Representing the Industrial City: Rotterdam, 1880–1970

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This article examines the image of industrial Rotterdam in commercially—produced postcards and in avant-garde photography and film. In the late 19th century, picture postcards rapidly developed into a mass medium. Hundreds of different view cards of Rotterdam circulated during the "Golden Age" of the postcard, which lasted until the end of the 1910s. These cards promoted a particular vision of Rotterdam to tourists and people visiting for business, but also to the local population, thus shaping the city's self-image. At the other end of the cultural spectrum, avant-garde filmmakers and photographers visualized Rotterdam in radical new ways. Starting in the twenties, artists like Joris Ivens and Andor von Barsy redefined the aesthetic qualities of the urban landscape and disclosed the beauty of the industrial city to the general public. Their modernist perspectives on Rotterdam influenced the visual representation of the city well into the post-war period.

The visual materials I selected for my research are all photographic and there is a reason for this. From their invention, photography and the cinema were widely seen as part of the industrial age. Both media were also considered "objective" because photographic images are mechanically produced and reproduced. The industrial quality, combined with the ontological realism of the photographic image, made that photography and cinematography were frequently chosen to market the modern city and its industries (Schürmann 2008, 130–132). Obviously, the objectivity of photographic images should never be taken for granted. It is in fact highly ambiguous. Nonetheless, more than paintings, for instance, photographic images do bear a direct relationship with reality and this makes them particularly relevant for my own approach, which combines aesthetic analysis with social history. I am not interested in urban representation *per se* but in the historical relationship between the visualization of industrial Rotterdam and its "factual" development of as a port and industrial city. It is at the intersection of these phenom-

ena, that we can understand the dynamics of medialisation in the context of large processes social and cultural change.

Postcards from a Family Album

When I moved to Rotterdam a few years ago, I was given a collection of 52 old postcards of my new hometown. They came from an album that once belonged to my great grandparents, who lived in a provincial town in the South-East of the Netherlands. They and their children received the post-cards between 1902 and 1918. The majority of these cards belonged to a set. Selling packets of six, seven or eight different views of the same town was a common commercial practice in those days. The buyer would either send the individual cards to different addresses or, as in this case, to the same household. By receiving several cards of such a series or even the complete set within the time-span of a few days, my relatives shared in the traveler's metropolitan experience. My family did not visit Rotterdam until the 1920s. So I wondered what impression of the city did they get from these postcards.

Each set in the collection offers the spectator an overview of the city's touristic highlights: public buildings, bridges, historical statues, shopping streets and scenic views of the old town center (Fig. 1). However, what is con-spicuously missing in the sets are images of Rotterdam as a modern indus-trial city. Only the old, 17th and 18th century pre-industrial harbors in the town center with their small sailing boats are represented on the cards. There are no pictures of the new docks on the South Bank, where the industrial port activities were concentrated. Neither do we find any pictures of ware-houses or factories. Despite the fact that Rotterdam was widely perceived as an industrial city, its industrial character is exactly what these postcard series avoided to represent. In addition, the postcards favor a picturesque mode of representation, which in some series is enhanced by the use of a soft-tone coloring of the originally black-and-white photographs. Thus, the cards offer a romantic idealization of the present: an urban ideal image that focuses on the city's historical past. To be sure: there are some postcards in my collec-tion that show the modern metropolitan qualities of Rotterdam: its elevated railway, the iron-work bridges and the White House skyscraper. Yet also for these emblems of modern life the same picturesque mode of representation prevails, domesticating urban modernity as it were.

Fig. 1: Postcard set Rotterdam, stamped 1903

(Source: Author's private collection, family album)

At this junction, I want to point that this collection may well be representative for a Dutch family album of the early 20th century, but it does not reflect the total offering on the market. In the 1900s, some local postcard publishers and the Verlag Dr. Trenkler, a Leipzig-based company that operated internationally, had views of the new docks on the South Bank in their assortment. Typically, these postcards featured the steam ships, grain elevators and cranes that epitomized the modern industrial port. (Fig. 2) We find several examples in the collections of German postcard dealers, but far less in Dutch archival collections. While this discrepancy requires further research, it suggests a difference in the city's perception between national and international publics. German visitors, many of whom might have been on business in Rotterdam, seem to have appreciated the industrial quality of the city well before the Dutch.

What can we learn from the case of my Rotterdam postcard collection? For one, in the opening decades of the 20th century, the production of commercial postcards was so large and their circulation so widespread in that it is difficult to give a comprehensive overview of the corpus. This is often the case with visual materials that were mechanically reproduced. Hence, one

Fig. 2: Postcard Rijnhaven, circa 1910

(Source: Author's private collection)

needs to carefully consider the limits and limitations of the corpus of images under consideration and situate the selection in the broader media landscape. Second, we have to be attentive to the fact that the industrial quality of an industrial city is not necessarily favored by mainstream visual media. Especially in metropolitan contexts, we will come across competing interpretations of modernity and urban life. In other words, there is not "one" industrial city and the absence of certain images may also be meaningful and needs to be explained. Thus a detour is necessary to understand why most Dutch postcard albums of the early 20th century do not contain images of industrial Rotterdam.

From Mercantile Town to Industrial City

Well into the 1830s, writers and visitors still praised Rotterdam for having kept the character of a Dutch mercantile town of the 17th and 18th century. As Paul van de Laar (1998) points out, the term mercantile town not only designated a city focused on trade but also implied an urban ideal image, which had its roots in the pre-industrial period and shaped for over two centuries the ways in which Rotterdam saw it self and represented itself to the larger world. In the mercantile town, the elite of merchant families set the political, social and cultural agenda, and the flourishing of commerce went hand in hand with a flowering of the arts stimulated by that same elite. The economy of Rotterdam, like that of other mercantile towns such as Amsterdam and Venice, was based upon the staple market system and entailed a particular model of spatial development characterized by a strong relationship between town and harbor, whereby the waterfront functioned as a showcase for the wealth of the city and its elite. (van Dijk and Avelar Pinheiro 2003, 91). In Rotterdam, it was on the *Boompjes* on the North Bank of the New Meuse that the most prosperous merchant families lived and did business.

The urban ideal of the mercantile town began to disintegrate in the second half of the 19th century under the pressures of reality. Due to innovations in transportation technology, investments in infrastructure and the rapid industrialization of the German hinterland, Rotterdam grew explosively and its port developed into one of the largest in continental Europe. Large-scale harbor expansion took place between 1880 and 1920, increasing

the total port area from approximately 200 hectares to almost 1,800. The New Waterway canal improved the access route to the North Sea, especially for larger vessels. From the mid-1890s until the outbreak of the First World War, the port's annual growth in traffic was almost eight percent. In 1880, the port handled about 2.7 million tons, by 1913 the total volume of cargo had increased to 32 million tons. Nearly 75 percent of all goods were transit goods, coming from or going to Germany. The expansion in traffic went hand in hand with a fundamental shift in the port's economy. Rotterdam changed from a staple market system to a transit port. This meant that the core of economic activities no longer revolved around the trade in relatively high valued commodities shipped in small volumes, but on the throughput in bulk of raw materials, like iron ore, coal, grains, wood and, later also petroleum (van de Laar 2000, 2002; de Goey 2002).

Initially, the transformation of Rotterdam from a mercantile town into a *transitopolis* met with fierce resistance. During the first half of the 19th century, the Rotterdam merchant elite successfully used their political power to frustrate the reorientation of the port's function in order to protect their staple-market interests. According to Van de Laar, the city's business elite "was opposed against free trade, the abolition of Rhine tolls that would stimulate the port's transit function, and it did not like any modern railroad connections that could jeopardize the distributive function of the old merchant families" (2002, 64). By the 1870s, however, the resistance of the old merchant families was broken by a new breed of entrepreneurs and measures by the central government to liberalize the Dutch economy by putting an end to the nation's seaport monopolies, thus finally embracing the new international standards of free trade. From then on, Rotterdam could fully exploit the advantages of its geographic location and developed into a transit port. Between 1880 and 1914, the municipality invested almost eighty million guilders in the infrastructure of its harbors (van de Laar 2002, 66). The largest public investments went into a new harbor complex on the South Bank: the Rhine, Meuse and Waal docks. Specially built for the handling of bulk goods, these river docks allowed cargo-handling from ship to ship on stream via floating and shore-based grab cranes and elevators.

In this context of rapid economic and geographic expansion, the ideal of a town in which industry and trade harmoniously mixed with socio-cultural functions, gave way to a model of urban planning that separated the city from its industrial activities. From the 1900s onwards, we witness a growing spatial division between living and working and a process of decentraliza-

tion, whereby the harbors moved to the western outskirts of Rotterdam towards the sea. This outward movement had its parallels in the realm of housing. Workers and their families continued to live near the harbors, docks and shipyards, but as early as the 1870s the wealthy upper class began to move out of the city. Rotterdam gained the reputation of being a *werkstad*—a workmen's city. Its largely working-class population continued to grow, from circa 100,000 inhabitants in 1850 to 470,000 in 1914 (van de Laar 1998, 24). After several decades of boomtown growth, Rotterdam was no longer a small, attractive mercantile town but a large, modern industrial city.

"Oh how ugly, ugly thou art. Industrial new Rotterdam", the Dutch poet E. J. Potgieter complained in 1879 (van de Laar 1998, 1). According to its critics, industrial Rotterdam and its business elite of *nouveau riche* cargo handlers and stevedores was solely focused on economic growth and material well-being. In the eyes of many contemporaries, the elevated railway that opened in 1877 exemplified par excellence the ugliness of the modern era and the barbarian character of the transit city, its lack of cultural sensibility and good taste in urban planning. There had been strong public resistance to the construction of the railway, not only on the part of the merchant elite but much broader sections of the population because the railway literally cut through the city's historic center (Fig. 1). With the railway, the new age had arrived. Its presence in the urban landscape was unavoidable for everybody who walked through the city. However, as my earlier analysis of the post cards revealed, decades after its actual demise, the inhabitants of Rotterdam and most Dutch visitors still clung to the ideal image of the mercantile city and its notions of urban beauty. Hence, they favored a picturesque mode of representation that softened the "ugliness" of the industrial city and soothed the anxiety associated with modern life.

The Beauty of the Industrial City

During the 1920s, the aesthetic esteem for the industrial city with its functionalist architecture changed radically. By the end of the decade, "modern, large, technological Rotterdam had become enormously popular both in artistic circles and among the city's inhabitants in general", art historian Patricia van Ulzen observes (2007, 55). Avant-garde movements like Russian Constructivism, German *Neue Sachlichkeit* and the Dutch movement *De*

Stijl provided new frameworks to appreciate the modern urbanity of Rotterdam. A city that had previously been branded as ugly, was suddenly considered beautiful (van Ulzen 2007, 49).

The beginnings of this shift in taste from a picturesque to a modern aesthetics can be situated with the emergence of a style that became known as the New Photography. This international movement advocated a documentary mode of representation that "objectively" reflected reality but from unusual angles and with strong contrasts in form and light to produce an effect of alienation and thus sensitize the spectator. Some of the leading exponents of the New Photography were based in Rotterdam, where they belonged to a creative milieu that included many prominent modernist architects, typographers, and industrial designers, including as J. A. Brinkman, J. J. P. Oud, W. H. Gispen, J. Kamman and P. Swart. They maintained extensive international contacts, especially with the Bauhaus, and exchanged ideas with other photographers and filmmakers through avant-garde platforms like *Internationale Revue i10* and *Filmliga* (Van Ulzen 2007, 55; Gierstberg 2011, 109; Paalman 2011, 67–111).

Embraced by the municipality, the local business community and the popular press, the New Photography became the aesthetic vehicle to promote the modernity of Rotterdam and its industrial port, especially the new docks on the South Bank. The ultimate symbol of the city's newly-discovered industrial beauty became *De Hef*—the high draw bridge over the New Meuse, which was inserted into the old elevated railway in 1927. In many respects, *De Hef*—the actual bridge and its visual representation on postcards, in the popular press and in avant-garde art—exemplified the shift towards a modernist aesthetic sensibility (Fig. 3). As we saw, the construction of the elevated railway had met with fierce resistance in the 1870s. Fifty years later, the public's response to the new bridge was decidedly more enthusiastic. Local newspapers reported with great excitement about the construction works and covered in detail the dismantling of the old bridge and the opening of the new one (Koot 2001). *De Hef* inspired the anonymous reporters of the popular, illustrated weekly *Groot*

Fig. 3: Postcard Rotterdam—Alles Staal (all Steel) with De Hef bridge, circa 1935

(Source: Author's private collection)

Rotterdam but also featured in the 1928 portfolio *Métal* by the prominent avant-garde photographer Germaine Krull.

Krull's photography had a strong influence on Joris Ivens, with whom she had a relationship when he shot *De Brug* (The Bridge), by far the most famous art work about *De Hef* and a film that was almost immediately recognized as a masterpiece of experimental cinema. Made in 1928, this short documentary (black & white, silent, 16 minutes) shows the movements of the lifting bridge, trains, and boats. By way of rhythmic editing and constructivist perspectives, alternating between different angles and with strong variations in shot size, Ivens creates a visual contrast between the different movements and forms. The film premiered in the art-cinema context of the *Filmliga* and then gained a much broader audience when its distribution was taken over by the Dutch branch of the UfA. In the national press, *De Brug* was highly praised and typically reviewed in terms of the "first Dutch art film", an "expression of modern times" and "modern beauty" (Koot 2001, 28).

The aesthetics of *De Brug* deserve a more detailed analysis, but I am primarily concerned here with questions of social history, in particular with the film's relationship to the actual industrial city. If we consider Ivens' cinematographic representation of the South Bank harbor from the perspective of social history, what strikes first and foremost is the almost total absence of people in the film. The filmmaker presents himself as the man behind the camera. The spectator sees the bridge through his eyes, but the other human beings in the film are merely abstract forms, instead of characters with inner emotions with whom the viewers can identify. In fact, in several shots, we only see an arm or hand that is operating a machine. In other words, the *werkstad* as a social space is absent. Rotterdam is emptied of its workers and its representation reduced to a visual spectacle of industrial architecture and transportation technologies.[1] This abstraction was a deliberate choice on the part of Ivens. While in the post-war era, the harbor became more and more disconnected from the city, this spatial division was not yet the case in the first half of the 20th century. Dockers and other laborers lived in working-classes neighborhoods on the South Bank because the combination of working and living was still the dominant urban pattern. Indeed, "the city" could

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1 Obviously, this aesthetic strategy had its real-life counterpart in processes of mechanization in the harbor itself. For instance, a series of new techniques, especially the introduction of floating and shore-based grab cranes, had mechanized much of the handling of ore and coal, which had previously done manually by dock workers (van Driel 2002).

Fig. 4: Jan van Maanen, De Maas biedt velen arbeid/
The Maas provides work for many

(Source: Photo from Brusse and Oud (1938), 38)

not be entirely blocked out when shooting *De Brug*. In the far distance, framed by the bars of the bridge, the spectator gets a glimpse of street life on the quays. It is as if social reality breaks through the formal language of constructivism.

The dehumanization of the industrial city is not characteristic for Ivens' film alone. On the contrary. I would argue that it is emblematic for the New Photography. Take the work of Andor von Barsy, a Hungarian cameraman and photographer, who lived and worked in Rotterdam during the interwar period (Gierstberg 2011; Paalman 2011, 130–165). His series of photographs of the Rotterdam harbor—almost 300 in total—rarely represent workers and if they do, the rationale seems purely aesthetic. The same can be said for many of his films. For instance, Von Barsy's *Tusschen aankomst en ver-*
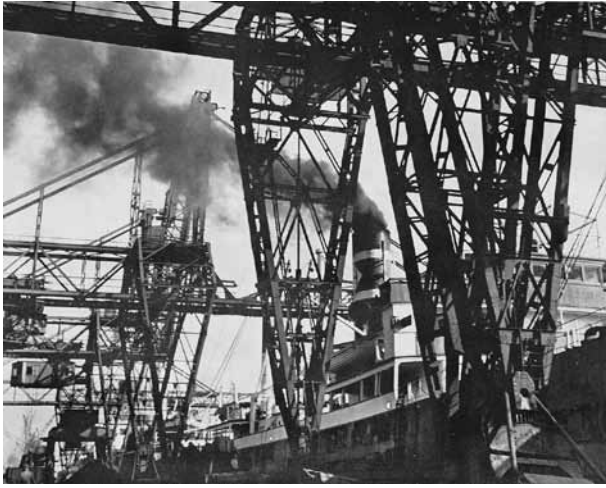
Fig. 5: Jan van Maanen, Het daverende lied van den arbeid/The booming song of labour

(Source: Photo from photo from Brusse and Oud (1938), 39)

trek (Between arrival and departure), a port promotion film, was described as "a voluminous symphony of cranes, crabs, tug-boats and ocean steamers" by a contemporary reviewer (quoted after Gierstberg 2011, 108). Another famous example is *De Schoonheid van Rotterdam* (the beauty of Rotterdam), a richly illustrated book that appeared in 1938 in a highly popular book series dedicated to beauty of the Netherlands (Brusse and Oud 1938). Most photographs in the Rotterdam volume are typical examples of the New Photography. They capture the city's industrial and modernist qualities "in black and white with strong contrasts that show the structure of the objects to better effect" (van Ulzen 2007, 49). Ships and industrial structures such as bridges, cranes and grabs dominate this visualization of Rotterdam. The absence of people is striking. Workers appear mostly in extreme long shots, which represent them as faceless, stylized figures in the industrial landscape (Fig. 4). Perhaps the most telling example in *De Schoonheid van Rotterdam* is the photograph "The booming song of labor" by Jan van Maanen (Fig. 5). In this shot of the harbor labor is understood as the fully mechanized labor of the cranes.

Until the outbreak of the Second World War, modernist representations of the South bank docks defined by and large the visual image of industrial Rotterdam. The older, more picturesque postcards of the industrial port,

often with soft-tone coloring, disappeared from the market. The war years had their own iconography. In May 1940, the city's historic center, including the old Leuvehaven, was almost entirely destroyed by the German Air Force and the firestorm that followed the aerial bombardment. The new harbor complexes along the Meuse suffered very heavy damage in September 1944, when the German occupiers blew up the quays and warehouses on both the North and South banks and demolished the few remaining cranes and elevators. The majority of postcards of this period highlight the devastation in the city center, whereby visual contrasts are frequently used to enhance the picturesque quality and sense of drama inherent in wartime images.

Post-War Industrial Rotterdam: The Rush to the Coast

In the first two decades after the war, the modernist image of Rotterdam gained momentum. There was a strong continuity between the interwar-years and the period of post-war reconstruction in terms of architectural ideals. By the 1930s, Rotterdam was already highly praised for its modernist buildings. J. J. P. Oud acted as the Municipal Housing Architect for Rotterdam from 1918 until 1933. The utopian visions of city and society were embodied in the *Nieuwe Bouwen* projects of the Brinkman & Van der Vlugt firm, in particular in their Van Nelle factory (1931). During the reconstruction era, no other Dutch city accepted as thoroughly the modernist principles of architecture and urban planning defined by the CIAM (*Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne*). Thus, Rotterdam built the most modernist city center in the Netherlands and became a prime example for the international planning community (Rooijendijk 2005, 63). In "A Walk Through Rotterdam", for instance, Lewis Mumford discusses with unbridled enthusiasm the aesthetic and urban qualities of the *Lijnbaan*, the new open-air pedestrian shopping mall that formed the heart of the city's modernist center (Mumford 1953, 50–52). Not surprisingly, the favorite object of photographers and film makers became the new city center with its functionalist architecture (Andela and Wagenaar 1995; Blijstra 1965). On the other hand, the post-war interest in the city center and concomitant changes in the visual representation of modern Rotterdam should not be understood as a simple shift in subject matter. At stake was a major transformation in the relation between the city and its industrial port.

The so-called *Basisplan*, which was presented in 1946, defined the outlook for the future Rotterdam. As social geographer Cordula Rooijendijk observes, the plan was "a turning point in history, since its aim was to realize a new utopian society on the basis of socioeconomic planning, marking the end of laissez-faire and the beginning of the welfare state" (2005, 67). In the new city, urban functions—dwelling, work, leisure and transportation—were radically separated. Rotterdam was zoned into housing areas, recreational areas, and work areas. There was to be a central business district but large industries and companies that had no need to be in the center, had to be relocated to new industrial zones on the outskirts (Rooijendijk 2005, 74).

The *Basisplan* had important consequences for the relation between city and harbor. As a result of the decentralization policy, the port and related industries moved more and more westwards towards the coast during the postwar era. This development was fostered by fundamental changes in transport technology and cargo handling, notably the introduction of containers and the continuous increase of vessel size. Large-scale expansion of the port surface further accelerated the ongoing separation between the city and its harbor. With the Botlek Plan, the Europoort-Maasvlakte complex and the opening of the Eemhaven, the total port area grew from 1,400 hectares in 1950 to some 7,600 hectares in 1975. These new harbors were much larger than the ones that were developed before 1940. In particular, they accommodated large petro-chemical plants and storage tanks. In the post-war period, industrialization occupied a central place in port policies. Before the war, Rotterdam's large scale industrialization remained limited to those sectors that were directly connected to transshipment and shipping, that is ship building and repair. After 1945, the city wanted to become less dependent on the German hinterland and diversify its economy, especially by stimulating the oil business and related industries (van de Laar 2002; de Goey 2002).

Because of the "rush to the coast", industrial Rotterdam moved literally out of view. Whereas in the 1920s and 1930s, the segregation of city and industry had been to a large extent a visual effect created by the New Photography, it became reality with the development of the Botlek, Europoort and first Maasvlakte. To this day, the harbor remains a fundamental element in the story of the city's identity and its economic success. However, the harbor figures primarily in written narratives. Since the 1960s, the port and its industries can only be re-integrated into the visual representation of Rotterdam by way of montage. Let me illustrate this with two examples.

Representing Post-War Rotterdam

The first example concerns multi-picture postcards. After the war, this type of "greetings from" card, typically with four to eight photographs of a particular city in black-and-white or color, developed into one the most widely-spread commercial formats aimed at tourists. Clearly, the collage of different miniature views echoes the sets of the early 20th century. In the case of Rotterdam, the format was particular appropriate as it allowed to represent the city and the new, outlying harbors on a single card (Fig. 6). In fact, the dynamics of the industrial port could only be seized by offering a multi-picture overview (Fig. 7). Like the postcards and avant-garde photography of the Interwar period, the "greetings from Rotterdam" cards produced during the reconstruction era stress the modern and metropolitan quality of Rotterdam. However, unlike Van Ulzen, I would not conclude that there was a strong "continuity in the way the city's future was envisioned" (2007, 66). On the contrary, we can observe a radical break in perspective. The emphasis in the visual narrative about Rotterdam shifted in the postwar period from the harbor to the new city center, from industrial activity to consumption and entertainment. By the 1960s, the *Lijnbaan* shopping mall (van den Broek & Bakema, 1949–1953), department store *De Bijenkorf* (Breuer, 1953–1957)

Fig. 6: Postcard Greetings from Rotterdam, circa 1967

(Source: www.dekunstclub.nl)

Fig. 7: Postcard Greetings from Rotterdam, circa 1964

(Source: www.dekunstclub.nl)

and the Euromast (Maaskant, 1960), a space age observation tower for tourists, had become the city's new icons.

My second example is again taken from avant-garde cinematography. More than thirty years after the success of *De Brug* (1928), Joris Ivens was commissioned by the city council to make a promotional film about Rotterdam as the "gate of Europe". With a commentary written and narrated by the poet Gerrit Kouwenaar, *Rotterdam-Europoort* (1966, 20 minutes, color) can be best described as a cine-poem that combines fact and fiction. The film alternates between abstract images of the port and industrial activities, intimate documentary sequences portraying social life in the city, and staged scenes in which the fictional theme of the flying Dutchman is elaborated. The three story lines come together to tell a story of destruction and reconstruction: "this city I saw burning, this city I saw building" (commentary Kouwenaar).

In *Rotterdam-Europoort*, montage is essential to link the city and the harbor, to visualize the connection between "oil and grain and people […] and oil and people" (Kouwenaar). Whereas in *De Brug*, social life and urban living could still break into the film's highly stylized representation of the industrial city, this was no longer an aesthetic choice when Ivens shot the Europoort film. Due to the rush to the coast, the geographic separation of city and port had become reality. The nearest harbors of the Botlek-Europort complex are situated at some twenty kilometers from the center of Rotter-

dam. Moreover, Ivens has to use extreme long shots and aerial photography to characterize the Europoort. The new harbor complex is not only situated far away from the city center and hence "out of view", but it also resists representation because of its scale and the nature of its industries. Only with an extreme distance between the camera and its object does the filmmaker manage to give the spectator an impression of the Europoort-Botlek complex. Such extreme long shots, by their very nature, render the human element invisible. In particular, the shots of the petro-chemical industry in *Rotterdam-Europoort* show an entirely desolate, dehumanized industrial landscape. It is almost as if we watch an apocalyptic scene in a science fiction film. The dehumanization of the industrial city that we observed in *De Brug* and other works of New Photography is brought to an extreme, but it is imposed by the landscape itself and not a matter of modernist aesthetics.

However, there is more at stake in *Rotterdam-Europoort* than just a new urban pattern that conditions and restructures the visual representation of the industrial city. Ivens deliberately reinforces the split between port and city, between working and living. Whereas the images of the *Europoort* evoke the formal aesthetics of the New Photography, most sequences in the city are shot in *cinema vérité* style, thus creating a strong aesthetic contrast between the port and the city center. Only when filming a new, modernist apartment block, an emblem of welfare state housing for the working classes, Ivens uses the same formalist language as when he films the harbor complex. But everyday life in the city center is captured in a far more direct and realist way. People are rendered as individuals, they literally have faces and their activities seem to unfold naturally before the camera. The inner city is primarily represented as a shopping and entertainment zone and the domain of the young. Many scenes shows acts of consumption and recreation: people are portrayed as smiling shoppers, cheerful cinemagoers, they are drinking coffee in a lunch room or enjoy themselves at night driving around on mopeds. The fourth urban function that Ivens isolates in the film is transportation: the bustle at the railway station, flows of people going by foot, bike or moped to work, home or into the shopping district. In sum, *Rotterdam-Europoort* endorses and visualizes the urban ideal image of the modernist city as defined in the *Basisplan* with its strict separation of urban society into industrial, housing and recreational zones that are connected by efficient transportation systems.

Conclusion

This article has examined how commercial postcards and some renowned works of avant-garde photography and cinematography represented Rotterdam as an industrial city. Given the centrality of the port for the city's identity and economy, my research focused on images of the harbors. For the period 1880–1970, we can distinguish three stages. During the first decades of industrialization (1880–1920), when Rotterdam rapidly developed into a major industrial port and big city, this urban and economic development was only marginally visible in the postcards of the period. In terms of subject matter, most view cards highlighted the city's historical center and the old Leuvehaven as if times had not changed and Rotterdam remained a mercantile town. Cards of the newly-built docks on the South Bank circulated on a limited scale, but they aimed primarily at foreign tourists. Aesthetically, the postcards of this period, even those of the new harbors, favored a picturesque mode of representation, often using soft-coloring to create a romantic effect.

Around 1920, as modernism came to the foreground in almost all realms of art, Rotterdam's industrial quality was reassessed and its functionalist beauty discovered by avant-garde photography and cinematography. This shift from a picturesque to a modernist aesthetic sensibility and the concomitant interest industrial Rotterdam was not restricted to the cultural elite. By the end of the twenties, modernism had gained a much wider audience thanks to illustrated magazines like *Groot Rotterdam*, the programming of avant-garde cinema in commercial movie theaters, modernist design and typography. During the next decade, the South Bank harbor complex figured prominently in the visual representation of Rotterdam. In the 1930s, postcard producers also adopted a more objective photographic style and they no longer applied the technique of soft-coloring. Finally, it is important to recall that despite their profound interest in the industrial port, avant-garde filmmakers and photographers largely ignored workers and working-class life in Rotterdam. There was a strong tendency to dehumanize the industrial landscape reducing it to functionalist architecture, bridges, cranes, machines, ships and trains.

During the post-war reconstruction era, modernism continued to be the dominant aesthetic regime. As Rotterdam and its new center became the mecca of modernist architects and urban planners, producers of visual images developed a strong interest in the inner city at the expense of the harbour. This visual marginalization of industrial Rotterdam went hand in hand with

the physical movement of port activities towards the coast as a result modernist planning, which advocated a clear separation between different urban functions and relegated industrial activity to the outskirts of the city. In the second half of the 20th century, the physical and visual gap between the city and harbour grew to the point that both spaces could only be integrated into the same visual narrative by way of collage and montage. However, the mode of representation changed. The 1960s witnessed the beginning of a break away from modernism and a gradual humanization of the visualized urban landscape. This shift in aesthetics and subject matter was fostered by a shift towards a more personalized and intimate documentary style in film and photography. The inhabitants of Rotterdam first appeared as gratified consumers in the modernist décor of the new city center or tenants of comfortable welfare state apartments. Paradoxically, workers as real people with personal stories about Rotterdam as *werkstad* only came to the forefront of the city's visual representation at the beginning of the post-industrial era, that is during the seventies and eighties, when they went massively on strike to fight the growing redundancies in the port and related industries.

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