

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF CINEMA – A CINEMATIC WORLD

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The influence that historical paintings enjoyed during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (GERNER a. ZIMMERMANN 1997) experienced a definite shift to motion pictures, full-length feature films and regular television programmes during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thanks to cinema, TV and the tremendous range of video cassettes and DVDs available, movies have become particularly ubiquitous. The prevalence of motion pictures in modern society throughout the world has encouraged many academics and scholars to examine images (SCHELSKE 1997; SACHS-HOMBACH 2005) and movies (AITKEN 1994; KABATEK 2003; BRONFEN 2004).

The classic theme of geography, the analysis of landscapes, has already found its way in the early works of the first film scholars. In 1924, the cinema theorist and critic BÉLA BALÁZS turned his attention to landscapes in movies and its specific physiognomies that only correspond to a certain extent with the landscapes of everyday reality. Landscapes are primarily discussed, while taking into account aspects of the dramaturgical impact and poetic possibilities inherent in films. The concept of cinematic area and transcending spatial/temporal continuity (cf. ARNHEIM 1932) is another reoccurring dimension of cinematic theory. As a result, there really are possible links to cultural geography which is dedicated to analyzing location, region, landscape and environment and their representation. In the 1950s, a German sociologist and later geographer EUGEN WIRTH (1952) focused on elements of cinematic presentation from a geographic angle. At the same time, the author used the theory of ancient Greek theatre as a foil in order to concentrate on cinematic locations and their dramaturgical functions in the narrative framework of the visual medium. In 1957 a series of articles was published in Great Britain in *The Geographical Magazine* that acted as the interface between documentary film and regional geography from the perspective of geography. Even in France there are isolated considerations about establishing a “Cinéma-géographie” (LACOSTE 1976). These approaches are of no consequence for further scientific discussion, however, and can be regarded only as marginal notes.

Not until the mid 1980s did geographers BURGESS and GOLD (1985, 1) state that “the media have been on the periphery of geographical inquiry for too long.”

They published the groundbreaking book *Geography, the Media and Popular Culture* and called on cultural geographers to specifically study all types of mass media. In 1988, DENIS COSGROVE (quotation taken from PHILO 1991, 1) described the new trend that was establishing itself in the field of human geography: “The change in title [of the Social Geography Study Group to include Cultural Geography] is an entirely welcome event for someone like myself who has always believed that human geography should celebrate the cultural diversity of our world and pay attention to the ways in which human beliefs, values and ideals continuously shape its landscapes. It is a change which signals a profound and, in some respects, an overdue change in geographical philosophy and methodology.” For cultural geography, this is where it is necessary to invest a lot of time and energy in order to gain accurate insight into the diversity and complicated processes that contribute to the evolution of a cinematic world, which exists parallel to life world while constantly interacting with it and providing inspiration for structuring day-to-day life.

As ever, it is the Anglo-Saxon cultural geographers who are at the forefront in exploring the field of cinematic geography by taking into account a wide variety of perspectives and developing concepts to this day. The revolutionary collection of fundamental articles, written by STUART AITKEN and LEO ZONN (1994) and entitled “*Place, Power, Situation and Spectacle: A Geography of Film*”, can be interpreted as the final starting signal for the advent of geographical film research. Since then, a large number of papers and books have been written on the field of cinematic geography in the broadest sense. These include works about city life in movies (CLARKE 1997; LUKINBEAL 1998; FORSHER 2003; BOLLHÖFER 2003; BARBER 2002; SHIEL a. FITZMAURICE 2001, 2003; ESCHER a. ZIMMERMANN 2005), about cinematic landscapes (HIGSON 1987; LUKINBEAL a.

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KENNEDY 1993; ESCHER a. ZIMMERMANN 2001; LUKINBEAL 2005), about cinematic representation and imagery and their geographical impact (MAINS 2004; AITKEN 2003; ZONN a. WINCHELL 2002). There are also a large number of studies focusing on gender representation (CRAINE a. AITKEN 2004; HOLMES et al. 2004; AITKEN a. LUKINBEAL 1997) and gender identities (ZONN a. WINCHELL 2002; AITKEN 2003) in movies. CRESSWELL and DIXON (2002) published an important collection of papers that cover cinematic geography and discuss the construction of identities on different levels. Other classical topics of geography like globalization (MILLER 1993; JAMESON 1992), tourism (RILEY a. VAN DOREN 1992; ZIMMERMANN 2003; BEETON 2005) and the implication that movie production has on economic geography (LUKINBEAL 2002, 2004b, 2006; COE 2000a, 2000b; STORPER a. CHRISTOPHERSON 1989; STORPER 1993) have already been treated in the meantime from a cinematic angle. Particular attention has also been given to aspects of movie distribution and market policies (SCOTT 2005) and studies about consumption and acceptance of movies (JANCOVICH a. FAIRE 2003). Studies have already been published about the general lines of recent development of cinematic geography by KENNEDY and LUKINBEAL (1997) and LUKINBEAL (2004a) and LUKINBEAL and ZIMMERMANN (cf. article in current issue).

Movies as a medium can be analyzed by the field of geography from a wide variety of perspectives and issues, as the other articles of this issue impressively demonstrate. Nevertheless, the question is what new and other perspectives have not already been examined and written about in existing disciplines like film studies, journalism, media sciences and others. The underlying theme of classic geography, conventional methodical procedures of geography and definitions established by historic consensus should still be the focus of attention when broadening this subject. The point is not to supplement other disciplines or look for niches and gaps in other disciplines which deal with movies, but rather to apply original perspectives of geographical studies to the social phenomenon of movies. The competence of the subject is to be established in the themes area and landscape as well as world and location. That is why the following four subject areas should be the focus of geographical film research, since we are of the opinion that the field of geography with its specific areas and methodical perspectives in particular can contribute to broadening scientific knowledge and can prove to be a useful tool as fragments of an evolving cinematic geography: 1) Outline of a theory for producing cinematic areas that enables an understanding of the evolution, function and com-

position of the areas and illustrates its social connections and implications. 2) Understanding the role, the function and construction of landscape in movies, which emphasizes the central theme of classic geography. 3) Deconstruction and deglorification of the gradual genesis and the existence of a self-referential *cinematic world* in media, and 4) analysis of the interaction between locations of cinematic imagination and reality.

### *Cinematic space*

A theory of cinematic spaces attempts to address the question of how spaces are created arranged or generated in movies. LOTMAN (1972) offers a basis for the theoretical considerations of cinematic spaces with his topological model of culture that interprets the crossing of borders as an underlying technique of cinematic narration and as a variation to written texts and spoken language. The concept enables a hierarchical differentiation of semantic spaces that are established through narration. For movies, that means every action as defined by LOTMAN (1972, 1977) shall be construed as a departure from a semantic space and thus crossing a border. As soon as a cinematic figure or even the camera perspective, which represents the universal view of the cinema, exits a given space, a border has been crossed. Moreover, crossing culturally established or social borders boosts the dynamics of the movie many times over. Crossing a border is achieved in movies by combining unexpected messages that in the given context either modify cultural traditions, violate religious taboos or cross other barriers. Crossing geographical, linguistic or cultural borders and tearing down intolerable norms form the key elements of any (well) functioning cinematic narration. The central figures of a movie should constantly move along the dividing line between imaginable and unimaginable from the audience's perspective. Gender-specific, linguistic, location-related and cultural borders are always available. By constantly crossing such borders, the unimaginable becomes cinematic reality (cf. ZIMMERMANN a. ESCHER 2005). The cinematic space of a movie is created as a result of continuously crossing borders. The quality, suspense and the interest an audience has in a movie depend on the dynamics of crossing borders. Scenes of action may be construed both as geographical and as fabricated cinematic locations. That also applies to metaphorical areas commonly used in movies. It is not always possible to clearly differentiate between the various areas in a movie. The different spheres frequently overlap, and thus a differentiation is only possible to a limited extent in the real world. To ensure that a movie

appeals to an audience and does not conjure up the impression of a chaotic sequence of images, the sequence of pictures and thus the narrated story are stabilized and rendered easily accessible based on the extreme point rule (RENNER 1986) and the consistency principle (RENNER 1983). The extreme point rule (RENNER 1986) guarantees that the activities, events and dynamics are focused on an extreme point in such a way to stabilize the situation in the case of crossing borders in the sequences of movie scenes. This extreme point may be arranged topographically, socially, politically or communicatively. By attaching more importance to this rule, a good director creates an evocative sensation due to frequently crossing borders. The consistency principle (RENNER 1983) ensures that the opposition between the main character and the semantic space (LOTMAN 1972) can be eliminated at the end of the movie after violating dynamic order and repeatedly crossing borders. The consistency rule guarantees that the imaginary world continues to exist not only for the movie, in spite of the temporary chaos. Border crossers and geography allow for a “well-functioning” movie that has been adopted by the culturally dominant cinema of Hollywood in particular.

Breaking with conventions and crossing existing borders, regardless of their topographical character or other nature, e.g. in the form of metaphors, broadens the world as we know it. Crossing borders in movies open up new spaces and permit the audience to change how they perceive things. Enlarging existing borders allows for the expansion of the sphere and scope of action within a movie. It seems that the point is to constantly push the borders in an effort to expand the sphere of action. Cinematic protagonists pursue an “expansion policy” on behalf of the filmmaker for the audience’s benefit. Cinematic geography portrayed as such can be regarded as established and reproducible action, movement and border crossing.

Cinematic narration is characterized by crossing borders and thus differs from other stories that are not based on imagery. If a movie does not include any crossed borders, the geography of the movie becomes a big sham (ZIMMERMANN a. ESCHER 2005). Crossing and violating borders leave room for discourse both in the movie itself and beyond. This room for discussion does not only entail the cinematically *re*-presented space but also the space that is provided as an intercultural holding area and is constantly expanding as a result of crossing borders and breaking taboos (cf. MALETZKE 1996). Even the space created outside of movies continues to grow due to constantly crossing borders and adapt gradually due to intermedia exchange. Owing to its own constitutive logic, movies

make a contribution to changing, developing and transforming or stabilizing society.

The propositions outlined here could be a starting point for a more extensive “theory on cinematic spaces” or a “theory on the production and functionality of spaces in movies”.

### *Cinematic landscape*

A cinematic landscape or landscape in movies may be interpreted as the representation of material, real-world and subjectively organized scenery on the earth’s surface, which is loaded with cultural additions, or a fictitious environment in the day-to-day dimension. Similar to the themes and subjects used in painting, literature, photography and even movies, this works because there is no landscape that has been seen for the first time (cf. KOEBNER 1997). The audience perceives a landscape it has seen before and thus a product purposefully created and processes this substitute into its own subjective sense of perception. It is not a question of whether the presented landscape actually reflects how the audience sees the physical world, but rather if the recipient trusts the representation and in what manner the audience selectively perceives certain landscape elements. These imaginary landscapes contribute to the success of the movie in various positions and mechanisms of action. The varied representation and narrative function of landscape in movies is thus visualized in the area of tension between setting and emotion (HIGSON 1987; ESCHER a. ZIMMERMANN 2001).

Although landscape may function as a mere framework where action unfolds in a movie, the landscape occupies a narrative area that only offers the spatial level or stage of action for the presentation. Landscape utilized in this manner may support the message of a scene or lend additional contrast to the action (SCHÜTTE 1999). Cinematic landscape as a mere framework may be compared with the stage set of a theatre, if not considered its direct equivalent. That said, the landscape is always the place of people’s day-to-day routine and the centre of everyday occurrences, emotional relationships and satisfied needs as we perceive them. This is where movies pick up the threads, since the recognition of the location and assimilation into a cinematic landscape by the audience come first in the cognitive process. Consequently, there is an opportunity to ensure authenticity. Locations and landscapes in movies can thus be identified as historical, geographical or fictitious elements and lend *genuineness* to the narration of the story. This usually functions on two levels: Either the spectators recognize the location as an actual place,

or they see the location as an authentically arranged place and therefore assign it the significance of a real place or at least a place that furthers the story (ESCHER a. ZIMMERMANN 2001). Another function that landscapes frequently perform in movies is the role of the actor or the role as (nature's) spectacles (cf. LACOSTE 1990). Landscape is presented in movies for its own sake. Uniqueness, beauty and aesthetics of landscape are of top priority without reference to the action of the movie. While LACOSTE (1990, 68) sees the significance alone in the arrangement of the landscape in the primarily cinematic copy of landscapes, he also points out the possible manipulation opportunities that exist in the technical preparation of such representations.

Landscape is also used in movies to support moods or build up or strengthen the disposition of recipients with regard to spatial evaluation. KOEBNER (1994) shows by taking the "Island and Jungle" as an example that specific themes, conflicts, processes, conclusions and feelings can be assigned to corresponding types of landscapes in movies. The prerequisite is that the cinematic landscape is defined as a scene of action for actors and no longer serves as a backdrop. The symbolic function of a cinematic landscape unites people under a single symbol that stands for relationships, values and goals of a group of people, e.g. in the form of national attributes. Invented communities evolve with regard to cinematically transported symbols that are to be read and felt in a certain way and which are used to show us how we are supposed to feel, think and react (cf. ZIMMERMANN a. ESCHER 2005). Using the landscape as a myth or as transport medium of a myth in movies, as is common, e.g. in the genre of Western movies, has a similar significance. In such movies, landscapes are used to define the 'Wild West' as a classic masculine area that also has to support the *frontier myth*. When shooting Western movies, Hollywood's movie producers sought spectacular landscapes that convey isolation, bareness and wildness (STANTON 1994). Hollywood's film industry generates new senses of perception for certain landscapes.

The outlined aspects of cinematic landscape show that this form of representation is visualized within the dimensions of setting and emotion. These structural aids are integrated in our day-to-day life, which makes it an object of cultural geographical research.

#### *Cinematic world*

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a fictitious cinematic world had gradually evolved that gains its dynamics on the big screen and unfolds in the life world (cf. JAMESON 1992).

The dominating effect and power of "great narrations" will be replaced more and more by a fictitious *cinematic world* with cities, towns and landscapes as well as with standards and rules during the 21<sup>st</sup> century that spreads not only in the imaginations of people, but also becomes more definite in the self-referential dynamics and further developed with every additional movie. It is necessary to note however that the cinematic worlds, which create their own universe, have to be interpreted, analyzed and reconstructed in the context of their production relationship and their target audience or recipients.

As the first motion pictures were shown at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, spectators were fascinated by the motion presented. The wondrous movement based on everyday life and yet contradicting daily experiences is not sufficient for reaching possible spectators with movies that tell a story. Filmmakers require additional references to convey the authenticity of the motion pictures and the narrated stories to the audience. The first methods for movies seeking a way to legitimize the authenticity of their stories focus on the paintings of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were known to a broad segment of the population in the form of graphic prints. This is especially true for the historical Roman film that falls back on the paintings of battles and fight scenes for sets and costumes (JUNKELMANN 2004). Since the advent of photography, postcards, which can now be found all over Europe, have become the answer, since they inform a broad section of people in Europe about foreign and unfamiliar locations and landscapes. KOTLOWSKI (1996, 32) even makes reference to a postcard mania. The film scholar BOULANGER (1975, 137) points out the relationship between movies and the subjects of postcards. The effect of recognition in a movie theatre is of incredible importance for the audience. An identity to foreign, unfamiliar locations is created with the aid of postcards, since the sender wants to inform the recipient about the location, from where he is sending the postcard (KOTLOWSKI 1996). For these reasons, it makes good sense that movie producers fall back on the depicted locations and photos of postcards when preparing their films. The most popular images in the world are no longer traced back to paintings or photographs. Instead, they come from successful movies and advertisements. A filmmaker will tap these resources in successful movies, when he shoots another movie about a topic or certain location. One person who worked on the script of the famous movie *Ben Hur* remarked: "William Wyler studied not Roman history but other Roman movies in preparation of *Ben Hur*" (VIDAL 1992, 84). In analyzing many movies, HEILMANN (2004) proved that the historically inaccurate sets for Babylon

were used throughout all other movies. Once a location, city, landscape or history is defined by a successful movie, the same production environment will be used for the same icons and identical settings again and the identity of the city will be maintained in movies and for fictitious narration. Nowadays, movies represent the reference system both for new movies and for everyday communication. A *cinematic world* evolves in this manner, a cinematically fictitious world that is constantly modified and specified and becomes established in the interpretation processes of the life world by means of intermedia and day-to-day communication. The *cinematic world* is anchored to everyday life only to the certain extent, on which it was once based. This shows that concepts, sets, costumes and stories of successful movies live on in other movies. As REED put it (1989, 8), “Movies come from movies, and any given movie repeats things from hundreds of others.” Attention should be given, however, to the context in which movies evolve; production environment and target audience create in terms of supply and demand an ever-adapting, yet self-referential *cinematic world* that is no longer subject to the rules of everyday life. Although a fictitious parallel world that refers back to itself in terms of word, image and storyline has evolved in the meantime in cinemas, it does reflect everyday reality to a large extent. This fictitious world, which reaches many areas of everyday life thanks to marketing, should be deglamorized in the classic sense or should not be permitted to bewitch the world any further. For the purpose of discourse research that not only address the universe of the fictitious cinematic world, but many other forms of media involved, which contribute to reinforcing and stabilizing the *cinematic world*, geography should attempt to deconstruct this world in the perspectives of both social and natural sciences.

#### *Cinematic location*

The interaction between fictitious movies and real life intensifies on all levels, as can be seen by the press’s increasing reactions to movies. The modern world consists of “mixing spaces” that include things people have experienced and seen in movies and which can be labelled as “intermediate worlds” (BLOTHNER 1999, 50). As part of the cycle generating everyday reality from cinematic production, representation and everyday consumption, the circuit closes due to the economic creation of elements of fiction and the arrangement of locations (cf. CROUCH et al. 2005). The premise is based on BAUDRILLARD (1994), for whom it is not reality that disappears, but rather the forms of known reality, which forces geographers to do some

rethinking with regard to the object of their research. Distinguishing between real and imaginary is no longer possible. Because of the omnipresence of media simulation, there is no place for actual reality. Instead it is replaced with hyperreality (BAUDRILLARD 1994; ECO 1986). Hyperreality is experienced in the postmodern society primarily by tourists who travel in a world that consists of constructions and inventions (URRY 2002). Nothing original or authentic exists anymore. There are now a wide variety of publications, e.g. travel guides, that provide detailed information as to where and how to find which screened locations (cf. STANTON 1994; GORDON 1993; REEVES 2001; PETZEL 2001; SKRENTNY 2002), which influences not only the streams of tourists, but also offers information with regard to locational perception and reception. In addition to such travel guides, there are also magazines, dailies and weekly papers that also cover these topics and thus make their contribution to marketing the destinations. Nowadays, screened locations market themselves in order to benefit from the positive image created in the cinema and to be able to participate economically in the success of the movie (TOOKE a. BAKER 1996). In this manner, simulations as defined by BAUDRILLARD (1994) are created, that have now become the basis of every tourism-oriented arrangement (cf. ZIMMERMANN 2003; BEETON 2005).

More and more locations, establishments and landscapes, which only exist as the fiction in movies, are created in order to enable tourists to access the world of movies. The transitory location, which provides access to fiction, has been created. The most important medium of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – the movie – and the world of the largest industrial sector – the tourist industry – are viewed for this purpose jointly while outlining some of their synergies. URRY (2002) notes that tourist destinations are purposefully selected according to their worthwhileness, whereas categories like dreams and fantasies are targeted in particular. Destinations are subjected to an emotional charging and therefore experience a significant upvaluation. Ensuring that these locations are constructed as imagined and can be maintained requires a lot of non-tourist actions, e.g. in the acceptance of movies, TV, literature, videos and other forms of mass media. URRY (2002, 3) regards this media usage as essential for the specific tourist look that can only be constructed and maintained. Both ZIMMERMANN (2003) and DAVIN (2005) acknowledge this connection by placing tourists on the same level as media users and thus selecting a theoretical approach, in which the view can be utilized as an analytical tool. In consequence, the cinematic location is no longer subject to only rules that are founded in cinematic feasibility.

ity. Rather it is subject to a complex, narrative-cognitive system.

These phenomena are embedded in a development process that shows and recognizes the current evolution of new forms of tourist-oriented use of landscapes and thus dimensions of landscape and that these forms involve a new form of "consumption" of landscapes (cf. LIVERMAN a. SHERMAN 1985; MEETHAN 2001). This form of consumption can be explained, on the one hand, by the "multioptional media society" (OPASCHOWSKI 2002, 132) and, on the other hand, by the fact that tours, from the standpoint of the tourist industry, are largely adapted to the practices of media consumption (SACKS 1992, 98). These elements can be seen in the wide variety of forms, whereas one of the most current forms is the so-called film site or screened location tourism (cf. TOOKE a. BAKER 1996; RILEY et al. 1998; ZIMMERMANN 2003; BEETON 2005).

Mass media provide tourists with images and information about destinations that would be otherwise inaccessible or only available in another form (cf. BUTLER 1990). This applies especially to destinations that have achieved fame thanks to cinema and TV movies (TOOKE a. BAKER 1996). Movies may trigger a real boom in tourism for a certain region, city or location within a city (cf. REEVES 2001). Particular emphasis is being given to this situation when marketing locations and landscapes. Based on the premises described, one should attempt to outline fundamental studies of the rules governing the connection between cinematic fiction and real world reality.

### Conclusion

Establishing human geography as a subject, called "New Cultural Geography" in Germany, for new methods, for a broadened social understanding and for a growing awareness with regard to cultural dimensions of everyday reality (cf. SHURMER-SMITH 2002; GEBHARDT et al. 2003; BLOTEVOGEL 2003) should be viewed as an opportunity for development of the field of geography in order to preserve its ability to hold its own in the university context. After all, the goals to broaden the subject do not require any drastic changes, but rather call for supplementing existing methods suitably and increased interdisciplinary collaboration. This includes the purposeful analysis of mass media, which views movies as the most influential and central medium (cf. PAECH 2005). For these reasons, movies should be the object of a social-studies-oriented geography. That is why it seems absolutely necessary to have geography faculties in German speaking countries focus more on movies as a medium. Whether cultural

geographical analysis focuses on movies from Hollywood, Bollywood, specific national cinemas or selected auteur cinema, is secondary, since it is impossible to deny that these competing cultural industries play a key role in creating and maintaining national, regional, cultural and individual reality and therefore must be an integral element of geographical consideration.

The event that serves as a basis for this booklet has been up to now the main venue for geographers worldwide, which focuses exclusively on movies. Sessions have already taken place at international conventions that addressed the topics of geography and media, such as the annual convention of "Association of American Geographers" (AAG) in Los Angeles (2002), Philadelphia (2004), Denver (2005) and Chicago (2006). The event took place in June of 2004 at the Geographical Institute of Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz under the title "The Geography of Cinema: A Cinematic World". Thanks to development funds from the "Zentrum für Interkulturelle Studien" (ZIS) of Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz, to whom the organizers are much obliged, almost all of the leading representatives of this new discipline were able to come to Mainz.

The following articles represent a selection of the presentations given that impressively illustrate how geography can make contributions to a better understanding of movies, culture and politics. In their article on "Imagining geographies of film", STUART AITKEN and DEBORAH DIXON present the intersection of geography and filmology taking current geographical research paradigms and concepts as a basis. In their presentation, they focus, among other things, on space, place landscape and networks. The article by CHRIS LUKINBEAL and STEFAN ZIMMERMANN "Film geography: a new subfield" shows how a geography of cinema can be established as an independent subdiscipline by examining several lines of research. Taking the movie "*The Day After Tomorrow*" as an example, the geographical problem areas of geopolitical imaginary, cultural politics, cultural industries as object of globalization and finally the crisis of representation are examined carefully and outlined as features of cinematic geography. Selecting a rather classical approach in his paper "*Runaway Hollywood: Cold Mountain, Romania*", CHRIS LUKINBEAL analyzes the underlying political and economic conditions that served as a basis for the movie "*Cold Mountain*" and the resulting outsourcing projects that support and have a lasting effect on cinematic realism.

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hope that our involvement helps to further advance the “geography of cinema” in the “Old World” and on the “continent” in particular and bring it back to where the cornerstone was laid in terms of theory more than 50 years ago.

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