



Geographie

Media Geography – 1

Franz Steiner Verlag

# The Geography of Cinema – A Cinematic World

Edited by Chris Lukinbeal  
and Stefan Zimmermann

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**MEDIA GEOGRAPHY AT MAINZ**

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Edited by

Anton Escher  
Chris Lukinbeal  
Stefan Zimmermann

Volume 1

# **The Geography of Cinema – A Cinematic World**

Edited by Chris Lukinbeal and Stefan Zimmermann



Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart 2008

*Cover illustration:* „The Pope of Broadway“ depicts Anthony Quinn on the Victor Clothing Company Building, 242 South Broadway, Los Angeles, California. Mural by Eloy Torrez, assisted by Bob Grigas, 1985. Photography by Chris Lukinbeal.

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*Geographers usually see themselves in a tradition of Alexander von Humboldt and we would like to highlight his position that everything in our world is interdependent. Deriving from that assumption geography has to be seen as an unlimited science, a discipline that knows the borders but has none.*

Anton Escher, Chris Lukinbeal and Stefan Zimmermann,  
Tempe and Mainz, January 2008



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## PREFACE

Most of the essays in this volume derived from an international symposium, *The Geography of Cinema – A Cinematic World*, at the Institute of Geography at the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz in June 2004. While special sessions on cinema and the media have occurred at conferences in Europe, the UK, the U.S. and Australia, this symposium was the first to gather some of the leading scholars in cinematic geography from around the world. The objective of the symposium was to explore the burgeoning subfield of film geography and chart new research trajectories (Figure 1). We, the organizers, also sought to close the gap between film studies and geography while broadening the existing knowledge base of both.

A highlight of the symposium included the showing of documentary films at Caligari FilmBühne in Wiesbaden<sup>1</sup> produced by faculty and students at the Institute of Geography at Johannes Gutenberg-University in Mainz. Also shown at the theatre was Susan Main's preliminary work on documenting diaspora and stories of Jamaican migration to the UK. Rather than just presentations on current research and group discussions, this event encouraged geographers to engage film production, digital media and documentary filmmaking. This event was the impetus for later documentary projects in Arizona<sup>2</sup> and at San Diego and Northridge, California<sup>3</sup>.

We are grateful that nearly all of the sixteen scholars invited were able to attend and present their latest research. Scholars came from Germany, the United Kingdom, United States, Jamaica and the Philippines. We are indebted to the Centre for Intercultural Studies<sup>4</sup> of the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, who deemed this event worthy of financial support. Some of the essays from the symposium were published in *Erdkunde* (2006, volume 60, number 4; see Figure 2) and other essays were requested from authors who were at the symposium for

1. <http://www.wiesbaden.de/caligari>, a historical neo-Gothic style theater that opened in 1926.
2. The *Mediated Geographies: Critical Pedagogy and Geographic Education* project produced a series of student based documentary, all of which are located on the project website: <http://geography.asu.edu/lukinbeal/mediated.html>. One of Ari PALOS' documentaries (the project's consultant) is discussed in this book in Deborah Dixon's chapter on independent U.S. documentary films.
3. These projects were presented at the 2007 annual meeting of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers (<http://www.csus.edu/apcg/>). Some of these documentaries will be a part of an upcoming special issue of *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography*. *Aether: The Journal of Media Geography* is a new online journal that started publishing in the fall of 2007. Many of the participants from this symposium are on its editorial board and have written essays for its first volume. For more information see: [www.aetherjournal.org](http://www.aetherjournal.org)
4. Zentrum für Interkulturelle Studien (ZIS)

Figure 1. Programme The Geography of Cinema – A Cinematic World

<p><b>Symposium: <i>The Geography of Cinema – A Cinematic World</i></b></p> <p><b>24. – 26. June 2004</b></p> <p>Chair: Alfred Hornung und Anton Escher</p> <p><b><u>Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June, Institute of Geography</u></b></p> <p><b>Deborah Dixon / Stuart Aitken:</b> The Geography of Cinema</p> <p><b>Marcus Doel:</b> “Animated photography and vernacular relativity: engineering space and time in early English films”</p> <p><b>Deborah Dixon:</b> Framing Border Landscapes</p> <p><b>Mita Banerjee &amp; Peter W. Marx:</b> “Ally lives just next door...” German-US-American relations in popular culture.</p> <p><b>Christina Kennedy:</b> Place, Emotion and Experience: an Autobiographical Approach to the “Reel”</p> <p><b><u>Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June, Caligari FilmBühne (Wiesbaden)</u></b></p> <p><b>Bernd Kiefer:</b> The Caligari: a place of visual pleasure</p> <p><b>Susan Mains:</b> Translating Mobility: Documenting Diaspora and Stories of Jamaican Migration</p> <p><b>Helge Weichmann:</b> Geographic Fieldwork in Film – Marrakech</p> <p><b>Wolfgang Natter:</b> Place and Space in Community-based filmmaking: The Geographies of Appalshop (Kentucky)</p> <p><b>Stephanie Schimo:</b> Nare – A Life between saucepan and notebook</p> <p><b>Joseph S.E. Palis:</b> Mapping the Heart of Brazil in Walter Salles “Central Station”</p> <p><b><u>Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June, Institute of Geography</u></b></p> <p><b>Gerd Becker:</b> <i>Nouri Bouzid’s</i> Film <i>Bezness</i> as a visual study on the gaze</p> <p><b>Stuart Aitken:</b> Leading Men to Violence and Creating Spaces for their Emotions</p> <p><b>Dave Clarke:</b> Moving pictures / stopping places: hotels and motels on film</p> <p><b>Christopher Lukinbeal:</b> “Runaway Hollywood”</p> <p><b>Stefan Zimmermann:</b> Landscapes of “Heimat” in post-war German cinema</p> <p><b>Final discussion</b></p>
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Figure 2. Essays deriving from the Symposium which have been published in *Erdkunde*

<p>AITKEN, S. and DIXON, D. 2006: Imagining Geographies of Film. In: <i>Erdkunde</i> 60 (4), 326–336.</p> <p>ESCHER, A. 2006: The Geography of Cinema. A Cinematic World. In: <i>Erdkunde</i> 60 (4), 307–314.</p> <p>LUKINBEAL, C. 2006: Runaway Hollywood. Cold Mountain, Romania. In: <i>Erdkunde</i> 60 (4), 337–345.</p> <p>LUKINBEAL, C. and ZIMMERMANN, S. 2006: Film Geography. A New Subfield. In: <i>Erdkunde</i> 60 (4), 315–325.</p>
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inclusion in this book. Also, one essay from the symposium has since been published in *Gender, Place and Culture* (Stuart AITKEN 2006, “Leading Men to Violence and Creating Spaces for their Emotions,” 13, 492–507). The essays by David Clarke and Marcus Doel represent larger projects that have gone on to engage hotels and motels in film and the transition of animated photography into film. Rather than a comprehensive compendium that seeks to sum up the totality of a new subfield, this book aims to foster further interest and dialogue about geographic research on cinema.

This book represents the first of a new series to be offered by Franz Steiner Verlag. The series, “Media Geography at Mainz”, will be edited by Anton Escher, Chris Lukinbeal and Stefan Zimmermann. Two future volumes are already in the works including, Gerd Becker’s “Eying the Globe – Science and Visuality” and Stefan Zimmermann’s “Deserts, Palm Trees and Bazaars – The Cinematic Geography of the Orient”. All books will be published in English and we welcome inquiries related to possible book length manuscripts related to media geography.

We deeply appreciate the editing and editorial comments that Tina Kennedy and Kathrin Samstag made on the penultimate draft of this book.

Chris Lukinbeal, Anton Escher & Stefan Zimmermann,  
Tempe and Mainz, August 2008



## INTRODUCTION



*Chris Lukinbeal / Stefan Zimmermann*

## A CINEMATIC WORLD

*With cinema, it is the world  
which becomes its own image, and  
not an image which becomes the world*

(DELEUZE 1986, 57).

### INTRODUCTION

Gillian ROSE (2003) recently asked the question, “how, exactly, is Geography ‘visual’?” The assumption is that, if we are a visual discipline, we already understand ‘the visual.’ The use of visuals abound in geographic practice whether in research, remote sensing, GIS, animated maps, photographs, film and television, or charts and graphs. In our teaching, visuals are so commonplace in lectures and presentations that it seems odd to witness a pedagogic event without them. Whether through the use of PowerPoint, slides, the Internet or documentaries and feature films, the visual dominates our educational practices. Many geographers assert that the ocularcentrism of geography is a primary *modus operandi* towards geographical knowledge. But how does the visual structure geographical knowledge? ROSE (2003, 2001) asserts that *visuality* refers to what we see, how we see, and what we are able to see. *Visuality* is of particular importance because power relations always saturate it. This is not to say that geography has not questioned the visual, or *visuality*; quite the contrary. Much work has been done on *visuality* as it relates to the construction and depiction of social difference, power relations, subjectivity and identity formation, as well as how it impacts the body. Decoding hierarchies, exposing practices of inclusion and exclusion, and revealing how *visuality* naturalizes ideologies and our view of the ‘other,’ remain active arenas of geographic inquiry.

We suggest that much geographic research on film has focused on the content of the visual, or what is seen and unseen (cf. DOEL and CLARKE 2007). While this is a very important aspect of querying exactly how geography is visual, it does not fully address all the modalities of film geography. In this introduction, then, we wish to explore aspects of geographic *visuality* as they relate to film geography. We assert that a pure focus on *visuality* limits the purview of film geography. Film is an assemblage of sight and sound, of texture and (e)motion, memory and experience. Moving beyond the sensory subjectivities of voyeurism and voyages, film is, paradoxically, also an assemblage of simulacra and of representational, non-

representational, haptical, affective and performative practices. While other assemblages and modalities of exploring film geography are found throughout this book and elsewhere, our aim here is to develop a dialogue that embraces new opportunities for inquiry into cinematic geographies; while, at the same time, not jettisoning traditional cultural geographic theories and practices that provide foundational frameworks.

In this introductory essay, we address ROSE's challenge by discussing three aspects of the visual in the world of cinematic geography. These aspects include the content of what is seen, the form of seeing and the affect of what is seen.

### WHAT IS SEEN – THE CONTENT

Authors in this collection use different theoretical approaches when addressing the content of what is seen in film. These approaches range from humanistic, positivistic, and text-centered, to poststructural and psychoanalytic.

The chapter by DIXON, ZONN and BASCOM provides an overview of different approaches that have been used to analyze the content of film by elaborating on an organizational framework of author-centered, text-centered, and reader-centered approaches. Rather than dismissing structural theories that underlie much of the initial inquiries into film geography, their aim is to illustrate how structural and poststructural theories illustrate larger ontological and epistemological debates that challenge how the visual constructs geographic knowledge. Where humanistic inquiry seeks to expose the emotional force and fabric of textual-subject relations between place, film, and viewer (as in Tina KENNEDY's chapter), BECKER's chapter uses a positivistic perspective to counter the dominance of the written word in documenting ethnographies; thereby, allowing researchers to learn from feature films how to tell more accurate and effective visual stories of cultures in place. Marxist and neo-Marxist inquiries work to expose dominate ideologies (that are naturalized within documentaries, feature films and television shows) and to articulate counter hegemonic narratives that seek to resist and subvert established 'ways of seeing.' These approaches are seen in DIXON's chapter on Independent U.S. Documentary Films, and, to a lesser extent, in Joseph PALIS's chapter.

Drawing from poststructural inquiry, BANERJEE and MARX's chapter, as well as MAINS' chapter explore how film and television articulate the 'other' and how race and ethnicity are contested and negotiated identities in a globalized era of transcontinental flows of people and cultures. Both chapters show how film and television work to 'fix' identities and reinforce cultural norms of inclusion and exclusion, promoting marginalized mediated spaces in which ethnic identities are reified as the 'other' to mainstream homogenous inclusive myths. However, as BANERJEE and MARX, as well as MAINS, explain, subterranean and overt challenges to mythic media representations show that identity is relational and constantly under negotiation. In his chapter, ZIMMERMANN shows how films from a particular genre, *Heimat*, played a key role in the transition of Germany national identity during post World War II. *Heimat* films worked to provide a national identity, founded on

traditional cultural values that allowed Germans to take pride in their heritage, and, at the same time, helped heal the wounds of the recent destruction of their cities. Through a return to the rural idyllic, folklore, and sentimental bonds with landscape, the Heimat genre reveals how the affective power of film can move beyond the individual to the cultural.

Drawing from psychoanalysis and poststructural theories, CLARKE's chapter, as well as that of MORENO and AITKEN, challenges the social-spatial dialectic and moves beyond, within and outside the fixed scalar boundaries of body, individual, society and culture. Non-representational, unconscious spaces are not fixed within the scale of the mind or body; rather, movement, action, reaction and behavior flow freely across scales. CLARKE suggests that hotels, as non-places or resting points where the accelerated circulation of global flows stop to recharge, provide for chance encounters that produce a unique type of subjectivity, an inconsequential togetherness, an anti-church of sorts. MORENO and AITKEN further challenge us to rethink how film, space, and the scales of the body move freely because of addiction. Thereby, this fluidity produces new geographic configurations that we previously may not have considered.

A focus on the content of what is seen configures film as social texts, objects worthy of geographic inquiry. Whatever form social texts take, their symbolic qualities inform, challenge and negotiate social-spatial meaning. In their book, *Engaging Film*, CRESSWELL and DIXON (2002) argue that the textual metaphor has become hegemonic within film geography primarily because it is a powerful and appropriate means through which to engage cultural and social politics of meaning (re)production.

'Text' refers to a signifying practice associated with types of cultural production including the written word, painting, landscape and film. Textual analysis is a hermeneutical method focused on assumption and inquiry, where we query a 'text' guided by a hypothesis. The creative interaction, or hermeneutical circle of going back-and-forth between the interpreter's theoretical framework and the text being studied, leads to meaning and understanding. Diffusion of this hermeneutical method to geography followed the "linguistic turn" in the social sciences.

Applying the notion of 'text' to other forms of cultural production assumes that they are metaphorically like texts. This leads to two different questions: First, is 'text' a good paradigm for film geography? Second, how is the textual metaphor overlaid onto the content of what is seen? Extrapolating from RICOEUR's (1971) work, the textual metaphor is a valid means of inquiry for four reasons. First, written discourse and social life have similar characteristics. As such, meaning is constructed through the act of writing just as agency reifies the built environment (cf. COSGROVE 1984). Second, intention and reception of any text often fail to coincide. Similarly, actions can become detached from agents and can have effects beyond the scale of their intent. This can happen for both the 'text' under inquiry and the 'text' being constructed (cf. DUNCAN and DUNCAN 1988). Third, interpretation of texts and cultural events vary with location, culture and era. In other words, the ethical issue of essentialism, where one's views speak for others,

remains a fundamental issue regardless of whether the item being studied is a text, event, or action (SMITH 2002). Fourth, textual meaning is unstable and fluid because it is interpreted. Similarly, social institutions and actions are also unstable and fluid because meaning is constituted through the relative position of the interpreter. Relativism, or the fact that interpretation is relative to the interpreter, is an issue regardless of the method of inquiry. ROSE (2001) takes this a step further when suggesting that discourse analysis can take two forms: the first focuses on the contested meanings within a text (the text-centered approach). The second examines the articulation of discourse in social practices, institutions and technologies that produce texts (the author-centered approach). DIXON, ZONN and BASCOM offer a third, reader-centered, approach. Here, rather than dismissing the issue of relativism, they argue that this approach empowers the reader-viewer by granting them the authority to appropriate, resist or transform the meanings within social texts. This exposes the fact that relativism is not about coming to a consensus about one 'true' meaning or understanding; rather, it is a discursive process wherein negotiation of social meanings are conceived as heterogeneous rather than homogenous. The textual metaphor, overlaid onto the content of what is seen, is paradigmatic because it is a method rather than a theory. Readings can be from a diversity of theoretical positions allowing film geography to develop a truly discursive environment in which to prosper.

The textual metaphor, however, has its limits. For example, an alternative model of inquiry into film geography may follow a production-product-distribution-consumption model in which the text is primarily, but not wholly, constituted by the product. This alternative model of inquiry centers on film as part of a cultural economy that produces cultural goods for global consumption. According to SCOTT (2005, 3), "the cultural economy can be broadly defined as a group of sectors ... that produce goods and services whose subjective meaning, or, more precisely sign-value to the consumer is high in comparison with their utilitarian purpose." Under this rubric, the cinematic world is mutually constitutive of social texts and extra-textual processes. In their examination of the global dominance of the Hollywood film industry, MILLER et al. (2005, 5) argue, "unlike textual reductionists, we do not assume that it is adequate to interpret a film's internal qualities or the supposed 'positioning' of mythic spectators." DIXON's chapter, on independent documentary films in the U.S., presents an author-centered textual analysis in which extra-textual processes, concerning the role of state funding of documentary films, are explored. She argues that the state, through funding, defines documentaries and reifies the idealized notion of rural spaces by focusing on hard-working individuals. As such, society is positioned within President Johnson's notion of a Great Society that frames marginalization within a neoliberal discourse.

While methodological in nature, the textual metaphor may reinforce specific epistemological and ontological formations. CRESSWELL and DIXON (2002) argue that a focus on text and context within the textual metaphor resembles, and may even reinforce, the normative belief that film is a re-presentation of reality. By connecting film with representation, a binary is constructed wherein the 'reel' is a

second-hand experience and the 'real' is a primary experience. This binary reinforces the belief that film is of secondary importance to direct geographic studies in the field. This binary further reinforces a hegemonic order within geography, delimiting what is an acceptable and unacceptable mode of inquiry. Only recently has film geography begun to overcome this arbitrary normative belief. LUKINBEAL and ZIMMERMANN (2006, 322) challenge the deterministic logic of the binary stating:

We eschew the representational determinism that film geography is synonymous with *re-*presentations of some ontological stable "authentic" reality. Drawing from CRANG et al. (1999, 2), we posit that film geography always exceeds the cinematic technologies which produce representations because film is "constituted by the social relations, discourses and sites in which these technologies are embedded." The technologies that capture, encode and represent the world are always embedded in social and cultural practices that are temporally and spatially specific. Representations are not the polar opposite of reality especially when it comes to film and cinema. Cinematic images are always socialized just as technologies are always socialized.

CLARKE (1997) succinctly argues that cinema is simulacral rather than representational. CRESSWELL and DIXON (2002, 3–4) contend that films are not "mere images of unmediated expressions of the mind, but rather the temporary embodiment of social processes that continually construct and deconstruct the world as we know it." LUKINBEAL (2004, 247) expounds upon this idea stating, "visual media are today's cognitive maps (JAMESON 1984, 1988, 1992) or social cartography (BRUNO 1997, 2002) of meaning creation and identity formation." Therefore, the simulacrum does not conceal truth; truth conceals that there is none (BAUDRILLARD 1988). This leads us to back to our opening quotation by DELEUZE (1986, 57) which explains that the world is not imaged, imagined or re-presented by cinema, but rather the world becomes its own image, "a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (BAUDRILLARD 1983, 2). Querying cinema as simulacra leads us away from the content of what is seen and begins to questioning the form of the seen.

#### THE FORM OF WHAT IS SEEN

Cinema makes no claims that it is anything but a mechanical re-production. Rather than re-producing the 'real' or re-producing what is 'seen', cinema produces a 'reality-effect' – a simulacrum of the real. Cinema is a machine for constructing different relations between space and time. What is seen in a landscape amounts to a representational form that affords the subject apparent mastery over space by aligning vision with truth. In this sense 'seeing is believing' and the 'seen' is a fixed, centered, and all embarrassing gaze. Seeing is not objective; rather, it is a practiced appropriation of space constituted through learned 'ways of seeing,' or scopic regimes ingrained by social and cultural norms. Scopic regime, a term coined by Christian METZ (1977), seeks to differentiate 'vision' from 'visuality.' Whereas 'vision' is often considered a universal and natural, subject-centered phenomenon, 'visuality' emphasizes that ways of looking are not natural; rather, they are socially constructed. Further, scopic regimes have a history wherein specific regimes become hegemonic during specific cultural eras. Both ZIMMERMANN's and DOEL's

chapters, for instance, focus on the synchronic nature of scopic regimes within German culture (ZIMMERMANN) and the form of film itself (DOEL).

DOEL argues that there is a significant omission within film geography on the study of the form of film itself. While much has been written on the content, or function of film, form has its own spatial and temporal characteristics that are distinct from, yet related to, function. Focusing on the formative years of film, DOEL traces the geographies of film's scopic regime as it transitioned from animated photography into narrative cinema. Under the scopic regime of animated photography, public interest was tautological in that audiences wanted ultra-realism, life-like animation, or re-presentations of actual life. During this period, film sought to re-produce true movement – to *animate* photography. Misrepresentation of natural movement produced negative reviews from trade journals. Film was evaluated on its ability to re-present motion. Because of this, film was sold by the foot with purchasers showing concern about paying for any footage that was not truly animated. DOEL argues that, with continuity editing and narrative space decades away, time was inscribed “synchronically within the scene, rather than being fashioned diachronically between scenes through editing” (DOEL, current volume). The shift in film's scopic regime occurred when cinema stopped “re-presenting an actual or staged instant” and started to function “as an apparatus that could both manipulate and manufacture space and time. In so doing, animated photography ceased being a *referential* medium, bound to the *Real*, to become a simulacral medium, free to fabricate a reality-effect” (DOEL, current volume). Film ceased functioning as representational (imaging the world) and became simulacral (a world becomes its own image). The essential element of film, then, “is not the framed image” or the content “but that which comes *between* the frames: *the cut*” (DOEL, current volume).

With animated photography, the focus is on the seen on the visual and representational. With narrative cinema, the focus shifts to the scene, visuality and simulacra through use of montage. HEATH (1981) argues that classic narrative space provides a solution to coordinating the problem of space and time relations in film. Classic narrative space became the dominant scopic regime of film which sought to mend the tension between quattrocento space (a central, fixed all embracing point of view) and the inherent movement of film which threatened the fixity of the gaze. He refers to the practice devised to convert ‘seen’ (fixed) into ‘scene’ (mobilized) via a manner which “contains the mobility that could threaten the clarity of vision” (HEATH 1981, 36) by constantly re-centering the observer's point of view. CLARKE's and DOEL's (CLARKE and DOEL 2005, 2006, 2007; DOEL and CLARKE 2007) excellent work on the transition within film's scopic regime shows that initially viewers were uncomfortable with point-of-view shots and continuity editing and found them ‘unnatural.’ Over time, however, this new visuality was naturalized and a new scopic regime accepted.