

Oil Spaces

Extended Urbanization from Sea to Land

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Oil Spaces: Extended Urbanization from Sea to Land

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Abstract

Flows of petroleum have shaped buildings, cities and landscape around the world on sea and land. This paper shows how industrially drilled petroleum and its refined products have played a major role in transforming the built environment over the last century and a half, in ways that are often not visible or recognized. Understanding the multiple links between refineries, gas stations, headquarters or cities around the world, and acknowledging the path dependencies that these flows have created, provides a concrete example for extended urbanization and its role in fueling ways of life and visions of progress, modernity, and disaster.

Through detailed international case studies the paper considers petroleum's role in the development of the built environment and the imagination. It explores how petroleum and its infrastructure have served in shaping extended urbanization as a source of military conflict and political and economic power, inspiring efforts to create territories and reshape geographies and national boundaries. The paper explores ruptures and continuities between colonial and postcolonial frameworks through diverse case studies with diverse functions from around the world, including heritage sites.

By revealing petroleum's role in organizing and imagining space globally, this paper takes up a key task in imagining the possibilities of a post-oil future. It explores diverse contributions made by students in courses at Delft University of Technology to show visualize them.