[Re]formation of maritime dystopias

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"We are all utopians, so soon as we wish for something different."

Henri Lefebvre,1984, p.75

**Everyday life in the modern world (S. Rabinovitch, Trans.). Transaction Publishers. (Original work published 1968), p. 75.*

Contents

i. Introduction

The vast area of “Erfgoedlijn Maritieme Industrie” is full of remnants or still active maritime industrial sites. Today's perception is more of neglected and abandoned buildings, remainders of a vibrant industrial era, questioning their purpose and existence in the post-industrial era we are currently living in. The site in focus (fig. 1) is located in Sliedrecht and encompasses the industrial area surrounding the current Rotterdam Steel Works factory. The industrial site, which was previously a shipyard, was named in reference to the van Eijk family, who were the landowners and proprietors of the business, that now functions as his name declares with steel[1]. The industrial theme of the use of the site is still there, what about the vibrance of this space though? Industrial spaces were typically presented as utopian places[2], symbolizing progress and prosperity for the surrounding communities. However, it is pertinent to question whether these spaces truly embodied the utopian ideals they were purported to represent, and to define what it is that constitutes a utopian place. Furthermore, it is worth questioning why these spaces were defined as utopian and what impact this had on the people who owned them, worked in them or lived around them. Given their current appearance and utilization, the former shipyards are perceived more as dystopian sites, which is diametrically opposed to their initial objective. In conclusion, this research aims to elucidate the distinctive characteristics of the sites, thereby facilitating a harmonious adaptation to the prevailing circumstances, both current and future. To address the questions arising from the problematization of the meaning and characteristics of maritime industrial sites, the following research question was formulated.

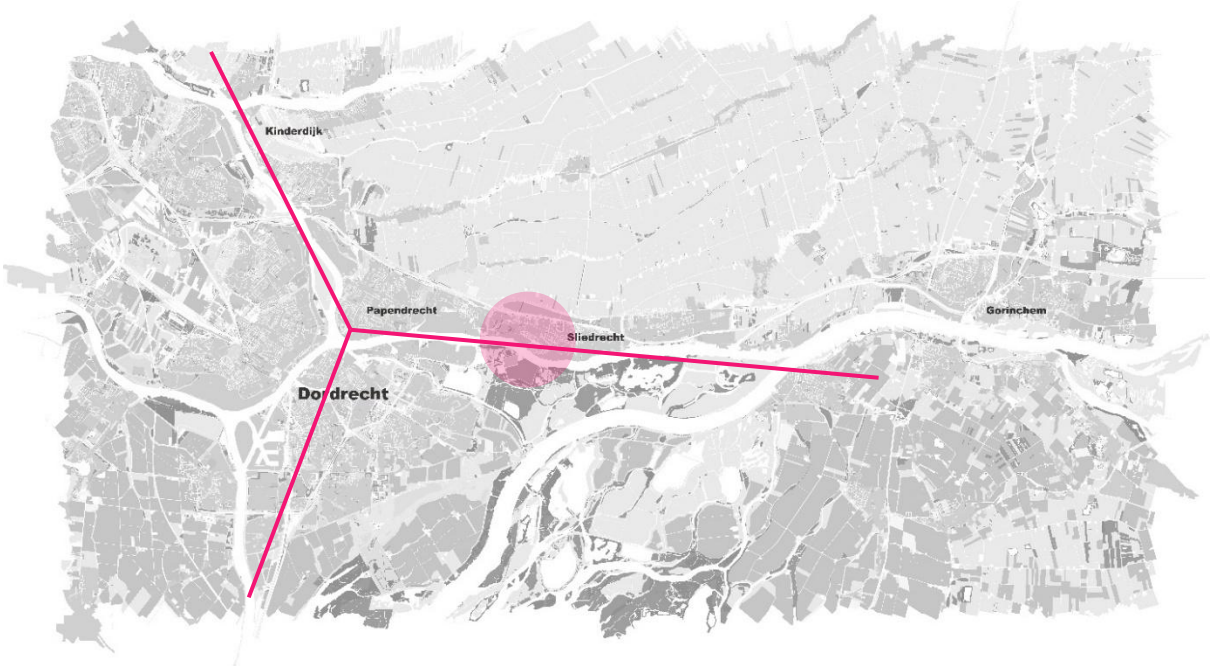


Fig. 1. Map of the area of interest (adapted from: CADMapper)

[1] The selected site will adopt the designation "former Van Eijk Shipyard."
[2] Zimmermann, 2013, pp. 235–262

R.Q.: How were the utopian / dystopian dualities manifested over the course of the former Van Eijk shipyard's lifetime and its epistemological sections, and how these dualities can be employed to re-form its appearance into a heritage-based transformation?

What were/are the main spatial characteristics (or dualities) of industrials sites / shipyards?

How can we describe / depict the connection of those sites to the society in the past and in the present?

How those sites altered the area near them? Was that a beneficial impact or maybe not?

Why it is important to re-form the maritime sites? How we will achieve this?

The concept of utopia versus dystopia, or better said the theme need to describe the world as such, is not something new in academical discussion. In between the two world wars, when the western civilization was in great need for reconstruction the Athens Charter[3] (1933) proposed by the CIAM group, presented the utopian model of the new world. That wide spread tactic of course raised many questions around its efficiency with the most well know the Italian architectural historian and theorist Manfredo Tafuri[4] to expressed his critical thinking about utopianism and the capacity of architecture to shape society, regardless of the requirements of capitalism. All this discussion around utopianism led to the need to often want dystopias to describe utopias and vice versa. Moreover, the concept of utopia is not alien to Dutch culture. Constant Nieuwenhuys presented his approach to utopian design and lifestyle in his project New Babylon. His work may not have been perceived as utopian by everyone, but it did raise the question of what utopia/dystopia looks like. Thus, it made me think that utopia is not subjective but deeply connected to our feelings. Nevertheless, the desire to create utopias persists. The article "Spaces of Utopia and Dystopia: Landscaping the Contemporary City" by Gordon MacLeod and Kevin Ward[5] provides an in-depth examination of the intertwined concepts of utopia and dystopia. The text describes utopian and dystopian places in contemporary cities. Utopias are characterized by a controlled and exclusive environment, with a strong emphasis on fortification and purification. In contrast, dystopias are often associated with low-income communities, and which are perceived as being isolated, dark, and abandoned, with a high presence of decay. It is worthy of note that in that article the former industrial spaces are frequently perceived as dystopian in the concept of contemporary city (p.154).

The zoning policies that were previously implemented with the intention of creating an ideal cityscape have now been shown to result in the formation of two distinct types of urban environments. However, it should be noted that one individual's perception of a utopia might be regarded as a dystopia by another. The previous essay suggests that fortified and exclusive areas may ultimately restrict individual freedom of expression. In contrast, in an abandoned, dark building, coexistence flourishes along with a sense of inclusivity. It is evident that the term 'utopia' possesses a dual meaning, at times connoting a positive concept and at other times a negative one. Similarly, the concept of industry is also sometimes regarded as a positive entity and at other

[3] Le Corbusier, 1973

[4] Tafuri, M., & La Penta, B. L., 1976

[5] MacLeod, G., & Ward, K., 2002

times as a negative one. It is my considered opinion that for a society to flourish, a certain degree of both is necessary achieving a harmonious equilibrium. Although the theme of utopia/dystopia is relatively broad and eternal, it can be clarified through different research themes. In this study, the spatial parameter of these themes is selected through the most essential dualities, based on the archetypal duality of utopia/dystopia, which will be depicted mainly in sectional drawings close to the urban fabric in the design area of the former Van Eijk shipyard. Since several dystopias or utopias can exist on this site, depending on their typology (rural, industrial, architectural, etc.), the chosen focus on the spatial character of these aims to achieve a combination of different types, emphasizing the importance of space rather than the type of utopia/dystopia.

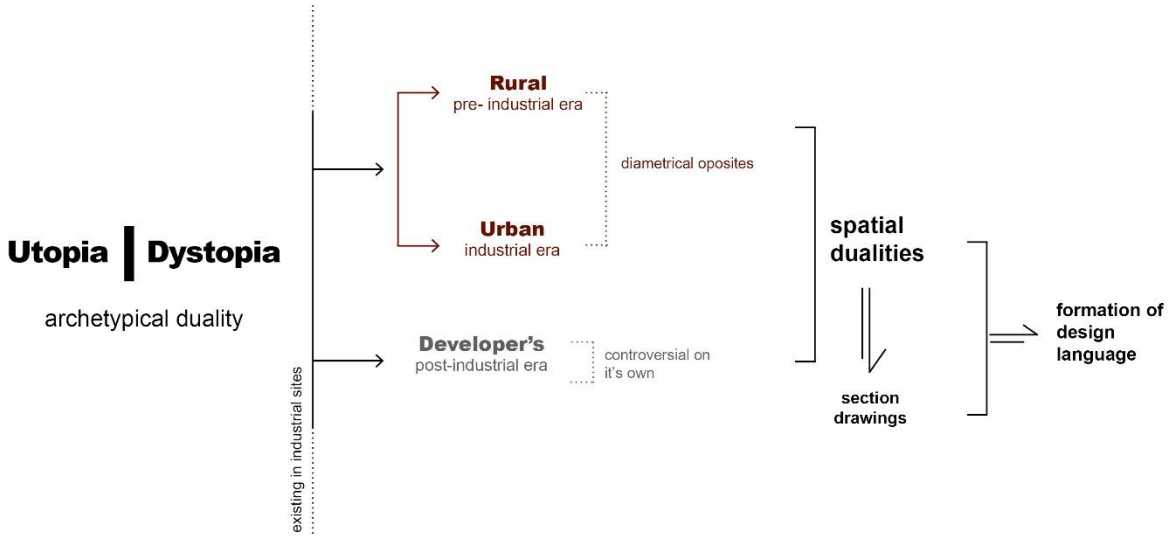


Fig. 2. The first method diagram made by the author to explain the steps that will follow

ii. Chapter 1. The creation of the method

The initial stage of the research was to create a value assessment matrix to comprehend the values that occurred in various scales (from site to the materials), their significance and how they had been altered. To accomplish this, the matrix proposed in the book *Design from Heritage*[6] by Professors Wessel de Jonge and Marieke Kuipers was utilized. This book contains a comprehensive explanation in Chapter 4 of the theories of Stewart Brand and Alois Reigl that were amalgamated to achieve a fairly objective value assessment. The explanation for the values occurred is based on the work of Ana Tarrafa Silva and Ana Pereira Roders, who presented a precise and easily comprehensible definition of the values in their conference paper *Cultural Heritage Management and Heritage (Impact) Assessments*[7] *(p.p. 375-382)*. The examination of both positive and negative values was undertaken, and the principal outcome of this preliminary analysis indicated a strong correlation of water with the former shipyard, now disappeared due to the construction of the dyke, the connection that existed through the years of the shipyard and the community constructed around it, and finally, the shipyard itself and the layers of time (with all the alterations it underwent) during its existence (fig. 5). While these outcomes are of paramount importance and validity for the site, they remain overly generalized and necessitate further thorough examination. Most importantly the theme of utopia and dystopia couldn't be clearly identified and be presented in that matrix which led me to the need of creation of a new way to assess the values taking into account that approach.

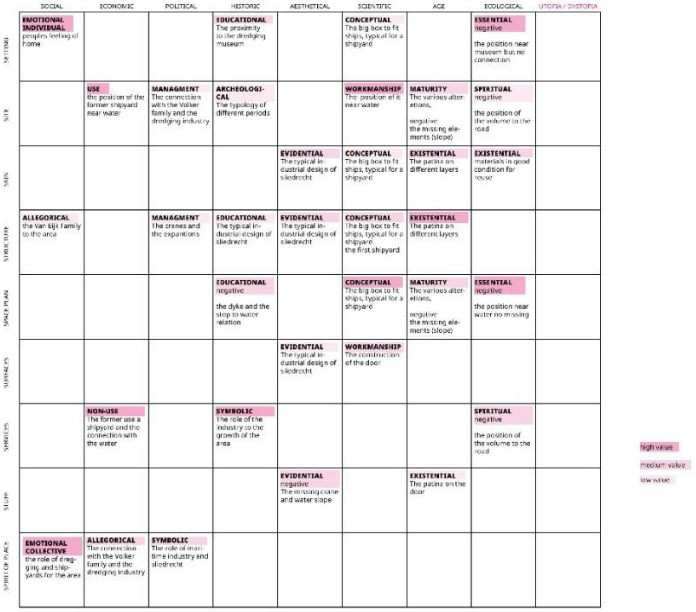


Fig. 3. Value assessment matrix based on the template given in the book Design from Heritage by Professor Wessel de Jonge and Professor Marieke Kuipers with the values' explanation from the conference paper Cultural Heritage Management and Heritage (Impact) Assessments by Ana Tarrafa Silva and Ana Pereira Roders.

[6] Kuipers, M.C., de Jonge, W., 2017

[7] Pereira, Roders, A., Taraffa, Silva, A., 2012

In light of the necessity to achieve a more precise outcome for the site, it was essential to utilize the dualities theory presented, which is based on the archetypal duality of utopia/dystopia, in the reading and translation of the space. This method demands the thorough examination of drawings and photographs from several time periods in order to extract the pair of dualities. The approach adopted entailed the identification of distinctive feelings, characteristics, atmospheres or facts, leading to the creation of a comprehensive list. However, the key point of this research was not simply to reveal the changes that have occurred. The aim was to try to extract the most astonishing spatial element that is revealed at its identical moment within the time-lapse of the shipyard, and to pair it with a moment where this feature is no longer as vibrant or it is presented with a negative impact (diametrically changed) by illustrating the spatial feature again. This would allow us to create the spatial duality based on utopia and dystopia. So, it was more than necessary to first conduct a timeline (fig. 4) where it was documented the occurrence of epistemological sections at specific points in time. The term 'epistemological section' is used to denote a precise moment, period or year in which an event resulted in a significant change to the site, and these sections are characterized by a combination of industrial growth and architectural alterations. After that it was more than obvious the pairs of dualities with the most utopic and the most dystopic moment. This approach confers a degree of flexibility and innovation, enabling a comparative analysis of the most analogous elements from the former Van Eijk shipyard. Through this process, it is possible to determine the value of preserving, reviving or discarding elements, with the overarching objective being the enhancement of heritage and the creation of a harmonious design.

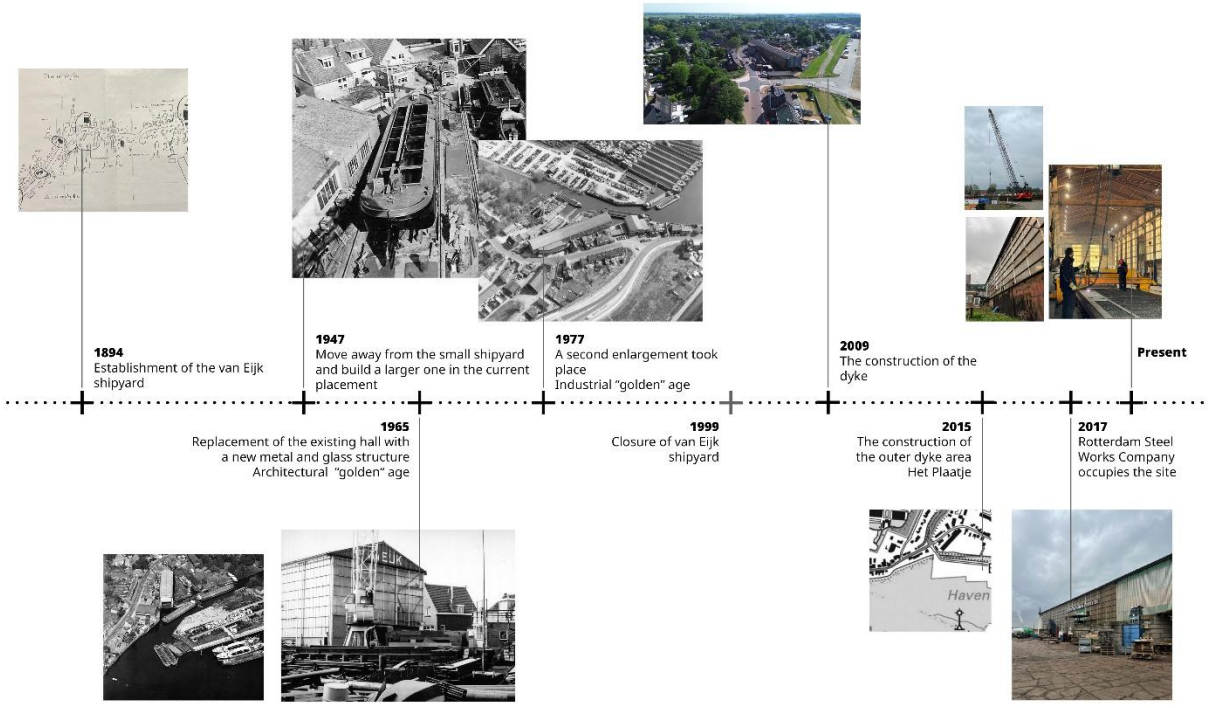
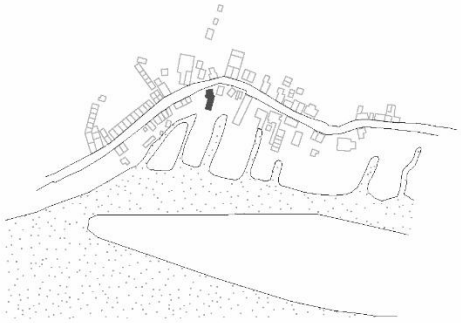
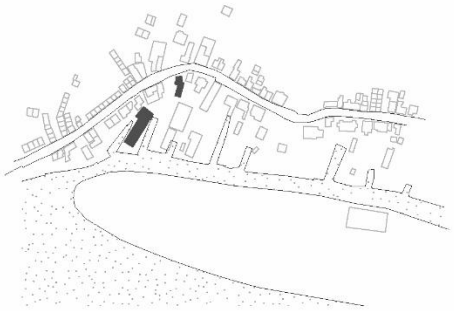


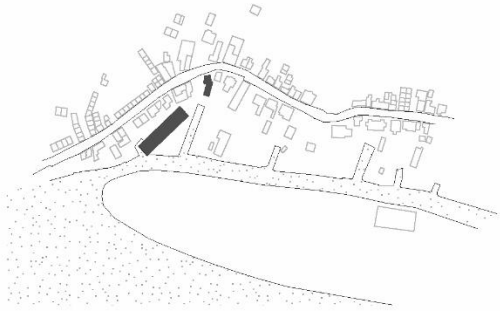
Fig. 4. Timeline with a collection of maps and photos collected from the Historische Vereniging Sliedrecht, the website Topotijdreis, the personal archive of Mr. Van Rees, W. and van Eijk family, and the author.



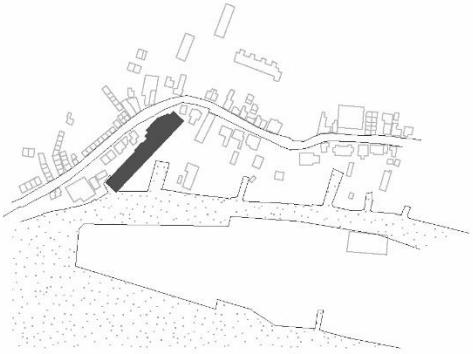
The initial shipyard's placement, organic relation of water and land **1894**



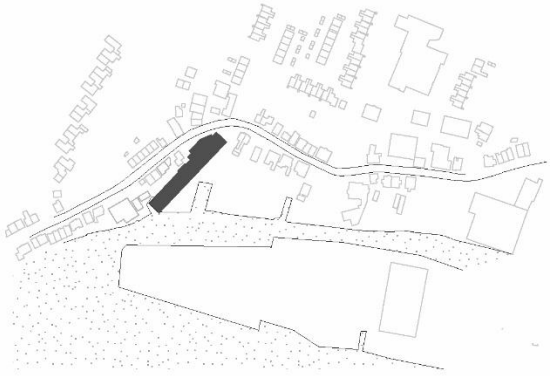
The growing of the shipyard, still quite organic relation of water and land **1947**



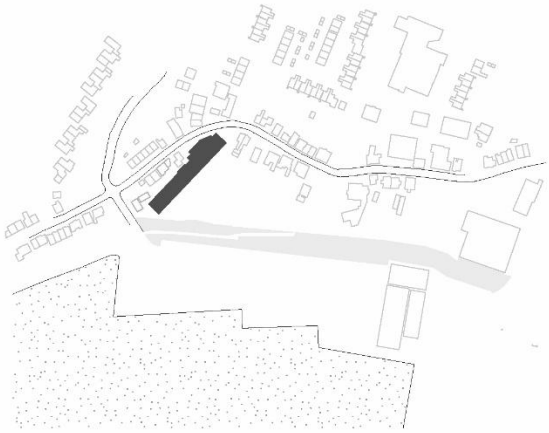
The consttruction of the modern shipyard, reformation to the water- land relation **1965**



The extension of the shipyard, greater alteration to the water-land relation **1977**



The closing of the shipyard, nothing chaged to the water-land relation **2000**

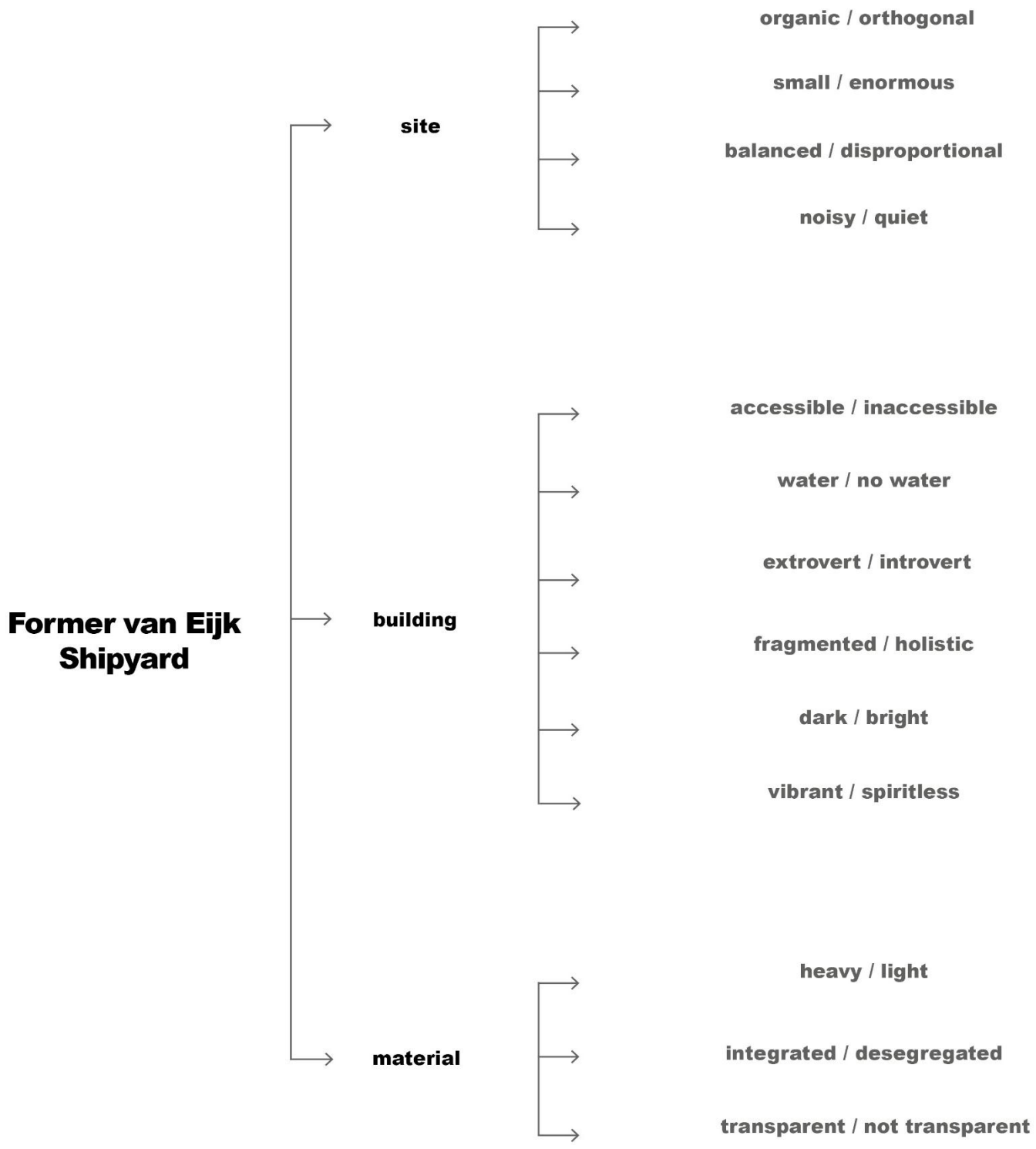


The construction of the dyke in 2009 and the new platform created the biggest disruption to the relation water - land - shipyard **2024**

Fig. 5. Gradual transformation of the relationship of the triptych former van Eijk shipyard – water – land and the surrounding area.

As mentioned before, the acquisition of information and the revelation of dualities pairs was facilitated through the implementation of visual aids, namely drawings and photographs. Following this primary classification, I employed a secondary classification to enhance the accuracy of the final products. It was observed that not all duality pairs were compatible with all the various scales present in the area. Evidently those alterations occurred during the analysis, particularly in the epistemological section, which pertains to different layers. Some alterations were more perceptible in the site scale and its relationship with the surrounding area, offering insights into the relationship between industry and society. Other alterations occurred in building size or material aspects, creating a wide variety of changes. In light of these observations, I deemed it appropriate to extend the pairing of dualities beyond, and to categorize them according to the observed scale. This approach was found to be particularly beneficial in the subsequent design stage, as it enabled us to justify the subsequent design choices. To further emphasize this point, I employed section drawings and sketches, along with notes on photographs, to enhance the depth and clarity of the analysis. The aforementioned elements are collectively presented in the following diagram as the primary outcome of the research conducted in this area (fig. 6).

Fig. 6. The initial categorization of dualities was undertaken in the vicinity of the former van Eijk shipyard.

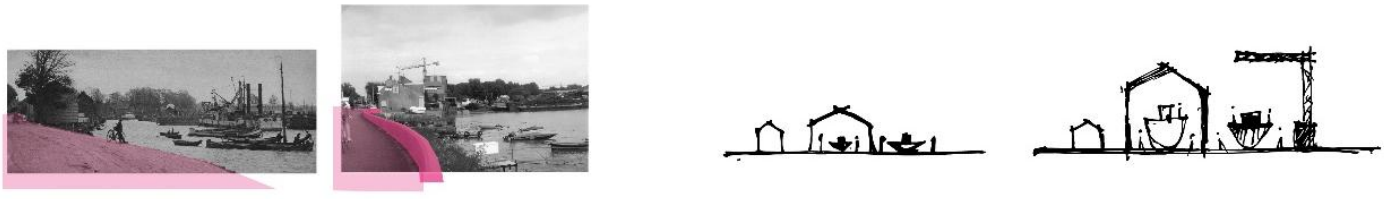

Former van Eijk Shipyard
site
organic / orthogonal
small / enormous
balanced / disproportional
noisy / quiet
building
accessible / inaccessible
water / no water
extrovert / introvert
fragmented / holistic
dark / bright
vibrant / spiritless
material
heavy / light
integrated / desegregated
transparent / not transparent

iii. Chapter 2. Dualities and Classification

As previously stated, numerous duality pairs can be defined and presented; however, only the most distinguished of these have been selected based on their heritage value and primary value assessment (fig. 5). In the subsequent text, these pairs will be presented, with a focus on the distinctive characteristics that led to their selection. In a similar vein, they are to be elucidated in accordance with the scale to which each refers. It is important to note that these pairs can be applied to other scales and that they have had an influential effect on other scales, but that they are most readily identifiable in the scale under discussion.

The analysis revealed four dualities that were most distinguished and prominent for the “site” scale category (fig. 7). The placement of the first shipyard exhibited a more organic relationship between the land and the surrounding environment, with the land meeting the water in a natural manner. The roads were not yet formed, and the structures were constructed with natural materials and had a design that was adaptable to water flooding, presenting a rural setting. Conversely, in 1990, the roads and structures were well-defined and man-made, creating a highly structured appearance in relation to the water and the natural environment. The second pair pertain to the size of the industrial settlement. In 1920, the industrial site was small, meeting the needs of the industry. In 1965, however, the industrial site underwent its first significant expansion, driven by rapidly growing demands. A larger, single-volume structure superseded the preexisting volumes, surpassing the height of the previous structure and extending over a greater length. This augmentation was necessitated by the industry's growing demand and its evolving relationship with the dredging sector. Again in 1965, the site and the surrounding area exhibited a balanced image, with a harmonious equilibrium of green and industrial settings. However, in the current conditions, the industrial presence seems to dominate, underscoring its significance. Moreover, in 1965 the site experienced a significant increase in noise levels, indicating that the industry was operating at full capacity. A substantial amount of work occurred in the external spaces of the shipyard, creating an active exterior environment. The contemporary perception of the site is diametrically opposed to this, with the site now characterized by a sense of tranquility and the execution of all heavy-duty operations taking place either within the confines of the building or at the extremities of the industrial platform, beyond the dyke.

Fig. 7. The category “site” of dualities occurred in various epistemological sections.



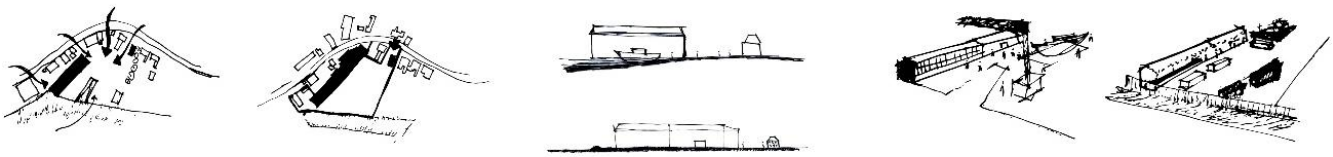
organic / orthogonal
1920 organic formulation of land /
1990 & 2020 structured formulation of land

small / enormous
1920 small scale Industry /
1965 big scale industry

balanced / disproportional
1965 equal amount of green and industry /
2024 industrial character predominates over green

noisy / quiet
1965 the industry was very busy and super noisy because a lot of work happened outside /
2024 the industrial uses happen inside so its not so noisy

At the "building" scale, an additional six dualities were identified. Initially, the accessibility of the building—meaning the ways one could approach the industrial setting—was a revolutionary aspect of 1965. This was because the site was open to the public, allowing anyone to enter. This openness was further reinforced by the fact that shipyard workers occupied the surrounding houses, strengthening the building's connection with the community. However, this relationship changed significantly after the site's closure and its transition to its current state. Today, the building is accessible only from one side, with the entire complex enclosed by fences (fig. 8a). The shipyard's proximity to the water was particularly significant in 1965. This was the first time two slopes were constructed—one in the external space and another inside the building—creating a direct connection between the shipyard and the water. However, the construction of a new dyke in 2009 altered this relationship, causing the water to recede several meters from the building (fig. 8b). The year 1965 was a defining period for the shipyard, marked by industrial growth and increasing demand for its services. This expansion required large machinery and a substantial crane on the building's exterior, giving the structure an outwardly oriented character. Today, however, the exterior space is used for material storage, the cranes have been removed, and the building's interior is more extensively utilized, resulting in a more introverted appearance (fig. 8c).



accessible / inaccessible
1965 the entrance to the shipyard was initially on the other side and open to everyone /
2024 slightly modified entrance and fencing to the area

water / no water
1977 immediate connection to water, water is available to industry /
2015 remote connection to water

extrovert / introvert
1965 extrovert, the life is collected in the yard /
2024 introvert, the life is collected in the inside of the factory

Fig. 8a - c. The category "building" of dualities occurred in various epistemological sections.

In the early stages of the industry, in 1910, the shipyard appeared more fragmented, with two separate buildings resembling warehouses. Over the years, the site evolved, and by 1947, the buildings were positioned closer together. However, the materials used in their construction remained substandard, leading to poor working conditions. The buildings were constructed similarly to residential settlements, with a few additional windows, but these modifications were insufficient to resolve the fundamental issues. Low-rise structures and a lack of natural light contributed to an unfavorable work environment. By 1965, the industry had experienced

substantial growth, influencing the shipyard's architectural appearance. A colossal metal structure, sheathed in glass, was built, giving the industry a unified and modern presence while significantly improving working conditions. The glass-covered walls allowed ample natural light to enter, creating a distinctive visual identity (fig. 8d & e). This year marked a pivotal moment in the architectural evolution of the shipyard, introducing bold new features that would define its appearance for decades. However, the most significant transformation from an industrial perspective occurred in 1977, when the shipyard expanded into a complex of buildings rather than the single hall that remains active today (fig. 8g).

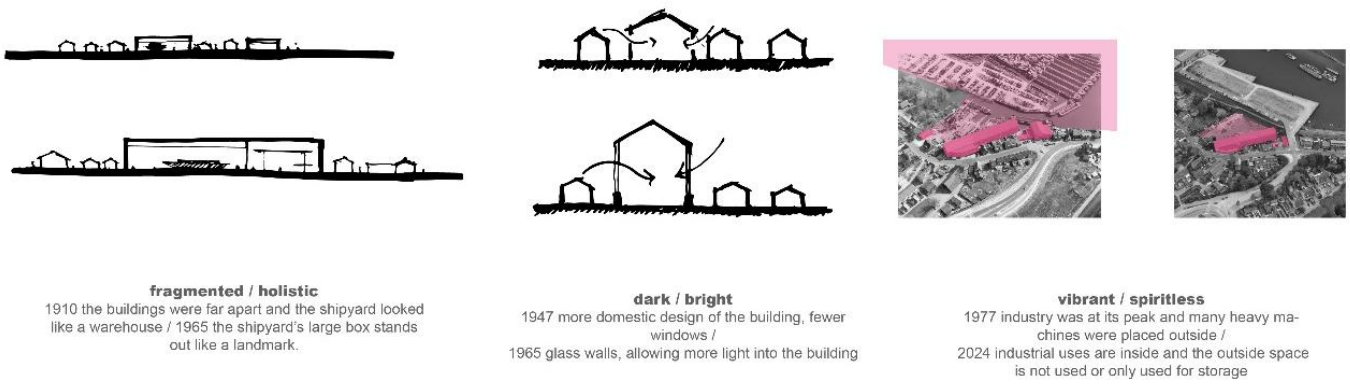


Fig. 8d - g. The category "building" of dualities occurred in various epistemological sections.

The final category encompasses a detailed examination of the architectural structure, herein referred to as the "material", which employs a smaller-scale approach (fig. 9). Within this category, there are only three dualities, yet they are of paramount importance. The primary focus of this category is the examination of the construction materials utilized by the shipyard throughout its operational lifespan. The initial shipyard was constructed using wooden plates, while the second was primarily brickwork with small openings, a technique also employed in the surrounding residential buildings, thereby creating minimal contrast. This transition occurred in 1947 and persisted until a significant transformation in 1965. The initial structure was demolished, and a steel and glass construction took its place. Concrete was used for the base, with brickwork employed to cover part of the walls. The transition to steel and glass resulted in an airy ambience within the shipyard, effectively creating a monumental transparent landmark that symbolized innovation. The third and final pair of dualities pertains to the transparency of the structure, and this time, a different pair of epistemological sections will be compared. In 1977, the second and final extension of the shipyard took place. The construction of this phase incorporated steel as a primary structural element, complemented by the use of plastic sheeting for external cladding. These plastic sheets, while exhibiting a degree of opacity, nevertheless facilitated enhanced visibility of the shipyard, thereby fostering a stronger connection with the local community. However, the current state of disrepair, characterized by the accumulation of dirt and grime on glass and plastic surfaces, has significantly diminished the transparency of the space, thereby compromising its aesthetic appeal and functionality.

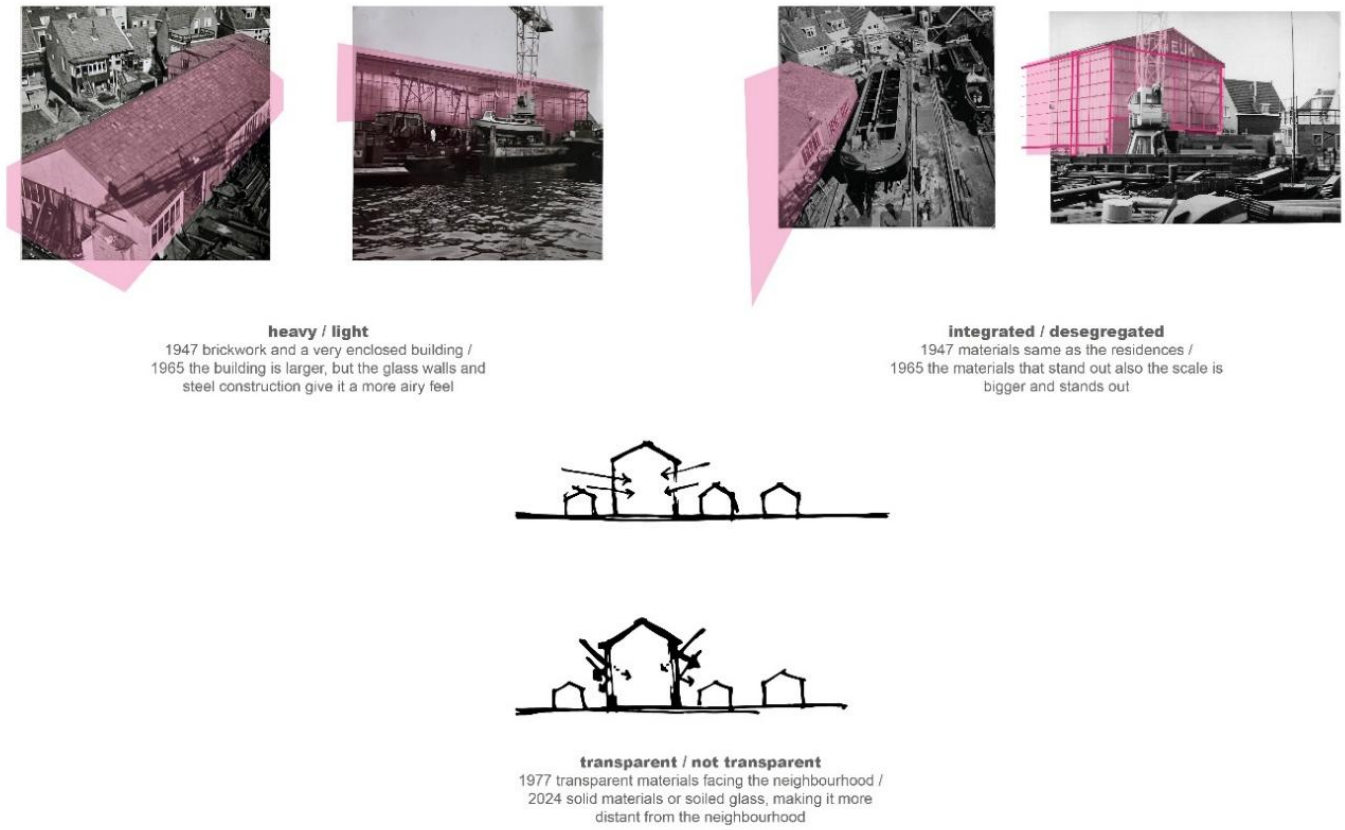


Fig. 9. The category “material” of dualities occurred in various epistemological sections.

But which part of the dualities is utopian and which is dystopian? If we try to identify utopias only from a spatial perspective, for the “site” scale the utopian qualities are: organic, enormous, balanced and tranquil. For the “building” scale they are: accessible, water-related, extroverted, holistic, bright and vibrant, and for the “material” scale they are: light, desegregated and transparent. The interesting thing is that although these are perceived as utopian features, some of them don't exist anymore, or even if they do, they don't fit in with the proposed ideal uses for the site. And even more different users or stakeholders may have a different opinion based on their experience of the space. As we mentioned before, 1965 was undeniably an architectural utopia, while 1977 was an industrial one, which means that things have changed according to this gnomon and so on.

iv. Chapter 3. Translation into design

Having a clear view of what the pairs are and why they gather as such, it is time to take this new method to its final step and use it as the creation of a design language based on the revealed heritage values. The duality of utopia and dystopia is often mentioned, although the aim of this method is not to produce a utopian or dystopian place, but rather to create harmony through the design choices. Thus, according to the proposed uses for the site, some were chosen to be revived, while others were chosen to be forgotten (fig. 10). The next stage is to select one design element from each pair to create a design language for the site. This design language is intended to underpin the design choices made and serve as a source of inspiration at different scales. The utility of these features extends beyond the design scale, providing a multi-faceted approach to design (fig. 11).

The essence of these elements is far more important than simply replicating their initial appearance. In this particular case, a combination of elements was used to formulate the design proposal. The most important element in enhancing the heritage value of the final design was the reconnection with the water. To this end, the proposal includes the placement of substantial structures, reminiscent of the dimensions and overall appearance of the shipyards, close to the water area beyond the dyke. This will create a comprehensive perspective of the site, reinforcing its industrial character. The intention is to replace the former noisy and vibrant character of the site with an increase in public uses, an expansion of the dredging museum, and the creation of links between piers, platforms, and paths. The central area of the site will feature an experience park with a 1:1 scale ship exhibition and various maritime and dredging machinery displays, emphasizing the extroverted character of the site and creating an active core. The accessibility of the area is a distinctive feature of the site, closely linked to its heritage values, and therefore more entrances to the site are proposed at different locations related to each use. The entrances have been carefully designed to embody transparency and ensure their immediate recognition. The character of the entrances is aimed at revitalizing the brightness of the complex, a quality that will be manifested through the choice of building materials. Finally, it is important to note the two key design features that deal with the balance between green and industrial elements. This balance will be achieved by using a combination of orthogonal and organic designs to create the final result.

Eventually, it should be noted that these pairs and their classification are primarily used for design inspiration in the master plan. However, they can be used as a guide for all design stages, from the general zoning plans to the selection of materials. This method works as a value assessment and the result reinforces the final design choices as mentioned above. Therefore, the use of the selected characteristics is more than necessary also for other scales. This method gives a good idea of the values of the place, creating space for more thoughts about the design of the area and connecting heritage aspects of different layers into several scales.

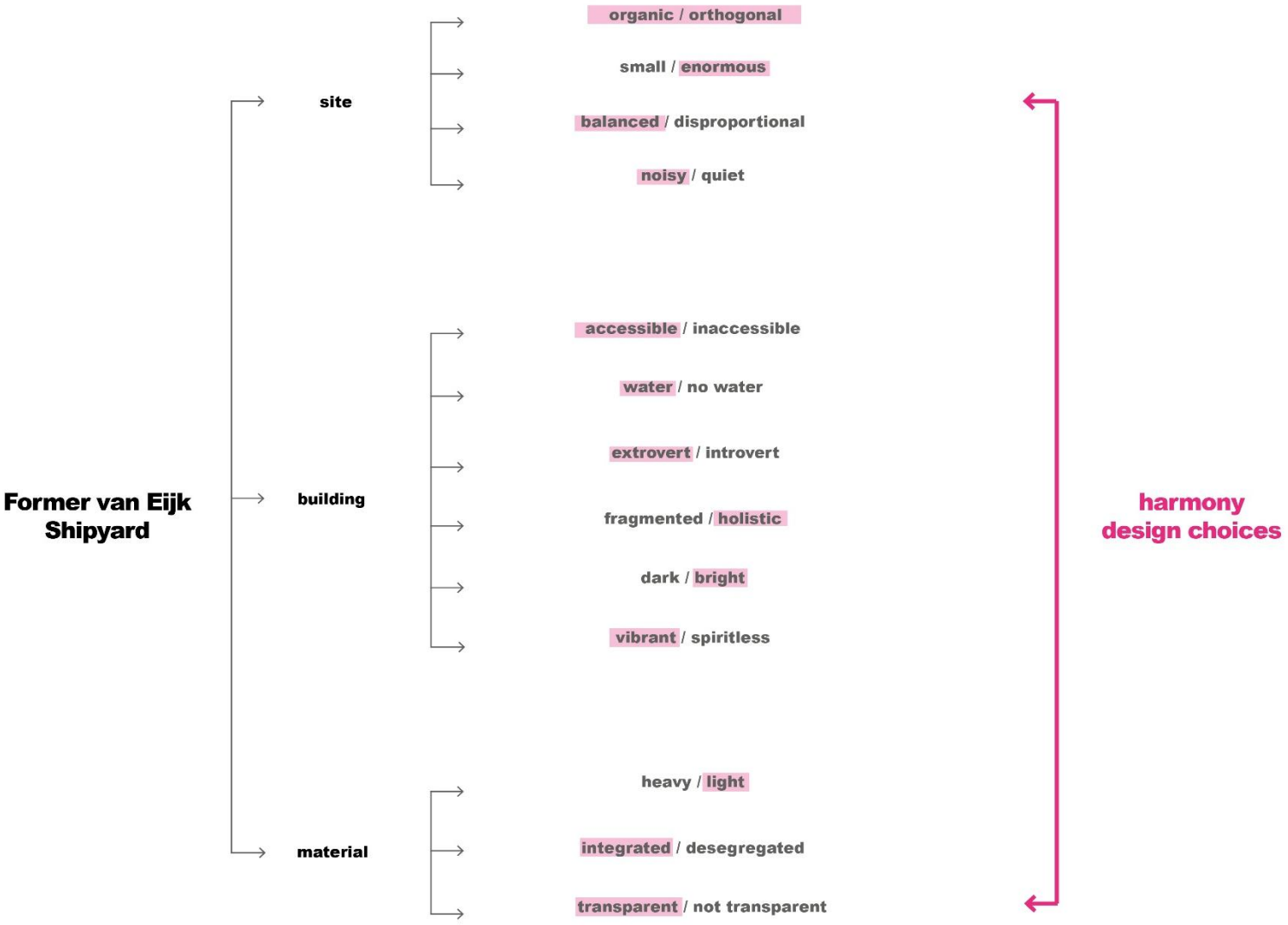
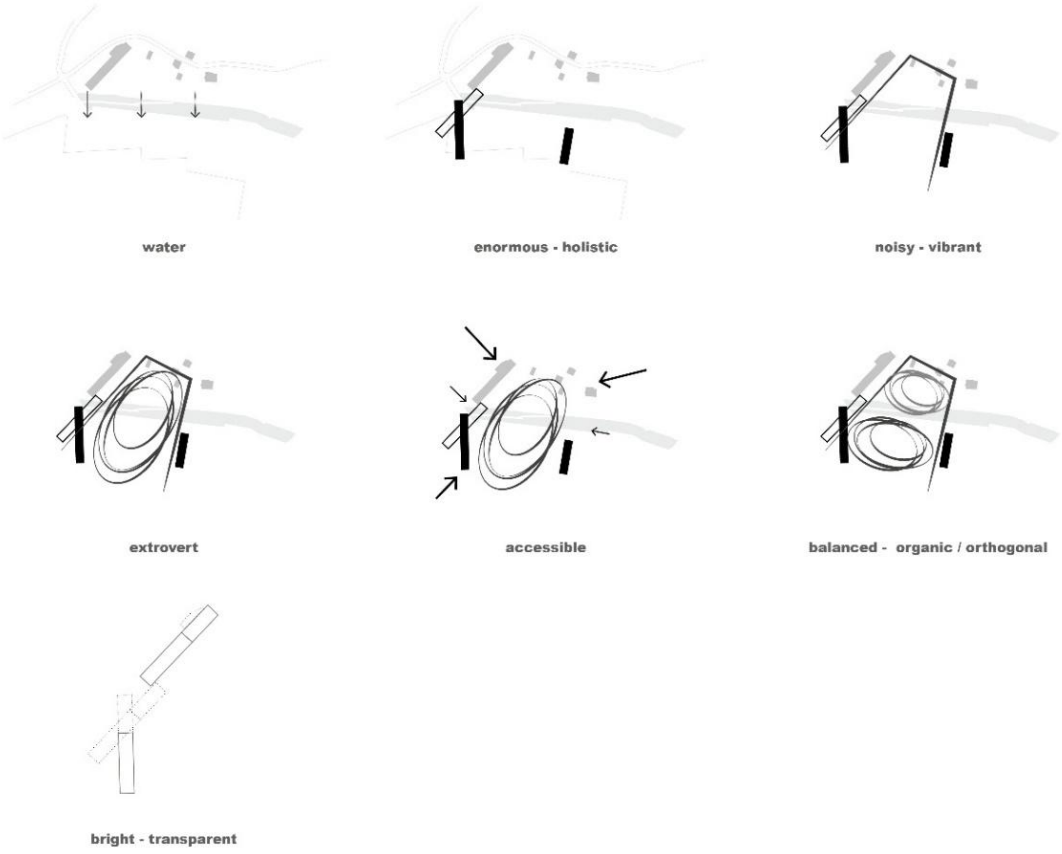
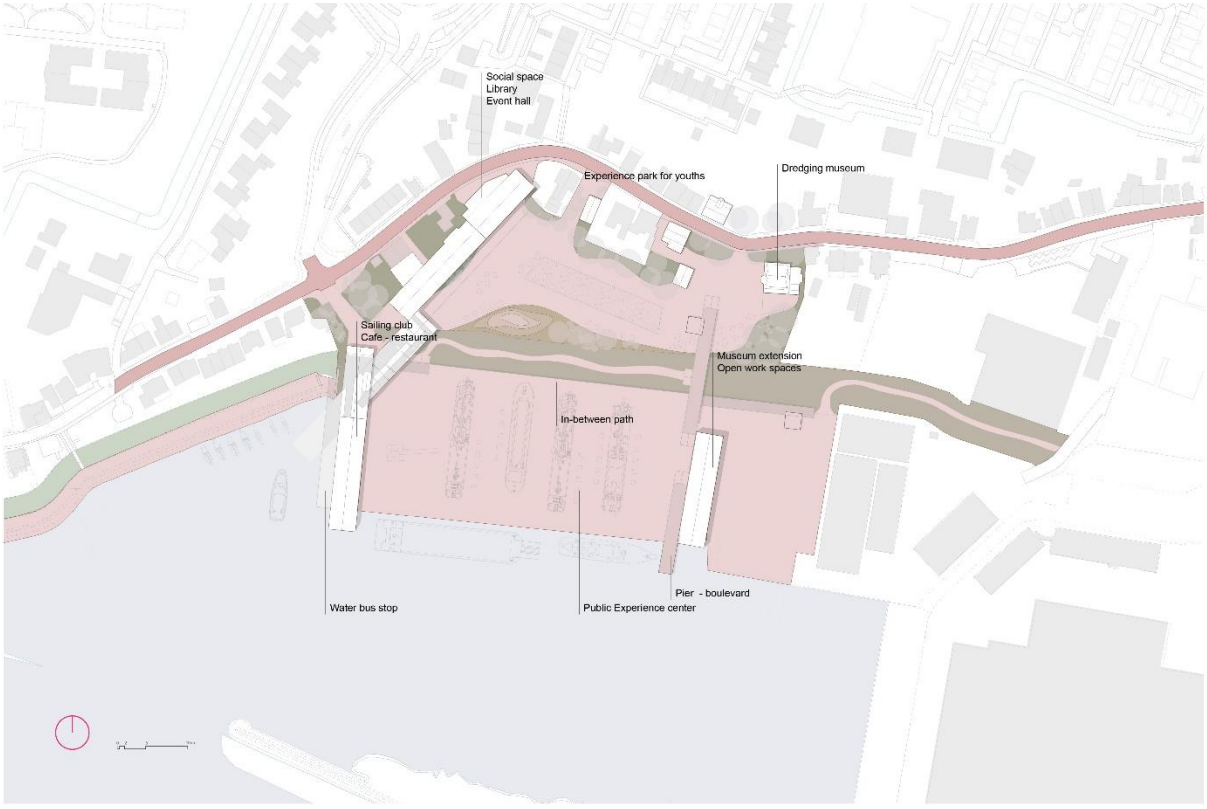


Fig. 10. The second categorization of dualities was undertaken in the vicinity of the former van Eijk shipyard.

Fig. 11 and 12. Translating the selected values from the dualities into architectural design choices. The application of these to the creation of the masterplan.





v. Conclusion

This research turned out to be the implementation of a new method of heritage evaluation. Starting from a very broad idea, such as the feeling of the space as utopian or dystopian, the first challenge was to determine the type of utopia / dystopia being studied and, obviously, the people to whom it refers. In the chosen site we can say that there were many utopias, such as an architectural utopia in 1965 or an industrial utopia in 1977, both of which can be very contradictory in terms of the perspective and the users involved. That means that the industrial utopia could be perceived as an architectural dystopia. Mainly because the architectural utopia has a greater impact on the user and the immediate surroundings, whereas the industrial utopia has a greater impact on the owner and perhaps the workers. The strength of this method is that it can combine different perspectives of different stakeholders, because the main theme of the evaluation is the effect that the space has on the users, taking into account different parameters. All these quite controversial things could be presented and expressed through the analysis of the space and the recognition of dualities. It is also something that any user can easily describe or express, as it is very much an experience and not a theory that they necessarily have to understand in order to describe their implementation with it. By recognizing the coexistence of utopian and dystopian elements, it acknowledges that perceptions of space are subjective and shaped by historical, social, and functional contexts. Furthermore, it is not just about architecture as an element, but architecture as an atmosphere. This may seem rather uncertain as a theory, but it is precisely this that makes it accessible to all those involved in the space.

Why though this method differs from the one used in chapter 1 with the creation of the matrix, the one well known value assessment? The “matrix” approach remains a well-established and thoroughly studied tool. Designers can use it to justify their choices after identifying the underlying values. The primary goal of the “matrix” method is to describe the values that emerge and their significance to the area. However, that method is primarily suited for individuals in the field of architecture, or more specifically, those familiar with heritage and its preservation. Not every user connected to the place can easily understand the method without guidance; at the very least, a script or instructional tool would be necessary for reference throughout the process. Additionally, while the original method is highly detailed and considers various scales of examination, it maintains a singular perspective throughout the assessment. This means that if the analysis needs to be conducted from another user’s viewpoint, a new matrix must be created from the beginning for each perspective being considered.

According to this study, this is the main difference between the two methods. Because the one created and explained in this research is based on combining different perspectives and trying to be simple so that everyone, after being introduced to it, could use it and express their ideas about the space. Furthermore, by involving and taking into account different stakeholders, it is hoped that the space will be active for more years than just one use, making it more sustainable. It also strengthens the identity of the place, as the space is associated with different users, permanent and temporary, but this makes it unique and livable. By giving them all a voice and an active role, the special values of the place will flourish. Ultimately, the architect is the one who translates feelings into spatial quality and acts as a mediator, but the primary source will be the people attached to the area. In addition, its applicability to different types of heritage sites and cultural contexts could be further tested, as it has only been tested in the context of industrial maritime

heritage. Consequently, this method aims to be as objective as possible, using well-known methods and theories, although these percentages cannot and should not be considered absolute, leaving room for discussion and adaptation. All in all, a utopia cannot exist without a dystopia, and as said before, one man's utopia is another man's dystopia.

*Word count: 4.273

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