

Peter Thiel-founded floating-island plan sunk by the government of paradise?

March 20 2018, by Ethan Baron, The Mercury News

It seems the "Next New World" may not be coming to Tahiti after all—the government of French Polynesia has thrown a wrench into plans for a libertarian utopia on floating islands there—as proposed by a group founded by Peter Thiel and a former Google engineer.

The "Floating Island Project" by the Seasteading Institute—which started up with funding from libertarian Silicon Valley contrarian and PayPal founder Thiel—became ensnared in Polynesian politics, with the government appearing to back away from the project.

The institute, founded in 2008 by Thiel and former Google software engineer Patri Friedman, has described the floating-island plan for the Polynesian paradise as its "first stride to the seas." The group aims to create the "Next New World" on the planet's oceans, its website says.

Ultimately, the institute aims to set up ocean-based colonies that would "cure the sick" by stripping medicine of bureaucracy; "enrich" hundreds of millions of "poor and oppressed" people with "no place to go" by providing them with ocean-surface communities; "feed the hungry" with farmed algae and open ocean-farmed fish; "power the world" with solar energy; and "improve governance" by giving the world's citizens a "fluid frontier" where they could "sail about and choose the states they want."

Plans had progressed to the point where the institute and French Polynesia—whose capital Pape'ete is in Tahiti—had signed a memorandum of understanding that would allow the ocean colonists to

set up a "seazone" with a "unique governing framework" where seasteading could begin, according to the institute.

"We plan to be in Tahiti by the beginning of 2018 to begin the development of our floating island pilot project," the group said on its site.

But late last month, the government of French Polynesia's Facebook page was updated with a notice accusing its opposition of riling up the populace over the ocean-colony plan. The agreement between the group and the government expired at the end of 2017 and is now "obsolete," the post said.

However, institute staff member Joe Quirk was not prepared to write off the French Polynesia project. The memorandum between the two parties required the institute to conduct studies that were finished in 2017, and there was no need to renew the agreement, Quirk said.

Quirk is a founder and managing director of Blue Frontiers, which works with the institute and would build the sea colonies.

"While we would like to bring the [project](#) to Tahiti or elsewhere in French Polynesia, it isn't our only option," Quirk said.

He wrote in a March 5 blog post that Blue Frontiers "will only build seasteads in a place where most people are proud to host it."

Blue Frontiers "has opened discussions with other island nations that are just as concerned about [sea level rise](#), the fate of their people, their culture, and their homeland," he wrote.

Thiel invested \$1.7 million in the institute, but resigned from its board in 2011, according to Business Insider, which spotted the French Polynesia

government's Facebook post.

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