ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF MEDIA GEOGRAPHIES

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First published 2022 by Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-367-48285-5 (hbk) ISBN: 978-1-032-11916-8 (pbk) ISBN: 978-1-003-03906-8 (ebk) DOI: 10.4324/9781003039068

Typeset in Bembo by Taylor & Francis Books

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Elisabeth Sommerlad

FILM GEOGRAPHY

"Films... often evoke a sense of place—a feeling that we, the... viewer, know what it's like to 'be there'" (Cresswell 2004, 7f). They introduce us to (un)known places and landscapes and allow us to experience them. The world we live in today consists more than ever of media imaginations that blend with our everyday experiences, conveying an overall sense of our world. The audio-visual images of motion pictures in particular contribute to this process. As cultural and social documents, films stage social realities and thus offer condensed and meaningful interpretations of everyday life (Schroer 2018). They shape and affect our perceptions and actions and contribute to the construction of world concepts (Gregory 1995, 474; Dimbarth 2018). Filmic geographies are not considered as mirrors of reality, but as medial constructions (Escher & Zimmermann 2001, 230). However, these imaginations create reality-generating meanings, and make them accessible for everyday discourses. They perpetuate, constitute and construct social realities in various ways and thereby influence, transform and manifest our knowledge of the world.

Film geography—sometimes also referred to as cinematic geography—is a research area that deals with the multi-layered, cinematographically generated geographical imaginations and their interconnections and effects manifested in the everyday world (Zimmermann 2007, 14). It integrates, both theoretically and methodologically, interdisciplinary approaches and deals with the relations between film, location, space and place (Roberts 2020). This chapter first gives an overview of the development of film geography. This is followed by an outline of selected topics that have been the focus of film geographical studies. The article concludes with an outlook on future trends in film geography.

Film geography: A brief overview

There is a long history of the discipline of film geography, which can be traced in several key scholarly publications. The analysis of filmic landscapes already appeared about 100 years ago in Balász's theoretical considerations of landscape photography, which, in his view, serves the scenographic spatial design of a feature film and in this role attributes high poetic qualities to it (Balász 1924). Another key publication examined the various aspects of cinematic presentation from a geographical perspective and focused on the juxtaposition of film and reality (Wirth 1952). Further precursors of film geography can be found in scholarly works which

addressed the interface between documentary films and regional geography (e.g. Dixon 2015, 40; Griffith 1953; Manvell 1956). It is noteworthy that the term *cinéma-géographie* was also mentioned for the first time by the French geographer Lacoste (1976). However, these publications are still isolated approaches that precede film geography as a discipline.

An important milestone in the development of film geography can be found with Burgess and Gold (1985), who argue for an engagement of geography with mass media content. A further landmark is an anthology published by Aitken and Zonn (1994), which compiled essays that dealt exclusively with film-related topics. At the beginning of the 2000s, Cresswell and Dixon (2002) pointed out that geography is required to take a critical look at cinematic realism. The concept of (cinematic) representation thus changes from an assumed process of mimetic depiction to a process of socially contested constructions (Lukinbeal 2010, 1110–1111). Subsequent publications have taken up the recognizable impetus of a critical debate within film geography and have continued to shape recent film geographical discourses (Aitken & Dixon 2006, 327). This is also reflected in the contributions by Escher (2006) or Lukinbeal and Zimmermann (2006; 2008), which explore different strands of research in film geography in a multi-perspective manner and highlight different thematic areas of study. The geographical examination of the subject of film has since developed steadily and differentiated considerably. Contemporary film geography addresses the medium of film from a variety of perspectives.

Topics of film geography

A review of the previously published introductory chapters on film geography shows that there are numerous possibilities for defining thematic areas of the subject. They arrange theoretical perspectives on film geography issues and research approaches in very different ways and thereby highlight different aspects (e.g. Aitken & Dixon 2006; Escher 2006; Lukinbeal & Zimmermann 2006; 2008; Lukinbeal 2009; Zimmermann 2009; Dixon 2014; Staszak 2014; Sharp & Lukinbeal 2015, 2017; Roberts 2020; Sommerlad forthcoming b). The contribution at hand offers a further possibility to explore the subject of film geography.

Film geographical studies can loosely be placed in a complex interplay of the following four perspectives: (1) the content conveyed on a *screen*, (2) the *locations* where filmic content is produced or located as well as the *places* charged with meaning by films, (3) the *reception* and *critical reflection* of filmic contents, practices and effects, and (4) film as a *tool* of academic research (see Figure 9.1).

In this context, film geographical studies approach an examination of film-related content, aspects of film productions and the (inter-)effects of film and life-world contexts. Without claiming to be exhaustive, the following six research areas are identifiable in the interplay of these relational perspectives: (1) geography in film, (2) geography of film, (3) screen tourism, (4) cinematic cartography, (5) didactics of geography and critical film geography, (6) film as a methodological instrument and medium of communication in research. This suggested classification, that serves to structure the chapter, focuses less on epistemological or theoretical perspectives underlying film geographical investigations; rather, it accentuates exemplary topics that delineate diverse fields of interest. In doing so, it is noteworthy that each of those thematic spheres is not merely anchored in a single film geographical perspective, but often combines different aspects—although one or other viewpoint is occasionally emphasized more intensively.

As diverse as the research interests in film geography are, so are the methodological approaches that tackle the discipline (Kennedy & Lukinbeal 1997). Studies that focus on films



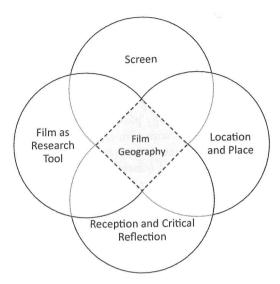


Figure 9.1 Relational perspectives on film geography: Overview

as text are often based on common methods of film studies and visual methodologies (e.g. Rose 2012). Analyses that go beyond textual film analysis draw on well established methods of quantitative and qualitative social research. Depending on research interests, cartographic methods and spatial analysis, approaches of cultural studies, media, communication and reception research, social media research or auto-ethnography are applied. The variety of methods is a creative challenge, as existing approaches require a meaningful combination (Zimmermann 2009, 307).

Geography in film

The basis of filmic geographies is a combination of camera perspectives, angles and view-points, "traditional visual guidelines and their inscribed stories" (Zimmermann 2009, 302, transl. by author). Filmmakers use these to engender spatial representations, which are examined under the term "cinematic space" (Heath 1981). Cinematic space is a central category of analysis in film studies and takes into account "the conceptual proximity to film technical and creative levels of film" (Zimmermann 2009: 302, transl. by author). From a geographical viewpoint, this involves theoretical examinations of forms of cinematographic design and questions of how an audiovisual continuity emerges, providing the spectator with a cohesive spatial impression of what is seen (Escher 2006; Clarke 2008). Anchored in cinematic space are narratively significant, cinematically conceived places. As an aesthetically and emotionally superimposed phenomenon, a cinematic landscape transports moods, atmospheric elements and myths (Higson 1987; Escher 2006, 309). A landscape can serve different roles in films and function as a framework for the plot, a setting, an actor or a symbol (Escher & Zimmermann 2001; Lukinbeal 2005). An overview of different approaches to the relationship between cinema and landscape can be found in Harper and Rayner (2010).

Furthermore, another and highly diverse key research topic in film geography is the analysis of cinematically imagined cities (Shiel & Fitzmaurice 2001; 2003; Lukinbeal & Sharp 2019). While recent approaches focus on the interactions between the urban and film and thereby transcend the boundaries of geography in film (e.g. Roberts 2012b), there is a long



tradition in the textual analysis of the construct of a "Cinematic City" (Clarke 1997). As an aesthetic construction, a Cinematic City consists not only of the ensemble of filmed locations, architectures and staged society, but also of the interplay of spatial perspectives and the linking of urban sights attributed with semantic and spatial meanings. A Cinematic City is not only a location or setting for a film, but acts as a dramaturgically and dramatically influential actor across multiple movies (Escher & Zimmermann 2005). Corresponding studies deal with cities such as New York (Da Costa 2003; Fröhlich 2007; Sommerlad forthcoming b), Kuala Lumpur (Bunnell 2004), Marrakesh (Zimmermann & Escher 2005; Sommerlad 2019a), Cairo (Escher & Zimmermann 2005b), London (Brunsdon 2007), Tangier (Sommerlad 2019), Berlin (Natter 1994), and many more. Cinematic imaginations of landscapes or cities reveal a specific power of films: they do not simply depict a possible "reality," but reconfigure spatial views and thereby create new (illusionistic) places that would not exist without them (cf. Zimmermann 2007). They comprise a mixture of footage edited together from studio sets and reallife locations. Due to an increasing digitalization process, cinematic worlds are enhanced by digital sceneries (e.g. via computer generated imagery). For example, cityscapes that would not be possible in the "real world" are created through cinematographic techniques: locations that seem to be close to each other can actually be far apart, while other perspectives might be completely removed for the cinematic spatial image, whereas some others could be completely recreated by computer animation—thus creating new, ambiguous depictions of imaginary places (Zimmermann 2009, 302). A critical analysis of such spaces can uncover (representational) power relations that are embedded in the production processes as well as in related reception discourses, as Bunnell (2004) proves for example in his study on Kuala Lumpur.

Geography of film

Research in film geography is not limited to the film-diegetic world, but also aims to explore the interplay of film-related sites with everyday realities. Geography of film thereby draws attention to places and spaces as well as to industrial clusters and networks of media and film production, while also touching on issues related to (globalized) media economies and cultural politics. Research often takes place in conjunction with economic aspects, for example by taking into account approaches to economic geography or political economy (Sharp & Lukinbeal 2015, 22-23). Particular emphasis is placed on the formation, development and networking of local and national film industries, film studios and production clusters (Storper & Christopherson 1987; Storper 1989). A special interest lies in Hollywood's film industry (Scott 2005; McDonald 2008; Christopherson 2013; Gleich & Webb 2019), televisual and cinematic places (Fletchall et al. 2012), as well as the historical and contemporary development of film production sites and locations (Lukinbeal & Gleich 2018). On a global scale, increasing consideration is being given to examining global(ized) film industries. For instance the film business associated with Hollywood North in Vancouver and Toronto (Gasher 2002; Spencer & Ayscough 2003; Wilson 2016), Bollywood (Kavoori & Punathambekar 2008; Dagnaud & Feigelson 2012), Nollywood (Ogbeide 2012; Krings & Okome 2013; Miller 2016) or various East Asian film industries (Yau Shuk-ting 2009; Curtin 2015). Some studies (e.g. Govil 2015) address translocal and transnational perspectives on the film and television production industry.

The examination of film production sites is not necessarily limited to a (cultural) economic perspective. Lukinbeal (2006, 2012) argues for taking into account that cultural texts are inevitably embedded in both political and economic practices of their respective markets and that such conditions and production practices must also be considered within the framework

of hermeneutic text analyses (Sharp & Lukinbeal 2015, 23–24). In taking into account the scope of cultural politics, questions arise as to what extent films produced in different regional contexts convey different cultural or political value patterns and interpretations of the world and society (e.g. geopolitical images, gender relations or concepts of identity). Morgan Parmett (2019) studies the cultural economy of film and television productions and explores the connection between geographies of race and class and television production practices. Therefore, she draws on the case study of *Treme*, a show filmed on location in the Tremé neighborhood of post-Katrina New Orleans. Furthermore, studies that look at global film cultures and border-crossing cinema from a postcolonial perspective are particularly interesting (e.g. Roy & Huat 2012)—although the deliberate examination of global film cultures within film geography is considered a desideratum.

Screen tourism

Film locations are exposed to tourist effects and are therefore a good example to trace the reciprocal effects between cinematic worlds and spheres of everyday life. There are numerous catchwords describing this phenomenon: film tourism, movie-induced tourism or set-jetting—to name just a few (Busby & Klug 2001; Tzanelli 2007; Roesch 2009; Zimmermann & Reeves 2009; Beeton 2016). Since touristic effects on places are no longer triggered solely by feature films, but also by TV shows and further formats, which are available on all types of devices, the term *screen tourism* is particularly well suited to describe the phenomenon and its accompanying practices (Kim 2010; Böcher 2018, 16). Academic research addresses the issue as a "complex social and tourism phenomenon with psychological, economic, geographical and political dimensions, among others" (Steinecke 2016, 21, transl. by author). As a tourism segment, screen tourism has become an established market phenomenon and is promoted by many countries and regions due to its high economic potential (Tooke & Baker 1996; Riley et al. 1998).

Screen tourism is not limited to the original locations of a film, but also affects regions, cities and even particular buildings that have served as the setting or place of inspiration. In addition, facilities of the cultural and leisure industry related to filmmaking are also addressed, such as cultural events, exhibitions, museums or theme parks (Steinecke 2016, 20). With regard to destinations and tourist practices at those very places, Escher, Sommerlad and Karner (2017, 157–161) suggest distinguishing between different types of screen tourism (see Figure 9.2).

Fan tourism (a) describes, for instance, the re-enactment of film characters or scenes at specific locations or events. Set tourism (b) takes place at locations created especially for a particular film or for film tourism, such as Hobbiton in New Zealand, a site that was in fact only reproduced and revitalized as a tourist destination after the filming of The Lord of the Rings trilogy had been completed. Entire landscapes are associated as a characteristic of a film genre in the case of genre tourism (c) and are staged in the context of touristic journeys. For example, Monument Valley is closely linked to the Western genre and has long been an established tourist magnet. In the case of city tourism (d), entire cities become tourist attractions because they have served as a film location/setting. A good example is Dubrovnik in Croatia, where tourists can trace Game of Thrones on specific tours. Theme park tourism (e) summarizes all tourism forms, which takes place in built recreational parks/studios, such as Universal Studios in Los Angeles. Landscape tourism (f) turns countries, regions or landscapes into destinations for screen tourists, as they are related to particular films. A prominent example is (once again) New Zealand, which has been promoting itself as Middle Earth for many years. A potential for future academic studies exists in investigating and analyzing the increasing interrelation between fictional film and factual everyday world(s). Such hyperreal

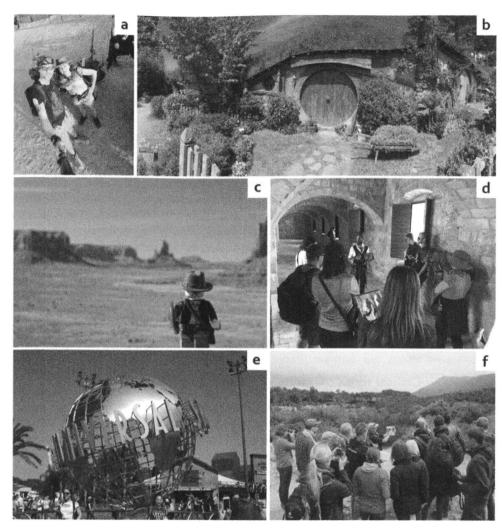


Figure 9.2 Types of screen-tourism: (a) fan-tourism (re-enacting Mad Max at Wasteland Weekend in Edwards, CA, Randy Lewis and Monti Sigg 2019); (b) set-tourism (Hobbiton in New Zealand, Marie Karner 2016); (c) genre-tourism (Monument Valley, USA, Claudia Finkler 2016); (d) city-tourism (Game of Thrones Tour in Dubrovnik, Croatia, Daniel Böcher 2018); (e) theme-park-tourism (Universal Studios in LA, Elisabeth Sommerlad 2016); (f) landscape-tourism (Lord of the Rings Tour in New Zealand, Marie Karner 2016)

sites continue to be re-invented through increasing marketing strategies, tourist activities and practices, and intermedia networks.

Cinematic cartography

Places featured in film are often illustrated with maps. An example are tourist maps for film sites in the context of screen tourism. Additionally, maps appear *in* films in manifold ways and perform a variety of narrative functions. They are used, for instance, to locate cinematic stories or to provide the spectator with an orientation within the fictitious cinematic world.

The interconnections between cartography, mapping practices, scale, maps and film are complex and have been analyzed under the heading of "Cinematic Cartography" (e.g. Caquard & Taylor 2009; Caquard & Cartwright 2014; Penz & Koeck 2017; Lukinbeal et al. 2019). This perspective integrates a diverse range of topics, involving more than just the question of what functionality maps have in film (Mauer & Sommerlad forthcoming). Roberts and Hallam (2014, 8) identify five relevant thematic fields of cinematic cartography: "(1) maps and mapping in films; (2) mapping of film production and consumption; (3) movie mapping and place marketing; (4) cognitive and emotional mapping; and (5) film as spatial critique." In order to understand why film itself is considered a "modern cartography" (Bruno 2002, 71) or a work of cartographic art (Conley 2007), it is necessary to expand the general idea of a map. From a film geographical perspective, emphasis is placed on the profound relations between the mediums of film and map, cartographic practices and cinematic narratives (Lukinbeal 2004; 2018; Caquard et al. 2009; Joliveau 2009; Sharp 2018; Lukinbeal & Sharp 2019). The concept of "Cinema's Mapping Impulse" is used to investigate the connections between cartographic and cinematographic practices (Castro 2009; 2011). Caquard examines the influence that cinematic maps have had on cartographic practices, for example, the very fact that current mapping practices and functions of digital cartography were conceptualized in much older cinematographic techniques (Caquard 2009; 2011). Roberts studies the extent to which films can be read as maps and asks about the spatial practices of cinematic cartography and how film maps and film mapping can be understood as geographical knowledge productions (Roberts 2012a).

Critical film geography and filmic geography didactics

Films never stand for their own sake, but are consumed and received as a product in a situational and situated manner and are thereby attributed with individual meanings (Sharp & Lukinbeal 2015, 27). Research on film reception and reflection investigates how the diversity of reception and interpretation can be grasped theoretically and empirically (Dixon et al. 2008). Aitken and Dixon (2006) criticize that the geographical interest in films often lacks a critical perspective. "Instead of focusing on the ways in which films generate meaning, film geographical research has often focused 'on the geographical realism of films'" (Cresswell & Dixon 2002, 7-8; Aitken & Dixon 2006, 326). Similarly, other scholars (Escher & Zimmermann 2001; Lukinbeal & Zimmermann 2006; Lukinbeal & Sharp 2015) problematize the Real/Reel Binary and call for the simplifying dual system of the real and the reel to be broken up in a critical perspective. Thus, the analysis of filmic texts should always take place in the awareness that films stage a pre-interpreted reality and that the resulting geographies must be understood as simulacra. Accordingly, films can only be discerned as socially constructed and discursive formations embedded in cultural and political global contexts that need to be deciphered. Therefore, a critically reflected film geography deals with topics such as popular geopolitics, cultural policies and practices, and complex globalized cultural industries. It calls for an anti-essentialist, critical examination of questions such as the power of spatial relations, how films generate socio-spatial meanings, and how they engender images that are materially reflected in everyday social practices (Aitken & Dixon 2006, Hughes 2007; Dodds 2008; Lukinbeal 2019; Sommerlad forthcoming a).

A critical perspective is also expressed in didactic contexts. Publications on film didactics include a critical perspective on the omnipresent use and methodological-didactic value of images, documentaries and feature films in teaching geography (Di Palma 2009; Plien 2017). Especially in educational contexts, a key aspect should be to critically examine the mediation

of film narratives, their subtexts and apparent realisms, and how they influence the spectator's imagination (Aitken 1994). The use of "film as a critical pedagogic tool that confronts the viewers (students and researchers) with a whole series of questions about the ways in which spaces and identities are made up and dissolved within the structure of films," which Cresswell and Dixon (2002, 7) also advocate, should, in particular, question the relations between conveyed content and specific forms of filmic communication.

Film as a methodological instrument and communication medium of research

A further dimension of the geographic engagement with film consists in considering it not only as a subject of analysis, but also as a research tool, as a medium of communication, or as a result of academic research. Garrett (2010) discusses the advantages of including video production in the toolset of geographic research, as "[v]ideographic work gives researchers an avenue to depict place, culture, society, gesture, movement, rhythm and flow in new and exciting ways" (Garrett 2010, 536). The production of geographic knowledge could be achieved through acquisition and analysis of qualitative video data (videography, Knoblauch & Schnettler 2012), the production of films, or—in other words—the integration of film into the practice of geographic research. Possible ways include the integration of video footage for field documentation as well as including reflexive filmmaking and participatory videos in empirical research projects (Garrett 2010, 523-530). Similarly, Jacobs (2013; 2016) emphasizes that geography, as a visual discipline, must open itself more to the production of audiovisual materials and argues for a stronger engagement of geographers with filmmaking practices. This would allow geographers "to utilize new skill sets, reach new audiences and produce different forms of critically engaged audiovisualized knowledge" (Jacobs 2013, 724). Another benefit of integrating filmmaking into geographical practice is that cinematically mediated representations, power relations and spatial constructions can be better grasped if the process of filmmaking was actively experienced. This is especially possible through a self-determined and critical acquisition of methodical approaches to this medium (Thieme et al. 2019, 296). Knowledge of the possibilities of researching not only about but also with film thus relates not least to the incorporation of the practical production of media content such as (digital) films and videos into learner-centered educational environments, e.g. geography classes and training (Jacobs 2013). There are now numerous geographic institutes that operate media labs and integrate film-related training into their curricula (see Figure 9.3).

The background of such demands is also the call for a "Geographic Media Literacy" (Lukinbeal 2014)—i.e. the sensitization for a critical examination of (audio)visual media. This aspect is related to the previous paragraph, which focused on the didactic relevance of film geographical research. Furthermore, it is important to have a sound knowledge of how film content is produced in order to be able to analyze and understand it critically (Jacobs 2016, 453). Current explorations of filmic geographies also address questions about the dimension of the body and thus link the methodological debate with up-to-date approaches to embodiment research (Ernwein 2020).

Outlook

A high potential and key characteristic of film geography lies in its ability to focus on complex interconnections between cinematic and everyday life worlds. The field can be tackled best when theoretical and methodological approaches and perspectives are interdisciplinarily combined. Researchers in the field are invited to consider the presented perspectives

o 09.050.612 M5-MA Seminar: Film documentation

Veranstaltungsdetails

Lehrende/r: Julian Zschocke

Veranstaltungsart: online: Seminar

Anzeige im Stundenplan: M5-MA S: Fd

Semesterwochenstunden: 2

Credits: 5.0

Unterrichtssprache: Englisch

Min. | Max. Teilnehmerzahl: - | 34

Prioritätsschema: Senatsrichtlinie

Zulassung gemäß Richtlinie über den Zugang zu teilnahmebeschränkten Lehrveranstaltungen vom 07.

März 2007.

Nähere Informationen hierzu entnehmen Sie bitte www.info.jogustine.uni-mainz.de/senatsrichtlinie

inhalt:

This seminar aims to give students an insight into modern forms of documentaries that have emerged within the past 10 years. The rise of videoplatforms like YouTube and social media has paved the way for new forms of documentary filmmaking. Many of them focus on geographic phenomena. Examples include modern formats like

Vox: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cc0dqW2HCRc

Vice News: https://youtu.be/qi37th_N3Ck

Wendover productions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MP1OAm7Pzps

and plenty of others.

The seminar is practical, meaning students will form groups to produce their own short documentary on a geographic topic within the semester. This starts with courses that teach knowledge on pre-production, how to form an idea, write a pitch, treatment and full script for a documentary. Productionwise students will be enabled to shoot their own movie with accessible means and the basics of post-production using DaVinci Resolve will be taught.

At the end students will present their final film to the class and have an in-depth discussion about their message, their filmmaking and how they can improve in the future.

Requirements to fulfill the course:

active participation, final documentary script, documentary film (5-10 min), presentation of the film

Figure 9.3 An example of the integration of filmic practice into a university curriculum in the MA program "Human Geography: Globalisation, Media, and Culture" at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (revised screenshot from the course catalogue, online: https://bit.ly/3kJW5Fn)

(screened content, location and place, reception and critical reflection, film as tool) and the linked six thematic fields not as separate approaches, but rather as interrelating spheres that can be creatively combined. Escher (2006; 2019), for example, reveals how cinematic and everyday cultures are interrelating through the decisive integration of various film geographical perspectives with historical and contemporary cultural phenomena. Another innovative approach for film geographic research is understanding film as spatial practice. Drawing on this perspective, Roberts (2018; 2020) advocates for an approach of "doing film geography," which incorporates aspects of performativity and haptics in order to creatively engage with the relation between place(s) and filmmaking practices.

A holistic film geography takes up the challenge of linking the complexities of meanings, materialities, places, spaces and scales and interpreting the patterns and effects underlying them:

A geography of film, however, is not limited to the cultural politics of place and space within film. It spans the spectrum from the individual cognitive realm to the socio-cultural level, as well as from the local to the global.

(Kennedy & Lukinbeal 1997, 47)

Film geography should therefore operate at a variety of different scales and levels and combine multiple perspectives, some of which have been introduced in this paper. It is desirable that the discipline continues to explore these complex and fascinating interconnections. Future film geographers should consequently encourage the emergence of critically reflective and creative approaches in order to foster the place of film geography in the edifice of media geography.

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