Semiotic Analysis of Stakeholder Interviews in the Markerwadden Project
Abstract

Dutch planning, which long utilized top-down approaches, has recently involved more actors and interests in the planning process. In the end of the 1980s, a paradigm shift from government to governance can be observed in the Dutch planning system (Spaans 2006). In the new governance model, "hierarchical planning" has been abandoned, and the national government is much more flexible. The Markerwadden project, a collaborative island-building initiative between government, planners, designers, engineers, and ecologists exemplifies the changes in Dutch spatial planning. The project aims to restore the ecosystem health of the Markermeer after a long period of silt sedimentation caused by partitioning the IJsselmeer in 1975 through the construction of the Houtribdijk. In addition to consulting written material available to the public on the new management project, we interviewed three major stakeholders: Natuurmonumenten, Rijkswaterstaat and Boskalis. Officially, the project was portrayed as consisting of a mutual goal to restore the ecosystem. This essay is developed based on the research question: "what underlying desires can be gathered from stakeholder’s stated opinions on the project and how might these desires dictate the future of the project?" We applied a semiotic analysis as a theoretical lens to interpret and evaluate interview statements to address our research questions. In general, semiotics is the “exploration of the communication of meanings and how messages are encoded and decoded” (Foote and Azaryahu 2009, p. 89). To analyze the project through this lens, results of the interview from different stakeholders are compared against each other and then decoded to understand what the underlying desires beneath stated goals are. We link the connection between stakeholder interest and neoliberalism theory in spatial planning and predict the future outcomes of the Markerwadden project, as well as envisage the conflicting desires which might appeal from each stakeholder. In conclusion, we show how semiotic analysis can reveal the underlying interests of different stakeholders which not only focusses on ecological restoration but also the possibility of profit gains from exporting knowledge. The analysis used in this essay creates learning opportunities for planners and designers to understand the other points of view beside looking at the main goal of the project. Although our analysis does not problematize the neoliberalization of the planning outright, it does lead to questions about conflicting desires and how these might dictate the future of the project.

Key words

Innovation, collaborative planning, semiotic analysis, ecological restoration, neoliberalism
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. 2
Key words .............................................................................................................. 2
Introduction .......................................................................................................... 4
Background ......................................................................................................... 5
  History of Management Practices in the Markermeer and the Markerwadden Project ...... 5
  History of Spatial Planning Trends in the Netherlands ........................................... 6
Methods .............................................................................................................. 7
Results .................................................................................................................. 8
  Rijkswaterstaat ................................................................................................. 8
  Natuurmonumenten ......................................................................................... 8
  Boskalis ........................................................................................................... 8
Discussion and reflection .................................................................................... 9
  Stated Goals .................................................................................................... 9
  Deeper Meanings: “The most experimental island in the world” ......................... 9
  Narratives and Neoliberalization ..................................................................... 10
  Conflicting desires and their impacts on the future ......................................... 10
Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 11
Works referenced ............................................................................................. 12
Appendix A ........................................................................................................ 14
  Boskalis .......................................................................................................... 14
  Natuurmonumenten ....................................................................................... 14
  Rijkswaterstaat (RWS) ................................................................................... 16
Introduction

An object possesses various meanings for different stakeholders. To take this statement further, if this object is a project to build islands, then each stakeholder interprets the goals of a project in their own ways; the project connotes meanings for these various groups. This paper will analyze and compare the various perspectives of stakeholders in the Markerwadden project. We will look for statements among and between stakeholders that share or diverge from the official goal of the Markerwadden project: to build islands of silt to restore the Markermeer. This is a water body that has long suffered from severe sedimentation and resulting deterioration of ecological conditions. Stakeholders involved in managing the Markermeer might attach their own meanings to the construction through this project. Therefore, one should not take for granted that all stakeholders collaborating on the Markerwadden project agree with its ecological restoration purpose. We should look deeper in their statements for underlying motives. We will apply semiotic analysis to interpret the stated opinions. Furthermore, we predict how these varying interpretations of the project and motives might dictate the future of the project. The following research question will be used to guide our analysis: What underlying desires can be gathered from stakeholder’s stated opinions on the project, and how might these desires dictate the future of the project?

Firstly, a background study will be conducted to understand the planning history of the Markermeer area and investigate past Dutch planning trends that have shaped the present condition. Secondly, the methods section describes the methodology of data collection, as well as the reason for collecting the data in this manner. A brief summary of the principles of semiotics will also be provided in this section. Next, the outcomes of the stakeholder interviews will be summarized in the results section (for the complete interviews, see Appendix A). These results will be discussed and interpreted in the discussion section, using a semiotic lens. The conclusion will describe broader implications gathered using semiotic analysis of stakeholder interviews.
History of Management Practices in the Markermeer and the Markerwadden Project

Understanding the planning process for the Markermeer and the recent Markerwadden project, one of the most ambitious and ingenious projects of the Netherlands, requires looking into a history that involved increasing its land mass and freshwater areas via reclamation and levee-building for purposes such as urban development. Until 1932 the Markermeer was part of Zuiderzee, which was “a shallow, brackish bay feeding straight into the North Sea, albeit partly sheltered by a string of islands” (Sullivan 2016). By constructing the Afsluitdijk Levee, a 20-mile causeway joining two separate fingers of the country together, it was turned into a freshwater lake called Ijsselmeer. Development of a huge dam in 1975 in this lake created a new, artificial lake called the Markermeer that initially was planned to become a polder. Nevertheless, due to public concern about drying out the existing land around it, which also provided habitat for migrating birds, land reclamation was abandoned and further urban improvements were made. Instead, it focused on the existing Flevopolder to the south. Stopping the polder plan for the Markermeer led to disruption in water flow caused massive silt sedimentation, which suffocated biodiversity; the lake became a sort of a “watery Sahara”. (Sullivan 2016; Waterhout et al 2013). This negative ecological trend has created lake conditions that do not meet even the basic necessities of Natura 2000 or those of the Water Framework Directive for 2015 and 2027. Therefore, a drastic action was needed. To bring back the vitality to Markermeer, an innovative plan was created to utilize silt to create the Markerwadden islands. This project could potentially restore the water quality, create new habitat for flora and fauna, especially migrating birds, and offer water recreation opportunities. Figure 1 & 2 show an aerial image and the map of Markermeer, its current condition and the location of the islands.

Figure 1: Murky waters of the Markeermeer-IJmeer hydrological compartment (source: Urban Region in Delta 2013)
History of Spatial Planning Trends in the Netherlands

Dutch planning has long utilized top-down, strategic national planning aimed at controlling land use for the purpose of development while protecting against floods (Gerrits 2012). It has recently involved more actors and interests in the planning process. Historically, policymakers had to “oversee all the consequences of planned interventions” (Gerrits 2012, p. 336). In the end of the 1980s, a paradigm shift from government to governance can be observed in Dutch planning system (Spaans 2006). In the new governance model, "hierarchical planning" has been abandoned, and the national government is much more flexible and less prescriptive than before. However, the role of economic, political and ambitious forces cannot be ignored. These forces can be interpreted as the neoliberal turn which nowadays penetrates different aspects of strategic spatial planning in many northwestern European countries (Olesen 2013 cited in Taşan-Kok and Baeten 2012; Olesen 2013 cited in Allmendinger & Haughton 2012). Olesen (2013) argues that neoliberalism plays an important role in how people think about strategic spatial planning. In addition, ecological concerns, not just anthropocentric, profit-based viewpoints, have arisen in spatial planning.
Methods

To interpret and evaluate planning and the different narratives in the Markerwadden project, semi-guided interviews were conducted with representatives of the different stakeholders. Several topics of interest were prepared before the interviews, but no strict structure was adhered to. This allowed the interviewee to be as comfortable as possible with the interviewer and was deemed the most appropriate way for the stakeholder narratives to be as natural as possible.

The interviews were conducted with three different stakeholders:

- Rijkswaterstaat: the executive branch of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Environment
- Natuurmonumenten: a civic organization for the protection and maintenance of natural areas
- Boskalis: a global dredging and offshore contractor based in the Netherlands

From these interviews, the roles these stakeholders play in the Markerwadden project and management of the Markermeer and the intentions behind their involvement could be gathered. This data was then analyzed using a semiotic lens. Semiotics, in general, refers to the interpretation of signs. In this case, we will use the definition provided by Foote and Azaryahu (2009), who state that semiotics is the “exploration of the communication of meanings and how messages are encoded and decoded” (Foote and Azaryahu 2009, p. 89). In the discussion section, we view the islands as the sign that is interpreted in a multitude of ways by the stakeholders. The communications that are gathered in the interviews will be decoded to infer meaning and underlying desires of the stakeholders. Central questions of the discussion include:

- What are the stakeholder’s stated goals in achieving the islands?
- What do they say and what are the meanings that can be identified from their words?
- Can the motives of stakeholders working on the project be tied to greater trends in Dutch spatial planning practice, for example, neoliberalization in strategic spatial planning?
- Are there stakeholders with conflicting desires and how will this potentially impact the future of the Markerwadden and the Markermeer?
Results

Research on the Markermeer reveals that many stakeholders with different objectives were involved in the initial stages of planning (Waterhout et al. 2013). During the process, increasing attention on the importance of an ecologically sound environment could be observed, which reverberated in the planning process. Several options for improving the ecology in the Markermeer were put forward, of which the cheapest, but also most innovative and uncertain, option was eventually chosen (Waterhout et al. 2013). This section will detail the different perspectives of the stakeholders.

Rijkswaterstaat

From the interview it was identified that Rijkswaterstaat and Natuurmonumenten together are responsible for the execution of the Markerwadden project, as well as the evaluation of its effectiveness. So far, there have not been disagreements between stakeholders because everyone does what they do best. Rijkswaterstaat’s role is managing construction of the islands, which in their words are “the most experimental in the world”

Natuurmonumenten

Currently, Natuurmonumenten is mainly involved to ensure that the islands will reach their ecological goals. Natuurmonumenten will receive management of the islands from 2021 onwards, when they will start managing the biodiversity. The representative identifies biodiversity in the Markermeer as the main goal of the project, while ecotourism is a track which can be explored in a later stage. Public support for the islands comes from water-related tourism, and the innovative character of the islands.

Boskalis

Boskalis won the bid to get to build the islands by providing a plan which would build the largest number of hectares for the fixed price set by Natuurmonumenten and Rijkswaterstaat. Boskalis answers to Natuurmonumenten (who developed the concept and vision of the islands) and Rijkswaterstaat (who contract and manage the construction of the islands). Currently, the construction is on schedule. This way, there will be enough flexibility in planning to make room for uncertainties. Boskalis has consultants (i.e., Arcadis) who support them in the technological design of the project. Due to the experimental nature of the islands, building them is a learning experience. They are using new construction techniques, and are doing something that is not done every day.
Discussion and reflection

Stated Goals
To interpret stakeholders’ perceptions on the Markerwadden project using a semiotics approach, and connect these to the planning process in the Markermeer, we first needed to hear their visions of the project explicitly. Based on an interview with Natuurmonumenten, the organization tasked with defining project goals and overseeing the ecological aspects of the project, we were made aware that the overarching focus of the project is environmental. Other representative stakeholders from Rijkswaterstaat and Boskalis confirmed that the project aims to restore the conditions of the lake’s ecosystem by building these islands out of the silt that has caused turbidity. Tourism and recreation, economic development, and knowledge creation are claimed to be secondary interests. This reflects the changes in Dutch spatial planning, where well-being of the physical environment has grown in prominence. In addition, it contrasts from the human, engineering-focused planning approach of the Markermeer from 100 years ago, when flood protection land reclamation for urban development in North Holland and Flevoland took priority.

Deeper Meanings: “The most experimental island in the world”
On the surface, our interviews indicate a shared vision among stakeholders for the Markerwadden project: undoing a long history of human-focused water management practice that had sacrificed environmental wellbeing in the Markermeer for urban development. This vision can also be deduced from the written material on the project available to the public. However, looking deeper into the interview results, the phrases chosen to describe the project indicate that stakeholders attach their own meanings to the island-building of the Markerwadden. For instance, Rijkswaterstaat, maintaining a focus on water management, referred to the project as “the most experimental islands in the world” (Rijkswaterstaat 2016), adding that it was “innovative in using the sludge for building the islands”. Describing the project in this way indicates that the meaning they gave to the project was one of knowledge generation, not just ecological restoration. The goals of the project could therefore be extended to knowledge creation and export. As Duineveld (2016) mentioned, “a significant percentage of the money we make in the Netherlands comes from the waterworks”. It is implied that Dutch expertise in building with water worldwide can be exported to other countries. Thus, knowledge export of building with sludge may be one of the underlying main reasons to build islands in the Markermeer.

In the interviews with Boskalis, descriptors such as “learning by doing”, “experimental”, “novel approach”, and “not something done every day” (Boskalis 2016), were expressed in relation to the planning process. The meaning that can be deciphered from these statements when compared to the interview with Rijkswaterstaat, is that Boskalis could also benefit from marketing of the island construction process. For instance, they could win bids on other larger projects in the realm of building islands in the future. For this project, they seek consultation from Arcadis, a design and consultancy firm which sells its knowledge on the ‘floating city’ concept to other cities dealing with water management challenges. In order to be competitive in the building sector, innovation is required; building the islands might offer an opportunity for Boskalis to achieve this. According to Hartmann (2012), experimental learning in spatial planning resembles the ‘individualist’ rationality, which is typically used in neoliberal schemes. For Boskalis, the Markerwadden symbolizes a means to an economic end.

In short, a semiotic analysis indicates that ecological restoration does not comprise the primary goal of the project, and that the stakeholders’ values as a group differ from the values of
stakeholders independently. This is perhaps an effect of planning based on governance approaches designed to produce win-win situations. There is an asymmetry between statements on the project’s purpose as stated officially and the meanings revealed by stakeholders individually. This renders the planning process of the Markerwadden, and the Markermeer as a whole, less stable. It also signifies that the planning process is more politically-charged than at face value.

Narratives and Neoliberalization

From the meanings stakeholders like Boskalis and Rijkswaterstaat attach to the project, commodification of a nature restoration project reveals itself as a powerful motive driving the planning process. This corresponds with findings in academic literature which have identified the phenomenon of neoliberalization of strategic spatial planning in the Netherlands. Planning not only involves government and civil society as the main actors but also the private sector to create projects so that cities, like the Amsterdam metropolitan area can compete globally (Olesen 2013). As none of the stakeholders mentioned public participation in the process (and did not seem interested in including this later on), the presence of an economic development-focused narrative that benefits private interests more than the public good and the environment, is increasingly likely. Hidden pecuniary interests might distract managers from the original intentions to restore the Markermeer and shift the management goals, while affecting legitimacy.

Conflicting desires and their impacts on the future

Due to the disparity between officially stated goals of the project and what was implied by the stakeholders individually, conflicts about the uses on the Markerwadden islands could develop. This might lead to a softened approach to environmental protection and restoration. For instance, stakeholders may attempt to capitalize on profit-making opportunities from the Markerwadden project. The representative from Natuurmonumenten also voiced concern in this direction, stating that there had been no disagreements yet, but that she could foresee these happening in the future.

Semiotic analysis can help predict the future outcomes of the Markerwadden and implications for the management of the Markermeer. Among the stakeholders interviewed, all repeated that the expertise of the organizations was combined, with “everyone doing what they do best” (Rijkswaterstaat 2016). For example, Rijkswaterstaat manages the technical side of the island construction, whereas Natuurmonumenten enters the process at a later stage to create biodiversity. However, this statement requires further critical analysis; despite the diverse underlying goals for the Markerwadden, the ease of collaboration is taken for granted. Based on their stated lack of concern, stakeholders have not anticipated dilemmas, for example, in the case that Natuurmonumenten disagrees with the way Rijkswaterstaat and Boskalis handle the construction. For instance, specific needs of biodiversity could be sidelined in favor of lower-cost construction and design approaches. However, since biodiversity is officially identified as the main goal of the project, Rijkswaterstaat and Boskalis could be asked to sacrifice their own personal gains from the project to uphold the integrity of the original management plan.
Conclusion

In conclusion, though the Markerwadden islands are being constructed under the guise of ecological restoration to set the Markermeer on a better management trajectory, semiotic analysis of stakeholder interviews indicates that underlying interests are being served. These interests include economic gains from knowledge export, as well as the potential for ecotourism. This semiotic analysis has shown that while there has been a shift in Dutch planning focus towards ecological planning, this trend is supported by neoliberalization in spatial planning. This means that the Markerwadden are not simply being constructed for the purpose of ecosystem restoration, but more so because of a potential to earn money from exporting knowledge. The consequences of these underlying interests could extend to a diminished interest among managers in prioritizing the ecological well-being of the Markermeer, despite its long history of deteriorating conditions. However, if different intentions can unify the approach and support environmental projects, then the disparity between interests might not even be problematic, as long as there is agreement on the policy. Nonetheless, awareness of underlying intentions in this governance approach to management may be useful in anticipating future failure.
Works referenced

(The interviewees are anonymous)


Google maps, Markeer Wadden Islands location 2016, available at: https://www.google.nl/maps/place/Markermeer/@52.5380971,4.9623583,10z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m5!3m4!1s0x47c61e8ba473d3a3:0x4cd720247e6ebbc1!8m2!3d52.5427157!4d5.2745176?hl=en, [Accessed 20 Oct.2016].


Appendix A

The transcribed interviews:

Boskalis

Question (Q): How did they win the bid?
Answer (A):
- Fixed amount 33 million euros - offered most hectares for that amount
- Lowest price for size of islands

Q: What are the challenges with project?
A: Sedimentation collection at base and consolidation of silt – first basis for structure, but more demands in 2020-2021 when contact bids- some risks

Q: Who does he answer to?
A: Joint venture- Natuurmonumenten (development of concept/ vision for nature island) and Rijkswaterstaat (contracting/ managing construction of island). This project has started in March and going well. The contract will end in 2021.
- 4 years for consolidation and settlement in underground
- Had 5 years, needed less than this - fast building
- Flexibility in planning
- Ahead of schedule, which indicates room for uncertainties

Q: Are still people building every day?
A: Need more funding. If thing goes well, will build next island. But now are still working on first island.
Maintenance for outside of island, sand and rock on outside must maintain a certain profile/ stay stable. This is an experimental project– not something done every day- novel approach, learning experience possible. Boskalis also involve outside consultancy (i.e., Arcadis- a firm to design the island).

Natuurmonumenten

- Natuurmonumenten will receive the management from 2021, so they set the end goals of the project and has the power to steer it in the right direction during the construction phase.
- There will be lots of research. The goals are quite broad due to the uncertainties. they will also manage the research and see whether the research and the goals go in the same direction.

Q: How about the fund/ budget? where does the money come from?
A: The original start was with funds from the ‘dreamfund’ of the postcode loterij. Afterwards it was mainly the national and some provincial government who contributed, and the 3 parties: natuurmonumenten, boskalis and rijkswaterstaat. The ministry of economic affairs just said that they would contribute another €4 million to the project (bringing the total up to €19 million). Now they want to get other provinces and companies involved.

Q: When will the project be a success?
A: Hard to say. Building will be finished in 2020, but then nature still needs time to evolve. This is already happening: nature is already evolving on and around the island, and we’re trying to follow this. These islands are built with the silt from the Markermeer. A very long gully was dug for this. This gully will collect more of the silt, and in the end we would like to construct
the other (planned) islands from the silt collected in the gully. This is a process for which lots of research is needed to see how this is going to work. But that is then the goal. So you can distinguish two lines: we’re constructing a swamp which has a lot of value to nature and the current ‘hard edges’ to the Markermeer (due to construction of the sides of the lake). And next to that, with taking the silt from the Markermeer, they want to improve the quality of the lake water in the Markermeer. So that’s really exciting. So when that goal has been reached the project would be a success, but simply the construction of the islands itself will draw in lots of birds and biodiversity.

Q: Is biodiversity become the main focus of the project or would it also be important to draw people for recreation or eco-tourism? Will you earn money?
A: That is a later track. The main focus now is building with silt (technical side) and the nature goals: improving biodiversity. In the end it will never be profitable, but there will be attempts to return any money which is earned by the project back into the project, for research for example.

Q: Will there need to be active maintenance?
A: That is one of the questions. We want it to be as self-maintaining as possible, they want as little active maintenance as possible. It will be a natural landscape, where big processes such as erosion and sedimentation are balanced and self-maintaining. But we don’t want it to be a complete forest, for instance, so if we see those processes happening, we will step in on places where it is possible. We’re not sure yet what will happen in terms of colonization and what will happen to wooden plants such as willows. The ground is weak, so it might be that when a tree grows, it will simply fall over. We will have to see about that.

Q: Is it ever difficult with the biodiversity because you cannot value this?
A: To invest in the project and tell people that the value will be biodiversity? No, it is not. The hard part is to make the part of the biodiversity which is under water visible. That is where the start of the ecosystem is: with the primary production of phytoplankton and zooplankton which are then eaten by mussels, etc. That is where the start is, but when the island is there it will attract people. It is going to be an island with a harbor so people can come with their boats, and walk over the island. So that will attract people. This means that you will not really have to explain it in terms of money.

Q: But how do you get investments?
A: We didn’t really calculate this, we didn’t express the biodiversity in money yet. This is something which is really difficult. What we’re mainly trying to do is emphasize the innovative character of the islands: building with silt, to get parties involved. And also the nature which is developed as worth, which is then a knowledge product, or innovation product.

Q: Are you working with other European stakeholders? Natura 2000, rewilding Europe?
A: So far, no. Markermeer is going to be a Natura 2000 area, it is later going to be a part of that. Because of the construction of the islands, the Natura 2000 goals will be reached sooner, and it contributes to that, to the recovery of water quality in the Markermeer. We tried to get life subsidy, for the construction of the islands, but that hasn’t worked so far. And other processes like rewilding Europe need to start up still.

Q: How do they gain public support among the population, people who are not interested in biodiversity? A: It’s mainly the people who will recreate on the island, especially people who will go here by boat which is typically Dutch. Next to that it is the innovative character,
building with water which is something the NL is very known for. And you can see this here. This is an area where lots of things are tried, which we can then repeat on other locations in NL and other countries.

Q: Have there been any pitfalls in the project? Issues? Challenges in the process with the biodiversity and ecology part?
A: No, not so far, but I can imagine this will come now. Once the islands are there, and the ecological development is only now beginning, at a certain point you will need to make decisions on what you will do and what direction you will go into with the islands. So I expect there will be some trouble in deciding this. The design is aimed at a system which is as dynamic as possible. That means that all the different habitats, from pioneers to further stadiums, will always be present in the area, but this will be very dependent on the influence of the water management Markermeer/Markerwadden. These waters will be connected with the dams opening. Then we'll have to see whether it will remain dynamic, because we really want to keep the pioneer species in the area. So you will eventually have to choose that if that does not happen naturally, you will have to actively insert (for instance) sand again to promote the different stadiums being present at all times. But then we're a lot further in the development of the islands.

Q: What about the cooperation between parties?
A: We gave the assignment of building the islands, but from 2021 we will be given full management of the islands.

Q: What are the other plans and solutions to reach the same goal? (very beginning of planning process)?
A: The idea to build swamps in the Markermeer is very old: 10-15 years. Different parties: governments but also companies and engineering firms are talking about it. At different places along the sides of the Markermeer there are different pilot projects to test how they influence biodiversity. However, the idea to do it on such a grand scale, came from Rijkswaterstaat, and the unique thing about it is that it worked now. There were talks for years about these kinds of ideas, but that they now executed it on a very big scale is new.

Rijkswaterstaat (RWS)
- Difficulties to get funding, because it is only for nature.
- Natuurmonumenten and RWS started the project together, both very good at specific tasks. RWS at contracting projects
- First island has been constructed in 6 months, but they are now not completely finished with it yet, all materials are from the lake itself. They dug a pit from which the materials were gathered in the lake itself.
- experiments with reeds (“riet”) are happening now
- “bird paradise” is major purpose: nature development. Limited recreation is possible, in designated area.
- Planning for sludge: gather sludge in the Markermeer, and use that to construct more islands. Islands are going to grow naturally.
- Later developments, lots of uncertainties. The islands now are an experiment. They are looking to get funding for the experiments on the best way to build further islands. Talking with different universities and companies to fund experiments.
- Funding: 3 parties, equal share: RWS, Natuurmonumenten, postcode loterij
- Project will finish in 2020, they will start to put in vegetation in 2017 (first compartments).
- Total area islands will be about 600 hectares (they hope).
Location of the island was chosen due to the proximity to the Houtribdijk. They hope the islands will grow towards that dyke, so they close the gap between the islands and the dyke → they will have a closed area, so islands are protected. Additionally, the currents in the Markermeer are circular, which means that the sludge goes around and it can be caught by the islands and the big pit that was dug.

Q: Are there any solutions to bring back vitality to the lake?  
A: This now is the biggest solution, but there are other experiments on other locations to catch the sludge. Difficulty of building there is that the soil on the island is very soft, just 1 hard edge to protect from the SW-winds.

Q: Do you have other projects similar like this?  
A: One in England, with making an island. This is one of the most experimental island, innovative in using sludge, in the world

Q: How is the schedule running so far?  
A: They are ahead of schedule.

Q: How did you chose the contractor?  
A: make different contractors make a plan on how to construct the islands before 2020. They chose the smartest solution. “Not the cheapest”. Boskalis made the island in 6 months, consolidation goes on for several years.

Q: Who is responsible authority to evaluate the effectiveness of the island?  
A: Natuurmonumenten and Rijkswaterstaat. But everyone knows the islands are a big experiment, so they have some lenience. They don’t have to answer to anyone about this project. Everyone knows that it is an experiment, and accept this. Around 30€ million has been invested so far. They need more.

Q: Are there disagreements between stakeholders?  
A: No, because everyone does what they do best.

Q: What is the order of the planning process? Do RWS and Boskalis come in first, and later Natuurmonumenten when the project is almost finished?  
A: RWS and Natuurmonumenten do the same: every decision is made together. Depending on the issue at hand, the party with the most experience in the matter will lead the decision. E.g.: Natuurmonumenten will make nature-related decisions.

Q: Applied for other sources of funding?  
A: I don’t know, Natuurmonumenten is in the lead for securing funds for the project.

Q: When would the experiment be a success?  
A: When all the (5) islands are built.

Q: Built structures on the islands?  
A: There will be some observatories on the islands, as well as a high viewing tower. 3 birdwatch towers and 1 high rise building for overview of the project.

Q: Is overnight stay possible?
A: No. Only people who do the experiments. Tourists will have to leave at night. Because of safety and peace and quiet on the island.