A Director's Cut for Spatial Planning: A Cinematic Approach to the Flemish Urbanized Landscape

Annelies Staessen

Doctoral dissertation submitted to obtain the academic degree of
Doctor of Urbanism and Spatial Planning

Supervisors

Prof. Steven Jacobs, PhD* – Prof. Em. Luuk Boelens, PhD**

* Department of Art, Music and Theatre Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, Ghent University

** Department of Civil Engineering
Faculty of Engineering and Architecture, Ghent University

December 2024

GHENT UNIVERSITY

Members of the Examination Board

Chair

Prof. Em. Luc Taerwe, PhD, Ghent University

Other members entitled to vote

Prof. Greet Deruyter, PhD, Ghent University

Prof. Klaske Havik, PhD, Technische Universiteit Delft, the Netherlands

Prof. Mark Tewdwr-Jones, PhD, University College London, United Kingdom

Prof. Em. Bart Verschaffel, PhD, Ghent University

Supervisors

Prof. Steven Jacobs, PhD, Ghent University

Prof. Em. Luuk Boelens, PhD, Ghent University

CONTENTS

FIGURES

SAMENVATTING

SUMMARY

SAMENVATTING

Dit doctoraatsonderzoek richt zich op de filmische verbeelding van het hedendaagse Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap en verkent hoe deze verbeeldingen kunnen bijdragen aan de huidige debatten binnen de ruimtelijke planning in deze specifieke context. De percepties van het Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap lopen sterk uiteen. Enerzijds worstelen experten zoals ruimtelijk planners, stedenbouwkundigen en beleidsmakers om grip te krijgen op de verstedelijking en fragmentatie van deze ruimte. Hierbij focust men vooral op demografische, economische en ecologische problemen die ontstaan door de verspreide nederzettingsstructuur in Vlaanderen. Plannen en rapporten zoals Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen 1997, Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen 2018, RuimteRapport 2018, RuimteRapport 2021, enzovoort, benadrukken een dringende nood aan verdichting van de centra in combinatie met een bouwstop en/of -shift. Anderzijds wordt de resterende open ruimte nog steeds verder ingenomen door residentiële of industriële ontwikkelingen, waarbij open ruimte jaarlijks met een gemiddelde snelheid van 6,4 hectare per dag verdwijnt (Statbel; Pisman, Vanacker, Strosse, et al., 2019). Ondanks de negatieve effecten van deze sterk verspreide bouwwoede, zoals aanhoudende verkeersproblemen, impact op klimaatverandering, verhoogd energieverbruik en transformatie van het landschap, zet de versnippering van de open ruimte onverminderd door. Het stedenbouwkundig discours en de bijhorende plannen van de afgelopen decennia lijken weinig effect te hebben op de alledaagse leefwereld. In de omgang met de Vlaamse ruimte bestaat er met andere woorden een discrepantie tussen de visies, concepten en plannen binnen professionele planningspraktijken en de alledaagse cultuur en realiteit van bewoners en gebruikers. Het dominante discours in de planning is gebaseerd op een instrumentele, rationele, strategische benadering, waarbij conventionele onderzoeksmethoden en instrumenten zoals plannen, geografische informatiesystemen (GIS), statistiek, enzovoort, de specifieke nuances van de dagelijkse leefwereld nauwelijks vatten. Het is net deze sociale en culturele context die vaak ontbreekt in het beleid. Doordat abstracte, technocratische kaders het beleid bepalen worden intrinsieke kenmerken, betekenis, waarde en ervaring van dit verstedelijkte landschap doorgaans niet meegenomen.

Aangezien kunst een cruciale rol speelt in het weerspiegelen en interpreteren van sociale en culturele contexten, en Vlaanderen bovendien een rijke traditie kent in artistieke representaties, richt dit onderzoek zich op het benutten van kunst om een meer geïntegreerd en genuanceerd beeld van het Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap te verkrijgen. In dit kader onderscheidt film zich van

andere kunstvormen zoals literatuur, fotografie en schilderkunst door zijn breed toegankelijke en multidimensionale aard. Filmische percepties - in het bijzonder de weergave van ruimtelijke omgevingen in films – hebben de capaciteit om ruimtes te representeren (als visueel medium), te reflecteren (als spatio-temporeel en narratief medium) en te interageren met evoluties van ruimten (als invloedrijk medium). In een gemediatiseerde maatschappij, waarin film een invloedrijke rol speelt, kan film nieuwe inzichten bieden in het alledaagse, de leefwereld. Daarnaast kan film de intrinsieke kenmerken met betrekking tot ervaringen, verhaallijnen, en de specifieke dynamiek van het dagelijkse leven weergeven. Gebaseerd op deze drievoudige kwaliteit van filmische beelden (het representatieve, het reflectieve en het interactieve), onderzoekt deze studie filmische visualisaties van het Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap om een antwoord te bieden op de onderzoeksvraag: ***kan film bijdragen aan een geïntegreerde benadering van het Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap in de ruimtelijke planning?***

Om deze onderzoeksvraag te beantwoorden zijn drie subvragen geformuleerd: (1) Hoe wordt het Vlaamse landschap in films gerepresenteerd? (2) Welke (nieuwe) inzichten over de Vlaamse stedelijke cultuur biedt deze filmische perceptie? (3) Hoe kunnen de verkregen inzichten uit filmische representaties worden toegepast om de aansluiting tussen stedelijke planning en het Vlaamse stedelijke landschap te verbeteren? Op basis van een theoretisch kader (hoofdstuk 2) wordt een methodologie uitgestippeld (hoofdstuk 3) om aan de hand van spatio-morfologische en socio-culturele dataverzameling een antwoord te formuleren op deze deelvragen. Door theoretische concepten te combineren met filmtheorieën, wordt een multidimensionale benadering geïnitieerd die de representerende, reflecterende en interactieve kwaliteiten van film integreert. Cinematisch realisme, zoals besproken door Bazin en Kracauer, benadrukt de unieke capaciteit van film om de fysieke realiteit vast te leggen. De theorieën van Lefebvre, de Certeau, Habermas en Latour, die zich richten op de alledaagse leefwereld en de fundamentele dichotomie tussen systeem en leefwereld, bieden inzichten om binnen de ruimtelijke planning tot een meer geïntegreerde benadering te komen. Daarnaast onderzoeken de theorieën van Giedion, Benjamin, Merleau-Ponty, Eisenstein, Bergson, Deleuze en Heath elk verschillende aspecten die film zijn specifieke rol geven in het begrijpen en vormgeven van ruimten. De integratie van deze theorieën biedt een kader dat film positioneert als een krachtig medium voor het begrijpen en vormgeven van ruimte.

Tegen deze achtergrond wordt vervolgens een methodologie uitgestippeld om filmische percepties van het Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap te onderzoeken. Niet alleen kan deze filmische kijk naar voren worden geschoven om een perspectief te bieden op het alledaagse (ruimte lezen), of om tactisch visuele en temporele verbeeldingen van ruimte weer te geven (ruimte sociaal

construeren), maar met zijn narratieve en normatieve/dramaturgische representaties kan het ook planningsacties vormen in de richting van meer genuanceerde, ofwel geleefde dimensies (ruimte mediëren). Deze drie filmische acties - representatie, reflectie en interactie - bieden een structuur voor een operationeel onderzoekskader dat bestaat uit drie corresponderende componenten. Het eerste deel behelst een diepgaande ruimtelijk-morfologische filmanalyse (met behulp van de video-annotatiesoftware ELAN) om de heersende cinematografische representaties van het Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap te lezen. Op basis van deze analyse van ruimtelijke representaties worden in een volgende stap de (inter)subjectieve uitdrukkingen van ruimtelijk-socioculturele thema's onderzocht in relatie tot de stilistische effecten, gecreëerd door het gebruik van montage, licht, kleur, geluid, optiek, enzovoort. Via semi-gestructureerde bilaterale interviews met de regisseurs van de geselecteerde films worden de intenties en reflecties op deze verbeelde ruimtes duidelijk. En tenslotte, in het laatste deel wordt via gemodereerde filmsessies met belanghebbenden de mogelijke rol van film in ruimtelijke planning verder onderzocht. Daarbij worden panelgesprekken en discussies met het publiek gebruikt om inzicht te krijgen in hoe deze films onze percepties vormgeven, ons gevoel omtrent plaatsen beïnvloeden en onze relatie met afgebeelde omgevingen mediëren.

Daarnaast wordt, om de onderzoeksdoelstellingen verder te operationaliseren, een selectieproces gehanteerd om fictiefilms te identificeren die een duidelijk filmisch perspectief bieden op de huidige Vlaamse verstedelijkte context. De selectiecriteria zijn tweeledig: enerzijds 'formeel' - waarbij alleen fictiefilms met een releasedatum na 2004 worden geselecteerd om de actualiteit van de beelden te waarborgen; anderzijds 'inhoudelijk' - met de nadruk op auteursfilms vanwege de artistieke inbedding, waarvan het narratief zich voornamelijk afspeelt in het heden en binnen een specifieke ruimtelijke context. Dit proces resulteerde in de keuze van acht hedendaagse fictiefilms: *Steve+Sky* (Felix Van Groeningen, 2004), *Carlo* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004), *Rundskop* (Michaël R.Roskam, 2011), *Fucking Suburbia* (Jeff Otte, 2012), *Kid* (Fien Troch, 2012), *Violet* (Bas Devos, 2014), *Above Us All* (Eugenie Jansen, 2014) en *Home* (Fien Troch, 2016). Deze films bieden een actueel en contextueel beeld van specifieke ruimtelijke thema's, zoals lintbebouwing langs steenwegen, woonwijken met lage dichtheid in suburbane gebieden, en open ruimten. De selectie vormt daarmee een representatieve basis voor een genuanceerde analyse van de filmische representatie van verstedelijkte landschappen in Vlaanderen.

Tegen deze achtergrond concentreert de empirie zich op de analyse van de geselecteerde films, met het doel te ontdekken a) wat er wordt gerepresenteerd en hoe audiovisuele (camera)technieken een ruimtelijk-morfologische lezing van deze ruimten uitdrukken (representatie), b) hoe de narratieve rela

ties een sociale constructie uitdrukken (reflectie), en tot slot c) wat de mogelijke mediërende rol van cinema is of kan zijn (interactie).

In het eerste deel van de analyse, de ruimtelijk-morfologische verkenning van cinematografische representaties (hoofdstuk 4), wordt duidelijk dat alle films gebruik maken van bepaalde generieke, archetypische beelden van natuurlijke, landelijke of stedelijke (Vlaamse) landschappen. Toch gaan de cinematografische representaties in de geselecteerde films verder dan deze traditionele beelden door de hybride realiteit van Vlaamse landschappen elk op een eigen manier te vatten. Alledaagse, en daardoor vaak over het hoofd geziene plaatsen, zoals straten, parkeerplaatsen, woningen, bordelen, enzovoort, krijgen in deze representaties een centrale positie. Bovendien registreert de camera hoe het dagelijks gebruik van deze ruimtes vaak afwijkt van wat beoogd was in ontwerpen en plannen. Zo worden parkeerterreinen van supermarkten afgebeeld als speeltuinen voor kinderen (**Kid**) of als ontmoetingsplaatsen voor tieners (**Home**). Op deze manier verbinden de cinematografische weergaves deze omgevingen met het alledaagse van specifieke subculturen of leeftijdsgroepen. Bovendien worden de uitdagingen waarmee deze groepen geconfronteerd worden (zoals de zoektocht van adolescenten naar identiteit en vrijheid, de financiële lasten en beslommeringen van boeren die leiden tot illegale activiteiten, het gemarginaliseerde bestaan van criminelen en sekswerkers langs steenwegen) benadrukt. De analyse toont aan dat cinematografische representaties niet alleen de aandacht vestigen op onopgemerkte of onbegrepen plaatsen, maar ook inzichten opleveren omtrent het dagelijks gebruik van die specifieke groepen. Of het nu gaat om de straten in suburbane verkavelingen in **Violet** en **Fucking Suburbia**, parkeerplaatsen in **Home** en **Kid**, braakliggende terreinen en bars en bordelen langs steenwegen in **Steve+Sky**, ongecontroleerde open ruimtes in **Rundskop**, **Carlo** en **Kid**, of de aangrijpende herdenkingslandschappen in **Above Us All**; elke setting heeft zijn betekenis en actieve rol in het narratief over het Vlaamse landschap.

Een verdere analyse van dat narratief, door middel van het ontrafelen van de verhalen en interviews met de regisseurs, werpt in het tweede deel licht op hoe cinema de Vlaamse socio-culturele leefwereld reflecteert (hoofdstuk 5). De geselecteerde films voegen een dramaturgische en symbolische laag toe aan de steenwegen, suburbane verkavelingen en de open ruimte landschappen. Filmlocaties en hun ruimtelijke kenmerken spelen een cruciale rol in het vormgeven van de sociaal-culturele context en de verhaallijn. Ze worden door de regisseurs gebruikt om de gevoelens, ervaringen en connecties van personages te weerspiegelen of te versterken. Zo wordt de afloop van de achtervolging in **Carlo** bepaald door de kenmerken van de boomgaard waarin de protagonisten belanden. In **Rundskop** is de dramatische wending in het leven van de jonge Jacky mede het gevolg van de open ruimte, waar ook een zekere wette-

loosheid (en daarmee dreiging) heerst. De symbolische waarde van open ruimte is een belangrijk element in zowel *Kid* als *Above Us All*. In *Kid* is het bos een plek van harmonie en vrijheid, en uiteindelijk zelfs de plek waar *Kid* wordt herenigd met zijn moeder. In *Above Us All* drukken de landschappen een rouwproces uit. De suburbane verkavelingen zijn in de geselecteerde films verbonden met stabiliteit maar fungeren in *Violet* en *Fucking Suburbia* vooral als afgesloten werelden, waarin de protagonisten (meestal tieners) zich opgesloten voelen. Ook in Kid's geval impliceert de verhuizing naar de typische vrijstaande woning van zijn tante, verlies van vrijheid. Dit staat in contrast met de steenweg in *Steve+Sky,* die als een vrijplaats vol mogelijkheden de jonge levens van de personages definieert en verbindt. Naast de narratieve en cinematografische keuzes, geven de regisseurs ook aan dat het esthetische aspect een rol speelt in de weergave van de landschappen. Door individuen of bepaalde groepen in hun dagelijkse suburbane omgeving te portretteren met aandacht voor culturele connotaties en symbolieken, dragen de regisseurs bij aan meer genuanceerde en diepgaande inzichten van de Vlaamse stedelijke cultuur. Dit gaat verder dan de doorgaans analytische benaderingen van planologen. Daarnaast dragen ze bij aan een beter begrip van de dynamische relatie tussen mensen en hun omgeving.

Tenslotte onderzoekt het derde deel de mogelijke mediërende rol van film door middel van twee filmsessies, waarbij fragmenten uit de geselecteerde films vertoond werden aan een publiek met verschillende professionele achtergronden (hoofdstuk 6). De paneldiscussies die tijdens deze sessies werden gehouden, gingen dieper in op de complexiteit van suburbia (tijdens de eerste filmsessie) en de interpretatie van genuanceerde open ruimten (tijdens de tweede filmsessie). Deze discussies suggereren een tweeledige bijdrage van film aan ruimtelijke planning: enerzijds door een alternatieve, meer genuanceerde interpretatie te bieden, en anderzijds door nieuwe concepten te initiëren Ten eerste, stimuleren de ruimtelijk-morfologische en sociaal-culturele aspecten uit de filmbeelden een herinterpretatie van suburbia en open ruimte. De discussies wijzen op de nostalgische referenties in de beelden die diep geworteld zijn in het collectieve bewustzijn van de gemiddelde Vlaming. Daardoor ontstaat er enerzijds een gevoel van sociaal-historische herkenning. Anderzijds dagen de films de geïdealiseerde voorstellingen van het suburbane leven en de romantische kijk op het Vlaamse landschap uit. De confrontatie met de verhalen en acties in de films ondermijnt de schijnbare cultivering van het idyllische. Bovendien versterken filmmakers hun impact door onverwachte associaties te introduceren; hierdoor worden conventionele percepties verstoord en kan een bewustwording van deze onbewust aanwezige associaties en sterk ingebedde, nostalgische beelden geïntroduceerd worden in planning. Ten tweede kunnen de films nieuwe concepten genereren die de agenda en focus van ruimtelijke planners

helpen vormgeven. Zo inspireert de leeftijdsgebonden ervaring van suburbane woonomgevingen in de films om planningsprioriteiten te herzien. Dit omvat het uitdenken van alternatieve projecten die ook onzichtbare (kansarme) groepen binnen de privaat-publieke setting van suburbia betrekken. Wat de open ruimte betreft, biedt de conceptualisering van Vlaanderen als een soort 'Wonderland' van een reeks kleinere afzonderlijke entiteiten met elk hun eigen unieke kenmerken, een meer werkelijk geleefd   perspectief dat een antwoord kan bieden op het conventionele streven naar grote, aaneengesloten open ruimten. Uit de enquêtes die op het einde van elke filmsessie bij het publiek afgenomen werden, kwam het potentieel van film als communicatiemiddel en katalysator voor deze dialoog sterk naar voor.

De conclusies synthetiseren en consolideren deze bevindingen door een antwoord te formuleren op de onderzoeksvraag (hoofdstuk 7). Het onderzoek naar acht fictie films toont aan hoe cinema onze kijk op stedelijke landschappen kan verbreden door typische Vlaamse thema's zoals steenwegen, suburbia en open ruimte op nieuwe manieren te belichten. Films brengen alledaagse ruimten en het gebruik ervan door specifieke groepen onder de aandacht. Dit stelt de mainstream perceptie van deze ruimtes in vraag. De filmische beelden benadrukken wat gewaardeerd wordt in deze landschappen en onthullen de veelzijdigheid van het verstedelijkte landschap. In de sociale constructies van films ontstaan meerlagige interpretaties die nieuwe planningsinzichten bieden. Bovendien fungeren films als bemiddelaars om bij te dragen aan culturele bewustwording, maar ook om meer geleefde discussies aan te wakkeren en planners daarmee te inspireren tot innovatieve benaderingen en concepten. Deze thesis maakt duidelijk dat film een nieuwe benadering kan bieden voor de ruimtelijke planningspraktijk. Film verschaft niet alleen inzichten en reflecties die de analyse, interpretatie en het ontwerp van ruimtes anders benaderen, maar dient ook als platform voor interdisciplinaire dialoog tussen planners, beleidsmakers, architecten en andere belanghebbenden.

Tot slot wordt er gereflecteerd op zowel het theoretisch kader, als de empirische dimensies, en sluit deze thesis af met enkele operationele beschouwingen over hoe een filmische benadering voor een meer gedragen – en daarmee meer veerkrachtige en duurzame - toekomst in de planningspraktijk ingezet kan worden (hoofdstuk 8). De geldigheid van inzichten uit fictiefilms in relatie tot de keuzes van de regisseur met betrekking tot het narratief, evenals de beperkingen en sterktes die inherent zijn aan hun subjectieve narratieve framing worden in overweging genomen. Daarnaast benadrukt het proefschrift de dubbele rol van films als zowel *intermediair* als *mediator* binnen actornetwerken, waarbij hun vermogen om bestaande ruimtelijke percepties te weers-

piegelen, maar ook tegelijkertijd te hervormen, wordt benadrukt. Hierbij worden potentiële toepassingen van film als krachtig verbeeldingsmiddel, als narratieve leeswijze, als katalysator van cultureel bewustzijn, als dialoogvorm, en als deel van het planningsproces gesuggereerd om een cinematografisch perspectief in de ruimtelijke planning aan te nemen. Finaal geeft deze thesis daarmee enkele operationele lijnen aan over hoe een dergelijk cinematisch onderzoek kan inspireren tot integratie van de culturele leefwereld en artistieke representaties in planningspraktijken. Vooral in de context van de huidige, steeds veranderende en hypervisuele maatschappij, is de integratie van traditionele en nieuwe artistieke technieken, zoals film, cruciaal om tot meer gedragen plannen te komen.

SUMMARY

This doctoral research focuses on the cinematic representation of the contemporary urbanized Flemish landscape and explores how these representations can contribute to current debates within spatial planning regarding this specific area. Considering the Flemish urbanized landscape, perceptions are widely divergent. On the one hand, experts such as spatial planners, urban designers, and policymakers struggle to manage the urbanization and fragmentation of this space. Their focus is mainly on demographic, economic, and ecological issues arising from the dispersed settlement structure in Flanders. Plans and reports like the Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders (*Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen* 1997), Spatial Policy Plan (*Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen* 2018), Spatial Report (*RuimteRapport* 2018, *RuimteRapport* 2021), and others emphasize the urgent need for densification of city centers combined with a building stop and/or shift. On the other hand, the remaining open space is still taken up by residential or industrial development, such as in 2019 at a speed of 6,4 hectares a day (Pisman, Vanacker, Strosse, et al., 2019). Despite the adverse effects of sprawl, such as ongoing traffic jams, impact on climate change, heightened energy consumption and landscape transformation, the Flemish inhabitants in general persist in their dispersed settlement behavior; thus, suburbanization unimpededly continues. The urban planning discourse and corresponding plans of recent decades seem to have little effect on everyday life. In other words, there is a discrepancy between the discourse, theories, and concepts within professional planning practices and the everyday culture and reality of residents. The dominant discourse in planning is based on an instrumental, rational, strategic approach, where conventional research methods and instruments such as plans, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), statistics, and so on, barely capture the specific nuances of daily life. The social and cultural context, the intrinsic characteristics, meaning, value, and experience of this urbanized landscape are often missing in the abstract, technocratic frameworks that determine policy.

Since art plays a crucial role in reflecting and interpreting social and cultural contexts, and Flanders has a rich tradition in artistic representations, this research focuses on utilizing art to gain a more integrated and nuanced understanding of the Flemish urbanized landscape. In this context, film distinguishes itself from other art forms like literature, photography, and painting by its widely accessible and multidimensional nature. Cinematic perceptions, especially the depiction of spatial environments in films, have the capacity to represent (as a

visual medium), reflect (as a spatio-temporal and narrative medium), and inte-
ract (as an influential medium). In our current mediated society, where film plays
an influential role, film can offer new insights into the everyday, the lifeworld,
and the intrinsic characteristics related to experiences, narratives, and specific
dynamics of daily life. Based on these three qualities of cinematic images (the
representative, the reflective, and the interactive), this study examines cinema-
tic visualizations of the Flemish urbanized landscape to answer the research
question: ***can film contribute to an integrated approach to the Flemish urbanized
landscape in spatial planning?***

     To answer this research question, three sub-questions have been formula-
ted: (1) How is this peculiar Flemish landscape presented in film? (2) Exactly what
(new) knowledge of Flemish urban culture is offered by this cinematic percep-
tion? (3) And how can these insights gleaned from cinematic representations be
applied to enhance the connection between urban planning and the Flemish
urban landscape? Based on a theoretical framework (chapter 2), a methodology
is outlined (chapter 3) to formulate answers to sub-questions through spatio-
-morphological and socio-cultural data collection. By combining theoretical
concepts with film theories, a multidimensional approach is initiated that inte-
grates the representative, reflective, and interactive qualities of film. Cinema-
tic realism, as discussed by Bazin and Kracauer, emphasizes the unique capacity
of film to capture physical reality. The theories of Lefebvre, de Certeau, Haber-
mas, and Latour, which focus on the everyday lifeworld and the fundamental
dichotomy between system and lifeworld, offer insights for achieving a more
integrated approach in spatial planning. Additionally, the theories of Giedion,
Benjamin, Merleau-Ponty, Eisenstein, Bergson, Deleuze, and Heath each explore
different aspects that give film its specific role in understanding and shaping
space. The integration of these theories provides a framework that positions
film as a powerful medium for understanding and shaping space, incorporating
perspectives from multiple theories. Against this background, a methodology is
outlined to investigate cinematic perceptions of the Flemish urbanized lands-
cape. Not only can this cinematic view be used to offer a perspective on the
everyday (reading space), or to tactically depict visual and temporal represen-
tations of space (socially constructing space), but with its narrative and norma-
tive/dramaturgical representations, it can also shape planning actions towards
more nuanced or new lived dimensions (mediating space). These three cinematic

actions—representation, reflection, and interaction—provide a structure for the operational research framework consisting of three corresponding components. The first part involves an in-depth spatio-morphological film analysis (using the video annotation software ELAN) to discover the prevailing cinematic representations of the Flemish urbanized landscape. Based on this analysis of spatial representations, the next step examines the (inter)subjective expressions of spatial-sociocultural themes in relation to the stylistic effects evoked by the use of editing, light, color, sound, optics, and so on. Through semi-structured bilateral interviews with the directors of the selected films, the intentions and reflections on these imagined spaces become clear. In the final part, moderated film sessions with stakeholders investigate the role of film in spatial planning. Discussions with the panel and audience are used to understand how these films shape our perceptions, influence our sense of place, and mediate our relationship with depicted environments.

Furthermore, to operationalize the research objectives, a selection process is applied to identify fiction films that offer a clear cinematic perspective on the contemporary Flemish urbanized context. The selection criteria are twofold: formally, only fiction films with a release date after 2004 are included to ensure the relevance of the images, and substantively, *films d'auteur* are the focus due to their artistic embedding, with the narrative mainly taking place in the present and within a specific spatial context. This process resulted in eight contemporary fiction films: *Steve+Sky* (Felix Van Groeningen, 2004), *Carlo* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004), *Bullhead* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011), *Fucking Suburbia* (Jeff Otte, 2012), *Kid* (Fien Troch, 2012), *Violet* (Bas Devos, 2014), *Above Us All* (Eugenie Jansen, 2014), and *Home* (Fien Troch, 2016). These films provide a contemporary and contextual view of the specific spatial themes, such as ribbon development along arterial roads, low-density residential areas in suburban regions, and open spaces. This selection offers a comprehensive basis for a nuanced analysis of the cinematic representation of urbanized landscapes in Flanders.

Against this background, the empirical part focuses on the analysis of the selected films, aiming to discover a) what is represented and how audio-visual (camera) techniques express a spatio-morphological reading of these spaces (representation), b) how narrative relationships express a social construction (reflection), and finally c) what the potential mediating role of cinema is (interaction). In the first part of the analysis, the spatio-morphological exploration of cinematic representations (Chapter 4), it becomes clear that all films use certain generic, archetypical images of natural, rural, or urban (Flemish) landscapes. However, the cinematic representations in the selected films go beyond these traditional images by capturing the hybrid reality of Flemish landscapes. Common places like streets, parking lots, houses, brothels, etc. are eleva-

ted within these representations, emerging as focal points within the cinematic frame. Therefore, these places become more than mere backgrounds and sets in these representations. Moreover, the camera captures how this everyday use often diverges from their intended design and plan. For instance, parking lots of supermarkets are depicted as children's playgrounds in *Kid*, or hangout spots for teenagers in *Home.* As such, the Flemish urbanized landscape is cinematographically constructed through the portrayal of generic everyday spaces, but equally connects the representation of these spaces with specific subcultures or age groups. These cinematic representations also illuminate the challenges faced by these groups: the struggle for identity and freedom among adolescents in outdoor peripheral spaces, the financial burdens and entanglements with illicit activities for farmers, and the marginalized existence along the arterial road for criminals and sex workers. The analysis shows that cinematic representations not only draw attention to otherwise overlooked, or misjudged places such as suburban neighborhoods, parking lots, wastelands and arterial road environments, it also reveals insights about these places and their everyday use by specific groups. Furthermore, by employing filmic representations as a lens for analysis, we not only gain insights into these environments but also recognize the pivotal role of cinematic context in shaping narrative dynamics. Whether it's the tranquil suburban neighborhoods in *Violet* and *Fucking Suburbia*, the gritty underworld of bars and brothels along arterial roads in *Steve+Sky*, the poignant landscapes of commemoration in *Above Us All*, the claustrophobic interiors in *Home*, the uncontrolled open spaces in *Bullhead* and *Carlo* and *Kid*, each setting is more than just a backdrop—it is an active participant in the storytelling process.

An analysis of narrative relationships and their spatial representation through unraveling the stories and interviews with the directors in the second part of the analysis sheds light on how cinema reflects the Flemish urban culture (chapter 5). The selected films add a dramatic and symbolic layer to the environments of arterial roads, suburban developments, and open space landscapes. Film locations and their spatial characteristics play a crucial role in shaping the socio-cultural context and storyline; they are used by directors to reflect or amplify the feelings, experiences, and connections of characters. For example, the outcome of the chase in *Carlo* is determined by the characteristics of the orchard where the protagonists end up. In *Bullhead*, the dramatic turn in young

Jacky's life course is possible because the open space appears to be almost lawless. The symbolic value of open space is important in both *Kid* and *Above Us All*. In *Kid*, the forest is a place of harmony (no financial worries) and freedom (no imposed rules or obligations), and ultimately, it is also the place where Kid is reunited with his mother, even after both of them have died. Since the storyline of *Above Us All* did not take precedence in making the movie, the landscapes express the processing of grief. The suburban environments function in all the movies as enclosed worlds wherein the protagonists, mostly teenagers (*Home, Violet, Fucking Suburbia*) seem somehow trapped. Also in Kid's case, moving to the suburban house of his aunt implies loss of freedom. The opposite is the case for the opportunities experienced along the arterial road, which define the young lives of the protagonists in *Steve+Sky*. The world of the arterial road seems primarily a refuge where individual desires and needs of subcultures with distinct behavioral patterns can thrive. Besides the narrative and cinematic choices, directors also indicate that the aesthetic aspect plays a role in depicting the landscapes. By portraying individuals or certain groups in their everyday (suburban) environment with attention to cultural connotations and symbolism, directors contribute to nuanced and sophisticated insights into social connections and the cultural significance of the urbanized Flemish landscape.

The third and last part of the analysis explores the potential mediating role of film through two film sessions where fragments from selected films were shown to an audience with diverse professional backgrounds (Chapter 6). The panel discussions delved deeper into the complexity of suburbia during the first film session, and open space, during the second, highlighting the dual contribution of film to spatial planning. Firstly, the spatial-morphological and socio-cultural aspects from the film images offer an alternative, more nuanced reading. The discussions about suburbia and open space point to the nostalgic references in the images, representations deeply rooted in the collective consciousness, which are used to evoke recognition but also to move away from an idealized depiction of suburban life or romantic landscapes. The confrontation with the narratives and actions in the movies subvert this cultivation of the seemingly idyllic. Furthermore, filmmakers amplify their impact by introducing unexpected associations, creating a clash that disrupts conventional perceptions and heightens awareness of these subconscious and nostalgia-laden images. Secondly, films possess the transformative power to shape new concepts, which might be added to the agenda and focus of spatial planners. In suburban environments, the age-specific focus highlighted by these films prompts a reconsideration of planning priorities. This includes addressing underprivileged groups within the private-public setting of suburbia and exploring alternative build-up projects. Regarding open space, the conceptualization of Flanders as a Wonder-

land, a series of smaller distinct entities, each with its unique characteristics, offers a fresh perspective that extends beyond the conventional approach to aim for large, continuous open spaces. Surveys conducted at the end of each film session indicated film's potential as a communication tool and catalyst for dialogue.

The conclusions synthesize and consolidate these findings by addressing the research question (Chapter 7). The study of eight fiction films demonstrates how cinema can broaden our view of urban landscapes by shedding new light on typical Flemish themes such as motorway spaces, suburban neighborhoods, and open space. Films draw attention to everyday spaces and their use by specific groups, challenging mainstream perceptions of these spaces. The cinematic images highlight what is valued in these landscapes and reveal the versatility of the urbanized landscape. In the social constructions of films, multilayered interpretations emerge that offer new planning insights. Moreover, films serve as mediators that contribute to cultural awareness, spark discussions, and inspire planners to create innovative approaches and concepts. This thesis makes it clear that film can offer a new approach to spatial planning practice, as film not only provides insights and reflections that inform the analysis, interpretation, and design of spaces but also serves as a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue between planners, policymakers, architects, and other stakeholders.

Finally, the thesis reflects on both the theoretical framework and empirical dimensions, concluding with a consideration of the broader implications of a cinematic approach for a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive future in planning practice (Chapter 8). It considers the validity of insights drawn from fiction films in relation to the director's choices regarding the narrative and the limitations and strengths inherent in their subjective narrative framing. Additionally, the thesis emphasizes the dual role of films as both intermediaries and mediators within actor-networks, highlighting their ability to reflect existing spatial perceptions while also reshaping them. It suggests potential applications of film as: a powerful means of imagination, a narrative reading, a catalyst for cultural awareness, a form of dialogue, and part of the planning process, advocating for the adoption of a cinematic perspective in spatial planning. Ultimately, this thesis provides some operational guidelines on how such cinematic research can inspire the integration of the cultural environment and artistic representations into planning practices. Particularly in the context of today's ever-changing and hyper-visual society, integrating traditional and new artistic techniques, such as film, is crucial to achieving sustainable plans.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1. Diverging perceptions of the Flemish urbanized landscape

In our modern-day mediatized society, the moving image has a prominent role. Film influences the way we construct images of the world and, as a result, how we operate in it. Cinematic perceptions determine ideas, including ideas about space. As urban planners analyze, interpret and design places, they formulate concepts of space in order to understand its meaning and how it is used. Therefore, it is important to consider perceptions of space, including those provided by images on screen.

Also in the case of the Flemish urbanized landscape, it is especially relevant to include cinematic perceptions when reflecting on and conceptualizing space, since perceptions of this particularly fragmented landscape are widely divergent. Ever since the Flemish architect and urbanist Renaat Braem labelled Belgium as "the ugliest country in the world" (Braem, 1968), urban professionals have been struggling with the negative impact of urbanization in Flanders. They have also adopted Braem's critical perception of this sprawl (see a.o. Boussauw & Boelens, 2014). In their search for ways to counter uncontrolled suburbanization, both urban planners and policy makers have primarily focused on demographic, economic, and ecological problems produced by dispersed urbanization (with plans and reports like RSV (1997), BRV (2018), RURA (2018), RURA (2021), etc.)[1]. However, there are two important objections to these attempted solutions. Firstly, these responses ignored more structural foundations of Flanders' dispersed layout, such as geographical features of the landscape, ancient infrastructure policies and the associated housing, and economic and spatial planning ontologies (Boelens, 2021; Boelens & Pisman, 2020). Secondly, experts underestimated the significance of underlying and embedded ambitions and aspirations of the Flemish people (see a.o. Meeus & De Decker, 2013). As a result, the Flemish inhabitants in general persist in their dispersed settlement behavior despite the known consequences of sprawl, such as ongoing traffic jams, impact on climate change, energy consumption, and transformation of the landscape. Hence, and regardless of the spatial concepts and plans of the past fifty years, Braem's critique is still remarkably accurate.

The highly fragmented settlement structure now covers almost the entire territory. Although it is a densely populated region[2], with a settlement area of 33%, Flanders has one of the lowest densities in terms of settlement structure[3] within Europe. Furthermore, while planners voice an urgent need for densification of the centers to safeguard the remaining open space from further land parceling, the consumption of space unimpededly continues. In 2019 it increased at a speed of 6,4 hectares a day, and open space is still taken up by resi-

1.
Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen (RSV) 1997: The Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders is a vision that indicates how space should be used in Flanders and has been an important foundation of spatial policy since 1997.
Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen (BRV) 2018: the Flanders Regional Policy Plan (BRV) is a strategic vision that includes a picture of the future and an overview of long-term policy options, particularly strategic objectives.
Ruimterapport (RURA) Vlaanderen 2018: The Spatial Report on Flanders that describes, analyses, and evaluates the state of space/spatial fabric in Flanders.
2.
The average population density in Flanders was 488 inhabitants/km2 in 2021. (https://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/bevolking-omvang-en-groei)
3.
Vlaanderen, Ruimte. "Witboek Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen." Brussels, Belgium. [https://www.ruimtevlaanderen.be/Portals/108/WhitePaperSpatialPolicyPlanFlanders_brochure2017_1.pdf] Available from (2017).
Vlaamse Overheid. (2017a). "Vlaams Bouwmeester meerjarenprogramma 2017-2020." Brussels, Belgium. [https://www.vlaamsbouwmeester.be/nl/meerjarenprogramma-2017-2020] Available from (2017).

dential or industrial developments (Pisman, Vanacker, Strosse, et al., 2019). The announced building shift[4] risks to remain as hollow phrases. When dealing with this Flemish space, there exists a major dichotomy between concepts and theories of professional experts on the one hand and everyday culture and realities of inhabitants on the other.

1.1 Characteristics of the Flemish urbanized landscape: space & politics

Urban development in Belgium, and particularly in Flanders, appears to be a rather individualistic practice, determined by personal housing needs, property rights, and building opportunities. This has led to a landscape characterized by its everyday nature, lacking in grand gestures or spectacular layouts. Even before the industrial revolution, the landscape in Flanders has been cultivated and divided into plots (Dehaene & Loopmans, 2003, p. 4). As a result, fragmented ownership structures the territory and its heterogeneous land use. Rural hamlets, small villages, and towns sprawl across the landscape (De Meulder, Schreurs, Cock, & Notteboom, 1999, p. 81).

Successive housing laws, in 1889 and 1948[5], generated by ideals promoted by liberal-Catholic political parties and organizations, stimulated individual homeownership with generous building grants and without regulatory restrictions. Together with the development of both a dense railway and road network and the democratization of car ownership, which made every place easily accessible, rural sites became attractive residential locations. The landscape, already defined by a dispersed settlement structure, gradually turned into a peri-urbanized area.

This caused persistent pressure on the open spaces and eventually resulted in further urban fragmentation and congestion of the roads and railways. To deal with a more sustainable future, spatial planners struggle to manage and preserve open spaces. Moreover, throughout the last decades, the Flemish policy discourse on open space has been rather economically biased and based on monofunctional zoning. In an overview of spatial management in Flanders, Renard, Coppens, and Vloebergh (2022) describe the policy on open space since 1980, when the Belgian state reform devolved its responsibility for spatial planning to regional governments. However, inheriting the Belgian law on urbanism from 1962 and the first zoning plans of the seventies as a result (Boelens & Pisman, 2020), it took until 1997 to develop the *Spatial Structure Plan for Flanders* (Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen, RSV). Renard et al. (2022) believe that this short period during the second half of the 1990s was exceptional for establishing a policy that maintained, implemented, and enforced spatial plans more

4.
As one of the strategic goals of the Flemish policy plan on space, this building stop was announced in 2015 to end the additional consumption of land in 2040. Therefore, a gradual reduction is implemented in which the disappearance of 3 hectares of open space every day should be reached by 2025. This procrastination seems to have the opposite effect.

5.
1889 huisvestingswet
1948 wet de Taeye

sustainably. The intention of the RSV and the emergency decree adopted four years earlier was to stop sprawl in general and especially in open spaces definitely. Unfortunately, according to Renard et al., the neoliberal era of Thatcher, Reagan, Kohl, Lubbers, Mertens, etc., was also firmly established in Flanders from the administration of the liberal Dewael (1999) onwards. This included a new wave of loosening urban regulations in spatial planning. Individual housing needs, property rights, and building opportunities again took precedence over the RSV intentions to preserve open space. In less than 20 years, more than 40 decree amendments resulted in spatial planning characterized by decretal deviations and exception rules. According to Renard et al. (2022), all these decrees have facilitated more urban sprawl, although compact city planning was still addressed, but merely as window dressing.

This also went on in right-wing Christian democratic administrations, despite the fact that since the beginning of the 2010s, the intention for a new Flemish Spatial Structure Plan (Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen, BRV) was announced by the Flemish government. Part of this new policy plan was again a decisive building stop on formerly legalized greenfields in the countryside, and a 'shift' of these building permits towards the main Flemish cities. The aim was to gradually reduce the speed of open space occupation to 3 hectares a day by 2025 and to zero occupation by 2040. Although a task force was installed to get a grip on the financial, social, and economic implications of this intention, since its final report in 2022 (Viaene et al., 2022), this didn't result in new policy decrees regarding the 'building stop' in the countryside, or even a 'building shift' towards the main cities. It must be said that the scenarios of the task force were too wide and abstract and didn't give concrete outlines for the respective politicians. Therefore, this intention has remained vague and has even resulted in an opposite effect towards a continuation of filling up open spaces to precede an eventual policy ban upfront.

To end this ongoing deterioration of the Flemish landscape and preserve the remaining open space, Renard et al. (2022) advocate a reversal in policy regime, as well as the enforcement of the objectives of planning with new strategies, decrees, and property rights. But given the status of the present Flemish policy climate, and the new dynamic of spatial planning (Boonstra, Boelens, Staessen, & Davids, 2020), it remains unclear if these 'old, hard planning objects' will be implemented. More importantly, Renard et al. seem to point to the need for a new basis to these 'open space policies': "Open space is much more than land that has not yet been built. In a densely populated region, open space has a specific social and cultural meaning."[6] (P. C. Renard, Tom; Vloebergh, Guy, 2022, p. 182). Unfortunately, they don't give any concrete outlines of how to achieve this.

6.
Translated from Dutch by the author

1.2 Planning perspectives on Flemish urbanized landscapes

As mentioned above, the outcome of this evolution is a peri-urban space in which urbanization alternates with few remaining open spaces. It is characterized by its piecemeal ribbon development along the many provincial main roads, with fragments of nature patched up with scattered settlements. This fragmented layout determines a suburban life predominated by displacements for work, education, and leisure. The resulting landscape has been indicated as a 'Horizontal Metropolis' (B Secchi & Viganò, 2012; Viganò, Cavalieri, & Corte, 2018); a term similar to a wide range of neologisms such as 'dispersed city', 'nevelstad', 'edge city', 'città diffusa' (Indovina, Matassoni, & Savino, 1990), 'città fractale', 'network city' (Castells, 1996), 'generic city' (Koolhaas, 1995), 'tapijtmetropool' (Neutelings, 1989), etc. All these terms have been used to describe the trivial landscape with a diffuse use scattered over the territory. The proliferation of these terms reflects the complexity and elusive nature of this urbanized landscape, indicating that it is difficult to fully comprehend or capture in a single concept. Furthermore, these spatial conditions have been repeatedly criticized by professionals— including the urbanists, architects, planners, and scholars who coined these terms, as well as other experts in the field—for being unsustainable and unsatisfying to live in.

As a model, defined by limited spatial planning regulations (Albrechts, 1999) and everyday practices rather than spectacular plans, the horizontal metropolis is conventionally designated as inferior compared with the compact highly planned, and regulated city model (Boelens, 2013; Friedman, 2005; Glaeser, 2011; Leinfelder & Allaert, 2010). Not only within the context of urban planning, but also in a wider social debate current demographic, economic, and ecological problems are assigned to our current spatial model that is wasting land and has resulted in social problems such as structural traffic jams, noise barriers, chronic flooding, and so on (see a.o. Bronstert, Niehoff, & Bürger, 2002; Ewing, Pendall, & Chen, 2002; Kahn, 2000). By focusing on these problems, urban planners developed a rather negative opinion to restrict the urban sprawl. But this problem-based approach suppresses the attention of the (cultural) lifeworld.

Urban sprawl, as an uncontrolled expansion of urban areas into the surrounding rural or undeveloped land, exhibits several distinct typologies, reflecting various forms of urban growth and development. The Spatial Report for Flanders (Ruimterapport Vlaanderen, RURA, Pisman et al., 2021; Pisman, Vanacker, Willems, Engelen, & Poelmans, 2019) describes functional (urban, peri--urban, and rural) and morphological categories (centers, ribbon development,

and scattered buildings) to characterize this policy. Similarly, Vermeiren et al. (2022) distinguished four significant urban sprawl types in Flanders, encompassing (dense) urban areas, villages and urban fringes, ribbon development, and dispersed buildings. As a result, and as a framework for the analysis of visualizations of the landscape, we can define the present Flemish landscape by the following three major characterizations: ribbon development, low-density suburban housing, and open spaces.

Ribbon development along motorway spaces

As a common feature of scattered urbanity across Flanders, ribbon development refers to long strips of urbanization along transportation corridors. The typical regional motorways connecting cities, the so-called 'steenwegen', were expanded with urban activities, such as housing and commercial functions, over the years. This specific form of sprawl has been analyzed by different researchers adapting a historical and policy perspective (Verbeek, Boussauw, & Pisman, 2014), qualifying the impact on the landscape (Verbeek, Pisman, Leinfelder, & Allaert, 2011), or calculating the costs related to ribbon development (Boussauw, Steenberghen, Vermander, Fransen, & Wittemans, 2023; Vermeiren et al., 2022). The results reveal how these ribbon developments not only suppressed nature but also generated higher costs for infrastructure and utilities (sewer, water supply, gas, cabling, etc.) and made services such as mail, garbage collection, and home care very expensive.

Low-density residential development in Suburbia

After the first wave of suburban sprawl was initiated by the dense network of trams and trains, housing laws with cheap government loans, and few spatial planning regulations, suburbanization again accelerated after the Second World War. The idealized image of 'suburbia' influenced millions of people in various Western or Anglo-Saxon countries. The phenomenon of the allotment—facilitated by different measures, the use of the car, and purchasing power—emerged extensively all over the Flemish region. These suburban neighborhoods are composed of a succession of detached single-family houses with a garden. As a result, the occupation rate of space was 33% in 2015 and about 70% of Flemish people live in very low-density suburban areas. Moreover, with a growing population, this residential model not only affects energy consumption and the environment but also the quality of life. There is an urgent need among (public) principals and designers for densification combined with the development of new forms of housing.

But a vast majority of the Belgians still aspire to the ideal of owning a (semi)detached single-family house with a garden (De Decker, 2011b; Verhetsel, Witlox, & Tierens, 2003) Over the years, building grants stimulated this mind-

set so that private homeownership has become the norm. Different surveys demonstrate how strongly this ideal is embedded in the Flemish cultural identity (De Decker, 2011b; Elchardus & Roggemans, 2010; Verhetsel et al., 2003). The physical reality and consequences for the landscape are for most of these people subordinate to the realization of this dream. Moreover, after the realization of this 'suburban dream', Fleming appears to be anchored to it. He prefers to adopt the house to changing situations—such as family expansion, divorce, or aging—rather than moving to a more suitable living solution. (De Decker, 2013; De Witte et al., 2012; Meeus & De Decker, 2013). The environment of the house in an allotment far from the city is not adoptable and raises the question of how this strategy of 'ageing-in-place' can be sustained. Once the physical possibilities decrease, the suburban inhabitants will be confronted with unreachable services for care and elementary provisions since one can no longer rely on the car.

Open space

Next to 'suburbia' and the 'steenwegen', 'open space' is another determinative topic in the discussion of the 'horizontal metropolis'. The concept of 'open space' appears to be broad and incorporates various definitions ranging from 'unbuilt' spaces in its most general view to not occupied areas outside of the city cores, or even potential areas for new urban development. Moreover, the category of open space comprises distinct functions, including residual space as much as rural landscapes or recreational parks.

However, in anticipation of fundamental societal and environmental challenges in this densely populated region[7], open space is crucial. These open spaces are primordial to provide biodiversity and natural resources, raw materials, food production, recreation, relaxation, resilience, and more. Furthermore, when coping with the effects of climate change, open spaces can retain water in the event of drought or floods, and they are the sites for production of renewable energy (Bomans, Steenberghen, Dewaelheyns, Leinfelder, & Gulinck, 2010; Pisman et al., 2021). In health care, open spaces play their part as spaces for recreation and relaxation (Gidlow, Ellis, & Bostock, 2012; Maas, Verheij, Groenewegen, De Vries, & Spreeuwenberg, 2006). Therefore, as a hybrid space, the design and management of Flemish open space is defined by logicalities of diverging interests. This causes persistent pressure on the open spaces and eventually results in a decrease in their surface and further fragmentation. As such, spatial planners struggle to manage and preserve open spaces.

All things considered, although current policy decisions (on planning, on agriculture, etc.) are intended to determine the Flemish landscape of the future, a common definition or understanding of ribbon development, suburbia, and open space is still lacking. Furthermore, the old narrative doesn't cope with

7.
Flanders is the northern region of Belgium and had an average population density of 488 inhabitants/km2 in 2021. (https://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/bevolking-omvang-en-groei)

the present challenges. And even more, the rationale of planners and politicians regarding these three features doesn't match the way citizens appreciate these ways of living. Take for instance, De Decker (2011b) who argued that the present sprawled condition is rooted in a longstanding tradition of homeownership. He contends that "the compulsion to possess a nonurban single-family house is engraved in the minds of people" (De Decker, 2011b, p. 1647). In combination with an institutionalized anti-urban attitude he discerned with both citizens and government, Flemish sprawl is difficult or even impossible to counter. Thus, perhaps we have to look elsewhere to gain more understanding. Considering the unfilled call of Renard et al. (2022) above, perhaps we need indeed to turn to cultural meaning, social value, and daily experience to visualize and comprehend contemporary characteristics.

1.3 Artistic perspectives on the Flemish urbanized landscape

Fortunately, Flanders has a long-standing tradition in socio-cultural visual representation of its landscape through arts like literature and painting. With the Flemish and Dutch schools of painting during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, landscape originated as an independent genre in Western Europe (as opposed to the Eastern tradition of 'mountain-water' ink paintings, during the *Shan Shui*, period in 4th century China). At this point, the landscape evolved from being included as a scenic setting ancillary to the main religious or mythological theme of a painting, to dominating as the independent subject matter of paintings. From these landscape paintings of Flemish masters such as Joachim Patinir or Pieter Breugel the Elder, the genre evolved, in many European countries, via Romantic landscape painting (with the Pastoral, the Picturesque, and the Sublime as general categories), towards Impressionism, and later surrealist landscapes, alienating modern cityscapes to contemporary interpretations.

In literature, too, Flemish authors have long engaged with the cultural and social landscapes of their times. Early works, such as the medieval epic *Van den Vos Reynaerde*, were centered on rural settings and the dynamics of medieval urban centers. However, it was in the 19th century, alongside the rise of industrialization and urban expansion in Belgium, that more explicit representations of the modern urban landscape began to emerge in Flemish literature. Authors like Hendrik Conscience, Guido Gezelle, Cyriel Buysse, and Stijn Streuvels vividly captured the transition from rural life to the burgeoning industrial cities, reflecting on the broader societal shifts—urbanization, industrialization, and the accompanying social upheavals.

This exploration of the complex interplay between people and their environments continued into the 20th century and beyond. Writers such as Louis Paul Boon, Hugo Claus, and Paul van Ostaijen delved into themes of modernity, nostalgia, alienation, and the tensions between urban and rural life. Contemporary authors like Peter Verhelst and Dimitri Verhulst have further expanded these reflections, offering nuanced interpretations of the Flemish landscape and its socio-cultural transformations.

This tradition of landscape representation resonates to this day in popular culture—not only in paintings with rural sceneries, but also on postcards, and even in a landscape setting pictured with our smartphone. Additionally, these landscape interpretations extend into films, where they have become an integral and prominent part of the visual experience. Whether serving as a background representation, conscious reflection, or even an expressive component of the narrative, rural landscapes have become inherently part of the moving image through the 20th century. Here rural imagery was part of Flemish films from the outset. After the Flemish production *De Storm in het Leven* (*The Storm in Life*, Karel van Rijn, 1920), set in the harbor of Antwerp and considered the first Belgian full-length film, a tradition of different typical cinematic 'landscape' genres developed in Flanders. Next to the Belgian documentary films, the humorous and in dialect popular farces ('*volkskluchten*'), and the peasant tragedies ('*boerendrama*') were historical country-side films picturing farmers and their relatives. Films like *The Conscript* (Roland Verhavert, 1974), *Pallieter* (Roland Verhavert, 1975), *De Witte Van Sichem* (Robbe De Hert, 1980), *Flaxfield* (Jan Gruyaert, 1983), *The Van Paemel Family* (Paul Cammermans, 1986), and *Boerenpsalm* (Roland Verhavert, 1989) nostalgically portray the countryside, glorifying nature. Often based on famous literary works, the movies in this genre revolve around hard-working, often oppressed people in rural communities. The specific landscape of the rural countryside, in contrast with the modernity of the city, defined the iconography of the movies at that time and stressed its opposition to the city in particular.

Although the following generations of filmmakers broke away from this tradition of documentaries and peasant films to make movies on contemporary topics, the majority of Flemish film productions are situated in this Flemish context. By positioning their narratives within this particular scale and context, directors use Flemish landscapes as a stage to give meaning to cinematic events. As such, and since cinema was a major source for recreation throughout the 20th century, the impact of these filmic representations on society remains important. Even though this 'opposing narrative' is no longer a main genre in contemporary dominant cinema, as it was and still is in visual media, this image has a prominent role in mediating our attachments to and understanding of landscapes more implicitly.

1.4 The Everyday: overlooked knowledge in conventional spatial planning

Despite its numerous cultural representations, the complexities of everyday dynamics challenge the interpretation and comprehension of the Flemish urbanized landscape. A significant tension exists between the perception of the Flemish urban landscape by planning or governmental institutions and the everyday perception, experience, and use of this specific environment. As mentioned above, a negative perception of this intricate network of peri-urban areas dominates in modern spatial planning. The prevailing discourse in planning is based on the instrumental, rational, strategic approach, while the meaning and representation of the urban landscape might be different in everyday life and practice. The cultural context, in which the importance of personal desires and practices dominates, does not determine such a negative discourse.

On the other hand, there is also a normative discourse. Luuk Boelens (2013) indicates that although the horizontal metropolis might waste more space than its vertical counterpart, it doesn't necessarily has to be at the expense of mobility, economic, ecologic, bio-, and landscape quality. He demonstrates the possibilities of the very dense and diffuse road network, how the social-economic interaction between the cities and their sprawl is organized and how the Belgian urban landscape remains close to its original landscape structure. This argumentation prompts Boelens to emphasize that we need a new thinking and action framework, more than a new design attitude or new planning concepts. (Boelens, 2013, p. 21)

To improve the knowledge of planners and to conceptualize the problem, we need another angle of approach for the 'horizontal metropolis'. It is important to investigate the differences (and similarities) in how the city and space are perceived since perceptions influence evolutions of cities and space. These perceptions determine not only the ideas about the city and space but also the way in which urban landscapes are depicted affects those who live and work in them. According to Hamers, the choices of whether or not to invest in the city center or in its surrounding countryside are influenced by perceptions and motives that private individuals, investors, and others might have. These perceptions affect the policy plans of desired and undesired spatial development and the design of living (Hamers, 2003, p. 21).

What is needed, then, is a way to investigate culture and behavioral practices that shape the everyday and therefore lived space—a lens through which we can analyze contemporary culture or change and urban histories in a way that depicts the sense and meaning of place. Therefore, there is a need to delve

more profoundly into the everyday lifeworld of Flemish people. This is also motivated by the dependency of political will on the aspirations of the general public, which makes the matter highly relational (Amin, 2001; Amin & Thrift, 2002; Crang & Thrift, 2000; Doel, 1999; Massey, 2005). Notwithstanding some pioneering work concerning situational, phenomenological, and ethnographic research (Reijndorp & Reijnders, 2010) or, in spatial planning, using research by design (see a.o. Roggema, 2016; Bernardo Secchi & Ingallina, 2006; Taverne, 1989), planners still hardly grasp the whole picture of this lifeworld.

Each profession has its own specific instruments and tools to gather determined information. For instance, a geographer mainly uses maps and areal pictures, an ethnographer bases on photographs, an architect makes drawings and models, a sociologist depends on interviews and field work, and political scientist starts from legislation and institutional permits. The urban professionals mainly rely on plans, GIS, research by design, statistics, citizen science, field visits, etc. This range of planning tools seems to be unable to grasp the complex nuances of (Flemish) life, therefore they fail to handle spatial issues in a planner's correct way. The knowledge of the everyday is not generated by the existing research methods, which still seem to start from conceived theories and produce systematic knowledge. To be able to read, understand, and conceptualize the urban landscape, and especially Flemish sprawl, planners need to go beyond the systematic. In this way, the link between urban plans and everyday culture might be restored.

2. Introducing a cinematic approach

2.1 Interpreting the everyday through artistic mediations.

Artists have long engaged in creative practices that reinterpret and reframe everyday spaces, encouraging audiences to perceive their environments in novel and often profound ways. As mentioned above, artistic works not only aesthetically visualise Flanders' landscape but also function from the very beginning as socio-cultural constructs, offering powerful tools for social commentary and transformation.

Art serves as a mediator between physical spaces, everyday experiences, and theoretical concepts, often providing alternative perspectives that challenge conventional understandings. A pivotal example of this artistic mediation between space and theory is the Situationist International (SI) movement, which emerged in the 1950s and 60s under the leadership of Guy Debord. Situationist theory originated at the *First World Congress of Visual Artists* in September 1956, which brought together radical art collectives from all over Europe. Their similar ideas, influenced by Dadaism, Surrealism, and Letterism, were formally coalesced in 1957 to form the *Situationiste Internationale* (SI). The aesthetic and social themes and ideas of the coalition especially took roots in the International Letterists and the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus (IMIB), the latter itself a fusion of COBRA group and the Nuclear Art Movement. The Situationist International published their manifestos between 1958 and 1969 in their collectively-edited magazine named by the organization they founded.

As artists and revolutionaries, the Situationists' strategy for social transformation was based on superseding the categorization of art and culture as separate and specialized activities through the theory and practice of constructing *situations*. In their Marxist understanding of capitalist society, the shift from production to consumption divided society into producers and consumers, actors and spectators, or the passive gaze of the subject who consumes the spectacle and the reified spectacle itself. Capitalism created 'pseudo-needs' to increase consumption and subsequently treated people like passive objects diverting and stifling their creativity. By constructing situations which disrupt the ordinary, the Situationists aimed at ending alienation of daily life under capitalism. Guy Debord, artist, cultural theorist, activist, and leading member of the SI, articulated in his position statement titled *Report on the Construction of Situa-*

tions and on the International Situationist Tendency's Conditions of Organization of Action (1957b):

> Our central idea is that of the construction of situations, that is to say, the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality…. The construction of situations begins on the ruins of the modern spectacle. It is easy to see what extent the very principle of the spectacle – nonintervention – linked to the alienation of the old world. Conversely, the most pertinent revolutionary experiments in culture have sought to break the spectator's psychological identification with the hero as to draw them into activity by provoking their capacities to revolutionize their own lives. (Debord, 1957b, p.12-14)

In the group's most influential book, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967), Debord developed a critique of consumer culture and community fetishism based on an analysis of the everyday experience in which the quality of life is impoverished. Debord observes how, since the late 1920s, "the whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation." (Debord, 1967, p.12) According to Debord, with the 'second industrial revolution' authentic social life has been supplanted with its representation.

Production was the main concern during the initial phase of industrial capitalism; the commodity itself is at this stage a means to further the accumulation of capital. This situation causes social atomization and alienation, degrading *being* into *having*. The transformation from producer to consumer during the 'second industrial revolution' has further transformed *having* into merely *appearing*. With consumption as the motor of socioeconomic reproduction, the commodity also colonizes social life. To seduce the consumer, a continual stream of images is generated by the system of commodity production. In a spectacular society, the image has 'invaded' daily life and even replaced relations between people. For Debord, "the spectacle is not a collection of images, rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images". (Debord, 1967, p.12)

As a social metaphor to describe the society of the spectacle, Debord and other Situationist authors employed the motion picture. This archetypal modern cultural product with its transfixed and willing audience, rather than acting subjects, symbolizes the condition of society. Debord describes how people become spectators of their own lives:

The spectator's alienation from and submission to the contemplated object (which is the outcome of his own unthinking activity) works like this: the more he contemplates, the less he lives; the more readily he recognizes his own needs in the images of need proposed by the dominant system, the less he understands his own existence and his own desires. The spectacle's externality with respect to the acting is demonstrated by the fact that the individual's own gestures are no longer his own, but rather those of someone else who represents them to him. The spectator feels at home nowhere, for the spectacle is everywhere. (Debord, 1967, p.23)

However, mass media like film or television, are only manifestations of the spectacle, not the spectacle itself. As a concept, the spectacle refers to the domination and totalization of contemporary consumer capitalism in which the image is of central importance in the colonization of social life. The Situationists aimed at transforming this condition of class alienation and cultural homogenization through a revolution that reinvents everyday life. The commitment was also in line with the other founding theoretical text *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (1967), written by Raoul Vaneigem and published at the same time as Debord's book.

Their focus on constructing *situations*—disruptive and unfamiliar to realize a temporary liberation—is part of the Situationists' tactics to contest the spectacle. In order to free people from conventions and authority they initiated other techniques, such as *détournement* and *dérive.* Détrounement is an approach to montage that recontextualizes different elements of culture. Dérive is a practice of drifting or personal itineraries deliberately avoiding specified routes without a particular destination in mind. These techniques resulted in what they defined as *psychogeography*, alternative study, and cartography to elicit meaning and reconfigure possibilities from personal experience. In fact, the group aimed towards the fusion of the whole of arts and techniques in the creation of an *urbanisme unitaire*. Debord's *Naked City* (1957a) published with the *Psychogeographical Guide of Paris* (1955) presents graphic expressions of his psychogeographical surveys of Paris. The series of maps not only represent a fragmented and subjective experience of urban space, they also attempt to disrupt existing representations. Moreover, they were supposed to convey a different vision of the city, namely a social, experiential or existential 'truth'.

Although the group officially dissolved in 1972, their protest against capitalist rationality still has widespread influence. Over their fifteen-year existence, the SI published twelve issues of its journal, eight conferences, and next to other political works, they produced many art pieces (Debord made six films between

1952 and 1978). The group's ideas were often seen as spiritual precursors to the May events in 1968 in France.

In their search for ways out of customary thinking and acting, the group ascribed the image of the role of a principal mediator. Cinema was especially regarded as the central art of the society of the spectacle, not only due to its expressive capacity of representation but also because of the material mode of staging which transformed the public into a passive crowd. Moreover, films are, just like Debord's plans of Paris in **Naked City**, social constructs: they articulate a certain perspective on the 'real' world. Images provided by cinema— but equally by literature, architecture and the visual arts—are primarily mental constructions rather than real places. The way a filmmaker depicts certain areas reveals not only the characteristics of the area itself, but also unveils its significance for the characters of the narration. The place in which a particular scene takes place situates the story, gives us an indication of the personality and origin of the characters, and determines the general atmosphere of the film. Films are not merely an excellent representational tool but also offer the audience a glance at the director's subjective reflection.

Numerous artists from various artistic disciplines have followed in the footsteps of the Situationists, using their work to mediate between everyday spaces and broader theoretical frameworks. For instance, photographers Brend and Hilla Becher documented industrial landscapes, emphasizing the aesthetic qualities of functional structures often overlooked in daily life. Similarly, artists like Daniel Buren and Gordon Matta-Clark have engaged with urban spaces to highlight the relationship between architecture and social interaction, while Christo's large-scale installations challenge viewers to reconsider their perceptions of public spaces. In the realm of painting, Edward Hopper's work exemplifies how everyday settings can evoke profound emotional and psychological themes. His depictions of urban life resonate with viewers, prompting reflection on solitude and the human experience within common spaces. Hopper's art serves as a reminder that the mundane can be a canvas for exploring deeper existential questions.

These artistic explorations have also influenced architects to reinterpret everyday spaces, encouraging new perspectives on urban environments. Ed Ruscha's photographic books, such as **Twenty-Six Gasoline Stations** (1969) and **Every Building on the Sunset Strip** (1966), captured the mundane architecture of the American West in a deadpan, documentary style. His approach inspired Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi's seminal work **Learning from Las Vegas** (1972), where they studied the vernacular architecture of the Las Vegas Strip without judgment. Ruscha's work demonstrated that the ordinary elements

of the built environment could be the subject of serious artistic and intellectual inquiry.

Learning from Las Vegas was groundbreaking in challenging the prevailing Modernist architectural ethos, which often prioritized form and function over the cultural and symbolic dimensions of architecture. Venturi and Scott Brown introduced the concept of the **decorated shed,** contrasting it with the **duck**, and embracing the use of signs and symbols that reflect everyday urban life. Their research involved a detailed analysis of Las Vegas's architecture, focusing on its signs, symbols, and patterns of urban life. This work exemplifies how artists and architects can serve as mediators between space and theory, using their findings to critique existing architectural paradigms.

The book played a significant role in the development of postmodern architecture, fostering a movement that embraced the complexity and ambiguity of urban spaces. It sparked debates among architects, dividing those who supported its ideas from those who adhered to Modernist principles. This controversy underscored the importance of reevaluating the role of everyday environments in architectural discourse, encouraging a more inclusive understanding of urban experience. Contemporary architects such as Stefano Boeri have also contributed to this discourse by using art to enrich narratives about urban spaces. Boeri's **eclectic atlases** (2003; 1999), for instance, intentionally incorporate artistic images to deepen the exploration of urban environments, thereby transcending the limitations of traditional architectural discussions.

While other arts have been used to comprehend the everyday, this research focuses specifically on film, a choice that resonates with the Situationists' emphasis on cinema as a critical tool in understanding and challenging the spectacle. Since the inception of cinema, cities and urban landscapes have been central subjects for filmmakers. Films that engage with everyday narratives illustrate how visual storytelling can shape our understanding of the city, highlighting the spatio-temporal dynamics of urban life. This cinematic approach reinforces the idea that art can mediate our experiences of space, prompting new ways of thinking about our environments.

Especially in our modern-day mediatized society, the impact of audiovisual media on our perception of space is profound. These images, including film images, contribute to the understanding, interpretation, and modification of our environment. Film, with its unique ability to portray and manipulate time and space through techniques like montage, offers a distinctive, dynamic perspective on spatial complexities, surpassing other mediums like photography, literature, painting, and theatre. Unlike photography and painting, which captures a single moment in time, film captures movement and continuity, providing a richer, more immersive experience of temporal flow. This ability to depict motion

and change distinguishes film, enabling it to convey the fluidity of life in ways that static images cannot. Moreover, film's narrative structure differentiates it from literature by integrating visual and auditory elements to create a multisensory storytelling experience. While literature relies on the reader's imagination to visualize scenes, film presents a concrete visual and auditory world, guiding the audience through carefully crafted spatio-temporal sequences. This audio-visual synergy enhances the viewer's emotional and cognitive engagement with the narrative, making the experience more immediate and visceral. Furthermore, film's capacity to evoke sensory and affective responses allows film to create a more profound connection between the audience and the depicted environment. By portraying spaces in evocative ways, cinematic perceptions express and influence our ideas and vision on the actual world. Unlike theatre, which relies on live performances and the physical presence of actors and audiences within a shared space, film leverages the camera's ability to frame and manipulate spatial and temporal elements, offering a more controlled and varied exploration of environments. Film can utilize techniques such as montage and special effects to create experiences and convey messages that are beyond the reach of theatrical productions. In that way, film, as a product originating in the everyday, can instigate planners to move beyond conceived theories and systematic knowledge.

In choosing film as the focus of this research, the intention is to harness its unique capacity to evoke sensory and affective responses and to engage with the everyday in a way that other forms of art might not fully achieve. Film's ability to dynamically represent urban environments, capturing the temporal and spatial dimensions of the human experience, makes it an ideal medium for exploring the social and cultural meanings embedded in everyday spaces. The cinematic imagination of cities in movies has been investigated in international academic studies focussing on various topics such as mapping urban spaces, identity, tourism, architecture, etc. (see a.o. AlSayyad, 2006; Borden, 2013; Fitzmaurice & Shiel, 2001; Hallam, 2010; Koeck & Roberts, 2010; Lukinbeal & Sommerlad, 2022; Penz, 2017). Additionally, research has examined the portrayal of American suburbs in film (see a.o. Beuka, 2016; Coon, 2013; Forrest, 2017; Muzzio & Halper, 2002) and explored themes of urban change and the perceptions of places (Tewdwr-Jones, 2011b).

Despite this body of work, film has rarely been used to study perceptions of the Flemish urban space. In Flanders, existing studies on the urbanized landscape are primarily situated within spatial planning, geography, and landscape science. For instance, Bruno Notteboom's doctoral thesis (2009) employs photographic footage rather than film to explore various domains, including botany, landscape protection, amateur photography, tourism, agricultural education, landscape architecture, and urban planning, all of which have shaped the

image of the Flemish landscape. Similarly, the re-photography project **Recollec-
ting landscapes**, initiated by Jean Massart and continued by subsequent photo-
graphers, culminating in the work of Labo S, has meticulously documented
the transformation of the Flemish landscape over the past century, offering a
comprehensive view of its urbanization through sequential photographic series.
Furthermore, there are several studies, among those of Greet De Block (2011),
Maarten Van Acker (2011) and David Peleman (2014), dealing with the history
and development of the rural-urban condition of Flanders, but their focus is
on infrastructure projects rather than cinematic representation. While projects
like **Moving landscapes (Bewegende landschappen : over stedenbouw en film, , De
Caigny & Van Impe, 2013)** and **Cinema rural**[8] have explored documentary films
to depict the historical context of urbanization and agriculture, there is a gap in
the exploration of contemporary cinematic representations of Flemish urbani-
zed space, especially for spatial planning purposes.

2.2 Threefold 'spatial' qualities of film: representation, reflection, and interactive

While the cinematic imagination has been widely explored in various
international contexts, the understanding of space through film remains an area
of significant scholarly interest. Numerous authors have examined the ways in
which cinema reflects and shapes the social, cultural, economic, geographical,
and political dimensions of spatial reality (for example AlSayyad, 2006; Barber,
2002; Clarke & McArthur, 1997; Koeck & Roberts, 2010; Mennel, 2008; Penz
& Lu, 2011; Pratt & San Juan, 2014; Shiel, 2001; Shiel & Fitzmaurice, 2003). In
addition to these thematic and formal studies, Mark Tewdwr-Jones has even
brought this discourse into the specific field of professional urban planning. He
believes that utilizing images, stories, and film offers a unique sense of place
that can assist in reinterpreting places. Moreover, according to Tewdwr-Jones,
the camera lens is capable of capturing a multilayered, holistic interpretation of
the built environment, which is unavailable through other explorations of space
(Tewdwr-Jones, 2011a, p.28-29). The potential of the moving image to rein-
terpret places and understand emotional attachments to them originates in a
threefold quality of the cinematic image.

Firstly, film visually represents information about space and can thus
function as a reading device. Amongst others, Juhani Pallasmaa described how
cinema articulates lived space, environments in use, and everyday life scenes
(Pallasmaa & Gilardi, 2000). François Penz and Maureen Thomas also empha-
size the connection between film and the city, highlighting how both are intrinsi-

cally linked to lived space. As a representational medium, cinema articulates lived space, environments in use, and everyday life scenes:

> In the same way that buildings and cities create and preserve images of culture and a particular way of life, cinema illuminates the cultural archeology of both the time of its making and the era that it depicts. Both forms of art define the dimensions and essence of existential space; they both create experiential scenes of life situations. (Penz & Thomas, 1997)

Secondly, cinematic narratives reflect and interpret social realities, allowing moving images to act as tools for reshaping concepts. The images of cities in films contribute to the creation of a distinct 'urban imaginary' which Edward Soja defines as "our mental or cognitive mappings of urban reality and the interpretive grids through which we think about, experience, evaluate and decide to act in the places, spaces, and communities in which we live." (Soja, 2000, p.324) The stories told to us and by us, narratives structuring the practices of our everyday life, provide knowledge of the world. Shiel stressed cinema's capacity to evoke and represent spatial dimensions:

> Cinema is a peculiarly spatial form of culture, of course, because (of all cultural forms) cinema operates and is best understood in terms of the organization of space: both space in films – the space of the shot; the space of the narrative setting; the geographical relationship of various settings in sequence in a film; the mapping of a lived environment on film; and films in space – the shaping of lived urban spaces by cinema as cultural practice; the spatial organization of its industry at the levels of production, distribution, and exhibition; the role of cinema in globalization (Shiel, 2001, p. 5).

These narratives are inextricably linked with a temporal dimension as well. Doreen Massey conceptualizes space as '*a simultaneity of stories-so-far*': spaces are no longer a passive background or a flat surface across which we walk; temporality and space are interlocked through the stories going on. Space is in her conception "a cut through the myriad stories in which we are all living at any one moment". With the pictorial reference of a train cutting through the landscape and thus cutting through this myriad number of stories, Massey elucidates this idea:

> There is a famous passage, I think from Raymond Williams ... He too is on a train and he catches a picture, a woman in her pinny bending

over to clear the back drain with a stick. For the passenger on the train she will forever be doing this. She is held in that instant, almost immobilized. Perhaps she's doing it ('I really must clear out that drain before I go away') just as she locks up the house to leave to visit her sister, half the world away, and whom she hasn't seen for years. From the train she is going nowhere; she is trapped in the timeless instant. (Massey, 2005, p. 119)

Similarly, time and space converge in film, unfolding one of the many possible narratives in the cinematic world. This convergence, where time is spatialized and space is temporalized, is central to the medium's ability to reveal the lived spaces reflected in cinematic narratives. Erwin Panofsky famously articulated this duality, arguing that "cinema's unique and specific possibilities can be defined as dynamization of space and, accordingly, spatialization of time." (2004, p. 232) In the cinematic experience, this interplay between space and time is not merely observed but actively manipulated to serve the film's narrative and emotional goals. Panofsky's concept underscores how cinema uniquely blends and manipulates the dimensions of time and space in ways that other art forms cannot. By dynamizing space and spatializing time, cinema creates complex and immersive experiences that engage audiences on multiple levels, both visually and temporally. Film, therefore, acts as a lens through which we can explore the spatial and temporal dimensions of our lived experience.

Thirdly, the cinematic image is not only representational and reflective as mentioned above; it also influences various aspects of everyday life. Miriam Hansen argued that classical Hollywood cinema served as a form of **vernacular modernism** that shaped everyday life and culture. She explains how Hollywood cinema not only mirrored but actively influenced modern experiences, creating a shared cultural framework that shaped how people understood and interacted with the rapidly changing world around them. As Hansen notes, "Hollywood did not just circulate images and sounds; it produced and globalized a new sensorium; it constituted, or tried to constitute, new subjectivities and subjects" (1999, p. 71) Classical Hollywood films exported American modes of modernity to other parts of the world, where they were often reinterpreted or adapted to fit local contexts. This contributed to a global vernacular of modernism that transcended national boundaries.

There are numerous contemporary examples of how films and documentaries can shift public perceptions. For instance, *Rosetta* (Dardenne & Dardenne, 1999), which follows the life of a young, poor Belgian teenager, induced Belgian policy-makers to pass the 'Rosetta's Law' to protect the rights of teenage workers in the country. *An Inconvenient Truth* (Guggenheim & Gore, 2006) or

The Beach (Danny Boyle, 2000) are international examples of how cinema can initiate awareness and influence people's behavior. According to various studies (Butts, 2007; Jacobsen, 2011), awareness of climate change translated into behavioral change and in carbon offsets after watching the former film. However, years of intensive tourism as an outgrowth of the latter harmed nature and especially the coral on Thailand's Maya Bay beach to that extent that the local authorities decided to close the beach to tourists from 2017 until 2021.

Of course, the spatial impact of film is mostly far less explicit than the examples just mentioned. Cinema's influence on how space is conceived, and how people see and imagine cities and urban space will determine how they live their daily lives or how they appreciate certain spaces more than another. For example, romantic films with love scenes set in specific locations may evoke affection for similar real-life places. Conversely, if the crime scenes of films are repeatedly situated in certain areas, for instance in harbors, these environments will be perceived as dangerous and no-go zones. Therefore, it is important to investigate the mutual interaction within this film-space relationship; as much as film influences space, film itself is naturally shaped by space and cannot exist without space.

2.3 Research question and outline

This research project assumes that an investigation of the cinematic representation of the Flemish urban landscape can introduce a new perspective, one operating as a mediator to understand the discrepancy in perceptions of the horizontal metropolis. Moreover, film serves as a medium that is inherently attuned to the nuances of everyday life, rather than being shaped primarily by planning theories.

However, cinema and urban landscapes are closely intertwined. Since the very beginning of cinema, cities and urban landscapes have been a primary subject of interest for amateur and professional cinematographers (Clarke & McArthur, 1997; Koeck, 2012; Shiel, 2001). Furthermore, different aspects of the relationship between cinema and urban space have been demonstrated in different research, as mentioned above. These insights pronounce that our understanding of (urban) space cannot be viewed independently of cinematic experience. In our mediatized society, film, amongst others, influences the way we construct images of the world and, as a result, how we operate in it. Cinematic perceptions, in particular the depiction of spatial environment in films, represent, reflect, and influence the evolutions of spaces. These perceptions determine not only the ideas about space, but also the way in which areas are depicted affects those who live and work in it. Film acts not only as a tool to discover a more nuanced image of the Flemish urbanized landscape since it

offers us a representation. It also serves as (an image of) a social construct and finally, as a public trigger since film influences public opinion and, as a result, how people operate. These three different acting roles of film might offer a possible solution to bridge the gap between the planning rationale and realities as described above.

The intention of this dissertation is to use film as a (cultural) lens to gain insight in the everyday experience of the horizontal metropolis. Starting from the pronounced discrepancy in perception regarding the Flemish urbanized landscape, the filmic visualizations will be investigated in their reflection and relation to the discourse of urbanists and planners. Hence the research question of this paper:

Is film able to contribute to an integrated approach of the Flemish urbanized landscape in Spatial Planning?

In order to answer this main research question, it has been rephrased into three sub questions:

- *How* is this peculiar Flemish landscape presented in film? Since it is necessary to discover first what the prevalent cinematographic *representations* of the Flemish urbanized landscape in films are.

- Exactly **what (new) knowledge** of Flemish urban culture is offered by this cinematic perception? If this cinematic perception can offer us (new) knowledge that contributes to a new perspective on the Flemish urbanized landscape, it can possibly establish an understanding of spatial phenomena and the interactions between everyday culture and spaces.

- And finally how can these insights gleaned from cinematic representations be applied to enhance the connection between urban planning and the Flemish urban landscape?

RQ 1: How is the landscape represented in film?

EVERYDAY ← FILM ← PLANNING

RQ 2: What (new) knowledge?

RQ 3: How can these insights enhance the connection between urban planning and the Flemish urban landscape?
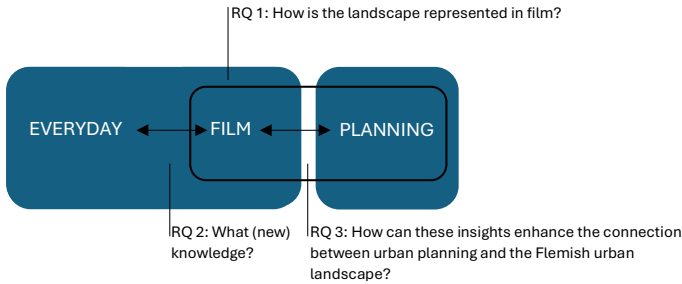
To address these research questions, this dissertation will first delve into the theoretical backgrounds of this hypothesis. Chapter 2 combines theoretical concepts on the everyday with film theories into a framework that integrates the representative, reflective, and interactive qualities of film. Theories on movement by Giedion and montage by Eisenstein highlight film's specific spatial representation. Cinematic realism, as discussed by Bazin and Kracauer, emphasizes the unique capacity of film to capture physical reality. The theories of Lefebvre, de Certeau, Habermas, and Latour, which focus on the everyday lifeworld and the fundamental dichotomy between system and lifeworld, offer insights for achieving a more integrated approach in spatial planning. Additionally, the theories of Benjamin, Merleau-Ponty, Bergson, Deleuze, and Heath each explore different aspects that give film its specific role in understanding and shaping space. The integration of these theories provides a framework that positions film as a powerful medium for understanding and shaping space, incorporating perspectives from multiple theories.

Following these fundamental theories, chapter 3 delineates a methodology for investigating prevalent Flemish cinematographic representations of the Flemish urbanized landscape. This includes the operationalization of this research through methods of spatio-morphological and socio-cultural data collection, reception, and mediation examination and selection criteria to determine specific films/cases.

The subsequent chapters, chapters 4 to 6, report on the empirical analysis of the selected films focusing on the three characteristic features of the present Flemish landscape, e.g. motorway spaces, suburban spaces, and open spaces. In chapter 4, a spatio-morphological exploration of portrayed urban landscapes in the film selection gives insight into the prevalent representations of these environments. Therewith this chapter provides an understanding of how film operates as a reading device. Chapter 5 extends the analysis to socio-cultural constructs by unraveling the narratives and interviewing the directors. This exploration sheds light on how cinema reflects knowledge of Flemish urban culture. Chapter 6 shifts the focus to the mediating role of film, in particular for

CHAPTER 1

EVERYDAY

PLANNING

DICHOTOMY

RQ: Can Film contribute to the conventional approach in Spatial Planning?

RQ 1: How is the landscape presented in Film?

EVERYDAY ← FILM ← PLANNING

RQ 2: What (new) knowledge?

RQ 3: How can these insights enhance the connection between urban planning and the Flemish urban landscape?
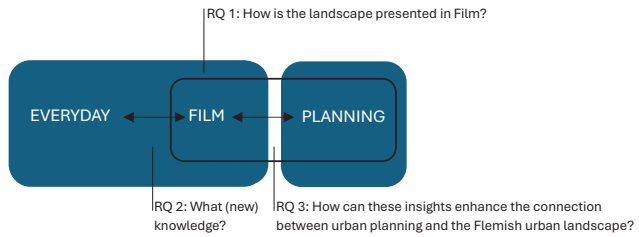
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

relating the everyday and cinema

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

REPRESENTATION : reading

EVERYDAY ← FILM ← PLANNING

REFLECTION : social construct

INTERACTION : mediation
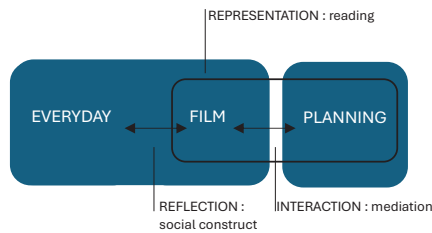
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

CASES

MOTORWAY SPACES	SUBURBAN SPACES	OPEN SPACES	
- representation	- representation	- representation	- RQ 1
- reflection	- reflection	- reflection	- RQ 2
	- interaction	- interaction	- RQ 3

CHAPTER 4
CHAPTER 5
CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION
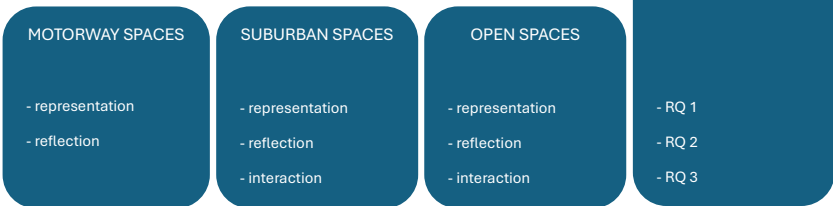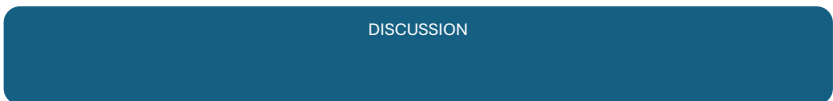
spatial planning. This chapter examines the capacity of a cinematic perspective to mediate between system and lifeworld views of Flemish planning based on film debates with expert panels and an audience survey.

Chapter 7 returns to the research question of whether this new or extra knowledge might enhance the conventional spatial planning approach. This chapter offers conclusive insights derived from the research outcomes and formulates an answer to the different research questions.

Finally, in chapter 8, the dissertation reflects on both theoretical framework and empirical dimensions. The potential for planning, the employed methodology, and the research limitations are identified and scrutinized, providing a comprehensive view of the research's implications. The chapter concludes by contemplating the broader implications of a cinematic approach for a more resilient, sustainable, and supported future in planning practice.

CINEMA AND THE EVERYDAY

THEORETICAL EXPLORATIONS

1. Introduction

The previous chapter elucidated the tension between planning concepts and theories and the lived realities of everyday life, highlighting a gap that is difficult to grasp by traditional planning methodologies. To formulate an answer to this dichotomy between planning and everyday life, a new perspective is needed. Therefore, this dissertation proposes the use of film as a medium that is both capable of representing the dynamics of space and deeply intertwined with the everyday. By capturing movement, film reflects the subtleties of daily experiences, offering a unique lens through which to enhance our understanding of space.

In constructing a comprehensive theoretical framework, it is essential first to engage with theories of cinematic movement and montage—two characteristics fundamental to cinema's capacity for spatial representation. Understanding how movement and montage shape the viewer's experience of space is crucial to proceed to theories of cinematic realism, which highlight film's distinct capabilities in portraying the real textures and rhythms of daily existence. Building on these foundations, the integration of the unique characteristics of film—such as movement, embodiment, montage, temporality, and narrative—with theories that explore the everyday, lifeworld, and lived space, provides a perspective that underscores the potential of film to not only document but also provide profound insights into the social and physical spaces that define our daily lives. The cinematic gaze, therefore, serves multiple functions: it enhances our perception of the everyday (reading space), tactically reflects the visual and temporal imaginaries of space (socially constructing space), and through its narrative and normative/dramaturgic representations, exerts a cultural and societal influence on the evolution of spaces (mediating space). By weaving together these theoretical strands, this chapter aims to demonstrate how film can bridge the gap between the systematic and the lived, offering planners a more nuanced and engaged approach to understand and shape urban landscapes.

2. Cinema as a medium of spatial representation

2.1 Cinematic movement and the dynamics of space

The capacity of film to capture, represent and explore space is inherently linked to its ability to depict movement. The dynamic portrayal makes cinema a particularly compelling medium for professionals dealing with space, such as architects, urbanists and spatial planners. Unlike the static plans and images traditionally used in these fields, film enables to perceive and understand the built and non-built environment not as a series of fixed, isolated moments, but as a continuously evolving reality shaped by human activity and motion.

Contemporary films portraying the Flemish urbanized landscape demonstrate this potential through a range of visual strategies, including tracking shots, varying viewpoints and dynamic sequences, that emphasize movement to represent space. As will be illustrated in the case studies in chapter 4, Bas Devos employs tracking shots that follow characters navigating suburban streets in *Violet* (2014), while Fien Troch's *Kid* (2012) captures the protagonist moving through wooded landscapes, emphasizing the relationship between people and their environments. Felix van Groeningen's *Steve+Sky* (2004) explores motion along arterial roads, whether on foot, on motorcycles, or in cars, whereas Michaël R. Roskam's *Carlo* (2004) contrasts silent, empty landscapes with the speed and blatant presence of cars racing along an arterial road. In both *Carlo* and *Bullhead* (2011), Roskam uses chase sequences that traverse various terrains, merging the physical movement of characters with an immersive engagement of the viewer. These examples illustrate how cinema serves as a powerful medium for representing space, highlighting the relational and ever-changing nature of the world around us.

Cinema's capabilities to evoke the dynamics of space is a topic reaching back to an entire tradition in film and architecture theory. Amongst these, the architectural historian Siegfried Giedion recognized cinema's potential to convey the dynamism of space and movement. In his seminal work, *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948), Giedion explored the impact of mechanization on everyday life and its relationship with film. Giedion noted that film's ability to capture movement and integrate sound and sight represents the culmination of full mechanization. By documenting mechanization and its effects in the ordinary environment of everyday life, Giedion examens the split between thinking and feeling,

which he indicated in his earlier work **Space, Time and Architecture** (1941). Written in America during World War Two, the Swiss art critic and historian (son of Swiss textile entrepreneurs with a degree in mechanical engineering) traces the development of mechanization in Western history to offer an 'anonymous history' that relates facts – technologies, photography, painting, and business history – to human, social and cultural context. Moreover, this history is presented as a continuous narrative in which Giedion gives special attention to "the concept of Movement, which underlies all mechanization" (Giedion, 1970, p.5).

Giedion begins his history with the ancient and medieval times, when there was a balanced interplay between thought and feeling. "As the Greek temple symbolizes forces in equilibrium, in which neither verticals nor horizontals dominate, the earth in the classical view formed the forever immovable center of the cosmos" (Giedion, 1970, p.15). Thought has overwhelmed feeling from the Gothic ages onwards, visible in the architecture of Gothic cathedrals with their 'soaring verticals'. "They seem the symbols of everlasting change, of movement" (Giedion, 1970, p.15). In the 14th century, Nicolas Oresme offers the first graphic representation of movement (c. 1350) and simultaneously a scientific way of understanding movement. "The nineteenth century makes the great leap and literally learns to feel the pulse of nature" (Giedion, 1970, p.17). Marey's nineteenth century photographic studies of birds in flight are the outcome of the evolution of representing organic movement into graphic form towards visualization of movement in space. Around 1912, the American production engineer Frank B. Gilbreth "detached human movement from its bearer or subject, and achieved its precise visualization in space and time." (Giedion, 1970, p.25) Giedion notices that this phenomenon of capturing movement into abstract lines of time and motion studies, occurs parallel with more abstract and fragmented representations of movement in philosophy and literature. Lumière's cinematograph (1895-6), Henri Bergson's lecture on the **Cinematographic Mechanism of Thought** (1900), James Joyce's words, Duchamps's **Nude Descending the Staircase**, Kandinsky's paintings, etc. are all examples of how contemporary perceptual realities represent a more fragmented, mechanized view of the world.

This history of technology is used by Giedion to indicate how mechanization is the result of rationalism. According to Giedion, it is the rationalization of living movement that stresses the contrast between the ancient and the modern outlook. "The ancients perceived the world as eternally existing self-renewing, whereas we perceive it as created and existing within temporal limits; that is, world is determined toward a specific purpose." (Giedion, 1970, p.30) This approach of evolution in the direction of a purpose expresses also faith in progress. "Evolution is now interchangeably with the progress, and natural selec-

tion with the results of the free competition." (Giedion, 1970, p.31) Industriali-
zation, which is brought about by mechanization, replaced belief in progress by
faith in production. This involved a division of labor and resulted in alienation
of the human aspect from the production. "The worker cannot manufacture a
product from start to finish; from the standpoint of the consumer the product
becomes increasingly difficult to master." (Giedion, 1970, p.714) In fact, Giedion
describes mechanization "as the end product of a rationalistic view of the world.
Mechanizing production means dissecting work into its component operations."
(Giedion, 1970, p.31)

Giedion situates the era of full mechanization in the period between the
two World Wars. This period is characterized by the mechanization of every-
day life. Industrialization is no longer limited to factory production but invol-
ves the domestic sphere. These technologies, standardizations, automations are
registered in nearly all aspects of life and turn the kitchen into a laboratory, the
bath into a standardized cell, and rationalize their equipment. Sigfried Giedion
traces modern life as affected by mechanization by describing the evolution and
resulting philosophical implications of such disparate innovations as the slaugh-
terhouse, the Yale lock, the assembly line, tractors, ovens, and 'comfort' as defi-
ned by advancements in furniture design. Moreover, Giedion diagnoses how
these automations of our mode of life develop into 'mechanization of man and
the human body':

> Mechanization implanted itself more deeply. It impinged upon the
> very center of the human psyche, through all the senses. For the eye
> and the ear, doors to the emotions, media of mechanical reproduction
> were invented. The cinema, with its unlimited possibility of reprodu-
> cing an optical-psychic process, displaces the theater. The adding
> of sound and of color aims at an increasing realism. New values are
> born with the new medium, and a new mode of imagination. (Giedion,
> 1970, p.42-43)

In film, full mechanization culminates with its ability to capture movement
incorporating sound and sight. As a product of modernization par excellence,
the moving picture translates the human response to rationalization into artis-
tic symbols. Other cultural metaphors penetrating man's existence are the auto-
mobile, ensuring personal mobility, and the assembly line, automating and stan-
dardizing parts and labor. Giedion refers to the portrayal of mechanization of life
and the automations of the human body in Charlie Chaplin's film *Modern Times*
(1936). Later on also the films *Mon Oncle* (1958) and *Playtime* (1967), that were
directed in the 60's by Jacques Tati, trace the same struggle with modern lifes-

tyle as affected by mechanization, technological innovations and consumerist modern design.

The mechanized view of the world installed a sense of disassociation, this alienation as a consequence of fragmentation obstructs 'wholeness'. Giedion argues to restore a dynamic equilibrium between humans and technology, thought and feeling:

> The coming period has to reinstate basic human values. It must be a time of reorganization in the broadest sense, a time that must find its way to universalism. The coming period must bring order to our minds, our production, our feeling, our economic and social development. It has to bridge the gap that, since the onset of mechanization, has split our modes of thinking from our modes of feeling. (...) The process leading up to the present role of mechanization can nowhere be observed better than in the United States, where the new methods of production were first applied, and where mechanization is inextricably woven into the pattern of thought and customs. (Giedion, 1970, p.v)

Mechanization Takes Command established a new kind of historiography, while Giedion's earlier work *Space, Time & Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (1941), was a more standard history of modern architecture. Both works had an important influence in the field of architecture, philosophy and technology studies, and for instance on the members of the Independent Group at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in the 1950s.

Giedion's focus on the ordinary, the implications of modernization on everyday activities, is equally important in the debate on how to deal with space in Flanders. Considering the Flemish urbanized condition, with its scattered urbanity, urban professionals have to deal with a landscape that is determined by the everyday. Moreover, the configuration of this everyday space was in many ways shaped by mechanization as well. The most straightforward example is probably how the mobility network enabled, amongst others, a diffuse settlement structure. The development of both a dense railway and road network and the democratization of car ownership, made every place easily accessible. Combined with housing laws that stimulated individual homeownership through generous building grants, also rural sites became attractive (residential) locations. In this respect mechanization contributed to the gradual transformation of the Flemish space into a peri-urbanized area; a horizontal metropolis. While daily practice unimpededly continues consuming space, spatial planners as well as policy makers have been struggling for years to get grip on the fragmentation of space.

The divergence between professional experts and everyday experience, use and perception of this urbanized space, corresponds with the split between thought (the professional) and feeling (the everyday) as described by Giedion. Applying his examination on the role of modernity and specifically mechanization in this dichotomy, by documenting the effects on everyday life, might reveal new insights on this space. Particularly since this space is not defined by grand planning gestures but by the accumulation of trivial, everyday activities, a new method of historiography that traces the development of Flemish urbanization can/should generate a new approach to the horizontal metropolis.

While Giedion's method of historiography employs a strong focus on mechanization in general, the composition of a spatial investigation on the Flemish space demands the representation of this space as a central topic. Insight in representational strategies of everyday experience of the horizontal metropolis will expose information on the cultural relations and the perceptions within this context.

2.2 Montage and spatial representation

The representation of space in film is not only tied to the depiction and representation of movement, also to the use of montage enables to reflect the dynamism of space. The arrangement of sequencing of shots create a certain rhythm and equally enables to show different viewpoints and evoke complex meanings. Montage allows filmmakers to connect disparate spaces and moments, creating a dynamic experience of space that transcends linear time. In contemporary Flemish cinema, this is evident in various works that employ montage to convey the typical dynamics of certain spaces. For instance, the rapid montage in the opening sequence of Felix Van Groeningen's **Steve+Sky,** as discussed in chapter 4, introduces multiple spaces—the road, the brothel, the gas station, the bowling alley—seamlessly linking them together through editing. Even from the start, some of the images from the film's ending montage are subtly interwoven, suggesting a cyclical narrative structure. Similarly, Michaël R. Roskam utilizes montage in **Bullhead** to present different points of view and spatial experiences, incorporating flashbacks to the protagonist's youth. While his short film **Carlo** (2004) employs the montage of shifting perspectives among various characters to build a layered narrative.

These films demonstrate a specific quality of the medium that Sergei Eisenstein, Soviet filmmaker and theorist, elaborated on. Eisenstein argues that montage is the fundamental method for artistic composition in all forms of art, not just cinema. For Eisenstein, montage is defined as the collision of opposing elements that generates an abstract idea from concrete ones. Cinema is unique because montage is fundamental to the mechanism of cinema itself, in which

the illusion of movement is created in the spectator's mind through the arrangement and sequencing of different shots. Thus, montage is essential for producing moving pictures. Not the separate shots, but the relation of shots is the essence of cinema.

Moreover, the combination of shots not only provides movement, by strategically juxtaposing two shots, filmmakers can generate new meanings that transcend the individual images and manipulate the viewer's perception of space and time. Therewith, Eisenstein regards cinema as an evolutionary step in artistic perception, the culmination of all the arts. Filmmakers should cultivate montage as a dialogue between the work of art and the viewer. He maintained that editing should not aim for smooth transitions of shots, but montage should be used to hit the spectator through clashing movements and rhythms. Eisenstein identified five key methods of montage, from simple to most complex: *metric* (based on the length of each shot), *rhythmic* (based on the editorial and compositional combination of different shot lengths and movements within frames), *tonal* (based on the emotional meaning of the shots), *overtonal* (the cumulation of metric, rhythmic, and tonal montage), and *intellectual* (based on the collision of images that are rich in cultural, symbolic, and political history and elicit in their combination an intellectual meaning). (Eisenstein, 2014, p. 73) These methods allowed filmmakers to manipulate emotions, create tension, and convey complex ideas through the editing process.

Furthermore, Eisenstein pointed out how the ability to direct the audience's thought processes, emphasizes the exemplifying nature of montage. He believes that spectators retrace the artist's creative process, experiencing similar cognitive and emotional states. This shared mental journey is not about manipulating the viewer but about educating and enhancing their cognitive and emotional abilities.

> The strength of montage lies in the fact that it involves the spectator's emotions and reason. The spectator is forced to follow the same creative path that the author followed when creating the image. The spectator does not only see the depicted elements of the work; he also experiences the dynamic process of the emergence and formation of the image in the same way that the author experienced it. This is as close as it is possible to conveying visually the fullness of the author's thought and intention, to conveying them 'with the same force of physical perception' with which they faced the author in his moments of creative vision. (Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Principles of the New Russian Cinema,' Writings 1922-1933, p. 199)

Eisenstein also explored the relationship between space and montage in cinema. He proposed that the arrangement and sequencing of spaces within a film could evoke a montage effect, similar to how an architect designs a building. Factors such as framing, borders, and movement within these spaces played a crucial role in guiding the viewer's experience and eliciting specific emotions and ideas. Eisenstein argued that the potential for cinematic qualities in architecture had been overlooked by architects until the advent of cinema and montage highlighted these features. This rediscovery was notably embraced by Constructivist artists and Le Corbusier with his idea of the *promenade architecturale*. Eisenstein elaborated on these ideas in his late 1930s essay *Montage and Architecture*, in which he explored how architectural ensembles could be experienced through a montage-like sequence, similar to the shifting viewpoints of a moving spectator.

He contrasted two paths for the spatial eye: the architectural path, where a spectator moves between carefully arranged phenomena and the cinematic path, the modern version of the architectural exploration, where an imaginary line is followed among a series of objects. The cinematic spectator traverses in a certain sequence, multiple sites far apart and distant moments in time. Eisenstein illustrated this with the example of the Acropolis in Athens, referencing Auguste Choisy's analysis which depicted the Acropolis as a series of successive perspective views, akin to a storyboard or montage sequence. Eisenstein believed that the Acropolis represented a "perfect example of one of the most ancient films," with its sequence of views and carefully calculated intervals between buildings. He saw this as a form of *cinematism*; the presence of cinematic effects in artworks before the advent of film. This perspective led him to see cinematic qualities in various historical artworks and architectural designs, such as the Parthenon, Giambattista Piranesi's depiction of polyfocal pictorial spaces in his architectural fantasies (*Carceri d'invenzione*, (1760)), and the Stations of the Cross in Catholic churches. He also mentioned Gian Lorenzo Bernini's baldachin in St. Peter's and the specific working methods of his contemporaries, such as Le Corbusier's idea of the promenade architecturale and the axonometric drawings by Konstantin Melnikov or the Vkhutemas.

Eisenstein's theories on montage were deeply rooted in his Marxist and dialectical materialist beliefs. He believed that montage could be used to educate the masses and foster revolutionary change. His films, such as *Strike* (1925b) and *Battleship Potemkin (1925a)*, were designed to formalize the Marxist political struggle of the proletariat and to create a sense of solidarity among the working class.

In essence, Eisenstein's theories not only revolutionized editing techniques but also highlighted the significance of spatial composition in creating

a cohesive cinematic experience. By skillfully manipulating both the editing process and the spatial dynamics within a film, filmmakers can craft narratives that resonate deeply with audiences on intellectual and emotional levels.

3. Cinematic realism

3.1 Postwar cinematic realism

In addition to representing the dynamics of space through movement and montage, cinema also distinguishes itself through its realist nature. This became increasingly evident in the postwar period as filmmakers began to foreground social reality and everyday life, reflecting a broader cultural fascination with the quotidian. In the years before the war, cinema merely occasional dealt with reality as a reproductive matter of style without aesthetic value, since it was regarded as only mechanically copying reality without artistic creation. However, the 'photographic nature' of cinema became the basis of its orientation toward reality during the immediate postwar years. The cinematic focus on foregrounding social reality and the everyday emerged in Italian Neorealism with the works of Roberto Rossellini, Luchino Visconti and Vittorio De Sica.

Throughout neorealist cinema there are two diverging trends in the way filmmakers and theorists value the bond of the recorded reality and its represented image. On the one hand, there is the tendency in which cinema is regarded as an instrument to reproduce and document the world in an immediate and empirical manner. By using film techniques and narrative structures to observe, describe and present the world as it is, this 'functional realism' comprehends a mainly documentary value. While on the other hand, the line of 'aesthetic realism' relies on the capacity of cinema to participate to the world by providing a comprehensive view in an interpretive and critical approach. Both paths are prompted by the interest in, and the desire to know and understand reality, to realize knowledge of life and its everyday moments. Nevertheless, theoreticians and proponents as Cesare Zavattini and Guido Aristarco maintain opposite positions, according the two trends, regarding the cinematic representation of reality.

The moral agenda of Zavattini, Italian screenwriter, director and theorist, consisted of awakening people to appreciate the richness and significance of the real. In the aftermath of the war and the fight for liberation, film must present life itself and emphasize ordinariness, normality as a story.

> No other medium of expression has the cinema's original and innate capacity for showing things that we believe worth showing, as they happen day by day - in what we might call their 'dailiness,' their longest and truest duration. The cinema has everything in front of it, and no other medium has the same possibilities for getting it known quickly

to the greatest number of people. (Zavattini, 2019, p.53)

A number of strategies function to express the pursuit to re-create what is in front of the camera: allowing things themselves to lead us, real people or amateur actors, duration and immediacy. Zavattini's idea of direct encounter between cinema and reality privileges analytical documentary as a style that can truthfully mirror things.

Guido Aristarco, Italian film critic in *Cinema* and later *Cinema Nuovo* and author of theoretical essays, supplemented this mere recording of facts by a critical perception to achieve understanding and effective knowledge. Cinema should not be limited to observing and describing, but reconstruct the under-lying logic of phenomena. Aristarco abandons the simple, purely descriptive documentary approach for a mediated approach in which plot and charac-ter contribute to the explanation of hidden reasons, dynamics and motives of events.

Within this polarity other contributions on Neorealism, like the work of Luigi Chiarini, Umberto Barbaro or Fernando Di Giammatteo, can be positioned somewhere in between Zavattini's immediacy and Aristarco's mediated recons-truction. Based on cinema's fundamental relationship with reality, the director's role is the creative re-elaboration (Chiarini) or imagination (Barbaro) or lingual (Di Giammatteo).

Influenced by these Italian Neorealist writers, André Bazin and Sigfried Kracauer developed, in parallel with each other, fundamental thoughts and theory on cinematic realism during the postwar years. Together Bazin and Kracauer are taken to be among the most paradigmatic examples in realist film theory.

3.2 Existential realism

André Bazin, French film critic, theorist, philosopher and co-founder of *Cahier du cinéma*, regards cinema as the completion of art history granted by its ability to reproduce time. With photography, representation became a purely technical fact which assured objectivity. This mechanical objectivity distances photography from other plastic arts:

> All the arts are based on the presence of man, only photography deri-ves an advantage from his absence. Photography affects us like a phenomenon in nature, like a flower or a snowflake whose vegeta-ble or earthly origins are an inseparable part of their beauty. (Bazin, 2004, p.13)

Subsequently, cinema surpassed photography and all other pictorial work, through adding an imprint of the duration of things. This combination of photographic objectivity with recording in time makes cinema inherently realistic. Moreover, Bazin conceives an existential relationship between cinema and reality, with cinema being part of reality instead of only representing it. The aim of the medium is to interact with and participate in the world, the essence of cinema is to bring out the intimate truth of things. (Bazin, 2004) The core of Bazin's *ontological realism* is cinema's capacity to create and manipulate reality in a specific way, rather than reproducing empirical reality as such. Additionally, Bazin's approach included a moral dimension. Reacting against the propaganda films of the war period, which often imposed meaning through classic découpage techniques similar to Eisenstein's montage, Bazin advocated for a cinema that allows viewers the freedom to find meaning themselves. He preferred images that are more ambiguous and indeterminate, providing space for personal interpretation rather than delivering a predetermined message (Bazin, 2004).

Based on this ontology of realist film, Bazin privileges the long take and depth of field as signifiers of reality. Spectators should have the freedom and possibility to independently decipher reality as it appears on screen; this involves choosing where to direct their gaze, what to focus on, in what sequence, and for how long, allowing them to make their own synthesis of that viewing process. (Bazin, 2004) The temporality of the long take, offering equal attention to both significant and insignificant details, presents events in their integrity and thus guarantees filmic realism. (Bazin, 1972) Moreover, as a spatial correlate of this temporal equality, depth of field is essential to preserve the unity of space and the relationship between the objects and events within that space. The effort to depict the integrity of reality thus implies spatio-temporal continuity at the expense of montage. The perceptual field of representation is enlarged when there is no interference, no distortion of time or space, instead of manipulation into a 'preferred reading'. (Bazin, 1972)

The case studies in chapter 4 will indicate a remarkable and deliberate use of long takes in contemporary Flemish cinema that demonstrates Bazin's realist aesthetics, emphasizing spatio-temporal continuity. For instance, in Bas Devos's *Violet*, long takes immerse viewers in moments of stillness and contemplation, reflecting Bazin's belief in cinema's ability to preserve the integrity of time and space. Similarly, Fien Troch's *Kid* makes notable use of long takes to capture the experiences of its young protagonist. The camera's lingering gaze allows the viewer to interpret the unfolding scenes, in line with Bazin's call for a democratic distribution of attention within the frame. Additionally, Eugenie Jansen's film *Above Us All* (2014) combines long takes with 360-degree camera movements to depict landscapes. This technique resonates with Bazin's emphasis on cinema's

capacity to provide an unmediated engagement with reality, maintaining a sense of unity and continuity in the representation of space.

3.3 Functional realism

In contrast to Bazin, journalist, sociologist, cultural critic and film theorist Siegfried Kracauer is not concerned with cinematic techniques and their realist potentials, such as the long-take or depth of field. His matter of interest is rather the *use* of various techniques. Nevertheless, both theorists start from the conviction that film essentially derives from photography. In ***Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality*** (1960), Kracauer assumes "that film is essentially an extension of photography and therefore shares with this medium a marked affinity for the visible world around us. Films come into their own when they record and reveal physical reality*" (Kracauer, 1997, p. ix).*

This photographic nature of film, the ability to record and render material reality visible, has an aesthetic and structural consequence for the cinematic content. For Kracauer, each medium has a specific nature, basic properties, which establishes the aesthetic validity of a work. The more works are built from the fundamental characteristics of that medium, the more aesthetically satisfying they are. Because of its realist nature, Kracauer underscores four typical 'affinities' for photographic content: the affinity for unstaged reality (nature in the raw), the emphasis on the fortuitous (random events and casual facts), the suggestion of endlessness (impression to represent an inexhaustible universe) and the affinity for the indeterminate (interpretable intentions and circumstances bear many possible meanings). Since film's basic properties are identical to the properties of photography, it inherits the same the realistic vocation and follows the same kind of affinities.

Next to this 'realistic tendency', focused on the actual physical existence founded on the aforementioned affinities, Kracauer discerned also a 'formalist tendency' referring to the more directive compositional elements. The 'technical properties' and narrative (genre) structures that are applied to create a composition, a work of 'art', a cultural product, characterize the 'formalist tendency'. Kracauer recognized that both tendencies have claims to validity and do not necessarily conflict with nor exclude each other. In order to exist, all films obviously involve some degree of the formative process. Nevertheless, he proposed that in their combination the realistic component should precede the formative: "as in photography, everything depends on the 'right' balance between the realistic tendency and the formative tendency; and the two tendencies are well balanced if the latter does not try to overwhelm the former but eventually follows its lead." (Kracauer, 1997, p.39)

Moreover, the presence of movement adds another dimension to films 'realist tendency'. Once the camera is used to render space dynamic, film distinguishes from other media for capturing and revealing 'physical reality'. The spatiotemporal is associated with an affinity for 'the flow of life', the succession of events, the infinite flux of contingencies and happenstances. Thus, cinema is able to capture the substance of modern urban existence, the rapidity and turbulence of metropolitan life, which manifests itself on the streets of the city:

> The affinity of film for haphazard contingencies is most strikingly demonstrated by its unwavering susceptibility to the 'street' – a term designed to cover not only the street, particularly the street, in a literal sense, but also its various extensions, such as railway stations, dance and assembly halls, bars, hotel lobbies, airports, etc. (Kracauer, 1997, p.62)

Film thus becomes a witness of the world and enables the spectator to experience this. Especially since modernity and science has fragmented the world, film can function as an antidote to abstraction and alienation from physical reality:

> Film renders visible what we did not, or even could not, see before its advent. It effectively assists us in discovering the material world with its psychophysical correspondences. We literally redeem this world from its dormant state, its state of virtual non-existence, by endeavoring to experience it through the camera... The cinema can be defined as a medium particularly equipped to promote the redemption of physical reality. Its imagery permits us for the first time to take away with us the objects and occurrences that comprise the flow of material life. (Kracauer, 1997, p.300)

These Kracauerian concepts are evident in several contemporary Flemish movies. For example, Fien Troch's *Home* employs a documentary style to capture everyday moments and interactions with a raw, unfiltered realism. This approach highlights the fortuitous and indeterminate aspects of life, aligning with Kracauer's emphasis on unstaged reality. Similarly, Eugenie Jansen's *Above Us All* allows for a degree of coincidence in its portrayal of environments, embracing the indeterminate nature of physical reality. These films reflect Kracauer's belief in film's capacity to redeem and present physical reality in it in its raw, unmediated form.

4. Cinema as a medium of the everyday

4.1 The role of embodiment in cinematic representation

Bazin and Kracauer's realist perspectives and emphasis on photographic nature of the medium film, realistic tendencies, and the redemption of physical reality contributes to a nuanced understanding of how films construct and represent space. Bazin highlights photographic objectivity as a key aspect of how films capture and reveal the physical world, with depth of field being essential for representing space cinematically (Bazin, 2004). In contrast, Kracauer focuses on how movement in film dynamically portrays space, underscoring the medium's capability to reveal physical space realistically (Kracauer, 1997). Similarly, Giedion explored the impact of mechanization on film emphasizing the significance of movement in film as a means of representing the everyday, particularly noting how space is represented. As an example he refers to the genre of city symphonies during the interwar period, such as *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis* (1927) and *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), which celebrated the dynamism of the metropolis and modernity. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach to film complements this focus on movement. Also Merleau-Ponty suggests that films can provide a new way of seeing the world, challenging our habitual perceptions and offering fresh perspectives. In his essay *Le cinéma et la nouvelle psychologie (The Film and the New Psychology)* (1964), Merleau-Ponty explores how film engages the body and senses directly, offering an immediate and transformative understanding of reality. By depicting how characters move through and interact with their environments, films evoke a sense of embodied space, enabling viewers to connect more deeply with the narrative and its spatial dimensions. Merleau-Ponty discusses the experience of the spectator, emphasizing how film engages the viewer's perceptual and emotional faculties. This phenomenological approach to the spectator's experience highlights the active role of the viewer in constructing meaning from film.

According to Merleau-Ponty, perception is not merely a cognitive construction in which the mind alone fills in unseen elements and organizes the world into a system of structures, as the classical psychological view assumes. He asserts that perception involves the body's engagement with the world and that our most abstract thinking is anchored in embodied perception. Our bodies

have their own logic and ways of interpreting and moving into the world that are not processed through cognitive representation. He illustrates this with examples of how perception can vary independently of logical reasoning, such as the illusion of motion when observing a stationary train in a train station. One might misinterpret the movement of a neighboring train as their own due to their embodied position in the world. (Merleau-Ponty, 1965, p. 280) This demonstrates how perception is anchored in a bodily, pre-intellectual interaction with the world. This embodied perception allows for a deeper understanding of spatial relationships and sensory experiences, such as the perception of colors as sounds or textures.

Merleau-Ponty extends these ideas in his exploration of film, regarding this medium as a significant mode of expressing and understanding human experience. Film, according to Merleau-Ponty, reveals the union of mind and body by showing rather than explaining meaning, making it an art form that demonstrates the lived experience. He argues that film constructs experiences through the interaction of all frames, not just through linear progression. This mirrors his idea that perception operates in terms of wholes, or *gestalts*, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Thus, objects and scenes are comprehended through holistic patterns, figures against backgrounds are not perceived as isolated parts but as an unified whole. In film, the meaning of each shot depends on its context within the sequence, similar to how a melody emerges from the flow of notes. As a temporal medium, film allows its sense and meaning to emerge over time, akin to how embodied perception engages with the world continuously (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

Films, through their temporal and sensory *gestalt*, can vividly express emotions and relational dynamics. Rather than relying solely on visual effects or narrative structures, Merleau-Ponty advocates for a form of filmmaking that expresses emotions and experiences through the actors' bodily behaviors and gestures. In the sign language of gesture and gaze, movies can present a world and a way of being in that world. By presenting a person's conduct or behavior, rather than just their thoughts, film can convey emotions and experiences more effectively (Merleau-Ponty, 1964).

Guiding the viewer's attention and emotions through techniques such as camera angles, lighting, editing, and sound, the medium of film has the power to manipulate perception. This aligns with Merleau-Ponty's view that our perception is not merely a passive reception of information, but an active, interpretative process that shapes our understanding of reality. He regarded art, including film, as a way to reveal the world in its richness and complexity, expressing aspects of human experience that are difficult to articulate in words (Merleau-Ponty, 1964). Therewith, films can provide a new way of seeing the world, challenging our habitual perceptions and offering fresh perspectives.

Vivian Sobchack expanded upon Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomeno-logical approach to film, delving into the embodied experience of watching a movie. In *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1992), Sobchack argues that watching a film is not just a visual activity but an embo-died one. She posits that our bodies engage with films in a multisensory manner, invoking a kind of 'fleshly' knowledge, deeply rooted in bodily percep-tion. Sobchack's phenomenological approach emphasizes that films appeal to the viewer's senses, creating sensations that are felt throughout the body. For example, the movement and rhythm of a camera can make viewers feel as though they are physically moving within the filmic space, experiencing its weight, texture, and temperature. This approach challenges the traditional sepa-ration of the senses, demonstrating that vision in cinema can be "haptic," or touch-like, fostering a visceral, tactile relationship with the screen.

Laura Marks extends this idea through her concept of haptic visuality, particularly in her book *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (2000). Marks differentiates between optical visuality, the objec-tive gaze typically associated with traditional film viewing, and haptic visuality, a mode of sensory engagement that transcends mere visual observation. Whereas optical visuality relies on clear, distinct images that the viewer observes from a distance, haptic visuality involves a close, intimate interaction with the film's surface. Haptic visuality invites viewers to perceive images in a tactile manner, almost as if they could feel the textures and surfaces depicted on screen. This mode of viewing is characterized by a blurring of boundaries, where the distinc-tion between viewer and image becomes less defined, fostering a sense of immersion and corporeal engagement.

Marks highlights experimental and intercultural films that employ techni-ques such as grainy textures, close-ups, and blurred images to evoke a haptic response. These films emphasize materiality and surface details, drawing viewers into a sensory relationship with the film that transcends mere visual observation. This haptic engagement is particularly effective in creating a sense of space that is felt as much as it is seen, making the cinematic experience profoundly spatial and immersive.

These phenomenological approaches reveal how films go beyond mere visual depiction to create an immersive and embodied experience. Also, in the representation of everyday life, the viewers' senses and emotions are enga-ged, allowing for a deeper connection. Through movement, embodied percep-tion, and haptic engagement, films provide a vivid and multifaceted portrayal of everyday spaces, challenging viewers to experience and understand the portrayed environments in new and meaningful ways.

For instance, contemporary Flemish cinema often portrays landscapes in alignment with the characters' perspectives, enhancing the sensory and emotional engagement of the viewer. In Jeff Otte's **Fucking Suburbia** (2012), tracking shots follow the protagonists as they walk or cycle slowly through their neighborhood, allowing viewers to almost feel the oppressive summer heat that permeates the short film. Similarly, Fien Troch's **Home** (2016) uses a handheld camera to follow teenagers closely, incorporating footage shot with smartphones, which switches to the vertical aspect ratio typical of these devices. This technique draws the audience into the characters' lifeworld, creating an intimate connection with their everyday surroundings and experiences.

Expanding these insights on the Flemish urbanized landscape, cinematic representations should thus offer a new reading, a different perspective that transcends traditional methods of spatial analysis, such as color-coded maps or statistical data. Films can provide a nuanced reading of the Flemish space, one that captures the vibrancy and texture of everyday life often overshadowed by abstract representations. By immersing viewers in the lived experience of these places, films reveal the subtleties and dynamics that are frequently marginalized or overlooked. Films engage viewers' senses and emotions, creating an embodied connection, an immersion that allows for a richer understanding of the spatial dynamics, social interactions, and cultural contexts that define spaces.

4.2 Everyday lived space as a social construct reflected through narrative and temporality

Films shape our understanding of the 'real' world through their unique representation of space, which encompasses capturing movement, embodied experience, and the recording and reproduction of time. As a temporal medium, cinema has the ability to reflect and shape our perception and understanding of time. In the realm of cinematic realism, both André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer emphasized the importance of the temporal dimension in distinguishing film's depiction of reality. Bazin highlighted the significance of duration, particularly through the use of long takes, which he believed conveying a more authentic representation of reality (Bazin, 1972). Kracauer focused on the flow of life and the succession of events, arguing that film effectively captures the rapid pace and dynamic nature of modern urban experiences (Kracauer, 1997).

As one of the pioneering philosophers to reflect on the relationship between time and cinema, Henri Bergson articulated his conception of time and movement especially in his seminal work **L'Évolution créatrice** (1945, Creative Evolution, 1907). Bergson distinguishes between two modes of time: **duration**,

an internal, qualitative experience of time that is fluid and indivisible, and the mechanistic, spatialized time used by science, which breaks time into discrete, measurable units (such as hours and minutes). Experienced time flows seamlessly, with moments blending into one another, while measured time imposes sharp divisions. For Bergson, **duration** is the true experience of time, one that reflects the continuous flow of consciousness and life itself. In contrast, the abstract, scientific conception of time, which reduces time to a series of instants, misrepresents the dynamic and evolving nature of reality. (Bergson, 1983, pp. xx–xxi) Bergson critiques cinema as a technological embodiment of this misconception, as it fragments time into static instants represented by individual frames, which, when projected, only create the illusion of real movement.

Furthermore, Bergson discusses the limitations of human perception by comparing it to a cinematographic process of rapidly displaying snapshots in sequence to capture movement. According to Bergson our understanding of reality works similar. We perceive the world by taking mental 'snapshots' of moments in time and stringing them together to form a coherent picture of change or movement. However, this method is flawed because true movement and change are continuous and cannot be fully captured by discrete, static states. The last chapter of **Creative Evolution** criticizes this approach as it leads to a 'mechanistic illusion' where we mistake the stitched-together images for real, fluid motion. Bergson argues that our typical methods of knowledge, which are practical and suited to act on, fall short when it comes to understanding the true nature of continuous change. True understanding requires immersing oneself in the process of change itself, rather than attempting to reconstruct it from static snapshots. (Bergson, 1945, pp. 304-308)

Although Bergson's ideas of cinema focused on early film techniques before the widespread use of montage, his influence on cinema philosophy endures, particularly through Gilles Deleuze. The latter's books *Cinéma 1. L'image-mouvement* (Cinema I: The Movement-Image, 1983) and *Cinéma 2. L'image-temps* (Cinema II: The Time-Image, 1985) were heavily inspired by Bergson's work. According to Deleuze, Bergson's ideas about duration and phenomenological vitalism could be applied to understand cinema in a new, more profound way; highlighting how cinema has the power to make time visible on the screen.

Deleuze argues that cinema initially developed around the concept of the *movement-image*, which represents the world through a series of actions and movements. In the cinema of the movement-image, units of time and edited transitions (such as cuts, changes in camera angles, and fades) organize the action and movement within a logical, causal framework, thereby subordinating time to movement. In this context, time is not merely synonymous with movement but rather serves as a measure that determines the extent and struc-

ture of movement. This concept resonates with early cinematic practices, where the movement-image dominated. As Deleuze notes, classical cinema was fundamentally defined by montage, which not only organized the flow and continuity of images but also constructed the causal relationships that anchored time within the narrative. Montage, therefore, became the mechanism through which movement was both created and sustained, ensuring that time was always tied to the progression of actions and events.

However, Deleuze sees the movement-image as having reached a crisis point, where it can no longer adequately capture the complexities of modern life. After WWII, mainly with Italian Neo-Realism and French New Wave cinema, the cinematic scheme of action-reaction and traditional narrative structures are no longer maintained. In response to the rise of more experimental and non-linear forms of storytelling, Deleuze proposes the concept of the **time-image**. The time-image, characteristic of post-war cinema, presents time as a direct, non-linear, and non-chronological experience. This type of image is more concerned with the subjective experience of time and the way it shapes our perception of reality. The time-image allows time to become a subject of exploration in its own right, as Deleuze states:

> The time-image does not imply the absence of movement (even though it often includes its increased scarcity) but it implies the reversal of the subordination; it is no longer time which is subordinate to movement; it is movement which subordinates itself to time. It is no longer time which derives from movement, from its norm and its corrected aberrations; it is movement as *false movement*, as aberrant movement which now depends on time. (1989, p. 271)

In the time-image, Deleuze's concept of '**any-space-whatever**' becomes crucial in creating a new relationship with time and narrative. The term refers to a type of cinematic space that is not necessarily tied to specific locations or contexts, but characterized by its abstract, disconnected and often indeterminate qualities. 'Any-space-whatever' is open to multiple possibilities and connections. Unlike clearly defined and recognizable spaces, it lacks a specific, familiar identity and instead emphasizes a more generic, atmospheric, or affective quality. These spaces break from linearity and causality, fostering a sense of temporal and spatial ambiguity that reflects deeper existential or philosophical questions. In such spaces, movement and organization are no longer predetermined or coherent, allowing for a more fluid and open-ended experience.

Mary Ann Doane expands upon these philosophical underpinnings in her book '*The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*' (2002) by examining the intricate relationship between cinema and the evolving

concepts of time in modernity. Doane explores how the rise of cinema coincided with significant late nineteenth-century social and cultural developments, in particular the rise of industrialization which was marked by rapid standardization and rationalization of (labor) time. She argues that during this period, time became a specific object of knowledge in diverse fields such as thermodynamics, evolutionary theory, physiology, archaeology, statistics, psychoanalysis, and philosophy. By highlighting several time-related developments, Doane indicates how a general change in the understanding of temporality was occurring in many aspects of life: "Through its rationalization and abstraction, its externalization and reification in the form of pocket watches, standardized schedules, the organization of the work day, and industrialization in general, time becomes other, alienated." (Doane, 2002, p. 221) Furthermore, Doane argues that cinema provided a particular experience of time, so-called 'cinematic time', which reflects the fragmentation of experiences in modern life by manipulating and organizing time through editing and narrative techniques. Her examination extends to how aesthetic choices in early cinema, such as montage and slow motion, intersect with technological innovations, contributing to new ways of perceiving and understanding time.

Cinema records and represents duration with temporal invariability, creating a unique sense of temporal continuity. While the phonograph was the first time-based technology, cinema expanded the popular experience of temporal invariability by extending this capability into the visual domain. Early descriptions of cinema as 'moving reflections' imply that cinema operates in a continuous present, a characteristic that enhances its immersive quality. This continuous present has two main aspects: the uniformity of text and plot duration, and the perception that narrative and plot time pass together. This contrasts with written narratives, where narrative time does not always correlate with plot time. Thus, Doane illustrates that cinema's distinctive temporal quality lies in its ability to render a time index visually, creating a continuous present that is fundamental to the cinematic experience. According to Doane, the cinematic experience encompasses multiple temporalities, created by cinematic technologies that manipulate time:

> There is the temporality of the apparatus itself—linear, irreversible, "mechanical." And there is the temporality of the diegesis, the way in which time is represented by the image, the varying invocations of present, past, future, historicity. Flashbacks would be the most prominent example of how the temporal content of the narrative can seemingly contest or counter the irreversibility of the apparatus itself. And finally, there is the temporality of reception, theoretically distinct but nevertheless a temporality which the developing

classical cinema attempted to fuse as tightly as possible to that of the apparatus, conferring upon it the same linear predictability and irreversibility. Historically, experimentation with this form of temporality has been relegated to an avant-garde at the margins of mainstream cinema. Everything about the theatrical setting—the placement of the screen in relation to the audience, the darkness of the auditorium and its enclosed space—encourages the spectator to honor the relentless temporality of the apparatus. (Doane, 2002, p. 30)

The ideas of Deleuze and Doane offer a deeper understanding of time and temporality in cinema, emphasizing that the manipulation of time on screen goes beyond merely recording time and movement; it also reshapes our experience of time itself. This manipulation extends to the succession of images structured in narratives, which in turn shape our perception of reality. To effectively explore the spatial dimension—particularly the Flemish urbanized space as portrayed in film—it is essential to consider how narratives, in their various forms, influence the organization of our everyday experiences and interactions with the world. By exploring the construction and interpretation of these stories, we can uncover the ways in which they inform both our lived spaces and our temporal experiences.

Amongst others, this lived space is defined by Henri Lefebvre in *The production of space* (1974) as the spatial imaginary of time. According to Lefebvre, traditional Western philosophy neglected everyday life and the lived experience of time, space and body as an important area of social existence. In particular Marx's critique of the nineteenth century capitalist society provided a foundational contribution which should be expanded. For Lefebvre, economistic biases constrained Marxism to the domains of labor and production. Furthermore, his objective was not merely a study of everyday under conditions of modernity, but to propose and even attain transformation of everyday life.

Since the establishment of the capitalist mode of production, the impact of capitalism has exceeded the economic sphere. Subsequently, alienation, as observed by Marx, can also be found in a far wider range of areas namely social,

political, ideological and philosophical. Not only labor is increasingly fragmented and specialized, also social activities and practices became highly differentiated, which means alienation in leisure, just as in work. Whereas premodern societies unified human practices, there was no separation of productive labor and daily life. However, modernity disintegrated everyday life from other, more specialized activities. Lefebvre's argumentation exposes a dialectic perspective on this fragmentation:

> This alienation was *economic* (the division of labor; 'private' property; the formation of economic fetishes: money, commodities, capital); *social* (the formation of classes); *political* (the formation of the State); *ideological* (religions, metaphysics, moral doctrines). It was also *philosophical*: primitive man, simple, living on the same level as nature, became divided up into subject and object, form and content, nature and power, reality and possibility, truth and illusion, community and individuality, body and consciousness … With its speculative (metaphysical) vocabulary, philosophy is itself a part of human alienation. But the human has developed only through alienation. (Henri Lefebvre, 1991, p.249)

Lefebvre regards alienation as a negative effect of capitalism, in particular emergent in the centralized state with its anonymous bureaucratic apparatus. However, he also sees the potential for the transformation of social existence through this alienation. This transformation of social life, he argues, would imply the complete empowerment and fulfilment of humanity's 'species-being' or the creation of the total person, Lefebvre's so-called 'total man'. The concept of the 'total man' can be seen as a kind of utopian vantage point, which would result in the 'end of history'; a state which incorporates a complete understanding of society and nature as a complex 'whole'. Therefore, dialectic reason needs to be employed to restore the rupture between the practical and the theoretical, between the concrete and the abstract, brought about by capitalist social relations. Moreover, Lefebvre conceived this notion of totality as an open, unfinished process of becoming, flexible and provisional instead of a fixed social structure.

Everyday life is an essential component of this totality: it mediates between culture and nature, it integrates and connects between activities. It is in everyday life that people produce themselves as humans, where all life occurs. As Lefebvre defines the everyday in his dialectic logic as follows:

> Everyday life, in a sense residual, defined by 'what is left over' after all distinct, superior, specialized, structured activities have been

singled out for analysis, must be defined as a totality. Considered in their specialization and their technicality, superior activities leave a 'technical vacuum' between one another which is filled by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities, encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground. And it is in everyday life that the sum total of relations which make the human – and every human being – a whole takes its shape and its form. In it are expressed and fulfilled those relations which bring into play the totality of the real, albeit in a certain manner which is always partial and incomplete: friendship, comradeship, love, the need to communicate, play, etc. (Henri Lefebvre, 1991, p.97)

The ideas of avant-garde artists of Dadaism and the Surrealist movement inspired Lefebvre to acknowledge the importance of everyday life and adopt their search to transcend alienation. However, whereas Surrealisms revolutionary potential of the everyday remained within the aesthetic realm, Lefebvre calls for a transformation and explains that this requires critical knowledge of everyday life. According to Lefebvre, most inhabitants of the modern age "do not know their lives very well, or know them inadequately" (Henri Lefebvre, 1991, p.94).

Although the quotidian suggests boredom, triviality, banality, ordinary, Lefebvre observes how it is thoroughly routinized, repetitive and 'habitualized'. Fundamental recurrences, even if they are out of the daily cycle but like the birthday celebration or the yearly holiday, part of a cycle of leisure, shape everyday life.

After World War Two, capitalism is no longer restricted to technology and production. Lefebvre describes how capitalism penetrated the details of daily life, or better still 'colonized' the everyday by new technology and established a 'consumer society'. He criticizes the seduction of mass culture and what he calls the 'bureaucratic society of controlled consumption'. Concerning commodity consumption, Lefebvre's dialectic analysis of leisure in the modern world is crucial in his critique of everyday life. Lefebvre describes how, in modern society, "we work to earn our leisure, and leisure only has one meaning: to get away from work" (Henri Lefebvre, 1991, p.40). Leisure is regarded by Lefebvre as a routinized instance of a capitalist everyday life and thus implies a continuation of alienation. As such, there is a shift from production to consumption in postwar capitalism with the commodification of leisure activities as an essential component.

Lefebvre endorses the critique of everyday life in the feature films of Charlie Chaplin. In the foreword of the second edition of *Critique of Everyday*

Life (1958), Lefebvre examines how experiences of leisure in cinema and theatre can offer some sort of revelation concerning everyday life. Chaplin's films defamiliarize since they function as a reverse-image: "an image of everyday reality, taken in its totality or as a fragment, reflecting that reality in all its depth through people, ideas and things which are apparently quite different from everyday experience." (Henri Lefebvre, 1991, p.12) The comfort of luxury objects is replaced by Chaplin's struggle, his "battle – a duel which is always different and yet always the same – with objects, everyday objects: an umbrella, a deckchair, a motorbike, a banana skin" (Henri Lefebvre, 1991, p.11). These tensions and struggles with natural or normal situations, not only elicit a comic effect, but also encompass a critique by disorientation:

> Thus the critique of everyday life takes the form of a living, dialectical pair: on the one hand, 'modern times' (with everything they entail: bourgeoisie, capitalism, techniques and technicity, etc.), and on the other, the Tramp. The relation between them is not a simple one. In a fiction truer than reality as it is immediately given, they go on producing and destroying one another ceaselessly. In this way the comical produces the tragic, the tragic destroys the comical, and vice versa; cruelty is never absent from the clowning; the setting for the clowning is constantly being broadened: the city, the factory, Fascism, capitalist society in its entirety. But is the comedy defined by its underlying tragedy, or by its victory over the tragic? (Henri Lefebvre, 1991, p.13)

Lefebvre's dialectical approach of the alienating conditions of everyday life draws on the legacy of antecedents like Marx, Hegel and the existentialism of Martin Heidegger. The critique of Lefebvre was in turn a direct inspiration for the *Situationistse Internationale* (SI), and anticipated the tumultuous events of May 68 in France. His collaboration with SI extended Lefebvre's attention to urban life, equally relying on his dialectic observations in the context of urban environments for everyday life as earlier in the domestic sphere.

In his later work, *Le Droit à la ville* (*The Right to the City*, 1968), *La revolution urbaine* (*The Urban Revolution*, 1970) and *La production de l'espace* (*The Production of Space*, 1974), Lefebvre develops a translation of his analysis in spatial terms. In the latter he introduced a three-part dialectic between what he defined as the perceived space (*espace perçu*) composed of everyday practices and perceptions, the conceived space (*espace conçu*) consisting of representations or theories and concepts of space and the lived space (*espace vécu*) composed of spatial imaginary of time. While the conceived space, the space of

scientists, urbanists and architects, is subjected to the process of rationalization, the lived space is out of the planners' gaze.

This position regarding space and spatial organization was picked up by Edward Soja in *Thirdspace* (1996). He describes a similar spatial triad in which *Firstspace* comprehends the concrete material space in which human actions are situated, just like the perceived space. *Secondspace* corresponds with the conceived space and collects all conceptual thoughts considering space. According to Soja, conceived and perceived space dominated mainstream spatial or geographical imagination for at least the past century. *Thirdspace* as defined by Soja is not only the intersection and combination, but also the extension of Firstspace and Secondspace. Soja formulates this concept as

> another way of thinking about the social production of human spatiality that incorporates both Firstspace and Secondspace perspectives while at the same time opening up the scope and complexity of the geographical or spatial imagination. In this alternative or "third" perspective, the spatial specificity of urbanism is investigated as fully lived space, a simultaneously real-and-imagined, actual-and--virtual locus of structured individuality and collective experience and agency. (Soja, 2000, p.11)

This spatial trialectic, developed by Lefebvre and later expanded by Soja, offers different modes of perceiving, reading and analyzing space. Lefebvre's understanding regards the everyday as a product as well as it is a medium. However, by expanding space as a product, as Lefebvre does, it becomes subject of exchange and consumption. Space is thus not a neutral container. Lefebvre's concept of the everyday, originally applied to Paris, a bustling metropolis, offers a profound lens through which we can investigate and understand space, including the urbanized landscape of Flanders. Despite the differences in scale and dynamics, the underlying principles Lefebvre discusses, such as the interplay between lived experience, spatial practices, and the social production of space, remain relevant. While Paris represents the archetype of a metropolitan everyday characterized by the rhythms, movements, and interactions of a dense urban center, the Flemish landscape embodies a different kind of everyday shaped by its unique socio-spatial arrangements, including a more dispersed urbanization pattern. Moreover, the Flemish urban landscape is not a product of a process of (bureaucratic) urban planning, instead it developed largely out of everyday practices rather than by top-down planning directives. The first law on urbanism dates from 1962, and the impact of its instruments, the regional

plans (*gewestplannen*), remained limited for a long time (Boussauw & Boelens, 2014, p.45). The endorsement of the regional plans took very long (until 1980), the residential zones and zones for residential expansion in these plans were very generously demarcated and local authorities could still deviate by means of local zoning plans and subdivision plans (*lokale bestemmingsplannen en verkavelingsvergunningen*).

For Lefebvre, these zoning plans and subdivision plans created by spatial experts are representations that remain within the conceived space. He argues to expand the meanings and use these representations impose on space by applying this spatial triad to interpret space. To be able to read, understand and conceptualize the urban landscape and especially the Flemish condition, planners therefore need a new tool, a new instrument that can restore the link between the urban plans and the everyday culture. By applying Lefebvre's framework to Flanders, we can gain insights into how everyday life in the context of a horizontal metropolis influences urban planning, how space is utilized and perceived, and how these factors contribute to the region's distinct urban identity. Film, as both a visual medium and a social construct, offers such a tool. Film allows for the visualization and analysis of spatial practices by capturing the everyday in its temporal flow. The ability of film to capture time and thus weave narratives, makes it a powerful medium for understanding the layers of social life that shape and are shaped by urban space. Through its unique capacity to document and narrate the rhythms of daily life, film provides insights into the lived experiences that often escape static planning documents, thereby restoring the crucial connection between urban planning and the everyday realities of space.

This ambition to read and understand the socio-cultural starting from individual daily life practices and influencing this in return, became more operational prominent in Michel de Certeau's (1980) book *L'Invention du Quotidien* (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984). Corresponding to Giedion, de Certeau emphasized daily routines and their connected ways of operating, in order to develop a new methodology to grasp the everyday. For that purpose, he introduced the term 'tactics' as opposed to the regular 'strategies'; e.g. methodologies and processes with formal long-term implementation horizons. Strategies are therewith assigned to the 'producers', the institutions and structures of power.

A strategy works through spatial domination which implicates that strategies have institutional or spatial limits and borders. The regulations constituted by a strategy are based on rational ordering and with the objective of institutional control. In de Certeau's theory, he denotes the concept of a strategy by calling

> (I call) a 'strategy' the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will land power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an 'environment'. A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, 'clientèles', 'targets', or 'objects' of research). Political economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. (Michel De Certeau, 1984, p.xix)

A tactic, on the other hand, involves the creative subversion of the rational order through temporal techniques. By seizing opportunities within the constraints of a given order, tactics set up resistance stemming from daily life practices. Everyday practices, such as speaking, walking, reading, eating, shopping, cooking, decorating, and so on, are the typical tactical moments of the marginal, non-producers to poach of the forms, spaces and meanings of the powerful. Operating within restricted time-frames, tactics, as opposed to strategies, have no specific place and consequently no explicit borders. When circumstances require, a cultural struggle develops as the weak manipulate or distort the forms and symbols of power with tactics. In the definition of de Certeau

> A tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances. The 'proper' is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'. Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'. The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. This is achieved in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements (thus, in the supermarket, the housewife confronts heterogeneous and mobile data – what she has in the refrigerator, the tastes, appetites, and moods of her guests, the best buys and their possible combinations with what she already has on hand at home, etc.); the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is 'seized'. (Michel De Certeau, 1984, p.xix)

De Certeau argues that culture is composed of a plural set of practices and their system of operational combination. The central premise of **The Practice of Everyday Life** is to foreground the logic of these everyday practices, their ways of operating or doing things, their **manières de faire,** which is marked by the tactical resistance to the order of the rational system. Operating completely within capitalist reality that dominates contemporary society, de Certeau's focus significantly alters from Lefebvre's and the Situationists' claim for anti-capitalist revolution. A prominent example is the repositioning of the practice of **détournement**, the Situationists' ironic technique of re-representation, by the clandestine activity of **la perruque** ('the wig') as a model of displacement and inversion. La **perruque** is a mode of appropriation occurring when the employee produces his own work, borrowing implements or materials and time of the company. The notion also challenges the productivist logic of spatial separation between office, workplace and space of enjoyment, since such 'tactical' use of space resists the 'strategy' of abstract rational modeling.

In the chapter **Walking in the City** de Certeau concretely illustrates this dual perspective by confronting the panorama of a city with the **fact** of the city. He uses the cityscape of New York visible from the World Trade Centre, the panorama, as the idealized perspective of a **dieu voyeur**, comparable with the image of urbanists and architects in their maps, plans and rational blueprints. This is the city of the institutions, where the strategies of governments guarantee surveillance and transparency. At street level, however, transparency is exchanged for a labyrinth in which the walker deploys tactics, for instance by taking off-road shortcuts. This is the **fact** of the city, the city which people experience by their memories, their linked meanings and desires. Through these (spatial) practices of everyday, like walking, these tactics engage with structuring strategies. De Certeau stresses that by actual practices of walking

> ... one can analyze the microbe-like, singular and plural practices which an urbanistic system was supposed to administer or suppress, but which have outlived its decay; one can follow the swarming activity of these procedures that, far from being regulated and eliminated by panoptic administration, have reinforced themselves in a proliferating illegitimacy, developed and insinuated themselves into the networks of surveillance, and combined in accord with unreadable but stable tactics to the point of constituting everyday regulations and surreptitious creativities that are merely concealed by the frantic mechanisms and discourses of the observational organization. (Michel De Certeau, 1984, p.96)

The ambition to read and understand the everyday, to gain insight in the tactics determining the conditions of social activity, is also the core of the second volume *Living & Cooking* published in 1998. Together with sociologists Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, de Certeau registers the myriad ways in which individuals – conceptualized as consumers – operate within the systems and structures of the everyday. For instance, in her search of appropriate methodologies, Giard was inspired by Chantal Akerman's film *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975) for her essay *Doing Cooking.* The film frames the daily routine in the household of a woman in a way it defamiliarizes the everyday.

As planners it is important to examine new methodologies to grasp the everyday. Planning methodologies and processes traditionally remained restricted to what de Certeau conceptualized as strategies, with formal long-term implementation horizons. Attention for the potential of tactics is scarcely incorporated in professional planning practice. Nevertheless, over the past decade several more informal, citizen-driven and low-cost, temporary interventions emerged, also in Flanders, often to improve local neighborhoods. Examples of these interventions include temporarily transforming parking spaces into public areas with seating and greenery, creating *play streets* by closing off roads so children can safely play, initiatives like *123piano* where pianos are placed in public spaces for anyone to play, and guerrilla gardening efforts where citizens plant flowers and vegetables in underutilized urban spaces. These initiatives reflect a growing recognition of the value of small-scale, tactical urbanism in fostering community engagement and enhancing urban environments. They generated a movement called tactical urbanism and confirm de Certeau's observations on the active role of the citizens. Moreover, tactical urbanism not only challenges conventional planning paradigms but also highlights the importance of self--organization in urban development. Beitske Boonstra's work emphasizes the significance of self-organization and community involvement in spatial planning, advocating for methodologies that empower citizens to take an active role in the planning process. (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011) Her research suggests that integrating tactical urbanism into formal planning frameworks could enhance community engagement and foster more responsive urban environments. The potential for tactical urbanism to influence spatial planning is still being explored, but it is evident that these grassroots movements can provide valuable insights into the needs and desires of local communities. By recognizing the importance of both strategies and tactics, planners can develop more inclusive and adaptable approaches that reflect the complexities of urban life and the active participation of citizens in shaping their surroundings.

Identifying everyday tactics not only deepens our understanding of how citizens actively engage with and shape their environments, but it also provides valuable insights into the lived experience of space. Just as these tactical interventions reveal the nuanced and dynamic ways people interact with urban spaces, cinematic narratives similarly capture the complexity of lived space. Stephen Heath's theorization of narrative space in *Questions of Cinema* (1981) asserts that narrative, not perspectival images, is the dominant practice in creating coherent cinematic space and time. In cinema, where space is dynamic and complex, the character's gaze and the viewer's identification with the camera's point of view are crucial for achieving spatial unity. Thus, narrative space underscores the importance of understanding space as both a social and spatial construct, shaped by the actions and perspectives of those who inhabit and observe it.

Heath expands upon the traditional Renaissance perspective model, to highlight how the construction of cinematic space is not shaped by the stability of classical perspective, or Quattrocento space. Film's inherent mobility, both the movement of the camera and the movements within the frame, and fragmentation implicate that the viewer's perception is never entirely stable and centered. Therewith, cinematic space is not caught by the optical camera lens' perspectivism, but constructed through the logic of narrative, or so-called 'narrativization'.

> Our eye is never seized by some static spectacle, is never some motionless recorder; not only is our vision anyway binocular, but one eye alone sees in time: constant scanning movements to bring the different parts of whatever is observed to the fovea, movements necessary in order that the receptive cells produce fresh neuro-electric impulses, immediate activity of memory inasmuch as there is no brute vision to be isolated from the visual experience of the individual inevitably engaged in a specific socio-historical situation. (Heath, 1981, pp. 30-31)

Narrativization integrates spatial and temporal elements into a cohesive structure by presenting a discourse that appears pre-existing. The operation of narrativization of cinematic space relies on the viewer's identification with and interpretation of the eye of the camera, and the direction of the character's gaze in interpreting narrative space.

> The drama of vision in the film returns the drama of vision of the film: the spectator will be bound to the film as spectacle as the world of the film is itself revealed as spectacle on the basis of a narrative organization of look and point of view and moves space into place through

image-flow; the character, figure of the look, is a kind of perspective within the perspective system, regulating the world, orienting space, providing directions – and for the spectator. (Heath, 1981, p. 44)

Narrativization, according to Heath, is not merely the unfolding of a plot but a holistic interpretative response involving how visual images are framed, positioned, and edited. These stylistic techniques open up a fictional space where the organization of visual space contributes significantly to the communication of the narrative. Heath utilizes semiotic principles to dissect how films generate meaning. He posits that narrative space in film functions similarly to language, where each element (e.g., setting, props, spatial relationships) carries specific signifiers that contribute to the overall signified meaning. Structural elements, such as the positioning of characters within the frame, the use of off-screen space, and transitions between different spatial contexts through editing, are imbued with meaning that enhances the narrative structure. Moreover, Heath considers the temporal dimensions of narrative space, noting how the manipulation of time through editing techniques like flashbacks and cross-cutting affects the perception of space and vice versa. This interplay creates a complex narrative fabric engaging viewers on multiple levels. Thus, narrative space is not confined to physical locations depicted on screen, but encompasses the relationships between different spaces, the movement within those spaces, and the subjective perception of space by characters and viewers.

In cinema, the construction of narrative space through the character's gaze and the viewer's identification with the camera's point-of-view offers a parallel to how social and spatial knowledge can be intertwined. By exploring these everyday tactics, planners and scholars alike can draw from the narrative techniques used in film to better comprehend and represent the intricacies of social interactions within (urban) spaces. Films could offer us instruments to read and even gain understanding of the tactical-everyday in the context of the (sub) urban landscape. Moreover, film provides a source of information on how these tactics are, or could be performed in specific contexts. This approach allows for a richer understanding of lived space, how space is not only occupied but also experienced and narrated.

4.3 Cinema's transformative perception as a mediator between system and lifeworld

The perspective on space in film not only reproduces and represents reality through a mechanical lens and reflects social constructs through narratives, but also influences everyday life. Bazin indicated that the aim of the medium is to interact with and participate in the world (Bazin, 2004) and Kracauer stressed the connection between the filmic representation and the audience's perception of reality (Kracauer, 1997). Films can thus mediate our experience of the everyday, shape our perception of reality and influence our interaction with our surroundings. AlSayyad describes how "movies influence the way we construct images of the world, and in many instances they influence how we operate within it" (2006, p. 1). He argues that our understanding of the urban cannot be viewed independently of cinematic experience. Moreover, since film is a very common and easily accessible medium, public opinion and behavior can also be influenced by film.[9]

This interplay between film and reality is deeply rooted in the impact of technological advancements on art and perception. Walter Benjamin's theory in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) explores how the rise of mechanical reproduction, through technologies like photography and film, fundamentally transforms our understanding of art. Traditional art forms, like painting and sculpture, were tied to their unique, original existence, imbued with what Benjamin calls 'aura' – the authenticity and singularity that give them their unique value. However, with the advent of technologies that allow for mass reproduction, such as the camera, this aura is disrupted. Instead of being confined to a unique, original form, art can now be replicated and distributed on a larger scale, breaking down barriers of exclusivity and allowing a broader audience to engage with it (Benjamin, 1935, pp. 15-16).

This shift is particularly evident in the realm of cinema. Moreover, mechanical reproduction also transformed the way art is perceived and experienced. Unlike painting, which invites contemplation, film disrupts traditional modes of perception through its rapid juxtapositions and movements, creating a fragmented, distracted viewing experience. The manipulations of the director, cinematographer and editor allow film to reflect and represent the complexity and fragmentation of modern life. This assembled image presented in cinema algins with contemporary reality and allows for the cinematographer to penetrate "deeply into the tissue of reality" (Benjamin, 1935, p. 29).

Thus, the transformative nature of film also impacts our spatial perception, an experience to which Benjamin draws parallels with architecture. Akin

[9]
Many authors from different disciplines have investigated the influence of movies on attitudes and behavior, for example the' Payne Fund Studies', a series of monographs already published in 1933 by a number of sociologists and psychologists or, more recently, Michelle C. Pautz 2015, etc.

to architecture, where the audience's experience of moving through the constructed space, interpreting signs, symbols, and meanings, is central to the work, cinema can be understood as a 'tactile art':

> Architecture has always offered the prototype of an artwork that is received in a state of distraction and through the collective. The laws of architecture's reception are highly instructive. (...) Buildings are received in a twofold manner: by use and by perception. Or, better: tactilely [taktisch] and optically. There is at present no concept for such reception so long as one imagines it according to the kind of aggregate reception that is typical, for example, of a traveler before a famous building. On the tactile side, there is no counterpart to what contemplation is on the optical side. Tactile reception comes about not only by way of attention but also by way of habit. The latter largely determines even the optical reception of architecture, which originally takes the form less of an attentive observation than of a casual noticing. Under certain circumstances, this form of reception shaped by architecture acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at historical turning points cannot be accomplished solely by optical means—that is, by way of contemplation. They are mastered gradually—guided by tactile reception—through habit. (Benjamin, 2008, pp. 33-34)

Benjamin sees architecture as a prime example of how art has historically been received collectively and in a state of distraction. Unlike other art forms that have come and gone, architecture has always been a constant in human life, shaping our perceptions through a dual reception: tactilely, through use, and optically, through perception. This habitual engagement with architecture underscores how art can influence us without requiring focused attention (Benjamin, 1935). Benjamin suggests that film, as a mass medium, has the potential to be used for both emancipatory and manipulative purposes. On the one hand, film can democratize art and bring new perspectives to the masses; on the other hand, it can be used for propaganda and control.

Film thus has the capacity to interact, to function as a 'language', between systems and everyday life, as Jurgen Habermas (1962; 1968, 1981) recalled this. In his view, 'interaction' or **communicative, symbolic action** is how we connect and engage with our environment. According to Habermas consensual norms define "reciprocal expectations about behavior and must be unders-

tood and recognized by at least two acting subjects" (Jürgen Habermas, 1968, p. 92). Social norms and their mutual understanding are central in communicative action and define expected behavior enforced through sanctions. Departing from this human socio-cultural 'modernization', Habermas expanded the distinction between communicative and instrumental/strategic action in his later work **Theory of Communicative action** (1981). This theory builds on the earlier, fundamental distinction he introduced in **Technology and Science as 'Ideology'** (1968) between 'work' (or 'labor') and 'interaction' as constituting parts of social systems.

On the one hand, the notion 'work' incorporates all **purposive-rational action**, according to Habermas this can be either instrumental or strategic action or their conjunction. Technical rules resulting from empirical knowledge determine instrumental action. While instrumental action focusses on physical, observable events in order to effectively control reality, strategic action or rational choice depends on social preference rules (value systems) and decision procedures. Nevertheless, still rational. The strategies of rational choice are thus defined by analytic knowledge, or correct evaluation of possible alternative choices. Both forms of purposive-rational action realize defined goals under given conditions. (Jürgen Habermas, 1968, p.92)

On the other hand, 'interaction' involves communicative or symbolic action, through which individuals connect and engage with their environment. Habermas highlights the importance of binding consensual norms that establish reciprocal expectations of behavior, which must be mutually understood and recognized by the participants. These social norms are crucial to communicative action, as they define expected behaviors and enforce them through social sanctions, shaping the way we interact within our socio-cultural frameworks.

Habermas summarizes his classification of action types in the diagram below (Jürgen Habermas, 1968, p.93):

	Systems of purposive-rational (instrumental and strategic) action	Institutional framework: Symbolic interaction
Action – orienting rules	Technical rules	Social norms
Level of definition	Context-free language	Intersubjectively shared ordinary language
Type of definition	Conditional predictions Conditional imperatives	Reciprocal expectations about behavior
Mechanisms of acquisition	Learning of skills and qualifications	Role internalization
Function of action type	Problem-solving (goal attainment, defined in means-ends relations)	Maintenance of institutions (conformity to norms on the basis of reciprocal enforcement)
Sanctions against violation of rules	Inefficacy: failure in reality	Punishment on the basis of conventional sanctions: failure against authority
'rationalization'	Growth of productive forces; extension of power of technical control	Emancipation, individuation; extension of communication free of domination

This model of work, purposive-rational action, and interaction, communicative action, structures social systems. Societies consist of an institutional framework or the sociocultural life-world of norms that guide symbolic interaction, combined with subsystems of purposive-rational action institutionalizing patterns of instrumental or strategic action. Subsystems can be the economic system or the state apparatus, primary based on purposive-rational action. But subsequently family and kinship structures conform to moral rules of interaction.

In line with the philosophical tradition of the Frankfurt School, where Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse were his preceptors, Habermas elaborates on the problem of rationality. Influenced by Max Weber's theory of rationalization of society, Habermas investigates the status of scientific and technical development and its relation with the progressive rationalization of society in **Technology and Science as Ideology**. He criticizes Herbert Marcuse's thesis that rationality of science and technology effectuates unacknowledged political domination. Instead, Habermas reconstructs the social phases of the history of mankind based on his distinction between interaction or the institutional framework and work or purposive-rational action to reformulate rationalization.

A 'traditional society', as defined by Habermas, is characterized by the superiority of the institutional framework of symbolic interaction. In these societies mythical and religious interpretations of the world dominate and "purposive-rational actions could only be motivated at all through ritual attachment to interactions" (p.114) Civilizations with relatively developed technology, and more specifically where technology installs an economic system, pass through the expansion of (sub)systems of purposive-rational action independently of the legitimating efficacy of cultural traditions. This progressive secularization finally results in the modern period in which the institutional framework or lifeworld is colonized by the subsystems of purposive-rational action. "The capitalist mode of production can be comprehended as a mechanism that guarantees the permanent expansion of subsystems of purposive-rational action and thereby overturns the traditionalist 'superiority' of the institutional framework to the forces of production" (Jürgen Habermas, 1968, p.96).

Departing from this human socio-cultural development Habermas expanded the distinction between communicative action (interaction) and strategic action (work) in his later work **Theory of Communicative action** (1981). He formulated the concept 'lifeworld' in order to grasp the horizon of understanding the everyday. In this definition the lifeworld is composed by resources of culture, society and personality and serves as background to social action. Habermas stresses that culture, containing the resources for interpretation, is only one of

the components of the lifeworld. Social interaction takes place in society, offering consensus considering legitimate orders and justifying norms, and is based on personality; the individual identity. These three spheres are intertwined and interact in processes of social reproduction. More specifically, through consensus within society confirmed by changes in the content of cultural tradition and personal competences social reproduction takes place. For Habermas, communicative action is essential to achieve this symbolic reproduction of society.

Following his former classification of action types, also work, next to interaction, is a constituting part of society. Work is here introduced as the concept 'system', which is then again defined by purposive-rational action. The system is determined by the physical, material reproduction within societies and is oriented towards achieving defined goals under given conditions. Of these organizational and institutional structures within the system, especially the economic system and the political-legal system and their interactions enable an extremely efficient organization of the material reproduction in modern societies.

In fact, these systems develop a 'relative autonomous' functioning, without interaction with the lifeworld. Habermas indicates a growing distance between such systemworld of experts and the social lifeworld of 'the everyday'. The evolution of rationalization of society (as described above) allows even the domination of the system and its purposive-rational action, or 'the colonization of the lifeworld'.

In Flanders, and especially considering the condition of the Flemish urban landscape, a similar tendency can be unvealed. The spatial planning system became dominated by purposive-rational action and material reproduction, but falls behind on social, dramaturgic and cultural reproduction. A split between instrumental rationality of the urban discourse and the everyday experience of the lifeworld surfaces when plans do not get executed and remain unrealistic and idealized strategies. Experts negatively perceive the way we deal with Flemish space, while in the everyday shared interpretations and other perceptions dominate.

In order to bridge this gap between the system of spatial professionals and the everyday lifeworld, experts need to gain understanding of everyday, that is knowledge of the symbolic reproduction within the horizontal metropolis. The knowledge of 'everyday' is not generated by the existing research methods, who rely on the empirical knowledge of the system.

Habermas also focusses on the restoration of the connection with the lifeworld. Obviously, as a medium through which individuals communicate, 'language' is a put forward as a prominent medium to achieve understanding. "The concept of reaching an understanding suggests a rationally motiva-

ted agreement among participants that is measured against criticizable validity claims" (Jürgen Habermas, 1968, p.75). Understanding thus depends on inter-subjective communication, hence Habermas's concentration on communicative action. He distinguishes four theoretical perspectives on 'linguistically mediated interaction', each with their own rationality and action structure.

The first aspect of interaction delineated by Habermas is '*teleological action*'. The emphasis of this mode of action is on precipitating a desired action (by the second party) or outcome. It is strategic action based on empirical knowledge or a decision among alternative courses of action. The validity claim of this rationality of action is truth. The second aspect is the '*normatively regulated action*'. Whereas for teleological action the actor solely relates to the objective world, this kind of action first of all postulates a relation to the social world consisting of "a normative context that establishes which interactions belong to the body of justified interpersonal relations" (Habermas 1984, 88). The normatively regulated model of action provides for judgments of an actor in his or her accordance to the norms of the social world. In other words, rightness is the validity claim of this domain. The third action type Habermas outlines is '*dramaturgical*'. Central to dramaturgical action is the performance of any action revealing or expressing a social narrative to an audience. The focus is on the 'presentation of self' and exactly the specific way an individual represents his subjective world. The goal is to convey of the speaker's expressed intentions and therefore truthfulness and authenticity are the validity claims of this action. Finally, Habermas presents '*communicative action*' as the fourth perspective on interaction. Communicative action is always oriented to reaching understanding and based on "the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or by extra-verbal means*)*" (Jürgen Habermas, 1968, p.86). Mutual understanding is the validity claim of this domain which must be oriented across all three dimensions: objective representation, intersubjective legitimacy and subjective representation.

Based on these theoretical reflections on action types, the previous diagram was modified:

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

	WORK		INTERACTION		
	SYSTEM		LIFEWORLD		
	Systems of purposive-rational (instrumental and strategic) action		Institutional framework: Symbolic interaction		
Knowledge complex	TELEOLOGIC		NORMATIVE	DRAMATURGIC	COMMUNICATIVE
Traditional expressions	Instrumental action	Rational choice	Moral	Expression	'language'
Action – orienting rules	Technical rules	strategies	Legal values	esthetic norms	Social norms
Type of knowledge	Empirical knowledge	Analytic knowledge	moral knowledge	Esthetic knowledge	Intersubjective knowledge
Type of definition	Conditional predictions	Conditional imperatives	Reciprocal expectations about behavior	Reciprocal expectations about behavior	Reciprocal expectations about behavior
Mechanisms of acquisition	Learning of skills	qualifications	Role internalization	Role internalization	Role internalization
Function of action type	Problem-solving (goal attainment, defined in means-ends relations)	Problem-solving (goal attainment, defined in means-ends relations)	Maintenance of institutions (conformity to norms on the basis of reciprocal enforcement)	Maintenance of institutions (conformity to norms on the basis of reciprocal enforcement)	Maintenance of institutions (conformity to norms on the basis of reciprocal enforcement)
Sanctions against violation of rules	Inefficacy: failure in reality	Inefficacy: failure in reality	Punishment on the basis of conventional sanctions: failure against authority	Punishment on the basis of conventional sanctions: failure against authority	Punishment on the basis of conventional sanctions: failure against authority
Validity claims	truth	Effect, effectivity	Justice, rightness	truthfulness authenticity identifiable	Mutual understanding
Means 'rationalization'	Technique Growth of productive forces; extension of power of technical control	strategies Growth of productive forces; extension of power of technical control	Ideology Emancipation, individuation; extension of communication free of domination	Art Emancipation, individuation; extension of communication free of domination	speech Emancipation, individuation; extension of communication free of domination
Argumentive form	Theoretical discourse	Theoretical discourse	Practical discourse	Esthetic discourse	Explicative discourse

Figure 2.2

classification of action types, adapted from Habermas, J. (1981). Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns (Vol. 2)..

Habermas, however, has encountered significant criticism in the meantime. Amongst others Bruno Latour urges to analyze the problem by signing away the opposition between system and lifeworld, nature and culture, social and personal, and considers these as hybrids. In *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991a), Latour argues that this partition is not a given fact but artificially constructed, brought about by modern science. In premodern societies culture and nature were integrated. Based on the scientific-historical work of Shapin and Schaffer (1985), Latour situates the beginning of the Modern Constitution with the debates between Hobbe, as the protagonist of politics, and Boyle, as the protagonist of science. Together, "they are inventing our modern world, a world in which the representation of things through the intermediary of the laboratory is forever dissociated from the representation of citizens through the intermediary of the social contract" (Latour, 1991b, p.27).

For Latour, modernity thus separates nature from society, which he identifies as the first Great Divide. This first, internal, divide is related to and accounts for the second, external divide, that between moderns and not moderns. 'Us', moderns separating nature and culture, distinguish themselves temporally from 'Them', premoderns from the past.
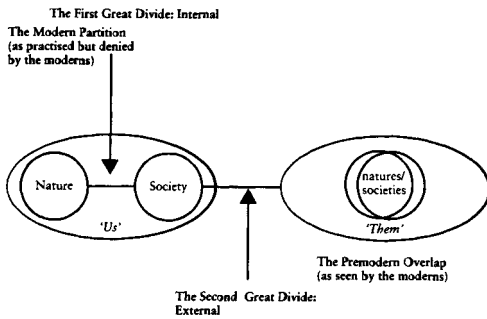
In order to maintain the dichotomy, modernism practices the work of purification. The practice of purification is the categorization of all objects and phenomena as either nonhuman nature and human culture. However, the debate between Boyle and Hobbe reveals as well that the world of science is also a social world. The example of Boyle's air pump shows how Boyle had to technically control his experiment, in addition, he needed reliable witnesses and political support for his experiment. Conversely, Hobbe's human construction of the Leviathan[10] recruits countless goods and objects in order to give it consistency and durability. Both Boyle's work, exemplary for how natural science requires political theory, and Hobbe's account, exemplary for the social reliant on a treatment of natural science, illustrate the mixture of nature and culture or the production of nature-culture hybrids, quasi-objects, within modernism. This is

10

Leviathan is a sea monster described in the Old Testament (Psalms 74: 13, 14; Job 41; Isaiah 27:1) which Hobbes uses in his work Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil (1651) as a creature representing powerful sovereign domination.

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

process of creating "mixtures between entirely new types of beings, hybrids of nature and culture" (Latour, 1991b, p.10) is what Latour describes as translation, the second practice of modernity.

At the same time, the practice of purification can only be possible when the practice of translation is ignored. This is what Latour identifies as the inherent paradox of the modern constitution: "the modern Constitution allows the expanded proliferation of the hybrids whose existence, whose very possibility, it denies" (Latour, 1991b, p.34). Latour deconstructs the basics of the modern constitution trough four guarantees/paradoxes. First, Nature, as the result of purification, is transcendent but at the same time Nature can be mobilized and objectively controllable in laboratories in the process of translation. Second, Society is immanent, in the process of purification it is constructed by people, but in the process of translation the laws of stabilizing society are beyond our reach. Third, in order to maintain the practice of purification, the distinction of nature and culture, the networks of nature-culture hybrids must remain absolutely distinct. Finally, God does not intervene in Nature or Society, but is omnipresent and ensures arbitration.

Figure 2.4
'The paradoxes of Nature and Society' from 'We Have Never Been Modern' by Bruno Latour (1991a, p. 32).

FIRST PARADOX

| Nature is not our construction; it is transcendent and surpasses us infinitely. | Society is our free construction; it is immanent to our action. |

SECOND PARADOX

| Nature is our artificial construction in the laboratory; it is immanent. | Society is not our construction; it is transcendent and surpasses us infinitely. |

CONSTITUTION

| First guarantee: even though we construct Nature, Nature is as if we did not construct it. | Second guarantee: even though we do not construct Society, Society is as if we did construct it. |

Third guarantee: Nature and Society must remain absolutely distinct: the work of purification must remain absolutely distinct from the work of mediation.

Three responses are possible to this contradiction. The first one Latour formulates is the anti-modern option, by rejecting the founding principles of modernism and returning to the pre-modern era. The second alternative exists of the continuation of being modern, by just forgetting the contradictions and attempt to continue the process of translation and purification. The third possibility is the pessimistic, sceptic relativistic post-modern.

Latour rejects all three, suggests that "no one has ever been modern" (Latour, 1991b, p.47), and advocates a new constitution, the non-modern or a-modern constitution. The combination of all three – intertwined humans and

non-humans from the pre-moderns, translation processes in order to strengthen hybrids from the moderns, and constructivism from the post-moderns – allows nature and culture to be explained together through quasi-objects. "A nonmodern is anyone who takes simultaneously into account the moderns' Constitution and the populations of hybrids that that Constitution rejects and allows to proliferate." (Latour, 1991b, p.47)

	What is retained	What is rejected	Modern Constitution	Nonmodern Constitution
From the moderns	–long networks –size –experimentation –relative universals –final separation between objective nature and free society	–separation between nature and society –clandestiness of the practices of mediation –external Great Divide –critical denunciation –universality, rationality	*1st guarantee:* Nature is transcendent but mobilizable (immanent). *2nd guarantee:* Society is immanent but it infinitely surpasses us (transcendent)	*1st guarantee:* nonseparability of the common production of societies and natures. *2nd guarantee:* continuous following of the production of Nature, which is objective, and the production of Society, which is free. In the last analysis, there is indeed a transcendence of Nature and an immanence of Society, but the two are not separated.
From the premoderns	–non-separability of things and signs –transcendence without a contrary –multiplication of nonhumans –temporality by intensity	–obligation always to link the social and natural orders –scapegoating mechanism ● ethnocentrism ● territory –limits on scale	*3rd guarantee:* Nature and Society are totally distinct, and the work of purification bears no relation to the work of mediation.	*3rd guarantee:* freedom is redefined as a capacity to sort the combinations of hybrids that no longer depend on a homogeneous temporal flow.
From the post moderns	–multiple times –constructivism –reflexivity –denaturalization	–belief in modernism –critical deconstruction –ironic reflexivity –anachronism	*4th guarantee:* the crossed-out God is totally absent but ensures arbitration between the two branches of government.	*4th guarantee:* the production of hybrids, by becoming explicit and collective, becomes the object of an enlarged democracy that regulates or slows down its cadence.

Figure 2.5
'What is retained and what is rejected' & 'Modern/nonmodern constitutions' from 'We Have Never Been Modern' by Bruno Latour (1991a, p. 135 & 141).

Thus, Latour argues that there is no pure nature nor pure culture and introduces the concept of 'quasi-objects'. By focusing on the history of quasi-objects and explain Nature and Society together, networks in which both human and non-human actors interact can be traced. This approach, examining the relations and associations between heterogeneous actors enrolled within a network in order to reveal the complexities of our sociotechnical world, was further developed with Michel Callon, John Law and others as Actor-Network-Theory (ANT). The notion of actor-network emphasizes that everything is simultaneously an actor and a network:

reducible neither to an actor alone nor to a network... An actor-network is simultaneously an actor whose activity is networking heterogeneous elements and a network that is able to redefine and transform what it is made of (Callon, 1987, p.93)

Actors make alliances and attempt to set up interactions, durable associations through space and time with other actors. At the same time actors are networks, constituted by material and physical arrangements. Moreover, these heterogeneous assemblages are dynamic, constantly shifting networks in which ANT postulates human and non-human actors play equally important roles. As a consequence of this leveling of humans and non-humans, ANT's principle of generalized symmetry, identity is defined through interaction in the construction of actor-networks.

In his later work *Reassembling the social* (2005b) Latour's search for a more descriptive social science offers a methodology to study the social. Also, for planners ANT provides a tool to understand, describe and explain the role and construction of space. Just like everything else, space is 'hybrid' and shaped out of relations. Thus, in order to analyze particular spaces planners should trace all the connections in a network, starting with the **actants** – this term includes agency for objects as actors – involved in it. Following the actants indicates how spaces come to be relationally linked together and thus reveals the processes that construct space.

As a conceptual tool **translation** is introduced to understand these formation and transformation processes of the actor-network. Through four different phases the actants align and accord their interests and converge into a network. Callon (1984) distinguished **problematization** (actants define themselves in relation to a challenge or problem), **interessement** (other actants share the challenge or problem), **enrolment** (alliances and roles redefine and coordinate to encounter the challenge or problem) and **mobilization of allies** (alliances gain stability through institutionalization). With the same highly relational approach, Latour (2004) described these four translation phases as **wonderment**, **consultation**, **hierarchy** and **institutionalization**.

In these processes actants, thus both human and non-human objects, can act as **intermediaries** or **mediators**. The distinction depends on how the actants deal with the various input they receive and transport. ANT uses the term black box to describe how an intermediary should be regarded in terms of input and output without any knowledge of its internal techniques. In *Reassembling the social*, Latour delineates an intermediary as '*what transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs*.' (Latour, 2005a, p.39) While 'm*ediators transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry*.' (Latour, 2005a, p.39) In other words, intermediaries transport information without transforming whereas mediators transform meaning by interconnection.

As such, and also for planners, ANT can provide an operational tool not only to understand, describe and explain the role and construction of space, but also act within it (Boelens, 2010; Rydin & Tate, 2016). Just like everything else, space is 'hybrid' and shaped out of relations between the human and non-human. In these processes the act of planning can operate as an **intermediary** (just moving information from the one to the other) or as a **mediator** (bringing actants together, or in other word 'in networks') (Boelens, 2018, 2021). In order to move beyond the systematic imprisonment of planning, films might become an effective tool to intermediate and even mediate as a hybrid actant itself. Here it could make things clear more integrated, or holistically hybrid for everyone involved. Therewith the cinematic image becomes not only representational, but also

influential. Cinematic perceptions, in particular the depiction of spatial environment in films, might represent, reflect and influence the evolutions of spaces as hybrids of the cinematic system (such as directing, celluloid, producing etc.) and the cinematic lifeworld (of the filmmaker, actors, contexts etc.). These perceptions then determine not only ideas about space, but also affect in return those who live and work in it. It becomes in fact an ongoing story of (cinematic) actant-networking about how we perceive, conceive and live space, paraphrasing Lefebvre. But even more, as much as film influences space, film itself is shaped by space and cannot exist without it; the interaction between film and space, actants and networks, becomes hybrid in itself.

5. Understanding the everyday through cinematic imagination

The Flemish urbanized landscape, often characterized as a horizontal metropolis, embodies a profound duality between concepts and theories of professional experts on the one hand and everyday culture and realities on the other hand. This landscape presents significant challenges for planners, as the ways in which citizens and developers interact with space frequently diverge from the envisioned plans. Urban guidelines and spatial planning projects often remain unimplemented, confined to paper, as the lived space—shaped by everyday practices—creatively subverts the rational, bureaucratic ordering of conceived space. As a result, this landscape is as much shaped by informal tactics as by formal strategies. This dichotomy between professional perceptions and everyday life exerts a substantial influence on the evolution of the landscape, necessitating a deeper understanding to effectively manage spatial developments.

Despite its apparent disorder, this landscape can possibly be better comprehended through the lens of **the everyday**. This is a concept that, while rooted in traditional metropolitan contexts by thinkers like Lefebvre or de Certeau, is equally relevant here. The hybrid nature of the Flemish urbanized landscape, where suburban areas and open spaces are neither fully urban nor rural, offers a unique everyday experience, rich with stories and possibilities akin to those in larger cities, as articulated by scholars like Massey. Moreover, the utopian narratives that once guided the development of suburban neighborhoods, motorways, and open spaces have, in many cases, evolved into dystopian realities—gardens without autarky, roads plagued by congestion, and spaces that are neither natural nor urban. This blend of utopian and dystopian elements aligns with Latour's ideas of hybridity, emphasizing the interconnectedness of actors within this landscape.

Art, and particularly film, emerges as a powerful medium for capturing the essence of the everyday and bridging the gap between systematic urban planning and the lived realities of suburban life. As Benjamin discussed, film, as a mass medium, has the transformative power to bring new perspectives to the masses, altering our perception and understanding of space by highlighting previously unnoticed aspects or immersing the viewer in new spatial experiences. Film possesses the unique capacity to represent, reflect, and mediate social constructs, and reveal the layers of meaning within the everyday. These meanings are often overlooked by traditional urban planning. By incorporating the cinematic gaze, planners can gain deeper insights into the lifeworld of suburban areas, understanding the rhythms, narratives, and dynamics that shape daily life. The works of thinkers like Merleau-Ponty, Deleuze, and Eisenstein further

underscore the importance of film in capturing the real textures and rhythms of daily existence. This approach not only enhances the reading of space but also allows for the construction of more nuanced, lived spaces through the mediation of planning actions. Furthermore, by integrating theories of cinematic realism and the distinct characteristics of film—such as movement (Giedion), embodiment (Merleau-Ponty, Sobchack, Marks), montage (Eisenstein), temporality (Bergson, Deleuze, Marks), and narrative (Heath) —urban planners can move beyond the limitations of systematic planning. This method offers an engaged view of the suburban landscape, providing a more comprehensive framework for understanding and shaping the everyday realities of the horizontal metropolis. In doing so, planners can better align their strategies with the lived experiences of those they aim to serve, fostering a more responsive and adaptive approach to urban development.

In conclusion, the notion of film as a representation, reflection of social constructs, and mediator between system and lifeworld, offer a glimpse of how the cinematic view can help planners towards a more engaged approach. Not only does film offer an opportunity to gain insight into the everyday, the lifeworld, and its intrinsic characteristics with regard to experiences, its storylines, and the typical dynamics of daily life, but it might also connect these views with the act of planning itself. By producing new information and views on the subject at hand (intermediating), but also influencing the views of the leading planning actors within a broader situational network (mediating), film enables planners to go beyond the systematic. Not only can this cinematic view been put forward to provide a better perspective on the everyday (reading space), or to tactically reflect visual and temporal imaginaries of space (socially constructing space), but with its narrative and normative/dramaturgic representations it might also mold planning actions towards more nuanced or new lived dimensions (mediating space). These three filmic actions might offer an operational method on where, in what phase and how a cinematic gaze can help planning to get a more overall and engaged view on the (sub)urban landscape.

THE FLEMISH LANDCAPE IN CINEMA

AN OPERATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

This study attempts to foster a more profound comprehension of the Flemish urbanized landscape through a cinematic lens. As it is the ambition of this research to delve into the intricate details of how spaces are represented, perceived and understood, it is inherently qualitative and explorative.

Recognizing the importance of regarding films not solely as textual entities but as dynamic social practices intricately connected to spatial contexts, this approach aligns with findings from various international academic studies (see a.o. Koeck & Roberts, 2010; Lukinbeal & Sommerlad, 2022; Penz, 2017). However, the mediating role of films in the realm of spatial planning has not been thoroughly investigated in previous studies. Furthermore, a multidimensional exploration of contemporary Flemish space in film, particularly in its relation to planning matters, is almost non-existent. The scope of projects as '*Moving landscapes*' *(Bewegende landschappen: over stedenbouw en film, , De Caigny & Van Impe, 2013)* or *Cinema rural[11]* is imited to documentary films to imagine the historical context of urbanization and agriculture. A holistic exploration of the cinematic representation of Flemish space in its contemporary form for spatial planning purposes is lacking.

To address these gaps, this research employs qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. This approach is designed to provide in-depth insights and capture nuances that quantitative approaches may overlook (Patton, 2014; Richards, 2020; Yin, 2016, 2018). By adopting this methodological stance, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of the Flemish urbanized landscape and its implications for spatial planning.

[11]
From 2018 to 2021, the international project Cinema Rural mapped out various collections of films made by government institutions and agricultural organisations to communicate with the rural population. https://cagnet.be/page/project-cinema-rural

1. Setting the scenes

1.1 Selection of contemporary fiction films

To operationalize the research objectives, a selection process was employed to identify fiction films which provide, amongst others, a specific example of a cinematic perspective on the Flemish sub-urban context. Based on formal and substantive criteria eight contemporary fiction films set in the Flemish urbanized context stood out. The formal criteria include the selection of fictional feature films, which excluded documentaries and series, with a release date after 2004 to guarantee the contemporaneity of the images. Moreover, the choice to focus on so-called *films d'auteur* with a significant proportion of homegrown investment preserve the author's artistic control and autonomy and embeddedness in the Flemish context. Substantive requirements include a narrative situated mainly in the present and in a prominent context of ribbon development along motorway spaces or low-density residential development in suburbia or open space.

First of all, given the research's emphasis on gaining insights into the subjective representation and reflection inherent in the everyday lifeworld, the selection was narrowed to (narrative) fiction film. There is versatile information, also about space, in the way a director constructs a narrative by combining visual, spatial and temporal elements. Although the reflections of reality in documentary films are equally dealing with narratives, the representation in these films mainly converges with the conceived space. The concept of using fiction to explore and represent everyday dynamics and phenomena has deep roots. Leavy (2012) Fictional narratives create "believable worlds" that resonate with audiences, blurring the line between fact and fiction and allowing the audience to connect emotionally and critically to real-world issues. Especially *Auteur* cinema, where filmmakers employ fiction to explore societal and psychological issues, mixes factual elements with fictional storytelling. This approach aligns with the objectives of social research: both aim to deepen human understanding, foster empathy, and provide critical insights into diverse experiences (Cole, 2001). Dunlop (1999, p. 12) suggests that novels—and similarly, narrative films—illuminate human experience, making them "exploratory, explanatory, and generative" tools. Fiction, whether in literature or film, can thus raise consciousness, disrupt stereotypes, and build emotional resonance (Leavy, 2012).

Moreover, the intention of filmic documentaries is to portray a fact-based part of reality, to convey with moving images the creator's vision on certain

aspects. The films dating from the 1950s onwards, of cineastes like Jef Corne-lis, Charles Dekeukelaire or Luc de Heush, of which some were highlighted in '*Moving landscapes'* (2013), or the more recent documentary series *Archibelge* (2014), communicate the view of spatial professionals rather than allowing insight in lived space. As such, art and architecture theorist Geert Bekaert wrote the screenplay of several of Jef Cornelis' documentaries, amongst which *De straat* (The Street, 1972, showing how the street has denigrated from a lively meeting and residential place in the city to mere traffic space), *Bouwen in België* (Building in Belgium, 1971, analyzing the building process and the created environment that follows from that pragmatic mentality)*, Ge kent de weg en de taal* (1976, portraying the rural, premodern remnants of the last 'village' in Flanders), and *Rijksweg* N°1 (1978, highlighting various aspects of a typical arterial road in Flanders).

Secondly, the selection was refined based on the release date. To ensure relevance to the current urban landscape and to facilitate investigations into the evolving interaction between cinematic depictions and urban reality, only films released within the last twenty years provided a focused and relevant foundation. As a reading device the cinematic representations have been employed as a (cultural) lens to explore the past. As Patrick Keiller stated: "In films, one can explore the spaces of the past, in order to better anticipate the spaces of the future" (2014, p. 145). The city symphonies, a genre that poetically presents big-city life, are an example of such documents in time that have been widely examined (see a.o. Jacobs, Hielscher, & Kinik, 2018; Kinik, 2009; Stein, 2021). Especially the early city symphonies of the 1920s and 1930s give a glimpse of, and are related to urban modernity. Next to capturing areas at specific moments, film is also able to document long term evolutions of particular places through time. *Helsinki Forever* (Van Bagh, 2008) for instance, depicts the evolution of the Finnish capital over the course of several decades by stitching together footage from fiction, documentary film, photographs and paintings. Similarly, Wes Andersen used clips from hundreds of fiction films in *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) to demonstrate how Los Angeles has been represented on screen over time, and how those representations impacted our perception of the city. Suchlike movies inspired François Penz et al., to set up their so-called cinematic urban archeology, a methodology to investigate film imaginaries of a certain area in order to grasp the complexity of urban phenomena. Also "the increasing availability of digitally stored archive material makes such retrospectively 'longitudinal' cinematic studies (e.g. of a particular area through time) increasingly fruitful" (Penz, Reid, & Thomas, 2017, p. 193). However, this research takes a distinctive turn by investigating contemporary films to unravel present-day challenges in relation to the contemporary urban discourse. This research actively engages

with current planning debates, emphasizing the value of narratives in understanding the everyday.

Finally, the thematic features of the Flemish urbanized condition played a pivotal role in refining the selection. Films were meticulously chosen based on their alignment with the Flemish urbanized landscape, excluding those with storylines abroad, in the Walloon region, or limited to city centers. Other films are limited to the interior and recorded in the (studio) set without any outdoor registrations. This type of movies is not accounted for this study. Animated films lacking a connection to the real context were also excluded. The specific setting, specifically films that prominently feature either motorway spaces, suburban spaces or open spaces, or a combination, further delineated the selection.

1.2 Selected films

The stringent criteria ensured that the chosen films provide a contextual portrayal of the specific spatial themes under examination, namely ribbon development along motorway spaces, low-density residential developments in suburban spaces, and open spaces. Therewith, the selection offers a comprehensive foundation for a nuanced analysis of the cinematic representation of urbanized landscapes in Flanders.

Regarding the theme of motorway spaces, the selection pointed out that there is remarkably little attention for these spaces in fiction films. While there is a longstanding tradition of road movies, typically linked with the expansive landscapes of the United States, contemporary movies centered along these Flemish arterial motorways are sparse. The films that confirm to the genre of the road movie often set off in Flanders, to depict the protagonists' journey abroad. Examples are the drama-comedy *Hasta la vista* (Geoffrey Enthoven, 2011), the satirical *King of the Belgians* (Peter Brosens & Jessica Woodworth, 2016) or *Vincent* (Christophe Van Rompaey, 2016), in which the journey on the road is situated respectively to Spain, across the Balkans and in France, to name a few. Michael Gott (2013) identified eleven Belgian movies as Francophone Belgian road movies. These are situated in Wallonia, often with trips to north France, and thus don't portray the landscape of the arterial roads in Flanders. Moreover, in films like *Eldorado* (Bouli Lanners, 2008) the Walloon landscape is even transformed into a vast American-style setting by cameraman Jean-Paul de Zaeytijd.

Steve+Sky (Felix Van Groeningen, 2004) might not be set in America but depicts a very generic environment that is likewise identifiable inspired on American movies. Felix Van Groeningen's 2004 drama is clearly inspired by the sensibilities of 90s American independent cinema, particularly those of Quentin Tarantino, with its frenetic music video-inspired editing, frequent asides of acrobatic dialogue, plot of mythic happenstance, and eclectic set of characters. But

despite the film's American influence at the level of style and tone, the film's backdrop is specifically and uniquely Flemish, depicting the marginalized space of the so-called ***Kortrijksesteenweg***, an arterial road between the cities Ghent and Kortrijk.

In the selection process, we discovered that although, postwar suburbia has been the setting for numerous 'suburban' films since the 1940s[12], in comparison there is surprisingly little attention for suburbia in Flemish cinema. Mainstream Flemish films of this period are mostly set in the city centers or villages. However, over the last ten years a short film (***Fucking Suburbia***, Jeff Otte, 2012), a youth movie (***Binti***, Frederike Migom, 2019) and three fiction films (***The Best of Dorien B.***, Anke Blondé, 2019; ***Violet***, Bas Devos, 2014; ***Home***, Fien Troch, 2016) have specifically situated their stories in typical suburban neighborhoods in Flanders. Of these ***Fucking Suburbia***, ***Violet*** and ***Home***, stand out in reflection on the suburban condition. With a major part of the movie ***Kid*** (Fien Troch, 2012) set in, and determined by, a suburban context, this film completes the selection.

In order to address the question of open space, this selection contains four contemporary Flemish fiction films which provide, amongst others, a specific example of a cinematic perspective on the Flemish rural and agricultural context. Although Flanders has had a tradition in so-called 'peasant-films'[13] historical country-side films, mainstream contemporary Flemish feature films are mostly set in city centers or villages. However, ***Bullhead*** (Michaël R.Roskam, 2011) and ***Kid*** (Fien Troch, 2012) are very much embedded in an agricultural setting. Both films exhibit special attention for, and a fresh eye on open spaces in Flanders. This is also the case for the movies ***Carlo*** (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004) and ***Above Us All*** (Eugenie Jansen, 2014), in which the focus is not on the agricultural context as such, but as the narrative unfolds, open spaces, natural as wel as agricultural, are a defining factor in both movies.

12
Postwar suburbia has been the setting for numerous suburban films since the 1940s, such as: It's a Wonderful Life (Frank Capra, 1946), The Graduate (Mike Nichols, 19967), The Swimmer (Frank Perry, 1968), The Stepford Wives (Bryan Forbes, 1975), Blue Velvet (David Lynch, 1986), Edward Scissorhands (Tim Burton, 1990), The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998), American Beauty (Sam Mendes, 1999), etc. (Beuka, 2016; Muzzio & Halper, 2002; Perkins, 2013)

13
Films like The Conscript (Roland Verhavert, 1974), Pallieter (Roland Verhavert, 1975), De Witte Van Sichem (Robbe De Hert, 1980), Flaxfield (Jan Gruyaert, 1983), The Van Paemel Family (Paul Cammermans, 1986), Boerenpsalm (Roland Verhavert, 1989), portrayed a rural community of hard-working, often oppressed people. This genre was based on famous literary works and consists of a nostalgic impression of the countryside in which nature was glorified and the contrast with the modernity of the city was stressed.

Figure 3.1

motorway spaces	suburban spaces	open spaces
Steve+Sky (Felix Van Groeningen, 2004)		Carlo (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004)
		Bullhead (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011)
	Kid (Fien Troch, 2012)	Kid (Fien Troch, 2012)
	Fucking Suburbia (Jeff Otte, 2012)	Above Us All (Eugenie Jansen, 2014)
	Violet (Bas Devos, 2014)	
	Home (Fien Troch, 2016)	

This selection process resulted in eight films that will be examined to trace the complexities of the Flemish urbanized landscape and the current social dynamics at play. Each of these films exhibit special attention for, and a fresh eye on various spatial dimensions of the urbanized landscape in Flanders, ranging from motorway spaces and suburbia to rural and agricultural landscapes. That is why we have selected these films to delve more specifically into the meaning of their specific narratives, visual aesthetics, and storytelling techniques for a new (planning) perspective of the countryside. In general, and as a start they have the following main narrative:

To begin with, the storyline of Van Groeningen's debut film **Steve+Sky** (2004) (Figure 12) revolves around the romance between small-time crook Steve and interim prostitute Sky, and is situated entirely along an arterial road, a so-called 'stone road' (**steenweg**), the **Kortrijksesteenweg** on the outskirts of Ghent. In fact, in addition to the two protagonists, this motorway takes the third lead role in this film. Spectators are emerged in a distinct world where life unfolds other social practices. Sky is employed in successive interim jobs including factory work, as a prostitute in one of the many brothels and later on as a dancer in a strip club on the motorway, while Steve switches from being a drug dealer to stealing and selling motorcycles after a stay in prison.

Carlo (Figure 13), the protagonist of the short movie (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004), was supposed to fill in for his injured nephew, who broke both feet, for a football tournament. As Carlo waits at the appointed place, in front of a factory along an arterial road, he accidentally gets into the wrong car and ends up with a bunch of gangsters. They have no intention of playing football and Carlo discovers that he has found himself in an extremely tricky situation. The arterial road and its surroundings function as a connecting thread in this movie. Carlo is confronted with his chances of luck and fate while he moves from the factory, in

Figure 3.2
Steve+Sky, Felix Van Groeningen, 2004
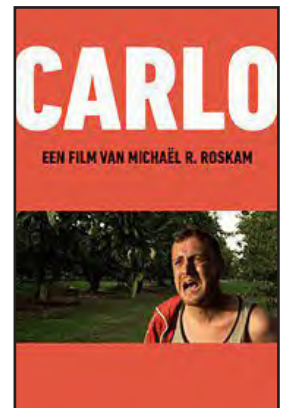
Figure 3.3
Carlo, Michaël R. Roskam, 2004

Figure 3.4
Fucking Suburbia, Jeff Otte, 2012

Figure 3.5
Violet, Bas Devos, 2014

Figure 3.6
Home, Fien Troch, 2016

the car on the road, towards the warehouse (where the criminals want to rob), in a pursuit that ultimately ends between rows of fruit trees.

Fucking suburbia (Jeff Otte, 2012) (Figure 14) depicts two brothers with nothing to do during a hot summer in a boring suburban neighborhood. The oldest of the two, a thirty-year-old man, temporarily moved back into the parental house to take care of their grandmother who is confined to bed. The younger brother is only sixteen years old and tries to cope with the presence of his brother and puberty while his summer holiday seems endless. Nevertheless, this film does not have a typical straightforward story, rather it creates an emotional atmosphere. Both brothers appear to have difficulties in communicating with each other as well as with other people. Even when they are with their friends or in a single moment with their girlfriend, they remain silent. Regardless the big age-difference, both boys apparently struggle with 'distance' and 'boredom', feelings that are explicitly stressed by the suburban environment.

In turn, the central theme of *Violet* (Bas Devos, 2014) (Figure 15) - awarded with the Grand Prix of the Generation 14plus International Jury prize - is the grief of fifteen-year-old Jesse. After he witnesses the random lethal stabbing of his friend Jonas at a quiet, nondescript shopping mall where they hang out in the beginning of the film, the movie depicts how Jesse struggles to come to terms with himself and his environment after that trauma. Unable to answer these questions to his friends, Jesse gets isolated and a growing feeling of loneliness complicates his mourning process. In this, various moments of interaction with his environment are portrayed, such as the loneliness in the audience of a black-metal concert, the tense relation with his own parents at home and moments in which Jesse hangs out with his BMX biker gang.

The central location in *Home* (Fien Troch, 2016) (Figure 16) is the protagonist's aunt's house, an average Flemish home. Banned by his parents from the family home after juvenile, the seventeen-year-old Kevin ends up to live with his aunt. Departing from this occasion, the film captures adolescence and its difficulties, especially when it comes to the relation and communication with adults. In search for a place, Kevin hangs out with the group of friends of his nephew Sammy. Their meeting place is at home or at the parking lot of the supermarket. In this ordinary suburban environment, the film exposes big, personal dramas through everyday, small situations. Kevin especially connects with John, a quiet friend of Sammy living with a manipulative mother. John's emotional unhealthy situation at home dramatically escalates and ends up with the dead of his mother. The strain of their involvement forces John, Kevin and Sammy into unimaginable actions.

Kid (Fien Troch, 2012) (Figure 17) portrays the emotional lifeworld of the seven-year-old boy Kid, who lives with his single mother and brother Billy on a farm. The mother apparently has financial problems, although it is not clear

what exactly is going on because the events are shown through the eyes of the brothers. A fixed frontal camera, most of the time placed at the children's eye-level, registers how animals are deported, bits and pieces of telephone conversations with creditors, or other conversations just out of earshot. When the mother is shot dead by creditors, the brothers have to move to live with their aunt and uncle in a typical suburban single-family house. The film shows the grief and pain of the boys, who each deal with the situation and new suburban environment in their own way.

Next, the crime film *Bullhead* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011) (Figure 18) tells the story of Jacky Vanmarsenille, a young cow farmer, involved in growth hormones traffic. He injects his cattle with hormones, but also himself to safeguard his masculinity after being castrated as a kid during a skirmish with youngsters. A chain of events is set into motion after Jacky is pressured to make a deal with a notorious beef trader. But Jacky is hesitant. Next to the recent murder of a cop investigating hormone mafia, also the hormone trafficker's assistant, an estranged friend from his childhood, makes him suspicious. On top of that, the re-encounter with the sister of his childhood' aggressor, brings Jacky's every day struggle with his own past even more apparent and will finally determine his destiny.

The last film in this selection, ***Above Us All*** (Eugenie Jansen, 2014) (Figure 19) is a film about an Australian girl Shay, who ends up in Flanders, more specifically the region of Ypres, after the death of her Australian mother. Together with her Flemish father and smaller brother Caleb, the girl has to cope with personal loss in an environment surrounded by public memorials of the first World War. Each scene in this film consists of a long, uninterrupted shot, originally in 3D, in which the slowly rotating camera makes a full circle. The characters are caught quasi-accidentally in vast landscapes, village locations or intimate rooms. Occasionally, Jansen breaks through this rhythm of catching scenes and spaces, by placing someone right in front of the camera and spinning along, while a voice-over makes us part of their thoughts.

Figure 3.7
Kid, Fien Troch, 2012
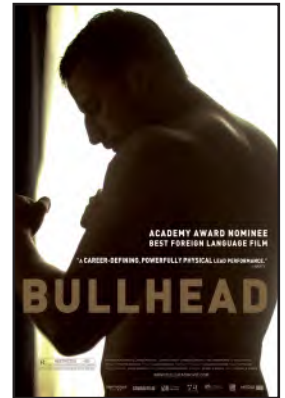
Figure 3.8
Bullhead, Michaël R. Roskam, 2011

Figure 3.9
Above Us All, Eugenie Jansen, 2014

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

2. Cinematic approach: research design

Based on the theoretical framework established in the previous chapter, the possible use of film as a planning instrument to envision and communicate aspects of the everyday lifeworld, is grounded on a threefold quality of the cinematic image, namely the representational, reflective and interactive. Accordingly, an in-depth analysis is structured according to these three filmic actions: reading, social constructive, mediating. Next to providing a comprehensive representation of the everyday (reading device), and a strategical reflection on visual and temporal imaginaries of space (socially constructing space), the cinematic narrative and normative/dramaturgic representations can shape planning actions towards more nuanced and innovative co-evolutionary dimensions (mediating space). This conceptual framework for a cinematic approach is visualized in Figure 110. Whereas conventional research methods, the more systematic type of instruments such as plans, statistics, field visits, geographical information systems (GIS), etc., are not able to provide substantial knowledge of everyday life, this method using an alternative cinematic perspective, aims to offer insight in the experience value and emotional attachments to places.

1. Cinematic reading:
spatio-morphological data

EVERYDAY ← → FILM ← → PLANNING

2.Cinematic social construct:
spatio-sociocultural data

3. Cinematic mediation :
testing reception
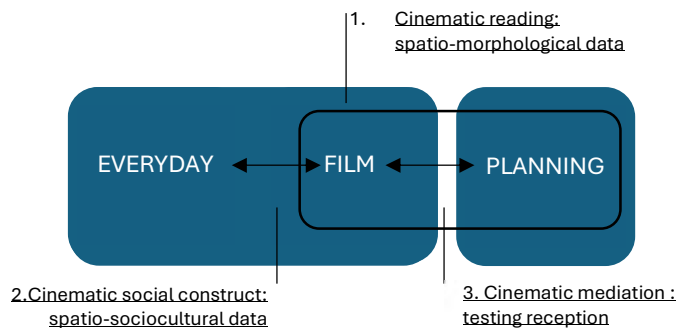
Figure 3.10
conceptual model of a cinematic approach

2.1 Cinematic reading: collecting spatio-morphological data

The first section of the analysis embodies the cinematic reading device and describes reoccurring spatial-physical themes. With attention for aspects as typology, morphology, scale, etc., the spaces in which the films are mainly situated have been indicated in relation to the storyline. A visual inventory of spatial structures has been elaborated by examining the formal composition of the shots, and the audiovisual (camera) techniques employed by directors to visualize the spatial structures. By exploring the framing, camera-settings and camera-movements of establishing shots, panoramas, street views, detailed explorations of certain areas, and other spaces in the film, we uncover the director's spatial reading and strategies to manipulate the viewer's perception.

In line with Giedion's exploration of movement and his inventory of everyday spaces, the analysis traces the rhythm of cinematic space, revealing how everyday environments are portrayed and transformed on screen. Merleau--Ponty's concept of embodied perception further guides this exploration, as the analysis considers how directors use techniques such as camera angles, lighting, editing, and sound to manipulate viewers' sensory experiences and guide their attention within the cinematic space. Sobchack's notion that the movement and rhythm of the camera can make viewers feel as though they are physically moving within filmic space is evident in the dynamic interplay between the camera and the environments it navigates. Marks' ideas on the haptic response to film are also integrated, highlighting how the use of textures, close-ups, and other tactile elements invites viewers to experience the materiality of the filmic space.

The video annotation software ELAN[14] was used as a digital tool to visualize this first part of the analysis. This program allowed to manually segment the films, identify and mark sequences and individual shots and add descriptions. Moreover, a system of different layers facilitated to organize tiers in a timeline and export a visual structure of the film into a schematic image. Additionally, these tiers were exported to an excel file, which provided comprehensive data on the length of the annotations (of shots or sequences).

The initial phase of this part of the analysis involved defining each film's structural elements by annotating different sequences, followed by detailing the characteristics of the spatial portrayal. Spatial configurations were categorized into urban spaces (with subcategories as city, allotment, supermarket, parking lot, bank office), domestic spaces (with subcategories as interior, objects, exterior), and open spaces (with subcategories as forest, football field, fields, agricultural).

[14] As a professional tool, the computer software ELAN allows to manually and semi-automatically annotate and transcribe audio or video recordings. For more additional information on the software see https://archive.mpi.nl/tla/elan. For this research, version 5.9 was used to segment the films in tiers according to thematic subjects and add descriptions.

The subsequent phase involved an examination of the formal composition of the shots based on annotations of cinematic features such as camera techniques or sound. Camera-settings as aspect-ratio or format of the image and camera-distances (ranging from extreme long shot, long shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up to extreme close-up) were annotated on the same timeline of each movie. Other settings such as the camera-position (frontal on eye-level, shooting-up or shooting-down, touch-angle), and camera-movement (pan, tilt, roll, travelling shot, tracking shot, lift up or down, dolly shot, hand held camera) completed the visual analysis. Additionally, the use of sound, whether silence, conversation, or music, was documented.

This comprehensive mapping process yielded a visual representation of spatial structures and camera settings on the timeline of each film. This overview provided valuable insights into the interconnectedness between the overall structure of the film, its locations, spatial structures, and their cinematic portrayal, enabling a deeper understanding of how these elements work together to create an embodied experience for the viewer.

1. Cinematic reading: spatio-morphologic
- spatial structures
- sequences
- cinematic techniques (camera settings, lighting, etc.)

EVERYDAY　　　　FILM　　　　PLANNING
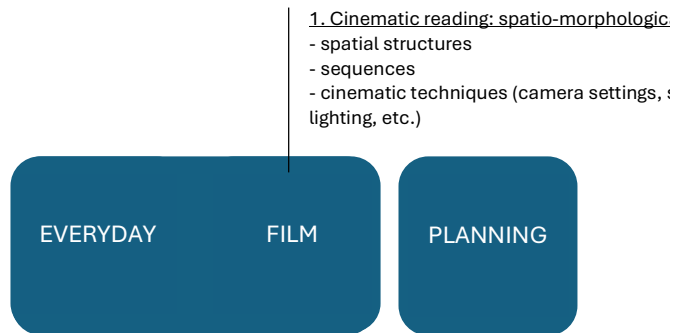
Figure 3.11
cinematic reading

2.2 Cinematic social construct: collecting spatio -sociocultural data

The second part has uncovered the social construction, through an analysis of narrative relations and their spatial imagination. Therefore, this part of the analysis builds on the annotations of the previous part in which the films have been divided into sequences. For each sequence the role of the above indicated spaces has been analyzed in order to reveal the pivotal spatial-sociocultural themes within them.

Through unravelling the function in the montage, for instance establishing shots, transitions, length of the takes, patterns in how the scenes are cut, etc., connotations that are linked with types of spaces were exposed. The way the audio and visual materials are cut together defines the rhythm of the motion picture. Consecutive long takes dominate slow cutting editing and can be deployed to establish a mood whereas a sequence of shots of brief duration in fast cutting can energetically introduce a lot of information. Moreover, different techniques of montage will determine if the narrative develops unobtrusively consistent, in a continuous montage, or if the film alternates different lines of action on distinct places in a parallel montage, or cross-cutting, often to suggest meaning or generate suspense. The use of long takes and deep focus, in particular, resonates with Bazin's concept of cinematic realism, where depth of field and unbroken shots allow the audience to engage more fully with the filmic space, providing a more immersive and realistic experience. These montage techniques are maintained and supported by many possible transitions between shots, such as the 180 degree system, eyeline matches, juxtapositions, superimpositions, jump cuts, fade-out or fade-in, lap dissolve or wipe. Additionally, executing special effects, inserting music, extra dialogue or voiceover and adding titles are also part of the stylistic choices of montage and editing techniques that reinforce the expression of the narrative. Further analysis of the narratives by identifying the montage and editing techniques focused on the way spatial structures are related to this assemblage.

Further analysis of the narratives through the lens of montage and editing techniques reveals how spatial structures relate to this assemblage. The analysis draws on Deleuze's and Doane's concepts of time and temporality in cinema, considering how montage manipulates the perception of time and space, creating a lived temporality that resonates with the viewer. Lefebvre's notion of lived space is central to this exploration, as the narrative space depicted in the films is not just a backdrop but a lived, dynamic environment that interacts with the characters and their experiences. Heath's idea of narrative space, where the space within a film is actively constructed and reconstructed through the unfol-

ding narrative, further deepens our understanding of how space and story are interwoven. De Certeau's ideas on tactics also inform the analysis, highlighting how spatial narratives can be seen as tactics employed by the director to guide the viewer's engagement with the filmic space. This exploration into the narrative expressions of space was enriched by semi-structured bilateral interviews with directors Felix Van Groeningen (*Steve+Sky*, 2004), Jeff Otte *(Fucking Suburbia*, 2012), Bas Devos (*Violet*, 2014), Fien Troch (*Kid* & *Home*, 2012, 2016), Michaël R. Roskam (*Carlo* & *Bullhead*, 2004; 2011) and Eugenie Jansen (*Above Us All*, 2014). These interviews focused on the creative process of their film production(s). During an open-ended conversation their motivations, intentions, decisions and considerations were discussed. This concerned in particular the construction of space in their movies and elements that influenced the depiction of space. The key questions that served as starting point were dealing with the conceptualization of the movie, the location itself, cinematographic strategies, the construction of the narrative and montage and editing. Additionally, the interviews delved into the director's perceptions on the everyday in the Flemish urbanized landscape. The key questions framing these discussions encompassed various aspects such as:

- **Conceptualization of the movie :**
How does the movie fit into the director's career, filmography, or oeuvre? What motivated the director to embark on this particular film project?
- Location selection:
Where was the film shot (one location or multiple)? What criteria influenced the choice of location? Was the script tailored to a specific location, or was there a search for a suitable setting? Were professionals, such as a 'Location scout,' involved, and what factors influenced the decision-making (e.g., budget, practical considerations)?
- Cinematographic strategies:
Can the director provide insights into choices related to camera-setting, positions, movement, exposure, etc.? What were the intentions and reasoning behind these choices? How did these cinematographic strategies contribute to the desired atmosphere and convey the intended message?
- Construction of the narrative:
How do specific places within the movie relate to situations or characters?
- Montage and editing:
Explore the use of techniques like flashbacks, and elaborate on the editing process? Where there particular strategies applied? What were the intentions and reasoning in montage and editing?

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. (Transcripts of the interviews can be accessed through the author.) Thematic analysis and interpretation were conducted using a systematic, open and selective coding process. Adhering to a grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 2018) the analysis aimed to identify recurring themes, ideas and concepts associated with spatial representations in the movies.

EVERYDAY ←→ FILM   PLANNING

2.Cinematic social construct:
spatio-sociocultural data
Narrative relations –
Interviews with directors -
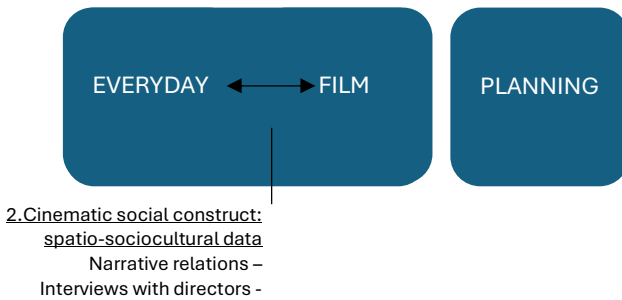
Figure 3.12
cinematic social construct

2.3 Cinematic mediation: testing the reception of film with spatial planners

Finally, the third part investigates the possible mediating role between system and lifeworld by means of two film sessions with stakeholders of the spatial subject in question. The first session was centered around low density developments in suburban neighborhoods and the second session focused on open space. At a local cinema, fragments of the selection of motion pictures were screened to an audience with different professional backgrounds (spatial planners, urbanists, geographers, students and other) and an expert panel (experienced in academic and governmental spatial research on the topic).

While differing slightly in set-up, both sessions shared the screening of fragments as the core of the debate evening. Each session's screening comprised two main parts. The initial part delved into fragments portraying spatio-morphological aspects related to the spatial theme, whether centered around suburbia or open space. The subsequent part concentrated on spatio-social aspects manifested within the fragments. Discussions with both the expert panel and the attending public took place either following the screening of all fragments within one of these two parts or after the presentation of several grouped fragments.

In the initial phase of both sessions, the panel members were introduced, setting the stage for the evening's proceedings. An overarching discussion on the role of film as a mediator in spatial planning unfolded towards

the sessions' conclusion. The audience survey was strategically divided, with inquiries about their (professional) background and relationship with the topic administered before the screening of the first part. At the end of the session, questions addressing the reception of the fragments and their impact on the participants' perspectives on the central theme were posed. Participants were further queried on whether they perceived film as a viable medium for planners or spatial experts, and if affirmative, how film could be effectively integrated into planning practices.

To facilitate audience engagement in the different debates throughout the session, the interactive software *Wooclap* was utilized. This technology enabled attendees to log in using their smartphones. Additionally, at intervals during the session, the audience was prompted to submit keywords through the Wooclap platform, outlining their perceptions of the presented fragments. These keywords were then displayed on the screen, serving as catalysts for ensuing discussions.

The debates were moderated by the author, which was recorded, transcribed and also analyzed using a systematic process of open and selective coding adopting a grounded theory approach to data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Furthermore, this allowed to test if films as intermediaries in an actor-network, are able to communicate and establish an understanding of the Flemish urbanized condition and even influence spatial concepts, views and actions of these stakeholders. In the same way Latour focusses on actor-networks, films should always be considered in their networks in order to understand this interaction. Film is not outside society, but is the result of society and its relations, restrictions, possibilities, prevailing ideas, and so on, while it re-influences life again reciprocally.

EVERYDAY → FILM ← PLANNING
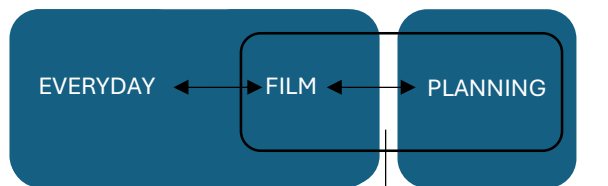
3. Cinematic mediation
- film sessions
with panel discussions

Figure 3.13
cinematic mediation

3. Overview

motorway spaces	suburban spaces	open spaces	
Steve+Sky (Felix Van Groeningen, 2004)	*Kid (Fien Troch, 2012)* *Fucking Suburbia (Jeff Otte, 2012)* *Violet (Bas Devos, 2014)* *Home (Fien Troch, 2016)*	*Carlo (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004)* *Bullhead (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011)* *Kid (Fien Troch, 2012)* *Above Us All (Eugenie Jansen, 2014)*	CHAPTER 4 SPATIO_MORPHOLOGIC AL READING : ANALYSIS
Felix Van Groeningen *Michaël R. Roskam*	*Fien Troch* *Jeff Otte* *Bas Devos*	*Fien Troch* *Michaël R. Roskam* *Eugenie Jansen*	CHAPTER 5 SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRUCT : INTERVIEWS
	panel: *Michiel Dehaene* *Pascal De Decker* *Ann Psiman*	*panel:* *Bruno Notteboom* *Veerle Van Eetvelde* *Jeroen De Waegemaeker*	CHAPTER 6 MEDIATION : FILM SESSION + PANEL DEBATE

Figure 3.14

overview of selected cases and method
related to the chapters

SPATIO-MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF URBAN LANDSCAPES IN FILM

1. Introduction:
film as a reading device

In this chapter, the first part of the study, focusing on the selected films' portrayal of spatial elements, is presented. This section embodies the cinematic reading device, unraveling reoccurring spatial-physical themes. In the following, different settings of the films have been identified in relation to the storyline and with attention for aspects as typology, morphology, scale, etc. This resulted in a visual inventory of spatial structures that includes the formal composition of the shots and the audiovisual (camera) techniques employed by directors to visualize the spatial structures. These visual schemes, together with stills from the film, illustrate and complement the text of this analysis.

Through adopting this method of reading and analyzing the portrayed spaces to the specific selection of films, this chapter aims to discover the prevalent cinematographic ***perceptions*** of Flemish urbanized landscape in films. Within the broader framework delineated by the preceding chapters, encapsulating the urbanized Flemish landscape - encompassing suburbia, motorway spaces and open spaces, this close reading illuminates the spatio-morphological representation. It is noteworthy to underscore that while these themes may not necessarily hold pivotal roles in the plot, they are intricately interwoven with the broader narrative of suburbia, open space, and motorway environments. Therewith, this chapter addresses the first research question : ***How is this peculiar Flemish landscape presented in film***?

2. Motorway spaces

The arterial roads are an essential part of the mobility network that to a large extend defined the layout of the dispersed Flemish landscape. Already in the late 18th century, arterial roads were constructed to connect the most important provincial towns of the Flemish landscape. The realization of a dense railway network soon followed during industrialization and was completed with the establishment of the *National Society of Community Railways* (*Nationale Maatschappij van Buurtspoorwegen*) in 1885. The combination of motorways with a dens, finely-meshed railway network resulted in a strong mobility network that made small villages and hamlets accessible. A law on cheap rail passes and several housing laws (amongst others 1889 and De Taeye, 1948) stimulated the Fleming not only to settle near train and tram stops, in these small villages on the countryside, but also to acquire a newly built house. These grants, together with the democratization of car ownership, turned these arterial connection roads into attractive residential building locations. The typical Flemish ribbon development emerged due to advantages such as accessibility, ample parking place and in general a view on open landscapes.

The uncontrolled occupation of the area along the arterial roads resulted in the establishment of all kinds of chain stores, including department stores, garden centers, DIY shops, furniture emporiums and fashion chains, along these roads. Meanwhile, the dense network of roads continued to be constructed, widened and paved. An extensive motorway network completed this road network from the mid-1960s onwards. This made final urbanization of the landscape with an originally already scattered settlement structure possible.

Spatial professionals focus on the adverse effects of this extensively spread urbanization, which are glaringly evident along the Flemish arterial roads. Initially intended solely as transportation links between cities, these arterial roads paid little heed to the surrounding landscape and agriculture. However, as urban activities like housing and commercial functions expanded along them, a host of issues emerged. The roads themselves witnessed a surge in traffic accidents and lengthy traffic congestions. Additionally, these rather haphazard developments alongside the roads escalated the costs of utility line installations (sewers, water mains, gas lines, cabling, etc.) and also essential services such as postal delivery, waste disposal, and home care are notably more expensive. Furthermore, the ribbon development has suppressed nature and accompanying pollution is further damaging the biodiversity. Planners and policymakers particularly focus on demographic, economic, and environmental challenges, including persistent traffic congestion, fine particulate matter, various forms of pollution, noise disturbances, safety concerns, chronic flooding, and more.

In the range of contemporary Flemish cinema, **Steve+Sky** (Felix Van Groeningen, 2004) emerges as a distinctive narrative that diverges from the traditional road movie genre, yet remains deeply intertwined with the arterial motorways of Flanders. Unlike the expansive American landscapes often romanticized in road films, **Steve+Sky** situates its story along the marginalized mundane corridors dotted with brothels of the Kortrijksesteenweg, an arterial road that connects Ghent and Kortrijk. This setting is not merely a backdrop but a character in its own right, reflecting the unique socio-cultural milieu of the region.

Next to an intensive analysis of **Steve+Sky**, scenes from **Carlo** (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004), **Bullhead** (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011) and **Home** (Fien Troch, 2016) are also included in this study of motorway spaces. Although these three films were selected in the broader corpus of this research for their setting in open space (**Carlo** and **Bullhead**) and suburbia (**Home**), they contain, to a greater or lesser extent, interesting scenes taking place along or on an arterial road.

The analysis of portrayed motorway spaces distinguishes two types of spaces, namely the infrastructure and the surrounding landscape, or the arterial road itself and the developments along this roadway. It's evident that both elements have a reciprocal relationship, influencing one another. For each element, a closer look examines the way it is positioned within the cinematic frame, including the formal composition of the shots and the use of audiovisual techniques.

2.1 On the (arterial) road

In **Steve+Sky**, the motorway is the central space, it is the setting of and visible in 34% of the scenes (not including the interior scenes). The film offers a rendering of a motorway landscape and its roadside environment that responds to the cinematic tradition of the road movie, playing on the genres' attendant discourses on space, mobility, and freedom. Moreover, the arterial road between Ghent and Kortrijk is also a constant presence in the characters life. The road not only connects the different portrayed places but also the characters of the movie. (Figure 41)

The scene with Steve and his former girlfriend driving a red minivan before Steve gets caught by the police, introduces the roadway. An extreme long shot shows the front of the van, centered on the screen, driving towards the camera. Meanwhile, also the loosely built-up roadside area flanks the image. (Figure 42) After a flashback to the bowling where the paths of Steve and Sky crossed for the first time, a close up framing the windshield now shows the two characters in the van and a distant view on the road through the back window. While the two have a discussion, the camera shifts between extreme,

SEQUENCES

URBAN SPACES   - road
                      - roundabout
                      - crossroad
                      - parking lot
                      - facades
                      - sky walking on road
                      - prostitution
                      - gas station
                      - prison
                      - interior
DOMESTIC SPACE   - interior : room Steve
                      - interior : room Sky
OPEN SPACE   - water
                      - air
SCENES ON THE ROAD
SCENES IN CARS
CAMERA MOVEMENT
EXTERIOR
INTERIOR
IMAGE SEIZE   - extreme long shot
                      - long shot
                      - medium shot
                      - medium close-up
                      - extreme close-up
CAMERA POSITION   - shooting up
                      - frontal
                      - shooting down
                      - backside

Figure 4.1
visualization of the sequences and spatial structures (top) and camera-settings in relation to the sequences and spatial structures (bottom) in Steve+Sky – ELAN

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING
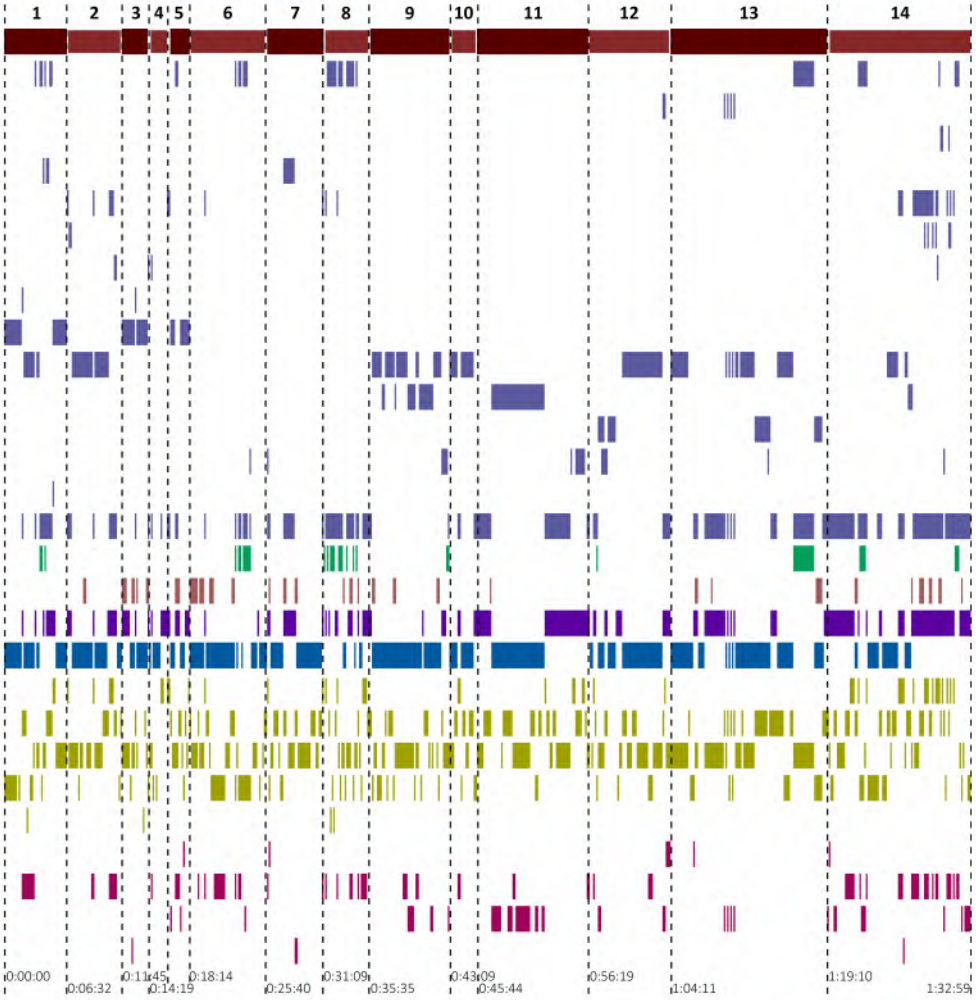
Figure 4.4
Steve+Sky
still 00:15:47 – still 00:32:27
still 01:29:04 - still 01:29:16

Figure 4.5
Steve+Sky – still 01:03:49

frontal close-ups of Steve, and close-ups in profile of the driving girl. The latter offers also a view on the detached buildings, in this case houses, along the road through the side window.

A few scenes later, after Steve got arrested and was imprisoned, Sky walks on the side of the road. After she enters the screen on the left in an extreme long shot, slowly moving to the right in front of the frontally portrayed façade of a Chinese restaurant, the frame switches to a centrally framed close-up of Sky. In the background, there is the road and its traffic on the left, and a gas station on the right. As she walks towards the camera in a dolly shot, she introduces herself. In voice-over she says: "I am blonde, I am one meter seventy-eight, I am twenty-two years old and I'll to anything you want." A statement that hints at her profession as a prostitute in one of the many brothels along this road. (Figure 43)

The protagonists, Steve and Sky, are each connected with a specific movement on the road, Sky strolling and Steve racing. This opposition, also in their direction, is maintained throughout the film. Sky frequently slowly crosses the frame, walking from the left to the right, indicating this is her biotope. On the contrary, Steve moves with speed, running or in various vehicles, from the right to the left across the screen. Frontally framed by the windshield of the car, or on his motorcycle moving central on the screen, he moves towards the camera. (Figure 44) This opposition reaches an apotheosis in the final scene of the film. Supported by pumping beats, Steve skims on his motorbike along the endless succession of shops, brothels, houses, interior design shops, Chinese restaurants, petrol stations, etc. His speed is accentuated by shots quickly soaring the road, displaying Steve's view on the motorcycle. These images are interspersed with Sky dancing on a crossing in silence until the two intersect.

The roundabout, as a special feature of the road itself, is also highlighted in several shots. The roundabout is linked with Steve and filmed with a camera shooting down on the cars riding and Steve running in rounds. He literally runs rounds, as his life seemingly also goes in circles. (Figure 45)

The open road is traditionally a symbol of mobility and therewith freedom. Men possess that freedom in **Steve+Sky**, Steve and Jean-Claude are the ones driving cars or motorcycles. As the female protagonist, Sky mainly walks throughout the movie, or she is been shuttled by the taxi driver. When she works, she is imprisoned in her neon lighted space behind the window. In **Home** (2016), Fien Troch relies on the same cinematographic strategy when she portrays the teenager Kevin on his way to work in the bathroom store of his uncle and aunt. Kevin walks along an arterial road as a car with adolescents pulls over. The friends of his nephew Sammy, John and Lina, are in the car, on their way to school. Everything is filmed with a handheld camera, following in the footsteps of Kevin. (Figure 46) Earlier these characters were introduced in the opening sequence.

Images of Sammy, Lina and their friend hanging on the parking of a supermarket where they skate, smoke, and dance, are juxtaposed with Kevin's arrival by bus. Kevin might have got out of juvenile prison, he clearly is not as free as his peers. The scene along the arterial road contains this contradiction, unlike the other teenagers in the movie, Kevin has to walk, has no car, and cannot go to school.

The portrayal of the arterial road in *Carlo* (2004) is also linked with accelerated movement. With a camera positioned close to the asphalt, Michaël R. Roskam frames an empty road bordered on each side with a row of trees in one of the establishing shots. An image that functions as an announcement of what is yet to come. Eight minutes later, about halfway in the short movie, the road looks more like a racing circuit when the yellow car is overtaken by the other car with the gangsters. The same low camera position of this shot stresses the white lines and kilometer number on the road. Moreover, this point of view evokes excitement, adrenaline, tension and a sense of speed. (Figure 47)

The road turns into a crime scene when the gangster that is in the car with the footballers realizes he is on the road with the wrong company. A rudderless car moves over when the passengers get shot one by one. Again Roskam employs a low camera position to record this tribulation.

Other scenes that take place on the road have the camera placed high inside the car, which in this case pushes the road into the less visible background.

Figure 4.6
Home – still 01:3:44

Figure 4.7
Carlo – still 00:08:35

2.2 Roadside ribbon landscape

Though these roads represent a space between proper urban centers, they are far from barren, with brothels, gas stations, big stores and food venues populating the built environment along the roadside, which are often shown to constitute a kind of horizontal strip that the protagonists can be seen to race by. Felix Van Groeningen registers this particular motorway developments in *Steve+Sky* through a recurrent structure of static, frontal extreme long shots. The camera neutrally portrays the isolated buildings bordering the road in shots that occur evenly distributed over the full length of the film. The majority of these shots register traffic passing between the camera and the portrayed façade. Next to these direct representations, the environment is indirectly presented in the background, through a car window, or as a window reflection through the multitude of scenes of driving cars. (Figure 48)

As mentioned above, the road with its surrounding parking lots, big stores, car dealers, brothels, Chinese restaurants, gas stations, etc. is determinant in *Steve+Sky*. However, the gas station and the brothel are the most prominent environments linked with the motorway in this movie. The film opens and closes with the same anecdote about a father and son arguing at a petrol station. During the opening scene, this story is told on voice-over without an accompanying image. Only during the final scene, as Sky tells the same story her way, the complete event is portrayed on screen. As the archetype of the motorway,

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

the petrol station appears also on screen when Sky walks along the road or as the setting to portray her ex-boyfriend who was also her pimp. (Figure 49)

The brothel on the other hand is the place where Sky spends her days, where she lives and works, where she meets Steve, where the story unfolds. The portrayal of these neon-lit window displays contrast with other street facing facades that are completely closed. After the introduction of the setting and different characters, about ten minutes far in the movie, Sky takes place behind the window of one of the brothels. As the camera, positioned on the exterior, zooms in on her, she explains in voice over : "In Belgium there are around fifteen thousand prostitutes who do four to six clients a day. That's an average of seventy-five thousand men visiting whores each day. My first client was an old man. All I had to do was fondle him a bit. He couldn't even get a boner." Meanwhile images of other prostitutes in windows of other brothels alternate on the screen. Also for these brothel's facades, the frontal portrayal from the other side of the road with traffic passing, is maintained which stresses the way these woman are displayed like ordinary merchandise that is exposed and sold along these arterial roads. (Figure 410)

Also in **Bullhead**, the brothel is linked to the space of the arterial road. One specific scene first shows young Jacky and his friend discussing girls, love and sex in front of a large meadow. When Jacky asks his friend a favor, the camera shifts perspective and shows how the two boys were leering at prostitutes in the brothel on the other side of the road. (Figure 411)

Figure 4.9
Steve+Sky
still 00:34:52 - still 00:14:46

SPATIO-MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF URBAN LANDSCAPES IN FILM   111

Next to the brothel, the typical big stores of the roadside ribbons appear also in *Home* and *Carlo*. The above mentioned scene in *Home* on the arterial road is also where the bathroom store and showroom is situated. On the other side of the road, the new cars behind a fence and a sign on the road indicate that there is a car dealer. In Roskam's short film, Carlo sets in his escape when the car halts at the warehouse along the arterial road the gangsters want to rob. He tries to get away by taking a turn from the road onto the terrain of a big store, recognizable by the typical road announcement signs. Carlo manages to climb over the fence of this store and runs across the deserted parking lot into the nature behind it. (Figure 412)

Figure 4.11
Bullhead – still 0:33:15 – still 00:33:24

Figure 4.12
Carlo – still 00:10:13

3. Suburban spaces

Although suburbia is not a prominent setting within Flemish cinema, *Fucking Suburbia* (Jeff Otte, 2012), *Violet* (Bas Devos, 2014) and *Home* (Fien Troch, 2016) are three contemporary fiction films that critically engage with the suburban neighborhoods of Flanders. Through their distinct narratives and stylistic approaches, these films explore the complexities and nuances of suburban life, offering insightful reflections on the socio-cultural fabric of these spaces. Moreover, as the title already suggests, *Fucking Suburbia* provides a complete immersion in the suburban lifeworld with portrayed spaces that are completely restricted to suburban spaces. Next to the suburban residential area, which takes seventy percent of the screen time, only related open spaces, such as a suburban football field, enter the picture. (Figure 413) Likewise, almost half of the film *Violet* (44 percent) has a suburban setting of which the residential neighborhood takes the lion's share. (Figure 414) Fien Troch applied another strategy and constituted a suburban setting in *Home* by mainly relying on interior shots. Despite the fact that only the interior of the central house of Kevin's aunt is visualized throughout the film, the type of dwelling and its neighborhood is clear. (Figure 415) In the second part of *Kid* (Fien Troch, 2012), after the mother of the boys has been shot, the suburban setting is also determining and taking up a major part of the screen time. In addition, the scenes with a suburban setting from the other films in the selection complete the spatio-morphological analysis.

The analysis of suburban space concentrates on the suburban streets, the facades of indiviual residential houses and the interior of the domestic. These are the spatial elements that not only appear the most on screen and thus constitute suburban space in these films, these elements are also determining Flemish suburban residential areas. In Flanders, these low-density residential areas are still the answer to the idealized image of family life in individual detached single-family houses with a front and back yard, situated in a safe and quiet environment where children can play in the streets (low car traffic) or the adjacent forest, field or vacant building plot. With a growing population this wasteful residential model not only affects energy consumption and the environment but also the quality of life. Planners voice an urgent need for densification of the centers to safeguard the remaining open space from further land parceling, combined with the development of new housing types.

SEQUENCES
URBANIZED allotmen
DOMESTIC: - interior
- exterior
OPEN SPACES: - wood
-football field
- edge
- field

- extreme long shot
- long shot
- medium shot
- medium close-up
- close-up
- extreme close-up
CAMERA MOVEMEN
- zoom
- tracking shot
- 360 turn
CAMERA POSITION
- eye level
- frontal
- shooting down
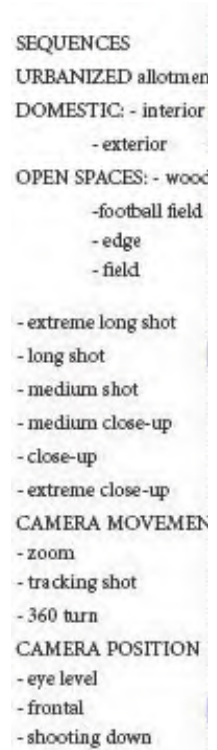
Figure 4.13
visualization of the sequences and spatial structures (top) and camera-settings in relation to the sequences and spatial structures (bottom) in Fucking Suburbia – ELAN
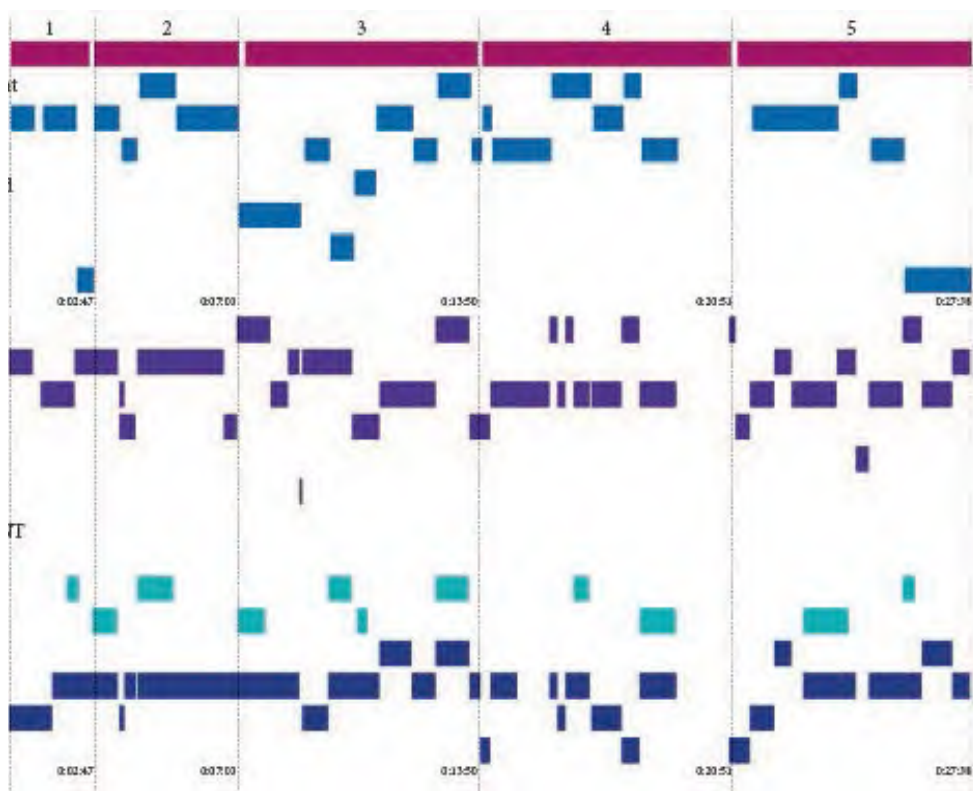
3.1 Streets of suburbia

The street and street pattern of suburban residential areas are usually to a large extend defining the neighborhood. Suburban streets are often designed with cul-de-sacs or dead-end streets in order to reduce traffic and create, in combination with the low-density layout of these areas, a peaceful environment. However, according to contemporary spatial debates these residential landscapes don't match with more sustainable visions for Flanders. One of the central issues in these discussions is the extensive land-take and use of pavement in suburban areas as a direct consequence of urban sprawl. The risk of flooding for instance, is linked with the reduced water infiltration in areas where large portions of land are covered with impermeable surfaces like roads, driveways and sidewalks. Other matters at stake are mobility and travel behavior, car-dependence directly translates into environmental impact and livability.

Research has shown that the presence of green space and safety for children to grow up in the suburbs remains, especially for young families with children, important impetus to favor suburban neighborhoods with a culturally homogeneous middle-class population. (de Olde et al., 2018; Meeus & De Decker, 2013, 2015; Schuermans, Meeus, & Decker, 2015) However, already in 1971, Jef Cornelis analytically reflected in his movie made for television *The Street*, how the street as a public space for social interaction has evolved and deteriorated. The documentary film focusses on how motorized traffic has replaced everyday community life and activities in streets. This research will investigate how contemporary streets in suburban neighborhoods are portrayed in films.

Figure 4.14
visualization of the sequences and spatial structures (top) and camera-settings in relation to the sequences and spatial structures (bottom) in Violet – ELAN
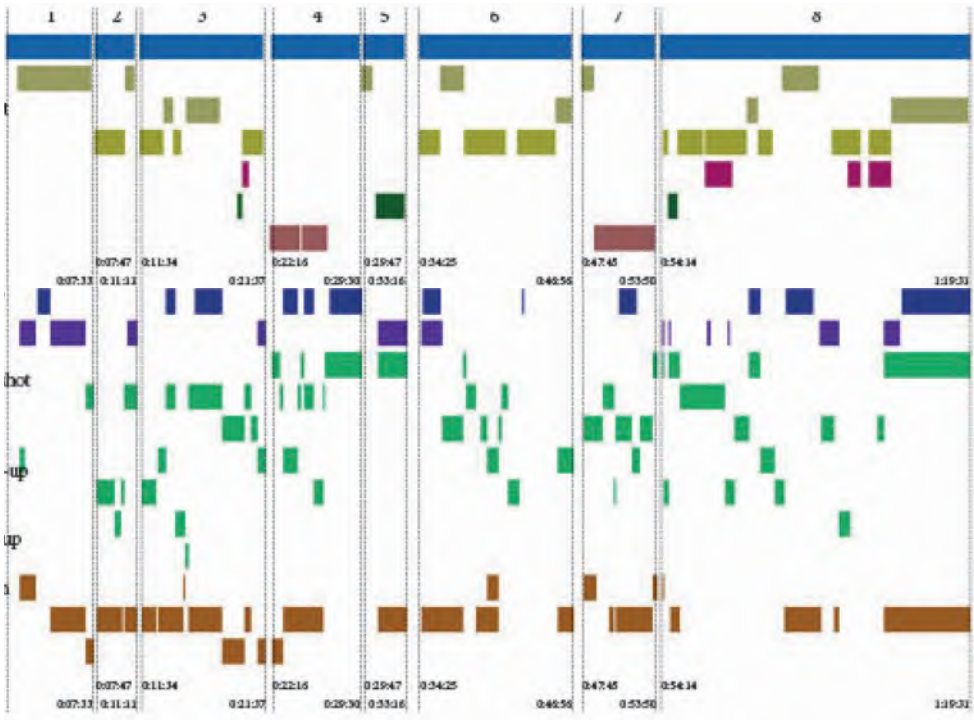
URBAN SPACES	- parking lot
	- store
	- school
DOMESTIC SPACE	- interior
	- exterior
OPEN SPACE	- street
	- field
IMAGE SEIZE	- smarphone
	- extreme long shot
	- long shot
	- medium shot
	- medium close-up
	- close-up
	- extreme close-up
CAMERA MOVEMENT	- zoom in
	- zoom out
	- travelling
	- pan
	- tilt

Figure 4.15
visualization of the sequences and spa-
tial structures (top) and camera-settings
in relation to the sequences and spatial
structures (bottom) in Home – ELAN
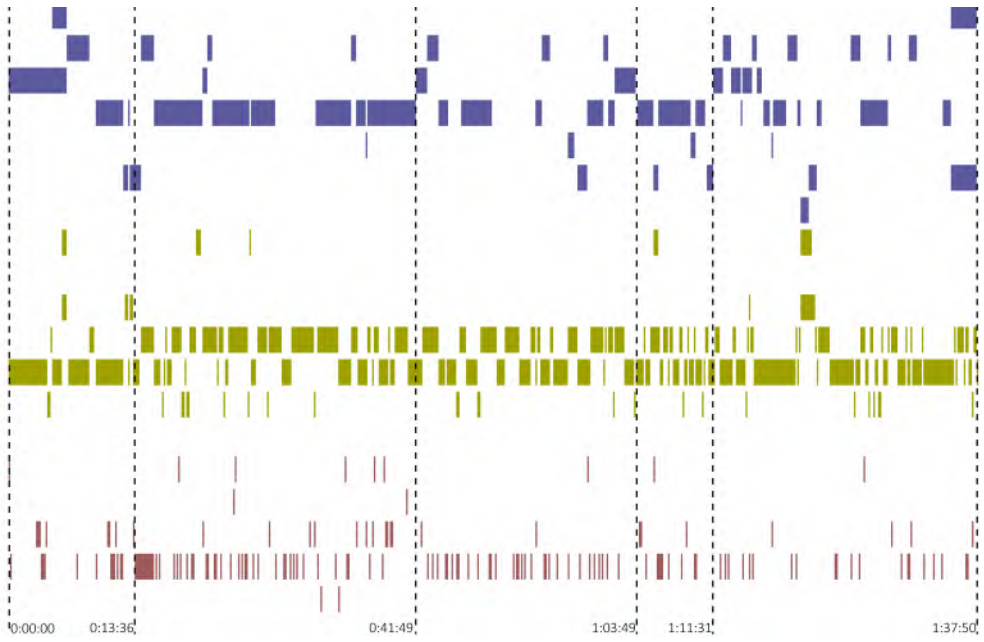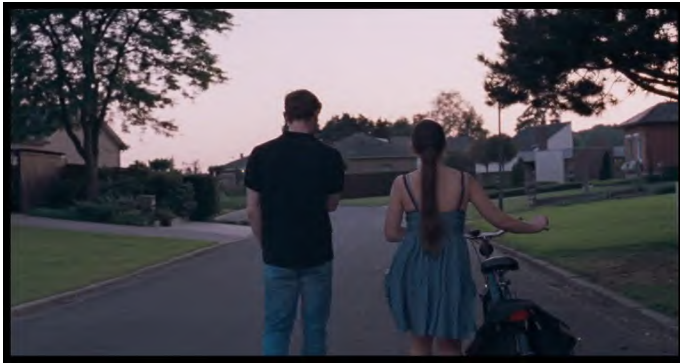
Figure 4.17

Fucking Suburbia
still 00:04:21
still 00:12:39
still 00:16:52

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

The narrative of **Fucking Suburbia** is completely situated within an average suburban residential neighborhood. The suburb is represented as a mundane, desolate environment, which is reinforced by the lack of action in the narrative. The streets are empty and deserted, nothing really happens. Furthermore, the oppressive heat creates a sluggish atmosphere and stresses the struggles of both brothers.

Fucking Suburbia contains two shots that depict the neighborhood with a slightly elevated bird's eye view. Both scenes have the same fixed camera position, looking down at the same street and houses, once in the evening light and once at dawn. Although there is a person walking on the otherwise empty street in the setting at dusk, and there is no movement at all in the morning shot, both views leave a quiet, hushed impression. (Figure 416)

Most of the time (during 57% of the film) the camera is positioned at eye level, and on three different moments in this short movie, the camera follows the protagonists while moving through the streets of the neighborhood. (Figure 417) Firstly, in the beginning of the film, the oldest brother walks back home with a girl after a barbecue party. The images of the party accentuate how this male figure, who has just returned into the neighborhood, feels alienated in this environment of settled people. During their subsequent walk on the streets of the suburban residential district, he recollects memories of their youth in the neighborhood, when they played together in the street. The happy memories suggest he did fit in at the time. The camera in their wake neutrally registers not only these two characters from the backside, but meanwhile also the suburban setting. Secondly, the most surreal representation of the neighborhood is caught in the scene when the camera follows the girl riding through the allotment on her bike in the twilight. On every parcel she passes there are people standing close to the road, on their own piece of land, all looking in the same direction. When she turns around the corner and passes the ice cream cart it becomes clear what everyone was waiting for. Different elements in this unusual situation have a disorientating and confusing effect: there are people in the so far deserted streets, all of them are standing still with their back turned towards the camera, the only sound before the ice cream cart turns on, is the noise produced by the bike of the girl. This uncanny portrayal articulates the isolated life in the neighborhood, even the beautiful summer evening can't initiate community life on the street. Thirdly, walking with his broken motorcycle at hand, the younger brother is confronted on the street with two small kids. The camera records the younger brother from behind while the kids are circling on their bikes around him. As they shout swear words at him, the boy stoically strolls on. Apparently, more people on the streets not necessarily results in community life or the peaceful environment imagined by parents. The whole environment still feels empty and alienating.

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

This alignment with the characters' perspectives, particularly when the camera follows them from behind, creates a sense of movement and rhythm that, as Sobchack discusses, can make viewers feel as though they are physically moving within the filmic space. This embodied perception enhances the viewer's connection to the characters' experiences and the suburban environment, drawing them into the film's portrayal of isolation and disconnection.

The storyline of *Violet* is situated in the suburbs of a big city, also in this case a very average and recognizable Flemish allotment. This suburb is projected as a place of isolation and loneliness. The disaffecting atmosphere is accentuated by static camerawork, slow pace and selective sound. The camera focuses on unmoving characters, details and empty streets. The only signs of habitation are the shots with BMX-riders, apart from them the streets are deserted. Passengers occur only in the shopping mall in the city or driving along on the highway. The montage of these typical long shots of cinematographer Nicolas Karakatsanis creates the effect of a dilatory sequence of silent compositions. The spare and concrete sounds, fixating on environmental noises that are alternately natural and mechanical, contribute to an unnatural stillness.

The neighborhood is introduced after the fatal incident, in the scene where Jesse rides around his district with his BMX-friends. The latter slide into the image on their little bikes as the camera moves along in the center of the street. (Figure 418) From that point onwards, the camera tracks the group as they move through the streets, following the different twists and turns of the road. After they arrive by Jesse's house, they take him on a ride through the district. Jesse's mother has ordered him to stay in the street. The group wanders on their bikes through the streets when dissenting the conversation, suddenly one of the boys stops, changes direction and rides back. The whole group follows and stays within the borders of the quarter. It seems they are confined within the borders of this neighborhood, and death provides the only way to escape suburbia, as in Jonas's case.

Another scene in which the camera gently glides through the streets, is when Jesse returns from an encounter with Jonas's father at night. Two bikes move quietly next to each other through the allotment, one of them has no rider. Jesse is on his own, holding the bike of his deceased friend. (Figure 419) The only sound in this scene is produced by the bikes. Again the silence reinforces the loneliness in this scene. The feeling of absence, which is carefully constructed throughout the film, might be most explicit in this silent movement through the dormant streets of the quarter.

In the final tracking shot, the experience of the desolate environment and silence culminate. After Jesse's father carries the crying boy home from finding him on the street at dawn, the camera starts moving. (Figure 420) This

Figure 4.20
Violet
still 01:14:29 - still 01:16:15
still 01:16:31 - still 01:17:27
still 01:17:51 - still 01:18:24

contrasts with the overall static camera in the rest of the film. Like the crew of young bikers in the beginning of the film, the camera slowly hovers through the neighborhood. In complete silence, the shot takes six and a half minutes, the audience arrives in a big overwhelming cloud.

Although the neighborhood is the place where the camera is no longer fixed, but moves through the streets, there is a predominant distant point of view in the cinematographic construction of the neighborhood in *Violet*. This is characterized by the overwhelming silence and the absence of many conversations, moreover, the action is often situated outside the boundaries of the frame. The murder in the openings scene is also depicted through the cctv security monitors of the shopping mall. Furthermore, the alternation in shallow and focus in the images enhances this removed position. Finally, the abstract images of light that mark the transition between different scenes also underline a distortion of time and space, contributing to an atmosphere of disorientation and estrangement. These techniques, particularly the use of use of grainy, low-resolution footage, align with Marks' concept of haptic visuality. Marks suggests that such visual styles engage viewers' tactile senses, enabling them to 'feel' the materiality of the filmic space. In *Violet*, these choices intensify the emotional impact, allowing viewers to experience the disconnection and alienation that permeate the film on a more visceral level

The specific way of filming in *Above Us All*, with a 360 degrees circling camera, captures the specificities of each environment the protagonists find themselves in. The arrival of the family in Ypres is the only scene in this movie that portrays the broader built context of the bed and breakfast in which they will settle. (Figure 421) The camera is positioned together with the family within a small van, and reveals the environment along the road bordered with a series of successive detached single-family houses. Stressed by the double movement, the van driving along the road and the turning camera within the van, this establishing shot of the Flemish part of the narrative is in many ways opposite to the first, Australian part of the movie. The Australian nature and vast landscapes seem to be replaced by a succession of buildings and the freedom of the landscape appears to be exchanged for imprisonment in this vehicle.

Finally, it is remarkable how this kind of establishing, visualizing or locating the central residence within the surroundings of a neighborhood is completely absent in both of the movies directed by Fien Troch in this selection, namely *Kid* and *Home*. Notwithstanding, the suburban setting is an important aspect in both narratives. *Home* relies on the interior, mainly the size and decoration of the different spaces, in combination with facades of neighboring houses that are revealed by sporadic views through the window, to subtly reflect the suburban setting. (Figure 422) In contrast, *Kid* shows clearly the exterior of the house, the

Figure 4.21
Above Us All
still 00:20:12 – still 00:20:23 – still 00:20:35 – still 00:20:48
still 00:21:02 – still 00:21:10 – still 00:21:18 – still 00:21:22
still 00:21:33 – still 00:21:38 – still 00:21:43 – still 00:21:51

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

façade of the uncle and aunt's house, but that is all. The picture frame stops at the plot boundaries, portraying an isolated building with narrow strips of grass on both sides. (Figure 423) An image that corresponds with typical subdivisons of single-family houses in residential neighborhoods and as represented in the suburban streets in the other movies, as described above. Hence suggesting the house is set within such a neighborhood full of isolated houses bordering quiet roads.

3.2 Facing the detached single-family house

The suburban landscape in Flanders is predominated by private, detached single family houses. The majority of these houses are owner-occupied, the outcome of different systems of support and housing grants throughout Belgian's history (Boelens & Pisman, 2020; De Decker, 2011b; De Meulder et al., 1999; Meeus & De Decker, 2013). Although this building typology of (semi) detached single family houses is consistent in scale, implantation and plan structure, individual preferences of these home-owners resulted in a wide variety of housing types and styles. These allotments are composed by dwellings that can be a so-called 'fermette', a typical detached house styled to refer an old farmhouse, a mass-produced bungalow, or anything in between. Accordingly also the facades can range from traditional to modern, or from kitschy to minimalistic, all tailored to suit the client's preferences. The result has been repeatedly criticized by the professional environment. A famous example hackling the Belgian development is the manifesto *The ugliest country in the world* written by Renaat Braem already in 1968. Many aspects this book, in which Braem states that Belgium looks like an insane patchwork quilt sewn together, remain contemporary sore points. De Decker (De Decker, 2011b) refers to Verhoeven according to whom Belgian people are 'dwelling wild', giving in to an apparently unruly urge to build what and where they want, thereby ignoring the societal and environmental consequences.

Regardless these (aesthetic) objections, about one in four families lives in a typical residential subdivision (Bervoets & Heynen, 2013; Pisman et al., 2016) and a vast majority of the Belgians still aspires the ideal of owing a (semi)detached single-family house with a garden. This ideal is not only strongly embedded in the Flemish cultural identity (De Decker, 2011a; Elchardus & Roggemans, 2010; Verhetsel et al., 2003), it also expresses the preferences and inspiration of the inhabitants. Hence, a manifestation of the everyday. Also in the selected movies, detached single-family houses get their share of attention. It is remarkable how the facades, often a frontal façade view, are explicitly used to in certain scenes.

Figure 4.22
Home – still 01:26:25

Figure 4.23
KID – still 00:45:03

Two houses are explicitly visualized in the movie *Violet*, namely the house of Jesse and his parents and the one of Jonas' family. In both cases, the façade fills the whole frame. The rather square format of the image, the film is shot with aspect ratio of 4:3, centers the focus and creates a direct confrontation. Moreover, these facades stress Jesse's (increasing) alienation and social isolation, since he appears to be found alone on one side of the façade. When his house is portrayed he is inside while his mother and friends are outside, the opposite happens in the scene in front of Jonas' house. Jesse, who seems closed off in his own world, is outside and Jonas' family members move around in the interior. As such the facades function as a border or dividing wall, expressing and increasing the Jesse's feeling of separation.

Jesse is in bed when his bmx-friends arrive at his place in the beginning of the film. Together with the bikers the camera moves slowly towards the house, framing the façade frontally. As the boys reach the edge of the lawn, Jesse's mother who was working in the garden, walks towards the boys. Meanwhile the camera continues the dolly movement and the façade gradually fills the screen. (Figure 424)

The evening scene where Jesse spies on Jonas's family introduces the façade of Jonas' family house. (Figure 425) Jesse stands alone outside, in the shadows, looking at the family of his deceased friend. He observes how they come home after a memorial walk. On arrival at the driveway, the car's lights illuminate a part of the façade. Jonas' parents and two sisters enter the house and the scene shows how, by each time lighting an extra room and starting from living room, each family member retreats in their own space of the house. Together with Jesse, the camera witnesses how the different squares illuminate in the façade. Just like Jesse has to cope with his feelings of grief individually, the family members are also split up in separate rooms. Portrayed within lonely squares of light, each character is individually dealing with their pain. This scene reflects an enforced individuality, apparently also present in the at the scale of the neighborhood where different lives occur isolated next to each other.

Long takes portraying a frontal image of the facade with front yard of the uncle and aunt's house situate the particular parcel in *Kid.* The façade itself has an average composition of typical elements. There is a driveway in front of the garage, a front door situated in the middle of fenestration, brick walls and a pitched roof with red roof tiles, strips of grass on the sides and a hedge to demarcate the plot. Everything looks clean and well-maintained. In spite of all this, also in this movie these images emphasize the house as a solitary object, there is a distant impression which reflects also on its inhabitants as detached individuals.

Figure 4.24
Violet – still 00:14:08

Figure 4.25
Violet
still 00:31:37 – still 00:31:54
still 00:32:05 – still 00:33:00

The sequence that introduces this house starts with the scene in which Kid's uncle mows the lawn. (Figure 426) Billy, the brother of Kid, is trying to help him with the cable. The only sound in this scene is that of the mower. A few interior scenes later, Billy is standing on the grass of the front yard. The camera is now closer to Billy in the foreground and the house behind him, which fills the complete image frame. After a few seconds, the front door opens and the aunt comes out with a bucket to clean. Again, nothing is said, but this scene is supported by ominous music. The sequence ends with the façade at nightfall, the same music continues and adds to the chilled atmosphere. There are no people in the image, the lights of the two windows that go out one by one are the only indication of life. The whole sequence evokes an uncomfortable feeling rather than a cozy, homely atmosphere. The same happens after the nightly arrival of the father. A short stilled image of the façade introduces the awkward encounter with the boys in the morning.

The façade thus introduced the boys' new living environment, the return of their father and at the end of the film, the frontage is the setting of the sendoff scene when the kids depart with their father. After two medium shots, one of the couple and one of Kid, both in front of the garage door, a close-up captures how Kid and his aunt hold each other. A long shot of the frontage, with the couple in front of their house and the car that drives from the driveway to disappear from the view, closes off the brothers' stay with their uncle and aunt. (Figure 427) Thus, the façade images are used to mark the beginning and end of

Figure 4.26

KID
still 00:48:55 – still 00:50:08
still 00:50:15 – still 00:50:35

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

a specific part the boy's life. The last frontage scene precedes Kid's decision to let himself fall out of the driving car.

This use of long takes aligns with André Bazin's concept of cinematic realism, which values the preservation of spatial and temporal continuity to offer a more authentic representation of reality. In *Kid*, the façade scenes bookend significant moments in the boys' lives, marking their arrival, the return of their father, and their departure. The final façade shot, showing the brothers leaving with their father, underscores this boundary, while the long takes allow for an unmediated experience of the environment and its emotional impact. Additionally, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes, the static camera, lighting, and sound techniques in these scenes contribute to an embodied perception. The prolonged, uninterrupted view of the façade and its changing states immerses the viewer in Kid's discomfort, allowing them to viscerally experience the unease of his new living situation.

Figure 4.27
KID – still 01:25:13 – still 01:25:19

Figure 4.29

Fucking Suburbia
still 00:18:47
still 00:24:58

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Figure 4.28
Steve+Sky – still 00:09:03

Steve+Sky, a movie centered on an arterial road and its (suburban) developments, contains a remarkable scene that plays with the annotations and accompanying expectations of certain types of frontages. A long shot of a central-framed façade seems to announce the establishing shot of a house. (Figure 428) The image contains an impression of the road in front, central driveway, several large trees in the front garden that is bordered by a low hedge and a symmetrically built-up frontage with central entrance party flanked on both sides by a rectangular window. An attentive viewer will notice an advertising sign near the road, just behind the hedge on the building's parcel, facing the passing traffic. This framing, frontal on the building and thus lateral on the sign, makes the content of the sign invisible. Sky enters the screen on the left-hand side, walking along the road to the right. When she arrives at the driveway, she turns off and walks towards the house. As soon as she approaches the house, the camera starts moving in her footsteps and crosses the street. The distance to Sky and the house decreases and then the image shifts to the interior. As Sky enters the building, it becomes clear that this house does not have a residential use. Instead, Sky entered a brothel.

Suchlike frontal façade images are not present in ***Fucking Suburbia*** or ***Home***. ***Fucking Suburbia*** frames façades only partially or during street views, but never portrays centrally framed frontages. Consequently, there is no complete exterior image of the family home. (Figure 429) In fact, only the rear façade of this house Is visible during some scenes about the garden shed.

Similarly, an exterior view on the central house in ***Home*** is absent. As mentioned above, ***Home*** only has indirect views on the neighborhood. Façades of the neighboring houses can be discerned through the kitchen window. Next to that, glimpses of Johns house come into the image when Kevin accompanies John at his house. (Figure 430) However, there is never an image of the exterior of the central house of Sammy.

Figure 4.30
Home
still 00:35:51 – still 01:05:55

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

3.3 Domestic interior views

Interior scenes are present in all the selected movies. Just like in other scenes, the mise-en-scène contributes to the mood, tone and theme of a movie. The state of the interiors define not only the general atmosphere of respective scenes, it also gives an indication of the personality and situation of the character associated with it. This part of the research focusses on the way the domestic interiors relate and add to the overall portrayal of suburban space in the selected films. A detailed study of the filmic representation of these interiors is not within the scope of this research.

As mentioned above, the suburban setting in *Home* is created only by portraying a specific type of domestic interior. The house of Sammy, where Kevin moves in, is most prominent in the film. It is a spacious place, with big windows that enlighten the different rooms and offer sporadic views in the garden and onto neighboring houses. The images give the impression of a wealthy environment. Nevertheless, Kevin gets a room in the basement. The sober furnishings and small window high up against the ceiling contrast with the rest of the house. This stresses how the family provides a place for Kevin to stay, but not really as a part of their family. (Figure 431)

Also the house where John lives with his abusive mother contrasts with the light and spacious environment of Sammy's house. (Figure 432) Although this house has a more modest and average feel, it is clearly also a detached single-family house. The rooms are smaller, the handheld camera that captures these spaces makes this difference tangible, and often dark. Furthermore, the combination with 4:3 format definitely enhances a claustrophobic feel. Although both suburban houses, Sammy's and John's, are rather ordinary, both miss a homely atmosphere.

Similarly, Fien Troch's other movie in this selection, *Kid,* juxtaposes two houses, the farmhouse and the suburban house. The interior of the farmhouse, where the boys live with their mother, clearly reflects the financial problems. *Kid* depicts the environment with an overall subdued ambiance. The movie takes off with four consecutive static shots of objects in the farmhouse followed by a tractor riding towards the farm. The whole opening is supported by dramatic music. (Figure 433) The point of view is that of the children, their world and experiences are recorded in a linear storyline. The interior images are characterized by a low camera angle at the eye-level of the children, which stresses the experience of the brothers. (Figure 434) But despite their predicament, which is tangible amongst others in the outdated furniture and the bits and pieces of

Figure 4.31
Home
still 00:31:31 – still 00:11:55

Figure 4.32
Home – still 00:25:36
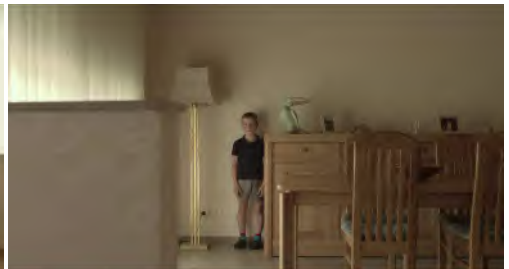
telephone conversations with creditors, the boys are at ease in this house. Kid yells and demands privacy when he is in bath, the brothers hang or fight in the coach.

Later on, the boys move to the suburban house of their aunt and uncle. Although the furniture is contemporary, there is a completely new bedroom installed for the kids, this clean and comfortable house lacks the warmth and cosy feel of a home. Especially Kid is not at ease in this house. (Figure 435) When certain scenes in the coach or at the table of the farmhouse recur in the suburban setting, it becomes clear how difficult the adjustment is. This is most explicit in the bathroom, Kid is now washed by his aunt in the company of his brother. While at the beginning of the film, a bathing scene shows how he used to relish his time in the bath, enjoying a strip alone, and yelling at his mother whenever she entered the bathroom. The interior scenes of this suburban house match with the scenes of the frontal façade that depict a distant atmosphere. Everything is clean and well maintained, but in general, the suburban house leaves an impersonal impression, which is underlined by long takes in combination with static camerawork.

Jesse's feelings of isolation and loneliness in **Violet**, are also accentuated by static camerawork, slow pace and selective sound. The domestic interiors are constituted by a montage of these typical long takes of cinematographer Nicolas Karakatsanis that focus on details like an empty chair, shoes, or the light and shadow entering through a window. (Figure 436) The spare and concrete sounds, fixating on environmental noises that are alternately natural and mechanical, contribute to an unnatural stillness. This combination creates the effect of a dilatory sequence of silent compositions. As previously noted, the long takes connect with Bazin's theory on authentically representing reality. In this case it is combined with detailed close-ups, which, according to Mark's theory a visual strategy, engage the viewer's tactile senses. The combination and recurring use of these techniques throughout the film underscore a persistent atmosphere of alienation and detachment, reinforcing Jesse's internal experience and the film's overall mood.

Whereas the living room of Jesse's house has a big window viewing on the street, the interior of the mother's house in Fucking Suburbia seems very much closed of from the street. The shutters in the kitchen and room where the grandmother is confined to bed, are always let down or halfway down, which prevents outside viewing and light entering. The camera is often positioned as a spy or a fly on the wall, watching through the doorway into the bedroom or kitchen. (Figure 437) The stiffing impression created by these rather dark interiors, contrast with the sunlit streets of the neighborhood. However, there are two morning shots, taken from the ceiling looking down each time on one of

Figure 4.33
KID
still 00:01:06 – still 00:01:08
still 00:01:17 – still 00:01:33

Figure 4.34
KID
still 00:09:48 – still 00:11:32

Figure 4.35
KID
still 00:45:44 – still 00:49:51

Figure 4.36
Violet
still 00:20:26 – still 00:21:24
still 00:58:19 – still 00:59:41

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Figure 4.37

Fucking Suburbia
still 00:06:18 – still 00:21:53

Figure 4.38

Fucking Suburbia
still 00:13:52 – still 00:21:09

the brothers in bed, both with the morning sun on their face. In the case of the youngest brother, he is in his bedroom, the oldest wakes up in the caravan in the garden. (Figure 438) Merleau-Ponty's writings on embodied perception are particularly relevant here. The camera angles, lighting, and sound design work together to create a sensory experience that allows viewers to almost physically feel the oppressive summer heat. The contrast between the dark, shuttered interiors and the bright, sunlit morning shots immerses the viewer in the characters' experience of both the physical and emotional environment.
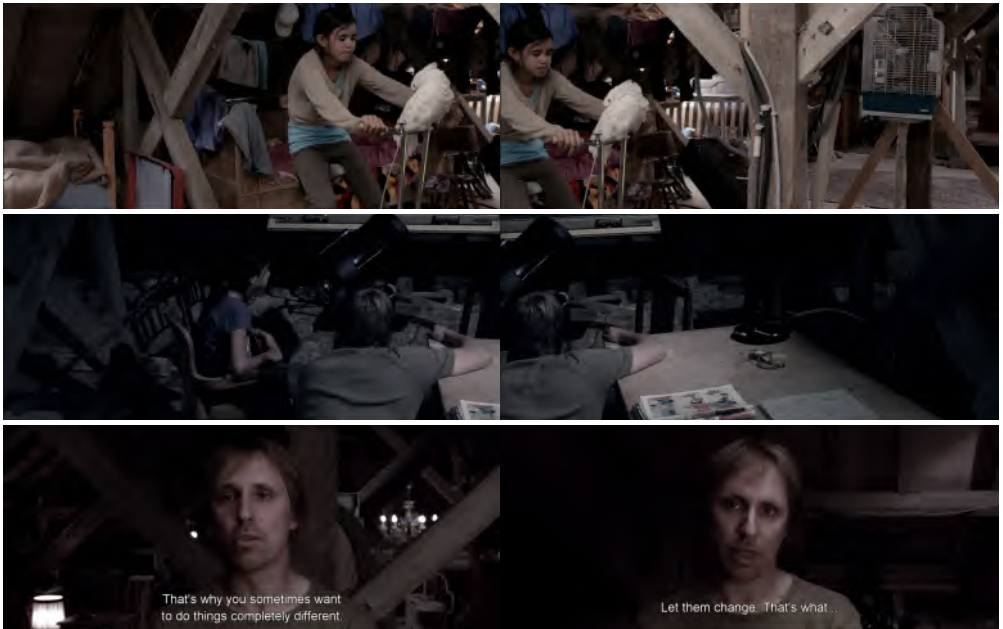
The dark and enclosed interiors where Shay in *Above Us All* ends up in after she moved from Australia to Belgium, stress the restriction of freedom the eleven-year-old experiences. The broad views of Australian landscapes show how Shay is used to have space to wander outside. This contrasts with the confined spaces in which her Belgian life takes place. The arrival scene immediately captures the family within a small van, and simultaneously reveals the built-up environment. They have to settle in a dark attic, the extreme opposite of the Australian illuminated spaces. (Figure 439) Moreover, the specific way of filming with a 360 degrees rotating camera only stresses this experience of space. By positioning the spectator at the center of these circular movements, space is perceived in a familiar way without directive framing or cutting. In addition, the whole space of each scene is portrayed. The result is a documentary-style, everyday scenery in which seemingly random events occur. Nevertheless, as the spectator's view moves along with the camera, one discovers the details and actions in each scene.

Figure 4.39

Above Us All
still 00:39:11 – still 00:39:21 – still 00:39:29 – still 00:39:39
still 00:40:43 – still 00:40:56 – still 00:41:10 – still 00:41:19
still 01:20:18 – still 01:21:58 – still 01:22:05 – still 01:22:19

3.4 Suburban outdoor spaces

Next to the typical components found in suburban neighborhoods, streets and houses as discussed above, the movies also draw attention to outdoor spaces that are on the fringe of being suburban. In *Violet* the teenagers are well--versed in the skatepark, they loiter around a football field in *Fucking Suburbia*, and a parking lot of a supermarket is an important space for *Kid* as well as the teenagers in *Home*. These spaces are related to suburbia, and the suburban lifestyles of the protagonists, as meeting places these spaces are often significant in the narrative, but it is not clear how these are exactly (physically) linked to the suburban neighborhoods. These spaces have an important function in the suburban, but are also open spaces. Because of their distinction as open space, these particular spaces will be described in detail as hybrid landscapes.

4. Open spaces

This examination of the portrayal of open space in fiction film delves into four notable films that provide a unique cinematic perspective on the open spaces of Flanders: *Bullhead* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011), *Kid* (Fien Troch, 2012), *Carlo* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004), and *Above Us All* (Eugenie Jansen, 2014). Through their narratives, these films explore the rural and agricultural landscapes of Flanders, highlighting the significance of open spaces in shaping the region's characteristics. Although *Carlo*, *Bullhead*, *Kid* and *Above Us All* all have a different set-up, the distinct presence of open spaces is what links these four movies. The amount of time open space appears on screen is just one of the factors demonstrating the importance of these areas. In *Carlo* more than half of the film, 58 % of the total screen time, is set in open space. (Figure 440) Both *Bullhead* and *Kid* portray a farmer family on the Flemish countryside. But while in *Bullhead* the scenes in open space take 13 % of the movie (Figure 441), and in *Kid* one quarter (Figure 442), they both have a dominant agricultural landscape view. In *Above Us All* approximately 42 minutes, which is about 43% of the 99 minutes, have open space locations. (Figure 443)

As for the motorway and suburban spaces, the analysis also refers to remarkable scenes in open space that occur in the films that were initially selected because of their predominant suburban setting or portrayal of the spaces of arterial roads.

The cinematic analysis focusses on what kind of open spaces are represented on screen and how these particular spaces function within the narrative. The aim is to discover the meaning and experience value of open space through the mode of portrayal in the films. Therefore, this spatio-morphological investigation is structured according to different types of open space featured in the films. As such, the conventional framework of open space as nature and agriculture, soon entered the categorization. The natural and agricultural landscapes provide a major part of the cinematic imagination of open spaces. However, an important amount of open spaces portrayed in the movies does not coincide with these types of land use. A third type of imagined open spaces is not shown in relation to nature or agriculture, and questions the definition of open space as unbuilt, non-sealed land, which is often used in spatial planning. These spaces have other characteristics and values that are not conform the traditional characterization of natural landscapes. This illustrates the complexity and hybridity of open space, and consequently the struggle for spatial planners to address the persistent pressure on these spaces. Since logicalities of diverging interests, ranging from ecological, economical, recreational to relaxation, define

open space, it is difficult to design, manage and preserve open space in Flanders. Although open space is of vital importance, it clearly lacks a strong and consistent narrative.

4.1 Natural landscapes

Flemish nature regions contain a myriad of landscapes, including polders, clay pits, dunes, brook valleys, rivers, meadows and forests. These areas provide essential ecological services (such as preservation of biodiversity or water management), recreational opportunities (such as hiking or bird-watching) and economic benefits (e.g. tourism). Forests, in particular, hold significant importance as an integral component of nature and open spaces in Flanders. Nevertheless, covering 10 percent of the Flemish territory (INBO, 2023), there is a relatively low forest cover in Flanders.

Urbanization in Flanders has fragmented also these natural areas. According to the Nature Report Flanders 2023 (Michels et al., 2023, p. p. 79), about 26,4 percent of Flanders is legally protected as natural areas. This includes nature reserves, parks, and other areas that are managed for conservation purposes. However, within those natural areas, there are also cultivated grasslands and croplands, even roads and buildings. Strictly protected natural zones account merely for 2,9 percent of Flanders. Due to the fragmentation of the territory, these natural areas do not form a contiguous network but are rather disjointed shreds on a patchwork. Contiguous natural zones are nevertheless important for ecological conservation, biodiversity and to mitigate effects of climate change (drought, floods, etc.).

SEQUENCES
                                                    - transition
URBANIZED SPACES   - arterial road
                                                    - car
                                                    - factory
DOMESTIC SPACE   - interior
                                                    - exterior
OPEN SPACE   - field
                                                    - plantation
                                                    - forest
IMAGE SEIZE   - extreme long shot
                                                    - long shot
                                                    - medium shot
                                                    - medium close-up
                                                    - close-up
                                                    - extreme close-up
CAMERA MOVEMENT

Figure 4.40
visualization of the sequences and spatial structures (top) and camera-settings in relation to the sequences and spatial structures (bottom) in Carlo – ELAN
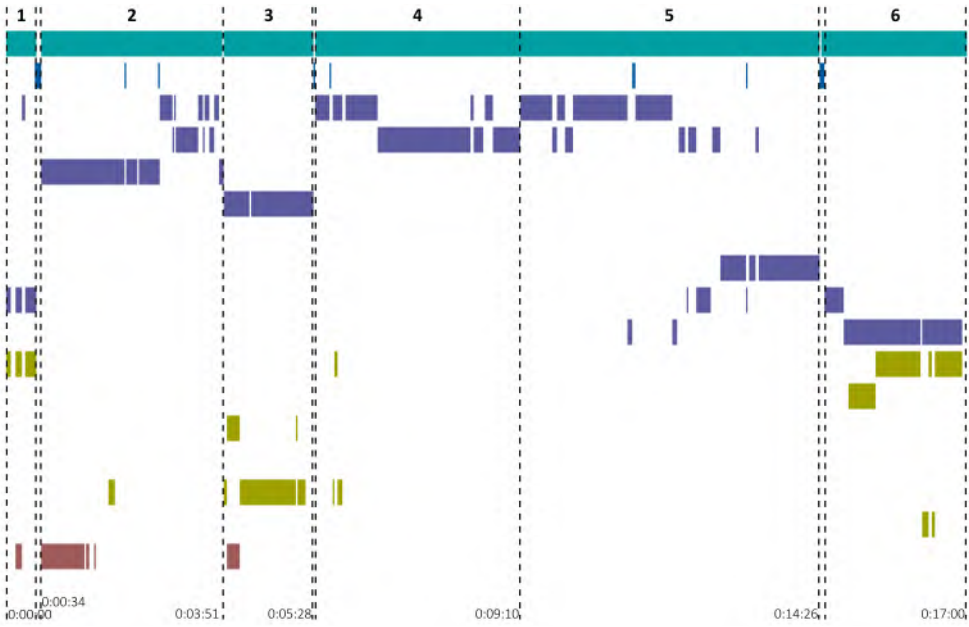
SEQUENCES

URBANIZED SPACES - city
                  - on the road
                  - garage
                  - port
                  - dealer
                  - police station
                  - public interior

DOMESTIC SPACE   - interior
                  - exterior

OPEN SPACE   - field
                  - agriculture
                  - race track
                  - nature

IMAGE SEIZE   - extreme long shot
                  - long shot
                  - medium shot
                  - medium close-up
                  - close-up
                  - extreme close-up

CAMERA MOVEMENT

Figure 4.41

visualization of the
sequences and spatial
structures (top) and
camera-settings in re-
lation to the sequences
and spatial structures
(bottom) in Bullhead
ELAN

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING
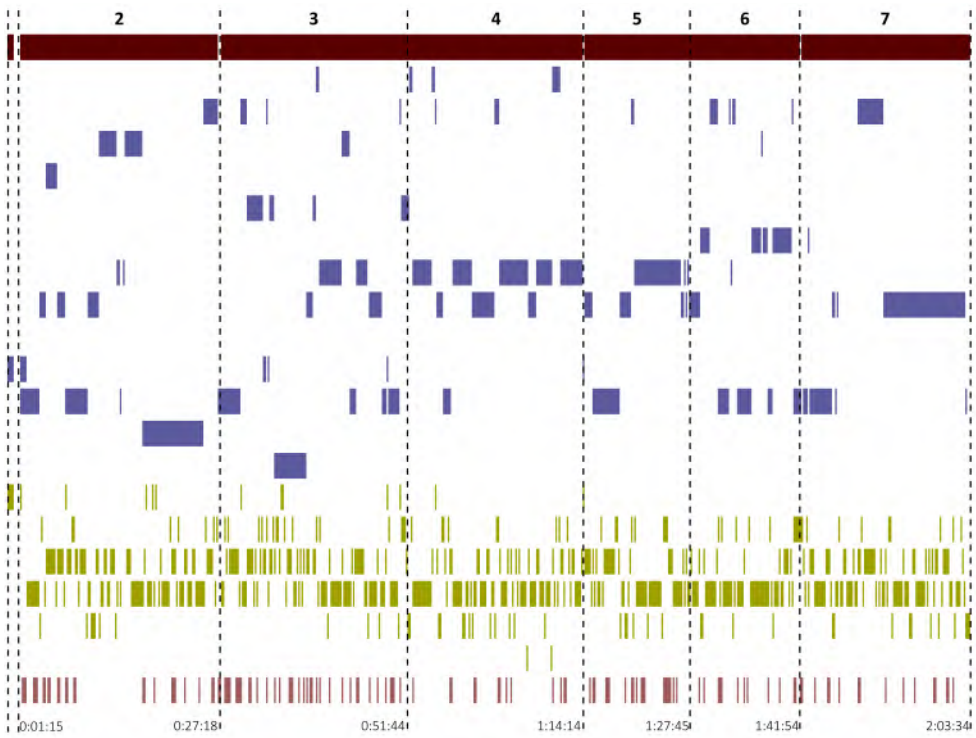
SEQUENCES

URBAN SPACES   - supermarket
                    - parking lot
                    - bank office

DOMESTIC SPACE   - interior
                    - exterior

OPEN SPACE   - forest
                    - football field
                    - fields
                    - agricultural

IMAGE SEIZE   - extreme long shot
                    - long shot
                    - medium shot
                    - medium close-up
                    - extreme close-up

CAMERA MOVEMENT- tracking shot

CAMERA POSITION   - low (kids level)
                    - frontal

SOUND   - silence
                    - conversation
                    - music

Figure 4.42

visualization of the sequences and spatial structures (top) and camera-settings in relation to the sequences and spatial structures (bottom) in KID ELAN

SEQUENCES

URBANIZED SPACES   - urban functions
                    - school

DOMESTIC SPACE   - exterior
                    - interior

OPEN SPACE   - bunker
                    - field
                    - agricultural

SOUND   - conversation
                    - environmental
                    - voice over

Figure 4.43

visualization of the sequences and spatial structures (top) and camera-settings in relation to the sequences and spatial structures (bottom) in Above Us All – ELAN
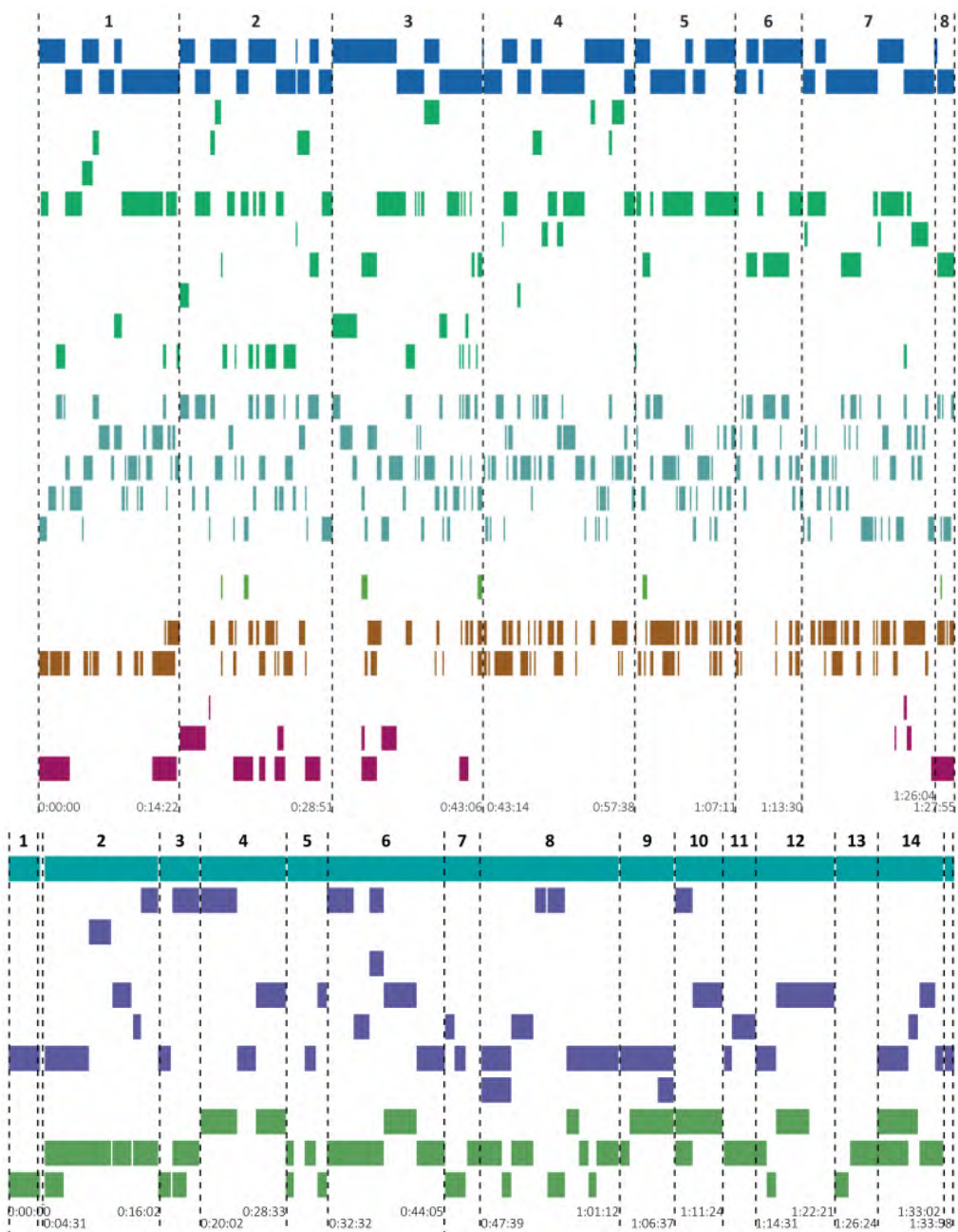
A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Muddy landscapes, fields and farmlands constitute the environment of the young cattle farmer Jacky, the central character in *Bullhead*. In the movie, natural landscapes appear at several key moments, in which these landscapes are not just as a backdrop but the scene's centerpiece. Moreover, the cinematography of the landscapes in *Bullhead* is fitting with the story, reflecting the mood and origin of the characters.

As such, the film's opening scene portrays a misty long shot of a meadow fringed by dark woods. (Figure 444) An ominous voiceover accompanies the misty long shot: "Sometimes a dreadful event in the past has happened that makes everybody fall silent; even you yourself will not waste one fucking word on it. It may have been repressed for a long time, but one day someone will cross your path who brings back the memory. One way or another, you will always be fucked."

After that, *Bullhead* unfolds in a non-linear storytelling with jumps between present day and the drastic event of Jacky's childhood. Images of open fields are used to mark the transitions between different sequences. (Figure 445) These images draw attention by the position of their horizon. In the beginning of the movie, these landscapes have a low horizon in combination with a sky full of clouds. During the film, the horizon of these landscapes rises until only a small strip of air remains, as such the viewer experiences how the protagonist's situation equally gets more oppressive.

The most determining scene in the movie, the dreadful event the voiceover referred to in the establishing shot, clarifies the injections with testosterone Jacky administers to himself. An extensive flashback envisions young Jacky and his friend in a landscape on a fringe between a meadow and a forest. While they were searching for the francophone girl Jacky had a crush on, they accidently witnessed her vicious brother and his gang masturbating. As their presence suddenly got noticed, the youngster chased them across the area and over the embankment. (Figure 446) Eventually he managed to catch Jacky and punished him by crushing Jacky's scrotum with a stone. This moment, in this secluded landscape, defined Jacky's future that from then onwards depends on hormones that ensure he can be a massive man, but also flare up his inner rage.

except when you point it out,

In the case of **Carlo,** the same director Michael R. Roskam uses comparable techniques to not only envision natural landscapes, but also give them a prominent and determining role in the movie. The first images of this film are landscapes, also in this film there is a voice-over accompanying them. Instead of one natural landscape that lights up and darkens again after the warning about buried secrets is spoken, Carlo opens with a succession of four landscapes while the narrator gives his interpretation of having luck. (Figure 447) Afterwards the screen turns all white. Clouded grey skies determine the chilly atmosphere of the chosen landscapes. Although the electricity pylons, the road, the planted trees and fields clearly indicate human activity, there are no people present in these images.

Throughout Carlo, the camera is mainly at a low position filming upwards, making the environment more threatening, except for a scene during the final sequence in which the criminals prepare Carlo's burial. Set between the trees in a forest, the camera registers an overview of the situation from a birds-eye position: the gangsters moving around a rectangular hole, an old bath tub and the cows as witnesses between the trees. After the kill shot is fired, the camera switches back to a low angle position and displays the departure of the cows between the trees as the end of the movie. (Figure 448)

The forest has also a prominent role in **Kid**. The boy as well as the movie, spends a lot of time in open spaces. His territory consists of the farm and its fields, the football field, the parking lot of the supermarket and especially the forest. These are the places where Kid passes on his way from school, plays with friends, and hangs around according to his own intuition and desire.

In particular the forest is the place where Kid finds himself at ease and safe. This is the space where he can wander around freely, eat his candy undisturbed, or find comfort after being punished. (Figure 449) The forest is also the place where he connects with his mother. In the final scene of **Kid**, the forest is the place where the boy is re-united with his mother after both of them have died. (Figure 450) Earlier on in the movie, Kid made his mother promise to meet at this spot in the wood after he had lost her. In this way, the forest, as a comfortable place, is represented as the counterpart of the house where tensions and (financial) burdens prevail.

Before the death of his mother, Kid spends a lot of time alone in the forest. However, after the fatal shootout, Kid seems to have lost not only his mother but also this freedom. From that occasion onwards, he is accompanied in the forest: by classmates during gym course, by his uncle or his brother and even his father turned up and spends an afternoon with the boys in and around the wood. It is only in the forest that the camera moves along with Kid, which contrasts with the static camera of the other scenes.

Figure 4.47

Carlo
still 00:00:04
still 00:00:12
still 00:00:18
still 00:00:26

As previously noted, when Shay moves from Australia to Belgium in **Above Us All,** a comparable restriction of freedom occurs. The expansive natural vistas of Australia reflect her abundant opportunities to move around freely, whereas in Belgium, a sense of confinement is experienced and even amplified by the portrayed landscapes. Especially the frequent sights of overcast, grey skies captured with the horizon high in the frame impart an added sense of seclusion even to the natural scenery. (Figure 451) Traces in the landscape of the First World War, such as craters resulting from bomb impacts or trenches in the woods, further contribute to this atmosphere. Obviously, the panoramas created by the slow 360-degree pans, emphasize how this imprisoned feeling is all around.

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Both *Violet* and *Fucking Suburbia* have, next to their predominant subur-
ban setting, a scene set in a forest. In both cases it concerns of a part of the
wood that is portrayed as a place of teenagers, where they are not bound by
the adult society. However, in this natural landscape**,** *Violet* as well as *Fucking
Suburbia* expose the struggles and difficulties these youngsters experience in
finding their place.

The sixteen-year-old brother is the one that retreats with his girlfriend in
the forest in *Fucking Suburbia.* The short scene portrays the two sitting next to
each other in silence. (Figure 452)

In *Violet* the forest is the setting for a sequence, rather central in the
movie, that marks the transition between the sequences that concern the initial
reaction of Jesse and his environment and the start of coping the tragic event. In
this setting, a track in the wood allows the BMX-crew to fly in the air. Between
the green treetops, a low positioned camera catches them shooting upwards
when they make their aerial tricks. (Figure 453) When the camera pans the
circle of youngsters as they discuss their jumps, Jesse seems part of this gang.
The circular camera movement creates the impression Jesse is one of them.
But when Jesse is called a coward by another biker just a little later, he is exclu-
ded from the group. Subsequently the guy tells him he's not welcome any more.

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

4.2 Agricultural landscape

Professional agriculture and horticulture covers almost half of the land in Flanders (about 45%)[15], which makes agriculture a major operator in and manager of open space. Until recently, agriculture not only shaped open space, but also served as the main guardian to keep spaces 'open'. However, this professional agriculture is more and more intensified and therewith taking up ever more industrial appearances. This leads to a 'new rurality' of the countryside (Halfacree, 2017; Vanneste et al., 2023), meaning that the countryside gets more and more urban characteristics with the following features.

Firstly, the number of agricultural holdings shows a declining trend. Since 2001, an average of 936 Flemish farmers ceases their activities each year. From the 39.276 holdings in agriculture and horticulture in 2001, only 23.361 were still active in 2019 (Claeys & Windekens, 2021, p. 22). This decrease of 40% is due to an over intensification of the agricultural production, but also to aging population of farmers that retire and stop their activities on predominantly small farms. As a result, the remaining farms scale up, which goes hand in hand with new technological production developments, meaning further mechanization, industrialization and specialization. Eventually this evolution results in further 'ruralization' of the countryside along with fewer farmers to 'defend' open space as such.

Secondly, crises such as foot-and-mouth disease, dioxin, swine fever, bird flu, droughts, etc. and recently the nitrogen problems expose the vulnerability of the sector and raise new questions on the future of agriculture, the guardian of the original landscapes (Jackson, 1984; Thompson, 1995). With 80 percent of Natura-2000 areas in Flanders suffering from excessive nitrogen pressure, each farm was given a color code indicating whether the farm should stop (red), not expand (orange) or might continue (green). This further encourages farmers to invest in techniques that reduce nitrogen emissions, which in turn leads to intensive livestock farming with fewer farmers and an industrial, urbanized outlook.

Thirdly, relatively recent public attention for climate change raised the awareness of biodiversity loss by agricultural production and initiated a shift to land sharing (Coetzer et al., 2019; Kremen, 2015). In a land sharing system agricultural land and natural elements are no longer regarded as opposites, but function together in an integrated system. More organic and agroforestry land-sharing-based farms shift away from the use of chemicals (fertilizers, pesticides, etc.) with plots of land that are much higher in diversity. In terms of agricultural output, however, a bigger plot of land is required to obtain the level of productivity and profit of a land-sparing farm; and subsequently change the more diverging outlook of Flemish open space profoundly.

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING
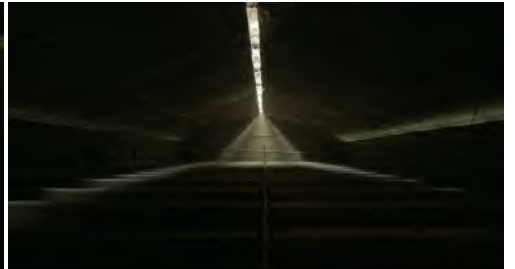
Both *Bullhead* and *Kid* have opening scenes that explicitly situate the narrative in an agricultural setting. The protagonists of these two movies are raised on a farmstead where animals are bred, a piggery in the case of *Kid* and the family cow farm where Jacky lives and works in *Bullhead*. The two movies depict a context that illustrates the challenges of sustaining the farm's operational activities.

The first shot in the establishing sequence of Kid portrays an old-fashioned painting of a farm. This object immediately sets the tone and atmosphere of the movie and is followed by three other static long takes of objects in the farmhouse. The introduction concludes with zooming in on the farm itself. After an extreme long shot of a tractor riding towards the farm, a young adult and the two kids get out of the tractor and enter the pigsty. (Figure 454) Two dark images portray the interior of the pigsty, one focusing on the pigs and one showing the architecture of the stable with the even arrangement of half-height partition walls and light entering through the ridge. (Figure 455) No word is spoken during the entire sequence, there are only monotone, rather somberly sounds of an organ that are gradually supplemented with church bells and the sound of the tractor. In the pigsty the sound of the pigs replaces the church bells and tractor engine. The slow pace of the images in combination with these specific sounds reinforces the gloomy atmosphere.

When Jacky is introduced in *Bullhead*, right after the warning about buried secrets is outspoken, he arrives by car on a country road cutting through fields in a landscape bordered with the wall of a cemetery at the horizon. (Figure 456) Also this scene is supported only by a monotonous, menacing sound. He approaches a neighboring farmer and compels him to sell his cattle exclusively to Jacky's uncle. The threat is visually enforced by the imposing physique of Jacky, filmed from below, and the secluded feel at the farm's courtyard. Pushed back against his tractor, the farmer can't move and there is no one around, there are only his cows in the open stable in the background. As Jacky walks away from the scene, the way his figure with broad shoulders fills almost the entire screen underlines his dominance. The tone is set, Jacky's family, for whom the use of illegal growth hormones to make their cows grow and fatten faster appears to be common practice, seems to have some influence in the region. These hormones define the profitability of the farm, and on top of that they guarantee Jacky's personal masculinity.

The question of viability of the pig farm in *Kid* also overshadows the events during the first part of the movie. A conversation in the bank elucidates that the mother is grappling with significant debt. As the movie progresses, the animals are deported from the already desolate farm, the mother receives a warning from a financial advisor, and the pressure to settle her obligations rises palpably.

Figure 4.54
KID – still 00:02:39

Figure 4.55
KID – still 00:03:14 – still 00:03:18

Figure 4.56
Bullhead – still 00:02:06

Next to the scenes that take place in these specific farm environments, where the underlying theme of peasants' survival strategies becomes evident, both films incorporate a myriad of images referring to agriculture more subtly. Through the depiction of certain landscapes or background elements intricately linked with farming, a prevailing agricultural context is established. For instance, many of the seemingly natural grass fields in *Bullhead* are in fact cultivated land. These are the fields in the forefront of the transition images between different sequences. (Figure 457) Similarly, *Kid* exposes this almost inherent agricultural presence. Several scenes depict Kid in the vicinity of agricultural fields, walking through them or observing the huge machinery tending the land. (Figure 458) All these scenes exude a tranquil and harmonious ambiance. This tranquility is also mirrored in the scene in which Kid and his brother are joined by their mother outdoors. They approach through the field, finding a quiet spot underneath a tree. (Figure 459) In contrast to the household, where familial dynamics are often fraught with tension, with the kids shouting or teasing one another, this natural place, surrounded by fields and the forest in the background, exudes an atmosphere of serenity. Here, the family seems unburdened by their worries and preoccupations, allowing for a more harmonious sense of togetherness to prevail.

It is remarkable how the movies in this selection portray agriculture as an evident presence in the landscape. Just like the planted crops in *Bullhead* and *Kid*, there is the field behind the garden shed in *Fucking Suburbia* (Figure 460) or the rows of trees in the fruit plantation where Carlo tries to escape his destiny (Figure 461). By employing the documentary-style, everyday sceneries that are portrayed in *Above Us All* register seemingly random events, the many agricultural elements appear as seamlessly integrated within the landscape. This is also the case for the scene with the hot-air balloon: apart from the ascending balloon and the kids running and waving in its tracks, seemingly nothing happens, while in fact a multitude of ongoing things are caught. (Figure 462) Shay passes a war memorial monument, in the background there is a small village, a church tower, and even a group of cyclists pass by, but there is also a farmer working on his land. In another scene Shay and two boys are playing with a metal detector and digging up stuff on a piece of farmland, while also in this case the farmer is working on it with his tractor. As the camera completes its 360 degree rotation also the cows, onlooking of the whole event from the adjacent ground, enter the image. The rotating camera provides a comprehensive view of the space, which also demonstrates how the agricultural presence is all around.

Figure 4.60
Fucking Suburbia – still 00:02:27

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING
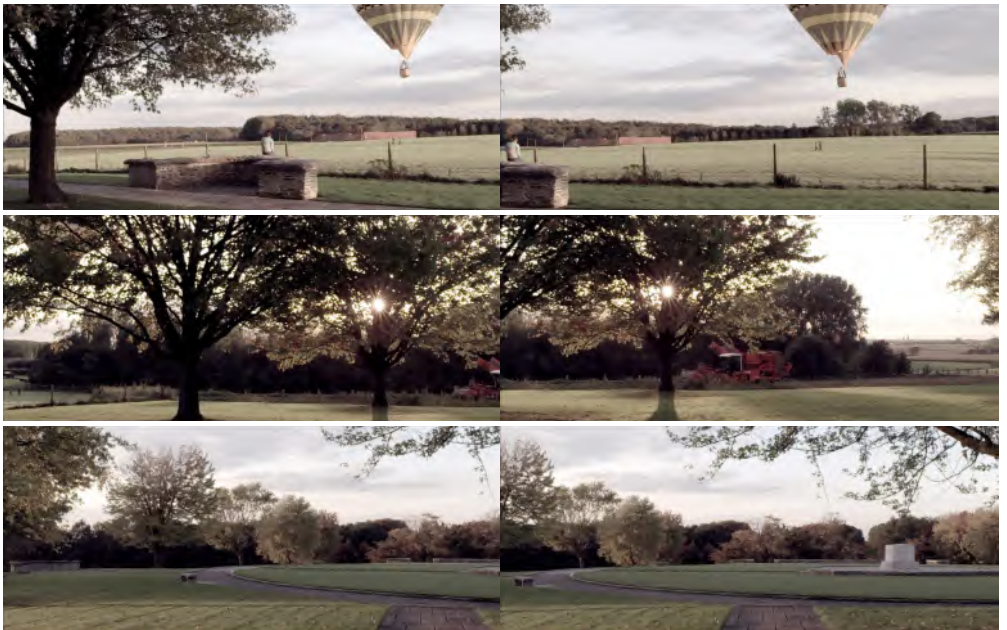
Figure 4.61
Carlo – still 00:13:38

4.3 Hybrid landscapes

In the morphological analysis of open spaces that appear in the selection of films, a third category of open space emerges, namely hybrid landscapes. Hybrid landscapes are territories where urban and rural realms merge, resulting in types of space that fall outside the conventional categorization of natural or agricultural landscapes. Shaped to a greater or lesser extent by human intervention, these landscapes are characterized by the coexistence of urban, suburban and natural elements. The significance of hybrid landscapes for cultural heritage, their aesthetic value, and recreational opportunities are often less recognized compared to natural or agricultural landscapes. Nevertheless, as public spaces these often function as meeting places, capable of fostering social cohesion and community engagement.

Phenomena such as garden sprawl, booming horse industry (the so called *horsification*), etc. are examples of these transformations of open spaces into hybrid landscapes. But also other functions balance on the edge of being defined as open space. As a result, also paved surfaces increase and the remaining open spaces become more fragmented. This undermines primarily the ecological sustainability and the conservation of biodiversity. Nonetheless, these landscapes play a crucial role in enhancing recreational experiences. It is this social value that directors acknowledge and emphasize by portraying these hybrid landscapes as the setting of meeting places.

The specific way of filming with a 360 degrees rotating camera, employed in *Above Us All*, seems the exquisite way to capture hybrid landscapes. The documentary-style scenes register how human activity meets the environment. A returning location is the wood with trenches which meander between the trees. (Figure 463) Another example of hybrid landscapes can be found in the scene of *Above Us All* in which lawnmowers crisscross the graveyard. (Figure 464) The rigidly planned place and expected tranquility of such a cemetery, contrasts with the chaos created by the lawnmowers and the noise they produce. Other scenes are likewise located on the fringe between urban and natural areas, like the community party on a paved plot adjacent to a big hall. (Figure 465) The rotating

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Figure 4.64
Above Us All
still 00:30:46
still 00:30:59
still 00:31:03

Figure 4.65
Above Us All
still 00:33:52
still 00:34:47
still 00:35:03

camera shows the undefined natural hinterland twice, in the beginning and at the end of the rotation, while the arterial road that bounds the plot on the opposite side appears halfway the circular camera movement. Shay does not want to take part in the festivities and after a discussion with her father she eventually walks away on the trodden path that leads into the green hinterland.

In the movies *Bullhead* and *Fucking suburbia*, these hybrid landscapes are linked with sport. The harness-racing stadium in *Bullhead* serves as the place where hormone dealing mafiosi discretely and undisturbed try to set up a new connection with a cattle trader from another part of the country. The setting is introduced by an image framed by a window wall, shot from inside looking on the green of the track, and only accompanied by the sound of a trampling horse running by on the track. The viewpoint soon shifts to the edge of the track, where a conversation between three obscure figures, filmed in close-up with a camera positioned behind these men, makes this new connection concrete. Once the name Jacky Vanmarsenille is dropped, the image looking through the glazed wall returns on screen. This time the glassed sliding doors open, announcing Jacky's arrival. (Figure 466) The latter's back is shot in close-up, again his wide shoulders fill almost the whole frame. As Jacky and his veterinarian approach, a couple of extreme long shots portray the area of the horse race track. The entire scene offers a visual counterpoint to the enclosed and dark spaces on the farm that preceded. Even when the whole company moves to the restaurant and gets seated at a table, the open of the view is guaranteed by the big window wall in front of which the table is positioned. Regardless the grey and clouded sky, the overall impression of light and openness contrasts in particular with the gloomy atmosphere in which Jacky is generally depicted in.

WEST-VLAANDEREN, BELGIË

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

The short film **Fucking Suburbia** portrays how a group of teenagers gathers at the football field. As the camera pans from one goalpost to the other across the empty football field, the setting of their hangout spot is established. (Figure 467) Meanwhile, the suburban houses in the background on one side of the field, the trees that line the length of the field, the weathered and half-demolished advertising panel and finally also the dilapidated cafeteria-building with six youngsters in its shadow pass in the picture. The sound is that of the rattling engine of a moped. Then the focus is on the sixteen-year-old brother, sitting with the other teenagers on a bench. They do not speak to each other, just wait for time to pass. Their silence is stressed by the length of the scene, which takes about one minute, in combination with the bright sunlight that expresses the oppressive heat and the emptiness of the environment.

Similarly, teenagers and children seem to be the ones who frequent the hybrid landscapes in the movies **Violet**, **Kid** and **Home**. In all three cases, it concerns spaces characterized by concrete surfaces and human interventions. Nevertheless, these places are perceived and experienced as open areas due to their primary use as places for recreation and social interactions.

At the skate-park in the movie **Violet**, Jesse tries to pick up his life by joining the bmx-crew. The sequence begins with a close-up of a coffin-shaped opening in the concrete ramp, offering a glimpse into the wilderness behind this construction. Only the howling of the wind is audible until a boy on a bike enters the image and carefully maneuvers around the whole and the scuffing sound of his bicycle on the concrete is added. After another boy makes the same move around the opening, the camera zooms in on the concrete surface, capturing the fleeting shadows of the boys as they descend a slope one by one. Then the image switches to an image that is filled with the grey concrete landscape, as if it is an abstract painting of snow-covered mountains. The bikers then cross the image, gliding and jumping over the slopes. (Figure 468) After that, the horizon re-enters the frame, portraying Jesse in the company of his friends at the top of a half-pipe, while the sound remains confined to the immediate vicinity. The boys watch the moves and tricks of their peers. This quiet atmosphere provides a moment of relieve for Jesse, a moment without being questioned. However, this is abruptly interrupted when Jesse is confronted by a small boy holding a photo of Jonas' lifeless body, which circulates on the internet. Jesse channels his frustration by taking it out on his bike, venting his emotions through each forceful strike. Despite the lack of words exchanged, his friends stand by him, offering silent support, eventually succeeding in soothing his agitated state. United, they gather around a roaring bonfire, finding solace in each other's company.

In both of Fien Troch's selected films, **Kid** and **Home**, the parking of a big supermarket plays an important role as the gathering and hangout space of the

Figure 4.68
Violet
still 00:48:50 – still 00:48:56
still 00:49:09 – still 00:49:16
still 00:49:21 – still 00:49:40

kids. In Home, teenagers loiter around the parking area, enjoying each other's company and their momentarily freedom. (Figure 469) Here they drink, skate, smoke and dance undisturbed. The aspect ratio of these scenes shifts from 4:3 to the format of a smartphone lens. The way they appropriate this place is therewith translated to the impression of control over the imagery. This shift in framing conveys a sense of ownership and control over the imagery, reflecting how the characters assert their presence and influence in the depicted space.

For Kid and his friend, the grey, concrete expanse of the parking lot serves as their playground. The space is depicted from two vantage points: one directly facing the supermarket's facade with a line of shopping carts in front, and another with the facade on the left, revealing a landscape in the distance. (Figure 470) Here, they linger, occasionally disrupting a man working in a cabin, pleading for money to purchase candy, or finding their perch on a concrete block at the base of a lamppost. From this spot, they watch as a pimped car blaring loud music makes its exit from the parking lot. These scenes are captured through long shots and extreme long shots, underscoring the emptiness of the parking lot.
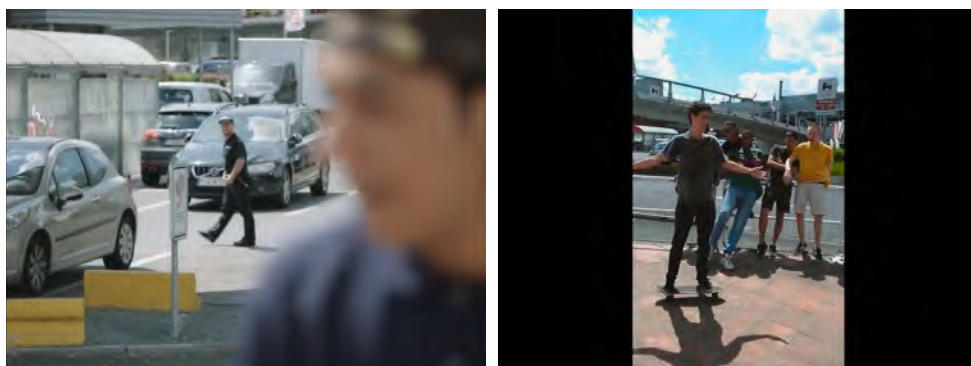
Figure 4.69
Home
still 00:05:57 – still 00:06:48

Figure 4.70

KID – still 00:47:51 – still 00:48:31

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

5. In Between Discussion & Conclusion about Reading

The selection of contemporary Flemish fiction films analyzed in this study provides an exploration of urbanized spaces in Flanders, encompassing motorway spaces, suburban settings and open spaces. While mainstream Flemish cinema has predominantly focused on city centers or villages, a select few films in recent years have specifically situated their stories in peri-urban areas, echoing Giedion's concept of the 'inventory of the everyday'. The cinematic representations in this selection offer a perspective on the everyday use and experience of these spaces. Their role in the narrative and visual composition of the films highlights the significance of these places for daily routines, recreation, possible escape, aligning with Giedion's idea that cinema can capture the rhythms of modern life and the experience of contemporary spaces.

It is remarkable that only in the films *Bullhead, Carlo* and *Above Us All* the location is specified. The area of the language border, between Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia, in Limburg is the main setting of both *Bullhead* and *Carlo*. Not only linguistic but also cultural differences on both sides of this divide are part of the backdrop in these films, both directed by Michaël R. Roskam. For both films, this cultural aspect helps to enrich the overall atmosphere and authenticity. Similarly, the backdrop of Ypres and its specific environment infused with memories of death from World War I, in *Above Us All* impacts the family's adjustment to the mother's death.

The other films of this selection do not explicitly pinpoint their exact filming locations but rely on generic, everyday spaces such as suburban neighborhoods and the spaces along arterial roads to convey their narratives. While the setting is undoubtedly relevant, it is presented in a more universal manner. In *Violet* and *Fucking Suburbia*, for instance, the focus lies on the essence of suburban neighborhoods, and *Steve+Sky* encapsulates the sum and substance of arterial roads rather than emphasizing any specific locality. By portraying them as a generic representation that could apply to various locations across Flanders, the films tap into a broader commentary on the experience within these environments, rather than emphasizing specific geographical locations. Notably, seemingly trivial spaces like brothels and parking lots hold significant importance in the lives of these protagonists, thus playing a crucial role in driving the narratives forward. In this way, the films serve as a reflection of the broader societal and cultural dynamics that occur within these spaces, offering viewers a window into the lives of the protagonists and the challenges they face within these everyday environments. Moreover, by focusing on specific groups within society, all

the films in this selection convey the significance these seemingly commonplace spaces hold for certain age-groups or (sub)cultures. Mainly youth are captured in their everyday experiences and interactions and their relation to spaces.

Van Groeningen centers the narrative of his movie *Steve+Sky* on a very specific (sub)culture on the fringes of society. The environment of an arterial road defines a world of bars, prostitution and small criminality. The road itself is not reduced to a traffic place, but is even showcased as a domestic place. Furthermore, the environment's imagination also mirrors the protagonists' state of mind and challenges the conventional notion of the road as a symbol of boundless freedom. *Steve+Sky* depicts marginalized youth who struggle to realize a normative coming-of-age experience, stuck in the limbo between adolescence and adulthood much in the same way they find themselves stuck in these liminal roadside environments between cities, experiencing the road as a fixture of their existence rather than a path from one position to another (ideally more secure) position. The protagonists find provisional domesticity within these roadside and transient unhomely spaces (brothels, gas stations, bowling), which are a constant presence in the character's underground lifestyles. By situating the love story entirely along such a regional road, and also from the poetical images of the film, *Steve+Sky* unveils an appreciation for this colourful neon lighted environment.

Similarly, also the suburban neighborhoods are esthetically portrayed in this selection of films. With long takes, the camera navigates through the streets, captures particular stylized frontal views on facades or focusses on interior atmospheres. In this use of long takes reflects André Bazin's concept of cinematic realism is recognized. Bazin believed that long takes, by allowing scenes to unfold without the interruption of editing, more closely mimic the continuity of real life and thereby preserve the spatial and temporal unity of the scenes. In these Flemish films, long takes serve to immerse the viewer in the suburban environment, allowing the camera to linger on the empty streets or the interiors of houses in a way that emphasizes their realism and the everyday. This technique aligns with Bazin's belief in the power of cinema to capture reality, offering the audience a more direct, unmediated experience of the world within the film. The portrayal of suburban streets in these films defies conventional expectations. Instead of scenes with children playing on the streets, the portrayed suburban streets are predominantly empty, exuding at times even a deserted impression. Moreover, *Fucking Suburbia* presents a surreal representation when adults populate the streets in the scene with the ice-cream car. Scenes in which teenagers in *Violet* and *Fucking Suburbia* move through the streets don't evoke such an extraordinary portrayal.

The represented facades reinforce the focus on the single-family house. With a static camera, individual houses are singled out. Additionally, the interior spaces within suburban homes play a crucial role in shaping the atmosphere and mood of the films. The interiors reflect the personalities and situations of the characters, providing insight into their experiences within the suburban environment. From the spacious yet impersonal interiors of *Kid* to the claustrophobic feel of the family houses in *Home*, the films utilize interior spaces to convey the emotional and social dynamics of the characters. This technique aligns with Marks' theory of haptic visuality, where close-ups and textured visuals invite a tactile engagement with the image, encouraging viewers to 'feel' the space rather than just observe it. The physicality of these spaces becomes almost palpable, drawing viewers into the characters' lived experiences within these suburban settings and deepening their emotional connection to the environments that shape the characters' lives. Finally, the teenagers in *Violet* as well as those of *Fucking suburbia* and *Home*, frequent outdoor spaces on the fringes of suburbia. The skate park, the woods, the edge of the football field and even the parking lot of the supermarket are places of the teenagers, where they are not bound by adult society.

Suchlike outdoor spaces on the urban fringe, characterized by the merging of urban, suburban and natural elements, is exactly what stands out in the representation of open spaces in this film selection. Although there is a common connotation of open space with natural landscapes, comparable to the persistent idealized image of the suburban ideal, the cinematic representation of open spaces goes beyond this archetypical or nostalgic image. The natural landscapes in the film all contain traces of human interventions, ranging from for instance planted trees in *Kid* and *Carlo*, to the craters resulting from bomb impacts in *Above Us All*. The films Bullhead, *Kid* and *Above Us All* make clear how especially the agricultural context is integrated in, and an important determinant of open space. Moreover, these films depict the challenges faced by farmers and the intricate connection between agriculture and our everyday environment.

Through the intrusion of human artefacts and urban elements, open spaces are transformed to a greater or lesser extend in cultural landscapes. The most extreme examples are places like the parking lot of the supermarket in *Kid* or the horse track in *Bullhead*. Regardless their less natural condition, these places on the urban fringe offer recreation and freedom that characterize open spaces. The films *Above Us All* and *Kid*, but also *Fucking Suburbia*, *Violet* and *Home*, capture these hybrid spaces as hubs for social interactions, particularly among adolescents. By doing so the conventional definition of open space, as unbuilt, non-sealed land, is challenged. These spaces, often overlooked in terms of cultural heritage and ecological significance, are represented as vital meeting places.

In conclusion, the contemporary Flemish fiction films examined in this study offer a multifaceted view on the urbanized spaces of Flanders, ranging from motorway spaces to suburban neighborhoods and open spaces By deliberately focusing on these peri-urban areas, a major part of the screen time is dedicated to scenes set in such places, these films draw the attention to these often overlooked spaces. Moreover, the explicit esthetic portrayal challenges conventional expectations, consider the colorful lighted roadscapes, surrealistic suburban streets or cultural landscapes, and provides insight into the characters' experiences within these spaces.

Furthermore, the films in this selection focus on specific age-groups or subcultures, particularly youth, capturing their everyday experiences and interactions within these environments. Their experiences and emotions are supported, mirrored and at times even enlarged by the spatial portrayal.

The films highlight the importance of these spaces in the everyday. Places on the urban fringe for instance, offer vital recreation and freedom, serving as hubs for social interactions, particularly among adolescents. Or the intricate connection between agriculture and open space in our everyday environment sheds light on the challenges faced by farmers. By incorporating how human interventions and urban elements are integrated in open spaces, the films stand out in their nuanced depiction going beyond the archetypical representations that have been imprinted in our (collective) memory and succeed in catching the hybrid reality of Flemish landscapes.

In essence, this selection of Flemish films served as an exploration of the complex relationship between individuals and their urbanized surroundings, providing viewers with a lens through which to examine the significance of these spaces in our daily lives. However, we have to take into account that these films are not mere representations or documentation, but they also serve as reflective portrayals, presenting the directors' perspective. It is essential to consider that these are subjective depictions, reflections of the filmmakers' impressions. These imaginations reveal what the directors and filmmakers want to show and what they want the audience to perceive and believe. The directors decide on what to include or exclude from the frame, therewith they present a partial and fragmentary view. Rather than being a drawback, this serves as a factor to bear in mind when considering these cinematic representations. Consequently, it is imperative to trace their decisions throughout the creative process. Therefore, the next chapter includes interviews with the directors as part of the investigation of the socio-cultural reflections in these films.

THE ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRUCTS OF URBAN LANDSCAPES IN FILM

1. Introduction:
film as a social construct

In the previous chapter filmic representations of the Flemish urbanized landscape were analyzed by focusing on spatial-morphological themes. Regarding and analyzing film as a reading device documented certain everyday spaces, otherwise often overlooked, and its importance and significance for specific age-groups or subcultures. However, films are not merely a representational or documenting medium, but films are also highly reflective in the sense that they articulate a specific view on cultural concepts in the sphere of the everyday. As a social construct, cinematic narratives contain reflections on the experience and connotations of places that can give us insight in Lefebvre's lived space.

This chapter aims to answer the second research question: *what (new) knowledge of Flemish urban culture is offered by this cinematic perception?* Therefore, this second part of the study explores the social construction and reflection of films by investigating the used (inter)subjective expressions of spatio--sociocultural themes. Based on the analysis of the spatial representations of the previous part, this chapter examines socio-cultural themes of the narratives in relation to stylistic effects provoked by employing montage, editing of lighting, color, sound, optics, and so on. By interviewing the director of each film on the choices in the process of filmmaking, the intentions of, and perspectives on these imagined spaces will be revealed.

2. Shot on location

Film locations are a crucial aspect in shaping the visual language and narrative elements of a film. Especially when films are shot in real locations, rather than on studio sets, these settings can enhance the authenticity of a story and add socio-cultural aspects. With the exception of the scenes in prison in *Steve+Sky*, all the selected films were shot on location. Thus, the cultural and historical context of the Flemish urbanized landscape and its significance are essential components of the storytelling in these films.

There are several considerations that combine to determine a film location, of which visual aesthetics, cultural context, economics, feasibility (accessibility, lighting, sound, etc.) and logistics might be the most decisive ones. The careful selection of locations is therefore a pivotal step in the filmmaking process. In big film productions, it is common to work with location scouts who provide potentially useful and viable location options based on the general scenery requirements described by the scriptwriters, producer and/or director. In case of the analyzed films, only Felix Van Groeningen worked with a location scout for *Steve+Sky*. For him, the suggestions of the location scout function as "a dropbox full of pictures of things" to rely on when he is puzzling together his film in the preparation phase.

The other interviewed directors did the search for film locations for the movies in this selection themselves, there was no location scout involved. Bas Devos mentions how he prefers to go looking for locations himself: "Preferably I just do that myself. I think that's a lot of fun and a good way to also just shape your film."[16] As a matter of fact, the interviews revealed two distinct approaches to find film locations: the most common way is a predominantly visual and aesthetic search based on an image and atmosphere the director has in mind, while the other approach starts and sets up a film from a specific location the director is familiar with.

The central theme of grief played a pivotal role in Eugenie Jansen's decision to choose the setting of *Above Us All.* The director sought a place of remembrance for this film, for which Ypres and its surroundings, a landscape deeply intertwined with the omnipresence of the World War and its reminders, emerged as a natural choice. Both the physical and mental landscape in Ypres are saturated with the echoes of war. The numerous cemeteries, bunkers, craters and other tangible remnants are a vivid and integral aspect of the everyday, the local culture and identity, commemorated through social mourning by rituals such as the Last Post, the poppies, crosses and the preservation in museums. The commemoration of the war is in that region a constant presence in the consciousness of its inhabitants. Together with the some basic concepts and the

16.
Translated from Dutch,
interview with Bas Devos
on 24.08.2021

people acting in the film, the location is one of the few elements that Jansen determines before she starts filming. Jansen creates conditions instead of meticulously planning everything, which allows her to embrace coincidence into the process. The film develops itself and unexpected things emerge, surpassing her initial thoughts. "And which are often even more beautiful, than what you could have conceived yourself."[17] Moreover, this approach also allows room for the audience to interpret and engage with the unfolding story.

The Flemish directors are more familiar with the landscape and its particular locations, resulting from a deep connection to the places they grew up, and often also hark back to the landscapes of their youth. This personal knowledge resonates on both the visual and sentimental levels in their films, embodying a nuanced understanding of the cultural and geographical nuances that shape the backdrop of their stories.

The spaces depicted in the film *Violet*, primarily the suburban neighborhood, are heavily influenced by the mental and physical landscapes of director Bas Devos's youth. Devos describes Violet as a meticulously "constructed, fictional mental space (...) a kind of cinematic bubble, with the least (of all the films he made) connection to the political reality of our world."[18] The film unfolds within a confined universe, and even its narrative, although very small, remains self-referential. As a result, Devos started from a preconceived image and focused on a pursuit of aesthetics. The quest for visually striking locations that aligned with his envisioned imagery proved exceptionally demanding:

> I was just sitting at my desk and I was imagining, fantasizing and that is a mixture of undoubtedly memories, and memories of the neighborhoods in which that I grew up. And then actually wanting to make those somehow, cinematic. And that is extremely confrontational because our Flemish neighborhoods are not cinematic. There are some, but you really have to search. (...) I had an image, a kind of romantic image of what that would be like and then, when I tried to find it in reality, I was shocked that it was difficult. (...) I also had a lot of demands. In fact, I wanted to be able to go with a camera from inside a house, all the way outside through a neighborhood and preferably not see anything that would shock me, aesthetically.[19]

Rather than starting from an aesthetic youth memory of certain places, Michaël R. Roskam, educated as an artistic painter, regards the Flemish landscapes as complex and inspirational spaces with dramatic possibilities. However, as Roskam grew up in the area where both *Carlo* and *Bullhead* were filmed, he also largely knew the locations of these films in advance. From his youth, he knew the drive-in cinema, the big white screen that appears in the background

when Carlo is running. Two years after **Carlo** was shot, when Roskam checked the place to see what happened to the site after the demolition of the drive--in cinema, he immediately saw the dramatic possibilities because of the elevations that were made:

> And there in the back suddenly unfolded a whole new landscape, with those elevations. Because they had demolished everything and so they had made elevations. These were actually unnatural slopes. And there was this tree right there. And I went to look and I thought: wow, that's for the chase. Because now I can make him run, and that guy below. So you have that shot, and you suddenly see him coming up that mountain. That was flat, that's pure landscaping, nothing natural. But it's all, just grass and trees. And yet it's an artifact. Again. So I … and that gives, gave me a tremendously dramatic opportunity to, yes, make that guy run, disappear behind that line for a moment and then suddenly jump up close on that little boy.[20]

Starting from his ability to recognize dramatic potential, Roskam frames and edits landscapes based on the emotions, meanings and experiences they evoke.

Similarly, and even more fundamentally embedded in their approach, Jeff Otte and Fien Troch started directly from the locations for their films **Fucking Suburbia** and **Kid**. During daily walks in that specific neighborhood of **Fucking Suburbia**, his breaks while working on another film, Otte found inspiration in the surroundings:

> "And then you see, yes, you take something from everything you see (…) And then that setting actually became a character for me."[21]

Fien Troch, for **Kid**, began with the place rather than a story, emphasizing the importance of these locations in shaping the narrative: "Kid started from a place and not from a story. So there was first the place, the locations, which is why they are also so important. (…) Kid really exists because of its locations."[22] The film, deeply rooted in Troch's nostalgic memories of her youth, allows the environment to tell its own story through still photography and the director's perspective. For the director, that nostalgia evokes an eerie (**unheimlich**) feeling, as the memory of that place is defining. "And eerie (unheimlich) in a way, the human aspect because those were all lovely people but very different from where I grew up. But also the eeriness (unheimliche) of those houses and places that were very distant and, yes, as a result very cinematic in my memory."[23] Furthermore, Troch's approach is highly associative, as she connects specific places and

20.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Michaël R. Roskam on 13.06.2022

21.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Jeff Otte on 21.07.20211

22.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Fien Troch on 12.10.2021

23.
Ibidem

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

evocative images, as mentioned drawing primarily from her memories. When Troch envisions these settings, she romanticizes them. It's crucial to note that she regards this romanticizing not as a conventional aesthetic enhancement; instead, she seeks to magnify elements, rendering them more expansive, sardonic, or remote. Troch deliberately avoids portraying the realistic and comfortable middle ground, yet equally refrains from depicting places in an excessively extreme manner. Articulating her perspective, she states: "I'm consistently in pursuit of a certain ugliness; I never romanticize and yet I romanticize everything. And by that I mean, I look for something ugly and the uglier the better.(...) Charm is a facet I always completely avoid in films."[24]

Obviously, the directors acknowledge an evolution in their approaches. Felix Van Groeningen explained how he operates organically and intuitively, initiated by a feeling. He describes a shift in his trajectory: in his earlier years as a filmmaker, he wanted to combine various interests, whereas now, a powerful story and a larger world are fundamental. According to Van Groeningen, he evolved as a more adept storyteller, particularly in the domain of adaptation, with more developed skills and an expanded toolkit.

Bas Devos, who initially placed significant emphasis on the pursuit of aesthetics for his debut film Violet, has diverged from that focal point in his later works. He situates his films more firmly in reality, which is particularly evident in his two following urban-centered productions set in Brussels (*Hellhole*, 2019 and *Ghost Tropic*, 2022). Moreover, starting from and anchoring his films to a specific setting instead of focusing on the aesthetic, has given him greater creative freedom and established a profound connection to the specific settings.

Departing from a visual-centric approach in which the location dictated the narrative, Fien Troch's approach changed during the creation of *Home*, influenced in part by her partner and collaborator Nico Leunen. In her first films, the location dictated the narrative. The director had locations in mind during the writing process, and even adapted the story according to the location. While Troch prioritized the narrative over visual elements during the development process of *Home*. As a result, the screenplay of *Home* stands independently, the locations of this film are in function of, and complementing the storyline: "those places remain important in themselves, but it has simply become the next step."[25] Notably, *Home* was based on true events. Although the visual is less pronounced in Home, the locations and their atmosphere remain of paramount significance in Troch's films.

Finally, it is important to recognize that, even when films are shot on location, the director may modify these settings to a greater of lesser extent. This may involve manipulating elements, such as removing or adding items or even

[24]
Ibidem

[25]
Ibidem

creating specific weather conditions like rain or thunderstorms, to align with the director's envisioned backdrop. However, both Fien Troch and Eugenie Jansen underscored in the interviews their premise of minimal intervention in the films *Home* and *Above Us All*. Jansen explained how the spaces in the film remain unaltered, the starting point was to work with what is present. "Except for the attic room at the bed and breakfast, which we decorated. (...) there are things that were there already, so we put some beds in between."[26] Similarly, Fien Troch emphasized how they choose not to intervene or enhance any aspect, exterior nor interior, when filming *Home*. The idea was to capture the chosen settings as they are, without modifications, as she explains for the selected central house: "there is nothing, not even anything moved there, the only thing we were allowed to do was to take away pictures because otherwise it would be weird that other family pictures were hanging there. And not as a kind of dogma, but more as the freedom that we wanted to film and we tackled the thing."[29] The same philosophy extended to the weather, where no interventions occurred: "the weather it was. And if it started raining in the scene, it just started raining."[28]

26.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Eugenie Jansen on 02.11.2022

27.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Fien Troch on 12.10.2021

28.
Ibidem

3. Motorway spaces

The previous chapter describes how motorway spaces are represented in the selected films through the depiction of actions on the road itself and the portrayal of its roadside developments. Contrary to a mere conduit for traffic, these motorway spaces emerge in the narratives as liminal spaces where the protagonists find themselves stuck. The various elements of the motorway environment, including brothels, restaurants, gas stations, stores, parking lots, are uniformly represented, characterizing these environments as a no-man's land. This theme is predominantly present in *Steve+Sky,* but extends to scenes in the films *Carlo*, *Bullhead* and *Home*. Next to the no-man's land narrative, the representation of the arterial roads elucidates also a narrative of connection. The deliberate framing of these spaces in combination with the different storylines emphasize the interconnected nature of the depicted functions, both formally and symbolically, resonating with Kracauer's view of how cinema captures the dynamics of modern life.

3.1 No-mans land

Steve+Sky presents the motorway spaces in which the film unfolds as a generic environment, where a repetition of non-places like gas stations, hotels, clubs, stores, and so on, occupy space. Identifiably inspired by American movies, Van Groeningen sets the narrative of his movie in a spatial environment that although lacking a distinct identity, is strongly defining the specific (sub)cultures that thrive there. This reflects Deleuze's notion of the 'any-space-whatever,' where the motorway becomes an abstract, indeterminate space that symbolizes detachment and ambiguity. It is through this context, as much the location as the social reflections, that the characters' identities are developed.

Van Groeningen underscores the importance of the cinematic space within which his stories unfold, not only displaying profound attention to it, but also meticulously composing this space. For Van Groeningen, this cinematic space serves as a powerful tool to illuminate the character's inner state, either supporting, mirroring or at times even amplifying their experiences and emotions. Through deliberate choices in form, he assembles and contextualizes the spaces in his films, endowing them with meaning. This deliberate focus is present in all his films, albeit for each work in a different manner:

I think that in my films I was very much preoccupied with, well, the space where the film takes place, to assemble that in detail. That that is always something I've found exciting. That's part of film, but I think some directors are much less, yes, concerned with that and more concerned with the story, or atmosphere, or ... That really depends on what that you want to do. But for me, that I found that, yes, actually quite a fun element to play with, (...) to make bigger formal choices about that and in that way compose it and make that fit into your film. And also through that, to give meaning to it. But that was still my first film, so I was still exploring that and then I did that with 'With Friends like these' also in a different way, with all my films in a different way. And so yes, I had this basic story, ... and that seemed to me, yes, a nice way to connect those characters and say something about those places. (...) I am always preoccupied with space, but with the space in which my story takes place.[29]

In the case of **Steve+Sky**, the director's choice of the arterial road and its environment as a setting serves to emphasize the nature of these overlooked or unremarkable places and inhabitants. Van Groeningen acknowledges his fascination with these spaces, describing them as indeterminate places that people pass by or associate with travel. The arterial road becomes a symbol of a no-man's land, a space that, even after passing through, retains a sense of emptiness and detachment. The colors and visual elements in the film are manipulated to make these seemingly unattractive spaces more visually appealing, echoing the aesthetics often found in American films.

You know, it's a, actually when you've driven past there, you have the feeling of it's no man's land and in that movie too, right? That remains that and that's what I find cool about it and indeed the colors and the ... yes, the, yes, uh, ... making something much more attractive, which in itself is not so attractive. A little fair, a little .... (laughs) American film.[30]

The seemingly ordinary locations along the arterial road thus become meaningful, evocative elements in Van Groeningen's portrayal. These places contribute to the development of the characters, the overall atmosphere and are an integral part of the narrative as a symbol of a no-man's land.

Similarly, in the short movie **Carlo** and the scene featuring the arterial road in **Home**, the setting is framed as a a undefined space, laden with gene-

29.
Translated from Dutch,
interview with Felix Van Groeningen
on 25.11.2022

30.
Ibidem

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

ric developments. In the case of **Carlo**, the desolation of the empty road and parking area shapes and accentuates the narrative of this no-man's land. Carlo finds himself left alone with his chasers, in an undefined place devoid of any occupants. While Kevin's solitude in **Home** is likewise stressed by the non-specific, generic environment, even as traffic passes by on the road. The sentiment of Kevin's profound aloneness in the world and non-belonging is emphasized by the fact that he is walking along this road. Although his peers stop to have a quick talk, there is no space for him in their car. The undetermined nature of these spaces contributes to the overarching narrative of a no-man's land.

3.2 Ways of connection

Felix Van Groeningen employs the motorway in **Steve+Sky** as both a formal and symbolic connection within his narrative. Formally, the road serves as a connection, physically knitting the different characters and spaces together. The lives of these characters take place entirely along this specific road at a specific location. This aligns with Deleuze's movement-image, where the road organizes the action and movement within a logical framework.

> I was looking for something more formal to tie things together, whereby that road, well, it literally connected it together. And then you see him driving his motorcycle, you see her walking on it and ... well, and gradually that is how it entered the film, and, for me, in my head and eventually in the film as well, that really became one world.[31]

Symbolically, this colorful neon lighted environment unites the two protagonists in a tender love story. Furthermore, by situating Sky in the brothel's window, in the same way as other commercial displays along the same arterial road showcase lawnmowers, bicycles, furniture, food and other consumption goods, she is portrayed as commodified merchandise. This deliberate placement intertwines Sky also symbolically with her surroundings, together with various other items for sale, she is a part of this (economic) system. Moreover, the music accentuates this interconnection throughout the movie. There is the song **beats of love,** from the Belgian band **Nacht und Nebel**, which Sky sings along on her Walkman on reoccurring moments during the film. There is the dance at the opening of the night club, which is performed by all the girls including Sky with her broken arm. The synchronized choreography on **Rock to the Beat** manifests them as a group. And there is the scene in which Marco Borsato's song **Dromen zijn bedrog** (**dreams are deceiving**) underscores the love between the two characters. These are only the most prominent examples elucidating how the award-

31.
Ibidem

-winning[32] soundtrack, composed by David and Stephen Dewaele aka *2 Many DJ's,* contributes to the narrative of connection in the movie. *Beats of Love* as the subtitle of this film only stresses the importance attributed to the music and this particular song.

In the short film *Carlo*, the road itself is present as a crucial, connecting element. From the opening sequence onwards, the road serves as the backbone throughout this movie. It is the physical setting of defining scenes, such as the meeting place of both the footballers and the gangsters, the location of the warehouse the gangsters planned to rob and the route of the first part of the chase. In other words, the road also symbolically connects Carlo with the gangsters in the narrative and therewith defines his unfortunate destiny. This reflects Heath's notion of narrativization, where the spatial organization and movement within the frame contribute to the overall narrative structure.

4. Suburban spaces

The spatio-morphological analysis of cinematic suburban portrayal focussed mainly on the representation of suburban streets and houses, both in their interior and exterior portrayal. Within this exploration, two interconnected narratives surface, delineating the suburban allotment as a safe and secure place, shielded from external danger, and suburbia embodying a sense of stability. The deliberate portrayal of empty streets, devoid of (heavy) traffic, coupled with the emphasis on the individual houses that encapsulate family lives, contributes to the narrative of safety, and even seclusion. The cinematic techniques, such as long takes, static cameras and stilled images, become integral elements in reinforcing the narrative of stability. These visual choices result in the construction of narratives of safety and stability connected to suburbia.

Obviously, there is a visual and cultural influence of American films, particularly considering suburban settings, that is not to be underestimated. Both Bas Devos and Jeff Otte mention how the American iconography of the neighborhood was one of the factors that determined the choice of location. Their films *Violet* and *Fucking Suburbia* were shot in the same suburban district, dating from the late '70s to mid '80s and characterized by an open and winding street pattern. Otte notes visual elements like the winding streets and one-story houses with flat gabled roofs, which are reminiscent of American suburbs. Especially the absence of tall trees and hedges contributes to an open feel, which is, in combination with the twists and turns in the streets, interesting from a filmic point of view:

> it's quite open and yet closed again ... How the Fleming is (...). And all those curves and those twists and turns. If you have straight lines, you are very limited, you always have one perfect angle in a straight street pattern, whereas here it twists and turns, and you actually get lost in a few hundred square meters. (...) it's a labyrinth.[33]

Similarly, Bas Devos points at the visibility of the houses and front yards in combination with the practicality of filming as other decisive elements of the neighborhood to locate *Violet*. To capture the bmx-riders, a curving street pattern was necessary and the position of the central house had to allow the specific framing as he envisioned it:

33.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Jeff Otte on 21.07.2021

The number of requirements or so that were in my head was totally unrealistic I think. But where I finally ended up, that was the first time where I was like 'ah yes, here's something exciting', because those streets that really gently curve. That was in fact the most decisive thing. Rather than being able to see houses and front yards, those were things that I think I could also give in in my imagination. But, that you had such a gentle curve and then another gentle curve, that was super special about that place. (...) But also with the house. The main character's house where that I wanted to be able to see the neighborhood from inside the house on the one hand. And so I wanted to look out at one or two streets. And which one could also approach with the camera. So that one could feel that house, that one could feel that getting closer, that one could feel that center or so of that movie. (...) So, there is never one, I think, really decisive reason to land somewhere though.[34]

Regardless the American outlook of the neighborhood, there is no uniformity in the buildings as is often the case in American suburbs. Otte recognizes how the typical Flemish freedom in building in the district, the way how every owner appropriates their own house according to their wishes, characterizes it as a Flemish suburban allotment.

Next to the suburban references, Fien Troch and Felix Van Groeningen also mention their fascination for certain places stemming from American movies. The latter was especially inspired by gas stations as undetermined places in American cinema. Fien Troch, associates supermarkets and parking lots with Americanization, viewing them as highly capitalist spaces with a false sense of freedom. Troch's reflections touch on her love-hate relationship with typical American landscapes, revealing the impact of American films on her understanding and perception of cultures, people and emotions:

But I also have a big love-hate relationship anyway with American, typical American landscapes because that's for me also a part of how one sees the world.... I realized very late, that a lot of things that I thought I knew, I knew them from the movies. And knowing cultures, and knowing people, but also a big part of my image of the world, is based on America. Whereas if you then have to discover so little by little, we are not here in America, that it is actually totally different here. (...). And I think from that also comes a kind of projection of, um, actually a sneaky search for something very American in this society. And to me, something very American means something like that, a kind of false freedom and something very capitalistic.[35]

34.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Bas Devos on 24.08.2021.

35.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Fien Troch on 12.10.2021.

4.1 Suburban seclusion

It is remarkable that in all films the suburban space is depicted as safe and secure. Especially in **Violet** and **Fucking Suburbia** the residential area is depicted as a secluded world. In case of the former, the city is associated with violence (the murder of Jonas) while Jesse is surrounded by family solace in the quiet environment of the neighborhood. While **Fucking Suburbia** remains for its entire duration within the suburban neighborhood.

In the interview Bas Devos explained how he evokes these associations and emotions by the specific way he makes movies. Bas Devos regards his films as narrative fiction films, but "they are somewhat on that fringe of what most people would label classic narrative films because they don't really have a classic narrative plot structure but start much more from an emotionality, and from materiality."[36] In this way, using the tools that film offers him, Devos tries to understand something about how people are and how they relate to their environment. In addition to exploring how people relate to the ground on which they exist, their living space, or the place you would claim as home, is also central in his films.

The suburb in **Violet** is in general projected as a quiet place, secluded from the outside world and therefore even turns into a place of isolation and loneliness. The empty streets, where the BMX-riders can ride with four next to each other and can take up the entire width of the street, are devoid of (heavy) traffic or attackers and thus safe. At the same time static camerawork and long shots in which the only sounds are spare environmental noises, accentuate desolation. Moreover, the narrative logic of the film highlights the house of Jesse as the ultimate place where he is safe and protected. In the house he is protected by his parents, even if they can't really reach him, they are there for him. The atmosphere is different when Jesse's group of BMX-friends comes over and takes him for a ride through the suburban streets. Although their visit is meant to support him, meanwhile they take the opportunity to question him: "they come to visit him and they take him and there they actually interrogate him and …. It's more with those guys and with that, to me, narrative logic, like they have questions and they want answers or they look at him in a different way than before or … some are severe with him, some are nice to him, whatever."[37]

The narrative of seclusion is confirmed in the final shot of the movie, in which the big cloud not only closes up the film, but also secludes the neighborhood. In order to create this closing, the director clarified the need to familiarize the audience with the neighborhood throughout the film:

36.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Bas Devos on 24.08.2021

37.
Ibidem

We actually wanted to really go through that neighborhood and we wanted to sort of say goodbye to that film, we also wanted to move away from that character and we wanted that was something which is mystical or I don't really remember what all the thoughts were about that. Then, when I wrote that, I knew like 'ah, I actually do want in the middle of that film, or the beginning of that film, I do want to show that neighborhood already. I want you as a viewer to already have a sense of 'ah yeah, okay.' When you see that at the end, that that's not necessarily new but that you understand that place a little bit. That was definitely something that came into play.[38]

Just like in **Violet**, a desolate impression prevails in the typical and very recognizable allotment of **Fucking Suburbia**. To portray the atmosphere of the suburb, Otte employs stilled images, long shots, and typical sounds of suburban neighborhoods such as barking dogs, roaring mopeds and especially the rythmic lowering of rolling shutters: "This is a very recognizable sound that I heard as a child … I was raised in a neighborhood here uh, two, three kilometers away, and that was especially, for me something summery, at dusk, those shutters being lowered rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr."[39]

Unfolding entirely within the confines of the neighborhood, **Fucking Suburbia** conveys a sentiment of seclusion experienced by the two brothers. As youngsters with nothing to do, the youngest has summer holiday and the eldest is basically waiting for the death of his grandmother, the neighborhood has not much more to offer than boredom. Especially the eldest brother, unwillingly returned to the neighborhood, is portrayed as an outsider that is somehow trapped there. Symbolically, he tears down the shed in the garden as a way to break out, the field behind it gives him space and air. The scene with the girl cycling through the neighborhood at dusk somehow accentuates this disconnection by the juxtaposition of normally shuttered streets suddenly populated by pajama-wearing inhabitants. Otte exaggerated this scene to underline the estranging effect of what seems like a normal ritual to the participants: "We put too many extras there so that one thinks a UFO has landed here (…) you magnify it a little bit and I thought it was really cool to see how people laughed so hard with it at the visions."[40] The scene was inspired by a similar scene Otte experienced himself as he cycled home in the evening when he was young: "and in the neighborhood where normally all the shutters have been closed for a long time, suddenly there were all these people in their pajamas on the corner of a street, staring into the distance. I thought, what is this? (…) And then around the corner you could see them standing, oh …"[41]

38.
Ibidem
.
39.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Jeff Otte on 21.07.2021
40.
Ibidem.
41.
Ibidem

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

The narrative of seclusion in the films of Fien Troch is centered on the individual house, rather than the suburban neighborhood. In *Home*, Kevin is received with care and love by his aunt, but this is restricted. For the aunt this affection should be confined to a designated space, translating how she wants control. Therefore, in her opinion, Kevin should remain a vulnerable boy without a voice or opinion. This limitation is symbolized by the choice of the basement as Kevin's living space. A place with only a small window in the height near the ceiling, reminiscent of a prison window. As Troch explains the narrative: "Kevin is taken care of and is given also love. But he has to stay where he belongs according to that mother. That mama will never say: you belong in the basement, but he has to remain a vulnerable boy without opinion. And then she can take care of that, but as soon as he gets stronger ..."[42]

Furthermore, the house where John lives with his abusive mother is even more a secluded space. Within the walls of this house, John's mother lives in her own distinct reality and unspeakable actions unfold, shielded off from the outside world. The filmmaker notes an unintentional darkness associated with this location, which contributes to an unsettling atmosphere, but "that works super hard, the fact that it doesn't seem to be such a fresh house anyway."[43] This contributes to the unease emanating from that place.

Also in the movie Kid, the places and the way certain places feel are defining. Especially the house of the aunt and uncle enhances the loneliness of Kid after his mother died. Both the interior and exterior of that house show a kind of *ugly cleanliness*, there is no soul in the house. The adults have good intentions and buy the boys new clothes and toys, decorate a whole new and neat bedroom, but every room is incredibly tidy and misses coziness. For Troch the place amplifies Kid's loneliness:

> this is that place. Here is his loneliness, and it is times a hundred because of that place. And by the fact that it is so clean and that that room. They then set up a room like that for those kids. Really, oh my god, then it is better to sleep in the laundry room than in this one. (laughs) And so, you know, they're not going to have any ... well, so buy new slouches, buy new ditties, but there's no soul in there or anything. Maybe it's mainly that.[44]

42.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Fien Troch on 12.10.2021
43.
Ibidem

44.
Ibidem

4.2 Suburban stability

The depiction of suburban neighborhoods in these films is intricately linked to a perceived stability of individuals and families who, in the words of Fien Troch, **have their shit together**. This narrative of order and stability is predominantly constructed through the portrayal of suburban detached single--family houses. When the camera moves through the neighborhood in *Violet* and *Fucking Suburbia* we get to see nicely finished and well-maintained houses. Especially a meticulously mowed lawn in front of the house serves as a potent symbol of stability.

This theme is encapsulated in *Kid* through the scene statically portraying the front façade of the aunt and uncle's house. The uncle diligently mows the lawn, while shortly after the aunt starts cleaning the windows. These visible coping mechanisms showcase the importance these people attach to manage and uphold a tidy and stable appearance, although circumstances are challenging. As the director, Fien Troch explained how she sought to preserve the integrity of these locations while simultaneously romanticizing them, as described above. The emphasis was on **the unheimlich**, uncomfortable atmosphere. Moreover, Troch explains how she deliberately made cinematographic choices and maintained a tight framing to showcase a certain ugliness in *Kid*: "I definitely wanted to show an ugliness in Kid. (...) An ugliness that at the time I found very aesthetic, that I was really in love with."[45] According to Troch, this 'ugliness' is visible in all the sets, in the unlikely simplicity of those kind of houses.

For the main setting in *Home*, Sammy's house where Kevin ends up, Troch deliberately chose a neutral, undefined house as the setting. The house could have been situated anywhere in Flanders, but it is clear that it belongs to the well-to-do middle class, situated in a suburban location. "What quickly became clear, though, was that if those are also, with all due respect, marginal people, then that is so obvious that, of course, all this misery then happens to those kinds of people."[46] Furthermore, Troch didn't intervene at the locations. As mentioned above, she never made anything more beautiful, neither outside nor inside.

Jeff Otte associates this stability with boredom, as a stagnation in our evolution. In *Fucking Suburbia* this is reflected in how the neighborhood is always quiet and deserted:

45. Ibidem.

46. Ibidem

It's the boredom. Somehow it's an evolution of, we all have our little garden, our house, we can all go to the south of France on vacation for two weeks, but what now... um, and it's that stagnation one finds himself in,... this should then be the pinnacle of human development, civilization, and we're here, but we're bored... um, and that to me makes that setting very important and unique (...) everyone who lives here, their children are already living somewhere else. So it's always quiet and deserted here. Here, we never had to say to people: we now want you all to be inside or stay inside because, this is it...[47]

This sentiment is also expressed in the twilight scene showcasing the girl riding through the allotment. In this moment, people are literally standing still on the driveways of their residences. As the camera navigates through the neighborhood, tracking the girl on the bike, a profound stillness permeates this scene. The girl's solidary movement creates a contrast against the backdrop of a seemingly suspended and paused existence, casting an impression of stagnation.

5. Open spaces

Open spaces are often primarily associated with traditional, picturesque landscapes. Likewise, the preceding chapter's analysis of visual representations of open spaces in the film selection revealed a recurrent use of static images reminiscent of ancient landscape paintings. Directors Michaël R. Roskam, trained as a painter, and Eugenie Jansen share a profound exploration of man's surrounding landscapes. They explained how they explore the relationship between landscape, memory, and human experience in their works.

In the early works of Roskam, particularly in his short movies and *Bullhead*, the Belgian-Flemish landscape has consciously been assigned an integral role. In addition, and as a consequence of his background in painting, the (classical) genre of landscape painting has influenced his work. Roskam regards cinema as an extension of, and indebted to, a tradition of representing landscapes in both painting and photography. Cinema's ability to convey not only space but also incorporate time and timelessness, makes it a unique medium.

For Michael R. Roskam, landscape is not a mere backdrop. He defines landscape as an image, a panoramic view from a specific vantage point that captures a wide spectrum of elements (trees, towers, castles, rocks, etc.) forming the composition on the horizon. In Flanders, Roskam finds beauty in distinctive, typical landmarks such as high voltage cables, water towers and church towers. Nowadays also windmills are part of these very visibly present landmarks:

> So for me, a landscape is just a view. From one point, spread out to a very wide point. And that evokes something. So the artist decides to evoke or use a landscape in a certain way to evoke something. Threat, and sometimes also just for the sheer fun of painting, yes, like when you paint an apple, how do I relate to my object as an image maker? (...) In Flanders you can hardly choose a place without seeing one of the three, for me personally, I'm talking 2003 and so on, in that period, without seeing three landmarks: high-voltage cables, water towers or church towers. And in more urbanized, the more of those three that you see at the same time.[48]

Moreover, these Flemish landscapes are imbued with significance, for Roskam these are not pristine, natural or authentic landscapes in the traditional sense, but crafted, complex landscapes filled with drama, and historical references that give them meaning and aesthetic value:

48.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Michaël R. Roskam on 13.06.2022

So I therefore feel more beauty in that ugliness, than if I were to look at it objectively. Objectively I also think: don't make sense. But if those houses suddenly represent something to me, where it originates, then that ugliness becomes an identification.[49]

In sum, Roskam uses landscapes, the formal elements in it and incorporation of drama to evoke meaning and beauty. He employs the landscape as a container of stories, of the numerous events that took place in it, that is able to convey these embedded connotations. Inspired by a tradition of representing landscapes in art painting, it is the way Roskam frames and edits landscapes that generates emotion, meaning and experience.

Similarly, for Eugenie Jansen, the landscape serves a dual purpose. On the one hand, she views the landscape as a witness and repository of memories, a tangible record of historical events. For example, in the landscape surrounding Ypres, the scars of war, both in memory and physical remnants, are vividly present. There are still bombs and people that are dogged up; the landscape is a living memory. The indelible imprint of war shapes the environment and even gave rise to a memorial industry and tourism. On the other hand, Jansen perceives the landscape as a determinant of human identity, a condition that molds the kind of person one becomes. The landscape, with its historical context and geographical features, affects and influences individuals profoundly. *It's in your genes*. In Ypres, the memory of war is deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness and, even in Australia, the Aboriginal stories about the land underscore the profound connection between landscapes and the people who inhabit them.

In addition to this exploration of the intricate relationship between landscapes and human existence, as the basic principle of their visual storytelling, the presence of human artefacts determines the construction of open space in the selected movies. The introduction of these artificial elements turns the natural landscapes into hybrid or cultural landscapes. As detailed in the previous chapter, these cultural elements range from planted crops (***Bullhead, Kid***) or orderly rows of trees (***Carlo***), bomb craters (***Above Us All***), church towers (***Bullhead, Above Us All***), high-voltage pylons (***Carlo***), to even more unconventional features like a complete horse race track (***Bullhead***) and the parking lot of the supermarket (***Kid***). Despite their distinctiveness, all these landscapes are represented in the selected movies as open space.

However, and notwithstanding the varying degrees of integrated cultural elements, the narratives of these movies are consistently and decisively shaped by the pivotal role of open spaces. In ***Carlo***, for instance, the outcome of the chase resulting from a misunderstanding, is intricately tied to the characteris-

49.
Ibidem

tics of the orchard, the popping of the cannon as much as the trees planted in rows. Similarly, the dramatic turning point in young Jacky's life, in *Bullhead*, takes place in open space that appears to be almost lawless. The symbolic value of open space is important in both *Kid* and *Above Us All*. In Kid, the forest is a place of harmony (free from financial worries) and freedom (absence of imposed rules or obligations). Ultimately, it is also the place where Kid is re-united with his mother, even after both of them died. Since the storyline of *Above Us All* did not take precedence in making the movie, the landscapes express the processing of grief.

This comprehensive analysis, coupled with insights from interviews with the directors, reveals two overarching themes. First, narratives of freedom emerge from the deliberate use of open spaces in the selected films. Second, a profound symbolic and transcendental connection is established through the intentional and careful construction of landscapes within the narratives.

5.1 Dichotomies of freedom

In the portrayal of open space, there is a distinct association of freedom with these landscapes. These landscapes appear as places with less or no social control, and therefore these places are free from obligations. Especially for children, open spaces are places where they can hang out freely. This is explicitly the case for Kid, who retreats to nature in his leisure time. Whether wandering through the wood or fields, these are the moments where he is at ease. Temporarily liberated from the perpetual tension and financial anxieties at home, or the stringent behavioral expectations at school, Kid can unwind in these natural environments without constraints.

Similarly, the supermarket parking lot is one of the frequented spaces by Kid and his friend, akin to a personal playground. Troch elaborates on the allure of this location, highlighting the presence of the adjacent candy-filled supermarket as an attraction point: "that parking lot is like the Valhalla for them, there you can buy everything you possibly like." Troch regards the parking lot as a non-complex place, emphasizing its straightforward nature:

> you don't have much choice there: park your car, the carts are there, and you come to do your shopping, that's a non-complex place or so. And I think non-complex places like that always attract me very much, to make that more complicated there than it should be. Or to really show a loneliness there.[50]

The supermarket itself is for Troch emblematic of practicality, functionality and organization, a representation of a well-ordered life, where you "have

your shit together". This association extends to a sense of security, of which the routine of shopping, cooking and consuming meals symbolizes a structured existence. For her, the supermarket parking lot holds a profound appeal as it encapsulates the convergence of these elements:

> so, your life is good if you have your car and if you go to the supermarket, do all your shopping and then we eat in front of the TV or eat first and then we watch ... so, something so very structural, that I don't have, or that I'm always looking for but I don't succeed in. And I think that such a supermarket parking lot there is something very, a very rewarding place for me because, to bring all that together there.[51]

The supermarket parking lot reappears in Fien Troch's other film in this selection, *Home*. Again, the parking area is portrayed as the place claimed by the youngsters. The portrait 0.52:1 images taken with a smartphone, that are at these moments mixed with the images in 4:3 format of the rest of the movie, express their appropriation of this space. It is the meeting place of the teenagers, where they hang out together, listen to music, smoke, skate, dance. "You're too old to understand" is the answer of Sammy in the scene in the kitchen when his mother asks why they want to spend their time at a parking lot of a supermarket. This underscores how the different generations inhabit different lifeworlds, physically as well as mentally.

Also *Fucking Suburbia* and *Violet*, although both concentrated on suburban settings, show how teenagers struggle to find their place. Although the suburban streets are in both films empty and deserted, the youngsters move into open space to gather freely. Places like the football field, the wood or the skatepark, offer the youngsters an escape from the constraints of adult society, serving as spots of freedom devoid of adult control or involvement.

Nevertheless, when the camera observes the sixteen-year-old protagonist sitting with the other teenagers at the empty football field in *Fucking Suburbia*, nothing spectacular occurs. The group merely passes time in silence, lacking any vibrancy. The scene exemplifies the struggle these adolescents face in establishing meaningful connections. Similar difficulties manifest when the boy retreats with his girlfriend in the wood, apparently their uncertainties in behavior and communication create an awkward silence. This underscores the challenges these youth encounter in finding their place. Especially this residential environment has not much to offer.

The places claimed by the teenagers are associated with the BMX-gang in *Violet*. Whether it is at the circuit in the wood or the skatepark, the group

51.
Ibidem

collectively lives it up with their bikes. Afterwards they sit together, discussing their jumps and tricks or in silence, staring at the campfire they made. It is a micro-world, without outside or adult interference. Devos conveys his admiration for the BMX-culture by juxtaposing the weightlessness of the jumps and mid-air maneuvers with the grounding force of gravity upon landing. This metaphor symbolizes a leap into the unknown, a momentary escape, and the subsequent return to reality. Jesse, part of the BMX crew, experiences the thrill of soaring through the air only to be brought back to earth when labeled a coward and unwelcome by a fellow biker.

> I think a lot departs just from that love of bmx or that fascination with bmx. And ... Yeah, a lot of it has to do with, sorry, kind of silly, but that's kind of a transition, is the way those guys jump and the way those hang in the air. Every time they hang at the highest point, whether they want to or not, they almost always do, they make a noise. Because actually there at that highest point, they know whether it's going to go right or go wrong. So right before they come down that way. And that, to me, was the metaphor that that actually had to be present there that that, um, yes stood for both a kind of jump into the unknown or so but also the moment of surrender, a kind of being able to escape from ... And then you have to land back again of course. Then you have to hope that you don't fall on your face. And a kind of weightlessness, which applies that to that point. And which then contrasts that, I think, with that gravity, which is that much more tangible in all these other scenes where that we're with him and literally with his feet on the ground.[52]

The lack of (social) control in these places also indicates a sort of safe--conduct for illegal practices. Throughout both of Michaël R. Roskam's movies in this selection, nature is also unambiguously connected with the imminence of danger. Roskam regards these natural environments as lawless areas where everything is possible. Sociocultural aspects of urbanization are linked with traditional urban issues and problems that appear on the countryside. For instance, the pursuit in the fruit plantation in *Carlo* or illegal trafficking, mobs, prostitution and violence in *Bullhead*, which are considered as typically urban phenomena. Roskam deliberately choose to set a typically urban chase between corridors of planted apple trees: "That's really, a chase in a plantation is, I thought, too crazy. We always have chases in streets, metros, or, behind houses, this and that. And now it was, its walls of apple trees."[53]

52.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Bas Devos on 24.08.2021

53.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Michaël R. Roskam on 13.06.2022

Especially in **Bullhead** the countryside is portrayed as a place where one can act undisturbed as one desires, regardless of the legal or more often illegal nature of these practices. The adults are involved in illegal hormone traffic, while the kids leer at prostitutes, masturbate hidden in the bushes and violate each other. Roskam elaborates on the origin of his emphasis on the freedom and lawlessness in his depiction of the countryside:

> But that is also so the association we make. I, as a child, when we, among friends, went somewhere sneaky, or not sneaky, but when we wanted to be secluded, yes, we went out of town. And we would sit in the field. There was always a place, some shed or this or that, where we could go and smoke and drink or see girlfriends or ... We didn't live in the city, we took our bikes. In the field they leave you alone. (laughs) And that's where we got away with it. I mean, from all backgrounds. (...) For me those landscapes, or stepping outside the city, and I'm talking about the medium-sized city in an agricultural area, for us that nature around there was freedom.[54]

The inherent drawback of uncontrolled freedom lies in the vulnerability it exposes individuals to, particularly in the absence of traditional authority. In such cases, criminal elements seize the opportunity to take over. The gathering of the mob at the horse race track in **Bullhead,** makes their unchallenged authority tangible. The absence of protective mechanisms leaves individuals defenseless, culminating in the assault on young Jacky and the murders of Kid's mother and Carlo.

In essence, on the one hand, freedom is experienced by (innocent) children. These environments do not impose rules or obligations, there are no expectations like silence in the church, purchase in the supermarket or behave and obey at school and at home. On the other hand, freedom also has criminal implications when these areas are linked with lawlessness. As places with little or no (social) control, illegal hormone trafficking, mutilation (young Jacky) and even murder (Carlo and Kid's mother) are possible and define the open space also as a place (of crime). Therewith open spaces instead of being one-dimensional, also become hybrid spaces (liberating and frightening), like but also completely different to urban spaces. As spaces with typically more (social) control and less freedom, especially for children, the context of urban spaces would offer a different narrative.

54.
Ibidem

5.2 Narratives of symbolism

The way the landscapes are integrated in the movies, evokes emotions, often even a transcendental or symbolic layer. The filmmakers strategically employ landscapes to imbue their works with depth, meaning and emotional resonance. The landscapes in these movies serve as a powerful tool to convey symbolic meanings and intricate narratives.

While making *Above Us All*, Eugenie Jansen sought to express the experience of space and time in combination with mourning. Very personal mourning, the grief of the girl who lost her mother, but also public and social commemoration. The director thus needed a place of remembrance to situate and develop the initial storyline. Public commemoration is very much present in the Flemish region of Ypres, where the first World War is visible and present in everyday life. In a landscape dotted by cemeteries, bunkers, craters, and so on, this commemoration exists physically. But equally the rituals like the last post, the poppies, crosses, etc. and museums keep the commemoration socio-culturally alive.

In her filmic investigation of space and time, Jansen places these two (personal and societal mourning) in constant opposition to each other. The rotating camera in 360-degree circles, expresses the relationship between space and time: "very little seems to be happening but meanwhile, when we have passed 360 degrees, space is no longer what it was (...) because time has passed, so time is always affecting space. (...) It will never be what it was before."[55] This also captures how the world moves on, time passes by, while for the person who is mourning everything is on hold.

The scene in the cemetery with the lawnmowers is exemplary of how a simple act, mowing the grass, becomes symbolic. The meticulously manicured setting of a cemetery emphasizes the sentiment of semblance of control over life, represented in the act of mowing the grass:

> that's also one of my favorite scenes. But I had seen it once already (...) So that they were there, with so many people mowing. And yeah, that just becomes a ballet, right? Those mowers, with uh ... And yes, and also, yes well, mowing grass to me anyway has a meaning of euh, ... if the grass is short then you have life under control, something like that. (...) So cutting the grass, the grass is important, it has to be short, it has to look good, it has to ... yeah, especially in a cemetery like that.[56]

With the rotating camera Eugenie Jansen observes, records and archives a reality that develops by bringing together the non-professional actors she

53.
Translation from interview with Eugenie Jansen
on 02.11.2022

56.
Ibidem

selected, the locations as such (without styling them) and her substantive principles. In this method of filmmaking, coincidence is also an important factor. In each scene she registers the space and events that are, partly accidentally, there at that moment in combination with things that are directed into this setting. The community party is such a scene that, not originally part of the script, emerged organically during the crew's collaboration with the owners of the bed and breakfast. The director and actors joined their hosts to this party to film the event and acted the dispute between Shay and her father into the scene.

Conversely, including the observatory, with its inherent symbolism of stars as eternal life, in the movie was a preconceived thematic element. The film explores the opposition between the mystical legend of the Sky camp in Australia and the scientific perspective on the stars and death of Shay's father. Jansen explains how the choice of a Belgian astronomer further enriched the narrative, not only extending the themes of time and space, but also adding a personal connection to the chosen filming location:

> it's someone who works at an observatory. Because thematically that connects very well. And also about time and space. And practically, that it could be someone from Belgium who … at the observatories are a lot, because he himself had also worked at one of those …, at the observatory where we were filming, he had also done an internship once, from Belgium.[57]

Michaël R. Roskam deliberately selects landscapes to evoke specific emotions. The opening scenes of both *Carlo* and ***Bullhead,*** along with the transitional images between different sequences in the latter, are examples of how framing and evocation of the landscape constructs a certain atmosphere and viewing experience for the audience. In each instance, these are images of landscapes devoid of people, introducing the movie and establishing its setting in the countryside or the upcoming sequence. The transitional images in ***Bullhead*** ensure the continuity of the film and enhance its comprehensibility for the audience. The rising horizon in the transitional images throughout the movie, reflect the emotional situation of the protagonist.

As an artist, he employs framing, drama and playful optics to give the landscapes profound significance. The director incorporates references to the past, elements of beauty and inspiration as part of a tradition in imagining landscapes. Roskam emphasizes how the framing is pivotal in his commitment to capture the landscape at its most authentic:

57.
Ibidem

If I can generate meaning, it also generates a certain beauty. Because if I want to show it, I also want to show it at its most beautiful, at its ... In terms of composition, not to retouch it, or update it, or pretend that it is beautiful. No, but then it is, there is always an angle where you can show something, in a way you can show something that people generally say: hey, that's so ugly there, but when I see that picture, something happens, what is it? (...) but then again, it is framing, you frame! It is your frame that determines what you do with your landscape.[58]

In addition to the framing, the cinematic representation of landscapes gains significance by the representation. Roskam explains how he strategically evokes emotions and symbolic meaning, for instance by optically separating functionality and meaning. In the same way a child transforms a hair dryer into a make-believe revolver, an image thus gains the capacity to generate novel significance. Suchlike associations become evident when Roskam discusses the portrayal of Jacky's car navigating small roads amidst fields:

Um, yeah, those are scratches, those are ... I compared that to, like there's a kind of, yeah, a volcano of concrete, something like that. Like Pompeii, ash, and that runs, those are gutters, gutters of concrete. But when I look at that in a certain way, those are, um, volcanic paths. Once erupted somewhere, from a city. And the city, boom, and then that starts running, and that flows, and those are volcanic paths to me.[59]

The scene with the little boys talking about girls in front of the open field is another example of how the director, through framing and playful construction, generates a certain experience and authenticity. The boys were very deliberately positioned in front of the open field, the landscape, and then the camera turns so that the arterial road with the brothel comes into view:

behind them you see the landscape ... You have no idea, why are they sitting there, chatting in a landscape about girls. And you just turn around, because what they see is not that landscape, we see that landscape and those guys, they see the whorehouses, which also define the landscape. So, the framework, construction and that is a playfulness also of what do you do first, how do you generate, authenticity, or do you generate a certain experience of the spectator.[60]

58.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Michaël R. Roskam on 13.06.2022

59.
Ibidem

60.
Ibidem

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Roskam further elucidates his approach in the creation of the short film Carlo. He indicates how he premeditated **Carlo** as the funeral of its protagonist Carlo, in which the landscape serves as a symbolic cathedral. By meticulously capturing the final scene as if within the confines of a church, the landscape metaphorically transformed into a cathedral. Every element, from the entrance to the bathtub as an altar and the cows as a choir, contributes to this deliberate construction.

> I filmed it as if I was in a in a church. I didn't film that as if I was in a meadow. The entrance, everything, it is going to the cathedral and that bathtub, which is there, is the altar, (...). And the cows, that's the choir. So I filmed it, filmed and visualized it as if it is a cathedral. We are not in a meadow. We are in the church, because Carlo is going to die. It is his funeral.[61]

The symbolism associated with the landscapes in Fien Troch's film **Kid**, results from an approach that, as previously mentioned, originates from the locations themselves. These places' associations with certain atmospheres, often derive from the director's personal memories. Troch underscores the pivotal role of the locations in shaping the narrative of **Kid,** asserting that the film's existence is inherently tied to these places, considering them as primordial elements. Among other things, the use of still lifes, enables her to convey the story through the inherent symbolism embedded in the locations.

She assigned symbolic value to the settings linked with nature in her film, emphasizing her intention to interweave the natural world with thematic elements of the narrative. Unlike the other settings in the film, nature still represents something pure, it is a rather neutral place but at the same time a place of much more emotion. Especially the forest is imagined as a place of big and intense emotions, as well harmony and happiness (in a quiet family moment or when Kid plays in the wood), as much as fear (when Kid is afraid he lost his mother). It is the place where "peace is found and where that the mom is found again, where he is afraid he has lost his mom, ... (...) he is afraid there, he moves, he has lost his mom, there is laughter, ..."[62] This contrasts with the insensitive, chilly atmosphere of urban places, as the supermarket, the bank office, and even the living rooms in this movie. These urban places, while orderly and clean, lack the warmth and emotional depth found in the more natural settings.

Moreover, that nature, the forest evolves with Kid's feelings throughout the film. It is the place where at the beginning of the film he has a kind of freedom that he has less in other places (at home, at school, at church, ...), but which

61.
Ibidem

62.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Fien Troch on 12.10.2021

is very much cut down after the death of his mom. Everything is suddenly rever-sed, framed, he hardly comes alone in the woods anymore (though he does come with his class, his uncle, ...). Troch explains this nuanced depiction and arti-culates her desire to portray nature incorporating fairy-tale-like duality:

63.
Ibidem

64.
Ibidem

> the plan was to show that nature could create a kind of freedom,
> which he (Kid) had less in those other places. I also wanted to treat
> nature a bit like, ... almost like in fairy tales. Where the forest can be
> such a bright and lovely place but also a dark and sinister place. So
> that it blends a bit with that.[63]

Yet Troch did not manipulate her imagination of the forest: "for a long time I considered, do I want to make that forest even more threatening or dark or ... But in the end I didn't."[64]

The evolution of the forest aligned with Kid's feelings culminates in the final scene, when the forest is even lifted into a transcendental realm as we witness Kid's reunion with his mother. The forest now appears illuminated, with Kid confidently navigating through the woods towards an open space where he finds his mother.

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

6.in Between Discussion & Conclusion about Social Construction

The exploration of socio-cultural themes within the narratives of the selected movies, in combination with understandings gained from interviews with the directors, has provided profound insights into the experience and connotations of everyday lived space in the Flemish urbanized landscape. Through the lens of Henri Lefebvre's theory of **the production of space**, these films demonstrate how space is not merely a backdrop but a social construct, intricately tied to the lived experiences and identities of those who inhabit it. The selected movies add a dramatic and symbolic layer to the landscapes they portray, echoing Lefebvre's assertion that space is an active agent in the shaping of social relations.

The motorway environments, represented in **Steve+Sky** and **Carlo**, serve as generic yet evocative spaces, symbolizing a no-man's land that reflects emptiness and detachment. The otherwise unremarkable locations are transformed into meaningful elements that contribute to character identity and storytelling, in ways reminiscent of Michel de Certeau's notion of **tactical re-appropriation** of space. The arterial road serves in both movies as a crucial and defining element, physically and symbolically connecting characters and shaping the narrative.

The portrayal of suburban spaces across these films offers a consistent theme of seclusion and a deliberate construction of safety and security. The prevailing sense of seclusion is exemplified in the intentional choices made by the filmmakers, such as Otte's exaggerated scene in **Fucking Suburbia** and Troch's explorations of individual houses in **Home** and **Kid** or the mystical cloud in **Violet**. Furthermore, the films collectively depict suburban stability as intricately linked to the perceived order and well-maintained appearance of detached single-family houses. The meticulous portrayal of suburban homes in **Violet, Fucking Suburbia, and Kid** as a potent symbol of stability, highlights the importance characters attach to managing a tidy and stable image.

The open spaces in the discussed films, such as nature, supermarket parking lots and suburban settings, are associated with freedom and convey symbolic layers in the narrative. The association of open spaces with freedom emerges from the films' depiction of children and teenagers finding solace and escape from societal constraints in nature, parking lots, football fields and skateparks. This resonates with de Certeau's idea of **spatial practices**—the ways in which individuals navigate and appropriate space in their everyday lives. However, this freedom also becomes breeding grounds for illegal activities, introducing a narrative of (uncontrolled) crime and vulnerability to these open spaces.

Moreover, the filmmakers employ landscapes as powerful tools for symbolic expression and emotional resonance. Often the landscapes are styled, for instance when Roskam portrays nature as a cathedral or when Troch uses the forest as in a fairy tale. Jansen preserves the spaces in her movie, not only by leaving them as they are but also by showing their totality. In this way, the landscapes are used to communicate emotions: a landscape of fear in **Carlo** and mourning in **Above Us All**.

Overall, the directors use the setting not only as a backdrop but as a crucial element in conveying emotions, exploring relationships, and commenting on societal themes such as liberation, struggle for identity, boredom, stagnation, and the quest for stability. The narrative choices, cinematography, and attention to details in these films contribute to a nuanced portrayal of the urbanized landscape. Through this nuanced portrayal, these films invite the audience to reflect on the complexities and contradictions inherent in the everyday environment. Not only qualities and possibilities, which are often overlooked by planners, but also the dual nature of these environments surface.

As undefined and generic as motorway spaces may seem, they serve to physically and symbolically connect people and places, as evidenced in the love story of Steve and Sky. Similarly, while suburbia may provide a secure and stable environment for adults, it is experienced as desolate and boring by teenagers in transition to adulthood. These youngsters inhabit transitional places, often so-called wastelands on the urban fringe. Open spaces, where youth seek freedom, are controlled by adults, be it farmers on their land, costumers on parking lots, criminals on the road or in the wood, or astronomers in observatories. In fact, the combination of these films reveals how adults attempt to control and structure space, while children and teenagers strive to escape this control. Symbols as well-maintained lawns, suburban protection, or even the sky observatory, express adult control. Children and teenagers frequent the skate park, the woods, the edge of the football field and even the parking lot of the supermarket, in these places they find solace and are not bound by adult society.

In addition to these inspirations, connotations and reflections on reality, the interviews also clarified that the directors deliberately choose these environments not only to situate their stories but also to esthetically portray these locations. Their decisions are not only driven by narrative considerations but also by a pure aesthetic sensibility.

Roskam, for instance, is fascinated by the repetition of things, which he finds in rows of high-voltage pylons, roadside trees planted in a rhythm corresponding with the white lines of the road, the oval lines and stands of the horse race track, etc. The color palette in the film **Bullhead** was also an aesthetic choice,

which helped to ensure consistency. Of course, a landscape is also defined by its color and its light. When they were working on *Bullhead*, Michaël R. Roskam and cinematographer Nicolas Karakatsanis were inspired by Delacroix's painting *La Barque de Dante* (*The Barque of Dante*, 1822) in which the drops of water on a man's naked thigh were painted by a yellow, a red and a green brushstroke. This helped to determine the film's color palette: when they combined those three colors (yellow, red, green) with light blue, they would "at least be doing something that's also true in painting. And that worked."[65] Moreover, for Roskam symbolic connotations and history are part of ugliness or beauty, therefore, both are interchangeable in his perspective:

> For me, ugly and beautiful are very much interchangeable. Depends on how it serves me. And yes, in that way an ugly wilted flower can suddenly become very beautiful, because there is something. It says something. Simple.[66]

Fien Troch explained how she sought to showcase ugliness in her film Kid, finding an aesthetic charm in the unlikeliness and simplicity of certain settings:

> I definitely wanted to show in Kid an ugliness.(...) An ugliness that at that time I found very aesthetic, that I was really in love with.[67]

For her, that ugliness is in all the sets, "in the unlikely simplicity of those kinds of houses."[68]

Similarly, Van Groeningen clarifies the aesthetically driven choices in his film *Steve+Sky.* For instance, he uses recurring blue screens to connect images, scenes and link those to characters. The color blue is woven into various scenes: there is the blue sky when the bird flies towards the prison, the water in Sky's fish tank and the swimming pool where Steve and Sky come together at the end. Van Groeningen emphasizes the clean and dreamy quality of the blue, highlighting its significance and recognizability for the audience:

> But, I just found that image of that pool very clean. You can see that blue, and it is very dreamy and very light in color and then ... And then you understand what it is and it comes back again in that, I think in the final montage as well, right? That you then have that blue, and they jump, that it comes together like that.[69]

65.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Michaël R. Roskam on 13.06.2022

66.
Ibidem

67.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Fien Troch on 12.10.2021

68.
Ibidem
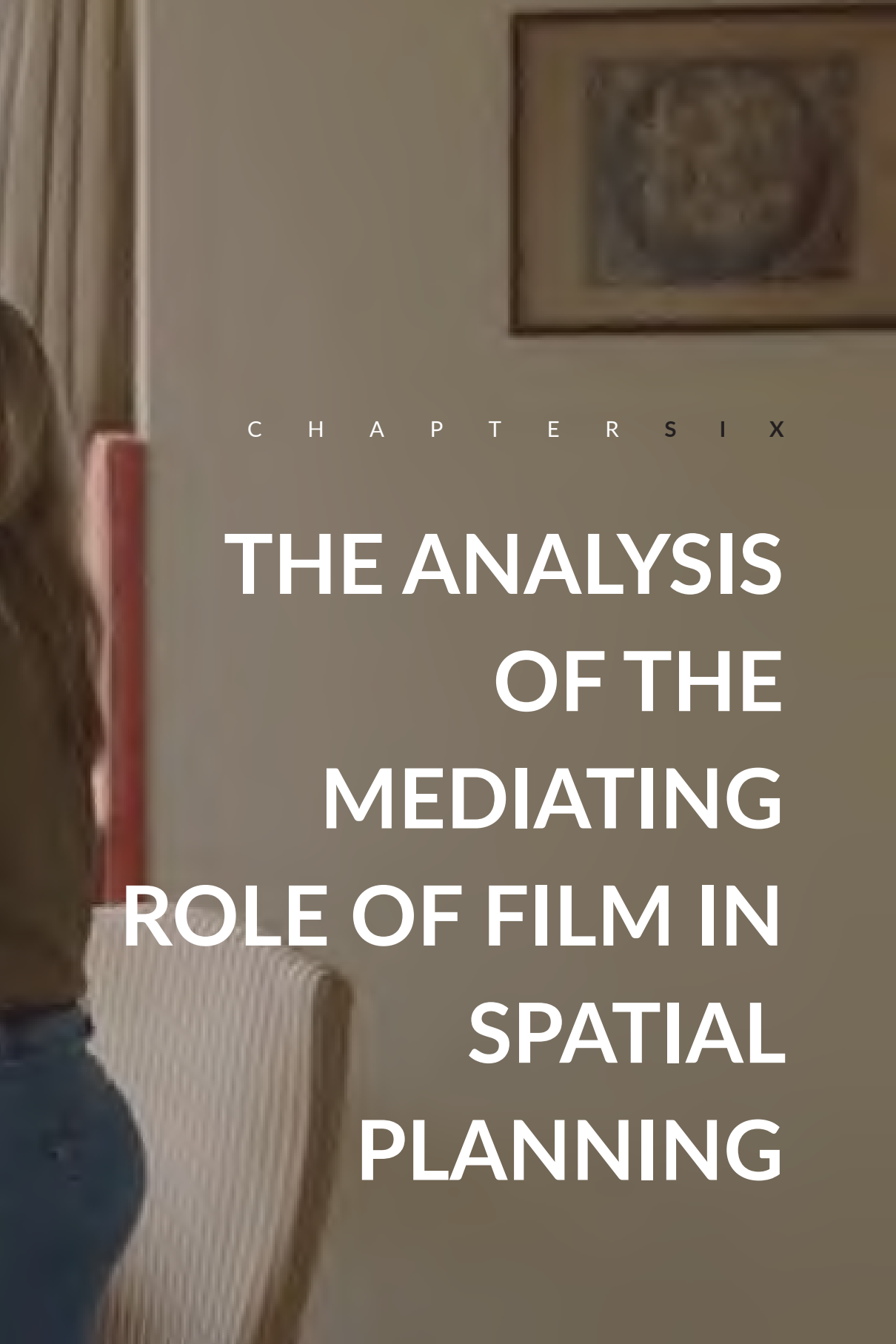
69.
Translated from Dutch, interview with Felix Van Groeningen on 25.11.2022

Finally, although this research primarily focused on the visual aspects, sound also has a prominent role in all the films, contributing to the atmosphere and reflecting the characters' emotional state. Whether limited to silence or the sounds of the environment like in *Violet*, *Fucking Suburbia* or *Above Us All*, or through a supporting soundtrack like in *Steve+Sky*.

In conclusion, these films not only contribute to our understanding of the socio-cultural construction of place but also serve as a cultural lens to gain insight into the everyday experience of urban sprawl. Spatial planners can enhance their understanding of the dynamic relationship between people and the environments they inhabit, leading to more thoughtful and effective urban and regional planning strategies. The positive elements emerging from such insights could inform urban and regional planning strategies, emphasizing the qualities and possibilities often overlooked by planners. Planners could then prioritize the positive elements while working to minimize the negative as much as possible.

THE ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIATING ROLE OF FILM IN SPATIAL PLANNING

1. Introduction:
film as a mediator

As the final part of this study, this chapter expands upon the findings from the preceding chapters. The selected films served as a lens for examining the Flemish urbanized landscape, delving into spatio-morphological representations and socio-cultural reflections. Specifically, the analysis focused on cinematic portrayals as a reading device to reveal the intrinsic characteristics of the physical environment and as a social construct to understand how the narratives tactically reflect cultural concepts in the sphere of the everyday. The central objective of this chapter is to address the third research question: ***How can insights gleaned from cinematic representations be applied to enhance the connection between urban planning and the Flemish urban landscape?***

As a ***mediator,*** film has the capacity to interact and to contribute to the social debate on how to deal with space. Therefore, film holds the potential to bridge the gap between professional experts, or 'the system' as defined by Habermas in his ***Theory of Communicative Action*** (1981), and the everyday, 'the lifeworld', of laymen. Since cinema influences perceptions of space, cities and urban environments, it inevitably shapes individuals' daily experiences and preferences for particular spaces.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how these films shape our spatial perceptions, contribute to our sense of place and mediate our relationship with the depicted environments, two moderated film sessions were organized. Each film session centered on a specific topic, one on suburbia and another on open space, and involved screening fragments of the selection of motion pictures to an audience with diverse professional backgrounds (spatial planners, urbanists, geographers, students and other). This was followed by a panel discussion of experts on the topic (experienced in academic and governmental spatial research on the topic) with the audience. In order to engage the public and start the debate, the audience was asked to digitally enter key words that characterize the images after each set of fragments. The resulting word clouds were projected on the screen, serving as inspiration for the panel members. The discussion was recorded, transcribed and analyzed using a systematic process of open and selective coding adopting a grounded theory approach to data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A detailed report of both film sessions and debates is available in the appendix.

2. Suburban spaces

At a local cinema, *KASKcinema* in Ghent, the filmic debate evening centered around the theme of suburban neighborhoods was organized and moderated by the author (on March 11, 2022, Figure 61). The session comprised an introduction, two major parts and a concluding debate. In alignment with this research design, the first part focused on the portrayal of the physical environment and spatial-morphological aspects, and the second part delved into the lifestyle and its associated spatial-social aspects. For each part a series of film excerpts was followed by group discussions with the experts. Subsequently, both the audience and panel members participated in a brief questionnaire.

The event was promoted primarily through digital and social media platforms, including Facebook, the AMRP UGent website, and email communications. Attendance was free of charge, and the audience included individuals individuals from diverse professional backgrounds and age groups. The range of professions represented included spatial planners, architects, researchers, students and individuals engaged in nature conservation. The age distribution spanned from 22 to 64 years, showcasing a broad demographic spectrum. Surveying the audience revealed the personal connections attendees held with the central theme: 29% of the attendees who responded disclosed growing up in a suburban neighborhood (4 out of 14 respondents), while 25% indicated their current residence in a suburban neighborhood (4 out of 14 respondents).

The expert panel members, Ann Pisman, Pascal De Decker and Michiel Dehaene, each introduced their perspective on the topic before the start of the first part. An Pisman, research director at the Ministry of the Flemish Government and visiting professor at the Department of Mobility and Spatial Planning of Ghent University, started by framing the term 'suburban'. Pisman highlighted the prevalent normative interpretation, often regarding suburban as inferior to urban, but underscored its synonymy with peripheral or urban fringe. In her research, she approached the suburban housing issue from two distinct angles: examining it from the resident's perspective as an actor and exploring the characteristics of physical environment, specifically the different living environments in Flanders. Fundamentally, Pisman regards the discussion surrounding suburban living as the juxtaposition of individual interest and residential experience versus the broader considerations of open space and general interest. A similar reflective perspective on the evocation of suburban living was offered by Pascal De Decker, professor in the Master of Urbanism and Spatial

Planning at the Department of Architecture at KU Leuven. His research focusses on the sociological and spatial dimensions of housing, urbanism, and demographic developments. De Decker positioned suburban living as a highly individualized form of living, presenting individualized advantages such as light, air, greenery, privacy, safety, ethnic homogeneity, status, and space. He countered these advantages with collective disadvantages, including higher infrastructure costs, long(er) commutes and the resultant environmental impacts, leading to 'an atomized society'. Professor Michiel Dehaene, senior lecturer in urban planning at the department of Architecture and Urbanism at Ghent University, and researcher in the epistemology of urbanism and the relationship between urbanism, ecology, and urbanization, supported his argument with an image of an advertisement panel for a suburban subdivision as it is displayed in Bokrijk, an open-air museum with 140 historic buildings. Dehaene contented that this panel serves as an indication that the suburban neighborhood is now a part of history. The Flemish suburban residential landscape, according to Dehaene, has evolved from residential desire to an unfortunate historical legacy. Despite the prevailing moral disdain, the question that lingers is, what about the future of subdivision?

Film fragments from seven Flemish fiction films were presented, with three films not being part of the core selection of this work and therefore not included in this dissertation so far. As is the case for the other movies, Flemish suburbia is not merely a backdrop but plays a prominent and integral role in these two movies. The fragments provided compelling visuals to enhance the discussion. All of the films discussed are recent, having been released within the last 20 years, with the oldest dating back to 2008. The panel members were not given prior information; they viewed the fragments for the first time and shared spontaneous reactions. The overall purpose and motivation behind the doctoral research were elucidated towards the end, setting the stage for a debate on film as a mediator. Prior to the commencement of the first segment, a brief explanation was provided on the dichotomy regarding the Flemish urbanized landscape. On the one hand, urban planners as well as policy makers struggle to get grip on the congestion of this space. On the other hand, daily practice of consuming space in Flanders continues unimpededly, still six hectares of open space disappear every day through further urbanization.

2.1 Suburban spatio-morphology of Mobility, Silence, and Quality of Life

The first series of fragments focused on spatial and morphological elements through film fragments from **The Misfortunates** (Felix Van Groeningen, 2009), **Fucking Suburbia** (Jeff Otte, 2012) and **Violet** (Bas Devos, 2014). The first two fragments were taken from the film **The Misfortunates** (Figure 62). This adaptation of the semi-autobiographical bestseller by Dimitri Verhulst (**De Helaasheid der Dingen**, 2006), shows the retrospective of the protagonist Gunther on the years when he stayed with his grandmother and her four alcoholic adult sons, including his own father. The story is set in the 1980s, in a fictional, but typically Flemish village (called **Reetveerdegem)**. The adult writer describes how thirteen-year-old Gunther watches the troubles of his uncles and father and tries to escape poverty himself. The film is full of anecdotal fragments of bizarre situations, such as the nude cycling competition, the beer drinking contest, the comeback of Roy Orbison in the house of the Iranian villagers, or the 'Tour de France' with glasses of whiskey during the mountain stages. These anecdotes reflect both the mentality in the village and the boy's state of mind.

The establishing shot, a short fragment from the beginning of the film that frames the setting, was shown first. Young Gunther cycles in front of a succession of freestanding, middle class houses, tries to stand upright on his carrier and eventually falls. (Figure 63) During the film session, this was followed by a fragment in which we very visually follow the train of thought of adult Gunther. He looks out of a train window and notes that this point of view gives insight into the world's backyards, a landscape filled with multiple layers of crooked extensions (so-called **koterijen**). (Figure 64)

The train keeps making its way through my life. But one forgives a train much because it is a train. Unlike a car, it passes the back of the world. The listed houses of the station neighborhood turn out to be half slums. But you only get to see that mess from the tracks. There is no vehicle that gives you a more honest impression of the country than the train. So behold our gardens, our dovecotes and cottages. See our underpants drying on the wire. Behold our garden gnomes, our celery and our leeks. Our porches and our brick barbecues. See how the cows along the route steadily give way to our brick monstrosities, which tastelessly with the bank's approval have plopped down in that landscape. Take the train and see how motionless the marble and granite along the track bores under a layer of dust and offers a final resting place for our loved ones.[70]

70.
Translated from Dutch, the text in voice over in the movie stems originally from another book by Dimitri Verhulst, namely 'De kamer hiernaast'(1999)

The scene from **Fucking Suburbia**, the short movie of Jeff Otte, that takes us through the suburban subdivision was subsequently screened. (Figure 65) At dawn, the camera follows the girl riding on her bike while she passes people in their driveways facing away from the camera.

The last fragment of this part was taken from the beginning of the film Violet, after Jonas is stabbed to death. The arrival of the bmx-group at Jesse's house shows the suburban setting of the story. (Figure 66) With the camera in their track, the group takes Jesse on a ride through the neighborhood.

The discussion started with the observation that the streets are remarkably empty in these fragments, very few cars appear in the scenes. An Pisman highlighted the difference in mobility behavior between city dwellers and those outside the city: people living further from the city tend to rely more on cars, covering more miles. Michiel Dehaene noted that this primarily generates traffic elsewhere. Moreover, the fragments showcased a noticeable presence of bicycles. Bike mobility ensures that even young people are not necessarily confined to suburban developments. Suburban neighborhoods offer space for various activities such as biking in the middle of the road, standing on bikes, attempting tricks like BMX, or engaging in other trends like rollerblading, skateboarding, roller-skating, and more. Children actively use the streets in these ways. Continuing this topic, it was pointed out that there are no sidewalks. Adjacent to the road there are private gardens, there is nothing in between. No sidewalks, no bike paths. Someone in the audience commented that these neighborhoods are so quiet that one can walk anywhere, even on the street.

Silence is another prominent aspect that was noticed in the fragments. The cliché of tranquility and the association of silence with living in a green environment seemed to be present. Sound, including silence or daily noises like mopeds, contributes to the experience. Some participants found the scenes boring, as appeared in the word cloud, while others considered the films slow and poetic (Figure 67).
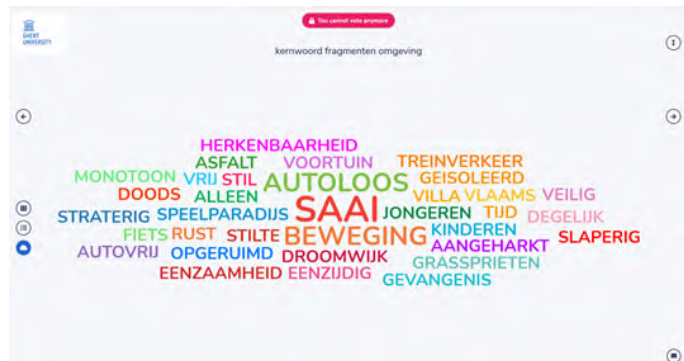
Figure 6.7
word cloud generated after the first series of fragments focused on spatio-morphological aspects
Translation of the words:
HERKENBAARHEID: identifiability,
ASFALT: asphalt, VOORTUIN: front yard, TREINVERKEER: train traffic,
MONOTOON: monotonous, VRIJ: free, STIL: quiet, AUTOVRIJ: car free, GEISOLEERD: isolated,
DOODS: deadly, ALLEEN: alone, VILLA: villa, VLAAMS: Flemish, VEILIG: safe,
STRATERIG: streets, SPEELPARADIJS: play paradise, SAAI: boring, JONGEREN: youngsters, TIJD: time, DEGELIJK: decent,
FIETS: bicycle, RUST: rest, STILTE: silence, BEWEGING: movement, KINDEREN: children,
AUTOLOOS: car-free, OPGERUIMD: uncluttered, DROOMWIJK: dream neighbourhood,
AANGEHARKT: raked, SLAPERIG: drowsy, GRASSPRIETEN: blades of grass,
EENZAAMHEID: loneliness, EENZIJDIG: one-sided, GEVANGENIS: prison

This question arose a discussion about the quality of life in these suburban neighborhoods, referencing Leo Van Broeck's discourse that asserts these environments lack quality. Yet, Dehaene wondered: 'if these places truly lacked quality, why would everyone want to live there?'[71] However, he indicated this doesn't mean there are no problems. It's argued that these areas do not offer a sustainable future perspective in terms of living on this planet. Due to the fundamental nature of the problem, supporting it socially is not justified.

The voting behavior in suburban areas was brought up. According to De Decker, non-city areas are significantly more conservative than the city. He mentions how his research has shown that people want to live in white, homogeneous areas without migrants or poor people in their vicinity. Progressive and conservative tendencies are spatially segregating.

Lastly, the participants reflected on the perception of these suburban environments. They acknowledged that in the past, many may have perceived such environments as liberating. Studies were cited, illustrating the appeal of these areas for children up to the age of twelve due to increased freedom and space to play compared with inner city environments. However, a shift was noted in adolescence, with teenagers seeking to explore beyond these confines. The discussion concluded with the assertion that children, more than their parents, claim these spaces as their own domain, they become the primary inhabitants of these streets.

In summary, the fragments initiated a debate on various facets of suburban living, including mobility patterns, the role of silence, quality of life, political inclinations, and evolving perceptions over time. The multifaceted nature of the discussion underscored the complexity inherent in understanding suburban dynamics.

2.2 Socio-cultural reflections on isolation and teenhood in suburbia

Seven fragments characterizing the spatio-social aspects of surburban lifestyles introduced the second part of the debate evening. These film excerpts are successively taken from *Nowhere Man* (Patrice Toye, 2008), *The Best of Dorien B.* (Anke Blondé, 2019), *Kid* (Fien Troch, 2012), *Violet* (Bas Devos, 2014) and *Home* (Fien Troch, 2016).

The juxtaposition of two scenes from *Nowhere Man* detail the construct of suburbia in this motion picture. (Figure 68) The story of this movie, co-written by Bjorn Olaf Johannessen and the director Patrice Toye, revolves around forty-year-old Tomas who stages his own death longing for a new start and a more spectacular life. Living an apparently average but good life, with a wonder-

Figure 6.8

Nowhere Man

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

ful wife, he entertains fantasies of a different life. Soon after executing his plan and having set foot on a tropical island, he regrets his decision. The paradise he imagined appears to be a place of hard labor, violence and racism, a place where he is desperately lonely. After five years he tries to return to his former life, where his remarried wife now takes control of his life.

The first fragment is situated in the first part of the movie, in the buil-d-up to the escape, the fake suicide. (Figure 69) The setting is a residential district characterized by big white villas, introduced by an aerial view of the big houses with worn-out lawns. This environment represents the boredom and lack of authenticity the main character is struggling with. The bald and lamentable garden of the couple symbolizes the man's growing sense of unhappiness with his mundane life. (Figure 610) At the moment the protagonist makes an effort to improve this situation, by planting a young tree in the garden, he decides to walk into the raging house fire to fake his suicide.

Figure 6.9
Nowhere Man – still 00:11:56

Figure 6.10
Nowhere Man – still 00:12:27

The second fragment portrays the neighborhood in spring, when the main character returns after five years in search for his wife and former life. (Figure 611) The condition of the house and the front garden has drastically improved. A nice garden with a mowed lawn, a fully grown tree, plants and bordered by a hedge, is now the territory of a playing kid. The lifeless impression is exchanged for a pleasing and vivacious place as a new family moved in.

Similarly, the subsequent fragment sheds light on the societal expectation that an individual, particularly once one starts a family, should settle in a suburban neighborhood. This societal norm is exemplified by Dorien, the protagonist mentioned in the title *The Best of Dorien B*. (Figure 612), who resides with her two children and successful husband in a suburban single-family house. Adding to her seemingly happy life, the 36-year-old veterinarian manages a thriving practice, possessing all the ingredients for happiness. However, her world takes a tumultuous turn when she discovers her mother has been involved in a long--term extramarital affair, her husband's close connection with a colleague and a concerning lump in her breast. These revelations prompt Dorien to evaluate her life, embarking on a quest to find the best version of herself. The film explores the clash between her (childhood) dreams and the harsh reality she faces. The fragment, particularly an encounter with an old friend who has traversed the globe, vividly portrays this contrast. (Figure 613) It becomes evident how Dorien relinquished her dream of vaccinating wild animals in Africa to conform to societal expectations and fulfill the conventional role of starting a family.
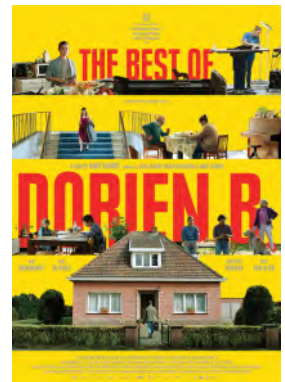
Following this, the scene from *Kid* in which the frontal facade of the uncle and aunt's house is statically portrayed was screened. (Figure 614) Together with Billy, Kid's uncle is mowing the lawn and later on, the aunt starts cleaning the windows. The scene ends with a stilled image at nightfall, same point of view, the lights of the two windows in the facade go out one by one.

The opposite happens in the evening scene portraying Jonas' family coming home in *Violet*, which was screened as next. In this fragment the camera registers how different squares of light are illuminated in the facade as the family members retreat to their rooms one by one. (Figure 615)

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Figure 6.13
The best of Dorien B.- still 00:21:40

Figure 6.14
KID
still 00:48:55 – still 00:50:08
still 00:50:15 – still 00:50:35

The last two fragments show the teenagers spending their time in Fien Troch's fiction film **Home**. The images of the youngsters hanging out on the parking of the supermarket in the first fragment, clarified the conversation of the second, interior fragment. (Figure 616) Sammy's mother doesn't understand why the parking lot of the supermarket is an important place for them, Sammy replies she is too old to understand.
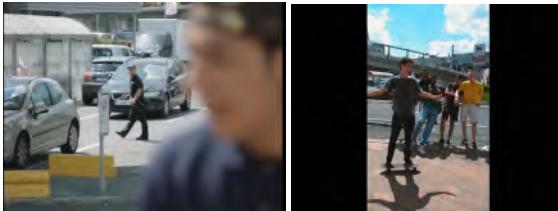
The start of the discussion revolved around the words *'loneliness', 'alienation', 'family life', freedom',* identified by the audience as keywords for the displayed fragments. (Figure 617) The previous debate that emphasized the suitability of suburban residential areas for young families was picked up. This theme was also present in the fragment of **The Best of Dorien B.** Furthermore, the lack of space for teenagers was pointed out and the association of the feeling of 'not belonging' as a young person was mentioned to be with all places outside the city, not just the suburban neighborhoods with large houses and front yards. The absence of urban facilities for young people leads them to seek a particular lifestyle which they cannot find in that suburban locations.

The conversation then delved into how films depict suburban lifestyles, with Flemish directors capable of creating a visual and atmospheric representation that reflects their perspective on suburban life. It was regarded as necessary to interpret this portrayal, as the idealized image of suburban life in films may differ from reality. The selected authorial or arthouse films were said to offer insights into how directors perceive the relationship between spatial settings and the social or personal meanings derived from them.

The dialogue continued, exploring the alignment of the depicted images with reality. While the exhibited scenes feature open front yards and homes with considerable visibility, contemporary suburban neighborhoods often have tall fences, restricting views into front yards and houses, symbolizing a trend toward increased individualization and changes in privacy. The evolution from open hedges in the 1950s to enclosed spaces in later years is noted, emphasizing the growing trend of individualization.

The conversation concluded with a discussion on the absence of a so-called 'beauty committee' in suburban developments. The environment, where residents maintain a certain distance from each other, allows for individual freedom while paradoxically leading to remarkably similar choices.

Figure 6.17

word cloud generated after the first series of fragments focused on socio-cultural aspects
Translation of the words:

GEZINSLEVEN: family life, NIEUWE CLICHES: new cliches, URBAN CULTURE: urban culture,
IDENTITEIT, Identity, BEWEGING: movement, VLUCHTOORD: escape, GEVANGEN: captive,
VRIJHEID: freedom, VERVELING: boredom, EENZAAM: lonely, VOORSTELLING: presentation,
VISITEKAARTJE: business card, DARK: dark,
TALMEN: hesitate, VOORTUIN: front yard, DRUGS: drugs, INKIJK: insight,
VERVREEMDING: alienation, KINDERSPEELPARADIJS: children's playground, EENTONIG: monotonuous,
IDEAAL: Ideal, TOE-EIGENEN: appropriate

2.3 Film as a mediator a for planning

A short presentation on how film not only represents and reflects the director's perspective on the world, but also influences and interacts with the social debate on how to deal with space, introduced the concluding discussion. The debate centered on the role of film as a mediator in representing and reflecting on suburban life and questioned whether the screened fragments could contribute to spatial planning.

The panelists discussed the aesthetics of Flemish films, with Michiel Dehaene contemplating the Flemish surrealist tradition and its specific ties to the suburban context. He questioned whether the surrealist aesthetic tradition is a product of the suburb and delved into the specificity of the aesthetic it embodies. He pondered whether it truly ingrains itself in Flemish culture, which, to a significant extent, is inherently non-urban, with productions not necessarily originating from the creative milieu of the city.

The discussion extended to the recognizability of specific spaces in films and the inquiry into whether viewers genuinely absorb spatial elements. There is a wealth of unconscious information that is assimilated without the average viewer's awareness, yet it remains a potent presence. The panel members unanimously agree on the enormous impact images can have.

Furthermore, Michiel Dehaene also reflected on the use of film as a medium for communicating about planning, ranging from reflective to propaganda purposes. Despite the current accessibility of image production, with film technology available on our phones, it is still underutilized in professional practice.

2.4 Survey results

The survey, administered to 12 respondents, lightened a more nuanced image of suburbia. After having seen the selection of fragments and the following debates, seventy percent of the attendees indicated that in their vision on suburbia, positive or negative aspects have changed, been strengthened or added. The majority of them (seventy-seven percent) experienced both new qualities and negative characteristics, while for twelve percent only a more positive perspective came to the fore through the fragments. The audience denoted an idealized, recognizable and nostalgic image in which appreciation surfaces as a principal positive value. Other positive aspects included tranquility, greenery, space, child-friendliness, and a sense of control, while negative aspects encompassed distance, isolation, lack of interaction, and dependence on cars. In contrast to the appraisal of the quiet and peaceful environments, and surprisingly only for a small part of the respondents mainly the monotonous, boring and individualistic characteristics were illuminated in the fragments.

The majority of respondents acknowledged that film could serve as a valuable medium for planners and spatial experts, offering additional truths about space, facilitating the interpretation of suburban life, and contributing to both analytical and promotional aspects.

3. Open spaces

The film session on open space, hosted once again at KASKcinema in Ghent on October 10th 2022 (Figure 618), basically followed the same set-up but improvements were made. The presentation on the mediating role of film, took place at the outset of the evening, preceding the screening of selected film fragments. For the screening, the selection of film fragments was based on, and limited to the films of, the analysis of spatial structures in combination with the reflections of the involved directors. In line with the format of the debate evening on suburbia, these fragments were divided into two main categories, according to which they were shown; first fragments characterizing the spatio--morphology of open space and second fragments characterizing the spatio-social aspects of open space. Each category featured film fragments presented in clusters of two or three, followed immediately by brief discussions on the screened images. This allowed the panel, who had been briefed in advance and had previewed the fragments, and the audience to engage in more focused debates. A longer debate exploring how film serves as a lens for understanding open space, transcending traditional academic boundaries, wrapped up the evening.

This second event, like the previous one, offered free entry and was promoted through digital and social media platforms, including Facebook, the AMRP UGent website, and email. Among the audience, the same age distribution, spanning from 22 to 64 years, and comparable spectrum of professional backgrounds, including students, academics, and spatial professionals, as on the film session about suburbia were indicated during a short survey. A notable revelation of this survey was the discrepancy between those who grew up in open space environments (50%) and those currently residing in such areas (7%, or only one of the 14 respondents).

Based on a brief explanation of their vision on open space, the panel members, Jeroen De Waegemaeker, Veerle Van Eetvelde and Bruno Notteboom, were introduced. Jeroen De Waegemaeker, researcher at Flanders Research Institute for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Instituut voor Landbouw-, Visserij-en Voedingsonderzoek, ILVO) indicated how his vision on space evolved. From focusing on built infrastructure during his architectural education, his attention shifted to nature and small landscape elements, but also agriculture when conducting PhD research. Additionally, these converge with other functions, such as gardens or horse meadows, that also shape our open space. Currently, De Waegemaeker thus maintains a multifaceted viewpoint on open space that navigates conflicts among these different elements within open space. Veerle Van Eetvelde, professor of Landscape Research at Ghent University, highlighted the dynamic, heterogeneous and interconnected nature of Flanders' lands-

Figure 6.18
announcement filmic debate evening centered around the theme of open space

cape. It is a multifunctional landscape in which people live, experience, recreate and produce. Her vision emphasizes the interplay of ecology, cultural-historical aspects and visual elements shaping open space. As an engineer-architect and urban planner, professor Bruno Notteboom's research at KULeuven, presented images from the project '*Recollecting Landscapes'*, a re-photography project initiated twenty years ago. The images depict the intersection of nature and industry, revealing Notteboom's ongoing interest in understanding the dynamics of landscapes. He criticized urban planning for simplifying and zoning landscapes, while in reality, landscapes are more complex and hybrid. Notteboom argued that photography and film can capture the hybrid nature of spaces.

The films *Carlo* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004), *Bullhead* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011), *Kid* (Fien Troch, 2012) and *Above Us All* (Eugenie Jansen, 2014) constitute the core selection for the theme open space in this research. They served as the foundation for the film fragments discussed in the previous stages and on this debate evening. The first part of the session focused on the spatio-morphological portrayal of Flemish open spaces and comprised three clusters of fragments. These fragments progress from a more traditional landscape portrayal in the first group, to more urbanized representations of open spaces in the second cluster, and finally, to depictions that border on being open spaces. In the second part of the evening, the fragments reflecting socio-cultural narratives were organized into four groups. These groups were based on the narratives that explore the experience of the landscape successively coupled with very idyllic, urban, cultural-historical or transcendental themes.

Figure 6.19
Bullhead
still 00:00:55
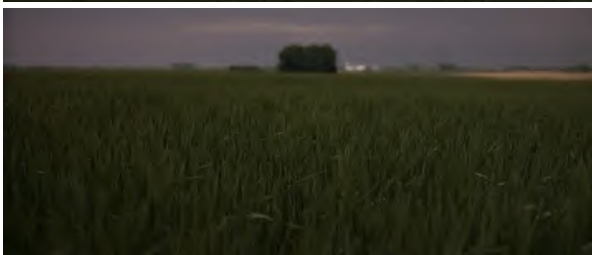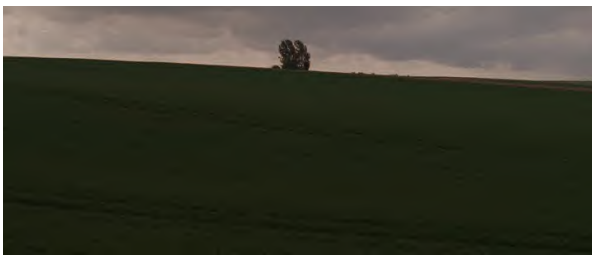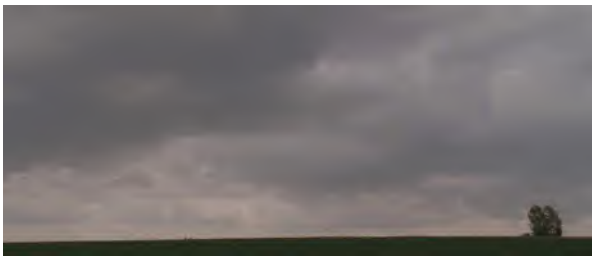
Figure 6.20
Bullhead
still 00:07:31
still 00:33:05
still 00:48:58
still 01:41:50

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

3.1 Spatio-morphological exploration of cinematic open spaces

The opening scene of **Bullhead** was presented as the initial fragment. This establishing sequence features a long shot of a meadow surrounded by trees at dawn. (Figure 619) Initially enveloped in darkness, the scene gradually brightens as a somber voice-over foreshadows forthcoming events in the film.

Following this scene, four stills portraying landscapes are shown. (Figure 620) These images not only establish the movie's rural setting but also serve as transitions between various scenes. They play a crucial role in maintaining the film's continuity and ensuring coherence for the audience, acting as a cohesive element that binds different narrative segments together. The first still is characterized by a cloud formation dominating three-fourths of the image above a low horizon. This horizon line ascends in subsequent images, mirroring the progression in the film and symbolizing Jacky's increasing predicament.

To conclude this initial series of fragments, a scene from **Kid** was presented. The still image frames a grain field with trees in the background, initially brought to life only by the gentle sway of the crops in response to a mild breeze. Moments later, the mother and her two sons traverse the field, crossing the screen in their journey. Subsequently, a serene tableau unfolds as they recline beneath a tree, the boys gradually drifting into slumber in this harmonious family moment. (Figure 621)

Figure 6.21
KID
still 00:28:52 – still 00:29:17
still 00:29:29 – still 00:29:30

After watching these fragments, the panel noted how the displayed images (fragments) adhere to the classical definition of open space, the traditional approach to the landscape. (Figure 622) Jeroen De Waegemaeker noted that the agricultural-natural aspect is clearly fundamental to our region, the images portrayed agriculture as a foundational layer and the basic identity of Flanders.

On one hand, these images were interpreted as idyllic and secure; on the other hand, they also contain a more mysterious layer, including the mist and sound, creating an atmosphere of concern. Bruno Notteboom explained this by pointing out that we see a recognizable, archetypal image, but there is a twist in it that shifts it, thus creating an uncanny atmosphere.

Figure 6.22

word cloud generated after the first series of fragments focused on spatio-morphological aspects
Translation of the words:

BOMENGRENS: tree line,
IDYLLISCH: idyllic, DUISTER: dark, NATUUR: nature, LANDBOUW: agriculture,
GERUIS: rustling, LIEFDE: love, GEKLOOT: fucked,
STILSTAAND: still, DRUGS: drugs, GROEN: green, RUST: peace, ZOMER: summer,
VERSTILD: stilled, SCHIJN; appearance, KALMTE: calmness, NOSTALGIE: nostalgia, RUSTIG: quiet,
AGRARISCH: agricultural, LAWAAI: noise, VALSE NATUUR: false nature, PLAT: flat, HOMOGEEN: homogeneous,
ZONDER BEBOUWING: without building

A second series of fragments commenced with a scene from *Bullhead*, featuring the protagonist Jacky driving back to the farm. (Figure 623) As the Jeep veers off the main road, the image captures the car on roads cutting through the fields, leaving clouds of dust in its wake.

Subsequently, the screening showcases two key excerpts from *Carlo*, specifically the opening and closing scenes. The film's initial sequence unfolds through six landscapes, devoid of human presence but marked by clear signs of human existence. (Figure 624) High voltage pylons, cultivated crops, and trees lining the roads define these evocative landscapes. Similarly, the final scene depicts Carlo's burial, with trees meticulously arranged in rows, and a typical cow trough in the form of an old bathtub. (Figure 625)

This series of fragments concluded with a scene from **Above Us All**, featuring a hot air balloon. (Figure 626) As the camera executes a 360-degree turn, children are caught on screen joyfully running and waving beneath the rising balloon. In the background there is a small village and a group of cyclists pass by. Continuing its rotation, the camera captures a farmer working on his land and Shay walking away from a war memorial. In this peaceful scene, seemingly nothing happens, while in fact a multitude of ongoing things are caught.

The images depicted in these scenes were still perceived as very idyllic by both the panel members and the audience. (Figure 627) Even the portrayal of agriculture, with grazing cows under the trees and lacking mega-stables or towers of a bio-digester, created a more romantic impression. Similar to the images from the first series, these landscapes were recognized as serving as a backdrop for various actions. The discussion highlighted how this stable backdrop strongly appeals to our subconscious, as suchlike images are deeply ingrained in our minds. They are highly recognizable, containing all the elements of a typical Flemish open space landscape, even including power lines and roads through agricultural areas. However, the movement and activity within these landscapes bring a surprising element to the scenes. Against that stable background, diverse and heterogeneous things occur, but the landscape accommo-

dates it all. Bruno Notteboom referred to the paintings of Breughel, wherein similarly various events take place, yet everything is encompassed in a stable worldview. Especially in the case of Michaël R. Roskam's images, who was trained as a classical painter, these are clearly a cultural product and refer to the Flemish tradition of representing landscapes.

The linear arrangements of trees in *Carlo*'s scenes, particularly in the final scene, contribute to structure the visual composition of the image. The moderator and author of this research, mentioned that Roskam himself draws a fascinating analogy, comparing this setting to a cathedral with the rows of trees as the columns, the drinking trough as the altar and the cows as the choir. Furthermore, it was observed by the audience that the infusion of dramatic music adds an enchanting, almost magical layer to the entire imagery. Bruno Notte-

Figure 6.27

word cloud generated after the second series of fragments focused on spatio-morphological aspects
Translation of the words:

VERSNIPPERD: fragmented
ONVERSCHILLIGHEID: indifference, GEMAAKT: made,
VLAAMS: Flemish, LANDELIJK: rural, OOGST: harvest, AANGEPLANT: planted, BOS: forest, ANTROPOGEEN: anthropogenic,
ROUTE 66: route 66, EMOTIONEEL LANDSCHAP: emotional landscape, HOEVE: farmhouse, GODVERLATEN: desolate
LINTBEBOUWING: ribbon development, VERSCHILLENDE FUNCTIES: different functions, KOE: cow, SCHIJN: appearance,
BEBOUWD: built, GEKLOOT: fucked, LANDBOUW: agriculture, MENS: human, RUSTIG: quiet,
GEMANIPULEERD: manipulated, MIDDELPUNT: centre,
"MAN MADE": "man made"

boom also drew parallels between these linear tree structures and the designs of landscape architect Bas Smets, who happens to be a close friend of Roskam.

The debate then delved into the emotional intensity of these landscapes, focusing on the deliberate placement of contrasting elements. The poignant example of Carlo being shot in the midst of a tranquil, peaceful setting emerged as a key illustration. The scene highlights how this deliberate contrast serves as a trigger for intensifying the emotional depth of these scenes. Bruno Notteboom contended that this deliberate use of the landscape reinforces the notion that the landscape acts as a stable canvas capable of hosting and juxtaposing various actions. However, Luuk Boelens challenged the conventional connotations associated with landscapes, questioning their perceived associations with peace, harmony, and idyllic scenes. For him, the landscape is equally a realm of uncontrolled activities, housing illicit operations such as drug labs and hormone trade.

The final set of fragments in the category of spatio-morphological portrayal of open space challenges the conventional definition of open space. Two fragments delve into locations situated at the fringes of what is traditionally regarded as open space. Firstly, a scene unfolding at the harness-racing stadium in *Bullhead* depicts a meeting of hormone dealing mafiosi. (Figure 628) An establishing shot framed by a window wall, provides a glimpse of the track outside and

therewith introduces the setting. This perspective, supported by the sound of galloping horses on the track, returns towards the end of this sequence. Preceding that, a conversation among three figures at the edge of the track is recorded.

Figure 6.28

Bullhead
still 00:17:41
still 00:18:11
still 00:19:01

Secondly, a fragment from the movie Kid unfolds on the concrete expanse of a supermarket's parking. (Figure 629) Pulsating beats of loud house music accompany Kid's friend as he diagonally runs over the parking spaces. The boy takes place next to Kid and shares the bag of candy he was holding. Seated on the base of a lamppost, they eat their candy while watching the car blaring house music departing from the parking lot.

The consensus among both panel members and the audience was clear regarding the categorization of the specific spaces featured in the last two fragments—they were considered open spaces despite their paved surfaces. (Figure 630) Pavement, which can also be found in open spaces, was deemed a defining factor in determining whether a space qualifies as open space or not. Instead, Veerle Van Eetvelde emphasized the importance of the context,

particularly the perspective and distance in the background, as a determining factor. Both images contained the classic elements of a landscape, including foreground, middle ground and background. Notably, it was especially the background, or the visible opening in the background creating a horizon and extending the viewing distance, that was regarded as crucial. The absence of obstructive buildings allowed for an unimpeded view, providing a space from which one could look further away.

The panel members agreed that the fragmented landscape, characteristic of Flanders (or Belgium), dictates that larger entities of open space are impossible. Nevertheless, there is always a landscape, always a potential escape to something else. This observation was compared to a labyrinth, where one inevitably ends up in an open space somewhere. The comparison was also made to '*Alice in Wonderland*', reflecting the transition from one world to another, as seen in Kid, where the protagonist transitions between different worlds, experiencing diverse emotions and events.

The profound connection between Kid and the forest was explored, with the forest serving as his escape and safe place. The visual representation of this link was highlighted when the forest appears in the background as Kid and his friend sit on the concrete block in the parking lot. Furthermore, the importance of landmarks—recognizable elements that can be named and located—was emphasized in the landscape for orientation and positioning within a larger context.

A comparison with the more planned, human-made Netherlands, underscored the small scale and organic nature as distinctive features of Flanders. The clear, large structure in the Netherlands makes the horizon more quickly perceivable.

Finally, the observation was made that public spaces are more readily labeled as open spaces compared to privatized spaces, such as the horse race track, which are accessible only to a select public.

Figure 6.30

word cloud generated after the third series of fragments focused on spatio-morphological aspects
Translation of the words:

RIJKDOM VS ARMOEDE: wealth vs poverty
HARD: hard, GEBOUWEN/STRUCTUREN: buildings/structures, BAANWINKELS: retail stores,
STEENVLAKTE: stone surface, VERHARD: hardened (paved), VAN: from, SCENE: scene, GRIJS: gray,
SCHAAL: scale, PUBLIEKE RUIMTE: public space, STEDELIJK: urban,
LANDBOUWLOOS: agriculture-less, PLURALISTISCH: pluralistic, GROTE: large, PASSAGE: passage,
JOHNNY: johnny, THUISOMGEVING: home environment, MAFFIA: mafia,
BETON: concrete, LELIJK: ugly, STEENWEG: arterial road,
MENSELIJKE AANWEZIGHEID: human presence

Figure 6.31

KID
still 00:17:33 – still 00:18:18
still 00:18:34 – still 00:19:26
still 00:20:14 – still 00:20:24

3.2 Narratives from fear to redemption in cinematic symbolic landscapes

The fragments of the second part of the evening, reflecting socio-cultural narratives, evoked extensive discussions and reflections. The audience and panel members engaged in nuanced conversations on the symbolic significance of landscapes in cinematic narratives.

As a start, a longer sequence from the film *Kid* served as a lens to discuss the portrayal of an idyllic forest as a source of comfort and happiness for the main character. (Figure 631) The fragment starts once again at the parking lot of the supermarket, where we see kid talking to an older lady. When he buys candy, it becomes clear he solicited money from the lady. The subsequent journey through the forest is a peaceful moment of joy, eating his candy while he is walking. However, as he returns home, the lady departs from the farm house, leading to Kids's punishment and subsequent retreat back into the woods.
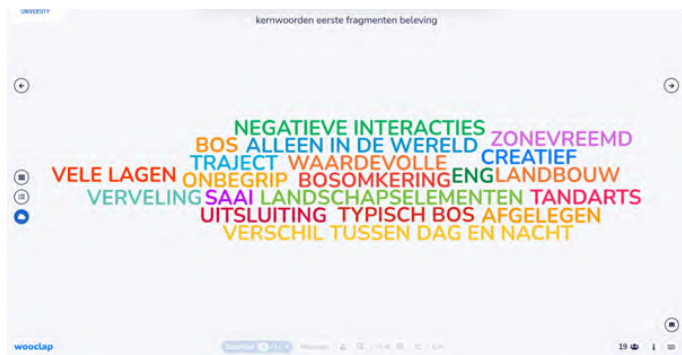
Figure 6.32

word cloud generated after the first series of fragments focused on socio-cultural aspects
Translation of the words:

NEGATIEVE INTERACTIES: negative interactions
BOS: forest, ALLEEN IN DE WERELD: alone in the world, ZONEVREEMD: non-zoned
TRAJECT: trajectory, WAARDEVOLLE: valuable, CREATIEF: creative
VELE LAGEN: many layers, ONBEGRIP: incomprehension, BOSOMKERING: forest inversion, ENG: scary, LANDBOUW: agriculture
VERVELING: boredom, SAAI: dull, LANDSCHAPSELEMENTEN: landscape elements, TANDARTS: dentist
UITSLUITING: exclusion, TYPISCH BOS: typical forest, AFGELEGEN: remote
VERSCHIL TUSSEN DAG EN NACHT: difference between day and night

The ensuing debate centered on the dissonant and tense imagery, driven by the interplay and juxtaposition of sensory and cultural associations.(Figure 632) In case of the forest, an initial association with a peaceful, tranquil place was made. Nevertheless, in traditional fairy tales, the forest often harbored frightening narratives. In the portrayed sequence of *Kid*, this dichotomy is exem-

plified when the woods serve as a solace for the boy in contrast with the distant atmosphere on the farm. Rural landscapes were pointed out as another, similar case. The stereotypical image of peace and nostalgia clashed with cultural associations of farmers engaged in illicit activities like extasy labs. In **Kid** financial problems accentuate the tension and pressure on the mother. Notably, the countryside, typically associated with a close-knit community, was portrayed as unsettling, challenging the conventional perception of rural tranquility.

The discussion delved into the perspective of farmers, with Bruno Notteboom referencing sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who asserted that farmers perceive their landscape through the lens of labor. The film presented a departure from the idyllic rural image, introducing elements of hardship to disrupt the familiar cultural narrative.

Two fragments, successively from **Carlo** and **Bullhead**, hooked up into this discussion through the interplay of social associations with urban settings and spatial aspects, a rural setting. Both scenes portray criminal events, chases ending badly, in a rural setting. The fragment of Carlo sets off in the orchard, where the protagonist is chased by criminals between the rows of fruit trees. He does not manage to escape, leading to the subsequent scene of the criminals gathering to dig his grave. (Figure 633)

A similar narrative, typically associated with urban environments, unfolds in the scene of **Bullhead**. In front of a large meadow, young Jacky and his friend talk about girls and sex. When the camera shifts perspective, the suggestion of peaceful innocence is replaced by the realization that the boys were leering at prostitutes all the time. The two set of in search for the girl Jacky has fallen for, but instead they catch a group of boys masturbating in the bushes. These set in a chase, eventually Jacky gets caught and mutilated by the youngsters. (Figure 634)

In comparison with the previous scenes, these images generated completely different keywords and emotions by the attendees, such as eerie, fear, and claustrophobia. (Figure 635) During the debate, this was explained by the lack of social control and the absence of overview in the landscapes. On the one hand, it became clear how all rules are omitted when there is very little social control. On the other hand, these landscape no longer characterize as landscapes: there is no visible horizon, no overview, no possible escape or place to hide. Moreover, both protagonists are familiar with the landscape, but the action instills fear rather than confidence. A reference with the effect of a horror movie was made, this type of movies often applies the strategy of altering certain things or rules in a safe setting, like an idyllic landscape in the fragments, to intensify fear since this is not expected to happen in this kind of setting.

Figure 6.33

Carlo
still 00:13:38
still 00:13:53
still 00:14:59
still 00:15:21

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Under there.

Come on guys, hurry up!

Figure 6.35

word cloud generated after the second series of fragments focused on socio-cultural aspects
Translation of the words:

WALONIE VERSUS VLAANDEREN: Wallonia versus Flanders
GEEN ANONIMITEIT/VERSTOPPLEK: no anonymity/hiding place
CRIMINEEL: criminal, GEEN HULP VAN BUITENAF: no help from outside, PIJNLIJK: painful
BAAN HOEREN: road prostitutes, STRAFFELOOSHEID: impunity, STIL: silent, ENGE OPEN RUIMTE: scary open space
WREED: cruel, GEEN SOCIAL CONTROLE: no social control, KOUD: cold
DAS PAS HORROR: that's horror, VERBORGEN IN OPENHEID: hidden in openness
CLAUSTROFOBISCH: claustrophobic

The cultural- historical aspects present in open spaces were captured in the following two excerpts from **Above Us All**. The rotating camera in the first fragment portrays a cemetery of World War I graves. (Figure 636) The serenity of this environment is interrupted by lawnmowers crisscrossing the place. Likewise, there is activity on the fields in the second fragment, children are playing with a metal detector while the farmer is busy with his tractor. (Figure 637)

Figure 6.38

word cloud generated after the third series of fragments focused on socio-cultural aspects
Translation of the words:

HISTORISCH LANDSCHAP: historical landscape
PALIMPSEST: palimpsest, MULTIFUNCTIONEEL: multifunctional, LEEGTE IN GEDRUIS: emptiness in noise
WERKEN: works, CHAOS: chaos, VUIL: dirty, CONTRAST: contrast, LUID: loud
VEEL GRASMACHINES: many lawnmowers, BEDRIJVIGHEID: bustle, OPEN LANDSCHAP: open landscape
MECHANISERING: mechanization, STRAK: tight
CHAOS VS RUST: chaos vs peace, AGRAGISCH: agricultural
VERSTOORDE RUS: disturbed peace
LANDSCHAP: landscape, VLAAMSE ARDENNEN: Flemish Ardennes

It was noted how both fragments convey a sense of activity, depicting a mechanized maintenance of the landscape through the lawnmowers, the farmer and the children. (Figure 638) In the first fragment, the juxtaposition between the neat, planned and tranquil micro-landscape of the cemetery and the chaos of the lawnmowers signifies this activity. While, the second fragment is associated with the mess of digging into the earth and the mud. The historical aspect was mentioned to be an inherent part of that region, almost constituting an intrinsic characteristic of those places.
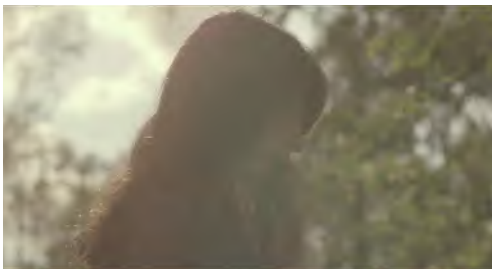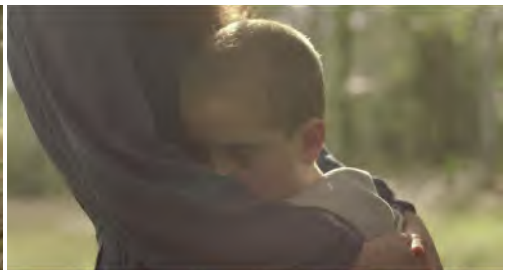
The last two scenes, taken from the movie *Kid*, impose a transcenden-
tal narrative on the forest. Both fragments are set in the wood, with the first
following the harmonious scene of the mother and the boys underneath the
tree and the final scene of the movie serving as the second of these two frag-
ments. During the first fragment, the camera follows Kid in search of this mother
through the woods. (Figure 639) Fearing he has lost her, Kid yells for his mother
and eventually finds her in an open space. The same walk between the trees is
portrayed after Kid's dead, leading to a reunion with his mother, who had been
shot earlier in the film. (Figure 640) With long takes and overlaid with light, their
embrace is depicted before the screen turns dark.

The panel delved into the significance of the forest setting for this sacral
closing of the movie, viewing it as a logical consequence of the film's narra-
tive. (Figure 641) Throughout the movie, nature, open space and landscapes
are portrayed as essential characters. The forest in particular, serves as a place
of solace, a playground and a meeting place for Kid and his mother. The final
sequence of *Kid* was perceived as a sacred moment, visually echoing a religious
theme with an archetypical image of Madonna with child, channeled through
nature. The soundtrack and the overexposed light contribute and even enhance
the overall feeling of redemption. An interesting opposition between this scene
and the rotating scenes of *Above Us All* was pointed out. The latter presents the
person in the middle and captures the entire landscape, meanwhile taking the
measure of everything in it. In contrast, in the final scene from *Kid*, the camera
seems to circle around the woman and her child, reducing the place to the back-
ground.

Simultaneously, the forest was regarded as a very placeless setting, not
specifically situated but with universal characteristics. The discussion revolved
around the association of the forest with sacrality. An association enhanced by
the verticality of the trees reaching towards the sky. Also, other open spaces
and landscapes could be experienced as sacral. The panel wondered whether
urban environments could evoke similar transcendental qualities, acknowled-
ging that the answer might depend on the narrative and the cultural history
linked to those spaces.

Figure 6.39
KID
still 00:31:40 – still 00:32:08
still 00:32:23 – still 00:32:27

Figure 6.40
KID
still 01:26:26 – still 01:26:33
still 01:26:40 – still 01:26:58
still 01:27:22 - still 01:27:38

Figure 6.41

word cloud generated after the fourth series of fragments focused on socio-cultural aspects
Translation of the words:

EIND GOED AL GOED: all's well that ends well
DRAMA: drama, SACRAAL: sacred, GOD: god, MIJMEREN: muse
SPIRITUEEL: spiritual, LICHT: light, AFSCHEID: farewell
VERVREEMDING: estrangement, GEBORGENHEID: security, HET PARADIJS: the paradise
GEWIJD LANDSCHAP: inaugurated landscape
VERMENGING MET LANDSCHAP: merging with landscape

3.3 Film as a mediator for planning

The concluding debate encompassed reflections on archetypal images, their impact on spatial planning, and the dichotomy between nature and culture. The hybrid nature of landscapes emerged as a central theme, challenging conventional categorizations.

The panel reflected on archetypal images and how these have been etched into our (collective) memory over the centuries. For example, archetypal images of what landscapes are, rural, natural as well as urban landscapes, have all sorts of connotations attached to them. It was noted how films start from those stereotypes and manipulate them. Here Bruno Notteboom drew a link with urbanism and spatial planning, where planners also have an initial set of images in mind that visualize and direct the design and plan. We strive to reinforce those images. However, these images do not necessarily correspond to reality, they are archetypes. According to Notteboom, these archetypes rely on categorization and zoning, but reality is much more hybrid. Urbanism is based on structure and zoning, even though we actually know we're dealing with hybrids. He referred to the philosopher Bruno Latour who rejected the dichotomy man created between nature and culture. Nevertheless, as a designer, dealing with this hybridity is regarded as a very complex exercise and film can contribute by providing a different point of view.

In the course of the evening, a reference was made to *Alice in Wonderland*. Parallels were drawn with the way Alice's journey takes her recurrently through specific environments with distinct characteristics and adventures. Similarly, the Flemish landscape could be perceived as a sequence of unique environments, each with its own surprises. Notably, the diversity of the Flemish landscape is a defining characteristic.

Reference Simon Schama's work, which posits that landscape plays a role in shaping people's identity. Examples such as "the forest to the Germans, stone to the Swiss, polder to the Dutch" were mentioned. When Shama writes about the forest and includes poetry and a number of other things, it was mentioned how that taught something about Germans. Similarly, a polder and the governance of the polders, and how extends into initiatives in Holland, contains knowledge about Hollanders. Thus, Luuk Boelens extended this notion to argue that a Flemish Wonderland-landscape, with its distinct character and own identity, challenges the existence of a singular, typical Flemish landscape. However, the concept of a Wonderland-landscape could provide a guiding concept for spatial planning, and specifically to deal with open space. Considering Flanders as a collage of distinctive landscapes, different characteristic environments, offers a unique perspective for spatial planning, particularly in managing open

spaces. Yet, the current Flemish landscape can be characterized as a Wonderland-landscape because it has largely grown this way organically. Thus the question arose whether the same result would be achieved if it were intentionally planned as a Wonderland-landscape?

3.4 Survey results

The survey results, derived from eleven respondents who engaged in discussions following the viewing of selected film fragments, offer a nuanced perspective on open space in Flanders. Positive qualities identified by respondents include tranquility (mentioned by 4 respondents), greenery (3 respondents), diversity (2 respondents) and charm in chaos (2 respondents). Conversely, negative aspects highlighted consist of fragmentation (5 respondents), low ecological value and excessive construction (3 respondents), as well as feelings of insecurity, fear and lawlessness (3 respondents).

The survey reveals that 50% of the participants reported a change in their vision of open space; it enhanced new meanings and added other ones, albeit both positive and negative aspects. The audience with a majority (73%) of spatial professionals, indicated how the definition of open space was broadened; for instance, unlike commonly assumed, pavement is not a term to determine whether areas are open space or not. Next to that, respondents denoted how the film fragments and subsequent discussion raised awareness of spatial archetypes, and how these are important when filmmakers create a double layering, a friction in the narrative.

Crucially, all respondents expressed conviction that film might serve as a valuable medium to assist planners and spatial experts in comprehending and managing open space in Flanders. They suggest to implement film mainly on a cultural level, emphasizing its role in gaining insight into the experience of open space. Films, according to the respondents, allow for a nuanced understanding of the situation that may not be captured through traditional plan analyses. Additionally, on a cultural level, films are seen as contributors to thought processes and dialogue, and even sensibilization with a wider audience.

4. In Between Discussion & Conclusion about Mediation

The two filmic debate evenings at KASKcinema offered a comprehensive exploration of suburban living and open space, combining academic insights, cinematic representations, and audience perspectives. The discussions delved into the complexities of these environments, shedding light on the varied experiences and challenges associated with it.

The debate on the spatio-morphological aspects of suburban portrayal mainly highlighted the presence of empty streets, stressed by the silence. However, the use of these public spaces by children with their bicycles sparked debates about the quality of life in these neighborhoods.

In contrast to the perceived quietness of suburban neighborhoods, the different discussions regarding the spatio-morphological depictions of open space lightened how the landscapes constitute a stable background for a number of very diverse acts. This mainly idyllic background interacts with our subconscious in which all these images are strongly embedded. The images are highly recognizable since they contain all the elements of a typical Flemish landscape, even high-voltage lines and the track through agricultural fields. Just like in the paintings of Breugel, a wide range of heterogeneous things can happen in these landscapes. According to the panel of experts, an important factor to morphologically define open spaces is their horizon, the perspective in the background where distance is visible. It is precisely the fragmented landscape, the patchwork that Flanders is, that determines that there are no large entities of open space. However, this also implies the presence of spaces succeeding one another, without a vast horizon. This makes it less 'open space', but at the same time also a hybrid open space, where there is always an escape to something else. By the experts, sustained by the audience, this layout was compared to a labyrinth, where one knows that somehow one will always end up at a final 'opening'. And since these 'openings' are so diverging, they become different worlds like the subsequent landscapes of *Alice in Wonderland.* This is the case for Kid for instance, he actually tumbles from one world into another. There are always other things with different emotions happening.

As a consequence, also the horse race track or the parking lot of the supermarket are considered as open spaces. When these places are portrayed, there is always another 'opening' visible on the background. The director also connects Kid with the forest, which is his place of refuge and safety. When the forest is visible in the background of the scene with Kid and his friend on the

concrete bloc of the supermarket parking, this connection is also visually established.

Considering the sociocultural dimension observed in the suburban fragments, an age-specific focus in the appreciation of suburbia and perceptions of privacy and individualization came to the fore. Apparently, and according to te screened fragments, suburbia serves predominantly mid-aged inhabitants, or young families with their children, and not so much the other age-groups. Especially the absence of designated spaces for teenagers was underscored in the discussion.

Furthermore, the panel noted how the dynamics of suburban life are also highly determined by a trend of individualization. The importance of individual freedom, expressed in fenced front yards and styling of individual houses, impact on the distance and visibility within the neighborhoods. However, with lots of open front yards, this was not always reflected in the fragments.

The fragments on open space in which spatio-social aspects come to the fore, evoke suspense and drama. The images are perceived by the panel and the audience as estranging and distorting. The debates clarified how this experience is generated by the clash of sensorial and cultural associations. In case of the rural landscape, which is clearly a fundamental landscape of this region, sensorial associations are often in opposition with the urban landscape. Where urban landscapes are often associated with violence, rural landscapes are stereotyped as peaceful and quiet. However, the films add a cultural layer with financial problems, illegal business in hormone traffic of farmers, places with little or no control, anonymity and aloofness. In this way, a very familiar and reassuring image of an idyllic landscape, is twisted by bringing in that misery, which determines the tension of the films.

An example of this strategy can be found in the scene of *Above Us All* in which lawnmowers crisscross the graveyard. The rigidly planned place and expected tranquility of such a cemetery, contrasts with the chaos created by the lawnmowers and the noise they produce. The pursuits in Roskam's films, when Carlo is chased between the fruit trees and young Jacky is chased after being caught peeping at teenagers, are even more triggering that effect. In both cases, the characters are familiar with the landscape, but the action makes them feel more fear than confidence. By changing some aspects of a secure setting – represented by the idyllic landscape – a sensation of fear is generated, which has a huge impact because of the well-known location.

The possible mediating role of film between system and lifeworld, both in the context of suburbia and open space, was recognized in the debates and short inquiries amongst the audience. Through the screenings and following

debates of experts, it became clear how film functions as a reflective medium that not only captures but also impacts perspectives on the everyday spaces.

In the examination of suburbia, the conversation extended to the impact of films on spatial planning, the aesthetics of Flemish films, and considerations of film as a tool for communication in planning practices. The survey results reflected a nuanced shift in perceptions, with attendees recognizing both positive and negative aspects of suburbia. With an overall appreciation of suburban space, these films might indeed contribute to the public perception of those places.

The cinematic perspectives also opened up the definition of open space and offer urban and spatial planners a point of view that originates in the hybrid reality. Instead of starting from planners' stereotypes, based on zoning, this cinematic approach teaches us that open spaces are defined by far more aspects than their condition in terms of pavement or difference to the urban. During the debate, it became clear that instead of the view to a continuous horizon as a condition of open space, it is at least in Flanders the sequence, the opening towards another open space in the background, that is meaningful for the present perception of open space. This perception also touches the (until screening) unconscious awareness of Flemish inhabitants in the countryside, and therewith the experience of everyday life. Instead of re-creation or final horizon, open spaces at present offer a continuous longing for more, new experiences and ongoing adventures. As such, the new, stressed or added narratives of the films introduced the concept of the Flemish landscape as a Wonderland, a collage of distinctive environments. In this Wonderland one tumbles, just like Alice in Wonderland, from one landscape into the other. The survey results showcased an enriched understanding of open space, broadening the definition beyond traditional parameters.

In both surveys, on the screenings of suburbia and open space, respondents expressed the belief that film could serve as a valuable tool for planners, contributing to (cultural) insight, nuanced understanding, dialogue and promotion.

It is important to note that the audiences for both film debate evenings were primarily professionals in spatial planning and related fields, such as architects and urbanists. This is likely due to the targeted dissemination of the event announcements via social media, which effectively reached this specific group. Despite this specialized audience, the findings can contribute to a better understanding of how film can be used as a tool in spatial planning.

In conclusion, the investigation into the role of film as a mediator highlighted its two-fold contribution to spatial planning, namely by providing an alter-

native, more holistic reading and by shaping new conceptualizations. Firstly, the spatio-morphological and socio-cultural aspects captured in cinematic images challenge entrenched stereotypes and provide and another reading of space. This was evident in the discussions on suburbia and open space, where cinematic images tapped into nostalgic references and departed from portraying idealized suburban life and romantic landscapes. These depictions, deeply rooted in the collective subconscious, evoke recognition. These cinematic perspectives can thus install or underline awareness of these unconsciously present associations and strongly embedded, nostaligic images. However, the confrontation with the narratives and actions in the movies subvert this seemingly cultivation of the idyllic. Furthermore, filmmakers amplify their impact by introducing unexpected associations, creating a clash that disrupts conventional perceptions and heightens awareness of these subconscious and nostalgia-laden images.

Secondly, films possess the transformative power to shape new concepts, which might be added to the agenda and focus of spatial planners. In suburban environments, the age-specific focus highlighted by these films prompts a reconsideration of planning priorities. This includes addressing underprivileged groups within the private-public setting of suburbia and exploring alternative build-up projects. Regarding open space, the conceptualization of Flanders as a Wonderland, a series of smaller distinct entities, each with its unique characteristics, offers a fresh perspective that extends beyond the conventional approach to aim for of large, continuous open spaces.

The survey results further indicated film's potential as a communication tool and catalyst for dialogue. Although this has not been further investigated, it designates possible pathways for planners to engage with filmic representations. This research has shown that if planners would engage with filmic representations, it could foster a nuanced understanding of spatial dynamics and even instigate new themes and concepts to plan and design space.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

1. Research outcomes

This research started from the observation that there is a fundamental discrepancy between the discourse and perception of spatial planners on the Flemish urbanized landscape and everyday life and practice in that landscape. While spatial planners as well as policy makers try to get a grip on (sub)urbanization and further fragmentation through their planning means, consumption of Flemish space unimpededly continues. Both urban planners and policy makers have primarily focused on demographic, economic, and ecological problems produced by Flanders' dispersed settlement structure (with plans and reports like RSV 1997, BRV 2018, RURA 2018, RURA 2021, etc.). All these plans voice an urgent need for urban densification in combination with a building shift on formerly legalized greenfields in the countryside. However, the remaining open space is annually still taken up by residential or industrial development - in 2019 at a speed of 6,4 hectares a day (Pisman, Vanacker, Strosse, et al., 2019). Despite the adverse effects of sprawl, such as ongoing traffic jams, impact on climate change, heightened energy consumption and ecological transformations, the Flemish inhabitants in general persist in their dispersed settlement behavior, thereby unimpededly continuing suburbanization.

The highly fragmented settlement structure by now covers approximately one third of the entire territory. Although Flanders is a densely populated region[72], with a settlement area of 33 percent, it has one of the lowest densities in terms of settlement structure.[73] Since everyday life just goes on despite governmental plans of more than 3 decades, planners struggle to fully grasp the cultural nuances and realities of inhabitants when dealing with this subject. There occurs a growing divide between professional planning practices and lived experiences. Conventional research methods, including traditional tools like plans, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), periodic field visits, and statistics hardly capture the intricacies of everyday life. This leads to policies adhering to abstract frameworks, rather than incorporating the characteristics, meaning, value, and experience of this urbanized landscape. The need to understand contemporary everyday life and lived space is also motivated by the interdependence between political will and public aspirations, which makes the matter highly relational (Amin, 2001; Amin & Thrift, 2002; Crang & Thrift, 2000; Doel, 1999; Massey, 2005). And although visual methods - such as photovoice, photo-elicitation, or other situational, phenomenological and ethnographic research (Reijndorp & Reijnders, 2010) - have been used to establish a direct interaction between researchers and subjects in other fields, such as sociology and anthropology, or, in spatial planning, by means of research by design (a.o. Roggema, 2016; Bernardo Secchi & Ingallina, 2006; Taverne, 1989), planners

72.
The average population density in Flanders is 488 inhabitants/km2 in 2021. (https://www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/bevolking-omvang-en-groei)

73.
Vlaanderen, Ruimte. "Witboek Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen." Brussels, Belgium.[https://www.ruimtevlaanderen.be/Portals/108/WhitePaperSpatialPolicyPlanFlanders_brochure2017_1.pdf] Available from (2017).
Vlaamse Overheid. (2017a). "Vlaams Bouwmeester meerjarenprogramma 2017-2020." Brussels, Belgium. [https://www.vlaamsbouwmeester.be/nl/meerjarenprogramma-2017-2020.] Available from (2017).

still hardly grasp the whole picture of this lifeworld. To better understand and conceptualize the urban landscape, and especially Flemish sprawl, planners need to move beyond systematic approaches and engage with the lived space. This shift can help bridge the gap between urban plans and everyday culture.

Against this background, film was introduced as a potential new perspective to regain the specific social and cultural meaning of the everyday in Flemish urbanized landscapes. Since cinematic perceptions, in particular the depiction of spatial environments in films, have the capacity to represent, reflect, and interact with evolutions of spaces, film might offer an opportunity to gain new insights into the everyday, the lifeworld, and its intrinsic characteristics with regard to experience, its storylines, and the typical dynamics of daily life. Moreover, this threefold quality of the cinematic image (the representational, the reflectional, and the interactive) facilitates film to mediate between realities and theories or concepts on contemporary landscapes. Thus, this research explored whether and how film might contribute to a new approach in spatial planning, specifically considering the Flemish urbanized landscape. If successful, this would imply that film could serve as a tool to bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and everyday ways of living.

Grounded on this threefold quality of the cinematic image, the investigation of cinematic perceptions of the Flemish urbanized landscape analyzed the representation of the everyday (reading space), the strategical reflection on visual and temporal imaginaries of space (socially constructing space) and the interactive dimension (mediating space) in a selection of eight contemporary fiction films. These films - *Steve+Sky* (Felix Van Groeningen, 2004), *Carlo* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2004), *Bullhead* (Michaël R. Roskam, 2011), *Fucking Suburbia* (Jeff Otte, 2012), *Kid* (Fien Troch, 2012), *Violet* (Bas Devos, 2014), *Above Us All* (Eugenie Jansen, 2014), and *Home* (Fien Troch, 2016) - stood out in their contemporary and contextual view of specific spatial themes in the Flemish urbanized landscape, namely ribbon development along arterial roads, low-density residential areas in suburban regions, and open spaces. This concluding chapter presents the results of each sub-question, each addressing a specific cinematic role, and ultimately formulates an answer to the central research question: ***Is film able to contribute to an integrated approach of the Flemish urbanized landscape in Spatial Planning?***

1.1 What are the prevalent cinematographic representations of the Flemish urbanized landscape in films? How is this peculiar Flemish landscape presented in film?

Starting from the observation that film has the capability of representing versatile information about space by combining visual, spatial, and temporal elements, this first part of the analysis examined reoccurring cinematic representations of physical spatial settings. Moreover, the cinematic attention for the everyday reveals daily life and its intrinsic and typical dynamics through visual portrayals and storylines. Therefore, the filmic representational characteristics, the formal components such as camera settings, soundtrack, mise-en-scène, etc., were investigated in relation to the storyline.

This was done by categorizing the spaces portrayed in the selection of films according to their spatial-morphological characteristics. The video annotation software, ELAN, was helpful at this stage to indicate portrayed spatial structures in relation to the storyline and timing within each movie. The shots in this inventory were then analyzed in their formal composition and applied audiovisual (camera) techniques, such as framing, camera settings, camera movements, etc.. This provided an overview of the kind of spaces portrayed in relation to their filmic depiction. Moreover, also the amount of time the director spends in a particular setting helped to clarify the cinematic perceptions.

Although the selected films all have different set-ups, the distinct presence of at least one of the three typical aspects of the Flemish dispersed landscape (suburbia, arterial roads, open space) is what links these eight movies in this research. The amount of time these typical areas appear on screen is just one of the factors demonstrating the importance of these environments. In this selection, there are films that are nearly entirely set in a suburban environment (*Fucking Suburbia, Violet, Home*) or along an arterial road (*Steve+Sky*), while other movies have a major part of the screened film time dedicated to open space (*Bullhead, Above Us All*) or combine the setting in open space with a suburban setting (*Kid*), or a setup along an arterial road (*Carlo*). None of these films has explicit references to a concentrated city or ascribed the city center with a defining role. Therefore, these films draw the attention to respectively the suburban residential neighborhoods, open spaces or the environments of the arterial roads. Especially the long takes in combination with static camerawork, recurrent in many of these movies (*Violet, Kid, Fucking Suburbia, Above Us All*), stress the imagined environments and allow the viewer to absorb these spaces.

Furthermore, with the exception of *Above Us All* and *Bullhead*, none of the films explicitly locates the narratives in a particular city or place. In *Above Us All* the Flemish landscapes of public commemoration are placed in opposition to the Australian open landscapes, while *Bullhead* deliberately uses the different regions on both sides of the language border in Belgium. Next to that, and what is unambiguously the case for the other six movies of the case study, there are no discernable references, such as recognizable landmarks, cathedrals, street or place names, that deliberately draw the attention and reveal the exact location of the story. Instead, the directors portray generic, but recognizable Flemish places. As such, the imagined suburban neighborhoods in *Violet* and *Fucking Suburbia* have the typical set-up of plots with detached single-family houses, even resembling typical American residential neighborhoods. Moreover, by singling out façades of these single-family houses with statical, frontal images in *Kid* and *Violet* these ordinary houses are imbued with significance, both aesthetically and symbolically. The world of the arterial road, particularly in *Steve+Sky,* is composed as a characteristic succession of parking lots, big stores, brothels, Chinese restaurants, gas stations, etc. in the Flemish landscape. These visualized places, the suburban neighborhoods and the areas along the arterial roads, could be located anywhere in Flanders. Even the open spaces are portrayed as very traditional landscapes with static images that are cognate with ancient landscape paintings particular for Flanders. Examples include, among others, the landscapes of the opening scene in both *Bullhead* and *Carlo,* the transitional images in *Bullhead*, the fields in *Kid, Above Us All,* and *Bullhead*, and the forest in *Kid, Carlo, Violet,* and *Fucking Suburbia*. Nevertheless, in all these visualizations of open space, the introduction of human artefacts turns the natural landscapes into cultural landscapes. These cultural elements range from planted crops (*Bullhead, Kid*) or rows of trees (*Carlo*), craters resulting from bomb impacts (*Above Us All*), high-voltage pylons (*Carlo*), to even a complete horse racetrack (*Bullhead*) and the parking lot of the supermarket (*Kid*). All these landscapes are represented in the selected movies as open space.

It is striking that all the movies rely on certain generic, archetypal images of landscapes that have been imprinted in the Flemish (collective) memory. In the cinematic representation we recognize these stereotypes of natural, rural, or urban landscapes and the associated connotations. However, the cinematic representations that were analyzed in this dissertation go beyond these traditional representations and succeed in catching the hybrid reality of Flemish landscapes. Commonplaces like streets, parking lots, houses, brothels, etc. are elevated within these representations, emerging as focal points within the cinematic frame. These spaces, often situated on the urban fringe and intertwined with everyday use, are imbued with significance as settings for cinematic scenes. Moreover, the camera captures how this everyday use often diverges from their

intended design and plan. For instance, parking lots of supermarkets are depicted as children's playgrounds in *Kid*, or hangout spots for teenagers in *Home*.

As such, the Flemish urbanized landscape is cinematographically constructed through the portrayal of generic everyday spaces, but equally connects the representation of these spaces with specific subcultures or age groups. These cinematic representations also illuminate the challenges faced by these groups: the struggle for identity and freedom among adolescents in outdoor peripheral spaces, the financial burdens and entanglements with illicit activities for farmers, and the marginalized existence along the arterial road for criminals and sex workers. These movies made clear that regarding and analyzing filmic representations as **a reading device** not only draws attention to otherwise overlooked, or misjudged places such as suburban allotments, parking lots, wastelands, and arterial road environments. Moreover, it also reveals insights about these places and their everyday use by specific groups. Furthermore, by employing filmic representations as a lens for analysis, we do not only gain insights into these environments, but also recognize the pivotal role of cinematic context in shaping narrative dynamics. Whether it's the tranquil suburban neighborhoods in *Violet* and *Fucking Suburbia*, the gritty underworld of bars and brothels along arterial roads in *Steve+Sky*, the poignant landscapes of commemoration in *Above Us All*, the claustrophobic interiors in *Home*, or the uncontrolled open spaces in *Bullhead*, *Carlo,* and *Kid*, each setting is more than only a backdrop. They are in fact an active participant in the storytelling process.

1.2 What (new) knowledge of the Flemish urban culture is offered by this cinematic perception?

Next to being a representational medium or reading device, films also articulate a specific reflection on cultural concepts in the 'real' world. In addition to capturing physical elements and structures, films also selectively highlight non-physical issues; the narratives of films express ideas that structure the practices of our everyday life. When directors situate a story in a particular place and establish a setting, their partial and fragmentary view reflects the sense and meaning of a place. Mark Tewdwr-Jones' reasoned that the camera lens is well positioned to provide a unique sense of space, unavailable through other explorations of space: '*A deeper reading of filmic representations may not only assist in our reading of the urban, but can also assist in how particular people and communities possess attachments to particular urban landscapes.*' (Tewdwr-Jones, 2011b, p. 31)

To unveil these social constructions and reflections embedded in films, this study delved into the (inter)subjective expressions of spatio-sociocultural themes through extensive analysis of the selected films and interviews with each film's director. Building upon the first analysis of spatial representations, this part of the analysis focused on understanding the production of socio-cultural meaning in the selected movies. This involved scrutinizing narrative elements in relation to montage, editing, lighting, color, sound, and optics. Furthermore, in-depth interviews were conducted with the directors, delving into their motivations, intentions, decisions, and considerations throughout the filmmaking process, with particular emphasis on the construction of space and the various influences that shaped its depiction.

Film locations play a pivotal role in shaping the socio-cultural context and storytelling of a film. Next to shaping the visual language, narrative elements, and overall authenticity of a film, a film's location also contributes significantly to the overall impact and resonance with audiences. The selected films were all shot on location in Flanders, which highlights the crucial role of these locations in the creation process of a film. Moreover, the directors often minimize interventions to preserve the authenticity of the chosen settings. As a pivotal step in the filmmaking process, the selection and treatment of film locations differs for each director. Jeff Otte started from a very specific location, whereas Bas Devos, Fien Troch, and Michaël R. Roskam were inspired by childhood memories. In contrast, Eugenie Jansen and Felix van Groeningen were driven by thematic concepts. For Jansen, this meant choosing a location that resonated with the theme of commemoration, while van Groeningen was guided by the central

theme of the road as a connector where anything is for sale, even Sky as a prostitute. On top of that, the choice of a film setting is also determined by various considerations ranging from visual aesthetics and cultural associations to feasibility and logistics.

In the selected films, the Flemish dispersed landscape, and especially the presence of motorway spaces, suburban spaces, and open space, is not limited to merely a representation in the background. In each of these movies, the narratives are determined by the pivotal role of these spaces. In *Carlo*, the outcome of the chase as a consequence of a misunderstanding, is defined by the characteristics of the orchard, including the cannons that pop loudly to scare away birds, which are as defining as the trees planted in rows. In *Bullhead*, the dramatic turn in young Jacky's life course is possible in open space that appears to be almost lawless. The symbolic value of open space is important in both *Kid* and *Above Us All*. In *Kid*, the forest is a place of harmony (no financial worries) and freedom (no imposed rules or obligations), and ultimately, it is also the place where Kid is re-united with his mother, even after their deaths. Since the storyline of *Above Us All* did not take precedence in making the movie, the landscapes express the processing of grief. For its part, the suburban environments function in all the movies as enclosed worlds wherein the protagonists, mostly teenagers (*Home, Violet, Fucking Suburbia*), seem somehow trapped. Also in Kid's case, moving to the suburban house of his aunt implies loss of freedom. The opposite is the case for the opportunities experienced along the arterial road, which define the young lives of the protagonists in *Steve+Sky*. The world of the arterial road seems primarily a refuge where individual desires and needs of subcultures with distinct behavioral patterns can thrive.

As a social construct, the selected movies add a dramatic and symbolic layer to these landscapes of the road, suburbia, and open space. Van Groeningen explained how he meticulously composes the places where his films take place. He regards the settings as an essential element, which he employs to indicate, mirror, or magnify the feelings, experiences, and connections of the characters. In *Steve+Sky*, the road serves as a symbolic connection between the protagonists: Sky frequently walks along it, crossing the screen from left to right. In contrast, Steve travels in the opposite direction on his motorcycle or by running along the road. Just as their love story unfolds gradually throughout the movie, these movements also do not converge until the final scene, when Steve narrowly avoids hitting Sky at the crosswalk, bringing them together.

The suburban neighborhoods in these films are connected with the stability of people and families that have their lives structured and under control; they '*have their shit together*' as Fien Troch says. These suburbia's are then nice surroundings for (innocent) children and harmonious families. Teenagers occupy

a special position in this. Being in transition to adultery, they also inhabit liminal places. The teenagers in **Violet,** as well as those of **Fucking suburbia** and **Home**, frequent the so-called wastelands. The skate park, the woods, the edge of the football field, and even the parking lot of the supermarket are places of the teenagers, where they are not bound by an adult society.

In their portrayal of open space, the directors connect freedom with these landscapes. On the one hand, freedom is experienced by (innocent) children. These environments do not impose rules or obligations; there are no expectations like silence in the church, purchase in the supermarket or good behavior and obedience at school and at home. On the other hand, freedom also has criminal implications when these areas are linked with lawlessness. As places with little or no (social) control, such horrors as illegal hormone trafficking, mutilation (young Jacky), and even murder (Carlo and Kid's mother) are possible and define the open space also as a place (of crime). Open spaces, therefore, instead of being one-dimensional, also become hybrid spaces (liberating and frightening), like but also completely different to urban spaces. As spaces with typically more regulations and (social) control, especially for children, the context of urban spaces would initially not be associated with this kind of freedom. Urban contexts are much more designed to regulate behavior, such as walking on the sidewalks. Moreover, whereas in open spaces coincidence seems to have a greater influence, in urban environments specific functions are often designated to certain areas, like play areas in which even the activities are defined by the presence of swings, sandboxes and monkey bars. Nevertheless, the density of people living in urban environments and the traffic come with their own kind of dangers and impose structured norms. Therefore, different narratives surround urban and open spaces.

The interviews also made clear that the directors deliberately choose these environments, not only to situate their stories but also to aesthetically portray these locations. The selection of films in this thesis shows how several aesthetic scenes portray suburban neighborhoods as an assemblage of plots. With a camera gently gliding through the streets, tracking the BMX-riders in **Violet** or one of the protagonists in **Fucking Suburbia**, the layout of the suburban environment with curving and slightly rolling streets becomes importantly apparent. And despite the rawness of the narrative and its portrayal, **Steve+Sky** emanates an almost surreal poetry. On the one hand, the landscape characterized by its heavy traffic feels desolate. The spectator experiences the harsh reality of a world that is reversing from its origin, with sometimes fully enclosed façades. On the other hand, the tender love of these two colorful individuals emerging in an equally colorful neon-lighted environment resembles a fairy-tale. In turn, Michaël R. Roskam approaches the landscape aesthetically, with refe-

rences to our cultural past, and uses the narrative to link the landscape with threat. Human artefacts like linear rows of planted trees or raised slopes are the morphological elements he employs in an aesthetic way to generate a dramatic composition in the open space narrative. Fien Troch positions open spaces, and particularly the forest, in contrast with inhabited places. This is done by a very deliberate use of cinematography: a consistent static framing stresses the uncomfortable atmosphere on the farm, at school, in church, or in the house of Kid's uncle and aunt. While the open spaces, including the parking lot, are the places that offer the boy comfort, security, and freedom. Eugenie Jansen's rotating camera captures settings that are physically not changed or styled by the filmmaker but inserted with coincidental and directed scenes. With this technique the multiplicity of things that happen in these hybrid landscapes (in contrast to the general idea that open landscapes are often dull or clear) is not only visualized, but also stressed, enhancing a new narrative of open space.

Finally, Bas Devos, Jeff Otte, Fien Troch, and Felix Van Groeningen have also indicated the influence of American movies on visual and cultural elements. Both Devos and Otte emphasized how the American iconography of suburban neighborhoods influenced their choice of filming locations, noting features such as winding streets and one-story houses, reminiscent of American suburbs. Troch and Van Groeningen expressed their fascination with certain typical American settings, such as gas stations and supermarkets. These reflec-

tions indicate how perceptions of cultures and the world have been shaped by American films, even in our non-American Flemish society.

As such and last but not least, films thus offer a unique lens through which to explore and understand Flemish urban culture. Herewith the selected films also become a **'social construct'**. By depicting the use, experience, and connotations of different places, films extend our understanding beyond mere visual observations, enriching social interpretations of the landscape. Through the portrayal of individuals or certain groups navigating their sub-urbanized surroundings, these films offer profound insights into the complexities of the Flemish urban culture, deepening our understanding of the dynamic relationship between people and their environments**.** Each film provides a glimpse into everyday life within the Flemish urbanized landscape. Motorway spaces are showcased as both symbolic connectors and aesthetic settings for romance. Suburbia is depicted as more than just a collection of houses, but also as social havens of stability and safety ideals for families. Open spaces are portrayed as hybrid environments where children and teenagers seek freedom, or where criminal activities unfold beyond social control, sometimes even evoking transcendental sensations. Through these narratives, films become a valuable source of information about how culture, everyday life, and spatial relations manifest themselves within this urban context. They serve as cultural lenses through which we can gain insights into the daily life experiences of urban sprawl, for better or worse. Therefore, the cinematic context is not only aesthetically significant but also crucial in defining a social message conveyed by the films.

1.3 How can these insights gleaned from cinematic representations be applied to enhance the connection between urban planning and the Flemish urban landscape?

In concordance with this, our final endeavor focused on the capacity of film to interact between professional experts, or 'the system' as defined by Habermas in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981), and the everyday, 'the lifeworld', of laymen. The contribution of cinematic interactions to the social debate on how to deal with space can bridge this gap and get planners involved to better understand the everyday. In order to discover the possible mediating role of film between system and lifeworld, we organized and moderated two film sessions with debates. Each session focused on a defining theme within this landscape, namely suburbia and open space. For the screening, film fragments were selected based on the forementioned analysis of cinematic spatial structures, in combination with the reflections of the involved directors. These fragments were divided into two main categories: the first fragments characterized the spatio-morphology and second fragments characterizing the spatio-social aspects of the topic. After screening fragments of the selection of motion pictures to an audience of stakeholders, a panel discussion with an expert panel and the public ensued, allowing to understand how films are able to communicate, even influence spatial concepts, views, and actions of stake- and shareholders of the subject. An interactive questionnaire allowed public participation before, during, and after the screening, providing insight into the public's reception and possible changes in presumed perceptions of space.

The first part, screening and following debate, revealed a more nuanced image of both suburbia and open space to the audience of spatial experts. In the case of suburbia, the audience denoted an idealized, recognizable and nostalgic image in which appreciation surfaces as a principal positive value. This sentiment was conveyed through spatio-morphological aspects that highlighted the tranquility of these suburban environments with their silenced empty streets. Moreover, the fragments with children freely riding their bicycles in these streets strengthens the feeling of a safe and enclosed community life. This overall appreciation of suburban space in films might indeed contribute to the public perception of those places. Whereas planners tend to dismiss this dominant suburban districts as one of the determining factors in the spatial disarrangement of the Flemish landscape, this cinematic attention and accompanying analysis redirected the focus of the debate towards these features. Furthermore, the debates on the narratives of the selected fragments also illuminated an age-specific

focus in appreciation of suburbia. While these neighborhoods are depicted as suitable and desirable for middle-aged inhabitants and young families, teenagers often feel disconnected from them. Thus, these films might add to the agenda focus of planners in suburbia, in order to serve those underprivileged groups in the private-public setting of suburbia, or might focus this agenda on alternative build-up projects. In the context of densification efforts, this may involve creating adapted spaces for young families in city centers that evoke the same sense of safety and community, as found and appreciated in suburban areas. Moreover, providing accommodations for teenagers, a demographic group often overlooked and relegated to the urban fringe, could then significantly enhance inclusivity and well-being. In a broader context, the debates showed that cinematic mediation offers valuable insights for planners, in particular regarding the nuanced relationships various (demographic) groups have with space. These insights might be integrated, emphasizing positive elements while mitigating negative ones, in new spatial plans.

The cinematic perspectives also opened up the definition of open space and offered urban and spatial planners a point of view that originates in the hybrid reality. Through both spatio-morphological representations and socio-cultural construct in the narratives, open spaces are not depicted as conventional, idyllic, or monofunctional landscapes, but as dynamic environments, rich in diversity. They encompass a spectrum of elements, ranging from natural features to more or less present man-made structures like high voltage pylons, racetracks, and concrete parking lots. Moreover, open spaces are also used in various, hybrid ways, making them a relational platform for divergent actions in turn. In fact, open spaces emerge as hubs for a wide range of activities, extending beyond the traditional associations with nature or agriculture. They host BMX tracks, serve as venues for various recreational pursuits, but also unfortunately become settings for illicit activities such as vandalism and crime. Rather than relying on approaches based on spatial zoning with conventional stereotypes, this cinematic approach reveals that open spaces are defined by a myriad of factors beyond their physical attributes or their contrast to the urban. The debates evidenced that, in Flanders, the perception of open space is not solely dependent on the large scale and continuous horizon but even so on the sequence and the connection with other open spaces in the background. Contrary to the notion of open spaces as static or finite, the focus of the current Flemish open landscapes in the films is on the succession of smaller distinct entities as a continuous yearning for exploration and adventure. This interpretation implies that for spatial planning the relations between these different open spaces are equally important. The debate introduced the concept of the Flemish landscape as a *Wonderland*, akin to Alice's adventures. Considered as a Wonderland, each open space

emphasizes a remarkable variety and diversity, presenting the Flemish landscape as a collage of distinctive landscapes, wherein users tumble from one to the other. This concept of Flanders as a Wonderland can serve as a methodological approach for spatial planners, encouraging them to view and design the landscape as a series of interconnected open spaces, instead of one open space, demarcated and zoned from other functions, each with its own unique characteristics and adventures, reflecting its inherent diversity.

Next to the outcomes of the debates, through the second part - the interactive questionnaire - it became clear that the fragments also evoked a more general discussion on the interpretation and impact of moving images. The majority of the respondents (77 percent on the evening focusing on suburbia in film, 100 percent on the evening centered on open space) have become convinced that film might be regarded as a medium that can help planners or spatial experts in their reading and handling of open space in Flanders. They suggested implementing film mainly on a cultural level and in spatial education, to gain insight in the experience of (open) space. Films were more and more regarded to enable us to sense the situation, which cannot be caught in regular plan analyses. On a cultural level, the questionnaire revealed that films can contribute to thought processes and dialogue, and even sensibilization with wider audiences.

Furthermore, the audience of spatial professionals broadened their view on suburbia and the definition of open space. Additionally, respondents denoted how the film fragments and subsequent discussion raised awareness of spatial archetypes, and how these are important when filmmakers create a double layering, and a friction in the narrative. Considering suburbia, there was a nuanced shift in perception towards an appreciation for suburban spaces based on an aesthetically positive portrayal. Negative aspects, such as monotony, boredom, isolation, and individualism, no longer prevailed. Instead, the image of suburbia as a quiet and peaceful environment, highlighted by tranquility, greenery, spaciousness, child-friendliness, and a sense of control, becomes more prominent. During the session on open space, the discussions led to the introduction of a design concept based on the narrative of open space as a Wonderland. In turn, this concept can inspire planners to approach this landscape as a sequence of smaller entities of open spaces each with their own specific characteristics and adventures.

Noteworthy is the need for more profound analyses in the psycho-cultural impact of represented spaces in film, which is often neglected by planners and spatial policies. The audience at the screenings with panel debate consisted mainly of professionals in fields related to our spatial environment, such as archi-

tects, spatial planners and urbanists. This was due to the dissemination of the announcement, primarily through social media, which effectively reached this specific audience. Nevertheless, the results can be used to further define how film can be utilized as a tool in spatial planning.

As such and as a **mediator** between system and lifeworld, film has thus underscored its dual significance in spatial planning, offering both an alternative, more comprehensive reading of space and shaping new conceptualizations that originate in this reading. Firstly, cinematic imagery, capturing spatio-morphological and socio-cultural dimensions, challenged entrenched stereotypes and conventional perceptions, as evidenced in the debates on suburbia and open space. These cinematic depictions evoked recognition of deeply ingrained, nostalgic images, prompting heightened awareness of subconscious associations. Secondly, through the debates, films might introduce new concepts into planning agendas, such as addressing age-specific needs in suburbia and embracing the concept of Flanders as a Wonderland of diverse, interconnected spaces. The survey results suggest film's potential as a communication tool and catalyst for dialogue, paving the way for planners to engage with cinematic representations to foster a nuanced understanding of spatial dynamics and introduce innovative themes and concepts into spatial planning and design processes.

2. General conclusion

Taking the results of the different sub-questions into account, the main research question is recaptured:

Is film able to contribute to an integrated approach of the Flemish urbanized landscape in Spatial Planning?

The investigation of a selection of eight fiction films in their cinematic reading, social construction and mediation made clear that the framing of typical aspects of this landscape (dived into three main themes: suburbia, arterial roads and open space) in narrative fiction film broadens the common vision. The research findings showed several ways in which cinema can open up the way to innovative reflection on space and its challenges.

Firstly, considered as a reading device, the cinematic representations provide significant attention for everyday spaces, which are not usually on the radar of planners. This stresses not only the importance of the portrayed areas like the suburban neighborhood, the environment of the arterial road, and a wide variety of open spaces, but also their everyday use and experience by specific groups. The aesthetic framing of suburban streets and individual houses as well as the roadside developments of the arterial road in the investigated films, refute the mainstream approach of these generic spaces as ordinary. While the protagonists of the movies, marginalized youth in the case of the arterial road, and teenagers and young children in suburban and open space contexts, occupy spaces on the urban fringe. Therewith indicating how they invert the intended use, for instance the parking lot of the supermarket is used as a playground or hangout place instead of for parking. But most importantly, these representations highlight spaces that, although often overlooked by spatial planners, are integral to the everyday lifeworld. Particularly regarding the investigated spatial themes in the Flemish urbanized landscape - namely ribbon development along arterial roads, low-density residential areas in suburban regions, and open spaces - the cinematic representations revealed how these underappreciated elements define the experience and functioning of the everyday lifeworld.

Secondly, considered as a social construct, filmic narratives succeed in highlighting what is really appreciated in these landscapes and what is not. By depicting how people and communities interact with and form attachments to particular urban landscapes, a very selective perspective (highly theoretical/systematic, negative, monofunctional) is adjusted into a multiple layered image.

In the cinematic reflections of this research, suburban neighborhoods are static, empty, and maybe even monotonous but at the same time valued as a safety net; the environment of the arterial road is a no-man's land but equally a space where specific subcultures thrive; and open spaces are associated with the dual nature of freedom (a retreat and underground) and symbolism (transcendence and fear). These narratives thus define the Flemish spaces as hybrid spaces, necessitating a different approach than the zoned plans or categorical statistics upon which the current, generic planning is typically based. From planning analysis to problem definition, decision-making up to the execution processes, the traditional approach relies entirely on zoning (in open spaces) or conceptualization (in suburbs and along major roads). Subsequent regulations define what is permissible within these zones and/or concepts. However, the cinematic reflections demonstrated that traditional methods do not adequately capture all aspects of suburbia, the developments along the arterial roads or open spaces. This fundamentally challenges the conventional planning perspectives and methods, stressing the need to integrate the daily lived experiences, opinions, desires, and opportunities of users from the outset.

Thirdly, considered as a mediator, film screenings initiate debates that facilitate a more comprehensive reading of space that in turn has the opportunity to shape new concepts for planners to consider. The age-specific focus in suburban environments prompts a reconsideration of planning priorities, addressing underprivileged groups and exploring alternative projects. Similarly, the conceptualization of Flanders as a Wonderland, with diverse, interconnected spaces, offers a fresh perspective beyond conventional approaches to open space planning. This demonstrates how film can play a role in a more profound deployment of Habermas's theory of communicative action in spatial planning. In order to bridge the gap between the system and lifeworld, the communicative actions pointed out by the cultural cinematic actions can contribute by helping develop dramaturgic and normative frameworks for spatial development. The focus is not on negotiation-oriented, collaborative, or strategic approach, as intended by Ines (1995), Healy (1997) or Albrechts (2001), but on communicative action as mediator between purposive-rational, dramaturgic and normative actions.

In essence, the lens of fiction film thus offers a novel approach for the spatial planning practice by providing not only insights and reflections that inform the analysis, interpretation, and design of spaces, but also introduces opportunities to (re)focus on dramaturgic normative actions within spatial planning. While not directly applicable, cinematic representations foster cultural awareness and introduce new perspectives grounded in everyday experiences, thus facilitating overarching communicative action between system and lifeworld. Furthermore, film narratives can inspire planners to envision futures and define approaches, while also serving as a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue among not only planners but also policymakers, architects, community members, and other stakeholders.

OVERALL DISCUSSION

The ambition of this dissertation was to look at film with an open view, without preconceived spatial perceptions, with the intention to profoundly delve into the everyday lifeworld of Flanders.

The selected films served as a lens for examining the Flemish urbanized landscape, delving into spatio-morphological representations, socio-cultural reflections, and possible mediations. This chapter begins with reflections on the research methodology and theoretical framework employed. It then explores potential avenues for integrating cinematic insights into spatial planning. Additionally, it offers recommendations for further research based on these discussions.

1. Reflections on this research

Viewing films with a planning perspective definitely resulted in additional knowledge about the daily lifeworld and planning practice in Flanders (see conclusions). Although this set of eight films might give a narrow view (focus on three topics within the Flemish context), a subjective notion (only through the producers' lenses), or a fashion mood (due to the timing of the productions), the cinematic interpretations captured, envisioned, and communicated meaningful aspects of the everyday lifeworld and by doing so, enhanced a deeper understanding of daily lives for planners.

1.1 Empirical reflections

Based on the results, the method of analyzing cinematic images through its three different acting roles (representation, reflection, interaction) has proven to form an addition to regular planning research on the matter. Moreover, the method definitely has potential to incorporate more extensive selections of films and even other audiovisual media. In this case the selection was driven by, on the one hand, the initial indication of typical aspects of the Flemish urbanized landscape (suburbia, arterial roads, open space), and on the other hand, the prospect of an in-depth interview with the director (defining a delamination in production time and type of film). For each acting role – cinematic representation, cinematic reflection, and cinematic interaction - a reflection on the implications of the empirical choices made in this dissertation and indications of or recommendations for further research were formulated.

Firstly, as a reading device the cinematic representations served as a (cultural) lens and mirror to the world, representing the lifeworld, the everyday. However, these cinematic representations could also function as an instrument for documentation. On the one hand, films provide spatial knowledge; locations can be morphologically observed through the images on screen without the observer actually being (geographically or time-related) on the spot. On the other hand, the incorporation of time allows us to take a look at spaces of the past or evolutions of areas through time. When discussing the method and selection of films for this dissertation, the possibilities and existing research of long-term evolutions of specific places over time, as depicted in films, were hinted at (chapter 3). References were made to cities symphonies and films as *Helsinki Forever* (Bagh, 2008) or *Los Angeles Plays Itself (Andersen, 2003)*, as well as the research of François Penz and his concept of 'cinematic urban archaeologies', all documenting and researching spaces over time through film. Such inves-

tigations delve deeper into the continuous and changing nature of urban and cultural landscapes, providing valuable insights into the historical and socio-cultural transformations of specific places. But the focus of this research was on contemporary issues and questions pertaining to the Flemish urbanized landscape. The research confirms that for that purpose film can also be used. This approach emphasizes current spatial and societal dynamics, to which film proves to be a rich source of versatile information, rather than the longitudinal study of specific locations. The latter might be interesting for further research.

Secondly, as a social construct the cinematic reflections were examined to expose how a specific reception of the 'real' world is articulated in the movies. Notwithstanding the aim to consider contemporary fiction films, the current selection of films is limited by a focus on narrative fiction films, and in this case even films that are a bit on the fringe of classic narrative film because they often lack a classic narrative plot structure. This underlines the fact that film is an artificial construction, which has to be kept in mind. Movies can portray a hectic city as a dull and even deserted environment, and vice versa. In this context for instance, Fien Troch mentioned how she removed all the cars from the parking lot of the supermarket in *Kid* to create the impression there were hardly any clients. Hence, film is not a duplicate of reality, but a partial and fragmentary view according to what the filmmakers want to show and want the audience to see. It is important to be conscious of this framing. And although the narratives in fiction films are (largely) fabricated or dramatized, with enlarged or minimized aspects in favor of the movie, exactly these narratives expose perceptions of culture, place, and space. Moreover, the filmmakers themselves indicated how they use film to understand something of the world and how people relate to their surroundings. It is exactly this knowledge, originating in the lifeworld, this research intended to discover. Narrative fiction films, or so-called arthouse cinema, allow us to profoundly delve into the everyday lifeworld of Flanders, to look at this urbanized landscape with an open view.

Thirdly, as a mediator, the cinematic perspectives served to open up the dialogue on spatial planning issues through the screening and following debate of experts. The screenings might trigger consequent debates from a cinematic point of view that originates in the hybrid reality, instead of starting from planners' stereotypes on the Flemish urban landscape. This goes further than previous studies on the capacity afforded by cinematic imagination to comprehend urban spaces (by authors such as AlSayyad, 2006; Barber, 2002; Clarke & McArthur, 1997; Koeck & Roberts, 2010; Mennel, 2008; Penz & Lu, 2011; Pratt & San Juan, 2014; Shiel, 2001; Shiel & Fitzmaurice, 2003 and

others). These tend to be limited to an investigation of the movies itself and do not include a comparable study of cinematic interaction.

However, since the mediating role of films for spatial planning is still at the forefront of research and was not analyzed in previous studies, this third part of our method should be regarded as a primordial experiment. The practical organization of such film screenings with panel debate raised critical questions on what to show and how to measure the impact of what was eventually shown. It might be necessary to portray an entire film, and thus leave the message of the director untouched. But for practical reasons we focused on a selection of fragments of different films, and thus incited an inevitable framing. Moreover, we struggled to objectively trace how the portrayed cinematic images resonated with its audience. And obviously, the choices and decisions induced new considerations. But to ensure a dialogue on one of the topics, screening a selection of movie fragments seemed to be the best option to engage an unaltered audience, concentrated in one evening and offering the possibility to compare different movies. Questions could be raised how the fragments should be ordered and introduced, without directing the audience and while fostering an open discussion. Moreover, in order to get the conversation started, a panel of experts on the topic was invited. But is it a good idea to inform these panel members beforehand and to what extent? Similarly, how much of the topic and this research in particular should be introduced to the public and at what moment during the event? Can a questionnaire contribute to discovering the reception and appropriation of the audience? Furthermore, the timing of such an assessment, before or after the debate, has to be considered since impressions and opinions can be altered as the discussions evolve. Further research is needed to understand the optimal methods for organizing and analyzing film screenings in the context of spatial planning. This includes investigating the best practices for fragment selection, panel member preparation, audience briefing, and the timing and design of impact assessments. Addressing these aspects will enhance the ability to utilize films effectively in spatial planning discussions and ensure a more nuanced understanding of how cinematic representations influence public perceptions and planning outcomes. Additionally, there might be an interesting link to make with the field of psychology, for instance the works of Gallese & Guerra on cinema and neuroscience (2019), or Yacavone on philosophical aesthetics (2014). These perspectives could provide valuable insights into how audiences perceive and are influenced by cinematic representations.

During the development process of the two film sessions on successively suburbia and open space, the majority of the initial questions were answered along the way. As such, the second screening and consequent debate benefited from improvements that were implemented to counter the concerns that surfa-

ced during the first event. For both events, the film excerpts were chosen based on spatial analysis and input from directors, then divided into two groups: one focusing on spatial morphology and the other on socio-spatial aspects. During the first event dealing with suburbia, a discussion with the panel members (and audience) and for practical reasons moderated by the author, took place after each series of fragments. At that moment the panel members were not informed beforehand about the fragments; they were asked to react on the spot, with an open mind. To involve the audience and get the discussion started, the public was asked to enter keywords about this series of fragments, that were projected on the screen. Nevertheless, the course of the conversation was difficult and rather strained. This experience motivated us to alter different aspects of the debate's approach: within the two parts, with the focus on respectively spatio-morphology and spatio-social elements, the fragments were clustered according to three and four different themes, each theme was then followed by a smaller and more specific discussion, which was prepared together with the panel members by showing them the fragments and course of the event on beforehand. Again the public entered keywords that were projected on the screen. According to the introduction of the themes, instead of only at two moments, keywords preceded the start of each short discussion, subsequent to the fragments of each theme. This approach lent itself to more and more in-depth discussions. To refine the process and explore additional methods for enhancing the effectiveness of film screenings and discussions in the context of spatial planning, the need for further research was already mentioned above. This research includes studying the impact of pre-discussion preparations for panel members, the optimal clustering of film fragments, and the role of audience participation in stimulating meaningful dialogue. Such investigations will help to establish best practices for utilizing cinematic representations to foster informed and dynamic conversations about spatial planning and urban development.

Regardless of the improvements in the approach during the second event, both sessions were able to test if films are able to communicate and establish an understanding of Flemish urban sprawl and even influence spatial concepts, views, and actions of these stakeholders. The screenings and discussions contributed to shaping a shared narrative among the audience of spatial professionals. Thus, the mediating role of films in spatial planning discussions was experimentally validated, proving to be at least an effective conversation starter.

This method of analyzing cinematic images through its three different acting roles (representation, reflection, and interaction) turned out to be an intensive approach that requires a well-considered selection of movies. Nevertheless, the innovative combination of in-depth analysis, interviews with the directors, and targeted screenings with panel debates added to the traditional

planning methods by revealing characteristics that are not visible on maps or in statistics, clarifying the propelling ideas and reflections of the directors, and starting a conversation that involves not only planners but also a wider audience. The potential of the last stage in this method, how film can become a trigger for discussion within planning matters, and more specific possibilities for implementation in the planning process could still be further researched and developed. These sessions highlighted critical considerations for organizing effective screenings, such as fragment selection, panel preparation, and audience engagement. The iterative process of refining these events underscored the importance of further research to optimize the use of cinematic representations in fostering informed discussions about urban development. Future studies should continue to explore and refine these methods, ensuring a nuanced and impactful integration of film in spatial planning research and practice.

1.2 Theoretical reflections

This dissertation considered film as a reading device, a social reflection, and a mediator to bridge the duality between concepts and theories on the one hand and everyday lived space on the other. Theoretical conceptualizations on this duality were combined with cinematic theories to initiate a multifaceted approach that integrates film's representational, reflectional, and interactive qualities. Cinematic realism, as articulated by Bazin and Kracauer, highlights film's unique ability to capture and represent physical reality. The theories of Lefebvre, de Certeau, Habermas, and Latour collectively describe how the system of capitalism, bureaucracy, and mass culture imposes itself on the lifeworld of everyday life, leading to alienation. But on the other hand they also create possibilities of how individuals and groups deploy tactics and create situations to resist and appropriate the environment to their own desires and meanings. The theories of Giedion, Benjamin, Merleau-Ponty, Eisenstein, Bergson, Deleuze and Heath each explore different aspects that lend film its specific role in understanding and shaping space. The integration of these theories provided a framework that positions film as a powerful medium for understanding and shaping space, integrating perspectives from multiple theories.

The findings of this research reveal how Flemish urbanized landscapes are cinematically constructed and represented through the depiction of everyday spaces. Giedion's focus on the everyday, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of space, and Marks's haptic visuality enriches our understanding of how the selected Flemish films portray the complex interplay between individuals and their urbanized surroundings. The films serve not only as cinematic explorations of space but also as reflective portrayals of the socio-cultural dynamics that

shape everyday life in Flanders. Through these lenses, we see how these everyday spaces, often overlooked in both film and urban studies, are imbued with meaning, emotion, and significance, offering a nuanced perspective on the lived experience.

Deleuze, Doane, Lefebvre, de Certeau, Heath, and Massey provide the tools to understand how these films represent space, time, and social practices. The films not only depict the physical landscapes of Flanders but also engage with the deeper socio-cultural dynamics at play, offering a nuanced reflection on how everyday spaces are experienced, appropriated, and imbued with meaning. This analysis underscores the importance of considering both the visual and ideological dimensions of cinematic space in understanding the lived experience of urbanized environments. Furthermore, the films reflect how space is relational, produced through interactions and relationships by showing how spaces like suburbs, motorways, and open spaces are shaped by and also actively shape the characters' lives in a continuous, co-evolving process. This relational approach highlights how the spaces in these films are not merely settings but active participants in the narrative, influencing and being influenced by the characters' experiences.

In understanding the role of film in the complex dynamics at play in this co-evolution of space and society, Latour's actor-network theory is echoed in the research findings, which present space as a hybrid of various interactions and associations. Films function not only as representations but also as influential actants that shape and are shaped by the spaces they depict. This relational perspective views film as an active participant in the co-evolution of space, where the boundaries between the physical and the social, the natural and the cultural, are continuously negotiated and redefined. The manipulation of time and space through cinematic techniques - such as framing, editing, and montage - creates a complex narrative that engages viewers on multiple levels. This interplay between time, space, and narrative contributes to a more engaged and nuanced understanding of space as a relational construct, rather than a mere physical location.

The proposed framework, therefore, proves effective in extracting knowledge from cinematic perception. Film's representational, reflective, and interactive qualities offer an operational method for planning to achieve a more comprehensive and engaged view of the (sub)urban landscape. By reading space, socially constructing space, and mediating space, film serves as a valuable tool for spatial planning, enabling a nuanced understanding of everyday spaces and contributing to the shaping of future narratives.

2. The director's cut of reality

This examination of fiction film's potential contribution to spatial planning raises more conceptual reflections on the subjective nature, artistic intentions, and potential influence on both public and planners' perceptions. It is essential to consider the validity of insights drawn from fiction films in relation to these specific factors: the role of the narrative and the ways fiction films shape emotional and cultural understandings of urban environments, the limitations and strengths inherent in their subjective narrative framing, the extent to which their stylized representations of space can (objectively) inform planning decisions, the translation of film tools and the role of the film itself within actor--networks. These dynamics are, to a significant extent, shaped by the directors' choices, underscoring the importance of intentionality in the interplay between fiction and reality.

2.1 The power of narratives

The storylines of the selected films feature extreme events: Jacky is molested at a young age in *Bullhead* (Roskam, 2011), Jesse's friend in *Violet* (Devos, 2014), Carlo (Roskam, 2004), and the mother of Kid (Troch, 2012) are murdered. Such events may appear disconnected from the everyday lifeworld and could raise questions about the potential to derive meaningful insights from these fictional accounts. However, a key distinction here is between storyline and narrative in cinematic representations. A distinction that also applies to other artistic forms such as literature, theatre, and photography for instance.

While the storyline refers to the literal sequence of events—the "what happens"—the narrative encompasses the subjective manner in which these events are presented, shaped by choices in perspective, tone, style, and thematic focus (Chatman, 1978). In film, the narrative is conveyed through a combination of visual and auditory elements such as cinematography, editing, sound design, and character development. These elements work together to create an emotional and interpretive experience for the viewer. This distinction is significant because the narrative often reveals underlying social, cultural, and psychological themes that are not immediately apparent from the storyline alone (Bordwell, Thompson, & Smith, 2010).

In the selected films, the storylines serve as the starting point of a fictional movie that is situated, by the director, in everyday environments. This spatial and cultural contextualization is itself a narrative device. For instance, the way characters are portrayed—whether as ordinary individuals or extraordinary figures—the spaces they inhabit, and the manner in which events unfold all contri-

bute to shaping the audience's perception. Even when the storylines involve speculative or improbable scenarios, the narrative structure reflects the director's worldview and intention. As Elsaesser and Hagener (2015) observe, cinematic narratives convey societal values, beliefs, and spatial contexts through the director's deliberate choices, aiming to guide audience interpretation.

Equally important is the audience's reception of the narrative. Emotional responses and identification with characters are shaped by cultural context, revealing how the narrative resonates with societal ideologies and values. In order to connect with the audience, directors consider how people interpret their everyday lifeworld. By embedding extreme events within familiar environments, filmmakers construct cinematic worlds that reflect societal values, ideologies, and histories. Fictional films thus become windows into the ideologies, values, and social dynamics of their time. As Marc Ferro (1988) argues, cinematic narratives hold a unique capacity to illuminate social realities. They go beyond surface-level storytelling to explore deeper ideological and psychological undercurrents, often revealing more about a society than its storylines alone. For researchers, exactly these cinematic narratives make fictional films valuable tools for understanding the interplay between space, culture, ideology, and human experience.

2.2 The paradox of objectivity

The way a director represents the everyday by manipulating the narrative highlights another duality, namely the paradox of objectivity in cinema. This paradox is often framed through the distinction between documentaries and fictional films. Documentaries have traditionally been regarded as factual representations of reality, while fictional films are often dismissed as dramatized representations and mere products of imagination. The rise of modern technologies such as computer-generated imagery (CGI) and artificial intelligence (AI) further complicates this distinction by creating hyper-realistic fictional landscapes that blur the line between the real and the imagined. While these tools enable the construction of immersive environments, they also challenge notions of authenticity and raise questions about where representation ends and reality begins.

To explore this paradox, Ferro compares the approaches of notable directors. Dziga Vertov, for instance, advocated for documentaries as truthful mediums, emphasizing an objective depiction of life, whereas Sergei Eisenstein used the transformative power of montage to reveal deeper social truths. Others, like Jean Vigo, sought a middle ground, blending observation with interpretation to create what he called a "documented viewpoint." Fictional films, Ferro argues, occupy a unique position in this spectrum, as their imaginative

frameworks often illuminate societal dynamics that traditional methods over-look.

The inclusion of fictional films in this research is not to suggest they provide an objective or precise reflection of spaces and places but rather to explore how their stylized portrayals offer valuable insights. By highlighting the emotional and narrative dimensions of space, fiction films reveal how places can be experienced on a psychological level, adding depth to our understanding of spatial environments. However, it is crucial to recognize that these subjective representations, while valuable for exploring the cultural, emotional, and symbo-lic aspects of space, do not directly translate into reliable data for urban planning decisions. This limitation underscores the need for critical scrutiny when using films as a tool for planning, as their insights must be complemented by more grounded, objective forms of media, such as documentaries or user interviews, which provide a clearer, factual representation of real-world urban dynamics.

Nonetheless, fiction films offer a unique narrative framework for explo-ring dimensions of space that might be overlooked in more conventional forms of media. Whereas documentaries and interviews typically focus on observable behaviors and tangible realities, fiction films can delve into abstract, psychologi-cal, and speculative aspects of space, offering valuable insights into how people feel about a place, rather than simply how they interact with it. This is especially pertinent in the context of urban planning, where understanding the emotio-nal and cultural significance of space can inform design decisions that resonate with the public on a deeper level. The exploration of such subjective experien-ces can enrich our understanding of urban environments, but it is crucial to balance these perspectives with other forms of data and research to create a more comprehensive and nuanced view.

2.3 The adaptation of film tools

The integration of cinematic perspectives encourages spatial planners to think beyond conventional methodologies and explore innovative approaches to understand and shape space. More than providing a lens into the everyday lifeworld, the cinematic approach prompts planners to critically reflect on their tools and methods. At its core, the aim of spatial planning is to propose the best interaction between space and society, for the sake of society (Van Veen Commissie, 1973). In comparison, filmmakers bring to the screen the experien-tial and perceptual dimensions of this interaction, often envisioning spaces as dynamic constructs intertwined with societal structures.

This parallel invites one to consider how filmic tools—such as framing, sequencing, narrative, montage, and other techniques— might be adapted to enrich spatial planning practices. Bernard Tschumi notably explored this poten-

tial in **The Manhattan Transcripts** (1981), reconceptualizing space as a dynamic medium shaped by and shaping human actions and experiences. His work demonstrates how isolating events, movements, and spaces can create a different reading and new understandings of the built environment. By analyzing the articulation of spatial elements through frames and sequences, their transformation, reconfiguration, and combination through programs and narratives, he employs deconstruction to reveal the complexities of reality as mediated by photography and cinema. This approach engages with sensations such as violence, pleasure, and madness, illustrating the emotional and experiential dimensions of space. As a preliminary exploration, this section will reflect on the narrative, framing, and sequencing as cinematic tools, which appear particularly adaptable for translation into the instrumentation of spatial planning.

As mentioned above, narrative construction, a powerful tool in film, conveys temporal and emotional layers, often linking disparate events to create a cohesive story. Tschumi's work blends narrative with spatial analysis, portraying architecture as a stage for actions and events. Spatial planners similarly employ narratives to contextualize urban interventions, integrating historical, cultural, and social dimensions into their analyses. For instance, the portrayed narratives of children and young people in suburban neighbourhoods remind planners of the need to include and design spaces tailored to their needs.

In film, framing directs attention to specific elements within a shot, deliberately excluding others to guide the viewer's interpretation. In the films discussed in this research, framing emerges as a key technique: both what is shown on screen and what is deliberately left out shape the narrative. For instance, in **Kid** by Fien Troch, the framing of the aunt and uncle's house emphasizes Kid's profound sense of lonliness by focusing solely on the house, excluding its broader context. Tschumi's use of framing in **The Manhattan Transcripts** underscores two opposing yet interconnected manipulations: the **framing device** ("square, healthy, conformist, normal and predictable, regular and comforting, correct") and the **framed material** (distorting, compressing, displacing).

Framing relates with distortion and simplification that are used in film to manipulate perceptions, exaggerating or minimizing elements to underscore particular themes. Tschumi adopts these techniques to deconstruct architectural conventions, emphasizing the disjunctions between form, function, and meaning. His diagrams distort spatial relationships to foreground their latent possibilities or contradictions. Similarly, in spatial planning, framing isolates particular aspects of the built environment to reveal relationships or dynamics that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Sequencing, another essential instrument, constructs meaning through the arrangement of shots over time. The concept of the Flemish landscape as a "Wonderland," discussed during the film screenings, heavily relies on sequencing, linking distinct spatial entities with unique characteristics and experiences. Tschumi appropriates this technique to represent the sequential experience of space, incorporating movement, events, and architectural elements into his diagrams. For Tschumi, sequencing encapsulates both temporality and logic, as he explains: "the Transcripts' sequences represent both time and consequence, temporality and logic (...) The temporality of the Transcripts inevitably suggests the analogy of film. Beyond a common twentieth-century sensibility, both share a frame-by-frame technique, the isolation of frozen bits of action. In both, spaces are not only composed, but also developed from shot to shot so that the final meaning of each shot depends on its context." (Tschumi, 1994, p. 10) In spatial planning, sequencing can effectively represent the temporal rhythms of urban life. By arranging spatial moments as a sequence, planners can convey experiential narratives that traditional maps or plans might fail to capture.

Moreover, sequencing is closely linked to montage. As Tschumi describes, "these combinations are nothing but a form of editing, of montage, where stage and audience space are ultimately reversed, and action becomes its ow representation." (Tschumi, 1994, p. 12) Montage, as an editing technique, not only stitches together sequential spatial experiences but also juxtaposes contrasting elements, creating opportunities for tension, dialogue, and reinterpretation within urban contexts.

Filmic techniques offer spatial planners a powerful means of breaking away from static and formalist traditions of representation. Tschumi's observation that "Ultimately, the spatial relationships and physical dimensions of objects that change with each viewpoint are like movie shots from above that are intercut with those from below: reality is made infinitely malleable, so that emotive, dramatic, or poetic attributes can change and unfold," (Tschumi, 1994, p. 12) underscores the transformative potential of these tools. Techniques such as framing, sequencing, narrative construction, distortion, and omission enable planners to put to the foreground the lived experience of space, revealing its dynamic and relational qualities. While Tschumi's **Manhattan Transcripts** exemplifies the integration of filmic techniques into spatial analysis, the concrete methodologies for employing tools like framing, sequencing, and narratives in practice warrant further exploration. With additional research, this approach holds the potential to not only enrich spatial analysis but also empower practitioners to address complex urban challenges with enhanced creativity and critical insight.

2.4 The position of film in Actor-Networks

Finally, considering movies as the director's **cut of reality** raises critical questions about the position of film within the framework of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as described by Bruno Latour (2005). This perspective invites reflection on whether films function as actors, or more precisely actants, mediators, or intermediaries within the network of human and non-human entities.

Films emerge from a complex production process, where the director plays a pivotal role as the orchestrator of meaning and vision—**the director's cut**. In this sense, films are not neutral artifacts; they are profoundly shaped by the subjective perspective of their creators. Fiction films, in particular, offer a narrative and dramaturgical representation that constructs a condensed image in service of a storyline. As discussed above, these storylines, as well as the interpretations embedded within the director's vision, are deeply rooted in societal values, beliefs, and spatial contexts. The director's creative input becomes a node within the broader actor-network, both shaped by and shaping the cultural and spatial realities of the time.

Once the film reaches its final form as a finished product, it takes on a dual role. First, it serves as a **reflection** of the lifeworld, providing valuable insights into the lived experiences, cultural dynamics, and spatial perceptions of its context. In this capacity, I would argue that the film operates as an **intermediary**, transporting meaning from the lifeworld without fundamentally transforming it. This intermediary role underscores the central focus of this dissertation: understanding how planners can learn from films. By engaging with film, planners gain a richer comprehension of the lifeworld and its complexities, which could inform more nuanced and empathetic planning practices. A case in point is the interpretation of open space as a **Wonderland-concept**, which emerged during discussions following a film screening.

At the same time, as noted in the introduction, films also extend their influence into the lifeworld, operating as **mediators**. As mediators, films actively shape the perception and experience of space, and by extension, they influence societal behaviors and attitudes toward spatial environments. This transformative capacity positions films as active participants in shaping networks of meaning and interaction. Although this dimension of film's impact—how planners might leverage films to influence behavior or reshape spatial perception—falls outside the scope of this research, it represents a compelling avenue for future exploration. For instance, interviews with planners could investigate how filmic perspectives might be leveraged in planning processes, including nudging techniques.

In conclusion, films occupy a unique position within actor-networks, functioning as both intermediaries, by reflecting and transmitting existing meanings, and mediators, by reshaping perceptions and creating new connections within networks. This dual role offers planners both a lens to better understand the lifeworld and a potential medium for influencing spatial experiences. The **director's cut**—the director's personal vision and subjective interpretation of space—plays a critical role in shaping these representations. However, this subjectivity also complicates the extent to which such depictions can offer planners reliable or actionable insights, adding another layer of complexity to their use in the planning process.

3. Potential of cinematic understanding for planning

Throughout this dissertation, an in-depth exploration was conducted into the cinematographic perceptions evident in contemporary movies, serving as a case study to ascertain the extent to which film can offer fresh insights and operationally contribute to the traditional approach of the Flemish (sub)urbanized landscape in Spatial Planning. The results might give reason that film unarguably has the potential to do so, especially in reference to the lived space, e.g. the broader acceptance and therewith the impact of planning. So far, this research concentrated on the mediating role of film between system and lifeworld to discover how planners can learn from film. Through an analysis of how topics such as suburbia, motorway spaces, and open spaces are portrayed in film, we uncovered the meanings, uses, and qualities assigned to these spaces, as well as their role within cinematic narratives. Building upon these insights, we can now reflect on how these insights in the everyday lifeworld gained from film, can be used in, and inform, spatial planning practices to feed back into the lifeworld. The following presents a series of suggestions on how adopting a cinematographic perspective can enhance spatial planning. These pathways offer opportunities to (re)introduce a focus on dramaturgic actions within spatial planning. It's important to note that this list is not exhaustive and serves as a starting point for further research.

3.1 Cinematic approach as an imagination of alternative realities

Imagination is a crucial component of both spatial thinking and the cinematic experience. Historically, spatial planning has often been driven by bold, utopian imaginaries (Koning & van Dijk, 2024). Also the current societal challenges, such as demographics, food, mobility, and climate change, demand for imaginative visions on how to conceptualize and design sustainable environments that solve complex problems, engage communities, anticipate future needs, and foster innovation. However, over recent decades, formal planning processes have moved away from such imaginative approaches, becoming more focused on decision-making processes and short-term, risk-averse 'quick wins' rather than long-term, transformative visions (Koning & van Dijk, 2024).

As a visual medium, film relies on imagination to engage viewers with and experience the spaces and events portrayed on screen. While films provide a highly realistic and perceptual experience, the viewer's imagination is crucial

for constructing the narrative (by filling in gaps, developing expectations, etc.), visualizing the fictional world (motivations, emotions, and inner experiences of the characters not directly observable on screen), generating emotional responses, and going beyond the immediately perceptual aspects of the film experience.

Therefore, the imaginative power of fiction films can play a significant role in spatial planning by influencing perceptions, emotions, and attitudes towards places. Throughout planning history, utopian visions and modern societal concepts have been driven by powerful imagery. Visionaries like Charles Fourier and Ebenezer Howard imagined more self-sufficient societies, while others like Soria y Mata and Tony Garnier proposed respectively linear cities and industrial city models. In this regard, the motif of motorways spaces serves as an illustrative example to clarify how fiction films provoke reflections on potential urban scenarios, technological advancements and social challenges.

Motorways and their landscapes have been imagined in many ways throughout history. In the early 20th century, architects and urban planners envisioned motorways as integral components of utopian city designs. Frank Lloyd Wright's **Broadacre City** (1932) and Le Corbusier's **Ville Radieuse** (Radiant City, 1933) both incorporated extensive road networks, positioning the motorway as a central artery of urban life. These utopian visions emphasized the efficiency of movement, spatial organization, and the liberation of individuals from the constraints of traditional urban spaces. Motorways were conceived not merely as transportation routes but as transformative elements capable of reshaping the social fabric and spatial experiences of cities.

In cinema, the theme of the road has also been explored in relation to societal issues, reflecting and shaping popular perceptions of motorways and their landscapes. Films such as **Metropolis** (Fritz Lang, 1926) have depicted futurist cities with advanced transportation systems and the road movie genre has depicted the motorway as a metaphorical space of self-discovery and adventure. From classics like **Easy Rider** (Dennis Hopper, 1969), **Paris Texas** (Wim Wenders, 1984), or **Thelma and Louise** (Ridely Scott, 1991), to contemporary films like **Green Book** (Peter Farrelly, 2018), **Nomadland** (Chloé Zhao, 2020) or **Dog** (Reid Carolin & Channing Tatum, 2022), road movies have explored themes of freedom, escapism, and existentialism against the backdrop of vast highway landscapes.

These imaginations have contributed to the symbolic meaning motorways have acquired. Beyond their practical function, these spaces of movement reflect broader social dynamics and cultural values. In the post-war era, motorways became emblematic of progress, modernity, and economic development. In this dissertation, the imagination of motorways spaces, particularly in the film

Steve+Sky, unveiled alternative non-urban lifestyles emerging in motorway landscapes. However, instead of solely promising impacts, these spaces now also exhibit dystopian features.

A similar phenomenon is evident in the representation of suburbia. As a hallmark of post-war urban development, the suburban ideal, inspired by utopian garden cities, has long embodied the promise of a better life: private homes, green spaces and safe communities. This ideal was most visibly realized in mid-century American suburbs, but similar aspirations shaped Flemish suburban developments, symbolizing stability and family values. However, the success of suburbia has tainted the dream with negative connotations critiques of monotony, social isolation, environmental degradation, and sprawling land use. Films like **The Truman Show** (Peter Weir, 1998) explore these tensions by situating a narrative in Seahaven, a fiction town depicted as a utopian environment with picturesque homes, a walkable layout, and an orderly community. However, Seahaven's controlled perfection becomes a dystopia for Truman, the protagonist, as it suppresses his autonomy and individual agency. Notably, the film was shot in Seaside, Florida, a real New Urbanist town designed to embody principles of aesthetic harmony, compactness, pedestrian-friendliness and community-life. The dual reading of Seahaven, as a utopia for its creators but a dystopia for its residents, underscores the double-edged impact of suburban planning ideals. Even today, despite critiques labeling suburbia as wasteful or monotonous, it remains a preferred lifestyle for many, offering safety and stability. Flemish films such as **Fucking Suburbia**, **Kid**, and **Violet** delve into this utopian/dystopian duality, contrasting the security and order of suburban neighborhoods with the emptiness and boredom they impose, particularly on youth. These films highlight the tension between the promise of suburbia and its lived experience, emphasizing the need for planners to address such contradictions.

While imagination was a powerful tool for planning, fiction films provide a platform to regain these two sides of imagination (as well as the utopian, as the dystopian one) to explore these speculative scenarios and experiment with unconventional ideas, fostering a culture of imagination and creativity among planners. The way films present the duality of utopia and dystopia is particularly relevant for understanding the profound implications of planning decisions. Suburbia and motorways, once symbols of modernist dreams, now evoke questions about control, sustainability, and the lived experience. Films allow planners to re-engage with these spaces, considering how their designs shape lives both positively and negatively. Fiction films, by capturing the complex interplay between utopian aspirations and dystopian realities, remind planners of the need to balance visionary ideals with the lived experiences of those inhabiting these spaces. Moreover, imagination's influence extends beyond cinema,

permeating various visual media prevalent in contemporary society. Exploring other audiovisual materials, such as television series or commercials, could enrich these research methodologies and insights.

In his investigation of the suburb in contemporary US film and television, Timotheus Vermeulen (2011) incorporated a variety of genres and contexts. Next to different narrative fiction films, such as a family film, an independent film, and high school noirs, Vermeulen also analyzed drama and animated sitcoms. Similarly, it would be interesting to expand this doctoral research and apply the methodology on other audiovisual material, such as television series or even commercials. Nevertheless, an interesting selection in this wide range of material is far from evident. Although there are some long-lasting soap operas (such as *Familie*, since 1991, or *Thuis*, since 1995) broadcasted every weekday on Flemish television, these are mainly recorded in studios and in doing do not provide insights into the real and highly differentiated Flemish landscape. Likewise, other genres such as animated sitcoms, science fiction movies or serials, are not extensively dealing with the Flemish condition, if there are any at all, and would therefore offer no substantiated knowledge. There might be interesting material in youth serials, with the exception of some preliminary research in other disciplines, the potential of these sources should be explored in depth. Within the research on contemporary rural history, Rien Emmery (2009) investigated the imagery of *De Kat*, a Flemish children's television series dating from 1973. According to Emmery this television series presents a traditional imagery of the rural idyll.

3.2 Cinematic approach as a narrative mode of reasoning

Recognizing the potential of films as an additional resource can significantly enhance the richness of perspectives available to planners and researchers, contributing to a more holistic understanding of the spaces they aim to shape. In this attempt of understanding the everyday, the value of narratives came to the fore. While visual representation remains essential, the narrative and storytelling qualities embedded in these cinematic perceptions play a pivotal role in unraveling the essence of places. The narratives contain information regarding the socio-spatial practices, perceptions, and expectations; they express the logicalities of different actors (the inhabitant, the farmer, the project developer, etc.) in the everyday. Narratives convey a particular point of view, reflecting values and distinguishing these works as more than mere illustrations. Jerome Bruner described how a narrative mode of reasoning, concerned with attaching meaning to and structuring everyday experiences through the cons-

truction of stories, complements a paradigmatic or scientific mode, which is concerned with categorization and conceptualization (Bruner, 1985). By delving into invisible qualities, forgotten values, or concealed challenges, these narratives not only raise awareness but also open a dialogue. The importance of narratives in the context of spatial planning has been emphasized by several authors (for example Ameel, 2017; Depriest-Hricko & Prytherch, 2013; Eckstein & Trogmorthon, 2003; Grenni, Horlings, & Soini, 2020; M. Hajer & Versteeg, 2005; M. A. Hajer, Grijzen, & van't Klooster, 2010). Narratives shape people's perceptions and understanding of a place and can support the creation of a shared vision for its development.

What was not part of this research and is recommended for future research is how these narratives themselves are influenced. For instance, the financial aspect of filmmaking and how that determines the images is not identified in this research. Since the selected *film d'auteurs* were not commissioned by local, national, or regional authorities, nor were there restrictions connected with funding that were related to the (suburban) landscape portrayal, the financial support in these cases did not profoundly affect the way the urbanized landscape was portrayed in this selection of movies and was thus not taken into account. In other cases, there are for instance examples of Flemish television serials (such as '*Dertigers*', '*Katarakt*', '*De Smaak van de Keyser*', etc.) that have been largely co-financed by e.g. provincial authorities, cities and/or regions, and which are promoted on screen. As an aspect of city marketing, this phenomenon is often referred to as 'tourism product placement'. (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006)

3.3 Cinematic approach as a catalyst of cultural awareness

Fiction films serve as powerful tools for cultural awareness, shedding light on problematic areas, challenging stereotypes, and prompting critical reflections on societal norms. Through thought-provoking narratives and visual storytelling, the cinematic perceptions of motorway and suburban spaces, areas typically regarded as problematic by spatial planners, contributed to a more nuanced understanding of cultural dynamics. Suchlike subjective perceptions are important, not so much in terms of mapping the depicted areas, but in terms of the underlying, cultural frames of thought on these more general themes.

This research focused on the three topics outside of city centers to investigate the sprawled urbanization. The narratives also provoke inquiries about the living spaces outside suburbia and the portrayal of city centers. If suburbia is presented as a haven for stability, does this imply that city centers are

portrayed as hubs of instability and crime? Given the contemporary emphasis on urban densification and the push for people to return to city living, understanding the everyday experiences in cities becomes crucial. This prompts questions about how films depict city centers in contrast to suburbia. Does the emphasis on suburban safety imply a negative portrayal of urban areas? The juxtaposition of these narratives raises inquiries into the intricate relationship between urban planning strategies, filmic representations, and societal perceptions. As such, it is equally important to trace the (cinematic) narratives connected with the city center. The socio-cultural imaginations of everyday city life in films might be connected with stigmatization. For instance, returning negative framing of social housing, drug issues, safety, etc. might cast the city centers as unappealing and push people to prefer other areas.

3.4 Cinematic approach as a methodology for dialogue

Turning the focus to the reciprocal relationship between film and planning knowledge, an exploration emerges on how planners can harness the medium of film to impact the everyday. A cinematic approach entails a public trigger and a highly innovative way for governments to communicate with and engage citizens. Film can serve as a catalyst for dialogue and engagement within or with communities. By leveraging cinematic images and narratives, planners can establish direct interaction with stakeholders and the public, fostering a collaborative approach to urban development. Film screenings, documentaries, and multimedia presentations serve as valuable tools for facilitating participatory and creating spaces for collective reflection, exchange of ideas, and creation of urban visions. Visual representations of proposed projects or planning initiatives presented through film can elicit feedback, address concerns, and foster dialogue among diverse stakeholders.

Moreover, this cinematic approach not only serves to bridge the gap between the lifeworld and spatial planning, providing a more engaging and relatable way to communicate with citizens, but also allows for the encouragement of behavioral change by nudging and influencing citizens' choices. As societies pursue transitions, there is a discernible shift towards emphasizing future-oriented or persuasive storytelling (M. A. Hajer et al., 2010; Van Hulst, 2012). The cinematic approach, within the realm of spatial planning, emerges as a transformative solution to outdated methods of involving people in envisioning the future. Simultaneously, the focus on strategies for influencing behavioral change and nudging has gained terrain, and a cinematic approach can convey persuasive storytelling and nudge behavioral change, embodying a new approach to

how governments communicate and interact with citizens (Bandsma, Rauws, & de Roo, 2021).

This research delved into the exploration of the insights that everyday planning knowledge can derive from the realm of film. The dissertation specifically concentrated on the cinematic portrayal of typical Flemish urbanized landscapes, intentionally excluding discussions on the theories surrounding environmental perception through a cinematic lens in the context of tourism. The selected movies do not overtly cater to tourism-centric themes or city-marketing agendas. However, it is interesting to notice how in this particular field, tourism, the interaction between cinematic representations and our experience of the world becomes remarkably apparent. Not only can film's representation of foreign locations and narrative spaces be regarded as a touristic attraction for the spectator (as film theorists like Bruno, 1997; Corbin, 2014; etc., argue), but these moving images can also generate a desire and stimulate physical travel to associated sites, which consequently impacts these places. (see literature on film-induced tourism by, among others, Beeton, 2005; Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998; Riley & Van Doren, 1992; Tooke & Baker, 1996). Similarly, but often less explicit, also in other areas than tourism, movies enhance awareness of places and influence the audience, the so-called 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1990).

3.5 Cinematic approach as part of spatial planning processes

As mentioned above, considering films as mediators in everyday actor-networks provides a connection with spatial planning and ways to navigate planning problems. The integration of film as a planning tool in the navigation techniques derived from Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), holds promise to contribute to a more comprehensive spatial planning. The four phases of translation defined by Callon (1984) and Latour (2004), and even more the operationalization of the actant-network theories following Deleuze and Guattari (1980) by Jean Hillier (2007) and especially Sanders (2009) and Boelens (2010; 2020), provide possible pathways to integrate and operationalize the cinematic approach of this dissertation in a planning methodology. Based on these navigation techniques – tracing, mapping, diagramming, and agencying (Sanders, 2009) - we aim to identify the possible role and integration of our cinematic approach in the subsequent phases of a planning process.

Tracing actions, the technique of the first phase, involve the exploration of a site or planning challenge by systematically identifying its historical emergence and development. It aims to reveal the multiplicity of actors (both human

and non-human) and focuses on what truly matters, uncovering the core issues beyond conventional perspectives. In this analytical stage, incorporating cinematic approaches can be pivotal to exploring and incorporating the everyday. Cinematic representations offer a reading device and cinematic reflections can uncover narratives of the everyday lived spaces. In this way, the cases have shown that spaces like the roadside developments along arterial roads, suburban neighborhoods, parking lots and wastelands are defining the everyday lifeworld although it is exactly these spaces that are often overlooked or misjudged by spatial planners. Cinematic images challenge entrenched stereotypes and present alternative readings of space, disrupting conventional perceptions. This is particularly relevant in the context of more recent, post-structural actor-relational views on planning (Boelens, 2010; Boelens & De Roo, 2016; Boonstra et al., 2020), which takes lived experiences as the starting point in and of planning actions (Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2005). Next to other normative or dramaturgic knowledge and action domains, such as poetic interpretations, paintings, dance, pictorial, and other cultural exposes, the present explorative or tracing tools of planning (such as data collection, GIS, morphological, or even explorative design research) have to be added by these domains in order to deal with the complex nature of future planning challenges and uncover the generally hidden needs, desires, longings, etc. of daily life.

However, when exploring the integration of film in planning processes, it is crucial to recognize movies as 'creative objects' rather than scientific data. Films, in particular, capture and embody the essence of places by portraying situations through stories and characters. This inherently subjective nature allows for ample space for interaction and interpretation. This subjectivity is not a drawback but rather an element to be considered, offering an opportunity for diverse perspectives that can enrich the planning process. Unlike the specialist-oriented logic of scientific disciplines, artists are not confined by subject or discipline. They use their mediums as instruments to observe, discover, and respond. Film, as an art form, provides an integrative point of view that complements scientific approaches.

Mapping actions, the technique of the second phase, are based on the outcomes of the tracing and determine specific opportunities to address the planning challenge through innovative solutions. Based on what matters (defined through tracing), mapping actions represent how the potentials can be deployed and become reality through new alliances of actors. The investigation in the mediating role of film has shown that films possess transformative power, shaping new concepts and prompting a reconsideration of planning priorities. Especially in addressing specific groups, like the teenagers or marginalized youth that are usually not the groups that planners design for, the cases have

shown how they relate to their environment. Engaging stakeholders through film screenings and discussions allows planners to mediate perceptions of space and gather diverse perspectives on planning challenges. Recognizing the potential of film as a communication tool and catalyst for dialogue opens avenues for planners to engage with cinematic representations, fostering a nuanced understanding of spatial dynamics and inspiring fresh themes and concepts for planning and design.

Diagramming actions, are linked to the process of translation and entail the identification of who or what to involve to realize the plan, idea or concept. For planning processes this means finding partners, charting their relationships and joint interests that could lead to alliances to transformation according to the tracing and mapping actions. In this phase, the insights from cinematic perspective can be used in, and inform, spatial planning practices to feed back into the lifeworld, especially as a method for dialogue (as discussed above).

The last planning action, **agencying**, consolidates the preceeding phases by intervening and institutionalizing these plans with laws, regulations, contracts, arrangements etc. Traditionally this action is executed by government instances. As mentioned above, the integration of film as a planning tool holds promise in both the problematization and analytical stages of planning (tracing and agencying). However, in the last stage of a planning process, agencying, a cinematic approach can be related to the narratives of these institutions in the form of, for instance, (financial) support in the film process. However, this was out of the scope of this research.

In this way film is not separate from society; it is shaped by society's relationships, restrictions, possibilities, prevailing ideas, and both utopian and dystopian visions. The continuous reciprocal influence motivates an investigation of the processes of becoming, rather than solely concentrating on profound research, limited to the outcomes. However, it is important to note that although fiction films can be influential, this thesis does not claim that film is so powerful that it can or should replace other planning tools. Films help to redirect the planner's gaze, to open up towards other narratives and logicalities beyond the systematic. As a medium, film is capable of confronting the spectator with another perspective on reality. When used as one of many tools in the spatial planning process, fiction films can complement these practices by providing inspiration, raising awareness, and stimulating conversations with different actors, ultimately contributing to the narrative for spatial planning. Therewith this research might inspire to include the cultural lifeworld and role of artistic representations in planning practices more profoundly. Particularly in the context of today's ever-changing and hyper-visual society, integrating traditional and new artistic techniques, such as film, is crucial to achieve more supported and, therefore,- more sustainable plans.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: a note on cinematic terminology

   While the focus of the analysis remains spatial, drawing from a background in urbanism and spatial planning, it is imperative to embrace the nuanced language of cinematography to articulate the results of the analysis. visual dynamics inherent in the built environment. This brief introduction seeks to elucidate key cinematic terms that will be applied throughout the dissertation, ensuring clarity and precision in the analysis. The terminology was structured according to the context in which they were already mentioned in this chapter.

   Movie Structure:

Scene: A discrete segment of a film's narrative, a unit of action, typically unfolding in a single location and time.

Sequence: A series of connected scenes forming a larger narrative or thematic unit.

Establishing Shot: A wide-angle shot at the beginning of a scene that provides context and situates the viewer in the space before focusing on specific details.

   Location Selection:

Location Scout: The person in charge of exploring and selecting physical spaces for filming to match the envisioned settings and needs of a production.

   Cinematographic Strategies:

   Camera Settings:

Aspect ratio: format of the image, The proportional relationship between the width and height of the film frame, influencing the visual composition and overall look of the image

Camera Distances: Varied shot scales, Different distances between the camera and the subject, impacting the viewer's perception and emotional engagement

extreme long shot: A shot taken from a considerable distance, showing a vast expanse of the setting.

long shot: A shot capturing the subject in its entirety within its surroundings.

medium shot: frames the subject from the waist up, providing a moderate view.

medium close-up: Focuses on the subject's head and shoulders, offering more detail than a medium shot.

close-up: Emphasizes a specific detail or part of the subject, intensifying viewer connection.

extreme close-up: Extremely close framing, often highlighting small details or facial expressions.
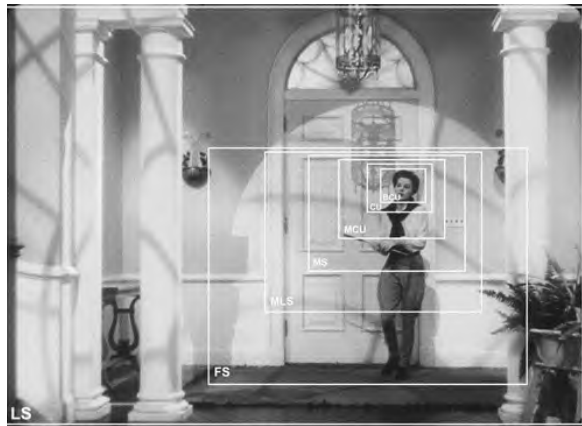

Figure 0.1

Camera Distances, Barry Salt (Film style and technology : history and analysis) (LS: long shot – FS: full shot=long shot – MS: medium shot – MLS: medium long shot – MCU: medium close-up - CU: close-up – BCU: big close-up = extreme close-up)
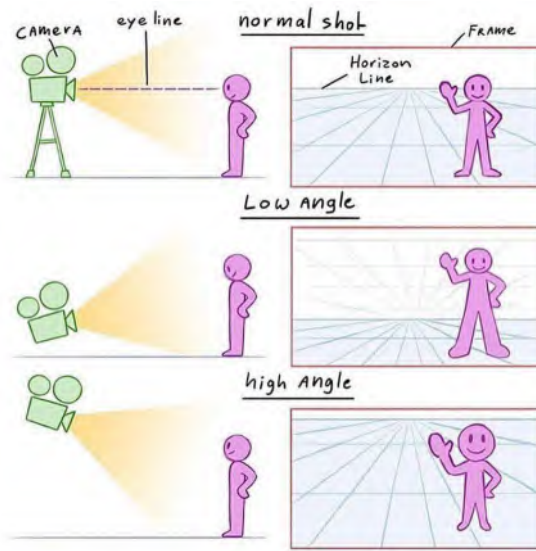
Figure 0.2
camera position
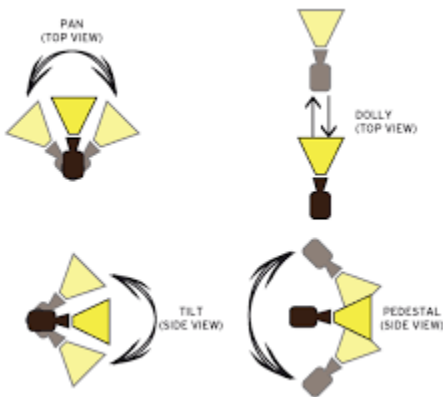
Figure 0.3
camera movement

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

camera-position

frontal on eye-level : the camera is positioned directly in front of the subject at eye level, creating a neutral and natural perspective.

shooting-up : The camera is angled upwards, exaggerating the height of the subject, potentially creating a disempowering effect. In extreme cases, it can resemble the perspective of a frog looking upward.

shooting-down : The camera is angled downward, providing a top-down view. In extreme cases, it can resemble a bird's eye perspective, offering a comprehensive overview.

touch-angle : The specific angle at which the camera physically interacts with the subject, influencing the emotional or visual impact of the shot.

camera-movement

Pan: Horizontal movement of the camera, scanning the scene from left to right or vice versa.

Tilt: Vertical movement of the camera, looking up or down.

Roll: Rotation of the camera around its central axis, altering the horizon line.

Travelling Shot: The camera physically moves through space to follow or explore the scene.

Lift Up or Down: Vertical movement of the camera to ascend or descend within the scene.

Dolly Shot: The camera is mounted on a wheeled platform, allowing for smooth and controlled movement.

Handheld Camera: The camera is held by a person, producing a more dynamic and immersive visual style.

Narrative:
The overarching story or plot structure.

Montage and Editing: Montage refers to the editing techniques used to assemble and sequence shots, including continuous montage, parallel montage, cross-cutting, flashbacks, and flashforwards.

Continuous Montage: Seamless flow of images, maintaining a continuous narrative.

Parallel Montage: Simultaneous presentation of multiple events to create thematic connections.

Cross-Cutting: Interweaving scenes to convey parallel actions or events.

Flashback/Flashforward: Displacement of the narrative timeline to depict past or future events.

Transitions Between Shots:

180 Degree System: Maintaining spatial continuity by adhering to the 180-degree rule.

Eyeline Matches: Ensuring visual coherence by aligning the character's eyelines across shots.

Juxtapositions, Superimpositions: Overlaying images for symbolic or thematic effect.

Jump Cuts: Abrupt transitions that create a jarring effect.

Fade-out or Fade-in: Gradual darkening or brightening of the screen between scenes.

Lap Dissolve or Wipe: Transition effects involving the gradual blending or wiping of one shot into another.

APPENDIX 2: interview reports

2.1 Jeff Otte – 21.07.2021

Plaats van interview: Biesdelle, Tessenderlo en tuin Jeff Otte, Tessenderlo

Fucking Suburbia ontstond nadat Jeff Otte een wildcard gekregen had van het VAF. Dankzij deze wildcard kreeg hij eigenlijk financieel carte blanche om een kortfilm te maken. Dit gaf hem heel veel vrijheid. Tijdens het schrijven aan een andere film ging hij dagelijks in de wijk wandelen om te ontspannen. '*En dan ziet ge, ja, ge neemt van alles wat dat ge ziet iets mee (...) En dan is dat decor eigenlijk een personage voor mij geworden.*'

De wijk zelf heeft iets heel visueels, door de openheid en het kronkelende stratenpatroon, en iets heel Amerikaans. Het is een wijk uit eind jaren zeventig tot midden jaren tachtig. De woningen zijn allemaal één bouwlaag met een relatief plat zadeldak, wat voor Otte heel Amerikaans is. Bovendien staan er heel weinig hoge bomen en weinig of geen hagen die de huizen afschermen, waardoor er een weids zicht is en elke mogelijke hoek interessant is. '*En het is allemaal, het is vrij open en toch ook weer afgesloten ... Hoe dat de Vlaming is*'. Ook het bochtenwerk in de straten maakt de wijk interessant: '*En al die bochten en die kronkels. Als ge rechte lijnen hebt, zijt ge heel beperkt euhm, ge hebt altijd ene perfecte hoek in een recht stratenpatroon, terwijl dat het hier gaat kronkelen, zweven, en ge eigenlijk verloren loopt op een paar honderden vierkante meters. (...) het is een labyrinth.*'

Wat de wijk dan weer heel Vlaams maakt, is de vrijheid in het bouwen, het is geen eenheidsworst zoals in de Amerikaanse suburbs : '*Wat dat hier het Vlaamse is, van ja, maar ik ga het mij toch toe-eigenen, en dit is mijn smaak en mijn goesting, en ook alles mag hier. (...) hebben we toch altijd meer vrijheid gekregen om ons ding te doen. Euhm, dus het is enerzijds de herkenbaarheid van het Vlaamse, ja, de archi-lelijke fermette ... gecombineerd met een soort van stratenpatroon wat dat voor mij heel Amerikaans aan doet.*

Typerend is ook de verveling, die tot uiting komt in hoe de wijk altijd stil en verlaten is: '*Het is de verveling hé, ergens is het een evolutie van kijk, we hebben allemaal ons tuintje, ons huis, we kunnen allemaal twee weken naar het zuiden van Frankrijk op vakantie, maar wat nu... euhm, en het is die stilstand waarin dat ge staat, van... dit zou dan het summum moeten zijn van menselijke ontwikkeling, beschaving, en we zijn er, maar we vervelen ons... euhm, en dat maakt voor mij die setting heel belangrijk en uniek (...) iedereen die hier woont, die hun kinderen die zijn al de deur uit. Dus het is hier altijd stil en verlaten. We hebben hier nooit moeten*

zeggen tegen mensen, van ja, we willen nu dat jullie allemaal binnen zijn of binnen blijven want, dit is het...'

Het hoofdpersonage, de oudste broer, is een buitenstaander die tegen wil en dank in die wijk terug keert en daar niets heeft. '**Dat is ook de plattelandsvlucht. Wie komt hier wonen? Mensen die een job vlakbij hebben en die hun barbecue aandoen in het weekend en zeggen, ja we hebben het goed.** '

Om die sfeer van de suburb in beeld te brengen gebruikt Otte stillevens, lang aangehouden shots, en typerende geluiden zoals de rolluiken ('*Dit is een heel herkenbaar geluid dat ik als kind ... ik ben op een wijk hier euh, twee, drie kilometer vandaan groot gebracht, en dat was vooral, voor mij iets zomers, bij valavond, die rolluiken die rrrr, rrrr, rrrr, rrrr naar beneden worden gelaten'*), blaffende honden en het mobilietje.

Voor de scene met het meisje dat bij valavond fietst door de wijk had Otte een beetje overdreven: '*We hebben daar te veel figuranten gezet waardoor dat ge denkt van, hier is een ufo geland* (...) *je vergroot dat een heel klein beetje uit en ik vond dat wel heel straf om dan bij de visies te zien hoe mensen daar heel hard mee lachten*' De scene is geïnspireerd op een gelijkaardig tafereel dat Otte zelf meemaakte toen hij 's avonds naar huis fietste : '*En in de wijk waar normaal alle rolluiken al lang dicht zijn, dat er zo plots allemaal mensen in hun pyjama op de hoek van een straat zo in de verte staan te staren. Dat ik dacht van, wat is dit nu? Mijn frank was niet gevallen, dat die gewoon aan het wachten waren op ... En dan om de hoek zag je ze staan, van oh...*'

Het interieur is ergens anders opgenomen: '*maar dat is dan de vrijheid die da ge in Vlaanderen hebt, omdat alles zo passe-partout is. Elke stijl kunt ge wel in elk dorp of elke gemeente terug vinden.*'

Tegenwoordig is alles snel (in films) en vluchtig, terwijl Otte terug wil naar het trage: '*Geef mij tijd, neem mij niet bij de hand om een bepaalde emotie te voelen, bij een bepaald beeld, maar laat het mij zelf ontdekken. Laat mij in een ruimte, en daarom ook die wijk die zo interessant is omdat ze open is. Laat mij daarin zelf iets ontdekken, zelf iets vinden wat dat ik herken, wat dat ik ervan maak. En dat is wel iets wat dat Fien heel na aan het hart ligt en Bas ook. Maar wij noemen, wij noemen dat euh, zo wel ns de Kempische school.*'

Over de invloed van Amerikaanse films : '*we zijn opgegroeid met die films uit Amerika en die auteursfilms daar, die hebben mij ook altijd aangesproken. Gummo, ik weet niet of dat je die ooit gezien hebt? Ja, dat is ... We lachen daarmee, want dat is Amerika, maar dat is ook Vlaanderen hé, voor een stuk.*'

Over de ruimtelijke ontwikkelingen in Vlaanderen : '*ik zie dat met lede ogen aan, hoe dat het vooral een investeringscultuur is, als in, euh, alle dorpscentra, of gemeentecentra, zoals het hier dan het geval is, euh, alles wat herkenbaar is wordt*

eigenlijk gewoon plat gegooid, want het is oud en het is klein. En ze gaan daar alle-
maal appartementen op zetten. En ik vind dat eigenlijk jammer, omdat ik dan net
vind van oké, euh, d'r moet,... In dat centrum is alles rond die kerk opgebouwd, en
is alles ook plat gebetonneerd, voor parkingplaatsen voor wagens, voor iedereen
die daar naar de lokale middenstand gaat terwijl dat die ook al allemaal weg is,
want dat verhuist naar grootsteden of euh, shoppingcentra. Euh, maak daar dan
een groene, verkeersarme omgeving van en dan komt die horeca vanzelf. Maar ze
doen eigenlijk het tegenovergestelde, ze willen de parkeerkeerplaatsen behouden
omdat alle huizen moeten wijken voor appartementen (...) Vroeger had een dorp
nog iets, en oké, het is ook allemaal euh, inwisselbaar, maar nu, ...'

Interessante personen mbt de huidige Vlaamse cinema:

Fien Troch (*En ook de lelijkheid omarmt zij, enorm*.)

Bas Devos

Bouli Lanners (*Die maakt heel mooie films. Dat is eigenlijk een schilder.*
Dus die is als schilder naar regie gegaan en dat zie je ook in zijn werk. Alles is een
tableau'ke. Voor mij is dat de tegenhanger van Fien Troch. Allez, de evenknie, maar
de Franstalige variant. Maar hij zoekt dan ook naar die typische Franstalige wijken,
die koterij. En dat is eerder die lintbebouwing. Dus in voormalige industriële ...)

Bruno Dumont (*Noord-Frankrijk heb je Bruno Dumont, wat dat één van de*
grote, allez, één van de favorieten is van Fien onder andere. Waar dat zij ook wel
soms de mosterd heeft gehaald. Maar die zit zo in Frans-Vlaanderen te draaien.)

Wannes Destoop (Albatros)

Gilles coulier

Wouter Bouvijn

Enzo Smits

Reeks Lockdown op canvas

Jan Eelen

2.2 Bas Devos – 25.08.21

Plaats van interview: kantoor (productiehuis), Koopliedenstraat 35, Brussel

De films van Bas Devos zijn narratieve fictiefilms, maar zitten een beetje in die marge van wat de meeste mensen als klassieke narratieve films zouden bestempelen omdat ze niet echt een klassieke narratieve plotstructuur hebben maar veel meer vertrekken vanuit een emotionaliteit, en vanuit materialiteit. Op die manier probeert Devos, met de tools die film hem biedt, iets te begrijpen van hoe mensen in elkaar zitten en hoe ze zich verhouden tot hun omgeving. Naast het onderzoeken hoe mensen zich verhouden tot de grond waarop ze bestaan, staat ook de woonruimte, of de plek die je als thuis zou claimen, centraal in zijn films.

Bij zijn eerste film, *Violet*, lag de nadruk heel hard op (de zoektocht naar) het esthetische, terwijl hij daar nu, voor zijn laatste films, los van gekomen is, meer vrijheid heeft en zijn films zich veel meer in de werkelijkheid proberen te plaatsen. Zijn laatste twee films zijn ook echt stadsfilms, gesitueerd in brussel, meer verankerd op een plaats en gaan ook een relatie met die plek aan. Nu werkt Devos eigenlijk veelal vanuit locaties.

Devos filmt niet op een set maar op locatie, een decor bouwen is voor hem geen optie. Er is financieel geen ruimte voor en op locatie draaien biedt meer vrijheid om zaken te gaan ontdekken en last minute te beslissen. Hij gaat het liefst zelf op zoek naar naar locaties: '*liefst van al doe ik dat gewoon zelf. Ik vind dat heel leuk en ... een goede manier of zo om ook gewoon uw film vorm te geven.*'

VIOLET

Violet is voor Bas Devos zijn meest fictionele film (van de drie die hij op het moment van het interview maakte): '*In de zin dat het echt een soort opgebouwde, fictieve mentale ruimte is. (...) Een soort filmische bubbel, het minst geconnecteerd met een soort politieke werkelijkheid waarin we ons bewegen.*' De film bestaat in een besloten wereld, en ook het narratief, hoewel dat heel klein is, refereert alleen maar aan zichzelf.

Omdat de film zich in een soort droomwereld afspeelt en Devos toen heel erg vertrok vanuit een zoektocht naar esthetiek, bleek het erg moeilijk een mooie plek wou vinden die aan zijn vooropgesteld beeld beantwoordden. Bovendien refereerden de ruimtes (de wijk) grotendeels aan de ruimtes, zowel mentaal als fysiek, die Devos in zijn jeugd gekend heeft. Devos denkt dat hij in deze film de ruimtes geplooid heeft naar wat hij wou zien, de gedachten over de plekken stonden in functie van het verhaal: '*zat ik gewoon aan mijn bureau en was ik aan het verbeelden, aan het fantaseren en dat is een mengeling van ongetwijfeld herinneringen, en herinneringen aan de wijken waarin dat ik ben opgegroeid.*

Euhm, en die dan eigenlijk willen op één of ander manier, filmisch willen maken. En dat is mega confronterend want onze Vlaamse wijken zijn niet filmisch. Allez, d'r zijn er een aantal, maar je moet echt zoeken. (…) *Ik had een beeld, een soort romantisch beeld van hoe dat dan zou zijn en dan, als ik dat wou vinden in de werkelijkheid dan was dat, wow, dat was wel een schok, dat dat moeilijk was. (…) Ik had ook veel eisen gesteld hé, ik wou eigenlijk idealiter met een camera van binnen in een huis, hele-maal naar buiten door een wijk kunnen gaan en liefst van al niets zien dat me voor de borst zou stoten, esthetisch.*'

De plekken die hij zocht voor Violet bleken dus supermoeilijk te vinden in Vlaanderen, veel heeft te maken met de manier waarop Vlaanderen geordened is. De zoektocht was vooral op intuïtie: '*Ik weet dat ik heel veel wijken opzocht die ik interessant vond. Je hebt veel tuinwijken en zo, maar dat is dan allemaal uniform. Euh, en dat was het ook niet. Dat wist ik ook, dat het dat niet mocht zijn. Dus, ja, goe, heel veel rond rijden voor niks*…'

De wijk waarin Violet zich afspeelt combineert een aantal zaken: een glooiend stratenpatroon, wat noodzakelijk was om het bmx'en en fietsen in beeld te brengen, de huizen en voortuinen zijn zichtbaar en niet afgeschermd met hagen, een super-Amerikaanse iconografie, het huis van het hoofdperso-nage dat op de straat uitkijkt en waar je naartoe kan gaan met de camera en de praktische haalbaarheid om er te filmen. '*het aantal eisen of zo dat in mijn hoofd zat was totaal onrealistisch denk ik. Maar waar dat ik dan finaal terecht kwam daar was wel een eerste keer waar dat ik zoiets had van 'ah ja, hier is iets spannend' want die straten die glooien echt. Dat was eigenlijk het meest doorslaggevende of zo. Eerder nog dan huizen kunnen zien en voortuinen, dat waren dingen die ik ook kon opgeven denk ik in mijn verbeelding. Maar, dat je zo een zachte bocht maakte en dan weer een zachte bocht had, dat was super bijzonder aan die plek. (…) Maar ook met het huis. Het huis van het hoofdpersonage waar dat ik van wou dat je van in het huis die wijk kon zien enerzijds. En dus wou ik graag dat je keek op één of twee straten. En waar dat je ook naartoe zou kunnen gaan met de camera. Dus dat je dat huis zou voelen, dat je dat dichterbij zou voelen komen, dat je dat centrum of zo van die film zou kunnen voelen. (…) Dus ja. D'r is nooit zo, één, denk ik, echt doorslag-gevende reden om ergens te landen hoor. Het is heel vaak een mix van, een wens, euhm, de verrassing, want ge hebt geen beeld maar ge ziet iets en je denkt 'oh, dit is totaal niet wat ik in gedachten had, maar wow, dat is nog wel cool', mogelijkheden, zo van 'ah, hier kan wel vanalles', praktische zaken, ja …*'

Bovendien kan het overal in Vlaanderen zijn, maar ook niet noodzakelijk Vlaanderen: '*Dat is niet Vlaanderen, dat is ook niet niet-Vlaanderen.*'

De narratieve logica in de film plaatst het huis, als een beschermde, veilige plek, tegenover de groep vrienden en de wijk, wat veel onveiliger is. In het huis wordt hij beschermd door zijn ouders, ook al raken die niet helemaal tot bij

hem, ze zijn er en laten dat ook verstaan. De groep vrienden nemen hem mee en hebben vragen die hij niet kan beantwoorden: '*ze komen hem bezoeken en ze nemen hem mee en daar ondervragen ze hem eigenlijk en ... Het heeft meer met die jongens en met die, voor mij, narratieve logica, zoiets van die hebben vragen en die willen antwoorden of die kijken naar hem op een andere manier als daarvoor of ... sommigen zijn streng voor hem, andere zijn lief voor hem, whatever. Dat was meer van tel dan dat dat per se aan de ruimte vast hing denk ik.*'

Er vertrekt ook veel vanuit de liefde en fascinatie voor bmx. Het is ook een micro-wereldje, zonder inmenining van buitenaf of van volwassenen. Devos gebruikt het contrast tussen de gewichtloosheid (bij hun bmx-sprongen) en de zwaartekracht. De manier waarop de bmx'ers springen en in de lucht hangen, het geluidje op het hoogste punt, is een metafoor voor een soort van sprong in het onbekende, een moment van overgave, kunnen ontsnappen aan .... En dan terug moeten landen, de zwaartekracht die veel tastbaarder is in alle andere scenes, wat hem letterlijk met zijn voeten op de grond zet.

De keuze voor 4:3 kadrering was een manier om te focussen: '*dat je eigenlijk echt letterlijk een stuk van die context iedere keer wegknipt en iedere keer zegt van 'ja, kijk deze is een bos waar dat ze gaan bmx'en, waar dat dat is, dat doet er eigenlijk niet per se toe of zo. Wat dat er wel toe doet zijn die geometrische vormen en whatever, of hoe dat die twee jongens nu naar mekaar kijken, of ... allé, dat doet er toe.*'

Vormelijk zoekt Devos naar interessante manieren om zaken te tonen, bijvoorbeel in de scene waarbij Jesse observeert hoe de familie van Jonas thuiskomt en de lichten in de verschillende kamers aangaan. Het is ook een manier om Jesse tegenover die familie te plaatsen. Ook de klank wordt eigenlijk continu als een soort subjectieve ervaring en niet als een soort objectieve ervaring gebruikt.

Verder was het voor Devos belangijrk dat elk shot zich opende als een soort klein zoektochtje, dat je als kijker pas halverwege de scene begrijpt wat je ziet of wat er aan het gebeuren is. Daardoor krijg je het fragmentarische en springen van plaats naar plaats. Toch zijn de verschillende locaties verbonden door midddel van de autoritten.

De wijk wordt wel meer in zijn geheel getoond, er wordt meer context getoond: '*We wilden eigenlijk echt door die wijk gaan en we wilden als het ware een soort van afscheid nemen van die film, we wilden ook weg gaan van dat personage en we wilden dat dat iets, wat mystiek is of ik weet eigenlijk al niet meer goed wat alle gedachtes daarbij waren. Als ik dat dan schreef, wist ik wel van 'ah, ik wil eigenlijk wel graag in het midden van die film, of het begin van die film, wil ik die wijk al wel tonen. Ik wil dat je als kijker al een gevoel hebt van 'ah ja, oké'. Als je dat aan het*

einde ziet, dat dat niet per se nieuw is maar dat je die plek een beetje begrijpt. Dat was zeker wel iets dat meespeelde.'

Het interieur van het huis is niet hetzelfde als het exterieur. Interieur is gefilmd in een klein huisje , bungalow-stijl in Rijmenam.

Het skatepark: *ik was echt gecharmeerd door dat van Mechelen omdat ze dat zelf hadden gebouwd. Dat is eigenlijk begonnen als een illegaal skatepark, ze hebben dat zelf gebouwd. En dat is, jaar na jaar groeide dat. En eigenlijk, tot een jaar voor dat ik ging filmen was dat eigenlijk nog niet de moeite. Maar in het jaar voor ik filmde hebben ze daar een heel stuk bij mogen gieten, hebben ze toestemming gekregen van de gemeente die zoiets hadden van 'ja, dat ligt hier nu, doe maar'. En dan ineens was dat wel echt de moeite. Waardoor dat die beton ook nog zo nieuw is in die film en nog zo wit en bijna licht geeft zo.*

Het bos: een compromis, *het bos was een beetje een compromis omdat heel veel van de bmx-bossen heel dens zijn. Als in, letterlijk, ge kunt er op tien meter van staan en ge ziet het niet. En dat is natuurlijk ook niet de bedoeling van ...(...) in Waterloo, via tips van een paar mensen in Bois de Berlaymont terecht kwam. En Bois de Berlaymont ligt niet ver van de Brusselse ring. Euhm, en dat is wel een heel ruim bos zo en daar hebben ze een heel cool parcours gemaakt. Allé, bon, ik vond dat cool, de bmx'ers vonden dat saai. (...) Dat Bois de Berlaymont was ideaal omdat dat gewoon vlak naast een grote baan lag, heel makkelijk bereikbaar, we konden de camion daar dichtbij parkeren enzo.*

Als Bas Devos reflecteert over het ruimtegebruik in Vlaanderen dan merkt hij een enorm gebrek aan gevoeligheid en respect voor openbare ruimte, we hebben veel kansen laten liggen met onze openbare ruimte. De verkavelingen spelen daar een hoofdrol, glansrol in. Hij denkt dat er niet veel plekken zijn op de wereld zijn waar dat er zoveel mag als bij ons, of zoveel gemogen heeft als bij ons. En dat is wel zonde. Bovendien schrikt hij wel van hoe ondoordacht dat allemaal is, en van de impact dat dat heeft, dat soort landgebruik, op alles in het leven.

Tegelijk is daar op één of andere manier wel een esthetische liefde voor die specifieke plek. *Het heeft iets charmant, en natuurlijk is het interessant om te zien wat voor mensen er dan achter die gevels wonen en zo.*

2.3 Fien Troch – 12.10.21

Plaats van interview: Mok, Brussel

De locaties en de sfeer die op die plekken hangt zijn erg bepalend in de films van Fien Troch. De regisseur heeft bij het schrijven de plekken meestal al in haar hoofd. Hierbij is er wel sprake van een evolutie in de aanpak, deze veranderde namelijk bij het schrijven van Home, mede onder invloed van haar partner en monteur Nico Leunen, die aan Home heeft meegeschreven. Bij Troch haar eerste films werd heel hard vertrokken vanuit de plek en paste Troch het verhaal zelfs aan volgens de locatie, de plek dirigeerde met andere woorden heel hard het scenario. Bij Home staan de locaties in functie van het verhaal: '*die plekken blijven op zich belangrijk, maar het is gewoon de volgende stap geworden.*' Door niet langer het visuele te laten primeren op het verhaal, staat volgens de regisseur het scenario van Home meer op zich. '*En dat ik dat visuele er als iets heel essentieel kan bij voegen en niet, het verhaal is ondergeschikt aan de plaatsen.*'

Voor Troch werken de locaties heel associatief, ze gaat plekken linken aan bepaalde beelden en sferen, veelal uit haar herinneringen. Als ze die plekken in beeld brengt, romantiseert ze die plekken heel erg. Daarmee bedoelt ze niet in esthetische zin, niet mooier maken, maar zaken vergroten, wranger of afstandelijker maken. Ze brengt niet de realistische, aangename middenweg in beeld, maar zal de plekken ook nooit heel extreem gaan weergeven. '*Ik ben altijd op zoek naar een soort van lelijkheid, ik romantiseer nooit en toch romantiseer ik alles. En daarmee bedoel ik, ik zoek iets lelijk en hoe lelijker hoe beter.(...) Charme ontwijk ik altijd volledig in films*'

Doorheen het oeuvre van Troch zijn er bepaalde omgevingen die als type in meerdere films voorkomen, zoals parkings (Kid en Home), supermarkten (Een ander zijn geluk en Kid) en schoolgebouwen (Kid en Home). Troch verklaart haar fascinaties voor deze locaties aan de hand van de associaties die ze bij deze plekken maakt:

Supermarkten (en parkings) zijn voor Troch heel erg gekoppeld aan veramerikanisering. Het zijn voor haar heel erg kapitalistische plekken met een soort valse vrijheid. Ze associeert deze plaatsen met het gevoel van je leven op orde hebben ('have your shit together') en dus ook een vals gevoel van geborgenheid.

Een parking is voor Troch een niet-complexe plek : '*je hebt daar niet veel keuze hé: uw auto parkeren, de karretjes staan daar, en je komt uw inkopen doen, dat is een niet-complexe plek of zo. En ik denk dat zo'n niet-complexe plekken mij altijd heel hard aantrekken om dat daar dan ingewikkelder te maken dan het zou moeten zijn. Of daar echt een eenzaamheid te tonen.*'

Schoolgebouwen hebben voor Troch iets heel onpersoonlijk

De personages in de films van Fien Troch worden vertolkt door mensen van op die plek, het zijn geen professionele acteurs.

KID

Voor Kid is Fien Troch '*vertrokken vanuit een plek en niet vanuit een verhaal.*' Er was dus eerst de plek, de locaties, waardoor die ook zo belangrijk zijn. Troch laat in de film ook ruimte, onder andere door middel van stillevens, om die locaties te laten vertellen in de film. '*Kid bestaat echt door zijn locaties.*'

Het is de omgeving waar Fien Troch tijdens haar jeugd haar vakanties doorbracht, de zus van haar oma woonde op zo'n boerderij vlak bij haar oma. Voor de regisseur is die nostalgie, een unheimlich gevoel als herinnering aan die plek bepalend. '*En unheimlich een stuk het menselijke omdat die, dat waren allemaal lieve mensen maar heel anders dan waar ik opgegroeid was. Maar ook het unheimliche van die huizen en van die plekken die heel afstandelijk en euh, ja, heel filmisch daardoor, dan in mijn herinnering zaten*.'

Het was voor Troch belangrijk om de integriteit van die plek te behouden, maar tegelijk romantiseert ze de plek (zoals hierboven beschreven). De nadruk lag daarbij op dat unheimliche, de sfeer is vaak ongemakkelijk, carré, hoekig. Hiervoor werd ook in de cinematografie bewust ingezet, met een kadrage die altijd heel vast is. De regel bij het filmen was: borstshot en heupshot, en dan af en toe een ruimte als mensen uit beeld gaan of in beeld komen.

Verder wou de regisseur '*in Kid ook zeker een lelijkheid tonen.*(...) *Een lelijkheid die ik op die moment heel esthetisch vond hé, waar ik echt verliefd op was.*' Die lelijkheid zit voor haar in alle decors, in de onwaarschijnlijke simpelheid van dat soort huizen.

De film is geschreven met het idee van goed weer, mega zon, een beetje gebaseerd op L'Etranger van Camus. Tijdens de opnames was het echter geen goede zomer. Enkel de regen (als Kid 's avonds buiten staat op de oprit van de woning van de tante) is gemanipuleerd (die is gemaakt).

De plekken of het gevoel van een plek, zijn dus heel erg bepalend in deze film. Zo wordt Kid zijn eenzaamheid heel erg versterkt of benadrukt door de omgeving: '*Kid zijn eenzaamheid is maal honderd door die plek*'. Voor Troch is de weergave van het gevoel van die plek bijna contemplatief en kon het niet anders getoond worden: '*hoe dat verhaal blend of die kinderen of die personages blenden met wie ze zijn, hoe ze eruit zien, hoe ze spelen, waar ze wonen.*'

Meer concrete toelichting bij enkele specifieke locaties in de film:
Het huis van de tante :
Het huis van de tante representeert een heel erg doorsnee Vlaamse woning, de herkenbaarheid van het typische 'huisje-tuintje-boompje'-verhaal speelt hier heel erg.

Zeker voor de voorgevel is dit het geval. Deze wordt in de film geïsoleerd weergegeven: '*ik denk dat ik de indruk geef in Kid dat daarnaast nog zevenentwintig van die huizen staan. Wat dat dan heel Vlaams is, is dat daarnaast dan misschien nog zo'n een jaren zeventig, iets dat ik nog mooi vindt, zo soort bungalow en daarnaast staat dan zo een spaanse villa en daarnaast iets zeer ongedefinieerd Vlaams dat je denkt uuh. En die kakafonie heb ik niet getoond. En dat is wat ik bedoel met romantiseren, allé romantiseren niet, maar je zet het wel naar uw hand.*'

Het interieur werd gefilmd in een andere woning dan die gevel die we te zien krijgen. Zowel het interieur als het exterieur toont een soort lelijke cleanheid, er zit geen ziel in de woning.

De boerderij :

Ook in de boerderij werd veel weg gehaald uit het interieur om de 'ongezellige' sfeer te versterken.

Het bos (de natuur):

De natuur heeft in de film een heel symbolische waarde. In tegenstelling tot de andere plekken in de film staat de natuur voor nog iets puur, het is een vrij neutrale plek maar tegelijk ook een plek van veel meer emotie. Het is de plek waar '*de rust gevonden wordt en waar dat de mama wordt teruggevonden, waar hij bang is dat hij zijn mama kwijt is, ... (...) hij is daar bang, hij verhuist, hij is zijn mama kwijt, er wordt gelachen, ...*'

Bovendien evolueert die natuur, het bos mee met Kid zijn gevoel doorheen de film. Het is de plek waar hij aan het begin van de film een soort vrijheid heeft die hij op andere plekken (thuis, op school, in de kerk, ...) minder heeft, maar die na de dood van zijn mama heel erg ingeknot wordt. Alles is dan plots omgekeerd, gekaderd, hij komt bijna niet meer alleen in het bos (wel nog met de klas, zijn oom, ...).

Fien Troch verwijst hierbij ook naar de manier waarop het bos in een sprookje gebruikt wordt: '*waar dat het bos zo een heldere, leuke plek kan zijn maar evengoed een donkere, onheilspellende plek.*'

Toch heeft Troch niet gemanipuleerd in haar weergave van het bos: '*ik heb lang gedacht van, wil ik dat bos nog dreigender maken door donker of ... Maar dat is uiteindelijk niet gebeurd.*'

Het meertje:

Het meertje is een plek gelijkaardig aan de meertjes waar Troch vroeger met haar oma ging. Ze spendeerden daar dan een ganse namiddag, met shop en emmer, zoals op het strand. De scène werd gefilmd in de buurt van de abdij van Averbode.

Supermarkt:

De supermarkt symboliseert hier vooral het praktische, het functionele, georganiseerde.

Supermarktparking:

Voor de kinderen is die parking hun speelterrein en vooral ook de associatie met de supermarkt waar er snoep is : '*die parking is voor hen zo het walhalla, daar kun je alles kopen wat je kunt kopen wat wij leuk vinden*.'

 HOME

 Bij het schrijven van het scenario voor Home was Fien Troch meer met het verhalende bezig, het scenario primeerde boven de plek '*en niet met het visuele waardoor dat dat minder uitgesproken was*'. Bovendien is Home gebaseerd op waargebeurde feiten.

De plekken in de film moesten iets urban uitstralen: '*Liefst veel beton en veel ..., enfin, of toch eerder de plekken waar dat je van voelt, we hebben niet, we geven niet veel ruimte cadeau aan mensen, aangename ruimte.*'

De setting, het huis van Sammy waar Kevin terecht komt, was bewust een neutrale, ongedefinieerde woning. Het huis zou overal in Vlaanderen gesitueerd kunnen zijn, maar het is wel duidelijk dat het om de gegoede middenklasse in een suburbane, net niet stad zijnde, locatie gaat. '*Wat al snel duidelijk was, was wel dat als dat ook nog eens, met alle respect, marginale mensen zijn, dan is dat zo obvious van ja, natuurlijk, al die ellende dat gebeurt dan bij dat soort mensen.*'

Bij deze film werd er ook voor gekozen om nooit in te grijpen, nooit iets mooier te maken, noch buiten noch binnen. Zo werden in het huis dat gekozen werd geen ingrepen gedaan: '*Dus daar wordt niet, niets, zelfs niets verzet, het enige wat we mochten doen was foto's wegnemen omdat dat anders raar is dat daar andere familiefoto's hingen. En niet zo een soort van dogma, maar meer zo in de vrijheid dat we wouden filmen en dat we het ding aanpakken*.' Maar ook bij bijvoorbeeld het weer werd niet ingegrepen, het weer van het moment bij opname is het weer dat in de film te zien is: '*het weer dat het was was het. En als het begon te regenen in de scène, dan begon het maar te regenen. Daar is niks, niks ... (...) het idee was, als het overtrekt dan overtrekt het gewoon in de film*.'

Dat heeft ook te maken met de documentaire-stijl van filmen met een handcamera en heel continu gedraaid. Uiteraard is alles geënsceneerd met verschillende takes, maar in de scène (niet in een verhaal) werd er continu gedraaid. Het idee om documentaire te filmen kwam in eerste instantie voort uit heel praktische overwegingen: '*ik wil alle vrijheid, als die daar iets aan het doen zijn, dat je daar gewoon naartoe kan lopen en dat filmen, als iemand ... ik wil niet dat ze geïntimideerd zijn door lichtsettingen en dat ze een uur moeten wachten.*'

Ook de jongeren die in de film spelen waren heel puur en echt (geen professionele acteurs) en hadden een soort frisheid en maturiteit vindt Troch. De omgang met Kevin in de film: '*Kevin wordt opgevangen en er wordt ook liefde aan gegeven. Maar dat moet wel blijven op de plek waar hij hoort volgens die mama. Die mama gaat nooit zeggen: ge hoort zo wat in de kelder, maar dat moet wel een*

kwetsbare jongen zonder mening blijven. En dan kan ze daar voor zorgen, maar vanaf dat die sterker wordt ...'

Meer concrete toelichting bij enkele specifieke locaties in de film:
De parking van de supermarkt (Delhaize) :
De jongeren hangen er rond, claimen de plek, ze hebben ook geen andere plek om naartoe te gaan.
De school:
De school is heel erg typische (Vlaamse) school, zou overal kunnen zijn. Typerend zijn de grote grijze bakstenen of betonsteen.
Het huis van de 'evil mother':
Er is iets donker aan de woning die hiervoor gebruikt werd. Dat is eerder toevallig, maar '*dat werkt super hard dat dat toch niet zo een fris huis lijkt te zijn*.'
De woning staat in Kessel-Lo of Leuven, in de natuur.
De plek waar de mama van Kevin hem vertelt dat hij niet naar huis kan komen (waar Kevin huilt):
Troch zocht bewust een heel ongedefinieerde plek, ze wou geen hippe (koffie)bar of smakeloos café, daarvoor werd een soort pizzeria-ding gebruikt.

Vlaamse landschap en verstedelijking
Fien Troch vertelt hoe ze bij de zoektocht naar locaties uren rond reed met de auto of de fiets en dan geconfronteerd werd met het deprimerende van de vele lelijke Vlaamse huizen. Troch vindt verkavelingen dan ook een heel triest iets. Het is een stuk van onze identiteit: dat dat hier één grote rommel is, daardoor is er ook veel creativiteit, maar het is ook de prijs die men betaalt voor totale vrijheid. Troch vindt het idee van het huis met de tuin een soort foute luxe die ons is aangekweekt, het is volgens haar belangrijk te weten waarom je ergens gaat wonen.

2.4 Michaël R. Roskam – 13.06.22

Plaats van interview: tuin woning Michaël R. Roskam

Het Belgisch-Vlaamse landschap speelt bewust een rol in het vroege werk van Michaël R. Roskam (kortfilms en Rundskop). Door zijn opleiding schilderkunst heeft het (klassieke) genre van de landschapsschilderkunst een invloed op zijn werk. Cinema ziet hij als onderdeel van, en schatplichtig aan een traditie van representatie van het landschap in de landschapsschilderkunst, in de landschapsfotografie. Maar cinema heeft een hele unieke manier om dat landschap te tonen, namelijk tijd en tijdloosheid.

Michaël R. Roskam definieert landschap als een beeld, een zicht op een horizon van één punt naar een heel wijd punt. De compositie wordt gevormd door de elementen (bomen, torens, kastelen, rotsblokken, etc.) die zich op die horizon bevinden. In Vlaanderen zijn er een aantal heel typische landmarks waar Roskam schoonheid in ziet, namelijk hoogspanningskabels, watertorens en kerktorens (anno 2003, tegenwoordig ook windmolens). Deze landmarks zijn ook erg zichtbaar aanwezig : '*In Vlaanderen kunt ge bijna nauwelijks nog een plek kiezen zonder één van de drie, voor mij persoonlijk, ik spreek nu 2003 en zo, in die periode nog, zonder dat ge drie landmarks ziet: hoogspanningskabels, watertorens of kerktorens. En in verstedelijkter, hoe meer van die drie dat je er tegelijkertijd ziet*.'

Bovendien zijn deze Vlaamse landschappen geen echte natuurlandschappen, onze natuur is gemaakt, niet puur, niet authentiek (aangeplante bossen, akkers, …) maar wel complexe, dramatische, bezielde landschappen. Er gebeurt heel veel (complex), het is opgevuld met drama (emotionele laag, er gebeurt iets), en door de referenties aan het verleden heeft het betekenis en krijgt het schoonheid (bezieling als onderdeel van een traditie).

Als kunstenaar beslist hij om op een bepaalde manier een landschap te evoceren of om het landschap te gebruiken om iets te evoceren. Aan het landschap en de vormelijke elementen in het landschap wordt vervolgens betekenis gegeven door framing, incorporatie in het drama en/of het toepassen van een speelse optiek. Het kader, de framing, bepaald wat de regisseur met het landschap doet. De representatie en montage van landschappen in de film dienen om een emotie op te wekken (drama). Door de functionaliteit en betekenis optisch van elkaar los te koppelen kan een beeld nieuwe betekenis genereren (net zoals een haardroger voor een kind een revolver wordt).

De landschappen moeten iets spelen, ze worden eigenlijk gecast om betekenis toe te voegen. En als iets betekenis heeft krijgt het schoonheid en wil de regisseur het landschap ook op zijn schoonst tonen (compositorisch, niet om te gaan retoucheren of bijwerken of doen alsof het wel mooi is). Bovendien zijn het lelijke en het mooie voor Roskam heel sterk inwisselbaar: '*hangt ervan af how it serves me*'.

RUNDSKOP

De locaties in rundskop waren vooraf grotendeels gekend door de regisseur, hij is in die streek, met de Luikse steenweg, opgegroeid. De plek van de achtervolging en aanval ontdekte Michaël R. Roskam door daar rond te wandelen als hij ging kijken wat er met de site van de drive-in cinema (waar voorheen ook een scène uit Carlo opgenomen is) gebeurd was en er onmiddellijk de dramatische mogelijkheden zag door de verhogingen. De taluds, het gras en de bomen zijn allemaal aangelegd, het is een artefact..

De situering in de openingsscène, het establishing shot, maakt onmiddellijk deel uit van de dramatische opbouw zodat de toon en atmosfeer meteen gezet is. Roskam begint meteen met het landschap, dat landschap evoceert zich: '*toont zich efkens en sluit zich terug efkens. En, bijna op de meest idyllische van allemaal, met de mist en een beetje bos en een beetje dit, en dan die stem erop, allé die verteller die dan iets vrij, ja, een beetje cynisch zelfs bijna, maar ook heel emotioneel iets brengt*'

Doorheen de film worden landschapsbeelden ook als overgangsbeelden gebruikt. Hierbij zijn er altijd duidelijke, menselijke artefacten in beeld (een koe, hoogspanningsmast, jonge scheuten graan, etc.). De horizon van deze landschappen wordt ook steeds hoger (steeds minder lucht in beeld) zodat het steeds bedrukkender wordt en de grond meer zijn werk begint te doen. Ook bezitten deze landschappen een ander tijdsgevoel, een verstilling: de eerste seconde lijkt dat beeld een foto, het beweegt niet. '*Het is pas, omdat ge weet dat ge in een film zit, omdat er een tijdverloop is, dat dat landschap, ge voelt dat dat toch leeft*'. Elementen in het beeld gaan bewegen: gras of jonge graanscheuten op de voorgrond, wolken die bewegen, ...

De scène met de kleine jongens die aan het praten zijn over meisjes voor het open veld is een duidelijk voorbeeld van hoe de regisseur door middel van kadrering en speelse opbouw, een bepaalde ervaring en authenticiteit genereert. De jongens werden heel bewust gepositioneerd voor het open veld, het landschap, en dan draait de camera zodat de steenweg met het bordeel in beeld komt: '*achter hun zie je het landschap ... Je hebt geen idee, wat zit die daar nu te babbelen in een landschap over meiskes. En ge draait gewoon om, want wat zij zien, is niet dat landschap, wij zien dat landschap en die jongens, zij zien de hoerenkoten, die het landschap mee bepalen. So, het kader, opbouw en dat is een speelsheid ook van wat doe je eerst, hoe genereert ge, authenticiteit, of genereert ge een bepaalde ervaring van de toeschouwer*'

Doorheen de film wordt de natuur ook duidelijk gekoppeld aan dreiging, daar zit altijd het gevaar want daar kan alles (soort van wetteloosheid). '*Voor mij zijn die landschappen, of buiten de stad treden, en dan heb ik het over de middelgrote stad in een agrarisch gebied, voor ons was die natuur daarrond, vrijheid*'.

Een aantal keuzes zijn ook puur esthetisch, zoals de keuzes omtrent kleur in film. Uiteraard wordt een landschap ook bepaald door zijn kleur, door zijn licht. Voor Rundskop waren Michaël R. Roskam en cinematograaf Nicolas Karakatsanis geïnspireerd door het schilderij *La Barque de Dante* van Delacroix (*The Barque of Dante*, ook *Dante et Virgile aux enfers (Dante and Virgil in Hell)*, 1822) waarop de waterdruppels op de naakte dij van een man geschilderd waren door een gele, een rode en een groene streep. Van veraf zie je een druppel op de huid, net als transparant water, iets lichtblauwachtig. Dit bepaalde mee het kleurenpallet van de film: een combinatie van die drie kleuren (geel, rood, groen) met lichtblauw, '*dat we dan tenminste iets doen wat ook in de schilderkunst klopt. En dat werkte.*' Het vooraf bepalen van een kleurenpallet verzekert ook consistentie.

Andere bepalende beelden en associaties die in de film aanwezig zijn:

Betonnen verkavelingswegskes (auto rijdt door een veld) als krassen in het landschap:

'*Ik vergeleek dat met, alsof er ergens zo een soort, ja, een vulkaan van beton is. Zoals Pompeii, as, en dat loopt, dat zijn goten, goten van beton. Maar als ik daar op een bepaalde manier naar kijk zijn dat, euhm, vulkanische paden. Ooit ergens uitgebarsten, uit een stad. En de stad, boem, en dan begint dat te lopen, en dat stroomt en dat zijn voor mij vulkaanpaden. (...) Het stof ook hé. Dan voelt ge een soort, voor mij, misschien rijdt hij zelfs niet, maar vaart hij ... door beton en zand.*'

Viaducten:

' *ik hou van die strakke betonnen kamers waar we onderdoor rijden met de brug, autostrade, ... hebt ge daar ook shots, van zo een rond punt, waar ge zo, van licht in donker, terug.*'

Schuifdeuren, het raam als kader:

'*Het landschap tonen, maar ook, laten voelen van waaruit dat we kijken naar het landschap.*'

Paardenrenbaan:

'*Ik vind paardenrenbanen prachtig, I love it. Dat is gewoon, ja, een ovaal met lijnen en stands en ...*'

CARLO

De kortfilm *Carlo* heeft Michaël R. Roskam pgevat als de begrafenis van Carlo, met het landschap als kathedraal: '*En de <u>kathedraal</u> van bomen in de wei. Voor mij was dat een, ik heb dat gefilmd alsof ik in een kerk zit. Ik heb dat niet gefilmd alsof ik op een weiland zat. De binnenkomst, alles, het is eigenlijk een, dat is naar de kathedraal gaan en die badkuip, die daar staat, is het altaar, dus dat bad waar de koeien uit drinken. En de koeien, dat is het koor. Dus ik heb dat gewoon, voor mij was dat, we filmen dat en visualiseren dat alsof dat dat een kathedraal is.*'

We zijn niet op een weiland. We zitten in de kerk, want Carlo gaat sterven. Dat is zijn begrafenis.'

Het landschap van de plantage met fruitbomen komt in de film in beeld tijdens de achtervolging, waardoor je de corridors van de appelbomen ervaart: '*We hebben altijd achtervolgingen in straten, metro's, of achter huisjes, nu zijn het muren van appelbomen.*' Carlo wordt er ook opgeschrikt door een krieken-gaskanon. In Haspengouw worden dergelijke gaskanonnen gebruikt om de vogels weg te jagen en hoor je deze constant knallen. '*That's landscape too. Als ik naar een landschap kijk, op één of andere manier, dat knalt de hele tijd, er is geen vrede.*'

Ook de kortfilm Carlo start met een landschap als openingsscène, ook met voice-over. Hier zien we duidelijk de hoogspanningsmasten, maar ook de aangeplante bomen langs de weg: '*dat ritme vind ik prachtig, past zo mooi met die witte lijnen in het midden, een repetitie der dingen.*'

Het groot wit scherm dat tijdens de achtervolging in beeld komt werd vroeger gebruikt voor een drive-in cinema. De regisseur gebruikt hier vooral het visuele contrast van '*zo een groot, wit monolithisch vlak in het midden van de natuur.*'

Vlaamse landschap en verstedelijking

Michaël R. Roskam ziet in het Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap vooral de sporen van de geschiedenis na vijftienhonderd jaar en heeft daar respect voor, omdat het ergens vandaan komt: '*Dus ik voel daardoor meer schoonheid in die lelijkheid, dan als ik daar objectief naar zou kijken. Objectief denk ik ook van: don't make sense. Maar als die huizen plots iets representeren voor mij, waar het vandaan komt, dan wordt die lelijkheid een* <u>identificatie</u>*. (...) Ik zeg niet dat ik het mooi vind, maar I kinda respect it. er is een manier om daar ook wel wat trots in te vinden, vind ik. Ik vind dat wel leuk, zo trots te zijn ook op dingen waarvan ge denkt, hey sas ...*'

Het landschap in Vlaanderen/België wordt bepaald door zijn historische ligging: klimatologisch mooi tussen het Noorden en het Zuiden en centraal in Europa. Het goede klimaat (mooie seizoenen, vruchtbare gronden, relatief weinig overstromingen, geen aardbevingen, mooie nivelleringen, etc.) en de centrale ligging hebben er mee voor gezorgd dat Vlaanderen/België vele machtcentra op een relatief kleine oppervlakte telt (Antwerpen, Brugge, Brussel, Luik). Het werd bijgevolg makkelijk om op korte afstand van meerdere centra te gaan wonen, wat de verstedelijking in de hand gewerkt heeft.

Daarnaast is België heel lang het slagveld van Europa geweest. Voor Roskam verklaart dit het individualistische bouwgedrag van de Vlaming: '*doe wat ge wilt, wij doen ons deuren en ons ramen toe, hier doen we feest en doen dat open en uitdrukkingsloos. (...) Omdat ge geen communicatie wilt geven aan de bezetter. (...) Mensen zijn hier gewoon zo wat ieder voor zich denk ik (...) Uw eigen heerschappij. Omdat we er geen hebben, omdat we altijd onderdrukt zijn geweest.*'

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Roskam gelooft dat het klimaat, de omgeving, de plek waar je woont '*bepaalt hoe he daar in mekaar steekt.*'

Het landschap is opgebouwd uit verschillende parallelle netwerken (religie: klooster, abdijen; staat, transport, technologie, fabrieken, waterlopen, etc.) die over elkaar heen schuiven.

2.5 Eugenie Jansen – 02.11.22

Plaats van interview: C.R. Waiboerweg 1B, Millingen aan de Rijn, Nederland (woning Eugenie Jansen)

Het proces van film maken gebeurt bij Eugenie Jansen door toeval voortdurend binnen te laten. Ze start met een aantal inhoudelijke vragen als uitgangspunt, een aantal mensen die in de film gaan spelen, de ruimte die ze uitkoos en een concept. Daarmee gaat ze aan de slag, '*ik weet ook niet wat dat allemaal bij mekaar gaat geven'*. Niet alles is vooraf bedacht. Door het toeval binnen te laten en eigenlijk eerder voorwaardes te scheppen, ontwikkelt de film zichzelf en ontstaan er dingen die ze niet van tevoren had kunnen verzinnen. '*En die vaak nog mooier zijn, dan wat je zelf had kunnen verzinnen.*' Bovendien laat deze methode ook ruimte aan de kijker voor interpretatie.

Voor 'Above Us All' had iemand anders het script geschreven en werd Jansen gevraagd voor de regie. Het originele script was een vrij autobiografisch verhaal van de schrijfster die zelf vanuit Indonesië naar Nederland gekomen is op het moment dat haar moeder overlijdt. Het originele script was eerder een avonturen-kinderfilm. Jansen wou het script niet letterlijk verfilmen en heeft het verhaal heel erg naar haar hand gezet (bv. Nederland vervangen door Ieper en omstreken, Australië ipv. Indonesië) en verder ontwikkeld, ook samen met de spelers.

Binnen dat script selecteerde Jansen een aantal thema's, de uitgangspunten voor deze film, namelijk : film als beleving, ruimte en tijd, rouwverwerking (persoonlijk en maatschappelijk). Met deze film wou de regisseur enerzijds onderzoeken hoe film kan gebruikt worden om een beleving en een ervaring centraal te plaatsen. De opzet van deze film was dan ook om een verhaal door de film heen laten stromen, zonder dat het verhaal vooropstaat in het film maken. Jansen refereert hierbij naar Peter Greenaway die ooit zei dat film een te belangrijk medium aan verhalen is om louter aan verhalenvertellers over te laten. Wat hierbij dus op de voorgrond staat is niet het verhaal, maar eerder op dat moment ergens echt zijn. Door de kijker in het centrum van het shot te plaatsen en de camera 360 graden rond dat middelpunt te laten draaien, staat de kijker werkelijk in de ruimte. Anderzijds is de film ook een onderzoek naar ruimte en tijd. Door niet te decouperen, te knippen binnen shots, wou Jansen de ruimte en de tijd heel houden. Bovendien geeft het concept van de 3D-film waarbij in elke scène de ganse ruimte getoond wordt (ook de achterkant) door de camera in cirkels van 360 graden te laten draaien, uitdrukking aan de verhouding tussen de ruimte en de tijd: '*er lijkt heel weinig te gebeuren maar ondertussen is, als we 360 graden verder zijn is de ruimte niet meer wat die was (...) want de tijd is verstreken, dus de tijd heeft enorm altijd invloed op de ruimte. (...) Het wordt nooit meer zoals het was.*' Met dit concept kon kon ook het thema rouwverwerking, zowel heel

persoonlijke rouwverwerking (van het meisje dat haar moeder kwijt is), als het publieke herdenken (het maatschappelijke herdenken van een oorlog), in beeld gebracht worden: 'één van de dingen van rouw is, het is natuurlijk voor iedereen heel anders, maar dat tijd, dus de wereld draait maar door, maar de tijd voor degene die rouwt staat stil.'

Jansen werkt voor haar films niet met professionele acteurs, maar met mensen ter plekke. Zo is de sterrenkundige uit de film ook een sterrenkundige, de mensen van de bed and breakfast zijn die mensen, etc. Omdat een sterrenwacht thematisch erg goed aansluit, gaat ook over tijd en ruimte, had Jansen vooraf wel al bepaald dat het om een Westerse astronoom zou gaan die daar werkt. Die '*spelers hebben heel erg invloed op de ontwikkeling van de film, op wat er gebeurt en wie je tegenkomt en wie het gaat spelen, ... die nemen eigenlijk de film over.*' Op die manier heeft het verhaal zich ontwikkeld terwijl ze aan het filmen waren. '*Het werd steeds duidelijker dat die verhouding tussen die vader en die dochter dat dat eigenlijk de spil van de film was. Dus het script was iets anders dan dat de film uiteindelijk geworden is.*' Zo is één van Maarten zijn ouders overleden toen die kind was. '*En hij zei heel erg van, op dat moment ben ik eigenlijk ook mijn andere ouder verloren. Want dat verdriet stond tussen ons in en daar konden we het niet over hebben. En, dus ik was niet alleen mijn vader kwijt, maar ik was ook mijn moeder kwijt. En dat is iets wat hij heel erg in de film in heeft gebracht en wat je eigenlijk ook zag gebeuren tussen hem en Shay. Van dat ze mekaar niet meer konden bereiken. Dus op die manier, ja, dat komt dan meer in het verhaal dan dat het in het oorspronkelijke verhaal zat en daar ging het steeds meer, concentreerde zich, de film daarop.*'

Doordat het verhaal zich ontwikkelde terwijl ze aan het filmen waren, was de verteltechniek in het begin nog niet duidelijk. Vandaar dat er bij de scènes met een personage dat meedraait in het eerste deel van de film een voice-over gebruikt wordt en ze naar het einde toe rechtstreeks in de camera praten: '*En naarmate ik daar zelfverzekerder over was, kon ik de mensen ook gewoon echt laten praten. In het begin wist ik dat allemaal nog niet zelf. En ... in het begin was het veiliger om dan een voice-over te doen, want dan kun je nog kiezen, bij die opa. Dus ik werd steeds zelfverzekerder (...) en dan kon ik ze ook vragen stellen. Dus het is eigenlijk een soort praktisch ding zo. Het groeiproces van de film is dat gegroeid dat ze, ja, gewoon spreken en zeggen wat ze denken. En in het begin, in Australië was het nog allemaal aftasten en zoeken. Dus hebben we de verhalen los opgenomen en daar... Naar het einde toe wordt er steeds meer gepraat. Ja, en dan, ja. Maar dat is, ja, dat is het ... als de film klaar is weet je hoe je hem moet maken. Dus het proces van het leren van hoe, want ja, kan dat überhaupt? Een hele film maken waar de camera 360 graden blijft, kan dat? ... '*

De regisseur zocht voor deze film een plek waar herdacht werd. In Ieper en omstreken is de oorlog heel aanwezig, zowel fysiek met de vele begraafplaatsen, bunkers, kraters in het landschap, etc., als in je hoofd, omdat je het ook de hele tijd ziet. Bovendien is het herdenken van de oorlog in Ieper heel levend, heel erg onderdeel van het dagelijks leven. Het maatschappelijke rouwen met rituelen zoals de last post, de klaprozen, kruisjes, etc. en musea, is heel erg zichtbaar in die streek.

De ruimtes in de film zijn zoals ze zijn en werden niet veranderd. Het uitgangspunt was om het te doen met wat er is. '*Behalve de zolderkamer bij het bed and breakfast, die hebben we ingericht. Dat is dan een nieuwe kamer voor hun. Maar er stonden ook al spullen (…) er staan daar dingen die daar al allemaal stonden, dus daar hebben we wat bedden tussen gezet.*'

Bij de aankomst in Ieper zien we de Australische kinderen, die effectief voor het eerst in Vlaanderen zijn, met vreemde ogen rondkijken (waar zijn we terecht gekomen?). In deze scène wordt het landschap geïntroduceerd door te filmen in het busje waardoor er een dubbele beweging ontstaat: de auto rijdt vooruit terwijl de camera ronddraait in het busje.

De sterrenwacht in Australië werd door Maarten aangebracht, hij had daar een keer stage gelopen.

In 'Above Us All' observeert en registreert (en archiveert) Jansen met de ronddraaiende camera een documentaire werkelijkheid waarbinnen '*dingen die gebeuren omdat ze gebeuren en dingen daarbinnen die geregisseerd zijn*'. Enkele voorbeelden hiervan zijn:

Scène aankomst motorrijders aan museum : '*Dat museumpje (…) daar kwamen mannen met een soort hells angels pakken aan. En dat was toeval dat die daar kwamen, en toen hebben we gevraagd : willen jullie dat nog een keer doen? Dus dat soort dingen, dat soort toevalsdingen vind ik wel heel belangrijk ook, dat het niet allemaal bedacht is en … Maar dat je ook het echt, echte leven doorheen ziet sijpelen.*'

Scène met de buurtbarbecue : '*de mensen die de bed&breakfast hadden, die zeiden op een dag : we kunnen niet filmen want we hebben de buurtbarbecue, daar gaan we heen. En toen zeiden wij: nou, dan willen we daar graag mee en dat filmen en dan spelen we een scène. Dus de scène gaat tussen de vader en de dochter. De vader die wil integreren en de dochter wil dat helemaal niet en die loopt weg. Dus dat is een stukje gespeeld, maar de rest eromheen is allemaal niks aan gedaan. Gewoon zoals het was. (..) alleen de spelers die spelen hun ding daar tussendoor.*'

Scène waarbij ze een mogelijke woning voor de vader en de kinderen bezoeken: ze hadden een makelaar gebeld met de vraag of er een woning in de buurt te huur was. '*En de scène die wij daar dan binnen spelen is dat zij eigenlijk dus bij de tante wil blijven. En dat is dan het conflict en dat spelen we*

dan uit. En dat de vader haar probeert over te halen: maar ja, dan hebben we een eigen plek en dat is goed.'

Scène op de begraafplaats met de grasmaaiers: '***dat is ook één van mijn lievelingsscènes. Maar ik had het een keer gezien al. (...) Dus dat ze daar, met zoveel mensen aan het maaien waren. En ja, dat wordt gewoon een ballet, toch? Die maaiers, met euh ... en ja, en ook, ja goed, gras maaien heeft voor mij sowieso een betekenis van euh, ... als het gras maar kort is dan heb je het leven onder controle, zoiets. (...) Dus gras maaien, het gras is belangrijk, dat moet kort zijn, dat moet er goed uit zien, dat moet ... ja zeker op zo'n begraafplaats, ja.'***

Scène met de spelenede kinderen met metaaldetector op het land: ze hadden de boer gevraagd om met z'n tractor op zijn land te rijden. Zijn zoon ging altijd met een metaaldetector zoeken, hij had zelf een eigen museumpje gemaakt met zijn vondsten. Dit leverde dan weer inspiratie voor scene in bunker.

Scène in het landschap met de luchtballon : ook deze scène is een mix van zaken die georganiseerd en geregisseerd zijn met zaken die gewoon op dat moment gebeuren. De luchtballon en de jongentjes die erachteraan rennen is zo geregeld, de boer die op het veld aan het werk is was daar gewoon. Er werd dan zo gefilmd dat kerktoren ook in beeld komt.

Scène met kamelen in Ieper: in Australië zijn er veel wilde kamelen in Australië. De kamelen die in de scène in Australië in beeld komen waren er wel gezet door hen. Als referentie daaraan komen ze terug in Ieper. De scène met ondergaande zon en de kamelen wordt een surrealistisch beeld gecreëerd.

De betekenis van het landschap is voor Jansen tweeledig: enerzijds ziet ze het landschap als getuige, het landschap als herinnering, anderzijds is het landschap ook heel erg bepalend voor de mens, het landschap als conditie voor het soort persoon die je wordt of bent. Zo is de omgeving in Ieper en omstreken heel erg bepaald door de (herinnering aan de) oorlog die heel levendig aanwezig is in het landschap (er worden nog steeds bommen en mensen opgegraven, mensen overlijden eraan), er is zelfs een hele herdenkingsindustrie en toerisme op gebouwd. Maar evenzeer beïnvloedt dit landschap de mensen die er wonen en leven, het zit in je genen. Ook in Australië zijn er Aboriginal-verhalen over het land en de landschappen en over de plek waar men woont.

2.6 Felix van Groeningen – 28.11.22

Plaats van interview: huis Felix Van Groeningen

Felix Van Groeningen werkt organisch en intuïtief, vertrekkende vanuit een gevoel. In zijn werk ziet hij een bepaalde evolutie: als jonge filmmaker wou hij veel dingen die hem interesseren samenbrengen, nu vertrekt hij meer vanuit een straf verhaal en een grotere wereld. Hij vindt dat hij meer een verhalenverteller geworden is, zeker ook in het adapteren, hij is daar beter in geworden, hanteert er meer tools voor.

Van Groeningen heeft de nood om de dingen eenvoudiger te maken, om dan met eenvoudige dingen te kunnen beginnen bouwen. In de voorbereiding wordt eigenlijk de film gemaakt, als een grote puzzel: zoeken van locaties, repeteren, kostuums passen, alles op elkaar afstemmen. '*Dan begint ge te puzzelen, begint ge uw film te zien*.'

De ruimte waarin het verhaal van zijn films zich afspeelt is voor de regisseur een belangrijk element, hij besteedt er veel aandacht aan en de ruimte wordt dan ook altijd minutieus samengesteld. Deze ruimte zet hij in om de gemoedstoestand van het personage te schaduwen, of wat zij meemaken te vergroten of duiden. Door vormelijke keuzes te maken kan hij de ruimte samen stellen en doen kloppen in zijn films, meer nog, daardoor kan hij die ruimtes ook betekenis geven. Dit heeft hij in al zijn films gedaan, zij het telkens op een andere manier.

Van Groeningen werkt altijd met location scouts: dat werkt vooral als een dropbox vol met foto's.

STEVE+SKY

Voor Steve+Sky, de film over een half crimineelke en een ex-hoerke die elkaar tegen komen, was er een grote vrijheid in montage en in vertelling. Van Groeningen was geïnspireerd door *The Limey* van Steven Soderbergh (1999).

De steenweg, specifiek de Kortrijksesteenweg, was niet het eerste idee, maar is wel redelijk snel gekomen als locatie. De steenweg was een fijne manier om die personages te verbinden en iets te zeggen over die plekken. Enerzijds iets heel vormelijk, namelijk die baan die letterlijk de dingen verbindt en aan elkaar breit. Anderzijds de symboliek van de plek met de prostitutie als koopwaar: '*zij zit in haar kotje en ze is koopwaar, en dan, dat zie je dan tussen de grasmachines staan en de vélo-winkel en de club, al wat dingen die daar te koop zijn*.'

Het merendeel van de film is ook effectief opgenomen op de Kortrijksesteenweg (tachtig à negentig procent). Door de focus van de film begon Van Groeningen ook anders naar die plekken te kijken en er zelf schoonheid in te zien: '*ik vond dat vaak heel lelijk en dan toch vond ik daar, ik kon daar een schoonheid in zien als ge daar echt begon op te focussen*.' Bovendien werd, door voor de

Kortrijksesteenweg te kiezen, bijna elk gebouw op die locatie uitgeplozen. Hierdoor ontdekten ze fascinerende zaken, zoals het motel met de grote pijl op de achtergevel, die in de film gebruikt werden.

Met frontale weergave van de gevels langs de steenweg wilden Fleix Van Groeningen en Ruben Impens (DOP) een geloofwaardige weergave van de steenweg tonen, zonder dat op '*een heel fotografisch of interessante, cinematografische manier te doen.*' De film Bufallo 66 van Vincent Gallo (1998) diende hier ook als inspiratie. Dat resulteerde in de directe, anti-fotografische (heel carré, heel recht) weergave.

Ook wist Van Groening vooraf heel goed welke elementen van de steenweg hij in de film wou: een benzinestation, een hotel, een huis, die club, plekken waar Steve voorbij loopt, een aantal winkels, de bowling. Vooral voor tankstations, als onbestemde plekken, plekken waar mensen passeren, heeft Van Groeningen een fascinatie (die ook voortkomt uit Amerikaanse films). Door deze plekken is de steenweg-omgeving een niemandsland.

De kleurrijke weergave maakt het '*veel aantrekkelijker, een beetje kermis, … een beetje Amerikaanse film*.'

Er zitten een aantal visuele motieven in de film:

Langs de steenweg beweegt Sky, wandelend, traag, van links naar rechts over het scherm. Steve rijdt op zijn moto, met snelheid, van rechts naar links.

De terugkerende blauwe schermen (de lucht, het zwembad, Frankrijk): deze zijn verbonden, '*omdat het zo een beeld is dat ge niet goed begrijpt, en dan komt dat terug, dan betekent dat weer iets anders, maar ge linkt het wel aan een personage.*'

De vrije vogel in de lucht is de introductie van de gevangenis (in tegenstelling tot free as a bird), terwijl de vissen in het water verwijzen naar hoe Sky ongrijpbaar is (als een vis).

Het beeld van het zwembad, dat blauw, vond Van Groeningen heel mooi. Het is heel domering en licht van kleur. In de eindmontage komt het blauw scherm terug als ze in het zwembad springen, alles komt samen op dat moment.

Steve loopt rondjes rond het rondpunt, gefilmd vanuit vogelperspectief om de cirkel duidelijk zichtbaar in beeld te hebben. Hij loopt rondjes in de gevangenis en ook daarbuiten raakt hij niet uit zijn ding, hij blijft in rondjes lopen (letterlijk en figuurlijk).

50CC

De kortfilm 50CC over jonge gasten met brommertjes die onderweg naar een 50cc-race stoppen aan een naftestation, is gefilmd aan een tankstation op Antwerpen Zuid, toen Petroleum Zuid, een klein tankstation op een onbestemde plek in the middle of nowhhere. '*En het ziet er eigenlijk heel onrealistisch uit: een caravan die daar staat, met één naftepomp; (lacht) En zo buizen daarrond ... Dus dat had ook al zoiets, ja, zo ... De sfeer van 'Bagdad Café', ergens in de woestijn, in de States, zo, ja, een afgelegen naftestation of zo'n diner of zo.*'

DAGEN ZONDER LIEF

Dagen Zonder Lief, een verhaal over vrienden, speelt zich af in een kleine stad. Van Groeningen koos hiervoor bewust geen grote stad en bewust niet Gent, hij wou meer abstrageren. De weergave van de stad klopt met het verhaal, de eenzaamheid bij die mensen: '*zo dat glimmende, dat lege, en zijn we dan gaan overdrijven, door altijd van te proberen ... er zijn bijna geen mensen in beeld, je ziet bijna nooit andere mensen of andere auto's, echt alleen en leeg in die stad zijn* (...) *Zo veel grijs of zilver in beeld, en die torens, dat appartement dat groot en leeg ook'*

Het rondpunt is ook in Dagen zonder Lief een belangrijke locatie. Er hangt een hele leuke herinnering aan vast, maar het is tegelijk ook erg lelijk en de blokken die eraan gesitueerd zijn herinneren aan de zelfmoord van één van de vrienden.

DE HELAASHEID DER DINGEN

In De Helaasheid Der Dingen vormt de trein de verbinding tussen het verleden en heden. De trein is er altijd, '*maar het is eigenlijk ook door de trein te nemen dat hij daar weg gaat en dan blijft in zijn leven een rol spelen, er niet van weg raakt. (...) In het verleden zie je hem, ja, zie je hier en daar wat shots dat er een, allé, dat hij treinsporen oversteekt, dat hij met de fiets rijdt en ge ziet een trein rijden, euh, ze gaan zwemmen, ge ziet daar een trein rijden. Als hij naar het internaat begint te gaan, zit hij op de trein. Hij gaat ook weg van zijn vader met de trein.*' Op die manier kon Van Groeningen op een organische manier de ruimte vorm geven en laten kloppen met het bestaande verhaal van Dimitri Verhulst.

De passage in de trein waarin het hoofdpersonage zegt: '*neem de trein, en kijk naar de gedrochten, de misbaksels die met de goedkeuring van de bank in dat Vlaamse landschap zijn neergepoo*t' komt uit een kortverhaal van Dimitiri Verhulst en zat niet in de Helaasheid der dingen zelf.

Het dorp is volledig gecreëerd en werd samengesteld uit vier of vijf dorpen: '*één met de kerk, dan dat huis dat was in een ander dorp, een aantal cafétjes, station, en huizen (die chique wijk), en een frituur.*'

THE BROKEN CIRCLE BREAKDOWN

'*Het verhaal van die band wordt eigenlijk vooral verteld door die cafétjes die alsmaar groter en groter worden. (eindigt in de Roma) (...) Wat er met die band gebeurde, vond zijn functie binnen dat verhaal en stuurde het verhaal, gaf gevoel.*'

BELGICA

Dat cafétje dat een club wordt, allemaal in dat zelfde gebouw, dat iets warm heeft in het begin en nogal kil op het einde

BEAUTIFUL BOY

Het huis in Beautiful Boy maakt echt deel uit van het verhaal: '*Waarbij dat dat heel warm is in het begin, en dan die kamer van hem, dat zijn gemoedstoestand weergeeft, en dan ja, is dat huis eigenlijk een soort paradijs ook, van die familie.*'

DE ACHT BERGEN

De acht bergen is chronologisch gedraaid en had een heel lange draai-periode, een stuk in de winter en een stuk in de zomer. Gaandeweg hebben ze veel geleerd en kunnen bijsturen : voorbereidingsperiode, draaien, monteren.

De bergen zijn ook een personage in de film. Het gehanteerde 4:3 kader lijkt niet evident voor een film in de bergen, maar liet toe om altijd een shot van het personage met de berg erbij te maken, en de hoogte van de berg wordt hier-door benadrukt.

Redelijk dicht bij het boek gebleven. Hierbij was het belangrijk dat je altijd min of meer voelt op welke hoogte je je bevindt. Gebaseerd op passage uit boek waarbij de moeder zegt dat **iedereen in de bergen, die van de bergen houdt, zijn favoriete hoogte heeft, die bij hem past.** Door dit toe te passen en de film zo vorm te geven dat de hoogte voelbaar is, werken de bergen echt goed in die film.

APPENDIX 3: reports of debates at film screenings

3.1 Suburbia – 11.03.22

Locatie: KASKcinema, Gent

Panel : Ann Pisman, Pascal De Decker, Michiel Dehaene

technische problemen met projectie bij aanvang

Introductie

Publiek

Van de aanwezigen reageerden 14 personen op de vraag naar hun professionele achtergrond:

2 studenten (1 student stedenbouw en ruimtelijke planning, 1 niet gespecifieerd

8 architecten / stedenbouwkundigen / ruimtelijk planners (exclusief 3 studenten)

2 (universitair) onderzoekers

1 natuurbeheer

Van de aanwezigen reageerden 17 personen op de vraag naar hun leeftijd:

De jongste respondent is 22 jaar, de oudste 64

8 personen zijn tussen de 20 en 30 jaar

4 personen zijn tussen de 30 en 40 jaar

1 persoon is tussen de 40 en 50 jaar (42 jaar)

2 personen zijn tussen de 50 en 60 jaar

2 personen zijn 60 jaar of ouder

Na een korte toelichting over de verschillende percepties van het Vlaamse verstedelijkte landschap (Slide 7 tem 9), de verschillend films waaruit fragmenten komen (slide 10), volgt de introductie van de panelleden (slide 1 tem 14):

An Pisman, onderzoeksdirecteur bij het Ministerie van de Vlaamse Regering en gastprofessor aan de afdeling voor Mobiliteit en Ruimtelijke Planning, Ugent

Het begrip 'suburbaan', vaak normatief ingevuld (als minderwaardig dan urbaan), maar is eigenlijk synoniem voor perifeer of randstedelijk.

Benadering van het suburbane woonvraagstuk op twee verschillende manieren, namelijk vanuit de bewoner als actor en vanuit de kenmerken van fysieke omgeving (welke leefomgevingen)

In principe gaat de discussie over suburbaan wonen over individueel (woonervaring) versus algemeen belang (open ruimte)

Pascal De Decker, professor in de masteropleiding Stedenbouw en Ruimtelijke Planning, departement Architectuur KULeuven

Wat roept suburbaan wonen op? Het is een sterk geïndividualiseerde vorm van wonen. De (gepercipieerde) voordelen zijn geïndividualiseerd: licht, lucht, groen, privacy, veiligheid, etnisch homogeen, status, ruimte... Waardoor de betovering blijft. De nadelen ervan zijn collectief. Hogere kosten voor infrastructuur, lange(re) verplaatsingen naar school, werk en voorzieningen met als neveneffecten luchtvervuiling, lawaai, congestie en verkeersonveiligheid. En een geatomiseerde samenleving

Michiel Dehaene, hoofddocent Stedenbouw, vakgroep Architectuur en Stedenbouw, Ugent

Bord verkaveling in Bokrijk: verkaveling is geschiedenis, voorbij.

Vlaamse suburbane woonlandschap evolueerde van woonwens naar kwalijke historische erfenis. Er is moreel misprijzen, maar wat met de toekomst van de verkaveling?

publiek

relatie van het publiek met suburbaan wonen:

Van de aanwezigen gaf 29% aan opgegroeid te zijn in een suburbane wijk. (4 van de 14 respondenten)

25% van de aanwezigen geeft aan momenteel in een suburbane wijk te wonen. (4 van de 14 respondenten)

Deel 1 : OMGEVING (ruimtelijk – morfologische aspecten)

filmfragmenten :
(slide 17 tem 25)
De helaasheid der dingen (Felix van Groeningen, 2009)
Fucking Suburbia (Jeff Otte, 2012)
Violet (Bas Devos, 2014)

Kernwoorden vanuit het publiek:

Discussie / panelgesprek:

Opvallend zijn de lege straten, er komen heel weinig auto's voor in de fragmenten. An Pisman haalt het verschil in verplaatsingsgedrag aan tussen stadsbewoners en mensen buiten de stad: mensen die verder van de stad wonen verplaatsen zich meer met de auto, doen meer autokilometers. Michiel Dehaene merkt op dat dat natuurlijk vooral elders verkeer genereert.

Er zijn opvallend veel fietsen in de fragmenten, fietsmobiliteit maakt dat je ook als jongere niet noodzakelijk opgesloten zit in de verkaveling. Ook bieden de suburbane verkavelingswijken ruimte om te fietsen, in het midden van de weg, op de fiets te gaan staan of andere trucjes te proberen, bmx, of andere rages zoals rolschaatsen, skateboarden, skeelers, enzovoort. De straat wordt op die manier intensief gebruikt door kinderen.

Er wordt opgemerkt dat er geen voetpad is, er is alleen de weg en dan privé-tuinen, er is niets tussen. Geen voetpad, geen fietspad. Het is er zodanig rustig dat je overal kan wandelen, dus ook op straat.

De stilte in de fragmenten is een ander opvallend aspect. Het cliché van stilte en rust, die koppeling tussen stilte en wonen in een groene omgeving. Het geluid, inclusief stilte of dagelijkse geluiden zoals brommertjes, draagt bij aan de ervaring. Door enkele deelnemers worden de scenes als saai ervaren, terwijl anderen de films als traag en poëtisch beschouwen.

Er is een discussie over de kwaliteit van leven in deze suburbane woonwijken. Er wordt verwezen naar het discours van Leo Van Broeck die altijd heel erg stelde dat die omgevingen geen kwaliteit hebben. Maar waarom wil iedereen daar wonen als die omgevingen geen enkele kwaliteit zouden hebben? Dus dat klopt toch gewoon niet dat die omgevingen geen enkele kwaliteit hebben. Dat wil daarom niet zeggen dat er geen problemen mee zijn. Er wordt betoogd dat deze omgevingen geen duurzaam toekomstperspectief bieden in termen van

een manier om op deze planeet te wonen. Doordat het probleem zodanig funda-
menteel is, is het maatschappelijk ondersteunen ervan ook niet gerechtvaardigd.

Het stemgedrag in suburbane gebieden komt ter sprake. De niet-stad is
een pak conservatiever dan de stad. Men wil daar in witte homogene gebieden
wonen en geen migranten en geen arme mensen in hun buurt. Progressief en
conservatief zijn zich ruimtelijk aan het scheiden.

Dergelijke omgevingen werden vroeger door veel mensen misschien als
bevrijdend ervaren. Ook zijn er studies die aantonen dat deze omgevingen voor
kinderen er tot hun twaalfde ideaal is, omdat ze veel meer vrijheid en speel-
ruimte hebben dan in de stad. Vanaf de tienerjaren krijg je een kanteling, dan
willen ze eigenlijk meer plekken bezoeken. De jeugd eigent zich die plekken toe,
dat is hun domein en je krijgt een heel sterke appropriation. Zij zijn eigenlijk
degenen die de straten bewonen, veel meer dan hun ouders.

Deel 2 : LEEFSTIJL (socio-culturele aspecten)
filmfragmenten :
(slide 32 tem 45)
Nowhere Man (Patrice Toye, 2008)
The Best of Dorien B. (Anke Blondé, 2019)
Kid (Fien Troch, 2013)
Violet (Bas Devos, 2014)
Home (Fien Troch, 2016)

Kernwoorden vanuit het publiek:

Discussie / panelgesprek:

Er wordt aangehaakt op de woorden 'eenzaam, vervreemding, gezinsleven, vrijheid' die door het publiek als kernwoorden bij de getoonde fragmenten gegeven werden. Ook de voorgaande discussie waarbij suburbane verkavelingswijken goed zijn voor jonge gezinnen (wat ook naar voor kwam uit het fragment van Dorien B.), maar dat tieners daar eigenlijk geen plaats hebben. Het gevoel 'niet op je plek' te zijn als jongere wordt gekoppeld aan alle plaatsen buiten de stad, niet enkel de verkavelingswijk met grote woningen en voortuinen. Door het gebrek aan stedelijke voorzieningen voor jongeren wordt er gezocht naar een bepaalde levensstijl die ze op die locatie niet kunnen vinden, maar waar ze wel mee in aanraking komen.

Er ontstaat een discussie over hoe films de levensstijl in de voorsteden en hoe films deze portretteren. Vlaamse regisseurs zijn instaat om een beeld neer te zetten, een sfeerbeeld, waarmee ze hun eigen blik geven op het idee van suburbaan leven. Ook dat moet geïnterpreteerd worden. Vaak kan er misschien wel een ideaal beeld heersen over dat suburbaan leven maar is de realiteit misschien anders. In de auteursfilms, of arthouse-films, die hier geslecteerd werden, kan je gaan kijken hoe de regisseur veronderstelt wat de relatie is tussen een ruimtelijke setting en de sociale of persoonlijke betekenis die daar dan aan ontleend wordt.

Het gesprek gaat verder over de overeenstemming met de realiteit van de getoonde beelden. Het zijn hele open voortuinen en woningen met relatief veel inkijk. Tegenwoordig zijn er in dergelijke wijken hele grote hekkens rond de voortuinen, je kan niet meer binnen kijken in de woning of de voortuin en zelfs niet binnen gaan in de voortuin. In dit verband wordt verwezen naar een evolutie van individualisering en daarmee gepaard gaande veranderingen in openheid en inkijk in woningen. In de jaren '50 waren er wel hagen rond de woningen, maar men maakte nog openingen in de hagen en men sprong binnen langs de achterdeur en zo had je contacten. Bijvoorbeeld in de wijken van de Nationale Landmaatschappij was het gereglementeerd er geen haag of geen hoge hagen mochten zijn, dus die waren in het begin meer open. Ook in veel verkavelingsvoorschriften was dat zo. In de wijken die in de jaren '50 gebouwd zijn sluit men minder af, wijken die dan eind jaren '60 gebouwd zijn, sluit men wel af. Hoe verder je opschuift in de tijd, hoe meer en hoe hoger dat die hagen komen. En dan komt de garage vooraan en dan heb je volledige blokkage tussen de straat en wat erachter gebeurt. Dus de individualisering is echt iets dat in de jaren '60 is ontstaan en steeds verder en extremer doorzet. Er wordt opgemerkt dat er ook zeer geïndividualiseerd gewoond wordt in de stad.

Het debat eindigt met een discussie over het gebrek aan schoonheidscommissie in de verkaveling. Dat is net de omgeving waar men ver genoeg van elkaar uit de buurt blijft, zodat iedereen kan doen wat hij wil en dan toch in

zeker zin heel gelijkaardige dingen doet. Als de verkaveling in ontwikkelingsfase zit is dat sociaal relatief homogeen en wordt er binnen de verkaveling wel overal binnen en buiten gelopen. Volgens een panellid zelfs ook nog altijd vandaag. Maar die ontwikkelingsfase is in veel verkavelingen voorbij. Dus je komt in een andere fase terecht. Een andere generatie en een heel ander socialisering van diezelfde ruimte.

Deel 3 : Film als mediator

Toelichting film als representatie, reflectie en mediator.

Discussie / panelgesprek:

Michiel Dehaene reflecteert over het gebruik van film als medium om over planning te communiceren, variërend van reflectief tot propaganda. Het instrumentele. Ondanks de huidige laagdrempeligheid van beeldproductie, filmtechnologie is beschikbaar in onze telefoon, wordt dit nog maar weinig in de professionele praktijk gebruikt.

Verder brengt Dehaene de esthetiek van de Vlaamse film ter sprake. Denkend over de Vlaamse surrealistische traditie, vraagt hij zich af of de surrealistische esthetische traditie een kind is van de suburb of niet? Hoe specifiek is de esthetiek die erop zit en zet die zich inderdaad ook vast op ook een Vlaamse cultuur die natuurlijk voor een groot stuk eigenlijk niet stedelijk is en waar bijvoorbeeld productie niet per se uit het creatieve milieu van de stad komt.

Tenslotte wordt er gediscussieerd over de herkenbaarheid van bepaalde ruimtes in films en de vraag of kijkers daadwerkelijk de ruimtelijke elementen opnemen. Er is veel onbewuste informatie die wel wordt opgenomen zonder dat de doorsnee-kijker dat door heeft, maar die wel heel sterk aanwezig is. De panelleden zijn het erover eens dat de impact van beelden enorm is.

Resultaten vragenlijst

12 respondenten

Professionele achtergrond :

Stedenbouw en ruimtelijke planning : 7, onderzoeker : 2, geograaf : 1; docent: 1

4% van de respondenten is opgegroeid in een suburbane wijk in Vlaanderen

Slechts 3 respondenten wonen op dit moment in een suburban wijk in Vlaanderen, 75% niet.

Als kwaliteiten (positieve aspecten) van suburbia werden volgende aspecten benoemd:

Rust (5 respondenten)

Groen/natuur (3 respondenten)

ruimte (3 respondenten)

leuk voor kinderen, spelen op straat, kindvriendelijk (4 respondenten)

woonkwaliteit (1 respondent)

idee leven onder controle te hebben (1 respondent)

nieuwe kwaliteiten zouden geformuleerd moeten worden (1 respondent)

Als negatieve kenmerken van suburbia werden volgende aspecten benoemd:

Afstand, afgelegen (3 respondenten)

geïsoleerd (2 respondenten)

gebrek aan interactie, ver van levendigheid (2 respondenten)

ruimteverspilling (1 respondent)

auto-afhankelijk (1 respondent)

saai(vanaf 15 jaar) (2 respondenten)

weinig/ tekort aan voorzieningen (2 respondenten)

andere (telkens 1 respondent): niet duurzaam, clichématige benadering van de wijken, eenzaamheid, lelijk, duur, asociaal, verkrompen, beperkte diversiteit, slecht openbaar vervoer

Zijn er in uw visie op suburbia, na de getoonde fragmenten en discussies van deze avond positieve of negatieve aspecten veranderd, versterkt of bijgekomen?

Voor 1 respondent zijn er, na het zien van de getoonde fragmenten, in zijn visie op suburbia enkel positieve aspecten veranderd, versterkt of bijgekomen.

Voor 1 respondent zijn er, na het zien van de getoonde fragmenten, in zijn visie op suburbia enkel negatieve aspecten veranderd, versterkt of bijgekomen.

Voor 54% van de respondenten (7 respondenten) zijn er zowel positieve als negatieve aspecten veranderd, versterkt of bijgekomen. Voor de overige 31% van de respondenten (4 respondenten) hebben de fragmenten en discussies niets veranderd in hun visie op suburbia.

Aspecten die hierbij aangegeven werden:

Sommigen waarderen het

Het idee van daar te wonen is voor sommige heel belangrijk

Dat er kansen liggen voor een nieuw verhaal: promofilm future suburbia?

Rust, eentonigheid

Meer woonkwaliteit dan je zou denken, maar ook saaier, eenzamer, bevreemdender

Deed vooral een 'nostalgisch' beeld terugkomen, heel herkenbaar

Ideaalbeeld bekrachtigd, maar ook de niet idyllische representatie kwam in de film aan bod

75% van de respondenten (10 respondenten) denkt dat film dus een medium is dat planologen of ruimtelijke experten kan helpen in hun lezing van suburbia.

Manieren die aangehaald werden om dit te implementeren in de planningspraktijk:

Film toont extra waarheden over ruimte

Leren over interpretatie van suburbaan leven

Analyse van historische filmfragmenten

Als 'propaganda'

Analystisch en promotie van een visie

Via de meer commerciële, toegankelijke televisie?

Als representatieve medium dat gebruik en betekenis krachtig beschrijft

3.2 Open space – 10.10.22

Locatie: KASKcinema, Gent
Panel : Jeroen De Waegemaeker, Veerle Van Eetvelde, Bruno Notteboom
Introductie
Publiek
Van de aanwezigen reageerden 17 personen op de vraag naar hun professionele achtergrond:
8 studenten (3 studenten stedenbouw en ruimtelijke planning, 1 student film en 1 student landschaps- en tuinarchitectuur.
5 academici
9 architecten / stedenbouwkundigen / ruimtelijk planners (inclusief 3 studenten)
Van de aanwezigen reageerden 18 personen op de vraag naar hun leeftijd:
De jongste respondent is 22 jaar, de oudste 64
9 personen zijn tussen de 20 en 30 jaar
4 personen zijn tussen de 30 en 40 jaar
3 personen zijn tussen de 40 en 50 jaar (alle drie 49 jaar)
2 personen zijn 60 jaar of ouder

Na een korte toelichting van het begrip 'open ruimte' (Slide 7 tem 9), de aanpak van het onderzoek waarbij film ingezet wordt als instrument om de ruimte te lezen (slide 10 tem 16), volgt de introductie van de panelleden (slide 17 tem 20):
Jeroen De Waegemaeker, Instituut voor Landbouw-, Visserij- en Voedingsonderzoek (ILVO)
visie op open ruimte:
bebouwde infrastructuur (focus tijdens opleiding architectuur)
natuur en kleine landschapselementen (focus tijdens onderzoek)
landbouw
veel andersoortige functies (niet-landbouw, niet-natuur) die open ruimte mee vorm geven

Veerle Van Eetvelde, professor landschapskunde aan de Vakgroep Geografie, onderzoekseenheid Landschapskunde, UGent

visie op open ruimte:

Open ruimte in Vlaanderen : een zeer dynamisch, heterogeen en multifunctioneel landschap waarin zowel gewoond wordt, geleefd, beleefd, recreatie en productie vanuit landbouw en energie. Die verwevenheid, ecologische waarde met cultuur-historische aspecten en visuele aspecten, is zeer typisch aan de open ruimte in Vlaanderen. Open ruimte gaat dus om al die elementen samen en de relaties tussen die verschillende elementen.

Bruno Notteboom, professor aan de faculteit Architectuur, KULeuven.

visie op open ruimte:

'Recollecting landscapes': her-fotografie als middel om te lezen wat er in een landschap gebeurt.

Open ruimte en landschappen : plek waar heel veel dingen bij elkaar komen (bv. Natuur en industrie), hybride ruimte

Stedenbouw en ruimtelijke ordening : neiging om de ruimte te gaan ordenen, zoneren, termen als natuur, stad of ruraal landschap, terwijl net die wisselwerkingen of hybride categorieën de uitdaging vormen om mee te werken.

www.recollectinglandscapes.be
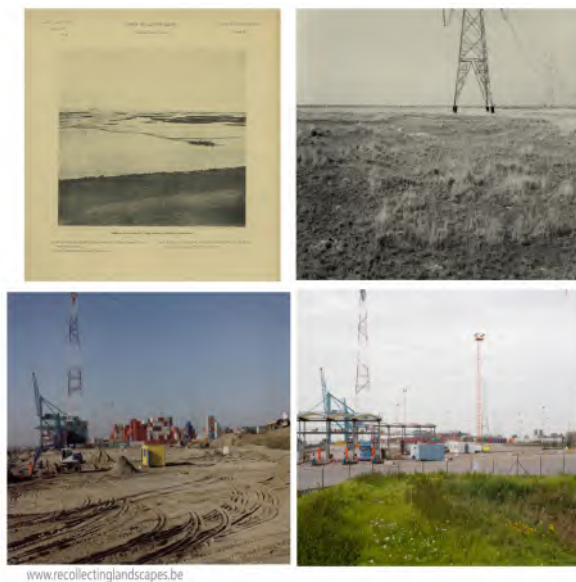
publiek

relatie van het publiek met open ruimte:

Van de aanwezigen gaf 50% aan opgegroeid te zijn in een gebied of omgeving die men zou karakteriseren als open ruimte. (16 respondenten)

Slechts één persoon van de aanwezigen geeft aan momenteel in een gebied of omgeving te wonen die men zou karakteriseren als open ruimte. (7% van de 14 respondenten)

Deel 1 : ruimtelijk – morfologische aspecten (omgeving/setting)
3 thema's
De traditionele landschapsvoorstelling
(Slide 24 tem 32)
Openingsscène Rundskop: landschap licht op
Overgangsbeelden uit Rundskop
Scène uit Kid: harmonisch

Kernwoorden vanuit het publiek:

Discussie / panelgesprek:

De getoonde beelden (fragmenten) beantwoorden aan de klassieke defi-
nitie van open ruimte, de traditionele benadering van het landschap. Jeroen De
Waegemaeker merkt hierbij op dat het agrarisch-natuurlijke duidelijk fundamen-
teel is voor onze streek, waarbij de landbouw als een soort basislaag, basisiden-
titeit van Vlaanderen weergegeven is.

Enerzijds worden deze beelden geïnterpreteerd als idyllisch en gebor-
gen, anderzijds bevatten de beelden ook een meer mysterieuze laag, onder
andere de mist en het geluid creëert een sfeer van bezorgdheid. Bruno Notte-
boom verklaart dit door te duiden dat we een herkenbaar, archetypisch beeld,
een oerbeeld, zien waar een draai aan gegeven werd zodat er een verschuiving
plaats vindt en dus een unheimliche sfeer gecreëerd werd.

'urbanisatie' van de open ruimte
(Slide 33 tem 40)
Scène Rundskop: grens natuur-steenweg, weg door het landschap
Openingsscène en eindscène Carlo : landschap als kathedraal,
waarbij de bomen, hoogspanningsmasten de pilaren zijn, het schip
vormen,
de koeien zijn het koor
Scène Above Us All: er gebeurt heel veel in dit 360°shot
Kinderen, bebouwing, landbouwer, herdenking WO

Discussie / panelgesprek

Nog steeds zeer idyllisch beeld, ook van de landbouw, grazende koeien onder de bomen, geen mega-stallen, geen torens van de biovergaster

Net als de beelden uit de eerste reeks vormen deze landschappen een soort achtergrond voor een aantal, heel verschillende, handelingen die gebeuren. Die stabiele achtergrond interpelleert heel sterk aan ons onderbewustzijn om dat het allemaal beelden zijn die we heel sterk zitten hebben in ons. Het zijn heel herkenbare beelden, ze bevatten alle elementen van een typisch Vlaams open ruimte-landschap, zoals de hoogspanningslijnen en de baan door de agrarische gebieden. Toch zorgt de beweging en activiteit voor een soort verrassing in het landschap. Tegen die stabiele achtergrond gebeuren er heel verschillende dingen, heel heterogeen, maar dat landschap draagt dat allemaal. Er wordt hierbij door Bruno Notteboom gerefereerd aan de schilderijen van Breugel '*waar dat er van alles kan gebeuren, maar eigenlijk zit dat vervat in een soort heel stabiel wereldbeeld dat daar eigenlijk tegen kan precies*.'

Het is inderdaad zo dat de beelden (zeker in het geval van Roskam die een opleiding in de schilderkunst heeft) verwijzen naar de Vlaamse traditie van weergave van het landschap, ze zijn duidelijk een echt cultuurproduct.

De lineaire bomenrijen in de scènes uit Carlo, vooral ook de eindscène, geven structuur aan het beeld. Roskam vergelijkt dit met een kathedraal waarbij de bomen de kolommen zijn, de badkuip (drinkbak voor de koeien) het altaar en de koeien het koor. De combinatie met de dramatische muziek geeft het geheel een bijna magische beeldvorming. Die lineaire structuren van de bomenrijen linkt Bruno Notteboom ook met de ontwerpen van Bas Smets. Smets en Roskam zijn goed bevriend.

De landschappen zijn emotioneel geladen doordat er iets in geplaatst werd dat er heel sterk mee contrasteert, zoals het doodschieten van Carlo in een vredevol landschap. Voor Bruno Notteboom bevestigd dit dat het landschap een stabiele drager is waar je de actie kan uithalen en vervangen. Luuk Boelens stelt de connotatie van het landschap met vrede, harmonie en idylle in vraag. Voor hem is het landschap net zo goed de ongecontroleerde plek van illegale praktijken (drugslabs, hormonenhandel, …).

Grenzen van de open ruimte
(Slide 41 tem 45)
Scène Rundskop : paardenrenbaan
Scène Kid : parking supermarkt
Zijn deze ook open ruimte?

Discussie / panelgesprek

Het zijn open ruimtes op zich, ondanks de verharding. Verharding is geen term om te bepalen of het al dan niet open ruimte is, in de open ruimte komen er ook verharde plekken voor.

De beelden bevatten voorgrond, middengrond en verte, de klassieke elementen van een landschap. Het is vooral die achtergrond, de verte, de context, het perspectief, de horizon, het landschap of de open ruimte zichtbaar op de achtergrond dat maakt dat de kijkafstand eigenlijk veel verder is en niet belemmerd wordt door bebouwing. '… *ge hebt vanaf daar ergens een plek waar ge weer verder kunt kijken*.'

Net het gefragmenteerde landschap, de lappendeken die Vlaanderen (of België) is, bepaalt dat er nooit grotere gehelen van open ruimte zijn maar dat je uiteindelijk altijd bij landschap uitkomt, er is altijd een ontsnapping naar iets anders. Dit werd vergeleken met een labyrint, waarvan men weet dat men

ergens altijd op een open ruimte uitkomt. '*Of dat je ergens weet dat er ook iets anders is zelfs al zie je het ook niet* (...) *in sommige gevallen is het ook een soort overgang van het ene naar het andere, als een soort Alice in Wonderland, dat je van de ene wereld in de andere terecht komt. Wat dat ook in die Kid ook wel het geval is hé, die tuimelt eigenlijk van de ene wereld in een andere. En waar dat er altijd andere dingen gebeuren en andere emoties op geprojecteerd worden.*'

Kid wordt door de regisseur ook heel erg met het bos gelinkt, het bos is zijn ontsnappingsplek, zijn veiligheid. Dit gebeurt ook visueel door het bos op de achtergrond zichtbaar te laten als Kid en zijn vriend op de betonblok op de parking zitten.

Daarnaast zijn herkenningspunten, elementen die men herkent en kan benoemen en een plaats kan geven, in het landschap erg belangrijk om oriëntatie mogelijk te maken, zich kunnen plaatsen in een groter geheel.

De vergelijking met Nederland wordt gemaakt:

In Nederland is alles veel meer gepland, mens-gemaakt, ingebed in een soort grote duidelijke structuur waardoor je de horizon wel sneller voelt.

De kleinschaligheid, het organische, is heel typisch Vlaams.

Er wordt ook opgemerkt dat publieke ruimte sneller als open ruimte benoemt wordt dan geprivatiseerde ruimte die maar voor een select publiek toegankelijk is.

Deel 2 : ruimtelijk – sociale aspecten (beleving/narratief)
Idyllisch landschap
(Slide 50 tem 52)
Scène Kid: bos als plaats waar hij vrij en gelukkig is
Kan er ongestraft snoep eten, ...

Discussie / panelgesprek

De beelden wringen, zijn bevreemdend, er is spanning en dramatiek. Deze ervaring (beleving) wordt gegenereerd door het spel tussen, het over elkaar schuiven, de mismatch vaak, van zintuigelijke associaties en culturele associaties.

In het geval van het bos:

Zintuigelijke voorstelling /stereotype beeld/ eerste associatie : vaak als vredevol, rustig, geest laten dwalen in een bos om even weg te zijn, een plek waar men zich thuis voelt (niet zo voor iedereen)

Culturele associaties: In sprookjes gebeuren in het bos altijd enge dingen (Roodkapje, Klein Duimpje, Sneeuwwitje, etc.).

In Kid is het bos heel erg de plek die de jongen troost biedt, waar hij geborgenheid vindt die hij op andere plaatsen niet vindt. De tegenstelling met de afstandelijke sfeer op de boerderij (zijn thuis) benadrukt dit. Het is ook de plek waar hij vrij is (geen regels waar hij aan moet voldoen zoals thuis, op school, in de kerk).

In het geval van het rurale landschap:

Zintuigelijke voorstelling/stereotype beeld/ eerste associatie: heel vredevol, rustig kalm, nostalgisch landschap, idyllisch landschap, geruststellend, lieflijke natuur

In vergelijking met een stedelijk landschap (eerder gewelddadig aanvoelen) kan een ruraal landschap rust brengen.

Culturele associaties: boer doet vaak illegale zaken (cfr. Hormonen), plek met weinig controle, plaats van de xtc-labs.

In de traditionele boerenfilms of literatuur (verwijzing naar Stijn Streuvels) gaat het vaak over de problemen van de boeren, de verpauperde landarbeiders

Anonimiteit wordt vaak geassocieerd met de stad, op het platteland eerder 'ons kent ons'.

Ook in Kid gaat het niet goed met de boeren: Financiële problemen op de boerderij (spanning, sfeer wordt bepaald door de druk op de moeder, oa van de schuldeisers,)

Afstandelijkheid van de kassier in de supermarkt op het platteland werkt bevreemdend.

We kijken hier niet met de blik van de boer naar het landschap. Bruno Notteboom verwijst hiervoor naar socioloog Pierre Bourdieu, die verklaarde dat een boer enkel de arbeid ziet als hij naar zijn landschap kijkt. '*Wat dat je hier eigenlijk krijgt is wij die kijken naar een landelijke setting die in heel dat stereotype beeld zit van een idyllisch landschap. Maar een idyllisch landschap kan alleen maar idyllisch zijn omdat je er niet dagdagelijks in werkt.*' Hier wordt een beeld dat zeer vertrouwd en geruststellend is, doordat het zo lang in onze cultuur ontwikkeld is,

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

het typisch burgerlijk beeld van een idyllisch landschap, onvertrouwd gemaakt door daar die miserie in te brengen, wat de spanning van de film bepaald.

De regisseur kan heel wat dynamieken capteren die in de open ruimte spelen, veel zaken uit verschillende culturele hoeken komen hier samen.

Stedelijk narratief
(Slide 53 tem 57)
Scène Carlo: achtervolging in fruitboomgaard door criminelen
Scène Rundskop :
Contrast open veld – steenweg met prostitutie
Vrijheid kinderen (verplaatsing, masturbatie) eindigt in verminking (aanleiding hormonen)

Discussie / panelgesprek

De emoties bij deze beelden zijn helemaal anders dan bij de voorgaande: hier spreekt men van eng, angst, claustrofobisch. Dit omdat enerzijds duidelijk is dat alle regels wegvallen in deze ruimtes, er is heel weinig sociale controle. Anderzijds is het een landschap waarin je eigenlijk geen landschap meer hebt, er is geen horizon zichtbaar. Je kunt niet vluchten of je ergens verstoppen.

'O*m u veilig te voelen in een landschap moet ge langs de ene kant overzicht hebben, je moet dingen kunnen zien wat dat er gebeurt, maar ge moet ook plekken vinden om u veilig te voelen, zo om u weg te steken. Ik weet niet wie dat daarnet zei, om te verstoppen*.'

In beide gevallen is het voor de personages een landschap dat ze goed kennen, maar dat door de actie hen meer angst geeft dan vertrouwen. Er is dus sprake van een dubbel gevoel bij éé021élfde plek. Hierbij wordt verwezen naar het effect van de horrorfilm, waarbij men ook een aantal zaken of regels verandert aan een veiligheidssetting (in dit geval het idyllische landschap) waardoor

die angst een groter effect heeft en nog meer binnen komt omdat het niet de bedoeling is dat dat daar gebeurt.

Het dorp, rurale community is altijd al (ook historisch gezien) een constructie als een soort hybride tussen nabijheid van mensen die elkaar kennen, en gedeelde belangen. Die community heeft zich niet altijd rond een bepaalde soort ruimte afgespeeld. Bij het klassieke beeld van een dorp denken we spontaan aan het marktplein of kerkpleinen als sociale samenkomstplek, maar tegenwoordig is dat vaak bijvoorbeeld de parking van de supermarkt. Terwijl deze ruimtes vaak door planners geassocieerd worden met vluchtige, weinig betekenisvolle passages.

Cultuur-historisch landschap
(Slide 58 tem 61)
Scène Above Us All: graven WO

Discussie / panelgesprek

In het eerste fragment (grasmaaiers op het kerkhof) valt vooral de tegenstelling op tussen het strakke, geplande, de rust van het micro-landschap dat zo'n kerkhof is en de (gecreëerde) chaos van de grasmaaiers.

Uit beide fragmenten spreekt bedrijvigheid, een soort gemechaniseerd onderhoud van het landschap (de grasmaaiers, de boer aan het werk met z'n tractor en de kinderen met de metaaldetector). Toch wordt het werken in het tweede fragment gelinkt met wroeten in de aarde, het is een vuile modderboel. Terwijl het eerste fragment eerder een gemiliteerd onderhoud verbeeld.

Het historische aspect, erfgoed, maakt inherent deel uit van die streek. Het is bijna een intrinsiek kenmerk van die plekken.

Transcendent landschap
(Slide 62 tem 65)
Scènes Kid:
bos is ook plaats waar hij bang is
bos is ook plaats waar ze herenigd worden na de dood

Discussie / panelgesprek

Tijdens de eindsequentie van Kid krijgen we een sacrale beleving waarbij een oerbeeld, Madonna met kind, gecombineerd wordt met terugkeren naar de natuur. We hebben dus een religieus thema dat door de natuur wordt gekanaliseerd. De soundtrack, het geluid (muziek) draagt niet enkel bij aan deze beleving maar versterkt deze ervaring enorm.

Het bos als setting voor deze scène is in deze film een logisch gevolg van het narratief in de film: het bos werd doorheen de film reeds geprojecteerd als de plek waar Kid troost vindt en de plek waar de moeder en Kid zouden afspreken als ze elkaar nog eens kwijt raken.

Tegelijk is deze situering in het bos heel plaatsloos, niet gesitueerd : '*het zijn plaatsen die universeel zijn eigenlijk. Dus dat bos is, dat zou een ander bos kunnen zijn en eigenlijk doet het er niet toe welk bos dat het is. Het is bijna het omgekeerde van die scènes die altijd met die camera die rond, waar dat eigenlijk de mens in het midden staat en eigenlijk heel dat landschap opneemt en de maat van neemt en alles toont dat daar in zit, cirkel je nu eigenlijk met de camera rond die vrouw met dat kind. En die plek is eigenlijk een soort achtergrond voor die twee figuren hé.*' Ook de compositie van een bos, verticaliteit en beslotenheid van de boomstammen, maken dat we ook hier de associatie maken met 'naar de hemel gericht, opstijgen.' Net zoals bij Carlo wordt hier opgemerkt dat gotische kathedralen net daarom gebaseerd zijn op die verticaliteit van bossen.

Verder speelt het licht ook mee in het gevoel van verlossing op het einde, onder andere door het cultuur-historisch beeld waarbij we de hemel associëren met veel licht .'*Ge zijt dood als ge overbelicht zijt.*'

De vraag is of deze scène ook in een andere setting, bijvoorbeeld een stedelijke omgeving, zou werken? Hier is deze setting logisch omdat het de kern van de film is, die open ruimte en dat landschap zijn eigenlijk een soort personage in deze film. Met een ander narratief kan dit ook perfect in een ander open ruimte landschap, het hoeft geen bos te zijn om paradijs te zijn. Zelfs in urbane plekken, stedelijke omgevingen kan een gelijkaardig mechanisme gebruikt worden, dat is dan gekoppeld aan de cultuurgeschiedenis.

Einddebat + vragenlijst
(Slide 66 tem 70)

Door de eeuwen heen zijn er bepaalde beelden, archetypische beelden, in ons (collectieve) geheugen gegrift. Zo zijn er archetypische beelden van wat landschappen zijn, een ruraal, natuurlijk of stedelijk landschap, waaraan allerlei connotaties verbonden zijn. Films nemen die stereotypen en beginnen daar van alles mee te doen. Hier ziet Bruno Notteboom een link met stedenbouw en ruimtelijke planning, waar men ook vertrekt van een aantal beelden waar men naartoe wilt. Deze beelden beantwoorden niet noodzakelijk aan de realiteit, het zijn archetypes. We streven ernaar om die beelden te versterken, maar de realiteit is veel hybrider.

Stedenbouw is, al honderd jaar aan een stuk, gebaseerd op ordening en zonering. '*wij willen eigenlijk dingen uit elkaar trekken, terwijl dat we eigenlijk weten dat we met hybrides aan het werken zijn.*' We creëren hiervoor dicotomieën, natuur en cultuur, om in de realiteit te kunnen handelen, of om te kunnen nadenken. Er wordt verwezen naar de wetenschapsfilosoof Bruno Latour die deze dichotomie verwerpt, natuur kan niet los gezien worden van cultuur en omgekeerd.

Als ontwerper is omgaan met die hybriditeit een heel complexe oefening: '*waar trek je de dingen uit elkaar en waar schuif je dingen in mekaar. (...) soms is het ook goed om die hybriditeit uit mekaar te halen, is het ook goed van landschappen te creëren of te ontwikkelen die vooral natuur zijn, om allerlei redenen, en op andere plekken is het goed om dingen in mekaar te schuiven enzovoort.*'

Het is de taak van de stedenbouwkundige en de ruimtelijk planner om vanuit die complexiteit te beginnen, te vertrekken vanuit het bestaande. Hierin kan film bijdragen om de stedenbouwkundige, de ruimtelijk planner een ander standpunt te bieden dan als je gewoon op een kaart kijkt.

Er werd in de loop van de avond een referentie gemaakt naar Alice in Wonderland: het Vlaamse landschap als duikellandschap waarbij je van het ene landschap in het andere duikelt, en zo telkens verrast wordt. Een kenmerk van het Vlaamse landschap is inderdaad die grote variatie en diversiteit.

Op de betekenis van zo'n duikellandschap voor de Vlaamse identiteit wordt niet dieper ingegaan. Er werd verwezen naar het werk van Simon Schama waarbij die stelt dat landschap een deel van de identiteit van een volk bepaald: '*Het woud aan de Duitsers, steen aan de Zwitsers, polder aan de Hollanders. (...) als hij schrijft over woud en daar dichtkunst bij betrekt en daar een aantal andere dingen bij betrekt, leert het mij wel iets over Duitsers. Mensen als, als je een polder hebt en je begint over het bestuur van de polders na te denken, en hoe de geloofsgemeenschappen in elkaar zitten en hoe dat doorwerkt in initiatieven in Holland, dan leert mij dat iets over Hollanders.*' Doordat elke plek in dit Vlaamse duikellandschap heeft eigen karakter, zijn eigen identiteit, heeft, is er dus niet één Vlaams landschap, zeker geen typisch Vlaams landschap.

Toch zou het concept van het duikellandschap in de ruimtelijke planning en de omgang met open ruimte houvast kunnen bieden. Als we Vlaanderen beschouwen als een soort collage van verschillende duikelmomenten, verschillende kenmerkende landschappen, dan geeft dat een andere manier om na te denken over hoe men kan omgaan met ruimte en hoe deze ruimte te plannen. Anderzijds kan dit Vlaamse landschap tegenwoordig gekarakteriseerd worden als een duikellandschap omdat het grotendeels organisch zo gegroeid is, de vraag is of je hetzelfde resultaat kan krijgen als je een duikellandschap zou plannen.

Resultaten vragenlijst

11 respondenten

Professionele achtergrond :

Stedenbouw en ruimtelijke planning : 8, architect : 1, geomatica : 1

55% van de respondenten is opgegroeid in open ruimte gebied in Vlaanderen

Slechts 1 respondent woont op dit moment in open ruimte gebied in Vlaanderen, 91% niet.

Als kwaliteiten (positieve aspecten) van de open ruimte in Vlaanderen werden volgende aspecten benoemd:

Rust (4 respondenten)

Groen/natuur (3 respondenten)

Diversiteit (2 respondenten)

Kleinschaligheid, versnippering, porositeit (2 respondenten)

Charme in chaos, mooi uitzicht, gekende gezichten (2 respondenten)

Als negatieve kenmerken van de open ruimte in Vlaanderen werden volgende aspecten benoemd:

Versnippering (5 respondenten)

Weinig natuurwaarde, veel bebouwing, beton (3 respondenten)

Onveilig, angst, regelloosheid (3 respondenten)

Zijn er in uw visie op open ruimte in Vlaanderen, na de getoonde fragmenten en discussies van deze avond positieve of negatieve aspecten veranderd, versterkt of bijgekomen?

Voor 1 respondent zijn er, na het zien van de getoonde fragmenten, in zijn visie op open ruimte in Vlaanderen enkel negatieve aspecten veranderd, versterkt of bijgekomen.

Voor 45% van de respondenten (> 5 respondenten) zijn er zowel positieve als negatieve aspecten veranderd, versterkt of bijgekomen. Voor de overige 45% van de respondenten (> 5 respondenten) hebben de fragmenten en discussies niets veranderd in hun visie op open ruimte.

Aspecten die hierbij aangegeven werden:

Verruiming van de definitie van open ruimte tegenover de 'officiële' definitie van de overheid.

Besef van archetypes, ook bij filmmakers, en het belang ervan in ons geheugen

De dubbele gelaagdheid, frictie die op de ervaring zit

Alles heeft op zijn manier zijn charme, niks is altijd zwart-wit

Vlaanderen als duikellandschap

Alle respondenten (100%) denken dat film dus een medium is dat planologen of ruimtelijke experten kan helpen in hun lezing van de open ruimte in Vlaanderen.

Manieren die aangehaald werden om dit te implementeren in de planningspraktijk:

De films kunnen bijdragen aan de denkprocessen en dialoog (sensibilisering) door de situatie op het terrein laten zien, vooraleer er een plan van bovenaf gemaakt wordt.

Het gebruik en de beleving van open ruimte in beeld brengen, hiermee ook de gewaarwording van het platteland bij een groter publiek, inzichten bij de gewone burger.

De gedachtegang van de lokale bevolking aanvoelen.

Om in te zien dat landschap meer is dan de som van de delen.

Weergave van hoe een (ruraal) gebied in Vlaanderen er kan uitzien.

Op cultureel niveau, niet instrumenteel.

Mentaliteitsverandering, bijvoorbeeld ter versterking van het idee om in de stad te wonen.

Welke middelen hebben we daarvoor nodig?

Gebruik van verschillende perspectieven, sterkere betrekking van de kunsten, film en documentaires, beeld in het algemeen.
Onderwijs dat verbindend werkt.
Nieuwe strategie, campagne voering, discussie
Enquêtes, verrekijker, pen en papier

BIBLIOGRAPHY
FILMOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Albrechts, L. (1999). Planners as catalysts and initiators of change. The new structure plan for Flanders. *European Planning Studies, 7*(5), 587-603.

Albrechts, L. (2001). From traditional land use planning to strategic spatial planning: The case of Flanders. In L. Albrechts, J. Alden, & A. da Rosa Pires (Eds.),*The changing institutional landscape of planning* (pp. 83-108): Routledge.

AlSayyad, N. (2006). *Cinematic urbanism: A history of the modern from reel to real*. New York : Routledge.

Ameel, L. (2017). Towards a narrative typology of urban planning narratives for, in and of planning in Jätkäsaari, Helsinki. *Urban Design International, 22*, 318-330.

Amin, A. (2001). Moving on: institutionalism in economic geography. *Environment and Planning A, 33*(7), 1237-1241.

Amin, A., & Thrift, N. (2002). *Cities: Reimagining the urban*. Polity Press.

Bandsma, K., Rauws, W., & de Roo, G. (2021). Optimising nudges in public space: Identifying and tackling barriers to design and implementation. *Planning Theory & Practice, 22*(4), 556-571.

Barber, S. (2002). *Projected cities*. Reaktion books.

Bazin, A. (1972). What is Cinema? *Vol II*. (*H. Gray, Trans.).* University of California Press.

Bazin, A. (2004). *What Is Cinema? Vol. I* (H. Gray, Trans.): University of California Press.

Benjamin, W. (1936). *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. Schocken Books.*

Benjamin, W. (2008). *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility, and other writings on media*. Harvard University Press.

Bergson, H. (1945). *L'évolution créatrice* (exemplaire n° 2443 ed.): Genève: Albert Skira.

Bervoets, W., & Heynen, H. (2013). The obduracy of the detached single family house in Flanders. *International Journal of Housing Policy, 13*(4), 358-380.

Beuka, R. (2016). *SuburbiaNation: Reading suburban landscape in twentieth century American film and fiction*: Springer.

Bewegende landschappen : over stedenbouw en film. (E. V. I. Sofie De Caigny Ed.). Antwerpen: Centrum Vlaamse Architectuurarchieven.

Boelens, L. (2010). Theorizing practice and practising theory: Outlines for an actor-relational-approach in planning. *Planning theory, 9*(1), 28-62.

Boelens, L. (2013). *De ontspannen versus de jachtige metropool: Pleidooi voor een horizontale ruimtelijke planning*; inaugurele rede uitgesproken bij de

aanvaardiing van het ambt (gewoon) hoogleraar Mobiliteit en Ruimtelijke Planning. *Inaugurele redes*. [Inaugural lecture]. Utrecht University

Boelens, L. (2018). Moving towards a flat ontology of institutional innovation: Actor-relational lessons learned from early water management perspectives. In W. Salet (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of institutions and planning in action* (pp. 92-107): Routledge.

Boelens, L. (2020). Opening up new planning landscapes: An introduction in the actor-relational approach of planning.In *Opening up the planning landscape—15 years of actor-relational approaches to spatial planning in Flanders, the Netherlands and beyond*, (pp. 11-34).

Boelens, L. (2021). A flat ontology in spatial planning: Opening up a new landscape or just a dead end? *Planning Theory & Practice, 22* (1), 4-15). Taylor & Francis.

Boelens, L., & Pisman, A. (2020). Planning the low countries: Understanding the similarities within dissimilarities. In *Opening up the planning landscape: 15 years of actor-relational approaches to spatial planning in Flanders, the Netherlands and beyond* (pp. 37-66). Planning.

Boeri, S. (2003). *Eclectic atlases in USE alternative states of Europe*. Milan: Skira.

Boeri, S., Basilico, G., & Boeri, S. (1999). The Italian landscape: Towards an eclectic atlas. Italy: Cross Sections of a Country, (p. 24). Skira.

Bomans, K., Steenberghen, T., Dewaelheyns, V., Leinfelder, H., & Gulinck, H. (2010). Underrated transformations in the open space—The case of an urbanized and multifunctional area. *Landscape and urban planning, 94*(3-4), 196-205.

Boonstra, B., & Boelens, L. (2011). Self-organization in urban development: Towards a new perspective on spatial planning. *Urban Research & Practice, 4*(2), 99-122.

Boonstra, B., Boelens, L., Staessen, A., & Davids, P. (2020). After ARA: Critical reflections and a reflexive beyond. In *Opening up the planning landscape* (pp. 367-380).

Borden, I. (2013). *Drive: Journeys through film, cities and landscapes*. Reaktion Books.

Bordwell, D., Thompson, K., & Smith, J. (2010). *Film art: An introduction* (Vol. 7): McGraw-Hill New York.

Boussauw, K., & Boelens, L. (2014). Plan in opmaak: de selectieve coproductie voor het Ruimtelijk Beleidsplan Vlaanderen. *Ruimte & Maatschappij, 6*(2), 39-67.

Boussauw, K., Steenberghen, T., Vermander, M., Fransen, K., & Wittemans, K. (2023). Urban sprawl and home-delivered services: An exploratory analysis of spatial variations of cost and quality in Flanders (Belgium). *Land Use Policy, 132*, 106769.

Braem, R. (1968). *Het lelijkste land ter wereld* (Vol. 9). Leuven: Davidsfonds.

Bronstert, A., Niehoff, D., & Bürger, G. (2002). Effects of climate and land-use change on storm runoff generation: present knowledge and modelling capabilities. *Hydrological Processes, 16*(2), 509-529.

Brown, S., Venturi, I., & Izenour, S. (1972). *Learning from Las Vegas*. Art, Architecture and Engineering Library.

Bruner, J. (1985). Narrative and paradigmatic modes of thought. *Teachers College Record, 86*(6), 97-115.

Butts, M. (2007). Global consumers vote Al Gore, Oprah Winfrey and Kofi Annan most influential to champion global warming cause: Nielsen Survey. Nielsen.

Callon, M. (1984). Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay. *The Sociological Review, 32*(1_suppl), 196-233.

Callon, M. (1987). Society in the making: The study of technology as a tool for sociological analysis. In W.E. Bijker, T.P. Hughes, & T. Pinch (Eds)., *The social construction of technological systems: New directions in the sociology and history of technology*, (pp. 83-103). MIT Press.

Castells, M. (2011). *The rise of the network society (2nd ed.)*: John Wiley & Sons (Original work published 1996).

Clarke, D., & McArthur, C. (1997). *The cinematic city*. Psychology Press.

Cole, A. (2001). Lives in context: The art of life history research. *Altamira*.

Coon, D.R. (2013). *Look closer: Suburban narratives and American values in film and television*. Rutgers University Press.

Crang, M., & Thrift, N. (2000). *Thinking space* (Vol. 9): Routledge London.

De Block, G. (2011). *Engineering the territory: Technology, space and society in 19th and 20th century Belgium (Infrastructuur als inzet voor de organisatie van het territorium: technologie, ruimte en maatschappij in België sinds het begin van de 19de eeuw)* [Doctoral dissertation]. K.U.Leuven.

de Certeau, M. (1980). *L'invention du quotidien* (Vol. 1). Paris: UGE.

De Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (S.Rendall, Trans.). University of California Press.

De Decker, P. (2011a). A garden of Eden? The promotion of the single-family house with a garden in Belgium before the Second World War.

De Decker, P. (2011b). Understanding housing sprawl: the case of Flanders, Belgium. *Environment and Planning A, 43*(7), 1634-1654.

De Decker, P. (2013). *Eigen woning: geldmachine of pensioensparen?* Maklu.

De Meulder, B., Schreurs, J., Cock, A., & Notteboom, B. (1999). Sleutelen aan het Belgische stadslandschap. *Oase (52), 78*, 113.

de Olde, C., Descamps, G., Diels, E., Maes, M., van Rooij, S., & Wyckmans, J. (2018). Tussen stad en rand: Percepties op push-en pullfactoren bij de

woonplaatskeuze van jonge gezinnen in Vlaanderen. *Ruimte & maatschappij: Vlaams-Nederlands tijdschrift voor Ruimtelijke Vraagstukken,9*(4), 8-31.

De Witte, N., Smetcoren, A.-S., De Donder, L., Dury, S., Buffel, T., Kardol, M. J. M., & Verte, D. (2012). *Een huis? Een thuis! Over ouderen en wonen*. Vanden Broele.

Debord, G. (1955). *Psychogeographic guide of Paris*. Permild & Rosengreen, Denmark.

Debord, G. (1957a). *The naked city: Illustration de l'hypothèse des plagues tournantes en psychogéographique*: Permild & Rosengreen.

Debord, G. (1957b). Report on the Construction of Situations. *Situationist International Anthology, 22*.

Debord, G. (1995). *The society of the spectacle*. (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.) Zone Books (Original work published 1967).

Dehaene, M., & Loopmans, M. (2003). De argeloze transformatie naar een diffuse stad: Vlaanderen als Nevelstad. *AGORA Magazine, 19*(3), 4-6.

Deleuze, G. (1980). *Mille Plateaux*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit.

Deleuze, G. (1983). *Cinéma 1: L'image-mouvement.* Paris: *Éditions de Minuit*.

Deleuze, G. (1985). Cinéma 2: L'image-temps. Paris: Editions de Minuit).

Deleuze, G. (1989). Cinema 2: The Time-Image (Cinéma 2: L'Image-temps). Trans. (Original work published 1985)

Depriest-Hricko, L. R., & Prytherch, D. L. (2013). Planning and sense of place in a 'dying'downtown: Articulating memories and visions in Middletown, Ohio. *Journal of Urban Design, 18*(1), 145-165.

Doane, M. A. (2002). *The emergence of cinematic time: Modernity, contingency, the archive.* Harvard University Press.

Doel, M. A. (1999). *Poststructuralist geographies: the diabolical art of spatial science*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Dunlop, R. (1999). *Boundary Bay: A novel as educational research.* University of British Columbia,

Eckstein, B. J., & Trogmorthon, J. A. (2003). *Story and sustainability: Planning, practice and possibility for American cities*. MIT Press.

Edward, S. (1996). *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places*. Madden: Blackwell Publishing.

Eisenstein, S. (2014). *Film form: Essays in film theory*. HMH.

Elchardus, M., & Roggemans, L. (2010). De ideale levensloop van jongeren. In *Jongeren in cijfers en letters. Bevindingen van de JOP-monitor 2* (pp. 161-180): Acco.

Elsaesser, T., & Hagener, M. (2015). *Film theory: An introduction through the senses*: Routledge.

Emmery, R. (2009). Looking past the rural idyll."De Kat", or televising the post-productivist countryside. *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire, 87*(3), 793-809.

Ewing, R., Pendall, R., & Chen, D. (2002). *Measuring sprawl and its impact*.

Ferro, M. (1988). *Cinema and history*: Wayne State University Press.

Fitzmaurice, T., & Shiel, M. (2001). *Cinema and the city: Film and urban societies in a global context.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Forrest, D., Harper, G., & Rayner, J. (2017). *Filmurbia: Screening the Suburbs*. Palgrave Macmillan

Friedman, T. L. (2005). *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first century*. Macmillan.

Gallese, V., & Guerra, M. (2019). *The empathic screen: Cinema and neuroscience*. Oxford University Press.

Gemeenschap, M. v. d. V. (1997). *Ruimtelijk Structuurplan Vlaanderen*. Brussel: Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.

Giard, L., Mayol, P., & de Certeau, M. (1998). *The Practice of Everyday Life. Volume 2: Living and cooking*. (T.J. Tomasick, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gidlow, C. J., Ellis, N. J., & Bostock, S. (2012). Development of the neighbourhood green space tool (NGST). *Landscape and Urban Planning, 106*(4), 347-358.

Giedion, S. (1941). *Space, time and architecture: the growth of a new tradition*. Harvard University Press.

Giedion, S. (1970). *Mechanization takes command: A contribution to anonymous history.* Oxford University Press.

Glaeser, E. (2011). *Triumph of the city: How urban spaces make us human*: Pan Macmillan.

Gott, M. (2013). Cowboys, icebergs, and "outlaws": The paradoxes and possibilities of the Francophone Belgian road movie. *Transfers, 3*(2), 47-69.

Grenni, S., Horlings, L., & Soini, K. (2020). Linking spatial planning and place branding strategies through cultural narratives in places. *European Planning Studies, 28*(7), 1355-1374.

Habermas, J. (1962). *Strukturwandel der Offentlichkeit*. Suhrkamp.

Habermas, J. (1968). Technology and science as "ideology". In *Toward a Rational Society*. Beacon Press

Habermas, J. (1981). *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Vol. 2): Suhrkamp Frankfurt.

Hajer, M., & Versteeg, W. (2005). A decade of discourse analysis of environmental politics: Achievements, challenges, perspectives. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning, 7*(3), 175-184.

A DIRECTOR'S CUT FOR SPATIAL PLANNING

Hajer, M. A., Grijzen, J., & van't Klooster, S. A. (2010). *Sterke verhalen: Hoe Nederland de planologie opnieuw uitvindt* (Vol. 3). 010 Publishers.

Hallam, J. (2010). Film, space and place: Researching a city in film. *New Review of Film and Television Studies, 8*(3), 277-296.

Hamers, D.A.F. (2003). *Tijd voor suburbia: De Amerikaanse buitenwijk in wetenschap en literatuur* [Doctoral Dissertation]. Maastricht University.

Hansen, M. (1999). The mass production of the senses: Classical cinema as vernacular modernism. *Modernism/modernity, 6*(2), 59-77.

Healey, P. (1997). *Collaborative planning: Shaping places in fragmented societies*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Heath, S. (1981). *Questions of cinema*. Indiana University Press.

Hillier, J. (2007). *Stretching beyond the horizon: Aultiplanar theory of spatial planning and governance*. Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

Hudson, S., & Ritchie, J. B. (2006). Promoting destinations via film tourism: An empirical identification of supporting marketing initiatives. *Journal of Travel Research, 44*(4), 387-396.

Indovina, F., Matassoni, F., & Savino, M. (1990). *La città diffusa* (The diffuse city). *Venice: Daest, Dipartimento di Analisi Economica e Sociale del Territorio*.

Innes, J. E. (1995). Planning theory's emerging paradigm: Communicative action and interactive practice. *Journal of Planning Education and Research, 14*(3), 183-189.

Jacobs, S., Hielscher, E., & Kinik, A. (2018). *The city symphony phenomenon: Cinema, art, and urban modernity between the wars*. Routledge.

Jacobsen, G. D. (2011). The Al Gore effect: an inconvenient truth and voluntary carbon offsets. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management, 61*(1), 67-78.

Kahn, M. E. (2000). The environmental impact of suburbanization. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 19*(4), 569-586.

Keiller, P. (2014). *The view from the train: Cities and other landscapes*. Verso Books.

Kinik, A. J. (2009). *Dynamic of the metropolis: the city film and the spaces of modernity* [Doctoral dissertataion] McGill University.

Koeck, R. (2012). *Cine-scapes: Cinematic spaces in architecture and cities*. Routledge.

Koeck, R., & Roberts, L. (2010). *The city and the moving image: Urban projections.* Houndmills.

Koning, J., & van Dijk, T. (2024). Rehabilitating utopias: The importance of imagination to confronting our spatial challenges. *Planning Practice & Research, 39*(1), 136-155.

Koolhaas, R. (1995). *The generic city*. Sikkens Foundation.

Kracauer, S. (1997). *Theory of film: The redemption of physical reality*. Princeton University Press.

Latour, B. (1991a). *Nous N'avons Jamais été Modernes [We have never been modern]*. Paris: Editions La Decouverte.

Latour, B. (1991b). *We Have Never Been Modern* (C. Porter, Trans.).

Latour, B. (2004). *Politics of nature*.Harvard University Press.

Latour, B. (2005a). Reassembling the social. *Política y Sociedad, 43*(3), 127-130.

Latour, B. (2005b). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network--theory*. Oxford University Press.

le Corbusier (1933). *La ville radieuse*: Éditions de l'architecture d'aujourd'hui.

Leavy, P. (2012). Fiction and critical perspectives on social research: A research note. *Humanity & Society, 36*(3), 251-259.

Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le droit à la ville* (Vol. 3). Paris Anthropos.

Lefebvre, H. (1970). *La révolution urbaine.* Paris: Idées Nrf.

Lefebvre, H. (1974). The Social Production of Space [La production de l'espace]. In Oxford: Blackwell.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). *Critique of everyday life. Vol. 1, Introduction*. Verso.

Lefebvre, H., & Nicholson-Smith, D. (1991). *The production of space* (Vol. 142). Oxford Blackwell.

Leinfelder, H., & Allaert, G. (2010). Increasing societal discomfort about a dominant restrictive planning discourse on open space in Flanders, Belgium. *European Planning Studies, 18*(11), 1787-1804.

Lukinbeal, C., & Sommerlad, E. (2022). Doing film geography. *GeoJournal, 87*(Suppl 1), 1-9.

Maas, J., Verheij, R. A., Groenewegen, P. P., De Vries, S., & Spreeuwenberg, P. (2006). Green space, urbanity, and health: How strong is the relation? *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health, 60*(7), 587-592.

Marks, L. U. (2000). *The skin of the film: Intercultural cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Massey, D. (2005). *For Space*. SAGE.

Meeus, B., & De Decker, P. (2013). *De geest van suburbia*. Maklu.

Meeus, B., & De Decker, P. (2015). Staying put! A housing pathway analysis of residential stability in Belgium. *Housing Studies, 30*(7), 1116-1134.

Mennel, B. C. (2008). *Cities and cinema*. London: Routledge.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964). *Sense and non-Sense*. Northwestern University Press.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1965). Phenomenology of perception. (C. Smith, Trans.)

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2019). The film and the new psychology. In *Philosophers on film from Bergson to Badiou: A critical reader* (pp. 97-112): Columbia University Press.

Michels, H., Alaerts, K., Schneiders, A., Stevens, M., Van Gossum, P., Van Reeth, W., & Vught, I. (2023). Natuurrapport 2023: Samen werken aan het Vlaamse biodiversiteitsbeleid van de toekomst.

Muzzio, D., & Halper, T. (2002). *Pleasantville? The suburb and its representation in American movies.* Urban Affairs Review. *37*(4), 543-574.

Notteboom, B. (2009). *"Ouvrons les yeux!": Stedenbouw en beeldvorming van het landschap in België 1890-1940. Retrieved from* http://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:001316028

Pallasmaa, J., & Gilardi, F. (2000). Lived space in architecture and cinema. *Arkitektur & Kultur*.

Panofsky, E. (2004). Style and medium in the motion pictures. In L. Braudy & M. Cohen (Eds.), *Film theory and criticism: Introductory readings* (Vol. 1974, pp. 233-248). Oxford University Press.

Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice (4ᵗʰ ed.).* Sage Publications.

Peleman, D. (2014). *Les hommes de la route. De constructie van een stedelijk wereldbeeld voor de moderne weg in België, 1889-1962.* Gent: Universiteit Gent. Retrieved from http://lib.ugent.be/catalog/rug01:002052729

Penz, F. (2017). *Cinematic aided design: An everyday life approach to architecture*. Routledge.

Penz, F., & Lu, A. (Eds.). (2011). *Urban cinematics : Understanding urban phenomena through the moving image.* Bristol.

Penz, F., Reid, A., & Thomas, M. (2017). Cinematic Urban Archaeology: The Battersea case. In F. Penz & R. Koeck (Eds.), *Cinematic Urban Geographies* (pp. 191-222): Palgrave Macmillan.

Penz, F., & Thomas, M. (1997). *Cinema & architecture* BFI publis.hing.

Perkins, C. (2013). *American smart cinema*. Edinburgh University Press.

Piranesi, G. (1760). Carceri d'Invenzione, sn. In: Roma.

Pisman, A., Loris, I., Vermeiren, K., Hahn, K., De Mulder, S., & Vanacker, S. (2016). De verkaveling in cijfers. In *Verkavelingsverhalen* (pp. 17-32). Public Space.

Pisman, A., Vanacker, S., Bieseman, H., Vanongeval, L., Van Steerteghem, M., Poelmans, L., & Van Dyck, K. (2021). *Ruimterapport Vlaanderen 2021*.

Pisman, A., Vanacker, S., Strosse, V., Vervoort, P., Vermeiren, K., & Bieseman, H. (2019). Meer ruimtebeslag en minder open ruimte in Vlaanderen: Een meer gedetailleerde analyse van de feiten.

Pisman, A., Vanacker, S., Willems, P., Engelen, G., & Poelmans, L. (2019). Ruimterapport Vlaanderen (RURA).

Pratt, G. J., & San Juan, R. M. (2014). *Film and urban space: Critical possibilities*. Edinburgh University Press.

Reijndorp, A., & Reijnders, L. (2010). *De alledaagse en de geplande stad: Over identiteit, plek en thuis*. Amsterdam SUN Trancity.

Renard, P., Coppens, T., & Vloebergh, G. (2022). *Met voorbedachten rade: sluip-moord op de open ruimte*. Lannoo.

Richards, L. (2020). *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide (4th ed.).* SAGE Publications.

Roggema, R. (2016). Research by design: Proposition for a methodological approach. *Urban science, 1*(1), 2.

Ruscha, E. (1966). *Every building on the Sunset Strip*. Los Angeles.

Ruscha, E. (1969). *Twentysix gasoline stations*.

Rydin, Y., & Tate, L. (2016). *Actor networks of planning: Exploring the influence of actor network theory*. Routledge.

Sanders, W. (2009). Unmappables: Connecting people to possible worlds.In *The Uurban connection: An actor-relational approach to urban planning.* (pp.166-179). Rotterdam.

Schuermans, N., Meeus, B., & Decker, P. D. (2015). Geographies of whiteness and wealth: White, middle class discourses on segregation and social mix in Flanders, Belgium. *Journal of Urban Affairs, 37*(4), 478-495.

Secchi, B., & Ingallina, P. (2006). *Première leçon d'urbanisme*: Parenthèses.

Secchi, B., & Viganò, P. (2012). La métropole horizontale. In *Bruxelles 2040, trois visions pour une métropole*, (pp. 29-45).

Shiel, M. (2001). Cinema and the city in History and theory. In M. Shiel & T. Fitzmaurice (Eds.) *Cinema and the city: Film and urban societies in a global context*, (pp.1-18). Blackwell

Shiel, M., & Fitzmaurice, T. (Eds.). (2003) *Screening the City*. Verso.

Sobchack, V. (1992). *The address of the eye: A phenomenology of film experience*: Princeton University Press.

Soja, E. W. (2000). *Postmetropolis: critical studies of cities and regions*. Blackwell.

Stein, E. (2021). *Seeing symphonically: Avant-garde film, urban planning, and the utopianimage of New York*. State University of New York Press.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research techniques.

Strosse, V., Salomez, J., Hermy, J., & Pisman, A. (2018). Ruimte voor open ruimte. In *Ruimterapport Vlaanderen (RURA)* (pp. 352-393). Departement Omge-ving.

Taverne, E. (1989). Sleutelen aan een draaiende motor. Bernardo Secchi's plan voor Siena. Archis.

Tewdwr-Jones, M. (2011a). Modern planning on film: Re-shaping space, image and representation. *Berkeley Planning Journal, 26*(1).

Tewdwr-Jones, M. (2011b). *Urban reflections: Narratives of place, planning and change*. Policy Press.

Tschumi, B. (1994). *The manhattan transcripts*.

Van Acker, M. (2011). *From flux to frame: The infrastructure project as a vehicle of territorial imagination and an instrument of urbanization in Belgium since the early 19th century.* K.U.Leuven.

Van Hulst, M. (2012). Storytelling, a model of and a model for planning. *Planning Theory, 11*(3), 299-318.

Vaneigem, R. (1967). *The revolution of everyday life* (D. Nicholson-Smith, Trans.). Left Bank.

Veen, V. (1973). Rapport van de Commissie Interdepartementale taakverdeling en coördinatie. *Den Haag: SDU*.

Verbeek, T., Boussauw, K., & Pisman, A. (2014). Presence and trends of linear sprawl: Explaining ribbon development in the north of Belgium. *Landscape and Urban Planning, 128*, 48-59.

Verbeek, T., Pisman, A., Leinfelder, H., & Allaert, G. (2011). For every house a garden... a morphological assessment of residential development in Flanders' rural areas. In *The powerful garden: Emerging views on the garden complex* (pp. 85-106). Garant.

Verhetsel, A., Witlox, F., & Tierens, N. (2003). *Jongeren en wonen in Vlaanderen: woonsituatie, woonwensen en woonbehoeften*.

Vermeiren, K., Crols, T., Uljee, I., De Nocker, L., Beckx, C., Pisman, A., . . . Poelmans, L. (2022). Modelling urban sprawl and assessing its costs in the planning process: A case study in Flanders, Belgium. *Land Use Policy, 113*, 105902.

Vermeulen, T. (2011). *Scenes from the suburbs: the suburb in contemporary US film and television.* University of Reading,

Viaene, P., Paelinck, M., Lacoere, P., Hurtado, O. Z., Engelen, G., & Onderzoekscentrum, D. (2022). Rapport 3. Planschade Strategische neutralisatie.

Viganò, P., Cavalieri, C., & Corte, M. B. (2018). *The horizontal metropolis between urbanism and urbanization*. Springer.

Vlaanderen, O. (2018). *Beleidsplan Ruimte Vlaanderen*: *Strategische visie*.

Yacavone, D. (2014). *Film worlds: A philosophical aesthetics of cinema*. Columbia University Press.

Yin, R. K. (2016). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. Guilford Press.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications*: *Design and methods.* Sage Publications.

Zavattini, C. (2019). Some ideas on the cinema. In *V. De Sica (Ed.), The essential de Sica* (pp. 50-61). University of Toronto Press.

FILMOGRAPHY

Akerman, C. (Writer). (1975). Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles . C. Jénart & E. Paul (Producers): The Criterion Collection (USA DVD);Janus Films (USA).

Andersen, T. (Writer & Director). (2003). *Los Angeles Plays Itself*.USA.

Bagh, P. v. (Writer & Director). (2008). *Helsinki, Forever*. In I. Oy (Producer). Finland: Illume Oy.

Benoot, S., Coton, G., Magis, O., & De Vos, E. (Writers).(2014). ARCHI-BELGE. *The ugliest country in the world*.

Boyle, D. (Writer). (2000). *The Beach*. In A. Macdonald (Producer). 20th Century Fox.

Brosens, P. W., & Jessica (Writers). (2016). *King of the Belgians*. In P. W. Brosens & Jessica (Producers). Belgium/Netherlands/Bulgaria.

Burton, T. (Director). (1990). *Edward Scissorhands*. 20th Century Fox.

Cammermans, P. (Writer). (1986). *Het gezin van Paemel*. In K. e. Kino (Producer). Belgium: 90 min.

Capra, F. (Writer). (1946). *It's a Wonderful Life*. United States: Republic Entertainment.

Carolin, R., & Tatum, C. (Writers). (2022). *Dog*. Hilversum: WW Entertainment.

Cornelis, J. (Writer). (1971). *Bouwen in België*. Argos.

Cornelis, J. (Writer). (1972). *De Straat*. Argos.

Cornelis, J. (Writer). (1976). *Ge kent de weg en de taal*. Argos.

Cornelis, J. (Writer). (1978). Rijksweg N°1. Argos.

Dardenne, J.-P., & Dardenne, L. (Writers). (1999). *Rosetta*. In J.-P. Dardenne & L. Dardenne (Producers): ARP Sélection (France).

Devos, B. (Writer). (2014). *Violet*. In M. Goyens (Producer).

Eisenstein, S. (Writer). (1925a). Battleship Potemkin. In J. Bliokh (Producer). USSR: Goskino.

Eisenstein, S. (Writer). (1925b). Strike (Stachka). In Goskino (Producer). USSR.

Enthoven, G. (Writer). (2011). *Hasta la vista*. In M. Vanhoof (Producer). Belgium.

Forbes, B. (Writer). (1975). *The Stepford wives*. Paramount Pictures.

Gruyaert, J. (Writer). (1983). *De Vlaschaard*. Belgium.

Guggenheim, D., & Gore, A. (Writers). (2006). *An Inconvenient Truth*. In L. B. Laurie David, Scott Z. Burns (Producers). Paramount Classics.

Hert, R. D. (Writer). (1980). *De Witte van Sichem*. In R. V. Henk Van Soom (Producer). Belgium.

Jansen, E. (Writer). (2014). *Above Us All*. In M. M. De Productie, Mollywood (Producer). Netherlands.

Lanners, B. (Writer). (2008). *Eldorado*. In V. Production (Producer). Belgium / France.

Lynch, D. K. (Director) (1986). *Blue Velvet*. Dino De Laurentiis Group Inc.

Mendes, S. (Writer). (1999). *American Beauty*. In D. J. Bruce Cohen (Producer): DreamWorks Pictures.

Nichols, M. (Writer). (19967). *The Graduate*. Embassy Pictures.

Otte, J. (Writer). (2012). *Fucking Suburbia*. N. Leunen (Producer).

Perry, F. (Writer). (1968). *The swimmer*. Columbia Tristar Home Video.

Roskam, M. R. (Writer). (2004). *Carlo*. C. Ellen De Waele (Producer).

Roskam, M. R. (Writer). (2011). *Rundskop*. Kinepolis Film.

Ruttmann, W. (1927). *Berlin: Symphony of a great city*. Image Entertainment.

Scott, R. (Writer). (1991). *Thelma & Louise*. In. United States, United States. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, MGM/UA Home Video.

Tati, J. (Writer). (1958). *Mon Oncle*. Gaumont (France); Continental Distributing (U.S.).

Tati, J. (Writer). (1967). *Playtime*. B. Maurice & R. Silvera (Producers).

Troch, F. (Writer). (2012). *Kid*. A. Lombardo (Producer). Belgium, Netherlands, Germany.

Troch, F. (Writer). (2016). *Home*. A. Lombardo (Producer). Belgium.

Van Groeningen, F. (Writer). (2004). *Steve + Sky*. D. Impens (Producer). Kinepolis Film Distribution (Belgium), Lifesize Entertainment (United States).

Van Groeningen, F. (Writer). (2009*). De helaasheid der dingen*. Impens (Producer).

Van Rompaey, C. (Writer). (2016). *Vincent*. J.-C. van Reybrouck & D. Phlypo (Producers). Paradiso Filmed Entertainment.

Verhavert, R. (Writer). (1974). *De loteling*. In J. van Raemdonck & J.E. Lauwers (Producers). Kunst en Kino.

Verhavert, R. (Writer). (1975). *Pallieter*. In J. Van Raemdonck (Producer). Belgium.

Verhavert, R. (Writer). (1989). *Boerenpsalm*. In Visie (Producer). Belgium.

Vertov, D. (Writer). (1929). *Man with a movie camera*. In *Silent film online*. London: British Film Institute.

Weir, P. (Writer). (1998). *The Truman Show*. In A. N. Scott Rudin, Edward S. Feldman, Adam Schroeder (Producers). Paramount Pictures.

Wright, F. L. (1932). *The Disappearing City*. W. F. Payson.

Zhao, C. (Writer). (2020). *Nomadland*. In *Z1A; BUA0327601*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS