

Revitalization of Maritime Heritage: Restoring the identity of Dutch industrial shipyards.



Research Plan

Studio Maritime Heritage
Madelijn Belle, 5016398

Supervisors:
Marie-Therese van Thoor
Carola Hein

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Foreword

This research plan is primarily concerned with the uses of maritime heritage for representations of identity in the Netherlands. It explores ways in which identities and meanings are constructed and reconstructed. It follows the view that industrial shipyards possess value beyond their physical qualities. By adapting and reusing these shipyards, the histories of these sites can become part of future identity narratives.

1. Introduction

Disappearing industries

Industrial heritage is still used on many industrial locations, where industrial extraction and production operations continue. Industrial heritage comprises sites and buildings which offer witness to past or present industrial production processes, including the extraction of raw materials, their transformation into goods and the related energy and transportation infrastructures¹. The tangible elements are represented by industrial technology, processes, engineering and architecture.

Industrial shipyards form a unique legacy of architecture and engineering in the industrial heritage field. They are the tangible and vivid remains of the industrial ages. The appreciation and importance of the transformation and reuse of industrial shipyards in the Netherlands has significantly risen in the last three decades². However, there are places where the ongoing process has come to an end and the appreciation and sense of historical continuity has disappeared (Figure 1). Many industrial shipyards fell into decline in the second half of the 20th century as industrialized economies started to decline³. The de-industrialization due to these economic circumstances, as well as technological developments, led to disappearing industries. Also, the low appreciation by the general public, as well as their difficult visibility and restricted entrances made it less plausible for the buildings to be preserved⁴.

Value of shipyards

Industrial shipyards have always been particularly alluring. It is the area where two separate systems - land and water - interact. This unique position distinguishes shipyards from other industrial building. It has historical significance in the area and is a space with particular visibility⁵.

Industrial shipyards are valuable, because they often have transnational and transoceanic qualities: they recall a time where people made significant contributions to international trade, exploration or battle⁶. They conserve and transmit historical knowledge and lost practices and preserve long histories of industrial processes and our cultural memories for future generations. This way, historical industrial developments played an important role in the formulation of regional and local identities⁷.

¹ Pr  ambule 2011, p. 1.

² Nevzgodin 2016, p. 36.

³ Davidson 2013, p. 3.

⁴ Nevzgodin 2016, p. 37.

⁵ Giovinazzi & Moretti 2009, p. 58.

⁶ Hickman 2020, p. 401.

⁷ Nevzgodin 2016, p. 38.



Figure 1: Abandoned shipyard, Mercon-Kloosterrein in Alblasterdam (Bestemmingsplan Mercon Kloos, 2018)

Despite the decline of industrial shipyards in the second half of the 20th century and low appreciation by the general public, later this nostalgia and the need to preserve the memory of ambitions and progressiveness increased. Municipalities, provinces and the national government eventually acknowledged industrial sites as catalysts for urban and economic change. By using them as profitable real estate, private parties have also come to understand their value.

As a result, industrial shipyards began to offer chances for sustainable redevelopment. The industrial shipyards have potential because they are cheap, large and easily to utilize spaces with an atmosphere of the rough and authentic architecture⁸. The reuse of historic elements from these shipyards offers the potential of recognizing past meanings and functions of the area. As such, it can provide inhabitants and visitors elements to identify with⁹. The transformation can stimulate the local economy by attracting investment and tourists. Finally, continuing to adapt and use industrial shipyards avoids wasting energy and can be less harmful to the environment than demolition and new construction¹⁰.

Shipyards Willemsoord (Figure 2) in Den Helder was even designated a national monument in 1997, because of its special value. At this former military-industrial site, ships and submarines of the national fleet were built, repaired and maintained. The complex was unique, since it was the only remaining shipyard in the Netherlands whose original coherence of the site had also remained recognizable¹¹.



Figure 2: Willemsoord before the war (Netherlands Institute of Military History, n.d.)

⁸ Nevzgodin 2016, p. 41.

⁹ Hetteema & Egberts 2019, p. 131.

¹⁰ TICCIH 2003, p. 5.

¹¹ Van Emstede 2015, p. 246.

Maritime heritage and identity

The term 'identity' can refer "to the ways in which heritage, language, religion, ethnicity, nationalism and shared interpretations of the past are used to construct narratives of inclusion and exclusion that define communities and the ways in which these later are rendered specific and differentiated"¹². The aspects of identity are connected to the place. The 'identity of the place' is described as a collection of memories, values, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings¹³.

The use of the term "place" in heritage is growing. Heritage is transformed into a tool for expressing identity in which the 'power of place' is invoked in its sense to give physical reality to these expressions and experiences¹⁴. Heritage, as a way of expressing the past, gives meaning to human existence by transmitting ideas of timeless values that define identity¹⁵. This way, heritage is intimately involved in the construction and legitimation of the construct of identity. It participates in the creation and interchange of meanings and is utilized to communicate identity messages. Similar Laurajane Smith, professor of Heritage and Museum Studies, has focused more specifically on assessing heritage that are formative to identities:

Heritage is about negotiation – about using the past, and collective or individual memories, to negotiate new ways of being and expressing identity. In this process heritage objects, sites, places or institutions like museums become cultural tools or props to facilitate this process – but do not themselves stand in for this process or act. (Laurajane Smith, 2006, p.4)

When we apply this to industrial marine heritage specifically, the definition of industrial heritage as prescribed before is too restrictive, since industrial heritage comprises more than just material elements. The definition defined by the Nizhny Tagil Charter for Industrial Heritage from 2003 descends to a further layer: "the remains of industrial culture, which are of historical, technological, social, architectural or scientific value"¹⁶. He states industrial heritage provides an important sense of identity. It contains different values intrinsic to the site itself, its fabric, components, machinery and setting, in industrial landscape, written documentation and in intangible elements of industry contained in human memories and customs. This immaterial culture can provide insights into the past imaginations and the identity of the place¹⁷.

However, using maritime heritage as a means of communication and meaning-making is quite uncommon in the expert's view of heritage¹⁸. This way, traditional perspectives on

¹² Graham & Howard 2008, p. 5.

¹³ Proshansky et al 2014, p. 77.

¹⁴ Smith 2006, p. 75.

¹⁵ Graham et al 2000, p. 40.

¹⁶ TICCIH 2003, p. 2.

¹⁷ Wicke 2019, p. 4.

¹⁸ Smith 2006, p. 2.

heritage can conceal the cultural process of identity formation that is fundamental to heritage¹⁹.

Changing identities

Heritage is not only about expressing and preserving the past, the cultural values and their meanings; it can also be about cultural changes and alteration of values. It could be about changing the meanings of the past as the cultural, social and political needs of the present change and develop.

The past of the maritime history, as represented by formal industrial shipyards, also brings with it the burdens of history; its atrocities, mistakes and crimes, all in the setting of a capitalist space that symbolized power, hierarchy and exploitation. The painting (Figure 3) depicts a visual representation of the identity at the industrial shipyard. We can notice the vibrant atmosphere where many things are happening. However, there is a darker side: the claustrophobic, sooty upheaved and bleak workers, battling with work. Above all, the hierarchy is revealed with capitalists standing above all. Not even to mention the negative image due to all the effects of the pollution, noise, abandonment and decay. For these reasons alone, a strong needs exist not only to improve the tangible environment, but also to change the intangible negative identities of industrial shipyards.

It is important to investigate how industrial heritage shipyards, can be a resource used to challenge and redefine the values and identities of a place, besides representing history.

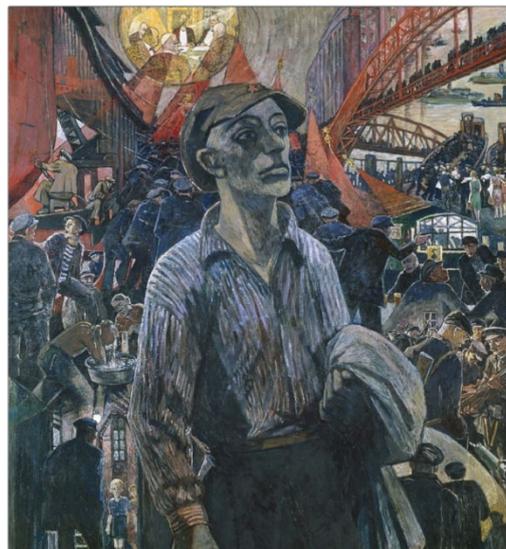


Figure 3: Painting of worker of a Hamburg shipyard (Johan Heinrich Vogeler, 1928)

¹⁹ Smith 2006, p. 4.

Research Question

The study focuses on the following main question:

- How can the identities of industrial shipyards be preserved and transformed into positive identities without losing its historical significance?

Sub Questions

The main question will be addressed by the structure of the following sub questions:

- Which aspects relate to the identity and distinctiveness of former industrial shipyards? Following this: What are the aspects that merit to be preserved and the ones that should be discarded?
- What is the way of activating the concept of identity in former industrial shipyards?

Relevance

The abandonment that followed de-industrialization poses great challenges to the redevelopment of industrial shipyards. This research aims to increase awareness and appreciation of industrial shipyards, which will benefit their redevelopment.

The elaboration of the research is expected to contribute to making people understand that the value of industrial shipyard value goes beyond their physical qualities and that the identity of the place plays a major role in this. It is imperative to transcend the traditional paradigm of heritage conservation and elucidate the ways in which industrial shipyards can function as a means of communication and meaning-making¹⁹.

As a result, the research will offer a suggestion for future initiatives by identifying ways in which previous shipyards have been adapted and reused. In doing so, it demonstrates how the history of these sites has become part of the present identity. Finally, the research offers design tools that can contribute to the design process of former industrial shipyards.

2. Methodology

As previously mentioned, heritage conveys ideas and values that define identity¹⁵. To explore what identity is at stake in industrial shipyards, the historical, technological, social, architectural and scientific values, visible in the tangible and intangible layers of heritage, will be collected. Several case studies of industrial shipyards will be examined through an exploratory research, in order to ascertain which aspects relate to the identity of industrial shipyards, which aspects merit to be preserved and how this identity is activated. In this research on industrial heritage and identity, the relationship between the construction of collective spaces (place) and collective pasts (industrial heritage) is of primary concern. Since the focus is on using industrial heritage in relation to the representation of identity, personal experiences and identification remain secondary.

Research strategy

In order to construct a final design toolbox with interventions to redefine identity, which can be used in the future design process of industrial shipyards, input is generated from a series of additional analytical steps in each case study. These steps derive from Cross (2006) ways to investigate an existing physical environment. He suggested that design knowledge is embodied in people (design epistemology), process (design praxeology) and products (design phenomenology)²⁰. These domains of design will be applied to three case studies in order to retrieve information about how the industrial shipyards are designed, how the design process is developed and applied and how design objects influence the interactions among people and environments.

These three steps provide insight into the process of restoring identity in industrial shipyards: First, the former identity of the shipyard is examined. Then it looks at the design choices towards new identity formation. Finally, the reception of this possibly restored identity is examined.

Analytic steps in each case study

1. Design Epistemology - study of designedly ways of knowing

Design epistemology embraces a disposition in which knowledge is acquired through making and reflection²¹. This step involves gaining general knowledge about the case studies. The history of the place, including the historical transformation over time, will be collected through archival material. The importance of the industrial shipyards can be verified by examining the ways in which they have been preserved in collective memory. To

²⁰ Cross 2006, p. 4.

²¹ Feast & Melles 2010, p. 3.

learn more about the morphology both now and throughout the periods of active industry, drawings illustrating the most significant moments from the configuration of the site and the region will be mapped. The procedure that led to the establishment of the industrial shipyard will be documented. The important takeaway from this step is determining what the formal shipyard's identity was all about.

→ *This step examines the former identity of the shipyard.*

2. Design Praxeology - study of the practice and processes of design

Design praxeology is focused on research methods that entail analysis and testing²².

This step describes the manner in which the transformation task was approached. The information is obtained from experts and actors who were involved in the redevelopment of the case studies. This step will primarily focus on how the design may have transformed the identity of the place and how it has been activated.

→ *This step examines in what way the experts included the identity in the design process.*

3. Design Phenomenology - study of the form and configuration of design products

Design phenomenology seeks to understand how design affects everyday life and the intersubjectivity between the designer and the users of the design²³. Here the experience and identity of the place will be examined from the user perspective. Information on how case studies are perceived by users will be obtained from images in the media and mass communication. This time, the importance of the re-use and new design of the industrial shipyards will be verified by examining the ways in which they have been reminded in collective memory and how they are identified in the present.

→ *This step examines whether the identity has actually been restored and activated and how it's received by the public.*

This combination of strategies results in a complex description of each case study. Overall, this framework aims to indicate how the former identity of a site may be considered and transformed in the adaptive reuse of former shipyards, as well as its importance to the environment.

Choice of Case Studies

The choice of case studies is based on geographical and typological diversity, as well as project size and year of origin. The following case studies will be used to examine how the identity of the site has been activated (Figure 4): Kromhoutwerf in Amsterdam (Figure 5), RDM-werf in Rotterdam (Figure 7) and Willemsoord in Den Helder (Figure 9). The specific focus will be on how negative perceptions of industrial shipyards have been dealt with and how they may have been transformed into a positive entity without losing the places historical significance.

²² Cross 2006, p. 6.

²³ Cross 2006, p. 7.

	Kromhout-werf	RDM-werf	Willemsoord
Location	Amsterdam	Rotterdam	Den Helder
Year	1757	1902	1820
Typology	Museum	Makers District with business, campus & research	Maritime theme park
Size	1000 m ²	25 ha	40 ha
Specialty	Only remaining evidence of Amsterdam shipbuilding. Partly still in use as a shipyard Central location in Amsterdam	The collaboration between companies, students and researchers on sustainable technical innovations , as well as their experimental facilities.	National monument. Unique complex with a very diverse program , including museums, theater, visitor center, 'kunstuitleen', cinema, casino, cafés, maritime stores and events.
Useful sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book <i>De Kromhout uit 1907</i> by Frans Brokx • Vereniging Museum 't-Kromhout • Vereniging Stadsherstel Amsterdam NV • Kromhout archive • Stadsarchief Amsterdam • Kromhout museum Amsterdam Youtube channel for videos • Kromhoutmuseum.nl 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDM archief • Janitor and formal worker RDM, Peter Blokdijk • Newspaper <i>De Havenloods</i> • Cultuurhistorische verkenning RDM • Stadsarchief Rotterdam • Rdmrotterdam.nl 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book <i>Rijkswerf Willemsoord</i> by Paul Groenendijk • Helderse Historische Vereniging • Noord-Holland archive • Regionaal archief Alkmaar • Blad <i>Levend verleden</i> • Willemsoordbv.nl

Figure 4: Diagram of different case studies (Own work, 2023)



*Figure 5: The industrial shipyard for sale
(Han van Gool, 1991)*



*Figure 6: Museum Kromhoutwerf
(Gerrit Alink, n.d.)*



*Figure 7: Workers at workbenches on the dry dock
(Stadsarchief Rotterdam, 1946)*



*Figure 8: Activity at the Innovation Dock
(Jerry Lampen, n.d.)*



*Figure 9: Workers at the dock
(Willemsoord BV, n.d.)*



*Figure 10: Bustling new Willemsoord
(Sweco, n.d.)*

Methodological reflection

The case studies are subjected to an existing framework to examine the identity of transformed industrial shipyards. This is to arrive at an answer to the question: “How can the identities of industrial shipyards be preserved and transformed into a positive identities without losing its historical significance?”. An ethical problem that may arise is the discussion of whether or not working from an existing framework leads to a certain direction of answers. It may well be assumed that such a framework rests on academic knowledge. However, re-examining methods of transforming and activating identity and then revising and adapting the chosen framework may be a more ethical choice. Thus, the existing chosen framework could be used to analyze the case studies, but can be modified along the way.

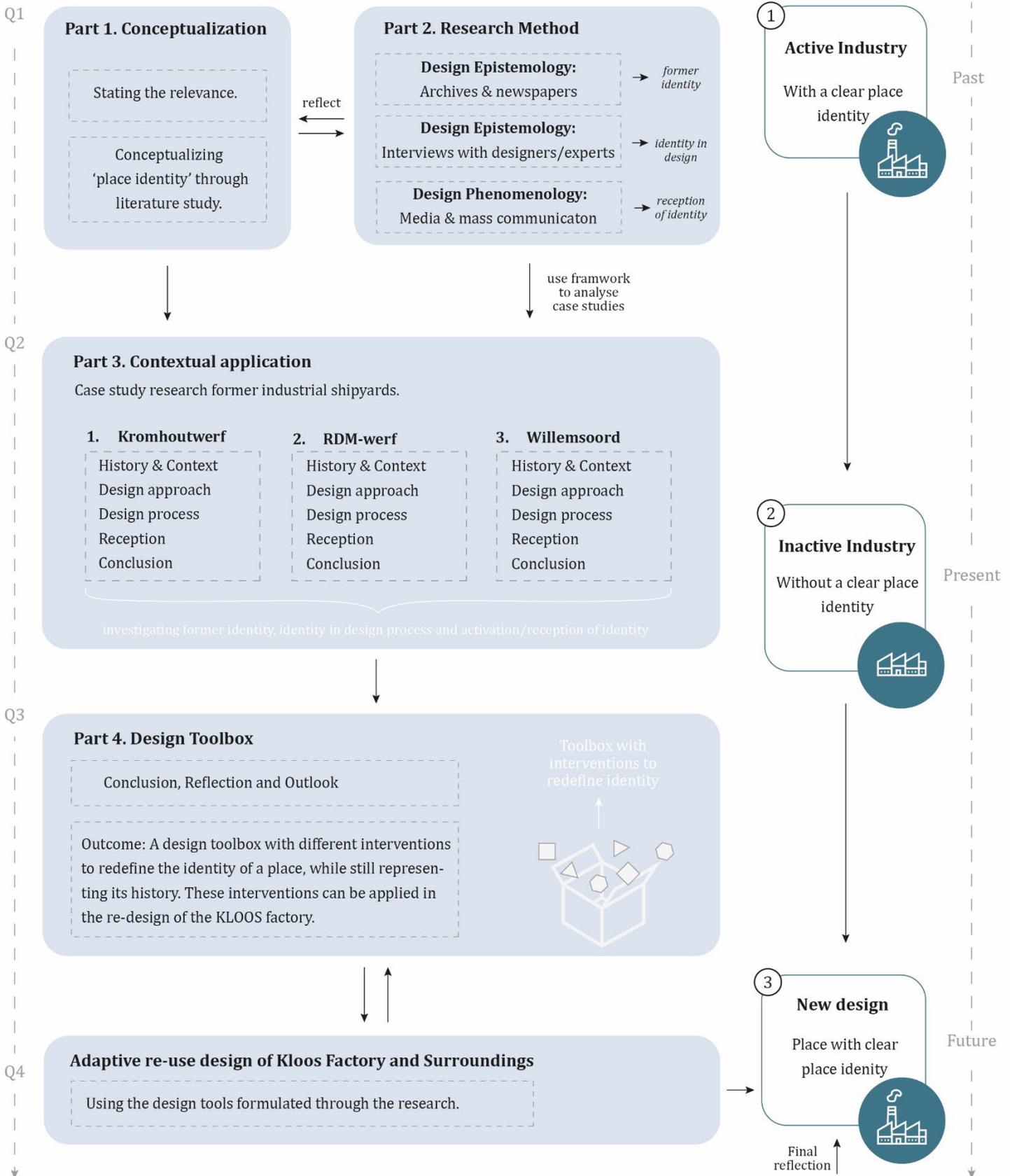
Research structure

An overview diagram of the research structure can be found on the next page.

RESEARCH

How can the identities of industrial shipyards be preserved and transformed into positive identities without losing its historical significance?

DESIGN



3. Literature list

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