

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

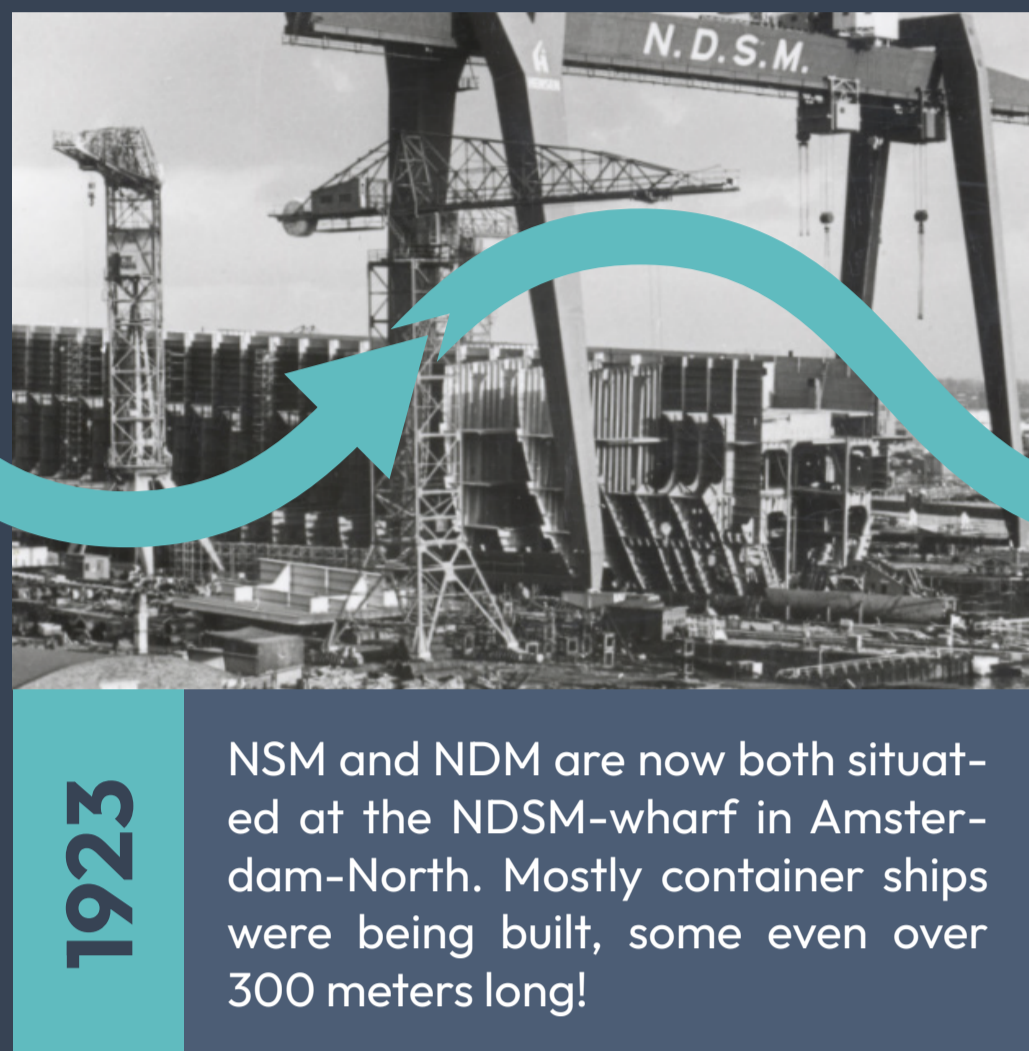
A constant noise around you caused by the shouting of dockmasters and ship-engineers, freight wagons carrying tons of steel passing by and a ship being launched in the distance. You are somewhere in the 50's or 60's of the last century. You are located on the NDSM-wharf in Amsterdam-North, the Netherlands. On the 25th of August 1894 the N.V. Nederlandse Scheepsbouw Maatschappij (Dutch Ship-building Company) was founded close nearby Amsterdam Central Station. The company focused on building modern ships, made of steel and with mechanical thrust, instead of sailships. The NDSM-wharf has later developed into a place for creative people, from which it has become a textbook example of the process of gentrification. Read below about the incredibly interesting development of the NDSM-area.

Years after the Nederlandse Scheepsbouw Maatschappij was founded and had merged with the Nederlandsche Dok Maatschappij after the Second World War in 1946, business was booming in the 1950s and '60s. An economic center, that is what the NDSM-wharf was in its heyday. Houses were built in the adjacent neighbourhood for the workers of the shipyard, a so-called garden village. This was the beginning of the habitation of Amsterdam-North. As said, the NSM and NDM merged into the NDSM, therefore the name of the area specified in this poster: NDSM-wharf.

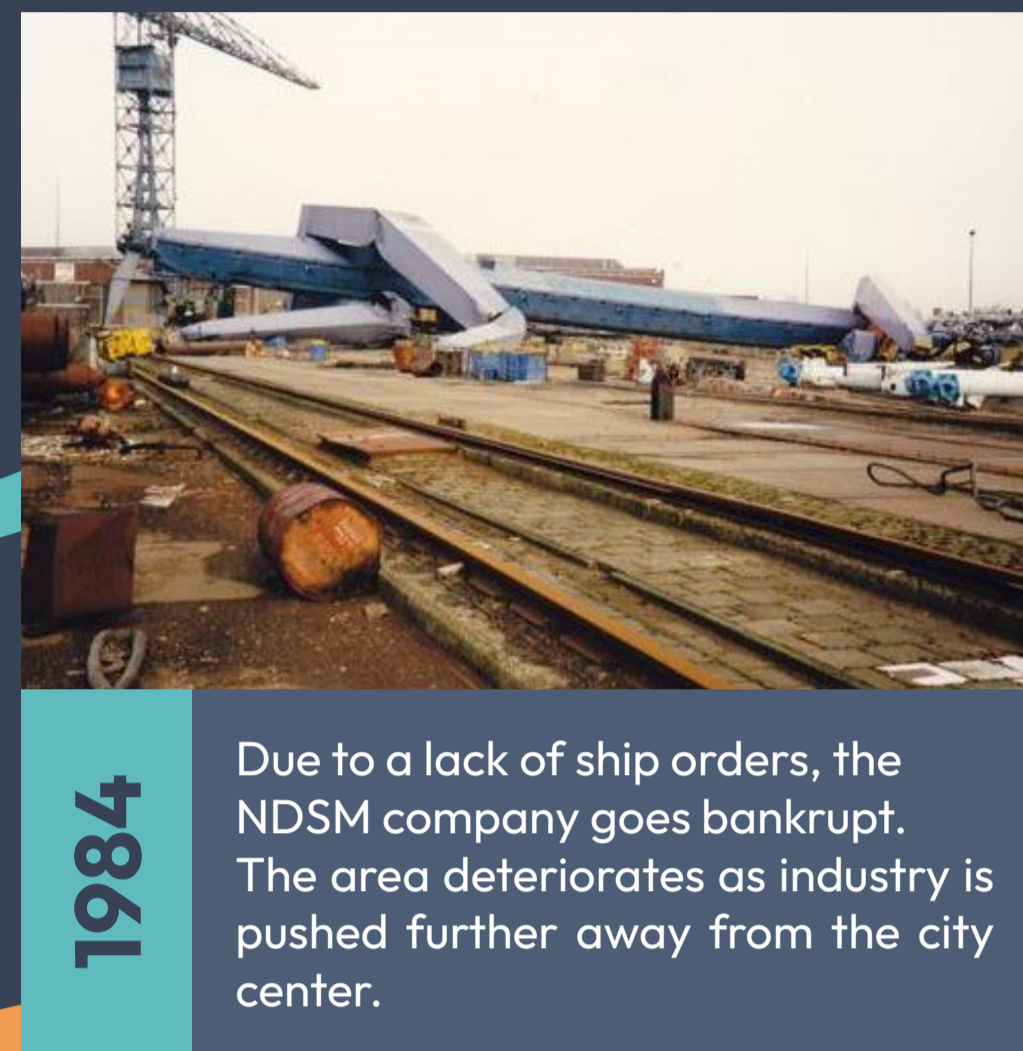
Time went by and in the 1970s and '80s there was increasing competition for the NDSM from Asia. Asian countries became more and more specialised and efficient industrial producers and focused on educating engineers. This, and other factors, led to the bankruptcy and thus closure of the NDSM-wharf in 1984. The area was abandoned and neglected for a long period of time.



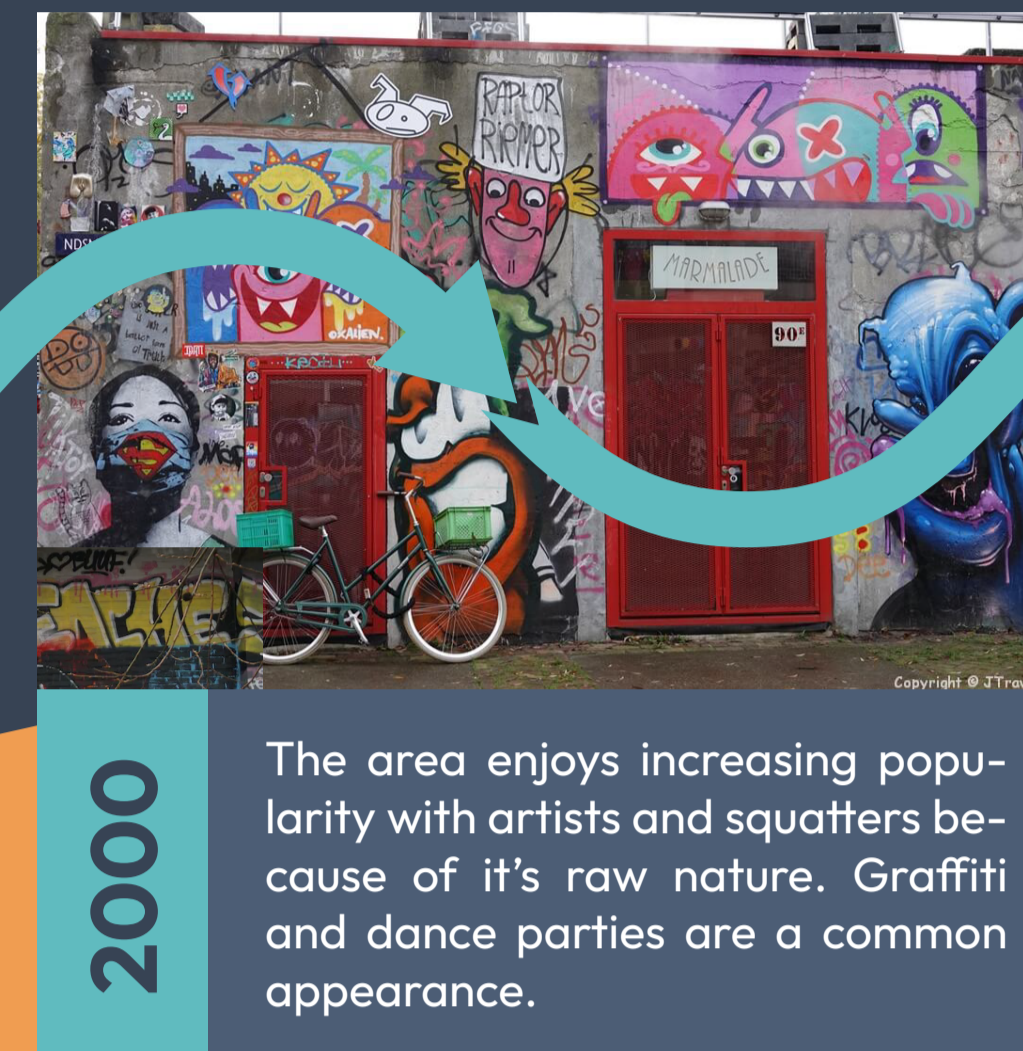
1664 Long before the current NDSM area and surroundings had an industrial function, it was the place where the gallows field of Amsterdam was located until 1795.



1923 NSM and NDM are now both situated at the NDSM-wharf in Amsterdam-North. Mostly container ships were being built, some even over 300 meters long!



1984 Due to a lack of ship orders, the NDSM company goes bankrupt. The area deteriorates as industry is pushed further away from the city center.



2000 The area enjoys increasing popularity with artists and squatters because of its raw nature. Graffiti and dance parties are a common appearance.



2023 International businesses and upper-class citizens are attracted to the heavily gentrified area, which is now becoming more and more expensive.

CURRENT LAND USE DISTRIBUTION AT THE NDSM WHARF, AMSTERDAM

CLASHING COMMUNITIES

The appearance of a new artistic scene in the NDSM-wharf engendered socio-economic changes which are still going on. This dynamic, in its turn, instigated tension between original inhabitants of Amsterdam-North and new, more affluent residents who moved here after the area's revival. These two demographics differ immensely from each other. Amsterdam-North natives, who used to work in ship wharfs such as NDSM and live in low-density garden villages* (see footnote) spread around them, have a below average income and education.

The new residents have a high income and a cosmopolitan world view, they live in luxurious apartments, which sprang up when the NDSM-site became a mainstream cultural site. New and old residents live right next to each other and are competing for the same space and amenities, which leads to displacement of the poorer citizens. **Visible in the map on the right** is how a lot of the former industrial terrain is now (starting to be) used for high-end commercial or residential purposes. This comes at a cost: the creative culture that originally thrived in this area is now being pushed away. It is tragic how creative culture that initially revivals dilapidated urban areas eventually leads to these areas becoming non-inclusive enclaves (and no one benefits from a monoculture).



1 A garden city north of the NDSM-wharf. The housing here originates from the 1930's when it served as worker's houses.



2 The luxury apartment blocks in construction form a clear contrast with the garden cities in the background.



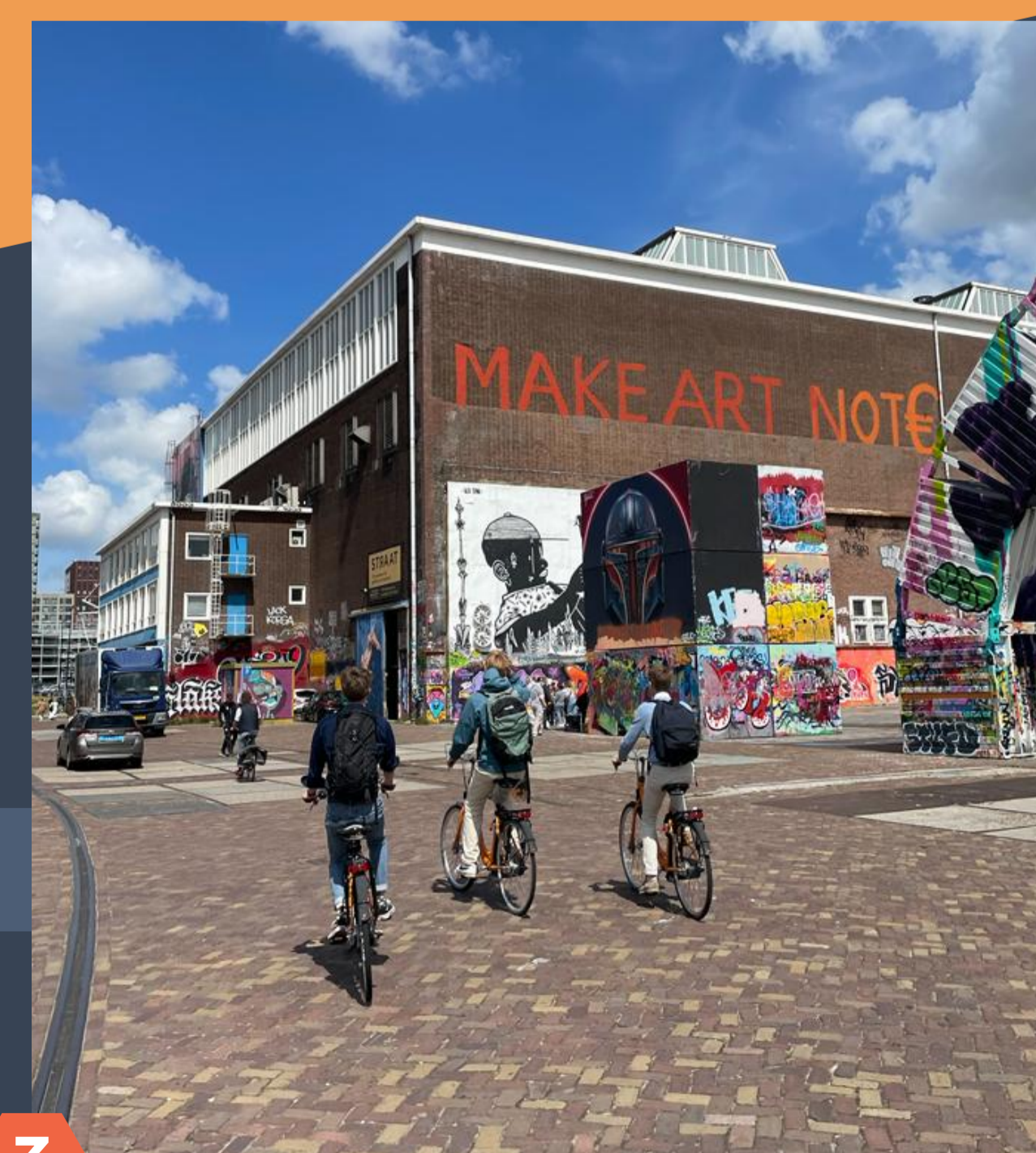
KEY

Land use		Roads & borders		Other	
	Residential		Commercial		Hard neighbourhood border
	Creative		Under construction		Point of interest
	Road		Threat of luxury residential development by investors		

“OVER-GENTRIFICATION”

Gentrification of urban areas usually starts off positive but has the risk of destroying its own causes.

The artists who made the NDSM-wharf their new home and workplace brought with them a process of rejuvenation. Consequently, Amsterdam-north, historically a neglected city district, received an economic boost from the people and businesses who were attracted to this lively yet still nitty-gritty place. For a long period of time this influx in wealth will also lead to an increase in diversity and inclusivity. But at a certain point, when large, international companies move in, the influx becomes overwhelming and the area becomes unaffordable. This is a crucial tipping point, the moment when original residents and creatives can no longer afford to live in a place they built up themselves, and are subsequently displaced. The NDSM-wharf is at risk of moving past this point, visible in the Jacobs Curve on the left.



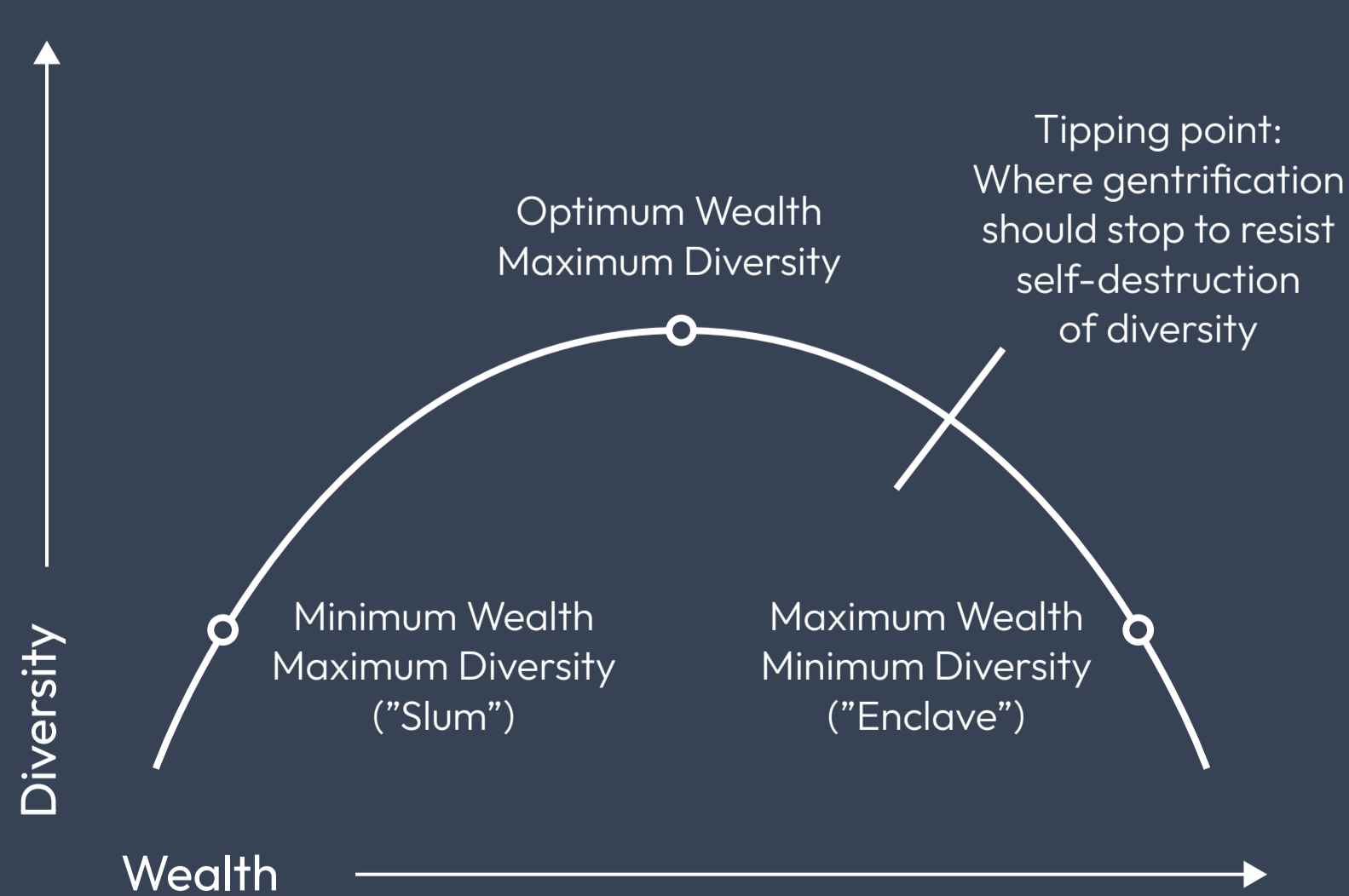
3 “MAKE ART NOT €”. This mural serves as a clear message from the creative community on the NDSM-wharf towards the newly attracted businesses (own picture).

Ideally, we want the NDSM-site and Amsterdam-North to remain right before the tipping point: Wealth and inclusivity should be in equilibrium.

However, development of cities and the process of gentrification is inherently dynamic; does that make it feasible to “freeze” a site in one particular socio-economic state? It might not be possible for one place to be in continuous harmony, but one site could play an important role in connecting different neighbourhoods and people.

We believe that the future of NDSM lies here, as a bridge between different demographics. The creative culture that brought new life to Amsterdam-north should now strive to bring people together, old and new residents, by establishing public spaces where everyone feels welcome.

JACOBS CURVE



Footnotes

* The garden city is an ideal of a planned residential community. The village-like communities are usually quite green and spacious and were a response to the need for improvement in quality of urban life, which had become marred by overcrowding and congestion in the early 20th century (Britannica, 2022).

References

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