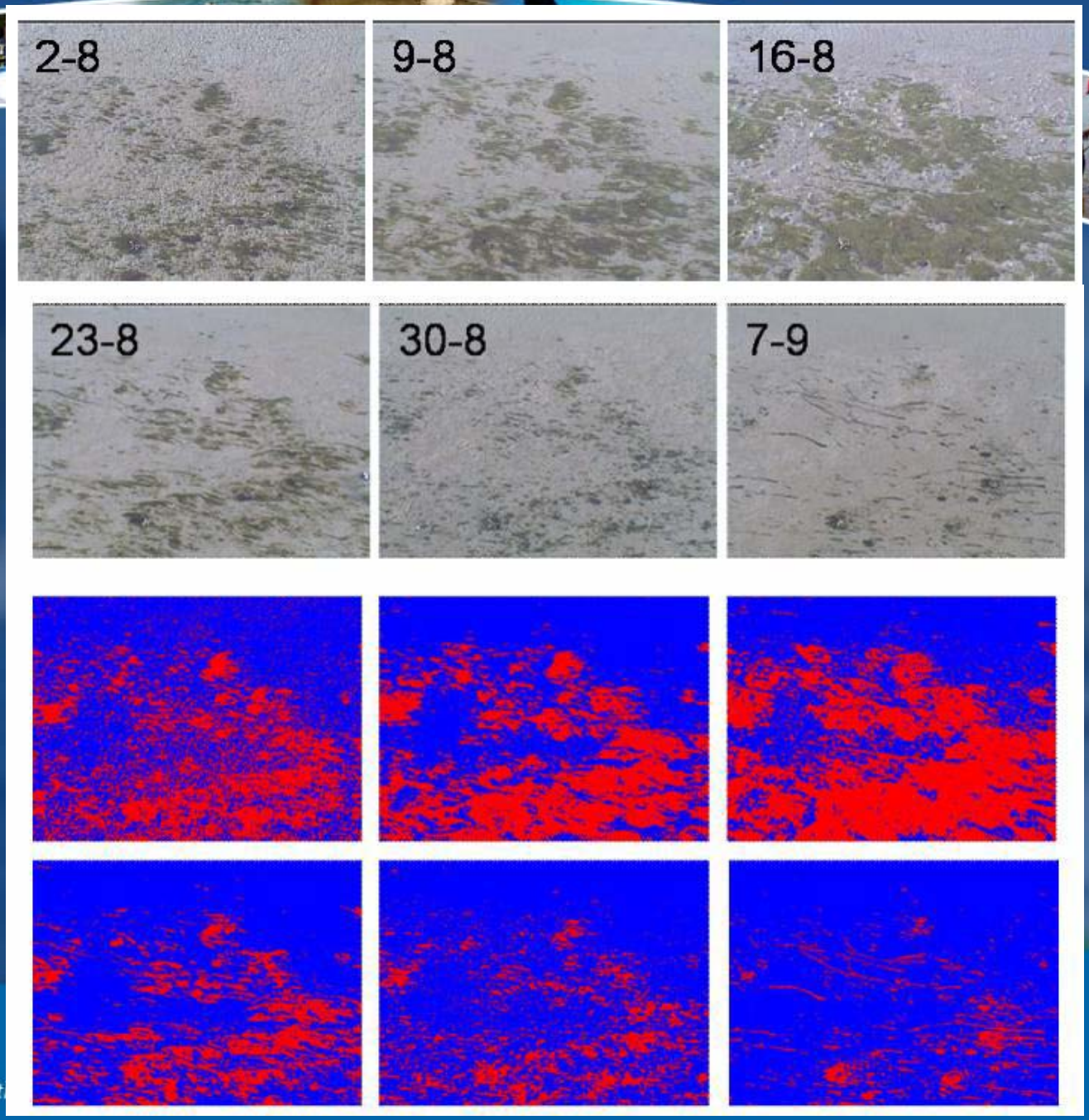
argus-data.wldelft.nl/sites/galg/2009

Argus-bio

Argus-bio



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Nourishment strategies

- Locations
- Shape
- Volumes
- Frequency

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Building with Nature solutions

Short and medium term solutions:

Stabilize intertidal areas

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- Coastal protection by applying the concept of ecosystem engineers

Long term solutions: **sand import**

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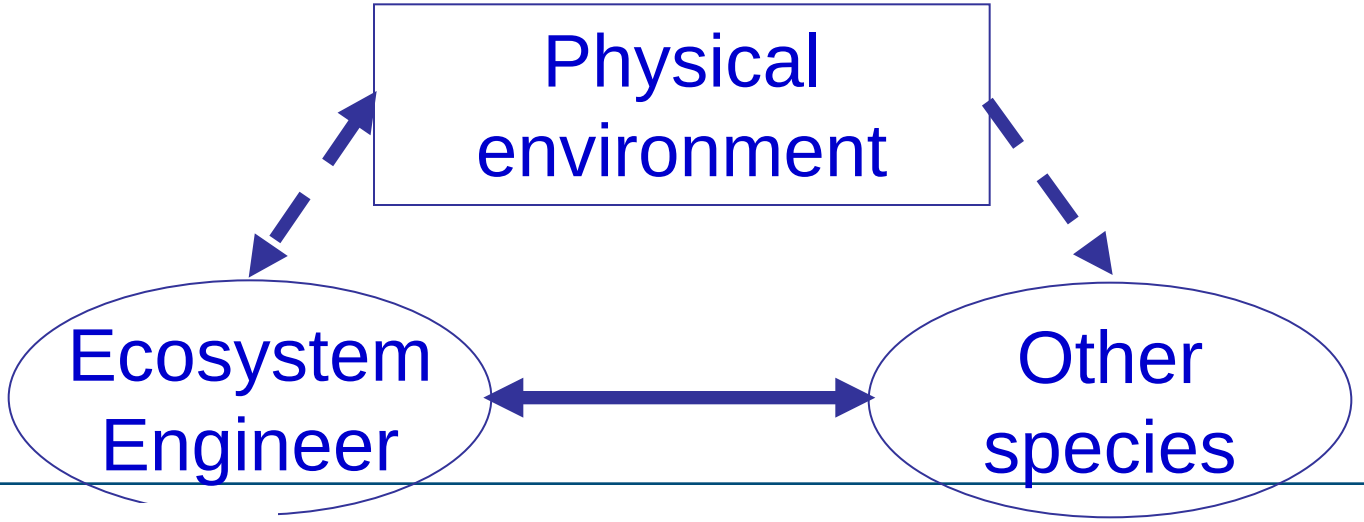
Ecosystem engineering

- EE = “modification of the abiotic environment by biological activity” (Jones et al. 1994)
- biologically mediated modification of the abiotic environment has a major impact on the structure, function, and biodiversity of a wide range of ecosystems



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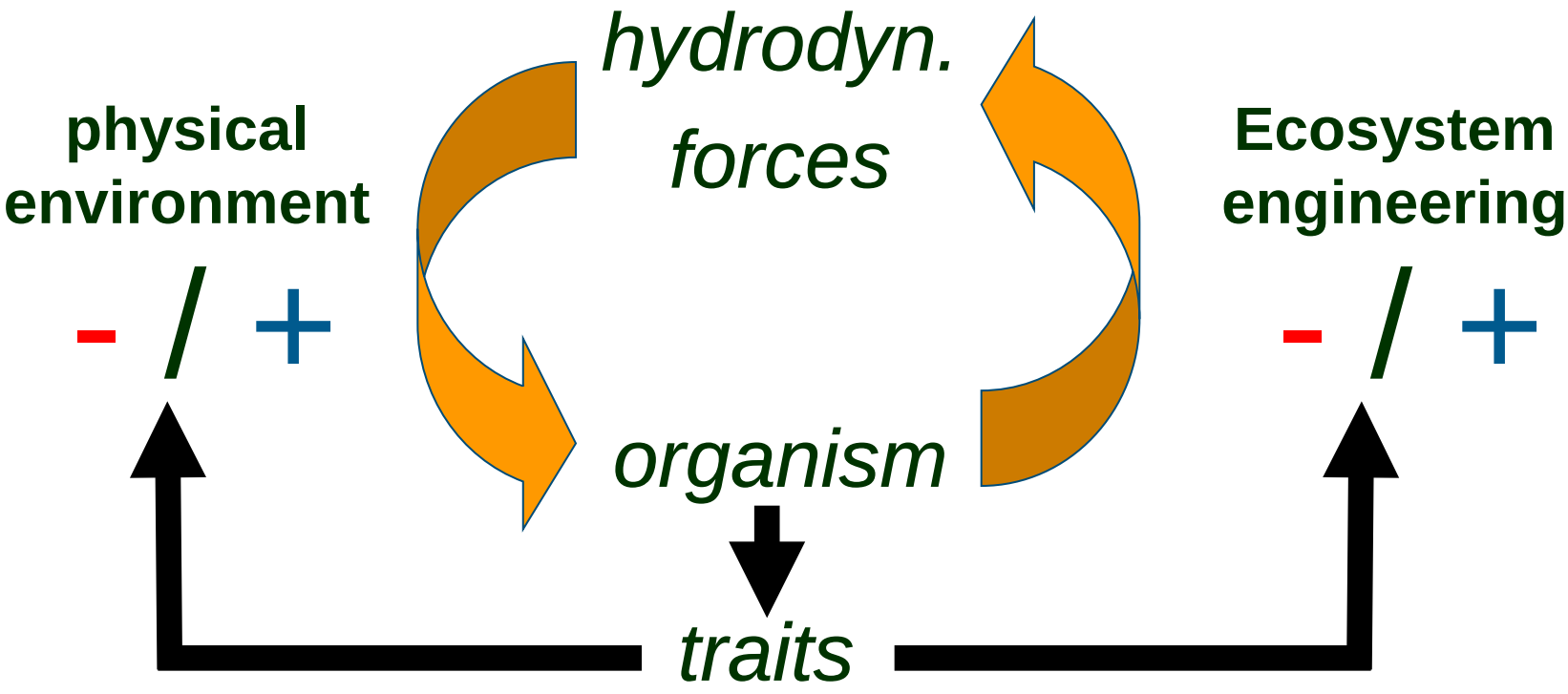
The concept of ecosystem engineers



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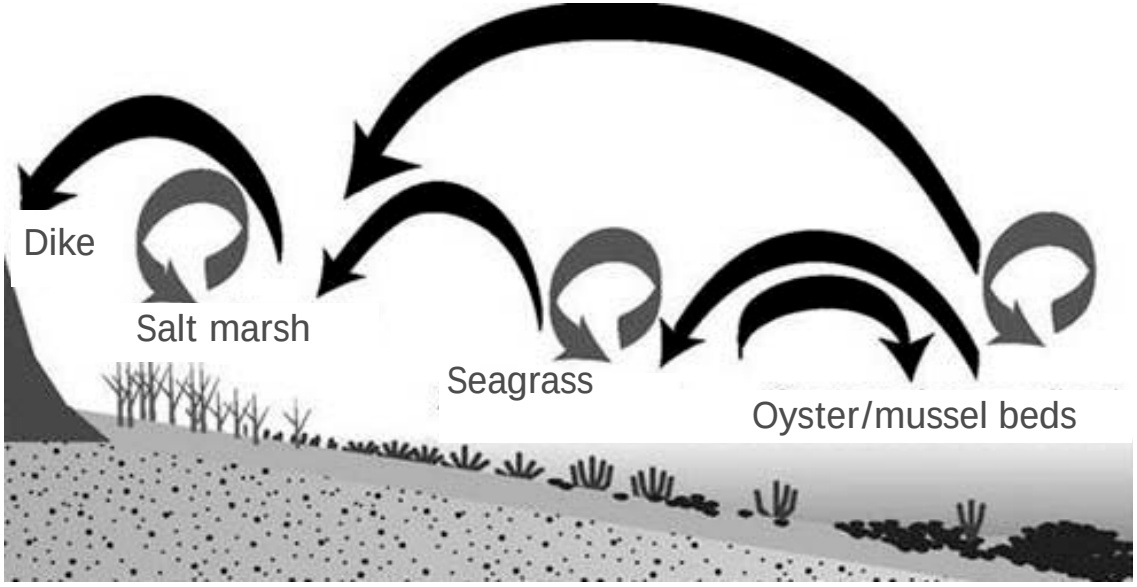
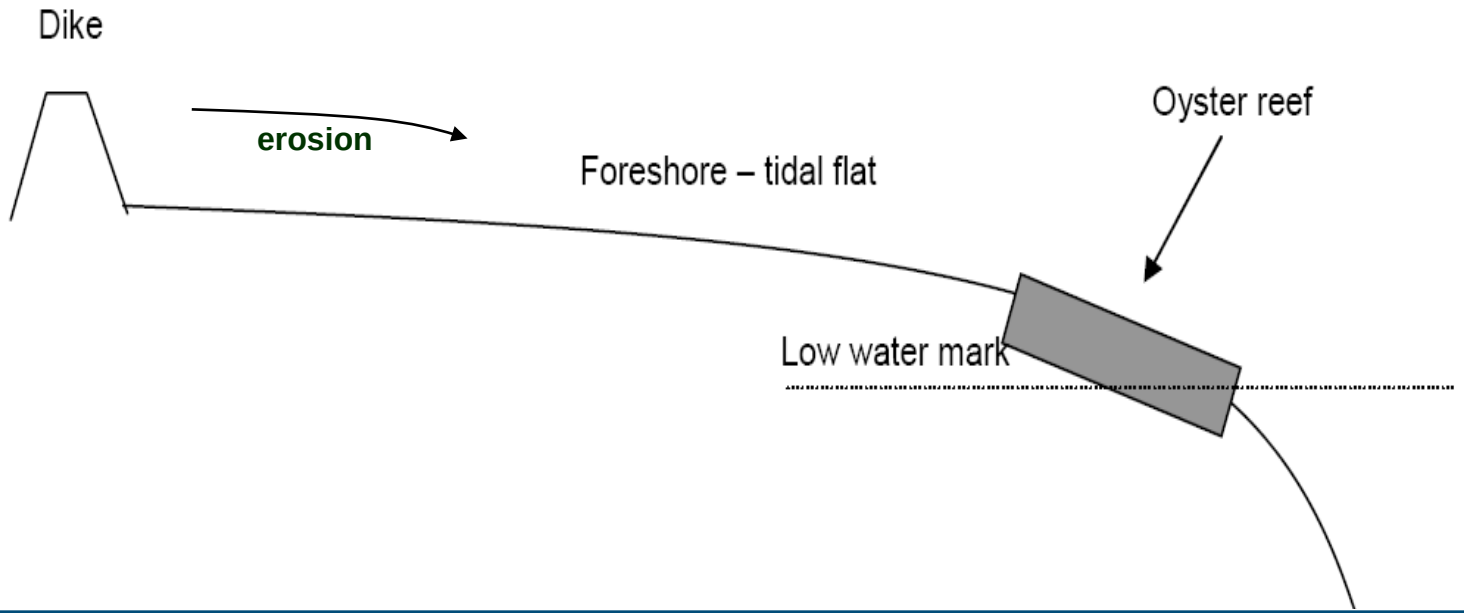
Coastal protection by applying the concept of ecosystem engineers

Ecosystem engineers such as reef building oysters can protect tidal flats from erosion, reduce wave energy, trap sediment, …and protect dikes



The use of ecosystem engineers in EDD

- the use of ecosystem engineers is successful when they are self-sustainable and stabilize tidal flats => artificial oyster reefs seem promising as substrate



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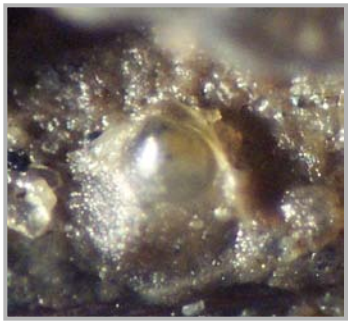
The use of ecosystem engineers in EDD

- To become self-sustainable reefs, oysters need to settle, grow, survive and reproduce at the prevailing hydrodynamic conditions

⇒grow out to a living reef (and provide habitat)



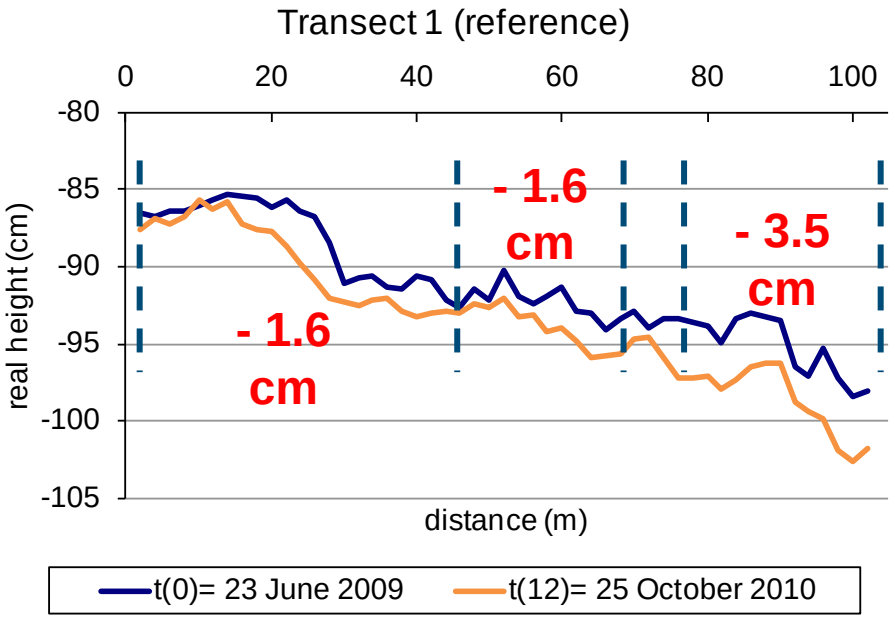
Pilot Ecosystem engineers

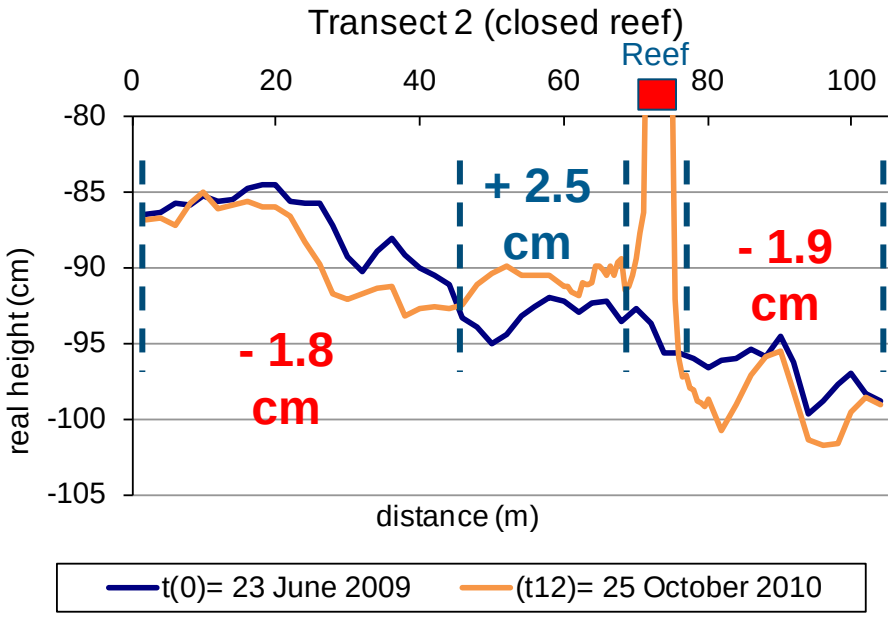
1. testing of different materials and cages in small-scale experiments => use of gabions most promising
2. Small scale pilot June 2009: gabions filled with oyster shells

± 100 m^2, 11000 kg oyster shells

Small-scale pilot: elevation changes

- Detailed height measurements along transects





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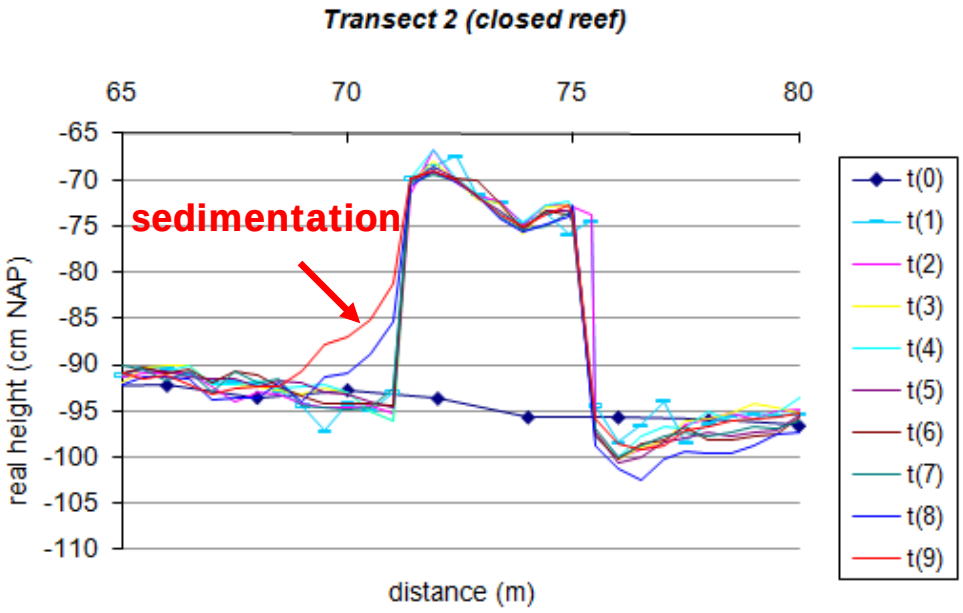
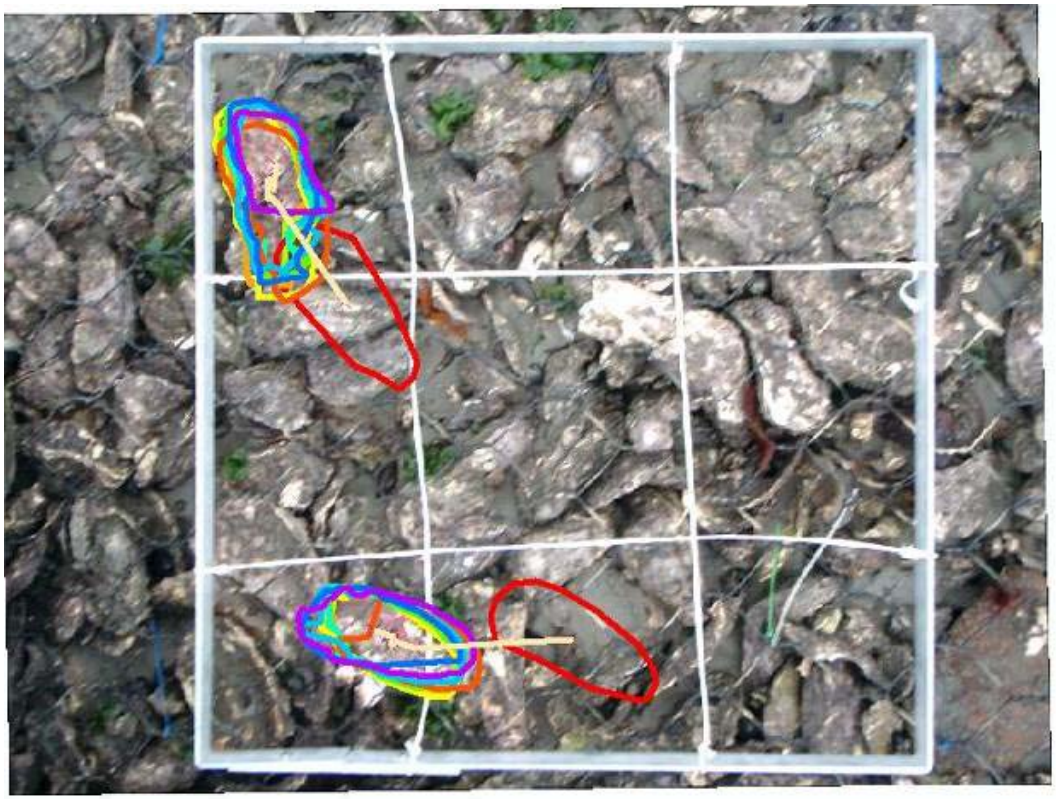
Small-scale pilot: elevation changes

- Sedimentation behind reefs



Small-scale pilot: shell stability

- Movement of oyster shells inside artificial reefs



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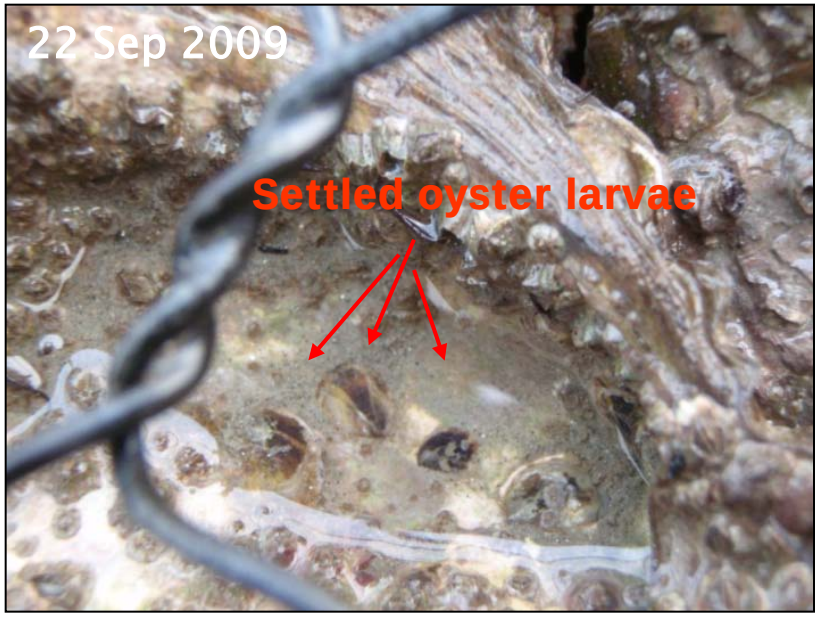
Small-scale pilot: settlement of oyster larvae



Small scale pilot: summary

- Promising results with small artificial oyster reefs after one year:
- Gabions with oyster shells are stable structures
- Local sedimentation and reduced erosion observed behind reefs, surrounding tidal flat further eroding (± 2cm)
- Oyster larvae settle and grow on artificial reef

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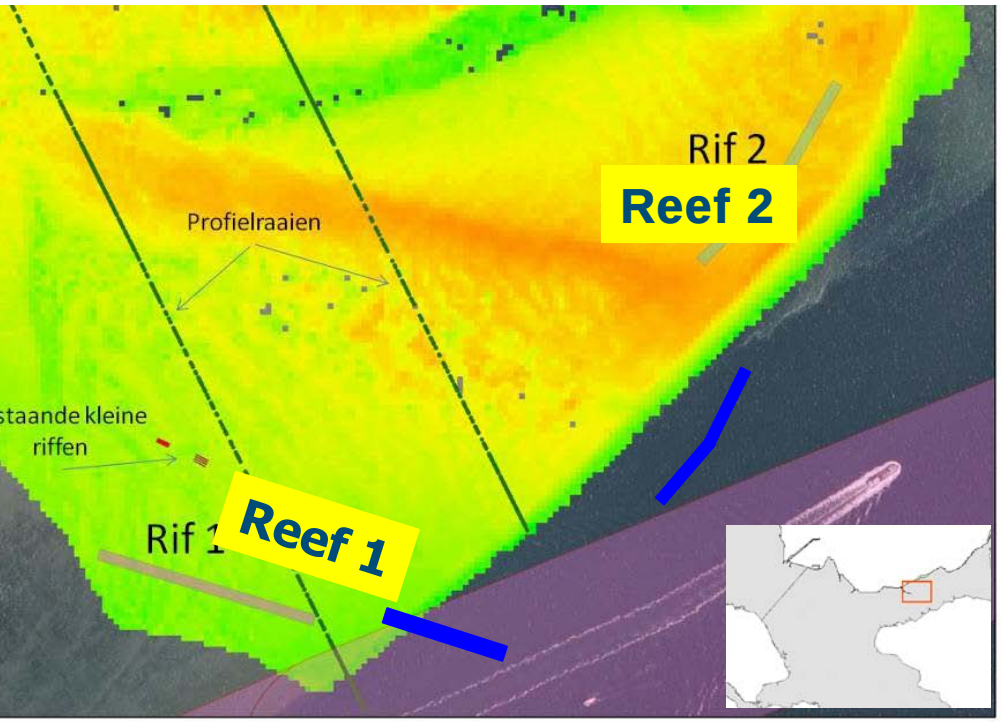
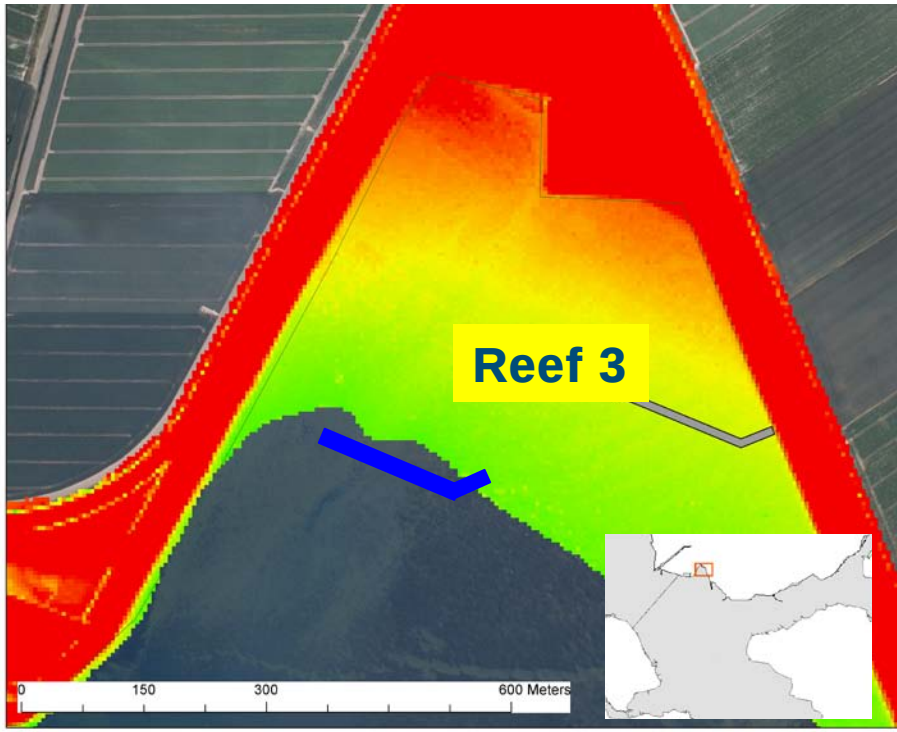
Upscaling 2010: large scale pilot

- Large scale pilot with three reefs of 200 x 10 meters





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Large scale pilot – realization

- First attempts with harness

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Large scale pilot – realization

- Adopted methodology

Large scale pilot – realization

- Adopted methodology

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Large scale pilot – realization

- Adopted methodology

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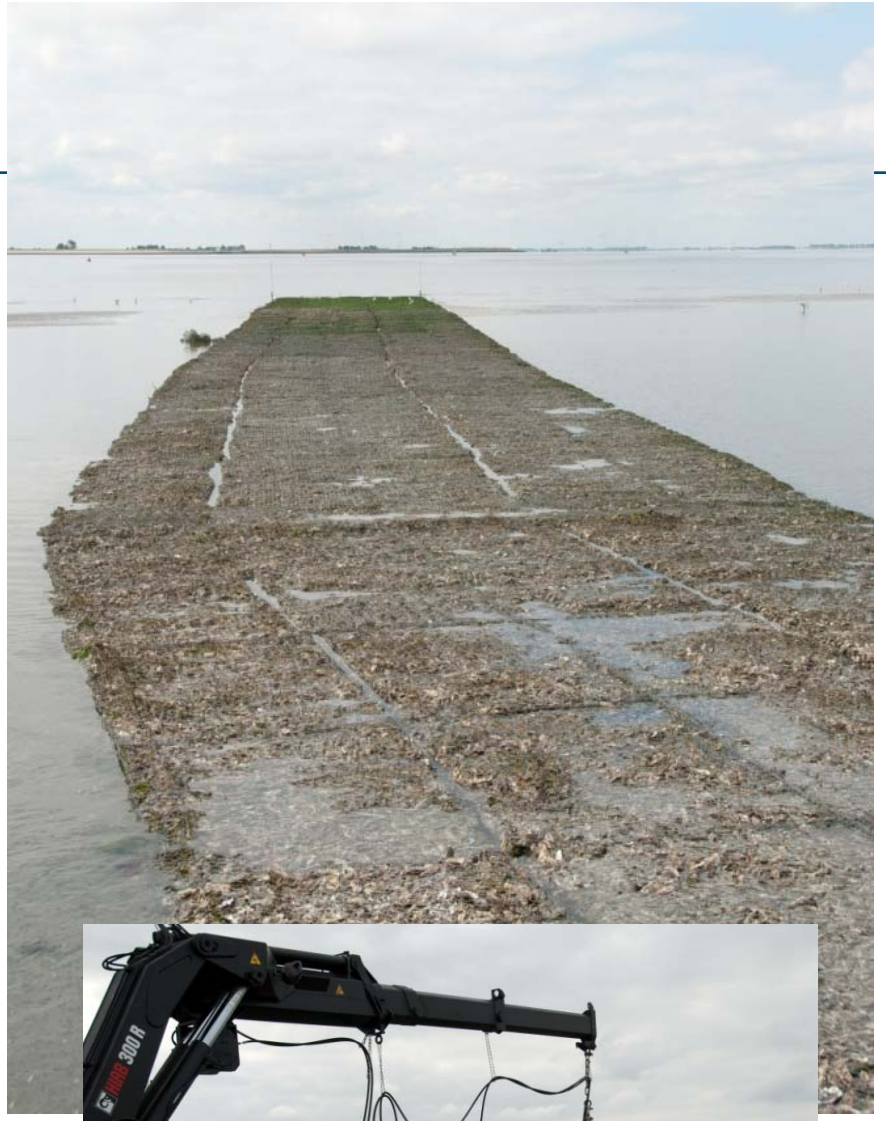


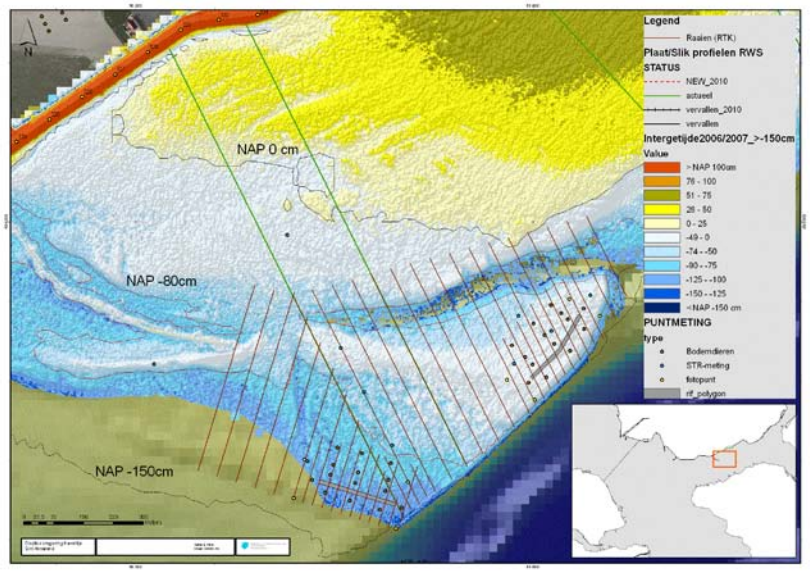

300 R

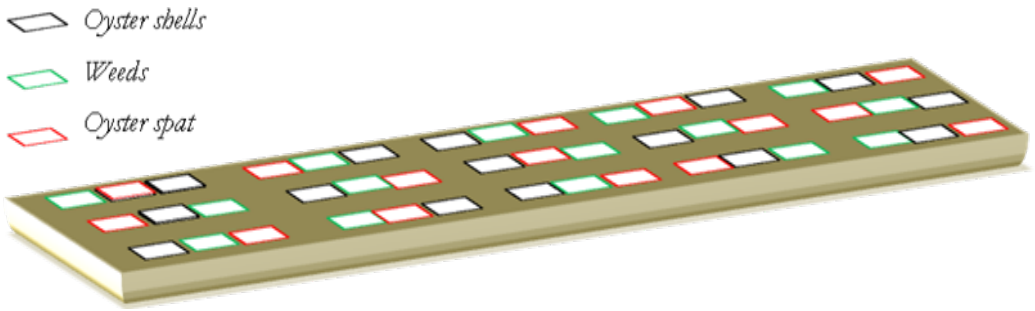
Each reef: 400 m^3,

± 230 tons of oyster shells

Monitoring programme

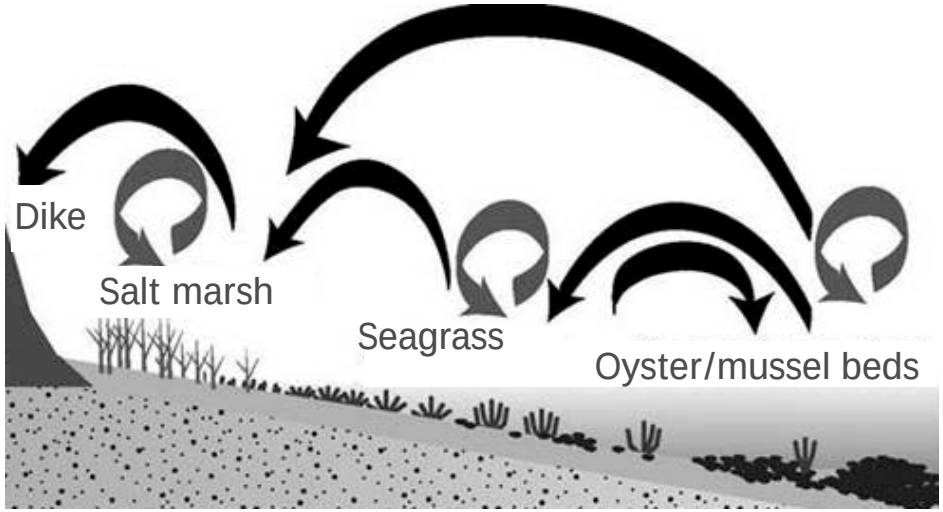
- Reef stability, oyster shell stability, algal coverage,
- Oyster recruitment, survival and growth
- (Hydro)morphological and ecological impact on tidal flat





A combination of measures

- Cascade of ecosystem engineers



- Nourishment of tidal flats

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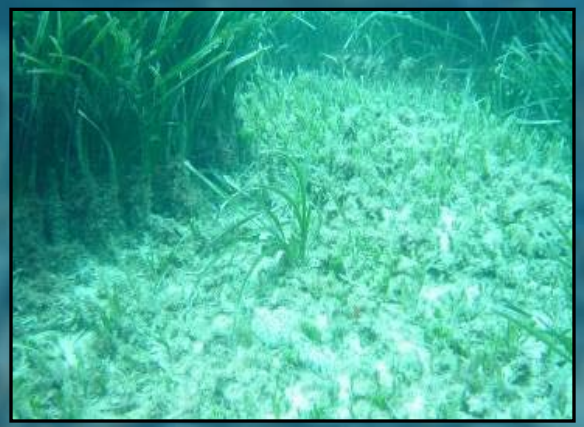
More ecosystem engineers in BwN programme:



Sea grass

Salt marches

Mangroves

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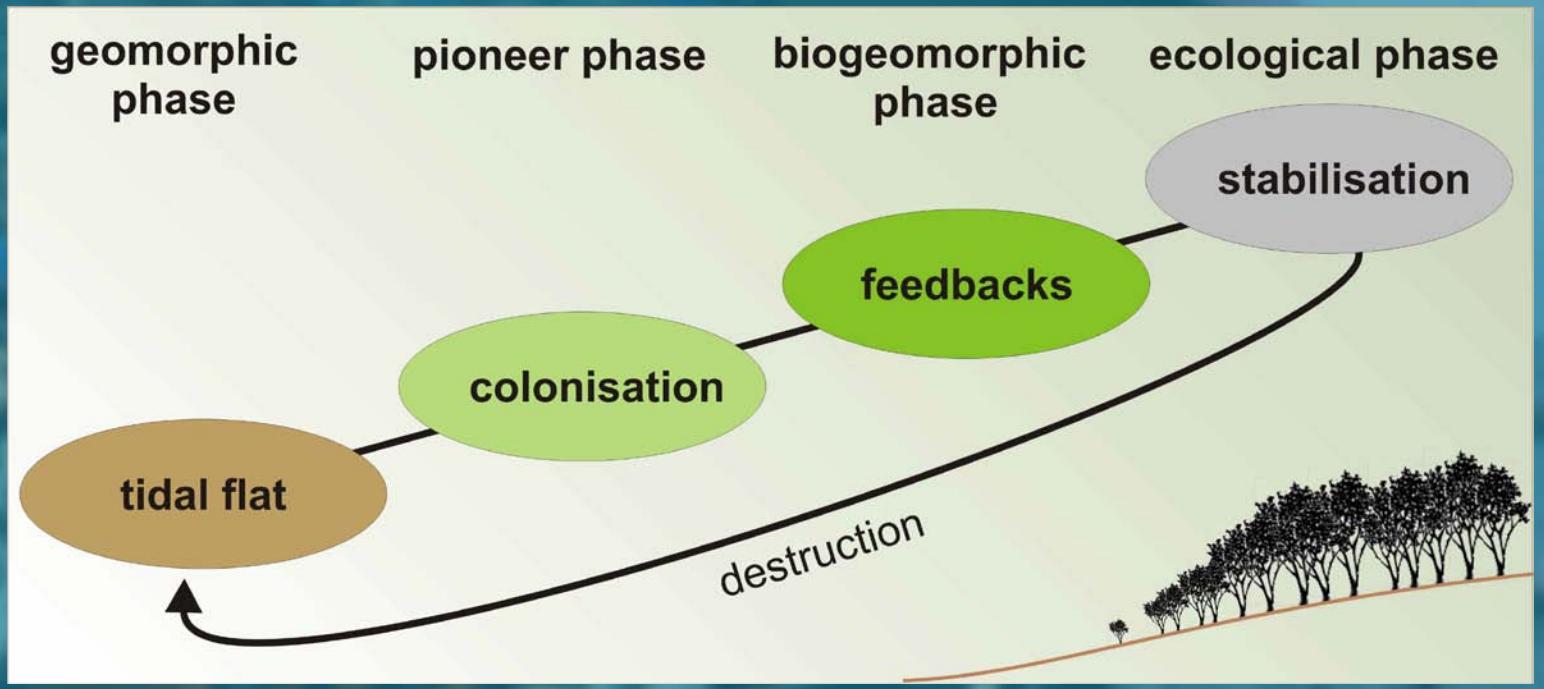
Biogeomorphic succession of mangroves

PhD research: Thorsten Balke



Concept of biogeomorphic succession by Corenblit (2007) modified for mangroves

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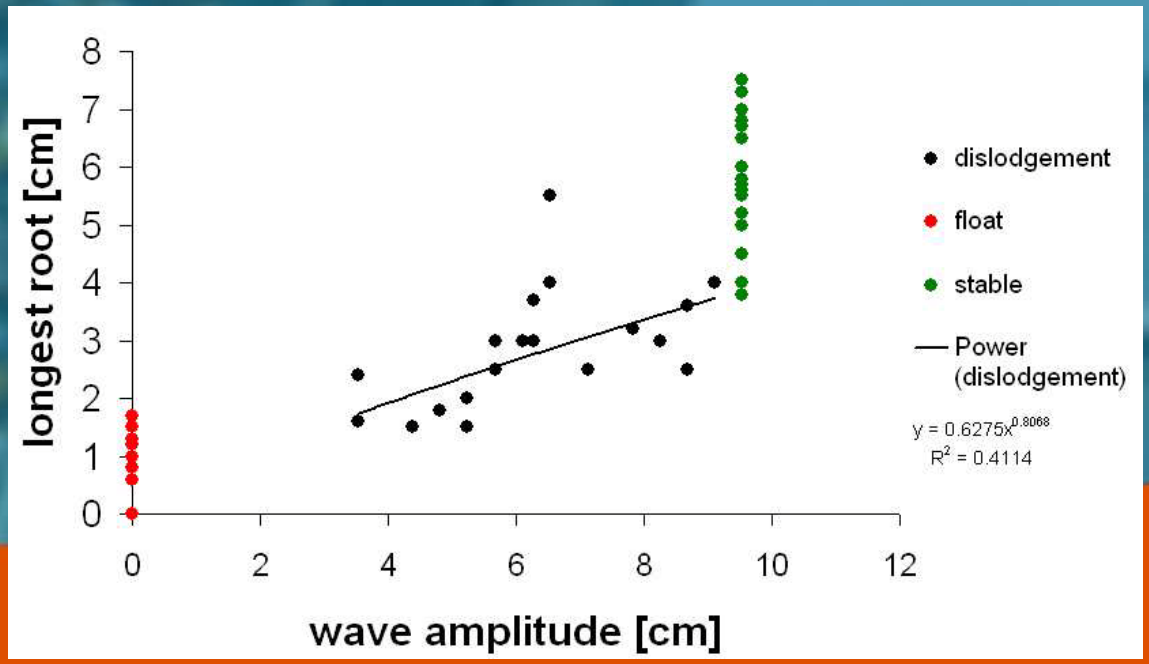
Flume tests on early establishment



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