

P4 Reflection Paper Jules Bresson TU Delft

The Waterdriehoek region has a rich history deeply intertwined with water, which has shaped its cultural identity. However, a growing separation between heritage preservation and water management, coupled with the challenges of climate change and rapid urbanization, threatens the relationship between people and water and hinders the exploration of water's potential to link water management and maritime heritage sites and connect the past to the present. The uiterwaarden in urbanized areas acts at present as a physical barrier between people and water due to their assigned industrial and water management functions. However, in the face of a changing industrial landscape, the connection these sites have to water and to history might also give them the potential to connect people to water again.

In my opinion, the Baggermuseum case in Sliedrecht is a strong example of diminishing the region's heritage narrative. With fewer visitors each year and a decreasing interest in water management among young people, the museum was on the brink of being transferred to a section of the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam. Severing the connection between Sliedrecht and the museum would be a heavy blow to the cultural identity of Sliedrecht, which still very much identifies with the dredging industry. Whilst we were there I felt that the story of water management and the area as a whole has a lot of unfulfilled potential. Therefore I plan to do a significant scale-up to a regional or even national museum. My goal was to redevelop the Baggermuseum as well as the area around it, including the Van Eyck Shipyard and the empty plot outside of the dike (Uiterwaarde in an urbanized region). Based on field research, (a method I started valuing a lot in my master's, because of the feel for the atmosphere it gives rather than looking for information online) I try to revitalize this strategic location by facilitating new connections with water as part of a museum harbor area.

The research dives into reconnecting people with water based on Kevin Lynch's 'Elements of the City'. Approaching the Dutch river landscape as a network of paths, edges, nodes, elements, and landmarks. This has been a useful tool for me to restructure the complicated site. The new masterplan creates connections from the polder to the waterfront, where it hosts carefully designed spaces for people to stay. The drilling heads of dredging equipment are used as a recognizable network that binds the different paths together. Reflecting on the larger-scale development, it completely changes the way people reach and interact with water, which makes it a successful transformation in my opinion. On a smaller scale, I think the industrial architectural language used, combined with waterfront landscape elements inspired by the field research works well to create a vibrant public riverfront. Bringing both identities found in the Dutch river landscape together in one place.

From a heritage perspective, I take a rather unconventional approach. This is mostly due to my interests not completely aligning with the studio's usual approach. (Maritime Heritage was my 2nd choice) However, the 3 mentors and knowledge I picked up during my graduation year have shown me that Heritage can be interpreted in various ways. Instead of reusing the buildings on site, I built a new building inspired by the story behind Sliedrecht. Deconstructing and reconstructing the shipyard and its typology, using Bagger-specie* to make building materials, and playing into the region's historical connection to water are ways that I interpreted the value of the Baggermuseum case.

*Material that the industry now sees as waste, essentially mud

I firmly believe that, especially in The Netherlands, thinking about water and how it is a system that is connected to almost every aspect of society is vital when planning and designing. Climate change only confirms that we as architects need to start taking it seriously, hopefully, this project can be an example for students in the coming years of the Maritime Heritage studio because Water is Heritage in the Netherlands. The freedom this graduation process offered me, brought me in contact with different companies and stakeholders in the area. I better understand the role of an architect within the design process now. I plan to continue this exploration of innovative ways to research, design, and build in my professional career.

Looking back at certain design decisions, I think that I could have simplified my building a lot more. However, I do believe that trusting the process and following a natural progression of ideas is also valuable. Looking ahead, I want to dedicate my time between P4 and P5 to material research, how to work with this newly developed concrete from Baggerspecie, make a model, and most importantly, create a clear storyline with vibrant imagery, full of character. Where identity, landscape, architecture, and the water blend into a lively museum area.