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THE VOORSTERKLEI DESIGN WORKSHOP

by James Melsom

The Voorsterklei workshop was an intensive one-week design exercise led by Maïke van Stiphout of DS Landscape Architects, Amsterdam.

The design task was to determine solutions for the problematic water management of the landscape zone surrounding Zutphen, a city southwest of Arnhem in the Netherlands, simultaneously addressing future land use.

The landscape of the nearby village of Voorst is formed by a river landscape dynamic. The IJssel River deposits transported sand onto river dunes (the higher ground upon which Voorst is also built), while river clay is deposited in the lower areas (the 'Voorsterklei').

The border between the two bands of material is very legible in the landscape. It falls exactly between the forests of the 'De Poll' properties and the Nijnbeker Klei in the northern area, and the edge of the village of Voorst and the landscape zone of the Voorsterklei in the southern zone. The terrain's relatively abrupt height difference by the church of Voorst is perhaps the most beautiful manifestation of this phenomenon. Within the nearby clay riverbed, diverse ridges, north-south oriented stream channels and dike constructions are visible: a clear representation of the flood plain of the IJssel. One of the last of these channels is the Oudellijssel/Hoenderneesterbeek, the southern border of the Voorsterklei.

Since 1993, the pressure of increased water levels on the region resulted in a government-led initiative to restructure the landscape surrounding Zutphen. The resulting studies, such as the 'Bypass landscape' study, proposed a basic framework within which this might take place.¹

Taking such initiatives as a basis, the workshop targeted existing and future needs as well as the landscape's potential. In addition to the fundamental problems of increasing water volumes, the student projects deal with additional urban pressures and future land use issues implicit in the site. The need for new infrastructure, the concerns of existing landowners, the development of Zutphen's waterside edge, and additional housing development were all to be integrated into the new landscape proposals.

Aside from common design problematics of the Voorsterklei site and the Rhine Delta of the MAS LA Design Studio, the two sites actually share the same water since the IJssel receives part of its flow from the Rhine Delta, hundreds of kilometers away. For the Netherlands, one important issue is that countries upstream, particularly Germany and Switzerland, develop new means to increase their water capacities within the river landscape in order to reduce peak flow levels.

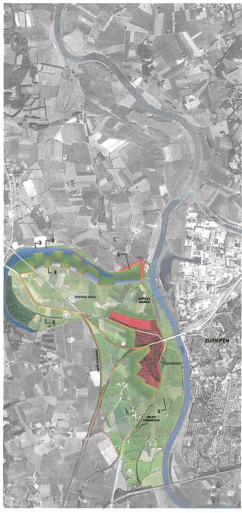
aerial view of ijssel landscape



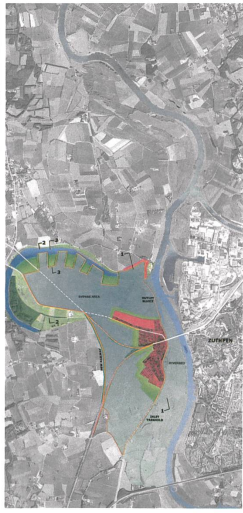
in the studio with Maïke van Stiphout



¹ Rik de Visser, Topos, Issue 51, 2005 – Residential Landscape, IJssel Bypass



plan of proposed landscape structure



plan of proposed landscape structure during high water levels

plan of infrastructure and topography



programmatic differentiation



sections of proposal

