Visual representations of landscape designs tell a lot about a project, the design process, and about the political interests. The visual content of these representations reflects a myriad of processes, not only in what they show or do not show, but also what visual techniques and styles are used. A visual analytic framework enables the researcher to ‘head’ design representations by relating the images to their makers, the interests of those makers, as well as to the socio-political context within which those images were created. This can be illustrated using the case of the Rotterdam Roof Park.

The visual rhetoric of the Roof Park begins with a sketch. In 1996, a group of inhabitants of the Rotterdam Dakpark (Roof Park) situated above an industrial train yard in Rotterdam allegedly drew a sketch on a paper napkin. A city planner from the municipality of Rotterdam and community organizer by constructing a visual language together with a landscape architect and community organizer by constructing a scale model (Figure 1). One could say this approach was successful: the local community could express their wishes and concerns, and arrived at a design concept they were satisfied with.

Parallel to the participatory design process, the municipality was pursuing a more iconic design: they presented the Roof Park as part of the ‘Parklânne’, a park interswoven with the city’s infrastructure, through a bird’s eye drawing (Figure 1). They were looking at the project from a larger perspective focused on connectivity, embedding the project in a structure of iconic city projects. The visuals used by the municipality and designers, up to this point reflect these in their drawings and maps are from the perspective of the neighborhood (southwest - northeast). Emphasizing the connectivity with the local community and the neighborhood role of the Roof Park. The ‘Parklânne’ is clearly present in the perspective drawing, but not emphasized in the cartographic material. The combination of spatial functions is visualized using a layering of small iconic drawings (Figures 3, 4, 5 page 176).

The desirability of high-profile competition and community role of the Roof Park. The ‘Parklânne’ is clearly present in the perspective drawing, but not emphasized in the cartographic material. The combination of spatial functions is visualized using a layering of small iconic drawings (Figures 3, 4, 5 page 176).

In a later stage, the project developer pressured for additional commercial exploitation: a combination of 3D bird’s eye visualizations and realistic 3D artist impressions at ground level presented their vision of the ‘Bigshops Parkboulevard’. The project from a larger perspective focused on connectivity, embedding the project in a structure of iconic city projects. The visuals used by the municipality and designers, up to this point reflect these in their drawings and maps are from the perspective of the neighborhood (southwest - northeast). Emphasizing the connectivity with the local community and the neighborhood role of the Roof Park. The ‘Parklânne’ is clearly present in the perspective drawing, but not emphasized in the cartographic material. The combination of spatial functions is visualized using a layering of small iconic drawings (Figures 3, 4, 5 page 176).

Kevin Raaphorst

‘DECONSTRUCTING’ THE ROTTERDAM ROOF PARK

MULTICLITY OF DESIGN REPRESENTATIONS

Kevin Raaphorst MSc is a PhD candidate in the STW PhD-program at the Chair Group Landscape Architecture, Department of Environmental Sciences, at Wageningen University & Research (WUR). He is part of the project ‘Contribution of MFFD’s to landscape management & Research (WUR). He is part of the project ‘Contribution of MFFD’s to landscape management &

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There was a logical succession from analogue towards digital techniques as the project developed: as the design ideas became more concrete, they were also represented more precisely. But these images also reflect the interests of the people behind them: the project developer presented an attractive shopping boulevard, and the municipality used a 3D aerial perspective to emphasize the ‘Parklane’ (Figure 6). The focal point of the images was no longer just the park and its connection to the neighborhood; it had become the development of the shopping boulevard and its connection to the ‘Parklane’ concept.

Conclusion
Every aspect of a design representation, whether it be scale, perspective, technique, lighting, or color scheme, is an implicit or explicit choice. Design representations are thus political instruments, and should be treated and studied as such. The case of the Rotterdam Roof Park shows the increasing interest in design-based participatory and interdisciplinary workshops, in which the design process is used as a means to achieve a common future vision; it also shows the convincing power of sophisticated visual representations and how stakeholders use this to emphasize their interests.

Different stakeholders have different interests and communicate these interests in different ways. This analysis shows that a project like the Rotterdam Roof Park is not reducible to a single image: a 3D bird’s eye view does not show all the design ideas that make up the project, and neither does a handmade scale model. The emphasis on the Bigshops Boulevard in some visualizations does not exclude the social functions of the park for the community, and vice versa. By looking at all of these images, and identifying the ideas and interests that are embedded within them, we can get the most complete representation of a design project. The pictures that end up on a website or billboard only represent a small part of a design, even though these are often the images that become the focus of public discussion.