

## **The technocratic landscape of the late Holocene**

*Text by Xandra van der Eijk*

In the Netherlands, a landscape is considered a non-fixed entity that can be utilised, adjusted, reshaped and reworked. Its earth layers, built up over millions of years, are redistributed at will, their materialities chaotically re-organised into a non-linear timeline. This particular land, which was submerged underwater at the end of the last ice age, is marked by reclamation and exploitation. Every part is accounted for, measured, divided and assigned a purpose. The rhythms of the water to which it owes its existence are calculated, controlled, predicted. And so the boundary of where land begins and water ends, is under constant negotiation.

In the last 150 years, technological development has increasingly enabled the Dutch to pursue domination over land and sea, earning them a questionable reputation as “masters of water”. Bathymetry and sonar technologies mapped out the former-land-now-seabed, as well as the water column. The continental shelf, both the parts with and without water, is considered nothing but a cross-section of matter; nothing but a set of densities to move through. It is a carefully crafted narrative of technological development, of progress and victory. Yet nearing the end of the Holocene, in the border zone of transition, other narratives emerge. Through the cracks, from the deep, in the enmeshed, those whose existences have been overwritten and left unheard, leave their marks regardless.

### **A fieldtrip to Borssele**

In one particular part of the Netherlands, a small beach outcrop in the Zeeland peninsula, sound stitches all narratives together. Both onshore and offshore, vibration moves with, between and through everything that exists. Against a backdrop of windmills and nuclear facilities, and situated at one of the world's economically most important waterways, the place emits a constant humming, a grunting, a grinding. Natural dunes creep up the land, swept up or away as the wind pleases and as the tide allows. The beaches' watery borderline is lined with remnants from another time and age, emanating the physical transformation of matter. On the second day of the lab, we will immerse ourselves in this technocratic landscape. *Being* in a literal, observable tension field, we ask ourselves: What is transition in a place that is never static and where time is non-linear? Can we attune ourselves to the complexity of realities unfolding, observe the diversity of “-cenes” that are taking place? Who is vibrating, how can their tune be detected, and how can their story be told?