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Cinematic Rotterdam: the times and tides of a modern city

Paalman, F.J.J.W.

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CHAPTER 8. A MODEL TO COMMUNICATE THE CITY

§ 1. cinematic models

The new city that emerged under the direction of city planner C. van Traa (1944- 1964), and under the supervision of the Mayors P.J. Oud (1945-1952) and G.E. van Walsum (1952-1965), became an international model of planning and urbanism⁹²¹. This was supported by film and television⁹²². An example is the CBS report THE STORY OF ROTTERDAM (1955, Walter Cronkite, Max de Haas), to highlight the results of the Marshall Plan aid⁹²³. Cronkite, standing in front of the St. Laurens church, starts to tell the ‘story of Rotterdam’. He visits the town hall where he meets city planner Cornelis van Traa, who explains the reconstruction plans. In the meantime, images of construction works are shown. The city seems to be a place of joy and happiness. It is proud of the new shops along the Coolingsingel, including the Bijenkorf by Breuer, the housing estates of the Lijnbaan, the new offices, and the St. Laurens church that is being reconstructed; in its port two tugboats tow the impressive ‘Nieuw Amsterdam’ ocean liner. The city is both a place of busy traffic and quietness; it is both a city without a heart, expressed by Zadkine’s sculpture, and a city of progressive human values, symbolised by the statue of Erasmus. After finishing the interview with Van Traa, Cronkite states that Rotterdam could serve as a model for city planners elsewhere in the world, and he ‘gives back’ to New York⁹²⁴. Rotterdam travelled the world in a nutshell, as a model, like a movie star.

Film and television became increasingly important to communicate ideas and to generate support about the new urban society that had to be built after the war⁹²⁵. In comparison to the pre-war period, ‘a shift in mode of address can be detected from that of engagement, to model and statement...’, as Elizabeth Lebas (2007: 36) has remarked in the case of Glasgow. This also applies to Rotterdam. Film offered a model *of* the city and a model *for* the city, on top of the city being a model in itself. This modelling through film happened in different ways.

The ‘modernity thesis’ suggests a correlation between between modernity and cinema in terms of perception⁹²⁶. As such we may pay attention to the fact that city planner Van Traa was a film enthusiast himself. Whereas he first explained his plan (1946) in terms of functionality, he also pointed to the way it is experienced, which is exemplified by the connection between north and south. According to historian Paul van de Laar (2000: 460), accessibility was one thing, but ‘[e]qually important was the feeling that a passenger to Rotterdam-South would have’. He quotes Van Traa describing his plan with the following words: one ‘passes twice the river, twice a harbour, and then goes along the heads of two of the largest and most vivid harbours of Europe, and all in a grand totality, so that one who experiences it becomes enthusiast once and again,

⁹²¹ See e.g. Mumford, 1957; Benevolo [1960] (in: Wagenaar, 1992: 13); Bacon, 1964: 6; Hillebrecht, 1964: 2; Johnson-Marshall, 1964: 5 e.a.

⁹²² An early example of a foreign report on Rotterdam after WWII is the British production IN ROTTERDAM (1946, Ronald Haines). It shows the city mainly from the river Maas, paying attention to the destroyed city, but above all to the historical heritage that is still saved, in particular the *jenever* (gin) distilleries. Other examples are the Yugoslavian report HAMBURG-HAG-ROTTERDAM (1955, Vladan Slijepcevic) and the Italian ROTTERDAM (1957, Igor Scherb), a.o.

⁹²³ Max de Haas frequently worked as a cameraman for CBS, and it had been him who had convinced Cronkite to come to Rotterdam (Bert Hogenkamp, personal communication FP, 2009-01-13).

⁹²⁴ See also www.geheugenvannederland.nl; the film is mentioned under the title: AMERIKAANSE BELANGSTELLING VOOR WEDEROPBOUW IN ROTTERDAM.

⁹²⁵ Municipalities promoting themselves by way of film had already a tradition before WWII (e.g. films by Willy Mullens since the 1910s). During the war Multifilm (i.c.w. VNF) made a series of films for different cities, a.o. Nijmegen, Schiedam, Dordrecht, Eindhoven, and Tilburg (see: NFDB > Multifilm and/or Allan Penning, dir.), as well as Filmfabriek Holland, e.g. Amsterdam, Arnhem, The Hague, Gouda (ref. NFDB). As a ‘genre’ the city film had its heydays in the 1950s, with titles such as NIJMEGEN, STAD AAN DE RIVIER (1951, Frans Dupont), OUVERTURE DEN HAAG (1954, Rudi Hornecker), HENGELO 1954 (1954, Polygoon), VLAARDINGEN KOERST OP MORGEN (1955, Jan Schaper), TILBURG, HARMONIE VAN EEN GEMEENSCHAP (1956, Otto van Neijenhoff), ZAANDAM, ONZE STAD (1956, Polygoon-Profiliti), AMSTERDAM, STAD VAN HET WATER (1957, Max de Haas), GOUDA ALBUM (1960, Walter Smith), a.o.

⁹²⁶ For this term, see: Bordwell, 1997: 140-147; cf. ch. 12.§1.

while it is most important for the identity formation of the entire city⁹²⁷. Van Traa's plan became a matter of 'scripted spaces' (to use the concept of Norman Klein, 1999).

In a similar way Van Traa designed 'the window on the river' (*het venster op de rivier*), which established a visual connection between city and port, with the port being a 'window on the world'. After an idea by Backx, Van Traa designed this (eventually unsuccessful) plan by enlarging the Coolsingel boulevard up to the river, which he explicitly explained in aesthetic and psychological terms⁹²⁸. In general, Van Traa paid attention to spatial contrasts, such as low-rise versus high-rise, housing versus leisure facilities, and high-density complexes versus open spaces such as parks and waters. Together with a refined transportation system this enabled an 'urban montage', with different places quickly succeeding each other⁹²⁹.

This links up with an important aspect of the modernity thesis, the correspondence between cinema and mobility. The 'Basisplan', and following plans, foresaw an elaborate circulation system, including a network of roads with crossings at different levels, tunnels and roundabouts, a periphery motorway with fly-overs, as well as tramways and railways, including terminals and stations, next to airports⁹³⁰. Moving through the city became a cinematic experience, which was exemplified by newsreels and other reports on infrastructural advances⁹³¹. Moreover, the car got integrated in the architectural project, by way of interior roads, car parks and car ports⁹³². Such an integration was continued at pedestrian level by applications such as elevators, escalators and revolving components⁹³³.

In addition to the movements that were enabled by all kinds of built structures, the act of building these structures endorsed the city already with a cinematic quality. It is exemplified by the *Rondrit Wederopbouw Rotterdam* (org.: Jan Lebbink). During the summer of 1946, the "Office for Information and Publicity" and the "Rotterdam Tourist Information Board" (VVV) organised a daily two-hour 'reconstruction excursion' by bus. It was a 'reality film' that played with the imagination – almost nothing was being built yet in 1946 – through the suggestion of what the city could become, as explained by a guide. Due to its success, the excursion became an annual event, which lasted until 1966⁹³⁴. Next to that, a special international tour got organised (by the VVV), with explanations in three languages. Over the course of the next decade, new suburbs were visited too, as well as the infrastructural projects just mentioned.

Since 1947, the information office also organised the *Opbouwdag* ('construction day'), which would take place every year on the 18th of May, under supervision of K.P. van der Mandele⁹³⁵. It was the day, in 1940, that city planner Witteveen had been commissioned to draw

⁹²⁷ Van Traa quoted by Van de Laar, 2000: 459-460; original quote: 'Minstens zo belangrijk was het gevoel dat de passant op weg naar Rotterdam-Zuid zou ervaren. Dan "passeert hij tweemaal een rivier, tweemaal een haven en komt dan [p459] langs de koppen van twee van de grootste en levendigste havens van Europa en dat alles is een grootsch geheel, dat iemand die dat beleeft, telkens weer stimuleert en dat van het grootste belang voor de karaktervorming voor de gehele stad is.'

⁹²⁸ see: Van de Laar, 2000: 460. The plan was partly fulfilled by a 14-storey housing block, the 'Maastorenflat' (1955-1956), designed by Herman Bakker, who had previously worked for the studio of Van Ravesteyn (cf. Groenendijk & Vollaard, 2004: 25). The idea was eventually unsuccessful, since the port gradually moved westward, out of the city.

⁹²⁹ The 'urban montage' would be further reinforced by the (partly underground) metro line, built since 1959. Once it was built, it was considered a tourist attraction for its great variety of views, see: Edzes, 1974: 1.

⁹³⁰ There are many examples to be found in Rotterdam for the kind of transition spaces mentioned; airports: Heliport Rotterdam, Airport Zestienhoven; train stations: e.g. Rotterdam Central Station; transportation: e.g. Rotterdam Metro; circulation system / crossing at different levels: e.g. Weena, 's Gravendijkwal; roundabout: e.g. Hofplein, Droog-Leavever Fortuynplein; periphery motorway with elevated junctions: i.e. the Ruit om Rotterdam with e.g. Kleinpolderplein, Knooppunt Ridderkerk; tunnels: e.g. Maastunnel, Beneluxtunnel.

⁹³¹ One of the earliest reports as such was on the opening of a new tramway, *Polygoon Neerlands Nieuws*, 1946-wk06.

⁹³² e.g. Groothandelsgebouw

⁹³³ e.g. restaurant of Euromast

⁹³⁴ See the article: 'D.C. Zuur: in de ene hand de microfoon...in de andere het stuur', p24 in: *Rotterdam, Officieel Tijdschrift van de Gemeente Rotterdam*, vol. 2/1, 1963. As explained by D.C. Zuur, one of the bus drivers, he got his text from the office, but was also able to add information himself.

⁹³⁵ Groenendijk, 2004 > Karel Paul van der Mandele (www.wonen.rotterdam.nl/smartsite2043748.dws)

the reconstruction plan, and it was rhetorically applied here. It would become an annual event, which became a way to attract attention from the media, among them Polygoon⁹³⁶. The act of building was turned into a show, which eventually would be recorded on film too.

These cases, next to the fact that various architects and planners were interested in cinema⁹³⁷, seem to be confirmations of the modernity thesis, if they would not just tell one part of the story. The city, as argued by Bernhard Tschumi (1994 [1983]: 140), can only be understood when space is perceived in relation to acts that take place in space, that empower space, and that make certain spatial structures important. Media should be considered here too. They make it possible to express complex urban life and to provide frames for urban development. This goes beyond perception, in aesthetic terms. The connection between cinema and modernity, and the modern city in particular, is multifold and not limited to a particular cinematic mode.

Architectural and planning projects have traditionally been presented by technical and perspective drawings, maps and three-dimensional models. Film became another medium to present plans, and quite literally regarding the films of the department of “Public Works” (Gemeentewerken), made by its own ‘phototechnical service’. In addition to the classical media, film could show developments and processes, because of movement and sequences; it could show a project growing. Through framing and montage it could visualise relationships, between different spaces, people, and activities. Film could also suggest certain developments taking place, by showing existing spaces and projects under construction, and subsequently empty lots, in order to imagine similar things happening there too.

If one still takes into account that Van Traa used to be a film enthusiast, one might eventually see the ‘Basisplan’ as a kind of film script⁹³⁸. What remains of the post-war city today, in its various facets, is its image on film. Different from set design serving the story of a film, the set here is the subject itself. In its turn, the subject of this architecture and planning is modern life – its organisation, its becoming, its actualisation, and its reflection. The city of Rotterdam followed a strategy in which architecture and planning became a *mise-en-scene* that enabled the city to act; the development of society was the purpose of design. Films articulated this, which includes films that do not concern planning in a direct sense. Whereas Gold and Ward (1997) have addressed the need for commissioners to propagate planning ‘beyond housing’, in the case of Great Britain, one may extend this argument and consider films ‘beyond planning’. Films that promoted the modern city and its institutions, and the architecture that gave shape to it, had the same purpose, which creates an ontological complex in which architecture and cinema are mutually supportive.

2008-12-30). Van der Mandele organised the financial support for this event (like many others), cf. *Rotterdam Jaarboekje*, 1976: 107.

⁹³⁶ E.g. ROTTERDAM STRAKS, OPBOUWDAG IN DE MAASSTAD (Polygoon, 1947-23), including images of the exhibition ‘Rotterdam Straks’ (Museum Boymans); OPBOUWDAG (Polygoon, 1948-22), showing the area where the new airport will be built, housing plans for Mathenesse, the first church to be built after WWII, and reconstruction work on the harbour; KONINKLIJK BEZOEK (Polygoon, 1949-22) shows festivities and a tour through the city and the port by Queen Juliana and Prince Bernhard – the royal couple also visits the emergency houses of Wielewaal (district Charlois), and the ‘Bouwcentrum’ (Building Centre), where C. van Traa informs them about the plans. Such reports are continued in later years, e.g. ROTTERDAM VIERT ELFDE OPBOUWDAG (1957, Polygoon Neerlands Nieuws), OPBOUWDAG 1963 (1963, Polygoon Neerlands Nieuws), STADSNIEUWS 1971 (1971, Soek). It became also a habit to finish the *Opbouwdag* with a film programme. In 1957, for example, it showed in Ahoy’ a film on the reconstruction of the old city of Warsaw – a historical reconstruction that was quite a different from Rotterdam (*Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1958: 88); in 1959, films were shown at the Schouwburg, on reconstruction works in France and England, next to the film DOKBOUW AAN DE NIEUWE MAAS (1959, Ytzen Brusse), on the building of docks for Wilton-Feyenoord – organised by the ‘Comité Rotterdam 1960’, ‘Havenvereniging Rotterdam’, RKS and ‘Genootschap Roterodamum’ – *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1960: 94.

⁹³⁷ See e.g. ch. 2.§1.

⁹³⁸ This applies even quite literally in the case of his slides-lecture (*Het Nieuwe Stadsplan*) that he presented at the *Rotterdamsche Kunstkring* (1946-05-10). *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, ‘Dagelijkse Kroniek 1946’, jrg. 5, 1947: p51 [GAR].

The function of films dealing with city planning and reconstruction can thus be understood in terms of plan, model, and support, in which the notion of model links the other two. A model, in order to be implemented, needs both a plan and support.

§ 2. news reports and television

Important for the reconstruction of Rotterdam was the way it was subject to news reports, which went beyond monitoring, and took on the role of what I have previously called 'projective reflexivity': envisioning development. After WWII, Polygoon continued its weekly news reports, now called 'Polygoon Neerlands Nieuws', which was shown in 110 cinemas all over the Netherlands. In 1946, Philip Bloemendal started to work for the company as a commentator. The typical sound of his voice became well-known in the country: the voice of reconstruction.

The 1950s were the glorious years of the Polygoon news, to which Rotterdam has much to owe. A particular name to be mentioned here is that of Joop Burcksen. He was born and raised in Rotterdam, where he spent much time in the cinemas. He wanted to work as a filmmaker, but after the war there was no film production left in Rotterdam⁹³⁹. Therefore, in 1951, at the age of twenty-two, he joined Polygoon in Haarlem, while still living in Rotterdam for the next few years. After a while he began to work as a sound technician, and later on he joined the editorial board of Polygoon's news. As a cameraman he became responsible for various reports and documentary shorts. He reported on achievements like the 'Groothandelsgebouw', the 'Heliport', the reconstruction of the St. Laurens church and the construction of 'De Bijenkorf', the installation of a radar chain for navigation in the port, as well as the creation of the 'Euromast', among others⁹⁴⁰.

At the same time, television broadcasting emerged⁹⁴¹. It was organised by the *Nederlandse Televisie Stichting* (NTS) in Bussum, which united the main broadcasting associations that had been concerned with radio⁹⁴². The NTS collaborated with Multifilm in Haarlem, and since 1952 they made domestic news reports. During the first years this did not happen on a regular basis yet, and the numbers were still limited. In 1952, Amsterdam was shown in seven reports, and Rotterdam in just one, on housing shortage and a makeshift village of old trams and train wagons. During the next year, Amsterdam was shown another seven times, and Rotterdam three times, including two reports on the new 'Heliport'⁹⁴³.

⁹³⁹ Personal communication of the author with Joop Burcksen, 2007-05-22.

⁹⁴⁰ The Polygoon reports mentioned are: 'Groothandelsgebouw': 1953-23; 'Heliport': 1953-21 and 1953-32, St.Laurens: 1954-25, 'De Bijenkorf': 1956-04, radar chain: 1956-50, 'Euromast': 1959-14. Source: personal communication (FP) with Burcksen. In the well-made report on the radar chain, characterised by various carefully lit scenes, there are also images of a ship dealing with fog. This is the reason why the radar is built, as sight is limited. However, according to Burcksen, the day that it was put to use it was a clear sky. Eventually he took a transparent plastic bag in which he kept his bread for lunch, creased it, and put it in front of the lens. It perfectly looked like a foggy day, in which the radar made sense indeed, and so the boatmen acted alike.

⁹⁴¹ Television had been introduced in the Netherlands by John Logie Baird in 1928, at the Nenijs. The Dutch electronics company of Philips, which had been present there too, began to develop television equipment. One of the Philips pioneers was Erik de Vries, who started to do experiments for the firm in 1931 when he was 19 years old. Throughout the 1930s he would be involved with experiments, like the tv-shows on the trade fair (*voorjaarbeurs*) in Utrecht in 1938. In 1938-1939 he made a tour through Europe to demonstrate the medium (see: http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geschiedenis_van_de_televisie 'geschiedenis van de televisie', 2007-05-27). During the 'Philips Experimental Period' (PET, 1948-03-18 – 1951-07-10), De Vries was in charge of 264 tv-shows for a small number of people in Eindhoven. Afterwards the first national television broadcasting took place on the 2nd of October 1951, from 'Studio Irene' in Bussum (see: www.nos.nl/assets/service/nosnl_overdenos.html 'NOS: ontstaansgeschiedenis', 2007-05-27). De Vries would still play a role as an instructor of tv-directors and tv-cameramen (see: www.beeldengeluid.nl 'Erik de Vries, uitgebreide biografie', 2004-03-25).

⁹⁴² These associations were divided along the lines of what in Dutch has been called the *verzuiling*, an overall social division in different 'columns' (= *zuilen*), which dominated public life. The NTS encompassed representatives of the broadcasting stations KRO (Catholic), NCRV (protestant Christian), VARA (socialist) and AVRO (liberal), and later also VPRO (progressive Christian, soon 'critical').

⁹⁴³ JOURNAAL [housing shortage] NTS, 1952-02-29; JOURNAAL [Heliport], NTS, 1953-05-19, 1953-10-09, 1956-12-04.

An important step was the decision of Multifilm to open a laboratory in Hilversum, near the television studios in Bussum. It is one of the reasons that in 1955 the number of reports rapidly increased, and on the 5th of January 1956 the NTS began its regular JOURNAAL, which was broadcast three times a week⁹⁴⁴. The presence of Multifilm in Hilversum finally led to the joint-venture ‘Cinecentrum’, in which Multifilm collaborated with Polygoon, Profilti and Interfilm⁹⁴⁵. According to Hogenkamp, Multifilm argued that cinema news and television news were different things, and subject to different aesthetic principles, and that therefore no competition existed between them. But Polygoon certainly felt the competition⁹⁴⁶. The JOURNAAL became soon the most popular television programme, while television rapidly spread. In 1955, less than one percent of the Dutch households had a television set. Six years later it was already one third⁹⁴⁷. The time of broadcasting also increased, from twelve hours a week in 1958, to eighteen in 1960⁹⁴⁸. Since television in general became also more important for entertainment, the number of cinema spectators dropped from 64.2 million in 1958 to 38.7 million in 1964⁹⁴⁹.

The NTS reports on Rotterdam concerned mainly the port and the reconstruction. Exemplary is a report on a ‘masonry match’ (JOURNAAL, NTS, 1956-07-12): bricklayers could win the ‘silver trowel’, which was handed over by A.C. De Bruijn, Minister for *productiviteitsbevordering* (‘productivity promotion’). The state heralded the workers as the heroes of the reconstruction, and television amplified it. Most newsreels like this one have remained anonymous, but illustrative is the fact that among the cameramen frequenting Rotterdam were Charles Breijer and Peter Alsemgeest (for the latter, see chapter 12).

Breijer started as a photographer, and was part of the resistance during WWII, together with Cas Oorthuys (a.o.). The two of them also contributed to the brochure *Het Nieuwe Hart van Rotterdam* (1946, ASRO), which accompanied the ‘Basisplan’. Oorthuys would make several photographic series in Rotterdam afterwards, which resulted in the photographic paperback *Dit is Onze Havenstad Rotterdam* (1952) and eventually in his monumental book *Rotterdam, Dynamische Stad* (1959), with photographs of both the city and its port⁹⁵⁰. Breijer, who concentrated on the moving image, made various reports in Rotterdam too, for example about the ‘SS Rotterdam’ (1958), the new flag ship of the HAL built by the RDM (which Oorthuys recorded too)⁹⁵¹. Their recordings remained comparable, in terms of content and style, characterised by sophisticated compositions and perspectives, but always at the service of the

⁹⁴⁴ Since 1958-05-01 this became four times a week, and since 1960-10-03 six times; Scheepmaker, 1981: 152.

⁹⁴⁵ The collaboration started in 1956 and Cinecentrum, with three hundred employees, was officially opened on the 27th of April 1959. Hogenkamp, 2003: 79.

⁹⁴⁶ Scheepmaker, 1981: 19-20.

⁹⁴⁷ In 1955, out of 2,850,000 Dutch households, 25,000 had television sets, and 100,000 in 1957, which was reported by the JOURNAAL (NTS, 1957-01-03). After another two, on the 24th of July 1959, the ‘PTT’ registered number 500,000 and this growth would go on. By 1961 there were one million registrations. Van de Laar (2000: 573) has estimated that there were about 3,000 television sets in Rotterdam in 1955.

25,000 televisions in 1955, in: ‘Na 1960: het tijdperk van de televisie en de auto’, website ‘Vergeten Verleden’, by W8 Onderzoek, 2003 www.w8.nl/tv.htm visited: 2006-02-08. 500,000 in 1959: www.verkeerenwaterstaat.nl/?lc=nl&page=364

Home > Over VenW > Actuele onderwerpen > Historisch overzicht VenW > Overzicht 1957-1966 / 1967-1976 / Overzicht 1977-1986 (Website visited: 2006-03-21). One million by 1961; Van Driel, 1999.

⁹⁴⁸ In: ‘Na 1960: het tijdperk van de televisie en de auto’.

⁹⁴⁹ Hogenkamp, 2003: 80. Over the course of the 1960s, this change was also noticeable regarding sports events as well as visits paid to community centres, a.o. For Rotterdam, see: Van de Laar, 2000: 574.

⁹⁵⁰ On the occasion of the Ahoy’ (1950) Cas Oorthuys had already made a series of photographs on the port. He frequently visited Rotterdam in the following years, broadening his field to the city as a whole, which is also reflected by his photographs for the book *De Steden* (“The Cities”, 1951), in the series *De Schoonheid van Ons Land*.

⁹⁵¹ e.g. JOURNAAL (NTS, 1955-10-06, Belgian ambassador visiting RDM); see also reports on the construction of the ‘SS Rotterdam’ at the RDM: JOURNAAL (NTS, 1958-08-13); FILMREPORTAGE (NTS, 1958-09-13); JOURNAAL (NTS, 1958-09-17); JOURNAAL, 1959-08-21; 1959-09-03; 1959-09-11. Oorthuys included the images of the ‘SS Rotterdam’ in *Rotterdam, Dynamische Stad*.

human concern. This, in general, applied to the television JOURNAAL, which it shared with the photographic association GKI⁹⁵².

Already in 1956, the reports concerning Amsterdam outnumbered those of Polygoon. Concerning Rotterdam, Polygoon remained the most productive until 1959. After that year, for all major cities, Polygoon became second in terms of frequency and numbers of spectators. If we look at the reports of both Polygoon and the NTS JOURNAAL made in the 1950s, Amsterdam was by far the most frequently shown (table 1). Its figure is about the same as that of the four other cities together. This is not only because Amsterdam is the Dutch capital, but its proximity to Haarlem and Bussum/Hilversum also played a role. According to Carel Enkelaar, editor in chief of the NTS JOURNAAL, it was easier to acquire daily news from Paris, Rome or London [and New York] than from the different provinces of the Netherlands⁹⁵³. Rotterdam took a position in between.

Rotterdam was shown through reports on the launching of ships, revealing monuments, and openings of buildings. Reports like these, quite similar to those of Polygoon (table 2), show the attractors of increasing welfare, economic growth and progress. In a survey on television spectatorship, from 1957, respondents made clear, however, that they did not appreciate just reports on formal events⁹⁵⁴. In the next years the JOURNAAL began to change, and to develop its own approach. With more time to broadcast, it started to cover more and different subjects⁹⁵⁵.

Table 1: The City in News Reports, 1950-1959

approximate numbers of reports dealing explicitly with the main Dutch cities⁹⁵⁶

black = NTS Journaal (TV); blue = Polygoon (cinema)

	Amsterdam		Rotterdam		The Hague		Utrecht		Eindhoven	
1950		94		30		42		12		2
1951		68		28		34		17		6
1952	7	91	1	25	3	42	1	13	1	1
1953	7	53	3	32	2	29	1	11	0	5
1954	-	54	-	20	-	36	-	14	-	5
1955	36	76	9	27	11	26	5	16	4	1
1956	77	71	33	33	24	43	18	15	6	2
1957	80	61	22	34	26	26	9	11	9	9
1958	90	52	23	26	34	21	11	10	4	4
1959	112	86	48	37	51	34	28	17	4	5

⁹⁵² Both Oorthuys and Breijer were members of the GKI, just like Aart Klein, who published the photobook *Amsterdam Rotterdam, twee steden Rapsodie* (1959); for the latter, cf. Suermondt, 1993.

⁹⁵³ As addressed by Carel Enkelaar in 1961 on the occasion of receiving the national television award (*Prins Bernhard Fonds Televisieprijs*). Already in its first years, the NTS made an agreement with CBS in New York for news exchange. It then initiated, in 1958, the European News Exchange, in: Scheepmaker, 1981: 31; note on CBS: p28.

⁹⁵⁴ Hoekstra, 2001.

⁹⁵⁵ Gradually the JOURNAAL began to pay attention to events such as accidents, first of all in the port, which would become a frequent subject over the course of time. Early examples are: a report on the explosion at a tug-boat (1957-04-16), and a fire at a cargo ship (1957-06-27).

⁹⁵⁶ Figures are based on the collections 'NOS Journaal' and 'Polygoon' of B&G, May 2007 ('old catalogue'). Counted are reports in which the name of the city is explicitly mentioned in the descriptions within the database of B&G (see: www.beeldengeluid.nl); in this way certain reports have been omitted that, for example, just mention 'Botlek' (harbour area) or 'Schiphol' (airport). Note that some reports might not have been preserved and are therefore not counted. Some reports, on the other hand, have double registrations due to different versions, like the 'jaaroverzicht journaal' (year reports). There are no data available for domestic television news reports in 1954. Note that the numbers of Polygoon also include commissioned films; this however might actually give a more realistic image since they counterbalance certain inevitable omissions.

Table 2: Subjects of Polygoon Reports on Rotterdam, 1945-1959⁹⁵⁷

1945-1949		
port issues (excl. navy)	43	29%
sports games	29	19%
navy	16	11%
reconstruction (building)	14	9%
military (excl. navy)	12	8%
politics	10	7%
other	25	17%
total reports	149	100%
1950-1959		
sports games	73	25%
port issues (excl. navy)	49	17%
reconstruction (building)	44	15%
navy	32	11%
politics	27	9%
arts & culture	25	9%
zoo	11	4%
military (excl. navy)	7	2%
other	24	8%
total reports	292	100%

§ 3. steady spirit

In the 1940s, film production was at a minimum in the Netherlands. Illustrative for the conditions of Dutch cinema at that time is the conception of the feature film *DUTCH IN SEVEN LESSONS* (1948). The British film organisation Rank commissioned Hein Josephson and Charles Huguenot van der Linden to make a series of documentary shorts on the Netherlands. However, during the production Rank got a new board of directors who cancelled the project⁹⁵⁸. The recordings made so far, including aerial shots of Amsterdam and Rotterdam, were dressed into a fictional story, of an English cameraman that visits the Netherlands for seven days. In this way the film is an odd reflection upon itself. Audrey Hepburn plays a Stewardess explaining things about the country. Various sketches on Dutch particularities make up the body of the film, which the directors called a 'documentary comedy'⁹⁵⁹. The film presents a cheerful image of a country that has left the hardships of the war behind, which appears as a feature length promotion film for the Netherlands. It neatly links up with Huguenot van der Lindens' later industrial films that got

⁹⁵⁷ The figures are based on the descriptions of Polygoon week reports by B&G (Polygoon collectie), May 2007 ('old catalogue'). Included are reports since 1945 May 5. This overview provides merely a general indication. Reports are classified based on the dominant subject, as determined by the description or title of the report. For example, the first arrival of bananas in the port after WWII, has been classified as 'port'. 'Port', in such reports, is the common denominator, whereas bananas is incidental, but the main 'issue'. Comparable reports, however, might lack the descriptive key used for the classifications here, e.g. arrival of Canadian horses (1945-09-26), which is described by the keys: 'horses' (*paarden*) and 'reconstruction' (*wederopbouw*). Although the arrival of horses helped the reconstruction of the country, I have not considered it as a part of building the city, and, since 'port' is not a key here, I have classified it as 'other'.

⁹⁵⁸ Albers e.a., 2004: 244.

⁹⁵⁹ <http://cultura.nps.nl/page/tv-gids/162614> 2008-08-14.

wrapped into fiction (e.g. *BLOEM DER NATIE*, 1956). It blurred the line between promotion, art and entertainment, which were subject to a common attractor of economic development.

Only by 1950 a major Dutch feature film was produced again: *DE DIJK IS DICHT* (“The Dike is Closed”), directed by Anton Koolhaas. He had previously worked as a (film) critic for the newspaper *NRC* in Rotterdam. After the war Koolhaas was invited to become a member of an editorial committee to supervise *Polygoon*, since it had continued its work during the German occupation. Instead of supervising, however, the committee became an editorial board that became actively involved with other productions too. Due to Koolhaas’s connection with Rotterdam, the city also plays a role in *DE DIJK IS DICHT*, although the main setting is the province of Zeeland. The film tells the story of a man, played by Kees Brusse (trained by the *Rotterdams Toneel*⁹⁶⁰), who comes from the island Walcheren, but stays in Rotterdam for work reasons. When Walcheren suffers a bombardment in 1944, his wife is killed, as she drowns due to a broken dyke. He visits her grave and is taken over by a depression, but he finally understands that the only way out is to get in contact with the villagers, and to join them in their attempt to reconstruct the country.

The dyke, which is broken and repaired again, symbolizes the Dutch nation. This is emblematic for the spirit after WWII, which can also be recognised in various documentaries. Exemplary is *MODERNE ARCHITECTUUR IN NEDERLAND* (1954, Rudi Hornecker), which was commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Art and Science. The film was made to promote the country’s contemporary architecture, which had become the main vehicle for Dutch culture after WWII. Rotterdam was prominently present in this film, with housing, service and industry complexes, including buildings that would remain relatively unknown afterwards⁹⁶¹. A striking feature of this film, besides its expressive framing, was a montage sequence with interchanging portraits of workers and shots of buildings. ‘The Netherlands has adapted itself to the rhythm of this time’, the narrator said⁹⁶². This film, however, was not made before a number of other films had been made that dealt more explicitly with the reconstruction.

Of particular importance are the films by Herman van der Horst, especially *ROTTERDAM AAN DEN SLAG* (“Rotterdam Gets to Work”, 1946), and *STEADY! (HOUEN ZO!, 1952)*. The latter is a film of twenty minutes, commissioned and financed by the ‘Mutual Security Agency’ (MSA) of the Marshall Plan program⁹⁶³. Its aim was to generate support for the reconstruction, and for the American case. However, the movement that Van der Horst was a part of was historically affiliated with the political left – not unlike Dutch Prime Minister Drees that had received the aid and used the film to make propaganda for the PvdA⁹⁶⁴. The reconstruction had different sides that merged into a common aim.

Van der Horst did not use a voice-over or any other kind of commentary. The film, starting at the damaged St. Laurens, and subsequently showing the work being done in the port

⁹⁶⁰ Van de Laar (2000: 556) mentions Brusse and the role of the *Rotterdams Toneel* for the cultural development of Rotterdam after WWII. Kees was the brother of filmmaker Ytzen Brusse, and the son of writer / journalist M.J. Brusse.

⁹⁶¹ Special attention was paid to, a.o. the Groothandelsgebouw, Lijnbaan, department store Wassen/Ter Meulen, and HBU. Examples of relatively unknown buildings shown in the film are: a villa by J. Boks (1951) and housing estates by J. Pot and J. Pot-Keegstra (1950), and H. Hupkes and C. van Asperen (1954). Within less than half-an hour, more than seventy buildings were presented in total. In this way the achievements of the reconstruction became known to the Dutch, and to foreigners, since the film travelled abroad as well. The film, made with Prof. G. Holt as its consultant, had its premiere at 21-08-1954 in The Hague for a large number of architects, and one week later it was shown at the Triennale of Milan (Schelling, 1954).

⁹⁶² Original quote: ‘Nederland heeft zich aangepast aan het ritme van deze tijd.’

⁹⁶³ The premiere of the film took place in the Luxor theatre on 1952-07-2. An introduction to the film was given by Clarence E. Hunter, head of the MSA in the Netherlands – *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1953: 43.

⁹⁶⁴ See: *EEN VERKIEZINGSFILMPJE VAN DE PVD A* (1956, Carel Borgers, see: ‘filmography outside Rotterdam’); this propaganda film was made for the 1956 elections and it was probably broadcast on television. Drees emphasises the achievements of the reconstruction, and refers to *STEADY!*; since a break follows it seems likely that (a fragment of) this film was shown as part of the propaganda film.

and the city, is characterised by a rhythmic editing, expressive cinematography, and an articulated sound design. Simone Brouwers has described it as follows:

In *STEADY!* (1952) the changing appearance of the city of Rotterdam is shown through the eyes of, among others, a pigeon fancier, a war invalid, two boys, an engine-driver and construction workers. All of them look from a different point of view at the city; sitting driving, relaxing, working, high on a scaffolding, low on the water. Via them, Van der Horst tells his story about the city.⁹⁶⁵

The city becomes a rhythmic composition of machines and people. And to refresh the spirit and to make the work even more joyful, the navy band inspires the city with their music. In the description of Hans Keller:

STEADY! deals with the successful continuation of the Reconstruction of Rotterdam. New is the perfection of the displayed technique of image and sound recordings, as well as the editing. The *zoomar*-lens made its entry. It is less light sensitive than the usual fixed lenses, but the *zoomar* – a visual trombone, as W.F. Hermans would call it – is extraordinary action-eager. In this film, which is rightly characterised as dynamical, Herman van der Horst uses virtually all its possibilities. The *pile-driver-sequence*, which he shot with a new lens and which gave him new ideas for the use of sound, has become legendary.⁹⁶⁶

With every bang of the pile-driving machine, by way of quick editing, and a camera tilting rapidly up the façade each time, a new building is shown. The city seems to be built in no-time.

STEADY! was made for a national and an international audience, to show the spirit of the Dutch, and what the country was able to do. The city is presented as a model of reconstruction achievements, and of Dutch modernity. By focusing on the creation of a new city, and leaving out old parts of the city, it reinforces the plans of the city's architects and planners whose starting point was a tabula rasa, or as Van der Horst might have considered it, bare land that has to be appropriated by man. Van der Horst thematised the emptiness of Rotterdam by accommodating the imagery and contents (or the spirit) of a new city. By doing so, the film is an attempt to generate the enthusiasm for the plans.

The British filmmaker Lindsay Anderson, accused this high modernist cinema of having 'too hygienic effectiveness' and advocated the 'injection of dirt'. According to Bert Hogenkamp, there was no place for tensions and conflicts, or for objecting individuals; the people in the work by Van der Horst not as real, but as metaphorical. The films are characterised by harmony and a common aim⁹⁶⁷. The film was nevertheless very successful. The *Rotterdamse Kunststichting*, for example, honoured Van der Horst with the *Penning van de Rotte*⁹⁶⁸.

⁹⁶⁵ Brouwers, 1994: 49; original quote: 'In *HOUEN ZO!* (1952) wordt de veranderende aanblik van de stad Rotterdam getoond door de ogen van onder anderen een duivenmelker, een oorlogsinvalid, twee jongetjes, een machinist en enkele bouwvakkers. Zij kijken allen vanuit een ander standpunt naar de stad; rijdend zittend, luiierend, werkend, hoog op een stelling, laag op het water. Via hen vertelt Van der Horst zijn verhaal over de stad.'

⁹⁶⁶ Hans Keller, 1994: 18; original quote: '*HOUEN ZO!* gaat over de voortzetting van de geslaagde wederopbouw van Rotterdam. Nieuw is de vervolmaking van de aan de dag gelegde techniek waarmee de film is opgenomen, van geluid voorzien en gemonteerd. De *zoomar*-lens heeft zijn intrede gedaan. Het ding is minder lichtgevoelig dan de gebruikelijke vaste lenzen, maar de *zoomar* – een visuele schuiftrompet, zoals W.F. Hermans later zegt – is buitengewoon actie-belust. // Herman van der Horst benut er in deze niet ten onrechte alom als dynamisch gekenschetste film ongeveer alle mogelijkheden van. De *heiblok*-sequence, die hij met behulp van de nieuwe lens realiseert en die hem ook in het gebruik van het geluid op nieuwe ideeën bracht, is legendarisch geworden.'

⁹⁶⁷ Hogenkamp, 2003: 101. Cf. Lebas, 2007: 40, who observes, in the case of Glasgow, a shift from the pre-war period, in which the kinds of people in the films were similar to those who watched them, to the post-war period in which the films reached 'out beyond reality of the lives of a local working-class towards an imagined mass, and thus implicitly classless, audience beyond Glasgow, beyond Scotland itself.'

⁹⁶⁸ On 1953-04-13 – *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1954: 33.

Considering its importance, we might briefly look how its production had been propelled. The NWF, which produced Van der Horst's first film on Rotterdam in 1946, participated in the political strategy of the reconstruction, while it also lay the foundations for the 'Dutch documentary school'. It stemmed from the pre-war avant-garde movement, with Schuitema as a central figure, which created a network between filmmakers and commissioners.

Since its films for the Ministry of Reconstruction had proven to be valuable, other ministries became interested too, especially the ministries of Economic Affairs, of Agriculture, and of Education, Art and Science⁹⁶⁹. The "Government Information Service" (*Regeeringsvoorlichtingsdienst*), in the person of Gijs van der Wiel, became an intermediary between different governmental bodies and filmmakers. That also applies to 'T SCHOT IS TE BOORD (1951, Van der Horst), about the herring fishery and international collaboration, which was also funded by the Marshall Plan programme. In 1952 this film won the first prize for non-fiction shorts at the Cannes Film Festival. It meant international recognition for Van der Horst, and more commissions to come, like STEADY.

The NWF had been both the funnel and the jumping board for Van der Horst, who was seen as a leader of the 'Dutch documentary school'. 'Van der Horst, in a good-natured manner, took it as his due to be called like that. Him, a leader of a school, a movement? No filmmaker in the Netherlands operated in such a solitary way as he did'⁹⁷⁰, wrote Hans Keller, who made a documentary about the work of Van der Horst⁹⁷¹. Does it mean that he, after having been a member of the NWF, was actually operating as much as possible outside professional networks?

Two ends of a spectre of relations, one 'formal public', the other 'informal private', might give a clue of the underlying mechanisms. At the formal end is the Cannes Film Festival, and its director Robert Favre le Bret. Dutch documentaries were successful in Cannes in the 1950s and 1960s, with Golden Palms for films by Haanstra, Van der Horst, and John Fernhout. According to film critic Bob Bertina, the personal fascination of Favre le Bret had been decisive in this respect (in: De Wit, 1994). Van der Horst, in his Rembrandt-like appearance, embodied Dutch culture. Whereas the characters in his films are metaphorical, Van der Horst himself was treated as such as well. However, Favre le Bret recognised a genuine, Dutch style of filmmaking, that of the Dutch documentary school, which has been described by Keller as follows.

The soberness of framing, the movements of the natural light, the attention to air and clouds, the almost devotional attention to the existing relationship between people, nature and the natural forces – one for another visual characteristics that seem to have been directly taken from the iconography of the Dutch Golden Age.⁹⁷²

This description applies especially to 'T SCHOT IS TE BOORD (1951). Slightly different, however, is STEADY!, for which Van der Horst won again the first prize for non-fiction short at the Cannes festival, in 1953. It does not deal with nature, but it still deals with human strength, and harmony between people and their environment; notwithstanding the dynamism of the activities going on,

⁹⁶⁹ Brouwers, 1994: 47

⁹⁷⁰ Keller, 1994: 21; original quote: 'Van der Horst liet zich die benoeming goedmoedig aanleunen. Hij en voorman van een school, een beweging? Geen filmmaker in Nederland opereerde zo solitair als hij.'

⁹⁷¹ This film is called VOETNOTEN BIJ EEN OEUVRE (1994), which was commissioned by the Netherlands Film Festival, Utrecht, on the occasion of a retrospective of the films by Van der Horst. The publication from which I quote was published at the same time.

⁹⁷² Keller, 1994: 21; original quote: 'De soberheid van de kadrering, de bewegingen van het natuurlijke licht, die aandacht voor lucht en wolken, de bijna devote aandacht voor de gegeven verstandhouding tussen mens, natuur en de natuurlijke krachten – stuk voor stuk visuele karakteristieken, die rechtstreeks ontleend leken aan de beeldtaal uit de Hollandse Gouden Eeuw.'

a quietness characterizes the film. Because of the successes in Cannes, Van der Horst became part of the global film festival network and became a real hit⁹⁷³.

At the ‘informal private’ end we may consider a quote by Simone Brouwers. She first sticks to the image of Van der Horst as a solitary artist, who prefers to do everything himself: research and preparations, direction, camera, sound, and editing – although he actually worked with a number of people that frequently collaborated with him⁹⁷⁴. ‘However’, she remarks, ‘the only constantly present colleague is his spouse Margreet. She was his ‘sound-board’ during the editing and collaborated on the sound recording for his last five films.’ She quotes Van der Horst:

We made our films together. On average, I need six hands. She has four of them. What she does is listen to my displeasure about the conditions, to my criticism when everything goes wrong again. She is my target to discharge, she records sound, she takes care that my things are there, always and everywhere, she knows how to manage people, clear the streets, and she automatically listens if everything functions well during recordings, and she hands out cigars. Awful.⁹⁷⁵

Such roles, largely unaccredited on the films and by historians, are of decisive importance for the success of the films, for a career and the development of a style. What does it mean that the man who is considered to be the solitary artist said: ‘We made our films together’? He even said *our films*. In other words, Margaretha Van der Horst-Admiraal was at the same time producer, manager, and adviser.

§ 4. film production in and about the city

In the first years after WWII, there were only a few professional filmmakers working in Rotterdam, next to a growing number of dedicated amateurs⁹⁷⁶. Among the amateur films are various historically unique recordings, which were often made as documents for future generations. An example is the outstanding documentary EILANDEN EXPRESSE (1954, A. den Besten), about the tram connection between Rotterdam and the Delta area south of the city (i.e. the island Voorne Putten)⁹⁷⁷. Anthropologically speaking, these films were instances of appropriating the urban conditions. Film became an individual tool to perceive and to frame the city. This can be understood as a matter of stigmergy, as a process of communication that happens within and that affects a particular environment, by using, marking and changing it accordingly.

A committed amateur filmmaker was Ed Millecam, who made, for example, DE SYMPHONIE VAN EEN GROTE STAD (1948). It was an echo of the pre-war avant-garde that showed a day in the life of Rotterdam: a woman opens the curtains, the market begins, barges bring sand for the reconstruction works, and the film ends with the evening rush hour. There are several other (well-made) films, of either unknown professional or amateur filmmakers, such as WEDEROPBOUW (1955, anon.). The opening scene shows the city by a pan from a high perspective; there are subsequently construction activities in some new streets⁹⁷⁸, and there is a

⁹⁷³ It won also prizes in Edinburgh, New York, Dublin, Bombay, Montevideo, Locarno, Strasbourg, Vienna, Oberhausen and Berlin.

⁹⁷⁴ Sound engineer Ate de Vries; composer Jan Mul; commentators Evert Gerretsen, Ger Lugtenburg; technician Wim Huender.

⁹⁷⁵ Van der Horst in: Brouwers, 1994: 47-48; original quote: ‘De enige constant aanwezige collega is echter echtgenote Margreet. Zij is zijn klankbord bij de montage en werkt mee aan de geluidopnames voor de laatste vijf films. Van der Horst: “Wij maakten samen onze films. Gemiddeld heb ik zes handen nodig. Zij heeft er vier. Wat zij doet is luisteren naar mijn misnoegen over de toestanden, naar mijn kritiek als alles weer eens verkeerd gaat. Mikpunt om op af te reageren, geluid opnemen, zorgen dat overal en altijd de spullen er zijn, met mensen omspringen, straten schoonvegen, automatisch luisteren of alles functioneert bij opnamen en sigaren uitdelen. Verschrikkelijk.”

⁹⁷⁶ Smits, 2002: 18-28.

⁹⁷⁷ Smits, 2002: 28; A. den Besten had previously worked for the Army Film Service.

⁹⁷⁸ E.g. Gerdesiaweg, Vredenoordlaan, Goudsesingel, Blaak.

general image of the empty city with the remaining St. Laurens church. The middle part consists of digging works and the construction of important buildings in the city centre⁹⁷⁹. The end of the film consists of general street images⁹⁸⁰, and long shots taken from the tower of the town hall show the appearance of the new skyline.

Rather similar are recordings by W.G. de Jong, called HERBOUW ROTTERDAM (1946-1959), and those by N.J. Polak, who made already films before WWII, of important events in the city, like the construction and launching of the ocean liner 'Nieuw Amsterdam' (1937). He might have used some of his recordings for semi-public presentations, which is similarly a matter of communicating through the environment. Another amateur filmmaker to be mentioned here was Rien Peeters, who made a commissioned (colour) film about the work of harbour clerks, which he called EUROPOORT (1951) – as such he coined the name for the extension of the port that started at the end of the decade. Peeters sometimes assisted his friend Carel Borgers, who was one of the few professional filmmakers in Rotterdam.

Before Borgers started to work as a cameraman for television, he and his firm *NV Filmproductie Rotterdam* made various promotional and industrial films⁹⁸¹. An example is a film for Van Berkel (1950), which produced measuring equipment, and had already made itself a name for its modern publicity campaigns before WWII. This film shows the production process of precision instruments, like scales and slicers, and subsequently the way they are used. To that end, shots were made at a number of places in the city, such as the port, Heineken's beer brewery, a hospital, and a paper factory. This implies a particular take on urban development, in which Van Berkel relates different (industrial) services. However, a vision upon the city in a broader perspective would only gradually develop, in the wake of the Dutch documentary school.

the case of Jan Schaper

A particular person that reinforced the link between Rotterdam as *Tatort* and Rotterdam as *Standort* was Jan Schaper (•1921-†2008). In 1950, when he worked as a journalist for the newspaper *Het Vrije Volk*, he submitted a film script for a national competition organised by the Ministry of OK&W (culture). He won first prize. As a consequence, he was recommended for a grant of the Rockefeller foundation, a three months traineeship in Hollywood⁹⁸². On the 6th of September, Schaper left with the 'SS Volendam' to New York in the footsteps of the musician Jurriaan Andriessen, who had received such a grant the year before. At his departure Schaper expressed his wish to look for possibilities to make *cine poèmes*. Once in Hollywood he became an assistant to director Robert Siodmak for the production of the docudrama *THE WHISTLE AT EATON FALLS* (1951, USA)⁹⁸³. It was the period in which 'method acting' emerged, which prescribes the actor to identify with the character by making use of his own emotions⁹⁸⁴. Its main exponent was Marlon Brando, who had just made his film debut in *THE MEN* (1950, USA, Fred Zinnemann) and became famous through his role in *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* (1951, USA, Elia Kazan). It would have a lasting effect on Schaper. However, because of the Korea crisis, he decided to return to the Netherlands. Back home, early 1951, he sent his winning script and a letter to B.D. Ochse, the director of Polygoon. Besides the proposal to make the film, Schaper offered his skills to write scripts for commercials and propaganda films. Ochse invited Schaper at

⁹⁷⁹ E.g. Groothandelsgebouw, Schouwburg, Bouwcentrum, as well as warehouses along the Wijnhaven.

⁹⁸⁰ E.g. Coolsingel, Goudsesingel, Oostzeedijk.

⁹⁸¹ For examples, see filmography (Rotterdam and outside Rotterdam) > Borgers, Carel.

⁹⁸² For this and following information: Jansen, Pierre; 'Good Luck, Jan', *Nieuwe Schiedamsche Courant*, 1950-09-07.

⁹⁸³ '...een paar weken assistant-regie bij Robert Siodmak bij een speelfilm-productie van de Rochemont.' Jan Schaper in a letter to VARA-radio, 1954-05-31, personal archive Jan Schaper.

⁹⁸⁴ See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Method_acting >> 'Method Acting' (visited: 2007-05-09).

his home⁹⁸⁵. However, Schaper and his wife Leen Verheij decided to emigrate to Australia, to stay away from the Cold War battlefield that Europe was about to become, as Schaper supposed. After doing all kinds of jobs, including radio broadcasting, Schaper wrote an application letter to Stanley Hawes of the Australian National Film Board, but soon afterwards he changed his mind and wanted to emigrate to Canada, as he concluded that Australia did not have the opportunities he was looking for⁹⁸⁶. In the end he changed his mind again and with his wife he returned to the Netherlands, in 1953.

After Schaper saw STEADY!, he wrote a letter to Van der Horst. He expressed his admiration for the cinematography, and asked if he could write scripts for him, since that could be improved in his opinion⁹⁸⁷. He mentioned that during his stay in America he met Robert Flaherty, to stress his concern with documentary cinema. It did not result in a direct collaboration, but it may have helped him to establish contacts⁹⁸⁸. He was asked to write scripts for the 'Instituut Film & Jeugd'⁹⁸⁹, where Schuitema was active, who knew Van der Horst. In a similar way, Schaper established contacts with Walter Smith, who made THAT MOST LIVING CITY (1954). Smith asked him to write the script for his Caltex film LAND BELOW THE SEA (1954). At the same time Schaper made his first own film, called ROKA-FILM (1954), to promote an association of grocers. Shot by himself, it helped him to be contracted as a cameraman for the television experiment at the E55 manifestation the next year, which meant the introduction to the world of television.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of OK&W came into action to make a film out of his script. Piet van Moock of Forumfilm, who had previously produced Bert Haanstra's successful MIRROR OF HOLLAND (1950), was asked to produce the film, which would be called TROS ("Hawser", 1956). The young filmmaker Wim van der Velde, who had collaborated with Van Moock before, was asked to be its director. At that time, Van der Velde worked at the *Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia* in Rome, also through a grant from OK&W, just like cameraman Eduard van der Enden⁹⁹⁰. Van der Velde accepted the invitation and came back to the Netherlands, together with Van der Enden who was asked to do the cinematography. Affected by the Italian *neorealismo*, working with actors taken 'from the street', Van der Velde and Schaper went into the streets to look for suitable candidates. In a park in Vlaardingen, Schaper spotted a seventeen year old girl, whom he asked to play the main character. In this way Christine van Roon played Hannie, a young woman who left her boyfriend when she emigrated with her parents to Canada a few years before. After her father dies, she goes back to arrange some things, and meets unexpectedly her ex-boyfriend Rinus (Ger de Jong), who has become the captain of a tugboat. Although she had promised to return and to stay with him, she is now married and has a three year old child. They try to understand their situation and have a coffee (in a jazz-bar that symbolizes cosmopolitan Rotterdam). But the two of them do not resolve their situation. Characteristic for Rotterdam, the drama is intertwined with the scale and power of its port: at the end the tugboat of Rinus tows the ocean liner 'Nieuw Amsterdam', with Hannie on board in order to return to Canada. He does not know that she did not embark and that she is watching both the tugboat and the ship going away.

The narrative of the film contains several flashbacks, first of all with a big ship packed with people to seek a better future. There are also flashbacks of places in the city where they had enjoyed being together. Now and then are mixed. The city, besides its port, is represented by the

⁹⁸⁵ Schaper wrote a letter on the 15th of February 1951 to Ochse. The film script is called 'De Andere Oever'; letter by Schaper and reply by Ochse are in the personal archive of Jan Schaper.

⁹⁸⁶ Letter of Stanley Hawes 1952-12-02, personal archive Jan Schaper.

⁹⁸⁷ Letter: 13th of August 1953; personal archive Jan Schaper.

⁹⁸⁸ A year later, in 1954 (letters in the personal archive of Schaper), he wrote a script for a film about the historical background of the Dutch St. Nicholas celebration (SINTERKLAAS KOMT NAAR HOLLAND, 1955), commissioned by Gijs van der Wiel (RVD), who was a good relation of Van der Horst. Schaper directed the film together with Hattum Hoving, while it was produced by Multifilm, where Van der Horst knew several people too.

⁹⁸⁹ It is not clear if these scripts have been made into films – probably with different titles.

⁹⁹⁰ For Van der Velde, see Hogenkamp, 2003: 102; for Van der Enden, see: Hendriks, 2006: 114. In Rome they had already made a short film together.

'Beurs', the new 'Bijenkorf' and 'De Hef' (the bridge from Ivens's film). This bridge is also to be seen in the opening shot, which is a long take that shows a train passing it. One of the most dramatic and powerful images of the film, is a shot from an extreme high angle, in which Rinus walks across a square, sad and disappointed, while she follows him at a distance.

After the film was finished, OK&W requested certain adaptations, and another version was made, including some extra facts to articulate the port. Afterwards Schaper and Van der Velde thought of producing more fiction films. For four years, according to Van der Velde, they were looking for suitable actors to make the films they envisioned⁹⁹¹. In this perspective we should also consider the activities that Schaper started to undertake as a photographer, almost like a casting practice. In 1957 he roamed around the city with his Kalloflex camera, photographing youngsters, especially at the Lijnbaan shopping centre.

The pictures of these 'street models' were published, together with essays by Cornelis Bastiaan Vaandrager, as a series in the newspaper *Algemeen Dagblad*, in 1957⁹⁹². They were also exhibited in the *Fotocentrum Rotterdam* of Kees Molkenboer, which attracted the attention of several newspapers. The interest was raised because of the phenomenon of the teddy boys and girls (*nozems* in Dutch), which in Rotterdam was called *Lijnbaanjeugd*. They 'appropriated' the brand new shopping-centre and surroundings, which Schaper recorded in a realist way⁹⁹³. Art critic Dolf Welling, editor of the *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, opened his review by saying that 'the photos ... seem to be cut from the feature film that he [Schaper] desperately would like to make'⁹⁹⁴. He characterised the photos by saying: 'This photography strives for a neo-realism, which prefers the usual human element above the "official" event'⁹⁹⁵. This is especially clear when the pictures are compared to a news report on the Lijnbaan that was shot at the same time (JOURNAAL, NTS, 1956-11-29), which showed the installation of decorative illumination on the occasion of the St. Nicholas celebration.

Most critics were positive about Schaper's work, except for a critic of *De Rotterdammer*.

[P]hotography – like every other representational medium – has a task, namely this: to see, to record, en to transmit with the mark of the maker. Exactly that mark of the maker, his vision, his conception, his interpretation and his colouring give photography its legitimacy as a visual medium. Schaper considers the famous Cartier Bresson as his guide. But Schaper does not understand much of him; Cartier, after all, let the world tremble in astonishment, because of the poverty he photographed. (...) And what does Schaper do with "his" youth? He photographs it and knows how to make perfect enlargements of his negatives – but he has no vision, not on Cartier Bresson and not on "his" youth. He just transmits and, when you ask him, explains: "I don't say anything, I just let you watch through the lens of my camera.." – and hence he definitively condemns his photography.⁹⁹⁶

⁹⁹¹ This and following information is based on the newspaper article: 'Twintig Jonge Mensen Dromen van de Film', 1959-12-07. Source unknown; personal archive Jan Schaper.

⁹⁹² As a result, the AD also asked Schaper to shoot portraits of a new generation of authors, a.o. Vestdijk and Lucebert.

⁹⁹³ Meeting places were *Café De Turk* and *Ijssalon Capri*. Cf. Andriessen, 1957.

⁹⁹⁴ Welling, 1957. Original quote: 'De foto's ... zijn als geknipt uit de speelfilm, die hij zo graag zou willen maken.'

⁹⁹⁵ Welling, 1957. Original quote: 'Deze fotografie streeft een neo-realisme na, dat het gewone menselijke element verkiest boven de "officiële" gebeurtenis.'

⁹⁹⁶ 'Jan Schaper in Fotocentrum; Foto's zonder visie van dito Jeugd', *De Rotterdammer*, 1957-09-05, author is G.H. Original quote: 'Want fotografie – als elk ander weergave-middel – heeft een taak, en wel deze: te zien, vast te leggen, en met het stempel van de maker door te geven. Juist dat stempel van de maker, zijn visie, zijn opvatting, zijn interpretatie en zijn kleuring geven de fotografie haar bestaansrecht als beeldend medium. Schaper haalt de beroemde Cartier Bresson aan als leidraad, door hem gebruikt. Schaper snapt dan ook van Cartier Bresson niet veel; immers, Cartier liet de wereld verschrikt huiveren van armoede, door hem gefotografeerd. (...) En wat doen Schaper met "zijn" jeugd? Hij fotografeert ze en weet van zijn negatieven perfecte vergrotingen te maken – maar hij heeft geen visie, op Cartier Bresson niet en op "zijn" jeugd niet. Hij geeft alleen maar door en verklaart je desgevraagd: "Ik zeg niets, ik laat je alleen maar door de lens van mijn camera kijken.." – en veroordeelt daarmee definitief zijn fotografie.'

Other critics wrote exactly the opposite: ‘The photos are good, with vision, there is directness, of moment; they are telling in an honest and unposed manner; they ask questions and confront us with a strange mentality’⁹⁹⁷. Notwithstanding a conflict between Schaper and Molkenboer, the pictures were subsequently shown at the women’s fair ‘Femina’, where they found a large public⁹⁹⁸. Finally they were also shown at photo gallery *La Cave Internationale* in Amsterdam⁹⁹⁹.

The photographic career of Schaper took its own course, which affected his filmmaking. It drew him further into non-fiction cinema, including promotional filmmaking¹⁰⁰⁰. The interaction between photography and film would especially come to the fore in his work for the municipality of Vlaardingen (see next chapter). However, Schaper and Van der Velde still developed ideas for fiction films. They established the ‘Productiegroep Trosfilm’, and rented a studio in Rotterdam, above the office of the newly established *Nederlandse Filmproductie Maatschappij*¹⁰⁰¹. In early 1959, Schaper and Van der Velde placed advertisements in the national newspapers to recruit people that aspired to become actors. From 300 applications they invited one hundred to the ‘Riche-bar’ for auditions, from which they selected twenty people. In the weekends they came together, while during the week they exercised. The idea was to begin immediately with a film production, in the autumn of 1959, but tensions arose between Schaper and Van der Velde. Whereas the latter was affected by Italian cinema, and wanted to start filming, Schaper preferred to educate the group first of all, in order to develop the acting skills. Rather than drawing people from the street and start shooting he thought of the Actors Studio of Lee Strasberg in New York¹⁰⁰². Yet another reason for the tension was of a private nature. Christine van Roon, who played the main character in TROS, via Schaper, married Van der Velde. Complications emerged as Schaper and Van der Velde had affairs with each other’s lovers¹⁰⁰³.

Van der Velde decided to leave and started to work as a documentary filmmaker for VPRO-television¹⁰⁰⁴. Schaper, who got divorced from his wife Leen, eventually married Christine, and set himself to documentaries as well¹⁰⁰⁵. Schaper continued the actors group, which he renamed ‘Open Studio’, but for him, acting like a guru, it became merely a platform to propagate life lessons. No fiction films would be made, except for a number of tests and other unfinished attempts (e.g. 60 MINUTEN CS and HEEN EN WEER). Instead, a large number of non-fiction films were produced, in which the city became the main character, a model ‘playing itself’.

⁹⁹⁷ ‘Fotocentrum Rotterdam – geslaagd experiment; Jan Schaper fotografeerde jeugd tussen Lijnbaan en Binnenweg’, *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 1957-09-06. Original quote: ‘De foto’s zijn goed, van visie, directheid, van moment; zij vertellen eerlijk en ongeposeerd en stellen vragen en confronteren ons met een vreemde mentaliteit.’ See for a comparable comment: Nieman, 1957.

⁹⁹⁸ E.g. ‘Schapers foto-expositie voortijdig gesloten’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, September 1957 [date unknown; personal archive Schaper].

⁹⁹⁹ Nieman (1958) reviewed this show, in *Elsevier*, as a ‘a good and even a little sensational photo collection’. Original quote: ‘Een goede en zelfs een tikje sensationele fotocollectie’.

¹⁰⁰⁰ e.g. UNILEVER KINDERLAND (1957, Jan Schaper); SAMENWERKEN (1957, Jan Schaper & Albert Brosens) for NV De Bataafsche Petroleum Mij; NUTRICIAFILM (1958, Jan Schaper); OPBOUWFILM NV HOOGENBOOM (1958, Jan Schaper).

¹⁰⁰¹ i.e. Eendrachtsweg 10. An immediate connection between the two enterprises is established by NFM ‘court’ cameraman Eduard van der Enden, who did already the cinematography for TROS, and also for HARMONIE IN INDUSTRIE, for which Schaper wrote the scripts, while he simultaneously worked on several films by Van der Velde.

¹⁰⁰² It was founded in 1949, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lee_Strasberg >> ‘Lee Strasberg’ (visited: 2007-05-09).

¹⁰⁰³ Personal communication FP with Jan Schaper, Christine van Roon, Wim van der Velde, Trudy Mulder (2004-2007).

¹⁰⁰⁴ Verhagen, Hans; ‘Jan Schaper, gesproken zelfportret, van gids naar nieuwe toneeltoppen’, *Algemeen Dagblad*, 1961-08-05. (Photographs by Egbert Munks.)

¹⁰⁰⁵ While Schaper worked on his own films, he also wrote scripts for other documentaries, e.g. HARMONIE IN INDUSTRIE (1959, Piet van Moock). It was made partly with the same crew from TROS, which strengthened his position.