

Outport and Hinterland

Rotterdam Business and Ruhr Industry, 1870-2010

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Rotterdam and the Ruhr district

A connection forged by the river Rhine



Introduction

This research project aims to explore the development of the economic links between the port of Rotterdam and Rotterdam business on the one hand, and the Ruhr district and Ruhr industry on the other in the period 1870-2010.

Research questions

How and why did economic interdependencies between Rotterdam and its hinterland evolve over these 140 years?

In which way did the main actors shape the cross-border region?

What role did networks or clusters play in this process?

Three subprojects

- **Coal, Iron Ore and Steel.** Rotterdam Business and the German 'Montan' Industry, 1870-1940. *Joep Schenk*
- **Opting for Oil.** Rotterdam's Oil Harbour and the Move from Coal to Petrochemical Feedstock of the Rhine Industry, 1945-1975. *Marten Boon*
- **The Box and Rotterdam's New Hinterland.** The Rise of Container Transport and Globalisation, 1966-2010. *Klara Paardenkooper*



Theory

The project departs from the idea of the Rhine basin as a transnational economic region. Clusters or networks of companies play a key role in the competitiveness and coherence of economic regions (Michael Porter, Paul Krugman).

Methodology

Network analysis: mapping cross-border flows of goods, capital, people and knowledge.

Business history: multiple case studies of firms in the region.

Preliminary findings

- » Continuity over entire 140 year period?
- » Competing modes of transport shape Rotterdam-Ruhr relationship from 1870 on.
- » Two historical turns: energy transition from coal to oil and containerisation.
- » Pipelines and containers put pressure on continuity (1955, 1966).
- » New firms enter existing networks, securing continuity after energy transition.
- » At each turn, local governments and firms prove decisive in forging continuity through investments in infrastructure and facilities in both Rotterdam and the Ruhr area.

Foreign destinations for inland shipping from Rotterdam in 1961

