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Cinematic Rotterdam: the times and tides of a modern city

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CHAPTER 9. EXTENDED CITY

§ 1. multiple extensions

In the 1940s and 1950s, urban development was framed in terms of progress, which literally meant ‘growth’. Along with the growth of the port, the city needed new residential quarters, which was already foreseen by the ‘Basisplan’ (1946). Extending the city was a matter of building suburbs, which relied on a social programme. Cor Wagenaar (1992: 298) has argued that urban planning even said farewell to design, replacing it by scientific studies and policymaking. According to Wagenaar it was the onset of the ‘welfare city’, and the new Rotterdam became a prototype for the Dutch welfare state.

An ideal community life was envisioned. This, however, could not be achieved without an idea of how to ban antisocial behaviour and delinquency. Although planners and architects have hardly touched upon such issues, it became a concrete challenge for the institutions of the welfare state. In order to let the people believe in (social) progress, one also had to show them an appropriate treatment of delicate issues¹⁰⁰⁶. In this perspective we might consider a film like *DE BAJES IS ZO GROOT* (1950, Charles Huguenot van der Linden), which shows various kinds of detention in the Netherlands. The film addresses the responsibility of the state towards both society and its prisoners, within a humane, new social order. Various prisons are shown, including a women’s prison in Rotterdam. Women care for their babies inside the prison, while others work in factories. It shows nevertheless the antipode of the house and family life on which urban planning visions were based, and hence their latent problematic character.

The issue of the relationship between urban planning and social organisation might be approached through De Certeau’s model of place based on an ‘ethnography of communication’ (1997: 109). It is the way people use the environment as a way to communicate. The city, as a social system, manifests itself through its environment. The local is the starting point, the focus and place where interactions crystallise, and a major factor within the construction of social networks, including those connecting architects, filmmakers and commissioners. I will reflect upon different positions within such networks, what effects they had on the city’s organisation, its image, and the way this was communicated or mediated by film. Whereas the city extended itself physically, it simultaneously extended in terms of networks and media practices. These were multiple extensions that reinforced one another, radiating from the city’s culture core.

§ 2. living innovations

During the first years of the war, a few projects were carried out to counter housing shortage. For that purpose, under German administration, several villages were incorporated by Rotterdam: IJsselmonde, Overschie, Schiebroek, and Hillegersberg, in order to provide building ground. The emergency villages built in IJsselmonde and Overschie were documented by Polygoon¹⁰⁰⁷. Soon after the first projects were carried out, the Germans declared a construction stop (*bouwstop*, 1942-07-02)¹⁰⁰⁸. The Germans needed the material and human resources for military purposes.

During the war, new possibilities for housing were explored by the *NV Volkswoningbouw*, first in 1941¹⁰⁰⁹. In 1943 the results of this study were elaborated by Van Tijen and Maaskant, now focused on the idea of *de Stedelijke Tuinwijk* (“Urban Garden Quarter”). One

¹⁰⁰⁶ Luhr & Lehman (2006: 176-177) have made a similar observation regarding *noir* feature films based on police procedurals. ‘Procedurals were often curious combinations of both utopian and dystopian modernist strains, utopian in that they showed benign state organisations using advanced technology to root out criminals, but dystopian in their emphasis upon the pervasive, ongoing, and expanding world of contemporary crime.’

¹⁰⁰⁷ *BOUW NOODWONINGEN IN OVERSCHIE / WEDEROPBOUW OVERSCHIE* (1941, Polygoon). *BOUW VAN NOODWONINGEN IN IJSSELMONDE* (1941, Polygoon).

¹⁰⁰⁸ Since Germany fought on two fronts, in the east and the west. Oudenaarden, 2004: 16; Van de Laar, 2000: 435.

¹⁰⁰⁹ In 1941, Plate commissioned Maaskant, Van Tijen, Brinkman & Van den Broek to carry out a study for new housing possibilities, which resulted in the book *Woonmogelijkheden In Het Nieuwe Rotterdam*.

year later, Van Tijen became involved with the *Rotterdamsche Gemeenschap*, which propagated the *wijkgedachte* (the idea of the ‘neighbourhood unit’). This, in turn, informed another study, by a group of ten members, including Van Tijen, and headed by Alexander Bos, director of the “Municipal Department for Social Housing”. This study resulted in the influential book *De Stad der Toekomst, De Toekomst der Stad* (“The City of the Future, The Future of the City”, Bos e.a., 1946). Wagenaar has called it ‘a film in the form of a book’, since it was highly affected by the film *DIE STADT VON MORGEN* (1930, Svend Noldan)¹⁰¹⁰. As the title already suggests, it was an ambitious study, to set an agenda for urban development in general, far beyond the disciplinary conventions of urban planning. Rather exceptional was the fact that the group included also three female representatives, from the fields of education, social care-taking, and religion¹⁰¹¹.

The book propelled the *wijkgedachte* and envisioned the city as a social system of various levels providing particular functions. Neighbourhoods would have about 2000 to 4000 inhabitants, living in 500 to 1000 dwellings, which in turn would be part of a *wijk* (district), with about 20,000 inhabitants, and subsequently of a *stadsdeel* (quarter) of about 100,000 people¹⁰¹². These figures were thought to be ideal numbers to enable basic social-cultural and health care facilities. Moreover, districts would have their own council, which was later institutionalised indeed as the *deeltgemeenteraad*. Largely comparable to the ideas of Lewis Mumford, a neighbourhood unit would be based on life-cycle differentiation, with old and young living together.

Within its broad idea of urban development, the group did not forget to mention the role of film, for which it asked ‘great attention’ in respect of ‘social-cultural building-up’¹⁰¹³. Following explicitly the ideas of the *Filmliga*, it addressed the dominance of commercial cinema, and the difficulty to raise its level, especially in the Dutch situation. In order to break that monopoly, the group proposed, following people like Schuitema and others, to invest in cultural and ‘development’ films. Addressing the *wijkgedachte* once more, the group added that such films had to be shown in halls in the neighbourhoods, in special programmes and through well-prepared screenings. They stated (p258) that it could have an important impact on the general public. However, it was noticed too that costs were high, and the government was called to its responsibility. Various films would indeed be commissioned by the (municipal) government. Next to that, in the sphere of community work, youth clubs produced their own 8mm and 16mm films and frequently organised film screenings¹⁰¹⁴.

Ideas on social-cultural development were closely linked to economic considerations, in such a way that architectural and planning concepts favoured the application of industrial building methods, and more studies were conducted in this respect. In 1947, the Ministry of Reconstruction established a group to study ‘efficient housing’, headed by Jo van den Broek¹⁰¹⁵. Its results were applied in ‘Zuidwijk’ (1946-1953, H. Maaskant, W. van Tijen), which was based on the experimental RBM pre-fabricated construction system.

¹⁰¹⁰ Wagenaar, 1992: 214 and 266. Bos’s introduction to the film (1936-11-25) had also been called ‘De Stad der Toekomst’, which was at the same time the Dutch title of the film. A summary of the book was also read by Bos as a lecture for VARA-radio, 1947-01-25: 16h10-16h25. Archive ‘A. Bos’ NAI: BOSA g11.

¹⁰¹¹ Resp. J.J. van Dulleman, L. Havelaar, L.M. Mispelblom Beyer-van den Berg van Eysinga. This study had a major impact, see e.g. Bijhouwer e.a. (1983: 108-113), Wagenaar (1992: 266), Van de Laar (2000: 472).

¹⁰¹² Bos e.a., 1946: 315-319.

¹⁰¹³ ‘Grote aandacht zal bij de sociaal-culturele opbouw moeten worden gegeven aan de film’, Bos e.a., 1946: 257. To that end, it is said, a role could be played by the new *Filmliga*, just like the association ‘Vrienden van de Film’ (for the establishment and aims of the latter, see: *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1947, p31).

¹⁰¹⁴ An example is *Arend en De Zeemeeuw*; for general information on this youth organisation: Van de Laar, 2000: 572. An example of an 8mm film: *GEZINSKAMP* (1958, Arend en de Zeemeeuw); more titles to be found in: GAR. Another example is the Christian community centre *De Brandaris* (see: filmography > 1960s & 1970s > Riet, J.M. van; more titles to be found in: GAR), while the nationally operating Christelijke Film Actie / CEFA organised three film screenings per week at Atrium – *Rotterdams Jaarboekje*, 1961: p19.

¹⁰¹⁵ I.e. *Studiegroep Efficiënte Woningbouw*, see: Bijhouwer e.a., 1983: 108-113.

The problems of housing shortage were addressed by several films¹⁰¹⁶. One of them is EEN HUIS (1948, Henry James & Rob Out) which propagates industrialisation of the building branch, following the example of automobile manufacturing. The film propagates above all the working ethos. It is an appeal to produce, especially for the international market. In this way, the film explains, the country is able to buy, in return, building materials abroad. It was a general view, of both the government and commercial enterprises, which was promoted by various means¹⁰¹⁷.

Around 1948, prices for building material rapidly increased internationally, while the Dutch state had serious financial problems, which grew because of its military operations in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia)¹⁰¹⁸. Therefore one needed to increase the country's production, which was rhetorically addressed by EEN HUIS. It emphasizes the importance of the home for family life and to raise children. Building and working go together with harmonious living, and every citizen contributes to it, men and women.

Besides the fact that wives enabled their husbands to work, to carry out the urban plans, they also contributed to the development through various organisations and initiatives, such as the "Women Advice Committee for Housing Development" (*Vrouwenadviescommissie voor de Woningbouw*, see: De Wit, 1995: 5). This organisation, which was established in Rotterdam in 1946, claimed a role in the reconstruction process. Through practical experience one drew guidelines for the organisation of dwellings, while one became actively involved, and trained, in design processes¹⁰¹⁹. As such they also contributed to the modernisation of the building industry.

Pre-fabrication allowed on-site mounting of buildings, which accelerated construction processes, as well as physically enlarging the building sphere, since the building was made at several places, from where the components were carried to the construction site. These new production methods demanded elaborate building scenarios and competent directors. Architects researched the different possibilities of industrially manufactured, pre-fabricated concrete shells, with modular wall and floor panels. Because of standard measures and elements, different parts could be combined.

The new construction techniques not only enabled one to build fast. Architects who created large industrial complexes and housing estates, among them Van den Broek & Bakema, Maaskant and Groosman, also built villas that were related in style and technique, but more expressive¹⁰²⁰. They were bright, open and spacious, and applied new kinds of floor plans and interior designs, as shown by the 'Bouwcentrum' (and Polygoon, 1956-wk15). Such templates

¹⁰¹⁶ E.g. WONINGNOOD (1950, Max de Haas) and BOUWEND NEDERLAND (1952, Polygoon-Profilti). The latter was commissioned by the "Ministry of Reconstruction and Housing" and showed building projects in various Dutch towns that had been devastated by the war. In the case of Rotterdam it also showed a model of the future city, including the ambitious idea of a large roundabout and two suspension bridges across the Nieuwe Maas, which would not be constructed in the end. The immediate occasion for the film was the celebration of the fact that since the end of the war 50,000 new dwellings had been made. In order to increase the production, the film addressed the first steps that were made in respect of industrial production of houses.

¹⁰¹⁷ Zoetmulder made the photographs for a promotional folder (app. 1948) with the slogan: 'It may be a better policy to spend your money, rather than to lend it... Buy Holland's outstanding merchandise through The American West Coast Import and Export Company – San Francisco, California; Rotterdam, Holland.' Additional quote: 'Let us make a serious attempt to do business with each other, to know each other's countries and peoples better. Everything we do in this connection will be instrumental to building a better world imperative out of the disorder and chaos of today' (Siegfried M. Hymans, managing director).

¹⁰¹⁸ Cf. Van de Laar, 2000: 467.

¹⁰¹⁹ See the interviews by De Wit (1995) with Adri Dooremans-Lans and Nel van der Pol-van den Dorpel, who were members of the managing board of the *Vrouwenadviescommissie voor de Woningbouw*.

¹⁰²⁰ Cf. Van Hoogstraten, 2000: 14. Major examples of functionalist housing projects in Rotterdam after WWII are: 'Zuidpleinflat' (1941-1947, Groosman, Van Tijen, Bakema, Maaskant), 'Parkflat' (Groosman, 1949-1958), 'Lijnbaanflats' (1954-1956, Maaskant); 'Pendrechtflats' (1949-1953, Beese, Bakema); main examples of private villas in Rotterdam after WWII: 'House Ypenhof' (1948-1952, Van den Broek), 'Own House' (1951, Haan), 'House Uitenbroek' (1954-1956, Haan), 'House van Stokkum' (1956, Groosman), 'Villa Veder' (1957-1960), Maaskant), 'House Van Buchem' (1960-1961, Van den Broek & Bakema), among many others.

promised new perspectives for mass housing too, also in terms of ‘social engineering’, although it had to resolve quantitative problems first of all.

The municipality occupied an important position within these developments. Since it was under tremendous pressure to build large amounts of dwellings, new people were contracted. Among them was, since September 1946, the German architect and planner Lotte Beese (see: Damen & Devolder, 1993). Beese had studied at the Bauhaus in Dessau. After a complicated love relationship with its director Hannes Meyer she had to leave the school, in early 1929. At the end of the next year she visited Meyer briefly in Moscow. She got pregnant and stayed in the USSR, where she met Mart Stam. They married and worked on housing projects for new Soviet cities, the so-called *sotsgorod*¹⁰²¹. At the end of 1934, they left the USSR and went to the Netherlands. With Mart Stam she had another child and they also started a studio together¹⁰²². In 1943 they got divorced again.

Whereas Mart’s tabula-rasa plan for Rotterdam did not come through, Lotte took his place instead and was appointed as chief architect within the municipal housing department. The ideas for the *sotsgorod* that they had implemented in the USSR were further elaborated and projected onto the map of Rotterdam. Her first important project was *Kleinpolder* (1946-1947), located at the edge of the city, which was partly built with recycled materials from the destroyed city centre. Like the housing projects in the USSR, it made use of the possibilities of industrial construction. Based on CIAM principles, it became an open quarter, with greenery in between the housing blocks, with collective gardens, and separation of traffic modes. Corresponding to the *wijkgedachte* it provided differentiation of dwellings, for people of different ages, while the quarter also included various public facilities. This was further elaborated in ‘Pendrecht’ (1949-1953), which she designed with ‘Opbouw’, in particular with Jaap Bakema. Together with ‘Zuidwijk’ and ‘Lombardijen’ (arch. P. van Drimmelen), it was part of the southern garden cities¹⁰²³. These were, however, not intended as ‘satellite cities’, but as parts of the city.

Pendrecht encompassed 6300 dwellings. The idea of spatial units was conceptualised as an ascending series: dwelling, block, neighbourhood, district, town¹⁰²⁴. In order to let the project function socially, applicants were screened, regarding social status, and household inspection was subsequently carried out (by female civil servants)¹⁰²⁵. Next to that, community centres and associations were set up. The plans, with considerable variation of dwellings, were discussed at the CIAM congresses¹⁰²⁶. Pendrecht served as a model for ‘Alexanderpolder’ (1952-1953) that Beese, Bakema and other members of ‘Opbouw’ presented also at CIAM (IX).

¹⁰²¹ See the film *Sotsgorod, Cities for Utopia* (1995, Anna Abrahams).

¹⁰²² One of the projects they carried out in this way, in collaboration with Maaskant and Van Tijen, was that of the now famous ‘drive-in-dwellings’ in Amsterdam (1937). At the same time Beese produced graphic designs, like covers for the magazine of ‘De 8 & Opbouw’, of which she had become a member, and for example a photographic mural for the office of the shipping company Burger & Zn in Rotterdam. Lotte and Mart also designed the pavilion for the Dutch Railway exhibition De Trein 1839-1939 in Amsterdam, which was accompanied by the film NA 100 JAAR (1939, Max de Haas) – for more information about this film, see: Hogenkamp, 1988: 93-95. In 1939, they won the competition for the Dutch pavilion for the World Exhibition in New York, which was, however, not made in the end.

¹⁰²³ See, e.g. Van de Laar, 2000: 474-475.

¹⁰²⁴ ‘The district configures four neighbourhoods around a traffic-free square. Rather than the usual system of (perimeter) blocks or series of free-standing buildings the fundamental unit chosen for these neighbourhoods was the so-called ‘wooneenheid’ (cluster), which can be considered a spatial and social link between house and neighbourhood. Each cluster consists of a variety of buildings serving differing categories of tenant. This social diversity is reflected in their spatial layout, free-standing blocks of differing height together surrounding a communal green space. The later, more common name for the cluster, ‘stempel’ or stamp, derives from the way in which clusters are organized in a strict orthogonal system’ (Groenendijk & Vollaard, 1998: 304).

¹⁰²⁵ See: Van de Laar, 2000: 477. He also remarks that socially problematic families were largely concentrated in the emergency dwellings that had been built in and after WWII. The most problematic families and individuals, about 500 altogether, were deported to resocialisation camps in the province of Drenthe. This resocialisation failed and the attempts were cancelled already in the 1950s.

¹⁰²⁶ In Bergamo (1949) and in Hoddesdon (1951), see: De Heer, 1983: 51.

At the same time, Beese became involved with the design of the new village 'Nagele' (1947-1957) in the 'Noordoostpolder', which was part of the reclamation of the Zuiderzee¹⁰²⁷. Nagele is known as one of the most elaborate Dutch modernist planning experiments in which most prominent Dutch architects were involved. In collaboration with Ernest Groosman, Beese created thirty-two dwellings for agricultural workers (Karweihof, 1955). Conceptually, Nagele and Pendrecht (as well as Alexanderpolder) are related. Moreover, since the Zuiderzee-project was above all a national concern, it attracted settlers from all provinces, among them farmers who had to move from the Rotterdam region, due to the Botlek port development.

The Amsterdam based filmmaker Louis van Gasteren, who was in touch with people like Mart Stam, Jaap Bakema and Ernest Groosman, proposed to make a film about the design process and the construction of Nagele, which became EEN NIEUW DORP OP NIEUW LAND ("A New Village on New Land", 1960). When Van Gasteren started this documentary, in 1955, several crucial discussions had taken place already. He therefore staged new meetings with all of them in the Cinetone Studios in Duivendrecht, near Amsterdam. There he also brought large models that were especially made for the film, built at Van Gasteren's own studio. In this way, Van Gasteren actively participated in the development process by creating conditions to reflect upon the project. Besides that, Van Gasteren gave his own views upon the project¹⁰²⁸

This film resulted in another one, called ALLE VOGELS HEBBEN NESTEN ("All Birds Have Nests", 1961), to promote the Dura-Coignet pre-fabricated system. The connection was established by Ernest Groosman. He had previously worked on the appropriation of the 'Welschen' system for the company Muijs & De Winter. It was introduced as MUWI, and Groosman applied it first of all in Vlaardingen and Schiedam¹⁰²⁹. Whereas the MUWI components were still produced at different places, the French system of Coignet was a new, fully industrial and standardised construction system, with all elements made at one site: houses being made in a factory. In order to introduce this system to the Netherlands, Dura had to build its own factory, which required a critical mass of at least 6,000 housing units. Minister H.B.J. Witte of "Reconstruction and Social Housing" (1952-1959), stimulated and forced different municipalities to collaborate: Rotterdam, Schiedam, Vlaardingen, Spijkenisse, Ridderkerk, and Maassluis, all near the factory, in order to minimise transportation costs (Hellinga, 2001: 36). Transportation also became an integrated part of the production and the standardisation of the construction process, not least since the size of tunnels and Dutch traffic regulations became factors in the final measurements of the houses. Dura built its housing factory in the Eemhaven in Rotterdam, after a design by Ernest Groosman. In 1959 it was ready to produce two types of apartments designed by Groosman. In the next years, the system would be applied in other municipalities near Rotterdam as well¹⁰³⁰. In this case the Rijnmond area, as the agglomeration of Rotterdam became known, functioned as one planning area.

The film shows the work at the Dura factory in Rotterdam, and the construction of the houses in the district Lombardijen¹⁰³¹. Critic Jan Blokker of the *Algemeen Handelsblad* ('Louis van Gasteren builds houses') recognised that Van Gasteren applied features of classic Soviet

¹⁰²⁷ Groenendijk & Vollaard, 1998: 52.

¹⁰²⁸ Van Gasteren (in a conversation with the author FP, 2003-10-07) has illustrated it as follows. 'There is an image of a footpath, which had emerged because of people taking the shortest route by cutting the corner. I said to Bakema: "Can't you design a route plan in which roads emerge themselves?" Original quote: 'Daar is een beeld van een paadje, ontstaan doordat mensen de snelste weg nemen door de hoek af te snijden. Ik zei tegen Bakema: 'kunnen jullie niet een wegenplan ontwerpen waarin wegen vanzelf ontstaan?''

¹⁰²⁹ Since 1950 in Vlaardingen, where MUWI had its factory, and since 1952 in Schiedam (Nieuwlandpolder). At the same time Groosman made the shopping corridor 'Van Hogendorp' in Vlaardingen (1951-1952). See: Hellinga, 2001: 28-29/34.

¹⁰³⁰ Among other: Rozenburg, Zalmplaat, Slikkerveer and Capelle aan den IJssel – Hellinga, 2001: 37-39.

¹⁰³¹ 'Lombardijen' is exemplary for its pre-fab construction, see also: De Heer, 1983: 91; Nycolaas, 1983: 183.

cinema¹⁰³². As such, the film became a rhetorical plea for industrialisation and progress that is explicitly socially motivated. This is already clear from the film's introduction, which even appeals to the UN Declaration of Human Rights. It is the cinematic counterpart of Van Ettinger's book *Towards a Habitable World* (1960). While he discussed the problem of the transmission of knowledge, especially regarding a resistance to change, he remarked (p230) that people in the building trade read little, but like to watch pictures. Whereas the film was made for the general public, it was also an argument to convince constructors, architects, planners and policymakers¹⁰³³. Many of them attended the premiere at the Arena Theater in Rotterdam (1961-10-26), where the film was introduced by the President-Commissioner of Dura-Coignet, W.H. de Monchy¹⁰³⁴, who had been concerned with the reconstruction of Rotterdam before.

The *NRC* called the film 'an aggressive plea', 'which will not fail to stimulate or to continue the discussion on the problem of housing'¹⁰³⁵. The film received various other enthusiastic reviews, for example in the *Algemeen Dagblad*: 'The film fills the spectator with awe, amazement, admiration, and fascinates like only a few industrial films can do'¹⁰³⁶. What follows is Van Gasteren's own story of the film production, which provides an informal and lively account of its undertaking.

In England they were busy with industrial building, such as the airy-system. Here [in Amsterdam] in the Populierenweg, next to the Linnaeusstraat, they applied it too. I found it quite interesting, and went to a factory in Leiden, where they made concrete building blocks. I started to talk about it with Groosman, who passed by here, just after he returned from a visit to Moscow. Groosman was a kind of dandy, and liked the idea of a film. He took me to Dura. They're willing to do things, and they don't make problems about money – I just tell you. They were rather busy with things like hunting and searching for plover's eggs. They showed me how you have to eat them, like this, slap, you smash it. And with Wim Dam, of the Ministry of Social Housing, we went to the factories of Coignet in France. That was a big party.

But at Dura's factories it was deadly boring. With the shootings we had also trouble with lighting – it was just too dark inside. And the labour was not related to anything. They just made the components, plain and dry. I looked for a bit of life, some human action. But it wasn't there, although there is still something in the film, someone with a cigarette, which he passes to a colleague by a transportation belt. The rest of it was a sober and matter-of-fact reporting, almost a commissioned film [*bijna een opdrachtfilm*]. We had to survive too.

Dura went to the Mayor and Aldermen of Rotterdam. The municipality had to build dwellings, so they were willing to collaborate. They only thought in cubic meters. And the architects could nicely sell it. How handy it was to walk this and that way, how good the rooms were, and with an additional storage. But for myself it still contained a promise. I was always rummaging around with cables. I wished to put all of that in the sheet piling, slabs to it, and then to plug in. But the way they did it, you won't believe it! They just got away with it. And I had to make it into a film... There is a ballad, written by Jan Vrijman, on music by Hans van Sweeden, which comes across quite well. That ballad has it¹⁰³⁷.

¹⁰³² Cf. "'Alle Vogels hebben Nesten"; Krachtige film over de woningbouw', *De Volkskrant*, 1961-10-20. Van Gasteren himself has addressed that he had a marxist education – and that he was raised with the monthly *USSR im Bau* (1930s). Next to that he has mentioned the influence of Joris Ivens and Hanns Eisler (*NIEUWE GRONDEN*, 1933), ref.: 'Alle vogels hebben nesten', interview with Van Gasteren, 1978, pp15-16, Archief Louis van Gasteren, NFM.

¹⁰³³ As illustrated by a review in the building magazine *Misset's Bouwwereld* (1961-11-10, 'Alle Vogels hebben nesten...').

¹⁰³⁴ 'Woningprobleem onoplosbaar zonder industriële bouw; bij de film van Dura-Coignet', *NRC*, 1961-10-27.

¹⁰³⁵ Original quote: '...een aggressief betoog in filmbeelden over een actueel vraagstuk dat niet na zal laten de discussie over het woningprobleem te stimuleren of op gang te houden.' Pleidooi voor oplossing van woningprobleem; Film van Louis van Gasteren "Alle vogels hebben nesten", *NRC*, 1961-10-21.

¹⁰³⁶ Original quote: 'De film wekt ontzag, verbazing, bewondering en boeit zoals weinig industriële films dat kunnen doen.' Bosman, Antony; 'Goede industriële film van Louis van Gasteren', *Algemeen Dagblad*, 1961-10-27.

¹⁰³⁷ Louis van Gasteren in conversation with the author (FP), 2003-10-07. Original quote: 'Wat systeembouw betreft, in Engeland waren ze bezig met industrieel bouwen, volgens het airey-systeem. Hier in de populierenweg bij de

This account reveals various connections between different people and places (with Dura being based in Rotterdam, and Van Gasteren in Amsterdam). Hannerz's idea (1996: 149) of cities as 'switchboards' again applies here. Products, ideas and values enter the city, and in a modified form they are exported again. This is an interplay between the environment and 'historical factors', which take place through local appropriation: the French Coignet system that is adapted by Dura to be applied in Rotterdam, which is shown by Van Gasteren.

The story explains not only how the film production was initiated, but also the ambiguities that it implied. Although Van Gasteren believed in the social promise of industrial construction, reality was harsh. 'It is hard to compose a symphony out of it'¹⁰³⁸, a critic of *De Telegraaf* remarked, in the only 'dissonant' review of the film, who also said that the industrial production of houses results in dead districts that bring happiness only to the homeless¹⁰³⁹. Van Gasteren had to resolve other difficulties too, especially in respect of the government, which was concerned with the application of Dura's pre-fabricated system, and wanted to have a say in the film, but without actually supporting it¹⁰⁴⁰. In the next years industrial building methods were nevertheless applied all over the Netherlands.

§ 3. the Rijnmond region and the case of Vlaardingen

Since the 19th century, Rotterdam has incorporated several villages, among them Charlois, Delfshaven, IJsselmonde, and Kralingen¹⁰⁴¹. In 1927, Rotterdam launched a plan to incorporate a large number of municipalities, including Vlaardingen and Schiedam, Capelle aan den IJssel, Ridderkerk, and Barendrecht, but the province of Zuid-Holland cancelled the plan¹⁰⁴². The small dyke village of Hoogvliet, however, was nevertheless incorporated, in 1934. After the war it became a satellite city of 60,000 inhabitants, which offered housing to the workers of the rapidly

Linnaeusstraat hadden ze dat ook toegepast. Ik vond dat wel interessant. Daarna ben ik uit eigener beweging naar een fabriek in Leiden gegaan, waar ze bouwblokken van beton maakten. Groosman kwam toen net terug uit Moskou. Ik had het er met hem over. Hij kwam hier langs. Hij was een beetje ijdel, zo met een vlinderdas om. Hij wilde een soort kunstenaar zijn. Groosman bracht me naar Dura. Via hem ging dat. Daar willen ze wel, en doen niet moeilijk over geld. Ik zeg het je maar. Via hem bij Dura, ja, tjonge, daar waren ze bezig, eigenlijk vooral met jagen en kievitseieren zoeken, dat lieten ze me zien, hoe je kievitseieren moest eten, zo pats, dan sloeg je een ei plat, want die waren anders veel te hard. En met Wim Dam van het ministerie van Volkshuisvesting gingen we naar Frankrijk, naar de fabrieken van Coignet. Dat was een groot feest. Daar werd tekeer gegaan. Maar de fabrieken zelf, van Dura, dat was maar een dooie boel. We hadden er bij de opnamen ook moeite met de belichting. Er gebeurde ook niets. De arbeid daar was aan niets gerelateerd. Daar werden gewoon die onderdelen droog gemaakt. Ik zocht naar wat leven, naar menselijk handelen. Maar dat was er bijna niet. Ja, ik heb in de film nog wel iets, iemand met een sigaret, die hij via een soort transportband naar een collega liet gaan, zoiets. Het was meer nuchtere verslaglegging, bijna een opdrachtfilm. Ja, we moesten hier ook rondkomen, dus dat deden we. Die van Dura gingen wel naar de gemeente, naar de Burgemeester en wethouders. In Rotterdam was dat allemaal. De gemeente die moest woningen bouwen, dus daar wilden ze wel. Ze dachten alleen in kubieke meters. En de architect die mocht het mooi verkopen. Hoe handig het wel niet was om zus en zo te lopen, en hoe goed de kamers waren, en met een extra berging. Ik zag er zelf trouwens wel wat in. Ik liep altijd maar met draden te klooiën. Het leek me handig om dat allemaal in de bekisting op te nemen, platen er voor, en stekkerdozen erin. Was je daar tenminste vanaf. Maar verder, jongens. Dat ging er toch aan toe. Ja, om daar een film van te maken... Er zit een ballade in, geschreven door Jan Vrijman, en muziek van Kees van Zweden, dat komt goed over. Die ballade heeft het wel.'

¹⁰³⁸ Original quote: 'Een gegeven waaruit moeilijk een symfonie kan worden gecomponeerd...', in: 'Nieuwe film van Louis A. van Gasteren', *De Telegraaf*, 1961-10-19 (signed by G.A.B.).

¹⁰³⁹ Original quote: '... [huizenfabrieken] die aan de lopende band onderdelen van mensennesten produceren, welke samengevoegd en aaneengerijd, doodse stadsdelen doen ontstaan, maar daklozen gelukkig maken.' – *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴⁰ ref.: 'Alle vogels hebben nesten', interview with Van Gasteren, 1978, pp15-16, Archief Louis van Gasteren, Nederlands Filmmuseum; cf. Hogenkamp, 2003: 238.

¹⁰⁴¹ Oudenaarden, 2004: 19.

¹⁰⁴² This decision was made in 1929 (Oudenaarden, 2004: 19). In the preceding years, plans for satellite cities were developed by a.o. Van Lohuizen (see: Wagenaar, 1992: 56).

extending harbours and industry (i.e. the Botlek development)¹⁰⁴³. The first plans were made by Lotte Beese, who elaborated also particular quarters of it (a.o. 'Westpunt', 1955-1957).

Although the neighbouring municipalities of Rotterdam remained independent, socially and economically they became ever more part of the agglomeration, due to industrial expansion and suburbanisation. Like the British New Towns, various other satellites cities were planned, including Spijkenisse, Capelle aan den IJssel and Ridderkerk, which had all been villages for centuries. Besides them, the historical towns Schiedam and Vlaardingen had to grow too.

Rotterdam developed into a network of towns and suburbs. It corresponds to the ideas of the American urban theorist Lewis Mumford, whose book *The social foundations of post-war building* was translated into Dutch and published by the *Rotterdamsche Gemeenschap* (1946). Mumford argued that there is a maximum number and size in respect of social relationships, exchange, and recognition. Moreover, districts need to have their own identity and governance, for the city to be a meeting place. Whatever the effect of his ideas might have been, in the essay 'Social Complexity and Urban design' (1963), Mumford mentions Rotterdam, Coventry and Vällingby as cities where such principles are carried out¹⁰⁴⁴.

Whereas the New Towns in Britain, to which Mumford refers too, were new suburbs around large historical centres, Rotterdam became the newly planned centre, surrounded by historical settlements. Among them are the towns of Schiedam and Vlaardingen, which are part of the port region. Both towns grew rapidly after WWII, with old parts being redeveloped and new areas being built, for housing and industry. Vlaardingen will be taken as a case for further reflection upon the image and position of an independent town within the agglomeration of Rotterdam. I will do so by considering its masterplan, by architect Willem van Tijen, which became 'a model to communicate the city', supported by the film OLD TOWN GROWING YOUNGER (1955/1958, Jan Schaper) which is the English version of VLAARDINGEN KOERST OP MORGEN. The film was the first important documentary by Jan Schaper, who, just like Louis van Gasteren, said that he was largely influenced by the ideas of Lewis Mumford¹⁰⁴⁵. However, neither Louis van Gasteren nor Jan Schaper have explicitly addressed the idea of satellite cities, even though Van Gasteren's film ALLE VOGELS HEBBEN NESTEN (1961) dealt with a project that concerned all of the Rijnmond region, whereas Schaper's film is a 'close-up' of one of its towns. Yet, Van Gasteren's film rather views the possibilities of industrial construction within a perspective of global housing conditions, while Schaper's film is, in correspondence with the ideas of Mumford, an attempt to understand Vlaardingen as a 'complete' town, as an urban unit with demographic diversity and its own identity, as a part of the Rijnmond region.

In 1947, Jan Heusdens became the Mayor of Vlaardingen and leader of a progressive municipal government that changed the town radically. In November of the same year he commissioned architect Willem van Tijen to draw a 'structure plan' for Vlaardingen (*Structuurplan Vlaardingen, 1947-1949*), and to elaborate it with plans for the housing quarters 'Babberspolder' and 'Westwijk', which belong to his most important contributions to post-war planning in the Netherlands, according to Idsinga and Schilt in the book *Architect W. van Tijen* (1988)¹⁰⁴⁶.

The *Nederlands Economisch Instituut* and the *Economisch Technologisch Instituut voor Zuid-Holland* were asked to make prognoses for the growth of Vlaardingen. Due to the expansion of the port of Rotterdam, Vlaardingen was thought to have a rapid increase of its industry and housing requirements. It was estimated in 1947 that the town would grow from its present 42,000 inhabitants to 130,000 in the 1970s. In 1949, a structure plan was presented, which included a sanitation plan for the existing city that had to become a home for 60,000 people. The next step

¹⁰⁴³ Damen & Devolder, 1993: 69; cf. Van de Laar, 2000: 476.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Mumford, 1968; the article was first published in *Architectural Record*, 1963-2. For Rotterdam, cf. Mumford, 1957.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Van Gasteren mentioned it in a conversation with the author (2003-10-07) as well as Schaper (2003-11-14).

¹⁰⁴⁶ Idsinga & Schilt, 1988: 349 (project explanation: 349-356).

was the creation of new quarters for another 70,000 people, with the industry being concentrated along the Nieuwe Maas. After the plans had been presented they were carried out immediately, starting with the sanitation and ‘completion’ of the existing city. In 1950, Van Tijen started to elaborate the plan for ‘Babberspolder’, which was executed between 1951 and 1953.

In the autumn of 1954, the municipality of Vlaardingen commissioned Jan Schaper to make a film about its growth, from a herring fishing town to an industrial centre. A film was thought to be an appropriate way to show the town’s totality and consistency, for reasons of information and explanation, promotion and documentation of the rapid growth of the town. At first Mayor Heusdens wanted to present the film at a meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, later that year. In the early 1950s, Heusdens had convinced Cincinnati Millacron to open a factory in Vlaardingen (1952-1954, arch. Hugh Maaskant)¹⁰⁴⁷. The film would be a way to show the success, and to open up new perspectives. However, its production became an extensive communication process between Schaper, who lived in Vlaardingen himself at that time, and the municipality, as well as architect Van Tijen¹⁰⁴⁸. It soon turned out that the production of this film needed much more time. The final result, of half an hour, was ready one year later than initially planned¹⁰⁴⁹.

The municipality did not object the delay, since it allowed one to include various projects that were just getting ready. The Alderman for Education, H.K. van Minnen (a direct link to the educational function of the film), wrote Schaper a letter (1955-06-10)¹⁰⁵⁰ to make additional recordings of churches, homes for the elderly, a swimming pool (*Kolpa bad*), schools and the new equipment of the “Cleaning and Disinfection Service” (*Gemeente Reinigings- en ontsmettingsdienst*), in order to present values of social care, health, and hygiene.

The film, which begins with atmospheric images of historical Vlaardingen and activities in the port, gradually moves towards plans to sanitise old parts of the town. Hence, corporeal health and hygiene is presented in immediate connection with a sane, modern environment. One of the landmarks of this renewed town is the brand new Delta-Hotel by architect Joost Boks, for ‘industrial tourism’ as it is said, due to its superb location along the river Nieuwe Maas and its expressive composition of cubes hanging over the water. Its location, near a park and the industry of the port, also shows the position of the city as being both a healthy environment and economically prosperous. The future of the city is guaranteed by the river that runs along it, the film says. The port offered indeed new perspectives to Vlaardingen, which can also be seen in one of the next films by Schaper, ERTSHAVEN H.V.O. (1960).

OLD TOWN GROWING YOUNGER is a promotional account of the reconstruction spirit, and a plea for progress. Yet there is an ongoing tension between past and future, city and countryside, housing and industry. We see polders and meadows versus construction, the historical town and traditional fishermen versus industrial activities. The film includes archaic images with impressionist light effects, interchanged by images that make use of high contrasts of light, as well as shots with high and low angles, next to a montage of oppositions.

In 1957, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed interest in the film. They found it exemplary for the reconstruction and the future perspectives of the Netherlands, and ordered twenty copies for screenings abroad. Schaper took the opportunity to write a letter to the municipality (7 May 1957) to propose new shots, since the developments in Vlaardingen went so fast that certain architectural models shown at the end of the film had become reality already, and

¹⁰⁴⁷ Nieuwenhuizen, Bert van; ‘Kort Politiek Nieuws; Monumenten’, D66 Vlaardingen,

www.d66vlaardingen.nl/nieuws/archives/000241.html 10 February 2003 and Provoost: 2003: 135.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Personal communication with Jan Schaper, 2005-02-11. (Schaper: ‘Van Tijen visited me at home’.)

¹⁰⁴⁹ Information from the newspaper article ‘Jan Schaper maakt een film over Vlaardingen’, *Het Vrije Volk*, 1954-10-02.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Personal archive Jan Schaper. The information is confirmed in a letter by Schaper in which he explained the declaration of extra costs (because of the requests by Van Minnen), 1955-10-22.

several new buildings and complexes were not yet part of the film¹⁰⁵¹. The municipality approved Schaper's proposal, and a new version was made.

While Schaper worked on the new version, he was also asked to make a series of photographs, due to the success of his film. Schaper made a series of hundred photographs (1957-1958), for exhibition in public buildings and schools¹⁰⁵². They were also part of a submission, by the municipality of Vlaardingen, to the international architecture and planning exhibition Interbau in Berlin (1957) – with contributions of architects like Le Corbusier, Gropius, Niemeyer, Aalto and others. Schaper's series became part of the Dutch contribution to show Vlaardingen as a model case of town planning in the Netherlands. It accompanied the built demonstration of Van den Broek & Bakema, who created one of the so-called *Punkthäuser*¹⁰⁵³.

The new film was ready in January 1958. It received even more enthusiastic reviews than the former. A critic of 'Het Vrije Volk' even considered it to be one of the best city films in Europe¹⁰⁵⁴. With one hundred and four new images, the film exemplified the dynamics of the stormy urban developments, according to the critic. 'In the new version, the variation of acts has become more playful and surprising; the quality of the shots has been perfected in many cases, and the dynamics of what is happening in Vlaardingen is fully shown'¹⁰⁵⁵. The critic also saw 'fascinating new images' of the port enterprise of Vlaardingen, and immediately drew the connection with the film ERTSHAVEN H.V.O. that Schaper made at the same time (1957-1960).

In early 1958, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received twenty copies of the film for screenings abroad¹⁰⁵⁶. Later that year, the film was broadcast on Dutch television (1958-05-06), while the Government Information Service (RVD) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs selected it for the Dutch film programme at the world exhibition in Brussels, EXPO 1958. Besides the general theme of life and work in the Netherlands, the Dutch contribution paid special attention to Dutch 'port cities'. Due to the work Schaper and his wife Leen had done for the Femina, they were also asked to curate the photography presentation of the Dutch pavilion¹⁰⁵⁷.

After EXPO 1958, Schaper was asked to make more photographs for the municipality, which had taken the initiative to publish a book, including an English edition¹⁰⁵⁸. It received a lot of attention in the newspapers, and some, like *Het Vrije Volk*, even published previews.

For many years, armed with a photcamera, Schaper roamed Vlaardingen, which he knows like few others. He snapped here; made a shot there. (...) Schaper photographed Vlaardingen as it was. Slum dwellings, old alleys, fishermen and lugger. He also photographed the metamorphosis of the years after the war. Houses and modern quarters arose, industries emerged. Drifting Vlaardingen threw history overboard in order to steam toward a vivid future. // Surprising are the effects that Schaper knows to achieve in his book. Past and future are mixed into one story that is presented to the reader.¹⁰⁵⁹

¹⁰⁵¹ E.g. the school 'Groen van Prinstererlyceum', Police Office (*politiebureau*), Town Hall (*Raadhuis*), Station Vlaardingen-East, a tunnel, Van Heutzflat, and the housing quarter Westwijk, the latter being designed between 1951 and 1956, and constructed between 1956 and 1961

¹⁰⁵² From correspondence between Schaper and the municipality in the personal archive of Jan Schaper.

¹⁰⁵³ <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin-Hansaviertel> (visited 2007-05-10).

¹⁰⁵⁴ 'Nieuwe versie van Vlaardingen-film; goed werk van Jan A. Schaper', in: *Het Vrije Volk*, 16 January 1958.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid. Original quote: 'In de nieuwe versie is de variatie in handelingen speelser en overwachter geworden, is de kwaliteit van de opnemingen in vele gevallen 'volmaakt' en is de dynamiek van wat in Vlaardingen gebeurt ten volle weergegeven.'

¹⁰⁵⁶ Copy of a letter by Schaper to the municipality of Vlaardingen, 6 January 1958; personal archive Jan Schaper.

¹⁰⁵⁷ The exhibition encompassed five photographic presentations of two cities each: Rotterdam and Dordrecht, Amsterdam and Zaandam, Vlaardingen and Schiedam, Den Helder and Delfzijl. Each presentation was accompanied by a booklet. Besides this, the show included two other presentations of the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam by prints of 7 by 1.5 meter (23 x 5 feet). For information on Vlaardingen and the work of Schaper at EXPO 1958, see: 'Op Expo is ook Vlaardingen vertegenwoordigd', *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad, editie Vlaardingen*, April 12, 1958.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Its production was carried out by bookseller Aart Pontier and N.V. Van Dooren press.

¹⁰⁵⁹ 'Vlaardingen onderwerp van bijzonder boekwerk; foto's (130) en tekst van cineast Schaper', in: *Het Vrije Volk*, edition Vlaardingen, 1959-10-10. Original quote: 'Veel jaren zwierf Schaper gewapend met fototoestel door

The book can be considered as a still version of the film, as well as a contextualisation of it and a document with additional and profound information. It not only shows the direct connection between film, photography and writing as it is practiced by one and the same person, but it also illustrates the union between the different media in terms of publicity and informative purposes.

The article in *Het Vrije Volk* is accompanied by a picture from the book. A signpost that shows the direction to Rotterdam stresses the connection with the city on which its future depended. Its position in the Rijnmond was also addressed by the preliminary title of the book: “Vlaardingen, Corner-stone of Europoort” (*Vlaardingen, Hoeksteen van Europoort*). The newspaper, however, prefers a previous suggestion by Schaper: “Vlaardingen, Revenge on the Past” (*Vlaardingen, Revanche op het Verleden*). The book was finally published, in 1959, with the title ‘Vlaardingen in turning tide’ (*Vlaardingen in kerend tij...*). One of the most enthusiastic reviews was published by Dr. A.W. Schippers Jzn in *De Nederlandse Courant voor Canada*, a paper for the Dutch community in Canada, with detailed comments and background information on the text and photographs¹⁰⁶⁰. The review starts mentioning the fast growth of the town that is made possible by Mayor Heusdens. In his period of office, from 1947 until 1959, the town had almost doubled its population, up to 70,000 people, with a prospect, at that time, of a total number of 160,000 in the next twenty years (which would not happen in the end). The critic compares the story of the book with the developments he observes himself in the town Scarborough, as a part of metropolitan Toronto. The developments go equally fast over there, but in their planning, according to Schippers, they are less harmonious and less diverse in their possibilities for the citizens. Hence Vlaardingen might be taken as a successful model. From today’s perspective this may be questionable, but it shows all the more the convincing power that Schaper’s work had at that time.

Vlaardingen dat hij kent als weinig anderen. Hij knipte hier; hij maakte daar een shot. (...) Schaper fotografeerde Vlaardingen zoals het was. Krotwoningen, oude straatjes, vissers en loggerschepen. Hij fotografeerde ook de gedaanteverwisseling van de jaren na de oorlog. Huizen, moderne wijken verzezen, industriën ontstonden. Driftig gooide Vlaardingen het verleden overboord om op een levendige toekomst aan te stomen. // Verrassend zijn de effecten, die schaper in zijn boek weet te bereiken. Verleden en heden worden in één verhaal gemengd aan de lezer voorgelegd.’

¹⁰⁶⁰ Schipper Jzn, A.W.; ‘Een boek met een stuk interessante historie en tastbare realiteit’, in: *De Nederlandsche Courant voor Canada*, 15 July 1961.