

# Graduation Report

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# Re-awakening The Senses

Amplifying sensory experience in the local context of Winsum

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## Foreword

Light and darkness shape the atmosphere of a specific place and influence how people move, pause and stay. This awareness grew during my half-year exchange in Stockholm, Sweden. Extreme seasonal differences there made the rhythm of light tangible. In the winter, daylight lasted only a few hours, while in the summer it extended far into the late evening. These shifts altered daily routines and the pace of everyday life. Light becomes a force.

At the same time, this experience made me aware that spatial perception is never shaped by light alone. Elements such as water, wind, landscape, and seasonal change also stimulate the senses and influence how a place is experienced. Architecture can therefore act as a mediator between people and their surroundings, amplifying these sensory qualities.

This graduation project builds on that realization. By engaging with the natural rhythms and sensory qualities of the landscape, the project explores how architecture can encourage moments of slowing down. Elements such as light, water, landscape, materiality, and seasonal change influence how people perceive and move through space. Within the Public Building Graduation Studio, architecture is approached as a spatial medium that shapes shared spaces, guides movement, and creates opportunities for pause and encounter within everyday life.

I hope you enjoy reading this graduation report.

Juliana Lueb

## Abstract

This Studio departs from the Nij Begun agenda, a 30-year plan recently implemented by the Dutch Government to build a better future for the regions of Groningen and North Drenthe. Nij Begun targets areas that have been affected for decades by practices of gas extraction and, therefore, also by several earthquakes, causing serious damages to buildings as well as economical and mental damage to its inhabitants. Groningen differs from neighbouring provinces such as Friesland, Drenthe, and the Wadden region, where identities and leisure infrastructure are more established and the destination more clearly defined.

In regions where sustainable tourism is increasingly used as a strategy for economic and social regeneration, public architecture plays an important role in shaping how architecture affects everyday life and social cohesion. Within the Nij Begun, the broader regional ambition, small villages such as Winsum provide an opportunity to explore how tourism and public architecture can be brought together in a meaningful way.

Through a research-by-design approach, this project explores how a public building can transform movement into moments of pause by structuring spatial sequences through senses, landscape, and program. The design proposes a hybrid public building that integrates tourism-related functions with everyday local use, including a public roof garden as a key example of this shared programme. By framing views of the horizon, water, and changing daylight conditions, the building encourages visitors and residents to experience the rhythms of the northern Dutch landscape and to slow down within everyday movement. This experience is further strengthened by the rhythm of the structural trusses, which guide movement through the building, the sound of rainwater that makes changing weather conditions more present, and the public quay that draws people towards the water and its activities.

# PART 1 | Introduction

## Problem statement

Groningen's image as a tourist destination is often perceived as modest or less distinctive compared to other Dutch destinations. In contrast to neighbouring tourist provinces such as Friesland and Drenthe, which have a more clearly recognisable recreational identity, Groningen's landscape and heritage qualities are less immediately visible to visitors. Research indicates that many non-visitors associate the province with quietness and do not clearly differentiate it as a holiday destination. According to a tourism image study conducted in 2019, nearly half of non-visitors did not consider Groningen an interesting vacation destination and felt that it did not stand out in comparison to other Dutch provinces (Sweco, 2019). This image persists despite Groningen's strong landscape and heritage qualities (e.g., cultural landscapes).

The challenge is therefore not only to accommodate tourism growth, but to make the identity of the place more visible and experiential. In Winsum, this means revealing qualities that are already present but often remain in the background: the historic terp structure, the relationship with the water, the rhythm of slow-mobility routes, and the quietness, darkness, and openness of the northern Dutch landscape.

At the same time, tourism in the province is increasing, with Groningen recording the highest growth in overnight stays of any Dutch province in 2024 (CBS, 2025). This growth creates an important spatial challenge. If tourism is to contribute to the quality of the region and its

local communities, it should not only attract more visitors, but also create conditions for longer stays, meaningful engagement, and a stronger experience of local identity.

Winsum, officially recognized as one of the most beautiful villages in the Netherlands (ANWB, 2020), illustrates the tension clearly between heritage value and contemporary tourism. The village is rich in cultural heritage, characterized by its historic terps, waterways (the Reitdiep), and monumental buildings. It is also strategically located along important walking routes like the Pieterpad, as well as cycling and water networks.

Despite these qualities, Winsum currently operates as a transit zone rather than a clear destination. Winsum currently lacks spatial structures that translate these existing networks into places of encounter, participation, and longer stays. As a result, the village functions primarily as a transit point within larger tourism flows rather than as a meaningful destination for both visitors and residents. This issue became visible during the tourism peak in the COVID-19 period, when existing facilities proved insufficient to support visitors and residents simultaneously (Barneveld, 2025).

Winsum therefore forms a relevant case study. On the one hand, the village already possesses a strong spatial and heritage identity, as it is a nationally protected village landscape with origins as a twin village on two terps separated by the Winsumerdiep. On the other hand, it functions as a key node within

slow-travel networks, where stages of the Pieterpad begin and end, and where local routes concentrate around bridges and waterways. The recognition of Winsum as the “most beautiful village in the Netherlands” further emphasizes its national attractiveness, yet this appeal requires public facilities that support both tourism and everyday village life without disrupting the existing social and spatial rhythms.

### **Relevance**

Within the Nij Begun agenda, tourism is seen to strengthen both the economy and everyday life in Groningen and North Drenthe. Small villages such as Winsum represent a testing ground for how public architecture can align tourism growth with local use.

As tourism increasingly shapes patterns of stay and use in Groningen, the role of public architecture becomes crucial in determining how this growth affects everyday life, social cohesion and sense of belonging. Instead of treating tourism as a separate layer added onto existing villages, this design project explores how a public building in Winsum can embed slow leisure within daily public life. By supporting both local use and visitor experience, the project aims to strengthen shared use, spatial quality and community connection, while contributing to a renewed identity for post-gas Groningen. In this way, Winsum becomes a testing ground for research on public buildings in rural and village contexts beyond the specific site.

### **Objective and motivation**

When public buildings fail to connect leisure, community life and tourism, it tends to pass through a village rather than becoming part of everyday life. Visitors move through spaces, but everyday use, social interaction and longer-term local value remain limited.

This graduation project starts from that observation. It explores how a public building in Winsum can create a different relationship between tourism and everyday life. The project engages with the natural rhythms of the landscape, particularly the changing seasons that shape daily life. Variations in daylight, weather, vegetation, and moments of use throughout the year influence how people experience and move through space. By working with these seasonal and temporal changes, the building aims to make these rhythms visible and tangible, allowing movement to slow down and creating opportunities for moments of pause.

## Research question

“How can architecture transform Winsum from a transit village into a destination where visitors and residents slow down, stay longer, and reconnect with the natural rhythms and sensory qualities of the landscape?”

Definition natural rhythms of the landscape

The natural rhythms of the landscape are shaped by daily and seasonal cycles such as light and darkness, weather, water levels, and vegetation changes. These rhythms influence how people perceive time, move through space, and experience their surroundings. The natural rhythms of light and darkness are primarily shaped by the daily cycle of day and night and the seasonal variations throughout the year. These rhythms are fundamental to human life, influencing biological processes, perception of time, and patterns of activity. The alternation between light and darkness regulates the human circadian rhythm, which affects sleep, alertness, and overall well-being, (RIVM). By engaging with these natural rhythms, architecture can make environmental changes perceptible and support a more attentive and slower experience of place.

Sub questions

*Spatial sequences*

- How can spatial sequences shaped by natural rhythms and sensory qualities guide movement through the building and create moments of slowing down?

*Programme*

- How can the program of a public building in Winsum accommodate both everyday use by locals and longer stays by tourist, allowing different rhythms of use to coexist?

*Pieterpad*

- How can the building engage with the Pieterpad as a slow-travel route, and contribute to Winsum as a place for rest, reflection and overnight stay for hikers?

*Reitdiep*

- How can the Reitdiep, through the Winsumerdiep, be integrated as spatial element, allowing changing rhythms of water levels to be experienced within the building?

# Research question.

## Scope

This research focuses on the intersection of four spatial systems that structure the landscape of Winsum. Together, these systems shape movement, orientation, and the experiential qualities of the village and its surroundings.

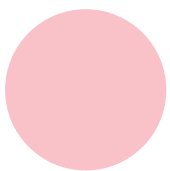
- *The Reitdiep, water network:* Winsum is embedded in a landscape of waterways which offers potential for leisure and orientation. The Reitdiep river connects the Lauwersmeer and Waddensea with the city of Groningen and forms an important spatial and historical backbone of the region.

- *Slow-mobility network:* Winsum functions as a node within the Dutch slow-travel system. Segment 2 of the Pieterpad connects Winsum to Groningen, turning Winsum into a legible node within one of the Netherlands' best-known long-distance hiking paths.

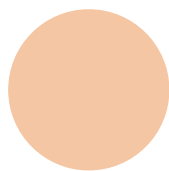
- *Historic terp landscape:* Winsum's village structure is shaped by its origins as a twin village on two historic terps, separated by the Winsumerdiep. Although this heritage forms an important part of the village identity, it is not always clearly visible or legible in the everyday experience of visitors.

- *Silence and darkness landscape:* Winsum is located within a designated area recognized for its low levels of noise and artificial light. This condition of silence and darkness offers a rare spatial quality, in which natural rhythms of light and darkness remain perceptible.

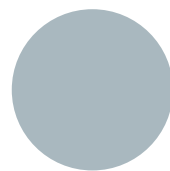
Together these systems intersect within the village structure, through its historic terps, bridges, and sight lines, forming the framework for this research.



Slow mobility  
network



Historic terp  
landscape



Water network



Silence and  
darkness landscape

## PART 2 | Approach

### Methods

This graduation project adopts a research-by-design approach, in which designing is understood as a reflective dialogue between analysis, spatial exploration, and interpretation. Design proposals are used to explore spatial possibilities, test effects, and iteratively refine ideas through both verbal and spatial outputs. Rather than applying all research methods simultaneously, the project deploys different methods at specific moments, depending on the design question at hand.

Research and design develop in parallel through an iterative process in which analytical research informs spatial propositions that are tested, reflected upon, and refined. In this way, research is both descriptive and projective, using design as a tool to explore architectural possibilities how light can guide movement, pause and staying across every day and seasonal rhythms. Within this process, light is studied through spatial sequences, sections, and material expression to explore how every day and seasonal rhythms become architecturally readable.

Within this approach, hybridity and multiplicity function as guiding design principles. Hybridity is applied by using program as a design instrument that enables the overlap of tourism-related and everyday local uses. Multiplicity informs the design process by addressing spatial, programmatic and experiential layers simultaneously rather than sequentially.

The methodology is structured through five interconnected steps:

#### 1. *Context and system analysis*

The project analyses Winsum within a broader spatial system, including slow-mobility routes, waterways, heritage structures, and designated darkness areas.

#### 2. *Programmatic research*

Programmatic research investigates overlaps between everyday village life and tourism-related activities, with particular attention to temporal rhythms across day, evening, and night.

#### 3. *Typological and reference research*

Reference projects are studied that use landscape, routing, and light as spatial and experiential media within public buildings.

#### 4. *Iterative design translation*

Insights from analysis and research are translated into spatial design through iterative drawing and testing in plans, sections and route diagrams.

#### 5. *Scenario thinking*

Future scenarios are used to test how the design performs across different seasons and patterns of use.

Together, these steps structure an iterative design process in which analytical research and spatial design continuously inform each other.

## Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is structured as a set of conceptual lenses that inform the design investigations. Rather than treating public architecture as an isolated object, the framework positions the public building as a spatial mediator between landscape, routes, everyday life and tourism.

### 1. *Place-specific architecture*

Drawing on Kenneth Frampton's concept of critical regionalism, the project approaches architecture as a response to specific conditions of topography, climate, light, material experience, and local culture (Frampton, 1987). Instead of producing an iconic or universal object, the design is understood as a place-specific intervention embedded in the spatial and cultural context of Winsum.

### 2. *Movement and spatial configuration*

Bill Hillier's work on spatial configuration and movement demonstrates that spatial layouts strongly influence patterns of movement and encounter (Hillier, 1996). From this perspective, architecture can actively shape how people move through space. In this project, routes, thresholds, and sightlines are used as design tools to guide movement and encourage moments of slowing down.

### 3. *Sensory architecture*

Juhani Pallasmaa's theory of sensory architecture highlights the importance of atmosphere, light, shadow, and material perception in shaping spatial experience (Pallasmaa, 2024). In *The Eyes of the Skin*, Pallasmaa wrote that light has often been reduced to a quantitative matter, while windows have lost their role as mediators between interior and exterior, light and shadow, and private and public. Within this project, openings and windows

are understood as mediators between interior and exterior, and between light and darkness, allowing natural rhythms of the landscape to become architecturally perceptible.

### 4. *Public space and staying*

Jan Gehl's research on life between buildings demonstrates that people are attracted to places where other people and activities are present (Gehl, 2011). Spatial conditions that allow sitting, standing, watching, and informal interaction strengthen public life and encourage longer stays. This perspective informs the design of spaces that support encounter, observation, and everyday use.

### 5. *Tourism and architecture – Specht*

Jan Specht's work on Architectural Tourism provides a critical perspective on destination-making (Specht, 2014). Rather than relying on iconic attractors, successful tourist architecture should remain embedded in local life and maintain continuity with everyday spatial practices.

### 6. *Hybrid public buildings*

Research on hybrid buildings by Fernández Per and Mozas demonstrates how mixed programs can support overlapping uses and temporal rhythms within a single building. When degrees of publicness are designed gradually rather than through strict separation, architecture can accommodate both everyday village life and visitor-oriented activities (Fernández Per, 2014).

Together, these lenses frame the public building as a hybrid spatial instrument that mediates between movement and staying, tourism and everyday life, and between landscape conditions such as light and darkness.

## PART 3 | Results

### 3.0 Design position

Re-awakening the senses positions a hybrid public building in Winsum as a node between slow travel, water recreation, and everyday village life. Located within the networks of the Pieterpad, cycling routes, waterways, and local public spaces, the building responds to the question of how architecture can transform Winsum from a transit village into a destination where visitors slow down, stay longer, and reconnect with the landscape.

The design takes the four main potentials of the regional framework as its starting point: slow mobility, the historic terp landscape, water, and darkness and silence. Rather than introducing a new attraction, the project works with

qualities that are already present in Winsum but are often experienced only indirectly or remain in the background. Through architecture, these qualities are amplified, made more visible, and translated into sensory experiences that strengthen the identity of the region.

Winsum is characterised by open horizons, water networks, seasonal change, and a slow-mobility culture. These qualities form the basis of the design strategy.

The project transforms passage into staying through a sequence of routes that guide movement towards activity, encounter, and the waterfront. Raised plateaus, open and enclosed façade and active programmes along the circulation

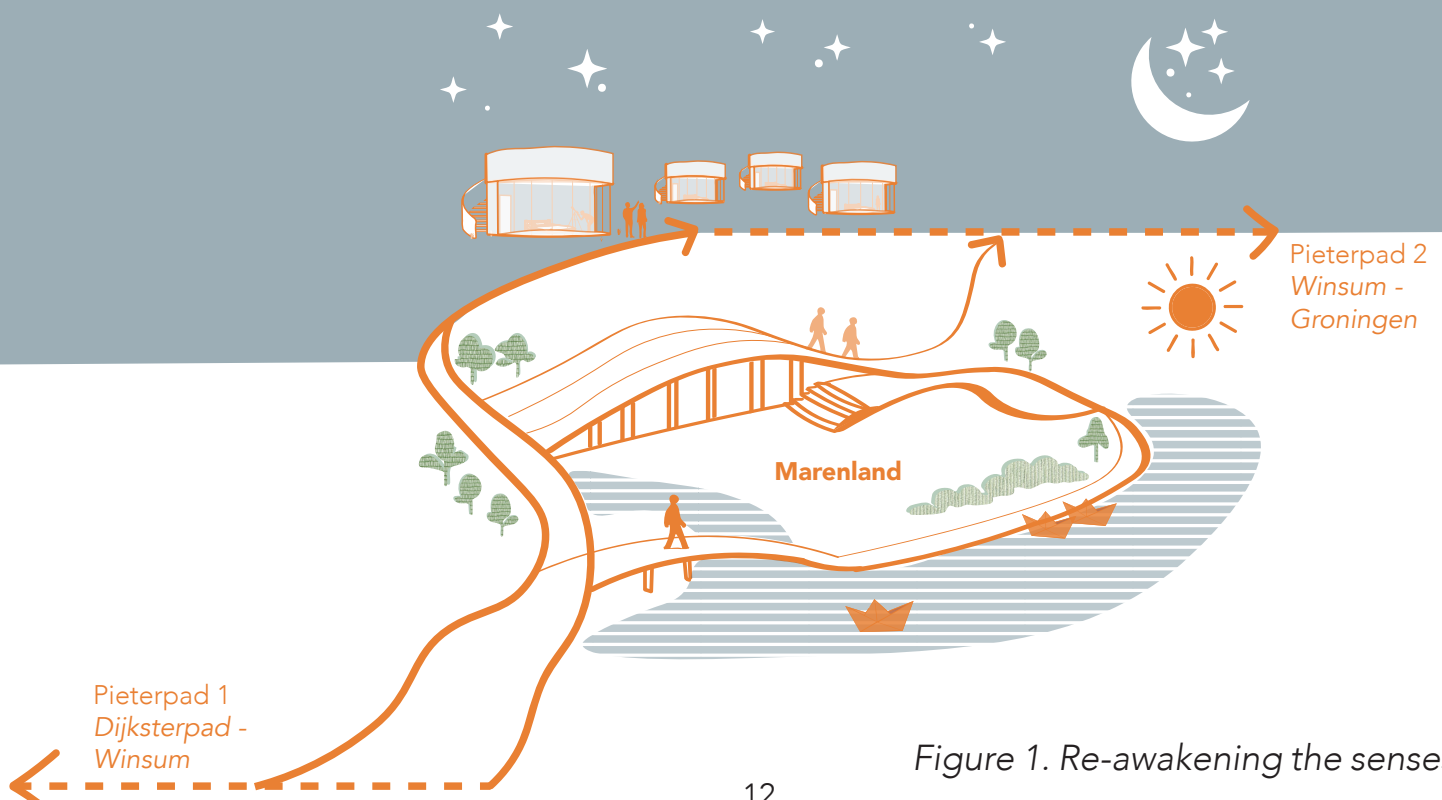


Figure 1. Re-awakening the senses

route create moments where visitors and residents are invited to pause, gather, and engage with the water.

Natural rhythms such as daylight, seasonal change, water reflections, and darkness structure the spatial experience. During the day, filtered daylight and framed views towards the horizon and water regulate the pace of movement. At night, artificial lighting is deliberately minimized so that darkness and the perception of the night sky remain part of the spatial experience, in line with regional landscape qualities and Dark Sky ambitions.

In this way, the building does not introduce a new attraction but intensifies the existing qualities of Winsum, allowing visitors and residents to experience the sensory rhythms of the landscape and encouraging moments of slowing down within everyday movement.

The design translates the sensory qualities of the landscape into architectural strategies across three scales: the landscape scale, the building scale, and the material scale.

### 3.1 Landscape system structuring

Winsum is not defined by a single attraction, but by the overlap of four spatial systems: the historic terp landscape, the slow-mobility network, the water network, and the landscape of darkness and silence. Together, these systems structure movement, orientation, identity, and sensory experience in and around the village.

The diagram translates these existing conditions into four design potentials. Slow mobility passing through Winsum can become a node within the slow-mobility network. The historic landscape, which is often unnoticed, can be made visible through architecture. Water can shift from a background condition into an active experience. The unused potential

of darkness and silence can become part of the spatial atmosphere of the project. These four potentials form the spatial and sensory framework for the design.

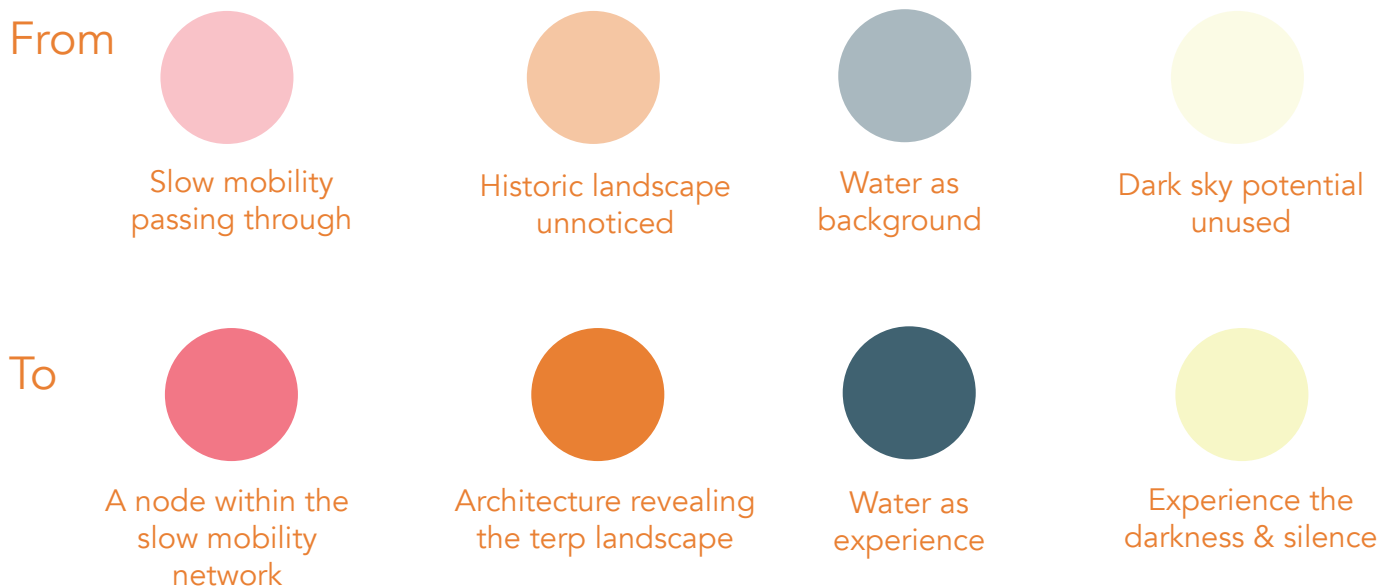


Figure 2. Four spatial systems

## What makes Winsum unique and why does it require a specific approach?

The uniqueness of Winsum lies in the layering of these four systems. Each system is already present in the landscape, but not always clearly visible or fully experienced in everyday movement through the village. The design approach therefore starts from revealing, connecting, and intensifying these existing qualities.

### Heritage and landscape structure

The nationally protected village landscape and the double-terp structure two elevated terps separated by the Winsumerdiep (J.T. Possel), (Rijksdienst voor Cultureel Erfgoed, 2026), mean that level differences and crossings are already embedded in the spatial DNA of the place.

### Slow-mobility node

The Pieterpad is the most well-known long-distance hiking route in the Netherlands (501 km), divided into 26 stages (Wandelnet, sd). Winsum functions as a starting or ending point for two of these stages, including the stage, Pieterburen - Winsum, which is formally recognized as a node within the network with designated route maps and start/end locations (Stichting Pieterpad, sd).

The route is also extremely popular. Interviews and news reports refer to millions of hikers over the past decades, and particularly during the COVID-19 period the route experienced significant pressure on accommodation facilities along the trail (NOS Nieuws , 2023).



Figure 3. The Wierden landscape

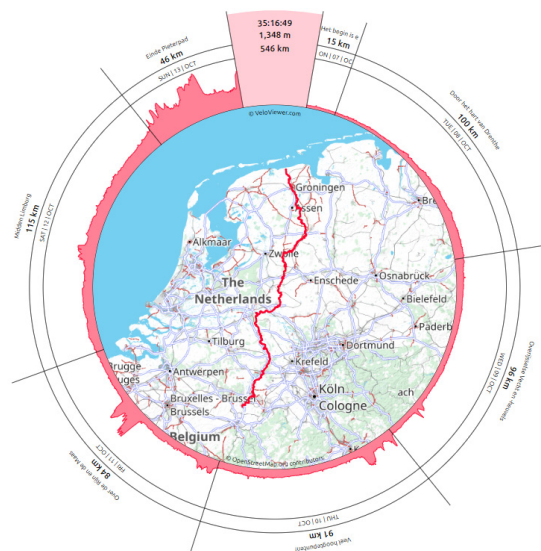


Figure 4. The Pieterpad

**Water as a historical and contemporary carrier**

The Winsumerdiep has long been connected to the Reitdiep, functioning both as a drainage channel and as part of a historical trade route within the regional water system (Visitwadden, sd). This water network has therefore played an important role in shaping settlement patterns, economic activity, and landscape structure in the region.

Until 1877, the Reitdiep was connected to the open sea, meaning tidal influence was part of the broader water system (Canon van Nederland, sd).

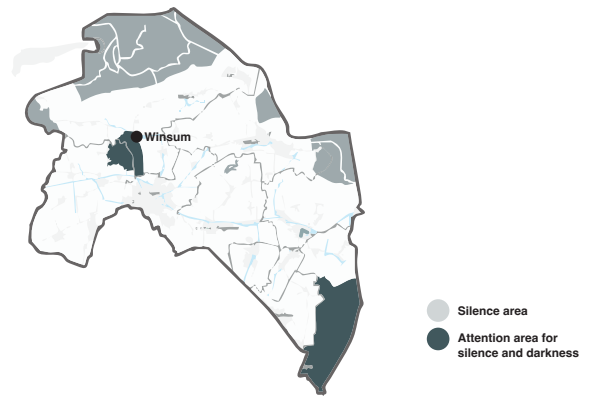
**Darkness and silence**

The Province of Groningen identifies silence and darkness as key landscape qualities and designates an attention area around the Reitdiep. This implies that design interventions must not only use these qualities but also protect them. An additional regional layer of significance is the designation of Lauwersmeer National Park as an official Dark Sky Park by the International Dark-Sky Association in October 2016 (Provincie Groningen, 2025). This status highlights the regional importance of preserving natural night conditions and limiting light pollution.

Crucially for this project, silence and darkness in Groningen are not only experiential qualities but also part of spatial policy. The province has designated both silence areas and attention areas for silence and darkness. A dataset description from the National Georegister explicitly identifies such an attention area in “the municipality of Winsum, west of the provincial road between Groningen-Winsum” (NGR,



Figure 5. The Reitdiep



Dark-sky connections from Winsum



Figure 6. Silence and darkness

2025).

## 3.2 Spatial translation from landscape to architecture

### 3.2.1 Circulation system

#### Design move

The site is organised into distinct zones, see figure 9. Diagram site zones and figure 10. The new map of Marenland. Mobility-related functions, such as bicycle parking, information points, and arrival spaces, are concentrated within the arrival zone. Public programmes with a longer duration of stay, including the restaurant, exhibition space, and auditorium, are positioned towards the waterfront.

A continuous waterside path connects the Winsumerdiep with the building and links the arrival zone to the public quay, see figure 7. Waterside path. Together, the programme distribution and circulation structure create a movement sequence from arrival to the waterfront, strengthening the relationship between visitors, public activity, and the water landscape.

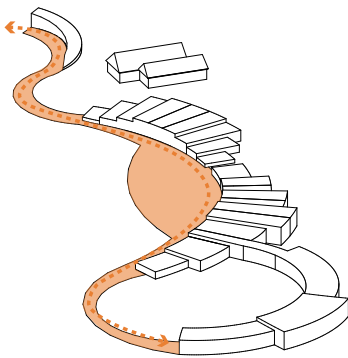


Figure 7. Waterside path

#### Mechanism

By allowing routes to converge at programmatic anchors and offering users multiple choices, through the building, along the water, or across the roof landscape, the design creates not a single efficient corridor but a network of micro-decisions.

This increases route betweenness and introduces alternative paths that enhance opportunities for staying, consistent with movement theories developed in Space Syntax (Hillier, 1996).

#### Consequence

Rather than passing directly through the site, visitors are gradually drawn towards places of activity, encounter, and the waterfront. The movement sequence encourages moments of pause and orientation, transforming arrival into a longer stay. Water becomes an active part of the experience, while public programmes create opportunities for interaction between tourists and local residents.

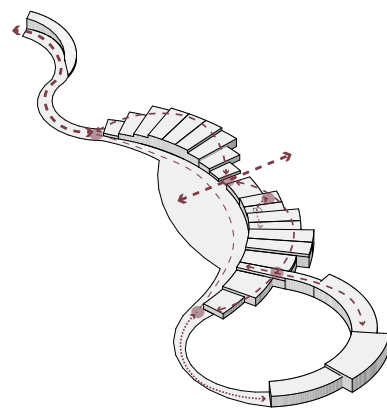


Figure 8. Circulation strategy

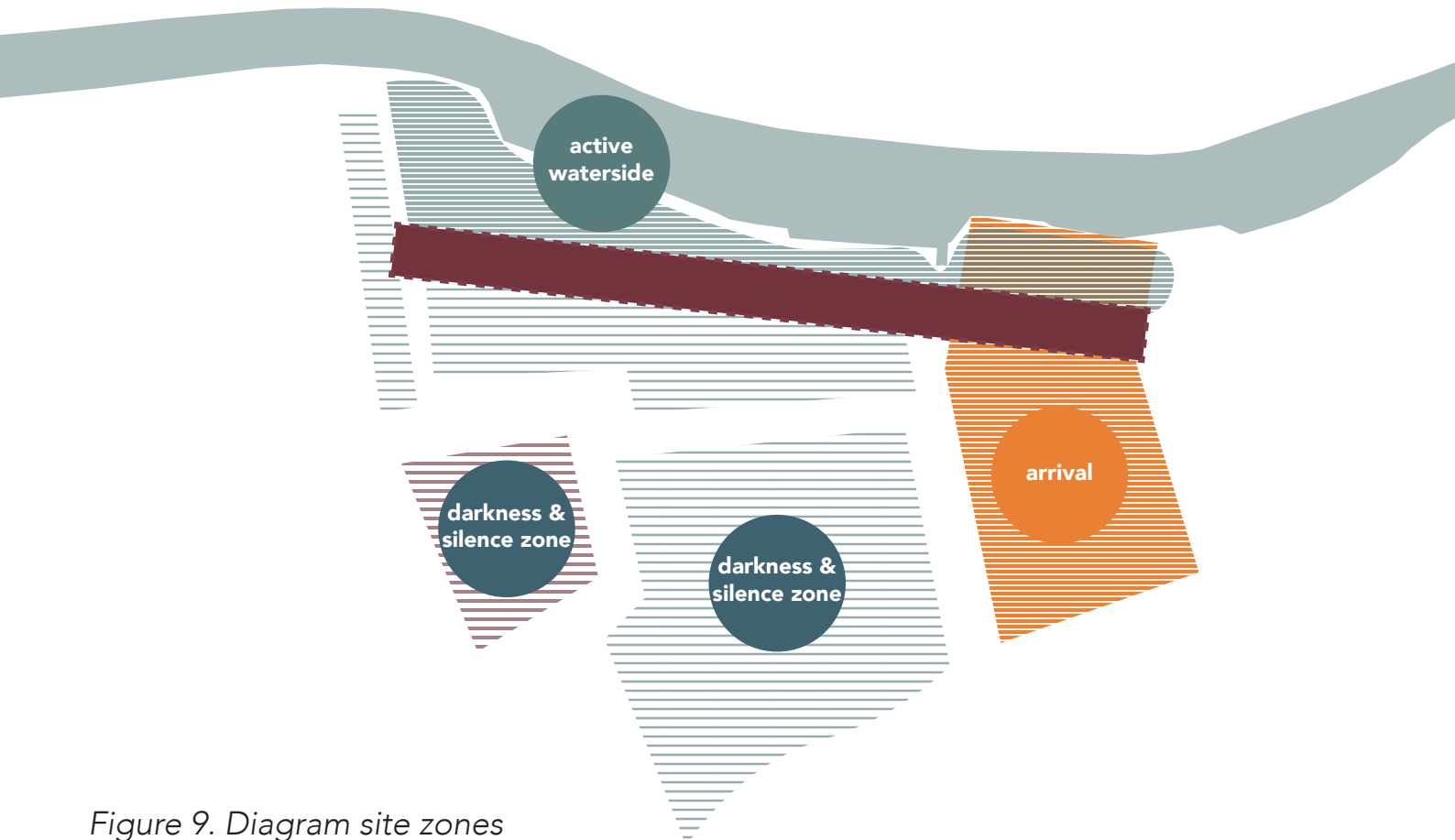


Figure 9. Diagram site zones

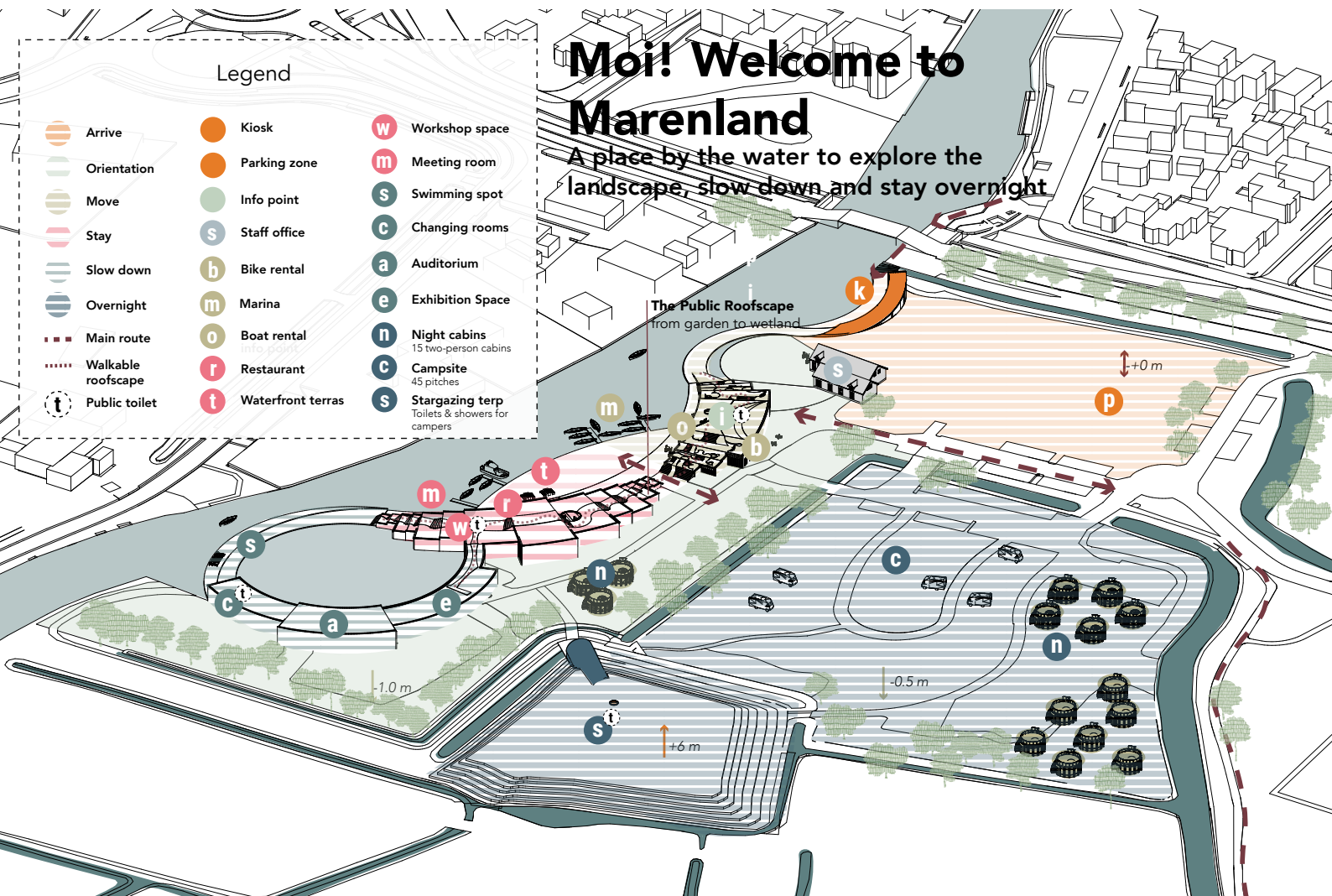


Figure 10. The new map of Marenland

### Design move

The design introduces four routes:

- Through the building (internal route linking programmatic hubs)
- Along the water (The path reinforcing the waterfront experience)
- Over the building (roof landscape as an elevated route with horizon views)
- Water axis (a spatial axis connecting hinterland and waterfront)

### Evidence

Hillier: spatial configuration and movement (Hillier, 1996).

Gehl: staying and observing activity (Gehl, 2011).

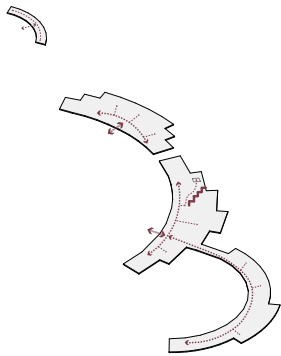


Figure 11. Through the building

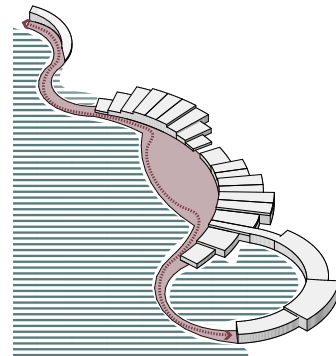


Figure 12. Along the water

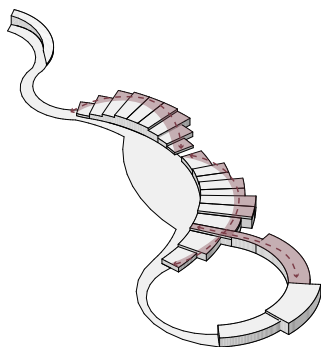


Figure 13. Over the building

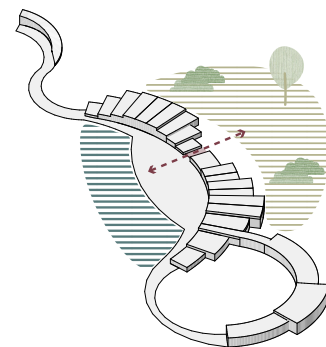


Figure 14. Water axis

### 3.2.2 Activating the waterfront: water as spatial experience.

The Reitdiep landscape is characterised by open horizons and water structures, historically connected to trade, drainage networks, and settlement patterns. The Winsumerdiep originates from the former watercourse *De Delf*, which shaped the spatial development of Winsum and connected the village to a wider regional water system. The historical map of *De Delf* and the Winsumerdiep therefore forms an important reference for understanding water not only as an edge condition, but as a structuring element of movement, orientation, and identity, see Figure 17, *De Delf* as the origin of the Winsumerdiep.

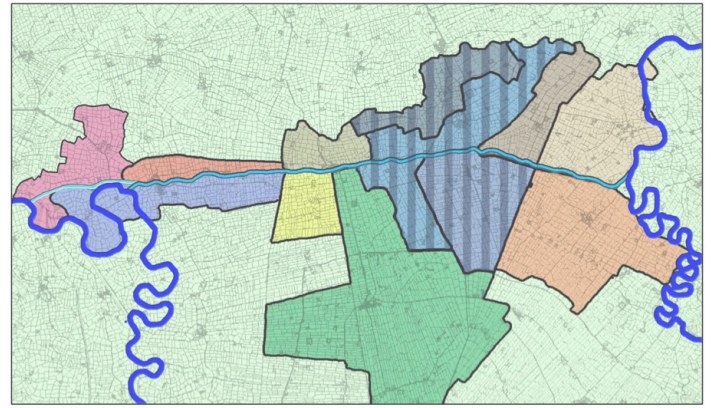


Figure 17. The Winsumerdiep originates from the *De Delf*, Lauwersto Eems report

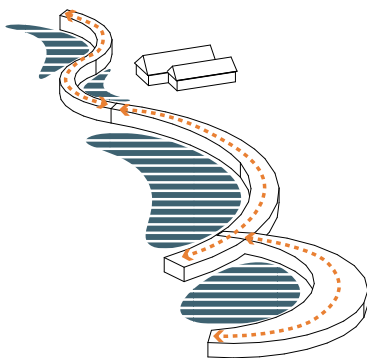


Figure 15. Water rhythm

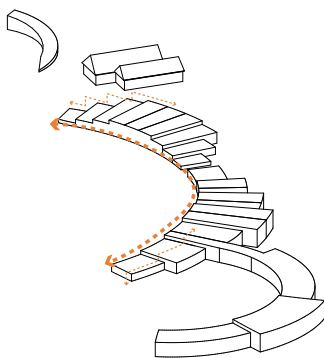


Figure 16. Stepped massing

#### Design move

The building mass follows the waterline in a curved sequence. Toward the water the façade is open, while toward the hinterland it becomes stepped, forming terraces.

#### Mechanism

The curved mass generates a rhythm of changing perspectives. Horizons appear and disappear along the route, terraces provide stopping points, and the water becomes a spatial reference.

#### Consequence

The building establishes a spatial dialogue with the water. Travellers experience the Winsumerdiep as an orienting axis within the landscape, while the design integrates the waterfront into the architectural sequence, activating the water as part of the experience.

#### Evidence

Historical water dynamics of the Reitdiep (More Landscape, VE-R).  
Critical regionalism (Frampton, 1987).



Figure 18. Swimming spot

### 3.2.3 Façade as sensory mediator: light, view, and darkness

The façade responds to the open landscape conditions of the Reitdiep area by creating a gradual transition between the sheltered interior spaces and the expansive views towards the Winsumerdiep and surrounding horizon.

#### Design move

The façade gradually opens towards the water and becomes more enclosed towards the hinterland. A wooden curtain wall filters daylight and frames views towards the Winsumerdiep and the surrounding horizon. Integrated solar façade panels are oriented according to the sun path and are used as both an energy-generating layer and a shading element within the façade composition, see Figure 21, Façade elevation.

#### Mechanism

Users experience the landscape through fragments: a view towards the water. The alternation between transparent openings, wooden curtain walls, and

solar façade panels creates a layered façade rhythm

#### Consequence

Movement through the building becomes a sensory sequence of view, light, shadow, and focus. The façade slows down perception by alternating between openness and enclosure, encouraging users to look outward, pause, and become aware of changing daylight, weather, and the surrounding water landscape.

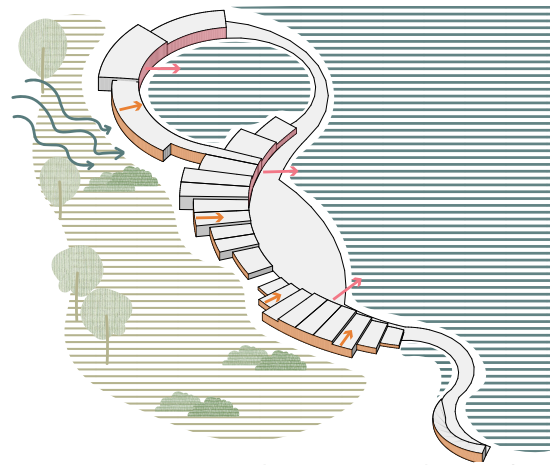


Figure 19. Façade responds to the surrounding landscape

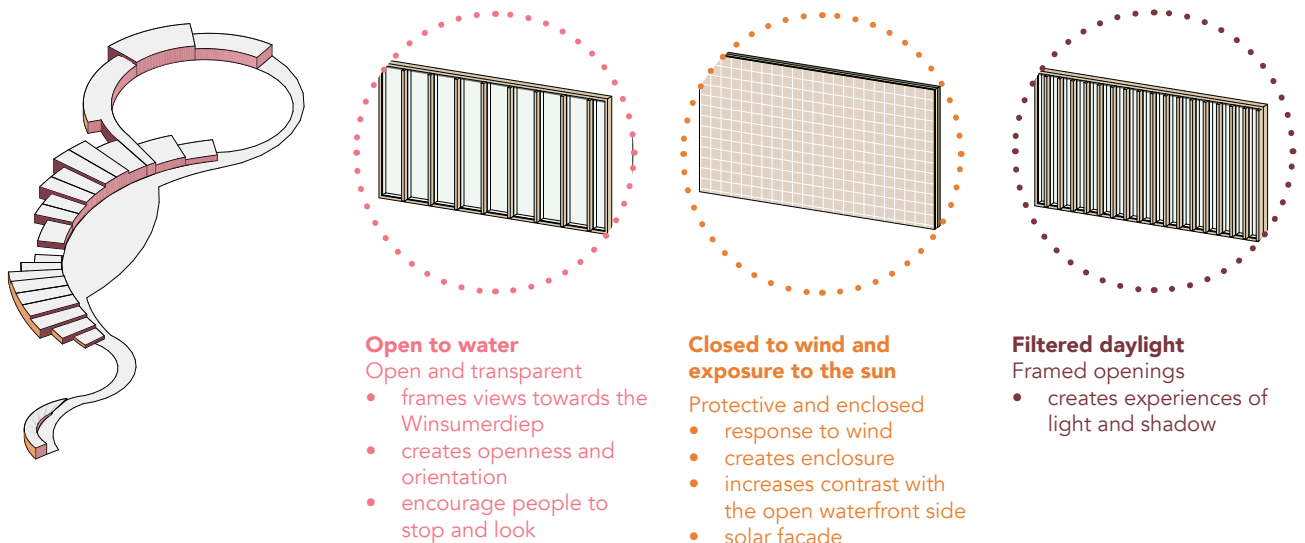


Figure 20. Façade principles

Evidence  
Pallasmaa, sensory architecture.  
(Pallasmaa, 2024).  
Provincial policies on darkness and light  
planning (Province Groningen, 2025).

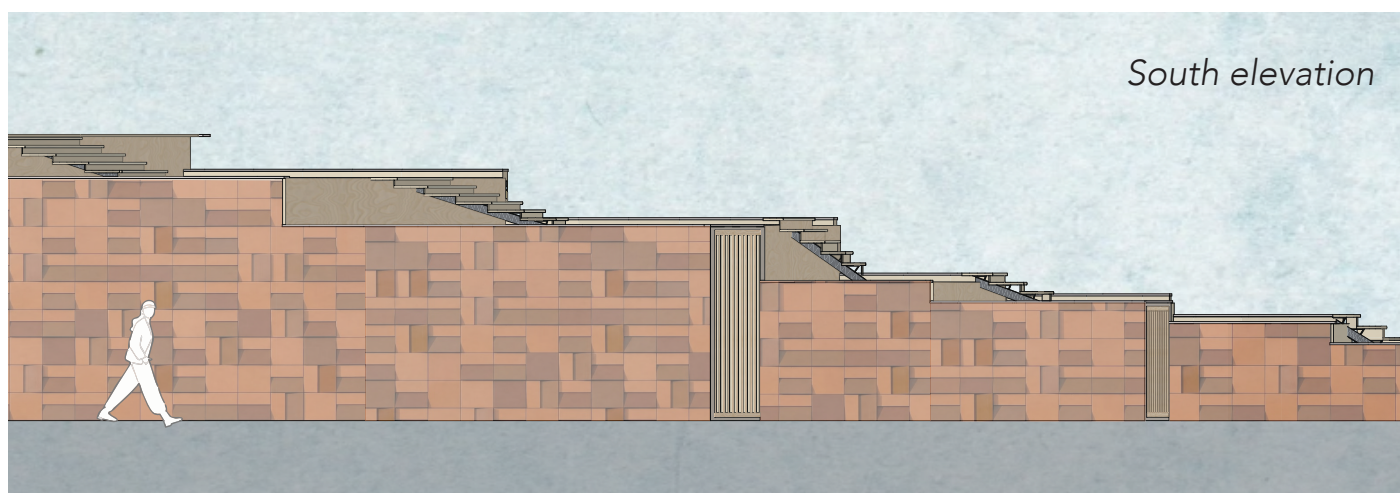


Figure 21. Façade elevation (not to scale)

### 3.2.4 Structural rhythm

The experience of movement through the building is not only shaped by routes and façade openings, but also by the rhythm of the structural frame. The timber structure forms a repeated spatial order that gives direction to the interior and supports the movement sequence from arrival towards the waterfront.

#### Design move

The main load-bearing structure is expressed as a visible rhythm of timber columns and beams. These columns and beams guide movement through the building and create a clear spatial direction underneath the roof structure. Rather than being hidden, the structure becomes part of the architectural experience.

#### Mechanism

The repetition of the columns and beams creates a rhythm of compression and release along the circulation route. As visitors move underneath the structure, the spacing of the beams

gives orientation and reinforces a sense of movement and direction. The timber materiality strengthens the play of light and shadow, as the columns filter daylight and cast changing shadow patterns across the interior.

#### Consequence

The structural rhythm makes movement through the building more legible and sensory. Visitors are guided not only by the route itself, but also by the visible order of the structure. At the same time, the warm and tactile quality of timber creates a softer atmosphere, making the interior feel more connected to the landscape and encouraging moments of pause within movement.

#### Evidence

Pallasmaa: sensory architecture (Pallasmaa, 2024).

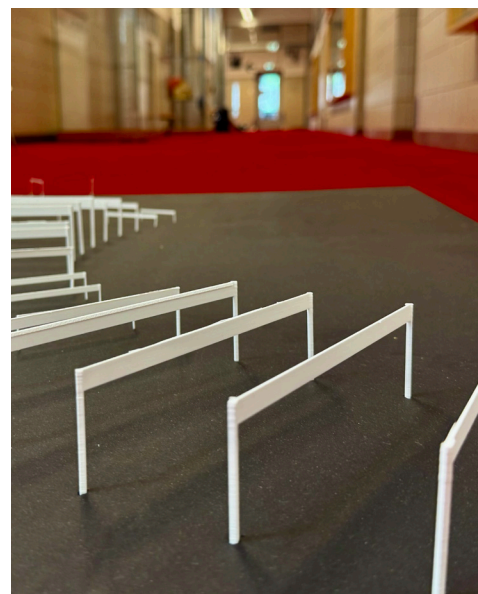
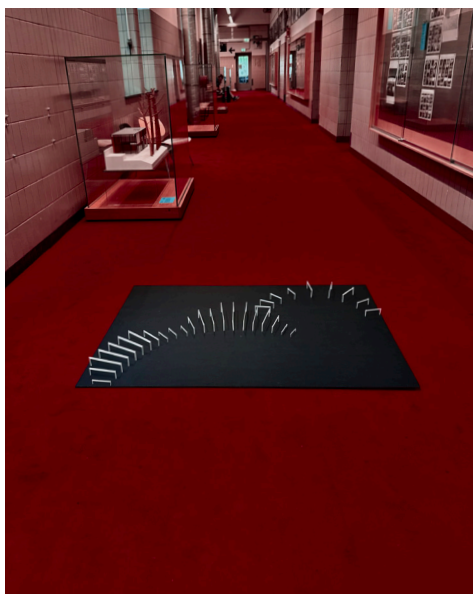


Figure 22. Model of the structure scale 1:100



Figure 23. Render of the interior space

### 3.2.5 Programme throughout the year: overlapping rhythms of use

Tourism development must balance visitor attraction with everyday village life. A study by Sweco shows that visitors evaluate Groningen more positively than non-visitors, suggesting that direct experience of the region can strengthen its image (Sweco, 2019). It therefore remains a challenge not only to attract people to the region, but also to provide a qualitative experience that aligns with Groningen's qualities of tranquillity, space, heritage, and landscape. At the same time, the increase in overnight visitors in Groningen signals that public facilities should support longer stays without displacing local daily routines (CBS, 2025).

#### Design move

The program is organised in hubs along a main route:

- Mobility hub and local showcase (orientation, information point, bicycle and boat rental)
- Collaboration hub (education, workshops, local initiatives)
- Social heart (café and restaurant)
- Public stage (auditorium and exhibition space)
- Waterfront axis connecting the active waterside and the hinterland
- Optional overnight cabins extending use into the night



Figure 24. Organization Public Building 1

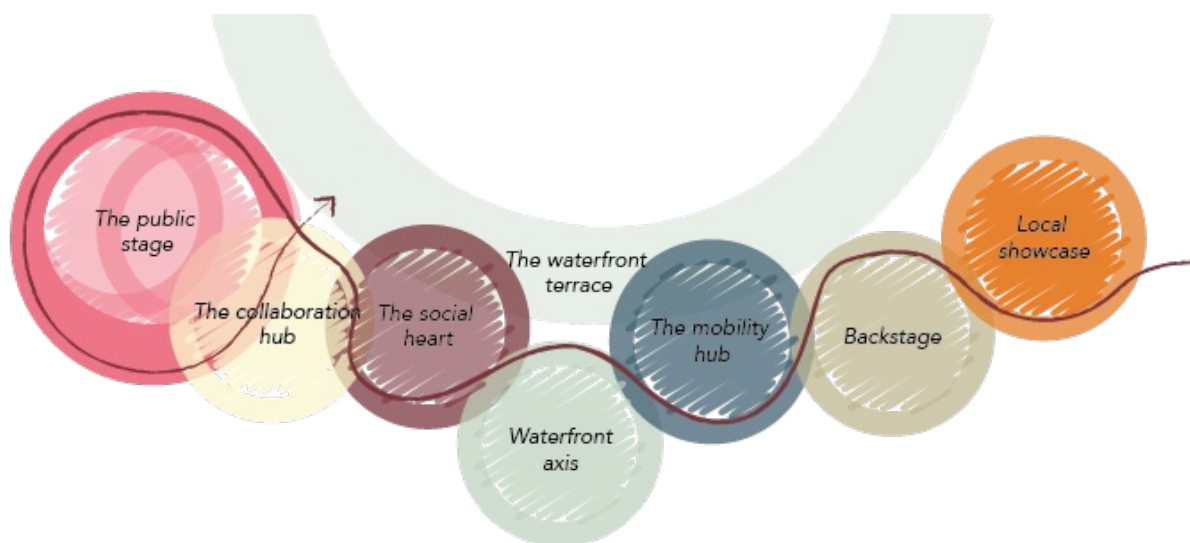


Figure 25. Organization Public Building 2

### Mechanism

Programmatic anchors act as attractors along the route, they provide a reason to stop. This aligns with Gehl's observation that activity attracts other people and strengthens staying when people can watch, meet, and pause (Gehl, 2011). At the same time, hybridity (a mix of functions) supports the emergence of overlapping rhythms: the same place can function as a hikers' stop in the morning and as a village evening venue later in the day.

The sensory experience of the building also changes with these rhythms. During rain, water is not hidden as a technical by-product, but made audible through the roof gutter and material detailing, see figure 26. Section during the rain. The sound of rainwater strengthens awareness of weather and makes the changing conditions of the landscape present within the building.

### Consequence

The building functions across daily rhythms:

- Morning: hikers, cyclist, route information and coffee
- Afternoon: workshops, exhibition, education and local use
- Evening: restaurant and cultural events
- Night: quiet darkness and overnight stay

In this way, the programme supports tourism without becoming separate from village life. Visitors are given reasons to stay longer, while residents gain public spaces that can be used throughout the day and across the year. The building therefore becomes not a seasonal tourist facility, but a shared public place where regional identity, everyday use, and landscape experience come together.

### Evidence

Activity attracts people (Gehl, 2011).  
Hybrid buildings research (Fernández Per, 2014)

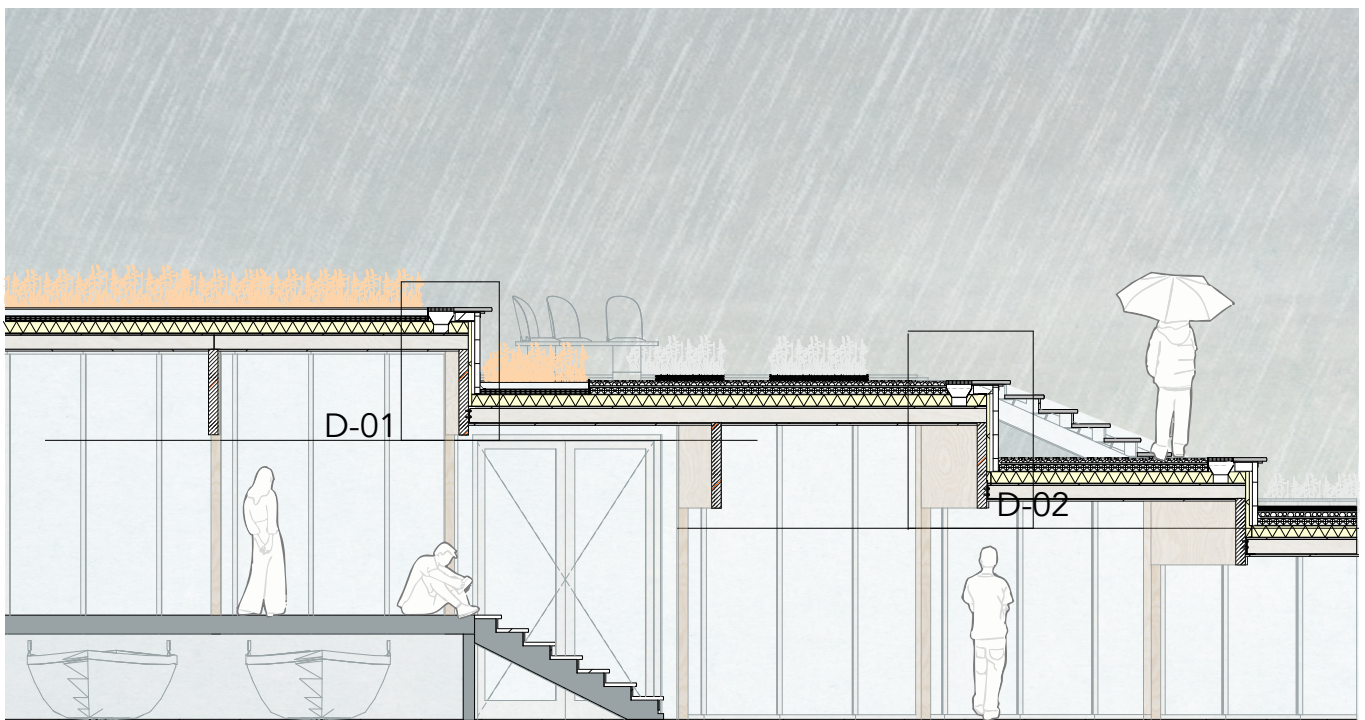


Figure 26. Section

### **3.3 Awakening the senses**

The concept of awakening the senses brings together the spatial strategies of the project. Rather than adding a new attraction to Winsum, the design intensifies the environmental qualities that are already present in the landscape: the horizon, water, wind, changing daylight, darkness, vegetation, and seasonal change. These rhythms shape how the place is perceived and form the basis for a slower and more attentive experience of the village.

Across the landscape scale, the building frames views towards the Winsumerdiep and the surrounding open landscape. Visitors become aware of changing weather conditions, reflections on the water, the movement of vegetation, and the openness of the horizon.

At the building scale, routes through the building, along the water, and across the roof landscape translate these conditions into a sequence of spatial experiences. Alternating moments of enclosure and openness, filtered daylight and views towards activity along the waterfront encourage visitors and residents to slow down, pause, and orient themselves within the landscape.

At the material scale, the façade and interior elements further mediate sensory perception. Wooden window frames, solar façade panels, surface textures, and material transitions at the roofscape shape the tactile atmosphere of the building.

The sound of rainwater, wind, movement along the quay, vegetation, and changing material conditions can further strengthen the experience of place. Through these sensory layers, architecture helps make the identity of Winsum more visible, tangible, and memorable.

## PART 4 | Conclusion and discussion

### Conclusion

This graduation project investigated how architecture can transform Winsum from a transit village into a destination where visitors and residents slow down, stay longer, and reconnect with the natural rhythms and sensory qualities of the landscape.

The project started from the observation that Winsum already contains landscape qualities, but that these qualities are not always clearly visible or consciously experienced. The village is shaped by its historic terp landscape, the Winsumerdiep, the Pieterpad and other slow-mobility networks, open horizons, darkness, silence, and seasonal rhythms. However, these conditions often remain in the background of everyday movement. As a result, Winsum is frequently passed through rather than experienced as a place of stay.

The design proposal, Re-awakening the senses, responds to this condition by proposing a hybrid public building that does not introduce an isolated new attraction, but intensifies the qualities that are already present. The building acts as a mediator between tourism and everyday village life, between movement and pause, and between the body and the surrounding landscape.

The transformation from passage to staying is achieved through three main strategies.

First, the design reorganises movement by creating multiple routes: through the building, along the water, over the roof landscape, and towards the waterfront. These routes do not form a single

efficient corridor, but create a sequence of choices, thresholds, level differences, framed views, and moments of pause. In this way, movement becomes slower, more conscious, and more connected to activity and landscape.

Second, the programme supports overlapping rhythms of use. Functions such as the mobility hub, café, workshop spaces, exhibition areas, auditorium, public quay, roof garden, and optional night cabins allow the building to be used by different groups at different moments of the day and year. It can function as a resting point for hikers, a place for local meetings and workshops, a cultural venue, a waterfront destination, and a quiet place to stay overnight. Tourism is therefore not treated as a separate layer, but becomes embedded within everyday village life.

Third, the design strengthens the sensory experience of Winsum's landscape. Framed views towards the water and horizon, filtered daylight, the rhythm of the timber structure, changing shadows, material tactility, the sound of rainwater, the public roof garden, and the relationship with darkness and silence make the existing qualities of the place more tangible. Water is no longer a background condition, but becomes part of movement, orientation, sound, reflection, and public life. Darkness is not seen as an absence, but as a landscape quality that can shape the atmosphere of the building at night.

Together, these strategies show that destination-making in a village context does not have to rely on spectacle or

iconic attraction. Instead, architecture can create a destination by making existing qualities more visible, accessible, and experiential. In Winsum, this means revealing the identity of the place through slow mobility, water, public life, materiality, darkness, and the natural rhythms of the northern Dutch landscape.

### **Implications**

The implications of this project are both local and transferable, directly relating back to the central research question of how architecture can transform Winsum from a place of passage into a destination for staying through sensory experience, slow mobility and public interaction. Rather than relying on iconic attractions or large-scale tourism infrastructure, the project demonstrates that existing landscape qualities, waterways, darkness, silence, heritage structures and seasonal rhythms can become the foundation for the public building when they are spatially intensified through architecture.

Locally, the project proposes a new narrative for Winsum within the broader context of post-gas Groningen. Instead of framing the region primarily through extraction and damage the design re-imagines Winsum as a place of slow leisure, local pride, shared use and landscape awareness.

The building acts as a spatial stage where residents and visitors participate in the same seasonal rhythms, making the local landscape, waterways, darkness, silence, heritage and social life visible as part of a renewed future identity. In this way, the project contributes to

the ambition of Re-Start the North: re-activation is understood not only as large-scale development, but also as the careful strengthening of existing spatial, cultural and sensory qualities.

The project remains modest in scale and rooted in the village context, but its ambition is regional: to show how public architecture can support the revitalisation of post-gas Groningen by creating places where people stay, meet, return and recognise the value of their own landscape.

The programme strengthens this ambition by supporting year-round use. Children, teenagers, adults, elderly residents, hikers, cyclists and overnight visitors each use the building in different ways and at different moments of the year, allowing tourism and everyday village life to overlap without depending only on seasonal peaks.

Beyond Winsum, the project suggests that other post-gas villages could be approached through a similar method. Instead of starting from the question of what new attraction should be added, the design process can begin by identifying existing systems: slow-mobility routes, water networks, heritage structures, landscape qualities, darkness, silence, local routines and seasonal patterns. These systems can then be translated into public programmes, spatial sequences and sensory experiences. The transferability of the project therefore lies not in copying the building itself, but in applying the approach: reading local rhythms, connecting them to everyday use, and using architecture to make them visible, accessible and shared.

This makes the project relevant not only for Winsum, but also for other villages dealing with questions of regional identity and tourism.

At the same time, the project raises critical questions. Tourism can strengthen local identity and facilities, but it can also risk turning village life into an experience for visitors. The design therefore tries to avoid a one-sided visitor perspective by embedding programmes for local residents and different age groups. A second tension concerns darkness and silence. Making these qualities accessible should not destroy them through excessive lighting, noise or over-programming. For this reason, the project works with low-intensity night

use, limited artificial lighting and careful positioning of the cabins, so that darkness remains a protected landscape quality rather than a consumable attraction.

### Reflection

The process of this graduation project developed through a dialogue between research and design. At the beginning of the project, my interest was mainly driven by experiences, especially the relationship between light, darkness, the future plan of the Reitdiep. Earlier design studies explored how a landscape could be structured by water and light and experienced through a route. Looking back, this was an important starting point.

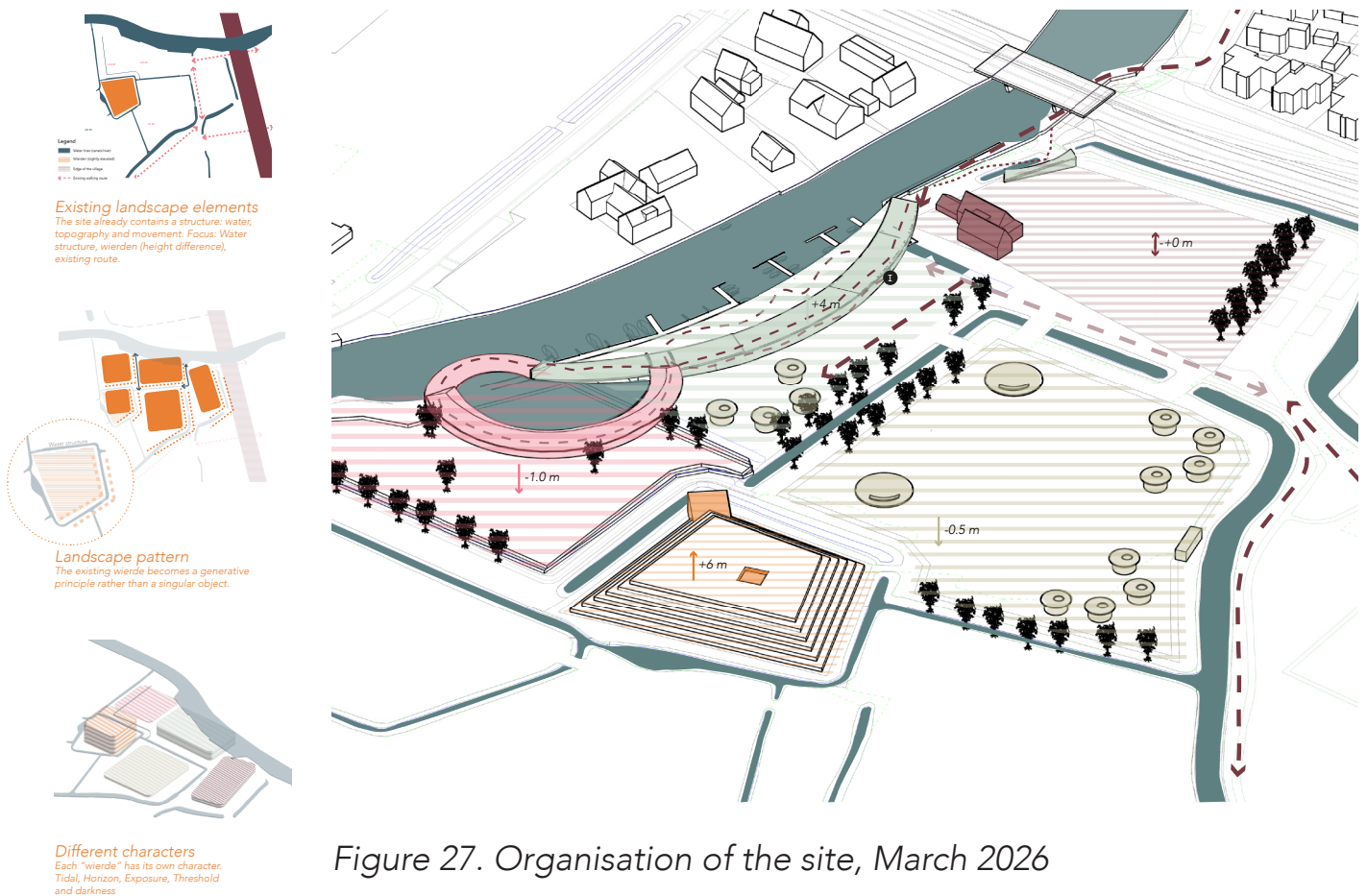
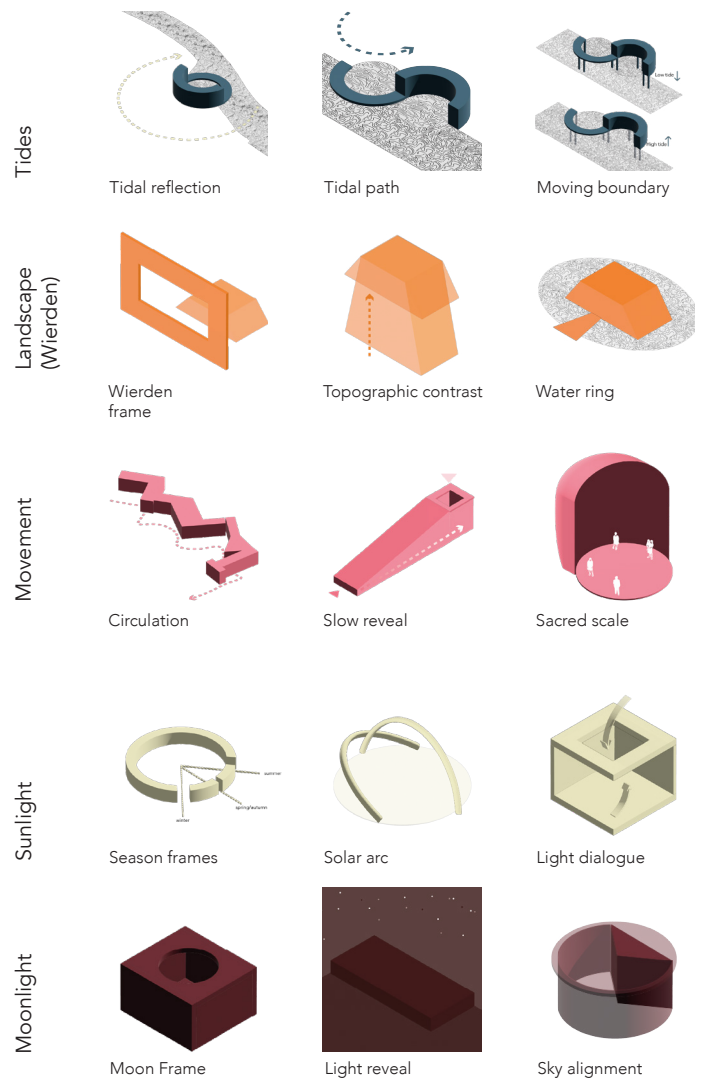


Figure 27. Organisation of the site, March 2026

## I. Landscape system



## II. Experience of light

light/darkness  
perception  
sky/observatory  
compression/openness

Through the research, this sensory interest gradually became connected to a broader question within the studio theme Re-Start the North. An important starting point was the comparative tourism research carried out during the group phase at the beginning of the process. This research helped me understand that Groningen does not necessarily lack landscape qualities, but that these qualities are less clearly translated into a recognisable recreational identity. Although this research was produced early in the project, it remained relevant in the background of my design process. The comparison with the Wadden Islands, Friesland and Drenthe showed that arrival, infrastructure and narrative are important in creating a stronger sense of place, and these themes continued to influence how I thought about Winsum as more than a place of passage.

Figure 28. Core elements, March 2026

**Problem – What's going wrong?**

	Waddenzee	Friesland	Drenthe	Groningen
<b>Natural Landscape (dunes, forests, polders, water)</b>	Large landscape with wide sandy beaches, meadows and salt marshes surrounding the islands, some forests, no polders surrounded by sea	Water rich polder land with many lakes. Pastures (not used for grazing) and forested areas (Oostvaardersplassen, Waddenzee) Sea coast with dunes and salt marshes	Forested province with heath on sandy soils, small scale cultural landscapes with villages and trees, no sea or beaches (only inland lakes)	Expansive flat landscape with polders and farmlands. Wadden coast with open salt marshes very little forest, a few lakes (e.g. Palswadden Meer, Oostvaardersplassen)
<b>Biodiversity &amp; Ecosystems (Boschduin, Dark Sky, moorland hiking)</b>	Unique ecosystem (Wadden Sea, UNESCO World Heritage) with millions of migratory birds and seal colonies. Moorland hiking is a signature activity. Dark Sky Park, De Bouschput (Terschelling) for stargazing.	Rich in meadow birds, 60% of Europe's black-bellied plover (breed here). National Parks like Afdel Fierren (great bog) and Lauwersmeer region, designated Dark Sky Park). Moorland hiking possible from the Fierren coast.	High ecological quality in forests and heathlands (strong view seaward). Core breeding area (Focheloboven).	Rich in birds in Lauwersmeer National Park (shared with Friesland). Large salt marsh and estuary nature in the Delfland. Rarely visited at the Wadden coast (e.g. Punt van Padden). Moorland hiking depends from Fierren (popular route to Rottumeroers).
<b>Recreational (inf)structure (cycling, tennis, accommodations)</b>	Established cycling and hiking network. Wide range of lodging (small island size. Sufficient campsite/bedrooms). Cars restricted on some islands (e.g. Vlieland/Schaarmonnikoog), bike rental common.	Diverse cycling and waterway network – ideal for biking and boating. Many campsites, marinas, and holiday homes around the lakes and historic barns. Good general facilities, with focus on water sports tourism in summer.	Extensive network of hiking and walking routes (Drenthe is known as the cycling province of NL). Many campsites, holiday parks, and B&Bs. Moorland but also quite diverse in villages and small towns, generally peaceful and low key.	Cycling network across the province (including Wadden coast and inland). Accommodations and restaurants mostly around the city of Groningen and tourist sites (e.g. Lauwersmeer, Drenthe), more limited elsewhere. A few marinas (Lauwersmeer) for water sports.
<b>Icons / Attractions</b>	UNESCO Wadden Sea (Bird falls), Binnemilieu (Terschelling), Moerlanthaling, seal watching. Cultural attractions like the Rural Festival (Terschelling), nature museum (Comen) (Terschelling).	Ethnohistorical historic towns linked by Benneke-koedijk route. Friese Laken (woolen parasites). UNESCO World Heritage (Steinwageningen station). Culture events: Midwinterfest, Herfsteppen.	Dobbers (D) prehistoric stone grass, largest (not larger) with water center). Patented long distance hiking trail runs through Drenthe. National Park (Drenthe) Friese Wold, De Oostvaardersplassen) attract nature lovers. Also known for TT Circuit (Assen) and Waddenzee (Zierikzee).	Seal Rescue Center (with Acropia International), base for moorland hiking). Fortified town. Fortification history site. Museum in Groningen city also Lauwersmeer National Park, and the vibrant student city of Groningen itself.
<b>Tourist Awareness / Image</b>	Highly popular within the Netherlands, among the visitor regions. Image positive, open, unspoiled nature and authenticity. Appeals to Dutch and German tourists.	Strong positive image as land of nature, culture, and water. Dialect identity through language and traditions, which strengthens tourist appeal. (De Friese Taal)	Strong brand as authentic, natural province. Very popular with domestic (Drenthe) tourists (second only to Limburg). Seen as a place of prehistoric history and serene countryside. Image evokes nature and heritage.	Relatively low on tourist radar. Visitors associated with questions, open spaces, and fresh air. Non-visitors often see Groningen as "the city", which creates both exclusivity and a psychological barrier.

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Figure 29. Comparative tourism research, analysing how Groningen's recreational identity differs from neighbouring regions. Group research, November 2025.

The research-by-design approach worked well because it allowed me to move continuously between analysis, drawing, modelling and reflection. The process was iterative, moving between research, references, drawing and testing.

The route studies helped me test how the building could connect the village, the Winsumerdiep, the landscape and the Pieterpad. Instead of placing an object on the site, the design began to work as a sequence: arrival, movement, pause, activity, view, water and return.

A second important shift was the development of the programme. At first, the programme was mainly organised as a list of functions, such as café, exhibition, mobility hub, workshop space and cabins. During the process, I realised that the programme needed to be understood as a system of hubs connected by circulation. Figures 30 and 31 were important because they showed how the building could orient users towards activity while still keeping a continuous public route and pedestrian waterfront.

At the same time, some parts of the process could have been stronger. I should have started earlier with three-dimensional modelling and testing. In the beginning, I found this step difficult and postponed it, while the project actually needed spatial and material testing to understand the relation between route, height differences, light and programme. When I finally started modelling more directly, it helped me make decisions faster and more clearly. For a next project, I would use physical and digital modelling earlier, not only

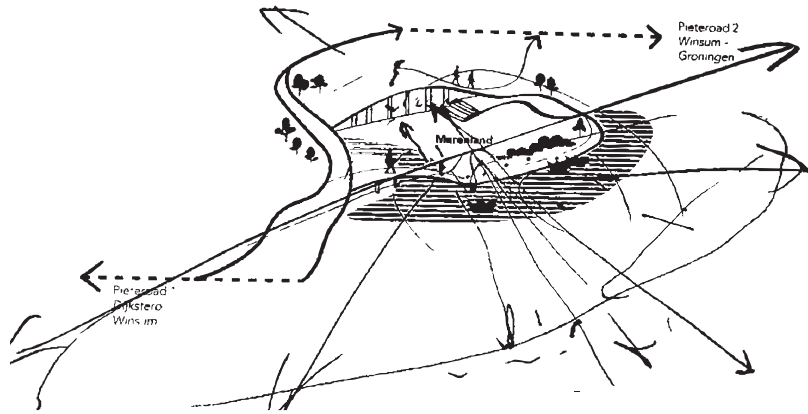


Figure 30. Sketch activity around the water, movement flows and sightlines, April 2026

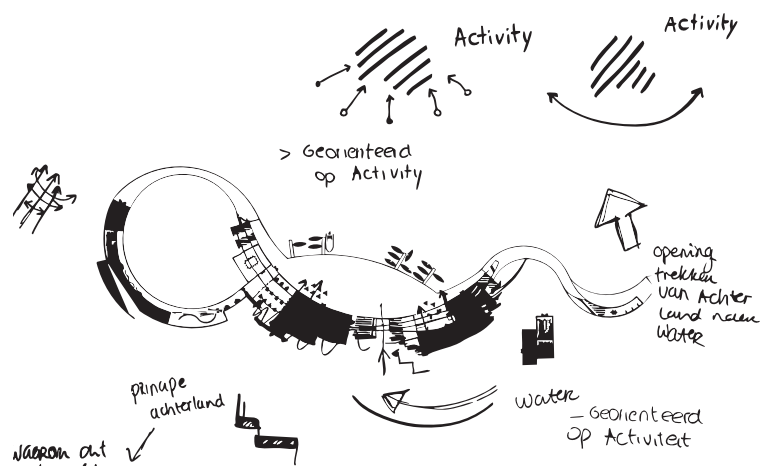


Figure 31. Programme and circulation sketch, testing how activity zones could orient towards the waterfront and follow the movement of the sun, April 2026



# Appendices

## Appendix 1

Groningen's tourist image is often perceived as modest and less distinctive by non-visitors. Research shows that people who have not visited the province tend to hold lower expectations of Groningen as a tourist destination, while visitors consistently report significantly more positive experiences (Sweco, 2019).

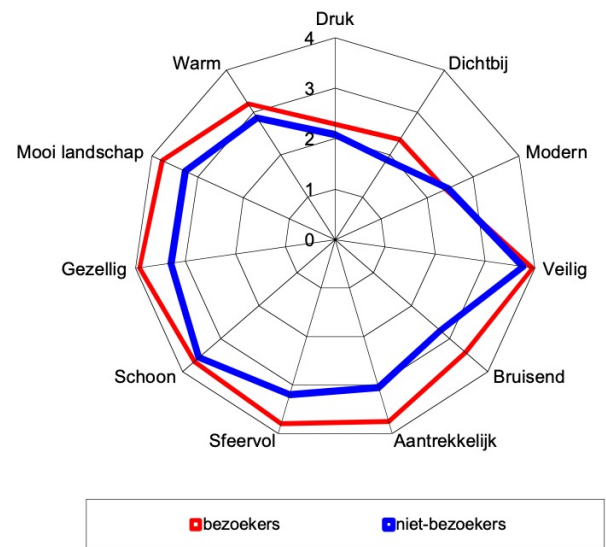


Figure 35. Groningen's tourist image, Sweco report

## Appendix 2

"Benches that provide a good view of surrounding activities are used more frequently than benches with little or no view of others." (Gehl, 2011).

Therefore, the activity of boats along the waterfront is intentionally positioned as part of the spatial sequence. The path runs between the water and the café, allowing visitors to observe the activity on the water. This arrangement encourages people to pause, watch, and stay longer. Diagram showing the path along the waterfront and the restaurant oriented toward the activity.

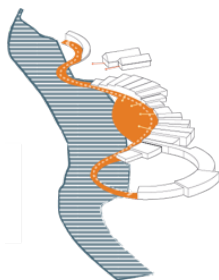


Figure 36. The path along the waterfront

# Appendices

## Appendix 3

Fragment from the provincial report (p. 59) indicating that both silence and darkness are identified as core landscape qualities of the Province of Groningen. These qualities are recognized as important environmental and spatial characteristics that should be protected and considered in spatial development and design decisions.

### Stiltegebieden

In onze dunbevolkte provincie is stilte een van de kernkarakteristieken (zie 5.3). Daarom beschermen we de stilte en verbeteren we deze waar het kan. De provincie kent drie stiltegebieden: (delen van) het Waddengebied, de oevers van het Schildmeer en het Lauwersmeergebied.

### Aandachtsgebieden voor Stilte en Duisternis

Daarnaast zijn er aandachtsgebieden voor stilte en duisternis: het zuidelijk deel van de gemeente Westervolde en het gebied rondom het Reitdiep in de driehoek Adorp – Winsum – Oldehove. We zorgen dat de (kwaliteit van de) stilte in deze gebieden behouden blijft. Samen met gemeenten verkennen we of uitbreiding van het areaal aan stiltegebieden wenselijk is. Daarbij zoeken we aansluiting bij gebieden waar al een behoorlijke mate van rust en ruimte aanwezig is zoals natuurgebieden. We benutten de kwaliteiten van stiltegebieden voor rustzoekende en natuurgerichte recreatie.

### Duisternis, lichthinder en lichtvervuiling

Duisternis is een belangrijke voorwaarde voor mens en dier om gezond te kunnen leven. Mensen en dieren kunnen lichthinder ervaren door één of meerdere lichtbronnen. Van lichtvervuiling is sprake als kunstlicht in de omgeving zich opstapelt. Lichtvervuiling en lichthinder ontwrichten de natuurlijke levenscyclus van mens en dier. Vermindering ervan draagt bij aan biodiversiteit, verbeteren van gezondheid, stimuleren van recreatie, ruimtelijke kwaliteit en energiebesparing. Wij zoeken zoveel mogelijk de verbinding met die thema's om onze doelen te behalen.

Duisternis is een andere kernkarakteristiek van de provincie Groningen. Daarom beschermen we de duisternis en vergroten we deze waar het kan. Op plekken waar sprake is van een hoge lichtemissie werken we aan het verminderen ervan, vooral in de twee aandachtsgebieden voor stilte en duisternis. Het Nationaal Park Lauwersmeer moet de speciale status 'International Dark Sky Park Lauwersmeer

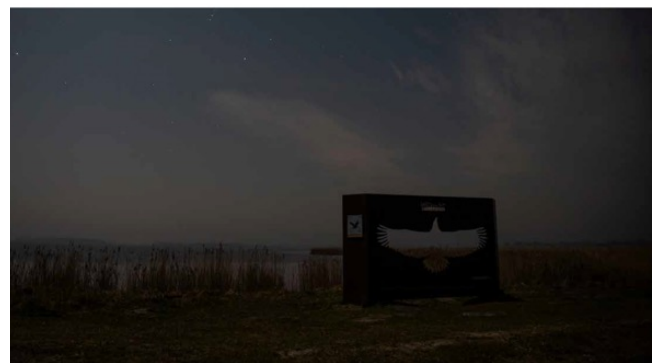


Figure 37. Provincial report (p.59) Province of Groningen

## Appendix 4

### User groups and seasonal use

User group	Main rhythm of use	Spring/summer	Autumn/winter	Relevant spaces
<b>Children</b>	Weekends, school holidays, afternoons	Outdoor play, roofgarden	Workshops, small exhibitions, indoor learning	Roof garden, workshop rooms, café, quay
<b>Teenagers</b>	After school, weekends, evenings	Informal meeting, events, waterfront use	Workshops, lectures, social use	Quay, public stage, workshop rooms, café, roof garden
<b>Adults (local residents)</b>	Daily use, lunch breaks, weekends	Café, local market, roof garden, walking routes, waterfront terrace	Local initiatives, exhibitions, meetings	Café, local showcase, roof garden, collaboration hub
<b>Elderly residents</b>	Weekdays, mornings, afternoons	Slow walking routes, sitting, observing water and landscape	Sheltered café use, exhibitions	Café, roof garden, seating areas, public route, waterfront view
<b>Hikers/cyclists</b>	Mainly spring, summer, early autumn	Arrival point, orientation, pause, route information, overnight stay	Limited but still possible for long-distance walkers	Mobility hub, local showcase, cabins, café
<b>Overnight visitors</b>	Seasonal peaks, weekends, holidays	Night cabins, sunset/sunrise experience, dark-sky landscape	Quiet retreat, darkness experience, landscape stay	Cabins, roof route, waterfront, café
<b>Local initiatives</b>	Throughout the year	Outdoor workshops, local events, markets	Indoor workshops, lectures, exhibitions, meetings	Collaboration hub, public stage, local showcase

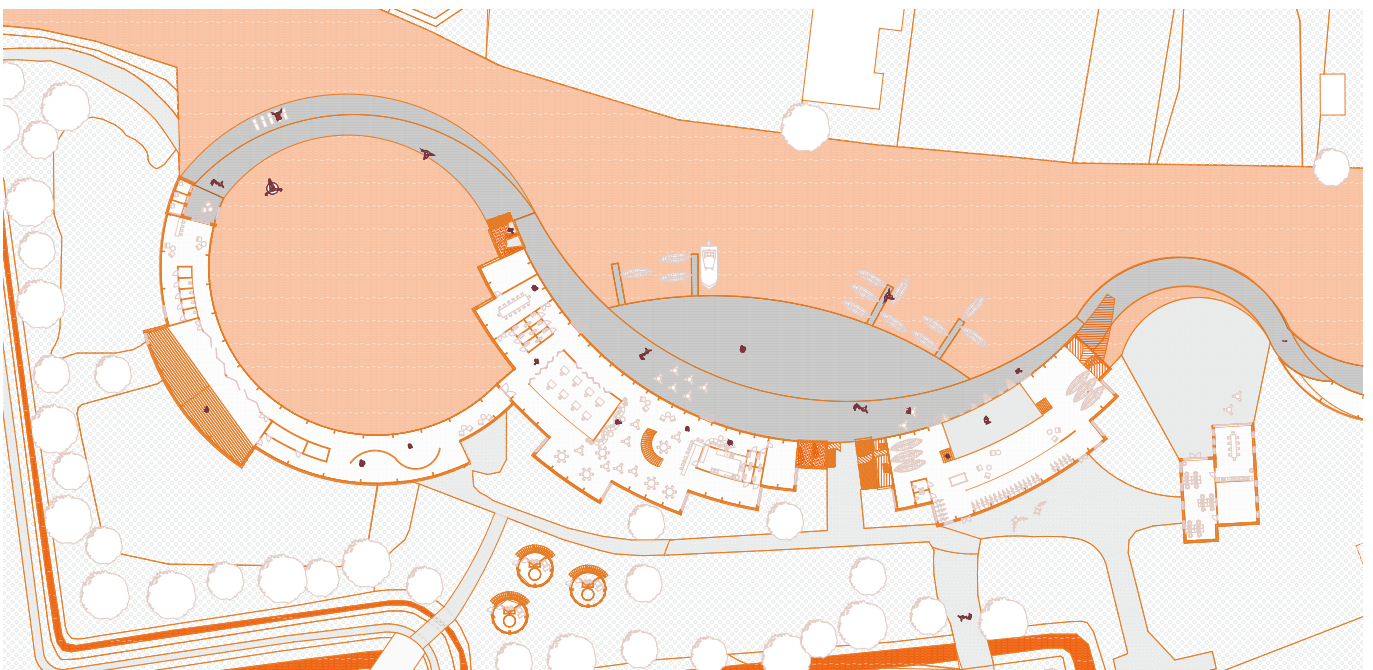


Figure 38. Floorplan public building

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# Graduation Report