



Heritage & Architecture – Maritime Heritage Studio

WATERDRIEHOEK ART TRIENNIAL

A Local-beneficial Tradition-respecting Art Tourism In Heritage Area

Research Plan

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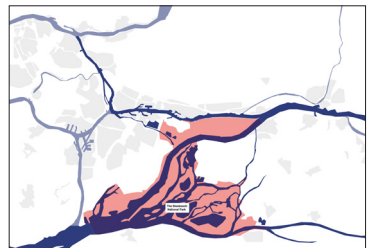
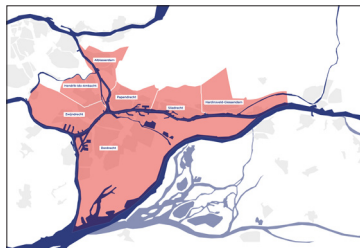
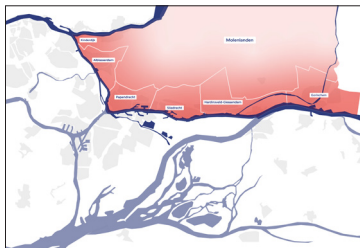


Figure 1. Waterdriehoek Heritage Area, and its three components. Illustrated by the author.

1. Introduction

1.1 Thesis Topic

The Heritage & Architecture MSc 3 Graduation Project focuses on Waterdriehoek, a unique heritage area that is home to the Biesbosch, Drechtsteden and Kinderdijk World Heritage complexes (Fig 1)¹. From Kinderdijk to Zwijndrecht, from Dordrecht to Gorinchem, Centuries of dyke construction, water management, agricultural development, and the flourishing of distinctive industries such as shipbuilding and steel have shaped a layered and complex built heritage landscape².

Drawing on UNESCO's categorization of heritage³, Waterdriehoek's habitat-related heritage values can be divided into tangible and intangible heritage values. The former includes micro-architectural values and macro-environmental values, while the latter refers to social values, such as cultural traditions.

As stated in architectural value, the seven towns included in Drechtsteden plus Gorinchem have a rich architectural heritage with a total of 1,162 national monuments (Rijksmonumenten) and an almost equal number of municipal monuments (Gemeentelijke Monumenten)⁴.

According to environmental value, Waterdriehoek has natural water bodies and associated wetlands in the field of natural environment, and three types of built environments: artificial water bodies and hydraulic systems created by dredging with associated agricultural landscapes, clusters of towns and villages on the waterfront with their distinctive human heritage, and the industrial heritage of the shipbuilding and iron and steel industries that are densely spread along the waterfront⁵.

In terms of social values, Waterdriehoek has a collective memory and way of life centered on the shipbuilding, dredging and steel industries. Many families in the local community have been involved in these maritime industries for four or five generations or more. The fabric of the micro-history of the area includes memorial spaces of industry, navigating and dredging, skills and craftsmanship, and community fellowship⁶.

The local government and aspirants are not completely blind to the above macro issues. The current intent of the Waterdriehoek project proposed by the Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency and the South Holland Province is to comprehensively revitalize the region, which has seen a decline in industrial capacity. This project intends to continue and upgrade the efforts of the local sectors in tourism, to develop a local-beneficial tradition-respecting art tourism based on the rich heritage values of Waterdriehoek, and to propose some feasible ideas for concrete initiatives.

1.2 Topic Research on Tourism

There are many ways and directions of concern for the development of large heritage areas. What this study wishes to explore in depth is the part of it that relates to the economics of tourism.

First, the tourism discussions in this study are placed under the framework of Heritage Tourism. According to the *Encyclopedia of Archaeology*, “Heritage tourism consists of visits to places that embody the past and/or to places related to intangible heritage manifestations⁷”. Heritage Tourism was founded and popularized because it is considered to have many benefits in three areas: economic, social, and environmental⁸. But tourism development in heritage sites has always been controversial, as there has always been a tension between economic development and the preservation of many of the characteristics of heritage sites⁹. Waterdriehoek has a strong local focus on Heritage tourism development, and there have been a number of explorations of tourism that balance heritage character and economic benefits, with projects underway¹⁰.

This study hopes to introduce a specific type of tourism in Waterdriehoek - MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) tourism. Unlike other forms of permanent, uninterrupted tourism, “MICE tourism is a type of tourism where large groups of people come together in a particular place and for a particular reason, such as a mutual interest¹¹”. Due to its non-permanent duration, this type of tourism will make it possible to share the use of heritage areas with local communities in a more balanced and equitable way.

More specifically, the possibilities of Tourism discussed in this research program are not only focused on Exhibition Tourism among “MICE”, but also specifically consider the case of the fusion of built heritage across borders with the arts, which can be called “Art Tourism”. Existing Art Tourism practices are found in urban areas as well as rural areas (Fig 2-5), and this widespread presence reflects its role as a promising form of Heritage Tourism: “Artistic initiatives and interventions

create new interest in historical destinations that might have otherwise been overlooked, forgotten or underfunded¹²”.

The research plan for this project focuses on the shortcomings of the completed Waterdriehoek project and explores and discusses approaches to regional revitalization using “art tourism” as a catalyst.



Figure 2. Milan Design Week 2022.
<https://www.scdedgener.com/marketing/milan-design-week-2022-the-focus-on-sustainability%E2%80%9C%BC/>



Figure 3. The 18th Venice Architecture Biennale.
<https://www.archdaily.com/1010535/a-look-back-at-the-18th-venice-architecture-biennale-the-first-to-be-focused-on-the-culture-of-africa>



Figure 4. Hu Shi Guang Art Eco Site, Longyou, Zhejiang, China.
<https://www.arthing.org/archives/2024/03/hushiguang-artecosite.html>



Figure 5. Estonia Rural Urban Art Festival in Antsla.
<https://upmag.com/rural-urban-art/>

1.3 Problem Statement

When assessing the three heritage values of Waterdriehoek's habitat from the perspective of heritage tourism, while some of the completed results have their merits and provide the necessary basic resources, there are still a number of problems and shortcomings in the overall picture.

The completed Waterdriehoek projects are largely limited to investments in transportation infrastructure, restoration and rehabilitation of monuments, individual recreational facilities, and traditional cultural destinations such as museums, including the Waterdriehoek themed cycling route, the waterbus from Rotterdam Erasmusbrug, the new visitor center in Kinderdijk, the Bundeszentrum in Sliedrecht, and the new visitor center in Kinderdijk. Waterdriehoek themed cycling route, the waterbus from Rotterdam Erasmusbrug, the new visitor center in Kinderdijk, the extension of the Baggermuseum in Sliedrecht, small lodging facilities in the Biesbosch, etc¹³.

And there are two main areas where the problem is currently more pronounced. With regard to the tangible built heritage, parts of the built environment are in danger of deterioration and disappearance due to changes in industry, economic patterns and climate. This is particularly the case for industrial heritage, such as the Mercon Kloos in Alblasterdam and the De Zaai area in Sliedrecht, where abandoned factory areas are left unattended or even demolished for redevelopment¹⁴. For those intangible heritage, Waterdriehoek's collective memory and way of life fades amongst its residents with mediocre neighborhood renewal. In the case of Alblasterdam, New neighborhoods and new businesses have replaced the industrial heritage of the shipyard area¹⁵, This has not only homogenized the area, but has also crowded out the traditional services and cultural prospects¹⁶.

The weaknesses of the existing Waterdriehoek tourism industry can be summarized in two points. Firstly, insufficient attention is paid to existing heritage sites with potential for reuse. This includes not only the industrial heritage mentioned above,

but also the wetlands in the region other than the Biesbosch and the barn buildings on the Biesbosch, among others. At the same time, the overall tourism branding and marketing of the region still appears to be rather old-fashioned and lacking in character, and has not yet succeeded in integrating the unique multi-layered and multi-dimensional heritage values of the region.

The positive and negative attitudes of Waterdriehoek's local residents and community are also issues that need to be emphasized for future tourism development. They are also more supportive of the low-intensity tourism development that has taken place so far, due to the benefits in terms of tourism infrastructure and economy. But under future development, how can the needs of local residents be considered and not have their lives and business pattern disrupted too much by foreign tourists? According to preliminary interviews, there are many local residents who still lament the loss of their Maritime traditions under the relocation of industries; are there ways in which new tourism development opportunities can simultaneously satisfy their desire to safeguard their traditions?

1.4 Research Question

The ambition of this study is to explore a design that is simultaneously able to conserve and reuse built heritage and have an active involvement in the maritime lifestyles with local tradition. The reuse of heritage buildings is embodied in the development of the tourism economy, while the active participation in local life pays special attention to the Maritime tradition.

So the research poses the main question:

How can the built heritage of Waterdriehoek be activated to better develop the tourism economy while contributing to the local maritime lifestyle and culture?

As a prerequisite for all active design operations and interventions, an antecedent sub-question is:

1. With regard to tourism and related areas, what are the demands and expectations of the local population for future development?

The question focuses on the simultaneous attainment of two goals that require exploration towards both outside and inside Waterdriehoek, respectively, and encompasses the two sub-questions described below:

2. Outwardly, how to organize artistic and cultural activities based on the built heritage to create a unique on-site art tourism brand?

3. Inwardly, how can new activities be made to actively engage in the lives of local residents, serving and benefiting them while continuing traditions?

Of course, to achieve both goals at the same time, what matters is the balance and the way to achieve that balance, which makes this problem also contain a third sub-question:

4. How can this project balance and integrate the respective needs of residents and visitors to create healthy long-term development?

2. Research Framework & Methodology

2.1 Methods & Applications

Due to the purpose and orientation towards design, a purposeful and usable study of Waterdriehoek is necessary, which requires an individualized selection and design of the methodological path of the study.

2.1.1 Site visits & Interview & Questionnaire

First-hand information will be obtained by walking and observing the site, and I will first experience the environment and things in the area, recognizing the various types of physical and social structures, visible and invisible, in their current state. The most direct first-hand information must be obtained by walking and observing within the site. In the case of Waterdriehoek, this should be accomplished through multiple walks through at least six major settlements and their surrounding countryside throughout the region.

Since personal observation is always subjective and limited, I also propose to conduct interviews and questionnaires. These interviews and questionnaires will focus on understanding the tourism and arts industries in the Waterdriehoek area and their connection to the community, but also on the changes in the way of life shaped by the traditional industries of shipping and dredging in the area, as well as the changes in the industry. The largest proportion of respondents will be local residents, but also includes role-specific participants and people from outside the region.

2.1.2 Literatures

It is clear that research related to built heritage cannot only focus on the current situation, but that the tracing of history, the compilation and the formation of specific historical narratives is one of the most crucial research elements. In this regard, although interviewing has a role to play, the main avenue of research is still the review of literature. This study will compare the information gathered with other sources (maps, photographs, and descriptions) from different periods of time and combines the constants and variables can better

plan its development, restoration, redevelopment, and preservation (and even destruction)¹⁷.

2.1.3 Archive Documents & Policies

The Waterdriehoek area was born out of the agricultural landscape management after the floods, and the archives of the various periods of construction are complete. Access to archival materials focused on the design drawings of the built heritage as well as records of the development history of the players involved (e.g., shipbuilding companies or prominent local families).

The economic development of tourism, which is the focus of design research, and the renovation of heritage, which is the basis of design research, are both highly related to the governmental departments. So the research requires a careful review of the local laws and regulations related to tourism and heritage, and even face-to-face communication with the governmental departments.

2.1.4 Case Study & Typology Research

In addition to accumulating basic background information using the above types of methods, design-oriented research relies more on finding similar project proposals and ideas from different perspectives at different points in the process. In this study this included four focused directions of case study and typology research in the strategy phase, the pre-contextual group work phase, the transition from research to design, and the architectural program layout phase.

2.2 Relevance & Core Strategy

The later part of the research will present a vision for the development of art tourism in Waterdriehoek based on the understanding of Waterdriehoek.

The vision will use the most famous case in this field, the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial (ETAT), as a reference¹⁸. Analogous to Fram Kitakawa's shaping of ETAT with the Satoyama concept as its core¹⁹, which blends natural environments of mountains and forests with artificially created environments of agriculture, the Waterdriehoek region has a system that mixes natural water bodies with artificial water management and industrial production environments. By migrating the tension from 'mountains - landscapes - agriculture' to 'canals - waterscapes - industry,' The Waterdriehoek area could also introduce "Water-environmental Art" similar to "Land Art". Considering that ETAT has successfully shaped the mountainous rural areas of central Japan, the project's in-depth research will also envision a feasibility plan for the Waterdriehoek Art Triennial (WAT), centered around water-environmental art and relying on local architecture and landscape heritage.

The vision of the WAT points to the core strategy of this study and contains three components: **1.** Using the built heritage areas and associated water bodies of Waterdriehoek as exhibition venues for water-environmental art, local residents and former shipbuilders and dredgers participate as artist advisors in the creation of the work; **2.** Maritime-related education, crafts, and boat repair and maintenance services, primarily for the benefit of the local community, are shared with the festival in the use of important heritage buildings.; **3.** Variable Seasonal flexible spaces as a means of regulating and integrating the needs of different audiences, with a portion of the space serving as creative and temporary exhibition space during the Festival and educational and craft space during non-exhibition periods.

2.3 Framework & Scheme

This final project, in general, consists of the first half of research and the second half of design, but in fact, based on the origin of Waterdriehoek, research and design are integrated and interspersed with each other. The specific logical framework can be clearly presented by a Framework Diagram (Fig 6), and a more detailed process that includes the Methodology can be presented in a Research Scheme as shown in Fig 7.

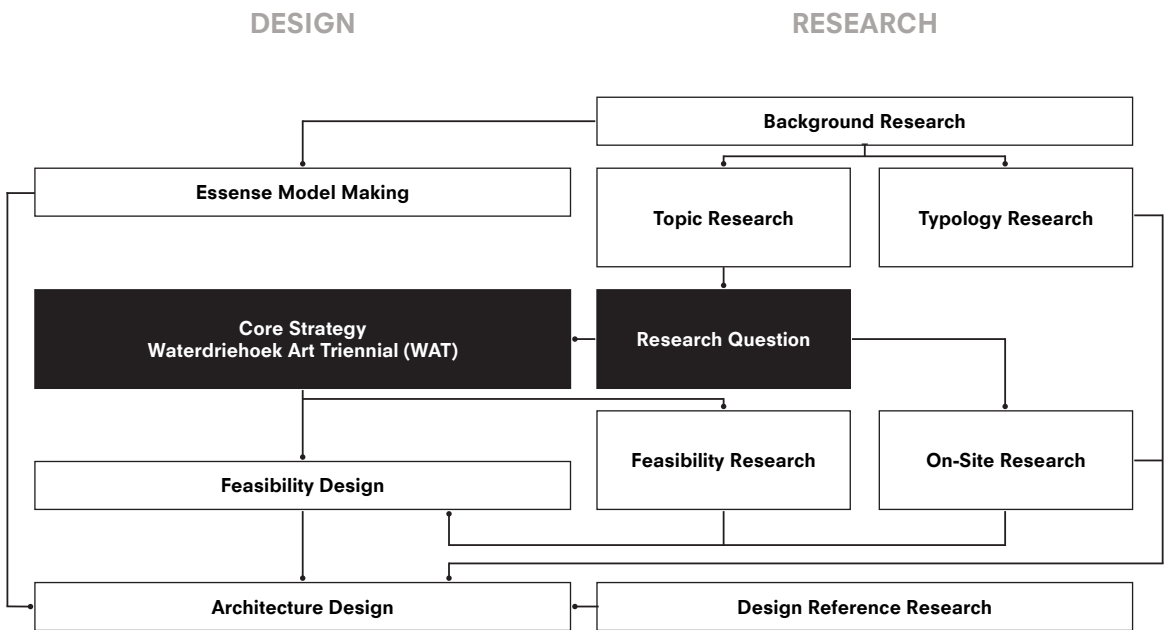


Figure 6. Framework Diagram.
Illustrated by the author.

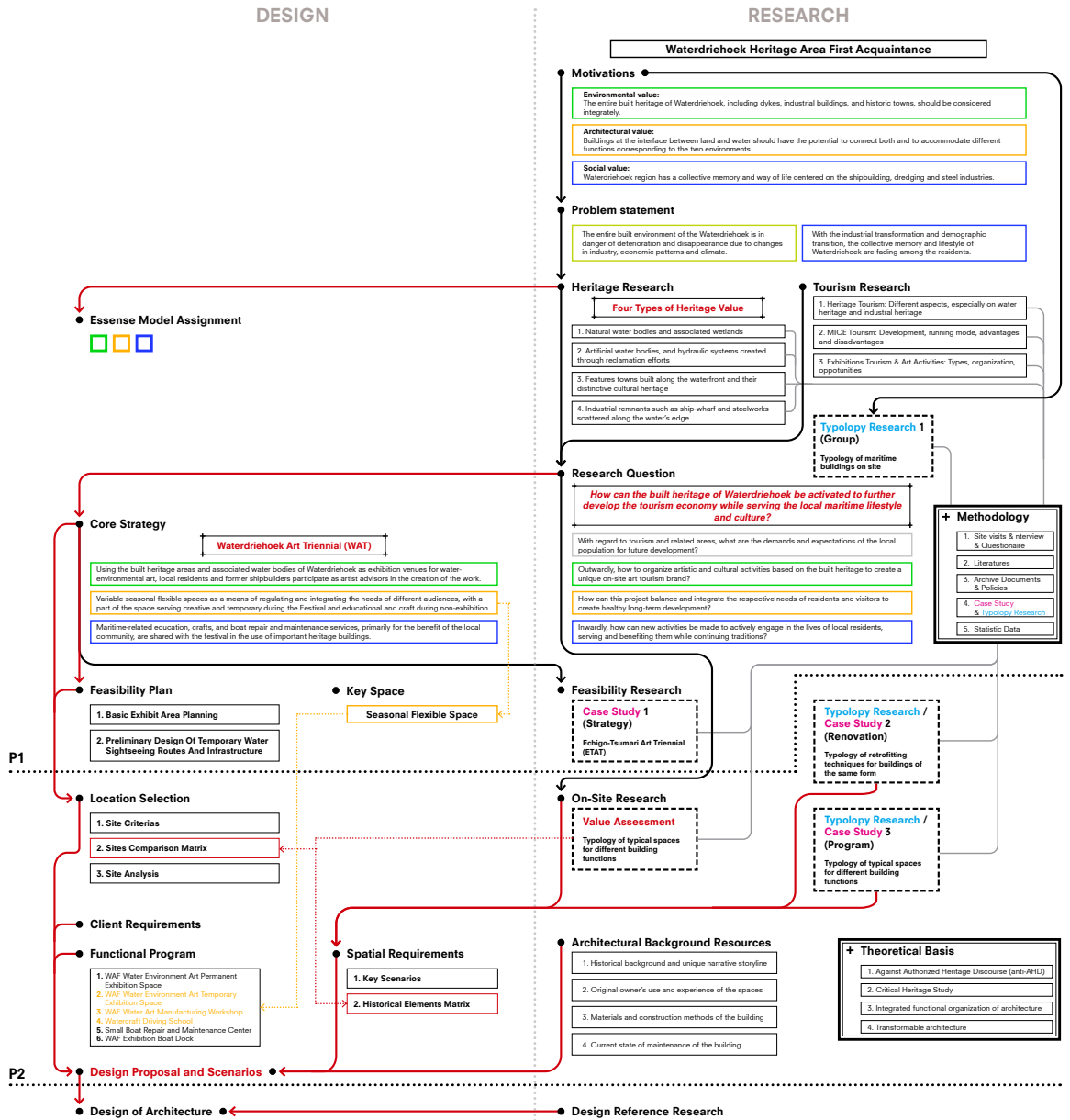


Figure 7. Research Scheme. Illustrated by the author.

2.4 Theoretical Basis

The Waterdriehoek area is extremely diverse in terms of heritage values, while at the same time the monumental character that is central to the classical concept of cultural heritage is not predominant, and is highly conducive to the application and practice of some of the cutting-edge heritage theories of this century. Also because of the main question's requirement, the final monolithic design is centered on the concept of variable seasonal flexible spaces, will involve two architectural ontological discussions: the spatial juxtaposition of multiple functions and the temporal asynchrony of multiple functions, which will require the introduction of a number of relevant design theories.

2.4.1 Against Authorized Heritage Discourse (anti-AHD)

Laurajane Smith first summarized the concept of 'Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD)' and criticized it²⁰, liberating heritage participation from the confines of the old-fashioned AHD conception implies a more inclusive and participatory heritage engagement. Waterdriehoek is an excellent site for practicing anti-AHD at the practical level.

2.4.2 Critical Heritage Study

More specifically, Critical Heritage Study calls for transforming passivity into proactivity and delving into the origins and demystification of heritage. As Rodney Harrison proposed, revealing the various processes that produce heritage allows the public to understand heritage from their own backgrounds²¹. And further, to derive vitality from the multiplicity of heritage meanings in facing the future.

2.4.3 Integrated functional organization of architecture

One of the outstanding features of the monolithic design phase of the project is the multiple composites of traditional building types, combining different functions such as art museums, workshops, schools, shipyards, etc., in the same building complex, forming an organic whole through appropriate

functional organization. Koolhaas, in *Delirious New York*, extensively discusses the method of interweaving functions²².

2.4.4 Transformable architecture: flexibility and non-commensurability

The realization of multiple non-consensual functions in limited spaces like the seasonal flexible spaces envisioned for this project requires a very special class of architecture "that change shape, space, form or appearance by the physical alteration of their structure, skin or internal surface, enabling a significant alteration in the way it is used or perceived²³."

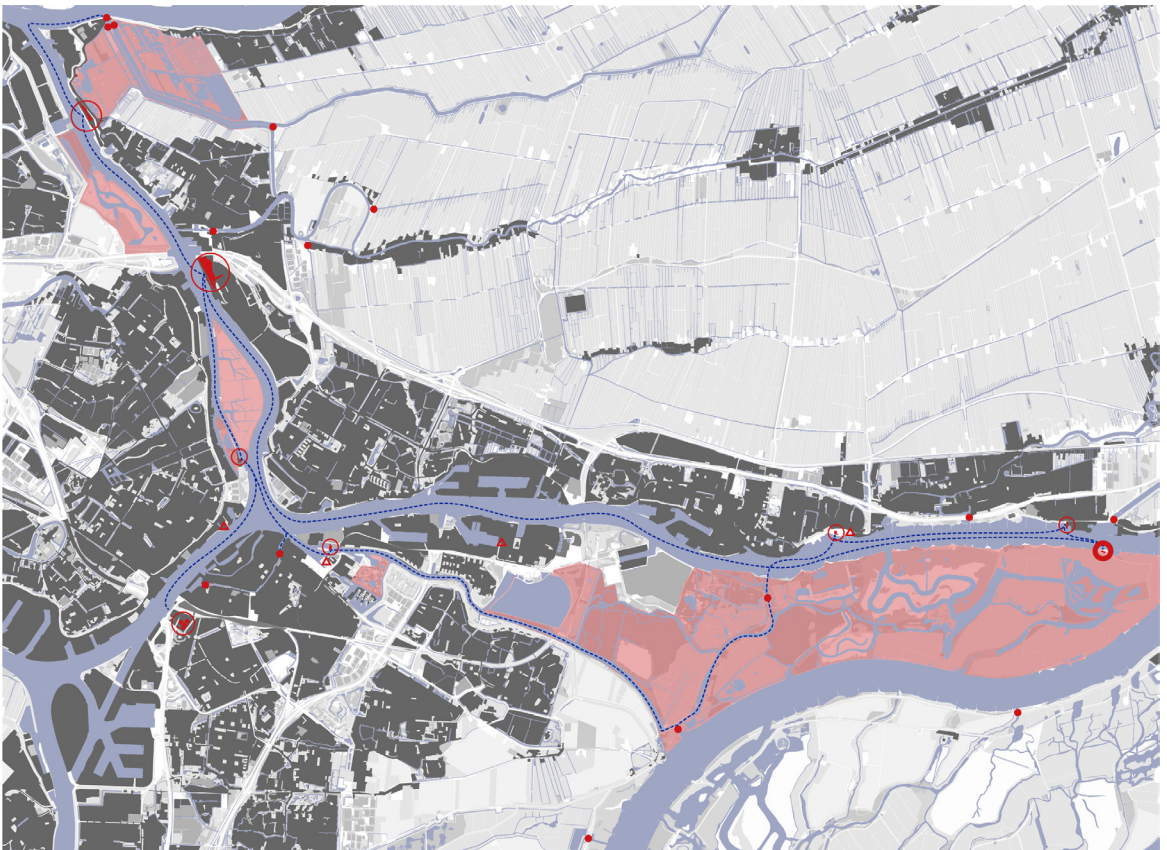


Figure 8. Waterdriehoek Art Triennial routes, first version.
Illustrated by the author.

3. Expected Research Results & Design Question

3.1 Expected Research Results

The study of Waterdriehoek itself will ultimately result in the typological classification of potential existing heritage buildings in the region, the quantification of heritage values under diverse evaluation criteria, and the principles of arts tourism development appropriate to the area.

The end of the research will guide more specific design practices in subsequent phases, so the feasibility study of Waterdriehoek Art Triennial (WAT) will also involve the transformation of landscape and water bodies as suitable artistic carriers through zoning plans based on existing waterborne transportation and preliminary ideas for a tidal water tour route based on existing water transportation (Fig 8).

Ultimately, these results will determine the appropriate reuse methods for heritage buildings in the triennial, lead to a specific heritage building renewal design, which will serve as the main venue for WAT.

3.2 Design Question

Through the whole research, the main questions will be answered in many ways, leading to some specific binding guidelines (Fig 9). This will be translated into design questions for design practice in a closely corresponding manner:

How can “the selected heritage building” be transformed to host main exhibition area of water-environment art triennial but also serve locals’ daily life and maritime culture in non-event period?

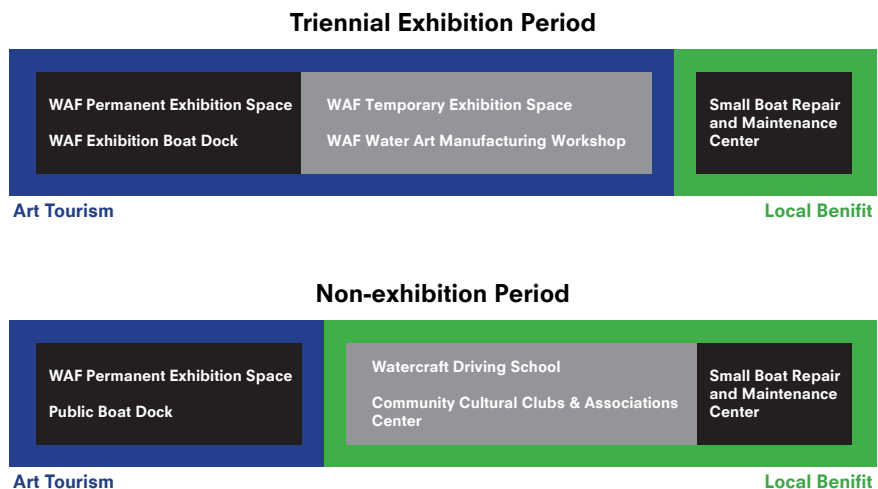


Figure 9. Seasonal change of functions & spaces in the selected building. Illustrated by the author.

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