Introduction

From the 1990s, the humanities has undergone a ‘spatial turn’, with ideas from human geography finding purchase within humanities disciplines like literary studies, sociology, and history (Warf and Arias 2009: 1). As a discipline studying a medium predicated upon the depiction of space, film studies has equally alighted on the potential use of spatial and geographical methodologies. As geographer Doreen Massey suggested in 1999, ‘the potential for creative dialogue between people in film studies and those in geography is enormous. It has already been productive, and I think could be more so’ (Massey and Lury 1999: 233). Certain ideas sourced from spatial theorists have accordingly made numerous appearances in film studies, two notable examples being Marc Augé’s (1995) description of the ‘non-places’ of postmodernity and globalisation, and Fredric Jameson’s (1991) oft-cited concept of ‘cognitive mapping’. However, even in this context of increased attention to space and spatiality, the work of Henri Lefebvre has only been fitfully employed. This is surprising, not only because of the tight interrelationship of the formation of film studies as a modern university discipline with Marxist methodologies, but also because of the attention long paid in the discipline to issues of how meanings can be spatially encoded and expressed through mise-en-scène.

In this chapter, I will ask to what extent Lefebvre’s work might prove useful for understanding the spaces created by moving image media, in particular those representations of urban space with which cinema is often associated. Lefebvre’s spatial triad delineates between spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces, with the second term naming abstract, often visual conceptualisations of space (Lefebvre 1991: 38–39). Lefebvre generally associates these with drawing boards, blueprints, and blank sheets of paper, and he repeatedly proposes that they are the tools of technocrats who would impose their instrumental will on space. Although quite different to these, cinema, with its visual privilege, would seem to fit such a rubric. Yet, as Lawrence Webb (2014: 24–25) notes, cinema’s representation of space ‘mediate[s] between the material profilmic environment of the city, the conceptual world of architectural theory and urbanism, and the socially experienced space of the city of which it is both a “representation” and a concrete instance’. Cinema thus opens up to the complexities and ambiguities of Lefebvre’s spatial triad, a triad which Lefebvre himself (1991: 40) described not as an abstract...
typological model but a malleable critical tool. With this in mind, I will not delineate the space of the moving image purely as a representation. Instead, I will propose that Lefebvre’s work on the devaluation of space in critical theory can reveal spatial biases in methods of film analysis; that his writings on urban form can enlighten readings of the city spaces represented in cinema; and, finally, that his emphasis on visuality and neocapital urban environments has only become more pertinent as screens and moving-image media increasingly permeate and define the contemporary city.

**Foregrounding cinematic space**

Film may consist of shifting patterns of light and colour upon a fixed screen, but it is also emphatically a spatial art. As Erwin Panofsky (2003: 71) described in 1959, narrative cinema of the kind that has been culturally dominant since the second decade of the 20th century is both a ‘dynamisation of space’ and a ‘spatialisation of time’. Unlike theatre, space in film is quintessentially active:

> Not only bodies move in space, but space itself does, approaching, receding, turning, dissolving, and recrystallizing as it appears through the controlled locomotion and focusing of the camera and through the cutting and editing of the various shots…. This opens up a world of possibilities of which the stage can never dream.

*(Panofsky 2003: 72)*

These possibilities produce a distinctive form of space, *cinematic space*. This space overwhelmingly seeks – whether consciously or automatically – to replicate something of our experience of embodied, lived space. But, as Panofsky’s words imply, it remains ontologically and perceptually distinct. In film, flat compositions, edited views, and moving camera angles become, through the attention of the spectator, something like a space we can feel we are experiencing, even though at the moment of their reception these perceived spaces are solely imagistic.

In this, cinematic space is like real space, only perhaps more so: it is *produced*, created at the point of perception by a spectator/occupant. ‘*(Social) space is a (social) product*,’ Lefebvre (1991: 26–27) asserts, and is not reducible to ‘mental space (as it is defined by philosophers and mathematicians)’ nor ‘physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of ‘nature’). Space is not fixed and inert, but a product that comes into being thanks to ‘networks of exchange and flows of raw material and energy’ (Lefebvre 1991: 85), its social character arising from its investment with meaning by living bodies, historical actions, and the imagination (Lefebvre 1991: 40–41). This is of course not the only way that space is produced for Lefebvre – it is also manufactured by the ruling powers of the corporation and the state. Lefebvre’s Marxism leads him to call for at the very least a rethinking, and at most the overthrow of these powers and their spatial code, a code of visuality and abstraction that takes space out of the hands of its everyday user (see for example Lefebvre 1991: 57).

As a medium that puts space onscreen, and which provides movement through space rather than static or semiotic descriptions of space, film is not only connected with architecture (Vidler 2000: 99) but positioned as a peculiarly urban art form. David B. Clarke proposes that films and cities are ‘imbibed to such an extent that it is unthinkable that the cinema could have developed without the city’, and that the city has equally ‘been unmistakably shaped by the cinematic form’ (Clarke 1997: 1; see also Koeck and Roberts 2010; McQuire 2008: 59). In 1936, Walter Benjamin (1969: 250) claimed that cinema was the only art form that was sufficient for the modernising city, inuring spectators to the ‘profound changes in the apperceptive apparatus’. 
that defined the early 20th century. Since the 1990s, scholarly literature in cinema and the city has grown apace, a phenomenon Charlotte Brunsdon (2012) links to the instability of the disciplinary objects at the heart of both film and urban studies. (That is, at the onset of the 21st century, urban studies has as much trouble defining ‘the city’ as film studies does in defining ‘cinema’). If existing accounts stress the innate link between cinema and the city, they do not in doing so claim that all cinema exclusively depicts or is solely received within the urban environment. Instead, they highlight the way in which industrialised, mechanised processes associated with urban life have rearranged social organisation, how this converges with the emergence and functioning of the cinematic apparatus, and how cinematic images create and propagate ideas of specific cities and the city in general upon a global stage. (Rather than provide an overview of this literature here, interested readers are directed to Brunsdon’s [2012: 214–215] extensive timeline of key publications.)

Yet, even as cinema’s relationship to the city has received considerable attention since the late 1990s, this work has been for the most part slow to take up Lefebvre’s own insights regarding contemporary urbanism and, particularly, spatial production. While Lefebvre might make semi-regular appearances in books and articles on film and urban space, he often does so only as a fleeting reference, functioning as a heavy-hitting scholarly bulwark testifying to the importance of analysing space and its impact upon those living within it. (There are exceptions, and these will be discussed in the next section.) Certainly, any formalist reading of cinematic urban space that privileges the manner in which the film text is producing a distinctive form of space and spatiality – and what the political consequences of this production are – might reasonably be considered Lefebvrian, and there is a wealth of material in this vein which looks at specific films and cities. But a concerted engagement with Lefebvre is for the most part lacking.

Nonetheless, one of the most influential accounts of cinematic space has intriguing, if subtle, links with Lefebvre’s work. Stephen Heath’s 1976 essay ‘Narrative Space’ (Heath 1976) sets out to show how space is part of onscreen actions, but describes this involvement as defined by support, economy, and legibility. Film is produced ‘as the realisation of a coherent and positioned space’, one in which views of reality have been coded in order to tame their potential ‘excess’; that is, the way reality (or illusionistic representation) always escapes the limits and movements of the frame (Heath 1976: 74). If perspectival renderings of space in painting imposed a spatial code built around the eye – an idea Heath shares with Lefebvre (1991: 273, 361) – then much the same is true of film. The movement and visual variation introduced by the cinematic apparatus into this perspectival code threatens to potentially destabilise it as a system, and is for Heath tamed in narrative filmmaking through compositional staging and continuity editing techniques. Or, to put it a slightly different way, ‘narrative ensures that film’s mobile frames and figures remain consumable for a viewer weaned on Renaissance perspective’ (Cooper 2002: 139). Being cinematically constructed through an intentional process (‘space will be difficult’), Heath (1976: 79) asserts the work of cinematic spatial production, and how this work is ideologically loaded and how it binds the spectator within the (imaginary, but coherent and believable) space that is cinematically produced.

Heath’s essay is firmly situated within ‘the semiotic–psychoanalytic tradition’ of 1970s film theory and its focus on Althusserian ideological interpellation (Clarke 1997: 8). But his consideration of how space’s onscreen legibility is dictated by socio-cultural currents and a politically loaded concept of ‘realism’ all connects his essay to Lefebvre’s contemporaneous concerns. Both Heath and Lefebvre reveal the effort required to subordinate space, what is at stake in this subordination, and how this process is culturally conditioned and even implicitly capitalistic. Lefebvre (2009: 170) describes how if space ‘has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be “purely” formal, the essence of rational abstraction, it is precisely
because this space has already been occupied and planned, already been the focus of past strategies, of which we cannot always find traces’. This is equally applicable to filmed space, in which the ‘strategies’ of coherence, a kind of ‘background-ing’, and an orientation around character and narrative support are overwhelming but unquestioned. Film grammar, as it is employed in a mainstream context, is about privileging the movements and experiences of onscreen individuals, and space is used to serve this goal, usually through its marginalisation as an agential force (often being, quite literally, out of focus and in the background).

Indeed, in formal accounts of cinematic space – such as those by Richard Maltby (2003) and David Bordwell (1985; 2006) – its function as safe, legible background or support is accentuated to the extent that any alternative reading of cinematic space is effectively closed down. Maltby (2003: 354) may intriguingly point to Psycho’s (1960) shower scene as inaugurating the possibility of ‘unsafe space’ in mainstream cinema – space in which ‘our comforting ability to predict what will happen in a space or a story can be arbitrarily violated’ – but the nightmarishness, the psychic and visceral threat of such space comes from the very fact that it denies (but only at key, narratively motivated moments) the classical model of space built on coherence and subordination. Anthony Vidler (2000: 100–107) describes how film and built space had a problematic relationship, since cinema’s potential for spatial experimentation and warped and distorted spaces (seen in German Expressionism of the 1920s) denied modernist narratives of clarity, poise, and functionalism. But those moments when space seems to occupy the foreground, is placed on the agenda as an unstable, formative agent in cinematic form, are always exceptions. Indeed, many scholars and critics call attention to the importance of space in any given film text by suggesting that it functions like a character in itself. Meant as a way of lauding space and of paying space its due, this compliment only elevates spatial concerns by endowing them with the mantle of the psychological or the narrational. Suggesting that space can only be viably studied by bestowing upon it the traits of an onscreen individual is problematic and dichotomises cinematic space into that which is character-like (and thus worthy of study) and that which is apparently just background (and which can therefore be safely considered a neutral support). Space is important even when it does fade into the background: when it is not encouraging us to see it as character in itself, it is still influencing characters, textual form, and spectatorship in crucial ways.

Lefebvre and cinematic urbanism

In listing problems that might be encountered when applying Lefebvre’s theories to contemporary urban and political life, Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden ask how successfully his work might ‘travel’ into new geographical and temporal situations (Brenner and Elden 2009: 32). Similarly, questions may be asked around the usefulness of Lefebvre for analysing moving image media. As Webb (2014: 242) points out, Lefebvre had little to say about cinema directly, which as a result might be thought of as one of his own ‘blind fields’ (see Lefebvre 2003: 29–31). The application of Lefebvre’s work to film is then made especially problematic thanks to his words on images and media culture, which are rarely celebratory.

Discussing the image as part of a broader semantic field in 1961’s Critique of Everyday Life vol. 2, Lefebvre (2002: 289) credits it with expressivity and emotionality, and even proposes that ‘the deepest communication of all is achieved through images’. This is a rare moment of openness towards the visual, an openness which is rarely in evidence. In The Production of Space in particular, Lefebvre offers a savage condemnation of images. Connecting images of any kind with the modernist ‘trinity of readability-visibility-intelligibility’, he attacks them as fundamental to a conceptual framework that may be normalised but which is highly deceptive (Lefebvre 1991: 96). Denying the body, Western culture’s establishing of the faculty of sight as the primary sense
– to the extent that that which is true is synonymous with that which is or can be seen – is the root of abstract space and the political problems of urban space and social praxis in the late 20th century. For Lefebvre, images can never reveal, only reinforce:

photographs, advertisements, films. Can images of this kind really be expected to expose errors concerning space? Hardly. Where there is error or illusion, the image is more likely to secrete it and reinforce it than to reveal it. No matter how ‘beautiful’ they may be, such images belong to an incriminated medium.

*(Lefebvre 1991: 96–97)*

Images, in particular those of cinema and television, divert attention from real problems, and their emphasis on visibility encourages passivity in their audiences (Lefebvre 1987: 11), infantilising them and encouraging ‘non-participation in a false presence’ as a way of life (Lefebvre 2002: 223–224; see also Jones 2015: 66). Indeed, not only do images deceive, we may find the idea of imagistic representation (and abstraction) wherever we find illusion, all of which prompts Lefebvre (1991: 97) to proclaim that ‘the image kills’.

However, for all this condemnation, there is hope: sometimes an artist’s ‘tenderness or cruelty’ transgresses the limitations of the image, and, as a result, ‘a truth and a reality’ might thus emerge which avoid the image’s normal emphasis upon ‘exactitude, clarity, readability and plasticity’ (Lefebvre 1991: 97). A brief footnote in this passage from *The Production of Space* points to photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson’s work as an example of that which is able to enact such an overcoming. Just as Merrifield (2006: 26) suggests that Lefebvre ‘could never comprehend modern capitalism as seamless’, so too this minor admission indicates that the image may be capable of something other than deception and abstraction. Deploring the ‘monopoly on intelligibility’ granted written texts and semiotic coding, Lefebvre (1991: 62) identifies a series of non-verbal systems which are more ambiguous, including ‘music, painting, sculpture, architecture’, and even theatre; if, tellingly, film does not feature on this list, we might nonetheless suggest that it is not so different or so separate from those arts that do appear.

Accordingly, some film studies work has sought to explicitly use Lefebvre’s ideas to discover how cinema might show the spatial strategies of neocapital through its visualisation of urban contestation. Perhaps the most widely known example of this is Edward Dimendberg’s *Film Noir and the Spaces of Modernity*, in which Lefebvre’s work on abstraction and the multidimensionality of space is used to reconsider the spatial strategies at work in films noir of the 1940s and 1950s. Dimendberg proposes that these films show ‘far more of the city than is necessary to commence their narratives’ (2004: 89), and that skylines and urban landmarks feature ‘as simultaneously background and active agent’ (2004: 92), words which bely the difficulty in getting away from the language of narrative surplus (and the dichotomising of narrative/activity on the one hand and background on the other). Approaching film noir as a ‘process and product’ of cultural negotiations and restructurings, Dimendberg (2004: 12) suggests that this genre or cycle of films responded to the rise in the US of ‘abstract space’, and acutely shows the consequences of the ‘centripetal’ changes that reshaped urban centres in the early 20th century into regimented, corporatised spaces of accumulation, and also reshaped beliefs around who the city belonged to and what it was for. Noir characters negotiate constant police surveillance and highly securitised urban streets, living in an environment of ‘functionalized separation’ in which ‘urban forms connected to the life of a culture and charged with collective meaning’ have been lost (Dimendberg 2004: 102). If the city in film noir was a place of threat, then this was not simply due to its lawlessness: the anxiety of noir urbanism arises not only from threats to personal safety, but also from what Dimendberg (2004: 91) calls ‘the psychic hazards of dwelling in an
urban space whose historical mutation yields real spatial gaps and temporal voids’. The spatial changes wrought by Lefebvre’s bureaucratic society of controlled consumption are therefore felt cinematically in noir filmmaking.

Dimendberg’s reading of this body of films, then, is Lefebvrian in as much as it highlights how space is influencing generic and narrative procedures as well as the actions of onscreen characters. It is not unusual for Lefebvre’s (admittedly still expansive) commentary on specific spatial restructurings to be employed alongside his more theory-led critique of space in this way. Webb (2014: 235, 242–244), for instance, applies Lefebvre’s work on the city in the 1970s to the way Paris was being represented cinematically by French New Wave directors like Jean-Luc Godard. To explore the intersection of cinema with processes of urban modernisation and transnational branding, Webb uses both Lefebvre’s description of the historical re-shaping of urban space (itself inspired by Paris) and his more overarching and philosophical claims regarding the multidimensional and political nature of space. In my own work, I have likewise applied these two strands of Lefebvre’s thinking, in my case to contemporary cinema. Action cinema, I have argued, depicts physical movements in urban space that both rely on and subvert spatial strategies of top-down control, as protagonists attend to their surroundings in concerted and inventive ways, exploring the nuances, weak points, and latent possibilities of contemporary urban space (Jones 2015: 55–66). Meanwhile, recent mainstream cinema that shows the manufacturing of false or duplicitous spaces (Jones 2016), or which employs extensive digital imagery to generate environments (Jones 2013), can likewise be fruitfully read alongside Lefebvre’s ideas around strategies of spatial abstraction and their consequences (despite the historical and conceptual distance of these films from his writing).

In the same vein, Katherine Shonfield considers Lefebvre’s work invaluable for indicating how cinema can reveal the normally disguised ideological impositions of contemporary urban space. In Walls Have Feelings, Shonfield (2000: 160) argues that fictions such as films should not be accepted as ‘at best interesting, but subordinate, parallel commentaries to mainstream architectural history’. Seemingly inspired by Lefebvre’s intense distrust of knowledge specialisation and the hallowed expertise of the technocrat, she puts films forward as ‘non-expert’ spatial interpretations that can ‘make bold connections between apparently disparate circumstances’ in a way denied more technical accounts of urban space (Shonfield 2000: 161–162). Indeed, her claims here echo Lefebvre’s (2005: 28) historically-situated assertions that from the 1960s onwards the ‘people’ of French society, and Western society by extension, somehow sought a kind of ‘counter-knowledge’ that might amount to a ‘counter-power’. For Shonfield, both films and their audiences evince a kind of spatial knowledge that is unappreciated and politically untapped. Inspiringly, she closes the book with a plea that more – and more serious – attention must be paid to cinematic fictions and their spatial representations, since moving this ‘fictional insight to centre stage’ will show the public their stake in ‘discussions of the city’s future’ (Shonfield 2000: 173).

In all these cases, then, Lefebvre’s descriptions of shifting spatial imaginations have substantiated claims around the onscreen urban space of a given set of films; but his conceptual framework for interpreting space and its constitution have also proven crucial in thinking about the production of (cinematic) space more generally. Films offer insight not only into historical urban formations, but also the way these formations shape action and different forms of spatial consciousness (see Jones 2015: 148). Moreover, such depictions might go beyond the representable and become habitable. This is the argument made by Giuliana Bruno, who contemplates film in relation to architecture, travel, memory, and mapmaking, and claims that films are part of a ‘habitable, spatiovisual configuration’ (Bruno 2002: 2). Lefebvre thus informs what she calls her ‘cartographic reading of haptic space’ (Bruno 2002: 255), a reading of
cinema open to our subjective experience of living somehow within a film and experiencing the extended world of global tourism through this moving-image habitat and its psychogeography. She describes how Italian neorealist cinema – which shot on location in the war-torn urban spaces of Europe in the late 1940s and early 1950s – offers city walks in which we witness the interplay between city and body, urban space and social existence, and does so in ways that call to mind Lefebvre’s thinking on the interplay of environment and subjectivity (Bruno 2002: 30). Like architecture, film is ‘built as it is constantly negotiated by (e)motions, traversed by the histories both of its inhabitants and its transient dwellers’ (Bruno 2002: 66). Referring to cinema as ‘a vehicle for psycho–spatial journeys’ (Bruno 1997: 23), her reading is explicitly Lefebvrian in its attention to the body and the involvement of the body and the embodied subject in perceiving space, and how this happens even in the seemingly immobile situation of viewing screened media.

Bruno (1997: 22–23) sees the ‘mobile urban viewpoint’ of film as a kind of in-between, transitional space, and argues that cinema and its psychogeographical journeys are ‘a mobile map of differences, a production of socio–sexual fragments and cross-cultural travel’. This use of Lefebvre to highlight cinema’s progressive potential – echoed in Shonfield’s writing (2004) as well as my own – might be considered a sort of counter-reading of his work. For Lefebvre (1991: 33, 41), representations of space, being as they are ‘tied to the relations of production and to the “order” which those relations impose’, play their own social and political part in replicating and enforcing those relations. As Heath’s writing on cinematic space indicates, narrative filmmaking’s articulation of space certainly seems to function in this manner. However, Lefebvre’s work, when applied to the images and media apparatus he often harshly condemned, can also helpfully reveal the same kinds of social shifts and spatial ideologies he sought to understand. Moreover, in many ways the spaces depicted by cinema cannot be described purely or even primarily as ‘representations of space’. Many film scholars unsettle or outright reject such a typological distinction (see Dimendberg 2004; Jones 2015; Webb 2014), and films – even if they are in many cases commercial commodities – are not normally the products of the ‘scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers’ that Lefebvre (1991: 38) associates with such representations. Films are rather urban explorations that map the spaces they depict in ways that open them up to our inhabitations; these mappings may or may not be accurate in any strict sense, but they do reflect spatial ideologies and possibilities in insightful, useful, too-little-explored ways.

City of screens

In stressing the importance of the visual in the contemporary urban landscape, Lefebvre implicitly joins the images of television and the globalised media apparatus with this landscape. Both cinema and abstract space reduce ‘three-dimensional realities to two dimensions’ and seem to offer space ‘no social existence independently of an intense, aggressive and responsive visualization’ (Lefebvre 1991: 285–286). If the contemporary urban form functions according to visual dictates, then this only becomes more overt as the city itself becomes reliant upon mediation and screens to provide public information, social spectacle, and urban branding (Berry, Harbord, and Moore 2013; Pratt and San Juan 2012; Verhoeff 2016). Images form an increasingly intrinsic part of what Nigel Thrift (2004) calls the ‘spatial politics of affect’ in today’s cities. They assist in neocapitalism’s 24/7 functioning and its relentless soliciting and management of attention (Crary 2013). And the way these images are globally constructed, aesthetically engineered, and geographically situated all reveal the workings of the urban (Rose, Degen, and Melhuish 2016). As Scott McQuire summarises, in today’s ‘media
city’, digital moving image technologies take a constitutive part in ‘the dynamic production of contemporary urban space, in Lefebvre’s sense of binding affect and cognition to space’ (McQuire 2008: vii).

So, the contemporary city is not only ‘cinematic’ insofar as it utilises visual logics to implicitly place space beyond the control of its inhabitants, but also for the (perhaps more obvious) reason that it is inundated with screens. And if the image functions in the powerful fashion that Lefebvre claims, then it is vital to undertake work deciphering the content of those images that circulate not only of but also in the city in an era of urban screens, camera-phones, and periscope. Lefebvre (1991: 188–189) suggests that representations of space confuse investigations into the foundations of social space because ‘they offer an already clarified picture’, and so he dictates that they must be ‘dispelled’. But the images encountered by the city-dweller are a kind of spatial practice in and of themselves. If the individual in the city street was for Lefebvre (2003: 18) both ‘spectacle and spectator’, then these spectatorial relations are now often mediated and understood through screens, and these screens accordingly reshape urban space, becoming part of the urban semiology which Lefebvre (1996: 108) suggests must be read in any process that seeks to decipher the deeper, less visible, ‘unconscious’ aspects of the contemporary city.

If Lefebvre’s work points most overtly to how these screens might maintain a kind of spatial status quo of visualisation and organised passivity, then we must note that they also have the capacity to intervene in our experience of the urban (Verhoeff 2016). We can thus propose that the right to the city as it might manifest today should take in not only the occupation and use of urban space, but also the right to disseminate images of this pedestrian activity, and should influence the kinds of images that circulate within urban spaces and what their content might be. In an era not only of digital surveillance but also of sousveillance – the recording and dissemination of filmed material on consumer platforms – the circulation of moving images of the urban environment can function not only to control and indoctrinate but also to stimulate debate and engender political activity. Images are not only observed, they are used, enacted, in ways that escape Lefebvre’s negative considerations of them, and that include them within more radical and interventionist spatial politics.

**Conclusion: the Lefebvrian cinematic city**

Lefebvre may think of images as a lifeless medium and consider them to privilege visuality at the expense of the body in order to maintain an ideology of abstract space, but, despite this, films offer important interpretations of urban space that must be understood in order to account for the workings of the contemporary city. Film provides not only a vital record of how urban space is conceived at a given time – as in film noir’s tracking of the centripetal changes to the city – it also manifests space itself in ways that reveal underlying spatial ideologies – as in mainstream narrative cinema’s focus on legibility, coherence, and the individualised subject. Moreover, thinking about the Lefebvrian cinematic city as something that is not just confined to a screen (working in a unidirectional fashion, and solely representational) but rather as something embedded within the urban environment, bi-directional and processual, and as operating across all terms of Lefebvre’s spatial triad, allows us to update his urban theories for present conditions. Images, then, have a more complicated relationship to the urban than merely providing a kind of abstract model for planners, or an example of the disembodied forms of experience and knowledge sought by neocapitalist states. Moving image media can highlight spatial strategies and even counter-strategies; offer representational spaces of meaning that are somehow psychologically inhabitable; and even re-shape the affective and experiential
economy of the city itself. As such, it is clear that film studies can learn much from Lefebvre’s writings, and vice versa.

References


