

# *Cinema and Geography: Geographic Space, Landscape and Territory in the Film Industry\**

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“We accept the reality with which we are presented.  
It’s that simple.”

*The Truman Show*, 1998

“film could trace a map of the world, like a cartographer; it could explain stories and historical events , like a historian; it could “dig” in the past of distant civilizations , like an archeologist; and it could tell of the customs and habits of people like an ethnographer”

(Shohat, 1991; cit. en Stam, 2000:35)

“If You Film It, They Will Come...”

(*The Worldwide Guide to Movie Locations*, Tony Reeves, 2001)

## Cinema and Geography: Geographic Space, Landscape and Territory in the Film Industry.

### ABSTRACT:

This work presents a theoretical and analytical approach to the relationship between cinema and geographic space. First, special cinematographic qualities are differentiated from those of other means of geographic representation, at the same time identifying the differences between real space and film space. Subsequently, the main contributions from various geographic subdisciplines are examined, identifying which paths of study should be followed in the relationship between geography and film. A third, more analytical part of the content looks at the specific problems of film locations, the way landscape and nature are presented on screen, the use of cinema as a political/territorial instrument, and the economic repercussions created by the film industry.

KEYWORDS: Cinema and Geography – Cultural Geography – Cinema and landscape – Cinema and territory

## I. INTRODUCTION

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These pages aim to provide a theoretical and analytical approach to the relationship between cinema, geography and geographic space. The objectives of the text are as follows:

Firstly, to show the characteristics of cinema as a recent medium –one that has existed for little more than a century- which has been used with great frequency to describe aspects of geographic reality. Whilst geographic research has dealt both with film as a medium and also its connection with space, it has not had the same capacity as film to nourish the collective geographic imaginarium. This imbalance means that we need to study a series of important factors in the relationship between cinema and geography.

Secondly, to provide a general analysis of existing connections between cinema and geographic space. It must be remembered that these relationships are established in two ways: via the mediation of geographic space by film production (thus an influential factor upon the final product) and via the impact of film production upon geographic space and its perception. In this second context mention will be made of some of the repercussions- social, territorial and economic- of both the shooting and subsequent screening of film. Furthermore, after analyzing how the cinema industry deals with the location of filming, it will be shown how this medium presents us with different types of landscape and territory.

We are aware that different sections in the following could be dealt with at greater length - above all by means of detailed case studies- but the main goal of these pages is to present a general panorama of existing relationships between cinema and geography.

## **II. CINEMA AS A MEDIUM**

### **1. The arrival of a new medium**

From the very beginnings of civilization man has used various means, materials and procedures to transmit or accumulate analytic or descriptive information on geographic space, nature, landscape and territory. Cartography has provided since antiquity an extensive variety of maps that are fundamentally exploratory, military and scientific. In turn, chorographic descriptions, travel literature and even painting, have also allowed us to approach other sorts of characteristics of nature or of landscape not provided by geography (the third dimension, the color of vegetation or the description of the sky). Travel books, literary texts of fiction (above all from the 19th century onwards, with the appearance of the modern novel), paintings, etchings and photographs have been repeatedly used as tools in numerous geographic studies and what is more, with a great variety of underlying objectives and aims (in the case of literary narratives, for example, maps have helped the reader keep track of the plot). This means that the reader or observer had documents at their disposal that enabled them to gain a rough understanding of the space that lay beyond their reach.

By the middle of the 19th century, there was a diminishing dependence on the artistic ability and literary skill of the author. The incorporation of two new and interrelated media of photography and cinematography allowed nature and landscape to be portrayed in the most truthful means possible .

Etchings and photographs were already contributing to spread visual knowledge of remote places, especially when the means of graphic reproduction permitted their inclusion in the press, books and magazines. Cinema, in contrast, presented moving images and supposes an advance in the capacity to transmit a determined geographic space to the audience. Allied with this is the historical context in which this new medium appears; a period of intense economic transformation generated by the

industrial revolution that had important social consequences<sup>1</sup>. Clearly we are dealing with a new means of transmitting knowledge for a new society, one much more dynamic than the last.

It is also worth remembering the already long tradition that has converted cinema into a geographical and historical-territorial document and that allows us to reconstruct in memory landscapes that no longer exist (having been profoundly changed by the vicissitudes of socio-economic change or war)<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. The generalization of the consumption of images

The consequences of the introduction of this new medium are all the more remarkable because, in contrast with previous means and techniques, this new process of describing geographic space was not directed towards a cultivated elite. Instead, it acted as **an object of mass consumption** that gradually reached all levels of society<sup>3</sup>. As well as its new technical capacity to create images, film also had the added power to spread and circulate these representations. In some ways film acts in parallel with political and social advances in that it allows a certain “democratization” of some places and landscapes that were previously inaccessible or even unknown to the greater part of society<sup>4</sup>.

Since its beginnings, cinema (and also photography) has been known for an enormous capacity to both portray and describe the landscape and its inhabitants. Indeed, some of the first cinematic works at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century have a descriptive and documental component that link it to the Human Geography of the 19thC, a project that collected images right around the world from an anthropological point of view.<sup>5</sup>

An idea of the volume of images that these days reach the Spanish viewer comes to us via the annual statistics of the General Society of Spanish Authors (SGAE). With respect to cinema, the last three decades have witnessed an appreciable decline in growth, with 11.33 cinema tickets sold per person in 1968 dropping to 1.78 in 1988 then slightly recovering from this date onwards (3.3 tickets were sold per person in the year 2004). It must be noted that these figures are in line with those of all Europe and that among these countries Spain has one of the highest rates of attendance in the cinema. Essentially the explanation for the decline, and subsequent stabilization, in the number of people who go to the cinema is due to increasing competition from other mediums of communication (such as television) and to new means of storing and viewing cinematic material (video and DVD). This last is easily affirmed by observing how the price of buying and renting video as well as DVD has tripled in a decade and in the significant increase, since the start of the

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Sontag highlighted the paradox of the coincidence behind the appearance of a technical means to register places and landscape at the same time that these landscapes began to change rapidly: “Cameras started duplicating the world at a time when human landscape began to undergo a dizzying rate of change: whilst an incalculable number of biological and social life forms are being destroyed, an artefact is obtained to register what is disappearing” (Sontag, 2005:32).

<sup>2</sup> This is the case with coastal or rural zones that have been today urbanized, or with sections of those cities destroyed by warfare in the past century (*Germania, anno zero*, 1948).

<sup>3</sup> Montserrat Hugué has indicated that the reproductive capacity of cinema constituted “the essential reason that the traditional elites did not trust this new non-exclusive art or form of entertainment, and that persisted in taking hold in theaters of limited social access, leaving the tents where films were shown to the popular classes” (Hugué, 2002:15).

<sup>4</sup> This ‘democratization’ of the visual enjoyment of landscapes also extends to the area of the fantasy genre, like the early tapes of Tarzan or cartoons.

<sup>5</sup> Bernardi (2002:39) cites, in this respect, the projects of Albert Kahn, Georges Méliès or Boleslaw Matuszewski. Sontag (2005) mentions the foundation in 1897, with a similar intention, but limited to English culture, of the national Association of Photographic Record by Benjamin Stone, with the aim of documenting traditional rural ceremonies and festivals that were dying out.

90s, of the number of minutes that every Spaniard spends in watching television (almost three and a half hours per day), a medium in which films are also broadcast.

Thus, after a century of cinematic creation and growth, it is evident that we can speak of “**a new genre of cultural geography**” and for this reason it seems interesting to consider relationships between this new medium and geographic space. Never before has so much information on landscapes been transmitted, intentionally or not, and never before have we had the present capacity to transmit this visual information to so many people. To this we should also add the effects of half a century of television programming, which we are not able to discuss here.

### 3. The spatial component in cinema: object and shadow(real space and filmed space)

Since its inception, cinema (and photography) has been considered to consist of a technique that reproduced what the human eye could already see and, as such, that justified the objectivity of all that it presented. Yet from the moment in which cinema was used as a modern tool for story telling, it also came to be recognized as a means of artistic expression. These two perspectives developed at the same time that a formal separation took place between the so-called “cinema fiction” and the documentary. Walter Benjamin has clearly established the moment in which artistic mediums such as cinema or photography pass through the border between invented science and work of art and how this step is associated with commercial activity. In the case of photography he points out: “the pretension of photography to the status of art is contiguous with its appearance as a good. This coincides with the influence that photography as a reproductive procedure had upon art itself. It isolated art from its roots and handed it over to the anonymity of the market and demand” (Benjamin, 1938:88). Further on he argues in a similar way on cinema: “the period of technical reproductibility de-coupled art from its cultural base, forever extinguishing the gleam of its autonomy. This brought with it a change in the function of art that fell from sight in this century. And this change even went unnoticed for a period well into the 20th century, the same period that has seen the growth of cinema” (Benjamin, 1939:108).

Despite the previous, cinema can be undoubtedly conceived of as an “art of movement”, something that distinguishes it from painting or sculpture. For the moment, it is the artistic form that has the greatest capacity to represent the intersection between time and space (Harvey, 1998: 340). As such its works must, of necessity, be framed by the space-time matrix (without which it would be impossible to make films). It is thus useful to clearly establish the differences between “object and shadow”, which is to say between real space and the image of this that film projects:

- First, one must distinguish between the two dimensional **screen space** and the three dimensional space where the action in the film occurs (*action space* or “**filmic space**”). The rectangular shape itself of the screen, the “screen space”, has an added quality which obliges the audience to focus their attention on a field of vision more reduced and physically limited than the radius of human visual action. This capacity to limit the field of vision helps reinforce the intensity and importance of the images at the same time that it organizes them.

- As filmic space is connected to the creative control of the individual author, it is essentially **visual** and potentially unlimited in its dimensions. But along with this advantage, we must also take into account factors that prevent a whole perception of the landscape, factors that demand the full use of all five senses. Fundamentally, space in cinema (with the exception of a few little known experiments) has no volume but rather deals with a flat and codified analogy of this.

- Since the invention of sound in cinema, **auditory sensation** has been co-ordinated according to the presentation of the visual story. This, however, does not necessarily involve the

use of ‘real’ sound; some natural sounds are emphasized over others<sup>6</sup>, the sound of the action may be anticipated, music can be incorporated with the landscape and the original diction or even language of the actors may be modified.<sup>7</sup> The rest of the senses that permit a total appreciation of landscape remain neglected and have not been translated to the cinema; as smell is not appreciable and there is no possibility of touch, it is difficult to achieve a comprehensive perception of the environment.

- Further evidence of the change in reality is related to the **treatment of meteorological phenomena**. Most films show stable environmental atmospheres and only rarely do phenomena appear that change this situation. When they do so, they almost always use means that are accompanied by an exaggerated meteorological event and which thus look to grab the attention of the viewer. While in real life man perceives most of these phenomena by using various senses (and on occasions in a subtle way –eg breezes, drizzle and strong sun), cinema is obliged to shift these same effects to an image and sound that are clear and easily perceptible by the viewer. Precipitation is substituted by artificial effects of highly intense rains that are practically torrential and almost always exclusively tropical (*Wonderland*, 1999). In the case of breezes, these must be sufficiently strong enough so that the viewer can detect them through the way they move objects (something which also lends emphasis). As for temperature, it is carried indirectly onto the screen by association with attitudes, gestures or clothing. Finally, situations of strong sunlight are usually represented by inserting full shots of the sun. All these types of meteorological phenomena usually demand the use of backing music or sound effects that reinforce intensity by means of a series of codes already assimilated by the spectator.

- Together with its limitations and disadvantages, it is worth noting that the **landscape** can end up looking, especially with the latest technical advances, attractive and **improved**. Audiences are even provided with views that they would never get to see for themselves- as is the case with certain sequences filmed in inaccessible places (aerial and ground level shots, at different speeds, etc.)<sup>8</sup>. It must be remembered here that different modes of observation are provided within a filmic space: by using different shooting techniques, the director can make us experience this space from a distance, from outside or can place us inside it. On other occasions filming technique allows us to move either slowly ‘into’ filmic space or, on the contrary, at great speed<sup>9</sup>.

- Occasionally an audience may find themselves mentally reproducing an **“apparently coherent”** space based on fragments of real space taken from scenes of a film. For this reason it is almost impossible to follow urban routes as they appear on film; being composed of segments or parts of different streets, they bear no real connection to each other. Only a small minority of the audience -with spatial knowledge of the city where the action takes place- could appreciate this

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<sup>6</sup> Although technical developments have allowed us to appreciate sounds made by animals, the wind or rivers as they occur in a natural landscape, the first recordings often generate an excess of these sounds (as was the case of those recordings in supposed jungle environment).

<sup>7</sup> In fact the actors dialogue was recorded on “seperate tracks” from the rest of the sound and, on occasion, not where filming took place but rather in a studio, far from the supposed natural sound.

<sup>8</sup> This reality is self-evident in the documentary genre, above all in productions of the last few years which have seen cameras placed on birds (*Le peuple migrateur*, 2001), fish or crabs, or micro-cameras introduced in tiny underground galleries.

<sup>9</sup> “Our taverns and metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished bedrooms, our train stations and our factories appeared to have had us irrevocably locked in. Then cinema appeared and blew this prison-world to bits with tenth of a second dynamite, so that now, in the middle of vast ruin and waste, we travel calmly and without fear. With the photograph, space contracts; with slow motion, movement is postponed” (Benjamin, 1969: 236, cited by Harvey, 1998: 381).

spatial discontinuity. This effect is especially clear in those scenes that take place in countries different from those in which they are screened.

- For some authors (Sesonke, 1973: 406), filmic space incorporates other spaces that are **non-visualized** by the viewer but are essential to understand the narrative. These are spaces that are not covered by the camera but occasionally form an non-visible reality that can be noticed when characters either enter or exit a scene (whether this be from the side or rear of stage). Actors also disappear in this filmic space (later not real) when they enter a doorway whose room we don't see or when they go around a corner in the street. As such, in a film there is a space beyond that which is shown and which is indispensable in order understand the story being told.

- Just as there is a filmic space different from “screen-space”, there is also a “**filmic time**” different from “**projection time**” (Khatchadourian, 1987: 173). Whilst projection time is determined by footage length, filmic time does not have a specific duration: it may often appear longer or at times shorter (as with certain slow motion scenes) and experimentally it might end up coinciding with the length of “screen time”. The rhythms of film time thus vary according to the demands of the narrative and may be very slow on some occasions or rapid on others. It is worth remembering that **temporal discontinuities**- as much as spacial discontinuities- can be observed in all films.

### III. CINEMA AND GEOGRAPHY

The present paragraphs speak clearly of a unique relationship between the real environment and the image transmitted by the film industry. What the viewer sees is, to a greater or lesser extent, an altered geographic space that although false has the capacity to make a strong impact. The power of the image in film (or television) implies a notable ability to generate imaginary situations regarding historical, social, anthropological and also geographical questions. There are an enormous variety of facts and geographic elements that can be analyzed in this context and it can be seen that images have traditionally played a strong role both in geographic explanation and in the very recreation of “geographic images”. Both factors justify the need for an approach to film production from the discipline of geography. As such it is worth knowing the key points and lines of film interpretation that geographers themselves have pursued.

#### 1. The overdue presence of cinema in Geography studies

During the last few years cultural approaches have proliferated in all sorts of geographical research. This attention to the relationship between cultural creation and geographic space is in some way connected to the first modern geographers who participated in a method in which even Geography itself became a cultural fact (Ortega, 1987:105 y ss.). Since the beginning of so-called “Modern Geography”, modern geographers have had a more or less latent interest in cultural media (as long as this had to do with elements of territory, landscape or nature) which has come to take shape in a school or line of research that could be grouped under the title of Cultural Geography.

In reality, literature has long been employed in geographical research with travel accounts and even novels being used to reconstruct historical landscapes (changes in flora, in agrarian structures, in the physiognomy of the cities, etc.). As indicated by Douglas Pockock (1981), literature also realizes an even more subtle function, one that contributes to the general process of learning through which attitudes and values of particular society or space are acquired. Our cultural vision of reality can thus be influenced by the contributions of literature.

If we consider cinema to be one of the most capable means of creating representations of the world, especially in the second half of the 20th century, then it is clear, for the same reasons that applied to literature in the 19th century, it should be of concern to Geography. At a relatively early stage films were already acknowledged to be of help in spreading geographic knowledge. Proof of this are the publications of Roger Manvell, director of the British Film Academy, in *The Geographical Magazine* from 1953 on by direct orders of the Royal Geographical Society of London.<sup>10</sup>

Notwithstanding, studies that link both disciplines are quite limited in number. For many years films, and with them all other products of the media, have been on the margins of geographical research (Burguess, 1985:1).

Even day it still seems necessary to employ ‘defensive arguments’ when considering the relationship between cinema and geography. In History a particular focus has been widely accepted for years that connects History and film production (in a great variety of aspects)<sup>11</sup>; evidence of this can be seen in the current extensive bibliography and even the creation, in a Spanish context, of the Barcelona-based research centre “Film-Historia”. In the discipline of Geography, on the contrary, little progress appears to have been made. Some recent reflection on the historians’ method of working (Gaddis, 2004), supports a call for narrative and imaginative approaches in historical research, things that may be achieved through the use of appropriate materials from cinema fiction<sup>12</sup>. From our point of view these considerations can be perfectly extrapolated to the area of Geography.

There are many **reasons that explain the scant amount** of research done, until now, in the geography-cinema binomial. Here the characteristics and evolution of the medium itself have to be taken into account. Whilst today DVD players or computer programmes provide considerable ease in handling images, just little over a decade ago, the viewing of a film, its storage, screening and treatment were beyond the means of most people. Adequate analysis of film material thus turned out to be rather difficult.

In geography the use of literature is accepted and generalized not only as an efficient medium in the description of landscape but also as a source for researching geographic facts. The same does not occur with cinema whose use in geography is relegated to a didactic function. This issue is surprising if we contrast the capacity of cinema to transmit images with that of the literary text in terms of the purely formal aspect of describing landscapes. With respect to the disinformation that is attributed to film, it has to be remembered that certain literary creations, such as some works by Emilio Salgari or Jules Verne, have been responsible for a treatment of the landscape that is full of errors, banalities and untruths, without this supposing a loss in their literary value.

Finally, even if the previously mentioned attitudes are dying out, there still persists a clear difficulty in establishing a connection between images (provided by films and observed by audiences) and

<sup>10</sup> Aitken consider these articles to be where mention is first made of cinema in Geography (Aitken 1994: 294).

<sup>11</sup> Thirty years ago Marc Ferro, one of the historians who has done the most research into History and Cinema, indicated that: “when at the start of the ‘70s they began to study film as a historical document and thus proceed onto a ‘counteranalysis’ of society, the idea was worrying for the university media. In those years there was only quantitative history and prestigious academics like Fernand Braudel and Pierre Renouvin advised me not to use cinema: ‘Interesting, but better you not talk much about it; ‘Don’t insist on doing this thesis’. Today cinema is obligatory for archivists and investigators” (Ferro, 1977:15).

<sup>12</sup> Thus writes Hueso in his work *Cinema and the 20thC.*: “It is not that we think that cinema has to be the only source for studying the history of this period ; this would be wrong and completely absurd. Rather, there is a series of elements can be taken from its images and contrasted with those drawn from other more traditional sources. This can provide a greater depth and a wealth of perspective in contemporary knowledge” (Hueso, 1998:42).

the effects these images have (economic, social and cultural) upon the landscape and the territory they describe.

In any case, there is no doubt that films and the media in general, are bearers of what could be called “popular culture”. As such they must be considered to be an essential element when modulating the individual and social experiences that relate to our surroundings. Some argue that as it does not derive from direct experience, media-based information is of a secondary nature. Authors such as Burgess and Gold (1985) however indicate that this information, including that derived from films, is of central importance and makes a significant contribution to the way in which reality is conceived by the individual.

## 2. Principal lines of research

A brief review of cinema studies and Geography reveals the gradual convergence and interrelation between lines of work, different thematic areas of interest and dates of publication.

A first approach has its origins in the area of **Geography Didactics**. We have already shown how since the Fifties attention has been drawn in Anglo Saxon cultures towards the teaching possibilities offered by film – that is, as an exceptional means of describing territories and regions distant to the students (Manvell, 1953 y 1956). This most productive line of research (Clark, 1970; Gold, Revill and Haigh, 1996; Ansell, 2002) has born several results in Spain, particularly in works of the Geography Didactic of the Spanish Geographers Association and of UNED.

Coinciding with the first research done by Christopherson and Storper in 1986, another group of projects can be placed together in **Economic Geography**. Over the past few years, these and other researchers have been aware of the relevance of the cultural industry, not only as an economic but also ideological motor of today’s society and have carried out projects with the aim of highlighting the importance of this ‘industry’ and to show the features of its distribution and localization (Christopherson y Storper, 1986; Scott, 2002 y 2004, Gámir, 2005). Within this section we include that research which analyzes one or more of the stages that take place from production to screening. Here there is a clear relation with Urban Geography, as different types of film establishments (large theaters, multiple cinemas or more recently the multiplex) have a clear impact upon the environment into which they are placed (Gámir, 2001).

A third group of projects are to be found in **Cultural Geography** and are centred on the creation and diffusion of geographic images. Geographic production along these lines presents a great variety of themes and contents that are worthy of more detailed comment.

With respect to the capacity or intention to create (explicitly or not) geographic images, some authors speak of being able to distinguish between two streams of interpretation in the West. The first of these, essentially North American, considers communication as a process by which a message is transmitted over a distance. Seen in this way the North American film industry finds itself interested in the production of stereotypes, whether these be of societies or of places. In European studies, communication is conceptualized as a process through which a particular culture is created, modified and transformed. Analysis of filmic representation must therefore constitute a priority for those geographers who want to understand postmodern society- one in which our peers obtain knowledge mostly through the interpolation of representations (some of which are produced

by the film industry)<sup>13</sup>. In this way reality and its representation (whether true or not), are bound together in a continuous process (Harvey, 1998). The cinematic-geographic relation is thus focused not so much on the individual as on the idea of cinema as an expression of the hegemonic relations of territory in post modern society.

With respect to contents, these have a great thematic variety that is in some ways explained by early publishing dates and by a limited number of publications. Certainly there are a variety of collective works (Burguess y Gold, 1985; Kemal y Gaskell, 1993; Aitken y Zonn, 1994) and analytic studies of films or specific directors.

From a systematic point of view, there are works that stand out for their analysis of landscape in cinema fiction (Nogué, 1982; González, 1995; Mottet, 1999; Escher y Zimmermann, 2001) or for their focus on a particular film genre. Among these, worth noting are those on the ‘western’ (Foucher, 1977; Lacoste, 1999; Henriët, 2003), on fantasy films (Kitchin y Kneale, 2002) and on documentary cinema. Some of these studies mentioned have carried out in-depth work in deconstructing documentaries and their results should be taken into account by the Geographic Didactic. It would also be wise to include in this group that research which is related to the representation of cinema in the Third World (Macdonald, 1990).

There are some noticeable shortfalls that are simply due to the youthful stage of this line of research. Very few works, for example, reveal a conceptual and concrete frame of reference that go beyond generic labelling such as post modernism, Humanist Geography or New Cultural Geography (Burguess, 1989; Rose, 1996; Kennedy y Lukinbeal, 1997). Others are disconnected from previous studies in cinema research<sup>14</sup> and only a limited number of them deal with material published outside of the USA, United Kingdom or France.

In spite of the apparent separation between the most theoretical contents of Cultural Geography and those most evidently derived from Economic Geography, a limited amount of research has been published over the past few years which connects both these tendencies and lends them a greater relevance. We refer to those few works which analyze economic consequences in specific territories and whose motivations are based, not on an empirical knowledge of reality, but on the assimilation of a group of images of varying origin (naturally enough among these is cinema, although television or advertising could also be included). These are works which show how the spread of varying images influences real economic activity- particularly that of tourism (Riley, Baker y Van Doren, 1998).

Studies that actually relate cinema and geography- specifically through Cultural Geography and through Geography Didactics- are rare but we believe that this is an area which still bears much promise. It can show how films and documentaries, with their broad symbolic capacity, have created a way of “seeing” and “valuing” the landscape that complicates or prevents other alternative visions (Aitken, 1994). Just as indicated by M.J. Clark in 1970, it must not be forgotten that “a film consists of an inflexible presentation of concepts that snatches control of the class from the hands of the teacher” (Clark, 1970: 17).

### 3. Vectors of the studio in the cinema-geography relationship

<sup>13</sup> “The Nature that is displayed before the camera is not the same that is displayed before the naked eye: although it may not be more because the space in which it has been unconsciously penetrated has been replaced by a consciously explored space” (Benjamin, 1969:236, citado por Harvey, 1998: 381).

<sup>14</sup> It is worth citing, for their clear link to geographic aspects or approaches, the works of Bernardi (2002), Bradley (1994), Mottet (1998, 1999), Ramírez (1993), Sitney (1993) or Stam (2000).

There are a series of key points that explain how cinema transfers a particular image of landscape or territory that lie within the tradition itself of film history. Evolution and experiment with different film techniques, such as different types of camera, improvements in the sensitivity of film stock, changes in photographic dimensions, incorporation and improvement in sound, introduction of color, creation of special effects or digitalization of part of the process, have also clearly influenced the image of geographic spaces that are shifted to the viewer. This last approach has barely been considered in Geography studies. For this reason we indicate here three vectors, non-exclusive, that from our point of view should be contemplated when analyzing “film–geography”:

- The **procedures** by which techniques and film schools have taken on the filming of geographic space, emphasizing the changes made throughout the history of cinema and how these have influenced the way of presenting landscape and territory.
- The **historical and social context** in which filming is produced. Its analysis provides one of the keys for interpreting both the landscape that appears in film and the society as portrayed.
- The **impact upon the individual** of the geographic representation created, independently of the degree of fidelity to the landscape or territory represented. How cinema helps to form, together with other means, a group of geographic images that influence the behaviour and values of the individual.

#### IV. CINEMA AND GEOGRAPHIC SPACE

##### 1. The dual connection between cinema and geographic space

The relationship between cinema and geography is worth considering in a dual sense: that while geographic elements influence film production and its results, film making also has an impact upon geographic space. It is to be noted that while in the first case we refer to the primary stage of production and specifically that of shooting, the second deals with the consequences that occur after the public screening of a film.

In the first sense- the influence of certain **geographic characteristics** on the **selection of exteriors**- there is clearly a great variety of determining factors. Sometimes a director may be interested in presenting certain natural conditions as “active protagonists” and his or her eagerness may lead them to look for a match between the place of narration and of filming. This may not always occur as there are other factors that condition the choice of exteriors. It is thus worth emphasizing how the characteristics of the natural world can condition the selection of film locations.

In a second sense a connection is established after the screening of the film. Due to its capacity to transmit particular geographic images (prototypes of landscape which are not always real), film helps to **create new and collective territorial imaginariums**<sup>15</sup> that may come to have economic and territorial implications.

The high capacity of the North American industry, together with the gradual concentration of the media over the last two decades, has tended to integrate the processes of distribution and screening within the large companies of the sector. Both factors have also provided the film industry as a

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<sup>15</sup> Relph (1976) creates a category of “experiences of places”, from the most superficial to the most profound. The first are provided by the mass media. These are previously filtered by opinion makers and are spread via the media, particularly through advertising. The media is aimed directly at the average citizen and provides a low and simple level of experience of place (banalization of landscape).

whole with a notable power to spread certain images. One result has been the transmission of a wide ranging ‘knowledge’ of particular places or environments, previously little known, among European, Asian or African audiences.

A great majority of images shown are not directly known by the general public but are easily recognizable by them due to the repeated screenings of such places (these are mostly urban environments or places but also include emblematic natural spaces such as certain national parks – eg *Grand Canyon*, 1991). Weekly broadcasts of television series set in particular cities have also powerfully contributed to fix the characteristics and landmarks of these cities in the memory of the audience. These features are later even sought after when the viewer visits the urban area filmed (*Central do Brasil*, 1998).

Cinema is also **testimony to human activity**, reflecting those sectors of flourishing economic activity and- with few exceptions-<sup>16</sup> ignoring territories in crisis or those which show less dynamic human activity. This explains the loss of the lead role played in the collective imagination by some cities that were once first ranking enclaves of the imperial colonies (Cairo, Casablanca, Bombay were cities that were also often represented via scenography) or by the return to prominence of cities such as Shanghai or Berlin<sup>17</sup>. In the United States, this connection between cinema and human activity was patently obvious in the period between wars when the vitality of industrial cities of the north such as Chicago were represented by numerous films on gangsters involved in bootleg alcohol. The appearance in scenes of cities such as Atlanta, Miami or Houston, reflects the transfer of some of the country’s economic dynamism to the southern states.

Nevertheless, the spaces of the cities highlighted by these films are ‘scenarios’ – particular areas or landmarks- that on occasion are only inserted to serve as a transition between one scene and the next (what film terminology calls the “establishing shot”). The audience knows nothing of the situation surrounding the territory of the city and nor does it have a clear idea of its design, urban structure, its morphological features, recent changes or its sociological characteristics, etc.<sup>18</sup> As such, the availability of significant features in some cities (such as the Empire State Building, monuments like the Eiffel Tower, bridges like that in Brooklyn, and even the urban topography of San Francisco), gives them an advantage over others when the time comes to be selected as part of the collective urban ‘imaginarium’<sup>19</sup> (once again the observations of Kevin Lynch on the legibility of urban space gain currency). If it is true that there is a certain repetition in the screening of established landmarks, it is no less certain that the film industry has recently taken care to incorporate, in a permanent way, new visual references. These must be capable of surprising the public and at the same time must reflect the dynamism of distant spaces, ones which were until

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<sup>16</sup> It has its own subgenre, the so-called social cinema, which aims to denounce certain social conditions not only through the stories told but also through by showing images of spaces in crisis, whether they be empty industrial lots or the outer suburbs. This is the case of Italian cinema in the Sixties or English cinema at the end of the Eighties. In the case of Spain, the effects of the industrial downsizing along the Cantabrian coastline can be seen in *Los lunes al sol* (2002). In North American cinema one can talk of a metropolitan genre whose most characteristic element is the environmental and social breakdown of various neighbourhoods of the North American metropolis (*Assault on Precinct 13*, 1976).

<sup>17</sup> An account of research on cinema and various post-colonial metropolis – among which are Saigon, Manila and cities from South African and Nigerian- is to be found in Shiel and Fitzmaurice (2001).

<sup>18</sup> More care is taken of these aspects in computer games where the spectator visually “moves about” part of the urban network .

<sup>19</sup> There is a description of locations shown in films that were shot in 18 big cities around the world, including an interesting cartography of film sites, to be found in Hellmann and Weber-Hof (2006). From the field of architecture, Solé (2007) points out the indirect work of transmitting urban landscapes of particular cities such as Rome or New York , among others, by film directors such as Fellini or Scorsese.

recently unknown in other cultures (ej.: the Petrona Towers in Kuala Lumpur, in *Entrapment*, 1999).<sup>20</sup>

Yet in spite of the intensity with which certain places are portrayed, including those recently added to this collective imaginarium, it only has to be remembered that those films which make the greatest impact transmit an incomplete image of the earth. While in some of them, territories draw the attention of the cameras and stand out, others look like great empty spaces. These are what we could qualify as the “**forgotten places**” of film. They are landscapes, cities and territories that haven’t been selected and whose image have not been seen by the audience, even in those cases that are physically close to them<sup>21</sup>.

The previous considerations reaffirm our idea that there is even a ‘duplication’ that occurs of the image of space perceived by people: the real and that which comes from the world of film images. Over the past few years and as a consequence of the banalization of geographic images, a unique process has been taking place in which the world of cinema fiction has been made material via its ability to attract the masses to film locations. Geographic spaces have thus come to be altered by the real, fundamentally by means of ‘film tourism’, a phenomena not exclusive to cinema but which also occurs with literature, music, etc. This fact makes increasingly clear the need in Geography to analyze which landscapes are being transmitted among millions of audience members and in what way landscapes are present in the medium of film. This new geographic imagining *is already having economic, social and territorial consequences*

## 2. Film and locations

Stories told in film do not always require the presence of an exterior space to serve as scenery or background. In productions particularly connected with the theatre the action may take place in a closed or even single space (*Rope*, 1948).

Most films, however, do include exterior scenes and greatly vary in the way they carry out this aspect of cinematic practice. An analysis of the different criteria for the choice of location, or the way of representing exteriors, provides a typology that will be subsequently developed.

### 1. *Supplanted Places*

A quick look at film reveals the generalization and level of perfection in the techniques of supplantation, whether these affect the sound (reproduced a posteriori), the actors (the use of doubles in compromising scenes) or particular actions or risky situations (use of models or special effects). As a result it shouldn’t appear strange that this noted cinematic tradition of supplanting reality might also affect place. The reasons for the use of ‘double’ locations in film can be very different. Even if partly explained by the same **evolution of film technique**, they are often due to other causes.

Unless they carefully read the end credits, the audience may not always be aware of the transposition of place that often occurs<sup>22</sup>. More than three decades ago, Michel Foucher, conducted

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<sup>20</sup> In a contrary sense, after the destruction of the Twin Towers a systematic revision was carried out of those films that were in the middle of shooting with the aim of ‘erasing’ a skyline from an urban New York landscape that no longer existed and that also served as a painful reminder of the city’s tragedy. Some even considered the possibility of carrying out this elimination retroactively in films from previous years.

<sup>21</sup> It was after the screening of “Tierra sin pan” (1933), by Luis Buñuel, that Spanish audiences first heard of Las Hurdes as an area that was both nearby and economically depressed.

<sup>22</sup> Information on shooting locations has been the object of increasing attention, at least from some directors, and above all in cases where natural or urban scenery plays a prominent role. In so-called ‘classic cinema’ (black and white) such

pioneering research into the landscapes of the Western and in particular those filmed in the second decade of the 20thC. He presented a ‘gunbelt cartography’ which showed what he termed the ‘geographic contradiction’ of much filming (Foucher, 1977:133), where shooting is done in places different from the original whose facts and histories it attempts to represent.

It must be remembered that in cinema at the end of the 19th century and start of the 20th century, landscape was considered to be little more than decoration, something typical of a theater play where what matters is the actor and not the backdrop. Film studios, which developed in Hollywood from 1908 onwards, possessed photographic collections containing different types of landscapes or urban environments that were used to construct film sets (Ramírez, 1993). It was from these collections that ‘western villages’, ‘oriental palaces’ and ‘Spanish plazas’ proceeded to get built in nearby areas. Exterior scenes were thus shot in semi-permanent installations that were repeated and re-used in different films. Over time these open air sets were abandoned<sup>23</sup> and by the end of the Thirties, film companies had greater financial capacity and had inaugurated enormous new sets. These meant that exterior scenes could be done in conditions that permitted greater comfort and security (*Citizen Kane*, 1941).

The interest in including real images taken from ‘hard-to-get-to’ places also led to the re-use of scenes from previous films. This occurred in *Lost Horizon* (1937), where the Himalayas were represented by sequences shot in the Alps for the film *Stürme über dem Mont Blanc* (1930) (directed by Arnold Franck and with Leni Riefenstahl as the main character).

Nowadays, when film technique has resolved many problems in filming exteriors, the supplantation of landscapes may be due to other reasons. First, and in spite of these technical advances, the **conditions** of the **geographic environment** can slow down the process of shooting. Among these conditions it is worth indicating references to the number of hours of daylight available, to the adverse atmospheric conditions and even specific topographical characteristics (slope, irregular altitude, etc). There are also other elements that can cause a location to be rejected, such as those related to the infrastructure networks and productive systems in the region (inexistent or deficient access, lack of necessary production services necessary for filming - lodging and maintenance, etc).

A second type of obstacle is related to the consequences of filming in areas of **high human activity**, something which occurs in the majority of the western metropolises<sup>24</sup>.

In third place, and with a marked responsibility for the ‘doubling’ of locations, are **economic motivations**. In general, transferring a real production team to a more or less distant location involves high costs (travel, lodging, taxes and local permission). Such problems mean that only

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information did not exist; from the Fifties or Sixties onwards imprecise information was incorporated from continents or countries where filming was done. It has only been recently that films have added extensive information on the equipment and the means necessary to make the film. Reference is now also made to the location of filming and occasionally includes thanks for assistance provided by local or similar authorities. But if there has been an evident improvement in the information related to the characteristics of the film, it is also true that information on the location of filming always appears at the end of the credits. The information on some Dvds is more detailed as it includes extras to do with the production and shooting of the film in question. Abundant information related to film locations is offered in the web page of the *International Movie Data Base* – something of great interest for any geographical study of this theme..

<sup>23</sup> Proof of the theatrical factor in the consideration of the landscape can be seen in most cinema manuals. Mention of landscape is almost always included in the chapters to do with the sets.

<sup>24</sup> This is how Jaques Tati expressed it with respect to his film *Play Time* (1967) where he had two buildings - called “Tativille” - constructed to substitute the real Paris and avoid problems arising from the frenetic and permanent urban activity.

large film projects, ones that are expecting sizeable takings, can afford the costs of filming (whether these occur from distant locations or as a result of a high amount of visual representation). Another of the elements related to filming costs is the outlay for taxes established by the local authorities. In this context, it is interesting to note that the same capacity of representation – referred to earlier – has generated a certain hierarchy or ‘value ranking’ of landmarks or emblematic places<sup>25</sup>.

At other times, the decision not to use real locations lies with **political considerations**, especially when access or filming is prohibited in particular regions. This happened during the Cold War, a period when Western productions included settings in landscapes or cities of the USSR<sup>26</sup>, Eastern Europe<sup>27</sup>, Cuba<sup>28</sup>, North Korea, Vietnam or China<sup>29</sup> and were obliged to substitute them with surroundings with similar formal characteristics. In this same category but on a different level we have to include protected spaces or religious monuments where interior filming is strictly prohibited (the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris) or at least subject to permits that are very difficult to obtain.

One last factor might be the **spacial distribution of the film studios**, one which favours filming in locations nearby rather than in distant places where the action actually takes place. Included in these considerations are demands made by some movie stars, often reluctant to make long and lengthy trips<sup>30</sup>.

These obstacles (geographic, economic and political...) explain why it often turns out to be more advantageous to reproduce the environmental conditions of a landscape by means of a film set or alternative location. In any case the results are the same: the characteristics of a territory are transmitted via the transposition of another one that is judged to be similar or sufficiently adequate. This produces a reductionism in the typology of landscapes known to the audience. Variety is thus limited to a few stereotypes: tropical jungle, paradise island, desert<sup>31</sup>, Atlantic forest, Mediterranean coast, polar zones... (Nietschmann, 1993: 5).

**Table 1: Some examples of supplanting narrative location with film location**

Title	NARRATIVE LOCATION	FILM LOCATION
<i>Lost Horizon</i> (1937)	Tibet	California (United States)
<i>Lawrence of Arabia</i> (1962)	Aqabah (Jordania, 1), Cairo (Egipto, 2)	Gulf of Adra (Almería, 1), (Sevilla, 2)
<i>Doctor Zhivago</i> (1965)	Siberia	Soria
<i>Per qualche dollaro in più</i> (1965)	Aguascalientes (México)	Níjar (Almería)
<i>C'era una volta il West</i> (1968)	Abilene (Kansas)	Calahorra (Granada)

<sup>25</sup> Filming in the Paris metro or other locations in this city means paying out some 3.000 euros daily (facts from 2005) a figure that goes up to 8,000 euros when especially significant landmarks are filmed, as is the case with the Eiffel Tower (Rosado y Querol, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> For example, *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) was filmed in Castilla y León and not in the taiga; *Reds* (1981) in Helsinki and not in Leningrad; *Gorki Park* (1983) in Stockholm and Helsinki and not in Moscow.

<sup>27</sup> *Torn Curtain* (1966), shot in Denmark and West Berlin

<sup>28</sup> *Topaz* (1969), shot in California.

<sup>29</sup> *M.A.S.H.* (1970), shot in California and not in Korea. *Apocalypse Now* (1979), not in the Vietnamese jungle but in the Phillipines; *55 Days at Peking* (1963) in Las Matas (Madrid) and not in Beijing. *The Sand Pebbles* (1966), whose narrative is centred on the Yang-Tse, was filmed, among other places, in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Information offered by the IMDB emphasizes the predominance of films shot in Hong Kong as opposed to the rest of the Chinese locations.

<sup>30</sup> Humphrey Bogart famously put up an unsuccessful fight with John Houston over going to Mexico during the shooting of *The treasure of Sierra Madre* (1948), by John Houston.

<sup>31</sup> Without managing to distinguish, for example, the different types of desert (*erg, reg, costal* with cold air currents, etc.).

<i>The Man Who Would Be King</i> (1975)	India-Pakistan	Morocco (Atlas, Ouarzazate), Utah (EE.UU.), Haute Savoie (Francia)
<i>Life of Brian</i> (1979)	Palestine	Tunis
<i>Apocalypse Now</i> (1979)	Vietnam	Filipinas, República Dominicana
<i>Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade</i> (1989)	Iskenderun (Turkey)	Guadix
<i>Capitaine Conan</i> (1996)	Massif de Soköl (Bulgaria)	Mountainous massif by the side of Danube in Rumanía
<i>Seven years in Tibet</i> (1997)	Tibet	As well as Tibet, British Columbia (Canada), Tirol (Austria), Mendoza (Argentina)
<i>Saving Private Ryan</i> (1998)	Omaha Beach, Normandy (France)	County Wexford (Ireland)
<i>Black Hawk Down</i> (2001)	Somalia	Morocco
<i>Quo Vadis?</i> (2001)	Palestine	Tunis
<i>The Last Samurai</i> (2003)	Japan	New Zealand
<i>Brokeback Mountain</i> (2005)	Wyoming	Alberta
<i>Flags of our fathers</i> (2006)	Iwo Jima (Japan)	Iceland
<i>The Illusionist</i> (2006)	Vienna	Prague and Tábor (Czech Republic)

Source: Own production.

## 2. Real places

As we have just pointed out, the logical alternative to filming in those places where the narration ‘really’ occurs can cause numerous difficulties. This explains why, throughout the history of film, this practice has been uncommon.

There is a clear relationship between stories told by film and the geographic environment in which the producer is physically located. Most of the cinema produced in any given country reflects the stories that happen in that same country<sup>32</sup>. This is especially so during the first stages of the development of the nation’s film industry which sees the increase of shooting possibilities in real locations. One could speak, in this sense, of how location is connected to the whereabouts of the producers and film studios.

When the narration takes place far from the studios the basic reason for relocating the filming to these settings has to do with the director’s (or producer’s) interest in showing, with greatest possible accuracy and veracity, the locations that affect the narration, deliberately trying to avoid “double places”<sup>33</sup>. Occasionally, the emphasis on this way of proceeding ends up as a publicity success and adds value to the production. This is particularly so in those cases when filming occurs in an authentic space previously forbidden to the camera<sup>34</sup>, when it is the first time it has been filmed or

<sup>32</sup> The most notable exception in this respect is the case of Hollywood cinema which, from early on, paid attention to stories that occurred far from its borders (even if filming took place in studios and sets). This can be seen in the cases of orientalist cinema (*The Thief of Bagdad*, 1940), or of biblical content (*Quo Vadis*, 1951; *The Ten Commandments*, 1956; *Ben Hur*, 1959).

<sup>33</sup> For example, the director of the film *Stazione Termini* (1952), Vittorio de Sica, established a real location as a condition of filming. For economic reasons, the films producers had proposed building a railway station (cit. in González Monclús, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> *The Last Emperor* (1987), by Bernardo Bertolucci.

when the scenery presents some type of notable visual quality, such as monumental nature or landscape<sup>35</sup>.

### 3. *Places modified, inexistent and imagined*

Film tries to avoid discourses of normality, regular events in time and also anything that may be close in the space of the typical - from the 'West' - audience member. On the contrary, it is the unique or- perhaps from an aesthetic inherited from Romanticism- the sublime and the picturesque that always stands out. For this reason, film always prefers exceptional and exotic landscapes. When these landscapes can not be found or end up being expensive to access, the solution is provided by 'in situ' or 'a posteriori' modification (via various studio techniques) of landscapes that most resemble the intended original<sup>36</sup>. Although modification is a truly common practice -even on daily surroundings such as cities, towns or rural areas - it is often used only to eliminate anachronistic elements or, on the contrary, to add others to confer a particular 'period look'.

For one reason or another, certain genres- especially **science fiction films**- find themselves obliged to present inexistent scenery, background, places and landscapes. The means of creating these rely heavily upon the construction of film sets and models or, more recently, upon the digital creation of new scenes. There are various types of films or situations to be found within this category.

On one hand are those stories that occur in the future and that are set on a noticeably modified Earth<sup>37</sup>. Other stories incorporate additional planets – real or artificial- into the ecumene.<sup>38</sup> Further cases describe, at the risk of error, spaces on earth that remain unexplored or little known: great marine abysses, remote islands or the interior of the earth's core.<sup>39</sup>

One of the modalities of creation of these 'false landscapes' is inspired by previous works. This often happens with some movies based on comics- where the urban scenes that these stories take place have to be modified (*Flash Gordon*, 1980; *Batman*, 1989)- or in science fiction literature (trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings*, 2001-2003).

In any case, and as has been demonstrated previously (López Silvestre, 2004) the analysis of these creations shows a clear preference for landscapes laden with a Baroque aesthetic- mountainous spaces of great peaks and gorges, wide and desolate plains, impenetrable jungles- and also for 'extreme landscapes' in which certain climactic characteristics play a large role (*Blade Runner*, 1982). In fact the spectacular nature of these false landscapes becomes one of the principal attractions in some of these productions. Despite this, even false landscapes that are not as overwhelming, such as those in *The Truman Show* (1998) or *Casanova* (1976) manage to gain a prominence that ends up overshadowing other artistic or narrative aspects of these same films.

Another special way of presenting place and landscape is related to **cartoon production**. The tradition of producing cartoons has maintained at least two differentiated sorts of shots. While a first corresponds to characters who must be 'animated' before the audience, a second shot deals with landscape that may even appear static or as an unvarying fixed background (without wind, without water that flows or animals that move - only the bare essentials necessary to tell the desired story). Such performances, then, pass through an extreme simplification of the landscape. Attention to

<sup>35</sup> As foreexample the cataracts of Iguazú seen in *The Mission* (1986) or the Amazonian jungle in *The Emerald Forest* (1985).

<sup>36</sup> *Bienvenido, Mr. Marshall* (1953), *Jurassic Park* (1993). Ramírez (1993) talks of the creation of a plam grove in the area surrounding Hollywood to stage pirate films.

<sup>37</sup> *Planet of the Apes* (1968).

<sup>38</sup> *Star Wars* (1977); *Dune* (1984).

<sup>39</sup> *Journey to center of the Earth* (1959); *The Abyss* (1989); *The Core* (2003).

detail in the form, in the movement of the characters and also in the realism of the background scenes usually increases according to the age of the public who are the target of these series or films<sup>40</sup>.

### 3. Landscape and nature in cinema

As landscape has been a classic area of interest in contemporary Geography and taking into account the likelihood of its representation in film, it is unavoidable that we discuss some ideas on technical aspects, the treatment of landscape in cinema language, the types of landscapes that appear in films and their degree of importance.

Landscape in cinema appears conditioned by the **technical resources** available for filming and screening. Following developments chronologically, in the first black and white movies the degree of sensitivity of film stock (ortochromatic, panchromatic) turned out to be fundamental in highlighting the qualities of the landscape. As pointed out by Sitney (1993), the director Robert Flaherty employed different types of film in two of his best known works. In *Nanook of the North* (1921) he used ortochromatic film- the most common at that time- because it was more efficient in reproducing those violent contrasts of black and white so appropriate to the Arctic. In contrast, in *Moana* (1926), after failing in the attempt to use color, he opted for panchromatic with its greater capacity to translate the variety of color in the Pacific into a broad range of greys.

The possibilities of showing the characteristics of landscape were essentially changed with the incorporation of color, evidently in general use after *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938) and *Gone With The Wind* (1939). By all means, the first years of discretionary use of color led to somewhat artificial results as it was common to exaggerate its intensity whether for technical reasons or in an express attempt to emphasize the color (something that was toned down in future productions). Over the past few years technical advances in the use of color and its digital treatment have facilitated an increased capacity to show landscapes exactly as they appear before our eyes.

A third technical aspect is related to the format of the film, one that decides the proportions of the screens in film theatres. A significant change took place along these lines in the Fifties when the film industry tried out new formats to compete with the recently appeared television. Cinemascope, Vistavision, Todd-AO and Cinerama often lent further grandiosity to films, the use of wide angles obtaining a depth of field that adequately captured vast landscapes or crowd scenes (*Cleopatra*, 1963; *My Fair Lady*, 1964; *Doctor Zhivago*, 1965).

As well as the material technical aspects, there is another group of factors that explains the way of presenting landscapes and that is related to both the practice and **cinematic language** of different film directors. One of these technical-creative factors connected with the reproduction of the landscape refers to the director's use of different types of shots. As cinema managed to get away from the theatrical concept of the scene and began to show stories that required filming in the exterior, the use of general shots or in a group began to assume greater relevance. From this stemmed a growing capacity to describe landscapes. Michel Foucher has thus commented upon the innovations introduced by director John Ford when he used shots that showed great areas of landscape (as for example *Stagecoach*, 1939). The North American director provides a panoramic view of space in his works, something which allows us to see how people move (by horse or by

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<sup>40</sup> In the case of some North American producers, efforts have been made to lend realism to the territory described (*The Lion King*, 1994; *Cars*, 2006).

foot). It was with the adoption of the technique of long shots or sequence shots, that space was introduced into films of the West (Foucher, 1977: 134).

The possibility of filming scenes from a long distance or at downward angle became evident with the widespread use of aerial shots, which were ideal for rapidly presenting broad expanses of territory and thus for efficiently characterizing those landscapes connected to narration. In contrast with general shots taken on the ground, those from the air also enable the audience to ‘move about’ the landscape (*Out of Africa*, 1985).

Landscape can be a means of contributing to the proper development of history. González Monclús points out that the presence of stereotyped landscapes on the screen lends dynamism to the film narrative and offers the audience key plot points in the story to be told. Here we may consider those opening frames of some films which show great stretches of land (occasionally taken from the air by second units who are specialists in this area) as descendants of literary descriptions of landscape (González Monclús, 1995:58-59). Just as landscape might serve to introduce history in a physical context, it may also aim to reinforce how the feelings and behaviours of some characters are explained (for example in the cinema of Abbas Kiarostami and of Akira Kurosawa) or to reinforce the drama of the narration (*Pelle erobreren – Pell the Conqueror*, 1987, *Fargo*, 1996).

The unique approach to landscape in cinema gives rise to the need to reinforce its visual form. On most occasions ( particularly when there are no characters in the scene) this is done through the use of “ad hoc” soundtracks which also lend symbolic or cultural weight. Landscape scenes without music are extremely rare. This is in line with Stam’s declaration that “empty spaces on a sound track are a truely taboo...There can’t be sounds unaccompanied by a corresponding image nor images without sound” (Stam, 2000:251).

Yet independently of technical factors and those practices employed by directors in a film production, it is clear that **the degree of prominence** assigned to landscape in cinema may vary significantly. On one end of the scale there are films in which landscape, far from being scenery, is the undeclared protagonist (Nogué, 1982:15). This is the case with films in which characters serve as a vehicle for the spectator to appreciate the qualities of the landscape, especially unexplored natural spaces (*Dersú Uzalá*, 1975; *Mountains of the Moon*, 1990). Within this same group it is possible to include those films that consider the journey as a guide to the plot; such is the case with road movies where the director shows the visual journey through which different landscapes are connected to life experiences (*Two for the Road*, 1967; *Easy Rider*, 1969; *Thelma and Louise*, 1991; *Motorcycle Diaries*, 2004; *Trasamerica*, 2005). On the other end of the scale, we must include those films where space in general ends up irrelevant to core plot development. These are mostly B-grade action films in which any landscape (generally urban) turns out to be valid or interchangeable. The majority of films, however, find themselves situated somewhere between both extremes in which landscape has an importance –though relative- due its role in the plot as “inevitable scene”.

The **variety of landscape** in film is so great not only because nowadays a good part of the planet is ‘filmable’ but also because film has the ability to take on landscape of different scales. In any case it is appropriate here to establish a typological approach.

First, it is worth pointing out those films in which nature plays a greater part (whether reflected in mountains, arctic or polar regions, deserts or tropical jungles). The presentation of these natural settings usually emphasizes their most extreme elements (greenery of the tropical jungle, aridity of the desert) and often serves to underscore the difficulty of situations faced by the main characters (*Los amantes del Círculo Polar*, 1998). A wide range of temperate landscapes, to the contrary, (Mediterranean, Saharan, the Steppes) fail to arouse much attention in film.

The relationship between **Nature and Cinema** has gone through various stages. Nature owes its inclusion here to those concepts, as sustained by Joachim Ritter (1963), that affirm that whenever a film is shot in a natural setting, cinema is basically exhibiting its great capacity to convert nature into landscape and to transmit this perception.<sup>41</sup>

In the first filming of the 20th century, when the process of decolonization of Asia and Africa had not yet begun, areas of untouched nature were presented as territories far from civilization, ruled only by the law of nature or law of the strongest. This way of presenting it- virginal ,unexplored and missing an owner- justified thus a legitimate colonization by the white man.

In its beginnings, cinema saw Nature as an ideal stage on which to develop the multiple difficulties and adventures faced by its main characters, especially in the African continent. Areas of nature were unknown to the western audience- this was a time when mass tourism hadn't been developed- which led to a falsification of its characteristics and the spread of false stereotyping of local and even animal behaviour as unpredictable (*Mogambo*, 1953). With respect to western films –which show spectacular desert landscapes- it is well known that the National Park *Monument Valley* was used to show nature typical to the American West when in fact it only showed a small portion of this.

After the Second World War we see the incorporation of natural surroundings into the civilizing process. Thanks to technique, man's dominion over nature is emphasized, even in the most extreme situations. Scripts are common which, directly or indirectly, address the exploitation of ferocious territory (*Fitzcarraldo*, 1982; *Giant*, 1956), the completion of great engineering projects against Nature or the colonization of new lands.

The Seventies then sees the development of its own subgenre: disaster cinema (of a mostly natural type) where by the end of the film Man and Nature come to a tacit agreement of mutual respect that mustn't be broken<sup>42</sup>.

From the Nineties onwards, man finds his ability to deal with natural disasters weakened. No longer are these local but operate on a planetary scale as Nature itself appears to have recovered its power (although often at the price of being an obvious exaggeration<sup>43</sup>). Yet another of the most persistent 'enemies' in action films also disappeared with the fall of the Communist Block. The usual quota of scenes of destruction and critical situations, previously attributable to the governments of Communist states, was now taken over by Nature in its new role of 'counter character'. A new subgenre in film was thus inaugurated that some authors label 'ecological cinema' and which is often similar to the documentary genre. This is especially the case from that moment when the concept of climatic change crosses over from the scientific domain and into the common place<sup>44</sup>.

#### 4. Film and Territory

<sup>41</sup> Ritter (1963) asserts that "landscape is nature that reveals itself aesthetically to those whose observe and contemplate it with feeling" (cit. in Sandro Bernardi, 2002:24).

<sup>42</sup> *Earthquake* (1974). Liverman and Sherman have emphasized how incongruent it is that the locations of these films should be found in the West when the majority of these type of disasters occur in the setting of developing countries (Liverman and Sherman, 1985).

<sup>43</sup> *Twister* (1996), *The perfect storm* (2000), *The day after tomorrow* (2004).

<sup>44</sup> Since the disintegration of the USSR and the terrorist attacks of the 11 of September in 2001, the film industry has found that part of this role of counterprotagonist can be played by societies in the newly formed Central Asian countries and by extremist Islamic groups.

If Nature or landscape are more or less common ingredients to film, the presence of some type of territorial reference is practically inevitable (an exception would be those theatrical narratives that occur solely in the interior). Territory here can be understood both as a merely physical base- natural or artificial, with or without its aesthetic component- but also in a geographical sense that implies a connection to matters of a politico-administrative nature. There is thus a great difference between both these considerations of territory-cinema. In the following lines we reflect upon the two aspects indicated, the general and the technical.

The visual presence of territory receives varying sorts of treatment in film. Consciously or not, some directors grant it a high degree of prominence (as can happen with landscape) while others practically annul its importance or even its presence. In the first case, certain films that deal with personal drama see their discourse reinforced by the existence of a physical base- as for example city outskirts, where social marginalization and territorial morphologies take place in the same shot. In *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Barrio* (1998) or *Ça commence aujourd'hui* (1999), the attention of the camera to certain urban designs, constructions and locations transmits a message which prioritizes particular social types and their surroundings. In other cases, certain of the more privileged residential spaces (North American suburbs) are accompanied by stories in which daily experience come close to the banal or trivial (*American beauty*, 1999). In another context, the tone of some stories is reinforced by showing types of territory (*Historias mínimas*, 2002, which takes place in Argentinian Patagonia).

From a technical or politico-territorial point of view, some comment is due here not so much for a more or less intense attention towards the visual component of territory but rather because of the existence of scripts that reflect, also with degrees of intensity, on aspects of territorial performance. The examples are many and deal with a variety of issues: *En construcción* (2001) portrays the social changes wrought by urban renewal in inner city Barcelona ; *Chinatown* (1974) shows the disputes over use of water resources in California; *L'Arbre, le mairie et la médiathèque* (1993), considers the allocation of use in local urban planning ; *Local Hero* (1983) introduces the confrontation between the landscape, environment and the installation of a petrol refinery in a Scottish village; *Tulsa* (1949) deals with the consequences of oil mining on cattle farming; *Erin Brockowitz* (2000) denounces the consequences of the spillage of the chemical industry among the local population; *Play Time* (1967) includes a clear criticism of models of contemporary urban growth (specifically of the 'no-places'); and *The Grapes of Warth* (1940) tackles the social consequences of productive reorganization in the USA after the effects of the *Dust Bowl*.

Since its inception the film industry has been closely connected to the concepts of territory (these may take the shape of empire, regional nationalism or more clearly, the Nation State). Here cinema is taking on three basic functions that are not clearly separable: to entertain, inform and shape the national conscience, whether at the service of the state or the empire.

With respect to the connection between film and imperialism, Stam has highlighted the fact that film had its beginnings at a decisive moment in western imperialism. Countries that experienced most prolific production in the silent era- United Kingdom, France, the United States, Germany- often played a most prominent part in imperialism. Stam himself indicates that "film combined narration and spectacle to explain the history of colonialism from the perspective of the colonizer (...). Thus, eurocolonial cinema created its own version of history not only for the audiences of the country of origin but also for the rest of the world" (Stam, 2000:34). The United Kingdom even created a film service exclusively connected to the colonies named the "Colonial Film Unit" (Manvell, 1953:650).

What is important here is that film has been placed at the service of the Nation State because, in some ways, without direct or indirect government support these respective film industries would not have progressed. At the same time, film is also an ideal vehicle to pass on the qualities of the Nation State; it has become a form of mass consumption and its images easily transmit messages to a public that in some societies is illiterate (as already pointed out by Roger Manvell in 1953).

The intensity with which cinema manages to stress the qualities of a territory- understood here as geographic space which contains a certain system of social and economic organization- can vary considerably.

At one end of the scale is what we call “**propaganda cinema**”, which has the aim of transmitting a clear and simple message from established power to society (even at the price of selecting or simplifying information). Propaganda cinema has without doubt had a spatial intensity during periods of war when different armies were directly implicated in or assisted with film production by providing material or military personnel. Within this group we should include those short films whose screening before main films was mandatory. In the years prior to television, these ‘shorts’ were the only means available to people that provided images of the most important events in their country. Over time, and with the presence of television and its own daily news programs, these types of documentaries became one of the most important ways of communicating to the public the social and economic achievements of non-democratic regimes. Just as governments intervened to establish a cinema that emphasized the true values of the Nation-State, it has been usual to practice censorship via ‘ad hoc’ bodies in order to avoid the spread of ideas or messages considered inconvenient.

A larger group is formed by those films that both tell a story and transmit the true values of the Nation-State, but in an indirect way which is not easily detected by the average audience member. Foucher indicates that in the case of the Western, the desert should not just be seen as a landscape but rather as having territorial function, representing a space where differences are dissolved between the veterans from the North and South. As such, territory here reflects the unity of a nation previously divided by a civil war and is presented as essential to the formation of the new North American nation. Despite this, it is true that the landscapes reflected in the films of this genre had in reality a minor role in the history of the United States and even in the conquest itself of the American West (Foucher, 1977:132)<sup>45</sup>. Even the sound track, though it may principally aim to lead the viewer through the represented space, can also help to transmit, more subtly, particular social and cultural values<sup>46</sup>.

The interest of the Nation State therefore consists of transmitting and spreading among the public **the signs of identity of its territory**, starting with its physical characteristics. First it justifies the legitimate possession of territory by the people. This is clearly evidenced by the filmography that deals with the recently formed states such as the United States,<sup>47</sup> Israel<sup>48</sup>, countries emerging from the decolonization of European empires (*Lion of the Desert*, 1961; *Battaglia di Algeri*, 1966) or societies being transformed through revolution (just as appears in the filmography of Sergei M. Eisenstein). As such it is normal to sum up the expansion of territory, whether of the State or Empire, in terms of the new discoveries made throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Cinema is also concerned with emphasizing the physical qualities of territory and more especially those

<sup>45</sup>Stoner provides an analysis of the implications of the North American government in the spread of ideologically driven cinema in the Fifties (Stonor, 2001:398 y ss.).

<sup>46</sup>“The choice of European symphonic music instead of African music in films that occur in Africa (for example, *Out of Africa*, 1985 and *Ashanti*, 1979) suggest that the emotions of the film are on the side of the European protagonists and that Africa is no more than a backdrop” (Stam, 2000: 256).

<sup>47</sup> *The Birth of a Nation* (1915).

<sup>48</sup> *Exodus* (1960).

resources considered necessary to develop modern agriculture or modern industry<sup>49</sup>. This is the case with those films that revel in the marvels of Nature in the Nation State (especially in those States of great size)<sup>50</sup>. Lastly, the borders of the State are fiercely defended in those films that justify particular disputed territorios- be they islands, enclaves or rivers<sup>51</sup>.

Yet, together with territory, the interesting thing about this alliance between State and film industry is that it transmits **positive values that characterize society**: the value of education and work; defence of the democratic system (for example in the cinema of Frank Capra: *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*, 1939); tenacity and capacity for suffering in the face of adverse conditions; the discipline of a society that supports its army without question and even in some cases, the identification of the people as chosen by God. Often these values are passed on by relating the lives and model behaviour of national heroes to the members of the audience<sup>52</sup>.

Special mention needs to be made of the **cartography** shown in films. Without doubt its function consists of situating the viewer in the place where the story occurs (especially where this is far from the viewer's country). A revision of some titles appears to show three stages, with certain overlap, in which cartography has had varying degrees of importance. In the cinema that evolved prior to the Second World War the cartography to be seen is lazy and, in general, shows territories at continental scale<sup>53</sup> or in great regional groups. During the conflict and in the first decades after, war films normally began by showing a map of enemy and allied positions so that the viewer could not only locate the place of action<sup>54</sup> but also appreciate the strategic importance of a disputed territory that cost human life. We must also include in this group those films of historical content that reproduce maps that are supposedly old but conveniently modified so as to be readable. In the last few decades the lack of this initial introduction has disorientated the contemporary audience who at times do not even know in which part of the world the action is taking place and where the borders are.

## 5. Territorial and economic impact of film activity

The restructuring of the film industry at the end of the 20th century has resulted in its globalization and the hegemony of a small number of North American companies that, dominating production and distribution, are moving towards control of screening. Cinema nowadays must thus be considered as another business activity whose products are made, distributed and displayed before a viewer-consumer and that participates in the same business strategies adopted in other branches of activity (horizontal and vertical integration, networking, economies of scale, standardization, opening of other markets, technification, etc). Cinema has thus reassumed the industrial dimension with which it was initially conceived, increasingly superimposing itself on the artistic dimension (Gámir, 2001). In the United States the film industry employs more than 270.000 workers and is considered to be an engine of growth, supporting and generating business subsidiaries similar to those of the construction or steel industry.

<sup>49</sup> A full and complete study of the material is found in Hjort y Mackenzie (2000) where, together with general considerations, specific analysis is made of the concept of nation in Scottish, Indonesia, Polish, Turkish, Indian and German cinema..

<sup>50</sup> *Jeremiah Johnson* (1972); *Sibiriada* (1979).

<sup>51</sup> A detailed analysis is made in Dodds(2003) of the films in the British spy series James Bond from *Dr. No* (1962), in the middle of the Cold War, to *Die Another Day* (2002).

<sup>52</sup> Anthony Smith (2000:50) mentions the cases of *Viva Zapata* (1952), *El Cid* (1961) y *Gandhi* (1982) to which could be added , among other films, *Michael Collins* (1996) o *Braveheart* (1995).

<sup>53</sup> As in the majority of Tarzan films , the beginning of the film shows a simple and not political map of Africa between World Wars .

<sup>54</sup> For example in *Objetive Burma!* (1945) or in *The Guns of Navarone* (1961) and *Casablanca* (1942).

The objective of the current section under consideration, however, is not concerned with the economic impact of the film industry as a whole but rather the economic and territorial effects upon those places chosen by film producers. The economic effects of production and screening of a film in a territory can be grouped in three classes which are differentiated by the moment in which they occur and according to their characteristics.

In the first case, **shooting a film** involves varying costs for the producer, from providing food and lodging for the film crews to obtaining services. This expenditure benefits the local hotel business as much as it does other businesses which provide services attached to film production (vehicle hire, hiring of carpenters, assistants, translators, security, etc..)

In the case of those territories that have not only served as actual film scenes but have also already collaborated on a number of productions, another group of activities appear that are more established and connected with the film business. Assistance from local government generates an industrial network that is likely to be permanent and also initiates training of auxiliary personnel for filming (artists, photographic and sound technicians, etc). If the territorial conditions are exceptional and there is financing as well as support from government, this process can end up in the **construction of permanent sets**<sup>55</sup>.

However there is a third economic effect which does not appear during shooting but rather after the screening of the film in theatres around the world. Though less apparent and evident than the two previously mentioned effects, this is nonetheless important and has a certain capacity to last. We refer here to **movie tourism**, something that can be defined as the tourism that occurs in certain places as a result of the showing of a film. Local or regional governments are increasingly aware of the capacity that films have to 'locate' a city or landscape in the mental map of audience members and that films are often far more efficient in drawing tourists than any publicity campaign developed overseas.

There are numerous examples of films that have contributed to the increase of tourism, revealing the interest the tourist-viewer has in connecting those places seen in the cinema with those of their trip. New Zealand thus experienced a 30 per cent increase in the number of visitors after the screening of the trilogy of *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) as well as *The Piano* (1993) and *The Last Samurai* (2003). Similar effects have also been recorded in the United Kingdom where, after the release of *Sense and Sensibility* (1995) and *Pride and Prejudice* (2005), there was an increase of 39 percent in the number of visits to County Devon and 50 percent to the house where Jane Austen was born. France experienced significant figures after the screening of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) when an increase of 40 per cent was detected in the amount of tourists who wanted to visit the beaches of the Allied landing in Normandy and this despite the fact that filming took place in Ireland (Querol y Rosado, 2006). In Africa, Tunis has lured tourists with the shooting locations of *Star Wars* (1977). Finally, in the case of Spain we have the example of *Calabuch* (1956), which made a decisive contribution to spreading a tourist-friendly image of Peñíscola.

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<sup>55</sup> Technical advances made during the last years have allowed the outsourcing of a great number of jobs, including those related to set construction. In Ouarzazate in Morocco, producer Dino de Laurentis together with Cinecitta Studios have built permanent sets that cover an area of 150 hectares and have made filming possible of films such as *Gladiator* (2000), *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005) or *Alexander the Great* (2006). Other similar examples are the Gold coast Studios in Queensland (Australia), or the "City of Light" studios in Alicante.

With respect to the United States, Riley *et al.* (1998:929) have carried out a quantitative analysis of the number of visitors to twelve locations after the screening of successful films<sup>56</sup>. During the ten years prior to film release and the five years after, the visitors' records at different monuments or national parks registered a notable change in trends, translating into a 54% increase in visits by the fifth year of the film screening. This effect may end up changing the appearance and activity within those places that have been filmed, transforming them into great storehouses of memory. This is particularly the case with small towns<sup>57</sup>.

There are even some film studios that have managed to become tourist attractions. This has happened with Fox Baja Studios (Rosarito, Mexico), created by this company to film nautical scenes and where films have been shot such as *Titanic* (1997), *Pearl Harbour* (2001) or *Master and Commander* (2003). In Spain the considerable number of Westerns filmed in Almeria led to visits being made to Cinema Studios Fort Bravo, constructed three decades ago in Tabernas.

Precisely because of the frequent use in film of what we previously called supplanted places, anomalous situations are produced when tourists attempt to visit locations that do not match the places filmed. Problems also arise for local authorities when local hotels do not have sufficient capacity to cope with the flow of tourists.

The above mentioned effects- those linked to the shooting and subsequent screening of the film - have led to the creation of non-profit businesses which are promoted by local or regional governments. Known as *Film Commissions* or Film Offices, their objectives are to act as an intermediary between the public administration and the film industry by promoting, transmitting and aiding those producers and film makers who want to film in the area.

To achieve these ends, the Film Commissions offer a production guide that includes information on the service industry in areas likely to be used by the film crew, information on the physical characteristics of the region and even methodical catalogues of locations. It is also common to present, as an advertising ploy, a catalog of films already shot in the area.

These bodies also carry out tourism marketing strategies, generating products and services that lead to an increase in the tourism of the region or city. We refer here to the so-called *movie maps*; these are maps or plans which include a route through the principal attractions that appear in 'hit' films or in television series. *Movie maps* channel an increasingly noticeable flow of tourists and are even being presented in a GIS format which shows scenes from the film by selecting points that appear on the map or plan. Among the most significant examples are those that show filming scenes from productions located in New York (like the series *Friends*, *Sex in the City* or *The Sopranos*), California (*Sideways*, 2004) or London (*Match Point*, 2005; *Bridget Jones' Diary*, 2005).

These types of public bodies have emerged through local initiative and have already achieved a certain maturity. Proof of this is the existence of an international association (and another based in Europe which has 176 offices), the holding of theme-based exhibitions together with the publishing of a specialist magazine (*Location magazine*). In Spain this development has taken longer, being initiated first in Andalucia and later in those areas or towns with a large tourist flow<sup>58</sup>. In 2001 the

<sup>56</sup> These are the films *Gettysburg* (1993), *Dancing with Wolves* (1990), *Thelma and Louise* (1991), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977), *Field of Dreams* (1989), *Steel Magnolias* (1989), *JFK* (1991), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1992), *The Fugitive* (1993), *Little Women* (1994).

<sup>57</sup> This happened with the small rural town of Juliette, in Georgia, after there was filming in its streets for *Fried Green Tomatoes* (1991). José Luis Guerin, in his documentary *Innesfree* (1990) tells of a similar process in this Irish town after the screening of *The Quiet Man* (1952).

*Spanish Film Commission* was formed with seven offices throughout the autonomous regions and ten among cities and other entities<sup>59</sup>.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The previous pages have demonstrated the importance of film in the formation of the collective geographic imaginarium. This prominent role merits special attention because, as has been mentioned, film images are not accurate when they reproduce geographic space. The ineluctable consideration of film as an artistic genre –though a very commercialized one – suggests a treatment of space that is far from the parameters of science and is closer to being a “novelistic narrative with images”. This explains the reasons for supplanting and modifying geographic settings and why spacial continuity may be ruptured without the audience realizing it.

Far from considering cinema to be a passive medium, limited to a distorted transmission of landscapes or territories, the preceding lines have highlighted its increasingly active function in forming an imaginary space which is then superimposed upon what the audience knows of certain places. In fact there are economic and territorial consequences already taking place as a result of both the shooting and screening phase of films.

As has been noted beforehand, these pages have limited themselves to setting out some general considerations and key explanations on the relationship between film and geography. This practice makes it possible, at any rate, to take note of various lines of research.

Firstly, it has turned out to be clear that one of the most urgent tasks of researchers should be to draw up a cartography of places that have been filmed. Existing data bases that include shooting locations among its variables ( Film Index, International Movie Data Base or in the Spanish case, the web page produced by the Ministry of Culture) can be of great help in achieving this aim. What is more, a diachronic analysis can offer interesting conclusions on the incorporation of new locations.

Another of line of research, linked with both economic and cultural aspects, would consist of evaluating the territorial and economic impact (indirect or direct) of particular film shoots in actual locations.

A third approach could be directed towards finding out if the reflections included in this article are valid for other mediums of communication, such as television or advertising, especially those linked to tour operators. This would deal with knowing in which way and to what extent advertising can superimpose its own imaginary space- through the repetition of stereotyped landscapes- upon the knowledge (practical, educative and literary) that the potential tourist already has of this holiday destination.

The vast number of films that have been shot through out the 20th century and the start of the 21st century also make it possible to pay attention to the way in which important territorial transformations within particular urban and metropolitan areas have been portrayed.

Finally, and taking advantage of the relevant existing works, it appears appropriate to go into greater depth on issues linked to Geography Didactics. Equally interesting for both cinema fiction

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<sup>59</sup> An analysis of the Film Commissions in our country is to be found in Rosado and Querol, 2006: 83-86.

and film documentaries is the effort to promote the deconstruction of the language of images provided by these types of productions.

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Cinema and Geography: Geographic Space, Landscape and Territory in the Film Industry.

By Agustín Gámir Orueta and Carlos Manuel Valdés

As occurs in other forms of artistic expression, such as literature, fine arts, and photography, film has an enormous capacity, possibly even greater than the others, for transmitting images. Despite the fact that cinema supplies a plethora of images from the whole world, implying a strong and varied connection to geographical space, research on the subject, in a geographic context, has hardly begun.

In these pages we will present, from a very general standpoint, some of the characteristics of cinema as a means of visual information, as well as the main existing connections between film and geographic space, paying special attention to the two-way sense of this relationship. This relationship consists, on the one hand, of the use of geographic space in a film production, and on the other, of the consequences of the production on said space, in both the physical and symbolic aspects, if both show clear elements of this connection.

- Cinema as Media

The rise of photography and cinema, along with the advances in the technical means of reproduction and distribution of images, has contributed to generalize the visual familiarity of many geographic spaces, enlarging considerably the potential viewing public. We could call this the “democratization” of the visual image of some, until now, inaccessible, and even, to the majority of the population, unknown places and landscapes. Inarguably, films and documentaries have, during a century of their existence, contributed to a new level of geographic culture.

In any case, the representation of reality in film implies a series of alterations. The difference between screen space and action space, and between real time and film time, is obvious, but it is necessary too, to point out cinema’s limitations in reaching a fully quintessential perception, and in recreating atmospheric phenomena, or on the other hand, recognizing its ability to present from points of view impossible for the human eye.

- Cinema and Geographic Research

In spite of the great number of images with greater or lesser geographic significance, and its great capacity to create worlds of fiction, Geography as a study, has paid little and only very recent attention to the effects of cinema as an interesting means for the analysis of territory, of landscape, and the ways in which these two elements are understood by filmmakers, and by the public itself.

An analysis of the literature on the relationship between cinema and geography, allows one to recognize some fundamental aspects of attention. One of them deals with the teaching of geography; many works limit themselves to the analysis of the geographic components of a few titles, while others focus more on proposing specific methods in the geographical analysis of films. Other aspects have to do with economical geography (the relevance of the film industry in its different manifestations), and with cultural geography, (an analysis of the different tendencies to create geographical images and their possibilities for interpretation, which can even include political ones). Other approaches, which should also be mentioned, are a cross between the cultural and the economic, with an emphasis on analysing the economic consequences of film productions, especially in the tourist sector.

Apart from these different possible lines of analysis, there are three essential paths of study in the relationship between cinema and geography. On the one hand, the technical and aesthetic systems applied in the filming of a geographic space. Secondly, there is the historical and social context in which the filming is produced, and finally, the impact which the geographical representation has on the viewing public.

#### - Cinema and Geographic Space

There is a two-way sense in the relationship between cinema and geographic space. Firstly, geographic elements influence the film production, thus giving a series of physical factors which influence the shooting in certain places, despite the fact that other factors could contribute more believably or with a better result. Secondly, the activity of filming influences the geographic space and its perception. The power of certain film industries contributes to an inequality apparent in the frequency in which certain geographic environments are presented. It is also true that more developed environments are shown than crisis zones. For that reason one could speak of a clear duality in geographic space represented in cinema.

The images which the viewers perceive, even when they are real, often challenge the detailed reconstruction of the scenery through which the characters move; something which is very clear in the case of cities. Films contribute to the creation or the familiarization of emblematic scenery, through its reiteration or magnified representation.

From the above, it is easy to conclude the existence of “duplication” in the images of perceived space by the average person: real space and fiction space (the world of film and television). And, if we go one step further, we see how so often the individual’s approach to the real world is mediatized by the images of film and television, as in the case of *movie tourism*.

Locations that appear in film are conditioned by diverse factors; natural, economic, and aesthetic-narrative. According to the correspondence produced between narrative space and filming space, the difference could be described as “authentic location”, when both concepts coincide, “supplanted location”, when the coincidence does not exist, “modified, simplified, or imaginary places”.

With respect to the supplanting of sites, this was justified in filmmaking’s early history, as there were many technical difficulties which made filming exteriors difficult, resulting in the extensive use of sets, both indoors and out. As time passed, however, after solving the early technical difficulties, the supplanting of locations was motivated by such geographic considerations as the number of sunlight hours available, predominant atmospheric conditions, and topography, and from the human point of view, there was the lack of sufficient infrastructure. There were also technical difficulties in shooting caused by surroundings with intense activity, such as large cities. Economic reasons such as the high cost of travel, and difficult or impossible to reach locations existed too, and political-administrative reasons such as wars, or locations protected for their natural value. There were even cultural aspects, such as religious sites with limited or prohibited access. All interior scenes are filmed in the actual studios, which prefer to film nearby rather than where the narrative really takes place.

In reality, the use of “authentic locations” is limited to those films which are set in environments found near the studios, or in very ambitious projects, more and more feasible today considering the recent developments in transportation, in which the director or producer consider it essential to move to other surroundings. Another form of change in the reality of the set which appears in films happens after adapting the scenery to the story. This is something especially common in some genres like science fiction or adventure.

### - Landscape, nature and Cinema

The possibilities of working with landscape in cinema are numerous. In any case, technical conditions have improved, achieving great credibility and highly powerful imagery. The addition of colour, better quality of film, new formats and styles of shots, and even the use of aerial shots, are some of the factors that have contributed to improving the possibilities of presenting landscape, or its relevance.

It isn't difficult to find parallels in the use of landscape in film and literature. It is normal, especially in some types of cinema, or in the works of specific directors, to give a certain degree of relevance to the landscape, or at least to find a backdrop that lends itself to either give importance to the psychological characteristics of the characters, or to provide a context which increases the drama of the plot.

Apart from these considerations, most normal film production tends to count on (often to make the final result more spectacular) landscapes which are exotic or have great natural beauty. Nature, through a medium as powerful as cinema, is easily converted into landscape, that is, modified by human perception. In this sense, the view of film toward nature has changed since the ideas of "reverential fear", to other ideas which promote the exploitation of its resources, and more recently showing examples of degradation resulting from the productive activity of modern society, and even on occasion, the natural world's capacity for revenge, as in the case of disaster films.

### - Cinema and Territory

The term territory, understood as a special component, either natural or artificial, which often implies political-administrative references, is another concept which films, consciously or not, allude to in a very normal way. For example, some films portray with great detail and importance, certain urban morphologies as an essential context of specific marginal underworlds. Some territorial environments, beyond their own physiognomy, are converted into basic elements of the story, such as monotonous territories, mountainous territories etc. The connection to territory is evident in the actual scripts of some films, which tend to intervene in the territory, sometimes pointing out elements of transformation or conflict.

Another territorial orientation has clearer political or political-ideological connections. The powers that be have charged cinema with the task of contributing to the formation or development of a national and even imperial consciousness. Films ideological function has been almost inevitably, historically linked to the possibilities of the film industry's development. In any case, it is true that the degree of ideological compromise varies greatly, from propaganda films, to those which, in an indirect way, transmit the nation-state's particular values.

### - The Territorial and Economic Repercussions of the Film Industry

If cinema, as an industry, carries clear implications from an industrial point of view, (in some countries, as in the United States, it is considered a leading industry), there are also other economic derivations from the business: the creation of studios, or shooting expenses when the crew has to be moved to another location, clearly generate profits where the activity takes place. But maybe the most interesting of all is the effect that created the term *movie tourism*. We have already mentioned film and television's capacity to transmit images from other geographic contexts, and this has functioned for many years as tourist company's perfect allies. *Movie tourism* is the kind of tourism influenced by the screening of a film. Some studies have started to calculate the growth of tourism

in certain places after the opening of certain films. This phenomena has led to the creation of the so-called *film commissions* or *film offices*, which work as intermediaries between the local councils and the film industry to promote and encourage filming in their working environments. They even develop marketing strategies for tourism, generating products and services which encourage sightseeing, like movie maps, for example.