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Cinematic Rotterdam: the times and tides of a modern city

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Publication date
2010

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Paalman, F. J. J. W. (2010). *Cinematic Rotterdam: the times and tides of a modern city*. [Thesis, fully internal, Universiteit van Amsterdam]. Eigen Beheer.

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CHAPTER 2. FILM, ARCHITECTURE, CITY

§ 1. avant-garde

The avant-garde has played a prominent role in establishing the modern image of Rotterdam. Its architecture especially has become well-known, in particular the housing projects of architect J.J.P. Oud and the 'Van Nelle factory' (1925-1930) by architect Jan Brinkman and Leen van der Vlugt. There is an immediate link between them and avant-garde cinema, since all of them, as well as the director of Van Nelle, C.H. van der Leeuw, and the associated industrial designer Willem Gispen, were among the initiators of the Filmliga Rotterdam in 1927¹⁷⁷. The interaction between these avant-gardes continued after the Filmliga dissolved in 1933¹⁷⁸.

This connection did not only exist in Rotterdam, which is clear when we look at other branches of the Filmliga. While most film historians have focused on the Filmliga Amsterdam, where it was founded, Hans Schoots (1999) has pointed to the fact that the branches in Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague were all established by architects¹⁷⁹. His observation can be elaborated and specified a little further. J.J.P. Oud was the founding chairman of the Filmliga Rotterdam. In that capacity he also signed its manifesto, together with the journalist and secretary Johan Huijts, and the architect Jan Brinkman, among others¹⁸⁰. Once the Filmliga Rotterdam was established, Oud became an ordinary member of the board¹⁸¹. Huijts became its chairman, while the role of secretary was then fulfilled by the young interior architect Ida Liefrinck (aka Liv Falkenberg-Liefrinck), who worked for Oud's studio¹⁸². For several years she ran the secretariat of the Filmliga Rotterdam, and afterwards that of the architecture association and magazine *De 8 & Opbouw*¹⁸³. In Utrecht the Filmliga was established by the architects Sybold van Ravesteyn and Gerrit Rietveld, chairman and secretary respectively. Van Ravesteyn was an especially active member. Further, in The Hague the architect Cornelis van Eesteren became the chairman and designer Vilmos Huszár became the secretary. Why were all of them committed to film?

One answer might be that they were interested in set design, like Henk Wegerif¹⁸⁴. After he had met Filmliga filmmaker Jan Teunissen, who made a film about his 'Flatgebouw Willemspark' in The Hague (1928-1930), he became the most important set designer in the Netherlands in the 1930s. In total, he designed the sets for nineteen feature films¹⁸⁵. However, Wegerif was an exception. Concerning Dutch cinema, the Filmliga was especially a platform for the 'absolute film', which was exactly the kind of film that hardly made use of spectacular sets.

¹⁷⁷ The first board of the Filmliga Rotterdam consisted of the following members: J.J.P. Oud (chairman), J.E. van der Pot (vice-chairman), J. Huijts (secretary), N. Rost (2nd secretary), J. Mees PRzn. (treasurer), S.J.R. de Monchy (member), J.A. Brinkman (member). These people also signed the manifesto that was printed in the first issues of the *Filmliga* magazine (1927) – inside back cover). Smit (2005: 32) adds the following names that originally signed the manifesto: L. Bolle, P. Meller, J.T.Schaddelee, W.H.Gispen, J. Gompertz, C.H. van der Leeuw, and L.C. van der Vlugt. For Van der Vlugt and Van der Leeuw, see: Koch, 2005: 189n92. See also: Huijts, 1975: 266.

¹⁷⁸ In 1934, for example, *Opbouw* organised an exhibition on *Het Nieuwe Bouwen* in the Filmliga related Studio 32 (see: Van Gelderen, 1934: 103-104).

¹⁷⁹ Schoots, 1999: 183-185.

¹⁸⁰ The *Manifest Filmliga Rotterdam* together with the *Manifest Filmliga Amsterdam* was published in the first two editions of the *Filmliga* magazine (1927).

¹⁸¹ At this time (autumn 1927), Oud got overstrained and ill, and various tasks were carried out by his collaborators, among them Pali Meller (cf. Taverne e.a., 2001: 132). In this case it was Ida Liefrinck to do the work, although Oud remained a member of the board for a period of two years (until October 1929).

¹⁸² For more information about her work: Kühnel, 2006.

¹⁸³ Liefrinck is mentioned as the secretary of the Filmliga Rotterdam from the second issue of *Filmliga*, 1927/2 (p13), until the issue 1930/5 February (p66). For her role in *De 8 & Opbouw*, see: Holsappel, 2000: 9; in the period 1934-1939 she ran the secretariat of its magazine.

¹⁸⁴ The architect A.H. Wegerif became known as a representative of the *Haagsche School* (The Hague). One of his famous designs is the Private House Solheim in Delft (1932, see: Groenendijk en Vollaard, 1998: 211).

¹⁸⁵ Dittrich, 1987.

Another reason why architects were involved with film might be that they were interested in designing cinema theatres, of which numbers had increased significantly during the 1920s. J.J.P. Oud had built one of the first cinema theatres in the Netherlands, the Schinkel Bioscoop in Purmerend (1912)¹⁸⁶. Leen van der Vlugt, who was also among the initiators of the Filmliga Rotterdam¹⁸⁷, had built the large ‘Theater Soesman’ in Rotterdam (1922). Some architects managed to link the interests indeed. In Amsterdam, Merkelbach & Karsten rebuilt the Filmliga theatre ‘De Uitkijk’ (1933), and Johannes Duiker created the famous ‘Cineac’ (1933-1934)¹⁸⁸, while De Stijl architect Jan Wils built ‘City’ (1935, part of the City-concern). In Utrecht, Gerrit Rietveld and Truus Schröder-Schräder designed the Filmliga theatre ‘Vreeburg’ (1936)¹⁸⁹. However, since their numbers were limited in comparison to the total amount of cinemas, this does not provide a satisfying answer.

Architects were probably interested in avant-garde films since many of them dealt with architecture and urban space. Well-known are THE BRIDGE (1928, Joris Ivens) and HOOGSTRAAT (1929, Andor von Bary), as well as MODERNE NEDERLANDSCHE ARCHITECTUUR (1930, Mannus Franken), and WE ARE BUILDING (1930, Joris Ivens), including the short NEW ARCHITECTURE. In the latter Ivens, like Mannus Franken, shows various landmarks of Dutch modern architecture. It gives special attention to the ‘Van Nelle factory’ that is highlighted in a constructivist way for its use of glass. These films reverse the question to: why were so many filmmakers interested in architecture? Film historian Bert Hogenkamp has addressed this issue too: ‘It is striking that the filmmakers of the Filmliga-generation were so fascinated by modern architecture. *Het Nieuwe Bouwen* [‘New Building’], lent itself apparently well for experiments in image composition’¹⁹⁰. Although architecture brought possibilities for formal experimentation, this interest was rooted in a broader concern. Film historian Tom Gunning even says that the interaction between architecture and the Filmliga movement has largely directed the Dutch conception of modernist cinema¹⁹¹.

In 1920, the artists Theo van Doesburg met Hans Richter and Viking Eggeling, who were working on abstract animations. Van Doesburg became very enthusiastic and wrote about them in the article ‘Abstracte Filmbeelding’ (1921) that he published in *De Stijl*. He linked these experiments to earlier ideas of Vilmos Huszár and addressed the possibility in the Netherlands to elaborate on them, to which end Van Doesburg would publish various other articles about film too¹⁹². At the same time he heralded modern architecture, such as the pre-barricaded housing experiment ‘Stulemeijer’ in Rotterdam, by architect Jan van Hardeveld (*De Stijl*, vol. 4/12, 1921). It carried the promise of low costs, acceleration of the construction process, and new opportunities for plasticity and flexibility. Walls could be arranged in various ways; concrete and steel frames even enabled architects to design sliding walls of glass, which linked up with cinema in terms of transparency, display, view, and perspective¹⁹³. Van Doesburg envisioned a kind of

¹⁸⁶ Taverne e.a., 2001: 86-89; cf. Van der Maden, 1986: 41.

¹⁸⁷ Schoots, 1999: 183.

¹⁸⁸ Next to that Duiker expressed a general interest in film (see: Duiker, 1933a, 1933b).

¹⁸⁹ See: Brusse, 1938: 3-5. At the same time Rietveld was also thinking of possibilities to create a stereoscopic theatre, which was a problem that he could not solve by architecture (cf. Limperg, 1939). Better suitable to do so was photographic technology that would be explored, for example, by Andor von Bary (which resulted in the book *Raumbild-Fotografie*, Halle (Saale): Verlag Wilhelm Knapp, 1943 – Bibliothek Carl Zeiss; www.stereoskopie.com > Literatur (2008-05-27).

¹⁹⁰ Hogenkamp, 1988: 49. Original quote: ‘Het is opvallend dat de filmmakers van de Filmliga-generatie zo door de moderne architectuur gefascineerd werden. *Het Nieuwe Bouwen* leende zich blijkbaar goed voor experimenten in beeldcompositie.’

¹⁹¹ Gunning, 1999: 256.

¹⁹² The first article (*De Stijl*, vol. 4/5, 1921) was followed by articles in the issues 2, 3 and 7 in 1922, 5 in 1923, and 55/56 in 1927.

¹⁹³ In relationship to the work of Van Doesburg, see: Van Straaten, 1988: 142. The architects of the modern movement searched for new ways to elaborate and to apply ideas on movement and time, related to functions of space and modes of use, which changed according to different moments of the day and the year, as well as particular events. In this

'light-architecture', and thought of projected walls that created illusory spaces¹⁹⁴. Architecture, he prophesied, could be just light, fully transparent, even immaterial and constantly changing, which were radical extrapolations of the ideas that he and Van Eesteren had developed with their studies *Hôtel Particulier* and *Maison Particulière* (1923). While Van Doesburg moved abroad, other members of *De Stijl* became active members of the Filmliga, among them Huszár, Rietveld, Oud, and Van Eesteren¹⁹⁵.

The Bridge

The most famous example of a film that resulted from the converging interests between architecture and cinema is THE BRIDGE. It is a 'montage documentary' that has been compared to the 'city symphonies' of Cavalcanti, Ruttmann, Vigo and Vertov, among others. It deals with the 'Koningsbrug' ('King's Bridge', 1924-1927, Pieter Joosting), a big iron railway bridge that is also known as *De Hef* (≈ the lift). The film shows trains crossing the bridge, a train that has to wait when the middle part of the bridge is elevated, and ships passing by; the bridge goes down again and the train continues. These various movements provide abstract imagery, visual patterns, dynamic compositions and contrasting views. Through the film's expressive editing the different perspectives interchange and create a rhythm. A single movement, for example the closing of the bridge, is shown from different angles; the shots are edited one after the other, and in this way the movement is discomposed. The film coincides with the logic and the structure of the subject.

Comparing THE BRIDGE to the architecture theory of Siegfried Giedion, Tom Gunning argues that Ivens approached the architectural ideal of visual simultaneity.

On the basis of the railway bridge in Rotterdam, Ivens explores the reorganisation of space, but he also shows its functioning, its processes and rhythm by way of cinematic time. Until then, no other avant-garde film had researched the visual characteristics of one location so profoundly.¹⁹⁶

Both film and architecture were considered as modes of perception. In their own ways, both tried to see the world in a new perspective, to provide a new worldview, and to establish a new image of it. Gunning argues that architecture is in fact not the 'subject' of THE BRIDGE. Instead, Ivens elaborated the shared interest of the avant-garde cinema and modern architecture for new experiences, generated by technology and technological environments. THE BRIDGE, as Gunning puts it, explores a new vision, which is made possible by new technological constructions¹⁹⁷.

Film theorist Béla Balázs (1930) and Gilles Deleuze quoting him (1983), compared THE BRIDGE to Ivens's next film, RAIN (1929, Joris Ivens, Mannus Franken), which does not just show 'rain', as a general phenomenon, but a specific appearance of it.

perspective one might consider, for example, the application of sliding walls in the housing complex 'De Eendracht' (1929-1935, Jo van den Broek). A floor plan turned into a storyboard, indicating different sequences, for day and night.

¹⁹⁴ This information is derived from the exhibition: 'Theo van Doesburg, architect, schilder, dichter', that was organised by the Centraal Museum in Utrecht, and the Kröller Müller Museum in Otterlo (2000-03-12 – 2000-06-18). Curators of the exhibition were Marja Bosma, Sjarel Ex, Toos van Kooten and Evert van Straaten, and it was accompanied by an oeuvre catalogue (Els Hoek, ed., 2000). The idea of light architecture would be elaborated by others later on, cf. Limperg, 1939.

¹⁹⁵ In this light one may also consider Van Eesteren's lecture and slide show on the functional city called *Eine Stunde Städtebau* (Berlin, January 1928), which has been called an 'urbanist film' (Van Rossem, 1997; cf. Vanstiphout, 2005: 267). In this presentation, with examples of urban planning in different countries, Van Eesteren made also use of aerial photographs, which, according to Van Rossem, was of special interest to Van Eesteren, next to maps, diagrams and graphs. As such, film could be added here too as an instrument to show the functioning and organisation of a city.

¹⁹⁶ Gunning, 1999: 257. Original quote: 'Ivens onderzoekt aan de hand van de Rotterdamse spoorbrug de reorganisatie van de ruimte, maar laat met behulp van filmische tijd ook zijn werking, zijn processen en ritme zien. Geen enkele andere avant-gardefilm had tot dan toe de visuele eigenschappen van één afzonderlijke locatie zo grondig onderzocht.'

¹⁹⁷ Gunning, 1999: 256.

‘And even when it’s a matter of a unique object, like the *Bridge* of Rotterdam, this metallic construction is dissolved in immaterial images, framed in a thousand different ways. The fact that this bridge can be seen in a multiplicity of ways renders it, as it were, unreal. It does not appear to us as the creation of engineers aiming at a determinate end, but like a curious series of optical effects. These are visual variations on which it would be difficult for a goods train to travel.’ [Balázs, quoted by Deleuze]

This is not a concept of bridge, but neither is it the individuated state of things defined by its form, its metallic matter, its uses and functions. It is a potentiality. (Deleuze, 1992 [1983]: 110-111)

Deleuze distinguishes between what something *is* at a particular moment, which is based on a specific character, role or object, for instance, and what something might *evoke*, a potential, which is based on things like brightness, a particular shape or, for example, a compassionate look. This potentiality is an ‘affect’ that opens up an ‘any-space-whatever’ (*espace quelconque*), which is a concept that Deleuze developed through *THE BRIDGE*. He writes that the large number of shots in the film ‘constitute the set of singularities which are combined in the any-space-whatever in which this bridge appeared as pure quality, this metal as pure power, Rotterdam itself as affect’ (Deleuze, 1992 [1983]: 111). It is not a fixed object anymore; ‘it no longer has co-ordinates, it is a pure potential’ (ibid, 120). The film opens up a space beyond the object. As such, the film establishes a new connection between film and architecture.

In order to understand the potentialities of *THE BRIDGE*, one might consider how this film came into being. First of all it seems important that Ivens (•1898-†1989), coming from Nijmegen, studied at the Economische Hogeschool Rotterdam from 1919 to 1922¹⁹⁸. This fact is often overlooked, since he is usually associated with Amsterdam, where he lived and worked later on. His years in Rotterdam were foundational in terms of interests and connections, regarding issues such as movement and construction, as well as labour and politics¹⁹⁹. Crucial is the fact that in Rotterdam he became friends with Arthur Lehning, who introduced him into the ideas of anarchism.

Ivens’s father, who owned the photography company CAPI, sent him to Germany to study photo-technology at the Technical Institute of Charlottenburg, near Berlin²⁰⁰. Lehning went to Berlin as well. At Lehning’s home in Berlin, Ivens met the anarchist and avant-garde photographer Germaine Krull, with whom he fell in love (and whom he married later)²⁰¹. Krull introduced him to the cultural and political scenes of Berlin and together they went to cinemas to see avant-garde films²⁰².

Krull had just been in the Soviet Union for a period of one year and, together with Kurt Hübschmann, she opened a photography studio (1922)²⁰³. It became successful, and as a result, she also took part in exhibitions together with André Kertész, László Moholy-Nagy and other prominent photographers. She established contacts with members of the Bauhaus and became involved with the constructivist movement. Concurrently to that, she frequented the same circuits as the photographer Ré Niemeyer, who was briefly married to Hans Richter, and collaborated on his films. This formed the basis for contacts between Ivens and Richter²⁰⁴.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Schoots, 1993: 116.

¹⁹⁹ It was in Rotterdam too, in 1924, that Ivens made his first serious attempts at filmmaking – about a bar with sailors, see: Sichel, 1999: 71.

²⁰⁰ De Boode & Van Oudheusden, 1985: 62-63.

²⁰¹ Ibid. Krull and Ivens married at the 2nd of April 1927 (and they got divorced at the 27th of August 1943) – Sichel, 1999: 70; cf. www.kunstbus.nl/verklaringen/germaine+krull.html (2008-05-28).

²⁰² See: De Boode & Van Oudheusden, 1985: 63, cf. information by the Ivens Foundation Nijmegen: www.iven.nl.

²⁰³ Aka Kurt Hutton, see: Sichel, 1999: 37; cf. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, www.sfmoma.org > exhibitions > Germaine Krull (2008-05-28).

²⁰⁴ Richter, in his turn, as a pioneer of Dada, was friends with Kurt Schwitters and Van Doesburg, who, together with Van Doesburg’s wife Nelly van Moorsel, gave their Dada performance in *De Doelen* in Rotterdam in 1923.

In the period that Krull and Ivens moved to the Netherlands, she made her photographic portfolio *Métal* (1925-1928)²⁰⁵. It includes her well-known photographs of the Eiffel Tower, next to photographs of industrial complexes in the harbours of Amsterdam and Rotterdam. At the same time, Ivens became involved with the Filmliga. As he was very enthusiastic about Ruttmann's *BERLIN, DIE SINFONIE EINER GROSSSTADT* (1927), he wanted to show it at the Filmliga, and to that end he visited Ruttmann in his studio in Berlin. It was during this occasion that Ivens got the idea to make films himself, and thought of a suitable subject. Sybold van Ravesteyn, who was a member of the board of the Filmliga and an architect for the Dutch Railways, suggested him to make a film about the new railway bridge *De Hef*, for all the movements it encompasses²⁰⁶. Ravesteyn contacted Pieter Joosting, who designed the bridge, and together they assisted Ivens during the three months of shooting the film. It is likely, however, that Krull has actually been the decisive factor, since she was working on her portfolio *Métal*. During, and probably already before the shooting of *THE BRIDGE*, in the first months of 1928, she took also several photographs of the bridge and of Ivens at work. When the film was shown at the Filmliga, Van Ravesteyn used them for a montage that was printed on the cover of the *Filmliga* magazine (1928/11 – cover design by Huszár). In addition, the photographs were also used for the cover of *De Gemeenschap* (1928, vol. 4/7, design: Paul Schuitema). In conjunction with the film, Krull's portfolio *Métal* was published in 1928 too²⁰⁷, which is a story that 'is best told as a collaborative tale of the photographer and filmmaker together' (Sichel, 1999: 74).

Whereas *THE BRIDGE* is Ivens's first important work, which set his reputation as an avant-garde filmmaker, his later work is rather different, no longer based on constructivism, but on social realism. In that sense the film is closer to Krull's work. It seems that gender issues are at stake, which could be further explored²⁰⁸. The directors have been accredited first of all, which at that time were almost exclusively men. Women, instead, often operated behind the scenes. This has been addressed before, but it has hardly been researched until now²⁰⁹.

If, alternatively, we consider the role of Van Ravesteyn, something similar comes to the fore. Van Ravesteyn, born and raised in Rotterdam, was trained as a civil engineer, and also worked as such. Because of his wife, Dora Hintzen, who was highly interested in modern art, and especially *De Stijl*, he decided to change functions at the NS and to work as an architect²¹⁰. Her connections also played a role here²¹¹. As such he got into contact with J.J.P. Oud, who introduced him to the avant-garde movement²¹². This also resulted in Van Ravesteyn's involvement with the Filmliga.

²⁰⁵ Sichel, 1999, Ch. 4.

²⁰⁶ De Boode & Van Oudheusden, 1985: 64.

²⁰⁷ For further details, see: Sichel, 1999: 77.

²⁰⁸ If one just realises that various film theorists have called editing the main feature of cinema, the cutter might be accredited accordingly. It is striking that Helene van Dongen and Lien d'Oliveyra were among the first in the Netherlands to edit sound-film. The former used to work with Ivens (e.g. *NIEUWE GRONDEN*, 1933), the latter with Rutten (e.g. *DEAD WATER*, 1934).

²⁰⁹ Cf. Hogenkamp, in: Westhoff, 1995: II (introduction). In this study on the biographies of thirty (male) filmmakers in the Netherlands (1920s-1930s), Hogenkamp has argued that more research should be done concerning the role of women in the Dutch film industry.

²¹⁰ Timmer, 2002. Besides the fact that Van Ravesteyn himself has pointed to the role of his wife in his career, it is also striking that they were married from 1915 to 1931, which runs parallel to the period that Van Ravesteyn came to the fore as an advocate of modernism, while after their divorce he turned towards a more traditional approach.

²¹¹ She was the daughter of George Herman Hintzen, who was a well-known economist and politician, with many connections. He had first been a member of the Dutch parliament before he became alderman of Rotterdam. Later he became partner at the banking firm of R. Mees & Co. (1902-1925). Whereas Van Ravesteyn became known for his work for the railways and, internationally, for his housing project at the *Weissenhofsiedlung* in Stuttgart (1927), G.H. Hintzen was concerned with the Dutch Railways, while he had also been the founder of the Society for Workers Housing (*Maatschappij voor Werkmanswoningen*, 1896). www.parlement.com/9291000/bio/00584 (2008-05-28).

²¹² Pronk, 2001: 190.

Although THE BRIDGE might still be understood in terms of ‘potential’ and *espace quelconque*, as proposed by Deleuze, it is first of all a crystallisation of interactions within a network. This is also the rationale that caused Allen J. Scott to frame the hypothesis that ‘innovation, all else being equal, is likely to be a geometric function of the size of the relevant reference group’ (2000: 12). Whether this hypothesis can be maintained in the long term remains to be seen, but as a provocation it is at least valuable. It suggests, in this case, that the film is the *sediment* of social exchanges, between people across different disciplines. As a *potential* the film has fuelled such exchanges, which is exemplified by the subsequent commission to make WE ARE BUILDING, and the fact that soon after its release it was shown in Berlin and acquired by Sovkino to be shown to filmmakers in Moscow²¹³. The film became the currency for an international exchange.

Nul uur Nul

Drawing the network, there appear to be more crystallisation points of innovation. A masterpiece never exists in isolation. Other works, however, have not necessarily received broad attention. For various reasons experiments might have been forgotten. They come only to the fore by reconsidering the network and the overall constellation of forces, and by tracing transmissions within it. In this way, I will present the case of NUL UUR NUL (1927-1928, ‘Zero Hour Zero’), which is little known, but which can be considered as one of the earliest and probably most radical examples of Dutch avant-garde cinema, as well as theatre: it was a film and theatre play in one. However, the film has not been preserved, except for fragments, but the available documentation allows for an attempt to reconstruct it on paper. The image that comes to the fore shows Rotterdam and The Hague, and deals most explicitly with *industry, mobility, media* and *leisure*. As such it might be taken as a counterpart of THE BRIDGE, also if we still follow Deleuze.

This successful project was initiated and written by the young Simon Koster (•1900-†1989), who was part of *Wij Nu!*, a collective from The Hague that promoted experimental theatre and film²¹⁴. This group of people would also help to establish the Filmliga as a national organisation. Koster himself, who had started to work in Berlin as a foreign correspondent of the NRC, became a representative of the Filmliga, for which he established and maintained contacts with filmmakers in Berlin, just like Mannus Franken did in Paris. Through his connections in The Hague, Koster approached theatre director Cor van der Lugt Melsert of the established *Vereenigd Rotterdamsch Hofstad-Tooneel*, and found him willing to collaborate on this experiment. Various interior shots were recorded in Berlin, in collaboration with the cinematographer Curt Oertel²¹⁵. Next to that he asked his friend Gerard Rutten, another member of *Wij Nu!*, to design the sets. Officially under the direction of Van der Lugt Melsert, the play was performed at the *Koninklijke Schouwburg* in The Hague, on the 1st of January 1928, and at the *Groote Schouwburg* in Rotterdam, on the 17th of January.

In a flyer for the show, Koster explained the reason of the project. The account starts with an experience Koster once had at midnight. After visiting friends at the countryside he was waiting for his train, which was delayed. The next train was about to depart at 0.00 hr. (*Nul uur Nul*). He remarked that these zeros were the result of the 24-hour-time, but there was something strange about it.²¹⁶

²¹³ In Berlin it was shown by the *Kino Technische Gesellschaft* – ref. *Nieuw Weekblad voor de Cinematografie*, nr. 34, 1928.

²¹⁴ Cf. Rutten, 1976: 44.

²¹⁵ Mentioned on a flyer and a film production photo in the Archive Simon Koster, Theater Instituut Nederland, inventaris 48, nr. 215. The film is part of the collection of the B&G in Hilversum. It is eleven minutes in length, but the script (at the Theater Instituut Nederland) suggests that there must have been more material.

²¹⁶ Flyer written by Simon Koster (Archive Simon Koster, Theater Instituut Nederland, inventaris 48, nr. 215), original quote: ‘De verlatenheid, de nacht, de stilte, en daar héél, heel ver de brandende gloed van de stad, dat alles schijnt met deze eigenaardige drie nullen in eenig onbegrijpelijk verband te staan. Nul uur Nul...., is dat niet de stilte, de

The desolation, the night, the silence, and there, very far away, the burning glow of the city, that all seems to have some incomprehensible connection with these peculiar zeros. Zero hour Zero....., is that not the silence, the endless emptiness, a moment in time outside of all actual time? Which date is it? Is it still yesterday, or already tomorrow? A question to pursue a process. Maybe it is neither yesterday, nor tomorrow, but an instance of the absolute presence, between the old and the new day, an unreal point in space, with on the one side the blazing, glowing city, and on the other the nocturnal landscape.....

Based on these reflections, Koster wrote the script for the performance²¹⁷.

In a review for the *Filmliga* (1928/6), Johan Huijts wrote that the show starts with ‘a succinct and occasionally excellent *Rien que les Heures*’²¹⁸. The latter is a reference to Cavalcanti’s film about Paris (1926) that had just been presented at the Filmliga, while it had already been introduced before by Marcel L’Herbier and Mannus Franken at *Wij Nu!*²¹⁹. The film shows an image of the Earth: a globe that turns around very quickly. The world is literally sped up, which is subsequently articulated by a restless interchange of images, through a fast and suggestive montage, and through the technique of superimposition (double exposure), which emphasizes that everything is happening simultaneously. Besides that, various sequences of the film are coloured, by way of tinting. This visual whirlpool includes images of aeroplanes, ships at sea, enshippment in the Rotterdam harbour, and work being done in factories. Several of these images were shot by Andor von Barsy, as part of industrial films such as *ORANJEBOOM*, *HET BIERBROUWBEDRIJF*, including images of machines handling beer barrels, and *MACHINEFABRIEK EN SCHEEPSWERF VAN P. SMIT JR.*, including images of the production of bombs. A striking fact is that these Transfilma productions, which Von Barsy shot in 1927, were not even released by then. Those images are interchanged by recordings of a jazz performance by Johnny Possart at *Café Pschorr*, shots of people dancing, a merry-go-round, and people relaxing on a cruise ship, having lunch, watching horse races, swimming and playing tennis. There are telephone operators and office talks²²⁰. Altogether, this collage of quickly interchanging images exemplifies what Heynen (1999: 12) has called the transitory concept of modernity.

Whereas one of the main characters in *RIEN QUE LES HEURES* is a woman selling newspapers, *NUL UUR NUL* features a newspaper boy played by a woman: the actress Annie van Ees, who played a similar character in the very popular theatre play ‘Boefje’, since 1923, which was also directed by Van der Lugt Melsert²²¹. The vendor enters the theatre from behind the audience, comments upon all kinds of local affairs, moves to the stage and addresses the people on screen. The film shows a train arriving at a station, which is The Hague HS. These images were actually made by Otto van Neijenhoff for his never completed film about the Dutch railways²²². People get off the train, on stage, and walk away. The newspaper vendor starts speaking, with a broad local tongue, to people waiting for their train. An elderly couple approaches him and ask what time the train to Rotterdam departs. *NUL UUR NUL*, answers the boy, whose name is AKO (after a well-known chain of newspaper shops). He in turn asks them if

eindelooze leegte, een tijdstip buiten alle werkelijke tijd? Welke datum is het? Is het nog gisteren, of is het al morgen? Een vraagstuk om een proces over te voeren. Misschien is het noch het gisteren, noch het morgen, maar een oogenblik van het absolute heden, tusschen de oude en de nieuwe dag; een onwerkelijk punt in de ruimte, waarin aan de ééne kant de laaiendlichte stad, aan de andere kant het nachtelijke landschap ligt.....’.

²¹⁷ Simon Koster (1927), script *NUL UUR NUL*, Theater Instituut Nederland, code 45E 21.

²¹⁸ Original quote: ‘een beknopt en hier en daar voortreffelijk *Rien que les Heures*’.

²¹⁹ Fragments of Cavalcanti’s work had been shown at *Wij Nu!*, as part of presentations on French cinema by both Marcel L’Herbier and Mannus Franken – Brederoo: 1986: 186.

²²⁰ It is not exactly clear which of these images were already shown here, and which were part of later scenes.

²²¹ The play was based on the book by M.J. Brusse (publ. 1903); it was elaborated as such by Jaap van der Poll (1923), and performed by the *Vereenigd Rotterdamsch Hofstad-Tooneel*. The story was also made into a film (1939, Detlef Sierck), in which Annie van Ees also played the main character – see: Lammers, 2008.

²²² Information from the Instituut voor Beeld & Geluid, see the record *NUL UUR NUL* at B&G.

they are going to dance, because ‘all people from The Hague go dancing in Rotterdam’. They say they do not dance anymore. ‘Oh, are you then going to the aviation-school?’ But they don’t. They reply that they take it easy. The boy thinks a while and says: ‘Ohhh, then I know you. You are the committee for the Hofplein Issue [a major urban planning question since 1922]’. But the man does not understand him. He does not know Rotterdam at all, so the boy starts to explain the city. In a humorous way he tells them about the tramway company, roads being renovated and bridges that become ever bigger, so that the old man concludes that Rotterdam must be ‘the city of the future’. With this picture the setting has been drawn. All that comes next, being a reflection upon modernity, is at the same time a reflection upon Rotterdam.

While the elderly couple waits for the train of *Nul uur Nul*, the boy waits too, and falls asleep. On the screen there is a projection of film images showing newspapers, sold by the boy that we see as well, which report what is going on in the world. In front of the screen appears an old, anachronistic man. He starts to give an optimistic lecture, refuting the theory that the civilisation of Europe has come to an end. While reflecting upon issues of social development and technology, he argues that we are entering a new era. His observations are juxtaposed to all kinds of harsh film images projected behind him. Social catastrophes and images of the League of Nations are interchanged. Regarding these contrasts, Huijts remarked that ‘it is difficult not to write a satire’, but for ‘satire the prose was too weak.’ It was neither satire, nor prose, but an oscillation between such categories, of things that happen simultaneously, but Huijts found the interchanges too repetitive. Instead, he suggested that ‘our pioneers’ could try to establish the unity of theatre and film by using ‘the slow-motion and absolute film: rhythms, no representations’.

The old man disappears from stage and the motion pictures go on, which are subsequently presented under different headings, starting with traffic. There are images of traffic at the Willemsbrug, and a chaos of cars. The newspaper vendor sings about it, and at the end of the song a car approaches from a distance. It seems as if he rides over the boy, who falls on the floor. Under the next heading, ‘film news’, the boy pays a visit to Hollywood, which is shown on the screen. On stage the boy enters a palace, where he is the guest of Pola Negri and other famous stars. A film set is being built, and shootings begin. Different headings follow: ‘Family Announcements’, ‘City News’, ‘Radio’, ‘Commemoration’, ‘Feuilleton’, and ‘Latest News’.

All of the headings are about modern life and a world in turmoil, while confusion is *communicated* when people from the audience start to protest against the show. There are objections against ‘pornographic images’ of a lady scarcely dressed in a negligee (which seems another reference to Cavalcanti). Some people shout that the film has to be stopped. It is part of the script, and actors are among the audience. It allows the director to appear on stage and to give his motivation.

We live in a time of progress, of innovation in every area. On this evening we have broken with several traditions. And I believe that it is reasonable. Most of you made a telephone call for the first time about twenty, twenty-five years ago. That was a colossal invention. But you have forgotten the impression which that first telephone call had upon you. Only a few years ago you heard radio for the first time. What we do here tonight, is applying new means in the theatre. In a few years you will hardly remember that it had ever been different. This you should realise, when I ask you: shall we continue the film in this performance, yes or no?²²³

²²³ Simon Koster, script *NUL UUR NUL* (1927), p51, Theater Instituut Nederland, code 45E 21, original quote: ‘We leven in een tijd van vooruitgang, van vernieuwing op elk gebied. Op dezen avond hebben we gebroken met verschillende tradities. En ik geloof, dat dat te billijken is. De meesten van u hebben twintig, vijfentwintig jaar geleden voor het eerst getelefoneerd. Dat was een kolossale uitvinding. Maar de indruk, die dat eerste telefoongesprek op U maakte, bent U vergeten. Nog maar een paar jaar geleden hoorde U voor de eerste keer radio. Wat wij hier vanavond doen, is de toepassing van nieuwe hulpmiddelen op het toneel. Over enkele jaren zult u zich misschien nauwelijks herinneren dat het ooit anders is geweest. Dit moet u bedenken, als ik u nu vraag: zullen we de film in deze opvoering laten blijven, ja of nee?’

Of course, the performance is continued. In retrospect this is a key moment of the performance. This forecast became a matter of fact: the performance would be forgotten, while the use of media on stage (and beyond, in public space) became a common phenomenon. Most important here, regarding the performance's central issue of 'time', is the reflection upon past and future, or the ability to remember that it had been different, and to imagine that it can be different as well.

Under the next heading, 'Latest News', the director of the play, Van der Lugt Melsert, is to be seen in the film, playing himself, reading the newspapers with headlines about this 'scandalous film'. Between all the activities that the film shows, a clock is to be seen, once and again. It moves inevitably towards midnight (= NUL UUR NUL), with the director getting crazy. He finally puts a gun to his head, while the clock beats twelve. In the next shot are spectacular fireworks over the city: it is zero hour zero – one should notice here that the first performance took place on New Year's Day, 1928.

AKO wakes up. The train has arrived. All the people get on the train: the players on stage sit down on steps in front of the film screen. On the screen a train starts moving, which are constructivist images by Otto van Neijenhoff. The passengers begin to talk to each other²²⁴. The conversation is about the train that goes to Rotterdam. Rotterdam, however, is not an actual city anymore. It has become the future, or rather an abstract perception of time.

AKO: Watch! We move! If you didn't know any better, you would say that we move!

Chic Type: Where are we actually going?

Old man: It's not really a usual train.

Old woman: It isn't the ghost-train, is it?

AKO: No. It's the train of ZERO HOUR ZERO.

Old man: Do we have to stay in it for long?

AKO: Very long!!! Nobody knows how long. It can even be that you have to get off at full speed.

Chic Type: Mondieu! What an unpleasant train!

Editor: On which section are we actually riding?

AKO: Between two v-e-r-y big stations! Between 'Yesterday' and 'Tomorrow'.

Old man: Stop it!

²²⁴ Simon Koster, script NUL UUR NUL (1927), p54, Theater Instituut Nederland, code 45E 21. The following quote is from pages that are not numbered, but put in between the pages with numbers. It seems that this is a later version that replaced the previous one. The translation is without the broad tongue. Original quote: 'Ako: Kijk! We rije! As je nie beter wis, zou je zeggen dat we rije! // Chi. typ: Waar gan we eigenlijk heen? // Oude man: Het is ook geen gewone trein. // Oude vrouw: Het is toch niet de spooktrein? // Ako: Nee. Het is de trein van NUL UUR NUL. // Oude man: Motte we daar lang in blijven zitten? // Ako: Héél lang!!! Niemand weet, hoe lang. Het kan wel zijn, dat je in volle vaart mot uitstappe! // Ch.: Mondieu! Wat een onaangename trein! // redact.: Op welk traject rijden we eigenlijk? // Ako: Tusschen twee hééle groote stations! Tusschen "Gisteren" en "Morgen". // Oude man: Hou op! // Oude vrouw: Ik wil terug! // Ako: Dat kan niet. De weg naar "gisteren" is versperd! // El. dame: Is er geen noodrem? // Ch. Typ: Ik wil niet naar "Morgen". Al m'n bagage is in "gisteren" blijven staan. // Ako: Hier verkoope ze geen retourtjes! // Oude vr.: Stoppe!!!! // Oude man: Ik heb geen geld, om zoo ver te reizen! // El. dame: Hij gaat hoe langer hoe harder! // Redact. Hij vliegt als een bezetene. Dat is waanzin!!! // Oude vr. Ik word duizelig! // Ch. Typ: Wat een vaart!!! Wat een vaart!!! // Ako: We vliegen! Op weg naar de toekomst!!!!'

Old woman: I want to go back!

AKO: That's not possible. The road to 'Yesterday' is blocked.

Elegant lady: Isn't there an emergency break?

Chic Type: I don't want to go to 'Tomorrow'. All my luggage remained in 'Yesterday'.

AKO: They don't sell return tickets here.

Old woman: Stop!

Old man: I have no money to travel that far!

Elegant lady: It goes faster all the way!

Editor: It flies like a possessed one. That's madness!

Old woman: I get dizzy!

Chic Type: What a speed!!! What a speed!!!

AKO: We fly! On the way to the future!!!!

The conversation is accompanied by a loop of a moving train that is projected behind the actors. The train seems to move ahead, but its movement is actually indeterminate, due to the loop, while the actors on stage stay at the same place. Moreover, the image makes use of a split screen. The cameraman must have been hanging out of a window, and then filmed the train. The image is mirrored to the other side of the film frame. The result is that we see two sides of the train, without the train itself. There is nothing else than windows and a moving landscape. According to Huijts, this last image of the show was 'really a hollow built mysteriousness, an ectoplastic reality of etherealness'²²⁵. It might be another instance of Deleuze's 'any-space-whatever', as an affection-image that opens up a new realm, but it does more than that.

NUL UUR NUL is a reflection upon the nature of time and addresses the problem of dividing it. Deleuze has addressed the same problem, arguing that time is a continuous flow, a movement, opposite to space that can be divided infinitely. Modern science, he says, has rendered time into 'equidistant instants'; each moment is equal to another, hence an 'any-instant-whatever'. Hence, we have immobile sections to which an abstract understanding of time is added. He says that the philosopher Henri Bergson, in 1907, mistakenly called it the 'cinematographic illusion'²²⁶. Although cinema is based on immobile sections, being still images that become movement, Deleuze says that this is not a matter of perceiving immobile sections to which abstract time is added by the mind. Rather, the movement is perceived immediately²²⁷. The result is what Deleuze calls the 'movement-image'. The final scene of NUL UUR NUL expresses exactly such a thought: the movement in between two instants, but at the same time it also shows the conceptual imprisonment of it. Film takes a peculiar position here, since it is combined with theatre, and for the fact that it is a loop in the end.

The loop suggests that one moves ahead, but it is a vicious circle in which the past becomes present, once and again. The loop exemplifies a fluctuation between past and future.

²²⁵ Original quote: '...werkelijk een holgebouwde geheimzinnigheid, een ectoplastische realiteit van onwerkelijkheid....'

²²⁶ Deleuze, 1992 [1983]: 1.

²²⁷ Ibid, 2.

Whereas it may exemplify the idea of the ‘movement-image’, it may also provide a counterargument to Deleuze’s ‘time-image’. Deleuze has explained that time is perceived by recalling a virtual image, from the past, through an actual image, from the present (he has called this together the ‘crystal-image’); the image that emerges from it is the ‘time-image’. It is a fluctuation between virtual and physical, and it is a creation of memory. In the case of a loop, however, there is a temporal shortcut. What does it mean, in this case, that the loop itself addresses the problem of time, by way of a train as a symbol of progress, which stands for the condition of the modern world in general?

At this point one can consider Niklas Luhmann’s thought about the way the modern world, as a social system, creates and maintains itself. He observed a major problem. At the scale of the whole world there is not ‘outside’, and the output of the system serves as input again. The result is a *sur place*, like the loop.

[A] re-entry leads to an unresolvable indeterminacy. The system cannot match its internal observations with its reality, nor can external observers compute the system. Such systems need a memory function (i.e. culture) that presents the present as an outcome of the past. But memory means forgetting and highly selective remembering, it means constructing identities for re-impregnating recurring events. In addition, such systems need an oscillator function to be able to cross the boundaries of all distinctions they use, such as, being/not-being, inside/outside, good/bad, male/female, true/false etc. (Luhmann, 1997)

To be able to remember, identities need to be made, which means images and forms, hence cultural expressions like cinema and architecture (a.o.). To create such forms the (collective) mind needs the oscillator function. It crosses boundaries and distinctions, like those mentioned by Luhmann, which can all be illustrated by examples from NUL UUR NUL. Such a boundary crossing is characteristic for the avant-garde in general, and the notion of ‘oscillation’ could therefore be used to address its role within cultural and society. At the same time the avant-garde provides a memory function, for the fact that a film (or a building) becomes a reference for things that have been done. In the case of NUL UUR NUL, the memory function is even explicitly addressed when the director appears on stage – memory and oscillation are two sides of the same coin.

In a literal way, the memory function is instantiated by the film making use of footage from other films. Recycled film images recall past issues and events, and as such the memory function is made explicit. In this case, however, there is a complication, since the original films by Von Barys and Van Neijenhoff had not been released yet. It causes a gradual shift from ‘remediation’ to ‘premediation’²²⁸. Alternatively, the film material was used within a stage performance. Whereas early cinema used to remediate the theatre, this is an instance of the theatre remediating cinema. Whereas mediation versus remediation is itself an instance of oscillation, the move between two different cultural forms – theatre and cinema – is yet another instance of oscillation.

The idea of oscillation is, furthermore, exemplified by moving back and forth between different media categories and genres, such as fiction and documentary, avant-garde and industrial film. This too is part of the ‘subject’ of NUL UUR NUL, since it reflects upon media practices, as well as urban development, as different sides of modernity. In this way it is both a *reflection upon* its conditions and a *crystallisation of* these conditions. It corresponds to John Urry’s theory (2003) of ‘reflexive modernization’. Elaborating on Urry’s emphasis on ‘relationality’, one can recognise a link here between the particular and the general: between metaphor, such as the looped train, as a vehicle of reflection, and the totality of the modern world.

²²⁸ Whereas the term ‘remediation’ was first used by Bolter and Grusin (2000), the latter has also spoken of ‘premediation’ – ref.: Richard Grusin: ‘Premediation: Media Logics in Times of War’, presentation at De Balie, Amsterdam, 2003-11-12. www.debalie.nl/artikel.jsp?articleid=4473&podiumid=media (visited, 2007-09-25).

This totality, however, can be precisely identified through the professional network of which Koster was part, which links Paris (Cavalcanti, through Franken, L'Herbier) to The Hague and Rotterdam, to Berlin (Oertel a.o.) and London (some additional shots), and elsewhere. This modern world is therefore not just a general reference (like the fictional visit to Hollywood), but largely a set of actual connections.

Since the central issue of NUL UUR NUL is time, a similar relationship between the particular and the general might be recognised concerning the particular moment of zero hour zero vis-à-vis the general nature of past and future. According to Luhmann, the system creates time by making a distinction between past and future, through memory and oscillation as functions of culture. This implies that the temporal horizon of the modern world, as addressed by Koster, exists because of cultural manifestations, including that of Koster. Each manifestation has its own temporal horizon, of past and future, which becomes abstract when it concerns explicitly a conception of time. From today's perspective, Koster's conception of time lies in the past, but it still offers possibilities for further thinking, which makes it eventually part of today's future. Next to that, NUL UUR NUL contains direct and indirect references to the future. An example is the casual remark of AKO, when referring to the procrastination in respect of the reorganisation of the 'Hofplein'. The discussion about the reorganisation of this square would continue for another fifteen years or so. Eventually it resulted in a major conflict between architect J.J.P. Oud and city planner Witteveen, during WWII, which affected both their careers, and the planning of post-war Rotterdam²²⁹.

Whereas I have already discussed the forecast that applied to the performance itself, being forgotten afterwards, we might instead consider its potential that revealed itself some years later. Koster would write the script for the successful feature film DEAD WATER (1934), which was directed by Gerard Rutten, who had been the set designer of NUL UUR NUL. Afterwards Koster himself directed LENTELIED (1936), while Andor von Barys collaborated on all of these films as a cameraman (see: Chapter 4). It shows a network that cuts across time, which already performs the functions of memory and oscillation. Returning where I started this section, I will elaborate on the role of networks in the next section.

§ 2. cross-disciplinary networks

Films like THE BRIDGE and NUL UUR NUL have been crystallisation points of social-cultural exchange within avant-garde networks. These networks were not only of an artistic nature. They were embedded within the concrete environments that the films reflect: 'Rotterdam itself as affect'. I will make an attempt to identify certain forces behind the scenes of both film and architecture, as a cross-disciplinary history, and how they have framed the city. Much of such social-cultural exchange happened in spheres where formal and informal activities took place simultaneously, which is especially at issue regarding the complexity social order of cities, according to Ulf Hannerz (1980: 172).

In such a differentiated structure, the individual has many kinds of situational involvements, that is to say, roles, and the opportunities for making varied combinations of roles in one's repertoire may be considerable. But to each role correspond one or more relationships to other people, and thus networks are assembled with a variability which roughly matches that of role constellations.

Role constellations are established through formal and informal contracts (cf. Hannerz, 1996: 69; De Certeau, 1997: 107-108; Conti, 2005: 30). Besides formal networks, based on administrative or professional relationships, De Certeau has addressed informal networks based on ethnicity, regional origin, kinship, as well as passion or convictions.

²²⁹ Wagenaar, 1992: 190-203.

Such ‘parameters’ can be recognised in Rotterdam too. In the case of ethnicity, one could consider the network of Jewish cinema entrepreneurs, the cross-disciplinary network of Hungarians (a.o. Von Barys, Von Ébneht, Meller), and the network of German film professionals²³⁰. The factor of the place of origin is exemplified by a number of prominent designers and architects in Rotterdam that came all from a particular area, north of Amsterdam – among them J.J.P. Oud, Mart Stam, Willem van Tijen, Jacob Jongert and Piet Zwart²³¹. Finally, according to Wouter Vanstiphout (2005: 268), the role of family ties has been particularly important within the world of architecture and construction in Rotterdam in that period of time²³². Love affairs have already been exemplified by the cases of Ivens and Krull, and Van Ravesteyn and Hintzen.

In addition, De Certeau has suggested a new model of a place based ‘ethnography of communication’. He has argued to ‘characterize the social group in its place through its way of dealing with its environment, through its fundamental strategies of communication, and through the systems that decode choices offered in matters of communication’ (De Certeau, 1997: 109). The manipulation of codes of communication implies inventions and changes in the social and spatial environment. In my case the ‘codes’ largely concern films and buildings, which I understand as intermediary objects providing temporary local attractors to direct the exchanges within the networks and the environment. This works on both a psychological and a cultural level²³³.

From the perspective of cognitive anthropology, this can be framed in terms of cultural connectionism (cf. Strauss & Quinn, 1997). This theory says that the mind organises thoughts through nodes of different weight. Important is the connection between the nodes, and the degree of activation. When a node is activated, it activates the adjacent nodes, and so on. The word ‘city’, for example, activates the word ‘citizen’, the word ‘Rotterdam’ activates ‘port’. Within a group of architects the name ‘Van Nelle’ brings to mind the design of its modern factory, rather than coffee, tea or tobacco. When Von Barys labelled his film HOOGSTRAAT (1929) as an ‘absolute film’, he gave it a code that corresponded to the collective cognitive network of the people involved with the Filmliga.

The Filmliga Rotterdam exemplifies the intertwining of formal and informal networks, and the actualisation of cross-disciplinary connections, something that Frank van Vree (2001) has outlined regarding the press. One of the agencies that contributed to the establishment of the Filmliga was the art society *Rotterdamsche Kring*. Initiated in 1913 by the banker Rudolf Mees and his wife Emilie Havelaar-Mees, it organised various kinds of events, including presentations

²³⁰ For the network of Jewish cinema entrepreneurs in Rotterdam, see: André van der Velden, 2004; for Hungarian artists working in the Netherlands in the 1920s, see: Ex, 2002: 18, as well as Ch. 4 §1.; for Germans, see: Dittrich, 1986.

²³¹ Designer Piet Zwart (•1885-†1977) was born in Zaandijk, which is not far from Purmerend where both the architects Oud (•1890-†1963) and Stam (•1899-†1986) were born, while their colleague Van Tijen (•1894-†1974) was born in Wormerveer that is also close to Purmerend. Graphic designer Jongert (•1883-†1943) was born in Wormer, and lived in Purmerend for several years. Oud and Jongert were teachers at the *Stadstekenschool* in Purmerend in 1909 (Taverne e.a., 2001: 82). Since 1915, Jongert made graphic designs for the Oud (family) trading company in alcoholic drinks and tobacco. In 1918, when Oud started to work for the municipality of Rotterdam (through Berlage), Jongert started to teach at the ‘Rotterdam Academy of Visual Arts’, and through him Piet Zwart one year later (see: Brentjens, 2008: 64). In 1919 Jongert got his first commission from the Van Nelle factory, whose trade included tobacco, which draws a link to the Oud trading company. In 1919 too, Jongert and Oud advised Mart Stam to come to Rotterdam to work for the studio of Granpré Molière, Verhagen & Kok, which he did (Halbertsma & Van Ulzen, 2001: 209).

²³² The fact that J.J.P. Oud’s brother P.J. Oud became the mayor of Rotterdam (1938), even though this followed other connections, seems more than a ‘coincidence’.

²³³ This can be seen in accordance with Urry’s ‘relationality’, and the ‘isomorphy of structure’ that has been outlined by Gell (1998: 221), see also: Riles (2000: 184), and the concept of stigmery, as explained by Bonabeau, Dorigo, Theraulaz, 1999: 16; cf. 7.§1.

on architecture and cinema²³⁴. The banker Jacob Mees P.Rzn, a co-founder of the *Rotterdamsche Kring*, became treasurer of the Filmliga Rotterdam, with his bank supporting it financially too. The secretary of the Rotterdamsche Kring, the librarian Johannes van der Pot, who was the director of the *Rotterdamsch Leeskabinet* (library), became vice-chairman²³⁵. Van Nelle director Kees van der Leeuw, another co-founder of the *Rotterdamsche Kring*, supported it too²³⁶. This happened when the new Van Nelle factory was built (1925-1930); its architects, Jan Brinkman and Leen van der Vlugt, became involved with the Filmliga as well, and along with them various others related to Opbouw, among them Willem Gispén, Leendert Bolle, J.J.P. Oud, Pali Meller, and Ida Lieftrinck.

Journalists frequented the *Rotterdamsche Kring* too, especially those of the NRC, which was located close to it²³⁷. The NRC's foreign news editor Johan Huijts became the secretary of the Filmliga Rotterdam, and soon its chairman. Foreign correspondent Simon Koster became the representative of the Filmliga in Germany, just like Mannus Franken in France, after he had been one of the first to write about film in the NRC. Many others can be mentioned here too, among them Jo Otten and Menno ter Braak, and also people that were not actively involved with the Filmliga, but still interested, among them literature editor Victor van Vriesland, architecture editor Han van Loghem and the columnist Charles Cocheret. The latter also wrote the article 'Stadsfilm' (NRC, 1929-06-29), which reads like a script for a city symphony, about the experience of Rotterdam from the perspective of a train passenger²³⁸. As a result of this interest in film, the NRC started a special film section, since 1929, and its editor became Coen Graadt van Roggen (1904-1933²³⁹)²⁴⁰. As I have already explained, his reviews caused the *Nederlandsche Bioscoopbond* to boycott the NRC, which Tuschinski finally resolved by establishing the avant-garde theatre Studio 32.

Graadt van Roggen also edited a series of ten books on film, *Monografieën over Filmkunst* (1931-1933). He himself wrote the first issue, and several of his NRC colleagues contributed to this series, which was published by W.L. & J. Brusse. The books attracted special attention for their covers, designed by Piet Zwart. At the same time, after the Filmliga had moved its main office from Amsterdam to Rotterdam, in 1931, the *Filmliga* magazine was published by Nijgh & Van Ditmar, which was related to the NRC²⁴¹. The covers of the *Filmliga* were, in turn, designed by Paul Schuitema. The latter had also started to make films himself, which finally resulted in the city-symphony MAASBRUGGEN (1937), about the bridges across the Nieuwe Maas, and the ongoing traffic that made use of them²⁴². Different from Ivens's film, people were prominently present in this film.

The cinephilia of the NRC journalists is articulated by an ironical fiction short about the stress at the office: REDACTEUREN ZIEN U AAN ("Editors watch you", 1931, anonymous). They all collaborated on this silent film, in which Victor van Vriesland played the main role. He goes crazy from his work: the pressure is too high, the money not enough, and the atmosphere at the

²³⁴ Van der Pot, 1962: 139; Schoots, 1999: 182; Huijts, 1975: 266; Koch, 2005: 59n5. The RK offered its members reduction to the Filmliga, and vice versa.

²³⁵ Smit, 2005: 18-19.

²³⁶ Van der Pot, 1962: 139.

²³⁷ Van Vree, 2001: 128. In the winter of 1930-1931, there were also lectures at the *Rotterdamsche Kring* by Menno ter Braak and Coen graadt van Roggen, see: Van der Pot, 1962: 150.

²³⁸ Cf. Van der Velden, 2001: 103.

²³⁹ In 1932, Graadt van Roggen left for the Dutch East Indies; he got ill and died in 1933, ref. Peter Bosma.

²⁴⁰ In *Filmliga* 1929/6 p76 it was mentioned that the NRC was the first Dutch newspaper with its own film section. A rectification in the next issue 1929/7 p92 mentioned that the newspaper *Het Vaderland* had actually preceded it, with a film section edited by Luc Willink, see for example the review on Von Bary's THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS: 'Filmkritiek, Rotterdam als Film-Epos,' *Het Vaderland*, 1928-08-16.

²⁴¹ Boele, 2003: 168.

²⁴² Schuitema started this production in 1932, together with the designer Gerrit Kiljan (who had already made SCHEVENINGEN, 1930) – see: De Boode & Van Oudheusden, 1985: 81.

office is too bad. He finally jumps out of a window, to commit suicide, but he lands on the canvas roof of a car. This enigmatic film is an outstanding example of avant-garde cinema, with unusual perspectives and framing, and a rapid montage. The reason for its production is unclear. Considering the title, one might wonder who is addressed by “you” (*U*) – at least not the general public. Also the anonymity of the author raises questions. Considering its style and professionalism, it must have been a filmmaker of the Filmliga – probably Andor von Barsy. The film exemplifies the position of the NRC within the avant-garde cinema in Rotterdam, as part of a cross-disciplinary history.

In 1935, when the Filmliga was already dissolved, the NRC opened its own cinema Cineac, like the *Algemeen Handelblad* had done in Amsterdam²⁴³. Here one could see on-going news shows, documentaries and animation films. Cineac was located at the Coolsingel, where the NRC had bought the former Cinema Royal from, indeed, Abraham Tuschinski (who lived above it)²⁴⁴. The investment of the NRC was not just a matter of cinephilia: cinema had changed the media landscape, which challenged the press. For that reason the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, the largest in the city, had already covered the façade of its office building at Hofplein with big light screens and running texts to communicate the news in a cinematic way, which André van der Velden has called ‘a projector in the urban space’²⁴⁵. Once sound film had entered the stage, cinema became truly a competitor, and Cineac was an answer to that.

The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* also published frequently articles on film, and several of its journalists were affected by cinema²⁴⁶. Alongside it was the Catholic *De Maasbode*. In the case of the latter, it was especially the work of its editor Father Hyacinth Hermans, as he had been involved with film censorship, first in Rotterdam, and later nationally²⁴⁷. Someone else involved with this newspaper was the avant-garde filmmaker Jan Hin, after him and his firm Hinfilm moved to Rotterdam in 1933. In 1936 he completed the MAASBODEFILM, about the functioning of the newspaper, to be shown in Rome at an exhibition about the Catholic press²⁴⁸.

Important too were the local weekly magazines *Weekblad gewijd aan de belangen van Rotterdam* and its film critic Jan van Kasteel, and *Groot Rotterdam*²⁴⁹. The latter commissioned a feature length documentary, GROOT ROTTERDAM (1930, Co van der Wal), which deals with journalists reporting on things happening in the city. The commission itself reveals that the magazine understood the impact of film on journalism, but also the way that media in general were part of urban life. The film shows both the operations of the magazine as well as the city. Moreover, it makes clear that events become important when media are present.

Cross-disciplinary connections were reinforced by a number of other organisations, among them the business association Club Rotterdam (est. 1928), which played a major role behind the scenes through all kinds of interrelations, and openly through the Volksuniversiteit²⁵⁰. This “people’s university” was open to everybody, to follow all kinds of courses and lectures on various subjects. It was established in 1917, by the banker Willem Mees, and once again with the support of Van der Leeuw, among others. Under the leadership of its secretary Ida van Dugteren, the Volksuniversiteit became the biggest of its kind in the Netherlands, with more than 12,000 members²⁵¹, among them many women and people from the working-class. As such, it had an

²⁴³In Amsterdam the Cineac (1933-1934) was built by the architects Duiker and Elling. Duiker subsequently designed the rebuilt theatre in Rotterdam (1934-1935). For information on the latter: archive NAI/DUIK 227.

²⁴⁴Berg, 1996: page 34 and 162.

²⁴⁵Since 1930. Van der Velden, 2001: 115.

²⁴⁶among them Herman Besselaar, Alfred Kossmann, Wim Wagener and Ben Stroman, cf. Van Vree, 2001: 146.

²⁴⁷Nieuwenhuis, 1963: 166.

²⁴⁸Hogenkamp, 2004: 36/79.

²⁴⁹For Jan van Kasteel, see: Smit, 2005: 74-80. For the general role of *Groot Rotterdam*, see: Halbertsma & Van Ulzen, 2001: 23.

²⁵⁰Halbertsma & Van Ulzen, 2001: 76 and 164.

²⁵¹Van Ulzen, 2001: 167: 12.263 members in 1935-36.

important emancipatory function in Rotterdam. Moreover, transcending political divisions, it became an important node within the city's cultural ecology.

An active member of the Volksuniversiteit became designer Jacob Jongert, head of Van Nelle's publicity department. Architect J.J.P. Oud was also involved; in 1924 he drew sketches for a new accommodation, and one year later he presented a preliminary design²⁵². Because of problems to finance a new building, Van der Leeuw proposed to donate 10,000 guilders, but only if Brinkman & Van der Vlugt would be the architects. This was objected by city planner Witteveen²⁵³. For several years the process went on. The Volksuniversiteit kept in contact with Brinkman & Van der Vlugt, but no plan would be carried out. The Volksuniversiteit offered nevertheless a highly successful programme that included a range of lectures and courses, which often made use of industrial and informational films²⁵⁴. This concerned all kinds of topics, such as the industry, aviation, geography, architecture and planning, as well as cinema²⁵⁵.

Leo Jordaan, who was a member of the Filmliga and a film critic writing for *De Groene Amsterdammer* presented the cinema courses since 1929, which he continued for many years, even during WWII. Part of these courses were the screenings of art films from Germany, France, Russia and elsewhere, many of them being distributed by De Uitkijk²⁵⁶. Among these screenings was also a programme dedicated to Dutch Cinema (1929-11-12), including Ivens's THE BRIDGE and RAIN. The collaboration between the VU and the Filmliga resulted, in 1932, in an agreement that participants of Jordaan's film course got a reduction on the membership fee of the Filmliga. The agreement was written by Cornelis van Traa, who had become the secretary of the Filmliga Rotterdam²⁵⁷. Since he worked as a planner at the municipal department of urban development, this instantiates once again the cross-disciplinary networks that existed at that time.

§ 3. for modernity

Whereas the Filmliga Amsterdam considered cinema as a form of art in its own right, the Filmliga Rotterdam emphasised its potential within society at large (cf. Schoots, 1999: 187). This was articulated in a discussion between Menno ter Braak and Johan Huijts in *Filmliga*. Ter Braak started the discussion through his article 'Is de Film een Gemeenschapskunst?' ('Is Film a

²⁵² Ott, 1967: 61, 93; Taverne e.a., 2001: 336; cf. Halbertsma & Van Ulzen, 2001: 285.

²⁵³ Ott, 1967: 94.

²⁵⁴ For documentation of films shown at the VU, see: GAR, archive 'Volksuniversiteit', toegangsnr. 75, inv. nr. 275.

²⁵⁵ The courses, and the films, usually presented these subjects in general terms, but several of them dealt more specifically with Rotterdam, e.g. the course 'Rotterdamsche bedrijvigheid' (October-November, 1936). In the case of architecture and planning, presentations were given by people like Van der Vlugt, Stam, Berlage, Bos, and Van Tijen; in the case of cinema we might mention, besides Jordaan, the names of people like Ivens, Ter Braak, and Franken (ref. programme magazines of the VU, coll.: GAR, archive 'Volksuniversiteit', toegangsnr. 75, inv. nr. 314-318).

²⁵⁶ The VU continued to show such film long after the Filmliga was dissolved (1933), and as such it played an important role in the film culture of Rotterdam. The VU organised screenings at its own building and at cinema Corso, Samaritaan, Ons Huis, Nederlandsche Handels-Hoogeschool, Maasoord (Poortugaal) e.a., usually as part of its course, but occasionally also for groups of unemployed or disabled people. See: GAR, archive 'Volksuniversiteit', toegangsnr. 75, inv. nr. 275 e.a. This unique archive includes the intensive correspondence between Van Dugteren and various film distributors (a.o.), about all kinds of films that were shown by the Volksuniversiteit. Striking is the exchange of (many) letters between Van Dugteren and Ed Pelster of the *Centraal Bureau voor Ligafilms* (i.e. De Uitkijk). Consider for example the following fragment of a letter by Van Dugteren to Pelster (1929-10-12) about the organisation of the programme on Dutch cinema: 'I extremely regret that because of your so usual laxity this case is going haywire again. You do want to write bills for film rent and be introduced to other *Volksuniversiteiten*, but you don't spend any effort whatsoever for your clients.' Original quote: 'Het spyt my buitengewoon dat door de by U zoo gebruikelijke laksheid nu deze zaak weer in het honderd moet lopen. U wilt wel rekeningen voor filmhuur schryven en geholpen worden aan introducties by andere Volksuniversiteiten, maar U geeft U niet de minste moeite voor Uw klanten.' Also Jordaan got upset (in a letter to Pelster, early November 1929). Other organisational difficulties followed with the next screening, Ruttmann's BERLIN, DIE SINFONIE EINER GROSTADT (1927). It became an issue of 'fundamental importance', according to VU chairman W.C. Mees, and a special meeting of the board was dedicated to it (letter of Van Dugteren to Pelster, 1929-12-06). The collaboration with Pelster would nevertheless be continued.

²⁵⁷ Letter of Van Traa to Van Dugteren (1932-09-13) and a concept letter by Van Traa to the participants of the film course > coll. GAR, archive 'Volksuniversiteit', toegangsnr. 75, inv. nr. 275.

Community Art?’, in: *Filmliga*, 1927/3). In a rhetoric and elitist manner, Ter Braak argued that film could only be a matter of individual expression. Huijts reacted by writing the article ‘Film as Gemeenschapskunst’ (‘Film as Community Art’, in: *Filmliga*, 1928/6). He warned that the avant-garde should not indulge in ‘sterile pleasure of beauty, lacking the inner coherence with life’; the avant-garde should not be about aesthetics based on individual experience and expression, neither the opposite: ‘community art is not about a generally confessed sentiment or thought, but about the problem; and the form is not the greatest common denominator and at best the smallest common multiple of the capacity of the mass, but the actualisation of its measure and symphony (*samenklank*)’²⁵⁸. Film should be about ‘the problem’, i.e. issues that really matter, which concern society, and the form of a film should be a logical expression of it. Huijts ended his article by saying that ‘it was the faith in film as community art, that I helped to set up the [Filmliga] branch in Rotterdam. Because for me the community goes above film’²⁵⁹. One should notice here that also Huijts had a preference for what was called the ‘absolute film’, which he had also suggested to the ‘pioneers’ that made NUL UUR NUL, instead of representational imagery. However, as his interest in this experiment has shown too, film had to address issues of the community, and he regarded film form as a subordinate to that. It implied that rather different kinds of film could be promoted too, as long as they would follow a progressive social agenda. It might be telling that Ter Braak, after he had moved from Amsterdam to Rotterdam, where he stayed for four years, eventually remarked that this city had been ‘a benevolent anti-aesthetic medicine’ to him²⁶⁰.

Since there were many architects among the members of the Filmliga, one can consider how such ideas corresponded to their views. A few experimental films showed their work, but many important projects, among them the housing estates by Oud, were hardly ever shown through film²⁶¹. This is comparable to an observation made by Thomas Elsaesser in the case of projects like the ‘Weissenhofsiedlung’ in Stuttgart (1927) and ‘Siemensstadt’ in Berlin (1930)²⁶². Thinking in terms of functionalism, there seemed to be little reason just to record such projects on film. For one part, photography was used for reasons of documentation and promotion. Film was used differently.

In the case of British municipal films, Elizabeth Lebas has remarked that these ‘[f]ilms could show both procedure and progress in ways that were practical, succinct and even entertaining. In turn, by showing the *actual sites and settings* of procedure and progress to inhabitants who were called upon to visit them and in the case of new housing estates, actually occupy them, they played a vital role in assigning and re-designating new spaces for another way of living’ (Lebas, 2000: 140; italics FP). Just because these films were produced locally, people could recognise their own situation, which turned out to be an effective way to educate and to instruct people, as a precondition for social, hence spatial change. Most important here has been the argument that ‘these were not films *about* modern living, but *for* modern living’ (p141).

A similar kind of argument has been made by Thomas Elsaesser in his article ‘Die Stadt von Morgen; Filme zum Bauen und Wohnen’ (2005). He starts by mentioning the screening of the German film DIE STADT VON MORGEN – EIN FILM VOM STÄDTEBAU (1930, Svend Noldan) by the Filmliga theatre De Uitkijk in Amsterdam, in 1932. He wonders why this avant-garde

²⁵⁸ *Filmliga* magazine 1928/6, p10, original quote: ‘het gaat in gemeenschapskunst niet om het algemeen beleden sentiment of de gedachte, maar om het probleem; en de vorm is niet de grootste gemene deeler en op zijn best het kleinste gemeene veelvoud van het vermogen der massa, maar de verwerkelijking van haar maat en samenklank.’

²⁵⁹ *Filmliga* magazine 1928/6, p11, original quote: ‘En het was in het geloof in de film als gemeenschapskunst, dat ik de Rotterdamsche afdeeling oprichten hielp. Want boven de film gaat voor mij de gemeenschap.’

²⁶⁰ Ter Braak in a reply to Stroman, quoted in: Petra Berrevoets, ‘Braak, Menno ter’, see: Halbertsma & Van Ulzen, 2001: 38.

²⁶¹ An exception is the film ROTTERDAM EN HOE HET BOUWDE by architect Wim ten Bosch, which, however, was not completed before 1940.

²⁶² Elsaesser, 2005b: 382.

cinema theatre showed this 'dry educational film from an unknown director'²⁶³. He then points to the fact that there was a close connection between the avant-garde movements of cinema and architecture, both in the Netherlands and in Germany and argues that architectural films were a way to show the possibilities for a new way of living. *DIE STADT VON MORGEN* was indeed enthusiastically received by progressive architects and planners in the Netherlands²⁶⁴. We might especially mention Alexander Bos. After he had become the director of the department of social housing in Rotterdam, he gave a course at the Volksuniversiteit on the development of Rotterdam in an international perspective. Part of it was the public screening of this film (the copy of *De Uitkijk*), which he introduced and explained by slides for a large audience²⁶⁵. As such, the film indicated the future of Rotterdam as Bos had it in mind (cf. Wagenaar, 1992: 60).

Besides *DIE STADT VON MORGEN*, many other films should be taken into account²⁶⁶. It is a cinema that started with *Das Neue Frankfurt*, under the direction of city planner Ernst May, which has been the focus of Elsaesser's study. Such films were, indeed, not about modern living, but for modern living. We may recognise a parallel to the distinction between transitory and programmatic concepts of modernity, as suggested by architecture historian Hilde Heynen (1999: 12). If it comes to film, it is clearly the programmatic side that needs more attention.

Film scholars have predominantly focussed on a limited notion of the avant-garde, and therefore, Elsaesser argues, too much material has never been studied in its full content, if at all. For one part, this is due to the fact that many of these films were not meant for regular cinema distribution, but for occasions like big (industrial) exhibitions and fairs²⁶⁷. Elsaesser has therefore argued to relate three 'A-factors' to each other: the *Auftraggeber* (commissioner), the *Anlass* (reason) and the *Anwendung* (use) of a film²⁶⁸. In this way it is possible to discover the motivations behind these productions, the agendas they served, and the settings of which they were part. Elaborating on this view, Elsaesser has addressed *Das Neue Frankfurt* as a specific case of 'Media-Publicity' (*Medien-Öffentlichkeit*), which is an instance of what he has called *Medienverbund*. It was a complex of architecture, design, graphic design, press, photography, film, and meetings (e.g. the CIAM congress in 1929), which all served to propagate the ideas of the modern movement, those of social-democracy, progress and industrialisation. Besides analyzing films and buildings as objects, we need to frame them as part of broader programmes and networks. This might be illuminated, first of all, by considering 'construction films'.

construction film

Architecture in itself is a difficult subject to be filmed, since it usually does not move itself. In that respect still photography has been a more suitable medium²⁶⁹. However, one can move the camera along or through a building, in order to show its plasticity and spatial-temporal order, which has indeed been explored, or one can record the movement of vehicles or people in relation to a building. The construction process is yet another way to show the architecture, where camera movement, movement of people and movement of machines can be combined, while it follows a clear narrative: the building process. Moreover, both people and machines are engaged with the architecture that is to arise, which makes the architecture both human and dynamic. The resulting film is informative, of documentary value, and a record of human creation.

²⁶³ Elsaesser, 2005b: 381. Original quote: 'Ein eher trockener Lehrfilm, von einem unbekanntem Regisseur...'. The film was produced by Svend Noldan, but directed by the city planners Maximilian von Goldbeck and Erich Kotzer.

²⁶⁴ cf. Duiker, 1932; Groenewegen, 1932.

²⁶⁵ See: 'De Stad der Toekomst' [review], p1 in: *Co-Bouw* (vol. 80, nr. 96), 1936-12-01; see also: *Geïllustreerd Programma VU, Cursus 1936-1937*, Volksuniversiteit te Rotterdam; and *Vertooning van de film "De Stad der Toekomst"*, VU, November-nummer 1936 (vol. 16, nr. 4) > archive 'A. Bos' at NAI: BOSA (1-6).

²⁶⁶ Ciacci (2001), cited by Taverne, 2007: 6.

²⁶⁷ Elsaesser, 2005b: 400.

²⁶⁸ Elsaesser, 2005b: 383. Original quote: 'Hier gilt es, drei Ebenen mit einander ins Verhältnis zu setzen: der Auftraggeber, der Anlass und die Anwendung des Films.'

²⁶⁹ Cf. Elsaesser, 2005b; Taverne, 2007: 6.

One of the first filmmakers to record construction works in Rotterdam was the Dutch film pioneer Willy Mullens, from The Hague. In the years 1919-1920 he documented the construction of garden village 'Vreewijk' (1913-, arch. Granpré Molière). The film is a kind of excursion through this new residential area, giving impressions of the construction activities that take place. Different approaches developed during the next years²⁷⁰. Construction processes were documented step by step; almost as a cinematographic 'blueprint' for similar projects to take place elsewhere. An early illustration of this are the recordings by Mullens, made between 1926-1930, of the construction of the 'Van Nelle factory'. It was done so in close collaboration with the architects Brinkman and Van der Vlugt²⁷¹.

In July 1926, when Mullens received the commission, the construction time was estimated to be ten months, but it would be four years in the end. After Mullens and his employees had visited the construction site for about twenty-five times, in a period of a year and a half, most of the shots of the central building, the tobacco factory, got lost because of a fire²⁷². They decided, however, to continue the film project, and to make new recordings of the construction of the coffee and tea factories, the garage and the heating station²⁷³. This film, BOUW VAN DE VAN NELLE FABRIEK, was ready in April 1930, but it probably never had a public screening²⁷⁴. It was made for documentary purposes. History has confirmed it, as Anna Abrahams made the film BOUWEN VOOR HET LICHT (1991) with this material. Whereas the building itself defined space, since it became a reference mark in the environment, film marked a moment in time, for next generations of workers and the general public. Next to that, the commissioner and the architects needed a record to evaluate the decisions they made. In fact, the construction method and the design of the factory were altered during the construction process.

Mullens's film is not exceptional. The memory function is also at issue regarding port activities or the production of milk, for example²⁷⁵. In the 1920s, production methods rapidly changed. Documenting a stage of this development offered the possibility to match results, which is the reason that such films still enjoy the interest of specialist groups today. There is, however, a difference between the industrial film in general and the particular genre of the construction film, since the latter does not show mass-production. Since each building is unique, with its own development history and its own programme, it is possible to distinguish different purposes.

A major case is the construction of department store 'De Bijenkorf' and the film GROEI (1928-1930), produced by Polygoon and directed by Jo de Haas. In the late 1920s De Bijenkorf commissioned architect Willem Dudok to build a modern department store with a steel-and-glass façade. The building was located at the Coolingsingel, the main boulevard of the city, different from the 'Van Nelle factory' that was located in the outskirts. As it was visually very present, 'De

²⁷⁰ One might also consider here the reports on the construction of the *Koninginnebrug*, by Orion (1928, 1929) and Krieger (1929). The bridge was built by A.H. van Rood & W.G. Witteveen, 1924-1929, see: Groenendijk & Vollaard, 2007: 123. Next to such reports and documentaries, one may also mention newsreels on construction, as different as e.g. NIEUW GEBOUW NATIONALE LEVENSVZERKERINGENBANK (1924-02-07, Polygoon); NIEUWE BRUG (1926-10-05, Polygoon); DE NENIJTO IN AANBOUW (1928-04, Polygoon); FEYENOORD STADION GEREED (1937-02-27, Polygoon).

Outside Rotterdam we find other 'construction films', including well-known examples such as BETON EN WONINGBOUWFILM (1923, Cor Aafjes), about 'Betondorp' in Amsterdam, commissioned by the municipality, and the film BOUW FLATGEBOUW WILLEMSPARK (1930, Jan Teunissen), about the construction of a building in The Hague by the architect Henk Wegerif, which was commissioned by the 'collective of residents'.

²⁷¹ Correspondence between Van Nelle and Haghe Film (Mullens), 1926-1930 – GAR, 'Archief Van Nelle', toegangscode 944, inv. Nr. 2020, 'Stukken betreffende de producties van de eerste Van Nelle reclamefilms, 1919-1936.'

²⁷² Ibid; a part of the lost material was made by A.P.A. Adriaansz, chief operator of Haghe Film. Once the material was burnt, Mullens proposed (1928-02-02) to make animations of the construction, but that idea was rejected.

²⁷³ Ibid; letter by Van Nelle to Brinkman & Van der Vlugt, 1928-02-02.

²⁷⁴ Ibid; In a letter by Mullens to Van Nelle, 1930-01-03, Mullens mentioned that a positive rush print was sent to Van Nelle, in order to discuss the editing of the film. On the 22nd of April, Mullens wrote a letter to say that the film was ready. There are no further references to a public screening whatsoever.

²⁷⁵ See e.g. NV HYGIËNISCHE MELKSTAL 'DE VAAN' (1928, Transfilma) and HET MODERNSTE MELKINRICHTINGBEDRIJF VAN NEDERLAND (1929, Polygoon), for: Rotterdamsche Melkinrichting.

Bijenkorf' meant the onset of a prosperous era for Rotterdam, as the title of the film indicates as well: 'Growth'. Rotterdam had made its definite step into modernity. In the following years, this new spirit of the city was above all experienced at the Bijenkorf roof-terrace [ref.]. Prophetic are therefore the images of it in the film, with the camera placed low, so that we see men working high above the city. This image, just like several others, creates a contrast between height and depth, so that the city becomes a huge spatial volume, a vast, modern metropolis.

GROEI makes use of modern film aesthetics, through mobile framing, superimposition, rhythmic editing, and special compositions. There is, for example, a shot from the roof, showing a construction elevator coming up, while down in the street a tram comes into the frame from top to bottom. The tram is like an elevator, and vice versa. This 'three dimensional graphic' distorts the viewer's perception by using depth and opposed movements, which results in 'cinematic plasticity.' It establishes an analogy between tram and elevator, and between urbanism and architecture. There is another remarkable sequence with an elevator, which is filmed from the inside, while moving upward. The elevator cab is bounded by a steel fence, through which the camera registers the different storeys of the building. The pattern of the fence interferes with the same pattern at the floors it passes, which causes a rhythmic doubling of lines. Whereas people are absent in these shots, there is also an 'absolute' image of workers that climb down a series of steep stairs. This ongoing human movement forms a contrast and yet a synthesis with the mechanical movements.

Other images show ram machines and cement transporters, followed by informal shots of workers having lunch and then workhorses eating and drinking in a similar way – a witty example of associative filmmaking. At the end the completed building is shown. Its composition, with a tower and a large rectangular building, is transferred into a cinematic composition. The camera frames the tower diagonally, moves to the right along the building so that the top corner is shown diagonally. As the façade of the building consists of steel-and-glass in a regular grid, the sequence shows an abstract pattern of lines. The building has changed into moving graphics, an architecture that seems to float. The camera scans the building. Moving across its façade, there are suddenly people standing behind it. They do the finishing touch, the glass and frameworks are cleaned and polished for the great event: the opening.

Finally the film shows the opening with 70,000 people attending it²⁷⁶. They had been waiting for this moment for two years, regularly informed by the Polygoon newsreels that were made from the footage. In this way De Bijenkorf bought itself into the news, similar to what commercials for De Bijenkorf would later do, like those by Henk Alsem and Andor von Barsy²⁷⁷. Thus, GROEI expressed the identity of the store. The construction, as a seemingly functional concern, was above all a way to show modernity, progress, hence 'growth'. Functionalism dictated style and fashion, and style and fashion were the trade of De Bijenkorf. Trade, architecture, and film reinforced each other.

'De Bijenkorf' became a symbol for modern Rotterdam. Various other films contributed to that too²⁷⁸. While it is an outstanding example of the 'construction genre', it could equally be called an avant-garde film²⁷⁹. Polygoon was largely influenced by the Soviet cinema; it had already been so for several years²⁸⁰. According to Polygoon director B. D. Ochse, it also conceived documentary filmmaking in terms of art, which had to be shown in the (regular)

²⁷⁶ This number is mentioned by Talle, 2001: 245.

²⁷⁷ I.e. DROOMEN (1931, Alsem); HERFSTMODE (1932), TAFELTJE DEKJE (1933), Von Barsy (the latter two are missing).

²⁷⁸ It was subsequently shown, together with the 'Van Nelle factory' and other buildings, in the film MODERNE NEDERLANDSCHE ARCHITECTUUR (1930, Mannus Franken), in ROTTERDAM (1935, Max de Haas), and e.g. in the montage-sequence of modern architecture in the film LENTELIED (1936, Koster).

²⁷⁹ Simultaneously to GROEI, De Haas also made STALEN KNUISTEN (1930), for the 'General Dutch Union of Metal Workers' (ANMB, *Algemene Nederlandsche Metaalbewerkerbond*), which was actually shown at the Filmliga; for detailed information on this film see Hogenkamp, 1988: 36, cf. Schoots, 1999: 207.

²⁸⁰ See: Hogenkamp, 1988.

cinema. It combined artistic and financial aims, which happened indeed with GROEI²⁸¹. One should also consider the film as a particular instance of *Medienverbund*. Within this programmatic union, the film links up with De Bijenkorf commercials and other media. Von Barys, for example, made photographs for De Bijenkorf as well²⁸². Next to that, De Bijenkorf organised exhibitions of important international avant-garde artists. In addition, it displayed modern design, like the furniture by Willem Gispen, as part of its collection. Finally, its architecture brought it all together.

Whereas GROEI was based on modernity as an 'identity' to attract customers, similar films had other goals, like Ivens's WIJ BOUWEN (1930), on building in the Netherlands, and the related film BETONARBEID ("Concrete Labour", 1930),²⁸³ on the construction of embankment walls in Rotterdam. Since they were commissioned by the "General Dutch Union of Construction Workers" (ANBB), they promoted the building industry and its workers in order to recruit new members. BETONARBEID shows in detail the construction process and methods, and the skills of the workers, often through close-ups of hands, interchanged with overviews of the collective achievement and its organisation. Although WIJ BOUWEN received highly enthusiastic reviews²⁸⁴, in its approach it is not very different from GROEI. We might also compare it to another film by Polygoon, with the suggestive title "The Cooperative Production Grows; a cinematographic excursion through our new HAKA-factories" (1932)²⁸⁵. It shows the construction and eventual operation of the co-operative HAKA factory (1931-1932), which was designed by Herman Mertens, another member of the Filmliga²⁸⁶. This film presents, in a straightforward manner, manual labour and mechanical production as extensions of each other, and the individual engagement and collective efforts of the workers.

A construction film that served above all a memory function, not unlike the building that it portrayed, is BOUW MUSEUM BOYMANS (1932-1935), made by G.L. Theijssen of Gemeentewerken, in order to present it to the museum in the end. This detailed film, of almost an hour, shows the building process step by step. It starts with images of the 'Schielandshuis', the former location of the museum, followed by shots of the architects of Gemeentewerken on their way to the office, where they are portrayed at the drawing tables. Overviews and close ups of the construction work interchange, while the film pays also attention to the workers, including shots of them receiving their salary.

Another extensive construction film, with a different purpose, is BOUW MAASTUNNEL (1937-1941, Polygoon), commissioned by the N.V. Maastunnel, a joint venture of construction companies²⁸⁷. It shows technical drawings and animations of the tunnel, interchanged with shots of the construction activities. It takes the viewer along the design and engineering process, to explain it to both professionals and citizens. Different versions were made for different audiences, between 15 minutes and one hour, while the progress of the construction was also shown by

²⁸¹ According to Hogenkamp (1988: 36), the film was shown in the programmes of Cinema Royal and Tuschinski in Amsterdam, but it seems more than likely that at least Tuschinski also showed them in Rotterdam.

²⁸² In Gemeentearchief Rotterdam, ref. Joop de Jong / *Nederlands Fotomuseum*, 2008.

²⁸³ It is also called CAISSONBOUW.

²⁸⁴ E.g. De Graaff, 1930.

²⁸⁵ Original title: DE COOPERATIEVE PRODUCTIE GROEIT, EEN CINEMATOGRAFISCHE RONDWANDELING DOOR ONZE NIEUWE HAKA-FABRIEKEN.

²⁸⁶ Mertens was, besides Van Ravesteyn and Rietveld a.o., a member of the board of the Filmliga Utrecht, see: *Filmliga* 1927/3, p13.

²⁸⁷ N.V. Maastunnel collaborated with the *Dienst Gemeentewerken*. Next to the Polygoon production, an employee of *Gemeentewerken*, E. Jeanmaire, made a series of twelve shorts about the construction. Both the Polygoon and the series of shorts were handed over to the photographic archive of *Gemeentewerken*. Information by J.P. van Bruggen in a letter (1960-11-21) to the GAR, Gemeentearchief Rotterdam, archive 'Gemeentelijke Archiefdienst Rotterdam' (archief van het archief), dossier 'correspondentie filmcollectie', toegangsnr. 297.01, inv. nr. 461 (1958-1962).

²⁸⁷ It seems that these film recordings were made at the same time as the photographs made by Van der Leeuw, June 1945, which are reprinted in: Roelofsz, 1989: 140.

Polygoon's newsreels, over a period of four years²⁸⁸. It created an interest among the cinema spectators to learn about the advancements. This continued when the city around it was destroyed, in 1940, of which we do not see a glimpse. It is an instance of the system's capacity for selective memory.

When going to Rotterdam to record the advances of the Maastunnel, Polygoon occasionally shot other construction works too. Examples are those of the World Trade Centre ('Beurs') and the new zoo ('Diergaarde Blijdorp')²⁸⁹. It shows that the mediation of one project caused the monitoring of others as well²⁹⁰.

Construction films were more than records of new construction techniques or registrations of actual events. They celebrated progress and urban development, characterised by optimism: the future can be built. Notwithstanding this common goal, and their common iconography, these films were made for different reasons. It opens up perspectives to other kinds of productions. Linking the concerns of Elsaesser with those of Lebas allows us to move beyond the subject of building, in order to consider a broad range of films that served modernity, and the development of the modern city.

industrial film

The 'construction film' could be seen as a particular 'genre' of the industrial film²⁹¹. After the crisis of the 1910s, industrial production in Rotterdam increased, since one tried to reduce the city's dependence on shipping²⁹². This growth was accompanied by the production of industrial films, which grew exponentially in a few years time. To all of these films apply the three Rs of Hediger and Vonderau (2007: 22), which stand for: Record, Rhetorics, and Rationalization²⁹³. Such films served as recruitment, of clients and investors, and reinforcement, by providing positive feedback that is instrumental to the emergence of the modern city as a self-organizing system²⁹⁴.

In total, an estimated number of at least three hundred industrial films were made in Rotterdam in the 1920s and 1930s, varying in length from about ten to ninety minutes. It is hard to give exact numbers, since such films had their own exhibition channels and were often not reported, and if so, the records as well as the films might have been lost during WWII or for any other reason later on. From the available data, it is known that one of the first industrial film concerning Rotterdam, and one of the first commissioned films in the Netherlands, was ONZE SCHEEPVAART (1913), which was directed by Maurits Binger and produced by the *Maatschappij*

²⁸⁸ It started by showing the location where the tunnel would be built, and the first digging works: TUNNELBOUW OFFICIEEL BEGONNEN (1937-06-15). For the implementation it was also necessary to remove a wooden Norwegian sailormen's church, which was lifted and rolled aside: HET VERROLDE NOORSE KERKJE WORDT OPNIEUW IN GEBRUIK GENOMEN (1937-11-14). The last report of that year briefly showed the construction activities: TUNNELBOUW (1937-12-29). A few months later a more extensive report showed the works, with traffic at the Coolsingel and at the Maas bridges, followed by schematic drawings of the tunnel, and images of the construction: TUNNELBOUW (1938-03-08). More reports followed, sometimes combined with other construction works, like that of De Beurs: ROTTERDAM BOUWT (1939-01-23). See furthermore: BOUW VAN DE MAASTUNNEL (1939-09-28), DE MAASTUNNELWERKEN (1940-03-15), BOUW VAN DE MAASTUNNEL VORDERT (1940-10-07), EEN BELANGRIJKE FASE IN DE TUNNELBOUW (1941-05), a.o.

²⁸⁹ WTC (J.F. Staal, 1925-1940): NIEUWE BEURS IN ROTTERDAM GROEIT (1938-01-18), ROTTERDAM BOUWT (1939-01-23), BEURSGEBOUW NADERT HAAR VOLTOOIING (1940-04-09); Zoo (S. van Ravesteyn (1937-1941): ROTTERDAMSE DIERGAARDE GAAT VERHUIZEN (1939-11-17), DIERGAARDE BLIJDORP GEREED (1940-12-09).

²⁹⁰ See, alternatively, also the *demolition* of a building: OPRUIMEN VAN EEN OUD GEBOUW (1938-11-25). It shows an explosion, which is subsequently repeated, but the other way round, as a marvellous act of construction.

²⁹¹ Rather than reflecting upon industrial films in terms of genre, I have tried to frame broader tendencies, and to relate titles because of features and agendas. For industrial film genres, see Kessler & Masson, 2007.

²⁹² Cf. Van de Laar, 2000: 323/354, as proposed by the Vereeniging Stadsverbetering Nieuw Rotterdam, in 1919.

²⁹³ It is an elaboration of the three A's of Elsaesser (2005b). At the same time Hediger and Vonderau point to the fact, that already in 1914, George L. Cox addressed that industrial films dealt with 5 M's: financial Means, Materials, Machines, Markets and Men. This text is included in their volume (see: Cox, 2007 [1914]).

²⁹⁴ Cf. Bonabeau, Dorigo, Theraulaz, 1999: 9.

voor *Wetenschappelijke Cinematografie* from Haarlem (later Hollandia, and subsequently Polygoon)²⁹⁵. The film was made for the municipality and various enterprises, in order to promote the port, and as such it was the onset of a long history of harbour films, and the connection between Polygoon and Rotterdam²⁹⁶. Among the early films that Polygoon made for companies in the port are those for the warehousing firm *Blaauwhoedenveem* (1920, Alex Benno²⁹⁷), the dockyards of Gusto (1920, Polygoon), and the dockyards of Fijenoord, on the occasion of its centenary (1923, Polygoon²⁹⁸). Another prominent name regarding such films became Willy Mullens and his company Haghe Film²⁹⁹. Around 1920, Mullens made his series of ‘city films’, for municipalities across the country. One of these films is *EEN GEZICHT OP DE GROOTE HAVENWERKEN TE ROTTERDAM EN SCHIEDAM* (1920). As a result of it, Mullens was also asked to make films for the coal trading association *Steenkolen Handels Vereeniging* (1921, 1923, Willy Mullens).

There is an immediate connection between these films and the emergence of newsreel production. Images from the Fijenoord film, for example, were used for a newsreel too³⁰⁰. In this way Polygoon attracted companies to commission films, while at the same time it reduced the production costs of the newsreels. It became the beginning of a practice that Polygoon would continue for decades. Something similar applies to the newsreels and documentaries by Mullens³⁰¹. It also enabled Otto van Neijenhoff, who began his career as a cameraman for Mullens, to produce films himself, for companies such as Watson (1925) and Wilton (1926). The Wilton shipyards, moreover, gave rise to the production of newsreels in another way as well. Bartel Wilton, one of the directors of the company and the oldest son of its founder, left it in 1920, at the age of fifty-seven, after a fight with his brother. Bartel became the director of the City cinema concern and established the Orion film production company, in The Hague³⁰². Orion got known as a non-fiction and newsreel producer, which also made reports on Rotterdam. We might, furthermore, mention Henk Alsem, who had worked for Fox-News in the USA before he made a film on the Dutch East Indies for the Rotterdamsche Lloyd, and before he began to work as a filmmaker for the Royal Dutch Navy³⁰³.

The port guaranteed a continuous flow of news. Besides economic interest, this included human interest too, such as a report on the funeral of eight sailors of a rescue-team after their lifeboat had foundered, or, alternatively, the celebration of the crew of the cargo steamship *Alhena* that rescued 536 passengers from a sinking ship near Uruguay³⁰⁴. Especially popular

²⁹⁵ At about the same time, Hollandia made the film *DE HAVENWERKEN TE ROTTERDAM EN AMSTERDAM* (1913); this production seems to be related. One can also consider here an earlier production by the British company ‘Urban Trading’: *AMSTERDAM AND ROTTERDAM* (1911).

²⁹⁶ Albers, 2004: 266; the film had its premiere, for invited guests, on 1913-11-10 at De Doelen. At about the same time Hollandia also made a film for the Van den Bergh margarine factory, and another one to promote the port of Rotterdam and Amsterdam. For more information on the way Polygoon dealt with industrial films and other films for commercial purposes, see: De Haan, 1995: 23.

²⁹⁷ Afterwards, Alex Benno would make various other films for firms in the port too with his company Actueel Film, e.g. *THOMSENS HAVENBEDRIJF* (1924).

²⁹⁸ For such commissions, Polygoon worked with local agencies; in Rotterdam it was the photography shop of J.J. Swart (De Haan, 1995: 25). Of interest here are also family films that Polygoon made for Swart, and, among others, for the Ruys shipping dynasty that was linked to the Rotterdamsche Lloyd (1921, 1922, Polygoon). For this company Polygoon subsequently made the film *DE STOOMVAARTMAATSCHAPPIJ ‘ROTTERDAMSCHER LLOYD’* (1925). For Van Nelle director Sonneveld, Polygoon also made family films (1925).

²⁹⁹ E.g. *ROTTERDAM* (1922); *VERVOER DROOGDOK 8000 TON – DOK TANDJONG PRIOK* (1923) a.o.

³⁰⁰ i.e. *WERF FIJENOORD* (1923); newsreel: *HET 100-JARIG BESTAAN VAN DE WERF FEIENOORD* [1923-02-01].

³⁰¹ In the case of Mullens, see for example the newsreels on the mayors Zimmerman and Wijtema (1923), which were made due to Mullens’s connections with the municipality.

³⁰² www.cinemacontext.nl > personen > Bartel Wilton Sr. (website visited 2008-07-07)

³⁰³ www.nfdb.nl > Alsem, Henk > info (2007-10-27)

³⁰⁴ *BEGRAFFENIS VAN DE BEMANNING VAN DE REDDINGSBOOT ‘PRINS DER NEDERLANDEN’ TE HOEK VAN HOLLAND* (1929, Orion); *HULDIGING VAN DE BEMANNING VAN DE ALHENA* (1928, Polygoon). The ‘SS *Alhena*’, of shipping company

became reports on the launching of a ship or its maiden trip³⁰⁵. This is, furthermore, also reflected by amateur recordings, as a way to appropriate modern times. Of special interest is a series of forty-one short films (1929-1937), made by A Vertregt, who was a captain for the Rotterdamsche Lloyd. He recorded all kinds of aspects of his travels and the life aboard of his ship³⁰⁶.

The growing demand for industrial films by firms in Rotterdam resulted in the establishment of the film production company Transfilma. One of its major films was ORANJEBOOM, HET BIERBROUWBEDRIJF (1927, Transfilma). In almost one and a half hours, it shows each step of the production of beer. It raises some questions. Who was interested in such a detailed and long record of industrial production? Considering the subject of beer, one can hardly think of educational purposes, at least not to instruct school children. To whom was the film shown, where, and why? It makes a difference if it was presented to a general audience, as a promotion for beer, or, for example, to engineers interested in industrial production. As I will show in the chapter on events, it was meant for a general audience, as part of the international industry exhibition 'Nenijto' (1928). It not only promoted the brand, but above all industrialisation and rationalisation, turning the ancient craft of beer production into a product of the new life, that of modernity. This is well expressed by way of an etching by Jan Luyken that the film shows³⁰⁷. It makes clear that in the seventeenth century, the barrels were filled manually, while it now all happened mechanically³⁰⁸. Besides the fact that it rhetorically addresses the modernisation of the production process, the reference also relates that artwork to film as a contemporary medium with a similar purpose. The modernity of industrial production is reinforced by the medium itself.

Similar arguments can be made for other industrial films. In addition to those on beer, are those on tea and coffee, by Van Nelle. Already quite early, it made use of film for promotion and information. In 1919, Dick van der Leeuw, the youngest brother of Van Nelle director Kees, made the film DE THEE, VAN DE PLANTAGE NAAR HET PAKJE³⁰⁹. It starts with the work on the tea plantations in Java, it then shows the transshipment of the tea to the port of Rotterdam, and finally the way it was processed in the (old) Van Nelle factory³¹⁰. The film was shown across the Netherlands, as Van Nelle started to travel around the country with a special film car, to organise screenings at clubs, schools, stores and especially at the main squares of villages and towns, where hundreds and sometimes even thousands of people gathered³¹¹. Besides the tea film, a short film was made about coffee from Brasil³¹², and more films would follow. Until the late 1930s Van Nelle's film car drove around the country. In this way Van Nelle reached the general public, and as such the films had an important share in Van Nelle's increasing sales figures³¹³.

Nievelt, Goudriaan & Co., assisted (1927-10-25) the wrecked 'Principessa Mafalda', with Italian emigrants on their way to Argentina.

³⁰⁵ e.g. TEWATERLATING VAN HET S.S. SLIEDRECHT (1924-05-31, Willy Mullens); VERTREK 'STATENDAM' (1929, Orion); HET NIEUWE MS WELTEVREDEN VAN DE ROTTERDAMSE LLOYD VERLAAT DE WERF VAN P. SMIT JR (1937, Filmfabriek Holland); NIEUWE ONDERZEEER VOOR DE POOLSE MARINE TEWATERGELATEN (1938-42, Polygoon), a.o.

³⁰⁶ Besides that, the Rotterdamsche Lloyd had also various films been made by (a.o.) J.C. Mol, e.g. JAVA, SUMATRA EN BALI (1939). See also the films by Willem van der Poll (1934, 1936).

³⁰⁷ The etching is from the book *Het Menselyk Bedryf* ("The Human Trade"), published in 1694. It contains engravings from Dutch artist Jan Luyken about trades from the late 17th century. www.janluyken.com/ (visited: 2007-10-03)

³⁰⁸ cf. 'Bedrijfsfilm D'Oranjeboom', in: *De Maasbode*, 1928-01-14.

³⁰⁹ Dicke, 2007: 43, referred to as THEEFILM. It is most likely that Dick van der Leeuw, who continued to make films until his death in 1936, made other recordings related to Van Nelle as well, e.g. FAMILIE VAN DER LEEUW (1925).

³¹⁰ The film includes scenes of the Van Nelle garage at Wilhelminakade and of its factory at Schiedamsedijk.

³¹¹ The tea film also meant the start of film screenings at *Ons Huis*; it was shown there in collaboration with the *Nederlandsche Vereeniging van Huisvrouwen*, 1921-05-24. For this and general documentation about Van Nelle's film screenings, see: GAR, 'Archief Van Nelle', toegangscode 944, inv. Nr. 2021, 'Stukken betreffende reclamefilmvoorstellingen, 1919-1938; cf. Dicke, 2007: 55.

³¹² DE KOFFIE (1922, Van Nelle); the first part is about the cultivation of coffee in Brasil, the second part is about the processing of coffee at the Van Nelle factory.

³¹³ Dicke, 2007: 46.

In 1926, Willy Mullens was asked to make a new, short version of the tea film³¹⁴. About two months later the film was ready and Mullens was then asked to record the construction of the new factory (BOUW VAN DE VAN NELLE FABRIEK, 1926-1930). It was made for documentary purposes, a record, in terms of Hediger and Vonderau. Through the connections that Van der Leeuw as well as the architects Brinkman and Van der Vlugt maintained with the Filmliga, Ivens also paid attention to the factory in his film NEW ARCHITECTURE, and Mannus Franken did so in MODERNE NEDERLANDSCHE ARCHITECTUUR (1930). Additionally, Van Nelle enabled Henk Alsem to carry out a form study (VAN NELLE FABRIEK, 1930), which was never finished, however. Van der Leeuw then commissioned Jan Teunissen to make a short film in the same spirit (i.e. THE BUILDINGS OF DE ERVEN WED. J. VAN NELLE AT ROTTERDAM, 1931)³¹⁵. It shows the factory from different angles; it was filmed with a moving camera, so that the architecture seems to be liberated from gravity³¹⁶. This experiment was presented at the Filmliga, and as part of lectures that Van der Leeuw gave in the USA³¹⁷.

When the building finally operated, Van Nelle commissioned Polygoon to make the diptych ACHTER GLAS! ("Behind Glass!", 1931). Polygoon had not only become the largest and most professional Dutch film company, but it had also made itself a name for progressive, innovative films³¹⁸. From one perspective, ACHTER GLAS! is a straight portrait of the processing of tea and coffee, but in fact it actually deals with the brand new building itself. The factory design was conceived upon the idea to offer good labour conditions, and one of the preconditions was a maximum amount of light inside the building. This film shows bright, clean and spacious surroundings. This transparent building displayed itself, its constructions and its inside life and organisation, which was all highlighted and amplified by this equally 'functionalist' film³¹⁹.

Parallel to these films, and several commercials too, Van Nelle commissioned Andor von Barys to make photographic records of the construction of the factory, while Jan Kamman was asked to make photographs that highlighted its modern appearance, in avant-garde style, in addition to the straight photographic documents by Evert van Ojen³²⁰. It shows that Van der Leeuw followed different approaches, within a complex strategy of generating and transmitting values that promoted modernity.

While Brinkman & Van der Vlugt built the Van Nelle factory, they also constructed a grain silo for the GEM (1929-1930). Both buildings are to be seen, for example, in Von Barys's 'absolute film' ROTTERDAM (1934), and many other films and newsreels would follow³²¹. In

³¹⁴ It included material of the former, with additional images, ref.: Contract between Van Nelle and Haghefilm (Mullens), 1926-03-30, GAR, 'Archief Van Nelle', toegangscode 944, inv. Nr. 2020, 'Stukken betreffende de producties van de eerste Van Nelle reclamefilms, 1919-1936.

³¹⁵ Correspondence between C.H. van der Leeuw and G.J. Teunissen, April-June, 1931 – GAR, 'Archief Van Nelle', toegangscode 944, inv. Nr. 2020, 'Stukken betreffende de producties van de eerste Van Nelle reclamefilms, 1919-1936. The film was shown at the Filmliga (in Rotterdam on 1931-04-11), under the heading 'Fragmenten', together with STALEN KNUISTEN and TRIOMF (1931, Jan Jansen).

³¹⁶ Ibid; the film was edited on the music of an unknown gramophone record that Teunissen sent to Van der Leeuw together with the positive print (1931-04-11 and 1931-04-15).

³¹⁷ Ibid, Van der Leeuw was enthusiastic about the film, and he immediately agreed upon Teunissen's proposal for a commercial, 'but with a plot or very stylised, and with sound' (letter by Teunissen to Van der Leeuw, 1931-06-17). Due to difficulties with sound film production, however, Teunissen was not able to make that film, but the idea remained. It was finally executed by Visiefilm (IN DEN TIJD VAN..., 1933, Max de Haas), but still with productional troubles, see: Hogenkamp, 1988: 83.

³¹⁸ e.g. EN GIJ, KAMERAAD? (1928, Jan Jansen), GROEI (1930, Jo de Haas), STALEN KNUISTEN (1930, Jo de Haas). It is likely that ACHTER GLAS! was also made by Jo de Haas, who soon afterwards, together with Max de Haas and Ab Keyzer, established Visie Film; among their first commissions was Van Nelle's promotional film IN DEN TIJD VAN... (1933, Max de Haas).

³¹⁹ More films would be made that also showed the work in the factory, e.g. RECLAME VAN NELLE (1936, Polygoon). See for other titles: www.cinemacontext.nl/id/R001222 (2008-07-10).

³²⁰ See: Halbertsma & Van Ulzen (eds.), 2001: 330.

³²¹ Besides general recordings of the port in which the GEM appears, there are also more specific reports, e.g. ZILVEREN JUBILEUM VAN DE GRAAN ELEVATOR MAATSCHAPPIJ (1933, Profilti).

terms of cultural ecology, the connection between these projects is established ‘when the coffee meets the biscuit’. Such a systemic relationship is about the organisation of flows of energy, matter, human resources, and liquid assets, channelled through cultural values.

Various other films can be mentioned that deal with alimentation. It is actually no coincidence that one of the first industrial films made in Rotterdam was commissioned by Van den Bergh’s Margarine factory³²². This enterprise, that later became known as Margarine Unie / Blue Band, produced many more films afterwards. Among them is a short film about the Blue Band factory (1930, Willy Mullens³²³); the factory is subsequently shown in an experimental commercial (1932, Profilti). The latter is among the first with sound, and it is therefore interesting to see that it consciously addresses the aspect of sound, through various close-ups of a speaker, with graphic slogans superimposed on it, while a voice-over promotes the product.

Blue Band was at the basis of the multinational Unilever. Its headquarters were built by Herman Mertens (1930-1931), who was, like Brinkman and Van der Vlugt, also an active member of the Filmliga. It was a moderate modern building, monumental, but with a rather open interior space that could be divided and arranged by boards. Mertens would subsequently build the highly modern HAKA factory (1931-1932), another food producing and processing facility, which I have just discussed regarding the Polygoon film on its construction. These projects show the connection between the port, the food industry and urbanism, and how this propelled a culture in which both architecture and cinema could develop.

Many more ‘food films’ can be mentioned³²⁴. They can be seen next to the ‘fuel films’, which include for example the films that Mullens (1921, 1923) and Transfilma (1927) made for the *Steenkolen Handels Vereeniging*, and other films, like those made for the oil company Shell. Shell commissioned all kinds of films that promoted and documented its business and developments in which it had a special interest, such as aviation³²⁵. Exemplary is the long documentary AARDOLIE, VAN PUT TOT POMP (1932, C.W.A. van Bergen & Willy Mullens). It shows the process of oil winning, its transportation to the port of Rotterdam, where it is processed, with extensive imagery of the refineries – and the observation of safety measures, and finally the consumption of oil³²⁶. ‘Food and fuel’ points directly to Steward’s notion of subsistence in respect of the ‘culture core’, which radiates into the field of film production.

mobility

Before WWII, the Hofplein was a major square where all kinds of traffic came together. It has been shown in various films that presented it as the motor of the modern city, such as the well-made amateur film HOFPLEIN (1932, K.L.A. & R. van der Leeuw). Since it was also a fragmented square, it was subject of an ongoing discussion among architects and planners, which would not be resolved before the war.

Architecture and planning had to accommodate new means of transport and complicated logistics. Regarding railway facilities, it had been the trade of Sybold van Ravesteyn, who built signal-houses and stations, among them ‘Station Beurs’, which were hallmarks of *Het Nieuwe Bouwen*. Mobility also required innovative constructions, such as railway bridge ‘Koningsbrug’ (*De Hef*, 1924-1927), by Van Ravesteyn’s colleague Pieter Joosting. It had already attracted

³²² I.e. MARGARINEFABRIEK SIMON VAN DEN BERGH (1913, Hollandia Filmfabriek).

³²³ Already before Mullens made a film for Van den Bergh (192x).

³²⁴ E.g. EEN KIJKJE IN DE FABRIEKEN VAN C. JAMIN (1920, F.A. Noggerath); various productions by Mullens (e.g. FYFFES BANANEN, 1925), by Alex Benno (e.g. GRAANSILO’S TE ROTTERDAM, 1925), and by Otto van Neijenhoff (e.g. H. RINGERS’ CACAO- EN CHOCOLADEFABRIEKEN, 1926; SCHOLTES ADVOCAATFABRIEK, 1927).

³²⁵ E.g. SHELL OIL, 1930; AARDOLIE, VAN PUT TOT POMP, 1932, C.W.A. van Bergen & W. Mullens), UITBREIDING INSTALLATIES PERNIS, 1936 – on aviation: e.g. LUCHTVAART EN SHELL, 1934. In 1934, a Shell Film Unit was established in London, which started to produce films itself (cf. Boon, 2008: 77).

³²⁶ As such it is an example of what Tom Gunning has called a ‘process film’, to make a difference with what he calls a ‘place film’, which applies to most other films dealing with Rotterdam. Gunning quoted in: Sørenssen, 1999.

media attention during its construction (Polygoon, 1926-10-05). Once it was finished, it featured in Ivens's *THE BRIDGE*, in the city promotion film *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* (1928, Andor von Barys), in the sponsored film *KONINGSHAVEN TE ROTTERDAM* (1929, W. Krieger) that was presumably made for the new Blue-Band margarine factory next to it, as an act of branding³²⁷, and in the city-symphony *DE MAASBRUGGEN* (1937, Paul Schuitema), among others. This bridge accommodated movements of ships and trains, while it could move itself as well. What counts here is movement, which is engineered as a functional affair. *De Hef* is an example of engineering and architecture that are connected to a new kind of urbanism.

This urbanism also involved the port. Considering the link between urbanism and the port, one should consider various kinds of buildings like factories and engineering works, including constructions such as locks, cranes and elevators³²⁸. Such installations enable the port to be a world of mobility *par excellence*, which has always appealed to the imagination – something that is especially reflected by amateur films³²⁹. An early example of a film that articulated the port's aesthetic features was the short Polygoon production *TECHNISCH FILMSPEL IN ÉÉN BEDRIJF* ("Technical Film Play in one Act", 1923), which showed the choreography of loading bridges, docks, tug boats and various other ships – the film also draws a connection to Polygoon's newsreels. Innumerable films have subsequently highlighted the spectacle of the port, with Von Barys's films, including *THE CITY THAT NEVER RESTS* (1928) and *TUSSCHEN AANKOMST EN VERTREK* (1938), as the most remarkable ones. Next to that, film was also used to visualise rather specific concerns of navigation and its coordination, for example a film by Mannus Franken on radiotelegraphy (1934).

In this system, the port is a dramatic environment of movement, a stage for ongoing industrial performance, of great intensity, according to elaborate logistical, almost dramaturgical scripts. This 'symphony' of cranes, vessels and engines turned the port into a moving city, with the ships and cranes as its building blocks. As such, the dockyards became its productional force, and as an organisational structure also the model for what it produced: the engineering of movement. It was exactly for this reason that Henry Ford visited the yards in Rotterdam in October 1930 – and of course to reinforce an international network of industrialists. Both reasons are shown in a news report by Polygoon: Ford not only visits the docks, but also club house 'De Maas'³³⁰. Such buildings, therefore, are part of the 'moving city' too, for their organisational architecture, as stable points of a social-economic structure that enables movement. Ford and docks like RDM, Fijenoord and Wilton, shared interests in the modernisation of society, based on an overall mobility, in which the production of ships are structurally coupled to the production of cars, which, furthermore, involves the production of roads, and an urbanism and architecture that makes such a development possible. It also involves an urban culture that promotes such values, which is exemplified in Rotterdam by car races, among other.

Cinema, in its turn, as a modern medium based on movement, articulated such values. An example is the *NON-STOP-RIT FORD* (1926-12-07), a commercial and newsreel in one, made by Polygoon, which showed a seven days non-stop car rally through the Netherlands, passing Rotterdam. Also illuminating is the work of Simon Koster, since he first made the experimental film and theatre play *NUL UUR NUL* (1927-1928), and subsequently the fiction film *LENTELIED*

³²⁷ 'Blue-Band' (a Unilever subsidiary) had a large advertisement on the bridge, which is to be seen at the end of the film. This image is also prominently present in a promotional booklet: *Blue-Band Fabrieken*, Rotterdam: Drukkerij J. van Boekhoven, 1936. In various ways, Blue-Band made use of film as a promotional medium, e.g. *ENKELE SNAPSHOTS UIT DE BLUEBAND FABRIEKEN* (1930, Willy Mullens).

³²⁸ For locks, see e.g. *INGEBRUIKKNEMING PARKSLUIZEN TE ROTTERDAM* (1933, Profilti); for grain elevators, see e.g. *ZILVEREN JUBILEUM VAN DE GRAAN ELEVATOR MAATSCHAPPIJ* (1933, Profilti).

³²⁹ Examples of well-made amateur films about the port include: *KRUISENDE WEGEN* (1933-1935, K.L.A. van der Leeuw); *HAVEN VAN ROTTERDAM* (1937, N.J. Polak), among others.

³³⁰ *BEZOEK HENRY FORD* (1930, Polygoon, newsreel 30-18). Club house 'De Maas' (1908-1909, arch. Michiel Brinkman), belonged to the rowing and sailing club 'De Maas'; it served above all as a meeting point for the 'harbour barons'. For more information on this building, see: Groenendijk & Vollaard, 2007: 83.

(1936). Both concern movement, as a subject, and as an aesthetic motive, which is reflected by their dynamic montage. In the former the train was ‘the vehicle to the future’; in the latter it had made place for the car and the aeroplane.

Over the course of the 1930s, the car became the dominant engine for city planning, although the railways remained important. Inside the agglomeration the tramway was still a convenient way to move, which, in the 1920s, changed from steam and horse traction to electricity. Its importance was emphasised by a film about the Rotterdam Tramway Company, which was made on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, a typical moment to reflect upon one’s history and development (RTM, 1878-1928, Willy Mullens). Besides the tram, the train remained important, for long distance traffic, which the Dutch Railways emphasised with a film on its centenary (NA 100 JAAR, 1939, Max de Haas)³³¹.

The car nevertheless came to the fore, which gradually became manifest. It was concretised by a project like the ‘Maastunnel’ (1937-1941, Van Bruggen and Van der Steur). It exemplifies how space directs urban flows, and that it is a crucial factor within city management and an integral part of city planning, as Michelle Provoost has argued (1996: 13). She even called it the ‘masterpiece’ of city planner Witteveen, who had previously worked for, indeed, the Dutch Railways. His role was decisive in the final work.

As Provoost has explained (1996: 13), the ‘Maastunnel’ was a traffic project on the route between The Hague and Dordrecht (and Antwerp eventually). It made Rotterdam part of a larger network that had been created since 1927, when the state department for traffic (*Rijkswaterstaat*) presented the *Rijkswegenplan*³³². As a part of the research that preceded this plan, Polygoon was asked to document the situation, to provide study material (WEGENFILM, HOLLAND OP Z’N SMALST, 1926)³³³. This road movie follows the main roads across the country. Regarding Rotterdam it includes images of its busy main road, the Coolsingel, and the traffic congestion that took place at the Maas bridges, and various impressions of its connections to other cities (i.e. Delft and Dordrecht). When the Maastunnel was under construction, Polygoon recorded this as well, step by step, to be shown in its news show. However, rather than merely monitoring the development of Rotterdam and the Netherlands, this was an active participation in channelling visions and transmitting values of mobility. In fact, the recordings of the Maastunnel were made for the “Municipal Department of Public Works” (Gemeentewerken). Various film versions were made, which were used for different purposes. Polygoon also used the material for its newsreels.

Within the city, the Maastunnel route opened up the new residential districts in the south, and the new districts Blijdorp and Overschie in the north, which were also built according to plans by Witteveen (i.e. *Studie voor den algemeenen uitleg van Rotterdam*, 1928³³⁴). The routes became part of the architectural project of the Maastunnel, which is especially clear in the case of the ’s Gravendijkwal, a road with a trench to accommodate fast automobile flows³³⁵.

According to Provoost (1996: 15), the aesthetics of the tunnel was merely ‘adding public architecture to the city’, well-detailed and well-furnished (with Gispens lamps). It is striking that the idea of a tunnel was seriously criticised by Han van Loghem (1935; 1936), who was a radical advocate of functionalism. According to him a tunnel did not have the same monumental or architectural value as a bridge, as expressed in the design by J. Emmen, which had been made as an alternative to the tunnel. Only the tunnel’s ventilation buildings could have such a function, as an addition to the main thing. A tunnel lacked the overwhelming experience of perceiving the river from above. Striking about his criticism is the rhetoric in terms of aesthetics.

What he did not recognize, however, is the possibility of a tunnel to have such an effect too. A tunnel can be an instance of ‘urban montage’; a cut from one scenery to another. What

³³¹ Including views of Rotterdam, from the railway to The Hague, and from the railway across the Maas.

³³² Supervised by G.J. van den Broek, see: Provoost, 1996: 21 e.a.

³³³ This is not a ‘finished version’; the material was used for study purposes, and not intended for public screening.

³³⁴ See: Provoost, 1996: 9. Cf Van de Laar, 2000: 357.

³³⁵ Cf. Van de Laar, 1996: 185.

speaks in favour of Van Loghem, however, is his concern with quality. It was not an easy for him, as a proponent of functionalism. It was the time that Oud and Van Ravesteyn advocated an artistic turn, to highlight visuality rather than functionality³³⁶. For Van Loghem, 'vision' was a function of architecture. When the tunnel was eventually being built, Van Ravesteyn designed the 'Diergaarde Blijdorp' (Zoo, 1937-1941), with a renewed attention for ornaments, curves and decorations. It highlights the growing contrast between what was considered as civil engineering and art; the 'Maastunnel' became a matter of planning, straight figures and facts, not the least in the way it was presented by newsreels and informative films.

This discussion was also at issue regarding the steamship 'Nieuw Amsterdam' (1935-1938) – named after the Dutch settlement that became New York, to which the ship would travel. This 'sea castle' was built by the *Rotterdamsche Droogdok Maatschappij* (RDM) for the Holland America Line. The HAL had grown because of the migration from Europe to America³³⁷. Since the 1920s, it had to change its strategy. Travelling had to be more attractive. For the new ship, architects, designers and artists worked on its interior, among them Van Ravesteyn and Oud, next to Merkelbach & Karsten and others, headed by Th. Wijdeveld.

The ship was a small city in itself, with various 'urban functions' such as a cinema (design by Oud)³³⁸. It became a hallmark of engineering and design. Media contributed to that reputation, like Polygoon, which spent various reports on its construction and trial runs³³⁹. However, in a special issue of *De 8 & Opbouw* (1938/12) on architecture and ship design, Johan Niegeman, who had previously worked for Wijdeveld as well as Merkelbach & Karsten, concluded that the architects had been 'putting a cloth around a carcass'³⁴⁰. Instead of decorating, architects had to collaborate with the engineers on the organisation of the ship, which was a chaos of interior spaces. He illustrates this statement by a rhetorical passage.

We do not want to go seriously into possibilities that today's technology enables already. For many it would be too Jules Vernes like when we assert that one should apply more courageous, interesting and newer constructions, which could make travelling on such a ship an even bigger experience, such as extended decks of glass that suspend over the surface of the sea, or, at the bottom of the ship, a space with wall and floor elements of glass, which offer a sight into the sea that will be lit, or a combined aeroplane ship construction, a drifting-floating-flying vehicle.³⁴¹

This is more than a casual remark; it is a critique that depicts the ideal modernist image of architecture, by using the latest technology, in order to create an exciting experience, like cinema.

³³⁶ This renewed attention for the artistic aspect of architecture is most of all articulated in an article by Arthur Staal in *De 8 & Opbouw* (see: Staal, 1938: 88), in which he criticises the uncritical and uncommitted continuation of abstract art, after twenty years of experimentation. It was a reaction to articles in the previous edition of *De 8 & Opbouw* (1938, vol. 9/8: 69-78) concerning an exhibition of abstract art in the *Stedelijk Museum* in Amsterdam.

³³⁷ See: Van de Laar, 2000: 196.

³³⁸ For a description of the *Nieuw Amsterdam* and the work of Oud, see: Reinhartz-Tergau, 1990: 122.

³³⁹ E.g. DE EERSTE REIS VAN DE 'NIEUW AMSTERDAM' (Polygoon, 1938-02-15) – the ship is moved from RDM to Wilton for the finishing works on it; DE 'NIEUW AMSTERDAM' KIEST VOOR HET EERST ZEE (Polygoon, 1938-03-21) – its first travel to New York; OFFICIELE OVERDRACHT VAN DE 'NIEUW AMSTERDAM' (Polygoon, 1938-04-23) – with shots of its exterior and interior, including a swimming pool, cinema, lounge, and shots of the official inauguration. See also: DE NIEUW AMSTERDAM LOOPT VAN STAPEL (1937, Profilti).

³⁴⁰ An example of a project that was more in line with the functionalist ideals was the interior design of the tanker 'MS Pendrecht' by Ida Lieftrink (Holsappel, 2000: 18).

³⁴¹ 'Wij willen hier tenminste nu niet ernstig ingaan op mogelijkheden, waartoe misschien de hedendaagsche techniek ons reeds in staat stelt. Voor velen zou het te Jules Vernes-achtig zijn, wanneer wij zouden beweren, dat men meer gedurfde, interessante en nieuwere constructie's toe moet passen, welke het reizen op een dusdanig gebouwd schip tot een nog grooter beleven zouden kunnen maken, zooals bv. overstekende dekken uit glas boven de zee-oppervlakte of op den bodem van het schip een ruimte met glazen wand- en vloergedeelten, welke een blik in de te verlichten zee bieden, of een gecombineerde vliegtuig-schip constructie, een drijvend-zwevend-vliegend gevaarte.' (Niegeman, 1938: 128-129).

Architecture was envisioned as a new mode of perception, and the construction of buildings would almost collide with the engineering of ships and aeroplanes, comparable to Kazimir Malevitch's conceptual 'Future Planits for Earth Dwellers' (1923-1924) and 'Architektons' (1920-1926)³⁴². Similarly, in one of the following issues of *De 8 & Opbouw* (1938, vol. 9/23) dedicated to the subject of 'flying', aeroplanes were discussed as models for architecture, but not uncritically. Mart Stam stated that 'the architects' side is the human side', which is also the title of his article. The designs of certain aeroplanes show an unknown consistency, they are of 'a straightness and an unconstrainedness' that one can hardly see anywhere else³⁴³. However, the human being in the aeroplane has become secondary to the machine, almost irrelevant. Moreover, Stam pointed to the fact that aeroplanes are developed for war, rather than for holidays. 'Let us be only impressed', he concluded, 'in everything we do, and above all in our work, by the quality, and above all the human quality'³⁴⁴.

³⁴² D'andrea, 1990: 152-155/160-161. Niegeman, who had worked in the USSR (1930-1937), must have been familiar with this work.

³⁴³ Stam, 1938: 225; original quote: 'van een zakelijkheid en een ongedwongenheid'.

³⁴⁴ Stam, 1938: 226; original quote: 'Tenslotte, laten we in alles en vooral in ons werk ons slechts door de kwaliteit en boven alles door de menselijke kwaliteit imponeren.'