The Cinematic Spaces of the Horizontal Metropolis

The condition of the ‘Flemish urban landscape’ has been a difficult subject to tackle for urban planners as well as policy makers for more than half a century. Uncontrolled urbanization resulted in a highly fragmented settlement structure that covers almost the entire territory, also indicated as a ‘horizontal metropolis’. The current demographic, economic and ecological consequences such as structural traffic jams, noise nuisance, chronic flooding, .... seem to have little effect on the everyday conception of these spaces. The daily practice of consuming space in Flanders continues unimpededly, still four hectares of open space disappear every day through further urbanization. Regardless the unplanned and perhaps chaotic outcome, the moods and behavior concerning space and urbanization seem to be shaped by rather individual desires and practices. Apparently there is a (growing) distance between the urban discourse and the everyday life and practice in how the city and the space are perceived. It is important to investigate these differences, since perceptions have an influence on the evolutions of spaces. These perceptions determine not only the ideas about the city and the space, the way in which these areas are depicted also affects those who live and work in it.

This research assumes that the cinematic space reflects the intrinsic characteristics, the experience value and the typical dynamics of this urbanized space. But the visualizations in films also influence the way in which we understand what spaces and places mean and how we deal with it. Therefore the analysis of the cinematic representations of the horizontal metropolis will be deployed to explore how space and place in film shape our political, social and cultural definition of space. In particular the case of ‘Suburbia’, essential to urbanization, will be explored to discover how visualizations reflect and relate to the discourse of urban professionals.

Film, urbanization, Flanders, visualization, perception, space, city, image, suburbia, culture