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Cinematic Rotterdam: the times and tides of a modern city

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Within various academic fields since the 1990s, there has been a growing interest in the relationship between cinema and architecture, and more generally, between cinema and the city. At this intersection, some urgent questions appear in respect of the disciplines involved. I will examine this, first of all, through film studies, to which I will relate observations and ideas from the fields of architecture and the social sciences.

film studies

The history of cinema began to be written from within by engineers and filmmakers in the 1890s, when cinema was invented¹. Philosophers soon became interested as well². The link between film and reality was questioned – how film frames events, human concerns and ideas. Certain positions quickly established themselves, and from the 1920s onwards, theorists tended to move back and forth between highlighting the constructive features of film, with an emphasis on framing, montage, special effects and non-diegetic sound (e.g. Arnheim, 1932), and underscoring realistic features, due to the structural analogies of the photographic image to the object it shows (e.g. Bazin, 1958). Two major interpretative strands have developed concurrently, an aesthetic and a psychological one. Some of the most influential thinkers, notably Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer, paid attention to the political implications and social impact of the cinema as well. Their essays from the 1920s and 1930s have helped to establish the cinematic mode of perception as a model for modern aesthetics in general (leading to the so-called ‘modernity thesis’³).

As sound film established itself as the norm after 1929, spoken language increased in importance. Especially in Europe, the use of the vernacular strengthened the notion of national cinema, with films drawing on domestic traditions in the arts and entertainment forms. Avant-garde cinema lost out, and films became dedicated to telling stories. As a consequence, film scholars ever since, but especially after 1945, have been preoccupied with narration, fiction, and genre; they have conducted textual analysis, elaborated semiotic theories of film language, and applied literary psychoanalytical models to themes and ways of looking. A major literary concept that was adopted in the 1950s was that of the *auteur*. Although it has not only been applied to European films, it is antagonistic to the American studio system. The same can be said about the notion of art film; it goes back to the avant-garde, which rejected commercial cinema.

However, such paradigms are now under pressure. Due to globalisation, the notion of national cinema has become problematic. It no longer offers the appropriate tools for understanding the exchange between American and European cinema. After the long tradition of European *émigré* filmmakers who went to America, who in return affected European cinema, we now have more of a global system of exchange⁴. The scope, scale and frequency of international co-productions have brought the economic implications of film production into the picture, which require different concepts.

Another significant factor that has called for new approaches is the emergence of digital media. First of all, they have changed the photographic basis of cinema, and have therefore affected notions of realism. Digital media have also foregrounded spatial metaphors, rather than

¹ Among the first were William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson and Antonia Dickson: *The Life and Inventions of Thomas Alva Edison* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1894); *History of the Kinetograph, Kinetoscope, and Kinetophonograph* (New York: Albert Bunn, 1895). As a filmmaker who reported on the Boer War, W.K.L. also wrote *The Biograph in Battle: Its Story in the South African War* (Flicks Books, 1901) – www.victorian-cinema.net/dickson.htm (2008-01-29).

² According to Deleuze (1983), Henri Bergson’s *Matter and Memory* (1896) is a kind of proto-philosophy of film.

³ Bordwell (1997: 140-147) has called it as such, in order to give a critique on it; for a recent argument in favour of this thesis, see: Casetti, 2008. See also chapter 12.

⁴ E.g. Elsaesser, 2005a; Behlil, 2007.

literary ones⁵. Next to that they have ‘remediated’ cinema, to use a term introduced by Bolter and Grusin (2000). A convergence has taken place between different media, which has, as a consequence, caused a revision of the history of cinema⁶. Little known predecessors of current media practices are being rediscovered, which especially concerns films that have rarely been shown inside the cinema⁷. Historical potentials are therefore reassessed. Along with it the idea of linear ‘history’ of cause and effect and to some extent the nature of time as such are being challenged. One speaks of recurrent patterns, of accelerated or suspended developments, and of retroactive causalities.

Ideas of cinema and time have consequences for thinking about the way the medium itself constructs time. Cinematography used to be a matter of recording movements, and therefore time, while editing has enabled the impression of continuity out of discontinuity, with time compression, repetition, flash-backs, and flash-forwards as some of the most typical effects. Through new media, both as a way to produce and to distribute films, other conceptions have come to the fore: of non-linear temporality, simultaneity, flow and event. This has, in turn, made the study of cinematic time an issue of its own⁸, so that the movement intrinsic to film has itself become a matter of investigation along these lines – partly as an elaboration of ideas of Gilles Deleuze (1983, 1985), who himself drew inspiration from Henri Bergson.

After several decades of studying the language of film as a construction, and the ideology of film as based on creating the ‘illusion of reality’, there has been a shift towards phenomenology, which might be said to highlight the reverse: ‘the reality of illusion’⁹. More generally, film studies have opened up towards a proliferation of different approaches: besides cognitivist approaches, focusing on the nature of perception, there has been renewed attention given to ‘bodily affect’ and ‘embodiment’, thus emphasizing reception¹⁰. Such a diversity of issues highlight a philosophical divide between an epistemology of cinema – *the logic of knowing*, and an ontology of cinema – *the logic of being*. One way that ontological questions are being articulated is through the ‘spatial turn’, which has occurred across different disciplines within the humanities¹¹. This takes many forms, but in film studies it has led to the cinema being conceptualised as not only a narrative and temporal medium, but also as a cartographic medium: mapping feelings and ideas, human interactions and events, and eventually space itself¹². Moreover, there is a concern with the interaction between the location of production and the location of the action in a film¹³.

cinematic city – film and architecture

The spatial turn has also given new urgency to the relationship between cinema and the city. This interest, however, already has a long tradition. Since the 1920s it has been noted, first by scholars like Benjamin and Kracauer, that the modern aesthetics of metropolitan life hold parallels to the cinematic mode of perception. Cities have, moreover, played an important role in many films not just as locations, but as protagonists, while film production, movie-going and film culture have

⁵ This started with notions such as the ‘information highway’, the ‘digital city’ and ‘windows’, while programming has been called ‘architecture’.

⁶ E.g. Cubitt, 2004; Rodowick, 2007.

⁷ It includes various industrial, civil and scientific media practices, often with specific tools and methods. Shaw & Weibel, 2007; Harbord, 2007: 1, with references to Francesco Casetti [1996] and Victor Burgin [2004]. In this respect, Elsaesser (2007: 34-35) speaks of the ‘3 x S/M-practice’: surveillance/military, surgery/medicine, sensing/monitoring.

⁸ E.g. Doane, 2002; Mulvey, 2005.

⁹ E.g. Anderson, 1996 [on the reality of film perception], cf. Pisters, 2006: 13, e.a.

¹⁰ E.g. Marks, 2000; Sobchack, 2004.

¹¹ For an overview of different developments across various disciplines, see: Arias & Warf, 2008.

¹² E.g. Bruno, 2002; Conley, 2007, respectively.

¹³ Elsaesser has called this, respectively, *Standort* and *Tatort*, as addressed in a lecture for the Studium Generale of the Rietveld Academie at the Netherlands Media Art Institute Montevideo / Time Based Arts in Amsterdam, 2004-02-18.

also largely been an urban affair. Direct links can be established between film production, the urban environment and the perceptual body that moves in it.

A landmark in the revival of interest was the publication in 1997 of the book *The Cinematic City* edited, notably, by the British geographer David Clarke. It aimed 'to open up a space for the continued theorization of the cinematic city' (p10), beyond the dominant paradigm that is 'triangulated by semiotics, psychoanalysis and historical materialism' (p7). Clarke emphatically articulated the spatial quality of film, in terms of the 'cinematic experience' and specificities of the medium. Special attention was paid to 'the figuration of the city in cinema as either utopian or dystopian, and its relation to the extra-cinematic city' (p10). In utopian terms the metropolis has been framed as a whirlpool; of excitement, change, challenge, innovation and progress, exemplified by avant-garde 'city symphonies' such as *RIEN QUE LES HEURES* (1926, Alberto Cavalcanti), set in Paris, and *BERLIN, DIE SINFONIE EINER GROSSSTADT* (1927, Walter Ruttmann). The dystopian view on the city shows instead oppression, congestion, alienation, anonymity and loss of moral values, which has been exemplified by classics like *METROPOLIS* (1927, Fritz Lang) and *BLADE RUNNER* (1982, Ridley Scott). This is largely a discourse on fiction film, although Clarke's book also includes a study by Gold and Ward on informative films that supported urban planning in Britain. In the subsequent ten years many publications on the cinematic city have followed¹⁴. Among them are also cross-disciplinary studies such as *Imagining the Modern City* (1999) by James Donald. He argues that literature, cinema, architecture and the visual arts create a specifically urban consciousness; they provide images of cities that are primarily mental constructions rather than real places. It constitutes a particular dimension of urbanism, beyond planning and design practices¹⁵.

Parallel to the debate on the cinematic city, and to some extent part of it, has been a concern among film scholars and architecture historians with the relationship between cinema and architecture. They have studied set design, the way built space helps to structure a given film, or the way the sheer familiarity of cinema and its ways of seeing the world have promoted and hermeneutically affected modern architecture and urbanism¹⁶. But there is also a more fundamental side to it. While film scholars, as we saw, try to push the edges of existing paradigms and come up with new ones, architecture theorists too experience the limits of notions such as *tabula rasa*, the autonomous building based on universal principles, building as art, design as style, and the architect as genius, or, alternatively, architecture as a social condenser that generates new forms of life. The architectural counterpart of the spatial turn is, paradoxically perhaps, a new interest in time and movement, in narrative and processes, and how these intersect with or alter (static) space. It has been articulated since the early 1980s, and partly in cinematic terms, by Bernhard Tschumi and Rem Koolhaas, among others¹⁷. Such a turn has been strengthened by issues of redevelopment, which touch upon stories of buildings and their users¹⁸. Emphasizing use and programme, architects have reassessed the social implications of design and

¹⁴ Including more than fifty academic books (in English) and even more articles in (Anglo-Saxon) academic journals.

¹⁵ Cf. Bollerey, 2006.

¹⁶ Major studies on set design include those by Albrecht, 1986; Neumann, 1996; Bergfelder e.a., 2007. Important in respect of film and architectural hermeneutics is Colomina (1988 e.a.). Since the 1990s more than forty other major books on cinema and architecture have been published, a.o. Covert & Wick, 1993; Toy, 1994; Weihsmann, 1995; Penz & Thomas, 1997; Sorkin, 1999; Fear, 2000; Lamster, 2000; Shonfield, 2001; Pallasmaa, 2002; Bruno, 2002; Jacobs, 2007.

¹⁷ See e.g. Tschumi, 1999 (i.e. film school Le Fresnoy). Koolhaas, in his turn, began his career as a script writer, as mentioned by Gargiani (2008: 3), who links it to his architecture through 'the idea of the animated building' and 'actors on an urban stage'. In an interview for *Der Spiegel* (Kronsbein & Matussek, 2006), Koolhaas says himself: 'In a script, you have to link various episodes together, you have to generate suspense and you have to assemble things – through editing, for example. It's exactly the same in architecture. Architects also put together spatial episodes to make sequences.'

¹⁸ E.g. Crimson, 1995a. A recent case is the redevelopment of the 'Mercati Generali' in Rome (2004-2010, Rem Koolhaas).

their impact on daily life¹⁹. This harks back to discussions from the 1950s and the 1960s (e.g. Mumford, Jacobs, Team X, who themselves took up ideas from the 1920s). Regarding the use, significance and social role of space, cinema has been considered as a set of practices as well as discourses that can offer models.

Besides films dealing with space, the urban environment itself has become mediated, which has been conceptualised in terms of scripted space, locative media, augmented space, and convergence culture²⁰. By now, media have even become intertwined with the design process itself. Although this extends far beyond the cinema, the cinema is nevertheless still regarded as the genealogically most mature and aesthetically most legitimate realm of audiovisual culture, especially when hidden features of its history are discovered²¹. The cinema is even referred to as a paradigm for the experience economy²². This applies especially to what one might call the 'joint-venture' of cinema, architecture and urbanism, when it comes to matters of city branding and corporate identity. Like cinema, architecture, as a symbolic realm, has also become part of high culture as well as popular culture (with architects both treated as 'artists' and as 'pop stars').

Despite the many publications on the subject, the debate on the cinematic city, with authors from various disciplines, has remained rather loose. There have been some attempts to connect different disciplinary approaches. An example is the book *Cinema and the City, Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (2001). Its editors, the British film scholars Tony Fitzmaurice and Mark Shiel, explicitly advocated a sociological approach, in which global networks are framed through urban hubs, among them well-known cinematic cities such as New York, Los Angeles, London and Paris, but also cities such as Lagos, Manila and Montreal. It shifts the attention from national cinema and national institutions, to decentralised agencies and local developments that are embedded in a specific environment. While commendably ambitious in its reach, in terms of methodology, however, their sociological stance still needs further elaboration (of which more below).

But there is also a question of the relevant corpus when redefining the scope of such a study. If the notion of the cinematic city is to be taken seriously, it should apply to smaller cities too, especially those that are similarly modern, in their demographics, their concentration of specialised industries or services, and in their participation within global networks. Especially if we accept that such networks have gained in importance vis-à-vis the nation state, it might be instructive to leave the capitals, which largely represent the nation, and focus on regional centres or hubs. References, to be discussed later on in more detail, are case-studies concerning the avant-garde and industrial films dealing with Frankfurt (Elsaesser, 2005b), and municipal films dealing with Glasgow (Lebas, 2005 & 2007). While these studies focus on particular films (or periods), it might be possible to extend the scope, and to develop a more comprehensive view of the 'cinematic city' that concerns various kinds of (media) productions dealing with the city, the urban environment and its time-space dynamics.

case-study: Rotterdam

Rotterdam is a candidate for such a case-study. It is the second city of the Netherlands (a country that itself is little known for its national cinema). In international perspective, the size of Rotterdam is modest. It has had an average of about 600,000 inhabitants throughout the 20th century, and one million in the agglomeration. Yet, it is a modern city, which is part of global networks. Rotterdam is well-known for its port, as it used to be the largest in the world for several

¹⁹ E.g. Ghirardo, 1996; McLeod, 1996. A recent publication in respect of social engineering has been an edition of the architecture magazine *Volume* that is dedicated to this subject (see: Oosterman, ed., 2008).

²⁰ 'scripted space': Lunenfeld (1998) and Klein (1999); 'locative media' has been coined by Kalnins as a title of a workshop by the RIXC new media lab in Riga in 2002; 'augmented space': Manovich (2006); 'convergence culture': Jenkins (2006).

²¹ E.g. Rodowick, 2007: 189; Harbord, 2007.

²² E.g. Beller, 2006.

decades. While it is still highly important, the image of Rotterdam has diversified. Besides its port, it actively promotes itself nowadays as a city of architecture and as a city of media. It highlights its modern housing and industrial architecture, for which it made a name for itself since the 1920s, the achievements of post-war reconstruction, and various trendsetting projects from the last decades. In respect of media, the International Film Festival Rotterdam is of importance, next to the Rotterdam Media Fund and the development of an audiovisual sector, clustered in the 'Lloydkwartier'. Not coincidentally, Rotterdam is also featured in a diversity of films, which establishes a direct link to the 'city of architecture'. Such films range from art films, such as *A ZED AND TWO NOUGHTS* (1985, Peter Greenaway), to big budget productions, such as *WHO AM I?* (1998, Jackie Chan), to mention two obvious examples.

There are some titles to which I will refer throughout my project that may already be familiar. Among them are avant-garde classics, such as *THE BRIDGE* (1928, Joris Ivens), and popular feature films from the glory days of 'Dutch cinema', such as *BOEFJE* (1939, Detlef Sierck). There is the propaganda film *ANGRIFF AUF ROTTERDAM* (1940, UFA), with the well-known images of the bombardment of Rotterdam. There are classics from the period of reconstruction, such as *STEADY!* (1952, Herman van der Horst), which is considered a major example of the so-called 'Dutch School' of documentary cinema. There are also challenging hybrids, for example *ROTTERDAM – EUROPOORT* (1966, Joris Ivens), which combines the genre of the avant-garde city symphony with fiction, in particular the legend of the Flying Dutchman. Quite different to this are various dystopian feature films that have emerged since the 1970s, such as *SPETERS* (1980, Paul Verhoeven). Although one may come across these titles when searching for films about Rotterdam in the database of the *Gemeentearchief Rotterdam*, which is the place to begin such an enterprise, they are not its main feature. The city archive's collection of films, from the 1910s to the present, includes about seven thousand titles. It grows every day, not only with recent productions, but also with historic films that eventually end up here, if they had not already found their way to the *Nederlands Filmmuseum* (Eye) in Amsterdam or the *Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid* in Hilversum (which is linked to television), which together add approximately fifteen thousand other titles or so, from newsreels to feature films.

Moving quickly through their databases, one thing is immediately clear. Although one may find a reasonable number of (sometimes unknown) avant-garde productions, as well as feature films, the vast majority of productions differ from the corpus that is usually studied by film scholars. Besides newsreels, which are mainly to be found in Hilversum, there are many commissioned films: industrial and business films, often related to the port, educational films, films to promote the city and municipal services, and films made for or even produced by various kinds of social institutions, next to amateur films. Much of the material found here has hardly ever, if at all, been studied by academics. While taking into account that there may be many more of such films elsewhere, and that a similar situation exists in other cities, it is still puzzling why all of these films were made, and who may have watched them.

It is obvious that these films were not made for reasons of entertainment, at least not in the first place. They may have their own aesthetic qualities, which I will take into account, but their purposes have been, first of all, social and economic. If it comes to advertising and sponsorship, on which large amounts of money are spent, economists have noticed that individual enterprises may profit from it, but that it is usually at the expense of competitors. There is scant evidence that advertising has an effect on macroeconomic quantities, and therefore there is little consensus about the significance of advertising for the economy at large²³. However, the films under consideration cover a range of issues. They are the product of various kinds of motivations and interests, which broadens the perspective.

One has to ask oneself what functions these films fulfil in society. It calls for an approach that may not only explain what these films transmit and how they are constructed, but especially

²³ Marlet, Van Woerkens, Mulder, Poort, 2006: III.

how they participate in social processes, or more specifically in the case of the city, how they contribute to urban development. This question does not just apply to commissioned films, but also to avant-garde films or feature films, and, by extension, to cinema in general. How is cinema embedded in social structures and what are the dynamics that operate between them? This question moves beyond the conception of cinema as the free play of the imagination opening up new perspectives, while it also challenges the conception that cinema influences behaviour through providing certain social role models. I consider the participatory and interventionist aspects of cinema as a major question that touches upon many other issues as well. It is particularly pressing in the light of the ubiquity of media within modern society, with various kinds of applications outside or beyond the cinema.

research problems

Some of the films under consideration have been reviewed by film scholars or critics before, especially in studies on avant-garde films and documentaries, where they have primarily been addressed as works of art. As a consequence, the films' commissioners, uses or purposes have not always been taken into consideration. This criticism, however, does not apply to the work of Bert Hogenkamp (1988, 2003), who has extensively written on Dutch documentary cinema. He has presented a vast horizon in this respect, especially since he has taken the term 'documentary' in its broadest possible sense. Notwithstanding this elaborate detective work, there is still a lot to be discovered.

A number of films that will come to the fore in various chapters here could be related to the national institutions and the artistic as well as economic developments that Hogenkamp has indicated, but there are also documentary productions that raise new questions and that require a different take²⁴. Among them are scripted and staged films, or films that strictly served local purposes rather than national ones. There are also many television productions dealing with Rotterdam, among them various foreign documentaries, made since the 1950s. They have not yet appeared in any study of Dutch cinema, nor in any study of another national cinema, since they simply do not match either the notion of 'national' or that of 'cinema'. Television, moreover, has often been considered by film scholars as something that belongs to another register, but film and television are related, if it were just for the fact that until the 1980s, most television reports and documentaries were still shot on film. By following the connections between film and television, one can reveal some of their dynamics, and compare their respective take on certain social issues that they have addressed.

Whereas the classification in terms of documentary or other specific media categories might sometimes be problematic, this also applies to their classifications in terms of avant-garde, art and *auteur*. The reasons for commissioned productions are usually social or economic, rather than personal or artistic²⁵. A film that is conventional in its style, however, may still be challenging otherwise. Even in the case of films that are idiosyncratic in their *mise-en-scene* or that show a clear sign of artistic expressivity, the paradigm of the *auteur* might still not explain how they have come about. The fact that such films, too, are embedded in an environment, and part of communication processes between different agents, requires different factors to be taken into account. This raises certain methodological problems. Textual analysis is no longer sufficient. Instead, a methodology has to be developed that links the aesthetic to the social-economic factors in a concrete and demonstrable way.

Rather than drawing up a corpus *a priori*, it appeared to me to be more relevant to examine various media productions and practices that had been left unnoticed before, to see to what extent they have played a role in the development of the city. Discovering networks, drawing links, and following the transmissions through them leads to unknown places, objects

²⁴ For a similar argument in the case of science films, vis-à-vis documentaries or 'non-fiction', see: Boon, 2008: 1.

²⁵ Cf. Boon, 2008: 4-5.

and people. It suggests the existence of an ‘exploded cinema’ or ‘postcinema’ before it was called that, as something that was not a marginal corollary of the cinema, but that actually belonged to its core right from the start. It includes film screenings at industry fairs, in factories, in museums and at schools²⁶. With such a broadening of the view, many more audiovisual formats come to the fore as well, from slideshows and the amateur 8mm film to the expensive format of widescreen 70mm, from live television broadcasting and telerecording to videocassettes and wired on-demand transmissions.

The variety of research material, however, causes methodological and practical problems, not least because of the sheer quantity. Whereas I initially had the intention to consider the history of films about Rotterdam from its beginning to the present, when I still had no idea about the actual numbers of films that had been made, it occurred to me later that some historical limitations were inevitable. I have decided to confine myself to the period from the 1920s to the 1970s, which still encompasses an estimated five to six thousand productions. I present this period in three chronological parts – while leaving space for ‘temporal differentiation’ or overlaps within the different chapters. This period roughly coincides with the heydays of modernity and modernism, as a social condition and as a set of movements and ideas, respectively. The chosen time frame has been motivated not least by the observation that in the 1920s cinema became increasingly important within culture and society, while it reinforced its connection with the city. It was also the period in which modern architecture and planning came to the fore and new ideas and technologies were explored. Since the 1920s, the city has changed rapidly. This was accelerated by WWII, and continued afterwards at an ever-increasing pace. In the 1970s, modernism became severely criticised; theoretically it came to a halt. New urban developments followed and, along with it, media as public or policy instruments took on new roles. Moreover, the media landscape itself changed too, which prepared the grounds for the media saturated society in which we live today.

In this way I try to investigate the emergence of the modern city, how it has been framed, and how it can be conceptualised, across the discourses of ‘modernity’ and ‘media’. Architecture historian Hilde Heynen (1999: 12) has made a distinction between transitory and programmatic concepts of modernity. Transitory concepts reside in the ‘new and now’, in ongoing change and the momentary, innovation and the revolt against tradition. Programmatic concepts are, alternatively, associated with progress, emancipation, liberation, and often conceived of as a *project*. Transitory modernity may inherently cause temporal complexity, but in the end this also counts for programmatic modernity, due to social and spatial programmes and plans that imply assumptions and expectations concerning the future. Especially after WWII, plans were made for the city of the future, which envisioned nothing less than a new society based on modern communities. As such the future was already part of the historical present, and vice versa. Temporal loops are integral part of the modernist project. With films participating in this project, the question emerges as to how they relate to such temporal complications. Should cinema likewise be understood in terms of recurrent patterns and suspended or accelerated developments? Should productions be approached in terms of ‘events’, as part of communication processes, and are particular films merely versions or series of some kind? How has this, in turn, affected the social-cultural processes and spatial developments at stake?

commissioned films

Since much of the corpus consists of commissioned films, we may consider a number of recent studies on this subject. Elizabeth Lebas (2000) has observed that many British municipal films, especially from before WWII, concern issues of health and body politics, which immediately relate to modernist ideas on social housing²⁷. Complex issues were visualised and made

²⁶ Cf. Lebas, 2000: 140.

²⁷ Cf. Boon, 2008: 145-150 (a.o.).

comprehensible through films in order to instruct people, in town halls, clinics, courtyards etc. They were part of a modernisation process, but, as she has argued, 'these were not films *about* modern living, but *for* modern living' (p141). Regarding municipal films from Glasgow, from the 1920s to the 1970s (2005, 2007), she has articulated, moreover, a correspondence between municipal films and a progressive political agenda of modernisation, which may be observed in Rotterdam too.

Besides municipal films, there are 'industrial films' to be considered, which have become the subject of an emerging debate among film scholars. An impetus to it was a study by Thomas Elsaesser (2005b) on historical films about construction and housing related to *Das Neue Frankfurt*: a housing programme of the city of Frankfurt, directed by Ernst May, which turned into a multidisciplinary avant-garde movement that gained notice through its magazine (1926-1931). Elsaesser argues that different strategies were followed in order to achieve modernisation, which were successful even though there was at first sight no direct convergence of approaches between the avant-gardes of architecture and cinema. The films in question often followed the argumentative and aesthetic schemes of industrial films, rather than those of avant-garde cinema. Films served particular purposes, and were shown to different audiences, on different occasions. Elsaesser has therefore suggested (2005b: 383) to explore three As: *Auftraggeber* (commissioner), *Anlass* (reason), *Anwendung* (use). Irrespective of the 'artistic quality', many examples of 'applied cinema' only make sense when taking into account to whom they were of interest, and why they were made. What purposes were served, how have they been used, on what occasions and in which settings, and what has been their role within the processes at stake? By linking the three As to one another, and those of similar productions, extensive crossdisciplinary networks emerge. They show 'the social life of images', in accordance to 'the social life of things' (Appadurai, 1986²⁸).

In the case of *Das Neue Frankfurt*, film promoted modernity along with various other media. Therefore Elsaesser has coined the concept of *Medienverbund* (2005b: 391). It is the way different media, including film, photography, printed matter, design and architecture, are strategically applied to reinforce each other, following a similar agenda. Various connections between the arts, industry and politics may hence come to the fore, which empowered different 'actors' and forged alliances for each occasion²⁹.

The concept of the three As has informed the book *Filmische Mittel, industrielle Zwecke* (2007), edited by the film scholars Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, including a number of studies that explicitly address the relationship between cinema and city³⁰. Elaborating on the three As they have argued that industrial films may subsequently be framed by considering three Rs: Record, Rhetorics, and Rationalization³¹. They too have emphasised that the *auteur* paradigm is not appropriate³². This does not degrade the work of the filmmaker. On the contrary, by framing the actual conditions, restrictions and requirements, we might actually get a better understanding of the solutions and achievements established by the makers. This also counts for cameramen or producers, for example, and all others involved. Industrial films developed their own conventions (Hediger and Vonderau, 2007: 11³³). They were of an exceptionally high level, like any other means of production, serving industrial objectives, even though they have not been canonised by

²⁸ This volume concerns a collection of essays; besides the work of Appadurai, one might especially consider the contribution by Kopytoff.

²⁹ Cf. Elsaesser, 2007: 39/51; Hagener, 2005.

³⁰ This concerns above all towns that have been identified with particular companies or industries such as Zlin (related to Bata'), Jena (Carl Zeiss), Mo I Rana (Norsk Jernverk) – see resp. Szczepanik, 2007; Hagener, 2007; Sørenssen.

³¹ Hediger and Vonderau (2007: 22) have pointed to the fact, that already in 1914, George L. Cox addressed that industrial films dealt with 5 Ms: Means, Materials, Machines, Markets and Men. This text is part of their volume (Cox, 2007 [1914]).

³² Hediger & Vonderau, 2007: 11.

³³ Cf. in the same volume: Hediger, 2007: 22.

film critics, theorists and historians. This is partly due to the ephemeral appearance of these films, since they were often made for a specific moment, event and audience. As Hediger and Vonderau state, there is much to be discovered in company archives, to understand the role of film in overall production processes; such films illuminate the rhetorical and functional qualities of cinema and its role in society at large. Moreover, they argue, this does not belong to the margins of cinema, if the budgets alone were to be considered. In fact, they have formed the backbone of national film production in many countries, such as the Netherlands³⁴.

Industrial films had their own circuits for distribution, including special industrial film festivals with their own awards and rewards. One of them was organised, for the first time in 1960, by the employers' federation *Conseil des Fédérations Industrielles d'Europe* (CIFE)³⁵. Each year this prestigious event was hosted by a different country and member of the federation. It created its own circuit and network, for filmmakers and businessmen to meet. One could learn here about other companies, and how they manifested (i.e. promoted and represented) themselves. The Netherlands have always been prominently present at such events, and various films dealing with Rotterdam have won prizes.

Already in 1960, the Dutch critic and (script) writer Jan Blokker remarked that the achievements of applied cinema were little known outside its own circles, despite its energy, working spirit and discipline of form, which were, as he said, only exceptionally still present in the big world of fiction film production. He predicted, moreover, that the film historian of the future would discover and recognise the private firms, municipal commissioners and governmental bodies as the great sponsors of cinema in the period after 1950³⁶. This seems applicable to Rotterdam, also in the case of artistic experiments and feature films. It should even be possible to extend Elsaesser's theoretical and methodological concept of the three As to cinema in general. Since any kind of film promotes a particular register of values, it may always be, in the end, a matter of 'applied cinema'.

the urban environment – economy, culture, society

The approaches discussed here touch upon concerns from the social sciences and social-economic history, especially where one observes a convergence between economy and culture. A particular reference is the book *On Hollywood* by economic geographer Allen J. Scott. He states that it is 'the broad question of the commodification of culture, and [a concern] with the ways in which basic physical conditions of production and the symbolic content of outputs are intertwined with one another in the modern economy' (2005: xi-xii). However, there remains an asymmetry in the approaches. For Scott, Hollywood is of interest as an industrial cluster, as *Standort*³⁷, whose productive fabric coincides more or less with the urban fabric. Rotterdam is a different case. Production arrangements are crucial here too, but only to illuminate the relationship of the films

³⁴ Hogenkamp, 2003: 179/282, cf. Zimmermann (2007: 55), for the example of Switzerland.

³⁵ For general information on this federation: www.eurofound.europa.eu > employer organisations (2008-05-15). The Dutch member is *Verbond Nederlandse Ondernemingen* (VNO). Besides its participation in the festival, it also organised special screenings of Dutch films. The Dutch contribution was selected by a jury that consisted of representatives from the *Nederlandse Bioscoopbond*, *Nederlandse Beroepsvereniging van Filmers*, companies with film services, and the minister of culture (CRM). In 1970 the CIFE established a permanent committee for the production and distribution of industrial films, with its secretary based in Rome. Ref.: 'Succes in Florence' (anon. magazine, Sept. 1970), personal archive Joop Burcksen.

³⁶ Original quote: 'Als propaganda- of louter als communicatiemiddel leidt de film een wonderlijk besloten leven: naar buiten vrijwel onbekend, binnen haar eigen bestaan daarentegen vervuld van een bedrijvigheid, een werkdrijf en een hoge mate van vormdiscipline, die in de grote wereld van de speelfilmindustrie alleen nog maar bij uitzondering voorkomen. Wie in later jaren de zoveelste geschiedenis van de film wil schrijven zal vermoedelijk op de veilige afstand die de tijd voor hem geschapen heeft, achter het filmbeoefenen van bijvoorbeeld de periode na 1950 veel scherper en duidelijker dan wij, niet de officiële producenten of filmproducerende firma's, maar de particuliere bedrijven, gemeentelijke opdrachtgevers en overheidslichamen als de grote "sponsors" van de filmkunst ontdekken en erkennen.' Blokker, 1960.

³⁷ *Standort – Tatort*, coined by Thomas Elasseer, lecture at the NIMK / Rietveld Academy, Amsterdam, 2004-02-18.

to *Tatort*, and to explain how they function within the city. Central here is the ontological question how media products and other creative achievements are enabled by the city in order, at the same time, to frame the city.

Notwithstanding the differences, some premises still hold. Scott depicts a place – in his case, a part of Los Angeles – and the way it generates values as a ‘system of socioeconomic interactions’, which constitute ‘an organized ecology of specialized but complementary production activities and labor tasks...’ (2005: xi-xii). He emphasises features of socio-economic agglomeration, such as mutual learning and synergy, which may be explicit in a cluster of similar firms, but which are also factors within urban development in general. Through so-called ‘Jacobs-externalities’, different sectors get interrelated and form an integral system. ‘The interpretation of the city as a layered system of structures is widely supported nowadays’, says sociologist Arnold Reijndorp in the ‘atlas of the cultural ecology of Rotterdam’ (2004)³⁸. This atlas has been presented as a methodology to frame developments in the city in terms of qualities and potentialities (p10). It both represents what the city is and what it can be, by a detailed mapping of differences, and by producing a comprehensive totality that is otherwise invisible (p11)³⁹. It does so by layering three sorts of maps that show the city’s morphology, the urban functions, and perspectives and dynamics.

This ecological approach goes back, though unacknowledged, to the *Theory of Culture Change* (1955) of the American anthropologist Julian Steward (1902-1972). Elaborating on Alfred Kroeber’s environmental possibilism, Steward coined the term ‘cultural ecology’ and called it ‘a method for recognizing the ways in which culture change is induced by adaptation to environment’ (1976 [1955]: 5). History and the environment set restrictions on possible directions for development, which tends to strengthen itself. In the case of Rotterdam, historian Paul van de Laar has reflected upon something like this in a television programme on historical promotion films (VERGETEN VERHALEN, 2005, Harm Korst, TV Rijnmond)⁴⁰. He notices that films from the 1950s promoted a city of labour, which caught on. In the 1970s, when the image of the city was changing, a tension appeared between content and message, or what the city was and how it was envisioned, as a city of culture and leisure. He concludes ‘that the image of the city of labour is so strong, that even when Rotterdam wants to get rid of it, it is hardly possible, and probably you need to make peace with it’⁴¹. It is a reconsideration of his thesis from the book *Stad van Formaart* (2000), which says that Rotterdam has developed from a *transitopolis* around 1900, to a city of labour, to a city of culture today.

The theory of cultural ecology has mainly been applied to rural communities⁴², and disappeared in recent years, but Steward himself has also indicated how it applies to urban development. While industrialisation brought national institutions and modern culture (including motion pictures, as Steward remarks), towns grew and their importance *vis-à-vis* the state

³⁸ Original quote: ‘De interpretatie van de stad als een gelaagd systeem van structuren wordt inmiddels wijd gedragen’ (Reijndorp, 2004: 14). Cf. Salingaros, 2005, and Marshall, 2009, which are both urban studies that understand cities as evolutionary, complex systems, akin to ecosystems.

³⁹ It attempts to do so by three series of maps of contemporary Rotterdam, drawn by NEXT architects. The first are ‘base’ maps, concerning the urban morphology, which pay attention to private and public spaces. The second are ‘inventory’ maps, concerning urban functions, indicating sites of different social-cultural and economic activities, such as shopping, knowledge exchange, and cultural production, including film and architecture. The third are ‘perspective’ maps, about the urban dynamics, which encompass flows of people, transformations, and parochial domains, among other factors. These three series of maps show different, increasingly complex layers of the urban cultural ecology.

⁴⁰ I.e. HOUEN ZO! (1952, Herman van der Horst), THAT MOST LIVING CITY (1954, Walter Smith), EEN WANDELING DOOR ROTTERDAM (1955, Joop Burcksen), ROTTERDAM (1962, Eimert Kruidhof), STERSPOT ROTTERDAM (1975, Toonder).

⁴¹ Original quote: ‘Naar mate het Rotterdamse imago aan het veranderen is, zo vanaf de jaren zeventig, dan zie je toch dat er meer spanning komt tussen de inhoud en de boodschap. Naar mijn idee heeft dat te maken met dat het imago van de werkstad zo sterk is, dat of Rotterdam er nou vanaf wil of niet, dat bijna niet mogelijk is, en misschien moet je daar vrede mee hebben.’

⁴² Cf. Moran, 1990; McNetting, 1990; Rappaport, 1990.

increased. Steward has distinguished five major categories of functions that cities fulfil in modern society at large; they became centres for: marketing, public facilities, commercial services, political and religious organisations, and the distribution of mass media (Steward, 1976 [1955]: 211). These functions also changed the internal composition of towns. New segments of classes and sociocultural groups appeared. How this manifested per city appears to be different, if we just compare Hollywood and Rotterdam. I will therefore consider the various social-cultural and economic institutions in Rotterdam that are mapped by Van de Laar (a.o.), and the networks that have enabled them⁴³.

Along with the appearance of new institutions and social groups, and an increasing complexity as a result of it, their overall integration takes place at a higher level, that of a city, a country or a commonwealth. The notion of 'integration' points to the degree of coherence between sociocultural institutions within the particular level of the ecology. At the highest level a common denominator can be found, but at lower levels differentiation is reinforced. This is a double movement⁴⁴. According to Steward, it is effected by three major factors (ibid, 49-50): education, participation in national institutions, and mass media. To some extent they transmit 'standardized and syndicated ideals of behavior', but there is also a subcultural repatterning of meaning.

For each audiovisual production, from blockbusters to 'media of microcultures' (Hannerz, 1992: 85), one may identify the relationships that enable it and the systemic level to which it relates. To whom is it of interest, and at what level does its vision or information apply or have consequences? In this perspective, subcultures may be taken into account, among them different professional organisations and interest groups. To identify them within a cultural ecology is a matter of drawing networks within networks. As the Swedish anthropologist Ulf Hannerz has it (1992: 99): 'we see subcultures as clusterings of perspectives; variously clearly bounded, sometimes nesting in one another, sometimes crosscutting; in some places rich in content and form, in other places poor in the same respects....'

Hannerz locates different subcultures within a common environment, for which he uses the term 'habitat': 'the habitats of different agents may overlap either more or less, within the landscape as a whole; and the habitat is emergent and transitory. It is not by definition linked to a particular territory' (Hannerz, 1996: 48). We should keep that in mind when thinking of a city like Rotterdam. Elaborating on it, Hannerz coins his concept of the 'global ecumene'. For this he refers to Alfred Kroeber, who used (in 1945) the term *oikoumene* of the ancient Greeks, being 'the entire inhabited world as the Greeks then understood it' (Hannerz, 1996: 7). Hannerz defines the global ecumene as 'an open fairly densely networked landscape', in which culture gets organised (1996: 50). It is, I would argue, directly related to the theory of cultural ecology, and also to Scott's economic geography. Since the Greek *oikos* means house, the 'ecumene' is the habitat, 'ecology' its organisation, and 'economy' its management.

Cultural ecology informs a methodology based on networks. Instead of an *agent – structure* divide, it invokes a sense of relationality⁴⁵. It corresponds to Hannerz's ideas of a networked landscape, with networks within networks. Levels of social organisation do not exist on top of each other; they exist within one another, through situational involvements (Hannerz, 1980: 172). Within complex society, one performs different roles within different situations. Through such individual involvements, links are made, alliances arise, positions may shift, and opposed forces may join.

⁴³ As indicated by, among others, De Klerk (1998), and Dicke e.a. (2003).

⁴⁴ See also: Jameson (1992), considering the overall mechanisms and the individual experience; Strauss & Quinn (1997: 4), following Bakhtin, concerning centripetal and centrifugal forces that enable cultural reproduction / thematicity next to cultural variation / inconsistency / change; Augé (1999: 5): planetarization / universalization being paralleled by individualization / particularization.

⁴⁵ Cf. Castells, 1996 [networks within networks]; Latour, 1997; Riles, 2000: 62-64, Urry, 2003: 122 [relationality]

The proposed methodology is a matter of tracing such involvements and alliances in respect of film productions. It is a matter of following the links between the content of films and the environment in which they are made and released, through the connections between artefacts and people. Beyond networks, however, are values that are transmitted, through collective cognitive operations, and the changes they bring about. I will therefore keep in mind what sociologist John Urry has called a theory of 'reflexive modernization' (2003: 139). Urry says that social processes are increasingly monitored through science and expert systems, as well as aesthetic-expressive systems. In this perspective, culture is a matter of collective learning, which is said to be crucial for society as a complex system (e.g. Conti, 2005; Fleener, 2005). A particular problem that emerges here, however, as addressed by sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1997), concerns the way a society registers and evaluates its own achievements, and how this enables further development. In the course of this thesis I will come back to Luhmann, and try to elaborate on these ideas through specific cases.

a note on the practice of research

For each period under consideration, I have made extensive inventories of titles of audiovisual productions that concerned Rotterdam and urban development. This has been carried out through filtering the catalogues of the principal film archives, and by adding titles of (missing) films that are known from other records. The choice of subject-headings and subjects that I will discuss, and hence the design of the chapters, is based on the main issues as they appeared from examining the available material.

One should notice, though, that over the course of my research, there has been a revolutionary development in the management and accessibility of databases. Illustrative is the case of the *Gemeentearchief Rotterdam*. When I first visited it, early 2003, the film 'database' was a paper catalogue with only titles and dates, which were not always correct, and which were ordered according to the way the films had entered the archive. There was one monitor with a VHS player in a corner of the general reading room. Tapes could be ordered by filling in forms, and it took about 20 minutes before they were brought. There is now an online database with various ways to search for titles. They can be watched at a special studio with various sets, and one can take the tapes or discs from the shelves oneself. The case of *Beeld & Geluid* in Hilversum is comparable. The *Nederlands Filmmuseum* (Eye) in its turn, has no online database yet. In the meantime other databases have appeared that offer access to films online (e.g. *Het Geheugen van Nederland*), but the number of titles relevant to my case is still rather limited. Due to the rapid changes, new data have come to the fore up until the end of writing my thesis, and new data will no doubt be found afterwards, which may offer new insights that hopefully can contribute to my overall argument, whether by strengthening it or providing further nuances.

For research, the databases are of crucial importance. Through some broad search keys, derived from preliminary impressions and the literature about the city, it is possible to observe major concerns and discern general patterns through the sheer quantities of data that are available. Such an approach is refined step-by-step. When selections of films are made, which are subsequently watched in the archive, the approach turns from quantitative to qualitative. Aesthetic features are taken into consideration, which, in turn, offer data to trace network connections. This leads to other databases, among them architectural ones – in particular that of *Stichting Bonas*, which is related to the *Nederlands Architectuur instituut*. It offers references to publications, actual places, and the people involved. People who are no longer alive may be represented through booklets and newspaper articles, and archive documents such as letters or notes. For more recent periods the people involved may, next to these sources, still speak for themselves. They can indicate reasons and motivations, reveal values and refer to the conditions that have enabled to create the objects at issue. This provides more links to be traced, and the cycle can be repeated again.

The sequence from database to films to places to people, and back again, is a basic model. In practice, many such sequences are followed simultaneously, which affect one another. It implies an ongoing movement between levels of analysis and abstraction, between quantitative and structural approaches through the databases, and qualitative and individualised approaches in the case of tracing connections and interactions. Although databases are once and again consulted, they themselves, like any other carrier of information, also affect directions of research. It may sometimes be relevant to know how the films or the data have entered the archive, and why things have been classified in the way they are. Through frequent use one develops an awareness of criteria and what may be possible to use as search keys.

However sophisticated databases may be, they are never complete. Moreover, files can have been modified for various reasons, or data may not be accurate. Databases give descriptions, which are useful for the first stage of research. But one should always keep in mind that for every title much more is hidden: the production histories, the potentials, and hence the options, choices and hesitations of those that have been involved. Hidden are also the effects that films might have had on spectators or users, the filmmakers themselves or on others. Such factors have somehow affected the thing itself. Once the situations are communicated and recreated, through the makers or their 'representatives', the objects come alive and potentials reappear. This has especially happened through the film series 'Rotterdam Classics' (since 2007), which I have compiled for the *Gemeentearchief Rotterdam* and theatre Lantaren/Venster. The public screenings have led to encounters with unknown spectators, filmmakers, representatives of institutions and others.

outline of the book

In order to visualise the architecture of my script I have imagined it as a kind of building in which the three periods constitute large domes, which are connected through recurrent themes that are corridors and elevators. However, it is probably more appropriate to imagine it as a city with three districts containing buildings from different periods. Each of the three districts is preceded by a prologue, a gateway, which is intended to provide some relevant data and to mark a point of departure. The districts lie around a common area, which is the port. The port is addressed in various chapters of Part I (ch. 2, 4, 5), and it is the subject of particular chapters of Part II and III (ch. 6, 14 and 15). People live all over this city, but there is a special 'residential quarter' that has grown over the years: this is the issue of social housing that is linked to social engagement (part of ch. 5, 9, 16). There is a common ground for events, which in themselves have addressed major concerns of their time (ch. 3, 10, 13). There are conceptual vehicles that connect the Parts, through issues of motion and mobility, avant-garde movements and industrial activities. There are other issues that appear occasionally, such as greenery, domestic life, education, sports, fine arts or literature. They do create spaces that provide shortcuts to move back and forth, but in terms of media and urban development they might possibly be extended beyond the scope of my thesis.

Part I – The Emergence of a Cinematic City, Rotterdam in the 1920s & 1930s

In Chapter 1 ('The Emergence of Cinema in Rotterdam'), I address the developments that preceded the period under investigation, as a background to the next chapters. In the early years, production was closely related to exhibition, which I frame through ideas of clustering and agglomeration. After 1920 specialisation occurred, which was then reinforced by sound film. In Chapter 2 ('Film, Architecture, City') I consider the avant-garde movements of both architecture and cinema. In Rotterdam these were related, which is exemplified by Ivens's *THE BRIDGE*. It has been studied by many for its innovative form and vision. In my turn I link it to the social-cultural networks through which it emerged, as well as other productions. Next to that I consider, among others, films on the Van Nelle factory. Through it I show connections between avant-garde productions and industrial films, which promoted modernity in their own way. In this perspective I also discuss construction films, as well as the issue of movement.

In Chapter 3 ('Events'), I relate different kinds of events to urban space and cinema, from sports games and aviation shows to the international industry exhibition Nenijs to that exemplifies the idea of *Medienverbund*. Various industrial films were shown there, including films by the Hungarian cinematographer Andor von Barsy, to whom I dedicate the next chapter (4). Much of his work has remained unnoticed so far, since it did not correspond to the *auteur* paradigm. It has nevertheless played a role in the development of Rotterdam, especially the port. Whereas the social-economic significance of film is highlighted, there is still a personal side to it, which also touches upon the issue of contingency.

In Chapter 5, finally, I elaborate on the issue of a 'shared agenda', which is focused on social engagement. Special attention is given to housing projects, first of all those by J.J.P. Oud, and the way film helped to create the envisioned modern environment. Particularly important has been the municipal Schoolbioscoop, next to the avant-garde and companies that produced films for unions and other social organisations.

Part II – The Cinematic Reconstruction of a City, Rotterdam in the 1940s & 1950s

With WWII and the destruction of Rotterdam, a new phase of urban development started: the period of reconstruction. Much attention has been paid to its planning and architecture. I address the role of film in this process, which helped to communicate, to support and to develop the plans. However, in Chapter 6 ('Gate to the World') I will start with the port, which received priority. The early reconstruction films and newsreels did indeed concern the port, and for many years it remained the main subject of cinematic Rotterdam. The port connected the city to the world again, and film exemplified that, through reports on the navy, films that promoted shipping and industry, and films that showed the possibility of emigration. The port and its industry enabled film productions, while the two realms shared values of modernisation.

Ideas for the reconstruction of the city were already developed by the business elite during the war, which is discussed in Chapter 7 ('The Appearance of a New City'). Cinema played a role in its first stage, but it became soon a hidden affair. After the war publicity became important again, to generate support for the plans. The war accelerated modernisation, which paid off in the 1950s. Rotterdam became a model city, and film helped to create this image, as we will see in chapter 8 ('A Model to Communicate the City'). Important were Polygoon's newsreels, municipal promotion films, and Marshal films, including Van der Horst's *STEADY!* I address links between *Standort* and *Tatort*, through the 'porosity' of urban systems, while film production gradually recovered in Rotterdam.

Visions on social organisation were articulated by architects, planners, industrialists and filmmakers alike. This affected the city centre as well as the new suburbs, which are the focus of Chapter 9 ('Extended City'). One was concerned with building communities through a new spatial and economic order. In the perspective of the agglomeration of Rotterdam, things are exemplified through the case of Vlaardingen.

Various issues from the preceding chapters come together in Chapter 10 ('To animate the city'). It deals with large events, in particular Ahoy' and E55. They accompanied the reconstruction, for which various media were used, to animate the city.

Part III – The Cinematic Proliferation of a City, Rotterdam in the 1960s & 1970s

The process of modernisation that took place after WWII accelerated in the 1960s-1970s, not least in terms of audiovisual media. The image of the city diversified. This is articulated in Chapter 11, on 'Developing Compositions'. The new city became a living entity made out of a multitude of components, spatially and socially, which was reinforced by an influx of immigrants. This was paralleled by the bifurcation of media, which became an ever greater part of urbanism, through municipal informational films, artistic films, and municipal collaborations on fiction films and (foreign) television productions. Foreign productions may be little known in the city itself, but they helped to achieve its ambitions abroad. The role of television is further

elaborated through the case of the 'Open Studio', which anchored media practices in Rotterdam, next to news reports on national television.

The counterpart of the mosaic and its interactions was the straightforward design of transportation systems to regulate urban flows. In Chapter 12 ('The Structure of Motion'), it is exemplified by the media coverage of the developing metro, ring road, and airport, and, through a separate chapter, the port (ch. 13. 'Anchoring Film and Television'). Documentaries and newsreels heralded them as hallmarks of modernisation, but gradually resistance grew, which was reflected by film and television too. The arena of public opinion is highlighted in Chapter 14 ('Striking Development'), with promotional films about containerisation and television newsreels addressing the strikes in the port in the 1970s. The presence of television here is also an instance of 'developing compositions'.

Like the previous period, the economic conditions and the construction of the city's infrastructure were accompanied by large events to animate the city (ch. 15, 'The Urban Medium'). This too was subject to proliferation, from the Floriade and the C'70 to the new Ahoy' hall, the Holland Pop Festival, and finally the international film festival. Different forces came finally to the fore in the 1970s, which are discussed in the last chapter (Ch. 16. 'Re/Visions'). Revisions of functionalism made their way through the 1960s. More drastic changes were effected by the urban renewal movement, which criticised planning practices and propelled citizen participation. Media played a role in it, and video in particular. This, however, was anything but a clear development, since opposed visions emerged, which brought new challenges and opportunities to the urban system.

Through this script I hope to present Rotterdam as a template next to those of Frankfurt, Glasgow and Hollywood, in the way they have been presented by Elsaesser, Lebas and Scott, in order to understand the social role of cinema, and especially how it has contributed to urban development. Elaborating on this question, I try to answer why and how various productions dealing with Rotterdam have come into being. Through the relationship between film and the built environment I also make an attempt to frame architecture, planning and media production as part of broader social-cultural processes. I do so through a methodology based on network connections and transmissions that have left certain traces, which might hopefully offer a model to other studies too. Intertwined with these objectives is the aim to give an idea of the film history of Rotterdam, and hence of the city, with its particularities and qualities that have informed the different chapters as indicated. It may help to understand the current condition of Rotterdam as a city of media and of architecture, and in more general terms, to understand different kinds of little known factors within urban development. Dealing with a specific period of history, finally, I also attempt to contribute to a historiographical model that can grasp complex network dynamics and the way time is framed by them. It may open up ways to uncover recurrent patterns of potentialities, and to establish links between developments through time.