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Civic Visions: Mapping the 'City' Film 1900–1960

Julia Hallam

Abstract *Films made in and about cities offer a rich source of material for investigating projections of civic identity and citizenship and their relationship to the changing urban imaginary of the twentieth century. Focusing on a range of films made in and about a provincial city and collated by the 'Mapping the City in Film' project as part of research into the relationship between film, architecture, and urban space, this paper explores how textual and genre analysis can be complemented by the use of accurate mapping tools such as geographical information systems software (GIS). GIS creates a framework for an open ended multidisciplinary, intermedial exploration of film and space in which location information can be mapped and visually organised. This enables, for example, an exploration of how various forms of place-making activity are projected at particular times by different cultures of film production and film-related practices. The paper argues that GIS visualisation methods in partnership with traditional film analysis and historical contextual information can begin to map an affective architecture of place.*

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> A whole history remains to be written of spaces … which would at the same time be the history of powers … from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat. (Foucault 1980: 149)

Films made in and about cities offer a particularly rich source of material for investigating projections of civic identity and citizenship and their relationship to the changing urban imaginary of the twentieth century. Drawing on on-going archival research into Liverpool and Merseyside film, this paper examines the ways in which geospatial computing tools (specifically ArcGIS) can be used to visualise the development of various cultures of film production and their contribution to perceptions and projections of space and place. A partnership between film studies and architecture, the *City in Film* project is the first attempt to comprehensively trace and catalogue the wide range of genres and production practices that have contributed to how urban space has been perceived and projected in moving image media (see http://www.liv.ac.uk/lsa/cityinfilm/). Focusing on factual productions rather than feature films and dramas, the project has collated a catalogue

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that includes actualities, travelogues, newsreel footage, amateur and independent productions, promotional material, and campaign videos, which enable in-depth analysis and the development of a socially and spatially embedded reading of what Roberts and Koeck (2007) have termed 'the archive city'. As well as recording conventional filmic data such as title, producer, date, duration and format, wherever possible the films in the catalogue have been viewed and categorised by their spatial content such as landmark locations and the spatial function as well as use of the buildings and spaces, which draw on criteria developed by Kronenburg (2002) for architectural research. The transference of this database to an Arc GIS platform has enabled us to study in greater depth the dynamic ways in which moving images made in and/or about a particular place are invested in the everyday production of locality, space, and identity and analyse how specific film genres engage with historically contingent material and symbolic geographies of place.

Most place-based research in film studies has tended to focus on thematic and generic readings that examine, for example, the 'impossible geographies' created by the imaginary use of place (Brunsdon 2007: 1–20). Brunsdon's study *London in Cinema*, which examines the representation of the city in feature films since 1945, is an exemplary model of this approach. Her book, as she comments 'investigate[s] the kinds of London that are found in cinema and, using critical categories such as genre, explore[s] significant patterning in these cinematic Londons' (2007: 6). Drawing on the work of historical geographer Miles Ogborn, Brunsdon argues that films are part of the textual production of space, and that 'neither spaces nor texts can be the *a priori* basis for the other' (Ogborn, in Brunsdon 2007: 6). However, despite acknowledging the broader contextual framings underpinning filmic images of London, Brunsdon has little interest in exploring the extra-diegetic spaces and histories that have informed the city's cinematic geographies. As she herself notes, 'the films [come] first, with sometimes only fleeting reference to significant aspects of London's history and geography' (2007: 6).

Although Liverpool is not, in conventional academic understandings of the term, a 'cinematic city', feature films have been made in and about the city since the early days of cinema, the majority dating from 1950s onwards, with a distinct peak in the 1990s.[1] In many of these later films, Liverpool frequently stands in for other places; when it plays itself, it is usually in films created by well-known local writers and directors such as Chris Bernard, Alan Bleasdale, Frank Cottrell Boyce, Alex Cox, Terence Davies, Jimmy McGovern and Willy Russell.[2] Unlike the archetypical 'cinematic cities' of London, Berlin, New York and Los Angeles which have all been the subject of intense studies of their cinematic fictions (Brunsdon 2007; Clarke 1997;

[1] Analysis of feature film productions, *City in Film* database, http://www.liv.ac.uk/lsa/cityinfilm/catalogue.html

[2] Films by these filmmakers include *Letter to Brezhnev* (Chris Bernard 1984), *Three Businessmen* (Alex Cox 1998), *Distant Voices, Still Lives* (Terence Davies 1988). Screenplays include *No Surrender* (Alan Bleasdale 1985), *Grow Your Own* (Frank Cottrell Boyce 2007), *Liam* (Jimmy McGovern 2000) and *Shirley Valentine* (Willy Russell 1989).

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Donald 1999), a provincial city such as Liverpool, because of its size, offers an exemplary range of iconic sites and environments such as civic buildings, urban gateways, and work and leisure spaces that enable a wide range of moving image materials made in and about the city to be analysed according to their spatial function and use. Transferring the *City in Film* catalogue to an ArcGIS platform has enabled the development of a more refined process of geo-historical analysis as well as the production of a range of geo-referenced contextual materials including digitised segments of particular films, interviews with filmmakers, company/organisational materials, cinema sites, and supporting documentation.[3] The function and use of various spaces used as locations in the films logged in the *City and Film* catalogue have been transferred to the ArcGIS platform and mapped using their precise geographical co-ordinates; the maps can be accessed by date, informing understandings of the ways in which the city is visualised by specific genres at particular times. This has enabled us to extract a range of information that could not be easily visualised using other methods of analysis, for example, the locations that feature most frequently in 'official' productions such as newsreels and promotional films or the wider and more varied range of locations found in early television documentary films.

In this paper, the focus is on mapping the preferred location points or nodes across a range of factual films that depict local events, landmark buildings and journeys to, from, and around the city. Public space around landmark buildings is often used to stage civic events, which are watched by crowds of people, people who through their very presence at the events become implicated in the demonstrations of citizenship that we see in the films. If our understandings of place-making activity are linked to particular histories, identities, regimes of memory, and meaning (often defined in terms of the collective or urban imaginary), then the demonstrations of collective participation in these local events can be defined as one aspect of this process. Here, I would like to suggest that what we are watching in these films is part of a discursive construction of power and authority defined by the French post-structuralist political theorist Nicole Loraux as the 'civic imaginary'. Loraux argues that the leaders of the city of ancient Athens forged a sense of collective identity amongst the city's inhabitants by promoting an idealised self-image through a range of public discourses (Loraux 1993). In the twentieth century, particularly before the widespread development of television broadcasting in the 1950s,[4] films play a particular role in this process, projecting a sense of place and civic identity amidst the nationalising and internationalising forces of commercial film culture.

[3] This material forms part of the History Detectives permanent exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool.

[4] Regional television developed in England with the passing of the Television Act in 1954; the franchise holder, Granada Television, started broadcasting in 1956. Television ownership rose nationally during the decade from around a million licenses issued in 1953–54 to 10,469,753 by the end of the decade (Hallam 2003).

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Film studies and mapping

> Cinematic cartography appears to be as much about mapping memory as it is about envisioning the future of cartography; as much about the map as metaphor as it is about film as metaphor; as much about the integration of cinema in mapping as it is about the place of cartography in filming and editing. (Sébastien Caquard and D. R. Fraser Taylor 2009: 7)

Since what has putatively been described as the 'spatial turn' in the humanities during the mid 1990s, mapping is a term that has gathered significance. A growing vanguard of researchers from disciplines that range from geography, urban studies, architecture, and history, to literature, film, media, and cultural studies study the relationship between film, space, and place. What motivates much of the work across this apparently disparate field is an interest in the ways in which the interdisciplinary study of moving images, and the cultures of distribution and consumption that develop in tandem with the production of those images, provides renewed insights into our knowledge of the development of urban modernity and modern subjectivity. Les Roberts (2010c) has traced some of the major theoretical contributions to the development of work in this area that reveals the extent to which 'thinking spatially' underpins a growing body of recent research in the humanities. Edited collections such as *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Warf and Arias 2009); *The Spatial Turn: Paradigms of Space in the Cultural and Social Sciences* (Döring and Thielmann 2008); and *Geographies of Communication: The Spatial Turn in Media Studies* (Falkheimer and Jansson 2006), vie with a number of journal articles and publications such as 'Historical GIS: The Spatial Turn in Social Science History', *Social Science History Special Edition*, (Knowles 2000); 'The Spatial Turn: Geographical Approaches in the History of Science' in *Journal of the History of Biology* (Finnegan 2008); 'Turning Spatial' in *Art History* (Highmore 1998). A similar number of publications can be identified that focus almost exclusively on film (see AlSayyad 2006; Bruno 2002; Brunsdon 2007; Caquard and Taylor 2009; Conley 2007; Cresswell and Dixon 2002; Dimendberg 2004; Everett and Goodbody 2005; Hallam 2007; Keiller 2007; Koeck and Roberts 2010; Konstantarakos 2000; Lefebvre 2006; Lukinbeal and Zonn 2004; Roberts 2005, 2010a, 2010b; Roberts and Koeck 2007). Roberts argues that it is becoming increasingly difficult to gauge what exactly is meant by the 'spatial turn' and the ubiquitous trope of mapping that is found in much contemporary cultural criticism. Echoing Lefebvre's (1991) argument that space is culturally and materially reproduced as part of lived everyday realities, Roberts argues that there is a need to situate and embed visual cultures in social and material landscapes, and to explore or 'map' the interplay between the representational and the material (Roberts 2010c). In film studies, for example, although there has been theoretical concern with genealogical mappings of the discursive terrain that created the conditions that we now know as cinema (see Clarke 1997; Clarke and Doel 2005; and for the relationship between scientific discourse, gesture and embodiment in screen performance see Valiaho 2010), the role of visual imagery in the material and symbolic production of social space, and the dynamic and dialectical interplay between

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different generic spatial formations that historians of early film such as André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning pioneered and continue to explore (see Gaudreault and Gunning 2006) is less well developed. In textual analysis, the term mapping tends to be used in the following three ways.

Maps and mapping in films

The representation of maps in the *mise-en-scene* of feature films is the focus of a number of critical and theoretical approaches; as Tom Conley points out, '[s]ince the advent of narrative in cinema – which is to say, from its very beginnings – maps are inserted in the field of the image to indicate where action "takes place"' (2009a: 132). In Sébastien Caquard's discussion of cinematic maps – or 'cinemaps' – he argues that early animated maps in films such as Fritz Lang's *M* (1931) predated many of the future functions of modern digital cartography, such as the use of sound, shifts in perspectives, and the combination of realistic images and cartographic symbols. '[Exploring] more systematically and more deeply the potential influence cinema could have on cartography', Caquard suggests, professional cartographers can learn much from the study of cinematic techniques used by Lang and other filmmakers in terms of their status as cinematic precursors to modern forms of media cartography (2009: 54). Conley's work focuses primarily on examples from post-war cinema (2007, 2009a, 2009b). His approach to what he terms 'cartographic cinema' (2007) can be defined in terms of (a) its focus on the geographic and representational cartographies contained with the film's diegesis, and (b) on the psychoanalytical and affective forms of 'mapping' that are mobilised between film and viewer in terms of his or her subjectivity and psychic positionality. Conley argues that many commercial films, similarly to cartography, 'share in the design of what one critic long ago (Jameson 1982) called "strategies of containment"'. Yet these fears can be displaced by alternative uses of what he terms 'the cartographies the medium mantles to establish its hold on perception' (Conley 2007: 212). The forms of 'deterritorialization' that Conley, per Deleuze, maps out in cartographic cinema provide examples which have the potential to re-orientate the spectator through activating the imagination to negotiate different positions and places 'in the area between the cartography of the film, as it is seen, and the imagination as it moves about and deciphers the film' (Conley 2007: 212).

Cognitive and emotional mapping

Guiliana Bruno's *Atlas of Emotions* (2002) and Conley's *Cartographic Cinema* (2007) each provide a detailed theoretical exposition of the ways in which the affective properties of the cinematic medium play host to mappings of the psychic and '*e*motional' (Bruno 2002) topographies given form in the immaterial architectures that structure the complex interplay between the spatial textualities of film and the subjective 'navigation' of these spaces by the viewer/spectator.[5] For Bruno

[5] Conley uses the concept of a 'subject position' in speech act theory to suggest that the 'viewer-position' in cinema studies might be an interrogative position occupied by the spectator: 'a map in a movie can prompt us to ask where we are in view of the film' (2007: 212).

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the psychogeographic mobilities and affective geometries unleashed by film and other forms of moving image culture prompt renewed critical understandings of not only the ways we might read or 'map' the spaces of film, but also how the forms and architectures of urban space might shape theoretical, aesthetic and practical re-engagements with cities themselves:

> Mapping is the shared terrain in which the architectural-filmic bond resides – a terrain that can be fleshed out by rethinking practices of cartography for travelling cultures, with an awareness of the inscription of emotion within this motion. Indeed, by way of filmic representation, geography itself is being transformed and (e)mobilized…. A frame for cultural mappings, film is *modern cartography*. (Bruno 2002: 71)

Conleys's 'cartographic cinema' treads a similar conceptual terrain, noting that even if a film does not feature a map as part of its diegesis, 'by nature [film] bears an implicit relation with cartography…films *are* maps insofar as each medium can be defined as a form of what cartographers call "locational media"' (2007: 1–2).

In a similar vein, Teresa Castro's discussion of the 'mapping impulse' (Castro 2009, 2010) refers to a 'visual regime': a way of seeing the world that has cartographic affinities. Cinematic cartography here refers less to the presence of maps *per se* in films, as to the cultural, perceptual and cognitive processes that inform understandings of place and space. Focusing on what she describes as 'cartographic shapes', Castro shows how 'panoramas' (viewpoints shaping synoptic and spatially coherent landscapes and vistas), 'aerial views' ('gods-eye' or 'birds-eye' perspectives from planes or hot-air balloons) and 'atlases' (spatio-visual assemblies and visual archives) define a cinematic topography in which the mapping impulse is a central cognitive element. Drawing attention to the broad and complex theoretical terrain within which mapping and cartographic practices are embedded, Castro notes that mapping can therefore refer to a multitude of processes, from the cognitive operations implied in the structuring of spatial knowledge to the discursive implications of a particular visual regime (2009: 10).

Film as spatial critique: critical cinematic cartography

Castro's work is of particular significance to the development of what Patrick Keiller (2007) has termed 'film as spatial critique', which develops Gunning and Gaudreault's notion of the 'view aesthetic' and locates it within a broader spectrum of activity that links the perceptual processes of creating pictorial representation with the instrumental activities of map making. To date the most productive resource for research in this area has been archival film materials from the early days of film (1890s–1910s) and the post-war period (1950s–70s); in the case of the latter, Keiller is particularly interested in the ways in which a spatial reading of films of these urban landscapes expose and articulate some of the contested or contradictory spatialities emerging during this period as a result of controversial large-scale modernist

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urban planning developments which left their destructive stamp on many cities during the 1960s and 1970s (see Hallam 2007, 2010; Roberts 2010a, 2010d).

Transferring the *City in Film* catalogue to an ArcGIS platform has enabled the research team to explore further Keiller's notion of 'film as spatial critique'. By mapping the location content of films listed in the catalogue according to their precise geographical co-ordinates, an informed understanding of the ways in which the city is visualised by specific genres and at particular times is being developed. Focusing on the central area of Liverpool and its immediate suburban hinterland, the patterns observable in locations mapped across different film genres demonstrate the ways in which a city's cinematic geographies reflect what can perhaps more accurately be described as *cities* in film: a mosaic of overlapping representations of the city's urban landscape which convey the different meanings attached to specific discourses and practices surrounding the production of local films. In the remainder of this paper, I will examine in more detail three genres, amateur 'spatial documentaries',[6] professional documentaries and newsreels, with the aim of analysing the ways in which certain genres and their modes of production create distinctive mappings of space and place. The period from 1900 until 1960 embraces shifts in local filmmaking practice as it develops from a primarily commercial endeavour at the beginning of the century to a leisure pursuit. The introduction of 9.5-mm and 8-mm film formats during the 1920s spurred the private ownership of lighter weight cine cameras by a wealthy elite. Amateur cine societies, with their collective ethos and shared use of expensive facilities and equipment, developed on Merseyside in the early 1930s, extending local movie making to a broader social group. As more people enjoyed affluent suburban lifestyles and increased leisure time in the 1950s, home movie making grew rapidly to become a mature cultural practice. The relationship between film production and the role of the filmmakers as participants and witnesses at civic and public events is central to the development of the civic imaginary and 'citizen subjectivity', the dynamic interplay between textual positioning and viewing positions in films made in and about cities during this period. The end of the 1950s heralds the development of a distinctively modernist aesthetic in amateur city films, discussed in more detail in Hallam (2010), and the decline of the newsreels due to competition from regional television news.

Film, architecture and the civic imaginary

As part of Liverpool City Council's attempt to re-brand the image of the city in preparation for its tenure as European Capital of Culture in 2008, St George's Hall, the city's most prominent historic building, was extensively renovated to host the opening celebrations. As a material and symbolic

[6] Footage shot by amateur filmmakers that record everyday spaces and places without accompanying music or voice over narration. The footage appears 'raw' in that it seems to have been edited in camera or subsequently edited without the addition of any further embellishments. See Hallam 2010.

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reminder of past glories and of a renewed and revitalised present, the hall continues to function as a central point of orientation in what Kevin Lynch (1960) has described as the 'legible sign system' of the city through which residents and visitors alike navigate cityscapes and urban spaces. Lynch's notational system of 'landmarks', 'districts', 'edges', 'nodes', and 'paths' has been highly influential in formulating understandings of the ways in which people construct mental images (or 'cognitive maps') of urban environments and learn to navigate these spaces. Likewise, his concepts of urban 'legibility' (the ability to 'read' and hence orientate ourselves within urban landscapes) and 'imageability' (the propensity for cities and cityscapes to lend themselves to 'legible' or readable forms of urban representation), has been an important contribution to architectural and urban design practice.

The importance of particular 'nodes' and 'landmarks' in the construction of cognitive mappings of urban space observed by Lynch seems to bear a notable degree of similarity and overlap with Castro's associations between film and the cartographical activities of map-making briefly described above. Lynch defines a node as 'the strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, which are the intensive focus to and from which he is travelling' (1960: 47); typically, the node is a junction or conversion point. Within this schema, Liverpool's principal civic buildings, the Town Hall and St George's Hall, function as both landmarks and nodes. Strategically positioned at the junctions of Georgian and Victorian Liverpool's principal carriageways, these two distinctive buildings provided major points of orientation for people arriving or leaving the city by rail and road on their way to and from the waterfront. It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that the earliest film footage of the city is shot in the public space around these buildings. At the time when the Lumière Brothers' film operator Jean Alexandre Louis Promio first visited the city in 1897, the city was at the peak of its power and wealth, arrogantly proclaiming itself as the second city of the Empire. Promio shot three sequences of the city that day, *Lime Street*, *Church Street* and *Panorama Pris du Chemin de Fer Électrique*. Based on an analysis of the shadows in the *mise-en-scène* of these films, Richard Koeck argues that Promio shot *Lime Street* first, capturing the city's most prominent building on his way from the railway station to the waterfront via the city's main thoroughfare, Church Street, where he shot his second sequence (Koeck 2009: 72).

In the Liverpool of 1900/01 St George's Plateau and Exchange Flags (the Georgian square behind the Town Hall) were the principal gathering places for civic celebrations. Civic occasions filmed by Mitchell and Kenyon at this time include royal visits, the decoration of Boer War volunteer soldiers by heroes such as Earl Roberts, and the celebration of national holidays such as St George's Day and Trafalgar Day.[7] People were keen to see themselves on

[7] See, for example, *St Georges Day in Liverpool* (1901), *Lord Roberts Presenting Medals to Boer War Volunteers in Liverpool* (1901), *Visit of Lord Kitchener to Liverpool? Or Lord Roberts in Liverpool* (1901), *Trafalgar Day in Liverpool* (1901), *Visit of Lord Roberts and Viscount Kitchener to Receive Freedom of the City, Liverpool* (1902).

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screen partaking in these public events, even if only as members of the crowd; in Liverpool, for example, the films would be shown two days after the event in popular venues such as Hengler's Circus (Everton), The Prince of Wales Theatre and the elite St George's Hall, where a seat cost two shillings, which ensured that only the city's wealthier citizens attended and watched their friends and associates on the screen (Toulmin 2006). *Lord Roberts Presenting Medals to Boer War Volunteers in Liverpool* (Mitchell and Kenyon 1901) illustrates the typical relationship between architectural space, the view aesthetic and the emergent subjective territorialisation created by moving image culture: a discursive formation in which 'love of place' (topophilia), imperialism, and nationalism are spatially mapped and embedded in the psychic and *e*motional (Bruno 2002) terrain of 'citizen subjects' attending the screenings. As local entrepreneurial showmen were clearly aware, this was a significant event in the local diary that would draw a large crowd; in one sequence, at least two cameramen can be seen at work (implying a third), one positioned to capture the *portraits vivants* of the principal actors (Lord Roberts and his entourage), and the others stationed amongst the crowd to capture people watching the parade and the presentations on the steps of St George's Hall. In the surviving edit, the crowd is as much the camera's focus as the military celebrities, who are the ostensible focus of the civic events. Evidence of popularity for the films of these events can be found in the local paper: a review in the *Liverpool Daily Post* reported that 'last evening, long before the hour fixed for opening the doors, the hall was besieged by hundreds of people clamouring for admission. When the performance commenced, there was scarcely a vacant place either for standing or sitting on the large floor of the hall' (15 November 1901). For the wealthy middle-class audience, some of whom may well have attended the earlier event, the film maps a 'civic imaginary' in which psychic and *e*motional topographies are given intangible form in the immaterial architectures that structure the complex interplay between the film and the emotional experience of viewing, sitting, or standing inside the building that formed a background location to earlier events. The affective architectures of space and place are inscribed in the viewing process, an 'atlas of emotions' embedded in the subjective navigation of filmic, physical and civic space.

Local views: city cine-cartography

By the late 1920s, amateur cinematography had become popular among the wealthy elite. Journeys into and around the city form the substance of early amateur work made in and about Liverpool. Home movies made by the wealthy Preston family in the early 1930s, for example *Views of Liners 'Cedric' and 'Britannic'* (North West Film Archive), depict family members and civic dignitaries at numerous civic events and occasions. Other films were made by members of the growing cine-club movement. Amateurs were not only interested in creating moving portraits of their family members and friends; they were also keen to record their own experiences as witnesses at major civic events and occasions. Close analysis of footage of the opening of the Mersey Tunnel in 1934, which has been compiled and edited to form a record of events by amateur filmmaker and collector Angus Tilston, reveals the difference between amateur and newsreel aesthetics at

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this time.[8] The newsreel cinematographers focus on capturing images of the main celebrities, such as following King George V and his entourage as it moves through the crowded streets to the tunnel mouth, the King disembarking at the ceremonial platform where he is shown delivering his speech in a medium close-up shot with occasional cutaways to wide-angled long shots that emphasise the size of the vast crowd gathered at the rear of St George's Hall. In the amateur footage compiled by Tilston, a number of views situate us in and with the crowd as a participant observer; the views are frequently interrupted by people walking in front of the camera. There is uneven movement as a second camera pans the crowd from a high vantage point to create a panorama, a view that Castro suggests is central to what she term film's 'mapping impulse'. Because of its distance from events, the amateur footage can be clearly identified; the filmmaker's view is less privileged than that of the newsreel cinematographers. Briefly depicted in the amateur footage, the newsreel cameras are positioned on a specially built platform that affords them an optimal view of the King delivering his opening address to local dignitaries and the massed crowds against the backdrop of the curtained tunnel entrance.

A comparative analysis of newsreel and amateur nodal points in 1930s films indicates the ways in which the newsreels' spatial aesthetics situate the films' affective relations within a sphere of national interests and concerns. Locations in newsreel productions in the 1930s reveal an overall clustering around the spaces associated with commerce and industry (the docks, the business areas around the Pier Head including the Royal Liver Building, Water Street, and Old Hall Street), with transport links (including ferry terminals, Lime Street railway station, and the Overhead Railway), civic buildings and monuments (Town Hall, Municipal Buildings, St George's Hall, Cenotaph, Wellington Monument), places of worship (the city's Anglican and Metropolitan cathedrals, St Nicholas' Church), and sports and recreation grounds (Goodison Park, Wavertree Park, and Sefton Park) also prominent (Figure 1).

Strongly reflective of the city's proud civic identity, economic institutions, and sporting prowess the newsreels depict an urban imaginary shaped by links with broader national interests; local vistas and vernacular architecture are less frequently in the foreground in the locations and landmarks on screen. In contrast, the locations in amateur films in the 1920s and 1930s display a pattern that emphasises tourism and leisure activity: the docks and Overhead Railway (a major tourist attraction at this time), shopping areas (Bold Street, Renshaw Street, and Church Street), high-society wedding venues (St Luke's Church, St Nicholas Church) and cultural entertainment venues such as St George's Hall, the Empire Theatre, and the Forum Cinema (Figure 2).[9]

By the 1930s, many of Liverpool's wealthier citizens had left the crowded, dirty inner city areas for the leafy suburbs of the Wirral and commuted to work

[8] *The Mersey Tunnels: 60 Years 1934-1994*, Angus Tilston, Pleasures Past, 1994.

[9] For a more developed discussion on using geospatial computing tools to map film and urban space see Hallam and Roberts (forthcoming).

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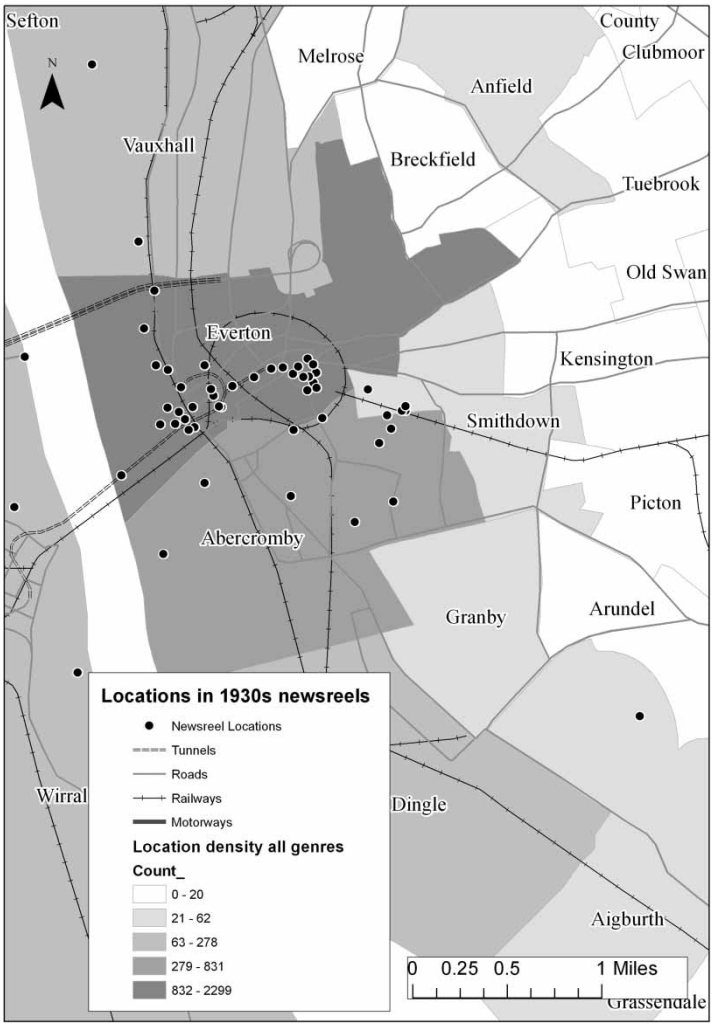

Figure 1. Locations in newsreel films, 1930s. Courtesy *City in Film* database, http://www.liv.ac.uk/lsa/cityinfilm/catalogue.html

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across the river by ferry or underground train. It was in these suburbs that a number of amateur cine clubs developed around 1932; adverts for their activities are found in magazines such as *Pathescope Monthly*, a review for the 9.5-mm cinematographer.[10] Compilations of 1930s amateur material made by clubs such as Hoylake Movie Makers feature family days out to New Brighton as well as trips to Liverpool to partake in major civic events such as the opening of the Mersey tunnel. Nodal points such as landmark buildings continue to shape the civic imaginary. Invariably shot in short sequences with a hand held, sometimes shaky, camera, these films construct an embodied

[10] For a detailed account of the development of Merseyside cine societies, see Hallam 2010.

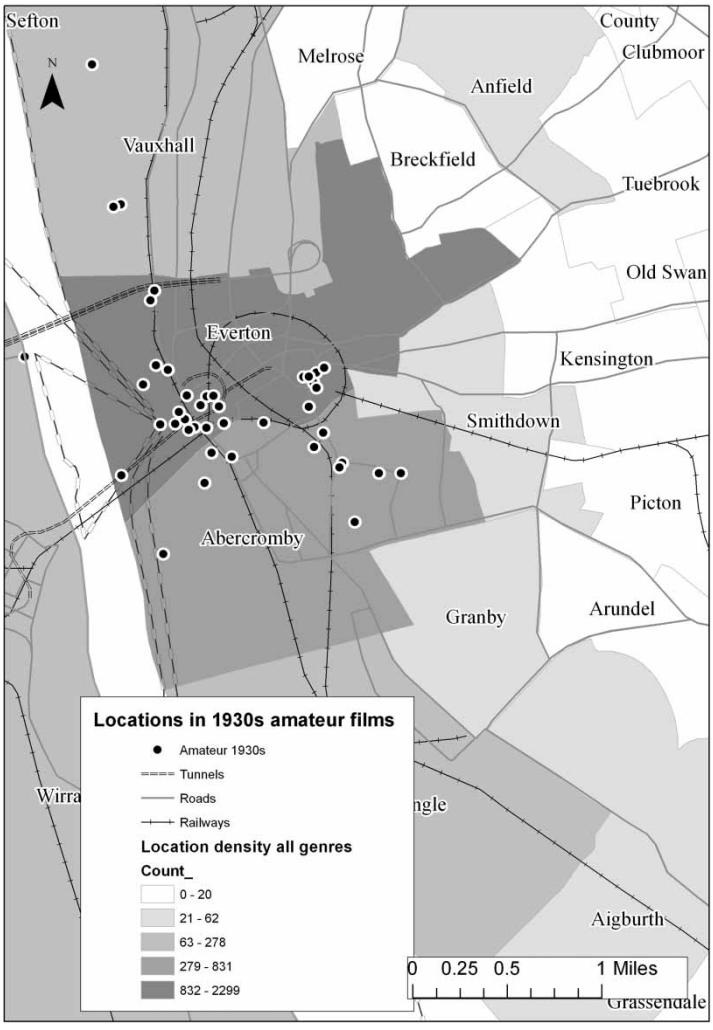

Figure 2. Locations in amateur films, 1930s. Courtesy *City in Film* database, http://www.liv.ac.uk/lsa/cityinfilm/catalogue.html

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gaze, a citizen subjectivity that situates viewers (family, friends, and club members) within a personal space of shared experience and memory. With viewers often watching the activities of their families and friends on screens at home or at cine-club screenings, affective architectures of familiarity and recognition continue to be in play.

By the 1950s the moving image production sector was responding to rapid changes in post war patterns of leisure and recreation. Amateur filmmaking had evolved to become a mature cultural practice with nation-wide networks of cine-clubs established in England, Scotland, and Wales. By the late 1950s there were seven cine-societies on Merseyside and others in nearby Chester and Deeside. The collective ethos of the clubs, with their shared ownership of cameras and equipment, brought the possibilities of filmmaking to an ever-widening group and class of people. Newsreel production, although

still buoyant at the beginning of the 1950s, declined throughout the decade in part due to a lessening of demand from cinemas for newsreels in their programmes, in itself a consequence of competition for regional news audiences from the new domestic medium of television. In contrast, documentary production of all forms was on the increase, enhanced by the activities of groups such as the Free Cinema movement and the increasing availability of lightweight 16-mm film equipment. Of the 41 documentaries on the *City in Film* database, eight are promotional vehicles commissioned by the city, eight are campaigning television documentaries about poverty and poor housing conditions, while a further eight are corporate films promoting the interests of their sponsors. The location map (Figure 3) shows that civic and municipal buildings and institutions continue to feature heavily in all forms

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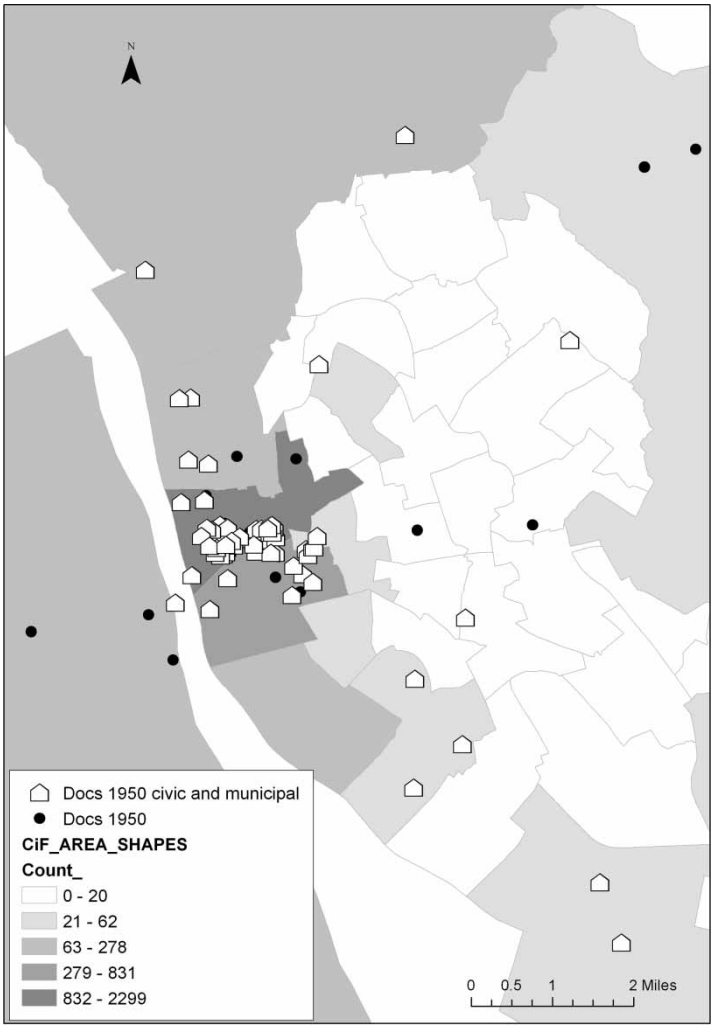

Figure 3. Civic and municipal locations as a proportion of all locations in documentaries, 1950s. Courtesy *City in Film* database, http://www.liv.ac.uk/lsa/cityinfilm/catalogue.html

of documentary, with marked clusters of nodal points around St George's Hall and the business area, images that point to national audience interests as well as local concerns.

Newsreels cover similar territory, with growing national interest in Liverpool's football clubs becoming more apparent (Goodison Park and Anfield Stadium) (Figure 4).

Locations in amateur films are more varied overall, covering more of Merseyside; although many of these are in the city centre, there is a marked decrease in images of civic and municipal locations and institutions (Figure 5). Reflecting the leisure pursuits of a growingly affluent professional and lower middle-class living in the wealthier areas of Merseyside, many of the films feature trips on the river to the seaside (New Brighton), visits to exhibitions, festivals, parades and

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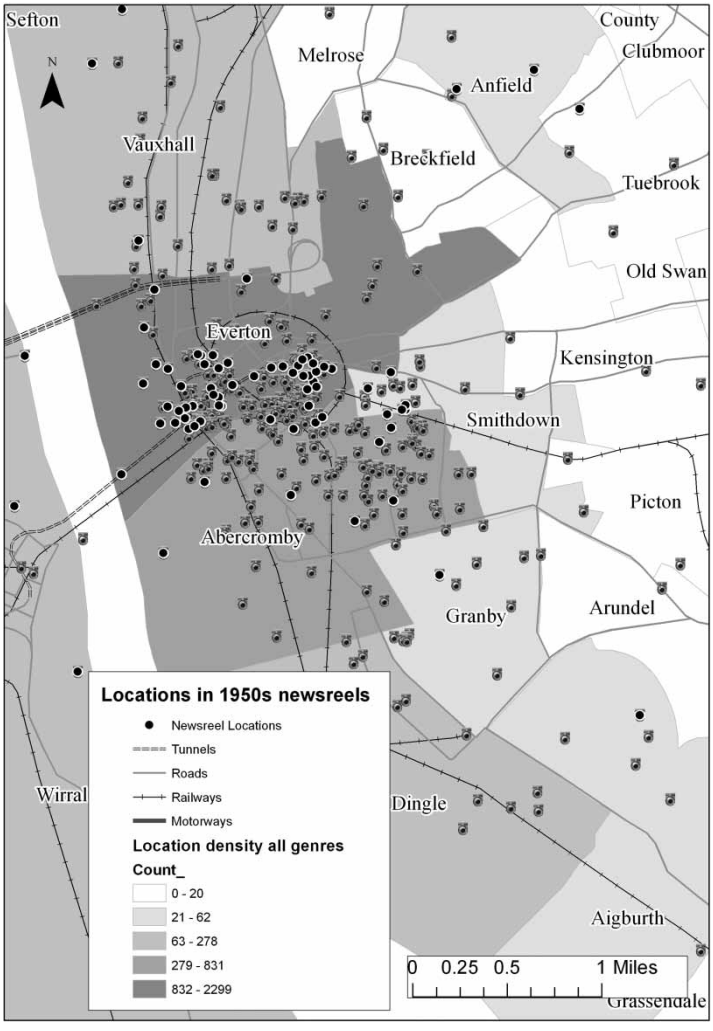

Figure 4. Locations in newsreel films as a proportion of locations in all genres, 1950s. Courtesy *City in Film* database, http://www.liv.ac.uk/lsa/cityinfilm/catalogue.html.

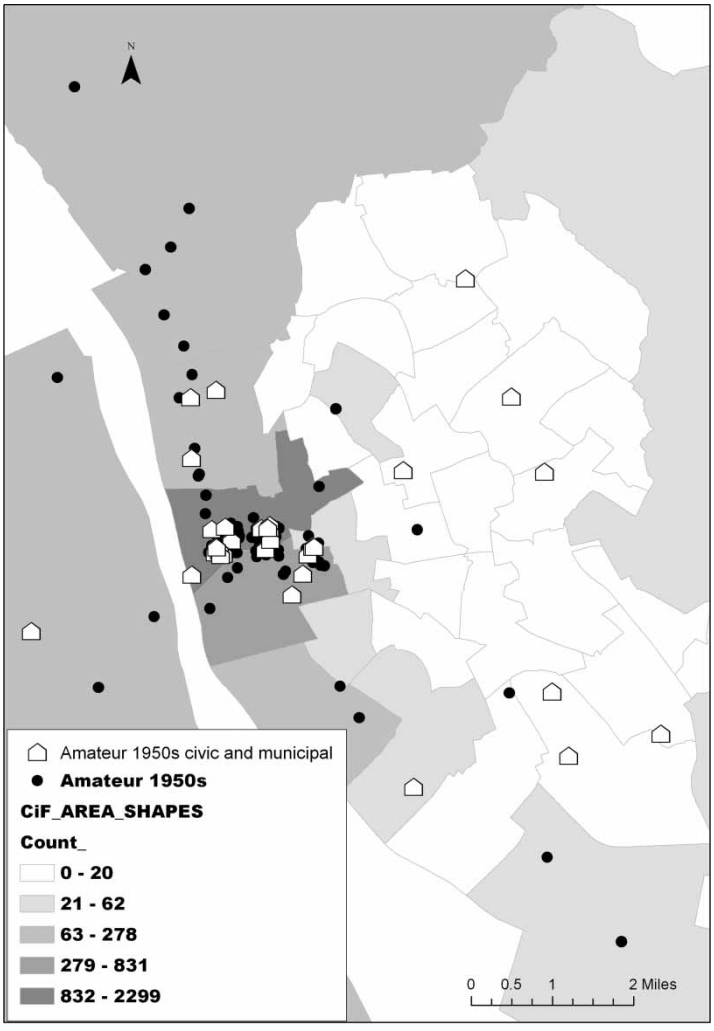

Figure 5. Civic and municipal locations as a proportion of all locations in amateur films, 1950s. Courtesy *City in Film* database, http://www.liv.ac.uk/lsa/cityinfilm/catalogue.html

other entertainments, and views of visiting liners and ships on the Mersey as well as other local transport systems and railways. Although there are references to events of civic importance such as royal visits to Merseyside and major festivals, the emphasis on more localised events such as garden parties and on leisure activities such as days at the seaside visualises the increasing mobility of the middle classes. By the mid 1950s, the overwhelming majority of the films that fall within the amateur genre are made by filmmakers and cine-clubs based outside of Liverpool (especially in the Wirral). Films include those that trace journeys from the suburbs into the city centre (Shand 2009b); people moving around the city via various different modes of transport; or films about transport (trams, Overhead Railway, bridges, high-speed roads [Roberts 2010a]). Mapping these more expansive location points highlights the essentially mobile nature of much amateur filmmaking practice in the

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region, demonstrating the extent to which transport geographies and routes within and beyond the city have remained an important factor in the documenting of Liverpool on film, and, by extension, of the shaping of ideas of place, locality, and identity.

In 1957 the city celebrated the 750th anniversary of the granting of its charter by King John in 1207. Two films made to commemorate the event serve as a useful detailed comparison of the urban imaginary and affective architectures of amateur and documentary films at this time: a city council commission that celebrates the 'glories' of Liverpool in the twentieth century, *This in our Time* (Associated Pathé 1952), which draws on the Pathé's newsreel archive; and an amateur film, *Charter Year* (Hoylake Cine Group 1957), made by filmmaker Eric Knowles. *This in our Time* is a history of Liverpool told through the first 50 years of newsreel films made about the city; it begins with rare early footage of the city's 700th anniversary festival parade in 1907, a pageant of moving tableaus on horse drawn carts that depicts the city's history from its earliest days as a feudal settlement to its Edwardian peak as self-proclaimed second city of the Empire. The glory of the city pageant, which would have been an orgy of colour in an otherwise dull Edwardian landscape, is rendered in ghostly black and white in marked contrast to the strident tones of authoritative commentary that accompany the visual montage, moving backwards and forwards through time as it boasts of the city's finest achievements: its proud military and sea-faring history, the contribution of women to the war effort in 1914, philanthropic traditions and concerns about the welfare of the poor, achievements in architecture and engineering, the slum clearance programmes of the 1930s and so on. Each achievement is qualified by a statement of Liverpool firsts: the first city to have public baths, the first city to have a medical officer of health, to introduce public wash houses, to build homes that were 'almost revolutionary' in their design for workers' families. A long sequence of naval footage dwells on the heroism of local people displayed in the recent war: 3396 killed in the Blitz of May 1941 and ten thousand homes destroyed. The hectoring voice over reels off the city's story in a well-oiled narration pitched against the shadows of former glories accompanied by cheerful brass band marching music, a patriotic middle-brow aesthetic of uncomplaining determination that, with a stiff upper lip, continues to keep smiling through.

By way of contrast, Eric Knowles' film is about the present, an on-going account of events and activities made during the course of Charter year structured around a number of key locations indicated by inter-titles. Almost 30 minutes in length, his is an ambitious attempt to document aspects of city life in what was at the time the relatively new issue of standard 8-mm colour film. While many of the events that Knowles records are civic in nature, such as the opening of the William Brown library by the Queen Mother following a re-building scheme to repair damage caused by bombs in the blitz of 1941, Knowles also records changes in the urban and topographical fabric of the city such as the demolition of the affectionately named 'dockers umbrella' (the Overhead Railway), another casualty of war-time damage, and a journey on the last electric tram. Both the electric Overhead Railway (a Liverpool first) and the electric tram system were symbols of

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modernisation when they were opened in the 1890s. Knowles' film, while celebrating Charter Year, also heralds the changes created by an overall decline in the city's fortunes that would lead to the City Council adopting a new rhetoric in the 1960s: City of Change and Challenge. The section inter-titles are indicative of how the filmmaker envisaged his record of events, focusing on well-known city landmarks and nodal locations such as the Town Hall, the Cathedral, the University, the Pier Head, city parks, and Otterspool Promenade. As well as predictable scenes of civic celebration, there is a focus on people and everyday activities such as flower sellers in Clayton Square and carters on the Dock Road tending their horses. Light relief is provided by Professor Codman's Punch and Judy Show arriving on St George's Plateau accompanied by a young (now nationally famous) Ken Dodd and the delighted faces of children watching the ritual beatings. The considered ways in which these sequences have been shot and assembled (rather than edited to create a narrative or a montage of juxtapositions) is analogous to Castro's definition of the atlas as a collection of maps (i.e. images), assembled in relation to an overall scheme that aims for 'thoroughness and completeness' (2009:13). The emphasis on what is disappearing (the Overhead Railway, the electric tram system, craft skills associated with rope work, shire horses used for goods haulage) lends the film a nostalgic air, given added poignancy by the garish colour palate of the film stock, the blurred quality of the image, uneven camerawork and home made inter-titles. Constructed for personal reasons rather than for profit or civic purposes this film is in Bruno's term an *e*motion(al) record of the daily activities taking place in the locations around which the filmmaker chooses to structure his film, a spatial sequencing that constitutes 'an atlas of emotion', a citizen subjectivity governed by a longing for the securities of the past.

The emotive flows that shape the choice of locations in amateur films give material shape to their civic sensibilities, illustrating and revealing contemporary subjectivities. These become apparent through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses of the spatial relations inscribed in film practice at specific historical moments. In the early days of film production, films are made for local consumption and profit, their shooting techniques designed to record both the event itself and the reactions of the crowds that attend; films play an active role in constructing a modern citizen subjectivity, particularly amongst middle-class filmgoers. By the 1930s, newsreel companies, driven by economies of scale, seek to inform and entertain national audiences; their coverage of individual cities clusters around potentially familiar sites, recognisable landmarks and major events, their voice-over narrations and rousing music designed to foster pride and nationalist sentiments. The amateur is a member of the urban crowd, a participant observer/witness who creates an embodied viewpoint of city life; no longer an inner-city resident, the amateur's subjectivity often appears to be that of an eager tourist, entranced by the views and vistas. By the 1950s, for some amateur filmmakers such as Knowles the journey to the city has become a nostalgic trip; his film maps a fractured civic imaginary in which the affective architectures of citizen subjectivity are charged by the forces of destruction and modernisation.

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Towards a method of cine-cartographic mapping

Drawing on the work of the mapping historian John Harley, Teresa Castro suggests that:

> if we understand maps to be 'graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes or events in the human world' (Harley and Woodward 1987: XVI), our focus shifts from maps as objects to mapping as a function. Within this context, the coupling of eye and instrument that distinguishes cartography's observation of space seems not so distant from the one that determines cinema's careful coding and scaling of the world. (Castro 2008: 35)

The topographic fascination associated with topophilia apparent in the work of amateur filmmakers such as Eric Knowles is found in many amateur films explored as part of the *Mapping the City in Film* project (see Hallam 2007). Following Castro's guidelines that we should consider urban filmscapes in terms of mental geographies and emotional mappings (2008: 36), the amateur city films considered here arguably constitute an embodied form of cine-cartographic film practice in which the relations of being, seeing, and recording are brought together and written into (rather than topographically onto) the body of text. Amateur filmmakers, no less than professional moving-image producers, inhabit the imaginative, material, and symbolic spaces through which their visions are articulated in the contexts of their own codes of practice. Ryan Shand has described this as 'a homogenous and parallel film practice…existing not necessarily to challenge the mainstream but in dialogue with it' (Shand 2009a: 160). While amateur films vary in the diversity of their generic attributes, ranging across most of the forms associated with mainstream commercial film culture, their particular mode of production, whether made by lone individuals, who are part of cine-societies and groups, or made as a group members of cine-society projects, remains wedded to a highly nuanced relationship to locality and place. As Shand suggests, 'amateur filmmakers have perhaps been most active in the exploration of both actual and imagined local worlds, enjoying a particular intimacy with geographies close to home, and a characteristic sensitivity to often highly nuanced aspects of localised social practice' (Shand 2009a: 157). It is in this sense that the films reveal 'the little tactics of the habitat', bringing into sharper perspective the micro-politics and affective architectures that shape imaginaries of place through their detailed recording of everyday life, events and occurrences.

The role and future scope of cinematic cartography as a mode of geo-historical praxis is premised on the contention, as the literary scholar Franco Moretti has observed, that maps function 'as analytical tools…bringing to light relations that would otherwise remain hidden' (Moretti 1998: 3). The development of arts and humanities-focused applications of GIS technology, such as research in historical GIS (Gregory and Ell 2007; Geddes and Gregory Forthcoming), and the studies of film production and consumption briefly outlined above, provide some indication as to the ways in which GIS

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resources may be harnessed to begin to provide critical insights into cultural, aesthetic, and everyday aspects of filmmaking as a form of spatial practice. Furthermore, the interactivity offered by GIS enables researchers, archivists, and museum curators alike to embed sound and video files as attachments to geo-referenced point, line, and polygon data, extending the contextual frameworks through which future generations can access and understand these local films.[11] Barthes' call to 'multiply the readings of the city' (Barthes 1997: 171) can be given further impetus by the interpolation of oral histories, video interviews, and other digitised forms of ethnographic data within the already multi-layered cartographic and historical film geographies of the city.

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[11] Material developed as part of this project is held on the GIS database at the Museum of Liverpool and can be accessed in part from the interactive exhibit in the History Detectives gallery.

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Filmography

Charter Year (Hoylake Cine Group 1957)
Church Street (Lumière Brothers 1897)
Lime Street (Lumière Brothers 1897)
Lord Roberts Presenting Medals to Boer War Volunteers in Liverpool (Mitchell & Kenyon 1901)
M (Fritz Lang 1931)
The Mersey Tunnels: 60 Years 1934–1994, (Angus Tilston, Pleasures Past 1994)
Panorama Pris du Chemin de Fer Électrique (Lumière Brothers 1897)

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This in our Time (Associated Pathé 1952)
Views of Liners 'Cedric' and 'Britannic' (Preston Family 1930)

Julia Hallam, Reader in Communication and Media, University of Liverpool has led two UK Arts and Humanities Research Council projects exploring the relationship between film and urban space. Her current project, *Mapping the City in Film: A Geo-historical Analysis*, is developing new methodologies for multi-disciplinary and intermedial analysis of moving image texts using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) software and creating a map of films made in and about Merseyside for public exhibition with the Museum of Liverpool. An edited collection, *Locating the Moving Image: New Approaches to Film and Place*, is due to be published by Indiana University Press in December 2012.

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