

## **“The Logistical Image: A Visual History of ‘Port Salesology’”**

Dara Orenstein

In the preface of *The Port of Hamburg* (1911), a treatise on modernization of seaports, Edwin J. Clapp, a professor of transportation at NYU, warned his readers that the reasons for Hamburg’s success might be difficult for them to grasp. “It is hoped that the illustrations will help the reader understand what is new and strange to him,” Clapp noted, “better than mere description could.” Clapp’s aside points to the significance of “illustrations” in the history of logistics, and begs for further analysis. What would pictures convey that words alone would obscure? And how would pictures take shape in brick and mortar? Infrastructural sites like ports are often the most fantastical of projects. They require that boosters envision their plots of dirt, no matter how remote, as “pivotal” to world trade. Thanks to promoters like Clapp, for example, municipal dollars in cities like New York and Mobile in the 1920s and 1930s were awarded as much for the appeal of portraits of cranes and cargo as on the merits of technical reports. This talk will sketch a few of the key tropes—and contradictions—in this archive of what a geographer in 1926 called “the new science of port salesology.”

**Dara Orenstein** is an assistant professor in the Department of American Studies at George Washington University, where she teaches courses on cultural and political economy. This year she is a Kluge Fellow at the Library of Congress, and is completing a book on the imagineering of the U.S. foreign-trade zone system from the 1840s to the 1990s.