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## **For the good of the city. Moral ecologies informing port-city relationships in Schiedam**

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# Universiteit Leiden

For the good of the city.

## Moral ecologies informing port-city relationships in Schiedam

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Universiteit Leiden

MSc Thesis: Sociology of Policy in Practice



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## Introduction

The research focused on the port-city relationships in Schiedam, the Netherlands. It aimed at reconstructing them through analysing the perspectives expressed by three groups of actors – the municipality, port companies, and residents.

It developed in collaboration with the Port City Futures group, which enhanced my understanding of the case study. The multidisciplinary approach that its members adopt gave me significant insights, attracting my attention to the city's history, the development of its industry, and the regional role taken by its urban port. By engaging with this community of researchers, I discovered that Schiedam is one of the last private ports in the Netherlands, meaning that the municipality owns the port's land and leases it to the companies. I discovered the participatory plans that the municipality ran in 2015 to co-create a program for the future developments of the port. Moreover, I learned that the port of Schiedam currently hosts the R&D headquarters of some of the most innovative and world-famous companies working on heavy lifting, offshore energy, and maritime engineering.

My analysis was enhanced by the importance that these researchers give to understanding the connections and effects of ports with urban environments and between local and regional dimensions of port cities. It made me reflect on the positionality of Schiedam in the South Holland province, particularly its vicinity to Rotterdam, and the social and political dynamics that rose by that. Furthermore, I adopted their critical stance in investigating the opportunities and drawbacks that the presence of the port entailed for the city of Schiedam and its population.

The Port City Future group share the claim that studying the complexity of port cities needs for accounting the several – and constantly changing - relationships that connects localities and international financial and commercial flows, involving multiple private and public actors, levels of governance and systems of infrastructures (Hein, 2019: 1-4; 2021: 3). The literature adopted the term “port cityscape” to give a framework to this complex and undefined network (Hein, 2016: 430).

Not being able to approach such complexity comprehensively, I adopted an assemblage thinking, inquiring about the formation and evolution of the relationships connecting Schiedam, the three groups of actors and the regional conurbation (Farias, 2011: 366). The research represents a constitutive analysis of the Schiedam port cityscape, conducted through the lenses of port-city relationships. It represents an interpretative study of what the relationships between the actors consulted in Schiedam consist of and how they work being part of the broader port cityscape (Taylor, 1971 and McCann, 1996 and Wendt, 1998 in Cramer, 2016: 21).

While considering multi-scalar dynamics found relevant by the research participants, the study hinged on an interpretative approach addressing how these three groups of local actors assemble and participate in the dynamics connecting the port and the city of Schiedam given their role and position. I looked at the

types and forms of relationships between people, institutions, and companies using three analytical concepts. “Moral ecologies” shed light on how different actors evaluate those connections, including infrastructures, discerning from ideas about appropriate ways of managing port-city relationships and unjust ones (Scaramelli, 2019: 389). The concept of “reasonable politics” highlights how such ideas become considered suitable, informing the logics lying behind the actors’ perspectives (Blaser, 2016: 548). Finally, Tozzi (2021) describes how such logics emerge through the combination of interests, materialities, and affections gathered through the concept of “matters of care”.

Taken together, the three concepts allowed me to engage with and illuminate the ethico-political values attached by each actor to port-city relationships answering the claim present in the literature for exploring the evolution of the actors’ networks and the formation of planning mindsets and contrasting interests in port cityscapes (Hein 2019: 5; 2021: 3; Hein et al. 2021: 8). The research question “*How do different moral ecologies inform actors’ perspectives about port-city relationships in Schiedam?*” emerged from the need for understanding these different perspectives, and the aim to make them intelligible to the other actors, with the hope that such understanding will lead to better-informed decisions (Goh, 2020a: 193; Dewey, 1998 [1927] and Callon et al., 2009 in Farias, 2011: 371).

Throughout the four months of fieldwork and the forty interviews, this approach led me to uncover the different evaluations and techno-political functions given to the port (Anard et al., 2018: 31), and its connection to the municipal plans for urban development – pivoting on attracting wealthier citizens and uplifting the image of the city. It also sheds light on the constitution of perspectives about Schiedam's socio-economic levels and its strategic position for maritime business in relation to Rotterdam.

Furthermore, the analysis unveiled the politics of scale used by the residents opposing to the port to address the environmental footprints of port activities (Escobar, 2001: 161) - which after years of neglect from the municipality, appealed to higher levels of governance – underlining different conceptions of socio-environmental justice. The situation I encountered in Schiedam highlighted the influence of multi-scalar dynamics on the city. The national housing crisis compelled the municipality to build several new dwellings in the next few years. On the other hand, the recent deliberation of the High Court of the Netherlands - reshaped the basis for the concession of environmental permits to port firms, which threatened the continuity of the port activities in Schiedam.

However, the empirical findings suggest that the agency of the municipality allowed the institution to manage the two issues while pursuing its objectives. The research pinpoints that the actors’ difference in interests and objectives – concerning both the port and the city and their relationships – is based upon distinct modes of experience, characterising the bird-eye perspective used by municipal actors against the grassroots one of the residents. Such divergence led to different problematisations and evaluations of the opportunities and drawbacks of port and urban development. Embodied experiences and evaluations over the quality of life and the urban environment characterised the perspectives of the residents, which

brought most of the citizenry to neglect port-related issues because they were not directly affected by them. In contrast, the narratives of municipal actors and companies' representatives hinged on a more quantitative approach, based on the number of low and middle-income residents living in the city and the number of complaints against the pollution of the port. The fact that most of the interviewed citizens do not share the municipal decisions concerning port and urban development raises the question of if and how the policies envisioned and developed by the municipality address the materialities of the residents (Tozzi 2021).

Indeed, recent literature points out how modernist urban planning successfully enhances the attractiveness of cities by raising the territory values for investors and new residents – which appeared to be the main municipality matters of care (Goh, 2021: 185; Gould and Lewis 2018 and Checker 2011, in Angueloski et al., 2019: 26142). However, many authors question this mystified rhetoric by drawing attention to who benefits and who else suffers from – and is included in the shaping of - these developments (Angueloski et al., 2019: 26143; Scaramelli 2019: 391; Goh, 2021:185; Shi et al. 2016:131-132; Cousins, 2020: 2).

The sum of all these dynamics, which characterise Schiedam's port-city relationships, made it an exemplifying case study of the complexity, dynamism, and multi-scalarity of port cityscapes (Bryman, 2012: 70).

The thesis is structured into six chapters. The first one is a historical and spatial contextualisation of the case study. It outlines the aspects of the city's heritage and position in the region that appeared to be empirically relevant for understanding the port-city relationships at play. The second chapter describes the theoretical framework that guided the analysis, arguing the relevance of assemblage thinking, scalar approaches, and the three core concepts introduced above for inquiring about the relationships composing port cityscapes. Then I will present the research population, the sub-questions, and the methodology characterising this study while critically reflecting on my positionality, the ethical concerns, and the limits of the analysis.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters outline the research findings, presented through the analysis of interview excerpts. This empirical part of the thesis starts with analysing the municipal plans for urban development, underlining the constraints raised by political duties and the interests in social engineering the city's demography. Through the perspectives on the city's historic built environment and how it should be managed, a first juxtaposition between the moral ecologies of the local government and the citizens will emerge. The divergence between the two hinged on different modes of experience, providing the introduction to a better understanding of the conflicting perspectives concerning the port. The fifth chapter focuses on the port of Schiedam and the different narratives that depicted it as beneficial for the city or detrimental. The last section of the chapter analyses the residents' strategies to oppose the port and its activities and the changes imposed by the deliberation of the High Court. The final chapter describes the strategies the municipality and port companies used to face the new environmental permits, the forms of

multi-stakeholder collaboration that emerged from this new situation, and the interests in assembling port-city relationships to maintain the status.

## 1. Case study contextualisation<sup>1</sup>

The first chapter outlines the historical development of the industry and what it meant for the local population, the geographical location of the city, and the political connections with the larger region. By doing so, I will draw the elements of this case study that resonates with the concepts of scale, assemblage, and port cityscape, which are part of my theoretical framework.

### 1.1 The history of the city, its heritage, and the reflections on the current situation.

The conversations had with the members of the Port City Futures group introduced me to what, during fieldwork, I discovered to be the historical heritage of the city: alcohol production and maritime industry. These two industrial sectors marked the city's development throughout the last three centuries having significant socio-economic implications for the population. This sub-chapter addresses their evolution and the features of this heritage that are still relevant nowadays.

I started my research focusing on the current state of the port and its connection with the city, but I realised the importance held by the city's historical heritage. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I was sitting at the counter of a local pub in the city centre, conversing with the owner and some other residents, when I heard the expression "Black Nazareth". Luca, the young captain of a river vessel, explained the meaning of this derogatory alias.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, a vibrant distillery sector developed in the city. The production focused mainly on the jenever. An industrial cluster developed around this beverage, and every step of the jenever production happened in the city. Dozens of distilleries opened their businesses in Schiedam, exported their products worldwide, and employed the local population during what is sometimes called the golden age of the city (Heinz, 2019: 1).<sup>2</sup> However, the jenever industry was highly pollutant and implied dramatic labour conditions, characterising the citizens' low quality of life and socio-economic level. The meagre salaries, the

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<sup>1</sup> The information provided in this chapter, if not differently stated, came from informal conversation had during the period of fieldwork.

<sup>2</sup> <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schiedam> last access on 21/07/2022.

long working hours, and diffuse alcohol abuse united with poor sanitary conditions in overcrowded buildings shaped the alias of the city. Schiedam became known as “Black Nazareth”.

The word “black” stands for the quantity of smoke coming out of the dozens of distilleries working at the time, which gave the buildings darkened the entire cityscape. While the word “Nazareth” sarcastically refers to the residents’ unmatched hopes to enhance their quality of life through the rise of the distillery sector. Only a few distilleries developed into successful businesses, and only a handful of citizens increased their wealth, creating a sharp socio-economic inequality gap between a small group of rich citizens and the rest of Schiedam’s inhabitants, a feature still characterising the current demography of the city.

The citizens' reliance on the distillery sector's monocultural industry generated a vast economic crisis when the jenever industry declined at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, in 1872, the digging works of the New Waterway were accomplished, marking the rapid increase of the number of vessels reaching the Rotterdam region – and Schiedam (Sennema, 2021: 64). The growing demand in the Rhine-Ruhr area for oil and derivate products lied at the foundation of the decisions to opening the new shipping canal, representing an important example of the effects that international trade connections had on the development of the area (Hein, 2021b: 53). Following the rise of the maritime sector happening along the New Waterway, Werf Gusto open its shipyards in Schiedam at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>3</sup> exploiting the strategic position of the municipality. Most of the Schiedam’s residents were employed by this industry and by Wilton-Fijenoord later in the 30s. Ship building and repair became the industry nourishing the development of the city and its port. The flourishing of this new manufacturing sector marked a period of relief for the city after the crisis of the jenever industry (Heinz, 2019: 2). However, the characteristics of the related jobs, in terms of career possibilities and social mobility, were similar to the previous centuries.

The international oil crisis of the 1970s and the connected economic recession marked a new period of crisis for the industry in Schiedam. The lesser number of vessels incoming to the port of Rotterdam, which expansion relied on the petrochemical industry,<sup>4</sup> and the cheaper costs of shipbuilding and repair in countries with blander working regulations marked the decline of the city’s maritime cluster (Heinz, 2019: 2-3). During the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the port of Schiedam was mainly abandoned. However, at the beginning of Rotterdam’s policy of port externalisation, a bulk of offshore companies moved to Schiedam instead of relocating to Maasvlakte II (Ibidem; Kuipers et al., 2018: 3). At the same time, the municipality started to buy the land of the port, previously owned by private citizens (Heinz, 2019: 2-3). This meant the exclusion of the Rotterdam Port Authority from the decision concerning the port of Schiedam, even if the collaborations between the two entities remained strong.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://werf-gusto.com> last access on 22/07/2022.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/04/03/archives/oil-crisis-and-recession-have-slowed-rotterdam-port-expansion-once.html> last access on 22/07/2022.

In the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis, the municipality implemented an investment plan to support the industry's resilience, incentivizing the companies in the port area to stay. The Schiedam offshore cluster continued to attract important maritime companies thanks to acquisition and branding. The cluster – rebranded as Offshore Valley by the municipality - counts more than 2000 engineers and 50 businesses (Ibidem).

Nowadays, the port of Schiedam hosts activities spacing from ships design to maintenance with more than 3000 workers (Kuipers et al., 2018: 4). The cluster specialised in maritime manufacturing, engineering and there is an ongoing process of transition from bulk transshipment to maritime expertise, provision of services, and design activities. Furthermore, offshore wind energy production is one of the port companies' developing fields of expertise (Kruipers et al., 2018: 21). All these features made the Offshore Valley the current high-tech hub with a unique set of innovative maritime practices.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the port of Schiedam remains the closer industrial area to the city of Rotterdam on the north side of the New Waterway.

This brief contextualisation of Schiedam's history outlined the importance of industrial activities for the city and its inhabitants. It also stressed how regional and international dynamics shaped the very development of the industrial sector, ultimately affecting Schiedam and its population. I will further elaborate on the regional connection in the following sub-chapter.

Furthermore, The alias of "Black Nazareth" and the public image of Schiedam as a municipality with a poor population compose a narrative that still characterises the city as an unattractive place to live or recreate. The local government wanted to tackle pivoting on the city's historical heritage to redefine Schiedam as a place worth visiting and settling in.

## 1.2 Schiedam's spatiality and its positionality in the region

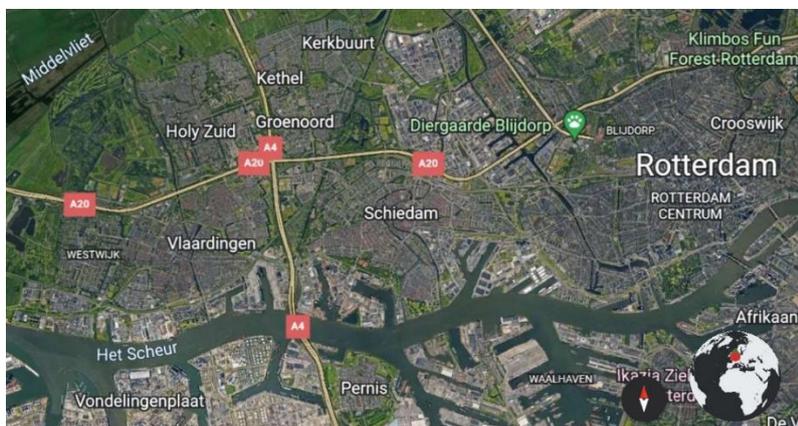


FIGURE 1: SOURCE GOOGLE HEARTH

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/nl/bouwen-aan-de-haven/lopende-projecten/offshore-valley> last access on 01/12/2021.

During my fieldwork, I understand the importance of regional dynamics on the current issues Schiedam faces. The municipality is part of the South-Holland province and thus must comply with regional guidelines. The most relevant provincial policies concerned the housing crisis and the retention of port-related industrial activities. Provincial and national policies address both issues, influencing the municipality of Schiedam and its development programs. In response to the housing crisis, the municipality must construct thousands of new dwellings in the next few years, which - during the fieldwork - was at the top of the municipal agenda setting.

Also the spatiality of Schiedam affects the municipality's room of manoeuvre. The borders of the city are both physical and administrative. They are the New Waterway on the South; the Delfland natural reserve on the North, which is a protected area; the A4 highway on the East, an important artery for the port companies and the movements of goods; and the municipality of Rotterdam on the West, which administrative border simply draw an invisible line on the continuing urban tissue. Such a spatial conformation leaves little space for new housing construction. While the port zone, packed between infrastructures, cannot expand further.

On the other hand, the vicinity to Rotterdam, a city bigger in extension, population, and maritime activities, had and continues to influence Schiedam significantly. Its closeness meant the development of the maritime sector at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and represented why the offshore companies moved to Schiedam. Indeed, Schiedam is spatially part of the larger port of Rotterdam. The industrial activities carried out all around Schiedam impact the city and its citizens.

Furthermore, the policies displayed in Rotterdam territory affected the municipality of Schiedam, which often followed the example of the bigger city. They also affect the composition of the city's demography which changed and continues to change by welcoming the people pushed out from Rotterdam by rising living costs.

In conclusion, as for the city's history, regional dynamics continue to affect Schiedam and its population. The city's spatiality and positionality impact the current possibilities and problems that Schiedam's policymakers and inhabitants face. Both provincial policies and the vicinity to Rotterdam - and its port agglomeration - are important factors to consider when analysing the challenges faced by the city. These features resonate with the concepts of scale, assemblage, and port cityscape that I will outline in the next chapter and use throughout my analysis.

## 2. Theoretical framework and research relevance

This chapter depicts the theoretical framework that guided my research throughout the research fieldwork and the data analysis. It first sheds light on the meaning of the term “scale” I will adopt during the thesis, as the literature recognises that many social scientists used it with different approaches (Brenner, 2001: 48; Leitner and Miller 2007: 116). Then, the chapter defines the term “port cityscape” through recent literature, pinpointing the importance of analysing such a concept with a scalar approach and assemblage thinking to address its complexity (Fariás, 2011: 368; Hein, 2019: 1).

After having outlined the use that I will make of these terms, I will present the core of my theoretical framework, made by the concepts of “matters of care”, “reasonable politics”, and “moral ecologies”. The three concepts guided the qualitative analysis of the interests and materialities of the different actors encountered during the fieldwork. Such an analysis informed the reconstruction of their ideas over just development for Schiedam and its port, connected to actors’ modes of experience and positionality. I will refer to the anthropological literature relevant to my case study to offer insights for the analysis of infrastructures, policymakers’ reflexivity and positionality, participation, and heritage in a development framework.

Overall, my approach stands for a constitutive analysis of port cityscapes generated through inquiring the existing and changing relationships between the various actors involved by using an interpretative approach. This represents a proposition to tackle the need reported in the literature for understanding how port cityscapes change over time, by what means, and what conflicts and opportunities arise (Hein, 2019: 1; 2021: 3). Assemblage thinking and a multi-scalar approach highlight the understanding of evolving networks by looking at multi-scalar dynamics and actors with different positionalities. Academics also point out the necessity for understanding the formation of different actors’ perspectives concerning appropriate implementation strategies (Goh, 2020a: 191). Given the complexity of port cityscapes, This understanding is essential to addressing public and private competing interests (Hein, 2019: 2,6; 2021: 4).

Indeed, the conflicts and opportunities observed in Schiedam emerged from the constataions of port areas, related to different interests and ideas on how to manage them. Understanding ideas about just development as inevitably contextual and subjective (Littlejohn 2020a, Young 1990 in Shi et al. 2016: 132), the research tried to reconstruct these perspectives through the inquiry of actors’ interests, materiality, affections, and rationalities. The concept of “moral ecology” addresses the subjective ideas about the just relationships between actors - human, non-human, and institutions (Scaramelli, 2019: 389), it thus suits the exploration of the ideas about appropriate development in the Schiedam port cityscape. Therefore, the following research question guided my analysis:

“How do different moral ecologies inform actors’ perspectives about port-city relationships in Schiedam?”

The empirical relevance of such an approach is to unveil the relationships composing the port cityscape of Schiedam through researching the different perspectives of the actors involved. It enabled the disclosure of unequal power relationships and the expectations different actors have for future developments. By acknowledging all of this, a better-informed participation can be achieved, and particular actions can be taken considering the possibilities that emerge in particular relational contexts (Dewey, 1998 [1927] and Callon et al., 2009 in Farias, 2011: 371).

## 2.1 Scales and port cityscapes

Starting from the suggestion made by Leitner and Miller to ground conceptual arguments in empirical studies of power and social dynamics (2007: 122), I will use the concept of “scale” and “scalar dynamics” in relation to social spaces and practices concerning relationships that transcend the locality of Schiedam (Farias 2011: 370; cf. Brenner 2001: 593).

Following Howitt (2003 in Leitner and Miller, 2007: 118), I will consider three scalar dimensions: size, level, and relation. The first two respectively distinguish a geographical conception of scale and a political one (Leitner and Miller, 2007: 118). In my case study, the scale size refers to the different geographical extensions of the port of Schiedam compared to Rotterdam’s one. The level of the scale relates to governance and the authority issuing or implanting policies, such as the municipality of Schiedam or the South Holland province. The relevance of such an understanding of “scale” lies in the inextricability of nature, space, and social life that accounts for the constitution of actors’ agency in relation to scalar dynamics and the power embedded in them (Leitner and Miller, 2007: 118-9, 121). Hence, scale size and levels subsist through the scalar relationships between actors, the third dimension.

Leitner and Miller (2007: 116-7) stressed the social construction of scales and the actors’ impact on scalar power structures independently from their position in the scale. Indeed, research findings unveiled the residents’ and policymaker’s agency as structured by and structuring scalar dynamics. The court case mentioned in the introduction and the agency used by the municipality to shape the application of the consequent new policies represent politics of scale enacted by the actors who are simultaneously affected by the structure of the scale and strategically using it (Escobar, 2001: 161).

Thus, my understanding of “scale” and “scalar dynamics” pivots on geographical and political dimensions while accounting for the relations between actors shaped by and shaping scalar dynamics. By focusing on the relationships among the different scale levels, this approach enables investigating both impositions and opportunities raised by scalar dynamics (Ibidem; Farias, 2011: 370; Leitner and Miller, 2007: 118).

This scalar approach is essential to understanding the various forms of port-city relationships (Hein, 2019: 1). Ports are usually conceived as enclosed entities and their different activities are analysed as separate functions without addressing their interconnections with urban environments (Hein, 2019: 4, 2021: 2). However, port and city connections are multiple; constitutive of networks composed by physical infrastructures, economic interests, governance entities, and flows of cargos, goods, people; and continuously evolving in size, usage, and scale (Hein, 2021: 3). These connections include different public and private organisations with divergent perspectives on the area's functions, the appropriate implementation strategies, and often overlapping authority (Hein, 2019: 2,4; Goh, 2020a: 191). Furthermore, ports generate impacts that extend over their administrative boundaries and the scale of the city while being affected by global markets and relations with regional hinterlands (Hein 2021: 4). Thus, research on ports requires comprehending the connections between social, spatial, and governance aspects considering scalar relationships (OECD, 2014: 83 in Hein, 2019: 5).

The concept of “port cityscape” provides a framework for an integrated comprehension of the interlinked spaces and entities within Schiedam port city (Hein, 2019: 5; 2020a: 6). It accounts for the relationships constituting these multi-scalar networks between urban and port buildings, infrastructures, economic activities, institutions, and environments, transformed through intangible tools as laws and policies (Hein, 2019: 1, 4; 2021: 3).

While a scalar approach helps the understanding of port cityscapes’ dynamics, their complexity can be inquired through assemblage thinking (Tonkiss, 2011 in Kamalipor and Peimani, 2015: 402). Considering port cityscapes as evolving multi-scalar assemblages or open-ended entanglements (Tsing, 2015: viii), accounts for their constitution created by the different and changing relationships between the actors (Fariás, 2011: 366). However, since assemblage theory has been used in many ways and heavily criticised, its relevance for understanding port cityscapes needs to be adequately exposed.

## 2.2 Assemblages and port cityscapes

“Assemblage” is a term coined within Deleuzian philosophy differently understood and adopted in several academic disciplines (Kamalipor and Peimani, 2015: 402). The concept relates to notions of multiplicity, network, and emergence, in particular socio-spatial local configurations that includes non-human actors – like infrastructures (Anderson and McFarlane, 2011 in Kamalipor and Peimani, 2015: 402; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987 in Kamalipor and Peimani, 2015: 403; De Landa, 2006 in Kamalipor and Peimani, 2015: 403). Assemblage thinking privilege the study of the relationships within the network (Fariás, 2011: 368; Hill, 2018: 1240), thus resonating with both the concepts of “scale” and “port cityscape” mentioned above.

The debates in urban theory concerning the concept of “assemblage” evolved around two opposite axes, both understanding the city as a complex entity constituted by socio-cultural, economic, and political phenomena (Brenner et al., 2011: 226; Farias, 2011: 369; Storper and Scott, 2016: 1129). In this context, port cities can be understood as a particular type of urban environment that extends the urban-land nexus to involve water and all the connections that a port involves, gathered through the concept of port cityscape.

Authors inclined to theory structuration criticize assemblage thinking, sustaining that it fails to systematically comprehend the urban phenomena (Storper and Scott, 2016: 1126; Brenner et al., 2011: 225). In their opinion, assemblage theory conceives the complexity of urban environments as flat, posing on the same level all the actors involved, not accounting for human agency, and rejecting scalar structures of power (Brenner et al., 2011: 233; Storper and Scott, 2016: 1127). Although acknowledging the multi-scalar dynamics in urban environments, Storper and Scott (2016: 1130-1) argued that the resulted indeterminacy of the urban-land(-water) nexus boundaries calls for deciding what is relevant and what leave out of the analysis. The motivation they give pivots on the fact that even if changing the urban environment, the effects of multi-scalar relationships do not undermine the “constitutive inside of the city” (ibidem).

Opposing such critical approaches, several scholars advocate for a study of urban environments based on inquiry (see Farias, 2011; Hill, 2018). They claim that a structuralist approach tends to essentialise socio-cultural local dynamics ascending all urban phenomena to global political economy, failing to recognise that the latter does not uniquely produce the former (Escobar, 2001: 141,147; Farias, 2011: 305; Kamalipour and Peimani, 2015: 404).

Instead, inquiry allows studying the network's evolution and expansion, exploring the current and emerging relationships between its actors, without a priori limitations of the field of study (Farias, 2011: 366; cf. Storper and Scott 2016: 1130-1). Thus, assemblage thinking focus on the dynamism of the network with a relational approach, reconstructing the complexity of the urban-land-water nexus by looking at the relationships between the actors involved (De Landa, 2006 in Kamalipour and Comeini, 2015: 403; Tsing, 2015: 83). The emphasis given by some authors to flatten the network does not refer to avoid any scalar thinking, but to not privilege any scale over the others in order to account for all the actors involved (Hill, 2018: 1262).

Rather than apolitical, such an approach reconsiders urban-land-water nexuses as formations that need to be held together, defended, maintained, and can be redefined (Farias, 2011: 370-1). It accounts for agency, underlining which actors, at what scale, and by what means assemble particular socio-spatialities, critically questioning who forms part of the network and who does not (ibidem; Macdonald 2009: 118 in Hill, 2018:

1237). At the same time, through inquiry, assemblage thinking opens the analysis to both powerful groups and grassroots movements and the actions that at any scalar level shape the relationship within the assemblage, ultimately modifying it (Kamalipour and Comeini, 2015: 404, 406-7; Escobar 2001: 152-3; Caliskan and Callon, 2010: 8-9 in Farias, 2011: 370). In this sense, assemblage thinking resonates with the multi-scalar approach depicted above.

Having outlined the most relevant features of assemblage thinking, its relations with the concept of port cityscapes should be evident. A port cityscape is more complex than the sum of port and city, as both entities are more than the sum of their respective parts. Its connections feature political and geographical multi-scalar dynamics that affect various local socio-environmental contexts. Port-city-region networks are made by actors and flows – that can be understood as a particular connection between actors – which connections are constantly evolving (Hein, 2021: 3). To fully understand a port cityscape, the agency and perspective of each of actor need to be analysed in relation to scalar power relations and opportunities given by politics of scales. By understanding the different perceptions at stake in the port cityscape, and the interests and materialities that create them, it is possible to foster actors' reciprocal understanding (Hein, 2019: 5). Through the improvement of the available knowledge concerning the values and needs moving the different actors in the network, a more informed collaboration became possible by making intelligible the reasons and ideas that lie behind each actor's position (Dewey, 1998 [1927] and Callon et al., 2009 in Farias, 2011: 371).

Various authors stressed the importance of empirical analysis regarding individuals' perceptions and needs that shapes their claim over the development agenda, as they are inevitably contextual and subjective (Littlejohn, 2020a; Young 1990 in Shi et al., 2016: 132; Shi et al., 2016: 135; Angueloski et al. 2019: 26142). The chapter follows by expressing the core of my theoretical framework, aimed at giving analytical tools for investigating such perceptions considered grounded in the materiality of individuals' life and affections concerning the relations forming the urban-land-water assemblages.

## 2.3 Core concepts

The section outlines the analytical concepts used to study actors' perceptions. The fieldwork experience evolved around the engagement with three main groups of actors: the municipal employees working on the port development, some of the companies' representatives involved in the stakeholders' meetings, and several residents living close to the industrial harbours and in other areas of the city. To a lesser extent, it involved the DCMR, the environmental institution responsible for monitoring the companies' pollution.

The research focused on the relationships between these actors, their environment, and other institutions, understood as constitutive of - a part of - the Schiedam port cityscape. The analysis examined the constitution of these relationships through the lens of the different actors' perspectives I could engage with. Conceiving the different perspectives as formed by actors' interests and affections based on people's materialities and experiences. For instance, the vicinity of participants' households to the harbour changed their perspective because this altered the experienced effects of the port industrial activities, both in intensity and frequency.

The research is thus a constitutive analysis of port-city relationships in Schiedam, developed through the inquiry of actors' moral ecologies, matters of care, and reasonable politics. It represents an interpretative analysis of what the relationships between the actors consulted in Schiedam consist of and how they work being part of the broader port cityscape (Taylor, 1971 and McCann, 1996 and Wendt, 1998 in Cramer, 2016: 21). Both the methods used for the constitutive analysis and the research participants are outlined in the next chapter, while here the focus is on the analytical tools that shaped my engagement with the field and the complexity of the port cityscape.

### 2.3.1 Moral ecologies and infrastructures

The first main concept that guided my analysis is "moral ecologies", defined by Scaramelli (2019: 389) as individuals' evaluation of how the relationships between people, environments, and institutions should be. It entails the presence of several ethical positions about the appropriate ways to manage intra-human and human-nonhuman relations in a particular ecological space. The concept sets infrastructures and ecologies as inseparable, as the former shape and modify the latter. To conceive infrastructures as a part of the environment opens to consider how people relate with these entities, how they become charged with different meanings, and the pivoting aspects of the negotiations – or conflicts - with the political authority.

I focused on the port of Schiedam as an infrastructure, part of the larger port of Rotterdam but independent from it. In particular, I tried to unveil the techno-political function of the port in Schiedam and its poetical and aesthetical conceptions. Anard et al. (2018: 31) analysed infrastructures as technological adjustments to shape the world with a set of objectives. This is the techno-political function of infrastructures, which I found closely connected with the municipal political agenda for the city – namely, attracting more investments and wealthier citizens during my fieldwork. The political function of the port and the resistance coming from a group of residents show different ethics and publics, gathered, and divided around moral ecologies (ibidem).

On the other hand, the port of Schiedam conveys expectations, promises, and different affections. Larkin (2013: 335) calls the sum of these aspects the poetics of infrastructures, the meanings given to the port by differently situated actors. Furthermore, the author analysed the aesthetics of infrastructures, meaning how the daily experience of the port produces ambient conditions and shapes human interactions with their environment (Larkin, 2013: 337). As mentioned above, I found the research participants' perceptions heavily impacted by their modes of experience the port, more poetically if they do not live close to the harbours or very aesthetic when the port pollution affected the participants' living environment.

Such an understanding of infrastructures relates to moral ecologies in addressing the actors' perspectives about what infrastructural adjustments are needed and how institutions should implement them. Such adjustments enlighten multi-scalar connections of the Schiedam port cityscape, as they are created at the institutional level – by the municipality or the province – and maintained and monitored by private and public bodies – respectively, the port companies and the DCMR – aiming at impacting in specific ways the local environment. Furthermore, considering the existence of different moral ecologies grounds the analysis of actors' perspectives on individuals' material conditions and subjective ideas of what is appropriate, considering the local environment (Scaramelli, 2019: 390-1). Topics that the literature on port cities considers relevant to be analysed (Hein, 2019: 5; Hein et al., 2021: 8).

### 2.3.2 Reasonable politics and participation

The second main concept is 'reasonable politics', which illuminates how some points of view are defined as 'reasonable' in any given societal situation, often according to particular standards of knowledge production or epistemology (Blaser, 2016: 548). Reasonable politics classify differences in perspective as more or less suitable or logical. Often, the most authoritative or influential narratives qualify what perspective is reasonable, therefore setting the terms of the confrontation (Blaser 2016: 550). The analysis of reasonable politics unveiled the mechanism that led to prioritising certain moral ecologies over others, limiting people's ability to make their concerns heard.

Thus, it links to the actors' decision power and degrees of participation in the debates. Consultative practices only in some cases involved citizens, but always with undefined responsibilities and voluntarily, which ultimately led to lacking any influence on the transformative agenda (Murray 2012: 202; Arnstein, 1969: 217-8). However, the High Court's resolution on the environmental permits created new struggles for the companies, which might re-set the boundaries of participation (Baiocchi and Summers, 2017: 321-2). The companies became more interested in negotiating with the citizens to avoid further complaints and legal actions.

Furthermore, the concept of 'reasonable politics' allows investigating which mindsets lead to consider certain adjustments as feasible for Schiedam, the means to reach such adjustments, and the reasons informing such evaluations. For instance, the claim made by some residents to move the industrial activities to Maasvlakte II is not reasonable for the municipality or the companies. The first has a different techno-politics concerning the port, while the latter has many reasons to stay close to Rotterdam. At the same time, the technical and financial side of ports and port activities define what actions are reasonable to address different problems. For instance, tackling sound pollution requires developing and applying expensive technical solutions and days of work. Port companies found the application of sound-cancellation units reasonable only when the ship remained anchored for weeks

### 2.3.3 Matters of care and policies

The concept of "matters of care" informed my comprehension of how reasonable politics come to be and what motivations sustain the actors' moral ecologies. Created by Puig de la Bellacasa (2011), and further expanded by Tozzi (2021), the concept draws upon Latour's notions of "matters of fact" and "matters of concern" (2004b and 2005b and 2005c in Puig de la Bellacasa 2011: 87). The first one shows how issues are often framed together in narratives that construct them as self-evident, as they were neutral and undisputable. Instead, "matters of concern" acknowledges the subjectivity of such narratives, showing how actors' socio-political interests create the logic displayed to make certain issues objective (Latour 2004, 2008 in Tozzi 2021: 156-157). Tozzi (2021) shows how the concept of "matters of care" expand the analysis of people's interests by underlining their affections and materialities. The concept is useful to investigate what people value and believe is important, in a particular socio-economical context, thus informing their moral ecologies and ideas about what is reasonable.

Analysing the 'matters of care' concerning the development of Schiedam's port enabled highlighting the different stances and the interests informing the reasonable politics at stake and the actors' expectations over the relationships of the port cityscape. The most relevant example from the empirical data involved the municipality visions for the city's future and the port's instrumental role in it. Since the interviewed municipal employees shared the perspective that the city would benefit from the presence of richer citizens, the peculiarity of Schiedam's port - which employ mostly engineers - became a reason to maintain active the city's harbours. The matter of care shared by these municipal employees is to enhance the city of Schiedam by attracting citizens with higher incomes, while the techno-politic value attributed to the port made its permanence as part of the municipal reasonable politics. Since port-city relationships did not figure in the interests of most of the residents I met, the citizens willing to participate in the dialogue about the port were only a few.

When addressing Latour's concept of "matter of fact", Tozzi cites the concept of "rendering technical" (Li, 2007 in Tozzi 2021: 159). Li (2007: 7) articulates two practices behind policy implementation. The first one is problematisation, which entails identifying features of the concerned context that need adjustments. The framing of a problem relates to the contextual knowledge and epistemology that drives the experts' assessment. Thus, it is relevant to investigate reasonable politics and intervention strategies. Furthermore, the process of problematisation implies the presence of values and interests, the matters of care underling the development strategy. For the research case study, the interest in attracting richer citizens directly identifies the demographic low socio-economic average as the problem to target for improving the city.

The second practice is named "rendering technical" (ibidem). It defines the processes that lead to represent intelligible domains in analytical categories and characteristics from which techniques to address the problem can be devised (Rose 1999, in Li 2007: 7). The best example coming from the empirical experience is the management of sound pollution. In this case, sound calculation guiding the environmental permits considers absolute levels of noise, not addressing specifically low-frequencies which were the main source of nuisance for the residents

The process of translating complex domains into analytical categories demarcates who has the authority to identify both the dearth and the strategies to solve it and participate in depoliticise them (Li 2007: 7). Since the legal framework does not separate the low frequencies from other frequencies, the DCMR has no obligation to address the issue.

Finally, many anthropologists dedicate their analyses to studying bureaucrats and experts involved in policymaking. During my analysis, I paid attention to their ethical position, histories, and institutional framework (Schwegel and Powell, 2008: 2; Hoag and Hull, 2017). The combination of personal perspectives and organisational cultures – and the possible conflicts between those – further informed the understanding of experts' affections, framing their reflexivity and epistemic that take part in their matters of care and moral ecologies (Holmes and Marcus, 2008; Tate, 2020: 87).

Taken together, the three concepts - informed by anthropological knowledge of infrastructures, participation, and policies - enabled the analysis of the formation of certain mindsets and practices about port-city relationships in Schiedam. Likewise, they provide an analytical tool to address different stances and politics related to the actors' values and materialities, supporting or opposing the reasonable politics guiding the development agenda. When thinking about port spatial adjustments, moral ecologies help comprehend the intertwined values in the ecosystem composed of humans, animals, plants, water, land, institutions, and infrastructures. Considering the actors' matters of care shows how moral ecologies come to be and become translated into actions, carrying affections and interests. While through reasonable

politics, it is possible to examine what moral ecologies and matters of care determine the transformative agenda, limiting other possibilities.

After describing the research population, the next chapter will outline the methodology used to research people's moral ecologies, matters of care, and reasonable politics in the case study and how the three concepts shaped the research sub-questions. It also expresses the limits of the research, which could not - nor was suppose to - be a complete investigation of Schiedam's port cityscape.

### 3. Participants, sub-questions, methodology, and limits of the research

Understanding port cityscapes through assemblage thinking implies the impossibility to define a priori all the relationships they entail. Nevertheless, imagining as many of them as possible and the impact factors is possible. For instance, international monetary flows, their connections to the capital market, and the price of goods strongly influence port cityscapes (Hein, 2019: 3). Then, investigating those relationships through inquiry while being attentive to disclose unforeseen ones. However, one of the primary limits of this research is the choice of focusing exclusively on actors' perspectives related to the city of Schiedam and its harbours and - through them - reconstructing scalar dynamics that affected the port cityscape of Schiedam. The reason behind such an approach was the relatively small amount of time available for fieldwork in a context extraneous to me. I will further express the pertinent research limits in each of the following sections.

The chapters aim to describe the research population, the operationalisation of the concepts into sub-questions, and the methods conducted during the fieldwork to answer them. It starts by presenting the groups of actors I could engage with, trying to be as nuanced as possible without disclosing their identities. Then, it follows by outlining the process that brought the concepts of "moral ecologies", "matters of care", "and reasonable politics" to become concrete research (sub)questions, mainly through the analysis of narratives, interests and modes of experience. Finally, the chapter expands on the qualitative methods used to investigate the port cityscape of Schiedam, gathered around qualitative mapping, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation.

#### 3.1 Research Population

The research population figures three main groups of participants, either working or living in Schiedam. Initially, I focused on the actors mentioned in the documents of the participatory process for the port development of a few years ago - citizens, municipality, and port companies (Daaamen et al., 2016). I

wanted to see their perspective on the project implementations, but I soon realised the importance of including more actors – as the DCMR - given their relevance in Schiedam’s port cityscape network.

Overall, I met the participants through purposive sampling aimed at comprehending the actors of the three groups (Bryman 2012: 412). To find possible participants, I relied on email contacts and the interactions created during different types of observation - introduced in the methodological sub-chapter. Then, I used snowball sampling to get in touch with other actors of each network (Bryman 2012: 202). None of the three categories of actors represents bounded units (Luning 2020), and many of these people have contact with participants of other groups. It is thus relevant to explore how different people relate to each other and the plans according to their interests and social position. However, the vast majority of the research population involved middle-aged, middle-income Dutch citizens, and the homogeneity of these features limits my research results. The sampling techniques I used heavily affected the research population's constitution and limits. The study aimed to analyse as many perspectives concerning port-city relationships in Schiedam as possible. The selections of the participants and the total number cannot generalise my results to the city's whole population.

In this section, I will describe the groups of participants and the organisations that they work for or represent without mentioning the specific role of each actor, avoiding disclosing their identity

I refer as institutional actors to the eleven participants affiliated with the municipality of Schiedam, the DCMR, or S’DAM. Their conversation shaped my understanding of the narratives and perspectives within these three organisations.

I conducted a group interview with the municipal group managing the port developments in Schiedam, composed of four persons, one of the legal policy advisors, and one of the employees concerned with managing the relationships between the municipality and the citizenry. Furthermore, I could reach the persons who formerly managed the participatory program concerning the port development. I sought to understand what values moved the actions of bureaucrats both as individuals and as employees. What influences the organisations’ culture in establishing their leeway, and how much their agency and individual evaluation can influence the project application.

As already mentioned, the DCMR is a public organisation related to environmental issues. During the fieldwork, I engaged with two employees focusing on the Rijnmond area. The DCMR divides into three sections with three different functions. The first is concerned with writing the permits in compliance with environmental laws. The second one monitors that the companies comply with the permits, sending inspectors, and collecting the complaints of the citizenry through a 24/7 phone service. The third one gives environmental advice in spatial planning, and the municipalities directly contact it when they consider it appropriate. I could interview one of the advisors responsible for a different municipality than Schiedam

and participate in a meeting with the person directly involved in the conversation with the local municipality and firms. Engaging with these two actors was particularly important given the relevance of noise pollution that characterised the whole fieldwork and allowed me to grasp the complex legal work that lies behind environmental permits and regulations.

The third mentioned institution is *S'DAM*, an organisation that collaborates with the municipality and other local institutions, such as museums. The main objective of *S'DAM* is the rebranding of Schiedam, pivoting on the historical centre and its peculiarities, i.e. the windmills and jenever distilleries. The office in Schiedam sells tickets for touristic attractions, but the most important role of *S'DAM* is to tie different actors and institutions, creating and expanding this network. I could interview two employees of the organisation. Their discourses helped me to grasp the relevance that institutional actors gave to the rebranding process and the separation between port and city, expanding my understanding of the case study.

The second group of actors concerned the citizenry. I engaged in several informal conversations and interviewed twenty-four residents during the research experience. Five live close to the port area, while the rest reside in other parts of the city. I compared how the distance from the harbours impacted their ideas about the port. I met the residents mainly through participant observation in two community centres in the closest neighbourhoods to the port area or while free-floating in the streets close to the harbours. As mentioned, one of the research limits concerned the averagely homogenous socio-economic levels of the citizens interviewed, mostly middle-income. Thus, I could not relate their narratives and interests to different socio-economics levels, which would have provided a stronger understanding of the Schiedam port cityscape since many interlocutors referred to the number of low-income citizens in Schiedam.

The third group is composed of the port companies' representatives and the two business associations operating in Schiedam. I could engage with seven actors, including the two associations' chairpersons. Speaking with these interlocutors was essential to analyse the companies' interests in remaining in Schiedam and their projects concerning the port. Comparing the discourses of business actors with the ones of the citizens spreads light on the different reasonable politics and matters of care that animate the two groups. I then compared them with the municipal ones. Differences in development expectations unveiled the contrasts in their moral ecologies and connection with modes of experience.

Furthermore, I tried to contextualise Schiedam and its port in the vaster regional conurbation, understanding the differences that being a private and urban port entails. Thus, I contacted several experts working in different organisations that could provide an idea of the regional dynamics and the division of responsibilities between private and public bodies. In particular, researches from TU Delft, the Port City Futures group, and the Resilient Delta initiative; experts working in the Delta Program, which collaborates

with the Ministry of Infrastructure for water management; the Rotterdam Port Authority; and the Rijnmond area Veiligheidsregio which coordinates and advise disaster managements. Their discourses gave me a grasp of the processes of problematisation and technicalisation described by Li (2007: 17) happening at different scales concerning the water-land nexus in the Rotterdam region.

Researching these four networks of actors and how they interact among and between themselves gave me the local insights needed to answer the three sub-questions I am about to present.

### 3.2 Research sub-questions and concepts operationalisation

This section aims to present the three sub-questions that guided my research and how they build on each other in answering the main question: *“How do different moral ecologies inform stakeholders’ perspectives about port-city relationships in Schiedam?”*. The three sub-questions relate to the core concepts described above, which I will operationalise while discussing the methods used to address each one. Each question considers the development of both port and city without stipulating their interconnectedness. Indeed, empirical findings demonstrated how port and city are sometimes considered separate entities while others are essentially connected to Schiedam's development.

As expressed in the previous chapter, “moral ecologies” refers to socio-spatial relationships between humans, infrastructures, and the environment, conceiving individuals’ ideas about how political institutions manage these connections (Scaramelli, 2019: 389). To understand how these different ideas came to be, I relied on exploring the actors’ rationales, interests, and affections concerning the port and the city of Schiedam. I analysed rationales through the concept of “reasonable politics”. Thus the first sub-question is:

*“What are the reasonable politics in actors’ narratives about Schiedam's development?”*

Reasonable politics consider how logics emerged from standards of knowledge and epistemologies (Blaser, 2016: 548). The concept entails the contextual rationalities that underline actors’ ideas. Concretely, these are gathered through actors’ considerations of appropriate ways to address problems and issues and are utterly connected with material considerations. The consequent logics informed actors’ decisions, for instance, on what part of the city should be developed or what strategies to implement to diminish the noise produced by the vessels.

During the research, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews produced the material to investigate the actors’ rationalities encountered. The discursive feature of the data enabled the analysis of their narratives, unveiling the use and kind of reasonable politics implied. I interrogated the research material creating axis of comparison on, for example, the presence of an industrial port close to the living

environment or the construction of new dwellings. I highlighted the most shared narratives among and within each group of actors, the contrasts and differences risen from their different positionalities, and the narratives assumed by those with decision power on the development agenda.

By relating each reasonable politic to the topic of the discussion and the speaker, I could see how logics changed contextually, shaping what is seen as possible or appropriate. The technical side of spatial planning brought the experts' conversation towards numbers and restrictions related to geographical and infrastructural features of the city. On the other hand, the rationalities guiding the expectations for the future of Schiedam were much more connected to the presence of amenities and the quality of life.

By analysing the logics informing actors' arguments about the development in Schiedam, I pinpointed their perspectives considering the relations that port and city have, should maintain, or change. These rationales opened the analysis of the interests and affections sustaining them, which I addressed with the second sub-question:

*“What interests and affections shape actor’s considerations about appropriate development for the city and its port area?”*

The question refers to the concept of “matters of care” used to understand the different actors' stances and reasonable politics. As described by Tozzi (2021: 157), through analysing the matters of care, it is possible to link socio-political interests to actors' materiality and affections. Thus, it grounds interests and evaluations of the most emotional and empirical side of people's lives.

Interests and concerns are often connected, with the latter shaping the former (Latour, 2008 in Tozzi, 2021: 156-7). I used qualitative mapping and semi-structured interviews to answer this question to grasp the concerns that shape people's perspectives. However, another limitation of the research was the impossibility of conducting mental mapping with all the participants. The time at disposal for the interviews, especially with port companies' representatives and municipal employees, was very limited. I thus preferred to expand their perceptions through semi-structured interviews, using qualitative mapping mainly with the residents. Nevertheless, this technique was useful to gather ideas about what the city of Schiedam represents for these participants, thus articulating their affections and concerns.

Overall, while explaining to me what worries them, both the emotional and material side of actors' interests emerged, as the disappointment for the municipalities' decisions or the physical perception of the port affecting peoples' life. On the other hand, by asking the participants what they believed important for the city and for them, I could grasp their affections and considerations about appropriate development. To answer the research question, I looked at what role the port-city relationships took in such considerations – or if actors did not mention them.

Moreover, the use of narrative interviews showed how the evaluations of what the city needs related to actors' daily life and modes of experience. Matters of care changed in function of where they live and how they look at the city and the port, from a grassroots point of view like most of the residents or a bird-eye perspective predominant in the institutional actors.

Overall, interests and affections changed in connection to the spatial dimension and actors' relations with the city and infrastructures. They also often entailed evaluations of the institutional decisions, which made the matters of care empirically relevant to examining actors' moral ecologies about port-city relations.

During the interviews, by asking to elaborate on how the expressed concerns should be addressed and by whom, the participants explained the forms of development they would like to see for the city. This is the topic of the third sub-questions:

*“What are the ways and practices envisioned by each actor to reach the desired development?”*

The answers to this question gathered during the fieldwork further underlined the relevance to inquiry moral ecologies. The desired developments exposed by the different participants encompassed their interests and affections but always concerned the relationships between and within people, environment, and institutions. Thus, answering this question expanded the understanding of actors' moral ecologies while highlighting the empirical relevance of inquiring about the different perceptions gathered around these relationships.

Semi-structured interviews featuring questions on how to tackle actors' concerns directly, and data analysis underlined the envisioned practices to obtain the desired development – or decision-making process. As for the interests and affections, such ideas were strongly related to actors' positionality and modes of experience. For instance, municipal employees who needed to implement a project preferred shaping the project internally to the institutions and then proposing it to the - considered - relevant stakeholders. On the other hand, citizens and port companies' representatives would rather be included from the very beginning of the project, varying from consultation practices to real decision power.

To understand the different stances on what is desired or envisioned, the analysis of institutional cultures and actors' materiality became necessary since such dynamics alter their leeway and, ultimately, the interests informing what should be done. Hence, the answers of the previous two sub-questions deeply expanded my understanding of what ways and practices became desirable or considered essential for the city's development.

At the same time, the actors' perspectives on how development should be managed underlined ideas about who should participate, why, the institutions' role, and considerations over the environment. But also, the different evaluations concerning problematics and opportunities raised by an urban port. Such

evaluations, built upon matters of care and expressed through reasonable politics, shaped actors' perspectives concerning the relationships between and within different local actors, infrastructures, and the city of Schiedam. Thus, building on each other, the three sub-questions provided the empirical data to answer the main one.

### 3.3 Methodology

My unproficiency in the Dutch language strongly affected the choices of research methods. Even considering Schiedam's multi-ethnic demography, all the research participants are native Dutch speakers. Furthermore, people used to speak Dutch in the contexts where I conducted the fieldwork. I could not rely on informal group conversations during the participant observations, as they were not in English.

Thus, participant observation had an ancillary role in the research. I used it, combined with free-floating (Pétonnet 1982 in Driessen and Jansen 2013: 251), at the beginning of the fieldwork to get attuned to the port area and closest neighbourhoods. Free-floating in port areas and the nearby green spaces enabled me to see the spatial and infrastructural features of that part of the city and the number of people gathering in those spaces.

Furthermore, the two techniques allowed me to meet some research participants who indicated the presence of two community centres. From then on, I conducted participant observation there, meeting new participants and gathering some information in mundane settings to highlight local points of view and emic categories concerning the port-city relationships (Emerson et al. 2011: 133, 137, 157). Helping the cooking staff of one of the community centres twice per week for a month opened to informal talks with many residents living close to the port. Small talks and informal conversations with people have been proven helpful in discovering main narratives giving a grasp of these people's sensibilities towards the port (Boxer 2011 and Coupland 2000 and Holmes 2005 in Driessen and Jansen 2013: 251).

The average age of the people encountered there brought me to look for some younger participants in pubs and podiums around the city. However, I engaged mainly with people in their forties or older. Again, informal talks about the port of Schiedam revealed some interesting aspects. For instance, the younger citizens are less knowledgeable about the port activities.

Two other unique moments of participant research helped me in finding new participants. The first one introduced me to a group of citizens who attended evening courses about Schiedam's history, mostly

middle-aged couples. I visited one of the city's churches with them, and after the tour, I proposed to participate in the research.

The second moment gave me access to the port companies' representatives. I attended one of the trimestral meetings between the bigger firms of the port and their business association, the residents' representatives, DCMR, and the municipality. Again, they spoke in Dutch, but I could see the type of interactions and establish personal contacts, creating opportunities for one-on-one interviews. The only resident attending those meetings, explained to me the main topics of the conversations. It pivoted on the complaints presented at the DCMR and the upcoming new environmental permits. This highlighted the central values of these topics for this heterogeneous group of actors, underscoring their concerns about the future (Emerson et al., 2011: 134-5, 147-8). Indeed, other empirical findings showed how both issues are extremely relevant for the port companies and the municipality, as they threatened the possibility of continuing port activities.

As presented in the above section, I relied mainly on semi-structured interviews. I predilected open questions, enabling the participants to elaborate on what is meaningful to them with their own words (Ibidem: 136, 150; Bryman 2012: 470). Narrative interviews have helped stimulate discourses that connect experiences and actions, fostering accounts that represent their considerations of port-city relationships (Gubrium and Holstein 2012: 33). This helped me understand what actors – both human and not – their narratives entailed. The analysis of what was integrated – and left apart – and what rationales were used highlighted the matters of care and reasonable politics animating such accounts (Ibidem: 35-6, 40-1).

The use of qualitative or mental mapping sustained the interviews with the citizens – and two municipal employees - and their construction of narratives over the port and the city. This method unveils representations, tensions and values related to particular spaces through the creation of visual material (Harteveld 2020; Mulder 2021). As narratives, these maps were created upon experiences and different visions. What actors saw in the space expressed what is more important to them, based on moral and aesthetic assumptions, thus closely connected to their environment (Harteveld 2020; Grasseni 2013: 97). I asked to draw the city to see if the port figured in the drawings, but in most of the cases, it did not, which led me to think that the port is not the main feature of Schiedam in the participant's minds. Nevertheless, this technique allowed me to understand what participants evaluated most in their environment. Questions and conversations about the drawings elicited further articulation of the actors' values attached to the city and the ethico-political stances concerning the uses of space (Grasseni 2013: 107-9). In doing so, the method provided a basis for understanding the participants' matters of care and moral ecologies.

Most of the interviews were one-on-one conversations, except for the municipality team for the port development, which was a group interview, and some residents who participated with their partners. I

alternate the use of classic semi-structured interviews and narrative ones. In doing the former, I used a set of questions specific for each group of actors to create analytical axis within each group of participants. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I asked to do walking (cycling) interviews, semi-structured interviews conducted while moving in a specific area. This helped me a lot to get attuned to the city's areas and harbours, their changing over the years, and how people experienced them.

When using the narratives interview, I set up the conversation on two topics for all the participants. First, the city – with the support of qualitative mapping – and then, the port. This part of the interview focused on making the residents create and express their narrative over the current situation in the city, the port and the wished future developments. In such a way, I tried to uncover the different narratives and interests at stake, comparing them with the positionality of the participants. Highlighting the red threads that connected the two topics pinpointed actors' narratives over the port-city relationships.

On the other hand, I used more typical semi-structured interviews with experts at the Safety Regions, the Delta Program, and DCMR. In this case, I was looking to understand which methods they used to run their analysis to compare their approach with the modes of experience of the residents. Indeed, statistical modelling and analysis underline many of their strategies versus the embodied experience of the citizens. I also limited the narrative part of the interviews when engaging with the representatives of the companies and the municipality team responsible for the port area. That helped me understand their material constraints deriving from the organisation's culture or the technical side of the port.

The limits caused by not knowing the language are reflected not only in the methods used but also in the type of data gathered and, ultimately, the type of triangulation I was able to make. Participant observation had an ancillary role and was conducted only in the settings of one social group taken into the analysis - the residents - except for the multi-stakeholders meeting mentioned above. This, associated with the predominant role of one-on-one interviews, shaped the type of data obtained: individuals' perspectives, values, material constraints, and narratives. I thus tried to reconstruct the nuanced group's interests by putting together the individuals' ones. Similarly, I triangulate the data using axis of comparison made by similar questions asked to different people and not by using participant observation to compare what people say with what they do.

Finally, I decided to use interviews exert to guide the analysis throughout the empirical chapters, to render justice to the narratives and perspectives that the research participants kindly shared with me. I tried to let their words guide the presentation of the results as they guided me during the fieldwork. Thus, I tried to relate the participants' statements to each other to generate the analysis shaping the research results. However, this does not entail any claim of objectivism. My subjectivity and positionality as a foreign

researcher interpreted the data and tried to reconstruct rationales, interests, and affections shaping the participants' moral ecologies of port-city relationships.

After outlining the research methods, the chapters conclude with considerations about the ethical stance adopted and my positionality during the research.

### 3.4 Ethics and positionality

Throughout the research, I posed particular attention to being transparent about my interest and motivations, my positionality, and the use of the data gathered both during interviews and informal conversations. I never hid my connections with the municipality, the firms, and the residents. By knowing my role, the research participants made an informed choice when pondering their participation and sharing information. Furthermore, I give my availability to get rid of all the data if someone would have changed her/his mind about it.

I always asked permission to tape the interviews and incorporate the data given to me in the research. I did not share raw data with anyone else since they contain sensitive information like participants' names, working positions, political preferences, and membership in local networks. All the files containing such sensible information as my fieldwork diary have been stored locally on my computer. Likewise, the maps produced do not present any references to people's identities, and I incorporated them in the thesis only if the participants agreed. I anonymised all the research participants by using aliases and referring in general terms to their social position and background. This should prevent any possible harm derived from the publication of the result. After graduation, I will dispose of all the raw data.

However, the research's outcomes might present Schiedam's municipality negatively as an institution. The reason is the claim of some participants that the municipality was not enforcing the environmental, allowing the firms to exceed the noise thresholds imposed by the law. Indeed, the research uncovered the municipal power over such decisions. However, taking a situational and consequentialist ethical stance, I doubt my research will harm the municipality. The concerned residents were aware of the situation. While I am merely reporting such narratives without presenting proof supporting such statements, the situation during the research period - at the edge of new national environmental permits - protects the municipality, which is legally entitled to allow port activities. I thus feel free to represent such perspectives.

Some other ethical concerns arose when I was asked with whom else I spoke. In this case, I generally mentioned the position of other interlocutors. I never report the thoughts of someone else, thus avoiding possible harm. In other cases, I tried to create connections between people with similar ideas and projects. I always mentioned the presence of another person with similar ideas, and only when all of the people concerned agreed to share their contacts, I revealed the identity of other participants. I did so by taking an

action-research stance, considering the newly formed relationships more beneficial than harmful. Similarly, I gave the same importance to the perspectives of each actor, notifying particular citizens' concerns to the policymakers while explaining to the citizens who asked about the constraints faced by the experts that I speak with. I take this stance aiming at increasing the intelligibility of different actors' materialities and interests, hoping for a more informed comprehension of the port-city relationships complexity that will foster reciprocal understanding.

Given the small number of Schiedam's inhabitants and the relatively small circle of people involved in port-city relationships, some people might be easily tracked by those well attuned to such context. For instance, there is only one citizen who is representing the residents of Schiedam West in the discussions with the companies. In this case, I will be particularly careful not to expose him by connecting his words with other groups of actors, allowing his perspective to emerge without exposing him.

Concerning my positionality, some benefits and drawbacks arose from it. I am not affiliated with any governance institutions or companies. Some actors welcomed my neutral position, especially those who were tired of reading about them in the local journals. On the other hand, often experts and employees found it unworthy to dedicate their time to me. Moreover, my young age and the limited relevance of my research – being just a master's thesis - produced similar results at times.

Since I only recently started to engage with the topic of port-city and the Rotterdam region, I am not fully aware of the complete socio-historical backgrounds of the area, nor of all the multi-scalar and technical implications that must be considered when considering port environments and urban developments. Thus, my position was inevitably inferior regarding knowledge and authority concerning all interlocutors.

In addition, even if I encountered many people proficient in English. To speak in a different language might have affected the quality, quantity, and willingness to share information. The possibility of engaging in group situations and understanding the conversations was severely restricted.

Finally, the positive features connected with my positionality are gathered around my unfamiliarity with the case study. By being an outsider, my focus on Schiedam generated some interest in many research participants who were somehow delighted that a young foreigner was interested in their issues and struggled with spatial adjustments, thus enhancing their willingness to share information. To be a stranger can elicit people to explain and reflect upon common senses and habits unfamiliar to me. Furthermore, in a Dutch setting, the people who found the time and the willingness to translate the main conversations for me often agreed to participate in the research.

Having contextualised the case study, presented the theoretical framework, the methods, participants, and limits of the research, and discussed the ethical concerns and my positionality, the thesis follows with the three empirical chapters that expose the empirical findings of the research. The first two gathered the

reasonable politics and matters of care related to port and urban development since the fieldwork experience pinpointed their relevance to addressing the main research question. The final chapter aims to expose the moral ecologies informing actors' perspectives over port-city relationships.

## 4. Assembling the city: interests, logics, and materialities surrounding the perspectives on urban development.

The chapter aims to represent the institutional actors' and residents' perspectives on the city and what should be done to improve it. It reveals the importance of the multi-scalar connections that shape the constraints faced by the municipality and the objective of social engineering the demography of Schiedam. Institutional actors believed that a stronger presence of richer citizens would be better for the city, representing their main matters of care. The first sub-chapter presents the logics used to sustain this argument – the municipal reasonable politics – highlighting the appropriate relationships between people, the city, and its heritage envisioned by these actors, their moral ecologies.

The chapter continues by contraposing such ideas with the residents' ones, pointing out a different conception of heritage and what is good for the city. The residents connected it with a feel of the place, or the “spirit of Schiedam, while the institutional actors tended to stress how the historic built environment can raise the attractiveness of the city.

Two important features appeared through the analysis of these perspectives. The first one is that actors related the dynamics in Schiedam to what happened in Rotterdam, reinforcing the importance of looking at regional relationships shaping the city's assemblage. The second concerns the stance taken by the actors. Institutional employees used a bird-eye perspective to identify and address the city's problems, while the residents' perspective is shaped by their embodied experiences. This difference brought diverse problematisations, opposed matters of care, and ultimately shaped the actors' moral ecologies differently.

### 4.1 The municipality's plans for urban development

In the first chapter, I outlined some aspects of the history of Schiedam that affect the city's demography, spatial development and image. I also pinpointed the need to create large numbers of dwellings over the next few years and the effects on Schiedam caused by the vicinity of Rotterdam. The latter contributes to

characterising Schiedam as having the features of a little town but facing the issues of a big city. As a municipal employee responsible for legal policies - Michele put it:

"That makes it a strange town because it's got the big city problems. I mean, it's got like 80,000 inhabitants, not really big. But it's got the problems of a city of 600,000 like Rotterdam because everything that happens in Rotterdam happens here. [...] Poverty, crime, I mean, usually, if you've got statistics, we're top of the list you don't want to be top at and at the bottom of the other lists. So crime rate is relatively high. It's getting better, poverty is high. [...] It is interconnected with Rotterdam because one side of the street is Schiedam the other side is Rotterdam. Yeah. This is one of the areas in the Netherlands with the lowest income, the highest rate of problems, accumulating problems connected to low income, low schooling."

The depicted image of the Schiedam relates to how the city's demography is affected by multi-scalar connections with the bigger city of Rotterdam. The two cities are administratively separated, two separate entities but physically connected. The urban tissue and the social dynamics expand regardless of bureaucratic boundaries. Michele sees such connections between the two cities as detrimental for Schiedam as it is affected by problematic issues happening in the other municipality. Furthermore, Michele's words reflect a relationship between low levels of education with the "accumulation of problems" like crime, poverty, the "big city problems". The exert well exemplifies similar discourses from participants of each group of actors (institutions, residents, and port companies) that report poorness and low education level as the most problematic aspects of the city. This resonates with the city imaginaries of the past centuries, as the "Black Nazareth" alias as Schiedam was known. Both the number of marginalised residents and the derogatory image of the city were part of the issues considered by municipal and S'DAM employees when reflecting on the necessary urban development for Schiedam.

The institutional plans regarding urban development focused on attracting new citizens with higher income to Schiedam. The municipality considers greater numbers of citizens with a middle-to-high income as a booster for economic activities in the city and an improvement for Schiedam as a whole. Luigi, who is responsible for the city branding at S'DAM, explicitly expressed it:

"the city marketing in 2014 and 2015 [... focussed] on attracting young middle-income people to settle in the city because we had a very big group of, uh, low educated low-income people, no middle class and a little high-class people. Um, and we wanted to have more middle-class people, more people with, uh, financial better-prepared perspectives, which could help the economy of the city. [...] they are now pushed out of Rotterdam, so they are coming automatically."

Luigi as well sees how Schiedam is affected by the gentrification dynamics happening at the Rotterdam scale. Since the middle class is flowing into the city by itself, the strategies for urban development focus on rendering Schiedam more appealing to this target instead of promoting it. This entails the improvement of the living environment of the city through augmenting amenities and cultural activities while redeveloping old housing buildings and creating new dwellings to accommodate the potential newcomers.

Michele elaborated some considerations on how the living environment is connected to housing projects and the reshaping of public spaces:

"Our ambitions were always focused on social housing. And now you see that there are more to middle-income housing. [...] So people can take a step on the housing ladder inside of the city instead of going to the other growing towns. So that's one of our biggest, uh, problems we've got keeping people in town too, that are benefiting from, from how we're trying to help them and then benefiting for the whole city. [...] And also, uh, nice place to live outside. Good public, public spaces. [...] So how can you upgrade? That's more green, more open spaces, more light. So those are the big issues to make, uh, new housing, [...] the hardest, is to build a nice house in a nice place where you want to live, that's the hardest part. And that's what we're trying to achieve."

In addition to confirming the municipality's focus on middle-income housing, Michele expresses the importance of creating good living and public spaces. Urban development is thus used as a strategic tool for social engineering, in which investments toward the improvement of the built environment are conceived as crucial to attracting new middle-class residents while giving room within the city for uptrading socio-economic mobility paths. From the narrative presented by the two actors, this appears to be one of the main matters of care of the municipality. The next section further explores the issue, analysing the reasons for focusing on the middle class while considering some of the constraints experienced by the municipality.

#### 4.1.2 Between housing crisis and gentrification: municipality's matters of care and moral ecologies

In the first chapter, I outlined the obligation imposed by the housing crisis experienced in the country that the municipality is currently facing. While the previous section expressed the words of two participants describing the effects of the vicinity of Rotterdam on this. During our interview, Michele reflected on how the housing crisis influences the goals established by the Schiedam government:

"[We have to build] 7000 more houses in the next ten years. And then noise is just one of the issues. [...] We got height restrictions because the airport's over there. [...] We have a big gas line here as well, which got restrictions on people living there. So if you look at it there are not many parts of Schiedam where you can have a development thing. [...] Still, we need to develop and it's hard. [...] Yeah, how can we make a nice town but also get our goals? And housing is the biggest one. I mean, that's just on a national level that's the biggest one for the next couple of years." [sic.]

Michele expressed the several constraints he and his colleagues are dealing with. His words outline multi-scalar dynamics. The lack of housing experienced in the whole country affects Schiedam, as the higher government asked the municipality to build 7000 new dwellings in a determined amount of time. This set their main goal for the next years. Furthermore, the limitations experienced concern infrastructures that are out of their control, which represents another example of scalar dynamics present in Schiedam urban assemblage.

However, during the interview, he reflected on the importance of the environment *surrounding* the houses. Even if there is an obligation to construct new dwellings, the types of house products depend entirely on the municipality's decision. To attract new middle-income residents, the materiality of the city became relevant. Thus, one of the municipality's matters of care is to "make a nice town", by creating a typology of housing and living environment that is appealing to the desired target of people. Further in our conversation, Michele explicated the concern for creating new middle-income housing products:

"So we actually got the go-ahead to uh, diminish our number of social housing. Uh, we've decided to not do that in, in absolute numbers. In relative [absolute] numbers, it's going to be a little less. But in relative numbers, we want to keep the same and make sure that the house is going to build are more focused on middle income, higher income [...]. So that's a big problem because we don't have the middle-income houses, we're trying to build them too."

His words resonate with Luigi's exert, where he speaks about a high social divide in Schiedam, with a small number of middle-class residents. To tackle the issue, the municipality wants to develop dwellings targeted to enlarge this group of residents. The focus – or the matter of care is centred on accommodating higher-income citizens. This matter of care highlights a particular municipal moral ecology. Michele pointed out the plans to address the unbalance relationships between the number of middle and low-income citizens. Referring to the municipality's plans, he stated how they are trying to enlarge the number of the former. Thus, when it comes to the relationships between citizens and the city, it appeared that the institutional actors preferred to have larger portions of richer citizens. Furthermore, the national housing crisis was used to push forward this matter of care, an example of the actors' agency above the multi-scalar connections within the assemblage (Leitner and Miller, 2007: 118-9, 121).

However, Michele pointed out how social housing is still part of the municipality plans, meaning that the objective is not to eradicate the economically marginalised residents, as this type of dwelling often hosts residents with a lower income. Nevertheless, when speaking with the municipal team responsible for the port development, Simone and Angelo expressed some reasons in favour of a moral ecology that privilege the presence of wealthier citizens:

Simone: "A lot of engineers [working in the port], they don't live in Schiedam [...] and that's something that is changing because Schiedam is also changing is um, housing products for having a better mixture between social housing and higher-income housing so that there's a better spread in your city [...] and well, that will give a better mix in the total, uh, city area which means better social control, uh, or a safer area."

Angelo: "The social weaker people from Rotterdam came to look for houses in Schiedam and if it's like this, your city doesn't get better."

Simone confirmed what Michele said about the new type of housing that the city is currently developing. In his opinion, this will generate a safer city through an enhanced level of social control given by the presence of more middle-income residents. He is implicitly stating the moral ecology at the basis of such discourses,

increasing the number of richer people in the city will help to solve some of the social issues of Schiedam. Such an opinion is echoed by Angelo when arguing that the city should not host the most marginalised citizens pushed out from Rotterdam. The aspect of the municipality's objective/matter of care to increase the middle-income housing takes part in a larger plan of avoiding "social weaker" citizens from settling in the city, as they are seen as hindering the social control and the safeness of the city. This points out the connections of Schiedam within the larger regional assemblage, scalar dynamics that transcend its locality (Fariás 2011: 370; cf. Brenner 2001: 593), and how these relationships shape the institutional actors' strategies and moral ecologies, affecting both the urban tissue and the population of Schiedam (cf. Storper and Scott, 2016: 1130-1).

Confirming what I outlined in the previous section, it appears that the matter of care in question is a socio-economical engineering process targeting the demography of Schiedam, while rising the housing prices through developing expensive dwellings and improving the urban environment represent the logic to achieve this – the institutional actors' reasonable politic. In a different conversation, Luigi pointed out how this process is already happening:

"The movement of the gentrification is going very fast now because people are pushed out of Rotterdam. [...] If you want to have a house and start a family Rotterdam is too expensive. Then you get to go to [other cities]. But then Schiedam is by far the best option because it is a and uh, actually it looks like it belongs to the city of Rotterdam. It has a very beautiful ancient centre and with restaurants and bars, you have the train, you have to metro, we have the tram. [...] And also project developers know that this is a, uh, movement, so they are following the movement. They are looking for new opportunities to buy old houses, renovate them [...] And then I think that a big group of low-educated people are pushed out of the city. Because people with money buy the houses."

Luigi referred to young, highly educated people looking to start a family. In this sense, the vicinity to the bigger city now is seen here as something valuable to Schiedam, as these young middle-income people are looking for an area where housing prices do not outweigh the quality of the living environment. This represents a good example of the usefulness of interpretative assemblage thinking, attentive to the diverse relationships between network nodes – Schiedam and Rotterdam – and how actors interpret them (Fariás, 2011: 366, 371).

As Michele did, Luigi's discourse connects the level of education with the level of income, as experts earn higher wages. He made an explicit reference to some aspects of the urban environment that makes Schiedam an attractive location for middle-income newcomers to settle in. First, the urban texture's continuity made the city appear as part of Rotterdam. Second, he mentioned the presence of amenities, like restaurants and pubs and a web of infrastructure that well connects Schiedam to the region. Finally, the presence of the historical centre is a perk. Later in the section, I will further argue on the strategy of instrumentalising the city heritage to serve the municipality's matters of care.

Luigi also highlighted how developers are already creating the type of housing products desired by the municipality. The current presence of developers at work takes part in another set of municipal matters of care: attracting investments.

Michele: "It's a city in development where ten years ago people didn't really want to invest in the city. And now they see the potential [...] partly due to how we are acting as, as the civil servants opening up, creating opportunities, giving opportunities and really trying to do stuff differently. Uh, if you got every rule you need to, to, uh, to comply, just trying to see, oh, which grey areas can we use."

Michele confirmed Luigi's statement and pointed out an important aspect: investors are currently more inclined to commission developments in Schiedam because of civil servants' attitude. His words underlined the agency he and his colleagues are using, not sticking to what is allowed or forbidden by law but trying to find a solution that renders the project applicable. They used their decision-making power with a certain ideology (Stoler 2002 and Deeb and Marcus 2011 in Tate 2020:87,89), "creating opportunities" by looking at grey areas. This topic will come back when analysing the municipality's strategies regarding regulating port activities, as it is an important demonstration of actors' agency in the port city assemblage. The previous exert from Luigi seems to answer the question "opportunities for who?" as he considered the inevitable gentrification that will originate from these renewals.

Luigi's thoughts also highlighted the importance of investments and new economic activities. Furthermore, his words hint at how history and heritage became useful tools for the municipality's purposes:

"[There are] beautiful projects, which with, um, um, reminding and restoring and keeping some parts of the history, they [the municipality] are building very nice new projects with, um, modern living projects which are not static but dynamic with businesses, restaurants and shops, and playing grounds for children and several types of um houses for different people. The old distillery, a beautiful distillery and is there rebuilt, but they're now restoring it as a hotel, the distillery hotel."

The narrative from his words highlighted the municipality's projects to combine historical valorisation with constructing new dwellings and green public spaces. The housing projects are depicted as dynamic, involving economic activities on the ground floor with living spaces in the upper stories, which resonates with the words presented by other institutional participants. The municipality aims to fulfil the need for housing while enhancing the local economic activities, attracting more investments and generating an increased circulation of money. Furthermore, as stated by Michele, also Luigi highlights the importance of creating an appropriate living environment with amenities and recreational possibilities.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the distillery sector played an important role in the history of the city and it is now part of the heritage valorisation projects of the city. Two small exert from Luigi's and Michele's interviews exemplify this trend:

Michele [talking about the distiller district project on the East side of the city]: "This part is going to be housed. Yeah, this part is going to be the distillers. Because distillery, it's a big part of a heritage. [...] We want to keep that heritage. So that's, that's important for the city. Um. Let's see, It's that's really, really make it personal."

Luigi: " We have pillars on [what] we want to promote the city, a distillery history and the innovative makers. So it is of people in innovation and making. This production is important and innovative production [...] we have, uh, always the city has been a city of makers: jenever, docks, harbours are making. for the history of making, we want to distinguish ourselves from other cities as innovative makers."

Michele clearly stated the municipality's interests in maintaining the heritage of the city, focusing on what is typical of Schiedam. To "really make it personal" means to create a vivid image of Schiedam's uniqueness which hinges on what differentiates it from other cities, like Rotterdam, its historical heritage.

Similarly, Luigi's words pinpointed strategical uses of the past to foster the city's image of the present. The city's heritage became another matter of care for the municipality, contributing to attracting middle-income citizens. During the fieldwork, I have been able to observe and speak about the importance given to rebranding the jenever production and the history of the city, marketing which the main target are not the current residents but the potential visitors and newcomers. The absence of port-related arguments in this kind of narrative can be related to the position of Schiedam in the vaster Rotterdam's port cityscape. In this sense, the historical port heritage is not something the city can pivot into being more attractive because of the longer port history of Rotterdam.

Modernisation and heritage were conceived as intertwined in the re-valorisation of Schiedam as a whole. Institutional actors' narratives acknowledge the low position of Schiedam in the national statistics while reflecting on its up-trending movent towards a city which is worthwhile to visit or inhabit. Institutional narratives outlined the strategic use of heritage along with urban development as the reasonable politics to transform both the image and the population of the city, which ultimately represent the municipality's main matter of care. Thus, heritage became commodified and instrumentalised in the rebranding for such a purpose, intertwining history and gentrification (Franquesa, 2013 in Hill, 2018: 1239).

The concept of 'matters of care' open the analysis of actions and interests to the materialities influencing them. An exert from Michele's interview well expresses how this side impacts the decision-making at the institutional level:

"At the moment, there's so much going on, we can't really cope with it. So we need to make choices. [...] And making choices is hard and we've got - and I think also that's part of what your study is - a lot of external influences which are hindering us, which are, uh, making it harder to get those developments started. [...] I mean, it doesn't really depend on what you do. People are always going to say 'but you should have done this or that', and it's not a right or wrong kind of thing. We're trying to do the best of our knowledge. We make decisions which we think are best for

the city on the level of a city. On an individual level, it's not always the best decision. But we need to think a bit higher as a municipality."

Michele critically reflected on his role as a policy maker and the one of the municipality as a whole. From his words, it appears that the quantity of work that has to be done and the number of faced constraints are overwhelming. This situation implies that institutional actors have to make strong choices within the given time and limitations. For Michele, it comes to complying with such an intricate situation "with the best of our knowledge", his reflexivity shows the stance taken to deal with this complexity (Holmes and Marcus, 2008; Tate, 2020: 87). Municipal actors took a bird-eye perspective addressing the scale of the city, even considering that their solutions might not be the best decisions from an individual point of view. The use of such a stance justifies their reasonable politics, representing the objectification of the decisions to attract richer citizens for the good of the city. In this way, through urban renewal and the instrumentalisation of the city heritage, municipal actors used their decision power to assemble particular socio-spatialities aimed at fostering the inclusion of richer citizens rather than low-income ones (Farias, 2011: 370-1; Macdonald 2009:118 in Hill, 2018: 1237).

Through such reasoning, the moral ecologies of the municipality emerged. Municipal actors tried to assemble the city, privileging a bird-eye perspective and instrumental uses of the city's heritage and the obligation of constructing new dwellings.

In conclusion, from all the exerts presented so far, it appears that the considered actors took a stance "from above" looking at the city, its problems, and possible solutions, assembling Schiedam vis-à-vis Rotterdam and the housing crisis. Following Li (2007: 17), institutional actors' problematisation considers the poor socio-economic condition of the citizenry as the issue to tackle, figuring the development of middle-income housing, increasing the investments for the city, and valorising Scheidam's public spaces and heritage as the solutions to that. The three solutions represented the reasonable politics to achieve the municipal actors' main matters of care – social engineering. Thus, accomplishing each of the envisioned development became a matter of care per se, a pursued interest featuring ethico-political values. The sum of these aspects reconstructs their moral ecology - the appropriate ways to manage the relationships shaping Schiedam as a city, including citizens, built environment, and economic aspects – which privilege wealthier citizens as the beneficiaries of urban policies.

As I will describe in the following chapters, the port took a similar role in the municipality plans, being a reasonable politic to achieve the planned social engineering, while the maintenance of its functions became a matter of care. This ultimately shaped the institutional actors' moral ecologies concerning port-city relationships.

However, after outlining institutional actors' stances on urban development, the chapter continues addressing the residents' perspectives on the city. Like the institutional actors, residents emphasised the

city's history and the living environment. However, the interests of these actors generally focused on their everyday life instead of the city as a whole. Thus, representing a basis for grasping the differences between the matters of care and moral ecologies of the two groups.

## 4.2 The residents' opinions on urban development

Some of the residents I met lived in Schiedam for over 20 years. They experienced the changes that happened to the city and its social environment. As for the institutional actors, the difficulties of the past were present in their narratives. Giorgio, a man in his 40s born and raised in Schiedam, articulated some thoughts on the influence that the vicinity of Rotterdam meant for the city, which is in line with Michele's considerations.

"What you see, if you look from a longer period of time perspective, Schiedam has always been a troubling city with a very high social divide and sort of a few rich people a lot of poor people [...] when all the trouble was pushed out of Rotterdam, it went to the neighbouring cities, including Schiedam. So there was a lot of crime here in the city. [...] Now it's getting better, but we're still high in the [crime] rankings and it has to do with the dynamics of the port Rotterdam."

Similarly to the institutional narratives expressed before, Giorgio ascribes the significant socio-economic differences present in the city to the gentrification processes pushing away the poorest citizens from Rotterdam. Giorgio perceived his environment as affected by what happens in Rotterdam, his argument echoed interconnections in the vaster urban assemblage. Rotterdam dynamics trespass its administrative boundaries, affecting the surrounding municipalities. Furthermore, Giorgio relates high crime rates to the presence of the port, connecting urban dynamics to the ones triggered by the port cityscape of Rotterdam's region.

Further reflections on port cityscapes will follow in the next chapter, while this section focuses on how the interviewed citizens relate to the urban development happening in the city. How do their perspectives differ or resonate with the institutional ones, and what other improvements they would like to see, starting with the words of two residents with different social positions which focus on housing projects:

Stella: "I think there's a big change that happened in the last 20 years here from a very poor city with only big buildings, with too many people inside and no feeling with the place at all."

Pietro [speaking about housing projects]: “Yes. Very good stuff. Old houses are being pulled down and new houses are being built now. So this process has started. And, it's good for the city that something is happening and these old houses are being replaced.”

Stella is a local artist, collaborating with the citizens in all kinds of social projects involving the arts, while Pietro is a middle-high income retired man. They do not know each other and live in two different parts of the city with very different socio-economical averages. However, they both shared the idea that the city was improving by enhancing its built environment and creating better living conditions. By referring to what is good for the city, Pietro articulates a narrative that shares in some way the bird-eye perspective used by institutional actors. However, Stella took a more grassroots perspective, mentioning how such changes positively affected the poorer Schiedammers' quality of life, as they were the inhabitants of the old dwellings. She raised another point, the absence of a “feeling with the place” caused by the anonymous structure of the big old condo previously built.

Her opinion resonates not only with Michele's thoughts on the living environment but with the narrative that emerged from the interviews with Giulia, a citizen with a similar socioeconomic status to Pietro:

“[...]Schiedam has a history, you see it on the buildings. It's old. It has got something. [...] Here you can see there are building new houses and you see right there [pointing towards existent buildings], what they've done it before, the shape of those houses. They have no history. [...] So we would like that these new houses, they [the municipality] do them look like the old ones. So your centre stays intact. [...]”

This conversation happened on the rooftop terrace of Giulia and Riccardo's house in the city's historic centre. From there, I could see the buildings Giulia was criticizing. Her husband highlighted how the design of the upcoming buildings focused on conserving the historical facades of the city centre, thus maintaining the “spirit” of Schiedam. Both Giulia and Stella related the importance of urban renewal to an individual perspective, centring the benefits of building new houses with Schiedam's “spirit” and people's daily life and experience. Their matters of care do not concern having richer neighbours but a nice urban environment and living conditions. Thus even if sharing similar interests for urban development with the institutional actors and comparing Schiedam to the reasons animating them were different. Giulia's next exert provides a further example:

“We live in the centre and we understand that they have to build houses. We see it in front of us. We won't see the mill again. But we know there have to be people here. We know and we accept it. And we have the luck that they build it in an old-fashioned way. So it's nice to look at.”

Although she and Riccardo acknowledge and accept the need to build new dwellings, they wanted a good-looking urban environment. They are not interested in who is going to live in the new houses, what they care about is being able to enjoy the sight from their terrace and while walking in the city centre. Many

other residents living in the city centre or other neighbourhoods articulated similar thoughts, which led me to argue that residents' matters of care are strictly related to modes of experiencing their surroundings more than engineering the socio-economic demography of the city.

Indeed, the construction of buildings not in line with the city's old-fashioned environment represented one of the points of friction between residents and the municipality. For instance, Riccardo told me about the construction of a high-rise next to one of the historic windmills of the city. The plans caused many complaints among the city centre residents, as it will look sharply different from the rest of the buildings. The new building will modify the Schiedam skyline, introducing an element of modernity considered disturbing by the residents. This case is an example of the choices mentioned by Michele that the municipality has to take to face the current housing situation. The new construction will provide many dwellings, helping the municipality to fulfil regional requirements. However, from a citizens' point of view, it will ruin the sight of that area, hindering the attractiveness of their living environment.

The example is useful to address the moral ecologies expressed by the interviewed residents. The "just" relationships between people, environment, and institutions envisioned by these actors respect the historic built environment of the city – as mentioned by Giulia and Riccardo – and the people currently living in the city – as the short exert from Stella exemplifies.

Indeed, the mental maps produced by the residents illustrate how vividly the historical built environment took part in the residents' image of the city. In their drawings, the participants often illustrated windmills, the old harbours and architecture in the city centre.



FIGURE 1: FOUR MENTAL MAPS PRODUCED BY THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS. ALL FOUR REPRESENT WINDMILLS AND JENEVER, TO HISTORICAL FEATURES OF SCHIEDAM, THREE OF THEM ILLUSTRATE THE OLD HARBOURS FORMING PART OF THE CITY CENTRE WHILE ONLY ONE SHOWS THE CURRENT PORT ACTIVITIES

Another recurrent theme in the mapping exercise was the jenever, represented as bottles or glasses in their typical shape, expressing not only the distillery history of the city but the possibilities of amusement offered by pubs and restaurants. From the interviews and the qualitative mapping exercises, it appears that the history of Schiedam takes part in composing the citizens' narratives over the city, and it is highly evaluated. However, often they did

not relate such history with the negative aspects that the jenever industry had on the city. It appears then that the “spirit” of the Schiedam is constructed on the remembrances of the past that are still experienceable today because they are constitutive of the current environment. Civil and institutional actors reassembled the city’s history and used it to create an identity for Schiedam (Hill, 2018). However, the purposes guiding such a process are different. Institutional actors see the heritage of Schiedam as a perk to obtain the attractiveness they seek, while the residents connect it to a “sense of the place” gathered through perceptions and experiences (Escobar, 2001: 140, 150). The matters of care of the latter group of actors differ from the municipality ones as they aim at defending local constructions of Schiedam – both physical and social, the buildings and the “spirit” of the city – instead of producing a certain locality for instrumental purposes (Escobar, 2001: 161; Hill, 2018: 1262-3). Thus, residents and citizens gave different meanings to the historical urban environment, which articulate their moral ecologies concerning it. They want to maintain the “spirit of the city” and criticised the municipal decisions threatening to alter it.

Residents’ epistemic is more grounded in embodied experiences than socio-economical evaluations of what is good for the city. Cinzia - a municipal employee whose role brings her closer to the citizens than her colleagues – briefly articulated a thought on what matters for the citizens of Schiedam:

“The issue for many people is more in their direct environment. The garbage outside the houses is a problem [...] the way how the environment looks dirty.”

Cinzia implicitly distinguished the issues for the citizens that are “more in their direct environment” and those considered by institutional actors. Indeed, although acknowledging the socio-economic difficulties faced by many Schiedammers, the residents interviewed residents asked for urban developments that tackled problems such as the quantity of traffic or the garbage in the streets, problems affecting their life rising from daily experiences. In their discourses, changing the historical image of the city, attracting new investments, and engineering Schiedam’s demography did not feature as reasonable politics for improving the city. A position close to the one expressed by the residents living close to the port. However, in their case, the major nuisances come from the activities carried out on the harbours, issues rarely mentioned by the residents living far away from the port area.

In conclusion, the two groups of participants expressed quite different matters of care and reasonable politics. Although Schiedam's heritage is considered important by the interviewed residents, and both groups compared Schiedam to Rotterdam, their words did not resonate with the reasonable politics that conceive it as a tool to obtain the desired social engineering. The perspective generally adopted by the groups of actors differs on the scale used to analyse reality, from a city level to a more individual one. It followed a very different way of perceiving the problems present in the city. From these different

perspectives derived different moral ecologies or opinions on what is problematic in the city's environment and how it should be addressed.

Different materialises shaped the actors' matters of care and moral ecologies. Municipal actors' materiality was shaped by the objectives coming from the higher government and the limitations related to fulfilling such goals considering all the other issues of the city. Nevertheless, institutional actors managed to instrumentalise the situation to fulfil their projects for the city while compelling the duties imposed by the province.

While residents' materiality was utterly connected with their life, the built environment surrounding them and the nuisances present in it, such as garbage and traffic. However, in this case, the institutional plans to "make a nice city" might benefit the interviewed middle-income residents until the construction of new high-rises will alter the cityscape.

The focus on materiality and embodied experiences is also relevant for the next chapter. It will help to understand the differences within actors' stances towards the port activities and how they should be managed. While analysing the perspective adopted by the research participants will unveil the relevance given to the presence of the port and who might benefit from it. As it will appear, the different stances adopted by residents and civil servants on port activities did not benefit the former in any way.

## 5. A contested space: actors' perspectives on the port of Schiedam

The chapter reconstructs the main narratives and matters of care concerning the port development in Schiedam and, through these, the moral ecologies that shape port-city relationships. It reveals how port activities and companies are currently considered useful by the municipality as they are a source of income, increase the attractiveness of Schiedam and invest in the territory – contributing to "what is good for the city". Thus, maintaining the port companies in Schiedam is another municipal reasonable politic, as it contributes to fulfilling some of the municipalities' matters of care. This is relevant since a group of citizens strongly oppose port activities, and their environmental footprint expressed a very different image of the port companies. Therefore, the chapter addresses what the diverse actors think about the presence of port activities in Schiedam, comparing the different narratives with the distinct perspectives adopted and the various material constraints experienced by them. Furthermore, the potential benefit of the port will be critically questioned to reveal in what ways it might represent an advantageous asset and for whom.

The first section locates Schiedam in the vaster port of Rotterdam's region. It will outline participants' narratives that depict the city as a part of the larger assemblage representing a unique asset for the vaster

port cityscape. The second sub-chapter will address the change in the municipal perceptible about the port, from neglected to relevant for the city, illuminating how this change informed the institutional moral ecologies. In contrast, the following section addresses the perspectives of those residents describing the port as detrimental to their life. Finally, the chapter highlights the power of the citizens that, through formal complaints and legal actions, managed to change the environmental permits, threatening the port activities.

## 5.1 The uniqueness of Schiedam's port in the vaster assemblage

As seen through the words of different actors in the previous chapter, Schiedam is connected with the larger port cityscape of Rotterdam. This implies the presence of multi-scalar connections affecting the city and the port companies. The section aims at reconstructing such dynamics, revealing how they became considered beneficial by companies and the municipality.

During the interviews, the participants reflected on the role performed by Schiedam's harbours and the port activities displayed in the largest port conurbation. Interlocutors' narratives oscillate from an image of Schiedam as a mere part of the port of Rotterdam to the idea that the activities conducted in Schiedam and its maritime knowledge cluster play an essential role in the vaster port cityscape. This section argues that one of the companies' matters of care is to remain in this area for the relationships that characterise the regional assemblage.

Schiedam is well known in the maritime sector as a cluster of expertise in ship repairing and the offshore industry.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, Giuseppe, who have his company and house in Schiedam and represents one of the port business associations, goes further:

“It has developed into a very interesting maritime area. And at the moment it's really well known in the world that this is a very interesting maritime part. And also, many companies from Rotterdam have come here. [...] And we are so specialized here. Rotterdam doesn't have our companies. What we have here, they don't have. So they are really, really interested in them.”

Once again, evaluations about Schiedam are made vis-à-vis to Rotterdam. In this case, Giuseppe outlined Schiedam's relevance for Rotterdam, in terms of the services that the port companies operating in the city can provide to the larger port cityscape. Giuseppe pointed out the fact that new companies started to move to Schiedam from Rotterdam, which has to do with the estrangement of port industrial activities

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.portofrotterdam.com/nl/bouwen-aan-de-haven/lopende-projecten/offshore-valley>. Last access on the 08/06/2022

from the Rotterdam urban area. One of the causes that lead the companies to relocate to Schiedam instead of other areas such as Maasvlakte is the presence of amenities and the closeness to the urban environment, which other industrial areas lack. Simone, one of the municipal employees working on the port area, gave some reasons for this:

Simone: "For most of the engineers it's like they go to Germany or to Belgium, is like it's an hour drive and that's the middle of nowhere. There's nothing to do. Uh, you don't put a company with the research and development there" [sic.]

He highlighted one of the matters of care of the port companies and their expert workers, the attractiveness and reachability of the working environment. Maasvlakte II, where many port companies formerly operating in the Rotterdam harbours relocated, is still under development, meaning that there are not many amenities for the workers to recreate. Furthermore, it is not easy to reach as there are few public transportations and it is at the end of one of the most trafficked highways in the country. These issues made industrial urban ports very attractive areas for companies. The vicinity to the urban environment, a source of many hindrances, is valuable for port workers because of recreational possibilities and the easiness of reaching their job places.

Previously, I outlined a general feeling of the detrimental effect that the vicinity to Rotterdam has on the socio-economic conditions in Schiedam. However, when taking a port business stance, being part of the larger assemblage benefits the companies operating in Schiedam, as the following three exerts, coming from separate interviews, outline. Simone and Michele are municipal employees, while Enzo is the facility manager of one of the port companies operating in Schiedam.

Enzo: "It's beneficial of course because a lot of the the customers are all around you. I mean from Dordrecht to Hook of Holland is maritime [sector] so you're in the middle of it. You can provide services for all those people"

Simone: "I think the port has a strategic position, uh, with the distance to the sea, uh, the connection with the region, with all the chain of suppliers, the Hague nearby, but also Delft."

Michele: "You can go to Brazil, or China, but I don't think you have the same partners that you got here. And I think that's one of the main reasons. And then it's quite good that we're that interconnected to Rotterdam. And they get so much I mean, so much support from different levels on a national level because it's so important for the Dutch economy."

The three actors outlined how the geographical position of Schiedam, in the middle of the vaster assemblage, plays an important role in favouring the companies' activities by being close to clients, suppliers, and other maritime companies. Indeed, by being within the Rotterdam port cityscape, Schiedam's companies providing technical assistance and other services related to maritime engineering happen to be in one of the European areas with the highest traffic of vessels. Moreover, being close to The

Hague and Delft is also relevant. The Hague is the centre of political power in the Netherlands, while Delft has one of the best technical universities in the country, an important basin for expert recruitment. Michele, who reflected on the social problems arising from the vicinity of Rotterdam, sees such a connection as very beneficial when thinking about maritime companies instead of citizens. Even if not mentioning the academic term, the three exerts outlined some of the multi-scalar connections composing the port cityscape and shaping this particular assemblage.

Enzo expressed the relationships and connections linked by the New Waterway, while Simone and Michele extended it to the relationships with the hinterland. Those links within the port cityscape take the form of supply chains, company-customer partnerships, connections between businesses and educational institutions through the flows of highly educated experts, and political and economic support for port activities. Such links connect several types of organisations based in different municipalities and having different business types and educational and governance institutions. These connections form multi-scalar dynamics that characterise the relationships between actors in the port cityscape of Schiedam, ultimately becoming the reasons for the companies to remain in this strategic position.

In line with some of the authors discussing assemblages and scale, the analysis of the Schiedam case pointed out how the locality is affected by and affects the regional dimension (Fariás, 2011: 366; Leitner and Miller 2007: 116-7). Roberto, a member of the municipality team responsible for the port development, expressed some thoughts on the relevance of Schiedam for the port activities of the region:

“We are in a big area of Rotterdam and somehow, we also, um, give character to this big port of Rotterdam, especially with the companies that we have and the things that we do in our port. So internationally, it's also important that [we are] part of the big Rotterdam maritime capital of Europe and we give character to that.”

Roberto's words resonate with the one pronounced by Giuseppe, presented at the beginning of the chapter. Both exerts outlined the role of Schiedam on the bigger scale, based on the companies' specialisation in heavy lifting and offshore energy, and share a positive image of the port activities carried out in the city. Indeed, as Roberto expressed, the municipal employees I engaged with share a positive narrative for the port and its activities.

This section outlined the Schiedam position in the Rotterdam port cityscape, some of the multi-scalar connections at play, and how the port companies are portrayed as the beneficiaries of such connections. The chapter moves forward analysing the narratives that depict the port of Schiedam as beneficial for the city. Such rhetoric started when it became clear that the presence of these specialised port activities was for pursuing the municipality's matters of care of changing the image of the city and attracting high-income residents. Then, the chapter will focus on the hindrances caused by the port activities, and whose narratives that describe the port of Schiedam as a problem more than an asset.

## 5.2 From neglection to relevance: the changes in the municipality's matters of care toward the port

Simone: "the municipality with Marco changed the way of looking at the port because it used to be more about: they're not doing what the regulations say and there's only a lot of noise pollution. [...] the political environment is good now at this moment, to make the important choices to keep the port here and to make it more steady and even build-on."

Simone's quotation introduced the figure of Marco, who was part of the municipality's team for the port development and contributed to reshaping the institutional perspective towards the port. It also outlined the main guideline that currently creates the teams' narrative over the port development: keep it here and keep developing it is. It is interesting to note that what Simone described as previous ways of looking at the port are very close to the one shared by those who oppose port activities in Schiedam.

I will dive into such perspectives in the next sub-chapter, while this section outlines the main reasons for the changed municipal approach. These related to economic reasoning and ideas about the possibilities that the port raised for the city.

The former municipal plans for the port were to reconvert it into housing. Marco's analysis, conducted in 2014, revealed the value of the port companies and the facilities present in Schiedam, which changed the municipality's way of looking at the port and the development plans.

Simone: "Marco did a really good job because he had the, uh, get the assignment to look at what is the value of the port for the city. And when he started that, he did a really smart job because he went to the Erasmus University and asked an economist to really look into what do we got in Schiedam for companies, what kind of people work there, what is the added value, what is the interrelation with, uh, the rest of the region."

The analysis of Marco triggered a change in the municipality's approach toward port development because the knowledge he produced made it reasonable for the local government to switch their strategy. The pivot of such knowledge was a cost/benefit economic analysis which ultimately revealed the multi-scalar connections between the port of Schiedam and regional assemblage. Marco's work shifted the perspective that municipal actors had over the port and the city itself, highlighting the connectivity with the port of Rotterdam.

Marco: "I, uh, quickly understood that it was a very high level of investments which had taken place there. [...] So if you want to construct houses, they [the municipality] would have lost a lot of money because you have to pay a compensation to the companies. [...] they didn't know that there were soo high companies because they never cared and they had no connection with the port. They neglected it because the population of Schiedam didn't go there and didn't work there. It was like an island. It was our municipality but, you know, in the mindset of Schiedam it was another world

far away and nobody cared to go there it was not well connected physically with the town. [...] But when I explained what was going on there, they became interested because if you are capable of connecting this town with the ports, you can make a Win-Win situation."

Marco exposed some reasons behind the port's institutional neglect, which differs from the one stated by Simone. Those are the absence of Schiedammers working in the city's harbours and the bad physical connections between the city and the port. He stated that the port was perceived as far away, even if very close to the urban environment. From what I saw, the harbours remain mostly an unvisited area of the city which is related to the industrial nature of the space, a heavy working environment where everything is fenced. In the last chapter, I will further highlight how this situation currently forbids the citizenry from experiencing the port, preventing people from being interested in the problems caused by it

On the other hand, more participants from each group of actors stated that nowadays, not many Schiedammers work in port companies. Marco's analysis pointed out the small number of residents working in the port harbours, and I met only two port workers living in the city. This rises the question of what kind of benefits the port brings to the city and for whom.

However, it is important to stress the factors that made unreasonable the transformation of the port area into a housing one. Marco said explicitly that the municipality would have to pay compensation if it forced the companies to move, based on the costs of the assets to relocate, which in the case of Schiedam is particularly high. The realisation of the economic implications made the municipal actors rethink their development. The economic constraints represent one of the limitations making the maintenance of the port activities in Schiedam the only reasonable solution. An important aspect to consider for the analysis concerning actors' preferences over the port and urban development.

While the possibility to create a benefit for the city represents another important factor. Marco articulated more on the latter issue during our interview, while Ettore – former chairman of one of the port business associations – added another layer present in the urban development narratives: attracting investments.

Marco: "You can make connections with the port to the city and then you can add value to the city. [...] You can attract the high-end workers to live in Schiedam. [...] Also, education: there is a lot of need in the port for high-skilled personnel. So if you are able to educate your people, that would benefit the population of Schiedam. [...] If you are able to connect port and city both profit from it, port profits because they will get goods, high skilled personnel and the city can profit because skilled personnel will consume in the city. [...] We did a lot to improve the image of the ports, to identify Schiedam as a port city. And also and that was very interesting for our politics and politicians because they could profile themselves."

Ettore: "Yeah, well a lot of citizens of the city of Schiedam were unemployed. So they were really looking at what new jobs, and new economic development since these new big companies will come to the port. They also have their investments in the neighbourhoods. It made a new economic development possible also for the citizens of Schiedam."

The two exerts perfectly exemplify the actors' narratives on the beneficial effects that a connection between port and city could generate, namely attracting high-income workers to live and consume in Schiedam, education and job opportunities for the low-skilled residents, attracting more investments for the living environment, and improve the image of the city. Such desired effects strongly resonate with the municipal interests concerning urban development. Hence, it is possible to argue that preserving port activities is not only logical for the aforementioned reasons, but more importantly, it is one of the municipality's reasonable politics to fulfil their matters of care: the social engineering of Schiedam's demography and the uplifting of the city image. The port as infrastructure and the companies operating in it thus perform a techno-politic role in the accomplishment of the municipality's projects (Anard et al.,2018: 31). In this sense, keeping the port active became a municipal matter of care per se, because it represents an instrument to reach their main goal. In their narrative, educational possibilities and economic benefits are the reasonable politics that sustain such matters of care. I will show in the sixth chapter how municipal actors are using all their agency to maintain the port industrial activities in Schiedam. It is also possible to see how financial aspects are recurrently taken as the unit of measurement when considering what can be beneficial for the city. However, another image emerges when critically lodging the narratives into their materialities.

Marco and Ettore outlined a Win-Win situation that seems beneficial for everyone, representing the reasonable politics of the two groups of actors for keeping the port active. The port-city relationship are evaluated as relevant and appropriate because aligning with the main municipal matters of care discussed above. The objectives for the city shaped institutional moral ecologies.

Nevertheless, as many interlocutors mentioned, most workers of the port companies do not live in Schiedam nor recreate in the city. On the other hand, it is true that the main port companies invested in Schiedam's municipality, but only in the port area. Being a private port, the holder of the land leases is responsible for maintaining the quality of the docks, which has been the main objective of companies' investments in Schiedam. Thus, companies' investments did not create any experienceable benefit for the residents.

Furthermore, after a few years after the analysis carried out by Marco, the number of citizens working in the port has not risen, nor has the municipality created effective programs to transform the companies' need for workers into career opportunities for the residents. Actually, there is an educational project with such an aim. It started in 2019, stopped during the pandemic crisis and still struggling to start again. However, among all the research participants, only two members of the port development team knew about such a program. The companies are currently running their training programs in other areas of the region, such as Rotterdam and Hook of Holland, thus not directly helping Schiedam residents to find new job opportunities. Finally, the municipality tried to re-profile Schiedam as a port city by rebranding the port

cluster as the Off Shore Valley and trying to connect the city's maritime heritage with the highly specialised present. This worked to some extent, as politicians could use this term in their meetings, highlighting the technological innovativeness present in the city, a poetic of infrastructures to show off the city of Schiedam (Larkin, 2013: 335). However, neither the citizens nor the companies found it beneficial. Within the first group, very few residents even know about such a brand, while the representatives of the former one are very sceptical because the brand was imposed from above and did not find it useful for their profiling.

Thus, it seems that the depicted Win-Win situation fades when shifting the potential benefits determined by the urban port presence from a bird-eye perspective to a grassroots one. The value for the companies based in Schiedam is more related to the strategic position in the regional assemblage than what the city has to offer. While during the research, the residents did not experience any direct benefit from the port. My experience reinforces this argument, as I did not detect a direct positive impact on the citizenry either from an employment point of view or for the added financial value to the city's economy. Instead, I saw the disconnection mentioned by Marco, on which I will further elaborate in the sixth chapter.

However, the municipality – as for urban development - is adopting a perspective that considers the city as a whole. From this stance, it is relevant that port companies generate economic revenue for the local government. Moreover, their presence potentially triggers other effects, such as attracting more companies and high-end workers that are considered beneficial for the type of city institutional actors want to achieve – and could reside in the new middle-income dwellings under construction. Their moral ecology drew on such arguments to highlight the usefulness of the port to the city

Also, the residents who are less affected by – or informed about - see the port industry as potentially beneficial for the city, ultimately agreeing to the reasonable politics of the local government by taking a similar perspective on the value for the city as a whole. I will present four excerpts to make the similitudes between these actors' narratives emerge. The first one comes from the conversation with the municipality team for the port development; the other three are from residents not living close to the port area. They are all supportive of the presence of port activities in the city.

Angelo: “[The port] it's a big employer. It's a big source of income. And it's it's it's part of the character of the city, just like the Gin or Jenever. It's part of the past and the DNA of the city.”

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Katia: “[about the future presence of port companies] Why not? I mean, uh, it's there and, uh if it's still worth to have some activities there, then let it be so.”

Pietro: “I mean, these companies, everybody needs to work.”

Katia: “Yes. Yes. And it's we are next to the water. So it would be a bit crazy not to use it.”

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MD: “Do you think the port is still important for the city?”

Cristiano: “Of course, it gives an identity to Schiedam. Hopefully, these companies will still make use of the harbour facilities. [...] It's also, it's you have much more different kind of industries. And

that's important, I think because if we have an economic recession [...] is useful for people, it makes it attractive to live here. So it makes the difference.[sic.]

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Riccardo: "I wouldn't have a problem with it when it becomes more business in the port. So there's more activity and more people. I think it would be a good thing for the city."

Here it is possible to see how each of the three exerts coming from citizens living in the city centre echoed one of the points listed by Angelo. The port is depicted as a source of employment by Katia and Pietro; as constituting the city identity and a source of stability for Schiedam and its residents by Cristiano; and as a source of income by Riccardo. Furthermore, Cristiano and Riccardo raised another issue which is important for the municipality as well: the attractiveness of the city. In their thoughts, an active port also represents a source of attraction for two reasons. Cristiano relates the presence of port activities as a way to diversify the city's economy, rendering Schiedam more resilient financially and thus more attractive as a city where to settle. On the other hand, Riccardo points out how the presence of port business means a larger quantity of workers coming to the city, rendering it more lively. Both reasoning align with the municipal perspective about the potential value the port can apport to the city.

These residents share a positive view of the port, thinking it is beneficial for the city, especially from an economical perspective. Indeed, economic reasoning emerges as the dominant one in all their narratives, representing an axis of comparison with the perspectives of the most critical residents of the port. They presented a quite different argument on the economic advantages of the port activities. This argument became a way to sustain their matters of care that - as I am about to address - are entangled in their embodied experiences.

In conclusion, this section outlined the relevance of institutional actors – and some residents who live in the city centre – to the port activities. This verged on the attractiveness for the city raised by specialised companies and the hope that the maritime engineers will settle in Schiedam. Thus, the port became instrumental in the matters of care of the municipality, raising the citizenry's socio-economic level and changing the detrimental image of the past. To sustain the presence of the port, the favourable actors argued for the possibility of attracting investments and employing the low-income residents of Schiedam. The reasonable politics for keeping the port active underlined its value for the city. However, empirical findings question such narrative as the number of citizens employed in the port was very low, and the investments focused on the port's quays. Again, a bird-eye perspective of what is good for the city clashed with grassroots ones. The following section shows how the embodied experiences of the residents living close to the port shaped their opinions against it.

### 5.3 The detrimental side of the port

There is a group of citizens who strongly opposes the industrial activities of the port. They all claim that the drawbacks caused by the port surpass the benefits provided, claiming that an industrial port should exist so close to a living area. Those citizens are the ones who live closer to the edges of the port industrial zone and thus are the most affected by its environmental footprint. Giorgio presented an overview of such problems:

“[First] there is a lot of traffic going up and down, but that's OK, part of living in a city. Second, it's light. So there's a lot of light all the time, disturbing nightlife or wildlife, but also us. [third] Sound, So high frequency and low-frequency sound, you have to imagine that there are big ships and they're working on the cranes at night or in the evening, [...] Then, the hotel function of the ships, which means that provides air conditioning and light on the ship they just start the engines and keep them running 24/7. And this provides sound and smell and black smoke. [...] And also, they paint a lot in the air, [name of a company] they're not supposed to, but they paint the spray paint out in the open. And [another company] they spray paint inside, but the spray paint still comes out. So sometimes we have like white spots on the roofs of cars or whatever.”

Several types of pollution and reasons behind such contamination emerged from his words, describing pollutant activities as affecting humans and wildlife. Giorgio reported light, noise, and air pollution as ever-present. The first one comes from the artificial light illuminating both the port area and the vessels. While noise and air pollution have more than one source, the traffic, the engines of ships that must be functioning all time, and the working activities conducted along the quays. He denounced that some companies circumvent the legislation – by painting outside, but even the painting conducted inside is still hazardous for the environment.

All the listed problematics are embodied and experienced through the senses: Giorgio saw the black smoke, the white spots, and the lights, he heard or smelt the traffic and the engines. Other residents opposing to port activities stressed the daily sensorial experiences of such disturbances. These experiences constitute their living environment and shape their narrative.

Three experts from different interviews show how the environmental issues became intertwined with the housing situations of those who live near the port, linking port and urban development through such embodiment.

Dante: “In this area, the houses are from the 1930s, I mean, they're not very well insulated. So these low-frequency waves just travel through your house and [...] during the nights when it's quieter outside you lie in your bed you can really hear this noise. [...] You can close your eyes and you won't see something but you cannot unhear something.” [sic.]

Giorgio: “We have old houses from the 1930s. So we have these like coloured glass and when the low frequency is sounding, it's not something you really hear, but you feel it, more like it's like a vibration. All the glass was tingling like that. Which keeps you awake.”

Franco: "Here day and night is noise from the cars from the industry at the south of the river, [from] low frequencies. My ears are perfect I think I hear everything, it didn't disturb me because I can close my window. [...] But it's not good for your health you don't hear it but it's there."

Dante, as Giorgio, lives close to the port, while Franco's house is a little more distant. Despite this, the main difference lies in the type of housing. Franco's dwelling could be easily insulated because it has been built more recently. He is thus less affected by the noise, while Dante and Giorgio cannot insulate their houses and are thus more disturbed by the noise. As they pointed out, it is at night, when the city is silent, that the low frequencies are more perceivable and cause more disturbances. Dante and Giorgio's discourses resonate with embodied and sensorial experiences when they say "you cannot unhear something" and "you feel it, more like a vibration". The interlocutors expressed how this keeps them awake, representing a serious hindrance to their quality of life.

Franco's exert points out other two issues. The first one is that Schiedam is affected by port activities on the other side of the river, the industrial area of Pernis and Botlek. This is an example of how the environmental footprint of industrial activities extends beyond physical boundaries, affecting different administrative scales (Hein 2021: 4), and of the connections within the port cityscape. The second one connects noise and health and expands the implications of port-related nuisances. This group of residents' matters of care are utterly connected with their embodied experiences. The hindrances caused by the port are part of their materiality and affect their daily life and wellbeing. That is why housing insulation became important for these residents, as it is one possible solution to diminish the negative effects experienced. Some municipal actors are aware and concerned about these dynamics, as Michele pointed out during our conversation:

"When we talk about sound and noise levels, it's always in a context. This is a big agglomeration and [...] noise is part of this area. We can't get rid of it. (...) But what is acceptable? Because noise is also bad for your health and some are more likely to be affected than others, especially the low-frequency sounds. [...] So that's one of the biggest problems and really at the moment, we're working on it. How can we get those noises reduced to acceptable levels? Can the industry do something? But also, can we make the houses better insulated against noise? [...] New houses get proper insulation. And the next step is what we're going to do with the existing houses and in the end, it's money [...] Maybe it's subsidized maybe we just need to pay it. And I don't know if it's us or the province or on a higher level. We want to keep the industry there. [...] We can't have everybody pay for their own insulation measures because we want something."

Michele pointed out multi-scalar dynamics related to a different level of governance. He used the emic category of agglomeration to express how Schiedam is affected by the noises caused in the vaster assemblage that are not under municipal control. The exert also shows the municipality's affections concerning noise hindrances. Michele was critically reflecting on the possibilities of tackling such an issue. He implicitly said that the construction of new dwellings has priority over the insulation of existing ones because - as mentioned before, it is the mandatory task assigned by the central government. This highlights

how the concern for housing insulation comes after the municipality's priorities, and the material constraints prevail on the affection. Furthermore, some moral evaluations emerged from his words when he referred to "acceptable levels" and when he stated that it is impossible to pretend that people pay for something the municipality desires. In doing so, Michele was expressing evaluations over the relationships between people, infrastructures, and the environment – moral ecologies – implicitly privileging a perspective that did not consider the current noise levels as too high but acceptable given all the connections of the assemblage.

However, as he explicitly mentioned, it is about money. Economic reasoning not only leads to the consideration about housing insulation but also of what is right or wrong for people to pay. Even if considering the residents' health connected to a reasonable amount of noise, Michele did not address the price paid every day – in terms of wellbeing - by those citizens most affected by the port's environmental footprint. The concerned literature warns about these institutional actors' lack of addressing environmental injustice, underlining the need for qualitative research to comprehend the conceptualisation of environmental risks arising from citizens (Angueloski et al., 2019: 26141-2). When speaking with the port development team, they were reflecting on the noise caused by the port, similarly overlooking the hindrances experienced by some residents:

Angelo: "The port is full now, at the moment. There are no complaints. There is no noise.

Simone: "There's noise. But nobody's complaining. [...] Somehow everybody thinks the port is a big, uh, noise polluting, uh, system. But if you look at it from the other areas it's not such a big issue. And it's like a handful of people who are really complaining [...]"

Roberto: "Yeah, exactly. Because I, I agree with you because the contribution from the noise point of view from the industry, it's not only [here], but all over the Netherlands, it's less than 1%."

Independently from the accuracy of Roberto's projection, what emerges from the exert is the type of analysis used by these institutional actors to address the nuisance issue. They adopted a bird-eye perspective, focusing on noise averages and numbers of complaints – and complainers instead of the experienced drawbacks. The relationships with the port suffered by the residents are lessened to the number of complaints, representing another evaluation of the relationships between port and city.

On the contrary, the narratives of the residents who live close to the harbours expressed the importance of sensorial experiences in shaping their perception of the port. The development studies literature highlights how the differences in the perspective adopted by policymakers and citizens lead to projects disregarding the residents' materialities (Tozzi, 2021). A bird-eye approach identifies different problems than the grassroots embodied experience of the residents does, leading to institutional policies that do not address issues on an individual level (Ibidem). The embodied experiences are at the foundation of the residents' moral ecology concerning the port, just like for urban development.

Following on noise hindrances and the importance of embodied experience, Franco, Michele, and Simone raised another important issue: not everyone is concerned by - or even hears such types of frequencies. During an informal interview at Lucio's place, which is also close to the port, he spoke about this topic when his wife and daughter entered the room and sarcastically commented that he listens to those noises and does not feel or hear them. Carlo and his daughter, two other interlocutors living in the same area for many years, stated that the noise is not that terrible and that eventually, people get used to it. Carlo strongly supported port companies' presence in the city since he thought they gave Schiedam international fame and attracted expats from all over the world. He considered the environmental impacts something worth bearing for the city's greater benefit. Thus, there were discrepancies between the residents living by the port. It is evident the importance of moral ecologies in shaping actors' perspectives, who considered the port presence as positive for the city and advocated for its maintenance using similar reasonable politics to the municipal ones.

However, who took an opposite stance expressed a counter-narrative on such arguments:

Dante: "I think that this municipality thinks that there's a lot of business and income coming via these, uh, say, larger companies in the harbour. But I wonder whether that's the case, because, I mean, most people that work there don't live in Schiedam I think so it's just more, uh, I think for your own prestige, maybe a little bit of taxes [...] and of course, it's pretty expensive to move."

Giorgio: "I lived here for 20 years now and the only people I see here are Philippines, people from Latvia working on the machines. So it had nothing to do with the local economy, [...] it's not a big economic factor in the neighbourhood. They're not paying much taxes locally and they're only providing pollution. So, if you make an economic balance, they cost more than they deliver, if you take pollution into the equation and the trouble they cause." [sic.]

The two residents reflected on the actual economic influence of the port over the city. Both mentioned the number of Schiedammers working in the city's harbours and the quantity of taxes paid to the local government. They consider the two amounts too low to represent an actual contribution worth bearing the industrial activities and consequences. Dante and Giorgio presented a perspective on the economic benefits of the port as opposed to the municipal one. Their narrative counterpoints the reasonable politics used by the municipality.

However, Dante outlined two significant issues in the institutional narratives: prestige and compensation costs. He thus acknowledged the port's relevance for municipal purposes and the constraints that limit the institutional choices. On the other hand, by evaluating the cost-benefits provided and caused by the port companies, Giorgio exposed a very important issue neglected by the institutional narratives: to "take the pollution into the equation". During our informal interview, Lucio also made several similar statements, claiming that the troubles caused by the port greatly outgrow the benefits.

In conclusion, the residents opposing the port used similar reasonable politics to the municipal actors, verging on economic costs and benefits created by the port. However, their perspective on the two issues counterpoints the claims of a win-win situation made by the municipality, as they do not see how the port is relevantly helping the city's development nor providing opportunities for the residents. The two groups of actors assembled different perspectives of what the presence of the port entailed for the city. Thus, reinforcing the thesis' argument of the need to inquire the relationships constituting port cityscapes from the different perspectives of the actors embedded in the network (Shi et al., 2016: 135; Goh, 2021: 185; Angueloski et al., 2019: 26142; Hein 2019: 5; Hein et al. 2021: 8).

The residents' arguments described in this section support their interest in enhancing the living conditions by shutting down the port activities. Analysing this claim in the light of matters of care addressed the materiality that shapes their opinions. Their daily embodied experiences are affected by hindrances of port activities, especially the smell and noise coming from the ever-working engines of the vessels. In the absence of affection for the port - they did not recognise it as valuable - their moral ecology points toward eliminating the port from the assemblage of Schiedam, as the next section will elaborate. The chapter follows outlining the coping strategies used by these residents to make their moral ecologies count. They managed to affect both the companies and the municipality through legal actions. I will examine how their agency managed to impact the whole country, representing a politic of scale which altered the power balance between the actors (Escobar, 2001: 161).

## 5.4 Complain for moral ecologies

Most participants who live close to the port area claimed that industrial activities should move elsewhere. As described in the previous section, their argumentation started from their embodied experiences and counterpointed the municipal narratives over the benefits of the port presence. These topics compose the reasonable politics of whose matters of care want the port to be dismantled. An excerpt from Giorgio's interview well resumes this transition.

"It's about the disturbance and and I think, well, they [port companies] cannot exist here under current licence regulations. [...] I'm not against work or offices or whatever. It's about the disturbance [...] It would be a logical solution to remove this specialistic industry out of the urban areas to a good place where they can grow, where they can pollute, where they can provide light, sound whatever they want because they will not disturb anyone and give expansion to urban development."

Giorgio pinpointed the special case of Schiedam, where companies exceeding the environmental permits are still working. He is also aware of the housing crisis, an argument used to support the idea that the port should be reconverted into dwellings. The importance of embodied experience lies implicitly behind the statement that industry should move where it can pollute without disturbing human life. Giorgio, like the

other residents sharing this idea, is not fighting for environmental justice but their living environment. This resonates with those authors that relate the industrial activities carried out in urbanised deltas to the health and social conditions of the citizens and - as Giorgio did - advocate for a radical change (see Meyer, 2019). Giorgio clearly stated the moral ecology of the residents opposing the port, an urban port cannot coexist with living environments. He sees the relationships between the urban port of Schiedam and the close living environments as not appropriate because the industrial activities provide pollution and nuisances to the residents.

However, municipal actors have a different perspective about port-city relationships, as is well exposed by Michele's words:

"If we want to make a decision, we need to think about two goals. I mean, expanding our port or having a port future-proof, but also creating houses. And that's yeah, it's a hard puzzle because *we want to have both, and we can have both*, but we need to accept that they both influence each other so the port can't keep growing like they would want to [... and] if you're living there, you should accept some kind of influence from the port some kind of noise level, because the port is there. It's, it's part of Schiedam. It's work. People work there. So if you live in Schiedam, you should accept some kind of noise level." [emphasis added]

The exert sheds light on the conundrum experienced by the municipality's policymakers, who "want and can have both" port and housing development. The two processes mutual influence each other, as Schiedam port is surrounded by the city and its inhabitants' dwellings. The hindrances caused by housing for port development are not related to the use of space but the legal regulations that tighten industry leeway when it is close to a living area. The municipal employee points out finding a compromise between port companies and residents as a reasonable solution for both entities to coexist. However, the costs experienced by the different stakeholders are quite different. The former would accept losing some business opportunities, while the latter should tolerate living with the nuisances caused by port activities. Nevertheless, since the presence of the port is instrumental to the municipal matters of care, the institutional actors' moral ecologies informing port-city relationships pointed toward the coexistence of industrial activities next to living environments.

However, as Giorgio addressed later during our interview, many residents do not accept such conditions. Concretely, the action of these citizens hinged on the legal limitations regulating noise pollution and refer to the competent environmental institution, the DCMR:

"The council has been sleeping for the last ten years. So let's say, for example, permits have been given out for like, say, ten thousand hertz on sound, but they're producing 30000 hertz. Nobody cares. [...] So there were a lot of complaints at the DCMR. And the thing is, if there are more than 70 complaints, then the complaints [then the complaints are taken] seriously by their internal protocol. So we always have to make sure that 70 people made phone calls and email or to make sure that the complaint has been processed."

Independently from the accuracy of his knowledge about the internal protocols of the DCMR, what Giorgio outlined is a politic of scale (Escobar, 2001: 161). Residents were aware of the different political scales at play in Schiedam and how they work. The DCMR has the duty to control the source of the complaints, and when finding excessive pollution – values that surpass the permits – the organization communicates it to the municipality. From then on, the municipality should compel the relevant company to chase the polluting activity, returning it within legal boundaries. However, like many other residents living near the port, Giorgio is sceptical about the municipality action and declared that the municipality often did not act at all.

Indeed, Domenico, working at the DCMR but following the case of another city, pointed out the agency of the municipal actors on this issue:

“There are two possibilities. Uh, you get an official fine, saying for every day that you do not comply with the regulation, you have to pay €1,000. But there are also, uh, possibilities to act on the activity itself like that shutting it down or something like that. The local government, they have to, uh, decide on how they work that out.”

Domenico explained to me the models used by the DCMR to estimate the absolute noise level in a certain area. Those numbers are an agglomeration of different noise factors, such as industry and traffic, giving the total number of decibels coming from each noise source. The maximum amount of noise legally permitted to the industries around housing areas is between 50 and 55 decibels, directly affecting the permits given to the industry in Schiedam. Such calculations are used by the residents opposing the port activities to outline the industry's negative impact. Indeed, the interactive map on the DCMR's website shows how some households experience noise levels above the legal regulations.<sup>7</sup> However, the municipality has “to work that out”, leaving a certain degree of leeway to these actors.

Michele during his interview pointed out such a power, and reflected on what basis it should be applied:

“I work in the permits side of things. It's, it's hard, it's numbers. It's, I mean it's, it's just it's yes or no. And this pretty much no room to have a good conversation about what is best. I mean, you need to comply on that front. And sometimes you just want to say, is that really important? I mean, it's more important if you if you've got a development which is sustainable, which is important, and maybe if you don't comply to it, maybe that's acceptable because on the whole, what you're doing is so much better. [...]. What's just one rule compared to all we want to achieve as a town? I mean, yeah, if you just look at one rule, we should leave here. I mean, then if you look at what's allowed noise-wise [...] you should just vacate this area. I mean, it is just uninhabitable if you look at this and you know, pretty much everybody's quite happy living here. And so yeah, there's just one rule and you should look at the bigger picture.”

The exert shows the moral ecologies of the municipal actors concerning the relationships between port activities, environmental laws, and the residents. The municipality was not sleeping but actively choosing

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dcmr.nl/geluid-schiedam>. Last accessed on 08/06/2022.

where and how to intervene. Michele refers to the avantgarde industry of Schiedam, which now focuses on offshore renewable energy. He sees the important role taken by the port activities of the city, leading the environmental transition. By doing so, he implies that infringing current environmental regulations become reasonable as it might lead to a better future. To sustain his argument, he kept using a bird-eye perspective, looking at “the bigger picture”. He admitted that in the current situation if the permits were to be applied strictly, whether the port industry or the dwellings surrounding would have to be relocated. The number of complainers comes back in Michele's exert when he stated that "pretty much everybody is quite happy". The residents opposing the port were not numerous enough to provide a reasonable basis for relocating the industrial activities. Thus, the municipal employee pinpointed the validity of residents' scepticism concerning the municipal action against transgressor companies.

Michele's agency shows the actors' ability to shape the relationships within the Schiedam port cityscape. Likewise, The residents' legal action used the difference of power in the governance scale by appealing – and winning – to a higher authority than the municipality. They managed to change the situation for the whole country. It thus represents a politic of scale described by Escobar (2001: 166), used to enforce their moral ecologies. The change in the legislation altered the power dynamics between the actors and therefore, the matters of care of the port companies and the municipality, which were looking for ways to diminish the number of complaints.

The High Court sided with the residents in early 2020. After having complained for years to the DCMR and waiting in vain for some municipal resolution toward the sound pollution coming from the port, a group of citizens whom *de facto* live *in* the port industrial area appealed to the national High Court<sup>8</sup>. The controversy was the legislative gap by which noise caused by the vessels anchored at the port was not part of the companies' environmental responsibility. The judge deliberated in favour of the residents, nullifying the old environmental permits, ratifying the entire country. Hence, the new permits will include the pollution caused by the ships anchored to the environmental permits of the firm responsible for that quay. Most of the companies would not be able to operate anymore in this condition, the next chapter illustrates how the municipality can act on the issue, enabling the port to remain active.

The chapter described the different perspectives that residents, institutional actors, and port companies had on the port of Schiedam and its relationships with the city and the regional assemblage. The city's position is strategic for the port companies. From a business point of view, the vicinity of Rotterdam is seen as useful and beneficial – counterpointing the evaluations of urban development addressed in the previous chapter. At the time of the research, the port activities were highly considered by the municipality because they could concur in achieving their main matter of care – uplifting the city's image and attracting richer

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<sup>8</sup> I did not engage with these citizens, as the signed a non-divulagation contract with the municipality.

citizens. The reasonable politics sustain these arguments are not far from the ones presented for urban investments. These actors conceived of the port as providing economic opportunities for the city. However, when taking a grassroots stance, the described opportunities faded as the number of Schiedammers working in the port was still very low, and the investments sponsored by the port companies involved only the quays.

Furthermore, the residents living closer to the port experienced many nuisances from the port's environmental footprint. These negative embodied experiences pushed them to pursue legal actions, first through complaints and then appealing to the Higher Court. Their matters of care concern the ceasing of port activities. At the same time, it appeared that the municipality used all their decision power to keep the port active. Two opposed moral ecologies concerning port and city relationships started to emerge, linked to two different stances. A bird-eye perspective privileges the maintenance of port activities as they economically benefit the city, overlooking the detrimental sides of the port as the number of complaining citizens is not high enough to change the logic of this reasoning. On the other hand, the residents most affected by the port – from an individual perspective – claim more environmentally just relations between the port and the city.

The last chapter describes the strategies used by port companies and municipalities to address this complex situation, as they share the matter of care of keeping the port in Schiedam and active.

## 6. Power balances and port-city relationships

As introduced by the last exert from Michele's interview, the change in the environmental permits constituted a potential threat for the port companies. However, as it will appear by the end of the chapter, the political support of the municipality is likely to maintain the status quo, if not incrementing the permitted noise for industrial activities. Although some actors within the municipality and the port companies expressed concerns about the citizens' quality of life, empirical findings suggested that their focus is on maintaining the port active.

The chapter first describes the municipal agency in writing the new permits and then focuses on the actions taken by the companies to diminish the number of complainers. The final section outlines the forms of collaboration between residents, companies, and the municipality used to address the changing situation.

### 6.1 Facing the citizens' complaints and the new environmental laws

This sub-chapter describes the actions port companies and municipal actors took to face the changing legal situation and the threat represented by the number of complaints. The municipality used their decision power to safeguard the port activities. While the port companies developed solutions to diminish the number of complainers. The analysis of the narratives concerning these strategies will further unveil the moral ecologies of both actors, which focused on creating relationships between the actors that could provide a basis for the port to remain active. Thus facilitating the companies instead of the residents

### 6.1.2 The municipal agency on the new environmental permits

Dante: "The harbours of Schiedam have reached the ceiling of their sound limit. So basically, if you add all the ships to it, they will exceed, uh, the legal, uh, ceiling. But there is also a law that you can in one go sort of raise that level all you want and that's the option now they [the municipality] are considering."

Dante's words expressed the situation in the port of Schiedam during the fieldwork. The port area had already reached – and sometimes exceeded – the maximum amount of noise allowed to industrial zones next to living environments. However, the municipal government has the faculty to raise that amount once. Increasing the maximum of the DBs permitted to each company became the reasonable politic to maintain the port active – the matters of care at stake. Michele expressed both the urgency of such action and the consequent choice that will affect the future of the port activities in Schiedam:

"We need to, give that extra noise. We need to make a decision about that. [We can] add it to what is allowed now, no questions asked [...] So that's the easy way. Just add that amount and then problem solved. [...] But not for the people living there. So that's something we need to ask ourselves. Do we want to allow the maximum amount of extra noise or should it be something less, like are we going to allow that you make more noise than it was before? But we also want you to make a small step back to make it better for the people living there."

At this stage of the municipal actor's narrative, he considered the residents' quality of life. He is not questioning whether to raise the limits but to what extent. His words highlighted the agency of the municipality and the possibility of allowing even more noise than already produced, which would represent a great opportunity for the port companies to expand their businesses. However, he acknowledged the effects the decision will have on the people living close to the port. In an exert presented in section 4.3, he considered what factors could diminish the noise in the port area, reflecting on what the industries could do and the role of better insulation. Although for the residents would be better to decrease the permitted noises, Michele's narrative did not question the reduction of port activities. The moral ecology emerging from his discourse conceive "a small step back" from the companies and keeping the relative levels of nuisances as the appropriate relations between firms and residents.

He continued:

“Companies need to accept that people don't want the amount of noise they make now and that they should do everything to make it less. But people living there should also accept that they are living in a highly urbanized area which got industry and that there's always going to be some noise and it's going to be more than when you live elsewhere.”

This perspective does not consider the claims of those residents most affected by the port pollution. Their moral ecology – that privilege port-city relationships not affecting negatively their daily life – do not fit with the municipal reasonable politics because hindering the port activities threaten their projects for the city. Michele saw the port companies as responsible for developing solutions for reducing the experienced noise while the residents should accept the presence of industrial activities.

In the meantime, while the DCMR and the municipality worked on the new permits, the latter allowed the continuation of port activities, another example of their decision power and of privileging port companies' interests over the citizens' ones

### 6.1.3 The actions taken by the companies

Port companies rely on the municipal agency to maintain their working capacity even when permits include the vessels. Thus, the companies' envisioned solutions hinged on diminishing the number of complainers by enhancing the communication between parties and developing technical solutions to diminish the noise coming from the port. At the same time, their approach became more inclined to cooperate with the residents and other companies.

The conversation between residents and port companies started around 2005 to solve the pollution caused by the painting activities carried out in the open. Some research participants remember how, at the time, the number of residents participating was higher, but the interaction was hostile. The painting problem was partially solved, and the citizens' participation dropped in time. The meetings became more about the co-managing the port areas under the responsibility of the firms and, more recently, about sound pollution. I will articulate more on the types and forms of collaboration at the end of the chapter, while this section pinpoints how the legal actions taken by the residents changed the companies' approaches.

After the High Court resolution, port companies realised the serious threat the complaints represented to their business and looked for interaction with the residents. Two short excerpts from Dante and Ettore well exemplify this process.

Ettore: "These people, you know, they can complain. And actually, we have this legislation when they complain, well, the DCMR can stop the work. So you have to deal with them and look together for new solutions. That's in our both interests."

Dante: "They [the port companies] were originally from the idea 'If I make something, if I do business, I have to make noise and, uh, people shouldn't complain' but I think they ought to start to open up now [...] this court case has really changed their behaviour."

It is easily arguable that the main interest of every company is doing business, which *de facto* represents the main matter of care for the port companies in Schiedam. However, to fulfil their matter of care the companies "have to deal with" the residents. Threatened by the possibility of losing their businesses or having to leave the strategic position in the assemblage, finding solutions to alleviate the noise produced and increasing the collaboration with the citizens are two of the current companies' matters of care. These two re-shaped their conception of appropriate relationships between the actors of the Schiedam port cityscape. They are trying to address the sources of complaints by different means, many of which are related to the most technical side of the port, like developing dampers for the vessels' engines, while others hinge on increasing communication with the residents.

Enzo, one of the companies' representatives, reported a brief outline of the communication strategies used by the companies to diminish the number of complaints:

"You get the complaints, and you get angry people and people calling. So [some companies] really put a lot of money and effort in getting a better understanding with the neighbours. [...] When a ship was coming and they knew that was going to make a lot of noise [...] they are very active in telling people [...] 'okay, then this ship will arrive [...] we asked them to, uh, to change the light. We will ask them not to do testing the speaker or whatever. And when you tell people 'okay, it's coming on Monday and it's leaving on Thursday' then they know and they are a lot more likely not to complain." [sic.]

Enzo described the usual actions taken by port activities to inform the citizens of the presence of the vessel and the actions taken to lower the nuisances produced by it. Sometimes these solutions are easy to arrange, like anchoring the ship behind a building that will block the propagation of the sound waves to some extent. Other solutions are far more expensive and difficult to apply. However, Enzo stressed the effort that the companies put in trying to avoid people complaining. Not surprisingly, the type of communications mentioned started two years ago, after the High Court resolution. Dante articulated some thoughts concerning how these efforts took form and their effectiveness:

"What really helps us is good communication between the companies and uh, and neighbourhood. There is a regular newsletter that they sent out [...] and it helps. I mean, not if the ship is here for three months, that makes three months of noise that we have. [...] And there's also the noise-cancelling systems, which I think it will cost them about two days to put it all on the chimney. So, you know, two days of noise and then it's less. So it is, it's. It helps to, uh, reduce the number of complaints [...] raising the acceptance basically."

During the same conversation, he told me about an episode when he - mad about the noise produced by the port activities - went to speak to one of the companies' representatives and, by talking, understood

how they were considering many solutions to decrease the nuisances. He then realised that the firms are actively tackling the issue, which is why he praised this level of communication. Dante critically reflected that this did not solve the problem but helped, which benefited the companies as it contributed to "raising the acceptance" from the residents towards the port activities.

Dante related to some technical solutions as well. The characteristics of the port environment made this kind of action as the most likely to develop for the companies. As Graziano – a researcher from TU Delft who worked on the Schiedam case a few years ago - clearly outlined:

"A port is a very technical sphere, it's about infrastructure, logistics. It is also dominated by engineers. (...) So there the rationale of thinking and of developing strategies for the port is also very technical."

Metaphorically, the nature of the port sphere creates a material context where engineering rationales and technical knowledge represent the common language shared by the companies used to discuss possible practical solutions. This facilitates the collaboration within this group of actors and even incentives it when facing the same problems. One representative of the business associations reflected on this issue.

Ettore: "See, they have the same problem, like this new legislation where ships are also included in the noise plan. [...] In the end, they have the same interests, they have the same problem, and they're looking at the same solution. That's why they work together [...] It's in the interests of the companies to come together."

Ettore highlighted how the current situation represents a challenge for all the companies, which can benefit by facing it together. At the same time, it shapes the reasonable politics of the discourse, which pivot on pragmatical considerations anchored to the hard, technical side of the port. During an informal conversation, one of the port companies' representatives explained the costs and the logistics of applying noise dampers to the vessels– the noise-cancelling systems mentioned by Dante. This technical solution represents a high cost for the companies, dozens of thousands of euros, and days of work plus the ship owner's permission, as the procedure often requires modifying the exhaust pipes of the vessel. The dampers are an example of a more general politic that conceives interventions of this cost as reasonable only when necessary. This means that if a vessel is going to stay anchored for one week, it is very unlikely that the company working on it will put the dampers. However, the companies' representatives did not consider removing or diminishing the ships anchored at the docks, and the port activities in general - the solution that would benefit these residents the most. It seems that the strategies implied to limit the environmental footprint aimed at limiting the number of complaints more than improving the residents' quality of life, exactly as reported by Dante at the beginning of this section.

Furthermore, the noise pollution worsened over time. Vessels grew in size, thus creating more nuisances for nearby residents. During our conversation, Dante reflected on this issue:

"The ships coming into the harbour became bigger and bigger. And with that, also, the engines of the ships became bigger and bigger. And these ships are offshore ships that are not built to be in harbours. So, if you want to save money on the noise reduction system for the engine, you just have quite a loud engine. And that is what we suffer the most, here in the area. [...] And the difficulty is that there's no legal threshold for low-frequency noises. There's only an absolute noise level."

He described how the type of industry characterising Schiedam's port cityscape makes that the ships approaching the harbours are constructed to be in the open sea, where nuisance issues are often not considered. Ship builders and owners spare economic costs on the noise reduction systems, which ultimately affects Schiedam citizens' quality of life. Furthermore, another scale that emerged relevant to fully understanding the complex dynamics of port cityscapes is the time scale. Nowadays, the ships approaching the city's harbours differ enormously from the ones that used to be built and repaired there in the last century. Larger vessels have a bigger environmental footprint. At the same time, the type of activities carried out by the port companies in Schiedam makes the ship remain anchored at the harbour for long periods. As the words of Dante, Giorgio, and Franco expressed in the previous chapter, this situation creates long-lasting stress factors for the residents living in that area of the city. Dante also expressed that low-frequencies noises, the aspect that most affects these citizens, are not regulated by the law, representing an advantage for these companies.

The new regulations, like the old ones, will be based on absolute noise levels, not fully tackling the residents' embodied experiences. At the same time, there will not be legal boundaries obliging the municipality and the port companies to focus on this issue. Thus, the companies have a certain degree of leeway in deciding whether to address such problems or not. The rationale that the interviewed representatives of the companies expressed echoes the municipal one, as it takes the number of complaints as the base to act. Giacomo, a participant of this group of actors, elaborated on this argument during our interview:

"Well, there's a discussion we always have about the complaints and the surroundings. And, uh, I told them, well, we haven't had a lot of complaints. And the environmental survey [the complaints received by the DCMR] said we had three complaints in one quarter. How many are there? Because we always work over here. There is noise. There was a vessel. So, uh, how seriously do we have to take it if you have three complaints?"

Giacomo, as the municipality's actors, reflected on the relevance of the problem based on the number of complaints received by the DCMR. He took a bird-eye perspective that gives more relevance to quantities of reported nuisances than the quality of residents' life. From this perspective, only when the complaints are high enough - although a specific number was not mentioned – does the application of expensive measures become reasonable. Such a stance represents a particular moral ecology, which quantifies the negative effects experienced by the residents and then categorises them as relevant or not to address. The

evaluation is based on the threat posed by the number of complaints. When there is no threat, the question becomes, “how seriously do we have to take it”?

The section outlined the port companies’ actions and rationales to tackle the number of complainers. These are connected to the technical sphere of the port and hinged on creating more communication between the parties. However, the costs of developing and applying technical solutions – such as noise cancellation units – made tackling the issue reasonable only under some conditions: a high number of complaints and long-lasting source of nuisances. Therefore, quantities instead of residents’ quality of life shaped the reasonable politics of this group of actors, ultimately revealing their moral ecology concerning the relationships between people, companies, and the environment. The next sub-chapter further dives into the port-city relationships I could observe during my research. As for the actions described, they took form to enable the continuation of port activities.

## 6.2 Collaboration and port-city relationships

Schiedam has a recent history characterised by a strong level of collaboration between port companies and municipality, involving to some extent the local population. Since the port spatial development plans of 2015, the municipality has given high relevance to port companies’ needs and requests. The different stakeholders gather twice or thrice per year to discuss the visions for the port’s future, meetings involving dozens of actors from companies, trade unions, and even universities. During my fieldwork, this kind of collaboration was suspended since the municipality was working internally on transforming the co-created program into applicable projects. However, this inclusive process remained vividly in the minds of the research participants who attended those meetings and opened the way to other kinds of collaborations.

The section first outlines the close contact between the companies and the municipality used to overpower the DCMR and the monitoring of the port’s environmental footprint. Then, it focuses on the Burenraad, the only moment of encounter that gathered representatives of all the parties concerned by the port activities. In particular, it juxtaposes the perspectives about its usefulness and inclusivity to the more critical ones. The chapter concludes by analysing the reasons behind the scarce civic participation in the discussion concerning the port and the municipal plans to increase certain port-city relationships instrumentally.

Schiedam local government and port companies work closely and have direct channels of communications, as Giacomo – a representative of one company – expressed:

“We have very small length [close relationships] with the municipality. The DCMR is a little bit stuck in between the two parties. Because they wanted to do the work. But we are also having a lot of appointments with the municipality as well. [...] The DCMR, they want to, to check if we are following up the, uh, the permit. [...] but cannot check because we have other agreements with the municipality”. [sic.]

Giacomo highlighted how the agreements between the municipality and the companies overstepped the role of the DCMR. He implicitly pointed out some dynamics that prevent the DCMR employees from checking on the port companies, thus avoiding regular monitoring of their environmental footprint. This echoes - and supports - the scepticism expressed by the residents, who see the municipality as too less critical toward the port companies. An exert from Dante’s interview exemplifies this trend:

“It feels to me that they have more influence than you would expect based just on the fact that they're companies in Schiedam. I don't have a conspiracy theory around it, but, uh. Yeah. Sometimes it feels like they're going away quite easily with what they want” [sic.]

Dante stressed the strength of the connections between the municipality and port companies, feeling the former reserves special treatment for the latter. Such a situation seems in line with the municipal moral ecologies, considering the importance of the port in the municipal projects for the city and the effort put into maintaining the port active. Indeed, the municipality committed to sustaining the port companies by manoeuvring the writing of the new environmental permits – as described at the beginning of the chapter – and by removing the obstacles hindering the continuation of port activities, such as the DCMR controls. The latter represents another reasonable politic that institutional actors apply to avoid the suspension or economic sanctions toward port activities. This provides a further argument sustaining the analysis of the municipality’s moral ecologies as featuring the presence of an industrial port as valuable for Schiedam, their evaluations on the appropriate relationships between – in this case – firms and institutions entailed bypassing the DCMR controls.

Also port companies’ representatives motivated such actions by referring to the value of the port to the city. Giuseppe, the owner of one of the companies in the port, referred to such an argument:

“The interests are different, I agree. [...] But what do you do with the 7000 people [workers] and who's paying the municipality? We need the industry to get the city on a nice level. So don't fight all day but try to speak and know that there's a difference in interest and be open about it, be in contact and see what you can do together. [...] But if you phone every evening the DCMR [...] that doesn't help anybody.” [sic.]

Giuseppe acknowledged the difference in evaluations and interests between the actors, but he stressed the relevance of the industrial activities for the city and the numbers of people working in the port – although he knew that most of them do not live in Schiedam. His reasonable politics are thus in line with the one

used by the municipality. He considered the port a source of income for the municipality and important to “get the city on a nice level”. Attracting investments and uplifting the city's image were two of the matters of care that the interviewed municipal actors expressed. In this sense, Giuseppe's narrative aligns with one of the institutional actors. However, his evaluations did not reflect on who will benefit from the uplifting of the city.

Likewise, he thought that residents should be more comprehensive, avoiding blind confrontation and refrain from complaining continuously to the DCMR. However, he did not state that people should accept the situation as it is – as Michele did – but the interaction should focus on open dialogue to understand each other needs. His stance echoed the work of Farias, which recognizes the relevance of making each actor's perspective intelligible to sustain a more informed collaboration (Dewey, 1998 [1927] and Callon et al., 2009 in Farias, 2011: 371). Giuseppe referred to the Burenraad, meetings that systematically involved representatives from the residents, the municipality, the DCMR, the business associations, and the port companies. Such meetings are held in high regard by both the business actors and the municipal ones because – in their perspective – these situations represent opportunities to discuss and find solutions to the main issues faced by each actor together.

Angelo, belonging to the municipal team for the port development a similarly positive view:

“[These meetings] represent a good environment towards listening to the citizens, collaborating with the residents. I also think that in the end it came to be, useful for the industry as well. If, uh, people are happy they [the companies] will receive less complaints from the DCMR. That can be some kind of synergies and a win-win situation over there.” [sic.]

Angelo praised the Burenraad, as a moment in which the residents can make their voices heard and collaborate with the other stakeholders. His words echoed the win-win situation expressed by Marco in section 4.2 when speaking about connecting the port and the city, but Angelo referred to the possibilities raised by these meetings. As exposed in the previous chapter, the situation seemed to benefit the companies more than the residents. Angelo's words represent a further argument for sustaining such founding. This collaboration became useful to the companies to avoid people complaining to the DCMR.

I could attend one of these meetings where all the different parties were present, nine actors in total, one citizen, one municipal employee, a person from the DCMR and six representatives of port companies and business associations. It was held in Dutch, and I could not follow all the discussions. However, I could observe the interactions between the actors present and see that the only citizen present – which I do not nominate to avoid the recognizability of his words presented in the previous chapters – rarely spoke and only when asked. His presence seemed a form of tokenism more than real participation, instrumental to making other citizens in contact with him aware of the actions taken by the companies to limit noise

pollution. Thus, it gave me the impression to be an informative practice that did not entail any influence over the decisions or the topics of discussion (Arnstein, 1969).

The moral ecologies expressed by the representatives of port companies and business associations mostly appreciated the relationships between people and companies, providing a basis to maintain the port active – their matter of care. Concretely they aimed to inform the residents on the arriving vessels and the measures taken to diminish the noise produced, so they stop complaining to the DCMR. While communication and multi-stakeholder meetings become the reasonable politics to achieve their objectives.

The critics of these meetings<sup>9</sup> said that the actors gathered focused too much on noise pollution, not addressing other issues affecting the area, such as traffic and air pollution. Furthermore, they reported how often the Burenraad participants tackled the noise issue to the point required by norms, for instance, not considering the problem caused by low frequencies – the permits consider absolute noise levels, not discerning between high and low frequencies. These critics thought that the Burenraad should be more creative and open, involving as many actors as possible, and aimed at finding solutions that engage the area and the different interests more holistically.

The moral ecologies presented by these actors stressed a wider approach to port-city relationships that should tackle any issue at stake instead of focusing on the matters hindering the maintenance of an active port. The positive note is that the resident involved has been put in charge of reforming the Burenraad, apparently giving some more power in his hands. In the future, it might become more inclusive and more effective in addressing the moral ecologies of the residents.

Other problems he expressed during our interview concern the low number of residents interested or disposed to keep the dialogue going and the voluntary basis on which he represents the citizens in these meetings. The latter made it difficult to dedicate enough time to foster multi-stakeholder conversation as he had to do it on the side of his job.

Concerning the first problem, empirical findings highlighted how many interlocutors perceived a general distance between the port and the city of Schiedam. Not only did the participants rarely draw the port during the mental map exercises - when asked to draw their city - but many informal conversations highlighted a general lack of knowledge of what was happening in the port.

When reflecting on this issue, Riccardo and Giulia articulate some reasons behind people's neglect for the port:

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<sup>9</sup> I intentionally avoid to mention their name, because from the description of their position their identity would be revealed to the other participants of the Burenraad.

Riccardo: "I don't think a lot of people have a connection with it [the port]. We walk there, and we always look there, but there's no direct connection for being there.

Giulia: "You don't see any activity that you can feel that you live nearby a port. In Rotterdam, when you go by the wharves at the companies, you see people at work. You don't see that over here."

Embodied experiences become again relevant in actors' narratives. Giulia stated a lack of "feeling" the port, as it is impossible to witness the works happening on the quays, which makes it worthless to go there. As happened with other participants, she relates the situation in Schiedam to Rotterdam, underlining how the latter has a more experienceable port. This absence of reasons to go visit the port is the lack of connections mentioned by Riccardo.

Michele reflected to what extent the port should be accessible, adopting another perspective:

"Why should somebody want to go here unless you work there and should people go there? [...] should the port be accessible? On some points, yes. But it's also a working area. [...] I mean sometimes it's better to just separate them. It's less of a hassle. [...] The city is on the inside and the industry is on the outside and the dike is pretty much the green space with the park. And I always thought, well, it's kind of a nice barrier in between those two just separating them, although they are pretty much next to each other."

Michele reflected on to what extent the port should be accessible. In his narrative, industrial and recreational spaces should be separated to be less problematic. The physical separation mentioned by Michele is the Volkspark, the dike between Schiedam West and the harbours. When I first got there, I was astonished by the differences between one side of the park and the other. Coming from the city, it was impossible to see the cranes and the ships characterising Schiedam's port landscape. High trees with green leaves were the only thing I could see. They hide the industrial facilities and the heavy traffic from and towards the wharves. I was surprised by the absence of people on the port side of the park. Those roads do not have bicycle lanes or walking paths, the warehouses and fences dominate the view, and most of the work happens behind the walls.

The Volkspark appeared to be a spatial barrier that resonates cognitively, creating a separation between port and city. However, even if the park hides the industrial area from sight, it does not protect from the environmental issues experienced by the people who live closer to it. The divide between port and city relates to people who live in other parts of the city, where daily life does not have anything to do with the port. Furthermore, since only a few citizens work in the port companies and the branding does not consider the city's maritime heritage, the port becomes separate from the city environment and the life of the citizens.

However, institutional actors have an interest in fostering port-city connections. Roberto, a member of the municipal team working on the port area, expressed the relevance of such connections:

“If they [the residents] are proud of the port, if they know what the port is, what does it mean. Um, then it's much more easier to talk about port expansion or stuff like that because people are aware that the port has meaning for the city. So if I look from that perspective, I would say the connection between the city and the port is very important.” [sic.]

The actor's words confirm the disconnection between port and citizens and the latter's lack of knowledge concerning the former. The side of the port that Roberto found relevant to be known as the most technical one. The exert echoes the perspective of Michele when he stressed the importance of the port of Schiedam, arguing that port activities should not be stopped. The proudness that Roberto mentioned relates to the port avantguard-ness, by knowing the importance of the port activities and the relevance that they bring to the city – reasonable politics analysed in the previous chapter - people's acceptance would rise. As described for the collaboration between people and companies, Roberto and his colleagues expressed a moral ecology that considers port-city relationships important when instrumental in limiting the hindrances to port activities.

The chapter provided further empirical arguments to show the connection between matters of care and moral ecologies – the evaluation of appropriate relationships between people, the environment, institutions, and infrastructures. At the end of the previous chapter, the research results showed how the matters of care of the residents opposing the port are connected with their modes of experiencing the port, while institutional and business actors' interests are related to keeping the port active. The moral ecologies concerning port-city relationships were shaped upon contrasting ideas: who is negatively affected by port activities aims for their suppression, while who has interests in maintaining the situation as it is used strategies and arguments to defend the status quo. Increasing the communication between the actors, raising the proudness of the citizens for “their” port, and claiming the relevance of port companies for the city of Schiedam were reasonable politics applied to diminish the number of complaints. It emerged that quantities of noise produced and complaints received by the DCMR are what matters for port companies and municipal actors, more than tackling the hindrances that the port represents for the living conditions of the citizens close to the port. Thus, the low number of residents affected by - and interested in - what was happening in the port decreased the power of whom opposed it. The High Court case was an exception, a few residents managed to threaten the port companies. However, the political power of the municipality and their agency over the environmental permits will probably keep the situation as it is. Nevertheless, the court case fostered some collaborative approaches between the actors, which, even if not constituting effective inclusivity, opened to possible future scenarios where the moral ecologies of the residents might be taken more seriously.

## Conclusions

The research reconstructed the perspectives of three groups of actors regarding port-city relationships in Schiedam – institutional actors, port companies, and residents – using the concepts of “moral ecologies”, “reasonable politics”, and “matters of care”. The combination of the three unveiled the constitution of actors’ evaluation of the appropriate relations between people, institutions, environment, and infrastructure through the analysis of the interests and materialities shaping such evaluations and the logics sustaining them (Scaramelli, 2019; Blaser, 2016; Tozzi, 2021).

The empirical findings suggest that actors’ considerations about appropriate or unjust port-city relationships need to be understood in relation to modes of experiencing the port and the city, discerning from bird-eye perspectives that consider what could benefit the city from grassroots stances privileging the quality of life, the surrounding environment, and embodied experiences. Furthermore, understanding the leeway and agency of each actor required considering multi-scalar dynamics affecting their materialities and constraints (Escobar, 2001: 141,147). While shedding light on actors’ ability to reshape them (ibidem).

In this way, it was possible to comprehend different perspectives about what is good for the city and what kind of developments should be implemented, unveiling the formation of planning mindsets and contrasting interests in Schiedam’s port cityscape (Hein 2019: 5; 2021: 3; Hein et al. 2021: 8).

The municipality considered the improvement of the image of the city and the attraction of richer citizens as the objectives to pursue. Pivoting on the historical heritage of the city and on the uniqueness of Schiedam’s maritime cluster became the logics to achieve the planned goals. Indeed, these features characterise and distinguish Schiedam within the regional assemblage and from the city of Rotterdam. The port became relevant for the institutional actors because considered one of the pillars for improving the city, as it attracted highly educated workers and investments.

Therefore, understanding such a relationship made it possible to comprehend the municipal efforts to keep the port active, even when exceeding the legal pollution thresholds and negatively affecting citizens living close to the industrial areas. Their moral ecology concerning port-city relationships evaluated the benefit of the city as most important than the quality of life of its residents. Institutional narratives used the low number of citizens opposing the port's presence to belittle its detrimental sides, pivoting on its usefulness for the city – as a source of employment and investments - and the energy transition.

The residents living far away from the port industrial area shared to some extent the municipal narrative of the port's importance for Schiedam. Their idea hinged on the celebrity of the port companies operating in the city and their lack of experiencing the port. Empirical findings demonstrated the low interactions between citizens and port areas due to the enclosed entity of the industrial zone, which rendered it unattractive and unworthy to be there. This separation meant scarce participation in the multi-stakeholder discussion concerning the port and its environmental footprint.

However, these citizens did not agree with the municipality on the need for social engineering of the city's demography, nor on the instrumental use of Schiedam's heritage to achieve such a purpose. Their interests relate to daily experiences shaping their "sense of the place" (Escobar, 2001: 140,150), focusing on the quantity of traffic or garbage in the city and the maintenance of the historic built environment intact as constituting the "spirit" of Schiedam. Their requests to the local government hinged on these issues and on leaving untouched the city's historical landmarks.

The centrality of daily experiences characterised the residents' narratives and claims opposing the port as well. The noise and smell produced by the works on the quays and the ever-running engines of the ships became embodied experiences hindering their quality of life. These participants asked for port-city relationships that respect their life and wealth by not polluting their environment.

During our conversations, they deconstructed the reasonable politics used by the municipal actors to legitimise the presence of an urban industrial port in the city. Indeed, empirical findings and other studies carried out before revealed the low number of Schiedammers working in the port companies and the nature of the investments coming from the latter, which focused on the maintenance of the port area and not the urban environment of the city. Furthermore, the programs aimed at providing professional education and direct access to job positions in the port companies working in Schiedam had stopped after a few months because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and none of the residents was aware of this opportunity.

The most critical residents claimed that the port should move where no people live, thus being free to work and pollute. Their claims focused on their embodied experience instead of values concerning the environment as something to preserve. Their agency comprehends the possibility of complaining to the DCMR – the environmental institution checking on the environmental footprint of the companies – trying to enforce their moral ecologies. After understanding the ineffectivity of this strategy, some other residents who did not participate in the research appealed to the High Court of the Netherlands, winning the case and changing the environmental permits that will involve the pollution caused by the vessels.

Additionally, the enormous economic value of the facilities and machinery in the port made it unreasonable and almost impossible for the municipality to pay the compensation that moving all the port industries would require.

These findings suggest that the residents' materialities and moral ecologies are not addressed by the local government's policies, which is why they appealed to a higher level of governance. Furthermore, the research pointed toward the answer to the empirical question – presented in the introduction – of "who does *really* benefit from the municipal plans?"

On the one hand, richer citizens from the more expansive Rotterdam are more than welcome to settle in Schiedam. They are the target of the municipal urban development, which was creating the living condition to accommodate middle-to-high-income citizens.

On the other hand, port companies were advantaged by the positive political environment, which allowed the continuation of their activities during the transition between old and new environmental permits. Furthermore, the municipal agency consented to raise noise pollution limits, thus protecting their position even under the new permits. Thus, companies' interests were – and will be – fulfilled thanks to the political support of the local government. The moral ecologies concerning port-city relationships of this group of actors entailed direct connections with the municipality, which allowed to bypass the monitoring of the DCMR and interactions with the citizens aimed at diminishing the number of complainers.

All this demonstrates that the companies are the group of actors that benefit the most from municipal policies because their presence is instrumental in achieving the local government's goal for the city. Hence, it appears that the institutional moral ecologies concerning the relationships between port and city evaluate as appropriate the connections that render useful the former for the latter. This situation was possible in Schiedam due to the municipal ownership of the port area, providing the local government with greater decisional power over the port than in other cases featuring Port Authorities.

Finally, as stated in the introduction, the empirical relevance of this research relied on the possibility of fostering informed collaboration by making intelligible the different actors' perspectives encountered in Schiedam, and particularly the materialities, and constraints shaping their logics (Farias, 2011; Shi et al., 2016; Cousins, 2020; Goh, 2020a, 2020b, 2021; Littlejohn, 2020a, 2020b; Angueloski et., al 2019, Hein, 2019; Frantzeskaki and Kabish, 2016). The Burenraad – the only meetings involving representatives of the residents, companies, municipality, and the DCMR that was still happening - is probably the most suitable terrain for achieving this. However, it needs to transform from an informative meeting dealing mainly with noise cancellation solutions to a moment in which the different stakeholders reflect together on how to shape the port's future, the connected urban areas, and the whole port-city relationships. This happened before in Schiedam, during the years of the municipal participatory program for co-shaping the future of the port. The actors involved in the Burenraad should find strategies to avoid what happened then, as few implementations took place in the next years while the interests of the parties changed. But this raises enough topics for a different analysis. The fact that the residents are in charge of reforming the Burenraad opens to more inclusive collaboration. The quantity and quality of time and resources invested in it by the port companies and the municipality, and the relevance given to the citizens' voices will shed light on the concrete possibility for real participation.

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## Appendix A. Policy Recommendations: fostering inclusive port-city relationships.

Even if the research developed with the Port City Futures group as the internship provider, the study focused on the relationships between citizens, port companies, and the local government of Schiedam. Thus, the policy briefs first address the situation of Schiedam and then reflect on the role that Port City Futures could have.

### 1. Executive summary

The complexity of Schiedam port-city relationships requires an integrated approach that considers the economic and technical aspects of port activities, municipal mindsets, and residents' daily experiences. At the moment of the analysis, several factors caused a division between port and city, although the closeness of the two areas. Only a few citizens were concerned about port activities, limiting public participation and supervision over municipal decisions for the future of Schiedam's harbours.

The municipal policy approaches treated port and city as separate entities, with only recent infrastructural attempts to connect the two areas. On the other hand, the municipal tendency to accommodate port companies' needs incremented the dissatisfaction of the residents opposing their presence. Furthermore, the research findings did not support the existence of beneficial outcomes for the population coming from the city's industrial port – i.e., job opportunities.

Therefore, the policy recommendations point towards: the expansion of public awareness of both the negative and positive aspects of the port; the creation of frequent multi-stakeholders meetings to co-address different needs; the implementation of training programs to employ Schiedam's residents in the port companies.

### 2. Different perspectives brought to different problematisations and policies

The difference in actors' perspectives, with a lack of transparency and collaboration, determined the problems in Schiedam's port-city relationships. The municipality considered the city in its totality, not addressing the population's specific needs. Institutional actors focused on attracting wealthier citizens rather than improving the living conditions of the residents. The port recently became an instrument to

achieve such a goal, as it employs several high-skilled workers. Thus, the local government used its decision power to maintain the port activities. The willingness to increase the maximum amount of permitted noise exemplifies this approach. At the same time, municipal plans lack to consider port and city as closely connected and affecting each other, leaving the port companies to develop their businesses without addressing the effects on the close areas.

The companies often took a business approach, maximizing their opportunities despite the drawbacks for the surrounding areas. The risk caused by people's complaints and legal actions shaped their propensity toward engaging with the residents. Thus, they tried to resolve the complainers' problem instead of tackling the port's environmental footprint.

On the other hand, the citizens focused on their daily experiences, not fully understanding urban and port development's financial and technical aspects. In the last 50 years, only a few residents worked in the port, combined with policy plans addressing the port and city as separate, making the citizens largely unaware and disinterested in what happens in the harbours. Only a few Schiedammers directly affected by port activities are concerned about the pollution caused. They claimed that the port should be relocated to Maasvlakte II, ignoring the impossibility of taking such an action. Rotterdam Port Authority manages the Maasvlakte II's land lots, which other companies have rented already. Moreover, moving the port companies' facilities is economically unsustainable for the municipality.

Finally, there were limited opportunities to gather these three groups of actors – or their representatives – around the same table. The Burenraad meetings aim to address the noise issue rather than shed light on the different perspectives at stake. Furthermore, the Burenraad gathers only three times per year, only a few actors are aware of its existence, and it is always hosted in the building of a port company, a private space. This situation limited public participation and worsened the possibility of understanding each other's perspectives, finding compromises, and co-develop possible solutions.

### 3. Policy recommendations

Infrastructural adjustments are insufficient to improve the connections between Schiedam and its port. The municipality, the port companies, and local organizations such as museums and community centres should collaborate to create more awareness about the port. For instance, a weekly newsletter could be prepared by the port's two business associations, illustrating the port companies' innovativeness, the job opportunities, the professional courses held by each company, and the time and place of the next multi-stakeholder meeting. Data on the environmental footprint of port activities should be included in the newsletter through independent research experts as the DCMR employees. In such a way, Schiedams'

citizens would have the possibility to stay informed about what happens in the harbours of the city. Once each month, the port development municipal team could write a piece in the newsletter explaining the last decisions and the program's state for developing the port. The transparency of environmental data and policy processes concerning the port area would better inform the citizens.

In collaboration with port companies, local museums could organise expositions about the port's history and its value for the city, linking the history of Schiedam as a port city to its present. Fostering the proudness of the residents of the city's port could diminish the complaints and improve civic participation and the residents' interest in working in the port.

Participation should be addressed by the municipality using roles as the *wijkregisseurs* and the community centres, helping to organize the civil society effectively. A better organised civil society would facilitate the role of the citizens' representative at the Burenraad meetings and even bring new perspectives to the table. The Burenraad should be held more frequently, at least once per month, and in a public setting to improve its accessibility. Furthermore, discussions similar to the one had between 2014 and 2016 about the future of the port should be maintained through the Burenraad, constantly monitoring the actors' expectations and discussing them, explaining the material and logistical constraints faced by the municipality transparently.

Finally, the port companies and the municipality should address citizens' needs even if not obliged by law. A program creating job opportunities in the port for unemployed citizens must be instituted and applied constantly. Walk-ins in the port companies and public events held in the port area could increase the effectiveness of this program. The low-frequencies emissions are not legally regulated, but they represent the bigger problems for the residents living nearby the port. Prioritizing the insulation of the dwellings most affected by low frequencies could be an effective program to address this issue. Port companies could invest in the areas next to the port and housing insulation. The local government could create a tax on low frequencies and the revenues invested for dwelling insulation.

#### 4. Considerations on the Port City Futures group

The multiple disciplines and backgrounds represented in the research group are both inspiring and useful in addressing the complexity of port cities and their challenges. However, as the research findings suggested, legal, technical, and economic aspects are relevant to fully comprehending port-city relationships. Thus, including individuals with backgrounds in law, engineering, or economics would increase the research group's capacity to address port city challenges holistically.

On the other hand, in my opinion, Port City Futures should outreach experts and people outside the academia, involving them as much as possible in the very generative conversations happening within the group. For instance, workshops and events could be tailored to make port and municipal actors reflect on societal issues. The group could extend conference invitations to experts and local citizens, fostering multi-stakeholder participation. The group's researchers could take the role of advisors, creating products for policymakers.

Finally, the research group should use its network to bring examples of societal challenges into the classes and courses held in the three universities – Erasmus, Leiden, TU Delft. In this way, the "next generation" experts would be formed with a particular sensibility for the complexity of port cities, their different dimensions and problematics while studying concrete examples of strategies and outcomes that characterised the policies that managed them.