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### Cinematic Rotterdam: the times and tides of a modern city

Paalman, F.J.J.W.

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## CHAPTER 3. EVENTS

### § 1. between image and space

Architecture is not a matter of meeting the preconditions for construction, but constructing preconditions for events to take place, according to Bernard Tschumi (1994). In his view, architecture is both about space and the events that take place in it. Architecture does not determine such events, since there is no hierarchical cause and effect relationship – such a relationship used to be the assumption of the modern movement, according to Tschumi, but it does not correspond to the actual functioning and experience of architecture. Architecture enables the emergence of new relationships between space and events. This, however, happens only when the architecture itself elaborates on actual sociocultural and economic conditions, and the accompanying media processes. Architecture, after all, should be experienced through events that occur in it, for which the architecture provides strategies. In the view of Tschumi, an event is a movement that happens between and across spatial categories. An event is an activity, even a thought. It is a turning point, rather than a beginning or an end. As such it is different from the modernist statement of form following function. Examples are the architecture exhibition by *Opbouw* in the former town hall, and the art exhibitions by *De Rotterdammers* in the former old men's home (*Oudemannenhuis*) in 1923, and by *De Branding* in the former post-office in 1926<sup>345</sup>. Form and function were detached, but the presence of the buildings created an opportunity for these events to take place.

Events might be roughly conceptualised into three kinds, which have all been largely mediated (e.g. by newsreels). First of all are 'contingent occasions', from private encounters and social meetings (or disruptions), to the experience of novelties like motorised traffic flows and movements in the harbour – from fire, ship accidents, to something like the transportation of elephants<sup>346</sup>. Such events are often unexpected and are not intended to be an attraction. When it concerns private experiences, they are mostly hidden. When it concerns accidents, they are hardly ever recorded on film at the moment they occur – instead, we get an account afterwards or learn about their consequences. Such events must be re-enacted to be shown, which happens through fiction films; they can frame the individual drama or impact of such events. As such we can consider a feature film like *MODERNE LANDHAAIEN* (1926, Alex Benno)<sup>347</sup>. American travellers arrive at the harbour. They are invited to a party, where they get robbed. With outdoor shots being taken in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, the film addresses the changing conditions of the city in general.

Secondly, there are organised events, including formal and regulated happenings, which often attracted a lot of attention. This ranges from political gatherings to the launching of ships or

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<sup>345</sup> The exhibition by *Opbouw* took place in *Het Oude Raadhuis*, 1923-10-18 – 1923-10-31, ref. Affiche Opbouw, ontwerp: Paul Schuitema, GAR: G-0000-0111. The exhibition by *De Rotterdammers* included work by Hendrik Chabot, Adriaan van der Plas and Jan Kamman; the exhibition by *De Branding* included work by Chabot and Hermann Bieling (see: Van de Laar, 2000: 375-376).

<sup>346</sup> Concerning traffic, see the collection of Polygoon newsreels archived as *VERKEER* (1929, Polygoon), and additionally, e.g. the feature length documentary about the Rotterdam Tramway Company (RTM, 1878-1928, Willy Mullens) as well as educational films by A.M. van der Wel (*MET DE PAARDENTRAM NAAR OVERSCHIE*, 1925, *VEILIG VERKEER*, 1930). For fire, see e.g. *BRAND LEUVEHAVEN* and *GROOTE BRAND TE ROTTERDAM* (Profilti, 1935, 1937); for ship accidents, see e.g. *STRANDING VAN SS STUART-STAR TE HOEK V. HOLLAND* (1923, F.H. van Dijk); another remarkable accident was a collapse of a façade of a workshop and a trade house (at Hang 33/35/37), due to the deteriorated condition of the building and a boat that crashed into it (1925-12-04); see: *INGEVALLEN PUI BIJ HET HANG* (Polygoon, 1925); *OLIFANTENTRANSPORT NAAR ENGELAND* (Polygoon, 1928-week29); three elephants are hoisted from the embankment into a ship.

<sup>347</sup> It was shown across the country for various years, in Rotterdam at Corso and at the Prinses Theater, see: *cinemacontext* (2009-01-15).

the inaugurations of buildings<sup>348</sup>, and also receptions of famous people – in particular film stars, sports champions and statesmen<sup>349</sup>.

Lastly, one might consider deliberately planned manifestations, to attract large audiences and media attention, such as exhibitions, parades, demonstrations, sports games, music events, and various celebrations<sup>350</sup>. It is already exemplified by the film *HISTORISCHE OPTOCHT IN ROTTERDAM* (1913, Alex Benno), about the celebration of one hundred years of independence. There are, however, earlier examples of the link between events and films, including recordings of fair grounds in the late 1890s, being the cradle of cinema itself<sup>351</sup>. As such, ‘going to the movies’ is another kind of event that can be mentioned here. The films themselves add a layer of complexity to this web of events. Moreover, the presence of journalists, like the cameramen of Weisbard, Tuschinski and Polygoon, increased the importance of events. They turned them into news, adding value to it. In this way, media paved the ground for more and greater events to take place.

Events imply a certain temporality. Yet, they also affect spatial, visual and social structures, with long lasting effects, whether through buildings, films or social networks. Moreover, events enable following events to take place, and so they are weaving a fabric that animates the city. Events are intermediaries between people and the city, between the present and a continuing history, between time and space, space and image, image and idea.

I will focus here on planned manifestations, which turned out to be highly important within the cultural ecology at large. The first case has to do with sports games, which I have framed under the heading of ‘urban playgrounds’. The second deals with aviation, as a particular kind of traffic. This will be followed by the *Nenijto* exhibition, which was a huge event to promote the city, by integrating different media. All this has been of major importance within the cultural history of Rotterdam, for the values on which it relied and which it elaborated, although relatively little has been published about it. In the case of the *Nenijto*, Marlite Halbertsma has established a connection between this event and the world exhibitions of Barcelona (1929) and Antwerp (1930), among others. The article was published in the book *Interbellum Rotterdam* (Halbertsma & Van Ulzen, eds., 2001), which accompanied an exhibition that was organised on the occasion of Rotterdam being Europe’s ‘cultural capital’ – itself a major event within a certain tradition, as it turns out.

One important reason that the *Nenijto* and other events have not been canonised within the history of Dutch urbanism, architecture and other disciplines is probably the aspect of

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<sup>348</sup> e.g. *COMMUNISTISCHE DEMONSTRATIE TEGEN DE VLOOTWET* (1923-18, POLYGOON); *VERTREK ‘STATENDAM’* (1929, Orion); *OPENING VAN HET DAMESZWEMBAD ‘DE KOUS’ TE ROTTERDAM* (1928, Henk Alsem); *OFFICIELE OPENING KONINGINNEBRUG* (Polygoon, 1929-06-14), *INGEBRUIKNEMING PARKSLUIZEN TE ROTTERDAM* (1933, Profilti), among many others.

<sup>349</sup> Film stars like Asta Nielsen (*HET BEZOEK VAN ASTA NIELSEN AAN ROTTERDAM*, 1920, Mullens), Eddy Polo (*AANKOMST EDDY POLO*, Polygoon, 1931-04-01), Hertha Thiele (*AANKOMST VAN FILMACTRICE HERTHA THIELE*, Polygoon, 1933-03-17), sportsmen like the Dutch world champion sprint cycling Antoine Mazairac (*ONTVANGST MAZAIRAC*, Polygoon 1929-week21) or the French world champion boxing light-heavyweight Georges Carpentier (*CARPENTIER’S TOCHT TE ROTTERDAM*, 1921, Karl Weisbard), politicians and statesmen like the Japanese prince-regent (and later emperor) Hirohito (*HET BEZOEK VAN HIRO-HITO AAN ROTTERDAM*, 1921, Karl Weisbard), a.o.

<sup>350</sup> Examples of events and film reports about them: cattle show: *PAASVEETENTOONSTELLING IN ROTTERDAM* (1928, Orion); week of illumination: *LICHTWEEK ROTTERDAM* (1930-02-22, Orion); motorcycling games *MOTORBEHENDIGHEIDSWEDSTRIJDEN* (1937-09-11, Polygoon); sailing matches: *DE EERSTE KRALINGSCHE ZEILWEEK 1937* (1938, J.A. van Pelt); *INTERNATIONALE MARATHONLOOP GEORGANISEERD DOOR HET WEEKBLAD ‘HET LEVEN’* (1938-05-22, Polygoon); *LUNAPARK LAND VAN HOBOKEN* (1939, J.A. van Pelt).

<sup>351</sup> e.g. *DE KERMIS*, 1899, Stefan Hofbauer; another example of recordings of an event is *PARADE ROTTERDAMSCHER SCHUTTERIJ*, *ibid*); a self-reflexivity regarding ‘going to the movies’, as an event, but still part of variety shows, is present in *OPNAME UITGAAN DER MIDDAG-VOORSTELLING (VAN CASINO VARIÉTÉ) VAN ZATERDAG 21 JUNI L.L.* (1902, *ibid*).

temporality. However, the notion of temporality itself was important within the general cultural discourses of the 1920s, as it was related to the idea of continuous change. But the results are hard to grasp, and traces are not always obvious. There seems to be an insuperable paradox. The more successful they had been, the less visible they are. It suggests that the quality of temporal works is actually not to be found within notions of materiality and aesthetics, but most of all in the effects these works have had outside their own realm. This demands another way of thinking, especially in the case of architecture history. It is at this point that media become all the more important. However, media historians face a similar difficulty. Media products that have been made in relationship to events have had a very restricted presence too.

As a counter argument one can say that all cultural artefacts, whether buildings or films, have a temporal use value. That is exactly the point and events just make that clear. One could argue, however, that events have been seriously analysed for centuries within theatre and music studies. But there is a difference. Music and theatre performances, and in fact also sports events, are typical instances of the cultural realm, whether they are considered in terms of classical or popular culture. Industrial exhibitions instead, not unlike product demonstrations, or even traffic circulation, and also political acts for example, have a different character. Such events necessarily demand a cross-disciplinary perspective in order to understand their cultural value.

My intention is to look at events as dynamic complexes. Events are not individual works, but collective projects. As such, they have a different dynamic, and a different value. This is not to say that we should ignore individual achievements. But to recognise such individual achievements, we need to understand how they have been contributions to larger projects; we need to trace relations within broader developments, to follow motivations and aims. In order to understand the value of an event, and its constituents, we have to think of an event as a 'network within a network'. In this way, we can perceive and conceptualise a multitude of layers and connections between different objects and settings.

### **urban playgrounds**

To explain the active role of media in the evolution of 'the urban playground', I will consider sports games first of all. Illuminating is a case about an away match of football club Sparta Rotterdam, against HFC Haarlem (1921-02-27), including the travel of Sparta supporters to Haarlem. The newspaper *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* took the initiative for this travel, which by 1921 was still a major enterprise. The newspaper arranged a convoy of trucks, packed with people. The tour started at the Coolsingel Boulevard, in front of the brand new town hall, where an enormous crowd had gathered. Whereas the Coolsingel used to be a canal (Coolvest), Mayor A.R. Zimmerman had proposed to turn it into a metropolitan boulevard, including a new town hall (in neo-Renaissance style) and the central post office<sup>352</sup>. The plan was accepted in 1909. The last stage of this project, the stopping up of the Coolvest until Hofplein, was completed at the beginning of 1921<sup>353</sup>.

The convoy moved from the Coolsingel to the Hofplein, and further onwards, via the Schiekade up to the north, all the way flanked by thousands of people, as if it were a victory parade. As a confirmation of Tschumi's thesis, the Coolsingel and the Hofplein thus provided the spatial preconditions for such an event to happen, immediately when this possibility was there. Elaborating on this thesis, we might draw an immediate connection to the accompanying media processes. Next to the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, and its journalists being present to report the event, the 'expedition' was shown in detail in a report produced by Abraham Tuschinski (VOETBALWEDSTRIJD HAARLEM – SPARTA, Tuschinski, 1921-02-27). Three of Tuschinski's operators were simultaneously shooting, which was still something remarkable for newsreel

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<sup>352</sup> For these two buildings, see: Groenendijk & Vollaard, 2007: 48-49 – town hall: 1912-1920, arch. H.J. Evers; post-office: 1915-1923, G.C. Bremer.

<sup>353</sup> Van de Laar, 1996: 180.

production. Besides the trucks and general overviews, the cameramen portrayed many of the people in the crowd, who all wanted to see themselves that night in the cinema. The report concluded with images of the match, won by Sparta (1-2). Although the match was not a final or such, the media presence made it important. Rather than a sports event, it was a media event, which was, after all, enabled through a new configuration of urban space.

Remarkable is the fact that Polygoon too reported the match. At first sight it might look like any other report made by Polygoon, but it was actually part of its very first news show<sup>354</sup>. Until then, Polygoon had only produced reports and documentaries by commission, while Tuschinski, by that time, had already created the news show TUSCHINSKI ACTUALITEITEN (since 1920). Because of the attention from Rotterdam for this match, Polygoon also went there – not much of an effort, since Polygoon was based in Haarlem. It was the onset for the production of newsreels by Polygoon, although this history is not exactly clear<sup>355</sup>. To be able to do so, Polygoon also needed to set up its distribution, for which it depended on the cinemas. With Tuschinski producing his own newsreels, it seems that Polygoon must have sought new players to collaborate with<sup>356</sup>.

In the next years, Polygoon managed to establish a firm position. For its newsreels to be shown across the Netherlands, including in Rotterdam, various other events were reported, like aviation shows and sailing races on the Nieuwe Maas (1922). Gradually more political and economic events in Rotterdam were reported, like a communist demonstration against military agitation and governmental measures to strengthen the Dutch navy (1923, wk-18), or, for example, a visit of about one hundred representatives of the American railway authorities, with the aim of improving conditions for American tourism (1924, wk-32)<sup>357</sup>.

Entertainment and sports remained nevertheless among the favourite subjects of newsreels dealing with Rotterdam. All kinds of matches and international tournaments were reported, ranging from boxing and swimming to cycling, but over the course of the 1920s, football became the most popular. Whereas Sparta received special attention in the beginning, Feyenoord came soon to the fore, after it celebrated its first Dutch championship in 1924. The earliest recordings of Feyenoord were made during a match against Sparta (1925)<sup>358</sup>. Many more reports would follow, including one of a ‘fancy dress match’ on the occasion of its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1928), while at the same time a film was made for Sparta that had its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary<sup>359</sup>.

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<sup>354</sup> Albers (2004: 291) mentions that it was one of the three newsreels in the first news show of Polygoon; the others were: STAPELLOOP ‘LYBERTY GLO’ and 1-MEI DAG (TE DORDRECHT). The report on the football match has, according to B&G’s archiving order, document identity number 3 (docid: 3). The only Polygoon report at B&G classified as *Polygoon Hollands Nieuws* that has a higher document identity (docid: 2) is the report on the launching of the ship Lyberty Glo from Wilton’s Dry Docks in the port of Rotterdam (rec.: 1921-02-03). The latter might actually be part of a commission, which seems not unlikely considering the interest in film by Bart Wilton.

<sup>355</sup> It might be that the report on the match by Polygoon is actually the material from the Tuschinski production, since the Tuschinski film kept in the collection of GAR actually misses the images of the match. The Polygoon report, in any case, shows various fragments of the match, with a.o. the Haarlem players Arie Bieshaar and Willy Angenent (goal keeper), and the Sparta players Cees Roem (goalkeeper), Cas Ruffelse and Harry Nippius (information from B&G).

<sup>356</sup> A particular case in this respect is a news report concerning the brand new *Ooster Theater* (owned by Frans Berkhout), showing school children getting out of the cinema after the screening of the educational LENTEFILM (1923), made by Polygoon itself. It is an articulated example of self-monitoring. The report is called: UITGAAN VAN HET OOSTERTHEATER NA EEN VOORSTELLING VAN DE LENTEFILM VOOR DE SCHOLEN (*Polygoon Hollands Nieuws*, rec.: 1922-03-07). It is still one of the first news reports made by Polygoon.

<sup>357</sup> It concerned ladies and gentlemen of the American Association of Passenger Traffic Officers (with its president H.B. Callaway) and the American Association of Railroad Traffic Officers (source: B&G).

<sup>358</sup> VOETBALWEDSTRIJD SPARTA – FEIJENOORD [1-0] (1925, Polygoon). It was a crucial match in the western district competition, which was won by Sparta.

<sup>359</sup> The fancy dress match was played at Feyenoord’s old home at the Kromme Zandweg. Important matches, however, were played at the Sparta stadium. The Sparta film included a match against Feyenoord, in the year that the latter became Dutch champion again. Of special interest are also two matches of ‘the classic’ which were shown as shorts in

By the time that Polygoon's newsreels were shown by Tuschinski too, Polygoon made a report on a match between teams of Tuschinski employees, one from Amsterdam, the other from Rotterdam, with Abraham Tuschinski and his family among the supporters (1927-04-15, Polygoon). It exemplifies the close collaboration between Polygoon, as the main Dutch film production company, and Tuschinski, as the main Dutch film exhibition enterprise. Although Tuschinski continued to produce films incidentally, it also commissioned Polygoon to make recordings, for example on the Rotterdam Golden Independent Cup (*Gouden Onafhankelijkheidsbeker*, 1928-11-18), at the Sparta stadium. In this relatively long report, shown at Tuschinski theatres, a selection from Rotterdam plays against the Dutch national football team, for 17,999 fans. Many faces are to be seen, once more. Moreover, the camera tilts from the tribune to a billboard above it, which is an advertisement for Tuschinski. The first goal of the Rotterdam team is shown, made by the outside left player, through a diagonal ground shot. The match results in 2-2, but Rotterdam's Mayor Droogleever-Fortuyn gives the cup nevertheless to the team from his own city. The relationship between Tuschinski and Polygoon is finally exemplified by a football match between the firms, watched by their directors Abraham Tuschinski and B.D. Ochse (VOETBALWEDSTRIJD TUSCHINSKI – POLYGOON, 1931-12-26). It was, obviously, recorded by Polygoon and shown at the Tuschinski theatres. Football was a way to settle things informally and to reinforce connections, while it was also turned into a public event.

The preoccupation with sports was not confined to specially designated spaces; sports events and the activities connected to them extended to the urban space in general. André van der Velden has mentioned a particular event that I would like to recall here<sup>360</sup>. It was a 'live report' of the football game between the Netherlands and Belgium on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 1930. The game was held in Amsterdam. In Rotterdam thousands of people stood in front of the office building of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, where a big screen was mounted that simulated a football field. On the screen were items to indicate the positions of the players, which were moved mechanically, informed by a radio-connection. This event can be considered as a pre-television screening, which attracted so many people that one spoke of the 'Hofplein stadium'. The Hofplein, notwithstanding its problematic profile, was a space that enabled events to take place.

The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, with Rotterdam as *Standort*, turned its city into *Tatort*. It amplified and extended certain events, taking place in Haarlem, Amsterdam or elsewhere, to make it a media event that enhanced the urban experience in and of Rotterdam. Whereas Van der Velden has conceptualised it as 'a projector in the urban space', it adds a dimension to the monitoring function of media, which we might call 'projective reflexivity'. The newspaper actively participated in the course of things taking place in the city, while reporting on it at the same time. It is an instance of active and creative monitoring, which is a matter of both oscillation and memory, both generating and transmitting cultural values. Sports games offered good opportunities to that, since they attracted a critical mass.

Sports games continued to attract attention and hence providing opportunities to extend the urban space as playground<sup>361</sup>. Whereas media enabled broader audiences to watch sports, this

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the cinema: VOETBALWEDSTRIJD FEIJENOORD – AJAX [2-4], 1932-05-01 and VOETBALWEDSTRIJD AJAX – FEIJENOORD [1-3], 1932-05-05. These were matches in the national play-offs, which were won by Ajax.

<sup>360</sup> Van der Velden, 2001: 115-117.

<sup>361</sup> Regarding the link between sports and urban space as a playground, we might pay extra attention to an annual swimming competition, which took place in the river Schie. It is a particular kind of space that provided the precondition for such an event to happen, which also raised attention, e.g. Polygoon newsreels. See for example the edition of 1931, which was won by the Olympic champion Marie 'Zus' Braun (3 KM ZWEMWEDSTRIJDEN, Polygoon, 1931-07-11). Also worth mentioning is the international marathon of Rotterdam, which was organised by the weekly magazine *Het Leven*, another instance of news media involved in turning the city into *Tatort*, see the news report INTERNATIONALE MARATHONLOOP GEORGANISEERD DOOR HET WEEKBLAD 'HET LEVEN' (Polygoon, 1938-05-22) – the marathon was won by the Belgian athlete Meskens. Important became also, among various other events, the annual Concours Hippique (see e.g. 1931, Polygoon).

was paralleled by spatial mediation, in particular through the construction of a new stadium for football club Feijenoord (1934-1936, Brinkman & Van der Vlugt). Whereas media enabled the sharing of an experience across a broad environment, acting as a centrifugal factor for spatial diffusion, the event that it brought under attention functioned as a centripetal force, with a strong spatial concentration. There seems to be a direct correlation between the increase of the former and the latter, resulting in bigger accommodations for ever larger events to take place.

Exactly a month after Polygoon reported that the stadium was finished, with detailed images of its architecture, it recorded the inauguration of the stadium on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 1937. It started with a relay run through Rotterdam-Zuid, to bring the Feijenoord flag from the old field to the new one. Next there was a speech and then the kick-off by Mayor Droogleevers-Fortuyn for the match between Feijenoord and the Belgian football club Beerschot, which was won by the home team (5-2), for 37,825 spectators. About two months later (1937-05-02), the Dutch national team played here for the first time, against Belgium (1-0). As a record for the Netherlands at that time, 60,000 supporters came to see the match, which required the service of seventy extra trams and four hundred controllers, who could hardly handle the crowd<sup>362</sup>. Once the stadium was there, it provided the opportunity for other events to take place as well<sup>363</sup>.

Although sports games were turned into major events that cut across social and political divisions, this, however, became problematic on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1938, when the Dutch national football team was about to play a match against the German team<sup>364</sup>. Since the *Kristallnacht* (1938-11-9), a public discussion had taken place if the match should be cancelled, but the Dutch football union KNVB wanted it to be played. In the end, it was nevertheless cancelled by Mayor P.J. Oud (who had just been installed, see: Polygoon, 1938-10-20). The official reason was to avoid disorderliness, since one expected demonstrations and actions against the German regime, and counteractions of Dutch national-socialists (NSB)<sup>365</sup>.

Besides sports, we can extend the argument of the city turned into mediatised urban playgrounds by considering other events. Among them is the annually held VVV-week, which was organised to stimulate tourism in the city. Part of the 1934 edition was a folkloristic procession, as reported by Polygoon (1934-09-05). Such a national exposure by Polygoon was important, since it stimulated people from elsewhere to come to Rotterdam, to watch another event: an advertisement parade moving through the city, including various cars with billboards, horsemen with flags, and floats decorated with flowers. The parade was, subsequently, made into a cinema commercial, commissioned and presented by cinema Colosseum, and also produced by Polygoon (DE VVV WEEK, 1934). Moreover, Colosseum was one of the participants in the parade, making publicity for its own film screenings, while the parade also moved along the building itself that is to be seen in the commercial<sup>366</sup>.

It turned out to be good publicity for Colosseum, and the next year it commissioned Polygoon to make another commercial<sup>367</sup>. Colosseum even extended the formula, and started to make its own city news reports, in collaboration with Polygoon<sup>368</sup>. In the following years the VVV-week became more spectacular. In its 1935 edition, it revolved around the theme of

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<sup>362</sup> [www.fortunecity.com/wembley/goodison/185/Dekuip1.htm](http://www.fortunecity.com/wembley/goodison/185/Dekuip1.htm) (2007-09-15)

<sup>363</sup> For example the famous boxing match between Bep van Klaveren and Assane Diouf (won by the former), which was also reported by Polygoon (1939-06-25), making use of slow-motion images to increase the dramatic action.

<sup>364</sup> Not unlike other sports games that were organised previously between the Netherlands and Germany, e.g. athletic games for women, organised in Rotterdam as well (ATHLETIEK NEDERLAND – DUITSLAND, Polygoon, 1938-07-11).

<sup>365</sup> Van der Pauw, 2006: 27. See also: [www.xs4all.nl/~jurryt/kuip97.htm](http://www.xs4all.nl/~jurryt/kuip97.htm) Article: 'De Tweede Wereldoorlog: inleiding' (website visited: 2007-09-18).

<sup>366</sup> With a billboard on the façade advertising the film DE JANTJES (1934, NL, Jaap Speyer) while a billboard in the parade makes publicity for the film IK BEN GEEN ENGEL/I AM NOT AN ANGEL (USA, Wesley Ruggles), 'with Mae West'.

<sup>367</sup> I.e. BUITENOPNAME VAN HET COLOSSEUM THEATER, Polygoon, 1935-06-06, showing the façade of the cinema, with an advertisement for NANA (1934, USA, Dorothy Arzner), with Anna Sten, while people queue up to get inside.

<sup>368</sup> See: COLOSSEUM NIEUWS (1938, Polygoon).

navigation, with various replicas of ships exhibited in the city, among them a large pirate ship<sup>369</sup>. Finally, one might draw here a cross-connection to other promotional activities to stimulate tourism; in 1934 the national tourist association ANVV commissioned Visie Film to make a feature length film on the highlights of the Netherlands (NEDERLAND SPREEKT, Max de Haas), which was also released as separate films, including one on Rotterdam, featuring the port and the city centre<sup>370</sup>.

Next to promotional means that combined entertainment and commerce, other events were organised, such as an exhibition about Rotterdam, called *Ontdek Uw Stad* (“Discover Your City”, 1937-1938, design: Pieter den Besten)<sup>371</sup>. This event, which was initiated by the municipality as a relief project for unemployed youths (*Centraal Comité voor Jongere Werklozen*), gave an overview of what had been established in Rotterdam concerning trade, planning, industry and shipping, while it also presented certain cultural and social institutions. Opbouw contributed to it through the presentation of a plan for urban vegetation and relaxation areas. As an event, it was organised from the belief that a great latent interest existed in all that lives in the city<sup>372</sup>. The exhibition became a success indeed, with more than fifty thousand visitors, thanks to the media attention, like that of Polygoon (1937-12-07)<sup>373</sup>. It raised a general interest in, and an engagement with urban development.

## § 2. amazing air-evolutions

According to Le Corbusier, traffic was one of the key functions within urban planning. He framed it in a functionalist perspective, in terms of transportation and connections, which implied the modern values of movement and technology. I will consider a case that explicitly draws upon these values, and how they have contributed to urban development. I will do so by paying attention to the most extreme form of traffic that developed in Rotterdam at that time, which is aviation, with the arrival of the Zeppelin as its pinnacle.

In 1919, the decision was made to build an airport in Rotterdam, called ‘Waalhaven’ (1919-1921, Gemeentewerken)<sup>374</sup>. It would become the first civil airport of Europe<sup>375</sup>. Besides its importance as an accommodation for passenger flights, it also became important as a platform for the ‘spectacle of aviation’. Because of the airport, there were often aeroplanes in the sky over Rotterdam, which gave the city a futuristic appearance. Flying was one of the ultimate technological achievements, and as such a feature of modern culture that stimulated the imagination. As such it was also a matter of leisure and entertainment. In that respect ‘Waalhaven’ is of special interest as an urban space that offered opportunities for events to take place, in particular the so-called ‘aviation shows’<sup>376</sup>. Fun and function went together.

On a limited scale, such shows had already taken place in Rotterdam since the early 1910s. It was also reported through newsreels, which got titles like “sensational flying demonstration by the French air acrobat Pégoud” (1912) and “the amazing air-evolutions of the famous aviator Pégoud in Rotterdam” (1913), which were shot by Herman Luijnen for Pathé

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<sup>369</sup> DE VVV-WEEK TE ROTTERDAM; DE ROTTESTAD IN FEESTDOS (Profilti, 1935). For the following year, see: RIDDERTOURNOOI EN WAGENRENNEN OP Woudenstein (Polygoon, 1936-09-12); PRINS PHILIP VAN SPANJE WOONT DE VVV-WEEK BIJ (Polygoon, 1936-09-05)

<sup>370</sup> Port with industry (as an attraction), ‘SS Statendam’ a.o., and the city with the town hall, a mill, De Bijenkorf a.o.

<sup>371</sup> ‘Tentoonstelling Rotterdam 1937-1938; *ontdek uw stad*’, organised by the ‘Centraal Comité voor jonge werklozen’ (see: Van Gelderen, 1938: 203).

<sup>372</sup> Van Gelderen, 1938: 203.

<sup>373</sup> The reports showed a large number of urban models.

<sup>374</sup> Moscoviter, 1996: 33; Van de Laar, 1996: 192/308. It was made under the supervision of *Gemeentewerken* director A.C. Burgdorffer.

<sup>375</sup> Arenal, 1990. It received immediately a lot of attention, also from other cities, see e.g. BEZOEK BURGEMEESTERS AAN HET Vliegterrein Waalhaven (1922, Willy Mullens).

<sup>376</sup> But not exclusively, since other events would be organised here too, like motor performances, see for example: MOTORBEHENDIGHEIDSWEDSTRIJDEN (rec.: 1937-09-11, Polygoon).



Frères<sup>377</sup>. In this way an immediate connection can be drawn between cinema and aviation. The connection was notably reinforced when Abraham Tuschinski organised, and recorded of course, a great aviation show at sports park Woudestein (VliegDemonstratie op Woudestein, 1919). Two years later Tuschinski was the first to show aerial views of Rotterdam and its surroundings. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, the Italian pilot Umberto Maddalena, as a representative of the *Regia Aeronautica Italia* (Italian Air Force) and accompanied by his wife, publicly demonstrated the hydro-aeroplane Savoia S 16. Tuschinski made an agreement to fly with him. The *Nieuwe Waterweg* (“New Waterway”, Port of Rotterdam) served as a runway, which was then followed through the air. In this way the agglomeration of Rotterdam was shown, still in quite some detail<sup>378</sup>. It was a revolutionary new way to perceive the city, which became valuable to modern city planning<sup>379</sup>.

In 1922 the Waalhaven airport organised the *International Concours Aviatique de Rotterdam* (ICAR, 1922-09-02), which was reported by Polygoon. It addressed the involvement of military representatives and the Royal House, with Prince Hendrik opening the accompanying exhibition on the state of the art of aeroplane navigation. The ICAR combined technological interests, warfare possibilities and entertainment<sup>380</sup>.

Aviation shows were not without risk. That year one of the aeroplanes collapsed and its pilot Saveur was killed. His funeral was subsequently reported and shown at Tuschinski’s *Cinéma Royal* (1922-09-15)<sup>381</sup>. Film amplified the tragedy, which actually reinforced the sensation of the shows. Shown in cinemas, the events were recreated. Film became a reference and a perceptual model for the shows. Many aviation shows followed, throughout the 1920s and 1930s, which were frequently reported<sup>382</sup>. We might particularly mention the occasion of the test flights of the ‘pander baby’ aircraft, which was a production of the Pander factory in The Hague. This aircraft, as a report by Polygoon (1924-11-18) makes clear, was made for the *Salon d’Aviatique* in Paris. It reveals a network that accompanied the airlines of passenger flights, especially those of the KLM (Royal Dutch Airlines).

KLM was founded by Albert Plesman in 1919, with the aid of firms in Rotterdam<sup>383</sup>. It had its base at Waalhaven, and soon at Schiphol (Amsterdam), where it established its headquarters<sup>384</sup>. The aviation network was reinforced by other services, air mail in particular,

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<sup>377</sup> 1912 – SENSATIONEELE VliegDemonstratie door den Franschen Luchtacrobaat PÉGOUD; 1913 – DE WONDERVOLLE LUCHT-EVOLUTIËN VAN DEN BEROEMDEN AVIATEUR PÉGOUD TE ROTTERDAM. See also: VliegDemonstratiën van PÉGOUD TE ROTTERDAM (1913, Willy Mullens).

<sup>378</sup> The film shows, respectively: Oostplein, Kralingen, Hoge Boezem, Gedempte Slaak, Plantage, rangeerterreinen Maasstation, Maasbruggen, Witte Huys, plantsoenen op Oosterkade, Oude Haven, Nieuwe Haven, Haringvliet, Goudsche Singel, Noordereiland, Schiehoofd/Schiemond, Ruige Plaatbrug, Wilton, Koushaven, IJsselhaven, Lekhaven, Schiedam, Schiedam-Zuid, Vlaardingen, Oude Haven, Buitenhaven, Maassluis, polders, Keilehaven, Petroleumhaven, Gemeentelijke droogdokken, Schiehaven, Centraal Station, Diergaarde; Rotterdam-noord, Rotterdam-west/Heemraadsingel, Delfshaven, Kralingse Plas.

<sup>379</sup> In this respect one might also consider the “Diorama of Rotterdam” that Jaap Gidding designed for the world exhibition in Antwerp (1930), a mural that presented in detail the agglomeration of Rotterdam. According to Halbertsma (2001: 215), this painting was based on the use of aerial photography.

<sup>380</sup> The military interest was, for example, also present in the training at Waalhaven (a.o.) of KNIL-soldiers (KNIL = *Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger* = Royal Army of the Dutch East Indies), as addressed by the film: Vliegfeesten te Rotterdam (1928, Orion). See also, e.g. Vliegfeest (Polygoon, 1929-06-23/1929-06-30), portraying Prince Hedrik together with J.M.J.H. Lambooy, Minister of Defense, attending the *conours aviatique* at Waalhaven.

<sup>381</sup> DE BEGRAFENIS VAN DEN GEVALLEN Vlieger SAVEUR TE ROTTERDAM (1922, Tuschinski)

<sup>382</sup> The year 1928 might serve as an index to consider a range of reports: Vliegfeest (1928, Polygoon); Vliegfeesten te Rotterdam, 1928, Orion; Polygoon, 1928-wk04, 1928-wk19, a.o.

<sup>383</sup> i.e. Wm. H. Müller & Co, and *Rotterdamsche Bankvereniging*; Van de Laar, 2000: 309.

<sup>384</sup> Van de Laar, 2000: 309. This location was above all motivated by the fact that it had a more favourable position to access The Hague.

which was also articulated through film<sup>385</sup>. Following Tuschinski, KLM soon established its own photographic service, which released films and aerial photographs, like those in the publication *Rotterdam, Photographed From the Air* (1923)<sup>386</sup>. This booklet also included pictures of the airport itself, which was accompanied by the remark that ‘A visit to the aerodrome is more and more experienced to be one of the pleasant excursion trips.’ Watching aeroplanes at this ‘flight station’ (*vliegstation*), while enjoying a drink at the terrace of *Hotel-Café-Restaurant Waalhaven*, became a major attraction, even on week days.

In a similar way, KLM made company films, with views of the workshops at Waalhaven for example, as well as aerial recordings of the Netherlands, starting with Amsterdam and Rotterdam (*RONDVLUCHT BOVEN NEDERLAND*, 1925, KLM). KLM also collaborated with other film producers, like Orion and Profilti, which made a film that stressed flying as a spectacular mode of perception (*VLIEGEN MET DE KLM*, 1927, Orion-Profilti)<sup>387</sup>. In this film, people get on board at Waalhaven to see with their own eyes what they had already seen in the cinema before. Many other films would be produced by KLM in the next years that presented Rotterdam and the Netherlands from the air<sup>388</sup>. Among them is also *ROTTERDAM* (1937, KLM), to promote the city as a tourist destination, which KLM produced in collaboration with Spido (harbour boat trips), and the zoo, where the film had its premiere too<sup>389</sup>.

One might finally draw a cross-connection to football once more: Tuschinski’s football team not only played against Polygoon, but also against the team of KLM (won by the latter: 1-2), as reported by Polygoon (*VOETBAL TUSCHINSKI – KLM*, 1938-05-29). Although the trinity of film, flying and football might be occasional, the link between film and flying was a firm one, and many more films would be made to exemplify it<sup>390</sup>. This even resulted in a fiction film, *AFFAIRE D-63* (1936, Dahl-Film), a detective parody, which was made through a collaboration between members of the *Rotterdamsche Smalfilmliga* and the *Rotterdamsche Aeroclub*<sup>391</sup>.

### **the arrival of the Zeppelin**

The climax of the air shows was the arrival of the Zeppelin in Rotterdam in June 1932. What made it unique was not just the Zeppelin itself, which stayed hardly half an hour in Rotterdam, but primarily the programming around it. Already in 1918, during WWI, a whole fleet of Zeppelins passed Rotterdam when Germany used them to attack England. A decade later, in September 1928, the first German airship after the war, the ‘Graf Zeppelin’, made its premiere flight. Two weeks later it made a flight to Rotterdam, although it did not land. The next year, in October 1929, the ‘Graf Zeppelin’ made a special *Hollandfahrt* with Rotterdam as its destination<sup>392</sup>. It was reported by Tuschinski in his news show, and it was also an item in the Orion

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<sup>385</sup> Van de Laar, 2000: 309. Since 1920-07-26, to London. See also, for example: *MET DE FOKKER VII EN DE EERSTE LUCHTMAIL NAAR MARSEILLE VANAF WAALHAVEN* (1926, Henk Alsem).

<sup>386</sup> Published by H.A. Kramers and Son and edited in collaboration with the Municipality of Rotterdam.

<sup>387</sup> At the same time Orion also made the news report *VLIEGVELD WAALHAVEN* (1927), and the next year *VLIEGFEESTEN TE ROTTERDAM*.

<sup>388</sup> i.e. *BEDRIJFSFILM KLM WAALHAVEN – SCHIPHOL* (1930, KLM); *LUCHTOPNAMEN ROTTERDAM KLM* (1930, KLM); *ROTTERDAM... THANS* (1938, KLM). Besides that, other enterprises became involved with aviation too, such as Shell, since it provided fuel. It showed its engagement by way of film as well, e.g. *LUCHTVAART EN SHELL* (1934, Shell), including images of Schiphol and Waalhaven (see also: *LUCHTVAARTFILM*, 1934, Shell).

<sup>389</sup> Premiere at the *Sociëteitsgebouw der Rotterdamsche Diergaarde*, 1937-10-29, see: *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1938: XLV.

<sup>390</sup> See for example certain highlights, a.o. reports on the first Dutch female pilot: *NEDERLANDS EERSTE AVIATRICE BEP VERSLUYS* (Orion, 1930-12-04) and Polygoon, 1930-wk33; American pilots visiting Rotterdam: Polygoon, 1930-wk12; see furthermore: Polygoon, 1931-wk13; Polygoon, 1932-wk35; Polygoon 1933-wk04 (about the flight of M.A.G. van der Leeuw and his wife to Africa, where they had made film recordings too, see: Dicke, 2007: 132); Polygoon, 1934-wk37; 1934-wk38; Polygoon, 1937-wk25, among others. See also: *NAAR WAALHAVEN* (1932, Henk Alsem), and a film on the aeroplane factory of Koolhoven (1938, H. Maas).

<sup>391</sup> Smits, 2002: 13.

<sup>392</sup> Areense, 1990: 70.

Revue (1929-10-18). Since it was a 'media event', images of the Zeppelin were also included in the film *GROOT ROTTERDAM* (1929, Co van der Wal), which promoted the magazine with that name. Masses of people went out in the streets to catch a glimpse of the 'air castle' (which also did not land). 'It seems as if the Rotterdammers were looking in the air for something they could not find on the earth', as Halbertsma and Van Ulzen have framed it (2001: 12)<sup>393</sup>. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1932 the 'Graf Zeppelin' made another *Hollandfahrt*, from Friedrichshaven to Rotterdam, with the purpose to land at Waalhaven. The event was initiated by the *Rotterdamsche Aeroclub* and organised by Jacques Kleiboer<sup>394</sup>. It was a 'cinematic event', not only because it was widely covered by film reports and other media, but even more so for the way it was organised.

First of all, the arrival was announced long before, which created a general suspense. Everybody knew about it, everybody was talking about it, and everybody was out in the streets at the moment supreme, turning the city into a tremendous hive. Secondly, the airport had been dressed as 'festive grounds'. The event was sold-out. Fifty-thousand people bought a ticket to attend the show, besides a further fifty-thousand people who were present at the Airport Twente (Enschede), in the east of the Netherlands, where the Zeppelin made a stopover (it was no coincidence that the organiser Kleiboer came from Enschede himself). These 100,000 people made the event a commercial success. In order to attract all these people to the airport, even though they could see the Zeppelin perfectly anywhere else, the organisation arranged several attractions. At Waalhaven were performances by gymnasts and musicians, as well as aviation shows, and aerial tours. The latter was a highly sophisticated attraction, since people could make flights above the city to see all the masses out in the streets – the event created its own conditions to be a real event. However, the biggest attraction was, as they called it, 'the voice of the giant'.

Radio was still something new, and so was the use of loud-speakers in open air. Pilots of escorting aeroplanes reported on the voyage. At the airport, a narrator, Mr. Slot, made a story out of it for the thousands of people waiting there. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* (1932-06-20) wrote:

His voice went over the area in mighty waves, whipped up by 1200 Watt; it reached the remote auditors, and then ebbed away to hazy distances. The audience listened with close attention: 'The Zeppelin flies above North-Holland'...<sup>395</sup>

The suspense was brought to a climax. The deliberate use of sound made the audience aware of other sounds as well. In the same newspaper article, the journalist mentioned the noise of a Hawk airplane that accompanied the Zeppelin and said:

The Hawk descended. The engine turned silent. From the direction of the city a mighty 'organing' sound was coming. The Zeppelin. Suddenly all boats in the harbour started to whistle. It was an Old-Years' night-sound, impressive. The gigantic airship fared straight towards the airfield. All the people became taciturn. One-hundred-thousand faces were directed to the cloudy sky, where a new cloud appeared with a silver shine. 'Graf Zeppelin', one read.<sup>396</sup>

The arrival of the Zeppelin was a truly audio-visual event.

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<sup>393</sup> Original quote: 'Het lijkt wel alsof de Rotterdammers in de lucht zochten wat ze op aarde niet vonden.'

<sup>394</sup> Areense, 1990: 72.

<sup>395</sup> Original quote: "Zijn stem ging in machtige golven, opgezweept door 1200 Watt, over het terrein, bereikte de verste toehoorders, ebde af naar nevelige verten. Gespannen hoorde men toe: 'De Zeppelin vliegt boven Noord-Holland'....."

<sup>396</sup> "De Hawk daalde. De motor zweeg. Uit de richting van de stad kwam een machtig, orgelend geluid. De Zeppelin. Opeens begonnen alle booten in de haven te fluiten. Het was een Oudejaarsnacht-geluid, indrukwekkend. Het reusachtige luchtship voer rechtstreeks naar het vliegveld toe. De menschen werden er stil van. Honderdduizend gezichten richtten zich naar den bewolkten hemel, waarin nu een nieuwe wolk kwam met een zilveren schittering. 'Graf Zeppelin' las men."

This show took place at a time that cinema in the Netherlands was at an impasse. From 1930 to 1934, no Dutch feature film was released. The film industry could not yet handle the introduction of sound technology, while many theatres had problems with it too until 1932. The arrival of the Zeppelin can be seen as a reality substitute for the cinema, where the cinema used to be a substitute for reality, although its cinematic quality is also reflected by film reports, first of all those by Profilti and Polygoon (1932-06-18). Both companies were still in their first year of producing newsreels with sound, with a voice-over commenting on the event. Besides this, we might mention amateur recordings<sup>397</sup>, and a film impression by avant-garde filmmaker Paul Schuitema (*DE GRAF ZEPPELIN IN NEDERLAND*). He showed both the spectators and the Zeppelin, flying diagonally through the film frame, while it subsequently seems to turn rapidly around because of the camera moving around its axis. Notwithstanding the different motivations of the filmmakers, all of these images highlight a futuristic moment in the history of Rotterdam.

However, by that time, Waalhaven had definitively lost its battle with Schiphol airport. The plan for a tunnel under the river Nieuwe Maas, to reduce the time to access Waalhaven from the north, did not make a change, nor did the increasing number of aeroplanes visiting the airport<sup>398</sup>.

### § 3. Neniĳto

During the summer of 1928, when the Olympic Games took place in Amsterdam, Rotterdam wanted to profit from its attention by organising the *Nederlandsche Nijverheids Tentoonstelling*, called Neniĳto for short<sup>399</sup>. This industry exhibition included contributions from the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, France, Denmark and Austria, continuing the tradition of world fairs that had started in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. New, however, was the heterogeneous combination of product information and entertainment, as Marlite Halbertsma has argued (2001: 214). Moreover, the exhibition was organised as a matter of city marketing, for which tactics of theatre and advertisement were used. I would add media to this as well, which played an important role, including newspapers and magazines, photography, film, sound, performances, and various forms of visual art<sup>400</sup>. In this way, the Neniĳto became a mass event that attracted one-and-a-half million visitors in four months<sup>401</sup>. For the time being, the Neniĳto became part of big city life, even though the exhibition area was situated outside the actual city, in the Blijdorp polder. Many people went to the exhibition every week, at the expenses of entertainment in the city, especially the cinema. The revenues of the cinema theatres that year were 90,000 guilders less than the year before<sup>402</sup>. So the exhibition became a kind of substitute for the cinema.

According to Halbertsma (2001: 211), the Neniĳto was the beginning of a two-fold marketing strategy that highlighted the city's modern architecture and its harbour. The exhibition itself, with its industrially made, temporal pavilions in geometrical forms, was a major example of contemporary architecture. Its masterplan and design was made by the young Rotterdam architect Christinus Bonifacius van der Tak (•1901-†1977)<sup>403</sup>. One entered the exhibition through a large semi-circular building flanked by two towers. Behind it was the Rotterdam Pavilion, designed by city architect Adrianus van der Steur (•1893-†1953). This cubist building, which was rather different in style from Museum Boymans that Van der Steur would make too, was considered one of the sensations of the exhibition, both for its architecture and the huge scale

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<sup>397</sup> E.g. anon., 1932; J. de Klerk, 1932; K.L.A. van der Leeuw.

<sup>398</sup> Van de Laar, 2000: 310. In 1933 there landed 4,799 aeroplanes at Waalhaven. By 1938 Rotterdam faced the threat of having no airport altogether, which was countered by a unique publicity campaign (Van de Laar, 2000: 312).

<sup>399</sup> It took place from the 26<sup>th</sup> of May to the 30<sup>th</sup> of September.

<sup>400</sup> e.g. art works by Hermann Bieling, Hendrik Chabot, Leendert Bolle, Laurens van Kuik (Van de Laar, 2000: 376).

<sup>401</sup> Halbertsma, 2001: 209.

<sup>402</sup> Halbertsma, 2001: 209.

<sup>403</sup> He became later the city architect of Amersfoort. His oeuvre is stylistically related to that of Willem Dudok and the architects of functionalism – see: Groenendijk & Vollaard, 1998: 86.

model of Rotterdam and its harbours that it presented. In this model, the river Nieuwe Maas served as a walkway to watch the city. Through this model one could simply locate the various enterprises that were presented in the halls.

Van der Tak designed four big halls, of which three were identical. They consisted of iron constructions covered with wooden panels, finished with white plaster, for which reason the *Nenijto* has also been called “The White City”<sup>404</sup>. They were decorated with horizontal and vertical coloured stripes, like all other buildings, which had been the most striking element of the exhibition according to the accounts of visitors<sup>405</sup>. The colours of the stripes were reinforced by the deep red geraniums in the flower-boxes at the kiosks. Moreover, this formed a contrast with the well-designed abundance of greenery all over the area. A resemblance with colours used by *De Stijl* seems likely, but little is known about this<sup>406</sup>. Although many images have been made of the exhibition, all documentation is in black-and-white.

Between the four halls, Van der Tak drew an avenue with more than twenty kiosks, each six metres in height, in an expressive cubist style. At the end of the avenue, Van der Tak designed *Café Caland*, also in a typical modernist style. Next to it was a similar kind of pavilion for the designers associations VANK-BKI, marked by a slender tower, and some kiosks, like that of *Celotex* (arch. H. Th. Wijdeveld)<sup>407</sup>. Along the avenue ran a 2.5 kilometre railway track with a small steam-train that pulled a long row of open passenger wagons. It connected the entrance building to the amusement park behind the avenue and *Café Caland*. This Lunapark was one of the biggest of Europe and the biggest ever created in the Netherlands at that time. It included a hippodrome, a ‘waterchute’, a ‘Bergbahn’, a ‘Niagara waterfall’, a car track, where one could drive real cars, dodgems and a swingmill<sup>408</sup>. The organisation of the Lunapark was the responsibility of the entertainment firm Hommerson, which had actually grown from a travelling film company<sup>409</sup>.

During the exhibition several activities were organised, like a parade of decorated cars, an automobile game of skill, a tribute to the Olympic swimming champions Marie ‘Zus’ Braun and Marie Baron, a festive visit of the queen-mother Emma, a ballooning show, and a great lottery to win a Cadillac Sedan and other cars, as well as various consumer goods<sup>410</sup>. One of the most striking presentations at the *Nenijto* was that of the brand new medium of television, by the British inventor John Logie Baird, which followed after presentations that he had held in London and Berlin shortly before. This show got much attention in the press and on the radio, but it was postponed several times. Only at the last day of the exhibition (1928-09-30), the demonstration of the Baird-televisor actually took place<sup>411</sup>. It was immediately picked up by Philips, with serious broadcasting plans as a result, but that would eventually take another twenty-five years<sup>412</sup>.

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<sup>404</sup> Daalder, 1990: 327.

<sup>405</sup> See: Den Ouden, 2003; this CD-ROM is a collection of memoirs and general information about Rotterdam.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid. About the colours is a ‘call for memories’, addressed to people who have been there.

<sup>407</sup> The design of the *Celotex*-kiosk integrated typography and architecture (Broos, 1989: 20). The participation of Wijdeveld is of interest, since he who would design the Dutch pavilion at the world exhibition in Antwerp two years later, see: OPENING NEDERLANDSCH PAVILJOEN OP DE WERELDTENTOONSTELLING IN ANTWERPEN (1930, Orion) [filmography Rotterdam]. It was a show that elaborated on the idea of an exhibition based on theatre and advertisement tactics.

<sup>408</sup> De Winter, 1988: 4.

<sup>409</sup> This family company, directed by Hendrikus Hommerson, who was trained as an artist, began its history at fairs around 1896. After a few years Hommerson began, for which he produced films himself, especially newsreels and local recordings. This was continued until 1917, when Hendrikus Hommerson died. His sons took over and introduced other kinds of entertainment. [www.hommerson.nl/bedrijfsinforhistorie.html](http://www.hommerson.nl/bedrijfsinforhistorie.html) (2009-04-01).

<sup>410</sup> The Cadillac for 6-7 persons was worth 13,600 guilders. See a poster (end of May 1928) that announced the lottery – ‘Krantenkipsels *Nenijto*’, GAR: ‘Rotterdamse Bibliotheek’, nr. XXVI B80.

<sup>411</sup> Wieten, 2003.

<sup>412</sup> In Rotterdam, film operator Max Vis of the W.B. Theatre, also started to experiment with television, using a Nipkow-disc, while he developed a special kind of lamp, which would be produced (and patented) by Philips. In 1936,

Philips was present at the Neniĳto to promote its radio sets, which were present in every exhibition space, while Philips introduced also sound installations along the avenue, which were the so-called ‘singing towers’ (*zingende torens*). A surprised journalist reported that there was suddenly violin music in the air, or any other kind of sound, coming from any place at any moment<sup>413</sup>. Highly involved in the organisation of the exhibition, and clearly visible, was the presence of the printed press. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* had its own impressive pavilion, next to that of the city of Rotterdam. The newspaper also presented itself by way of a film, made by Polygoon<sup>414</sup>. The NRC, in its turn, had a big stand in one of the halls. Besides their presentations, they also reported on the happenings. The *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* even published a daily Neniĳto-paper, while the NRC published a weekly special Neniĳto-edition. Besides the press there were also cinema newsreels, starting with the construction of the exhibition and various activities that were organised (Polygoon, 1928)<sup>415</sup>. Among them are also recordings of an ‘African village’ where one could observe the daily life of about one hundred Senegalese people that were exhibited here<sup>416</sup>. Such images were screened as newsreels in the cinemas, in Rotterdam and elsewhere, as extensions of the event, while some of them were also shown at the event itself (e.g. *KONINKLIJKE FAMILIE OP DE NENIJTO*, Willy Mullens).

The organisation of the Neniĳto made an agreement with Willy Mullens’ film production and distribution company Haghe Film to show industrial films at the event. Therefore a small cinema theatre was made at the Neniĳto, for free shows of about one hour, which took place throughout the day<sup>417</sup>. For this occasion, several promotional films were made, by Haghe Film especially Transfilma<sup>418</sup>. The latter made, for example, films commissioned by Daniel van Beuningen, the main financier of the Neniĳto and director of the coal trading association (SHV) and various other enterprises<sup>419</sup>. These films, which were made by Andor von Barsy, presented a diverse image of the harbour, with movements of ocean liners, tug boats, Rhine barges, and cranes for loading and unloading, but they had also one thing in common. They emphasised efficiency and modernity.

Similarly Transfilma also made films about modern alimentary production, such as milk and bread, and one about beer<sup>420</sup>. In the case of the latter, *ORANJEBOOM, HET BIERBROUWBEDRIJF* (1927), a witty reference is made to the Neniĳto. The end of the film shows a Dutchman, a Chinese, an African, and a Bavarian, uniting the world by drinking beer together. Rotterdam had a large Chinese community, since many Chinese worked as sailors for Dutch

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when the BBC had a series of test transmissions, to be received within a radius of 40 kilometres, Vis could nevertheless receive the programmes on his system, and BBC technicians came over to see how it worked; Vis in: De Vries, 1983.

<sup>413</sup> NRC, juni 1928 (week after opening), front page of special edition Neniĳto, GAR: ‘Rotterdamse Bibliotheek’, nr. XX C48.

<sup>414</sup> The film is missing, but Polygoon also made a news report out of it: *OPNAME VOOR ROTTERDAMSCH NIEUWSBLAD* (1928, wk01).

<sup>415</sup> All these Polygoon reports have been collected under the title *NENIJTO* (1928) at GAR, see: Polygoon. See also: *DE NENIJTO IN AANBOUW* (Polygoon *Hollands Nieuws*, 1928); *OPSTIJGEN VAN BALLON* (Polygoon, 1928-08-11).

<sup>416</sup> *AMADOU SECK HET NEGERJONGETJE VAN DE NENIJTO* [mother with baby] (Polygoon, 1928-07-08); *NEGERDORP OP DE NENIJTO TE ROTTERDAM* (*DOOPLECHTIGHEID SENEGALEZEN OP DE NENIJTO ROTTERDAM*) (1928, Orion).

<sup>417</sup> NRC, juni 1928 (week after opening), front page of special edition Neniĳto, GAR: ‘Rotterdamse Bibliotheek’, nr. XX C48. The theatre was located in ‘Hal A’. There is no record left of the films that were shown here; the films were announced per day by way of a notice board. See: ‘Wat er op de Neniĳto te zien is’, in: *Schiedammer Courant*, 1928-05-28 (‘Krantenknipsels Neniĳto’, GAR: coll. ‘Rotterdamse Bibliotheek’, XXVI B80).

<sup>418</sup> Examples of Haghe Film productions shown at the Neniĳto are N.V. CORNS. SWARTTOUW’S STUWADOOR- EN MACHINEBEDRIJVEN [Rotterdam] and HEEMAF’S MOTORENFABRIEK [Hengelo] (both: 1928, Willy Mullens) – ref.: advertisement by Haghe Film in *De Telegraaf* and *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 1928-06-08 (‘Krantenknipsels Neniĳto’, GAR: coll. ‘Rotterdamse Bibliotheek’, XXVI B80).

<sup>419</sup> E.g. *STEENKOLEN HANDELSVEREENIGING NEDERLANDSCH HAVENBEDRIJF* (1927, Transfilma); *STOOMSLEEPDIENST V/H VAN P. SMIT JR.* (1927, Transfilma); *NEDERLANDSCHE RIJNVAARTVEREENIGING* (1927, Transfilma) – see advertisement Haghe Film, previous note.

<sup>420</sup> e.g. *HYGIËNISCHE MELKSTAL DE VAAN*, and *MODELBEDRIJVEN DER VOLKSVOEDING*.

shipping companies<sup>421</sup>, while the African and Bavarian referred to the extraordinary attractions of an African village, next to, indeed, the *Ober-Bayern* beer hall, with drinking, singing and games. Here one could drink Oranjeboom beer, which was another major sponsor of the event.

The Neniĵto began as a private initiative of businessmen in order to promote the port of Rotterdam. The municipality was initially involved with it for practical reasons, but later also to manifest itself. While Van Beuningen and others had several promotional films at their disposal, the municipality realised its absence as such, but it was not yet too late<sup>422</sup>. They immediately asked Von Barys and Transfilma to make three shorts, about the municipal docks and ferries, the gas works and the electricity works<sup>423</sup>. They show that the harbour serves the importation of coal, neatly connecting to the films by SHV, which is subsequently transported through the city to be used and processed by the factories.

At the Neniĵto, architecture, design and various media communicated a common direction for urban development, and as such it is a clear instance of *Medienverbund*. Some of its expressions only make sense in connection to one another, which is exemplified by the sequence of the four men drinking Oranjeboom-beer in Von Barys's film. Such references would otherwise be missed. By taking the interconnections into account, one can recognise the sensation of modernity that the event provided, by presenting the harbour, industry, and urban space as vehicles of a prosperous future. As such the Neniĵto was both an expression of modern city life and a model for further development.

Besides these prospects, the Neniĵto also provided the city with a concrete facility. After the exhibition was over, the halls were used for the annual 'Primavera', a horticulture exhibition that took place since 1929<sup>424</sup>. It was the precursor of the Floriade (since 1960). As the buildings of the Neniĵto were dismantlable, the halls were also used for other events elsewhere in the city, over a period of about fifty years<sup>425</sup>.

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<sup>421</sup> Since 1911, when Chinese replaced striking Dutch sailors. By 1927 more than 3,000 Chinese worked on Dutch ships (Van de Laar, 2000: 192). See also the short film KATENDRECHT (1925, anon.), on Chinese residents.

<sup>422</sup> During the exhibition Haghe Film addressed the possibility to show films, by way of an advertisement in *De Telegraaf* and *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 1928-06-08 ('Krantenknipsels Neniĵto', GAR: coll. 'Rotterdamse Bibliotheek', nr. XXVI B80).

<sup>423</sup> HET GEMEENTE ELECTRICITEITSBEDRIJF; HET GEMEENTE GASBEDRIJF ROTTERDAM (1928, Transfilma).

<sup>424</sup> See e.g. KONINKLIJK BEZOEK AAN BLOEMENTOONSTELLING IN NENIĴTO GEBOUW (1929, Orion), and the reports by Polygoon: OPENING BLOEMENTOONSTELLING (rec.: 1929-04-24) and KONINGIN MOEDER BEZOEKT BLOEMENTOONSTELLING (rec.: 1929-04-25), VIJFDE PRIMAVERA EN NAJAARSTENTOONSTELLING (1935-11-06), PRIMAVERA BLOEMENTOONSTELLING (1936-04-09), HM DE KONINGIN BEZOEKT PRIMAVERA (1938-04-08).

<sup>425</sup> De Winter, 1988: 7.