P4 REFLECTION

The project within its social context

This graduation project operates within the South-west delta on the island of Goeree-Overflakkee. This island is on the breaking point of turning into a declining domestic region with on the other hand a very touristic coastal region in the west part of the island. The coast is very popular amongst tourists which are mostly of Dutch and German origin. New developments are overwhelming the coastal area which is famous for its quiet and open character. This unbalanced division in economic welfare between de coast and the domestic region is a problem that not only Goeree-Overflakkee has to deal with, but also the other delta islands are, to a certain extent, dealing with this same problem.

This project should offer opportunities for the island on the short term to prevent the domestic region from declining and it will prevent the economic balance to move fully to the coast. So by giving the island a new impulse and make it unique in its kind, more people and also public facilities will settle in or near the historic centres again. In the social context this will improve the living quality of the population of all the historical villages on the island and the new type of tourism and recreation will create additional jobs. The coast will only improve in its quality but not in its quantity, so the natural open character will be guaranteed.

These spatial and economic improvements can be made possible because of some major changes in the water system what results in a return of the estuary dynamics in the Haringvliet.

For the longer term, the spatial and natural system of the island need to adapt to external changes in climate change and the water system. For the entire southwest delta, sea level rise, increasing river discharges and salinization are a threat. The adaptive masterplan for the island of Goeree-Overflakkee shows how a certain location can adapt to external changes and how to deal with the uncertainty of these changes. This offers a sustainable method of how to approach complex systems and translate this in spatial planning and design.

Relationship with the Graduation lab

The website of delta urbanism stated the following: ‘Delta interventions is an inter-disciplinary studio which deals with the development of delta areas worldwide. Not only does the delta offer great conditions for settlements and trading, there is also the threat of the water. The studio focusses on research and design projects that not only result in more safety and better water-systems, but also in stronger spatial identities and new cohesions of cities and landscapes: in a new, strong and beautiful urban delta-landscape’.

Current situation of Goeree-Overflakkee, most touristic facilities are located near the coast and the daily facilities for the local population of the island are spread over the historical city centres.

This image represents the worst case scenario, what can happen with the socio-cultural state of the island if we do nothing. Public facilities will disappear from the domestic (largest) part of the island, this decreases the living quality so there won’t settle new people and because of the ageing problem the villages will slowly deflate. The density of coast however will strongly increase but not in the benefit of the spatial quality.
This graduation project translates the assignment of climate change on the long term into a design assignment for the short term. The aim is to turn the negative consequences of climate change around into positive opportunities for spatial and socio-economic qualities. Salinization of the Haringvliet will on the one hand lead to serious problems for the agriculture sector, but by implementing an integral water system on the island, based on natural patterns from the substrate layer, it will for the long term offer a sustainable and reliable solution.

So the first priority is to ensure the agriculture sector of their future, and the second priority was to use this measures for the benefit of recreation and economy. Thorough research has been done into the water system and how rain water can be stored on the island. This resulted in a water pattern, covering the whole island, and at the same time connects to the existing villages. To collect enough knowledge about the water management aspect of this project, a lot of ‘expert interviews’ did take place. So that represents the inter-disciplinarily of the project and studio. To combine all different interests into one approach and design.

**Methodical line of approach**

Within the studio of Delta Interventions or the Delta Urbanism research group there are some frequently used methods. One of them is the 3x3x3 method which is related to the layer approach and has as goal to give you insight into the configuration of the landscape and the development through time. By connecting the past with the present, a future exploration can be made. That is what I also applied in this graduation project but then on a slightly different way. By extracting the landscape in all its different layers, use historical research to link the present to the past and pay extra attention to the configuration of the substrate layer, a solid base for further research and design could be made.

Another method is the use of case studies. In this project there is not been used one specific case study but several reference projects. By exploring their tools and techniques, knowledge for my own project could be obtained. Examples of such projects are: Tiengemeten, Plan Tureluur, Waterdunen and urban transformations of Leidschendam and Zevenbergen.

**Research and design**

In the overall process the research by design method is often used within Delta Urbanism projects. Here the focus is on a constant reflection and movement between research and design. The research can immediately be tested in the design and then further research or analysis can take place again.
In my graduation project the approach was more research-based design. Especially because of the major water issue, a lot of research and analysis had to be done. This resulted in a vision and later, by thorough exploration of the theoretical framework, into an adaptive masterplan. So important methods are based on the Adaptive Delta Management approach. Within this approach our living environment can be considered as one big system consisting out of different subsystems with all kinds of interrelationships. So the design context can be considered as a complex adaptive system where the design assignment can be approached through certain development paths based on breaking points. The relation between space and time is an important factor and also what role ‘gradients’ play is the landscape planning. In the end the graduation project mainly consisted out of a research into the adaptivity of the Delta and how this can result in certain design interventions. So the design in this case of not the main goal, but more a way to show how certain decisions with a large temporal variety can result in short term design interventions and use this design visualisation as a tool to convince within the decision-making process.