

Opting for Oil

Rotterdam's Oil Port and the Move from Coal to Oil of the Rhine Industry, 1945-1975

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Relevance

What explains the continuity in 140 years of economic relations between the Rotterdam port and the German Ruhr area, even though the initial cause for regional integration of the Lower Rhine region has disappeared?

Research problem

- 1945-1975: Transition coal to oil
 - Oil boom in Rotterdam port
 - Coal crisis in the Rhine-Ruhr area
- So far, studied as unrelated cases
- Transition: break or continuity in Rotterdam-Rhine-Ruhr relationship?
- Role of firms and governments

Shell Netherlands Refinery, Rotterdam-Pernis (1st and 2nd Petroleum dock)



The Lower Rhine region



Research questions

- How and why did the transition from coal to oil affect the economic relationship between the Rotterdam port and the Ruhr area between 1945 and 1975?
- To what extent did energy transition pose a break or provide continuity to economic relations in the Lower Rhine region?
- How and why did energy transition affect the level of integration in the Lower Rhine region?

Expected results

- Economic relations reaffirmed after disruptions of war and coal crisis
- Firms are key actors: investments embedded in existing networks
- However, level of integration/interaction has declined

Research methods

- **Flow perspective**
Network analysis of commodity flows, using concepts of economic geography
- **Actor perspective**
Multiple case study of firms based on company archives



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