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INTRODUCTION

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In a 1973 article entitled simply “Cinema Space,” the philosopher Alexander Sesonske describes a universal experience of “cinematic space” that is assumed to have predictable qualities that we as viewers inhabit:

We sit still, motionless, in a dark room, facing a pattern of light and movement. The darkness of the room obliterates the visual space of our immediate surroundings; our immobility cuts off the flow of tactual and kinesthetic sensations that forms a major dimension of ordinary experience. Our eye, like that of every living creature, naturally turns to areas of light and is attracted by motion. Hence in this darkness the rectangle of light and motion before us exercises maximum visual attraction...The slightest invitation will persuade us to abandon out ordinary lives and live wholly within the world of the film. Cinema space presents that invitation.

(Sesonske 1973: 399-400)

Cinema space is contrasted with “normal” space, a different world we are called to through the specific mechanism of the cinema hall. Cinema is another land, and a darkened, silent cinema hall seems to be the universal ticket to travel there.¹

If this vision of cinema seems outmoded, it is perhaps because our empirical experiences of cinema have spatially shifted, and scholars have taken these shifts seriously. Smartphones with

¹ I would like to thank Thea Riofrancos, Laura Finch, Karl Swinehart, and Kuhu Tanvir for their valuable feedback during the process of putting this issue together.

video capabilities, films on airplanes, and cinematic representations of hypermobility all seem to point to new spatializations of cinema and media more generally.

This issue was put together in order to argue that perceptions of meaningful social spaces, as well as ideas of spatial lack, desolation, breakdown, rootlessness, and destruction, all should be conceptually gathered as examples of meaningful chronotopes — irreducibly linked sketches of space and time — through which spacetime is produced and mediated. Instead of flattening the cinema halls, highways, and development projects of transnational capital, this issue seeks a paradigm from which to make sense of the interactions of space and cinema, where place is always understood to have both material and imaginative qualities, and where its production is both local *and* global. The authors writing here argue that cinema both represents and materially takes part in the reorientation of space in the 21st century.

New Spaces, Non-Spaces, and the Globe

The idea that space is socially and materially produced even in uncomfortably modern conditions is not always commonsensical. Recently I was talking with a colleague visiting the US about the university where I was teaching at the time, which is located outside of New Delhi, just a few kilometers past the border with the neighboring state of Haryana, on the highway to Chandigarh. My colleague was considering sending students from her own American liberal arts institution for an exchange program, and the conversation revolved around the viability of space. How would students traverse the distance between the heart of Delhi and the campus itself? Inside the campus walls, we all agreed, the classes, students, and intellectual ferment would encourage students on a study abroad program to think beyond their American lives towards cross-cultural possibilities. But the trip to campus was another story. “It’s kind of a non-place, isn’t it?” was her offhand remark.

The road from the city to the peri-urban campus passes a large, multi-story garbage heap as it veers slightly from Delhi towards Chandigarh. On the left and right, signs touting marriage halls promising AC seating and banquet space sit right above the places they advertise: spacious lawns hemmed in by elaborate facades. Faux-marble cherubs surround a dozen white, neoclassical Statues of Liberty in one such structure. Another features a three-story flat exterior entirely covered in saturated photographs of densely packed leaves, a mockup of lush jungle in a semi-arid landscape. From the highway, you can see that the palaces are merely flat structures lashed to more

ordinary buildings. Other fanciful structures include water parks — at the entry to one, you are greeted by a giant fiberglass kangaroo recently painted gold (Just Chill Water Park); another is overlooked by an enormous bald “laughing Buddha” pouring real water thirty or so feet down an artificial mountain from what appears to be a *matka* or traditional clay water carrying vessel. Further down the highway, temples to Shani (Saturn) have sprouted up, and the god’s larger-than-life water buffalo mount made, again, of fiberglass, suggests aesthetic connections with the water park menagerie back down the road. Older buildings set back into fields and dusty lots hold warehouses and small factories: Roshan Cold Storage; Puneet Rice Mill, a rubber factory, a factory that makes gaskets. A little later you pass a branch of the Ansal Plaza chain of malls, which, though it offers a multiplex cinema and a McDonald’s, is derided in reviews as underpopulated and bad: “the inside of the mall is deserted in the evening and doesn’t give a good feel about the place. Lonely, scary and certainly not recommended for women alone.” (Another mall a few minutes away gets better reviews.) The mall and other structures face the highway, set into plots that were formerly farmland. In many cases they are still surrounded by agriculture: fields of wheat, soy, mustard, and kitchen gardens of vegetables. Around 25 kilometers down the highway, an archway over a side road declares “WELCOME TO RAJIV GANDHI EDUCATION CITY.”

Visually striking in its diversity of types of places — of which I’ve only named a few — the highway nonetheless spoke to my colleague of the non-specificity of place supposedly engendered by late capital, theorized by anthropologist Marc Augé in his 1992 book as *Non-Lieux* and quickly translated, in 1995, into *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. The now-familiar trope of modernity’s acceleration of time and shrinking of space struck Augé as something that needed to be theoretically reckoned with as a new “overabundance” of both time and space. Although he accepted that “soils and territories still exist[ed]” both in reality and in people’s imaginations, they were now joined by the “multiplication of what we call ‘non-places,’ in opposition to the sociological notion of place, associated...with the idea of a culture localized in time and space” (Augé 1995: 34). This proliferation of excessive non-specificity was a symptom of what was translated as “supermodernity” — not “super” in terms of size, but the French “sur,” denoting a spatial relation.

Augé’s idea of “non-places” is seductive, playing on the discomfort of the early 1990s with a globalization process that was seen to be steadily, creepingly homogenizing. Spaces, in this formulation, were once articulated in terms of cultural difference (Augé’s “sociological notion of

place”); now, he says, places are routinely shorn of rooted human significance. “If a place can be defined as relational, historical, and concerned with identity,” writes Augé, “the space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place” (77-78). These spaces are spaces of disconnection and transit: for instance, “the motorway,” and “the airport lounge” figure prominently, though so does “the supermarket” (96). In contrast to old spaces that “create the organically social,” (non-)spaces of late capital “create solitary contractuality” (94) or “a world...surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral” (78). This sounds suspiciously similar to Michel de Certeau’s account of New York City, a city that

has never learned the art of growing old by playing on all its pasts. Its present invents itself, from hour to hour, in the act of throwing away its previous accomplishments and challenging the future. A city composed of paroxysmal places in monumental reliefs. The spectator can read in it a universe that is constantly exploding

(de Certeau 2011 [1980]: 91)

Here too we find a modern present in sharp distinction from the past — and these temporal distinctions make themselves felt on space. Though Augé takes pains to distinguish his vision of modernist non-spatial dystopia from de Certeau’s, both describe a hollowing out of place that don’t just de-stabilize older orders of geographic space, social meaning, and collective identity, but annihilate them altogether. In their (non)place are the dehumanizing (non)features of a capitalist future-landscape. They echo Marx’s own comment that “capital by its nature drives beyond every spatial barrier,” where roads and other channels for physical movement materially produce “the annihilation of space by time” (Marx 2015 [1857]: 459). But whereas Marx is interested in the economic drive to build channels for circulating workers and goods under conditions of capital, Augé is interested in a concomitant cultural severing of space from time. The highway, with its half-empty malls and desultory water parks, is a non-place par excellence for Augé.

But how can the highway from Jahangirpuri to Chandigarh be marked as truly severed from its social world as a non-place? Certainly, the effects of developmentalist capitalism are on display in this transit corridor. Driving through the highway, the outside visitor sees mainly the garishness of the wedding halls, the outrageous oversized objects by the side of the road, and the remainder of fields still under cultivation. But to argue that this zone is outside social history is misleading.

Take the water parks that seem to signify incongruous, transactional capitalism. Against the easy critique that these projects are environmentally unfriendly, derivative (and therefore out

of joint with social histories of the spaces in which they are built), and tacky, Kath Weston argues that elaborate water-based amusements in the National Capital Region of Delhi are products of complex social and economic interactions, where new relations to land and water (population growth in peri-urban areas outside the city; an increasingly aggressive ‘sand mafia’ that extracts its raw material from flood plains and river beds) produce new forms of pleasure, in which “its sparkling expanse in a city where water seldom glistens constituted a spectacle in its own right” (Weston 2017: 163). Environmental degradation of several local varieties, economic shifts, and social pleasures are all tied up together in these spaces, which are not out of place so much as they are produced as new, complex spaces. They are precisely relational and historical, produced by (not outside of) the social conditions in which they are placed. Water parks, we might argue, have chronotopic dimensions. Similarly, the Shani temple that dominates one corner on the highway reflects the particular social relations in this moment of contemporary Indian economic history. Carla Bellamy writes that the dramatic increase in the worship of the traditionally malevolent Shani in Delhi is a reasonable response to changing economic possibilities after liberalization (Bellamy 2014).

The overall effect of the highway, for people from outside the area, is most often one of arriving in “the middle of nowhere.” What people mean by this, I think, is that the highway looks uncomfortably mixed in its chronotopic aesthetic: the wheat fields that serve as visual signs of an agricultural, pastoralist past still belong to middle-caste Jat landholders, and surround bright and cheap-looking fiberglass decorations (equally strong signs of an aesthetically and probably socially dystopian future). Perhaps this is aesthetically unsettling, but the farms, fiberglass, roadside temples, and water parks alike together form the features of a landscape produced precisely by the social and economic history of that particular place. Neither the urban center nor properly pastoralist farmland, or the highway disrupts a binary of spaces that are shot through with ideas about time and kinds of personhood.

The representations of this highway space as “the middle of nowhere” align with ideas of non-spaces: both presume the *loss* of a fullness of socially meaningful space in a mythical past at the expense of real spaces and their representations in the capitalist present. The Chandigarh highway doesn’t just abstractly represent the social failures of capital in contemporary North India. Ethnographically, it can be specified: it is the result of a state-led project of expropriating farmland from Jat farmers for the development of Rajiv Gandhi Education City, a massive project planned

to promote private investment in higher education (and thus, building) in the state of Haryana. By many people's reckoning, this was a land grab, in which "the police often employed undemocratic means like threats, violence and bribes to get landholders to accede to sell their land" (Luthra 2017: 20). These spaces are mediated both by images of elsewhere (i.e., the Sydney Grand hotel's golden kangaroo) and the transregional dimensions of capital in India in a period marked by globalism and the neoliberal logics of "opening."

Projects of modernity are unthinkable without spatial representations. As Brian Larkin suggests, following Benjamin and Krakauer, "the quotidian landscapes of life—posters on the walls, shop signs, dancing girls, bestsellers, panoramas, the shape, style, and circulation of city buses—are all surface representations of the fantasy energy by which the collective perceives the social order" (Larkin 2008: 125-126). Not just the buses but *all* the indices Larkin mentions were, at the time, part of visual circulatory systems that brought urban space together in new ways in the 19th century. Central among these technologies of circulation were, of course, the cinema and its direct antecedents.

In the early 1990s, Arjun Appadurai famously argued that the interaction of large-scale migration and technological mass mediation was at the center of the ineluctable shift in spatial dynamics called "globalization," which couldn't be merely described as a set of economic shifts:

Neither images nor viewers fit into circuits or audiences that are easily bound within local, national, or regional spaces. ... [B]oth persons and images often meet unpredictably, outside the certainties of home. ... This mobile and unforeseeable relationship between mass-mediated events and migratory audiences defines the core of the link between globalization and the modern.

(Appadurai 1996: 4)

Despite his more hopeful acceptance of this new order of things, Appadurai's globalized space has something in common with Augé's "non-space:" both envision a past in which space was comfortably tied to meaningful social groups, where "the certainties of home" could be assumed. Appadurai reads globalization's changes as *spatialized* imaginative frontiers where "ethnoscapes," "mediascapes" and "technoscapes" all metaphorically remap the world even as they derive from real movements of humans, representational media, and technology that supersede the "old" space of the nation-state. *Modernity at Large* has been critiqued for asserting the downfall of the nation-state prematurely, but it does suggest a way forward in the way space must be imagined as produced by both human migration and media: not just as the undifferentiable result of a generic

global capital, but as a set of social achievements. Increasing movement and its representation come together not in un-knowable non-spaces but in spaces that are unpredictable.

As Anna Tsing helpfully adds, the late 20th century might have looked like “a time in which no units or scales count for much except the globe” (Tsing 2000: 328), but acceding to the existence of global scales demands careful interrogation: to begin to understand new global spatial regimes, “we might stop making a distinction between ‘global’ *forces* and ‘local’ *places*,” a “seductive set of distinctions” that misunderstands “the ways that all ‘place’ making and all ‘force’ making are *both* local and global” (352). Place, argues Tsing, is produced by the interaction of living beings (including, but not limited to humans), objects, and ideas, and this production is both imaginative *and* material. The space of the globe is a social project, a scale that is produced (like any other, anthropologists might hasten to add). Mistaken for ripping geographic place outside of social space, the heady or terrifyingly dislocating signs of postmodernity are just making scale anew. As anthropologists now regularly insist, the question is not merely *where did the new scale of ‘the global’ come from?* but

how are understandings of locality, community, and region formed and lived? To answer this question, we must turn away from the idea that such things as locality and community are simply given or natural and turn toward a focus on social and political processes of place making, conceived less as a matter of “ideas” than of embodied practices.

(Ferguson and Gupta 1997: 6)

Most of the authors here examine space as a nested component, inseparable from ideas of time in the form of what Bakhtin calls the *chronotope*. As mass-mediated representations of space allow images and sounds of places that do not otherwise exist to emerge into social imaginaries, they produce spatialized sketches of futures and pasts alike: chronotopes of different histories and modernities inform one another. On the level of representation, for Bakhtin, chronotopes demonstrate ways in which “space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history,” (Bakhtin 1981: 84). Lived realities in which representations of space and linked to representations of time also chronotopic: in this formulation, the idea of a “non-place,” with its spatial specificity (the highway, the mall) and its equally essential temporal element (the time of “super-modernity”) is itself a recognizable chronotope. Common spatial phrases like “the middle of nowhere,” recount chronotopes of isolation that sit somewhere in time, perhaps in the middle of a journey. The spacetime of “globalization,” similarly, offers up a spatial scale (a whole, the globe) along with a time period — the post-1990s future.

If, for Bakhtin, space and time were interlinked in the chronotope, for contemporary linguistic anthropology, the term (even in its Bakhtinian sense) involves a sense of personhood as well. In a seminal essay, Asif Agha argues that “a chronotopic depiction formulates a sketch of personhood in time and place; and, the sketch is enacted and construed within a participation framework” — a material, patterned mode of interaction, such as the two-person dyad of a face-to-face conversation or the broadcast single-sender/mass-listener framework of a television broadcast (Agha 2007: 321). In other words, images of linked spacetime cannot be expressed or perceived outside of social, interactional space. For Bakhtin and Agha, *all* representations ultimately occur chronotopically, that is, both at a time and in some distinct space, and socially, through uptake in some specific framework. Thus, meaningful representations “connect the chronotopes they depict to the chronotopes in which they are experienced” (322). Narrowly, this means that all cinematic representations of space are also produced and consumed in time and space, and link a series of spatialized moments together: the spacetime depicted (the indexed image, diegetic spacetime), the material circulation of the physical film, and the spacetime of experience or uptake (in the cinema hall or the home). Cinematic representations of space are thus materialized chronotopes moving throughout the social world.

The authors here examine the cinematic production of space from multiple disciplinary backgrounds and points of view. Many of the authors here focus on what Augé would dismiss as non-spaces: contemporary roads and their blockages in Bolivia (Karl Swinehart); the oceanic passages of migrants during the Syrian refugee crisis (Giuseppe Previtali); the movement of vehicles bearing educational films in provincial Jiangsu, China (Hongwei Thorn Chen). If we are to shift our object of study from “‘things in space’ to ‘the production of space,’” as Henri Lefebvre suggests (1991), cinema is multiply implicated. First, cinema *represents* space, audiovisually presenting locality, foreignness, ‘here’ and ‘there.’ Spaces at different scales, whether local, national, transnational, or global, are depicted, normalized, and contested through cinematic texts.

Secondly, social practices of spatial production emerge *through* cinematic production, circulation, and consumption. The spaces of producers’ offices, film sets, post-production studios, and cinema halls, among many others, allow for certain social — and cinematic — configurations, while blocking others. Hegemonic and counterhegemonic modes of circulation shape the spatial imaginaries of cinematic practice.

Taking into account both of these analytic views of spatial production, papers focusing on literal cinematic real estate—spaces of production and exhibition spaces alike—are featured alongside those examining representational spaces. This issue seeks to draw together representational spaces *and* spaces of production and consumption to argue that both are implicated in one another, purposefully bringing together writing from several disciplines. Along with film and media studies and anthropology, many of the authors are themselves trained and write across disciplines. In part, this diversity helps to overcome the perceived gap between the social sciences and humanities in looking at cinematic space.

First, cinematic images visually index “real” space from the moments and conditions of their production, however mediated—we re-see the rooms, rivers, interiors, backgrounds, and other geographical features that once stood in front of the camera. Heroes and heroines may or may not be placed between the camera’s eye and the landscape. Their presence is tangential to our purposes. The point is that all cinema is made *somewhere*, in a particularly located location, with particular attributes. We might not see all of these: the windiness of a mountainside or the dangerous chasm slightly to the left of the frame, never shown. In my own recent experience, a series of complex shots in a rural area of Chhattisgarh managed to entirely leave out both the busy highway directly to the back of the cameraman shooting a deserted-looking scrubby cliff above a half-dry canyon, as well as any electrical wires. Or post-production decisions to intercut a famous landmark of one city with a generic street shot taken in another city purposefully mislead the eye into believing in the emplacement of the shot. Cinematic images are always *partially* and *selectively* indexical of the landscape where they were made. The visual index of the scene once in front of the camera is only one part of cinematic spatial representation, and has to be propped up with other signs like narrative, score, characters, and so forth in order to make a claim on what, socially, a space is.

Cinema produces other spaces, as well. It is by now a commonplace to point to the spatial dynamics of cinema-industrial practices as socially meaningful and worthy of study. Of these spaces, the cinema hall has gotten the most attention from both anthropologists and cinema scholars. Cinema halls have historically been large, quasi-public spaces that encourage social interaction, bringing into being fears of miscegenation and racial or class mixing (Larkin 2008, Srinivas 2000) or territory for staking a claim to a public ethics attached to film heroes themselves (Dickey 2001). In this volume, Gwen Kirk and Debjani Mukherjee both take up the spatial

practices of cinema halls in social detail. That we have looked to cinema halls in particular as territorialized loci where the politics of cinema *really happens* is perhaps not surprising: they are also spaces chosen by protest groups as the stage for battles over representational politics. When cinema halls are burnt or looted in the name of a social movement, it becomes clear that the space in which representation takes place is suffused with social potentiality.

Cinema halls are not the only such spaces. Anthropologists and media historians also periodically rediscover the importance of cinematic production, investigating the socio-spatial regimes through where representation takes place on film sets and “on location,” recalling Powdermaker’s early (1950) ethnography of Hollywood production. Space however is not always an explicit focus of these works, though it is always at least a spectral theoretical presence: narrative, character, and *mise en scene* cannot emerge without their production in spacetime. Disciplinary stereotypes cleave these two major ways of studying cinematic space along predictable lines: spatial representations and the abstractable qualities of cinematic space are covered by scholars of film studies (and others in the humanities), and any concrete space that is occupied or produced outside of the visual field — the off-screen processes of filmmaking, circulation, and exhibition — are the proper territory of anthropologists (and other social scientists).

Ethnographically grounded studies begin to locate the cinema hall as a *social* and historically variable spaces: S. V. Srinivas excavates elite cinema patrons’ disgust and dismay at sharing distinctly *non*-silent built spaces with lower classes in the theater, carefully reading mid-20th century letters to the editor in a film journal to show that the cinema hall itself was an exemplary space through which class anxiety was described and worked out.

Lakshmi Srinivas similarly argues that contemporary cinema halls in urban Bangalore both mark and reproduce spatial hierarchies, where “cinema is embedded in and shaped by the localities of the city” (Srinivas 2010: 193). She notes that cinema halls stage geographically clustered differences between film language, genre, and style on the one hand, and language and class composition of audiences, on the other. Since locality itself is “vested with so much meaning,” it stands to reason that theater spaces would be “saturated with value” (Srinivas 2010: 201) — value that seems to flow in both directions from the hall to everyday life.

Brian Larkin goes further when he examines cinema halls in colonial Kano, Nigeria as “a peculiar kind of social space marked by a duality of presence and absence, rootedness, and

transport...Cinema is made distinctively modern by this ability to destabilize and make mobile people, ideas, and commodities” (Larkin 2008: 1124). Until Nigeria recently began making its own movies, cinema was an imported commodity, relying on culture industries and transnational distribution networks from India, Hong Kong, or the US. Larkin makes the case that the halls themselves become spatially salient in a “colonial, capitalism modernity” where urban space was being reimagined and reconstructed (126). Cinema halls were built into a topography of already existing racial and class difference, and were spaces at which new practices and moral orders of gendered and racialized leisure emerged. Local Hausa critiques of cinema, Larkin argues, were not merely Islamist knee-jerk reactions to modern technology, but were reactions to a new colonial spatial order, exemplified in the cinema hall’s unstable social and spatial mixing.

If the screen functions as a disciplinary divide between those who study the meaning of representations and those who study social practices, where formal qualities of the film are contrasted with the sociological facts of cinema audiences, opinions, and infrastructures, this is perhaps not accidental. Such a division is proudly invoked by some social scientists as a triumph, of seeing the film not as romanticized *art* but as part and parcel of *social infrastructure* (see Ginsburg 2002). And certainly, many film scholars have had little interest in the empirical conditions of cinematic production or consumption beyond abstract psychological understandings of auteurship on the one hand and spectatorship on the other. But this division assumes that the social world can be cleanly separated from the cinematic world of representation, and, as anthropologists of media have argued forcefully, mass media may represent the social world but it does so from inside, not outside, social practices. Like language in general, cinema is a reflexive system capable of representing itself, and, like language, cinema is embedded in and emerges from the social practices that it describes.

Beyond disciplinary stereotypes, cinema and media studies as well as anthropology have all recently begun to pierce the ideology of the screen that divides “representation” from “social life.” For instance, anthropologist Constantine Nakassis describes the ineluctably interconnected production, movement, and on-screen “citation” of distinct signs of cultural value in Tamil Nadu as filmmakers and young men iteratively borrow from one another’s fashion choices “through the screen” (Nakassis 2016: 194).

In a very different ethnography, Anand Pandian describes the uneven, distressing power of nature to disrupt a filmmaker's desire for certain spatial representations of Switzerland, "blithely presuming that the environment would bend itself to the necessities of the film":

As the young producer in charge of the expedition confidently stated as we waited our turn at the airport immigration counters, "Switzerland is like an outdoor studio." Over the course of the next few days, however, endless accidents confounded and unraveled this presumption of a natural studio environment. The filmmakers were buffeted, rattled, and frustrated by the very natural and material elements evoked by the song sequence, forcing a profound transformation of the situations through which the song ultimately gained expression.

(Pandian 2011: 53).

Far from a neutral ground on which to practice human creative expression, and from which to draw out representations of space, the landscape here is a co-creator, sometimes a persnickety and even violent one, whose material processes and exigencies are indexed partially in the ultimate aesthetic form of the film.

In his 2003 book *Screen Traffic*, Charles Acland also weaves together aesthetics, production, and circulation, arguing that the "felt internationalism" of the contemporary era — an affective chronotope — cannot be explained without recourse to the cinematic aesthetics of the "megaplex." Blockbusters are designed to transcend local preferences through corporate cinematic logics of design, and new cinema technologies, including technologies of distribution, both enable and ensure the emergence of particular "global" aesthetic forms.

More recently Yingjin Zhang discusses the production of what he calls "polylocality" in contemporary Chinese cinema, where multiple "locals" are imagined and produced simultaneously in the "interplay between the production of space and the space of production" (Zhang 2) in a world of cinema production defined by diffusely located funding, production facilities, and reception contexts. Examining production data as well as formal cinematic qualities of commercial film and documentary, he argues that cinema should be seen as definitionally multiple, "polylocal and translocal at different scales." The local, translocal, and polylocal — all distinct chronotopes of scale and interconnection — link filmmakers' global aspirations with representations of landscapes and other 'local' images.

Space On, Across, and Through the Screen

Cinema is still central to contemporary remakings of scale — not just the global scales made possible by transnational circulation, but of new embodied practices of localness. These

papers address questions of spatial scale, materiality, and representation in varied, discipline-crossing ways that evaluate projects and processes on both of the screen, through formal aesthetic analysis along with ethnography, archival investigations, and reflections on filmmaking itself.

Gabriel Dattatreyan zooms in on young Somali refugees who gathered in the urban village of Khirki in South Delhi to improvise rhymes, where hip hop “became a means to collectively articulate the kinds of challenges they faced coming of age in Delhi while claiming a bit of Delhi for themselves.” In this essay, he reflects on the space-making potential both of hip hop itself and of his own collaborative, “hiphopographic” project of filming these young men. He recounts how the making of the film, *Cry Out Loud*, became another mediatized site for self-fashioning, a further unfolding of the *cipha* — the “circle of active listeners and imminent participants” — to “create ways of seeing and representing Delhi as a place where anti-Blackness circulates and makes visible a complex political economy of difference.” The young men experience Delhi as a segregated and often violently anti-Black space. Their experiences jump scale through the emergent experimental poetics of hip hop, which link local frustrations with transnational scales of belonging and non-belonging, unfolding in and through the *cipha*.

The *cipha* is a key site in this paper, both a physical, social space for mediating spatialized and racialized collective identities, and also a metaphor for the creative process of collective identity formation itself in its “dialogic reflexivity.” As Dattatreyan writes, “the *cipha* became an ethos that translated into a working model for collaboration” and helped him imagine an afterlife for *Cry Out Loud* after its initial collaborative screening in Delhi. Despite misgivings, he argues that continued screenings in the US and Canada “[take] hip hop’s dialogic and critical potentiality into new realms in a historical moment where anti-Blackness continues to proliferate across geographies.” By jumping scale, the film re-makes spatial possibilities of imaginative intimacy that, he suggests, are politically essential.

Giuseppe Previtali also focuses on human movement, to a different crisis of human mobility unfolding in early 21st century Europe as mass migration from Syria has led to political outrage as well as complacency or opposition. Previtali undertakes a formal investigation of recent images and films that depict human movement, death, and “de-subjectification” as migrant space is claimed and contested. Beginning with a meditation on a heavily circulated image of death and grief—an image of the young Alan Kurdi’s body, facedown in the sand—Previtali argues that projects of de-individuation work differently in distinct media ecosystems. In a web series intended

to dramatize the work of the Italian Navy, helicopter shots depict “migrants as a headless and uncontrollable group,” which is “one of the main features of the xenophobic narration that has taken hold for some years in Italy.” On the other hand, the focus of the film *I Stay With the Bride* closely follows individual migrants and their journeys. As described by Previtali, one frame depicts both “the conventional route, which goes straight from one country to the other, and the rough, curvy and difficult route that the protagonists are bound to take on foot.” In a moment of mass migration and political uncertainty, space itself is dramatized.

Marie-Eve Monette also examines fraught representations of space in a socially and economically unsettled time. She reads the Argentinian film *Bolivia* as a document of changing aesthetics and narrative commitments in a highly destabilized world, where national economic status seems tied to cinematic aesthetics. Monette links the cramped space of the café in which the migrant protagonists work low-wage jobs with their precarity and with larger patterns of economic uncertainty in post-1990s Argentina. She charts fragile alliances between characters as partially indexical of the status of real migrants at the time: they are necessary, but spatially set apart.

Space is similarly fraught in David Gray’s examination of cinematic exhibition practices both during and after Pinochet’s dictatorial rule from 1973-1990 in Chile. Post-dictatorship Chile focuses, Gray argues, on ideas of reconciliation that ideologically enclose the dictatorship squarely in the past. But the time of Pinochet, and its social aftereffects, seep into contemporary life as well. Exhibition sites, argues Gray, “are at once belated challenges to this reconciliation as concealment, while also sometimes still showing the lingering effects of the moving impasse of the transition to democracy.” Looking at cinematic spaces as material, instantiated moments of exhibition allows Gray to examine the ways that “similar images are used to read history in the present” to very different ends. Beginning with *Por la Vida*, a revolutionary 1980s U-Matic video that documents violent protest, which came with lesson plans attached for clandestine community viewing, Gray argues for the interaction of viewing space and cinematic text in the political potential of cinema. An audiovisual archive, Gray suggests, can bring a questioning political community into being — but this possibility can also be foreclosed. In the exhibition practices of the *Museo de la memoria*, archival video clips are reanimated as pedagogical tools, but their placement in a fixed history — one that is ideologically and temporally *past*, according to the museum — neutralizes some of their political potential: “memory is too neatly separated from the present, as though it were possible to mark the start and end dates of the dictatorship and cleanly slice it out of Chile’s history.”

Other authors take up more explicitly materialist frameworks for investigating cinematic space. In his investigation of making, mobilizing, and screening educational films in provincial Jiangsu, China in the 1930s, Hongwei Thorn Chen theorizes the space-making capabilities of the screen directly. Instead of primarily analyzing the content of educational films to make claims about belonging and the nation, Thorn uses the mobile screen to refocus attention on practices of circulation: “With a dual attention to the virtual mobility offered by screens, which provide surfaces on which circulating content can be shown, and the mobility solicited of audiences, who must traverse municipal and rural infrastructures to arrive at the screening space and then navigate the architectures of the space itself,” he argues, “the study of screen practices is coterminous with the study of the production of space as such.” His essay uses rich archival data to describe the production of Jiangsu as a place that could be physically traversed and audiovisually addressed through the introduction of pedagogical film. In this essay, cinema does not merely circulate as a set of disembodied, centrally-prepared images that interpellate a readymade nation. Instead, the “mass education center” emerges as an ideal through which the uneducated masses might be shown how to live and work — ideally, through the educational capacity of traveling cinema, which theoretically could cross vast distances to impart standardized knowledge. But Thorn focuses on the material obstacles that did not just interject themselves, but deeply shaped educational cinema’s homogenizing capabilities. Archival material records the movements of audiovisual equipment via rural “ambulatory teaching van” with its dependence on roads, available fuel, and battery life produce the spatial possibilities of where and how educational film might reach an audience. Maps and other spatial visualizations by planners and officials are juxtaposed with the complaints of frustrated cinema operators about the lack of food and adequate housing on the road to argue that the material bases of exhibition are just as important as cinematic “content” in examining the ideologies and practices of spacemaking through cinema.

Karl Swinehart also ties together the space everyday circulation and cinematically represented spaces, arguing for a distinct chronotope of the road in Bolivian cinema. Roads, he argues, are not simple, infrastructural channels allowing the passage of people and things, ideologically and materially connecting a country to its hinterlands. Along with Thorn, he understands the road as a place that invites blockage as much as movement. He examines the materiality of roadblocks, both their semipermeability to individual humans and their political utility as stoppage of goods, arguing that the roadblocks themselves constitute a certain chronotope of passage (or its lack).

Cinema, similarly, is excavated for chronotopic sketches of Bolivian roads in films presented to the researcher as “national products of the finest quality. These films depict journeys through a national terrain marked by the plurinational ideals of diverse regional groups — one film depicts “a cast of characters who evoke regional stereotypes at their most overstated;” one protagonist “changes her wardrobe at each stop to don women’s clothing typical of the region,” but by the end of the film, “the characters have confronted and overcome regional stereotypes and ethnic prejudices in the course of traversing the nation and its roads.” Roads, here, are a chronotope of the interconnected nation-state whose differences can be surmounted by travel. But in other films, the road is a source of tension and danger, death and fear, where criminals might lurk. Roads are “not just the ligaments of the nation’s flesh, economic arteries flowing with people and goods, but chronotopes populated by people in conflict, persons engaged in varying hostile acts of mutual unintelligibility.”

Gwen Kirk, too, examines cinema’s location in physical, social, and linguistic space. Kirk carefully examines the languages used in and around different cinema halls in Lahore, Pakistan, to argue for a robust ecology of “linguistic landscapes” interwoven with other forms of urban geography. In multilingual Pakistan, language is always a tangible axis of social difference. Urdu, Punjabi, English, and other languages all converge in urban cinema halls, with distinct social uses. The “media paratexts” of advertisements in English, snack stall signboards in Punjabi, notices to the public in Urdu, and safety guidelines in all three might fade into the background for film researchers examining theatrical spaces. But Kirk argues that they shouldn’t: in multilingual spaces, these media paratexts in particular “have different aims and perhaps offer different possibilities for their audiences than those seen in other types of signage.” These paratexts allow a distinct and possibly contradictory social reading of space in the city. By taking them together, she argues that examining multilingual paratexts can “make explicit the connections between ideologies of written language and spaces of cinematic consumption.” Cinematic space is not just animated by films themselves, but is shot through by myriad other social projects that organize and interpellate readers.

Debjani Mukherjee also writes about the space of the cinema hall itself, focusing on multiplexes in India. The ideology of the multiplex is that of a novel, modern space whose sleek glass architecture mirrors the modernity of its patrons (and the films that it shows). However, Mukherjee puts forth an argument of not-quite-newness, examining the affective parallels between

cinematic remakes and what builders call “retrofits,” single-screen cinema halls that are rebuilt or retrofitted into multiplexes. Both, she convincingly argues, are steeped in narratives of memory: “Old single screen theaters and the films that were projected on their screens remain part of remembered histories, signposting the passage of time, and even when retrofitted to a new form, their spaces still bear reminiscences of the past, holding personal and intimate connections.” Both hall and film, when remade, retain the ability to bring the cinemagoer into “recall of the past,” but also into the “newness of the present.” The chronotope of multiplex cinema, so often misread as purely future-oriented, at times affectively catapults people into felt pasts.

Articles in this issue suggest that we must examine the ways in which cinema produces and scales space in a variety of ways: by tracing the materiality and ideologies of circulation (Chen, Gray, and Kirk), practices of visually representing non-cinematic circulation of everyday infrastructures like roads (Swinehart and Chen) and the nested, reflexive practice of cinematic exhibition, particularly as new types of spaces like multiplex cinema halls directly affect cinematic production (Mukherjee). Other papers address representation as it is entangled with new political-economic spatialized flows of migration based on economic destabilization and violence (Monette and Previtali). This diversity of practical and disciplinary thrusts all take into consideration the central conceit of this issue: that both materialist explanations of spatial production as well as ideational explanations must be taken together to adequately explain cinematic space. One paper ethnographically and reflexively examines the social production of space in the author’s *own* film (Dattatreyan). Especially when taken together, these papers make a strong argument for counterposing cinema studies *tout court* with ethnographic, anthropological, or materialist studies to better understand space *both* as it is represented and as it is socially inhabited.

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