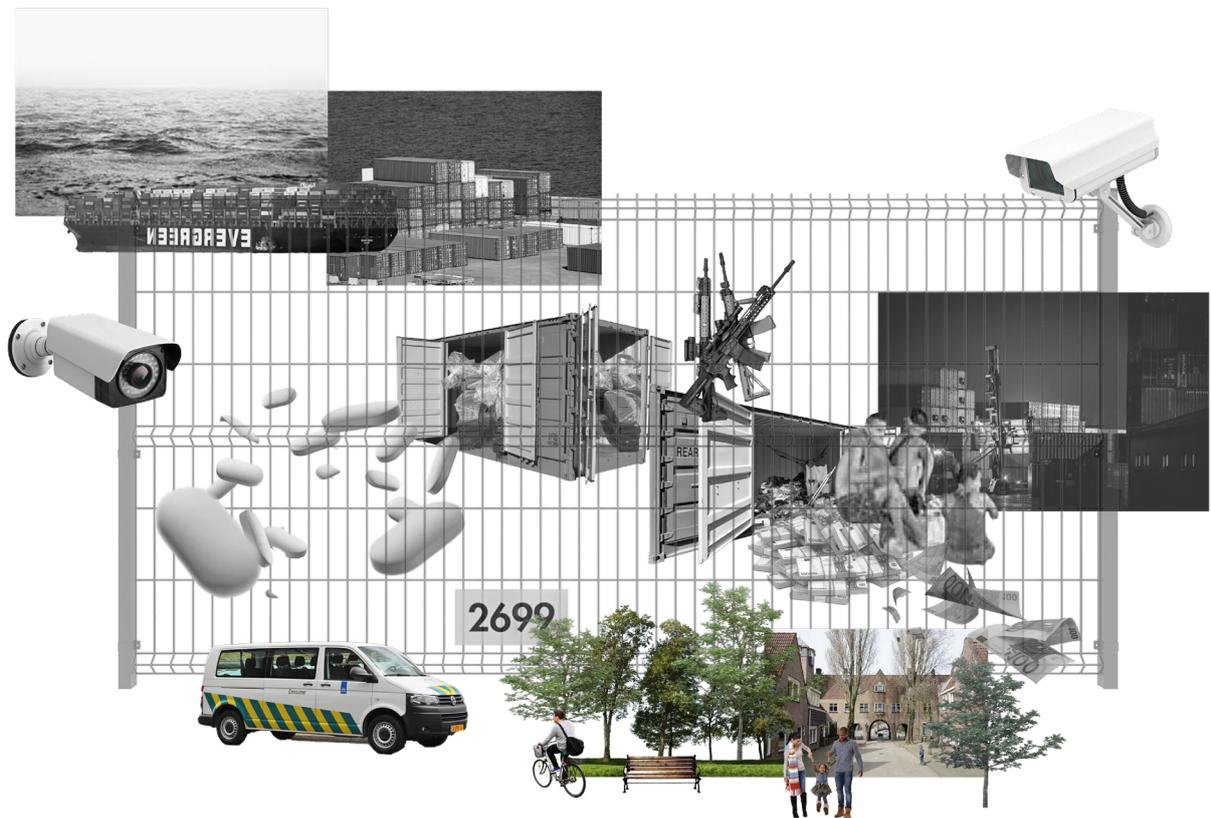


Turning "Virtual Fence" into Safety Net for Heijplaat

Narcotic flow in the Working Ports, an Elephant around the Port-Nested-Village



**Turning “Virtual Fence*” into Safety Net for Heijplaat:
Narcotic flow in the Working Ports, an Elephant around the Port-Nested-Village**

* “Virtual Fence” is the project by the Port Authority under the program “Undermining Crimes.”
This is elaborated further on page 15 and Appendix D.

Keywords

Working Port, Port-Nested-Village, Security vs. Safety, Narcotic Flow,
Externe Veiligheid, Natural Surveillance

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after moving to the netherlands in 2023, i realized my emotional connection with water. 7 years in china in a city known as "the city of canals" and 9 years in hong kong, the main island surrounded by the sea, and now in the land lower than the sea level - water has been omnipresent in my daily life.

but it was only since i started at tu delft that water became an actual statement - having written a thesis paper on rooftops as terra incognita in the blurring of land and water binary, developed an academic project for resilient public buildings amongst sea level rise in harbour city and an island, and participating in a student pavilion design team that aims to deal with water reuse. i'm here to see what other light can shine on water, but i'm not drowning.....

- Notes from Week 1

back-ground

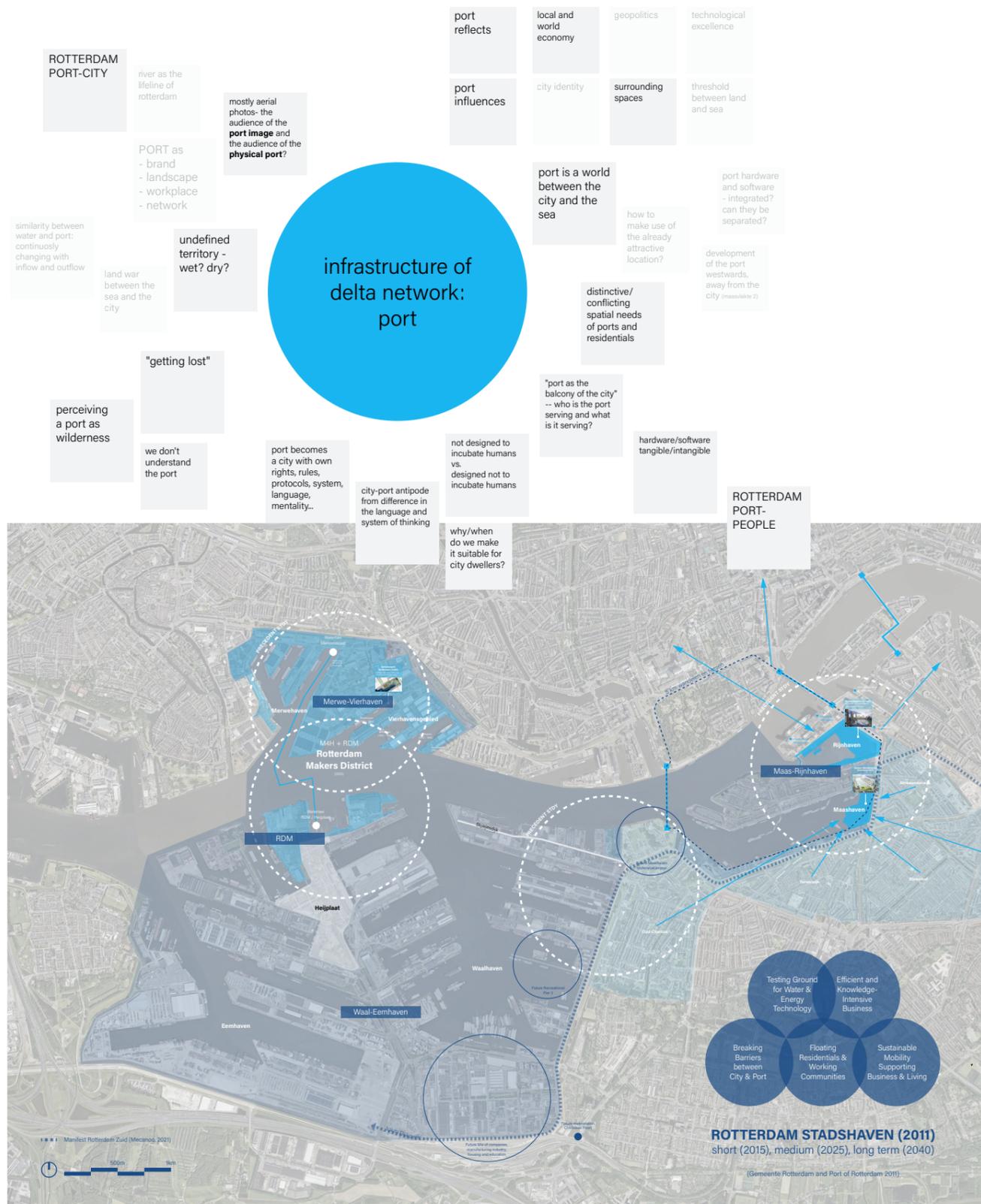


Introduction to Veldacademie Graduation Lab

The river Maas is inseparable from the development of the city of Rotterdam. The city sits on both banks of the Nieuwe Maas that flows through and continues far into the hinterland - the direct connection to the North Sea has been bringing historic, ecological, economic, and social values to the city. As much as this "lifeline of the city" binds the two chunks together, it separates them apart - Rotterdammers from above the river gave the nickname "Boerenzij (the rural side)" to people in Rotterdam South to indicate that the people there were not real city dwellers. (TENT Rotterdam 2021)

This graduation studio lays ground in Rotterdam South with a focus on human and social aspects of architecture. I believe that unlocking flows of, with, and around water in our (status quo) dry world can make a city like Rotterdam, particularly Rotterdam South, a testing ground for unique water-human-land integration.

middle ground



Problem Field

Port, a space of flow. As one of the main infrastructures of the delta, the port is a special world between the land and the sea. It is where national and global economies meet and exchange cargos of commodities, bringing opportunities and innovations to the port-city. As a connecting port to the entire network in Europe and beyond, the port of Rotterdam successfully gained its name as "the biggest port in Europe" already in the 1950s. The port established not only a strong economy but also an identity, brand, and memory for the city. (Steenhuis et al. 2015)

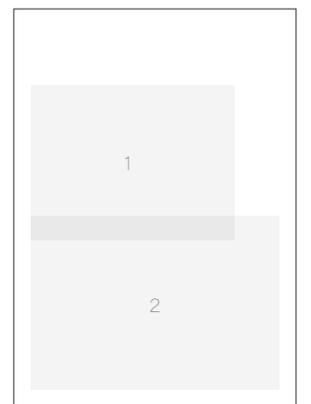
Whereas the port was making the city in the past, today, the post-war city is (re-)making the port. Historically cut deep into the city fabric, the port of Rotterdam has been developing westwards to the North Sea since the 1960s (Appendix A), leaving the ports situated near the city (Stadshaven) to the discussion of "keep, get rid of, rebuild". For example, Maashaven and Rijnhaven have uncovered their potential to rebuild their ecosystem to reflect the urban priorities (i.e. residential and park). (Gemeente Rotterdam 2024, Appendix B) These "post-ports" directly connected to the urban core demonstrate the "renewal of port/city links" (Hoyle 1989, Appendix C), integrating port ground into the urban development.

Still, Rotterdam continues to employ the romanticized image this manmade landscape offers to the city. Simply searching for images of "Rotterdam port" on a search engine, one can notice that most of the images are taken from a bird's eye view. (Appendix D) The question then is, *how does this image make us oblivious of what port delivers to the people of Rotterdam, rather than to the city of Rotterdam?*

Urgency of the Issue

This calls for zooming into what water and the port can unintentionally bring to the people. The very reason for "gateway to/from Europe" - the geographic location, the economic efficiency, and the robust infrastructure, makes the port ground attractive to deviant and/or criminal activities. (Staring 2019) It is not surprising to find that the "working ports" closer to the city are targeted for these undermining crimes*, for one, drug smuggling - after clearance in Rotterdam, cargo can freely travel to other EU states. (Port of Rotterdam 2018) Such (global) narcotic inflow into these (local) working ports poses a special risk because the impact of the happening can span into the city and the wider (national and global) network. Therefore, it is worth to seize what the failure of the port security can inject into the port ground and beyond.

* Undermining crime refers to a crime that uses legitimate businesses and services for illegal activities. (Government of the Netherlands 2024)



- 1 Brainstorming on Fascination of Delta Infrastructure: Port
- 2 Positioning the Fascination in the Context of Rotterdam: Study on Stadshaven Today



fast vehicle, noise nuisance from the industrial activities, scale of objects aiming at running trucks, anonymous objects



Industrial Entrance

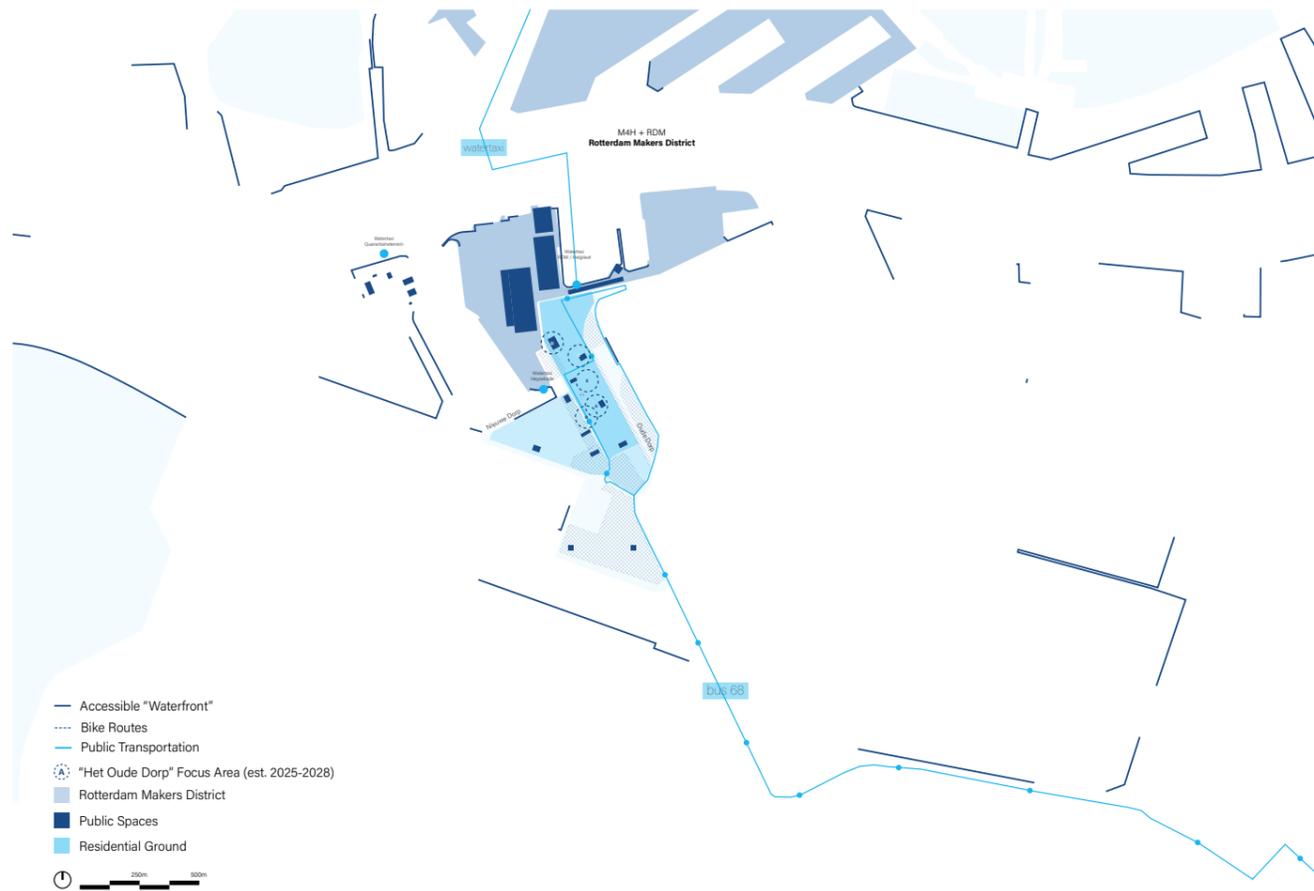


walkable, smaller familiar objects, less/slower vehicles



to Heijplaat Village

3 Photo Reportage "Who Would Think There's a Village Inside?" (Sep 2024)



foreground

Location

Unlike the aforementioned post-ports that transformed into a waterfront with a strong motif to serve the residential districts nearby and across the river, Waalhaven and Eemhaven remain as working ports*. Relatively detached from the urban core, they have continued to develop into the center of transshipment, logistics, and distribution services.

This places the neighborhood of Heijplaat in a complex position. Heijplaat is a small village with around 1,800 residents (est. 2023), completely encircled by Waal-Eemhaven. It was originally established in the 1910s as a garden-village to inhabit the dockworkers of Rotterdam Dry Dock Company (RDM, at the northern tip of the port). Shortly after RDM went through bankruptcy in the 1980s, the village faced a risk of demolition in 1990 but survived with a community protest. (Gemeente Rotterdam 2024) Although the village itself has little to do with port activities anymore, it has rebranded as a "Cool Village in the Harbour**".

Complexity

Administratively speaking, the village falls under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Rotterdam, while all the matters of the port are handled by the Rotterdam Port Authority***. Although 70% of its share belongs to the municipality, it is not responsible for urban development. The port has become its own "city" with its actors, planning guidelines, legal regimes, and governance frameworks. Although the port ground and the village ground are physically adjoining, the mapping of the port functions and the residential functions on the same base map disclose distinctive spatial dynamics - different scales of structure, mobility system, and configuration of the fabric. More importantly, the interrelationship between the common element of water and the actors of each is activated differently. Whereas the port utilizes the water "body" for the transport of economies, residents have limited accessibility to the waterfront, shown by fragmented water "lines" detached from the residential. As such, the industrial port and the residential community on the antipode but one physically embracing another makes it difficult to integrate nor separate goals and priorities in this area.

Indeed, the vague boundary on the map can be highly deceptive, especially in the case of Heijplaat. Because of its specificities, it requires a new classification - it is not directly comparable to other garden villages in Rotterdam (e.g. Vreewijk) or other port-villages of Rotterdam Kleine Kernen (e.g. Pernis, Rozenburg, Hoek van Holland). As a "port-nested-village", it demands more nuanced and specialized discussion about what - whether "safe" or "unsafe", can trespass over the insignificant separation barriers from the port ground to the village ground.

Problematization

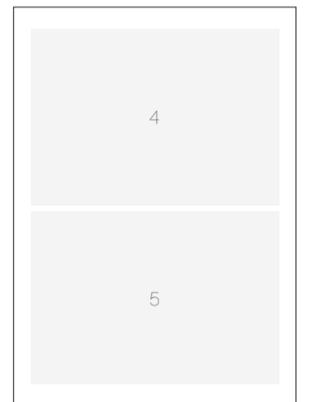
From this, one could easily conclude that this port-nested-village may be vulnerable to unsafe inflow from the port. However, the Wijkprofiel index**** shows that Heijplaat has been objectively and subjectively a "very safe milieu" since 2022. (Appendix E) This is surprising, considering the occasional but constant reports on illegal drug smuggling/trafficking caught on the empty cargo lots of Waal-Eemhaven. The breakage of "security" in the port does not seem to affect the sense of "safety" in the village.

* Waal-Eemhaven plots are still operating as "working ports", except for the former RDM plot that now hosts several educational institutions, which is a part of the Rotterdam Makers District.

** The Wijkkoord (Neighborhood Agreement) between the Heijplaat neighborhood and the municipality of Rotterdam states the slogan of "Stoer Dorp in de Haven".

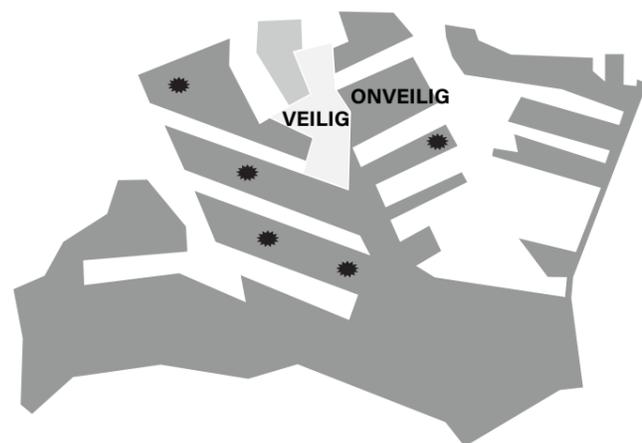
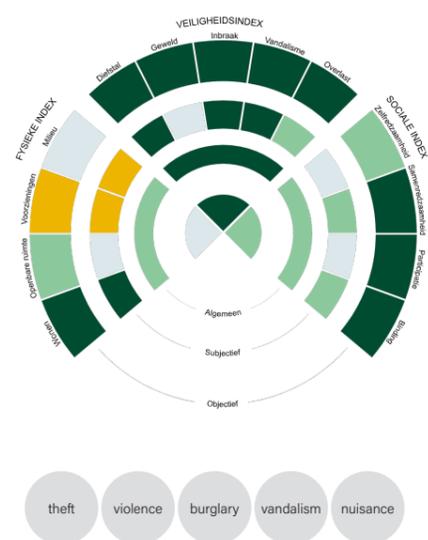
*** Formerly a department in Rotterdam Municipality, it became a semi-private operation in 2004 with operational freedom.

**** Measured by the municipality on the domains of the physical environment, safety, and social capacity.

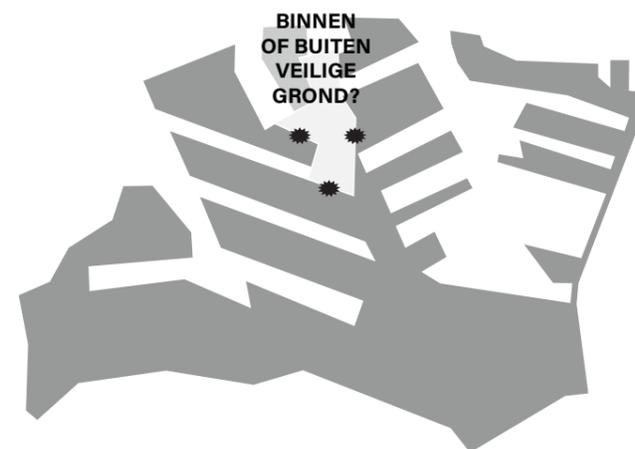


4 Mapping of Port Functions and Interrelationship with Water

5 Mapping of Residential Functions and Interrelationship with Water

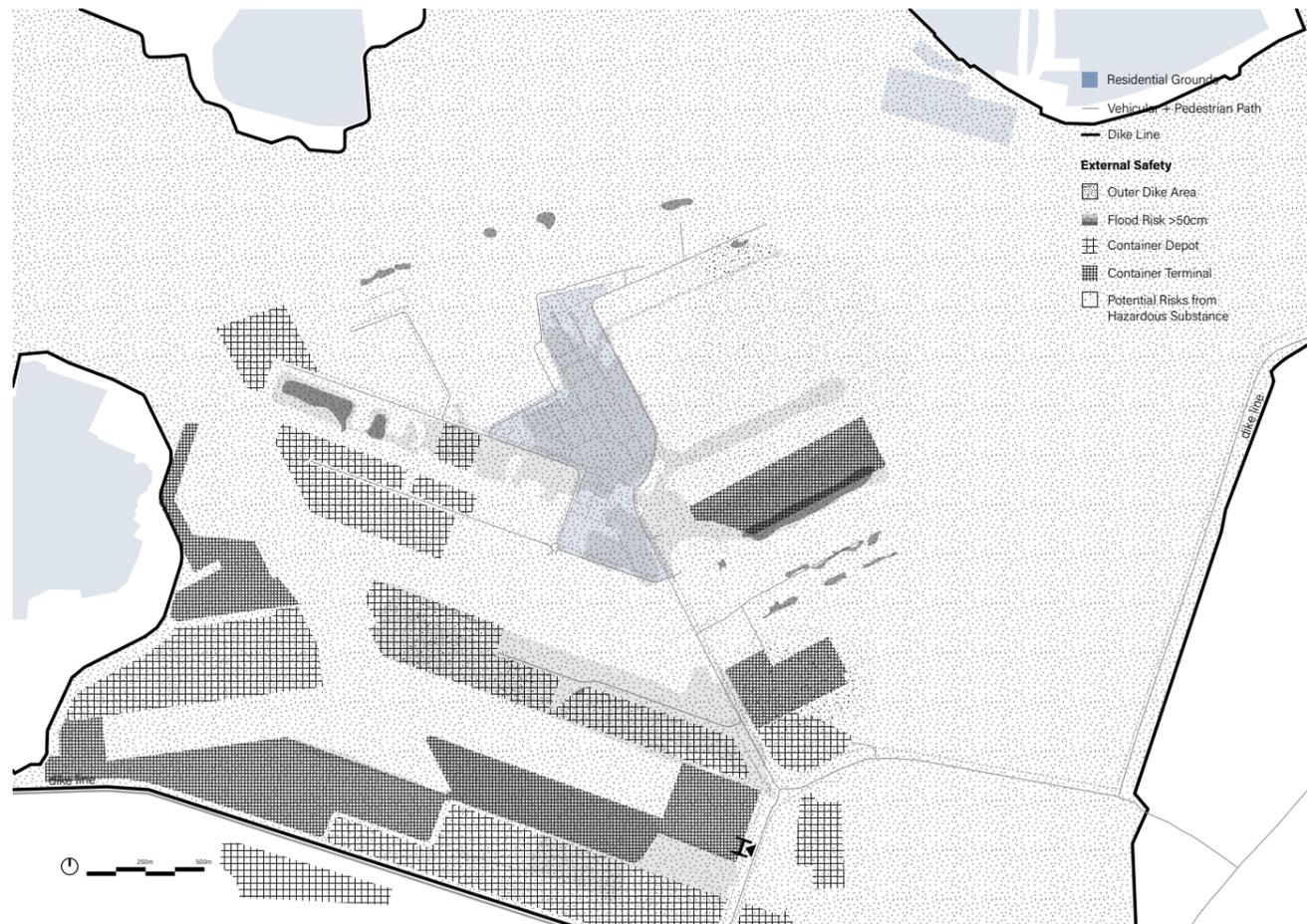


- village ground
- public (rdm)
- port ground



6 'Pacman' diagrams from the Wijkprofiel of Heijplaat (2024) by Gemeente Rotterdam.

7 "One step inside the boundary, is it safe? One step outside the boundary, is it unsafe?"



problem statement

Societal Relevance

The prevalent utopian stigmatization that the ground before the fence is safe and the ground over the fence is unsafe is questionable, especially when the village and the port share the boundary without a clear threshold. This thinking is “unsafe” because the port can quickly turn its position from a “special world between the land and the sea” to where the undermining world comes in contact with the legitimate world - approached by criminals, residents and employees of the port companies confront the risks of participating in the drug smuggling chain (Appendix F) by sharing information and access to the industrial ground. (Staring 2023, Appendix G) Even if such networked crimes do not pose an immediate threat to the village, the abstract line between security on the port ground and safety on the village ground is why we need a different type of transformation here.

Positioning

What makes the port cordial to all kinds of unsafe inflow must be more than its strategic location, but also in the difference in the language of the stakeholders - the presence, absence, and misuse of certain notions.

For one, the distinguished notions of external safety and internal safety (Clingendael 2016, Illustration 6) are not reflected in the municipality's neighborhood safety index*. External safety concerns with transnational and cross-border crimes and the five criteria of the neighborhood safety index by far do not reflect this. The import and export of narcotics do not respect the borders on the map and it's usually only tackled as a national security problem. (van der Laan et al. 2016). This way of measuring safety might well reflect the other neighborhoods in the city, but the specificities of Heijplaat must seek the right method for measuring and mapping the external safety risks.

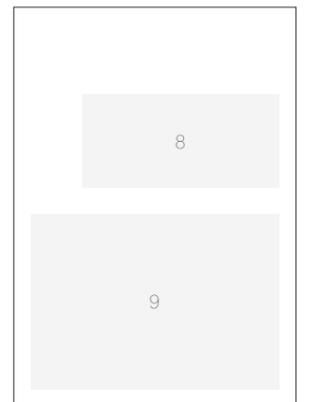
The second problem is that the security measures are limited to the institutional level. Already in 1930, Douane (Customs) concluded that it was not feasible to control all ships in the Rotterdam harbour on illegal drugs with mechanical surveillance and law enforcement. (Snelders 2021) Still, the municipality proposes camera surveillance as the ultimate solution, if all other options are found ineffective in Heijplaat. (Gemeente Rotterdam 2023) Reporting suspicion of undermining crimes is done through a digital platform, which is restricted to after-actions. (Appendix H) As a semi-private operation, the Port Authority also launched the program “Undermining Crimes” to fight against hard violations of the port security through the project “virtual fence”. (Port of Rotterdam 2024, Appendix I) However, this project doesn't go beyond law enforcement for tighter surveillance and raising awareness**. A limited collaborative effort between governmental bodies and private companies in locating surveillance cameras on private premises resulted in a failure to meet the goal in 2023. (Port of Rotterdam 2023) If institutional strategies*** cannot tackle the issue of narcotic flow, *can architecture take a part?*

So how can we take action to safety-fy the working port of Waal-Eemhaven and the port-nested-village of Heijplaat as a whole?

* Wijkprofiel of Heijplaat (2024) / Gemeente Rotterdam

** Five actions being taken by the Port of Rotterdam (2023)
 - Imposing additional security requirements
 - Installing smart cameras
 - Facilitating consultations between companies
 - 'Know your customer' project
 - Financial investment against PIN code fraud

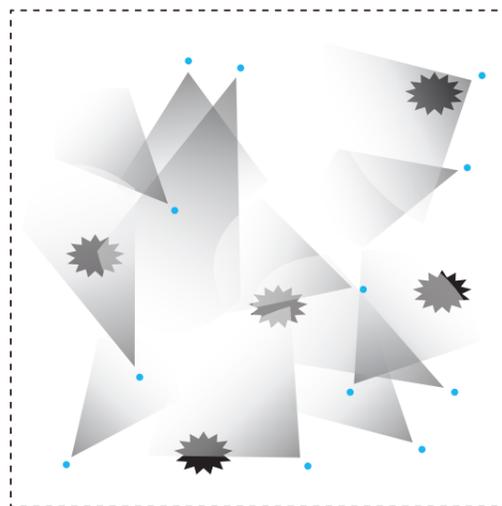
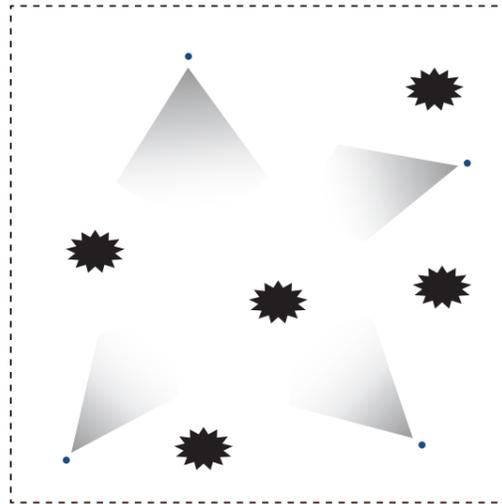
*** Relevant institutions include the HARC (Hit And Run Cargo) team, Customs, Seaport Police, and individual companies.



8 Category of Internal Safety and External Safety (van der Laan 2016)

9 Attempt to Map External Safety Risks from the Port to the Port-Nested-Village

theoretical framework



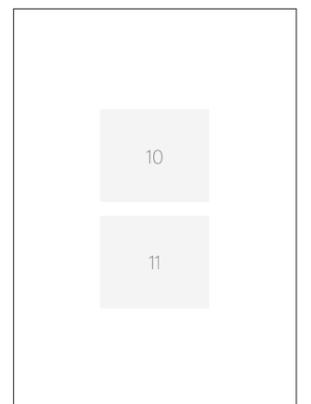
Departure Point

Moving on from the preliminary research, further research will react upon two existing theories to explore the physical & social and environment & behavior in the context of a sense of safety. First, the Defensible Space Theory by Oscar Newman (Newman 1972) dwells on the psychology of human being protective to the terrorized domains. Second, The Eyes on the Street Concept by Jane Jacobs (Jacobs 1961) starts from the human actions of informal observation in domains that draw them naturally.

Both discuss the notion of natural surveillance, while the former focuses on the physical intervention that creates territorial boundaries, the latter takes a humanistic approach. The careful combination of the two can hint what spatial qualities can turn “virtual fence” to a safety net. At the same time, both are intended for urban environments, thus are not directly applicable to the port environment. As a matter of fact, port is not designed to incubate humans and, also, is designed not to incubate humans. That being said, the lessons from the two theories must be geared to bridge the gap between these theories and the language (spatial, social, environmental, political, etc.) specific to the port and port-nested-village.

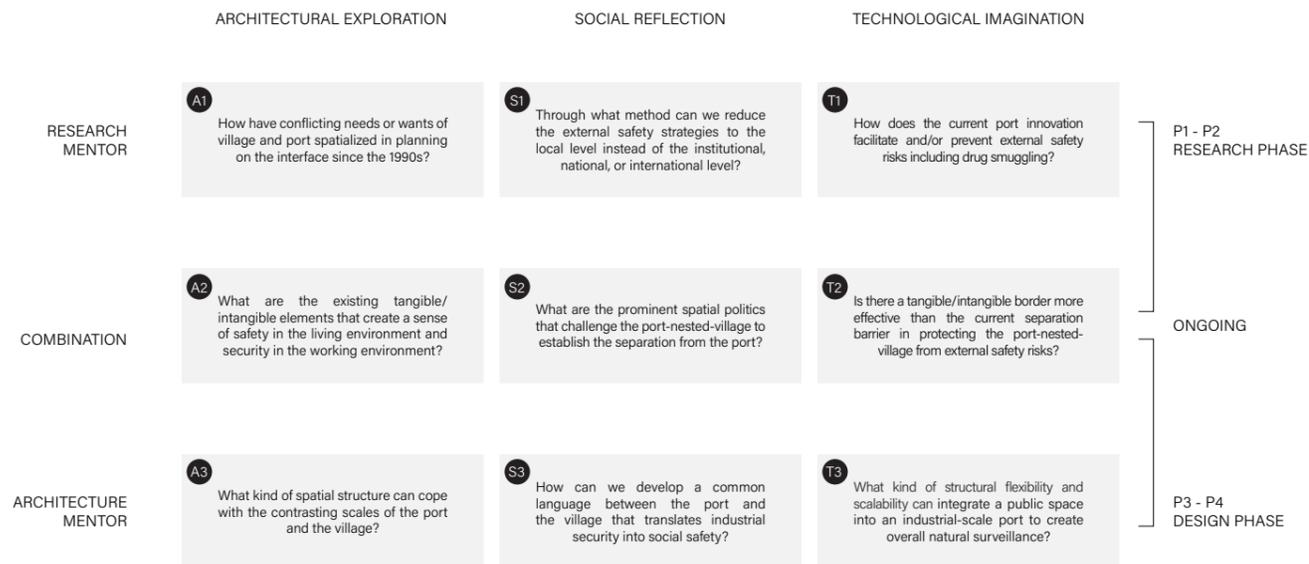
Scope of the Research

In order to produce architectural/urban intervention as the final outcome of the project, the research will emphasize the elements that are tangible or have spatial qualities; that excludes in-depth study on (narcotic) criminology and law and regulations related to it. The hyper-complexity of the port system and the little-known organized crime might raise a difficulty in the research process, yet, this is expected to be mitigated by collaborating with relevant organizations. Lastly, if any, confidential information collected during the research should not be directly published to prevent the misuse of the information. As it progresses, the project will inform itself the further appropriate actions under the supervision.



- 10 Conceptual Diagram of Mechanical Surveillance: Fixed Location and Range
- 11 Conceptual Diagram of Human Surveillance: Unpredictable Patterns

Can architectural/urban intervention activate spatial qualities that create a safety net for the port-nested-village against oblivious external safety risks?



research question

Initial Hypothesis

The main research question was framed under the hypothesis that due to the specificities of the port-nested-village, Heijplaat cannot be completely free from unsafe inflow from the port, for one, the illegal narcotic import: there is an oblivious belief of "safety" in the village. Sub-questions are defined in three pillars of architectural exploration, social reflection, and technological (digital to building technology) imagination. Each set of three sub-questions corresponds to the project phase for different purposes.

Sub-questions

Sub-questions on the first row (A1, S1, T1) will validate or correct the current hypothesis. Therefore, these are the priorities in the research phase at the beginning of P2.

A1: How have conflicting needs or wants of village and port spatialized in planning on the interface since the 1990s?

S1: Through what method can we reduce the external safety strategies to the local level instead of the institutional, national, or international level?

T1: How does the current port innovation facilitate and/or prevent external safety risks including drug smuggling?

Sub-questions on the second row (A2, S2, T2) will run parallel with the ones on the first row (A1, S1, T1), as the preparatory steps before the design phase.

A2: What are the existing tangible/intangible elements that create a sense of safety in the living environment and security in the working environment?

S2: What are the prominent spatial politics that challenge the port-nested-village to establish the separation from the port?

T2: Is there a tangible/intangible border more effective than the current separation barrier in protecting the port-nested-village from external safety risks?

Sub-questions on the third row (A3, S3, T3) shall not be definitive at this point, as they will evolve into design questions tackle clear (refined) design goal.

A3: What kind of spatial structure can cope with the contrasting scales of the port and the village?

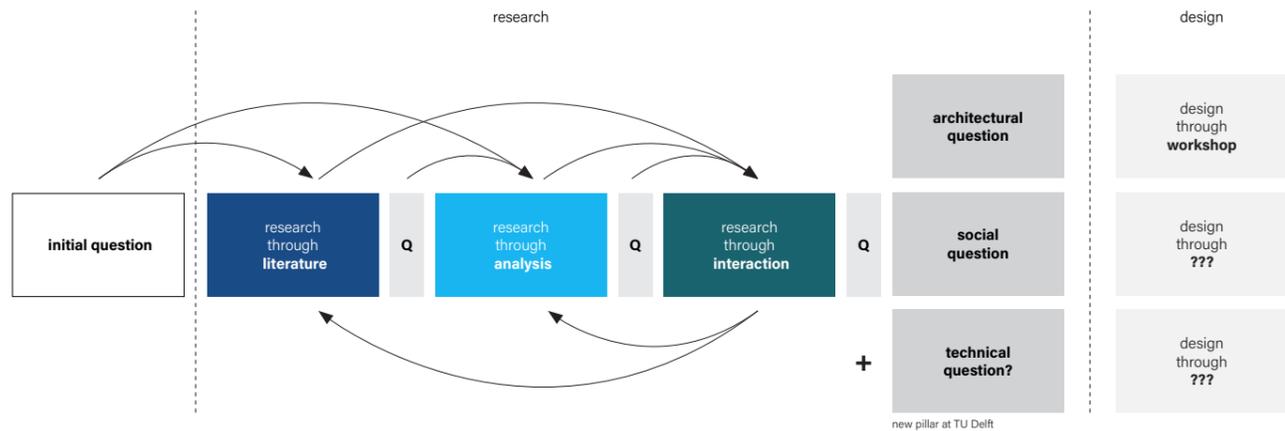
S3: How can we develop a common language between the port and the village that translates industrial security into social safety?

T3: What kind of structural flexibility and scalability can integrate a public space into an industrial-scale port to create overall natural surveillance?



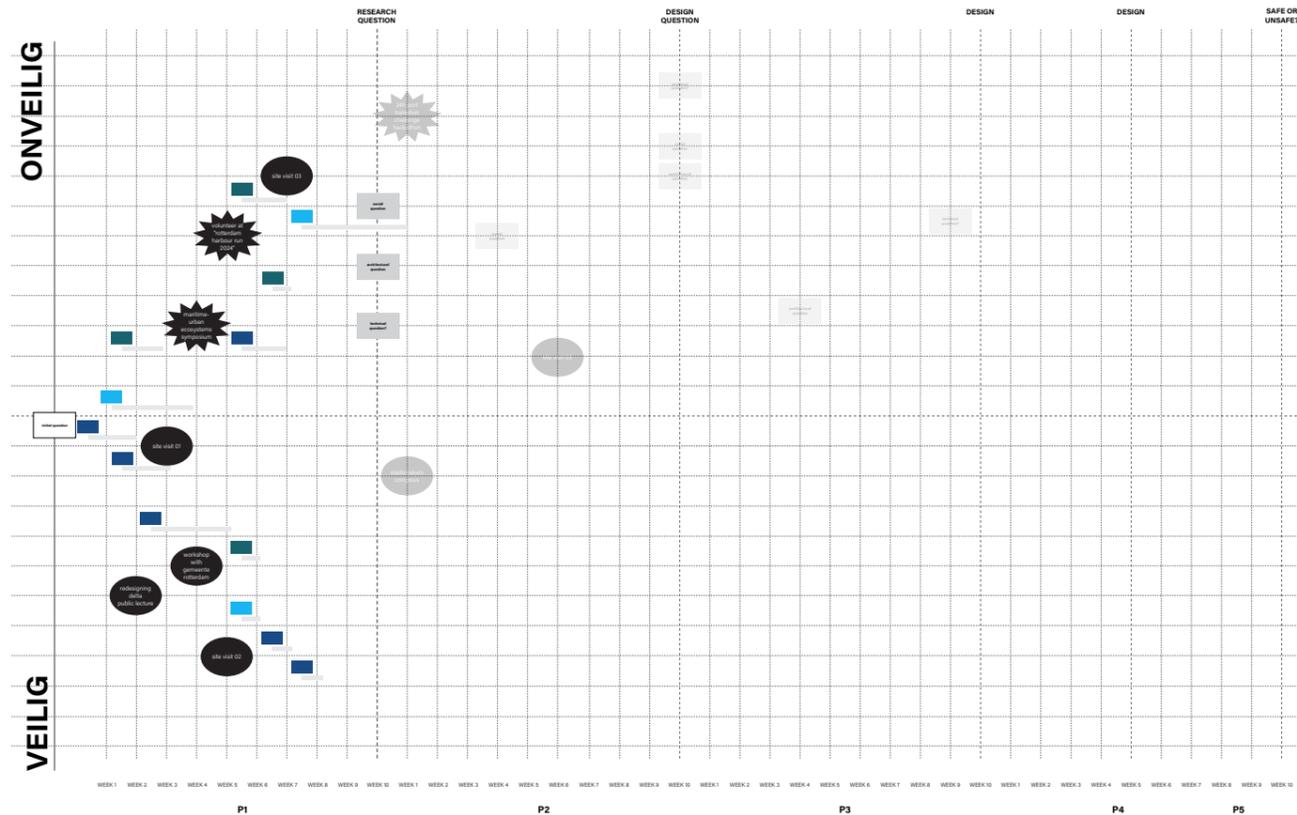
12 Main Research Question and Sub-questions Categorized under Three Pillars and Three Timeframe

How is it safe "here" and unsafe "there?"



P1 - P2 - P3 - P4 - P5

PLAYING UNSAFE



methodology

Research by Questioning

The research found the right direction with a spark of (almost) instinctive question upon observing the illogical distinction between security in the port and safety in the village despite the geographical adjacency - "how is it safe here and unsafe there?" This has led to subsequent questions. Research through literature, analysis, or interaction answered some of the questions in the course of 9 weeks preparing for the Research Plan. At other times, they generated further questions. The main and sub-questions are formulated from the unanswered questions at the end of P1. Again, these questions will find their way under the umbrella of three categories:

Research through literature including but not limited to:

- 1) Historical research (e.g. newspaper, planning report)
- 2) Literature review (e.g. research papers introducing relevant notions and topics)
- 3) Collection of data from online sources (e.g. Heijplaat local blog, Port Authority, Government of Netherlands, companies located at Waal-Eemhaven)
- 4) Case studies of architecture/urban projects

Research through analysis including but not limited to:

- 1) (Comparative) mapping series in city-scale and village-scale
- 2) Port and village objects diagrammed into a categorized catalog
- 3) Chronological cartography of social findings
- 4) Collages and sketches for collaboration/workshop

Research through interaction including but not limited to:

- 1) On-site observation and documentation (e.g. photo reportage)
- 2) On-field participation in port-related events*
- 3) Interviews with residents, city experts, and port companies employees
- 4) Collaboration/workshop with residents, neighborhood council, and third-party organization FORT-PORT**

Personal Motivation

Among the three, research through interaction demands the most emphasis. One says the world is changing not by information, but by knowledge, which stems from interaction. The "Playing Unsafe" chart*** will visualize the vertical integration and horizontal expansion of the knowledge throughout the project. Just like one conversation at the site pushed me to get out of my comfort zone, research through interaction, the core of Veldacademie Graduation Lab, will bring me to the "unsafe" world.

* On-field participation so far: Public lecture by Redesigning Deltas group (week 1.2), workshop with municipality of Rotterdam (week 1.4), symposium by PortCityFutures group (week 1.4), volunteering at Harbour Run Rotterdam (week 1.5), symposium at Tallinn Architecture Biennale (week 1.6), and attending PhD Defence on water-sensitive design (week 1.9)

** Possible research-design collaboration with FORT-PORT is under discussion.

*** Assessment of "safe" or "unsafe" will be done at least two weeks afterward and will continue to be adjusted throughout the process.



13 Initial Intuitive Question

14 Back-and-Forth Questioning and Answering through Three Types of Research Methods

15 "Playing Unsafe" Chart Sample: Questions and Research in the Level of Safe/Unsafe

research questions - methodology

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

DESIGN QUESTIONS

ARCHITECTURAL EXPLORATION

SOCIAL REFLECTION

TECHNOLOGICAL IMAGINATION



Appendix F



Container ship moored at the EuroMax shipping terminal in the Port of Rotterdam - Credit: Foto-VDW / DepositPhotos - License: DepositPhotos

CRIME BUSINESS DRUG TRAFFICKING COCAINE PORT OF ROTTERDAM AIVD » MORE TAGS

SHARE THIS:

WEDNESDAY, 22 MARCH 2023 - 09:45

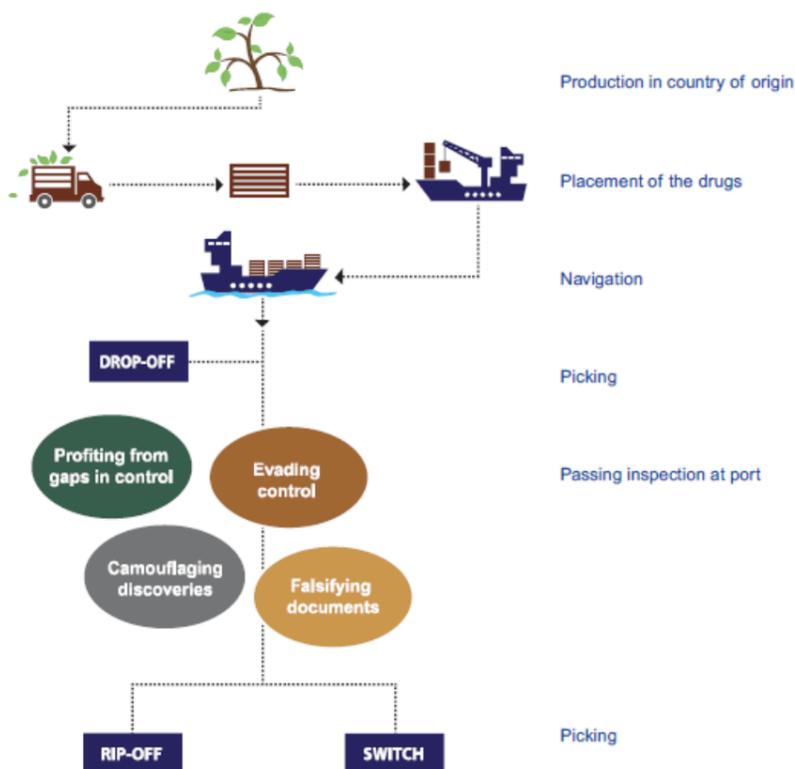
Thousands of Rotterdam port workers to be screened for links to drug crime

Companies in the port of Rotterdam will team up with intelligence service AIVD to screen thousands of employees and drivers for criminal offenses linked to drug crime. It involves employees in positions interesting for drug traffickers, like planners at terminals and truck drivers, [Trouw](#) reports.

Some port companies already use a standard certificate of good conduct to screen employees. In the new screening, the screening authority, Justis, will look specifically for cases relevant to drugs and drug smuggling. Employees will have to reapply for this special certificate of good conduct periodically. This form of screening by the AIVD is also used for Schiphol employees.

Risks Posed to the Port Employees to Participate in the Drug Crime Chain (NL Times 2023)

Appendix G



Drug Smuggling Process from Country of Origin to Delivery (Staring 2023)

Appendix H

Screenshots of "Veiligheidsloket (Security desk)" Page on Gemeente Rotterdam Website (Gemeente Rotterdam 2024)

Appendix I

A safe haven: who does what?

As the largest port in Europe, Rotterdam is one of the most important gateways for goods to Europe. As a result, the port is also a major attraction for organised drug crime. The seaport police, customs, the municipality of Rotterdam, the Port of Rotterdam Authority, the HARC team and companies active in the port form a united front against drug crime and develop joint initiatives for this purpose. Such as exchanging information (knowledge platforms), hanging cameras in the port (Virtual fence), securing terminal areas, educating and encouraging the integrity of employees (Programme Integrity of the Port) and making logistics chains digitally resilient (FERM and the Trust Chain).

POLICE

The Seaport Police are responsible for nautical surveillance, environmental enforcement, combating crime and border control. They provide support and investigate incidents.

PORT AUTHORITY OF ROTTERDAM

The Port of Rotterdam Authority is developing a leading, safe, efficient and sustainable port and industrial area. The Harbour Master Division is part of the Port Authority and is responsible for the safe and smooth handling of shipping, port security and nautical supervision.

CUSTOMS

Customs supervises the import and export and the transport of goods. To this end, this service carries out a large number of controlling, signalling and investigation tasks. Controls are carried out on the basis of risk profiles.

HARC TEAM

The Hit And Run Cargo (HARC) team is a collaboration between customs, FIOD, seaport police and the Public Prosecution Service in Rotterdam. The HARC team is involved in the investigation and prosecution of major investigations into drug crime in and around the port of Rotterdam.

HAVENTERMINALS

The terminals provide for unloading, loading and storage of goods. Responsible for securing their premises. Have an important role in raising awareness and acting with integrity by employees.

BASIS

Enterprising and efficient organization.

| MATERIAL THEME | KPI | GOAL 2023 | REALIZATION 2023 | REALIZATION 2022 | REALIZATION 2021 | CONTRIBUTION TO SDG |
|-------------------|---|-----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|---|
| Undermining crime | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing awareness Progress on 'Virtual Fence' project | Green | Orange | - | - | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH |

| THE IMPACT OF THE PORT OF ROTTERDAM | SELECTION OF RELEVANT CAPITALS | MAJOR RISKS |
|--|--|--|
| <p>KT - Undermining, mixing of the underworld and upper world (often drug-related), is increasingly a problem for the port of Rotterdam. It disrupts logistical efficiency and causes a feeling of insecurity among residents and employees in the port.</p> <p>LT- Long-term problems surrounding undermining crime can lead to a decline in support for the port and damage our reputation. This translates into a worse business climate.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our people - Finances - Infrastructure | <p>T10 - Terrorist attack in the port</p> <p>T13 - Undermining crime in the port</p> |

Strategies to Tackle Undermining Crimes in Port (Port of Rotterdam 2023) / Images Originally in Dutch, Machine-translated by Google Translate

image credits

All the illustrations in this Research Plan are done by the author. Images in the Appendices section are from the following sources:

Appendix A

Port of Rotterdam. 2017. "Rotterdam's Port Development." Port of Rotterdam. 2017. https://www.portofrotterdam.com/sites/default/files/styles/por_is_content_image/public/history-port-asia.jpg?tok=fxLpfjVK

Appendix B

Gemeente Rotterdam. 2024. "Rijnhaven." Gemeente Rotterdam. 2024. <https://www.rotterdam.nl/rijnhaven>.

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Appendix C

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