

Drawing relations on a sunken island;

A multi-species ethnography in a young nature reserve



Cover; Drawing by Nestor based on his memory of our visit once

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ABSTRACT

The Dutch delta nature is changing along the policy turn towards nature-based solutions. Polders are filled with water and beaver can build their castles, so also on the island of Tiengemeten. Nature is young here and still becoming. This seven-kilometer long island has been repurposed by the provincial council, and the farmers working the fields there, were displaced. This thesis discovers what was lost and what was gained according to the experiences of people related to the island today. Identities and position towards nature changed along with the new non-human inhabitants. This multi-species ethnography attempts to include more species besides humans, that are making the landscape. How the human residents position themselves into this new environment has been explored with the use of the participatory action mapping method.

The research data lead to the argument and warning, that during the process of naturification for an increase in biodiversity, could occur at the expense of cultural diversity by disrupting community fabrics and local knowledge. Justice is not only the fair share of space and resources, but the also recognition for a community, identity, its knowledge and its local uses.



Comfrey root, found on Tiengemeten.
Picture by author

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1. Introduction

In the South-Holland Delta lies an island, which has been 'given back to nature' since 1996 in order to create a network of natural areas good for biodiversity and resilience. The farmers were made to leave and agricultural fields, concrete and asphalt were dismantled. The dyke around the island, which was keeping the polders dry, was 'doorgestoken'¹ for 5 meters. Therefore water entered the island, creating swamps and tides together with new residents; beavers, Scottish highlanders and several geese species amongst others. Besides that, many different bird species visit the island in their migration and human tourists come for admiration. Despite of the fact that people sometimes think the island is uninhabited; many species made it their home, of which nine people. The island is called Tiengemeten.



[Google maps 2019] - South from Rotterdam, there lies the island Tiengemeten appointed by the purple arrow. West is the Northern Sea, east is the inland. If you search for the green area 'Nationaal Park de Biesbosch', go downstream and find the island. Along the river, there are several spaces where nature is developed, to create the 'Zuid-Holland Delta Natuur'.

¹ Literal translation; pierced through. Meaning that the dyke was partially taken down, letting water enter the polders.

Introducing key participants

1. Residents

Ton; This retired journalist lives in the center of the island. Starting as a weekender in ... within a few years he became a year round resident.

Ben; Coming from The Hague to Tiengemeten to find peace and space in 1978. He is now a retired butcher

Maya; This former journalist now shares ownership of the inn with her husband since 2009.

BAVO; An assisted living facility for people with acquired brain injury, run by two residents. Around twenty people live here short term to integrate into society.

2. Natuurmonumenten employers

Eduard; Ranger on Tiengemeten and surrounding area's since 1994, as Natuurmonumenten employee. Coming October he is going to retire. He is a generalist regarding knowledge about nature.

Gerwin; Ecologist on Tiengemeten since the last year of agriculture on the island. He joined the team of landscape designers and performs evaluations from an ecological perspective.

Marieke; Coordinating volunteers and organizing activities for OERR; a program to educate and involve kids to nature.

Karen; crm manager; busy with tourism and facilities

Annette II; Communications employer on Tiengemeten

3. Mainland

Huib; The skipper faring the ferry already from since he was nine years old. The business is in hands of his family for three generations.

Eva; The skipper's wife stating; "Huib fares, I do the rest." Here she refers to communication, administration, business plan a.o. She is one of three women in the Netherlands who can fare a ferry.

Piet; Former sheep breeder and traders works the fields on Tiengemeten.

Annette I; Volunteer guide for Natuurmonumenten.

4. Provincial council

Willy; Civil servant from the program and project department since the beginning of the transformation until 2018.

Guido; Civil servant from the program and project department today.

5. Weekenders

Maarten; shares a former workers house with his family since 1972.

May; The wife of Maarten's brother

The move to change the island's purpose is part of a broader trend where more green or blue infrastructures; nature-based solution (NBs), are introduced. This in order to manage risk of natural hazards, pollution, carbon sequestration, extreme weather, human health and economic goals, all combined with tackling global environmental challenges through nature-based solutions (Maes and Jacobs 2017; Bridgewater 2018; Davies and Lafortezza 2019; Faivre et al. 2017; Lafortezza et al. 2018,). The 'fight against' changed to 'living with'.

After the Watersnoodramp in 1953, a flood disaster taking at least 1800 human lives; "dat nooit weer"² had become the general expression. Consequently, the Delta Works became the project to prevent that. The construction of the Delta Works became part of national identity, referring to the engineers as heroes who conquered the water (Zwarteveen 2015). Water engineering today is an international task for 3000 Dutch companies (Zwarteveen 2015).

Nature-based solutions seem to go against the grain, when the 'modern' position of humans controlling nature changes and nature receives more time and space. What happens to daily life on Tiengemeten? What is this nature actually and who decides what it looks like? Who is welcome and who has to make room? And when identity

² Translated; 'that, never again'

used to revolve around conquering water or nature, what is the communities' identity today? The main research question is framed as follows; Who decides what nature is and who create the landscape in the recently restored delta nature on the island Tiengemeten?

In order to find answers to these questions, I have complemented regular ethnography with multi-species ethnography and participatory action mapping (PAM). The former in order to include non-human residents on Tiengemeten who constitute and create this environment, and the latter in order to make tangible how people position themselves in their environment.

Asking these questions is philosophically, theoretically and practically relevant as it helps us overthink and recognize our lines of reasoning. These lines of reasoning form political visions and implementations. Learning about visions and theories, and getting to know life on the ground, uncovers discrepancies between them. The connection between abstract ideas and life on the ground will be discovered in Tiengemeten). Recognizing this paradox "illuminates our moral sensibility and our moral discourse" (Drenthen 1999, 164). Justice is not only about sharing space, but also recognizing people's identity and relationships. Maybe in order to sustainably increase space for nature, we ought to be wary of displacing humans causing disrupted communities, losing local expert knowledge and losing social support.

The theoretical framework to analyze life on Tiengemeten is given in the next section, which is followed by an outline of the thesis' the structure.

1.1 Naturification

To analyze the newly perceived interwovenness of humans and their environment on Tiengemeten, a concept will be proposed which seems useful for this new trend: *Naturification*. Where gentrification signifies 'displacement justified with the improved quality of life in the neighborhood in order to accumulate capital', which connects to the displacement of farmers a more natural environment, the concept is also inextricably linked to race, class and the urban space (Huq and Harwood 2019). Farmers were perceived as unfit for the newly designed destination/zoning plan and displaced, though compensated. They had to make way for a network of natural zones for biodiversity and resilience of climate change and human activities. Besides this creation of 'wildernis', tourists have since been welcomed to generate more nature protectors and spend money used for management and purchase of more land for nature. Since gentrification

is specified to a certain group, location and goal, the naturification process, wherein more space and time is given to nature, then provides the possibility to pay attention to who determines what nature is, who has to make way for it and who benefits. Chapter two will explain the construction and meaning of naturification more thoroughly.

Naturification could be used as an overarching analysis tool, containing different already existing debates, concepts and theories. One of them, which will be elaborated on in chapter 3, is the trend of nature-based solutions and the call for resocialization of nature, which both happen on Tiengemeten. Several scholars call for the resocialization of water and to recognize the multiplicity of people's meanings of water, whilst rejecting the modernist view of knowing one water; H₂O (Linton 2014; Zwartveen et al. 2018; Aken van 2015; Mena-Vásconez et al. 2017). "The main feature of which has been to abstract all the world's waters from their local, social, cultural, religious and ecological context, to reduce them to a single substance and thus render them commensurable" (Linton 2014, 113). This H₂O in the hydrological cycle is a claimed universal understanding of water, unaffected by history or social interaction (Aken van 2015). Consequently, since water had become void of its history and social interaction, it could be brought under control (Linton 2014). Large-scale infrastructures and dams are materializations of this modern expertise (Kaika 2006).

The resocialization of water, or de-modernization, is aimed to happen through ethnographic accounts of different sorts of understandings of waters, which is explained in concepts such as waterworld, waterscape or *hydrosocial* cycle (Linton and Budds 2014). The latter is explained as: "a socio-natural process by which water and society make and remake each other over space and time, and have proposed it as an analytical tool for investigating hydrosocial relations" (Linton and Budds 2014, 115).

Inspired by the diverse ways of knowing waters, we will explore in chapter four what ways people know 'nature' and who decides how it takes shape in this new landscape where nature and water are less controlled. For a more equal distribution of space we will see in chapter four to what extent this has created sustainable citizenship. Mirja Vihersalo (2016) analyzed the lot of scientific research about the concepts of sustainable and environmental citizenship. She found that most research focused on ambitious sustainable citizens, the responsibilities they take, attitudes towards climate change and their actions in order to live a more environmental friendly life. She argues that research on the role of the state is needed, since the question of whose responsibility it is to take care of the environment implicitly seems to point at the citizen (Vihersalo 2016). Therefore this research focused on creation of sustainable citizenship

via nature-based solutions by the province, including the accompanying political layers; national and EU.

In chapter five we explore how social is this resocialization of nature is. To increase space for nature, this space has to be created. The exclusion of the farmers from being part of nature, portrayed as unnatural, or damaging nature, illustrates the paradox Nietzsche has written about before. He warned for the paradoxical attributes of environmental ethics, where “each moral interpretation of nature implies a conceptual seizure of power over nature. On the other hand, Nietzsche argues, the concept of nature is indispensable in ethics because we have to interpret nature in order to have a meaningful relation with reality (...). Morality occurs naturally within human nature” (Drenthen 1999). Irrigation engineer and social scientist Margreet Zwarteveen, has warned for this paradox as well, calling it “the trap of modernism” (Zwarteveen et al. 2018). What is important here, is that with all good intentions of protecting nature and speaking for nature, that this morality and ethics, if not careful enough, can become one way of knowing, just like the modernist perspective. So, as Veronica Strang emphasized, excluding the hydrological cycle, would mean the exclusion of a particular way of knowing (Strang 2018). Though, as Strang (2018) recognizes, it does not suffice to only know water without its intertwinement with history and society. Zwarteveen therefore calls for a “relaxation of modernism [which] includes embracing diversity, plurality or multiplicity as well as acknowledging, accepting and reconciling the existence of many different ways to engage with, relate to and account for water” (Zwarteveen 2018, 227). In this chapter we will see how identities and the community was connected to Tiengemeten, which dramatically changed with the island’s repurposing.

1.2 Methods

Multi-species ethnography

“An anthropology that is not just confined to the human but is concerned with the effects of our entanglements with other kinds of living selves” (Kohn 2007, 4).

The multi-species ethnographic focus illustrates how non-humans interact with humans, and to what extent they participate in the landscape making. These interactions indicate to what extent non-humans are recognized as citizens with rights or useful cattle to be taken care of and who are seen as a threat to biodiversity. Which species are welcome and who are actively excluded and why? We will see how management tries to control

this wilderness to a certain extent, what works and in what ways species find ways to omit human wishes.

The difference between multi-species and regular ethnographic research is the recognition of a multitude of organisms shaping, and are shaped by the environment, politics, culture and economics (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). The anthropologist Eduardo Kohn calls it 'anthropology of life' (Kohn 2007). The non-human species are analyzed beyond being the background, or food, or symbols towards recognized creatures being part of the creation of politics, history and culture (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010).

The way it is performed is not elaborated on in many research articles. Anthropologist Anna Tsing (2015) who has been researching how matsutake mushrooms, pines and human mushroom pickers create the Californian landscape, calls this 'the arts of noticing'. But what to do when you are a starting anthropologist writing a thesis on three months fieldwork? Are not there any handles that could be given to speed up the process of learning a little? Fortunately Victoria Strang (2018) provides one handle by calling for interdisciplinary collaboration. Biologists, ecologists and hydrologists for example provide besides local expertise scientific expertise. As they have been closely observing the beaver for example, they have interesting information to complement my research.

Inspired by multi-species research, stressing indigenous populations' knowledge I also stayed in close contact with locals who interacted with the landscape and non-human species a lot (De La Cadena 2010). The local ranger Eduard, farmer Piet and guide Annette taught me a lot about the animals on the island and were willing to take me along while doing their work. Besides that, doing volunteering work for Natuurmonumenten on the island, some volunteers I worked with were fanatic fowlers and hobby botanists who taught me a lot too. To complement these narratives, I had contact with the Nederlandse Zoogdierenvereniging³ who conducts research on mammals residing in the Netherlands, protect them and create awareness through projects.

Participatory Action Mapping

"Creative processes can shift people's understanding and develop their capacity to address the complex environmental issues that they face" (Kilvington, Atkinson, and Fenemor 2011, 557).

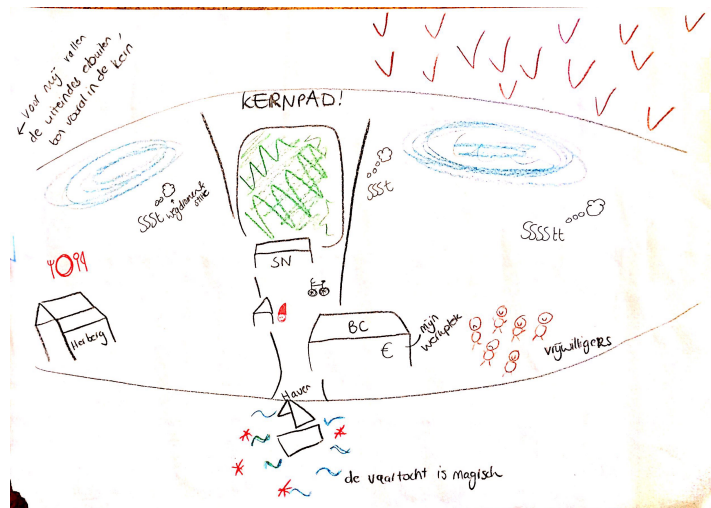
³ Dutch Mammal Association

As noticed during fieldwork, the research subject and the abstractness sometimes make the interview difficult, as some people have not thought of their relationality with nature, or their place in the environment like that. Moreover, I find it difficult to make the questions more concrete and simple. Therefore the subject demanded a tool to make the daily-lived experience tangible; drawing maps.

The mapping exercises could be placed within the PAR (participatory action research) methods as research participants actively co-create the research content and interpretations, which encourages them to represent themselves instead of the researcher speaking for them (Boll 2015). Besides that, Cathy MacDonald suggests PAR helps participants to analyze their own situations, which improves the quality of interviews (MacDonald 2012, 34-50).

As PAR contains many different tools and strategies, mapping is particularly useful for this research.

Following Julie Plichon (2017, 1), mapping helps to discover “different ways of connecting with places and to understand personal attachments to places”. Plichon uses a map of the environment and asks participants to take a walk en draw their emotions and thoughts on several key points of their choice. This tangible tool aids understanding between researcher and participant as the researcher can ask why a participant drew a certain thing at a certain place. Perception and meanings of places could be uncovered as mapping invites people to reflect on their experience of their environment. As Plichon



Drawing Marieke



Drawing Nestor

states, mapping “turns abstract experience into tangible realities” and make the internal visible (Plichon 2017, 7). Inspired by these examples, I created an assignment (attached in the appendix), which I tried to involve as many people as possible in. Finally the maps helped the interviews and conversations as I was aided to ask questions about why people drew certain things.

When looking at Marieke’s map for example, you can see she did not draw the eastern and western points of the island. She explained that she actually has not been there yet, while she is present on the island several days a week. She works there in the ‘visitors center’ indicated with the euro sign. Coordinating the volunteers is her responsibility, making sure that they are satisfied and fill in the gaps in the planning; they have been drawn as the stick figures with smiley and weepy faces. The green square in the middle represents the natural playground, which in size is relatively big. For her it is a significant place on Tiengemeten since connecting children to nature is part of her position for NM.

Drawing provides the freedom of altering reality to emphasize certain details. For example in the analysis by Michael Taussig of his own fieldwork notebook drawings, he explains that he drew a needle relatively big, is held by someone residing on the streets (Taussig 2011). This needle stood for the precariousness of the lives of the people on the street.

Through drawing, participants can express their experience freely, free from proportions in the physical world. In Marieke’s drawing we see that with the natural playground that is portrayed covering the whole south part of the island. Whilst at least more than half of it is wildernis. The picture above is a composition of the memories of a one-time visitor after hiking to the west point and back. In the left top corner are mushrooms drawn, which he identified and took with him to cook at home. We see the Scottish Highlander emphasized, placed in the middle and bigger than the other elements. He thought these were very cool creatures, with a surfer dude hairstyle. If you search a bit more, you can find more creatures.

Mapping is particularly useful when research focuses on the occupation of place and relationality towards the environment (Carones 2018). Giulia Carones (2018) shows this in her research on activists in Milan, who are using the occupation of place as the making of place, made visible in maps they drew for her. On Tiengemeten, several spaces are occupied by humans, others by birds and others by beavers. However, these occupations are not void of inter-species interaction. The beaver for example is a protected species, therefore humans are not allowed to disturb them when they are gnawing down trees, except for when they dig their hole in a dyke. Then they are

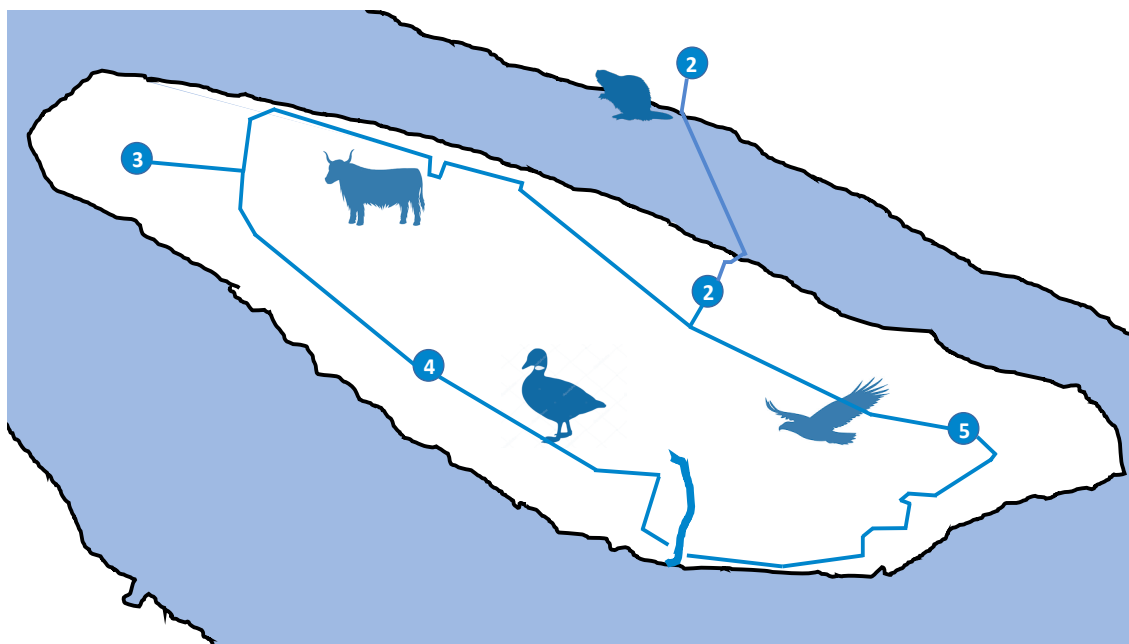
allowed to be displaced or shot down, as they can cause destabilization of dykes and threaten dry low land and human safety.

How are the residents and visitors perceiving different occupations and showing this in their maps? Who is recognized and receives a place on the map and who is rendered invisible? Is nature occupying space or is it granted to be there?

1.3 Structure

The thesis' structure is like a walk along the island, making stops at specific landmarks and passing specific species. This walk is based on results of the maps drawn by the participants. Structuring it this way means that this thesis is not beginning with a chapter on context and introducing the participants, neither chronologically in time. Therefore I present you now the structure, showing what information is placed in which chapter. Each chapter represents a landmark or area on Tiengemeten. A map at the chapters' introductions show where the reader is on the island. Landmarks symbolically and literally tell the story of Tiengemeten. Between the landmarks, we spot several species during our walk, which are featured in the interludes connecting the chapters. There we explore how they form the landscape today, and to what extent they are 'allowed' to do so.

The tour along Tiengemeten will start of course on the mainland where we take the ferry to the island. The faring has been executed by a family business for more than a



This is the route we are going to walk imaginatively. The landmarks are indicated with numbers. Between the chapters we encounter several animals that form the landscape. © Hans & Inge Dekker

century, in which they have witnessed the change of people wherefore they fared and the changing purpose the island fulfilled. In order to understand the island's purpose today and the way people and other species relate to it, *naturification* will serve as analysis tool, which will be introduced and explained here. Close to the harbor beavers build their castles, as they also do on the island. They sometimes swim alongside the ferry. We explore how the beaver came back into the Netherlands and now co-creates the landscape in interlude I.

After arrival on the island, we go westbound. About 5 kilometers along short willow bushes, sunken fields and a lot of twitter, we zigzag between the reeds over wooden bridges and arrive at the reedhill, chapter 3; a hill covered in nicely mowed grass with a bench and an apple tree; a goal to arrive at half way, to eat lunch on this viewpoint. This hill overlooked the transformations the landscape went through and the goals that have been set out by its owners with nature-based solutions; from earning money by cutting reeds to farming and finally to tourism going along with the attempted restoration and resocialization of a dynamic delta nature with tides, floodplains and brackish waters; a robust climate proof nature (Ministerie van Economische Zaken 2014). On our way to the next chapter, we encounter the Scottish highlander (interlude II) who is a good example of a nature-based solution. The life of the half domesticated animal is a nature-based solution as it is purposefully placed on Tiengemeten to keep the bushes and trees short.

Going towards the south, we enter the area 'Wildernis'⁴. Here we find how politics, policies, ownership and contemporary cultural aesthetics created a wildernis, and what 'wild' and 'natural' mean to people. As many political layers have been involved with this project, going as far as EU's Natura2000, Tiengemeten serves as an example of the state taking responsibility for environmental sustainability and sustainable citizenship through nature-based solutions (Barry 2006; Vihersalo 2017). We explore different definitions people use for 'nature' and how nature is given space and time on Tiengemeten.

While walking along these reeds during the end of April/beginning of May, do not be too surprised to be scared up by a loudly honking and flying up goose. Due to the reeds, you could have hardly seen that you approached a graylag goose nest, with maybe seven eggs (maximum) or tiny chicks. They are welcome and safe on this island, except for one day a year; the day of 'nest treatment'. This will be explained in interlude III.

⁴ Translated; Wilderness

We walk on, along the southern area of the island to a dead end because of the inlet. Since we are not physically walking right now, we imaginatively fly or swim over the inlet and arrive at the area 'Weemoed'⁵. In this area, the island emerged in the 18th century [administratively we cannot be sure because of lacking administrative documents due to floods] because of sedimentation and tides. We explore the history of the emergence and human settlement on Tiengemeten. Today polders and fields are preserved here and worked by Farmer Piet who tries to include the inhabitants of the BAVO, volunteers from the agricultural museum and anyone enthusiastic enough; me. Through material remembrances and nostalgic memories, we explore how the change of landscape creates feelings of lost identity and how these illustrate experiences of the present (Perreault 2018; Kaplan and Guntram 2011; Cusack 2007). Not only the nostalgia about farming will be discussed, but also how memories of a more biodiverse and dynamic past from before the green revolution, justify the changes towards more space for nature on the other hand (Cusack 2007; Perreault 2018).

If we are lucky, we can conclude the hike with the sight of the white-tailed eagle, a.k.a. the flying door named after its span of 2 meters, in interlude IV. This species is very much welcomed by NM, as they restricted the area for people, where a couple was building their nest in a poplar tree.

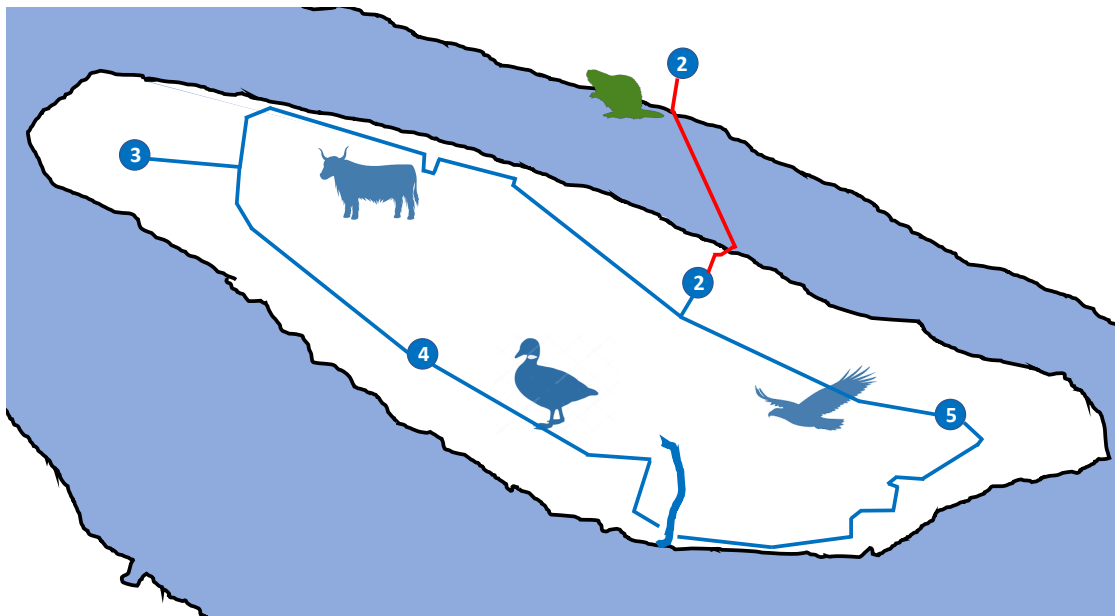
Finally the thesis will be concluded with a short summary of the main arguments and a thorough reflection on myself as a researcher and the choices I made in the field followed by the bibliography and acknowledgements.

⁵ Translated; Nostalgia. Weemoed is a soft-saddened mood. Perhaps a combination of nostalgia (having pleasant memories where one would go back to) and melancholia (feeling deep sadness or gloom).

2. Ferry

The ferry fare crosses Het Vuile Gat⁶, the waterbody separating Tiengemeten from the mainland. It takes around seven minutes to get to fare to the other side, depending on weather conditions and water levels. It takes off only once an hour.

Alongside the repurposing of the island since 1997, the ferry fares changed too; from faring for farmers to faring for tourists. However, the island today is still inhabited by a handful of people who remain to call the ferry 'de levensader van het eiland'⁷. The skipper and his ferry bring supplies, facilitate the islanders' mobility and functions as a meeting point.



“Rivers have a long signified life and regeneration, and have been appropriated as symbols of national vitality” (Cusack 2007, 101). Interestingly, as Tricia Cusack concluded while doing research, other places in the world often refer to the *river* as the bringer/sustainer of life, not the ferry (Cusack 2007). Is this in line with our modern conception of the human species' independent survival strategy, or ability to mold everything in favor for our survival?

The new purpose of the island, providing space and time for nature, attracts people who wish to experience that and excludes people who are unfit. To analyze the process, I would like to propose a new analytical tool *naturification*; composed out of

⁶ Translated; The Dirty Hole

⁷ Translated; the island's aorta

nature and 'gentrification'. The concept will be explained thoroughly and illustrated by the ferry in this chapter and applied along the whole thesis. This will become clear while analyzing the gentrification concept first. Secondly its shortcomings to this case will be explored followed by what it needs to be complemented, which leads to the new analytical tool; naturification.

2.1 Naturification

What does gentrification have to do with creating space and time for nature? The thought of gentrification came up during fieldwork when people told stories of displaced farmers, whereof many did not want to leave. They had to make place for water, beavers, Scottish highlanders, orchids and many more species. The farmers did not fit in the new destination plans. Even though they received a sum of money for which they could buy their own new farmstead with fields on the mainland, part of their identity linked to Tiengemeten and the community fabric got lost.

In gentrification, displacement is a central feature, executed by the government or the private market, which sometimes work together (Huq and Harwood 2019). The displacement of 'the unfit' in the urban space, is mostly justified by improving the



View from ferry at Tiengemeten.
Picture by author

quality of life in the neighborhood; tackling crime, improving housing qualities and consequently increasing rental or selling prices (Huq and Harwood 2019). The underlying motive of capital accumulation by displacing minority groups, concerning race, gender and/or class, is highly criticized (Huq and Harwood 2019).

Baxter and Brickell bring in another, less obvious, feature forward in the gentrification debate; gentrification is as well absent and present in people's home space, since they make and unmake unwanted others simultaneously (Baxter and Brickel 2014). These others are locally de-socialized and de-familiarized as they do not fit in the envisioned landscape/environment. The home space is not limited to the house but also "the surrounding spaces, including the next-door neighbor, important services (...), and the pathway to and from home, make up the home space as well. Displacement by gentrification destroys the "elaborate and complex community fabric that is crucial for low-income, immigrant and minority communities" (Huq and Harwood 2019, 713). They state that the process of territorial stigmatization justifies displacement, which they call 'social cleansing' (Huq and Harwood 2019).

When analyzing the process of Tiengemeten, gentrification seems to find common ground here. The new destination plan was assigned by the provincial council of South-Holland with their eyes on Natura2000 (EU policy) and Natuur Netwerk Nederland⁸ (National policy), to give some land back to nature. The fragmentation of natural areas caused the loss in biodiversity and consequently the resilience of these areas. Tiengemeten lies in the Haringvliet, a waterbody coming from the Biesbosch, which is a natural park. On the mainland several projects are part of this network too. Regarding gentrification, there is no collaboration between government and private market, but with a non-profit NGO. The management of the island has been given to Natuurmonumenten who had to weigh in too. What these policies entail, will be elaborated on in chapter four Wildernis.

In this case, improving the quality of living in the neighborhood could be enlarged in a bigger context. The province needed a 'blue lung' so they said in an interview, for the urban areas whereof Rotterdam and its harbor are part, but also as a pull factor for the south of South Holland aiming at attracting tourists and holding young residents in the rural area preventing too much demographic aging⁹. However, most definitely so stated these project managers, this room for nature was just for nature;

⁸ Translation; Nature Network Netherlands

⁹ Interview with Willy at Provincial council 23rd of April 2019

nature was a goal in itself. More about how these plans have been realized in chapter 3 and 4.

In the process of giving back space to nature, this space had to be created; which happened with the displacement of the farmers. These unwanted 'others' have not necessarily been racialized or criminalized; they were perceived as unsuitable for the new destination/zoning plan;

“The power of Tiengemeten is, that it is a 100% nature-island, which makes it very special. It is just too small to allow other functions.”¹⁰

How the displacement took place will be explained in chapter five Weemoed, where we can also read the stories of the people who experienced the past, which are showing how a complex community fabric has been disrupted.

Considering the capital accumulation, it is less obvious how relatable it is, and it remains a question. The island has always been private property, and those working the lands were surrendered to the mercy of the landlord whose aim was capital accumulation. Did a farmer who had to retirement, not have a direct heir successor, he had to take his stuff and leave. A new farmer was sought for the particular farmstead and agricultural lands (Perneel 2012). Capital accumulation shifted from private owners earning money from farmers to a non-profit NGO, the inn and the two non-profit museums. Natuurmonumenten makes money from tourism via excursions, guided tours and selling ice cream and souvenirs, receives subsidies and gets a lot of help from volunteers.

So although gentrification seems quite relatable, the debates take place in urban areas and are inextricably linked to race, gender and class. And the way of improving the neighborhood happens via improving housing facilities and parks for example. When considering Tiengemeten, these facets are absent, while there is a discussion of environmental sustainability going on; a different issue and different actors. Therefore I propose a new umbrella concept for the process of making room for nature and what that means for local life, with room for concerning humans, non-humans and entities¹¹. The latter two are included, inspired by multi-species research and the hydrosocial cycle concept (Strang 2018). The new concept is called; naturification.

Since there have been more nature-based solutions, for example the Room for the River projects, where water is given more space and people were displaced,

¹⁰ Interview with Willy at Provincial council 23rd of April 2019

¹¹ Concerning water or mountains for example

naturification seems to be a trend in society (Busscher, Brink van den, and Verweij 2018; Hudson 2018; Warner and Buuren van 2011; de Groot and de Groot 2009; Wolsink 2006). Another example of environmental sustainable projects are hydroelectric dam projects, for generating clean energy (Alley 2018; Kaika 2006) or windmills and solar panels (Greece case). These projects are change the landscape and sometimes at the cost of peoples attachment to a geographical space.

2.2 The Ferry's purpose

At the beginning of the naturification process, the ferry almost disappeared. For a silent natural area, there was no ferry needed to regularly bring people to the island. The discovery of the farmsteads' monumental values changed the plan and with this repurposing of the buildings, the island was decided to be accessible for people. This went alongside the changing political landscape concerning 'nature', that was changing from enclosed nature reserves to allowing society to experience this nature, hoping to induce appreciation and awareness and making money to sustain the management. Besides, nature could enter society as it fulfills important functions such as water storage and clean air. The policy turn will be explained further in chapter 3 Reed Hill.

"I have been faring passengers and cargo for forty years back and forth. I am not only married to my wife, but also to that water"¹²

(Huib in Van der Graaf 2007, 45)

So the ferry remained in service, which prevented Huib's divorce from the water. While his goal of transporting people remained, who these people are and what they are going to do, changed.



"The ferry fare is magical"

¹² Translation by author

Besides the additional effect of providing a magical experience, or helping people to “let go of daily worries” as guide Annette states, the ferry has several primary tasks. Along the changing purpose of the island and consequently the changing residents, the skippers found ways to play along those changes and adjust their primary tasks accordingly.

Back in the days, the time schedule was adjusted to the wishes of the farmers on the island; a basket was hoisted on a post on the island, so the skipper could see from the mainland that people wanted to fare over. Those who were waiting in the harbor on the mainland could then cross too (Perneel 2012).

Besides the farmers, there were also people on the island called ‘weekenders’. They resided in smaller houses mainly in the weekends and in holidays. Early seventies, the middle class abstained from residing on the islands’ weekendhomes/holidayhome/cottages (Perneel 2012). For all the different merchants selling their goods on the island (grocer, butcher, baker, peddler), it was not profitable anymore to go there. Huib, the skipper, saw this newly emerged untapped market and for five years he drove around on the island selling groceries to those who stayed and picking up orders at the butcher. Although, When the supermarkets arrived on the mainland, this business became unprofitable. During that time, in order to keep their heads above the water, the skipper family rebuilt the brown pub in the harbor into a restaurant. Ten years later he added ‘mailman’ to his curriculum too (Perneel 2012).

At the beginning of the island’s naturificaiton in 1998, it was to become a silent area for birds. Huib, who back then had been the skipper for 35 years, together with one of the farmers decided to get their truck drivers license as they thought their business was going to end (Graaf van der 2007). Though, plans changed and NM asked Huib to fare as they hoped to expect 50.000 visitors every year.

After 2011 Huib and NM came to new arrangements where NM became directly responsible for the fare from the mainland to Tiengemeten; they bought the ferry and started to sell the tickets themselves. As several households remained on the island, they had the plight to provide for their mobility. Huib still works for NM today as skipper. Though, besides that he is also an independent entrepreneur; he owns a small speedboat and a saloon boat. The latter is used to do expeditions; twilight trips, trips around Tiengemeten and ‘Haringvliet expedition’. It is a sort of hop-on-hop-off concept, mooring in several harbors on the mainland surrounding Tiengemeten. He cannot fare this alone, his wife Eva and several employees fare as well. Huib and Eva themselves, concentrate on the expeditions in summer. Besides this transportation function, on

Friday afternoons, Huib and Eva open their salon boat at the quay for everyone to have a drink.

Today the people using the ferry are the nine residents of the island, a hand full of weekenders, workers working at the BAVO and Natuurmonumenten employees, inn employees, and not to forget; tourists/visitors. Also the blue tit bird family fares with the ferry in their birdhouse, yes there is a birdhouse on the ferry, which is inhabited. The tourists and visitors are most of the times not aware of the fare schedule before 10:00 and after 17:00; those times are not publicly communicated and function for the change of shifts for the employers. Several fanatic fowlers with inside information know that at 7:00 the first ferry fares already and come along sometimes. With that first fare every morning, Huib goes to Ben's, a resident, to deliver his paper and for a cup of coffee while waiting for the nightshift of the BAVO to return after the shift transmission. Every Monday, Piet is part of this ritual too.

Living on the island with the ferry as means of mobility is not a romantic image everybody likes to live with. When Eduard was asked to become ranger of the area, he was actually supposed to live on Tiengemeten';

“But I said, we are not going to do that. Then we can stop the negotiations, I won't do that. You live where you work and how are you going to do that with the neighbors. You have to take decisions sometimes where they do not agree with. They told me to think again about the offer but I said; 'I'll do that for five minutes, but I know now already I am not going to live on the island.' After a year I knew I was right. There was this island overseer living on Tiengemeten, Paul, who was very much engaged with the community and could not say yes or no anymore. If Paul would leave and the whole circus would come to me of course. I can have discussions and issues with the people here, but at 16:00 I leave, and Paul used to be still here. He went to birthday parties there and the first half hour he was put down by the people. I don't feel like that, I am not going to do that.”¹³

Another group of residents, which should not be negated, are the 20 people living at the BAVO; a protected-living facility for people with uncongenital brain defects. In this place, the residents are guided with structure and rhythm to help them stabilize and

¹³ Interview with Eduard

recover and finally reintegrate into society. This facility on Tiengemeten is unique for some of their daily activities are outside such as gardening and farming with Piet, Lieske the coordinator explains to me. Plus, when someone is angry or agitated, he or she can go outside and scream or cry loudly without anybody getting scared. In the center of Rotterdam, this would result into conflicts quite quickly. Also when the residents are in the final stages of recovery and do groceries at the local supermarket or work at social workshops, people know them. In this rural area many people know one another, which helps. People know a little more what to expect and how to react. Also people recovering and reintegrating from a burn-out work at the BAVO as mentor for the residents. "This place is not only healing for the client but also for us."

The BAVO residents do not always like that they are limited by the fare times says Lieske: "People who come to live here love it or hate it. The haters quickly leave and find another facility. Most like it, and can live with the fact that they are bounded by the ferry times."

In Conclusion

Since gentrification is inextricably linked to racism, gender and class and situated in urban spaces, we have come up with a new concept, free from relationality with specific minorities and the urban space. A new concept would be more suitable and applicable on many other cases, specifically linked to spaces where nature has been given more territory. All those involved that are seen as unwanted and experience the consequences of displacement are considered, just like those who profit from this space in this proposed analysis tool.

The practices of the skipper have not changed a lot since the naturification process of Tiengemeten has started. Where in the past, the ferry schedule was determined by people on the island, it is today determined by NM for tourists and residents plus employees. Therefore, the goal and the ownership of the island changed, whereto Huib and Eva had to conform their business.

I - Beaver

Castor Fiber ssp. albicus

“Nature always wins in the end. For example, when they took down the dyke partly to let the water into the polders, the beavers tried to build a dam into this inlet. Well actually the beavers didn’t win, as the current was too strong for their buildings to hold and now you can find it on the side of this inlet. But if you look at the yellow primrose threatening biodiversity... People can try but never fully control the landscape. Do you want to see a beaver castle?” She looks at my shoes and I say I do not care if they get dirty, so we get up and go outside. Following the muddy beaver slides between the reeds we find a beaver castle with a height of two meters. We also spot gnawed trees and branches and Eva explains beavers never make a ‘bare’ landscape as the willow cuttings sprout very easily everywhere. They in fact spread the willows. We walk back to the path where she shows me another castle right next to it. “People even let their dogs out here, but the beavers apparently do not care.”¹⁴

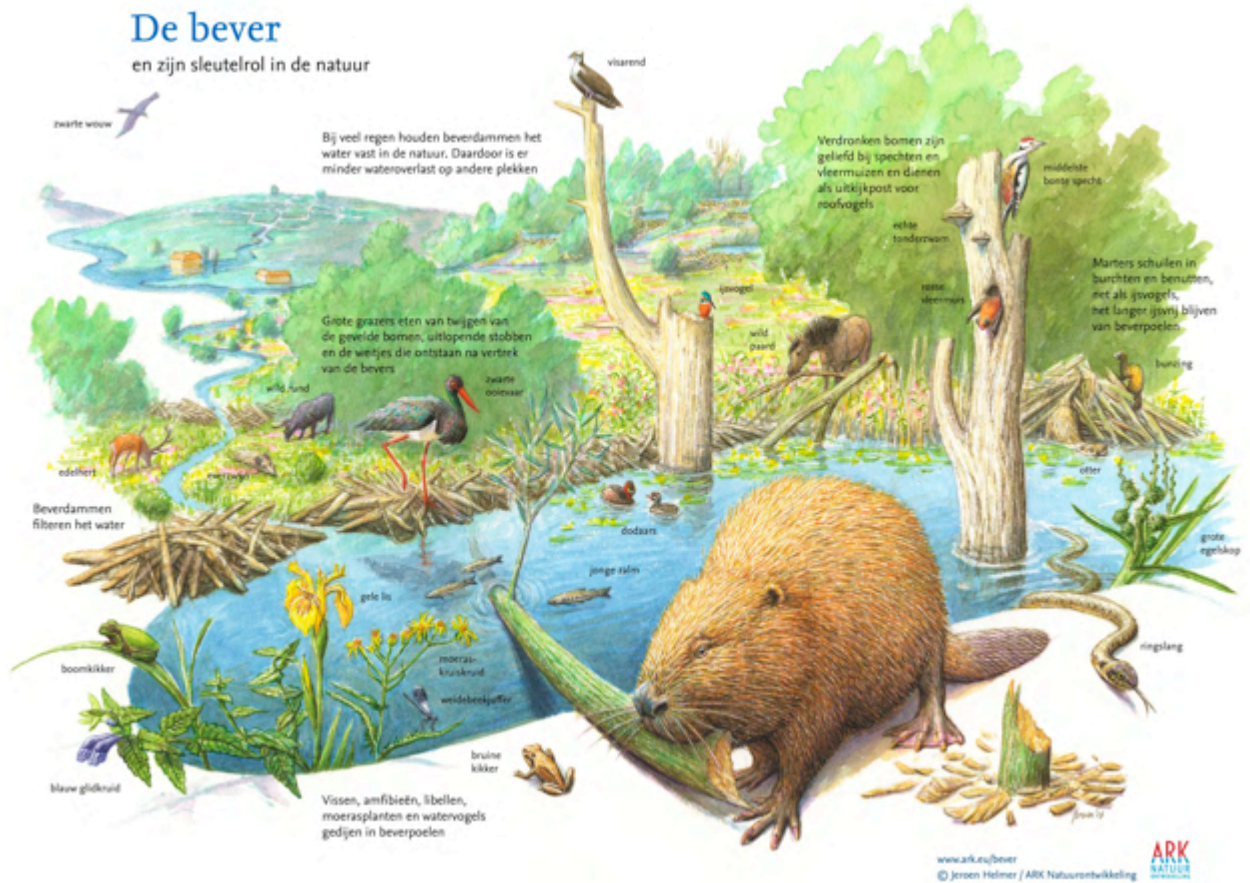
With a length of 70-100 centimeters, it is the biggest rodent/gnawer in Europe. Beavers live in the transition area between land and water, like swamps and along rivers, lakes and creeks (ARK 2016). The presence of trees, preferably willows and ash trees, is necessary just like a water depth of minimal 50 centimeters. They can stay for 15 minutes under water (ARK 2016).

Being a prominent landscaper, beavers create habitats for many different species. By gnawing down trees with their long orange (because of the iron in them) teeth, temporary open spaces provide opportunities for other plants and flowers. “This open habitat houses herbs, grasses, butterflies, dragonflies and amphibians who are absent a darker forests” (ARK 2016) . With his dams, he creates ponds of slower flowing water, where water plants thrive, like the yellow flag, with drunken trees where bats, woodpeckers and kingfishers stay. In winter these pools help shelter animals from freezing in shallower water (ARK 2016).

¹⁴ Interview with Eva the skippers’ wife

De bever

en zijn sleutelrol in de natuur



The Beavers' role in nature © Jeroen Helmer

His biggest enemies are the osprey, buzzard and human. The beaver disappeared from the Dutch landscape probably at the beginning of the 19th century (Zoogdiervereniging 2013). The death of the last beaver was inflicted by a human who made a mistake: “1st of October 1826, a fisherman saw a big water animal swim near his boat. He thought it was an otter, out to steal the fish from his nets. He took his punting pole and hit the animal on the head. Just then, he saw it was not an otter but a beaver. It was the last beaver in the Netherlands¹⁵,” so the story goes by Staatsbosbeheer who published a magazine dedicated to 25-year anniversary return of the beaver (Staatsbosbeheer 2013). Before they went extinct, they were hunted down by humans for their fur and castoreum. The latter is a yellow exudate from a gland between its anus and reproductive organs with which the animals marks its territory. Humans used it for its musk scent in perfumes and food or cigarettes to create a caramel and vanilla aroma. Also their habitats were destroyed by infrastructure and fragmentation of natural areas (Zoogdiervereniging 2013).

¹⁵ Translation by me

Almost 200 years later in 1988, the ministry of agriculture, nature and fishery together with WWF went to collect 42 beaver couples over a 4 year period, in former East-Germany and set them out in the Biesbosch (Staatsbosbeheer 2013; Zoogdiervereniging 2013). This natural park is located upstream from Tiengemeten. Besides these human efforts, beavers did their best to come to the Netherlands as well in the 90's. From Germany they swam to Limburg and settled there, whilst several beavers escaped a zoo in central Netherlands (Zoogdiervereniging 2013).

The beaver population increased after this reintroduction into the Netherlands and expanded its territory also towards Tiengemeten. The Dutch Mammal Association estimated the population in 2013 on 900/1000 animals (Zoogdiervereniging 2013). Staatsbosbeheer estimated the population on 600 animals in the Netherlands (Staatsbosbeheer 2013).

Today the human threat is indirect because impact on the environment; think for example about traffic accidents by cars or boats or pollution. They are protected by the national 'nature protection law', article 3.5 and 3.6 (Ministerie van Landbouw, Natuur en Voedselkwaliteit 2015). According to the first article, the law implies they cannot be caught or killed in their natural range. Also deliberate disturbance of the animals and their territory is forbidden. Article 3.6 states that they cannot be kept for transport for sale or for trade or any other reason. The beaver is also protected by EU directive 92/43/EEG perceived as a species of communal interest; except for Finnish, Swedish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Polish populations (European Union 1992).

Today on Tiengemeten, there are 11 known beaver castles. How many beavers there are, Eduard could not say. Sometimes one family has multiple castles and how many beavers belong to one family is also not known. Usually a mother and father live with their offspring, 2 newborns a year, who remain two years in the castle until they leave the 'nest' and find space for themselves. Eduard is also a bit reluctant to be very happy about the beavers' successes. He explains to me that beavers can build two sorts of homes; a castle or a clay mess. The former is a construction from branches, the latter is dug out in a riverbank, or sometimes in a dyke. Their residence in the dyke forms a threat to human safety as it undermines the construction and solidity of the dyke. In Limburg several beavers have been shot already. This decision was made after they tried more soft approaches such as translocation, though they just found their way back. Also the taller trees in the harbor on the mainland are needed as windshield for the boats. If the beaver would start to take these down, there would be a problem.



Ranger Eduard near one of the poplar trees, close to the farmstead ruin. © Qphoto

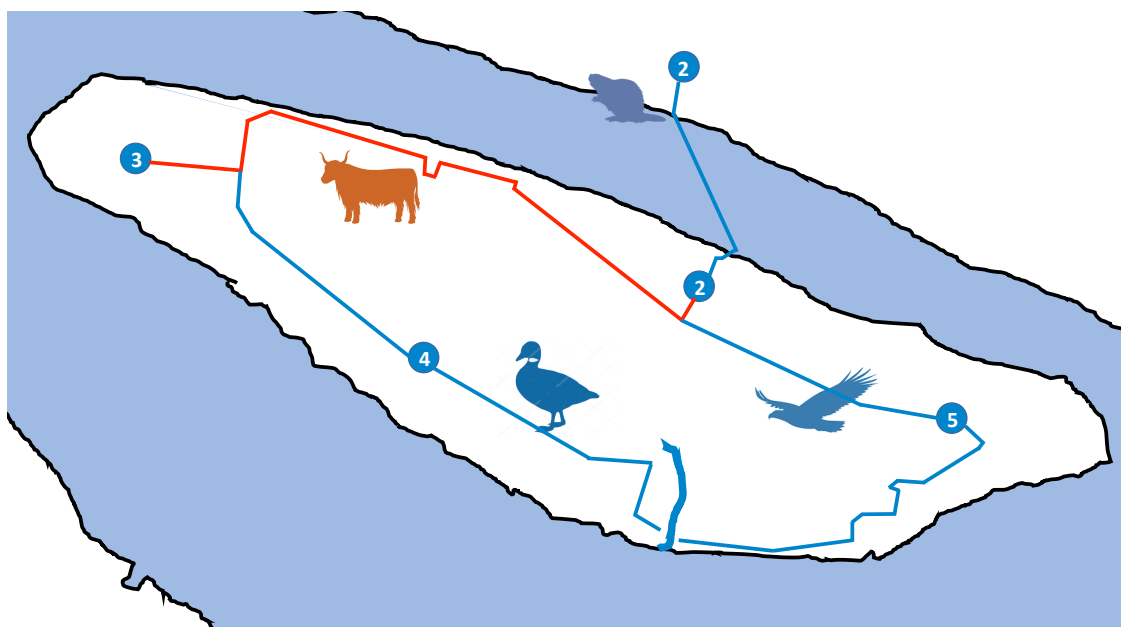
Despite of these concerns, Eduard likes to give the beaver tours anyways. Organized by NM one can book a tour where an experience is given by Eduard in a small boat. Beside this tour, there is also a walking route named after the beaver. Although it is rare to spot beavers, since they are active during twilight, they leave lots of traces for humans to be found and admired. One of those spots is across the inlet, near the old farmstead of family Vos, which today is left to ruin and become a home for owls and bats. Near the house are several older poplar trees, which are gnawed on profoundly. “Last year we were waiting for the moment that one of the trees would fall down. This year, just the same. What a work huh for a beaver to take one of those trees down,” explains guide Annette while we are looking at the trees.

As free as a ... uh... Beaver?

The way the beaver was brought back into the landscape and allowed to change this landscape is an example of how non-humans received recognition for their importance, and how ‘nature’ has gained ‘autonomy’ to do what it wants. They are nobody’s property and protected by law, even so their constructions. As the ranger expressed, this in fact invokes cautiousness as their clay mess homes form a threat to people’s dry feet.

3. Reed Hill

Many water birds move quickly aside during arrival in the harbor of the island. Walking straight ahead, we encounter a big barn with information about the island's history, with a volunteer next to a large map on the wall assigning three walking routes and what they behold, and a shop for souvenirs with nature themed umbrella's and rubber boots, but also stuffed animals (beavers, Scottish highlanders, birds) and many types of guide books for example for butterflies or flowers. Passing this building there are two museums and a natural playground before turning right towards the western point of the island, which is our goal for now.



On the right side is the dyke on which is inviting to walk on, as the grass is neatly mowed by the rangers providing a view over the swamp on the left, with its many birds and Scottish Highlanders with their feet in the water and the Haringvliet¹⁶ on the right with passing sailboats and other ships.

Walking along, now we have walked around 4 km, we leave the gravel path or the dyke and arrive at the reeds, mostly brownish and sometimes red, with a lot of the goldenrod species, walking through the muddy meandering paths. The reeds grow taller than an average human being and the wide view is gone, though the more advanced fowler can detect several birds here; grass beeper, reed bunting and bluethroat. One

¹⁶ Translated literally; herringflow. The waterbody connecting the Biesbosch and Tiengmeten to the North Sea.

detects these very tiny birds best by following their song. A muddy winding path leads us through the reeds, over wooden bridges which keep our feet dry from the extra muddy ditches where the Scottish Highlanders do not seem to have a problem with as you can see their tracks in the mud. Here and there one can see a tree with its roots under water in a lagoon created by a row of small rocks. There are more rocks at the borders of the island.



An organized guided tour, arriving at the reed hill.
Picture taken by author

After another kilometer, we can already see a green hill rising from the reeds and we will soon come at the foot of it. Arriving there and walking up to the top, might give you the feeling of arriving at a mountain peak [overstating a little]. It feels like reaching a goal, which might be kind of satisfying. Here one can sit on the bench or in the shade of the tree on this hill; an apple tree. Neatly clipped into a straight browsing line by the Scottish Highlanders. There are no other apple trees on the island and when I ask Gerwin or Eduard how it got there, they both joked, in different conversations, that a reed cutter once buried an apple on the hill. Who are these reed cutters? In those two weeks in spring of blossoming apple trees, it is even better as the one tree on the hill looks very pretty. Insects like bees and butterflies are very busy zooming around it. How actually did this green hill get in this sunken land? Why is it maintained so nicely in this rugged landscape? Just as the hill can be a goal to reach during your hike, what are the

goals for this landscape? To answer these questions, we go back in history, discovering the changing goals humans applied to the island.

We will look at the tough life of reed cutters, and how through the Delta Works the reeds lost their quality and the dynamic delta became static and lost its biodiversity. The Provincial council aimed at creating more space and time for nature. A nature-based solution to connect networks of natural areas, which would result in a more resilient nature, robust against tourism, climate change and also function economically. The Province's and Natuurmonumenten's motivations are placed into the resocialisation of nature perspective with their nature-based solutions. We will look at how national policy aims at restoring the dynamic delta as it was before the installation of the Delta Works in 1971 on this particular waterbody. A balance between room for nature and human safety, quality of life and farmers' livelihood (salinization of lands along the Haringvliet) is constantly attempted through monitoring and controlling the water and salt levels. We will also take a look at how 'nature' in its turn shapes social life today.

The reed hill was represented in most drawings/maps. For Eva, it was her favorite place on the island. Even though she left people out of her view, the manmade hill is her favorite. She made a watercolor painting and on the horizon on the right, she drew the reed hill with apple tree and apple. Guide Annette appointed the reedhill with number 13, writing in the legend: "The most beautiful place to have lunch under the apple tree. Always



Eva's drawing of how she 'likes to see the island most'

thinking about the past for a bit. What a cold, rough place this must have been for the reed cutters... Now it is idyllic here." Piet told about the reed hill: "The reed fields provided for a lot of money. I used to let my cows graze there, the landlord wanted grasslands, which emerged from this grazing. Now, there is a lot of junk washed ashore."

3.1 *Reed cutters*

The island financially floated on the reed cutting business; the best reeds in the Netherlands (Perneel 2012). 150 men from around the mainland found work

from November to April, when there was little to do on the farms as employee (Perneel 2012). “Saturdays, mother bought two breads to take away to Tiengemeten. The whole week one ate bread. Well, on Monday it tasted fine and Tuesday too, but on Thursday you ate in fact rusk. We all brought a box, to store the bread and some bacon, nothing more. You had to close it very well, because the rats walked over the bed at night. Normal rats, brown houserats. The rats indulged themselves of walking over our faces, their feet were cold as ice” (Perneel 2012, 62-3).

This hill used to be the mound to reside on for reed cutters. During wintertime men went to Tiengemeten to cut reeds in the 300 acres of reed’land’ standing with their feet in the water. These reeds functioned as roof coverings on the mainland and they were in particular very suitable; as it grew in the brackish water it was strong. At the start of the cutting season, the men built a hut from reeds on top of this hill to stay dry from the water, which was freezing and had a higher level during winter. In the hut, they stored bacon and bread on which they fed themselves during weekdays and a fire kept them warm. Although, when one lay with their face to the fire, their backs were cold. The top of the reed hut was open a little to let the smoke of the fire exit. There was no furniture, besides the boxes where their food was stored and blankets filled with chaff from the farmers. Every night, two men went to the nearest farm to get water. Only in the weekends they went home via a rowing boat, dirty and smelly.

It was a physically challenging profession, but they earned a little more money with this, than as farmhand. When in a week there was no rain or mist, a reed cutter earned maximum five and a half meal; 14,30 gulden. When in summer, working as farmhand they would earn for 48 hours work a week 12 gulden. Though in fact the work and working hours are incomparable. In 1918 the municipality’s health commission investigated the hygienic circumstances in these ‘primitive’ residences. The principal of N.V. Tiengemeten found a way to make a deal with the farmers who from then on rented out their shacks for their farmhands. In 1945 a mower was introduced and cutting with the hand was preterit (Perneel 2012).

3.2 Resocialization of water

The practice of reed cutting ended with the construction of the Haringvlietdam in 1971 as part of the Delta Works. The dam separated sweet and salt water, whilst brackish water provided the strongest reeds. These works were a huge national investment in human safety. Later it paid off in national pride, national fame, policy transfers and traveling Dutch engineers (Zwarteveen 2015). Despite of these advantages of human control and constructed infrastructure, the dynamic delta disappeared together with many species.

Since 2007, NM and the Provincial council have been trying to re-establish this dynamic tidal area in order to make the landscape attractive to welcome particular species, thus increase the biodiversity. One of the things they implemented was the intended partially brake down of a 'watcher dyke'¹⁷ on the island, to let the tides interact with the landscape *in* the island. Between this dyke and the water is a floodplain where sometimes sheep graze and sometimes is left to become wild; providing space for herons and geese. Gerwin the ecologist told me that the tides today are partly determined by the tides of the sea that influence inland levels through the harbor of Rotterdam, resulting in regular 60cm differences. Besides that, the level of Meuse and Rhine water influence this as well, though irregularly. This results in differences of 1,5 meters depending on the amount of rain that has fallen. In a more natural delta environment this excessive water floods the land and streams into the sea, shifting the brackish water area more towards the sea.

Today this flow is disturbed by the Haringvlietdam, which forms a human-controlled division between the sea and rivers. Since 2019 its sluices are opened now and then to let salt and sweet water meet again. Rijkswaterstaat takes care of the water not becoming too salty too far inland, since that would harm the agricultural fields. The farmers who do have fields next to the newly brackish area obtained solutions to prevent the salinization of their lands. This means that a period of time, river water is accumulating inland and when high enough and the sea tide low enough, the sluices open and the level inlands drops. Since the Maas is a rain river, there is no constant tidal working around Tiengemeten. The borderline for where the water cannot be salty, lies before Tiengemeten. So the interaction of brackish water and the island will not directly happen. Though, life under water around Tiengemeten, and subsequently birds that eat

¹⁷ So there are watcher, sleeper and dreamer dykes, Piet told me. The watcher dykes are the first to hold the water when it would rise. The sleeper is in between the watcher and the dreamer. The latter protect people's houses.

underwater life, might change. That is what NM hopes for: “the ideal natural situation would be a landscape of 20.000 acres, where erosion and sedimentation can go ahead, alternated by floods and dry ups. And that it would be a more regular tidal area with a large brackish water area where animals and plants can adapt to. However, human safety always comes first, and the way people use the water will always keep influencing the natural flow of the water.”¹⁸

Besides the restoration of a dynamic delta (as before the Delta Works), Natuurmonumenten depoldered¹⁹ the agricultural fields, banned pesticides and controls invasive species. They wish to bring back the biodiversity level as in the 1850’s. Successes in agriculture in that time were limited by the technology and pest control of these times, creating better circumstances for insects and birds, compared to today’s vast monoculture fields treated with chemicals. The date of 1850 has been chosen, as it is known for its rich biodiversity, but also because from this time we know what was there as it was being registered, Gerwin told me.

Calling for the need of bringing nature back into consideration, into society as green infrastructure is a trend where “a strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services” is implemented (Davies and Laforteza 2019, 407). The trend is turning away from grey infrastructures which Davies and Laforteza define as “manmade improvements that support and improve human settlements such as roads, power lines, water systems...” (Davies and Laforteza 2019, 407). To what extent could the latter be called manmade too? Davies also argues that the progress made with nature-based solutions is prohibited by ‘path dependence’; where memories of past decisions delay this policy turn (Davies and Laforteza 2019). They particularly are in favor of nature-based solutions because it combines today’s challenges; “Pursuing economic targets of job creation, growth and innovation while tackling global environmental challenges” (Maes and Jacobs 2017) . Recently nature-based solutions as concept has been adopted by the European Commission as: “solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience” (Laforteza et al. 2018).

¹⁸ Interview with ecologist Gerwin at the 13th of May 2019

¹⁹ A polder is land which would be below river levels during winterseason. In summer it dries up. People would build dykes around it and dig creeks to collect excessive water in order to drain it with pumps driven by windmills.

A call for bringing natural elements back into the social realm was done by several scholars concerning water in particular. Aken (2015) and Linton (2014) who called for the resocialization of water (Aken 2015; Linton 2014). This resocialization resides in the naturification concept, referring to more space and time for water. Although it does not evaluate who has to make this space. To elaborate on the resocialization of water, we start with Aken (2015) who wrote about the de-socialization of it: “Water, in different ways, has a social and cultural life, which has mainly remained hidden. And cultures are strongly linked to water, as lifeblood, but also as social and cultural medium since antiquity. The exogenous measurement, quantifiable and scientific, de-socialises water from the local context by linking it to the needs, language and priorities of the administrative system” (Aken van 2015) .

Earlier, Linton (2014, 113) wrote about the same problem, framing it differently, calling our way of knowing and understanding water ‘modern water’; “driving out its social content, to render water ahistorical, to reduce it to an abstract quantity and make it amenable to the application of instrumental reason”. The manmade, grey, adaptations concerning Tiengemeten and water are the Haringvlietdam and the polders for example. These are historical memories today. The most prominent utterances of history are about how we as a nation fought against water, not as something particularly mystical. Now on Tiengemeten, a new sort of history is written, is it? National identity related to delta works and polders (Zwarteveen 2015). Changing this seems to be experienced as a loss, which will be discovered further in chapter 5. Linton explains that this modern way of knowing is a cultural one as well, whilst calling for the resocialization of water (Linton 2014). “In the sense of its independence from human interference – of the hydrologic cycle has been upheld to the present. This immense water engine, fuelled by solar energy driven by gravity, proceeds endlessly in the presence or absence of human activity; an abstract, asocial process, an intellectual achievement, the main feature of which has been to abstract all the world’s waters from their local, social, cultural, religious and ecological contexts to reduce them to a single substance and thus render them commensurable. The identification of water as a ‘resource’ to be ‘managed’” (Linton 2014).

How then, is this resocialized nature influencing the lives of people living on Tiengemeten? At first the farmers had to make room, since there was not enough space on this island for the both of them in the envisioned landscape:

“Collaborating with farmers can occur in different ways, but it depends on what type of nature you want. A peat area, you can combine with cattle

very well, but if you speak about swamp nature, reed cutters have more to do there than farmers. The farm also has to be economically viable, and therefore sometimes nature has to be sacrificed. Then, it depends very much on your goals for a certain area.²⁰”

Besides these farmers there are nine other residents on the island today, where meanings, identities and activities changed accordingly to the naturification process. Several farmsteads were repurposed, suitable for the new purpose of the island. A barn and a farm in the center of the island are rented out to two museums; an agricultural museum and the Rien Poortvliet museum. The latter known for its paintings of Dutch animals in the forest and on fields, and the pictures of David the gnome. Another barn is used as Natuurmonumenten’s visitors center where bicycles are rented out and souvenirs can be bought. Then another barn functions as canteen for the natural playground. Then further towards the east, is the BAVO, the previously explained assisted living facility. At the east point, there is the inn. The eight residents inhabit the other 4 farms on the island. Ben, the final ninth resident, lives in one of the workers’ houses in the center. The other buildings are rented out to tourists or weekenders. Only the residents and weekenders can go see the sunrise and sunset every day. Others have to book a night to stay, since the ferry starts its fare in daylight.

Life on naturified Tiengemeten was challenging sometimes. Ton, who has been living on Tiengemeten since late 70’s missed the farmers in the beginning, since he had good contact with them. Also, as Natuurmonumenten is an organization for nature, they had to find ways to express their interests as residents. Therefore they founded a residents association of which Ton is the chairman. What he seeks on an island was and still is there; peace, safety and quiet. “Here you can keep the door unlocked because you know who are on the island.”²¹ When I ask him whether tourism changed his daily life, he explains it was a little struggle in the beginning:

“I was just sitting outside, and people go into your garden because they thought nobody was here. That’s how Natuurmonumenten promoted the island, because that is exciting for tourists of course. And when visitors would know, even though someone lives here, they thought were allowed to come here because the island is property of Natuurmonumenten and they are members. More residents suffered from this and therefor placed

²⁰ Interview with Guido at Provincial council on the 23rd of April 2019

²¹ Interview with Ton at Tiengemeten on the 14th of March 2019

these sings ‘no admittance, private area’. Once, it was a warm summer day I was watching TV with all the doors and windows open. All of a sudden a men steps inside my house with the question: ‘where can I find the barn owl?’²²

Another residents, Maya who runs the inn with her husband, explains the difficulties of running a restaurant on a ‘naturified’ island:

“Nature is fun, as long as it stays outside. Last summer we had a plague of flies, well we were very much embarrassed. On one of those windows (1x1,5 meters) were around 100 flies. We vacuumed them off, but if you turned around there were there again; every day. [Speaking more softly] At a certain point, we decided to let somebody do something about it. We are not allowed to use pesticides by Natuurmonumenten. And I don’t like to do it, but we have a business to run. Then I think, well guys [referring to the flies] if you would have stayed outside, I wouldn’t have hurt you. If you come inside you take a risk.”²³

Resident Ben is not concerned with anything anymore. “It used to be beautiful before the transformation too. The other day, when Huib saw a deer running from the harbor into this direction he gave me a call and I went to sit in front of the window.” While sitting in his serre, looking at his garden, he points at his cat Kitty: “She sometimes kills a baby hare and nibbles a little on it. Every morning when I sit here I can see it disappear a little more. First I see the lijkenpikkers²⁴ and later the maggots and flies and in two weeks it disappeared.” Ben has had two hernias and cannot enjoy the environment as much as in his younger days when he used to make big rounds. His buddy Hugo recently had to leave the island because his legs got paralyzed. Enjoying life on the island is not easy for everybody.

In Conclusion

This landscape has been changing with the increasing human control over water. Still there are reeds today, but its quality changed. Since the ‘watersnoodramp’ happened and the Delta Works were finished, the sweet and salt water were separated; tides and

²² Interview with Ton at Tiengemeten on the 14th of March 2019

²³ Interview with Maya at the inn on the 14th of March 2019

²⁴ Translation; corpse-snatchers. Refers to scavenger species

the brackish transition area disappeared for the sake of human safety, with the loss of specific species. With the policy trend of nature-based solutions, those tides are turning

One of the animals, if we have not encountered them yet we definitely will while walking towards the wildernis, is the ultimate nature-based solution; The Scottish highlander; they keep the willows and bushes short which benefits groundbreeding birds. Although they reside in the wildernis, they are not very very wild; however they have the right to suffer a little from hunger, though a natural death or natural reproduction is obstructed by human intervention. They also cannot leave the island and therefor taken care of.

II – Scottish Highlander

Bos Tauros

When I pass a roster in the grindpath, some sort of cattle guard, there is a sign warning me for the Scottish Highlanders; keep 25 meters distance, keep your dog on the leach as they can be unpredictable. When the path goes up a little and taking a bend, I see like 15 Scottish Highlanders standing scattered over the landscape, many of them staring at me stoically. If I am to respect the 25m distances, I cannot pass I can only go back. One of them stands right on the path. I am just standing there, contemplating what to do... Then the one on the path starts moving, and when I try to make use of that space, she stops immediately and four others come near and join her there. All of the sudden I scare up, from nothing really... I start to laugh a little about myself how scared I am of them and how helpless and unknowing. My mind gets twisted too, thinking that they might feel my fear and attack in response. They have huge horns and probably weigh several hundred kilos. Then I see in the distance some sort of golf cart approaching. Maybe it helps me to get through this situation? It stops near me, and someone looking like a ranger (forest watch/boswachter) opens the door: "Are they bothering you?"

"No, I just don't know what to do." Of course I would not admit being afraid...

"They normally just move aside when you get closer, but get in!"

So I get in the vehicle, some sort of four-wheel drive buggy. He stamps on the gass and speeds away. The Scottish Highlanders move wildly out of our way. "They stare at you as if you owe them 100 gulden huh? But they don't mean it bad. However they do weigh 500kg."

"Are you the ranger of this area?"

"Yes, one of them."

He pulls over and I jump out, continuing my walk. Relieved but also thinking how pathetic I actually am... The gravel path ends and now I walk on muddy grass. My feet are getting wet because my boots have too

many holes for this terrain to reach the end with dry feet. I need better shoes maybe.²⁵

Although Gerwin explained that native species are automatically protected to a certain extent and invasive species are not as they can threaten biodiversity, the Scottish Highlander is an exception. This cattle breed originating from the Scottish Highlands resides also in the Dutch lowlands, standing with their feet in the water.

The Scottish Highlander is a welcome outlander. Gerwin the ecologist explains how the animals are used as a nature management measure; to keep the willow and the bushes short, create small game trails and fertilize the land. The Scottish Highlanders create different biotopes, and when they would not be here, only willow forest would emerge. These short bushes form protection for tiny mammals and birds who are breeding on the ground and/or need reeds, of whom many are endangered. Besides these functions, they are gentle in general towards humans and fit in the landscape aesthetically. The area they forage is called wildernis, just as their haircut and they do not mind standing with their feet in the water, emphasizing the space water has here, like buffaloes in Sri-Lanka.

When I ask Eduard the ranger why the Scottish highlander is present on this island, since it could not get here on its own he explains: “well that’s easy. They were for free since they come from another terrain of NM. They are grassmachines. Just when there is a head and a tail on it, it is sufficient. We need it to slow down succession. You cannot stop it but you slow it down.

Since they are used as a management measure, they are taken care of and administratively registered as cattle. They are given the right to suffer to a certain extent, which increases their strength and inventiveness, but there’s a limit to it. If the carrying capacity of the landscape is not enough for the cows, several animals will be moved to another area. Supplementary feeding will not be done as will lead the herd to a certain place, and they will only graze there. The grazing of the whole landscape will stop. They do take responsibility of the animals there as they cannot leave by themselves whilst they were brought here by NM. This not only implies feeding, but also when one of them is wounded badly, she will be ‘relieved from suffering’ meaning; she will be taken down.

The Scottish highlanders do not have the right to reproduce on Tiengemeten though. Because of administrative difficulties, baby cows had to be marked and

²⁵ Fieldnotes - February

registered. They had to know who were the mother and father. Before, there were males, females and youngers who all contributed differently to the landscape. Males, when fighting, would create bull pits, a sandy space where certain insects thrive. The herd could only be brought together begin winter when they were hungry because of less grass growing. But the calves would not be walking alongside their mother anymore. Therefore they could only identify the genealogy through expensive DNA testing. Therefore they decided to only keep the females.



Two visitors. One of them taking a picture of a Scottish highlander.
Picture by author

Today, there are 150 SH. In the beginning they were with 300, which was too many, causing too short grazing and increase of goldenrod. This plant they do not like to eat. And as an invasive exotic, it has very little predators so gains a lot of ground. With less SH, there is more space for diverse vegetation.

There would have been different options, native cattle species (oerrund, dekrund, konik or tarpan, but they chose for the SH. Horses are petted quickly and fed,

which can cause trouble. The other oxen species are often a bit more aggressive. The SH are suitable since they still have some wild/natural behaviour in them, Gerwin explains. They are strong and independent and go well with recreation.

In Conclusion

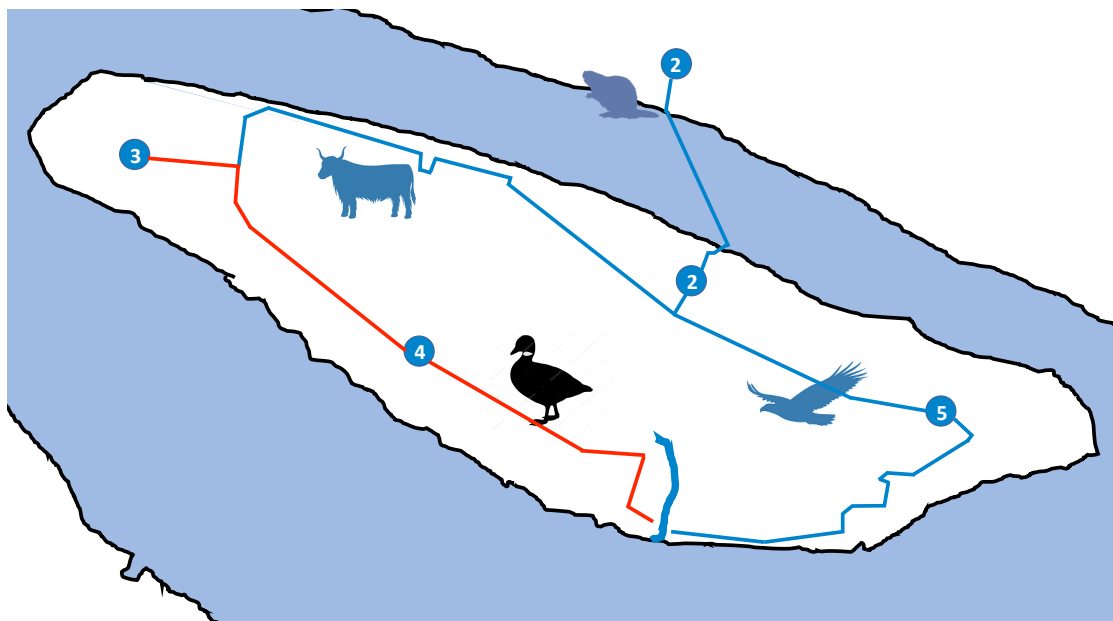
Whilst being a part of nature, and contributing to the wideness of the landscape, the Scottish highlander seems a perfect nature-based solution. However, how natural is this solution? His life is very much shaped and controlled by humans. What is nature actually? We will find interpretations of nature on Tiengemeten in the following chapter.

4. *Wildernis*²⁶

Whilst leaving the reeds and walking into the wildernis, one maybe identifies the tall poplar trees with their 'feet in the water', some fallen down and sport plucks of orange fur on their bare branches; traces of Scottish highlanders. If you look well, you might find traces of beavers. And if you listen well, you can hear the diversity of birds. Looking at the landscape, one can still detect the straight lines marking the past fields where creeks were running and sugar beets and potatoes had grown. There are also some ruined buildings to be found, inhabited today by bats and swallows, and maybe an own. If the water level allows us, we can walk up to them. You can go off the beaten tracks, that is allowed. There is writing on the wall of the shack in ruins;

"Hier waakt niemand over het eeuwige nu, dat steeds en altijd vergaat in het verleden"²⁷

As the contemporary (marketing) story of Tiengemeten tells us it is a nature island, given back to nature today for more than ten years, the question may rise what is meant by this nature? There are still traces of 'culture' in the landscape. In this chapter we will explore how nature is perceived by the people involved; residents, visitors, policy-makers and the owners Natuurmonumenten. Since we have arrived in the wildernis area of Tiengemeten, we will also explore how 'wild' this part and island actually are and the positions of humans in it. Through the concept of 'sustainable citizenship' we



²⁶ Name of this area. Translated; Wilderness

²⁷ Translation: "Nobody watches here over the eternal now, that always and forever perishes in the past."

can analyze the new position, beyond the modern, of becoming sustainable citizens and what this implies. The two-word concept will be deconstructed, looking at both terms individually to find discussions and deeper understandings of what the words could mean.

4.1 Sustainable Citizenship

Since 'sustainability' as an object of science is relatively young, its fundamental properties are constantly debated (Salas-Zapata, Ríos-Osorio, and Mejía-Escobar 2017). Salas-Zapata, a microbiologist, wishes to analyze the different perspectives and find their commonalities as these disagreements would "hinder the development of theories and methods that enable the study of sustainability" (Salas-Zapata 2017, 2238; (Hornborg 2017). He finds that there exists agreement about the object of the science; to solve "problems of unsustainability; climate change, depletion of natural sources, scarcity of water" amongst other things (Salas-Zapata 2017). The issues are about unsustainable interactions between humans and nature. Eduard, the local ranger explained to me that, according to him, humans have created an unbalance (unsustainability) in nature, and that it is our responsibility to restore it. Salas-Zapata also stresses the importance of perceiving sustainability as processual instead of substantial. This means that sustainability is a process of constantly becoming, adjusting



and changing, there is no end-goal or end-solution to be reached as a substantial problem would suggest, because an unsustainable problem has “a complex, dynamic and historic character” (Salas-Zapata 2017, 2240).

This way of understanding life in flux relates to the constant state of becoming together about which Heraclitus, Nietzsche, Ingold and Tsing have written before. This way of understanding life, tries to go beyond the ‘modern’ taxonomical notion of separate species, which can be known, and try to perceive species in constant change with each other and materials (Tsing 2017; Ingold 2011). Perceiving unsustainability as a substantial problem with an absolute solution is inadequate to solve the “dynamic nature of reality” (Salas-Zapata 2017, 2240). The extent to which this problem is being solved might be infinite with a constant needed effort to hold balance. It could be questioned whether the nature restoration of Tiengemeten took the complex history into account; when the transformation really started, along with the deconstruction of asphalt and concrete went many trees and fertile clay. A new zero line was created whereupon nature could emerge.

The processual character of sustainability’ can be seen on Tiengemeten, where management is constantly solving threats in order to create a sustainable balance. Especially when invasive species, which usually have little predators, thrive very well and therefore vanquishing native species, cause a decrease in biodiversity. The local ranger and ecologist from Natuurmonumenten prevent the emergence of monoculture by for example actively exterminating the yellow water primrose with the help of volunteers. This American yellow flowering water plant has several cars upon its sleeve as it can live on water *and* banks, multiplying through seeds *and* as a rhizome. Not only the threat of monoculture is a problem, also the process of exterminating causes damage to the ecosystem as the water level is lowered and people and sometimes even machines go over the bottom of the swamp.

When looking at the second word, citizenship, there is more diverse literature residing in an older discussion. While bearing in mind that the term has many more implications and approaches than will be stated here, the next part will provide only a discussion of what is relevant to this research. Back in 1949, the British sociologist Thomas Humphrey



Footprint of a deer. Reminding me that we are not the only ones using the path. Picture taken by author

Marschall provided us with a definition of formal citizenship; “a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respects to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed” (Marschall 2006, 28). Where Marschall emphasizes citizenship being ‘bestowed upon’ by the state, Engin Isin, professor in politics, complements this notion with the processual character of the concept (Isin 2009). Citizenship, according to him, is a relational process of constant negotiations where acts by citizens and ‘to-be-citizens’ are contesting the status quo. Calling it a relational process inhabits the recognition of the limited possibilities of acts by the state’s power (Isin 2009). Citizenship exists in a constant flow, exchanging domination and empowerment between the state and its citizens (Isin 2009). This flux also implies that, even though one has obtained rights, rights require constant acts and performances to claim them. Once these rights have been obtained officially/administratively, does not mean they are always lived by, by all members or the state itself (Isin 2009).

As suggested by Lund and Rachman (2016), recognition and property are important aspects of citizenship; “property and citizenship are fundamentally relational and intimately related to public authority in their constitution. They share the same essential element: recognition” (Lund and Rachman 2016). This refers back to Agamben’s argumentations about bios and zoe. In ancient Greece, women, children and slaves were excluded from politics and rights, and owned by men (Lorin 2006). They thus were not recognized as full citizens but as zoe. The men, when not slaves, were the owners and allowed to be active in politics, they were referred to as bios. Today these categories changed, and women and children, in general, are recognized as members of society, as citizens, with rights and property of themselves.

When a certain group is recognized to measure up to the status of citizen, their membership that they maybe negotiated for is recognized, then they are not to be owned but property of themselves and their property will be recognized as legitimate.

The two words together sustainable citizenship has its own meaning. The two-word concept actually came into being as a response to environmental citizenship (Vihersalo 2017). According to John Barry, environmental citizenship is more of a ‘part-time occupation’, whereas sustainable citizenship questions the ethical, socioeconomical- or political aspects, with the ambition for change (Barry 2006). This agrees with Vihersalo’s (2017) understanding; as an everyday practice to improve relationality between humans and the environment. An important point of critique towards the sustainable citizenship debate is that the relationship between society and

nature, should also include human rights and social justice (Argenti and Knight 2015). Besides, Vihersalo (2017) states that most research focuses on citizens' behavior and expectations or obligations, but where is the state's responsibility? Does sustainable citizenship only entail obligations? In this thesis both will be taken into consideration, together with the question of who are recognized as citizens.

Combining the separate analysis of the words, sustainable citizenship could mean a constant dynamic process of negotiations and acts, aiming at socio-ecologic resilience, as a responsibility of citizens.

This tool helps us to raise questions for particular cases; who are these citizens and how are they taking their responsibility? Interestingly, as we have seen when encountering the beaver, it is nobody's property and its buildings are protected. Even if someone would claim property over a beaver, that person would violate the law.



The very welcome, 'laughing bee orchid'. Picture taken by author

Tiengemeten today could be seen as the embodiment/project where EU, the state and the province have been taking their responsibility to improve their citizens' relationships with the environment, by giving nature more space and time. We have seen that in this project these institutions determined who the wanted and unwanted citizens are of this area. The beaver, the Scottish Highlander, NM volunteers, tourists, wader birds, deer and geese among other things, have been very welcome since the transformation. Farmers had to leave back then, just as the yellow primrose today; unwanted, not fitting the idea of a 'nature island'.

Besides, whilst having deconstructed sustainable citizenship, another point of view at the citizenship part will be used. Where it actually refers to responsibility taken by or for citizens, the analysis of citizenship raises the question who these citizens are, and who are recognized and owned.

Tiengemeten today could be seen as the embodiment/project where EU, the state and the province have been taking their responsibility to improve their citizens' relationships with the environment, by giving nature more space and time and people the ability to visit it. We have seen that in this project these institutions together with Natuurmonumenten have determined who the wanted and unwanted citizens are of this area. The beaver, the Scottish Highlander, NM volunteers, tourists, wader birds, deer and geese among other things, have been very welcome since the transformation. Farmers had to leave back then, just as the yellow primrose today; unwanted, not fitting the idea of a 'nature island'.

Besides, whilst having deconstructed sustainable citizenship, another point of view at the citizenship part will be used. Where it actually refers to responsibility taken by or for citizens, the analysis of citizenship raises the question who these citizens are, and who are recognized and owned. How this recognition and ownership are realized on Tiengemeten will be discussed in the next section.

4.2 Recognition & Ownership

In what form nature is defined is interesting to know what is recognized in what kind of way, which will be discussed first. Followed by how nature realized in the landscape by its owners and managers, which shows their perception on nature. Now fertile farmlands have been flooded on purpose, given to the tides and nature, experienceable for humans, though temporarily. This has been experienced as troublesome, by some; a loss of culture and a vrijplaats, now an attraction and safari for tourists. Though, this has been experienced as wonderful by nature loving visitors and volunteers, who actively want to create more appreciation for nature. Volunteers and tourists seem to be the active sustainable citizens. Why not grant this fertile lands to non-humans?

Recognition

*"Natuur kent vele kleuren groen"*²⁸

(Stoop de 2017, 117)

Stepping beyond the modern notion of knowing nature as scientific, Aken (2015) calls the diverse, cultural and social understandings of water 'the cultural diversity of water'.

²⁸ Translated by author: "Nature knows a lot of colors green"

This could also be applied onto nature in general. We will take a look at the cultural and social understanding of nature amongst the community on and around Tiengemeten. From their statements, diversity on even personal levels become apparent. Why is not there a common cultural understanding of nature on Tiengemeten? Could it be that this newly created nature and the cultural relation to it, is still in its infancy and figuring itself out? Where the modern Dutch conception of nature as our resource, or our control functioning as national pride resides in a crisis, there is no consensus yet over our newly to be found position towards it.

Eva's drawing shows a wide view with reeds, Scottish Highlanders and beavers. No humans. That is how she prefers to experience the island, she tells me. She achieves this by going to the western part of the island with her tent a wild-picking guide and a bottle of wine, "with the latter I can hold it out fine; wild camping. She hardly sleeps as she lies in the grass for hours to spot a beaver, or gets disturbed by curious Scottish Highlanders rubbing against her tent. Though, the great views and the sunset and sunrise are worth the struggle. Her favorite spot is the reed hill with the apple tree; relatively recently created and managed by humans; about that more in chapter 4.

Annette from NM also did not draw humans in the map. Though she did draw human-made landmarks like farmsteads, ruins, ferry, natural playground and sailing boats. The same counts for Annette the guide. Nestor did draw us two walking along the wildernis and Piet and Ton spoke mainly about human decision making and experiences in relation to people.

As I asked what nature actually is according to the people I met, I was offered many different answers. Some stated that nature does not exist anymore as human activity influences all corners of nature in the Netherlands. Brandjes, a construction engineer for NM spoke on the ferry stated that "we are responsible for the imbalances in nature, therefore we should restore these"²⁹. May, a weekender, stated that "we are part of this nature, we are just humans... that's what you experience when you reside longer in nature doing a long hike or canoe tour in Canada for example with the high trees and eagles flying over. Nature is that darkness and stillness at night. When you feel small."

Whilst walking with Annette the guide, she explains to me what she thinks nature is; "Nature gets time here, she's still very young and people say it is fake nature. Though I think nature is a place where things are allowed to go their way, where you as a human feel small, as if you are allowed to be here. I feel grateful that I can be here, surrounded by nature." While we walk in the wildernis at the end of March, she often

²⁹ When I stood with this construction engineer on the ferry, he told me this while we were chatting about my research.

times abruptly stops her sentence by pointing at the sound of a skylark high in the sky. “They climb in the air, go higher and higher, loudly twittering. Can you see?” I cannot, I am really trying, I hear the sounds though. “First try to locate the sound, follow that and you can see it.” It works, I can see it. But it also seems to dissolve in the sky while it does not move fast actually. “They pronounce spring,” explains Annette, “it makes me very joyful as it reminds me of the spring in the past when I would cycle to school between the farm fields I could hear them everywhere. Today there are no skylarks anymore near the fields, that’s not nature anymore. Everything is controlled and combatted besides the particular crop of interest.”³⁰

Then there are people stating that everything is nature, as Eva describes; “there are many different kinds of nature, agricultural fields are nature too. And people can try to control it, but nature always wins. Take for example the opening of the dyke to let the water in the polders, beavers started to build a dam right there. Though, the current was too strong so they had to build their castle on the side. Another example is the yellow primrose, which is an invasive exotic plant that they want to exterminate, they have to pump out the water inside the island and go into the area picking the plants manually or sometimes using excavators.. This damages and disrupts the ecosystem that is forming there.” Also the plant in itself prevents other plants from emerging. This way, biodiversity goals are not reached as fast as planned.

A quite different approach was provided by Maya, co-owner of the inn: “Well, nature is just everything that is outside. Sometimes nature comes inside and then I think; ‘no’. Nature is nice though it should stay outside.” I ask her what she thinks of the plants inside the house, are they nature? “Well that is culture right? Just like the dog, I do not think that is nature because you as a human intervene too much. Because you are controlling it a lot. Though the fruit trees in the orchard I do think they are nature because I almost don’t do anything about them.”³¹

Ownership

Ever since the island came into use by people, it was owned privately. Over time, different landlords decided what was going to happen on the island and what it was going to be used for. He usually facilitated the ferry, managed the buildings and arranged the poldering to create farmlands. In exchange, farmers paid a sum to the owner and were only allowed to stay there when they kept the farm running. So, when a

³⁰ Interview with guide Annette at Tiengemeten on the 26th of March 2019

³¹ Interview with Maya at the inn on the 14th of March 2019

farmer did not get children or these children would not run the farm, they had to leave the island and the landlord would look for new farmers. “The only land we owned was that under our nails” (Perneel 2012).

This system applied for Tiengemeten from around 1730 to 1987; then the island changed hands whilst several different plans showed up; camping, contaminated dredging sludge from the Rotterdam harbor, airport and finally a quiet nature reserve. This latter plan gained ground. With money from EU’s project Natura2000 the island was bought by the South-Holland province, Rijkswaterstaat and Natuurmonumenten. The latter organization manages the island whilst the destination plan had been determined by the province. The province complied with this project to the national goal of connecting natural reserves (agriculture with specifications) better together.

“The first plans were to make an airport on this island and later creating a depot for contaminated dredging sludge, which was very long on the agenda. In 1994 it was assigned to become a nature development area by the province and in 1997 it was bought by Natuurmonumenten. Basically, it was bought by the province and handed over to Natuurmonumenten. Initially the farmers were happy because they thought now they could stay.”³²

The island is shared property of the provincial council, Rijkswaterstaat and Natuurmonumenten. “Natuurmonumenten is an association, which buys land and creates and/or protects nature in the name of its members. In fact, every member ‘owns’ a piece of land. That is a fun argument to recruit members.” This is what our guide Annette explains during a tour around the island for the new NM volunteers of which I was one.

Before the naturification process of Tiengemeten in 1997, landscape engineers/designers from NM and the provincial council came up with the idea to create three areas on the island; Weemoed, Weelde and Wildernis³³. Also the departure of the people was decided, as they wanted to create a silent area for nature.

Though, how social is it to put nature in a reserve on an island, instead of daily interaction with people? It does get acknowledgement for its need for space and time, though would be separated from society.

Along the way NM found out, after already demolishing one of the farmsteads, that the buildings were older than they thought and should actually be treated as

³² Interview with Willy at Provincial council 23rd of April 2019

³³ Translated; Nostalgia, Opulence and Wilderness, respectively

monuments. A research group looked into the worth of the farms and concluded that the cultural historical value should be acknowledged. New financially viable functions were sought and found for the buildings, which fitted the landscape design. The farmers had to leave, except for Piet. Piet is not an agricultural farmer but a sheep breeder and lets them, his horses and a few cows graze on the dykes. About these buildings and Piet you can find more in chapter 5, when we arrive at the Weemoed area.

This change of plans was met with resistance and incomprehension. The farmers who lived from the land had to leave, whilst NM is going to make money from nature tourism now. Is this using nature for the organization's bank account? Is this really giving space and time back to nature? How differently is nature actually used when people still profit from this nature, which they attempt to bend to their will. Critical people call this *wensnatuur*.³⁴

NM explains that these two purposes can co-exist with a good zoning plan where priority in decision making was always for nature instead of marketing and experience³⁵: *"Balancing nature and recreation is still a challenge, though we see that the zoning strategy works. Almost no(human)body visits the western and southern areas of the island. Only forty acres of the 10km² are intensively used by humans."*³⁶

This zoning strategy is the reason that there is no bridge over the inlet [indicated on the map with the blue line on the bottom going from the surrounding water inside the island], which causes that people could not walk a full circle around the island through the southern side. Twice a year, an exception is made during the roaming tour, provided by two volunteering tour guides makes it possible for around twenty people to walk a full round. A small rowing boat of the ranger is made available to cross the inlet. Normally, use of boats and canoes on the waters on the island is not permitted, as it would disturb the animals too much; there are many animals on the riversides; birds, amphibians, insects...

Besides, this strategy to combine tourism with natural area, the destination plan does not lie completely in the hands of NM. The province, political landscape and thus the public opinion influence how an organization like NM can operate. With decreasing subsidies, NGO's have to fend for themselves and increasingly become more commercial and entrepreneurial. Besides, the idea of opening up nature in order to let people

³⁴ Expression referring to creating nature the way you want it; literally translated as; *wishnature*.

³⁵ Information from interviews; Gerwin ecologist, 13th of May 2019; Astrid area manager, 8th of April 2019; Willy and Guido from Provincial council, 23rd of April 2019

³⁶ Interview with ecologist Gerwin at the 13th of May 2019

appreciate the natural landscape gained ground, nature should be interactive and accessible instead of a reserve with a fence around it³⁷. From this interaction, appreciation emerges and people hopefully will want to take better care and caution for their environment. So the island had to become experienceable; open to the public. And through this, the decrease of subsidies could be compensated.

Restoration in what form

Gerwin tells me that one of the main issues of managing Tiengmeten, is the existence of the island altogether, which needs to be secured. Because of the current infrastructure, the delta area is not one of meandering rivers anymore, but those are streaming in one constant shape. This means that the river bottoms are eroding deeper and deeper. This causes the river to 'eat' from the edges of the island. Gerwin calls this 'sand hunger'. In order to prevent this, they have placed rows of rocks along the island to break the streaming of the river. These need constant control.

In the wildernis area, the land is shaped by Scottish highlanders and water, for the rest they try to intervene as little as possible. The Scottish highlanders are kept as cattle to keep the vegetation short. This results in lower bushes instead of trees, protecting the ground breeding birds, which they hope to attract to the island. For the hikers, the rangers mow paths which otherwise would be overgrown with reeds. Natuurmonumenten cannot control the water levels in the island. For the part where the dyke has gone, water from the Haringvliet flows inside and cannot be stopped. Rijkswaterstaat controls the water levels in the Haringvliet and responds to the tides of the sea and the levels of the river as we have seen before.

Another prominent creature grazing the landscape is the goose. Once a year the ranger with the help of volunteers clears nests of geese from the eggs, except for one. This they do because of a national agreement to meet farmers' difficulties. They reproduce in natural areas and go to the farmer fields to feed. This at the cost of the farmers production.

And as we have seen in the previous interlude, the beaver also helps keeping the trees short. But what does grow then? The plants where the volunteers became enthusiastic about are orchids, purple loosestrife, watermint, triangular pipin, spider marsh marigolds who grow in swamp-like landscapes. Comfrey and velvety groundsel attract many pollinating insects.

³⁷ Interview with Willy and Guido at Provincial council 23rd of April 2019

III - Goose

We are geared with boots and a skimmer: “We have to pass ditches that are filled with water and the skimmer we need so one does not have to bend over so far so many times. Now its not so hard yet but after an hour you’re gonna feel it.” The other ranger ignores this suggestion.

There are barnacle geese, Canadian geese, godwits, oystercatchers and sometimes some tiny birds I cannot identify. We are going to collect barnacle and Canadian geese eggs. “We do birth-control to ourselves too” states Eduard, “it is necessary because they eat all vegetation, do not leave space for other birds and have no natural enemies here.” The natural balance of the goose population to be achieved takes too much time, they are still increasing in numbers.

The geese fly up loud quacking when we start walking. If they only knew how powerful they are together... we walk parallel to each other with a creek as reference. When we find a nest, we leave one egg and scoop out the rest. I hesitate, what should I do with them? “Give them a swing” encourages Eduard me, “landfill”. Using his skimmer, he bends over to the nest and pops



Goose eggs on Tiengemeten
Picture taken by author

out the eggs between his legs into the landscape.

Some brave mother geese stay on the nest longer to protect it. When I get closer than 4 meters they always fly up. I feel the urge to skip several nests as they are hidden very well or the mother stayed on the nest bravely. When no one sees it, I do it sometimes. However, I do not feel sad in general about the practice, to my surprise. Or well, after three nests that uncanny feeling disappears. I become more curious about what is in the eggs; how developed are the embryos? I check the broken eggs and see only yellow egg yolk, no life to be detected. Later I do see blood coming from the eggs sometimes. When I collected courage I looked at one of those and an embryo with the size of an almond is visible, which makes me feel a bit uncanny, however, not too much. Maybe I feel uncomfortable with my emotionlessness more than with the razzia itself...

I realize once more that death is part of life. Never in my life have I seen so much death around me as on Tiengmeten; dead hares, insects, rats... These people and I decide over which one of the six will survive. Just like another predator would do. Well, ofcourse there are always reasons to justify a practice like this. That day we work until 15:00 and collect 3152 eggs with five people.

I ask a volunteer if he feels a little bad for the geese “no, I come from a hunters family. When I see a doe for example, I think; hmm jammy.” He asks me whether I ever tasted one. “Rightly cooked, the meat melts between your tongue and palate, so tender.”

At 15:00 we finish. I cycle home and do groceries, cook and fall asleep at 19:30.

This control measure focuses on the barnacle and graylag goose. Only the barnacle goose is systematically birth controlled and for the graylag, only when the ranger stumbles upon a nest. This control is an exception on the rights these animals have in the Netherlands in general. They are protected just like other native birds under the nature protection law (Wet Natuurbescherming 2016). In this law states that catching or killing birds is an economical offence, just as damaging or removing nests, resting places and eggs. One is also not allowed to have, transport or trade in birds, either dead or alive, nor pieces of products of them. Exceptions on this law can be given by the province and sometimes by the ministry of agriculture, nature and food quality under

strict conditions. Practically this means that birth control is performed in order to keep the numbers down, as they damage agricultural crops like grass and summer wheat.

The goose was only once represented in the maps that were drawn; the one of Nestor. He explained he drew the nest with eggs since we encountered one and I told him what happens to the eggs. Since he is interested in death in general, not frightened of it, he liked to include it in his collage. He actually wanted to draw the dead barnacle goose we came across, but it did not fit the composition. The geese also was not really present in conversations with people in general, besides that I saw on a chalkboard at the inn the promotion of the dish goose breast filet.



Piece of Nestor's drawing

On Tiengemeten we find several different geese species; barnacle, graylag and Canadian. The latter is hutable everywhere since it is an exotic species, thus not protected. Eduard does not hunt them down on Tiengemeten he states. Only when he spots wounded geese, probably shot but not killed, he tries to locate them and shoot them outside 'visitation hours'. So when there are not visitors. He is not making a secret of this hunt, though the general public has trouble with it and to prevent discussions during work, they decided to do it on particular hours.

Before the 1980's, the barnacle goose used to fly all the way to the arctic to build their nests and grow their chicks on high protein grass. To survive the winter, they migrated southwards to the Dutch and Belgian coasts(Loonen et al. 2019)Today, many of them remain here to breed, due to high quality of grass on farmers lands because of fertilizer which also ends up on natural areas (Loonen et al. 2019). The geese also profit from the measures taken to protect the meadow birds from the fox(Loonen et al. 2019) Still many birds perform the migration. In Maarten Loonen's research, they found that less bacteria and viruses survive in the Arctic Circle, when comparing the health of Dutch and arctic chicks, the latter were much healthier(Loonen et al. 2019)Loonen thinks the bacteria and viruses will eventually help to create this balance.

Their function in the ecosystem is fertilizing the land and keeping the swamp landscape open by feeding on the reeds. They eat reeds in times of moulting; than they cannot fly and seek shelter among the reeds. That is also what they eat at that time.

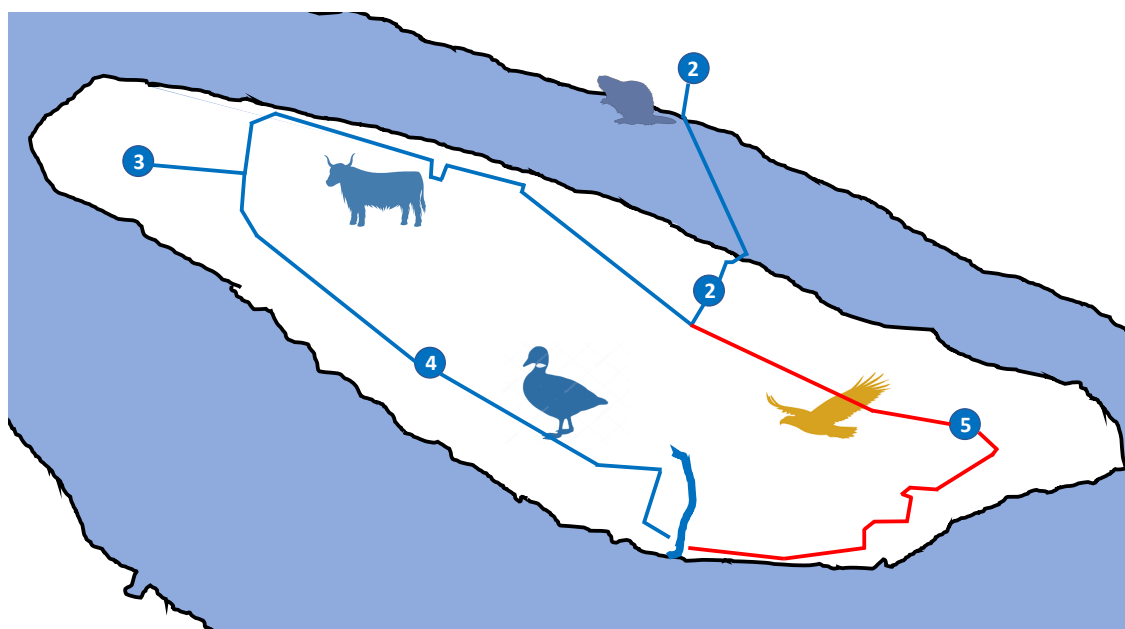
In Conclusion

The story of the goose birth-control shows us an exception on the protection rule. When a species becomes protected by law, there are exceptions when people's lives are disturbed to a certain extent. Because of geese's success and the attractiveness of the agricultural fields, farmers lose their grass which they grew to feed their cows. This story also shows how nature management has to reckon with the farmers. At the same time as the geese benefit from Tiengemeten for their reproduction they lose a lot of their reproduction successes due to human intervention. They are not the only ones that lose...

5. *Weemoed*

“I’m glad I haven’t experienced the time before everything changed, so I don’t regret or hunker to the past.”³⁸

We walk along the southern part of the island where we bump against the inlet³⁹, which we cannot cross. We wish to arrive at Weemoed on the other side. Since we are not physically walking right now, we imaginatively fly or swim over the inlet and arrive at the area of nostalgia; Weemoed. Polders and fields are preserved here and worked by farmer Piet and volunteers.



Where the beaver population has been building at least eleven castles and the lapwing increased in numbers, the human population decreased from around 100 to 9 people. On Tiengemeten the space and time nature obtained has been ‘given’ by the people. Giving this gift was imposed by institutions as the Provincial council, Rijkswaterstaat and Natuurmonumenten; they paid the literal costs, partially by money from the EU Natura2000 funds. Natuurmonumenten has been managing the island since; gained space and time to do so. It could be argued that the farmers were the one’s who paid the symbolical costs by leaving the land their families had worked on sometimes for

³⁸ Interview with Maya at the inn on the 14th of March 2019

³⁹ Where the dyke has been taken down, indicated by the thicker blue line going from the water into the island

generations. Even though having received royal payment wherefrom many farmers bought a new farm and land, it was not their choice to leave.

Though, their legacy to the island's landscape today is recognized and remembered in several ways, materially and narratively as cultural history, which will be explored in this chapter. As the strategy of ethnography was focused on the people who interact with the island today, I have not spoken with farmers of the past who have left the island. The information about the past I have gathered through guided tours, books and people who have been experiencing the island already before the transformation and are still connected to Tiengemeten.

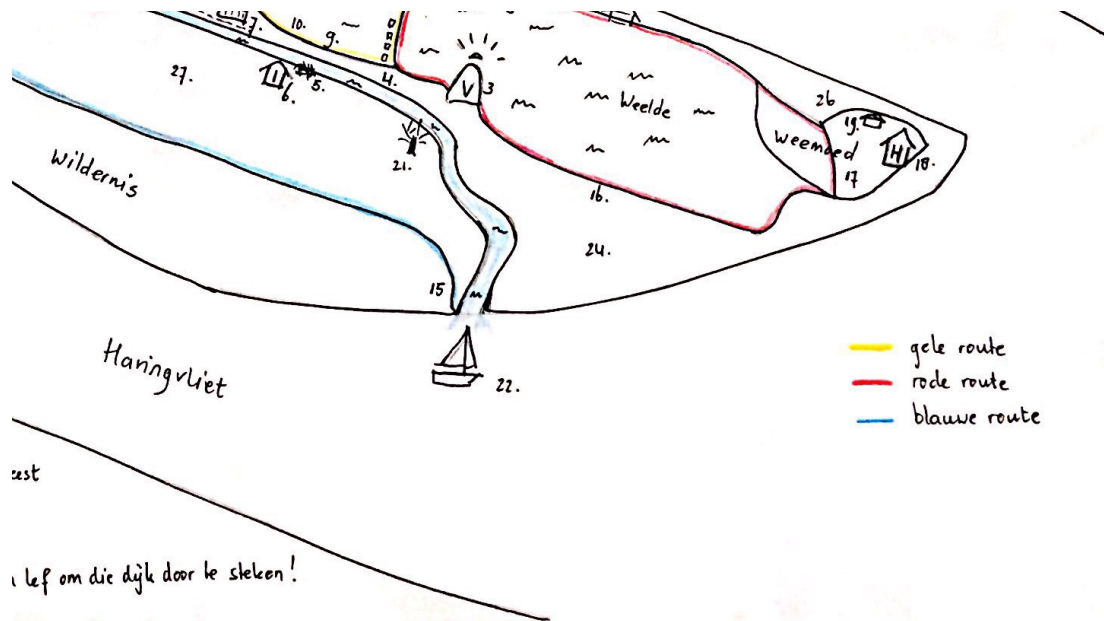
Following Tom Perreault, a political geography professor, these remembrances, which differ from one another and often inhabit idealizations, function as a means to make sense of the present and as an indication of one's present discomfort (Perreault 2018). Within these memories latent action to change this present reside. However, this also applies to the naturification of the island, since the memory of a diverse landscape with dynamic tidal areas and salmon in the Haringvliet, justifies the restoration of the brackish water and biodiversity on Tiengemeten. Is today's environmentalist goal, enough to disrupt an existing community fabric and people's identities related to a geographic space?

This chapter will start with the emergence of the island and its history concerning its owners and the farmers mainly based on the written history by Perneel, the local historian. This will be followed by the narratives from people connected to the island today, indicating feelings of loss, including an analysis of the material remembrances one can find on the island, concluded with an analysis of nostalgia for biodiversity.



A horse grazing on the dykes in the Weemoed area.
Picture taken by author

The weemoed area was represented in several maps, though not in those who are more like a drawing/painting, nor in those of the NM employees. On the right is a cut from guide Annette's map. Nr 15 represents the inlet stating: "The inlet. With the water comes the dynamic inside the island. What courage to pier the dyke!" Nr 17: "Weemoed. Small plots with mounds between them. How many deer do I count today? This is how my grandfather must have worked the land too." Nr 26: "the Old Polder, where the island derived its name from which is a nice historic story."



Piece of guide Annette's drawing, showing the inlet and weemoed.

5.1 Genesis

This is where it all began. The sand comes from afar, taken by the Meuse and Rhine along their way and sediments into an island arising in the Haringvliet. Here the influx of salt water from the ocean and the outflow of sweet water from the rivers meet and therefore came to a slower flow rate, so the sand could sediment and form land (Perneel 2012). Where the island emerged from meeting waters, people tried to modify it to their likeness.

We do not know everything about the human arrival on the island as the St. Elizabeth's flood of 1421 and Watersnoodramp of 1953 disappeared many official and administrative documents. Perneel (2012), the local historian and history teacher of Annette the guide, dived into the archives that were still available and complemented them with spoken statements of those who were born there and sometimes had generations' old stories.

In the beginning of the 17th century a small island emerged that grew bigger day by day (Perneel 2012). Where in 1670 the ‘rent-master general’ of South-Holland proposed to the states of Holland and West-Friesland, to consider this small clay plate in the Haringvliet as a domain, as land to be owned and possibly used for meadow. Saved paperwork shows that in 1688 the groundlease with Cornelys Risse from Zuid-Beijerland was ended and a new resolution was determined with Hanneman and Duijnen, the latter in function as mayor of The Hague. That is the first document where the ‘plaet’⁴⁰ is called; Thien Gemeten. A plaet with the size of five acres. Its name is ‘Thien’, old Dutch word for ten and Gemet is an old measure based on the size of a plot that a farmer could work from dawn till dusk. This gemet differed in size in different areas because of the soil. Clay was harder to plough, thus gemeten were smaller there than for example in Brabant where the soil consisted mainly of sand (Perneel 2012).

In 1804 two land agents (rentmeesters) applied at the State of the Batavian Republic for a permit to embank the island, which was granted. So in the same year, 272 acres of land was ingepolderd⁴¹; when in summer the waterlevels were low, more land lay dry (Perneel 2012). When one would build walls of clay, stone and sand around this land, it would remain dry in winter as well. When water levels rose, excessive groundwater streamed into ditches and was pumped away with Bosmannetjes; simple but efficient windmills. Though there was a polder already before that year, today called the Old Polder. Perneel estimates it must have been embanked around 1750 (Perneel 2012).

This Old Polder and Beneden Polder are still protected from the water today and pieces of it are farmed, in order to honor its cultural historical value. Around the embankments, clay was still washing up so the island kept on growing. This new land was not immediately ‘ripe’ for farming or inpoldering as it was



Ranger Eduard checking on the Bosmannetje - waterpump windmill or Tiengemeten in the weemoed area. The waterlevel was quite high therefore he suspected it defect.
Picture taken by author.

⁴⁰ A piece of land that just rises above the water and may often flood partially or wholly.

⁴¹ Creating polders

overgrown with reeds, instead of grass (Perneel 2012). These reeds were cut by the reed cutters, as you have read in the previous chapter Reed Hill. In the same century, half way the 19th, two other polders were created and the island got its shape that mainly remained the same until around 2000. In those years, spaces outside of the embankments, the floodplains, changed as they grew and shrank with the tidal interaction between sea and river.

5.2 Memorials & Memories

Where memories may seem to only refer to the past, Perreault states they indicate the relationship between the past and the present: “the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present. Even Individual recollection is a social act, insofar as personal memories can only be understood in the context of collective discourse and representation” (Perreault 2018, 316). What he means here is, that memory must be understood in context of the present and the collective discourse of the past, which influence today’s memory of an individual. Memories can be expressed in narratives and materials such as monuments, museums, memorial sites and landscapes (Perreault 2018).

The narratives of the past told in the present, especially when the past is idealized, could incite political action (Perreault 2018). And in Perreault’s research (2018), this political action is to gain environmental justice. So instead of rejecting idealizations of the past, one could listen to them and recognize the experiences of loss of a more ideal state (Perreault 2018).

2000 <



Source: Beeldarchief Rijkswaterstaat

> 2000



Source: © Siebe Swart

Interesting then, he states, is to find discrepancies between the collective memory and stories told near memorials and memories of individuals, which shows who has the power to tell the story, to create the officially shared narrative (Perreault 2018).

On Tiengemeten are two historical topics where the narratives revolved around; one about life on the island when the farmers were still there, and another about memories of biodiversity and quality of nature before the Delta Works. Both topics inhibit different memories and storylines.

Material

Material remembrances of the past presence of the farmers are the repurposed farmsteads, the ruined farmsteads, the straight lines in the Wildernis, and the Weemoed area. The latter will be further focused on, due to limited space. During the interview with ecologist Gerwin, he explains why they chose to remember this cultural heritage:

“We chose create three areas, one of them as weemoed to show the polderlandscape. The small scale acres refer to the history on Tiengemeten, to maintain the character of the past, just as we did with the farmsteads, the strait creeks/ditches, percolation, ruins and the reedhill. Those are cultural aspects. It actually refers back to farming from before the Second World War, as the agricultural museum does too. After WOII intensification and pesticides came into use and the relation with nature changed. There are several biodiversity values connected to this area; botanical and also birds who live around agricultural fields like the lapwing, godwit, skylark... this area has its own particular values.”⁴²

Farmer Piet obtained the possibility to work the landscape, whilst remaining an independent party from Natuurmonumenten.

Today I helped Piet with plowing and planting potatoes. He shows me one line of plowing with the tractor and I can follow his track for the lines to come. Later I have to do other patches. After one line, Piet comes: “are you still in love? Guess you are thinking of that man of yours?” I look at him puzzled and he points at the line I did. It is not straight at all. Plowing straight lines used to be an art. Two men from the agricultural museum help us together with three guys from the BAVO.

⁴² Interview with ecologist Gerwin at the 13th of May 2019

When all meters have been covered with potatoes, I feel real proud. Piet tells me that feeling will increase when rain has been falling for a few days and the plants comes out of the ground.

Somewhere in the field, there is a plastic sign. We walk up to it and see a bird walking to the side. “Now she’s walking away from the nest, to distract our attention from it to her.” We get closer and she flies up, loudly squeaking. It’s a kiviet. There are four eggs in the nest. “When there are two eggs, they start breeding.” Until the chicks can fly, they are very vulnerable for predators and tractors. This sign helps us to take the nest into consideration, lift the trailer when we pass it.

Three weeks later, we go check on the crops. Piet was very disappointed to tell me that the potatoes were taken by the rats. In the low augmentations of sand, where the potatoes used to be, there were tiny holes since the potatoes were gone. We even saw a rat’s skeleton. Piet also detects a trail towards the densely covered ditch. “Here one could place trap. Poison is not biological.” Though, there were several potato plants that came above the ground. For Piet, this was a real disappointment for all the hard work. For me though, I felt less bad since I was already thankful for the experience and do not mind the rats. Everyone has to eat, right? ⁴³



Me and a lapwing nest, semi-camouflaged on the field, marked by a sign to nu run over it with the tractor.

Picture taken by Piet

This memorial in the form of a landscape does not only recognize and remember the legacy of the farmers, but is also a place of collaboration between people related to the island, and nature since pesticides are not used and crops can be taken by animals.

Before the transformation, Piet was a sheep trader and breeder and let his animals graze on different dykes in the area, as well as on Tiengemeten. Even though he

⁴³ Fieldnotes April

felt bad for the other farmers, by remaining on good terms with the new owners of the island, he could keep working on Tiengemeten. When people ask him why he is still involved with the island, he tells them: “That way I have something to say about what happens here, and I can share my knowledge. Working together brings us further.”

Narratives

The following testimonies show the present compared to an idealized past.

Leen Naaktgeboren (mainland neighbor): “The farmers were bullied until they left. I knew them very well, we were together in school. I still become agitated when I talk about it, I shouldn’t do that. I know things change and I can understand why we need more room for nature. Though, the way it happened was not okay. Money also does not compensate feelings.” He further states that NM lies about its motives and treats people very bad. “Tiengemeten went from silent area to commercial fair.”⁴⁴

Farmer Piet: “It is as if animals become more important than people. The farmers made mistakes in the past and some still do by using certain pesticides. We were expected to provide the people with food and increase efficiency. Today there are different challenges. We should work together.”⁴⁵

Weekender May: “If you’d ask me there is not an enormous accumulation of nature here on Tiengemeten since Natuurmonumenten took it over. In the past there were less tourists and we had more contact with nature; swimming in the harbor with the birds and watching the sunset with a glass of wine in the meadow with the horses... Natuurmonumenten is a marketing machine and the island has become very boring actually. Why do tourists come here? I am not really a fan of the landscape and NM does not want to renovate the house. I think they are an arrogant organization stating; ‘we are going to make something of this island’, but it already was something. There was an identity connected to this island. It’s all right, someone can manage the area, however they pretend as if it is their property. Moreover, they are not really nature lovers, as they would otherwise see what was there already and do justice to it. The small community is broken. As the whole terrain was private property, people could drive cars without

⁴⁴ Fieldnotes April

⁴⁵ Fieldnotes May

MOT, so old rusty barrels were driven by 14-year old kids. But now it is institutionalized. I do not think the natural values increased.”⁴⁶

Annette - “I have always been a great advocate for nature and was a proponent of most plans and developments around Tiengemeten. Though it is difficult sometimes as my environment can be quite skeptical towards NM.” She explains when walking along Tiengemeten and seeing the ruined farmstead of the Vos family on the other side of the creek, she gets a lump in her throat. “Such a beautiful farm deteriorating like that... I have seen it from up close once with Eduard and you can see the fruit trees in the garden and imagine the farmer’s wife hanging out cloths to dry. It is just a beautiful place where generations of families lived. It’s hard to see it fall down like this. Now it is a place for bats, owls... If my grandfather would see this, he would turn in his grave.”

Maarten (weekender): “When NM started with this landscape, they zeroed (tare) the values of nature that was already here. For example the big poplar trees next to the main road where many woodpeckers lived, were taken down. And there was a very old small brick wall with special ferns... Yeah maybe I am nitpicker, but they just bulldozed the area. When something is not to their liking, they remove it. They did not maintain our home, which was very much in need of restoration. Whilst my father had helped preventing the island from becoming a dredging sludge depot. NM was waiting until we would just leave. A year ago they raised the rent on our family weekend house, which they have the right to do in fact, but we do not like it anymore. This is our last year... Look how pretty!” I cannot directly see what he means, and he said with a laugh; “I am an insect-man.” He points at a wasp with long legs on the wooden fence, separating their garden from their neighbors’. “Thanks to global warming, you do not have to travel to the south of Belgium to spot them. They come here!” I look puzzled at him and he explains: “Climate change is not our biggest problem, I believe nature will adapt to the rise of CO₂. Human waste though, chemicals and our hunger for resources is our problem.”

5.3 Identity Loss and Creation

“Spaces are bounded, they have texture and they are imbued with meanings that represent different elements of the national identity. Within these spaces, national identity varies” (Kaplan and Guntram 2011, 349). This means that a shared national

⁴⁶ Fieldnotes March

identity could be identified with a geographical space, just as it can be linked to a certain religion, language and morale. (Kaplan and Guntram 2011; Cusack 2007) . This identity is not necessarily shared by all and can differ on local and even individual scales. Besides, a shared identity can also be scattered around space.

An interesting aspect Tricia Cusack brings to the fore, is that a national identity can be constructed but needs to be maintained and affirmed in order to keep existing (Cusack 2007). Nations strive to the continuity of a certain identity, however it is in constant change as it is in constant negotiation. Which is actually not strange since even on personal level there are different interpretations of this identity.

A geographical location, a specific space, could therefor be seen as a tangible symbol for a communal identity, triggering pride and aesthetics (Kaplan and Guntram 2011). This tangible space, in the modern thought, can be modified to a certain extend to human needs and therefore does not necessarily have to change much, retaining the identity.

Loss

That is what the testimonies from the previous section of people's experience also inhabit; a feeling of loss. Since the changing landscape, social relations changed, whereto people connect their identity. This especially comes clear in May's statement, we read just before; "I think they are an arrogant organization stating; 'we are going to make something of this island', but it already was something. There was an identity connected to this island".

Since the island has been naturified and the social fabric has been disrupted, will there be a new community? Or will history come to a standstill, since the modern notion of nature does not give it a history? Time will tell. Only Ton's testimony hints towards a future without making history;

"In the old house, where I used to live, close to the road with the poplar trees inhabited by woodpeckers, there are all my memories of the family when we were still weekenders and getting to explore nature and the farmers with our young children." During the transformation process Ton could stay on the island, though in a different house, close to the information center. "In the house I live today, I have just planned to wear out the last years of my life. I am 70, so you can make your calculation."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Interview with Ton at Tiengemeten on the 18th of April 2019

Creation

Along changes an environment goes through due to human interventions, ideas of nature and human position towards it change too. As Cusack (2007) shows in her historical research on the Seine in France, which had been restored, cleansed and purified, meaning changed. The river became a symbol of the health of the community (Cusack 2007). Narratives of nostalgia and an idealized past can incite restoration of natural areas, referring to a specific period of time.

Gerwin and Astrid, who both have been working on the landscape design of Tiengemeten, both refer to the more ideal past before the installation of the Delta Works.⁴⁸ What is here today, is build on memories of an idealized past way before that. Gerwin and Astrid both explained to me how they aim at the recovery of the old delta nature, before the installation of the Delta Works. “In 1990 we realized that the decline of biodiversity happened because of the fragmentation of natural areas, of which the Dam is part by separating the ocean from the rivers. On Tiengemeten we aim at the recovery of the dynamic milieu. Area’s became either permanently under or above water, there was no temporarity anymore which is needed for many species for example the waders and spider march marigold. We have seen the latter back in the Mariapolder, where water floods and retracts many times.

A total restoration of the dynamic delta is not expected to be achieved, because of human safety and economic use (think about agricultural fields and industry). Little by little steps are made into the direction, since in the wildernis area water has free play on the land and a tidal area was created. Also since the sluices of the Haringvlietdam have been opened on specific moments since November, to let salt and sweet water meet again. This in order to meet international efforts to re-attract salmon and groupers back to the Alps.

With the new landscape, Natuurmonumenten is invoking a transformation of identities and pride relating to the landscapes they are creating:

“Experience, recreation, climate and biodiversity; reasons to be frugal/careful with nature. Whilst the Netherlands is just a small country, we are very prosperous thus have the ability to take responsibility and set an

⁴⁸ Information from interviews; Gerwin ecologist, 13th of May 2019; Astrid area manager, 8th of April 2019

example. Our landscape is in fact one big delta, where many birds fuel up during their migration, which is very important.”⁴⁹

In Conclusion

As we have seen the changes on Tiengemeten, the group of farmers and those who experienced the transition, lost a piece of their identity and community connected to the former landscape. Where there was pride in the victory over water with the manmade dykes and polders, where the fertile soil delivered crops profusely, where the community was tight, there now is nature... right?

⁴⁹ Interview with ecologist Gerwin at the 13th of May 2019

IV - Osprey Haliaeetus Albilica

This mysterious creature has been settling in the Netherlands since 2006. The bird is also known as 'the flying door' because of its two-meter wingspan. In 2018 a young couple was spotted on Tiengemeten building a nest. The southern part of the island, where their nest resided, was made prohibited for humans. Although, despite of this effort, the couple did not do a breeding attempt on Tiengemeten. This may remind us humans, how we might wish to control nature, but we are not the only ones with agency.



*The ospray,
Who was very welcome
But did not stay
And flew away*

Between the branches of the first tree of the row, you can see the nest. Picture taken by author

6. Conclusion

We have seen how a policy decision does not always benefit everyone involved, especially not when there is limited space. What happens on Tiengemeten raises an important debate about the goal of environmental sustainability and at what costs this goal might be achieved.

We have seen in the animal stories how they determine their own life, restricted or encouraged sometimes by human intervention. All these animals, together with human management and the water are forming the young landscape of Tiengemeten, which is still *becoming* and might never *be*.

Giving space back to nature sounds like a noble process, since humans already have been taking so much, who could object? It would never be my intention to discourage an attempt of naturifying the world. I do think, though, creating awareness of the paradox of environmental morality is important. Because what about the top-down decision to displace the farmers? With the departure, a tight community fabric and identity has been disrupted and local expert knowledge went lost.

With Natuurmonumenten as the owner of this area, they have the choice to decide what nature is. As Nietzsche (in Drenthen 1999) has stated and Zwarteveen (2015) has warned us, do not step into the trap of modernism, where only one truth or one way of knowing nature or water becomes the 'right' one. Therefore, I argue that a nature-inclusive perspective should not exclude humans and be cautious for, whilst aiming at an increase in biodiversity, cultural diversity should not be lost. Because, are not humans part of nature too?

Justice is not only the fair share of space and resources, but also recognition for a community, identity, its knowledge and its local uses. How to solve this, how to choose the lesser of two evils, or maybe the better of two evils? The answer lies in what farmer Piet is demonstrating; collaboration.

The conclusions and arguments presented in this thesis, are limited by my lack of experience in ethnographic research, multi-species ethnography and participatory action mapping and by who I am as a person. With the latter I especially refer to the interesting process happening at the beginning of the research. The fieldwork time of three months also limits my understanding of the area.

Reflections

I could not predict that I would be speaking up for the farmers instead of the environment. But reading literature and speaking with the local people, made me realize that imposing a morally 'right' project onto a local community seemed too little democratic and fair. Besides, when environmentalists and farmers would work together, sat around the table, maybe they would find great solutions.

Therefore I would like to help both sides of the table to understand each other a little better by posing the question of 'what is nature'? As we have seen, this question can give a lot of answers. To thank the community for their participation in my research and to create understanding, I am planning to make a small booklet with a tour along Tiengemeten where we explore the question and its diversity of answers.

Because of the difficulties of anonymization, this thesis will not be spread around. Even when names would have been changed, to anonymize the characters was practically impossible. Because of the small number of people involved with Tiengemeten, it could result into putting people against one another and maybe even seeing one character for another. In order to prevent causing such a conflict, I decided to follow my supervisor's suggestion of making a separate product to make public and share with the community.

The quality of the research is limited by my little experience in ethnographic research, and by who I am and what I know as a person. I hope I did not discredit non-humans and projects that try to include them

too much, because personally I encourage those. However, the ends do not justify the means. Therefore critique is important.



Ruined 'schatkeet'. Used for farmworkers as canteen.

Picture taken by author

7. Acknowledgements

The creation of this thesis would not have been possible without the participation of the people connected to Tiengemeten. Thanks to them and their honesty I learned a lot about the environment and social relations. Special thanks go to guide Annette, ranger Eduard and farmer Piet who regularly took me along on their jobs and activities, let me help them and for answering tons of questions.

My friends and family I want to thank for their believe in me, their love and understanding for my regular absence as daughter and friend for the past six months. Special thanks go to my father who has helped me with the digitally illustrated map that indicates where the reader is on the island. Tom, thank you for listening to my confusion and theories, and understanding of the temporary priority of this piece.

The suggestions, positivity, trust in my capabilities and freedom from my supervisor Emanuele Fantini were essential to the quality of this thesis and helped with a pleasant writing and research process.

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9. *Appendix*



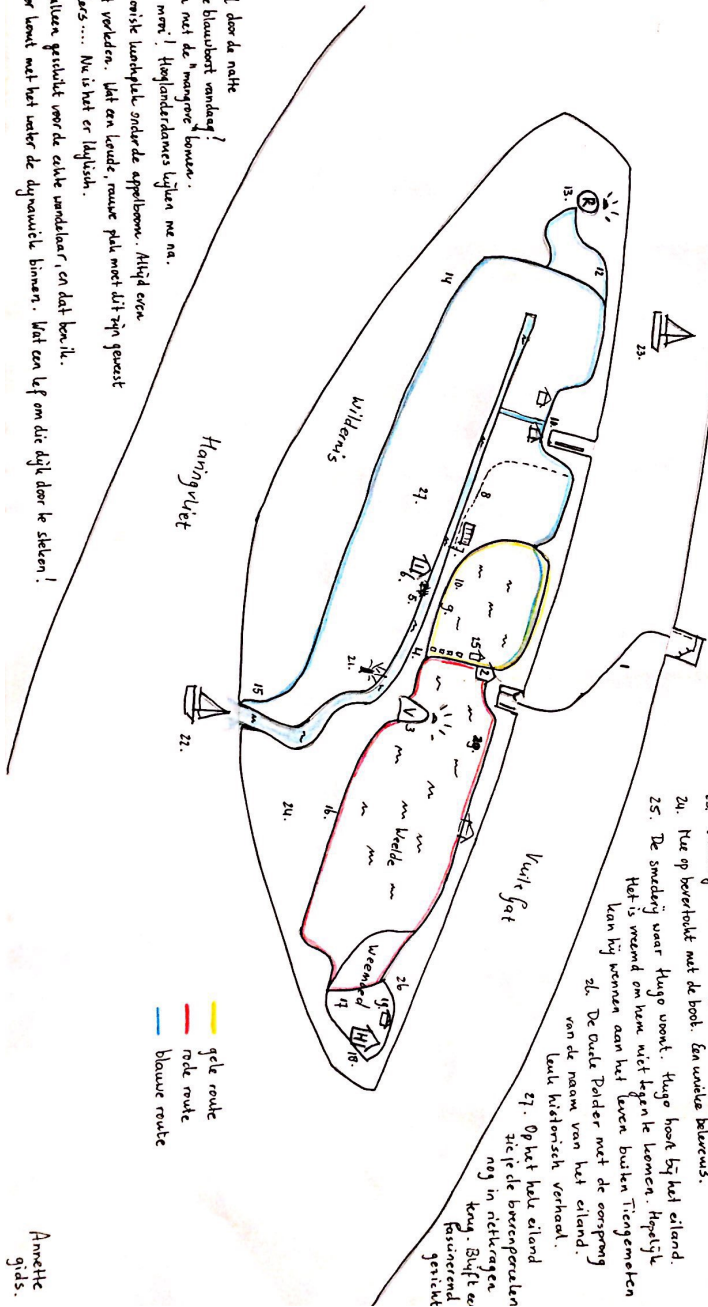
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Drawing Nestor

1. Vertrek met de post : hebben dagelijkse beslotenmeningen.
2. Ontwettigheids: onder vrijwilliges, de medewerkers en gasten. Altijd gevelij!
3. Viesberg: weids uitzicht op velds en over het eiland. Altijd naar verbaas zijn hoe mooi het hier is.
4. rikt op de wildernis. Valle rapels stien er dwe leer? Het lukt is hier so moet in ieder jaargelyde?
5. De boermarkt: Altijd naar stillelichte hopen die boer te sien. the lang voordat de compleetnagde boom gmoakt?
6. Veral: De Jernhoer vormt steeds srotter. Maale schuipakel voor alshande dieren. Bth ook even sullen. Hier woerde en besefswilde...
7. Oerdgepellonds: Hier hoer je padden lukttes en de boomkruiper.
8. Skuinske: Een van het pad of. Mpeijge ontmet te laptlaes ee markt wil een buide jonglanders. Halle dawas!
9. Veldkruisanten gaan ne het zomergewel uit wijen jaugd kerug.
10. Hoer te vandeag de vreedomp?
11. Sluiswachterswoning met sluitend uitzicht. Hier vil te of en te vel een tijde woner.

- h. De rode route. Natuur en cultuurhistorie in een wandeling. Lukt wit een groep naar ook heelijc in liden gevelijshap of velds. Vagat de zijpaadje niet met parking uitzicht op lualde f wildernis.
17. Nlemaal. Uline peralen met vullen erfussen. Hooval reer kl ilc wandag? To met wijen spa mager ghebed hebben.
18. Een een pauze met verrijde lunch. Honden erg veldom gelukelijc!
19. De leernijge: sluitende lishon. Hier verbaas f de bekeer met je verhaal als gids.
20. Vagat liden!
21. De boom die feds compleet maakt
22. Zeland naar binnen gluen.
23. Zeland gevelten van de vogelgeluiden. Het lude eiland ringt maek!
24. Rie op bevertoek met de boek. Een vunde blawens.
25. De smedery naar Huzo woonk. Huzo hoek by het eiland. Het is vreed om hant niet ligen te komen. Hpeijge kan hij wrenen aan het laven buiten Tienjemeften van de naam van het eiland.
26. De Oude Polder met de oerping lukt kietenssch verhaal.
27. Op het hule eiland zie je de beerenperalen nog in netkragen kong. Blijft en fassuierend geriekt

12. Het merise pad door de natte natuur. Zie ilde blaauwort wandag! en don die inham met de mangrove boomw.
13. Actonkoremond meri! Hooglandrdames liden na na. Rietheuvel: merise laanhtyle onder de appelsboom. Altijd even denken aan het verleden. Wat een lende, rouwe pik met blif zijn geveest voor de rietvagdars... Nu is het er ladjisch.
14. Hauer route, alleen gestuud voor de eikle wandelaar, en dat bevil. De inlaet. Hier leant met het water te dynamiek binnen. Wat een luf om die drij door te siken!
- 15.



Annette gids.



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Drawing Eva



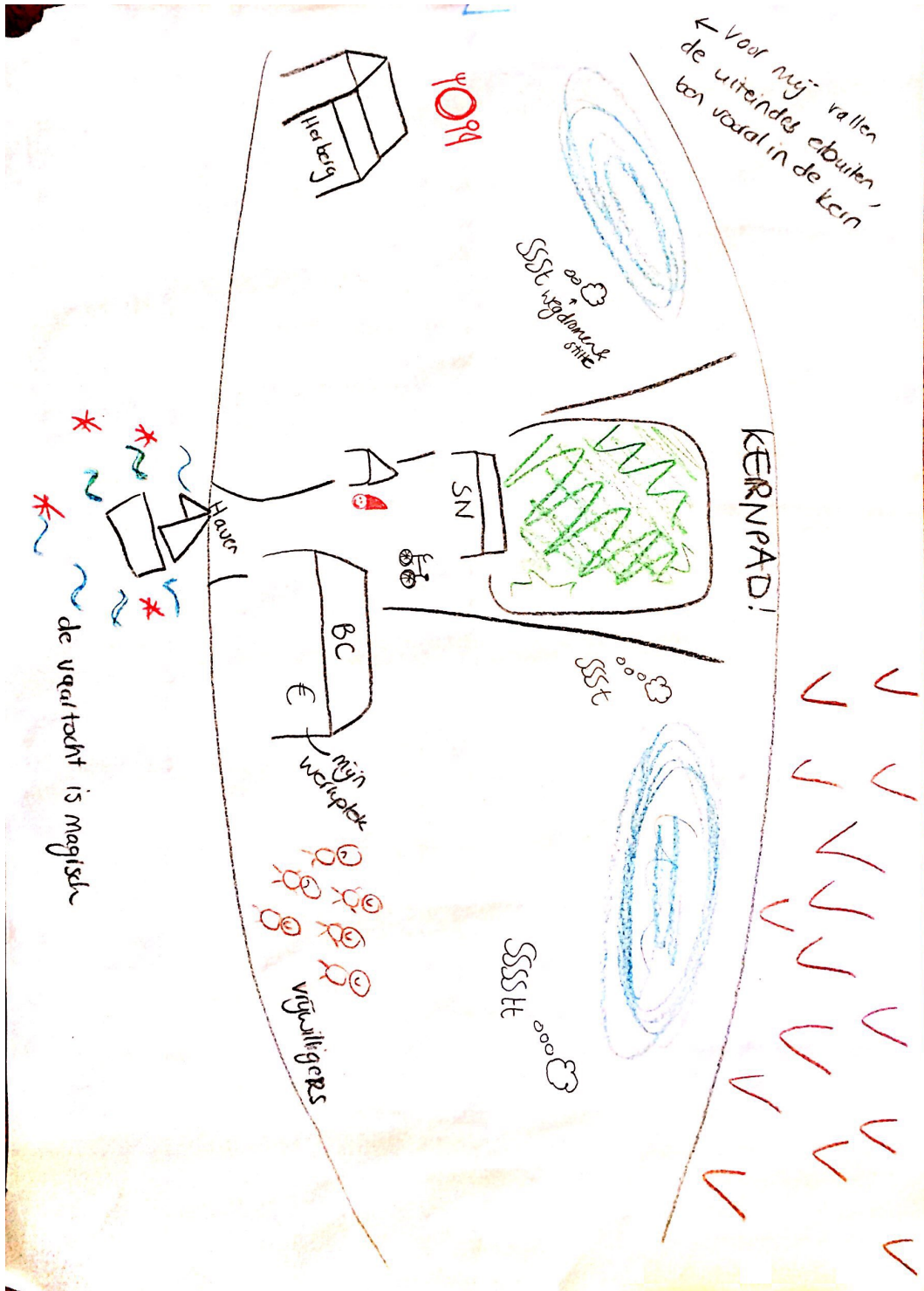
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Drawing Annette (Naturmonumenten)



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Drawing Ton



Scanned with CamScanner

Drawing Marieke

In Kaart Brengen

Fase twee; MSc afstudeeronderzoek Tiengemeten; participatory action research



Bedankt dat je mee wilt doen aan deze opdracht. Je deelname helpt mij met mijn onderzoek, maar ook met het nuanceren en in kaart brengen van menselijke ervaringen in de natuur.

Je hebt van mij drie legen A3 vellen papier gekregen. Ik wil je vragen om hier te tekenen **welke gebieden in (en eventueel rondom) Tiengemeten betekenis hebben voor jou.**

De vellen zijn helemaal leeg zodat je vrij bent om de vraag te beantwoorden zoals je dat wilt. Om je op weg te helpen, vind je aan de achterzijde van deze pagina enkele suggesties. Deze suggesties kun je gebruiken, maar mag je ook negeren.

Belangrijk

- Dit onderzoek wordt uitgevoerd door mij en is alleen verbonden aan de universiteit van Utrecht
- Je mag ten alle tijden je medewerking stoppen
- De kaart die je maakt zal in principe openbare informatie zijn, maar geef aan als je graag andere wensen hebt wat anonimiteit en publicatie betreft

Suggesties

Vaag

De vraag die ik hierboven gesteld heb kan vaag klinken, daarom dat ik hier enkele suggesties geef om je op weg te helpen. Maar, heb je al een idee en wil je meer vrijheid, negeer ze gerust.

Algemene Tips

- Je hoeft niet precies een kaart te tekenen zoals je die op de vorige pagina ziet
- De dingen die je tekent mogen buiten verhouding zijn
- Je mag woorden, zinnen, icoontjes en tekeningetjes gebruiken, evenals verschillende kleuren toepassen en plakken en knippen etc.
- Neem zoveel/weinig tijd als je wilt
- Je hoeft niet per se deze vellen te gebruiken

Hulpmiddelen

- Google maps; kan helpen
- Grafisch design; als je goed bent met computers, mag je het ook digitaal maken
- Vrienden/familie/kennissen
- Een rondje wandelen
- Van te voren een lijstje maken met herkenningpunten; herberg, mooie boom, pontje etc.
- Maak een legenda

Ervaring

- Welke routes loop je graag en wat kom je dan tegen?
- Wat voor activiteiten doe je op het eiland en wat neem je mee?
- Op welke plekken voel je je thuis?
- Waarbij ervaar je emoties van waardering, verbazing, verdriet, nostalgie, zorgen, frustratie, schoonheid, troost, comfort, conflict, dankbaarheid etc?
- Zintuigen; zijn er plekken waar je zintuigen worden geprikkeld? Zien, ruiken, voelen, proeven, horen...
- Tijdreizen; heb je een herinnering? Heb je zorgen voor de toekomst? Kijk je ergens naar uit?

Zijn er nog dingen onduidelijk, mag je me gerust mailen of bellen;
0624409001
inge_dekker@hotmail.com