The Bifurcation of Amsterdam's Terminals and Tourists: Urgenda and Beyond

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Abstract

This essay provides a visual and historical analysis of Amsterdam City and the terminal landscape of Westpoort in order to detail the aesthetic, discursive, and material entanglements of global logistics to the cultural imaginary of Amsterdam. By taking the recent victory of Stichting Urgenda over the interests of Dutch Petrocapital as a starting point, the essay suggests that while polity is beginning to shape environmental policy, the Port of Amsterdam continues to expand finance fueled fossil futures unabated. To explain why, archival and creative research generation is used to compare the Port of Amsterdam's visual regime of energy storage and circulation in Westpoort to Amsterdam City's post-industrial aesthetics.

Amsterdam is known as the commercial and cultural capital of the Netherlands. The city centre sits around ten kilometres away from Schiphol, one of the busiest airports in Europe. New tourists arrive every day, ready to explore the historical streets, canals, and houses dating back from centuries of trade and colonial rule. The aesthetics of Amsterdam City attract millions of tourists every year. However, the narrative and the scripted experience of Amsterdam leave out important spaces that drive its urban metabolism. The Port of Amsterdam, a vast industrial space of energy storage and circulation, is spatially and visually bifurcated from the post-industrial aesthetics and imaginaries of the city. The Port is out of sight but yet so close: following the IJ River west from the city centre one will pass the central train station, the A'dam tower, the post-industrial space of NSDM—a former ship wharf, and *Houthaven*, what used to be a terminal harbour for lumber, but now hosts some of the most expensive apartments in the City. However, soon after passing Houthaven a different landscape starts revealing itself: *Petroleumhaven*, a horseshoe formed oil harbour dating back to 1897, is the first glimpse of the oil storage that is a major industry at the Port of Amsterdam. Petroleumhaven was built after the city administration determined that a remote storage location had to be constructed because of the fire hazard of storing petroleum in the city. This was a historical moment for the bifurcation between port and city, which would later grow in proportion to the development of the city and its range of transport connections. Initially, Petroleumhaven stored petroleum products for heating and lighting in Amsterdam, but as demand grew, so did the oil storage tanks and range of oil products that facilitated urban life and development in the twentieth century (Spiekman). Later, the oil spaces at the Port expanded to new areas even further away from the city centre: with the opening of the American- owned Mobil refinery and tank storage in the late 1960s (Pinder 303) followed by the opening of Oiltanking's storage terminals in the 1970s (*Marquard & Bahls*). Since then, the Westpoort area of Amsterdam has continuously expanded its oil storage capacities and the terminal space is now the world's largest gasoline port ("Liquid Bulk").

However, while the logistics of Amsterdam's infrastructural space is financially and materially intimate to the cultural life of the city, the space is aesthetically and discursively bifurcated in the cultural imaginary of Amsterdam. With a mix of nostalgia for art and architecture from the (slave-powered) Dutch Golden Era and a hypermodern drive to top Europe's smart, clean, and innovative industries, Amsterdam's economic and ecological symbiosis with petrochemical trade simply does not register in its representations of itself. This bifurcation is important in the current context of ecological crisis and the coming to consciousness of modernity's dirty secret: the vast majority of habits we take as given—if not out and out *rights*—are either directly or indirectly bound up with the affordances of fossil fuels. In Dipesh Chakrabarty's formative phrasing for an ecologically astute historiography, "The mansion of modern freedoms stands on an ever-expanding base of fossil-fuel use," which is another way of saying that the physical and ideational structures of the modern city have thus far been mutually reinforced by inexpensive, powerful, and liquid forms of energy (208). In short, the energy transition required to mitigate and rehabilitate climate change is not just about switching from one fuel source to another but about rethinking the very premise of petrocultural forms of life.

Recent works by Brian Larkin and Dominic Boyer suggest that material infrastructures give form to both the sensibility of worlds that rely on them, and political regimes that inoculate them from contestation. In this essay, we provide a visual and historical analysis of Amsterdam City and the terminal landscape of Westpoort in order to detail the aesthetic, discursive, and material entanglements of global logistics to the cultural imaginary of Amsterdam. The analysis will compare Port of Amsterdam's visual regime of energy storage and circulation in Westpoort, to the post-industrial aesthetics in the city of Amsterdam, using archival and creative research conducted between 2018 and 2020. By investigating these two spaces through the focal point of petro-mobile mass tourism, we argue that the City and the Port are logistically intertwined, but culturally and spatially bifurcated through different visual regimes. The logistical infrastructure that moves people and goods in both city and port is part of the same petro-infrastructure,

yet they are visually and symbolically coded to distribute worlds sensibly autonomous from one another. The spatial and visual bifurcation between the terminal landscapes of Westpoort and the inner ring of Amsterdam contributes to the invisibility of the industrial infrastructures. The logistical infrastructure facilitates the flow of goods and people which reproduces the post-industrial cultural city—and therefore creates an impasse for sustainable transitions. Since the Westpoort is the largest gasoline storage facility in the world, and is bundled with a vast (and rapidly expanding) terminal for petrochemicals, coal, and natural gas, investigations into the means and effects of visual bifurcation implicitly involve larger ecological questions. As a case study, in other words, Amsterdam and its port can be taken as emblematic of a much more systemic problem of cultural and ecological imaginaries in urban centres most responsible for ongoing hydrocarbon emissions. And it is for this reason that the recent Urgenda Climate Case, in which nine hundred signatories filed a class action lawsuit against the Dutch Government's inept and criminal climate policy, should be taken as evidence that the bifurcation of city and port is never permanent, and that ecological forms of polity are on the rise.

I: Urgenda

We read the Urgenda case, which pertains to the entirety of the Netherlands, as a rift in what has otherwise been a cultural tendency toward Amsterdam's cultural containment from (but in) infrastructure. The case filed by Stichting Urgenda is not the first to cite charters such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in climate related cases, but it is the first to have its case (and citational argument) ratified by a supreme court. Effectively holding a sovereign government to its self-proclaimed duty to protect private and family life, and establishing that continued growth in fossil fueled emissions compromise both current and future generations to that protection, the Urgenda Climate Case installs a precedent for courts to interpret the anthropogenic causes of global warming and, hence, the agents of those causes. For the purposes of our interest in the logistical imaginary of

Amsterdam, the Urgenda case also offers a positive example of a democratic mode of accelerating both energy and cultural transition. Like many other nations on earth, the Netherlands is currently in the middle of a protruded and contested energy transition. Long reliant on fossil fuels in the form of natural gas, coal, and gasoline for domestic and industrial power and transportation—as well as private and public revenue connected to the leviathan that is Shell—the Dutch government has been surprisingly slow to advance policy, incentives, and mandates for an infrastructural and cultural transition to clean energy. Despite its global image as a clean and quiet nation, the Netherlands was by 2018 the worst performer on renewable energy in all of Europe (Eurostat 2018). Urgenda's argument from its filing in 2015 was that the Dutch government had sufficient information to act on behalf of its citizens to mitigate the dangers associated with global warming, and that by neglecting to do so it amounted to a wrongful act of the state—that, in other words, the Dutch state was *actively* and *knowingly* exposing its citizens to harm. The supreme court in the Hague hence supported the argument that the 2007 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report—advising a twenty-five to forty percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020—was, or could be understood as, legally binding, and therefore extraneous to the juridical sovereignty of any one nation-state. The Supreme Court established, in short, that refusing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by levels advised by the IPCC—a branch of the United Nations—amounted to an infringement on the basic human rights of the signatories.

But a question remained: how could a nation so fiscally and physically dependent on fossil fuels for its domestic and economic affairs possibly kickstart a transition that it and many other developed nations had argued was too ambitious or politically complex to accomplish? And how would it do so in less than a year? For the purpose of our particular focus on the industrial and cultural envelope of Amsterdam, the question is critical because, now closed, the Hemweg 8 coal plant—a source of electricity for both the port and the city—is implicated in the post-Urgenda timeline. But similar examples can be found wherever industrial and urban spaces are connected through fossil fueled power generation.

Until late 2019, the Hemweg 8 coal plant produced over 650MW of energy for both port-industry and surrounding electricity needs. The plant was built in 1994 by Swedish energy producer Vattenfall with an anticipated lifespan of forty years. In fact, Vattenfall had been the preferred provider of power plant infrastructure across the Netherlands, with its most recent plant in the Port of Rotterdam opening for business as late as 2015. Before the Urgenda case, the Dutch state had issued mandates for all coal-powered plants to close by 2029, providing Vattenfall with twelve years to either retrofit their plants to use clean energy or to abandon them as stranded assets. But by March of 2019, that transition timeline had to shrink from ten years to one. How the Dutch state will compensate Vattenfall's shareholders—who are legally entitled to returns on their investment—remains unclear, but Vattenfall also won the concession for four offshore wind farms off the coast of South-Holland—Hollandse Kust (zuid) I-IV—which is slated to become the world's largest wind farm unaided by subsidies. The speed of the project's rollout meets the energy needs of a region decommissioning coal power on a truncated timeline, promising to supply the Netherlands with 1500MW of power by 2023: roughly the electricity of two and a half Hemweg 8's, or approximately five percent of the total electricity production of the Netherlands (roughly two million homes equivalent).[1]

The Urgenda Climate Case and the rapid transition from coal to wind in the larger South Holland region are examples of how global warming is troubling the standard modes of governance built up in the age of fossil fuels. Polities appear to be more concerned about the ecological entanglements of a warming world than governments or industry, but the Supreme Court decision to uphold the case suggests a world where polities shape policy, instead of the other way around. And while the ecological impacts of installing and operating the largest wind farms on earth into the seabed of the North Sea remain uncertain, the one-year transition from coal to wind in the Port of Amsterdam is an important, if not unprecedented victory. But the victory could be more sustaining of environmental politics to come if it managed to address the longstanding bifurcation of logistical and energy infrastructures

[1] see "Regeling van de Minister van Economische Zaken en Klimaat"

from the cultural imaginary of urban centres like Amsterdam. The irony of the windfarms is that they both literally and figuratively *offshore* energy production, putting even more distance between urban dwellers and the energic source of their electric lives. In an effort to contextualize the bifurcation we have been addressing so far, we now turn back to the historical conditions that intensified the split between terminal and the tourist, and between logistical infrastructure and urban lifeworld. If the world after Urgenda is to be one more democratically negotiated by polity, industry, and the state, then an understanding of the aesthetic and discursive divorce between the terminal port and the cultural imaginaries of Amsterdam is needed.

II: Boomtown

To observe and analyse the bifurcation of the terminal port and city, and to get an overview of how it historically developed parallel to a specific set of cultural imaginaries that sought to leap Amsterdam out of an unemployment crisis, we now move to the top of the A'dam tower. Here, tourists who visit the city of Amsterdam can catch a view of the historical city centre on the other side of the IJ river, as well as a view of the surrounding post-industrial terrain including Eye Filmmuseum and the NSDM area—a former ship wharf in *Noord*. The tower, which was informally known as the Shell tower, has become something of a city monument of tourism after the renovation and transformation into the A'dam tower in 2016 (Hein 917).

Image 1. Doriann Kransberg. "Overhoeks." *Stadsarchief Amsterdam*, 2006.

The tower opened in 1971 as the headquarters building for Royal Dutch Shell. This was at a time when the North of Amsterdam still was an important industrial area, including shipbuilding at the NDSM wharf as well as petrochemical industries. However, as the city deindustrialized it also faced a labour crisis. This meant that in the late 1980s the city of Amsterdam was facing unemployment numbers that doubled the average of the country (Kloosterman 1327). At the time, housing in the North was organised around the factories for workers to be close to the production. The area was disconnected from the rest of Amsterdam and that, combined with the deindustrialisation of the labour-intensive factories at the location, meant that the area became an isolated place for unemployed workers—neglected in the political agenda of the city. The closure of the NSDM wharf and other factories during the industrial crisis of the 1970s and the 1980s meant that the seaport generally moved to the West of the city (Savini 142). Through the 1990s, multiple failed plans to revamp the North coincided with a continuous expansion of oil storage terminals in Westpoort. And, as the port moved west

it also moved out of the cultural imaginary of the city. A decade later, the oil storage terminals continuously expanded at the same time as the Shell tower and terrain, one of the last pinnacles of the industrial North, was renovated into a post-industrial monument for global tourism. The shift from labour-intensive production in Noord to the less labour-intensive terminal spaces in Westpoort was an important moment for the growing bifurcation between the Port and the City.

The bifurcation we are historicizing is thus bound up with the forms of labour that animate the city's economic activity, namely the transition from an industrial workforce to a service and creative form of post-industrial labour enumerated already in 1973 by Daniel Bell. As a response to the unemployment crisis in the 1980s and the negative discourse on the future of the city, The Architecture Centre of Amsterdam and the spatial planning department of the municipality published a glossy book called *Boomtown Amsterdam* in 1988. This happened in the pivotal moment of high unemployment—how could the city change its course and become a modern city and a global trade hub without losing its position as the cultural centrum of the Netherlands? A new vision of Amsterdam had been lurking around the corner for a few years: the completion of the World Trade Center in *Zuid* (Vlaanderen 78) and the application for the Summer Olympic Games in 1992 (Reich) indicated the rise of new cultural imaginaries of Amsterdam as a city for both global trade and tourism. From the first page of *Boomtown Amsterdam*, the new imaginary was symbolised from a bird's eye view of the South part of the city.

In the left corner of the photo is the, at the time, newly built World Trade Center. The frame and the angle make the building a focal point from where the viewer's gaze moves towards the horizon where Schiphol airport is visible. A dry text in the corner of the image states: "Economically important: the Zuid-as [South Axis]. Left below is the World Trade Center and Station Zuid/WTC. In the horizon Schiphol is visible" (Vlaanderen 9—translation our own). This way, the book firmly establishes its '*Boomtown* agenda' right from the start: promote growth in Zuid to create a global business hub in the southern periphery of the city with Schiphol airport as the main gateway to increase trading

and circulation. Interestingly, the photo gives a unique glimpse into the history of the space: to the left of the WTC, across the ring road and the Zuid station are a vast amount of tennis courts and a sports park, but no buildings. This is all different today. The *Boomtown* vision of modern high-rise buildings and global trading materialised and is now the island of finance-related companies that surrounds station Amsterdam Zuid: or rather, the vision is in a process of materialisation, as the Zuid island is constantly expanding and in its expansion closing the gap between the finance island and the Schiphol runways.

A recurring point in the book is the role of Schiphol as the future main port of Amsterdam. According to the authors: "Amsterdam, once a city with a majestic harbour front in the North, should in the future be regarded as a city with an airport front in the South. This means a total transformation [of the city]" (Vlaanderen 12—translation our own). The description "majestic harbour front in the North" refers not to the industrial shipbuilding and chemical factories in the mid-twentieth century, but to the romanticised 'Golden Era' of seventeenth-century mercantilism, colonialism and sail-capitalism where the port was in the centre of the maritime city. The harbour front of the seventeenth century was a lively place where trade, logistics and culture mixed with huge crews of dock workers. With the technology available at the time, shipping had a high labour intensity simply because extensive amounts of human power was needed to move goods (D'Eramo 86). The urge to put Amsterdam back on the world map was a central part of the discourse in *Boomtown*. The emphasis and nostalgia about the majestic port in Noord implied that the city needed to regenerate itself through a symbiosis between trading hubs, a cultural centre and the main port. And similar to seventeenth-century Amsterdam, the *Boomtown* vision incorporated the idea of mobilising huge crews of people—no longer as dock workers or seafarers, but as petro-mobile participants in global trade and circulation, as workers and tourists. In this sense, the vision of a change in what would be the main port of the City came true: but only to the extent that the traffic at the harbour front switched from sail and steam-capitalist trade and later industrial factories, to a commercial and cultural harbour front engaging petro-mobile mass tourism.

The terminal Westpoort remained invisible in the *Boomtown* discourse all the way. This was despite the book's focus and emphasis on global trade which relies on air and sea transport and the circulation of energy and goods through terminal landscapes like Westpoort. In other words, the focus on expanding Schiphol and the island of high-risers in Zuid in combination with the dream of a hyper-modern city that would re-enable global trade and international attention left no space for understanding the intensification of material footprints and especially fossil fuels it would entail. This way, the cultural imaginary of a global city remained as lightweight as ever, while the national fossil fuel energy usage soared in the next decades of transformation.

III: Finance-Fueled Fossil Futures

The imagined transition of Amsterdam in the 1980s started feeding into the asymmetry of the energy-intensive logistical city: terminal and touristic, with the bifurcation of the two as its inertia into a European capitol of capital. The *Boomtown* book promoted and anticipated a transformation of the city through the mobilisation of global finance capital in a hyper-modern environment in the periphery of the historical centre, supported by the logistical infrastructures of Schiphol that facilitated and amplified circulation of people and capital. What is crucial to note here is the intimacy of finance and fossil fuels, and the mediating function of the terminal where the two are most functionally recursive to one another. As is true in other centres of capitalism, post-1970s expansion in the fossil fuel industry worked symbiotically with the neoliberalization of the market, due first to the large sums of investment capital for new projects in the North Sea, and second because the flood of new oil guaranteed flows of revenue well into the future (Labban 2010). But it was to a fictional and nostalgic past that the municipal expansion was anchored, and not the fossil fueled future it was plotting for Amsterdam. The *Boomtown* narrative was nostalgic about the Golden Era and hesitant about the industrial period that followed (Vlaanderen 5). The hesitation about the industrial period and the focus on a new paradigm of global trade erased the history of the

expansion of the terminal port in West, which continued through the decline of labour-intensive industry in the north of the city. One major event in the continuous development of the terminal port happened just a few years before *Boomtown* was published: In October 1982, the two Dutch offshore North Sea oil platforms 'Helder' and 'Helm' officially opened—connected with a pipeline to the Oiltanking terminals at Westpoort (*Oiltanking*). The pipeline was the initial metabolism that would fuel new cultural imaginaries of *Boomtown's* globalized Amsterdam. Two decades later, a fossil-fueled handshake between aviation company KLM at the main port and Oiltanking in Westpoort cemented in the form of a pipeline on a thirty-year contract, connecting Oiltanking's storage terminals to Schiphol airport. Before this moment, kerosene was shipped with inland oil barges from Rotterdam, but this mode of distribution could no longer keep up with the capacity needed at the airport (*Nieuwsblad Transport;* "Kerosene").

To attain sustainable transitions, we need to embed the cultural imaginaries of urban centres like Amsterdam in the logistical energy infrastructures they rely on. Urgenda's climate case and the related closure of the Hemweg coal plant shows that it is possible to demand action that changes the relationship between the Port and the City—this momentum could prove essential in addressing sustainable transitions in the scale of global logistics. Because, additionally to electricity production and consumption, the light facade of the cultural city is sustained by global and oil-thirsty intermodal logistics. And as we argue in this paper, the connection between terminal landscapes and urban centres is something that needs to be researched and dissected to foster new representations and cultural imaginaries. One approach to bridging the gap between port and city is described by Brian Holmes in his recent work on "Anthropocene Public Space" (6). His conceptualization of public space in the Anthropocene is based on a collective and embodied experience of industrial spaces with immense carbon footprints, like the terminal Port in Amsterdam. The redirection of attention makes it possible for new representations to sprout: what is the cultural city when the terminal port is the carbon-intense foundation for its light facade? In the article, Holmes calls for a "[..] tactile, practical,

widely sharable confrontation with the human-generated forces that are transforming our biosphere" (5). He argues for an interdisciplinary force field of activists, artists and scholars alike, to create representations of the logistical infrastructures that are the foundational metabolisms of urban centres and at the same time the main driver of anthropogenic climate change. Inherent in the argument is that a confrontation needs to be intimate, action-based and multipliable. The representation and experience need to be sensible to the individual but scalable to make the political and material impact worthwhile—and here we see the Urgenda case as a prime example for such impact.

IV: Exaggerated Transition

Similar to Holmes' article on the transformative possibilities of embodied experiences from industrial sites, we find that the contrast between the urban centre and the terminal port in Amsterdam is stark, and it is at first sight hard to grasp how these spaces are entangled. From the western part of the city, one can reach the oil spaces at the terminal port if you cross underneath the A5 highway and continue westwards. The scale of the port means that no distance is short, but after half an hour one will eventually reach two of the biggest oil storage sites: Oiltanking and Evos (former Vopak site). Both storage terminals have a capacity of more than one million barrels of oil products, and in total the port stores enough oil to fill a swimming pool of almost eight thousand litres for each inhabitant in the city of Amsterdam ("Liquid Bulk"). To navigate the port on a bicycle is an experience of scale and feeling out of place: as one moves closer to the enormous industrial sites, things start to warp and change in size. Signs become bigger, roads become wider and cars turn into trucks. But that is not all. Where the urban centre of Amsterdam with its village-like narrow streets, bridges and bicycles feels like an open space for exploration and consumption, the terminal port—with its asphalt and concrete surfaces, endless fences and trucks—feels like a place where one either has a purpose or not. The signs at the port also reveal an interesting difference: compared to the signs in the urban centre that includes symbols, names, and distance

Image 2. Simon Oxholm Roy. "Zenith Energy Terminal - Westpoort, Amsterdam." 2019.

as a service for the many different nationalities visiting the city, many signs at the port consist only of numbers for the different area codes. This way, visitors at the port are expected to know their destination and to be able to decode the logic of the signs.

Decoding the port takes time, but once one is tuned into the functionality of the industrial aesthetics, things start to make more sense. In a way, the lack of cultural mediation of the space makes it easier to understand what is going on. One example of this are the roofs of the oil storage tanks: at first, the different storage tanks might appear the same. Immensely tall, white, cylindric and with a number painted on the site on each one of them. However, the roof type, if it is flat, cone or dome-shaped, open or closed, indicates what oil products the tank may contain. In the same way, dykes around oil storage terminals are not a decorative choice but a safety measure to prevent oil contamination of the surroundings in case of a spill. With this in mind, the dykes now represent and anticipate the scale of an accident which is always a risk at oil infrastructures. Eventually, tuning into the industrial semiotics and

infrastructural grammar of terminal spaces like the port is a helpful tool to start connecting it with the urban centre. In this way, we argue that bridging bifurcated spaces through embodied experience and archival research is an important part of sustainable transitions—since, in a time of anthropogenic climate change, business-as-usual and petro-political power thrive on the bifurcation of urban centres and terminal ports. The slow force of infrastructures that mould and form development and political decisions are not written onto the facade of the cultural city—and, to grasp it, one needs to research the archives as well as encounter the oil spaces first hand at the terminal port.

The Urgenda case and closure of the Hemweg power plant prove that it is possible to contest and defeat the political power ingrained in infrastructure spaces. However, the Urgenda case is just the beginning of a continuous struggle. The Dutch government has failed to stay on track with the planned twenty-five percent reduction in carbon emissions in 2020 so far—in reaction, Urgenda has deployed a new strand of tactics to reinforce the scheduled sustainable transition. The tactics are to make available a list of actions the government can take to get back on track with the emissions cut. The list consists of pragmatic and elaborated points to reduce carbon emission, from solar-panel implementation to a reduction of maximum speed on highways (*Urgenda*). These tactics seem to work as the government already implemented some of the points proposed by Urgenda. Interestingly, the strategy is similar to the activist tactic called "Exaggerated Compliance" which Keller Easterling describes in her defining book *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Spac*e. Here, she defines a type of compliant activism. The activism becomes effective when it not only complies with demand but exceeds it or manipulates it. In this way, compliance becomes a dominant force: like a student doing more than what is asked for and eventually forcing the professor to change or expand the curriculum and teaching methods. Urgenda is using exaggerated compliance as a way of helping the government in a sustainable transition. After realising that the government was not on track with the twenty-five percent reduction in carbon emissions as determined by the Urgenda Climate Case, they compiled a list of sustainable actions to take to meet the

agreed reduction. This is the exaggerated compliance tactic, providing the government with an ever-growing list of sustainable actions. The list started at forty different points of action but now contains 54 points and keeps growing, thereby forcing the government to keep up or even accelerate their action. And as Urgenda expands and its tactics begin to encourage a united ecological front—inclusive, for instance, of Extinction Rebellion activists, human rights advocates, and environmental NGOs—the significance of the terminal might yet emerge as a focal point for environmental justice.

While the focus shifts from sites of energy production internal to the Netherlands to the global network of consumers *implied* by, but not visible amidst, Amsterdam's terminal landscape, a new cultural imaginary is required to politicize the scales and scenes of emissions compromising our shared ecological futures. If the first phase of transition succeeded because Urgenda worked within the Dutch legal frameworks, the next phase will need to work within a larger scale of political ecology—one bound not by the nation but by the transnational network of landscapes connected materially by the geography of fossil fuel extraction, storage, circulation, and consumption. If, in other words, fossil fuels verifiably contravene our shared human rights, then they do so wherever they are burned. While Amsterdam's terminal landscape is site-specific and bound up with the cultural and economic life of the city, it is also a primary nodal point in the increasingly tangible terminus of our ecological viability as a species: a terminal in both the physical and temporal sense of the concept. That the terminal port animates the bifurcation of logistics and social life is precisely why it needs to become a core concept in ecological justice movements to come. A shift in attention from smokestacks to the tank farms that line the interface of land and maritime trade all over the world will mean we can start to reformulate the current terminal and the ecological crisis it promises into a driver and space for sustainable transitions.

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