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# Images and influence: the role of film in representing Johannesburg and shaping everyday practice in the city

**Parker, Alexandra Mary**

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# IMAGES AND INFLUENCE: THE ROLE OF FILM IN REPRESENTING JOHANNESBURG AND SHAPING EVERYDAY PRACTICE IN THE CITY

**Alexandra Mary Parker**

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

**Johannesburg, 2014**

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination to any other university.

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(Signature of candidate)

____ day of _____ year _____

# Abstract

Colonial and apartheid policies imposed a segregated urban form on Johannesburg and have led to a limited and generally incoherent knowledge of the city across most segments of the population. Representations of the city in cultural mediums including film allow residents to cross boundaries and make conceptual and practical connections and are therefore important in addressing past legacies.

Johannesburg's moving image history is only ten years younger than the city and over this time the representation of the city in film has provided insight into the nature of this urban agglomeration. But the representation of the city in film has been inconsistent and erratic and requires close analysis. It is important to understand the ways in which the city has been represented and how it features in popular mediums of culture and also how it contributes to the discourse of the city. There is very little understanding of how films are being received by *residents* of the spaces and places depicted on the screen, and even less on how these films influence the everyday practices of these residents.

This thesis draws on the idea of a 'circuit of culture' to explore both the representation of the city through film, and the impact of this representation on urban practice. To structure this analysis the thesis makes use of four lenses: materiality; identity; mobility; and crime. It provides an analysis of films with Johannesburg as a major location that were produced and screened after 1994. Surveys and interviews were conducted in four different locations in the city, each of which have been the site of film production and have been distinctly represented on the screen: Chiawelo; CBD; Fordsburg; and, Melville.

The study concludes that film can facilitate a greater understanding of the complex city for the residents of Johannesburg but that there are nevertheless clear limitations to what film can achieve. Films provide information and 'accessibility' to unknown spaces, encouraging interaction with the city, through exploration, familiarity and comfort but film can also be a conservative medium that reduces and typecasts complexity. Films often reinforce spatial stereotypes but they can also produce a "resistant reading" that helps transgress spatial boundaries.

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"Knowledge falls into a trap when it makes representations of space the basis for the study of 'life', for in doing so it reduces lived experience. The *object* of knowledge, is, precisely, the fragmented and uncertain connection between elaborated representations of space on the one hand and representational spaces (along with their underpinnings) on the other; and this 'object' implies (and explains) a *subject* – that subject in whom lived, perceived and conceived (known) come together within a spatial practice."

(Lefebvre, 1991, p. 230)

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Film is an urban phenomenon – since its very inception, film has depicted the burgeoning city and screened these images to an urban audience (Bruno, 2007). Since the birth of cinema, urban landscapes have inspired filmmakers and storytellers. Even in the early soundless films made in studios the city was integral and was often constructed in new and bold ways (Bruno, 2007). Cinemas have also always traditionally been situated within urban centres, limiting the audience but reinforcing the urban qualities of the medium. The urban film is also an embodiment of modernity reflecting repeated attempts to capture the fleeting moments of life in the metropolis.

Johannesburg's own history and development is uniquely concurrent with film history. Despite only being a mere mining settlement a decade old, Johannesburg screened its first moving pictures months after their world premieres in New York in 1896 (Gutsche, 1972). Film production followed shortly thereafter making the city one of the oldest film centres in the world, although the quantity and quality of those productions has varied greatly over the last hundred years or so. As a film location, Johannesburg is often represented, and sometimes misappropriated[1], on the screen. It is important to understand the ways in which the city has been represented and how it features in these popular mediums of culture[2]. But the relationship is not one-sided – films go on to influence their audiences and can alter people's perceptions of the city. Screen images and narratives, including those of film and documentaries, contribute to a collective knowledge and memory of spaces and places in the city. Images of the city on film and television screens give symbolic meaning to spaces by defining purposes and activities for a large audience, and by simplifying and interpreting

[1] International films that use Johannesburg as a film location will show images of the city but attribute

[2] Several scholars have examined the representations of Johannesburg: Vivian Bickford-Smith (2006; 2013) and Loren Kruger (1999; 2001; 2005; 2006) have explored the city in film while Kruger has also examined the representations in television, on the stage and in art; Sarah Nuttall (2004; 2008a; 2009), Megan Jones (2011; 2012; 2013) and Digby Ricci (1985) among others have examined the representation of the city in writing. These are some of the ways that the representations of Johannesburg in culture have been documented.

reality for the viewer. These new meanings shape perceptions in a social manner, leading to altered behaviour and contributing to the process of place-making in the city. Therefore it is pertinent to understand the way in which these representations are interpreted by the audiences that view them, and how those interpretations might influence and change their perceptions and understanding of the spaces shown.

Literature looking specifically at the relationship between film and the city has lagged far behind the production of film, possibly because this medium was seen to be 'popular' and, therefore, had less value for those with scientific or academic backgrounds. The British geographer John Gold began investigating the relationship between film and space in the 1970s and by the 1980s was encouraging other geographers to do the same (Gold, 1985). Subsequently, others joined the discussion, including planners and architects (Aitken & Zonn, 1994; Bruno, 1987; Clarke, 1997; Penz & Thomas, 1997). However, film continues to be an undervalued resource in the field of urban studies for exploring and understanding the complexity of the modern city.

It is impossible to know and grasp the whole city (even the physical component of the city), because it is so large and complex and diverse and ever-changing. Most people only experience the city in terms of the limited spaces in which they live, work and socialise. In Johannesburg, this has been exacerbated by the legacy of apartheid. Spatially, Johannesburg has been divided into Black and White, township and suburb, with large tracts of industrial zoning and mining wasteland between. Although spatial segregation is no longer enforced, this spatial fragmentation is still, by and large, a reality and, therefore, the knowledge of Johannesburg is even more fractured for its residents than for the residents of most other cities around the world.

The physical city exists in parallel with the city of people's minds[3]. The city of the mind is informed by actual experience but also by all the different representations of the city – photographs, artworks, maps, books, the media, the Internet, in music – and through stories and second-hand accounts. Film and television reconstruct, re-imagine and edit our urban spaces and the activities occurring therein. The screen re-presents the city and its spaces through its images.

[3] Post-Kantian philosophy and social theory acknowledges that all knowledge of the material world is mediated by the structures of the mind and is ultimately subject to human experiences and understanding.

Films, with their combination of visuals *and* storytelling, have the potential to dominate the information contained within the city of the mind. Visual information has been acknowledged as a dominant form of knowledge (Denzin, 1995), making the visual medium of film a powerful influence on the geography of the city of the mind. The representation of urban landscapes and the city in film is well documented by planners, geographers and architects (Alsayyad, 2006; Bruno, 2007; Clarke, 1997; Clarke & Doel, 2005; Denzin, 1995; Hallam, 2010; Lamster, 2000; Lukinbeal, 2002; Mathews, 2010; Penz, 2003; Schwarzer, 2004 to name but a few (see bibliography)). However, the influence of film on the city, on its inhabitants and practitioners, has not been given such great consideration, although it is understood that there is a process by which films do feed back into the urban environment (Alsayyad, 2006; Bruno, 2007; Clarke, 1997; Clarke & Doel, 2005; Denzin, 1995; Hallam, 2010; Lukinbeal, 2002; Mathews, 2010; Schwarzer, 2004). In some cases, scholars have admitted the difficulty in conclusively establishing this process (Gold, 1985) but generally the subject is conspicuous by its absence.

There is very little understanding of how films are being received by *residents* of the spaces and places depicted on the screen[4]. Therefore, this research examines how residents of the city receive urban films and, furthermore, how these films influence the everyday practice of these residents. In addition, the study also examines how films contribute to the discourse of the city through the representation of urban space. In so doing, the research shows how films facilitate a greater understanding of the complex city in which residents live. Understanding of space in the city is brought about through examining the relationship between different types of space. This takes us back to Lefebvre's quote in the preface, which highlights the importance of understanding the intersection of representational spaces and representations of space as the object of knowledge.

[4] Some scholars have explored the way in which films are being received by outsiders and the way in which film contributes to tourism and the tourist gaze (Busby & Klug 2001; Crouch, Jackson & Thompson 2006; MacCannell 1976; Roberts 2010 (this is by no means an exhaustive list)). A foreigner who visits the city, armed with knowledge gained from films and documentaries may have some influence as these studies suggest, but this is a limited influence on the urban practice within the city and as such, is not the focus of this study.

This work expands upon emerging concepts that construct the process of film production in terms of the 'circuit of culture' (Bollhöfer, 2007 after du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus 1997) or the cycles of representation, production, and consumption (Mathews, 2010) and involves the application of interdisciplinary methods to neglected areas of these cycles. An illustrative image of the circuit is included below but the detailed discussion of this circuit continues in Chapter two. In an interdisciplinary way, this research builds upon existing, international literature that deals with the representation and understanding of the city in film.

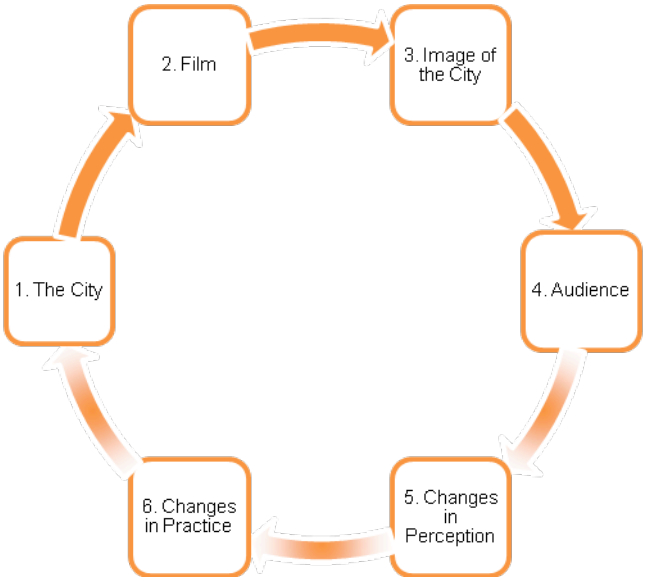


**Figure 1.1** – The city in the circuit of film/culture.

The question, at the heart of this research, is how the collective images of the city, as portrayed in film, influence perceptions of the city of varying groups and individuals and then, also, influence the urban practices of these groups and individuals. To answer this question, the study addresses the representation of Johannesburg in film and how it contributes to the discourse of the city. The study then examines how these representations are received in the city of Johannesburg and how these representations may be influencing perceptions and practices in the city.

A contribution of this research is the way it examines the role, of film images of the city, in the everyday lives of residents of that city. This part of the 'circuit of culture' has not been extensively researched. This study is also significant in that it demonstrates how urban films contribute to collective and social knowledge of the city. For residents of the spaces depicted, this is not abstract knowledge but, in fact, real knowledge, almost indistinguishable

from their lived experiences of these spaces. In addition, the research expands on the existing literature on film and television on South Africa, and specifically on Johannesburg, which is currently very limited. This is particularly pertinent as more films are being enjoyed within an international arena and this may influence the perceptions of citizens based in Johannesburg.

## 1.2 Johannesburg as a Case Study

Given its history, Johannesburg is a particularly divided city although there are complex crossovers (Kruger, 2006). Apartheid planning and policies imposed a segregated city and enforced a limited and incoherent knowledge of the city in its entirety. This fractured pattern of the city continues to reveal itself in spatial, social and economic inequalities (Tomlinson et al, 2003), but simultaneously these are being expressed and transgressed through various cultural mediums (Nuttall, 2008). It is a city that may reveal in stark outline the complexities of comprehending the whole and therefore the role of film in interpreting the city for its residents. But Johannesburg is not unique. There are many cities globally that are dealing with the issues of spatial inequalities. Broadly, Johannesburg's spatial problems are more universal and are widely applicable to all cities addressing inequalities in urban space.

The city has a long history with the film and television industry. Johannesburg is home to a large proportion of the film and television industries in South Africa (Visser, 2013), and the city's imagery features in several films and many television shows[5]. And so, there is a wealth of imagery that references the city and makes such a study as this possible. Recently, there have been a number of films that have been set in Johannesburg that have featured internationally including *Tsotsi*[6] (2005); *Jerusalema*[7] (2008) and *District 9* (2009). The city itself has not always been consistently represented on the screen. However, in recent years, Johannesburg is making increasingly more appearances in both local and international productions. Thus, seeing images of the city may still be novel to most residents, perhaps

[5] 70% of those employed in the film industry are based in Johannesburg and several of the large media enterprises such as Endemol, Primedia, and Sasani are also in Johannesburg (Visser, 2013).

[6] The title of the film, *Tsotsi*, is township slang for a gangster, and is also the gang nickname of the lead character. Although it is a non-English word only the title of the film has been italicised in this thesis to avoid confusing the name of the film with the discussions of the main character and gangsters/tsotsis in general. Chapter Eight provides more detail on the term tsotsi and the film *Tsotsi*.

[7] A.k.a. *Gangsters' Paradise.*

providing for greater insight into the urban environment they inhabit. Several scholars have already highlighted the ways in which American Hollywood productions have influenced residents of Johannesburg (Gutsche, 1972; Glaser, 1990) and of Cape Town (Nasson, 1987), mostly through fashion and lifestyle. Changes wrought through imported films may be more easily identified than changes through local productions.

Johannesburg, as the case study for this research, provides the urban setting to examine the role of film in the city. Johannesburg provides a good case because it represents the idea of the city and of the metropolis, not just in South Africa, but also for the southern African region. In addition, the development of the urban fabric has coincided with the birth and development of film and the cinema. Therefore, the history of Johannesburg, and the history of its representation can be traced as two parallel trajectories. The first public screening in South Africa took place on 11 May 1896 at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg (Gutsche, 1972). This was followed shortly by the first few films to be shot in Johannesburg in 1898 and 1899, which were simple recordings of some of the events of the day (Gutsche, 1972). The first production studio was begun in 1915 by Isidore Schlesinger and it was a prolific producer of films until 1922 when the more popular American and British films began dominating the cinemas (Worsdale, 2007).

For the next thirty years film production was very limited but the industry saw a revival in the 1950s when filmmakers such as Jamie Uys and Donald Swanson came on the scene. At the same time, the National Party, recently elected in 1948, began to take a serious interest in the potential of films for the promotion of a national identity and for the use of propaganda (Maingard, 2007b). The film subsidy system instituted this through the favouring of Afrikaans language films over English (Marx, 2000), demonstrated by the fact that forty-three of the sixty films made between 1956 and 1962 were in Afrikaans (Worsdale, 2007). The National Film Board was established in 1964 after nearly twenty years of discussion and consultation (Maingard, 2007b). In line with apartheid policies, the mandate of the NFB was the promotion of Afrikaans films but it also funded 'documentaries' in African languages to be shown in miners' hostels and township community halls (Maingard, 2007b).

In an effort to maintain control over the spread of information, the apartheid government had successfully delayed the introduction of television until 1976. This ensured the continued popularity of the cinema during the 1950s and 1960s, when cinemas around the world were struggling, but it did bring about the end of the National Film Board in 1979 (Maingard, 2007b). During the 1980s the film arena saw a second revival as the medium for anti-apartheid protest. The African National Congress supported the Video News Service which

screened films at township meetings and political rallies while 1988 saw the establishment of the Film and Allied Workers Organization (Ibid.). Together these organisations created a network that enabled political films such as *Mapantsula* (1988) to be widely screened (Ibid.).

Unfortunately apartheid did not only control the production of films but the government also maintained strict controls regarding the situation of cinemas and even the seating arrangements within the cinemas, though, by 1986 the majority of cinemas were multi-racial (Tomaselli, 1989). Many of the previously Black townships do no not have formal cinemas, even sixteen years after the first democratic elections. The first cinema in Soweto was only opened in Maponya Mall in 2007 (Saks, 2010). This will have an impact on people's experiences of film and television in different parts of the city as cinemas are not all widely accessible. Although the number of films in production in South Africa has fluctuated during its history, the standard of filmmaking and the technology used can be said to have remained on par with the rest of the world.

## 1.3 The Research Project

Johannesburg is represented in a multitude of ways and film is only a small portion of the myriad descriptions of the city. It would be exceptionally difficult for a single study to include all of these aspects of representation and in this thesis I have limited the study to feature films and documentaries. But as mentioned previously there is reason to believe that the dual components of visuals and narrative of film make this medium particularly compelling and dominant despite the fact that is only a small part of the city's representations. This suggests that film may be more relevant than other, more prolific, representations of Johannesburg. The selection of films and the complexity of researching their influence are discussed in more detail in Chapters two and three but will be briefly mentioned here.

Films use different shots or viewpoints of the camera in order to tell their visual stories. Film is free to explore anything from aerial and long distance shots to medium and close shots but films traditionally use 'establishing shots', which are long distance or wide-angle shots, to depict the setting or location of the narrative and characters. Even films shot in studios will make use of this technique to establish the scene. Images of Johannesburg feature in many forms on film screens but I have limited this study to the forms most likely to make use of 'establishing shots'. The forms of moving pictures that are least likely to use these techniques are commercial advertisements, music videos and news or current affairs inserts, although there will almost certainly be exceptions to this. Forms of film that feature 'establishing shots' are also likely to be based on narratives that are either fictional or factual. It is this

specific element of the 'establishing shot' within a strong narrative that I have focused on in my research.

Of course, in reality, many films are not so easily defined or categorised. It is even difficult to separate film from television as many films that appear on the cinema circuit will go on to be shown on the small screen. So, although this research is focusing on the products of films and documentaries, television will be a major space of reception for these products. It is therefore pertinent to discuss and define these categories because their definitions will have different implications for the research. The differences are important for understanding the varied ways that the city of Johannesburg is represented *and* for the way that these images are received. Films have poetic licence to reconstruct the city in order to create more drama and to reflect themes within the narrative. While documentaries work closely with real and existing landscapes, they are not immune to careful editing and selection in order to create a narrative structure or drive a message home.

The different categories of screen images also generate and target very different audiences. Films and documentaries are more likely to have an international audience, as well as a South African audience. However, they may be viewed through the medium of television, which has greater associations of the local because of high levels of local content and broadcasting in the official indigenous languages of the country. Films that are designed for an outside audience may receive different interpretations from Johannesburg residents, who are more intimate with the spaces and characters depicted in these films.

In addition, the spaces of reception are vastly different between film and television. In most cases, those watching a film at the cinema have bought a ticket and expect to watch the film in its entirety and without distraction in an audience of strangers. At home, the audience of the television is usually limited to the immediate family and their invited guests but viewing is also subjected to the countless distractions and interruptions that characterise the modern home. In South Africa, these spaces of reception are further differentiated by language and a history of limited access, but these factors will be expanded upon in the section discussing Johannesburg specifically. Gerald Macdonald has suggested though that the place of viewing, whether it is in a cinema theatre or within the home, has little bearing on the ability of the film to convey meaning (Macdonald, 1994).

The focus of the research project is film but with the recognition that television plays a role in the space of reception of films and documentaries and, therefore, it is a relevant part of the discussion. The research project is structured in three phases: examining the representation of Johannesburg in film; the reception of these images, and the influence of

these films on everyday practice. The representation study focuses on films produced after 1994 with Johannesburg as a film location. It is a multidisciplinary study incorporating methods from the fields of visual and urban studies. This interdisciplinary nature of the project has contributed to understanding the complex city by demonstrating the importance of considering the role of films in the discourse of the city for its residents.

## 1.4 The Structure of this Thesis

This thesis loosely follows the methodological approach of the research. The first part provides the context of the study, the second part explores the representation of Johannesburg, and the third part presents the reception of these images and the ways in which the films are influencing everyday practice in the city. Each part contains a number of chapters, which will be introduced briefly here.

Chapter two in Part A reviews the literature and presents the conceptual frame for the research. Two aspects of the literature are surveyed: the scholarship of the last century or so that has considered the city and the construction of urban space and its problems; and the growing literature that has emerged that examines the relationship between film and the city, most notably the city's representation in film. In addition this review briefly relates this literature to the case study of Johannesburg. The literature review identifies the four key themes of materiality, identity, mobility and crime in the city. These themes become part of a model of the complex city, which contributes to the conceptual frame discussed in the last section of the chapter. The conceptual frame is the circuit of culture, of which the city is a part, where films feed back into the city through the perceptions and behaviours of the audience.

The methodology is the subject of Chapter three in Part A. Expanding upon the conceptual frame, the methodology outlines three phases of study to illuminate the circuit of culture. The first phase is a representation study of the images of Johannesburg on the screen, using the visual method of cultivation analysis. The second phase explores the reception of the films of Johannesburg in four locations of the city: Chiawelo, the CBD, Fordsburg and Melville. This is conducted through a quantitative survey of 50 residents in each area. The third phase of the research examines and expands on the findings of the second phase through a focus group held with urban professionals and in-depth interviews with other select residents of Johannesburg. This chapter provides the framework for understanding the circuit of culture in Johannesburg and the structure for this thesis.

Chapter four in Part A provides a detailed history of Johannesburg and the history of its representation (or its absence) in film. The focus of this research is the period after 1994,

with the instatement of democracy, but this chapter shows that the four key themes and spatial constructs identified in Chapter two have been prevalent in films prior to this recent period. The chapter follows a linear structure beginning with the birth of the city and its film industry, from 1886 and 1896 respectively. The second period from 1948 discussed the first major feature films to significantly depict the city, while the third period from 1960 demonstrates the absence of Johannesburg on the screen. From 1976, Johannesburg reappears as an important location setting for several political films and from 1994 is the location of many productions in the newly democratic South Africa.

The representation of Johannesburg in film is the subject of Part B and it is divided into four chapters, which each address one of the four themes or spatial constructs identified in Chapter two. Chapter five explores the materiality of Johannesburg in film. The chapter uses the work of Michel de Certeau and Kevin Lynch to examine the various physical elements of the city. The city's materiality is compared with the images depicted on the screen and the associated meanings or interpretations and demonstrates the creation of spatial stereotypes in films of Johannesburg. The chapter also introduces the four locations that serve as the basis for the research, showing how each location is depicted on the screen.

Chapter six discusses the dimensions of identity with reference to different aspects of the circuit of culture. The first half of the chapter examines the identities of filmmakers, characters and the audience, highlighting some of the key issues in the literature on South African and Johannesburg film. The second half of the chapter explores the myriad identities that exist in the city of Johannesburg, and the relationship they have with the city and its development. This reveals large discrepancies between the identities in the circuit of culture and the identities present in the city. This section also examines the role of place identity, an important aspect in the discussion of the depiction of urban space in film.

The third chapter in Part B, Chapter seven, analyses the depiction of mobility in films of Johannesburg. The chapter identifies two main modes of movement: that of arriving or leaving Johannesburg; and those modes of movement within the city. While the trope of the country bumpkin arriving in the big city was established in Johannesburg's first major feature film *African Jim* (1949), many other experiences of migrants, foreign nationals and exiles are absent from the screen. However, the images of first arrival in Johannesburg continue to be powerful signifiers in current films. Through the work of Michel de Certeau and James Graham the chapter explores the meaning of individual mobility within the city, showing mobility to be an important space of personal expression and resistance in the city, but also as a space that continues to demonstrate inequalities.

The last chapter of Part B, Chapter eight, considers both the theme of crime in the city of Johannesburg and as a prevalent genre of recent films. The chapter outlines the intimate connection between the city on the screen and the depiction of crime and the underworld. In particular, the chapter focuses on the representation of the gangster, which has manifested in Johannesburg as the representation of the tsotsi. The chapter explores the evolution of the tsotsi figure in film and demonstrates how the tsotsi is the prime example of how films influence perceptions and behaviours of residents of the city. The tsotsi is connected to the city through his mobility and through the spaces that he inhabits and thus the chapter concludes with a discussion of the space of the ghetto in Johannesburg.

Part C presents the findings of the fieldwork. Chapter nine reveals the space of audience reception by detailing the four locations for the quantitative survey. The chapter discusses the demographic profiles, the viewing habits and practices, and the knowledge and perceptions of the participants in each of the locations. In the final section, the chapter demonstrates that films influence respondents' feelings of, and behaviour in, Johannesburg and shows some of the ways that films may be exerting this influence. The chapter also reveals that despite differences in demographics and film depictions, the four different locations of the city have very little impact on the influence of films. The influence of films is not directly or indirectly related to aspects of the fragmented city.

Chapter ten, the final chapter, explores how films influence feelings and behaviours in Johannesburg, through the survey but also through the focus group and in-depth interviews. The chapter relates the conceptual frame of the complex city and the discussion of the four key themes in the representation of Johannesburg to the findings of the fieldwork. It emerges that while films play a role with regards to identity, mobility and crime, it is with regards to knowledge of the city and its materiality that films may have the greatest influence. The research shows that films contribute to participants' knowledge of Johannesburg, and through the construction of spatial stereotypes, which integrate space with identity, mobility and crime, films increase awareness, comfort and understanding of the complex city.

# Part A: Context

Part A provides the background and context for this research. Chapter two reviews the literature on urban space as well as the literature on cities in cinema and generates a conceptual frame for the study. Chapter three presents the methodology for the three phases of research undertaken for this study. Chapter four discusses the history of Johannesburg and its representation in film, highlighting the trajectory of the key themes of this research.

# 2. The City in Film and Film in the City

## 2.1 Introduction

Over the past century, from at least the time of Georg Simmel, a vibrant, multi-faceted scholarship has emerged that explores the complex nature of the city. In addressing our knowledge of the city as a whole, these scholars have studied numerous aspects of the city: from its physical materiality to the social interactions and flows of information, people and goods[8]. Some of these scholars, namely Walter Benjamin and Henri Lefebvre have also included the representation of the city in media and art in their discussions and explorations of urban space (Benjamin, 2010; Lefebvre, 1991). For Lefebvre in particular, the representations and symbolisms of space are an integral component of the experiences of 'real' space (Lefebvre, 1991).

In parallel to the scholarship on the city, film established itself from its inception as a particularly urban medium and form of entertainment. Cinemas have been a popular form of entertainment in cities since the 'kinetoscope' and with technological advances the city became a favourite subject from the late 1920s. However, it is only in the last forty years that urban scholars have begun looking at the connections between film and the urban environment. Film intersects with the city at many levels. As an industry it impacts the city spatially and economically through the building of large studios and through the global network of film production. Film represents a form of visual urban space through the illusion of three dimensions on the screen, which creates the space of representation. Lastly, the city is the major site of audience reception. Large numbers of cinema viewers receive these representations within urban contexts. The focus of this research is the reception of these urban images by Johannesburg residents and how these images might be influencing their everyday lives in the same city they view on the screen.

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[8] The key texts discussed are Simmel's 'Metropolis and Mental Life' (Simmel, 2010); Benjamin's 'The Arcades Project' (Benjamin, 2010); Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (Lefebvre, 1991); Lynch's *The Image of the City* (Lynch, 1960); de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (de Certeau, 1984); and Castells' *The Rise of the Network Society* (Castells, 2000).

This relationship between the audience/urban residents, the representation of the city, and the city itself is constructed as a circuit of cultural production. The images of the metropolis are fed back into the physical city through the site of the urban audience, establishing a continuous flow. Researchers have studied the city and the way in which it is represented in film but few have examined how these images are informing urban residents or their everyday practice in the city.

This chapter builds towards a conceptual framework that includes the circuit of cultural production. In the first section I review some of the critical thinkers who have contributed to the discourse on the city and on spaces, as well as discuss the literature that has engaged directly with Johannesburg and its spaces. This section elaborates on some of the key theories of space and the city, which have added to our understanding of the complexities of the modern metropolis. This section will also briefly relate these theories to film and its representations.

The second section examines the literature on the city and spaces as represented in film of recent years. Scholars have begun to see the medium of film as a valuable resource that contributes to the discourse of the city and our comprehension of it. This section, therefore, relates film to the theories of space and urbanity discussed in the first section. The chapter concludes with the conceptual frame, which bridges the spaces of film with the spaces of the city. It provides a model for examining the relationship of the audience to films and to the city.

## 2.2 The Complex City

### 2.2.1 Urban Space

At first there was the concept of absolute space. Absolute space is considered to be the pure form of the physical that makes up space that exists prior to the theoretical construction of space. Once space began to be thought about and theorised, the notion that space may exist as an absolute has been mostly abandoned (Thrift, 2009). "Lefebvre inferred that absolute space cannot exist because, at the moment it is colonized through social activity, it becomes relativized and historized space" (Hubbard et al, 2004, p. 5). As urban growth exploded over the twentieth century, it became apparent that the complexities of the metropolis were reflected in the complexities of space construction and production. Simmel, a German sociologist, discussed the effects of the urban environment on the individual in his essay entitled 'Metropolis and Mental Life' from 1903. Simmel put forward the concept that spaces in the city are generated by human relations and are 'a sociological fact that forms itself spatially' (Simmel, 1997, p. 138) and that spaces can be seen to be symbolic of social relations

(Simmel, 1950). This is the beginning of the notion that it is the social aspect of spaces that give them their meaning.

Simmel also discusses the incredible intensity of stimuli that exist in the city and that define metropolitan life, making it difficult to maintain a sense of the personal self (Simmel, 1950) and contributing to the prevalence of the blasé attitude of urban residents (Simmel, 1971). The sheer number of stimuli that abound in city life force the individual to differentiate and select those stimuli that are most relevant to themselves (Simmel, 1950). The city is shaped by social relations but it also exerts a powerful influence on the minds of its residents. Film can help to make sense of all these stimuli and order the city into a more coherent form, but it can also be seen to be a medium that contributes to the flurry of information and visual stimuli.

For Simmel, the metropolis also presented new opportunities for individual freedoms (Simmel, 2010). City life affords its dwellers with opportunities for free movement in their social and intellectual relationships (Simmel, 2010). The individual attains freedom even amongst the masses of people in the big city. Simmel's work highlights the complexity inherent in the city and the difficulty for urban residents in making sense of this confusing environment. The city is simultaneously a space in which the individual can be overwhelmed and a place for individual freedom and expression. Ultimately, the urban resident experiences the city as an individual and the relationship with the city is thus a personal one. The individual finds expression in films through narrative and through the protagonists and characters of films. While the early years of film development were characterised by a huge variety and much experimentation, it would be the narrative or storytelling structure that emerged as the dominant feature of successful films (Mennel, 2008).

Thus social structures and identity play important roles in understanding the construction of space in the city. Both Simmel and Walter Benjamin (2010) wrote about how social structures had shifted within urban centres and had created distinctly urban behaviours and characters. Both scholars recognised the importance of the new urban social framework in the thinking and construction of space in the city. Space could no longer be thought of as an absolute because it was clearly influenced by the social activities of those people inhabiting the space. Cinemas and entertainment halls were very much part of the social space of modern cities. But Benjamin (1970) also warned against the depreciation of a landscape when viewed on the silver screen. He saw similarities between the distracted viewing of films and architecture (Benjamin, 1970).

Walter Benjamin, another German sociologist and literary critic, wrote about Parisian city life in his work 'The Arcades Project' [originally written 1927–1940] (Benjamin, 2010). Benjamin also developed the concept of the flâneur, the archetypal man who idly walks the streets and observes city life. The concept of the flâneur was based on the work of Charles Baudelaire but also touched upon the ideas of Simmel with the notion that a flâneur was born from a reaction to metropolitan life. The flâneur operates as though from two separate and opposite positions because he simultaneously observes city life in a detached manner, as though it were a landscape, but is also immersed in it through his dwelling in the city (Jennings, 2001). Benjamin, thus illustrates an inherent contradiction within the acts of strolling, observing and being in the city. But his work also highlights mobility as an important form of expression and experience in the city. Benjamin is the first of several scholars to connect mobility and flows with the modern urban environment.

Film embodies Benjamin's thinking. As motion pictures, films encapsulate the mobility of the flâneur. Film also functions in the dual manner that is integral to the flâneur. Films present an opportunity to view the city in the same way, offering an overall view of the city and the view of the everyday life that is the basis for the narratives. The city imagined on the screens of cinemas and televisions can be seen to be a visual representation of the flâneur's experience. Benjamin contrasts the individual experience of the flâneur with the idea of the street spaces as the space of the collective, of the masses of the city (Benjamin, 2010). The street becomes a space of intimacy, a 'familiar interior' for the many city dwellers (Benjamin, 2010).

Henri Lefebvre, a French social theorist, wrote about everyday life and the city for the better part of the twentieth century. His most influential book *The Production of Space* was originally published in 1974 and outlined three types of spaces that contribute to the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991). Lefebvre's social construction of space follows on from the earlier work of Georg Simmel. 'Spatial Practice', or perceived space, is the space belonging to the practice of everyday life, of society in general. 'Representations of Space', or conceived space, is space as conceptualised by architects, planners and urbanists. And lastly, 'Representational Space' or lived space is 'space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols' (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). For Lefebvre, space is a product of the activities of everyday life, the conception of planners, and the meaning interpreted through representation.

Films present the audience with representations of 'Spatial Practice' through narratives of everyday life but they are also 'Representational Space' in that they imbue the spaces on the

screen with meaning. Audiences experience the practice of spaces and the meaning of spaces through the screen and so the spaces become lived space, despite the audience not experiencing the spaces physically. Films also present images of 'conceived space', usually in the shots depicting the city from an aerial viewpoint, but also in science fiction films where audiences are shown visions of the future city. In some cases, these 'Representations of Space' are the original impressions of architects consulted by the filmmaker[9].

Lefebvre's main argument is that spaces are socially constructed and that the meanings that are formed socially within spaces will affect people's spatial perceptions and behaviours. The production of space is a reflection of the society that constructed it. "[S]pace is neither a 'subject' nor an 'object' but rather a social reality – that is to say a set of relations and forms. … But everyday life also figures in representational spaces – or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it forms such spaces." (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 116). For Lefebvre, space is not just the product of the designs of planners and architects but is also the product of the practice of everyday life and the meanings and symbolism attached to those spaces. Space is, therefore, as much a cultural product as a physical one.

Lefebvre's outline of space identifies some of the difficulties inherent to writing and understanding space. According to Lefebvre representational spaces are linked to social spaces in a clandestine or underground manner (Lefebvre, 1991). This suggests that they exist in parallel with social spaces or spatial practices but in an unconscious way. Some of the functioning of space remains hidden to us. This research shows that the relationship between representational and social spaces may not be as clandestine or unconscious as Lefebvre suggests. Film provides models for both spatial and social experiences, which conflates Lefebvre's 'spatial practice' and 'represented space' and may foster a dramaturgical society (Kennedy & Lukinbeal, 1997). Film and television form a significant part of the social building blocks that construct space. The screen depicts social spaces, which contribute meaning to those spaces and, following on from Lefebvre, will affect people's perceptions of space. Film is a cultural product that informs the cultural production of space.

Michel de Certeau expands upon some of Benjamin's ideas in his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984). There are two ways to view the city. The Concept-city is the city experienced by planners and urbanists who see the city as a well-defined entity, as if viewing

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[9] For example during the pre-production for the film *Minority Report* (2002), the director Steven Spielberg consulted with architects among others to create the futuristic world (Kennedy, 2002).

the city from the top of the skyscraper and able to see it as a whole. But de Certeau advocates the other view of the city, that of the experiences of the pedestrian on the ground, as he walks the streets. De Certeau likens the practice of walking to the act of speech and thereby the act of walking is also an act of communication. According to de Certeau, this is the practice of the everyday and these actions make up the real city (de Certeau, 1984).

Mobility is also very important. For de Certeau, walking is the act of the individual and walking in the city, choosing paths and routes is as personal a form of expression as the way in which we enunciate words or the way in which we establish rhetoric (de Certeau, 1984). Walking is, therefore, a means of demonstrating an urban life and of establishing agency in the city. The city emerges and reveals itself through the walks of its inhabitants (de Certeau, 1984). Walking is, at once, the act of expressing oneself as an urban citizen and a representation of the city.

Film can be seen to be a representation of both the Concept-city and the practice of everyday life. Filmmakers are able to deconstruct the chaos of the city and reconstruct it on the screen in a more ordered manner so that it appears to be a coherent whole and is more easily read and understood. Films and television shows are also excellent representations of slices of life within the city, presenting the experiences of a small group of people or even just one individual. As an act of communication that is seen by many, this 'walking in the city' becomes a powerful representation.

Documentaries and films allow us an opportunity to view the city from a distance, through another's eyes, removing ourselves from our own narrow experiences. The screen may also enable us to see the big picture, to achieve greater understanding of the whole city. Film, after all, is the home of the panorama, the sweeping camera shot that allows us to take in the wide vistas. According to de Certeau (1984), this is the viewpoint of planners, urbanists and architects that gives rise to the idea of the city that can be contained and categorised and understood as a whole.

However, de Certeau (1984) argues that this way of seeing the city, that induces god-like visions, is outdated and that an understanding of the city is required based on the experiences and journeys of the individual. De Certeau's argument against seeing the city as a whole from on high is aimed at planners and architects, those designers of the city, and does not take into account those people on the ground who are immersed in the busy city life and crave the simple all-encompassing view. But films are capable of representing both viewpoints and frequently rely on their audiences to identify with the stories and characters being depicted in order to be drawn into the world presented on the screen.

De Certeau's ways of seeing the city and the practice of walking is confined to a single city, and does not consider the city within a global network. The second half of the twentieth century saw the rise of the multinational company with headquarters in the major cities of the world, increased air travel, media and branding that spanned continents, and eventually, the interconnections of the Internet. For Manuel Castells, this meant that space could not be theorised in a vacuum but instead interacts with the economic, political and symbolic structures of society (Castells, 2000). These structures of society represent process and are constructed through flows: "flows of capital, flows of information, flows of technology, flows of organisational interaction, flows of images, sounds and symbols" (Castells, 2000, p. 442). Thus, the space generated through these processes is termed the space of flows (Castells, 2000); flows that prevent space being considered in isolation or stasis.

The parallels with film and Castells' ideas are quite striking, especially as Castells considers space to be a material product (Castells, 2000). While film may be seen to be representational space, it is also a commercial product. Cinema is part of a creative industry and is subject to very real and practical constraints stemming from investors, producers and governments. Chris Lukinbeal has discussed the economic production of film and the industrial nature of cinema by outlining the history and development of location shooting (Lukinbeal, 2002). Film commissions, now in existence in nearly every major city, influence and determine the locations where films are shot and sometimes set. While films are created in the social space and generate numerous meanings, they too are subjected to the dominant political and economic space flows.

Castells also builds further on the idea of socially-constructed space by stating that the relationship between society and space is complicated by the fact that each are not a reflection of each other but rather, space is society (Castells, 2000). This space that is society still contains the traditional elements of space including form, function and meaning and thus places are still created and lived in (Castells, 2000). But, because these places are subjected to the global space of flows, the meanings of these spaces are significantly altered and are 'increasingly separated from knowledge' (Castells, 2000, p. 459). Meaning in spaces is dominated by the meanings constructed through the space of flows and yet, this process is, seemingly, more and more an unconscious one.

A contemporary of Castells, Doreen Massey, has also examined the fluid nature of space and has described space as 'porous networks of social relations' (Massey, 1994, p. 121). But her early work began by interrogating the lack of spatial analysis in the field of economic geography (Callard, 2004). Massey demonstrated that spatial structures had a huge role to

play in the economic and industrial spheres of Britain. This research also revealed stark differences along lines of gender within the labour practices across various regions. Massey went on to explore gender relations in space to uncover the masculinised workplace eclipsing the feminised home (Callard, 2004).

Massey has consistently examined relationships: the relationship between space and place; space and time, and the social relations that construct space. She believes that concepts of the spatial and the social cannot be divorced leading to an intimate connection between identity and space. At the same time, Massey recognises that the social is not only constructed in space but is also generated through representation: through film and media (Lury & Massey, 1999). Thus, representations of space and place are drawn into the web that connects identities and the social with physical space and places. These notions become particularly relevant in the discussions of the practice of film viewing within social spaces and it is also relevant in the way that films promote some identities while undermining others.

Massey's work takes us from global flows to issues of the social and identity and even point back to the physical construct of space. The urban experience is difficult to define and means many things to the varied inhabitants of the city but these three aspects are key elements in the construction of urban space. Individual mobility in the city is a form of expression and the city itself is part of the movement and flow of information and goods. Architects and planners have developed understandings of the city as a whole through maps and aerial views but, as de Certeau (1984) points out, this is an abstraction – the man on the street only experiences the city through its parts: its streets and buildings.

In the 1960s, Kevin Lynch identified the visual stimuli and/or elements of spaces in the city that residents make use of to identify and understand urban space. In his book *The Image of the City*, Lynch discusses how inhabitants use elements of the city to construct a legible map of the city (Lynch, 1960). Working in the fields of urban planning and environmental psychology, he identified five elements that construct this map: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. These elements form environmental images and require three components to be successful. The images need to have an identity, to be differentiated from within the city; structure, a spatial relation to the inhabitant, and meaning (Lynch, 1960).

Lynch emphasises that the creation of an environmental process is a two-way process and in order to understand these images, the perceptions and meanings of these elements are as important as the physical elements themselves (Lynch, 1960). Lynch's work gave valuable insight into the way that inhabitants use and make sense of the vast city and his model of

research was replicated in numerous subsequent studies that varied in scale and focus (Ittelson, Proshansky, Rivlin & Winkel, 1974). He demonstrated how inhabitants of a city read and understand the multitude of visual stimuli in cities. Although the city is a vast and at times incomprehensible organism, its dwellers experience it as a series of spaces, elements, and visual images that they navigate on a daily basis. In addition, these residents attached meaning to some of these elements. Filmmakers use very similar language to Lynch's imageability to establish the location of a film.

Filmmakers draw on an audience's existing knowledge of a city's images when using landscape as place (Lukinbeal, 2005). For instance, a director only has to include a glimpse of the Eiffel Tower in order to locate the film in Paris because he relies on the audience to recognise the image reference. This is a function of the tower as a landmark. Other less-iconic cities will require more direct methods such as an image of a road sign or text on the screen that specifies the location of the story. Much can be inferred about the intended audience for a film in the way that the location is introduced in the film. David Bass (1997) was critical of Hollywood's depiction of Rome, which relied on well-known images of the city's landmarks whereas local films tend to have more subtle and nuanced images that may not be familiar to outsiders. It's possible that films have intuitively exploited these meanings and the legibility of spaces before Kevin Lynch revealed the manner in which city dwellers construct imageability. Films may also contribute to the iconising of a city's landmarks through repetition on the big screen. This is explored in some detail in Chapter five.

Films and television shows frame their visual geographies in very similar ways to the theories of space of the critical thinkers outlined above. For example, the 'establishing shot' – the long shot or aerial view that presents the city of Johannesburg from afar and as a whole – is similar to the way that planners and urbanists view the city in Lefebvre's 'Representations of space' (1991). The daily drama of the soap opera is the practice of the everyday that Lefebvre and de Certeau refer to, but it is also a simplified version, necessarily so because of the format of television and its need for condensed time. In this way, film and television present an ordered and simplified version of city life, which aids the urban dweller in line with Georg Simmel's theories of man's adaptation to urban experience (Simmel, 1950).

### 2.2.2 Complex Johannesburg

Johannesburg is a modern metropolis like many others around the world and most of the spatial theories and concepts outlined above apply to the city. But it's also clear that spaces have been theorised somewhat differently in the global South, and that literature that discusses Johannesburg specifically with regards to film is still somewhat sparse. The

predominant narrative of Johannesburg is one of inequality. There is significant literature that examines the spatial qualities and inequalities of Johannesburg (Beauregard & Body-Gendrot, 1999; Bremner, 2004; Crankshaw & Parnell, 2004; Murray, 2011; Nuttall & Mbembe, 2008). With over forty years of apartheid rule, spanning a significant proportion of Johannesburg's development, it is not surprising that most of this literature focuses on the issues of the apartheid city and its legacies into the twenty-first century.

Scholars have concentrated on the divided or segregated city. Planners have been drawing up and maintaining racial boundaries in Johannesburg since its inception and this was entrenched under apartheid laws. Peripheral townships and 'non-White' suburbs were isolated through distance and physical buffers. It was these divisive spatial legacies that were seen to be the greatest obstacles in creating a democratic city during the 1980s and 1990s. Nuttall and Mbembe (2008) believe that this overall focus has been largely framed through a loathing of Johannesburg's ugly, industrial and capitalist fixations. In their introduction to the book *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis*, Nuttall and Mbembe lament the overrepresentation of Johannesburg as the divided city (Nuttall & Mbembe, 2008).

Nuttall and Mbembe (2008) categorise the literature on Johannesburg into three broad areas. The first examines the divided and unequal city chronicling the physical manifestations of colonial and apartheid segregationist laws. The second category discusses the ways that Johannesburg is addressing the apartheid spatial legacy through development and redistribution. And lastly, there is a body of literature that explores the manner in which Johannesburg is being re-divided into fortified enclaves (Nuttall & Mbembe, 2008).

Nuttall and Mbembe (2008) prefer to divide the city in the vertical dimension: into the underground and the surface. The flashy, capitalist and consumptive practices above ground are founded on, quite literally, the subterranean, industrial gold mining activities that fund these activities. Embedded in this idea is the division of class, which was largely a division of race under apartheid, and which is also emerging as a division between violent criminals and those who fear (Nuttall & Mbembe, 2008). For these scholars, these layers of the city obscure one another and contribute to the elusive nature of Johannesburg. This concept of layering relates directly to the materiality of the city and the discussions of the construction of urban space of the previous section. The remainder of this section on Johannesburg will relate the broad discussions of space to the specific conditions of this post-apartheid city.

When considering the spatial divisions of the city, movement is discussed as an important factor in the transgression of apartheid boundaries. Pirie (1992) describes how during apartheid public transport was an important site for political protest, activism and boycotts;

derived from the fact that the long commutes were a constant reminder to Black South Africans of their exclusion from the city. In the democratic era, walking has become a focus for scholars discussing the crossing of the city's borders (Graham, 2007), while in more recent years driving has come into focus alongside walking. The car dominates other forms of mobility in the city (Graham, 2007) but has also come to represent a high status level and encompasses forms of identity and performance, rendering it a social practice rather than a private one (Livermon, 2008).

The practice of walking has been fused with an individual's urban expression and their identity. Sarah Nuttall (2004 & 2008) draws on the theory of de Certeau and the practice of walking to demonstrate the ways in which new identities, that cross multiple boundaries, are being enacted in the city. Identity is an extremely important urban element in Johannesburg because of the way that the Group Areas Act segregated the physical city according to the racial classifications of the apartheid government. Steven Robins (1998) describes how apartheid policies actively discouraged Black South Africans from identifying with the city by associating the identity with disorder and disease. The migrant worker was spatially separated from the township dweller, and even further divided along lines of ethnicity (Robins, 1998). In order to claim an urban identity, these migrant workers had to cross rural and ethnic barriers, often finding expression through violence (Robins, 1998). All aspects of identity, therefore, become crucial in the development of an urban identity.

The new possibilities that exist in Johannesburg, the 'African city', require new ways of imagining and theorising the city[10]. Spaces, previously abandoned or unoccupied, have been infiltrated by people: the homeless occupy the undersides of bridges; traders fill pavements; foreign and rural migrants live in derelict buildings and shacks are farmed on the periphery. These activities both obscure and reveal new social networks and practices, what Simone (2008) calls 'people as infrastructure'. For Simone, Lefebvre's perceived spaces and representational spaces are "increasingly conversant with one another" (2008, p. 89), suggesting that spaces have a surface of representation above the spaces of social interaction below. In a book chapter, ten years earlier, Jennifer Robinson (1998) described how it is the social and representational spaces that are demonstrating transformation in democratic South Africa and encroaching on the old spatial divisions. It is the practice and activities of the everyday that are producing new forms of space, defined by "dynamic and changing flows" (Robinson, 1998, p. 170). Robinson believes that it is Lefebvre's representational

[10] The City of Johannesburg, the municipal authority, has branded Johannesburg as a "world-class African city".

spaces that have informed the new types of space emerging in South African cities and that this has largely been achieved through the process of dreaming (Robinson, 1998). But to what extent is film, as a representational space, shaping these spaces?

In post-apartheid Johannesburg, crime has emerged as a critical theme. Several scholars have written about crime and safety on the streets of Johannesburg and some have written extensively about the reactions to the fear of crime. Karina Landman describes the growth and development of gated communities and secure enclaves (Landman, 2000). For Lindsay Bremner, this new 'geography of crime' is "adding further dimensions to its [the city's] social and spatial dimensions" (Bremner, 1998, p. 55). Increased security, as a reaction to crime, is seen as a new form of control and exclusion operating in post-apartheid Johannesburg. Although crime knows no spatial boundaries and affects all who live in Johannesburg, and most particularly those living in townships and informal settlements, it is the measures of security enforced by the wealthier classes that has further divided the city (Bremner, 1998).

Crime and fear are important elements in the city of Johannesburg but they do not constitute a theory, or a concept, of space that contributes to the understanding of the city. Fear of crime, and crime itself, has had an enormous impact on the materiality, social space, and mobility in the city and in many ways have reshaped the meaning of these spaces in Johannesburg. In addition modern Johannesburg is not the only time and place where fear has affected these aspects of urban space. Defensive walls can be traced to some of the earliest settlements in human history (Mumford, 1961) and the city has long been constructed in lore as a dangerous place. International scholars have discussed the affect of crime, its causes and solutions to it. Both Jane Jacobs (1962) and Oscar Newman (1972) placed great importance on the role of surveillance and urban design: in activating public spaces and preventing crime. Although these writers and practitioners provide explanations for the manifestation of these different spaces, these have not generated globally applicable theories of city space.

This section has discussed the key aspects of the literature – namely materiality, social identity and mobility – regarding the comprehension of urban space and cities. The concise summary of Johannesburg urban studies has expanded upon these elements and has also added the aspect of crime. All these elements contribute to understanding the city as a complex whole. Figure 2.1 on page 25 illustrates these aspects as part of the complex city. Materiality, social identity and mobility interact with each other and form the major components, while crime sits alongside these spatial elements, impacting on each aspect. The diagram serves as a model that identifies and compartmentalises the complex and vast city

into several different spaces that make up the everyday for the city's inhabitants. This section has also briefly related these aspects to film representations. This model is the guiding framework for the discussion of Johannesburg's representation in Part B of this thesis.

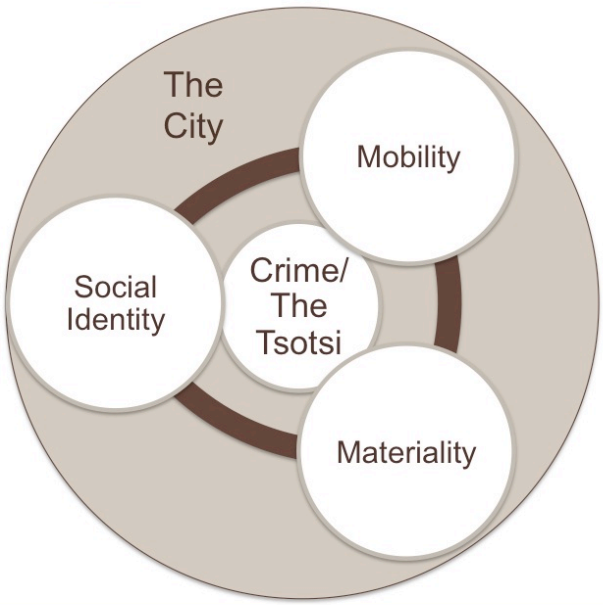


**Figure 2.1** – Diagram showing the key aspects of the complex city

## 2.3 The City and Film

Film occupies several types of space within the city. As a cultural and commercial product, film forms part of commercial and industrial spaces within the city and the global network of flows. The site at which films are consumed, the space of the audience, is also largely an urban space. And film embodies representational space in the way that it represents the different spaces of the city. These aspects of film in urban space are discussed in the first section. The second section examines representational space in more detail and makes use of the key aspects of urban space outlined above. A large body of the literature has focused on how the city has been represented in film. One aspect of this research explores the way that Johannesburg is represented in film and how it contributes to the discourse of the city. But the main focus of the research is to understand how audiences are receiving and using the filmic images of Johannesburg. This is discussed in the last section of the chapter.

### 2.3.1 Film in Urban Spaces

Film production can be highly fluid and this is translated into the images it produces. Film, therefore, cannot be described or defined by one type of space or occupy one type of space through representation. Some scholars have begun to point out the manner in which film occupies the space of flows as a product of a commercial industry (Shiel, 2001; Lukinbeal,

2002 & 2005; Macdonald, 1994). The creative output of films has always been closely linked to the economics of the production, which in turn has had a major influence on the choice of filming locations (Lukinbeal, 2002). So much so that city film commissions, the purpose of which is to promote and advertise their cities through film images and production, are now in existence in nearly every major city (Lukinbeal, 2002). This often leads to one city posing as another and a film commission may promote their city in terms of this ability to be non-descriptive or highly changeable. Only Bollhöfer (2007) has examined the conflicts that arise in the screen identities of urban spaces, though Lukinbeal (2005) did elaborate in later work on the process of location selection. The urban images that form the basis of the representational space may be driven by film as a commercial product occupying the space of flows within the city.

Film's second nature as a geographical and political industry (Macdonald, 1994) has largely been defined in relation to the cinema of Hollywood as a result of its domination of the market. The third cinema is categorised by films made independently in the third world or by directors from the third world. These films are characterised by very low budgets, which thereby free them from the constraints placed by the commercial natures of the first two cinemas (Macdonald, 1994). There is much debate surrounding the definitions of these 'types' of cinema, especially with regards to the lack of constraints in the third world.

The dominance of Hollywood is also reflected in the literature on the city in film, though there are two relevant texts to mention that consider the third world city and film industry. The first, David Foster's *Mexico City in Contemporary Mexican Cinema* (2002) examines the representation of Mexico City in Mexican national cinema. Foster (2002) believes that film can reveal the manner in which the symbolic city is embedded in the everyday lives of people portrayed in the films. Films, as cultural productions, cannot necessarily contribute to an understanding of the city but can further illuminate the nature of the urban experience (Foster, 2002). Foster selects a few films to analyse in depth the representations of the city, some of which are chosen specifically for their uniqueness or being the first to show a particular aspect. The result is that the interpretations and readings of the films that follow are not necessarily common readings within the realm of Mexican cinema.

The second book is *Bombay Cinema* (Mazumdar, 2007), which follows a similar approach to Foster's but is situated within Bollywood cinema and the city of Bombay (officially now recognised as Mumbai). Both books examine the city as represented in films and show how these representations have evolved as urban practices and politics have shifted. Both books demonstrate an increasing depiction of the city as narratives move away from rural locations,

but ultimately films provide the references for urban experiences and there is little understanding of how these relate to actual practices in the city.

These two works are useful because they both explore cities in contexts that are comparable to Johannesburg in their colonial histories and socio-economic statuses in the third world. However, they differ from Johannesburg in that both cities are part of thriving film industries, with Bollywood films in particular being the most prolific globally. A large industry, with large numbers of films being produced, provides the necessary space and funds to produce films that may be slightly unconventional or may explore more marginalised experiences. Johannesburg's industry is far smaller, which narrows the opportunities for variety. In addition, both books focus on the representational space of the cities although Foster does explore some aspects of the space of audience reception. Both Foster and Mazumdar rely on the cultural texts of films to provide an understanding of the city within film. Urban residents' lives are explored only through the representations on the screen rather than through audience reception.

Understanding film as representational space is the dominant form of analysis. Films, very easily, conform to Lefebvre's definition of representational space. Alongside a strong visual construct, films generate meaning through language, through the structures of the industry, through dominant perspectives and through the memories of its intended audiences (Chambers, 1997). Despite film's clear connections to aspects of urban space, it has not often been analysed within a spatial framework, even by urban studies scholars. The debate has focused on analysing the mediums of film as a metaphor of text. Although Norman Denzin emphasised the fact that the visual form was the dominant way of knowing, he also believed that visual representations could only be understood and analysed as textual constructions (Denzin, 1995).

While this metaphor may be useful it also serves to constrain the other aspects of film and space mentioned above. Cresswell and Dixon have recognised the limitations of the textual metaphor and have suggested that film instead should be considered a social relation or a mobility rather than a fixed element (Cresswell & Dixon, 2002). The aspect of social relation may also be extended to incorporate cultural practices. Cinema is a powerful signifying system but it also produces cultural goods and therefore is open to analysis as a set of cultural practices (Shiel, 2001). Clearly films are not easily reduced to, or understood through, a single metaphor. All these elements suggest that film needs to be analysed through a variety of lenses.

As stated earlier, films present views of both 'representations of space', or views from above, and the space of the everyday. Both Lefebvre and de Certeau conceived of 'representations of space' or the view from above to be the perspective of planners and architects and the visual material of this perspective were embodied in plans, maps and the aerial view. These plans and aerial views represent the knowledge and understanding that urban practitioners have of the city. But perhaps this conception of 'representations of space' is too narrow in the field of film and the concept should be broadened to include all spaces that are normally invisible for the average film viewer.

In film, the depiction of plans and maps is exceedingly rare but the aerial perspective features in many films, forming the viewpoint of the urban practitioners. In essence, these are the views that remain invisible to the majority of a city's inhabitants, now made visible on the big screen. Film presents unseen views and spaces for all to see and understand. Aerial perspectives in films, in line with the plans and maps that they are mimicking, are largely diagrammatic and two-dimensional. It is the everyday city, the city viewed from the ground, which provides the complexity outlined in Section 2.1.1. This builds on de Certeau's writing that places the view from above in tension with the experience of the everyday (de Certeau, 1984). The space of the everyday becomes, then, the visible in a binary with the views from above, or the invisible. And, although the views from above are normally invisible to the city's inhabitants, it is the representation of the everyday that provides information about the complexity of the city.

The contribution of film to the discourse of the complex city takes on more significance when the site of reception is considered. Films are viewed and enjoyed in spaces and in predominantly urban environments (Bruno, 1997). Watching a film can involve meeting friends and family at the cinema; settling in on the couch to watch on television or on the home theatre system, or, increasingly through the Internet and the computer with YouTube and Netflix. Although a key element in the site of audience reception, these spaces have received very little attention in the literature.

Some scholars (Heathcote, 2001; Flickinger, 2007) have traced the evolution of the architecture of cinemas in the city and how it highlights the ideologies of film viewing of the time periods. Brian Larkin has explored how teenage boys in Nigeria navigate both the city and dominant cultural practices in their quest to go to the movies (Larkin, 2004). Larkin reveals the relationship between the spatial and the social in the act of attending the cinema, independent of the spaces that form the subject matter of films. Larkin also demonstrates the importance of considering film viewing as a social practice within the city (Larkin, 2004).

Audience research has explored the sites of the cinema and the TV room as spaces of reception but very little work has explored the urban context of viewing urban films. Many turn to the images of film as the basis of the analysis. For Rob Lapsley images and representations reproduce social practices but that they also contest them (demonstrated through a Lacanian[11] analysis of the city in film) (Lapsley, 1997). This emphasises the need to understand the different dimensions of space represented in film and how they interact with the space of reception. The social and spatial aspects of film may prove to be the most influential, especially as the medium itself is a social activity. The ways in which the two aspects interact may provide a lens with which to examine both the way that audiences receive films, and the manner in which they understand their built environments.

### 2.3.2 Spaces Represented in Film

Geographers Jacqueline Burgess and John Gold compiled one of the earliest anthologies that looked at the representation of the city on the screen, *Geography, the Media and Popular Culture* (Burgess & Gold, 1985). They argued that direct experience of the city only constitutes a small percentage of the knowledge that each citizen has of the city and therefore, geographers needed to explore the media and popular culture in order to fully understand people's discourses of the city. Previously, popular culture had been dismissed as unworthy of study because of its very popular nature. Despite this being stated nearly thirty years ago, there has been little work since then that truly investigates how citizens experience their urban spaces through film.

The physical materiality is the obvious starting point for understanding the representation of the city on the screen. Filming on location and using real landscapes in order to set the scene, give fictional films a sense of credibility and realism (Aitken & Zonn, 1994) and blur the difference between reality and fiction. Clarke felt that far from just being fictional, film was a means of encountering reality (Clarke, 1997). But this reality may be predicated on existing knowledge of the real spaces of the city. For many outside of Los Angeles, the spaces of L.A. on the screen are no more real than the narratives they form part of because those spaces have not been encountered in reality. Discerning between real and fictional landscapes on the screen requires other forms of knowledge of those spaces.

Mitchell Schwarzer states that "cinematic landscapes heighten awareness of real places" (Schwarzer, 2004, p. 210) and goes on to say that through the editing processes, films can show us cities that are new and different while simultaneously familiar and thus, cinema

[11] This is form of psychoanalysis frequently used in film theory.

landscapes create hybrid cities (Schwarzer, 2004). Seemingly, without being radical or extremely different, the process of editing can contribute to new discourses of urban spaces. Again, this notion requires first-hand knowledge of these cities in order for there to be a hybrid of the familiar and the unknown. For Schwarzer this is a continuation of the processes begun with rapid transportation, however, travel by train and car reflects a more direct interaction with the landscape than film does (Schwarzer, 2004).

Chris Lukinbeal termed meaningful spaces in film as 'landscape as place' (2005). He closely examined the representation of landscape and environment in his paper 'Cinematic Landscapes' of 2005. He argued that films make use of 'landscape as space' and, 'landscape as place', and that the use of these different portrayals are determined by the narrative of the film, as well as the economics of the production (Lukinbeal, 2005). The use of 'landscape as place' is an important part of the narrative and its use relies on the audience's prior knowledge of the place portrayed (Lukinbeal, 2005). However, establishing this knowledge of place and its associated meanings within the realm of film and television may prove to be problematic.

Vanessa Mathews has explored the impact of global viewing on one such intimate urban space. In her paper titled 'Set Appeal', Mathews (2010) examined the site of a distillery that functioned as a film location prior to its redevelopment as a mixed-use facility. Mathews showed how the site benefitted from the economic production as well as the production of meaning generated through the use of the site as a film location (Mathews, 2010). She illustrated how the spaces inherited meaning from the narratives of the films and how this changed from film to film and how, in turn, this influenced the meaning of those spaces for residents and employees of the site (Mathews, 2010). Mathews demonstrated how spaces have become meaningful places through the medium of film.

Mathews (2010) and Lukinbeal (2005) both begin to unravel some of the physical elements and economic aspects of these spaces that lend themselves to being film locations and places. The materiality of spaces can determine their suitability for selection as a film location. Sometimes it is the very specificity of place, in space and time, that is required and other times it is the quality of non-place, of familiar blandness, that suggests the perfect film location. While scholars have addressed the materiality few have interrogated the specific make-up of physical space in films. The most thorough critique of a city's represented materiality can be found in Thom Andersen's three-part film, *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003). The film offers a historical overview of Hollywood's depiction of Los Angeles and reveals

the skewed representation of the city[12]. The Los Angeles depicted on the screen is merely a fraction of the real city and the film highlights the importance of using materiality as a lens to explore the on-screen representations of place. This is discussed in Chapter five.

Johannesburg is no exception to the lack of exploration of a city's materiality represented on the screen. Lucia Saks explores some notions of Johannesburg's materiality in the early films of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951) and *Come back, Africa* (1959) but this is not the main focus of her agenda (Saks, 2010b). Thelma Gutsche, in her well-cited compendium, *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa* (1972) describes the geography of the film industry in South Africa and reveals how Johannesburg came to host the majority of cinemas and film studios. This had more to do with the city as an economic and populous heart of the nation than with its very specific metropolitan location. Gutsche's work reveals the spaces of audience reception and film as a commercial product in Johannesburg, as opposed to any of the cultural meanings that the city may embody in film (Gutsche, 1972).

The materiality of the city is a large component of the representation of the city from above. The main physical elements of the city provide the foundation for looking at the city as a whole. When considering the space of the everyday there are two main aspects to consider: the social construction of space and mobility in the city. What is crucial, then, is the representation of the familiar, the visible and the everyday. Aitken and Zonn (1994) believe that film's power to influence lies in the way that it represents a simplified version of reality; our often-chaotic and difficult-to-grasp reality. Film, with its predominant narrative structure, forms the ideal playground for exploring the individual and their everyday life experiences but it also reveals the social nature of film.

Kennedy and Lukinbeal (1997) believe that representations of the city on the screen provide audiences with models for social and spatial interactions. The representation of the practice of the everyday returns us to the ideas of Lefebvre and Massey: that of space as a social construct or a set of social relations. The act of attending the cinema is itself a social interaction and deeply embedded in the urban milieu. This elevates film above being merely representational space as it can be considered to form the space of the everyday. But the depiction of everyday space is constrained by dominant social frameworks, partly due to the

[12] Andersen refers to Los Angeles as the 'city without a name' for the number of times it has played the part of an ambiguous location (*Los Angeles Plays Itself*, 2003). Hollywood films distort the geography of Los Angeles and imbue the modernist architecture heritage of the city with notions of evil by habitually locating movie villains within these residences.

conservative medium and the political aspect of film production. These constrained depictions exclude varied depictions of women (Thomas, 2003), Blacks (Massood, 2003) and the global south in general because of the dominance of Hollywood cinema. These limited representations are not uncontested but questions of authenticity and access remain. In South Africa, the film industry is still largely represented by White males and so the question of 'whose everyday space?' becomes even more pertinent. Social space as represented in film is also therefore, intimately connected with aspects of identity.

Film embodies movement suggesting that the experience of space in film is similar to that of the train or car (Schwarzer, 2004). Mitchell Schwarzer in his book *Zoomscape* discusses the way in which modern technologies have influenced the built environment (Schwarzer, 2004). Schwarzer believes that the technological transformations encompassed in trains, cars, cinema and television have all contributed to changes in architectural perception but that these changes happen gradually and do not reflect the pace at which the technologies themselves have changed. Schwarzer explores how motion and motion pictures have altered our perceptions of our urban environments but does not examine how mobility as a form of agency changes people's experiences of the city. Schwarzer's focus is on response in the built environment, which reveals only gradual shifts (Schwarzer, 2004).

Schwarzer's approach fails to acknowledge space as a social product because the social response to these technologies has been rapid. His focus on high speed mobility also does not make space for the more individual forms of mobility articulated by Walter Benjamin and Michel de Certeau that are also forms of expression in the urban environment. Everyday urban space has found expression in the literature on film through the figure of the flâneur following on from the writings of Baudelaire and Benjamin. Authors Friedberg (1993) and Murphy (2006) use the male figure of the flâneur to deconstruct the way in which women have been depicted in urban film settings. Amy Murphy (2006) reveals the presence of the female flâneuse in two films (*Roman Holiday* (1953) and *Lost in Translation* (2003)), fifty years apart, but is forced to concede that these films are far from typical examples. These female protagonists find freedom in the city without the mediation of sexual encounter. This form of mobility, is therefore, connected to aspects of identity and the social space of the city. It goes beyond mere motion and is embedded with meaning.

As mentioned previously, crime is not a form of space within the city but it does affect the other constructions of urban space in Johannesburg. It is also a major theme with regards to urban films. This is discussed in detail in Chapter eight but one of the key crime genres, film noir, was the first genre to exploit the location of the modern metropolis through extensive

location shooting, thereby cementing the relationship between the dangerous city and film. Crime can create imagined and real barriers in the city. Film is considered important for the way that it portrays parts of the city that are 'inaccessible' to other inhabitants of the city, either because of the fear of crime (or perceived crime) or other prejudices (Bullock, 2003; Green Leigh & Kenny, 1996). The intended audience of this knowledge is clearly those who do not reside or work in those particular areas and presumably, the knowledge conveyed is more than simply acknowledging the existence of such spaces. Films may be perpetuating the idea that certain spaces are inaccessible within the city.

It therefore appears pertinent to delve into the nature of the discourse on the city that film provides. In Johannesburg the literature on film reflects the small industry. Most literature focuses on the racial inequalities that exist and have existed historically, and the current issue of building a national cinema. The most significant work on the city and film is by scholar Loren Kruger. Kruger's work explores the representation of Johannesburg in several performing arts including film (Kruger, 2005). One of the key themes is crime and fear, stemming from an early article that termed Johannesburg the 'edgy' city (Kruger, 2001). Kruger shows how the city centre has been used as the location for images of crime and violence (2005 & 2006), emphasising common fears held in the country.

This section has discussed the literature on urban film and has shown how it intersects with the urban and spatial theories explored in the first section. Film has been theorised as part of Castell's space of flows and as a space of audience reception. But the predominant framing of urban film is through the lens of film as representational space. As representational space, scholars have discussed the representation of all four aspects of the complex city: materiality; social identity; mobility; and crime. However, very few scholars have recognised the multiplicity of spaces simultaneously: that the representational space of film can present numerous types of spaces and that film itself occupies numerous spaces within the city.

## 2.4 The Intersection of Representations with Reality – Towards a conceptual frame

The act of attending the cinema and viewing a film has been acknowledged to be an urban practice and yet the manner in which films are received and perceived is still mostly unexplored. Some scholars have found evidence for the way in which films influence people and spaces while others are more ambivalent of film's ability to do so. The aim of this research is to examine both lived space and representational space, as they are experienced in Johannesburg. Andrea Kahn suggests that there is a gap between the idea of the city (the city that is represented) and the city that is real (the city that exists) and there is another form of

representation (still to be imagined) that occupies this space (Kahn, 2002). Blothner (1999, quoted in Escher, 2006) calls these the 'intermediate worlds' that combine the fiction of film and the reality of the city. Cinema is, simultaneously, a mode of perceiving reality and a portion of reality itself (Clarke, 1997). The literature has suggested that these intermediate worlds are complex spaces that are difficult to access, so how does one begin to understand how these spaces are constructed?

This section examines the space of reception of films in the city. I discuss some of the literature regarding the reception and influence of films with particular attention to the circuit of cultural production. I combine the key spatial aspects of the city outlined above and this circuit to produce a conceptual frame for the research of the influence of urban films on Johannesburg residents.

### 2.4.1 The Reception of Films in the City

For some, the social practice of viewing a film is analogous to the practice of urban life. The parallels between the act of viewing a film and the act of being in the city lie, for the most part, in their both being unconscious actions (Burgess & Gold, 1985) and this idea draws strongly on the work of Walter Benjamin (Ockman, 2000). The fact that both practising in the city and watching films are unconscious acts may explain why it is difficult to study and examine their relationship and influence on each other. Certainly this is the view of John Gold, who went on to state that establishing the influence or cause-and-effect of film in the city would be a difficult and futile pursuit (1985), although there was no doubt that the influence existed.

Subsequent to this statement, however, various scholars have begun to establish the influence of film in a more concrete manner (Bollhöfer, 2007; Mathews, 2010). Kennedy and Lukinbeal (1997), in an in-depth paper, discussed the application of geographical research methods in understanding the relationship between film and the city. They emphasised Gold's statement by repeating the difficulty of establishing the connection between images and urban environments but they put forward the use of transactional theory in understanding behaviour in urban environments and that this would create a transactional reality whereby reality and representations are continuously informing each other (Kennedy & Lukinbeal, 1997).

Maureen Thomas (2003) has shown how films have effected change in the city of New York. Films can enact change. She examined the depiction of women and the city on screen, saying that historically the representations were generally negative (Thomas, 2003). The television show *Sex and the City* (1998–2004), however, presented a positive image of women in the city

and thereby changed people's perceptions and even their expectations of the city (Thomas, 2003). Thomas demonstrates how the superior fictional world created in the programme allowed women to expect and demand more from the real city (Thomas, 2003). This reiterates the view that not only can film reflect cultural practices but that it can also shape them in turn (Aitken & Zonn, 1994). Films can be an expression of current practices as well as an indicator of how practices may change in the future.

David Clarke in *The Cinematic City* (1997) reiterated the ability of film to shape the city and to change the perceptions of people, though Clarke references subsequent films as evidence of this change. Neil Bullock and Julia Hallam have also looked to films as evidence for changing perceptions. Bullock illustrated that the meanings of spaces are created through the narrative and films provide evidence of people's responses to these spaces (2003). Hallam has researched the representation of the city in an archive of over 110 years of film shot in Liverpool. In her paper, 'Film, Space and Place', Hallam (2010) puts forward the idea that changing perceptions can be traced and understood through the changing representations of the city in the films. Hallam (2010) emphasises the value of local films in this regard and that they contribute to the 'mythologisation' of place.

However, as a means of understanding changes in perceptions, the conservative medium of film may not be the most accurate measure of contemporary perceptions in reality. The filmmaker, Patrick Keiller, made the point that films very rarely present radically new concepts or places, and that the industry is generally very conservative (2003). Keiller and Schwarzer suggest that changes in perceptions and attitudes may be difficult to study because they are gradual and slow by nature. When Maureen Thomas (2003) examined the portrayal of women in urban settings in television shows she highlighted that films and television shows cannot be seen to be a reflection of perceptions and understandings in the real world. And, in fact, she laments many of the television shows in her study for lagging behind reality and not offering more realistic situations of women in the city (Thomas, 2003). The show *Sex in the City* was notable as an exception to this.

There are, therefore, some flaws in the approaches to this research that have studied films in order to understand the perceptions of people reflected within them. People's perceptions of the city and urban spaces cannot be understood by examining subsequent films because films often err on the conventional side and do not reveal actual impressions. Films alter our perceptions simply by providing information; rich, visual information, about unknown or unfamiliar parts of the city. This portrayal can go on to heighten our awareness of urban issues or the fictional narratives can allay our fears and prejudices. In addition, films

construct meanings and symbolic imagery but film scholars Stuart Hall (1980) and John Fiske (1982) have shown that the dominant meaning or intended interpretation can be resisted. Audience research, therefore, is critical in understanding perceptions and even more so when considering the myriad ways of interpreting films. However, because film is a conservative medium, films are never likely to challenge our perceptions in a radical manner. It is therefore, critical to understand how films are representing Johannesburg but, more importantly, how these images are being received, interpreted and influencing everyday life in the city.

### 2.4.2 The City in the Circuit of Culture

Bjorn Bollhöfer explicitly placed the representation of the city on the screen within a cycle of film production and consumption and borrowed[13] the term 'circuit of culture' (2007), situating the circuit within a cultural geography. Bollhöfer (2007) discussed two television shows in the detective genre in order to understand audience's responses to the representations of the city of Cologne. He emphasised the need to simultaneously look at more than one aspect of the circuit and also to understand that audiences bring their own discourses to the viewing experience (Bollhöfer, 2007). Bollhöfer's ideas and the circuit of culture form the basis of the conceptual framework of this study and are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

The circuit of culture was developed as a tool for understanding the impact of cultural texts or artefacts within the world or a particular setting. It provided the framework for analysing the introduction and growth of the Sony Walkman (du Gay, et al, 2007). Du Gay et al were able to show the intersection of personal, corporate and global identities associated with this one product. In addition they were able to explore the coding and meaning embedded in the cultural object and how it lead to changes in the use of public space and the subsequent regulation of the product in public space (du Gay, et al, 2007). The framework of the circuit of culture provides a suitable structure to understand the influence of Johannesburg films, even though they present a less tangible cultural product than that of the Sony Walkman.

[13] From du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, & Negus, 2007.

Below is a diagram illustrating film production and the reception of the film text as it relates to the city. The city landscape serves as inspiration and as a backdrop for the filmmaker's film. The filmmaker interprets the streets and building and reproduces a visual language that carries meaning. The audience views the film and understands the meaning and interpretation conveyed in the movie or is confronted by an unfamiliar interpretation. Meanings in our built environments and spaces are derived from the socially defined activities and purposes that occur in those spaces (Ittelson et al, 1974). Meanings defined by the screen are incorporated into the audience's existing knowledge and memories of the spaces represented and, as such, will go on to influence their perceptions of these spaces.

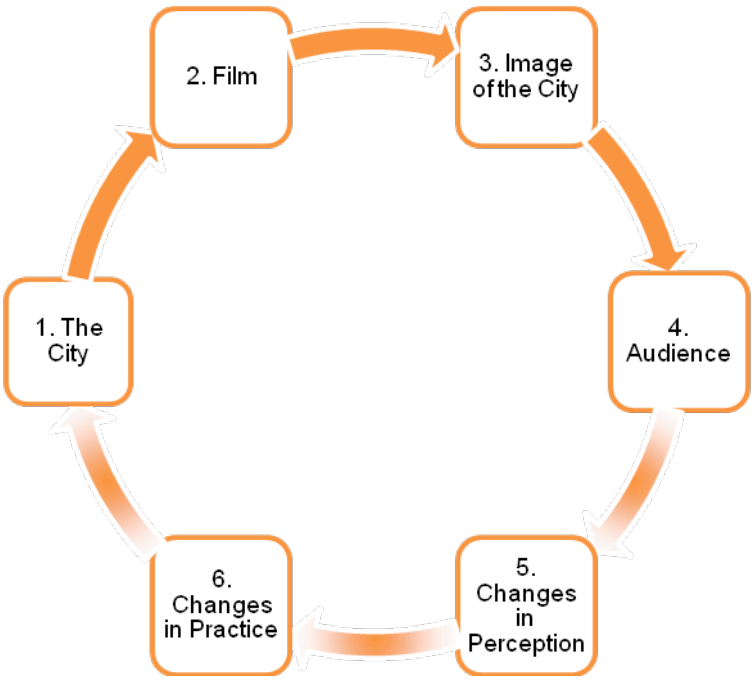


**Figure 2.2** – The circuit of the film text in the city.

Changes in perception can go on to change an audience's practices within those urban spaces, thereby changing the fabric of the city and creating a new landscape for filmmakers to represent. This forms the basic structure of the process of film production but it is by no means a closed process and there are many factors that influence it.

This cycle can also be short-circuited, for example, filmmakers may draw their inspiration from other representations of the city rather than the original landscape. Equally, the audience is also exposed to many different media and other elements that influence their perceptions and behaviours in the city, and therefore, the process of interpretation that leads

from changes in perception to changes in practice in the city is not easily defined. This part of the cycle has been shown as less defined in the diagram.

Bollhöfer (2007) explains that this cycle can be called a 'circuit of culture' where every stage of the cycle is infused with cultural values and meanings. A film may be presenting an interpretation of city space but a cinemagoer will also come to the screening with his or her own knowledge and understanding. Thus, it is important to understand the relationship between film and the city as a continuous process. This circuit of culture will be discussed in further detail in the following section.

### 2.4.3 Conceptual Frame

Bollhöfer (2007) explains that the three main sites in the circuit of culture are representation, production and consumption but that the circuit allows for much greater complexity with regards to the transference of meaning. Two other sites of meaning are identity and regulation (Bollhöfer, 2007). The circuit of culture incorporates these complexities demonstrated through the application of these main sites to the different processes within the cycle. In adapting this circuit I have replaced the simple representation of the city with the model of the complex city as shown in Figure 2.1. This model provides a framework for breaking down the vast and unknowable city into more manageable parts. It also identifies the different spaces that audiences may be interacting with through film.

Starting with the top half of the cycle, the process whereby the city is interpreted and drawn upon by filmmakers is the site of production but this could also be called a site of consumption if filmmakers are inspired by previous films. The process by which the filmmaker creates the image of the city is representation and the site of the audience viewing the images is consumption. Through all these sites, cultural meaning is associated and transferred.

The bottom half of the cycle is less distinct and more difficult to define. In order for the site of the audience to move from mere consumption to a film leading to a change in perception, the film must contribute meaning in the area of identity. The film's meaning must contribute to an existing identity or be significantly and convincingly of a different identity. There is a second site of cultural meaning production as new perceptions lead to changes in practice and finally, as these practices are incorporated into the city, the cultural meanings fall under the site of regulation. Regulation is defined as understanding the way that these cultural meanings become part of everyday practice (Bollhöfer, 2007).

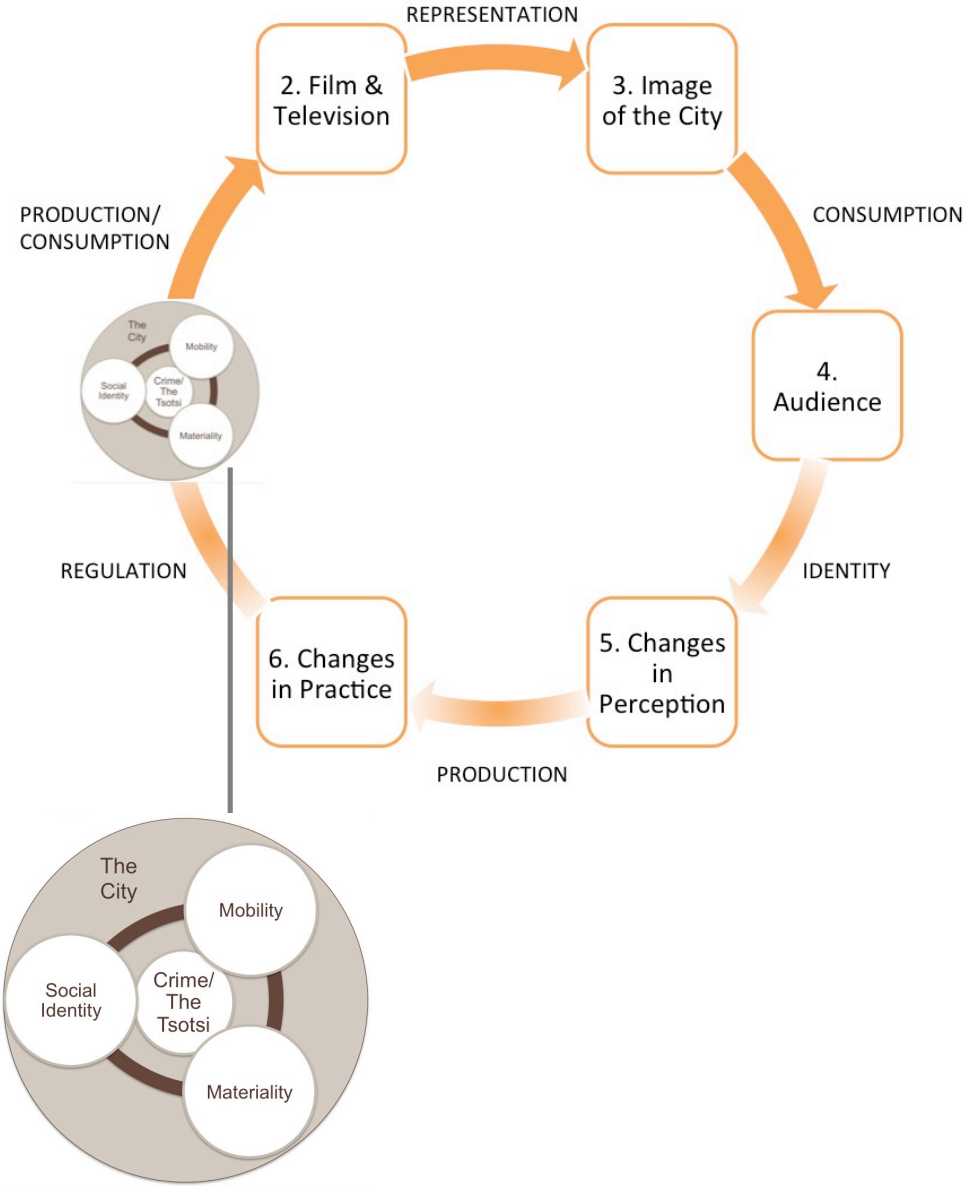


**Figure 2.3** – The complex city within the circuit of film text.

In broader terms, the top half of the cycle can be thought of as the sites of production and representation, while the bottom half is the extended site of consumption. This is to illustrate that the circuit of culture demonstrating the influence of other media such as newspapers or maps would be very similar – the top half would represent the processes involved in producing a newspaper while the bottom half would remain constant. This also shows that the points at which these two halves meet is where the circuit is at its most 'open' and complex. For example, at the site where the audience consumes the film or television show we know that this is not done in isolation. The audience has prior knowledge and

conceptions to which the meaning of the film is added. The circuit is never closed and is a continuous process.

As stated earlier, the extended site of consumption is the focus of this research. The aim of this research is not to definitively prove the totality of this cycle, as the 'circuit of culture' has been assumed by scholars to function in this way (du Gay, et al, 2007) and it has already been established that there is difficulty in definitive proof. Du Gay et al (2007) offer a number of methods for exploring the dimensions of the cycle and are related to the sites of production, consumption and identity etc. The focus of the research is to understand how film is an influencing factor in the relationship between the audience and the complex city. Specifically, the research questions the audience on their experience and understanding of the influence of film rather than examining other cultural practices for the evidence of films' influences[14].

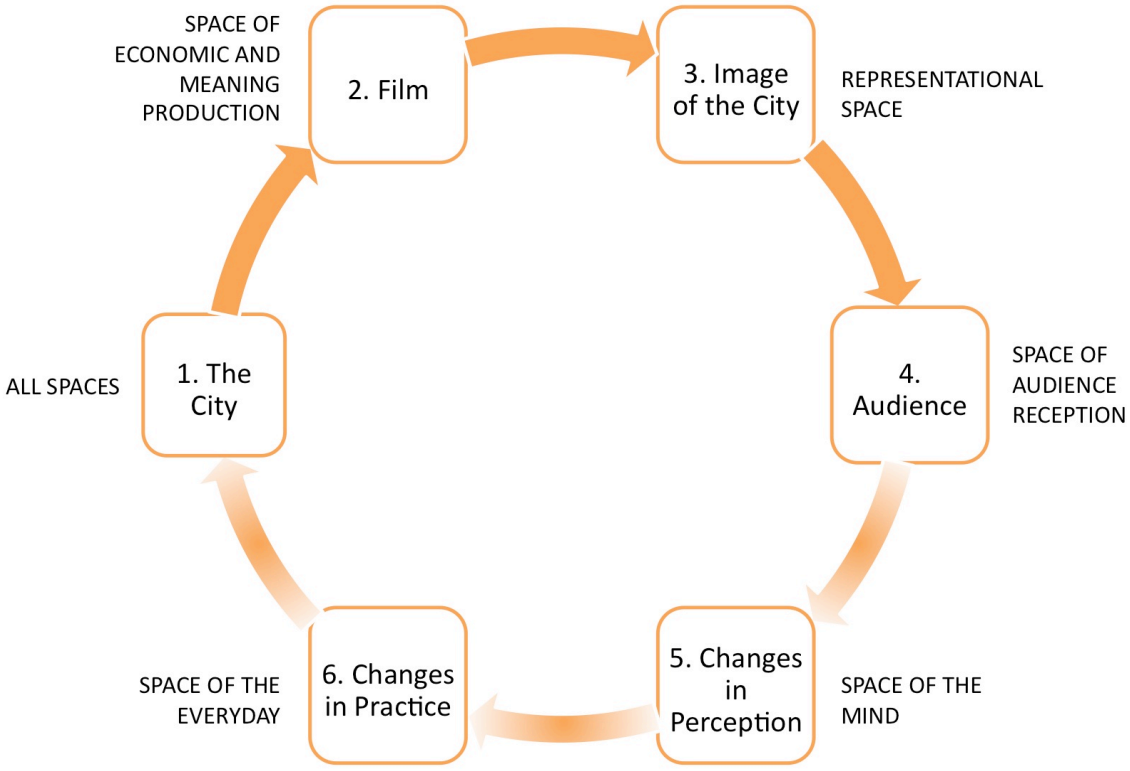


**Figure 2.4** – The circuit of film text and space.

Figure 2.4 returns to the types of spaces that have formed a large part of this chapter's discussion and applies these spaces to the circuit of culture. This reveals the gap between

[14] For example, the influence of American films in Johannesburg in the 1940s and 1950s was demonstrated through changes in fashion, slang and the naming of local gangs (Glaser 1990).

representational space and changes in spatial practice to be the intangible space of the mind or unconscious. The difficulty in understanding the relationship between our perceptions of representations of space and our practice within the city itself is that both these activities are unconscious (Burgess & Gold, 1985; Tomaselli, 1977). When we move through the city we are only conscious of the tasks we are in the process of achieving and when we watch films we are only conscious of the story. Joan Ockman agrees that with both these activities there are 'modes of distraction' (2000, p. 171) in experiencing television and the city.

The similarities between watching and practising in the city go deeper than that. Allen refers to the discourse of television experience and knowledge and compares the viewing or watching with the concept of 'a wandering viewpoint through the texts' (Allen, 1992, p. 105). Allen's use of the 'wandering viewpoint' points to the similarities between viewing films and de Certeau's walking in the city (1984). Our wandering through the city is akin to the way a film camera moves through the spaces of the city.

In this instance the filmmaker is de Certeau's pedestrian (1984) and the visual language of film is the act of walking in the city. The film could be the everyday practice of the director or the cinematographer or it could be telling the story of the protagonist's everyday. These individual experiences, whether fictional or real, create stories and memories, within the context of the film's location, that are enjoyed by large audiences. The spaces in the film are imbued with stories and with meaning, shared by a collective and so those spaces become **places**[15] for the collective. A parallel city is born, one where the streets are filled with drama and action and memories, shared and remembered by many, despite it being a fictional city.

The implications of the similarities between the city on the screen and the real city are that the research methods of media studies may well prove to offer new insights in understanding the sites of cultural consumption with regards to the city. And at the same time, geographical research methods may give greater insight into the process of interpreting the meanings of films and television shows. These different methods are discussed in greater detail in Chapter three.

## 2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has laid the foundation for examining the influence of films of Johannesburg for the everyday practice of its residents. In the first section it has provided a model for

[15] In this thesis I have used the term space as a general reference to the physical areas of the city whereas place is used to refer to particular spaces; either they have unique characters, can be readily distinguished from another, or have special meaning for residents.

grasping the complex city. This is based on spatial and urban theories of scholars over the last hundred years or so, whose work has contributed significantly to the comprehension of the city. This model identifies three key spatial ideas at work in the city: materiality, social identity, and mobility. With reference to Johannesburg, the model includes the aspect of crime which, while not necessarily a spatial construct, does have an impact on the other spatial constructs in the city.

The second section has examined the growing literature that explores the relationship between the urban and cinema. Film occupies three main spaces within the city. As part of a commercial industry within a global network film occupies Castells' space of flow in the city (Castells, 2000). It embodies Lefebvre's representational space, imbuing space with meaning and symbolism (Lefebvre, 1991), and as a cultural product film operates within the space of audience reception or consumption. The focus of this research is this last space because this is where films are interpreted and is the site of influence with potential impact on everyday practice in the city. But in order to understand this site it is also important to comprehend how Johannesburg is constructed in representational space. The model of the complex city provides a framework for examining these two spaces in greater detail.

The last section brings together the literature on the city and the literature on urban film. I have adapted the concept of the 'circuit of culture' to provide a conceptual framework for researching the influence of films on residents' feelings about and actions in the city of Johannesburg. The circuit shows a cyclical relationship between the audience and the city with film as a facilitator. Film interprets the city and represents simplified or partial images of Johannesburg, which audiences then see, read and interpret. The myriad interpretations and readings form the space of audience reception or consumption and is the focus of this research. My research examines the influence of these interpretations on the everyday practice of Johannesburg residents. This is the point, through the audience, at which images of Johannesburg influence the different dimensions of space in the city.

In this way film is examined as representational space and the space of audience reception. But it is also examined in relation to the spatial constructs identified in the complex city model. These spatial constructs provide a framework for better understanding the representational space and the space of audience reception, and have the additional benefit of relating directly to critical theories for understanding the city. Applying these ideas of multiple spaces provides the framework for understanding how films influence everyday practice in Johannesburg but also how they facilitate the comprehension of the complex city.

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1 Introduction

The inter-disciplinary nature of this research requires a number of varied methods to explore the different aspects of the relationship between images on the screen and the city. The methodology has been informed and framed by the circuit of culture, described in the conceptual framework of Chapter two. Specifically I have focused on four processes illustrated in the diagram through three phases/studies of research: the first is the site of representation of images of the city flowing into the consumption of those images; the second is the site of consumption of the audience and the identity associated with the consumption; and the third is the site of production – the site of changing perceptions.

While the visual medium of film will be the starting point of the research, it is my intention to focus on the reception of the images or what Gillian Rose calls the 'site of audiencing' (2005). Too many studies have relied on the cyclical nature of the production of film and have only analysed the images on the screen as a reflection of the society that produced them (see Alsayyad, 2006; Bruno, 2007; Clarke, 1997; Clarke & Doel, 2005; Denzin, 1995; Gordon, 2010; Hallam, 2010; Lamster, 2000; Penz, 2003).

As previously stated, watching the screen and being in the city are both largely unconscious, everyday acts (Burgess & Gold, 1985; Tomaselli, 1977). Therefore the role of the researcher is critical to bringing these practices to the surface. The influence of the researcher and the process of research will increase the audience member's awareness of his own perceptions and understandings, and this has both negative and positive consequences for the research design. Because of the unconscious nature of both activities it is impossible to understand to what extent scenes of the city on the screen will influence an audience in everyday life. By initiating the research and asking questions, awareness of the images of the city will be raised and the answers to the questions may only reflect newly considered ideas and not longstanding opinions. Further interviews held regularly over a period of time may provide more considered opinions but, again, these will be influenced by the increased awareness of the subject matter.

The research was conducted in three phases focusing on the four sites of the circuit of culture as mentioned above. The three phases incorporate methods from the disciplines of urban studies and geography, social sciences and media studies. The three phases to the study are: the first phase is a cultivation analysis of the representation of Johannesburg, focusing on films produced after 1994 but including the history of the city's representation; the second phase is a broad survey conducted across four locations in the city, while the third phase examines perceptions and experiences in greater detail through in-depth interviews.

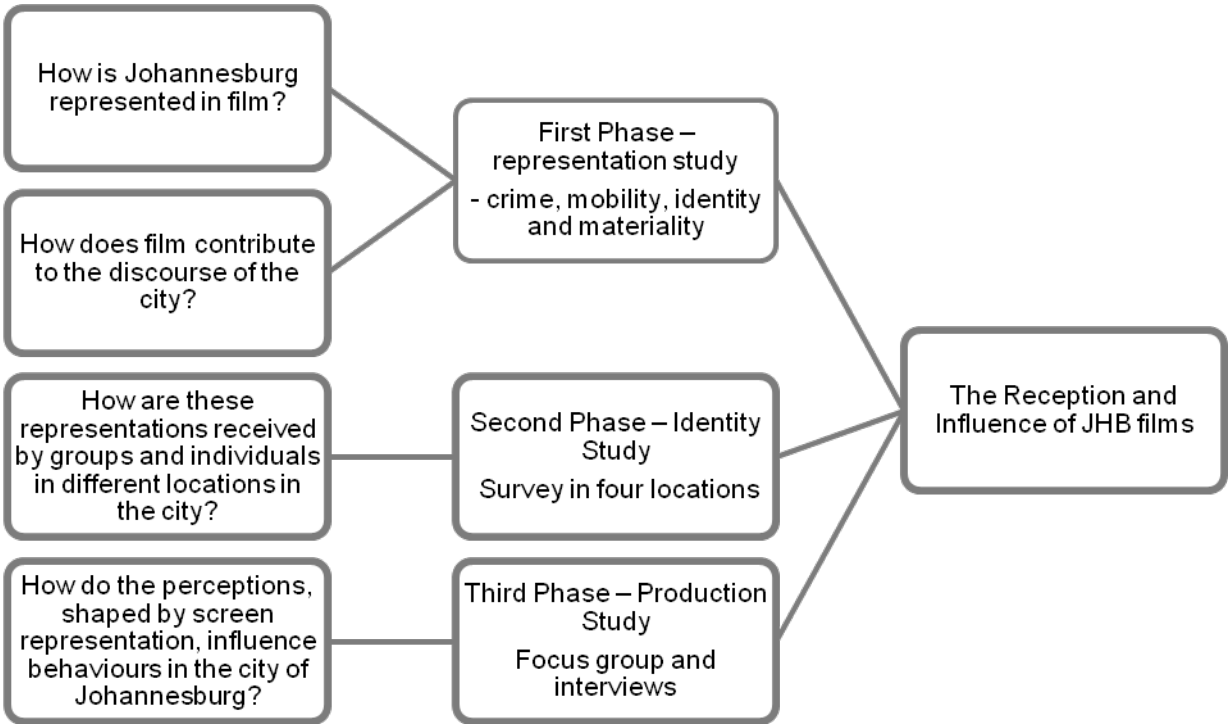


**Figure 3.1** – The three phases of research

## 3.2 Image of the City (Representation)

The first phase of the research, the 'representation study', involved mapping the representational spaces of Johannesburg (across the city's film history) in the two main categories of film and documentaries alongside the key academic literatures on the city. Films were analysed using the encoding/decoding model and, in conjunction with the literature, four key themes emerged. Those four themes are crime, mobility, identity and materiality. Crime and identity are critical themes in both visual representations and in urban literature, whereas mobility and materiality feature more in the literature and are obliquely referenced in the films and documentaries. Films were selected for analysis on the basis of their

predominant film location, beginning with the earliest depiction of Johannesburg in 1949, but focusing on films produced from 1994 onwards[16].

This research has focused on films produced since 1994 for a number of reasons but the intention is not to negate the influence or memory of films prior to this date. Therefore, key films prior to 1994 have also been considered as part of the larger discourse of the city. 1994 saw the official introduction of democracy but, as to be expected, democracy is yet to be fully realised spatially. The aim of this research is to establish whether film can assist with change by re-imagining the spaces of the city in a democratic manner. In addition, this was a means of limiting the research within a scope that can be reasonably achieved.

### 3.2.1 Johannesburg Films

Before beginning the process of analysing films set or filmed in Johannesburg in recent years, an overview of Johannesburg's representations throughout its history was conducted as part of the initial literature review. However, it emerged that very little work has been done on reviewing the history of Johannesburg on film. This review forms the basis for Chapter four and revealed a number of insights that informed the cultivation analysis of the films discussed in Part B. The historical overview examined films of Johannesburg alongside the development and growth of the city and demonstrated that in some cases films reflected developments in the city but that in many cases there are more absences of representations. These are discussed in more detail in Chapter four.

The survey, discussed in more detail in Section 3.3, provided a list of 27 films and documentaries and 11 television shows. All of which had been filmed in Johannesburg. Some films such as *Forgiveness* (2004) and *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) have been filmed in Johannesburg but are not set in the city. Other films such as *White Wedding* (2009) only feature Johannesburg briefly. The majority of the films, however, are set and filmed in Johannesburg. They vary in genre, international exposure and audience size and span the two decades since 1994. In this way they provide a broad cross-section of Johannesburg films through which to analyse the influence of films for residents of the city. Not all of these films have been analysed in depth or discussed in detail in this thesis. The thesis has focused

[16] 1994 serves as the watershed for democracy in South Africa and therefore films produced from then have been in a better position to depict democratic spaces, although there are such films that predate this. In addition, in order to understand the direct relationship between the moving images and practice in the city, these images need to have been viewed relatively recently and reflect, as near as possible, city spaces that are still familiar.

on the films with strong visual references to Johannesburg through the use of establishing shots and those with narratives rooted in the city. The thesis has also focussed on more contemporary settings where films have the potential to reimagine Johannesburg as opposed to historical dramas such as *Catch a Fire* (2006), which present Johannesburg as it 'was'.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the literature review identified the spatial constructs and facets of Johannesburg generating four main themes for the analysis of the films made after 1994, which are also highlighted in the historical overview. The first theme is materiality, which identifies the numerous physical elements and spaces of Johannesburg as the foundation for understanding the relationships between representations of spaces and those places in reality. The second theme looks at identity because, as described in Chapter two, urban spaces are seen to be spaces of personal expression and identities are the foundation of both the audience and films characters (the key element in identification with films). The third theme of mobility is an extension of the idea of personal expression in space and can be seen to be an intersection of identity and space in the city, which has also been reflected in films. And finally, the fourth theme is that of crime and the gangster figure, both of which form part of substantial discussions about Johannesburg and the films set in Johannesburg. These themes form the framework in which the films were analysed.

The historical overview has had a few limitations. As it was not the focus of this research it was not an exhaustive study, which was further limited by the difficulty of sourcing relevant films. Many of the early films, predating World War II, have been lost and very little information is available on the content of those films. The National Film, Video and Sound Archive only makes available films older than forty years and has limited resources for viewing of film reels. The historical overview in Chapter four suggests that there is more to be explored with regards to the history of Johannesburg and film, with the potential for further study.

### 3.2.2 Method and Analysis

Cultivation analysis assesses the content of television according to the subject being studied and then uses that information to understand the responses to a survey or quantitative study. Respondents are grouped according to their viewing habits, either light or heavy, and this is used to determine how influential the representations on the screen are. Originally developed to study the effects of violence shown in the media, it has since been used to compare the representation of women and ethnic minorities on the screen with real social conditions.

This method combines both qualitative and quantitative data, but as part of this research it is mainly qualitative. George Gerbner and his associates pioneered this method with a study

that looked at violence on television (Schroder et al, 2003). They analysed the frequency and type of violence depicted on the screen and then compared the responses of heavy and light viewers when questioned about their attitude toward violence. Criticisms of the method, though, include the difficulty in defining the depiction of violence (in this example, but the aspect to be studied requires clear definition in all its applications), and the fact that the initial interpretation and content analysis does not take into account an audience's own interpretation or reading of the same content.

Cultivation analysis was used to determine the images of Johannesburg that form part of the content of cinema screens in South Africa and this was compiled with existing media research as to the numbers of viewers and the popularity of the films or TV shows in question, where available. This established the frequency and manner in which Johannesburg is represented on the cinema screen. Johannesburg is referenced in film and television in a number of ways, from discussions in the dialogue to the use of the city as a continuous backdrop. This study made use of the establishing shot as the criterion for a movie or show to be considered a representation of the city. As discussed earlier, the establishing shot provides strong visual images of the location of the narrative and is usually indicative of meaning within the narrative. This generated the images that were then mapped according to themes and meanings.

In addition to the mapping process, the films have been analysed as a metaphor of text. The application of the metaphor of text to visual mediums is not without some debate in scholarly circles across the fields of geography, psychology and film studies. I have outlined the discussions below from both viewpoints.

Aitken (1997) and Denzin (1995) believe that visual representations can be read as texts, although Rose (2005) disagrees that approaches to texts can be applied to visual representations. Some scholars use the terms 'text' and 'film' interchangeably (Aitken, 1997 and Allen, 1992). Roland Barthes (1977), in discussing (primarily) art and photography, maintains that images are always accompanied by and imbued with text and that society still has a strong base in writing. Geographers Barnes and Duncan (1992), in their book about writing about geography, outline several reasons why landscape should be thought of as text but that the text can also include cultural productions and institutions. These scholars argue quite strongly for the use of the metaphor of text, even when applied to very different mediums and objects.

Another geographer, Stuart Aitken (1997) believes video-audio texts to be the basis of contemporary culture and that these texts are open to interpretation by the authors, scholars

and readers of the texts. He goes on to say that textual methods are also social constructions (Ibid.). In psychology, Flitterman-Lewis (1992) makes use of the spectator-text relationship in her psycho-analysis of films, while film scholar, Jacqueline Maingard (2003) suggests that the social statement present in a film is the voice of the filmmaker and it is this voice that allows the film to be read as a text.

Graeme Turner (1988) believes film resists the simple metaphor of text because it involves all the elements of lighting, editing, sound, camera and set design. Turner argues that it is a social process that gives meaning to the combination of images, sound and signs (Ibid.). He states that films rely heavily on the audience's prior knowledge and experience of film because meanings and signs are not conventional in the same manner as language or text (Ibid.). Turner argues for a contextual approach rather than one based on text but that this should be related to ideologies (Ibid.).

The varied application of the metaphor seems to suggest a very strong connection between the creation of meaning and symbolism, and the concepts of text and even language. In fact, semiotics, the study of symbolism in visual representations, draws heavily on the concepts of language.

The metaphor of text has also played an important role in the literature about Johannesburg, the city. Authors Kruger (2005), Nuttall (2008; 2009), Mbembe (2008) and Bremner (2010) have all drawn upon the metaphor in order to analyse and understand the complex city of Johannesburg. There is little literature about film and Johannesburg but the literature that makes use of the textual metaphor may offer more insight into the thinking around the city of Johannesburg. Therefore, understanding text as a metaphor is pertinent to both the fields of film and television and those of urban studies.

It is in no doubt that film and television are complex mediums, not to mention the complexity inherent in cities, and it is my opinion that they are resistant to the use of just one metaphor. I foresee that at some stages in the course of this research it will be pertinent to analyse the mediums in terms of their visual natures while with others the metaphor of text, especially with regards to narrative, will be useful. Ultimately though, this research aims to illustrate film and television representations as part of the cultural production and context of the city. Films were analysed both in terms of a text and as part of a greater cultural context.

In order to understand the meanings that may be associated with these images, I have viewed most films filmed in Johannesburg since 1994 and analysed 10 films in more depth, including two documentaries. The 10 films were analysed using the encoding/decoding model to

provide greater depth and a substantial cross-section of analysis. In 1980, Stuart Hall developed the encoding/decoding model, which understood the process of influence to be an active process whereby the audience was no longer passive and simply receiving messages, but was active in decoding their own interpretations of the original encoded media (Livingstone, 2005). Traditionally, research into the effects of the media used a linear model to analyse the process of media influence – the media producers or broadcasters sent out particular messages that were then received by the audience.

Up until this point it was generally believed that the meanings inherent in media were of the dominant group of society and that the audience was forced to interpret media in line with the dominant meaning (Schroder et al, 2003). Hall's theory allowed the audience to resist this dominance with three types of interpretations or positions: those that accepted the preferred reading, those that accepted and rejected some parts of the text constructed negotiated readings, and those who rejected the meanings outright constructed an oppositional reading (Ruddock, 2001). The encoding/decoding model establishes the audience member as an active participant with regards to the influence of the media.

Scholars Schroder, Drotner, Kline and Murray (2003) suggest that any in-depth analysis of the media texts should only be completed once the research with respondents has been conducted because the researcher is less likely to influence the informants with their own interpretations of the images. My opinion is that I am unable to watch any film, even for entertainment, without focusing on the images of the city represented therein and the meanings associated with them. For this reason, the visual analysis was conducted first so that I was completely conscious of my own interpretations and, therefore, I could deliberately avoid unconsciously including them in my research with the respondents.

The four themes that structured the analysis are discussed in detail in Part B in Chapters five, six, seven and eight. The films that formed the basis of this analysis are summarised and discussed in Appendix B.1. The themes allowed a comprehensive comparison between the real city of Johannesburg and its representations on the screen and also revealed how films contribute to the discourse on the city both as a series of visual maps and as a series of texts. These themes then guided the remaining two phases of research.

## 3.3 The Audience (Identity)

This second phase of the research examines the spaces of audience reception; the sites where films of Johannesburg intersect with the city's residents. The aim of this phase was to establish how films of Johannesburg are being received by its urban inhabitants as well as understand the viewing habits and everyday experiences of these inhabitants.

The second phase of the research, the 'identity study', was a quantitative questionnaire survey conducted in four different locations of Johannesburg to capture people's knowledge of the city and of film and television, and uncover their opinions thereof. The survey provided an opportunity to assess the knowledge and opinions of nearly 200 people (193 respondents).

Surveys, thus, provide a valuable and useful research method. However, the questions needed to be carefully phrased to avoid suggestive answers and it needs to be understood that the opinions expressed may only be in response to the survey, and may not have been considered prior to the research and because of this, may be equally fluid after the research has been considered (Ruddock, 2001). And so, surveys may not provide very reliable and repeatable results.

The aim of this second phase of the research was to understand how images are being received by residents in Johannesburg. The survey addressed this question both directly and indirectly. The survey asked respondents whether films influenced their feelings and activities in Johannesburg and some further questions that allowed respondents to elaborate on the potential influence. Simultaneously the survey included many general questions, which through a method of statistical correlation (discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.3), further examined unconscious connections between images and experiences of Johannesburg. The survey intended to understand the relationships between people's lived, everyday experiences of the city and the images of Johannesburg they may have seen at the cinema and on television. This phase of the research drew on the discussions of the previous chapter that assume that films are influencing or shaping space and may be doing so in a variety of ways. Lefebvre describes how representational spaces and lived spaces are interrelated:

> The emphasis thus comes to be laid on an *illusory space* deriving neither from geometrical space as such, nor from visual space (the space of images and photographs, as of drawings and plans) as such, nor even from practical and directly experienced social space as such; but rather from a telescoping of all these levels, from an oscillation between them or from substitutions effected among them. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 298) [emphasis in original]

### 3.3.1 The South African Audience

In South Africa there are 51.8 million people of whom 79% are Black; 8.9 % are Coloured, 2.5% are Indian and 8.9% are White (Statistics SA, 2011). Gauteng province has the largest population at 12.3 million, of whom 4.4 million live in Johannesburg (Statistics SA, 2011).

76% of Johannesburg residents are Black African; 6% are Coloured; 5% are Indian and 12.5% are White (Statistics SA, 2011).

Cinema attendance is very low in South Africa: "Of about 31 million possible cinema goers aged 16 and over, only about 1.7 million had attended a cinema during the preceding four weeks, and 559 000 in the previous seven days [in 2007]" (Glenn, 2008, p. 11) although another source states that approximately 23% of urban adults attend the cinema (DASCT, 1998). In addition, cinema viewers tend to be a very particular sub-section of the population and are not very representative. 24% of the audience are in the LSM 10 group, the wealthiest category in the Living Standards Measure (Glenn, 2008). "Approximately 44% of cinema audiences are White, 40% are Black and the remaining 16% are Indian and Coloured" (DASCT, 1998, p. 66). Both these socio-economic and racial discrepancies are heavily influenced by the legacy of apartheid. There are very few cinemas in the 'previously Black' suburbs or townships that remain predominantly Black areas and an outing to the cinema remains a luxury for many South Africans. The cinema theatre is also biased towards a young audience with 35% of viewers in the 16–24 age group (DASCT, 1998).

There are even fewer South Africans who watch DVDs – 932 000 over the period of a month – though they do so more regularly (Glenn, 2008). "Of some 11 million households, over 5 million (46%) reported having a DVD player in the home, while over 2 million (22%) report having home theatre systems" (Glenn, 2008, p. 12). It is suggested that high levels of pirated DVDs may be in use as an explanation for the discrepancy between the high numbers of DVD players in households and the low numbers of those who hire DVDs (Glenn, 2008). While 65.6 % of households own a television; 15.7 % own a computer and 7.3% have Internet access (Statistics SA, 2007). Although, researching audiences through the Internet, known as fan research, has increased in recent years (Bollhöfer, 2008; Ruddock, 2007), these figures show that it is not yet possible in South Africa due to the small percentage of the population that has access to the Internet.

Although, cinema audiences are proportionally very small in South Africa, this does not detract from the audience of any particular film. For example, *Tsotsi* (2005) achieved only very small audiences at the cinema (fewer than a million people saw the film in the theatre) but its screening on the free terrestrial channel SABC 1 achieved an audience of 8 million viewers (Glenn, 2008). The survey, therefore, did not only focus on those who attend the cinema but also included those who watch television because, as the statistics illustrate, the cinema audience is not representative of South Africa's population and the medium of television does not exclude films that have been screened in cinema theatres. And, as stated

previously, the physical site of the audience or the medium of viewing does not influence the meanings that are derived (MacDonald, 1994).

Ratings and television viewing is an imperfect science. Ratings are not reliable, in the same way as the information from the 2011 Census is not reliable. Whilst ownership of a television or DVD player does not provide information about the household's viewing habits, this information does give an idea of access to these mediums. However, in the data provided by Statistics South Africa for the 2011 Census on the questions of DVD player and television ownership, a substantial proportion of responses are missing, meaning that even access to these mediums is difficult to estimate.

### 3.3.2 Method

The quantitative questionnaire was conducted with 200 respondents, from four locations in Johannesburg, comprising 50 people from each location. The brief survey was conducted on the street using a non-probability sampling method. Although the sampling method was based on a convenience sampling every effort was made to approach participants across the 18–65-age range and to include both genders equally. The survey was conducted with the assistance of a student, Marole Mathebathe, who is fluent in nine of the eleven official South African languages. He and I each conducted half of the interviews in each location. The target population for the survey was the total number of people in Johannesburg who have access to television which is 2.5 million people (65.6% (households with television) of 3.8 million people (Statistics SA, 2007)). 200 people, when divided into four subgroups, provide a good sample size of 50 people per group or location in this instance (Schroder et al, 2003).

The survey questions were mostly closed questions with a range of answers in order to be completed at a faster rate. The questions can be categorised in four ways, although they were not presented in this order to the respondents. (Please see Appendix A.2 for the full questionnaire). The first category is that of demographics, which included the subcategory of identity, and asked participants about their gender, age, race, preferred language, education, income and employment status. The second category is 'Life in Johannesburg', which included the subcategory of movement and knowledge of the city, and asked respondents about the length of time they have lived in the city, their origin, whether they consider Johannesburg to be home, and their living arrangements.

The third category focuses on participants' viewing habits with questions concerning cinema, DVD and television viewing. It also asked respondents to select the films, documentaries and television shows which they had seen from a list of 38 provided. (Please see Appendix B.1 for the complete list of films and brief synopses). The films and television shows listed

were all filmed in Johannesburg and were all made post-1994. Although the focus of this research is film, it is difficult to separate television from film as television may be the site or medium where many films are viewed. Therefore, television shows were included so that a distinction could be discerned in the analysis of the findings. Images of the film posters or title screens were provided as *aides-memoires*. The fourth category can be termed perception and reception. Respondents were asked their opinion of Johannesburg and whether they enjoyed living in the city. They were also asked to name films that they had seen that had been filmed in Johannesburg and to explain how they recognised Johannesburg in these films. They were asked how they feel about seeing Johannesburg on the screen and finally, whether they felt films influenced their feelings or activities in any way.

The second and fourth categories in the survey explore some aspects of everyday practice as they relate to the city of Johannesburg. Everyday practice is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of activities. Whilst all of these activities take place in Johannesburg, only a few reflect 'direct' interactions with the city itself as opposed to domestic or workplace activities. The survey asks respondents about their knowledge of the city as a reflection of their familiarity or interactions with Johannesburg spaces. There are many questions concerning residents' feelings of spaces in Johannesburg; regarding their comfort, safety and general impressions of the city. Lastly, the questions of activities in the city are focussed on residents' mobility in Johannesburg. Movement from one space to another is an everyday practice that is also a primary form of interaction with the city (de Certeau, 1984 & Benjamin, 2010). Mobility in the city also encompasses the other themes identified in Chapter two: including identity and personal expression; elements of crime; and the physical form of the city.

The focus of my research is to understand the relationship between people's real experiences in the city and the images of the city they see on the screen but, as described before, this is not necessarily a conscious process. The survey was structured to try generate a flow of ideas without being explicit or coercive. The film selection component of the survey was followed by questions about respondents' opinions of living in Johannesburg to establish a subtle connection between the films and the city. Following this respondents were asked to name films that they had seen that had been filmed in Johannesburg. Despite having just been taken through a list of 38 possibilities, many struggled to recollect a particular film or show and only one or two made the connection with the list of films and the question. In many cases, respondents had difficulty recalling which films they had seen. This means that responses to the survey questions are not very reliable on the issue of recollecting films accurately. In qualitative studies this can be explored through discursive analysis of interview

data (Kuhn, 2002) but the ability to recollect only certain films may also suggest films which have had a greater impact.

The four locations of the survey are: the suburb of Chiawelo in Soweto (focusing on current or recent film and television locations and the fairly recent cinema in Maponya Mall); Fordsburg (focusing on the recent film locations); Johannesburg's CBD (focusing on current or recent film and television locations and the cinema complex within the Carlton Centre); and Melville (focusing on on-going or recent film and television locations). The locations were chosen to represent the different urban conditions and cinema facilities and film locations in Johannesburg and, because the city is still largely segregated, it is hoped that the different locations have provided a sample that is roughly representative of the city's demographics. A true stratified sample of Johannesburg's population has not been possible in the scope of this study.

Chiawelo is a suburb or township of Soweto established in 1956 for mostly Venda-speaking individuals[17]. It is mostly a residential suburb (as are many of Soweto's townships as result of imposed 'dormitory' conditions), characterised by small houses provided by the government, a few schools and some shops and businesses. It is connected to Johannesburg through the train station in the valley and is adjacent to the main arterial road of Soweto – Chris Hani Road. Informal settlements are nestled in the valley and these have formed the basis of the film locations for both *Tsotsi* (2005) and *District 9* (2009). The nearest shopping centre is Protea Gardens, 1.6 km away and the nearest cinema is in the new Maponya Mall, located 5.5 km away.

The second location chosen to conduct the survey was the immediate neighbourhood of the Carlton shopping centre in Johannesburg's central business district. The area was chosen because it has featured in a number of films and the shopping centre contains a cinema complex. The CBD is dominated by high-rise buildings, with a mixture of commercial, retail and residential uses. As one would expect in the central business district, the area is well serviced with a variety of amenities and transport links, as well as hosting a number of cinemas. The retail centre is on the doorstep of several major transport interchanges and serves as a meeting point for many, as well as a centre for entertainment, dining and

[17] Soweto is the large area south west of Johannesburg's centre that was established as an area for black residents of the city and became the main place for forced removals when the Group Areas Act was enforced. Soweto's districts or townships were further segregated according to language or ethnic origins to promote further divisions.

shopping activities. It is bustling with people who travel from all around the city, and beyond, to work in the area or to move through the transport network into other locations.

Fordsburg is one of Johannesburg's oldest suburbs, situated west of the CBD and Newtown. From the very beginning, it was (and still is) a mixed race, working-class area that provided residence to all those marginalised by the English-speaking administration of Johannesburg, including Afrikaners, Blacks and other migrants from India and Europe. The suburb has remained a mixed area and an entry point for foreigners into the city for much of its history, despite the best efforts of previous governments to 'clean' up the area through declarations of the Group Areas Act (declaring it an 'Indian' area) and forced removals of residents and businesses.

The location has a variety of activities with residential houses and small blocks of flats interspersed with several main roads lined with shops and restaurants. Up until recently the suburb had a few small independent cinemas, most notably the Majestic, though unfortunately these have closed down leaving the nearest cinema over 6 km away in Rosebank. The area has served as a film location for a number of films, particularly the recent movie *Material* (2011), which is why it was selected as a location for the survey.

Melville is a former 'Whites only' suburb about 5 km north-west of the CBD. This residential neighbourhood dates back to 1896 and consists mostly of modest freestanding houses. There are two main roads or high streets lined with shops and restaurants, one of which serves as the real location for the fictional soap opera called *7de Laan* (2000). The suburb is a typical middle-class neighbourhood, though perhaps with a reputation of being home to more creative or bohemian types. Again, the nearest cinema is in Rosebank, 4 km away. Both Melville and Fordsburg are close to the city centre and are serviced by public bus routes; access to these areas is mostly through minibus taxis and private vehicles.

Melville proved to be the most difficult area in which to conduct the survey. Although the suburb has more formal commercial activities than those of Chiawelo, and both areas have comparable levels of residential accommodation, there were far fewer people in the streets or frequenting the shops to survey in Melville, and those fewer people who were present were far more reluctant to participate. These descriptions of each area serve to introduce the variations in urban conditions and characters of each location. These urban conditions are often reflected in the locations' on-screen representations, which are discussed in Chapter five.

One of the initial issues with the data is the lack of representation of female respondents and there are a number of suggested reasons for this. I conducted the survey interviews with a male student assistant but we both interviewed similar numbers of women suggesting our different genders did not affect the willingness of women to participate in our survey. Therefore I do not believe the cause of the low number of female respondents to be related to the identities of the interviewers.

While every effort was made to ensure every second respondent was a woman, in some locations the absence of women available to interview was noticeable. In addition to this, when approached, many women declined the offer to participate – mostly due to being busy and reluctant to give up time. The interviews were conducted on the street in each of the neighbourhoods and therefore, this suggests that street spaces continue to be dominated by men and that women who do move through the streets are running errands with little time for surveys or other extraneous activities. This also suggests a framing of the street for men as a more leisurely and relaxed space than it is for women. This different framing of urban space for the different sexes is discussed with regards to the literature in Chapters six and seven. In order to address any potential gender limitations of the survey, working women and women who stay at home during the day were interviewed so as to include their perspectives as part of the research. This is discussed in the following section.

The research instruments for the second and third phases of this research can be found under Appendix A in Volume 2.

### 3.3.3 Analysis

52 interviews were conducted in Chiawelo, 51 in the CBD, 49 in Fordsburg and 47 in Melville, for a total of 199 survey interviews. The survey responses had been entered by hand on individual questionnaires which then had to be transferred into an electronic spread sheet. During this process, six survey questionnaires had to be discarded because they were incomplete, resulting in 193 valid questionnaire responses. The survey questions and responses were then coded to make it compatible for use in a statistics software package.

There were a number of open-ended questions that needed to be categorised and coded to be of use statistically. The question of race, or population group, was open-ended and this was first categorised into race category – the way that people chose to identify their race – for example by nationality, skin colour or religion. It is interesting to note that many people struggled to answer this question without some prompting because of the lack of standard boxes as provided in most forms and guided by government policy. This allowed people to identify their race as 'Christian' or 'Egyptian', which do not conform to the standard

definitions given for race. Unfortunately, these responses collated into race categories made it difficult to draw comparisons with existing data on the city and these locations. Therefore the responses for race were recoded to match government definitions. This means that the survey may have an overrepresentation of 'Other' as those who had identified themselves as 'Egyptian' were recoded as 'Other'.

Other open-ended questions were more straightforward. Preferred language was divided into four categories: English, Afrikaans, other official South African languages, and non-South-African languages[18]. In order to examine participants' regular movements in Johannesburg they were asked three questions relating to where they live, work and shop. The distance between the three sites given was calculated and if all three were local sites, the respondent was considered to have minimal daily movement in the city but if the sites were of a greater distance apart, then the respondent was considered to be mobile in the city on a daily basis. This was then collated into a single point of information about the daily urban movements of respondents.

Questions with positive or negative responses or where only one response was applicable were coded with different numbers for each response. Questions where there were numerous responses and participants could select more than one answer were treated as separate individual questions with positive or negative responses and coded as such. In selecting films and television shows that they had seen, respondents were asked to say which medium they had seen it on: at the cinema, on DVD, or on the television, or on several. This information was recorded electronically but during the interview process it became clear that this information may be even more unreliable because respondents struggled recalling seeing the film and then struggled to recall what medium they saw it on. It is difficult to distinguish between seeing a film on DVD (on your television screen) to seeing it on the same screen but as part of a television broadcast. In some instances respondents had watched films through illegal DVD or electronic copies on their computers and therefore could not select one of the options given. This data was, therefore, simplified as to whether the respondent had seen the film or television show in question.

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[18] Participants were asked their language of preference as opposed to specifying their mother tongue. This is because home language or mother tongue does not indicate the ability or preference for viewing media that may be in another language, namely English. This is important in the context of South African film and television where English is still predominant, even in the use of subtitles for programming that is not in English.

Once the data had been cleaned, simplified and coded, the result was 87 possible responses or variables for every single of the 193 respondents and this was imported into SPSS Statistics, a statistics software package. Each variable was coded further as nominal and any questions where respondents had not provided an answer were coded as missing. The software was then used to generate tables of frequencies, giving the breakdown of responses for each question. The software was also used to generate cross-tabulations: comparing the variables that related directly with influence with the other variables/questions in the survey to establish the elements that might inform or explain how films influence people's feelings and activities. The cross-tabulations were generated using three correlation coefficients or formulas: Lambda; Phi and Cramer's V, all appropriate for nominal variables. Cramer's V was selected as the most reliable and accurate because it is more reliable with frequencies smaller than 30 in number than the formula Lambda. Whereas Phi is more accurate still it can only be used for bivariate analysis, whereas many of the cross-tabulations were multivariate.

Once the cross-tabulations were calculated, each table was examined for correlation significance. Cramer's V works with positive values only between 0 and 1. Values and significance were classified as follows:

| **Value** | **Value Classification** | **Significance** | **Significance Classification** |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0–0.250 | Weak | 0.051–0.099 | Weak |
| 0.250–0.500 | Moderate | 0.011–0.05 | Moderate |
| 0.501–0.750 | Strong | 0–0.01 | Strong |
| 0.751–0.999 | Very Strong | | |

The tables were examined for correlations of values greater than 0.1 and significances less than 0.099. Where there was a significant correlation it was classified as weak, moderate or strong (there were no very strong correlations), based on the classification of the value. Where the cross-tabulation included variables with responses below the number of 30, only moderate or strong values were considered with strong significances to avoid making statements, which concerned only a small number of respondents.

Once the degree of correlation had been established each table of the cross-tabulation was studied for significant differences in the percentage points. A correlation was only considered if there was a 9-percentage point difference with that variable and the average response for the comparing variable. For example, if the average for the whole survey was 55%, then in comparison with another variable, the percentage had to be either 46% or less, or 64% or greater. This means that the differences are examined in relation to the average response for the whole survey rather than in comparison to the other responses for that variable.

## 3.4 Shifts in Perceptions and Practices (Production)

The third phase of the research focused on the production within the circuit of culture, where the representations of images leads to changes in perceptions and changes in behaviour and the aim was to triangulate with the analysis of the images on the screen and with the responses from the survey. Because this phase is largely about a process, the research was conducted with a qualitative process involving open-ended questions in interviews and focus discussion groups with a second, much smaller sample of respondents, drawn from the original random sampling in each location. These interviews draw on methods used by environmental psychologists and make use of films clips, photographs and visual maps in order to understand how the images of the city on the screen are received and how those images are related to the physical city.

### 3.4.1 Understanding Influences

Environmental psychology is the study of human behaviour in the physical environment. Two books from the 1970s comprehensively introduced the then new field of environmental psychology: *Environmental Psychology* (Proshansky et al, 1970) and *An Introduction to Environmental Psychology* (Ittelson et al, 1974). The physical environment can be the spaces of real, everyday activities but for the purposes of study, the environment can also be setup in a laboratory or can be the represented environment (Ittelson et al, 1974). Holton ((1965), quoted in Ittelson et al, 1974) defines the real, physical environment as 'experiential' and the visual representation of the environment (films, TV and photographs) as 'depictions' among five other categories of environment reality.

These environmental psychologists believe the process of cognition (the way in which people make sense of, and simplify, all the information present in any one environment) occurs in all these environment realities (Ittelson et al, 1974), or in other words, we analyse and understand the spaces presented on film and television in the same way that we analyse real and other types of spaces. These authors also emphasise that much of our analysis and

judgement is based on the evidence of purpose and meaning within spaces that has often been socially defined (Ibid.).

Kenneth Craik suggests a basic research paradigm for environmental psychology:

> When an environmental psychologist sets out to study the comprehension of any environmental display, he must deal with four issues. How shall he present the environmental display to the observer (Media of Presentation)? What behavioural reactions of the observer is he going to elicit and record (Response Format)? What are the pertinent characteristics of the environmental display (Environmental Dimensions)? And whose comprehensions is he to study (Observers)?
>
> (Craik (1970), quoted in Ittelson, 1974, p. 226)

Environmental psychology recognises that the city that we personally experience, know and remember is of equal importance to the physical and 'objective' city (Ittelson, 1974). Stephen Carr calls this the 'city of the mind' and suggests that this might be the most valuable area of study for urban planners and architects "[f]or in a real sense the city is what people think it is" (Carr 1970, p. 519). However, Carr goes on to say that spaces acquire significance once previous culturally defined knowledge encounters direct experience (Carr, 1970). Environmental psychology provides a strong foundation and a number of methods for the study of the reception of both images and spaces.

Environmental psychology was used in conjunction with audience research methods. Andy Ruddock (2001), in his book *Understanding Audiences*, outlines the history of research and study into the media and its effects and defines the different theories and methods that have been used from as early as the 1920s to gather information about film and television audiences. Due to the somewhat elusive nature of the audience, every methodology has limitations and Ruddock goes on to say that the objective of any research into audiences will strongly influence the results obtained (Ruddock, 2001). In combating these issues, Ruddock suggests the combined use of a number of methods and that the researcher should remain aware of their influence on the design, implementation and interpretation of the study (Ibid.).

Research in the media makes much use of the focus group which mirrors many elements of the methods used by environmental psychologists. The 'production' study combined these methods to give strength to the research focusing on the audience but also to provide additional insights into the 'representation' and 'identity' studies.

The stance of the researcher is critical to the method chosen and the results that it reveals: for example early research into the effects of the media assumed the audience to be passive absorbers of information and visuals and therefore only focused on the messages and images being broadcast (Livingstone, 2005). These early studies did, however, highlight some of the issues that each subsequent theory has had to face when researching the media and its audience. These issues include the difficulty of demonstrating links between the media and people's behaviour, defining public opinion or discourse, or even identifying the audience (Ruddock, 2001).

### 3.4.2 Method and Analysis

The proposed method for this third phase was to have a series of five focus groups. 20 respondents were sourced from the four geographic locations to form four groups of five respondents each. The intention was that the different sites would provide for different experiences in the city, though, of course, this is not the only factor that influences a person's experience of the city. However, it proved impossible to arrange to have these respondents attend these focus groups together. In each location, more than five respondents indicated that they were willing to participate, nearly all confirmed through later correspondence but when the day and time came, respondents simply did not arrive. In some cases, respondents were coming from diverse areas of the city and it was difficult to find a central meeting point that would be convenient. For example, in the CBD many respondents were living quite far from the city centre, making it difficult to incentivise them to attend a focus group and to make it convenient for all in the group to attend. But in Chiawelo, the respondents all lived in the neighbourhood and the focus group was held at the local primary school. In this case (and also for the other areas) apathy proved to be the biggest obstacle. Only one focus group was successfully held and that was a fifth group of five planners, architects and other practising urban professionals. This focus group took place at the same time as the other groups were originally scheduled, shortly after the surveys were conducted in each location.

After it was apparent that I would be unable to hold focus groups in each of the locations with respondents for each location, it was clear that a different approach was required. In the meantime I had analysed the data from the survey, which had revealed two key variables that may be affecting the influence of films on people's feelings and activities in the city. These two aspects are the recognition of Johannesburg in films and those who attend the cinema with friends. Therefore, in order to understand and explain this further I conducted nine in-depth interviews with participants divided into three categories, and I interviewed three people in each category. The first group was women who work or stay at home, in order to

address the disproportion of gender in the survey[19]; the second group was made up of students studying Honours in planning or urban design who are familiar with the images of the city and the way people 'read' the city; and the third group was people who attend the cinema with friends.

Participants were once again selected through a snowballing technique, through friends of friends. The interview included the short survey so that participants' responses could be compared to those of the survey and then include open-ended questions that delved into aspects of the cinema or DVD experience; experiences of the city and how they recognised Johannesburg in films.

As discussed earlier, viewing films and television, and practising in the city are both unconscious acts. However, the survey demonstrated that with minimal questioning respondents were able to raise these aspects to a conscious level and consider the connections between viewing and being in the city. Initially the research was designed for this process to require more questioning, which made provision for follow up interviews after a few months to allow the subconscious to surface. However, with the responses from the survey and the difficulty in acquiring willing focus group participants, this aspect of the research design was no longer relevant.

The interview and focus group transcripts have been analysed using Thematic Content Analysis. Each interview was coded but the themes were established largely through deductive analysis as the themes emerged both from the literature and films and from the survey, as described above.

## 3.5 Conclusion

Several methods have had to be shifted, adjusted or changed due to obstacles in the field including lost films and reluctant participants. However, the research was still conducted in three phases that relate strongly to the conceptual framework. The first phase, the 'representation' study, revealed both the historical representation of Johannesburg and the four major themes that connect the literature on films and urban spaces. This phase

[19] The findings from the quantitative survey showed that demographic elements of respondents' identities such as age, income or education did not play a role in the way that films influenced their experiences of Johannesburg. Gender was the only demographic element highlighted in the qualitative phase and only because of the disproportionate representation in the quantitative study. Therefore, the qualitative study focused on women who were less likely to have been interviewed in the quantitative study.

established the identity of Johannesburg on the screen and the discourse of the city's films. It has revealed the stereotyped spaces of the city and more importantly the spaces that are absent and not contributing to the representation or the discourse of Johannesburg. The results from this first phase constitute Chapter four and Part B, Chapters five to eight.

The second phase, the 'identity' study, successfully captured the experiences and thoughts of nearly 200 people in diverse locations across the city. The survey, although brief and quantitative, has revealed some important relationships, which will be discussed in Chapter nine. This phase primarily demonstrates the spaces of reception in the circuit of culture; the way that the city itself and films of the city are perceived and received. And finally, the third phase, the 'production' study, despite some setbacks was able to expand on the results from the identity study and shed some light on how films influence people's feelings about, and activities in, Johannesburg. This begins to explain some of the processes occurring within the circuit of culture, showing the way in which the images of the city inform everyday activities in the city. This forms the basis of the discussion in Chapter ten.

# 4. The History of Johannesburg and its Representations

## 4.1 Introduction

Johannesburg was not yet ten years old when the moving pictures first came to town but the city quickly embraced the new world of the cinema. This chapter traces the history of the city and the history of film in South Africa while giving an elementary international context of the history of film and television. However, the focus of this chapter is the representation of the city on the screen, therefore this chapter details Johannesburg's appearances on film and television and the contexts surrounding those scenes.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a historical context, both for the development of the city itself and the films set or shot in Johannesburg. There are four major themes – materiality, identity, mobility, and crime – that are inspired by the social, economic and political developments that took place in Johannesburg. Many of these themes emerged out of the city and were explored in film and television, some first in foreign productions and later in South African films, and each will be explored in detail in the following chapters. Johannesburg, depicted in film and television, embodies these concepts both as a direct representation and as a counter-representation.

Some scholarship has researched the historical representations of South African cities in film[20]. But since beginning the research for this thesis, two recent additions have been made on the history of Johannesburg and its representation. In September 2013, Vivian Bickford-Smith published a paper exploring the early period of Johannesburg and Cape Town on film from the 1890s to 1950s (Bickford-Smith, 2013). A larger project, *Imagining the Edgy City,* by Loren Kruger, is a very recent book that explores the representation of Johannesburg in

[20] Gary Baines has discussed the 'Apartheid' city in film, focusing on Sophiatown (2001; 2003) and Vivian Bickford-Smith, an urban historian, has examined the representation of both Johannesburg and Cape Town (2003; 2006; 2007). Loren Kruger has also published several articles discussing the representation of Johannesburg in film among other forms of representation but has largely focussed on contemporary images (1999; 2001; 2005; 2006; 2010).

many media including film from the 1930s to the present day (Kruger, 2013). These publications address the gap that was apparent when this research was begun and where possible these publications are referenced. However, an in-depth historical overview was not within the scope of this research and therefore this chapter provides a brief background into the history of the city and its images on the screen. It has not been possible to examine every feature film[21] shot in Johannesburg over the last 120 years; therefore only key films have been explored and discussed. These key films relate to the four major themes and are analysed to demonstrate their relation to these themes and in some cases to highlight the absence of some aspects of the city on film.

This chapter is structured in a linear fashion as it traces the history of the city and film and, as such, is divided into four main periods. The first section, '1886-1948', outlines the early history of Johannesburg and the introduction of moving pictures. The development of the city and the birth of film coincided, but this section shall show that there was very little engagement between the two during this period. However, the developments of these years would have a powerful influence for later decades, and it was during this time that the themes of materiality and identity were established.

The second era, '1948-1960' begins with post-war conditions and the institution of apartheid. The post-war period was significant internationally and heralded the birth of television broadcasting while the inception of apartheid in South Africa heralded political censorship that would delay the introduction of television, and that would also be reflected in the cinema. 1948 marks the year that South Africa began to diverge from the rest of the world in both the development of cinema and the city. This period of steady film production is very important in the evolution of the representation of Johannesburg and demonstrates the emergence of a Black urban identity and representation of the gangster or tsotsi.

The time period '1960-1976' saw extraordinary levels of production of Afrikaans language films and this third section explores the development of Afrikaner identity in film. This section also chronicles the growth of Johannesburg into an international metropolis with an

[21] Feature film is not the only medium to showcase images of Johannesburg and was certainly not the first. Particularly in the first half of the twentieth century Johannesburg features more regularly in the newsreel *African Mirror* (Sandon, 2013) and is central to the imagery generated around the 1936 Empire Exhibition (Kruger, 2013). The intention with this chapter is not to undermine the influence of these other media in Johannesburg but to focus specifically on feature film.

imposing skyline of skyscrapers. Despite the volume of films produced, Johannesburg does not feature strongly except for two films that offer different and influential depictions of the city.

In 1976, another watershed year, television was broadcast for the first time in South Africa but the year was also marked by the youth uprisings in Soweto and saw the increase in the anti-apartheid protests of the 1980s. This fourth section, '1976-1994', details the introduction of television and the anti-apartheid film as well as discussing the transitional period between 1990 and 1994, when apartheid was at an end but democracy had not yet been instated. This turbulent time is reflected in the absence of films to analyse but the major themes present in earlier films begin to reflect a change in the city.

The final section, '1994-2013', explores the city and screen of the democratic present. Democracy has brought about changes in the world of film and television, as well as for Johannesburg. Political censorship of moving images has fallen away and new television channels have emerged; the city is no longer subjected to racially segregated areas and planners and developers are slowly rectifying and changing the legacy of apartheid planning. Other aspects have resisted change, however. Access to the cinema and filmmaking skills remain the domain of the wealthy, and mostly White, citizens of the country and so this section discusses the current South African situation as well as looking back to the influential conditions of apartheid.

New themes emerge in the post-apartheid era but apartheid remains a strong theme, albeit a historical one. The familiar themes of crime and an urban Black identity continue to dominate, but now amongst issues of HIV/AIDS, gay and lesbian rights and xenophobia but Johannesburg remains an important visual and conceptual location in the evolution of these concepts.

## 4.2 The Birth of Johannesburg and Moving Pictures (1886–1948)

In 1886 gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand and the mining camp that was Johannesburg was very quickly established. Tents and corrugated iron shacks were rapidly transformed into more solid structures, including brick buildings and, within a decade of its existence, Johannesburg became the largest city in South Africa (Tomlinson et al, 2003). The wealth generated from the gold and the city's relative youth meant that it enjoyed the modern conveniences of electricity, the telephone and a railway system, all within those first ten years.

The proliferation of tents, mud huts and corrugated iron shacks belonging to gold diggers and fortune seekers soon required more formal arrangements. The Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek laid out a small city grid on a triangular portion of land owned by the government called Randjeslaagte. In conjunction, private property developers sold portions of the neighbouring farms to provide stands close to water and the gold fields. The early ramshackle houses were very soon replaced with brick structures and, by 1895, Johannesburg was connected by railway to the region's major centres facilitating the building of 2–3 storey Victorian buildings that came to characterise the early town (Beavon, 2004).

Prospecting, gold and property speculation very quickly established an economy for the settlement but without sufficient permanency or stability. However, the male-dominated town supported secondary activities to those of mining in the form of domestic service, laundry, hospitality, entertainment and transport and it was these activities that provided Johannesburg with the status of a permanent town (Van Onselen, 1982a).

Johannesburg was the site of much controversy and political turbulence from its very first days. The gold rush attracted thousands of men seeking their fortunes and these men came from near and far, some poor and some rich, all settling together in a camp that would play an enormous role in the country's history. There were many foreigners, from numerous European countries, as well as Britain, and these immigrants established English as the dominant language of business in the settlement (Van Onselen, 1982a). Other Whites included Afrikaners, mostly rural farmers who were struggling to survive on drought-ridden or poorly managed farms.

Many of the Afrikaners were poor with few resources, skills or education and the dominance of English put them at a disadvantage in the city. However, they did have political influence as the only citizens with franchise, and so they were able to secure employment and a level of tenure in the city through some reserved positions on the mines and as cab drivers and brick makers (Van Onselen, 1982a). Afrikaners found themselves marginalised in a city within their own republic and it became clear that Johannesburg would threaten the Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek and the rural Afrikaner way of life (Beavon, 2004).

Rural Blacks were equally attracted to the city for similar reasons – also suffering from the effects of drought and, in addition, being displaced by White farmers (Beavon, 2004). Cape Malays and Indians also travelled from coastal towns to try their luck in this new city (Beavon, 2004). Chinese labourers were imported to provide an even cheaper workforce in the mines (Beavon, 2004). The male dominance of early Johannesburg society ensured a proliferation of drinking establishments, gambling houses and brothels (Beavon, 2004). Paul

Kruger, president of the ZAR, only took a cursory interest in Johannesburg, viewing it as a den of iniquity, while collecting significant taxes and looking after the concerns of *burghers* (Afrikaners with franchise) (Van Onselen, 1982a).

This potent mix of races, ethnicities and religions would inform much of the development of the city and was also the cause of the many conflicts over access to work as well as the rights to land ownership, state assistance and housing (Beavon, 2004). As the depth of the goldfields was verified and the permanency of the city was established, the British became restless visitors in Kruger's republic and they began to plot rebellion. The initial hostilities were between Whites but the same issues around work and housing would surface repeatedly over the course of the twentieth century as conflicts between Whites and 'non-Whites' (Van Onselen, 1982a).

The first public film screening in South Africa took place on 11 May 1896 at the Empire Theatre in Johannesburg (Gutsche, 1972). Despite severe political unrest at the time, due to the Jameson Raid and the subsequent treason trial, moving pictures were extremely popular amongst the White population, both in Johannesburg and around the country. By 1898 the Empire Palace of Varieties was screening films permanently (Gutsche, 1972). The political situation and the introduction of regular screenings led to the first few films shot in Johannesburg in 1898 and 1899. Edgar Hyman had purchased a camera from the Warwick Trading Company and began filming the city from the front of trams (Gutsche, 1972). He also made a very brief film of Paul Kruger embarking for the Randzaal in his carriage. These films were sought after overseas, especially in Britain as the Anglo-Boer war began to loom (Gutsche, 1972).

The Anglo-Boer war was certainly one of the first major conflicts to be captured on celluloid. Several foreign production companies sent film correspondents to South Africa to document the war. Some of these were screened to South African audiences but usually only many months after they were shot, as all films were sent to Britain or America for processing and printing before returning slowly (or not at all) via ship (Gutsche, 1972). While most of the films focused on the battles, during quieter moments correspondents were able to film other aspects of South African life. At one such point, W.L. Dickson travelled to Johannesburg and shot scenes from the mines and some tribal war dances (Gutsche, 1972).

The growing town of Johannesburg does not feature as more than a novelty in these early films and the significance of the city appears to have escaped notice, though filmmakers showed interest in its industrial activities depicting the mines and their activities (Bickford-

Smith, 2013). Johannesburg features regularly as part of the news footage in *African Mirror*[22], which further illustrates the contrast between Johannesburg's importance as a news subject and its absence as place for narrative in feature films. But in reality, novelty was the dominant theme for filmmaking across the world in these early years (Bruno, 2007). Cameras were focused on capturing movement of any sort and the industry was highly experimental in its drive to continuously provide something new and entertain fickle audiences (Mennel, 2008). Conceptually, the city was a slow-moving and ancient object that provided little novelty, and although Johannesburg was new, it did not differ significantly from cities elsewhere.

At this time, the content and nature of films varied tremendously; films were experimental and very brief, usually lasting only a few minutes each (Mennel, 2008). The film market was international: there were cameras in many far flung places recording the people and sites and these were sold and shipped around the globe (Cinquegrani, 2011). The city, however, was not a feature of any of these international productions. City views and street scenes featured only as the backdrop to the action because the camera remained fixed on the source of movement and excitement, namely cars, trams and people (Cinquegrani, 2011).

A brief economic downturn after the war resulted in a decrease in local film production but the city continued to expand, mostly horizontally. However, 1902 saw the city's first steel framed tall building go up (Van der Waal, 1987). Johannesburg was a hive of industrial and commercial activity and could no longer be taken in with one glance (Van der Waal, 1987) but this exceptional growth and activity was not newsworthy and the city failed to be immortalised on celluloid.

In South Africa, the public had developed an appetite for moving images and the first permanent cinema was constructed in Durban in 1909 (Gutsche, 1972). Natal Electric Theatres also opened a cinema for 'Coloured people only' later that year but this was not as profitable as cinemas for 'Whites only' and so closed shortly afterwards (Ibid.). The other major cities were not left behind and several moving picture theatres appeared in Cape Town and Johannesburg. But it was Johannesburg that took the lead; it was this city alone that had the greatest demand and the means to fund development and ticket sales (Ibid.).

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[22] *African Mirror* was the dominant commercial newsreel in South Africa, producing weekly content to be screened in cinemas before feature films for most of the twentieth century (Sandon, 2013).

The formal cinema industry was based in Johannesburg – a number of the cinema theatre companies had their headquarters in Johannesburg (Ibid.). But this foundling industry faced haphazard organisation, cutthroat competition and fickle audiences, and so the industry, as a whole, approached local businessman, Isidore Schlesinger, in 1913, to consolidate and improve the flailing industry (Gutsche, 1972). Although Schlesinger was originally from the USA, he had come to South Africa as a teenager and had made his fortunes through insurance and had no prior knowledge of film production.

Despite very little industry experience, Schlesinger quickly established the African Theatres Trust Ltd to screen films and provide theatre buildings, the African Films Trust to import and distribute films, and the African Film Productions Ltd to produce local films (Ibid.). This established the effective monopoly of the film industry that was to dominate for many years to come. African Film Productions established their production studios in Killarney in 1915. At that time Killarney was a suburb on the very outskirts of the city and so the studios were large and extensive but the main benefit of their location was the immediate access to rural countryside. The studios were surrounded by rocky hills, small wooded areas, streams and fields all deemed essential for filming quality exterior shots (Ibid.). Up to this point local production had been limited to footage for documentaries, such as the epic *Cape to Cairo* of 1906 and topical or newsreel films which included a film of the funeral of Cecil John Rhodes in 1902. But World War I impeded the importation of international films and thereby encouraged local production (Gutsche, 1972).

By 1910, Johannesburg had been in existence for almost twenty five years and moving pictures had been present in the city for most of this time but, apart from the occasional newsreel, the city was still absent from the big screen. The enormous changes in politics and government brought about by the Anglo-Boer war, and the subsequent migration into the city of rural Afrikaners and Black South Africans alike, failed to be recognised as material for a film. However, narratives in general had not featured in filmmaking up until 1910, as the medium saw much experimentation prior to this period. The focus in South Africa, as in the rest of the world, was on films providing light entertainment and subjects that would draw crowds.

The first South African drama was produced in 1910–11 by Springbok Film Co. and was entitled *Star of the South* (Gutsche, 1972). The story focused on the discovery of a large diamond and was filmed mostly in the rural landscape. One of African Film Productions' first films was *De Voortrekkers* (1916), or *Winning a Continent*, directed by Harold Shaw. The film was a dramatic re-enactment of the country's early pioneers who travelled from the

Cape and from Natal to settle in Bloemfontein and Pretoria. This film took the country by storm, eliciting both high praise and criticism but its success at the box office ensured that the historical drama as a genre dominated the output of Schlesinger's studios for the rest of the decade (Ibid.).

As a location the city was sidelined. The productions of the Killarney studios preferred colonial stories set within the 'jungles' of Africa highlighting the superiority of Whites in films (Tomaselli et al, 1986). Films such as *King Solomon's Mines* (1918) and *Allan Quartermaine* (1919) exploited the easily accessed raw landscape to produce adventure stories for audiences keen to laugh.

One of the first fictional narrative films of Johannesburg was a comedy called *A 'Kract' Affair* from 1916 (Bickford-Smith, 2013). One film that did focus on the city and the dangers therein, *Virtue of the City*, was such a failure in 1919 that it was only screened once (Gutsche, 1972). In the newsreel footage of the *African Mirror*, Johannesburg was represented with a positive image as part of early efforts of tourism (Bickford-Smith, 2013). Apart from newsreel footage, the dirty, dusty, industrial city failed to capture imaginations, perhaps due to a lack of escapism and the inability of the urban landscape to harbour any sort of fantasy. It is also possible that the urban cinema audience was all too aware of the hardships of modern city life and rejected the portrayal of the city because it reminded them too much of their own difficulties. In those early days, cinema was very affordable and was still very much the domain of the working class. It was this group of people, both the White working class and the large number of Black labourers, who were most familiar with the challenges of city living.

Johannesburg's golden fortune did not favour everyone, though it was courted by many. From as early as the 1890s the poor began to flock to the fledgling town. Rural Black South Africans sought work on the mines as did rural Afrikaners, forced from the farmlands by drought, and arriving in Johannesburg to fight for similar job opportunities and live in adjacent suburbs. While the Randlords built large houses in the private residential suburbs of Parktown and Doornfontein, the poor were left to inhabit crowded conditions close to the noise and dust of the industrial mine activity. Although working-class Whites were considered superior to the Black and Chinese labour of the mines, the uncertainty of employment on the mines became an issue in later years and was the cause of the 1913 mineworkers' strike and the armed strike, known as the Rand Revolt, of 1922.

With these conditions in mind, it seems clear that the working-class cinema audience would not be interested in viewing the city on the screen, either in a realistic form, or in some

superficial and light-hearted manner. This was reflected internationally, as films that featured the city only appeared in the late 1920s with *Berlin: A city symphony* (1927) and the *Man with the movie camera* (1929). It was at this time that the cinema audience reflected a gradual change, when it became socially acceptable for the wealthier classes to attend. A lengthy process, the newsreels of World War I and subsequent international news rendered the cinema an acceptable, if not essential, source of news and information and a value to society in general (Gutsche, 1972). The city only really achieves a significant screen presence, though, with the development in later decades of crime, gangster and suspense genres and the film noir movement of the 1940s.

By 1920, local cinemas were dominated by Hollywood imports and as technologies changed in the late twenties to accommodate sound, local production all but came to an end (Worsdale, 2007). American studios had established a successful formula for producing films and had also promoted films through their star performers or actors, thereby creating demand. The talkies were hugely influential, introducing American slang and the tough characters of cowboys and gangsters, the latter of which were imitated by South African children (Gutsche, 1972).

Although this period predates the introduction of apartheid in 1948, there were many racial laws that denied natives and all 'non-Whites' many of their rights. Maingard chronicles the history of Black filmmaking to reveal that early films with representations of people of colour on the screen were marred by the colonial ideologies of the White filmmakers and these representations were limited to depictions of servant/slave relationships or barbaric native images (Maingard, 2007b). Black South Africans have been underrepresented in the country's filmmaking, both in front of and behind the camera, from the very beginning. This was exacerbated in later decades with the promotion of propaganda films made by the government.

Local cinemas were flooded with imports that had begun to explore the city in some depth, such as the films *Berlin: A city symphony* and the *Man with the movie camera*, mentioned earlier, that examined the industrial cities of Moscow and Berlin. One film of this period, of 1938, recreated 1890s Johannesburg as the setting for a musical. *We're going to be Rich* starred Gracie Fields in a British/American production that rebuilt the early settlement in the form of an elaborate set in Hollywood (Gutsche, 1972). The film tells the story of a couple seeking a fortune in the gold rush of the time and explores some of the difficulties in establishing a life and earning a living as the pair try to set up a home, and she finds work singing in a saloon. According to Thelma Gutsche, the set was very credible in recreating the mining camp of

Johannesburg (1972), but the fact that it came almost fifty years later renders it more in the tradition of historical drama and nostalgic story, rather than an exploration of the burgeoning city. Especially as by 1938, Johannesburg had only retained bare traces of its origins, as the camp had grown into a fully-fledged city. In any event the film attracted very little interest from local audiences (Ibid.), again relegating the city to the fringes.

While film production had dwindled, the town of Johannesburg continued to expand and flourish. It was officially declared a city in 1928, South Africa's first, (Van der Waal, 1987) and so this young upstart began to enter into the minds and hearts of South Africans as the very representative of urbanity. Despite the global depression of the 1930s, Johannesburg began to see unprecedented development, particularly in a vertical direction. This was due to the fact that South Africa left the gold standard in 1932, which led to economic expansion (Beavon, 2004). Taller and taller skyscrapers were erected in the city's centre and apartment buildings appeared further out in the suburbs. This was the beginning of the medium-rise suburbs of Yeoville and Killarney.

This section has shown that despite extraordinary growth and development in the city of Johannesburg, early films did not depict the burgeoning town. Early cinema audiences were not interested in seeing the mining camp and town on the big screen and international audiences were only drawn to newsreels about the political situation and the Anglo-Boer war. Even as the early film experiments moved into the narrative form of melodrama and comedy, the harsh realities of the city were deemed unsuitable for light-entertainment. The location of the Killarney film studios on the outskirts of the city for the benefit of access to the untouched *veld* (bush) reinforced the neglect of the city as a film location.

The city however, during this period, rendered large changes for South Africa in the spheres of economics, politics and social relationships, which would feature on celluloid in later decades. As filmmaking developed, the city gradually took on a larger role in film but this was reflected in South Africa only after World War II. The war brought about changes in South Africa and fostered Afrikaner nationalism, which would influence the elections of 1948. Afrikaners had already begun exploiting film to create a unified culture through *De Voortrekkers* and *They Built a Nation* (1938) and this would continue into the second half of the twentieth century.

## 4.3 The Institution of apartheid and New Representations on the Screen (1948–1960)

By 1948 Johannesburg was the bustling metropolis of the country, as rural migration into the city continued unabated after World War II. The industrial boom of the war persisted into

the 1950s and with it increased employment, which further encouraged migration into the city. The dramatic increase in population created a desperate need for housing: for White people but more pressingly for the thousands of Black labourers. Whites were accommodated in new suburbs to the north such as Roosevelt Park and in new high-rises in Hillbrow. However, Black South Africans were considered to be only temporary urban inhabitants. Only the bare minimum of site-and-service facilities adjacent to Orlando were provided (Beavon, 2004).

The vast industrial activities of the mines were matched by equally lucrative commercial enterprises and so the city became the centre of wealth and prosperity in South Africa. The high-rises of the central business district expanded into the adjacent northern suburb of Braamfontein, which quickly shed its suburban character within a few years. The suburbs continued to spread out from the centre necessitating the need for a network of highways encircling the city. The skyscrapers of the CBD and Hillbrow, constructed in the 1960s, epitomized this prosperity. This optimism and growth continued for decades until recession began to take effect in the 1970s.

This modern, first world, White city continued to be 'blighted' by pockets of 'non-White' residents and was entirely supported by the labour supplied by the dormitory townships. The city was the site of technology, industry and progress but it also brought together a clash of cultures. For some South Africans, Johannesburg was not the golden city but rather the site of crime, immorality and corruption, a far cry from the idyllic rural countryside. The dichotomy, that the metropolis of Johannesburg had spawned, had been reflected in fictional literature of both Black and White writers since before the turn of the century (Hofmeyer, 1981) and it was to now emerge finally on the screen.

1948 saw the institution of apartheid when the National Party came into power. Within the first four years, racial segregation and inequality were written into the legislation, banning interracial marriages, instituting pass laws and segregating the physical city. Apartheid laws governed every aspect of life in South Africa and the political unrest that followed would continue until the advent of democracy. Johannesburg, as South Africa's largest city, would be the location for many protests, both peaceful and violent, as well as treason trials, imprisonments and forced removals. And as outlying townships grew and were established as Soweto, the city became a deeply divided and sprawling metropolis.

In the late 1940s Johannesburg emerged as the city representative of the rural-urban polarity. There was no doubt that Johannesburg was South Africa's only metropolis but opinions differed as to whether this modern urban centre was a force for good or a seat of corruption

and ills. This dichotomous view of the city was embraced in the cinema, which, during the period 1948–1976, focused mainly on two suburbs to express this. During the 1950s Sophiatown was featured in three key films that explored the meaning and condition of the urban for Black South Africans. From the 1960s onwards the focus shifted to Hillbrow and the White experience of urbanity. This was expressed in a number of films of the period though two examples will be discussed in this section.

When the National Party came into power, one of their main policies was to rid the cities of the permanent presence of Black South Africans. In Johannesburg demarcated locations had been present for Black and Coloured people from the very beginning and these were continuously shifted and moved further outwards as the city expanded. Eventually, townships such as Kliptown were built as dormitory towns far beyond the borders of the city. The 1936 Native Trust and Land Act and the 1950 Group Areas Act disenfranchised 'non-Whites' of their rights to the city and prevented them from owning property in the city and inhabiting parts of it. For the majority, Johannesburg was now the golden apple, the forbidden fruit.

It was also after the war that the now legendary Sophiatown emerged. A location for 'non-Whites' situated close to the city centre, it became a melting pot of culture that embraced musicians, writers, artists and gangsters. One of the last places where Black South Africans owned property, the area fostered modern urban Blacks who had shrugged off their rural tribal backgrounds. The suburb was a hub for creativity, producing fantastic jazz in the clubs and *shebeens* (illicit taverns) and capturing the imaginations of many of the decade's best writers (Baines, 2003).

Because of the nature of the apartheid laws, Sophiatown was also bursting with illegal activity, some of it unavoidable and some of it criminal. Apartheid laws prevented Black South Africans from being present in the city without a pass, from drinking or selling alcohol and from coupling with a White person. These 'infractions' would immediately turn many Black South Africans into instant criminals. But Sophiatown also hosted 'legitimate' crime in the form of prostitution, drugs and violence. Sophiatown was home to the tsotsi or gangster and it was these underworld characters that embraced the glamour and motifs of Hollywood.

The first widely seen images of the city of Johannesburg and Sophiatown in fictional feature films were propelled onto the screen alongside characters establishing a Black urban identity. The first film to feature Sophiatown on the screen was Donald Swanson's *Jim Comes to Jo'burg* a.k.a. *African Jim* made in 1949. The film is the story of Jim who travels from his rural village to Johannesburg to seek out a better life for himself. Having arrived in the big city he is

escorted by some tsotsis to Sophiatown and once there, he is promptly hit over the head and mugged. He encounters further obstacles as he attempts to secure employment as a domestic servant for a wealthy White family. Eventually, he is employed as a waiter in a local music club in Sophiatown, where his singing talent is discovered.

The tsotsis reappear when they try to rob a business but Jim together with the night watchman apprehend them and all is well. The film ends as Jim embarks on a musical career, and is seen recording a duet with Judy, the nightclub songstress, and a touching romance is suggested. The film depicts Johannesburg as both a place of opportunity as well as a city with elements of danger and crime and critically, does not return to its rural beginnings. Jim has achieved success in the city and does not return to his village, therefore, the film, ultimately presents a positive image of the city, where fortunes can be made and does not make the comparison between the rural and the urban.

Litheko Modisane describes the film as being neither "entirely colonial [n]or conclusively progressive text" (2011, p. 6). The film does not shy away from showing some of the difficulties faced by urban Blacks (finding employment, segregation), but moulds these issues to fit the simplistic narrative. The film creates a seamless city, one that does not reflect the segregation of reality. Sophiatown is but a brisk walk from the central district and the train station. The large houses belonging to the White employers appear to be only a block or two away. Although the film stakes a claim to the city and its successes for Black South Africans, the film falls short of showing the harsh reality of the segregated city.

*Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951) also featured Sophiatown in Johannesburg but depicted the city from a far more negative perspective. Based on Alan Paton's 1948 novel of the same name, the film tells the story of Reverend Khumalo, a man from rural Natal who embarks for Johannesburg in order to seek out his sister and his son, echoing the journey Jim made in *African Jim* (Marx, 2007). The criminality and immorality of Sophiatown appalls this god-fearing man and when he eventually returns to the countryside, it has become a refuge against the evils of urban life.

James Jarvis is a White farmer and rural neighbour of the reverend's and, although they never encounter each other in the countryside, their lives tragically collide in Johannesburg when it is discovered that Khumalo's son has killed the son of Jarvis. Upon learning of his son's death, Jarvis realises that the White oppressors are to blame for much of the Blacks' conditions and reconciles his hatred and racism by being a better Christian and donating money to Khumalo's church. Khumalo's experience, on the other hand, has only taught him that the city corrupts all who reside there, from his brother and sister to his only son. Even

the Johannesburg-based reverend fails to overcome a bitter cynicism when he advises Khumalo to ignore the plight of his son's pregnant girlfriend.

The film ends with the return of Khumalo to the countryside with his new daughter-in-law in tow, returning to the sanctity of rural life. The city is abandoned. *Cry, the Beloved Country* depicts the realities for urban Black South Africans more accurately than *African Jim* (1949) but ultimately denies for Blacks any successful or worthy inhabitancy in the city. *African Jim* may be patronising for its simplistic depictions but *Cry, the Beloved Country* is far more damning of urbanity for Black South Africans, passing harsh judgments on all those who reside in the city.

Sophiatown fostered the development of an urban Black culture through its vibrant nightlife and the appreciation of jazz music, and this has been romanticised in recent literature and in films such as *Drum* (2004). But in reality Sophiatown was a harsh place to live. The suburb was poorly serviced, with dirt roads, overcrowding and tsotsis prowling the streets. These conditions were generally a result of the attitude of the state and neglect of 'non-White' areas. *Cry, the Beloved Country* alludes to this in the film but portrays Sophiatown in a two-dimensional manner, failing to highlight the emerging culture. *African Jim* also fails to present a balanced view of Sophiatown by glossing over the realities inherent to the suburb.

Both films use the location with very different meanings to emphasise their narratives in different ways. The meaning of Sophiatown, as portrayed in *Cry, the Beloved Country*, was ultimately rejected by Black South Africans. As Vivian Bickford-Smith points out, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, though it preaches racial reconciliation, the dominant message is one that disparages Black urbanisation, a message which resulted in the film being interpreted as aligning with apartheid policies (Bickford-Smith, 2006). The fact that neither film was subject to political censorship underscores this. In addition, Paton's novel and the film established an increasing awareness of slum conditions in Johannesburg, paving the way for large-scale, racially-motivated slum clearances under the Group Areas Act and other apartheid policies (Bickford-Smith, 2013).

As in other industries, World War II had advanced the technologies of the cinema. In order to capture the images of the battlefield, lightweight cameras and lights had been developed as well as faster film stock which all facilitated filming outside (Wyver, 1989). Filming on location for films became ever more popular, spurred on by Hollywood production companies opposed to building expensive sets (Ibid.). As the phenomenon of television grew during the 1950s, the cinema began to suffer, forcing studios to restructure the process of filmmaking.

Location filming was not only a result of changing technologies and cost-cutting measures. The documentaries and newsreels of the war had a huge influence on the image and direction of the cinema. The Italians developed the movement of neo-realism, which in turn influenced filmmakers across the globe to capture the spontaneity, the reality of life. One such filmmaker was Lionel Rogosin. An American director, Rogosin was passionate about making films that addressed political and social issues. One of his first films, *Come Back, Africa*, was filmed clandestinely in Johannesburg in 1958 in order to address the injustices of apartheid.

The film tells the story of Zachariah and his family who come to Johannesburg from the rural provinces to seek more money and a better life. By now a very familiar tale, the only things the city has to offer are hardship and tragedy. The difference in this film though, is that Rogosin shows that the apartheid laws are at the real heart of the problem. Rogosin's style also enabled the Black performers to express their own voice. In the interior of a *shebeen*, *Drum* writers Bloke Modisane and Lewis Nkosi play themselves and express their disdain for Alan Paton's book, *Cry, the Beloved Country* and the subsequent movie. Their disdain stems from the book's suggestion that Black South Africans would fare better in the countryside, once again denying urbanity for people of colour.

*Come Back, Africa* is an example of the influence of documentaries and Italian neo-realism. The cast of the film is made up of non-professionals plucked from the streets of Sophiatown and portions of the film are completely unscripted. But the film is not merely a documentary. The industry, upon which the city of Johannesburg is founded, is strongly evoked through the images of miners moving through the tunnels and workers marching off the train all set to the relentless drumbeat.

Protest filmmaking was also hampered by other factors that included a lack of skills and oppressive censorship that not only limited the scripts, but also determined who could watch the final product. *Come Back, Africa* incorporated a technique that resembles what Peter Davis calls the 'buddy' tradition where White and Black directors would team up on a film to generate a more authentic representation (Davis, 1996)[23]. One of the reasons the 'buddy'

[23] The key scene in *Come Back, Africa* takes place in a shebeen and is conversation between *Drum* writers commenting on the film *Cry, the Beloved Country* and some of the issues facing Black people in apartheid South Africa (Paleker, 2011). This was one of the first scenes of the film to be shot and it informed the tone for the rest of the film. It represents an early

system was employed was because Black filmmakers lacked the critical skills due to poor access to education, facilities and infrastructure, all imposed by the apartheid government (Evans, 2007). Under these circumstances, the cinema is only representative of the oppressive government and not of the nation. As it was, it took many more years for the issues of apartheid to appear in South African productions again, let alone any sort of authentic representation.

Johannesburg, the city, had finally made it onto the big screen but its locations were used to further the meaning of the narratives, often in very polar-opposite ways. The films of this period introduced the theme of Black urban identity but again it was another thirty years before an authentic Black representation premiered. These films expanded upon the theme of crime by addressing the issues of apartheid but also addressing the issues of poverty and unemployment that had arisen from the city. All three films focus on migration to the city while only touching upon mobility within Johannesburg. *Come Back, Africa* drew heavily on the mining and industrial activities creating avant-garde images of the city and its materialities.

For Black South Africans the city was the site of greatest conflict and where apartheid was most controlling and divisive and hence, it is these early films that began to address apartheid; these are the first to represent Johannesburg on the silver screen in South Africa. It is the unequal and divided city that provides such apparent visual images of the laws of apartheid and its effects. In contrast, the city is absent and is only alluded to in the White Afrikaans language films of the same period.

## 4.4 Fostering Afrikaner Identity through Film (1960–1976)

In the 1950s the National Party began to take a serious interest in the potential of films for the promotion of a national identity, and for the use of propaganda (Maingard, 2007b). The National Film Board (NFB) was established in 1964 after nearly twenty years of discussion and consultation (Gavshon, 1990). In line with apartheid policies and the film subsidy, the mandate of the NFB was the promotion of Afrikaans films, but it also funded the 'documentaries' in African languages that were shown in miners' hostels and township community halls (Maingard, 2007b).

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form of collaboration, a version of the 'buddy' technique that Peter Davis coined and applied to later films.

The film subsidy system instituted a system of funding that favoured Afrikaans language films over English (Marx, 2000), resulting in a never-seen-before boom of films in Afrikaans. Forty-three of the sixty films made between 1956 and 1962 were in Afrikaans (Worsdale, 2007). This continued into the 1960s and 1970s as Afrikaans films were seen to be a means of generating a strong sense of culture and nationhood within the Afrikaans community (Tomaselli, 1989). The funding worked in such a way that Afrikaans films received a greater subsidy than English films. Films in the vernacular received the smallest subsidies. Afrikaans films were also seen to be more commercially viable as they drew on an extensive network of rural drive-in cinemas in towns (Greig, 1980), which no doubt influenced the narrative and locations of films.

During the 1960s building boom, Hillbrow emerged on the skyline alongside the high-rises of the CBD. Apartment blocks went up by the dozen providing a modern lifestyle within close proximity to the city and views worthy of the expense. It also attracted many European immigrants who were escaping the post-war depression in Europe and so Hillbrow became a cosmopolitan location with a vibrant café and nightclub culture (Beavon, 2004). The urban fabric of Hillbrow came to embody this modern lifestyle and all that this symbolised, and this was translated into the cinema.

The depiction of the city was central to the films that featured the urban-rural dichotomy from a Black perspective, or attempted to illustrate the plight of Black South Africans in the city. For Afrikaans language films, the theme still dominates narratives but it is the rural location that takes precedence. The city is absent from the screen and, in some cases, is even absent from the narrative (Greig, 1980). These films take place on the idyllic farm or in the small town and usually revolve around a romance between a farmer's daughter and a neighbour's son (Greig, 1980). The city is personified in the stranger or foreigner visiting the countryside who brings an element of danger or corruption (Greig, 1980). Many of the films of the '60s and '70s follow these tropes, based on novels that espoused similar themes (Hofmeyer, 1981), and were avidly watched in the rural drive-in cinemas.

Hillbrow had now replaced Sophiatown as the embodiment of the corrupt city with its modern apartment buildings, even if the images of these did not always make it onto the screen. These images of modernity were very different from the corrugated tin walls and dust roads of the Black locations such as Sophiatown that had previously symbolised the corrupt city. The narratives of the Afrikaans films continued to be strong moral stories that pitted the evils of the city against the virtues of the country, but the tales were no longer inclusive of Black South Africans and were focused entirely on White South Africans. One film that

did depict the city was *Debbie* (1965), a highly controversial film when it was released, depicting a young woman who falls pregnant out of wedlock (Tomaselli & Van Zyl, 1985).

Debbie is the daughter of a farmer who is studying at university in Johannesburg, when she falls in love with a medical student and finds herself pregnant before they have a chance to get married. In a rather complicated narrative that follows, Debbie rejects her selfish lover Paul, but is taken care of by Paul's parents and has the baby in seclusion in the countryside. She gives the baby up for adoption and returns to the city. Three years later we are reunited with her to learn that she is working for an architect and living in Hillbrow when the architect proposes marriage. Her fiancé accepts her troubled past and it appears as though her life is successful and she has recovered from the folly of her youth.

Paul returns from his studies overseas, now a full-fledged doctor and begins courting Debbie again, though Debbie continues to reject his advances. The film ends in the hospital where Paul treats their daughter, who has been adopted, for a head injury. Although the ending is ambiguous, my interpretation is that Debbie accepts that there is nothing she can do for the daughter she gave up and is happy with how her life has turned out. Rather than being a story about one woman's fall from grace, the message is one of fulfilment: an unwanted pregnancy is not insurmountable.

This differs from Keyan Tomaselli's reading, which interprets the film within the trope of the *boeredogter* (farm girl), the innocent, virginal Afrikaans girl who finds herself in great trouble when she is in the city and corrupted by the modern urban way (Tomaselli & Van Zyl, 1985).

> [T]he film constantly stresses the social, cultural and psychological dangers of deviance and reveals the unhappiness, the guilt, the deprivation, social ostracism and loneliness forced upon the characters. … Debbie has difficulty in relating to her urban friends. She becomes estranged from her boyfriend and is very much alone by the end of the movie. (Ibid., pp. 219 & 220).

While the film is melodramatic and we do see Debbie experiencing unhappiness and guilt immediately after conception, Debbie is an active agent in the path her life takes and while initially her family is upset with her, Debbie is almost restored as the angelic *boeredogter* at her friend's wedding, three years later, where she sings in the church with the full acceptance of her parents too. In fact, Debbie is a modern woman who has rejected an unhappy marriage in the face of propriety and is living as a modern working woman in a trendy apartment in Hillbrow.

The film contains only a few establishing shots that set the scene but the few shots that do establish a location seem to suggest this progressive reading of the film. Debbie falls in love, and into trouble, in the rural location of St Lucia, amid scenes of lush wetlands and beaches and subsequent outings with Paul are in large parks emphasising a rural image. Debbie finds herself constrained by her parents' conservative outlook on the farm and the final chapter of her predicament is played out in the maternity home by the sea. In contrast, the life she builds for herself in the city is set against the backdrop of the skyscrapers of Hillbrow, and her dates with the architect include trips in small airplanes to Cape Town and days spent at the motor racing circuit.

Rather than displaying Hillbrow as the "Hell in the demonology of SA film" (Tomaselli & Van Zyl, 1985, p. 203), the film presents the city as the optimum location of modernity and the place where a woman can reinvent herself. This interpretation places the film in a more positive light, especially considering it is based on a 1948 book, *Groen Koring* by T. du Toit (Tomaselli & Van Zyl, 1985). Although the film casts Hillbrow in a more positive frame or, at worst, in an ambiguous setting, it did differ from the dominant trope of the time and perhaps lays the groundwork for another film, with similar themes, that was released in the 1970s.

In 1974, Johannesburg achieved a depiction on film that placed the city within an international arena equal to the cities of London and New York. The film was *Gold* (1974), a British production based on the novel by the popular writer Wilbur Smith and starring Roger Moore. The film was set on a gold mine just outside of Johannesburg, but the city itself was celebrated as any other global destination showing trendy nightclubs and glamorous apartments with magnificent views in Hillbrow. The film falls within the espionage-type genre, where the mine is the focus of an international plot to flood this particular mine and subsequently the surrounding mines, crippling Johannesburg's mining industry and sending the gold price through the roof.

The film depicts the White spaces of the city fairly accurately, showcasing Roger Moore's character's glamorous life in Hillbrow, business meetings in Braamfontein's high-rises and the lonely wife's isolation in the large house in the suburbs. In addition to depicting the metropolis of Johannesburg, the film features the mine location significantly, mostly in line with the narrative but also reminding the audience of the city's foundations. The film returns images of the industrial city to the screen, reminding the audience of the backbone of the metropolis. Familiar icons are displayed in the form of mine dumps and headgear rising out of the ground. The film subtly highlights the discord between the mining activities, the

modern high-rise city and the sprawling White suburbs. However the film only very briefly, and superficially, hints at the poor race relations between White bosses and Black labourers; cheap Black labour is the real underpinning of the city's success.

The international city of Johannesburg featured in the film had emerged out of a building boom during the 1960s that had seen unprecedented investment in the inner city, and in Hillbrow. Tall skyscrapers and high-rise apartment blocks were erected as a display of confidence in the gold economy. The city also continued to grow horizontally as White suburbs spread to the north, and the dormitory city of Soweto expanded to the south.

The 1970s brought about several changes for the apartheid city. The northern White suburbs stretched out even further north and incorporated the two satellites towns of Randburg and Sandton, reducing the CBD to a distant and isolated centre. Although decentralisation would only occur in the late 1970s and take off during the 1980s, the recession of the early years of the decade was the beginning of the city centre's failure (Beavon, 2004). The apartheid government was still determined to create a pure White city and began focusing their attentions on the suburb of Pageview, which hosted mainly Indian people but also Cape Malays, Coloureds and Blacks (Ibid.). By the late 1970s, the government had succeeded in relocating the suburb's residents and destroying the fabric of the neighbourhood but, as the next section shows, this attempt at purification soon looked futile in the face of expanding 'grey' areas of the city (Ibid.).

In an effort to maintain control over the spread of information, the apartheid government had successfully delayed the introduction of television until 1976. This ensured the continued popularity of the cinema during the 1950s and 1960s when cinemas around the world were struggling to compete with the popularity that television had gained during this period. However, the steady production of Afrikaans films during the 1960s began to wane towards the end of the 1970s, as the country entered the era of television.

Political censorship resulted in self-censorship so that films of this period did not reflect the political situation and thereby did not reflect the existing social situation. This is also reflected in the manner in which the city is represented. Afrikaner identity is the main theme developed during this period and Johannesburg does not feature, or is not visually depicted, in most of the films. *Gold* expands upon the theme of industrialisation and represents the city within a positive framework of the urban-rural dichotomy. But this international production fails to get to the heart of some other major themes. The country was isolated and cinema was also isolated within the nation.

## 4.5 The Introduction of Television and the Escalation of anti-apartheid protests (1976–1994)

The year 1976 saw South Africa enter a new era. The Soweto uprisings of that year saw anti-apartheid movements intensify, as townships became the setting for increasingly violent protests. In 1985 a state of emergency was declared and remained in place for four years. This period also saw changes in cinema and television that affected the way in which South Africans saw themselves, and the world. Between 1976 and 1985 international media moved into the country to record the ever-increasing turbulence before the state of emergency clamped down on media coverage.

Although, during this period, South Africa and apartheid received extensive airtime on screens overseas, on the news, in documentaries and even in feature films, South Africans themselves remained in the dark. Film production slowed drastically and those films that were produced, along with television, retreated into escapist narratives that did not reflect physical or political reality.

As mentioned earlier, television was only introduced in 1976. The broadcasting of television, with its imported content from America and Europe, was seen as a large threat to the ideology of apartheid by the nationalist government (Currie & Markowitz, 1995). But a single event forced the government to reconsider. In 1969, South Africa was the only country in the developed world that did not witness the broadcast of the moon landing (Head, 1974). South Africa had reached a pinnacle of isolation.

Television began to be broadcast in January of 1976 and then only the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), the state-controlled network, had a license to broadcast. The three television channels reflected the structures of apartheid: "TV1 addressed whites in English and Afrikaans. TV2 addressed blacks in Zulu. TV3 addressed blacks in Sotho." (Currie & Markowitz, 1995, p. 92). In 1983, BOPTV began broadcasting out of the homeland of Bophutatswana, though its reach was restricted to nearby Soweto (Ibid.). MNet was the first pay-TV station to be granted a license in 1986 but these new channels did little to boost local production with both only broadcasting less than 5% local content (Ibid.). During the State of Emergency period of the 1980s, even the SABC preferred to flood the airwaves with light entertainment from America, which also happened to be much cheaper than producing local shows (Currie & Markowitz, 1995).

The popularity and reach of television brought about the end of the National Film Board in 1979 (Gavshon, 1990), but escalated anti-apartheid resistance, and the technology of video renewed interest in the anti-apartheid film. Although videotapes had been used by television

studios since the 1950s, it was only in the early 1980s that sales of VCR machines and films on video became popular with households (Wyver, 1989). This technology also produced inexpensive and easy-to-use cameras (Ibid.), combining to empower non-professionals to produce films cheaply and enable them to distribute them easily and cheaply too.

International production companies came to the country during this period to make anti-apartheid documentaries to screen to overseas audiences (Gavshon, 1990) but local filmmakers were also encouraged by the new and cheaper technology. During the 1980s, the film arena saw a second revival as the medium for political protest. The African National Congress supported the Video News Service which screened films at township meetings and political rallies while 1988 saw the establishment of the Film and Allied Workers Organization (FAWO) (Maingard, 2007b). Together these organisations created a network that enabled political films such as *Mapantsula* (1988) to be widely screened (Ibid.).

*Mapantsula* tells the story of Panic, a tsotsi in modern Johannesburg who ends up sharing a jail cell with several anti-apartheid protestors. Panic realises, while reflecting in jail, that although he would like to exist free of all apartheid laws as well as moral laws, he cannot escape the politics of his time and place. The narrative is structured around flashbacks that tell the story leading up to his arrest, while the present takes place in the prison as Panic negotiates with his captors and fellow prisoners. Panic has a girlfriend who resides as a domestic worker on the property of her White employer, and she too experiences a political awakening when she loses her job and attends a political rally.

The film is an example of Davis' (1996) 'buddy' tradition with Oliver Schmitz teaming up with Thomas Mogotlane to write the script although Schmitz stayed behind the camera to direct Mogotlane in the role of Panic. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, Black South Africans strongly identified with the film while the film was also critically acclaimed overseas. Crucially, it was also the first political film to be widely seen by Black South Africans, as all previous films had been banned.

The film expresses the city as a place that Black people were empowered to inhabit (Saks, 2010) and the focus of that empowerment is the CBD and Hillbrow. These spaces are announced on the camera with their tall edifices, such as the Hillbrow Tower, and it is in these spaces where Panic defies apartheid and moral laws. In comparison, the spaces of the township and White suburb are generic and unidentifiable but are also the spaces where Panic encounters the constraints of the laws he tries to evade. Although the township space is unidentifiable, this is the first film to depict the peripheral township as a space of agency

for Black South Africans. Prior to this, the township had only previously been seen in propaganda films.

The uncertainty and turbulence of the 1980s saw many businesses flee the city centre to relocate to Sandton. The process had begun in the 1970s, when many businesses followed the move of the city hall to Braamfontein, on the northern side of the railway tracks. The 1970s brought recession to the country exacerbated by economic sanctions against the policies of apartheid. The flight was expedited by the emergence of large shopping centres in the suburbs, which further reduced the attraction for the city centre. Office parks sprung up around small decentralised nodes, as the city continued to spread ever outward. The decentralisation trend was not unique to the South African condition and was, in fact, a global trend. But the sudden lack of interest in the city centre allowed those people who had previously been denied rights to the city to begin inhabiting those spaces, albeit illegally.

The disinvestment of the city allowed for a 'greying' that extended to the nearby suburbs of Hillbrow and Yeoville, as Black South Africans moved into these areas. After almost a century of complete exclusion Black South Africans were finally laying claim to the city of Johannesburg. The greying of the city occurred in other arenas too, because, although the government had maintained strict controls regarding the situation of cinemas and the seating arrangements within, by 1986 the majority of cinemas were multi-racial (Tomaselli, 1989).

Migration into the city had not slowed down as drought and economic decline took its toll. By the mid-1970s there were between 1–1.5 million residents in Soweto (Morris, 1980). It was the generation that had been born under apartheid and born in the townships that took to the streets in June 1976, protesting apartheid. The population of Soweto could no longer be dismissed as only a temporary presence in the city. Backyard shacks and informal settlements increased during this period as migration exceeded the available housing. The migration into the city was not confined to the township areas either.

The 1980s was a period of great political unrest in the country and some of this was caught on camera. *Mapantsula* is one example of a fictional film capturing the turmoil, but the majority of the films that featured the anti-apartheid protests were documentaries produced by international companies for audiences overseas. The introduction of television had done little to improve the situation as it was state controlled and during the worst of the growing unrest preferred to broadcast innocuous American sitcoms and dramas. Even locally produced serials followed the formulas that had preceded in the medium of film (Tomaselli & Van Zyl, 1985), further neglecting the realities of the everyday lives of South Africans.

With the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, a democratic South Africa was on the horizon and this changed the nature of film and television once again. The anti-apartheid film was no longer urgent and political censorship was less rabid. This stimulated films such as *Sarafina!* (1992) and *Friends* (1993) which were able to openly address the issues of apartheid through new fictional genres though it would take many more years for cinema and television to free itself from the influence of documentaries and realism, the legacy of filmmaker Lionel Rogosin and the many anti-apartheid documentaries.

Films such as *Mapantsula* and *Sarafina!* began to illustrate Soweto in a new light and Soweto came to represent township space in film in the same way that Johannesburg is representative of urban space. Up until this point, township spaces were only depicted in propaganda films created by the government and these films are the first instances of township locations featuring in narrative fictional films. *Sarafina!* is set entirely in Soweto and was filmed there too, although access for filming was made simpler by the repealing of apartheid laws and policies in 1991.

*Sarafina!* was based on the play of the same name, written by Mbongeni Ngema, who also wrote the screenplay. The film tells the story of Sarafina, a teenage girl living in Soweto, and her fellow classmates as they struggle against the injustices of apartheid. Based on the true-life events of the 1976 student uprisings in Soweto, the film details the hardships of Sarafina's life as she cares for her younger siblings while her mother works as a domestic servant in the White suburbs. At the same time she is acutely aware of the fact that her father died in Mozambique in preparation to fight the struggle and the fact that she was born into a country of oppression.

When the history and music teacher is arrested in the classroom for teaching the children the origins of apartheid, the students protest, guns are fired by White soldiers and the conflict results in the death of a Black policeman. The policeman is burnt to death by the students in reaction to his betrayal of them. Sarafina is questioned and tortured in connection with his death but is released with a warning, but she has also learned about what it means to be a hero of the struggle. Sarafina becomes a woman as she realises there are consequences to all actions, even those that aim to eradicate oppression, and as an adult she must make her own decision about how she chooses to fight apartheid.

The plot and the characters of the film demonstrate the complexities of the experiences of Black South Africans allowing for a greater level of identification for a South African audience, although there are aspects of the film that have catered for an international audience. Most notably is the casting of Whoopi Goldberg as the influential teacher, Mary

Masembuko, but there are also elements of the film's location that have been tailored to foreign viewers. Soweto is announced very boldly in the first musical number as the students dance round Hollywood-type letters spelling out Soweto. Although this unusual declaration of location is in keeping with the film's musical genre, the film opens with views across the township at dawn that are sufficiently distinguishable for a 'local' audience[24].

The musical genre of the film, and the story's beginning as a play, have a strong influence in rendering the streets and houses of Soweto in a way that feels stylised and staged, though the film never loses sight of the realities of the township. The backyard shacks contrast with more formal social housing in the midst of scrap heaps and junkyards. The film clearly demonstrates the distance of Soweto from the city through the long train journey Sarafina undertakes to visit her mother living in Parktown, emphasising the isolation and the divided city. The lush green trees of the suburb contrast strongly with the dry red earth that dominates the landscape of Soweto in the film.

*Sarafina!* builds upon the earlier depictions of the city seen in *Mapantsula*, but is not as constrained as *Mapantsula* by the importance of the anti-apartheid message and is free to explore a more stylised depiction of the city. It is only after the democratic elections that Soweto begins to develop its own distinguishable screen identity; however there are few narratives in films made since 1994 that have matched the nuances and subtleties in the screenplay of the Black urban experience as shown in *Sarafina!*.

During this period the representation of the city becomes more nuanced and, again, develops alongside the theme of Black urban identity. Crime and the gangster have also resurfaced amongst these representations. These themes grow further in the next section and are very influential in the film and television that follows the democratic elections of 1994.

## 4.6 Democracy and the Free City (1994–2013)

1994 saw South Africa host its first democratic elections and the African National Congress and Nelson Mandela voted into power. Apartheid laws had been repealed, economic sanctions had been lifted and the violent political clashes that led up to the elections appeared to be dissipating. Johannesburg had emerged as the largest urban population in South Africa and the economic and commercial centre of the country. As such, it continued

[24] The literal spelling-out of the location may be interpreted as being for the benefit of an international audience, in reality many White South Africans, even those residing in Johannesburg, at this time would not have visited Soweto and would be unable to recognise the township from the 'establishing shots' of the film.

to attract people from rural areas and towns across the country and the continent, as all were now free to enter and live in the golden city.

However, inequalities remain in the city. Apartheid's demise and the advent of democracy had brought almost instantaneous reform to the political situation, but other changes were, and are, slower in their transformation, especially evident in the physical city (though, of course, nothing is ever truly black and White, both literally and metaphorically). Blurring across the racial divisions began in the late 1980s in Johannesburg's inner city and nearby Hillbrow, and though divisions continue to exist, they are now mostly along differences of class (Tomlinson et al, 2003).

The increased migration into the city exacerbated inequalities as the inner city and Hillbrow became overcrowded, creating vertical slums. Informal settlements have mushroomed all over as the metropolis continues to sprawl outwards. The local government, in addressing the pressing need for housing, has built large tracts of houses on the periphery. The wealthy city continues to decentralise, migrating north along the highway creating nodes in Fourways, Midrand and Centurion, all combining to create a metropolitan region that extends to Pretoria in the north.

The city is not the only arena where inequalities remain. Access to film and television still reveals the apartheid legacy. Many of the previously Black townships do no not have formal cinemas, even sixteen years after the first democratic elections. The first[25] cinema in Soweto was only opened in Maponya Mall in 2007 (Saks, 2010). There are still a substantial number of South Africans without access to television – in 2007 65.6% of South Africans owned televisions and the terrestrial television channels reached around 20 million people – however, this is still the largest television audience in Africa (Statistics SA, 2007). BOPTV fell away with the dissolution of the homelands and the first democratic elections in 1994, and since then South Africa has seen the introduction of a terrestrial television channel, eTV, and two pay satellite providers: DSTV and TopTV. These channels do provide some local content but are still dominated by imported content, though Western shows and films are now screened alongside channels devoted to content from India, as well as the African continent.

By far the biggest issue in South African cinema and television though is that of Black representation, both behind the camera and in the audience. Masilela and Balseiro believe

[25] The first modern cinema, perhaps, because there were two cinemas listed in Soweto in 1980 though the nature of what these cinemas screened is unclear (Morris, 1980).

that the inaccessibility and inequality imposed on Black filmmakers by apartheid is not a legacy that will be easy to redress because acquiring filmmaking skills remains inaccessible and expensive for the majority of South Africans (Balseiro & Masilela, 2003). For these authors, authentic representation continues to be unattainable, as it has shifted from an issue of race to an issue of class. While the realm of cinema may still be dominated by White male filmmakers, Saks points out that television does not suffer the same fate (Saks, 2010a).

In her book *Cinema in a Democratic South Africa*, Saks maintains that the race for authentic Black representation began in cinema prior to 1990 with films such as *Mapantsula*, but that it is actually television that has achieved successful representation both in front of and behind the camera, and there are a number of reasons for this (Saks, 2010a). The majority of films in South Africa are produced through collaborations with, or co-funding from, international investors and these films then have to be tailored towards an international audience for global distribution and release so that the funders may recoup their investments (Tomaselli, 2006). The South African cinema audience is comparatively too small for most films to break even, let alone make a profit (Ibid.).

Because of the expense of a movie ticket and the fact that cinema complexes are still, in the majority, situated in urban areas, in formerly 'White' suburbs, going to the movies is still a predominantly White and affluent pastime (Flanery, 2009). Television, on the other hand, has a much broader audience and is more widely available and more affordable. This larger, more representative South African audience demands narratives and casts that are closer to home (Saks, 2010a). There are many more opportunities for Black directors, scriptwriters and actors on South African television. This is also in part due to the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa's (ICASA) regulations that South Africa's television stations have to produce local content as part of their mandate. Unfortunately, although local productions are extremely popular with audiences, they are also very expensive to produce (Saks, 2010a).

The difference between film and television productions can be highlighted through the different representations of the city. Television presents the city in a more subtle and nuanced manner whereas film tends to portray the city in a stylised and stereotypical way. Both mediums, though, make use of narratives of crime and gangsters to reveal the metropolis. Crime is synonymous with democratic Johannesburg and is embedded in everyone's psyche while the gangster is an important urban trope and most significantly, critical to a Black urban identity. Unfortunately, the first film of the democratic era takes us back to previous depictions of the city.

One of the first films to be screened after the 1994 elections was Darrell Roodt's version of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995). The film's superficial reconciliation between the Black and White fathers was warmly received around the world and was seen to be representative of the optimism of the new democracy. This is despite the fact that the film faithfully reproduced the era of the book, pre-apartheid 1940s, and despite the fact that with only minor changes *Cry, the Beloved Country* still raised the criticisms made in the film *Come Back, Africa*.

The film differs from its earlier counterpart in its treatment of the landscape. The 1995 version benefits from the modern convention of shooting in a widescreen format, allowing the film to exploit the expansive vistas of the Drakensberg. In full colour, these glorious rural and pristine landscapes cannot compete with the images of the dirty and dangerous city, further emphasising the underlying message of the film – for Black South Africans to return to the countryside. Of course, in a historical film it is extremely difficult to give the city landscape the same expansive treatment without including modern buildings or features but at times the tight frame of the camera contributes to the claustrophobic quality of the urban spaces depicted. And, unfortunately, unlike the original, Sophiatown could not represent itself and had to be substituted. The film reinforces the apartheid campaign to exclude Blacks from the city.

The recurring and dominant theme and genre for film and television after democracy has been that of crime and violence. This comes as no surprise because the violent history of apartheid is just below the surface and the high crime rates facing South Africans currently are all part of the country's collective conscience (Maingard, 2007b). Gangs are prevalent in diverse films such as *Stander* (2003), *Tsotsi* (2005) and *Jerusalema* (2008), and violence is at the heart of television drama series such as *Yizo Yizo* (1999; 2001; 2003); *Gaz'lam* (2002–2005) and *Jacob's Cross* (2007–2009). These films and dramas have an intimate connection with the city as a location.

The film *Tsotsi* explores the gritty world of informal settlements and the periphery of the city in the story of a hijacker who accidently kidnaps a baby. The hijacker, Tsotsi, inhabits the spaces of the informal settlement and travels into the city by train to commit various crimes there, including robbing and killing a man and tormenting a disabled man. The hijacking of the story takes place in a comfortable middle-class suburb that is never given any context. We are not shown how Tsotsi finds himself there and there are no establishing shots of the area. This is in contrast with the informal settlement and the CBD of the city, both of which are treated with wide-angle shots encompassing the contexts of the locations.

Scenes of the modern city and the bustling informal settlement are juxtaposed against the peripheral presence of the *veld*. Tsotsi runs out of the settlement into the ashes of the grassland and even in the city, Tsotsi surveys the high-rise skyline from a rocky outcrop of bushveld. Surrounding the shanty town, the *veld* signifies a wasteland but also a sense of the wilderness. Tsotsi and his gang members are merely trying to survive in the city. Certainly, this is reinforced in the image of Tsotsi in the long grass within sight of the metropolis, suggesting an untamed spirit in the modern world. These images invite the audience to question the city as representative of civilisation: the raw landscape and the savage criminal acts that dwell on the edges.

*Tsotsi* was conceived from the beginning as a South African film that would be screened internationally (tsotsi.com, 2006), but as such the film gives no context to the time or place. The film opens inside Tsotsi's shack and Johannesburg is only recognisable through its skyline rather than through any overt identifiers. The intention was to establish the narrative as a universal story though there is no doubt that any South African could identify the city through the images of Ponte building on the horizon. So, although a local audience can identify the city through its representation on the screen, in many ways the city is stylised through specific lighting that suggests a strong pandering to an international audience.

The film is shot mostly at night and this is used to most effect in the scene where Tsotsi torments the disabled man. This is shot below the highway and up-lighting emphasises the cathedral-like qualities of the undercarriage of the highway structure, lending a certain dignity to the home of this poor man in a wheelchair. However, the informal settlement appears in a perpetual state of dawn or dusk and is bathed in pink light and mist or smog, rendering the poverty with a rose tint and making it palatable for foreign viewers. Some interpretations of the city are therefore sacrificed in accommodating an international audience.

Later films have been less forgiving of the city as crime continues to be the focus of film and television narratives. Another film that follows a violent gangster in the city is *Jerusalema*. The film draws upon the existing overcrowded and lawless conditions in the flats and apartments of Hillbrow, a suburb just north of Johannesburg's centre, and does not shy away from the harsh realities of urban living for some. Lucky Kunene starts out as a young gang member in Soweto before finding himself in jail when a cash-in-transit heist goes wrong. Five years later we find him in Hillbrow trying to earn an honest living when again, he is forced to live a life of crime and starts to hijack buildings. The film revels in its urban location – the high-rise buildings and the iconic Hillbrow Tower feature prominently in the film, from the opening credits right through to the very end. The hard lines of the vertical buildings add to the

criminal drama and builds upon visuals from earlier television dramas that established the city as a site of grime and crime.

*Yizo Yizo* was a popular and educational drama series aimed at the youth, set in a township high school on the outskirts of Johannesburg. In its third season, the highly relevant drama shifted location to the high-rise buildings of Hillbrow, where the school graduates now battled the problems of urban living and finding employment. Other drama serials that have taken advantage of Johannesburg's gritty inner city streetscapes and scenes are *Gaz'lam* and *Hard Copy* (2005). Kruger believes that short films and television dramas offer more insight into the real city of Johannesburg than the feature films of the big screen (Kruger, 2006). However, these films (even when geared to an international audience) use the location of Johannesburg as a landscape of place, exploiting the audience's prior knowledge of the spaces, injecting the stories with a definitive sense of reality. Fictional feature films emphasise the elusive[26] nature of the metropolis and create a more ambiguous image of the city than the shows of television, which promote a known city through the use of recognisable locations creating familiar images (Ibid.).

Loren Kruger demonstrates how the current city of Johannesburg, what she calls the 'edgy' city (Kruger, 2001), has begun to be shown in this way on South African screens, big and small (2006). The television series *The Line* (1994) and the short films *The Foreigner* (1997) and *A Drink in the Passage* (2002) combine the conflicting images of Johannesburg: the chaotic spaces of community juxtaposed with the deserted and feared public spaces (Kruger, 2006).

In a similar way, the film *District 9* (2009) creates a city of fear and terror but not just in the 'edgy' CBD but also in the informal settlements. The film tells the story of a group of aliens, known as prawns, who find themselves stranded residents of Johannesburg, set in the very near future. The government has responded to this invasion by setting up an enclosed camp to house the aliens and have instituted laws and means of control that evoke the same methods of apartheid segregation.

Although the narrative is a science fiction story, the film makes use of real images of informal settlements juxtaposed with aerial views of Johannesburg's central business district in a mock documentary style. Again, the contrast between the two main settings contributes

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[26] As mentioned in Chapter Two the term elusive comes from Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall's book on Johannesburg entitled *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (2008). In addition Thom Andersen refers to Los Angeles as elusive because of the representation of ambiguous spaces, a characteristic that is echoed in Johannesburg films (*Los Angeles Plays Itself*, 2003).

to the drama of the narrative. The director, Neill Blomkamp, is a South African but the production is an international one and this influence can be seen in the way that the film draws upon the prevalent images of South Africa during the 1980s.

During the 1980s, international audiences were familiar with the images of South Africa through the many documentaries and feature films produced about apartheid for export. In addition the news also featured countless stories about the violent protests and uprisings, and *District 9* builds upon these earlier associations creating a more realistic film. The use of actual locations in the city, to set the scene, adds to the sense of reality in the film especially in showing the gritty and uncomfortable spaces of the informal settlements. The shanty town in which the aliens have confined residence bears such a strong resemblance to harsh reality and is not romanticised in any way, that audiences have inferred meaning from the film to extend to alternative representations of apartheid or new forms of prejudice in the form of xenophobia.

But it is not all crime and violence. Johannesburg is still the object of dreams and aspirations and represents success and achievement. Because of this, many of the local soap operas are shot and set in Johannesburg. It is through television that Johannesburg has achieved a more balanced depiction. Soap operas and sitcoms, however, utilise the concept of the city as a location of dreams and aspirations rather than a real physical setting where the narrative unfolds. These programmes rely on a few repeated establishing shots to evoke the meaning inherent in the images of the glamorous and modern city. The city, as a real and physical setting, remains firmly within the genres of crime and drama.

## 4.7 Conclusion

Johannesburg has been prevalent on the screen since the introduction of moving pictures to the country in 1896, and has continued this dominance into the post-apartheid era. The film representations of Johannesburg show the city to be both a nuanced place and the very concept of city. This is by no means unique to South Africa as Mabhava Prasad discusses this concept of the double status of the city with regards to Mumbai in Indian cinema (2004). However, Johannesburg as a representation of the urban is also a representation of the modern nation of South Africa. Early visual images incorporated the inherent meaning of industrialisation symbolised in the mine dumps and headgear and, as the city grew, these images became symbols for the urbanisation of the country and the urban-rural dichotomy.

From the 1950s onwards the themes of crime and racial segregation became fused with images of Johannesburg, although both of these themes were present in earlier films. These images became integral to the development of a Black urban culture. In contrast, the

development of Afrikaner nationalism through film was established as an antithesis to the city and, as such, Johannesburg only becomes a visual reference in Afrikaans films from the 1960s onwards. As a result of these different representations, Johannesburg is imbued with meaning and identity, as a city and as a representation of the urban.

Lucia Saks (2003) warns against overlooking cinema's deep-seated urban nature. Because of the legacy of apartheid, many South Africans are still disenfranchised citizens of urban spaces, with little or no knowledge of the real city spaces. Saks emphasises the need to examine the fact that cinema is entrenched in the urban and to understand its urban qualities in order to create films that are more accessible to South Africa's rural and suburban residents (Saks, 2003). This chapter has explored the images of the city on the screen as a powerful influence on the development of identities and identification within the city of Johannesburg.

# Part B: Johannesburg's Representational Space

Part B examines the representation of Johannesburg in film, focusing on recent films produced after 1994 but also referencing key older films. The part is structured around the four key spatial constructs or themes identified in Chapter two: materiality, identity, mobility and crime. This part constitutes the findings of the cultivation analysis conducted as the first phase of the research. This part highlights the dominant representations of the city while also noting some important absences.

# 5. Materiality

## 5.1 Introduction

As the starting point for exploring the representation of Johannesburg in films, this chapter examines the representation of the physical city of Johannesburg on the screen. In the first section I lay out the way in which the urban landscape of Johannesburg has been portrayed on the screen. As discussed in Chapter three, I have drawn on the work of Kevin Lynch's *Image of the City* (Lynch, 1960) in understanding the parallels between the city and its representations:

> Since image development is a two-way process between observer and observed, it is possible to strengthen the image either by symbolic devices, by the retraining of the perceiver, or by the reshaping of one's surroundings (Lynch, 1960, p. 11).

Films are symbolic devices that shift the meanings of these spatial elements and influence the image of the city. First, I explore edges, landmarks and paths. The edge is particularly prevalent in Johannesburg as a result of apartheid planning. For Lynch, edges can either be barriers or seams, dividing or they are joining parts of the city, but in Johannesburg they are almost always barriers. Peripheral townships and 'non-White' suburbs were isolated through distance (on the edge) and physical buffers or edges in the form of the physical ridges, the mining belt, industrial zones or highways. Loren Kruger extended the notion of the edge to include a mentality of edginess or unease amongst Johannesburg's residents and thereby defined the city as edgy (Kruger, 2001). It was these divisive spatial legacies that were seen to be the greatest obstacles in creating a democratic city during the 1980s and 1990s. Nuttall and Mbembe (2008) believe that this overall focus has been framed largely through a loathing of Johannesburg's ugly, industrial and capitalist emphases.

But the city is not only about the edge. Landmarks are the symbolic objects of the urban landscape and the paths, varying from highways to streets, allow the city to be penetrated and explored. The paths connect and divide the districts and nodes, which will be discussed in the second section, and are important physical spaces in the city that functions as a public space and a space of personal expression. As de Certeau asserts, streets are most clearly the site of everyday urbanism and self-expression in the city landscape (de Certeau, 1984). The

street as a space of personal expression is explored throughout Part B: Johannesburg's Representational Space.

"Districts … are recognisable as having some common, identifying character." (Lynch, 1960, p. 47). For Tomaselli, the characteristic of an African film is the location or setting serves as a character; as an additional role player in the film (Tomaselli, 1993). Therefore neighbourhoods in the city can have both character and play characters in films, presenting two meanings for audiences to negotiate. In the second section of this chapter I explore the coming together of these two meanings of character through the discussion of a location as a stereotype. I describe the on-screen representations of the four locations and case studies of this thesis and relate these to what I suggest are particular stereotypes for Johannesburg.

## 5.2 Edges, Landmarks and Paths

### 5.2.1 The Natural Environment

Before it was a city Johannesburg was uncultivated farmland. Specifically, the city was laid out on the *uitvalgrond* (the leftover land) between three farms: Doornfontein, Braamfontein and Turffontein. The farmland was typical Highveld landscape: long grass and a few trees. Johannesburg is one of the largest cities in the world without proximity to a major body of water; be it a lake, river or the ocean. To the south of the current city centre the landscape is relatively hilly. The most distinctive feature of the landscape is a series of parallel ridges that run east to west beginning with the Kensington ridge to the south and the Northcliff ridge being the most northern ridge. These ridges, particularly the north-facing slopes, became the homes of the wealthy as those with money built their large houses with views, but the ridges were also marked by the presence of water towers making the most of the additional height. These ridges have provided edges in Johannesburg where the water's edge is absent.

As mentioned in Chapter four, the Killarney Film Studios capitalised on easy access to the *veld* landscape in order to produce the colonial films set in the 'jungle'. But the *veld* still makes an appearance in recent films, often indicating an edge or periphery. In *Jerusalema* (2008) the long brown grass of the *veld* is part of young Lucky's milieu in the township, but it disappears when he makes the move to Hillbrow. "The locations and setting of the film in *Tsotsi* [2005] are highly glamourised and sentimental, diminishing the redemptive vision of the film" (Marx, 2010). Scenes of the modern city and the bustling informal settlement are juxtaposed against the peripheral presence of the *veld*. Tsotsi runs out of the settlement into the ashes of the grassland and even in the city, Tsotsi surveys the high-rise skyline from a rocky outcrop of bushveld. Surrounding the shanty town, the *veld* signifies a waste land but also a sense of

the wilderness. Tsotsi and his gang members are merely trying to survive in the city. Certainly, this is reinforced in the image of Tsotsi in the long grass within sight of the metropolis, suggesting an untamed spirit in the modern world. These images invite the audience to question the city as representative of civilisation: the raw landscape and the savage criminal acts that dwell on the edges.

Johannesburg, despite the pre-existing almost treeless conditions, is the site of the largest urban man-made forest. This forest exists in the northern suburbs of the city and began with a tree plantation in Saxonwold, which was established to supply the mining industry, and has continued with trees lining suburban streets and in spacious private gardens. The sheer number and density of trees creates the image of a forest from any elevated views of the suburbs, so much so that such an image is a signifier of the former White middle and upper class neighbourhoods, as seen in *Jerusalema* and several other films.



**Figure 5.1** – A still from *Jerusalema* showing the urban forest (*Jerusalema* (2008) with permission from Jerusalem Entjha Films).

### 5.2.2 Mining and Industrial Landscapes

Johannesburg would not exist if it were not for the discovery of gold and since 1886 mining activity has had a major impact on, and been the determining factor of, the urban landscape. The gold reef runs east to west along the surface from Springs to Randfontein and inclines below the surface towards the south. To escape the noise and dust of the mining industry the wealthy set up quiet and leafy suburbs to the north (safely out of gold's way), establishing an

enduring divide in the city between race and class. Railways and major roadways that service the mining belt further emphasise this divide.

This literature frames the divisions of the city in a single horizontal dimension across the city but Nuttall and Mbembe (2008) prefer to divide the city in the vertical dimension into the underground and the surface. The flashy, capitalist and consumptive practices above ground are founded on, quite literally, the industrial gold mining activities that fund these activities. Embedded in this idea is the division of class, which was largely a division of race under apartheid, and which is also emerging as a division between violent criminals and those who fear (Nuttall & Mbembe, 2008). For these scholars, these layers of the city obscure one another and contribute to the elusive nature of Johannesburg.

Although mining took place far below the ground level from the late 1890s, the industrial activity is very much visible above the surface. The almost instantaneous evidence on the skyline would have been the mining headgear. These are large steel structures with gears at the top that operate the lift transporting miners into and out of the shafts. In the very early years these structures would have been the tallest structures for many miles: Johannesburg's own utilitarian Eiffel Towers. However, these would soon have been dwarfed by skyscrapers in the city centre from the 1930s and secondly, by mine dumps: large to enormous hills of processed and discarded waste. In some cases more than a kilometre wide, these hills of pale yellow sand form a series of abandoned pyramids, highly visible and stretching from west to east. In addition to the visual and obstructive impact of these mining elements the wind whips dust off these mounds causing a persistent annoyance for residents. But in the last five to ten years this mining landscape has started to disappear. The steel headgear has come down and the mine dumps are being re-processed with more refined technology, replacing mounds with voids.

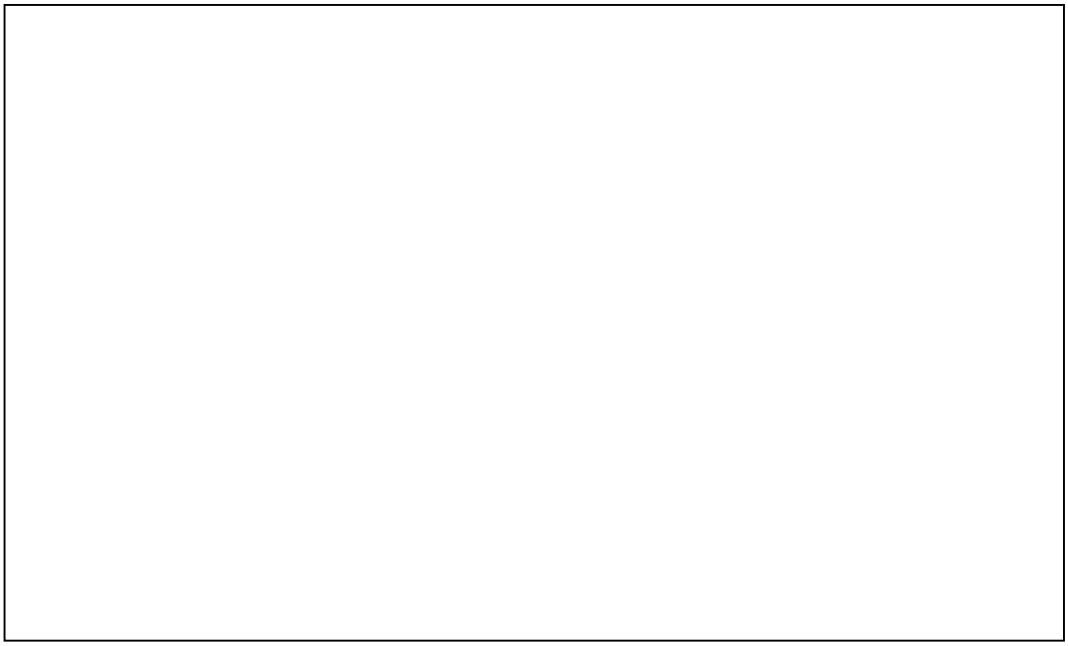

**Figure 5.**2 – Mining head-gear in *Yesterday* (Still from *Yesterday* (2004) copyright permission not obtained see thesis hardcopy).

Despite the importance of the mining industry and the prominence of its presence in the landscape of Johannesburg, its visual presence in films is somewhat limited. Some early footage of the city includes the recording of life on the mines. This was filmed during the Anglo-Boer War, when there was much interest in the war and in the country and the footage was used in an early cinematic form of news broadcasts. It is over fifty years before we see images of Johannesburg's mines again, in *Come Back, Africa* (1959).

> At first daytime sequences of Johannesburg show mine dumps 'mysteriously peeping through the buildings' before the camera allows us to recognise what they are; later they are set impressively against the city in longs shots… Amid the ubiquitous mine dumps and overpowering edifices of apartheid's industrial society, Zacharia's human drama unfolds. (Balseiro, 2003, p. 92)

The film reveals the hardships of working in a mine and living in the male hostels. In the scenes that depict miners underground, the director evokes the working-class underworld of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), where human labour has machine-like qualities. The imagery of the gears of the mining head referenced in the film emphasises this. But *Come Back, Africa* maintains a distinction between the mines and the city, when Zachariah gives up his job on the mine to move to Johannesburg and to live with his family.

The mining belt does include satellite towns that sprung up alongside mines or in some cases pre-date the existence of Johannesburg, and with a focus of suburban development to the

north of the city's origins, the mines can appear to exist outside of the city. However, this may be more of a mental geography. Many mines exist within the city's bounds and there may be many reasons for this exclusion. A post-industrial city could be seen to be more desirable but it may also be because the mine is the domain of the Black man; therefore during apartheid the mine is mentally constructed outside of the city. *Come Back, Africa* reiterates this by showing that mineworkers do not live in Johannesburg and are excluded from the city. Apartheid planning policies also made use of mining spaces and other industrial areas to provide buffer zones between different group areas thereby reinforcing separation and segregation.

A much more recent film, *Zama Zama* (2012), addresses the practice of illegal mining in dysfunctional mine shafts in Johannesburg. Although the above ground scenes are very much located in the city, the site of the mine is rendered as an abandoned space outside of the city. *Yesterday* (2004) is the only film that makes explicit the connection between mining and Johannesburg. Yesterday travels to Johannesburg to see her husband, a mineworker. Her arrival in Johannesburg is imposing, with the skyscrapers of the central city towering over her and this is mimicked through the image of the mining head-gear rising against the sky. Yesterday travels from the city centre on a bus to the mine but the imagery and camera angles serve to unite the mine and Johannesburg, as does the narrative which refers to her husband as a mineworker in Johannesburg.

There is a strong relationship between Johannesburg, its mining activities, migrant labour and the construction of masculine identity associated with these connections. This masculinity in relation to migrancy has not been explored in Johannesburg films, despite the city's obvious centrality to these narratives. The story of the male migrant worker's double life has not been told; even the mining workplace has been neglected by filmmakers. *Gold* (1974) shows the perspective of mining from the White male mining manager and *Yesterday* gives the perspective of the mining wife left behind in the rural village. Only *Zama Zama* shows the realities of illegal miners digging for precious metals in abandoned mines or shafts.

### 5.2.3 The Skyline and Landmarks

If the mine dumps and head-gear are the signifiers of Johannesburg as *eGoli*[27], the place of gold, then it is the city's skyline that marks Johannesburg as urban. Much of the city's signature skyscraper buildings were built in the boom time of the 1960s and early 1970s but

[27] *eGoli* is the Zulu word for Johannesburg meaning place of gold. In 1992 this word became the title of a long-running soap-opera set in the city, which ended in 2010.

the skyline is present in that first film featuring Johannesburg, *African Jim* (1949). The first images of Johannesburg, as seen by Jim from the train arriving in the city, are of the buildings and skyscrapers of the late 1940s and intermittently, electrical and telephone poles and wires in the foreground. In the film these images emphasise the notions of technology, advancement and civilisation and serve as the basis for the stark contrast between Jim's rural background and this new overwhelming city.



**Figure 5.3** – Johannesburg's skyline in *African Jim* (Still from *African Jim* (1949).

The same buildings that reached for the sky and dreams in *African Jim* are now symbols of death, desolation and an apartheid prison (Saks, 2010b). These buildings are now imposing and oppressive and these representations established a continued juxtaposition of the meanings inherent in the image of Johannesburg's skyline. In both *Sarafina!* (1992) and *Yesterday*, the films use skyscrapers in the city centre as images of threat and oppression. For both female characters in their respective films, the buildings take on the additional symbolism of the phallus and signify the city as masculine space.

But these two films make use of non-distinct buildings in the inner city and the earlier films, such as *Come Back, Africa,* feature a skyline that would not be easily recognised now. *African Jim* established the skyline as a visual signifier for the place of Johannesburg before the construction of the major landmarks that make the skyline easily identifiable today. Several high-rises and towers were built after these films were made. The first key tower was built in Brixton in 1961 for telecommunications and was named for J.G. Strijdom. The tower sits

atop a ridge just west of the city centre and is a distinctive tapered column. In 1971, this column was paired with, arguably, the most identifiable tower of Johannesburg's skyline: the Hillbrow Tower, officially named the Telkom tower today; it sits on the eastern edge of the inner city, and is often considered to be part of the CBD and its main signifier. The tower does not have the same elegant shape as the Brixton tower but is significantly more prominent.

The Brixton tower has featured in films only as the western edge of the city's skyline whereas many films have made use of the Hillbrow Tower, which very often is central to the depiction of Johannesburg and its skyline. It functions as the city's icon in the same way that the 'Space Needle' functions for Seattle or the 'gherkin' for London, although without as much global recognition. Since it was built the typical opening or credit sequence of Johannesburg films featuring the images of the skyline have included the aerial views of the Hillbrow Tower. *Gold* was probably the first film to display the newly completed tower and it featured in the beginning credits of *Mapantsula* (1988). But without a doubt the tower's biggest starring role has been in the film *Jerusalema*.




**Figure 5.4** – From left to right: the Yeoville water tower; Ponte and the Hillbrow Tower in *Jerusalema* (Still from *Jerusalema* (2008) with permission from Jerusalem Entjha Films).

The tower serves as a permanent and ever present anchor in the film and can be seen almost continuously. The tower's function is to locate the film in Johannesburg in the more stereotypical manner but it also serves as the marker for Hillbrow, its actual location near the

inner city, and the specific setting for most of the film. This appears to give the depiction of Johannesburg in the film more depth because the building is no longer simply a silhouette on the skyline but an integral part of a neighbourhood of the central city. The audience is no longer looking down on the tower from an aerial view but is looking up at the tower from the ground, adding a dimension of reality to the narrative.

The Hillbrow Tower was soon joined by a circular skyscraper called Ponte. The building's unusual shape and location very close to the Hillbrow Tower meant that it was very quickly established as a landmark on the city's skyline. In the last decade or so, the building's height and prominence has been topped with an enormous advertising billboard, which is illuminated at night. This has further increased its profile on the skyline. The only significant landmark building of Johannesburg's skyline to be truly located in the city centre is the Carlton Centre, which was finished in 1974. It has the distinction of being the tallest building in Africa ('The Top of Africa') but this is its only distinction. Its neighbours cluster round the building reaching slighter lesser heights but all the buildings have similar facades and silhouettes.

Neither the Carlton Centre nor Ponte have featured significantly in films featuring Johannesburg. Ponte is seen as a generic part of the skyline though it was reportedly going to be the star of a feature film. It was the home of the immigrant in the short film *The Foreigner* (1997) and the building was intended as the setting for a thriller British filmmaker Danny Boyle planned to direct (Hennigan, 2007), but this has not yet been realised. The Carlton Centre's image is used in two ways. The office skyscraper is a symbol of the modern city and we see images of this building towering over characters, such as Yesterday when she arrives in the city. In this way the building functions in a fairly generic manner as any other building of the skyline, albeit the tallest of them. At the base of the Carlton Centre is a shopping centre, which forms part of the complex. The shopping centre features just as regularly in films as the epitome of consumption in the city centre. In both *Max and Mona* (2004) and *Hijack Stories* (2002) the Carlton Centre is the location for the depiction of shopping, and for the image of being economically upwardly-mobile. Here the symbolism of the skyline is met at the ground with the everyday images of shopping and consumption.

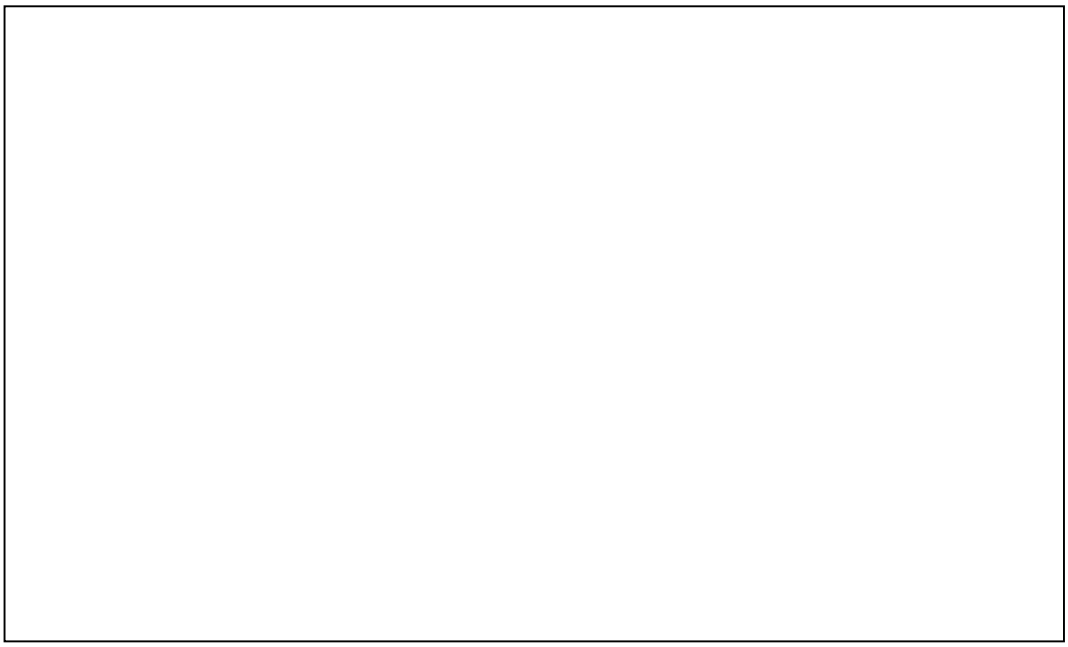

**Figure 5.5** – The Carlton Centre rising high above Yesterday (Still from *Yesterday* (2004) copyright permission not obtained see thesis hardcopy).

There are some smaller buildings and structures that are part of the inner city that don't necessarily form part of the skyline but do create identifiable landmarks and signifiers of the city. One of these is the recent Nelson Mandela Bridge, built in 2003, which connects the CBD and Newtown with Braamfontein to the north. It has a very distinctive modern suspended bridge style and became an instant landmark for the city, although, again its presence is not easily perceived from afar. The Nelson Mandela Bridge has been visually promiscuous on South African screens featuring in countless television adverts, television shows and a number of films. *Gums and Noses* (2004) was one of the first films to use the bridge as a location. In a night-time car chase sequence, the bridge is used as a spectacular visual icon as the protagonists drive over, around and back over the bridge; a route that does not make sense spatially. In this instance it's very clear that the bridge serves as a spectacle rather than a realistic function of space in the city.

There are also several omissions of important landmarks in the films of Johannesburg. The skyscrapers that form the central business district of Sandton to the north of the city centre do not feature in any films despite the fact this decentralised node is the true financial heart of Johannesburg. The brightly painted cooling towers of Orlando have become a local and international landmark of Soweto but have only featured in a few films. The focus of Johannesburg films is predominantly on the landmarks of the CBD.

All of these landmarks and structures have functioned as objects in Johannesburg's urban landscape. Landmarks are used in films, especially in the opening credits, to establish the

location of the film in Johannesburg. They are seen from afar; filmmakers use long shots and aerial views shot from helicopters to introduce us to the city. The mine dumps and the skyline with its signature buildings together stand as the emblems and icons of the city of gold. But these icons do not allow the audience to experience the city; they are merely objects in space that maintain distance between the viewer and the more intimate and in-depth exposure to Johannesburg. The landmarks provide useful references for locating the narrative of the films and, in some cases, add meaning to those narratives. But landmarks do not contribute to understanding the everyday lived experiences of residents of the city.

### 5.2.4 Highways and Streets

In the absence of meaningful public space in the city of Johannesburg, the streets play a critical role as the most basic form of public space. In many ways, the street spaces are the currency of the city, allowing social interactions and movement and Chapter seven explains how important movement articulated in the street is for the development of an urban identity and laying claim to the city. The street has also been the site of mobilisation; it is the site of anti-apartheid protests and marches and before that the site of bus boycotts. The street is the space in which we encounter the city and it is also the space for individual expression. Walking the streets is a form of personal expression and the practice of the everyday (de Certeau, 1984). This section explores the street as the site of the everyday city; the city from below.

The city emerged on the screen through a genre of cinema known as the street film. These films were mostly produced in the Weimar Republic of Germany, where the streets of Berlin became the locations to explore the issues of modernity, depicting the encounters with different social classes, corruption, crime and immorality (Mennel, 2008). An equal part of these films was a love affair with technology and industry and the fast pace of life, represented in images of cars and machines and traffic in the street (Mennel, 2008). In these films the street functions as a social space and as the realm of the machine.

These genres of film were never directly reproduced within the South African film industry but their influences are evident in the films that were made. The urban films made in South Africa during the 1950s certainly drew on elements of these genres. *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951) and *Come back, Africa* show images of streets at night and make use of dramatic lighting to emphasise the dangers that lurk in the city. Only *African Jim*, with its optimistic narrative, fails to draw on the dark conventions of film noir. However, it revels in the location of the street with many scenes and interactions between characters taking place there. Jim even spends his first night in an alley beside the night watchman. In *African Jim* the

street represents the concept of the urban and represents the space where Jim transforms from a country bumpkin to a successful urban singer.

As a pedestrian-free space the highway can be somewhat isolating. In the film *Taxi to Soweto* (1991), Jessica du Toit's car breaks down on the highway and the audience immediately senses her predicament as cars zoom past her. It is the isolated space of the highway that enables Jessica to accept a lift from a minibus taxi because on any other street she may have more easily found a different form of assistance. The connotation of isolation is further emphasised in the fact that apartheid planning policies made use of highways as buffer zones and to divide group areas.

As the fast circulation system of the city, many of Johannesburg's residents are familiar with the simple and fixed routes of highways. In many ways, highways function in films very closely to the landmarks of the city. In addition, the wide lanes open up the space of travel and very often reveal views of the city, allowing the audience to orientate and locate the narrative. Furthermore, large and bold navigational signage on the freeways contributes to the way that highways perform as locating devices in films. The vehicle-only and high-speed space of the highway also means that it does not allow much interaction with the city; promoting more of the elevated overview of the city, which again, suggests more of a landmark function. In discussing the car chase in *Hijack Stories* Fu and Murray suggest that the scenes evoke 'the street' despite the chase largely taking part along the highway (Fu & Murray, 2007). However, their description of the street demonstrates the street as space through which the city is experienced:

> The street is often the middle ground, or artery, in which centrifugal and centripetal forces manifest themselves as the unplanned extension of the cityscape collides with goals of urban planners. (Fu & Murray, 2007, p. 286)

The highways, however, remain one of the only sources of glamour to be found on the streets of Johannesburg. While we saw an element of the boulevard in the film *Gold*, it is actually extremely rare to see a slower-moving street space that connotes a sense of style and luxury to smart cars and their inhabitants. Sunset Boulevard has been immortalised in Hollywood and forms the basis of this street trope. The tall palm trees that line this upper class commercial avenue have become synonymous with economic prosperity, fame and urban glamour through their depiction in films. The pervasive influence of Hollywood cinema is reflective in the fact that Sunset Boulevard is far less grand than its counterparts in Paris or Berlin, but which nonetheless embodies the same sentiments of wealth and style.

The lack of such meaningful street spaces in South African films is directly related to Johannesburg's lack of boulevards. The highway is the poor substitute for such spaces.



**Figure 5.6** – The highway functioning as a landmark providing a view of the city centre from the south in *Hijack Stories* (Still from *Hijack Stories* (2002) with permission from Black Forest Films).

There are several arterial roads and routes that traverse large sections of Johannesburg. Louis Botha Avenue extends northwards from Hillbrow to the township of Alexandra and beyond; extending all the way to Pretoria. It is a primary road for the minibus taxi industry and as such is dominated by the presence of taxis all along the route, providing almost constant hooting. The vibrant energy of taxis and people inherent to the avenue is captured in the opening credits of *Hijack Stories* (2002), despite the fact that this particular street plays no role in the narrative of the film. These scenes of Louis Botha Avenue depict the everyday transport conditions for many of Johannesburg's residents and the scenes establish the underlying contrast of the film because the film's narrative focuses on the realm of the private car and the illegal acquisition of such cars.

Main Reef Road is another similar arterial road in the city. It connects Benoni in the east with Roodepoort in the west, running parallel to the mining belt. The road itself has featured as the subject of a documentary *Main Reef Road* (1999), which explores the diversity of the

street but it has also been depicted in feature films. These arterial roads are seldom the sites of vehicle mobility. In some cases, more mobility in vehicles is depicted in suburban streets. The first scene of *Stander* (2003) shows Stander driving at a furious pace through the quiet tree-lined roads of a suburb because he is late for his own wedding. This opening foretells Stander's future as a bank robber and a fugitive; the fast-paced life of a criminal. But the sequence also introduces the theme of anatopism; the car chase scene is out of place in the suburbs, as is a cop turned bank robber.

But the street is more than just a road for the use of vehicles. The street functions as a space for the movement of pedestrians, but also for the construction of identities of those pedestrians and as a space for social interaction. As such, the street has the potential to reveal the everyday city. This street is not the isolating highway or the main arterial road, but is the street that belongs to the finer grain. It may be a busy street in the central business district, an avenue in the suburb, a road in the township or the path through an informal settlement. These are the in-between spaces; slim public spaces that connect more private spaces, facilitating mobility and expression.

The aspects of identity, social interaction and mobility in the street come together in the character of the tsotsi. As is described in Chapters seven and eight, the mobility of the tsotsi occurs in the realm of the street and it is through the street that the city finds its most truthful expression. Both walking and driving take place in the street; the street provides the means of navigation and transportation. The genre of the tsotsi has given life to the streets of Johannesburg illuminating these spaces, revealing urban identities constructed through the mobilities of walking and driving.

The character of the tsotsi has become an agent of exploration and ownership in the city, which is revealed through his journeys in the streets of Johannesburg. The city is stitched together through his footsteps and framed through the window of a car. The tsotsi has developed an urban identity for Black South Africans that is intimately connected with movement through the city streets. And the extensive use of the street as a setting ensures that these films are urban films. They draw on the historical representations of the urban but also draw on the historical figure of the tsotsi as forged on Johannesburg's streets to create credible and realistic urban images.

But there are also other characters that make use of Johannesburg's streets and other representations of streets. Suburban street spaces define the street space as outside through the construction of walls and fences that delineate 'inside' space.

> The primary spatial/architectural figures through which this drama is being enacted are the boundary wall and the house. Johannesburg today is a city of walls, substitutes for the invisible walls of apartheid through which the Other was kept in its place. (Bremner, 2004, p. 464)

This is expressed quite strongly in the scenes in *Hijack Stories* when Sox is taken around the suburbs on excursions to steal cars. The quiet leafy streets become disconcertingly quiet as they stalk their vehicular prey. The suburbs are graded in cool colours while Soweto is always rendered with a warm glow largely as a result of the red dust or earth. Sox encounters Grace for the first time on the 'street' of the Soweto township. Strictly speaking she is in her front yard, but the low fence does not hinder their interaction. This is a more open street; a street that includes the front gardens and front facades of houses, and it fosters social interaction. Sox is able to walk into the gangsters' house party off the street and then a few minutes later is able to take cover in Grace's property when he sees her outside her house. In fact, the majority of encounters with Grace are in this liminal space between the house and the street.

The street, therefore, is the space where the city is experienced but is not limited to the physical materiality of Johannesburg, but also to the space of encounters with people. The street is the space for social interaction and it is also the space of self-expression; where urban identities play out. In comparison to landmarks, the streets have enabled a more in-depth experience of Johannesburg but there are different kinds of streets, which produce different spaces, and these different streets are influenced by their neighbourhoods. Alternatively, the streets are the windows through which these different neighbourhoods are experienced. Images of streets have come together to produce an overall reflection of the ghetto or, in the case of suburban streets, the images have produced reflections of isolation. The next section will explore these different neighbourhoods in greater detail.

## 5.3 Districts and Nodes

As a post-industrial city, and one that has continuously attracted immigrants, Johannesburg has a multitude of cosmopolitan and diverse districts. This diversity, however, is not always reflected on the screen. This section of the chapter explores the depiction of the neighbourhoods and districts of Johannesburg. This section explores four neighbourhoods of Johannesburg, which formed the foundation of this research, and their depictions on the screen. A fifth neighbourhood is of memory or loss: spaces that no longer exist in the city. These areas reflect the diversity inherent in the city of Johannesburg but the on-screen images do not necessarily reflect this diversity. This section shows that films have created

spatial stereotypes, a visual shorthand for spaces in the city that, while trying to subvert images of the fragmented city, these stereotypes also serve to reinforce this fragmentation.

> Structured geographies, buildings and other *bodies of the built environment* featured in *District 9* [2009] include the city of Johannesburg, as well as its suburbs and townships, the enormous alien mothership hanging over the city, and the slumland of *District 9* itself. Here borders are physically erected in the form of walls, shells or fences, and are maintained through structural reinforcement, guarding and policing. (Jansen van Veuren, 2012, p. 572) [emphasis in original]

This quote summarises the three key locations of Johannesburg that appear frequently in films set in the city. The first is the central business district, also referred to simply as 'the city of Johannesburg', demonstrating the way in which the CBD is at once a district of the city and represents the entirety of Johannesburg. The second location is that of the suburbs which do not feature strongly in *District 9*, or in many other films, but are nonetheless ever present spaces that are never fully expressed. The final location of the township can be divided into two distinct images. The first is the 'traditional' image of the township as laid out by the colonial and apartheid governments with rows upon rows of matchbox houses and often wide dusty streets. The second image is one of informal settlements, which seem to be inextricably linked to township spaces although many informal settlements exist outside of township spaces. Both images of township spaces are frequently filmed in Soweto and nearly always make implicit or explicit references to this emblematic and symbolic township.

And thus, the city of Johannesburg, the largest city in South Africa, is reduced to three or four types of locations. And I use the word type here quite specifically because in this section I am going to make the comparison between character types and these three or four locations. Therefore the first three districts described in this section, also describe these three spatial stereotypes. The last two districts are parts of the city that have featured in cinema but do not function as spatial stereotypes. The depiction of working-class neighbourhoods (of which Fordsburg is an example) is more nuanced and specific; there is no process of stereotyping. The last section looks at spaces of memory; spaces that no longer exist as they once were but that have been depicted on the screen. These spaces do not function as stereotypes.

### 5.3.1 The CBD and Decentralised Commercial Nodes

The central business district of Johannesburg features in many films set in Johannesburg and the skyline of the high-rise buildings is often used to establish the location of Johannesburg[28]. As a representation of the city as a whole it embodies all that the city itself symbolises, namely a city founded on gold mining, the economic heart of South Africa and even Africa, and therefore a site of aspiration and opportunity. Its rapid development since its inception in 1886 has also secured it as a modern centre, embodying the notions of industry and progress, and the very notion of urbanity.

One recent film of many (for example, *Hijack Stories*, *Stander*, *Yesterday*, *Tsotsi*, *District 9*, *Jozi* (2010)) that depicts the CBD is *Max and Mona* (2004). This film is a version of the long-told story of the naive country boy coming to the big city, seeking a better life. Mona is a goat that travels with Max to Johannesburg and is the source of most of the amusement in the film. The urban and modern context is emphasised with the arrival of Max and Mona in a minibus taxi, being delivered to the centre of the city where the streets (and protagonists) are dwarfed by the modern high-rise buildings, signalling their arrival. These images of arrival in the city and the domineering skyline are frequently depicted in films set in Johannesburg.

Max and his goat eventually settle in Soweto but he travels back to the city centre, to the Carlton Centre specifically, to do some shopping. Again, this reinforces the city as a commercial centre and imbues it with the ability to connote a certain status level for its occupants. This symbolism has been repeated in other films, most notably in *Hijack Stories*, the gangsters show off their status by shopping in the Carlton Centre. The depiction of the CBD is therefore largely associated with these two aspects: that of the centre of wealth and success at the same time as being a modern but overwhelming, and sometimes hostile, space.

The depictions of the CBD are also the shorthand for denoting the urban. The central business district, more than any other locale in the city, simultaneously represents Johannesburg in its entirety and the concept of the urban. As discussed in Chapter two, the representation of Johannesburg as both a nuanced place, and the very concept of city, is by no means unique to South Africa, as Mabhava Prasad discusses this concept of the double

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[28] In Section 5.2.3 the central business district is discussed at length as the primary location of the majority of landmarks in Johannesburg films. However, the location is also represented in many films in a more nuanced way with images of the street and more intimate spaces. This section briefly explores these representations as opposed to the landmarks discussed in the earlier section.

status of the city with regards to Bombay in Indian cinema (2004). Therefore, embodied in the stereotype of the CBD is a space of wealth, opportunity and aspiration; the iconic space of Johannesburg; and the very notion of the urban.

However, the city's image was not always so positive. In the early films, such as *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951), Johannesburg has a negative connotation. Implicit in the introduction to Johannesburg is the portrayal of the city as Sodom and Gomorrah, reflected in both the images of Johannesburg and the dialogue of the Reverend and his travelling companions (Beittel, 2003). The same skyline has come to signify a place of sin and despair. This notion is taken even further in the film, *Come Back, Africa*. The tall buildings are a strong presence in the film and make a bold statement:

> One after another, panning shots over the tops of buildings present a ghostly picture of the city at night. Devoid of people and completely silent, Johannesburg appears inhuman in its desolation. (Balseiro, 2003, p. 89)

Although such harsh images are no longer constructed around the city, some of these notions linger in the types of narratives and characters set in Johannesburg. This is discussed further in Chapters six, seven and eight.

The image of the Johannesburg CBD, as the economic hub of the country, prevails despite the shifts in centrality in the city since the 1980s. As described in Chapter four, businesses and wealth began migrating to the northern suburbs, predominantly Sandton, in the 1980s. Today, Johannesburg is multi-centred with commercial nodes in Sandton, Fourways and Midrand, stretching towards Pretoria. Sandton still dominates and has symbolic and real capital as the commercial centre of Johannesburg, with the skyline of the Sandton CBD very prominent and continuing to grow. The Sandton City tower, with its triangular top, has certainly featured as a landmark for greater Johannesburg since it was built in the 1970s, but Sandton as a definitive location with its own skyline has evaded appearances in films. Johannesburg's CBD skyline remains the iconic stereotype of the city, even if it is more symbolic than reality.

### 5.3.2 Township Spaces and Informal Settlements

Township spaces are important and frequent locations and sites in late apartheid and post-apartheid films. Johannesburg has several townships in the city and on the periphery, however, the largest one to the south, Soweto, has gained iconic status and has come to represent all township spaces in Johannesburg, if not the country. This is despite the fact that the earliest cinematic reference to a township is in Zoltan Korda's *Cry, the Beloved Country*,

which briefly shows Alexandra that also happens to be the oldest, and now most central, township in the city. Since then, township spaces, mostly filmed in Soweto, have featured in many key films of Johannesburg: *Mapantsula*, *Sarafina!*, *Taxi to Soweto*, *Soweto Green* (1995), *Chikin Biznis* (1998), *Max and Mona*, *Hijack Stories*, *Tsotsi*, *Jerusalema*, *District 9*, etc.

Commensurate with an area of such size and age, Soweto has very diverse spaces. Even before the end of apartheid, middle-class neighbourhoods had emerged and, with democracy, investment has poured into the suburb creating a university campus, transportation networks, tourist destinations, theatres and shopping malls. However, poverty remains in some districts and there is also the presence of informal settlements. In comparison, the depictions of Soweto in films have been rather two-dimensional. Lesley Marx states that in films such as *Mapantsula*, Soweto is Johannesburg's metaphorical shadow (Marx, 1996). The films *Hijack Stories* and *Max and Mona* show 'average' or 'typical' township spaces with small detached houses built by the government, wide dusty streets within a working class/criminal class context. Economic hardships are alluded to but do not form part of the aesthetic of the films.

More recent films, however, have begun to conflate township spaces with poverty and the slum.

> [T]he 'township space' is represented as a space of 'otherness' and cinematic representations fail to recognise that the township is actually a heterogeneous or hybridised space, as representations of the township have become 'fixed' by representing it as one of 'otherness', informal squatter camps and decay. (Ellapen, 2007, p. 114).

Two of these recent films have been shot in Chiawelo, although they are not necessarily located in the area within the storylines, but rather the location serves as a more generic township or informal settlement space within Johannesburg.

The film *Tsotsi* (2005) explores the gritty world of informal settlements and the periphery of the city in the story of a hijacker who accidently kidnaps a baby. The hijacker, Tsotsi, inhabits the spaces of the informal settlement (in Chiawelo) and travels into the city by train, to commit various crimes there including robbing and killing a man, and tormenting a disabled man. The settlement is shown to be a vast, almost impenetrable space dominated by criminal activities and gangsters. The opening scenes of the film establish the settlement as the realm of several gangsters, while rendering the spaces in a highly stylised and glamourised manner. It is shown to be a formidable space even for law enforcement. The informal

settlement appears in a perpetual state of dawn or dusk, and is bathed in pink light and mist (or smog), filtering the poverty and hardship through a rose tint.

The informal settlement is shown to be on the periphery of the city, and the film emphasises the distance between the settlement and the central business district through the train journeys, reflecting the reality for many Chiawelo residents. However, the film also neglects the greater context of the suburb and of its location in Soweto. The informal settlement is only a small part of Chiawelo and does not reflect the variety of housing conditions in Soweto at large. Instead the informal settlement is shown to be in isolation: from Johannesburg and from its immediate surroundings.

In the second key film, *District 9*, the theme of crime is set aside but, instead, the settlement embodies the representation of squalor, temporality and the space of the alien (both prawns and non-South Africans, specifically Nigerians). *District 9*, creates a city of fear and terror, not just in the 'edgy' CBD, but also in the informal settlements. The film tells the story of a group of aliens, known as prawns, who find themselves stranded residents of Johannesburg, set in the very near future. The government responds to this invasion by setting up an enclosed camp to house the aliens and institutes laws and means of control that evoke the same methods of apartheid segregation. Although the narrative is a science fiction story, the film makes use of real images of informal settlements juxtaposed with aerial views of Johannesburg's central business district in a mock documentary style. Again, the informal settlement is contrasted with the modern CBD, and contributes to the drama of the narrative. The shanty town in which the aliens have confined residence bears such a strong resemblance to harsh reality that it can be seen to be an allegorical representation of apartheid or xenophobia – a new form of prejudice.

Both films have the potential to be highly influential. *Tsotsi* was the first South African film to receive an Oscar, and as such was widely publicised and widely screened on local television shows. This is reflected in the fact that it was the most widely seen film in my survey with 76% of all respondents stating that they had seen the film. *District 9* had a smaller local audience – only 25% of participants of my survey had seen it, but it achieved blockbuster status with international audiences. It is fair to say that the images of Chiawelo represented in these films are likely to be dominant and to imbue the location with qualities of gangsterism and squalor.

### 5.3.3 Middle-class Suburbs

The middle-class and formerly White suburbs of Johannesburg started with Parktown and Westcliff established to the near north of the city centre, and continued sprawling in that direction for over one hundred years; to the point that it is almost continuous, reaching Centurion and Pretoria. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, these suburbs are characterised by the proliferation of tree-lined avenues and spacious green gardens, influenced by the Garden City Movement and the return to 'natural' landscapes. The trees were used to delineate the boundaries between public and private spaces (Winkler, 1995). From the 1980s, walls and, later, gated communities became the dominant language of delineation and division.

The result has been that the northern suburbs have become one undifferentiated sprawling mass, and this is how these spaces have been depicted in films:

> In *Mapantsula*, Schmitz presents a Manichean split between a white and a black visual world. There is almost a sense of a 'geography' of whiteness, characterised by opulence, mansions, and beautiful gardens, juxtaposed with a geography of blackness, whose poverty is marked by filth and overpopulation. (Oa Magogodi, 2003, p. 188)

I have selected Melville as a suburb popular as a film location used to represent these middle-class neighbourhoods. The depiction of Melville stands in stark contrast to the specificity of place that is the neighbourhood's reality. Melville represents the vast stretches of middle-class suburbia that sprawl north (and south, east and west) of Johannesburg's centre. Despite having a discernible bohemian character in reality, the neighbourhood is portrayed as the epitome of a generic quiet suburb. Again, it features in many films but perhaps the clearest example of its nonspecific depiction is in the film *Hijack Stories*. Sox is a young Black actor, who attempts to infiltrate the criminal underworld in Soweto in order to prepare for the role of a gangster on television. Critically, Sox lives in the former 'White' middle-class suburb of Rosebank, although the scenes depicting Rosebank were actually shot in Melville. This ambiguity or inauthenticity serves to emphasise Sox's own conflicting identities within the city, undermines his chances of success and, ultimately, reiterates the perception of the suburbs as non-places.

The locations in the film are restricted, for the most part to Soweto and 'Rosebank', which, according to Fu and Murray (2007, p. 284), "becomes integral to establishing the difference between an upwardly mobile urban identity for the emergent Black middle class and

excluded 'gangsta' identity in the 'Hood'." Fu and Murray argue that the 'fictionalised-stereotyped' (2007, p. 284) portrayal of both landscapes sets up the binary that contributes to the mythology of Johannesburg as the 'dangerous city'. By day, the middle-class suburb provides Sox with a familiar refuge but at night the spaces become a place of fear, where he attempts to steal his first car. This is emphasised in the visual of the suburban street lined with blank walls. This change in the feeling of spaces in the film reflects the theme of shifting identities, but the focus of the film is on the transition from suburb to township and therefore emphasises the identity of the township spaces, rather than the meaning of the suburban streets.

### 5.3.4 Working-class Neighbourhoods

With the development of middle- and upper-class suburbs to the north of Johannesburg's city centre, working-class suburbs congregated to the south, close to work opportunities in the industrial mining belt; neighbourhoods such as Turffontein, Rosettenville and Robertsham. The brickfields and industrial warehouses of Newtown supported the adjacent neighbourhoods of Fordsburg, Mayfair and Vrededorp to the west of the centre. Most of these neighbourhoods were designated for White inhabitants, but the suburbs of Pageview and Vrededorp were mixed with Indians, Coloureds and Cape Malays. These neighbourhoods are characterised by small houses on small plots, or terraced housing, with one or two Edwardian arcaded high streets.

These working-class suburbs, and the narratives of their inhabitants, have typically not been represented in the cinema of Johannesburg. Films that have represented these spaces treat the locations as different or unique. One such film, *Triomf* (2008), set in Triomf (the renamed and rebuilt Sophiatown) but filmed in Cottesloe and Vrededorp, takes pains to depict the character and the people of the film's location. The opening credits show the lead character walking through the suburb, with the small and now ramshackle houses and the poverty of the neighbourhood's inhabitants clearly depicted. This working-class neighbourhood requires such an extensive introduction because it has not been stereotyped and is unfamiliar to the audience.

Another film depicting a working-class neighbourhood is *Material* (2011) and this area and film form the basis of the fourth location for this study. *Material* was filmed entirely within Fordsburg, and is therefore the key film in the neighbourhood's representation. The concentration of film locations reflects the cultural identity of the film, which chronicles the journey of a young Muslim man, Cassim, who longs to be a comedian but does not want to defy his conservative father and family. Through the film's telling of the story it reveals both

the everyday nature of the neighbourhood's spaces and refers to its history under apartheid. We see the ritual of the men rising before dawn and walking to the mosque to attend morning prayers, while we are also made painfully aware that the shop belonging to Cassim's father is barely surviving in the traditional main street setting. This is in direct comparison and contrast to the shops in the local shopping centre, which was built as a manifestation of the Group Areas Act under apartheid. This extended introduction to the suburb through the credits mirrors the introduction in *Triomf* and once again emphasises these spaces as unknown or unfamiliar.

The film sets aside the traditional Johannesburg skyline and replaces it with a skyline in which the outline of a minaret takes centre stage in order to establish the setting for the film. This is not a location that serves as a more generic space within the city, but is rather a very specific place; and the storyline is located within that place. The plot is intimately connected with the history and the general character and culture of the neighbourhood. Because of these close connections between the spaces and the culture in the film, those viewers who share similar circumstances should relate more easily to the film and, potentially, those who are outside of such places and culture will become more aware of such spaces or those spaces may be made to feel foreign.

### 5.3.5 Spaces of Memory

The mixed-race working-class suburbs of Pageview and Vrededorp were commonly referred to as Fietas and, like other mixed or Black areas of the inner city of Johannesburg, were seen as a problem by the apartheid government. In the 1970s removals (to Lenasia, south of Soweto) and demolition began and continued for the rest of the decade. The active and vibrant high street of Pageview was forcefully reorganised into the Oriental Plaza shopping centre and many homes were razed. The demolitions and removals were never complete, no rebuilding was ever undertaken (unlike Sophiatown) and so many half-demolished buildings remain and some 'non-Whites' were allowed to stay in the area.

This narrative is familiar to all those who know the story of Sophiatown, described in Chapter four, which was a repeat of the forced removals of 'non-Whites' from Doornfontein in the 1930s, and before that Newtown in 1904. As suburbs for 'non-Whites' were severely limited in the city, all these locations were overcrowded and impoverished but they were also filled with a spirit of survival and defiance. With removals, demolitions and the passage of time these spaces are no longer what they once were and have entered into the spaces of memory and legend. Sophiatown is the dominant legend and as such it has dominated the

on-screen representations to the cost of the other locations which have not featured in Johannesburg cinemas.

Sophiatown was recorded at the time, before demolition occurred, in *Cry, the Beloved Country* and *Come Back, Africa* and was recreated in the remake of *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995) and in the film *Drum* (2004), the historical story of the magazine and its writers. Gary Baines describes how the neighbourhood successfully straddled both the Black and White spaces of the city:

> It [Sophiatown] was an urban space defined favourably in relation to the highly regulated and monotonous municipal locations such as Soweto, as well as the orderly, silent white suburbs of affluent Johannesburg. (Baines, 2003, p. 43)

This type is no longer visible in the city and is therefore only depicted in historical narratives and old films, rendering Sophiatown a space of memory. Unfortunately, the depiction of these spaces of memory, although rich with potential diversity in Fietas and Doornfontein, they have been limited to one neighbourhood: Sophiatown.

## 5.4 Conclusion

Images of the CBD feature most frequently in films, often through the image of the high-rise buildings forming the distinctive skyline, setting the scene, and establishing Johannesburg as primary location of a film. The CBD also features in greater detail, representing arrival in the 'big' city with images of overwhelming skyscrapers and illustrating commercial and financial successes. These images, for the most part, represent Johannesburg as the image of aspiration. This contrasts with Chiawelo, where the more formal suburban character has been overlooked in favour of representing the nearby informal settlement, emphasising images of hardship and poverty.

The representation of Fordsburg draws on the foreign cultures evident in the location with particular emphasis on the images of Muslim spaces in suburb. The local mosque, with its minaret, features prominently in the recomposed skyline image. These representations are from one film, *Material*, which reflects a dearth of representations of alternative identities in Johannesburg. Fordsburg has a specific and easily identifiable character in the city, which differs enormously from the depiction of former 'Whites only' suburbs such as Melville. Melville is used frequently as a location but instead of representing a specificity of place, rather serves as a substitute for many of Johannesburg's northern suburbs. It is only readily identifiable as a typical green-treed, quiet suburban neighbourhood. Therefore, each location

for the research survey has different on-screen representations as well as different urban conditions.

The dominant representations of each of these locations reveal a certain level of stereotyping of space. Even in films such as *Tsotsi* or *Hijack Stories*, where several of these different locations are used in the same film, each location presents the same meaning and signifier within the narrative. The CBD signifies the heart of economic prosperity and Chiawelo is rendered in terms of its informal settlement with hardship and crime. Some stereotypes are obviously negative and others positive, while others still may be more ambiguous. This stereotyping reinforces the notion of a segregated Johannesburg; of a city that is divided and separate.

This chapter has looked at the physical image of the city. I have shown how the city is viewed from above and outside; the two-dimensional view that allows an understanding of the whole city and to recognise the major landmarks that give the city its identity. These views inhibit intimacy with the lived space of the city; the everyday on the ground. It is the images of streets and districts that allow audiences to experience the everyday city and to become familiar with the more personal spaces of streets, homes and neighbourhoods. The examination of these everyday spaces has revealed that these physical spaces are imbued with the notions of personal identity and expression as Michel de Certeau has asserted (de Certeau, 1984). In South Africa this has been reinforced by colonial and apartheid spatial policies. Space in Johannesburg is intimately connected to aspects of identity. The following chapter will explore the role of identity in both films and in the urban spaces of Johannesburg.

# 6. Identity

## 6.1 Introduction

Identities are fluid – they shift and evolve with varying contexts and relationships and are considered to be constructed largely from without, through social, historical, political and cultural structures (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007). This is known as social constructionism. Jones and McEwen have generated a diagram that illustrates the various dimensions of identity. The model demonstrates six key aspects of identity that orbit around a central core of personal identity and that this all exists within a context of family, sociocultural and life experiences. These key aspects are sexual orientation; race; culture; social class; religion, and gender.

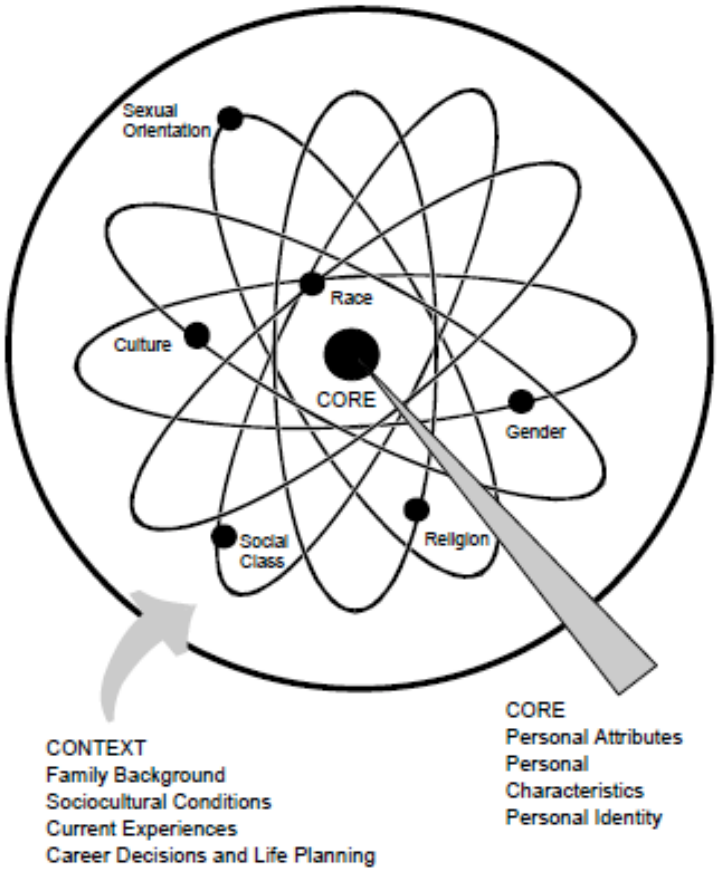


**Figure 6.1 –** Diagram of multiple dimensions of identity (Jones & McEwen, 2000)

However, within the context of South Africa, with the previous institutions of colonial and apartheid rule, identity needs to be understood within the broader postcolonial context:

> [T]he postcolony is made up not of one coherent 'public space', nor is it determined by any single organising principle. It is rather a plurality of 'spheres' and arenas, each having its own separate logic yet nonetheless liable to be entangled with other logics when operating in certain specific contexts: hence the postcolonial 'subject' has had to learn to continuously bargain [marchander] and improvise. Forced with this…the postcolonial 'subject' mobilises not just a single 'identity', but several fluid identities which, by their very nature, must be constantly 'revised' in order to achieve maximum instrumentality and efficacy as and when required. (Mbembe, 1992 quoted in Werbner, 1996, p. 1).

Mbembe very clearly connects the notion of postcolonial identity with space, using the terms 'public space' and 'arenas', emphasising the point that the postcolonial context, and therefore identity, is deeply embedded in the spaces of the postcolonial subject. This spatial dimension is missing from Jones and McEwen's model but has been included as a final section in this chapter. Identities of place are also critical in understanding the relationships among a film's images, the audience and the city.

Main characters, and their identities, play a central role in the process of audience identification with a film – a key aspect in the influence of the film (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991). However, films, as part of commercial products and as part of a cultural production cycle that has historically reinforced one dominant, homogenous culture, have been slow to reflect the multiplicity of identities that exist. The domination of Hollywood cinema across the globe led to the emergence of 'Third Cinema' in the 1960s. The movement reacted to the neo-colonialism and bourgeois values of Hollywood production and also led to the production of independent films outside of the studio system. In South Africa, film production was controlled through state subsidies and censorship for large parts of the twentieth century, severely limiting diverse representations on the screen (Paleker, 2010; 2011b & 2014).

I invoke bell hooks (though she is certainly not the only author to maintain this position) for emphasising the fact that no element of identity can be satisfactorily isolated, as this forms the basis of her criticism of feminist film theory (hooks, 2000). "To fully embrace individual experiences, it is necessary to explore differences within each aspect of identity as each is

influenced by the simultaneous experience of other dimensions" (Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007, p. 2). Aspects of gender and sexuality are connected to race and culture and this will be alluded to wherever possible, despite the structure of the section.

Thus, film (existing and real identities), and place, all intersect in this chapter, drawing parallels between our sense of self, our sense of place, and their representations. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section examines how identity is formulated in the circuit of culture from the role of the filmmaker to the role of the spectators. The second section examines the main dimensions of identity, with the addition of identities of place, and their intersections across the realms of film, audiences and reality.

## 6.2 Identity in the Circuit of Culture

In this section, I examine the role of identity in the circuit of culture, through three aspects of the process. The first is the role of the identity of the filmmaker, which has been debated and theorised in film studies. The second is the construction of identities on the screen through characters and, finally, the reception and interpretation of identities is discussed with regard to the audience.

### 6.2.1 Filmmaker Identities

The relevance of the role of the filmmaker in constructing the identities within a film, and the role of the filmmaker's identity, is complex in the literature on film. In discussing the constitution of feminist cinema, Sandy Flitterman-Lewis highlights the view that the filmmaker as author should not be seen to be the sole generator of meaning (Flitterman-Lewis, 2000). In particular, she speaks of gender identity:

> Feminist cinema would be defined, then, not according to the biological gender of the filmmaker, but according to the specific textual and enunciative processes that posit the work as alternative cinema. In this way, articulation of both forms of authorship – individual and textual – would be forged. (Flitterman-Lewis, 2000, p. 19)

This favours the notion that it is not necessarily the filmmaker's identity that determines the meaning of the film but rather a combination of the filmmaker's identity and the meanings derived from reading the film as a text (Flitterman-Lewis, 2000). In this way it is possible for a male filmmaker to produce a feminist film.

In the South African context the identity of the filmmaker has a political history within the country's filmmaking industry and therefore the role of the filmmaker's identity has been the subject of much debate. For Jacqueline Maingard (2003), the argument of ideology that a film posits, what she calls 'the voice', frames the subject matter of the film for the audience

and thereby provides the meanings and interpretations generated by the film. Maingard's position emphasises the individual process rather than the textual or dual combination. Masilela reiterates this:

> Features such as *Jim Comes to Jo'burg* (a.k.a. *African Jim*, 1949), *Zonk* (1950), *The Magic Garden* (1951), and *Song of Africa* (1951) never elicited any critical responses from African intellectuals because although the films had largely African casts, they were written and directed by Europeans. Typically of the early apartheid era, they were largely white films with a superficial coating of blackness. Hence the rejection by African intellectuals. (Masilela, 2003, p. 26)

In fact, criticism of the South African film industry has been largely focused on the industry's lack of transformation. Of the 132 feature films made between 1994 and 2008, 15% were directed by Black South Africans and 18% by female filmmakers, far below the level of parity (Botha, 2012). "In particular, white filmmakers who seek to document black subjects face mounting criticism, regardless of the purity of their intentions or methods." (Botha, 2012, p. 195).

Ideally, the identities of filmmakers should reflect the diversity and proportion within the South African population, but whether this will produce films that are representative has been questioned:

> Should a 'true South African cinema' be one where the means of production are in the hands of the majority of South Africans – or, at the very least, in the hands of an intellectual black elite that claims to represent the interests of that majority more persuasively than has hitherto been the case? If the answer is yes, would it follow that 'black films' would then be made? (Masilela & Balseiro, 2003, p. 6)

Access to affordable film education in and outside of the large urban centres is still difficult for all but the economic elite, which reinforces Masilela and Balseiro's argument, and relegates the industry to a state of unequal representation for many years to come. But does this undermine the meanings and interpretations of films made prior to 1994? Do we dismiss Rogosin's *Come Back, Africa* (1959); all of Sabela's films made under the subsidy; Schmitz's *Mapantsula* (1988), and Hood's *Tsotsi* (2005)? These films suggest that Flitterman-Lewis' model of individual and textual analysis is more useful.

### 6.2.2 Character Identities

There appears to be very little literature or theory in film studies that examines the construction, role or development of characters in films. There doesn't seem to be any

literature on character, or identity, as a fundamental element or device (such as narrative or pace, for example) in the film production process. There are discussions around stereotypes and two-dimensional, or marginalised, characters but these are elements that are seen to be part of the content or the meaning of the films rather than structural elements that generate narrative or meaning in their own right.

Camera angles can be used to add dimension to characters and allow the audience to identify with characters. Subjective camera angles use editing and a sequence of shots that present images as a character in the film might see the scene (Mascelli, 1965). The audience then sees the scene through the eyes of the character generating identification and even empathy. These are also called point of view shots.

Arguably, though, identity is the defining feature of feminist film theory and the subsequent theories that examine racial and queer identities and their portrayal in film. But feminist theory is largely concerned with the framing of characters, and most particularly with the gaze: the gaze of the filmmaker and the gaze of the audience/spectator. Feminist film theory analyses the role of female characters in films and deconstructs the way that the camera frames women on the screen as objects of sex and the male spectator, according to applied Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytical models.

The theory has successfully revealed important prejudices in the portrayal of women on the silver screen but it has also come under much criticism – all of which will be discussed in greater detail in the next section under gender.

Authors Stam and Spence provide some guidelines for the way that characters are constructed in films, and the elements that constitute their meaning and interpretation:

> A more comprehensive analysis of character status as speaking subject as against spoken object would attend to cinematic and extra-cinematic codes, and to their interweaving within textual systems. In short, it must address the instances through which film speaks – composition, framing, scale, off- and on-screen sound, music – as well as questions of plot and character. Questions of scale and duration, are intricately related to the respect afforded a character and the potential for audience sympathy, understanding and identification. (Stam & Spence, 2009, p. 763)

Characters are, therefore, not bounded by their dialogue or appearance but are constructed through many filmic devices. Therefore, in analysing identities on the screen, these various aspects should also be considered. These aspects also reinforce the idea that there is more at

play in the construction of character identities than the lone voice of the director or filmmaker.

There has been more literature on the processes of audience identification with characters and most of this will be discussed in the next section on audience identities. But writer bell hooks, in quoting Anne Friedberg, emphasises the fact that identification with characters occurs largely through stereotypical or simplified identities and warns against this occurrence because of its implications for reinforcing dominant cultural hegemony (hooks, 2000).

> In Anne Friedberg's essay "A Denial of Difference: Theories of Cinematic Identification" she stresses that 'identification can only be made through recognition, and all recognition is itself and implicit confirmation of the ideology of the status quo'. (hooks, 2000, p. 513)

It is useful to explore further into Anne Friedberg's work because she is able relate the practice of cinema-going and identification with a sense of place identity.

> The cinema spectator can engage in a kind of identity bulimia. Leaving the theatre, one abandons the garment, and takes only the memory of having worn it for a few hours – or having been worn by it. … The mall is an appropriate contemporary site for crises of identity because it is also a space where identity can so easily be transformed. (Friedberg, 1993, p. 122)

For Friedberg, the space of the cinema and the space of the suburban mall collide in their provision of temporary self-effacing identities. In Friedberg's book, *Window Shopping*, she elaborates on the pivotal role of arcades and shopping centres and cinemas in the propagation of the female flâneur and thereby creating urban identities for women (Friedberg, 1993).

Friedberg's ideas are central to this chapter and research because they connect representations and identities to spaces, but these ideas have very specific implications in the South African context. Shopping centres and cinemas are virtually inseparable in South Africa, with very few cinemas existing outside of the model of the multiplex mall cinema. However, malls are generally considered to be non-democratic spaces that largely exist in previously 'White' suburbs (though of course, this is now changing). What are the implications of this restrictive access for the identities of those who remain outside of these spaces?

So the physical spaces where characters and identities can be created and changed are restricted to certain groups of people in this country, but identities are also restricted within film production processes and, thereby within the circuit of culture. Martin Botha (2012) explains how a reliance on foreign investment for the production of a film influences the construction of key elements of the film including casting, characterisation and language. Films are tailored to meet the demands of an international industry, which often results in stereotypical identities that can be understood from outside, rather than more nuanced characters with whom South Africans would identify. The South African National Film and Video Foundation's emphasis on box office viability does little to discourage these tendencies. So, while characters form an important part of identity construction in and through film, their formation is largely at the mercy of economic processes in the circuit of culture.

### 6.2.3 Audience Identities

Feminist film theory focuses on the idea that a film is produced for an audience or spectator that is dominated by the White male (Smelik, 2007). This assumption has since been challenged and, when differing identities are considered, often very different meanings and interpretations are read into the films. One well-known example is the film *Top Gun*, which espoused meanings of stereotypical heterosexual masculinity that were subsequently subverted by homosexual males (Studlar, 2001).

For Diawara, the identity of the spectator is key to the film's interpretation, and theories of audience have ignored this aspect for too long.

> In other words, just as the subject holds a sentence together through his/her/its relation to the different parts of the sentence, the spectator too occupies a position without which the film is a meaningless discursive fragment. … Every narration places the spectator in a position of agency; and race, class and sexual relations influence the way in which this subjecthood is filled by the spectator. (Diawara, 1990, p. 33)

The identities that constitute the typical South African film audience then, become highly relevant; however, the political history of this country has, unfortunately, had an over-determining role in the make-up of local cinema audiences. As discussed in Chapter three, cinema audiences are small in South Africa largely because of apartheid planning policies that limited cinemas in township areas and within a broad framework that favoured censorship. But cinema is not the only viewing medium: television can increase an audience for a film several times over. Therefore, a film's audience and popularity is not necessarily determined by the spatial dimension of cinema theatres, nor by "having 'grown up on American taste,' as

Anant Singh[29], South Africa's only major international film producer, asserts" (Saks, 2003, p. 144), but is quite possibly determined by the film product itself.

Demonstrably, this reveals the conflict between the commercial process of film production in the current industry and the preferences of large proportions of the population. By and large, film production appears to ignore the television audiences but, as Ian Glenn points out, there are some films do well in both media and he suggests that the construction of local identities may be a key part of that.

> Schuster's film *Mr Bones* [2001] did well at [the] box office, was shown widely on DStv, and drew large black and lower LSM audiences. What did Schuster do right? In playing a range of South African roles, perhaps Schuster makes fun of local identities in a way that people find liberating or intriguing, allowing people both to claim him as one of them yet feel unthreatened by him. (Glenn, 2008, p. 13)[30]

While Schuster's films may include a greater variety of South African characters peculiar to our country, it would be hard to argue that they are any less stereotypical than the foreign co-productions that conform to international expectations.

Key literature has shown that the identities of filmmakers, of characters, and of audience members, are important and need to be considered in the process of reception and interpretation. However, a film such as *Tsotsi* appears to contradict the literature. Based on a book written by a White male during apartheid, and directed by another White male, the film relies on certain character types and simplifications in order to appeal to an international audience. And it did appeal to an international audience, winning the award for best foreign picture at the Academy Awards in 2006. But the film also had a very large mixed audience here, suggesting that the identities of the filmmaker and characters did not detract from the

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[29] Anant Singh, through his production company Videovision Entertainment, is behind the production of many of South Africa's most well-known films including Leon Schuster's *Mr Bone*s (2001; 2008) series, *Sarafina!* (1992), *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995), *Yesterday* (2004) and *Red Dust* (2004).

[30] Leon Schuster began his career in candid-camera skits and films, and since then, the majority of the films that he has acted in and directed use this form of comedy with the addition of slapstick. He is well known for the films *There's a Zulu on my Stoep* (1993) and Panic Mechanic (1997), but *Mr Bones* and *Mr Bones 2* have been his most successful. *Mr Bones* tells the story of the tribal traditional healer going in search of the chief's son only to return with a hapless American golfer by mistake.

audience's enjoyment of the film. This is not to say that these aspects of identity are not valid, but perhaps not as important in the reading of films as the literature suggests.

## 6.3 Dimensions of Identity

It would be impossible to cover all aspects of identity in this section and so it has been based on the diagram on page 119 that explores the multiple dimensions of identity. Indeed, it is very difficult to examine these aspects of identity in isolation, as each is intertwined and overlaps with each other. Therefore this section has been divided into three parts: the first examines gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, age and family life; the second looks at race, ethnicity, social class, language and culture; and the last section briefly touches upon identities of place. Each of these three sub-sections will look at how these aspects of identity have been discussed in the literature of both cultural and historical studies (identities in real life, if you will), as well as film and media studies with specific regard to South Africa and Johannesburg.

### 6.3.1 Race, Language and Class

The identity dimension of race has had a defining and determining impact on South Africa and as such has influenced nearly all other dimensions of identity. Colonial and apartheid laws based on racial identity affected a person's socio-economic status, their place of residence and movements, their level of education received, the race (and to a certain extent the sex) of the person with whom they could have sexual intercourse, the construction of their gender identity, and the family dynamic or structure. Although most of the laws were repealed in the early 1990s, and fair human rights have been enshrined in the new constitution since 1996, "for most, if not all, South Africans 'race' remains a primary constituent of identity. 'Race' conditions not only issues of access and inheritance, but also daily experience." (Distiller & Steyn, 2004, p. 7). Hence, I begin this section on facets of identity with the most influential in South Africa, that of race.

The very early days of Johannesburg's existence reflected an extreme gender bias towards men but were racially diverse. The mining camp had everyone living in close proximity in tin shacks and tents, but it was not long before segregation began to take a physical dimension in the burgeoning town. Of course, this merely reflected the social and economic segregation already in place that determined Black South Africans in the town as labourers and the working class. Political agendas, colonial and apartheid legislation welded together various aspects of identity with that of race.

Whites continued to construct these racial identities through the medium of film for the best part of the twentieth century. The issue of Black representation both in front of and behind

the camera has formed a large part of the post-apartheid literature on South African film. The first Black cast film – *African Jim* (1949) – depicts Black South Africans in an urban setting. This differs from the Black cinema of Hollywood, which, through the Black musicals of the 1920s and 1930s, portrayed African Americans in the rural idyll of the south (Massood, 2003). Hollywood shifted in the 1940s to depicting African Americans in urban settings when they began targeting Black audiences, and no doubt this influenced the local production of *African Jim*.

The rural simpleton has found more recent expression in films such as *Max and Mona* (2004), where Max's rural identity along with his traditional skill as a funeral wailer earns him ridicule but also eventually his sense of belonging in the city. This film, along with *Soweto Green* (1995) and *Chikin Biznis* (1998) begin to claim Soweto as a space of belonging in Johannesburg. John Kani's character in *Soweto Green* returns home to Soweto from exile in America and begins a journey of reintegration with life and business in Soweto. In *Chikin Biznis*, Sipho Khumalo has worked hard for most of his life as an office employee in a shiny glass building in Johannesburg's CBD. But at the beginning of the film he retires from this job, having saved for many years, to embark on his own business in the township spaces of Soweto. These representations of Black identity in Johannesburg are perhaps less politicised than those of *Cry, the Beloved Country*, of which both versions were heavily criticised for demonising the presence of Blacks in the city.

There have been no studies done on the portrayals of different races in South African films and whether they reflect the proportions of the country's population. However, there are enough Black characters, and lead characters, to acknowledge that while the portrayals may not be nuanced or diverse, Black characters are far from absent on South African screens. This cannot be said for Coloureds or Indians, who are notably absent from the big screen. The film *Fiela se Kind* (Fiela's Child) (1988) was a historical fiction that explored the definitions of apartheid racial terms, particularly the blurring between White and Coloured, and how this affected family relations. A Coloured family in the Western Cape is at the centre of the film *Forgiveness* (2004), about a post-apartheid reconciliation process, but both films take place in the rural Cape. Two more recent films, *Lucky* (2012) and *Material* (2011) depict Indian characters. The story of Lucky explores the crossing of boundaries or barriers between an elderly Indian woman and a young Black boy from the countryside. Neither of these main characters can speak English or each other's languages and so their interaction is structured differently.

On the other end of the race spectrum is the normative White race, which has dominated representation in South African films, both in front of and behind the camera. The notion of White identity can be characterised by absence; an absence of awareness and critical thought. " 'White' people now seldom articulate their identity in terms of their 'whiteness', but rather in terms of their 'ordinariness' as citizens of a modern, Western, developed world." (Ballard, 2004, p. 55). White identity has constructed the other through its position of looking outwards and defining that which is different (Burger Allen, 2002).

These defining elements of White identity and power had a profound effect on the South African film industry. "White nationalism – Afrikaner and British alike – has indeed debilitated filmic practice in the country from its inception by firmly grounding its ideological perspective in ethnocentrism." (Masilela & Balseiro, 2003, p. 6). Race groups are broad categories that contain within a multitude of subsequent identities. Religious identities are explored under the Indian umbrella in *Material* and the outsider nature of Jewish identity in South Africa is touched upon in *Inkunzi* (1976) (Paleker, 2011b). Language plays a large role in further differentiating within race groups: as a device used by the apartheid government to restrict Black people to bantustans or 'homelands'; and in the development of nationhood through Afrikaans (Parsons, 2013).

Afrikaans-language (and culturally-oriented) films continued to thrive in South Africa after 1994 and, in some cases, they are box office successes. Some of these films are hard-hitting dramas, such as *Skoonheid* (2010), which is about a middle-aged man grappling with his homosexual identity and which screened at the Cannes Film Festival in 2011. But most of the films are light-hearted comedies that continue with the traditional themes of family values and nostalgia. The majority of these films, if not all of them, are set in locations other than the big city of Johannesburg. The prime example of such a film is 2012's *Pretville* ('Fun'ville), a 1950s styled Afrikaans musical set in a small town, the set for which can now be visited as a nostalgic theme park in the countryside just an hour outside of Johannesburg. The content of the film draws heavily on American culture, and in fact blatantly ignores the complexities of South Africa at the time, which therefore suggests it is not so much the content (or culture) that offers up an alternative to the films from Hollywood but is more closely related to the language that is represented.

Language as a defining identity aspect was further entrenched through the subsidy scheme introduced in the late 1960s. Afrikaans language films were eligible for the highest subsidy; English language films for a lower payout and African language films received the lowest subsidy and were subject to the B-scheme subsidy. The subsidies were tied to box office

success, which resulted in many formulaic films that constructed stereotypical identities along the basis of language.

In post-apartheid South Africa, language is still as important as ever, if not more so, and becomes an important defining element when considering whether local films have been produced for a South African or international audience. *Jump the Gun*, a 1996 production, has dialogue that flows between the languages of Zulu, English and Afrikaans, a reflection of the narrative that explores two characters coming to Johannesburg and negotiating post-apartheid transformation in the city. In analysing the construction of sexual identity of the two key female characters in the film, Laura Twiggs reveals the importance of considering the spoken language:

> The dialogue following the sex act between Gugu and Zoo is mainly in Zulu, although the black characters in the film generally converse in a mixture of English and Zulu, which indicates the willingness of the film to engage with black sexuality on its own terms, thus breaking the 'deadly metonymy' to which Spiller refers. (Twiggs, 2003, p. 172)

*Yesterday* (2004) was the first film of the post-apartheid era to feature dialogue almost entirely in Zulu with English subtitles (Maingard, 2007b). The use of an African language may be thought to give authenticity and literally a voice, to those previously misrepresented in film; this film suggested otherwise. Although *Yesterday* dealt with the highly relevant issue of HIV/AIDS through the common-place situation of the migrant worker and his rural family, the film was not a box office hit in South Africa. This could be because the film was originally written in English, by a White director, and was intended to be exported to independent cinemas around the globe, where it was well received. The film is South African and is in Zulu but clearly did not resonate with its country's citizens.

Stuart Hall advocates for a definition of cultural identity that focuses on difference and the potential to shift (Hall, 2000). Cultural identity should be more of a process and South African films should reflect greater diversity in these cultural identities to facilitate this process. Apartheid fixed races spatially but it also tried to fix race to other aspects of identity, such as class and culture. 'Homelands' or *bantustans* were rural areas around the country that were designated for specific ethnic groups, whether they were from that area originally or not, and neighbourhoods within Soweto were further demarcated according to language or tribe.

### 6.3.2 Sexual and Lifecycle Identities

There is much literature on the gender binary in the international literature in the fields of media studies and in the discussion of urban spaces. The literature has begun by looking at the representation of women on the screen and women in the city but has since broadened to include masculinities. In South Africa, the apartheid emphasis on race has infused gender identities with issues of racial difference and this has impacted on other dimensions of identity including sexuality, sexual orientation, family structures and age.

The campsite of early Johannesburg was dominated by men seeking their fortunes and rectifying the gender imbalance became an early concern, although the focus was mainly on encouraging White women to the town. Young Black women coming to Johannesburg alone were seen as a major threat and they began arriving in large numbers from the late 1910s (Glaser, 2005). These women were seen as troublemakers resorting to the illegal activities of beer brewing and prostitution in order to survive (Glaser, 2005). They were treated with hostility and their presence threatened the temporary nature of the migrant labour system and was seen to exacerbate the situation in the slum yards at the centre of the city.

Anne Friedberg's (1993) work has shown how masculine constructions of space have been subverted through the female flâneur, through being allowed to be a spectator in spaces of shopping and in the cinema. The cinema and the representation of women on the screen is therefore critical to the construction of women's agency in the city. However, there are few depictions of strong and independent women in the city of Johannesburg. The popularity of the gangster genre has emphasised masculinity in the city and undermined female characters in these films, as discussed in Chapter seven. Films, such as *Yesterday* and *Life, Above All* (2010), which have addressed the issue of HIV/AIDS, have rendered women in rural spaces, although these women are portrayed as strong and independently-minded. But there have been a few female leads that have shown strength of character in Johannesburg.

Undoubtedly, one of the strongest female characters for Black women is Sarafina in *Sarafina!* (1992), played by the young Leleti Khumalo. As discussed in Chapter eight, Sarafina demonstrates defiance and opposition towards authority and the apartheid government and displays high levels of mobility and independence in Soweto. She is influenced by another strong female, Mary Masembuko, her teacher, who inspires her to lead. At one point, Sarafina's defiance extends into rebellion as she rejects her mother, and her mother's life of confinement in the White suburbs. Ultimately though, Sarafina's resistant stance is tempered by her lack of status in the central city and undermined by the closing narrative, which emphasises the supportive (and therefore submissive) role of women in the struggle, as

opposed to being on the (male) frontlines. Overall, however, Johannesburg films represent the city as the masculine space that it once was.

As with women, male identity in Johannesburg, and on the screen, is composed as an intersection with many other aspects of identity, resulting in 'many masculinities' (Morrell, 1998).

> In a path-breaking article by Belinda Bozzoli in 1983 the complexity of gender relations in South Africa was captured in her phrase 'a patchwork of patriarchies.' She argued that it was simplistic to view South Africa as under the thrall of one system of male rule and suggested the coexistence of many patriarchies in the country. She identified an 'English-speaking variety', 'Afrikaner patriarchy' and 'black culture', characterised by 'sexist assumptions and ideologies'. (Morrell, 1998, p. 613)

Masculinity is, therefore, constructed differently for the different races. Robert Morrell goes on to describe how under apartheid this was often a contradictory process "in that it both emphasised many cultures and nations and homogenised all 'non-Whites' " (Morrell, 1998, p. 625).

As described in the previous section, it was the White male (specifically the English speaker) who was the pioneer and coloniser. The White Afrikaner male was the farmer and head of the family. Neither of these tropes is comfortable in the city of Johannesburg, despite the city's history designating the settlement as a masculine space.

There is not much evidence to suggest that the male lead in a film is other than the norm for South African films, reflecting a common issue with other film markets such as the United States. But depictions of the White male in the city of Johannesburg are rare. Despite the fact that apartheid legislation claimed the city for the White man, this is generally not represented on the screen. On the other hand, African masculinity has been depicted more definitively with regards to the urban, and Johannesburg specifically.

> Although never entirely voided of rural influence, new styles of dress, (violent) modes of behaviour and an open scorn of country simplicity became their features. These developments were part of the process by which a new black, urban masculinity emerged to rival the old and to reject it as a masculinity of the 'moegoe'. (Morrell, 1998, p. 625)

The urban identity of the Black African male character will be discussed further in Chapters seven and eight, in relation to both the gangster and urban mobility and so I will address some other representations here. Three films explore the idea of entrepreneurship and success in the city of Johannesburg, specifically Soweto. Curtis Tshabalala returns from exile to work as a businessman in Johannesburg but dreams of making a greener Soweto, his childhood home, in the film *Soweto Green*. While some of the film deals with his American wife's adjustment to life and cultural practices in South Africa, the focus of the film is Curtis' negotiation in the business world, and his work to achieve his dreams in Soweto.

Similarly, Sipho in *Chikin Biznis*, quits his job to start his own small business selling chickens. The story revolves around comic interactions with his business rivals but the subplot illustrates equally comic attempts to woo a mistress. The film ends with Sipho realising his errors and showing support and love for his wife; however the role is not a particular strong male portrayal. Max's uncle Norman sees a business opportunity when his nephew joins him in Soweto, from the countryside, in the film *Max and Mona*. Norman is already a business owner running a *shebeen* from his home; however he is portrayed as dishonest or unreliable and Max's mother warns him against meeting up with his uncle.

*Max and Mona* raises the family dimension of identity. The definition of family in South Africa needs some consideration, as it does not conform to standard concepts:

> In South Africa, recent discussions about 'the family' stress the fact that any policies based on the idea of either a nuclear family, or on a functioning network in the form of an extended family, do not reflect the actual situation of South African households. Male–female relations, marriages and family formations do not adhere to a clean division between, on the one hand, civil law marriages with a corresponding nuclear family, and a customary law marriage with an extended family on the other. (Olaussen, 2001, p. 159)

For White Afrikaners, the base unit for the Afrikaner nation and culture is seen to be the family. The preservation of the family is the promotion of the nation. In rebellion of these ideals, the White gangsters of the 1950s, known as the Ducktails, rejected this domesticity to lead lives as promiscuous bachelors (Glaser, 2005). Today, this would be considered a trait common to gangsters of all races but in films of Johannesburg neither the Afrikaner family man nor the White gangster make many appearances.

Johannesburg films, though, tend to reveal an absence of the family and, even more often, an absence of the father of the household. In *Jerusalema* (2008), Lucky's father is notably absent.

In *Tsotsi*, the attentive and distraught father of the hijacked baby is a foil for Tsotsi's own father who chases him from his home. In many other films, though, characters are mere individuals with no reference to family. Films with female lead characters are more closely linked to the notions of family for the obvious reason that, historically, women have always been associated with the domestic: the home and the family.

Olaussen, in discussing the autobiographies of Black women during apartheid, emphasised the importance of family as a guiding framework for these women (Olaussen, 2001). She goes on to say that "...'family' functions as part of a narrative construction of the female self – either as an obstacle or as fulfilment or simply as self-evident and [a] 'natural' part of life." (Olaussen, 2001, p. 178). Women frame themselves and are framed by their roles within family structures, and this is reflected in the films with lead female characters. In the location of Johannesburg we once again see the absence of family, even for female characters. In the films *uDeliwe* (1975), *Debbie* (1965) and *Sarafina!*, the city is the setting for women who choose not to remain within traditional family structures.

As well as having strong female lead characters, *uDeliwe*, *Debbie* and *Sarafina!* all tell the story of young women, coming of age and grappling with the issues that many young people face. Through the 1976 Soweto uprising the youth was able to establish itself as political activists and have received much research attention since (Morrell, 2007). The film *Sarafina!* is very much a product of the greater interest in youth, while also dramatising events strongly related to the 1976 uprisings.

*Hijack Stories* (2002) tells the story of how easy it is to get into a life of crime, but the protagonists are slightly older, so while the *kwaito*[31] soundtrack and references to other media are aimed at young audiences, it did not achieve box office success. Max's tale in *Max and Mona* is far closer to a coming-of-age story in the big city, but achieved even less with cinema ticket sales. By far the most successful film about a youth is *Tsotsi*, which addresses the issues of poverty, crime and gangsterism, all with the help from a *kwaito* soundtrack and the cameo of a *kwaito* star, Zola.

But there are also television shows that reflect more recent literature about the youth as equally important cultural producers.

[31] *Kwaito* is a genre of music indigenous to Johannesburg that blends the genres of house and hip hop.

> Sometimes known as the Y Generation, contemporary black youth finds itself straddling cultural spaces. On the one hand, this generation is linked to its collective political and cultural past. On the other, it seeks, through conscious innovation, to establish an identity apart from (though not free of) Generation X, its parent culture, the politically active youth of the 1960s and '70s. (Bogatsu, 2002, p. 2)

Sarah Nuttall has also written substantially on the cultural production of youth and their relationship with spaces in the city (Nuttall, 2009 and Nuttall, 2008). We see small parts of this expression in *Hijack Stories* in the way that Sox models himself after the actor Wesley Snipes and, to some extent, it is expressed in a scene from *Max and Mona*, when Max goes shopping at the Carlton Centre, re-imagining himself in the process. But overall, the Y Generation is notably absent from Johannesburg's big screens.

The last aspect of identity that I would like to touch upon is the representation of gay and lesbians, and sexuality in general on the screen. South African films have been slightly slow in raising these issues on the screen (Botha & Van Aswegen, 1992), specifically, "[h]omosexuality is almost non-existent in South African cinema up till 1985" (Botha, 2012, p. 240). Since then there have been a number of films that have dealt with the narratives of gays and lesbians, the most notable being *Proteus* (2003), the historical drama of two gay men on Robben Island and, very recently, *Skoonheid*, which won the Queer Palm at the 2011 Cannes Film Festival. None of these films, though, have explored homosexuality in Johannesburg. In *Max and Mona*, Toni is a transgender mortician who helps Max to navigate some of the difficulties of life in Johannesburg, but the character has little depth and merely provides some light-hearted comedic moments.

Martin Botha sees the lack of gay and lesbian representation as part of a general absence of minorities or the marginalised, including Blacks and women (Botha, 2012). This includes the representation of sexuality too:

> That black sexuality, a subject characterised by a 'great silence' (Gaines 1990, 209), receives cinematic representation at all is a marked departure from previous South African films and the body of Western films as well. (Twiggs, 2003, p. 171)

Black sexuality is overlooked in favour of White sexuality and female sexuality is largely framed as subordinate to male sexuality. This is most prevalent in the gangster films where women are the sexual prizes of gang members (*Hijack Stories*; *Jerusalema*). In these films, Black male sexuality trumps female sexuality – of both Black and White females. There is one notable film that successfully combines the sexuality of two women, one White and one

Black, and the city. *Jump the Gun* is the story of two females, Minnie and Zoo, working hard in Johannesburg to establish their identities and lives in the city. They are not afraid to use their bodies and sex to express themselves and to achieve their needs. In a threesome with Clinton near the end of the film, Minnie and Zoo realise the full extent of their liberation in the city and the sexual encounter establishes their friendship/relationship, while Clinton, the White male, leaves the city.

However, this film is an exception. The absence of female sexuality and homosexuality in Johannesburg films is problematic in a country that continues to battle with extremely high levels of rape and regular occurrences of corrective rape. In this instance, the film industry reflects some of the more conservative notions that contribute to this violence against women, gays and lesbians.

### 6.3.3 Identities of Place

Identities of place are not featured as key aspects of identity formation in the diagram on page 119, but certainly national and continental identities feature quite prominently in the literature on South African film, and in the literature of identities emerging in post-apartheid conditions. For a study on the city, these constructions of identity become particularly relevant.

> Our sense of space and sense of self are mutually constitutive. As much as we try to shape our worlds to fit in with our identities, our environments also shape us, challenge us, and constrain us. We attempt to find comfort zones within which it is possible for us to 'be ourselves'. These are places that do not challenge our self-conceptions. Home in its ideal form is the best example. (Ballard, 2004, p. 51)

For Tim Edensor, home is the starting point for exclusion as it is viewed as a purified space, and these notions extend outwards to incorporate our neighbourhood, our city, our country, and even our continent (Edensor, 2002). So, while home weaves together identity and place, it can do this by defining the outsiders, who may not enter the home space. This is echoed by Doreen Massey who has suggested that it is this very weave of identity and place, these attempts at fixing the meanings and identities of spaces, that has led in recent years to the 'othering' of those who fall outside of these spaces (Massey, 1994).

Johannesburg is the national signifier of the idea of urbanity; it is the site where urban identities in South Africa are forged. In some ways this may mean that the identity of the city sits outside of the national identity. National identities are located in the romantic rural and pastoral landscape, as the site of emergence and birth (Edensor, 2002) and we have certainly

seen this in the construction of Afrikaner identity in Chapter four. To forge an urban identity is to separate oneself from rural roots and origins (although not necessarily losing those connections entirely) and possibly distance oneself from the nation, instead adopting a space of diverse identities within a global network.

In some ways then, Johannesburg has come to represent a site of defiance in films, particularly a defiance of the apartheid government. Martin Botha (2012) describes the Afrikaans language film, *Mamza* (1985), as a 'watershed' film for several reasons: first, it presented 'Coloureds' from a 'non-White' perspective; second, it criticised apartheid through its 'own' language; and third, it subverted the images of the Afrikaans pastoral landscape by substituting them with an urban landscape. In other films, such as *Jobman* and *The Stick*, the rural idyllic gave way to a 'symbolic wasteland' (Botha, 2012, p. 130), which addressed both the traditional Afrikaans films and the jungle-exploring colonial films. Chapter eight discusses the evolution of the tsotsi figure, an important emblem in the forging of Black urban identity and how central Johannesburg was to the on-screen depictions of these characters.

As we saw in Chapter five, Johannesburg's urban landscape is far from homogenous and aspects of identity are deeply embedded in these diverse districts because of the Group Areas Act that dictated spaces of dwelling and work according to race, ethnicity and even gender. These divisions are imprinted in the language used to describe the parts of the city: the Black townships, the White suburbs, and the ambiguous CBD[32]. These demarcated spaces are in the process of being redefined:

> Given South Africa's apartheid history, most black residents did not come out with a 'Township and Proud' attitude but instead often rejected this culture as one imposed by the apartheid system. … It is now 'cool' to be able to communicate in tsotsi-taal (township slang); hang out 'back home in the ghetto' eating the 'township burger' or kota (bunny chow). Being proudly township has become the equivalent of being proud of a unique South African experience: one's ghetto-credibility has become an unofficial measuring tool for one's blackness. (Bogatsu, 2002, pp. 4–5)

[32] The CBD was once entirely a 'White' space for White businessmen and consumers. Currently, it is often perceived as Black space, where Whites/middle-class suburbanites fear to tread, but property is still largely owned by big businesses who have created Central Improvement Districts (CIDs) to 'reclaim' the streets of the CBD, hence the ambiguity.

The film industry relies heavily on stereotypes, not just for characters, but also for spaces and, particularly in Johannesburg but not unique to the city, these two aspects of identity are inseparable. We see this most notably in *Hijack Stories*: Sox comes from Rosebank, a former White suburb, and identifies more with American culture, whereas Zama comes from the township and embodies the authentic tsotsi figure. The township space straddles the urban-rural divide by situating the individual in the city but with deep and continuous (through the migrant labour system) connections to rural traditions (Bogatsu, 2002). The township space reveals the difficulty of place identity because a person simultaneously loses their cultural or ethnic identity and takes on the cosmopolitan attitudes of city dwellers, leaving the person adrift in an identity no-man's-land (Bogatsu, 2002).

City place identity is made more complex by the fact that the city is not a fixed object or image. "[A]s the city changes physically, its buildings, streets, monuments and other artefacts come to represent and symbolise different things to different observers and inhabitants" (Mpe, 2003, p. 183). The literature on the representation of Johannesburg does not offer much clarity as to the stereotype of the city. As discussed previously the city has a fairly large film and television production industry and certainly has a strong presence in television dramas as a site for aspiration, but Johannesburg's presence in films is erratic and does not mirror its role in the country of South Africa.

This section has attempted to address many of the aspects that make up each individual's identity, and to discuss these aspects in relation to the development of the country and the city more generally, and then to examine the depictions of these aspects of identity, on-screen. It has not been possible to explore each aspect in depth and, as stated in the beginning, many of these aspects are interrelated and difficult to discuss in isolation. However, the section has shown which aspects are more dominant in both general discussions and on the screens and, conversely, which elements of identity are absent. While the identity of place, whether it be continent, country or city, is very relevant for the construction of individual and collective identities, the depiction of place identity in films is more elusive. In many ways, place identity relies heavily on these other aspects of identity, more so than mere images of spaces. This further emphasises the interwoven nature of place and identity. In Chapter ten I will explore the relationship between representations of identity and the process of interpreting and responding to these representations.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed three ways in which identity relates to, and is constructed through, films. The first section described the various identities at play within the circuit of

culture – from the filmmaker, to the text (character), to the site of reception (audience). In the literature, the filmmaker's identity is key to the type of text that is generated, and the responses from audiences. However, filmmaker identities in South Africa are still, by and large, restricted to White males, therefore limiting the films and responses to these films.

In Section 6.2, the various dimensions of identity were explored in reference to the constitution of the South African/Johannesburg audience, and how that might compare to the identity of characters on the screen. It is clear that there are substantial stereotypes and that there are many identities missing from the screen. The representations in the post-apartheid period have not dramatically differed from apartheid depictions. The effect of identity on the potential for a film to influence an audience member, through an audience member being able to relate to a particular character, will be explored in Chapters nine and ten. Identity may not be a significant determinant for the way in which films inform the everyday lives of citizens.

The last section briefly explored some aspects of place identity. Place identity is not one of the multiple dimensions of identity shown in Figure 6.1. Despite this, place identity plays an important role in understanding the representation of space and place on the screen. Johannesburg is the site where urban identities were forged and this is apparent in film representations of the city. The character of the tsotsi was particularly instrumental in the creation of this identity and as such, will be further discussed in Chapter eight. However, other dimensions of identity also intersect with place identity. Due to apartheid policies, place identity is fused with racial and socio-economic aspects of identity. This means that the representations of certain spaces can also be about 'othering'.

Images of places can be manipulated to represent other locations and even other time periods. This may impact on aspects of place identity and limit the potential for films to feed back into the real spaces that are very familiar to audiences. Places and spaces are far from fixed on the screen, therefore knowledge and the ability to recognise place on the screen may be paramount in constructing an identity of place through films. This will be explored in Chapter ten.

# 7. Mobility

## 7.1 Introduction

Access to the city and mobility within Johannesburg became yet another arena of inequality and political might. Long commutes and a lack of access and mobility are embedded in the urban experience of Black city dwellers. Films of the city portray some of the issues around movement, sometimes revealing the inequalities and representing different means of transportation, but often highlighting issues through the absence of representation. Film has the ability to suggest movement through camera techniques and through the editing process without actually representing the vehicle for movement. In fact, the process of viewing a film can be a form of movement; of being transported to another time or place through the visual and aural experience (Bruno, 2002).

This chapter examines two forms of movement in relation to the city. 'Travel to and from the city' constructs the city as a concept and as a singular place from the perspective of migrants and those in exile. For immigrants and migrant workers the city represents the spaces of opportunity, of dreams and fortunes, while for emigrants and those in exile, the city becomes a space of longing and of dreams of return (Naficy, 1999). This form of travel is equally represented by a lack of imagery of movement (travel is embodied in the nature of the foreigner or migrant miner), as much as it is in the visual images of the train and the airplane.

The second section, 'Travel within the city', explores the modes of movement from one inner-city space to another. Moving within the city reveals the city is made up of many places and spaces and that the act of mobility within its streets is the practice of the everyday, and is the act of agency associated with the urban experience. These acts are typically movements that take the form of walking, driving and being driven. Historically, mobility in Johannesburg and South Africa has been under intense control and has been used as a means of oppression. Consequently, modes of movement have taken on political connotations as well as signifiers of agency, economic status and aspirations of power.

The modes of transport discussed in each section are not limited to a particular form of movement. Trains and taxis carry migrants to the city as well commuters within the city. The helicopter presents the view of the city in its entirety but also remains a form of transport

that moves within the city rather than to, or away from, it. These double meanings blur de Certeau's practice of the everyday with his concept city; so, the commuter from Soweto may continuously experience Johannesburg as a migrant, arriving each day at Park Station. Film and television are able to reproduce both images of the city through the lens of the camera and therefore offer a bridge between the two viewpoints.

## 7.2 Travel to and from the City

This section looks at three aspects of movement. The first aspect explores the movement of people to the city, both permanently through immigration and temporarily through migrant labour. This is juxtaposed with the second aspect that examines people moving out of the city through exile and emigration. The third aspect looks at the modes of transport that have most commonly been used for these modes of travel. Not all movement into and away from the city can be represented by such broad strokes but this section includes the travel of those who would call Johannesburg home.

Home becomes an important and defining concept for the migrant worker, the exile and the immigrant. Thinking about the city from the perspective of migration and exile positions the city in the imaginary; it becomes a concept for which we long, of which we dream; it is the perspective from outside the city. Knowledge of the city is combined with emotion and with nostalgia so that Johannesburg exists in the hearts and minds of its inhabitants. The exile might have existing knowledge of the city that the rural migrant has yet to obtain, but the city remains an overall place, a single destination.

### 7.2.1 Immigrants

Johannesburg, very early in its existence, exerted a centripetal force on the surrounding countryside and southern Africa, which can still be felt today. There would be no cities without migration and yet many South African films describing the theme of migration focus on the rural setting. Migration is a central theme of the urban condition. But it was also a theme before the metropolis existed. This is reflected in the films *De Voortrekkers* (1916) and *They Built a Nation* (1938), which chronicled the great treks of Afrikaners as they moved inland to face hardship and battles but ultimately claiming farmlands for themselves. This migration represents the movement of White Afrikaners seeking new bucolic landscapes free from the political strife of British rule in the Cape, and wars with indigenous tribes. It is framed within a colonial ideology of gaining new territory and building a sense of

nationhood that is rooted in the rural idyll. This historical migration was a significant feature of the narratives of films up to the middle of the twentieth century[33].

Migration is a defining feature of Johannesburg and of the apartheid city in general, and is characterised by enormous diversity. As discussed in Chapters four and five, Johannesburg's original population travelled to the city from all over the country, and all over the world, bringing together a diverse but mostly male people. Gold diggers came from Europe and other gold fields in Australia and California. There was also considerable migration from within the southern African region with Johannesburg attracting both Afrikaners and Blacks to the city. As the city grew into the economic powerhouse of first the country and then the sub-Saharan region, it continued to draw fortune-seekers. Migrants gravitated towards the city in waves throughout the twentieth century; however, immigration policies favoured 'White' immigrants (Crush, 2000).

During the 1920s and 1930s, Johannesburg hosted a significant process of urbanisation as Afrikaners and Blacks were drawn to the economic benefits of city dwelling, or were pushed off the land by drought (Wentzel & Tlabela, 2006). After World War II, there was an influx of immigrants from Europe, a large proportion thereof from Britain (Glaser, 2010), seeking stability and opportunity in South Africa. From the late 1970s and 1980s, Johannesburg and South Africa began receiving increasing numbers of refugees from neighbouring countries, specifically Mozambique, as civil war erupted (Morris, 1998).

From 1994, with a democratically elected government, the city was open to all and migration into the city peaked, although the government has recently taken an 'anti-immigration' stance, severely limiting even legal immigration (Crush et al, 2005). The number of legal and illegal immigrants has substantially increased since 1990, with many from countries further north than the southern African region, such as Nigeria, the DRC, Somalia and Ethiopia (Morris, 1998). This wave has coincided with an increase in xenophobic sentiments, which erupted violently in 2008, creating the need for refugee camps and temporary hideouts for foreigners. Despite the variety and diversity of immigrants, and the almost continuous wave of foreign arrivals in Johannesburg, the experience of the foreigner in the city has found little expression in films.

Foreignness and xenophobia have been explored in a short film by Zola Maseko. The short film is entitled *The Foreigner* (1997), and describes the tentative relationship between a street

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[33] Films such as: *De Voortrekkers* (1916); *The Swallow* (1921); *They Built a Nation* (1938); *Ons Staan 'n Dag Oor* (1942).

kid and an African Muslim, both eking an existence in Hillbrow. The foreigner lives in Ponte – a building that has become an icon of immigrants in the city – and sells fruit and vegetables on a pavement nearby. He supports the street kid with produce from his stall and even invites him for dinner, all the while being persecuted by fellow traders and even the street kid's friends. The film ends with the violent killing of the foreigner in the city. The film is a moral tale but it gives only a glimpse of this foreigner's experience of, and journey into, Johannesburg. His arrival in the city is a fait accompli, and even his movement within the city is depicted in a limited way, most likely because of the short film format.

The full-length feature *Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon* (2005) does not have such constraints, although the film does not focus on one story of immigration but rather explores many. In his quest to find a recent acquaintance, a woman from Ethiopia, Keneiloe walks the streets of Hillbrow and neighbouring Berea and Yeoville, asking after this woman. During this task he encounters many foreigners and hears their individual stories of arrival in Johannesburg. In this way the film has a strong documentary and interview style. The film reveals the city to be full of strangers and foreigners, but when Keneiloe finally finds the woman, she rejects his offer of friendship. Again, the film ignores the journey of these arriving immigrants and instead focuses on Keneiloe's route through the city as he navigates his search on foot. His footsteps are confident and don't reflect the bewildering and hesitant progress of strangers in the city.

With only two films to comment upon, the absence of the immigrant experience in Johannesburg is startling, made especially so by the fact that most people are immigrants themselves or will have parents or grandparents with stories of arrival in the big city. The film *District 9* (2009) is structured in such a way that the alien invasion is suggestive of a metaphor that represents the experiences of foreigners in Johannesburg but that is also reflective, representing the inhuman laws of apartheid.

### 7.2.2 Migrant workers

Johannesburg has also been defined by another form of migration – that of the circular migrant, or the migrant labourer. Migration labour was in practice before gold was discovered on farms and on the diamond fields of Kimberley, and the practice was taken up enthusiastically by the Johannesburg gold mines (Wentzel & Tlabela, 2006). The temporary status or migrant workers in the city was encouraged, and even indentured labour was exploited in 1904 when large numbers of Chinese mineworkers were imported for a number of years before being shipped back to China (Van Onselen, 1982). More commonly, though,

migrant labour has been sourced from within the borders, or from neighbours such as Mozambique, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (Wentzel & Tlabela, 2006).

Apartheid and colonial laws forced many urban residents to become migrants. The Group Areas Act removed 'non-Whites' to the outskirts of the city where they had to endure long, daily commutes to the city centre and their places of work. The creation of 'homelands' divided families, with women and children remaining behind while the men became annual migrants to the city of Johannesburg. Travelling into the city, as opposed to travelling within it, became regular, and often daily, journeys. For the migrant, the urban experience is embodied in the concept of transience (Mbembe, 2008), so that the vehicle of movement represents the city. This results in modes of transport taking on new meanings for Black South Africans.

The first images of rural to urban migration appeared in *African Jim* (1949) also known as *Jim Comes to Jo'burg* and it's this film that gave its title to the trope of urban-rural dichotomies. Rural to urban migration affected all South Africans but it came to be dominated by representation of the Black experience of cities. Films made for White audiences focused on historical migration into the hinterland, rural settings and colonial narratives. Films that have explored rural to urban migration include *Come back, Africa* (1959); *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951 & 1995); *uDeliwe* (1975); *Debbie* (1965), and more recently, *Max and Mona* (2004), and *Yesterday* (2004). *Max and Mona* tells the familiar trope of '*Jim Comes to Jo'burg*' when Max leaves his village to study further in Johannesburg, although his final destination ends in Soweto. *Yesterday* is the story of the families left behind by migrants working in Johannesburg. Yesterday's husband works in the mines and returns home intermittently. The narrative of the film focuses on Yesterday's hardships in the rural village as she raises her daughter and discovers she has contracted HIV. Despite having to walk exceptionally long distances, Yesterday's autonomy is reinforced in her walking mobility.

It is only when she travels to the city to confront her husband about her illness that her independence is undermined that begins with the depiction of her in a taxi and on a city bus. The confrontation results in John viciously beating his wife. The tight framing and spatial constraints of the bus reflect Yesterday's own restrictions as a wife. Her return journey from the mine, the relentless movement of the bus, is used as an opportunity for flashbacks in the film, showing Yesterday's reflections but also reflecting the pre-determined nature of her predicament, and Yesterday's lack of control of the situation and her life in Johannesburg. The lack of depiction of an arrival in the city illustrates Johannesburg as a city that does not welcome women, and where women are not autonomous or in control of their own fates.

The story of *Jim Comes to Jo'burg* is rightfully known as a trope because it has shown little evolution since 1949. *uDeliwe* exhibits the same naïve success story twenty-six years later, as does *Max and Mona* forty years after that. The negative portrayal of the city that began with the 1951 version of *Cry, the Beloved Country* has been perpetuated in more recent films such as *Yesterday*. Despite the diversity of migrant experiences in the city, only two broad tropes have been explored in film.

### 7.2.3 Exile

Many South Africans went into exile during the apartheid years to flee the banishment and oppression of the government. Those who fled, both voluntarily and involuntarily, included artists, writers, singers and musicians and, of course, political activists and freedom fighters. Amongst these there were a few filmmakers; however, there is an absence of films made in exile or about the exile experience (Dovey, 2005). There is even an absence of characters that are framed within an exile narrative without going into the details of the exile experience. One such film is *Soweto Green* (1995).

*Soweto Green* opens in the interior of an airplane as we follow the journey of Curtis Tshabalala (John Kani), returning to South Africa with his American wife after exile in the USA. The film reflects many of the popular sentiments and uncertainties of the period leading up to, and following, the first democratic elections in 1994. The light-hearted comedic drama does not explore Curtis's emotions in any depth regarding his return to his home and in fact, his feelings are eclipsed by the comedic value of his wife's first experiences of the 'real' Johannesburg/Soweto. As such the airplane does not give meaning to the concept of the returning exile and instead merely serves to establish the setting of time and place in the film.

An exile is defined by his or her estrangement from their home (Peters, 1999), where home enters the imaginary as the space of yearning, and of dreams. These imaginings can also be tinged with nostalgia as the yearning for home becomes intertwined with a longing for yesteryear. Johannesburg does not feature as a space of longing, and longing or nostalgia is altogether absent from the South African film. Thabo Mbeki is not seen to yearn for his home in the film *Endgame* (2009) and, similarly, although not officially in exile, Mandela is not shown to long for his home in Vilakazi Street, Soweto in the film *Goodbye, Bafana* (2007). The literature on Sophiatown has been accused of nostalgia and sentimentality (Hart, 1984) and yet the film, *Drum* (2004), which recreates the time and place, does not carry those sentiments.

The creation of imaginary space in Johannesburg films is limited. The flashback or space of reflection is more often a narrative tool than one of nostalgia, or even a look towards a

future possibility. In *Yesterday*, Yesterday remembers the early days of her marriage grounded in the rural setting of her village through the nostalgic flashback on the bus. In *Sarafina!* (1992), Sarafina longs for freedom but this yearning does not form part of her visual imagination but instead is enacted at the end of the film through the grounded performative space of the school play. The imaginary spaces of home, of a better life, and even of freedom, are conspicuously absent from South African film.

Ross Devenish and Ntongela Masilela were both filmmakers in exile during apartheid but neither director has produced a film that describes or reflects their experiences of living abroad or returning home. This is surprising because of the strong emotional sentiments associated with both experiences as described above. In her article on exilic cinema, Dovey argues for the re-framing of certain anti-apartheid films to be considered representations of exile, but ones that also demonstrate that very little of this genre for South Africa, let alone Johannesburg, exists (Dovey, 2005).

### 7.2.4 Emigration

While there were many South Africans who were forced into exile for political reasons, beginning in the 1980s, there were as many White South Africans who voluntarily left the country out of fear. These South Africans feared the increasing violence, uprisings and uncertainty that plagued the country from the time of the state of emergency in the early '80s. This exodus, coined the 'brain drain' saw educated, White middle-class and wealthy South Africans emigrate throughout this period, continuing well into the period of democracy. Australia, New Zealand and Canada were among the most popular destinations for South African ex-patriots. The experiences of these South Africans have not been without trauma or difficulty and, in recent years, schemes have been established to encourage South Africans to return.

Again, though, these experiences are absent from the screen. References are made to those who have emigrated but in fleeting ways and seldom depicted with images. In *Jozi* (2010), James has telephonic conversations with his parents in Australia but their lives are portrayed in one dimension and from one confined room, that is no doubt in some studio, many miles from Australia. There is no doubt that these emigrants feel a longing for South African experiences, even if they are not necessarily defined by a yearning to return and yet, these imaginings remain unexpressed.

There are several international films, and films set in foreign locations that feature South African characters. Most of these are in small film roles such as *Mission Impossible 2* (2000) and *Lethal Weapon 2* (1989). But, even in a film such as *The Interpreter* (2005), where Nicole

Kidman plays a South African abroad in the lead role, the narrative and background of the character is neglected. How these South Africans ended up overseas remains unexplored and unanswered, and is of no concern in the plots of these films that tend to fall within the action of thriller genre.

### 7.2.5 Modes of Movement

Movement to and from the city carries the meanings articulated above – that of the conceptual city and sense of arrival, as well as the meaning of home and return. Particular modes of transport bring us and take us away from Johannesburg, and these are examined here. In the nineteenth century the train had transformed the city, making it far more accessible and bringing into the city thousands upon thousands of people from the rural areas. At once, trains both expanded cities and shortened the distances between towns. This was compounded by the introduction of automobiles and airplanes at the turn of the century. Mobility was a large part of the process of industrialisation, both as a by-product and as a catalyst for further developments. Film attempted to capture all these facets of industrialisation.

Early fortune seekers arrived in Johannesburg on foot, on horseback, and on the back of ox wagons. Roads existed connecting the coastal towns with Pretoria. These journeys were slow, arduous and severely limited in loads and capacities. Fortunately, Johannesburg residents did not have to wait long for the arrival of the train. Johannesburg was connected to Maputo via railway in 1890 and to Cape Town in 1893. The train station, known as Park Station, although not the main station that was nestled in Newtown just west of the city's centre, became the most popular due to its proximity to the centre of the city (Beavon, 2001). Almost instantaneously, the train became the dominant mode of transport to and from Johannesburg.

Foster describes how travellers at the time wrote of the journey as a 'rite of passage', shifting from scenic landscapes to the utilitarian cityscape of Johannesburg (2005, p. 298). During the nineteenth century the train came to represent industrialisation and was the means of connecting cities and carrying people to those cities. The train signified arrival in the city and necessitated the architecture of the train station that came to represent that point of arrival (Schwarzer, 2004). But the cross-country rail journey was also used to foster identification with the land for White travellers. Travel writing between 1900 and 1930 encouraged affection for, and deep association with, the landscape that rolled past the carriage window, encouraging place-based identities in the new country (Foster, 2005).

This narrative element is reflected in Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*. The train travels through a country landscape that is idyllic, while the approach to the city is described with a sense of foreboding. Reverend Khumalo describes the journey from rural Natal to Johannesburg:

> The train gathered way, to creep along the ridges of the hills, to hang over steep valleys, to pass the bracken and the flowers, to enter the darkness of the wattle plantations, past Stainton, down into Ixopo. The journey had begun. And now the fear back again, the fear of the unknown, the fear of the great city where boys were killed crossing the street, the fear of Gertrude's sickness. (Paton, 1987, pp. 12–13)

> The buildings get higher, the streets more uncountable. How does one find one's way in such a confusion? ... There is this railway station to come, this great place with all its tunnels under the ground. The train stops, under a great roof, and there are thousands of people. Steps go down into the earth, and here is the tunnel under the ground. Black people, white people, some going, some coming, so many that the tunnel is full ... He comes out into a great hall, and the stream goes up the steps, and here he is out in the street. (Paton, 1987, p. 16)

The image of the train entered literature, song and eventually, film. Glimpsing the city of Johannesburg on the horizon through the frame of a train carriage window is a common image in film. The first of these images can be seen in the early films of *African Jim* and *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951). As Jim and Reverend Khumalo are carried towards the city, through the train window we experience both their wonder and awe of the approaching city, and we see the Johannesburg skyline framed by the window. The train window provides the first encompassing view of Johannesburg; we see the city as a destination. In these films the train moves the characters to and from the city reinforcing the connection between rail travel and migration. This is reflected in the later film *Debbie* too, when Debbie boards the train in Johannesburg bound for her rural home.

The train carries us into, and out of, the city and in this role it is often countered with airplane. The airplane is limited to only inter-urban travel and offers no mobility within the city itself, but it does offer a very different approach to, and perspective of, the metropolis. In *Cry, the Beloved Country* Jarvis makes the same journey on a small aircraft that Khumalo makes by train, highlighting their different economic stations in life. And so, first and foremost, the plane is associated with the funds and status required for its use. Flight becomes the domain of the wealthy and privileged.



**Figure 7.1** – Jim arriving in Johannesburg (Still from *African Jim* (1949)).

The airplane reveals the extent of the city as we descend from great heights, but while we may be able to view its entirety from a small window the airplane deposits us ambiguously in an industrial wasteland just outside the city. Of course, these are not the only means of arriving in the city. Cars, taxis and buses probably provide the most common forms of transport into the city, and while the view from the windows of these vehicles is very similar to the approach of the train, the nature of these forms of movement mean that there is no final single destination in the city. Apart from perhaps the bus terminal, there is no grand train station and no vast airport, and so these modes of transport quickly dissolve the overall image of the city as place, as once in the city it is redefined into its constituent places.

This is exploited in *Gold* (1974), where the inclusion of a small aircraft adds to the glamourous lifestyle of Rod Slater. The space of the airport also serves to remind the audience of Johannesburg's global connections – reflected in the narrative that situates Johannesburg as part of an international gold mine plot. The glamour pervades despite the fact that the airplane flies out of the city into the bushveld, and despite the fact that it is not piloted by Rod himself but by Terry, the female interest of the film. Although most fliers only ever experience plane travel as passengers, this airplane represents the autonomy of mobility normally associated with walking and driving. This is demonstrated at the end of the

film when Terry flies Rod directly back to the mine and lands dramatically nearby so Rod can save the day. This is also a rare instance of a female character displaying autonomy and mobility in film, although the *mise-en-scene* for this mobility is less metropolitan and more rural and industrial.

The airplane features significantly in many more films as a way of viewing the city and introducing it, providing aerial images of the city without revealing the source of these images. In these images the airplane is not shown and the movement replicated in these establishing shots does not demonstrate mobility for the characters. Instead, these visual references suggest the vision of the panopticon, the all-seeing eye, and position the city as a destination and as a concept. This film technique positions the viewer outside of the narrative for a moment because the viewer is seeing privileged images that are outside of the characters' on-screen experiences. The viewer sees the whole city and the whole story for a short period before being immersed in the film.

Images of planes and flight travel in Johannesburg films reflect very little meaning other than to convey a certain level of wealth and status. This contrasts with the extensive use of aerial images used in films to establish the setting of a film. Airplanes and their images, therefore, offer characters in film little in the way of expressing their mobility in the city. Planes only offer economic meaning. Trains offer a greater sense of mobility, though often not within the city. Both forms of travel create the concept of arrival in the city that usually culminates in the depiction of the grand space of the station or airport. However these are not the only means of arrival in the city.

Recent films featuring migration have depicted the most common form of arrival in the city – that of the minibus taxi. In *Max and Mona*, Max departs his rural home on a tractor before catching a taxi to Johannesburg. The taxi drops him off on a street corner in the middle of the imposing CBD. Max is very quickly surrounded by the unfamiliar urban environment. Yesterday also travels by minibus taxi from KwaZulu–Natal to Johannesburg, in the film *Yesterday*. Her arrival in the city is only indicated through the image of her on a busy pavement, jostled by dozens of pedestrians. Johannesburg is first represented by the mass of people before the high-rise buildings of the city centre are revealed to us on screen.

Travel to the city shows little evolution over time. The train remains one of the most potent images of arrival into Johannesburg and has been only recently supplemented with the image of the taxi in films such as *Max and Mona* and *Yesterday*. The airplane has demonstrated even less change with time, largely because its use and representation in film has been intermittent and mostly fleeting. Only the backdrop of the airport exhibits the technological advances

that have been made over the last fifty years. In *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951) there is no sense of the terminal building, but in *Gold* and *Soweto Green* we can see the changes in appearance of the airport buildings. However, these have little to do with expressing meaning in the films and more to do with progress marching forward regardless. The changing nature of the airport spaces has no impact on the character or plot development of the films.

## 7.3 Travel in the City

Mobility is not always depicted in films because movement can be implied through editing techniques. A character can be shown walking a few steps or getting into a taxi, and with a change in location, the film's editing suggests that the character has moved through space. Subsequently, movement is not always present in films. In this section I discuss walking and driving as the two major forms of intra-urban movement. These types of movement differ from other forms of transport because they offer a level of autonomy. They therefore have the potential to demonstrate agency and mobility in the city for the characters that move in this way. This is illustrated particularly through the role of the tsotsi in many Johannesburg films, who shows agency both through walking and driving.

While walking and driving offer agency there are two other forms of movement that are more ambiguous in their meanings. The first is that of being driven or being a passenger on a train, bus or taxi in the city. These modes of transport are still able to provide characters with agency and mobility, but are compromised through the passivity of being a passenger. The last form of movement is actually an absence of mobility, and in this last section I discuss modes of transport that do not provide mobility and characters that remain immobile and fixed.

Recent literature on Johannesburg has emphasised walking and the work of de Certeau (Graham, 2007) bases this on the fact that walking is the most common and, most often, the only form of transport for South Africans (Behrens, 2005). This literature often compares the experience of walking against the privilege of the private motor vehicle travel: historically a predominantly White form of transport, now the domain of the middle to upper classes. But as Megan Jones points out, the car is not an impermeable bubble but is "transgressed by the exterior spaces they navigate" (2011, p. 391). The experience of moving through the street in a car is therefore not divorced from the pedestrian experience of the same street. In addition, from the highway, the car affords views of the whole city, allowing the driver to read the text and to write it.

### 7.3.1 Walking

Walking, and de Certeau's theory, has received much attention in recent literature on Johannesburg (Graham, 2007), and there is one main reason for this. Walking is theorised as a practice that provides mobility and agency, and subverts the dominant panoptican view and the system of auto-mobility (Graham, 2007). In addition, walking remains the main mode of transport for Black South Africans (Van Donk, 2004), and writing about walking therefore makes visible what was largely invisible during apartheid. Walking is also seen to be democratic – all those who are able-bodied are able to practise this form of the everyday – while even public transport, not to mention the private car, requires some economic means.

For de Certeau, walking is the act of the individual and walking in the city, choosing paths and routes, is as personal a form of expression as the way in which we enunciate words or the way in which we establish rhetoric (de Certeau, 1984). Walking is, therefore, a means of demonstrating an urban life and of establishing agency in the city. The city emerges and reveals itself through the walks of its inhabitants (de Certeau, 1984). Walking is, at once, the act of expressing oneself as an urban citizen and a representation of the city. Walking, as a primary means of movement, is represented most frequently on the big screen.

Two anti-apartheid films use walking to invoke defiance and construct the street as a space of resistance. *Come back, Africa* (1959) creates a powerful feeling of movement through the use of fast-paced editing (influenced by the Russian expressionist and the German street films of the 1920s and 1930s), and the depiction of masses of people. The scenes show workers disembarking trains and walking in the city, and labourers moving through the tunnels of mines, and they form interludes between the unfolding of the narrative of the film. They evoke de Certeau's description of the urban swarm:

> Their story begins on ground level, with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a qualitative character: a style of tactile apprehension and kinaesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together. In that respect, pedestrian movements form one of these 'real systems whose existence in fact makes up the city.' They are not localised: it is rather that they spatialise. (de Certeau, 1984, p. 97)

These scenes convey important meaning for the film. The swell of people represents the city: first, in the way that they represent processes of industrialisation and mass production, upon which processes Johannesburg is founded; and second, their act of walking maps out the spaces of the city, making city spaces visible. These scenes are representations of Black

South Africans, particularly the labour force, laying claim to the spaces of the White city. These meanings are in deep contrast with the protagonist Zachariah's own narrative, which depicts the constraining apartheid city with all its harsh conditions for Black South Africans. The mobility of the individual does not reflect the movement of the masses.

This suggests a third interpretation of the scenes of mass mobility in the film. At the height of the Defiance campaign of the 1950s, these scenes of hundreds of people walking in the streets references these protest marches. With an anti-apartheid message at its heart, this film is subtly inviting residents of the city to march in the streets to lay claim to the city. The streets of the city are the spaces where citizens can act out ownership of the city, to demand democracy and the right to access the city freely. The act of walking becomes an act of protest and walking the city is a way of claiming the right to the city.

This is very clearly represented in the film *Mapantsula* (1988). Panic's agency as a tsotsi in the city is represented through his active movement through the different spaces of Johannesburg. Our first encounter with Panic is on the streets of the central business district and the camera moves with him as he navigates through the busy streets. The segregated city is revealed in all its detail as we follow him on the train between Soweto and the city centre and on the bus to the White suburbs. Panic moves freely through the city on foot and by public transport, seemingly carefree and independent.

The public transport is seen to be an extension of his swaggering walk and his domination of space, most evidently demonstrated when he pays no heed to two fellow passengers who question his changing on the bus but who yield to his status as a tsotsi. This scene suggests that it is Panic's criminal nature that allows him such freedom, further emphasised by the juxtaposition of his restricted movement while in jail. But, as stated earlier, the film questions the definitions of legal and criminal, therefore opening up the possibilities of such freedom of movement.

Adopting de Certeau, Panic's act of walking establishes that this city exists as well as revealing its spaces (1984). Through Panic, Johannesburg emerges with spaces of opportunity and possibility, highlighting the key role that Panic has played in the development of a Black urban identity in Johannesburg. Through Panic the city exists as a series of spaces that Black people can lay claim to and inhabit. Panic exercises his claim to the city by walking the pavements and travelling on buses, trains and taxis. But public transport does not always represent freedom of movement – it is Panic's agency that gives it that meaning.

While Panic's agency and mobility begin to map out Black urban identity in the city, his walking also reflects the dominance of the male flâneur. The absence or vulnerability of female characters walking in the city is notable in contrast. This sentiment is reflected in *Yesterday*. Much of the film focuses on the long roads Yesterday must walk along from her isolated rural village, but they still represent her small degree of agency and are an opportunity for her to have long conversations with her daughter, Beauty. When Yesterday visits Johannesburg she is reliant on public transport and her status in Johannesburg is greatly diminished – revealed by the brutal beating she receives from her husband at the mines. Yesterday is a strong female character that is ultimately shown to be disempowered in the city. The walking that empowers men and tsotsis in the city is an element of mobility that is reserved for women only in township or rural spaces.

The vulnerability of women on the streets was established in a study that examined the way that women experience walking in the city of Johannesburg.

> The respondents in our study appear to have experienced themselves as the dominated 'other' and 'weaker sex', whose needs for spatial accessibility, mobility and social interaction were subordinated to those of motorised vehicles, and whose safety was compromised by criminals and males who tend to engage in victimising behaviours against women. (Seedat et al, 2006, p.149)

In recent years women have begun to speak out against the harassment they face in taxi-ranks in Johannesburg, for example, for wearing mini-skirts, but it's clear that the harassment has been going on for years (Vincent, no date). The result is that women do not feel comfortable when walking in the streets and when using public minibus taxis – the most commonly used form of transport in Johannesburg (Scheidegger, 2009).

The vulnerability of walking is further explored and exploited in *District 9* (2009). The film makes extensive use of the aerial view and the helicopter, and this is contrasted with the characters' experiences on the ground interacting with the aliens. As Wikus van der Merwe begins his transformation into an alien he is forced to remain at ground level, running on foot and hiding in the settlement of the aliens. This form of mobility is strongly associated with the aliens and the great difference in height also serves to reinforce the concept of the aliens being inferior. The audience is prevented from fully experiencing the film as a pure narrative through the use of mock documentary techniques. The film makes use of fake television footage, most of which is filmed from a moving vehicle – either a car or helicopter. This places the audience outside of the action taking place on the ground at the

level of the aliens. Here, walking is secured as an inferior form of mobility while motorised transport is given greater significance.

These films demonstrate how vulnerable the practice of walking can be. This vulnerability is reinforced by the fact that walking is often not a choice but is a mobility enforced through the spatial legacy of apartheid and economic status. The vulnerable nature of walking is further stated through road fatalities – pedestrians make up half of those who die on South African roads (Behrens, 2005). To walk is agency over immobility but does not necessarily represent agency in the larger city. Even Panic's agency in the city is achieved through a combination of walking and as a passenger on buses and taxis. This is the analysis that Graham suggests is critical for understanding mobility in Johannesburg: "Johannesburg's different urban mobilities remain circumscribed by the system of auto-mobility" (2007, p. 81).

### 7.3.2 Driving

According to de Certeau (1984), walking in the city is a form of expressing the act or the practice of being in the city. The manner in which we move through spaces is a description of the urban itself. But as Nigel Thrift (2004) points out, driving a car can be thought of as an equally valid form of movement and expression in the modern city. The motorcar bears a striking resemblance to walking in the meaning constructed in films, but there are also stark differences. The car occupies the same street space and, for the driver, is seen to be an extension of the body (Thrift, 2004) and offers the same level of autonomy in navigating the city. Katz (2000, p. 33, quoted in Thrift, 2004, p. 47) describes this mobility as the 'automobilised person', which Thrift argues requires a different form of analysis other than de Certeau's practice of walking as a language. James Graham goes further to state that the automobilised person's experience of the city is identical to that of the pedestrian, and that driving is not excluded from the processes of re-imaging and consuming the city (2007).

The car operates in a highly regulated and controlled space that contrasts vividly with the spaces of the pedestrian. It is confined to the space of the road, and does not have the same agility as walking, and is governed by clear road rules. But Thrift (2004) demonstrates how motorists have developed ways of expressing themselves through limited means and ways of bending road rules and creating shortcuts. The stiff steel chassis of the car is experienced as an extension of the body and the rigid road regulations are easily subverted creating a mode of mobility that is personal, responsive and autonomous.

In Johannesburg, the car is reserved for the privileged few and so its greater mobility is strongly juxtaposed, in the space of the street, against the 'immobility' of the many. This is

particularly emphasised with highways and freeways, where pedestrians are prohibited, giving preference to the mobility of the car. Cars are expensive, require skills and a licence and, therefore, have attained a high status level. These attributes of the car and the 'automobilised person' refer specifically to the driver of the vehicle, although Thrift (2004, p. 46) writes of 'passengering'. By the nature of driving, the passenger is not active in the embodiment of the car or the subversion of following a determined path and, therefore, does not experience driving in the same autonomous manner. This aspect will be discussed in the next section.

A large part of Johannesburg's development has focused on the car as the most important mode of transport. The first car in Johannesburg was recorded in 1897 and by 1933 there were 27 500 motor vehicles in the city (Beavon, 2001). A mere twenty years later and there were 110 000 cars, which called for a traffic plan and the beginnings of the freeways in the 1950s (Beavon, 2001). The major highways in Johannesburg were completed in 1975, serving the majority of White private car owners. These motorways fuelled urban sprawl and exacerbated the emptying of the city centre. As a result, the private car is still the preferred means of transport in Johannesburg. In some films this has meant that the car has eclipsed walking as the dominant mode of mobility.

This is particularly highlighted in gangster films. The film also allows for greater action and speed in films, as the popularity of the high speed car chase attests. In *Hijack Stories* (2002), Sox, the young actor, is seen to be extremely vulnerable on foot when he arrives in Soweto, having disembarked from a taxi. This is a complete role reversal when compared to Oliver Schmitz's earlier depiction of Panic in *Mapantsula*. His lack of agency in the narrative is further emphasised in that we never see him as a bold man of movement; even behind the wheel of a car he is under the control of Zama and his gang. This is juxtaposed with the image of the gangster, Zama, who is almost constantly within the frame of a motor vehicle. His operation as a tsotsi is the acquisition of cars through hijacking and, therefore, his agency in the city is achieved through auto-mobility. We first meet Zama in the back of the car and the vehicle becomes a moving space within the city, where conversations and confrontations occur all while traversing the streets at high speed.

The car compresses time and distance, revealing more of the city to us in less time. Zama's car mocks Sox's economic mobility by transporting him from comfortable Rosebank to a tsotsi underworld of the township within minutes. The streets become a background blur that connect the different parts of the city. The highly mobile and independent motor vehicle provides power and agency to the gangster, but it also diminishes the space of the street, which becomes a space of dominance and violence.

When Bra Dan shows off his walk to Sox in the *shebeen*, it is a signal that the walk as a marker of the tsotsi belongs to the gangsters of old and further emphasises the need for a car. And the car is no less an expression of the tsotsi than the walk was. As Thrift describes: "the identity of person and car kinaesthetically intertwine" (2007, p. 47), and this is demonstrated in the film at the end when Fly (the getaway driver) expresses his grief for his fellow gangster, Percy, at his funeral by performing 'doughnuts' (driving in circles) in the dirt road. Fly and his car are one entity.

In *Jerusalema*, the car and learning to drive are the entry points to becoming a tsotsi and to gaining access to the city. As a school pupil, Lucky walks the streets of Soweto and we even see him trying to earn money by washing taxis – remaining on the outside of the vehicles. We encounter the first tsotsi as he pulls up in a car and Lucky's initiation into gang life is through a comical process of simultaneously hijacking a vehicle and learning to drive. However, the car, and the life of crime, transport Lucky to the city and enable him to achieve mobility outside of Soweto.

Although the car is very clearly important to leading a life of crime, it is more importantly linked to independence and movement in the city.

> Speed and freedom are other powerful arguments in favour of the car; in contrast to public transport it allows for direct travel from door to door at any time, it provides privacy, a place to be alone and one can choose fellow travellers; hence the access to a car is equated with personal liberation. (Scheidegger, 2009, p. 213)

Vans, in the plot of *Jerusalema*, are used to break into an electronics store in the city centre and are upheld as symbols of success as displayed in the township arena. But when we catch up with Lucky again in Hillbrow, he is living an honest life as a taxi driver and it is only when he loses his vehicle in a hijacking that he returns to a life of crime. This blurs the representation of the car as a tool to commit crime but emphasises its role for achieving independence and mobility in the city.

*Jerusalema* contrasts Lucky's success in mobility and agency in the city with aerial or low angle images of the Hillbrow high-rises. These all-encompassing urban views represent de Certeau's concept city and they are interwoven within the narrative of the film suggesting that as Lucky has risen as a gangster he has lost touch with the city of the everyday. This is underlined by the fact that these images foretell of Lucky's downfall as emperor of Hillbrow. These representations of Johannesburg serve to stress the city's complicated and not easily

comprehended nature. Since the turn of the millennium, the car has been secured as the symbol of status and mobility for the tsotsi in the films of *Hijack Stories* and *Jerusalema*.

The importance of the car is not limited to the tsotsi figure. In *Stander* (2003), Andre Stander is a cop who begins to rob banks by walking in and demanding money. He is arrested and imprisoned for his crimes but Andre escapes with another convict and they form a small gang to continue their armed robberies. As a full-fledged gang they are complete with a car and a getaway driver, highlighting the role of the car in elevating their statuses as criminals. The film, however, is a historical enactment of the real Stander gang that preyed on banks in the 1970s in Johannesburg. In the historical context the meaning is diffused behind the meaning of reconstructing the past.

In *Chikin Biznis* (1998), Sipho Khumalo retires from his longstanding job in the city working for a White man to start his own business. The very first scenes of the film show him moving quickly on foot through the modern city, creating pathways through the bustle of Johannesburg. But his first action as an independent business owner is to fetch the bright yellow van that he has purchased with his retirement payout. The rest of the film plays out in the township but it is the car that secures Sipho's autonomy, even if it is not demonstrated as mobility in Johannesburg's city centre.

Driving, as much as walking, is a practice of the everyday. The car has been appropriated by tsotsis in much the same manner as clothing, as a means of expression and style. Drivers do not subscribe to the regulated system of auto-mobility and frequently subvert the rules, reinterpreting the grid of the city. As well as being a practice of the everyday, drivers are also afforded views of the city from afar and an understanding of the whole through the experience of the highways and elevated motorways. As Megan Jones (2011) illustrates, cars are not vehicles of isolation, retreating from the reality of the street but the barriers of doors and windshields are frequently transgressed. This is particularly revealed in the documentary of Johannesburg, *Unhinged: Surviving Johannesburg* (2010), which explores and interacts with the city almost exclusively from within a private car.

### 7.3.3 Being Driven

Thousands migrated to the city on foot, on horseback and in ox wagons and, once in the city, transport and movement became a highly contested issue. Low-skilled Afrikaners became cab drivers in the city and fought for their rights to operate in Johannesburg (Van Onselen, 1982a). The license to operate a tram system within the city was subjected to tight government control, initially restricted to the horse-drawn model (Ibid.). In later years, all public transport was segregated by law and this came at a time when efficient public

transport was desperately required by Blacks as they were removed to the outlying townships of Soweto.

The experiences of the passenger came under scrutiny with the arrival of train travel, which gave birth to the concept of the modern passenger (Adey, Bissell, McCormack & Merriman, 2012). The passenger is an ambiguous figure who can be seen to have surrendered control to the driver or the transport system, but equally the journey of the passenger may be characterised by ease and convenience (Ibid.). Travel as a passenger allows the traveller to certain leisure activities; to unwind or reflect upon the landscape moving past, or to engage with fellow travellers (Ibid.). Our childhoods are governed by experiences of being a passenger, first in the womb and then on our mothers' backs or in the stroller (Ibid.).

However, in South Africa, the experiences of passengers are far from gentle or convenient journeys. Public transport and its long, uncomfortable journeys became a constant affront and reminder to its passengers of the injustices and inequalities of apartheid (Pirie, 1992). The first intra-city commuter train in Johannesburg, called the Rand Tram, was established in 1890 and connected Boksburg and Johannesburg (Beavon, 2001). When the first native locations situated outside of the city were established at the turn of the twentieth century, the railway was seen as an important provider of cost-effective public transport to carry the labour force into the city where it was needed (Pirie, 1987). Local authorities continued to develop remote townships in conjunction with South African Railways, ensuring the train became the dominant mode of travel, even if this meant, in later years, suppressing the development of competing road transport (Pirie, 1987).

The situation of enforced monopolies and enforced commuting distances for Black South Africans created untenable conditions. Segregated trains were overcrowded, expensive, poorly serviced and infrequent. Protests against these conditions began in 1952 and continued throughout the apartheid era. But trains, particularly between Soweto and the city, were a continual struggle for commuters. Gangs operated on train carriages robbing their fellow passengers of their weekly wages, but the train also became a sight of political protest as political rallies and strike meetings could be held under the radar of the watchful authorities (Pirie, 1992). This erupted in the early 1990s, as trains became the site of horrific political violence between members of different parties. For the period of less than a year, from mid-1991, 138 people lost their lives on trains in Johannesburg (Sey, 2008). Although the violence disappeared almost completely after 1994 (Sey, 2008), it has tainted the trains as violent and dangerous spaces.

In *Tsotsi* (2005) there is a dramatic sequence showing a train journey at the beginning of the film, which does not represent the journey of any one of the characters, but instead appears to be the journey of the viewer into Tsotsi's world. The trip is intended to represent the physical distance between the city and suburbs and the world of Tsotsi. In other words the distance is along the rail tracks. However, in Johannesburg, the railroad was often used as a buffer between areas defined by different racial groups creating a barrier across the tracks rather than along their length. This is very seldom, if ever, represented in film, even with regard to the main railroads that run from east to west, which have strongly divided the city into a more affluent north and a working-class south. The depiction of the train in *Tsotsi* also reflects the images of early films such as *African Jim* (1949) and evoking the same sense of arrival in the city, even as Tsotsi resides within the greater Johannesburg area. This reinforces the segregated and fragmented city.

In *Tsotsi* the train is divorced from its meaning of travel as Tsotsi and his gang do not use it for mobility, but rather as a site for terror and crime. The train station becomes their hunting ground for victims, and the train is where they rob and maim them. The train carriage becomes a space of fear for victims and for the tsotsis; the space enables them to express their masculinity, power and ruthlessness. This reflects sentiments during apartheid when flaunting the rules of train travel signified your status as a man and criminal (Pirie, 1992) and this continues currently with the practice of train surfing. To surf the train is to ride on the outside of the carriage, at great danger, avoiding payment for the fare and securing a masculine image. The young men who practice this 'sport' attract many girlfriends and female followers at the risk of serious injury and death. The mobility of the train therefore, becomes overwhelmingly defined by the masculine, both in the courage required to be a passenger and through its use by criminals.



**Figure 7.2** – Tsotsi displaying his gangster masculinity on the train (Still from *Tsotsi* (2005) with permission).

Motorised omnibuses were introduced alongside trams from 1927 onwards, but were eventually replaced by electric trolley buses in 1936 (Sey, 2008). All tram, trolley bus and bus services were segregated, which put enormous strain on the economic viability of these transport modes. From 1943, buses became frequent targets for boycotts (Pirie, 1992). These scenes are referenced in *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951). The largest boycott in 1957, against the private company PUTCO, which serviced Black townships, saw thousands of Black South Africans walk the nine miles into the city (Sey, 2008). Buses continued to be the site of protest throughout apartheid and were seen in a similar light to trains – a constant reminder of the ills of apartheid. But buses are still relevant for their depiction of movement. As mentioned earlier, Panic's mobility is not diminished when he is shown using the bus. And in *Sarafina!* (1992) and *Yesterday* the bus is an important vehicle depicting the mobility of women in Johannesburg.

While buses and minibus taxis occupy the same space as cars and can even offer their passengers a level of independence, they do not carry the same meanings in film and in Johannesburg. The bus is more closely aligned in meaning to the train. In *Yesterday*, the bus journey is an opportunity for reflection as a passive passenger, much in the same way that trains are used in films. In *White Wedding* (2009), the bus terminus in Johannesburg is part of the main train station, Park Station, and this is used in the film to mark the departure point from Johannesburg when Elvis leaves the city on an overnight coach. The bus therefore offers no additional meaning.



**Figure 7.3** – Yesterday reflecting in the Johannesburg bus (Still from *Yesterday* (2004) copyright permission not obtained see thesis hardcopy).

Minibus taxis were a private response by Black South Africans, in the late 1970s and 1980s, to the lack of public transportation in the apartheid city for them. But the industry had its origins in a more conventional taxi service from the 1960s. These taxi services all operated illegally, as the government tried to maintain strict control and regulation over public transport; however the industry was deregulated in 1988 and the minibus taxi was finally legal (Khosa, 1998). Unfortunately, the deregulation sparked massively violent competition between rival taxi-owners and associations, and the industry was plagued by political violence prior to 1994 (Sey, 2008). The taxi industry has since been mostly brought to order and forms the backbone of transport in the city as well as between cities in South Africa. Many films set in Johannesburg make reference to this common mode of transport though its meanings, if any, are few.

The nature of the taxi system places it as a hybrid between public transport and the private car. The system operates within some regulatory framework – rival taxi associations have identified routes and territories that they operate within and there are both formal and informal taxi ranks, which constitute the main points of access to this transportation. However, the taxi industry is largely admonished for its disregard for road safety and regulations. Taxis will frequently stop in the middle of roads and intersections to drop off and pick up passengers, will ignore traffic signs and lights, and often ignore the maintenance of their vehicles so that they are in a dire state of roadworthiness. While stopping almost anywhere provides passengers with the freedom of an almost door-to-door service, passengers also fear greatly for their lives in light of the driving and vehicle standards.

As an expression of rebellion, the minibus taxi represented an opportunity to ditch all forms of state-provided public transport, reflected in the dramatic decrease of passenger numbers on buses and trains during the 1980s (Sey, 2008). So although people may travel as passengers on taxis, the journey represents a freedom of movement for most that was previously denied and represents an autonomy that is not necessarily of the self, but is autonomy free from state control. Hence the taxi bears a meaning that is constructed from the experiences of both the passenger and the driver.

In *Taxi to Soweto* (1991), the minibus taxi is the focus of the film and is the vehicle that allows a White woman and her husband from Parktown to begin to understand the life of Black people in Soweto. Through a series of unfortunate events, Jessica du Toit finds herself reliant on a taxi and its driver, Richard, when she ends up stranded in Soweto. The taxi is shown to be the only means of transport into Soweto, especially for the White characters and at the same time, Blacks are shown to be the almost exclusive passengers on the taxis. In

the film, the taxi is intended to be the literal and figurative vehicle that unites the White and Black urban experiences.

The taxi strongly evokes the experiences of Black South Africans, particularly Sowetans. In *Soweto Green* (1995) the newly landed Curtis and Cora are hijacked travelling from the highway and are forced to take a taxi to continue on to Soweto. Again, the taxi is the vehicle into Soweto. The meaning of the taxi as mobility for the driver was reiterated in *Jerusalema*. As described earlier, when Lucky's taxi is hijacked he loses his mobility, agency and ability to make a living as a taxi driver. It is at this point that he again turns to crime to reclaim his agency and his masculinity.

The taxi is also just depicted as part and parcel of the Black experience, particularly in the urban context. The urban and modern context is emphasised in *Max and Mona* when the scene of Max in the taxi with his goat is greeted with hilarity. The urban emphasis is surprising because even in this instance the taxi is travelling from the village to Johannesburg. The taxi is equally used for long-distance routes and inter-city journeys reflected in the films *Yesterday* and *Max and Mona*. The association with Soweto and the urban experience is therefore, very strong, reinforced in the images of taxis with the city skyline in the background that features frequently in *Taxi to Soweto*.

The experience of the passenger in Johannesburg is far from a passive one, where a commuter may travel along, unconsciously following the signs and signals of a public transport system. Films of Johannesburg reflect the ambiguous nature of the passenger, portraying both the passive traveller and the active commuter. Modes of public transport represent state control but also represent spaces of defiance. These modes of transport also signify an ambiguity between the journey from outside the city towards it, and from within the city. There is not much to distinguish between Jim's journey into Johannesburg and Sarafina's trip from Soweto. Both characters will have similar experiences of arrival in the city, though Sarafina's will be tarnished by repeated journeys. Similarly, Jessica and Max share experiences of exploring new urban environments, despite the different distances and destinations. What these films illustrate is that often the trip between Johannesburg and Soweto can feel as distant and strange as the enormous trek from rural to urban.

### 7.3.4 Going Nowhere

Movement does not necessarily result in a trajectory from A to B, but instead can represent a form of surveillance or control inflicted upon others. *District 9* makes extensive use of the aerial viewpoint, mostly through a conscious use of the helicopter. The feature film is designed to simulate a documentary and makes use of created 'news footage' shot from a

helicopter, looking down on the action. The film intentionally mimics the footage from news stories covering anti-apartheid uprisings during the 1980s, reinforcing a sense of familiarity even in the face of the alien narrative. The film's storyline and action includes MNU agents travelling in, pursuing and firing from helicopters, which adds further drama as well as recurring aerial views. However, despite the fact that the helicopters are used as a form of transport, their meaning is not derived from a sense of mobility but rather the helicopter connotes authority, surveillance and control. This can be seen in the shots of helicopters in *Jerusalema* and *Stander*, where meanings of surveillance and violent control are signified in the armed man that is almost always included in the frame of the helicopter view.

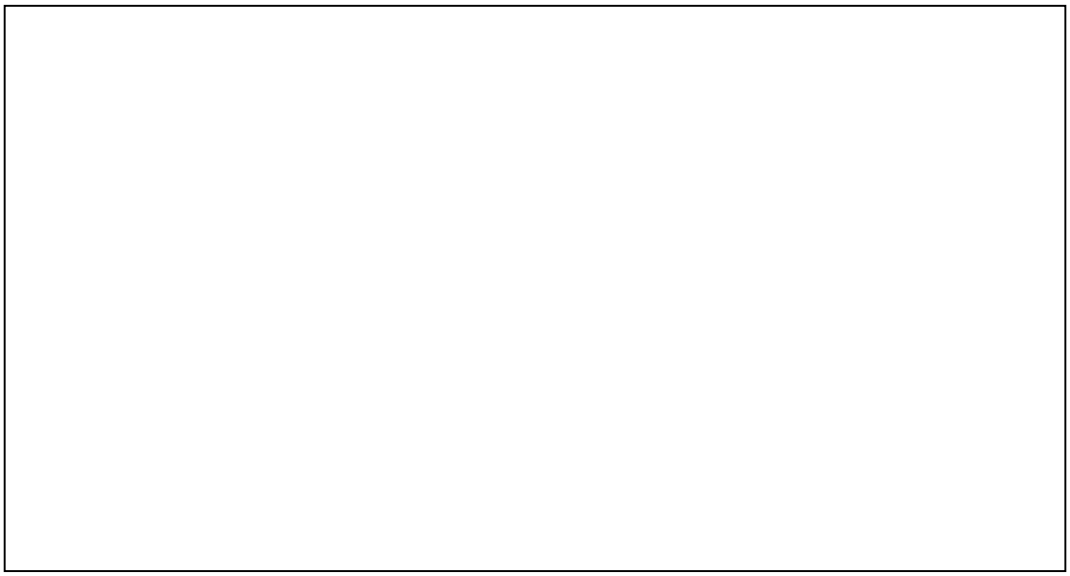


**Figure 7.3** – View from inside the helicopter (still from *District 9* (2009) copyright permission not obtained see thesis hardcopy)

## 7.4 Conclusion

Mobility provides a lens with which to understand Johannesburg and people in the city. Mobility as represented (or not) in film equally reveals and expresses the city. This chapter has shown that de Certeau's theory of walking is not the only expression of the everyday in Johannesburg film. Driving, and even public transport, forms an important element of self-expression and agency in Johannesburg. However, within these modes of mobility, film has illustrated inequality and power struggles: between rich and poor, male and female, and Black and White. But, film may reveal more by the stories or narratives that it fails to produce.

Narratives of exile are conspicuously absent. Travel to the city has received considerably more attention on film than travel from Johannesburg, and yet the tale of the foreign immigrant has largely been left untold. Travelling to the city has historically been constructed through the image of the train with the train embodying the industrial meaning of the

metropolis (Schwarzer, 2004). The train creates a definitive sense of arrival in the city but in Johannesburg the train is also embodied with political significance as a reminder of apartheid spatial planning, and as a space where criminals induced terror and asserted their masculinity (Pirie, 1992). In the films *Jerusalema* and *Tsotsi* the train represents the space of the male criminal but it also carries an ambiguous meaning of being both outside and inside the city simultaneously. Commuters travel and arrive in the city each day as if anew. This emphasises the physical distance between Soweto and Johannesburg, but also the mental distance, as those who live in the city experience it as strangers arriving.

The airplane and the aerial view provide the city with context and reveal the networks. As we move over the city, the view from above illustrates the grid of Johannesburg and shows its internal networks, while the airport represents the global connections and networks, reminding us of the context of the city, both within the urban landscape and the international matrix. In stark contrast, similar aerial views generated by helicopters represent surveillance and control and negate a sense of movement.

Nuttall (2004) points out that although there are physical markers of boundaries and spatial divisions that still exist in the city, movement that transgresses these barriers, breaks down the legacy of the apartheid city. The mobile tsotsi of the cinema screen has long been demonstrating this ability and, therefore, agency in the city. The ability to act and claim ownership in Johannesburg is not dependent on walking as a mode of transport but more broadly on the ability to move through the streets, whether on foot, by car or via public transport. The representation of the tsotsi is an integral part of representations of the city that reflect agency and freedom in many and varied parts of Johannesburg. However the dominance of the tsotsi character acts as a mirror reflecting the immobility of female characters.

The films of Johannesburg are not maps, they do not show the city in all its detail, and they only give small visual clues as to their real locations in the city. We see the city and this detail through the narratives and exploits of the characters in Johannesburg. It is the images of movement that provide the tools and maps to navigate the city. To move through the city is a form of urban expression. This is why the tsotsi is an important navigator in the city: because the character represents the urban. This is also why a lack of movement is equally critical. Those characters that are shown statically, or who move without going anywhere, undermine their claim to urbanity. To move is to explore, know, express and choose. Mobility in and around the city represents these elements of agency and urbanity.

Mobility provides an important platform to bridge the worlds of film and the city. Mobility is expressed through the actions of characters that audiences can easily identify with. Drawing on de Certeau (1984) and Graham (2007), viewers themselves express and know Johannesburg through their mobility therein, specifically through walking and driving. Movement and its absence in film is, therefore, a valuable element in exploring viewers' perceptions and urban practices in the city of Johannesburg.

# 8. Crime and the Tsotsi

## 8.1 Introduction

The image of Johannesburg is almost synonymous with crime and has the motif of the dangerous city (Fu & Murray, 2007). As a result the gangster genre is one of the most prevalent narratives of films located in Johannesburg. This is not unusual. Urban images on film have long being connected with the depiction of gangsters and the criminal underworld. The representation of the city globally is intimately linked to the portrayal of the criminal underworld, and the genres of the gangster and film noir. Urban streets were exploited to their full potential, to provide dark shadows and suspense in the stories of crime and detection. These, mostly American, films of the 1940s and 1950s were popular with South African audiences, particularly with young Black males searching for a foothold in urban life in Johannesburg. These young boys and men appropriated many aspects of the American film culture, specifically the gangster, and created the urban identity of the tsotsi.

Tsotsi can be roughly translated to mean gangster or criminal, but refers specifically to those gangsters of the townships who incorporated other cultural signifiers of language and dress (Dovey, 2009). In the next section, I will describe the many criminal elements of Johannesburg, which include other gangs in and around the city. But it is specifically the tsotsi, with his embodied signifiers, who embraced an urban identity and would go on to play a role in South African film.

The image of the gangster, or the tsotsi, has been linked in South Africa to the development of a Black urban identity since the first tsotsis appeared in the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, tsotsis have appeared on the screen in conjunction with images of Johannesburg, South Africa's largest city. Johannesburg, as the symbol of urbanity in the country, therefore bestows upon the tsotsi the representation of the urban, while the city is endowed with the images of crime and corruption.

The confluence of so many people from various backgrounds brought about a certain amount of friction in the city, not to mention the need for people acquainted with rural life to adapt to a modern city. The early days of Johannesburg were a hotbed of crime, mostly through illicit liquor selling, gambling and prostitution. But the nature of the apartheid laws (and those colonial laws that preceded them) rendered residing in the city a crime for 'non-

White' South Africans. The concept of crime becomes entwined with urban living and, therefore, becomes integral to the development of an urban identity for Blacks in Johannesburg.

Rural Blacks began to develop a collective identity when faced with the urban reality of Johannesburg, and evolved urban identities through the medium of film. In Hollywood, film entrenched the relationship between the city and crime through the gangster and suspense genres, and the film noir movement of the 1940s depicting the gritty city landscape. For Black South Africans, film, and later television, was a powerful tool in identifying with the city. The tsotsi or the image thereof, was a defining element in the creation of a Black urban identity.

In the post-apartheid era, the image of the tsotsi continues to be an important symbol in South African film and television. Jacqueline Maingard suggests that this is merely a continuation of the historical popularity of the gangster genre as well as reflecting a trend in the USA of the African–American gangster genre (Maingard, 2007b). In this chapter I argue that the continued relevance of the gangster motif is strongly related to the continued need to develop an urban identity; an urban identity that is based on the need to navigate and move through the city. This is because apartheid denied access and agency to the city for 'non-Whites' and therefore, in the post-apartheid era the city remains an incomprehensible entity.

This chapter explores the final theme for Part B: Johannesburg's Representational Space. Crime and the tsotsi are age-old issues in Johannesburg and continue to be relevant in the post-apartheid period. But this chapter also brings together the themes of the previous three chapters: the last section describes the spaces and materialities of the tsotsi in Johannesburg, and the second section examines the construction of a Black urban identity through the film characters, and the expression of these characters through mobility of on-screen spaces. The first section gives background into crime in Johannesburg and the development of the tsotsi figure. This first section shows how tsotsis were first influenced by films, while the following two sections show how this influence translated into real identities in the city and the articulation of these identities in real spaces of the city. This demonstrates the circuit of culture at work, and possibly the indirect nature of film's influence.

## 8.2 The City and Crime

Johannesburg was a rough, harsh and tough town for the first two to three decades of its existence. Thousands of fortune seekers arrived, criminals among them, and from the beginning, the chaotic and disorganised settlement was a law unto its own. The difficult

conditions that this early society faced, dictated the need to bend the rules somewhat. Before going into detail about Johannesburg's criminal underworld, it's important to emphasise that criminals have not always committed crimes in this country. Although crime and the law tends to be thought of in terms of right and wrong, in practice it is not so clearly defined, especially when legislation is used for the oppression of one or more races. The result is that the prisons contained Black men who had coupled with White women, White men who had sold liquor to Black men, and Black women who had brewed beer. The law of discrimination made it almost impossible for 'non-Whites' in South Africa to lead an 'honest' life.

It was the slump of the early 1890s that first revealed petty thieves and burglars in town, usually the recently unemployed (Van Onselen, 1982a), but there were also other factors leading to the creation of an underworld even before the town had roots. The harsh and uncertain conditions of Johannesburg's early existence discouraged women from making the town their home. The male-dominated society fostered the activities of gambling, prostitution and drinking – the latter only illegal for the town's Black residents. Those in authority turned a blind eye to these vices, aware that these were necessary evils to make life more bearable on the rand (Van Onselen, 1982a), and no doubt, also because the lack of a reasonable police presence severely hampered enforcement.

Prostitution began with independent women migrating into the city and occupying small hotels, boarding houses or working as barmaids but as more immigrants from Europe, Australia and America arrived, so the pimps and gangs emerged to control the sex industry (Van Onselen, 1982a). One of the most prominent of these gangs was known as the 'Bowery Boys', a syndicate of criminals from New York (originally mostly from Poland) that specialised in brothels, human trafficking and selling liquor illegally (Van Onselen, 1982a). This gang was particularly brazen, establishing the 'American' Club (essentially a pimps' club) to which they invited policemen, and they were described at the time as 'slouch-hatted bullies' (Van Onselen, 1982a, p. 118). It's likely that their counterparts in America were the inspiration for the gangster films of the 1940s, which in turn shaped the tsotsi gangsters of Sophiatown.

These immigrant syndicates were not the only gangs operating in Johannesburg before the end of the twentieth century. Various gangs, made up of local Black men (and some women), sprang up in response to the burgeoning town of Johannesburg and the new urban conditions. It would be these gangs that would shape the underworld in South Africa for the century to come. In the hills to the south of Johannesburg in the 1890s lived a gang of men, women and children, led by a young man called Jan Note. This gang was known as the

'Regiment of the Hills' or the 'Ninevites'. Initially, the gang operated and lived on the outskirts of the city, eluding authorities in the bushveld, and preying mostly on the migrants moving in and out of the city and their Black brethren (Kynoch, 1999). The gang was predominantly Zulu-based in its ethnicity and much of the sophisticated gang hierarchy was based on tribal and warrior language, incorporating terms such as 'chief' (Kynoch, 1999).

Yet another notorious gang of this period was the 'Amalaita', which began on the streets of Johannesburg as a collection of disgruntled male domestic servants and unemployed men, and then retreated to Durban during the Anglo-Boer War. It was during the Anglo-Boer War that the gang members shrugged off their cloaks of secrecy and discretion and donned flashy and conspicuous outfits. As Charles van Onselen describes:

> The various ranks were signified by means of coloured patches, which the Amalaita wore on their distinctive 'knickerbocker' trousers. In addition to this, every member wore some or other form of special hat or helmet and a colour knotted handkerchief around the neck that indicated the particular gang of which he was a member. Finally each Amalaita wore the universal sign of the movement – the red cloth badge. (1982b, p. 57)

The Amalaita also became associated with a distinctive type of music and gang members carried piano accordians, whistles and, most notably, mouth-organs (Van Onselen, 1982b). These gangs helped to develop new identities and foster belonging in these harsh urban environments, as well as to combat the injustices of an increasingly oppressive ruling class, but they still drew significantly upon their rural origins and traditions. This would have a profound influence on the development of the tsotsis in later decades.

Gangs were dominated by men but there were some women who joined their ranks. However, it was by trying to survive in the city that most women became criminals. Within the first decade of the settlement, Black women began arriving in Johannesburg to join their men, having endured drought and suffering in the countryside. Employment, however, was not yet readily available for women and so most resorted to brewing beer in the slumyards of Doornfontein to get by (Koch, 1981). These women were known as '*Shebeen* (tavern) Queens' and were integral to the community networks that existed in the crowded slums of the town (Koch, 1981). By law, all alcohol consumption and production was prohibited for Blacks in most of the country and, as a result, these women were frequently raided, harassed, and arrested by the police. However, no matter how many raids were conducted, litres of beer destroyed or slums relocated, the *shebeen* queen would re-emerge as a beacon of the social in Sophiatown, Soweto and Alexandra.

The early settlement of Johannesburg was characterised by an organised chaos that was a conglomeration of many ethnicities, nationalities, religions and races, all living huddled together in proximity to the mines. The full implication of this industrialising city was yet to be realised, but the White rulers were quick to respond to the new urban conditions to ensure their supremacy. New laws were implemented, specifically against 'non-Whites': what they could not drink, when they were barred entry into the city, and with whom they were not allowed to have sex. Under these circumstances, it was incredibly difficult for Black people to be law-abiding citizens, and it was these everyday injustices that encouraged people to belong to a gang; to live a life that was above all the laws imposed by the oppressive state.

The tsotsis emerged in Sophiatown amidst all these contributing conditions and set themselves up in opposition (Glaser, 1990). They were opposed to the unjust laws of the state and so became legal and moral outlaws, choosing to operate outside all ethical or lawful codes. The tsotsis embraced the urban condition; opposed to the rural structures and elements of dress that other gangs carried. The cinema, an urban pastime, influenced their style of clothing and infected their hybrid language, *tsotsitaal*, with American slang. This carefully constructed culture signified more than the image of a criminal; it was the image of a sophisticated urban gangster. *Tsotsitaal* (gangster language) was used by the writers of *Drum* magazine (Nixon, 1994) as a means of aligning themselves with Sophiatown culture, but it also indicates the powerful image of the tsotsi as a modern and urban Black South African. While not everyone was willing to embrace the criminal underworld in such a manner, they could adopt the lingo and slang and thereby claim their urbanity.

The reception of the tsotsi in everyday life in Sophiatown and Johannesburg reflects the complicated nature of the tsotsi as well as the difficulty of city living for its Black inhabitants. As criminals, tsotsis were despised as their victims were often their fellow residents in Sophiatown and the townships. But their criminal activities were also often a means of subverting the state's unjust laws. Tsotsis stole from White people and sold stolen goods at vastly reduced prices – allowing the impoverished to purchase the unaffordable (Lodge, 1981). This was not from a Robin Hood sentiment, but rather 'just business'. And the same went for flouting the racist apartheid laws – these were not politically motivated actions, but rather the result of following an amoral compass.

The word itself, tsotsi, is derived from the American 'zoot suit' and this was just one phrase of many American slang terms that was adopted (Nixon, 1994). The genre influenced all aspects of life for the criminals in Sophiatown, as they named their gangs after New York and dressed like the gangsters of the films and swaggered down the streets after their idols.

One tsotsi admitted to learning all of his knife skills from spending his childhood in front of the flickering images (Ibid.). Of course, tsotsis were not the only members of the audience, as Paul Gready elaborates how "the cinema for many became a 'sanctuary'. Its role in moulding perceptions and values so in need of, and pliable to, identities, should not be underestimated." (Gready, 1990, p. 155). Rob Nixon describes how the tsotsi "stood as a critical bridging figure between the criminal underworld of Hollywood fantasy and Sophiatown street-life" (1994, p. 32). The tsotsi, therefore, was a physical embodiment of the Hollywood imagination.

The tsotsi was a highly visible character in Sophiatown in the 1940s. He could be seen swaggering in the streets, identified most often by the narrow pants of his zoot suit, his bright shirts and his wide-brimmed hat. This style was adopted from the gangsters depicted in American movies, who became urban anti-heroes admired by the tsotsis. Clive Glaser (1990) explains that although the subculture of the tsotsi wasn't a conscious, politically motivated rebellion, it was a resistance to the dominant hegemony through culture. Lara Allen (2004) believes this cultural resistance was not limited to tsotsis but included musicians and performers, broadening the group to include women and law-abiding citizens. She calls it the 'Sophiatown imaginary' (Allen, 2004, p. 22), an urban culture created through images.

It was through *Drum* magazine that the image of the tsotsi was glamourised and disseminated (Kynoch, 1999). *Drum* reflected the shifting attitudes towards tsotsis in three stages: first, condemning the criminal behaviour; second, admiring their urban and rebellious natures, and finally, remembering and mythologising in the years and decades after Sophiatown's removal (Fenwick, 1996). These shifting attitudes demonstrate the subtle use of the tsotsi as a cultural figure of resistance because it was during the years when Sophiatown was facing the greatest threat and uncertainty that the tsotsi is most visible in the pages of *Drum* (Fenwick, 1996); in news articles, short stories and photo spreads.

The ultimate visibility for the tsotsi, though, was reached when a small gang was immortalised on the celluloid in *African Jim* (1949). This appearance would be the first of many on South African screens; the cinema and television being the perfect forum for this complex cultural icon. The evolution of the tsotsi on the screen will be explored in the next section.

Crime and the tsotsi continued to pervade Johannesburg off screen during the second half of the century. Criminals took on additional meanings when the ANC initiated its armed resistance branch, Umkhonto we Sizwe in 1961. The definition of the law became even more blurred when political activists and parties were banned or imprisoned for opposing the

government. In the early 1990s, on the horizon of democracy, politically-fuelled violence sparked tidal waves of fear, which still rippled at the end of the decade and into the new century when crime rates spiked. The gangster, crime and the underworld remain highly prevalent, if not highly visible, today.

The response to crime or the fear of crime has manifested itself dramatically in the built form of the city. Boundary walls have been extended and made higher and are often topped with electric fencing or razor-wire. Suburban roads have been blocked off or enclosed with limited access points, puncturing what once were public thoroughfares with security gates, booms and barriers. Property developers have capitalised on the increasing need for greater security and have built various forms of enclosed housing developments that range from small townhouse complexes to large private neighbourhoods known as gated communities. These private communities have shared internal roads and social amenities but are often identified from the outside by high imposing walls that stretch around large areas.

These physical barriers create "new divisions and separations, new cleavages and fault lines" (Bremner, 2004, p. 457) in the city that is still trying to repair the lines of apartheid segregation. The architecture of security self-imposes isolation; the wealthy retreat behind electric fencing and alarms, distancing themselves from the problems of poverty and continuing segregation along class divisions. The majority of citizens and the spaces on the outside of these fortresses come to be defined as 'the other'. Long blank walls emphasise the messy and dangerous streets of the city (Hook & Vrdoljak, 2001) and 'difference is conflated with violence and disorder' (Dirsuweit, 2003). The identities of those who exist on the outside of the walls become defined by the architecture of fear.

The character of the tsotsi was founded in its opposition to hegemonic cultures and institutions of law and morality. The tsotsi attempted to establish a presence in the city through signifiers of dress and language in the 1940s, but it is the response to crime in Johannesburg in the 1990s that has given the tsotsi's urban identity new meaning. As the urban spaces of racial segregation have shifted into the places of privilege, the leftover city, once again, becomes defined by crime and chaos. Through definition, this has now become the domain of the tsotsi, the defiant urban character.

The tsotsis did not pioneer the lawless gangster or his image of ostentatious dress, but it was the tsotsi who tailored the image specifically around a modern and urban identity. This urban quotient set the tsotsi apart from other gangsters operating at the time and imbued the tsotsi with meaning that went beyond the mere criminal and, ultimately, led to the tsotsi being both revered and reviled by the community (Fenwick, 1996). Since the 1940s the dress code of the

tsotsis has changed and evolved but the connotations of masculinity, violence, mobility (Morris, 2010) and urban identity have remained constant.

## 8.3 The Gangster/Tsotsi on Film

In the early 1930s, films began to focus on the urban milieu as the atmospheric and integral background to narratives about gangsters. The introduction of sound in film, the great depression, as well as the real-life inspiration of Al Capone and other prohibition gangsters, were all elements that came together in the gangster film (Shadoian, 1977). The city was an important theme of these films and was seen to be an imposing and shaping force on its citizens (Shadoian, 1977). Prior to this period, in the 1920s, the city was either viewed as a playground for demonstrating speed and movement, or a wasteland of the ills of modernity and industrialisation (Mennel, 2008).

These street films were mostly developed in Europe's capital cities but it is the genre of the gangster, as developed in America that combined the exciting narratives of the criminal with gritty urban landscapes. The gangster is a specifically urban character that falls outside of the dominant social culture, and the figure of the gangster was used to comment on the dominant culture and expose this underworld that existed below the surface (Shadoian, 1977). In the era of the depression, the gangster character was a scapegoat for the ills of too much wealth and success, but in his death the faint image of an awe-inspiring hero could be found (Shadoian, 1977). For the tsotsi, the image of the gangster was the most important; the moral demise or death of the gangster had no bearing on his admiration of the character (Glaser, 1990).

In the 1940s and 1950s, the gangster genre evolved a particular style called film noir[34]. Film Noir is generally characterised by a greater emphasis on light and shadow, with a greater number of scenes shot at night. The films also reflect an increased awareness of the created film world with self-conscious camera work and abstract compositions within the frame (Shadoian, 1977). As a result of post-war technologies, film noir films are also increasingly filmed on location and, as a result, the gangster loses its earlier fictional edges and starts to become more real and more human (Shadoian, 1977). The corrupt underworld is suddenly very close. These were the gangster films that formed the staple of the tsotsi's young life.

[34] There is significant debate within this subfield of cinema studies discussing whether film noir is a genre or a style, what time period defines the category and how to identify relevant films. It is not within the scope of this chapter or study to enter into this debate. Please refer to the bibliography for further reading on the subject.

Despite the popularity of such gangster films with local audiences, there are no locally produced films that fall within that genre during that time. It is also no coincidence that the city had, up to the late 1940s, also remained largely off screen. Although the gangster genre did not feature in local productions, the inclusion of crime and criminal elements in films was frequent, often to add to the drama or plot or to serve as the moral tale. Even in films such as *The Great Kimberley Diamond Robbery* (1910), the aspect of crime did not define the film and most movies remained within a more light-hearted romantic or adventure genre. Similarly, these films were yet to embrace an urban setting, still preferring to be set within the wild bush of the countryside.

In Chapter four I demonstrated how the first images of the city coincided with the first images of Sophiatown, and the very first representations of tsotsis in the film *African Jim*. This film was the first to show the urban Black character of the gangster that had developed out of the conditions in Sophiatown. One of the early images of the film depicts three gangsters in their suits and wide-brimmed hats, casually waiting outside the train station. These are the very first people in the city who Jim encounters and, therefore, through this introduction establish an urban status. *African Jim* established the connection between the city and the gangster, but the tsotsis are only present as a plot device. There is no space in the film to represent the complexity of admiration and admonishment that tsotsis received.

Jim is the hero of the film and is shown to be the very antithesis of the image of the tsotsi. Jim is hardworking and honest, and through his apprehension of the gangsters, is depicted as moral. The film ignores the fact that Jim's status in the city is illegal, a fact that would cloud the simplistic narrative that trumps good over bad. We are not shown the real urban experience and this is reflected in the way that the city is represented. Jim's movement between different parts of the city is not depicted and glosses over the difficulty for Black South Africans to establish themselves in the urban environment and, combined with the narrative of ultimate success, presents the city as a land of opportunity. The film says very little about the real conditions facing Black South Africans in the city.

The film is very far removed from the gangster genres from Hollywood with which it was competing, but the film must have given enormous credibility to the cultural creation of the tsotsi. As Lara Allen (2004) points out, the film gave affirmation to Black urban culture by simply projecting it on the big screen. The film portrayed the context of the tsotsi; the difficulty finding employment, the music, the nightclub and the violence. The tsotsi gangs, as a counter-hegemonic subculture were 'vicariously consumed through mass media by ordinary township dwellers' (Allen, 2004, p. 20), which was achieved mostly through the

pages of *Drum* magazine. But to achieve an urban status on the very same medium of their American gangster heroes would provide validation that would go far into the future of South African cinema.

To give further validation to the urban identity of the tsotsi, cinema was considered a particularly urban form of entertainment. Films were shot with urban audiences in mind (Bruno, 2007), and the narrative of the country bumpkin who comes to the city was a favourite in the city cinema (Mennel, 2008). In this case Jim portrays only a mild version of the fool from the countryside but this popular trope allowed audiences comedy based on self-reflection; in laughing at the bumpkin, the audience affirmed their own familiarity with the city and were no longer fools in the city (Mennel, 2008). We know that the fact that Jim triumphed over the tsotsis in the film ultimately did not affect the image of the tsotsi as an urban character in an urban medium.

The depiction of the tsotsi in *Come back, Africa* (1959) is not much different from the image in *African Jim*, however *Come back, Africa* is far more graphic about the conditions of urban life for Black South Africans in Johannesburg. The film celebrated the music and culture of Sophiatown and highlighted the dilemma facing urban Black South Africans who no longer identified with rural and tribal customs, but were prevented from claiming ownership of the city. Zachariah is in the city illegally (without a valid pass book), struggles to secure employment and therefore struggles to support his family. His encounter with the tsotsis of Sophiatown suggests an inability, or difficulty in understanding the urban cultures. When the tsotsis kill his wife at the end of the film, the two-dimensional image of the tsotsi is that of a violent and ruthless thug.

Both *African Jim* and *Come back, Africa* use crime as a plot device and as a means of demonstrating the difficulties of urban living for Black South Africans. In *Come back, Africa*, both Zachariah and the tsotsis are criminals (in the eyes of the law), but the line is quite clearly defined between apartheid criminals (those who were committing crimes against the pass laws etc.) and those engaged in legitimate crimes. This is despite the fact that the line was not so clearly drawn in reality: as mentioned earlier, apartheid laws made criminals of all Blacks seeking an urban life. And as a way of creating an urban identity, some upstanding citizens would adopt the elements of dress or language of tsotsi culture.

The tsotsi features in these films but as an enemy, and part of the many hardships faced in the metropolis. The tsotsi features as a small part of the narrative and does not occupy any main roles and, as a result, the complex nature of the gangster is not revealed, and neither are the complex cultural, social and political conditions that gave rise to the tsotsi. In this way,

the urban identity and agency intrinsic to the tsotsi is not fully expressed, and the characters only form part of a broader urban context. However, Nuttall and Michael (2000) believe that the early film *Come Back, Africa*, by depicting both urban and rural Black South Africans in Sophiatown, helped Black people to lay claim to urban spaces while the apartheid government was actively discouraging citizenship of the urban for people of colour. And so the film *Come back, Africa* was able to contribute to the development of Black urban identity, albeit not through the character of the tsotsi, and not at the time that it was filmed. In 1959, the film was banned and was not screened publicly until 1988 (Bickford-Smith, 2006), so while the messages contained therein were more affirming for Black South Africans, the film was not accessible. The thirty-year interval between filming and screening did little to alter the messages and the meaning of the film, and it was still relevant and found a warm reception in audiences around the country. The interval resulted in the film being alongside a different anti-apartheid film, that of *Mapantsula* (1988).

The meaning of the word mapantsula is almost as elusive as the definition for tsotsi. Mapantsula is the Zulu word for thief (Nixon, 1994), but can also mean hustler or 'flashily dressed'. In the 1980s, mapantsula became the fashionable synonym for tsotsi (Morris, 2010), following the changes of fashion of the decade as well as a new popular form of dance called pantsula developed in township *shebeens*, which we know to be the playgrounds of tsotsis. This flexibility attests to the strength of the image of tsotsi culture, which even under a different name and with a different look, could still convey the meaning of masculinity, violence, fashionability (Morris, 2010), and an urban identity.

In *Mapantsula* the tsotsi character comes to the foreground as the protagonist Panic and, as discussed in Chapter four, the city is revealed with new depth. The film takes pains to illustrate the fragmented nature of the city, never failing to demonstrate the bus or taxi journey that connects the township to the city centre, to the suburbs of White South Africans. The citizenship Panic claims in the city centre emphasises his vulnerability and powerlessness experienced in the other parts of the city, both the White suburbs and, to a certain degree, the Black townships, but also reflects the changes in the city that were occurring at the time.

Jacqueline Maingard suggests that this depiction of the city, that illustrates its segregated apartheid nature, only serves to juxtapose "township-trapped Panic against white suburban exclusion, and all that this signifies" (Maingard, 2007b, p. 513). But Panic is far from trapped in the township. He appears in the White suburbs with as much arrogance as he does in the township, despite being unwelcome and he dominates in the central core of the city, despite

that too being a stronghold of White dominance. The urban characteristics inherent in the tsotsi, which had been admired for so long, have been incorporated in this film through the protagonist, who is no longer a victim of the harsh city but a victim of the apartheid political system. The entire film revolves around his agency in the choices Panic makes and in the end whether he will take the decision to fight apartheid or not.

The heart of the film is an examination of the blurred line between criminality and illegality and thereby, focuses on the conditions that have moulded the tsotsi in general and Panic specifically. Panic is in jail, not because of his criminal actions, but because he is (falsely) believed to be a political activist. But as a criminal, Panic enjoys a fearlessness and agency in the city that further emphasises the association of crime and urbanity. The film offers glimpses of the architecture of fear, visible in the stone walls that flash past the bus windows. Panic is depicted as the outsider in this domestic realm and is shown to disrupt it violently when he throws the brick through the window of the White woman's house. Maingard (1994) describes *Mapantsula* as an 'open' text because the film emphasises the contextual over the narrative, stressing Panic's claim of urban spaces rather than what becomes of him (in the ambiguous ending of the film).

The character of Panic was able to build on important developments in the 1970s, of the portrayal of Blacks or African-Americans in Hollywood screens. During this period of filmmaking in Hollywood, a genre of films emerged, known as blaxploitation, which depicted Black protagonists (usually male) as heroes with an occasional healthy disrespect for the law. *Shaft* (1971) was a typical and defining film for the genre that featured John Shaft, a private detective employed by the police who also worked very closely with the gangsters. The film is set in New York and the opening sequence follows Shaft through the streets of the city as he navigates his way around. The shots are taken from above and slowly zoom in and reach eye level. *Mapantsula* certainly draws from the strength of these images and replicates a similar opening sequence in Johannesburg.

Blaxploitation films were important and highly influential because they established the lone Black individual as a hero in a contemporary urban setting (Massood, 2003). This hero figure was shown to have great mobility in the city, which gave him agency, more so than his many sexual encounters (Massood, 2003). The blaxploitation films were hugely popular for the brief period of the genre in America and certainly influenced later depictions of Black characters on the screen. The tsotsi as a protagonist owes its existence to the action heroes of blaxploitation films, but he differs from the African-American protagonist in that he is

first and foremost a criminal and is not defined by a law-abiding status. Black heroes were now established in the city.

The tsotsi had now emerged on screen as a character whose ability to move through the city freely enables a degree of power under the seemingly powerless influence of apartheid. Importantly, the protagonist of this film is a tsotsi who undergoes a political transformation. The city is viewed through the eyes of the tsotsi who is no longer a small part of the background. The gangster is no longer an enemy, but a person whose agency or claim to the city can be a strong identifier and can be used to further the political cause.

*Mapantsula* established the tsotsi as a powerful urban hero, but with a political agenda. With the institution of apartheid in 1994, the political cause had fallen away but crime rates in the city and in South Africa had increased dramatically. Crime and violence were prevalent while Johannesburg remained segregated, unequal and difficult to navigate.

Oliver Schmitz, who directed *Mapantsula*, made the transition from an anti-apartheid context to a democratic one with the film *Hijack Stories* (2002). The story follows a young Black actor (Sox), living in the previously White, middle-class suburb of Rosebank, who travels to his roots in Soweto in order to shadow a gangster for the role in a television show. In the township of Soweto, Sox finds himself out of his depth and enlists the help of his uncle, Bra Dan, a former tsotsi, and a young woman, Grace, who helps to introduce him to the notorious gangster, Zama. Sox embarks on a wild journey into the criminal underworld of car hijacking which ends with a violent car chase on the highway.

Schmitz continues to examine the blurred lines of legality in this film, which began with *Mapantsula*. In a scene in a Soweto *shebeen*, Bra Dan, the former tsotsi, states before all the drinkers that his crime as gangster under apartheid was to distribute alcohol to such *shebeens*, therefore, with democracy in place, he has renounced his tsotsi status. These comments are directed at the glamour that is awarded Zama and his small gang, who are violent criminals, and who operate in a legitimate world of crime. Bra Dan attempts to draw the distinction between the illegal apartheid tsotsi and the criminal gangster of democracy.

The narrative of the film also questions the moment at which a man becomes a criminal. As Sox shadows Zama's gang he slowly becomes embroiled in their crimes, first as an accomplice, and then as a car thief and hijacker. His journey is punctuated with recurring auditions, which emphasise a sense of lost identity and a need to further engage with the criminals. In fact, the question of criminality is extended to the notion of identity in the post-apartheid city. As Sox delves deeper into the underworld, he embraces the clothes and

lifestyle of the Sowetan tsotsi, abandoning his Black middle-class identity carefully cultivated from Hollywood films.

The ultimate theft of identity, though, comes at the end of the film. As Sox lies in hospital recovering from a bullet wound sustained in the highway car chase, Zama has struck a bargain with him to take his identity document and in the process he auditions successfully for the role of the television gangster. The desperation inherent in Zama's act to acquire a new identity is reminiscent of the desperation to acquire a legitimate pass book under apartheid and suggests that, while apartheid laws may have been abolished, there are now severe socio-economic laws that prevent real freedom of movement in the city. It also reveals the limits of the tsotsi's construction of identity in the city, as given the opportunity the tsotsi will forsake this identity for another.

As discussed in Chapter five, the locations in the film are restricted, for the most part to Soweto and Rosebank, which according to Fu and Murray "becomes integral to establishing the difference between an upwardly mobile urban identity for the emergent Black middle class and excluded 'gangsta' identity in the 'Hood'." (2007, p. 284). Fu and Murray argue that the 'fictionalised-stereotyped' (2007, p. 284) portrayal of both landscapes sets up the binary that contributes to the mythology of Johannesburg as the 'dangerous city'. By day, the middle-class suburbs provide Sox with a familiar refuge but at night they become a place of fear when he attempts to steal his first car. This is emphasised in the visual of the suburban street lined with blank walls. This change in the feeling of spaces in the film reflects the theme of shifting identities, but the focus of the film is on the identity of the township spaces rather than the meaning of the suburban streets. The film focuses on the spaces occupied by the other as defined by the walls of the suburbs, depicting the architecture of fear, and by doing so further emphasises the divisions.

The mythology of the 'dangerous city', however, is grown through the almost constant presence of fear in the characters. Sox, as the naïf, is scared for much of the film, and as the audience we are scared with him. Grace, Sox's ally in Soweto, also finds herself in a fearful encounter with Zama. But most importantly, we read fear on the faces of Zama and his gang on a number of occasions, rendering these criminals a human side. Finally, the film ends with a look of absolute fear on the face of the casting director when Zama gives his exceedingly realistic audition. The myth of the 'dangerous city' is made physically visible in these alarmed expressions.

Building upon *Hijack Stories*, *Jerusalema* (2008) is the unapologetic accumulation of the gangster genre. Lucky Kunene begins the film as a hardworking high school student who is

drawn into the criminal underworld when university fees are hard to come by. As we see in *Mapantsula* and *Hijack Stories*, the line between criminality and illegality is blurred. Lucky is introduced to car hijacking or 'affirmative repossession' by a relative who underwent arms training for Umkhonto we Sizwe in Russia under apartheid. He finds himself endowed with violent skills and unemployed in the newly democratic South Africa and urges Lucky to join his cause.

Although Lucky is initially reluctant, this opportunity becomes his gateway to the city. At first Lucky has been confined to the township of Soweto, but as he begins his criminal exploits, we see him and his friend gain ever more access to the city of Johannesburg. Their crimes commence on the fringes of the city but the high-rise skyline is ever-present on the horizon, beckoning the young criminals. This first chapter of the film, depicting Lucky's story, both glamourises the lifestyle of the gangster but also illustrates its inherent dangers, with Lucky ultimately abandoning the life of crime.

But when the audience rejoins Lucky, ten years later, living in the heart of the city, in Hillbrow, the opportunity to be a criminal gangster once again presents itself. As Lucky turns his attention to hijacking buildings, the location of the film becomes completely absorbed in the setting of Hillbrow. The overcrowded and unsanitary conditions of the area are transformed into the empire of Lucky, the tsotsi. Lucky is on a par with Panic in terms of their shared agency in the city, but *Jerusalema* goes further than *Mapantsula*, because Lucky is never redeemed by a moral action. Lucky achieves the status of tsotsi, a criminal gangster who goes on to evade the law and is able to move on to the next big city, reaching a new level of control in the urban environment.

Two signifiers in the film mark Lucky's transition into the life of a tsotsi. First, he dons the flashy suits that equate with his tsotsi status and urban intentions. Second, he is shown to be 'the other' in the city. The only scene in the film that gives context to the middle-class suburbs depicts Lucky outside the boundary wall of the house of the wealthy man who owns the building in Hillbrow. Lucky has a one-sided conversation with this man who remains faceless emphasising the upper class's self-imposed isolation and reluctance to participate in Johannesburg as citizens. In contrast, Lucky is shown to fully exploit the city for his own needs and embraces his new urban identity of 'the other', and of the tsotsi.

Both *Hijack Stories* and *Jerusalema* reference fear and its physical manifestations in the suburbs, but these are merely devices of contrast to highlight the urban identity of the tsotsi. These spaces are not shown with any depth and do not contribute significantly to the milieus

of the films. In the film *Tsotsi* (2005) we see more of the spaces of the middle-class but at the same time we have a character that is not defined by his urban or tsotsi qualities.

The film *Tsotsi* explores the gritty world of informal settlements and the periphery of the city in the story of a hijacker who accidently kidnaps a baby. The hijacker, Tsotsi, inhabits the spaces of the informal settlement and travels into the city by train to commit various crimes there, including robbing and killing a man and tormenting a disabled man. The hijacking of the story takes place in a comfortable middle-class suburb that is never given any context. We are not shown how Tsotsi finds himself there and there are no establishing shots of the area. This is in contrast with the informal settlement and the CBD of the city, both of which are treated with wide-angle shots encompassing the contexts of the locations.

Tsotsi, despite being the bearer of the title of a Johannesburg gangster, does not easily conform to the identity of the tsotsi that has been so carefully cultivated in the cinema preceding it. This is mostly because the film carries a message of redemption, and in order for Tsotsi to be redeemed, he cannot carry the cultural markers and signifiers of a true gangster. The real tsotsi of the film is the character played by kwaito artist Zola, and he confirms this in the beginning of the film when he refers to Tsotsi and his gang as the little gangsters.

Tsotsi does not wear the dress code required of gangsters, the most immediate signifier of his identity, and the agency normally associated with gangsters is not portrayed. In line with Tsotsi's case for redemption, he is depicted as being vulnerable in the city. The depiction of the city is carefully edited, restricting Tsotsi's mobility and agency as he shifts between locations and settings. The environments shown in the film are highly stylised and glamourised, and further reduce the image of the city to that of a stage set. Unfortunately, Tsotsi's journey to be an honest citizen renders him vulnerable and unable to act.

The end of the film takes place outside the house of his victims in the suburban street. We are reminded of fear and security through the presence of the large entrance gate that separates tsotsi and the baby from the father of the child. As Tsotsi gives up the baby, he relinquishes his life of crime but he also relinquishes his urban identity. The preceding scenes have shown him bidding farewell to the city and entering the suburbs. The film reiterates the link between a criminal identity and an urban identity.

## 8.4 The Ghetto and the Tsotsi

Maingard (2007b) suggests that these films form part of a gangster genre, influenced by the American ghetto/"'hood' films that will become the vehicle for the depiction of the Black

urban experience. The genre of the "hood emerged in the early 1990s, set mostly in the Watts area of Los Angeles, and was characterised by young (coming-of-age) male protagonists battling against the slum constraints of the dystopian ghetto" (Massood, 2003, p.7). These men fight against poverty, drugs and gang violence, which are all central conditions of the urban ghetto. The cityscape becomes a main character in these films. The problem with applying the ghetto genre to the South African Black urban experience is in defining the 'hood'.

The echoes of African–American experiences in the United States are exceptionally strong for Black South Africans, which have led to the powerful influence of American culture locally. A fraction of this influence has been traced in this chapter. African–Americans share many similarities in their relationship to the White city during the twentieth century. Many Blacks migrated into the city from the rural areas and were confined to segregated areas. In America these inner city areas became the ghettoes, and were forced into poverty through abandonment; first through White flight to the suburbs, followed by the similar flight of the Black middle-class in the 1970s (Massood, 2003). In South Africa, the Black urban experience was characterised by removals and banishment, as Blacks were removed from the city to outlying townships where they were subjected to further restriction and control.

The ghetto is defined as an urban space; a specific area of the city in which an ethnic group or race reside (Jaffe, 2012). It is the space of the 'non-White' other, the space of the poor, and a space of crime and violence (Linke, 2013).

> Wacquant (2002, p. 50) argues for a stricter definition of the ghetto as 'a relation of ethnoracial control and closure' that combines stigma, coercion, territorial confinement and institutional parallelism. He presses for a more precise use of the term to include only those urban areas that are characterised by stigma, coerced physical enclosure, and an institutional structure that functions parallel to the rest of society. (Jaffe, 2012, p. 676)

Although this definition may be too strict, a township during apartheid would easily conform to this definition. In addition to these defining elements, Rivke Jaffe adds the notion of mobility or immobility:

> While 'the ghetto' can refer to specific, concrete places, it has come to refer more broadly to a condition of urban immobility. Ghettoes are the original no-go areas: outsiders and even the police are scared to go in, while insiders are unable to get out. (Jaffe, 2012, p. 676)

In democratic South Africa there are several spaces in Johannesburg that could be considered in the role of the ghetto. The most obvious space, the space with echoes of the African–American inner city, and the space that defines the majority of Black urban experience, is the township. Soweto, the most iconic of township spaces has already seen much representation on screen as early as *Mapantsula*. However, it is a problematic location for the representation of the urban. By definition, the township is the obverse of the city because it was established as the space outside of the city, as the only acceptable (to the apartheid government) space for Black South Africans to reside within proximity to the city.

The spaces of the township, therefore, cannot provide the urban backdrop that is necessary for the definition of the tsotsi, and this is reflected in both *Mapantsula* and *Jerusalema*. In *Jerusalema*, however, we can see some elements of the 'hood' film in the first part of the story that tells of Lucky's youth. Lucky's coming-of-age tale is set within the township and features his attempts to escape the spaces and conditions of the township. The ghetto in the 'hood' genre is defined as a space of confinement that is often inescapable (Massood, 2003) and as a space of immobility (Jaffe, 2012). But Lucky does escape and ten years later we find him in the freedom of Johannesburg's inner city with a strong urban setting.

Another space that could be considered part of the ghetto is the informal settlement, which is where Tsotsi and his gang members reside in *Tsotsi*. The informal settlement has a greater claim to be an urban environment and a ghetto, not least because it contains an excess of the slum conditions of the ghetto. The informal settlement is usually situated closer to the urban amenities of transport and jobs and represents a foothold into the city, often providing rural residents their first point of access to the city. But the informal settlement is seen to be impermanent, although residents may live there for many years, even decades, there is always the threat of removal or a flood, or the hope that this is merely the first step towards a permanent home in the city. Impermanence is not a suitable trait for an urban location and we see the possibility for change inherent to the informal settlement represented in *Tsotsi*.

For Uli Linke there is a stark contrast between the meanings engendered in the representations of the ghetto and the informal settlement or slum:

> The oppositional status of the "black ghetto" as a "savage", "uncivilised", and "violent" space is thus crucial for sustaining white fantasies about distinction and distance. The shantytown, by contrast, engenders a more optimistic interpretation. As an artifact of globalisation, it embodies the "hope of history": each foot of non-arable urban frontier land transformed by squatter settlers, each house built, however incomplete, is perceived as a "relaunch of an ongoing promise, a 'not yet', a

> 'what is coming,' which – always – separates hope from utopia" (Mbembe, 2001, p. 206). (Linke, 2013, p. 16)

This is somewhat reflected in the redemptive narrative of *Tsotsi* that is absent in the other gangster films of Johannesburg.

The last location that can be considered to be equivalent to the African-American ghetto is the space of the inner city and of Hillbrow. But if the space of the ghetto in the 'hood genre is the space that limits mobility (Massood, 2003), then Johannesburg's inner city still represents the space of agency and aspiration, even while displaying the harsh realities of crime and poverty, as in *Jerusalema*. So while there are resonances of the ghetto genre in recent South African films, there are no corresponding spaces. The tsotsi subverts the image of the ghetto through his mobility; the Johannesburg gangster is defined by his presence outside of the 'ghetto'. This also emphasises the fact that the Black South African urban experience is characterised by many different spaces in the city of Johannesburg.

## 8.5 Conclusion

Rob Nixon discusses the influence of gangster films on Black South Africans living in Johannesburg in his book, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood*, and highlights the preference for gangster movies over Westerns: "Clearly, in most gangster movies, White actors embodied both good and evil whereas in Westerns the divide was persistently racialised" (1994, p. 35). However, there may be an additional reason for the preference. The gangster films of the 1940s were the first films to embrace the city as a filming location and this must certainly have impressed those young Black South Africans living in Johannesburg attempting to create new urban identities. The gangster, not the cowboy, was representative of the urban.

But the urban space of Johannesburg was a complex space for Black South Africans. The city represented both a dystopia and a utopia. To be Black and urban was a crime. To survive in the city, residents often had to resort to crime, or were subjected to its violent forms. The tsotsi embodied crime and the criminal but simultaneously represented defiance against the criminal laws of apartheid. The tsotsi threatened personal safety in the city while establishing a powerful cultural identity that was urban and inclusive. This cultural identity achieved high visibility in the pages of *Drum* magazine and subsequently on the big screen. The image of the tight-fitting suit and the shiny shoes symbolised the struggle for Black South Africans in the city.

Over the last seventy years the tsotsi has shown itself to be a highly adaptable, and flexible, cultural icon that has continued to influence both on and off screen. The tsotsi continues to

draw cultural significance and relevance from American sources, specifically Hollywood, although the limits of African-American urban experience are beginning to reveal themselves. Johannesburg city continues to provide ambiguous and difficult conditions and continues to be plagued by crime. In a form of symbiosis these conditions provide a situation in which the tsotsi thrives but also the conditions in which the agency and identity of the tsotsi are still required to navigate urban living.

This chapter has discussed the evolution of the gangster trope in the on-screen representations of Johannesburg, and has shown the motif to be a critical element in the development of a Black urban identity in the city. Historically, it is clear that the representation of the tsotsi on the screen is a response to the increased migration into the city of rural Black South Africans, and it has developed as a motif of agency in the city in reaction to the denied claim to the city during apartheid. In the years of democracy, the gangster remains an important image because, although the city is now freely accessible to all, it remains a vast, incoherent and incomprehensible place. The tsotsi character continues to function as an agent of exploration of the city, laying claim to spaces and helping South Africans to understand the metropolis.

The tsotsi is an important theme in South African film and in the depiction of Johannesburg because it reflects the continued relationship of crime and city life; the relationship that was established in the mining camp of this gold rush town. The tsotsi has also shown how cinematic images have been received and incorporated in Johannesburg's spaces. The construction of a Black urban identity, through identification with American films, has allowed Black residents to claim the city and express mobility through the streets. The tsotsi has shown the potential for films to influence the everyday activities for Johannesburg's residents. The following section, The Space of the Audience, will demonstrate how the city's inhabitants are receiving these cinematic images of Johannesburg, and how they might be influencing their practice in the city.

## Part C: The Space of the Audience

Part B established the way in which Johannesburg's spaces, through the lenses of materiality, identity, mobility and crime, have been depicted in film as part of the city's representational space. In this way, Part B also showed how films of Johannesburg are contributing to the discourse of the city. Part C moves from representational space to the space of audience reception or consumption. Chapter nine outlines the space of reception, with specific reference to the four locations in Johannesburg. This is the point at which the depictions of the various spaces intersect with the identities of the audiences, their experiences of the city and their urban contexts. Chapter ten goes beyond the four locations of the study to understand the broader space of film consumption in Johannesburg, expanding upon the findings of Chapter nine with further explorations and explanations.

# 9. The Reception of Films in Johannesburg

## 9.1 Introduction

In Chapter three I introduced the four Johannesburg locations that have formed the foundation of this research: Chiawelo, the CBD, Fordsburg and Melville. In Chapter five I described the key on-screen representations of these locations and the idea that these locations formed representations of spatial stereotypes of Johannesburg. And in the preceding five chapters, I have described the representation of Johannesburg on the screen with reference to the four lenses of materiality, identity, mobility and crime. This chapter examines the reception of these images by residents of the city within those four locations. The chapter examines the intersection of Johannesburg's representational space with the real urban conditions and the space of the audience in order to understand the relationship between these elements and how films might be influencing the space of the audience and the urban conditions.

This research project has used multiple methods to examine the circuit of culture. Part B made use of cultivation analysis to outline the discourse of Johannesburg in films and documentaries. This chapter focuses on the quantitative survey, describing the findings from the survey, conducted with 200 respondents in the four locations across the city. Chapter ten uses the methods of in-depth interviews and a focus group to expand upon the findings of this chapter. This chapter outlines the circuit of culture in its entirety, albeit very briefly. It examines the complex city through four sites in Johannesburg: Chiawelo, the CBD, Fordsburg and Melville. These locations provide a selection of the multiple spaces of Johannesburg and are representative of spatial stereotypes discussed in Chapter five. The sites are described in terms of a very brief overview of their materiality in Section 9.1, which also covers the main aspects of the identities of the audience members in each location. The images of each location in film are also very briefly discussed in this first section, with more detailed discussions preceding this chapter in Part B. Thus, the first section details the demographics for each area and makes comparisons. These demographic variables are independent and are, therefore, more likely to demonstrate how aspects of identity and quality of life in Johannesburg have an impact on the reception and influence of films.

The elaboration of the space of audience reception is continued in Section 9.2 with the discussion of the viewing habits of the audience. This second section examines the viewing habits and experiences of respondents in each of the four locations. Campaigns in the film industry have focused on increasing accessibility and affordability to the cinema in township areas, to rectify the imbalances imposed by apartheid legislation and to increase the audience for local film productions. This section, therefore, looks at the size of audiences in each area, as well as how the various media are consumed, and what the most popular content is for each neighbourhood. This is important background information for the explanation of the influence of films on feelings about, and activities in, the city.

The third section is simultaneously a discussion of the space of mobility for the respondents in Johannesburg, as well as a brief exploration of some of the aspects that may be a factor in the influence of film, but are excluded from the circuit of culture. This section looks at movement in, and knowledge of, Johannesburg and the recognition and perceptions of the participants. This section is intended to give some insight into how respondents feel about the city, what they know about the spaces of Johannesburg, and how they feel about seeing Johannesburg on the screen. These factors do not vary substantially per location, but their subject matter relates closely to the question of the influence of films and film reception. By the end of the third section the reader will have a clear picture or characterisation of each neighbourhood and the sites of interaction with the city and film media. This will lay the groundwork for understanding the influence of films on residents of the city.

The final section carefully examines the influence of films on feelings and activities; addressing the ways in which the cycle is completed. The last section answers the question of whether films do, in fact, influence people's feelings and activities in the city. The last section reveals that residents of a particular area are not necessarily influenced in different ways by images of their neighbourhoods that create particular characterisations. What the chapter shows is that despite the variations in each location in the city, this appears to have very little influence on how films are received and interpreted by respondents. Participants appear to respond to broader images of the city than to the more specific images of their immediate surroundings. Chapter 10 will go on to explain and explore what does appear to influence the reception of films.

## 9.2 Demographics and Experiences of the 'Real' City

Chapter six describes the various aspects of identity at play in Johannesburg; their representations on the screen and how these representations intersect with the city. This section gives an overview of the demographics of the research participants, giving some

insight into their identities, and an overview of some of their experiences of the real city. This section will also compare the overall results from the survey with the statistics from the most recent census, for an indication of the extent to which the research is representative. In addition, each location's real identities will be compared with the dominant identities portrayed on screen.

### 9.2.1 All Respondents

In total 193 people completed the survey with valid answers, which is just less than 1% of the locations' combined population, varying from as little as 0.11% in the CBD and as much as 2% in Fordsburg. Only 39.4% of the respondents resided in the respective locations, which means that a comparison with the 2011 Census data has limited meaning, because the census information is based on each location as a residence. However, examining the census data gives an indication of the strengths and limitations of the sample for the survey. The figures for these comparisons can be found in the tables of Appendix C.1. The survey demographics differ most starkly with the census figures on the issue of gender, with a much higher proportion of men represented. This imbalance has been addressed through the in-depth interviews, and was discussed in Chapter three. It is difficult to compare the proportions of age with the census data because the research survey excluded those younger than 18 years' old, and those older than 65 years' old for ethical considerations. The proportions for the two younger age groups are only slightly higher, as would be expected with a more limited sample; the 46–65-year-old age group is somewhat over-represented with a more than double percentage representation.

Despite the fact that race was an open-ended question on the survey, the breakdown of race for the survey is very similar to the census figures and only differs with a slightly higher representation of those who identified as 'other', more than likely *because* the question was open-ended. On the question of length of time spent living in Johannesburg, the survey data differs quite substantially from the census statistics. The discrepancy may arise from the fact that the question on the census "When did you move to this place?" is vague and could refer to that particular residence, and not necessarily the city of Johannesburg. A more reliable source of information related to this is that of origin. Here the similarities between the census information and the survey are more consistent.

With regards to completed education levels, the survey shows a greater proportion of those with higher education levels and an under-representation of those who have completed primary school or lower. This may be a result of the fact that half the interviews were conducted by me, in English, thus discouraging participants with lower education levels from

interacting with me. This may also explain the disproportionate preference for the English language when compared to the census data, which shows the majority speak indigenous South African languages. It may also be a factor of the way the question was phrased: the census asked "What is the language spoken most frequently at home?"

Income is a sensitive subject and is difficult to capture accurately. The census data for household income has many missing answers, making comparisons difficult. The census statistics indicate that the majority of households in the four locations earn more than R38 201 per month, which differs substantially from the majority of households in the survey earning between R1 600 and R10 000 per month. On the issue of employment, the survey question was not structured in a way that allowed for easy comparison with the census information, although was (arguably) slightly more simple to answer. However, on the two main categories of those employed in the formal sector, and those who are unemployed or not economically active, the survey compares favourably. The survey has a similar proportion of those who are employed by the formal sector and an under-representation, although still a significant proportion, of those who are unemployed.

Overall, for all the respondents in each of the locations, the survey is reasonably representative in comparison with the Census 2011 figures. Each location will now be explored in further detail.

### 9.2.2 Chiawelo

As mentioned in Chapter three, Chiawelo is a suburb of Soweto, which is the large historical township to the south-west of central Johannesburg. It was established in 1956 and designated as an area for those who speak Venda. Chiawelo shares many of the characteristics of the legacy of apartheid in its demographic profile. The results of my survey show that the suburb is dominated by those who identify themselves as Black African (96.2%) and that, in line with this, the preferred languages for the majority are other official South African languages (78.8%), other than English or Afrikaans. Almost half of the respondents (48.1%) interviewed were between the ages of 26 and 45 years' old. Chiawelo has an average level of education, with 42.3% of the respondents having completed high school, but unemployment is at the highest level in the suburb at 36.5%, and with a relatively high percentage of people self-employed in the informal sector. This, of course, correlates with a much lower income in the area: the majority earn less than R10 000 per month (47.1%), with a further 29.4% earning less than R1 600 a month.

Chiawelo is dominated by South Africans, with only a small percentage of foreign nationals (5.7%), although this does not necessarily translate into more residents feeling at home in

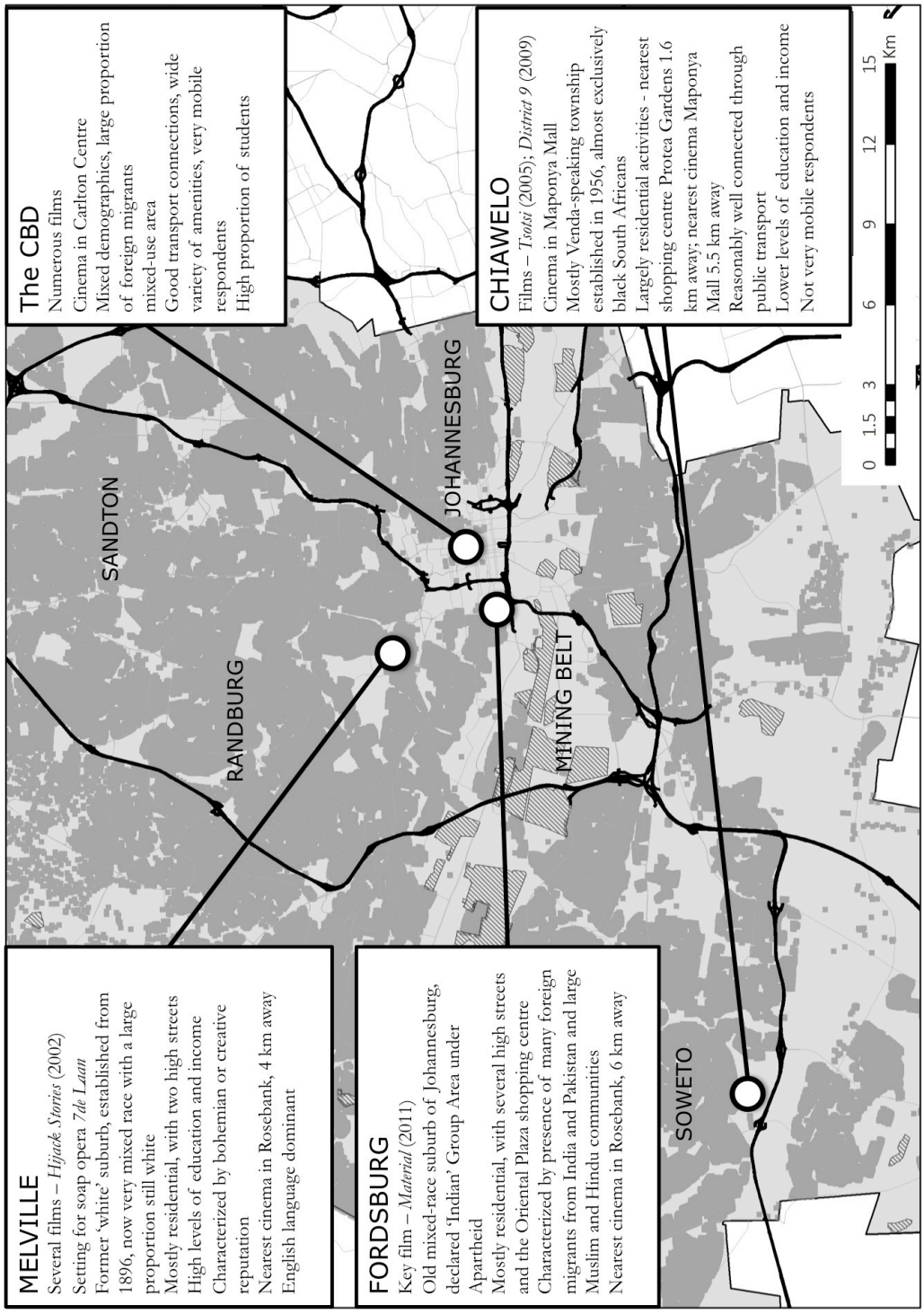
Johannesburg as this was very consistent across all four locations. The majority of those in Chiawelo were born in Johannesburg (53.1%). However, the suburb does seem to foster more of a family environment because the area has a higher percentage of those who live with their partners and children, or just their children, than those who live on their own. The majority of respondents in Chiawelo do not move around the city on a regular basis but tend to work and shop in the immediate areas. As mentioned earlier, this is related to types of employment and income levels.

If we consider the representation of Chiawelo as part of the broader stereotype of the township space, then the identities of the Chiawelo respondents have been represented in films such as *Hijack Stories* (2002); *Jerusalema* (2008); and *Max and Mona* (2004), although these films do emphasise criminal identities at the expense of more honest characters. However, considering the depiction of characters in the specific films relating to Chiawelo, *Tsotsi* and *District 9* (2009), these reveal that there is an over-representation of characters that are poor and criminals, in the case of *Tsotsi* (2005). And in the film *District 9*, there is a significant over-representation of the foreign national (if the prawns are taken as substitutes for the foreign national), and including the presence of Nigerians in the same space. There is also a lack of representation of the family in these films, although these aspects are represented in the township stereotype films such as *Chikin Biznis* (1999) and *Soweto Green* (1996). The residents, therefore, are not accurately represented within their space and, furthermore, are depicted in an overwhelmingly negative context, in comparison to their real identities.

### 9.2.3 The CBD

The CBD is, like most central business districts in large cities, relatively densely populated and cosmopolitan, with diverse functions and amenities. As the centre of the city, it also attracts many people from the rest of the city to work, shop, or entertain. Therefore, only 11 (23%) of those interviewed actually lived in the CBD, while the other respondents all came from other, varied areas of Johannesburg. The results of my survey show that, as in Chiawelo, the CBD is predominantly occupied by Black Africans (93.8%), who also prefer other official South African languages (60.4%); but, in addition, there is a greater preference for English (31.3%). A greater proportion of the respondents interviewed were aged 18–25 years' old. The CBD's education levels are on a par with Chiawelo's, with the exception that more respondents have attended university than in the Sowetan suburb. The CBD has the highest percentage of all the locations of people earning no income, and no one earning more than R25 000 per month; but on average the area is no poorer than the other locations.

**Figure 9.1** – Map showing Johannesburg with the four locations of the research, and a brief description based on the representational study and the demographic profiles of the quantitative survey.



The CBD has a high percentage of students (21.3%), but the majority of respondents are employed either part-time or full time in the formal sector (51.1%). The CBD is largely made up of people who originate from Johannesburg, or greater Johannesburg, with a total of 48%, but the area has the (marginally) lowest percentage of those who consider Johannesburg their home (60.4% (2.3% below the average)). The CBD has the highest percentage of all the areas of respondents living with their parents (41.7%) and this of course correlates with the higher numbers of respondents aged 18–25, and students in the area. The majority of the respondents move around the city regularly for work or to conduct their shopping (79.2%).

No films set in Johannesburg have depicted the CBD as a place of residence. Instead, Hillbrow, the CBD's neighbour, has been the location that best resembles the density of living, and the diversity of residents coming from all over the country and beyond. The depictions of the CBD, as a space of arrival in Johannesburg, over-represent characters that are new to the city, whether they are country bumpkins or foreign nationals. The city is also over-represented as a space of consumption, more often representing characters with greater wealth. As a location that attracts the youth with entertainment and education facilities, the CBD is under-represented with regards to youthful characters. Only television shows such as *Yizo Yizo* (1999; 2001; 2003) have really explored the experiences of youth in the centre of Johannesburg.

### 9.2.4 Fordsburg

Fordsburg is a working-class suburb, west of the city centre, which is one of the oldest mixed-race areas of Johannesburg that managed to remain so throughout apartheid. The Oriental Plaza, at the heart of the neighbourhood, has largely determined the 'Indian' character of Fordsburg. 50% of the respondents surveyed in Fordsburg were between the ages of 26 and 45 years' old. In terms of race, there were fewer Fordsburg respondents who identified as Black Africans, and a greater proportion of those who identified as Indian or Asian. The suburb also has the greatest percentage, of all the areas, of foreigners (31.9% in total). Related to this a much higher percentage of those who preferred non-South African languages (14.9%), but English has the highest percentage at 42.6%.

Fordsburg has very average education levels and corresponding income levels: the majority of the respondents earn between R1 600 and R10 000 per month (60%). The majority are employed in the formal sector: 51.1% full time, with a high percentage self-employed, at 19.1%. A high percentage of Fordsburg respondents live with non-relatives (17%) and a

much smaller percentage live with their partners and children (12.8%). The majority of those interviewed in the suburb move around the city regularly for work or shopping (70.2%).

Fordsburg's key film, *Material* (2011), represents the Indian Muslim identity of Fordsburg residents in some depth. Although the detailed and sensitive representation has been welcomed, it does run the risk of stereotyping the neighbourhood if there are no subsequent representations that point to the real diversity of residents in Fordsburg, in terms of race and religion.

### 9.2.5 Melville

Melville is a former White, middle-class neighbourhood, just north-west of the city's centre, and one of the oldest areas of Johannesburg. It has been characterised as an area with a bohemian and artistic flavour. The majority of the surveyed respondents in Melville are aged between 26 and 45 years' old, and a large proportion of those interviewed are White (23.3%) (although this is much lower than the Census 2011 figure for the area). The majority of those interviewed in this area identified as Black African (62.8%). Most of the respondents come from within South Africa (71.8%), with 52% of these born in Johannesburg. The highest percentage of those who stated that Johannesburg is their home came from Melville (67.4%). The preferred language, by far, in Melville is English (79.5%), with other official South African languages coming in at 11.4%.

Melville has much higher education levels than the other areas with 58.7% of the respondents having attended a university or attained a tertiary qualification. This has predictably corresponded with a much higher rate of income with 31.1% earning between R10 000 and R25 000, and 17.8% earning more than R25 000 per month. Most of the Melville respondents are employed in some way in the formal sector, either full time, part-time or are self-employed (71.1%). A quarter (24.4 %) of Melville respondents live with their partners, a quarter (24.4%) live with their partners and children, and just over a quarter (26.7%) live on their own. Respondents in Melville are almost equally split between those who move around the city regularly (47.8%) and those who do not (52.2%).

Melville's bohemian character has not reached the screen, and the depiction of characters in Melville is more closely aligned to the stereotype of the White suburb, to which it generally refers. The racial diversity in the suburb is shown in *Hijack Stories*, through the character Sox, and is obliquely referenced as a stereotype in *Tsotsi*, through Tsotsi's victims. As part of the suburban stereotype, Melville characters over-represent wealth and the White race group. In addition, the mobility of respondents in Melville is not depicted in films; characters in these

spaces are usually shown to be quite static, with the exception of Sox, whose narrative demands that he transgresses the boundary of the middle-class suburb.

This section has shown the individual elements of demographics that distinguish each location from the other, and gives them their distinct characters, but there is much that does not differentiate. Each location has a similar profile for the length of time that respondents have spent living in Johannesburg, and each neighbourhood also shares very similar profiles for the age of respondents. But perhaps the greatest similarity is the question of whether respondents consider Johannesburg their home. The average for all the respondents who consider Johannesburg to be their home is 62.7%, and this was very consistent across all four neighbourhoods. This section has also shown, though, that despite these many similarities the depiction of characters on the screen tends to be particular to each location. This contributes to the spatial stereotyping and also emphasises the diversity of characters that are absent from Johannesburg films.

## 9.3 Watching the City on the Screen

This section details the viewing habits of respondents for cinema, DVD and television viewing. It also looks at the audiences in each neighbourhood for the various film and television productions that have been filmed in Johannesburg. Each film or television show has been shot in the city but not all of them feature one of the locations or are even set in Johannesburg.

### 9.3.1 Viewing habits and experiences

**Cinema attendance**

Only 23.7% of all the respondents go to the cinema frequently, more go only occasionally (37.9%), but most never attend the cinema (38.4%). The highest percentage of those who do not attend is in Chiawelo: 50% of those interviewed in Chiawelo do not attend the cinema. This confirms the reasoning behind the efforts of the local film industry who are seeking to increase access to cinemas in townships spaces. However, in Chiawelo recent malls have created access that is comparable to the other more central locations, but the obstacle of sufficient disposable income remains.

**Reasons for attending the cinema**

24.4% of all the respondents go to the cinema to 'hang out' with their friends, and this was very even across all the locations, with only a slightly higher percentage in the CBD at 29.2% (consistent with the demographics of younger people and more students). In Melville the majority of respondents (54.3%) went to the cinema expressly to watch films in comparison

to only 17.3% of those in Chiawelo who did the same, while the average for the other locations was similar to the survey as a whole (37.3%). It would appear then, that apart from Chiawelo, respondents see the practice of going to the cinema less as a social event and more as a practice for viewing films.

**Reasons for not attending the cinema**

19.2% of those in Chiawelo cited the expense of the cinema as a reason for not attending followed by 14.9% offering the same reason in Fordsburg. In Chiawelo only 7.7% of the respondents stated that they don't go to the cinema because it is too far. No one cited this as a reason in the CBD or Melville, and only a single person in Fordsburg stated this as his/her reason. A greater percentage stated that they didnot go to the cinema because they do not like watching movies: 10.6% in Fordsburg and 9.6% in Chiawelo. This is therefore a larger obstacle than the distance to the nearest cinema. In fact, the greatest obstacle in attending the cinema was finding the time to do so. On average, for the whole survey, 18.1% of the respondents stated that they did not have time with the highest percentage in the CBD with 20.8%. Therefore time and expense are the key reasons for not attending the cinema on a regular basis.

**DVD Viewing**

Most respondents across all the locations watch DVDs frequently (54.7%), and a good few watch occasionally (34.9%), with the result that only 10.4% on average do not watch DVDs at all. This was highest in Melville, with 17.4% of those interviewed in the area stating that they do not watch DVDs.

**Television Viewing**

Television is the most watched medium of all three, with an average of 64.6% across the whole survey watching television frequently. This did vary with location, with the highest rate in Fordsburg (77.8%), and the lowest rate in Melville (58.7%). The average for watching only occasionally (27.5%) did not vary as much, but the averages for not watching at all did. Those in the CBD and Melville were quite high at 12.8% and 13% respectively, while Chiawelo and Fordsburg were relatively low at 3.9% and 2.2%.

Overall, Melville has the lowest rate of viewing at home (DVDs and television), whereas Chiawelo has the lowest rate of attending the cinema. This reinforces the idea that expense may be the biggest obstacle to cinema attendance. It is tempting to dismiss the medium as irrelevant, because this research has focused on films, which can eventually be viewed on all

the mediums and, ultimately, it is the content and images of Johannesburg that is the focus of this research. But Section 9.4 will show the medium does have an influence, and will be further discussed in Chapter ten.

### 9.3.2 Most Watched Films and TV Shows

| Most watched films and TV shows | Rank | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Generations* | 1 | 157 | 81.3% |
| *Isidingo* (1998) | 2 | 152 | 78.8% |
| *Rhythm City* (2007) | 3 | 151 | 78.2% |
| *Tsotsi* (2005) | 4 | 150 | 77.7% |
| *eKasi: Our Stories* (2009) | 5 | 144 | 74.6% |
| *Zone 14* (2005) | 6 | 143 | 74.1% |
| *Jerusalema* (2008) | 7 | 139 | 72.0% |
| *Yizo Yizo* | 8 | 132 | 68.4% |
| *7de Laan* | 9 | 124 | 64.2% |
| *White Wedding* (2009) | 10 | 112 | 58.0% |
| *Gaz'lam* | 11 | 110 | 57.0% |
| *Hijack Stories* (2002) | 12 | 100 | 51.8% |
| *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) | 13 | 76 | 39.4% |
| *Jacob's Cross* | 14 | 72 | 37.3% |
| *Yesterday* (2004) | 15 | 64 | 33.2% |
| *The Lab* (2006) | 16 | 51 | 26.4% |
| *District 9* (2009) | 17 | 50 | 25.9% |
| *Jozi* (2010) | 18 | 45 | 23.3% |
| *Catch a Fire* (2006) | 19 | 39 | 20.2% |
| *The Bang Bang Club* (2010) | 20 | 36 | 18.7% |
| *Stander* (2003) | 21 | 34 | 17.6% |
| *Drum* (2004) | 22 | 33 | 17.1% |
| *Forgiveness* (2004) | 23 | 32 | 16.6% |
| *Hard Copy* | 24 | 29 | 15.0% |
| *Max and Mona* (2004) | 25 | 25 | 13.0% |
| *Dangerous Ground* (1997) | 26 | 25 | 13.0% |
| *Material* (2012) | 27 | 24 | 12.4% |
| *Jump the Gun* (1996) | 28 | 23 | 11.9% |
| *Lucky* (2012) | 29 | 22 | 11.4% |
| *Gums and Noses* (2004) | 30 | 20 | 10.4% |
| *Red Dust* (2004) | 31 | 18 | 9.3% |
| *Surfing Soweto* (2006) | 32 | 17 | 8.8% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon* (2005) | 33 | 16 | 8.3% |
| *Soweto Green* (1995) | 34 | 15 | 7.8% |
| *Chikin Biznis: The Whole Story* (1998) | 35 | 14 | 7.3% |
| *Battle for Johannesburg* (2010) | 36 | 10 | 5.2% |
| *A Reasonable Man* (1999) | 37 | 9 | 4.7% |
| *Unhinged: Surviving Johannesburg* (2010) | 38 | 8 | 4.1% |

**Table 9.1** – Most watched films and television shows.

**All locations: The top films and television shows**

11 weekly or daily television shows were included in the survey, and seven of these were in the top ten of the most watched films or television shows. This was even more pronounced in the top five, where only *Tsotsi* achieved the same audiences as the four television shows (*Generations, Isidingo, Rhythm City* and *eKasi: Our Stories*). The only other two films to reach the top ten were *Jerusalema* and *White Wedding*. All three films star Rapulana Seiphemo, who is perhaps South Africa's best-known male lead, which may have contributed to the popularity of all three films. His most important role in his rise to stardom is arguably the role he played as Tau Mogale in *Generations*, the most watched television show in South Africa. Therefore the television shows and the films in the top ten are very closely linked.

The prevalence of television shows in the top ten illustrates that television attracts far greater audiences than films, even when they share similar narratives, themes or celebrity actors. This of course relates to the size of the audiences, generally for each medium discussed above, and is also related to the fact that television is more accessible and affordable on a more regular basis. In addition, feature films form a small percentage of the programming screened on local terrestrial television stations and South African productions form an even smaller part of the film component.

Nearly 40% of the films and television shows featured in the survey had fewer than 30 respondents state that they had seen the film or show. The least watched television show, *Hard Copy*, had only 29 viewers but all three documentaries that were on the list had fewer than 17, with *Unhinged: Surviving Jo'burg* at the bottom, with an audience of eight. Older films such as *Soweto Green* and *A Reasonable Man* tended to not fare as well, and this may be because the audience is smaller (fewer younger people will have seen it) and because it may be more difficult for respondents to recall whether they have seen such films.

*Hotel Rwanda* is the most widely seen international production, well ahead of the international blockbuster *District 9*. Generally speaking though, an international production is not

necessarily in a position to attract more audience members than a local production, for example, *The Bang Bang Club*, with an international cast and higher budget, did not fare as well as *Jozi* (released in the same year), a fairly average local production. Language may play a part in the local success of a film production, but this will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

**Each Location: The top films and television shows**

Some films and television shows were more popular in some areas than others and this will be discussed now briefly. Lists of the films or television shows with the highest audiences were compiled for each neighbourhood, and limited to the top ten in each case. In most cases, there are only minor differences between each location, but the major differences are discussed with each table. In addition to each table, other films are mentioned where a correlation was found between the film audience and location. Films not mentioned were watched evenly in all four neighbourhoods.

| **Most watched films and television shows in Chiawelo** | **No.** |
|---|---|
| *Generations* | 50 |
| *Zone 14* | 49 |
| *eKasi: Our Stories* | 48 |
| *Isidingo* | 47 |
| *Rhythm City* | 46 |
| *Yizo Yizo* | 46 |
| *7de Laan* | 45 |
| *Gaz'lam* | 44 |
| *Tsotsi* (2005) | 43 |
| *Jerusalema* (2008) | 43 |

**Table 9.2** – Chiawelo's top ten most watched films and television shows

Only two films, *Tsotsi* and *Jerusalema*, made it into Chiawelo's top ten and only just at 9th and 10th place respectively. It is interesting to note that *Zone 14* ranks 2nd in Chiawelo, despite it only placing 6th in the whole survey. This may be related to the fact that much of it is set in Soweto. Over a quarter of residents (26.9%) in Chiawelo have seen *Forgiveness* compared to only 8.5% in Fordsburg. The documentary *Surfing Soweto* was seen by 17.3% of those in Chiawelo, compared with only 2.2% of respondents in Melville. *eKasi: Our Stories* has the largest audience in Chiawelo with 92.3% of respondents who watch the show compared to only 54.3% in Melville. *Jacob's Cross* had large audiences in Chiawelo and the CBD (51.9% and 50%), with half of that in Melville (26.1%), and even less in Fordsburg (19.1%).

*The Lab* had the largest audience in Chiawelo, with 42.3% of the respondents having seen it. Similarly, *Hard Copy* was most popular in Chiawelo, with 25% of the respondents having watched it but only 4.3% of those in Fordsburg. Again, *Zone 14* was most popular in Chiawelo with 94.2% watching the show, almost double the number of respondents in Melville at 50%. Chiawelo respondents also formed the largest audiences for *Gaz'lam* (84.6%), *7de Laan* (86.5%), *Yizo Yizo* (88.5%) and *Generations* (96.2%).

| **Most watched films and television shows in the CBD** | **No.** |
|---|---|
| *Generations* | 46 |
| *Rhythm City* | 45 |
| *Zone 14* | 44 |
| *Isidingo* | 44 |
| *Jerusalema* (2008) | 44 |
| *Tsotsi* (2005) | 43 |
| *eKasi: Our Stories* | 41 |
| *Yizo Yizo* | 39 |
| *White Wedding* (2009) | 35 |
| *Hijack Stories* (2002) | 33 |

**Table 9.3** – The CBD's top ten most watched films and television shows

Four films made it into the CBD's top ten, which included *White Wedding* and *Hijack Stories*, both of which have minor references to locations in the CBD. *Gaz'lam*, which is set in the CBD, just missed the top ten at 11th place. The largest audience for *White Wedding* was in the CBD, with 72.9% of the respondents having seen the film and this is in stark contrast to the small audience in Fordsburg with only 29.8% having seen the film. A similar contrast between the two locations emerges with the film *Jerusalema*, where 91.7% of the respondents in the CBD had seen the film in comparison to only 44.7% in Fordsburg. For both these films, Chiawelo and Melville had very similar, relatively high audience numbers.

A quarter of respondents in the CBD had seen *Drum*, compared with only 4.3% in Fordsburg. *Yesterday* has a large audience in the CBD with 43.8% of the respondents having seen the film, in contrast to Fordsburg with only 17%. *Hijack Stories* found much larger audiences in Chiawelo and the CBD with 63.5% and 68.8% of the respondents having seen the film, almost double the audiences in Fordsburg and Melville, at 34% and 39.1% respectively. *Rhythm City* is most popular in the CBD, with 93.8% of the respondents watching the show, and least popular in Melville (56.5%). *Isidingo* was marginally more popular in the CBD (91.7%) than Chiawelo (90.4%) but both areas attracted large audiences.

| Most watched films and television shows in Fordsburg | No. |
|---|---|
| *Rhythm City* | 34 |
| *Generations* | 33 |
| *eKasi: Our Stories* | 30 |
| *Isidingo* | 29 |
| *Zone 14* | 27 |
| *Tsotsi* (2005) | 27 |
| *7de Laan* | 25 |
| *Yizo Yizo* | 22 |
| *Jerusalema* (2008) | 21 |
| *Gaz'lam* | 20 |

**Table 9.4** – Fordsburg's top ten most watched films and television shows

Fordsburg also only had two films make the top ten but it is interesting to note how much lower the audience figures are for each show or film. In fact, Fordsburg often compares negatively with the audience numbers of other locations. *Material* on average was seen by 12.4% of the respondents across the survey. However, in Fordsburg, where it was shot, the audience rose to 23.4%, although the film failed to feature on the top ten list. With *Tsotsi*, only Fordsburg differed from the other locations with a much smaller audience of 57.4% of the respondents, in comparison to an average of 84.2% for the other three locations.

| Most watched films and television shows in Melville | No. |
|---|---|
| *Tsotsi* (2005) | 37 |
| *Isidingo* | 32 |
| *Jerusalema* (2008) | 31 |
| *White Wedding* (2009) | 30 |
| *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) | 30 |
| *Generations* | 28 |
| *7de Laan* | 27 |
| *Rhythm City* | 26 |
| *eKasi: Our Stories* | 25 |
| *Yizo Yizo* | 25 |

**Table 9.5** – Melville's top ten most watched films and television shows

Melville's top ten list reveals a stark difference between itself and the other locations. The film *Tsotsi* is at the top of the list, and four other films are in the top five. Interestingly *7de Laan*, set in Melville, only features in 7th position. *District 9* did not have a particularly large

audience in the CBD or Fordsburg (14.6% and 12.8%) but the audience doubled in Chiawelo (26.9%), where some of it was shot. However, the largest audience was in Melville, with 50% of the respondents having seen the film. *Hotel Rwanda* had a large audience in Melville with 65.2% of respondents having seen the film. Considering that television shows make up only 29% of the viewing options available to select, their dominance of the top ten lists is noteworthy. Documentaries, which only made up 8% of the selection, do not feature at all in these lists. The respondents of Chiawelo watch the most films and television shows.

It's clear that the four locations differ far more in their viewing habits than in their demographic profiles. Fordsburg has the lowest viewership of local films and television shows of all the locations, despite not necessarily watching less television or attending the cinema any less. Melville has the second lowest viewership but had far greater numbers for films than for television shows. This reflects the viewing habits discussed Section 9.3.1. Films were also more popular in the CBD but the CBD had larger audiences for both television and films. Undoubtedly, Chiawelo has the largest television and film audiences. This suggests that Chiawelo is watching feature films through the medium of the DVD player and the television, as opposed to the cinema.

The audience numbers in each location may be influenced by a number of factors, such as income, language, or reasons for attending the cinema. These factors are also related to the demographic profiles of each location, suggesting that differences between each neighbourhood may be a result of the socio-economic legacy of apartheid planning, rather than a result of spatial or material differences. This section has also shown that participants are not necessarily more inclined to watch the films that have been shot in their neighbourhood. Although, there does appear to be a tenuous relationship between the key locations of the film or television show, and its ranking or audience size in each location. The film *Material* is a clear example of this in Fordsburg.

Ultimately it is very difficult to illustrate, or even identify, the impact of a single film or television show and therefore the overall viewing habits may be more relevant than the effect of specific films. Images and narratives from one film are difficult to isolate within a respondent's memory. Respondents often struggled to recall whether they had seen a particular film, although they may recall scenes from that film. At the same time the research suggests that influence is not dependent on how many Johannesburg films or television shows a respondent has seen, as I will discuss in the next section. A single film may make a dramatic impression on a participant, but this may differ with each individual.

## 9.4 Knowledge and Perceptions of the Real and the Screen City

This brief section provides the data on the daily mobility of participants in each location, as well as their knowledge of the city. It also examines the perception of Johannesburg and the reception of images of Johannesburg on the screen. These variables begin to knit together the concepts of the real and experienced city with the Johannesburg in films and television shows. These variables show the least variation per location despite the differences in experiences of the city and viewing habits outlined above.

### 9.4.1 Mobility in, and knowledge of, Johannesburg

78.8% of those in Chiawelo do not move around the city on a regular basis, in comparison to the 20.8% in the CBD and the 29.8% in Fordsburg who do not move around the city on a regular basis. In Melville, the proportions are more even, with 47.8% of those surveyed moving around regularly. On the whole, two thirds (66.3%) of respondents stated that they were familiar with many parts of Johannesburg, and that they knew their way around the city. In the CBD, this was as high as 75% and in Fordsburg as low as 55.3%. This is despite the fact that both areas were mobile on a daily basis in the city. 30.6% of respondents stated that they were only familiar with a few parts of the city, with 42.6% of those in Fordsburg expressing this statement.

Only 9.8% of the respondents stated that they felt Johannesburg was too big to know and again Fordsburg had a large percentage with 17% of respondents there agreeing with this statement. Fewer people found Johannesburg to be a confusing and overwhelming city, with only 6.2% of respondents agreeing with this statement. There was only one person in Chiawelo who did not agree with any of the statements about their knowledge of Johannesburg.

Most respondents (84.5%) across all four locations could name films or television shows that had featured Johannesburg in them which indicates the ability to recognise the city on the screen. The majority of respondents (72%) recognised Johannesburg through places that they had been to. Although there was some variation between each location, it was not significant. Chiawelo had the lowest figure at 63.5% and Melville the highest at 80.4%. Only 28% of respondents stated that they recognised Johannesburg in films through news stories or photographs, though more people in Chiawelo (42.3%) recognised Johannesburg through this method compared to only 17% in Fordsburg.

53.9% of all the respondents recognise Johannesburg on the screen through the city's major landmarks, although this varied dramatically with each of the four locations. Only 38.5% of those in Chiawelo recognised Johannesburg in this manner, while in Melville it was the majority (76.1%). Only a small minority of respondents (6.7%) stated that they weren't sure how they recognised Johannesburg when they did, and most of these were from Melville (53.8%). Finally, only 2.1% of all respondents said that they found it difficult to recognise Johannesburg in films. This is far below the 15.5% of respondents who couldn't name a film or show shot in Johannesburg. This suggests that perhaps one of the obstacles in researching films is the ability to recollect. These questions about recognition came almost directly after respondents were asked to select the films and television shows they had seen.

The location does seem to play some part in how respondents recognised Johannesburg in films. Respondents in Chiawelo relied more on 'second-hand' sources of recognition (news stories and photographs) and less on 'first-hand' knowledge (visiting places and landmarks), while respondents in Melville relied heavily on such 'first-hand' knowledge. These differences may not be a direct factor of the location itself but rather how the location is characterised in terms of demographics, as mentioned in the first section. But it may also have to do with the fact that respondents in Chiawelo watch more television while respondents in Melville watch more films. And, as discussed in a previous chapter, these different mediums represent the city in different ways.

Fordsburg and the CBD had a majority of respondents who were very mobile in the city on a daily basis, but this did not necessarily translate into knowledge of the city, or the ability to recognise Johannesburg in films distinctly. Despite the high rate of mobility of those in Fordsburg, Fordsburg respondents had the lowest rate for those who felt that they were very familiar with Johannesburg and the highest rate for those who find the city to be too big to know. A possible side effect of increased mobility would be the ability to recognise Johannesburg in films, through places visited or the city's major landmarks, but neither the CBD nor Fordsburg stood out in this regard. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

### 9.4.2 Perceptions of Johannesburg

These factors of perception are perhaps the aspects with the greatest potential or influence in the question of the influence of films. Intuitively, if your perceptions of Johannesburg are more positive, you may be more inclined to watch Johannesburg films and therefore more easily influenced.

62.7% of respondents consider Johannesburg to be their home. As mentioned earlier, this is very consistent across all the locations. However, at least 10 participants who were born in Johannesburg do not consider Johannesburg to be their home. This demonstrates the effect of migrant labour patterns on the city, and how this can even transcend generations. Despite the relatively high percentage of those who do not feel at home in Johannesburg, 82.3% of respondents said that they enjoy living in Johannesburg most of the time and a further 8.9% stated that they enjoy it occasionally. Only 8.9% said that they don't enjoy living in Johannesburg. This did not vary significantly with each neighbourhood. The majority, therefore, consider Johannesburg to be home and enjoy living in the city.

When asked about their perceptions of the city, participants' reactions were more mixed. 41.3% of respondents said that Johannesburg is getting better and an almost equal number, 43.4%, said that Johannesburg is getting worse. In the middle, 15.3% of participants said that Johannesburg is staying the same. Chiawelo was more positive, with 47.1% stating that Johannesburg is getting better; Fordsburg was more negative with 52.2% stating that Johannesburg is getting worse; and Melville respondents tended to be more ambivalent with 24.4% saying that they see no change in Johannesburg.

Overwhelmingly, the majority of participants (93.9%) stated that they liked seeing Johannesburg on the screen. 88.7% of these said that seeing Johannesburg on the screen made them feel happy. The majority of those who do not like seeing Johannesburg on the screen felt that it was because Johannesburg is shown in a negative way (54.5%). Slightly fewer people (85.6% of all respondents) felt that there should be more of Johannesburg on the screen. 50% of those who stated that they did not care where the film was shot, as long as it was good, were in Melville. But this is the only major difference between the locations. Perceptions of Johannesburg and Johannesburg on the screen do not vary significantly across the four locations.

## 9.5 Influence and Impact of Johannesburg Films and Television

Films have an influence on the feelings and activities of respondents in Johannesburg – this is presented here. Films influence both feelings of, and activities in, Johannesburg and in a variety of ways. This section first looks at how films influence feelings, and the various dimensions of those feelings. The second section examines the influence of films on activities in the city, and the various aspects of those activities. Rather than focusing on each location, this fourth section instead examines the variables outlined above that correlate with the influence of films. This section shows that it is not the differences of location and

demographics that factor in the influence of films, but rather the similarities of perception and reception that contribute to the influence of films.

The previous three sections of this chapter describe the existing conditions of the space of audience reception for films of Johannesburg. The sections on identity and demographics, and viewing habits, are unlikely to be influenced by images of Johannesburg on the screen; they are independent variables. The third section on mobility, knowledge and perception of Johannesburg may be influenced by films of the city but may equally inform viewing choices. This section attempts to uncover the relationship between the potential for film influence and the existing conditions within the space of reception.

All the correlations in this section have been compared with the average response for the question and only features significant deviations from the average. Appendix C.2 contains all the significant correlations between the variables of identity, viewing, mobility, perception and influence.

### 9.5.1 Films' Influence on Feelings of Johannesburg

Only a total of 31.1% respondents said that films of Johannesburg have not really changed the way that they feel about the city, meaning that 68.9% of respondents recognise either a positive or negative influence of films on their feelings.

| **Influence of Johannesburg films on feelings** | | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Films make me feel better about the city | 100 | 51.8 | 55.6 |
| | I feel worse about the city | 24 | 12.4 | 13.3 |
| | Films have not really changed the way that I feel about the city | 56 | 29.0 | 31.1 |
| | Total | 180 | 93.3 | 100.0 |
| Missing | No answer | 13 | 6.7 | |
| Total | | 193 | 100.0 | |

**Table 9.6** – Influence of Johannesburg films on feelings

There is no correlation between cinema attendance or television viewing, and the influence of films on feelings about Johannesburg. It is clear in the table on page 208 (Table 9.8) that there is a relationship with DVD viewing and the influence of films on feelings about

Johannesburg. The influence of films increases with increased DVD viewing for both positive and negative feelings[35]. This suggests that an aspect of the DVD viewing experience has a greater impact on a film's influence of people's feelings. Furthermore, DVD viewing may have more of a positive effect on respondents who watch DVDs more frequently, stating that the films make them feel better about the city[36]. But respondents who watch DVDs frequently are also more likely to state that they enjoy living in Johannesburg[37]. Therefore, frequent DVD viewing may encourage a more positive attitude for living in Johannesburg, and in the way that the images of the city are received. But the correlation between those who enjoy living in Johannesburg and those for whom films make them feel better about the city may also be related to a more general optimistic outlook, and may not be a direct or causal relationship. Although, these two variables did not correlate with other positive outlooks, such as the idea that Johannesburg as a place is getting better, or that participants enjoy seeing Johannesburg in films.

Those participants who have seen the film *Dangerous Ground* are more likely to state that films make them feel better about the city[38]. It's not clear why this particular film may have this effect. Respondents from Chiawelo are more likely to say that films make them feel better about the city[39]. The correlation with Chiawelo may be related to the viewing habits of Chiawelo participants. In general, respondents in Chiawelo have seen more Johannesburg films and television shows and this includes more frequent DVD viewing.

Those who do not enjoy living in Johannesburg are more likely to say that films make them feel worse about the city[40]. This is the converse of those who do enjoy living in the city. But, those who do not enjoy living in Johannesburg are also more likely to state that there is no influence on their feelings. Therefore, those participants who do not enjoy living in the city are either going to be less receptive to the influence of films or be influenced in a negative way. Those who go to the cinema to hang out with friends[41], and those aged between 18 and 25 years[42] are more likely to say that films make them feel worse about the city. Although it

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[35] Cramer's V .172; significance .032

[36] Cramer's V .172; significance .032

[37] Cramer's V .223; significance .001

[38] 83.3% – Cramer's V .223; significance .011

[39] 66.7% – Cramer's V .203; significance .022

[40] 35.3% – Cramer's V .223; significance .001

[41] 25.6% – Cramer's V .202; significance .025

[42] 21.3% – Cramer's V .150; significance .089

appears as though these two variables should be related because the 18–25-year-old age group is the dominant group for attending the cinema and going to the movies is seen to be a form of social entertainment, there is no correlation between these two variables.

| | | | DVD viewing | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Yes, frequently | Yes, occasionally | No | |
| Influence of Johannesburg films on feelings | Films make me feel better about the city | Count | 58 | 35 | 6 | 99 |
| | | % within DVD viewing | 58.0% | 57.4% | 33.3% | 55.3% |
| | I feel worse about the city | Count | 17 | 6 | 1 | 24 |
| | | % within DVD viewing | 17.0% | 9.8% | 5.6% | 13.4% |
| | Films have not really changed the way that I feel about the city | Count | 25 | 20 | 11 | 56 |
| | | % within DVD viewing | 25.0% | 32.8% | 61.1% | 31.3% |
| Total | | Count | 100 | 61 | 18 | 179 |
| | | % within DVD viewing | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

**Table 9.7** – Influence of Johannesburg films on feelings and DVD viewing (Cramer's V .172; significance .032).

Those respondents who feel worse about the city after seeing Johannesburg in films are more likely to state that they are more aware of dangerous activities in the city[43]. And they are also more likely to feel more comfortable in spaces after seeing them on the screen[44]. This suggests that, although a film's influence may have a negative impact on how a respondent feels about the city, the influence may have a more positive effect on other aspects of influence, ultimately allowing the respondent to feel more comfortable in the city. Those participants whose feelings of the city are influenced in a negative way may lead to a greater awareness of the influence of films, or have a greater influence overall. 54.5% of the respondents, who stated that characters make them wish they were living somewhere else, also stated that Johannesburg films make them feel worse about the city[45]. This suggests that some character portrayals may make respondents feel worse about the city. 36.3% of those

[43] 66.7% – Cramer's V .233; significance .008

[44] 37.5% – Cramer's V .180; significance .054

[45] Cramer's V .312; significance .000

who stated that characters make them wish they were living somewhere else identified as students under employment status[46]. Although the significance of this correlation is not that high it may easily be related to the fact that students are more mobile, having come from other parts of the country or city to study, and that they may be more aspirational, in other words, seeing themselves living somewhere else.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from correlations with an absence of influence. Respondents in Melville are far less likely to have their feelings about Johannesburg influenced in a negative or positive way[47]. This may be related to the overall lower levels of viewing the suburb, and may therefore reinforce the idea that higher levels of viewing influence the extent to which films influence feelings about Johannesburg. But it may be related to another variable, because the differing viewing mediums appear to have different effects. Those participants who go to the cinema expressly to watch films are more likely to say that they have no influence at all[48]. Those who have seen *District 9* are more likely to say that they have not influenced their feelings of Johannesburg[49]. This is probably related to the fact that *District 9* had the largest audience in Melville, which also correlates with a lack of influence. Those who do not watch *Zone 14*[50]; *Gaz'lam*[51]; *Yizo Yizo*[52]; and *Generations*[53] are more likely to say that films or television shows have no influence. These particular television shows have high audience numbers, which means that those who do not watch the shows are in the minority. Therefore, it is not necessarily these television shows in particular that have a strong influence of films on a respondent's feelings of the city.

Those who do not recognise Johannesburg in films through places that they have been to are more likely to state that films have no influence on their feelings[54]. This aspect of the ability to recognise Johannesburg is a variable that appears repeatedly in relation to influence. It confirms what might be considered obvious, that in order for a respondent to be influenced by a film or television show, the respondent needs to be able to identify the places in film

[46] Cramer's V .268; significance .033

[47] 47.7% – Cramer's V .269; significance .005

[48] 42.9% – Cramer's V .232; significance .008

[49] 41.7% – Cramer's V .194; significance .034

[50] 50% – Cramer's V .238; significance .006

[51] 41.7% – Cramer's V .197; significance .030

[52] 43.1% – Cramer's V .165; significance .086

[53] 51.6% – Cramer's V .206; significance .022

[54] 44.4% – Cramer's V .172; significance .069

that belong to Johannesburg. This will be explored further with regard to the other influences in Chapter ten.

Very few people did not want to see more of Johannesburg on the screen. Those who do not want to see more of Johannesburg on film, or who would rather see other places, or for whom it does not matter, are also more likely to state that films do not really influence their feelings about the city[55]. This suggests that if you are not particularly interested in seeing Johannesburg on the screen, your feelings about the city are less likely to be influenced by its images. This attitude to Johannesburg on the screen is similar to the attitude of living in the city, and reflects a similar correlation with the influence of film. Those who do not enjoy living in Johannesburg are more likely to say that films have no influence at all[56]. And those who only occasionally enjoy living in Johannesburg are more likely to say that films have no influence on their feelings[57].

Identity or demographic variables of respondents had almost no impact on the influence of films on participants' feelings of the city. Similarly movement around the city and knowledge of the city has no correlation with films' influence on feelings. This is surprising but will be explored further in Chapter ten.

**Images of Johannesburg in films make me feel safer in the city**

| **Films make me feel safer in the city** | | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 166 | 86.0 | 86.0 |
| | Yes | 27 | 14.0 | 14.0 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.8** – Films make me feel safer in the city.

This aspect of the influence of films on feelings was not a popular choice, with fewer than 30 positive responses articulating the way in which films may exert an influence. It does not correlate with many variables. Those who do not enjoy seeing Johannesburg on the screen are more likely to state that films of Johannesburg make them feel safer in the city[58]. This correlation is difficult to understand but may relate to the content of films, though it is

[55] Cramer's V .255; significance .001

[56] 52.9% – Cramer's V .223; significance .001

[57] 41.2% – Cramer's V .223; significance .001

[58] 75% – Cramer's V .275; significance .003

difficult to prove. It may be that even if respondents do not enjoy the setting of the films, there is still a positive effect on their feelings of safety in Johannesburg. Only 23.5% of those who stated that films make them more aware of dangerous activities stated that films make them feel safer in the city, however this is nearly 10% higher than the average affirmative response to this question[59]. This is similar to the correlation with the influence of films on activities. Those who state that films influence their activities consciously are more likely to state that films make them feel safe in the city (23.2%)[60]. Section 9.5.2 will show that there is a correlation between those respondents who state their activities in the city are influenced by films, and those who state that films make them more aware of dangerous activities. These two variables, therefore contribute to respondents feeling safer in the city.

There are no strong correlations between feeling safer in the city and any demographic variables. There are no correlations between feeling safer in the city and viewing habits. There is only a weak correlation with a single television show. Those participants who do not watch *Zone 14* are less likely to say that they feel safer in the city[61]. However, because those respondents who do not watch the show are very much in the minority, it is difficult to draw the conclusion that watching the show encourages participants to feel safer in the city. Those who find Johannesburg too big to know are more likely to say that films make them feel safer in the city[62]. Those who find Johannesburg to be confusing and overwhelming are more likely to say that films make them feel safer in the city[63]. Therefore, broadly speaking, those who are not very familiar with Johannesburg are more likely to feel safer in the city as a result of seeing films.

**Images of Johannesburg in films make me feel better about travelling in the city**

Those who state that images of Johannesburg in films make them feel better about travelling in the city are more likely to state that their perception of Johannesburg is getting better[64]. Similarly, those who enjoy living in Johannesburg are more likely to state that films make them feel better about travelling in the city[65]. In other words those participants who feel

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[59] Cramer's V .232; significance .001

[60] Cramer's V .276; significance .001

[61] 2% – Cramer's V .204; significance .005

[62] 36.8% – Cramer's V .218; significance .002

[63] 41.7% – Cramer's V .205; significance .004

[64] 33.3% – Cramer's V .250; significance .003

[65] 23.4% – Cramer's V .165; significance .074

positively towards Johannesburg, and living in the city, are more likely to feel better about travelling in the city after seeing Johannesburg in films.

| **Films make me feel better about travelling in the city** | | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 153 | 79.3 | 79.3 |
| | Yes | 40 | 20.7 | 20.7 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.9** – Films make me feel better about travelling in the city.

There are no strong correlations between feeling better about travelling in the city and demographics. Surprisingly, none of the locations correlated with films' influence on travelling in the city. Those who live with their parents are more likely to say that films make them feel better about travelling in the city[66]. This did not correlate with the younger age group and is, therefore, not necessarily related to a new youthful and mobile independence in the city.

Those who go to the cinema are more likely to state that films make them feel better about travelling in the city[67]. Those participants who watch DVDs more frequently are more likely to state that films make them feel better about travelling in the city[68]. Those who have seen *Jozi* [69], *A Reasonable Man* city[70], *Soweto Green*[71] and *The Lab*[72] are more likely to say that films have made them feel better about travelling in the city. Those who have not seen the films *Jerusalema*[73]or *eKasi: Our Stories*[74], or *Zone 14*[75], are more likely to state that films have not made them feel better about travelling in the city. The overall impression, therefore, is that

[66] 34.5% – Cramer's V .241; significance .049

[67] 36.2% – Cramer's V .216; significance .003

[68] 28.6% – Cramer's V .210; significance .015

[69] 33.3% – Cramer's V .172; significance .017

[70] 55.6% – Cramer's V .190; significance .008

[71] 46.7% – Cramer's V .186; significance .010

[72] 29.4% – Cramer's V .128; significance .074

[73] 88.9% – Cramer's V .148; significance .040

[74] 88.9% – Cramer's V .151; significance .035

[75] 88% – Cramer's V .127; significance .077

cinema and DVD viewing, along with several specific films and television shows, contributes to an increase in feeling better about travelling in the city.

Those who recognise Johannesburg through its major landmarks were more likely to state that films make them feel better about travelling in the city[76]. Those respondents who recognise Johannesburg in films through news stories or photographs are more likely to state that films make them feel better about travelling in the city[77]. Alternatively, those who state films make them feel better about travelling in the city were no more nor no less likely to state that they recognise Johannesburg in films through news stories or photographs (50%). This suggests that it is the ability to recognise Johannesburg through news stories or photographs, which influences whether a respondent is likely to feel better about travelling in the city. Again these two variables highlight the relevance of recognition for the influence of films on participants' feelings of the city.

**Images of Johannesburg in films encourage me to feel more comfortable, after seeing familiar places on the screen**

Feeling more comfortable in spaces, after having seen them on the screen, correlates with many variables, and from every main category of the survey. This variable also has some of the strongest correlations with other aspects of influence explored in the survey, and discussed in this section.

| **I feel more comfortable after seeing familiar places on the screen** | | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 143 | 74.1 | 74.1 |
| | Yes | 50 | 25.9 | 25.9 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.10** – I feel more comfortable after seeing familiar places on the screen.

76% of those who state that they feel more comfortable, after seeing familiar places on the screen, also stated that some characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg[78]. 58% of those who state that they feel more comfortable after seeing familiar places on the screen also stated that some characters make them feel they can achieve their dreams[79]. This

[76] 28.8% – Cramer's V .217; significance .003

[77] 37% – Cramer's V .251; significance .000

[78] Cramer's V (and Phi) .676; significance .000

[79] Cramer's V (and Phi) .583; significance .000

may suggest that if you relate strongly and positively with characters on the screen you are more likely to feel comfortable in spaces made familiar through films. It is suggested by the fact that there is no correlation with the question of whether any characters make respondents feel worse about living in Johannesburg, in other words, a more negative influence.

Those whose preferred language is English are more likely to feel comfortable in spaces after seeing them on the screen[80]. It is surprising that English as a preferred language has not come up as a previous correlation. There are two reasons that English might contribute to the strength of influence in this case. There are more films and television shows, even with local productions, in English. Even those where the oral language is not English, the subtitles are translated into English, which means there is a greater variety and quantity of content for those participants who prefer English, and therefore a greater potential for influence. In addition, because the lingua franca in Johannesburg is English, despite all eleven official languages in use, those respondents whose preferred language is anything other than English are more likely to feel less comfortable in the city.

There is no proportional correlation with comfort in spaces and income, but those who earn less than R1 600 per month are less likely (14.3%) to feel comfortable in spaces; those who earn between R1 600 and R10 000 per month are more likely (34%) to feel comfortable in spaces after having seen them on the screen[81]. Those who have attended university or college are more likely to state that they feel more comfortable in places after having seen them on the screen (52.4%) than those who have only completed Grade 9[82]. However, there is no proportional relationship with the level of education and the likelihood of feeling comfortable. It is not easy to extrapolate the relevance of these two variables.

Those who know the city very well are less likely to state that films make them feel more comfortable in spaces[83]. And those who are only familiar with a few parts of Johannesburg are also less likely to state that films make them feel more comfortable in spaces[84]. This suggests that there is not necessarily a straightforward relationship between knowledge of the

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[80] 36.7% – Cramer's V .229; significance .018

[81] Cramer's V .204; significance .096

[82] 7.7% – Cramer's V .309; significance .005

[83] 15.4% – Cramer's V .171; significance .017

[84] 16.9% – Cramer's V .136; significance .059

city, and feeling more comfortable in spaces as a result of films, although one might expect it.

Those who go to the cinema to hang out with friends are more likely to state that films make them feel more comfortable in spaces[85]. Those who have no time to attend the cinema are less likely to state that films make them more comfortable in places[86]. Those who watch DVDs frequently are more likely to state that they feel more comfortable in places after seeing them on the screen (37.1%), than those who watch only occasionally (13.4%), or those who do not watch at all (10.0%)[87]. This demonstrates a relationship between the frequency/intensity of DVD viewing, and feeling more comfortable in the spaces of Johannesburg shown on screen. However there are no correlations with cinema or TV viewing levels.

Those who have seen *Jozi*[88], *Drum*[89], *Forgiveness*[90], *Yesterday*[91], *Dangerous Ground*[92], and *The Lab*[93] are more likely to feel comfortable in spaces they have seen on the screen. Those who have not seen *Jerusalema*[94], *eKasi: Our Stories*[95], or *Rhythm City*[96] are less likely to feel comfortable in spaces they have seen on screen. In general, these specific films and television shows indicate the average viewing of films and television shows set in Johannesburg. *Yesterday*, *Drum* and *Jozi* all have lower audience figures on average, meaning that if you have seen these films you are more likely to be seeing more of Johannesburg on the screen. Similarly, *Jerusalema* and *Rhythm City* have much larger audiences suggesting that if respondents have not seen these films, they are seeing much less of Johannesburg than other respondents. All of which

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[85] 40.4% – Cramer's V .188; significance .009

[86] 11.4% – Cramer's V .156; significance .031

[87] Cramer's V .279; significance .001

[88] 35.6% – Cramer's V .121; significance .092

[89] 42.4% – Cramer's V .171; significance .017

[90] 40.6% – Cramer's V .150; significance .037

[91] 37.5% – Cramer's V .186; significance .010

[92] 52% – Cramer's V .230; significance .001

[93] 37.3% – Cramer's V .155; significance .031

[94] 16.7% – Cramer's V .131; significance .068

[95] 14.3% – Cramer's V .155; significance .032

[96] 11.9% – Cramer's V .169; significance .019

suggests that the more respondents see of Johannesburg on the screen, the greater potential there is for influence on their comfort levels in the city.

As with the previous variable, recognition of Johannesburg in films appears to impact on how the respondent is influenced by the films. Those who recognise Johannesburg in films, through news stories or photographs, are more likely to state that they feel more comfortable in the spaces shown on the screen (50%) than those who do not recognise Johannesburg through news stories (16.5%)[97]. Those who recognise Johannesburg in films through its major landmarks are also more likely to state that they feel more comfortable after seeing familiar places in films (39.4%), than those who do not recognise Johannesburg through the landmarks (10.1%)[98]. This reinforces the importance of recognition.

**Some characters make me feel good about living here**

| **Some characters make me feel good about living here** | | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 143 | 74.1 | 74.1 |
| | Yes | 50 | 25.9 | 25.9 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.11** – Some characters make me feel good about living here.

64% of the respondents who stated that some characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg also stated that some characters make them feel as though they can achieve their dreams here. This is in comparison to only 3.5% who did not state that characters make them feel good, but felt that some characters still make them feel as though they can achieve their dreams here[99]. Therefore, those respondents on whom characters have a positive influence on their feelings, about living in the city, will also have their aspirations in the city positively influenced.

Those aged 46–65 years' old are less likely to state that characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg[100]. It is not clear why this older age group are less likely to be

[97] Cramer's V .343; significance .000

[98] Cramer's V .333; significance .000

[99] Cramer's V (and Phi) .673; significance .000

[100] 14.3% - Cramer's V .172; significance .059

positively influenced by characters. It is not related to a more general negative outlook, because this age group did not correlate with any of the other variables that measured positive or negative attitudes. Those who prefer English are more likely than any other language to state that some characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg[101]. This may be related to the predominance of English as a language of dialogue as previously mentioned.

There are no correlations between those who feel characters make them feel good about living here and knowledge of Johannesburg. Those who watch DVDs frequently are more likely to state that characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg[102]. Those who have not seen *Jerusalema*[103] or *eKasi: Our Stories*[104] are less likely to state that film characters make them feel good about living here. Those who have seen the films *Yesterday*[105], *Stander*[106], *A Reasonable Man*[107], and *Dangerous Ground*[108] are more likely to state that film characters make them feel good about living here. As discussed above, these individual films may point towards a more general indicator of viewing habits.

Those who have attended university or college are more likely to state that some characters make them feel good about living here (42.9%) than those who have only completed Grade 9[109], although again there does not appear to be a relationship with the level of education and the likelihood of characters influencing perceptions of living in Johannesburg.

As with previous variables the way that responds recognise Johannesburg in films appears to impact on how the respondent is influenced by the films. Those who recognise Johannesburg in films, through its major landmarks, are also more likely to state that some characters make them feel good about living here (39.4%) than those who don't recognise

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[101] English – 43.0%; Afrikaans – 0%; Indigenous SA languages – 15.1%; Other languages – 16.7% – Cramer's V .131; significance .001

[102] 34.3% – Cramer's V .213; significance .013

[103] 16.7% – Cramer's V .329; significance .068

[104] 16.3% – Cramer's V .128; significance .076

[105] 37.5% – Cramer's V .186; significance .010

[106] 38.2% – Cramer's V .130; significance .071

[107] 66.7% – Cramer's V .206; significance .004

[108] 48% – Cramer's V .195; significance .007

[109] 7.7%)(Cramer's V .294; significance .011

Johannesburg through the landmarks (10.1%)[110]. Those who recognise Johannesburg through news stories or photographs are more likely to state that film characters make them feel good about living here[111].

**Some characters make me feel as though I can achieve my dreams here**

| **Some characters make me feel as though I can achieve my dreams here** | | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 156 | 80.8 | 80.8 |
| | Yes | 37 | 19.2 | 19.2 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.12** – Some characters make me feel as though I can achieve my dreams here.

Those who recognise Johannesburg in films through its major landmarks are also more likely to state that some characters make them feel that they can achieve their dreams (28.8%) than those who do not recognise Johannesburg through the city's landmarks (7.9%)[112].

Those aged 46–65 years' old are less likely to feel that some characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in the city[113]. Although this correlation is again difficult to explain, it does suggest a close resemblance of meaning to the influence of characters living in Johannesburg. Those with higher levels of education are more likely to state that some characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in Johannesburg[114]. This may be related to the notion that those respondents with higher levels of education may feel more empowered, or feel that there is a greater possibility for their dreams to be achieved, than those with lower education levels, though it is not within the scope of this study to illustrate this. There is no correlation between knowledge of Johannesburg and the influence of characters on aspirations.

Those who go to the cinema to hang out with friends are more likely to state that film characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in the city[115]. Those who have not seen

[110] Cramer's V .333; significance .000

[111] 40.7%)(Cramer's V .211; significance .003

[112] Cramer's V (and Phi) .266; significance .000

[113] 2.9%)(Cramer's V .196; significance .025

[114] Cramer's V .242; significance .080

[115] 31.9% – Cramer's V .211; significance .011

*Jerusalema*[116] or *Tsotsi*[117], or do not watch *eKasi: Our Stories*[118], *Zone 14*[119] or *Yizo Yizo*[120] are less likely to state that characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in the city. Those who have seen the film *Stander* [121], and *A Reasonable Man*[122], are more likely to state that some characters make them feel as though they can achieve their dreams in Johannesburg. Those who watch DVDs frequently are more likely to state that characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in the city[123]. Overall, all these correlations build a strong case for the influence of viewing habits on this variable, although many of the individual films and television shows have only weak correlations. It suggests that respondents who watch more content showing Johannesburg on screen are more likely to be influenced positively by characters.

Those who feel that Johannesburg is getting better are more likely to state that film characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in the city[124]. 100% of respondents who state that characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in the city also stated that they enjoy seeing Johannesburg on the screen[125]. This suggests that there is a general correlation between a positive influence of characters on respondents' aspirations and a positive attitude towards Johannesburg. But, those who state that characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in Johannesburg, also state that some characters make them wish they were living somewhere else[126], diminishing the positive relation. Lastly, those who recognise Johannesburg in films, through news stories or photographs, are more likely to state that some characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in the city[127], reiterating the relevance of the recognition variables.

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[116] 9.3% – Cramer's V .157; significance .029

[117] 7% – Cramer's V .166; significance .021

[118] 10.2% – Cramer's V .133; significance .065

[119] 10% – Cramer's V .138; significance .056

[120] 11.5% – Cramer's V .133; significance .065

[121] 29.4% – Cramer's V .120; significance .095

[122] 55.6% – Cramer's V .204; significance .005

[123] 27.6% – Cramer's V .236; significance .005

[124] 28.2% – Cramer's V .182; significance .043

[125] Cramer's V .131; significance .081

[126] 16.2% – Cramer's V .221; significance .002

[127] 31.5% – Cramer's V .195; significance .007

**Some characters make me wish I was living somewhere else**

| Some characters make me wish I was living somewhere else | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 182 | 94.3 | 94.3 |
| | Yes | 11 | 5.7 | 5.7 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.13** – Some characters make me wish I was living somewhere else.

Very few participants responded positively to this question. Those who are self-employed in the informal sector, and those who are currently unemployed, are less likely to state that characters make them wish they were living somewhere else[128]. Those who earn money through irregular jobs, and those who are students, are more likely to state that some characters make them wish they were living somewhere else[129]. These are weak correlations though and it is easy to suggest a relationship between those respondents, who are struggling with employment, and the need to be living somewhere else. These respondents may feel that there are better opportunities elsewhere and may be responding to suggestions from characters in films that reinforce this idea.

As stated previously, those who said that films make them feel worse about Johannesburg, were more likely to say that characters make them wish they were living somewhere else (25%), compared to 4% of those for whom films make them feel better about the city, and 1.8% for whom films have no influence on their feelings[130]. For these respondents films have a negative influence on their feelings of Johannesburg and how characters may negatively influence their desire to remain living in the city.

Attending the cinema with friends has had both positive and negative influences on how films influence participants' feeling of Johannesburg. In this instance, it is negative: those respondents who go to the cinema to hang out with friends are more likely to state that some characters make them wish they were living somewhere else[131].

[128] 0% for each – Cramer's V .268; significance .033

[129] 14.3% & 22.2% – Cramer's V .268; significance .033

[130] Cramer's V .312; significance .000

[131] 14.9% – Cramer's V .225; significance .002

### 9.5.2 Films' influence on Habits and Activities

Only a total of 25.6% said that films of Johannesburg have not really changed any of their activities in the city, meaning that 74.4% of respondents recognised an influence, whether conscious or unconscious, of films on their activities. More people recognise the influence of films on their behaviour than an influence on their feelings. Those who state that films influence their feelings either in a positive way (63.6%), or in a negative way (70.8%), are more likely to state that their habits or activities have been influenced by films[132]. Films are more likely to influence feelings about Johannesburg than activities in the city but in most cases they influence both feelings and activities.

| **Influence of Johannesburg films on activities** | | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Films have changed some of my activities and habits | 99 | 51.3 | 55.0 |
| | Maybe, unconsciously films have changed my habits or activities | 35 | 18.1 | 19.4 |
| | Films have not changed my habits or activities | 46 | 23.8 | 25.6 |
| | Total | 180 | 93.3 | 100.0 |
| Missing | No answer | 13 | 6.7 | |
| Total | | 193 | 100.0 | |

**Table 9.14** – Influence of Johannesburg films on activities.

Those who prefer indigenous South African languages are more likely to state that films have definitely changed their activities[133], while those who prefer English are a little more ambivalent, stating that they are more likely to state that films have changed their activities

[132] Cramer's V .211; significance .003

[133] 63.7% – Cramer's V .189; significance .046

unconsciously[134]. Perhaps, those respondents who prefer indigenous South African languages make the connection, between films and their activities in the city, more readily than those who prefer English. If a film or television show is in a respondent's mother tongue they may relate the film more closely to their own lives in the city, although this variable has not correlated with any of the other areas of influence.

On the other hand, two common variables again correlate with the influence of films on activities. Those who feel that Johannesburg is getting better were more likely to say that films have influenced their activities (67.6%), compared with those who felt that Johannesburg remains the same (44%)[135]. Those who recognise Johannesburg in films, through news stories and photographs, were more likely to state that films do influence their activities (consciously) (71.7%) and were less likely to say that they do not influence their activities at all (7.5%)[136].

| | | | DVD viewing | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Yes, frequently | Yes, occasionally | No | Total |
| Influence of Johannesburg films on activities | Films have changed some of my activities and habits | Count | 64 | 31 | 4 | 99 |
| | | % within DVD viewing | 64.6% | 50.0% | 22.2% | 55.3% |
| | Maybe, unconsciously films have changed my habits or activities | Count | 17 | 11 | 6 | 34 |
| | | % within DVD viewing | 17.2% | 17.7% | 33.3% | 19.0% |
| | Films have not changed my habits or activities | Count | 18 | 20 | 8 | 46 |
| | | % within DVD viewing | 18.2% | 32.3% | 44.4% | 25.7% |
| Total | | Count | 99 | 62 | 18 | 179 |
| | | % within DVD viewing | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

**Table 9.15** – Influence of Johannesburg films on activities and DVD viewing (Cramer's V .193; significance .010)

[134] 28% – Cramer's V .189; significance .046

[135] Cramer's V .172; significance .035

[136] Cramer's V .273; significance .001

Those who have not seen *eKasi: Our Stories*[137], *Gaz'lam*[138], *Yizo Yizo*[139], *Zone 14*[140], and *Generations*[141], are more likely to state that they may have changed unconsciously. Those who have seen the films and shows, *District 9*[142], *Jerusalema*[143], *eKasi: Our Stories*[144], *Yizo Yizo*[145] and *Zone 14*[146], are more likely to state that films have not influenced their activities. It would appear that individual TV shows have an impact on the unconscious influence, or lack of influence, of films on activities in the city. But as stated previously, these films and television shows may be indicators for general viewing levels of films and television shows with images of Johannesburg.

There are no correlations between daily urban movements, knowledge of Johannesburg, and films' influence on activities, and there are no correlations between cinema attendance, or the reasons for attendance and films' influence, on activities. Those who watch DVDs frequently are more likely to have their activities influenced by films either consciously or unconsciously[147]. DVD viewing therefore, appears to affect the influence of films on feelings and activities in a similar way. There is no correlation with television viewing. It is surprising that no other form of viewing affects the influence of films on activities.

71.7% of those respondents, who said that films influence their activities, stated that films had made them more aware of dangerous activities. In addition, those who had said that films perhaps unconsciously influenced their activities were more likely to say that they were not made more aware of dangerous activities[148]. This was one of the most significant ways in which films influenced respondents' activities in the city. These respondents were also more likely to say that films made them feel safer in the city[149]; more likely to say that they feel

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[137] 28.6% – Cramer's V .240; significance .006

[138] 28.2% – Cramer's V .206; significance .022

[139] 28% – Cramer's V .213; significance .017

[140] 36.6% – Cramer's V .298; significance .000

[141] 37.5% – Cramer's V .247; significance .004

[142] 36.7% – Cramer's V .225; significance .010

[143] 42.2% – Cramer's V .246; significance .004

[144] 38.1% – Cramer's V .240; significance .006

[145] 34% – Cramer's V .213; significance .017

[146] 34.1% – Cramer's V .298; significance .000

[147] Cramer's V .193; significance .010

[148] 71.4% – Cramer's V .624; significance .000

[149] 23.2% – Cramer's V .276; significance .001

better about travelling in the city[150]; more likely to have visited or explored other parts of the city[151]; more likely to feel comfortable in spaces after having seen them on the screen[152]; more likely to say that characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg[153], and more likely to say that some characters make them feel like they can achieve their dreams in Johannesburg[154].

**I am more aware of dangerous activities and I try avoid them**

| **I am more aware of dangerous activities and I try avoid them** | | **Frequency** | **Percent** | **Valid Percent** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 112 | 58.0 | 58.0 |
| | Yes | 81 | 42.0 | 42.0 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.16** – I am more aware of dangerous activities and I try avoid them.

This was the most common response to how films have influenced respondents' activities. 60.4% of those who stated that they are influenced by films stated that they have been made more aware of dangerous activities in the city[155].

| | | | Age | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 18–25 | 26–45 | 46–65 | |
| **I am more aware of dangerous activities and I try avoid them** | No | Count | 29 | 56 | 26 | 111 |
| | | % within Age | 45.3% | 60.2% | 74.3% | 57.8% |
| | Yes | Count | 35 | 37 | 9 | 81 |
| | | % within Age | 54.7% | 39.8% | 25.7% | 42.2% |
| Total | | Count | 64 | 93 | 35 | 192 |
| | | % within Age | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

**Table 9.17** – Age and awareness of dangerous activities (Cramer's V .207; significance .016)

Younger respondents stated that films made them more aware of dangerous activities as illustrated in the table above[156]. The younger age group may feel more vulnerable and may

[150] 35.4% – Cramer's V .367; significance .000

[151] 39.4% – Cramer's V .379; significance .000

[152] 43.4% – Cramer's V .414; significance .000

[153] 41.4% – Cramer's V .392; significance .000

[154] 33.3% – Cramer's V .362; significance .000

[155] Cramer's V (and Phi) .530; significance .000

be more strongly influenced by the dangerous activities of films, but this has not translated into feeling safer in the city for this age group. There is some correlation with income, but it is not proportional. Those who earned between R10 000 and R25 000 per month (30%), and those who earned less than R1 600 (34.3%), were less likely to state that films made them more aware of dangerous activities, while those earning between R1 600 and R10 000 per month were more likely to say the opposite (48.9%)[157].

There are no significant correlations between being made aware of dangerous activities and daily mobility in Johannesburg, or knowledge of the city.

Those participants, who have seen the films *Jozi*[158] or *Yesterday*[159], are more likely to have been made aware of dangerous activities. These films do not provide significant content that relates to dangerous activities and therefore, may be related again to more general viewing patterns. Those respondents who have seen the film *District 9* were more likely to state that they had not been made aware of dangerous activities[160]. Those participants who have not seen the films *Jerusalema*[161]and *Tsotsi*[162] were more likely to state that films had not made them more aware of dangerous activities. Those who do not watch *eKasi: Our Stories*[163], *Rhythm City*[164], *Zone 14*[165], *Yizo Yizo*[166], *Gaz'lam*[167], *Isidingo*[168], and *Generations*[169], are less likely to say that they have been made aware of dangerous activities. Again, these television shows are more of an indication of viewing levels, rather than sources of direct information.

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[156] Cramer's V .207; significance .016

[157] Cramer's V .246; significance .022

[158] 55.6% – Cramer's V .152; significance .035

[159] 56.3% – Cramer's V .204; significance .005

[160] 68% – Cramer's V .119; significance .097

[161] 75.9% – Cramer's V .226; significance .002

[162] 81.4% – Cramer's V .253; significance .000

[163] 24.5% – Cramer's V .207; significance .004

[164] 26.4% –Cramer's V .169; significance .019

[165] 18.9% – Cramer's V .287; significance .000

[166] 21.3% – Cramer's V .285; significance .000

[167] 28.9% – Cramer's V .230; significance .001

[168] 26.8% – Cramer's V .159; significance .027

[169] 16.7% – Cramer's V .246; significance .001

Those respondents who do not recognise Johannesburg in films through places they have been to are less likely to say that films have made them more aware of dangerous activities[170]. Those participants who recognise Johannesburg in films through news stories and photographs are more likely to say that films have made them more aware of dangerous activities[171]. Those respondents who do not recognise Johannesburg on the screen through the major landmarks are less likely to say that films have made them more aware of dangerous activities[172]. These variables of recognition suggest that second-hand knowledge of the city, through newspapers and photographs, is more likely to affect the influence of films than direct knowledge of the city or its landmarks.

Those respondents, for whom films influence their knowledge of Johannesburg, are also more likely to have other activities in the city influenced. Those participants who feel safer in the city after watching films are more likely to say that they have been made aware of dangerous activities[173]; however, the majority of those who are more aware of dangerous activities do not feel safer (76.5%). Those respondents who are more aware of dangerous activities are more likely to feel better about travelling in the city[174]. Those who are more aware of dangerous activities are more likely to have visited different parts of the city[175]. Those who are more aware of dangerous activities are more likely to feel more comfortable in spaces they have seen on the screen[176]. Those who are more aware of dangerous activities are more likely to say that characters make them feel good about living here[177]. Those who are more aware of dangerous activities are more likely to say that characters make them feel they can achieve their dreams here[178].

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[170] 31.5% – Cramer's V .132; significance .066

[171] 57.4% – Cramer's V .195; significance .007

[172] 32.6% – Cramer's V .176; significance .015

[173] 23.5% – Cramer's V .232; significance .001

[174] 29.6% – Cramer's V .187; significance .009

[175] 37% – Cramer's V .182; significance .011

[176] 38.3% – Cramer's V .240; significance .001

[177] 35.8% – Cramer's V .192; significance .008

[178] 28.4% – Cramer's V .199; significance .006

**Images of Johannesburg in films encourage me to use different routes through the city**

Only 4 people (2%) said that this is one of the ways that films influence their activities. This response has almost no correlations, and very weak ones at that. This suggests that this is not one of the ways that films influence changes in behaviour in the city.

| I use different routes through the city | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 189 | 97.9 | 97.9 |
| | Yes | 4 | 2.1 | 2.1 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.18** – I use different routes through the city.

**Images of Johannesburg in films have encouraged me to visit/explore different parts/areas of the city**

| I have visited/explored different parts/areas of the city | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | No | 140 | 72.5 | 72.5 |
| | Yes | 53 | 27.5 | 27.5 |
| | Total | 193 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

**Table 9.19** – I have visited/explored different parts/areas of the city.

66% of those who state that images of Johannesburg in films encourage them to visit different places, also state that they feel more comfortable in those places as a result of seeing them on the screen[179]. A similar correlation can be found with those who state that some characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg. 62.3% of those who have visited different places in Johannesburg also stated that characters make them feel good about living in the city compared to only 12.1% of those who say they have not visited different parts of the city[180]. This demonstrates that respondents tend to have their feelings or activities influenced in more than one way.

[179] Compared to the average response of 25.9%)(Cramer's V (and Phi) .564; significance .000

[180] Cramer's V (and Phi) .511; significance .000

Those who have attended university or college, are more likely to state that they have visited different parts of the city (52.4%), than those who have only completed Grade 9 (15.4%)[181], although there does not appear to be a relationship with the level of education and the likelihood of exploration. In other words, a greater education level does not necessarily result in an increase in visiting different parts of the city. Those who prefer English are more likely than any other language to state that they have visited different parts of the city as a result of seeing Johannesburg in films[182]. This may be related to the fact that those respondents who prefer English also feel more comfortable in the city, therefore encouraging exploration.

Those who are employed part-time in the formal sector, and those who are students, are more likely to state that they have explored different parts of the city[183]. Those who earn money through irregular jobs, and those who are currently unemployed, are less likely to state that they have visited different places in Johannesburg[184]. Employment is obviously a factor in the restriction of movement because those who are not earning are less likely to move around the city freely due to the constraints of the high cost of transportation. However, the question of exploration does not correlate with people's actual everyday movements around the city. Those who regularly move around the city every day are more likely to be employed full time in the formal sector (45.9%), although there is no relationship between the other levels of employment and daily urban movements[185].

There are no correlations between visiting places in the city, and knowledge of the city, or viewing habits. Those who have seen *The Bang Bang Club*[186] and *Drum*[187] are more likely to state that films encourage them to explore the city.

Those who recognise Johannesburg in films through news stories or photographs are more likely to state that they have visited different parts of the city[188]. Those who recognise

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[181] Cramer's V .276; significance .023

[182] 43.0% – Cramer's V .287; significance .001

[183] 41.7% & 44.4 % – Cramer's V .261; significance .043

[184] 14.3% & 8.1% – Cramer's V .261; significance .043

[185] Cramer's V .263; significance .040

[186] 38.9% – Cramer's V .123; significance .089

[187] 39.4% – Cramer's V .121; significance .092

[188] 50% – Cramer's V .315; significance .000

Johannesburg in films through its major landmarks are also more likely to state that they have visited different parts of the city[189].

## 9.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationship amongst the city, film and the audience, by expanding the city into its multiple spaces. The city has been examined through four locations, which form multiple spatial stereotypes within Johannesburg. The multiple spaces of materiality, identity, mobility and crime have also been discussed. This chapter has outlined the circuit of culture, touching on all the main points of the cycle. The last section of the chapter has focused on the site of consumption and has shown that films do influence feelings of, and activities, in the city of Johannesburg.

Participants may not always be able to recall specific films that they have seen, or be able to say how they recognise Johannesburg in films, but the majority recognise that films of the city influence their feelings and activities. The respondents showed that films influence feelings more readily than activities. The survey, therefore, confirmed the functioning of the circuit of culture, and what is more, revealed the influence of films at a more conscious, than unconscious, level.

Films influence feelings of safety, comfort and concerns about travelling in the city. Characters have a positive impact on feelings encouraging respondents to feel better about living in Johannesburg and achieving their dreams in the city, while having a lesser influence on suggestions that there are better places to live. The most significant influence, however, was on the activity of becoming aware of dangerous incidents and avoiding them with 42% of respondents confirming this influence. Films also encouraged the exploration of the city, but notably had almost no influence on the routes used for travel in the city. Respondents felt that films did not influence the routes that they travel in the city. This may relate to a high usage of public transport where respondents would not be in a position to select travel routes. This suggests that mobility in the city is encouraged through exploration but that expression through the use of different routes may not be possible. This was the only aspect tested for that did not show any significant influence from films.

The final section has also explored the factors or conditions that correlate with this influence. These factors reveal many things. The first is that the location or neighbourhood is not a factor affecting the way that films influence feelings and activities. This is despite each location characterised quite differently, and embodying different experiences of the city

[189] 42.3% – Cramer's V .360; significance .000

for each of its respondents. The aspect of location featured in only one of the eleven aspects of film influence, and is discussed in this last section. In fact, many of the demographic variables that make up the differences between locations did not factor either. Language, age and education were the most significant demographic aspects to feature, but aspects such as race, income or length of time spent living in Johannesburg almost never correlated with the influence of films.

DVD viewing was the most significant aspect of viewing habits and one of the most significant factors overall. The correlation with DVD viewing was far greater than cinema attendance, or television viewing, which did not correlate at all. Attending the cinema with friends had a moderate impact on the influence of films but surprisingly, general viewing practices did not affect how films influence feelings or activities. Twenty specific films and television shows did correlate with the influence of films, and some more than others. *Jerusalema*, *Zone 14*, and *eKasi: Our Stories* each had a significant effect on the how films influenced feelings and activities. Eight of the twenty are television shows but both films and television shows had similar levels of impact, though in many cases the television shows had higher levels of statistical significance. None of the documentaries had an impact. But, as stated previously, these films and television shows may be more of an indicator of viewing habits than about having specific impacts on influence. Viewing patterns of respondents will be explored further in the next chapter.

The variables that had the greatest impact are those that explore how respondents recognise Johannesburg on the screen. These variables correlated with more than half the aspects of film influence detailed above. Perceptions of Johannesburg, and Johannesburg on the screen also featured, but not as significantly as recognition. The reasons for this will be explored in Chapter ten.

This chapter has shown that participants in each location differed somewhat with demographic variables. Some viewing habits and knowledge of the city also varied with location, but the perception of Johannesburg and the reception of films were consistent across all the neighbourhoods. The chapter has shown that films influence respondents' feelings of, and activities in, the city of Johannesburg; and it has also begun to highlight some of the conditions for the influence of Johannesburg films on its residents. However, films do not exert influence in a vacuum. The influence of films is informed by the conditions of the space of reception. These conditions might include some aspects of viewing such as DVD viewing or attending the cinema with friends but exclude others such as television viewing or going to the movies. The influence of films may be informed by a respondent's knowledge

of the city and their ability to recognise Johannesburg in films, while excluding various aspects of that respondent's identity. This chapter has demonstrated the intersections of the reception of images of Johannesburg, and the more complex reality of everyday practice.

The circuit of culture provides only the scaffolding for understanding the relationship amongst film, the audience and the city. It does not account for all the complexity in the space of audience reception. I have tried to add layers of multiplicity by situating film in space, and the multiple spaces of the city in film but, ultimately, the site of reception is complex. This chapter has shown some of the factors that correlate with the influence of films on everyday practice, but ultimately, the space of reception is crowded with thousands of inputs. This makes it difficult to identify exactly how the cycle is functioning. Chapter ten will explore these factors affecting influence in more depth with guidance from the literature.

The findings discussed in this chapter raise a number of questions. Having demonstrated that films do influence feelings of, and activities in, the city, how is this influence exerted and what are the conditions of this influence? This chapter has shown that some viewing practices facilitate the influence of film more than others: how might different viewing practices affect the influence of films? Knowledge and recognition of Johannesburg was shown to be an important factor: how do films contribute to the knowledge of audience members, and how do respondents use their knowledge of the city when viewing films? Although identity is a major part of the literature on film and the city, aspects of identity do not impact on the influence of films: how do respondents identify or relate to films? Films do not influence aspects of mobility and crime equally: how do respondents view these aspects of their experiences in the city, with those of film? These questions will be explored further in Chapter ten.

# 10. The Influence of Johannesburg Films

## 10.1 Introduction

Chapter nine confirmed the circuit of culture, showing that films influence everyday practice in the city, through the site of audience reception. In addition, it showed how films specifically influence different feelings of, and behaviours in, Johannesburg. But films do not influence all aspects of urban practice. Avoiding dangerous activities in Johannesburg was the primary behavioural response to images of the city in films, while films had almost no influence on the routes participants used to travel through the city. The research was framed around the four key themes identified in both urban and film literatures. The research findings therefore suggest that the manner in which films influence residents of the city is not in the same way that films represent the city or the way in which audiences interact with the city in practice.

Having discussed the entire circuit of culture, this chapter focuses on just one aspect of the cycle: the space of audience to better understand the sphere of influence of films. Films do not influence all the spatial constructs or interactions equally. Chapter nine, based on the quantitative survey, raised several questions concerning the nature of the influence of films. In addition, the research findings from the quantitative survey illustrated that there are some conditions required before films exert an influence. The ability of Johannesburg films to influence Johannesburg residents is dependent on some pre-existing conditions within the space of audience reception. This chapter discusses these conditions and elements of influence, drawing on the qualitative interviews and focus group to expand and explain the findings presented in Chapter nine. The focus group was conducted with four urban professionals, to understand their insights gained from specialist spatial knowledge of Johannesburg. This chapter aims to provide a qualitative discussion and explanation for many of the findings and questions raised in the results from the quantitative survey presented in Chapter nine.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section looks at the space of reception, exploring the nature of the influence of films through the descriptions of respondents, and it examines the different viewing practices. The nature of influence can be somewhat intangible even as participants recognise the effects of films. Attending the cinema and watching DVDs

offer different forms of interaction with film products, which may differentiate the level of influence from television viewing. The second section discusses the imageability of Johannesburg in films and its spatial stereotypes. Films contribute to the audience's knowledge of the city in a very real way that leads the audience to feel that real and fictional knowledge is indistinguishable. The final section explores the other three themes of identity, mobility and crime. This section explores the similarities and differences between the research findings and the discourse on Johannesburg.

The relationship between the audience and the city is at the heart of this research. Films are facilitators and improvers of everyday practice in Johannesburg. This chapter delves deeper into this relationship through the qualitative methods of this research, revealing more personal intimacies with the city. This continues to be explored through the spatial constructs introduced in Chapter two, and reveals the strengths and weaknesses of films for enhancing these urban relationships. Films increase knowledge of the material city and may foster better social understandings within the city. They encourage exploration of Johannesburg but they also reinforce spatial and character stereotypes. Films encourage respondents to be more aware of dangerous activities, and to avoid them, but they do not make participants feel safer. Thus the influence of films on everyday practice is both negative and positive.

## 10.2 The Space of Reception

### 10.2.1 The Nature of Influence

Chapter nine established that films of Johannesburg influence the feelings and activities of respondents in the city. But even as respondents are aware of this influence, they find it difficult to articulate what it might mean and exactly how it might be affecting their perceptions of Johannesburg and their practices therein. Respondents relate to films in a multitude of ways and sometimes in seemingly contradictory ways:

> Interviewer: Have any of these films changed the way you feel about Johannesburg? Do you feel better about the city after seeing it on/in the movies? Or do you feel worse about the city? Or doesn't it really make any difference?
>
> Respondent: I think it has certainly opened my eyes to more, to areas that I am not familiar with. It has exposed me to more of that which I think is good.
>
> Interviewer: So on the whole it makes you feel better?

> Respondent: Uhhh, it doesn't really make me feel better, because the areas that I I'm not exposed to that I am seeing are not great. But I do, I do still like to see the city in the movies. – Stay at home woman (W2)

In response to whether films influence her feelings about Johannesburg, this respondent has expressed three different ideas. She has agreed that films provide more information about the city, which she considers a good aspect but at the same time she expresses that although the information about these different spaces is beneficial, the portrayal of these spaces is quite negative. So films do not influence her feelings in a positive way and yet she enjoys seeing Johannesburg on the screen, presumably because the negative portrayals do not eclipse the benefit of becoming more familiar with different parts of the city. It also highlights the difficulty for respondents to articulate the way that films influence their feelings of Johannesburg.

Another respondent describes how she is not always aware of the influence. Initially she states that films have no influence on her activities but with more probing admits to more of a conscious influence:

> Respondent: Not really. The thing that affects me most is the story that happens in the place and not the place itself.
>
> Interviewer: So then maybe subconsciously the films are affecting the way you do things in the city?
>
> Respondent: Ja, they do. But maybe I don't notice it as often as I should… could… like *Gums and Noses*, when I saw that I thought that kind of stuff only happens in American movies and American life so if they can adapt that to the South African movies then it must also be happening in South African life in general. – Young woman who attends the cinema (C1)

Other respondents articulate different conditions for the influence of films:

> Interviewer: Do you think that it's added to your understanding of the city?
>
> Respondent: A few of them have, I think very few of them have. So the ones that try to be difficult, like *Forgiveness* that made me think in a different way. *Material* made me think in a different way, *Conversations* [*on a Sunday Afternoon*] made me think in a different way. The rest I think maybe, because films tend to, the local films but maybe it's the international audience that they're targeting but they tend to have a happy ending in sight and they're moving towards it. Whereas that's why film, I

> mean, television seems more real cause they don't have to concentrate on the happy ending and they can just tell the story and let people go. – Working woman (W3)
>
> ---
>
> Respondent: Uhm… I don't know about films specifically. But there are certain shows. I feel like for me personally the shows that have the biggest impact are the ones that I relate to the most. So for example shows like *Generations*. I don't really relate to *Generations* so it doesn't affect me. But if it's a show that's more urban, for example *Vuzu Channel*[190] I feel like it has more of an impact. – Woman who attends the cinema (C3)

For the woman who attends the cinema, the influence of film is dependent on her ability to relate to the television show or film. She highlights the fact that even though the television soapie *Generations* is set in Johannesburg, it does not have enough of an urban context for her to relate to it. The influence of film may therefore, be dependent on the location of the narrative. This will be explored further in Section 10.3.

In other instances the influence of film is more direct. Two respondents describe how films influence their comfort in spaces:

> Respondent: Ja, I have visited places. But I would say that the reason that it's places I wouldn't really go is because of what I'm studying. So I don't know if it's the films that influence that or it may have, but may have made it feel a little bit more comfortable… – Young woman studying urban design (R3)
>
> ---
>
> Interviewer: Do you think you would feel more comfortable in township spaces after seeing *eKasi* [*Stories*]?
>
> Respondent: Yes, yes actually I would. 'Cos I mean it will show you like a family living in the township and you see like "okay, it's not so bad". – Young woman who attends the cinema (C2)

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[190] *Vuzu Channel* is a channel aimed at youths available on the satellite broadcaster DStv. The content focuses mostly on American reality shows such as *America's Next Top Model* with a few local counterparts.

For these two women the film directly influences their levels of comfort within the city. The second woman describes how her relationship to space is informed by certain character types in a location, which highlights the intersection between character and place.

### 10.2.2 Viewing Practices

Having established that respondents' feelings and activities are influenced by films and television shows, this section looks at levels of visual consumption and whether there is a relationship with influence.

Chapter nine showed that DVD viewing was one of the most significant variables with regard to the influence of films on feelings and activities. The influence of films increases with increased DVD viewing, for both positive and negative feelings about Johannesburg. This is in stark contrast to the lack of significance of other forms of viewing in attending the cinema and watching television. Television viewing did not correlate with any form of influence and cinema attendance only correlated with two aspects of influence. Although television content was not within the scope of this research, these findings suggest that television as a medium does not exert as great an influence as the media of the cinema and DVDs. This may have to do with the nature of viewing which will be discussed in this section. This respondent demonstrates that television and its day-to-day viewing is at the heart of many homes:

> Respondent: It's not just what you see but it's also what you hear […]. You could be watching as a family and the mom could be saying "aha, look drugs!" and the next day you come to Wits for an interview and you know that kind of stays in your mind for a little bit. But I feel like I never really gave into those perceptions. Like they were there and I acknowledged them but I always [keep] them at a distance and say "let's see". – Urban researcher R1

In this case, the respondent is even articulating a form of resistant reading: choosing to ignore both negative perceptions of family members and those portrayed on the screen.

Some level of cinema attendance encourages residents of Johannesburg to feel more comfortable in the city's spaces and to feel better about travelling in the city. One particular form of cinema practice appeared to play a larger role in the influence of films. Attending the cinema with friends has more of an effect on the influence of films in both a positive and negative way. In comparison, respondents who go to the cinema expressly to watch films are more likely to say that films have no influence on their feelings of Johannesburg at all. This

highlights the fact that two types of viewing practices are affecting the way that films influence respondents: DVD viewing and attending the cinema with friends.

It is not in the scope of this research to fully explain why DVD viewing has such a dominant effect on the way that films influence urban practice in Johannesburg. There are numerous scholars (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986; Ang, 1996), and studies, that have examined and compared the different spaces of audience reception, specifically comparing the viewing experiences of the cinema and the home. The qualitative interviews did, however, reveal some of the reasons why respondents might prefer one format over another, or why attending the cinema with friends might increase a film's influence.

These two respondents both described the convenience of DVD viewing, rendering it a more appealing option than attending the cinema:

> Respondent: You can watch them from your home. It's cheaper. You can decide when to stop, play, pause. I mean, if you don't feel like watching the whole movie then you don't have to. I think I get... I lose focus after two, three hours so for me a DVD – you can watch it before you sleep, and then after you wake up. You can split it up. – Woman who attends the cinema (C2)

> Respondent: The cinema is horrible because you can't pause the film. For me, that's a huge thing especially, I don't know, if it's something funny sometimes you laugh so hard that you need to pause because you're laughing. While at the cinema if you laugh too long you're losing out on a good minute that could be crucial to the story, or whatever. So that's what I don't like about the cinema. Besides sometimes it's cold, or whatever. – Urban researcher (R1)

While television viewing and DVD watching offer the same comforts of home, the option of choice and the crucial ability to pause is not available with television either. Thus DVD viewing is preferable to the cinema and television viewing. It is also possible that, with regard to Johannesburg films, specifically local film productions are more readily available on DVD than at the cinema. Due to smaller audience sizes, local films have shorter periods for screening at cinemas, meaning that they are less readily available to view on the big screen. This, however, does not explain the lack of television viewing as a factor because television has more local content.

DVD viewing does offer a sense of autonomy for the viewer, and this reiterates the similarities between viewing and urban practice. DVD viewing as a wilful practice does conjure Allen's simile of the 'wandering viewpoint' (Allen R. , 1992, p. 105). It emphasises

the viewing practice as a selective process but also reinforces film viewing as a space of exploration, which is echoed in the way that films influence residents' exploration of the city.

In discussions about their average experiences attending the cinema, a few respondents revealed the social nature of watching movies with friends that may contribute to a greater influence of films.

> Respondent: So, I know when I go to movies with friends, it's usually followed by something like getting something to eat, or getting coffee somewhere. Because the movie itself is quite anti-social, so and then a conversation is about the movie or things we've seen, or debate about what the characters have done… – Young man studying urban planning (R2)

As part of the social activity of going to the movies together, friends and family will discuss the film over a coffee or meal afterwards. The discussions and analysis that takes place socially may facilitate a more critical understanding of the images, and thereby increase the level to which a film may influence a respondent's feelings of, or activities in, the city. Another respondent who attends the cinema frequently on her own reiterates this:

> Respondent: I reflect personally. I would love to discuss the film but I go watch it alone. And none of my friends really watch movies, which is kind of sad. So unless I go with someone, I sometimes go with my relative. – Young woman who attends the cinema (C3)

Some specific films and television shows had strong correlations with the influence of films, as many television shows correlated as feature films. In most cases, these films and television shows may just be an indicator of general viewing habits, rather than indicative of specific films that have had a large influence. However, the findings from the survey demonstrated that the frequency of viewing, or the number of films viewed, was not a factor in the influence of films. Respondents are also able to articulate and describe strong impressions and influences from particular films. This suggests that films do not influence in an accumulative manner, or over long periods of time, but that films can exert an influence almost immediately, with a single viewing.

In the qualitative interviews participants were asked which films had made a significant impression on them. A stay-at-home woman had this to say:

> Respondent: I think *Tsotsi* did… I think *District 9* also made quite an impression. Because it was, it really could have been a Hollywood sort of futuristic movie. But it

> was done in Jo'burg and it was more interesting in that sense. It just was quite fun that it could have been a Hollywood blockbuster. But it was set in Johannesburg, so that there was no kind of point to it like there was in *Tsotsi* or *Material* or something. – Stay-at-home woman (W2)

In describing the films that have made an impression, this respondent is also highlighting the fact that local productions are perceived to be different from the films that are normally screened. She says that *District 9* was slightly different from other local productions because it 'could have been a Hollywood blockbuster', and also that it did not have a 'point', which perhaps suggests that local films usually have greater meaning. Another respondent described a local film as including something that is both familiar and unfamiliar:

> Respondent: Well, you're hoping every time you watch a local film to recognise the story and the people, and find something more familiar than what you would see in [an] international film, and also you're likely to get a perspective that you wouldn't have seen. So *Conversations* [*on a Sunday Afternoon*], doccie film, you wouldn't have seen that kind of story of foreign people and how they live unless you had seen that film. – Working woman (W3)

For her, the meaning of a local production is derived from the experiences depicted in the film. A local film should tell the story of characters that are familiar but also show experiences that may be different from the audience's. This begins to point to the fact that audiences respond to many aspects and elements of a film when relating it to their own environments. Local film productions may also offer a framework for resisting the dominant meaning or intended interpretation (Fiske, 1982; Hall, 1980). Respondents here reveal that local productions are considered apart from other productions. Existing knowledge of character and spatial stereotypes may lead more readily to alternative readings of the film. The following section will expand upon the way in which knowledge of the city affects the relationship between Johannesburg films and respondents' experiences of everyday Johannesburg.

## 10.3 Reading the City

### 10.3.1 Materiality and Imageability

The way that respondents recognised Johannesburg on the screen was the most significant element that affected the influence of films, on feelings of, and activities in, the city because it correlated with the highest number of aspects of influence. Recognition relates directly to the imageability of the city. The ability to recognise Johannesburg, through places visited, its

major landmarks, or through news stories and photographs, is related to respondents' first-hand and second-hand knowledge of Johannesburg. Respondents were also asked about their knowledge of the city: how well they know the city; and although knowledge and recognition go hand in hand, it is the latter that correlates more strongly with films' influence. Those who recognise Johannesburg are more likely to be influenced by films.

In-depth knowledge of the city might impede the meaning of the film, or lead to different interpretations. In the focus group held with urban professionals there was some discussion around the plausibility of Tsotsi's journey from the township to a middle-class suburb, shown to be a short journey made while running.

> Respondent: Like here, there is no way that Tsotsi would move from a township to a beautiful suburb like that in that short space of time. – Focus group participant S

> Respondent: It's an analogy for the city, I think. […] The kind of sharp contrast in fortunes and spaces. So you get people living in little spaces and those big houses. […] And actually, there are… there might be places like that where you can literally go from stark poverty to riches in a second like that, like Diepsloot. – Focus group participant N

For 'N', the spatial representation adds to the meaning of the film but for 'S' it destroys the illusion of the narrative somewhat. It is important to note, however, that despite the focus group including urban professionals, it took some probing and direct questioning for the group to think about the sequence in spatial terms. This suggests that people are not immediately aware of spatial inconsistencies in films.

Knowledge did not directly correlate with the influence of films. Knowledge of the city, or lack thereof, only correlated with one aspect of film influence. Those participants who find Johannesburg too big to know, and those who find Johannesburg to be confusing and overwhelming, are more likely to say that films make them feel safer in the city; but those participants who know the city very well are less likely to state that films make them feel more comfortable in spaces. This suggests that there is not necessarily a relationship between knowledge of the city and films influencing respondents to feel more comfortable in spaces as a result. Knowledge of the city is connected to the recognition of Johannesburg in films. 72% of respondents recognised Johannesburg on screen through the places that they had visited but those participants who only know a few parts of the city were less likely to state

that they recognise Johannesburg in films through places they have been to[191]. Similarly those who find Johannesburg too big to know were even less likely to state that they recognised Johannesburg on film through places visited[192]. This demonstrates the relationship between knowledge of the city and the ability to recognise Johannesburg in films. This is relevant for considering the importance of existing knowledge for the role of film influence on everyday practice in Johannesburg.

Films do provide knowledge of the city and contribute to the discourse of the city as discussed in Part B. Some respondents highlighted how films inform them about the city and about what goes on in Johannesburg. In particular, *Jerusalema* was informative for two respondents:

> Respondent: *Jerusalema.* I think we knew about the way buildings were hijacked. But we didn't know exactly how they did it. And the process of negotiation and the informal system of rent giving. That was very interesting. – Woman studying urban design (R3)

> Respondent: *Jerusalema*; the way in which buildings are hijacked and how they are taken over, it's also made me a lot more aware of the informal structures that exist within the city. […] Also with *Jerusalema* how the taxi industry works, with the competition between the different organisations. – Man studying urban planning (R2)

Both participants reveal how films have contributed to their knowledge and understanding of unfamiliar processes occurring in the city. This also highlights the fact that Johannesburg films go beyond images of the city's spaces to illustrate the variety of activities within those spaces. *Jerusalema* makes a stronger impression than other films, perhaps because its central location is Hillbrow. Drawing from the work of Bullock (2003) and Green Leigh and Kenny (1996), the strong influence of *Jerusalema* may be related to the fact that the central location is seen to be inaccessible. Hillbrow is seen by many as an impenetrable place in the city because of high levels of crime, and this notion goes beyond the borders of the city. Hillbrow has a notorious reputation outside of Johannesburg. Therefore, films that illuminate this no-go area are likely to make more of an impression.

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[191] 57.6% – Cramer's V .215, significance .003

[192] 36.8% – Cramer's V .259, significance .000

Not all participants felt that the knowledge they gained through films had direct connections to the city:

> Interviewer: Um, so even though something like *Tsotsi* kind of shows you life in a different, in a different kind of life in poverty, it doesn't really give you any information about the city?
>
> Respondent: No I don't think so. – Stay-at-home woman (W2)

This participant responded to the information about the characters and the depiction of their lives in the city but did not relate this to Johannesburg's spaces. This is despite the fact that earlier in the interview she had commented on the strong urban imagery in the film.

The knowledge attained from films can be indistinguishable from the information obtained through real experiences. Participants were asked to identify places in Johannesburg from photographs and in some cases participants could not say whether they recognised these places from films or from their own explorations of the city.

> Respondent: Mmm, see that's the thing with movies because you see it on TV and it mixes up with all the stuff that you know.
>
> […]
>
> Interviewer: So would you say it becomes difficult sometimes to distinguish what you've seen on the screen and what you've experienced in reality?
>
> Respondent: Yes sometimes. – Woman who attends the cinema (C1)
>
> --
>
> Respondent: That's not familiar at all. I don't think I have seen that ever since I have been here. Or maybe on TV, probably on TV, but not in reality. – Woman who attends the cinema (C2)

In this way, images of Johannesburg spaces in films contribute directly to participants' knowledge of the city. Chris Lukinbeal terms this form of knowledge cultural knowledge and states that this form of knowledge should not be overlooked in favour of direct forms of knowledge (Lukinbeal, 2005). Films therefore facilitate exploration of the city without the need for mobility or access. This has implications in a city that is still largely fragmented because of persistent inequalities in access to work and public transport. Films can transcend these obstacles to provide residents with information about places that may be inaccessible

in reality. Although spaces seen on the screen, and spaces visited, may be indistinguishable and films may facilitate a free flow of information, respondents still recognise a distinction between fictional cinematic portrayals and reality:

> Respondent: They [films] felt real because I would feel lost for a short while in the city, like when I came in for example. But only for a short while, like literally for an hour or less, I'd feel lost because you know it's a new environment and yes, it's really busy, the taxis and whatever. But then after that it [the film] stops being real. – Urban researcher (R1)

This respondent describes how the films of Johannesburg felt more real when he began visiting Johannesburg for the first time. But, as he felt more comfortable in the city, and gained more knowledge and confidence in the urban spaces, the films became less real and, perhaps, less relevant. This illustrates the complex relationship of urban knowledge and the ability of films to influence thoughts and behaviour. Films provide knowledge of Johannesburg but the effect of films' influence diminishes with increased knowledge of the city.

Recognising Johannesburg in films and television shows is the key factor impacting on the influence of films on everyday practice. As mentioned previously, the quantitative survey did reveal a correlation between knowledge of the city and recognition of Johannesburg in films. A majority (72%) of respondents identified Johannesburg in films by recognising places that they had visited. However, this did not correlate with many aspects of the influence of films. It is difficult to explain why this might be but may perhaps be related to the notion that this method of recognition is more elusive; relating to the confusion of real and screen images.

> Respondent: *Material*, I recognised the…
>
> Interviewer: Places that you've been to?
>
> Respondent: Yes. I've been to… it certainly looked like the streets, it was a bit confusing for me initially that I thought it could, part of it could be near Ellis Park, in the streets up there. But then the obvious, the uncle's shop was in the [Oriental] Plaza, I recognised that. – Stay at home woman (W2)

In this instance, the participant describes her struggle to identify the location of the film *Material*. The respondent needed the specific detail of the shop in the Oriental Plaza to determine the location of the film. In other instances participants struggled to articulate how

they recognised spaces. This participant correctly recognised the location of the photograph shown to her, but could not describe the elements that allowed her to make the connection:

> Respondent: I don't know. Maybe I recognise the highway. And the taxis I guess. But it's something about this landscape here… – Working woman (W3)

The highway and taxi elements of the image are not necessarily location specific and can, in fact, be found all over Johannesburg. The landscape she is referring to includes a mine dump. This is the distinctive element that located the image but she was not able to articulate this. This emphasises the elusive nature of recognising the spaces of the city in Johannesburg films. Identifying Johannesburg in films through the city's major landmarks may be less elusive.

Recognising Johannesburg in film through the landmarks had more of an effect on the influence of films, than the other methods of recognition. Those participants who recognise Johannesburg on screen through the major landmarks were more likely to feel better about travelling in the city; to feel more comfortable in spaces; to state that some characters make them feel good about living here; to state that some characters make them feel that they can achieve their dreams; to be more aware of dangerous activities, and to have visited different parts of the city. This greater effect of landmark recognition may be because landmarks, by their definition, assist with recognition and orientation in the city more generally.

Two respondents commented on the fact that the landmarks in films are concentrated in Johannesburg's CBD:

> Respondent: Well the landmarks that they show. They generally show the CBD and the Ponte tower. And I remember in *District 9* they had this explosion where that diamond building in Newtown [is], and that was quite a strong image. – Urban design student (R3)

> Respondent: It's interesting because they offer an alternative whereby when he is doing that he is looking at the inner city, the architecture of the inner city. Which then becomes a representation of Johannesburg. – Planning professional (Focus group S)

These participants also pointed out that these landmarks have come to be representative of the city. The film is instantly located in Johannesburg through the images of its major landmarks. Filmmakers are aware of this process and use it extensively to easily locate a film,

or avoid landmarks in order to have more ambiguous settings. In some cases, though, participants identify more subtle landmarks:

> Interviewer: The major landmarks of the city? Do you recognise those in films?
>
> Respondent: Oh yes. Very definitely. I think in *Tsotsi* there were some scenes with mine dumps, which were very recognisable. And also in the suburbs, where he was about to break into a home. I can't remember which suburb it was but it just had a very Johannesburg feel. […] For me I would have instantly recognised it as a Johannesburg suburb. It was very familiar. – Stay at home woman (W2)

The mine dumps are distinctive landmarks in Johannesburg, as discussed in Chapter five, but the Johannesburg suburb is far less of a definitive landmark. In fact, the respondent cannot identify the specific suburb to which the images belong. Lynch argues that legibility of space provides security for residents, therefore the lack of legibility may contribute to feelings of insecurity in the suburbs (Lynch, 1960). However, the suburbs are still legible in general, which does point to the strength of the spatial stereotype that films use; that it is akin in image to the landmark. Another participant elaborates on the use of spatial stereotypes:

> Respondent: Well then equally what comes to mind is that I also have a problem with just these representations of Jo'burg just being if you can imagine a walk down Commissioner from west to east or east to west. Because even that is not… it's a very particular kind of representation. So it's not like the mine dumps along the mining belt, or it's not leafy suburbia in some parts, it's not the Sandton CBD and Alex and Wynberg. So it tends to either be like from afar of this pretty skyline or it tends to be this stereotypical shot of the inner city – vendor with fruit. – Planning professional (focus group Y)

This urban professional laments the fact that, the spatial stereotype of Johannesburg's CBD, eclipses representations of the city that demonstrate more diversity. Diversity, however, is not likely to be easily recognised, or even familiar to mass cinema audiences, subverting the purpose of including locational landmarks in the films. Another urban professional participant felt that landmarks were of little use to him as identifying spaces of Johannesburg:

> Respondent: It's actually not landmarks. Those are not really critical to the way… I can actually recognise the city without the major landmarks. Or the ones that stand up tall anyway. I can probably just look at a particular street and know where it is or

> something as tiny as a pavement so, ja, the landmarks are not important for me in that sense. – Urban researcher (R1)

Because the landmarks most used in films are largely confined to the city centre, they are of little benefit to recognising the other spaces of Johannesburg. The images of landmarks locate the film in Johannesburg but cannot give any more information about specific places in the city. Thus, the participant describes using other aspects of the built environment to recognise the different spaces of Johannesburg. However, for the purposes of the films' influence on everyday practice in the city, recognition of the landmarks, and the key location of Johannesburg, is sufficient to increase the level of influence. This suggests that in order to be influenced by films residents only need to know that the broad location of the film is Johannesburg, without the need for more specific information at a smaller scale.

Participants also recognise Johannesburg in films through news stories and newspaper photographs. Those respondents who recognise Johannesburg in films through news stories or photographs are more likely to state that films make them feel better about travelling in the city; more likely to feel more comfortable in the spaces shown on the screen; more likely to state that film characters make them feel good about living here; more likely to state that films do influence their activities (consciously); more likely to have been made more aware of dangerous activities through films, and more likely to have visited different parts of the city as a result of seeing films. Recognition through this form of second-hand knowledge has a similar and large effect to the effect of recognition of landmarks on the influence of films on everyday practice. It demonstrates that recognition, and its effect on the influence of films, is not dependent on first-hand knowledge. Furthermore it implies that a respondent's ability to recognise Johannesburg in films increases with every Johannesburg film seen because of the second-hand knowledge of the city gained from films and television shows.

Respondents also recognise Johannesburg in films through elements that are not part of the city's materiality:

> Respondent: Ja, I think when you see people living normally, or just general family life, or going to a festival, or restaurant, like normal average living, *that* I recognise in Johannesburg. Particular when it's a film set in the summer, in the city. *That* reminds me of Johannesburg. But you don't really see that on local TV. It's either set in rural areas or hard hitting urban sort of scenario. – Working woman (W3)

> Respondent: Not in terms of the space. But in terms of the gestures. For example, I know that Jo'burg is a really busy place and a film could present New York or

> whatever, you know making the same kind of suggestions that reminded me of Jo'burg. But not because that space looks like Jo'burg somewhere, not in that sense. – Urban researcher (R1)

These two respondents reiterate the complexity inherent in defining the city. For the working woman, Johannesburg is more than its urban materiality and includes the social construction of space, which she feels is absent from the representations on television. For the urban researcher, the culture of Johannesburg is reminiscent of a place such as New York, and so he equates the two cities, explicitly ignoring the dimension of space. A second participant also compared New York and Johannesburg in a similar way:

> Respondent: Ja… well… I don't know about films. But I've been to places. Certain cities that have reminded me, like, architecturally as well. Like, I guess ja. Movies as well. Especially movies, for example, that are set in New York. Like the hustle and bustle sort of remind you of Johannesburg. – Woman who attends the cinema (C3)

New York was the only city to be mentioned in this way, and compared to Johannesburg. It is probably needless to point out that New York is vastly different from Johannesburg on numerous aspects including materiality. New York's Manhattan skyline towers over Johannesburg's; the city's public transport system is far reaching and widespread; and while New York is not without inequalities, even spatially, it is in the shadow of Johannesburg's inequalities. Despite these significant differences, there are similarities in their representations on the screen. The cinematic images of the skyscrapers of Johannesburg's CBD have the same symbolism as the skyscrapers of Manhattan in films: they symbolise a place of wealth creation and a centre of aspiration. This is reiterated in Johannesburg through the daily aspirational soap operas, all set in the city of gold. The comparison being made between Johannesburg and New York demonstrates the power of the stereotypical images, and the use of urban landmarks in creating an image or idea that is stronger than real materiality. The symbolic images of these cities are more prevalent in the minds of the respondents, than their other knowledge of these spaces.

This section has shown that recognition of Johannesburg in films plays an important role in the influence of films on everyday practice but, ultimately, the ability of films to influence feelings and behaviour is dependent on the respondent having some existing knowledge of the city. The knowledge of the city assists residents to relate to the information and influence that films provide.

> Interviewer: Do you feel more comfortable in the spaces that you have seen [in films]?
>
> Respondent: No… I don't even know where the spaces are that I've seen.
>
> Respondent: I don't have a great knowledge of the city. So I'm not sure if I did if it would help me feel more comfortable. Um, but I don't think so. Because I feel comfortable enough…
>
> Interviewer: With limited knowledge?
>
> Respondent: With limited knowledge of areas that I move in. – Stay at home woman (W1)

This participant had been living in Johannesburg for just over a year and her everyday urban practice in Johannesburg was limited to a very small area within the city. She had very little knowledge of the city and was unable to make use of the information provided by films. In addition, her feelings and behaviour in the city were less likely to be influenced by films. Another participant had a similar experience, having only lived in Johannesburg a year at the time of the interview:

> Respondent: OK, well before I moved here, before I was in Jo'burg, like, on *7de Laan*, especially they always used to use these names. Like they will say Magaliesberg and now I know that's near Johannesburg. But I thought it was all made up, until I moved here. And now when I watch it I am able to relate. Like, Oh my word, it's a real place, like 7de Laan, it actually exists and I didn't know that before at all. - Woman who attends the cinema (C2)

Her knowledge that these television shows or films were set in Johannesburg was based on an assumption because she wasn't sure how she knew that they were set in the city. These assumptions are all being confirmed for her now that she is living here. This reiterates the fact without some existing knowledge it was difficult for her to recognise Johannesburg in the films and television shows, even through the landmarks. She also emphasised that the information and images shown in these screen representations was of no use to her until she was living in the city:

> Respondent: Not at all. 'Cos I had, like, when I am watching in East London or Grahamstown I have nothing to put it against, so for me it's just an image. It's like I haven't been there, I have no attachment to it whatsoever. – Woman who attends the cinema (C2)

This participant highlights the fact that existing knowledge of the city is a condition for the influence of films and for participants to gain further knowledge from the medium. Without the ability to recognise the spaces and without the ability to situate the information in urban space, the images and associated meanings are just images or what Lukinbeal terms 'landscape as space' (Lukinbeal, 2005). The use of location shooting; depictions of real spaces can add a sense of authenticity to a film and its narrative (Lukinbeal, 2005) but this has limited applications. The sense of authenticity is predicated on a viewer's existing knowledge of these spaces but if the viewer has in-depth knowledge, a film's simplified depiction of space may then render the narrative less real.

### 10.3.2 Spatial Stereotypes

The comparison of New York to Johannesburg revealed the strength of the symbolic meaning and spatial stereotypes generated through films. Participants were very cognisant of the spatial stereotypes used in Johannesburg films and the subject was raised frequently. When asked to identify from still images the places of Johannesburg, participants frequently repeated the visual symbols and signifiers of the spatial stereotypes of Johannesburg that were outlined in Chapter five.

> Respondent: *laughs* This is like Sandton. This is maybe Houghton or, this could be Houghton or Melrose or Hurlingham or *giggles*… what makes me say that?
>
> Interviewer: *laughs* Yeah, what makes you say that? Security sign?
>
> Respondent: The security signs, the garden, the high walls. Ja I mean it looks opulent also. – Stay at home woman (W2)

This participant recognised the image as the stereotype for the middle-class suburb, while also recognising that she would not be able to identify a more specific location in Johannesburg. The elements of the image that aided her identification were elements that nearly all participants identified. In some instances a single lush green tree was the only signifier needed to identify the middle-class suburb. This emphasises some of the key material elements of the city discussed in Chapter five.

The stereotype is seen to be an inevitable element of film production:

> Respondent: I think it's a lot of those, because sometimes you would think it's a good thing that they showing what really happens. But then at other times you think they could have handled it a bit more sensitively that it feeds into sort of

> stereotypical vision of the city. But then how else are you supposed to portray the city. – Woman who attends the cinema (C1)

This participant highlights the conflict that is at the essence of the definition of stereotype. The stereotype is based on a truth that is widely applicable, and it functions as information shorthand; reducing ideas to a simpler form (Dyer, 1993). Participants recognise that spatial stereotypes are based on factual information that is not necessarily applicable to the space in its entirety. In the focus group this prompted a debate about the representation of Hillbrow in the documentary *Battle for Johannesburg*, and in the feature film *Jerusalema*.

> Respondent: It's too stereotypical. It was an interesting clip in the sense of […] this thing of crime, especially drugs, and how it's always easy to target the bottom. – S [referring to *Battle for Johannesburg*] (focus group participant)

> Respondent: Well, I think it's, I don't know, … maybe I don't know Hillbrow very well but I just found it such a stereotypical representation of Hillbrow. That sort of you know, all the bad guys are sort of Nigerian with these big guns. It's sort of that it's filled with prostitution and drugs and I don't know if that's necessarily true. I mean… there's a lot more. – T [referring to *Jerusalema*] (focus group participant)

Here participants refer to stereotypes in both the documentary and the feature film. This suggests that the participants felt that in both films information and images were being equally manipulated. There ensued a discussion between the validity of the documentary and the feature film.

> Respondent: So you kind of manipulate the situation and the people to get your own ends in this clip and it's the exact same thing in the other clip that you've got. [*Battle for Johannesburg* and *Jerusalema*] […] So, in one sense both of them show a kind of manipulation of the discourse, of the narrative, and in the one clip you see that in a very tiny localised way and in the other you see it in a much more international, I don't know what the word is, in a larger context. – N (focus group participant)

> Respondent: The disturbing part is the documentary, which then plays on something, of trying to document something. They should actually both be fiction. – S (focus group participant)

> Respondent: I mean for me the sort of the film represents the Hillbrow narrative, which I think is a bit unfair. There is definitely truth to these myths that exist within

> the Hillbrow narrative, but I just think that this film exaggerated it quite simplistically perhaps. – T (focus group participant)

> Respondent: So they haven't balanced it with the other kind of view of Hillbrow whereas what I am saying is that does exist in Hillbrow; it does exist inside a building in that you will not see from the outside what's going on in there. And what you can find inside. But it's certainly not *the* narrative and it shouldn't be. It should be a more balanced portrayal. – Y (focus group participant)

Lukinbeal's (2005) notion of 'landscape as place', the use of real locations to add instant authenticity to a film, has limited application as shown here. Respondents with greater knowledge of the city view these images as simplified and stereotypical. These participants are aware of the stereotypes because they are also aware that alternative depictions and narrative are possible in Hillbrow. They recognise the large truths that the stereotypes are based upon but also point out the other truths that are not depicted. Stereotypes are dangerous when the audience is unaware of the truths that remain off screen.

> Respondent: Well I think then you don't buy into the myths that you see on TV, so I mean if you've never really partied or worked, or lived or visited Soweto, you may think it's some dark jungle, or the inner city even. If you haven't found a couple of places then you…

> Interviewer: So do you think that films perpetuate those myths? Or do they help to break them?

> Respondent: No, they perpetuate them. Even the depiction of suburban areas as like cold, unfriendly and if you not from there then you're going to struggle to be there. I don't think that's true. – Working woman (W3)

This participant recognised the danger of these spatial stereotypes and felt that films perpetuate the stereotypes rather than breaking with the accepted conventions. This reiterates Patrick Keiller's argument that films do not present radical ideas but that film is rather a conservative medium (Keiller, 2003). The danger of the stereotype perpetuating myths or half-truths also emphasises the need or condition of some existing knowledge of the city. This knowledge assists viewers to situate the information in the film but also to recognise the spatial stereotypes.

> Interviewer: Do you feel that now that you're here in the city that those images are helping you to make sense of the city?

> Respondent: No I don't think so. In terms of the city, [it] is so big and diverse and there are so many different spaces so I don't think you can pinpoint it down to an image to say that okay, this is Johannesburg. I think to do that would be not look at everything, if that makes sense? – Woman who attends the cinema (C2)

The woman who attends the cinema suggests that films provide only limited images of the city rather than providing a series of diverse images. This is the dual nature of stereotypes. The spatial stereotypes in Johannesburg films provide simplified shorthand information for audience members but in so doing they also limit the diversity of depiction and therefore limit the transfer of knowledge through film.

## 10.4 Identity, Mobility and Crime

### 10.4.1 Identity

Aspects of identity did not significantly correlate with the influence of films on everyday urban practice. Many aspects of identity appear to be isolated correlations, making it difficult to draw conclusions from the connections.

Some age groups correlated with some aspects of film influence, although these correlations seem somewhat contradictory. Those respondents aged 18–25 years' old are more likely to say that films make them feel worse about the city. This is a negative film influence, but respondents in the older age group were also influenced by films in a negative way. Participants aged 46–65 years' old are less likely to state that characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg, and to feel that some characters encourage them to achieve their dreams in the city. It's not clear why this older age group is less likely to be positively influenced by characters. As mentioned previously, it is not related to a more general negative outlook because this age group did not correlate with any of the other variables that measured positive or negative attitudes. Age is therefore not a reliable measure for the influence of films on everyday urban practices.

Language is an aspect of identity with more significant correlations with the influence of film, although it did not correlate as frequently as expected.

Respondents whose preferred language is English are more likely to feel comfortable in spaces after seeing them on the screen; are more likely to state that some characters make them feel good about living in Johannesburg; are a little more ambivalent about the influence of films, stating that films have changed their activities unconsciously. Participants who prefer indigenous South African languages are more likely to state that films have definitely

changed their activities. Although these aspects of language only correlate with a few elements of film influence it may relate strongly to the existing issues of language inherent in local productions.

> Some evidence certainly suggests that South Africans remain racially and linguistically divided, particularly in their attitudes to what we might call cultural and social politics. … It may be that the local Afrikaans and African-language audiences are more loyal to local productions and that English language material that is palpably South African or draws on other languages will benefit from this kind of loyalty, while English speakers are more likely to see South African cultural products simply as one offering among others. (Glenn, 2008, p. 13)

The differences in language reflect socio-economic differences associated with different viewing mediums. Economics limit the number of viewing choices: fewer television sets, limited to the four terrestrial channels in poorer households, as opposed to numerous television sets, with satellite television as well as many other entertainment options, in wealthier households (Glenn, 2008). Thus audiences and viewing choices appear to reflect post-apartheid society in that they are both economically, and socially, fragmented (Botha, 2012).

Ultimately, aspects of identity have very little effect on the influence of film. It is not possible to create a profile of the person who is more likely to be influenced by films. Furthermore, the research revealed that respondents do not need to identify closely with the characters in order to relate to their narratives. In other words, they did not need to see characters that resembled themselves to empathize with, and to understand, the story.

> Interviewer: Do you think that there should be films/TV shows that reflect your experiences?
>
> Respondent: I mean that would be cool, but at the same time we can't say that experiences that are shown somebody else can't relate to them and maybe that's the person they're trying to affect more than me. And I think it's also cool seeing a different perspective. – Woman who attends the cinema (C3)
>
> --
>
> Respondent: I think that I can relate to their story. But it's not *my* story. So, no I don't think that any of them have depicted *my* existence of Johannesburg. But it's not something that I can't empathize with. – Working woman (W3)

Many participants felt that it was more relevant to see experiences and narratives that did not reflect their own experiences.

> Respondent: No, it's not critical at all. Because I am curious I like to explore different opinions, different peoples, ideas and perspectives so… oh, when I am watching *eKasi Stories*, that taught me a few things because it just opens up your mind to so much more [of] what is actually happening in the township, and I don't live in the township so, I don't have to relate at all. – Woman who attends the cinema (C2)

> Respondent: I'd actually enjoy that. Much rather than seeing people like me. Ja. Give perspective into other people's lives and the things that are happening. – Stay at home woman (W1)

> Respondent: I think it's a sort of, uh, life experience that I have not even vaguely come near. And just the difficulties of that kind of life. The reality of having to eke out an existence, which is not something I've come near to experiencing. [Speaking about *Tsotsi*] – Stay at home woman (W2)

The reflections of these participants emphasises the fact that the characters of films do not need to resemble the identities of the viewers in order for them to relate to the film narratives, but it also highlights the role of film in providing information. Here films are providing information about different experiences within Johannesburg and giving perspective to different urban conditions.

The character stereotype was raised as an issue with regards to the portrayal of greater diversity on the screen. Film characters are required to have dramatic stories to tell:

> Respondent: No. I'm not adventurous enough or interesting enough to be a character in a film. – Stay at home woman (W2)

And the stereotype is once again seen to be a negative element:

> Respondent: Well it's interesting because that may not have been my experience of the city, especially a lot of the South African movies are quite hard core and hard-hitting, so they portray the city in a very dark light. Like if *Yizo Yizo* is in Soweto, not many people have experienced *that* Soweto. – Working woman (W3)

> Respondent: Well, if I thought that then there'd also have to be characters for just about everyone else. Then there would be too many characters, but I guess with the stereotyped things it's helpful because it covers a lot of people at the same time. But

> then at other points I guess if you feel like it's too unspecific then you might feel it's difficult to identify with people. – Woman who attends the cinema (C1)

Both participants express the fact that character stereotypes may inhibit a process of identification with the film or television show. The working woman feels that there is an over emphasis on the negative aspects of the city, and feels that this only represents a small proportion of experience in Johannesburg. This suggests an overrepresentation. But the woman who attends the cinema feels that there is an underrepresentation because stereotypes represent large groups of people in a broad way. This participant also raises the fact that it is not necessarily possible or desirable to represent all character types, recognising the value inherent in the stereotype.

There is one particular film, *Material*, that made an impression on many of the participants interviewed but that did not necessarily correlate significantly in the quantitative survey.

> Respondent: Well, I guess because of my cultural background I think *Material* did come somewhat close. Because I think what it expressed was [those] kind[s] of over bearing parents and then my parents and brother are very protective of where I go… so I wouldn't I mean personally I wouldn't choose to go, I think that guy was a comedian and he was doing stand-up… I wouldn't go there personally just as a choice. But if I [did] my parents wouldn't be supportive… – Urban studies student (R3)

> Respondent: I feel obviously, because I know so much of this background I feel that I can relate very strongly to *Material* and it's very real, even the jokes are real even the way that the courtship happens; all of that stuff; Zoo Lake is the place, well it used to be the place to check each other out. So that I can relate to. – Focus group participant Y

These two participants came from Muslim backgrounds and expressed an ability to strongly relate to the culture and identities depicted in the film. This would seem to suggest that identity *is* important for relating to films but several other participants, with less direct identification, also related to the film:

> Respondent: The one I've seen most recently was *Material* a few months ago. And that I enjoyed. Just sort of opening up a world that I'm not entirely unfamiliar with, but also not very familiar with. Different people just bringing out universal themes. So it made me feel quite nice. I enjoyed it. – Stay at home woman (W1)

> Respondent: Yeah. I think so. I guess culturally… ja, like for example, a movie like I dunno, like *Material*… that's a culture I'd never have insight on if I hadn't watched the movies for example. – Women who attends the cinema (C3)

Therefore, the film *Material* resonates both with participants who can identify with the film directly and with those who relate vicariously. It is difficult to state why this particular film made such an impression but it may have to do with its exploration of the largely unfamiliar and its aversion to stereotypes:

> Respondent: I think it was very interesting, I think it gave a different perspective to Johannesburg. And I think even the footage of Fordsburg is not something we often see in film. I think it gave me, the way I look at Fordsburg differently, 'cos I just see there's this place of shopping and then they showed like some of the scenery and the streets and that was interesting. – Urban studies student (R3)

Chapter six revealed the absence of diversity of characters in Johannesburg films. This diversity is needed not only for viewers' relationships with characters, but also because characters are intimately linked on film to their spatial contexts. *Material* avoids spatial and character stereotypes. The film delves deep into the cultural and social aspects of a minority group of people in South Africa, revealing more intimate insights for the audience. But simultaneously through the stand up comedy of Cassim, the audience is made aware of the stereotype of Indian Muslims. The film also maps out new spaces in Johannesburg, depicting an intimate portrait of the neighbourhood of Fordsburg. The film does not rely on the stereotype shorthand to convey information but rather gives depth to characters and spaces. Unfortunately, this same approach may have limited the size of its audience because it doesn't have the elements of broad appeal.

Although elements of identity and demographics did not significantly correlate with the influence of films on urban practices, respondents articulated relationships with the city and its representation on the screen as deeply personal.

> Respondent: Actually the things that he listed, those five things that he listed, are things that I don't like about Jo'burg. So in my mind I was thinking what five things I like about Jo'burg. And then he started rattling them off and I thought I don't like these things actually. I am just not feeling what he is saying about Jo'burg. So I guess in a way it kind of articulates how much of a personal relationship people can have with the city. And that what we see as Jozi or as Jo'burg is not what the person next

to you will see as being the city that they know and love or hate. – Focus group participant N

Respondent: About the issue of identity, I think, just to state the obvious is that obviously my experience of the city and my love for certain parts or my dislike is coloured by my (excuse the pun), is coloured by my childhood in a former group area. So it's a completely different perspective and I think it's interesting to understand what people, how they formulate their images of the city. It's changed so much and it changes massively with age and it changes quite significantly with gender. A woman's experience of Johannesburg, and apart from the obvious sector thing [urban professions]. There are just other things that you might notice or you have a different geography in mind. So it's age and it's gender and it's culture, or I don't know the right word, ethnic origin. – Focus group participant Y

Respondent: You know *Zone 14* on SABC television? That's another vision of Johannesburg that doesn't resonate with me. I never grew up in the township and the township experience is not my experience. – Focus group participant N

In this way, these participants illustrate different place identities at work in Johannesburg. Chapter nine showed that participants did not necessarily always favour the films or television shows that were filmed in their particular location, but in some cases there seemed to be a connection. The lack of the connection may be because some respondents were only moving through the area as opposed to residing in the location, thus having less of an affiliation with the location. It may also have to do with varying levels of recognition: respondents who live in the area are presumably more likely to recognise the specific places referenced in the film, and are thus more likely to be influenced by that film. In many ways, this may serve to reinforce the fragmented nature of Johannesburg. This can be witnessed in the language of this participant describing the connection of place and identity:

Respondent: He [Tsotsi] seems to be, I don't know if it's a filmic convention, but he seems to belong in the township setting and then out of place in the suburb or on the outside. So like, when you are driving along and you see these cops stopping young, usually Black, gentlemen on the street it's because they don't belong there. So, you have to look a certain way to belong to a certain space and a certain area in the city and he looks like an outsider in one and not in the other. – Focus group participant N

The respondent is suggesting that films are able to convey place identity through their characters and film language or at the very least that it is possible to interpret a film in this way. This highlights the way that spatial stereotypes are used to convey information about characters. Spatial stereotypes are as much about the characters that reside in those spaces as they are about the places themselves. One respondent expressed his identification with Johannesburg films through sense of spatial belonging:

> Respondent: Ja, it's always like something along the lines of like looking for something in a semi-foreign kind of place but that you at the same time feel at home in. So that kind of tension, feeling foreign and home in the same kind of space is the interesting bit for me. But of course this only exists, maybe at a conceptual level because I don't feel foreign in the city. – Urban researcher (R1)

Some aspects of place identity were tested for in the quantitative survey. Participants were asked whether they consider Johannesburg to be their home, whether they enjoy living in the city and what their general impression is of the city. However, none of these aspects resulted in respondents' everyday practices being more likely to be influenced by films. So, although, anecdotally the above respondent connects films with his sense of place identity, the quantitative survey suggests that place identity is not a factor in the influence of films. Place identity is not a key dimension through which respondents relate to films of Johannesburg.

Lastly, two focus group participants commented on how their roles as urban professionals have informed their reading and interpreting of films.

> Respondent: So, on the one hand *Jerusalema* speaks to me from a professional point of view. But, the year *Tsotsi* came out, I was mugged and robbed within a two-week period. So, I felt a personal affinity to the story; not to the Tsotsi character, but to the couple who are spared their child. And in a way, that event completely changed the way I relate to the city. […] So I'd say from a personal point of view, *Tsotsi* speaks to me in a very profound way, and *Jerusalema* from a professional standpoint. And maybe now I should show this *Material* [film] to students as well, because my understanding of a certain community of which I am not a part, is now clearly, has now clearly been debunked. And I think students need that. – N urban professional (focus group participant)

> Respondent: I find that being familiar with the context I can then separate the narrative from the location quite easily. […] But I don't mix the two. To me it's just

> a location, and the narrative is something else. – S urban professional (focus group participant)

These two participants suggest that their identities as urban professionals may lead them to interpret films in a different way but in fact, it may just be that they are examining films through different spatial constructs. As audience members they use the predominant lens of social identity, and as urban professionals, they view films through a lens of materiality.

### 10.4.2 Mobility

Mobility, as discussed in Chapter seven, is a major aspect of Johannesburg, where inequalities still play a large role. This was reflected in the differences of mobility in each location with Chiawelo having a low level of mobility, and the CBD having very mobile participants. But this did not affect the way that films influence daily urban practice: mobility did not correlate at all with the influence of film. But mobility is still a relevant consideration that a few respondents commented upon. One participant equated mobility in the city to living in the city:

> Respondent: Well, I think a lot of people are moving and exploring the city, and they don't really show that. They're telling... I guess they're telling stories of incidents that happen but they don't just show people enjoying and living in the city. Or, I haven't seen that much… Except for like *Material*. – Working woman (W3)

This female participant saw exploration as an important part of being in the city, but simultaneously referenced the film *Material*, which is notably static in its use of locations and doesn't illustrate much mobility at all. This suggests that the participant sees the depiction in a film, of an under-explored area like Fordsburg, as an extension of mobility. Two other female participants, both stay-at-home women, expressed a reluctance to explore the city and low levels of mobility.

> Respondent: No. I never drive there. I never drive there alone. I wouldn't go there. I don't drive in areas I don't know. So the furthest south I'd go is to Fordsburg. Which I don't, I used to go more often than I go now. But I'm very comfortable driving there, and to Wits and things. But otherwise I sort of stay in this area, Sandton, and then I would like venture into the 'parks'[193] as well because I've been

[193] Here the participant is referring to suburbs such as Parktown, Parkview, Greenside and Parkhurst. They are collectively known as the 'Parks' because of the neighbourhood names

there a few times. But um, like Rosebank side. But I don't use those as landmarks because I'd never go there myself. And then if I'm not driving I don't pay attention. – Stay-at-home woman (W1)

Respondent: At any time of the day, ja. I mean if I go into the city I generally, I'll go in with one place in mind. So I work my route so I know exactly where I'm going.

Interviewer: So it's a direct kind of destination or visit, as opposed to something that might be exploratory?

Respondent: I won't explore, no. – Stay-at-home woman (W2)

For these two women, access to transport is not necessarily the issue but rather a lack of interest or a reluctance to move extensively in the city. Both women had expressed that films provided them with information and insight into different spaces and cultures in Johannesburg, suggesting an alternative form of exploration. In addition, their immobility may also give a reason as to why female respondents were more difficult to interview in the quantitative survey.

Chapter seven highlighted mobility as a key spatial construct in the literature of Johannesburg and film, but these findings show that mobility is not a major lens through which respondents relate to urban films. Chapter seven discussed mobility as a form of personal expression. Both de Certeau's walking the city (1984) and Graham's parallels in driving the city (2007) place mobility at the centre of autonomy and personal expression in the city. Even the experience of the passenger had some of these merits. Mobility defines the basis of interaction with the city, which reinforces its personal nature because interactions with the city are seen to be very personal. This emphasis on the personal may suggest why mobility is not a key element of the influence of film. Films may be too impersonal, conservative and stereotypical for audience members to be influenced in relation to their personal movements within Johannesburg.

### 10.4.3 Crime

The figure of the tsotsi or gangster demonstrated the relationship amongst films, audiences and the city. And, of course, crime is an important and prevalent issue in Johannesburg. This was reflected in the fact that the specific aspect that films had the most influence over, was making respondents more aware of dangerous activities, and allowing them to avoid them.

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and because of the lush green suburban landscape and are situated just north of the city centre.

The prevalence of this aspect of influence may also be a factor of the fact that many films and television shows shot in Johannesburg focus on crime and the gangster figure and/or contain violence.

> Respondent: Mmm. I'd say ja; I'd say the more violent stuff. So, the negative portrayals of the city I guess those are the ones that stick with you the most. Which is kind of sad, because I think it just makes you more alert and I dunno and opens your eyes to what's going on out there. […] I mean I don't know because it's not my experience. And I think that's the danger because that's what they're feeding us. And I feel like there needs to be more stuff that's more positive, that promotes us. Even though the fact that *Tsotsi* won an Academy [Award], people are going to go watch that movie. And that's going to be their perception of the country. Whereas a movie like *Material* people don't get to see. – Woman who attends the cinema (C3)

This participant puts forward the idea that violent films have made the biggest impression on her, and that it is the negative depictions that she remembers most. This might give some explanation as to why films have the strongest influence with regard to dangerous activities. She also laments the popularity of films with more violence, such as *Tsotsi*, an opinion she shares with other participants. Several participants felt that crime and criminal activities were exaggerated in films:

> Respondent: I don't know, probably. I don't know, I feel like I could challenge most of the images that I see about the city.
>
> Interviewer: Challenge them in what way?
>
> Respondent: For example, safety. But I guess that's the whole thing about film is that it needs to exaggerate something for the whole point to come across or maybe the fact that you see it so often in 45 minutes or two hours that it ends up seeming as though it's a lifetime. So those are the kind of things I'd challenge. – Urban researcher (R1)
>
> Respondent: Well I don't think the average person has that kind of high school experience that is that unsafe and that unproductive and that hard to escape from. But it is the, it is the reality for some people. I think it portrayed… I think it was a bit of an exaggeration for most people. But it's some people's reality. – Working woman (W3)

For the urban researcher it is the condensed time that films present that contributes to the sense of exaggeration; the repetition produced over the period of a feature film. The working woman is discussing the television show, *Yizo Yizo*, and expresses the same sense of exaggeration despite the fact that the show was based on extensive research into the issues facing youth in township schools (Andersson, 2010). This suggests that drama and exaggeration may be an expectation of film and television media. Participants also expressed the fact that depictions of crime and violence in Johannesburg contributed to negative perceptions about the spaces in the city:

> Interviewer: Do you feel more comfortable or familiar in spaces that you had seen on TV?
>
> Respondent: Depends what was going on. Like I feel, it depends how the place was portrayed on TV. A place like Alexandra for example, I feel like there's a lot of negative portrayal. So I remember when I went there I was really scared… but. No… I mean it depends. If it's your only…
>
> Interviewer: Reference point?
>
> Respondent: Yeah, reference point. And its negative, then you're going to have a negative perception. But if I knew the place before I saw it on TV then it's a different story. – Woman who attends the cinema (C3)

This participant reiterates the idea that negative portrayals can lead to feeling unsafe or uncomfortable in the city. Therefore, the converse of the influence of films making participants more aware of dangerous activities is that it may also make them feel unsafe. This is shown in the way that fewer participants stated that films influence them to feel safer in Johannesburg, than those who said they were made more aware of dangerous activities.

Lastly, despite Johannesburg's notorious reputation for high levels of crime, and despite the popularity of the depiction of the tsotsi and violence on the screen, respondents did not feel that their experiences of crime have been illustrated in Johannesburg films.

> Interviewer: Are there films or TV shows that you feel reflect your experiences of safety in Johannesburg?
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> Respondent: No. not really. A lot of them are usually very, they're on points of extremes. In some movies there could be no mention of violence. But in some movies it could be all about violence. – Woman who attends the cinema (C1)

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Interviewer: Do you think there are films or TV shows that have reflected your experiences of security or safety in Johannesburg?

Respondent: Do you mean the fact that I'm not scared?

Interviewer: Ja…

Respondent: No…

Interviewer: Should there be?

Respondent: No… because I think that I have a warped perception. – Woman who attends the cinema (C3)

Respondents repeatedly felt that films do not reflect their own experiences of safety and crime in Johannesburg, whether participants felt safe or unsafe. For participant C1 films did not depict a middle ground but rather showed either high levels of violence or none at all. Another participant suggested that films focus on the criminal, and less so on the victim:

Respondent: Well in both of those films [*Jerusalema* and *Hijack Stories*], I think they showed a criminal element which obviously most of us have not had experience, people may have an experience of victimhood but not of actually being a criminal and that kind of life and trying to become better, I don't know. I guess in some ways it is a fantasy, but we haven't seen it. I think *Forgiveness* as well. That was an interesting story and if we see stories of apartheid and how things were done we don't really see from the other side. – Working woman (W3)

The focus on the gangster or tsotsi as the protagonist eclipses the experience of the victim. Despite the fact that criminals are the minority in Johannesburg, their depiction in films paints them as a majority. Certainly, participants might understand criminals to be a majority through the application of the stereotype and other film languages. This might contribute to the sense of exaggeration or pervasiveness of crime, when films are interpreted within the framework of the majority of experience. Films may also serve to confirm respondents' existing knowledge and fears:

Respondent: Well for example if you look at *Jerusalema*, it like highlighted a lot of the criminal activity that goes on in Hillbrow. But I wouldn't say that specifically from film. I think it's the general perception that Hillbrow is an unsafe area. – Urban Design student (R3)

Signifiers of fear are prevalent in Johannesburg in the high walls, security guards and bars on the windows. These physical elements are a key part of the spatial stereotype for suburban spaces in Johannesburg. This permanently connects the images of fear to the depiction of certain spaces in the city. It also further illustrates the importance of understanding how spatial stereotypes are constructed and understood. Films may further fuel these fears by breathing life into the gangster characters:

> Respondent: Well violence in the film [*Jerusalema*] was so intense and the characters were kind of everyday people so it made it seem more real. I guess you could say that. – Woman who attends the cinema (C1)

Once again, film blurs the lines between fiction and reality by creating believable characters. These depictions feed the fear that exists in the city. Fear is also permanently entrenched in space through the construction of spatial stereotypes. This is, therefore, where film has a greater influence on everyday practice in Johannesburg.

## 10.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored in more depth the space of audience reception. It has examined the site at which films begin their influence on everyday practice in the city and has related these aspects of influence to the spatial themes discussed in Part B. While films contribute to the discourse on Johannesburg in all four aspects, films do not influence equally in all four themes.

The foundation of the chapter is based on the fact that the findings presented in Chapter nine show that films influence respondents' everyday practice in the city including their feelings of the city and their activities in Johannesburg. But even as the findings demonstrate this influence it remains an elusive process to explain. Respondents cannot easily articulate the way in which films influence their urban practice, which reinforces the unconscious nature of film viewing and everyday practice. This chapter also demonstrated that films blur the difference between reality and fiction with several respondents stating that they sometimes find it difficult to distinguish their knowledge gained from films and knowledge gained from real experiences in Johannesburg. This shows how the symbolism and meaning portrayed in films can easily be incorporated into a resident's discourse of the city. In some cases this symbolism or meaning may be more powerful than a respondent's real knowledge of space.

The depiction of real landscapes of Johannesburg can add authenticity to the narrative of the film, but this functions within narrow limits. Those viewers with very little knowledge of the

city will not be able to make use of the information provided by films, and will not be able to situate the symbolism and meaning within the context of the city. Those viewers with much greater knowledge of the spaces depicted will find the images too simplified and stereotypical pushing the images into the realm of fiction, even in the cases of documentaries. Therefore, knowledge of Johannesburg is an important factor in considering the influence of films on everyday practice.

Knowledge is also important with regards to recognising Johannesburg in films, which affects the influence of films on feelings of, and behaviour in, the city. Participants were not always able to articulate their understanding of recognition but many were able to recognise the city through its landmarks. This, however, gives a limited understanding of the city because so many of the landmarks are confined to the city centre. But respondents did not only recognise Johannesburg through its landmarks, streets or neighbourhoods. They also recognised aspects of culture or elements of the city that relate more broadly to the image or representation of Johannesburg projected through films and television shows. A large part of recognising Johannesburg in films relates to the use of spatial stereotypes in films. Participants could identify these stereotypes and simultaneously lamented their construction, and acknowledged their benefits.

Spatial stereotypes have also shaped the other themes of the city model. The stereotype contains elements of crime, not surprisingly as crime impacts on all the aspects of space in the city. Spatial stereotypes are constructed through elements of fear and security, in the case of the middle-class stereotype, and this has an effect on the influence of films on everyday practice. Films add a dimension of reality to the largely unknown figures of tsotsis and gangsters. Films influenced the highest number of respondents with regards to being made aware of dangerous activities in the city, but this may be directly related to the popularity of the gangster genre, as discussed in Chapter eight.

In terms of social identity, films are not necessarily spaces of personal reflection but about 'the other'. Respondents were more interested in viewing films of others rather than themselves. Information about others was related to spaces in the city and informed by spatial stereotypes. Spatial stereotypes, therefore, go beyond characterisation and simplification of places in the city, but also give meaning to the characters of these spaces. But the spatial stereotype was not the only intersection of identity, film and the city. Identity did have some significance with regard to the influence of films on urban practice. The influence of films is affected in some instances by age, but this is not consistent or easy to explain. Language has some effect on the way that films influence feelings of, and activities

in, the city, but it may also be indirectly related to the relationship between viewing mediums and language access. Participants did not need to identify closely with characters in order to empathise or relate to the film. In fact, participants enjoyed seeing films that told stories outside of their own experiences. In addition, respondents felt that their relationship with the city was highly personal and therefore, not easily translated into film. This is a similar response to the depiction of mobility in films.

In the literature, mobility is seen as important because it allows for the transgression of physical barriers and boundaries of identity. However, films do not appear to influence mobility. Films had almost no influence on participants' movements through the city and mobility was not a factor in the reception of Johannesburg films. Some participants conveyed experiences of limited mobility in the city, but that this did not seem to impact on their enjoyment of living in Johannesburg, or their reception of its films. The limited effects of film with regards to mobility may be due to the very personal nature of movement in the city, and the fact that through stereotypes and the conservative medium, film does not convey a sense of the personal. This limits the potential for film to influence aspects of viewers' mobility in the city.

Lastly, the frequency of viewing does not play the major role in the influence of films on everyday practice. This is surprising, considering that the research has established the influence of films. It suggests that a single viewing of a Johannesburg film can have as much impact as having seen a high number of local productions. In addition, the research shows that certain viewing practices, namely attending the cinema with friends and watching DVDs, has more of an impact on film influence than other forms of viewing. These two viewing practices take place in two very different situations and, while each has its own benefits, it is difficult to suggest why both are a factor in the influential reception of films. Even though television was not within the scope of this research, these findings suggest that television does not play a role as important as film in the influence of everyday practice in the city.

This chapter has shown how films influence everyday practice, the feelings and actions, or residents of Johannesburg. It has described a space of reception where urban viewers are embedded in the context of the films that they are viewing. This has particular consequences for the influence of films, and lays out particular conditions for that influence. The chapter has provided more depth of information on one aspect of the circuit of culture in the city but, simultaneously, has also shed more light on the direct interaction between residents and the urban spaces they occupy. This will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

# 11. Conclusion

## 11.1 Introduction

This research has set out to understand how the collective images of Johannesburg, as portrayed in film, influence perceptions of the city of varying groups and individuals, and then go on to influence the urban practices of these groups and individuals. The research has shown how Johannesburg is represented in film, and how these images have contributed to the discourse of the city. The research has gone on to demonstrate the space of reception of these images and how these representations are influencing everyday practice in Johannesburg.

Numerous scholars (Alsayyad, 2006; Bruno, 2007; Clarke, 1997; Clarke & Doel, 2005; Denzin, 1995; Hallam, 2010; Lamster, 2000; Lukinbeal, 2002; Mathews, 2010; Penz, 2003; Schwarzer, 2004) have examined the representation of cities in film, but few have explored the process whereby films influence the urban practice of the viewers of such representations, and there is little understanding of how films influence everyday practice in the city. Scholars have accepted that this influence occurs, and have focused on the representations and meanings generated of the urban environment. This does very little for understanding the process of influence or the space of reception. And in particular, it does not illuminate how viewers comprehend the representations in film of the urban spaces that they occupy on a regular basis.

Screen images and narratives, including those of film and documentaries, contribute to a collective knowledge and memory of spaces and places in the city. Knowledge of the city is provided in a simplified and shortened form, often through the use of stereotypes. Therefore, it is pertinent to understand the way in which these representations are interpreted by the audiences that view them, and how those interpretations might influence and change their perceptions and understanding of the spaces shown. The space of reception is filled with many other possible influences and thus can be convoluted and bewildering. More importantly, the city is saturated with stimuli and detail, leaving the viewer to grasp at comprehension. This saturated urban space is the site of everyday practice. Cities are complex; the way that residents interact with the city is complicated, but films contribute to

residents' understanding of the city by providing simplified information that is combined with their existing knowledge.

This concluding chapter strengthens this argument by revising the work presented and discussed in this thesis. Section 11.2 discusses the value and relevance of Johannesburg as a case study, commenting on some of the limits of the research project as well as some areas of rich potential research. The third section examines the nature of film's influence, showing how the research has explored the space of audience reception in the city. The key findings of the representational study and their implications are reviewed in the fourth section. The final section refers back to the notion of film as a way of knowing the city.

## 11.2 The Lessons Learnt from Johannesburg

This research has focused on the reception of films of Johannesburg by residents of Johannesburg and, in particular, has examined the process through which films influence everyday practice in the city. This research has looked at the influence of films for respondents living in the city they view on the screen. This is important because it has shown film to be relevant for residents of the city. The research project has focused on Johannesburg as a divided and unequal city and, as such, identified four different locations in the city with which to explore these divisions and inequalities.

The demographic profiles of the respondents in each location roughly corresponded with the 2011 Census data and showed each location to have significant variations. These variations of race, education, income and mobility are remains of the apartheid regime. Despite the differences apparent in each location, the location itself and these demographic variables were not factors in the reception and influence of films of Johannesburg. These locations had different representations on the screen and represented different spaces of reception, but this did not impact on the influence of Johannesburg film on the everyday practice of the residents. This suggests some of the ways that the space of reception may be simplified. Participants responded to films at the scale of the city, but did not show a significant response at the scale of the neighbourhood location. The scale of the city may offer the finest grain spatially with which to analyse the reception of films. It appears that the smaller scale of the locations examined is too fine-grained to provide further insights in understanding how films influence everyday practice in space. But it also suggests that these differences in demographics in each location do not play out with regards to the reception and interpretation of films in the city. In order to explore these ideas further, research in other cities would be useful.

This highlights a possible limitation of the study. Although the film industry in Johannesburg has grown over recent decades, and the city's representation has increased, it is still a relatively small industry compared with other film cities globally. This may be only one aspect that sets it apart from other cities, limiting its universality. Further research could focus on comparisons with other developing cities to test the notion of spatial stereotypes, which is at the heart of the divided city. This work could establish whether the stereotypes discussed with regards to Johannesburg have more universal themes and explore the reception of different spatial stereotypes. This would explore the potential for other spaces of reception and interpretations. A city such as Mumbai in India, with a much more substantial output of film products, may offer more diversity in its spatial stereotypes and spaces of reception.

Cape Town, although it has a very similar context to Johannesburg, may provide a more nuanced comparison. Cape Town has many similarities with Johannesburg in terms of the spatial themes: slight variations in the materiality, but very similar in the aspects of identity, mobility and crime. While the city spaces are quite similar, Cape Town has a substantially different film industry (Visser, 2013). The city has featured far less in local television, but has a growing international film production output. The narratives of some of these films are located in the city but many of the films that are shot in Cape Town have narratives located elsewhere. Thus, the images of the city of Cape Town have a far more international context. Further research in this city could answer whether this generates different stereotypes of the city, and whether these generate different meanings for the residents of Cape Town.

One of the reasons for choosing Johannesburg as a case study is the recent proliferation of Johannesburg as a location in local productions, and a reason for focusing on the post-1994 period. The historical overview of Johannesburg in film in Chapter four revealed a lack of on-screen representation. Although films were being screened in the city in 1893, less than a decade into Johannesburg's existence, the city was notably absent from fictional feature-length film productions until well into the twentieth century. Johannesburg was already a well-established metropolis by the time the first significant images of the city appeared in *African Jim* (1949). Although the 1950s marked a brief period when film embraced the urban location, this was followed by many stretches where Johannesburg was again more absent than present. It was really only in the late twentieth century that the city made regular on-screen appearances.

The increasing appearances of the city on the screen may have primed residents of Johannesburg to be more aware of the influence of films of Johannesburg with the growing

representation of the city on the screen. This increased awareness may limit the replication of the study when compared to future studies of other cities, but it may have also provided the ideal testing ground for examining the influence of films on everyday urban practice. Certainly there is more rich research to be undertaken in the 'city of gold', particularly examining the role of television. Johannesburg's representation in television was initially proposed as part of this study, and was included in the survey as explained in Chapter two. Although the findings did suggest that television viewing may not have as much impact on the influence of films as other viewing practices such as DVD viewing, it is still a medium worth further investigation. Images of the city are usually depicted in very different ways from the medium of film. Shots of the two-dimensional city, the city from above, and the landmarks are used to establish the setting of a television drama while the bulk of filming is done in studios. In addition, the narratives and characters are often more nuanced than those of film because television is produced specifically for a local audience. These factors may generate different meanings for the spaces depicted in television.

But the historical chapter also showed that the four spatial themes of materiality, identity, mobility and crime have been present in Johannesburg films throughout the twentieth century. The first feature films of Johannesburg established the symbolism of the city centre's skyline and, although the profile has changed, the meaning has not. These same images helped to cement Johannesburg's representation as the urban centre of the country. Crime, the tsotsi, and the notion of Johannesburg as a place of danger were also manifest in these early films and, in the case of the tsotsi, further developed through the medium of film. Other dimensions of identity play out in the representations of the city, with a notable absence of women and Coloured and Indian race groups on the screen. And, of course, mobilities represented in the city have shifted over time as technologies have changed but the image of the train arriving in Johannesburg is one that endures.

## 11.3 The Nature of Film's Influence

The second phase of research was a survey conducted in four locations of Johannesburg. These locations were chosen as representatives of diverse spaces within the city and as representative of the spatial stereotypes identified in the representational study. 50 survey interviews were each conducted in Chiawelo, the CBD, Fordsburg and Melville, providing a final sample size of 193 across different spaces in Johannesburg. The survey provided demographic profiles, viewing practices, some aspects of everyday life and perceptions in the city and, ultimately, an understanding of how films influence feelings and behaviour of residents in Johannesburg.

The survey of residents of Johannesburg established that films of the city influence the feelings and actions of its residents. The research also showed that the process of influence was accessible in the minds of the respondents. Respondents easily related images of the city to their feelings of Johannesburg and their activities therein, although at times they found it difficult to identify or articulate the influence of films. This difficulty in articulating the influence of films confirms John Gold's (Gold, 1985) reservations about researching the process of influence. However, this research has gone beyond confirming the influence of films on the everyday practice of residents in the city and has explored the process and space of reception.

This research has focused on the processes discussed in the circuit of culture, as outlined by Bjorn Bollhöfer (Bollhöfer, 2007), and illuminated the space of reception. The city is the starting point of the cycle, which demonstrates the process through which images of the city are translated into changes in perception and behaviour in the city. But the cycle is a simple diagram, which hides the complexities inherent in the space of reception and in the city itself. Thus the spatial themes identified in the urban literature have provided an additional framework for understanding these complexities. In reading the work of several urban scholars, three key spatial constructs were identified: the physical materiality of the city; space as a social construct; and space as flow or mobility. When examining the literature on the city and film, and the case of Johannesburg in particular, it is clear that crime is an important fourth theme. This is because it is a notorious aspect of Johannesburg and its history, and because it has strong connections with the representation of the city on film. Therefore, the circuit of culture, through the lenses of these four themes, has formed the conceptual framework for this research. These four key themes have given depth to exploring the space of reception through which film, the city and the audience intersect. I will return to this discussion further on.

While the survey demonstrated that films influence respondents' feelings of, and behaviours in, Johannesburg, it was unable to explain the nature of the influence of films. This was explored further through the focus group, with urban professionals and the qualitative interviews that were conducted as phase three of the research project. The survey had indicated that the frequency of viewing did not play a major role in the influence of films on everyday practice in the city. Surprisingly, television did not have an impact, despite the fact that the medium is more equitable in the context of South Africa. Only two practices of viewing appeared to impact on the influence of films: DVD viewing and attending the cinema with friends, had some impact on the way that the audience received films. The qualitative interviews demonstrated that these two viewing practices may offer opportunities

for deeper discussions regarding the film, or more attentive and focused viewing, in comparison with other viewing practices, perhaps leading to a greater influence.

In addition, the findings from the survey and the interviews indicated that the influence of films was not predicated on accumulative viewing, but rather that a single film or viewing could demonstrate influence. This demonstrates that the influence of films is almost immediate. The fact that respondents were able to identify influence confirms the idea that the influence of a film is not gradual but that it affects the feelings and behaviours of respondents within a short period. This has a number of implications. It suggests that film may not be as conservative as thought (Keiller, 2003) with regards to everyday practice. Or the converse may be more accurate: that films influence not through the presentation of conservative notions, but through the oppositional or resistant interpretation by the audience. Certainly this is the view of scholars such as Stuart Hall (Hall, 1980), and is reflected in the absences of representation discussed in the historical overview of Johannesburg and in the urban discourse represented in the more contemporary films. This will be discussed later with regards to spatial and identity stereotypes.

This raises some variance with the scholarship that examines changes in urban everyday practice over lengthy periods of time, such as the longitudinal study of the representation of Liverpool in film (Hallam, 2010). Films, despite representing conservative practices, may be affecting an influence and change in residents' everyday practice through oppositional interpretations. This suggests that subsequent films may not represent the changes in urban practice; rather they show a process of gradual change over time. Longitudinal studies may, therefore, indicate large-scale changes over large urban areas, but do not reflect the more immediate and small-scale changes affecting the everyday lives of residents in the city.

## 11.4 The Urban Discourse in Johannesburg Films

The representational study was phase one of the research project and examined the representation of Johannesburg in films produced since 1994, using the four lenses identified in the conceptual frame. This study drew on the literature on South African film, which is still somewhat limited, the urban literature of Johannesburg, and the international literature on film. Using the ideas of Kevin Lynch and Michel de Certeau as scaffolding, Chapter five described the representation of Johannesburg's materiality. The city was viewed from above through its natural and industrial landscapes, and through its landmarks. Films have not exploited Johannesburg's natural or industrial landscapes, with few films focusing on the city's prominent mining industry, and even fewer making use of the highveld landscape. The landmarks of Johannesburg's city centre have come to symbolise urbanity and 'the modern'

for South Africans, and these towers and edifices also contain the aspirations and dreams of many. But this symbolism is confined to the limits of the CBD, and landmarks outside of this district have failed to be projected with meaning on the screen.

Everyday space, viewed from the ground, was explored through pathways and through five main districts in Johannesburg. The chapter examined the representation of the four locations used as study areas for this research as the basis of four stereotypes of Johannesburg on film. The CBD as the site of the city's major landmarks represents in film the commercial district of the city, but is also the stereotype for Johannesburg in its entirety. Chiawelo represents the stereotype of the township space but, in a somewhat contradictory way, has largely been depicted as a representation of the informal settlement in Johannesburg. Melville is the preferred location for the depiction of the city's middle-class suburbia, although the non-descript nature of these spaces means that some of Melville's character is lost as the location stands in for similar parts of the city. Lastly, Fordsburg's depiction in films is largely limited to the film *Material* (2011), where it is seen to be a break from spatial and character stereotypes.

Chapter six explored the dimensions of identity in relation to film as a means of understanding the social space represented in film. The first two sections explored the identities of the filmmakers and the characters in comparison to the identities of South Africans and residents of Johannesburg described in the literature. Much of the literature on film in South Africa has touched upon the lack of broad representation of different identities of the majority of filmmakers. However, this has not necessarily impacted negatively on the reception of the films produced by these filmmakers. Whilst transformation is important for the industry, it is not relevant in considering the potential for films to influence.

The identities of characters in films of Johannesburg were also shown to be narrow in this chapter. Representations of Johannesburg have several absences of certain dimensions of identity. Narratives of strong female characters, the youth, and close family ties are just some of these absences. Chapter ten showed that diverse representations are important, not for identification of the self, but for increased knowledge and understanding of 'the other'. The aspect of place identity was equally important in this regard. Identity of place in Johannesburg is tied to other aspects of identity and was also connected to the spatial stereotypes outlined in Chapter five. This highlights the importance of understanding the representations of space and place in films because it impacts on the construction of identity and social space in the city.

Mobility in Johannesburg and film was explored both through journeys to the city and through journeys within the city. Journeys from the rural hinterland into the modern city of Johannesburg were forged into a trope in the early film *African Jim* (1949), and since then have been represented several times over. However, the journeys of other Johannesburg outsiders, such as those from beyond the national borders, have not received as much attention despite the fact that Johannesburg is a magnet for many African and Asian migrants. Similarly, the experiences of those who have emigrated and those in exile are missing from representations of the city.

In exploring the representation and meaning of mobility within Johannesburg, Chapter seven applied the work of Michel de Certeau (1984) and James Graham (2007). De Certeau describes the act of walking in the city as an act of personal expression, and this was replicated in films through a character's pedestrian mobility. But Graham posits that driving in the city is an equal form of personal expression and this too has been reflected in the films of Johannesburg. In fact, the experience of the passenger is not without aspects of personal expression and resistance, emphasising that varying forms of mobility can have similar meaning for residents and characters in Johannesburg. This is important when considering the depiction of characters transgressing the spatial boundaries of stereotypes in the city through these various forms of mobility. Mobility is an important aspect of everyday practice in Johannesburg, which occupies the physical pathways and districts of the city, whilst also embodying dimensions of identity.

The tsotsi character is shown to be the prime example of the themes of materiality, identity and mobility coming together on the screen, but it is also an example of the circuit of culture at work. The evolution of the tsotsi character on screen, and in the city, demonstrates how on-screen depictions have influenced both mobility in the city and the construction of urban identities. In this way the development of the tsotsi, as a character and as a gangster in the city, illustrates the functioning of the circuit of culture over an extended period of time.

The figure of the gangster in film has also shed light on the question of the ghetto space in Johannesburg. In American cinema, the gangster or 'hood' film can be characterised by the setting of the ghetto (Massood, 2003), thus defining the characters and the spatial stereotype. But in Johannesburg the tsotsi character is defined by the way that he resists the spatial stereotypes of the city. The tsotsi's mobility and transgression of the spatial boundaries of the city are what makes the character so meaningful and influential in Johannesburg film. This distinguishes the tsotsi from the American gangster. The prevalence of the gangster genre in Johannesburg films has shown the pervasive nature of crime and fear in the city.

Although crime is not a spatial construct, it affects the city through its materiality, residents' identities, and mobilities, and thus is a constant presence in the city and a common trope in films of the city.

The representational study demonstrated the construction of spatial stereotypes in the representations of Johannesburg in film. This first phase highlighted the limited diversity of characters in films. These are some of the limitations of film as a contributor to the discourse on the city. Identities and spaces are narrow and stereotyped and in some cases identities are confined to spatial stereotypes. But the representational study also showed how spatial stereotypes are used to depict characters transgressing boundaries and expressing urban identities through the crossing of borders. This was also true for the way that the identity stereotype of the tsotsi was used to generate an affirmative Black urban identity in Johannesburg. Therefore, stereotypes of space and identity are not necessarily negative.

Respondents recognised the spatial stereotypes of Johannesburg through their materiality and through the associated identities of characters. These stereotypes reinforce the view of Johannesburg as fragmented, but also facilitated a resistant reading by some respondents. This refers back to the idea of film as a conservative medium. The stereotypes suggest conservatism through the reinforcement of segregated spaces, but the research findings suggest that respondents are resisting these dominant readings. In many ways, the representational space of film was seen to be the space of the 'other'. Participants were interested in seeing other identities and other spaces over their own experiences in the city. Respondents compared the spaces, identities and experiences of the screen with their own in Johannesburg. This emphasises the importance of diversity (of spaces and identities) in Johannesburg films and also the importance of existing knowledge of the city through which to navigate the images of the screen. This will be discussed further in the following section.

## 11.5 Ways of Knowing

Films had the largest influence with regards to respondents' knowledge of dangerous activities and these viewings encouraged respondents to avoid these activities. The research revealed that films do not influence travel routes chosen in the city, although films do encourage exploration of Johannesburg and spaces seen in films. The most significant condition of reception may also be the arena where films have the greatest influence. The ability to recognise Johannesburg in films, either through first-hand or second-hand knowledge, was a prevalent factor in the influence of films on respondents' everyday practice. Without existing knowledge of the city, respondents could not make use of the information provided in films of Johannesburg. It was clear from the research that films

contribute to the collective knowledge of Johannesburg through information about spaces, identities and even crime. But it was also apparent that too much knowledge of the city could shatter the illusion of a simplified reality into an entirely fictional account. In-depth knowledge prevents the film from appearing authentic and limits the transfer of additional information.

This is important in considering film as a form of spatial, social and cultural knowledge (McArthur, 1997 & Lukinbeal, 2005), because films are part of a larger discourse on the city. In order for films to contribute to knowledge, the audience requires an existing knowledge of the spaces depicted. In addition, too much knowledge may discredit the film and its information. This suggests that, with regard to spatial depictions and knowledge in films, the influence of films is limited to an audience with some knowledge of the spaces but not too much. But the research has also shown how film can facilitate an understanding of the complex city for the residents of Johannesburg. Films provide information and 'accessibility' to unknown spaces. Tied to these spaces are aspects of identity, mobility and crime. In this way films can encourage greater interaction with the city, through exploration, familiarity and comfort.

Part B of this thesis showed how films of Johannesburg have represented the various spatial constructs of the complex city. These spatial themes have varying levels of representation in films, and varying levels of discussion in the literature on the city and film. Identity is a major theme in the literature on Johannesburg, and Johannesburg films, but this is not a primary area of influence of films for the respondents, despite the success of the tsotsi trope in developing a Black urban identity. Similarly, mobility is an important aspect in the literature in the city, even as it is somewhat overlooked in the literature on film. It is also the area in which films have a limited influence. On the other hand, film plays a major role in the influence of awareness of dangerous activities, reflecting the literature on both the city and film that focuses on crime. In this way, the four themes identified in the literature review are both different aspects of space in the city and different ways of knowing the city. The process of considering the relationship between the city, and its representations through the lenses of these four themes, has contributed to deconstructing the complexity of the city and to understanding the complicated nature of residents' interactions with the city. This provided a foundation for accessing respondents' feelings and actions concerning film and the city.

## 11.6 Conclusion

This research has used the circuit of culture to show how films influence feelings of and behaviours in the city of Johannesburg. This has demonstrated the process of the representation of Johannesburg, the reception of these images by residents, and how this has translated to changes in feelings and activities of residents within the city, leading to changes in everyday practice in Johannesburg. But the research has also shown how film can facilitate an understanding of the complex city for the residents of Johannesburg. Films provide information and 'accessibility' to unknown spaces. Tied to these spaces are aspects of identity, mobility and crime. In this way films can encourage greater interaction with the city, through exploration, familiarity and comfort. While a large proportion of the literature on influence has demonstrated the influence of film over time, this research shows that films can have an immediate impact on the everyday practice of the city's inhabitants.

The construction of spatial stereotypes in Johannesburg films goes beyond the materiality of space and includes aspects of identity, mobility and crime, reflecting the reality of the complex city. At first glance, understanding the makeup of these spatial stereotypes reinforces the unequal and fragmented nature of Johannesburg and the disadvantages inherent to stereotypes. But, these spatial stereotypes also allow characters to cross imagined borders within the city; borders that are not only spatial, but are often also racial and socio-economic. These stereotypes challenge the understanding of film as a conservative medium. On the one hand, they reinforce broad and general perspectives but, on the other, stereotypes facilitate readings, which oppose common thoughts and practices. The details of these spatial stereotypes might be particular to Johannesburg, but their function in film has wide application to any city globally that is struggling with issues of inequality manifesting in the urban spaces.

This research has shown the importance of understanding the representation of the city in film and how images of the physical city are related to other aspects of the city. The study has shown the representation of the city in film to be an important contribution to the discourse of urban space. Film is an undervalued resource within urban studies disciplines and there is little understanding of how films influence everyday practice in the city. This research has demonstrated the process through which films influence everyday practice as well as showing how films facilitate a relationship with the city. This study has revealed the relevance of examining the reception and influence of images of Johannesburg by residents experiencing and living the same spaces every day.

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*7de Laan* (2000–present) Danie Odendaal Productions.

*African Jim/Jim Comes to Jo'burg* (1949) Donald Swanson. Warrior Films.

*Amandla! A Revolution in Four Part Harmony* (2002) Hirsch, L. ATO Pictures, Kwela Productions Ltd. (108 mins)

*The Bang Bang Club* (2010) Silver, S. Foundry Films

*Battle for Johannesburg* (2010) Desai, Rehad. Uhuru Productions.

*Bopha!* (1993) Freeman, M. Arsenio Hall Communications, Taubman Entertainment Group (120 mins)

*Catch a Fire* (2006) Noyce, P. Focus Features, Studio Canal (101 mins)

*Chikin Biznis: The Whole Story* (1998) Wa Luruli, N. Mnet New Directions (103 mins)

*Come Back, Africa* (1959) Lionel Rogosin (95 mins)

*Conversations on a Sunday Afternoon* (2005) Matabane, K. Matabane Filmworks (80 mins)

*Cry, the Beloved Country* (1951) Zoltan Korda. London Film Productions. (103 mins)

*Cry, the Beloved Country* (1995) Darrell Roodt. Miramax Films, VideoVision Entertainment (106 mins)

*Daar Doer in die Stad* (1953) Uys, J. Afrikaanse Rolprentproduksies (70 mins)

*Dangerous Ground* (1997) Roodt, D. New Line Cinema, Jacaranda Films (95 mins)

*Debbie* (1965) Elmo de Witt. Jamie Uys Productions. (85 mins)

*De Voortrekkers* (1916) Harold Shaw. African Film Productions.

*District 9* (2009) Blomkamp, N. Tristar Pictures. (112 mins)

*Drum* (2004) Maseko, Z. Armada Pictures, Drum Pty. Ltd. (94 mins)

*eKasi: Our Stories* (2009; 2010–2011) Twala, V. Seleke Communications.

*Endgame* (2009) Travis, P. Daybreak Pictures, Film Afrika Worldwide (109 mins)

*Fiela se Kind* (1988) Heyns, K. Sonneblom Films, Starcorp International Pictures (105 mins)

*Fools* (1998) Suleman, R. JBA Production (90 mins)

*The Foreigner* (1997) Maseko, Z. (17 mins)

*Forgiveness* (2004) Gabriel, I. Dv8, Giant Films (112 mins)

*The Foster Gang* (1964) Rubens, P. D&P Productions, Nu Metro Home Entertainment (78 mins)

*Gaz'lam* (2002–2005) Yazbek, A.; Berk, B.; Berry, B. & Dandala, H. Ochre Moving Pictures (24 mins x 52)

*Gums and Noses* (2004) Freimond, C. TOM Pictures (89 mins)

*Gold* (1974) Hunt, P. Avton Films, Killarney Film Studios (120 mins)

*Goodbye Bafana* (2007) August, B. Banana Films (140 mins)

*The Great Kimberley Diamond Robbery* (1911) Springbok Film Company

*Hard Copy* (2005; 2006) Jann Turner. Curious Pictures.

*Hijack Stories* (2002) Schmitz, O. Ocean Films (94 mins)

*Hotel Rwanda* (2004) George, T. United Artists. (121 mins)

*iKati Elimnyama* (1975) Sabela, S. SABC Business Enterprises (75 mins)

*Isidingo* (1998–present) Endemol Entertainment, SABC 3

*Jacob's Cross* (2007; 2008; 2009) Moleya, T; Stewart, C & Sundstrom, N. The Bomb Shelter. (43mins x 39/42)

*Jerusalema* (2008) Ziman, R. Muti Films (119 mins)

*Jozi* (2010) Freimond, C. VideoVision Entertainment (101 mins)

*Jump the Gun* (1996) Blair, L. Parallax, Channel 4 Television Corporation (124 mins)

*The LAB* (2006; 2008; 2009) Curious Pictures.

*Life, Above All* (2010) Schmitz, O. Dreamer Joint Venture Filmproduction, Enigma Pictures, Niama Film. (100 mins)

*Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) Andersen, T. Thom Andersen Productions. (169 mins)

*Main Reef Road* (1999) Hofmeyer, N. Free Filmmakers. (58 mins)

*Mapantsula* (1988) Oliver Schmitz. Haverbeam, One Look Productions. (104 mins)

*Material* (2011) Freimond, C. Tom Pictures (94 min)

*Max and Mona* (2004) Mattera, T. Ice Media, Dv8 (98 mins)

*Metropolis* (1927) Lang, F. Universum Film (153 mins)

*Minority Report* (2002) Spielberg, S. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, DreamWorks SKG (145 mins)

*Mr Bones* (2001) Hofmeyr, G. Distant Horizons, Videovision Entertainment (110 mins)

*Mr Bones 2* (2008) Hofmeyr, G. Videovision Entertainment, Adlabs Films, Distant Horizons (101mins)

*My Country, My Hat* (1983) Bensusan, D. Bensusan Films (84 mins)

*A Reasonable Man* (1999) Hood, G. African Media Entertainment, Moviworld, MNet (103 mins)

*Red Dust* (2004) Hooper, T. Distant Horizon, BBC Films, VideoVision Entertainment (110 mins)

*Rhythm City* (2007–present) Curious Pictures

*Sarafina!* (1992) Roodt, D. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Distant Horizons, Hollywood Pictures. (117 mins)

*Scandal!* (2006–present) Ochre Moving Pictures.

*Shaft* (1971) Parks, G. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), Shaft Productions Ltd. (100 mins)

*Skoonheid* (2010) Hermanus, O. Moonlighting Films (105 mins)

*Soweto Green* (1995) Lister, D. Richard Green and Associates (100 mins)

*Stander* (2003) Hughes, B. Newmarket Film Group (116 mins)

*Surfing Soweto* (2006) Sara Blecher and Dimikatso Raphoto (36 mins)

*Taxi to Soweto* (1991) Van Rensburg, M. Toron International and Ster Kinekor Pictures (100 mins)

*They Built A Nation* (1938) Joseph Albrecht. African Film Productions.*Tsotsi* (2005) Hood, G. The UK Film & TV Production Company (94 mins)

*Triomf* (2008) Raeburn, M. Focus Films, GH Films, Giraffe Creations (118 mins)

*Tsotsi* (2005) Hood, G. The UK Film & TV Production Company (94 mins)

*uDeliwe* (1975) Sabela, S. Heyns Films, SABC Business Development (86 mins)

*Unhinged: Surviving Jo'burg* (2010) Loveland, A. AMARIAM Productions (52 mins)

*White Wedding* (2009) Turner, J. Stepping Stone Pictures. (93 mins)

*Yesterday* (2004) Roodt, D. VideoVision Entertainment (96 mins)

*Yizo Yizo* (1999; 2001; 2003) Mahlatsi, T. & Gibson, A. The Bomb Shelter.

*Zama Zama* (2012) Strijdom, V. Kokamoya Productions. (104 mins)

*Zone 14* (2005; 2007; 2010) Mpho Osei Tutu

*Zulu Love Letter* (2005) Suleman, R. Hollybell, FMB2 Films, ZDF/Arte (100 mins)