



Antwerpen Kinemastad

A mixed-method investigation into film exhibition and experiences of cinemagoing in Antwerp (1945-1995) with a focus on the Rex cinema group

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Film Studies and Visual Culture
at the University of Antwerp
to be defended by

Kathleen Lotze

Supervisor:
Prof. dr. Philippe Meers

Antwerp, 2020





Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Communication Studies
Visual and Digital Cultures Research Center

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Een *mixed-method* onderzoek naar filmvertoning en de ervaring van
bioscoopbezoek in de stad Antwerpen (1945-1995)
met de focus op de Rex cinemagroep

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To Karel.

Preface

In October 2009, the month I started this PhD endeavor, I had a conversation with an emeritus professor. I had just given my first presentation of some preliminary findings that originated in the cumulative work of previous researchers within the “Enlightened City” project. This professor was fascinated by the topic of the presentation, about memories of cinemagoing in Antwerp in the past. When I told him that this and other work done within that project will be part of my own PhD project he responded resolutely: "That will never work. I have never seen anyone successfully complete what someone else had started." Well, here we are. “Antwerpen Kinemastad” is completed.

Working on this project and writing this thesis took far longer than expected for various reasons that do not need to be listed here. They were the stumbling blocks on my road to success, but they also provided opportunities to take a step back, to recharge, to reflect, to reshuffle priorities. Just as I was constantly moving forward and backward in time and space, so was this thesis, both in figurative and literal sense. It was written in Antwerp, Velsbroek, Haarlem, Rietschen, Rouzède and Berlin, on long train rides and in dozens of waiting rooms of stations and hospitals. Naturally, a legion of colleagues, friends, family members and other supporters were part of this journey.

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to the University of Antwerp and the University Research Fund. They not only gave me the opportunity to start a doctoral project on a fascinating subject, but also created an environment that encouraged participation in national and international congresses, summer schools and trainings, which all helped me to mature as a researcher and to improve my personal skills as well as to disseminate and discuss results of my research. This also holds for my supervisor, Professor Philippe Meers. I guess it's safe to say that our collaboration started off in the toughest way one can imagine. I cannot be grateful enough for his confidence and trust as well as his willingness to become the supervisor of this PhD project, despite the fact that I almost died on him. Throughout the project he has always demonstrated his confidence in a good outcome. The great amount of freedom he granted me felt good, but was also a challenge. As one of his first PhD students who did most of their research and writing from abroad, the physical distance sometimes also became a mental one. Fortunately, we never lost contact and his friendly reminders, usually decorated with a Flemish saying, spurred me on to carry on and finish.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes out to Professors Daniël Biltreyst and Roel Vande Winkel, who have been part of the doctoral committee since the beginning; to Professor Alexander Dhoest, as the chair of the doctoral committee and the jury; as well as to Professor Marnix Beyen, Dr Clara Pafort-Overduin and Dr Thunnis van Oort as additional members of the jury. Their comments and

suggestions on earlier versions of this thesis had been invaluable and made its content and the arguments so much stronger. I especially would like to thank one person who has been a tremendous source of inspiration for me for many years: the late Dr Karel Dibbets. I'm fairly certain what his first words would have been if he could have lived to see the finished thesis: "*Kaatje, dat ik nog een eens mee mag maken!*" Karel was the person that sparked my interest in cinema history fifteen years ago and my work for his "Cinema Context" project later helped me to start as a researcher for the "Enlightened City" project, which lay the foundation for "Antwerpen Kinemastad". Karel's vision, his wits and critical thinking were extremely inspiring and his critical remarks on the first versions of this thesis made the end result more profound and condense. That is why I am dedicating this thesis to him.

Much of the thesis could not have been written if it would not have been for the eyewitnesses and experts in the field of film exhibition from within and outside the Rex cinema group: I wish to thank Paul Corluy, Jean Zeguers, Willy Magiels, Erik Kloeck, who, sadly, all passed away during the past years, but whose invaluable stories will live on with this thesis. I also thank Serge Bosschaerts, Marie-Louise Christeyns, Frans Druyts, Johan Hollants, Frank van der Kinderen, Kamiel de Meester, Marc van Passel and all the Antwerp citizens who were interviewed, for sharing their valuable stories and personal collections. Along this line I am also thanking all the students at the University of Antwerp involved in this research in earlier stages.

Furthermore, I wish to thank all my (ex-)colleagues, many of whom have become valuable friends, for their warm and undying encouragement, engaging discussions and funny jokes. A special thanks to Gert, for the enormous amount of work as my predecessor in the "Enlightened City" project which laid the foundation of "Antwerpen Kinemastad" and of which I now may reap the benefits. Many thanks also to Lies, partner in crime in the "Enlightened City" project and later the "European Cinema Project", with whom I brainstormed, suffered and laughed together. Thanks also to all my (ex-)colleagues from the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Antwerp. Although I was almost never there, they never made me feel like an outsider. Our chats, lunchbreaks, outings and bets on babies will always stay with me. A special thanks to Corine, Kevin, Koen for always granting me warm shelters during my stays in Antwerp, for their cooking and entertaining chitchat about the best kitchen knives, basil and celebrities. Their warmth and hospitality always meant a lot for me and I just would not know if and how I could ever pay them back. I also thank Iris (madam), my favorite Bollywood star, for her cheerfulness and colorfulness, which fit so well with her passion. A million thanks to my fellow jackalopes and cinema historians Clara, Thunnis, Åsa, Dani, Lies. Working with them, exchanging ideas and laughing with them has been such a reward on so many levels! My warm gratitude also goes out to my ex-colleagues at the department of Media Studies at Utrecht University, Clara, Thunnis, Judith and André who taught me

so much about best practices of research in cinema history and to my former teaching sisters and friends Daisy and Hanna. And last, but definitely not least, I warmly thank my new colleagues at the Netherlands Film Academy, for warmly welcoming me into their team and for supporting me to become a Doctor. A special thanks to Menno, hero, endless source of knowledge and inspiration.

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Most of all I am grateful for the love, the support and undying confidence of all the members of my family, especially Mutti, Vati (who sadly did not live to see me graduate), Silvia and Heike, for putting up with my annoying why-questions with which I have been torturing them all my life. Well, it did pay off. I particularly thank Mutti and Vati, for always supporting me and believing in me and never forcing me to do something I did not want to do. I can never pay them back what they have given me in all these years. Also a big thank you to Siegrid and Achim (who also departed much too soon) for their warmth, the delicious food and for giving me Björn and a warm home in Berlin. I thank Martijn who witnessed the early years of this thesis from up close and kept asking how things were going even after our paths had separated. I'm incredibly grateful for everything he has given me in all those years and particularly for a continuous belief that one day this project will be finished. I also know that Adri would be very happy and proud today. Many thanks also to Joop and especially Inkje, for the support and help with editing the Dutch summary.

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Kathleen Lotze, Haarlem, November 2020

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Abbreviations

<i>Abbreviation</i>	<i>Full term</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
ABVV	Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond	
ABVV	Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond	General Federation of Belgian Labor
AK	Antwerpen Kinemastad	PhD project.
AKA	Antwerpse Kinema Aktualiteiten	Antwerp newsreels
BBKC	Belgische Beroepskamer der Cinematografie	Belgian Professional Chamber of Cinematography
BRTN	Belgische Radio- en Televisieomroep Nederlandstalige Uitzendingen	Belgian Radio and Television Broadcaster for Dutch-language Broadcasts
CFA	Centrale Filmclub Antwerpen	Central Film Club Antwerp
CSBC	Belgische Syndicale Kamer van Cinematographie	Belgian Syndicate of Cinematography
DOCIP	Documentatiecentrum voor de cinematografische pers	Documentation center for the cinematographic press, founded in the 1930s.
EAO	European Audiovisual Observatory	
EHC	Erfgoedbibliotheek Henrik Conscience	Heritage library Henrik Conscience (Antwerp)
FOD	Federale Overheidsdienst Financiën	Federal Public Service Finances
GvA	Gazet van Antwerpen	local daily newspaper in Antwerp
KFL	Katholieke Filmliga	Catholic Film League
KNT	Kinderen niet toegelaten	children (under sixteen) not admitted
KT	Kinderen toegelaten	children (under sixteen) admitted
NBB	Nationale Bank van België	National Bank of Belgium
NBB	Nederlandse Bioscoopbond	Netherlands Cinema Alliance, founded in 1921 to represent the interests of Dutch exhibitors and distributors
NIS	Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek	National Institute for Statistics
NV	Naamloze vennootschap	Company with limited liability
PVBA	Publieke vennootschap met beperkte aansprakelijkheid	Public company with limited liability
SaS	Stad aan de Stroom	Non-profit organisation, founded in 1989, supported by Antwerp's city council and responsible for the integration of different interest groups (sea port, business wo/men, authorities, local population etc.) to improve the quality of urban life.
VKBB	Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België	Association of Cinema Directors of Belgium
VOZA	Verenigde Onafhankelijke Zalen te Antwerpen en Agglomeratie	United Independent Cinemas of Antwerp and Agglomeration, a group of exhibitors in the early 1970s, operating independently and in direct competition from Heylen

Introduction

On December 16, 1944, during the screening of *The Plainsman* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1936, USA), a V2 rocket hit two of Antwerp's most prestigious cinemas at that time, Rex and Scala.² The glorious picture palaces were heavily damaged and the bomb killed and wounded hundreds of people inside and outside the cinema. Amongst the casualties were staff members of the Rex and other Antwerp cinemas, who had gathered for a meeting in the same building. One of this meeting's few survivors was Georges Heylen (1912–95), director of the Rex and son-in-law of the cinema's owner (who was one of the casualties). In the wake of this catastrophic event, all Antwerp cinemas were closed for public viewings for months.³ In April 1945, the acclaimed film critic and pioneer of the Catholic Film Action Joz van Liempt proclaimed his delight that "the people from Antwerp can finally go to the movies again".⁴ Immediately after the war and despite the post-war austerity and solicitudes, the city's cinema culture recovered quickly. In 1947, less than three years after the bombing, Heylen would reopen the Rex and soon become one of the most influential cinema entrepreneurs in Belgian cinema history.

For most part of the twentieth century, Antwerp played a crucial role for national film exhibition and distribution. After Brussels it had the highest number of cinemas and cinema attendance. Cinema business was particularly thriving in the Station Quarter, the area surrounding Antwerp's main train station. Since the end of the nineteenth century this area was boasting with the finest shops, restaurants and cafes and was Antwerp's place to be and to be seen. After the opening of the first permanent cinema there in 1907, it would also become the area with an extraordinary high density of cinemas. For the larger part of the twentieth century, more than a dozen cinemas were operating there within a radius of five hundred meters. The Station Quarter was also the place where Heylen would start his career as a cinema entrepreneur and where he would gain a quasi-

¹ Heylen in F. Crols, "De Grote draak van Cinétown," *Trends. Financieel Economisch Magazine*, November 29, 1985a, 49.

² See the weekly film listing in the local newspaper (s.n., "Filmleiding," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, December 16-17, 1944, 2).

³ On December 21, 1944, Antwerp's main newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen* announced that all public gatherings of more than fifty persons, including film screenings at cinemas, were prohibited, in order to safeguard public order and safety (s.n., "Openbare bijeenkomsten verboden," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, December 21, 1944, 2). See also G. Willems, "Antwerpen "Kinemastad". Een kroniek van honderd jaar bioscoopcultuur," in *De verlichte stad. Een geschiedenis van bioscopen, filmvertoningen en filmcultuur in Vlaanderen*, eds. D. Biltreyst and P. Meers (Leuven: Lannoo, 2007), 248. For more details about the bombing on December 16, 1944 and its consequences see the website of historian Pieter Serrien: P. Serrien, "De V2-inslag op cinema Rex," accessed February 2, 2020, <https://pieterserrien.be/v2cinemarex/>, as well as P. Serrien, *Elke dag angst. De terreur van de V-bommen op België (1944-1945)*, (Antwerpen, Amsterdam: Horizon, 2016), 274-296.

⁴ J. van Liempt, "Weer films in Antwerpen," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, April 21, 1945, 2.

monopoly position in the 1960s. He kept his powerful position – which stretched far beyond the city of Antwerp – up until his downfall in 1993.

Until the 2000s, Antwerp's cinema history was primarily written by non-academics.⁵ This abounded in a number of overviews and reflections that are rich in historical details and anecdotes, largely based on personal collections, newspaper articles and personal interviews. A first thorough scholarly analysis of Antwerp's cinema history was done within the framework of the large-scale research project "The 'Enlightened' City: Screen Culture between Ideology, Economics and Experience. A Study on the Social Role of Film Exhibition and Film Consumption in Flanders (1895-2004) in Interaction with Modernity and Urbanisation".⁶ In his chapter titled "Antwerpen 'Kinemastad'. Een kroniek van honderd jaar bioscoopcultuur" ("Antwerp 'Cinema City'. A chronicle of a hundred years of cinema culture"), which is part of an edited volume presenting the results of this project, Gert Willems sketched an overview of 100 years cinema history in Antwerp (1907 to 2007), also paying attention to Heylen's rise and fall as a cinema entrepreneur and his meaning for local film exhibition.⁷

⁵ See as the most prominent examples C. Wildiers, *De Kinema veroverde de Scheldestad* (Antwerp: V.V.K.B., 1956); J. van Liempt, "Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (I)," *Cinema. Films & Video Magazine*, no. 86 (January 1985); J. van Liempt, "Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (II)," *Cinema. Films & Video Magazine*, no. 87 (February 1985); W. Magiels and R. De Hert, ed., *Magie van de Cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde* (Antwerp: Facet, 2004); F. Heirman, *Het paleis om de hoek. Een eeuw cinema in Antwerpen* (Antwerp: BMB, 2006). An exception would be the MA thesis by Bart Frederix: B. Frederix, "De bioscoopexploitatie in België & de bioscoop in Antwerpen: een case study" (MA thesis, Free University of Brussels, 1995). Here, he sketched the cinema history of Antwerp from the beginning until 1995, based on articles in newspapers and magazines, personal interviews and scarce archive material relating to the case of Metropolis. In 2000, the monograph *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné* was published by Guido Convents, which explored the first decade of film and cinema in Belgium, also paying attention to the changes in film exhibition in Antwerp (G. Convents, *Van kinetoscoop tot café-ciné. De eerste jaren van de film in België 1894-1908* (Leuven: Universitaire Pers Leuven, 2000). In 2002 another MA thesis written by Cindy van Handenhove provided a detailed overview of architectural features of the closed and active cinemas in Antwerp, including opening dates and exhibitors, if available (C. van Handenhove, "Antwerpen Kinemastad" (MA thesis, Ghent University, 2002).

⁶ "The 'Enlightened' City: Screen Culture between Ideology, Economics and Experience. A Study on the Social Role of Film Exhibition and Film Consumption in Flanders (1895-2004) in Interaction with Modernity and Urbanisation" (FWO - Flemish Research Council; 2005-2008; promotors Philippe Meers (University of Antwerp), Daniël Biltreyst (Ghent University) and Marnix Beyen (University of Antwerp)). For details see "Visual and Digital Cultures Research Center (ViDi)," Projects, University of Antwerp, accessed October 3, 2018, <https://www.uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/vidi/projects-and-publica/projects/>.

⁷ See Willems, "Antwerpen 'Kinemastad'". Next to this chapter, the volume contains a second case study of film exhibition in Antwerp, more specifically of the sex cinemas in the Station Quarter between 1950 and 1975 (O. van Steen and M. Beyen, "Stiefkinderen van de seksuele revolutie. Seksbioscopen in de Antwerpse Stationsbuurt, 1950-1975," in *De verlichte stad. Een geschiedenis van bioscopen, filmvertoningen en filmcultuur in Vlaanderen*, eds. D. Biltreyst and P. Meers (Leuven: LannooCampus, 2007). Furthermore, two PhD projects examined film exhibition in Antwerp in relation to Turkish, Indian and Jewish diaspora within the frameworks of the research project "Cinema and diaspora. A comparative study into ethnic film cultures in Antwerp: Bollywood, Northern African, Turkish and Jewish cinema" (FWO/BOF; 2008-2013; promotors Philippe Meers (University of Antwerp), Roel vande Winkel (then University of Antwerp, now Catholic University of Leuven) and Sofie van Bauwel (Ghent University)). Finally, the one-year research project "Movie-going at the docks. A media historical comparative analysis of cinema cultures in Antwerp (Flanders) and Rotterdam (Netherlands) (1910-1990)" (Pegasus Marie Curie Fellowship postdoc fellowship, EU/FWO-Flanders; 2015; researcher Thunnis van Oort, promotor Philippe Meers (University of Antwerp)) drew substantially on data gathered within the "Enlightened City" project as well as "Antwerpen Kinemastad". For project details see University of Antwerp, "Visual and Digital Cultures Research Center (ViDi)," Projects.

While these overviews and studies equally demonstrate Antwerp's status as a *Kinemastad* (literally meaning "cinema city") and Heylen's powerful role in the local exhibition market, a thorough and systematic investigation of the changes in film exhibition in Antwerp and how these changes related to changes in the film exhibition sector in general, and to Heylen and his cinema Rex group in particular, is still missing. The purpose of this PhD project "Antwerpen Kinemastad" is to fill this gap.⁸ The central question in this thesis is: How did the cinema landscape in Antwerp change in the second half of twentieth century and how did these changes relate to social, cultural-political and economic forces in general and to Heylen's powerful position and local patterns of film consumption in particular? In a broader, film-historiographical perspective, "Antwerpen Kinemastad" thus seeks to contribute, first, to the discussions about the role of small-scale investors for local film exhibition and distribution in the context of transnational flows. Second, by linking the supply of cinemas and films to preferences of local audiences it seeks to establish a multi-layered account of a city's film and cinema history that was marked by a lively cinema culture, through times of prosperity and crisis.

The dynamics of local exhibition markets and the socio-economic contexts within which they flourished (and failed) has been documented particularly well for cinema's early period, especially with regard to the relation between cinema and experiences of urban life and modernity.⁹ Embedded in contexts of practices of spectacular consumption in the nineteenth century, including morgues, panoramas, magic lantern shows, film quickly (yet not indisputably) became the dominant form of leisure in the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Increased professionalization and standardization within the film industry made film production and exhibition a booming business in the 1910s and 1920s. Cinemagoing became an established and affordable recreational activity and firmly integrated into everyday life. Until the Second World War, film was the most popular form of leisure. However, the gradual disintegration of the Hollywood studio system along with changed recreational patterns due to increased wealth and mobility had long-term effects on all sectors of the film industry, including production, distribution, exhibition, and reception. While the post-war decline in cinema attendance was also observable in Antwerp, compared to other cities in Belgium and abroad, the city's cinema culture remained thriving for at least another two decades.¹¹ This invites a closer

⁸ "Antwerpen Kinemastad. A media historic research on the post-war development of film exhibition and reception in Antwerp (1945-1995) with a special focus on the Rex cinema group" (Antwerp U Research Council BOF, 2009-2013, promoter: Philippe Meers).

⁹ For a comprehensive list of examples, see D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby and P. Meers, "Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. An Introduction," in *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History*, edited by D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby and P. Meers (London: Routledge 2012), 1-16.

¹⁰ For a compelling article about the conditioning of cinemagoing audiences by spectacles of consumption in the nineteenth century see V. R. Schwartz, "Cinematic Spectatorship before the Apparatus: The Public Taste for Reality in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," in *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, edited by L. Charney and V. R. Schwartz, 297-316 (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1995).

¹¹ For example, for Ghent see L. van de Vijver, "Gent Kinemastad. Een multimethodisch onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van de filmexploitatie, filmprogrammering en filmbeleving in de stad Gent en randgemeenten (1896-2010), als case binnen New

inspection of Antwerp's film exhibition sector and experiences of cinemagoing in this city, not only in order to find explanations for the relative success, but also in order to find out whether the situation in Antwerp was in fact quite typical.

During the past two decades, increased attention to the institutional, social and economic dimensions of film exhibition, including film programming and distribution strategies as well as the experiences of cinemagoing as part of the fabric and routines of everyday life, has been paid within the frameworks of a social history approach to film studies, and more particularly *new cinema history*. New cinema history is a recent strand of film-historical inquiry that, during the last decade, became established as a historiographical and methodological framework for analyzing patterns of the circulation and consumption of films in the past.¹² New cinema history moved scholarly attention away from the study of film texts to the social and economic contexts of film exhibition, distribution and reception.

Methodologically, the research design of "Antwerpen Kinemastad" is based on that of the "Enlightened' City" project. As I will show in more detail in Chapter 2, "Antwerpen Kinemastad" draws on the idea of theoretical and methodological triangulation, combining different approaches, methods and sources in order to examine the changes in film exhibition and consumption from different angles. More particularly, insights and methods from cultural and social geography and business history are combined with a media-historical analysis of the local film supply and oral history. Next to the research design, "Antwerpen Kinemastad" also draws on insights and data collected within the frameworks of the "Enlightened' City" project, which was based at the universities of Antwerp and Ghent and included researchers' and students' work, various research seminars and MA theses. For the purpose of this dissertation and based on new sources and data, these findings are complemented, refined and explored in more depth in order to fit the focus of the project on the dynamics of Antwerp's cinema sector in general and the Rex cinema group in particular.¹³ "Antwerpen Kinemastad" also differs from another follow-up research that originated in the "Enlightened' City" project, "Gent Kinemastad" in its narrower temporal focus on the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁴

This restriction arises from the particularity of Antwerp's cinema sector, where one exhibitor largely determined how films were distributed, exhibited, and consumed at that time. Focusing on

Cinema History," (PhD diss., Ghent University, 2012); for Nottingham (UK) see M. Jancovich, L. Faire and S. Stubbings, *The Place of the Audience* (London: BFI, 2003).

¹² R. Maltby, "On the prospect of writing cinema history from below," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9, no. 2, (2006); R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers, eds. *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby and P. Meers, eds. *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

¹³ For details of the amendments see the methodological paragraphs at the beginning of Chapters 3 through 6.

¹⁴ Van de Vijver, "Gent Kinemastad".

the period that Heylen was active in Antwerp as an exhibitor allows for a closer inspection of the city's exhibition market from a business-historical perspective. Although Heylen started in the cinema business before World War II (see Chapters 3 and 4), 1945 is chosen as the starting point of this thesis as it marked the end of the war and destruction, and the beginning of a period of reconstruction and renewed interest in, and supply of, recreational activities.¹⁵ The thesis thus covers the period starting shortly before Heylen would (re)open one of Antwerp's most prestigious cinemas, cinema Rex, in 1947, until 1995, the year that he passed. The decision to include the two years following his bankruptcy in 1993 can be motivated by the execution of his bankruptcy which not only revealed the extent of his cinema empire, but also what it meant for the city's socio-economic fabric.

Results of "Antwerpen Kinemastad" have previously been published in the form of three articles and two book chapters.¹⁶ In addition, two articles are in print and in the process of peer-review respectively, at the time that the final version of this thesis is written.¹⁷ Except for the co-authored article "Triangulation in historical audience research: Reflections and experiences from a multi-methodological research project on cinema audiences in Flanders", on which the discussion of triangulation is based in Chapter 2, none of these articles is included in this thesis. They form condensed versions of the explanations and insights provided in Chapters 3 through 6.

This thesis comprises two major parts: the first two chapters provide the historiographical and methodological framework for the empirical findings presented in Chapters 3 through 6. The aim of Chapter 1 is to provide the historiographical context of "Antwerpen Kinemastad" as a case study in new cinema history. I will show how new cinema history relates to the broader historiographical shifts in the twentieth century and to film historiography in particular. Part of these shifts were the increased acknowledgement for soft evidence and interpretative stances, with the historian mediating the many voices of the so-called "little" people instead of recounting with an authoritative voice the past of great events and people as it really was. In Chapter 2 I will discuss the

¹⁵ In 1945, approximately 147.5 million cinema tickets were sold in Belgium, a number that has never been surpassed since then (D. Biltereyst and P. Meers, eds., *De verlichte stad. Een geschiedenis van bioscopen, filmvertoningen en filmcultuur in Vlaanderen* (Leuven: LannooCampus, 2007), 282, Table 2).

¹⁶ K. Lotze and P. Meers, "Citizen Heylen. Opkomst en bloei van het Rex-concern binnen de Antwerpse bioscoopsector (1950-1975)," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 13, no. 2 (2010); D. Biltereyst, P. Meers, K. Lotze and L. van de Vijver, "Negotiating Cinema's Modernity: Strategies of Control and Audience Experiences of Cinema in Belgium, 1930s-1960s," in *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New perspectives on European Cinema History*, edited by D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby and P. Meers (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); D. Biltereyst, K. Lotze and P. Meers, "Triangulation in historical audience research: Reflections and experiences from a multi-methodological research project on cinema audiences in Flanders." *Participations. Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 9, no.2 (2012); K. Lotze and P. Meers, "'They don't need me in heaven... there are no cinemas there, ye know' – Cinema Culture in Antwerp (Belgium) and the Empire of Georges Heylen (1945-1975)," in *Watching Films: New Perspectives on Movie-Going, Exhibition and Reception*, eds. A. Moran and K. Aveyard, (Bristol and Chicago: Intellect, 2013); K. Lotze, "Bringing the Multiplex to Antwerp: A Battle of Two Giants," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 21, no. 1 (2018): 76-101.

¹⁷ Van Oort, T., A. Jernudd, K. Lotze, C. Pafort-Overduin et al. "Mapping Film Programming across Post-War Europe (1952)." *Research Data Journal for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (in press); C. Pafort-Overduin, T. van Oort, K. Lotze, A. Jernudd, "Moving films: visualising film flow in three European cities in 1952," *Tijdschrift for mediageschiedenis* (forthcoming).

methodological implications of these shifts. They regard the questions of objective truth and interpretative practice as well as the combination of different approaches and methods for historical inquiry. Special attention is given to the relationship between history and memory, as they – as it will be argued – form a symbiosis, strongly depending on, and mutually reinforcing, each other. It helps to engage with the writing of cinema histories in an open, flexible, and non-discriminating manner.

Chapters 3 through 6 constitute the empirical part of this thesis. They are structured in similar ways. Each chapter starts with an explanation of the methods applied and sources used for the analyses that follow. Each chapter focuses on one particular aspect of Antwerp's cinema history in general and Heylen's Rex cinema group in particular: *places, exhibition structures, films, memories*.

Chapter 3 ("Places") explores the changes in the physiognomy of Antwerp's cinema landscape from a socio-geographical perspective. It concentrates on the spatial diffusion of the cinemas across the city of Antwerp and a number of adjacent districts, and relates the changes to the socio-economic developments throughout the researched period. Based on these findings, Chapter 4 ("Exhibition structures") zooms into the peculiarities of the cinema market in the city of Antwerp, approached from a business-historical angle. By drawing on different sources, it identifies the different players active in the local cinema market which was marked by competition and the exhibitors' struggles to survive in an ailing industry. Again, the focus is on Heylen and his Rex cinema group which was commonly known as the "Rex concern", but, as I will show, in strictly judicial sense, it bore more similarities with a consortium consisting of a large number of corporations operating independently of each other. The findings about the nature of Heylen's cinema group and his position within Antwerp's exhibition market thus frame the analyses in Chapter 5 ("Films"). Here, a film programming analysis is carried out for a selection of cinemas in Antwerp's Station Quarter and two adjacent neighborhoods. The purpose of this analysis is, on the one hand, to indicate possible cooperation between the different exhibitors, thereby complementing the findings from Chapter 4. On the other hand, it serves to compare and analyze changes in film supply in the local cinema market as an indication for local audience's film tastes. Chapter 6 ("Memories of cinemagoing") complements the findings presented in Chapters 3 to 5 by offering an examination of how Antwerp's cinema culture was experienced by its patrons. The cinemagoing experiences as remembered by (former) Antwerp citizens thus offers a bottom up approach to the city's institutional cinema history, adding to the aspect of supply (cinemas and films) that of demand (preferences and motivation of choices).

Combined, these four chapters thus provide a multilayered picture of a part of Antwerp's cinema history and lay bare the dynamics of a local cinema market. By focusing on one particular exhibitor (and distributor) and his cinema group, this part of the thesis proposes explanations for Heylen's spectacular rise in the 1950s and his downfall in the 1990s. This will be reflected on in the

conclusion. In addition, by contextualizing the case of Antwerp within a broader historiographical and historical framework I will show how such case studies contribute to an understanding of the circulation and consumption of cultural products: they not only lay bare parallels and thus allow for hypotheses with regard to general patterns, but they also challenge existing theories and models, thereby calling for more nuanced approaches to the study of cultural institutions.

“To do film history today, one has to become an economic historian, a legal expert, a sociologist, an architectural historian, know about censorship and fiscal policy, read trade papers and fan magazines, even study Lloyds Lists of ships sunk during World War One to calculate how much of the film footage exported to Europe actually reached its destination.”¹⁸

1. Theoretical and historiographical underpinnings of new cinema history as a recent strand of film-historical inquiry

In 2006, Richard Maltby published his frequently cited programmatic review of the current state of film history in an article titled “On the prospect of writing cinema history from below”.¹⁹ He particularly bemoaned film historians’ little interest in general historiographic insights and developments and their persistent division between history and theory, which in his eyes led to isolated approaches in film history and reinventions of already existing models and methods.²⁰ In order for film history to matter more and to overcome the dominant practice of isolated approaches and theorizing, Maltby called for more attention to the contexts of film exhibition and consumption, “the socio-cultural history of the economic institution of cinema”, rather than keep the focus on the “aesthetic history of textual relations among individuals or individual objects”.²¹ Based on the assumption that the study of film texts tells little about the (changing) role of film and cinemagoing in people’s lives, he proposed “the development of histories of cinemas that place audiences, rather than films, at their center, and integrate the quantitative methods of social history with the concrete and particular conditions of experience that are the predominant concern of microhistory.”²²

Maltby’s critique of traditional film historians’ relative lack of awareness of historiographic debates and his call for more integrative approaches recalls a claim made by Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery more than twenty years earlier. Here, Allen and Gomery stated that “film historians [...] involve themselves in issues, controversies, and problems that reach far beyond the study of film itself and have been debated by historians and philosophers of history for centuries.”²³ Their pioneering volume *Film History. Theory and Practice*, in which they distinguish four approaches to the study of film in historical perspective (economic, technological, aesthetic and social), largely paved the way for a strand in film-historical research which is now commonly referred to as new

¹⁸ T. Elsaesser, “The New Film History,” *Sight & Sound* (Autumn 1986): 248.

¹⁹ Maltby, “On the prospect,”.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 74-77.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

²² *Ibid.*, 74.

²³ R. Allen and D. Gomery, *Film History. Theory and Practice* (New York et al.: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 4.

cinema history.²⁴ Since the publication of Maltby's article, new cinema history has amounted to a growing number of case studies that attest to the integration of a broad range of disciplines and approaches, from urban history, social geography and cultural history to business history, economic studies and memory studies.²⁵ Nevertheless, while the embracement of more socio-historical approaches to the study of film and cinema is laudable, the visibility of their work in those other disciplines and fields of research still remains somewhat sparse.²⁶

The aim of this chapter is to address the historiographical underpinnings of new cinema history, by reflecting on the place of film studies and film history within the broader historiographical debates throughout the twentieth century. In particular, in the following three paragraphs I will address the relation of film history to the historiographical shifts from event history to total history, from center to margins and from grand theory to piecemeal theorizing. Although the term "shift" implies a certain degree of chronology, it is important to bear in mind, that the classification of historians in clearly defined groups and schools is as delicate an enterprise as is the reduction of historical writing to one single historical paradigm. On the one hand, different approaches existed simultaneously and/or in different places and/or revived after having disappeared for some time. On the other hand, ideas of schools or individual scholars are likely to evolve or even change over time.²⁷ After all, as all intellectual thought, historical writing does not occur in a vacuum and is shaped by historic events and institutional agenda-setting. Examples of attempts to rewrite history as they occurred under repressive dictatorships (fascism, Stalinism) are extreme, yet illustrative.²⁸

In the 1970s and 1980s the influential historian Georg G. Iggers was pioneering in his attempt of socially and politically contextualizing historical writings, an approach that has been well embraced by many scholars since the 1990s.²⁹ Iggers, for example, spoke of four important directions

²⁴ I will return to Allen and Gomery's distinction in more detail below.

²⁵ See, for example, the edited volumes Maltby et al., *Explorations*; Biltereyst et al., *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*, Biltereyst et al., *The Routledge Companion*; as well as the special edition of *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis/ Journal for Media History*: C. Pafort-Overduin and T. van Oort, eds., "New Cinema History in the Low Countries and Beyond," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 21, no. 1 (2018).

²⁶ See, for example, the observation made by Thunnis van Oort and Clara Pafort-Overduin for the Netherlands: T. van Oort and C. Pafort-Overduin, "New Cinema History in the Low Countries and Beyond: An Introduction," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 21, no. 1 (2018): 15.

²⁷ The methodological approaches employed by *Annales* writers over time, are exemplary. Iggers identified all together four phases in the existences of the *Annales* (G. G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century. From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 58-62).

²⁸ With regard to some historians, the connection between their historical writing and contemporary political events (French Revolution, German Empire) was so strong, that De Schryver devoted a whole historiographical category to them. The corresponding chapter was titled "Historiography as political weapon and party conflict" (my translation). See R. De Schryver, *Historiografie. Vijfentwintig eeuwen geschiedschrijving van West-Europa* (Leuven et al.: University Press Leuven/Van Gorcum, 1990), 315-328. D. A. Jeremy Telman (elaborating on Pierre Bourdieu's thoughts on the dialectical interaction of structures and agency) claimed that: "Conformity among historians is thus less a product of political or even ideological uniformity than it is an effect of shared initiation into a disciplinary field." (D. A. J. Telman, "Georg G. Iggers and the Challenge of A Poststructuralist Historiography," in *The Many Faces of Clío. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography*, edited by E. Q. Wang and F. L. Fillafer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 154.)

²⁹ E. O. Wang, "Introduction," in *The Many Faces of Clío. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography*, edited by E. Q. Wang and F. L. Fillafer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 5.

that social science history took in the twentieth century.³⁰ As Iggers himself acknowledged, the four directions were just a selection from historical writings throughout the past century, but they nevertheless reflect important lines of thought.³¹ It would go far beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in detail these four particular or other directions of social history in the twentieth century. Some of their fundamental ideas and approaches will be addressed in the course of this chapter.

Just as social science history in general did not follow a straight line, but was marked by overlaps, ruptures, and the simultaneous existence of different approaches, so was the branch of film history. Allen and Gomery's *Film History* mentioned above, was the first major work reflecting on film history and historiography, showing that the four major lines of traditional film historical research they distinguished (aesthetic, technological, economic, and social), partly existed simultaneously, if not always with the same impact.³² New cinema history can be seen as a strand in research practice that brings together different theories and approaches in order to understand particular practices of film exhibition, distribution and consumption, how they changed in the course of time and how they relate to the larger socio-economic, political and cultural contexts in which they are embedded.

In its focus on the contextual aspects of how films were circulated and consumed, its attention for everyday practices of film exhibition and cinemagoing, and its support for

³⁰ The first is the German tradition of economic and social history (i.e. the ethnographically oriented *Kulturgeschichte* with its focus on everyday life and customs of common people) and later of historical sociology, including Max Weber's *Verstehende Soziologie* at the beginning of the twentieth century. This first tradition of social history differed from its Rankian predecessors because of its more rigorous methods and the wish to understand and explain historical process. Nevertheless, according to Iggers, it did neither break with the belief in the coherence and continuity of history, nor did it abandon its belief in the objectivity of scientific and social inquiry. The second direction can be located in the United States from the 1960s onwards, with the arrival of forms of social science history, which was less centered on the state and can be characterized by a belief in the explanatory power of quantitative methods. Together with improving computer technology this resulted in the multiplying of quantitative studies in fields such as political history, historical demography, economic history, and last but not least, media history. The third direction is the *Annales* in France, beginning in the 1920s. According to Iggers, the *Annales* was less a school, but the most influential "model for new paths of historical investigation of culture and society". Instead of formulating one theory of history or historiography, the *Annales* sought to integrate different sciences into *les sciences de l'homme* and provide a "forum for various directions and new approaches". While *Annales* historians have been criticized for focusing too much on the premodern world, some influential works did in fact deal with modern society, such as the extensive collaborative work by Pierre Nora titled *Les Lieux de mémoire* (which will be treated in more detail in the next chapter). Finally, the fourth direction was the reconstitution of social history in the Federal German Republic after World War II. The most prominent of this direction of social history became the Bielefeld School. According to Iggers, two important factors shaped historical studies in Germany in the 1960s. On the one hand they were born out of an intellectual heritage which kept politics and the state at the center of their interest. On the other hand historical studies in Western Germany from the 1960s onwards were framed by German politics in the first half of the twentieth century which resulted in an eagerness to critically confront the German past (Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 35-70).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

³² Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, iii, 3. See also Elsaesser, "New Film History," 247; D. Andrew, "Film and History," in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, eds. J. Hill and P. C. Gibson. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 179; Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 10; I. Blom and W. Strauven, "Cinema in Context. Het einde van filmstudies?" *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2006): 9; J. Chapman, M. Glancy and S. Harper, "Introduction," in *The New Film History. Sources, Methods, Approaches*, eds. J. Chapman, M. Glancy and S. Harper (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 6. Chapman et al. called it "the only thoroughgoing historiographical and methodological study of the discipline", even though "it inevitably has been overtaken by new intellectual developments, not least the increasing interest in representation and reception" (*Ibid.*, 6).

microhistorical inquiry, new cinema history can be considered as being shaped by at least three major historiographical debates: first, the aspirations for the writing of total histories as a reaction to the traditional prevalence of event history and history of great men; second, the growing attention for places and people at the “margins”; third, the increased abandoning of grand theory in favor of piecemeal theorizing. In the following, I will address these three debates and the ways they shaped film-historical inquiry. Although the three debates are discussed here in separate paragraphs, it should become clear that they are closely interrelated and necessitate each other.

1.1. Aspirations for “total history”

In 1990, Reginald de Schryver proclaimed a yet unheard-of inclination of historians towards a *histoire totale*, which would be paradoxical regarding the increasing fragmentation and specialization in the discipline.³³ However, as social historian Matti Peltonen argued more than a decade later, this fragmentation and specialization in the discipline can be largely ascribed to the defenders of the “solid and respectable” (traditional) history who discriminated against more holistic approaches to historical inquiry, by “declaring a considerable area of historical studies, such as economic and social history, for instance, as ‘not history’” and by relegating them as an “obedient and quite subfield”.³⁴

While the idea of “total history” as an approach to historical writing has never been clearly established, it has been commonly linked to social history and discussions on its objectives to offer an all-embracing approach to historical research.³⁵ One of the clearest demarcations of what such an approach might entail is offered by Peltonen. His reflections on the concept of total history is grounded in his discussion of the historian Richard J. Evans’ critical view of social history and more particularly, the work of economic historian Eric Hobsbawm. In his famous paper “From Social History to the History of Society”, written in 1970 and republished in his seminal collection of essays *On History*, Hobsbawm argues that “[s]ocial history can never be another specialization like economic or other hyphenated histories because its subject-matter cannot be isolated”.³⁶ According to Hobsbawm, the social is part of all human activities, be that economic, cultural, political, or religious.

³³ De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 365. See also Judith Thissen's diagnosis (for the status of film history in the Netherlands that is) that the 1990s were marked by a decreased belief in the ideal of an integrative total history (J. Thissen, “Filmgeschiedenis tussen cultuur en economie,” *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 13, no. 2 (2010): 5).

³⁴ M. Peltonen, “Where is the ‘Social’ Reflections in Social History? Reflections on the Concept of Total History,” *Scandinavian Economic History Review* 51, no. 2 (2003): 7, 12.

³⁵ See, for example, M. Harsgor, “Total History: The Annales School,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 13, no. 1 (Jan. 1978): 1-13; T. Zeldin, “Social History and Total History,” *Journal of Social History* 10, no. 2 (Winter 1976): 237-245; E. Hobsbawm, *On History* (London: Abacus, 1997): 94-123.

³⁶ Hobsbawm, *On History*, 99.

In his reflections Peltonen refers to three theoretical historians and their ideas that relate to total history.³⁷ The first is anthropologist Marcel Mauss' concept of "total social fact" developed and used in the 1920s and 1930s. According to this view, the social is inherent in all practices and institutions, hence society is heterogenous rather than homogenous and dividable in layers. Therefore society should be studied (certainly in historical studies) not as isolated layers (politics, economy, religion...) but in relation to each other. The second idea to which Peltonen refers is Fernand Braudel's idea of total history where (in contrast to what is often discussed as being distinct from one another) the three different speeds of historical time "each include all possible aspects of human life".³⁸ Finally, the third idea of total history is revealed in Peltonen's criticism of Dominick LaCapra's pejorative use of total history. By discarding LaCapra's accusation that social history claimed its status as the mother of all histories and "for trying to provide an alternative idea of the discipline of history", Peltonen aligns with Hobsbawm's view that the social aspect is predominant and should be a common denominator to defragmentize history.³⁹

Based on the discussion above, in this thesis "total history" is understood as an integral approach – in this case – to local cinema history that centers around the social aspects of film exhibition, distribution and reception, in both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. This does not mean, however, that the outcome will be a total history of Antwerp's cinema landscape. In concordance with the point made by Barbara Klinger in 1997, I see the potential of the idea of total history less in the urge to strive for completeness of historical reconstruction and more as an aim to provide different perspectives to the object of historical inquiry.⁴⁰ In this thesis it thus serves as an overarching framework to reconstruct and understand the multiple meanings of cinema-going in Antwerp in the second half of the twentieth century.

1.1.1. Moving beyond the theory of great men and great events

Initially, the aspirations for total history, certainly as envisioned by the Annales scholars, was a reaction to the predominantly political character of historical inquiry in the nineteenth century and its focus on great people and great events, thereby neglecting the broader contexts in which they existed and operated. The strong preoccupation of traditional history with people of name and power led to its label as the history (or theory) of the great man. Great man theory believes that

³⁷ Peltonen, "Where is the 'Social' Reflections in Social History," 9-11.

³⁸ Ibid., 10.

³⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁰ B. Klinger, "Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies." *Screen* 38, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 108-109. For details on her discussion about the value of total history for film historical inquiry see Paragraph 1.1.2.

“only individuals, and exceptional individuals at that, have the power to create historical change”.⁴¹

Film historians Kristin Thompson and David Bordwell argued that it is an extreme form of methodological individualism in its assumption “that *all* historical explanations must appeal to person-based causes sooner or later”.⁴²

The contesting of great man theory and questions about the role of individuals in history is one of the classic (and still ongoing) historiographical debates.⁴³ Central to this debate are questions if any individuals matter that much or if it was “all a matter of larger forces”.⁴⁴ A first wave of “democratization of history” occurred with the emergence of social science approaches represented by, for instance, Marxism and the *Annales*, in the first half of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ They extended the focus to include larger segments of the population and moved beyond politics to encompass questions of society and economy, and culture.⁴⁶ Their “call for a history that accounted for social and economic factors” implied a turn away from concentrating on the great individuals to the socio-economic conditions in which they existed.⁴⁷

Hence, in the pursuit of such a total history and the shift away from the focus on great men, their masterpieces and great events, also implied increased attention for everyday life and the ordinary. As Ben Highmore stated in *The Reader of Everyday Life*, the interest in the more trivial things of everyday life dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century, when sociologists began extracting philosophical generalizations about culture and society by attending to the ephemeral of modern life, such as fashion, meals or money.⁴⁸ According to Iggers, however “the study of culture understood as the conditions of everyday life and everyday experience” only became prominent in the second half of the twentieth century.⁴⁹

It was especially in the 1960s and 1970s that historians of the *Annales* school turned to histories of agriculture and food, demography and sexuality, feasting and dying, and other material

⁴¹ K. Thompson and D. Bordwell, *Film History. An Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003), 6.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5, emphasis in source.

⁴³ P. N. Stearns, *World History. The basics* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011), 157. Although Stearns’ focused on world history, this debate also holds for historical writing in general, and film history, as will become clear in the next section.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴⁵ Marxists believed in all-encompassing laws of historical development and that each historical conflict is determined by class conflicts which in turn are determined by economic developments. Its strong socio-economic focus also brought Marxism the label “historical materialism” which stood in contrast to its contemporary counterpart cultural history (German *Kulturgeschichte*, Iggers’ first direction of social history in the twentieth century) and its focus on non-material history (De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 334).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 353; B. Stråth, “Historiography, Social Sciences, and the Master Narratives,” in *The Many Faces of Clio. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography*, eds. E. Q. Wang and F. L. Fillafer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 132.

⁴⁷ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 4-5. See also De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 362-363.

⁴⁸ See for instance Highmore in his introductory part to the work of Georg Simmel in B. Highmore, ed., *The Everyday Life Reader* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 297. In this reader, Ben Highmore fascinatingly related classic theoretical writings, from Sigmund Freud (*Parapaxes*, 1915-1917) and Walter Benjamin (*On Some Motives in Baudelaire*, 1939) to Siegfried Kracauer (*Boredom*, 1924) and Steven Connor (*Rough Magic: Bags*, 2000) to matters of everyday life.

⁴⁹ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 8.

and immaterial cultural practices.⁵⁰ Ben Highmore pointed to a certain ambiguity with regard to Fernand Braudel's importance for the study of everyday life. Braudel, leader of the second generation and the most influential of *Annales* historians, distinguished between three layers of historical time: that of short-lived events (*histoire événementielle*), of cycles (covering large sections of the past), and *longue durée* (corresponding to the slow time of geographical and geological change).⁵¹ While Braudel's preference for *longue durée* principally calls for a structural approach to history and discourages the focus of historical study on day-to-day events, his interest in trivial everyday elements such as fashion, furniture and food led Highmore to include one of Braudel's writings in *The Everyday Life Reader*.⁵² One might add to this Peltonen's argument mentioned above, that Braudel practiced total history, as all three layers of historical time "each include all possible aspects of human life".⁵³

A similar ambiguity as the one pointed out by Highmore with regard to Braudel's work would then also apply to the work of one of the most renowned scholars known for grappling with questions of everyday life, French philosopher and historian Michel de Certeau. After all, what he was interested in most were the unconscious, hidden principles structuring practices of everyday life, and making them visible.⁵⁴ As implied by de Certeau, it is less the products and practices themselves which should be of concern, but the *traces* they leave. The traces in turn are marked by *uses*.⁵⁵ Consequently, de Certeau argued that we should not only study representations of a society, or modes of behavior, but how they are used.⁵⁶ In addition, these operations conform to certain rules: "There must be a logic of these practices."⁵⁷ The ambiguity lies in attention for the everyday practices and the search for patterns and structures of uses. According to Highmore, "negotiating this ambiguity is not an easy task and the question of whether to privilege the personal, the singular, and the intimate, or the structural, the anonymous, and the institutional is a perennial problem for attending to everyday life."⁵⁸ The challenge would then be the weaving together of the particular and the general, micro and macro perspectives, inviting an approach of the individual within the collective and the collective from the perspective of the individual. A topic which will return at several points in the course of this thesis.

⁵⁰ De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 363.

⁵¹ See F. Moretti, *Graphs Maps Trees. Abstract models for literary history* (London, New York: Verso, 2007), 13.

⁵² Highmore, *Everyday Life Reader*, 47. The work by Braudel included in the reader is the preface to his most influential book *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, first published in 1946.

⁵³ Peltonen, "Where is the 'Social' Reflections in Social History," 10.

⁵⁴ M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), xi.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, xii.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, xv.

⁵⁸ Highmore, *Everyday Life Reader*, 295.

The Annales' pursuit of a *histoire totale* embracing economic and social history as well as cultural history, has also been prominent in film history. Richard Maltby reflected on the renowned film historian and theorist Jean Mitry's call for a film *histoire totale* in 1973, which would be "simultaneously a history of its industry, its technologies, its systems of expression [...], and aesthetics structures, all bound together by the forces of the economic, psychosocial and cultural order".⁵⁹ As Dudley Andrew explained in his discussion of Mitry's theory in 1975, Mitry's integral approach to film theory and history was indebted to his background as a film maker combined with a great interest in history and how films work on a textual and paradigmatic level. According to Andrew, Mitry's critical spirit of theorizing was marked by dissecting film-theoretical and film-historical issues and examining each subordinated question one by one and from different angles, rather than analyzing films by using a priori formulas.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, as Andrew argued later, "Mitry's volumes can be read as a Darwinian table of survival" in his focus on dominant film forms and film makers and his neglect of "less visible 'phenomena'" such as animated, educational and home movies as well as women and minority film makers.⁶¹ Similarly, André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning showed that, while Mitry himself argued against deterministic views in historical theorizing, he actually "re-claimed the victory of teleology and linearity" in his attempt to analyze cinematic manifestations and their role in progressive adjustments and improvements.⁶²

The wish for leaving behind the writings of canonical film histories in favor of a total history has been expressed in all major film historical and film-historiographical work since then. In their discussion of traditional film history in 1985, Allen and Gomery claimed that event history's focus on great events and great people pervaded all four lines of traditional film historical research. In *aesthetic* film history, this was manifested most clearly in a preoccupation with "auteurism", the dominant film historical paradigm in the 1960s and 1970s which mirrored the "masterpiece tradition" in general art history.⁶³ One of its most prominent representatives was Andrew Sarris and his canon of famous directors (amongst which D.W. Griffith, Charles Chaplin, Alfred Hitchcock). While acknowledging the importance of auteurism for the shaping of film history from the 1960s to the 1980s, Allen and Gomery emphasized that the focus on the cinematic masterpieces excluded "economic, technological, and cultural aspects [which] are subordinate to the establishment of [such] a canon of enduring cinematic classics" since it neglects the "overall structure of production

⁵⁹ Mitry quoted in R. Maltby, "New Cinema Histories," in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, eds. R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 8.

⁶⁰ D. Andrew, "The Film Theory of Jean Mitry," *Cinema Journal* 14, no. 3 (Spring 1975): 1-3.

⁶¹ Andrew, "Film and History," 178.

⁶² A. Gaudreault and T. Gunning, "Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History," trans. J. Googins and W. Strauven, in *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, ed. W. Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 365-380, trans. of "Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l'histoire du cinéma?" in *Histoire du cinéma. Nouvelles approches*, eds. J. Aumont, A. Gaudreault and Michel Marie (Paris: Sorbonne, 1989), 49-63.

⁶³ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 71.

organization".⁶⁴ In other words, such an approach is unable to provide explanations for how and why these masterpieces came into being, for how and why certain styles developed and others did not, and for how and why some of the "great men" became famous while others did not.⁶⁵

The romantic view of the individual isolated genius holds as little for aesthetic film history as it does for its *technological* counterpart. By focusing on famous inventors (e.g. Jules Marey, Thomas Edison) traditional technological film history neglects the aesthetic, economic, social, and technological contexts within which inventions occurred. Similarly, applied to *economic* film history, the great man theory approach would result in myths of great men who "run the movie industry, completely removed from the 'normal' world of labor, capital, governmental restraints, and accountants".⁶⁶ As Allen and Gomery argue: "However sophisticated, the 'great man' theory tries to remove the movies from the realm of 'ordinary' economic activity. It mystifies the interplay of economic forces, simplifies all questions into examinations of personal decision-making process of one person, and deflects us from any complex understanding of business practice."⁶⁷ Finally, something similar would apply also for *social* film history, as the last strand of traditional film history, identified by Allen and Gomery. Here traditional approaches to film production apply theories of the great man to investigate the idiosyncrasies of studios' executives, thereby neglecting the complexity of all related social processes involved.⁶⁸

Semiotics was suggested by Allen and Gomery as one possible challenge to aesthetic film history's focus on masterpieces and their makers. Traditional aesthetic film history based on semiotics studies "the totality of ways in which meaning and pleasure have been produced in films".⁶⁹ The first to apply semiotics to film was the French structuralist Christian Metz. He studied film as language, its principles, conventions, codes etc., and tried to explain how meaning is embodied in film and how that meaning is communicated to the audience. According to Allen and Gomery, semiotics deemphasizes the role of the artist, because, by explaining how meaning is embodied in film and how that meaning is communicated to the audience, a semiotic approach to film history reaches beyond the individual film, its maker or "even beyond the realm of cinema itself".⁷⁰ However, despite its strong impact on the study of film, in its exclusive attention for aesthetics a semiotic approach falls short of being able to provide more far-ranging historical explanations. In other words, it cannot "without reference to some other explanatory model" tell us

⁶⁴ Ibid., 68, 86. See also J. Lewis, *American Film. A History* (New York/London: Norton, 2007), xiii.

⁶⁵ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 72.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 134.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 155.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 78.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

the reasons for particular choices in film style.⁷¹ A better alternative to the traditional event history was offered then by total history, which was to bring together all different aspects outlined above. The call for a such a total history has surfaced in most film historiographical works since the 1970s.

Rather than focusing on great men and events, Allen and Gomery's proposal to investigate the generative mechanisms underlying questions of film aesthetics, together with the acknowledgement that no filmmaker – no matter how brilliant – works in a vacuum, would foreground “the reasons for the making of the film, division of production tasks, technology employed, and delegation of responsibility and control, and criteria for evaluating the finished film”.⁷² It would show that historical change is not the result of a change in genius, but of external factors.⁷³ Allen and Gomery suggested the identification of five basic categories of generative mechanisms responsible for filmic signification and audience response in the past. The categories pertain to diverse aspects of film history, including style (use of specific cinematic techniques characterizing a given film or group of films), intertextual backgrounds (filmic, non-filmic, extra-filmic), modes of production (individual, collective, studio), authorship (biographical background), and aesthetic discourse on cinema.⁷⁴

The same year that Allen and Gomery's *Film History. Theory and Practice* appeared, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson published their benchmark work, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, as an “attempt to write a totalizing history of a mode of film practice in its historical context”.⁷⁵ It was also the first systematic analysis, not of a select number of masterpieces, but an “unbiased sample” of one hundred quasi randomly selected Hollywood studio productions, more or less known.⁷⁶ It offered an alternative to traditional aesthetic accounts regarding aesthetics as a text-immanent quality of film. Bordwell et al. aimed at providing an historical account of the classical Hollywood cinema as artistic and economic institution, by examining Hollywood cinema in its totality, “as a distinct artistic and economic phenomenon”, as “an integral system, including persons and groups but also rules, films, machinery, documents, institutions, work processes, and theoretical concepts”.⁷⁷ In doing so, they broke with trends in existing publications on Hollywood cinema which “lumped [its productions] together as indistinguishable vulgarity” splintering them into “a hundred categories” many of which are based on names of film stars, directors and other personnel engaged in the process of film production.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 86.

⁷³ See also Chapman et al., “Introduction,” 3.

⁷⁴ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 81-90.

⁷⁵ Chapman et al., “Introduction,” 5.

⁷⁶ D. Bordwell, J. Staiger and K. Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema. Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London, Routledge, 1985), 388.

⁷⁷ Ibid., xiii.

⁷⁸ Ibid., xiii.

Bordwell et al.'s attempt to "historicize textual analysis and connect the history of film style to the history of the motion picture industry" was further elaborated in Bordwell's *historical poetics of cinema* (which will be discussed in more detail when addressing the turn away from grand narratives in Paragraph 1.3).⁷⁹ Although aspiring for a total history of film, Bordwell's *historical poetics of cinema* excluded many contextual factors, such as economic patterns of film distribution, growth of teenage audiences, and ideology of private property.⁸⁰ Bordwell waved aside this neglect by pointing to the need to distinguish "among core questions, peripheral questions and irrelevant questions".⁸¹

The Classical Hollywood Cinema was also the basis for the equally widely acclaimed and detailed overview of film history by Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History. An Introduction* (which first appeared in 1994). While acknowledging the value of Thompson and Bordwell's *Film History* as an "absolutely indispensable narrative history of film" Paul Grainge, Mark Jancovich, and Sharon Monteith criticized the exclusive focus on aesthetic film history and its canonical approach to film history which would lead to the neglect of commercially more successful films not belonging to the established canon of film classics – a point frequently made in recent film and cinema history.⁸² Grainge et al. proposed instead to combine Thompson and Bordwell's with Allen and Gomery's approach "to provide a narrative history of the medium" while addressing "a wide range of different objects and methods".⁸³

What all these critics of histories of great men and events have in common, is their shared interest in the contextual factors shaping film production and consumption.

1.1.2. The shift in film-historical inquiry from text to context

Mitry's call for a *histoire totale* was also translated and quoted by, for example, Richard Abel in 1994 in his article titled "'Don't know much about history', or the (in)vested interests of doing cinema history". Here Abel reflected on the struggles he had in the late 1970 and early 1980s when writing about French Cinema. He was particularly dissatisfied with existing models "of historical analysis which tended to separate those 'simultaneous' histories into autonomous categories", rather than

⁷⁹ Ibid., xiv.

⁸⁰ D. Bordwell, "Historical Poetics of Cinema," *The Cinematic Text. Methods and Approaches*, ed. R. B. Palmer (New York: AMS, 1989), 371.

⁸¹ Ibid., 372.

⁸² P. Grainge, M. Jancovich and S. Monteith, eds. *Film Histories. An Introduction and Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), viii, ix. See for instance, R. Abel, "'Don't know much about history', or the (in)vested interests of doing cinema history," *Film History* 6 (1994): 112; Maltby, "New Cinema Histories," 7.

⁸³ Grainge et al., *Film Histories*, viii.

drawing “attention to and explain their interrelations.”⁸⁴ He rejected “those categories [because they] were organized according to firmly entrenched binaries which had governed my own education - differentiating the economic sphere from the cultural, distinguishing mass culture from art, and privileging the latter in terms of the French ‘narrative avant-garde’”.⁸⁵ Abel showed how traditional canonical film history has led to the neglect of film texts “long considered absent, forgotten and unexamined.”⁸⁶ Abel suggested to align film history more closely with cultural studies and its interest in “how the social relations of power are constituted, contested and changed in cultural practice, and how knowledge is and can be produced, circulated and put to use.”⁸⁷

In the same edition of the *Film History* journal as Abel's “Don't know much...” was published, Michèle Lagny emphasized the “need to provide a cross-cut between different approaches, while trying to evaluate their assumptions, their possibilities and their limits, in order to build (from concurrences, or sometimes from discrepancies) the occasional relationships, often problematical and fragmentary, which films (as individual works and as ‘series’) have towards aesthetics, economic constraints, social mechanisms and cultural conditions.”⁸⁸ Lagny observed a “clear-cut opposition” between “a film history essentially founded on film analysis and an institutional history of cinema”, a distinction which was also called for by Maltby about ten years later and which became essential for the positioning of the emerging field of new cinema history.⁸⁹

Also following Mitry, Klinger placed a strong call for a more contextual approach in order “to engage in a potentially vast system of interconnections, from the film and its immediate industrial context to social and historical developments”.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, she acknowledged the impossibility of writing a *histoire totale* of film reception, because of “the interpretative element present in all historical writing and because of the always fragmentary and incomplete nature of the historical record itself”.⁹¹ At the same time she also warned of completely abandoning aspirations for a total history. After all, Klinger argued, “[i]ts impossibility should not lead [...] to its dismissal”.⁹² The pursuit of what Klinger – in reference to Bordwell – called a *totalized view* should be “a scholarly aim rather than an absolutely achievable reality”.⁹³ Yet it would be a noble undertaking for it could push the limits of historical inquiry, stimulate historians to broaden their scope and continually refine their historical methods and perspectives.⁹⁴

⁸⁴ Abel, “Don't know much,” 110-111.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁸⁷ Abel, “Don't know much,” 114.

⁸⁸ M. Lagny, “Film History: Or History Expropriated,” *Film History* 6 (1994): 43.

⁸⁹ Lagny, “Film history,” 36; Maltby, “On the prospect,” 84.

⁹⁰ Klinger, “Film History Terminable,” 111.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

To achieve as comprehensive a film history as possible, Klinger called for a broad contextual approach. After all, “the aesthetic or political value of a film is no longer a matter of its intrinsic characteristics, but of the way those characteristics are deployed by various intertextual and historical forces.”⁹⁵ A contextual approach as envisioned by Klinger would contribute to a “totalized view” of historical film reception by tackling three traditional pitfalls: single discourse approach (studying reviews), staying “too close to home” (the preoccupation with one aspect of film – that is, the industry – neglecting its social-historical dynamics), and exclusive synchronous approach.⁹⁶ Klinger provided a remarkably detailed overview of topics to be addressed when aspiring a total history of film. It embraced synchronic as well as diachronic analyses of film production, distribution, and exhibition and considered cinema's intertexts, social and historical contexts.⁹⁷ Despite her strong emphasis on context Klinger did not say farewell to the film text completely.

Staiger equally emphasized that text-based and context-based approaches are not binary oppositions. After all, at least since modern linguistics and theories of American communication scholars, text-based analyses did include notions of active readers/spectators.⁹⁸ Context is, Staiger argued, “the best explanation for what happens during the experience of a text”.⁹⁹

Elsaesser and Abel also saw the advantages of combining text and context, but argued conversely. Both warned of simply abandoning the film text for the sake of (social) context. In his review of Allen and Gomery's *Film History. Theory and Practice*, Elsaesser noted “a possible sense of unease [which] comes from the fact that they only intermittently reflect on why they study film at all, rather than turning their formidable powers of analysis to the motor industry or the tobacco trade”.¹⁰⁰ Elsaesser used the example of the study of sound in film to show that a return to the film text is necessary. Exclusive attention for contextual examinations of technological and economic aspects would be as insufficient as would be a neglect of the relation between sound and image and its effects on viewing experience.¹⁰¹ Less interested in textual analysis per se, Abel, about eighteen years later, also criticized the work of “Allen and his supporters [which] generally succeeds as social or cultural history more than as cinema history; that is, its chief interest lies in describing and analyzing the social conditions and cultural practices within which moving pictures could be as important for their relative absence as for their presence.”¹⁰² For Abel the power of integrating filmic and non-filmic evidence rather lied in the writing of local histories in order to examine the circulation

⁹⁵ Ibid., 112.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 109, 111.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 115-127.

⁹⁸ J. Staiger, *Media Reception Studies* (New York, London: New York University Press, 2005), 65.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 82. Here, Staiger referred explicitly to Stuart Hall's term “framework of knowledge”, meaning the social contexts of the decoding act.

¹⁰⁰ Elsaesser, “New Film History,” 248.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 251.

¹⁰² R. Abel, “History Can Work for You, You Know How to Use It’,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no 1 (Fall 2004): 108-109.

of moving images from the perspectives of particular social, urban, and technological changes.¹⁰³

Whether or not to choose a film-centered approach, would become one of the most outspoken distinctions between two more recent fields of film historical inquiry: *new film history* and *new cinema history*. Both had their roots in the so-called “revisionist” film history which proposed to provide revisions of existing studies of early cinema. Fueled by one of the most legendary symposiums (“Cinema 1900-1906”) organized by the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAP) in 1978 in Brighton, the revisionists accomplished a change of many notions about early cinema.¹⁰⁴ The symposium brought together film historians who addressed a broad range of questions, particularly on the social and contextual functions of early cinema, based on new empirical material (filmic as well as non-filmic evidence). It led to an increased interest in early cinema which has now become manifest in the fact that the early period of cinema is by far the best documented one.

Revisionist film history is often linked to both Allen and Gomery and their groundbreaking dissertations in the 1970s.¹⁰⁵ The appearance of their collaborate work *Film History. Theory and Practice* in 1985, in which they explicitly called for a move away from event-history towards investigations of the generative mechanisms that brought about the events, was put forward one year later by Thomas Elsaesser as a prominent example of what he labeled “New Film History” (with capital letters).¹⁰⁶ As mentioned above, Elsaesser observed a tendency away from the interpretation of film texts to focusing on their social, economic, technological contexts – a shift in focus of which he remained critical.¹⁰⁷ His call for not abandoning the text and his proposal that new film history “should really be called New History of Cinema” signaled a splitting into two subfields of film historical inquiry: new film history and new cinema history.¹⁰⁸

More than thirty years after Elsaesser's call, new film historians James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper bundled major works and authors to provide an overview of key areas of new film history research, including reception studies, genre, authorship, and historical film. According to them, one of the motivations for new film historians for abandoning the “old” (traditional) film history, was its preoccupation with masterpieces and auteurs which resulted in a canonical film history with no eye for commercial mainstream cinema.¹⁰⁹ They proposed to move away from a

¹⁰³ Ibid., 109.

¹⁰⁴ See Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, 32. For a complete list of congresses organized by the FIAF since 1939 see “Past FIAF Congresses,” International Federation of Film Archives, accessed May 2, 2019, <https://www.fiafnet.org/pages/Events/Past-Congresses.html>.

¹⁰⁵ D. Gomery, “The Coming of Sound to the American Cinema: A History of the Transformation of the Industry,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1975); and the publication of Allen’s 1977 dissertation: R. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film, 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction*, New York: Arno Press, 1980.

¹⁰⁶ Elsaesser, “New Film History,” 246. For the accreditation of Elsaesser as the first scholar to use the name “new film history” see Chapman et al., “Introduction,” 5.

¹⁰⁷ Elsaesser, “New Film History,” 251. This shift led to his rather ironic statement quoted at the beginning of this Chapter (Ibid., 248).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 247.

¹⁰⁹ Chapman et al., “Introduction,” 2, 3.

history of the great man to pay more attention to the more ordinary people, for example, by extending the focus beyond the great directors to include other creative personnel, such as writers and art directors. In addition, new film history should move away from theoretical constructs of the spectator to responses of “actual” audiences by broadening the focus beyond the moment of film production to include the moment of film presentation and reception.¹¹⁰ New film historians explicitly define their work as being of a “greater level of methodological sophistication” by focusing on structures, processes, and agency thereby demonstrating a more complex relation between film and its various contexts.¹¹¹

Different from new film history, the strand of new cinema history as it emerged in the last one and a half decades, positions itself in critical relation to the more film centered approaches to film history (including new film history) by considering cinema primarily as a social institution framed by economic, political and cultural processes. Echoing some of the earlier calls against canonical film history, Richard Maltby warned of the pitfalls resulting from text-based, symptomatic film history. According to him, one of the dangers was that “[s]uch analyses tend to favor films that respond to their quest for allegorical or symptomatic meaning, and risk ascribing to individual films a representational significance that may be disproportionate to their capacity for historical agency.”¹¹² This would, in turn, lead to the neglect of some of the commercially most successful films, a point which I already addressed in reference to the contributions by Grainge et al. and Abel. Related to this first is another danger of symptomatic film history, one which Maltby described as the neglect of the “transitory nature of any film’s exhibition history”.¹¹³ This is particularly urgent for those periods and types of cinema (as I will show for Antwerp’s neighborhood cinemas in the 1950s), when and where individual films as mass products of cultural consumption had little value and became short lived ephemerals through the high frequencies of program changes.

The focus of “Antwerpen Kinemastad” lies primarily on the socio-economic and cultural factors that shaped the city’s cinema landscape in the second half of the twentieth century. For reasons provided above, an in-depth text-based analysis of films is only reasonable when the analysis can be embedded in the historical contexts of the films’ distribution, exhibition and reception. Before films for textual analysis can be selected one would have to find out first, which films played in Antwerp cinemas in the researched period and, second, which of them played significant roles in the city’s cinema history. In other words, it would not make much sense to analyse films based on their film-historical (canonical) value, if they were not, or hardly, screened on Antwerp screens. With this

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 6-7.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 6.

¹¹² Maltby, “New Cinema Histories,” 7.

¹¹³ Ibid., 7.

thesis a first step in this selection process is provided with the analyses of film programming in Antwerp cinemas provided in Chapter 5 as well as the with oral testimonies of cinemagoers in Antwerp in examined in Chapter 6. Additional textual analyses of films that, for example played well in the local cinemas and/or were remembered well by the former cinemagoers, would then be a next step in order to further explore the flow of films across the city in relation to memories of cinemagoing and thus to investigate the multiple meanings of cinemagoing in Antwerp.

1.1.3. Three developments and strands in film-historical inquiry

Linked to the shifts addressed in the previous two subparagraphs are three particular developments and strands in film historical research that have been inspiring for multi-level histories of film and cinema and can contribute to aspirations for a total history of film and/or cinema. All three corresponding perspectives – spatial, economic, and social – will be combined in this thesis.

The “spatial turn” in film history

The link between space and history, in general, has been stressed by several scholars. Social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey, for example, pointed to the interdependence of space and time by stating that “the past is *assumed* to be placed and that ‘history’ of *course* is meant to include geography”.¹¹⁴ She warned that if we leave space to be implicit in history, we fail to address the particularities about the space-time relations. Massey therefore proposed an alternative approach to space, where space is imagined as “a simultaneity of stories-so-far”.¹¹⁵ A reconsideration of space as suggested by Massey, stresses the interrelations which shape space as well as emphasize the characteristic of space being multiple and always under construction.¹¹⁶ In the case of cinema history, such an open conceptualization of space allows a synchronic as well as diachronic investigation of cinema within the broader cultural, political, socio-economic contexts that it shapes and is shaped by.

Since cinema history in particular has taken a *spatial turn* in the 1990s, the concept of space has played an important role in many aspects. Allen has been a prominent figure in pushing to the fore issues of socio-demographics in relation to the spatiality of cinema. He warned of simply

¹¹⁴ D. Massey, *For Space* (London et al.: Sage, 2005), 129 [emphasis in source]. See also historian Allan Megill’s reference to Fernand Braudel’s consideration of geography as the “bedrock of history” (A. Megill, “Recounting the Past: ‘Description’, Explanation, and Narrative in Historiography,” *American Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (June 1989): 693).

¹¹⁵ Massey, *For Space*, 124-125.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

conflating “the space of cinema with the places of cinematic exhibition”.¹¹⁷ Following Massey in her critique of the traditional distinction between concrete and lived place as opposed to abstract and meaningless space, Allen argued that her open conceptualization of space (see above) would caution cinema historians against “reducing the space of cinema to the places of film exhibition” and, in consequence, from reducing cinema's audiences to hypothetical spectators.¹¹⁸ According to Allen, “[t]he local places of moviegoing, then, need to be re-presented not as autonomous, neutral, static places that contain audiences and movies, and that then can be ‘compared’ to other such places somewhere else, but as internally heterogeneous nodal points in a social, economic, and cultural cartography of cinema: intersections of overlapping trajectories, networks, trails, and pathways, whose identities are constructed through the connections and collisions that occur there.”¹¹⁹

Along a similar line, Maltby pointed to the interplay of multiple contextual factors which influence decision-making processes of cinemagoers. Next to personal preferences, the act of choosing to see a film also depended on the cultural infrastructure of a given place. Often it was not about choosing one film out of many offered in a particular locality, but the choice could just as well be between choosing going to see a film at all, or engage in other recreational activities. As Maltby argued, “[t]he socio-spatial dimension to this kind of everyday decision-making behavior is familiar to geographers and anthropologists, but has only recently been appreciated as a significant factor in the diverse and often perverse stories of survival, closure or transition within cinema exhibition histories.”¹²⁰ The increased awareness of cinema's spatiality along with ever improving technological possibilities have resulted in a mushrooming of databases, often in combination with geo-spatial tools, most commonly Google maps and GIS (see below).

Exhibition, and particularly distribution, are especially sensitive to questions of space-time. As Deb Verhoeven's showed in her research on film distribution and exhibition of the Greek diaspora in Australia, for example, spatial distance inevitably means temporal distance in the availability of film.¹²¹ Similarly, but based on quantitative analyses of box office data for exhibition venues in Philadelphia in the mid-1930s, economic film historian John Sedgwick drew conclusions about choices in cinemagoing by geographically conditioned audiences attending different types of cinemas (first run, subsequent run etc.).¹²² Also, Vinzenz Hediger and Stefan Moitra, in a study of the cinema industry and cinema culture in the Ruhr Valley in the 1950s and 1960s, motivated their combination

¹¹⁷ R. Allen, “The place of space in film history,” *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2006): 15.

¹¹⁸ Massey, *For Space*, 6, 183-185; Allen, “The place of space in film history,” 16.

¹¹⁹ Allen, “The place of space in film history,” 24.

¹²⁰ Maltby, “New Cinema Histories,” 27.

¹²¹ D. Verhoeven, “Film Distribution in the Diaspora. Temporality, Community and National Cinema,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, eds. R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Oxford/Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 243-260.

¹²² J. Sedgwick, “Film consumer decision-making: The Philadelphia Story 1935-36,” (Inaugural lecture held at the London Metropolitan Business School, 9 February 2011): n.p.

of cultural geography, film programming and audience studies by arguing that “only within their social-topographic context film programs got social relevance” (for example, low brow culture programming in working class neighborhoods).¹²³

One of the first projects to systematically collect and present larger datasets related to film exhibition and distribution was Karel Dibbets' widely acclaimed “Cinema Context” project. “Cinema Context” is an online database of venues and film screenings, which also allows for the geospatial mapping of these data.¹²⁴ It is both encyclopedia and research tool which is to lay bare what Dibbets called the “DNA” of Dutch film culture. It contains information on exhibition venues (including address and economic properties) as well as on film screenings (dates and venues) and the films themselves. In Dibbets' view, the representation of data related to film screening events and venues by means of Google Maps can help to reveal the “spatial logistics” of distribution and exhibition patterns.¹²⁵

Groundbreaking work in relation to the geospatial analysis of film exhibition has been done by Jeffrey Klenotic. He proposed a geospatial approach to cinema history using Geographical Information System (GIS). By means of georeferencing, data from very different sources (maps, demographic statistics, box office, even oral testimonies) can be spatially mapped onto different layers in a coordinate system.¹²⁶ In addition, because “maps from different periods, social perspectives or geographic vantage points can be overlaid and compared” GIS allows for the visualization of “potentially significant spatial relationships between different phenomena”.¹²⁷

The data model of “Cinema Context” as well as ideas on the geospatial mapping of data related to film exhibition and consumption have been inspiring for a growing number of cinema historians for the past decade – including the researchers involved in the “‘Enlightened’ City” project – as it enables them to contextualize cinema history within more general cultural, social and economic activities.¹²⁸

¹²³ V. Hediger and S. Moitra, “Industry, Urbanity and Film Culture in 1950s and 1960s Germany. Perspectives for an Empirical Approach,” (Paper presented at the ECCR-conference, Amsterdam, 25 November 2005), 4.

¹²⁴ “Cinema Context”, accessed March 31, 2019, <http://cinemacontext.nl/>.

¹²⁵ K. Dibbets, “Cinema Context and the genes of film history,” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 8, no. 3 (September 2010): 337. For a detailed review of “Cinema Context” see J. Noordegraaf, K. Lotze and J. Boter, “Writing Cinema Histories with Digital Databases: The Case of Cinema Context,” *Tijdschrift voor mediageschiedenis* 21, no. 1(2018): 106-126.

¹²⁶ From my own inquiries in 2012 with public authorities in Antwerp I learned that they made barely use of GIS and where they did, it was only in a very limited way. In addition the maps which were available have restricted access (“Geoloketten: Toegang en gebruik,” Provincie Antwerpen, accessed Oktober 3, 2012, http://www.provant.be/bestuur/grondgebied/gis/geoloketten/Toegang_en_gebruik.jsp).

¹²⁷ J. Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map: Using GIS to Explore the Spatiality of Cinema,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, eds. R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 67.

¹²⁸ See, for example, R. Allen, “Getting to Going to the Show,” *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 8, no. 3 (September 2010): 275 note 1; M. Vélez-Serna, “Film Distribution in Scotland Before 1918,” (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2012), 39; D. Verhoeven, “New Cinema History and the Computational Turn,” (WCCA 2012: Beyond Art, Beyond Humanities, Beyond technologies: A New Creativity. World Congress of Communication and the Arts Conference

Economic and industrial film histories

In order to tackle the bias for great events and great persons in film history, Allen and Gomery proposed two possible alternatives for traditional approaches to economic history: Marxist critique and industrial analysis.¹²⁹ Two of the most prominent early examples of a (neo-)Marxist approach to film history are Peter Bächlin's *Film als Ware* (1947, published in 1975) and *The International Film Industry* by Thomas Guback (1969).

Film als Ware was a dissertation in which Bächlin examined how film as mass product was shaped by political and economic conditions during the first fifty years of its existence, particularly in the US and Germany. Following an investigation of the economic historical development of film, in the second part Bächlin provides a thorough exploration of film as mass product from a political-economy (Marxist) perspective, spanning aspects of financing, competition, the relationship between production, distribution and consumption, as well as processes of concentration and monopoly.¹³⁰ Apart from the rigorous Marxist conclusions drawn from that, Bächlin's consideration of production, distribution and consumption as three interdependent constituents of a general economic process has become highly valuable for film historical approaches in the last decades. It was also the basis for Bächlin's harsh criticism of the capitalist film industry, as this industry implicitly discouraged the production, distribution and consumption of artistically more qualitative films, by catering to the demand of the masses for the creations of illusory worlds. Hence Bächlin's conclusion that a change of the conditions of film production, content and aesthetics necessitates a change in the living conditions and mental needs of the broadest segment of film consumers.¹³¹

More than twenty years after Bächlin defended his groundbreaking thesis, Guback published his equally eminent work *The International Film Industry. Western Europe and America since 1945*. Similarly to Bächlin, but much less overtly Marxist, Guback stressed that "in a capitalist-oriented economy, film making is a business".¹³² Guback profoundly explored the relationship between US and Western-European film industry for the first postwar decades, by concentrating on political and economic processes. Drawing on extensive empirical source material and oral testimonies collected

Proceedings. COPEC, Portugal, 2012); P. Ercole, D. Treveri Gennari and C. O'Rawe, "Mapping Cinema Memories: Emotional Geographies of Cinemagoing in Rome in the 1950s," *Memory Studies* 10, no. 1 (2017): 74 note 4. For further examples see HoMER Network, "HoMER projects," accessed April 8, 2019, <http://homernetwork.org/dhp-projects/homer-projects-2/>.

¹²⁹ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 134.

¹³⁰ P. Bächlin, *Der Film als Ware* (Frankfurt a.M.: Athenäum Fischer, 1975), 83. His economic analysis of the film industry was based on the Marxist proposition that production, distribution and consumption constitute all elements of a totality and mutually influence one another.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 210-211.

¹³² T. Guback, *The International Film Industry: Western Europe and America Since 1945* (Bloomington/London: Indiana University Press, 1969), 7.

during a two year stay in Europe, he related issues of film export and import to postwar politics and their impact on national film policies and cultures, not only for the bigger film nations such as France, Italy and Germany, but he also provided compelling insights into the film cultures of smaller nations, including Belgium. He concluded that the film industries on both sides of the Atlantic had been economically, politically and culturally internationalized. According to Guback, this process of internationalization lead to a certain degree of homogeneity in film supply, “blurring the differences which are the sharp edges of distinct cultures”, since international films have to appeal “to most people in most places”.¹³³ While Guback admits that universal favorites had been made before (for example, Chaplin films or Italian neo-realist films), they appealed to human sensitivity and represented forms of cultural exchange. More recent films, however, deflected attention from reality and were “anti-culture”.¹³⁴ Here, Guback's aversion to capitalist mass culture echoes that of Bächlin (whom he did not mention once), but the conclusions were derived in different ways. While Bächlin agitated predominantly from a Marxist view and used the film industry as an example of the viciousness of capitalism, Guback's reflection rather arose from questions pertaining to American political, economic and cultural hegemony and the danger of cultural homogeneity.

Guback has influenced a number of film scholars who approached film history from a political economy perspective. One of them is Janet Wasko, who (together with Toby Miller) is one of the most prominent representatives today of political economy approaches drawing on the works of Guback. As Wasko's mentor, Guback more or less set the tone in his foreword to her renowned work from 1982, *Movies and Money. Financing the American Industry*. Here, based on an impressive number of detailed case studies, Wasko explored the historical relationship between financial institutions and the American film industry. She concluded that although the influence of banks on the film industry varied throughout the examined period (early cinema up until the 1970s), it was structural through a combination of relationships and “it is through the *totality* of these complex and ongoing relationships that have been built over the years [...] that the potential for the exercise of power has been made possible.”¹³⁵

Bächlin's strong emphasis on the collective nature of capitalist film production and consumption, perfectly illustrates Allen and Gomery's 1985 motivation for considering Marxist critique as a potential challenge to event history and great man theory.¹³⁶ While they praised Marxist approaches to economic film history for principally asking the right questions (for example,

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 198-199. “Their shallowness and cardboard characters are camouflaged with dazzling colors, wide screens, and directorial slickness.”

¹³⁵ J. Wasko, *Movies and Money. Financing the American Film Industry*, (Norwood NJ: Ablex, 1982), 216.

¹³⁶ Bächlin, *Der Film als Ware* 208-209. “Der Film ist, was die technische, ökonomische und geistige Seite sowohl seiner Herstellung wie seiner Auswirkung anbelangt, eine typische *Kollektiverscheinung*.” [Emphasis in source.]

“Why do a small number of corporations in each industry continually receive three-quarters of all profits?”), they were suspicious of their strong political stance and the direct move from economic analysis to questions of ideological formation which in their eyes equals “simple straightforward economic determinism”.¹³⁷ As an alternative to Marxist critique, Allen and Gomery considered industrial analysis as a valuable approach for writing economic film histories.¹³⁸ As I will show in Chapter 4 about the exhibition structures of Antwerp’s exhibition market in general, and Heylen’s cinema Rex group in particular, methods and frameworks for describing industrial markets offer powerful tools for analyzing the behavior of particular businesses as well as the dynamics within these markets from many perspectives.

In 1980 Dibbets offered such a groundbreaking film economic-historical analysis of the Dutch cinema sector from the late 1920s to the 1970s, which served as the foundation of the “Cinema Context” project mentioned earlier. By lack of business data, he studied the process of monopolization of theater chains by examining their connections in the form of exhibitors’ so-called “double functions” (meaning that one person is involved in the exhibition practice of at least two cinemas).¹³⁹ In the face of amounts of collected data, he decided to use cutting-edge computer aided graph theory (today mostly known for its application in network analysis). Dibbets’ study is restricted to questions of film exhibition (and related issues of distribution), yet it offers compelling insights and facts valuable not only for my investigation of Antwerp’s cinema sector. Dibbets also offered more general conclusions which strongly encourage comparative studies.¹⁴⁰ One such question would be the link between the situation of the national cinema sector and its shape (monopoly, oligopoly, pure competition...). Dibbets showed, for example, that in the postwar heydays of cinema, the expansion of cinema business was almost exclusively the result of expansion of powerful exhibitors with more than one theater. He also demonstrated that the growth of the bigger theater chains hardly contributed to an increase of cinemas on a national level, since cinemas were only redistributed within the cinema sector.¹⁴¹

What all these economic histories of the film industry have in common, is that they consider film business first and foremost as business, thereby shifting attention from glamorous Hollywood legends to the daily life practices and processes involved in any kind of industry. In the introduction to the special edition of *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis (TMG, Journal for Media History)* titled “Het filmbedrijf en de markt” (“The film industry and the market”), Judith Thissen deplored the

¹³⁷ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 135-136.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 138ff.

¹³⁹ K. Dibbets, “Bioscoopketens in Nederland. Economische concentratie en geografische spreiding van een bedrijfstak, 1928-1977,” (MA thesis, University of Amsterdam, 1980). 9, 10.

¹⁴⁰ Unfortunately, Dibbets’ thesis has not been widely accessible, since it was written in Dutch and has never been translated into English.

¹⁴¹ Dibbets, “Bioscoopketens,” 72, 99.

neglect of economic problems in traditional film history. While she praised new film history for reviving scholarly attention to technological change in combination with economic issues, she also observed a general lack of interest in film as consumer good and in the exhibitor as entrepreneur.¹⁴²

Thissen argued that cultural economics has a lot to offer for economic film historians:

As most contributions show, the market is not only a commercial space where price arrangements between suppliers and customers are made, but it is also a social phenomenon, where processes of making meaning play important roles. Just as in other creative industries, socio-cultural factors highly influence business processes in the film industry and it is exactly the interdependence of economy and culture which makes the market as an interesting point of departure for a history of film as consumer good.¹⁴³

William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson made a similar point by calling for a greater attention to questions of business and managerial issues:

Cinema as a business, as a civic partner, would be subject to the rationalizing discourses of fiscal risk reduction (fire, health, property value) rather than the moral imperatives of soul saving or taste elevating. More specifically, these [professional and managerial] groups defined the material conditions of cinema exhibition, regulating such aspects as seating (materials, size, location), ventilation, temperature and humidity levels, seating capacity, light levels, operating times, as well as the age and sometimes even the ethnicity of the audience.¹⁴⁴

Although Uricchio and Pearson primarily refer to the early nickelodeon era and the question of social control over cinema patrons, their line of argument is equally productive in a broader context and for later periods of cinema history.¹⁴⁵

Ian Christie underlined that although “new empirically-minded cinema studies needs to be prepared to learn from and to interact with other disciplines” (especially economic history), all these pioneering studies written in the 1940s have long been forgotten, because they were not considered worthwhile by the theory minded film historians of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, Staiger points out that although industrial market research in the film business that has been conducted since the 1910s and that by the 1920s larger movie companies had established internal departments (and/or external contracts) for market research, little of this has been applied for writing cinema history. In

¹⁴² Thissen, “Filmgeschiedenis tussen cultuur en economie,” 4, 5, 7.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 4, 7 [my translation]. This special edition of *TMG* (in Dutch) brings together contributions that weave together film history with questions of film policy, taxes, press discourse as well as local and global business strategies pertaining to film distribution and exhibition.

¹⁴⁴ W. Uricchio and R. E. Pearson, “Dialogue: Manhattan's Nickelodeons. New York? New York!” *Cinema Journal* 36, no. 4 (1997): 101.

¹⁴⁵ This assumption was more or less confirmed by Uricchio and Pearson when they proceeded: “The implementation of the technologies of social control, while inherently repressive and always historically determined in terms of which class values they privilege, are not intrinsic to capitalism or bourgeoisification and can be found throughout the ages and across ideological divides.” (Uricchio and Pearson, “Dialogue,” 101.)

¹⁴⁶ I. Christie, “‘Just the Facts, M'am?’ A Short History of Ambivalence Towards Empiricism in Cinema Studies,” *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2006): 71, 69.

addition, although, according to Staiger, audience research is one of the few instances in film studies where industry and academia proved a happily married couple, unfortunately this has not been the case for historical questions.¹⁴⁷

Different from most of the studies mentioned above, which approached film history from a political economy and/or macro-level perspective, in this thesis, film historical change is analyzed on a micro level, focusing on one particular company, the Rex cinema group, in order to be able to disclose the particularities of Antwerp's cinema history layer by layer. I will examine this cinema group by drawing on insights from the specific historical branch of business history. According to business historian Joachim Bläsing, business history is an inductive, empirical approach to history. It is context-based, since the history of one company often makes sense only when compared to other businesses. In addition, historical change of businesses does not take place in isolation, but is influenced by economic, social, political and cultural factors.¹⁴⁸

A specific form of economic analysis within the framework of a business-historical approach to cinema history is historical analysis of film programming. In this thesis, this type of analysis serves at least two different objectives. First, because historical analysis of film programming offers insights into the trajectories of films (as products) through space (from cinema to cinema) and time. These insights (when related to the cinemas' economic features), in turn, can be taken as indicators for the dynamics within a local cinema market, as they provide clues for the degree of product exchange between exhibitors and for cooperation between different players on the local cinema market (exhibitors as well as distributors). Furthermore, programming analysis allows insights in the screen times of each individual film, thereby introducing "time into the measurement of success and popularity, a dimension lost in the archives of box-office data."¹⁴⁹ A clear picture of the supply of films in each individual cinema allows conclusions about the cinema's profiles in terms of film programming, which in turn can be taken as an indication for audiences' demands and tastes and how this changed over time.

The points of critiques concerning the status of economic approaches to film history that were mentioned above underline the need for interdisciplinary collaboration. Recent renown scholars, amongst which Gerben Bakker, John Sedgwick and Michael Pokorny, and Arthur de Vany, who do approach film history from the perspectives of economics all have an economic background.¹⁵⁰ Thissen's point that we can best combine economic and social approaches to film

¹⁴⁷ Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 35, 37.

¹⁴⁸ J. F. E. Bläsing, *Hoofdlijnen van de moderne bedrijfsgeschiedenis* (Leiden, Antwerpen: Martinus Nijhoff, 1990), 66-67.

¹⁴⁹ Dibbets, "Cinema Context," 341.

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, G. Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised: The Emergence of the International Film Industry, 1890-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); J. Sedgwick and M. Pokorny, *An Economic History of Film* (London: Routledge, 2005); A. De Vany, *Hollywood Economics. How Extreme Uncertainty Shapes the Film Industry* (London/New York: Routledge, 2004).

history mirrors the critique Allen and Gomery made in 1985, that industrial analysis' narrow focus on economic factors results in exclusion of sociological or ideological variables, making it truly useful only in combination with other histories, particularly social history.¹⁵¹

Towards a “social turn” in film and cinema history

Gomery's comprehensive publication *Shared Pleasures* (published in 1992) was in fact doing that.¹⁵² *Shared Pleasures* represented in many ways what new cinema history is explicitly promoting: it is interdisciplinary in the combination of business history with, amongst others, urban geography, social history and media history; it is a combination of empirical micro-level research with macro-level observations; it focuses on the little men and everyday life practices of decision making involved in show business, rather than on the great people (directors, stars, producers). Most and foremost Gomery fascinatingly wove together industry and social change: “I argue that the economic structure and behavior of an industry often leads to important social change. Such is the case with moviegoing. [...] Although *Shared Pleasures* does not set out to fashion a social history of moviegoing, it will lay out the social implications of the industrial basis of moviegoing.”¹⁵³ Yet *Shared Pleasures* echoes the agenda of *new cinema history* in still another way: by deemphasizing the role of masterpieces and by putting the non-canonical films in the spotlight. Gomery himself considered *Shared Pleasures* the additional work to *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* called for by Bordwell, Staiger and Thompson.¹⁵⁴ Next to the link between industry and social change, Gomery clearly demonstrated the close tie between industrial and technological change in general.

This is important, as event history coalesces in technological determinism when, according to Allen and Gomery, “[t]he great inventors are celebrated for contributing to technological advancement of the cinema, and then another set of great individuals take the stage of film history – those who saw the possibilities inherent in technological change and came closest to ‘fulfilling the promise’ in that potential.”¹⁵⁵ Allen and Gomery saw the potential of technological film history rather in the exploration of the economics of technical change, broadening the scope beyond “the historical moment of technological discovery [to include] the events leading up to and following from it as well”.¹⁵⁶ Rather than focusing on famous inventors and their inventions they found it more useful to

¹⁵¹ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 150.

¹⁵² See also the comment by Bordwell cited in D. Gomery, *Shared Pleasures. A History of Movie Presentation in the United States*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), xii.

¹⁵³ Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, xviii.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xix.

¹⁵⁵ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 113.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 114-115, 124.

know about the obstacles and the struggles that had to be overcome for something to be invented and/or which other technological possibilities were available at particular moments.¹⁵⁷ *Shared Pleasures* devoted a whole part on technological changes and their socio-economic contexts. In doing so Gomery offered a compelling analysis of the development of both the film and television industry, not necessarily as rivals, but stressing their interdependency: "Television did not create a whole new industry, rather, television enveloped movie watching and gave rise to more persons watching more movies than any time before television became part of the very fabric of American life."¹⁵⁸

Next to questions of aesthetics, economy and technology, one aspect of social film and cinema history which has been addressed so far here only at the sideline is the audience. When including early film studies in the history of the discipline one comes to the conclusion that film history's interest in cinema's social audiences is not as new as it is traditionally claimed.¹⁵⁹ On the contrary, early film studies were especially interested in the social aspects of film reception - more particularly the political and moral impact of film on its audience. This interest has been lost, however, with the institutionalization of the discipline and the increased role of film theory in the 1960s and 1970s. With the dwindling of theory, the growing attention for ordinary people became manifest especially in the ever-increasing interest in the various contexts of practices of moviegoing and film reception, and cinema's social audiences in the past two decades.¹⁶⁰

Above I have already mentioned Abel's article "Don't know much about history" (1994), where he proposed to study the "intersection of cinema with a specific referential body of [historical] social relations and the construction of particular social subjectivities."¹⁶¹ His motivation for emphasizing the social aspect of film consumption was that "within those exhibition venues, the 'social text' of the audiences (and their desires and interests) varied considerably from location to location and over short and long periods of time."¹⁶² The questions Abel in which was interested very much resemble those of Allen: "Who actually went to the cinemas, where and when, according to

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 113.

¹⁵⁸ Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, xxi-xxii.

¹⁵⁹ L. Grieveson and H. Wasson, "The Academy and Motion Pictures," in *Inventing Film Studies*, eds. L. Grieveson and H. Wasson (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2008), xvi.

¹⁶⁰ As is already suggested in its title, the edited volume *Going to the Movies. Hollywood and the Social Experiences of Cinema* by Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes and Robert C. Allen, is an explicit collection of case studies and film-historical reflections that demonstrate the relevance of social history for film-historical inquiry (R. Maltby, M. Stokes and R. Allen, *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of the Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007). More particularly, see, for example, on female audiences J. Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood and Femal Spectatorship*, (London: Routledge, 1994); on black audiences R.C. Allen, "Relocating American Film History. The 'Problem' of the Empirical," *Cultural Studies* 20, no. 1 (2006); A. Knight, "Searching for the Apollo. Black Moviegoing and its Contexts in the Small-Town US South," in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 226-242; on class D. Biltereyst, P. Meers and L. van de Vijver, "Social Class, Experiences of Distinction and Cinema in Postwar Ghent," in *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 101-124.

¹⁶¹ Abel, "Don't know much," 112 [my emphasis].

¹⁶² Ibid., 113.

what social categories, and for what reasons? In the practice of everyday life, what determined their specific 'choices' of reading strategy? What use-value did 'going to the cinema' as well as seeing individual films have for them?"¹⁶³ It seems surprising then, that only ten years later, in his contribution to *Cinema Journal's* "In Focus" series dedicated to reflections on the status quo of film history, Abel criticized "Allen and his supporters" for engaging in social and cultural history more than in cinema history.¹⁶⁴

In another contribution to the same "In Focus" series in *Cinema Journal*, Steven J. Ross suggested a broadening of the "idea of who constitutes 'the audience' and the arenas in which 'reception' occurs".¹⁶⁵ He continued by providing as examples the more "varied and politically engaged 'audiences' as gossip columnists, government agencies, civic groups, censorship boards [...]" and includes as sources "oral histories of movie industry personnel, and the archival collections of star activists and industry leaders".¹⁶⁶

The "social turn" away from great individuals and events in film and cinema history, towards social interaction and more inclusive historical accounts of cinema's audiences manifested itself in the works of film scholars such as Jackey Stacey, Janet Staiger, Jane Gaines and Annette Kuhn. Originating in 1970s feminist theory of spectatorship (particularly Laura Mulvey's highly influential article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", a semiotic psycho-analytic analysis of film reception), more recent work by, for example, Staiger, Stacey and Kuhn (all discussed below), has changed the conception of audiences as abstract theoretical constructs towards cinemas' social audiences, by putting the moment of film reception in historical perspective.¹⁶⁷

In *Interpreting Films* (1992) Staiger proposed a "historical materialist" approach to reception study, which "assumes an interaction among context, text, and individual" and which traced the historically and socially available interpretive strategies.¹⁶⁸ Staiger moved away from traditional text-activated models of reception processes towards a "context-activated" model.¹⁶⁹ Reception then, is shaped by the particular subject position of each member of the audience, which in turn is determined by social relations based on categories such as class, race, gender, age etc.¹⁷⁰ These social categories, however, are neither mutually exclusive, nor additive. On the contrary, as Staiger

¹⁶³ Ibid. Compare, for example, R. C. Allen, "From Exhibition to Reception: Reflections on the Audience in Film History," *Screen* 31, no. 4 (1990): 348.

¹⁶⁴ Abel, "'History Can Work for You,'" 108.

¹⁶⁵ S. J. Ross, "Jargon and the Crisis of Readability: Methodology, Language, and the Future of Film History," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004), 131.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 132.

¹⁶⁷ L. Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1975): 6-18.

¹⁶⁸ J. Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 79, 80.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 210.

formulated it more than a decade later, “they are interlocking”.¹⁷¹ This heterogeneity of identities has been approached only recently as “intersectional analysis”.¹⁷² It has been crucial for the understanding of issues of identity, in the sense that social phenomena as well as individual acts (such as watching films) cannot be properly explained by reducing them to one type of identity, but by exploring how the different identities are organized.

A different approach to the framing of historical audiences and historical reception was chosen by Stacey for *Star Gazing* (1994). She brought together feminist film theory (particularly psychoanalysis) traditionally offering text-based approaches to spectatorship, and cultural studies, particularly informed by television studies' notion of social audience.¹⁷³ Based on analysis of historical letters and questionnaires, and new interviews with actual cinemagoers, Stacey concluded that cinemagoing reached beyond the pleasure of the text and included the pleasures of the “ritualised night out” as well as the material pleasures of cinema.¹⁷⁴

This was also one of the findings of Kuhn, who approached cinema history from an ethnohistorical perspective in her oral history study of British cinema going in the 1930s. Although she focused on the very act of reception, meaning the specific moment “of the reception and consumption of the films”, she came to the conclusion (like Stacey, before her) that individual films mattered less than the act of cinemagoing.¹⁷⁵ Rather than telling the stories of masterpieces and the great film people, cinema memories were much more structured along clear geographical lines. Furthermore, Kuhn reflected on the differences between the film studies approach to audience, which considers the spectator as a theoretical construct, versus the cultural studies approach, studying “the flesh and blood human beings who go to cinema to see films”.¹⁷⁶ She stressed that the danger of this division lay in “incomplete accounts of media texts and their consumption.”¹⁷⁷ She suggested as a possible solution to treat text and context alike as discursive practices. This is in line with Staiger's approach, which however “offers no access to the historical social audience”, as ethnographic approaches would.¹⁷⁸

Kuhn's and Stacey's findings that the film text disappears or is strongly colored by personal memories lead them to ask: “what [...] is the place of the film text in historical reception studies which use the memories of cinema-goers as their source materials?”.¹⁷⁹ It is a question that also fostered new cinema historians' call for more contextual approaches, rather than film centered ones.

¹⁷¹ Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 142.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 142-143.

¹⁷³ Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 47-48.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁷⁵ A. Kuhn, *An Everyday Magic: Cinema and Cultural Memory* (New York: Tauris, 2002), 3.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4. See also Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 24, 35.

¹⁷⁷ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 4.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁷⁹ Kuhn and Stacey, “Screen Histories,” 7.

Linked to this, in its aspirations for total history, new cinema history has explicitly shifted its attention away from the isolated act of film consumption towards everyday life practices of moviegoing as framed by differing social, political and economic contexts.

By way of concluding this part on film historians' increased aspirations for total history, two things become clear. First, the shift from great men to ordinary people is not linear and one form of historical inquiry does not simply replace the other. Biographies of great men and histories of great events are still being written by the day. Also, regular top something polls – with the decennial *Sight & Sound* critics poll as the most prestigious example – demonstrate that we keep cherishing our canons.¹⁸⁰ Second, nor is it an absolute shift: attending to ordinary people does not necessarily require the exclusion of the great men of history (and vice versa), a point expressed most elegantly by Paul Thompson. Although he was one of the pioneers of the bottom up approach to oral history (which will be dealt with extensively in Chapter 2), he also stressed the importance of juxtaposing statements from both, authorities and ordinary people, instead of simply celebrating “the working class as it is”.¹⁸¹ According to Thompson, “[r]eality is complex and many-sided; and it is a primary merit of oral history that to a much greater extent than most sources it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated.”¹⁸² It is in this light that this thesis' focus on one particular key player in Antwerp's cinema history must be understood. Although the focus on Heylen and his cinema group might be evocative of the practice of great men theory, the emphasis on the contextual (spatial, economic and social) factors that shaped cinemagoing in Antwerp throughout the twentieth century serve as a framework from which his exhibition (and later distribution) practices are explored.

1.2. The shift from center to margins

Inherent in aspirations for writing total history of film was a broadening of topics and the inclusion of hitherto neglected or forgotten, “marginal” topics. While margin literally means edge, according to de Certeau, marginality is not automatically limited to minority groups. Instead, it can become “massive and pervasive”, when the “cultural activity of the non-producers of culture [...] remains the only one possible for all those who nevertheless buy and pay for the showy products through which a productivist economy articulates itself. Marginality is becoming universal. A marginal group has now

¹⁸⁰ For the most recent poll see British Film Institute, “2018 in cinema: all our coverage,” Accessed May 6, 2019, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/sight-sound-magazine/polls-surveys/annual-round-ups/2018-cinema-all-our-coverage>.

¹⁸¹ P. Thompson, “The Voice of the Past: Oral History,” extracted from the 1988 ed, in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 24, 27.

¹⁸² Thompson, “The Voice of the Past,” 24.

become a silent majority.”¹⁸³ Without getting into details of de Certeau's discussion about power inequalities, it should be clear that a shift from center to margin does not necessarily mean the exclusion of all things belonging to a majority. In her definition of *minority*, Staiger, for example, highlights the aspect of *disadvantage* as being characteristic: minority groups are groups who perceive themselves as disadvantaged either as a group or as individuals. Most commonly researched are identity groups based on features such as gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and class.¹⁸⁴

However, next to questions of identity, the shift from center to margin is also observable in relation to geography (more particular the center-periphery debate) as well as to the industry. These three aspects relating to marginal (or neglected) topics will be addressed in the following subparagraphs.

1.2.1. Increased attention to minorities

In the course of the first half of the twentieth century, the atrocities of two world wars and the end of colonial empires had increased the awareness of the negative sides of economic growth and enlightenment and had heightened the consciousness of a crisis in modern society and culture. More attention was paid to (histories of) non-Western peoples, which led to an ever increasing body of work done on, as well as in, non-Western countries.¹⁸⁵

According to historian Peter Stearns, it was particularly in the middle of the twentieth century that “a few ambitious historians began [...] sketching a global, rather than national or at most regional, framework for the human experience.”¹⁸⁶ The increased interest in world history was partly inspired by Marxism: “Marxist ideology had always set forth a global vision, though it long focused on the emergence of Western capitalism.”¹⁸⁷ The leading social historian within the Bielefeld school Jürgen Kocka, on the other hand, observed in his analysis of conferences and organizations devoted

¹⁸³ De Certeau, *Everyday Life*, xvii.

¹⁸⁴ Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 139.

¹⁸⁵ According to historian Peter N. Stearns, the interest in the history of the world reaches back as far as Antiquity, but it has only seen a major uplift in the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century (Stearns, *World History*, 6-11). The earliest “world historians” were no full world historians by contemporary standards for the practical reason that they did not know what exactly comprised the world, “but their goal was wide ranging”. However, nineteenth century “and its fascination with nationalism, seriously disrupted what might otherwise have been a reasonably natural trend”. This “narrowing of the history mission” was further propelled by another nineteenth century development, “the growing interest in a heavily fact-based, elaborately researched scholarly presentation” of the past as it really was along with a preferred reliance on archival sources. The “new historical precision encouraged a choice of somewhat more limited topics”, that is to say politics. It had the ironic result that attention decreased for world history in the nineteenth and twentieth century, while especially then contacts between societies were accelerating.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

to history, amongst other things, a broad range of non-European and non-Western topics before World War II. Yet he also stated that although they were included from the start and despite their gaining significance, non-Western topics remained in the background until the 1980s. It was only after the collapse of communism that the center of attention moved from the Marxist-non-Marxist divide towards attention for relations between Western and non-Western parts of the world.¹⁸⁸

Such “centrifugal historiography” was complemented with the writing of history from below to explore the “neglected depths of societies”.¹⁸⁹ This was particularly the case for the turn of the *Annales* historians to anthropology, which led to its alternative designation *historique anthropologique*. According to historian Alan Knight, the anthropological turn in history was a logical outcome of the historian's growing interest on “small communities and their inner cultural and symbolic life”.¹⁹⁰ In turn, this fits Highmore's claim of anthropology being the “academic arena most attentive to everyday life”.¹⁹¹

Although, initially, Marxist theory had successfully raised concerns over power inequalities between the working class and the ruling class, according to Iggers, in the second half of the twentieth century “Marxist conceptions of class appeared inadequate in an environment that was increasingly aware of other divisions such as gender, race, ethnicity, and life style”.¹⁹² Cultural studies has played a great role in this by raising awareness for questions of identity. Cultural studies’ “focus on individuals’ differences, usually premised as socially constructed through economic, cultural, or social positioning” has played a decisive part particularly in audience and reception studies, where the main interest lies in the investigation of “cognitive relations between individuals and media texts”.¹⁹³ Until the 1980s, most issues on identity of audiences were covered by film theory (particularly feminist film theory) and/or television studies, not film history. While class, for instance, “probably was the first major identity for scholarly investigation,” according to Staiger “the specificity of race/ethnic minority interpretations has produced extensive theorizing [... which] has been one of the richest contributions to media reception studies.”¹⁹⁴

The importance of racial discourse in film and cinema history was also emphasized by Allen, at least for the American South, where “race – not class, gender, ethnicity, or immigration status –

¹⁸⁸ J. Kocka, “Transnational Approaches to Historical Sciences in the Twentieth century: International Historical Congresses and Organizations,” in *The Many Faces of Clío. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography*, edited by E. Q. Wang and F. L. Fillafer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 177, 180-182.

¹⁸⁹ A. Knight, “Latin America,” in *Companion to Historiography*, edited by M. Bentley, (London/New York, Routledge, 1997), 739. Robert Allen also called the history he proposes “centrifugal” (R. C. Allen, “Reimagining the History of the Experience of Cinema in a Post-Moviegoing Age,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Riley-Blackwell, 2011), 56).

¹⁹⁰ Knight, “Latin America,” 747. According to Highmore, the “academic arena most attentive to everyday life” is anthropology (or its older cognate ethnology). Highmore, *Everyday Life Reader*, 139.

¹⁹¹ Highmore, *Everyday Life Reader*, 139.

¹⁹² Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 6-7.

¹⁹³ Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 75, 87.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 162, 160-161.

was the principle social axis along which the experience of moviegoing was organised [...].”¹⁹⁵ Since his statement in 1990, that “[w]e have just begun to uncover the history of black exhibition in the U.S.,” Allen has extensively written about this topic.¹⁹⁶ Based on many years of research, he has shown, for example, that although moviegoing was embedded in everyday practices of Blacks in the American South, it was not unproblematic, since “playing the role of a moviegoer involved a complex and unpredictable social negotiation that took place outside of the theatre as well as inside, before a ticket was purchased as well as while the movies on the programme were shown”.¹⁹⁷

Two years after Allen’s statement, in 1992, Gregory A. Waller’s published his case study of black moviegoing and “colored” theatres in Lexington, Kentucky, and Gomery dedicated a chapter in *Shared Pleasures* to black moviegoing, from its beginnings until 1989.¹⁹⁸ Gomery’s rather pessimist view on early moviegoing for African Americans was nuanced by Arthur Knight about twenty years later. Based on his search for the allegedly “Negro theater” Apollo, Knight suggested that for African Americans moviegoing might have played a much bigger role in their daily lives than anticipated.¹⁹⁹ Just as Allen’s work on moviegoing in the American South, Arthur Knight demonstrates that the absence of traces left on Black moviegoing does not necessarily mean that African Americans never went to the movies in the first place.²⁰⁰ Also, based on evidence he did find on regular and increasing access for African Americans to the cinema in the US South, Knight concludes that cinemagoing was a normal part of their lives.²⁰¹ While Knight acknowledges the findings of, for example, Stacey and Kuhn, that film did not matter to audiences that much, he wonders if this is also the case for marginalized segments of the audience. Particularly in relation to African American activism, cinema going experiences might have been critically shaped by what was shown on screen.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ Allen, “The place of space in film history,” 18.

¹⁹⁶ Allen, “Relocating,” 351. See, for example, Allen, “The place of space in film history;” Allen, “Reimagining;” as well as R. C. Allen, “Race, Region, and Rusticity: Relocating U.S. Film History,” in *Going to the Movies. Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, edited by R. Maltby, M. Stokes and R. C. Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 25-44; R. C. Allen, “Decentering Historical Audience Studies: A Modest Proposal,” in *Hollywood in the Neighborhood: Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, edited by K. Seeley-Fuller (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008), 20-33.

¹⁹⁷ Allen, “Reimagining,” 53.

¹⁹⁸ G. A. Waller, “Another Audience: Black Moviegoing, 1907-16,” *Cinema Journal* 31, no. 2 (1992): 3-25; Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 155-170.

¹⁹⁹ Knight, “Searching for the Apollo,” 227, 228.

²⁰⁰ This is a recurrent observation also by other film scholars’ investigations of race in relation to experiences of cinemagoing. Next to the publications already mentioned in the course of this paragraph, see also for example, C. Regester, “From the Buzzard’s Roost: Black Moviegoing in Durham and Other North Carolina Cities during the Early Period of American Cinema,” *Film History* 17, no. 1 (2005): 113-124; J. M. Gaines, “The White in the Race Movie Audience,” in *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, edited by R. Maltby, M. Stokes and R. Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 60-75; D. J. Garcia, “Subversive Sounds: Ethnic Spectatorship and Boston’s Nickelodeon Theatres, 1907-1914,” *Film History* 19, no. 3 (2007): 213-227.

²⁰¹ Knight, “Searching for the Apollo,” 228.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 238. See also Waller, “Another Audience.”

In the wake of the *feminist* wave, even more extensive work has been done on female spectatorship, some of which on historical audiences.²⁰³ One of the most groundbreaking works in this respect was *Star Gazing* by Stacey (discussed above in relation to the social turn in film history). Drawing on historical letters and questionnaires she focused on escapism through, identification with, and consumption of, film stars as key aspects of female spectatorship, in order to investigate the role of film stars in women's experience and cinemagoing memories in Great Britain during and after World War II. In doing so she departed from psychoanalytic approaches that were then dominating the field of feminist film studies.²⁰⁴

While acknowledging the productive contributions of feminist film theory to the conceptualization of female spectatorship, however, Gaines criticized feminist theoreticians' ignorance of the powerful status of women in early film industry: "We would want to know why 1970s feminist film theory explained symbolic subjugation to men but not the power some women in the early industry exercised over others."²⁰⁵ One of the reasons for the fact that comparatively little work has been published about women directors and producers, is commonly attributed to the problematic question of authorship in the film industry. Anthony Slide, in his search for the real numbers of early women filmmakers, encountered additional problems such as the use of pseudonyms (sometimes unisexual names, or male names) by female film makers, or the difficult question of measuring the input of spouses (both ways).²⁰⁶

The growing interest in specific – hitherto largely neglected – segments of the population is praiseworthy in its attempt of writing certain segments of audiences back into film and cinema history. More work is required, however, in tackling the question of multiple identities that interlock rather than simply add up (for example, age, religion, nationality and political conviction). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, intersectional analysis offers a vital framework, by addressing the ways of how different identities are at work and relate in different situations.²⁰⁷ A substantial number of studies have demonstrated the fruitfulness of such approaches, particularly with respect to the questions of gender, class and ethnicity.²⁰⁸

²⁰³ See, for example, Miriam Hansen's conclusion in her study of spectatorship in the silent film era about the cinemas' role as a socially transitional space for working class women and providing "the *formal* conditions for an alternative public sphere" (M. Hansen, *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press, 1991), 90-125).

²⁰⁴ Stacey, *Star Gazing*.

²⁰⁵ J. M. Gaines, "Film History and the Two Presents of Feminist Film Theory," *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004): 114.

²⁰⁶ A. Slide, "Early Women Filmmakers: The Real Numbers," *Film History* 24 (2012): 114-121.

²⁰⁷ Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 142-143.

²⁰⁸ See, for example, Stacey, *Star Gazing*; K. Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan, 1998) as well as many case studies included in Maltby et al., *Going to the Movies*.

1.2.2. From geographical centers to the peripheries

The second aspect related to a trend towards the inclusion of marginal topics concerns the geographical shift from center to margin. This is observable in film and cinema historiography on several levels: on a global level, on a trans- and international level, as well as on a national and regional level.

First, regarding the global level, traditional film history has largely focused on the West, and more specifically on Hollywood and (its relation to) Western-Europe. There are many examples of “global” or international introductory film histories that still center on Hollywood and Europe, with comparatively little space left for film making in other parts of the world. Yet, although the relative shares of attention for film making outside of Hollywood and Europe are still moderate, there is a clear tendency towards an increase in contributions with every revised edition.²⁰⁹ In addition, especially since the 1990s quite a great deal of film historical inquiry increasingly moved away from Hollywood and (its tensions with) Western-Europe to include work on non-Western cinemas, predominantly in Asia, Africa and the former Eastern Bloc.²¹⁰ The increased engagement with cinemas outside of North America and Europe has heightened the awareness of the so-called non-Western cinemas as being heterogenous, where each cinema culture had its “own distinctive trajectory of cinematic development and concerns” and that they are not static entities but “sites of discursive contestations”.²¹¹ Also, the acknowledgement of the interplay and exchange between the different cinemas has resulted in a gradual fading away of series of binaries underpinning the traditional discourse on Western and non-Western cinema: the binaries of Westernization and indigenization, modernity and tradition, the global and the local.²¹²

Within the frameworks of the new cinema history approach, there is a growing interest in non-Western, non-Eurocentric cinema in relation to issues of economics, politics, aesthetics, institutions, technology, and cultural discourse, as it had been called for by, for example, Wimal Dissanayake in 1998, in his contribution to the *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, titled “Issues in World Cinema”.²¹³ This trend in new cinema history towards increased attention is discernible, for example,

²⁰⁹ See, for example, K. Thompson and D. Bordwell, *Film History. An Introduction*, 3rd revised ed. (New York, McGraw Hill, 2009); V. W. Wexman, *A History of Film*, 7th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2010); L. Gianetti and S. Eyman, *Flashback. A Brief History of Film*, 6th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2010); G. Mast and B. F. Kawin, *A Short History of the Movies*, 11th ed. (Boston: Longman, 2011).

²¹⁰ For Bollywood cinema, see V. Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema: Temples of Desire* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002); for African cinema see, for example, M. Diawara, *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992). On former East Bloc countries see, for instance, D. J. Goulding, ed., *Post New Wave Cinema in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989); S. Allan and J. Sandford, eds., *DEFA. East German Cinema, 1946-1992* (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 1999).

²¹¹ W. Dissanayake, “Issues in World Cinema,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, edited by J. Hill and P. C. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 527.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 527.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 533.

in the growing amount of contributions dedicated to non-Western cinemas in general works. While, for example, in the first edited volume explicitly dedicated to new cinema history, *Explorations in New Cinema History* only one case study was dedicated to a non-Western country (Stephen Putnam Hughes on South India), its follow up edition, *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History* (2012) and the recent *Companion to New Cinema History* (2019) both include several contributions on non-Western countries, including Indonesia, Turkey, Czechoslovakia and Mexico.²¹⁴ Also, a dynamic map on the website of the HoMER Network – which represents a great number of scholars whose work can be seen as showcases of new cinema history approaches – shows projects in non-Western countries, including Mexico, Columbia, Brazil and Turkey.²¹⁵

Second, along with this trend towards more attention to non-Western countries, an increased interest in cinemas of smaller nations is observable. The edited volume by Mette Hjort and Duncan Petrie can be considered as one of the first major contributions, bringing together analyses of the cinema histories in twelve smaller countries from all continents.²¹⁶ In addition, new cinema history's explicit encouragement of meso- and micro-historical perspectives on cinema history, has resulted in a large number of case studies from and about other smaller countries, including Belgium, the Netherlands, the former CSSR, Hungary, and Indonesia.²¹⁷

Third, on a national and regional level the focus shifted from metropolises to include non-metropolitan areas. Allen used the term *Gothamcentrism* in relation to film history as the “tendencies to place the metropolis at the center of historical narratives of moviegoing and to encourage the assumption that patterns of movie exhibition and moviegoing found there can be mapped to a greater or lesser degree upon smaller cities and towns in all parts of the United States at any given moment in the history of American cinema.”²¹⁸ In one of his earliest publications, one of the questions in which he was interested was whether “exhibition patterns [varied] from city to city and/or between urban and rural areas”.²¹⁹ Although in this article he still focused on New York, Allen

²¹⁴ S. Putnam Hughes “Silent Film Genre, Exhibition and Audiences in South India,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 295-309; D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby and P. Meers, eds., *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History* (London: Routledge 2012); Biltereyst et al., *The Routledge Companion*.

²¹⁵ See HoMER Network, “HoMER Projects”. In addition, it might be seen as indicative for the direction of new cinema history as a subfield of film history, that the 2019 conference, which was dedicated to theoretical questions of new cinema history, took place in Nassau, The Bahamas. See the corresponding call for papers: HoMER Network, “CfP HoMER Conference 2019 – Nassau: Anchoring Cinema History,” accessed May 6, 2019, <http://homernetwork.org/cfp-homer-conference-2019-nassau-anchoring-cinema-history/>.

²¹⁶ M. Hjort and D. Petrie, eds., *The Cinema of Small Nations* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). The twelve nations include Ireland, Denmark, Iceland, Scotland, Bulgaria, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and New Zealand.

²¹⁷ See Maltby et al. *Explorations* and Biltereyst et al. *The Routledge Companion*.

²¹⁸ Allen, “Decentering,” 21.

²¹⁹ R. C. Allen, “Motion Picture Exhibition in Manhattan 1906-1912: Beyond the Nickelodeon,” *Cinema Journal* 18, no. 2 (1979): 3. In this article Allen dismissed the assumption that nickelodeons were predominantly located in poor working-class areas and were crowded unsanitary places. Allen found that most, but not all of the movie theaters he examined were

was aware of the possible danger of making generalizations based on a study of this city only: “New York might well turn out to be typical only of New York; factors quite alien to the situation there might prove to be decisive elsewhere. What is needed are studies of exhibition in other cities – large and small, polyglot and homogeneous, in all parts of the country.”²²⁰

This point was repeated in a much stronger stance in an article Allen published seventeen years later. This article was a reply to Ben Singer in what had become the famous Allen-Singer debate in *Cinema Journal* in the mid-1990s, a debate that would embrace all together seven contributions (excluding Allen's article from 1979) and span more than two years. Without addressing in depth here all of the points of critique that were brought forward by Allen, Singer as well as other commentators – some points will be addressed elsewhere in this chapter - I would like to concentrate on one particular point made by Allen and Singer on the focus of their study: Manhattan. In reply on Singer's accusations (which were mostly about alleged misinterpretations of data and drawing wrong conclusions) and Singer's alternative findings, Allen cautioned that findings on moviegoing in Manhattan cannot simply be generalized for insights on moviegoing in general: “Just as we cannot map big-city exhibition patterns upon the quite different situations to be found in smaller cities and towns, neither can we assume that the structure of class relations was the same in Keokuk as it was in New York or Chicago.”²²¹ Here, Allen underwrites the statement put forward by Singer admitting that “until further research is undertaken, we have no way of knowing how closely other American cities paralleled the commercial, socioeconomic, and ethnic patterns of the Manhattan nickelodeon boom.”²²²

These contrastive views about the focus on Gotham city while questioning its typicality point to the advantages as well as disadvantages of such a focus. Advantages would be the clear spatial demarcation of the research object (the metropolis) in connection with the relatively easy manageability of the research data. Another advantage would be the relative significant economic role metropolises played for the distribution and exhibition sector.²²³ Yet with regard to this last point we cannot be absolutely sure as long as non-metropolitan cinemagoing has not been explored in-depth. Allen's move (in literally and figuratively sense) away from Manhattan towards the cities and towns of North Carolina not only underlines his commitment to explore the non-metropolitan practices and experiences of cinema, but also brings to light peculiarities and commonalities about non-metropolitan cinemagoing.²²⁴

located in working class neighborhoods. In addition, he rejects the claim that only poor working class people attended the screenings.

²²⁰ Allen, “Motion Picture Exhibition in Manhattan,” 13.

²²¹ R. C. Allen, “Manhattan Myopia; or, Oh! Iowa!” *Cinema Journal* 34, no. 3 (1996): 97.

²²² B. Singer, “Manhattan Nickelodeons: New Data on Audiences and Exhibitors,” *Cinema Journal* 34, no. 3 (1995): 29.

²²³ Allen, “Decentering,” 20; Singer, “New York,” 122-123.

²²⁴ Allen, “Relocating,” 62. See also Allen, “The Place of Space”; Allen, “Decentering;”; Allen, “Reimagining”.

The past two decades have witnessed increased scholarly attention to the study of the social history of cinema in non-metropolitan areas. One important contribution in this respect was Kathryn Fuller-Seeley's edited volume *Hollywood in the Neighborhood* (2008), which brings together a great number of prominent contributions on local cinemagoing, zooming in on issues of film exhibition and reception during the early period of cinema in a "wish to complicate and enrich our understanding of how film and cultural change intersect with and influence each other".²²⁵ The book reflects on many theoretical and methodological issues which will be addressed in connection to the writing of microhistories elsewhere in this chapter. More recently, Judith Thissen and Clemens Zimmermann as well as Daniela Treveri Gennari, Danielle Hipkins, and Catherine O'Rawe, brought together a broad range of case studies that examined the social and economic contexts of film culture beyond the cities, thereby refuting the persistent dichotomy urban versus rural and demonstrating the dynamics and interdependence between centers and periphery.²²⁶

From these points of views, the demand for more attention to the geographical margins is understandable. Nevertheless, it should also be clear that the relationship between center and margin is a relational one. This can be best exemplified by the case of Antwerp that is investigated here. Placed in global perspective, it might be considered as yet another study on cinemagoing culture in the Western hemisphere, but on a transnational level, it contributes to a growing body of studies of smaller nations. A similar ambiguity could be stated with regard to the national level: being the largest city in Belgium, Antwerp could be considered a metropole.²²⁷ Nevertheless, given its economic, social and cultural status as a second-tier city, it occupies a place between the capital city of Brussels and smaller urban and rural locations.

1.2.3. Industry

Closely related to the geographical turn away from the US and its relation with Europe is the shift in focus from the key players in film production and exhibition towards smaller and local actors in the film industry. Traditionally, film and cinema historical inquiry was preoccupied with the dominant mode of film practice and its modes of production (35-mm feature film), exhibition and reception

²²⁵ K. Fuller-Seeley and G. Potamianos, "Introduction. Researching and Writing the History of Local Moviegoing," in *Hollywood in the Neighborhood. Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing*, edited by K. Fuller-Seeley (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 2008), 6.

²²⁶ J. Thissen and C. Zimmermann, eds. *Cinema Beyond the City. Small-Town and Rural Film Culture in Europe* (London: BFI/Palgrave, 2016); Treveri Gennari, D., D. Hipkins and Catherine O'Rawe. Eds, *Rural Cinema Exhibition and Audiences in a Global Context* (Cham: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2018).

²²⁷ According to figures provided by the *Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek* (National Statistical Institute; NIS) during the period of investigation, the number of inhabitants in the city of Antwerp was twice to three times as high as that of the city of Brussels.

(theatrical).²²⁸ In the introduction to *Film History*, for example, Thompson and Bordwell motivated their limited scope “to those realms of filmmaking that are most frequently studied” (meaning theatrical fiction films, documentaries, avantgarde/experimental, animation) and the exclusion of other types of cinema (educational, industrial, scientific films), by arguing that “they play secondary roles in most historians' concerns”.²²⁹

While one cannot deny the impact of, for example the Hollywood studios on the development of the production and exhibition sector, in order to fully understand the workings of the film industry, attention needs also to be paid to independent, local players as important agents in film distribution and exhibition processes. This insight is also reflected in Maltby's call in his programmatic article “On the prospect of writing cinema history from below” that at the center of future microhistories of cinema would be individual cinemas, small chains and the small business men.²³⁰ Several case studies in, for example, Fuller-Seeley's edited volume *Hollywood in the Neighborhood*, Maltby, Stokes and Allen's *Going to the Movies* and Maltby, Biltereyst and Meer's *Explorations in New Cinema History*, demonstrate that macro-perspectives are prone to camouflage power imbalances and shifting sets of relations on local markets.²³¹ They show that in their struggle on the cinema market, local exhibitors were not completely without bargaining power. Studies like these thus give back the agency to the smaller players in the international film industry and also show how research limited to the macro-perspective invites and sustains alleged dichotomies and pigeonholing (for example, the traditional division between production, distribution, exhibition). As I will show in the course of this thesis, the development of Antwerp's cinema culture, its relation to international film markets and the changes it underwent in the second half of the twentieth century are inevitably linked to the growing (and eventually dwindling) power of one particular exhibitor, Georges Heylen, and his cinema group.

²²⁸ For early examples of histories of underground and subversive film see, for example, P. Tyler, *Underground Film. A Critical History* (New York: Grove Press, 1969) and B. Hein, *Film im Underground* (Frankfurt/M et al.: Ullstein, 1971). See Y. Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema. An Introduction* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006) for extensive research on independent filmmaking in the US; E. Schäfer “*Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*: A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959 (Durham et al.: Duke University Press, 1999) on exploitation films. For work on the histories of selected film festivals, see for instance, L. Smith, *Party in a Box. The Story of the Sundance Film Festival* (Layton: Gibbs Smith, 1999), K. Turan, *Sundance to Sarajevo. Film Festivals and the World They Made* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 2002) and M. De Valck, *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007).

²²⁹ Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, 2.

²³⁰ Maltby, “On the prospect,” 91.

²³¹ K. Fuller-Seeley, ed., *Hollywood in the Neighborhood. Historical Case Studies of Local Moviegoing* (Berkeley et al.: University of California Press, 2008); Maltby et al., *Going to the Movies*; Maltby et al., *Explorations in New Cinema History*.

1.3. From grand theorizing to the writing of micro film histories

A last shift to be discussed in this chapter about the historiographical underpinnings of new cinema history is the move away from grand theorizing towards historical inquiry based on micro-level film histories. Grand theory overshadowed film studies since the 1970s, but has also been attacked since about the same time. The increasing disillusionment with grand narratives in film history occurred in a broader paradigm shift in historical inquiry in general and can be linked to the crisis of macrohistory, a crisis which lay at the foundation of a growing interest in microhistory in the 1970s and 1980s.²³² The belief in a coherent historical narrative with great events and persons as its cornerstones became questioned and was gradually replaced by a belief in the existence of multiple histories, in which the many “are not viewed [...] as part of a crowd but as individuals”.²³³

One of grand theory’s most outspoken opponents in film history was Bordwell.²³⁴ His rejection of grand theory was overtly, and partly quite polemically, expressed in his chapter on the “Historical Poetics of Cinema” published in 1989. Published only four years after *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* his *historical poetics* of cinema was meant to serve as framework to analyze and explain cinema by analyzing film texts and explaining how they functioned in historical contexts.²³⁵ Bordwell criticized grand theory by drawing on arguments against what he labeled “SLAB-theory” (based on Saussurean semiotics, Lacanian psychoanalysis, Althusserian Marxism, and Barthesian textual theory). By constructing clear-cut dichotomies, he characterized historical poetics as everything SLAB-theory was not: open-ended and question driven instead of doctrine driven, constituting systematic research, and being considerate of alternative explanations.²³⁶

Rather than analyzing film within the boundaries of fixed theories, Bordwell’s historical poetics was thus described as a call for investigations of the “constructional principles” underlying film form.²³⁷ Bordwell’s “constructional principles” in fact resemble what Allen and Gomery before him had called the “generative mechanisms” responsible for filmic signification and audience response in the past (see Paragraph 1.1.1) – the only substantial difference being that, while

²³² Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 109, 153; J.-J. Meusy, “Local Cinema Histories in France: An overview,” *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2006): 106. As Meusy pointed out, the tradition of microhistory in fact reaches back to previous centuries and was practiced mostly in the form of monographs and biographies of key figures (Meusy, “Local Cinema Histories,” 106). For a comparison between nineteenth and twentieth century microhistory see Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 103. In 1994, Denzin and Lincoln predicted that “[t]he search for grand narratives will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations” (N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, “Introduction: Entering the Field of Qualitative Research,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks et al.: Sage), 11).

²³³ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 103.

²³⁴ According to Andrew, “[c]onfidence in a grand, singular story of film art began to erode in the 1970s” (Andrew, “Film and History,” 178).

²³⁵ Bordwell, “Historical Poetics,” 370-371.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 385-391.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 371.

Bordwell remained focused on film form, Allen and Gomery were also interested in economic, technological, and social aspects of film.²³⁸ In his defense of an exclusive focus on film form, Bordwell rejected topics such as “the economic patterns of film distribution, the growth of teenage audiences in the 1950s, or the ideology of private property” because they would not belong to the “core questions” and were “peripheral” or even “irrelevant”.²³⁹

The alternative provided by Bordwell to grand theory *a priori* reasoning was to engage in middle-level research.²⁴⁰ Middle-level research for him was the most appropriate compromise between “very tightly focused projects, which supposedly lead to steadily accumulating knowledge” and “Grand Theory, where you can't make a move without getting all your abstract doctrines correct beforehand.”²⁴¹ Rather, middle-level research would ask “questions of some scope without deep commitments to broad doctrines, and using the answers to those questions to build hypotheses of greater generality.”²⁴²

In his review of Allen and Gomery's *Film History. Theory and Practice*, Elsaesser also suggested a reduction of scale: “[...] in history one can rarely quantify by any statistically reliable method, but has to remain as specific as possible and always attend to the actual dynamics of *local* phenomena.”²⁴³ Apart from practical advantages (comparatively easy access to, and great variety of, sources) Allen and Gomery stressed the value of small-scale research as potentially fruitful contributions to the existing field of research, since “accumulation of histories can help reshape our thinking on vital questions of economic and social history”.²⁴⁴

The demarcation between meso-, micro- or local level is not clear cut. According to Iggers, microhistory concentrates “on small social units consisting of concrete individuals”.²⁴⁵ Peltonen, however, claimed that conventional interpretations of the microelement (as the one by Iggers I just cited) often focus only on its spatial nature and neglect its temporal aspect: “individuals or small places like villages are automatically assumed to represent the microelement discussed”.²⁴⁶ This way, however, “the fruits of microhistorical methodology” are not exhausted.²⁴⁷ The temporal aspect

²³⁸ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 81-90.

²³⁹ Bordwell, *Poetics*, 23-24. In his 2008 revised edition of “Poetics of Cinema”, the bottom line thus was the same, except that Bordwell formulated his critique slightly more mildly and embraced the examination of cultural aspects more openly than he did twenty years before (Bordwell, *Poetics*, 23, 30ff). Bordwell rightly rejected reflectionist film study (which treats films as reflections of their *Zeitgeist*), since the relation between individual films as products of mass culture and their socio-cultural context of production are much too complex and such causal links difficult to prove (Bordwell, *Poetics*, 30-31).

²⁴⁰ Bordwell, “Contemporary Film Studies,” 3.

²⁴¹ Bordwell, *Poetics*, 21.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 21-22.

²⁴³ Elsaesser, “New Film History,” 248 [my emphasis].

²⁴⁴ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 193.

²⁴⁵ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 14.

²⁴⁶ M. Peltonen, “Clues, Margins, and Monads: The Micro-Macro Link in Historical Research,” *History and Theory* 40, no. 3 (October 2001): 351.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 351.

missing from such readings, can be understood as the relationship of a particular event to a larger context, because it is, for instance, “the collision of an exceptional event with the long historical structure of popular culture”, that “brings into the open structures whose importance is much more difficult, if not impossible, to see in other periods”.²⁴⁸

In this thesis I will refer to such piecemeal approaches as “micro-level research” or “microhistories” meaning research related to small-scale investigation regarding to all three aspects (geographical units, temporal units, social and economic units). In the following two subparagraphs I sketch how the move towards micro-level research gained momentum in the writing of film and cinema histories in particular, and discuss the challenges of linking micro- and macrohistories.

1.3.1. Micro-level film histories

The trend in film history towards microlevel research has gained momentum in the 1980s and it still prevails. In his reflection on the status quo of film history in *Cinema Journal* in 2004, Abel strongly encouraged the writing of local cinema histories “as means to better understand the significance and function of cinema as a far-from monolith cultural institution and practice”.²⁴⁹ Sumiko Higashi commented on Abel's focus on local history, by emphasizing that “specific localities illuminate social processes and cultural change”.²⁵⁰ With regard to new film history, Chapman et al. called for the application of case studies “in order to illuminate the structures and processes that have determined the nature of the medium of film and its social institutions”.²⁵¹ Microlevel research has also been explicitly set on the academic agenda of new cinema history.²⁵²

The evident trend towards small-scale research leaves one with the important question of exactly how micro and macro perspectives are linked, without running the risk of falling into reductionism or aggregation, for instance, by defining the macro level as the sum of its micro elements.²⁵³ Referring to Paul Ricoeur's renowned work *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, cinema historian Jean-Jacques Meusy rightfully pointed out that, “in changing scale, we do not see the same

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 350.

²⁴⁹ Abel, “‘History Can Work for You’,” 108.

²⁵⁰ S. Higashi, “Film History, or a Baedeker Guide to the Historical Turn,” *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 95.

²⁵¹ Chapman et al., “Introduction,” 1-2.

²⁵² Maltby, “New Cinema Histories”.

²⁵³ Peltonen, “Clues, Margins, and Monads,” 356-357. Seen from a meta-level, the challenge of linking the micro and the macro apparently even distressed social history as a discipline, when in the late 1980s, early 1990s, according to Magnússon, social history was characterized by two debates: *compartmentalization* (“historians working within each of the various subdisciplines of social history put increased emphasis on strengthening the theoretical foundations of *their* fields of study” [my emphasis]) and *unification* (“how to bring the many disparate field within the discipline together”): S. G. Magnússon, “Social History as ‘Sites of Memory’? The Institutionalization of History: Microhistory and the Grand Narrative,” *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (Spring 2006): 893.

things larger or smaller [...] We see different things.”²⁵⁴ In the same edition of *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* (*Journal for Media History*) where Maltby's article “On the prospect of writing cinema history from below” appeared, Meusy provided an excellent view on local cinema history, with special emphasis on the link between micro and macro perspectives. What Peltonen called collisions “of an exceptional event with the long historical structure of popular culture” (see above) can be compared with what Meusy considers deviations to what is conceived as being standard. Such irregularities, the “bad pupils” and “ugly ducklings” of macrohistory, are usually neglected or written out of history because they just do not fit the more general patterns: “The facts analyzed by macrohistory will thus undergo a smoothing over, and those which deviate too much from the ‘standard’ will not be taken into account by general histories.”²⁵⁵

The question of how to link micro and macro perspectives is addressed in all standard film historical works that encourage micro-level research.²⁵⁶ It has also been called by Maltby as one of the challenges of new cinema history. For Maltby, “[s]pecific stories about local people stand a long way from Mitry's and Lagny's ambitious scoping of a prospective *histoire total* for the cinema”.²⁵⁷ The strength of new cinema history then lies in the “aggregation of detail” and comparative research projects.²⁵⁸ I will return to this in more detail in Chapter 2 as this question also involves discussing the link between quantitative and qualitative approaches to cinema history.

The call for more middle- and/or micro-level research is laudable in connection to the many forgotten and/or neglected histories. Yet just as with the endless inclusions of margins into film history, the question arises: where to stop? Bordwell's laconical remark on the achievements of culturalism (by being pluralistic and engaging in microhistories) as allowing “people to study virtually any period and find lots of things going on there” pointed to the potential problem of an endless, wild accumulation of unwritten histories.²⁵⁹ Similarly, Gaines cautioned against the risk of falling into a loop of endlessly rewriting history by constantly adding new forgotten histories: “Before we begin, we want to think how work on this huge cache of new evidence could become history-as-usual, our attempts to research, claim, and write not significantly different from the process of traditional historical revision.”²⁶⁰ Robert Sklar equally acknowledged the problem of an endless adding of new histories without a goal, but his criticism of the status quo of film history yields a solution that seems

²⁵⁴ Ricoeur cited in Meusy, “Local Cinema Histories,” 108 [transl. from French to English by Meusy].

²⁵⁵ Meusy, “Local Cinema Histories,” 105. He provides as an example that the initiative of systematic film rental is traditionally attributed to Charles Pathé in 1907, while it was already practiced three years earlier by a travelling film exhibitor named George Petit.

²⁵⁶ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*; Chapman et al., *New Film History*; Maltby et al., *Explorations*; Biltereyst et al., *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*.

²⁵⁷ Maltby, “New Cinema Histories,” 13-14.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

²⁵⁹ Bordwell, “Contemporary Film Studies,” 12.

²⁶⁰ Gaines, “Film History,” 115.

more concrete than Gaines' suggestion to (re)turn to the narrative: Sklar criticized the lack of meta-historiographic perspectives that might pull together multiple strands. By doing so, the writing back of forgotten or hidden histories could offer an opportunity for film historiography.²⁶¹ This importance of building a patchwork out of the many different micro- and macroperspectives has now become one of the aspirations of new cinema history.²⁶²

1.3.2. Collisions between micro and macro-perspectives

As suggested earlier, seen from the macro-perspective, the individual micro-perspectives can not only complement or contradict each other, but they can also contradict the macro-perspective. They are Meusy's "ugly ducklings" and "bad pupils", Peltonen's "collisions", which are traditionally written out of history, because they do not fit in the larger picture. In its aim to attend to such hidden histories by writing history from below, new cinema history has put them on the research agenda. The edited volume *Explorations in New Cinema History*, for instance, includes a number of examples of such collisions of the micro and the macro that demonstrate how micro-histories can contribute to the writing of new cinema histories. The following first two are examples of collisions with theories of Hollywood hegemony, the last two of collisions with the modernity thesis.

The first example is Mike Walsh's contribution about film exhibition and distribution in Australia.²⁶³ His detailed investigations of distribution and exhibition practices of the Australian subsidiary United Artists Australasia and an independent cinema in Adelaide, adds new shades to existing theories of Hollywood's hegemony. Based on his research, Walsh showed, for instance, that internal competition among different Hollywood majors existed and could lead to hitherto unexpected alliances of individual majors with local distributors and exhibitors. He demonstrated that macro-perspectives are prone to camouflage power imbalances and shifting sets of relation on local markets. A similar case was made by Deron Overpeck based on his microscopic investigation into the distributional practices of block-booking and blind bidding.²⁶⁴ He showed the plodding yet

²⁶¹ R. Sklar, "Does Film History Need a Crisis?" *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 136.

²⁶² See recent initiatives and collaborations, including the international research project "European Cinema Audiences: Entangled histories and shared memories" (AHRC, 2018-2021), "Cinema Ecosystem (CINECOS): A New Cinema History inspired project aiming at building an open access data platform for cinema history in Flanders and Belgium" (FWO, 2018-2021), "CORE" (an informal collaboration of several cinema historians from Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Great Britain, who presented their work at the HoMER 2017 conference and two forthcoming articles: Van Oort et al., "Mapping Film Programming across Post-War Europe"; Pafort-Overduin et al., "Moving films").

²⁶³ M. Walsh, "From Hollywood to the Garden Suburb (and Back to Hollywood). Exhibition and Distribution in Australia," in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltreyest and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 159-170.

²⁶⁴ D. Overpeck, "Blindsiding. Theatre Owners, Political Action and Industrial Change in Hollywood, 1975-1985," in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltreyest and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 185-196.

successful struggle of local exhibitors in the US, represented by the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO), against discriminating and highly unfavorable practices of major distributors in Hollywood. Overpeck's work not only gave back the agency to the smaller players in the American film industry, but he also showed how research limited to the macro-perspective invites and sustains alleged dichotomies and pigeon-holing (for example, the traditional division between production, distribution, exhibition).

Paul S. Moore's study offers a collision between the micro-history (of the promotion of the first cinemas in Canada) and the macro-story of the modernity thesis. He combined quantitative (statistical) analysis of the promotion of the first cinemas in metropolises, cities, towns and villages in Ontario.²⁶⁵ Against the traditional assumption supported by the modernity thesis which considers the emergence of cinema as an urban phenomenon, Moore proved that the institutionalized promotion of cinema was not invented in metropolis, but in the periphery. A last example of collisions between micro-history and the macro-perspective offered by the modernity thesis is provided by Fuller-Seeley. She placed the particular cinema history of Cooperstown, New York, within the broader cultural context of the village's Centennial celebration in 1907.²⁶⁶ The limited focus makes Fuller-Seeley's a useful example of micro-history in spatial as well as temporal terms. Based on archival research and film analysis she came to the conclusion, that, in contrast to the assumptions of proponents of the modernity thesis, moving pictures were accepted by the small-town families as equal alternatives for more traditional spectacles and as a recognized, yet "unremarked-upon" source of historical representation, education and amusement.²⁶⁷

Establishing the link between the micro and macro, is of course largely about the question of generalization. This question will be addressed in more detail in the following chapter. Rather than aiming at general statements grounded in the particularities of micro-studies, the contributions to *Explorations* discussed here expose vulnerable points in the macro-perspectives. By doing so, they call for additional research of similar phenomena in other places or other periods and invite to reconsider, amend or correct traditional assumptions.

²⁶⁵ P. S. Moore "The Social Biograph. Newspapers as Archives of the Regional Mass Market for Movies," in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltreyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 275.

²⁶⁶ K. Fuller-Seeley, "Modernity for Small Town Tastes. Movies at the 1907 Cooperstown, New York, Centennial," in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltreyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 280-294.

²⁶⁷ Fuller-Seeley, "Modernity for Small Town Tastes," 281.

1.4. Concluding remarks on Chapter 1

As I have shown in the course of this chapter, new cinema history as a strand in film history is indebted in various ways to the historiographical developments in the twentieth century in general and film studies in particular. As a case in new cinema history this thesis thus rests on the historiographical shifts that have been outlined in this first chapter.

First, it seeks to adapt the idea of total history, by investigating the changes in Antwerp's cinemagoing culture from a historical perspective that centers around the social aspects of film exhibition, distribution, and reception, approached synchronically as well as diachronically. Rather than focusing on the great men and events of film history it offers an examination of how local film exhibition and distribution was organized and how it was perceived by the local inhabitants, by which socio-geographical, economic and social factors this was shaped and how all that changed over the course of half a century. Second, in relation to the shift from centers to "margins", "Antwerpen Kinemastad" is a contribution to the body of historical research on cinemagoing in smaller countries. In addition, its focus on Antwerp as a second-tier city provides insights into the working of cinema culture outside the of capitals, that traditionally served as a point of departure to study film exhibition and distribution. Finally, the focus on local exhibitors and experiences of cinemagoing by the local people adds to investigations of top-down approaches to the film industry, usually from macro-historical perspectives.

In this thesis, a case is made for the integration of different subfields of history (film history, urban history, business history, social history) examined both synchronically and diachronically, in order to better understand the changes of local specificities in Antwerp's cinema culture and how they shaped and were shaped by regional, national and international contexts of film exhibition and film consumption. In its pursuit of the writing of integrative, small-scale histories of film and its social, economic and cultural contexts, new cinema history thus lends itself as an approach to closely examine the changes in local film exhibition and consumption, as it is proposed in this thesis. The shift in focus that new cinema history has brought to the discipline of film studies, has of course methodological implications. These are the subject of the next chapter.

“Places of memory [are] an expression of a changing historical interest, not aimed at comprehensive perspectives and impressive insights, but rather at smaller stories, individual events, and local histories.”²⁶⁸

2. Methodological implications: writing new cinema histories through memory

Loosely inspired concept of *lieux de mémoire* by the French historian Pierre Nora, which will be discussed in Paragraph 2.2.2, this thesis proposes to study cinemas as places where history and memory meet. This is in line with the overall belief in the strength of an integrative approach to cinema history by relating archival documents to oral testimonies. It allows for linking institutional history to the lived experiences of cinemas and films as remembered by actual cinemagoers. Such an integrative approach, that is, the linking of history and memory as well as the combination of different – quantitative and qualitative – sources and methods has been proved productive and has been informed by the changes in twentieth century historiography that I have outlined in Chapter 1. In this chapter I reflect on the methodological implications of these changes on, first, the different ways to engage in historical inquiry; second, how the relationship between history and memory has been conceived; and, third, the shift towards mixed-method approaches to historical research. Together, these three parts pave the way for explaining the approaches taken in “Antwerpen Kinemastad” in the final part of this chapter.

2.1. Objective truth and interpretative practice

Reflecting on Francis Fukuyama's apocalyptic announcement of the end of history in the early 1990s, Iggers provided a more positive view on the status quo of both history and historiography: “What is meant is obviously not that time will hence stand still, but there is no longer the possibility of a grand narrative that gives history coherence and meaning.”²⁶⁹ Neither would it mean “the end of history as scholarly enterprise”. According to Iggers, the loss of objectivity has “by no means led to a decline in serious historical inquiry. Instead it has led to a diversification of approaches and often to an increase in scholarly sophistication.”²⁷⁰ Iggers’ comment on the status quo of historiography at the threshold

²⁶⁸ F. van Vree, "Locale geschiedenis, lieux de mémoire en de dynamiek van de historische cultuur," *Stadsgeschiedenis* 3, no. 1 (2008): 68 [my transl.].

²⁶⁹ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 141.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 144. See also L. W. Levine, "The Unpredictable Past: Reflections on Recent American Historiography," *American Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (1989): 671.

of the twenty-first century touches upon several questions which will be discussed in this paragraph: What is the relation between historic and historical fact? Can history be written objectively? How should historical facts be presented? What is the role of the historian?

In 2007 the historian Donald R. Kelley observed that “[i]n the past two generations new methods of history cast doubt on the value of linear and neatly divided time lines in favor of different sorts and measures of ‘time’ and multiple plotting of historical change.”²⁷¹ Kelley's call draws on the postmodern denial of the possibility of an objective description of the world as propagated by the the famous historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) and his disciples, a description that crumbled away with the coming of what has been labeled the “linguistic turn”. The latter roots in Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857-1913) conception of language as a self-contained system and the assumption that there is no direct link between the signifier and signified.²⁷² De Saussure's ideas were picked up and developed further by linguists such as Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida, from the 1960s onwards, who stressed that language does not refer to reality but constructs it.

The linguistic turn made an important contribution for breaking the determinism inherent in older socioeconomic approaches to history and for emphasizing the role of cultural factors. The field of semiotics which I addressed in Chapter 1.1.1 can be positioned here as well. However, the linguistic turn also resulted in a difficult position for historians, for “[t]he basic idea of postmodern theory of historiography is the denial that historical writing refers to an actual historical past.”²⁷³ In other words, it implied that “objectivity in historical research is not possible because there is no object of history”.²⁷⁴

In 1990, de Schryver distinguished between objective and subjective history as follows. The essence of the former lies in von Ranke's belief in the existence of only one true history. The historian's task was to show “how it really was” by collecting as many empirical data as possible, because the data were considered to speak for themselves. With regard to subjective history, however, the historian (representing the present) would prevail.²⁷⁵ De Schryver's bias for “objective” history stands in contrast to Stearns' demand expressed in 2011 that, instead of listing historical facts, historical inquiry should be problem-driven and the data should be selected and rearranged in order to fit the argument.²⁷⁶ Clearly, as a case in new cinema history which invites pluralist

²⁷¹ D. R. Kelley, “Ideas of Periodization in the West,” in *The Many Faces of Clio. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography*, edited by E. Q. Wang and F. L. Fillafer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 24.

²⁷² Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 9.

²⁷³ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 133, 118.

²⁷⁴ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 9.

²⁷⁵ De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 12-13.

²⁷⁶ Stearns, *World History*, 49, 50. Stearns' call resembles that of Bordwell in relation to a historical poetics of cinema (Bordwell, “Historical Poetics,” 391).

approaches to the study of cinemagoing and its meaning, “Antwerpen Kinemastad” can be positioned more on the subjective side of the spectrum than on the objective one.

The contrast between both positions (that of de Schryver and Stearns) touches upon three fundamental topics of historiographical debate that are discussed in the following paragraphs: first, the form in which historical narratives should be written (narrative, explanatory, analytical, descriptive...); second, the problem of the empirical; third, the visibility of the historian in historical writing (that is the researcher's subject position).

2.1.1. The form of (film-)historical writings

Historian Allan Megill approached the question of historical objectivity by comparing ancient historiography with the institutionalized historiography in the nineteenth century (meaning the Rankian approach). While ancient historical accounts were based on rhetoric and the historian's primary aim was to convince their audience of the plausibility of “what for the most part happens”, the professional historian's aim was to show that something was or was not the case.²⁷⁷ In other words, the rhetorical historian was an “advocate for a cause to which he is already committed before *constructing* his historical account”.²⁷⁸ Rhetorical historiography was not about telling “the truth”, as in case of professional historiography of the nineteenth century, but about making one's historical account plausible.²⁷⁹ This is what narratives do: they make an account plausible by arranging the arguments in a certain order with the intention of convincing the audience. Megill emphasized that narrative form is not necessarily chronological, but is determined by the way certain plot elements, such as actions, characters, setting etc., are arranged within the narrative.²⁸⁰

Narrative accounts of history, however, were not uncontested. They were often associated with being “merely descriptive” and a suspicion prevailed “that ‘narrative history’ is epistemologically and methodologically defective.”²⁸¹ Megill traced the roots of this skepticism back to a bias for

²⁷⁷ A. Megill, “What Is Distinctive about Modern Historiography?” in *The Many Faces of Clio. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography*, edited by E. Q. Wang and F. L. Fillafer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 33.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 35 [my emphasis].

²⁷⁹ It must be noted, that Megill emphasized that “it is *not* commitment to objectivity that defines the professional historiography that developed in Ranke's time and after. Rather, what defines this historiography, differentiating it from the ancient, rhetorically oriented type, is a persisting tension within between *objectivity* and *advocacy* [...]” [emphasis in source]. In addition, he underlined the complexity of objectivity: “Objectivity is not a matter of deploying opposing perspectives – ideally, as many opposing perspectives as possible – and remaining neutral between (among) them. Rather, it is a matter balancing the competing claims of the discipline on the one hand and of advocacy or ‘perspective’ on the other.” (*Ibid.*, 36-37.)

²⁸⁰ Megill, “Recounting the Past,” 647. “Accordingly, the crucial question to ask, in deciding whether a given work is best seen as an instance of narrative history, is not, ‘Is this text organized in a chronologically sequential order?’ It is rather, ‘How prominent in the text are the elements of narrative?’” (*Ibid.*, 645.)

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 638.

explanation, which roots in the empiricist and/or positivist belief that science should be neither descriptive nor interpretative, but explanatory, that is establishing causal links. Megill, however, principally questioned this primacy of explanation over description, or recounting. After all, in order to establish causal links (for example, answer the question of the “why”), one would have to describe the situation in the first place (for example, the “what”).²⁸²

Megill provided two reasons for the pervasive explanatory bias: one relates to the pursuit of universalisms, the other to what he called “hermeneutic naiveté”, by which he referred to questions of the subject position of the researcher (see Paragraph 2.1.3 below).²⁸³ Regarding the first reason Megill argued that, “it is widely held in philosophy and in social science that only knowledge of the general or universal (as distinguished from the local or particular) is truly scientific; all else is inferior.”²⁸⁴ The problem is, however, that historians “often confuse ‘general laws’ with other kinds of generalizations [and therefore] sometimes miss the full force of the idea that a field is scientific only if it produces general laws. By ‘generalization,’ historians usually mean a broad statement that is nonetheless still tied to a particular historical context.”²⁸⁵

This touches the question of how to arrive from the fragmentary and complexity of historical particularities at the larger picture. For Megill “whenever...then” hypotheses offer possibilities of linking the particular to the universal. Instead of describing a reality, such hypotheses provide a “form of explanation that has a portability, a universalizability, that ‘description’ cannot have.”²⁸⁶ I will explore the challenge of moving from the universal to the particular further below, when dealing with the methodological implications of the move from macro to micro-level research.

With regard to the form film-historical writings in particular, according to Chapman et al., “old” (aesthetic and reflectionist approaches to) film history “prized empirical evidence and factual accounts over interpretative models”.²⁸⁷ This echoes Allen and Gomery's reference to “some film historians” rigorous distinction between narrative (or descriptive, chronological, the “what happened when”) and interpretive (critical, “why did it happen”) film history.²⁸⁸ Similar to what has been stated above in reference to Megill, however, Allen and Gomery rejected such a distinction: “It is difficult, however, to see how film history can be divided neatly between establishing ‘what happened’ on the one hand and ‘why it happened’ on the other. The two are necessarily of the same

²⁸² Ibid., 648.

²⁸³ Ibid., 630, 632.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 634.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 633.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 648, 633-634.

²⁸⁷ Chapman et al., “Introduction,” 4. However, the conceptual alignment of “empirical evidence and factual accounts” opposite the “interpretative models” as it was implied by the authors is not quite satisfying. At least since revisionist film history had started in the 1970s and gained momentum in the 1980s, we know that empirical evidence and (re)interpretation go perfectly well together.

²⁸⁸ Indeed, here one of the wrong assumptions surfaced which were criticized by Megill – the equation of narrative with chronological accounts of historical inquiry (Megill, “Recounting the Past,” 647).

enterprise.²⁸⁹ As a matter of fact, benchmark works on film history are still written in chronological order – usually beginning with the birth of cinema in 1895 and reaching out to the present or even beyond – while at the same time aiming at providing explanations.²⁹⁰

What Megill called the explanatory bias, runs through major works of film history. It might seem then, that film historians lag behind general historiography. However, Bordwell, for instance, proposed problem-driven explanatory models as alternatives to the “doctrine-driven thinking” of grand theory (see below).²⁹¹ In addition, contrasting Megill's rather black-and-white conception of explanation, Bordwell pointed to possible distinctions between different explanatory models (teleological, intentionalistic, functionalist) and different explanatory schemes (rational-agent, institutional, perceptual-cognitive) thereby showing that explanations can take many forms.²⁹² There seems to be a general tacit agreement among film historians, that their aim should not be the discovery of laws, but to “explain why a particular set of historical circumstances came about and with what consequences.”²⁹³

Stacey (in 1994) pointed to the ambivalence of narrative form in historical writing: “For the writer this narrative offers structure and form with which to organise what are often rather haphazard and arbitrary steps in the research process; for the reader, it offers the pleasures of discovery, of recognition and of resolution; for both order is imposed upon what once seemed chaos, and process becomes product.”²⁹⁴ While not completely abandoning the narrative form in *Star Gazing*, Stacey did partly disrupt the streamlined narrative structure by reflecting on the research process and methodological issues.

Jane Gaines, in her comment of the status quo of film history and feminist film theory, also problematized the way in which historical narratives

attempt to unfold events so naturally that they are seen as no different from the events they are attempting to represent “realistically.” Events in these narratives (in which the narrators are unseen) appear to “tell themselves.” Because of the effective use of technique, coupled with the denial of its use, readers of historical narratives, like viewers of the classical narrative realist texts, are given the illusion of a privileged relationship to the historical real – a picture more full and complete than ever before encountered.²⁹⁵

²⁸⁹ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 46-47.

²⁹⁰ To give a few examples of film histories which explicitly combine narrative and interpretative approach: Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, 4; D. Gomery and C. Pafort-Overduin, *Movie History. A Survey* (New York/London: Routledge, 2011), xxi; S. Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen. A History of Cinema Exhibition in Britain since 1896* (Manchester: Manchester University Press: 2007), 3-4; Mast and Kavin 2007: 7-8; Wexman 2010: ix-x; Chapman et al., “Introduction,” 8.

²⁹¹ Bordwell, *Poetics*, 2, see Bordwell, “Historical Poetics,” 385-391.

²⁹² Bordwell, “Historical Poetics,” 374, 382-383. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur speaks of two types of explanations, on the one hand offering a “causal connection or a law-like regularity”, on the other “offering explanations in terms of reasons” (P. Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 339).

²⁹³ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 6;

²⁹⁴ Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 51.

²⁹⁵ Gaines, “Film History,” 116. See also Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 50-51.

At the same time she criticized that “[w]hile the conventions of motion picture representation have been exhaustively critiqued, the conventions of our own [feminist] representation of the historical past have not.”²⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Gaines rejected postmodern criticism of narrative form, because the avoidance of narratives lead to avoidance of the topic of women in film history all together. At the same time she admitted the difficulty of circumventing narrative form: “Despite an awareness that there are alternatives to narrative [...] we are powerfully situated in relation to events that have unfolded before and during the cinema century.”²⁹⁷ She concluded her reflection by stating that “[t]he difficulty is to know how to tell these women's stories without telling them.”²⁹⁸ Just as Stacey, Gaines considered self-reflexivity in historical writing as fruitful.²⁹⁹

In addition to this, as Grainge et al. (2007) argued, absences and omissions are inevitable, since “narrative histories are always forced to streamline the complexities of history in order to find a clear and linear narrative of development.”³⁰⁰ These omissions do not necessarily mean that a certain history did not exist. Rather, it is about choosing “the appropriate focus and purpose of historical research,” since, after all, “one could never produce a full and accurate account of the history of film”.³⁰¹ This is particularly relevant for historical studies that investigate more long-term developments and changes and approach them from various angles, as is the case in this thesis.

Abel wanted to take the idea that was put forward by Grainge et al. even further and proposed a much more radical way. His interest in hypertext writing made him rethink the form of cinema history “not simply as a linear narrative that seeks to explain the causes of one or more historical changes (or the lack of change) but a series of displays containing linked, sometimes overlapping, sometimes divergent analyses, stories, documents, and images.”³⁰² As a matter of fact, technological innovations have made this possible for quite some time now. During the last decades digital research databases have mushroomed, with vast amounts of material.³⁰³ The rich amount of data that is available in this way opens up new ways to approach historical questions and generates new questions. It is crucial, however, not to overestimate the power of these digital tools. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2.3, quantitative approaches have a lot to offer, but are most valuable when combined with qualitative approaches.³⁰⁴ Or, to put it differently, cinema histories still

²⁹⁶ Gaines, “Film History,” 116.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 119.

³⁰⁰ Grainge et al., *Film Histories*, x.

³⁰¹ Grainge et al., *Film Histories*, x.

³⁰² R. Abel, “Wonder Cabinets and Writing Cinema History,” *Cinema Journal* 49, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 179.

³⁰³ For examples see Noordegraaf et al., “Writing Cinema Histories,” 111-113.

³⁰⁴ This has been most recently exemplified in a comparative pilot study that focused on exhibition and distribution patterns in the cities of Antwerp, Gothenburg and Rotterdam: Pafort-Overduin et al., “Moving films”.

have to be written by humans, if we are not to aspire a Rankian history, where our primary object would be to collect as many data as possible and where the data speak for themselves.

The dichotomy between the two basic forms of historical writing (description and explanation), can be referred to in different terms.³⁰⁵ Without getting into more details here, two things should be clear: First, there can be no purely explanatory or narrative form of historical writing since one is always informed by the other. Second, historical writing is always constructed. Related to this is the role of the researcher in historical inquiry. Before addressing this question in more detail, I first clarify the question of the empirical.

2.1.2. The question of the empirical

The point made by Megill about the nature of historical research calls to mind Allen and Gomery's rather narrow (almost positivist) view of science when they claimed (in 1985) that is impossible to approach history scientifically.³⁰⁶ According to them, empiricist scientific models, on the one hand, are closed systems, where scientists create experimentally a situation in which a regularity can be observed they themselves created and where "explanation takes the form of universal or covering laws" to predict a phenomenon in the future.³⁰⁷ History, on the other hand, is an open system: "no two historical events are ever the same, no matter how similar they might appear".³⁰⁸ Allen and Gomery added that a "generative mechanism primarily responsible for one event might not be nearly so important in another."³⁰⁹ Moreover, while scientists are able to replicate the situations they wish to study, historians cannot. Finally, "historians cannot 'see' a historical event directly, but only the traces".³¹⁰

Based on this premise, Allen and Gomery criticized the historical empiricist approach as championed by von Ranke (which they called "high school history"), its assumptions "that reality exists independently of the human mind, and that reality can be known and explained by scientific observation of events" as well as its belief that history can be written objectively by collecting as many data as possible (because the data would speak for themselves). According to Allen and

³⁰⁵ Megill, for example, also briefly addressed another common opposition, for example, between narrative and analytical history, which he himself considered as being "too crude", since some narrative histories can be also very analytical, engaging "in the differentiation of hitherto undifferentiated entities". The other way around, much analysis precedes narrative (since the elements have to be structured to establish a certain line of argumentation): Megill, "Recounting the Past," 650.

³⁰⁶ Megill, "Recounting the Past"; Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 11.

³⁰⁷ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 9.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 10. See also Stearns, *World History*, 63; Megill, "What Is Distinctive," 29.

³⁰⁹ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 20.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

Gomery, such empiricist approach to history is not wrong, but simplistic, because it does not account for the researcher's subject position, which is, his role in collecting, selecting and interpreting (or at least arranging) the data in order to establish his/her historical account.³¹¹ So far, they agreed with the conventionalist approach to history, according to which history is not written in a vacuum.

Yet, instead of choosing either the empiricist or the conventionalist approach, Allen and Gomery decided to take a middle position. While they underlined the (scientific) need for explaining the world, they also acknowledged the role of the historian as an active theorizer and interpreter, and the fact that his/her work is partly influenced by his/her personal and institutional background. They shared neither the empiricist belief in a reality as a one-dimensional realm of observable phenomena which can be described as laws, nor the conventionalist belief in anarchist theory of knowledge.³¹² Rather, they proposed a “realist” approach to film history (not to be confused with filmic realism in aesthetic film theory). Such a realist film history combines historical empiricism and conventionalism by preserving “the notion of an independently existing past (the view shared by empiricists) while taking into account the necessity and complexity of theory in historical explanation.”³¹³

By taking the middle position between empiricist and conventional approach, Allen and Gomery did not differ much from the position Bordwell's took in *Historical poetics*, even despite their different foci and their different statements about the possibility of approaching history scientifically. As Bordwell put it: “I occasionally invoke social-scientific studies and even evolutionary accounts as components of causal explanations.”³¹⁴ The bottom-line of both perspectives is the scholars' preference for an explanatory model of historical inquiry based on empirical evidence.

Both Allen and Gomery were major representatives of a new generation of film historians that emerged in the 1970s, the “revisionist film historians”. Rather than endlessly reinterpreting old film historical works and/or relying on film-texts as primary sources, as their traditional predecessors did, the revisionists' aim was to produce new film histories based on hitherto untapped (non-filmic) empirical evidence.³¹⁵

A pervasive confusion of “empirical” with “empiricist” led to the accusation of empirical researchers of being “damned empiricists”, culminating in the legendary empiricist debate.³¹⁶ In a

³¹¹ Ibid., 6-8. See also D. Bordwell, *Poetics of Cinema* (New York/London: Routledge, 2008), 3. In addition, see Ricoeur on Halbwachs' comparison of historical memory as the kind of history he was taught as school, wand which was all about “memorizing dates, facts, names, striking events, important persons, holidays to celebrate” (P. Ricoeur, *Memory*, 393-394).

³¹² Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 14-15.

³¹³ Ibid., 14.

³¹⁴ Bordwell, *Poetics*, 4. It should be stated in this connection that Andrew considered both 1985 approaches, that of Allen and Gomery and that of Bordwell et al., positivist (Andrew, “Film and History,” 179).

³¹⁵ Bordwell, “Contemporary Film Studies,” 27. For an extensive list of works by these new film historians see Bordwell, “Contemporary Film Studies,” 35, note 67.

³¹⁶ Allen, “Relocating,” 347-348; Bordwell, *Poetics*, 3; A. Kuhn and J. Stacey, “Screen Histories: An Introduction,” in *Screen Histories. A Screen Reader*, edited by A. Kuhn and J. Stacey (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998): 4.

footnote to an introductory chapter of *Post Theory* (1996) Bordwell elaborated “once more” on the difference between empiricist and empirical inquiry, as it is often confused by “adherents of Grand Theory”.³¹⁷ It is worth quoting here in full:

Empiricism names a philosophical tradition that places primary emphasis upon experience in explaining how humans acquire knowledge. Historically, empiricism has often embraced views that the mind is a passive receptacle and that concepts may be reduced to aggregates of sense impressions. An *empirical* inquiry is one which seeks answers to its questions from evidence outside the mind of the inquirer. Film history is empirical in just this way; but so too are all varieties of film criticism, which base their interpretations on evidence intersubjectively available within texts. And most film theory, from Münsterberg to Mitry, has been empirical. Only Grand Theory claims to be nonempirical.³¹⁸

Twenty years later Bordwell and Allen both were labeled empiricists by Ian Christie in his “deliberately polemical contribution”, titled “Short History of Ambivalence Towards Empiricism in Cinema Studies”.³¹⁹ Based on the entries in the *Oxford Dictionary* he clarified the difference between *empirical* (“based on observation and experiment”) and *empiricism* (“based on experience as ‘the only source of knowledge’”), which is followed by his own – rather lax – definition of empiricist as “approaches that define a problem or a question and set out a methodology for answering it”.³²⁰ Which makes it very easy, I assume, to label all serious research empiricist, including research which is actually empirical by nature. Empirical based research (rather than research based on reinterpretations of old works) has been dominating film historical inquiry up until the present day.³²¹ It is also the kind of research that is characteristic for new cinema history and thus “Antwerpen Kinemastad”.

Another related issue, which has been noted briefly before and which was also one of the major points of discussion in the Singer-Allen debate concerns the question if accuracy and/or abundance equals adequacy. Singer (in 1995), equipped with plenty of new empirical data, criticized Allen (particularly his publication from 1979) of having misinterpreted the nickelodeon's social context, amongst others, by miscalculating the number of theaters in certain neighborhoods and by drawing the wrong conclusions from factual errors on their ethnic descent.³²² This is not the place to discuss the details (the accusations are abundant), but one of Allen's replies is of a more general historiographical interest and of importance in relation to empirical based research. Without

³¹⁷ Bordwell, “Contemporary Film Studies,” 34, note 63.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Christie, “‘Just the Facts’,” 70-71, 72, note 1.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

³²¹ *New Film History*, for example, is a collection of film-centered yet empirical-based case studies, a “critical analysis of primary sources relating to the production and reception of feature films” (Chapman et al., “Introduction,” in *The New Film History. Sources, Methods, Approaches*, edited by J. Chapman, M. Glancy and S. Harper (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 2). See also Grainge et al., *Film Histories* xi.

³²² Singer “Manhattan Nickelodeons,” 5-6, 12, 23-24, 26, 29.

withdrawing his general conclusions on the nature and diversity of early film exhibition in the US, Allen (laconically) applauded Singer's "tenacity in tracking down building permits, census reports, and other data" and his pursuit to provide a more accurate picture.³²³ According to Allen, however, "accuracy is not synonymous with explanatory adequacy. Historical data are always contingent upon some question being asked about them. To believe otherwise is to fall into the empiricist trap that historical evidence somehow explains itself, and that if we were simply to have 'all the facts' we would have the final, determinative historical explanation."³²⁴ Allen provided as two examples, first Singer's *synchronic* flattening of data by mapping venues on a street map, which does not enable us to know the qualitative differences between theatres; and second, Singer's *diachronic* flattening of data by mapping of venues on a street map, which does not enable us to keep track of closures and opening (indicative of dynamics of the cinema market).³²⁵ Allen's critique was supported by Uricchio and Pearson another year later, in their reaction on the Singer-Allen debate. They maintained that Singer's pursuit for accuracy (based on hard evidence) comes at the cost of more qualitative insights (for example, concerning the composition of audiences), because of a lack of a "properly designed and useful research question".³²⁶

It should have become clear that neither Allen nor Uricchio and Pearson completely rejected the idea that a greater body of empirical evidence can enrich historical studies. Rather, they argue for a critical engagement with the sources. When their reactions are adapted to the most recent developments in film-historical studies the point I made earlier with regard to the value of digital humanities approaches to cinema history becomes even more clear. The increased access and availability of historical sources and data that have largely been made possible through technological innovation in the past decade, does not automatically lead to more complete cinema histories. Neither the sources nor the data – as abundant as they might be – speak for themselves, but they elicit different meanings depending on the questions asked. It requires careful thinking which kinds of questions demand which kinds of data and datasets. In the case of "Antwerpen Kinemastad", for example, the vast amount of film-programming data has been used in different ways. On the one hand, it is used in quantitative ways to calculate the shares of films per country of origin or year of

³²³ Allen, "Manhattan Myopia," 75.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 77, 78, 83, 88. In his response, Singer defended himself against these accusations by pointing to the fact that his priority was "to present as much substantive and corrective new data on nickelodeon-era exhibition in Manhattan as I could" and that Allen's "infinitely broader subject has virtually nothing to do with my explicit focus on Manhattan". Besides, Singer claimed never to have said that his (more accurate) data "constitute some kind of historical explanation in and of themselves". Furthermore, he would not see the different quality of theaters (Allen's accusation of Singer synchronic flattening) as reason to discard his neighborhood-analysis method of concluding about theaters' audiences. Besides, even though Allen had a point in criticizing Singer's synchronic flattening of all venues into nickelodeons, Singer claimed that the vast majority "were definitely nickelodeons, not upscale sites" (B. Singer, "New York, Just Like I Pictured It," *Cinema Journal* 35, no. 3 (1996): 104-108).

³²⁶ Uricchio and Pearson, "Dialogue," 100.

release to assess the dominance of particular countries on Antwerp screens and to establish programming profiles of cinemas and how this changed over time. On the other hand, from this large dataset, a small sample of the most successful films (in terms of screening duration) per sample year is selected to examine the trajectories of these films across Antwerp, in order to gain insights about possible hierarchies between the cinemas and ways of cooperation between the exhibitors.³²⁷

Closely related to the problem of the empirical and the awareness that “objective reality can never be captured” is a growing awareness of the subject position of the researcher and of the fact that the process and outcomes of his/her work are shaped by his/her personal context and background. In other words, there is an increasing acknowledgement that “[t]here is no value-free science.”³²⁸

2.1.3. Researcher's subject position: “hermeneutic naiveté”?

For Megill, “hermeneutic naiveté” – the belief in an objective view on history and the denial of the historian's embeddedness in a particular interpretive perspective – was the second reason for the mistaken preference for explanation over description (see above). It is mistaken because “[w]hen the hermeneutic dimension is excluded, ‘description’ gets reduced to data collection.”³²⁹ Following the “hermeneutic insight that all perception is perspectival,” however, is the recognition that the hermeneutic circle relates not only to the relation between part and whole of the investigated object, but also “between investigator and what is being investigated. The investigation will be prompted by the traditions, commitments, interests, and hopes of the investigator, which will affect what the investigator discovers.”³³⁰

The move towards more reflexivity in historical writing has become one of the achievements of postmodernist critique.³³¹ While (social) methodologists Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln spoke of a double crisis in postmodernism (one of representation and one of legitimation) in his concluding remarks to *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, Iggers put it more optimistically, and praised its achievements in so far that historians have acknowledged the limits of objectivity and have become

³²⁷ Because of the availability of new tools this question has been recently approached in a quantitative way by extending the dataset to include all films from the programming dataset for the year 1952 (Pafort-Overduin et al., “Moving films”). The results from this analysis largely confirmed the findings from the more qualitative approach presented in Chapter 5.2.3.

³²⁸ Denzin and Lincoln, “Introduction,” 2,3.

³²⁹ Megill, “Recounting the Past,” 636.

³³⁰ Ibid., 636-637.

³³¹ Megill: “To come to grips with the interpretive aspect of inquiry, one must make a reflexive move, looking at the way that the inquirer’s point of view enters into the investigation. The long historiographic tradition that holds to the fiction of an objective narrator feigning to be silent before the truth of the past resists self-reflexive sensitivity.” (Ibid., 637.)

aware of biases, and reflections on these issues have become part of their historical report.³³²

Historian D. A. Jeremy Telman shared a similarly optimistic vision by claiming that deconstructivism does not principally reject the existence of the a historical object, but rather reminds us of the fact that our access to the past is always mediated through texts.³³³ Furthermore, Telman embraced poststructuralism's "focus on the excluded and marginal, and also [...] its attentiveness to the ways in which structures constrain agency".³³⁴

As I have shown above as well as in Chapter 1, approaches to historical inquiry and historical writing differed throughout the twentieth century: from history focusing on major events and great people to a totalizing history embracing aspects of culture, economy and society, from the belief in one past that can be described objectively by accumulating as much empirical evidence as possible to more self-reflexive (hi)stories acknowledging the constructed character of historical narratives and the role of the researcher in the process of historical inquiry and historical writing.

Apparently, the most fundamental question in historiography is how *historic facts* (that is, facts of the past, everything that ever happened) become *historical facts* (determined as such by the historian). Is history just the "sum of all historic events" or is it "a force that makes events happen and gives human society a specific though unknowable direction"?³³⁵ The selection of historic facts and the way the historian puts them into historical writing determines the official historical canon and its relation to memory, because the question of availability and selectivity of sources is fundamentally different and yet similar for both history and memory.

2.2. History and memory

Both history and memory are retrospective in principle.³³⁶ As I have shown in Chapter 1 as well as in the previous paragraph, conceptualizations of history have varied strongly throughout time and by different thinkers. The idea of memory has not been debated less in academic discourse, than that of history. In the following subparagraphs I will introduce different conceptualizations of different forms of memory and the ways in which the relationship between history and memory has been conceived.

³³² Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 10-11; Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 144.

³³³ Telman, "Georg G. Iggers," 150. It should be noted that Telman still emphasized that, different from most historians of historiography, Iggers was quite "open and receptive" for postmodernist theory (Ibid., 146).

³³⁴ Ibid., 156.

³³⁵ H. White, "War and Peace. Against Historical Realism," in *The Many Faces of Clio. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography*, edited by E. Q. Wang and F. L. Fillafer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 45.

³³⁶ Ricoeur, *Memory*, 385.

2.2.1. Conceptualizations of different forms of memory

The interest in memory has been booming at least since the end of World War II.³³⁷ In the introduction to their reader *Memory. Histories, Theories, Debates* Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz argue that “while in the academy there is a common belief that memory is ‘everywhere,’ what this means remains an open matter.”³³⁸ According to Radstone and Schwarz, memory is of “complex, shifting meanings” and has been analyzed in different disciplines, from biomedical sciences to humanities, and within different theoretical traditions.³³⁹ In addition, as the historian Zsolt Horváth states in reference to the works of one of the most renowned scholars of memory, Reinhart Koselleck, notions of memory have changed over time.³⁴⁰ As a result of all this, the overuse and misuse of the concept led to its deflation, and resulted in memory studies’ “lack of clear focus”.³⁴¹

The first to attempt a sociological theory of memory was French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs. Although his contributions covered a broad spectrum of disciplines and topics (mathematical statistics and probability theory, social morphology, suicide, social class) Halbwachs is remembered most for his groundbreaking work on collective memory.³⁴² Halbwachs distinguished between different types of memory: historical, individual (or autobiographical), and collective. *Historical memory* is transmitted (by historians) through written words or other types of records and can be kept alive, for instance, in the form of commemorations; persons do not remember these events in the past directly. *Autobiographical memory* relates to events that an individual has personally experienced in the past. *Collective memory* exists outside the individual. It is a socially

³³⁷ A. Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *American Historical Review* (December 1997): 1386-1387; P. den Boer, “Geschiedenis, herinnering en ‘lieux de mémoire’,” in *Bezeten van vroeger. Erfgoed, identiteit en musealisering*, edited by R. van der Laarse (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2005), 45-46; van Vree, “Locale geschiedenis,” 65.

³³⁸ S. Radstone and B. Schwarz, “Introduction. Mapping Memory,” in *Memory. Histories, Theories, Debates*, edited by S. Radstone and B. Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 1. See also Confino, “Collective Memory,” 1387-1388.

³³⁹ Radstone and Schwarz, “Introduction. Mapping Memory,” 2, 4-5; J. van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), xii-xiii. See also van Vree, “Locale geschiedenis,” 65. According to Radstone and Schwarz, two major conceptualizations of memory which point to different theoretical categories would be, for instance, on the one hand, the *disappearance* of memory and the notion of social amnesia (meaning our disconnectedness with the past that created us, see above). On the other hand, there is a *politicization* of memory calling to attention the matter of remembering and forgetting, whether purposeful or involuntarily (Radstone and Schwarz, “Introduction. Mapping Memory,” 1-2).

³⁴⁰ Z. K. Horváth, “On ‘Lieu de Mémoire’, ‘Trauma’ and their Relevancies in Hungary. Memory Research in a *begriffsgeschichtliche* Approach,” *Kakanien Revisited* (September 9, 2004), accessed May 7, 2012. <http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/theorie/ZKHorvath1.pdf>: 1.

³⁴¹ Confino, “Collective Memory,” 1387.

³⁴² As Confino pointed out, art and cultural historian Aby Warburg was the first to use the concept of collective memory, yet Halbwachs was the first to use it systematically (Ibid., 1388, 1392).

constructed framework and transmitted over long periods of time, across generations.³⁴³ The bottom line of Halbwachs' work on memory was that all memory is socially constructed: “[...] it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.”³⁴⁴

Halbwachs' groundbreaking work on collective memory has dominated discourse on memory ever since.³⁴⁵ One of his heirs is Nora, who became famous for his work on French identity and memory, but even more famous as conceiver of *lieux de mémoire*. I will discuss this in more detail in the following paragraphs about the relation between history and memory, and in the final part of this subparagraph when I address the concept of *lieux de mémoire* in more detail. Following Halbwachs, Nora rigorously distinguished between rational history and what he called “true” memory (as social practice). He clearly preferred the latter and bemoaned the “conquest and eradication of memory by history”.³⁴⁶ In this process, memory underwent a metamorphosis from traditional, true, memory to modern memory. While true memory was immediate, social, collective, all-encompassing, modern memory is the opposite: indirect, individual, subjective. Nora distinguished between three main characteristics of modern memory.³⁴⁷ First, it is archival in its reliance on traces, written documents, and recordings. Second, it is marked by individual duty (“duty-memory”), since “memory became a private affair” due to psychologists' and sociologists' preoccupations with the individual psychology of remembering and identity formation.³⁴⁸ Finally, it is also alienated (“distance memory”), distanced from the past by our historical knowledge.³⁴⁹

The increased role of memory in historiography throughout the twentieth century has led to a dizzying – and sometimes confusing – accumulation of terms and concepts related to memory by different scholars. According to Nora, for example, “true memory” refers less to the neuropsychological capacity of human beings to encode, store, and retrieve information, and rather to the social practice – or “a cultural configuration” as Ricoeur called it – “the kind of inviolate social memory that primitive and archaic societies embodied, and whose secret died with them”.³⁵⁰ What

³⁴³ L. A. Coser “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs 1877-1945,” in *Maurice Halbwachs. On Collective Memory*, edited and translated by L. A. Coser, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 2, 23-24; M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, edited and translated by L. A. Coser (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 38-39. See also Ricoeur, *Memory*, 393-397.

³⁴⁴ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 38.

³⁴⁵ Coser, “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs,” 14-21. For a discussion of a number of major examples of Halbwachs' intellectual legacy see Coser, “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs,” 28-34.

³⁴⁶ P. Nora, “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 8. See also A. Erll, “Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction,” in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, edited by A. Erll and A. Nünning (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 6.

³⁴⁷ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 13-18; P. Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” in *Realms of Memory - Rethinking the French Past. Vol. I: Conflicts and Division*, edited by P. Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 8-11.

³⁴⁸ Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 15-16.

³⁴⁹ Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 16.

³⁵⁰ Ricoeur, *Memory*, 402; Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 2.

Nora labeled “archival memory” has been referred to in the previous chapter as history, and what he calls “history” has been referred to as historiography.³⁵¹ With regard to Halbwachs' distinction between historical, individual, and collective memory, Ricoeur considered the introduction of historical memory by Halbwachs more as rupture in his otherwise fine distinction between collective and individual memory.³⁵² Finally, as José van Dijck pointed out, the terms “autobiographical memory” and “personal memory” are often used interchangeably, despite subtle differences.³⁵³

Yet it is not only the quasi synonyms which hamper the use and understanding of the concept, but it is also because different meanings are attached to the same terms. Van Dijck, for instance, pointed to the different meanings of collective memory for sociologists and historians. For sociologists on the one hand, collective memory refers to the feeling of belonging to and sharing a communal past, and the experience of “a connection between what happened in general” and the involvement in it as an individual. For historians, on the other hand, collective memory, or social memory, “constitutes the interface between individual and collective ordering of the past” and can serve as a “central ordering concept” of the way in which history can be written, for example, by placing different value in either remembering or forgetting.³⁵⁴ Media historian Frank van Vree, in reference to the renowned memory scholar Aleida Assmann, pointed to the difference between social and cultural memory in terms of how it is mediated: while social memory is living and connected to generations and social groups, cultural memory can be transmitted and mediated.³⁵⁵

One of the most prominent scholars who focused on cultural memory in relation to film and cinema history is Kuhn, previously mentioned in relation to the social turn in film and cinema history (Paragraph 1.1.3). Although she does not define explicitly what she means by cultural memory, neither in her landmark study *An Everyday magic. Cinema and Cultural Memory* nor in subsequent publications, her investigation in *cinema memory* as a subtype of cultural memory implies an understanding of cultural memory as being shaped by individual and collective memory.³⁵⁶ I will

³⁵¹ See also Ricoeur, *Memory*, 402.

³⁵² Ricoeur, *Memory*, 393.

³⁵³ Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories*, 183, note 1. As a matter of fact, van Dijck alternated between both herself, “for stylistic reasons”.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁵⁵ Van Vree, “Locale geschiedenis,” 65. Specifically, van Vree referred to Aleida Assmann, *Der lange Schatten der Vergangenheit. Erinnerungskultur und Geschichtspolitik* (München: Beck, 2006). Historian Jörn Rüsen, rejected the use of both, collective as well as cultural memory. Instead, he advocated the term *historical culture*, because its “is a more open and comprehensive concept than *collective memory*” and constitutes “the *procedures and institutions to interpret the past in order to understand the present and to develop a future perspective of human life.*” According to Rüsen, *historical culture* “is not characterized by a structural gap between historical studies and collective memory, as has been the case in the memory-discourse since its beginning with Maurice Halbwachs and its further development by Pierre Nora.” (J. Rüsen, “Future-Directed Elements of a European Historical Culture,” in *The Many Faces of Clio. Cross-cultural Approaches to Historiography*, edited by E. Q. Wang and F. L. Fillafer (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2007), 163-164 [emphasis in source]).

³⁵⁶ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*; A. Kuhn, “Heterotopia, Heterochronia: Place and Time in Cinema Memory,” *Screen* 45, no. 2 (2004): 106-114; A. Kuhn, “What to do with Cinema Memory?” in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 85-97. This is in line with the delineation of cultural memory by Astrid Erll in the introduction to *Cultural Memory Studies*, as “the interplay of present

return to cinema memory in the next part, when discussing the relationship between history and memory.

As becomes clear, the question of how to conceptualize memory is complex and continues to provoke debate.³⁵⁷ In acknowledgment, both of the assumptions that collective memory is not just the sum of all individual memories, and that both are inextricably linked to one another, as well as following Halbwachs' claim of all memory being socially constructed, in this thesis I will largely distinguish between *individual* and *collective memory*.³⁵⁸ Here, *individual memory* is understood to be the individually and personally experienced memories (that is what has also been referred to as autobiographic and personal memory). *Collective memory* is used when referring to collectively constructed and mediated memories of events in the past.

2.2.2. The relationship between history and memory

Most theorizing on memory has centered around its relation to history. As stated above, both history and memory are retrospective in principle. Both are about the link between past and present, yet this link is established in different ways. This paragraph about the relationship between history and memory is divided into three parts. In the first, I will address a number of differences between history and memory, as they have been outlined by different scholars. Closely linked to this is the dialectical relationship between history and memory, which will be discussed in the subsequent paragraph. In the last paragraph I will discuss one particular approach to historical memory: Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*.

Differences between history and memory

Generally, the relation between history and memory has been thematized in terms of differences, more than in terms of commonalities. One of the most rigorous demarcations of the difference between history and memory comes from Pierre Nora. His repugnance against history (historiography, actually) as opposed to his bias for "true memory" pervaded much of his writing.

and past in socio-cultural contexts" and as investigating a broad range of phenomena, from "individual acts of remembering in a social context" and group memory to national and transnational memory (Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies," 2). It is important to note that also Erll stressed that individual and collective memory condition each other, as individual memory is rooted in the socio-cultural contexts of the individual just as much as a collective memory always needs the individual to be actualized (Ibid., 4-5).

³⁵⁷ Radstone and Schwarz, "Introduction. Mapping Memory," 6. For further discussion see, for example, S. Radstone, "Reconceiving Binaries: the Limits of Memory," *History Workshop Journal* 59 (Spring 2005): 140 and Erll, "Cultural Memory Studies," 2.

³⁵⁸ Van Dijck, for example, spoke of *personal cultural memory*, because the personal and culture "are the threads that binds memory's texture: they can be distinguished, but they can never be separated" (Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories*, 6).

While he described true memory in terms of life, social alliance and completeness, he decried history as rational, individual and always incomplete.³⁵⁹ Two binary oppositions can be distilled which mark Nora's distinction between history and memory: intellectual practice versus lived practice, and the notion of closure (history) versus the close link between past and present (memory). Regarding the former opposition, the perception of history as rational versus the stress on experience concerning memory, Pim Den Boer pointed to the etymological roots of "history" in "historiai", meaning learning by inquiry. Memory, on the other side, is a "fundamental trait of each human being".³⁶⁰ Memory has existed since the beginning of mankind, history has not. The second opposition considers history as cut off from the past ("a reconstruction [...] of what is no longer") and memory as "a bond tying us to the eternal present".³⁶¹ The latter is also consistent with what Lewis Coser observed with regard to Halbwachs' idea of collective memory being essentially a reconstruction of the past in light of the present, and what Barry Schwartz stated about personal memories: "To remember is to place a part of the past in the service of conceptions and needs of the present."³⁶²

Both dichotomies are of impact on the researcher's subject position. The first (rational history versus lived memory) brings to bear questions of intellectual authority: as I have shown earlier, there has been a historiographical shift from the Rankian belief in being able to describe the past objectively "as it really was" (represented here by the authority of the historian) to the acknowledgement of plural histories from below (represented by the many, the "little" people).³⁶³ This would then be of major impact for drawing historical conclusions based on memory, since historical accounts based on memory would depend on the researcher's subject position. Connected to this is another pitfall which was addressed by Coser. According to him, Halbwachs' assertion of the past being a social construction which is "mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present" and where "the beliefs, interests, and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past" entails the danger of the impossibility of historical continuity (meaning that the past would be considered as being something completely alien), if such a presentist approach is pushed too far.³⁶⁴

Generally speaking, the relation between history and memory was considered to be predominantly conflictual, conceived as the struggle between the loud, authoritative voice of official history and the hidden history in the personal memories of the little people. By heightening

³⁵⁹ See for example Nora, "Between Memory and History," 8-9. This is in line with Crane's elaboration on Halbwachs' distinction between historical and collective memory (S. A. Crane, "Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory," *American Historical Review* (December 1997): 1376-77).

³⁶⁰ Den Boer, "Geschiedenis, herinnering," 48.

³⁶¹ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 8.

³⁶² Coser, "Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs," 34; quote by Schwartz cited in Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 187.

³⁶³ See also Crane, "Writing the Individual Back," 1375.

³⁶⁴ Coser, "Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs," 25.

awareness on what was kept for remembering and what was written out of history, it is not coincidental that the increased interest in memory occurred in parallel with the emancipation of hitherto neglected groups in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and age (see Chapter 1). More recent work, however, also stressed the interdependence of history and memory.

A dialectical relationship

Referring to Halbwachs' and Nora's assertion that (professional) history invoked the death of (collective) memory, Susan Crane suggested that the increased interest in memory after World War II might also be seen as an indication "that collective memory has indeed survived the onslaught of historical representation".³⁶⁵ This claim to me, however, attests that thinking in binary opposition is not over yet.

This is even more curious, as Crane in the same essay also stressed the mutual dependence of historical, collective and individual memory. After all, collective memory is located in the individual and is shaped by public historical discourse. What has been neglected in the debate about memory, she argued, is that "for any individual, learning about history is a lived experience that becomes part of collective memory".³⁶⁶ This neglect then would obscure the fact that "collective memory is itself an expression of historical consciousness that derives from individuals".³⁶⁷ In other words, rather than simply opposing each other, history and memory both actually condition one another.

This point was also made by historian Hue-Tam Ho Tai in her review essay of *Realms of Memory*. According to her, "[m]emory [...] does not exist outside of history".³⁶⁸ She emphasized the mutual influence of (official) history and memory, arguing that the "distinction between history and memory is too simplistic. Even atomized memory uses the milestones of official, national history to construct or reconstruct the past."³⁶⁹ Tai argued that Nora's view of the clash between history and memory and his belief that memory was "seized by history", was in fact inherent in his top down approach to matters of national history and memory.³⁷⁰ For Nora, true memory disappeared with the advent of industrialization. According to Tai, the "loss of farms, the exodus of the young from the land, technological obsolescence, all these are undramatic occurrences and long-term trends that are

³⁶⁵ Crane, "Writing the Individual Back," 1377-1379.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 1381-1382.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 1381.

³⁶⁸ H.-T. H. Tai, "Remembered Realms: Pierre Nora and French National Memory," *American Historical Review*, 106, no. 3 (June 2001), accessed May 7, 2012, <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ahr/106.3/ah000906.html>: 917.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 920. See also E. Apfelbaum, "Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory," in *Memory. Histories, Theories, Debates*, edited by S. Radstone and B. Schwarz, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 89. According to Tai, Nora's distinction between memory and history is not even evident in his project, given that a number of the contributions were written "in the style of conventional historians rather than as students of memory" and due to the emphasis on "elite-opinion makers (who left behind records)" instead of "ordinary localized communities of memory" (Tai, "Remembered Realms," 920).

³⁷⁰ Nora, "Between Memory and History," 13; Tai, "Remembered Realms," 920-921.

experienced in isolation rather than collectively.³⁷¹ She argued, that if the national history of France had been better aligned with the personal, and, for instance, been built around milestones relevant for farmers (and not only politicians), the history of rural decline in France could have been preserved. Tai praised the approach of historian Raphael Samuel (who was well known for his working-class history from below) by claiming that “working-class memory, unlike agrarian memory, is constructed and maintained collectively.”³⁷² In contrast to Nora, Samuel “did not seek to draw a sharp distinction between history and memory but saw both as being joined in a symbiotic relationship”.³⁷³

While there seems to be a general agreement that history and memory do form a close relationship, how this relation works, however, has been an ongoing debate. Horváth, for instance, refers to the Polish-French historian Krzysztof Pomian who claimed that “we arrived from history, a *part of memory* to memory, an *object of history*”.³⁷⁴ This thread was also picked up by Ricoeur, yet he saw the development Pomian speaks of as just one of the two kinds of developments characterizing the dialectical relationship between history and memory. The first would be Pomian's understanding of memory having become objectified by history, meaning that, in Ricoeur's critical words, the development that memory has become “just a province of history”, a new found object of history alongside everyday objects and practices as “the body, cooking, death, sex, festivals, and [...] *mentalités*”.³⁷⁵ According to Ricoeur, with the professionalization of history, the privileging of written documents over oral testimonies, “a past is constructed that no one is able to remember. It is for a history such as this, bound up with a ‘viewpoint free of all egocentrism,’ that history has ceased to be ‘part of memory’ and that memory has become ‘part of history’.”³⁷⁶

The second development Ricoeur speaks of, opposes the first. Instead of a subordination of memory to history, here memory is “in charge of history”, that is, “found to be revealed to itself in its depth by the movement of history”.³⁷⁷ It is what Ricoeur calls the “historicizing of memory”, in the way that history is conceived as making use “of the imaginative variations coming from a cultural history of memory and forgetting as revelatory of the mnemonic potentialities that everydayness conceals.”³⁷⁸ Language plays a great role here, as the intersection of the “historical recounted” and the “mnemonic experienced”.³⁷⁹ This calls to mind Halbwachs who begins his chapter on “Language

³⁷¹ Tai, “Remembered Realms,” 920.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 921.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 921.

³⁷⁴ Horváth, “On ‘Lieu de Mémoire,’” 1.

³⁷⁵ Ricoeur, *Memory*, 385.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 387-388.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 389.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 389.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 390.

and Memory” by stating that “[n]o memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections.”³⁸⁰

Yet another aspect of the dialectic relationship between history and memory was addressed by Erika Apfelbaum in her analysis of “Halbwachs and the social properties of memory”. Apfelbaum used the term “politics of memory” to consider the relationship between history and memory over time. She drew on the thoughts of Halbwachs about the constant reproduction and transformation of memories of the past in the light of the present.³⁸¹ Yet, instead of dreading a drifting off too far in a presentist approach, as Coser warned, or of preventing memory studies from drowning in the personal meaninglessness of individual memories, Apfelbaum considered the opportunity of such a politics of memory as a reinscribing of the “personal experiences back in the larger flow of history”.³⁸² It echoes the call placed by Crane in her article which she appropriately titled “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory”. Here Crane pleaded for considering history and historical research as lived experience and for speaking of practice of history rather than knowledge of history. This way, Crane argued, Halbwachs' historical and collective memory might not be each other's enemies all together. Rather, historical memory would then just be one form of collective memory, and both could be recombined. One way to achieve this is by writing back the individual into collective memory, that is, by showing more “subjective responsibility” and by being more self-reflexive as historian and subjective individual.³⁸³ Both, Apfelbaum and Crane, saw the emancipatory function of this process of letting other voices speak rather than the authoritative historian. While Crane proposed the relocation of the “collective *and* historical memory in the individual thinking historically, and avoiding ‘speaking for others’,” Apfelbaum's “reinscription of one's personal experiences in the larger flow of history” would “facilitate or hinder a person's shedding of the anonymity of victimhood and regain a sense of historicity.”³⁸⁴

The emancipatory value of memory studies for film-historical inquiries in particular has been increasingly acknowledged since Kuhn's landmark study of memories of cinemagoing in Great Britain in the 1930s two decades ago and has gained momentum with the emergence of new cinema history as a strand in film history with explicit focus on cinemagoing as a social practice. According to Allen, the incorporation of memory studies has had profound historiographic and theoretical implication for film studies, as oral testimonies “implicitly contest both the empiricist objectification of film history and the epistemological authority of the interpretative analyst.”³⁸⁵

³⁸⁰ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 43. This is a conclusion of his study of dreams and aphasia as “those states where the field of memory is most characteristically narrowed” [i.e. stripped from the (social) frameworks of the collective].

³⁸¹ Apfelbaum, “Halbwachs,” 89; Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 47-49.

³⁸² Apfelbaum, “Halbwachs,” 90.

³⁸³ Crane, “Writing the Individual Back,” 1373-1375, 1382, 1384.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 1375; Apfelbaum, “Halbwachs,” 90.

³⁸⁵ Allen, “Reimagining,” 55.

The relationship between memory and film history in particular is special in the sense that film and cinema can be considered as “repositories for representing, shaping, (re)creating or indexing forms of individual and collective memory”.³⁸⁶ As Kuhn et al. pointed out in their introduction to the special edition of *Memory Studies* about “Memories of cinemagoing and film experience”, on the one hand, films can help (re)construct memories of the past; on the other hand, memories of films and cinemagoing can serve as an aspect of the “historical study of film reception and cinemagoing as a social practice”.³⁸⁷ One central approach to the study of historical audiences has therefore been oral history. Before turning to oral history as an approach to historical inquiry, in the remainder of this subparagraph I will address one particular way in which the link between history and memory has been established: the idea of *lieux de mémoire* by Pierre Nora.

Lieux de mémoire: where history and memory meet?

The original idea of *lieux de mémoire* was conceived at a seminar at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris in the 1970s. The objective was to demonstrate the hidden link between “ostensibly unrelated objects” which form “a complex network, an unconscious organization of collective memory that it is up to us to bring to consciousness”.³⁸⁸ In Nora's distinction between memory and history, “true” or “real” memory is social, collective, all-embracing. According to him, true memory (as social practice) has ceased to exist at the end of preindustrial France, with the beginning of modern time, when it was replaced by the written word and the archives of history (as intellectual practice). As a result, modern memory – “our form of memory” – became “nothing but history, a matter of sorting and sifting” and a way in which “modern societies organize a past they are condemned to forget”.³⁸⁹ Nora claimed that “[t]he less memory is experienced from within, the greater its need for external props and tangible reminders of that which no longer exists [...]”.³⁹⁰

Serving as bridges between memory and history, “*lieux de mémoire* are fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it.”³⁹¹ Originally the concept of *lieux de mémoire* concentrated on sites and the “invisible bonds” between them. It was later expanded to include French symbols and myths, “of the most expressive and revealing elements of

³⁸⁶ A. Kuhn, D. Biltereyst, P. Meers, “Memories of Cinemaging and Film Experience: An Introduction,” *Memory Studies* 10, no. 1 (2017): 3.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁸⁸ Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 19.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

'Frenchness'.³⁹² This new historiography represented by Nora's magnum opus proposed to write a "history of France through memory".³⁹³ He argued that "[w]hether one looks at economic factors, cultural practices, or mental evolutions, no unity is apparent [...]. Only in the eyes of memory do the concepts of cohesiveness, unity and, and continuity retain their pertinence and legitimacy."³⁹⁴

The contributions to the project were published in French as *Les Lieux de Mémoire* between 1984 and 1992 spanning seven volumes and involving nearly 120 contributors. Due to my insufficient command of the French language, for this thesis I had to rely mostly on the English translations of Nora's work. Nora's magnum opus was translated and published in two different editions by two different publishers: respectively *Realms of Memory* between 1996 and 1998 and *Rethinking France: Les Lieux de Mémoire* between 2001 and 2010. Not without major concessions: both translated and reedited versions only comprised a third each of the original. In addition, chapters were arranged in a different order, some were split.³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, Nora himself called the English versions a microcosm of the French original, offering "a simplified, purified structure, but one that is quite representative of the spirit and style of the original edifice" and accomplishing "the same mission".³⁹⁶ Knowledge and discussions of nuances that might have gotten lost in the translated versions would go far beyond the scope of this thesis, for the primary objective here is neither Nora's work in general, nor a detailed discussion of his concept of *lieux de mémoire* in particular. Rather the concept serves as an inspiration for an approach that combines history and memory. Before getting into this in detail, I will first turn to the concept of *lieux de mémoire*, its meanings and (mis)appropriations.

Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* rooted in Halbwachs' sociological conceptualization of memory, or, as Lawrence Kritzman formulated it in his foreword to Nora's edited volume *Realms of Memory – Rethinking the French Past* "[p]laces of memory are [...] determined by the mix of individuals that constitute the social group to which they relate."³⁹⁷ *Lieux de mémoire* can be physical and symbolic places, cultural products (books, films) or even distinctive traits of culture or civilization (for example, gastronomy or the Tour de France).

Although the concept is rather broad and has been applied by many different scholars and for many different purposes, as I will show below, a set of certain requirements emerge in Nora's writings for something to qualify as *lieu de mémoire*. First of all, *lieux de mémoire* are characterized

³⁹² P. Nora, "Preface to the English Language Edition," in *Realms of Memory - Rethinking the French Past. Vol. I: Conflicts and Divisions*, edited by P. Nora, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996): xvii.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ L. D. Kritzman, "Foreword: In Remembrance of Things French," in *Realms of Memory - Rethinking the French Past*, edited by P. Nora, (New York: Columbia University Press), 1996 xii.

³⁹⁵ P. Nora, "General Introduction," in *Rethinking France - Les Lieux de Mémoire. Vol. I: The State*, edited by P. Nora, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), xix-xxii. For Nora's contemplations on the translations see his introduction to the first volume of *Realms of Memory*: Nora, "Preface to the English Language Edition," xviii-xix.

³⁹⁶ Nora, "Preface to the English Language Edition," xix.

³⁹⁷ Kritzman, "Foreword," xi.

by their material, their functional, and their symbolic values. And, according to Nora, these three aspects always coexist. Nora provided as an example the notion of the historical generation as *lieu de mémoire*: “A generation is material in a demographic sense; functional by hypothesis, since memories are crystallized in generations and passed on from one to another, and symbolic by definition, since the term “generation” implies that the experience of a small number of people can be used to characterize a much larger number who did not participate in its central event or events.”³⁹⁸

A second requirement is a will to remember, because “[w]ithout a will to remember, *lieux de mémoire* would be *lieux d'histoire*.”³⁹⁹ To remain with Nora's example of generation, in his chapter “Generation” – which is the last chapter of the first volume of *Realms of Memory* – he extensively elaborates on the generation of 1968 and its “mania” for celebrating its pivotal events.⁴⁰⁰

A third prerequisite for something to qualify as *lieu de mémoire* is its capacity for generating new meanings to history, or, in Nora's words: its “ability to resurrect old meanings and generate new ones along with new and unforeseeable connections [...]”⁴⁰¹ *Lieux de mémoire* have no referent in reality. Rather they are self-referential, their meanings are instable and depend on its “users”. Individuals, as members of a social group, appropriate *lieux de mémoire* in order to make it part of their view of the past.⁴⁰² Remaining with the example of generation, according to Nora, a generation “is a product of memory, an effect of remembering”, “a fabrication of hindsight”.⁴⁰³ Because of this, the way in which a particular generation is perceived – and perceives itself – can change over time: “The moments that loom largest in a generation's consciousness of itself are invariably moments of despair and helplessness in the face of history's overwhelming, inaccessible majesty [...]. This obsession with a history that is over and done with and leaves nothing but a void haunts the imagination of all so-called strong generations and a fortiori of intermediate generations; it controls the way their memory works.”⁴⁰⁴

Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* was primarily meant to illuminate questions concerning national identity, and especially French national identity. Nora repeatedly expressed his doubts whether the concept of *lieux de mémoire* was exportable beyond France and beyond questions of

³⁹⁸ Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 14.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴⁰⁰ By this Nora especially alludes to the anniversary celebrations in 1978 and 1988 (P. Nora, “Generation,” in *Realms of Memory - Rethinking the French Past. Vol. I: Conflicts and Divisions*, edited by P. Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 500).

⁴⁰¹ Kritzman, “Foreword,” xiii, Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 15.

⁴⁰² Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 23-24.

⁴⁰³ Nora, “Generation,” 522.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 524-5.

French identity.⁴⁰⁵ In his introduction to the third volume of *Realms of Memory* on symbols, he emphasizes that:

What is unique about France stems from the availability of a full range of instruments on which the recent vogue for commemorations could draw. France has linked its historical experience to a development of the state, a territorial rootedness, a mode of cultural expression, and a form of historical self-consciousness that had made it a "nation of memory" [...]. This national memory has congealed in a historical tradition, historiography, of landscapes, institutions, monuments, and language which the historian can treat as so many *lieux de mémoire*.⁴⁰⁶

According to Den Boer, however, France is only different in one respect, which is universalism: "The British and German *lieux de mémoire* – symbols, handbooks, dictionaries, monuments, commemorations, and expositions – were also authoritarian, unifying, exclusive, and intensely historical."⁴⁰⁷ In his discussion of possible translations of the concept of *lieux de mémoire*, he underlines that problems occur in every language due to linguistic conceptual differences.⁴⁰⁸ Horváth – a Hungarian historian and translator of Nora's work into Hungarian – goes even further by claiming that "the notion of 'lieu de mémoire' is literally not adaptable", since "its integration implies the transformation of its linguistic, cultural and historical connotations to the given context."⁴⁰⁹ Whether or not the concept is exportable is still being debated. Nora himself eventually admitted that at least methodologically his new historiographical approach is more familiar to the Americans than to the French, for "in these countries [meaning such as the US] history has not assumed the same didactic role in forming the national consciousness, the history of history need not burden itself with such polemical content".⁴¹⁰

In the long run, the success of Nora's concept prevailed over his initial reservations, as historians all across Europe and even beyond, started writing new national histories through memory. Inspired by Nora's historiographical approach, works were published for, for example, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Israel, Spain, and Russia. In view of the number of national histories that were written based on his approach, Nora himself eventually admitted that the

⁴⁰⁵ Nora's opening lecture, held in 1992 at a seminar on *Lieux de mémoire* – organized by Dutch historians – at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, was aptly titled "La notion de 'lieux de mémoire' est-elle exportable?". The paper was later published in P. Nora, "La notion de 'lieu de mémoire' est-elle exportable?" in *Lieux de mémoire et identités nationales*, edited by P. den Boer and W. Frijhoff (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1993), 3-10.

⁴⁰⁶ P. Nora, "Introduction to *Realms of Memory*, Volume III," in *Realms of Memory – Rethinking the French Past. Vol. III: Symbols*, edited by P. Nora, ix-xii. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), xii.

⁴⁰⁷ P. den Boer, "Loci memoriae - Lieux de mémoire," in *Cultural Memory Studies*, edited by A. Erll and A. Nünning, (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 21-22.

⁴⁰⁸ Den Boer, "Loci memoriae," 22-23.

⁴⁰⁹ Horváth, "On 'Lieu de Mémoire'," 6.

⁴¹⁰ Nora, "General Introduction: Between Memory and History," 4.

question whether his concept of *lieux de mémoire* is exportable to other national models, had actually become superfluous.⁴¹¹

It is remarkable however, that despite their references to Nora and his concept, many of the contributions did not succeed in applying the concept in a manner to exploit it in all its richness. According to van Vree, the Dutch series, for instance, primarily failed in its attempt, because not memory but historiography determined the choice of the individual *lieux* and their approach. Hence, the series would be nothing more than “a journey alongside memorable monuments with the Netherlands as point of departure and arrival” paying too little attention to the “changes in the perception and symbolic meaning in later periods”.⁴¹² Something similar is observable for the Belgian series, where the majority of the contributions is not exploring the realms of Belgian memory in Nora's new historiographical way – the writing of history through memory – but offer conventional historical accounts of important places in Belgian history, paying too little attention to issues of collective memory, let alone to the changes in the perceptions of these places throughout time.⁴¹³

From this perspective, it would be interesting to explore what it could mean for film historians to conceive of cinema as a *lieu de mémoire*. One way would be to consider films or film stars (and especially historical films) as *lieux de mémoire*.⁴¹⁴ Applying the concept becomes more challenging, however, if cinema is considered as an institution, as a place for film screening and consumption.⁴¹⁵ Upon “testing” the three requirements listed above it is possible to draw the following conclusions.

Regarding the first requirement, to study cinemas as *lieux de mémoire* would mean to pay attention to their material, functional, symbolic value. Studying cinemas as *lieux de mémoire* then includes:

- memories of a cultural practice (*functional* value of cinemas as places where films were screened for entertainment, education, or as work place of cinemas' employees);

⁴¹¹ P. Nora, “Nachwort,” in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte III*, edited by E. François and H. Schulze (München: Beck, 2001), 681.

⁴¹² Van Vree, “Locale geschiedenis,” 66. See H. J. Wesseling, ed., *Plaatsen van herinnering*, 4 volumes (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2005-2006).

⁴¹³ The Belgian version comprises two volumes, both published in 2008: J. Tollebeek and G. Buelens, eds. *België: een parcours van herinnering I - plaatsen van tweedracht, crisis en nostalgie* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2008); J. Tollebeek, and G. Buelens, eds. *België: een parcours van herinnering II - plaatsen van tweedracht, crisis en nostalgie* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2008)..

⁴¹⁴ As a matter of fact, in the German edition *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, one chapter explores the famous actress Marlene Dietrich as *lieu de mémoire* (W. Sudendorf, “Marlene Dietrich,” in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte II*, edited by E. François and H. Schulze, München: Beck, 2001), 620-636).

⁴¹⁵ The Belgian edition of *Lieux* does comprise a contribution devoted to the socialist community center “Feestlokaal Vooruit” in the city of Ghent, which temporarily accommodated a popular cinema as well. However, the Vooruit's existence as cinema is devoted merely a single line in the whole chapter. See H. Balthazar, “Gent: het Feestlokaal Vooruit. ‘De heersende werkman,’” in *België: een parcours van herinnering I - plaatsen van geschiedenis en expansie*, edited by J. Tollebeek and G. Buelens (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2008), 334-347.

- memories of everyday life in a certain place (a city, a neighborhood) related to urban change (*material* value of cinemas as buildings);
- personal memories of the past (*symbolic* meaning of cinemas as meaning carriers for personal/social identity, belonging to a class, ideology...).

An examination of another requirement – the capacity of *lieux de memoire* to generate new meanings – would be equally productive. A number of studies have addressed the changed meaning of cinema and cinemagoing in different periods of time. Quite a number of studies have, for instance, investigated cinema's early period and its struggle for acceptance by different classes and ideologies.⁴¹⁶ Or, for the 1950s, Christine Geraghty, to add another example, has addressed the profound change in attitude towards cinema and cinemagoing in Great Britain.⁴¹⁷

Based on the considerations mentioned above, it would be productive to explore cinemas as *lieux de memoire*. Nora's basic idea of places where memory and history meet is useful for the integrative approach to cinema history. It stimulates to link institutional history of cinemas to individual experiences of cinemagoing as remembered by cinemagoers themselves. Nevertheless, in order to write a “social history of cinema through memory”, the concept of *lieux de memoire* as understood by Nora would not apply in full. First of all, because in order for a place to qualify as *lieu de memoire* is that it is self-conscious in the way it preserves memory.⁴¹⁸ One challenge is, that Nora does not specify whose will it is to remember.⁴¹⁹ At the same time, Nora emphasized that there are exceptions, as in the case of *lieux* where the absence of a will to remember is “compensated for by the work of time and science and by man's dreams and memories”.⁴²⁰ Cinemas are not principally conceived as commemorative institutions. Yet, as I have shown above, findings in recent studies point to the central role cinema played in shaping individual and collective memories of the past, and how cinema memories in particular can be viewed as a particular form of cultural memory.⁴²¹

⁴¹⁶ For Belgium see, for instance, Convents, *Van kinoscoop tot café-ciné* and L. Depauw and D. Biltreyst, “De Kruistocht tegen de slechte cinema: over de aanloop en de start van de Belgische filmkeuring (1911-1929),” *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 8, no. 3 (2005): 3-26.. For Germany and an internationally comparative perspective see, for instance, the various contributions in C. Müller and H. Segeberg, eds., *Kinoöffentlichkeit (1895-1920). Entstehung, Etablierung, Differenzierung* (Marburg: Schüren, 2008).

⁴¹⁷ C. Geraghty, “Cinema as Social Space: Understanding Cinema-going in Britain, 1947-63,” *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 42 (2000), accessed May 3, 2019, https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/32cb69_dea4296d45c2450bbf7aa65cf5e35d97.pdf.

⁴¹⁸ Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 21.

⁴¹⁹ See also Crane, “Writing the Individual Back,” 1380.

⁴²⁰ Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 16.

⁴²¹ See Kuhn, “What to do with Cinema Memory?”. For other studies see, for example, H. Richards, “Memory Reclamation of Cinema Going in Bridgend, South Wales, 1930–1960,” *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* 23, no. 4 (2003): 341–355; J. Labanyi, “The Mediation of Everyday Life: an Oral History of Cinema-Going in 1940s and 1950s Spain,” *Studies in Hispanic Cinemas* 2, no. 2 (2005): 105–108; M. Stokes and M. Jones, “Windows on the World: Memories of European Cinemas in 1960s Britain,” *Memory Studies* 10, no. 1 (2017): 78–90; D. Treveri Gennari, “Understanding the Cinemagoing Experience in Cultural Life: The Role of Oral History and the Formation of ‘Memories of Pleasure’,” *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 21, no. 1 (2018): 39-53.

Secondly, while Nora clearly distinguished between history and memory, in this thesis their relationship is considered as being symbiotic and complementary.⁴²² In the course of this chapter, several ways have been addressed of how official history and memory interact in a dialectical relationship. As this thesis is to show that oral testimonies are just as important for understanding and contextualizing reconstructions of historical changes in its full complexity, as are the findings from historical inquiry based on written documents and archival material, which help contextualize and interpret the oral testimonies.

Finally, despite his emphasis on fragmentary, non-teleological nature of his new historiographical approach, inherent to Nora's understanding of *lieux de mémoire* is his aim to “assemble a new national story” as well as a “teleological account of modernization”, of the replacement of memory by history, of *milieux de mémoire* by *lieux de mémoire*.⁴²³ This belief in a coherent historical narrative conflicts with the belief in the existence of multiple simultaneous histories as advocated in this thesis.⁴²⁴ What I am interested in is not a reconstruction of *the* history of cinemas and cinemagoing in Antwerp, but to disclose its complexity, consisting of multiple layers which invite multiple readings and different explanations for the changes in the city's cinema culture.

To sum up, three basic ideas of Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* are productive for studying Antwerp's cinema culture. The first is the idea of studying cinema as sites where history and memory meet. The second is the emphasis on the coexistence of their material, functional, symbolic values, which calls for a contextual approach. The third is the emphasis on changes in how cinemas and cinemagoing are perceived (remembered) throughout time. Specifically this last point raises the question of the place of oral history in relation to history and memory.

⁴²² According to Tai, Nora's distinction between memory and history is not even evident in his project, given the that a number of the contribution were written “in the style of conventional historians rather than as students of memory” and due to the emphasis on “elite-opinion makers (who left behind records)” instead of “ordinary localized communities of memory” (Tai, “Remembered Realms,” 8).

⁴²³ B. Schwarz, “Memory, Temporality, Modernity. Les Lieux de mémoire,” in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, edited by S. Radstone and B. Schwarz, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 57. See also van Vree, who actually saw an enrichment in the consideration of places of memory “as an expression of a changing historical interest, not aimed at comprehensive perspectives and impressive insights, but rather at smaller stories, individual events, and local histories. It is especially here that the changes – or even the break – in the contemporary historical culture implied by Nora, become manifest.” (Van Vree, “Locale geschiedenis,” 68 [my transl..])

⁴²⁴ In this line, a certain rejection of microhistories can be noticed in Nora's writings: “And from countless ‘microhistories’ we take shards of the past and try to glue them together in the hope that the history we reconstruct might seem more like the history we experience.” (Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 13.)

2.2.3. History, memory, and oral history

Iggers, in acknowledging the central role of memory, considered oral history as one approach to the reconstruction of historical memory.⁴²⁵ Den Boer argues that the memory boom and an increase in the popularity of oral history since World War II have blurred the boundaries between memory and history.⁴²⁶ Both claims in some way point to a common association of history with the practice of historical inquiry based on written sources, and archival documents, as opposed to the association of oral history with memory. Some of the points addressed here earlier, indicate that such an opposition between history and memory is rather simplistic. After all, as Radstone argued “personal accounts of the past do not necessarily offer direct access to the past” because there is a “complex and indirect relationship that pertains between personal memory and the past”.⁴²⁷ In the following I will address the increased role of oral history in historical inquiry in the past century and elaborate on its methodological implications.

The increased role of oral history in historical research

The use of oral testimony had been a common practice among historians before the professionalization of history in the nineteenth century, when it was replaced by written and archival documents.⁴²⁸ After that, oral history played a major role in anthropological studies, but revived as a branch of historical inquiry only in the second half of the twentieth century.⁴²⁹ As I have addressed in Chapter 1, the atrocities of two world wars and the end of colonial empires had increased the awareness of the negative sides of economic growth and enlightenment, which led to a growing consciousness of a crisis in modern society and culture and provided incentives for the “writing of history from below”.⁴³⁰ It had sensitized concerns of social differences in terms of ethnicity, gender, race, class, and age, and called for the investigation of hitherto neglected histories. Hence, fields where oral history was applied most frequently were gender studies, ethnic and racial studies.⁴³¹ In

⁴²⁵ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 153.

⁴²⁶ Den Boer, “Geschiedenis, herinnering,” 48. Regarding the recent memory boom see also D. James, “Meatpackers, Peronists, and Collective Memory: A View from the South,” *American Historical Review* (December 1997): 1404.

⁴²⁷ Radstone, “Reconceiving Binaries,” 135.

⁴²⁸ R. Perks and A. Thomson, “Part 1. Critical Developments: Introduction,” in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 1. Oral history must be clearly distinguished from (the history of) oral tradition, which has its roots in the nineteenth century and studies cultural materials and traditions transmitted orally from one generation to another (e.g. folktales, ballades, songs).

⁴²⁹ Den Boer, “Geschiedenis, herinnering,” 46.

⁴³⁰ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 7.

⁴³¹ There is a large tradition of oral history research with regard to trauma, victims of genocides, dictatorships and political, religious and ideological persecution. For a broad range of examples, including topics such as slavery, holocaust and migration in various parts of the world, see Part 3 in S. Radstone and B. Schwarz, eds., *Memory. Histories, Theories, Debates* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 363-458.

addition, technological innovation of, and easier access to, recording devices stimulated the use of oral history for historical research.⁴³²

The first “organized” project that used oral history as method of historical inquiry was that of Allan Nevins in 1948 in the US.⁴³³ Nevins' objective was to write histories of important leader figures by interviewing them “before they passed on”.⁴³⁴ The exclusive attention for the great men of history invoked much criticism and resulted in a shift of attention in oral history from the top to the basis in the course of the 1960s and 1970s.⁴³⁵ Several projects and associations emerged with a strong focus on interviews with ordinary people in an attempt to write histories about the people by the people.⁴³⁶

One of the pioneering oral historians in Great Britain in this respect was Paul Thompson. In 1978 he published the benchmark work *The Voice of the Past* in 1978.⁴³⁷ Instead of simply celebrating “the working class as it is”, Thompson stressed the importance of, for instance, the juxtaposing of statements from authorities and ordinary people.⁴³⁸ He argued that “[r]eality is complex and many-sided; and it is a primary merit of oral history that to a much greater extent than most sources it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated.”⁴³⁹ Hence, “[t]he challenge of oral history lies partly in relation to this essential social purpose of history,” thereby relating to its potential of changing “the focus of history itself, and open up new areas of inquiry.”⁴⁴⁰

Although histories of the working class remained one of the main fields of interest after that, oral history also became increasingly applied for the writing of biographies of the ordinary people (in order to reconstruct, amongst other, self-images, values, decision making and representatives of the masses), as well as for the writing of bottom-up histories and the construction of social identities (of, for example, immigrants, victims of war and discrimination), the history of everyday life, and local histories.⁴⁴¹ One particular field of inquiry that is of interest in this thesis is the use of oral history in

⁴³² Perks and Thomson, “Critical Developments,” 1.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴³⁴ M. Frisch, “Oral History and *Hard Times*. A Review Essay,” in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998). 32.

⁴³⁵ See for example the Michael Frisch's criticism on Nevin's project as being “explicitly archival, informational, and elitist” (*Ibid.*, 32).

⁴³⁶ Another prominent early example of such projects include the George Ewart Evans collection documenting rural life and agricultural work in GB between the 1950s and the 1970s (British Library. “George Ewart Evans collection.” Accessed May 29, 2019. <http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/George-Ewart-Evans-collection>). For more examples see A. Portelli, “Uchronic Dreams. Working-class Memory and Possible Worlds,” in *The Myths We Live By*, edited by R. Samuel and P. Thompson, (London/New York: Routledge, 1990), 143-160. Prominent associations include, for example the United States Oral History Association founded in 1967 by prominent oral historians such as Allan Nevins and Willa Baum as well as the British Oral History Society founded by Paul Thompson in the early 1970s (Perks and Thomson, “Critical Developments,” 1-2).

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁴³⁸ Thompson, “The Voice of the Past,” 27, 24.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 75-76; B. De Wever and P. François, *Gestemd verleden. Mondelinge geschiedenis als praktijk* (Brussels: Vlaams Centrum voor Volkskunde, 2003), 56-61.

business-historical research. Although oral testimonies are still largely undervalued as sources in business-historical research, generally the value of oral history for the writing of business histories has been stressed in relation to the experience of employees on the work floor.⁴⁴² According to Bläsing, positions and status within company hierarchies are unimportant and “the so-called nameless in history not seldom have as much as or even more interesting things to report than those that have played leading roles”, including “aspects which are not mentioned in official annual reports.”⁴⁴³ Historian Leen van Molle added that in order to get a well-balanced impression of the state of affairs, ideally persons from the top and the basis should be interviewed, from inside the company as well as outside.⁴⁴⁴ In this thesis oral history serves two purposes: a workplace-ethnographical approach to the business history of the Rex cinema group, as well as the examination of the cinema-going as a social practice. I will return to this in the final paragraph about methods used for this thesis.

During the past two decades, the value of oral testimonies has become increasingly and widely acknowledged also by film and cinema historians. This change is perhaps best exemplified by Allen's work. Although in 1985 in *Film History. Theory and Practice* the use of oral testimonies was included in the part of possible sources (next to a broad range of archival resources), the comparatively little space granted to it in combination with the explicit warning about “tricks memory can play on us” suggest that it was not explicitly encouraged.⁴⁴⁵ More than two decades later, however, Allen expressed his wish to include oral testimonies for his comprehensive project “Going to the Show”, because they “exponentially increase the number and variety of available film histories; they implicitly contest both the empiricist objectification of film history and the epistemological authority of the interpretive analyst.”⁴⁴⁶ In the wake of the study done by Kuhn on British cinema audiences in the 1930s, new research projects focusing on histories of local cinema cultures have been initiated that integrate oral histories alongside methods and sources.⁴⁴⁷

⁴⁴² L. van Molle, “Luisteren naar het verleden: het gebruik van mondelinge bronnen,” in *Een succesvolle onderneming. Handleiding voor het schrijven van een bedrijfsgeschiedenis*, edited by C. Vancoppenolle, (Brussel: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2002), 147-148. Wasko's *Movies and Money* is a wonderful exception in this. Regarding the use of stories and life histories in organizational research see, respectively, G. Musson, “Life Histories,” in *Qualitative Methods and Analysis in Organizational Research. A Practical Guide*, edited by G. Symon and C. Cassell (London et al.: Sage, 1998), 11, and Y. Gabriel, “The Use of Stories,” in *Qualitative Methods and Analysis in Organizational Research. A Practical Guide*, edited by G. Symon and C. Cassell (London et al.: Sage, 1998), 135. For oral history approaches to business history see Bläsing, *Hoofdlijnen*, 71, J. F. E. Bläsing and T. Langenhuyzen. “De verhouding tussen theorie en praktijk,” in *Een succesvolle onderneming. Handleiding voor het schrijven van een bedrijfsgeschiedenis*, edited by C. Vancoppenolle, (Brussel: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2002), 40; Van Molle, “Luisteren,” 147.

⁴⁴³ Bläsing, *Hoofdlijnen*, 73, 84.

⁴⁴⁴ Van Molle, “Luisteren,” 151, 153. For an example of such a workplace-ethnographical approach to cinema history, see, for example, L. Česálková, “‘Feel the film’: Film projectionists and professional memory,” *Memory Studies* 10, no. 1 (2017): 49-62.

⁴⁴⁵ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 210.

⁴⁴⁶ Allen, “Reimagining,” 55, 47-48.

⁴⁴⁷ Next to the “‘Enlightened City’” project, examples for such research projects include “An Oral History of Cinemagoing in 1940s and 1950s Spain” (AHRB, 1999-2004); “Cultural Memory and British Cinemagoing of the 1960s” (AHRC, University

Methodological implications

Although there is a growing recognition of the value of oral testimonies, how it should be used is still being met with suspicion. In our bias for written over oral sources we often tend to forget that, to formulate it with Staiger's words, scholars "use memories for almost all their raw evidence."⁴⁴⁸

Staiger embraced the increased role of memory in future work on reception studies, yet she also warned that we have to be aware of specific features of memory data.⁴⁴⁹ As I will address in more detail below, according to the prominent oral historians Ronald J. Grele and Alessandro Portelli, the only weakness of oral history is that it is most commonly accused of pretensions it does not have. It seems as if such ill assumptions stem mostly from scholars not familiar with the methods. After all, there is a general recognition amongst those who do apply these methods, that oral history does not provide direct access to the past, it represents neither facts nor "the past as it really was".⁴⁵⁰

The difficulties with regard to conceptualizations that are characteristic of memory studies in general, also applies for the field of oral history. Despite the fact that oral history has become well established as a historiographic approach since the 1970s and 1980s, it is still often met with suspicion.⁴⁵¹ Next to interviewing techniques and preparational standards for oral history, a third category of critique Grele distinguished, relates to questions of historical methodology. Grele divided this category in three (mistaken) major issues which are probably most often heard by oral historians: questions of (statistical) representation, the assumed primacy of written over oral testimony, as well as the accuracy of memory and intrusion of subjective or social biases.⁴⁵²

According to Grele, the problematizing of (statistical) representation in relation to oral history is not even adequate, for "[t]he real issues are historiographical, not statistical".⁴⁵³ He argued that "[i]nterviews are selected, not because they present some abstract statistical norm, but because they typify historical processes."⁴⁵⁴ Equally, the assumed primacy of written over oral testimonies ignores both, "problems of accuracy faced by historians" using written testimony, and the growing literature based on the analysis of oral testimony for historical purposes: "The usefulness of any source depends upon the information one is looking for, or the questions one seeks to answer."⁴⁵⁵

College London, 2013-2015); "Italian Cinema Audiences" (AHRC, Oxford Brookes University, 2013-2016), "European Cinema Audiences" (AHCR, Oxford Brookes University, 2018-2021). For more examples, see also HoMER Network, "HoMER projects".

⁴⁴⁸ Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 186.

⁴⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁴⁵⁰ See also Radstone, "Reconceiving Binaries": 136; Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 9; Gabriel, "The Use of Stories," 136.

⁴⁵¹ R. J. Grele, "Movement without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History," in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 40; A. Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader*, edited by R. Perks and A. Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 63.

⁴⁵² Grele, "Movement without Aim," 40-41; De Wever and François, *Gestemd verleden*, 7.

⁴⁵³ Grele, "Movement without Aim," 41.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

When scanning through the literature dealing with oral history, it comes as no surprise then that the bulk of text books and literature – often written as recommendations for cultural/archival policy – focuses on methodological questions (interviewing techniques, methods of transcription, archiving and interpretation) or address problems pertaining to the legitimization of oral history as a historiographical form of inquiry.⁴⁵⁶

A much greater problem – and one that lies in fact at the foundation – of all the above-mentioned points of critique Grele sees in the “sad condition of our theoretical knowledge about oral history, and the lack of serious efforts to think through exactly what an oral interview is or should be, how it is to be analyzed, or for what purposes [which] has resulted in a situation of endless activity without goal or meaning.”⁴⁵⁷ He argues that in order to engage in such introspection one needs to “begin to discuss what kinds of information we are getting”, “what it is that structures an interview”, and “how it should be conducted”.⁴⁵⁸ Grele's considerations echo that of another oral historian, Michael Frisch, who warns against the attitude to treat oral memory as history as it really was and who suggests to use oral history as a tool rather than evidence. According to Frisch, better questions for oral history would then be: “What happens to experience on the way to becoming memory?”, “What happens to experience on the way to becoming history?”, “What is the relationship between memory and historical generalization?”.⁴⁵⁹ Reflections as these mirror two of the central debates dominating oral history in the course of the 1970s and 1980s previously addressed in this chapter: the connection between memory and history, and between individual and collective consciousness.⁴⁶⁰

Furthermore, the acclaimed oral historian Alessandro Portelli pointed to the problem of lack of clear concepts. According to Portelli, the main problem lies in the lack of a clear understanding of what oral history is and how it can be used, which has made oral history a “specter [...] haunting the halls of academy” and charged it “with pretensions it does not have”.⁴⁶¹ Portelli listed a number of ill assumptions and offered alternatives as to what makes oral history really different from traditional approaches to history based on writing (and “rationality”).⁴⁶² Yet instead of abandoning written sources altogether he emphasized that both written and oral sources “are not mutually exclusive” and that “the undervaluing and the overvaluing of oral sources end up by cancelling out specific

⁴⁵⁶ See for example V. Yow, *Recording Oral History: a Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994); D. Dunaway and W. Baum, eds., *Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, 2nd ed. (London: AltaMira Press, 1996); De Wever and François, *Gestemd verleden*.

⁴⁵⁷ Grele, “Movement without Aim,” 42.

⁴⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁵⁹ Frisch, “Oral History,” 33.

⁴⁶⁰ Perks and Thompson, “The Voice of the Past,” 3.

⁴⁶¹ Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 63.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*, 64.

qualities, turning these sources either into mere supports for traditional written sources, or into an illusory cure for all ills.”⁴⁶³

One of them would be what he called the “orality of oral sources”.⁴⁶⁴ Although this seems to be a rather obvious trait, Portelli pointed to the common historical practice of analyzing transcriptions of oral interviews. Transcriptions disregard certain distinctive features of oral testimonies, such as tone, volume, intonation, speech rhythm which are hardly reproducible in written form, but which do have narrative function as bearers of meaning (of emotional content, for example).⁴⁶⁵ In addition to this, as pointed out by, for example, Ercole et al., body language represents an important feature of carriers of meaning, as it can reveal conflicting messages compared with the spoken word.⁴⁶⁶

A second important point discussed by Portelli and briefly mentioned above, is related to the wrong use of oral testimony as source for factual information. Portelli argued that oral history “tells us less about *events* than about their *meaning*”.⁴⁶⁷ Oral testimonies are as much about what people did as what they believed or wished to be doing, which makes oral sources “credible, but with a *different credibility*”, since “‘wrong’ statements are still psychologically ‘true’”.⁴⁶⁸ In addition, Portelli stressed that “memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings”.⁴⁶⁹ Memories can be transformed in time and be shaped according to present needs: certain events are weighed differently or even left out, other occurrences might be valued and colored differently throughout time. Portelli suggested that “the most precious information may lie in what the informants *hide*, and in the fact they *do* hide it, rather than in what they *tell*”.⁴⁷⁰

A third intrinsic characteristic of oral history as defined by Portelli relates to the question of objectivity. Portelli underlines the difference between written sources, as stable texts which are usually produced independently from the researcher's research agenda and which can only be interpreted, and oral sources, which are produced in interaction between researcher and respondent. On the one hand, the relationship between researcher and respondent as well as their interaction can have a considerable impact on the questions asked and answers provided in the course of the interview. Yet it also shapes the product of the interview after the fact, when, for instance, the voice of the interviewer is cut out of the interview and the meaning of the answers

⁴⁶³ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid., 65-67.

⁴⁶⁶ Ercole et al., “Mapping Cinema Memories”.

⁴⁶⁷ Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different,” 67 [emphasis in source].

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 68 [emphasis in source].

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 69.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid.

become distorted. Hence Portelli's conclusion that opposed to written sources "[o]ral testimony [...] is never the same twice".⁴⁷¹

Closely linked to this is a last ill assumption Portelli proposed to correct. Despite the democratic base of oral history, as a kind of history by the people for the people, he cautioned that we easily tend to forget that oral history is not where people speak for themselves. On the contrary, the historical discourse is still "firmly in the hands of the historian": by "selecting" the respondents (whether or not by random), by asking the questions and reacting to answers, by interpreting and/or presenting the interview. Yet, instead of trying to conceal the historian's partialities and involvements the generative process of oral testimonies, Portelli viewed the strength of oral history in exposing and confronting them.⁴⁷²

Connected to this is another point made by historian Alon Confino, that we should also be careful not to homogenize the collective. After all, the collective is not a homogeneous mass and we should be aware "of the fact that collective memory is an exploration of a shared identity that unites a social group [...] whose members nonetheless have different interests and motivations."⁴⁷³ While historian Daniel James agreed with Confino, he also criticized him, and particularly Crane, for neglecting the complexity at work when speaking of the collective. Based on anecdotes gathered from his research as oral and labor historian in Argentina, James showed that "these stories do not speak to collective memory in the abstract".⁴⁷⁴ Discrepancies in the testimonies of respondents, for example, should not simply "be reduced to truth telling or the foibles of memory", but can exist for some much more concrete reasons, such as competition for presence within groups, or the respondent's (unintended) reinforcement of communal stories of their generations which might root in notions of propriety and respect towards other members of the group.⁴⁷⁵

In addition to the pitfalls addressed above is the question of an increased abundance of oral testimonies available for historical research. Technological innovations in the second half of the twentieth century (portable recording devices, computer aided text processors, etc.) have to a certain degree enhanced possibilities of recording and evaluating oral testimonies, and helped the increased application of oral history. The advent of the digital age has accelerated this process even more, not only with regard to the drastic improvement of the quality, accessibility, usability of recording and processing devices and software, but also when it comes to storage and analyzing tools, such as data analysis software, digital databases and other forms of digital infrastructure. In the epilogue of *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, van Dijck posed a comprehensive number of

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 70-71.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 72-73.

⁴⁷³ Confino, "Collective Memory": 1390.

⁴⁷⁴ James, "Meatpackers," 1408.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 1408.

insightful questions in relation to the future of theorizing and studying memory. Amongst these are the ones which might shape thinking about, and doing, oral history in the future are questions relating to the easy access to, and use of, endless storage and retrieval functions offered by the world wide web, as this inevitably influences what and how we remember, blurring the borders between personal, collective, and historical memory ever more.⁴⁷⁶

By way of recapitulating the above-mentioned arguments of what oral history has to offer, its value lies particularly in the ways it complements and challenges other methods and approaches to historical inquiry. The pitfalls addressed above are particularly relevant as they serve as guiding principles of how to deal with oral testimonies in thesis. As I will explain in more detail below, rather than serving as unquestioned sources of historical facts, or what cinemagoing in the past “was really like”, they are used as additional voices to complement and nuance findings based on traditional sources (archive material, historical documents etc.) and – as I will show in Chapter 6 – they serve as points of departure to explore the *meaning* of film and cinemagoing in Antwerp in the past. Although oral history thus lends itself to be combined with other methods, the question is how exactly to combine different methods and what these combinations imply.

2.3. The shift from single- to mixed-method approaches

Twentieth century historiography was characterized by a shift from a largely separated use of quantitative and qualitative methods towards multi-method and mixed-method approaches.⁴⁷⁷ Denzin and Lincoln demarcated the difference between qualitative and quantitative research as follows: while quantitative studies emphasize abstraction and the “measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables”, qualitative research aims at rich descriptions and explanations of processes and meanings.⁴⁷⁸ Against a commonly held assumption, one did not develop out of the other. Rather, both strands, the quantitative and qualitative, existed simultaneously, albeit with different weights in different periods. Most broadly speaking, roughly the first half of the twentieth century was marked by a domination of the positivist paradigm. This was

⁴⁷⁶ Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories*, 170ff.

⁴⁷⁷ While mixed-method approaches are commonly understood as studies integrating quantitative and qualitative methods and data, multi-method approaches are considered as studies combining either quantitative or qualitative methods and data. See, for example, J. Creswell and P. Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Method Research* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2007), 273.

⁴⁷⁸ Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 4, 6.

subsequently criticized and/or complemented by postpositivist approaches, which were, in turn, replaced by an increased blurring of approaches from the 1970s onwards.⁴⁷⁹

Attempts do exist to draw more clearly defined chronological lines in applied methods in historical inquiry, but they are usually restricted to limited periods or certain disciplines. De Schryver, for example described the shift in relation to economic history from qualitative to quantitative (with a period of coexistence in the 1920s, when econometrists came up) after World War II, back to qualitative.⁴⁸⁰ Despite such attempts, however, it would be too simplistic to speak of clear shifts in the twentieth century from qualitative to quantitative methods, for example, or vice versa.⁴⁸¹ First of all, because the evolution of each individual strand itself is rather complex and hardly to grasp in linear ways. According to Denzin and Lincoln, for instance, qualitative research is “a set of practices [embracing] within its own multiple disciplinary histories constant tensions and contradictions over the project itself, including its methods and the forms of its findings.”⁴⁸² Furthermore, as mentioned above, qualitative and quantitative approaches have existed next to each other throughout history. From the 1990s they have been “legally” united in mixed-methods approaches (hence been labeled the “third methodological movement”).⁴⁸³

What makes a clear-cut delineation of the evolution of types of methodologies and their applications even more problematic is that there are no fixed links between a discipline or a subject and a method. Qualitative methods have been employed in different disciplines and/or for different subjects over time. Memory, for instance, has been approached from various disciplinary angles in the natural sciences (mostly associated with quantitative approaches) as well as in the humanities (more qualitative).⁴⁸⁴ One example is Halbwachs’ versatile thinking and multidisciplinary approach to the most wide-ranging facets of life. His vested interest in social aspects of memory was accompanied by a profound knowledge of mathematical statistics.⁴⁸⁵ He combined human and natural sciences, a trend mentioned by Denzin and Lincoln to become characteristic only in the 1970s.⁴⁸⁶ Halbwachs’ advocacy for cross-disciplinary collaboration found good soil within the circle of the *Annales*, as did his outspoken preference for explanation over description.⁴⁸⁷ Although most of his work on collective memory was published posthumously and in an unfinished state, it was highly

⁴⁷⁹ For a comparison of the corresponding attempts of periodization see, for example, C. Teddlie and A. Tashakkori, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research. Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Los Angeles et al.: Sage, 2009), 63ff.

⁴⁸⁰ De Schryver, *Historiografie*, 351.

⁴⁸¹ Gill Musson spoke of a “general eclipsing of qualitative methodologies by the quantitative approaches which characterized social science research during the mid part of [the twentieth] century” (Musson, “Life Histories,” 11).

⁴⁸² Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3, 4.

⁴⁸³ See Teddlie and Tashakkori, *Foundations*. Mixed-methods research has been labeled differently by different scholars. For some examples see Teddlie and Tashakkori, *Foundations*, 4.

⁴⁸⁴ Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories*, xiii.

⁴⁸⁵ Coser in Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 5.

⁴⁸⁶ Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 9.

⁴⁸⁷ Coser in Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 5, 7, 10, 11.

influential for other major works that followed, amongst which Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*.⁴⁸⁸ Memory and oral history played increasingly important roles in social sciences, and especially in historical inquiry, up to a point where scholars even speak about a “memory boom”.⁴⁸⁹

Within the humanities and film studies, in particular, mixed-method approaches have received increased scholarly attention with the emergence of digital humanities in the past two decades. The growing availability of sources in digital form as well as the development and constant refinement of digital tools has facilitated and stimulated new approaches to (film) historical inquiry.⁴⁹⁰

In the following subparagraphs I will address the application of multi-method and mixed-method approaches in the field of film history in general, and new cinema history in particular. As it forms the basic research design of this thesis, special attention is given to *triangulation* as a means to investigate local cinema histories from an interdisciplinary perspective and explore in depth the changes in film exhibition and film consumption in the past.

2.3.1. Multi-method and mixed-method approaches in film-historical inquiry

One of the most productive contributions to the opening up – methodologically – of film-historical research came forth of the field of cultural studies. In 1994, reflecting on the status quo of film history, Richard Abel called for a closer alignment of cinema history with the development of cultural studies: “Such an alignment particularly rests on Cultural Studies' interventionary analysis of how the social relations of power are constituted, contested and changed in cultural practice, and how knowledge is and can be produced, circulated, and put to use.”⁴⁹¹ Similarly, Graeme Turner reflected on the longstanding shared basis of film studies and cultural studies reaching back to the 1950s, and the shared interest in “popular forms and in the history of the cultural and industrial systems which produce these forms”.⁴⁹² At the same point he observed a crucial difference in their approach: while film studies were mostly preoccupied with the individual texts and its aesthetic properties, cultural studies was not (anymore), as it had moved “from a focus on the text to the analysis of the audience, and from there to mapping the discursive, economic, and regulatory context within which the two

⁴⁸⁸ Coseriu in Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Den Boer, “Geschiedenis, herinnering,” 45. Van Dijck asserted that the increased role of so-called ego-documents since WWII and “historians are increasingly intrigued by the way in which personal accounts, or ‘small histories,’ reflect and refine the complexities of grand historical narratives” (Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories*, 10).

⁴⁹⁰ Noordegraaf et al., “Writing Cinema Histories”: 106. See also M. Ross, M. Grauer and B. Freisleben, *Digital Tools in Media Studies: Analysis and Review* (Berlin: Transcript, 2009).

⁴⁹¹ Abel, “Don’t know much,” 114.

⁴⁹² G. Turner, “Cultural Studies and Film,” in *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, edited by J. Hill and P. C. Gibson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 195.

come together."⁴⁹³ According to Turner, broad globalization discussions have pushed political, economic and cultural topics for larger and smaller film nations at the center stage of film studies, and brought film studies and cultural studies closer together again.

However, as Turner also emphasized, this was not the case in relation to audience studies. While audience studies from a cultural studies perspective was quickly and well embraced by television studies, it was less so by film studies, not to mention by film and cinema history.⁴⁹⁴ As I have shown in Chapter 1, following the groundbreaking work of feminists like Mulvey in the 1970s there came the period which witnessed a shift from notions of constructed hypothetical spectators towards the study of cinema's social audiences. I have already discussed the implications of this shift for the conception of the cinema audience in terms of its social stratification (age, gender, class, etc.). Here I want to look at the methodological underpinnings of this shift.

The most obvious one was the move from the study of the film text towards examinations of the contexts of film exhibition and consumption. Within this wave of context-based research of historical film consumption there have been two strands. On the one hand studies that deduced information on how films might have been consumed by different audiences at different periods. Sources were non-filmic – or subsidiary – texts, such as reviews, letters to the editors, diaries etc., which were read discursively. Two examples are Staiger's (1992) historical materialist approach to film reception, and Barbara Klinger's (1997) thorough context-based approach to historical film reception.⁴⁹⁵ On the other hand, there are scholars who studied audiences more directly, via ethnographic approaches, most prominently oral histories. The groundbreaking work of Kuhn has been mentioned several times in this respect.

The application of ethnographic methods, and particularly oral history, in film-historical research has since then been gradually increasing.⁴⁹⁶ Film scholars as Staiger and Kuhn have demonstrated that an ethnographic approach to the writing of film history is especially rewarding for studying historical cinema audiences and reception. It was the merit of studies as these that demonstrated that going to the movies yielded so much more than just the movies.⁴⁹⁷ An ethnographic approach to film historical inquiry also offers more practical opportunities and challenges. Finding information and evidence on historical audiences, on the circumstances of film

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 199-200. For television studies from a cultural studies perspective see the groundbreaking work by, for example, D. Morley, *The Nationwide Audience. Structure and decoding* (London: BFI, 1980), I. Ang, *Het geval Dallas* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1982), J. Fiske, *Television Culture. Popular Pleasures and Politics* (London: Methuen, 1987).

⁴⁹⁵ Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 79-80; Klinger, "Film History Terminable," 108-113.

⁴⁹⁶ This can be exemplified even within the oeuvre of some scholars. While in 1992, Staiger, for instance, was rather reluctant towards the use of memories in reception studies (Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 79-80), in *Media Reception Studies*, published more than ten years later, she devoted a whole chapter to memory which she concluded by predicting that "memory studies will be a primary area for further work" (Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 196).

⁴⁹⁷ Kuhn, "What to do with Cinema Memory?," 85; Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 8.

consumption, of motives for cinemagoing, etc., has proven immensely difficult, definitely for periods and places where record keeping has been poor and/or where official records would tell only half the story. Kuhn and Stacey rightly pointed to the difference in approaches in for instance Great Britain and the US, due to a different degree of access to sources: “the deployment of cultural studies-style methods in historical ethnographies of film reception by British scholars Helen Taylor and Jackie Stacey, for example, stand in marked contrast to their US counterparts' focus on film industry discourses and intertexts.”⁴⁹⁸ This regional difference in approaches to historical research which are largely due to differences in access to sources has also been one of the central threads, for example, running through the “media industry studies” workshops (as a subfield of “media studies”) and panels at SCMS in 2012.⁴⁹⁹ A general agreement prevailed on the need for more attention to the human element in media industry studies which brings with it an increased role of memory and oral testimonies in media industry studies.

An additional challenge to integrative approaches lies in the institutional and educational backgrounds of scholars in the field. Exemplary for a persistent insular thinking among film historians was Higashi’s urgent call in 2004 for more interdisciplinary collaboration between scholars.⁵⁰⁰ And at least with the digital turn in the humanities about a decade ago, interdisciplinary collaboration has become even more indispensable: the creation and productive use of digital databases and archives often requires technical knowhow and skills many of the traditional researchers are not yet sufficiently familiar with.⁵⁰¹

Hence, for the last decades calls for interdisciplinary collaborations and multi- and mixed-method approaches to film history have become more urgent and explicit, particularly within the strand of new cinema history. Most visibly, this is manifested in the application of diverse theories, approaches, methods and data used in the contributions to the latest editions focusing on new cinema history (amongst which *Explorations in New Cinema History*, *Cinema* and *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*) and also in the work done by researchers within the HoMER Network as advocates of new cinema history.⁵⁰² However, while the publications – and new cinema

⁴⁹⁸ Kuhn and Stacey, “Screen Histories,” 6.

⁴⁹⁹ The demarcation of media industry studies as a subfield of media studies was provided by Paul McDonald, chair and founder of the media industry studies interest group during the closing panel at the 2012 conference of the Society of Cinema and Media Studies, Boston.

⁵⁰⁰ Higashi, “Film History”. Although Higashi’s call predominantly referred to collaboration between film historians and cultural and social historian, the bottom line of her argument for more interdisciplinary exchange can be easily transferred to other disciplines and fields of research.

⁵⁰¹ See for example, the results of a first tentative study of the use of the online database and research instrument Cinema Context, which showed that so far, the database has hardly been used to its full potential (Noordegraaf et al., “Writing Cinema Histories”).

⁵⁰² There has been a broad range of methods applied in film-historical inquiries, including geographical information system (GIS) for statistical analysis of geographical data for the study of cinema history, POPSTAT for quantitative analysis of film popularity, critical reviews of historical material archives and personal collections, and oral history. See Maltby et al., *Explorations*; Biltreyst et al. *The Routledge Companion*; HoMER Network, “HoMER projects”.

history as a field of cinema studies – *as a whole* are exemplary for interdisciplinary collaborations applying multi-method approaches based on a broad spectrum of sources and data, studies which unite all this within one single project are still relatively scarce.⁵⁰³

One noteworthy example, which has meanwhile become a very common combination within historians engaged in the writing of local film exhibition, is the combination of quantitative analysis of databases with archival research. Groundbreaking work has been done in this respect by Dibbets and the creation of the “Cinema Context” database, mentioned earlier. “Cinema Context” is not only a database providing factual dates about cinemas and film screenings, but it is also a research tool for unlocking the “DNA” of local cinema histories based on which new (qualitative and quantitative) research questions can be generated and answered. “Cinema Context” has existed for more than one and a half decades now and has served as inspiration for many projects, amongst which Allen's “Going to the Show” and most recently the “European Cinema Audiences” project.⁵⁰⁴

Another example for mixed-method approaches to the writing of new cinema histories was introduced by Klenotic and his use of GIS for the geospatial analysis of film exhibition (see also the discussion on the historiographical underpinnings of new cinema history in Chapter 1). Klenotic's contribution is most revealing in many ways. While initially, GIS has been used primarily for quantitative research, more recently it has increasingly been applied as a research instrument for “grounded visualization” and “in creative yet systematic and rigorous ways that challenge and overcome the divide between qualitative and quantitative methodologies”.⁵⁰⁵ In addition, and related to this, GIS can be used not only as a tool for visually mapping the end results (for example, the geospatial distribution of cinemas in a particular place), but also as an instrument for discovering and analyzing patterns in the dataset.⁵⁰⁶ This way, research based on GIS has the “capacity to reveal

⁵⁰³ Exceptions included in *Explorations* are, for example, Allen, “Reimagining”; Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map”; Knight 2011; Biltereyst et al., “Social Class,”; C. Pafort-Overduin “Distribution and Exhibition in The Netherlands, 1934-1936,” in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). Many exceptions can be linked to the “‘Enlightened’ City” project, as inspiration for similar mixed-methods research designs, combining spatial and economic analysis with oral history. For an overview of these projects see “Cinema City Cultures,” Projects, accessed March 29, 2019, <http://www.cinemacitycultures.com/projects.html>. Another outstanding example from the field of media industry studies is John Caldwell's book *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film/Television*, which proposed an ethnographic approach to media industry studies, embracing industrial analysis, business history as well as the substantial use of oral testimonies of the “little people” in the film industry, instead of directors, stars, producers, but gaffers, editors, and camera men (J. T. Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008)).

⁵⁰⁴ Allen, “Getting to *Going to the Show*,” 275, note 1. Blom and Strauven presented a number of similar projects in a special edition of *Tijdschrift for Mediageschiedenis* (in Dutch) dedicated to the topic of cinema in context as well as the corresponding database (Blom and Strauven, “Cinema Context”: 5-7). For more details about “Cinema Context” see Dibbets, “Cinema Context” and, of course the project's website “Cinema Context,” accessed March 31, 2019 <http://cinemacontext.nl/>. For a review of the use of online databases for film-historical research, with Cinema Context as a case, see Noordegraaf et al., “Writing Cinema Histories”.

⁵⁰⁵ Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map,” 59-60. According to Klenotic, grounded visualization is “a critical, empirical and interpretive approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative sources of information and draws upon the resources of grounded theory, ethnography and GIS visualisation” (Ibid.)

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 59.

spatial connections between social, cultural and economic practices that may at first glance seem unrelated.”⁵⁰⁷ By offering a combination of top-down quantitative and bottom-up qualitative approaches, it also allows to move between the particular and the general, the micro and the macro: “When complemented by contextual information on the ground and at microscale (e.g., stories about the lived experiences of individuals), GIS visualizations can establish important connections between large-scale phenomena (e.g., urban restructuring or land-cover change) and the everyday lives of individuals.”⁵⁰⁸ This fits Klenotic's view of cinema history as “a history of spatial relations” as well as a “people's history”, topics which I have addressed in Chapter 1.⁵⁰⁹ It is also in line with Jacques Meusy's view of a more complex understanding of local cinema history as offering countless different perspectives, which may be complementary, but can also be contradicting or competing.⁵¹⁰

This touches on a more philosophical problem, also addressed by Klenotic, concerning theory building. Given its open nature, in terms of the quantity of data as well as the possible ways of relating them, questions of representiveness and informational value arise. Or as Klenotic puts it: “The more open and creative GIS becomes as an heuristic *bricolage*, potentially involving community participation far beyond academia, the more difficult and more counterproductive it may become to impose a singular scholarly authority over its representations of space and place.”⁵¹¹ Nevertheless, the exponential growth of the number of digital and/online databases which offer (amongst others) a geospatial mapping of local cinema histories attests to the added value of this approach.⁵¹²

One of the ways to systematically combine different theories, methods, sources and data that has been proposed as a model in new cinema history to stimulate and facilitate comparative research, is the principle of triangulation.

2.3.2. Triangulation as a way to engage in new cinema history

The purpose of this subparagraph is to discuss the use of *triangulation* as a way of combining different methods and data. Following a number of remarks on definitions and the use of triangulation in qualitative research in general and cinema history in particular, in the second part triangulation is discussed as applied in the “‘Enlightened’ City” project, in the form of a (co-authored)

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁰⁸ Quote by Mei-Po Kwan cited in Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map,” 75.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., 58, 60.

⁵¹⁰ Meusy, “Local Cinema Histories”: 108. See also Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map,” 74.

⁵¹¹ Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map,” 73.

⁵¹² One of the first online database on film exhibition that was launched in Flanders was “Cinema Leuven,” accessed October 3, 2012, <http://www.cinemaleuven.be/>. For a list of recent projects that make use of similar tools see HoMER Network, “HoMER projects”.

publication. It was titled “Triangulation in historical audience research: Reflections and experiences from a multi-methodological research project on cinema audiences in Flanders” and was published in *Participations* in 2012 by Biltereyst, Meers and myself. This way I will provide the basis for the explanations in the last paragraph of the chapter, about the methods, sources and data used for “Antwerpen Kinemastad”.

Triangulation in qualitative research in general and cinema history in particular

Most generally, the essence of triangulation is cross-examination, meaning that different entities (for example, investigators, theories, methods, sources, data) are cross-checked, in order to enhance confidence in the validity of the research findings.⁵¹³ The prefix “tri” is in fact rendered meaningless and in practice, triangulation is understood as encompassing everything that applies to the combination of more than one of the above-mentioned entities, and preferably a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods.⁵¹⁴

Although the principles of triangulation have been used in qualitative research at least since the first half of the twentieth century, the term was first thoroughly conceptualized by Denzin in 1970.⁵¹⁵ Denzin distinguished between four types of triangulation: *data triangulation* (i.e. the combination of different sources and several sampling strategies), *investigator triangulation* (ensuring intercoder reliability), *triangulation of theories* (combining different theoretical positions to avoid possible biased views and potentially allow for alternative explanations) as well as *methodological triangulation* (using more than one method to compensate possible limitations inherent in one specific method).⁵¹⁶

⁵¹³ A. Bryman, “Sage Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods,” Triangulation, accessed October 20, 2012. <http://www.referenceworld.com/sage/socialscience/triangulation.pdf>. The idea of triangulation appeared in books on methods as early as 1966 (B. Johnson and R. Gray, “A History of Philosophical Issues for Mixed Methods Research,” in *Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, edited by A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie, (Thousand Oaks et al.: Sage, 2010), 87).

⁵¹⁴ See, for example, V. J. Janesick, “The Dance of Qualitative Research Design: Metaphor, Methodolatry, and Meaning,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks e.a.: Sage, 1994), 215; J. M. Morse, “Designing Funded Qualitative Research,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks e.a.: Sage, 1994), 224; B. K. Nastasi, J. H. Hitchcock and L. M. Brown, “An Inclusive Framework for Conceptualizing Mixed Methods Design Typologies: Moving Toward Fully Integrated Synergetic Research Models,” in *Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, edited by A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Los Angeles et al. : Sage, 2009), 307, 316; A. J. Onwuegbuzie and J. P. Combs, “Emergent Data Analysis Techniques in Mixed Methods Research: A Synthesis,” in *Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, edited by A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Los Angeles et al., Sage, 2009), 411; U. Flick, *Triangulation. Eine Einführung* (Wiesbaden: VS, 2011), 11.

⁵¹⁵ For more historical background on triangulation see, for example, Flick, *Triangulation*, 7-9 and Johnson and R. Gray, “A History of Philosophical Issues,” 87.

⁵¹⁶ See Flick’s discussion of these four types in Flick, *Triangulation*, 12-16, and Janesick, “The Dance,” 214-215. Meanwhile, other types of triangulation have been added. I have already mentioned Ligensa speaking of a conceptual triangulation (A. Ligensa, “Triangulating a Turn: Film 1900 as Technology, Perception and Culture,” in *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture*, edited by A. Ligensa and K. Kreimeier (New Barnet, Herts: John Libbey Publishing, 2009), 2-3). Valerie J. Janesick added *interdisciplinary* triangulation as a fifth to Denzin’s four types of triangulation (Janesick, “The Dance,” 214-215).

Criticism on Denzin's conceptualization concentrated mainly on two points: his (initial) claims that theoretical triangulation serves a more objective picture, and that methodological triangulation increases the validation of the results.⁵¹⁷ The corresponding points of critique reflect a more general discussion on the purpose of triangulation and how it should be applied. A post-positivist understanding which is still in circulation in methodological literature considers triangulation as a tool or a strategy of validation (as originally suggested by Denzin).⁵¹⁸ Denzin adjusted his conceptualization in later versions (from 1989 onwards) and proposed that a combination “of multiple methods, empirical materials, perspectives and observers in a single study is best understood [...] as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth, and depth to any investigation”.⁵¹⁹ In line with this, Laurel Richardson explained that post-positivist research deployed triangulation as a method of validation, but he also emphasized that this does not hold for post-modern mixed-methods as there is no longer “a ‘fixed point’ or ‘object’ that can be triangulated” and “that there are far more than “three sides” from which we approach the world”.⁵²⁰ Similarly, A. Michael Huberman and Matthew B. Miles stated that a “general prescription has been to pick triangulation sources that have different biases, different strengths, so they can complement each other. In the disorderly world of empirical research [...] independent measures never converge fully. [...] In other words, sources can be inconsistent or even conflicting, with no easy means of resolution.”⁵²¹

Understanding triangulation purely as a cross-checking of different methods, data or sources, as Alan Bryman calls for, for example, is challenging and in several points even unreasonable. Ethnographer and social scientist Amanda Coffey and social scientist Paul Atkinson, both experts in qualitative research methods, call for an awareness that the variety and complexity of data is to reflect (and not reduce!) the complexity of social phenomena.:

Crude understandings of triangulation often imply that data from different sources, or derived from different methods can be aggregated in some way in order to produce a fully rounded, more authentic, portrayal of the social world. Such a view would imply that the different data types, or different analytic strategies, would allow one to approximate with increasing fidelity a single, valid representation of the social world. [...] We do not believe that the alternative perspectives that are generated by different methods and techniques can be summed. They do not aggregate toward a

⁵¹⁷ See Flick's overview of the discussion of Denzin's first conceptualization of triangulation and his reaction (Flick, *Triangulation*, 17-19).

⁵¹⁸ See *Ibid.*, 12-16. For literature displaying a similar understanding of triangulation see, for example, Bryman, A. “Sage Encyclope,” 1, and R. Schnell, P. B. Hill and E. Esser, *Methoden der empirischen Sozialforschung* (Munich and Vienna: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999), 245.

⁵¹⁹ Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2. See also Flick, *Triangulation*, 17-19 and Morse who claimed that “the research can gain a more holistic view of the setting” (Morse, “Designing Funded Qualitative Research,” 224).

⁵²⁰ According to Richardson, instead of speaking of triangulation – with triangle referring to a “rigid, fixed, two dimensional object” – we should rather speak of crystallization, for crystals “are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose.” (L. Richardson, “Writing. A Method of Inquiry,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994), 522.)

⁵²¹ A. M. Huberman and M. B. Miles, “Data Management and Analysis Methods,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks e.a.: Sage, 1994), 438.

complete and rounded picture. [...] We can use different analytic strategies in order to explore different facets of our data, explore different versions of the social world. [...] Equally important, the combination or juxtaposition of different research techniques does not reduce the complexity of our understanding. The more we examine our data from different viewpoints, the more we may reveal – or indeed construct – their complexity. [...] We thus reject what might be called vulgar triangulation while endorsing a sensitive appreciation of complexity and variety.⁵²²

It is such a perspective from which Uwe Flick's proposed how triangulation should be understood, namely that the result should be a gain in knowledge, since insights are gathered on different levels thereby reaching further than would have been possible on just one level.⁵²³ Given its interdisciplinary character cinema historiography can gain a lot from triangulation, if it is understood in this way: as a means to unearth the complexity and variety of the researched phenomenon by combining different techniques.

The shift from thinking in quantitative versus qualitative approaches towards mixed-methods approaches to film history was already implied by Allen and Gomery's 1985 work. As discussed in Chapter 2.1.2, their "realist" approach to film history represented a combination of scientific (empiricist) and conventionalist methods and theories as this would preserve "the notion of an independently existing past, while taking into account the necessity and complexity of theory in historical explanation".⁵²⁴ Concretely, by resorting to Aristotle's *principle of noncontradiction* as a test for the validity of the findings, meaning that the same phenomenon is investigated by different theories and/or methods and if none of the results contradict each other, the evidence of the corresponding finding can be considered valid.⁵²⁵ In 2006 Allen spoke of a "triangulated film historical research paradigm," where oral history is combined with contemporaneous discourse (including ads, industry records, press) and analytical readings of selected films.⁵²⁶

For the past two decades, *triangulation* was frequently – and explicitly – used by film and cinema historians. For her oral history project on memories of cinemagoing in the UK in the 1930s Kuhn, for example, proposed a *methodological* triangulation combining three sets of inquiry: historical (archival source materials), ethnographic (interviews and questionnaires) and film-based (readings of selected films).⁵²⁷ Annemone Ligensa spoke of a *conceptual triangulation* of film in terms of technology, perception, and culture in order to explore 1900 as the significant turn in media history.⁵²⁸ Pafort-Overduin, to name a third example, triangulated three different kinds of *sources* (survey of press reviews, examination of distribution strategies, programming analysis) in order to

⁵²² A. Coffey and P. Atkinson, *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complementary Research Strategies* (Thousand Oaks et al.: Sage, 1996), 14. See also Bryman, A. "Sage Encyclope", 4.

⁵²³ Flick, *Triangulation*, 12.

⁵²⁴ Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 14.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁵²⁶ Allen, "Relocating," 58.

⁵²⁷ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 7, 240-254.

⁵²⁸ Ligensa, "Triangulating a Turn," 2-3.

show that against widely held assumptions, Dutch films were actually quite popular with domestic audiences.⁵²⁹

The following part introduces triangulation as an approach to historical audience research, as it has been proposed by the research team of the "'Enlightened' City" project and as it has been applied in its follow-up projects. The contribution by Daniel Biltereyst, Philippe Meers and myself for *Participations* included here, reflects on the difficulties related to doing historical media audience research (due to challenges of film historical research mentioned in the previous paragraphs). Here, a "triangulation of data, theory and methodology" is proposed in order to validate insights from previous studies and "to enrich our knowledge of the meaning and experience of cinema".⁵³⁰ This approach constitutes the basis for the research design of the "'Enlightened' City" project, in which "Antwerpen Kinemastad" originates.⁵³¹ Accordingly, first, the triangulation of data applies to the combination of data from different sources. Sources were physical (e.g. archive documents) and non-physical (oral testimonies), written (e.g. annuals, newspapers, trade journals, cash books) and non-written (photographs, films, architectural drawings).⁵³² Second, on the theoretical level, different models from different disciplines and fields of research were applied, including cultural economy and cultural studies. Closely related to the second is the third type of triangulation applied in the "'Enlightened' City" project, that of methodological triangulation. Here we see a combination of quantitative methods (structural and programming databases) with qualitative ones (oral history).⁵³³

Particularly the combination of oral history and institutional history based on archive material is a challenge that has informed much of the work in projects (with a similar research design) as the "'Enlightened' City" project. One of the most urgent questions is how to combine oral testimonies with archival documents and databases. As stated in the *Participations* article included below, the value of oral history lies in more discursive readings of the testimonies rather than in its use as evidence or for factual information.⁵³⁴ By linking oral testimonies to the institutional history of cinema based on historical material and archival documents, it became possible, for instance, to

⁵²⁹ Pafort-Overduin "Distribution and Exhibition," 126-127.

⁵³⁰ Biltereyst et al., "Negotiating Cinema's Modernity".

⁵³¹ In her PhD thesis "Gent Kinemastad", van de Vijver explained in detail the use of triangulation as applied for the "'Enlightened' City" and "Gent Kinemastad" projects. A table accompanied by text is to clarify what exactly is triangulated on which level (theory, method, data) in which part of the project. Generally speaking the triangulations center around the axes of binary oppositions between theories in science (economics) and humanities (cultural studies), between qualitative and quantitative methods, between hard and soft data (databases versus in depth-interviews): Van de Vijver, "Gent Kinemastad," 247.

⁵³² This distinction between different kinds of sources is derived from C. Vancoppenolle, "Bedrijfsarchieven: een grote verscheidenheid," in *Een succesvolle onderneming. Handleiding voor het schrijven van een bedrijfsgeschiedenis*, edited by C. Vancoppenolle (Brussels: Algemeen Rijksarchief, 2002), 79.

⁵³³ For more details see the following paragraph as well as the paragraphs on method, sources and data in Chapters 3 through 6.

⁵³⁴ D. Biltereyst, K. Lotze and P. Meers, "Triangulation in Historical Audience Research: Reflections and Experiences from a Multi-methodological Research Project on Cinema Audiences in Flanders," *Participations. Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 9, no. 2 (2012): 690-715: 698.

demonstrate that strategies of controlling cinema on an ideological and religious level were partly undermined by audience tactics and were therefore effective only to a certain degree.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁵ Biltereyst et al., "Negotiating Cinema's Modernity".

Article: Triangulation in historical audience research: Reflections and experiences from a multi-methodological research project on cinema audiences in Flanders

Reference: D. Biltreyst, K. Lotze and P. Meers in *Participations. Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 9, no. 2 (2012): 690-715.⁵³⁶

Introduction

Notwithstanding the continued focus upon audiences within communication and media studies, as well as the strongly developed arsenal of concepts, methodologies and paradigms within media audience research, it is safe to argue that until recently, research on historical media audiences was a widely underdeveloped domain.⁵³⁷ Many have argued for the necessity of historical research on audiences, not only for a better understanding of media culture and audiences' experiences in the past.⁵³⁸ Historical media audience research is also necessary, as Livingstone, Allen and Reiner claimed, for countering often ahistorical "assumptions about shared media experiences, about critical viewers, about the appropriation of new meanings into daily lives and dominant social discourses."⁵³⁹

Making historical audiences visible within media and cultural theory, however, has been often perceived as quite problematic, mainly because the object of investigation (i.e. the act or the process of consuming, receiving, making meaning of media) is mostly not materially there, or because contemporary researchers are confronted with the absence of systematic audience research in the past. This scarcity of resources forces researchers to be more creative in exploring often indirect sources for reconstructing historical media consumption and reception. This contribution focuses upon this methodological and heuristic problem of how to grab the historical audience – or how we can investigate past media experiences. What are the difficulties involved in doing this kind of historical audience research? What kind of sources and traces are there to understand historical media experiences? How can we analyse and interpret these sources and traces? What kind of methodologies of data collection, processing and analysis can be used?

This reflexive piece on methods (what refers to specific techniques for the research process from data collection to data analysis and interpretation) and methodologies (referring to the study of methods and dealing with the philosophical assumptions underlying the research process) in relation

⁵³⁶ The annotation in this version of the article included below has been altered to fit the style sheet of this dissertation.

⁵³⁷ K. Schrøder, Drotner, K., Kline, S. and C. Murray, *Researching Audiences* (London: Arnold, 2003).

⁵³⁸ See, for example, K. B. Jensen, "The Past in the Future: Problems and Potentials of Historical Reception Studies," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 3 (1993): 262-270

⁵³⁹ S. Livingstone, Allen, J. and R. Reiner, "Audiences for Crime Media 1946–91: A Historical Approach to Reception Studies," *The Communication Review* 4, no. 2 (2001): 165.

to the study of historical audiences is very much inspired by recent trends within film studies. Film studies traditionally concentrated on questions of aesthetics, style and ideology behind or within movies. Since the mid-1980s, however, new 'revisionist' film history approaches have opened the way for more empirically based historical research which moves beyond the screen and textual interpretations of films.⁵⁴⁰ This "new cinema history" explicitly argued for more research on audiences and reception in order to understand cinema as a more complex social phenomenon.⁵⁴¹

This recent shift within film studies has engaged, as Richard Maltby recently argued, "contributors from different points on the disciplinary compass, including history, geography, cultural studies, economics, sociology and anthropology, as well as film and media studies" in order to examine the circulation and consumption of films.⁵⁴² These efforts to look at cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange encompasses the usage of methods and theoretical underpinnings from disciplines other than those which were traditionally used within film studies. Within this effort to deal with historical film audiences, various kinds of sources have been explored, such as box-office revenues, corporate reports and other "indirect" testimonies on the audience.⁵⁴³ Other work was based on the traditions of oral history and other qualitative work on the reconstruction of past media experiences through memory studies, while others turned to reception analysis of specific genres, questionnaires or surveys.⁵⁴⁴

Only few historiographical projects on film audiences attempted to combine methodologies, hence raising questions of methodological integration, synergy and interdisciplinarity. This article will reflect upon the difficulties and opportunities related to doing historical film audience research from a multidisciplinary and –methodological perspective. This article consists of two parts. After an overview of the different methods and approaches of historical audience research within film studies, we will go into the experiences related to a series of case studies on the history of the social experiences of cinema and cinema-going in two Belgian cities (Ghent and Antwerp).⁵⁴⁵ The research

⁵⁴⁰ See, for example, Allen and Gomery, *Film History*.

⁵⁴¹ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*; Maltby et al., *Explorations*; Biltereyst et al., *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*.

⁵⁴² Maltby, "New Cinema Histories," 3.

⁵⁴³ On box-office revenues, see, for example, J. Sedgwick, "Patterns in First-Run and Suburban Filmgoing in Sydney in the mid-1930s," in *Explorations in New Cinema History. Approaches and Case Studies*, edited by R. Maltby, D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Malden/Oxford: Blackwell, 2011), 140-158; on corporate reports, see, for example, S. Sullivan, "Child Audiences in America's Nickelodeons, 1900-1915: The Keith/Albee Managers' Reports," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 30, no. 2 (2010): 155-168.

⁵⁴⁴ See R. Perks and A. Thomson, eds., *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998); S. Radstone and B. Schwarz, eds., *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford: Berg, 2000). For reception analysis of specific genres, see Livingstone et al., "Audiences for Crime Media"; for that of questionnaires or surveys see Kuhn, *Everyday Magic* and Stacey, *Star Gazing*.

⁵⁴⁵ This article is based on three historical research projects on film exhibition, film audiences and cinema-going: (1) "The 'Enlightened' City: Screen culture between ideology, economics and experience. A study of the social role of film exhibition and film consumption in Flanders (1895-2004) in interaction with modernity and urbanization" (project funded by the FWO/SRC-Flanders, promoters: Philippe Meers University of Antwerp, Daniel Biltereyst Ghent University, and Marnix Beyen University of Antwerp); (2) "Antwerpen Kinemastad. A media historic research on the post-war development of film exhibition and reception in Antwerp (1945-1995) with a special focus on the Rex cinema group" (Antwerp University

design of these projects consisted of three layers: besides structural analyses of the exhibition scene (using methods from political economy and socio-geography) and the supply of movies for audiences (programming analyses), we relied upon oral history approaches (inspired by ethnographic methods and cultural studies). Using this triangulation of methods, we will argue that the social practice of cinema-going was less inspired by movies, stars and programming strategies, than that it was a significant social routine, strongly inspired by community identity formation, class and social distinction.⁵⁴⁶

Audiences and cinema studies

As a general rule, a more systematic study of audiences is in its infancy. Movie audience research is relatively well developed, even though it too is undeveloped beyond the nickelodeon era. ... The humdrum is less researched than times of dramatic change. Historical research that has been done so far has focused more on moments of innovation – for example, the beginnings of movies in the nickelodeon days or the reactions of people to sound films. On the other hand, we have relatively little on the heyday of movies once movie-going had settled into a widespread habit. These times are difficult to document. ... They are also times when the medium is at its most popular and thus most influential, making what audiences do more important than the times of apparent change.⁵⁴⁷

Since Richard Butsch's call for more research into cinema audiences and everyday life, a rich variety of audience studies has emerged.⁵⁴⁸ In recent years groundbreaking work has been published in various journals and in a series of edited collections with studies on topics like the early twentieth century film-going experience; the examination of specific film audiences such as children, women, ethnic and other minority groups; cinema memory and fandom; audience reception of specific movies and genres; the relationship between production strategies, their conception of audiences and the actual consumption of movies; the link between audience reception and changes in distribution and exhibition strategies; the interrogation of Hollywood cinema as a cultural resource intimately bound to its richly diverse communities of viewers.⁵⁴⁹ While in the United States and in

Research Council BOF, 2009-2013, promoter: Philippe Meers); and (3) "Gent Kinemastad. A multimethodological research project on the history of film exhibition, programming and cinema-going in Ghent and its suburbs (1896-2010) as a case within a comparative New Cinema History perspective" (Ghent U Research Council BOF, 2009-2012, promoter: Daniel Biltereyst).

⁵⁴⁶ On different forms of triangulation, mainly in the field of social sciences and the humanities, see N. K. Denzin, *The Research Act* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989).

⁵⁴⁷ R. Butsch, "Popular Communication Audiences: A historical Research Agenda," *Popular Communication* 1, no. 1 (2003): 19-20.

⁵⁴⁸ See also special issues in journals such as *Participations* (November 2011).

⁵⁴⁹ See, for example, M. Stokes and R. Maltby, eds., *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London: BFI, 1999); M. Stokes and R. Maltby, eds., *Identifying Hollywood's Audiences: Cultural Identity and the Movies* (London: BFI, 1999); M. Stokes and R. Maltby, *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*

Britain historical film audience studies seem to be an accepted part of the film studies agenda, a similar move is gradually taking place now in other countries like those on the European continent.⁵⁵⁰

The growth of film audience historiography as a subfield has gone hand in hand with an empirical, historical and spatial turn, and it is closely linked to criticism against text-oriented 'high theory' film studies. Advocates of a 'new film historiography' or, more recently, a 'new cinema history', heavily criticized the dominance of a certain type of methods and concepts which do not sufficiently take into account contextual issues on production, distribution and reception.⁵⁵¹

Criticizing that "film history has been written as if films had no audiences," proponents of a new cinema history like Robert C. Allen reacted against dominant a-historical, text-oriented traditions within film studies. Underlining the need for a film history "from below," a clear focus emerged on reception studies and other kinds of empirical historical audience studies.⁵⁵²

Looking back at this recent stream of empirical studies on the 'real audience', one can only identify this field as a broad perspective with different traditions, concepts and methodologies.⁵⁵³ Following Allen, who back in 1990 defined a research agenda for film reception research, we can identify four major research areas.⁵⁵⁴ In his programmatic overview Allen called for research on exhibition, reception, social composition and discourses, and finally cinema-going as social practice. In this brief overview we will go into some of the most important work in these four different areas, highlighting some of their key methodological choices and problems in their attempts to grab the historical audience.

A first area of scholarly pursuit refers to the history of **film exhibition**. For an investigation of cinema-going, film exhibition studies are considered a necessary step in the direction of film audience research. Most of the work in this respect looks at the structural, economic and institutional context in which film consumption occurs. In his pioneering study *Shared Pleasures*,

(London: BFI, 2001); M. Stokes and R. Maltby, eds., *Hollywood Abroad. Audiences and Cultural Exchange* (London: BFI, 2004); Maltby et al., *Going to the Movies*.

⁵⁵⁰ For the US and the UK see, for example, G. A. Waller, *Main Street Amusements: Movies and Commercial Entertainment in a Southern City, 1896-1930* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995); K. Fuller-Seeley, *At the Picture Show: Small-town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996); S. J. Ross, ed., *Movies and American Society* (Malden: Blackwell, 2002); Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*; R. Abel, *Americanizing the Movies and "Movie-mad" Audiences, 1910-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). For Europe see, for example, A. Ligens and K. Kreimeier, eds., *Film 1900: Technology, Perception, Culture* (New Barnet: John Libbey, 2009); Biltereyst et al., "Social Class".

⁵⁵¹ That is, mainly those inspired by psychoanalysis, semiotics and literary theory (see R. Lapsley and M. Westlake, *Film Theory: An Introduction*, ed. 1988 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).) For advocates of "new film historiography" see, for example, Bordwell et al., *Classical Hollywood Cinema*; Allen and Gomery, *Film History*; for "new cinema history" Maltby et al., *Explorations*; Biltereyst et al., *Cinema, audiences and Modernity*.

⁵⁵² Allen, "From Exhibition to Reception," 348.

⁵⁵³ Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 54. See also M. Barker, "Film Audience Research: Making a Virtue out of a Necessity," *Iris* 26 (1999): 132.

⁵⁵⁴ Allen, "From Exhibition to Reception," 349-354.

Douglas Gomery describes the evolution of film exhibition in the U.S. from the start until the introduction of home video, demonstrating how the advent of television changed the film viewing experience, not only because of the additional possibilities for watching film, but also because of new promotional strategies.⁵⁵⁵ Another kind of sophisticated economically inspired analysis of film exhibition and cinema-going concentrates upon the analysis of box-office revenues of particular or a series of film venues. The work done by Sedgwick, for instance, on popular film-going in 1930s Britain combines hard-core quantitative economic analysis with detailed questions on cinema's popularity in specific contexts.⁵⁵⁶ Sedgwick developed an arsenal of statistic tools (e.g. POPSTAT Index of Film Popularity) for gauging film popularity based on cinema attendance. Both Gomery's and Sedgwick's powerful analyses pays particular attention to economic and industrial aspects of film screening. However, issues like audience's understanding, memories or meaning of going to the movies are either missing or seen as an effect of industrial strategies.⁵⁵⁷

Other work has been done on film exhibition strategies and their attempts to construct or interconnect with cinema-goers. Next to hard economic data, much of this research uses various kinds of historical sources, such as the location of cinemas, corporate reports, distribution and programming overviews. In her historical analysis of the circulation of Greek films for Greek diasporic audiences in Australia, for instance, Verhoeven stressed the distinctive social function that Greek cinema had for its diasporic community.⁵⁵⁸ Other work on everyday film culture also stresses the role of film exhibition. For her analysis of early cinema culture in rural Sweden, Åsa Jernudd for example used newspaper reports on audiences, as well as other data on film exhibition, programming or advertising in one small rural town (Örebro) demonstrated that the introduction of film and the transition from itinerant to permanent theatres went much smoother than widely assumed.⁵⁵⁹

A second area relates to historical **reception studies**, a field of research which aims at, as Staiger argued, developing a "context-activated theory" against "text-activated"-models from film studies.⁵⁶⁰ Staiger's "historical materialist reception research" aspires to analyze and reconstruct the viewing strategies available to the viewer in a specific historical period through a contextual analysis of public discourses about film.⁵⁶¹ This provides insights into the range of possible readings in specific

⁵⁵⁵ Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*.

⁵⁵⁶ J. Sedgwick, *Popular Film-going in 1930s Britain: A Choice of Pleasures* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000); Sedgwick, "Patterns".

⁵⁵⁷ Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 4.

⁵⁵⁸ Verhoeven, "Film Distribution".

⁵⁵⁹ Å. Jernudd, "Spaces of Early Film Exhibition in Sweden, 1897-1911," in *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History*, edited by D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby, and P. Meers (London: Routledge, 2012), 19.

⁵⁶⁰ Staiger, *Interpreting Films*, 57.

⁵⁶¹ See also See Staiger, *Interpreting Films*; J. Staiger, *Perverse Spectators. The Practices of Film Reception* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*.

historical periods. Arguing that contextual factors more than textual ones determine the experience viewers have while watching a movie and how they use these experiences in daily life, research in this field explores sources, such as press reviews, interviews, articles and letters to the editor of film magazines, or reports in the trade press. One of the aims of this research is examine the creation of the horizon of expectations and to analyze the various historical, political and other discourses around particular movies, genres, film directors or cinema at large.

Staiger's pioneering work has had a large following. Most scholars deal with the reception of a single film (see e.g. Shingler on *All about Eve* (1950, US, J. L. Mankiewicz), Davis on *Fantasia* (1940, US, J. Algar et al.), Poe on *On the Beach* (1959, US, S. Kramer), Smoodin on *Meet John Doe* (1941, US, F. Capra)).⁵⁶² Other research explores wider genres or types of films, such as the industry discourses on Hollywood's sound film serial in the 1930s or the reception of Hollywood movies by films British audiences in the 1950s.⁵⁶³

While historical reception studies clearly focus upon the context and discourses within which audiences are targeted and consume movies, most of this work does not include audience interviews as an important source of information. Among the scholars who integrate actual audience memories and experiences, one might indicate Barbara Klinger, who in 1997 called for a renewed research agenda in the direction of a "total history" of film reception.⁵⁶⁴ Klinger's textual and contextual analysis of Douglas Sirk's movies, for instance, emphasized the value of a diachronical approach and applied a wide variety of sources in order to be able to analyze their critical and academic reception.⁵⁶⁵

A third major category can be labeled as research looking at the **social composition of the audience**. Concentrating on how cinema has become a part of everyday life, much work on this issue proposes to examine the socio-demographic composition of film audiences. An interesting debate here focused upon early movie audiences and cinema as a public space and issues of inter-racial,

⁵⁶² M. Shingler, "Interpreting 'All About Eve': A Study in Historical Reception," In *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, edited by M. Stokes and R. Maltby (London: BFI, 2001), 46-62; A. M. Davis, "The Fall and Rise of 'Fantasia'," in *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, edited by M. Stokes and R. Maltby (London: BFI, 2001), 63-78; T. G. Poe, "Historical Spectatorship Around and About Stanley Kramer's 'On the Beach'," *Hollywood Spectatorship: Changing Perceptions of Cinema Audiences*, edited by M. Stokes and R. Maltby (London: BFI, 2001), 91-102; E. Smoodin, "'This Business of America': Fan Mail, Film Reception and 'Meet John Doe'." *Screen* 37, no. 2 (1996): 111-129.

⁵⁶³ G. Barefoot, "Who Watched that Masked Man? Hollywood's Serial Audiences in the 1930s," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 31, no. 2 (2011): 167-190; V. Porter and S. Harper, "Throbbing Hearts and Smart Repartee: The Reception of American Films in 1950s Britain," *Media History* 4, no. 2 (1998): 175-193.

⁵⁶⁴ B. Klinger, "Film History Terminable and Interminable: Recovering the Past in Reception Studies," *Screen* 38, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 107-128.

⁵⁶⁵ B. Klinger, *Melodrama and Meaning. History, Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

inter-gender, mixed ethnic film audiences along with questions on class segregation.⁵⁶⁶ Much of this work concentrates on the discursive construction of the cinema audience by specific public institutions, organizations or groups (e.g. censors, parents' organizations, religious pressure groups), and more particularly, of the concern for so-called vulnerable groups like children, immigrants, workers and women.⁵⁶⁷

Other researchers turned to industry related sources in order to uncover discourses and strategies developed by producers, distributors and exhibitors in their attempt to target specific audience groups. In his work on the historical composition of local film audiences in India, Stephen Hughes, for instance, indicates how exhibitors could operate a hierarchy of venues catering to different castes, classes and religious groups without explicitly segregating the social space that cinema provided.⁵⁶⁸ Other work in this area concentrates on how audiences themselves display discursive constructions of film reception. By analysing 1940s and 1950s letters to the editor in a film journal, S.V. Srivinas, for example, shows how male middle and higher class audiences in India construct themselves as a collective: "the public" or the "real knowing audience" as opposed to the "audience in general" which is not entitled to such visibility and public presence in the cinema space itself.⁵⁶⁹

In this area of research on the social composition of the film audience often many more sources and indicators are used, including, for example, poster announcements or photographs showing audiences cueing before or sitting in a cinema, hence visually indicating spatial segregation in film venues.⁵⁷⁰ Other indicators of class and race segregation include the attempt to geographically locate film venues in particular city neighborhoods and linking these locations with socio-demographic data.⁵⁷¹

Much work is done on the presence of women in cinemas. In a recent study on female audiences of early German cinema, Andrea Haller reconstructs the discourses on female cinema-

⁵⁶⁶ See, for example, Hansen, *Babel and Babylon*; Staiger, *Interpreting Films*; Allen, "Relocating;" T. Doherty, "Race Houses, Jim Crow Roosts, and Lily White Palaces: Desegregating the Motion Picture Theater," in *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema*, edited by R. Maltby, M. Stokes and R. Allen (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), 196-214; Knight, "Searching for the Apollo;" G. Toffell, "Cinema-going from Below: The Jewish Film Audience in Interwar Britain," *Participations* 8, no. 2 (2011): 522-538.

⁵⁶⁷ See, for example, W. Uricchio and R. E. Pearson, "'The Formative and Impressionable Stage': Discursive Constructions of the Nickelodeon's Child Audience," in *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era*, edited by M. Stokes and R. Maltby (London: BFI, 1999), 64-75; R. Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences. From Stage to Television, 1750-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁵⁶⁸ Hughes, "Silent Film Genre."

⁵⁶⁹ S. V. Srivinas, "Is There a Public in the Cinema Hall?" *Framework* 42 (2000), accessed October 9, 2012, <http://www.frameworkonline.com/Issue42/42svs.html>.

⁵⁷⁰ See, for example, Gaines, "The White."

⁵⁷¹ See, for example, Biltereyst et al., "Social Class."

going in Imperial Germany.⁵⁷² Using contemporary trade papers, fan and women's magazines, Haller examines how women experienced their movie-going and participated in the actual event of the film show, and how the patriarchal society they belonged to reacted to their participation in this new activity.

The last category analyzes the **event and the experience of "going to the movies" as a social phenomenon**. This broad area of research includes various methods and indicators in order to come to terms with the practices, experiences and memories of cinema-going within specific contextualized locations. In their attempt to investigate the cinema and the social interactions within this public space, some scholars turned to written or printed sources like film magazines.⁵⁷³ A second group of scholars turns to the re-examination of existing historical studies of audiences. Sue Harper and Vincent Porter, for instance, who were interested in social class and gender as determinants for crying in the cinema, re-examined or reinterpreted the original analyses of the UK 1950 Mass Observation social research.⁵⁷⁴ A similar re-examination of existing historical research was done by Jeffrey Richards, who looked at 1930s regional film audiences by turning to the original British Bolton survey.⁵⁷⁵ Other studies concentrated on specific cinemas and tried to understand the dynamics and interactions within this public space. One example is the work done by Glen McIver on Liverpool's Rialto.⁵⁷⁶ Using a wide range of materials left by the site, photographs, posters, newspaper and magazine articles and various published accounts as well as interviews with former users of the building, McIver reconstructed the cinema as a site of social memory.

Other work on cinema-going turns to different qualitative methodologies in an attempt to explore the actual audience's experience. This is often accompanied by the use of small research designs and ethnographic approaches on a micro level, ranging from interviews, observations, diaries and all kinds of other written accounts, testimonies or memories. To engage with the role of cinema and people's recollections of it, pioneering scholars used personal letters in newspapers, fan mail written by former cinema visitors, or in-depth interviews.⁵⁷⁷ A key source of inspiration is oral history methodology, also considered as an act of "writing history from below", along with theories coming from memory studies.⁵⁷⁸ Stacey's *Star Gazing* is one of the best known pioneering work in this trend

⁵⁷² A. Haller, "Diagnosis 'Flimmeritis': Female Cinema-going in Imperial Germany, 1911-18," in *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History*, edited by D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby, and P. Meers (London: Routledge, 2012), 130-141.

⁵⁷³ See, for example, Geraghty on British cinemas in the 1950s (Geraghty, "Cinema as Social Space").

⁵⁷⁴ S. Harper and V. Porter, "Moved to Tears: Weeping in the Cinema of Postwar Britain," *Screen* 37, no. 2 (1996): 152-173.

⁵⁷⁵ J. Richards, "Cinemas-going in Worktown: Regional Film Audiences in 1930s Britain," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 14, no. 2 (1994): 147-166.

⁵⁷⁶ G. McIver, "Liverpool's Rialto: Remembering the Romance," *Participations* 6, no. 2 (2009): 199-218.

⁵⁷⁷ See, for example, Stacey, *Star Gazing*; H. Taylor, *Scarlett's Women: Gone With The Wind and its Female Fans* (London: Virago, 1989); Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*.

⁵⁷⁸ Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, 7. See also Radstone and Schwarz, *Memory and Methodology*.

of audience research within star studies.⁵⁷⁹ Stacey, who explicitly refers to cultural studies work on television audiences, combines theories of spectatorship in feminist film criticism with empirical work on gender and audiences in cultural studies, including the usage of questionnaires. Other groundbreaking work has been done by Kuhn, mainly on the experience of film culture in Great Britain in the 1930s.⁵⁸⁰ Using the term “ethnohistory”, Kuhn forcefully illustrates the strength of ethnographic methodology in order to understand everyday cinema-going experiences.⁵⁸¹

In line with Kuhn’s work, much research on cinema-going is inspired by ethnographic methodologies in the sense of media ethnography, whereby actual audiences are interviewed in various forms, including in-depth interviews, focus groups etc. This kind of work has been done on film consumption or audience’s experience of local film culture in specific cities. In the case of Nottingham, for instance, this involved interviews as well as the mapping of the cultural geography of cinemas where each cinema is associated with a specific form of consumption, organized hierarchically.⁵⁸² Other work concentrates on specific periods and national contexts, as in the case of Jo Labanyi, who looked at cinema’s role as a form of escapism and mediation of everyday life in Spain in 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁸³ At a time of severe political repression and economic hardship under the Franco dictatorship, watching Hollywood movies introduced consumerist values in anticipation of the regime’s later overt adoption of capitalist modernization. In a similar sense, Daniela Treveri-Gennari et al. looked at Italian cinema audiences in the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁸⁴ Following a model that combines ethnographic audience study with analysis of the films, genres and stars that produced audiences’ dominant memories, they re-evaluate the popular reception of film by engaging with cinema-going memories, triangulating box office figures, the popular press and audience interviews.

A specific subgroup here is work focusing upon stars and fandom, asking actual film fans about their film experiences or analyzing other traces of fandom such as letters and other “ephemera”. One such an example is the work done by Helen Taylor on female fans of the book and movie *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming 1939).⁵⁸⁵ Her analysis is a combination of production analysis, text analysis, historical context and oral histories. She demonstrates the importance of changing historical contexts for the pleasure female fans derive from this popular film. Other work on film fans

⁵⁷⁹ Stacey, *Star Gazing*.

⁵⁸⁰ For example, A. Kuhn, "Cinema-going in Britain in the 1930s: Report of a Questionnaire Survey," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 19, no. 4 (1999): 531-543.

⁵⁸¹ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*.

⁵⁸² Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*.

⁵⁸³ J. Labanyi, "Cinema and the Mediation of Everyday Life in 1940s and 1950s Spain," *New Readings Online Journal* 8 (2007): 539-553. See also M. A. Paz, "The Spanish Remember: Movie Attendance During the Franco Dictatorship, 1943-1975," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 23, no. 4 (2003): 357-374.

⁵⁸⁴ D. Treveri Gennari, O'Rawe, C. and D. Hipkins, "In Search of Italian Cinema Audiences in the 1940s and 1950s: Gender, Genre and National identity," *Participations* 8, no. 2 (2011): 539-553.

⁵⁸⁵ Taylor, *Scarlett's Women*.

and their experiences with particular stars, genres, movies or series is or instance done by Réka Buckley (on Claudia Cardinale fans) and Peter Krämer (on Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*).⁵⁸⁶

Film audiences historiography, oral history and triangulation

This overview illustrates that in the recent twenty years or so a rich variety of research approaches emerged on different aspects of the historical film audience. The outline also indicates that each approach in a sense illuminates other facets of, and uses different concepts on, the audience. Next to a view upon film consumers as the outcome of industrial strategies, other audience conceptions were operationalized by perspectives looking at audiences as members of socio-demographically diverse groups, as textually inscribed and discursively constructed spectators, or as complex sense-making individuals. Obviously, this conceptual plurality raises many questions, including those on methodological clarity, criticism and synergy. To what degree, for instance, can these approaches (and their audience concepts) be combined? How do these different levels of empirical evidence converge and integrate? How can cinema's industrial and institutional history, for instance, be bound together with a socio-cultural history of audiences' experiences?

Notwithstanding the diversity of approaches, one must observe that only few historiographical studies on film audience have attempted to combine diverse methods and methodologies. Since the work done by Stacey and Kuhn one even observes a clear preference for qualitative methodologies coming from the social sciences, most often using small research designs and micro-level ethnographic approaches. In order to engage with the lived experiences of ordinary audiences in their historical context, many researchers are inspired by oral history, an approach coming from historical research and the humanities, often without raising few broader methodological problems related to it. What, for instance, are the pitfalls of investigating the social experience of going to the movies through interviews with people who rely upon their memories of past experiences? How do we have to select the sample of respondents? How to collect stories and memories? Taking into account the selective and subjective character of memory, how are these stories and memories to be analyzed and interpreted?

Next to methodological questions on the oral history research process, one might raise the problem of integrating this approach into a broader research design. How do micro-historical and personal stories relate to structural histories? What is the relationship between personal experience, collective consciousness and various other kinds of history like structural economic history? How can

⁵⁸⁶ R. Buckley, "The Emergence of Film Fandom in Postwar Italy: Reading Claudia Cardinale's Fan Mail," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 29, no. 4 (2009): 523-559; P. Krämer, "'Dear Mr. Kubrick': Audience Responses to *2001: A Space Odyssey* in the Late 1960s," *Participations* 6, no. 2 (2009): 240-259.

we reconcile memory and historical generalization? These questions are closely linked to, what Ronald Grele has called, the lack of serious theory building, conceptualization and methodological criticism which is characteristic of oral history at large. According to Grele, one needs to “begin to discuss what kinds of information we are getting” through interviews, and he warns against the attitude to treat memory as history as it really was. Oral history, he claims, should be seen as a tool rather than as evidence for factual information.⁵⁸⁷

In the following paragraphs, in which we will critically reflect on our own historiographical work on film audience, we adopt this position, namely that oral history is to be seen as a tool rather than as evidence. We will demonstrate the particular strength of an oral history approach within the context of methodological triangulation. Especially when older data resources are missing, triangulation can become a valuable in terms of contextualizing the positioning, construction and disciplining of audiences.

We will reflect upon some key methodological issues related to three research projects on the development of Belgian film exhibition and audience’s experience of cinema: (i) the large scale project “The ‘Enlightened’ City” (which ran from 2005 until 2008 and which focused on cinema exhibition structures and film consumption patterns in the region of Flanders), (ii) a project on film culture in Ghent, and (iii) a similar one on Antwerp (see footnote 1). These three projects consisted of a similar three-stage research design. The first line covered an extensive inventory of existing and historical cinemas in Flanders, Ghent and Antwerp, focussing upon the geographical distribution and the relations between the commercial and the pillarized circuit. The second line included a diachronic institutional analysis through research on particular cinemas’ programming strategies, with case studies on Antwerp and Ghent. The third line of research used oral history methods as a means to investigate the historical audiences’ memories of cinemas and film consumption and on their lived experiences of (film) leisure culture.

In the following analysis we will reflect on methodology and methods, rather than present a full-fledged overview of the key findings of these three projects.⁵⁸⁸ In order to illustrate the usefulness of triangulation, we will use as a test case the issue of class and cinema-going. Somewhat inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s work, we will show how class and social distinction were important issues when it comes to film exhibition, programming, and the audience strategies related to it, as well as to the audience’s experiences and memories of cinema(-going).⁵⁸⁹ As a theoretical background, we will make use of Bourdieu’s work on the connections between the objective socio-

⁵⁸⁷ Grele, “Movement,” 42.

⁵⁸⁸ These can be found in e.g. Biltreyst and Meers, *De verlichte stad*; P. Meers, D. Biltreyst and L. van de Vijver, “Metropolitan vs Rural Cinemagoing in Flanders 1925-75,” *Screen* 51, no. 3 (2010): 272-280; Maltby et al., *Explorations*; Biltreyst et al., *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity*.

⁵⁸⁹ P. Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 1984).

economic conditions of class on the one hand, and more subjective, internalized or mental structures producing particular life-styles and cultural tastes on the other.

Exhibition, neighbourhoods, and spaces of distinction

When starting to conceive a broader research design which attempts to write a new kind of film history from below, we were confronted by the fact that questions on exhibition structures, programming strategies and cinema-going behaviour in smaller countries, including Belgium, largely remain open for research. Older international statistical overviews indicated that Belgium had a long history of being a vivid film market with a large number of cinemas (given the small size of the country) and high cinema attendance rates. It remained unclear, however, what this really meant in terms of the different experiences of cinema within particular regions, cities or neighbourhoods. Following Allen's argument on the importance of space, place and sociality as constitutive features of the experience of cinema, we found it crucial to investigate these spatial differences, especially when they indicated forms of segregation.

On a national level, there were some film historical studies, indicating the existence of various film circuits, including commercial cinemas, film clubs and more politicized film venues.⁵⁹⁰ But here again, there was a clear lack of systematic research, especially on the importance of more ideologically oriented film initiatives. The latter refers to the phenomenon that, until the 1970s, Belgian society was strongly characterized by a system of pillarization, or the co-existence, competition or conflicts between blocks or "pillars" of ideologically more-or-less coherent organizations. This system created a pattern of social segmentation in which different groups had their own networks of schools, hospitals, trade unions and political parties. This process of "pillarization" overlapped with more traditional class conflicts, and Catholics, liberals, and socialists developed strategies to attract the masses through leisure, recreational activities, newspapers and other media or entertainment facilities as well as in hard political and socio-economic terms. Pillarization was not an exclusively Belgian phenomenon, but the ideological and religious segregation created by pillarization had a more profound impact across a range of social fields in Belgium than was the case in the Netherlands.⁵⁹¹

It is hard to estimate how successful Belgian socialists, liberals and Catholics were in "guiding" film audiences in their cinema-going practices, particularly among the lower social classes.

⁵⁹⁰ For example, Convents, *Van kinoscoop tot café-ciné*, on Catholic film initiatives.

⁵⁹¹ K. Dibbets, "Het taboe van de Nederlandse filmcultuur: neutraal in een verzuild land," *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 9, no. 2 (2006): 46-64; T. van Oort, "'Christ is Coming to the Elite Cinema': Film Exhibition in the Catholic South of the Netherlands, 1910s and 1920s," *Cinema, Audiences and Modernity. New Perspectives on European Cinema History*, edited by D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby and P. Meers (London: Routledge, 2012), 50-63.

To begin to address these issues, the “‘Enlightened’ City” research project built a longitudinal database of Flemish cinemas and other regular film screening venues, covering the period from the First World War onwards. Compiled from a wide variety of sources (official statistics, industry yearbooks, film programs in newspapers and trade journals, and information in public and private archives), this database contains some 47,500 entries detailing who organized screenings in which venues, where and when, as well as recording any financial, architectural or ideological information that we found on individual venues.

In general, the “‘Enlightened’ City” database confirmed the high number and the wide variety of regular film venues operating in Flanders and Brussels until the 1960s.⁵⁹² The database indicated that local film exhibition markets were highly competitive not only in major cities but also in smaller, even rural towns where commercial exhibitors often had to confront pillarized film screenings, mostly dominated by Catholics. From the 1920s until the 1960s, Catholic, socialist and to a smaller extent liberal and Flemish-nationalist exhibitors made up between nineteen and thirty-five percent of all film venues. After the Second World War, the general growth in the number of Flemish cinemas (from 560 film venues in 1946 to 984 in 1957) was accompanied by a slow increase in the number of cinemas in rural areas. Film exhibition was far less influenced by pillarization in the major cities.

Taking Ghent as an example, we found that the local film market was divided between the city centre cinemas with eleven film palaces like the Capitole on the one hand, and on the other hand second- and third-run cinemas located in the historical belt of mainly working-class city districts, and those in neighbouring towns or suburbs. Besides the city-centre palaces, where some pillarized cinemas were active (like the Socialist *Vooruit*), there were twelve cinemas located in the poorer districts of the historical belt around the city centre. A third group of film venues was located in the suburbs and the less proletarianized neighbouring towns.

As in most other cities, many of the most successful first-run cinemas like the *Capitol* were close to “bright light” centres, shopping malls and other recreational facilities, as well as mass transport lines. In purely quantitative terms, however most film venues were located in poorer people’s areas, although these were not insular, homogenous working-class or socialist-oriented environments. The Capitole promoted itself as a luxurious cinema for the higher social classes and conducted a strategy of spatial segregation through its differentiated price policy, while the socialist *Vooruit* did almost exactly the opposite by targeting lower social groups. Most major film venues, however, courted patrons from different social classes from around the city, as well as from towns on the outskirts of it. Although there were differences in the film exhibition structures between

⁵⁹² D. Biltreyst, P. Meers, L. van de Vijver and G. Willems, "Bioscopen, moderniteit en filmbeleving. Deel 1: Op zoek naar het erfgoed van bioscopen in landelijke en minder verstedelijkte gebieden in Vlaanderen," *Volkscunde: tijdschrift voor de studie van de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 108 (2007): 105-124.

different cities, the local film exhibition market in Ghent and Antwerp was clearly characterized by different forms of class segregation: within the major city-centre palaces through price differentiation, as well as by the venues' location in particular neighbourhoods.

Looking back at this first line of research, which brought forward many new insights into the development of the structure and the differences within the Belgian film exhibition scene, it is clear that we do not consider this exhibition analysis as a form of empirical research on audience's experiences.⁵⁹³ In line with earlier work on film exhibition strategies, we conceived this line as a necessary first entrance into, and a contextualization of, an attempt to interconnect with cinema-going practices. We acknowledge that other levels and aspects of exhibition research can be explored as, for instance, corporate reports, exhibitors' advertising and other audience maximizing strategies. More interestingly, though, we think that more work needs to be done in linking cinema's locations with more fine-grained maps of demographical variations within cities, regions and countries. In most countries, though, including Belgium, this kind of basic historical demographic data is still missing (or their construction is still in progress), and few reliable data are available on the geographical location in terms of class and other variables.

Programming distinction

The second major research line in our three research projects investigated cinemas' programming strategies from the 1930s until the 1970s. Next to the fact that historical research on shifts in film programming is still a largely uncovered area within film studies, we conceived this line as a necessary complement and a refinement of the first line of research on exhibition. Programming also relates to audiences in that sense that (successful) exhibitors employ strategies and develop their experiences in attracting audiences as consumers. More hypothetically, one might see programming as a skilful exercise of responding to audiences' tastes and desires. Following up on class-related issues of spatial distinction, the question was also what kinds of different movies and genres were offered to audiences and what kind of programming strategies were developed in order to attract consumers.

This second line of research on programming made use of a database capturing the full programming schemes of regular cinemas in Ghent and Antwerp for a sample of ten years (starting from 1932 until 1972). Based on these data we were able to analyze programming strategies at a general level, and also conduct a more detailed analysis of individual cinemas or groups of venues. For Ghent, for instance, in 1952, the database contained information on 1,431 film screenings of 654

⁵⁹³ More information and results for this research line can be found in Biltreyst et al. 2007.

different films in 32 cinemas. Looking at programming differences, linked to spatial and class segregation, we identified a hierarchy between cinemas, with city-centre palaces as first-run cinemas, while the pillarized cinemas, especially those in working-class neighbourhoods, received these pictures later on. A clear indication of this hierarchy is provided by the movies' year of production, which shows that city centre cinemas played much more recent movies than those in the districts and suburbs. Nearly three quarters of the pictures screened by the big film venues in the city centre were produced in 1951 or 1952, while neighbourhood cinemas relied much more on older material. District cinemas, for instance, only had a handful of very recent pictures, while exhibitors in suburbs still played a consistent amount of older film material. In addition, the analysis reinforced Capitole's image as a first-run, blockbuster-oriented cinema, screening more musicals and comedies than its lower-class oriented rival *Vooruit*.

Looking at the programming strategies, it becomes clear that film palaces in the city centres competed more heavily for filmgoers coming from different parts of the city and its surroundings. Each sought to foster its identity, and even big chains were well aware that while filmgoers might have selected cinemas on the basis of movies and programming, they also looked for a particular experience, atmosphere and the performance of big screen cinema.

As well as identifying differences in the social geography of cinemas in Ghent, we looked at how cinemas developed various programming strategies in order to attract different types of audiences. One might speculate here about a hierarchy of social and cultural differentiation among cinemas in terms of generic preferences, the average circulation time, or the availability of recent successful or controversial titles. In general, the analysis indicated that smaller neighbourhood and district cinemas operated as second- or even third-run venues, usually scheduling older, but also less controversial material, a pattern we attribute to these venues' more family and community oriented profile. This was also the case for cinemas located in working-class areas. Catholic cinemas in general were more prudish in what they offered their audiences.

Although programming analysis can hardly be seen as an approach focussing upon the empirical audience per se, one can conceive programming as a key intermediary between exhibitors and audiences, more in particular as one of the strategies (next to advertising, price strategies, etc) to attract audiences. In this contribution we only looked at some major differences which underlined tendencies of class differences and segregation along different kinds of cinemas located in specific neighbourhoods.⁵⁹⁴ Again, much more work can be done, including case studies on particular kinds of cinemas like those targeting lower or working class audiences, or vice versa on the programming and advertising strategies developed by first-run city centre palaces in order to investigate tendencies of

⁵⁹⁴ More information and results for this research line can be found in Biltreyst et al., "Social Class".

class-mixing in these venues. More importantly, though, we think, is to confront these strategies with concrete audiences' experiences. How, for instance, did ordinary filmgoers perceive these strategies? How did they experience class distinction and other forms of segregation as an effect of pillarization? How do they describe the different experiences and practices of going to district, neighbourhood or city centre cinemas? In order to answer these questions, we integrated a third line in the research project, using oral history methods.

Image 1: The Capitole promoting *You'll Never Get Rich* (1941, USA), probably at the end of the 1940s (Collection Albert Warie)



Cinema-going experiences, memories and distinction

Before turning to some key findings in our research projects, it is useful to go into some of the methodological choices made on the third research line, related to oral history. The oral history component of the "Enlightened' City" and both other research projects explored the social

experience of cinema-going in Flanders from the 1930s to the 1970s. It was based on a wide range of individual, in-depth interviews. The respondents were selected and found in homes for elderly people, within the social circle of acquaintances of the interviewers, or by self-selection (responding to advertisements in local newspapers). As is the case in most qualitative research, we sought as much variation as possible in terms of age, class, sex and ideological points of view, in order to grasp a wide variety of possible routines, ideas and motives concerning cinema-going. The level of film consumption also varied widely within our group of respondents, from avid daily movie-goers to those who hardly ever visited a movie theatre. The individual interviews were conducted in 2005 and 2006 in the respondents' home environment by two researchers and trained undergraduate students from the universities of Antwerp and Ghent. A total of 389 interviews were conducted, 155 in Antwerp, 61 in Ghent, and 173 in 21 smaller towns and villages. The sample comprised somewhat more women (52.5%) than men. The interviews were semi-structured, whereby the interviewers used thematic spreadsheets to keep the interviews focused, but leaving a large degree of space for the respondents' own stories and spontaneous memories. This was crucial, because many respondents were highly motivated to talk about cinema and had very vivid memories, whereby they often referred to specific moments they remembered. The length of the interviews differed depending on the storytelling capacities of our respondents, with an average length of around one hour per interview. When quoting respondents - who all have given written permission to use their interviews for academic publication - in the following paragraphs, we give their initials, sex, and date of birth. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using Atlas-ti, a software program suitable for qualitative research. At a first level of analysis, we structured the interviews according to the respondents' age group in order to investigate their stories' evolution. At a second level, we reorganized their memories around a selection of themes, such as choice of movie theatre, frequency, companionship, information about specific films and motives for cinema-going.

This third line of the project introduces new research questions (bottom-up, audience experiences), methodologies (interviews, qualitative analysis) and traditions (oral history, cultural studies). We concentrated on statements in which respondents discussed their experiences of class and ideological segregation in the post-war Ghent film scene, in order to examine the multilayered character of cultural and social distinction, and to demonstrate how this analysis of individual experiences and collective cultural practices of going to the movies (in sociological terms of agency) can add new insights to a structural, political economy analysis of cinema's strategies to attract audiences.

A key problem, however, when dealing with oral history methodology, Kuhn argues, is not so much how to collect stories, histories and memories, but rather how to analyze and interpret

them.⁵⁹⁵ Researchers have to take into account that memories are highly selective, subjective and distorted by time, which poses problems for interpretation. Memory is an active process of creating meanings. The selective workings of personal and collective memories include strategies of repetition, fragmentation, narration (the will to tell the “good story”), the use of anecdotes, and the tactics of forgetting, creating or overstressing particular events. The central aim of oral history research on cinema-going is not to objectively recreate or reconstruct the past based upon subjective memories of our respondents, but to look at the recreation of these memories about going to the cinema. In this regard Kuhn used the term “memory text”, meaning that the way people remember is as much a text to decipher as the actual memories they talk about.⁵⁹⁶ Researchers should take into account the active staging of memory, as well as they should question the transparency of what is remembered.

These considerations have wide-ranging research implications. One is that memories about cinema-going are often clouded by nostalgia, resulting from the disappearance of the cinema culture the respondents grew up in. As noted by Kuhn, memories about cinema-going are characterized by a strong past/present-trope, in other words, they cannot be understood without taking into account their relationship with the present. Moreover, time as it is remembered by respondents, is not the same as historical time. In her research on cinema-going during the Franco dictatorship Maria Paz came to quite similar conclusions, stating that her Spanish respondents remembered the Franco years as a rather homogenous period but also as one which greatly coincided with their own life stories.⁵⁹⁷ Only when explicitly contrasting different periods in their life, respondents realized the evolutions their cinema-going habits had made through time. We found the same homogenous time interpretation in our own interviews on Flanders (see further). The only major break our respondents saw, was the transition in the 1980s from classical cinema culture to the new and much less appreciated multiplex cinema culture.

When asked about their experiences of class distinction and segregation in the sphere of cinema, interviewees confirmed that at least ideological segregation was an important distinctive feature, although most respondents tended not to overrate its impact. In the Ghent case, for instance, most interviewees seemed not to be well-informed about the precise ideological profile of specific cinemas. Respondents knew about the *Vooruit* as the place for cinema and leisure within the socialist movement, but, except for the cinemas operating within their own pillar, they were usually unsure about other ideologically-inspired film venues. While recognizing that some audiences were faithful to particular film venues, most respondents strongly questioned the influence of ideological

⁵⁹⁵ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*.

⁵⁹⁶ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 9-12.

⁵⁹⁷ Paz, “The Spanish Remember,” 359.

loyalty in relation to cinema and other leisure activities. Interviewees preferred to talk about these cinemas' distinctive profiles in terms of differences in programming styles, degrees of controversy, ethics and audiences' expectations. One male respondent (G.M., born in 1921) recalled:

There were two cinemas which were a bit Catholic, I think. They showed movies where there was nothing to see at all. Certain people went to these venues, I know, also because the Church said they should avoid other cinemas which were associated with the devil. The Vooruit was openly socialist and I think the Scaldis also. People didn't know this, but there were many socialists in there ... We didn't look at the political orientation of cinemas. We just knew that when you went to a Catholic cinema you didn't have to expect too much.

Acknowledging that cinema was not the most productive place for official politics and other forms of ideological work, the oral histories underlined the fact that these movie houses were basically only lucrative entertainment-driven places. In many socialist and Catholic film venues, ticket prices were kept considerably lower than in first-run cinemas. Next to tickets prices, people also made a distinction between cinemas on the basis of programming differences such as genre, language, origin, pictures' running time, novelty of the program and morality. These differences also influenced their experiences of an hierarchy between first-, second- and third-run cinemas:

There was a difference according to the type of cinema ... In the great cinemas in the centre ... in the Majestic, Eldorado, Capitole, Select, there was a better audience, people from the city. In the neighborhood cinemas you saw a more popular audience. The Agora is an example. They played mostly second- or third-hand films, films that had been previously shown. It was a good opportunity to see them again if they had been missed. There were mostly people from the neighborhood. (P.B., male, 1947)

Class differences, so it turned out, had a clearly material dimension as it was, for instance, reflected in clothing and dress codes:

We practically never went to the big cinemas around the former south station, mainly because these were too expensive. We didn't go to cinemas such as the Century and Capitole... People usually dressed up for going to these film theatres. (R.D., male, 1946)

Some respondents referred to class-related distinctions in terms of differences of public decency, behaviour, hygiene and even physical cleanness:

This was slightly better in the city cinema, but in neighborhood cinemas everybody threw everything on the ground. People also brought their sandwiches with them because they were often planning to sit there for three screenings, and they threw it all on the ground. No, it wasn't very clean. (A.A., female, 1944)

Other respondents referred to differences in audience mentality, taste and participation:

There was another mentality, another, I would almost say, level of education of the people who live in the centre. And then if you went to the Brugsepoort or to the Muide, people were really more spontaneous, responding to everything. We were more reserved in our reactions, but in neighborhood cinemas people would react more spontaneously. (C.H., female, 1933)

It is not difficult to interpret these accounts from a Bourdieuan perspective as utterances of distinction, whereby respondents describe their own position in relation to other social groups and their social practices. The oral testimonies underlined the importance of audience composition, when describing cinema-going experiences and the atmosphere in cinemas, not only in terms of objective class differences but even more so from the perspective of concrete lifestyle, behaviour, taste or language. People talked about very different audiences, not in a classical class theory sense, but rather in terms of very specific class fractions, professions or generations, although they seldom made reference to either gender or ethnicity. In the way they described the social geography of cinema, people often intermingled various levels of audience compositions:

The audience was very diverse ... For example, Tuesday was the day for merchants and independent shop owners. Younger people often went on Fridays ... There was a real class difference between the cinemas. The working class went to the *Vooruit* and the middle and more wealthy classes went to the *Capitol* or *Majestic*. (G.P., male, 1922)

The respondents' mental mapping of cinema was constructed on a multilayered concept of cultural and social distinction, and in part by the aspiration to define and distinguish themselves from other social classes and their daily practices. The experience of cinema-going was also related to geographical stratification and the feeling of belonging to a community or living in a particular district. From this perspective, it is important to recognize that neighbourhood cinemas were not always defined in a pejorative sense. In their accounts of cinemas in the districts and the suburbs, interviewees often associated these cinemas with a sense of community and familiarity:

Mostly the same audience ... People who were used to go there. I knew almost everyone. This was the case in every neighborhood. Everybody in the district went to the same cinema. (G.M., male, 1921)

This analysis, which concentrated on the audience's experiences of cinema as a social practice only from the perspective of class distinction and ideological segregation, underlines the usefulness of oral history methodology. When considering these responses, it remains necessary to take into account historical distance, especially in interpreting critical evaluations of neighbourhood cinemas

as areas of poverty, low taste or undisciplined “bad” public behaviour. Of particular interest are statements which tend to downplay the impact of ideological segregation on cinema-going practices so many decades later. In this context one might speculate about whether the process of “depillarization” of society, which started in the 1960s and soon affected politicized film exhibition in Belgium, also influenced respondents’ replies.

The oral history analysis nevertheless underlines the contrast between the image of the film venues as it was intended (by the pillars) and how it was actually perceived. Film venues that openly targeted a very specific religious or political audience (predominantly Catholic parish halls with a regular film program) were conceived as being at the margin of cinema, or at least of cinema understood as a field of entertainment, leisure and pleasure. The greatest degree of class-mixing took place in the city centre film palaces, respondents argued. Although these cinemas were mostly associated with middle and higher social classes in their public image, promotion and architecture, their differentiated price policies and programming strategies succeeded in attracting film fans from other classes who aspired to a “better” film experience. In the respondents’ mental mapping of the field of cinema, the Capitole clearly provided the most intense cinema experience available to them.

Conclusion and discussion

In this article we tried to indicate how over the last couple of decades there is a growing interest in the lived experiences of historical film audiences. The relatively new field, which is closely linked to a plea for a new kind of cinema history from below, instigated a lively debate on theories, methods and research practices, and it has given rise to interesting interdisciplinary exchanges. But it equally raises problematic issues on methodology and methods.

In our case study we reported on a series of research projects dealing with historical cinema-going audiences in Belgium. The starting point was that postwar Belgian society was strongly divided along ideological (and religious) lines, and this also deeply influenced leisure, media and other cultural industries. The question was to what degree cinema, as the most popular form of entertainment and leisure, was also characterized by this ideological segregation. Using a three-layered research design, we concentrated on the issue of class segregation in terms of spatial distinction, programming distinction, and the audiences’ experiences and cinema-going memories. The overall picture is that the exhibition structure was largely segregated, that film programming showed clear differences, while film audiences highlighted the practice of cinema-going to be a significant social routine, strongly inspired by community identity formation, class and social distinction. The three-layered design made it possible to capture more fully how and where what

kind of movies were consumed by what kind of audiences. We are convinced that, applied to the question of the importance of ideology and social class, the analysis of the structure and the location of cinemas would have been insufficient if not supplemented by programming and audience analysis, thus making a strong case for triangulation in historical cinema audience research. Not only did oral history accounts propose interesting corrections or nuances to structural insights (e.g. on the power of the ideological pillars on cinema-going practices), they also brought forward new elements which might help to understand the lived experience of distinction (e.g. the importance of cloths, public decency, behavior or hygiene). We are convinced that, inspired by the idea of the conceptual plurality of the (film) audience, a triangulation of data, theory and methodology not only validates earlier insights, but it can also enrich our knowledge of the meaning and experience of cinema.

When looking at the literature overview as outlined above, it is clear that oral history is at its best when digging into lived experiences of cinema-going. It is less obvious to use it for obtaining basic historical information and fact checking. The researcher is confronted with a different set of problems, when for instance doing interviews with key players of a particular cinema historical setting, as we experienced in the case of the Antwerp exhibition scene in the postwar era.⁵⁹⁸ Although it is a rather weak source for getting hard facts, it does allow to get a grasp of the human aspect behind the available archival data of a specific organization or institution.

Some topics of research might appear absent from the interviews, or very difficult to trigger respondents' memories and testimonies. We experienced this as we were looking for the impact of ideology (pillarization, see below) in our oral history interviews. Although we operationalized the rather abstract concept into questions on specific opinions, attitudes and behavior, at first sight, audiences seemed to downplay the impact of ideology. It seemed as if it was so much part of their world view then, it was rather invisible to them. It was only after careful reconsideration of explicit statements and implicit indications (at the level of interviewing techniques, as well as analyzing the transcripts) we saw ideology at work. The main question then became: Where does ideology (in our case pillarization) shimmer through? Where do we find the traces of impact this ideological top down forces had on the lived experiences of these respondents?

Other problems can arise when working on specific forms of film that are not mainstream fiction film, as Louise Anderson experienced. In her study of historical newsreels audiences in Newcastle, UK, she comes to the conclusion that the theoretical frameworks for studying cinema memories, dominated by fiction films, are not entirely appropriate to her study of a factual form like newsreels, because as Anderson argued: "My participants had much more to say about cinema-going in general, which was talked about with great enthusiasm and in greater depth by some than

⁵⁹⁸ See Lotze and Meers, "They don't need me'."

newsreels in particular.”⁵⁹⁹ This particular problem for non-fiction news films, equally highlights an advantage of working on fiction film memories. Talking about their cinema-going experiences appears to be a pleasant nostalgia driven exercise, one related to bringing back “treasured memories.” However it is also one, which is mostly not threatening or linked to taboo issues. This is probably the reason why very few oral history projects focus on cinema-going experiences in more controversial places such as porn cinemas, which would be a highly problematic issue to have respondents talk about.

One might think of more under-developed fields of enquiry, like research on the experience of cinema in particular spaces (e.g. the highbrow or cinephile film club, the early multiplex), in specific periods (e.g. cinema’s decline in the 1960s), the experience of particular genres (e.g. on controversial juvenile delinquency movies) by specific kinds of audiences (e.g. women only screenings). In this context, it is also useful to think about other sources and traces which are available to understand historical media experiences, next to interviews (e.g. analysis of autobiographies, film fan diaries). In this context, Phil Wickham makes a plea for a more intensive use of “ephemera” in cinema history, because it is precisely “in the nexus between text and context, that ephemera can make meaning and provide historical evidence of the place of a film in its world and the lives of those that saw it” (p. 316).⁶⁰⁰ He argues that cinema programmes, fan magazines, toys, postcards, sheet music, books, posters, press books all can demonstrate “the weft and weave of cinematic experience as it was understood without the benefit of hindsight” (p. 317). They offer an illustration of everyday life “as a generalised theoretical concept but also of real individual everyday lives” thus giving “a very acute material rendering of the relationship between producer and consumer”. And these bottom-up perspectives on cinema in everyday life, combined with a more structural analysis, provided us with a fresh perspective on (researching) cinema cultures in context.

⁵⁹⁹ L. Anderson, "Postcards from the Edge: The Untidy Realities of Working with Older Cinema Audiences, Distant Memories and Newsreels," *Participations* 6, no. 2 (2009): 187.

⁶⁰⁰ P. Wickham, "Scrapbooks, Soap Dishes and Screen Dreams: Ephemera, Everyday Life and Cinema History," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 8, no. 3 (September 2010): 319.

The idea of triangulation in the field of cinema history is highly productive as it results in compelling and valuable insights and multiple layers of local cinema histories.⁶⁰¹ Its value has been demonstrated by projects which followed in the footsteps of the “‘Enlightened’ City” project or by the initiatives that have approached cinema history from a similar angle.⁶⁰² I believe that triangulation has much to offer for cinema historians, not only to achieve more complete and valid sets of research findings, but also by establishing links and by opening research perspectives which can and need to be explored further.

2.4. “Antwerpen Kinemastad” as a case study in new cinema history and as a mixed-method investigation in changes in film exhibition and film consumption

In the course of this chapter I have shown how historiographical “shifts” in the twentieth century have had implications on the methods used for historical research in general and how this shaped new cinema history as a recent strand of film history in particular. This also implies that, as a case in new cinema history, “Antwerpen Kinemastad” builds on this legacy. The investigation of Antwerp’s cinema history in the second half of the twentieth century is presented as a narrative that is grounded in the analysis (meaning interpretation and explanation based on description) of an abundance of different kinds of sources. In alignment with the ideas that narrative and explanatory forms do not mutually exclude but inform each other, and that historical writing is always constructed, this thesis proposes to provide a rich and multi-layered view of a part of Antwerp’s cinema history that can serve as a basis and point of departure for researching additional periods and topics related to that history.

An integrative approach to cinema history embracing cultural, social as well as economic aspects, necessarily calls for the combination of different theories, methods, and data. In addition, as argued also by film historian Charles Musser, a mixed-method approach provides possibilities of disengaging with fixed chronological structures and for tackling the challenge of historical sequencing: “Broadening the evidentiary base and interrogating assertions about historical change

⁶⁰¹ See also Hübel, in reference to the work of Anne and Joachim Paech, who spoke of the *trias* and three pillars of cinema historiography: architectural history, programming history, and life history (i.e. *Lebensgeschichte*, of employees): A. J. Hübel, *Big, bigger, Cinema! Film- und Kinomarketing in Deutschland (1910-1933)* (Marburg: Schüren, 2011), 220). Earlier, I have elaborated on Allen's wish to integrate oral testimonies in his “Going to the Show” project (Allen, “Reimagining,” 55, 47-48).

⁶⁰² One of the projects for which the “‘Enlightened’ City” project has served as example and source of inspiration is the “Cultura de la Pantalla” network which includes a number of cities in Mexico and beyond that are investigated through identical approaches. For details see P. Meers, D. Biltreyest and J. C. Lozano, “The Cultura de la Pantalla Network: Writing New Cinema Histories across Latin America and Europe,” *Revista Internacional de Comunicación y Desarrollo* 9 (2018): 161-168.

on a multiplicity of levels (production, exhibition, commerce, cinematic form and subject matter, technology, intertexts) proved crucial in addressing the questions of historical change."⁶⁰³

In order to investigate the changes in local film exhibition and consumption in Antwerp in the second half of the twentieth century in relation to the emergence, heydays and downfall of the Rex cinema group, in this thesis the principle of triangulation as described in the previous paragraph is applied on three levels: with regard to theories, methods, and data. The results are presented in four chapters that approach the question of changes in film exhibition and film consumption in Antwerp from four different angles: the spatial distribution of the cinemas in relation to urban history (Chapter 3, "Places"); the structure of the local cinema sector (Chapter 4, "Exhibition structures"); the supply of films (Chapter 5, "Films"); and how the experience of cinemagoing is remembered by local residents (Chapter 6, "Memories of cinemagoing"). In the remainder of this paragraph I explain the overall research design of this thesis. Questions to be addressed are: How do the historiographical and theoretical perspectives and methods frame the analyses in each of the four chapters, and how do the different chapters relate to one another? The explanation of the research design is of a more general kind here; details about the concrete methods, sources and data that are used will be explained at the beginning of each chapter.

Chapter 3 ("Places") examines Antwerp's cinema market from a social geography and urban history perspective. Insights from existing studies on processes of suburbanization and pauperization of particular areas are linked to the changes in the local cinema market. In order to disclose the long-term changes, five sample years are selected (one year per decade) for which the locations of active cinemas are mapped. By relating the cinemas' locations to questions of capacity and ownership it is possible to investigate the spatial distribution of the cinemas across the city for each moment in time and examine the geographical expansion of Heylen's cinema group in relation to his competitors as well as to socio-economic changes within the city's urban fabric in the course of second half of the twentieth century.

In addition to these insights on changes in the geo-spatial diffusion of Antwerp's cinema market, in Chapter 4 ("Exhibition structures"), the market is explored from a business-historical angle. The aim is to study the economic position of the Rex cinema group in relation to local competitors, by drawing on models from economics that help to explain processes of concentration in Antwerp's exhibition sector. This is then linked to certain strategies that were adopted by Heylen and his local competitors to survive in an ailing industry. Insights from the fields of film studies and film history about practices of film exhibition and distribution are used to examine these strategies. Although most of these insights build on research conducted in and about other countries, they help

⁶⁰³ C. Musser, "Historiographic Method and the Study of Early Cinema," *Cinema Journal* 44, no 1 (Fall 2004): 104.

to describe and explain the mechanisms of film exhibition (including distribution and reception as supply and demand sides of the market, respectively) on a local level. In addition, these insights allow for contextualizing the case of Antwerp – as a city in a small European country – within international networks of the film industry. After all, since an early stage, the film industry has largely been organized as an international business and networks for film production, distribution and exhibition have been largely international in their scope.

These insights from Chapters 3 and 4 about changes in the geographical and economic structure of the local cinema market are complemented in Chapter 5 (“Films”) by an in-depth study of the film supply in Antwerp cinemas. A programming analysis for the same five sample years as in Chapter 3 is conducted to understand the local film supply and to investigate local strategies of film exhibition, distribution, and reception. They can be interpreted not only as indicators for possible forms of collaboration and competition between individual exhibitors, but can also be viewed as indicators for preferences of local audiences.

This preference of local audiences is examined more closely in the final chapter (“Memories of cinemagoing”). Here, the findings from all previous chapters are connected to the experience of cinemagoing as remembered by Antwerp citizens. Oral testimonies are analyzed to better understand the meaning of cinemagoing in Antwerp in the past in relation to place, exhibition practices and film supply. These testimonies are used to analyze the meaning of cinemagoing, as an additional layer to the city’s history of film exhibition and reception. The knowledge gathered in the course of Chapters 3 through 5 helps to contextualize the cinemagoing memories within the history of film exhibition in the second half of the twentieth century in general, and to cinemas of the Rex cinema group in particular.

Insights from theories and methods from the disciplines and subfields of social geography, urban history, business history, economics, film studies, film history, and memory studies are thus combined to explore Antwerp’s cinema history from different angles. The application of different theories and methods implies that this research is based on different kinds of data: structured and unstructured, written and (audio-)visual documents and oral sources. The use of structured data (in the form of databases) is largely motivated by the wish to sketch certain changes on meso and macro level, including historical data about the cinemas (names, location, capacity, management) for the period of the Rex cinema group’s existence, as well as data about the films that were screened and information on the screenings themselves. The quantitative approach helps to answer question that relate to long-term changes and serve as points of departures to investigate the peculiarities in qualitative ways. Unstructured data in the form of written texts, images and oral sources originate in sources of different types: secondary academic and non-academic literature, archive material from public and private collections (reports and inventories, written correspondence, newspaper clippings,

photographs, drawings, filmed recordings), and transcriptions of oral testimonies.⁶⁰⁴ The triangulation of data is motivated, on the one hand, by the firm belief that different kinds of data from different sources complement each other and allow for a multilayered perspective on the object of study. On the other hand, it is also motivated in a more pragmatic way by the need to cope with the challenges that are inherent in the collection of historical data in general: restricted availability of, access to, and consistency of the data. I will address these challenges in more detail in Chapter 3.1.1.

Central to the overall approach taken here is a firm belief in the symbiotic relationship between history and memory. As I have shown in the previous paragraphs, history and memory are in constant interplay. While insights from history are important to contextualize and understand memories, memories can replenish and revive (under-)researched topics of history. Both also shape and feed one another, as cinema history is always contained in cinema memory and vice versa. In “Antwerpen Kinemastad”, both cinema history and cinema memory are explored by concentrating on all three major aspects examined in Chapters 3 through 5: places, exhibition structures, films. Table 1 shows how history and memory are linked with regard to these three aspects. *Places* relates to spatial dimensions of cinemagoing, including the spatial distribution of the cinemas across Antwerp, neighborhoods, and places in the city and how they shaped respondents' experiences. *Exhibition structures* largely refers to questions related to the structure of the exhibition market and how this was experienced by, and shaped, the respondents' choice of cinemas. Finally, the aspect of *films* relate to questions of film programming profiles of the cinemas, exchange of films between different (groups of) exhibitors as well as the relation between the popular canon of films (most successful films in terms of screened time) and the official (or classical) film canon (as established by traditional film historians and film critics).

Table 1: Investigated topics “Antwerpen Kinemastad”

	HISTORY	MEMORY
<i>PLACE</i>	geography (spatial distribution cinemas) architecture (size)	cinemas' proximity in relation to respondent's home choice center cinemas vs. neighborhood cinemas
<i>STRUCTURE</i>	economic profiles cinemas (ownership) competition within market (position of the Rex cinema group within Antwerp's market)	respondents' choice of particular cinemas (Heylen vs. competitors) Antwerpen Kinemastad (role Heylen for reputation of Antwerp as “cinema city”)
<i>FILMS</i>	film programming profiles of the cinemas trajectory of most successful films through Antwerp (as indicator of the exchange of films between competitors)	respondents' notion of cinema profiles memories of particular films (popular vs. official film canon)

⁶⁰⁴ For details see the section “Consulted archives and collections” in the bibliography.

As I have shown in Paragraph 2.2.3 about the relation between history, memory, and oral history, at the bottom of the contrastive views on the use of oral testimonies for historical inquiries lies the distinction between the memories treated as sources for factual knowledge versus memory treated as discourse. In this thesis both options apply. Due to the poor state of business archives for Antwerp cinemas and the fragmentary nature of evidence kept in many private collections, interviews with former key players in Antwerp's cinema sector are used to bring to life and to light diverse (undocumented or scarcely documented) aspects of Antwerp's cinematic past, which can then be further explored. The information from the interviews will be used by means of supplementing the institutional histories based on archive documents. Above all, the information will be used in full awareness of the particularities of oral testimonies and memories as previously discussed.

While oral testimonies are used in relation to the three above-mentioned aspects (places, exhibition structures, films) as supplementary sources to written documents and archival material, in Chapter 6, oral history is to offer an additional angle from which Antwerp's cinema history is approached. Therefore, different from Chapters 3 through 5, in the final chapter, the oral testimonies are not from former players in Antwerp's cinema market, but comprise the recollections of (former) Antwerp citizens of their cinema-going experiences in Antwerp throughout the period under investigation. In doing so Chapter 6 offers a cinema history from below which entails also the views on local cinema culture from those at whom it was targeted and who effectively consumed it one way or the other. The three perspectives taken in Chapters 3 through 5 (places, exhibition structures, films) are constitutive for the structure of Chapter 6.

This history-memory approach is dynamic in many ways and breaks with more static media-related classifications such as production/distribution/exhibition, sender/receiver, supplier/customer etc. To begin with, the dynamic character is inherent in the interaction between historical and mnemonic discourse as mentioned above. It stands out in its openness: cinema history and cinema memory are never complete, never finished, they complement, reinforce or correct each other. Secondly, the model is more than a static blueprint for the investigation of cinema culture. The three aspects of cinema history included here, for instance, are far from exhaustive and can be complemented or altered, dependent on the particularities of the cinema culture under investigation. Next to place, exhibition structures, and films other aspects to investigate would be, for example, alternative cultural circuits (e.g. concert halls, theaters, fairs), or transport facilities. Thirdly, next to these aspects themselves, it is also, and particularly, productive and interesting to examine the relationships between these aspects. They generate compelling questions about cinema on macro-, meso- as well as micro-level, such as the relation between place and structure in terms of local/regional/national film policy and its influence on urban development, or the relation between

structure and films in the form of the impact of large-scale introduction of television on local film exhibition and cinema profiling, or the link between urban history and memories of cinemagoing in one's former neighborhood, to name but a few. Finally, the history-memory approach adopted here lends itself to study important questions from synchronic as well as diachronic perspective. It is possible to examine the dynamics between place (cultural geography), structure (economic factors) and films (programming) for one particular moment in time. Yet it is equally fascinating to analyze the changes throughout time.

The combination of history and memory yields a dynamic model that considers cinemas as places where history and memory meet. It puts new cinema history into practice while at the same time expanding it, for instance, by putting the film text (for example, individual films and actors/actresses) back on the agenda of new cinema history. It helps to study cinema culture on a local level, also paying sufficient attention to processes and phenomena on meso- and macrolevel.

*"Build a roof above the De Keyserlei and you have the biggest multiplex in the world."*⁶⁰⁵

3. Places. Changes in the geo-spatial distribution of cinemas across Antwerp

Throughout the centuries Antwerp had gradually expanded from a settlement on the banks of the river Scheldt (Schelde in Flemish, running through the center of the map in Figure 3.1 in Appendix I) in the eighth century to an agglomeration constituted of nine districts (including the district of Antwerp) at the end of the twentieth century. Traces of the major urban expansions up until the middle ages are still visible today in the half circle shapes of major roads. They also demarcate the borders of a number of neighborhoods and/or districts.⁶⁰⁶ The last extensive expansion in 1982 was of a more administrative nature: as a consequence of the merging of municipalities (decreed by Belgian law already in 1975), former municipalities became urban districts of Antwerp. In other words, over the period of fifty years under investigation here, what is now called the agglomeration of Antwerp underwent considerable administrative changes.⁶⁰⁷ Since the last change in 1982, the agglomeration has consisted of nine districts, including (in alphabetical order) Antwerp, Berendrecht-Zandvliet-Lillo, Berchem, Borgerhout, Deurne, Ekeren, Hoboken, Merksem, and Wilrijk (see Figure 3.1 in Appendix I).⁶⁰⁸

In the last decades of the nineteenth century the Station Quarter became Antwerp's culturally most vibrant area. It was located east of the "boulevard" Frankrijklei, i.e. outside the inner half circle demarcating the historical center of the city.⁶⁰⁹ For the greatest part the Station Quarter was the area surrounding what would become Antwerp's Central Station in the beginning of the twentieth century.⁶¹⁰ The main axis running through the Station Quarter and connecting Central Station with the historical center was (and still is) De Keyserlei. From the late nineteenth century until the 1980s, the De Keyserlei was Antwerp's place to be and to be seen. The fancy restaurants,

⁶⁰⁵ Heylen quoted in W. Magiels, "De andere kant van Georges D. Heylen: 'The Smiling Cobra'," in *Magie van de cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde*, edited by W. Magiels and R. De Hert (Antwerp: Facet, 2004), 75. See Heylen in an interview with Oosterwaal in 1990: Heylen quoted in J. Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland, failliet filmmogol," *De Morgen*, September 4, 1993, 18.

⁶⁰⁶ I. Bertels, T. Bisschops and B. Blondé, "Stadslandschap. Ontwikkelingen en verwikkelingen van een stedelijke ruimte," in *Antwerpen. Biografie van een stad*, edited by I. Bertels, B. De Munck and H. van Goethem (Antwerpen: Meulenhoff/Manteau, 2010), 11-66. For a concise map depicting the first six urban expansions between the eighth and the sixteenth century see Bertels et al., "Stadslandschap," 58.

⁶⁰⁷ Bertels et al., "Stadslandschap," 50.

⁶⁰⁸ See the website of the city of Antwerp: Stad Antwerpen, "Homepage," accessed December 5, 2012. www.antwerpen.be.

⁶⁰⁹ With the coming of the railway and further transformations of former city walls into boulevards in the nineteenth century, Antwerp's center steadily grew in the direction away from the Scheldt (an alternative option would have been alongside the river).

⁶¹⁰ T. Soens, P. Stabel and B. Tritsmans, "Anders gaan leven? Spanningen en conflicten over stad en leefmilieu," in *Antwerpen. Biografie van een stad*, edited by I. Bertels, B. De Munck and H. van Goethem (Antwerp: Meulenhoff/Manteau, 2010), 162-163; Bertels et al., "Stadslandschap," 47.

shops and cultural venues were popular with residents and tourists alike and made it that by some the avenue was chauvinistically called Antwerp's Champs-Élysées.⁶¹¹

The Station Quarter was also the area where the most prestigious cinemas of Antwerp were located. In 1907 one of the film pioneers in Belgium, Willem Frederik Krüger, opened the first permanent cinema on the De Keyserlei: Cinéma Théâtre Krüger. Fancy picture palaces such as Anvers Palace on Appelmansstraat, Scala on Anneessenstraat and cinema Rex on De Keyserlei followed in the decades to come. Although World War II brought death and destruction to the Station Quarter (including cinemas as the Rex and Scala), after the war it quickly recovered and became Antwerp's cultural hot spot again. After the war, the Station Quarter also became inextricably linked to Heylen's Rex cinema group. It was here that he re-opened cinema Rex in 1947 and it was from here that he would build his cinema empire in the decades to come.⁶¹² Within a short period of time, he added one cinema after the other to his group until by the 1960s he had acquired a quasi-monopoly position in Antwerp's inner city. Although Heylen would keep this powerful position there for three more decades, the degradation of the Station Quarter in the course of the 1980s went hand in hand with the disappearance of many of his cinemas there in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

This chapter is to investigate the changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape between 1945 through 1995, with special attention to Heylen's cinema group. The focus in this chapter is on geo-spatial aspects and changes of Antwerp's cinema landscape between 1945 and 1995, including the location of the cinemas and their capacities (in terms of seating). Questions of ownership and/or management of the cinemas will be dealt with here only when needed to illustrate synchronic and diachronic dynamics of Antwerp's cinema landscape in relation to geography and urban history. More details on the relations between the different (groups of) exhibitors will be examined in depth in Chapter 4.

The following paragraph introduces the approach, sources and data used. In the two subsequent paragraphs, changes of the geo-spatial distribution of Antwerp cinemas are explored. The findings are summarized in the concluding paragraph and related to the broader theoretical and methodological framework of this thesis.

⁶¹¹ Quote by Antwerp's former mayor, Leona Detiège, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the De Keyserlei (in F. Lauwers, *De Keyserlei 125 jaar* (Antwerpen: New Work Cy, 1998), 4, as well as by Antwerp's renowned urban historian Lauwers in Lauwers, *De Keyserlei 125 jaar*, 9.

⁶¹² *Weekblad Cinema* 26 (11 1947): s.p.

3.1. Method, sources, data

The first step of exploring Antwerp's cinema history was to gather data about cinemas and to mark them on a map. For this step “Antwerpen Kinemastad” relied extensively on a first large database established within the frameworks of the “*Enlightened*” City project. This original database comprised information on film screening venues for a selection of major cities, small towns and villages in Flanders for the period 1924 through 2000.⁶¹³ It was subsequently extended by data on film screening venues in Antwerp (postal codes 2000 to 2060) stretching from 1902 through 2007.⁶¹⁴

Based on new historical evidence, the original data were complemented for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” to include more neighborhoods and districts for five sample years (1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992), thus roughly covering the period of the Rex cinema group’s existence (see Appendix II-2). It is this newly created database, henceforth referred to as “inventory database”, to which all of the following explanations relate. Before I deal with this database in more detail, I will address the particular challenges involved in the gathering of historical evidence. Unless indicated otherwise, I will focus on issues related solely to the inventory database as created for “Antwerpen Kinemastad”. After all, collecting data on the earlier periods and other types of cinemas had its own specific challenges, challenges that applied less for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” and more for earlier periods of cinema history.⁶¹⁵

3.1.1. Gathering historical evidence

The inventory database is based on a wide range of sources. Next to secondary literature about Antwerp’s cinema history (details below), they included archival material from public as well as private collections, such as yearbooks and annual reports, various essays and articles in newspapers, illustrated and trade press, photographs, programming and accounting books, business and legal correspondence. Finally, interviews with former key figures in Antwerp's cinema market helped to provide clues (rather than evidence) about the existence, (approximate) addresses and economic profile (ownership) of individual cinemas.⁶¹⁶ As addressed in in the previous two chapters, historians

⁶¹³ For details about the database, including data collection, see van de Vijver, “Gent Kinemastad,” 55-65.

⁶¹⁴ This expansion was done by Gert Willems, researcher of the “*Enlightened*” City project between from 2005 to 2007. This database is included in Appendix II-1.

⁶¹⁵ For example, with regard to the period of early cinema (1895 – 1910) when cinemas were still a novelty and promoted as such, rather than for the films and stars to be shown, or when as a consequence of overall absence of professionalism in the cinema business structural information was scarce.

⁶¹⁶ The factual information gathered from interviews was cross-referenced and checked in listings of archival records to ensure the validity of the information. Where such control was not possible the information was either excluded from the historical account or its source made transparent. An overview of these interviews is included in the bibliography.

have to go to great lengths in gathering evidence. Cinema historians are no exception in this. Most of the challenges concerning the collection of historical evidence can be subsumed under three issues: availability of, access to, and inconsistency of the data.

The availability of archival data usually depends on the degree of record keeping of companies (in the case of business history), the responsibility of institutions (public archives), and/or opportunities to trace private collectors and their willingness to cooperate. Most of the information in the inventory database was derived from annuals, including *Annuaire général du spectacle en Belgique* (General Directory of Spectacle in Belgium) and *Jaarboek van de Belgische film* (Yearbook of Belgian Film) kept in the public archives of the Koninklijk Filmarchief België in Brussels (Royal Film Archive of Belgium, currently called Cinematek) and the Rijksarchief Beveren (State Archives in Belgium).⁶¹⁷ It concerned mostly information originally collected for statistical purposes, including the names and addresses of the venues and sometimes also their seating capacities, types of projectors and/or names of exhibitors. Additional information was retrieved from secondary literature on Antwerp's cinema history, including *Het paleis om de hoek* by the local film critic Frank Heirman, *Magie van de cinema* by former Rex employee Willy Magiels and Belgian film maker Robbe de Hert, as well as an extensive Master thesis written by Cindy van Handenhove.⁶¹⁸ Complementary to the annuals these secondary sources provided information, for instance, on the opening and closing dates of the cinemas, their location as well as owners.

Closely related, yet not to be confused with the availability of data, is the problem of access: data can be available and not accessible, but not vice versa. Access to data can be restricted for different reasons. Restrictions can be physical, legal or they can result from a lack of indexing. In the case of Antwerp physical restrictions were predominantly due to the fact that many documents and material are kept in private collections or in the attics of individuals, some of which are largely unknown or in the hands of individuals who were not willing to share their material. Fortunately, the latter case was rather rare and most of the persons I contacted were more than willing to share their stories and material. Yet, as I have also experienced repeatedly over the past years, some of the encounters were rather accidental and it is very hard to estimate just how much more authentic material of the company's archive has survived and is still "out there". The second kind of restriction is of legal nature and usually has to do with questions of data protection. Several attempts to obtain data in relation to cinema's revenues and expenditures failed.⁶¹⁹ Concerning the last kind of

⁶¹⁷ The yearbooks were not consistently available for all years.

⁶¹⁸ Heirman, *Paleis om de hoek*; Magiels and De Hert, *Magie van de cinema*; Van Handenhove, "Antwerpen Kinemastad".

⁶¹⁹ Upon inquiries at the regional Chamber of commerce and the Federal Public Service Economy in Antwerp, for instance, I was told that it was possible to receive these data on national, provincial, and municipal level, but everything beyond that was problematic. As economist Erik Faucompret attested in this regard in an interview with the Flemish financial economic magazine *Trends*: "A complete quantitative financial analysis [of the local cinema sector] was impossible because the film industry was not willing to cooperate. The Belgian Professional Chamber for Cinematography, the only organization in

restriction, the material was available and publicly accessible, but the archive had not (yet) been sufficiently indexed or not been indexed at all. This particularly applies for the writing of cinema history as the topic of cinema is usually not of high priority to archives. Often, a plethora of material is scattered across different inventories related to different topics, which makes looking for cinema-related events (such as openings and closures of cinemas) a tedious and extremely time-consuming enterprise.

Just as problematic as restricted availability and access was the problem of inconsistency of available historical evidence.⁶²⁰ Although by the 1940s, cinema had long been institutionally established and occupied a regular spot in the local and entertainment press, in economic reports and publications, the fluctuation of businesses in operation as well as more general administrative changes and changes concerning the institutions responsible for record keeping often resulted in major inconsistencies. Below, I will address two kinds of inconsistencies: those across different sources and those within the same (type of) source.

First, the inconsistencies result from the fact that the data (or at least a set of data) cannot be derived from one singular type of source for the whole period under investigation. In case of “Antwerpen Kinemastad”, restricted availability of, and access to, historical evidence made it necessary to combine different sources. Hence, inconsistencies across the different sources had to be dealt with: classifications differed as did the type of data included in the listings. This meant, for instance, that while some listings in annuals included venues screening 35-mm film as well as 16-mm venues, others only listed 35-mm venues. Similarly, some sources listed only commercial cinemas, while others included non-commercial venues as well (e.g. parish halls, schools, dance halls). Finally, different institutions could also apply different ways of data-collection, for instance, via the former Nationaal Instituut voor de Statistiek (National Institute for Statistics, NIS) or by compiling lists themselves. Since different ways of data collection took a different amount of time and different channels of publication (internal or external), this implied different temporalities: cinemas which had been closed were still documented for the same year in one source, but not in the other. The same applied for cinemas that opened or changed ownership.

Next to inconsistencies amongst different sources there were also inconsistencies within the same kind of sources, even when documentation was being maintained by the same institutions.

possession of all statistics, refused any kind of cooperation friendly yet determined. Certain distributors, such as Warner-Columbia, preferred not to provide their balances and of the contacted exhibitors only 8% was willing to participate in my survey, despite repeated request.” (Faucompret in F. Crols, “Rode rekeningen,” *Trends. Financieel Economisch Magazine* 11, no. 239 (November 29, 1985): 52.)

⁶²⁰ See William Uricchio and Roberta Pearson elaboration on the major problem of inconsistency of historical evidence for the early nickelodeon period, a problem which they claimed is grounded in “the poor state of record keeping,” “the pervasive problem of corruption” or is simply the result of the high fluctuation of the number of businesses in operation (Uricchio and Pearson, “Dialogue,” 99).

Partly, these inconsistencies also resulted from administrative changes (e.g. because autonomous municipalities became districts). Partly, they were “just inconsistencies,” such as the numbers and types of items included in the listings of the yearbooks which differed over the years, similarly to what has been mentioned above in relation to external inconsistencies. For some years, for instance, only the name of the venue and its address and telephone number were listed, for other years, however, the type of film was included (35-mm, 16-mm), the name of the exhibitor/ director of the cinema, the number of seats and even the type of projector. In addition, Heylen's growing power within Antwerp's cinema market also resulted in disparities in advertisement in the local newspapers between his and competing cinemas. From the 1950s onwards, Heylen's cinemas were gradually more visible in the local press than those of his competitors. By the 1970s Heylen's cinemas were even advertised and reviewed on different pages than competing cinemas. It even reached the point that in the early 1970s, in Antwerp's major newspaper, *Gazet van Antwerpen*, the weekly newspaper column titled “Antwerpen Kinemastad” was exclusively devoted to reviews and advertisements for Heylen's cinemas. Despite the rather indiscriminating title, which gave the impression that the page concerned all of Antwerp cinemas, films in competing cinemas were reviewed and advertised elsewhere in the newspaper and less extensively.

Source-external as well as internal inconsistencies thus resulted in similar problems of systematic sampling, as did the insufficient availability of, and access to, the various collections addressed above. In an attempt to overcome these problems, existing sources and data were cross-checked. In the following paragraph I will explain in detail which data were gathered and included in the first (inventory) database.

3.1.2. Data included in the inventory database

As indicated at the outset of this chapter, the inventory database used for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” was based on an extensive database established within the frameworks of the “‘Enlightened’ City” project. Data collected for the latter span the period between 1902 (the first entry of regular film screenings in Antwerp) and 2007 (the end mark of data collection for the “‘Enlightened’ City” project). Principally, the data were processed using Excel (see Image 2). Each row represented one film screening venue on a year-to-year basis. This allowed the researchers to capture in detail the changes of the cinema market, such as openings and closures, managerial changes, or changes in the cinemas' capacities. The types of data collected in each column for each cinema and for each year are listed and explained in Table 3.1 in Appendix I.

Image 2: Screenshot of a part of the inventory database⁶²¹

1	Re Jaar	M: Da	Verme	Hu V	Huidig	Aai	Ve	Naam bios	Opme	Vroege	Latere	Ver	Adres	sta	Huis	Hu	Start	Einde	Ide	Ecc	Geo	Aai	Aa	Aa	Aa	Aantal
2	1902		Antwe	Antwi	2060			Burgersbo	Toneelzaal/	Turnzaal met			Wetstraat 6-8				1902	1930?			Wijk					
3	1902		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Café Arabé	café met occa:	Kursaal			Koningin A42				1902	1912			Wijk					
4	1903		Antwe	Antwi	2060			Burgersbo	Toneelzaal/	Turnzaal met			Wetstraat 6-8				1902	1930?			Wijk					
5	1903		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Café Arabé	café met occa:	Kursaal			Koningin A42				1902	1912			Wijk					
6	1904		Antwe	Antwi	2060			Burgersbo	Toneelzaal/	Turnzaal met			Wetstraat 6-8				1902	1930?			Wijk					
7	1904		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Café Arabé	café met occa:	Kursaal			Koningin A42				1902	1912			Wijk					
8	1904		Antwe	Antwi	2000			Folies Bergère					Wapperstr2				1904	1932?			Wijk				1400	
9	1904		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Revuethea	Revuetheater \	Scala			Anneesse22				1904	1934			Wijk					
10	1904		Antwe	Antwerpen				Rubens	Danszaal met	Palatinat			Carnotstraat				1904									
11	1905		Antwe	Antwi	2060			Burgersbo	Toneelzaal/	Turnzaal met			Wetstraat 6-8				1902	1930?			Wijk					
12	1905		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Café Arabé	café met occa:	Kursaal			Koningin A42				1902	1912			Wijk					
13	1905		Antwe	Antwi	2000			Folies Bergère					Wapperstr2				1904	1932?			Wijk				1400	
14	1905		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Grand Caf	Occasioneel fil	Gaumont			De Keyser15				1905	1912			Wijk					
15	1905		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Revuethea	Revuetheater \	Scala			Anneesse22				1904	1934			Wijk					
16	1906		Antwe	Antwi	2060			Burgersbo	Toneelzaal/	Turnzaal met			Wetstraat 6-8				1902	1930?			Wijk					
17	1906		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Café Arabé	café met occa:	Kursaal			Koningin A42				1902	1912			Wijk					
18	1906		Antwe	Antwi	2000			Folies Bergère					Wapperstr2				1904	1932?			Wijk				1400	
19	1906		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Grand Caf	Occasioneel fil	Gaumont			De Keyser15				1905	1912			Wijk					
20	1906		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Cir Kruger					Pathé				1906	1909			Wijk				1400	
21	1906		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Revuethea	Revuetheater \	Scala			Anneesse22				1904	1934			Wijk					
22	1906		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Tivoli					Pelikaanst102				1906	1907?			Wijk					
23	1906		Antwe	Antwi	2060			Zaal Flora	Danszaal met occasionel				Diepestrat145				1906	1912?			Wijk				792	
24	1907		Antwe	Antwi	2000			Alhambra					Hoogstraa35				1907	1966			Wijk				958	
25	1907		Antwe	Antwi	2060			Burgersbo	Toneelzaal/	Turnzaal met			Wetstraat 6-8				1902	1930?			Wijk					
26	1907		Antwe	Antwi	2018			Café Arabé	café met occa:	Kursaal			Koningin A42				1902	1912			Wijk					
27	1907		Antwe	Antwi	2060			Danszaal \	Soms cinema	Prins Alber			Diepestrat16				1907	1911			Wijk				951	
			Totaal																							

Given the large amount of data available, and in correspondence with the sampling for the programming analysis (Chapter 5), five sample years were determined from each decade (1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992) spanning roughly the existence of the Rex cinema group.⁶²² Concentrating on these five years allowed for the exploration of the evolution of the Rex cinema group within Antwerp's cinema market from just after its beginning in 1947 until just before its bankruptcy in 1993. It also made it possible to investigate all three different layers synchronically as well as diachronically, of the three aspects of cinema history outlined in this part of the thesis: place, structure, and films. The researched period is also interesting within a broader context of socio-political and cultural transitions throughout the second half of the twentieth century, such as the (political-) economic changes in the film industry and the rapid decline of cinema attendance from the 1950s onwards. On a socio-cultural level, the third quarter of the twentieth century also witnessed changed patterns of leisure time activities due to increased wealth and mobility. Last but not least, sexual liberalization had an impact on film and cinemagoing as well. For Antwerp in particular, the second half of the twentieth century saw a steady degradation of the Station Quarter.

⁶²¹ The complete database can be consulted in Appendix II-1.

⁶²² The first three sample years had already been decided on within the framework of the "Enlightened' City" project and were complemented by the last two data for above mentioned reasons.

3.1.3. Mapping the data from the inventory database

In order to get a better grasp on the collected data and the geo-spatial distribution of the cinemas across Antwerp, all cinemas were visualized on a map. In Chapters 1 and 2 I have already addressed two major mapping tools, GIS and Google Maps, which have been used most frequently by cinema scholars.⁶²³ In contrast to Google Maps, GIS allows operations which go much further than merely visualizing the end results, as statistical queries can be done, relating, for instance, to the spatial diffusion of cinemas in a certain neighborhood to demographic data or crime rates. Herein lies the greatest strength of GIS: it is not only a tool that helps to answer questions, but its openness and relationality allows generating endless new research questions.

For the purpose of “Antwerpen Kinemastad”, the visual mapping of the locations and most relevant features of the cinemas under investigation, Google Maps sufficed.⁶²⁴ Although less “sophisticated” than GIS, Allen, for example, by referring to the “Going to the Show” project, underlined the comparatively easier use of Google Maps and the unique possibility to map contemporary views of certain location onto the representations of the older maps.⁶²⁵ While GIS is highly promising for the writing of cinema histories in the future, it also has its drawbacks. Many of the problems are of practical and historiographical nature. They concern the availability of, and access to, the data; the sophistication of the application requires some experience or training; the historical change in urban structures poses problems of synchronization of different temporalities.⁶²⁶

For “Antwerpen Kinemastad” a number of neighborhoods and districts (former municipalities) was selected. The samples relate to three geographical levels, principally varying in scale (see Figures 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 in Appendix I). The first area, referred to here as the “Station Quarter”, mainly comprises the neighborhood west and north-west of Antwerp's Central Station (Figure 3.2).⁶²⁷ As the city's cultural hot spot, detailed research on the diffusion of cinemas in this area is necessary in order to understand the socio-economic dynamics at work here. The second

⁶²³ See, for example, Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map” (GIS) and Allen, “Getting to *Going to the Show*” (Google maps).

⁶²⁴ Limited access to structural data would have rendered the (added value of) the use of GIS unreasonable within the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, the sheer amount of data collected and to be collected within this and other projects (including those of students) as well as the kind of data, strongly encourage the use of GIS in the near future.

⁶²⁵ Allen, “Getting to *Going to the Show*,” 275-276, note 4. Partly inspired by “Cinema Context”, Allen constructed a “digital library project”. “Going to the Show” aims to document and illuminate cinema-going experiences in North Carolina between 1896-1930. The database contains information on 1300 cinema venues in 200 communities, which is geo-referenced to fire insurance maps (Allen, “Getting to *Going to the Show*”).

⁶²⁶ Klenotic, “Putting Cinema History on the Map,” 72-73; Allen, “Getting to *Going to the Show*,” 275, note 4; e-mail with urban historian and GIS expert at the University of Antwerp, Tim Bisschops, April, 18 2011. From my own inquiries with public authorities in Antwerp I learned that they still make barely use of GIS and where they do, it is only in a very limited way. In addition, the maps which *are* available have restricted access (Provincie Antwerpen, “Geoloketten”).

⁶²⁷ Please note that the area indicated as the Station Quarter here, is limited mostly to the area surrounding the De Keyserlei between the Central Station and the Frankrijklei, excluding the area south-east of the Central Station, which administratively also belongs to the Station Quarter.

sample area, the “core sample area”, includes the Station Quarter as defined above as well as the adjacent neighborhood (Stuivenberg) and district (Borgerhout), both situated at walking distance north and north-east of the Central Station (Figure 3.3). Stuivenberg and Borgerhout have been chosen, first, for practical reasons, since for both neighborhoods sufficient data were available and accessible for the complete researched period under investigation, allowing synchronic and diachronic comparisons. In addition, they have also been chosen because of their proximity to the Station Quarter, which allows for comparative investigation (mainly related to social status) of patterns in cinema going and film distribution between the cinemas located in the Station Quarter and those in Stuivenberg and Borgerhout. The third sample area is the “extended sample area”. It includes the first two areas in addition to a number of neighborhood and districts (former municipalities) located closest to them, including Antwerp's historical center, Antwerp South, Kiel as well as the districts Berchem, Deurne and Merksem. For the 1972 sample, an additional cinema (Rubens) in the nearby municipality of Zwijndrecht on the west bank of the river Scheldt was included (Figure 3.4).⁶²⁸

The distinction between these three geographical levels allows for a layered investigation of the local cinema culture on a meso- and micro-level. The smaller the scale of the area thus explored, the more in-depth research is possible. It would be nearly impossible, for instance, to carry out a detailed programming analysis and/or business-historical investigation of all cinemas that have ever existed within the complete territory covering the extended sample area. A strong focus on the Station Quarter as Heylen's main location again allowed for a detailed examination of the specific dynamics of Antwerp's social, cultural, and economic life in this area and their connection to cinema and the experience of cinemagoing. The inclusion of some of the neighborhoods and districts, on the other hand, was necessary in order to study the dynamics of the local cinema market (i.e. center versus neighborhood cinemas) and to be able to follow concrete patterns of film circulation along different types of cinemas.

Based on the inventory database introduced above, the locations of all cinemas within these three areas were depicted on a set of maps for each of the five sample years (1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992), which made it possible to analyze general changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape as well as the evolution of the Rex cinemas in particular.

⁶²⁸ This had to do with the conflict between Georges Heylen and the American major distributors and a specific investigation of particular cinemas which had formed a unit against Heylen. Details will be explained in Chapters 3.3.4. and more extensively 4.1.1. when this conflict is treated in depth.

3.2. General changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape

This paragraph focuses on more general changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape in relation to the particular socio-economic changes in Antwerp's history. These elaborations create the context for an examination of the changes in the geo-spatial distribution of Heylen's cinemas in Paragraph 3.3. The paragraph is structured in two parts. I will subsequently address the gradual disappearance of cinemas in Antwerp's neighborhoods and districts and the change from single-screen dream palaces to multi-screen venues.

3.2.1. The disappearance of cinemas in Antwerp's neighborhoods and districts

Before and after World War II, Belgium's cinema sector was booming. Even compared to nations with larger film industries in Continental Europe (such as France and Germany) Belgium had a higher number of cinemas per capita.⁶²⁹ Just as nationwide, in Antwerp the number of cinemas kept growing until the late 1950s.⁶³⁰ The highest concentration of cinemas was to be found in the Station Quarter (indicated by postal code 2018 in Figure 3.5 in Appendix I). To a lesser degree, yet also quite substantially, cinema business was also flourishing in Antwerp's historic center (postal code 2000), in neighborhoods as Kiel (postal code 2020), Stuivenberg/Amandus-Atheneum (2060) and in the adjacent districts Borgerhout (2140) and Berchem (2600).

Existing international publications generally describe the golden 1950s as bringing increased wealth and greater mobility which, on the one hand, effected patterns in leisure time (going on vacation, affordability of tv-screens,...) and along with it changed people's experience and perception of locality.⁶³¹ For many Antwerp citizens in particular, however, it also meant a massive abandoning of the poorer neighborhoods in the inner city and the move to the outskirts or neighborhoods as Kiel and Luchtbal, where modern apartment buildings offered far more comfort and luxury. In addition,

⁶²⁹ H. Browning and A. Sorrell, "Cinema and Cinema-going in Great Britain," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 117 (1954): 133-165.

⁶³⁰ *Weekblad Cinema* 26 (16 1947): s.p.; G. Willems, "De bioscoopexploitatie tussen bloei en crisis (1945-1957)," in *De verlichte stad. Een geschiedenis van bioscopen, filmvertoningen en filmcultuur in Vlaanderen*, edited by D. Biltereyst and P. Meers (Leuven: LannooCampus, 2007), 83-84; as well as the graphs in Biltereyst and Meers, *De verlichte stad*, 279, 280, 286.

⁶³¹ Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 145-146. For a discussion of the different factors contributing to the decline in cinema attendance in Great Britain (and partly the US) in the 1950s see, for instance, D. Docherty, Morrison, D. and M. Tracey, *The Last Picture Show? Britain's changing film audience* (London: BFI, 1987); Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 133-177; J. Sedgwick, "Product Differentiation at the Movies. Hollywood 1946 to 1965," in *An Economic History of Film*, edited by J. Sedgwick and M. Pokorny (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 188 (US only).

after the large scale introduction of television towards the end of the 1950s (after Belgium had hosted the first major World Fair Expo 1958), by the mid-1960s, people would no longer find luxury in cinema palaces alone, but also had the alternative to watch entertainment programs at home, which was now warm and cozy thanks to central heating.⁶³² Sociologists Frans van Mechelen and Luc Delanghe quite plastically described this “bourgeoisification process due to increased wealth” in relation to cinemagoing and a change in mentality:

Modern man does indeed want to spend a pleasant night out. He [sic] does not wish to spend his leisure time in a somewhat uncomfortable theater, where most likely he is being dished up with a print he is able to watch on television every day in his cozy living room.⁶³³

After cinema attendance in Belgium peaked in 1945, it continuously declined until the 1970s.⁶³⁴ Despite an ever-decreasing cinema attendance between 1945 and 1974, new cinemas were opened in the course of the 1950s. In 1957, the highest number of cinemas was recorded in Belgium. At the same time, between 1945 and 1957, the average number of tickets sold per cinema in Belgium dropped by more than 50% (i.e. from an average of 152,642 tickets per cinema in 1945 to 67,338 tickets per cinema in 1957).⁶³⁵ These developments had as an effect that Belgium's cinema sector became heavily oversaturated with a total of 1,585 cinemas. Rigorous measures to restrict the opening of new cinemas were never taken, however, mainly because (representatives of) the powerful American major distributors as well as exhibitors active in the booming 16-mm business voted against such regulations. Although the *Hoge Kinemaraad* (High Cinema Council) did succeed in restricting the construction of new 16-mm theaters, a corresponding restriction for 35-mm venues failed.⁶³⁶

In Antwerp, the situation remained quite stable between 1952 and 1962, with a slightly decreasing number of cinemas in most areas and an increase in the districts of Deurne (postal code 2100) and Merksem (2170) (see Figure 3.5 in Appendix I). This stability of number of cinemas in Antwerp stands in contrast to the situation in Ghent, for example, where in the 1950s and 1960s, a

⁶³² In a survey of more than 1,000 households in 1967, watching television scored highest by far on Saturday and Sunday evenings (with about 40%), compared to cinemagoing with only about 1% (M. Zwaenepoel, G. Cartrysse, L. Kempynck et al., *Vrije tijd. Een sociologische analyse van het vrijetijdsgebruik en de vrijetijdsbehoeften van de Westvlaamse bevolking* (Brugge: WES, 1969), 142-143, 146-147).

⁶³³ F. van Mechelen and L. Delanghe, *Vrijetijdsbesteding in Vlaanderen. Deel 3: Een onderzoek naar de weekendbesteding van de gezinnen in de winterperiode 1964-1965* (Antwerp: S.M. Ontwikkeling, 1967), 61 [my transl.]

⁶³⁴ Biltereyst and Meers, *De verlichte stad*, 282 (Table 2). Unfortunately, no systematic records or figures are available for cinema attendance during and preceding World War II.

⁶³⁵ Biltereyst and Meers, *De verlichte stad*, 279, 282 (Tables 1 and 2). In 1945 the highest number of cinema tickets ever was sold in Belgium after World War II. From that point onwards the number of sold tickets kept falling for almost 30 years in a row: Biltereyst and Meers, *De verlichte stad*, 282 (Table 2). Furthermore, it must be pointed out that the biggest increase of the number of cinemas occurred in nonurban areas.

⁶³⁶ Willems, “Bioscoopexploitatie tussen bloei en crisis,” 92. See also diverse editions of the trade journals *Weekblad Cinema* and *Ons Kinemadoek* from that period.

third of the cinemas had to close down within a ten-year period.⁶³⁷ However, a comparison of the figures of cinema attendance for the agglomeration of Antwerp (including all districts in the extended sample area as well as the districts of Hoboken, Mortsels, and Wilrijk) for 1952 and 1961 shows that attendance dropped for Antwerp relative to the national pace while the number of cinemas remained relatively stable in this area (seventy-nine and seventy-seven respectively).⁶³⁸ In other words, the average level of occupation of seats in cinemas within the agglomeration of Antwerp declined drastically within a decade, making Antwerp's cinema market look healthy from the outside (in terms of number of cinemas) while it was already fragile from the inside (decrease in attendance).

What had not been achieved by the lobby of local cinema activists fighting against the uncontrolled growth of 35-mm film screening venues, was eventually pushed through by sheer market force: by the end of the 1950s, the expansion of the cinema sector in Antwerp stopped and a reversal of the process commenced.⁶³⁹ In the course of the 1960s the absolute number of cinemas within the extended sample area dropped considerably and it did so in most areas. As Figures 1 and 2 below as well as the maps (Figure 3.5) in Appendix I show, with the exception of Stuivenberg (postal code 2060) and Antwerp's historical center (postal code 2000), most cinemas closed in the remaining neighborhoods or districts during the 1960s.

⁶³⁷ Van de Vijver, "Gent Kinemastad," 99.

⁶³⁸ In 1952 14,967,755 tickets were sold in the agglomeration of Antwerp and 113,571,676 nationwide (13,2%), in 1961 it was 10,199,725 out of 79,556,206 (12,8%). *Ons Kinemadoek* (9 1953): 19-20; Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België, *Jaarboek van de Belgische film* (Brussels, 1961), 33.

⁶³⁹ For a comprehensive review of the industrial organization of exhibitors and distributors in Belgium (in comparison to the Netherlands), their struggles for a more coordinated and less liberal market and their impact on the local exhibition sector, see T. Van Oort, "Industrial Organization of Film Exhibitors in the Low Countries: Comparing the Netherlands and Belgium, 1945-1960," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 37, no. 3 (2017): 484-490.

Figure 1: Absolute number of cinemas per sample year according to area

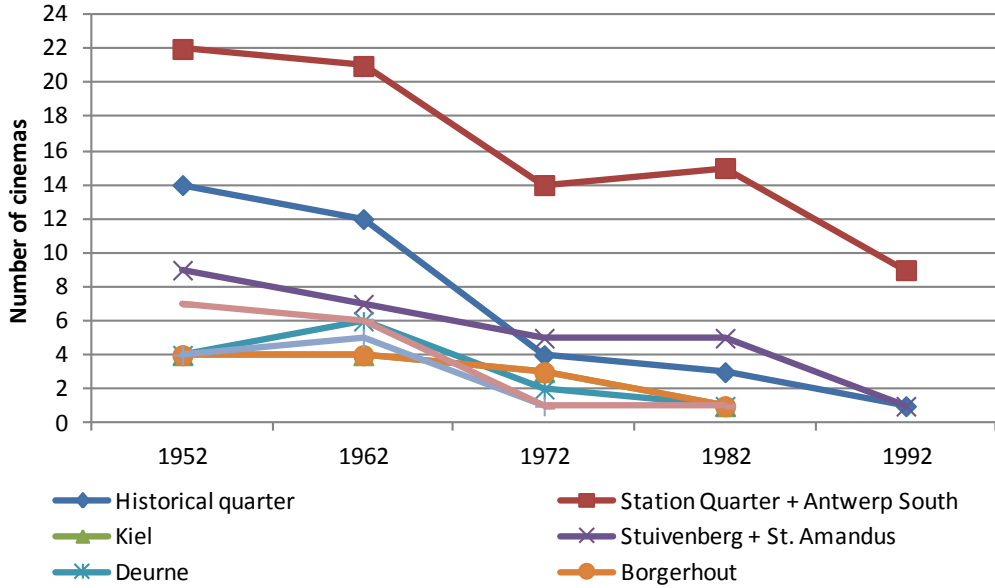
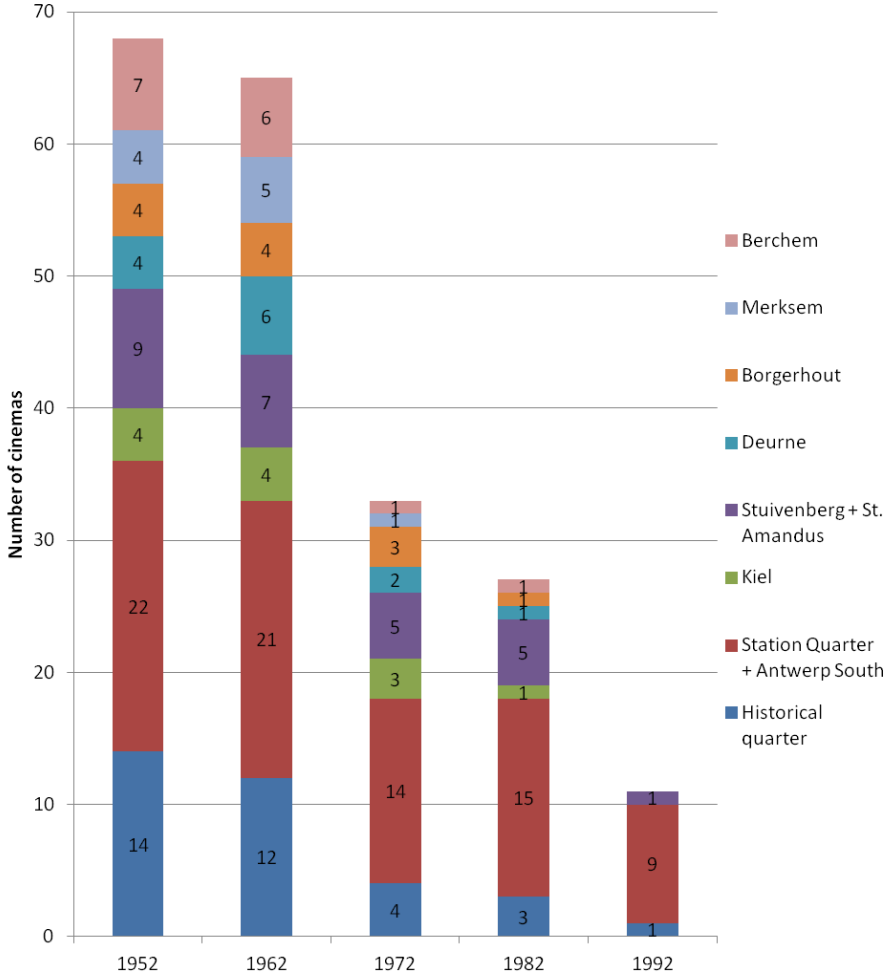


Figure 2: Number of cinemas per sample year according to area



The phenomenon that neighborhood cinemas died before center cinemas was neither typically Antwerp nor typically Belgian, but was quite common in many places.⁶⁴⁰ As Martin Barker and Kate Brooks explained

Cinemas died because for a complex of reasons people discontinued the idea of having the “family night out”. Where they did, they tended to “do it properly” by going into town – hence the disproportionate survival of city centre cinemas.⁶⁴¹

What was special about Antwerp was the density of the cluster of cinemas in the Station Quarter. The accumulation of between fifteen and twenty cinemas in the 1950s within a radius of five hundred meters offered Antwerp citizens and visitors a film choice of one giant open air “multiplex” (which did not exist at that time). The potentially wide choice of films and cinemas in combination with the easy access due to the favorable location near a broad range of public transport facilities, effected the appeal of the cinemas in the Station Quarter in a positive way. After all, the number and proximity of cinemas played an important role for the frequency of cinema attendance, as was concluded by van Mechelen and Delanghe, based on a study on recreational activities in Flanders on weekends.⁶⁴² The cinemas that did survive or opened in Antwerp's neighborhoods and districts from the 1970s onwards, were specialized in alternative film programming.

The Station Quarter remained Antwerp's cinema paradise until the late 1980s. For some, it was the last place in Belgium where cinemas still defined the street scape.⁶⁴³ However, the depopulation of Antwerp's inner city mentioned above, went hand in hand with an increase of business there, including growing problems with traffic and parking.⁶⁴⁴ Different from the situation in the US, for example, cinemas in Antwerp did not move to the suburbs along with the people, albeit, not on a continuing basis.⁶⁴⁵ In addition, in the late 1980s and during the 1990s, the Station Quarter

⁶⁴⁰ Between 1960 and 1992, 94% of the screens in Belgian communities with less than 20,000 inhabitants disappeared, compared to 57% for communities with between 20,000 and 100,000 inhabitants. The number of screens in Belgian communities with more than 100,000 inhabitants reached its low-point around 1975, after 55% of the screens had disappeared there, and grew to reach its high point in 1993, when the number of screens was almost twice as high as in 1975 (and almost 25% higher than in 1960) (E.A.O. / European Audiovisual Observatory, *The Film Industry in Belgium* (Brussels, 1997), 24).

⁶⁴¹ Barker and Brooks cited in Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 144.

⁶⁴² Van Mechelen and Delanghe, *Vrijtijdsbesteding*, 60, 63-64. The study was based on ca. 1,000 interviews with highly diverse segments of the Flemish population. The interviews were conducted in the winter of 1964/1965.

⁶⁴³ P. Duynslaegher, “Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis,” *Knack* 18, no. 39 (September 28, 1988): 51.

⁶⁴⁴ See Willems, “Bioscoopexploitatie tussen bloei en crisis,” 91; s.n., “De groei van de stad,” *Waar is de tijd* 21 (1998): 511; Bertels et al., “Stadslandschap”; R. Steyaert, G. Plomteux and A. Malliet, *Architectuurgids Antwerpen* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993), XXII. According to social urban geographers Ilse Laureyssen and Myriam Jansen-Verbeke, the industry moved to Antwerp's suburbs already in the 1960s, followed by services sector in the 1980s (I. Laureyssen and M. Jansen-Verbeke, “De recente verschuiving in de vestigingsplaats van bioscopen in Antwerpen: oorzaken en gevolgen,” *De Aardrijkskunde* 1 (1997): 46).

⁶⁴⁵ By relating the locations, opening and closing years for cinemas in the agglomeration of Antwerp to the population growth, Biltereyst, van Oort and Meers showed that a number of new cinemas opened in districts with a high population increase in the post-war period. However, this only occurred in a number of districts (Deurne and Borgerhout have been mentioned above, for example) and it also did not have a long-lasting effect, as cinemas closed again soon (D. Biltereyst, T. van Oort and P. Meers, “Comparing Historical Cinema Cultures. Reflections on new cinema history and comparison with a

was characterized by high crime rates, drug trafficking and worn down buildings. These problems heavily effected cinema attendance and were taking their toll on the cinemas there. When the last handful of cinemas closed upon Heylen's bankruptcy in 1993, the abundance of cinemas in the Station Quarter was wiped out in a blink of an eye. Of the nineteen cinemas that were open forty years earlier, only two were left.

With the opening of the giant megaplex Metropolis only a month after Heylen's bankruptcy, in combination with ongoing film screenings in cinemas and clubs outside of the Station Quarter, the 1990s meant a return to a slightly more decentralized diffusion of cinemas across Antwerp, albeit in a far less condensed form as decades before.

3.2.2. From single screen dream palaces to multi-screen venues

In 1952, there were sixty-eight single-screen cinemas within the extended sample area in Antwerp. The cinemas had a capacity varying from 150 to 2,000 seats. Compared to, for example, Gothenburg and Rotterdam which were of a comparable size in 1952, the average number of seats per cinema was far higher in Antwerp.⁶⁴⁶ More than half of the cinemas were of moderate size (measured by the standards back then) and offered between 500 and 1,000 seats (Table 3.2 in Appendix I).⁶⁴⁷ In addition, about a third of the cinemas had a seating capacity of more than 1,000 seats. Cinemas with less than 500 seats only constituted a bit more than 10% of the local cinema landscape. Most of the largest cinemas were located in the Station Quarter. Yet the Station Quarter also had a comparatively high number of small theaters, with less than 500 seats. In other words, the diversity of cinemas in the Station Quarter was quite impressive.

Overall, this situation remained quite stable for at least a decade. Figure 3 below, for example, shows a slight growth of cinemas of moderate capacity (500-999 seats) – according to standards at that time – that came at the cost of the smallest and biggest cinemas. The first drastic change occurred only in the decade that followed. As indicated in the previous paragraph, between 1962 and 1972 the number of cinemas in the extended sample area was reduced by almost 50%. The relative shares of cinemas in relation to their capacities, however, remained similar to those in 1952 and 1962: medium-size cinemas still accounted for more than half of all cinemas, a third of the

cross-national case study on Antwerp and Rotterdam,” in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, edited by D. Biltereyst, R. Maltby and P. Meers (London: Routledge, 2019), 107-108). For the findings on the US see Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 135.

⁶⁴⁶ Pafort-Overduin et al., “Moving films”.

⁶⁴⁷ Nowadays the largest screen in any of the Kinopolis multiplexes in Belgium has about 750 seats (and can be found in Metropolis in Antwerp). Most screens, however, accommodate between 100 and 300 persons. See Kinopolis, “Bioscopen,” accessed January 24, 2013, <http://kinopolis.be/nl/theaters>.

cinemas had at least 1,000 seats and smaller cinemas were comparatively low in number. This suggests that, at least up until that point (1972) size was not the dominant factor in determining the chance of survival of a cinema.⁶⁴⁸

The 1970s witnessed a radical break in these proportions, when the first multi-screen cinemas opened. The trend towards multi-screen theaters was not a typically Belgian phenomenon, but occurred in many other places.⁶⁴⁹ It was one of the answers to the ongoing recession in the film industry. The construction of multi-screen cinemas or the splitting up of large single-screen theatres had a number of advantages, amongst which a wider choice of films under one roof, risk-reduction with regard to box-office success or failure of films due to multiple-programming as well as lower operating costs (maintenance and staff). The multi-functionality of the complexes in combination with free parking space, comfortable seating and high technological standard were additional assets that had to lure spectators back to the cinemas.⁶⁵⁰

In Belgium, members of the Bert/Claeys family were the first to open a duplex cinema in the Flemish town of Harelbeke in 1970. Two years later they would open a triplex in the Flemish city of Hasselt, which was, in their own words, Europe's first multiplex.⁶⁵¹ Many multi-screen venues and multiplexes followed in Flanders and Wallonia and thriving on the multiplex success the Bert/Claeys group would eventually become Belgium's most powerful exhibitor. In 1987 – one year before the opening of the giant multiplex Kinopolis in Brussels – they had overtaken Heylen: they operated forty-five cinemas in Belgium, Heylen twenty-nine.⁶⁵² Because of their success – with Kinopolis in Brussels in 1988 as the largest, most modern and technologically most advanced one worldwide – the nation soon spoke of a “Kinopolisation” of Belgian suburbia.⁶⁵³

⁶⁴⁸ In their analysis of cinema closures in the 1950s and 1960s in Nottingham, UK, Jancovich et al. came to the conclusion that the size of the cinema did affect the rate of decline. While at first, predominantly the smallest cinemas were affected most by closures, later it was primarily the largest venues that closed down rapidly (Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 131).

⁶⁴⁹ For the Netherlands see, for example, Dibbets, “Bioscoopketens,” for Great Britain (and the US) see Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-Screen*.

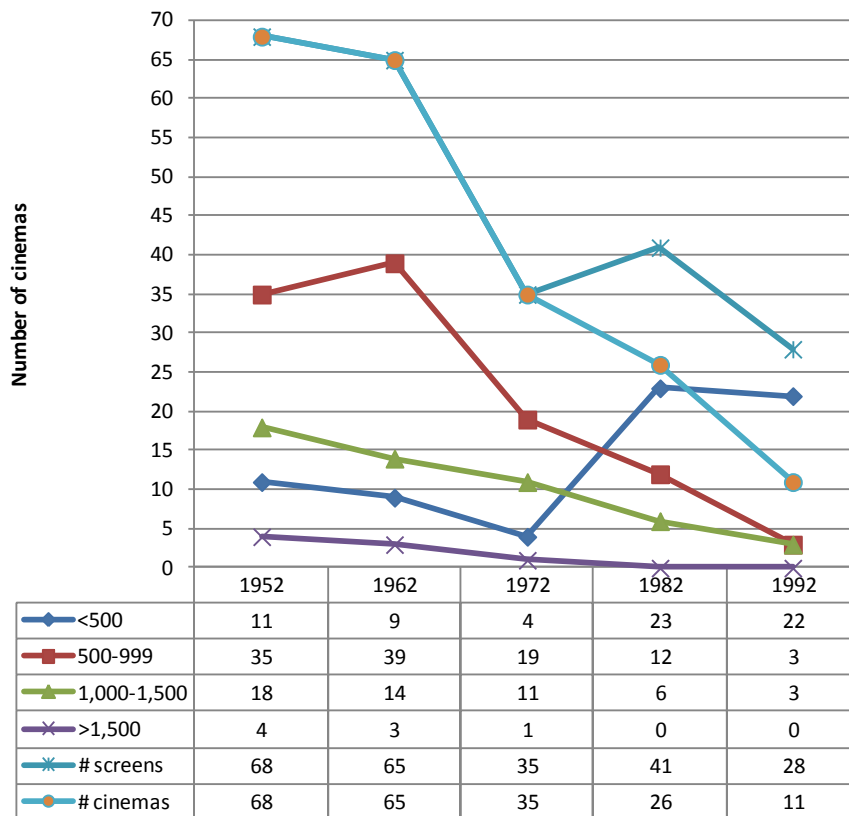
⁶⁵⁰ E.A.O., *The Film Industry in Belgium*, 25. See Kinopolis top man Albert Bert quoted in Duynslaegher, “Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis”: 49. See Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 136-139, 158-159. More details follow in Chapter 4.

⁶⁵¹ See the company's corporate homepage (Kinopolis, “Corporate,” accessed January 14, 2011, <http://corporate.kinopolis.com/index.cfm?PageID=18291>). See also E.A.O., *The Film Industry in Belgium*, 25. Film scholars differentiated between multi-screen venues and multiplexes and provide as the main criteria that multiplexes are purpose-built and have a minimum of five screens. See, for example, Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 153. I will address this difference in more depth in Chapters 4.5.2.

⁶⁵² S.n., “Liste des cinémas de Belgique 35mm” (Brussels, 1987), 1-4.

⁶⁵³ See, for example, F. van Laeken, “De kinopolisering van het bioscoopgebeuren,” *De Morgen*, 14 October 1993: 22.

Figure 3: Evolution of the cinema landscape (extended sample area) according to seating capacities (per cinema/screen) in the five sample years. The light blue line represents the total number of cinemas and/or screens, the light blue line with x-s represents the number of screens, the light blue line with orange dots the number of cinemas.



Remarkably, in Antwerp Heylen was not the first to take initiative in multi-screen exhibition.⁶⁵⁴ The first multi-screen to open its doors in Antwerp in 1973 was Calypso (first two and later three screens), operated by the successful Dutch cinema entrepreneur Piet Meerburg.⁶⁵⁵ Calypso was soon followed by Cartoon's (two, later three screens) in 1978. Yet compared to most Flemish cities for Antwerp the relative number of screens in relation to the number of seats lagged behind.⁶⁵⁶

Heylen only followed the trend of multi-screens in 1980. He started by constructing four small cinemas in the basement beneath Ambassadors (ca. 450 seats). This was followed by the split up

⁶⁵⁴ According to Zeguers, in the 1970s Heylen's permanent architect Rie Haan introduced a plan to rebuild the block between De Keyserlei, Anneessensstraat and Van Etbornstraat and construct a ten-floor complex for cinemas, shops, offices and apartments. Heylen refused to participate because he would not be involved in many of the businesses there (Zeguers in W. Magiels, "Een kijkje achter de schermen. Een gesprek met Jean Zeguers, rechterhand van bioscoopicoon Georges Heylen," in *Magie van de cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde*, edited by W. Magiels and R. De Hert (Antwerp: Facet, 2004), 72).

⁶⁵⁵ See P. Cuypers, "Filmdistributie en bioscoopwezen," in *Aspecten van film en bioscoop*, edited by G. Kruger (Amsterdam: Wetenschappelijke Uitgeverij, 1973), 120; Dibbets, "Bioscoopketens," 80.

⁶⁵⁶ Only for Turnhout, Leuven, and Kortrijk the quotient of the number of seats and number of cinemas was higher. In 1978 Antwerp was identified by economist Erik Faucompret as being among the top four Flemish cities (out of twelve) with the biggest theaters (in terms of seating capacity): E. Faucompret, "De crisis in de Vlaamse bioscoopindustrie," *Economisch en Sociaal Tijdschrift* 4 (1982): 462.

of Metro in 1981 into Metro 1 and 2. With a seating capacity of respectively 450 and 650 seats, the Metros still had a comparatively high number of seats: in 1982, hardly any of the cinemas in the multiplexes or multi-screen theaters elsewhere in Belgium had more than 300 seats.⁶⁵⁷ With the conversion of Metro, Antwerp's last cinema giant with more than 1,500 seats was gone in the Station Quarter. After Metro, cinema Quellin (formerly 640 seats) was split up in 1982 into three screens. In addition, Heylen reopened and partly converted other cinemas, many of which were accommodated in basements.⁶⁵⁸ The splitting of single screen cinemas and the reopening of multi-screen cinemas mainly occurred in the Station Quarter (and in Antwerp's historical center), where cultural life was most lively. Cinemas in the districts, on the other hand, closed down. They were predominantly owned by private investors with a comparatively low number of cinemas. For them the heavy investments were out of proportion to the potential earnings.

Most of Heylen's "new" screens offered less than 100 seats and were considered by cinemagoers as unattractive, tiny fleapits with "little puppet screens".⁶⁵⁹ When being asked why he would not invest in new multiplexes Heylen allegedly answered that he would only have to build a roof on top of the De Keyserlei and he would have the biggest multiplex in the world.⁶⁶⁰ Paradoxically enough, with the splitting up of his cinemas Heylen also started "redistributing" them across the Station Quarter: his elite cinema Odeon was closed at Frankrijklei only to be reopened as multi-screen complex Odeon 1, 2, 3, 4 in the same building complex that already accommodated Metro 1 and 2, Ambassadors, and Ambassadors 1, 2, 3, 4 as well as Rex and Rex-Club. Similarly, Sinjoor disappeared at De Keyserlei in mid-January 1992 to replace Ambassadors a month later. In a way then, with all the different cinemas practically under one roof Heylen had actually created a thirteen-screen cinema complex.

Remarkably, the Claeys-Bert family stayed away from Antwerp for more than two decades. While they were opening multiplexes in practically every corner of Belgium, it was only in 1993 that they opened Metropolis in Antwerp's north, west of the district of Merksem (outside the extended sample area, see Figure 3.1 in Appendix I). In consideration of the tremendous success of the group in Flanders and given Antwerp's reputation of being the cinema city of Flanders, this raises the question of why the group only entered Antwerp's cinema market in 1993. Two major reasons relate to Heylen's power and influence on the one hand and the hesitating attitude on behalf of local

⁶⁵⁷ Belgische Beroepskamer der Cinematografie, "Liste des exploitants de salles de cinéma 35mm de Belgique," Report, Brussels, 1982.

⁶⁵⁸ One example was the cinema complex in the Century Center, the building complex where Cineac was located at until the 1960s and where Jos Rastelli had his two Studios 1 and 2 in the 1970s. In 1980, Heylen opened three cinemas there, Brabo, Tijn, and Wapper (all names with strong local and historical meanings). More details follow Chapter 4.5.

⁶⁵⁹ Van Laeken, "De kinopolisering van het bioskoopgebeuren," 22 [my transl.] See Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 18.

⁶⁶⁰ Magiels, "De andere kant van Georges D. Heylen," 75.

authorities on the other. Both will be addressed in Paragraph 3.3.5. about the downfall of the Rex empire in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

All in all, according to a report published by the European Audiovisual Observatory (EAO) in 1997, between 1960 and 1970 the number of screens in Belgium decreased by a half, and again by a half within the following two decades. In other words, between 1960 and 1992 the number of screens had fallen from 1,506 to 314. 1993 marked a radical turn, however. Mainly due to the opening of new giant multiplexes the number of new screens “more than made up for the closure of certain unprofitable cinema-theatres and screens.”⁶⁶¹ Something similar can be observed for Antwerp. The coming of new multi-screen cinemas and the splitting up of former single-screen venues in the 1970s and 1980s clearly effected the physiognomy of Antwerp's cinema landscape. On the one hand, it altered the seating capacity per screen (increasing the potential film offer and choice). No longer did mid-size cinemas and big picture palaces dominate Antwerp's cinema landscape, but small size cinemas and screens had gained the upper hand. While in 1952 about a third of the cinemas in the extended sample area had more than 1,000 seats per cinema, in 1992 the share had dropped to a mere 10%. On the other hand, the multiplication of screens also had as a result that temporarily (around 1982) the number of screens in the extended sample area was higher than that in the early 1970s. Metropolis opened its doors on October 17, 1993, starting with ten screens on the opening day and was quickly extended by fourteen more screens offering nearly 9,000 seats.⁶⁶² For the agglomeration of Antwerp the opening of Metropolis made up the bankruptcy of Heylen's cinema empire, at least in terms of screens: five cinemas with a total of twelve screens were replaced by a giant twenty-four-screen multiplex.

3.3. From fragmentation to centralization

In 1997, the report published by the EAO noted that Belgium's cinema market had been witnessing increased centralization from the 1960s onwards.⁶⁶³ The process of centralization also applied to Antwerp, where the fifty years under investigation were marked by a shift from a highly fragmented market with many small players to a market which was dominated by one powerful player.

After having sketched the changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape between 1945 and 1995 in general, Paragraph 3.3. is to zoom in on the evolution of Heylen's Rex cinema group, its emergence in

⁶⁶¹ E.A.O., *The Film Industry in Belgium*, 22.

⁶⁶² P. Mijlemans, "De echt Antwerpse cinema," *De Morgen*, October 14, 1993, 2; G. Delveaux, "Metropolis," *De Nieuwe Gazet - Special Edition*, October 1, 1993, 1; Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België. *Jaarboek van de Belgische film* (Brussels, 1995/96), 66. See Kinapolis, "Bioscopen".

⁶⁶³ E.A.O., *The Film Industry in Belgium*, 22.

the late 1940s, the expansion that followed, years of crisis, and finally, the downfall of Heylen and his cinema group in the early 1990s. Table 3.3 in Appendix I is to facilitate a better overview of questions of ownership and/or managements of the researched cinemas within the extended sample areas for the five sample years. In order to be able better to contextualize the changes, I will start this paragraph with a prologue, describing the years before the emergence of the Rex cinema group.

3.3.1. First troubled years (pre 1945)

Generally, Heylen kept his personal background private, interviews with him were scarce.⁶⁶⁴ Not much is known about his family, education and earlier career, except from the things he himself told the press in interviews, as well as a number of archival documents and speculations, and reconstructions published in secondary sources.

Heylen was born in Antwerp in 1912. Although his ancestors had been a quite wealthy and influential Campine family of long standing, various sources also emphasize Heylen's working class background.⁶⁶⁵ In press interviews, Heylen himself liked to refer to the great role his ancestors played in the Peasants' War in 1798 and the corresponding monument erected at the local village square of Herentals, a small town in the Province of Antwerp. Heylen's father was said to have been the head of an Antwerp dock company.⁶⁶⁶

In a newspaper interview in 1992 Heylen was quoted recounting his past as follows:

After humanities at the Jesuits I studied art history. Through my huge hobby, photography, I got in contact with people who operated cinemas. Because I was just taking my first steps in the business world, I decided to try my luck in the film business. But it could have been any other sector. Although I did love cinema since I was a child.⁶⁶⁷

After he started working at cinema Rex, he quickly worked himself up to the top. According to the cover story of the Flemish financial economic weekly magazine *Trends*, Heylen was involved in the Rex from practically the beginning. In the article Heylen was quoted saying that he purchased the Rex

⁶⁶⁴ Crols, "De Grote Draak," 49.

⁶⁶⁵ J. M. Goris, "Historiek van de kempische familie Heylen." Genealogical report, Herentals, 1987, 1, 4. Goris' study of the Campine family Heylen goes back to the late seventeenth century, ending with Georges Heylen in the mid-1980s. The Campine is a natural region stretching across north-eastern parts of Belgium and the southern part of the Netherlands. Goris' study is part of the private collection of Paul Corluy. For accounts about Heylen's father see for example F. Heirman, "Vader was God voor mij," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, August 12, 2004, 30-31 (including interviews with Heylen's daughter Godelieve) and Heirman, *Paleis om de hoek*, 80.

⁶⁶⁶ See, for example, Crols, "De Grote Draak," 57; S. De Foer, "Kempenaar-sinjoor: hard en hartelijk. Baron Heylen houdt de teugels van zijn Rexconcern nog steeds stevig in handen," *Het Nieuwsblad*, January 15, 1992, s.p.; Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 17. This stand in contrast to a quote further down in the same source, where Heylen was quoted for referring to his poor Campine background.

⁶⁶⁷ Heylen in De Foer, "Kempenaar-sinjoor," s.p. [my transl.]

in 1935 “by accident,” while in a different place in the article, it can be read that Heylen started managing the Rex – as crisis manager – at the age of twenty-three, which also coincides with about the time that the Rex opened.⁶⁶⁸

Antwerp legend has it (in secondary sources) that Heylen initially earned his living as a salesman for ginger bread and rolled into the cinema business via his affluent family in law, the van Reybroecks. Heylen's father in law, Jules van Reybroeck (1880-1944) was investor in the prestigious cinema Rex at the De Keyserlei in Antwerp's Station Quarter.⁶⁶⁹ A legal report by auditor Marcel Gogne dating from 1959 praised Heylen as the business angel who (upon request of his father in law) rescued cinema Rex and the corresponding company NV Rex-Ciné from bankruptcy around 1940, by investing millions of Belga in the company.⁶⁷⁰ It is very unlikely that he could have done that on a ginger bread salary alone. That Heylen's father in law was director of the NV Rex-Ciné was confirmed by Gogne's report as well as an announcement by the van Reybroecks for the requiem of Jules van Reybroeck.⁶⁷¹ Yet exactly how and when Heylen became involved in the Rex cannot be said with absolute certainty based on the available sources. Judging from Gogne's audit in the late 1950s, Georges Heylen became the corporation's director in 1941 and within a short period of time and “under the aggravating circumstances” of the German occupation of Belgium (lasting from 1940 to 1944) Heylen succeeded in paying the debts of most of the company's creditors.⁶⁷²

On 16 December 1944, however, the Rex was hit by one of the V-rockets, that kept haunting Antwerp even after the country's liberation from the German occupiers (on 4 September 1944). At the moment the bomb hit the Rex the cinema was packed with cinemagoers attending the film *The Plainsman* and a meeting of the shareholders took place in the same building. The bomb devastated the Rex as well as the splendid picture palace Scala, which was located just around the corner, in the same building complex as the Rex. Hundreds of casualties were recorded, amongst the cinema

⁶⁶⁸ Crols, “De Grote Draak,” 57, 51.

⁶⁶⁹ Heirman, “‘Vader was God voor mij,’” 30 (including quotes by Heylen's daughter Godelieve); Heirman, *Paleis om de hoek*, 80.

⁶⁷⁰ Approximately in 1940, NV Rex-Ciné almost had to be sold by authority of the law after it had been thrown into debts by the bankruptcy of one of its most important debtors (M. Gogne, “Deskundig verslag inzake de heer Heylen. Rechtbank van eerste aanleg te Antwerpen,” Report, Antwerp, June 22, 1959, 236-238). Until 1944, the Belga was the official currency in Belgium. In 1939 one Belga was worth about six US Dollars (Nationale Bank van België. “Verslag over het jaar 1939.” Report, Brussels, Nationale Bank van België, 1940, 17).

⁶⁷¹ Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 27. It is unclear, however, if he was director of the Rex from the beginning. In 1935, a corporation to which Paul Doisy belonged (exhibitor of a.o. *Kursaal*, which was reopened as *Savoy* in 1952, see *infra*), applied for permission to build a cinema which was to become the legendary Rex. Doisy was also one of the shareholders of the Rex at that moment (Van Handenhove, Antwerpen Kinemstad,” 118; Lauwers, *De Keyserlei 125 jaar*,” 31, 53). From 1936 until 1941, when Heylen became director of cinema Rex and the corporation of NV Rex-Ciné, no data are available as to who owned and/or operated the Rex.

⁶⁷² Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 37-38, 237; Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België, *Annuaire du cinéma* (Brussels, 1942), 65. Nothing can be said for sure about whether or not Heylen collaborated with the Germans during the occupation. Oral testimonies vary from assertions that Heylen had secretly screened films for the Germans to claims that he survived the war with a clean record. (No names are provided here for reasons of confidentiality.)

audience and people on the street as well as the members of the meeting. Heylen's father in law was one of the casualties. Heylen was badly injured, but had survived the catastrophe.⁶⁷³

The reconstruction of the Rex would cost millions and no money was available as a consequence of the currency reform. Nevertheless, Heylen succeeded in having rebuilt the Rex in less than three years, and within the next decade, he had paid the remaining debts. The Belgian newspaper *De Morgen* quoted Heylen in 1993 recalling that it was “primarily thanks to the understanding cooperation and credits of Robert Vandeputte” – top man of several large organizations and in 1981 Minister of Finance – which had made possible the reconstruction of the Rex.⁶⁷⁴ The effort with which Heylen had “rescued” cinema Rex and the corporation twice in the 1940s seemed to herald a promising career.⁶⁷⁵

3.3.2. Emergence of the Rex cinema group (late 1940s – early 1950s)

In March 1947 Heylen reopened cinema Rex, which had been designed by architect Rie Haan as a copy of the old Rex.⁶⁷⁶ The new Rex met with the highest technological standards of that time and offered space for more than 1,000 spectators. Only a month later Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) opened cinema Metro just around the corner from the Rex, at the spot where cinema Scala had once been. Metro could accommodate even more spectators than the Rex, offering 2,000 seats.⁶⁷⁷ Shortly

⁶⁷³ See also Willems, “Antwerpen Kinemastad,” 248.

⁶⁷⁴ Vandeputte allegedly provided Heylen with the necessary loans. Vandeputte had been CEO of the Kredietbank (which happened to be one of the main creditors after the bankruptcy) as well as of three other prestigious concerns. In addition, as member of the CVP (the Christian People's Party) Vandeputte was also short-time Finance Minister in 1981 (Heylen in G. Timmerman, “Rex: The End?” *De Morgen*, August 19, 1993, s.p.).

⁶⁷⁵ Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 236-238. These characteristics were frequently mentioned by a great number of very different people, as well as Heylen himself, as the keys to Heylen's success. These witnesses include historians, friends and family, employees and also competitors. See for example Goris, “Historiek,” 24; Magiels in Oosterwaal, “Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland,” 17; Heylen in Oosterwaal, “Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland,” 17; Timmerman, “Rex: The End?”, s.p.

⁶⁷⁶ The opening film was *Piccadilly Incident* (1946) and not *Lost weekend* (1945) as was claimed in different sources (*Weekblad Cinema* 26 (10 1947): s.p.; *Weekblad Cinema* 26 (11 1947): s.p.). See van Liempt, “Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (I),” 74.

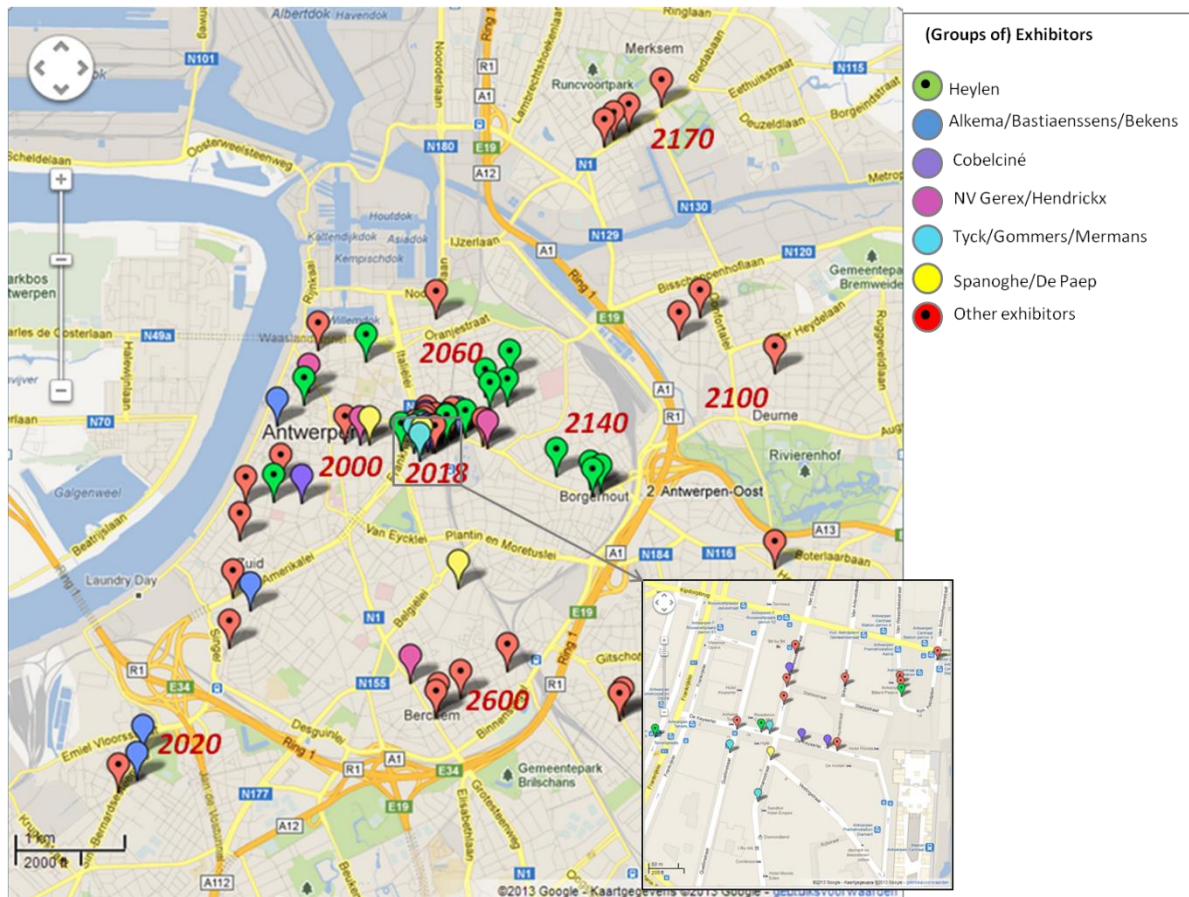
⁶⁷⁷ *Weekblad Cinema* 26 (16 1947): s.n. The announcement in *Weekblad Cinema* had a typo in it, proudly announcing Metro's equipment with 200 seats, which would have been extremely little measured by the standard at that time. No data are available for the year of opening. First entries confirming attesting that the number of seats was actually 2,000 are Belgische Syndicale Kamer van Cinematographie, “Liste des salles 35 mm existant à la date du 30 juin 1952 – mise a jour au 15 mai 1953,” Brussels, 1953, 13; Chambre syndicale belge de la publicité cinématographique a.s.b.l./Union belge des annonceurs a.s.b.l., “Répertoire publicitaire du cinéma belge,” Report, 1954, s.p; s.n., *Annuaire général du spectacle en Belgique* (Brussel: Editions l'Epoque, 1956), 156. Later, the number of seats in Metro was recorded as being 1,650. See, for instance, Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België, *Jaarboek van de Belgische Film* (Brussels, 1972/73), 72; Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België, *Jaarboek van de Belgische Film* (Brussels, 1980/81), 41; Belgische Beroepskamer der Cinematografie, “Liste des exploitants,” 14.

after he had opened the Rex, Heylen would take over cinema Astrid and in December 1949, Odeon reopened.⁶⁷⁸

At that time, Heylen (then in his early forties) was a relative newcomer in Antwerp's cinema sector, which was constituted of a great number of long-standing and experienced cinema entrepreneurs and small groups of exhibitors. In fact, from the 1910s onwards there had been a number of groups of exhibitors of which some names also appeared in annuals and other sources for the period of interest here. In addition, quite a number of them had also been actively engaged in associations struggling for the interests of the exhibition sector. In order to visualize the geo-spatial distribution of their cinemas across Antwerp, all cinemas belonging to the most powerful parties in 1952 are represented by different colors in an additional map (Figure 4 below). Unless indicated otherwise, the following descriptions and explanations refer to this map.

⁶⁷⁸ In the minutes for the meetings held in January and February 1949 of the VKBB's Antwerp division, Marcel Tropato was documented as exhibitor of Astrid as well as Artis, American, National, and RAF (*Inlichtingsbulletijn* 4 (5 1949): 6). Odeon had been exploited as Studio 48 by Bosmans before (who was also linked to Heylen via Astra).

Figure 4: Map of Antwerp cinemas in 1952 for the extended sample area and the Station Quarter (in detail on the bottom right hand side). The major (groups of) exhibitors are marked in different colors; see Table 4 below and Table 3.3 in Appendix I).



The first group of “veterans” with a long tradition in Antwerp’s cinema sector was the group Tyck/Gommers/Mermans. Willy Tyck, George Gommers, and Henri Mermans were son and sons in law to one of Antwerp’s longest established exhibitors Pierre Tyck, who opened his first cinema – Anvers Palace – at Appelmanstraat in the Station Quarter in 1915. According to Clement Wildiers, at that time Anvers Palace was the most beautiful and most comfortable cinema in Belgium.⁶⁷⁹ With 1,500 seats it was also the largest one in Antwerp. In 1952 the group exploited cinemas Eden, Pathé, and Anvers Palace in the Station Quarter (represented by the turquoise drop icons).

The second player with three cinemas in the Station Quarter was the group related to distributor Cobelciné and the names of A. de Backer and R. Dessente (cinemas marked by purple-blue icons).⁶⁸⁰ They exploited cinemas Ambassades, Capitole, and Regina in the Station Quarter. Next to that they also exploited cinema Cameo at Begijnenstraat in Antwerp South (postal code 2000).

⁶⁷⁹ Wildiers, *De Kinema veroverd*, 14.

⁶⁸⁰ Van Liempt, “Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (II),” 156. In contrast to the members of the Tyck/Gommers/Mermans group, who were mostly listed together, this is not the case with A. De Backer and R. Dessente. In different available sources from documenting (part of) the first half of the 1950s, either De Backer or Dessente were listed as exhibitors of the same group of cinemas (i.e. Ambassades, Cameo (Begijnenstraat, 2000 Antwerp), Capitole, and Regina). See Belgische Beroepskamer der Cinematografie, “Liste des exploitants de salles de cinéma 35mm de Belgique,” 10, 11, 14;

A third cinema group and one of Antwerp's long-standing ones was formed by Joseph Spanoghe and Albéric de Paep (cinemas marked yellow). They opened cinema Lux (postal code 2018) as early as in 1913, as the first purpose-built cinema in the whole of Antwerp at that time.⁶⁸¹ In 1952 they also exploited cinema Empire in the Station Quarter (at Appelmansstraat), as well as one of Antwerp's biggest cinemas with 2000 seats, cinema Roxy located at the Meir (extension of the De Keyserlei "beyond" the Frankrijklei).

Another name which needs to be mentioned here is that of Louis (or Leo) Hendrickx, administrator of the corporation NV Gerex (cinemas represented by purple icons). Until the 1950s he exploited the two large cinemas, Majestic at Carnotstraat (in Borgerhout) and Berchem Palace (both with more than 1,000 seats) as well as two smaller cinemas Coliseum (at the Meir) and Lido (located in Antwerp's historical center). More importantly, Hendrickx was an important figure in the cinema world as chairman of the *Syndikale Kamer van Antwerpen der Kinema's en Bijvakken* (Syndicate Chamber of Antwerp of Cinemas and Subsidiaries, henceforth referred to as Syndicate) from the 1920s onwards.⁶⁸² In 1937-1938 the Syndicate was replaced by the *Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België* (Association of Cinema Directors of Belgium, also known under its French name Association des Directeurs de Théâtres Cinématographiques de Belgique, henceforth referred to as VKBB).⁶⁸³ From the 1920s until his death in 1954, throughout the whole period of his chairmanship Hendrickx had been achieving much good in the interests of Antwerp exhibitors.⁶⁸⁴

The four cinemas represented by the blue icons belonged to yet another powerful group of exhibitors in Antwerp in the 1950s: Alkema-Bastiaenssens-Bekens. According to a list published in 1956 of member cinemas of the VKBB, they also exploited the prestigious cinema Rubens at the rim of the Station Quarter. The available evidence suggests that this group only became active in the cinema business after World War II.⁶⁸⁵

The last group was that of Heylen (depicted by the green drop icons). By 1952 he exploited more cinemas than any other player on Antwerp's cinema market at that time. Heylen clearly predominated the neighborhood-cinema landscape of Stuivenberg/Amandus-Atheneum (postal code 2060) and Borgerhout (2140). Both were working class neighborhoods, characterized on the one

Wildiers, *De Kinema veroverd*, 30; *Annuaire general du spectacle en Belgique* 1956: 156. In addition, Heirman spoke of a "group" in relation to A. De Backer (Heirman, *Paleis om de hoek*, 167), while Corluy disagreed that De Backer was involved in exploiting Ambassades (Corluy, personal interview with K. Lotze, Antwerp, August 6, 2008). The link between Cobelciné and René Dessente is made based on an entry in *Annuaire du cinématographe* 1942: 61 as well as the new year's congratulations by cinema architect Rie Haan to "Kinobel: Dessente" and their cinemas *Ambassade* [sic] and *Capitole*. *Weekblad Cinema* (1954): s.p.

⁶⁸¹ Wildiers, *De Kinema veroverd*, 13.

⁶⁸² The *Syndicate* was founded in 1916 to act on behalf and represent the interests of exhibitors. For a concise history of the first 40 years of the *Syndicate's*, later VKBB, see *Ibid.*, 17-33..

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 22, 24ff.

⁶⁸⁵ Except for Louis Bekens, son of Bernard Bekens who had been in the business since at least the 1920s (*Ibid.*, 15).

hand by an old working class population and the strong presence of labor migrants. After the massive wave of suburbanization in the 1950s, these neighborhoods north of the inner city underwent a demographic and economic decline, as they became refuge for those who could not afford the new, more luxurious apartments in the suburbs.⁶⁸⁶ In the 1990s they were considered to be two of three so-called “deprived neighborhoods” of Antwerp.⁶⁸⁷ Apart from these areas and a few cinemas in the Station Quarter, based on the available evidence, it can be concluded that in 1952 Heylen was practically absent in all other neighborhoods and districts. Furthermore, Figure 4 shows that different from Heylen, whose cinemas were clustered in different parts of the city, the other major (groups of) exhibitors had their cinemas scattered more widespread across Antwerp and adjacent districts.

The six different (groups of) exhibitors are summarized in Table 4 below to provide an overview of the key players in Antwerp's cinema market in the extended sample area in 1952.⁶⁸⁸ As can be seen in the table and as it has been shown above, until the 1950s, Antwerp's cinema sector was strongly fragmented and decentralized, geographically as well as economically. Many cinemas belonging to quite a large number of different (groups of) exhibitors were spread all across the city.

3.3.3. Years of expansion (early 1950s – mid 1960s)

The (re-)opening of the cinemas Rex, Odeon, and Astrid was just the beginning of the career of what would become Belgium's most influential cinema tycoon of his time. In the course of the next decade Georges Heylen would annex one cinema after the other. It is telling that in his book about Antwerp's cinema history dating from 1956, Wildiers already spoke of a swallowing up of a number of cinemas by the “George Heylen concern”.⁶⁸⁹

⁶⁸⁶ E. De Clercq, F. Guldentops, C. Kesteloot, et al., *Comparative Statistical Analysis at National, Metropolitan, Local and Neighbourhood Level* (Brussels/Antwerp: University of Amsterdam, 2000), 52-53, 80-81. This phenomenon was not typical for Antwerp alone, but had been observed for other places as well (e.g. H. L. Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics. A Guide for Financial Analysis*, 6th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 99; Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 135). Jancovich et al. (in reference to Roger Silverstone) acknowledged the common assumption of the 1950s and 1960s as the “suburb's golden age”, but they also point out that processes of suburbanization can be traced back 200-300 years prior (Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 104).

⁶⁸⁷ De Clercq et al., *Comparative Statistical Analysis*, 80.

⁶⁸⁸ The table is based on a range of different sources, mostly annuals, announcements in trade journals and lists published by various organs related to the cinema business. Due to contradictory information (e.g. in relation to the group Cobelcine and the involvement of Dessente and A. De Backer) and inconsistencies in record keeping (e.g. confusion of owner and manager of a venue) and spelling, distortions may occur.

⁶⁸⁹ Wildiers, *De Kinema veroverd*, 11, 12, 13.

Table 2: Overview of (historical) key players in Antwerp's cinema sector in 1952 within the extended sample area (postal code per cinema are provided between brackets)

<i>Group</i>	<i>(Related) Members</i>	<i>Cinemas</i>
Rex cinema group	Georges Heylen Flor Bosmans Lode Gebruers	Kemo (2000) Kinnox (2000) Odeon (2000) Winterpaleis (2000) Astrid (2018) Rex (2018) Astra (2060) Americain Palace (2060) Dixi (2060) Festa (2060) ⁶⁹⁰ National (2060) Century (2140) Luxor (2140) Roma (2140) Victory (2140)
Alkema/Bastiaenssens/Bekens	Alkema R. Bastiaenssens L. Bekens	Alhambra (2000) Forum (2018) Micro (2020) Modern Palace (2020) Rubens (2060)
Cobelciné group	Cobelciné (distributor) A. de Backer R. Dessente	Cameo (2000) Ambassades (2018) Capitole (2018) Regina (2018)
NV Gerex/Hendrickx	Leo Hendrickx Jan Simons	Coliseum (2000) Lido (2000) Majestic (2060) Berchem Palace (2600)
Tyck/Gommers/Mermans	Willy Tyck George Gommers Henri Mermans	Anvers Palace (2018) Eden (2018) Pathé (2018)
Spanoghe/de Paep	Jozeph Spanoghe Albéric de Paep	Roxy (2000) Empire (2018) Lux (2018)

In the 1950s, nearly all of the major cinema groups with long traditions in Antwerp's cinema landscape were struggling with setbacks. Of the four cinemas of the Bastiaenssens-Alkema-Bekens group only two were left in 1962 (in Kiel, postal code 2020, see Table 3.3 in Appendix I). The group Spanoghe/de Paep, which had three cinemas in 1952, was left in 1962 with Empire in the Station Quarter as the only cinema within the examined area. The Tyck/Gommers/Mermans group had also been reduced to two cinemas in the Station Quarter (Anvers Palace and Pathé). Cinema Eden had closed down two years before, to be reopened by Heylen as cinema Quellin.⁶⁹¹ The Cobelciné group

⁶⁹⁰ The list of 35 mm film exhibition venues published by the CSBC documented Goossens and Jacobs as directors of cinema *Festa* (Belgische Beroepskamer der Cinematografie, "Liste des exploitants de salles de cinéma 35mm de Belgique," 12). From December 1952 onwards, the film programming for Festa became included in the programming books of the Rex cinema group suggesting that Heylen had taken over (or was about to take over) the cinema or at least the film programming. This is confirmed by an inventory by long-time employee Corluy. With the establishment of the corporation with limited liability NV Festa in September 1952 and the official appointment of Heylen as its director, the cinema was officially annexed by the Rex cinema group (Gogne, "Deskundig verslag," 212, 214).

⁶⁹¹ The corresponding company NV Eden, however, was only acquired by Heylen in 1972. Quellin was later exploited by NV Anbima. See G. Heylen, Tyck, G., Mermans, H., Tyck, M. et al., Contract verkoop NV Eden, Antwerp, June 26, 1972.

had been left with one cinema (Regina) as had Hendrickx (Lido in the historical center of the city): Berchem Palace was taken over by Heylen; Majestic closed in 1956.

Since Antwerp's cinema sector did not substantially grow during the first two postwar decades, Heylen's expansion came mostly at the costs of his competitors. As a matter of fact, of the seventy-four different film screening locations within the extended sample area for the years 1952 and 1962, only thirty-four were exploited by the same (group of) exhibitors in 1952 and 1962. Moreover, with the exception of Heylen, there was only one exhibitor who had grown between 1952 and 1962 and who had more than two cinemas in the researched area. Mertens, connected to the PVBA Ceno (i.e. a private company with limited liability), exploited four cinemas spread across several parts of the city: Scala at Carnotstraat, at walking distance from central station, Cinex in Antwerp's South (2000), Centra in Kiel (2020), and Orly in Berchem (2600).

Comparisons of the maps for the sample years 1952 and 1962 illustrate the steady growth of Heylen's empire in the once highly diversified cinema market (see the maps in Figures 3.5, 3.6, and 3.7 in Appendix I). Between 1952 and 1962 some expansion is noticeable in the Station Quarter as well as in Berchem (2600).⁶⁹² When the maps of the extended sample area are compared for the different sample years, it becomes clear, however, that Heylen's expansion occurred in specific areas of the city. Most of his business, in fact, took place in what I have labeled the core sample area, i.e. the Station Quarter, the neighborhood Amandus-Atheneum/Stuivenberg as well as the district of Borgerhout. While the total number of cinemas in this area remained quite stable during this decade, with a total of thirty-three in 1952 and thirty-two in 1962, the share of cinemas affiliated with Heylen increased from twelve to seventeen. By 1952 all neighborhood cinemas in Borgerhout and Stuivenberg had been taken over by Heylen.⁶⁹³

The centralization of Antwerp's cinema sector becomes even more visible in the course of the 1960s, particularly in the Station Quarter (see Figure 3.7 in Appendix I). As indicated in the outset of this paragraph, in 1952 out of the nineteen cinemas located in the Station Quarter nine were in the hands of three groups, each exploiting three cinemas there: Tyck/Gommers/Mermans with Empire, Pathé, and Anvers Palace, Cobelciné with Ambassadors, Capitole, and Regina, as well as Heylen with Rex, Astrid, and Odeon. The remaining ten cinemas were exploited each by a different exhibitor, of which a handful also exploited one or two more cinemas in other parts of Antwerp. By 1962 half of all the cinemas in the Station Quarter were linked to Heylen.

⁶⁹² For Antwerp's historic center (2000) we see two cinemas (Kemo and Kinox) for which Heylen was recorded as exhibitor in 1952, but not in 1962 anymore. It is unclear if Heylen actually sold these cinemas or if the difference is caused by inconsistencies in the records. A third possibility is that, similar to the case of Astra (officially exploited by Bosmans, yet belonging to the Rex cinema group), the documented exhibitor of both cinemas (De Backer, see Table 3.3 in Appendix I) actually participated in Heylen's group.

⁶⁹³ Due to inconsistencies in written documents (annuals, advertisements, programming books, as well as secondary sources) it is not always possible to say exactly when which cinemas were integrated in Heylen's cinema group.

In 1953 Vendôme (formerly named ABC) and Savoy (formerly Kursaal) were integrated into his cinema group.⁶⁹⁴ In October 1959 Coliseum (on the Meir) as well as the prestigious cinema Rubens at the rim of the Station Quarter followed. Coliseum was closed less than half a year later, according to Heylen's longtime employee Paul Corluy, because it was situated "on the wrong side of the Boulevard" (i.e. the Frankrijklei) separating the Station Quarter from the city's historical center.⁶⁹⁵ Cinema Rubens had only been opened in 1952 and was the last cinema to be opened at the rim of the Station Quarter. The Rubens was opened at a moment when it had already become clear that Antwerp's cinema market was saturated. According to van Liempt, the Rubens was one too many and meant a turning point in the cinema history of Antwerp.⁶⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Heylen would continue to absorb one cinema after the other for some more years to come. In 1960, Capitole was added to his cinema group, followed by Quellin and Metro in 1961.⁶⁹⁷ In the course of the 1960s Heylen took over all remaining cinemas in the Station Quarter, with the exception of three (Plaza, Paris (formerly Regina) and Royal) – which specialized in erotic films. Furthermore, in 1963 Pathé was taken over by Heylen (formerly in the hands of the group of Willy Tyck), followed by Empire in 1964 (the last cinema there of the group Spanoghe/de Paep) and Ambassades in 1965 (formerly by NV Kinobel).⁶⁹⁸ Although Heylen had added most cinemas during the 1950s, his predominance truly became visible in the late 1960s, when most of the remaining competitors closed down.

To sum up this paragraph, the 1950s and 1960s witnessed an increased concentration of Antwerp cinemas in the hands of one exhibitor. This expansion was not the result of newly-built venues. Rather it came at the cost of his competitors who were forced to collaborate with Heylen's group, were taken over by Heylen, or had to close down. Heylen came to dominate particularly the working-class neighborhoods Stuivenberg/St. Amandus and Borgerhout and the vibrant Station Quarter.

⁶⁹⁴ Corluy, personal interview with K. Lotze, Antwerp, July 22, 2008. According to van Liempt, Savoy was integrated in 1958 only, yet there are ample reasons to believe Corluy's versions. The Rex programming books suggest a change of exhibitor in the beginning of July 1953 for Vendôme, and end of July 1953 for Savoy. In addition, in an advertisement placed in the yearly special edition of *Weekblad Cinema* on the occasion of the turn of the year 1953/54, George Heylen wished all members of the film sector a happy new year on behalf of the five cinemas Rex, Astrid, Odeon, Savoy, and Vendôme (*Weekblad Cinema* (new year's edition 1954): s.p.)

⁶⁹⁵ Corluy, personal interview, August 6, 2008. See Heylen in Crols, "De Grote Draak," 47 as well as the records in the Rex programming books. In fact, of the three cinemas located on the Meir in 1952 (depicted by the three red drop icons just above the postal code 2000 Figure 3.5 in Appendix I) two were gone by 1962 and the third was not a commercial cinema, but belonged to a Catholic school.

⁶⁹⁶ Van Liempt, "Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (II)," 156.

⁶⁹⁷ According to van Liempt, Quellin was only added to the Rex group in 1969 (*Ibid.*, 159). The Rex-programming books, however, suggest a switch in April 1961.

⁶⁹⁸ Unfortunately, no yearbooks are available for these years.

3.3.4. Times of crisis (late 1960s – mid 1980s)

Concerning the cinemas in Antwerp, Heylen's long-lasting policy of expansion ended in the late 1960s. Two developments can be linked to this. On the one hand, the ongoing decrease of cinema attendance made large numbers of cinemas unsustainable and the big picture palaces unviable. Most cinemas outside of the Station Quarter closed down, existing single-screen cinemas in the Station Quarter were split or converted into multi-screen venues. On the other hand, the late 1960s and early 1970s were characterized in Antwerp by increased calls for more artistic films and less commercial film screenings.⁶⁹⁹ Both developments are linked to the demand side and resulted in the opening of so-called studios, i.e. relatively small cinemas specialized in the screening of less commercial films.

In addition, and tightly linked, to the demand side are particular dynamics within Antwerp's cinema landscape which contributed to Heylen's expansion stop there, at least horizontally (concerning exhibition). By the early 1970s, Heylen had become almost the sole ruler within Antwerp's cinema landscape. His powerful position and practices of doing business influenced his relationship with both the local players within Antwerp's cinema market as well as players from outside. While some players strongly depended on Heylen (directly or indirectly), others tried to operate independently from him.

With regard to the first, Heylen's dominant position on Antwerp's lucrative market put him in an advantageous bargaining position. Heylen used this power to drive competing local exhibitors off his territory. He did this either by taking over their cinemas or their film programming, or by indirectly forcing them to show niche films. Nevertheless, competing exhibitors also admitted that as much as they despised him as much as they needed the publicity he made for the films.⁷⁰⁰ A similar highly ambivalent relationship also characterized Heylen's business with the American major studios. In the course of the 1960s his increased power on the Antwerp's market eventually led to disagreements about film rental conditions and to a complete distribution stop effectuated by the

⁶⁹⁹ It must be noted that initiatives to promote less commercial films and/or to contribute to film education were taken much earlier. The first film club that was founded in Antwerp after World War II, for example, was called "Het linnen venster" (HLV, i.e. The Linen Window). It existed between 1948 and 1964 (W. Magiels, "Een legendarische film club: 'Het linnen venster'," in *Magie van de cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde*, edited by W. Magiels and R. De Hert (Antwerp: Facet, 2004), 182-183). Furthermore, between 1954 and 1969, Antwerp hosted the National Belgian Film Festival which took place every other year (F. Auwera, "Het Nationaal Belgisch Filmfestival (1954-1969): Een tweejaarlijks filmfestijn zonder happy end (natuurlijk)," in *Magie van de cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde*, edited by W. Magiels and R. De Hert (Antwerp: Facet, 2004), 95-99). Also, in the mid 1950s, the Centrale Filmclub Antwerpen (CFA, Central Film Club Antwerp) was founded (W. Magiels, "Film International Antwerpen: De tijger BRULT," in *Magie van de cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde*, edited by W. Magiels and R. De Hert (Antwerp: Facet, 2004), 156; see R. Stallaerts, *Rode glamour. Bioscoop, film en socialistische beweging* (Ghent: Provinciebestuur Oost-Vlaanderen, 1989), 37).

⁷⁰⁰ See E. Kloeck, personal interview with K. Lotze and P. Meers, Antwerp, November 25, 2011; E. Kloeck, personal interview with K. Lotze and P. Meers, Antwerp, January 20, 2012; M. L. Christeyns and J. Hollants, personal interview with K. Lotze and P. Meers, Zwijndrecht, November 25, 2011.

American majors for all cinemas affiliated to Heylen. More details about the causes and the course of this conflict will follow in Chapter 4.4.1. What is of more importance here is that, as one of the outcomes of the conflict, a new player settled down in the Station Quarter, ending Heylen's monopoly position there. In 1973, the Dutch exhibitor Meerburg opened his cinema triplex Calypso (marked by the red drop icon on the left in the map for 1982 in Figure 3.7 in Appendix I) at the corner of Quellinstraat and De Keyserlei, directly across from Heylen's flagship cinema Rex. Nevertheless, as I will show in Paragraph 3.3.5., although the coming of Calypso officially ended Heylen's monopoly position in the Station Quarter, based on the number of cinemas Heylen remained the biggest player in this area (and in Antwerp) for another two decades.

The second possibility for exhibitors to cope with Heylen's power on the local market was to operate independently from him and his cinema group. Local exhibitors found refuge in the screening of films Heylen was less interested in (mostly for economic reasons), i.e. niche films, such as art house productions, or sexually more explicit material. It was a way for local exhibitors to circumvent the disadvantages suffered from Heylen's exclusivity rights with regard to film distribution (more details follow in Chapters 4 and 5). The conflict had made even clearer one particular annoyance that had been simmering especially amongst Antwerp film buffs since the late 1960s: the little supply of more artistic films in their cinema city.⁷⁰¹ Heylen was publicly criticized for depriving Antwerp citizens of the better films and for ruining Antwerp's film culture by screening predominantly commercial pulp. In a polemic article in the Flemish weekly magazine *De Nieuwe Gazet* dating from 1970, Heylen was labeled by art and film critic Ivo Nelissen a "cultural dictator" who committed commercial censorship by keeping commercially less interesting films outside of Antwerp. Nelissen called for the establishment of an organ, an association, uniting all film clubs, socialist as well as Catholic, to form a wall against Heylen's monopoly.⁷⁰² For a short while, such an association even came into existence, albeit not the directly with the purpose of supporting the less commercial circuit. A handful of neighborhood cinemas in Antwerp and adjacent districts united under the name of Verenigde Onafhankelijke Zalen van Antwerpen (VOZA, i.e. United Independent Cinemas of Antwerp) and screened films from the American majors Heylen would not receive as a consequence of the distribution conflict with them.⁷⁰³ These cinemas were widely spread across

⁷⁰¹ The 1950s brought a new uplift to socialist cinema initiatives, with the aim of film education. The screenings in socialist film clubs in Antwerp – usually introduced by renowned film critics, amongst which Turfkruyer – were quite well attended. Stallaerts, *Rode glamour*, 37-39.

⁷⁰² I. Nelissen, "Ontwikkelingshulp gevraagd voor Antwerpen 'Kinemastad'," *De Nieuwe*, April 24, 1970, s.p.. See also L. Mees and J.-P. Wauters, "Filmuitbating. De toeschouwer," *Film en televisie* 154 (1970): 4-5; H. van Gaelen, "Zij die van de film leven," *Avenue-België* (1974): 1-19.

⁷⁰³ The association was a rather informal one and was also called *Verenigde Onafhankelijke Cinemas van Antwerpen* (United Independent Venues of Antwerp) or *Verenigde Onafhankelijke Zalen van Antwerpen* (United Independent Cinemas of Antwerp), sometimes including the extension and agglomeration. See, for example, the weekly advertisements placed in the local newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen*.

Antwerp. The enterprise did not last long however; eye witnesses speak of a period from a few months to a few years.⁷⁰⁴

Other initiatives to bring non-mainstream films (back) to Antwerp were more successful. Although Antwerp had been host of a film festival before, it was especially in the 1970s and early 1980s that film festivals and film clubs mushroomed in Antwerp.⁷⁰⁵ In 1970 the Central Film Club Antwerp (CFA) organized the first International Film Week, which would lay the foundation of what has now become the prestigious International Film Festival Rotterdam.⁷⁰⁶ For quite some years these film weeks and festivals organized by the CFA took place in a number of Heylen's cinemas (rented by the CFA for the occasion): Studio Century and Roma in Borgerhout, Ambassades and Vendôme at Anneessensstraat in the Station Quarter. In addition, the CFA also rented Studio Century to program more artistic films there on a weekly basis (on Thursday evenings and later also on Sundays). Moreover, Studio Century was also the place where the first edition of the Fantastic Film Festival took place.⁷⁰⁷

With the exception of Calypso, all newcomers competing with Heylen in 1982 (Figure 3.5 in Appendix I), offered less commercial films (including old material). These new venues specializing in less commercial, common films popped up in different parts of the city, except for the Station Quarter. A shift had taken place: neighborhoods and districts, once home of cozy familiar neighborhood cinemas had now become the home for small venues screening less commercial films, usually in combination with alternative content, i.e. concerts and special festivities. In the long run however, for reasons I will address in Chapter 4, these venues had little chance of enduring. Despite Monty's initial success, for example, it did not manage to keep its head above the water and had to close in 1982. Cartoon's survived, but had to open up its programming for more commercial films.⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁴ For more details see Chapter 4.4.1.

⁷⁰⁵ Van Liempt linked the growth of initiative in the socio-cultural sector in the 1970s to the favorable policies of Prime Minister Gaston Eyskens and his Minister of Dutch Culture Frans van Mechelen (J. van Liempt, "Twintig jaar Vlaams filmbeleid," *Open deur* 14, no. 4-5 (April-May 1982): 85).

⁷⁰⁶ Magiels, "Film International Antwerpen," 156-157. See also International Film Festival Rotterdam. Accessed January 4, 2013. <http://www.filmfestivalrotterdam.com/en/>.

⁷⁰⁷ W. Magiels, "Festival van de fantastische film in Antwerpen: de eerste kreten," in *Magie van de cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde*, edited by W. Magiels and R. De Hert (Antwerp: Facet, 2004), 161. The following three (and last) editions of the festivals took place in cinemas not affiliated with Heylen. In a personal interview, Willy Magiels (member of the CFA and co-founder of Film International Antwerp as well as official press secretary of the Rex cinema group from 1981 onwards) explained that the festival moved to competing cinemas because Heylen did not like the idea of having no control over what was to be screened (W. Magiels, personal interview with K. Lotze and P. Meers, Antwerp, July 9, 2008).

⁷⁰⁸ Other film clubs were Centrumtheater (in Stuivenberg, open from 1976 until 1982), King Kong (in Antwerp's historical center, open from 1976 until 1982), Filmhuis (in Antwerp's historical center, open from 1979 until 1987). Different from Monty and Cartoon's, they did not all screen films throughout the week and were more part of a cultural center. For King Kong, see for example, Luc Pien about the organisation Fugitive Cinema and the cultural center King Kong (L. Pien, "De verborgen charmes van Fugitive Cinema and de van de 'King-Kong'," in *Magie van de cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde*, edited by W. Magiels and R. De Hert (Antwerp: Facet, 2004), 153-155).

When looking back at the changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape in 1985, Van Liempt noticed a massive disappearance of the big picture palaces and neighborhood cinemas.⁷⁰⁹ Indeed, most of the cinemas that had survived were located at the Station Quarter, Heylen's "home base". Calypso remained the only competitor of Heylen there screening regular films.⁷¹⁰ Nevertheless, by the end of the 1980s, the downfall of Heylen's business set in. For the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of cinema Rex in 1985 and the premiere of *A Passage to India* (Lean, 1984, UK/USA), a spectacular program was staged, including a living "festively decorated Indian elephant directly flown in from Dakar," all in the presence of important politicians and members of the film's cast and crew.⁷¹¹ In retrospective, the efforts and investments in this pompous celebration of the cinema's fiftieth anniversary already cast the shadows of the downfall of what had once been a cinema empire.

3.3.5. Antwerp's first multiplex and Heylen's downfall (late 1980s – mid 1990s)

While between 1972 and 1982, the number of Heylen's cinemas remained quite stable, in the latter half of the 1980s that number decreased noticeably. Although Heylen kept his relatively powerful position until the very end, viewed from nearby it was clearly a question of keeping up appearances. The neglected insides of his remaining cinemas in the Station Quarter mirrored the poor situation on the streets outside. As mentioned earlier in the course of this chapter, in the 1950s a wave of suburbanization took place as a consequence of increased wealth and mobility as well as due to incentives by the government to invest in housing. People moved from the poor neighborhoods in the inner city to peripheral neighborhoods and districts such as Kiel and Luchtbal.⁷¹² In the 1960s the industry followed and so did the service sector in the 1980s. These changes lead to a cultural, social and economic erosion of parts of the inner city, especially the Station Quarter. What had once been Antwerp's jewel in literary and figurative sense, now was associated rather with drug trafficking, high crime rates and shabby buildings.⁷¹³

⁷⁰⁹ Van Liempt, "Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (I)," 70.

⁷¹⁰ In 1973 and 1974 Jos Rastelli operated two Studios right across from Central Station, screening predominantly art house films.

⁷¹¹ See the description in the corresponding AKA dating "A Passage to India – 50 jaar Rex," YouTube, accessed January 4, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYX1F3KffIQ> [my transl.]

⁷¹² Bertels et al., "Stadslandschap," 52-55.

⁷¹³ Laureyssen and Jansen-Verbeke, "De recente verschuiving," 46. For memories of and opinions about the Station Quarter by its inhabitants and workers employed there see, for example, Gazet van Antwerpen, ed., *Antwerpen. Twintig wijken. Twintig werelden* (Antwerpen: Standaard, 2003), 229-242.

The ill fate and poor business that had haunted most of his competitors during the decades before, also started catching up with Heylen. Gradually he had to close one cinema after the other and sell the buildings. By 1992 Vendôme at Anneessensstraat, Capitole at De Keyserlei and Savoy at Astridplein had disappeared. In addition, the “relocation” of Odeon from the Frankrijklei and Sinjoor from De Keyserlei, both to Anneessensstraat, could not camouflage the continuing downfall of Heylen's cinema group. In addition, all of his cinemas were gone in Stuivenberg/Amandus-Atheneum and Borgerhout (except for cinema Rubens). In the course of 1992, another one of Heylen's first cinemas, Astrid at Queen Astrid Square, at a stone's throw from Central Station, closed as well. In public, Heylen motivated the transactions by claiming that he was saving money for the construction of a new cinema complex in the heart of Antwerp.⁷¹⁴ In reality, the wave of closures of cinemas that haunted the cinema sector in the districts and most of Antwerp's neighborhoods had eventually reached the center of the city and was now becoming visible for everyone.

In the meanwhile, the successful cinema group Bert/Claeys had substantiated its plans of settling down in Antwerp. As indicated in the first paragraph of this chapter, the entrance of the Bert/Claeys group did not occur unproblematically. There were at least two reasons why the Bert/Claeys did not enter Antwerp's once lucrative cinema market earlier. One had partly to do with municipal policies; I will return to this point below.

The other reason was a contract dating from 1980 in which members of the Claeys family on the one hand and Heylen and van Groeningen (director of the Rex group's distribution companies NV Excelsior and NV Filimpex) on the other, had stipulated several agreements. The agreements obliged Heylen not to construct new, or reopen existing, cinemas in the province of Limburg, while the Claeys family were not to construct new, or reopen existing, cinemas in the provinces of Antwerp, West- and East-Flanders, for a period of 20 years. In addition, Heylen had to guarantee the Claeys-group priority rights for his films in the province of Limburg for a period of ten years, while the Claeys in turn were obliged to screen Heylen's films there.⁷¹⁵ Apparently, the contract only resurfaced in 1993 after the NV Metropolis had been founded by Claeys and Bert in May 1993 and the building permission for the corresponding megaplex Metropolis had been granted by the city council.⁷¹⁶ Heylen, whose business had by then long been threatened by demise, had Metropolis summoned in

⁷¹⁴ G. Delveaux, “Rex gaat in tegenaanval,” *De Nieuwe Gazet*, January 5, 1993, 13; G.Fr./F.H., “Futuristisch draaiboek voor drie bioscopen,” *Gazet van Antwerpen*, May 2, 1992, 35.

⁷¹⁵ Van Groeningen et al., *Overeenkomst*, 4 April 1980. The agreement was made between and signed by van Groeningen (director of NV Excelsior and NV Filimpex), Heylen, Mr and Mrs Claeys. Since the Bert side of the family was not included in the contract, there was no question of breach of contract when they did open Decascoop (twelve screens) in Ghent (the capital of the province of East-Flanders) in 1982. See s.n., “Liste des cinémas de Belgique 35 mm” (Brussels, 1987), 2. For more details see Chapter 4.6.2.

⁷¹⁶ See the founding document of Metropolis, issued by the Chamber of Commerce in Antwerp on May 23, 1993 (J. Cannoodt, Founding document of Metropolis NV, Kamer van Koophandel. Antwerp, May 23, 1993); P. Lefelon, “Antwerps stadsbestuur legt beslag op Rex-cinema's,” *Gazet van Antwerpen*, August 26, 1993, 25.

August, one month before the Rex group's final downfall. Heylen claimed a sum of BEF 500 million (USD 15 million) of damage compensation, because NV Metropolis had breached their contract. I will return to the outcomes of this claim at the end of this paragraph, after having explained the tedious negotiations that determined the decision-making process for the new cinema complex in Antwerp.

The contract was not the only obstacle that the Bert/Claeys group had to face in their attempts to open a multiplex in Antwerp. The opening of Metropolis in October 1993 was preceded by a long period of negotiations as plans were also repeatedly put on ice because of initial hesitations on behalf of local authorities. Allegedly, Bert's plans of the construction of a multiplex in Antwerp had already circulated in the mid-1980s.⁷¹⁷ In 1989 it was picked up again. In a letter from August 1989, Albert Bert and his son Joost asked for the local authorities' permission for the construction of a cinema complex in Antwerp South. The letter included details about the intrepid yet highly appealing plans of the Berts. The cinema was not only supposed to become the "most advanced and best conceptualized cinema of the world", but was to be accompanied by a "big entertainment center with a giant parking lot", later to be extended by "a water park and sports facilities".⁷¹⁸ The entertainment center (to be named "The Village") was subdivided into three topics relating to three geographical levels. The first, named Schipperskwartier (Skipper's Quarter), corresponding to one of Antwerp's oldest and most traditional quarters, "had to let people feel and discover Antwerp how it once was". The second had as topic the European Union ("eenwording"), offering Belgian beer and chocolate as well as accommodating amongst others, a Dutch mosselhuis (clam house), a Danish tavern, a German *Weinstube*, an English pub, a Greek restaurant, and an Italian pizzeria. The third theme was Hollywood and was to harbor a copy of the store of Humphrey Bogart in the film *Casablanca* (Michael Curtiz, 1942, USA) or a copy of the Chinese theater in Beverly Hills. The Berts concluded their descriptions of the entertainment center by claiming that "[t]his village, which will already be a tourist attraction on its own, will be finalized with a finesse as Main Street in Walt Disney Orlando."⁷¹⁹

Despite the grandeur of the project the Berts did not gain permission, primarily due to fears of possible threats for the inner city cinemas, as well as of a possible gentrification of the area and an increase of traffic problems. Yet the city authorities were not entirely against such a project either and initiated a thorough and comprehensive investigation on behalf of the city of Antwerp on the possibility of a cinema complex in Antwerp. The investigation comprised two phases. First, it was supposed to examine the general interest in a new cinema complex in Antwerp as well as to estimate

⁷¹⁷ S.n., "Na Harelbeke de wereld," *De Nieuwe Gazet*, October 10, 1993, 2.

⁷¹⁸ A. Bert and J. Bert, letter to Stad Antwerpen, Antwerp, August 23, 1989, s.p.

⁷¹⁹ *Ibid.*

in how far a new cinema complex would become a potential threat to the inner-city theaters. In the second phase concrete locations were examined.

Apparently, questions about possible installations of cinema complexes within cityscapes were quite common. In one of their first preliminary reports about more general considerations of the desirability of a multiplex in Antwerp as well as of possible locations, members of the corresponding non-profit organization Stad aan de Stroom (SaS, i.e. City on the river, meaning the Scheldt) pointed to rescue plans for center cinemas in Belgium as well as abroad. The members acknowledged the importance of the cinemas for the inner city by asserting:

The disappearance of the center cinemas disturbs the functioning of the inner city. The center cinemas represent a welcome counter weight for the concentration of offices and shops. The complementarity lies predominantly in the moment they generate activity and bustle.⁷²⁰

In addition, they underlined that “[t]he conflux of cinemagoers and their influence on the surrounding catering establishments prevent the center from looking dead and void after office hours.”⁷²¹ However, the team also recognized that

none of Antwerp center cinemas [has] an architectural quality that is comparable to those in Brussels or abroad which had been included in the "rescue program". In addition, the interiors were just as irrelevant.⁷²²

By no means did the members of the SaS want to follow Brussels' model of subsidizing threatened center cinemas since it had actually failed its mission. Taking the coming of Kinopolis in Brussels as a (negative) example of how it should not be done, they formulated three pillars of preventive policy for the situation in Antwerp. These included a considerable limitation of the programming of Metropolis, a protection of the cinema function of the center cinemas, and a stimulation to modernize the center cinemas. Ideally, the cinema sector would be based on a bipolar model (as in Liège), with, on the one hand, a cinema complex outside the city center to recruit people from the region and, the other hand, a healthy cinema life in the city center targeting predominantly the city dweller.⁷²³ The preconditions for a successful implementation would be, first, that Heylen committed himself to continuing the exploitation of the center cinemas and invest in their modernization. Second, it was required that the two poles (i.e. Heylen and Bert/Claeys) had to

⁷²⁰ SaS, “Programma- en locatieonderzoek bioscoopcomplex.” Preliminary report. June 4, 1991, 10. For details regarding Stad aan de Stroom see J. van de Broeck, P. Vermeulen, S. Oosterlynck and Y. Albeda, *Antwerpen. Herwonnen stad? 1940 – 2012* (Brugge: die Keure, 2015), 81-83.

⁷²¹ SaS, “Report Onderzoek Metropolis,” April 16, 1991, 5 [my transl.]

⁷²² Ibid. 9 [my transl.]

⁷²³ See Collins, Hand, and Ryder for an economic study of the influence of travel time on cinemagoing and the particular choice between multiplex and nonmultiplexes (A. Collins, C. Hand and A. Ryder, "The Lure of the Multiplex? The Interplay of Time, Distance, and Cinema Attendance," *Environment and Planning A* 37 (2005): 483-501).

be equivalent. To ensure this, the center cinemas had to remain in one hand to offer sufficient counterweight to the suburban cinema complex. Third, Antwerp's cultural sector had to guarantee that the coming of Metropolis would not result in an impoverishment of the film supply. Fourth, a statement had to be made acknowledging that the disappearance of the cinemas in the city center would lead to a further erosion of the city.⁷²⁴

The general interest of the city in a new cinema complex figures prominently in the reports, but only under the condition that the continuance of the inner-city cinemas could be safeguarded. The latter was also in the interest of proprietors of the restaurants and shops in the Station Quarter, who feared (just as Eric Kloeck, exhibitor of the less commercial cinemas Monty and Cartoon's) that the closure of the cinemas would worsen the degradation of the area.⁷²⁵ What was most astonishing, however, was that according to the results from a survey conducted by the local newspaper, the target group of the whole enterprise, Antwerp citizens and the cinemagoers themselves, could not care less.⁷²⁶ Apart from a low response, more than 80% of the respondents found that a new cinema complex was not desirable.⁷²⁷

The different parties in the city council remained split until the end in their opinions about the issue. Members of the city council belonging to the Christian People's Party (CVP) and the green party Agalev (i.e. abbreviation for "Anders Gaan Leven" meaning "to live differently"), for example, argued against the coming of Metropolis, because it would threaten the cinema business as well as cultural and economic life in the Station Quarter.⁷²⁸ Antwerp's mayor Bob Cools remarked that it "would be a shame if a cinema as the Rex would disappear. For such a symbol should remain in existence, if only for historical reasons."⁷²⁹ PR manager of the Bert/Claeys group, Christian Nolens, resolutely rejected such arguments, by emphasizing that instead of trying to steal cinemagoers from the center cinemas, the group aimed at revitalizing moviegoing in Belgium by getting new segments of the population back to the cinemas, people which would only most rarely or not at all go to cinemas. The new cinema complex Metropolis was presented by the cinema group "as a kind of

⁷²⁴ SaS, "Report Onderzoek Metropolis," 9 [my transl.]

⁷²⁵ See, for example, s.n., "Gevraagd: uw mening over Antwerpen Cinemastad," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, April 9, 1992, 29; G.Fr., "Brengt Metropolis eindgeneriek voor Antwerpse Statiekwartier? Gemeenteraad van Antwerpen," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, January 27, 1993, 33.

⁷²⁶ S.n., "Gevraagd," 29. The survey consisted of two questions, one about the general desirability of a new cinema complex in Antwerp, the second about the preferred location (Antwerp South, Antwerp North, Linkeroever). Respondents had the choice to call or write.

⁷²⁷ P.S., "Cinema's toch liefst in de binnenstad. Matige belangstelling voor bioscoop-enquête," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, April 15, 1992, 30.

⁷²⁸ G.Fr., "Brengt Metropolis eindgeneriek voor Antwerpse Statiekwartier?". See also Lefelon, "Antwerps stadsbestuur legt beslag," 25.

⁷²⁹ Cools in K.T., "Antwerpse cinema is nog niet dood," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, June 29, 1993, 23. What is striking is that Cools expressed his worries only two months before Heylen's bankruptcy. He must have known about the millions of debts Heylen had with the city.

universal 'Authentic Antwaarps Cinema,' but then the biggest and the best".⁷³⁰ In order to make Metropolis "of Antwerp," the cinema group conducted research on Antwerp living and buying habits in Antwerp and planned to adjust the atmosphere of the cinema (with cozy niches) to the desires of Antwerp citizens to combine a visit to the movies with a sociable night out.⁷³¹

Moreover, cinema attendance in Antwerp had been declining dramatically for twenty years. As a matter of fact, according to Nolens, 6% of the audience in the multiplex Kinopolis Brussels would come from Antwerp city anyway.⁷³² Similarly to his argument, the poor situation of the cinema sector in the Station Quarter was also brought forward as an argument by the member of the Socialist Party (SP) and city councilor for city planning John Mangelschots, who asserted that the question depended also on the way in which the inner city cinemas were exploited. Mangelschots also criticized the fact that although several ideas had been put forward, except for Metropolis, no other plans had been substantiated yet with details or building applications.⁷³³

In their research dating from 1997 of the changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape, the social urban geographers Ilse Laureyssen and Myriam Jansen-Verbeke retrospectively confirmed the need for a strong involvement of the local authorities in the solution of the conflict. Based on a study of the causes and effects of the shifts in the location of cinema businesses in Antwerp (after the coming of Metropolis), they cautioned that the situation in the Station Quarter would escalate even further if it would all be left over to the spontaneous tempers of market forces. Rather, a slowing down of the decline and the eventual revitalization of the inner city had to be based on elaborate policy making and well-thought out plans.⁷³⁴ They listed as the three most important criteria for Kinopolis' choice of location access, low estate price, and available space. Relevant for the admission of the building permit, however, was the benefit of Metropolis for the project Punt-aan-de-Lijn (Point at the Line), the most northern depot for Antwerp's public transport (called De Lijn, i.e. The Line). The project was targeted at the complementary use of the mutual parking garage by commuter traffic during the day, while Metropolis was to provide streams of travelers in the evenings.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁰ Quote Metropolis NV cited in Mijlemans, "De echt Antwaarpse cinema," 2.

⁷³¹ Delveaux, "Metropolis," 2; Mijlemans, "De echt Antwaarpse cinema," 2.

⁷³² Nolens quoted in P. Renard, "Het is allemaal film," *Knack* (January 27, 1993): 22.

⁷³³ See, for example, G.Fr., "Brengt Metropolis eindgeneriek voor Antwerpse Statiekwartier?". Next to Heylen's idea of a Rex cinema complex in the Station Quarter, two more parties had submitted plans in the beginning of 1993 for the construction of new cinema complexes in Antwerp's historical center as well as Antwerp South (postal code 2000) (DM 26 February 1993: s.p.). One of the plans referred to the so-called Lombardia-project, i.e. plans for the construction of four new cinemas at the heart of Antwerp's historical center. These plans brought forward by the contracting business for construction companies Antwerpse Bouwwerken Verbeeck. The second plan was expressed by director and distributor Jan Verheyen. However, neither of these projects was realized. Regarding Verheyen's plans see also Kloeck's critical reaction in, for example, Renard, "Het is allemaal film," 25.

⁷³⁴ Laureyssen and Jansen-Verbeke, "De recente verschuiving," 46.

⁷³⁵ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

The decision for or against the construction of a multiplex in the suburbs of Antwerp was the first and also the last great battle of two giants in Antwerp's cinema sector during the whole period of the Rex cinema group's existence: between the Bert/Claeys group (which had seventy-one screens in Belgium by 1990) and Antwerp's last cinema tycoon, Heylen (28 screens in 1990).⁷³⁶ As often as there were items in the daily press about the Metropolis project as often as there were comments on it by Heylen. His arguments usually centered around two things. On the one hand, he maintained that Antwerp citizens would never go and see a film somewhere outside of the city when they could combine cinemagoing with a good night out downtown. On the other hand, he fervently stuck to his conviction that Metropolis would remain a utopia.⁷³⁷

When the coming of Metropolis in Antwerp's North was as good as certain, Heylen countered NV Metropolis' intentions by publicly announcing his plans for a new Rex complex in the beginning of January 1993. The idea was to transform the building complex which housed the cinemas Rex, Metro, Ambassades and Odeon at the corner of De Keyserlei and Anneessenstraat into one multiplex. The multiplex was to have fifteen screens offering at least 5,000 seats. The plans included a private parking garage, as well as business and living space.⁷³⁸ Heylen's competitor Kloeck, who had taken over the Calypso theaters before, expressed his doubts about Heylen's plans:

If Heylen so badly wants one big complex, why did he want the BTW-theatres back, when I rented them? And why did he close another six of his cinemas within one and a half years, if he will have to temporarily close his remaining cinemas soon for reconstruction works? No, Heylen cannot stand his own failure and wants to show that he is still in the race. I'm expecting the silent death of the Rex-concern.⁷³⁹

At the same time Kloeck pointed to the degenerate condition of the Station Quarter as one of the main causes of the worsening cinema business there. Neither did he believe in what was repeatedly brought forward by Heylen as one of the Station Quarter's best assets compared to the future location of Metropolis outside of down town: the cinemas' close integration in the city's mass public transport system. According to Kloeck, the public transport was in a state too lamentable to be truly reliable.⁷⁴⁰ Given his critique it is rather surprising that, within two months' time, Kloeck took over Heylen's cinemas Brabo, Tijn, Wapper (also called the BTW), located in the Century Centre, across

⁷³⁶ Belgische Beroepskamer der Cinematografie, "Liste des exploitants de salles de cinéma 35mm de Belgique," Report, Brussels, 1990, 1, 2f, 4. More details on this battle have been published in a corresponding article: Lotze, "Bringing Metropolis to Antwerp".

⁷³⁷ See, for example, P.S., "Cinema's toch liefst in de binnenstad"; D. Mertens, "'Metropolis' mag op de Luchtbal," *Het Nieuwsblad*, May 2, 1992, s.p.; s.n., "Rex tegen Metropolis?" *Het Nieuwsblad*, January 15, 1992, s.p.

⁷³⁸ G. Delveaux, "Rex bouwt filmcomplex," *De Nieuwe Gazet*, January 5, 1993, 1, 13; S. Denicelle, "Avant Projet D'Immeuble De Keiser Lei Antwerpen," Unpublished construction plan by Sylvia Denicelle Architecte DPLG, Nice, April 13, 1992, s.p. A brochure including details about multiplex is contained in the Archive of insolvency records of the Rex cinema group. The brochure dates from April 1992 and was provided by architect Sylvia Denicelle in Nice, France.

⁷³⁹ Kloeck quoted in Renard, "Het is allemaal film," 23 [my transl.]

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

Antwerp's central train station.⁷⁴¹ The takeover of the BTW-complex by Kloeck was the first time ever in the existence of the Rex cinema group, that someone would take over one of Heylen's cinemas.⁷⁴² In April 1993 Rubens at Carnotstraat (at the rim of the Station Quarter) closed. In the same month the Bert/Claeys group gained permission to start the construction of Metropolis.

Heylen's accusation of Metropolis NV to have breached their contract (see at the beginning of this paragraph) fits neatly in the line of counter actions Heylen took in order to prevent, or at least delay, the arrival of Metropolis in Antwerp. In January 1994, more than four months after he had filed his claim and thus after he had been declared bankrupt, the Commercial Court found Heylen's claim preposterous and unfounded, and considered it as being "nothing more than a last desperate attempt to cash in on a doomed company."⁷⁴³ Heylen never succeeded in demonstrating the details on which the sum was based in the first place. Eventually, at the end of 1994, even the Rex cinema group's trustee admitted in a letter to Heylen's former secretary general Zeguers, that "it is impossible to establish evidence for such a huge damage given the loss-generating situation of the Rex group [at the moment of the summons]."⁷⁴⁴ Apart from this, there were also more problems with Heylen's claim. A couple of formal judicial objections aside, one of the major arguments against Heylen was that the contract had become void by law after a new competition law had just been introduced in April 1993, forbidding such agreements between competitors. In addition, as it was argued by Metropolis' lawyer, Metropolis only opened one and a half months after the Rex group had been declared bankrupt and therefore the Rex group could not have suffered losses in the first place. Also, NV Metropolis was in fact the wrong entity to accuse a breach of contract of, since it was the Claeys family with which the agreement was made and not the shareholders of NV Metropolis.⁷⁴⁵

Eventually it was decided to settle the dispute in an amicable agreement, in which NV Metropolis was to pay BEF 1,500,000 (USD 45,000). On the side of NV Metropolis this decision was based on the consideration that a lawsuit would do no good to the image of the young company and the financial burdens and energy invested in it would stand in the way of setting up their new business in a timely manner. On Heylen's side, as indicated above, the lawyers did not expect too much of a success and found that the offered amount was more they could have actually hoped

⁷⁴¹P.V.d.P., "Drie 'nieuwe' filmzalen in Century Center vandaag open," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, March 19, 1993, 33.

⁷⁴² Apparently, the takeover was not completely voluntarily. In a newspaper interview for the local newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen* in January 1993, Kloeck explained that he had signed a rental contract for the three cinemas from March 1993 onwards. Heylen denied this, claiming that the takeover was far from official. Rather he had terminated the contract with the landlord in October 1992, "in order to put a bit of pressure on him", because of unacceptable rental conditions. Both, Kloeck as well as the landlord, confirmed that the contracts had been signed, however (A. van Wallendael, "Century-zalen weggekaapt door Calypso-baas," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, January 29, 1993, s.p.).

⁷⁴³ NV Metropolis' lawyer Wachstock in the conclusion for the Commercial Court (F. Wachstock, "Conclusie," *Rechtbank van Koophandel te Antwerpen*, January 14, 1994, 10 [my transl.]).

⁷⁴⁴ Van Passel, letter to Zeguers, Antwerp December 6, 1994 [my transl.].

⁷⁴⁵ Wachstock, "Conclusie,".

for.⁷⁴⁶ The sum was split and Heylen received 50% on his personal account; curator van Passel received 25% each for NV Excelsior and NV Filimpex.⁷⁴⁷ The fact that Heylen received such an amount of money while some of the creditors still had not been compensated for outstanding invoices and/or unpaid wages, hit the front page of the local newspaper.⁷⁴⁸

Ironically, the year 1993, which became a top year for the Belgian cinema industry, also brought about Heylen's ultimate downfall.⁷⁴⁹ On 3 September 1993 the curtain finally fell for Heylen and his cinema group. For him, the Station Quarter had been the place where it all began and where it all ended. His flagship cinema Rex located at the heart of the Station Quarter, was there from the beginning to the end. After his bankruptcy nearly all of the cinemas in the Station Quarter closed, the only remaining ones being Kloeck's Calypso and the BTW-studios.

3.3.6. Aftermath

As indicated above, the city council, as one of Heylen's biggest creditors, had always been split about the question whether or not to collect the debts (and have Heylen go bankrupt). They realized that with the closing down of a still quite remarkable number of cinemas, the quarter's gastronomy and cultural scene would suffer dramatic loss. The prime motivation of their thorough and in-depth investigation of the consequences of the construction of a new cinema complex in Antwerp was always to ensure the continuation of the inner-city cinemas. In 1985 Heylen was quoted in the financial economic magazine *Trends* saying: "If I would switch out the lights in my cinemas, Antwerp dies. I live on the food industry, the food industry lives on me."⁷⁵⁰ His prognoses as well as the concerns of the city council about the quality of cultural life in the Station Quarter turned out to be justified. According to Laureyssen and Jansen-Verbeke's analysis, before 1993 the Station Quarter was a multifunctional cultural and nightlife quarter in which the high concentration of cinemas

⁷⁴⁶ Van Passel, letter to Zeguers.

⁷⁴⁷ See the correspondence between representatives of the different parties: Jan Lenaerts defending in this case the interests of Marc van Passel and Georges Heylen, Jan Theunis and Francine Wachsstock in the interests of the Claeys family and NV Metropolis. J. Theunis, "Conclusie." Rechtbank van Koophandel te Antwerpen, A.R. nr. 09925/93, December 1993, 4, 11; Wachsstock, "Conclusie," 3; J. Theunis, letter to Lenaerts, April 12, 1994, 1; Rechtbank van Koophandel te Antwerpen. "Vonnis in de zaak van: Faillissement N.V. Excelsior Films en faillissement N.V. Filmipex." A.R. 10999-10006/93. Antwerpen, January 5, 1995; J. Lenaerts, letter to M. van Passel, Antwerp, January 10, 1995; M. van Passel, letter to J. Lenaerts and J. Theunis, Antwerp, January 11, 1995; M. van Passel, letter to G. van den Borne, Antwerp, September 11, 1996, 5,7. For public opinion on this see, for example, K.T., "Rex-wijnkelder helemaal uitverkocht," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, December 12, 1994, 30; G. Delveaux, "Filmbaron wil zijn deel. Heylen pikt graantje mee uit het failliet," *De Nieuwe Gazet*, December 20, 1994, 1. The two sums of BEF 375,000 were transferred to the bank accounts of NV Excelsior and NV Filimpex, respectively, on 1 March 1995. By then they had long been declared bankrupt.

⁷⁴⁸ Delveaux, "Filmbaron wil zijn deel".

⁷⁴⁹ E.A.O., *The Film Industry in Belgium*, 22.

⁷⁵⁰ Heylen in Crols, "De Grote Draak," 49.

played a vital role. After Heylen's bankruptcy, however, the process of cultural and economic erosion of the quarter deepened even further. Especially gastronomy suffered from the massive closure of cinemas in the Station Quarter. In interviews conducted by Laureyssen and Jansen-Verbeke with restaurant owners and catering managers a loss in sales of up to 70% was reported.⁷⁵¹ Other restaurant owners with businesses located at De Keyserlei who were interviewed for the national newspaper *De Standaard* spoke of between 30% and 40% loss. The owner of the once renowned tavern Fouquets explained, for example:

Every time a film ended, about four or five hundred people poured out onto the street. On average this brought us about 120 customers an evening. For about 400 francs per customer. Just figure out what that meant in a month's time.⁷⁵²

In addition, the bygone cinemas left ugly architectural scars in the Station Quarter making this area look even more abandoned and a no-go area for inhabitants and visitors alike than ever before. Or as Kloeck put it: "Antwerp's Station Quarter has become a cinema graveyard which is in the process of being annexed by the Bronx."⁷⁵³

Laureyssen and Jansen-Verbeke's survey amongst two hundred visitors of Metropolis in 1995-1996 showed that approximately half of them traveled more than twenty kilometers, mostly coming from Antwerp province or even from the Netherlands. In other words, the results confirmed Nolan's arguments before the coming of Metropolis, as they implied that it were not necessarily inner city folks that were attracted by Metropolis, but predominantly people from outside (the distance between Metropolis and the Station Quarter is about four kilometers). When being asked about the advantages of watching a film in Metropolis as opposed to the Station Quarter, nearly half of the respondents praised easy access, a quarter appreciated the possibility of on-site parking.⁷⁵⁴ The film offer scored relatively low (7%). In contrast, three major advantages of the inner city cinemas were the opportunities of having a good night out (e.g. by combining cinema and restaurant), proximity, and public transport.⁷⁵⁵ On the one hand, the outcome of the survey showed that Heylen had highly underestimated the power of Metropolis in attracting visitors from far beyond the multiplex' location. On the other hand, it also confirmed what he had repeatedly been

⁷⁵¹ Laureyssen and Jansen-Verbeke, "De recente verschuiving," 49.

⁷⁵² M.-A. Wilssens, "Legendarische De Keyserlei in stervensnood," *De Standaard*, February 7, 1994, 15.

⁷⁵³ Kloeck quoted in P. Mijlemans, "Biotoop stadsbioscoop bedreigd," *De Morgen*, October 14, 1993, 2. For similar claims expressed in the press of the worsened state of the area since the bankruptcy, see, for example, G. Delveaux, "Heropening van de Rex-cinema's best mogelijk," *De Nieuwe Gazet*, September 28, 1993, 5.

⁷⁵⁴ Collins et al. came to a similar conclusion in their study for the impact of travel time on cinemagoing. Their results suggested that multiplex visitors were willing to travel longer distances if easy parking was guaranteed (Collins et al., "Lure of the multiplex?", 496).

⁷⁵⁵ Laureyssen and Jansen-Verbeke, "De recente verschuiving," 48.

emphasizing: that Antwerp residents go for the relaxing coziness of the Station Quarter, where they can enjoy an after-movie beer in one of the countless bars or cafés at or near De Keyserlei.⁷⁵⁶

Although the report by the real estate agent Immobiliën Hugo Ceusters NV (responsible for the sale of the building complex at Anneessensstraat/De Keyserlei which housed the last Rex cinemas) only documents roughly the first year of the activities related to the sale of the Rex complex, it does clearly expose the difficulties of the whole enterprise, such as urban planning restrictions concerning parking space and architectural changes of the inner city buildings. While initially, city councilor for urban planning Mangelschots displayed quite some reservations about the preservation of the inner city cinemas in times of Heylen's reign, he was now highly positive about, and even encouraged, the plans of a new multiplex in the Station Quarter and eased some of the restrictions.⁷⁵⁷ In the beginning of 1995 a group of investors made a bid under sealed envelope of BEF 335,200,000 (USD 10,056,000) for the building complex.⁷⁵⁸ Besides a multiplex the reconstructed building was to accommodate a parking garage and ample shopping and gastronomic space. Among those interested in the exploitation of the cinema complex were two international cinema chains (MGM and Gaumont) which both had figured in Antwerp's cinema history at this very spot before. The fact that MGM's bid was even mentioned in the renowned American trade journal *The Hollywood Reporter* shows that what was going on in Antwerp sparked the interest of local, national and international key players of the film industry alike.⁷⁵⁹ Eventually Gaumont was the one which got through.⁷⁶⁰ The demolition work of the building complex started in the last months of 1995, about the time that Heylen passed away.⁷⁶¹ In 1997, Gaumont opened a seventeen-screen multiplex with a total of 3650 seats.⁷⁶²

The return of cinema (complexes) to the city centers, encouraged by local authorities and urban planners, was also discussed by the British film scholar Stuart Hanson as one way to improve the vitality and viability of city centers in Britain.⁷⁶³ In a similar manner, an additional number of measurements taken by Antwerp authorities were to tackle the problems of the Station Quarter. Laureysen and Jansen-Verbeke, for example, pointed out an initiative taken by the European Union, called Urban, in order to invest and improve the situation in the Station Quarter. Together with the city council and the Flemish government, the European Union was to invest BEF 300 million (USD 9

⁷⁵⁶ See Heylen quoted in Delveaux, "Rex bouwt filmcomplex," 13.

⁷⁵⁷ Immobiliën Hugo Ceusters, "Rapportering Rex Dossier," Report, November 1994: 3, 11.

⁷⁵⁸ See Kredietbank, letter to M. van Passel, Antwerp, May 23, 1995.

⁷⁵⁹ Maes, M., "MGM to bid on Antwerp multi," *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 7, 1994.

⁷⁶⁰ S.n., "Rex center wordt opkikker van formaat," *Antwerpse Post*, August 16, 1995, 1, 22.

⁷⁶¹ S.n., "Rex in puin," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, October 27, 1995, 1; F.H., "De kogel is door het dak," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, October 27, 1995, 19.

⁷⁶² Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België, *Jaarboek van de Belgische film* (Brussels, 1996/97), 63. The multiplex is now exploited by the French theater, distribution and production chain Union Générale Cinématographique (UGC).

⁷⁶³ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 153-155.

million) to revitalize the area in terms of economy, education, infrastructure, and networking. The plans for the building of a new cinema complex in 1997 at the spot where Rex and Metro had once been fitted in this plan.⁷⁶⁴ Concrete measurements, such as the increased presence of police, the combatting of organized crime, the installation of video cameras, in combination with a restructuring and revitalization of the area made that in 2003, the header of a chapter on Antwerp's Station Quarter in *Antwerpen twintig wijken, twintig werelden* (i.e. "Antwerp twenty neighborhoods, twenty worlds") wagered that by approximately 2008 the area would again be among Antwerp's top five cultural and nightlife quarters.⁷⁶⁵ Meanwhile, a large scale reconstruction and redesign of the De Keyserlei has started to return to it the grandeur of the past.

3.4. Concluding remarks on chapter 3

Antwerp has always been one of the country's leading cities when it comes to moving pictures.⁷⁶⁶ The abundance of cinemas in the inner city as well as in peripheral neighborhoods and districts was remarkable. As a microcosm of the city of Antwerp itself, the Station Quarter was a paradise for film fans, with more than a dozen cinemas of all shapes and sizes within a radius of five hundred meter. This area was also the base of Georges Heylen, one of the country's most successful and influential cinema tycoons. After he reopened the prestigious cinema Rex in 1947 at the heart of the Station Quarter, he gradually expanded his cinema empire until – only two decades later - he had acquired a monopoly position in this quarter. Although a number of new players entered Antwerp's market in the 1970s introducing new concepts (e.g. multi-screen, the screening of less commercial material), Heylen remained the most powerful player on the market. He was the last of the former giants in Antwerp's cinema past who had survived the massive closure of competing neighborhood and center cinemas. In contrast to Ghent the dying of cinemas set in comparatively late in Antwerp. This might be explained by Heylen's successful entrepreneurship, but also by other factors bound to Antwerp's locality. On the one hand, as a seaport city it commanded of a high number of potential cinemagoers (workers and seamen from home and abroad). On the other hand, Antwerp's Station Quarter had an

⁷⁶⁴ Laureyssen and Jansen-Verbeke, "De recente verschuiving," 49.

⁷⁶⁵ *Gazet van Antwerpen*, *Antwerpen*, 229. One concrete example was the so-called "Cell Station Quarter" in 2001, a special unit of the Federal Police which was to deal with thefts, aggressive begging and selling of illegal goods, at and around De Keyserlei (*Gazet van Antwerpen*, *Antwerpen*, 235; Gemeenteraad Antwerpen, *Gemeentebld* (12) 2002: 2056-2058; s.n., "Antwerpse politie wil bedelaars uit straatbeeld," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, August 23, 2001, s.p.).

⁷⁶⁶ Next to film exhibition and distribution, which is central to this thesis, Antwerp was also the cradle for many film productions: a large number of film stars and film makers were born in Antwerp and/or lived and/or worked there.

excellent reputation as cultural hotspot, with the best restaurants, shops and bars in Antwerp and far beyond.

Heylen's perseverance with which he had built his empire and turned it into a success, remained his trademark even in a hopeless battle against an ever-decreasing cinema attendance. Until the end he kept a stiff upper lip and boasted about plans to renew and restructure his empire. Despite discussions of Heylen's ill-management in the media (see details Chapter 4), it is therefore not completely surprising that the declaration of his bankruptcy on 3 September 1993 was quite shocking to outsiders as well as insiders. The coming of alternative film-screening venues in the historical center, in Antwerp's south and adjacent neighborhoods and districts north-east of the Station Quarter, in combination with Heylen's bankruptcy and the opening of Metropolis in 1993 fundamentally shifted the power balances within Antwerp's cinema market. Although the Station Quarter remained an area where cinemas would continue to be present, it had lost its film glamour and its defining role for making Antwerp a true cinema city.

The disappearance of neighborhood cinemas that was propelled in Antwerp from the 1960s onwards is not a unique phenomenon, neither in national, nor international context. Waves of suburbanization along with the pauperization of inner-city neighborhoods also occurred elsewhere in the post-war period. Unlike in the US, cinemas in Europe did not immediately follow the population to the outskirts.⁷⁶⁷ As travel distances to the city cinemas increased for those parts of the population and alternative recreational activities (including the domestication of popular entertainment with the coming of television) could be found nearer to their new homes, cinema lost its wide appeal as a social habit that was embedded in the contexts of daily life. Cinemas in the lively city centers that had traditionally been of a larger appeal to a broader spectrum of casual cinemagoers had better chances to survive than neighborhood cinemas, because of their central location in areas that were easily accessible by public transport and that boasted with places for a good night out. The importance of socio-economic dynamics for cinemagoing is most visible in the case of Antwerp: the Station Quarter, which had been the city's cultural hotspot since the late 1900s and which had been home to more than a dozen cinemas, had been degrading since the 1980s and made cinemas located there unviable.

Similarly, with regard to the changes in the exhibition sector from single-screen to multi-screen venues, the case of Antwerp is comparable with other national and international cases, yet only to some degree.⁷⁶⁸ While the converting of single-screen to multi-screen venues started in

⁷⁶⁷ For the UK, see for example, Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 95.

⁷⁶⁸ See, for example, G. Edgerton, "The Multiplex. The Modern American Motion Picture Theater as Message," in *Exhibition. The Film Reader*, ed. I. Rae Hark (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 155, and Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-Screen*, 121 for the US and the UK, respectively; for Belgium see E.A.O., *The Film Industry in Belgium*, 25. For the case of Ghent specifically see van de Vijver, "Gent Kinemastad," 103-105.

Antwerp in the about the same period as in other cities in Belgium, it did so with a relatively slow pace. Despite Antwerp's reputation as a *Kinemastad*, the first multiplex arrived in Antwerp only twelve years after Ghent. The struggles concerning the arrival of Metropolis that have been brought to light in this chapter show the complexity of studying local cinema markets, as it not only involves careful consideration of the individual players in and outside the cinema industry, but also the power (im)balances amongst the key players within the sector.

Thus, on a theoretical and methodological level, the analysis in this chapter has made a number of things clear. The approach of cinema history from the perspective of social urban geography, for example allowed to lay bare the cultural-economic dynamics of a given place. Without attention for the urban historical context (e.g. the suburbanization from the 1950s onwards, increased wealth and mobility leading to changes in recreational patterns), the changes in the geospatial distribution of cinemas could not be sufficiently explained. In addition, the Station Quarter is illustrative of the strong interdependence of cinema and (social) urban history. The changes that this quarter underwent from being Antwerp's cultural hotspot to the city's trash bin also influenced cinemagoing in this area, and vice versa. If cinemagoing is to become an integrative part of a social night out or regular recreational activity, a broader cultural and or recreational framework should be provided, including restaurants and/or shops. The ongoing dilapidation of the Station Quarter in the 1980s and 1990s certainly was not beneficial for the quarter's cinema life.

In order to map Antwerp's cinema landscape between 1945 and 1995 all types of sources were used, material as well as immaterial evidence, written as well as oral accounts, primary as well as secondary sources. The combination of all the different sources and the cross-referencing of the data, allowed it to tackle the challenges caused by inconsistencies and gaps in, as well as by ill-sampling of, the data sets. In addition, since every type of sources has its advantages as well as disadvantages, by combining the different kinds of sources at least some of the disadvantages would be flattened out. The usefulness for multi-method approaches to cinema history becomes even more clear when the findings of this chapter are linked to the ones that follow. What I have indicated peripherally in this chapter and what will become even more clearer in the next two chapters, for example, is that the disappearance of cinemas was not only caused by location and architecture, but also by the dynamics within the local cinema market, manifested in concrete actions by the individual players.

“Georges Heylen is a kind of commercial genius and he is also a true film buff.”⁷⁶⁹

4. Exhibition structures. Antwerp's cinema market and the position of the Rex cinema group

In the previous chapter the major key figures were introduced that played a role in Antwerp's cinema market between 1945 and 1995. It became clear that, concerning the number of cinemas, Heylen remained the most important figure within Antwerp's cinema landscape for nearly the whole period under investigation. Furthermore, I showed that Heylen was most active in the Station Quarter as well as in the neighborhood Stuivenberg/Amandus-Atheneum and the district of Borgerhout. Particularly his cinemas in the Station Quarter were thoroughly embedded in a rich cultural infrastructure, located amongst restaurants and shops, and nearby diverse forms of public mass transport. Cinemas in the adjacent neighborhoods and districts, on the other hand, were tied to the rhythms of work and leisure of the local population.

The following chapter proposes a set of explanations for both Heylen's growth in the 1950s as well as his downfall in the 1990s. The chapter consists of six main paragraphs. The first introduces the methods applied and sources and data used. Subsequently, the structure of the cinema group and the changes in the course of its existence are examined from a business-historical approach. Paragraphs 4.3 through 4.6 deal with the position of the Rex cinema group within the local market and how this changed over time. At the end of this chapter conclusions are drawn pertaining to specific results of the investigation as well as – on a more general level – to the chapter's methodological and theoretical relevance for studying local cinema markets.

4.1. Methods, sources, data

For the most part, the business-historical investigation of Antwerp's cinema landscape and, more particularly, that of the Rex cinema group, draws on empirical evidence collected for, and included in, the inventory database introduced in Paragraph 3.1. Hence most of the methodological issues connected to the collection, processing and analysis of the data have already been addressed in this connection. Therefore, in the following subparagraph I will focus on particular questions related to

⁷⁶⁹ Quote by Belgium's acclaimed life-long film critic and pioneer of the Catholic Film Action van Liempt (Van Liempt, “Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (II),” 158).

historical evidence concerning ownership and/or management (of the cinemas). In the second subparagraph I will address a number of economic underpinnings of the reconstructions that follow.

4.1.1. Gathering business-historical evidence

To begin with, the integral company archive of the Rex cinema group does not exist anymore.⁷⁷⁰ The integral archive of insolvency records of the Rex cinema group, however, had been secured in 2008 from the company's former official receiver Marc van Passel, and is now kept by the Visual and Digital Cultures Research Center (ViDi) at the University of Antwerp. For the most part, this comprehensive collection (consisting of about fifty archive boxes) contains legal correspondence between creditors and debtors. It contains comparatively few documents about the formation and accounting of the individual corporations from the fifty years preceding the bankruptcy.

In addition, as explained in Chapter 3, data about the cinemas included in the inventory database also consisted of names of persons and organizations involved in the operation of particular film screening venues. However, sources proved to be inconsistent in many ways. First, yearbooks – as the main source of empirical evidence for the inventory database – did not consistently mention names of exhibitors. Often, no names were included at all, or names for some cinemas were listed while for others they were not. A second problem was that no distinction was made in these sources between manager (or director) of a cinema and its owner, although this distinction is relevant. The owner owns the building (the property) and he/she is usually not responsible for the cinema's management – let alone the film programming – unless he/she is also the manager of the cinema. Management, then, more than ownership shapes the performance of the cinema on the local market.

A third problem, which rather haunts the cinema business in general, has to do with the strong presence of so-called double functions. One person could be involved in the operation of several cinemas and possibly even to different degrees (e.g. as owner, shareholder, main exhibitor, or programmer). The other way around, one cinema can be linked to several persons.⁷⁷¹ This was taken into account in the database by including several instances for persons involved in the exploitation of a particular cinema, including their functions. However, in the case of the Rex cinema

⁷⁷⁰ As the curator of the bankruptcy, Marc van Passel, asserted, (parts of) the company archive were actually for bankruptcy proceedings, but they were destroyed after the statutory period. It is not clear what exactly the archive contained and what was destroyed.

⁷⁷¹ In this respect, Dibbets wrote a pioneering historical study of the cinema market and cinema chains in the Netherlands between 1922 and 1977, using graph theory in combination with (then) state of the art computer technology (Dibbets, "Bioscoopketens"). For his study the data he gathered were largely derived from the inventories of the Nederlandse Bioscoopbond (NBB, Netherlands Cinema Alliance), which systematically kept record of all its members. In the Netherlands, this membership was obliged in order to operate a cinema.

group the issue of double functions turned out to be even more complex. As indicated in the general introduction of this thesis, in strictly legal sense, the Rex cinema group, which was more commonly known as the Rex concern, was a consortium consisting of a large number of corporations operating independently of each other (for details see Paragraph 4.2). What is important here, is the impact of the Rex' nature on the processes of data collection, processing, and analysis. It is still difficult to say for sure exactly how many corporations were actually part of the Rex cinema group. The major problem is the lack of systematic documentation, a lack that has to do with two issues. First, as mentioned earlier, only a fraction of the former business archive has been kept by private collectors and is now available and accessible. Second, in the case of Heylen, the lack of systematic evidence also results from the fact that there never was any: tracing back cinemas to Heylen turned out especially hard because some of the cinemas were registered on the name of relatives and/or acquaintances and contracts and takeovers often happened via straw men.

Hence, in addition, a great variety of archival material consulted for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” stems from Antwerp's heritage library, *Erfgoedbibliotheek Hendrik Conscience* (EHC) and (to a lesser extent) from Antwerp's city archive, the *Felixarchieff* (FA). The latter was consulted particularly for documentation of decision making by local authorities about matters related to film exhibition in Antwerp and agglomeration. The material included mostly cinema-related articles and announcements in the local and national press as well as items in the Flemish trade journal *Weekblad Cinema*. Furthermore, a considerable amount of historical evidence, including individual business documents, photographs and other archival material and rare collectors' items, was found in private collections. These collections belong to former employees of the Rex cinema group (Paul Corluy, Frans Druyts), historical key figures from the film business in general (Joz van Liempt, Michel Apers, Frank van der Kinderen) and private collectors (Serge Bosschaerts; an overview of all consulted collections is included in the bibliography). Evidence is thus scattered across various archives and collections – the existence of which is only partly known – which again caused major inconsistencies. An additional problem in this respect was that the fragmentary nature of most collections did not allow for systematic sampling and exhaustive analysis.

Next to the evidence found in written sources such as year books, newspaper advertisements, legal correspondence, and secondary literature, oral testimonies of former employees as well as of former competitors and other players on the cinema market proved highly valuable. This was mainly due to the lack of an integral company archive and the fragmentary nature of the available historical evidence, but also because many contracts and transactions in the cinema business were undocumented because they were carried out by handshakes. Expert interviews with former key figures in Antwerp's cinema market helped to provide clues about the existence,

(approximate) addresses and economic profile (with regard to ownership and/or management) of individual cinemas. The information gathered from these expert interviews was cross-referenced and checked in listings of archival records (e.g. year books, legal correspondence) to safeguard the validity of the information. Where such control was not possible the information was either excluded from the historical account or its source was made transparent. In addition, the value of these oral testimonies is not only that they complement, confirm, or contradict written testimonies, but that they also breathe life into history. Yiannis Gabriel pointed to the use of stories as “elements of organizational culture,” as “manifestations of shared belief systems” and “unconscious processes,” but also as “expressions of domination and opposition,” “revealing the clash of different interests”.⁷⁷² As I will demonstrate in the course of Paragraph 4.2., all these considerations were of particular relevance for investigating a “company” that can best be characterized as a jumble of shadow corporations and transactions.

4.1.2. Economic underpinnings: the structure of cinema markets

As this chapter is to explore the changes of the Rex cinema group mainly from a business-historical perspective, a number of assumptions underlying the following assertions need to be clarified. The first relates to the cinema market as being shaped by competition; the second concerns the products sold on this market: films and the cinema-going experience.

According to marketing theorist Philip Kotler, any one industry can be described at least by one of five distinct types of industry structure: pure monopoly, pure oligopoly, differentiated oligopoly, pure competition, and monopolistic competition (see Table 3 below).

Table 3: Five industry structure types based on Kotler.⁷⁷³

	One Seller	Few Sellers	Many Sellers
Undifferentiated Product	Pure monopoly	Pure oligopoly	Pure competitive
Differentiated Product		Differentiated oligopoly	Monopolistic competitive

Consequently, two elements are constitutive for the description of the local industry structure: the number of competitors (sellers) and the degree of product differentiation. Regarding the former, the identification of a company's competitors can be quite challenging, not least because it depends on

⁷⁷² Gabriel, “The Use of Stories,” 138.

⁷⁷³ P. Kotler, *Marketing Management. Analysis, planning, implementation, and control*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall International, 1988), 237.

the level on which competition occurs. For the local exhibition industry, it would be conceivable, for instance, to include other cultural or recreational competitors, such as theatre, sports or television.⁷⁷⁴ Given the scope of this thesis, here, by cinema market I mean the local exhibition market which aims to sell as specific products the film and the film-viewing experience.

Product differentiation, then, can occur in two ways: in relation to the film as well as to the film-viewing experience as the context of exhibition. Quite a number of industrial approaches to film history emphasized the quality of film as a differentiated product. Justin Wyatt, for example, states that “[p]roduct differentiation can be implemented through two different routes: in terms of *variety* and *quality*”.⁷⁷⁵ On a side note Wyatt does refer to factors related to exhibition, including “geographic location, convenience, theater maintenance, staff courtesy and service, and projection/sound quality”.⁷⁷⁶ However, by emphasizing too much the text-immanent features of the films as products to be sold by theaters, scholars as Wyatt underestimate the total package of the viewing experience which also contributes to the success of exhibition business. After all, it is the film viewing experience that distinguishes (the function of) cinema from (that of) television or a video store. Economists Darlene Chisholm and George Norman suggest three ways in which cinemas offer a product with multiple characteristics: their specific location (i.e. close to public transport facilities, in a business district etc.), the number of different films shown, and the number of screenings.⁷⁷⁷ More points can be added, amongst which the number of screens per cinema (indicating the increase in potential choice for customers), the degree of comfort as well as technological innovation.

When considering the cinema market as a competitive market for a highly differentiated product (the film and/or the experience of cinemagoing) three of the five industry types mentioned identified by Kotler apply. In the case of *pure monopoly* only one exhibitor would have control over the local market. Unless in case of state cinema (e.g. in the former Eastern bloc states) the powerful position of the pure monopolist exhibitor allows him/her to dictate prices irrespective of the service offered at his/her cinemas (e.g. in terms of technological quality, atmosphere). Secondly, *differentiated oligopoly* in a cinema market of the size of Antwerp in the heydays of cinema in the 1950s would mean that two or three exhibitors dominate the local cinema business. In order to

⁷⁷⁴ This line of thought is based on Kotler's idea that an industry can be defined “as a group of firms that offer a product or class of products that are close substitutes of each other. [...] Economists define ‘close substitutes’ as products with a high cross-elasticity of demand. Thus, if the price of one product rises and causes the demand for another product to rise, the two products are close substitutes.” (Ibid., 235) We could then think of television, for example, as offering substitutes for the films offered at cinemas.

⁷⁷⁵ J. Wyatt, *High Concept. Movies and Marketing in Hollywood*, 5th ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 99 [emphasis in original]. See also, for example, Sedgwick, “Product Differentiation”; V. Hediger and P. Vonderau, eds., *Demnächst in Ihrem Kino. Grundlagen der Filmwerbung und Filmvermarktung*, 2nd ed. (Marburg: Schüren, 2009), 399.

⁷⁷⁶ Hediger and Vonderau, *Demnächst*, 399.

⁷⁷⁷ D.C. Chisholm, M. S. McMillan and G. Norman, “Product Differentiation and Film Programming Choice: Do First-run Movie Theatres Show the Same Films?” Unpublished work, 2007, 3.

compete, they can differentiate their products in terms of technological standard, atmosphere, film programming etc. and may even seek leadership in one or more of these attributes and hence attract consumers favoring this/these attribute/s. Thirdly, a *monopolistic competitive* market would mean that many exhibitors are active on the local market. Differentiation of their products can be sought completely, or partially. In the latter case this could mean, for instance, that some cinemas show the same films, but distinguish themselves by offering more comfort, higher technological standard etc. Although, as Kotler emphasizes, any given industry can be described by one of the models “at a particular point in time, the competitive structure can change over time”.⁷⁷⁸ In this chapter I will show that this was also the case with the Rex cinema group.

In order to determine an industry structure, Kotler distinguished between several features, of which five can be considered to be relevant for local cinema markets. The first is the *number of sellers* in combination with the degree of *product differentiation*. In the case of “Antwerpen Kinemastad”, one would need to determine the number of exhibitors and the way in which the cinema-going and/or film-viewing experience differed in each of the corresponding cinemas. The second feature is *entry and mobility barriers* to keep newcomers from entering the market. Third, *exit and shrinkage barriers* to keep companies from closing down (e.g. legal or moral obligations towards customers, creditors, and/or employees) are actually tried to be lowered by those companies that want to remain in the market. The fourth determinant are *cost structures*, assumed that it is the cost mix that drives much of a company's strategic conduct. For exhibitors the cost mix would include, for instance, making choices between, for example, investments in new technological equipment, seating comfort, or publicity for films. The fifth determinant of an industry structure is the degree of *vertical integration*. While in the US vertical integration of production, distribution, and exhibition was banned with the Paramount decree after 1948, it was practiced in Europe (at least partially), as I will show for the case of Heylen.⁷⁷⁹

Rather than providing an exhaustive business analysis of the Rex cinema group and the local cinema market, the concepts and ideas introduced above help to better understand the overall changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape and the role of Heylen and his cinema group.

⁷⁷⁸ Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 237.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 333, 338. See also Dibbets, “Bioscoopketens”; Pafort-Overduin et al., “Moving films”.

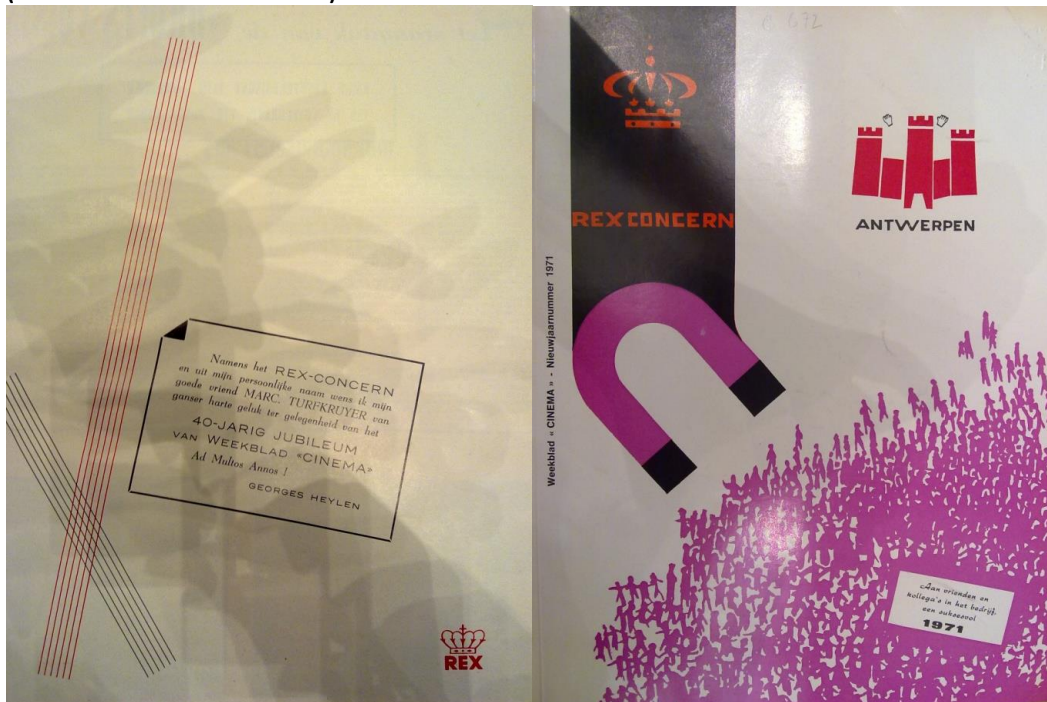
4.2. The Rex cinema group as an impenetrable jumble of companies

In what follows I examine the structure of the Rex cinema group in an attempt to disentangle what became an impenetrable jumble of companies. In the following paragraph I will briefly reflect on the group's label the “Rex-concern”. In the second paragraph I seek to break down the cinema group into its constituents.

4.2.1. The “Rex-concern”

In the vernacular, the Rex cinema group was most often referred to as the “Rex concern”.⁷⁸⁰ For a while, the term was even used by the group itself. Official announcements in the Flemish trade journal *Weekblad Cinema* on the occasion of a number of anniversaries, for example, repeatedly appeared on behalf of the “Rex-concern” (see, for example, Image 3 below).

Image 3: *Left:* Heylen's congratulations on the fortieth anniversary of the Flemish trade journal *Weekblad Cinema* on behalf of the “Rex-concern” to the journal's long-time chief editor and friend Marc Turfkruyer (source: *Weekblad Cinema* 1961). *Right:* Heylen's New Year's wishes for 1971 to the readers of *Weekblad Cinema* on behalf of the Rex-concern (Source: *Weekblad Cinema* 1971).



⁷⁸⁰ See, for example, Wildiers, *De Kinema veroverd*, 14; Van Liempt, “Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (I)”, 74; in addition to the multiple articles in local newspapers that were published during and around Heylen’s bankruptcy. The term “Rex-concern” was also consistently used by the group's receiver after the bankruptcy, Marc van Passel. See for example the final report concerning the bankruptcy of NV Rexciné: M. van Passel, “Eindverslag inzake faillissement N.V. Rexciné – Faill.nr. 13.840 – Ontwerp 14.08.03,” August 2002, as well as the many other sources in the archive of insolvency records of the Rex cinema group.

First of all, the designation “concern” underlines the economic notion of cinema as business, something which has often been neglected by film and cinema historians.⁷⁸¹ After all, cinemas were operated by companies, mostly companies with limited liability (in Dutch: *naamloze vennootschap* or NV). Some of the companies exploited one cinema, others a few. In addition, the Rex cinema group also consisted of a number of NVs which did not exploit any cinema at all, but served for other business actions, such as film distribution, deals in real estate, or the administration of staff (I will return to this in more detail in the next paragraph).

Nevertheless, strictly speaking, Heylen's organization was not a concern. Heylen himself also acknowledged this in an interview in 1970, ironically around the same time that his New Year's congratulations in *Weekblad Cinema* were published on behalf of the “Rex-concern”. In the 1970 interview he emphasized that “[w]hat they tend to call the Rex-concern, for instance, is nothing more than a name for a centralization of all these interests, an acquisition center. It concerns different separate corporations which are overarched by the Rex-concern. The Rex-concern itself does not constitute its own legal form. It consists of different interest groups which found it necessary to unite and of which we facilitate the coordination. Nothing more and nothing less.”⁷⁸² Similarly, in a comprehensive analysis of the key figures in Belgium's cinema business dating from 1974, film critic Hilde van Gaelen concluded that “[l]egally speaking, the Rex concern does not exist. In addition, Georges D. Heylen is never mentioned in annual economic reports of the company, of which he is the center. Neither did his name ever appear in the *Belgische Staatsblad* [Belgium's official journal where all laws, decrees, and the formation of organizations or companies are announced, K.L.].”⁷⁸³ Heylen's former secretary general Jean Zeguers – who had been working for Heylen from 1967 until 1993 – equally emphasized that, strictly speaking, the Rex-concern was not a concern, but a consortium.⁷⁸⁴ Based on a verdict by Antwerp's Labor Court in 1991, the different companies could not be considered a “technical business unit”, which a concern is.⁷⁸⁵ In this thesis I chose to use the name “group” as a more neutral term, mostly because discussions of the specific differences between various business types would reach far beyond the scope of this thesis and exceed my expertise.

⁷⁸¹ See Thissen, “Filmgeschiedenis tussen cultuur en economie,” p. 4.

⁷⁸² Heylen quoted in J.-P. Wauters and L. Mees, “Filmuitbating. Interview met de heer Heylen, uitbater (Antwerpen),” *Film en televisie* 154 (1970), 6. This quote was frequently referred to by renowned Flemish film critics. See, for example, van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 5; Van Liempt, “Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (II),” 158.

⁷⁸³ Van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 1.

⁷⁸⁴ J. Zeguers, personal interview with K. Lotze and P. Meers, Antwerp, July 4, 2008. Basically, the main difference between concern and consortium lies in the question of hierarchy between the individual companies and persons involved. While a concern is usually constituted of a parent company and subsidiaries – the latter being controlled by the former – a consortium is constituted of a number of companies (or persons) which operate rather independently from one another.

⁷⁸⁵ Arbeidsrechtbank Antwerpen, “Vonnis in zake het Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond. C. Copers v. 20 Rex NVs, gevestigd te 2018 Antwerpen, De Keyserlei 15,” Arbeidsrechtbank Antwerpen, 207.832/736-739, June 12, 1991.

The verdict by Antwerp's Labour Court is worth a closer look here, since it illuminates the strong ties between the different corporations (and hence the cinemas). In the interest of affiliated members who were working for one of Heylen's corporations, the *Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond* (General Federation of Belgian Labor, henceforth ABVV) filed a law suit against Heylen, and more particularly, against twenty of his corporations generally known as the "Rex-concern" or "the group Heylen".⁷⁸⁶ By this the ABVV hoped to achieve that the concern's legal status was to be acknowledged as one business unit, which would in the end help to improve the employees' working conditions (more details follow below). In its demand, the ABVV formulated a considerable number of arguments, according to which the different corporations within the Rex cinema group would in fact meet the requirements to be defined as "a technical business unit".⁷⁸⁷ Generally, the ABVV's demand was declared admissible yet unfounded, mainly because some of the arguments proved to be partly incorrect (e.g. some of the companies had their legal seats at different addresses) and partly because they constituted no legal reasons for considering the group of companies a technical business unit.⁷⁸⁸

There are several reasons for why Heylen would not officially unite all companies under one roof. One has to do with employment law and the possibility to establish a body representing the interests of the company's employees (a works council).⁷⁸⁹ As can be concluded from the ABVV's motivation for filing the law suit in 1991 in the first place, they hoped for a favorable decision of the court in order to organize social elections, meaning the election of representatives for such bodies. Other reasons mentioned were tax reduction, lower expenditure on wages or the use of straw companies for secret takeovers. Furthermore, it was also quite common, that along with a cinema the corresponding company was also taken over and kept under the same name. This was the case, for example, with NV Rex-Ciné, NV Astra, NV Festa, as well as with NV Kursaal (Kursaal/Savoy), NV Pathé (Pathé/Sinjoor) which Heylen would acquire in the course of the 1960s.⁷⁹⁰ Finally, Heylen also

⁷⁸⁶ Arbeidsrechtbank Antwerpen, "Vonnis," 3.

⁷⁸⁷ These arguments included, for example, that the companies were sufficiently known as "Rex-concern" or the "group Heylen"; they had a mutual headquarter (at De Keyserlei 15 in Antwerp) and the seats of related venues were located within a radius of one kilometer; they were involved in the same or similar activities (related to film exhibition); they partly had common shareholders; the book keeping of all companies was done at one address; the daily management of the companies was in the hands of one person (Eduard De Meester); there was one standard operation procedure for all companies; employees were arbitrarily exchanged between the companies; one staff card granted access to all companies and cinemas (Arbeidsrechtbank Antwerpen, "Vonnis," 3-5).

⁷⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-8.

⁷⁸⁹ According to Belgian law an employer is obliged to establish a Works Council if the number of employees of a technical business unit exceeds 100, or a Committee for Prevention and Protection in the Workplace (CPBW) for companies with more than 50 employees. Representatives of both bodies are able to negotiate with the management about the workers' rights (e.g. salary, hygiene, safety, social security, discrimination).

⁷⁹⁰ See A. Michielsens, "Proces verbaal verkoop Cinéma Astrid en Cinéma Savoy," Antwerp, February 2, 1992.

kept a number of dormant (inactive) companies which were used for channeling money (mostly debts) from one company to another.⁷⁹¹

Exactly how many companies belonged to the Rex cinema group throughout its existence is difficult to say. A quote from the secretary of the ABVV, Urbain Tempelaere, is quite illustrative of the intricate entanglement the Rex group represented. Tempelaere had been negotiating in the interest of the Rex-employees for years, yet when he was asked about the outcomes of the unions' (plural!) research into the structure of the Rex cinema group he answered:

Nothing, we don't have a clue. The book keeper is 79 years old and the right hand of the owner baron Heylen, he himself is 81, is a retired mechanic and hardly knows how many subsidiaries the Rex has in Antwerp. [...] I have seen a lot of things, but this tops it all. None of the employees knows, for example, for which of the 41 companies he or she works. There is even someone who is registered at two companies simultaneously. It all could be a scenario of a second-rate comedy, if the case wouldn't be so bloody serious.⁷⁹²

As Heylen's long-time employee Corluy witnessed, takeovers were kept a secret: "No one was supposed to know when another cinema was added. Eventually, of course, everyone knew."⁷⁹³

Although the lack and unsystematic availability of sources makes it quite problematic to provide the exact amount of all corporations that belonged to the Rex cinema group at any given moment throughout the group's existence, a number of documents now kept in private archives do provide insights into (part of) the group's structure at very specific moments. Acknowledging this rather typical historiographical restriction, in what follows, I will attempt a reconstruction of the structure of the Rex cinema group for a select number of moments. Newspaper articles and background articles in magazines and journals as well as published and unpublished oral testimonies will be used to complement the figures and data provided in the documents from the private collections.

4.2.2. Disentangling the jumble

Generally speaking, it can be said for sure, that the Rex cinema group consisted of at least a dozen of different companies. In newspaper articles published around the time of the bankruptcy, figures

⁷⁹¹ According to Theunis, legal representative of Heylen's opponents Metropolis and Claeys, NV Excelsior and NV Filimpex had no assets since at least 1990. See Theunis, "Conclusie," 11.

⁷⁹² Tempelaere quoted in P. Verbruggen, "Doek valt over filmimperium," *Het Volk*, August 28, 1993, s.p. [my transl.]

⁷⁹³ Quote Corluy, personal interview, 22 July 2008. As the person in charge of logistics (Corluy had to pick up the films at the distributors in Brussels and return them) for him the only way to know the number of cinemas belonging to the Rex cinema group at a particular point in time was by counting the names of cinemas he had to supply.

varied from twenty to over forty companies.⁷⁹⁴ Most of the companies were *naamloze vennootschappen* (companies with limited liability). An inventory of all companies listed in all examined documents from the different archives resulted in a list of twenty-five companies (Table 4.1 in Appendix I).

In the 1950s, the Rex cinema group was quite clearly structured. It consisted of a manageable number of different companies which were not yet as entangled as decades later. A legal report written in 1959/60 by auditor Marcel Gogne provides some insights into the structure at that particular moment.⁷⁹⁵ The audit was done on the occasion of a legal complaint of Heylen's brother in law, Georges van Reybroeck, son of the deceased Jules van Reybroeck. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Heylen became involved in the NV Rexciné via his family in law. On the one hand – as I will show below – the report confirms the strong involvement of Heylen and the van Reybroecks in several cinemas in Antwerp. On the other hand, it also lays bare the tensions between both parties and sheds some light on Heylen's way of doing business. By the time the claim was filed and the report was written, Heylen was already in the process of getting divorced from his wife Maria van Reybroeck, daughter of Jules van Reybroeck.⁷⁹⁶

In the report, some of the shareholders were grouped as families and/or groups, of which the most prominent one the van Reybroeck family; Georges and his father Joz Heylen; the de Wolf family; and a fourth that was indicated in the report as the Swiss group (see Table 4.2 in Appendix I). The van Reybroecks were represented in four corporations by different entities and members of the family. In the case of NV Rexciné, for instance, the group was represented by the heirs of the deceased Jules van Reybroeck, i.e. his widow Marguerite de Paep, his daughters Maria and Victoire, and his son Georges (for the relationships between family members see Figure 5 below). Van Reybroeck's son in law Herman van Hove had additional shares in NV Rexciné. With regard to other NVs, the van Reybroeck family was only represented by some of these family members. The van Reybroecks were part of the board of directors of the four corporations, of which they were shareholders. Yet as a consequence of Georges van Reybroeck's complaint in 1959, an extraordinary

⁷⁹⁴ See, for example, P. Lefelon, "Witte doek valt in tien Rex-zalen," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, Aug 26, 1993, 1; S. De Foer, "Personeel cinemagroep Rex dient stakingsaanzegging in," *De Standaard*, August 28, 1993, 11. It is very likely that this number is just rather a mix-up of digits, since the number of NVs at the time of the article had in fact been 24. Other newspapers do mention 24. See, for example, D.G.E., "Rex-concern in nood, overname nabij?" *De Nieuwe Gazet*, August 24, 1993, 1; De Foer, S., "Baron Heylen: 'Rex gaat door'," *De Standaard*, August 25, 1993, 17; Belga, "Bioscoopketen Heylen wankelt in Antwerpen," *De Morgen*, August 26, 1993: s.p. On the other hand, ABVV secretary Tempelaere spoke of 41. Tempelaere quoted in Verbruggen, "Doek valt," s.p.

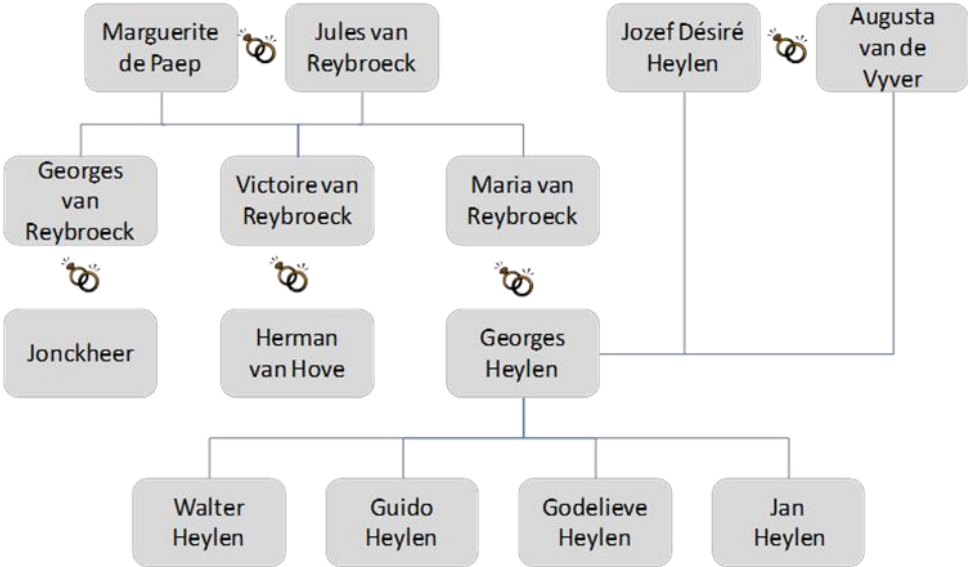
⁷⁹⁵ The original report is part of the private collection of Serge Bosschaerts.

⁷⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Maria van Reybroeck and Georges Heylen were only officially divorced in 1975. See Letter from Heylen's lawyer Dirk Grootjans to the Rex' trustee Marc van Passel: D. Grootjans, letter to M. van Passel, Antwerp, November 8, 1993. For more personal background see the interview with Heylen's daughter in Heirman, "'Vader was God voor mij,'" 30-31.

general meeting was summoned amongst the shareholders of NV Rexciné, NV Odeon, NV Antwerp-Ciné, and NV Astra. At this meeting the van Reybroeck's were unseated as non-executive directors.

Different from Herman van Hove, Jules van Reybroeck' other son in law of, Georges Heylen was not included in this first group, probably given the nature of the legal complaint. Vice versa, his (almost ex-)wife was not subsumed under the Heylen family either. Accordingly, in the report, the *Heylen family* consisted of Georges Heylen and his father Jozef. Judging from the report, Georges Heylen did not have a great number of shares in the companies in the 1950s. Nevertheless, he was appointed general director of all of the companies and therefore occupied the most powerful position. In addition, his father Jozef almost completely owned NV Cine Roma.⁷⁹⁷ He passed away in August 1952, only one year after the corporation was founded, which made either his wife and/or Georges Heylen as their only son the heir of these shares and hence of practically all of NV Cine Roma. Nothing is mentioned in the report that (some of) the shares were sold to other parties.

Figure 5: Part of the family tree of Georges Heylen and Maria van Reybroeck.⁷⁹⁸



A third family documented by Gogne was the de Wolf family, consisting of Florent, Jozef, Jan de Wolf from Merksem and Jan de Wolf from Leuven, as well as Jozef Sansen. Apart from these three families, a fourth group became involved as shareholder several years after the companies' founding. In the report it was referred to as the "Swiss group" and consisted of three members from

⁷⁹⁷ Jozef Heylen had acquired 394 shares worth BEF 500 each of NV Roma, corresponding to BEF 197,000 in total (worth approximately 4,000 USD at that time): Gogne, "Deskundig verslag," 161.

⁷⁹⁸ The scheme is based on Gogne, "Deskundig verslag" and Goris, "Historiek," as well as various archival documents, such as the death notice of Jules van Reybroeck and legal correspondence from the archive of the Rex' insolvency records. Heylen's second wife France Cafiero and their son Alexandre are not included.

Switzerland.⁷⁹⁹ Together they possessed quite large shares of several of Heylen's corporations. Finally, a number of individuals were shareholders. The professional backgrounds of these individual shareholders varied from accountants and dentists to secretaries and unemployed persons.

Basically, the complaint was about an accusation by Georges van Reybroeck directed at Georges Heylen of having committed fraud. The complaints, however, were manifold and at times “formulated rather abstruse”.⁸⁰⁰ They related to Heylen's involvement in seven corporations, despite the fact that the van Reybroecks as the accusers were only involved in four. The different complaints can be summarized in four major groups of presumed felonies: withholding money actually belonging to the corporations; irregularities in the takeovers of cinemas and in the buying and selling of cars; the paying out of fictive salaries or salaries of private staff at the companies' expense; as well as excessive purchase of goods (i.e. carbon arcs and razors).⁸⁰¹ Auditor Gogne did detect some irregularities in the companies' book keeping, wrongful possession of companies' money, and, last but definitely not least, a debt of BEF 3.2 million (ca. USD 100,000) that Heylen owed the companies.⁸⁰² However, they were judged by Gogne as trifles compared to the “good” Heylen had achieved for the company. After all, Gogne argued, under Heylen, the company results had steadily and significantly improved. In addition, upon Heylen's initiative six corporations had been founded in six successive years and the shares of almost all corporations had increased significantly in value (details follow in Paragraph 4.3.1).⁸⁰³

In summary, Gogne's report suggests that by 1959, Heylen was the director of at least seven companies of limited liability operating thirteen cinemas in the Station Quarter, Stuivenberg and Berchem. These findings match those presented in Chapter 3 (cinemas connected to Heylen), which were based on the records in yearbooks and a few supplementary sources. However, Table 3.3 in Appendix I also includes four cinemas which belonged to Heylen but were not mentioned in Gogne's report. Two explanations are conceivable for this discrepancy. The first possibility is that the cinema in question was exploited by a company also belonging to Heylen, but against which no charges were filed and it was therefore not included in the report.⁸⁰⁴ A second possible explanation for the

⁷⁹⁹ Unfortunately, no details are provided in the report about the motivation for involving foreign investors in Heylen's cinema business. Also, I found neither their names, nor those of their corporations, in the database (meaning that it was not possible to relate them to other cinemas in Antwerp).

⁸⁰⁰ Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 20.

⁸⁰¹ Carbon arcs lamps were the standard light sources in most film projectors from ca. 1900 until the 1960s. Concerning the excessive purchase of razors, a total of sixteen razors had been purchased via four different corporations, all in January/February 1957. Most likely they were purchased for promotional ends (as part of a promotional stunt) or as gifts for clients and/or business partners.

⁸⁰² Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 249-252.

⁸⁰³ See Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 236-240.

⁸⁰⁴ This might have been the case with the cinemas Savoy in the Station Quarter and National in Stuivenberg. Savoy (formerly known as Kursaal) was exploited by NV Kursaal, which was identified as belonging to Heylen's Rex group. With regard to cinema National, most likely this cinema was exploited by NV National Cinema, for the cinema and company not only had the same name, but also the same mailing address. In March 1957 NV Odeon sold a car to NV National Cinema

discrepancy would be that cinema and NVs did not belong to Heylen yet.⁸⁰⁵ Figure 6 below schematizes the structure of (part of) Heylen's Rex cinema group in 1959 based on Gogne's report. Apart from the seven, Heylen was involved in at least two other corporations against which no charges were filed. Both, NV Rubenspaleis and NV Cifia, were acquired almost completely by Heylen via NV Cine Roma in 1959.⁸⁰⁶

Figure 6: Corporations of which Heylen was director in 1959 (based on Gogne’s report)



Although Heylen did not have the biggest share in any of the seven companies, and in some cases he was not even shareholder, with the exception of NV Rexciné he was appointed director of them all immediately after the corporation had been founded.⁸⁰⁷ This means that, although the van Reybroecks had a great deal of shares, Heylen – in his position of director – had all the authority. It is

(Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 85). According to life-long employee of Heylen, Paul Corluy, National was not owned but only programmed by Heylen since at least 1951 (Corluy, personal interview, August 6, 2008).

⁸⁰⁵ This was the case with Quellin in the Station Quarter, which was exploited by NV Anbima and added to Heylen's consortium only in 1961. This also explains that instead of Heylen NV Anbima was listed in the yearbook as exploiter of Quellin.

⁸⁰⁶ Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 168.

⁸⁰⁷ Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 69, 101, 137, 164, 191, 214.

difficult to say, whether the van Reybroecks kept some of the cinemas after the separation of Georges Heylen and Maria van Reybroeck. As a matter of fact, the names of the van Reybroecks were never mentioned in any of the year books throughout the period under investigation here. As also became clear in the interviews with former employees, even if there was room for consultations and suggestions, Heylen always had the final word.⁸⁰⁸ Written sources also confirm that up until 1993 the daily management of at least a dozen companies was in Heylen's hands.⁸⁰⁹

According to Zeguers, in the 1970s, each of Heylen's larger pictures palaces had about four projectionists on payroll, nine to eleven usherettes, four overseers, four cashiers, one porter, three cleaning women. In addition, the Rex cinema group employed its own *calicot* artists, draftsmen, technicians, electricians, etc., which suggests that, during the cinema group's heydays, it employed several hundred people.⁸¹⁰ Last but not least, Heylen's family was also on the companies' payrolls. There was a clear allocation of tasks and a certain hierarchy within the staff of the Rex cinema group. Quite some of his most important staff members had been serving Heylen for up to four decades.⁸¹¹

While in the 1950s, most of the shareholders were persons, in the course of time, individual Rex companies would become shareholders of other Rex companies up to the point where some companies were mutually shareholders of each other. An overview of all shareholders of the bankrupt Rex companies by the cinema group's receiver van Passel illustrates the obscure complexity of Heylen's enterprise.⁸¹² The list includes eighteen companies, all of which had been declared bankrupt in 1993/94. Based on van Passel's list, a schematic overview has been constructed depicting the (directions of) the shares (Figure 4.1 in Appendix I). Only four of the eighteen companies did not have shares in other Rex-companies: NV Artwe, NV Cifia, NV Cinekust, NV Festa. According to Zeguers, there was no mother company, but the NV Rexciné was considered the "central company".⁸¹³ This is confirmed by van Passel's overview: Although NV Rexciné was not the biggest company of the Rex cinema group in the sense that it had not the highest number of shares in total, it was the one with the most shares in other companies. It had more than 90% of the shares in six and shares in four more of the eighteen companies listed by van Passel.⁸¹⁴

⁸⁰⁸ Zeguers, personal interview; Magiels, personal interview; Corluy, personal interview with K. Lotze and P. Meers, Antwerp, June 25, 2008; Magiels quoted in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 17.

⁸⁰⁹ Van Passel, letter to Fonds tot vergoeding," 2.

⁸¹⁰ Zeguers in Magiels, "Een kijkje achter de schermen," 71-72.

⁸¹¹ Detailed information about individual employees is omitted here for reasons of privacy.

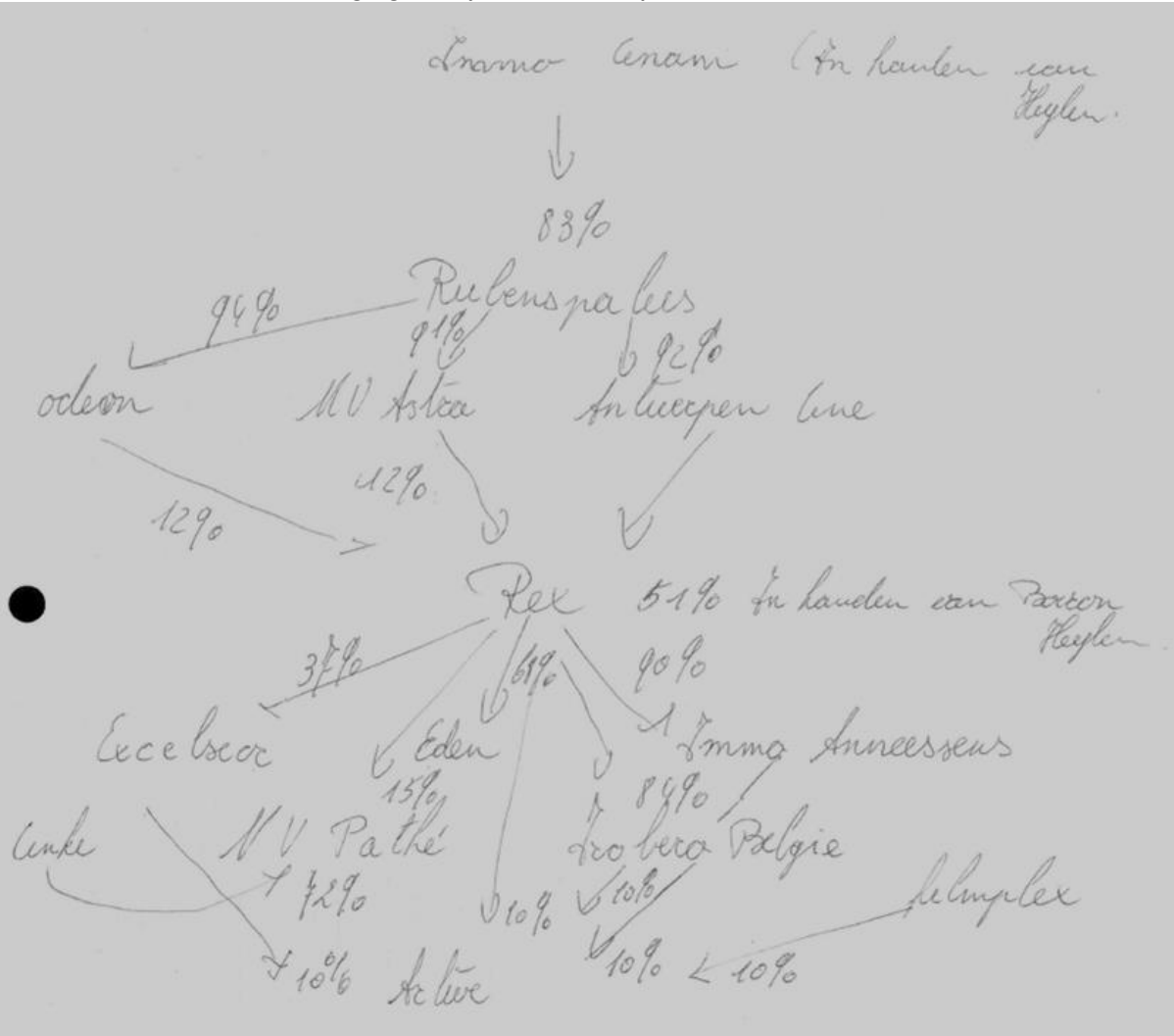
⁸¹² The list is based on the tax declarations for the particular companies.

⁸¹³ Zeguers, personal interview.

⁸¹⁴ Amongst the companies of which NV Rexciné had more than 90% of the shares were NV Frobera België and NV Filimpex, the two biggest companies of the Rex cinema group in terms of shares (S.n., "Onderling aandelenbezit," s.d.). In 1990/91 the number of companies of which NV Rexciné had shares in had also been ten, but they were different for a part: Eden, MOB, van Bree and Poppe, and Berchemse Kinemautbating instead of Filimpex, Immo Cinam, Rubenspaleis, Cenki (S.n., "Jaarrekening Rexciné 1990/91," Antwerp, April 10, 1992).

According to Frans Druyts, who had been working for Heylen as a technician since the mid-1970s and who had become an expert in labor rights and directly involved in negotiations on behalf of employers of the Rex group, a couple of the companies were dormant and were predominantly used for the booking of debts.⁸¹⁵ For his negotiations with the Labor Federation and for proving the entanglement of the cinema group, Druyts schematized the structure of the Rex empire and lay bare the connections between the particular companies (see Image 4 below). The map was drawn by Druyts in the final stage of the Rex and greatly matches the shares as worked out by van Passel.

Image 4: Map of the structure of the Rex cinema group, including names of the companies and shares in per cent. Arrows indicate direction of the shareholding; figures represent shares in per cent.



On 3 September 1993 most of the companies of the Rex cinema group were declared bankrupt, another one followed a fortnight later and three more in March 1994 (for details see Table

⁸¹⁵ F. Druyts, personal interview with K. Lotze, Antwerp, December 20, 2012. In the 2010s, Druyts, in his seventies, was giving courses on labor rights.

4 below). Of all eighteen companies assigned to trustee van Passel, NV Immo Anneessens was the only one that was not declared bankrupt, predominantly because it owned most of the properties (cinema buildings) of the cinema group which could be sold. Some NVs were paid out with the wins of others. On the whole, however, the money from the sales of movable and immovable property was not sufficient to compensate all of the creditors for their losses. Rather they were divided in groups according to priorities with which they would receive debts. Some parties were not paid their debts at all.

Table 4: Overview of bankruptcies of seventeen Rex companies in 1993/94.⁸¹⁶

<i>Company</i>	<i>Date declaration bankruptcy</i>
BVBA Anbima	3 September 1993
NV Antwerp Cine	3 September 1993
NV Artisanale Werkers	3 September 1993
NV Excelsior Films	3 September 1993
NV Filimpex	3 September 1993
NV Frobera	3 September 1993
NV Immo Cinam	3 September 1993
NV Kinema Astra	3 September 1993
NV Kursaal d'Anvers	3 September 1993
NV Odeon	3 September 1993
NV Pathé	3 September 1993
NV Rexciné	3 September 1993
NV Rubenspaleis	3 September 1993
NV Cenki	15 September 1993
NV Cifia	31 March 1994
NV Cinekust	31 March 1994
NV Festa	31 March 1994

Some of the bankruptcy proceedings dragged along for years, due to pending actions.⁸¹⁷ For NV Festa, for example, bankruptcy proceedings had to be reopened after two years (December 1996), because a case still had to be settled between Heylen and an exhibitor from Bruges, reaching back to the 1970s (details follow in Paragraph 4.4.2). Furthermore, a case between archive and news producer Belgavox and the national broadcaster *Belgische Radio- en Televisieomroep Nederlandstalige Uitzendingen* (Belgian Radio and Television Broadcaster for Dutch-language Broadcasts, BRTN) on the one hand and Heylen on the other, about the rights for the so-called *Antwerpse Actualiteitsfilms* (i.e. Antwerp News Journals, AKA's) dragged along for almost a decade. In addition to hitherto undecided claims of parties in pending proceedings, other creditors of the Rex cinema group numerously knocked on van Passel's door. Film distributors (amongst which most

⁸¹⁶ The table is based on the overview produced by van Passel in March 2002 as included in attachment of letter by custodial judge van den Borne (Van den G. Borne, letter to M. van Passel). See FOD Justitie, "Bijlage tot het Belgisch Staatsblad," September 11, 1993, 20089.

⁸¹⁷ See Van Passel, letter to van den Borne. The case *Muyle v. Heylen* was not yet reopened and therefore not mentioned in this letter.

prominently Warner Bros and Independent), local authorities (taxes, levies), suppliers of gas, light, beverages, candy etc. demanded their shares. Last but not least, also Heylen and his heirs demanded likewise. The claims concerned hitherto unpaid salaries for two of his children, for example, but most and foremost they regarded Georges Heylen's revindication of his impressive wine collection.⁸¹⁸

Although the disentanglement of the many different companies of the Rex cinema group was brought forward by van Passel as one of the major reasons for the bankruptcy, as I will show now, the downfall of Heylen's cinema empire also resulted from an accumulation of several other factors and developments, from internal pressures as well as pressures from outside the cinema sector.

4.3. The beginning and heydays of the Rex cinema group (late 1940s – mid 1960s)

From an economic perspective, competition on a certain market is significantly shaped, amongst others, by a number of entry barriers making it difficult for newcomers to enter the market. In the entertainment industry entry barriers relate to capital, know-how, regulations, and price competition (in order of importance).⁸¹⁹ In Chapter 3 I have already mentioned the unsuccessful attempts by associations of Belgian exhibitors in the 1930s up until the 1950s, to enforce regulations for the local market in the form of policies regulating permissions for planning, constructing and opening new 35-mm exhibition venues. As Thunnis van Oort argued in his comprehensive comparison of the industrial organization of film exhibitors and distributors in Belgium and the Netherlands, in Belgium they never succeeded to form a powerful umbrella organization like the Nederlandse Bioscoopbond (NBB, Netherlands Cinema Alliance) to unite and protect the interests of exhibitors and distributors alike. The lack of organizational coherence that resulted from the co-existence of different trade associations had a negative effect on the exhibitors in particular, as they not only struggled against an unbridled expansion of the exhibition sector within the nation, but also against the growing power of the American distributors.⁸²⁰

The uncontrolled growth of the market was eventually stopped by sheer market force. After all, a substantial amount of capital was required to build and open new cinemas.⁸²¹ Investments had to be made not only in the buildings and their interiors (for example, for seats and projection

⁸¹⁸ A part of Heylen's wine collection was successfully auctioned at Sotheby's and Christie's in London (Belga, "Wijn Rex-bioskoop geveild," *De Standaard*, December 3, 1994, 14; K.T., "Rex-wijnkelder," s.p.; PAW, "270.00 fr. voor château Pétrus uit wijnkelder Rex-concern," *Het Nieuwsblad*, December 12, 1994, 2).

⁸¹⁹ Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 14-16. See also Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 238.

⁸²⁰ Van Oort, "Industrial Organization," 484-487.

⁸²¹ This was also one of the main arguments made by Frank McCarthy, the European representative of the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA, acting in the interests of the American major distributors abroad), to not constrain competition on the Belgian market (Van Oort, "Industrial Organization," 489).

equipment) but also in exhibition (for example, for staff, insurances and films rental). While all these investments were necessary, the product's success, however, was highly unpredictable and uncertainty was high whether the investments would ever pay off.⁸²² Therefore, a certain know-how and feeling for the local market was an additional asset. For the local cinema market, the know-how not only concerned audience tastes but also a familiarity of local cinema-going habits (for example, housewives and/or children regularly attending afternoon screenings in neighborhood cinemas, or unmarried couples seeing a film in a center cinema on a night out on weekends). Next to capital and knowhow, the cinemas' position on the local market was also determined by distributional practices regulating the local film supply.

After having dealt in the previous paragraph with the internal structure of the Rex cinema group and how it evolved over time, the following paragraphs investigate the relations between Heylen's group and his competitors and the changing position of the cinema group within Antwerp's cinema market. Most generally, the development of the Rex cinema group can be characterized in four phases: the beginning of the Rex cinema group and its heydays (late 1940s until mid 1960s); struggles to survive in a competitive market (late 1960s until mid 1970s); losing ground (mid 1970s until late 1980s); and its downfall (late 1980s until early 1990s). Special attention will be paid in each subparagraph to three particular aspects – distributional practices, market position, film marketing – as the changes related to them are crucial for explaining the rapid growth of Heylen in the 1950s as much as his downfall in the 1990s.

4.3.1. The beginning of a cinema empire (late 1940s – early 1950s)

When Heylen reopened cinema Rex in 1947, he was not exactly unversed in the business of film exhibition. He had been director of the Rex cinema from 1941 until the catastrophic bombing in December 1944. Yet compared to his long-established competitors, such as the groups Tyck/Gommers/Meerman and Spanoghe/de Paep, he was a relative newcomer. Nevertheless, within a short period of time, he became the biggest exhibitor, at least in terms of number of cinemas in Antwerp. As I have shown in Chapter 3, by 1952 Heylen's cinemas clearly outnumbered that of his competitors. How did Heylen move to the top so quickly?

In the late 1940s, Antwerp's cinema market was a monopolistic competitive market. Most of the exhibitors had one or two cinemas and were competing by selling highly differentiated products:

⁸²² As Vogel quite plastically formulates it: "That the movie industry is complex and that it often operates near the edge of chaos in the midst of uncertainty is almost an inescapable inference for anyone who has been even a casual observer of, or participant in, the process of financing, making, and marketing films." (Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 108).

films and film-viewing experience. Heylen distinguished himself from other exhibitors by being inventive and original. He had the characteristics of the ideal entrepreneur in a Schumpeterian way, an entrepreneur who was “not a profit maximizing machine, but someone who, unlike what is common in standard theory, is not in command of perfect market information and therefore follows his intuition. Someone who obviously tries to make profit and in order to multiply this takes new and innovative initiatives and often wishes to explore market economical no man's land, even though half of the world is declaring him insane.”⁸²³ Innovation was also stressed as a key aspect in the film industry by de Vany, who claimed that “[t]he movies is [sic] full surprises because it is an industry of innovation and discovery.”⁸²⁴

Heylen's innovative attitude was manifested in various ways. He understood that the cinema business was about selling film as much as the film-viewing experience. In the late 1940s, he was Belgium's first exhibitor to furnish a cinema (Rex) with air-conditioned seats. The cinema was designed by the famous architect Rie Haan, who would remain a steady client of Heylen until the 1980s. In addition, he invested in fancy interior and staff, well-behaved and neatly-dressed ushers and porters, to make the cinema-going experience a guaranteed success. In addition, Heylen rather screened smaller film productions in exclusivity, than having to screen bigger productions simultaneously with other (competing) cinemas.⁸²⁵ He also distinguished himself in a Schumpeterian way in the highly competitive market by engaging in a special form of informing the public about the product he offered.⁸²⁶ He invested unusual amounts in the promotion of the films he screened. While, normally, film promotion was part of the distribution process and the distributor paid most of the promotional costs, Heylen deducted an additional budget for promotional campaigns from the rental fees of the distributors.⁸²⁷ He was often said to be the only exhibitor and later – with the exception of major studios – also the only distributor who managed to arrange for national and

⁸²³ Bläsing, *Hoofdlijnen*, 103. Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) was an influential economist and became famous for his groundbreaking work on, amongst others, entrepreneurship and innovation as the motor of economic change.

⁸²⁴ De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 3.

⁸²⁵ Van Liempt, “Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (II),” 158. Most of the (local) distribution offices for the Benelux were situated at the Koningstraat in Brussels. Within the cinema sector, it was a public secret that a beginning exhibitor would hardly get access to the bigger film productions. Stories abound of newcomers being sent from pillar to post in attempts to book films of acceptable quality. See, for example E. Kloeck, personal interview with M. van Ommen, Antwerp, May 8, 2011; Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview. See also the quote by Jos Rastelli in P. Duynslaegher, “De weg naar de Studio,” *Knack* 18, no. 40 (October 5, 1988): 46; Mrs Rastelli (mother of Jos Rastelli) quoted in F. Sartor, “De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop (2) - De pioniersjaren,” *Film en televisie* 302-303 (July-August 1982): 31; exhibitor Rahm quoted in F. Sartor, “De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop (5),” *Film en televisie* 319 (December 1983): 29; a Limburg exhibitor quoted in Sartor, “De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop (5),” 31.

⁸²⁶ See Bläsing's example of Schumpeter entrepreneur Hendrix Fabrieken NV who also distinguished himself in an innovative manner with regard to product information (Bläsing, *Hoofdlijnen*, 106, 110).

⁸²⁷ For promotional tasks of major distributors in the US see, for example, Wasko, *How Hollywood Works* (London e.a.: Sage, 2003), 84; Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 107; for Europe see, for example, V.I. Wasilewski, *Europäische Filmpolitik. Film zwischen Wirtschaft und Kultur* (Konstanz: UVK, 2009), 142.

international stars to be present at the premieres of their films.⁸²⁸ The publicity stunts for the promotion of films – not seldom linked to purposes of charity – became legendary and one of Heylen's trademarks.

By the early 1950s, Heylen's cinema business was flourishing. Five of the seven NVs linked to his group grew considerably during the period that Heylen was their director. In total the value of the seven NVs grew by BEF 27,235,200 (approximately USD 545,000) within a good decade's time (for details, see Figure 4.2 in Appendix I).⁸³⁰ Despite the two loss-generating NVs NV Berchemse Kinema-uitbating and NV Festa (both exploiting two neighborhood cinemas each, of which one cinema was closed each in 1957 and 1958 respectively), their loss was richly compensated by the profits of especially NV Odeon (connected to Odeon) and NV Antwerp-Ciné (connected to center cinema Astrid and neighborhood cinema Dixi), but also NV Roma (connected to the neighborhood cinemas in Borgerhout) and Rex-Ciné (connected to Rex) did very well.

High attendance figures earned Heylen the trust of distributors and, along with it, increasing priorities. Heylen clearly distinguished himself from other sellers by the choice of, and innovative and original publicity for, his films as well as by his vision of what best pleased the local cinema audience.

4.3.2. Heylen becomes the biggest player in Antwerp (early 1950s – mid 1960s)

In the course of 1950s, the Belgian cinema market was becoming saturated due to the uncontrolled growth of newly opened cinemas, paralleled by an ongoing decline in cinema attendance. At the same time, it was the period of Heylen's biggest expansion, which came predominantly at the costs of his competitors. As high cinema attendance can be considered as the major source of income for cinemas in that period, the major cause for the difference between Heylen's success and his competitors' failures must be looked for there. In the previous paragraph I have already pointed out one of Heylen's vital strengths: his inventiveness and originality in promoting his product in combination with his vision as how to treat his customers in order to attract as many spectators as possible.

⁸²⁸ See, for example, Heylen's last PR advisor Magiels, personal interview. According to Kamiel De Meester - Heylen's PR advisor in the 1960s and 1970s – the presence of stars in Antwerp was usually part of a promotional tour arranged for by the distributor (K. De Meester, personal interview with K. Lotze, Antwerp, January 23, 2014).

⁸²⁹ D. Gomery, "Fashioning an Exhibition Empire: Promotion, Publicity, and the Rise of Publix Theaters," in *Moviegoining in America*, edited by G. A. Waller (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), 124-125.

⁸³⁰ In case of the NV Rex-Ciné, Gogne counted eighteen years for the period between Heylen's announcement of director in 1941 and the date that the balance of accounts was determined in 1959 (Gogne, "Deskundig verslag," 240). It should be taken into consideration, however, that the NV lacked its main source of income, cinema Rex during the period that it was closed (between December 1944 and March 1947).

In what follows I will examine in detail three particular, yet inseparable, assets of Heylen. The first regards film distribution, the second market position, and the third film marketing. By way of introduction all three will be discussed in this paragraph in length and will be subsequently addressed proportionate to the degree to which they contributed to the success and failure of Heylen and the Rex cinema group.

Distributional practices

Generally, contracts between distributors and exhibitors were made beforehand; one year in advance was not unusual (i.e. so-called season contracts). The biggest issues to bargain about were rental fees, release dates, programming slots in, and the choice of, particular theaters.⁸³¹ While the distributor – and certainly the bigger distributors – were in a more powerful position, exhibitors were not completely without bargaining power.⁸³² According to film economist Arthur Da Vany, larger cinema circuits “got better clearances, lower rental rates for double bills, credit for promotional expenses against box-office receipts subject to film rental, freedom in a license to substitute another theater for one closed down, permission to charge lower admission prices, and privileges in selecting and eliminating pictures.”⁸³³

Until the 1970s, film distribution was most commonly organized around principles of exclusivity. According to this system, films would screen in a select number of designated cinemas in the centers of the big cities first and later move to cinemas in more peripheral areas. Cinemas were assigned a certain place in a hierarchy of run zones, which were partly geographically motivated, but also depended on distinctive quality features of the theater. The time that passed between screenings in different cinemas (i.e. runs) was called clearance window and was agreed upon beforehand. In general, for distributors the advantages of the run zone clearance system were that they could launch the picture in (metropolitan) areas first with the highest concentration of cinemas – hence generating potentially large admission – for a quick return of investments and exploit them for quite some time in a comparatively high number of theaters, without the need for extra copies. In addition, such exclusive cinemas most commonly charged higher ticket prices. Once a film had been exploited in these center cinemas it would move to the suburbs and more rural areas, where it was shown for less expensive admission prices and quite often in combination with another picture (i.e.

⁸³¹ Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 94-99; De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 162.

⁸³² See as a prominent example the study by Overpeck on theater owners’ successful fight against discriminating practices of Hollywood majors (Overpeck, “Blindsiding”). For distributors’ powerful role in the process see De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 12-13.

⁸³³ De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 160-161.

double bills).⁸³⁴ Next to risk reduction for distributors and producers and the financial advantage for distributors, the distributional system of runs and clearances also lend an aura of distinction to the film and the (exclusive) theaters. As William Paul stated, “[v]irtually every major release was tiered through a series of runs, with each tier effectively inscribing a somewhat different audience. The movie might be the same, albeit a bit older, but seeing it in your small neighborhood movie theater in second-run made of it a different experience from seeing it in one of the big downtown movie palaces.”⁸³⁵

In addition to the division in run zones, there were other practices imposed by distributors to maximize profits and reduce risks. Two of the most known and most controversial ones were block booking and blind bidding. In the case of block booking, the exhibitor rented films in packages for a year in advance, instead of booking them on an individual basis. Usually these package deals included one or two high profile films and a majority of B-productions. Block-booking often entailed practices of blind bidding which forced exhibitors to bid on films without having seen them, during a film's production phase or even before it went into production. It became a dominant practice in 1970s and had several benefits for distributors, but was burdensome for most (independent) exhibitors.⁸³⁶

This high degree of flexibility demanded by distributors and exhibitors of exclusive (center) cinemas was a way to deal with the extreme uncertainty the movie business entailed for the three sectors: production, distribution, and exhibition. De Vany stated that “movie revenue dynamics are so complex that they are nearly chaotic.”⁸³⁷ Based on statistical models using the *Variety* dataset he found that “[l]ong runs do not guarantee success because revenue is highly convex in rank. Many of the longest-lived films in our sample earned a small box-office revenue and some of the top-grossing films had relatively short lives. [...] Durability is unpredictable because each film meets many challenges from existing and new releases during its theatrical run.”⁸³⁸

While the system of exclusivity runs was obviously not that much of a problem in the 1950s, when films would screen in center cinemas mostly one or two weeks and moved on relatively quickly to play in subsequent-run cinemas, this began to change in the 1960s when film production output had significantly decreased as one of the consequence of the Paramount Decree in 1948 and the

⁸³⁴ Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 66-69; Paul, “K-mart audience,” 489; Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 93; Wyatt, *High Concept*, 111; A. J. Scott, “Hollywood and the World: The Geography of Motion-Picture Distribution and Marketing,” ed. 2004, in *The Contemporary Hollywood Reader*, edited by T. Miller (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 167; V. Hediger, “Blitz Exhibitionism’. Der Massenstart von Kinofilmen und die verspätete Revolution der Filmvermarktung,” in *Demnächst in Ihrem Kino. Grundlagen der Filmwerbung und Filmvermarktung*, edited by V. Hediger and P. Vonderau (Marburg: Schüren, 2009), 140-141.

⁸³⁵ W. Paul, “The K-mart Audience at the Mall Movies,” *Film History* 6 (1994): 489.

⁸³⁶ Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 68; S. I. Schiller, “The Relationship Between Motion Picture Distribution and Exhibition. An Analysis of the Effects of Anti-blind-bidding Legislation,” in *Exhibition. The Film Reader*, edited by I. R. Hark, (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 107-122; Overpeck, “Blindsiding,” 185-196.

⁸³⁷ De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 2.

⁸³⁸ *Ibid.*, 26.

ongoing recession in the film industry.⁸³⁹ It was now in the interest of the distributor to have the films exploited at the center cinemas longer (which sold tickets for higher prices).

The three distributional practices addressed above were also common in Belgium. Concerning the system of runs and clearances, which applied here in slightly altered form (see Chapter 5 for more details), it was quite common for practitioners in the field (i.e. film industry) to distinguish between “exclusiviteitszalen” (exclusivity cinemas), “eerste week zalen” or “centrumzalen” (first week or center cinemas), “2e week zalen” (second run cinemas) and “wijkzalen” (neighborhood cinemas).⁸⁴⁰ In addition, according to Flor Bosmans - chairman of Antwerp's division of the VKBB, and exhibitor of Heylen's second run cinema Astra and former owner of Odeon's predecessor Studio 48 – block booking and blind bidding were two of the biggest concerns and grievances of the Belgian cinema sector. According to Bosmans, such practices restricted exhibitors in their freedom to screen what they thought was appropriate and met the taste of local audiences. Bosmans emphasized that “only the important ‘circuits’ [...] with bigger power succeed in to get around it once in a while.”⁸⁴¹

Just how unfavorable these regulations were especially for smaller exhibitors in more peripheral areas, who would sometimes have to wait for a film between half a year up to one year, becomes apparent from the testimony of a small Belgian Limburg exhibitor, who stated that

When Hasselt says that it wants to screen this or that film on that date and when they want to keep it showing for several weeks and the film cannot be shown anywhere else in the province of Limburg, then this is by force of law in the Koningstraat in Brussels, where all distributors are located at. And if the film is eventually cleared by Hasselt, then there is a clearance window of four weeks – which is cleverly called security margin – before the film can be shown by competitors. I call this a scandal! Nevertheless, all distributors play along. Then we small business men come and they impose conditions on us which are as high or even higher than those of the city.⁸⁴²

⁸³⁹ Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 48. For a detailed account of the consequences of the Paramount decree (and similar cases in the US in the 1940s) see De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, Chapter 7, as well as M. Conant, “The Impact of the Paramount Decrees,” in *The American Film Industry*, edited by T. Balio (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 346-370. See the quote by renowned exhibitor of neighborhood cinemas in Antwerp Tony Lambert (who had always remained independent from Heylen) in Sartor, *Film en televisie*, (299) 1982: 27: “Just after the War it was a thousand times easier to build an established customer base. Cinema was the only kind of entertainment. And we as exhibitors of the neighborhood cinemas almost simultaneously screened the latest pictures with the center cinemas, after hardly three weeks a new film would play in the neighborhood cinemas. People wouldn't have to go to the city, because they knew that the film would play at our cinema after a fortnight.”

⁸⁴⁰ See, for example, Wildiers, *De Kinema veroverd*, 27; F. Bosmans, “De Exploitatie,” in *De Film in België*, edited by J. A. Robberechts (Antwerpen: Vlaams Economisch Verbond, 1954), 28; Jan van Mieghem in Sartor, “De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop (5),” 31; Van Liempt, “Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (I),” 71-73; Van Liempt, “Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (II),” 160.

⁸⁴¹ Bosmans, “De Exploitatie,” 28-30 [my transl.]. Other concerns were unjustified levies, the complexity and vast number of special clauses in rental contracts (impossible to know by heart or read every time a contract was signed), film censorship in form of controls and inspections, and the immense amount of money spent in technological innovation.

⁸⁴² Quote by an exhibitor in Limburg cited in Sartor, “De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop (5),” 31 [my trans.]. By Hasselt the exhibitor referred to the Bert/Claeys group who exploited seven screens there around that time.

The Belgian economist Erik Faucompret identified two major ways for exhibitors to circumvent the powerful position of the biggest distributors: horizontal and vertical integration. Whereas horizontal integration means a concentration of cinemas in the hand of a few exhibitors, a vertically integrated film industry usually spans the sectors production, distribution, and/or exhibition.⁸⁴³ With regard to horizontal integration, it can be generally assumed that the bigger an exhibitor, the more powerful is his or her bargaining position. Heylen and his Rex cinema group were proof of that.

Heylen had earned the trust of the major distributors relatively quickly. Films often made more profit at his cinemas than elsewhere. It resulted in a priority position for Heylen for the region of Antwerp, meaning that competitors would only get the film once it had been cleared and/or had dropped below the minimum threshold of earnings. This way Heylen was the first to receive the best films. In addition, the growing number of Rex cinemas resulted in an even more powerful position for him. Heylen's biggest asset was that he not only commanded of a large number of cinemas, but also of a large number of different types of cinemas (exclusive center cinemas, second-run, and neighborhood cinemas). Because of the large number of cinemas and the great variety of types of cinemas he was able to exploit successful films up to a year. In this way, his strategy echoes that of the Big Five Hollywood Majors in the early 1930s, when they used to squeeze "every possible dime from their films in their theatres before permitting an independent theatre to book at all."⁸⁴⁴

Heylen's preferred treatment by distributors not only regarded film choice, but also rental conditions. Because he made more profit on the films than most of his competitors, distributors were eager to have him book their films, if necessary, for more suitable rental conditions (e.g. lower rates, more favorable dates, for example holiday seasons, and theaters of choice). In addition, the large number of cinemas at his disposal also had as an effect that the distributional practices of block booking and blind siding turned out more advantageous for him than they did for other smaller exhibitors. Heylen could launch a potential hit in his flagship cinemas Rex and later Metro, and dump films of lesser quality in other cinemas owned or contracted by him. Because Heylen had the choice to have the better pictures play in his more prestigious theaters, their allure would increase even more. In Chapter 6 I will show that amongst cinemagoers, Heylen's cinemas in their heydays were indeed remembered as being the best offering the best films and best comfort.

Because of the exclusivity rights and his priority position in Antwerp (province and agglomeration) and the enormous amount and variety of cinemas at his disposal, by the 1960s

⁸⁴³ Faucompret, "Crisis in de Vlaamse bioscoopindustrie," 463-464. I will deal with vertical integration in more detail in the next subparagraph.

⁸⁴⁴ Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 68. It is to say that they equally displayed a more generous attitude towards their independent competitors and permitted them "to book major studio features early in the cycle of runs" (ibid.).

Heylen was able to block other exhibitors who would have to wait for months before a successful film was fully exploited in priority cinemas and would finally be cleared for their cinemas.⁸⁴⁵ In addition, cinemas operating independently from Heylen could not schedule these films long ahead for certain, since the film's clearance depended on their success at inner city (mostly Heylen's) cinemas. In many cases cinemas would not get to play a film at all.

An often-heard complaint by independent exhibitors was that Heylen contracted films of which he was not sure if he would play it, or even worse, films which he knew would not be successful in his cinemas and therefore would not be scheduled at all. I will return to this practice of "movie murder" in Paragraph 4.5.1. Something very similar was expressed in an expert interview with the former exhibitors of cinema Rubens in Zwijndrecht, Marie-Louise Christeyns and her son Johan Hollants. Christeyns and Hollants remembered the times of Heylen's reign, when they were hardly ever able to program long in advance, because "... you'd get the films, but no dates. In other words, you knew that you'd get the films, but didn't know when."⁸⁴⁶ Another ill effect of such distributional practices based on exclusivities was that by the time the films arrived at the cinemas in the suburbs and more rural areas, the copies were often damaged or showed other traces of multiple screenings. According to the exhibitors of the Rubens, complaints about, or rejections of, the films were of no use, since there was no compensation for damages and theoretically there was no obligation to screen a damaged film. After all, exhibitors could always choose to rent another (which they rather would not do, for in practice this would mean a film of far less quality and/or the contracting of another whole package of thirty to forty films for a year).⁸⁴⁷

Heylen's powerful bargaining position towards distributors had differing effects on competing exhibitors and left them with two choices. Either they would cooperate with Heylen in order to indirectly benefit from the more favorable conditions to which he had become entitled. Hence, apart from the cinemas he owned and/or exploited, Heylen also took care of the film programming of a number of cinemas.⁸⁴⁸ On the other hand, competitors who wanted to remain independent from Heylen were forced to take the leftovers offered by – mostly small – distributors, where Heylen had no priorities. Hence, they often switched to small independent productions and

⁸⁴⁵ Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview; Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen; quote by Jan Verheyen in Duynslaegher, "Het publiek heft een zesde zintuig," *Knack* 18, no. 42 (October 19, 1988): 41; quote by distributor Chantal Joostens in P. Duynslaegher, "Niet met, niet zonder elkaar," *Knack* 18, no. 41 (October 12, 1988): 43-44. Christeyns and Hollants remembered, for example, the case of the Belgian-French animation film *La flûte à six schtroumpfs* (Peyo, 1976, France/Belgium), which they considered a potentially successful hit for their neighborhood cinema Rubens. Because the same week Heylen would also release the film, Christeyns did not succeed in getting to play the film after its release. It was only much later that they were finally able to screen the film (Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview).

⁸⁴⁶ See Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview. Marie-Louise Christeyns took over the cinema from her mother in 1981, who had exploited it since the late 1940s.

⁸⁴⁷ Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview.

⁸⁴⁸ It is impossible to say exactly how many cinemas were programmed by Heylen (or one of his men), mostly because quite often such deals were on an incidental basis or contracted under the table.

niche films (e.g. horror or erotic films).⁸⁴⁹ In the worst case they were forced to exit the market for good.

Market position

Using Kotler's terminology introduced in Paragraph 4.2.2, the distributional practices addressed in the previous paragraph had as a main function the regulation of the number of sellers on the local exhibition market in Heylen's favor. As more competitors on the market generally mean less favorable potential profits for each one of them, sellers will try keep entry barriers high for potential newcomers and lower exit barriers for their competitors, thereby regulating whether and how a seller enters and exits the market.⁸⁵⁰

The oversaturated exhibition market in combination with Heylen's discriminating distribution practices kept entry barriers high for potential newcomers and exit barriers low for active exhibitors. The latter became manifest most clearly in his takeovers. As I have previously described, in the course of the 1950s and 1960s Heylen expanded his cinema empire, mostly at the cost of competing exhibitors, by taking over their cinemas. Little evidence is available about how exactly Heylen acquired all the cinemas over the years, as many contracts were closed by handshakes or in exchange for goods or services. Nevertheless, a number of examples in several sources do provide some insights.

The first concerns how cinema Metro changed hands in the late 1950s. Opened by MGM in 1949 in the same building complex as Heylen's flagship cinema Rex, Metro was the only cinema in Antwerp that was operated by an American major. Results from the film programming analysis point to a close cooperation between Heylen and MGM already in the early 1950s: in 1952 Heylen was about the only exhibitor to pick up films from Metro after they had been screened in Metro (details follow in Chapter 5). This might be seen as heralding his takeover in the late 1950s. In 1959, Heylen directly purchased Metro from MGM.⁸⁵¹ The transfer was charged on the account of NV Rexciné (which also exploited cinema Rex, see Table 4.2 in Appendix I). All non-executive directors present at the corresponding meeting of the board of directors approved of this transaction, except for the representatives of the van Reybroecks family. They expressed their worries that instead of investing in new cinemas, the dividends should rather be distributed amongst de shareholders. From the

⁸⁴⁹ Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview. As a matter of fact, Christeyns also tried to program more erotic material, but this did not work out for her cinema.

⁸⁵⁰ Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 238. Examples of exit barriers would be legal or moral obligations to customers, creditors, and employers or a low salvage value of assets.

⁸⁵¹ According to Ross Melnick, MGM's policy in the 1960s was to abandon most of its foreign theaters (R. Melnick, Personal talk with K. Lotze, Conference of the Society of Cinema and Media Studies, Boston, March 22-25, 2012). Something similar was asserted by Corluy, personal interview, August 6, 2008.

moment of purchase until cinema Metro was effectively exploited by Heylen from 1961 onwards, Heylen would receive rental fees by MGM worth BEF 800,000 - 900,000 (USD 16,000 – 18,000).⁸⁵²

A second way of takeover was by purchasing the shares of a company, instead of directly buying the cinema. This was the case, for example, with cinema Rubens at Carnotstraat, at the rim of the Station Quarter. In the same year that Heylen acquired cinema Metro, he also bought the limited liability companies NV Rubenspaleis and NV Cifia at the expense of NV Roma. With NV Rubenspaleis Heylen had automatically acquired cinema Rubens, since the cinema was owned by this company.⁸⁵³ As a matter of fact, many more of the companies which had been added to Heylen's empire in the course of time, exploited cinemas. As mentioned, often their names reminded of the (former) names of cinemas they exploited.

Furthermore, Heylen was also known for taking over some of the cinemas, and taking care of businesses, via straw men. This allegation was publicly expressed several times throughout the Rex group's existence, as in the case between the van Reybroeck family against Heylen in the 1950s, in the case between exhibitor André Muyle (active in the Flemish city of Bruges and the village of Pittem) against Heylen in the 1970s, as well as expressed by former Rex-staff in a letter to the Rex group's trustee van Passel in 1993.⁸⁵⁴ In addition, Heylen's father and three of Heylen's children and second wife were involved in Heylen's business, as shareholders and/or employees.

A fourth way in which Heylen influenced the local market was by taking care of the film programming for other cinemas. As explained earlier, a number of competitors agreed to have Heylen program their cinemas, because of his powerful position and his ability to arrange for attractive deals with distributors (rental rates, periods, and other rental conditions) from which his “competitors” would profit indirectly. Obviously, the benefits were mutual. Heylen not only earned a small amount of money from the percentage he asked, but the bigger the number of cinemas he had to serve, the firmer his bargaining position towards the distributors became, from which his contracted exhibitors could profit. Another advantage for Heylen was that he had an outlet for the films of lesser quality which he would receive in packages along with the better films (see the explanations on the practice block booking above). Above all, however, by programming for “competing” cinemas he had more control on what was shown at local theaters. A lawsuit that dragged along for at least a decade between Heylen and Muyle offers interesting insights about how far Heylen would actually go in using his powerful position to negatively influence the dynamics of local cinema market, in this case the one in Bruges (i.e. the capital of the province of West-Flanders where Heylen was also active). I will return

⁸⁵² Gogne, “Deskundig verslag,” 54.

⁸⁵³ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁸⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 23; Rex-staff. Letter to M. van Passel, Bruges, September 20, 1993. See also Zeguers, personal interview.

to this in more detail in Paragraph 4.4. when dealing with the period from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s.

Contributing to his success was Heylen's extensive network of influential people, in the business as well as the cultural and political world. One of his life-long colleagues and employees, for example, was Bosmans. Bosmans had been involved in the cinema business in Antwerp from almost the beginning: as conductor of string orchestras he participated in the opening of cinema Olympia as early as 1909. The cinema would later become (Studio) Century and was incorporated by the Rex cinema group in the 1950s, just as cinema Astra, of which Bosmans had been director since 1936. In 1954 Bosmans replaced the late Louis Hendrickx as chairman of the Antwerp division of the VKBB (who was addressed in Chapter 3 as one of the bigger players in Antwerp's cinema market until the 1950s).⁸⁵⁵ Heylen was also well acquainted with other influential people from the press and film sector, amongst which Marc Turfkruyer and Joz van Liempt.⁸⁵⁶ Moreover, Heylen rubbed shoulders with local and national politicians, from municipal executives and mayors to governors and prime ministers. The politicians attended premiere screenings and galas organized by the Rex cinema group and figured extensively in the AKAs.⁸⁵⁷ Most of the politicians predominantly belonged to the former Christian People's Party CVP or the former liberal party Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang (Party for Freedom and Progress, PVV).⁸⁵⁸

Politicians were not the only guests of honor with whom Heylen regularly dined. As he was a welcome guest at international film events, particularly the Cannes Film Festival, film stars, directors and producers of national and international fame were photographed in company of Heylen. National and international stars frequented Antwerp. Amongst the Flemish stars were Charles Janssens, Co Flower, and Jef Bruyninckx. Internationally acclaimed celebrities included, amongst many others, Fernandel, Gregory Peck, Claudia Cardinale, Melina Merkouri, Sergio Leone as well as controversial stars from the World War II era, such as Zarah Leander, Marika Röck, Heinz Rühmann.⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁵ Before Bosmans became chairman of the VKBB, he had been chairman of the *Syndikaat der Antwerpse Toonkunstenars* (i.e. Syndicate of the Antwerp's Sound Artists, my transl.) until it was dissolved (the musicians had become obsolete due to the increase of screenings sound films) in the 1930s. In this function, acting on behalf of the musicians, Bosmans had been involved in several conflicts with film exhibitors and had therefore been met with a good portion of skepticism by Antwerp exhibitors (Wildiers, *De Kinema veroverd*, 16, 23-26; CSBS 1953: 10; *Annuaire general du spectacle en Belgique* 1956: 156; Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België, "Liste complète des salles de cinémas," Brussels, 1959, 1).

⁸⁵⁶ Turfkruyer cited in W. Magiels, "Marc Turfkruyer: de peetvader van de Vlaamse filmkritiek," in *Magie van de cinema. Hollywood aan de Schelde*, edited by W. Magiels and R. De Hert (Antwerp: Facet, 2004): 77; Van Liempt, "Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (I)," 73.

⁸⁵⁷ Willy Magiels (responsible for PR of the Rex cinema group) in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 18. See also various episodes of AKAs, some of which are publicly available on *YouTube*. (Although copyrights have not been cleared, see Paragraph 4.2.2).

⁸⁵⁸ Members of the CVP were also the ones who expressed their concerns about the coming of Metropolis and were supportive of keeping the inner-city cinemas in the Station Quarter in 1992 and 1993..

⁸⁵⁹ Quite a number of the pictures are kept as part of the private collection of Paul Corluy, but they were also published in the local newspapers for coverage of the events and often events were filmed for the AKAs.

Heylen's connections potentially allowed him to influence infrastructural and financial decisions needed to expand his empire. After all, the city of Antwerp equally benefitted from the publicity stunts Heylen was able to stage again and again, economically and image-wise.

Film and cinema marketing

The importance of paid and free publicity for the promotion of films and cinemas was, and still is, widely acknowledged by film entrepreneurs and marketing experts from the early period of cinema on.⁸⁶⁰ Heylen was a showman when it came to the promotion of his cinemas and films. He covered a broad spectrum of different kinds of publicity. Here I will focus on four different ones: advertisements, publicity stunts, newsreels, as well as the so-called *calicots* (facade banners) and other on-street-promotion. Before getting into the details of how Heylen approached these facets of film and cinema marketing I will address the question of the presence of film stars (as part of publicity stunts) as well as matters concerning the use of newsreels from a general perspective.

Generally, film stars are considered as factors of success and marketing means for risk reduction. They serve product differentiation (film genre, studio) and have a signal function for consumers to expect a certain quality.⁸⁶¹ National and international campaigns would be arranged and financed by the distributor, while regional campaigns were set up in closer consultation between distributor and exhibitor. The use of stars to actively promote their films on-site (by attending premieres or giving interviews) was exploited by the major studios only relatively late and the initiative was usually taken by the studios.⁸⁶² In the case of American stars promoting films in the

⁸⁶⁰ J. Staiger, "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking about the History and Theory of Film Advertising," *Cinema Journal* 29, no. 3 (Spring 1990): 3; Hediger and Vonderau, *Demnächst*, 10; Hübel, *Big, bigger, Cinema!*, 10.

⁸⁶¹ S. Lowry, "Glamour und Geschäft. Filmstars als Marketingmittel," in *Demnächst in Ihrem Kino. Grundlagen der Filmwerbung und Filmvermarktung*, edited by V. Hediger and P. Vonderau (Marburg: Schüren, 2009), 282-284; C. Jungen, "Der Journalist, ein Geschäftspartner der Studios. Starinterviews als Mittel der Filmpromotion," in *Demnächst in Ihrem Kino. Grundlagen der Filmwerbung und Filmvermarktung*, edited by V. Hediger and P. Vonderau (Marburg: Schüren, 2009), 297-312. If the film actually does meet the quality standard, however, is only to be found out after having purchased the tickets. Fritz Iversen: "Es gibt kein Ausprobieren, sondern nur einen definitiven Kauf." (F. Iversen, "Man sieht nur wovon man gehört hat. Mundpropaganda und die Kinoauswertung von Independents und anderen Non-Blockbuster-Filmen," in *Demnächst in Ihrem Kino. Grundlagen der Filmwerbung und Filmvermarktung*, edited by V. Hediger and P. Vonderau (Marburg: Schüren, 2009), 181). For the impact of stars on box office results see, for example, S. Albert, "Movie Stars and the Distribution of Financially Successful Films in the Motion-picture Industry," in *An Economic History of Film*, edited by J. Sedgwick and M. Pokorny (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 218-239. In addition, based on his rigorously quantitative analyses De Vany found that "a belief that one can make accurate predictions of revenues or profits, even if a star is in a movie, is an illusion" (De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 120). De Vany did distinguish however, between groups of stars who can push box-office of blockbusters and individual stars who, based on statistical models generally do not make a difference for a film's potential success, with the exception of three stars: Tom Hanks, Steven Spielberg, and Oliver Stone. According to De Vany, they do, however, help launch a film (De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 135-137).

⁸⁶² The studios' organization of so-called press junkets, for example, started only in the 1980s. Press junkets are events where a film's stars, director and/or producer are interviewed by journalists in a relatively short period of time. Approximately 90% of the star interviews are arranged in this or a similar way. One-on-one interviews are only scarce and reserved for high-circulation media. In Europe, the junkets usually take place in popular metropolises such as London, Paris,

important film market of France, for example, this was a rather rare phenomenon until the 1990s.⁸⁶³ In addition, according to Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau, gimmicks and expensive publicity campaigns were predominantly used for film marketing in the US and the authors were uncertain to which extent this was a regular practice by small chain exhibitors who simply would lack financial means.⁸⁶⁴

In addition, the exhibition of newsreels and more particular cinema journals was a quite common practice everywhere from the early period of film and cinema onwards. As Anke Hübeler asserts with regard to “filmed news on film premieres”:

Durch die Präsentation der aufgeregt-neugierigen Schaulustigen und dem erwartungsvoll-gespannten und letztendlich begeisterten Premierenpublikum wird die Erwartungshaltung des Kinogängers an das ihm in Aussicht gestellte eigene Filmerlebnis entsprechend gesteigert und dem Zuschauer dabei gleichzeitig ein nachahmungswürdiges Genussbild offeriert. Diese Genussvorbilder sind für den Zuschauer umso attraktiver in Anbetracht der Prominenz der Premierengäste und eröffnen ihm die Möglichkeit, sich durch den eigenen Besuch des entsprechenden Filmes mit diesem Personenkreis zu identifizieren.⁸⁶⁵

Also Biltreyst and vande Winkel point to the long tradition and the importance of newsreels for the cinemagoing experience until the 1960s.⁸⁶⁶ The function of newsreels was to provide filmed news in addition to news items on the radio and in the press. With the advance of television as a regular and much more instant supplier of news, the cinema journals slowly lost this function.

The first of the four above-mentioned means of film and cinema promotion, in which Heylen engaged, was print advertisement. Next to the weekly film listings in the daily newspaper, which included announcements of all screenings in nearly all cinemas in Antwerp, cinemas would regularly announce their film programs in the form of short advertisements (see the example from 1952 in Image 5 below).⁸⁶⁷ These advertisements were usually published about three to four times a week for a select number of cinemas and mostly the bigger cinemas or the cinemas of the bigger players. Due to Heylen's increasing power on the local market and his large share of center cinemas (which were the most likely to place advertisements in the local press), the visibility of Heylen's cinemas on the advertisement pages became increasingly dominant. The ads always contained at least the location and times of the screenings and the film title as it was distributed in Belgium. Mostly this was accompanied by a short tagline, the names of directors and main actors, the official censorship rating

Munich or in the context of the film festivals in Cannes, Berlin or Venice. The costs are usually covered by the studios' corresponding regional agencies and/or distributors (Jungen, “Der Journalist,” 297-302, 307).

⁸⁶³ M. Danan, “Marketing the Hollywood Blockbuster in France,” 1st. ed. 1995, in *The Contemporary Hollywood Reader*, edited by T. Miller (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 378.

⁸⁶⁴ Hediger and Vonderau, *Demnächst*, 394.

⁸⁶⁵ Hübeler, *Big, bigger, Cinema!*, 95.

⁸⁶⁶ Biltreyst and vande Winkel, “Filmjournals in België,” 54.

⁸⁶⁷ Sex cinemas were not listed regularly there, for example. Neither were incidental film screenings in cultural centers.

and sometimes the original title of the films or the title in French, English, or even German, depending on the corresponding distributor and area of distribution. Except for ads in the daily press, Heylen also frequently placed ads for films in the trade press, the Flemish *Weekblad Cinema*. The ads ranged from ads for film screening in his cinemas and for films distributed by Excelsior (from the 1970s onwards) up to notifications, congratulations of Heylen on behalf of the Rex cinema group (see the examples in Image 3 at the beginning of this chapter).

In addition to extensive publicity in the press, Heylen was known for the publicity stunts, some of which were linked to charity. The most legendary one of these was the *Morgen van de goede daad* (Morning of the good deed), a recurrent event arranged by the local newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen* in cooperation with cinema Rex since the late 1940s for children on the morning of *Sinterklaas* (Saint Nicholas Day). It included a children's matinee in cinema Rex with every child attending the screening being handed out a goody bag.⁸⁶⁸ A special attraction of many of the publicity stunts was the presence of nationally and internationally acclaimed film stars (actors, directors, writers and producers). As mentioned in the previous subparagraph, stars of national and international fame patronized Antwerp on a regular basis. Heylen played a big role in this, yet to which extent remains unclear. Some parallel visits in the 1950s, for example, of film stars as Audrey Hepburn (1954) and Jayne Mansfield (1957) to Antwerp and the nearby city of Rotterdam point to promotional tours.⁸⁶⁹ This was also confirmed by Kamiel de Meester, responsible for PR during the 1960s and 1970s.⁸⁷⁰

⁸⁶⁸ Between 1951 and 1987, this event was amply reported in the *Gazet van Antwerpen* in relation to Heylen's cinemas. See, for example, s.n., "Schitterend Lustrum van De Morgen van de Goede Daad," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, December 3, 1951, 1, 6; s.n., "23^{ste} Morgen van de Goede Daad," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, December 1, 1969, 1, 3; s.n., "Veel pret met Sinterklaas en de 'Aristokatten'," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, December 6, 1982, 3; s.n., "Handen helpen Morgen van de Goede Daad," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, December 7, 1987, 3. According to Crols, "De Morgen van de Goede Daad" was an idea of Heylen and his former fellow scout and long-time director of the *Gazet van Antwerpen*, Joseph Somville (Crols, "De Grote Draak," 57). For an example of an AKA about the 38th *Morgen van de goede daad* in the mid-1980s see the copy publicly available on *YouTube* ("38ste morgen van de goede daad," accessed March 26, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XrR2IGvCE9k>).

⁸⁶⁹ Jayne Mansfield's visit to Antwerp in 1957 for the premiere of her film *The Girl Can't Help it* (Tashlin, 1956, US), for example, was most probably part of her 40-day European tour from 25 September to 6 November 1957, on which she also visited the editorial department of the Dutch national newspaper *De Telegraaf* in Amsterdam as well as a football match in Rotterdam. See Magiels and De Hert, *Magie van de cinema*, 235; G. Bestebreurtje, *Rotterdam in de jaren '50* (Rijswijk: Elmar, 1983), 43.

⁸⁷⁰ De Meester, personal interview. As I will address in Chapter this testimony contrasts that of Magiels was who the Rex cinema group's PR manager from the 1980s onwards. Magiels stated that although such invitations of big stars usually happened upon initiative of the most powerful studios. However, what Heylen's distribution agency Excelsior achieved by bringing famous stars to Antwerp was indeed exceptional (Magiels, personal interview).

not have its own regular film journals until the post-war period and had to rely on foreign (mostly French and American) suppliers of film journals. It was only in 1947 that Belgavox started broadcasting. Next to the national film journal *Belgavox*, there were a number of regional initiatives, amongst which were the AKAs.⁸⁷¹ Despite the significant production costs, the AKAs outlived all other regional film journals in Flanders.⁸⁷² The production costs were mostly for film stock and equipment, since a great deal of props and facilities used in the films were actually paid for in exchange for services and goods, for example, in the form of product placement for certain cars, catering services, and hotels. Often the premiere of a film prompted the making of an AKA, or was at least at the center of attention. Heylen's network of prominent and influential people regularly starring in the AKAs lent the film and cinema advertisements the necessary glamour and weight and linked the cinema world to local events and happenings (e.g. fashion shows, sporting events as well as the opening of bridges, tunnels or buildings), making Antwerp a true cinema city, not only in terms of the density of cinemas, but also in terms of prominence of national and international VIPs.

Next to ads, publicity stunts and newsreels, other traditional film marketing tools were extensively applied by Heylen to promote films and cinemas. A broad spectrum of on-site promotion was to lure the passersby into the cinemas. They were more functional for center cinemas which depended much stronger on passersby, than neighborhood cinemas did, as these predominantly attracted people from the neighborhood which came there on a regular basis. One of Heylen's on-site promotion and attractions were the *calicots*. Calicots were hand-painted facade banners, for which Heylen employed his own in-house painters. Furthermore, there were also the famous showcases at Appelmansstraat, in the middle of the Station Quarter. In the vernacular, they were called the *bakskes* (little boxes). They showcased an overview of the films playing in Antwerp's cinemas and as such not only had to attract the undecided passersby. Because of the cinemas' central location and high density in the Station Quarter, these showcases actually had the same function as the show cases in the foyers of the multiplexes today: people came to have a look at them after they had already decided that they would go see a movie, but had not agreed which one

⁸⁷¹ Film producer-distributor (and chocolate producer and gynecologist) Jean Daskalidès, for example, produced newsreels for Ghent (i.e. *Gentse Filmactualiteiten*), and later the regional newsreels (i.e. *Regionaal Filmjournaal*). In addition, there were also the West-Flemish news reels (i.e. *Westvlaamse Actualiteiten Films*): D. Biltereyst and R. vande Winkel, "Archiefinstellingen, bewaarbibliotheken, documentatiecentra en musea," in *Bewegend Geheugen. Een gids naar audiovisuele bronnen over Vlaanderen*, edited by D. Biltereyst and R. vande Winkel (Ghent: Academia Press, 2004), 205; D. Biltereyst and R. vande Winkel, "Documentatiecentra voor de studie van Belgisch-Vlaamse film," in *Bewegend Geheugen. Een gids naar audiovisuele bronnen over Vlaanderen*, edited by D. Biltereyst and R. vande Winkel (Ghent: Academia Press, 2004), 330, 331.

⁸⁷² Most of the regional news reels stopped in the late 1980s at the advent of Flemish commercial television. Belgavox ran far longer than all its foreign counterparts. While most foreign film journals predominantly from France and the US ceased to exist in the 1970s and 1980s and had disappeared from Belgian cinema screens in the first half of the 1970s, Belgavox only stopped in 1994. Nevertheless, it had had difficulties of keeping the head above the water since the 1960s and was only possible to keep on running due to vital subsidies by the government (Biltereyst, D. and R. vande Winkel, "Filmjournaals in België (1918-1994)," *Belgisch Tijdschrift voor Nieuwst Geschiedenis* 24, no. 1-2 (2009): 72-84).

to see. Other forms of on-site promotions included a riding advertising van as well as the handing out of gimmicks (e.g. balloons) or free or upgrades of tickets.

Heylen's publicity stunts, including the presence of stars was to create word of mouth about the films but also about his cinema group. Next to the common tools of film marketing discussed above, word of mouth was an especially powerful means to extend the films' legs. After all, personal recommendations are trusted more than sales pitches by parties in whose interest it is to make get as much viewers. On the other hand, word of mouth is highly difficult to steer and channel. As Hediger put it: "Die ersten Zuschauer können zu Missionaren eines Films werden – oder zu seinen Rufmördern."⁸⁷³ As Hediger and also de Vany point out, with the classic system of run zones it were predominantly the first run cinemas that profited from the big marketing campaigns. By the time the films reached subsequent run cinemas further down in the run zone hierarchy, the campaigns had long been forgotten and/or had drowned in the noise of the most recent campaigns for the latest pictures.⁸⁷⁴ Nevertheless, while first (and maybe second) run cinemas might have profited more than subsequent run cinemas from their investments in campaigns to launch films, they were also exposed to higher risks if a film turned out to be a flop. Several authors point to the fact that subsequent run cinemas had the advantage of knowledge about the films' performances and were actually able to benefit from the clearance period, since this time could be used for creating word of mouth which was particularly important for (mostly independent) films which weren't suitable for big, noisy launches and rather depended on word of mouth to get legs.⁸⁷⁵ Nevertheless, this argument only holds up to a certain extent, since these exhibitors were also bound to contracts and could not just drop a film after bad word of mouth or after learning that the film had flopped in the first run theaters.

In the case of Antwerp, Heylen's publicity campaigns positively affected cinemagoing, also for competing cinemas. From the expert interviews conducted for this thesis it became clear that as much as Heylen was dreaded by his competitors, just as much they admitted that they also needed the publicity he made for his films. Exhibitors of cinema Rubens in Zwijndrecht, Christeyns and Hollants, for example, asserted that the "small cinemas" competing with Heylen profited from Heylen's promotional campaigns and material. They explained that if a film did not show in his cinemas (and thus was not promoted by him) people would not attend screenings at competing subsequent-run cinemas either.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷³ Iversen, "Man sieht nur," 183.

⁸⁷⁴ Hediger, "'Blitz Exhibitionism'," 140-141. See also De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 146, 159-160.

⁸⁷⁵ Iversen, "Man sieht nur," 1810-182; Wyatt, *High Concept*, 112. See the example of exploitation films provided by Paul, which were made for generating quick turnovers and (because of their low quality) would never build up big audiences by word of mouth (Paul, "K-mart audience," 495-497).

⁸⁷⁶ The same was the case with Metropolis later: its opening and promotion of films also gave a boost to smaller cinemas.

As I have shown in this subparagraph, Heylen's cinema group grew steadily in the course of the 1950s and 1960s and a number of factors accounted for this. He took over cinemas, mostly from his competitors. His growing power as an exhibitor strengthened his bargaining position with distributors, which in turn resulted in more favorable renting conditions for films. The deployment of a broad range of marketing means for his films and cinemas resulted in a high visibility of the Rex cinemas in the public, contributing to the Rex cinema group's own signature.

4.4. Struggles to survive in a competitive market (late 1960s – mid 1970s)

By the 1960s, Heylen had become Belgium's most influential exhibitor. While cinema attendance kept declining worldwide as well as locally, Heylen had succeeded in bringing his cinema group to its peak. Most of his competitors had disappeared and neighborhood cinemas in the district closed down, resulting in Heylen's quasi-monopoly position in Antwerp's Station Quarter. Yet the sky above his cinema empire did not remain perfectly clear either. The late 1960s and 1970s brought a number of conflicts to the Rex cinema group as well as a number of changes to Antwerp's cinema landscape.

In Schumpeter's vision, innovation is followed by imitation which is followed in turn by market saturation, which can only be revived by a series of in-depth innovations.⁸⁷⁷ What would be possible in-depth innovation in film exhibition? In this subparagraph I will examine two conflicts, that provide insights in Heylen's way of doing business and his interactions with other players in the field, which already cast their shadows on his fate decades later: the conflict between Heylen and (representatives of) the American major distributors in the late 1960s and early 1970s as well his conflict with Muyle, briefly addressed in the previous paragraph.

4.4.1. Distributional practices: Heylen versus the American majors

On May 17, 1972 the latest James Bond hit *Diamonds are Forever* (Guy Hamilton, 1971, UK, distributed by United Artists) premiered simultaneously in six neighborhood cinemas in Antwerp. This was remarkable in two ways. First, because almost half a year had passed by then since the film's premiere in the capital of Brussels. Second, and even more astonishing, instead of being launched in Antwerp's prestigious first run theaters in the city center, the film premiered in six subsequent run cinemas in working class neighborhoods outside the inner city.

⁸⁷⁷ Bläsing, *Hoofdlijnen*, 106.

This subparagraph proposes to investigate reconstruction of what became known as the legendary distribution conflict between the American major distributors and Georges Heylen. The microscopic view presented here nuances existing macro-level histories of business flows within the film industry and sheds light on how they affected the dynamics of local cinema markets. Quite a lot has been written about the major studios and about “how Hollywood works”. Most of the work has focused on macro-level processes and has been written from a political economy perspective.⁸⁷⁸ Little is still known, how exactly the actions of global players effected the dynamics of local exhibition markets, especially those of smaller nations.⁸⁷⁹ This case study of the distribution conflict shows that local exhibitors were not completely without bargaining powers in their battle against global players in the film industry. Before getting into the details of the conflict, in what follows, a brief overview is provided of the relation between distribution and exhibition in general, following the explanations provided previously in Chapter 4.3.2.

Film distribution and exhibition: clashes of interests

By the early 1970s, only a few of the once mighty majors were left, some of which were close to downfall and/or forced to cooperate with others in order to survive.⁸⁸⁰ This unfavorable situation certainly applied to the distribution of their films abroad. In 1976 Thomas Guback stated that “[o]verseas the proliferation of television, motor cars, and weekend houses and the decline in the number of theaters have left their impact on earnings of American distributors, especially in Western Europe. Even with increased rental terms, the foreign market can hardly be called a growth area”.⁸⁸¹ In order to safeguard the majors' interests overseas, the Motion Picture Export Association (MPEA) was established. As a branch of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), the MPEA was thus permitted “to act as the sole export sales agent for its members, to set prices and terms of trade for films, and to make arrangements for their distribution abroad. In bringing together the majors and allowing them to act in concert through a single organization, the MPEA presented a ‘united front’ to the nations of the world, and by legal internal collusion prevented possible ruinous

⁸⁷⁸ See, for example, T. Guback, “Hollywood's International Market,” in *The American Film Industry*, edited by T. Balio. Madison (University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 387-409; Wasko, *How Hollywood Works*.

⁸⁷⁹ The situation described by Miriam van de Kamp for the neighboring country, the Netherlands, for example, equally applies for Belgium: “Little is known about the way in which the majors deal with small local markets, such as the Netherlands. Data for the Netherlands are scarce, scattered and often strongly bound to persons or companies.” (M. van de Kamp, “Majors en de Nederlandse speelfilm, 1990-2005. Van ondergeschoven kindje naar kerstkraker,” *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis* 13, no. 2 (December 2010): 208.)

⁸⁸⁰ To which degree the Paramount case had been harmful to the majors has been subject of discussion amongst film scholars. See, for example, Conant, “The Impact of the Paramount Decrees,” 346-370 and De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 143-175.

⁸⁸¹ Guback, “Hollywood's International Market,” 404.

competition among American film companies overseas.”⁸⁸² Amongst the MPEA's tasks were expansions of markets and keeping them open, informing its members about market conditions, negotiating film import agreements and rental terms. With the exception of Disney, the majors were supported abroad by the MPEA. In the early 1970s, there were eight members of MPEA: Allied Artists, Columbia, MGM, Paramount, Twentieth Century-Fox, UA, Universal, Warner Brothers.⁸⁸³

In order to meet the specific demands of the different markets, the majors were steered from different offices. In addition to their headquarter in Los Angeles, there were, amongst others, a regional office for Europe and several local offices across Europe.⁸⁸⁴ The different offices had different tasks and responsibilities. Generally, the tasks of distributors included obtaining licenses from producers for particular films for certain periods of time, as well as arranging for a film's exhibition at theaters and scheduling its release pattern. Furthermore distributors were in charge of storing and shipping prints as well as overseeing administrative actions, such as the collection of receipts and ancillary fees.⁸⁸⁵ Local offices, in particular, were responsible for launching the film by maintaining contacts with local cinemas as well as for adjusting promotional campaigns to the requirements of the local markets. In addition they stood in for logistics (physical transport of the films) and, if necessary, subtitling and/or synchronization of the films. Local offices had relative freedom in their decisions, but the degree in which they were able to make decisions varied from company to company.⁸⁸⁶

Despite their shared interest in generating the highest possible revenues and keep risks low, the means for exhibitors and distributors to achieve this were quite conflictive. By means of contracts distributors and exhibitors stipulated rental conditions, including rental fees, screening dates, duration and location.⁸⁸⁷ One way for distributors to lower risks was to mold rental conditions their way. As explained in paragraph 4.3.2, certain distributional practices had emerged over the decades to transfer some of the risks onto exhibitors' shoulders, including zoning, block booking and blind booking. The period a film remained on one particular screen was contractually stipulated beforehand, either for a fixed number of weeks or depending on the film's success. In the first case, if the exhibitor's expectations were high, he or she might book the film for a longer period than initially suggested by the distributor. If the distributor however expected more of the film, he or she could

⁸⁸² Ibid., 395, 403.

⁸⁸³ Ibid., 403.

⁸⁸⁴ Wasko, *How Hollywood Works*, 85. For the impact of the MPEA on the Belgian and Dutch exhibition sector see also Van Oort, “Industrial Organization,” 480, 488-489.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid., 84.

⁸⁸⁶ Van de Kamp, “Majors,” 109-111. See Wasko, *How Hollywood Works*, 85: “In terms of distribution, each company operates a home office, as well as local offices, branches or exchanges.”

⁸⁸⁷ Wasko, *How Hollywood Works*, 92. Usually the rental fee is a certain percentage of revenue and depends on the geographic area as well as the market. Next to that the percentage is based on a certain minimum threshold which in turn is based on the cinema's average earnings. The respective rental fee is contractually stipulated per week.

oblige the exhibitor to screen the film for a certain number of weeks. Even if the revenues remained below expectation, unless the exhibitor succeeded in convincing the distributor to ease or renew conditions he or she had to finish the contracted period and cinema (i.e. it was not allowed to move the film to a smaller cinema or screen).⁸⁸⁸ In the second case, where the rental period depended on the film's success, the film would only be passed on to the next theater after revenues had fallen below a minimum threshold. The corresponding threshold was determined for each cinema individually on an annual basis, depending on the average weekly incomes of a cinema.⁸⁸⁹

Generally, the more powerful the exhibitors, the bigger the chances of being able to negotiate more favorable rental conditions. Larger circuits and chains “got better clearances, lower rental rates for double bills, credit for promotional expenses against box-office receipts subject to film rental, freedom in a license to substitute another theater for one closed down, permission to charge lower admission prices, and privileges in selecting and eliminating pictures.”⁸⁹⁰ In the US, for example, the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO) was established to improve the exhibitors' position vis-à-vis the Hollywood studios.⁸⁹¹ Generally, however, such distributional practices turned out quite unfavorably for exhibitors, particularly for less powerful ones (non-chains) and/or with cinemas outside of urban centers. They mostly depended on other ways to attract audiences and increase profit, for example, by improving film marketing and by enhancing cinema-going and film-viewing experiences (better technical standards, higher comfort, catering facility, favorable location).

As explained in Chapter 3.2.1 and at the outset of Chapter 4.3, by the late 1950s, the Belgian cinema sector had become heavily oversaturated, partly because the powerful American major distributors as well as exhibitors active in the booming 16-mm business in Belgium acted against the implementation of restrictive regulations. Basically, Belgium was a lucrative market for the majors, given the relatively weak film production sector in combination with the country's high number of cinemas and attendance as well as the lack of significant import quota. This was reflected, for example by a predominance of US American film on Flemish screens.⁸⁹² However, what made it relatively difficult to deal with the Belgian market and tailor distribution strategies was that it was highly fragmented and dominated by local investors, many of which only operated a small number of cinemas, often less than a handful. Exhibition chains in general, and Hollywood majors in particular,

⁸⁸⁸ Exhibitor (and involved in the Belgian distribution agency Cine-Vog) Weis quoted in van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 13B.

⁸⁸⁹ Such “holdover” clauses were usually included in the contract (Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 97; see also De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 12-14).

⁸⁹⁰ De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 160-161.

⁸⁹¹ For an insightful contribution on the NATO's actions against discriminating practices by the Hollywood majors see, for example, Overpeck, “Blindsiding”.

⁸⁹² For the case of Antwerp, see Chapter 5. For the case of Ghent, see Van de Vijver, “Gent Kinemastad”.

were largely absent in Belgium in terms of film screening venues. During the time of the distribution conflict between Heylen and the American majors, the local offices of the major distributors were almost exclusively located in the capital of Brussels.

The distribution practice of runs and clearances, as described above, also applied in Belgium, albeit in an altered form. As previously mentioned, for entrepreneurs in the local film industry it was quite common to distinguish between exclusivity theatres, “first week” or “center cinemas,” “second week cinemas” and “neighborhood cinemas”. In addition, as will be demonstrated in detail in Chapter 5, films generally moved across the city in centrifugal direction as well as according to particular run and clearance patterns. However, the status of cinemas according to runs and clearances was not fixed and cinemas would screen different runs of different films. Generally, there was less than a handful of cinemas in Antwerp operating simultaneously that would predominantly function as opening venue. The further down the hierarchy of runs, the less fixed the cinemas' position was.

As I have shown in Chapter 4.3.2, the particularities of distributional practices (Heylen's priority position in Antwerp) in combination with the composition of his fleet of different types of cinemas (center-, neighborhood-, first- and subsequent-run) had strengthened and solidified his position on the local cinema market. The inequalities concerning distribution and power imbalances weighed heavily on Heylen's competitors. Heylen and the majors seemed a happily married couple. For the Americans, Belgium was a lucrative market and Heylen was widely known (and later also denounced) for his American friendly film programming. Yet while Heylen brought more money into the pockets of the majors than his competitors did, his powerful position also made him a serious threat to the majors, as he was able to put more pressure on the distributors than any other exhibitor in that region at that time. Disagreements abounded and by the late 1960s, early 1970s culminated in the distribution conflict between Heylen and the American majors.

Beginning(s) and implications of the conflict

It is hard to attribute the conflict to one specific cause or pin down its beginning to one specific moment in time. Secondary sources and eye witnesses proved to be occasionally contradictory. A number of periods, years and films are mentioned in various sources, which are said to have triggered or signaled the conflict.⁸⁹³ Heylen himself provided four reasons for the lockout in a

⁸⁹³ According to Curluy, for example, the conflict was triggered by overpriced rental fees for *The Dirty Dozen* (Aldrich, 1967, UK/US): Corluy in R. De Hert, “Werken voor het Rex-concern,” in *Cinema Roma. Over de Roma en het Rex-concern van Georges Heylen*, edited by J. Robert and Peter Balcaen (Antwerp: Erfgoedcel Antwerpen, 2003), 17. Film journalist Frank Heirman situated the beginning of the conflict later, in 1970, stating that Heylen countered the lock-out with *Der Arzt von*

magazine interview in 1974: first, the high rental percentages the American distributors demanded; second, the practices of “blind chain booking” (i.e. blind and block booking); third, that the Americans also wanted to dictate theater choice; fourth, the unacceptable conditions regarding prolongations.⁸⁹⁴ Heylen's statement in a way summarizes the different recollections from eyewitnesses, which underlines that the conflict was caused by a combination of factors and that disagreements had been dragging along for a considerable time.

The most detailed account of the conflict was provided by the secretary general of the Rex-consortium, Zeguers. Although his report concerns an eyewitness testimony and the necessary reservations have to be made, it offers starting points for the reconstruction. According to Zeguers, disagreements between Heylen and the American majors about distributional fees, terms of prolongation and theater choice for the musical *Hello Dolly* (Kelly, 1969, US) caused the conflict.⁸⁹⁵ The musical starred Barbra Streisand and was doomed to flop, since, according to Zeguers, at that time neither Streisand nor musicals were particularly popular in Belgium. Zeguers recalled how *Hello Dolly*'s distributor Fox asked for rental fees that were far too high to have the film play in Heylen's center theaters: “It became even a bigger flop than in America. After three, four weeks we had no choice but stop the film.”⁸⁹⁶ According to Zeguers, the negotiations heated up and Fox' newly elected representative in Brussels asked the MPEA for advice. As a consequence, the American majors discussed the possibilities of a lockout for Heylen's cinemas. While the new representative's predecessor knew Heylen, his competence, and knowledge of the local market, and would have never forced him to play a film under such conditions, the new representative was convinced that Heylen would give in and come and ask for films within a couple of months. He clearly underestimated Heylen's power on the local market and the fact that it was in the interests of both parties, exhibitor and distributor, that a film did well at the box office. Zeguers recalled that, initially, three majors (MGM, Paramount, and Universal – the latter merged to become CIC, responsible for distribution abroad) refused to join in the lockout. However, since the MPEA wanted to have all majors on one line, the three eventually complied and stopped distributing films to Heylen's theaters as well.⁸⁹⁷

St. Pauli (1968) the first of the *St. Pauli* series from West-Germany starring Curd Jürgens that turned out to be of unknown success with Antwerp audiences (Magiels, “De andere kant van Georges D. Heylen,” 75).

⁸⁹⁴ Heylen in van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 3B.

⁸⁹⁵ Quote Zeguers cited in F. Sartor, “De impact van de filmbusiness op de filmkritiek (5),” *Film and Televisie, Video* 539 (February 2004): 30.

⁸⁹⁶ Zeguers in Magiels, “Een kijkje achter de schermen,” 67; Zeguers, personal interview. In this light, it seems odd that in 1969 the musical *Funny Girl* (1968) also with Barbra Streisand in the main role played altogether fifteen weeks in Heylen's cinema Rubens. For details see the cinemas' programming books from 28 February to 6 June 1969, where information on screened films was documented on a weekly basis.

⁸⁹⁷ Zeguers, personal interview. Walt Disney was the only major that was not involved in the distribution stop, because it was not a member of the MPEA at that time and also had its films in Europe distributed by local distributors. In Belgium Disney films were distributed by the Belgian distributor Elan.

The conflict between Heylen and the American majors not only had several implications for Heylen's theatres, but also for those programmed by him as well as those of his competitors. Around 1971, at least nine of these competing cinemas had joined forces to form the “Verenigde Onafhankelijke Zalen van Antwerpen (en Agglomeratie)” (United Independent Cinemas of Antwerp (and Agglomeration)); henceforth VOZA). Participating cinemas were located near the Station Quarter (Scala), in Antwerp’s historic quarter (Kinox, Monty), as well as in the districts of Merksem (Merksem Palace), Kiel (Centra) Deurne (Capri, Elite), and the nearby municipalities of Schoten (Reo) and Zwijndrecht (Rubens; see the map for 1972 in Figure 3.5 in Appendix I, as well as Table 3.3 in Appendix I).⁸⁹⁸ The VOZA was an informal alliance, rather uncoordinated and existed only briefly, about one year at the most. Their name and spelling varied as did the composition of the group. According to one of the initiators, Tony Lambert, it was an obvious yet less-than-ideal solution for the Americans to deal with the gap Antwerp now represented.⁸⁹⁹

A programming analysis of Antwerp cinemas exposes the radical decline in the share of films distributed by American majors in Heylen's theatres during the two decades prior to the conflict: from 75% in 1952 to 52% in 1962 to 11% in 1972 (Figures 4.3 and 4.4 in Appendix I).⁹⁰⁰ The low number of film titles distributed by majors that was screened in Heylen’s cinemas stands in stark contrast to that screened at the VOZA cinemas, where the share of all film titles was 87%. Instead of giving in to the demands of the majors, however, Heylen tried to fill the gap of films partly by resorting to smaller independent distributors. It was not an increase of the number of independent distributors, though, which was to fill the gap of films. Rather, Heylen rented more films by some of the same independent distributors. Hence, the dramatic decrease of films by American distributors was paralleled by an increase of Belgian distributors such as Vog (from 8 in 1962 to 31 film titles in 1972) and Belga (from 4 to 24; see Figure 4.3).

Even more substantial, however, was the share of film titles from his own distribution company, Excelsior. With ninety-three film titles, constituting almost a third of all (identified) titles screened in Heylen’s cinemas, Excelsior had by far the biggest share of all twenty-six distributors Heylen had contracted for that year.⁹⁰¹ While it was widely known that Excelsior was Heylen's distribution agency, finding evidence which directly linked his name to this company is challenging.

⁸⁹⁸ Because of the rather informal nature of this alliance, it is challenging to find hard evidence for which cinema participated exactly when. The names of the cinemas listed above are taken from the weekly film announcements by the VOZA published in the *Gazet van Antwerpen*.

⁸⁹⁹ Quote Tony Lambert cited in van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 15B. See Marie-Louise Christeyns in Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview.

⁹⁰⁰ For details on the sources and methods used as well as the composition of the samples see Chapter 5.1.

⁹⁰¹ It was followed by Vog (31 film titles, 11% share), Elan (28; 10%) and Belga (24; 8%).

Heylen himself persistently denied his direct involvement in the company's business matters.⁹⁰² His name was not traceable in any official documents of the company's founding. Even long after the official launch of NV Excelsior, Heylen could not be directly connected to the company. Following a complaint filed by Muyle (which will be discussed in detail in the next subparagraph) against Heylen and NV Excelsior early in 1977, investigations on behalf of the judicial officer in charge, for example, resulted in the conclusion that Heylen could not be linked to Excelsior, "neither as partner in the firm, nor as its manager, director, employee, or in any position whatsoever".⁹⁰³ In an interrogation of Heylen by the same judicial officer a month prior, Heylen explained that he acted solely in the role of advisor and purchasing agent of NV Excelsior.⁹⁰⁴

Excelsior was officially founded in August 1970. The first film by Excelsior that was documented in the programming books of the Rex cinemas was the West-German production *Heintje – mein bester Freund* (Jacobs, 1970), which screened in January 1971. Nevertheless, Heylen's long-time employee Corluy, who was also in charge of logistic matters of film distribution, claimed that he had been unofficially distributing films for Heylen ("on the street") before that.⁹⁰⁵ As a matter of fact, according to the information in the *Bel-first* database, Filimpex, a second distribution agency that could be linked to Heylen, was founded as early as March 1965.⁹⁰⁶ A number of films by Filimpex had been documented in the programming books since 1969.⁹⁰⁷ However, compared to Excelsior, the number of films from Filimpex was small. Within two years of the founding of Excelsior, the films' share constituted about a third of all film titles shown in his cinemas, which was far higher than the share of any other single distributor in other examined sample years before and after the conflict (see Figure 4.3 in Appendix I).

By founding his own distribution companies Heylen killed at least two birds with one stone. On the one hand, he had found a way to circumvent high rental fees that in general were significantly higher in Belgium than in other European countries.⁹⁰⁸ On the other hand, this allowed him to compensate the shortage of films resulting from the distribution stop. According to former employees, Heylen looked for films in other and most and foremost Western European countries, especially Germany, France and Italy: "In the beginning we [...] weren't able to get the bigger films.

⁹⁰² See, for example, Heylen in van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 5B; Heylen in Wauters and Mees, "Interview met de heer Heylen," 6.

⁹⁰³ Rechtbank Antwerpen, Official report following the complaint of an offense (no. 5686) by A. Muyle v. G. Heylen. Antwerp, April 18, 1977, 1.

⁹⁰⁴ Rechtbank Antwerpen. Official report of interrogation J. P. D. Heylen (complaint of offense no. 4139), Antwerp, March 25, 1977, 2.

⁹⁰⁵ Corluy, personal interview, July 22, 2008. The official date of foundation of Excelsior was retrieved from the national financial database *bel-first*: *bel-first*, accessed January 15, 2013, <https://belfirst.bvdinfo.com>.

⁹⁰⁶ The *Bel-first* database comprised extensive information, including financial reports and statistics on companies in Belgium and Luxembourg.

⁹⁰⁷ The company Filimpex NV was founded in March 1965 (see *bel-first*).

⁹⁰⁸ Van Oort, "Industrial Organization," 489.

Steadily we expanded our market. The big breakthrough came with *The Go-Between* by Joseph Losey, a film we had bought before the Cannes Film Festival and which won a Golden Palm there in 1971.”⁹⁰⁹ The programming analysis confirms that three quarter of the films distributed by Excelsior which screened in Heylen's cinemas in 1972 were made in Italy, Great Britain, Germany or France, or were co-productions of at least two these countries (Figure 4.6 in Appendix I). Films from Italy alone accounted for one fifth of Excelsior's supply at examined cinemas in 1972. Only five Excelsior-films (5%) were made in the US.

Of course, these distributional changes had their repercussions on the cinemas' film programming. Generally, Heylen was widely known for his US-minded film programs and that the film programs at his theatres consisted mostly of pictures from the United States (see Chapter 6). Compared to 1952 and 1962, in 1972, the shares of films from the US had declined, accompanied by a rise of films from Western European countries.⁹¹⁰ Nevertheless, in contrast to the wide-spread opinion that no US-American films played at Heylen's theaters at all, the programming analysis shows that US-productions alone still occupied 21% of the screen time in Heylen's cinemas, which is far more than other countries (Figure 4.7 in Appendix I). A substantial number of the US productions screened in Heylen's cinemas in 1972 was distributed by Elan (25%), distributor of Disney films in Belgium at that time.⁹¹¹ Elan – of which the owners were said to be good friends with Heylen – had been an important distributor for Heylen before (see Chapter 5.3 for the programming analysis of the year 1962). Nevertheless, the number of *new* productions from the US that screened in Heylen's theaters was very limited. Not a single production was from 1972 itself, only three films were dating from the year before. All remaining productions were made and/or released between 1961 and 1970; most likely these were productions for which contracts had been arranged before the conflict. In comparison, the largest share of the films screened at VOZA was made in 1970 and 1971, another eight were from 1972 (Figure 4.8 in Appendix I).

In addition, Heylen generally resorted to older films and had them play longer at his theatres. As a matter of fact, all films screening in Heylen's theatres which were made before 1965 had the

⁹⁰⁹ Quote by Zeguers, cited in Sartor, “De impact,” 31. According to the data in the programming books, however, *The Go-Between* premiered before, *On the Buses* (1971). *The Go-Between* played from July to September 1971 eleven weeks at cinema *Odeon*; *On the Buses* played from December 1971 to February 1972 at Pathé (seven weeks) and Astra (two weeks).

⁹¹⁰ The decrease of US films and increase of productions from West-European countries in the post-war years cannot be solely linked to the conflict, but can also – at least partly – be ascribed to the long-time effects resulting from the protectionist film policies in several Western European countries, and especially France and Italy, from the 1950s onwards. For France, see for example, J.-P. Jeancolas, “From the Blum-Byrnes Agreement to the GATT affair,” in *Hollywood and Europe. Economics, Culture, National Identity 1945-1995*, edited by G. Nowell-Smith and S. Ricci (London: BFI, 1998), 47-60; for Italy, see C. Wagstaff, *Italian Neorealist Cinema. An Aesthetic Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007): 10-20. The number of French-Italian co-productions alone doubled within two years' time, from fourteen during the ‘film season’ of 1951-52 to thirty-three in 1952-53 (Vereniging der Kinemabestuurders van België, *Ons Kinemadoek* 11 (November 1953): 33).

⁹¹¹ Disney had its films distributed overseas by local distributors.

same average duration in cinemas (of about two and a half weeks) as did the more recent films. Before, older films were hardly screened for longer than a week (see Chapter 5). In 1972, historical dramas from ten years prior were frequently playing in cinema Rubens (which was known for its frequent playing of American historical dramas, adventure films and epics) for two months in a row each.⁹¹² Most curiously, however, was the screening of Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936, USA) from 1936 in first-run cinema Odeon (commonly known for its specialization in French films) for five weeks in a row.

The conflict between Heylen and the major distributors not only affected the programming in Heylen's own cinemas and that of the VOZA, but also the cinemas (in and outside of Antwerp) for which he was (officially and unofficially) contracted as programmer. Exactly how many cinemas next to his own Heylen programmed is difficult to say, because often contracts were based on handshakes or in exchange for deals or mutual services (as in the case of Muyle, Paragraph 4.4.2).

Finally, the distribution stop also had a bizarre effect on Antwerp's film culture in general. Since Heylen owned practically all center cinemas and the majors were aware of Antwerp's role for national film business, they rented films to Antwerp's cinemas that were operating independently from Heylen. In an attempt to counterbalance Heylen's monopoly in the city center, especially the VOZA cinemas were meant to provide an outlet for the films of the majors. In the beginning of May 1972, the VOZA announced a gala screening for *Diamonds Are Forever* (Guy Hamilton, 1971, UK) in the Flemish trade journal *Weekblad Cinema*.⁹¹³ The film – which had been a number one hit in the first half of 1972 at the box office in the neighboring country The Netherlands – was distributed by United Artist and therefore not scheduled to run at Heylen's theaters.⁹¹⁴ The gala screening was to take place on 17 Wednesday 1972 at the independent cinema of moderate size, Capri, in Antwerp's district Deurne and was to premiere two days later in seven VOZA cinemas simultaneously (see Image 6 below).⁹¹⁵ According to the programming research for 1972 it was very unusual in Antwerp that a single film premiered at so many cinemas at the same time. Although Heylen's and the VOZA cinemas would hardly have been expected to cooperate under these circumstances, out of 589 films playing in examined Antwerp cinemas throughout 1972, forty were in fact exchanged between the two parties. The exchange would usually follow the same pattern: many weeks at Heylen's cinemas and subsequently a couple of weeks in VOZA cinemas. Moreover, only five out of the forty films played longer at VOZA cinemas than at Heylen's cinemas.

⁹¹² Examples are *Porgy and Bess* (Preminger, 1959, US) eight weeks; *How the West Was Won* (Ford et al., 1962, US) seven weeks; *55 Days at Peking* (Ray, 1963, US) eight weeks; *El Cid* (Mann, 1961, Italy/US) ten weeks.

⁹¹³ s.n., *Weekblad Cinema* 51 (May 6, 1972): s.p.

⁹¹⁴ s.n., *Weekblad Cinema* 52 (January 13, (1973): s.p.

⁹¹⁵ *Hello Dolly* – the film that was claimed to have the conflict started – was announced for the screening at another VOZA cinema, the very same week. Neighborhood cinema Kinox was located in Antwerp's historic center and had a capacity of 987 seats.

Image 6: Advertisement for Antwerp's premiere of *Diamonds are Forever* at the United Independent Cinemas of Antwerp in the local newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen* on 19 May 1972.



Even more unusual was, that major box office hits as *Diamonds are forever* and *Love Story* (Arthur Hiller, 1970, USA, distributed by 20th Century Fox) now premiered in VOZA (thus neighborhood) cinemas instead of inner city first run cinemas. Some of the otherwise successful films (at least during the time of the conflict) stayed clear of Antwerp altogether, as was the case, for example, with Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972, USA).⁹¹⁶ In other words, the distribution conflict between Heylen and the American majors had as an effect a drastic twist in the system of runs and clearances. Neither the gala screening nor the premiere of *Diamonds* were announced in Antwerp's leading newspaper, *Gazet van Antwerpen*. With no advertisements and reviews, publicity for the film in this daily newspaper remained at a minimum and restricted to the weekly film listings in the newspaper. The constrained media attention for Heylen's competitors had partly to do with

⁹¹⁶The film was distributed by the major CIC. No trace of Antwerp was found in the weekly film listings and advertisements for the film in *Weekblad Cinema*, which did announce the film's spectacular success at Belgian theaters, including nine larger and smaller cities, and not in Antwerp, Belgium's cinema city par excellence. According to the advertisements BEF 20 million (USD 540,000) of revenues had been made within the first three weeks of screening and BEF 27 million (USD 740,000) within the first seven weeks at theaters in the following Flemish and Walloon cities: Brussels, Ghent, Ostend, Leuven, Liège, Charleroi, Namur, Mouscron, and Tournai (s.n., *Weekblad Cinema* 51 (November 18, 1972): s.p.; s.n., *Weekblad Cinema* 51 (December 2, 1972): s.p.).

Heylen's influence which also stretched to the local media. Concluding from *Diamonds'* disappearance from the weekly film listing within a few weeks following its premiere, the film probably did not attract as many spectators as the VOZA and United Artists might have wished for: in the first week of screening the film was listed for six cinemas, the second week four, the third two and after three weeks of screening, *Diamonds* had already disappeared from Antwerp's screens all together.⁹¹⁷

Ending of the conflict

Heylen himself was quoted saying that he was victim of the lockout for a period of six years.⁹¹⁸ An exact time frame of the conflict cannot be provided for sure, however, because films were often contracted for a year's period and old contracts dating from before the conflict between Heylen and the majors had to be finished. Hence entries in the Rex cinemas' film programming books, for example, only roughly indicate a possible period during which the conflict must have been at its height. While before August 1971 an average of two to four films by a major played at Heylen's cinemas on a weekly basis, after that their number decreased to two to four films a month. Between September 1972 and July 1973, only very few films by major distributors played at Heylen's cinemas, actually it was the least number by far.⁹¹⁹ This indicates that the lockout must have been around 1971. From 24 August 1973 onwards, several films by majors played at the Rex cinemas again on a weekly basis, suggesting that the conflict had come to an end. As we shall see below, this also coincides with two other developments which can be seen as indicators of the end of the conflict: the opening of the Calypso complex by the successful Dutch exhibitor Meerburg.

The conflict between Heylen and the American majors clearly effected cinemagoing in Antwerp. There were less box office hits available in Antwerp and often cinemagoers had to look for them in neighborhood cinemas. However, the conflict not only affected film consumers, but also had its downsides for the involved exhibitors and distributors. As Zeguers recalled, the direction of the Rex cinema group sat around tables with the majors night after night, to discuss the situation and find a solution. Negotiations took place on several levels: on the Belgian level, the European level and

⁹¹⁷ For unknown reasons, one of the seven cinemas, *Elite* (district Deurne), that had been mentioned in *Weekblad Cinema* to premiere *Diamonds*, was not included in the weekly film listing of the *Gazet van Antwerpen*. The reconstruction above can only indicate the impact of the distribution stop on Antwerp's film culture. The exact consequences the conflict had for the different cinemas' box offices are only measurable, of course, by also consulting the number of tickets effectively sold, both for *Diamonds* as well as for films shown at Rex cinemas during that time. Unfortunately, the original accounting books of a number of Rex cinemas that had been kept from that period, do not contain figures for distribution fees paid by Heylen from 1970 to 1975. Nevertheless, the observations do point to an unsuccessful deal between the Americans and VOZA.

⁹¹⁸ Heylen in Crols, "De Grote Draak," 49.

⁹¹⁹ Within these eleven months, a total of fourteen films were shown in Heylen's cinemas, including five films from the 1970s (four by CIC and one by Fox), another six were produced between 1967 and 1969 (one by CIC, four by Fox, one by United Artist) and three films were ten years or older (one each by CIC, Columbia, MGM).

directly with the Americans.⁹²⁰ After all, the situation was detrimental for both parties: Heylen made less money without the big American films, and the Americans saw their revenues drop without the lucrative Antwerp center cinemas. On the one hand, Heylen was not able to offer his audience many of the big pictures which were to be seen everywhere else but in Antwerp's inner city. The majors, on the other hand, realized all too well that they would never made as much profit in the independent cinemas (VOZA), as they would make in Rex theaters. According to Zeguers, it took sixteen or seventeen neighborhood cinemas to realize the profit of one of Heylen's large center cinemas.⁹²¹ According to Meerburg, the Americans lost USD 2,500,000 in this conflict.⁹²²

Meerburg was also the man with the help of whom the majors hoped to solve the conflict in their favor.⁹²³ After the majors realized their failed attempt to win the conflict by placing their films in cinemas that were operating independently from Heylen, they cherished new hopes that Heylen's monopoly might break with the coming of a new figure in Antwerp's inner city's cinema market. In September 1973, Meerburg opened the first two screens of his cinema triplex Calypso right at the heart of Heylen's cinemas empire and right across the street from Heylen's flagship cinema Rex. The coming of the Calypso cinemas brought an end to Heylen's monopolistic position in Antwerp's Station Quarter. As it was formulated by an expert from the field about a similar situation in Brussels in the late 1980s: "Of course, the 'majors' tremendously profit from breaking the monopoly position. If there is one single powerful group holding sway over a city, the distributors can hardly make demands to choose data, cinema combinations, conditions concerning the continuation of screening periods. With a new partner added they can play the two rivals off against each other; in film business much is built on some kind of institutionalized form of blackmailing."⁹²⁴

Calypso 2 and Calypso Club opened with Bernardo Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (*Ultimo tango a Parigi*, 1972, Italy/France, starring Marlon Brando) and *Cabaret* (Bob Fosse, 1972, US, starring Liza Minelli). However, similarly to the screening of *Diamonds* and the VOZA's scarce visibility in the local media in general, publicity for the Calypso cinema group, including the films screened

⁹²⁰ Zeguers, personal interview.

⁹²¹ Zeguers in Magiels, "Een kijkje achter de schermen," 65.

⁹²² Meerburg in van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 3B.

⁹²³ Piet A. Meerburg held administrative functions in numerous cinema organizations in the Netherlands. He was, for example, member of the executive board of the Calypso NV (Calypso Corporation) from 1962 onwards, of the Cinerama Exhibitors Nederland NV (Cinerama Exhibitors Netherlands Corporation) from 1970-1977 and of the Meerburg Theaterbeheer NV (Meerburg Theater Management Corporation) between 1970 and 1990. From 1955 until 1961, he was member of the executive board of cinema Calypso in Amsterdam, The Netherlands (Cinema Context, "Piet Meerburg," accessed April 8, 2010, <http://www.cinemacontext.nl/cgi/b/bib/bib-idx?fmt=long;size=1;start=1;tpl=details.tpl;lang=nl;type=boolean;sid=87e839af8a3165667e2a8a72cbc54db8;c=cccpersoon;rgn1=PersId;q1=P000066>). There are sources claiming that the opening of Calypso by Meerburg "actually happened upon request of the American film distributors" (J. T., "Akkoord rond overname Calypso-zalen. Eric Kloeck van Cartoon's wordt nieuwe uitbater," *De Morgen*, March 26, 1992, s.p. [authors' transl., emphasis in source]). No trace of the construction and opening of a new cinema complex in this location could be found in the minutes of the meetings of city council throughout 1973.

⁹²⁴ Duynslaegher, "Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis," 51.

there, was limited. It is highly remarkable that for an incident of such an importance to Antwerp's cinematic landscape, hardly any advertisements were placed in the daily newspaper beforehand. It was only one day before the first screenings at Calypso 2 and Calypso Club that there were two ads in the newspaper announcing the opening screenings.⁹²⁵ Even on the day of the opening, only the usual advertisements and no regular news items on the opening of the new cinema complex in Antwerp's inner city appeared in the local newspaper. While the films playing at Heylen's cinemas were – as usually under the header “Deze week in Antwerpens cinema's” (This week in Antwerp cinemas) – extensively reviewed and advertised in the weekend edition of the local newspaper, films playing at the newly opened Calypso cinemas were hardly paid attention to. Only in the more general section “Filmleven” (Film life), the opening of the Calypso cinema complex and the films were referred to for the first time and rather summarily: “This week two new cinemas will be opened in the center of Antwerp. These are the cinemas of the Calypso – triple – complex. The two cinemas will show ‘Cabaret’ and ‘Last Tango’. Both films had been reviewed in detail in this section earlier.”⁹²⁶

Shortly after Calypso 2 and Calypso Club had opened, Calypso 1 opened with *The Godfather*, which meant that the film eventually did come to Antwerp about a year after its national premiere. Heylen countered by screening *Diamonds are forever*, which resplendently shone from the advertisements of Heylen's giant and recently renovated premiere cinema Metro. Metro actually followed the screening of another Bond classic at Heylen's cinema Astra, *You Only Live Twice* from 1967, that had started the week before.⁹²⁷ The opening of the Calypso triplex and the screening of *Diamonds* in one of Heylen's cinemas thus both indicate that the conflict had finally come to an end.

Aftermath

Representatives of the two parties had been sitting around tables for months trying to work out a solution that would suit all involved. One of the outcomes of the negotiations was that the majors would have to grant Heylen's request that the rental fees charged by the majors would not exceed 70% anymore. In addition, an allocation of the films distributed by the majors was agreed upon for Meerburg and Heylen, according to which Meerburg would have the first choice of films by the majors, Heylen the second, Meerburg the third etc. (see Image 7 below, for an example of a note dividing the films between Meerburg and Heylen in 1983). Unfortunately, for the majors (and Meerburg) this allocation model did not quite work out in practice as expected. After all, compared to Heylen, the Calypso-chain just had too little a number of screens (even taking into account

⁹²⁵ S.n., *Gazet van Antwerpen*, September 26, 1973: 8.

⁹²⁶ S.n., “Filmleven,” *Gazet van Antwerpen*, September 28, 1973: 15.

⁹²⁷ S.n., “Waarheen Antwerpen,” *Gazet van Antwerpen*, September 27, 1973, 8.

Meerburg's Calypso cinemas in the nearby city of Ghent) and hence a limited outlet capacity for the majors. As a consequence, the allocation rules were soon altered, now more in Heylen's favor. The year after the conflict had ended, the leading film critic van Gaelen wrote in an in-depth article on Belgium's most powerful exhibitors, that Heylen "is not alone anymore in Antwerp. But he is more present than he ever was. [...] He will have to fight. But as before, people will have to reckon with him."⁹²⁸ Despite the fact that his monopoly position in Antwerp's inner city was broken, Heylen remained the most powerful player there for another twenty years. Moreover, Excelsior grew to become Belgium's number one distributor with the largest market share. In other words, not much had changed for those exhibitors operating independently from Heylen in Antwerp and its suburbs.

As briefly mentioned, the conflict between Heylen and the American majors not only had its repercussions on film exhibition in Antwerp, but also beyond the city boundaries. The case presented in the following subparagraph provides insights, not only in the scale of the conflict, but also in the ways Heylen handled his business.

Image 7: Table dating from around 1983 with films by major distributors and their allocation for the Calypso cinemas and Heylen (indicated by the letters C and H respectively). The original document is part of the Michel Apers collection.

FOX	WARNER	UNIVERSAL	COLUMBIA	MGM	PARAMOUNT
The day after H.	Risky Business H	Scarface *C	Christine H.	Yentl H	Terms of endearme C
Rumble Fish	Sudden Impact C	Rear Window	Educating Rita H	Brainstorm C	Testament
Two of a kind (Fox)	Star 80 H	Vertigo	Evil that men do H	Reckless H.	Uncommon valour
La femme publique (Fox)	Of unknown origin H	The man who knew too much	The big chill C.	Icepirates C.	The keep
Hot dog, the movie	Right Stuff C	The trouble with Harry	The dresser C.	Pennies from heaven C	Footloose
Funny People	Odds and Evens H	The rope	The man who loved women H	Phulia H.	
Unfaithfully Yours (Fox)	Woodstock H.	Bank	Last winter H		
Having it all		De Cab	Sing sing C.		
House of Soropity Row		Nightmares			
Nena		H			
Eddy and the Cruisers		H			
Grijpstra en de gier		H			
Ballad of Gregorio Cortez		H			
Mesrine		H			
Angelo my Love		H			
Red Monarch		H			
Calypso		H			

⁹²⁸ Van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 7B.

4.4.2. The case of Heylen versus Muyle

While until the 1960s, Heylen's market position grew predominantly horizontally (i.e. in terms of the numbers of cinemas), with the official founding of Excelsior/Filimpex, his business also started expanded vertically.

Generally, vertical integration was another way to deal with the power of the big distributors, next to horizontal expansion.⁹²⁹ The vertical integration of film production, distribution and/or exhibition was ruled out by the US Supreme Court in 1948 in the legendary Paramount Decree, but was still practiced to some degree in the US and also in Europe.⁹³⁰ Amongst the advantages was, most obviously, the possibility to screen films in exclusivity. In addition, expenses and earnings were in one hand. Costs could be cut and allow for lower admission prices, leading to higher total admissions, which would in turn generate higher incomes. These incomes could then be invested again in improvements of technology, comfort, etc. which would increase admission even more.⁹³¹ In addition, exhibitors-distributors could dictate their rental conditions to other exhibitors.

Nevertheless, the integration of distribution and exhibition was not without risks and disadvantages either. According to the codes of good conduct, the distributor-exhibitor was also bound to his/her contracts with the producer. In other words, he had to ensure that the film in question got the best chance there was. If chances were better for the film to screen in a competing cinema than in his/her own, the distributor-exhibitor was obliged to give the film to the competitor, all other things being equal, even if this would mean a waiving of high incomes in his/her own theater.⁹³² Furthermore, vertical integration was highly advantageous only as long as a film was doing well at the box office. As soon as the film flopped the setback stroke twice as hard. As a distributor one would now have a product that performed and sold poorly; as exhibitor one would suffer from low admission which in turn generated low revenues. In addition, Blackstone and Bowman point to the disadvantage of vertical integration for the dynamics on the local market, in general. For newcomers it would be even more difficult to enter the market, since "the entrant would need simultaneously to enter production, distribution, and exhibition".⁹³³

Henri Fol, exhibitor in Brussels and former secretary general of the *Syndicaat der Exclusiviteitstheaters in Brussel en Randgemeenten* (Syndicate of First Run Cinemas in Brussels and

⁹²⁹ Faucompret, "Crisis in de Vlaamse bioscoopindustrie," 464. See E. A. Blackstone and G. W. Bowman, "Vertical Integration in Motion Pictures," ed. 1999, in *The Contemporary Hollywood Reader*, edited by T. Miller (Oxon: Routledge 2009), 37-50.

⁹³⁰ For cases of vertical integration in the Netherlands see Dibbets, "Bioscoopketens".

⁹³¹ Blackstone and Bowman, "Vertical Integration," 37. For a solid analysis in this respect of the Flemish cinema sector in the 1980s, see Faucompret, "Crisis in de Vlaamse bioscoopindustrie," 458-468. For a fascinating study of the effect of lower admission prices on cinema admission during the interwar period see Bakker, *Entertainment Industrialised*, 230-231.

⁹³² Quote by a Brussels exhibitor-distributor in Crols, "De Grote Draak," 51.

⁹³³ Blackstone and Bowman, "Vertical Integration," 39.

Suburbs) put it quite similarly when he was asked about the alleged power games played by larger interest groups:

Look, if you want to open a cinema here across the street tomorrow and you can grant the distributor better revenues, then you get the films. But if there are others, who are stronger than you, then they will get the films. The films are rented on the basis of revenue shares. If you make higher revenues, the films are yours. There is not the least pressure on this, this is completely economically justified. We've been established here for years. If you as a newcomer will get between us, then you have the biggest difficulties to get films, because we have them all. We have all kinds of combinations. If you want to become an exhibitor here, then you have to be as strong as we are. Then you'd have to build ten cinemas at once. [...] We have three strong groups here [in Brussels] and if someone wants to do the same, then he will have to form one strong group. But this is completely out of the question, because they ought to know better than constructing anymore new cinemas.⁹³⁴

In their lengthy article published in *Film & televisie*, Flemish film critics Leo Mees and Jean-Pierre Wauters argued that there would be two possibilities of risk reduction in the cinema sector. The first was a concentration in the exhibition sector, as was the case in Antwerp. The second was a conversion of existing cinemas into multi-screens.⁹³⁵ Earlier in this chapter I have discussed the first option in relation to the power of the exhibitor towards the distributor. Yet horizontal expansion was also a means to improve the power on the local exhibition market. As van Gaelen formulated it in her in-depth article on cinema moguls in Belgium: "These interest groups [in Brussels] undoubtedly represent a power which cannot be neglected by the distributors, and which they certainly take into account. This is not to say, that life is all sunshine and roses for the united mighty. On the contrary, they are plagued with constant worries. Operating costs of a cinema are of a kind to give its exhibitor sleepless nights. A great pressure on these costs, according to Fol, is entertainment tax."⁹³⁶

It was not only operating costs and taxes Fol alluded to, that gave exhibitors hard times. Quite revealingly, van Gaelen opens with a trenchant observation based on a number of expert interviews. In reference to Heylen's nickname of Godfather she wrote: "The comparison with a don is being completed by certain (quite numerous) enemies with the wish, that a Mafia-like death by bullet will someday hit Georges D. For the friends of Georges D. (less strong in number), however, even a statue would not be enough; they call him a tycoon in public as well as on the bar stool."⁹³⁷ In other words, by the 1970s Heylen's power came to extend by far the local cinema market and his bargaining position towards external players was not to be underestimated.

Heylen's conflict with the Flemish exhibitor Muyle is especially rewarding to examine in more detail, for it is quite revealing about Heylen's way of doing business as well as about details of local

⁹³⁴ Fol in van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 11B [my transl.]

⁹³⁵ Mees and Wauters, "Filmuitbating," 4. I will return to this thread towards the end of this subparagraph.

⁹³⁶ Quote Fol in van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 9B [my transl.]

⁹³⁷ Van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 1B [my transl.]

practices of exhibition and distribution which cannot be captured by macro-historical research. In 1969, Heylen entered into a contract with Muyle, who at that point exploited two cinemas in Bruges (Richelieu and Kennedy) and one in Pittem (Alfa). The contract stipulated that Heylen was to *completely* take care of programming and supply of Muyle's cinemas for a period of ten years. In exchange for his services, (i.e. more favorable rental conditions, better pictures, and priorities for the films) Heylen was to receive 5% of the net incomes and was guaranteed the freedom to exploit and program other cinemas (which were not in direct competition with Muyle's cinemas). Moreover, Heylen and Muyle committed themselves to found a new company.⁹³⁸

Merely two years later, Muyle expressed his dissatisfaction about Heylen's service and failure to stick to agreements concerning rental conditions and questions of competition. One of the reasons behind this was Muyle's discovery that Heylen also exploited the cinemas Memling and Zwart Huis in Bruges, something which Muyle had no knowledge of when he entered the contract with Heylen 1969. Muyle was concerned about the situation in Bruges and requested copies of rental contracts for all films Heylen supplied for Muyle's three cinemas. Furthermore, Muyle asked Heylen not to rent any more new films on behalf of Muyle.

Muyle's letter was followed by heavy correspondence during the next months. Allegations abounded from both sides. While Heylen partly denied not to have sent rental contracts for films scheduled for cinema Alfa in Pittem and promised to do so in the future, he refused to send rental contracts for the films scheduled for Muyle's cinemas in Bruges for administrative reasons. Above all, however, Heylen refused to accept a breach of their contract from 1969.⁹³⁹ Muyle in turn refused to forge bills (as Heylen had allegedly asked him to) and requested that Heylen kept to his promise of arranging priority-deals for the films scheduled for Muyle's cinemas, including better rental deals and better films (American blockbusters).

Heylen's conflict with the majors was, of course, not unknown to Muyle. He suspected that the reasons for the conflict would predominantly lie in Heylen's personal attitude and greed for power. Muyle complained that because of Heylen's "power games" with the Americans, Muyle would not be able to show box office hits from American majors in his cinemas. He also suspected that Heylen was busy in setting up his own distribution agency and demanded, amongst others, that Heylen let him program his cinemas himself again and negotiate with the Americans himself.⁹⁴⁰ In his reaction to Muyle, Heylen replied: "With regard to the difficulties with the American distributors I

⁹³⁸ The contract was referred to in various judicial documents relating to the case that are kept in the Archive of Insolvency Records Rex, Box Festa Heylen t Muyle-Excelsior t Muyle – Kuursaal. See, for example, A. Le Paige, "Conclusie," Rechtbank van Koophandel te Brussel, December 17, 1973, 1-2; A. Muyle, letter to Rechtbank van eerste aanleg te Antwerpen. Pittem, January 18, 1977; H. Donckers and L. de Clerck, "Vonnis," Rechtbank van Koophandel te Antwerpen, September 2, 1977.

⁹³⁹ G. Heylen, letter to A. Muyle, Antwerp, June 30, 1971.

⁹⁴⁰ Muyle, letter to Heylen, 6 July 1971.

would like you to know that I oppose against the exorbitant high prices which those companies currently dare to demand. Here I am, fighting a battle, resolutely and alone, from which you all will benefit in the end.”⁹⁴¹ Heylen's argument was not completely unfounded, given his power on the local market (and increasingly in other places in Flanders) and it was later confirmed by one of his competitors, Kloeck: “You can say what you want, but this Heylen accomplished that the Americans reduced their fees somewhat. Because at that time, they would receive 70% of the revenues. 70%! [...] Because of Heylen some things did change. Distribution fees became human then.”⁹⁴² In addition, Heylen forbade Muyle to contract films with the Americans himself, thereby not only demonstrating his power as a local player in the cinema market of Bruges, but also in his negotiations with the Americans. It is not difficult to read in these lines an attitude of Heylen that bespeaks his self-approval about his actions as well as a certain amount of martyrdom with which he sought to rescue the national film industry.

Heylen rejected most of the accusations declaring them unfounded and pointed out that Muyle's cinemas were still operating quite successfully despite the “difficulties by which the cinema sector is currently being troubled”.⁹⁴³ With regard to his involvement with cinemas Memling and Zwart Huis, he defended himself by pointing out that he also programmed two other cinemas in Bruges, which Muyle was well aware of and which also competed with Muyle's cinemas. Above all, however, Heylen emphasized that he programmed Zwart Huis and Memling upon explicit request of the owners and he simply “had to give in to this request in the interest of everyone, including yours [that of Muyle]”.⁹⁴⁴ Concerning Muyle's remark about Heylen's plans for founding his own distribution company, Heylen bluntly replied that this was none of Muyle's business.⁹⁴⁵ Less than two weeks after Heylen's letter, Muyle appointed his lawyer to deal with the conflict and another month later Heylen initiated proceedings at the Commercial Court of Antwerp.⁹⁴⁶ The case dragged along for decades and even survived both contesters.

Muyle's suspicion and (correct) supposition about the establishment of a distribution agency by Heylen points to a general disinformation of people involved and not involved in the business, about Heylen's next moves. As Corluy put it: “No one was supposed to know, when another theater

⁹⁴¹ G. Heylen, letter to A. Muyle, Antwerp, July 12, 1971 [my transl.; emphasis in source].

⁹⁴² Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen.

⁹⁴³ Heylen, letter to Muyle, July 12, 1971 [my transl.]

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid. [my transl.]

⁹⁴⁵ Just one year earlier Heylen even completely denied rumors about his setting up a distribution office, while twenty years later Heylen proudly recounted how, in 1970, he had established his own distribution office as an answer to the distribution conflict with the American majors. (See Heylen in Wauters and Mees, “Filmuitbating,” 6 and Heylen in De Foer, “Kempenaar-sinjoor,” s.p.)

⁹⁴⁶ W. Willems, letter to G. Heylen, s.l., July 20, 1971; A. le Paige, “Conclusies,” *Rechtbank van eerste aanleg te Brugge*, January 5, 1976, 2.

was to be taken over. But at a given moment, everyone knew."⁹⁴⁷ The same applied to the founding of Excelsior. Corluy:

Heylen screened Excelsior films in Antwerp, but no one was supposed to know from which distributor the films came from. When exhibitors from Brussels, for example, would enquire who the distributor was of films as *Heintje*, I had to say, they were dropped off by train. Of course, everyone knew that this was a lie, but they wouldn't ask further questions. Only during the distribution conflict with the Americans, Heylen "cleared" the films. And then they'd could pick up films from me. Competitors would call this "street distribution".⁹⁴⁸

It is remarkable in this light that long after the official launch of NV Excelsior, Heylen could not be connected to the company. Following another complaint filed by Muyle against Heylen and NV Excelsior early in 1977, investigations on behalf of the judicial officer in charge resulted in the conclusion that Heylen could not be linked to Excelsior, "neither as partner in the firm, nor as its manager, director, employee, or in any position whatsoever".⁹⁴⁹ In an interrogation of Heylen by the same judicial officer a month prior, Heylen explained that he acted solely in the role of advisor and purchasing agent of NV Excelsior.⁹⁵⁰

Muyle's assumptions about Heylen's founding of a distribution company turned out to be as justified as were his assumptions about Heylen's hidden agenda of taking over cinemas in Bruges, and thereby becoming a direct competitor of Muyle. As the two cases presented in the paragraphs above show, Heylen's position on the local and regional exhibition market had grown to an extent that he was able to successfully fight competitors. It is also an example of attempts to monopolize the market in other ways than using trade organizations (like the NBB in the Netherlands) within the weakly organized sector in Belgium, as has been discussed by Van Oort.⁹⁵¹ Nevertheless, the ongoing crisis that had been weakening the cinema industry for decades, did not pass over Heylen's empire. The 1970s and 1980s were marked by a general downsizing of his enterprise, most often manifested in a splitting up and closing down of many of his theaters.

4.5. Losing ground (mid 1970s – late 1980s)

In his study of the Flemish cinema market in the 1970s and early 1980s, Faucompret identified the market structure for eight major towns and cities in Flanders and Brussels (Table 5 below). More

⁹⁴⁷ Corluy, personal interview, July 22, 2008 [my transl.].

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid. Records in the Rex programming books attest to this. The first entry of a film distributed by Excelsior dates from 1971, that is, the time of the conflict between Heylen and the Hollywood majors.

⁹⁴⁹ Rechtbank Antwerpen, Official report, April 18, 1977, 1.

⁹⁵⁰ Rechtbank Antwerpen, Official report, March 25, 1977, 2.

⁹⁵¹ Van Oort, "Industrial Organization," 484-490.

generally, Faucompret's study exposes the meanwhile high degree of concentration of the Flemish cinema market, at least for the bigger towns and cities. We see that Heylen held a powerful position in Antwerp and Bruges as well as in the seaside resort Oostende. Next to Heylen, the Bert/Claeys family became increasingly visible as an important player. As I have elaborated on in Chapter 3, the Bert/Claeys family started their successful career in the cinema business in the late 1960s and, based on their multiscreen and later multiplex concept, grew to become one of the most important group of exhibitors nationwide. By the 1980s the Bert/Claeys exploited more screens than Heylen did.⁹⁵² What is highly remarkable is that in six of the eight cities and towns listed in Faucompret's study *either* Heylen *or* the Bert/Claeys group were amongst the biggest players and that their territories were well defined and both parties were not in direct competition (I will return to this in Paragraph 4.6).

Table 5: Industry structure of the cinema market in eight Flemish cities in the late 1970s/early 1980s.⁹⁵³

City	Industry structure	Exhibitor	Number of screens
Brussels	Oligopoly	Putzeys – UGC	23
		Pathé – FoI	18
		Mestdagh (Weis)	14 2
Antwerp	Quasi-monopoly	Rex-concern [sic] (Meerburg)	23 (3)
Ghent	Oligopoly	Cinex-Sofexim	7
		Bert Meerburg	10 3
Kortrijk/Kuurne	Monopoly	Bert	7
Bruges	Duopoly	Rex-concern	5
		Muylle [sic]	4
Liege	Quasi-monopoly	Rastelli	2
		(Dijck)	1
Hasselt/Genk	Monopoly	Claeys	12
Oostende	Duopoly	Rex-concern	1
		Hackendorf	6

Considering the large number of cinemas in Antwerp, and adding to it the cinemas in other cities, it becomes clear that Heylen had a favorable position in the distribution-exhibition game. Adding to this was Heylen's success as distributor. Judging from Faucompret's study, vertical integration was a rather rare phenomenon in Belgium. He counted only two exhibitors active in Belgium who were also active as distributors, one of them being Heylen.⁹⁵⁴ Faucompret's analysis of the economic performance of cinema chains in Flanders in 1979 and 1980 also revealed that generally cinema business was bad, but also that the performance strongly varied for the particular

⁹⁵² Belgische Beroepskamer der Cinematografie, "Liste des exploitants" (1982).

⁹⁵³ Faucompret, "Crisis in de Vlaamse bioscoopindustrie," 464. The names between brackets represent exhibitors with a relatively small market share in the corresponding city. In case the market share was even more negligible, the exhibitor is not listed at all.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Faucompret did not provide names of the exhibitor-distributors. It is possible that the other exhibitor-distributor was Jos Rastelli. See Duynslaegher, "Weg naar de Studio," 46.

cinema companies. Out of the thirteen cinema complexes that Faucompret examined, only five were considered profitable enough. As a matter of fact, Heylen's "Rex-concern" [sic] scored second best after Kortrijk *Pentascop* (by Bert/Claeys). Meerburg's Calypso was not considered profitable at all and scored second worst.⁹⁵⁵

The two cases examined in Paragraph 4.4. show that Heylen's increased power was anathema to competing exhibitors and distributors. However, accusations against Heylen reached far beyond those of perceived economic inequalities. In the wake of the distribution conflict between Heylen and the majors as well as in face of the increasing dominance of Heylen on the local (and even regional) cinema market and the predominance of commercial films in his cinemas, the 1970s were marked by a revolt of the film critics and local film buffs.

4.5.1. The emergence of an alternative circuit

On the one hand, this had to do with Heylen's growing influence as distributor. Within a decade after its official foundation in the early 1970s, Excelsior became the leading distributor in Belgium.

Christeyns and Hollants from cinema Rubens in Zwijndrecht remarked about the composition of the package deals: "Excelsior films were always included as well, but they did have the best films."⁹⁵⁶ As Heylen's most important competitor in the 1980s, Kloeck added: "Words proved to be very persevering that he was screening dirt cheap, while this wasn't always true. [...] Well, the image has been persisting way up until the 1970s. And it was something you could hook into."⁹⁵⁷

Nevertheless, Heylen's film supply at cinemas in Antwerp in general and his conflict with the American majors, also caused raised eyebrows amongst film critics and local film buffs. They publicly reprimanded Heylen for his neglect of the films of better quality. At the statutory annual meeting of the Antwerp delegation of the Belgian Film Press Association it was held that "the normal commercial context within which films find their ways to their audiences in our country and especially in Antwerp, is of such kind, that for a major part the evolution of modern film art cannot be followed."⁹⁵⁸ Along with it, the members of the meeting praised the efforts of the local film clubs to show less commercial films.

In their 1970 article in *Film & televisie*, Mees and Wauters also raged against Heylen and heavily criticized the situation in Antwerp.⁹⁵⁹ Laconically they stated: "We don't have anything

⁹⁵⁵ Faucompret, "Crisis in de Vlaamse bioscoopindustrie," 460.

⁹⁵⁶ Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview [my transl.]

⁹⁵⁷ Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen [my transl.]

⁹⁵⁸ Quoted in Mees and Wauters, "Filmuitbating," 5 [my transl.]

⁹⁵⁹ *Film & televisie* was the organ of the Catholic Film League.

against the person of Mr. Heylen – for this he is much too friendly, friendliness, which, by the way, was materialized in free cinema tickets for the interviewers – but we do have something against the manner in which film life in Antwerp is evolving.”⁹⁶⁰ According to Mees and Wauters, Antwerp had long ceased to be the cinema city it once was and which it pretended to be according to Heylen's publicity slogans. Their biggest fears concerned the neglectful film and cinema supply due to the extensive monopolization and the lack of objective film and cinema news (which I will return to in one of the following subparagraphs). Regarding the former, Mees and Wauters argued that neither renovation and modernization of cinemas nor, attempts to screen the latest productions were necessary, and were financially and risk-intensive anyway. As much as the authors acknowledged the difficult times in which the cinema sector resided, as much as they cherished hope for new chances: “At a moment that the exhibition sector is on the verge of a complete reversal resulting from a change in demand and a change in the films, ‘the capital of Flanders’ is exposed to an inert and hardly manipulable apparatus. In Antwerp, they are hardly capable of getting an idea of what is happening in the film world right now. We thought it was necessary to draw attention on this.”⁹⁶¹

The tenor of their article was similar to that of Nelissen, another well-established critic, who called for “development aid for Antwerp cinema city” in an article published in the same year. Nelissen asserted that “[e]very unscreened film is a form of censorship, even though it is a commercial one.”⁹⁶² He disapproved of the lack of alternative – less commercial – productions in Antwerp cinemas: “It would be undemocratic however, to resort in state-imposed commitments while allowing Heylen to win the monopoly game under the guise of free competition. It is, however, just as absurd to patiently keep ensuring a cultural – or rather acultural – dictatorship which Heylen can permit himself after having acquired his monopoly.”⁹⁶³ In order to solve this problem, Nelissen appealed to all film clubs – “from the left and from the right” – to form an alliance against the “Rex-concern”.⁹⁶⁴ About a year later, Nelissen's dream of an alliance seemed to come true in the forming of the VOZA. Admittedly, the participating cinemas were not all film clubs in the strict sense. On the contrary, most of them were regular cinemas located outside Antwerp's city center. Also, at least to some of the VOZA members, the association was rather informal and did not last long.⁹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it did point to the possibility that Heylen's power was not entirely insurmountable.

This became manifest in a number of initiatives to bring less commercial films to Antwerp, ranging from underground films to productions from countries hitherto widely absent on Antwerp

⁹⁶⁰ Mees and Wauters, “Filmuitbating,” 4 [emphasis in source, my transl.]

⁹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5 [my transl.]

⁹⁶² Nelissen, “Ontwikkelingshulp,” s.p. [my transl.].

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.* [my transl.].

⁹⁶⁴ It must be noted that at that time Belgian society was still pillarized, i.e. organized along different ideological, religious and/or political convictions, the Catholic being the strongest pillar, followed by the socialists and the liberals.

⁹⁶⁵ See Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview. See also van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 3B.

screens as well as reruns of (much) older material. In Chapter 3, I have described how film festivals entered, and film clubs and screening venues for alternative content mushroomed across, the city during the 1970s and (partly) the 1980s. Here I will focus on more economic and business-historical reasons for their successes and failures and what changed in Antwerp's cinematic physiognomy.

From an economic point of view advantages of alternative film screening venues were, for example, that they had comparatively low advertisement costs, thanks to a relatively stable audience and because they would often rely on extended runs or reruns and could therefore rely on word of mouth.⁹⁶⁶ Jos Rastelli – who had successfully launched his studio-concept in various cities and towns in Flanders from the 1960s onwards – explained, for example, that a studio “is different from a day-to-day consumption cinema. It implies an anti-commercial programming strategy. In a studio not the box office is central but the film.”⁹⁶⁷ Rastelli's objective was to create – what was in his eyes – the most ideal film-viewing experience, which for him was characterized by the absence of concession stands, commercials and hostesses in his theaters. Most often these alternative venues made little profit, depended on voluntary work, and were experienced as being less comfortable than the purely commercial venues. Also, for Kloeck, who was involved in the foundation and operation of the alternative film venues Monty and Cartoon's, it was less about making money.⁹⁶⁸

In October 1976 a team of film aficionados and friends consisting of Michel Apers, Jan Jaspers, and Michel Vandeghinste (joined by Kloeck shortly after) reopened former parish hall cinema Monty.⁹⁶⁹ The opening was a success and no one less than Alfred Hitchcock himself was reported to have sent a telegram with the best wishes on the occasion.⁹⁷⁰ Monty – followed by Cartoon's, which opened less than two years later – distinguished itself from its commercially oriented counterparts in its innovative and original approach to film exhibition.⁹⁷¹ It offered an open

⁹⁶⁶ See S. Frank, “Sure Seaters Discover an Audience (1952),” in *Moviegoing in America*, edited by G. A. Waller (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), 256-257.

⁹⁶⁷ Rastelli in van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 7B [my transl.].

⁹⁶⁸ Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen [my transl.]. He compared the formation of their group with the Dutch soccer team Ajax in the 1970s, not in the sense of a dream team, since Ajax “was actually the inferior team, but because it was constituted solely of people from the same neighborhood. They are passionate about football, but that was completely accidental.”

⁹⁶⁹ Opinions of the two sole survivors (at the time of the interviews) of the founding of the Monty diverged about who stood at the cradle of the new Monty. While Vandeghinste emphasized the fact that it was Apers, Jaspers and himself who reopened the Monty in 1976 and that Eric Kloeck joined the group a month later, Kloeck stressed that Vandeghinste in fact stood more in the sideline (M. Vandeghinste, personal interview with M. van Ommen, Antwerp, May 2, 2011; Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen). The official announcement in the supplements of *Belgisch Staatsblad* (Belgian Official Journal) listed Apers, Vandeghinste, and Jaspers as the founders (FOD Justitie. “Bijlage tot het Belgisch Staatsblad.” October 27, 1976, 31293). These three were also mentioned as directors of cinema Monty in a newspaper article on the occasion of the reopening of the cinema (F.P., “Ciné Monty onder nieuwe vlag,” *De Nieuwe Gazet*, October 9, 1976: 16).

⁹⁷⁰ See quote from a newspaper article published in *De Nieuwe Gazet* (October 18, 1976), which was reprinted in: Cine Monty, programming folder, October 22 – 28, 1976: s.p. However, it cannot be confirmed that (and when) this article was actually printed. The only article about the opening of Monty from around that time was F.P., “Ciné Monty onder nieuwe vlag” and did not contain the reference to Hitchcock.

⁹⁷¹ NV Cartoon's was officially founded on 15 June 1978 by (amongst friends of) Guy Dandelooy, Eric Kloeck, and Michel Apers (FOD Justitie, *Bijlage tot het Belgisch Staatsblad*, June 23, 1978: 13002-13003).

and rather flexible programming, proposing to respond directly to audience requests concerning (the prolongation of) particular films.⁹⁷² Notes in the cinema's programming folders frequently alluded to possible changes in the film program and asked customers to regularly check corresponding announcements in the daily press.⁹⁷³ In addition to this rather interactive way of film programming, they would program three or four films on a weekly basis, instead of having the same production screen for one or more weeks. In addition, they organized retrospectives as well as thematic screenings, such as horror nights ("the later the night, the creepier the films"), the *bulderlachnacht* (night of roaring laughter with slapstick screenings) or Fifties-evenings (exclusive screenings of productions from the 1950s).⁹⁷⁴

Their originality seemed to pay off. According to a survey conducted by the Monty team after the first half year, the average age of the Monty customer was 25.7 years, going to the cinemas more than twice as often as the average Belgian cinemagoer. This, in combination with the top ten films from the first six months of the Monty's existence, suggests that it were indeed predominantly cinephiles and film buffs frequenting the cinema.⁹⁷⁵ In addition, because of their success (making profit from the screening of older material) they attracted distributors' attention and were finally taken seriously. 1,000 admissions a night was not unusual in the late 1970s.⁹⁷⁶ By comparison, Heylen's bigger cinemas, such as Metro, Pathé and Quellin only managed to exceed these numbers on weekends, and not structurally either.⁹⁷⁷ Partly thriving on the success of Monty, Cartoon's – a former whiskey bar in the hands of a local hockey club – opened its doors in June 1978.⁹⁷⁸

Neither Monty nor Cartoon's succeeded in keeping alive their success however. There were several reasons for this, ranging from disagreements on management and the course to be taken, up to disappointing cinema attendance vis-à-vis rising exploitation costs and last but not least, the opening of new studio-like cinemas by Heylen. In 1982 Monty closed and in 1983 it was agreed that Cartoon's was to be taken over by Calypso.⁹⁷⁹ According to the minutes from the extraordinary

⁹⁷² Cine Monty, "Monty's eerste Filmweek," programming folder, October 7 – 15, 1976: s.p. From this perspective the members of the Monty almost sound apologetic when they explain why they were not able to satisfy all wishes due to distributional contracts and copy rights as well as the poor quality of a number of older material.

⁹⁷³ See, for example, Cine Monty, programming folder, February 18 – 25, 1977: s.p.

⁹⁷⁴ Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen; Vandeghinste, personal interview with van Ommen; Cine Monty, programming folder, June 24 – July 1, 1977: s.p.

⁹⁷⁵ Cine Monty, "Monty's eerste Filmweek," s.p. The top ten included, amongst others, *Cabaret* (Fosse, 1972, USA), *A Clockwork Orange* (Kubrick, 1971, UK/USA), *Marat/Sade* (Brook, 1967, UK), *The Servant* (Losey, 1963, UK), *The Taking of Pelham* (Sargent, 1974, USA), *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (Forman, 1975, USA), and *Dersu Uzala* (Kurosawa, 1975, USSR/Japan). As Kloeck remembered for Monty, however, their regular customers were very mixed, from peers and older cinephiles, to people from the neighborhood and children (Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen).

⁹⁷⁶ Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen.

⁹⁷⁷ See, for example, the ledgers for cinema Metro and Pathé for 1977 and for Quellin for 1979.

⁹⁷⁸ Vandeghinste, personal interview with van Ommen; Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen; FOD Justitie, *Bijlage tot het Belgisch Staatsblad*, June 23, 1978: 13002-13003.

⁹⁷⁹ NV Cartoon's. "Bijzondere Algemene Vergadering: Doorverhuur exploitatie aan Calypso Antwerpen N.V." November 3, 1983.

general meeting of NV Cartoon's held in November 1983, the main motivation for the management of NV Cartoon's to take this decision was the company's hopeless and unviable situation: "The future perspective of Cartoon's as an independently operating film exhibitor can be considered suffocating at least, based on past results as well as on what we can expect in the future."⁹⁸⁰ In order for NV Cartoon's to survive, wages had to be cut. In addition, what also helped the company to survive was the closing of Monty which helped facilitating the opening of a third (far smaller) screen by NV Cartoon's. Also, Cartoon's could count on the support of Meerburg's Calypso group against Heylen's film "blocking maneuvers".⁹⁸¹

These "blocking maneuvers" to which the team of NV Cartoon's alluded were certain unfavorable distributional practices by distributors and powerful (groups of) exhibitors. As André Weis, exhibitor in Brussels and involved in the Belgian distribution company Ciné-Vog, explained the practices of "movie murders," which, according to him

[...] is inevitable. Just imagine that the groups contract the complete production of a dealer, including priorities (by which other groups or exhibitors are excluded as film renters) and with the right to reject, let's say, three out of ten films. What do you think happens with the three rejected films? You'll probably never get to see them. It is almost impossible that they even show somewhere else. They simply disappear in the basement of a distribution agency. Or the copies are not imported. And then there is also the drama with the films that disappear from the program after a week, because they didn't make enough money during the weekend. [...] You do make mistakes. Maybe you believe in a certain film and you rent it for a period of, let's say, six weeks. And after one week it turns out to be a flop. That is tough luck for sure. But you do have to persevere.⁹⁸²

His argument is in line with that of the film critics and film buffs quoted earlier, who complained about the lack of variety and quality of the films, particularly in Antwerp, due to Heylen's domination of the local market. It also illustrates the above-mentioned need of (positive) word of mouth for the smaller productions in order to get legs.⁹⁸³

A takeover of NV Cartoon's, including the cinemas, would not only ensure employment to the staff of Cartoon's (as one of the preconditions) but would also rescue the three cinemas of a certain death, in the face of the announcement of Albert Bert to build a twenty-screen multiplex in Antwerp. The contract was agreed on for the period of five years, starting 1 January 1984.⁹⁸⁴ In 1985,

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁸¹ Ibid.

⁹⁸² Weis in van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 13B.

⁹⁸³ As Weis recounted the case of a Swedish film, he had contracted for one of his cinemas, a film that turned out to be a flop. Weis kept it on the bill for two weeks, although he knew it was an anti-success: "In the end I was happy to have tried it, because I'm convinced that there were people who came to see the picture in the second week, who wanted to see the film and wouldn't have had the chance to, if the film had been removed after the first week. And then there are the victims of bad weather conditions. [...] The cinema does encounter a setback from this and in some cases, this is very unfortunate, when a film gets prematurely killed in a particular place because of that." (Weis in van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 13B.)

⁹⁸⁴ NV Cartoon's, "Bijzondere Algemene Vergadering" [my transl.].

however, the news got out that Meerburg was to withdraw from Flanders for good and sell both his Calypso-complexes in Antwerp and Ghent.⁹⁸⁵ While, Kloeck from Cartoon's as well as Rastelli (who had become successful with his studio-formula in Leuven and other Flemish cities but had failed in Antwerp in the early 1970s) were said to be interested, both parties withdrew because they would not get the Calypso cinemas in Ghent along with the Calypso screens in Antwerp.⁹⁸⁶

Such a new alliance between NV Calypso Antwerpen and NV Cartoon's had the advantage to form a counterforce against Heylen. In a letter, NV Calypso explained its main aims with regard to film programming after the recent takeover of the Cartoon's complex. Next to the company's vision concerning first runs of "art pictures that are difficult to handle" it also contained explicit references to programming strategies in connection with Heylen.⁹⁸⁷ Calypso requested a "second run policy for films released in Heylen's theaters" and it pointed out that this had been done in the past, with great success, "especially with 'difficult' pictures which didn't get much of a chance", as films partly made more money in second run in Cartoon's than in first run in Heylen's cinemas.⁹⁸⁸ However, as Calypso also claimed, recently Heylen had used the film club Filmhuis (in Antwerp's historical center) for subsequent runs of his (Excelsior) films, thereby blocking them for Calypso and Cartoon's – a strategy NV Calypso rendered "unacceptable".⁹⁸⁹

This practice of which Heylen was accused by NV Calypso and NV Cartoon's not only stands in contrast to the code of a distributor to act in the interest of the producer and give the film the best chance for the highest revenues, but it also partly sheds new light on an often heard assumption by Heylen's opponents for his neglect of the "more difficult film," as he allegedly did not consider them financially lucrative.⁹⁹⁰ According to former employees, Heylen did not believe that he could earn his living with more artistic films.⁹⁹¹ In interviews, Heylen himself partly admitted and partly defended this for various reasons. He did not beat around the bush, for example, about his conviction that cinema was, first and foremost, a place to entertain people and to offer them a few hours of escape: "Film is there for the masses, not exclusively for the hyper fastidious."⁹⁹² Heylen defended himself against the accusations of having deprived the public of films he did not like: "Who is talking such

⁹⁸⁵ The cinema complex was eventually sold to Superclub.

⁹⁸⁶ R. Stallaerts, "Film in de jaren zestig te Antwerpen," in *Antwerpen. De jaren zestig*, edited by B. Bern, J. Buyck, W. Houbrechts et al. (Schoten: Hadewijch, 1988), 117; F. Crols, "Wil u Calypso, 30 miljoen?" *Trends. Financieel Economisch Magazine* 11, no. 239 (November 29, 1985): 51.

⁹⁸⁷ NV Calypso, letter to unknown recipient, s.l., s.d. This letter is part of the private collection of Michel Apers, Box 2.

⁹⁸⁸ They provided as an example the film *Storia di Piera* (1983, Italy/France/West-Germany, Ferreri) which earned BEF 150,000 (1,000 admissions) in first run at Heylen's cinema Ambassades and BEF 240,000 (1,900 admissions) in second run in Cartoon's (NV Calypso, letter to unknown recipient [emphasis in source]). The letter had neither date nor recipient, but judging from the content and since it was written in English is likely that it might have been directed to a distributor.

⁹⁸⁹ NV Calypso, letter to unknown recipient [emphasis in source].

⁹⁹⁰ See, for example, Mees and Wauters, "Filmuitbating," 4; Nelissen, "Ontwikkelingshulp," s.p.; Van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 3B.

⁹⁹¹ Magiels, personal interview; Zeguers, personal interview.

⁹⁹² Heylen in Crols, "De Grote Draak," 47. See Heylen in Wauters and Mees, "Filmuitbating," 6.

rubbish? This would be theft. In fact, it is even impossible. We are contractually bound. But if the critics praise a film to the skies and the public is not interested, then we can't do anything about it."⁹⁹³

His commitment to serve the public – *his* public – well and in an optimum way, was actually stressed most frequently by him: “I'm in the service of public taste. [...] You can't force people to watch films they don't want to have. Then you're chasing them out of the cinema.”⁹⁹⁴ But he also said that he did it in the interests of his employees: “I'm a business man and I'm employing six hundred people. I can't keep them if I play films of the type ‘d'arts et d'essai’.”⁹⁹⁵ When he was asked by van Gaelen what he thought about culture he replied:

Culture. What is culture? A form of refinement, of mental civilization. Well, that's what we try to bring this to the extent of what is possible. The ambition to serve culture becomes clearly manifest in our production of news reels, short films, in our special screenings, in our cooperation with the cine clubs. Particularly our newsreels and short films take a special place within the totality of our activities. By producing these newsreels and documentaries, we intend to propagate the values which are present in our people with regard to culture, economy, history and industry. Yet it is my conviction that industry ought to go hand in hand with culture. Without economic success culture is not possible.⁹⁹⁶

As a matter of fact, his arguments regarding his “public service” was not seldom accompanied by his pursuit of profitability, usually included in a side note: “Indeed, for certain films, there is hardly any public to get a return of investments. We did some “marketing” [sic]. There have been trials with a few very difficult films, and these trials all ended with loss. Some very difficult films for cinephiles just can't return the investments made in exhibition, due to little interest.”⁹⁹⁷

Another reason Heylen provided for his preference for more commercial films was that, according to him, Antwerp audiences differed significantly from those in other Belgian cities, particularly Louvain and Brussels:

Of course, I agree that “the” audience does not exist. The audience is also a range of different types of people [sic]. But in our case, we have to talk about the Antwerp audience and throughout the years we have come to know it as an audience that stands with both feet on the ground. In Antwerp, “the man from the street” goes to the cinema and we absolutely have to take this into consideration. It is different in Brussels, the audience there is a bit “snob”, you have embassies there, consulates, headquarters of important organizations and governing bodies. In Louvain you have the student audience, so that you have possibilities you do not have in Antwerp, or only very rarely.⁹⁹⁸

⁹⁹³ Heylen in van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 7 [my transl.]

⁹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7B [my transl.]

⁹⁹⁵ Heylen in Crols, “De Grote Draak,” 47 [my transl.]

⁹⁹⁶ Heylen in van Gaelen, “Zij die van film leven,” 7B [my transl.]

⁹⁹⁷ Heylen in Wauters and Mees, “Filmuitbating,” 6-7 [my transl.]

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6 [my transl.]

But in Heylen's rhetoric the Belgian audience differed, too, from audiences in other countries. When being confronted with the success of his opponent Meerburg in the Netherlands, Heylen replied: "Here is Belgium and there are The Netherlands and you also know that there is a huge difference between the Dutch mentality and ours. The living habits in The Netherlands are different. The taste is different. The food is different."⁹⁹⁹ Finally, in Heylen's vision, the American audience, of course, differed from the European one and "[s]ome American companies simply don't take into account that America and Europe are two completely different worlds with two totally divergent mentalities."¹⁰⁰⁰

The important role Antwerp played for the national film industry, was underlined by Mees and Wauters' concern they expressed in their 1970s article. Although this article had the rather general title "Film uitbating. De Toeschouwer" (Film exhibition. The spectator), Mees and Wauters focused particularly on Antwerp because "the power that is represented by the concern in Antwerp, threatens to spread across other parts of the Flemish country" and while "the film exhibition is on the move everywhere, in Antwerp this branch is drabness itself".¹⁰⁰¹ Even before Monty and Cartoon's (re)opened their doors in order to offer to Antwerp citizens different experiences of film viewing and cinemagoing, Rastelli had also tried his luck in Antwerp in the early 1970s. In the 1960 he had become the biggest player in Louvain with his *studio* concept and horizontal film programming. Instead of continuous screenings, Rastelli screened a film every day at a fixed time, making it possible to screen more films a week as well as being able to adjust his programming to the preferences of local audiences (i.e. students who were particularly attracted to late night screenings). His studio-concept implied the absence of trailers and commercials and attractive ticket prices in order to cultivate a core audience that visits the cinema on a regular basis, preferably several times a week.¹⁰⁰² In the early 1970s he opened two studios (Studio I and Studio II) in the basement of the Century Center (where Cineac had been located until the 1960s) at the De Keyserlei, right across from Antwerp's central station. While Rastelli was able to extend his success to other towns and cities, his stay in Antwerp was a short one. Heylen took over Rastelli's studios in 1974, altered their names to locally more familiar ones Wapper and Tijn. In 1976 both venues closed, to be opened again in 1981, added by Brabo.¹⁰⁰³

⁹⁹⁹ Heylen in van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 5B [my transl.]

¹⁰⁰⁰ Ibid., 3B [my transl.]

¹⁰⁰¹ Mees and Wauters, "Filmuitbating," 5.

¹⁰⁰² Rastelli in Duynslaegher, "Weg naar de Studio," 46-47.

¹⁰⁰³ Several rumors circulated about the takeover: while Zeguers remembers Rastelli asking them to take over the programming (and exploitation) of the two studios (Zeguers, personal interview), an article about Rastelli in *Knack* mentioned bizarre incidents happening in Antwerp that eventually forced him to leave (P. Duynslaegher, "Studio Geel," *Knack* 18, no. 40 (October 5, 1988): 47).

That Heylen was not completely indifferent towards less commercial productions can be also inferred from his agreements with the local Film Club, which programmed films in Heylen's cinema Century in Borgerhout on Thursday (and later also Sunday) evenings in the 1970s. In addition, he also implicitly facilitated initiatives for the screening of more artistic films by renting out his cinemas on the occasion of film festivals. It is unclear however, to which extent these actions were based purely on economic considerations. Heylen's first own purpose-constructed venue for more artistic films opened in 1979. Rex Club, often referred to as the "little brother" of cinema Rex, was located in the basement of the Rex.¹⁰⁰⁴ It opened with a screening of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Ehe der Maria Braun* (1979, West-Germany). Nevertheless, despite Heylen's occasional ventures into more artistic films (a few of his cinemas were known for the screening of less commercial material), his focus did remain on the bigger commercial successes and traditional exhibition practices.

Although their success was only short-lived, new exhibitors as the ones of Monty and Cartoon's, had proved by exploring new ways of programming (reruns of older material, highly frequent program changes, interactive, flexible film programming) that a revival of cinema attendance was possible, if mostly amongst special segments of the local audience. While Heylen's more conventional exhibition practices can be seen as one major area where he started losing ground in the 1970s, the industry's move towards smaller auditoriums was another.

4.5.2. More screens, less cinemas

Next to market concentration, the conversion to multi-screen venues was another way of risk reduction in the ailing cinema industry. The relatively late and slow change in the physiognomy of Antwerp's cinema landscape from predominantly single-screen picture palaces to multi-screen venues from the 1970s onwards has been discussed in relation to socio-geographical developments in Chapter 3. Here I will touch upon some socio-economic aspects of that change and I will focus on multi-screen cinema complexes. Although the terms multi-screen theater and multiplex are often used synonymously, here I will follow Hanson's distinction between the two. Accordingly, multi-screen theaters were often constructed by converting larger cinemas and splitting them up in several auditoriums and thus differed from purpose-built, newly constructed multiplexes with five or more screens.¹⁰⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰⁴ Apparently, plans for such a venue had been existing since 1947 (Heylen quoted in Van Liempt, "Geschiedenis van de Antwerpse bioscopen (II)," 158-160).

¹⁰⁰⁵ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 159. For an extensive discussion of the multiplex see Paragraph 4.6.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there were several reasons why exhibitors constructed multi-screen complexes or split up existing single screen cinemas. Cinema attendance had been falling steadily since the immediate post-war years. By the 1970s, attendance had dropped to roughly a fifth.¹⁰⁰⁶ The huge picture palaces could not play to their capacity crowd anymore. While incomes thus decreased, operation costs (e.g. for heating, staff) remained the same or even increased. In other words, large single screen picture palaces became highly uneconomical. The tendency towards smaller auditoriums under one roof also offered cinemagoers a wider choice of films, while exhibitors were more flexible in their programming. With a shared projection booth for several screens, for example, films could be played on alternating screens, dependent on whether the number of visitors climbed or fell.¹⁰⁰⁷ In addition, it meant that the same film could be projected on different screens without the needs for extra copies and it was also cost-saving because it required less equipment and fewer projectionists.¹⁰⁰⁸

While in the mid-1970s, Heylen obstinately announced the return of the big cinemas, his competitor Meerburg was convinced that the opposite was actually the case.¹⁰⁰⁹ The huge success and rapid expansion of the Bert/Claeys group would indeed prove Meerburg right. It took some years and initiatives by other investors on Antwerp's cinema market before Heylen gave in and started investing in smaller cinemas and multi-screen complexes. Each opening of another of Heylen's cinemas was accompanied with the spectacular ballyhoo that had become the trademark of Heylen's campaigns. The new cinema complexes were presented in stunning superlatives. In 1977, for example, Heylen promoted the newly reopened cinema Sinjoor (formerly Pathé) as "the temple of intense film experience and the biggest modern cinema in Western Europe [...] equipped with the most modern technical gadgets and optimal comfort."¹⁰¹⁰

Nevertheless, the new complexes could not put the downfall of Heylen's cinema empire to a stop. Rather they symbolized the last throes and were little more than a keeping of up appearances. Some of the factors contributing to the failure of Heylen's latest projects are of a rather common nature and have been described, for example, by Hanson for multi-screens in British cities. According to Hanson, multi-screen cinemas had a number of drawbacks. Because in many cases, the multi-screen venues were not purpose-built (as the multiplexes were), but conversions from former larger cinemas, they were often marked by bad vision (bad line of sight, tiny screens) and bad acoustics as

¹⁰⁰⁶ Biltreyst and Meers, *De verlichte stad*, 282, table 2.

¹⁰⁰⁷ However, this also implied multi-screen cinemas could keep films longer on the program and that exhibitors of subsequent run cinemas in the outskirts (still) had to wait for a considerable time before the films would be scheduled for their theaters. See for example, Sartor, "De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop (5)," 31.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 122; Albert Bert in Duynslaegher, "Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis," 49.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 5B.

¹⁰¹⁰ Cine Sinjoor, opening folder, December 14, 1977.

well as lack of legroom, due to unfavorable split ups of the formerly large theaters. In addition, comfort was definitely not enhanced by the often-recycled equipment and furnishings.¹⁰¹¹

Newspaper articles published before and after Heylen's bankruptcy in 1993, reflect all of the above-mentioned factors. One of the respondents to a newspaper survey about the desirability of a new cinema complex in Antwerp summarized the current situation quite plastically:

The reason for [the migration of cinemagoers to Kinopolis in Brussels, KL] is very logical: in Antwerp, there is no quality and no supply. The sound installations (?) are of toy quality, the screens are suitable for smurfs and I'm not even talking about the horrible seats. The argumentation of Mr Heylen is one from twenty years ago. He has to learn to move with the times and certainly with high-tec possibilities which today's mega cinemas have to offer: Lucas Sound sound installations, 70mm facilities, giant screens etc.¹⁰¹²

In other words, Heylen's investments in multi-screen venues hardly paid off. The hoped-for masses stayed clear of his cinemas. Meanwhile, the broad-scale introduction of the VCR had made it possible that people were able to choose films and watch them at a time and conditions of their preference. While the direct link between the broad-scale introduction of VCR and the decline in cinema attendance has often been disputed by academics (amongst which Docherty et al. being the best known opponents), according to Vogel, the boost of ancillary markets for producing revenues and taking market shares from theatrical exhibition took place everywhere in the western world.¹⁰¹³ When Heylen, however, was asked in an interview for the Flemish financial economic magazine *Trends* about the crisis in cinema attendance he replied with the same self-congratulatory attitude as he did towards other accusations:

Crisis in the film industry? How crisis, where crisis? There is nothing as boring as dozing off in front of the tv. That is not the way to relax. People want to relax and they'll find it in the cinemas. You don't watch spectacle films as *Passage to India*, *Ran*, *Amadeus*, *Killing Fields*, *Year of the Dragon*, *The Terminator*, *Back to the Future* [all Excelsior films, K.L.] on a cheap screen, but on a room-high white linen in a comfortable chair with deep sound from the front, the back and the side. In the evenings, the cinemas of the Rex are the spine of Antwerp's night life.¹⁰¹⁴

What Heylen apparently forgot was, that the Station Quarter was not anymore what it had once been (see Paragraph 4.6).

¹⁰¹¹ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 121, 159.

¹⁰¹² Quote Joeri Janssens in P.S., "Cinema's toch liefst in de binnenstad," s.p.

¹⁰¹³ Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 68. See Docherty et al., *The Last Picture Show*.

¹⁰¹⁴ Heylen in Crols, "De Grote Draak," 49.

4.5.3. Publicity

In the wake of a constantly diminishing audience, good publicity had become even more important. I have mentioned earlier that the importance of publicity for the cinema business is widely acknowledged by marketing experts and scholars. It is considered just as important by many experts from the field of film production, exhibition, distribution. Tony Lambert, experienced exhibitor of district cinemas in Deurne and initiator of the VOZA, underlined the importance of publicity especially for cinemas outside the city center and after the massive cinema deaths in suburban and rural areas. While before, mostly people from a certain district or neighborhood attended the cinemas in their own neighborhood, “[n]ow they're coming from all over the place. With publicity you can attract people who live 30 to 40 kilometers away.”¹⁰¹⁵ Another exhibitor from outside of Antwerp's city center, who had been in the exhibition business since 1917 exclaimed: “If only you make hubbub!”¹⁰¹⁶ Belgium's *enfant terrible* film maker Robbe de Hert even went as far as to state that “[y]ou can sell sh... to the audience, if you do it the right way.”¹⁰¹⁷

I have previously described how Heylen made use of a broad spectrum of advertisement tools, from advertisements in newspapers and trade journals and publicity stunts up to newsreels, *calicots* and other on-street promotion. After the 1960s, the visibility of the Rex cinema group increased even more, due to Heylen's increased share on the local cinema market, but also because he knew how to lobby for his cause. The increased visibility in the media was manifested most clearly in the film advertisement pages in the daily press. Generally, until up into the 1960s all advertisements for all cinemas in Antwerp were placed on the same page(s). Only later the advertisements (not the film listings) became separated: Heylen would advertise on a different page within the same edition of the newspaper than his competitors would. A comparison between the page containing ads for Heylen's cinemas (Image 8 below) and the page with ads for his competitors (Image 9) in 1973 is revealing about the importance of publicity for Heylen compared to his competitors, but also points to Heylen's power in the local press. It is not only the difference in size that worked in favor of Heylen's cinemas, but also the misleading title of the page “Deze week in de Antwerp'se cinemas” (This week in Antwerp cinemas), as it suggests an overview of film ads for all

¹⁰¹⁵ Lambert in F. Sartor, "De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop," *Film en televisie* 299 (April 1982): 26.

¹⁰¹⁶ Rijdtant in F. Sartor, "De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop (4)," *Film en televisie* 311 (April 1983): 29.

¹⁰¹⁷ R. De Hert, "De TV is de grootste dief," *De Vlaamse Gids* 6 (November-December 1983): 21-22. In the same talk de Hert also underlined that neither script nor film stars were the most important elements which make a film more likely to be successful: “I give you an example. In case of *The Gods Must be Crazy*, who is the star in that film, that little bottle of Coca-Cola? This film has been playing for 20 weeks now, there is no film star, it's only guys from Botswana! [...] When Spielberg's *E.T.* started, he had eleven pages, a little more than I had with *Camera Soetra*, eleven pages with notes on the set, that was no script, but in his eleven pages there was something. What you have to tell, *that* is what the script is for me, whether it comprises 100 pages or eleven.”

cinemas in Antwerp. Because of this, in combination with the spectacular layout and design of the page, the ads placed by the VOZA on the next page, might be easily overlooked.

The battle between the different groups of exhibitors was clearly visible in the local newspapers. As these examples provided above originate in the period when the distribution conflict between Heylen and the American majors was at its height, it is likely that Heylen was pulling out all the stops for the promotion of his films, to compensate for the lack of American blockbusters. One and a half years later, with the coming of Meerburg's Calypso cinema complex, ads for the Calypso screens were placed directly under that for Heylen's cinemas and exceeded them in size by far (Image 10). However, next to the full advertisement page which Heylen still placed in the newspaper once a week, these kinds of advertisements were placed by Heylen in the daily newspaper several times a week and now also slightly resembled that of the VOZA, but under the title "Antwerpen Kinemastad".

By the 1980s, not much had changed compared to about a decade before (during the distribution conflict and before the coming of the Calypso triplex) in the shares of ads for Heylen's cinemas compared to those of his competitors. The only exception was that at the place where ads for the VOZA had once been placed, now ads for new competitors of Heylen (Calypso, Cartoon's and Monty) were to be found. Furthermore, Heylen kept the regular ad with a film overview of all films playing at his cinemas in a given week (Image 11). Yet, different from that in 1972 the title "Antwerpen Kinemastad" was no longer used. Given the prominence of the Calypso cinemas in the middle of Heylen's Station Quarter as well as the quite successful alternative film venues Monty and Cartoon's, it would have sounded rather ostentatious. The title, which was kept until the end, was now an old and rather neutral one: "Waarheen te Antwerpen" ("Where to go in Antwerp").

Famous stars kept frequenting Antwerp. PR manager from 1980s onwards, Magiels stated that although such invitations of big stars usually happened upon initiative of the most powerful studios, what Excelsior achieved in bringing famous stars to Antwerp was indeed exceptional.¹⁰¹⁸ The reception of such stars of course was quite a cost-intensive venture, since it not only required the arrangement of fancy dinners and excursions, but also the costs for travel and accommodation. However, as Magiels remembered, the presence of stars in Antwerp "actually didn't cost that much money, because usually it was part of a promotional tour by the production company. Besides, Heylen had his contacts everywhere, so that board and lodging etc. for the celebrities was often free of charge. You can actually see this in the *Antwerpse Kinema Aktualiteiten*."¹⁰¹⁹

Indeed, a closer look at these newsreels, henceforth AKA, reveals recurring references to brand names of cars, catering services, hotels, airlines as well as to the presence of local and national VIPs at the celebrities' receptions. It might not have been that obvious to the cinemagoer, as people had long stopped visiting the cinema on a weekly basis. But in retrospective and by consecutively watching the AKAs from the same period, a shift becomes clear: while in the 1960s, the AKAs were mostly staged around local news (e.g. opening of Kennedy tunnel under the river Scheldt, the fashion show Flandria) and the visit to Antwerp of famous persons from politics and popular media, later the AKAs increasingly became disguised product placements for companies and services Heylen had deals with.

¹⁰¹⁸ Magiels, personal interview. Magiels' testimony stands in contrast with that of Kamiel de Meester, how had been responsible for the Rex cinema group's publicity during the 1960s and 1970s.

¹⁰¹⁹ Magiels, personal interview.

Image 10: A section of a page in the *Gazet van Antwerpen* with an overview of films screened at the Rex cinemas (box with title "antwerpen kinemastad") as well as the newly opened Calypso.¹⁰²⁰

Image 11: Example of a film advertisement overview for Heylen's cinemas in the *Gazet van Antwerpen*, May 21, 1982.

Such countertrades not only applied to the AKAs and stays of celebrities, but they increasingly pervaded all of Heylen's businesses. Judging from the oral testimonies from former employees as well as from a number of pay checks kept in the archives, it is safe to say that Heylen

¹⁰²⁰ S.n., "Waarheen Antwerpen," 8. The poor quality of the scan included here results from the poor quality of the original copy of the newspaper page at the archive.

settled much of his business according to the principle of one hand washing the other. Gifts, expensive wine and the finest chocolates were part of many deals.¹⁰²¹

This “generosity” might have also played a role in the successful expansion of his network at home and abroad. As Kloeck, for example, remembered in a newspaper interview with the newspaper *De Morgen* in 1993: “Recently I was in France negotiating new film contracts with Alain Vannier [i.e. French producer] and what did I see there hanging on the wall? A photograph of Heylen, Vannier and Tindemans at Heylen's country house in the Campine. Mind you, the picture was taken during the best years of Tindemans, when he was still Prime Minister.”¹⁰²² A similar surprise was experienced by Duynslaegher when the famous film director Francis Ford Coppola started talking about Heylen in an interview: “What's his name again ... yea Heylen, Georges Heylen.”¹⁰²³ Heylen had always been a welcome guest at different international film festivals and in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s he was regularly mentioned in Hollywood's trade journal *Variety*. Aside from references in relation to Heylen's activities for Excelsior and his presence at important film festivals, some of the articles in *Variety* also related to the Belgian film and cinema market and achievements of Heylen, such as the three honorable titles he was awarded in the mid-1980s.¹⁰²⁴ In 1990, less than three years before Heylen's downfall, an article in *Variety* was titled “‘Belgian Finest’ - Heylen as biggest showman on the world,” linking Heylen to the famous Belgian chocolates.¹⁰²⁵

However, Heylen's prominence in the media was also heavily criticized upon publicly. In 1970 Mees and Wauters, for example, critically observed that “[o]bjective film information is not completely paralyzed yet, but the first stage has been passed.”¹⁰²⁶ In a similar vein, in 1985 the author of the *Trends* article Crols stated that

Georges D. Heylen controls the communication channels to the public. The omnipresent film ads “Antwerpen Kinemastad” only mention the Rex cinemas. Cinema is Heylen. Full stop. G.D.H. has exclusivity contracts with important Antwerp newspapers and press: *De Streekkrant* [i.e. a free weekly newspaper] publishes only advertisements for his films. Those who want to see a film at competing cinemas, Calypso being the first of the aggrieved, has to put much more effort to find out what they are screening.¹⁰²⁷

¹⁰²¹ See, for example, Corluy, personal interview, June 25, 2008; Magiels, personal interview; Zeguers, personal interview.

¹⁰²² Kloeck in Oosterwaal, “Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland,” 17.

¹⁰²³ Duynslaegher in Oosterwaal, “Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland,” 17.

¹⁰²⁴ See, for example, T. Clark, “47-Year Veteran Heylen, Belgium's Biggest Distributor, Clinging to Showmanship,” *Variety*, April 9, 1986, 37. In 1985, Heylen was conferred the title Commander in the order of Leopold, the most important and highest Belgian distinction. In 1986 the king also awarded Heylen the title of Baron Heylen van Oirland, which referred to Heylen's estate in Herenthals (Goris, “Historiek,” 25). Another year later Heylen was appointed by the British Queen “Honourable Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire” (Heirman, *Paleis om de hoek*, 95). The *Hollywood Reporter* also mentioned Heylen's distinction by the Order of the Italian Republic, next to his being made baron and his distinction as Officer of the most Excellent Order of the British Empire (s.n. *The Hollywood Reporter* (October 23, 1990): s.p).

¹⁰²⁵ S.n. “‘Belgian Finest’ - Heylen as biggest showman on the world,” *Variety* (November 12, 1990): s.p.

¹⁰²⁶ Mees and Wauters, “Filmuitbating,” 4-5 [my transl.].

¹⁰²⁷ Crols, “De Grote Draak,” 49 [my transl.].

Mees and Wauters' claim that Heylen's power would lead to a lack of objective cinema and film news was also mirrored by the recollections of film critic Duynslaegher in 1993, about his own experiences with Heylen:

Heylen always surrounded himself with footmen, pure servants. It almost looks like the court of Louis XIV. Antwerp's film press, too, walks on his leash. Never has there been written a bad word about Heylen. [...] The press is silent [about the bad conditions of his cinemas]. But oh dear, if only a new Rex cinema is polished up. Big party. Instant big parades through the city. One single snap with his fingers and the boys from the papers are singing the praises. Those who do dare and express some critical words is barred by Heylen. I went through this myself. Heylen behaves himself as a dictator-dinosaur. With all his charm that goes with it. He comes from another era.¹⁰²⁸

Heylen's PR manager Magiels explained that Heylen always wanted to read interviews before they were published: "If he disagrees with something, he demands that it is altered. If necessary, he calls up the chief editor. Heylen had a huge publicity budget to bestow on. It's normal that journalists are more careful with the things they write then, right."¹⁰²⁹ In other words, via the media, the public was exposed to both, the spectacle surrounding the Rex cinema group as well as heavy criticism of Heylen's reign.

4.5.4. Missed chances

Let me briefly recall the Schumpeterian conception of innovation: innovation is followed by imitation which is followed in turn by market saturation, which can only be revived by a series of in-depth innovations. When it comes to the exhibition sector possible in-depth innovations relate to product differentiation in terms of film supply (e.g. original film- and cinema marketing; the switch to alternative films and content) as well as in terms of the cinema-going and film-viewing experience by investing in technological enhancements (e.g. alterations in screen as well as cinema format; quality improvement of sound and vision; increased automation of specific operating processes). Heylen kept investing more or less in all these things, yet he did so only halfheartedly. He invested in the conversion of older single-screen cinemas into, or in the reconstruction of, multi-screen complexes, yet he started doing so relatively late. While elsewhere in the country the Bert/Claeys group had been marching on successfully in their construction and exploitation of multi-screen cinemas since the beginning of the 1970s, Heylen had his first cinema conversion materialized in 1980 only.

¹⁰²⁸ Duynslaegher in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 18.

¹⁰²⁹ Magiels in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 18. See the quite laconic remarks by Mees and Wauters about their experience with Heylen in 1970, that he not only assumed the right to alter some of his answers after the interview, but he even changed some of the questions, "because he didn't quite like the tone." (Mees and Wauters, "Filmmuitbating," 4).

Similarly, he lagged behind in the switch to the screening of alternative productions. Although he had partly supported art-house initiatives as the film club, local film festivals, by the time he opened his first art-house venue, the Rex Club, local audiences had already gotten a taste for, and were being served with, less commercial films in other venues such as Monty and Cartoon's.

Mees and Wauters put their fingers on the sore spot when they described how exhibitors in other countries dealt with the overall crisis in the cinema sector: by being innovative and original.¹⁰³⁰ These were two attributes that were characteristic for Heylen's success in the 1950 and 1960s as I have shown in the previous paragraphs. By the 1980s, however, Heylen was long lagging behind the changes in the cinema sector: stronger demand for niche productions and/or the requirement of technologically more sophisticated theaters with multiple yet bigger screens. Heylen eventually caught up with both developments, but he had already lost important ground. In addition, Heylen's kind of publicity did not match distributional practices anymore. The kind of promotion in which he invested was to activate word of mouth, but this was inadequate for saturation releases as a new distributional strategy, as it would take too long to become effective.

In an interview for *Film en televisie* in 1983, out of town exhibitor Rijdtant – after having worked in the cinema business for sixty-four years – pondered: “You only die slowly in the cinema, because one week business is better and the other week it is less.”¹⁰³¹ For Heylen's cinema empire the end was approaching faster than expected. The re-opening of the four-screen Odeon-complex at Anneessenstraat in 1986 was the last huge investment of Heylen in the (re)constructions of (new) cinemas. The closure of cinema Capitole at De Keyserlei one year later can be seen as official turning point in the history of the Rex cinema group as it marked the beginning of many more closures to come, which would eventually lead to Heylen's downfall in 1993.

4.6. The downfall (late 1980s – early 1990s)

If the downfall of the Rex cinema group had been noticed mostly by insiders before, with the accelerated closure of the cinemas in the Station Quarter in the second half of the 1980s it became also increasingly visible in the quarter's streetscape itself. In this last subparagraph I examine the main factors that contributed to the downfall of the Rex empire in the 1990s. As I will argue, the cinema group's downfall cannot be attributed to one single cause. Rather it was the result of a number of factors, some of which had their roots in the 1970s, as I have made clear in the previous paragraph.

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰³¹ Rijdtant in Sartor, "De teleurgang van de buurtbioscoop (5)," 29.

According to the final reports on the bankruptcy of each of the companies, the major reason of the bankruptcies was each company's close connection to the rest of the Rex-concern.¹⁰³² In addition, it was stated in the reports that

all companies of this group were declared bankrupt on 3 September 1993 or a short time after, due to the lack of sufficient means for renovation with the result that the cinema complex was highly outdated and was not in the position to compete with the new cinema complex which opened in Antwerp in the year of the bankruptcy.¹⁰³³

The trustee's conclusion reflects the two sides of the coin: aside from internal pressures the bankruptcy of the Rex cinema group was also caused by pressures from outside. In order to understand these changes of the physiognomy of the Belgian cinema landscape, it is helpful to look at corresponding developments abroad.

4.6.1. General reflections on the emergence of multiplexes

By the 1960s, the notion of cinema as prime example of modern mass media and as place offering entertainment for all had changed and cinemas were now largely perceived as old-fashioned, uncomfortable places, associated with past pleasures, "unattractive and moribund places which people were gradually less inspired to visit."¹⁰³⁴ Cinema attendance dropped to an all-time low.

In the US as well as in Great Britain the decline was put to a halt by radical changes in the exhibition industry. Two phenomena that pushed the spread of multiplexes there were changes in the retail industry on the one hand and the developments of suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s on the other.¹⁰³⁵ Along with the population, center cinemas "moved" to suburban areas, where the installment of multiplexes not only increased film choice but also ensured proximity to fast food, shops and parking, thereby improving the convenience and fabric of the total viewing experience.¹⁰³⁶ The changes left traditional cinemas with obvious disadvantages. In contrast to multi-screen complexes and other cinemas that had been converted, purpose-built multiplexes offered spacious seating comfort, highly sophisticated vision and sound (latest technological standards). Accordingly, Hanson explains the success of the multiplexes over the multi-screens complexes by asserting that "[m]ultiplexes have succeeded because they were conceived this way and therefore designed to overcome the fatal combination of lack of room, small screens and bad lines of sight for

¹⁰³² See the final reports on the bankruptcies for the individual companies, kept in the Archive of Insolvency Records Rex.

¹⁰³³ M. van Passel, "Activiteitenverslag inzake faillissement N.V. Excelsior. Faill.nr. 13.836," March 2004, 2. The conclusion of this report equals those in all other reports of the corresponding companies.

¹⁰³⁴ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 162. See also Geraghty, "Cinema as Social Space".

¹⁰³⁵ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 135. See Paul, "The K-Mart Audience;" P. Hubbard, "A Good Night out? Multiplex Cinemas as Sites of Embodied Leisure," *Leisure Studies* (July 22, 2003): 255-272; Collins et al., "The Lure of the Multiplex?"

¹⁰³⁶ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 135-137.

audiences.”¹⁰³⁷ On the other hand, the motives of economics of scale and cost effectiveness contributed to a certain uniformity and had as an effect that, from an aesthetic point of view, multiplexes were often criticized for their poor design and building execution.¹⁰³⁸ Multiplexes

are made up of a common and infinitely repeatable architectural design, somewhat modular in approach so that the number of screens actually contained within the multiplex won't change the overall look of the theatre. These chains create theatre malls with as familiar a look as K-Mart or McDonald's or other retail outlets with a national base. The uniformity in effect helps give the theatre a kind of brandname recognition designed to assure an audience by its very familiarity.¹⁰³⁹

Phil Hubbard similarly linked the preference of cinemagoers in Leicester to the idea of “riskless risk”, i.e. the search for social (leisure time) activities that offer relatively little risk. The multiplex concept responded to this by offering a broad choice of films (reducing the risk of having to watch a film that would not meet one's taste), easy access and guaranteed parking space (reducing the risk of spending unproportional amounts of time and effort) and a certain predictability of the night out in terms of the composition of the audience, the cleanliness and the design of the venue.¹⁰⁴⁰ In addition, as Hanson pointed out, the uniformity and the simplicity of the building execution was also important for attracting potential investors. In case of dissatisfying attendance, the complexes might be converted for other uses (e.g. bowling alleys).¹⁰⁴¹

Function became indeed prime imperative, when, according to Paul, “[f]ilm began to be merchandized like wares in a variety store, with everything to please a range of interests and tastes, in theory at least, available under one roof.”¹⁰⁴² For Hanson this “ruthless economising” indeed “signaled a break with previous conceptions of cinemas as ‘Picture Palaces’.”¹⁰⁴³ Nevertheless, the advantages of multiplexes by far outweighed the disadvantages in number and are worth to be addressed in detail here. Overall, the concept of the multiplex offered a win-win situation for both the cinemagoer and the exhibitor.

For the audience, on one side, it offered a variety of entertainment in one location, because food courts and shops were usually in immediate vicinity. In addition, suburban multiplexes provided good road access and ample parking space which appealed greatly to the increasingly mobile traveler. In addition, the increasingly (camera) controlled and policed environments of suburban shopping malls were enhancing their attractiveness as opposed to the increasing threats of deteriorating town centers. In addition to these more general appeals, multiplexes also offered

¹⁰³⁷ Ibid., 126, 136-139, 159, 162.

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid., 136-139.

¹⁰³⁹ Paul, “K-mart audience,” 493.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Hubbard, “A Good Night out?”, 267.

¹⁰⁴¹ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 157.

¹⁰⁴² Paul, “K-mart audience,” 491.

¹⁰⁴³ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 158.

advantages in terms of film viewing experience, including better sight and sound due to new technological advances in projection and sound. Last but not least, multiplexes, of course provided their visitors with an increased flexibility of film choice regarding age, genre, and personal preferences, and if a particular film was sold out there was no need to go home, because you could always choose another film under the same roof.¹⁰⁴⁴

These last arguments, however, often underplay the fact that the relation between the number of screens and potential film choice is not a direct one. An increased number of screens under one roof does not automatically mean that more different pictures are screened and it does certainly not mean a broadening of the spectrum of films offered. This is also what Hanson alluded to by adding the phrase “in theory at least” in the quote above. As Paul explained, against the assumption that multiplexes would be good for undervalued films because they would offer them space in the form of screens, multiplexes rather encouraged the distribution practice of saturation releases. The principle objective became to gain quick returns of investments in order to minimize interest payments on loans (e.g. to production companies). This in turn discouraged the screening of non-high-concept films, the so-called sleepers, which needed time to slowly build their audiences. It resulted in a homogenization of the products instead of product differentiation. In addition, the flatness of the multiplexes left their marks on the films as well. As Paul explained for the situation in the US: “A foreign language film really needs an art house to promote it; its location [downtown, non-mall] makes it something special. In the context of a multiplex, it becomes merely another product, and one for which the mass audience holds little interest.”¹⁰⁴⁵

On the other side, for exhibitors, advantages of multiplexes generally related to two aspects: film programming and cost effectiveness. To a certain extent, multiplexes, like the multi-screen concept, increased the flexibility with which exhibitors were able to program their films. It allowed them to show the same film on several screens at times of high demand, without the need of extra copies (because of the central projection booth). In addition, they could move initially popular films from larger to smaller auditoriums as soon as interest diminished. However, as exhibitors were also bound to contracts with distributors (and sometimes with producers) this flexibility was also restricted. From this perspective, it is apprehensible that the multiplex concept was particularly tempting for exhibitors to skim rentals. Apart from selling false tickets or “palming tickets” (i.e. not validating tickets at the entrance and leaving them intact in order to sell them twice) which was a clandestine practice also in traditional cinemas, the shared projector in multi-screen or multiplex

¹⁰⁴⁴ Ibid., 136-139, 148, 154, 158. See P. Hubbard, "Screen-shifting: Consumption, 'Riskless Risks' and the Changing Geographies of Cinema," *Environment and Planning A*, 34 (2002): 1239-1258; Hubbard, "A Good Night out?"; Collins et al., "The Lure of the Multiplex?".

¹⁰⁴⁵ Paul, "K-mart audience," 492, 495. For the European context a similar phenomenon is conceivable for the screening of art-house films.

complexes made it easier to arrange for unauthorized (uncontracted) extra screenings and move-overs of films with unexpectedly high or low attendance.¹⁰⁴⁶

Other advantages multiplexes yielded for exhibitors related to questions of cost effectiveness: "Multiplexes were usually constructed on low-cost sites and in a low-cost style. The centerpiece of a successful multiplex is its focus on economics of scale. Multiple auditoriums that share a common parking lot, box office, lobby, restrooms and concession area reduce overhead expenses and generate more profit per square foot."¹⁰⁴⁷ In addition, they allowed new forms of managerial practices, including the mass employment of students and unskilled labor. Moreover, the multiplex and the concession stand proved to be a happy marriage: whereas the multiplex promoted more foot traffic of which the concession stand could profit more than in a single screen theater, the concession stand was a major source of profit. Because margins for the concession stand were much higher than for the heavily taxed and otherwise financially burdened business of film exhibition, the concession stand could constitute up to 90% of the exhibitor's profits and was therefore also referred to as the "second box office by exhibitors".¹⁰⁴⁸

In Europe, Belgium was amongst the leading countries with regard to the construction of multiplexes and later megaplexes (i.e. multiplexes with ten screens or more) and the country owed this position primarily to the efforts of the Bert/Claeys group, who later became the internationally renowned Kinopolis-group.

4.6.2. The Kinepolisisation of Belgium ... and Antwerp

In Belgium, cinema attendance kept dropping steadily since the all-time peak in 1945. Although Heylen did relatively well, compared to his competitors, his cinemas were not spared from the downward spiral of ever decreasing audience numbers. While in 1950 Odeon (600 seats), for instance, easily sold between one thousand and two thousand tickets on a weekday, in 1985 daily ticket sales often did not even reach one hundred. Similarly, for Astrid daily ticket sales in 1967 often exceeded five hundred, yet hardly reached one hundred in 1980.¹⁰⁴⁹

In Paragraph 4.5.2, I have already discussed the success with which the Bert/Claeys group entered the Belgian market in the 1960s. In 1982 they opened Europe's first multiplex, the Decascoop in Ghent. For the Bert/Claeys group, the formula to success rested on three pillars:

¹⁰⁴⁶ Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 174.

¹⁰⁴⁷ B. Stones, "Modern Times," ed. 1993, in *Moviewalking America*, edited by G. A. Waller (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), 297.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 137-138; Paul, "K-mart audience," 492; Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 97.

¹⁰⁴⁹ See cashbooks cinema *Odeon* and *Astra* for the corresponding years. The original cash books are part of the private collection of Serge Bosschaerts.

rationalization of exploitation, mobility of customers, and quality.¹⁰⁵⁰ The first concerned management according to economics of scale. In an interview with Duynslaegher on the occasion of the opening of their newest multiplex Kinopolis in Brussels six years later, Bert summed up the advantages of the multiplex concept quite clearly: the central projection booth, limited labor costs, the broad range of film supply, the possibility to screen a film on multiple screens without the need of extra copies, flexible programming depending on film's performance.¹⁰⁵¹ The second pillar, the mobility of customers, was met by granting them easy access as well as ample and free parking space.

The third pillar was based on Bert's firm conviction of the importance of permanent innovation in order to offer customers the highest comfort. As the group explained in an analysis and overview of cinema exploitation in Brussels, agglomerations and nation-wide, cinema business was in fact about selling a "mix of product (film), presentation (projector and sound) and comfort (quick sale, friendly treatment and comfortable cinemas)."¹⁰⁵² In other words, they perfectly realized that cinema business was about the film as much as it was about the film viewing and cinema-going experience. Bert aptly highlighted the disadvantages of the recycled multi-screens and the splitting up of theaters:

Often, this happened quite improvidently, with tiny auditoriums and little seating comfort. Twenty years later nearly each metropolis has such by now outdated complexes with mini-halls, tiny screens and a vision and sound quality that is inferior to the hifi or video system in people's living room. And you don't even have the seating comfort as in the vintage cinema from the forties and fifties, as they are only being cherished in Antwerp anymore and where the rest-room is the only place where you can stretch your legs.¹⁰⁵³

Bert's disapproval of Heylen and his cinema empire in Antwerp became more explicit in his opinion, partly paraphrased by Duynslaegher in the same article: "This one big cinema as flagship surrounded by a lot of miniscule cinema halls, is not Bert's idea of a modern cinema complex. "Most often the difference in quality between the big and the smaller cinemas is too big. In Kinopolis we don't scale down, sometimes there might be a hundred seats less, but every auditorium offers the same comfort, with double arm rests, legroom and a decent distance between de first row and the screen."¹⁰⁵⁴ The Bert/Claeys group acknowledged that while they could hardly influence the product, it was all about innovation. Hence constant innovation was an important focal point and had to serve

¹⁰⁵⁰ V. Rottier, "Onderzoek inplanting biokoopkomplex," notes, April 30, 1991.

¹⁰⁵¹ Albert Bert in Duynslaegher, "Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis," 49.

¹⁰⁵² P. Vandenbosch, "letter to SaS, Bussels, s.d., 4.

¹⁰⁵³ Albert Bert in Duynslaegher, "Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis," 49 [my transl.].

¹⁰⁵⁴ Albert Bert in Duynslaegher, "Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis," 49.

the enhancement of the film-viewing experience. Bert's son Joost expressed this drive to follow the latest technological developments and experiments in terms of cinema equipment.¹⁰⁵⁵

Their efforts paid off and Belgium saw its cinema attendance rise once more.¹⁰⁵⁶ As Bruno Jamin, publicity manager of Twentieth Century Fox-UGC admitted: “Kinopolis is *fast food*-cinema, but served under ideal conditions.”¹⁰⁵⁷ By the early 1990s, Belgium had one of Europe's most technologically advanced cinema sector. How important modernization was to revitalize the cinema sector since the 1980s was also claimed by the research team of *Media Salles* who linked the increase in admission and occupancy rates to the opening of the many multiplexes by the Kinopolis group.¹⁰⁵⁸

I have already described in detail the struggles about the coming of Metropolis to Antwerp and the consequences for (bars, restaurants and shops at) the Station Quarter, in Chapter 3. Here, the discussion of the successful settlement of Metropolis in Heylen's cinema city in October 1993 serves a different purpose. In combination with the aforementioned points about the general advantages of multiplexes it is to illustrate some of the problems of and the factors contributing to the downfall of the Rex cinema group. As addressed before, the coming of the multiplexes in countries as the United States or Great Britain changed the exhibition structure radically with the result that cinemagoers came back to watch more films outside of the homes. Something similar became visible for Belgium, where the success of the Bert/Claeys group proved that people had not completely unlearned the habit of cinemagoing.

Heylen, on the other hand, invested fortunes in installing basement cinemas or in splitting up and recycling former picture palaces, instead of investing in new cinema complexes with bigger screens (not necessarily larger auditoriums). Heylen's policy of pimping box office results, however, consisted of shortsighted measurements. Instead of attacking the problem at its roots and get cinemagoers back by real improvements (keeping up with the latest technical standards and offering optimal seating and viewing comfort) he kept alive his dwindling empire by patching it up and treating symptoms instead of causes. By the time he publicly announced the complete reconstruction of the building complex between van Etbornstraat, De Keyserlei, and Anneessensstraat it was already too late: by then, NV Metropolis almost had its building permission for the construction of its Metropolis megaplex in Antwerp's north and the black letter day of the Rex was approaching at high speed.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Joost Bert in Duynslaegher, “Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis,” 50; Vandenbosch, P. Letter to F. Adrianssen (SaS). Brussels, ca. 1991, s.p.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Vandenbosch, letter to Adrianssen, s.p.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Duynslaegher, “Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis,” 51.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Media Salles, “The White Book of the European Exhibition Industry – Annex 2: Country Studies Belgium,” Report, 1994, 5, accessed January 14, 2013, http://www.mediasalles.it/whiteboo/wb1_anb.htm.

In his first conclusion for NV Metropolis in the dispute between Heylen and Metropolis (see details in Paragraph 3.3.5), Metropolis' lawyer Jan Theunis asserted that “[b]ecause of the mistakes made by the plaintiffs [i.e. NV Excelsior, NV Filimpex], which were sufficiently known in the public opinion, (and, amongst others, a total lack of policies regarding film programming, personnel and investments, whereby the cinemas perished from a non-existing seating comfort and an absolute lack of visual and auditive quality) the aspect of Antwerp's cultural life which film could have become, was completely ruined.”¹⁰⁵⁹ Even if Theunis' professionally grounded partiality for Metropolis is being acknowledged, his fervid blows against Heylen's mismanagement yielded considerable truth and had been mentioned by many insiders as well as outsiders. Below I will address some of the allegations in more detail and add some points also mentioned as factors contributing to Heylen's downfall.

4.6.3. Other factors contributing to the downfall

At around the time that most of Heylen's NVs were declared bankrupt in September 1993, media and other public discourse abounded in allegations and quotes of people about the causes of the downfall. I have already discussed addressed Heylen's halfhearted way of investing in his cinemas. In what follows I will attempt to tie together and examine the different opinions of outsiders and insiders, based on press coverage preceding and succeeding the bankruptcy as well as on archival documents. In doing so I will show that the downfall of the Rex was the result of concurring factors, again relating to company-internal as well as external developments.

With regard to the latter, the most visible factor contributing to the drain on cinemas particularly in the Station Quarter was that people increasingly steered clear of that area as crime rates and drug trafficking rose. The ongoing deterioration of the Station Quarter had as an effect that it was considered less and less a quarter to have a pleasant night out. In addition, as Jancovich et al. observed for the city of Nottingham, because of increased mobility (cars, wealth) “people's conception of their ‘local’ area changed as they both spent more leisure time in the home and traveled further and further for their entertainment.”¹⁰⁶⁰ In Antwerp a similar trend in the late 1980s meant that potential cinemagoers stayed away from the Station Quarter and rather chose a film in the new multiplex Kinopolis in Brussels instead, the world's first megaplex, which was within 45 minutes reach by train or car.¹⁰⁶¹ Local authorities were not completely innocent in this. Not only did

¹⁰⁵⁹ Theunis, “Conclusie,” 10.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Jancovich et al., *Place of the Audience*, 132. For an economic study of the influence of travel time on cinemagoing, and particularly the choice between multiplex and inner-city cinemas, see Collins et al., “The Lure of the Multiplex?”.

¹⁰⁶¹ Even Antwerp-based economist and film buff Faucompret (author of the aforementioned article “The crisis in the Flemish cinema industry”) admitted that he rather travels to Ghent or Brussels to go see a movie, since “for him, Antwerp is

they fail to take effective and timely measures to save the Station Quarter from degradation, they also – at least initially – discouraged new initiatives in the cinema sector (for example, by Bert).¹⁰⁶²

On the other hand, the downfall of the Rex cinema group was the result of Heylen's long-lasting mismanagement, miscalculations and wrong estimations in relation to investments and changes in people's practice of cinemagoing. The conclusions in the final reports of the insolvencies of all Rex companies, for example, gave as the main reason for each individual bankruptcy the strong connection between, and interdependency of, the individual companies with each other. As shown at the outset of this chapter, most Rex companies had shares in other Rex companies and in some cases the companies held mutual shares in each other. It is not surprising then that with the downfall of a few of the companies the whole Rex cinema group collapsed as a house of cards.

Heylen's mismanagement was criticized by experts from inside and outside of the Rex cinema group. The outdated management style and the absence of successors (Heylen was eighty-one years old when he was declared bankrupt) in combination with his strong dedication to do it all by himself resulted in miscalculations and wrong estimations regarding developments in the cinema sector.¹⁰⁶³ As I have shown in the previous subparagraphs, the teams of Monty and Cartoon's as well as the Bert/Claeys group had been able to demonstrate that it was actually possible to get people back to the cinema, despite of the "crisis in the Flemish cinema industry".¹⁰⁶⁴ While the former succeeded in the field of film supply by making their programming more interactive and by adapting to the preferences of the public as much as they could and wanted to, the latter investigated especially in viewing and seating comfort (latest technology, well-kept appearance, comfortable and spacious seating). Here the audience was in the center of attention and guided decision making. Officially, this also applied for Heylen. I have already quoted a number of passages with corresponding claims by Heylen that he acted purely in the interest of the audience. Yet based on archive documents and oral testimonies it becomes clear that it was all about keeping up appearances and pimping box office results.

Although Heylen had always been praised for his professionalism, showmanship and his knowledge, over the decades he had been gradually losing touch with the audience: he kept investing in the recycling of outdated cinemas, unfavorably executed and offering quaint yet utterly old-fashioned comfort. In an article in *Variety* in 1986 titled "47-Year Veteran Heylen, Belgium's Biggest Distrib., *Clinging to Showmanship*" a reporter put it as follows: "Heylen says he believes in

not a cinema city" (F. Crols, "Rode rekeningen," *Trends. Financieel Economisch Magazine* 11, no. 239 (November 29, 1985): 52). Heylen himself denied this in a newspaper interview in 1991 by claiming that "Kinopolis is no threat to us. We live [sic] about 40 km apart from each other." (Heylen in s.n., "Films zijn geen fast-food. Rex-concern: 23 zalen en meer dan 50 jaar bioscooptraditie op vierkante kilometer," *De Nieuwe Gazet*, June 12, 1991, 15 [my transl.].)

¹⁰⁶² Apparently, Bert tried to enter Antwerp's cinema market already in the first half of 1980s, but faced so many difficulties that they had to postpone their plans (Kloek in Mijlemans, "Biotoop," 2).

¹⁰⁶³ Magiels and Kloek in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 17, 18.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Faucompret, "Crisis in the Vlaamse bioscoopindustrie".

the old-fashioned virtues of exhibition showmanship. Red-uniformed doormen with white gloves welcome patrons to his theaters. He has two artists on the payroll who prepare massive housefront displays. He peppers his programs with trailers, using over 100 each week, and invests heavily in making his theaters as luxurious as possible.”¹⁰⁶⁵ The kind of luxury that was attracting the masses in the 1950s had long lost its appeal. People now found luxury and a broad scale of entertainment in their homes. According to Kloeck, “Heylen only had eyes for cheap pomp: plush carpets, a sales girl, a porter in a corny uniform. These kind of things no cinemagoer really cares about anymore.”¹⁰⁶⁶ In addition, the centrality of Heylen's cinemas in the Station Quarter and their embeddedness in a broad range of recreational, gastronomic and mass transport facilities, was no longer an asset, due to the increased mobility of the people and to the impoverishment of the area.

In addition, despite Heylen's recurrent references to his innovations and renovations, the condition of his cinemas caused repeated outcries in the press.¹⁰⁶⁷ Most frequently mentioned was the outdated condition. According to an anonymous observer quoted in *Knack* in 1988 about the move of cinema life to the suburbs, for example, Antwerp was the only city left in Belgium, where the cinema was still integral part of the cityscape, but with the huge disadvantage “that time stood still there”.¹⁰⁶⁸ As film critic Duynslaegher summarized it: “Tiny screens, bad sound installations, poor seating comfort. Only in the lavatories you are able to stretch your legs.”¹⁰⁶⁹ Kloeck equally bemoaned the condition of former picture palace cinema Rubens after it had been sold: “Unbelievable, such a mess. The seats were still the same as the ones I had been sitting on when I was a child. The projector was reassembled from three different types. The whole building was decrepit.”¹⁰⁷⁰ In an unofficial report dating from around 1991 on the desirability of a new cinema complex and the conditions of Heylen's cinemas an (anonymous) eye witness listed the shortcomings of Heylen's cinemas in the finest details and complained, amongst others, about uncomfortable seats, bad smell, the lack of emergency exits, poor vision and sound due to unfavorable building execution and outdated machines, and even called the splitting up of cinema Metro in the early 1980s an “architectural monster”.¹⁰⁷¹ Furthermore, reparations were hardly done anymore and staff

¹⁰⁶⁵ Clark, “47-Year Veteran Heylen, Belgium’s Biggest Distrib, Clinging to Showmanship,” [my emphasis]. The 47 years refer to the duration of Heylen's career as exhibitor, and not to his age.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Kloeck in Oosterwaal, “Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland,” 18.

¹⁰⁶⁷ See, for example, P. Mijlemans, “Metropolis kan, maar met mate,” *De Morgen*, June 14, 1991: s.p.; Kloeck in V. Janssens, “Calypso moet cinema-tij keren. Eigenaar van Cartoon's Eric Kloeck koopt zalencomplex over van Super Club,” *Het Nieuwsblad*, March 26, 1992, 11; S. De Foer, “Baron rustte op zijn lauweren,” *De Standaard*, September 4, 1993, 13; real estate agent Hugo Ceusters in M. Declercq, “Rex-concern staat te koop voor 530 miljoen,” *Gazet van Antwerpen*, February 22, 1994, 25; S. De Lie, S. De Foer and W. Smeuninx. “Beleggers kopen geen filmzalen.” *AS*, February 25, 1994, 16.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Quoted in Duynslaegher, “Brussel kijkt naar Kinopolis,” 51.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Duynslaegher in Oosterwaal, “Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland,” 18.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Kloeck in Oosterwaal, “Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland,” 18.

¹⁰⁷¹ S.n. “Onderzoek van de huidige bioscoop-functie in het Antwerpse,” informal report. Antwerp, ca. 1991, 4. Given the highly detailed information and insider knowledge of Heylen's cinemas, including projection booths and machines, this in-depth study must have been written by or at least with the help of (former) employees or persons with good access to the properties.

was utterly demotivated.¹⁰⁷² In a letter from a company medical officer to Heylen (on behalf of NV Artwe) about the annual inspection at Heylen's cinemas, the officer particularly criticized "the totally unacceptable" condition of neighborhood cinema Festa (located in Stuivenberg): "The lighting of the stair case leading to the upper floor to the place one dares calling refectory is utterly insufficient. Furthermore, the stair case has not been maintained for years. The lavatories resemble African conditions!! Filthy smelling lavatories of which I hope neither the labor inspection nor the press will ever get to see."¹⁰⁷³ Eventually the condition of Heylen's cinemas was even too bad for the cinema group's trustee van Passel to keep them open after the bankruptcy in order to finish contracts (and to lower debts).¹⁰⁷⁴ Insurances had not been paid for a while, safety regulations had been neglected and the interior was too old and lamentable.

According to eye witnesses, Heylen had stopped investing in substantial innovation and renovation.¹⁰⁷⁵ According to Rex secretary general Zeguers, some of the problems were indeed known, for example, the trend to install screens that reach from wall to wall and from the floor to the ceiling, but he also pointed to the dilemma that the Rex cinemas were completely unsuitable for such screens, as most of them were built in the 1920s and 1930s: "Not much could be done about this structurally, unless you wanted to tear them down and have them rebuilt from scratch."¹⁰⁷⁶ Investments of this magnitude were ruinous in a loss generating business as the exhibition sector was in the 1980s. Heylen frequently pointed to the numerous investments he kept making in his cinemas, which the public would hardly notice, however.¹⁰⁷⁷ Furthermore, Heylen's big asset of having his remaining cinemas located on a commercial top location also turned out to have the great disadvantage in the sense that the considerable surface on a comparatively expensive location could no longer be justified given the dramatic and ongoing decline in cinema attendance.¹⁰⁷⁸

Furthermore, mismanagement and miscalculations also occurred with regard to publicity budgets. The effect of different information channels on cinemagoers in France in the 1980s showed that people attributed word-of-mouth and personal recommendations a larger role than other sources of information, e.g. film ads and reviews in the daily press, showcases or items on television or radio.¹⁰⁷⁹ Heylen kept spending money in rather old fashioned promotion of his films and cinemas

¹⁰⁷² Ibid., 2-10.

¹⁰⁷³ D. Mermans, letter to G. Heylen and E. De Meester, Antwerp, July 4, 1991.

¹⁰⁷⁴ See quote van Passel in P. Lefelon, "Einde van Rex-film," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, September 4, 1993, 1.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Christeyns and Hollants, personal interview; Kloeck, personal interview, November 25, 2011; Kloeck, personal interview, January 20, 2012. See also the very detailed report by real estate agent Immobilien Hugo Ceusters, "Rapportering Rex Dossier," 2, dating from November 1994.

¹⁰⁷⁶ Zeguers in Magiels, "Een kijkje achter de schermen," 71 [my transl.]

¹⁰⁷⁷ See, for example, s.n. "Films zijn geen fast-food," 15.

¹⁰⁷⁸ See SaS, "Report Onderzoek Metropolis," 8.

¹⁰⁷⁹ J. Farchy, "Die Bedeutung von Information für die Nachfrage nach kulturellen Gütern," in *Demnächst in Ihrem Kino. Grundlagen der Filmwerbung und Filmvermarktung*, edited by V. Hediger and P. Vonderau (Marburg: Schüren, 2009), 207-208. Here, Farchy also noted a "Einbuße an Einfluss, den die Stars des Films auf die Kaufentscheidungen des Publikums ausüben" since the 1950s.

(*calicots*, gloved usherettes, uniformed porters). Some cutbacks were visible, however, in the amount and weight of advertisements for (films at) Heylen's cinemas in the daily press. While from the 1960s onwards, Heylen had been clearly dominating newspaper advertisements in number and presentation, by the 1990s ads for Heylen's cinemas had been reduced significantly in amount and bombast. As a matter of fact, the ads for films in Heylen's cinemas did not differ much anymore – neither in size nor in layout – from those of the Calypso-group. The reduction on Heylen's part were partly due to the decreased number of cinemas that was left of the Rex cinema group. However, ads did cost a lot of money, costs for which eventually Heylen could not pay anymore.¹⁰⁸⁰

In addition to advertisements in the press, Heylen kept spending money on the production of cinema journals. The last AKA was made in 1992 and was about the premiere of *Daens* (Coninx, 1992), a Belgian-French-Dutch co-production.¹⁰⁸¹ Again, this last filmed premiere took place in the presence of the film's main cast and crew, next to a large number of local and regional authorities, including Rex group's later trustee Marc van Passel – then chairman of the Rotary Club Antwerpen Oost – who was giving the introduction speech.¹⁰⁸² The AKAs had been produced and shown in Belgian cinemas for a much longer period than any other cinema journal. Most of the regional cinema journals disappeared in the 1980s with the coming of Flemish commercial broadcasting.¹⁰⁸³

Next to malinvestments in infrastructure and publicity, Heylen was also criticized for mismanagement of the company and staff in general. According to Magiels, there was too little cash flow to keep business running.¹⁰⁸⁴ Cash flow is vital for a company in order to pay off debts, acquire assets and pay dividends. Nevertheless, as Vogel asserted, exhibitors' practice of playing the "float" is an endemic industry problem. According to him it is actually rather surprising that this also occurs in the film industry, "because box-office income is almost always in cash, and, in theory, exhibitors should have absolutely no difficulty in paying rentals immediately due".¹⁰⁸⁵ Vogel added, that it is also surprising since exhibitors depend on the distributors' goodwill and should actually be motivated to pay promptly. In Heylen's case, too, the mountains of debts grew until eventually he could not even sell his cinemas as fast as he needed the money. He left behind incredible amounts of debts ranging from invoices for gas, candy and beverage suppliers to distributors and local authorities.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸⁰ Judging from countless documents in the archive of insolvency records, several of the publicity agencies were amongst Heylen's many creditors.

¹⁰⁸¹ Ironically, this film was about the Flemish priest Adolf Daens who became famous for his engagement for his fight for the underprivileged, the workers and the poor. This irony was alluded to by journalists less than a year later, who took the figure of Daens as a would-be helper in the socio-economic conflict between Heylen and his employers. (P. Lefelon "Rex-personeel haalt zijn inspiratie bij Daens." *Gazet van Antwerpen*, August 28, 1993, 27). See also "Daens de film," YouTube, accessed May 8, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C62KPsJAazc>.

¹⁰⁸² "Daens de film," YouTube.

¹⁰⁸³ Biltreyst and vande Winkel, "Filmjournaals," 79, 83-84. The AKAs were only outlived by the national news reel Belgavox, which had only managed to keep its head above the water for 30 years and it did so mostly by means of subsidies.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Magiels, personal interview.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 24.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Copies of the invoices are kept in several boxes of the archive of insolvency records.

Many of the quotes by Heylen's sole competitor in Antwerp's inner city, Kloeck, are illustrative and put Heylen's dilemmas in a nutshell. About a week before Heylen's final downfall Kloeck, for example, stated that "Heylen dismantled his empire just as professionally as he had constructed it."¹⁰⁸⁷ In addition, he argued that "Heylen had stuck to a very traditional and conservative management for too long" and that "he had despoiled his own companies".¹⁰⁸⁸ After Heylen's downfall he was quoted saying, "Heylen is just a nineteenth century patriarch, he is a man who once knew what cinema was but who lost the pedals a long time ago."¹⁰⁸⁹ According to Kloeck, the youngest of the Rex employees was 45 years old.¹⁰⁹⁰ Heylen had not arranged for a successor with regard to management.¹⁰⁹¹ This is especially astonishing in the light of Heylen's reply in 1985 upon the explicit question by the journalist of who would lead "cinetown" within one or two decades: "This succession is taken care of, of course."¹⁰⁹² He did not, however, provide names.

It is very likely that this was just an example of Heylen's common rhetoric to brush off nosy journalists and divert attention from bad business results. In public he would have never admitted that business was bad. When he was asked directly about, for example, the liquidations of some of his companies and the closures of his center cinemas, he provided as explanations – if he would comment on it at all – the need for a restructuring of his companies due to a surplus of manpower that he blamed on the lack of good films and low cinema attendance.¹⁰⁹³ When he was in fact confronted with concrete figures (e.g. about losses), Heylen also had an excuse at hand: "These figures can't possibly be checked for accuracy."¹⁰⁹⁴ It was this attitude of keeping a stiff upper lip with which he also responded to worried questions about the decreasing condition of his cinema empire. Even after more and more of his cinemas closed down and were sold in the early 1990s, Heylen waved worries away as rumors that "come from real estate speculators who are after the well-positioned location of his cinemas".¹⁰⁹⁵ One week before the black letter day, when agitation amongst his staff threatened to escalate and a social conflict was about to unfold, Heylen replied to questions of journalists: "There's nothing to worry about. What you're writing is all rubbish. We will carry on and are negotiating with an international acquirer."¹⁰⁹⁶ After an inquiry with Heylen two days later, the *Financieel Economische Tijd* [i.e. Financial Economic Time] still reported that "according to the baron there is 'no reason' for the Rex personnel to worry and that employees are

¹⁰⁸⁷ Kloeck in G. Timmerman, "Stakingsaanzegging bij Rex-concern," *De Morgen*, August 28, 1993, s.p.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Kloeck in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 18.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹¹ See Druyts, personal interview.

¹⁰⁹² Heylen in Crols, "De Grote Draak," 57.

¹⁰⁹³ S.n., "Ontslagen bij cinemaconcern Rex," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, July 29, 1993, 25; P. Lefelon, "'The End' voor twintigtal werknemers bij cinemaconcern Rex," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, July 30, 1993, 12; D.G.E., "Ontslagen maar geen zalen dicht," *De Nieuwe Gazet*, July 31, 1993, 13.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Heylen in Crols, "De Grote Draak," 49.

¹⁰⁹⁵ F.H., "Geen Metropolis tegen 93, wel vernieuwde Ambassades," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, January 18, 1992, 36.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Heylen in Lefelon, "Witte doek valt".

simply being agitated by 'a few hotheads'."¹⁰⁹⁷ Even a few days before the bankruptcy Heylen allegedly told his employees to "just keep doing your work. There's nothing going on."¹⁰⁹⁸

Just as he notoriously brushed off allegations of the bad condition of cinema culture in Antwerp in general and of his cinemas in particular, Heylen did not want to listen to advice from others, neither within nor outside of his cinema group. In his conclusion for the case Heylen against NV Metropolis dating from December 1993, Metropolis' lawyer Theunis resolutely asserted that "[a]lready more than two years ago, these companies [i.e. NV Excelsior, NV Filimpex, KL] were in a situation in which the dissolution of the company had to be brought forward to the respective general meeting, quod non."¹⁰⁹⁹ Looking back, Magiels pointed to Heylen's persistence and stubbornness: "Heylen has a lot of experience and skills, but he just can't delegate. Everything has to pass through his fingers. He works hard and a lot, he does. He is always the first one at the office in the mornings and in the evenings, he is always the one closing the doors. That's how he is. Determined and stubborn. He stops at nothing."¹¹⁰⁰ Former employees remembered that it was not impossible to bring forward suggestions and advice, and Heylen always had the final say.¹¹⁰¹

As seldom as Heylen acted upon the advice from others, just as little did he demonstrate his willingness to join forces with other exhibitors. Seen from a marketing theoretical perspective, this concerns establishing, maintaining or even raising exit barriers for poorly performing companies by companies which want to remain in the market.¹¹⁰² After all, the motivation for companies to create exit barriers for their competitors would be that it might be more profitable for them if, for example, a minimum number of businesses is required to maintain the level of supply and hence keep the market attractive for (potential) customers. A cinema market remains healthy as long as there are enough cinemas, and with it, film supply. On the one hand, as indicated earlier, the choice not only concerns the films and cinemas in particular, but, more importantly, whether to see or not see a film (and do something else). If there are enough cinemas (and hence films) to choose from, people are attracted to this area more likely. In addition, a healthy cinema market also attracts more distributors and has as an effect a more stable bargaining position for exhibitors. Regarding the latter, as I have pointed out several times in the course of this chapter, cooperation between exhibitors was a necessary means to counter the powerful group of distributors. It was also explicitly expressed by Ellinger (director of UGC) in 1985 about the two most powerful cinema chains (of French origin!) in Brussels: "There is no competition at all between Pathé and UGC, on the contrary, both groups are closely working together which in praxis results in one large group without

¹⁰⁹⁷ Belga and Timmerman, "Stakingsaanzegging," s.p.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Heylen in Lefelon, "Einde van Rex-film," 1.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Theunis, "Conclusie," 7.

¹¹⁰⁰ Magiels in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 17. See Magiels, personal interview.

¹¹⁰¹ See, for example, Zeguers, personal interview; Magiels, personal interview; Corluy, personal interview, June 25, 2008.

¹¹⁰² Kotler, *Marketing Management*, 238.

commercial rivalry with a cinema patrimony where films, in our opinion, are presented under the best possible circumstances.[...] A monopoly position which one day might make it difficult for the American distributors."¹¹⁰³

While many of Heylen's biggest competitors in Antwerp and the rest of Flanders had long acknowledged the importance of cooperation within the cinema sector, Heylen remained the lone fighter in his cinema kingdom. In 1974, Meerburg from the Calypso group already pointed out that "I'm convinced that our presence in Antwerp is also a good thing for Mr Heylen. It sounds very crazy, but I believe that it is also in the interests of Mister Heylen, that he does not stay alone here. We are not going to work against each other. There is space for the both of us and I truly believe that we came to Antwerp, just as it is good that the Studio [of Rastelli] is here."¹¹⁰⁴ Co-founder of cinema Monty and partner of Michel Apers, Michel Vandeghinste remembered later, that for the crew of the cinemas Monty and Cartoon's Meerburg's Calypso cinemas were no competition at all and that they "only competed with Heylen".¹¹⁰⁵ Something similar was expressed by Kloeck: "I don't believe in competition. The more cinemas, the more people will feel like going to see a movie." (Unless the cinemas in question have exactly the same film programming, as he added in a side note.)¹¹⁰⁶ After Heylen was declared bankrupt and the opening of Metropolis was approaching, Kloeck almost seemed to welcome the opening: "At least there's talking again between exhibitors, which did not happen under Heylen."¹¹⁰⁷ Although the concept of the Bert/Claeys group was not Kloeck's kind of cinema, he underlined the need and possibility of working complementarily.¹¹⁰⁸ This was confirmed by Claeys who, in reference to Kloeck's recently acquired monopoly position in the Station Quarter, expressed about the approaching opening of Metropolis: "This will also be beneficiary for the inner city."¹¹⁰⁹ As Metropolis PR manager Nolens put it about a fortnight later: "We are not sleeping in the same bed, but we eat and drink at the same table. We are not rivals, but colleagues."¹¹¹⁰

Heylen's nickname "the smiling cobra" referred to his changeable character ranging from being charming and generous to hot-tempered and narrow-minded.¹¹¹¹ In the press he showed off about his friendships with famous stars and politicians, while always also stressing his virtues as a modest and disciplined man.¹¹¹² His keywords to success were "righteousness, order and

¹¹⁰³ Ellinger in CAB, "Brussel: vriendelijk monopolie," *Trends. Financieel Economisch Magazine* 11 (1985): 50.

¹¹⁰⁴ Meerburg in van Gaelen, "Zij die van film leven," 7B.

¹¹⁰⁵ Vandeghinste, personal interview with van Ommen.

¹¹⁰⁶ Kloeck in Janssens, "Calypso," : s.p.

¹¹⁰⁷ Kloeck in Delveaux, "Metropolis," 2.

¹¹⁰⁸ Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen.

¹¹⁰⁹ Claeys in Delveaux, "Metropolis," 2.

¹¹¹⁰ Nolens in P. Mijlemans, "Platonische liefde tussen Antwerpse bioskopen," *De Morgen*, October 14, 1993, 2 [my transl.]

¹¹¹¹ Magiels, "De andere kant van Georges D. Heylen;" Anonymous Rex employee in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 17. See also the various personal interviews with Rex employers Corluy, Zegurs, Magiels, Druyts.

¹¹¹² Examples are ample, but one of the best ones dates from 1992 when he was quoted recounting how he had made the film "Mozart" [i.e. *Amadeus* (1984, US), sic] by "his friend" Milos Forman a worldwide success as well as how he tried to relaunch the German film in Belgium and "advised" director Wolfgang Petersen to film an adaptation of "the fantastic book" *Das Boot* (Heylen in De Foer, "Kempenaar-sinjoor," s.p.).

discipline".¹¹¹³ He asked much of his employees, but he also asked much of himself. In a newspaper interview in 1992 he – by then 80 years old – claimed that he still worked ten to twelve hours every day and that this was thanks to his healthy lifestyle.¹¹¹⁴ This healthy life style had become one of his publicly shared secrets. In a newspaper interview two years earlier, he explained (after having invited the reporter to feel his muscles): "I do a lot of exercising: rowing, biking, gymnastics. I sleep with the windows open. Get up early in the morning and shower daily with ice cold water. Smoking and drinking are taboo. *L'alcohol dégrade l'homme*."¹¹¹⁵

According to former employees on the one hand he was generous, on the other he was unpredictable and Victorian.¹¹¹⁶ It was especially in the last months of his reign and especially in connection with the serious deficits of his staff management that more and more of his negative traits were also discussed in the media. After it had become clear in August 1993 that four of Heylen's corporations were about to be liquidated and – as a result – four more cinemas would be put on death row, a socio-economic thriller unfolded about the future of Heylen, his cinema group, and his employees. The commotion hit the headlines for weeks in at least half a dozen different local and national newspapers.¹¹¹⁷ Heylen's attitude toward his personnel was described as being contemptuous, which was also manifest in his unwillingness to cooperate, and in his failures to appear at urgent staff meetings, partly organized by the labor federation. Heylen's reply to the announcement of serious actions on behalf of his employees was: "When they go on strike, they're not gonna get any cent anymore."¹¹¹⁸

As explained in Paragraph 4.2, for decades Heylen had effectively kept the number of employees per company below the minimum number of fifty so that the establishment of a Works Council was not obligatory. Although, initially, the ABVV had lost their case against twenty of Heylen's companies about their status as technical business unit, they eventually won the case after

¹¹¹³ De Foer, "Kempenaar-sinjoor," s.p.

¹¹¹⁴ Heylen in De Foer, "Kempenaar-sinjoor," s.p. [my transl.].

¹¹¹⁵ Heylen quoted in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 17. When being asked about the role of women in his life Heylen, married twice, asserted "A man is born free and only idiots marry." This statement, of course, needs to be taken with a grain of salt, since Heylen was married twice, which he also admitted right after. His sense of humor also became apparent in the way he remembered the Rex-disaster in 1944: "They were thinking that Heylen was dead. But they don't need me in heaven. There is no cinema there, you know. I had to walk on crutches for a long time and I had been blind for fourteen weeks. Blind as a bat. I had four, five skull fractures. [...] Until a while back I was only able to tell dark from light with my left eye. But recently I have undergone a surgery. Now I can even look around the corner." (Heylen quoted in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 17 [my transl.].)

¹¹¹⁶ See, for example, Druyts, personal interview; Magiels, "De andere kant van Georges D. Heylen".

¹¹¹⁷ It concerns the period from roughly mid-August until mid-September and newspapers such as *Gazet van Antwerpen*, *De Nieuwe Gazet*, *Het Volk*, *De Standaard*, *De Morgen* as well as the financial newspaper *Financieel Economische Tijd*. See, for example, D.G.E., "Rex-concern in nood, overname nabij?"; De Foer, S., "Sociaal konflikt bij Antwerps Rexconcern," *De Standaard*, August 26, 1993, 19; Lefelon, "Witte doek valt," s.p. as well as the public announcements for extraordinary general meetings of the corresponding four Rex companies NV Immo Cinam, NV Odeon, NV Immo Anneessens, and NV Rubenspaleis in s.n., "Oproeping tot een buitengewone algemene vergadering van NV Immocinam, NV Odeon, NV Rubenspaleis, NV Immo Anneessens," *De Morgen*, August 4, 1993, 7.

¹¹¹⁸ Quote Heylen in Lefelon, "Witte doek valt in tien Rex-zalen," 1. See S. De Foer, "Sociaal konflikt bij Rexconcern," *De Standaard*, August 16, 1993, s.p.; Belga, "Bioscoopketen Heylen wankelt," s.p.

having resubmitted it before the labor court in order for former employees to qualify for salary compensation and to fall under the rules of collective closure. According to a letter from the general office of the ABVV to Antwerp's representative Tempelaere, the collective labor agreement for the cinema sector allowed for cinemas or groups of cinemas with at least fifteen employees to install a trade-union representative. This trade-union representative, in turn made it possible to bargain about workers' rights. Attached to the letter was a list of Antwerp cinemas from which it transpired that actually most of Heylen's cinemas were in fact able to install a trade-union representative.¹¹¹⁹ As Tempelaere made clear in a newspaper interview in August 1993, there was not really a trade-union tradition in the cinema business, yet the different unions did consist of many members who could fight for the interests of the Rex victims as well.¹¹²⁰ Quite some press coverage about the escalating situation in Heylen's cinema group underlines the engagement of the unions on behalf of the Rex employees.¹¹²¹ Their actions and initiatives were to no avail, however, and could not save the Rex employees from getting discharged.

After the closure of some more of Heylen's center cinemas and the liquidation of some more of his companies had hit the headlines in the daily press in the middle of August 1993, a staff meeting was held on 20 August. At the meeting, a majority of the attendees expressed their readiness for immediate action, but their votes did not constitute the required two-third majority. 90% of them, however, did vote for a strike notice.¹¹²² The strike was eventually fixed for 3 September 1993, but was never put in action, because Heylen was declared bankrupt on the same day.

Heylen once said in a newspaper interview in 1990: "Take my job away and I'm dead within two months. And to lie there between six planks is chilly, I'm telling you."¹¹²³ Two years and two months after the bankruptcy he passed away.

4.6.4. Aftermath

Kloeck's belief in the advantages of cooperation also explains his resentment about Heylen's downfall. The week before Heylen was declared bankrupt, Kloeck – who claims that he had seen the bankruptcy coming at least half a year earlier after the withdrawal of one of Heylen's regular

¹¹¹⁹ D. Plaum, letter to U. Tempelaere, February 11, 1992.

¹¹²⁰ Tempelaere in Delveaux, "Sociaal conflict," s.p.

¹¹²¹ Practically all relevant newspapers regularly covered the course of the negotiations between (representatives of) the unions and Heylen and/or his representatives throughout August and September 1993.

¹¹²² See, for example, Lefelon, "Witte doek valt," s.p.; Belga and Timmerman, "Stakingsaanzegging," s.p.; De Foer, "Personeel cinemagroep rex," s.p.; Verbruggen, "Doek valt," s.p.; Belga, "Personeel Rex-concern dient stakingsaanzegging in," *Financieel Economische Tijd*, August 28, 1993: s.p.; VaM, "Vereffening Rex-concern uit startblokken," *Het Volk*, September 2, 1993, s.p.; S. De Foer, "Doek valt over cinemagroep Rex." *De Standaard*, September 4, 1993, 13.

¹¹²³ Quote Heylen dating from 1990, cited in Oosterwaal, "Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland," 18.

distributors from Heylen's cinemas – expressed his worries about a week before the bankruptcy: “The baron is sincerely thanked for this malaise. It was already catastrophic before, now the city is going to get mutilated even more. Is the Anneessensstraat going to become as spooky as the Astridplein? This is negative for my image and my business. The ambience is gone.”¹¹²⁴

Kloeck neither believed in the illusion that with the coming of Metropolis Antwerp would become the *Kinemastad* again it once had been, as it had been suggested by the Metropolis group.¹¹²⁵ He pointed to the fact that although the number of cinemagoers in his cinemas increased since Heylen's bankruptcy, at the same time Antwerp's inner city now attracted less than half of the number of cinemagoers it had done in July, when Heylen's cinemas were still open. He feared that cinemagoers were gone for good, because they would rather drop out when they were not able to go to their favorite cinema anymore, instead of waiting until a new cinema opens nearby.¹¹²⁶ In addition to the gaping void of empty buildings, the Rex cinema group's bankruptcy also led to the dislocation of the nightlife crowd towards the Grote Markt [i.e. in Antwerp's historical center]. Metropolis PR manager Nolens partly shared Kloecks conviction by explaining that consumer behavior changed quickly and people quickly unlearned their moviegoing habits once cinemas disappeared.¹¹²⁷

NV Kinopolis' accountant general Vandenbosch had emphasized earlier in his argumentation against Antwerp's city council's fear that the coming of a new cinema complex in Antwerp would not result in cinema deaths of traditional and center cinemas. He pointed to the massive investments that were made by competitors in, for example, Brussels and Louvain where competitors would actually invest in more sophisticated equipment and comfort – a phenomenon which Vandenbosch called the “Kinopolis-reflex” [sic].¹¹²⁸ What Vandenbosch did not mention, however, was the effect the coming of their multi- and megaplexes had on cinemas where exhibitors did simply not have the means to renovate and innovate.

After it had been announced that the building complex that housed the last Rex cinemas at Anneessensstraat/De Keyserlei was on sale, a broad spectrum of investors demonstrated their interests. Different parties – amongst which local authorities, investors and the Rex cinema group's receiver – repeatedly expressed their preferences for a buyer with plans for a new cinema complex.¹¹²⁹ Among those interested in acquiring and/or exploiting the former Rex cinemas was Kloeck. One of his greatest worries was that his Calypso and Century cinemas would drown in the wake of Heylen's bankruptcy, due to a potential outflow of customers to Metropolis which was to be

¹¹²⁴ Kloeck in G. Delveaux, “Rex: de magie sterft uit,” *De Nieuwe Gazet*, August 27, 1993, s.n. See also Kloeck, personal interviews November 25, 2011 and January 20, 2012.

¹¹²⁵ This was indeed one of the sales pitches by the Claeys-Bert group (Bert and Bert, letter to Stad Antwerpen).

¹¹²⁶ Kloeck in Mijlemans, “De echt Antwerpse cinema,” and Mijlemans, “Biotoop stadsbioscoop,” 2. See Kloeck in Oosterwaal, “Baron Georges Heylen van Oirland,” 18.

¹¹²⁷ Nolens in Mijlemans, “De echt Antwerpse cinema,” 2.

¹¹²⁸ Vandenbosch, letter to Adrianssen, s.p.

¹¹²⁹ Immobiliën Hugo Ceusters, “Rapportering Rex Dossier”.

opened within a month's time, as well as due to the further devaluation of the Station Quarter. Kloeck's idea of temporarily exploiting the former Rex cinemas actually could have come down to a win-win situation. He explained that apart from his personal motivations to keep the cinemas running, van Passel and the real estate agent would also benefit from the situation, since rental contracts for films and related matters could be completed as initially agreed upon, thereby amortizing some of the debts beforehand. Despite its high appeal, Kloeck's idea found no ear, mainly due to the "big problem concerning insurance issues and licensing rights".¹¹³⁰ As indicated in the last paragraph of Chapter 3, next to Kloeck and other local exhibitors Rastelli and Engelbrecht international key players in the film industry MGM, AMC, UGC and Gaumont were amongst other interested parties for the cinema business in the building complex.¹¹³¹ Gaumont finally succeeded in getting through with the deal, effectively closing the circle of roughly ninety years of cinema history, since Gaumont was also the first to exploit a cinema at this very spot in the 1910s.

4.7. Concluding remarks on Chapter 4

In this chapter I have shown that at the very bottom of Heylen's growth in the 1950s as well as his downfall in the 1990s lie causes relating to changes in the cinema industry on the one hand and changes in the habit of cinemagoing on the other. Both aspects (cinema industry and cinemagoing habit) are tied in the acknowledgement that cinema business is not only about selling film as a diversified product in itself, but it is – and was – predominantly about selling the experience of going to the movies, embracing the experience of (going to) the cinema as much as the experience of (viewing a) film.

Heylen was a showman with excellent marketing skills and knowledge of the local market. By investing in cinema infrastructure, comfort and publicity he succeeded in branding his product: the Rex cinema group. As will be clearer in Chapter 6, Heylen's Rex empire was widely known and acknowledged for having the best cinemas and showing the best films. The foundation of his monopolistic position was already taking shape in the 1950s, which was also the period of his biggest expansion and the period when the Belgian cinema market was becoming saturated. Heylen did not so much build new cinemas, as take over existing ones. Hence, his expansion predominantly came at the cost of his competitors, many of which had to close down, were taken over by Heylen or had to

¹¹³⁰ Kloeck, personal interviews, November 25, 2011 and January 20, 2012; E. Kloeck, letter to M. van Passel and Immobiliën Hugo Ceusters NV, Antwerp, 6 September 1993; Immobiliën Hugo Ceusters, "Rapportering Rex Dossier," 1. The "problems concerning insurance issues" mentioned in the report regarded the insurances for the cinemas Heylen had not paid for quite some time, making the exploitation of the cinemas too much of a risk for the companies' receiver, who would remain in the function of the exhibitor.

¹¹³¹ Ceusters, "Rapportering Rex Dossier".

play by his rules. In the 1960s Heylen became the key player in Antwerp's inner city and one of Belgium's leading exhibitors.

Whereas in the first decades of his career, he displayed great showmanship and entrepreneurial and innovative skills in the Schumpeterian sense, in the course of the 1970s he started lagging behind. New Schumpeters were needed to give new impulses to what had become an ailing industry. Heylen was indeed overtaken by new Schumpeters: on the one hand young idealistic film buffs who allowed for a more interactive audience participation and who offered a more intimate and familiar film-viewing experience (as in the case of Monty and Cartoon's), and on the other hand, the new generation of cinema entrepreneurs who invested in new architectural and conceptual designs as much as the latest technological innovations (Bert/Claeys group).

It is not that Heylen did not invest in his cinemas anymore, on the contrary. But instead of searching for new ways to get (back) audiences to his cinemas, he kept clinging to outdated formulas of success: by the 1980s hand-painted giant *calicots* appeared as old-fashioned as hand-gloved usherettes and uniformed porters in his cinemas. The meaning of comfort had changed as new generations became more affluent and mobile. Heylen was steadily losing ground from the 1970s onwards and insufficiently adapted to the socio-economic changes in the conditions of cinemagoing. In the 1950s and 1960s the notion of cinemagoing began to change from a predominantly communal activity tied to daily life routines (justifying big screens, cinemas in every neighborhood) to a more individualized activity (cinemagoing more as a special occasion linked to a good night out). Hence, cinemagoers became more selective in their film choice. Cinemas increasingly had to compete with other outlets of audiovisual products such as television and VCR. This, however, was completely denied by Heylen who asserted that “[t]elevision and video will never be able to completely push aside the cinema. Apart from the difference in atmosphere, watching tv for hours is simply unhealthy. There are 38.000 little dots flickering on a surface of 30 to 40 centimeter. This is extremely tiring for modern man, who comes home from work psychologically exhausted already. There is even a disease named after it: ‘televitis’.”¹¹³²

Heylen was not completely wrong in his argumentation. Watching a film at home and at the cinema cannot be simply compared since both are embedded in highly differing contexts.¹¹³³ Yet, Heylen did fail to realize a number of shifts that had taken place since he was the “Rex” of Belgium's exhibition industry; shifts that had, for example, contributed to a certain devaluation of film as cultural product as well. Cinema had become the locomotive of a film's life, a shop window with the biggest profits being generated in auxiliary markets. Along with this, the notion of cinema as a fancy place to meet and watch a film had long disappeared. Cinemas were not the pleasant places

¹¹³² Heylen in De Foer, “Kempenaar-sinjoor,” s.p. [my trans.]

¹¹³³ This had been a recurring debate in academic literature since the 1980s. See, for example, Docherty et al., *The Last picture show*.

anymore they used to be until the 1950s, but were now considered stinky boxes offering less comfort and less choice than at home.¹¹³⁴ For Antwerp particularly, this impression was even aggravated by the continuous degradation of the Station Quarter as former cinema hot spot.

As Hanson argued, multiplex corporations in the US (and the Kinopolis group in Belgium I would like to add) recognized that the mode of film consumption had changed as film had become a consumer product with “emphasis in home-based technological forms and entertainment”.¹¹³⁵ Despite general negative accounts of an ongoing decline in the film industry Hanson observed a “decline in the attraction of cinemas *not* of feature films” and asserted that “[f]ilm viewing as a popular activity was very much alive: it was cinema-going that was not.”¹¹³⁶ In addition, as Hanson also noted, “the problems for the exhibition industry and the possible remedies were too often focused on the *mechanics* of exhibition and distribution, rather than on the social and cultural *experience* of film.”¹¹³⁷ The cinema industry's failure of eradicating the problem at its roots had as a result that “[b]y 1970 the cinema had become just one more leisure pursuit among a myriad of alternatives” and “cinema had lost its privileged place in the social fabric of the nation”.¹¹³⁸ The spectacular growth of cinema attendance in the 1990s has shown that there is more to cinema than just film (which by then could be watched via many different media).

Whereas in the beginning of his career, Heylen's policy was proactive, by the 1980s it had become reactive. His were short-time solutions to an aggravating problem: he raised seat prices, eliminated competitors and invested in cheap conversions of existing cinemas. Instead of looking for new ways to attract (new segments of) audiences and investing in fundamental changes, his symptomatic management merely aimed at boosting box office, but not at bringing back audiences to the inner city theaters.

Apart from the specific insights gained concerning historical changes in film exhibition on a local level, this chapter has also made clear a number of things on a more general level. Local cinema business is much more complex than just about direct competition. It is marked by specific dynamics and the relations among the individual players. The cinema business is one of an intensely interwoven network with entangled interests. Instead of simply linking cinemas to names of persons, it is necessary to distinguish, for example, between corporations (e.g. NVs) which were run by several

¹¹³⁴ See Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*; Geraghty, “Cinema as Social Space”.

¹¹³⁵ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 128.

¹¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

¹¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 128 [emphasis in source]. This had also been suggested by Docherty et al., who asserted that “Solutions a plenty were offered for reversing this decline, but what strikes the outside observer is that possible remedies for the problems of the industry focused on the machinery of production and distribution [and] failed to grasp the social dimension of film-watching.” (Docherty et al., *The Last Picture Show*, 2-4.) They provided as an example how the film industry “believed that its fight was with a new alternative technology for delivering moving pictures. Instead of re-siting the cinemas and following the audience to the new housing estates, therefore, the film industry struck back at the technological level,” (for example, bigger screens, 3D, Technicolor; Docherty et al., *The Last Picture Show*, 28).

¹¹³⁸ Respectively Docherty et al., *The Last Picture Show*, 30 and Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 134.

persons (board of directors), most often shareholders.¹¹³⁹ As emphasized by former players in Antwerp's cinema sector and as I have shown in the course of this chapter, film exhibition was not necessarily about fierce and straightforward competition. Rather it was a question of give and take. As much as Heylen was dreaded for being treated with preference by distributors and therefore enjoying a number of significant advantages on the local market, as much as he was needed. On the one hand, because competitors profited from his investments in publicity. On the other hand, because his many cinemas had people maintain their moviegoing habits, at least up to a certain point in time, of which other exhibitors with only one or a few cinemas also profited. With a film choice offered by a number of cinemas in a culturally and infrastructurally attractive area as the Station Quarter, people were more likely to develop and maintain a habit of cinemagoing. The dilapidation of the Station Quarter and Heylen's neglect in terms of (technological) innovation, however, chased off cinemagoers, either to cinemas in nearby cities (as Brussels or Ghent) or away from the cinema altogether. The astonishing and long-lasting success of the Bert/Claeys group, which repeatedly made it to the headlines of the international trade magazine *Variety*, proved that times had changed and cinema could in fact still be profitable, if substantial investments were made in good equipment and comfort.

On a methodological and theoretical level, this chapter has again illustrated the worth of microhistories and the combination of oral and written sources as well as quantitative and qualitative datasets and methods. It has provided a rich and multilayered image of Antwerp's cinematic landscape and sheds new light on the complex relationship and interdependence between different players, local and global, big and small, in distribution and exhibition. It is here that qualitative and quantitative methods meet and that their respective findings complement and can be cross checked against each other.¹¹⁴⁰ It would have nearly impossible to describe the impact of, for example, the distribution conflict between Heylen and the American majors in detail, if it was not for the combination of the (quantitative) programming research with the plowing through of local trade journals and newspapers in archives and listening to (the illuminating accounts of) former employees and other eyewitnesses. Their oral testimonies provided clues for archival research and breathed life into static documents.

Depending from the angle we look from, the implications of case studies as the ones presented in this Chapter are manifold. In-depth studies of the relations between distribution and exhibition have been relatively scarce. Yet they are relevant, because – to speak in Wasko's terms –

¹¹³⁹ Dibbets already pointed to the phenomenon of double functions in 1980, yet his groundbreaking study had never been picked up massively.

¹¹⁴⁰ This corresponds to what Maltby suggested in his proposal of “writing cinema history from below”, that “[i]deally, the microhistories of Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levy, extend, complement and qualify the broader generalizations provided by quantitative methods, and their dialogue provides models for the histories of cinema from below that I am advocating.” (Maltby, “On the prospect,” 86.)

“[i]t is important to try to understand the basics of distribution agreements, as they reveal how money flows, as well as power relations within the industry.”¹¹⁴¹ However, micro-level histories in particular can offer insights in how global players in film industry operate on regional and local markets. Case studies as the ones presented here are important in the way they can expose flaws in macro-level assumptions. The research on distribution and exhibition in Antwerp in the late 1960s and early 1970s has shown, for example, that the dominance (or failure) of Hollywood studios did not exclusively depend on, for example, the quality of the films they produced, audience preferences or even the rigors of one particular business whizz, but was an accumulation of diverse economic and cultural (political) interests in combination with the dynamics of local cinema markets. More particularly, the case of Heylen and the Rex cinema group has demonstrated an attempt to monopolize a local market within a comparatively weakly organized national industry, an attempt that was successful, but only to a certain point in time. Heylen’s increased neglect in substantial and structural investments in a healthy enterprise aside, the question arises whether a more cooperative attitude towards his competitors could have saved the Rex cinema group in the long run.

However, in order to determine whether, and in how far, distribution, programming and exhibition for Antwerp cinemas differed from other cities in Flanders, Belgium and abroad, more comparative research is necessary. Whether or not Antwerp is a typical case of local cinema culture – and to which extent – still remains to be investigated. Judging from the results on cinema historical research on the Flemish city of Ghent, for example, local cinema chains by private investors were quite common in Flemish cities, yet Heylen’s power was unmatched. It is not only that we can put similar case studies of successful cinema entrepreneurs together in an attempt to make generalizations (i.e. the jig-saw version). Here it also makes sense to highlight the value of microhistories as possible collisions with existing macro-histories. One such collision would be Heylen’s spectacular growth in the 1950s, when in general the cinema industry was already in an ongoing recession. Another would be the rupture Heylen’s story exposes in the distribution system: as I have shown and will show in more detail in the following chapter, the conceptualization of classical system of run zone clearances has to be revised or at least needs some shading.

¹¹⁴¹ Wasko, *How Hollywood Works*, 86.

“Any film not shown is a form of censorship, albeit a commercial one.”¹¹⁴²

5. Films. Case studies in film supply within Antwerp's cinema market

This chapter explores the supply of films in Antwerp's cinemas. Often, studies of cinema markets in relation to film supply are based either on import figures or box office results.¹¹⁴³ While import figures tell little about what actually played on screens and with which success, box office results mask the popularity of films in another way. They are aggregates of films' takings from which the success of particular films can be inferred, yet only up to a certain degree. First because usually these aggregates do not distinguish between first run screenings (of which cinemas charge higher ticket prices, hence elevating revenues, while the number of people attending the film might not have been that high) and subsequent run screenings (charging lower prices). Second, neither do box office results tell about how long or how often the film was screened in which cinema. As Dibbets suggested, “[d]uration introduces time into measurement of success and popularity, a dimension lost in the archives of box office data”.¹¹⁴⁴ Despite their importance for studying cinema markets and cinema-going experiences, scholarly attention for film distribution and film programming on a microlevel has remained scarce.

There are two main reasons for conducting a micro-level study of film programming in this thesis. The first is that such a study provides insights into the actual film supply and a certain profiling of Heylen's cinemas and that of his competitors at a given point in time. A systematic and comparative analysis of the popularity of particular films is therefore not the focus of this examination.¹¹⁴⁵ A second reason for analyzing film programming in this thesis is because it offers indications for the dynamics within Antwerp's cinema market and the degree of cooperation and competition between the different players. The examination of how films traveled through the city and how they were exchanged between different types of cinemas, can be considered to be indicative for the extent of cooperation and/or competition between different exhibitors as well as for the relation between exhibitors and distributors.

The analyses which follow in the next three paragraphs are based on an extensive film programming database created within the frameworks of the “‘Enlightened’ City” project. This database was subsequently expanded for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” (for details see below). In this

¹¹⁴² Nelissen, “Ontwikkelingshulp,” s.p.

¹¹⁴³ See for example K. Thompson, *Exporting Entertainment. America in the world film market 1907-34* (London: BFI, 1985) (based on import); J. Garncarz, “Hollywood in Germany: The Role of American Films in Germany,” in *Hollywood in Europe*, edited by D. W. Ellwood and R. Kroes (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994), 94-135 (box-office).

¹¹⁴⁴ Dibbets, “Cinema Context,” 341.

¹¹⁴⁵ Such systematic approach to measuring the popularity of screened films is possible, for instance, by means of the POPSTAT index developed by Sedgwick and Pokorny (J. Sedgwick and M. Pokorny, “The Film Business in the United States and Britain during the 1930s.” *Economic History Review* 58 no. 1 (2005): 88).

chapter I will focus on three case studies of film programming in Antwerp cinemas, each investigating three particular sample years: 1952, 1962, 1982.¹¹⁴⁶ They all address the actual film supply for a selection of Antwerp cinemas at three crucial moments. The first case study is to deal with film programming for a moment when Antwerp's cinema market was still quite fragmented and Heylen had just started his expansionary moves. From this perspective it is interesting to look at possible differences and/or similarities in programming amongst the different exhibiting parties and at the degree of film exchange between them as indicative for possible cooperation. The second case study is to examine situation one decade later, after many of the inner-city cinemas had closed down and only a few of Heylen's competitors were still active on the local market. The case study of film programming in 1982 investigates the long-term impact of Heylen's distribution conflict with the American majors and of the coming of new competitors in Antwerp in the course of the 1970s. In doing so it partly hooks into the analysis of the cinema market and film supply for the early 1970s that has already been discussed in Chapter 4.4.1. All in all, the analyses of these particular moments in time thus invite a comparison of film supply and exchange between the different parties involved. The three cases are discussed in three separate paragraphs, but they are also discussed in comparative perspective throughout. In what follows I will first introduce used sources and applied methods.

5.1. Method, sources, data

The first subparagraph introduces the programming database and also addresses questions of data collection and consistency of the data. Paragraph 5.1.2 deals with the programming analysis, including motivation and operationalization of the research questions as well as sampling. Unless indicated otherwise, Heylen's cinemas and data related to screenings at his cinemas are marked with green color in all tables and figures; that of his competitors are marked red.

5.1.1. Programming database

To a large extent, the film programming analysis is based on data collected for another comprehensive database set up and carried out within the framework of the "Enlightened' City" project. Data for Antwerp were collected and processed (and partly analyzed) by Gert Willems and voluntary researchers. This original database contained film programming data for a selection of

¹¹⁴⁶ Motivations for these three particular years are provided in the following paragraph.

cinemas in Antwerp for the three sample years 1952, 1962, 1972.¹¹⁴⁷ The database was subsequently expanded for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” by a number of cinemas as well as by the sample years 1982, 1992.¹¹⁴⁸ It is this *programming database* on which all further elaborations in this chapter are based.

The reasons for the amendments of the existing database for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” were twofold. Most importantly, the composition of the samples created in the first instance did not allow for a systematic comparison between the sample years as intended for “Antwerpen Kinemastad”. This is because the data collected for the “‘Enlightened’ City” project were based on the Rex film programming books, which did not contain information for the same set of cases (cinemas) for all different sample years. While for 1952, for example, the programming books contained information about film programming for center and neighborhood cinemas mostly for cinemas linked to Heylen, the sample for 1962 consisted of center cinemas only, but now for all cinemas, those of Heylen's and competing ones. The sample for 1972 contained information about center cinemas only (and Studio Century in Borgerhout), all related to Heylen (due to his quasi-monopoly position in the Station Quarter). In order to facilitate proper comparisons for the sample years, additional data were collected for the cinemas hitherto excluded from the database. A second reason for expanding the original database was the inclusion of the sample years 1982 and 1992 in order to cover the entire period of the Rex cinema group's existence and to keep the time interval of one decade. For every sample year the film screenings were recorded for consecutive fifty-two weeks, each beginning on the first Friday in January.

As previously mentioned, the main sources used within the “‘Enlightened’ City” project were the programming books of the Rex-group. Whereas the greatest part of the company archive had been destroyed, an integral set of film programming books was kept in the private collection of Corluy. It concerns mostly the programming books for Antwerp's center cinemas related to Heylen. The books document the weekly film programming for the period 1951 until the day Heylen was declared bankrupt. Until the mid-1950s, the books also contain information on the screenings in neighborhood cinemas in Stuivenberg/St. Amandus, Borgerhout as well as Berchem and Antwerp's historical center. From 1955 onwards, the programming of neighborhood cinemas was registered in different books, which unfortunately have been lost. From that moment onwards, competing center

¹¹⁴⁷ For more details see the project-internal research reports and the integral programming report with the major conclusions for the three sample years. The first versions of the programming report for the years 1952 and 1962 were written by researcher Gert Willems. I want to thank Gert Willems and the voluntary member Kirsten van Beek for their valuable contributions. For the amended versions of these programming reports see: K. Lotze, “Rapport over de programmeringstendensen in Antwerpen voor het jaar 1952,” Unpublished report, University of Antwerp, 2009; K. Lotze, “Rapport over de programmeringstendensen in Antwerpen voor het jaar 1962,” Unpublished report, University of Antwerp, 2009; K. Lotze, “Rapport over de programmeringstendensen in Antwerpen voor het jaar 1972,” Unpublished report, University of Antwerp, 2010; K. Lotze, “Centraal rapport over de programmeringstendensen voor een selectie Antwerpse bioscopen in 1952, 1962 en 1972,” Unpublished report, University of Antwerp, 2011.

¹¹⁴⁸ Details can be found in the overview in Appendix II-3. The databases for 1952, 1962, 1972, 1982 are included as SAV- and Excel-files Appendix II-4. The data for 1992 were not used for this thesis and are therefore not included in the Appendix. I wish to thank MA student An Wielockx for her valuable assistance with collecting and processing the data.

cinemas were documented along with Heylen's center cinemas. At about the time of the distribution conflict in the late 1960s and early 1970s, no competing cinemas were recorded. With the opening of the Calypso triplex in 1973, its film programming was documented in the Rex-programming books as well, not that of Cartoon's, however.

The programming books contain a weekly listing of all films playing in the various cinemas, including their titles, distributors and official ratings of the national board for film classification (see Image 12 below).¹¹⁴⁹ Due to the closure of cinemas, opening of others and Heylen's takeovers of still others, the place in line of every individual cinema varied over the years. Generally, Heylen's own center cinemas were listed in the upper part of every page, followed by his neighborhood cinemas (if applicable). The lower part of cinemas would then consist of (major) cinemas operating independently of Heylen.¹¹⁵⁰ Hence, due to this peculiar listing of the cinemas in the programming books, the books also provided indications of times in which certain cinemas were part or not part of Heylen's cinema group.

¹¹⁴⁹ In Belgium, a film was principally prohibited for screenings for children under sixteen, unless the film was approved by the national board for film censorship for the screening for audiences under sixteen. In case different ratings were provided in the newspapers or programming books, the more favorable was used (sometimes films were resubmitted for censorship. For example, *The Outsider* (Mann, 1961, US) was listed as suitable for adults for a screening in neighborhood cinema National in September, while all the other screenings at Metro, Anvers Palace and Astra were listed as being suitable for adults and adolescents.

¹¹⁵⁰ For the weeks depicted in Image 12 below, for example, we can see the first block of cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group. Although Astra was part of Heylen's cinema group, it was considered a "second run" cinema and therefore documented separately from the center cinemas. Following Astra were three competing cinemas which were in turn preceded by a white line. This white line had been that of cinema Roxy, which had been closed shortly before. The next block is made up, again by competing cinemas and followed by two white lines originally referring to Quellin and Cineac. The latter was closed and Quellin had been taken over by Heylen shortly before. Hence its double entry, in the first block (i.e. related to Heylen's cinemas) and the last (i.e. competing cinemas).

Image 12: Example of a page in the Rex film programming books. The page documents the film programming in Antwerp center cinemas for seven weeks in April and May 1962.

TRIMESTRE	1-4	11-4	20-4	27-4	4-5	11-5	18-5	TRIMESTRE	25-4	25-5
REX	2 ^e WEEK MY GEISHA KT AA	3 ^e WEEK SEADRANT THREE KT AA	4 ^e WEEK SWISS T. ROBINSONS KT DISUREL	5 ^e WEEK ADORABLE MENTHUIS KT MELIOR	6 ^e WEEK LUMMER AND SHOOK KNT PAR	7 ^e WEEK FANNY KT V.B.	8 ^e WEEK NORTH BY NORTHWEST KNT METRO	REX	9 ^e WEEK JAIME TU AIME KNT METRO	10 ^e WEEK DE L'OP VIKI KNT ELAN
RUBENS	9 ^e WEEK	10 ^e WEEK 10 EN LAATSTE WEEK	11 ^e WEEK	12 ^e WEEK	13 ^e WEEK	14 ^e WEEK	15 ^e WEEK	RUBENS	16 ^e WEEK	17 ^e WEEK
ODEON	LES LOUIS SONT LACRES KNT SAINFORT	2 ^e WEEK ABSENT-MINDED KNT	3 ^e WEEK LIGHT IN THE PLAZZA KNT METRO	4 ^e WEEK ADORABLE MENTHUIS KNT MELIOR	5 ^e WEEK LUMMER AND SHOOK KNT PAR	6 ^e WEEK HIBELIE DE..... KNT SAINFORT	7 ^e WEEK	ODEON	8 ^e WEEK HAB. STAP KNT SAINFORT	9 ^e WEEK
ASTRID	7 ^e WEEK	8 ^e WEEK	9 ^e WEEK	10 ^e WEEK	11 ^e WEEK	12 ^e WEEK	13 ^e WEEK	ASTRID	14 ^e WEEK DER LUG KNT G.C.B.	15 ^e WEEK
VENDOME	8 ^e WEEK C'EST NOU KNT	9 ^e WEEK	10 ^e WEEK	11 ^e WEEK	12 ^e WEEK	13 ^e WEEK	14 ^e WEEK	VENDOME	15 ^e WEEK U.S. FANNY KNT	16 ^e WEEK
SAVOY	9 ^e WEEK DE OEDIPANS KNT PARON	10 ^e WEEK PARLEZ-MOI D'AMOUR KNT APOLLON	11 ^e WEEK	12 ^e WEEK NUR DER WIND KNT ELAN	13 ^e WEEK	14 ^e WEEK	15 ^e WEEK	SAVOY	16 ^e WEEK	17 ^e WEEK
CAPITOLE	10 ^e WEEK	11 ^e WEEK	12 ^e WEEK	13 ^e WEEK	14 ^e WEEK	15 ^e WEEK	16 ^e WEEK	CAPITOLE	17 ^e WEEK G.E.A. KNT	18 ^e WEEK
QUELLIN	11 ^e WEEK DIE BANDE DES SCHRECKENS KNT ELAN	12 ^e WEEK	13 ^e WEEK	14 ^e WEEK	15 ^e WEEK	16 ^e WEEK	17 ^e WEEK	QUELLIN	18 ^e WEEK UNER H.F. KNT ELAN	19 ^e WEEK
METRO	12 ^e WEEK THE OUTSIDER KNT U.I.	13 ^e WEEK	14 ^e WEEK	15 ^e WEEK	16 ^e WEEK	17 ^e WEEK	18 ^e WEEK	METRO	19 ^e WEEK	20 ^e WEEK
ASTRA	13 ^e WEEK SPARTAGUI KNT U.I.	14 ^e WEEK BREAKFAST AT T. KNT PAR	15 ^e WEEK DON CAMILLO... M. KNT DIC.	16 ^e WEEK BLEU HAWAII KNT PAR	17 ^e WEEK	18 ^e WEEK	19 ^e WEEK	ASTRA	20 ^e WEEK THE IN D KNT DISUREL	21 ^e WEEK
PALACE	14 ^e WEEK DAIL H FOR MURDER KNT W.B.	15 ^e WEEK VIE PRIVÉE KNT PATHE	16 ^e WEEK	17 ^e WEEK SPLENDOR IN THE GRASS KNT W.B.	18 ^e WEEK	19 ^e WEEK	20 ^e WEEK	PALACE	21 ^e WEEK PIRATES KNT INFERRA	22 ^e WEEK
PATHE	15 ^e WEEK	16 ^e WEEK 13 WEST STREET KNT GOLDH.	17 ^e WEEK WALK ON THE WILD SIDE KNT CAL.	18 ^e WEEK	19 ^e WEEK VOU DU PONT KNT ROYAL FILM	20 ^e WEEK	21 ^e WEEK	PATHE	22 ^e WEEK JRE RORDT KNT U.A.	23 ^e WEEK
EMPIRE	16 ^e WEEK LA V. DU MAIQUO DE KNT HEAL	17 ^e WEEK LE CABOTIN KNT METROP.	18 ^e WEEK L'AVENT. BERN ALMER KNT DINL	19 ^e WEEK MOULIN ROUGE KNT METROP.	20 ^e WEEK	21 ^e WEEK	22 ^e WEEK	EMPIRE	23 ^e WEEK H. JANS KNT	24 ^e WEEK
BOXY	17 ^e WEEK	18 ^e WEEK	19 ^e WEEK	20 ^e WEEK	21 ^e WEEK	22 ^e WEEK	23 ^e WEEK	BOXY	24 ^e WEEK BIRNQU KNT STANGRAE	25 ^e WEEK
AMBASSADES	18 ^e WEEK LA VIAGGA KNT METROP.	19 ^e WEEK GIAL OF NIGHT KNT W.B.	20 ^e WEEK LES FORTICHES KNT UFA	21 ^e WEEK NAZARIN KNT RANK	22 ^e WEEK AU LEUL DELA VIE KNT BIFG	23 ^e WEEK	24 ^e WEEK	AMBASSADES	25 ^e WEEK EDUCATION SENTIM. KNT METROP.	26 ^e WEEK
MOYV	19 ^e WEEK	20 ^e WEEK LA FILLE DU TORRENT KNT ABC	21 ^e WEEK	22 ^e WEEK UNE GROSSE TÊTE KNT	23 ^e WEEK	24 ^e WEEK	25 ^e WEEK	MOYV	26 ^e WEEK LEI INS KNT	27 ^e WEEK
PLAZA	20 ^e WEEK L'ENFER DANS LA P. KNT GOH.	21 ^e WEEK LES BREGANDS KNT KLD.	22 ^e WEEK DIE NACHT IN DES S. H. KNT KLD.	23 ^e WEEK GE CORN EN LIBRATÉ KNT CANTRA	24 ^e WEEK	25 ^e WEEK	26 ^e WEEK	PLAZA	27 ^e WEEK PRELUDE KNT GORDNA	28 ^e WEEK
REGINA	21 ^e WEEK LE BOURREAU A KNT ABC	22 ^e WEEK ALLEZ-Y L. FILLES KNT METROP.	23 ^e WEEK EL GO KNT MELIOR	24 ^e WEEK	25 ^e WEEK	26 ^e WEEK	27 ^e WEEK	REGINA	28 ^e WEEK	29 ^e WEEK
QUELLIN	22 ^e WEEK	23 ^e WEEK	24 ^e WEEK	25 ^e WEEK	26 ^e WEEK	27 ^e WEEK	28 ^e WEEK	QUELLIN	29 ^e WEEK	30 ^e WEEK
CINEAC	23 ^e WEEK	24 ^e WEEK	25 ^e WEEK	26 ^e WEEK	27 ^e WEEK	28 ^e WEEK	29 ^e WEEK	CINEAC	30 ^e WEEK	31 ^e WEEK

Because the information provided in the programming books did not allow for systematic sampling, additional film programming data were gathered for the “Antwerpen Kinemastad” project. It mostly concerns data taken from the weekly film listings in the major local daily newspaper *Gazet van Antwerpen* (GvA, see examples for 1962 and 1982 in Image 13 below).¹¹⁵¹ The film listings usually appeared the day before or on the day of the start of a new film week (which was on Fridays during the period under investigation). They contained at least the film titles for all cinemas in Antwerp and districts (with the exception of sex cinemas) as well as the names of the cinemas where the films were screened. The film listings did not include information about distributors. That means that this information is only available for film titles that were also listed in the programming books and/or for which additional advertisements had been published in the newspaper, which makes a systematic and comparative analysis for the particular sample years highly challenging. Sometimes film genres of the films were provided in the film listings, as well as brief descriptions of the content, names of

¹¹⁵¹ A comparison of the data provided in the programming books and newspaper film listings showed an overall match of the screenings.

stars or directors, and/or advices on the suitability of the film.¹¹⁵² With regards to the latter, the films were always listed according to the Catholic advice in correspondence to the films' target groups as recommended by the *Katholieke filmkeorraad* (Catholic council for film rating).¹¹⁵³ Different from the programming books, the film listings in the *Gazet van Antwerpen* did not include the official ratings by the national board of film classification (the difference between these two classification systems is explained in the following lines).

Image 13: Examples of film listings in the *Gazet van Antwerpen* in 1962 (left; s.n., "Filmleiding," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, April 27, 1962, 4) and 1982 (right; s.n., "Filminformatie," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, November 12, 1982, 26).

FILMLEIDING

VOOR ANTWERPEN

Voor Aïlen
ASTRID: De verstrooide professor, fantasie.
CENTRUM (Luchtbal) Z.: Alle hens aan dek, vrolijke komedie.
ELCKERLYC (K.F.L. 30-4): Reis per ballon, poëtische documentair, Aanbevolen.
METRO: Miljardair voor één dag, komedie, L. Vbh.
REX: Drie sergeanten, western, L. Vbh.
RUBENS: Zuidzee Robinsons, avontuurfilm.
ZUIDPOOL: De avonturen van Robin Hood, historische melodrama, L. Vbh.
LUXOR (Berchem) W.: Wanneer de klokken rinkelen, Muzikale komedie.
CAMEO (Hoboken) Z.: Come Prima, muzikale film, L. Vbh. - W.: De trouwe zwerper, kademie, Aanbev.
ASTORIA (Merkssem): Het purperen masker, mantel- en degenfilm, L. Vbh.
LURO (Merkssem): De beste vijand, klucht.
TOSCA (Merkssem): Seizoen in Salzburg, muzikale komedie, L. Vbh.

Voor Volwassenen en Aankomende Jeugd

CAMEO: Kapitein Morgan, de zee rover, avontuur - Mevrouw en haar auto, humoristische film.
CENTRA: Het troestekind van Arizona, komische western.
KEMO: De helse rit, western.
REGINA: El Cid, spektakelfilm.
SAVOY: ...alleen de wind, muzikale film.
ST-JAN: Het groene vijk, avontuurfilm.
WINTERPALEIS: De Comancheros, western.
RIX (Deurne) Z.: Kapitein Fracasse, mantel- en degenfilm.
AGORA (Hoboken) Z.: De duivel te slim, klucht.
ALLSOPPS (Mortsel) Z.: Een zeer voornaam persoon, humoristische film.
Voor Volwassenen
AMBASSADE: Nazarin, religieuze film, Vbh.
ARTIS: Een zeer voornaam persoon, humoristische film. - De ontspannen uit de hel, avontuur.
ASTRA: Blue Hawaii, muzikale film.
CENTRUM (Luchtbal) W.: De zaak Sidney Street, historische wedersamenstelling.
CINEAC: Een engel op aarde, komedie.
EMPIRE: Moulou rouge, biografische film, Vbh.
FESTA: De ordonnans, muzikale klucht, Vbh.
FORUM: Daar droomt elk meisje van, muzikale komedie, Vbh.
KINOX: Een piama voor twee, komedie, Vbh.
LIDO: De dodende tank, oorlogsfilm. - Het zonderlinge leven van Gene Krupa, biografische film, Vbh.
MICRO: Moorddadig, griezelfilm, Vbh. - Domino Kid, western, Vbh.
MODERNE: De duivel om 4 u, drama.
MONTY: Mariandl, muzikale film. - Marill, operette, Vbh.
NATIONAL: Zen piama voor twee, komedie, Vbh.
NOVA: Een piama voor twee, komedie, Vbh.
ODEON: De schattige lousenaarster, komedie, Str. Vbh.

PALACE: Koorts in het bloed, dramatische film, Str. Vbh.
PATHE: De wilde straat, milieudrama, Str. Vbh.
QUELLIN: Het recht op geluk, drama, Vbh.
RITZ: Big circus, zedenstudie. - De doder van het westen, western.
VENDOME: De nieuwsgierige lukkikker, komische spionagefilm.
CORSO (Berchem): De drie musketiers (De wraak van Miady), mantel- en degenfilm.
LUXOR (Berchem) Z.: Adieu, lebewohl, goodbye, muzikale film.
NOVA (Berchem) Z.: De dief van Bagdad, oosters verhaal. - W.: Samsen en Dalila, bijbels drama, Vbh.
ORLY (Berchem): De Mongolen, barbarenesos, Vbh.
PALACE (Berchem): Spartacus, historische wedersamenstelling.
CENTURY (Borgerhout): De vluchteling (La Ciociara), drama, Vbh.
ROMA (Borgerhout): Spartacus, historische wedersamenstelling.
VICTORY (Borgerhout): Scotland Yard tegen X, politiefilm. - Onzichtbare monsters, griezelfilm, Vbh.
CENTRA (Deurne) Z.: Door liefde bezeten, dramatische film, Str. Vbh. - W.: Alle hens aan dek, vrolijke komedie. - Nog vijf sekonden te leven, spionagefilm.
LACKBORS (Deurne) Z.: De man die geen noodlot had, western, Vbh. - Twee scullen bij Venus, komische film, Vbh. - De Gigolo, psychologische film, Str. Vbh.
PLAZA (Deurne) Z.: Beroemde geliefden, film in sketches, Str. Vbh. - Vandaag gaan we boemelen, muzikale film.
RIX (Deurne) W.: Beroemde geliefden, film in sketches, Str. Vbh.
GEANT (Hoboken) Z.: Papa, zo'n verleider, komedie, Vbh. - W.: Monster op loer, griezelfilm, Vbh.
ROXY (Hoboken) Z.: Het zwaard en het kruis, melodrama, Vbh.
MERKSEM PALACE: De koningen van het circus, dramatische film.
ALLSOPPS (Mortsel) W.: De uitdaging, gangsterfilm, Str. Vbh.
ODEON (Mortsel) Z.: Mariandl, muzikale komedie. - W.: Venus met de slanke heupen, dramatische film, Str. Vbh.
RENOVA (Wilrijk): De avonturen van graaf Bobby, muzikale komedie.
TRIANON (Wilrijk) Z.: In vlamme letters, dramatische film, Vbh. - W.: Tazran en de luitpaardvrouw, avontuur. - De gevangene van Zenda, avontuurfilm.

Af te raden

CINEX: De waarheid.
STUDIO MOVY: Une grosse tête (De boffer).
SELECT (Merkssem): Een avond op het strand.

Te Mijden

CAPITOLE: Meisjes van Partis.
SCALA: Paniek in de music-hall (+ Het rode net).
ROXY (Hoboken) W.: Moeder Johanna van de engelen.
REAL (Wilrijk): De lokvogels (+ De vrouw en de zwerper).

FILMINFORMATIE

ANTWERPEN

Ook voor kinderen
ASTRID: Rox en Rouky - Prettige tekenfilm
CALYPSO - Club: Pirate Movie, avonturen
CARTOON'S 2: Sinbad en het oog van de tijger, avonturen
REX: De gendarm en zijn gendarmetent, komedie
RUBENS: De tien geboden, bijbelverhaal.

Reeds voor tieners
AMBASSADES - Club 4: De sheriff zit achter de grendels, westernparodie
REX - Club: De ellendigen-melodrama
TIJL: De draak van het vuurmeer, fantastische avonturen
PALACE: Berchem: De blokbeesten met vakantie, komedie

Ook voor rijpere jeugd
AMBASSADES - Club I: Hammett Politiefilm.
AMBASSADE - Club II: Nachttrein Misdadddrama
CALYPSO I: Midsummer nights sex comedy
CALYPSO II: Victor, Victria, komedie
CARTOON'S I: Yol, kroffie
CARTOONS: Sleeper, SF - parodie
CARTOONS 2: La Strade, Drama
CARTOONS: Shoot te moon, psychologisch drama
CARTOONS 2: De nacht van Varennes, historisch drama
CARTOON'S 3: The shining - psychologisch griezelfilm
FILMHUIS: State of things, film in film
FILMHUIS - Club 13 (22 u. A time to life and a time to die, drama - 16 (22 u.) Imitation of life, drama - 17 (22 u.) There's always tomorrow, dramatische komedie.
METRO I: 1 u. 45 voor Jesus Christus, satirische komedie
QUELLIN: Pink Floyd, the wall
Muzikale film
VENDOME: Papillon, ontvluchtingsfilm

Voor volwassenen
AMBASSADES: Van de koele meren des doos, psychologisch drama
AMBASSADES - nacht: Dodelijke karate, karatefilm
AMBASSADES - CLUB III: Het houdt me wakker, komedie
ASTRA: Dodenrace 2000, anticipatiefilm
BRABO: Hot Bubblegum, jeugdzeden-schets
CAPITOLE: Class of 1984, Negatief
CARTOON'S III: Vlucht boven een koekeoekst, Metaforisch verhaal.
CARTOON'S III: Rijk en befaamd, Vrouwenportret
FESTA: Mad Max 2, avonturen
FILMHUIS: Women in love, complex liefdelatie
FILMHUIS - CLUB 12: 22 u. All idesire, melodrama
FILMHUIS CLUB 14: The bad and the beautiful, zedenstudie
FILMHUIS 15: 22 u. Undercurrent, drama
FILMHUIS 18: 22 u. The cat on a hot tin roof, psychologisch drama
METRO - nacht: Evilspeak, negatief
METRO II: Porky's, jeugdschets
ODEON: Emmanuelle, negatief
SAVOY: Pacific Banana, negatief
SINJOOR: Zomerliefde, vakantiekomedie
WAPPER: Clockwork Orange, bijtende allegorie
TRIOSSTUDIO I (Deurne): Stingray, Aktiefilm
TRIOSSTUDIO II: Karate force, karatefilm
TRIOSSTUDIO III: Happy birthday, negatief.

HALLE

Reeds voor tieners
DRIVE IN: Het huis bij het gouden meer, familieschets
Ook voor rijpere jeugd
DRIVE IN: Hij weet dat U alleen bent, Thriller

¹¹⁵² From the 1970s onwards the film listings also contained more specified information about night screenings and/or incidental screenings where a film would run in a particular cinema only once (instead of a whole week). This was particularly the case for VOZA cinemas in 1972.

¹¹⁵³ See a reference on top of the film listing for the week starting on 16 January 1953. The reference included an invitation to contact the council in case for complaints to be addressed to the *Documentatiecentrum voor de cinematografische pers* (Docip, i.e. Documentation center for the cinematographic press; s.n., "Filmleiding," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, January 16, 1953, 4).

In Belgium, films were generally prohibited for screening for children and adolescents under sixteen, unless the films had been submitted to and approved by the national board for film classification. Films that were admitted received the label *kinderen toegelaten* (children admitted; KT). Films that were not admitted for screenings for children of under sixteen, or films which were not submitted for classification were labeled *kinderen niet toegelaten* (children not admitted; KNT). In addition to these official ratings, films were also subjected to the (unofficial) film advice issued by the Catholic Council for film rating. This classification system was not mandatory and generally consisted of different categories targeting particular age groups: *voor allen* (for all age groups), *voor volwassenen en aankomende jeugd* (for adults and adolescents), *voor volwassenen* (for adults), *af te raden* (advised against) and *te mijden* (to be avoided).¹¹⁵⁴ Based on a comparison of 229 film titles – screened in Antwerp cinemas in 1952 – for which information on both rating systems is available – it is safe to say that positive Catholic ratings (for all ages, and adults and adolescents) generally corresponded with the official KT label, while negative Catholic ratings (advised against and to be avoided) were usually labeled KNT (see Table 5.1 in Appendix I). Films labeled by the Catholics “for adults” were classified in equal shares as KT and KNT films by the official censorship board.

The lack of official film censorship data for cinemas of which programming data were added within the frameworks of “Antwerpen Kinemastad”, was partly solved by copying the official ratings for films that had also been documented based on the programming books. In addition, missing official film censorship data were complemented by consulting corresponding advertisements for the films in the *Gazet van Antwerpen* which frequently did include official censorship ratings. However, usually only the prestigious cinemas advertised for their films on a regular basis (Heylen’s cinemas often did, as well as cinemas operated by the more powerful exhibitors, such as Tyck/Gommers/Mermans in the early 1950s and Meerburg in the early 1970s). In other words, official censorship data are scarcer for cinemas (and films) that were not included in the programming books and hardly advertised in the local newspaper.

In both types of sources, programming books and film listings, the films were most frequently listed under their translated Dutch (or English, French or German) title. Consequently, the films needed to be identified first in order to avoid double counts and allow for more detailed information about the films (see below). The identification rate varied from cinema to cinema and depended on, first, the translation of the title, and second, on additional information provided about the film. Regarding the former, identification was relatively easy for titles with literal translations or titles containing specific information about the film's setting or key figures (e.g. *La nuit de Varennes* or *Ilsa: She Wolf of the SS*). Concerning additional information, as Heylen advertised disproportionately

¹¹⁵⁴ In 1972 and 1982, the label *volwassenen en aankomende jeugd* (for adults and adolescents) was split into two labels, *reeds voor tieners* (for teenagers) and *ook voor de rijpere jeugd* (also for the more mature youth). In addition, in those years, the negative ratings “not to be recommended” and “to be avoided” had been dropped.

- the year of the film's initial release,
- the production company,
- the film's country/countries of origin,
- language(s) spoken in the film,
- film genre(s), as well as
- the names of the director and two main actors.¹¹⁵⁵

These data complemented the data on the screenings as extracted from the programming books and *Gazet van Antwerpen* film listings, which included

- the film title as distributed in, and advertised for, Antwerp cinemas,
- the cinema (name and address) as well as
- the screening dates (and, if applicable,
- names of distributors and
- film ratings).

With regard to the category of film genre, the choice was between adopting the classification as applied in the weekly film listings of the *Gazet van Antwerpen*, or that deployed on IMDb. Although the genre-classification as handled by the newspaper reflects the conception of the particular historical moment and is thus not applied in retrospective (as the classification on IMDb is), it does yield two problems related to consistency. The genre classifications handled in the *Gazet van Antwerpen* were not consistent in two ways: first, genre classifications were not included every week (and hence were missing for many films) and were structurally missing for screenings with a negative Catholic film rating (i.e. “advised against” or “to be avoided”). Second, genre classifications seemed to be rather lengthy and descriptive (for example “pseudo-historical film” for a number of epics in 1962, “mediocre Tarzan imitation” or “intimate emotional relations” in 1972, “didactic biography” or “existential melodrama” in 1982). This made the genre classifications in the newspapers so diverse that they would have become rather difficult to handle. In addition, it even occurred that the same film had different classifications. Hence, the genre classification from IMDb was adopted. Despite the fact that IMDb is an online database which relies on user generated content, it is one of the most authoritative and most comprehensive online film databases.¹¹⁵⁶ Different from wikis, for example, IMDb has salaried staff controlling entries. In addition, it works with clear-cut instructions for data input. Over the years that the research for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” has been conducted, the entries

¹¹⁵⁵ In case of co-productions, all participating countries were listed in the database in alphabetical order for reasons of data-management and analysis. Both West and East Germany were sorted under D (i.e. Duitsland in Dutch) and indicated by their initials W (West) and O (East) respectively. In case of multiple genre entries on IMDb, only the first three were recorded.

¹¹⁵⁶ The pioneering online database “Cinema Context”, for example, which was created primarily as tool for academic research, uses links to IMDb as source for the details on the films themselves.

proved to be relatively consistent.¹¹⁵⁷ I will not discuss the question of genre classification further here, since genres were not analyzed for the three case studies in this Chapter. Details can be consulted in the programming reports written within the frameworks of the “‘Enlightened’ City” project.¹¹⁵⁸

The sampling described above has advantages and disadvantages. The focus on a relatively small number of cinemas and sample years allows for a detailed investigation of the film programming in a number of sample years and makes it possible to follow the trajectories of the most successful films through Antwerp. It does not allow, however, for detailed information about the continuous evolution of the film programs of individual cinemas throughout the decades. Otherwise it would be possible to sketch, for example, the specific programming profiles of *each* individual cinema and compare it synchronously (e.g. with that of other cinemas) or diachronically (e.g. paying attention to how the profiles changed over time). Another possibility would be to examine in how far the classical film canon, as established by film critics, overlaps with the canon of films which ran longest in the cinemas under investigation, and what conclusions we can draw from certain overlaps or discrepancies. A third potential avenue for investigation could be the change in distributional practices in the course of the researched period. Although this could provide additional insights in potential cooperation between competitors and Heylen’s own distribution practices after he had founded his own distribution companies Filimpex and Excelsior, limitations of the available data make it difficult to establish reasonable arguments in this respect.¹¹⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the thousands of cases and tremendous amounts of data thus gathered open up opportunities for a wide array of examinations and generate numerous questions, for all years separately (synchronic perspective) as well as in diachronic perspective. Here I will focus on analyses which are functional for the thesis’ line of argumentation. The programming analysis has to generate answers to questions related to competition within Antwerp’s cinema market and about the degree of cooperation between the different parties involved, with special attention for the Rex cinema group.

¹¹⁵⁷ IMDb handles strict rules and clear-cut instructions for data input relating to genre classification. Between 2008 and 2013, IMDb consistently handled a total of twenty-eight genres, of which six did not apply for the programming analysis at hand: “adult” (exclusively used for hard core pornography), “game-show”, “news”, “reality-TV”, “short” and “talk-show” (International Movie Database, “IMDb Help Center,” accessed August 22, 2013, http://www.imdb.com/help/search?domain=helpdesk_faq&index=2&file=genres). For an alternative solution to the dilemma see Sedgwick, “Product Differentiation,” 199-202. One of the challenges was that for some films several genres were applied. Whenever more than one genre per film was listed on IMDb, only the first three were recorded and the corresponding combinations were subsequently grouped. This resulted in twenty genres which were used for the analysis: action, animation, adventure, documentary, drama, drama/comedy, erotic film, family film, fantastic film, film noir, historic film, horror film, comedy, crime, musical, war film, romantic film, science fiction, thriller, western. In case no genre was mentioned on IMDb, this was recorded in the database as missing value.

¹¹⁵⁸ See Lotze, “Programmeringstendensen 1952;” Lotze, “Programmeringstendensen 1962;” Lotze, “Programmeringstendensen 1972;” Lotze, “Centraal rapport”.

¹¹⁵⁹ This does not mean that data about distribution were completely neglected in the analysis. Rather, they were used to support or nuance findings of quantitative analyses, for example with regard to the origin of films.

The film programming data were collected first in Excel and subsequently converted to and analyzed in SPSS. In the SPSS database, each row (i.e. each case) represents one film screening (Image 15). Unless indicated otherwise, by “film screening” I mean the screening of one particular film title for at least three days within the same week (lasting from Friday to Thursday). The majority of the films screened in Antwerp during the moments under investigation were shown throughout the whole week, i.e. seven days in a row. Each column (variable) contains specific information in relation to the particular film screening (e.g. film title under which it was distributed in Antwerp, original film title, name of the cinema, the week the film was screened as well as information on the film itself, as mentioned above).

Image 15: Example of a SPSS-sheet for the programming analysis of 1982.

	Bioscoop	Filmtitel_vermeld	Filmtitel_origineel	Vertoningsweek	Distributeur	Officiële Filmtitel	Jaar	Producent	Herkomst_land	Taal	Regisseur	Genre_IMDb	
1	Cartoon's 1	Zwoele zomeravo.	Zwoele zomeravo...	10-Dec-1982	KT	1982 99	Nederland	Nederlands	Strooker, Shireen/Weisz, ...	komedie/drama/romantiek	Kok, Marj...		
2	Metro II	Mad Mission	Zuijia Paidang	24-Dec-1982	Excelsior	KT	1982	Cinema City & Films Co.	Hong Kong	Chinees	Tsang, Eric	actie/komedie	Hui, Samu...
3	Astra	Ruzie in het huis...	Zizanie, La	03-Sep-1982	Filmpex	KT	1978	Les Films Christian Fec...	Frankrijk	Frans	Zidi, Claude	komedie	De Funés...
4	Ambassades	Frankenstein junior	Young Frankenst...	25-Jun-1982	Belfides	KT	1974	Gruskoff/Venture Films	VS	Engels/Duits	Brooks, Mel	komedie	Wilder, Ge...
5	Ambassades	Frankenstein junior	Young Frankenst...	02-Jul-1982	Belfides	KT	1974	Gruskoff/Venture Films	VS	Engels/Duits	Brooks, Mel	komedie	Wilder, Ge...
6	Ambassades	Frankenstein junior	Young Frankenst...	09-Jul-1982	Belfides	KT	1974	Gruskoff/Venture Films	VS	Engels/Duits	Brooks, Mel	komedie	Wilder, Ge...
7	Ambassades	Frankenstein junior	Young Frankenst...	16-Jul-1982	Belfides	KT	1974	Gruskoff/Venture Films	VS	Engels/Duits	Brooks, Mel	komedie	Wilder, Ge...
8	Ambassades	Frankenstein junior	Young Frankenst...	23-Jul-1982	Belfides	KT	1974	Gruskoff/Venture Films	VS	Engels/Duits	Brooks, Mel	komedie	Wilder, Ge...
9	Ambassades	Frankenstein junior	Young Frankenst...	30-Jul-1982	Belfides	KT	1974	Gruskoff/Venture Films	VS	Engels/Duits	Brooks, Mel	komedie	Wilder, Ge...
10	Astra	Men leeft slechts...	You only Live Twi...	13-Aug-1982	Belfides	KNT	1967	Eon Productions	VK	Engels/Japans/Russisch	Gilbert, Lewis	actie/avontuur/sci-fi	Connelly, S...
11	Astra	Men leeft slechts...	You only Live Twi...	20-Aug-1982	Belfides	KNT	1967	Eon Productions	VK	Engels/Japans/Russisch	Gilbert, Lewis	actie/avontuur/sci-fi	Connelly, S...
12	Astra	Men leeft slechts...	You only Live Twi...	27-Aug-1982	Belfides	KNT	1967	Eon Productions	VK	Engels/Japans/Russisch	Gilbert, Lewis	actie/avontuur/sci-fi	Connelly, S...
13	Calypso Club	Yol	Yol	15-Oct-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
14	Calypso Club	Yol	Yol	22-Oct-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
15	Cartoon's 1	Yol	Yol	29-Oct-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
16	Cartoon's 1	Yol	Yol	05-Nov-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
17	Cartoon's 1	Yol	Yol	12-Nov-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
18	Cartoon's 1	Yol	Yol	19-Nov-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
19	Cartoon's 2	Yol	Yol	26-Nov-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
20	Cartoon's 2	Yol	Yol	03-Dec-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
21	Cartoon's 2	Yol	Yol	10-Dec-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
22	Cartoon's 2	Yol	Yol	17-Dec-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
23	Cartoon's 2	Yol	Yol	24-Dec-1982	Progrés-Ciné...	KT	1982	Güney Film	Frankrijk/Turkije/Zwits...	Turks	Gören, Serif/Güney, Yilmaz	drama/romantiek	Akan, Tari...
24	Monty	Bezeten meer, Het	Yasha-ga-ike	01-Jan-1982		99	1979	Grange Communications...	Japan	Japans	Shinoda, Masahiro	romantiek/fantastie	Bando, Ta...
25	Monty	Bezeten meer, Het	Yasha-ga-ike	08-Jan-1982			1979	Grange Communications...	Japan	Japans	Shinoda, Masahiro	romantiek/fantastie	Bando, Ta...
26	Monty	Bezeten meer, Het	Yasha-ga-ike	15-Jan-1982			1979	Grange Communications...	Japan	Japans	Shinoda, Masahiro	romantiek/fantastie	Bando, Ta...
27	Monty	Bezeten meer, Het	Yasha-ga-ike	22-Jan-1982			1979	Grange Communications...	Japan	Japans	Shinoda, Masahiro	romantiek/fantastie	Bando, Ta...
28	Monty	Bezeten meer, Het	Yasha-ga-ike	29-Jan-1982			1979	Grange Communications...	Japan	Japans	Shinoda, Masahiro	romantiek/fantastie	Bando, Ta...
29	Capitale	Bruce Lee slaat...	Xiong zhong	02-Jul-1982	Atlas	KNT	1982	Dragon Films Company	Frankrijk/Hong Kong	Chinees/Frans	Le, Bruce	actie/drama	Le, Bruce
30	Quellin	Moorden rechtsre...	Wrong is right	15-Oct-1982	Warner-Colum...	KT	1982	Columbia Pictures Corpo...	VS	Engels	Brooks, Richard	komedie/drama/thriller	Connelly, S...
31	Ambassades Club III	Moorden rechtsre...	Wrong is right	22-Oct-1982	Warner-Colum...	KT	1982	Columbia Pictures Corpo...	VS	Engels	Brooks, Richard	komedie/drama/thriller	Connelly, S...
32	Brabo	Wolven	Wolven	23-Jul-1982	Gaumont	KNT	1981	Orion Pictures Corporation	VS	Engels	Wadleigh, Michael	honorthriller	Finney, Al
33	Brabo	Wolven	Wolven	30-Jul-1982	Gaumont	KNT	1981	Orion Pictures Corporation	VS	Engels	Wadleigh, Michael	honorthriller	Finney, Al
34	Cartoon's 2	Wolven	Wolven	15-Oct-1982	Gaumont	KNT	1981	Orion Pictures Corporation	VS	Engels	Wadleigh, Michael	honorthriller	Finney, Al
35	Brabo	Terreur teraur	Without warning	11-Jun-1982	Cine Vog	KNT	1980	Heritage Enterprises Inc.	VS	Engels	Clark, Greydon	sci-fi/horror	Palanca, J...

5.1.2. Analysis

For this thesis, in order to analyze the programming data, three case studies are executed, each focusing on one particular sample year. Every case study consists of two main parts. The first is to investigate the film supply in Antwerp cinemas, paying special attention to differences and similarities between Heylen's and competing cinemas as well as between cinemas located in the city center and those located outside of it. The second part of each case study explores the circulation of the films across Antwerp, to examine the degree to which films were exchanged between Heylen and his competitors, and to expose possible patterns of the films and hierarchies amongst cinemas.

The point of departure is an extensive analysis of the first sample year 1952. This case study investigates the circulation of films in center and neighborhood cinemas of Heylen as well as of competing cinemas at a point in time when Heylen's cinema group was still in its infancy, yet already expanding rapidly. The analysis will serve as a point of reference for the analysis of 1962, a time when Antwerp's cinema market was still quite fragmented, despite Heylen's dominant position within the local market. In addition, neighborhood cinemas still existed in 1962, but a massive wave of closure was approaching at high speed. One of the questions to be addressed then is, if the programming of neighborhood cinemas in 1962 differed from that in 1952, and in how far. 1972 has not been selected for a case study in this chapter, mainly for two reasons. First, because a programming analysis has already been partly included in Chapter 4.4.1 as part of the reconstruction of the conflict between Heylen and the American major distributors in the early 1970s and would therefore be partly redundant. In addition, the singularity of the situation in 1972 would render that year an irregular entity to compare with in light of the research questions formulated at the outset of Chapter 5 (general programming strategies and patterns of distribution in Antwerp). Therefore, the third case study focuses on the sample year 1982 in order to examine some of the long term outcomes of the distribution conflict. After the failure of the VOZA, from 1973 onwards new players had entered the market and allegedly cooperated to form a front against Heylen. Hence, this case study for the year 1982 pays special attention to the circulation of films between the two different (groups of) exhibitors, Heylen and the Calypso-Cartoon's circuit, as indicative for the degree of exchange between them. This is done against the background of struggles between Heylen and Meerburg, but also to investigate the alleged collaboration between Calypso and Cartoon's, of which evidence was found in the archives (see Chapter 4.5.1).

Although the three different years are treated in separate paragraphs, they are related by means of diachronic comparison. In addition, at the end of this chapter I will summarize and draw diachronic lines with respect to the subjects of film programming and the particular key players on Antwerp's cinema market.

5.2. Case study 1: Film programming in 1952

As I have described in Chapters 3 and 4, by 1952 three cinemas could be linked to Heylen in the Station Quarter, in addition to all of the eight cinemas in the neighborhood Stuienberg/St. Amandus and the former municipality (now district) of Borgerhout. Whereas Heylen had a monopoly position in these two areas at the rim of the Station Quarter, the cinema market in the Station Quarter was still highly fragmented. In this paragraph I will show how an analysis of film programming of the

different cinemas can reveal first signs of hierarchies between active exhibitors in the local market at that point in time.

5.2.1. Corpus

For the sample year 1952, a total of thirty-one cinemas was analyzed (Table 5.2 in Appendix I). Except for three cinemas, all were located in the core sample area, encompassing the Station Quarter, Stuivenberg/St. Amandus, and Borgerhout (see also the corresponding map in Figure 3.6 in Appendix I). The three remaining cinemas (Coliseum, Roxy, Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege) were located on the avenue Meir, as an extension of De Keyserlei, east of the Frankrijklei. Four more cinemas located in the core sample area were not included, neither in the programming books, nor in the weekly film listings of the *Gazet van Antwerpen*, and were therefore excluded from the analysis: Cineac, A.B.C., Royal and Studio de Paris. Not all of the examined cinemas operated throughout the whole year. Kursaal closed down on 22 August 1952 and was reopened as Savoy on 28 November 1952; Rubens opened on 19 September 1952. Furthermore, Sint-Jan-Berchmancollege (principally a school which offered regular film screenings) was not mentioned in the *Gazet van Antwerpen* weekly film listings between 25 July and 12 September 1952, probably during summer break.

As explained at the outset of this chapter, the identification rates varied for particular cinemas and were highest for Heylen's cinemas (Table 5.3 in Appendix I). There was not one cinema in the 1952 sample for which the identification rate was less than 50%. Altogether 1355 film screenings were identified, including 688 individual film titles.

5.2.2. General remarks on film programming in Antwerp in 1952

In what follows I will subsequently discuss more general findings resulting from the programming analysis for 1952. These findings relate to the duration of the films on examined screens, the years of production of the films, their countries of origin and film ratings. Based on these variables, certain profiles of a selection of cinemas becomes clear which also provides the context in which the elaborations in Paragraph 5.2.3 can be placed. While the examination of the films' duration on screens points to the average time of the films' life cycle in one cinema, the years of the films' production provides a first indication of the cinemas' place in the hierarchy of runs. Information on the films' countries of origin and ratings on the other hand are explored in order to learn about

particular cinemas' programming profile and to be able to compare it synchronically as well as diachronically.

In 1952, film programs in most cinemas changed quite frequently. The average time films were screened in one particular cinema in 1952 was 2.0 weeks. The greatest majority of the cinemas would play films for less than two weeks on average and in many of them, films would only be screened for one week (see Table 5.4 and Figure 5.1 in Appendix I). It was especially the neighborhood cinemas which changed films on a weekly basis. Only in Heylen's cinema Odeon and de Backer's cinema Ambassades films often played longer than a fortnight, often even longer than a month. As I will show in detail below, these two center cinemas also differed with regard to the kind of films they screened: they screened comparatively few US productions and a substantial amount of French and French-Italian (co-) productions, predominantly from 1951 and 1952.

In terms of years of production, the films screened in 1952 dated from the 1930s through 1952 (Table 5.5 in Appendix I). The most recent productions from 1950 to 1952 accounted for 80% of the film screenings and titles, with films from 1951 clearly dominating the screens. Logically, the most recent years (1951 and 1952) were screened far longer (more than two weeks on average) in Antwerp cinemas than older productions (no more than one and a half weeks on average). From the perspective of the system of runs and clearances, it is understandable that the most recent productions screened comparatively longer at cinemas than films from before: while the more recent films still had to run through a myriad of tiers and runs, older films were usually screened for individual reruns in a select number of cinemas. Films from the 1940s were also quite frequently screened in Antwerp's cinemas in 1952. Nearly a quarter of the identified film titles that were screened was made in the decade before. Almost half of these films, in turn, were made during World War II (Table 5.6). Considering that a substantial number of these films were made and distributed by American majors (Table 5.7), it can be concluded that in 1952 Antwerp cinemas still served as outlet for the major's many backlog films which flooded Europe after the liberation.

Not surprisingly, Heylen's premiere cinema Rex had the largest share of most recent productions: 95% of all film titles were made in 1952 or 1951 (Table 5.8 and Figure 5.2 in Appendix I). Other center cinemas offered quite a large amount of films from these two most recent years as well: next to Heylen's cinema Odeon, these included the competing cinemas Anvers Palace and Pathé (both Tyck/Gommers/Mermans), Metro (MGM), Ambassades (de Backer). A few cinemas, all located at the rim of the Station Quarter, with more than 80% of the films from 1952 and 1951 were Rubens (operated by Bastiaenssens/Alkema) and Astra and Roma (both Heylen). As will be addressed in more detail in Paragraph 5.2.3, these three cinemas functioned as intermediaries between center and neighborhood cinemas. In addition, with two exceptions, all neighborhood cinemas in Stuivenberg/St. Amandus and Borgerhout screened far more films from 1951 than from any other

year. Nevertheless, there were some cinemas which played even more films from the 1940s than films from other years. Next to Heylen's neighborhood cinemas Americain Palace (Stuivenberg) and Victory (Borgerhout), also three competing cinemas in or near the Station Quarter screened a high percentage of films from the 1940s. Two of them (Coliseum, operated by Hendrickx, and Regina, operated de Decker) were in fact center cinemas; the third Rio (operated by Dessente), was a neighborhood cinema.

These findings support the idea that neighborhood cinemas were not per se used for re-runs of older material, and rather for subsequent runs of films during their first life cycle.¹¹⁶⁰ This is also confirmed by an analysis of the circulation of the twenty-five longest running films in 1952 (see Chapter 5.2.3). The findings above also suggest, that competing cinemas were more likely to program reruns of older films from the decade before, perhaps to compensate the lack of more recent film productions.

When examining the country of origin of the screened films, it can be noticed that roughly two thirds of the films screened in Antwerp cinemas in 1952 were made in the US (Table 5.9 in Appendix I). Films from France were also shown quite frequently in Antwerp cinemas. Moreover, single country productions and co-productions from France, Great Britain, West Germany and Italy often screened at examined cinemas. Together with films from the US, these productions, occupied 92% of the total screen time. In light of the large share of US productions showing in Antwerp in 1952 in general, it is not surprising that most of the examined cinemas screened predominantly films from the US. Two cinemas even screened exclusively films from the US (Metro, Crosly), four more dedicated more than 90% of their screen time to US films (the competing center cinemas Capitole and Empire, as well as Heylen's neighborhood cinemas Americain and Dixi (see Table 5.10 in Appendix I). On average, however, neighborhood cinemas (Americain, Dixi, Festa, Luxor, National, Roma, Victory) screened more films from the US and distributed by the American majors, than did center cinemas.¹¹⁶¹ This difference can be partly explained by the fact that in that period, US films often had more favorable ratings which attracted especially youngsters from within the neighborhood (see also the findings in Chapter 6).

Given the predominance of American films on Antwerp screens, those cinemas which screened US-films on a much smaller scale stand out. Except for Odeon (54% French-/Italian (co-)productions), these cinemas were all competing cinemas, and they were all operated by different exhibitors. Competing center cinemas Regina (operated by Dessente) and Studio Movy (In

¹¹⁶⁰ Except, of course, in case of special children's screenings within the context of children matinees or during holidays. Matinees were not included in the database, because they were not part of the regular program (showing for at least three days in a week).

¹¹⁶¹ Unless indicated otherwise, in this thesis, the term "majors" refers to what in the classical Hollywood studio era was called the big five (Paramount, MGM, 20th century Fox, Warner Bros., and RKO) and the little three (Universal, Columbia, United Artists): Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History. An Introduction*, 214-218.

het Panhuis), for example, dedicated three quarter of their screen time to the showing of films from France. Along with Ambassades (operated by de Backer; 43% French films, 30% French-Italian co-productions), these cinemas were also the ones with a noticeable absence of films from the US: four screenings were documented for Ambassades, one for Regina and none for Studio Movv. Furthermore, given the recent past – with the second World War being less than a decade ago – it is quite surprising that a number of cinemas screened relatively large shares of films from (West-)Germany and Austria. Even though Astrid – which became known for its family-friendly programming of German-language films – still screened about as many films from the US as from (West-)Germany (and Austria) in 1952, considering the much higher percentage of US films in most of the other cinemas, the trend towards a German-friendly programming already shimmered through and effectively set in over the course of the following years, as I will show in Paragraph 5.3. In addition, Coliseum (operated by long-term Antwerp exhibitor Hendrickx) and Savoy (Doisy) dedicated even more screenings to productions from these German-speaking countries (respectively 38% and 40%).¹¹⁶²

Generally thus, Heylen's cinemas screened more films from the US (78% of the total of film screenings) than did competing cinemas (58%). On the one hand, this supports the idea of Heylen being on good terms with the American majors, which also manifested itself in the larger shares of film titles screened at his cinemas (Table 5.11 and Figure 5.3 in Appendix I). However, it also contrasts findings from a recent quantitative study in the films *produced* in 1951 and 1952 by four Hollywood studios (MGM, Paramount, Columbia, and Republic) which screened in Antwerp in 1952.¹¹⁶³ Although this analysis showed a strong connection between MGM and Heylen (details follow), it also showed closer ties between his competitors and the other three Hollywood studios. The discrepancy with the results can be explained by the fact that films from the US that were shown in Heylen's cinemas were distributed by distributors not included in the sample (US American or European distributors), or were produced before 1951. This is partly confirmed by the qualitative analysis discussed in Paragraph 5.3.2, of twenty-five films from that played in Antwerp for more than four weeks (see also Table 5.16 in Appendix I).

On the other hand, the strong dominance of films from the US in Heylen's cinemas can also be explained by the fact that the sample included eight of Heylen's neighborhood cinemas, which – as stated above – played considerably more films from the US than center cinemas did. The dominance of films from the US in the neighborhood cinemas was a strategic choice, and is

¹¹⁶² Astonishingly, based on the examined sources, Savoy was operated as Kursaal by the same exhibitor until the beginning of 1952. The change of name as well as the programming analysis suggest differently: while Kursaal screened predominantly Italian film productions and films from the former Soviet Bloc, Savoy screened 40% films from (Western) Germany and Austria.

¹¹⁶³ Pafort-Overduin, "Moving films".

connected to one of the main target groups of neighborhood cinemas and the question of film censorship. The abundance of cinemas that was characteristic of Antwerp's exhibition sector in the 1950s, had as an effect that there practically was a cinema on every street corner. Due to their proximity to people's homes, neighborhood cinemas were substantially frequented by children. Exhibitors likely responded to this demand by programming films that were suitable for all groups. Because most of the film makers employed by the Hollywood studios in that period (and before) voluntarily adhered to the Production Code to prevent local censors and Catholic organs to censor their films for reasons of immoral or violent content, films from the US were often suited for screening for all age groups. An examination of the censorship ratings of films screened in Antwerp cinemas in 1952 confirms this (see Table 5.12 in Appendix I).

Overall, two thirds of the films screened in Antwerp in 1952 had been admitted for children, one third was considered suitable for children and adolescents by the Catholic classification board (Tables 5.13 and 5.14 in Appendix I). In addition, 14% of the individual film titles had a negative Catholic advice. Remarkably, in all of Heylen's cinemas films that were admitted for children under 16 were screened more often than films not admitted for children; in addition, in most of his cinemas the share of screenings of KT-labeled films was more than two-thirds (Table 5.15).¹¹⁶⁴ The relatively large share of KNT-labeled films at Astrid suggests that the cinema had adopted a family-/child-friendly programming profile only after 1952.

The shares of positive and negative (Catholic film) ratings for cinemas competing with those of Heylen, vary much more amongst the different cinemas, from 100% positive Catholic ratings (the Catholic school Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege) to cinemas with hardly or no screening of positively rated films (Savoy, Studio Movy, Ambassadors). Plaza, a cinema which became infamous for the screening of erotic films, was not among the top three cinemas with the most negatively rated film screenings. As a matter of fact, this cinema screened only slightly more films with negative ratings than films with positive ratings. This way, the programming analysis confirms the observations made by Oliver van Steen and Marnix Beyen, that Plaza would profile itself as a cinema specialized in sex films only in the mid-1960s.¹¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, with the exception of center cinema Crosly (50% of films with positive rating) no other cinema screened positively rated films for more than 50% of the time. The fact that, with the exception of Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege, no single competing cinema screened positively rated films for more than half of the time, does not necessarily mean that films were less suitable for children in general. Based on the data that are available on official film ratings for films

¹¹⁶⁴ Given the different sources used for collecting programming data for the different cinemas (see explanations at the beginning of this chapter), no direct comparison between Heylen's cinemas and that of his competitors is possible with regard to the ratings of the screened films.

¹¹⁶⁵ Van Steen and Beyen, "Stiefkinderen," 261. This study is based on different sources, mostly police reports, correspondence between the Crown Prosecutor and the Chief Legal Officer, newspaper clippings and personal interviews.

screened at competing cinemas, the large majority of these cinemas screened KT-labeled films at least half of the screen time.

By way of summarizing this subparagraph about general insights on film programming in Antwerp cinemas in 1952 the following observations can be made: The film programs at examined cinemas changed quite quickly. Most cinemas screened films for a duration between one to two weeks. Most neighborhood cinemas changed their film program on a weekly basis. The steady replacement of films in cinemas in 1952 thus supports the argument that in the early 1950s cinemagoing was still part of people's regular habits, to which the film industry responded. Film supply in Antwerp cinemas in 1952 was varied, but only to a certain extent: the vast majority of the films was less than three years old and was produced in the US or a Western European country (with France, Italy, West Germany and Great Britain in the lead). Nevertheless, a substantial number of films also dated from the 1940s, mostly US-American productions distributed by the American majors, revealing that in 1952 Antwerp still functioned as outlet for the majors' backlog films. Cinemas that do stand out through their different programming are mostly cinemas operating independently from Heylen. Some of them showed less films from the US, and have a clear French-Italian or German profiling. Collaborations amongst the different exhibitors cannot be established, however, based on these programming profiles of the cinemas. A close examination of the trajectories of the longest running films does expose some forms of cooperation.

5.2.3. Film exchange and trajectories within Antwerp's cinema market in 1952

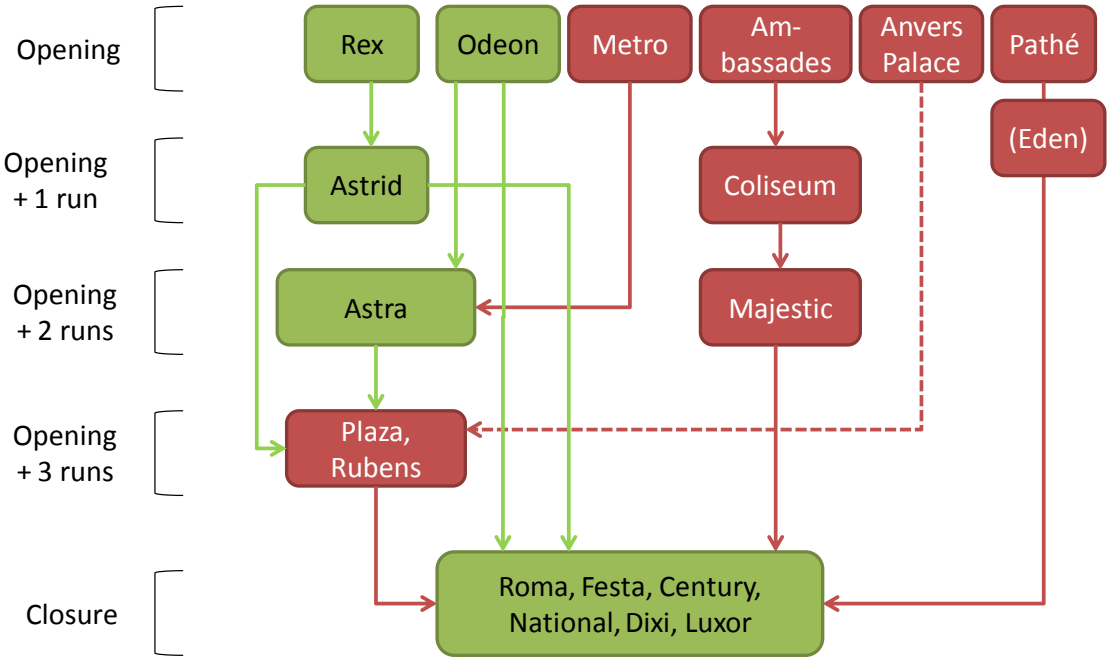
I will now look at how the most successful films (in terms of duration) travelled through Antwerp. Looking at the films' particular trajectories across Antwerp not only allows for conclusions about the cinemas' hierarchies within the local cinema market. It also indicates the degree (or lack) of cooperation between the corresponding exhibitors, based on the assumption that this is reflected in the film exchange between particular (groups of) cinemas. In order to chart the concrete trajectories, twenty-five films with the longest duration (which ran on examined screens for more than four weeks) were selected (Table 5.16 in Appendix I).

Based on the analysis, a hierarchy can be established of Antwerp cinemas according to their runs (Table 5.17 in Appendix I). Because not all cinemas exchanged films with each other, a hierarchical relation can only be established according to the patterns the twenty-five examined films followed. Based on this analysis, three sets of conclusions can be drawn. The first relates to a certain

hierarchy within Heylen's cinema group, the second to competing cinemas and the third to the exchange between Heylen on one hand and his competitors on the other.

First, with regard to a hierarchy within Heylen's exhibition network, Rex and Odeon clearly functioned as first run cinemas (see Figure 7 below and Table 5.17 in Appendix I). Furthermore, Astrid would directly pick up films from Rex, i.e. without a clearance window. Based on the observations below, this practice of so-called *move-overs* (represented by arrows in Table 5.16) did not occur between any other of the center cinemas, neither Heylen's nor competing ones. It is only observable further down the line of hierarchy of runs, between neighborhood cinemas. Astra functioned as bridge between center and neighborhood cinemas: if a film would play there, it was always after having played in a center cinema – either Heylen's or competing – and before moving to a neighborhood cinema. Finally, there was also a hierarchy amongst Heylen's neighborhood cinemas. Based on the examination we can roughly divide them into two groups: Roma, Festa and Century would play films more often before they moved to National, Luxor and Dixi – which would mostly form the end of the tail.¹¹⁶⁶

Figure 7: Hierarchy of cinemas according to screening patterns of the twenty-five longest screened films in 1952.



A second set of hierarchies can be established amongst cinemas competing with Heylen. De Backer's Ambassades as well as Anvers Palace and Pathé by the Tyck/Gommers/Mermans group

¹¹⁶⁶ Since only one of the twenty-five films screened in Victory, no reasonable conclusions can be drawn about the status of this neighborhood cinema.

screened films first. Films that played at Ambassades were picked up by Coliseum on the Meir and/or by Majestic on Carnotstraat, which both belonged to Hendrickx. The four films which first played at the Tyck/Gommers/Mermans cinemas first did not move to either of them. In other words, this first examination suggests a collaboration between de Backer and Hendrickx, but not between the Tyck/Gommers/Mermans group and Hendrickx.

Third, the examination of the trajectory of the longest running films in Antwerp in 1952 also reveals a certain degree of hierarchy between Heylen and his competitors. As indicated above, in 1952, quite some exchange of films took place between Heylen's cinemas and those operating independently of him. Moreover, the analysis suggests that the exchange went in specific directions. Films which premiered in competing cinemas, for example, would later run in Heylen's neighborhood cinemas, but never in Heylen's center cinemas (that is, not within the same year). Films that screened in Heylen's center cinema Rex, moved directly to Astrid and then either to his neighborhood cinemas or to competing center cinemas. In other words, films could travel from Heylen's center cinemas to competing center cinemas, but never the other way around. In addition, it also occurred that within the same year, films went back to Antwerp's city center (to competing cinemas) after having played in Heylen's neighborhood cinemas. This was the case, for example, with the Belgian production *Uit hetzelfde nest* (Kiel, 1952) and MGM's production *That Midnight Kiss* (Taurog, 1949). Unless this did not concern reruns this would mean a deviation from classical distributional patterns, according to which films move from the center to more peripheral areas. Finally, and quite remarkably, films distributed by the Hollywood majors had their Antwerp premieres only in cinemas affiliated to Heylen, the Tyck/Gommers/Mermans group or MGM. The latter operated cinema Metro, also a first run cinema, which screened exclusively its own studio productions. In addition, the fact that Metro predominantly exchanged films with Heylen's cinemas, could be taken as herald of Heylen's takeover of MGM less than a decade later.

To conclude, this first case study and the bottom-up approach to programming analysis has confirmed general knowledge of distribution and exhibition strategies based on macro-level research. At the same time the findings presented here have been confirmed in the beforementioned quantitative study that aimed at exploring ways of visualizing the flow of films across particular cities.¹¹⁶⁷ It does so in three ways: Firstly, the analysis here has demonstrated that distribution patterns were generally in place (as opposed to an arbitrary placement of films in cinemas of the local market). Secondly, the analysis also confirmed the classical distribution patterns according to which films moved from center in an outward direction. Thirdly, however, the results have shown that exceptions occurred and that cinemas cannot be rigorously divided according to runs. Rather, the analysis calls for a less rigid classification of cinemas, for example into opening,

¹¹⁶⁷ Pafort-Overduin et al., "Moving films".

past-opening, intermediary (between center and neighborhood) and closure cinemas, while at the same time allowing for space for differentiating opening cinemas according to the speed by which they passed opening films through (opening venues for quick launches as opposed to opening venues for the long-term launches of a film). In any case, in order to be able to capture the trajectory of many more films and see whether the hierarchy is confirmed or needs to be revised, further analysis is needed, based on an extended database, including more cinemas in the region as well as covering a longer period stretching over more than a calendar year.¹¹⁶⁸

5.3. Case study 2: Film programming in 1962

By 1962, Heylen had taken over six cinemas in the core sample area (including the Station Quarter, Stuivenberg/St. Amandus and Borgerhout, see Figure 3.6 in Appendix I) and closed one (Americain Palace in Stuivenberg). From this view, it is interesting what the film supply in general, and exchange of films in particular, looked like a decade later. As in Paragraph 5.2, in what follows, first the examined corpus is introduced, followed by a general examination of the film supply and an investigation of the film exchange between exhibitors.

5.3.1. Corpus

For the sample year 1962, the film programming of twenty-three cinemas was examined (Table 5.18 in Appendix I). For three cinemas no film programming was included in the weekly film listings of the *Gazet van Antwerpen*: Heylen's neighborhood cinemas Luxor in Borgerhout as well as Royal and Studio de Paris in the Station Quarter. With regard to Luxor, its absence in the weekly film listings suggests that the cinema had been closed by then, contrary to its listings in the year book.¹¹⁶⁹ Cinemas Royal and Studio de Paris were referred to by our respondents (see Chapter 6) as being sex cinemas, which would explain why no film programming of these cinemas was included in the film listings. With the exception of neighborhood cinema Dixi, all cinemas were open throughout 1962; Dixi closed on 1 February 1962 and is therefore excluded from the analysis as well.

The sample year 1962 contains a total of 1251 recorded screenings for the twenty-three cinemas, of which 1074 screenings were identified (86%; see Table 5.19 in Appendix I). Of the 1074

¹¹⁶⁸ The fact that, especially in the early 1950s, the life cycle of films could last well beyond one year was one of the reasons that, for example, for the "European Cinema Audiences" project, programming data were collected spanning a three year period.

¹¹⁶⁹ s.n., *Annuaire général du spectacle en Belgique* (Brussels: Editions l'Epoque, 1961-62), 392.

identified screenings, 510 were individual film titles. For nearly all of the examined cinemas, the majority of screenings was identified. Particularly films playing at Heylen's center cinemas were identified throughout. Only for the neighborhood Victory in Borgerhout and Scala on Carnotstraat, far less than half of the screenings was identified. Regarding Victory the high number of unidentified screenings can mainly be explained by the large number of double bills, which were not advertised for and only ran one week. The lack of advertisement and the quick change of films equally explains the low number of identified screenings for Scala.

5.3.2. General remarks on film programming in Antwerp in 1962

On average, in 1962 films were not screened much longer than a decade before. Average duration of the films in the city of Antwerp in 1962 was 2.1 weeks, compared to 2.0 in 1952. However, while in 1952 almost half of the cinemas changed films on a weekly basis, in 1962 it was only about a third. There are two major reasons for the resulting discrepancy between the stasis regarding average duration on the one hand and the noticeable decrease of cinemas with frequent program change on the other: some of the cinemas screened a few films which ran for a very long time (especially Rubens, Vendôme and Regina, see Table 5.21), while others screened films for a period between two four weeks quite consistently throughout the year (Heylen's premiere cinemas Rex and Metro). Generally, Heylen's cinemas screened films slightly longer than most of the competing cinemas (the exception being cinema Regina).

Just as in 1952, the neighborhood cinemas changed programming most frequently, on a weekly basis. This is quite surprising as, by the early 1960s, cinema had lost its appeal as low-priced recreational activity. As I have mentioned in Chapter 3.2.1, in reference to research conducted by van Mechelen and Delanghe, the diversity of alternative ways to spend your leisure time and money had driven away those people who would frequent the neighborhood cinemas regularly. Cinema became more associated with spending a night out (in the nearby city center and in combination with dining, drinks and/or dancing).¹¹⁷⁰ Neighborhood cinemas in particular had lost their appeal as extensions of people's living rooms (see Chapter 3) and with it the need for frequent program changes in order to offer their regular customers new films and to compensate for the loss in quality of the films due to time lag after their premieres at the center cinemas and due to possible physical damage as a consequence of meanwhile multiple screenings.¹¹⁷¹

¹¹⁷⁰ Van Mechelen and Delanghe, *Vrijtijdsbesteding*, 60-64.

¹¹⁷¹ Sedgwick, "Patterns," 154-155. See Verhoeven, "Film Distribution in the Diaspora" on ideas of temporality of distribution and exhibition.

The exhibitors' struggle to keep customers interested in regular visits to the cinemas is also reflected in the increased amount of most recent films playing in Antwerp in 1962. Although the year of production of the films varied remarkably for the sample as a whole, considerable more recent films were screened in examined cinemas in 1962 than in 1952 (Table 5.22 in Appendix I).¹¹⁷² 69% of the film titles were produced in 1961 or 1962, as opposed to 1952, when 53% of the film titles dated from the same year or the year before. As in 1952, in 1962 the most recent productions were screened far longer than (re-runs of) older films and most of the films at neighborhood cinemas were from 1961. Different from the 1952 sample, however, there now was also a certain difference between the profiles in terms of production year in Heylen's cinemas and those of his competitors. Heylen's cinemas generally screened far more films from 1961 and 1962 than competitors did. Except for Pathé and Anvers Palace – both operated by Tyck, one of Antwerp's last cinema tycoons from before the war – all of the competing cinemas screened less films from 1961 and 1962 than Heylen's cinemas did (Table 5.23 and Figure 5.5 in Appendix I). While in 1952 only cinema Rex had a share of more than 90%, in 1962 four of Heylen's cinemas had a share of more than 90% films from the two years. If we take the film supply (especially of recent productions) as an indication for the health of a cinema company, the programming results gained here point to Heylen's growing power within the local cinema market.

Just as in 1952, the majority of films screened in Antwerp cinemas came from the US (Table 5.24 in Appendix I). The share of US films, however, was decisively smaller than a decade before. Less than a third of individual film titles (39% of the screenings) now came from the US, about 30% less than in 1952. The share of US films had decreased mostly in favor of films from the Western European countries, notably France, West Germany, the UK and Italy. Together with the US, films titles from these Western European countries accounted for 85% of the total number of titles (as opposed to 92% the decade before; see Figure 5.6 in Appendix I). In addition, while in 1952, more than half of the cinemas screened US films during at least three quarter of their time, in 1962, half of the cinemas did not even reach the 50% mark anymore (Table 5.25 in Appendix I). As in 1952, it were predominantly Heylen's cinemas that played most of the US productions (Table 5.26). Yet, some of his cinemas also showed a clear preference for French-Italian productions (Odeon) and productions from West Germany and Austria (Astrid and Quellin). Regarding Astrid, we thus see that its programming profile as perceived by the local cinemagoer (see Chapter 6) had by now crystallized. Astrid screened the biggest share of productions from (West-)Germany and Austria (71% of the total

¹¹⁷² Whereas in the 1952 sample, none of the films predated the era of sound film, in 1962 at least two films from the silent era were screened: Buster Keaton's *The General* from 1926 screened in Heylen's Metro and Sergei M. Eisenstein's *Bronenosets Potyomkin* from 1925 in the competing cinema Regina.

screen time).¹¹⁷³ The German-oriented programming of Quellin, on the other hand, (*all* of the films were in German language!) was reported by Corluy as less a conscious choice of Heylen and had more to do with the contracts Heylen had “inherited” with the takeover of Quellin a year earlier.¹¹⁷⁴

Cinema Pathé, operated by Antwerp's renowned cinema group Tyck/Gommers/Mermans, was the only cinema operating independently from Heylen with a predominance of films from the US on its program. More than three quarter of the films screened in Pathé were distributed by American majors (Columbia, United Artists, Universal Pictures and Warner Bros., see Figure 5.7 in Appendix I, more details in Paragraph 5.3.3.). In addition (and partly resulting from this), Pathé was the only competing cinema which did *not* play a substantial number of films from France and/or French-Italian co-productions. All other competing cinemas screened French and/or French-Italian (co-)productions for at least 25% of the time. The dominance of US productions in Pathé might be interpreted as a continuation of long established ties with the American majors, from which Antwerp's last group of exhibitors from before the war was able to profit. Yet it can equally be interpreted as the group's perseverance in trying to stand to Heylen's growing power on the local market. Finally, although in 1962 the share of US films in neighborhood cinemas was still larger than that from other countries, compared to 1952 they now played considerable less films from US. While a decade before, the shares of US films at some cinemas even exceeded 90%, in 1962 the shares varied between one third and two thirds of the total number of screenings.

The doubling of films from France and Italy at the cost of productions from the US also had an impact on the film ratings.¹¹⁷⁵ Although films that had been officially admitted for the screening of children under sixteen still dominated Antwerp screens, compared to 1952, their share had decreased by 1962 (70% KT-labeled screenings in 1952 as opposed to 54% in 1962, see respective Tables 5.13 and 5.27 in Appendix I). In addition, judging from the proportion of films with available data the number of films with positive Catholic rating had decreased in favor of films rated suitable for adults, while the share of films with a negative rating had remained the same (see respective Tables 5.14 and 5.28 in Appendix I). The increase of more risqué film is not surprising when placed in the social and cultural contexts of the changes in the 1950s and 1960s, where the youth grew to

¹¹⁷³ Productions from West Germany and Austria alone (i.e. excluding co-productions) comprised respectively nineteen and sixteen weeks of the screen time at Astrid. This was more than films from the US (ten weeks).

¹¹⁷⁴ According to Corluy, the cinema was first owned by a distributor specialized in the distribution of German films (Corluy, personal interview, June 25, 2008). However, no evidence of this was found in archival documents. The VKBB's *Liste complète des salles de cinémas* for 1960 recorded the name Roels (of whom no further evidence was found): VKBB, “Liste complète des salles de cinémas” 1960: 1. In the *Annuaire général du spectacle en Belgique*, for 1959-1960 (when the cinema's name was still Eden) the group Tyck/Gommers/Mermans was listed as exhibitor, the edition for 1961-1962 mentioned Heylen's company NV Anbima, founded in January 1960 (*Annuaire général du spectacle en Belgique* 1959-1960: 339; *Annuaire général du spectacle en Belgique* 1961-1962: 392; H. van Cakenberghe, letter to Meester L. Eyckmans, Antwerp, October 18, 1994).

¹¹⁷⁵ Just as in 1952 two different sets of film rating data – official and Catholic film ratings – had to be analyzed due to inconsistencies in the source material.

become an important segment of the population, the pillarization of society began to perish, and sexual liberation as well as political and ideological activism questioned traditional beliefs.

Again, as in 1952, most of Heylen's cinemas had bigger shares of KT films than competing ones (Table 5.29 in Appendix I). Of the cinemas of which at least 90% of the film ratings were recorded in the database and which played quite substantial amounts of KT-labeled films were the center cinemas Capitole and Vendôme, premiere cinemas Metro and Rex, as well as “second run” cinema Astra. Quite remarkable also is the change that Astrid underwent. As indicated earlier, this cinema not only had the reputation amongst our oral testimonies of being specialized in German language films, but also as being a family friendly cinema. While in 1952, this had not as clearly been visible in terms of film ratings (56% KT), by 1962 the cinema's profile had become highly distinct. It was the cinema with the highest share of KT films (94%). Competing cinemas as Pathé, Regina, Empire and Anvers Palace screened nearly as much KT films as KNT films. Heylen's cinemas Quellin and Odeon, on the other hand, had the highest share of KNT-rated screenings, followed by competing cinema Ambassadors.¹¹⁷⁶ Three last examples of center cinemas are worth mentioning. Studio Movy, Plaza and Scala stand out as examples of cinemas which excluded children and clearly focused on adult audiences. Although more than 10% of the data on film rating is missing for Plaza and Studio Movy, based on the available evidence a clear dominance can be observed of films which were considered unsuitable for children under sixteen by the official board of film classification. The radical cut in KT screenings at Plaza compared to 1952 meant a drastic change of this cinema's programming profile. For Scala 87% of the documented films had a negative Catholic film advice, the remaining 13% were labeled as screenings for adults only.

Just as diverse the center cinemas were with regard to film rating, as diverse were the screenings in the different neighborhood cinemas. Some neighborhood cinemas played substantially more child-friendly films than others did. Almost half of the screen time of cinema Roma, for example was dedicated to films that had been positively approved by the Catholic Film League. Also, of the screenings for which official ratings were recorded in the database, the number of KT rated screenings was much higher than that of KNT screenings. Festa (Stuivenberg) and Century (Borgerhout) had about the same shares for positively rated screenings (about 20%) and screenings rated by the Catholics as suitable for adults (approximately 75%). For National, the shares were about a third positive ratings and two third screenings advised for adult audiences.

In other words, while a slight difference in the shares of KT and KNT films can be detected when Heylen's cinemas are compared to competing ones, such a difference cannot be detected

¹¹⁷⁶ Whereas the high percentage for screenings at *Odeon* can be explained by the cinema's focus on dramas from France and/or Italy, the extraordinary high rate of KNT films at Quellin can be linked to the fact that 40% of the genres screened at this cinema were crime or thriller-related (i.e. in 40% of the recorded screenings for Quellin the genre specification on IMDb included either or both the classification crime and/or thriller).

between center cinemas and neighborhood cinemas. Furthermore, a change is visible when the ratings for the neighborhood cinemas are compared with those in 1952, when most of the neighborhood cinemas screened proportionally more KT than KNT films. This finding might point to changes in the demographic composition of the audiences at the eve of the massive death of neighborhood cinemas, which had already set in elsewhere (e.g. Ghent), but not yet in Antwerp.¹¹⁷⁷ The reason for the proportionately high number of KT films in neighborhood cinemas in 1952 is the same as the reason for its decrease in 1962. Up until the 1950s neighborhood cinemas functioned as extensions of the home. There was practically one at every street corner, making them highly attractive for child audiences who could walk there without the need of adult company. By programming preferably KT films, exhibitors could tune in to that. By the 1960s, however, children who used to frequent these cinemas had grown up, and/or left the meanwhile impoverished working class neighborhoods north and northwest of the Station Quarter (amongst which Stuienberg and Borgerhout) to find more comfort in the suburbs.¹¹⁷⁸ In addition, increased wealth and mobility along with changes in recreational patterns gradually rendered neighborhood cinemas obsolete. In other words, these cinemas had gradually lost their social function as extension from the homes of people living nearby. Exhibitors then had to adjust their programming in order cater to other segments of the population as one of the ways to survive.

All in all, this paragraph about more general insights in film programming in Antwerp in 1962 has shown that more films were screened and for longer periods than a decade before. The number of films from the US had decreased considerably, which might point to the long-time effects of the protectionist measures taken by the West-European film industry in order to decelerate the import flood of Hollywood productions. Furthermore, this paragraph has revealed that although the neighborhood cinemas were about to disappear, they still changed their film programs on a weekly basis – a strategy that is actually more lucrative when the cinema's aim is to keep attracting the regular customer rather than the incidental one. Nevertheless, the decrease of child-friendly programming in these cinemas point to shifts in the demographic composition of their audiences. Finally, the results presented in this subparagraph also point to clearer profiles of particular cinemas, both of Heylen and competing ones. On the one hand, the relative predominance of US films in Heylen's cinemas might point to closer ties between him and the majors as a result from his growing power on the local market, leaving competing cinemas with the leftovers. On the other hand, a clearer profiling of the cinemas with regard to origin, production year and censorship rating might

¹¹⁷⁷ See Chapter 3 and Van de Vijver, "Gent Kinemastad," 99-101.

¹¹⁷⁸ See Sedgwick, who related socio-economic changes for US-Americans in the post-war period to the decline in cinema attendance (J. Sedgwick, "Product Differentiation at the Movies: Hollywood, 1946 to 1965," *The Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 3 (September 2002): 679-680). One of Sedgwick's arguments was that despite the increase in the amount of disposable leisure time, an increased choice of recreational activities and newly gained "family and house-owning responsibilities" had a negative effect on cinema-going practice.

also be considered as conscious choices made by the exhibitors to survive in an increasingly concentrating market. In the next paragraph the relation between the different players is examined closer, by analyzing the flow of the most popular films (in terms of duration) across the city.

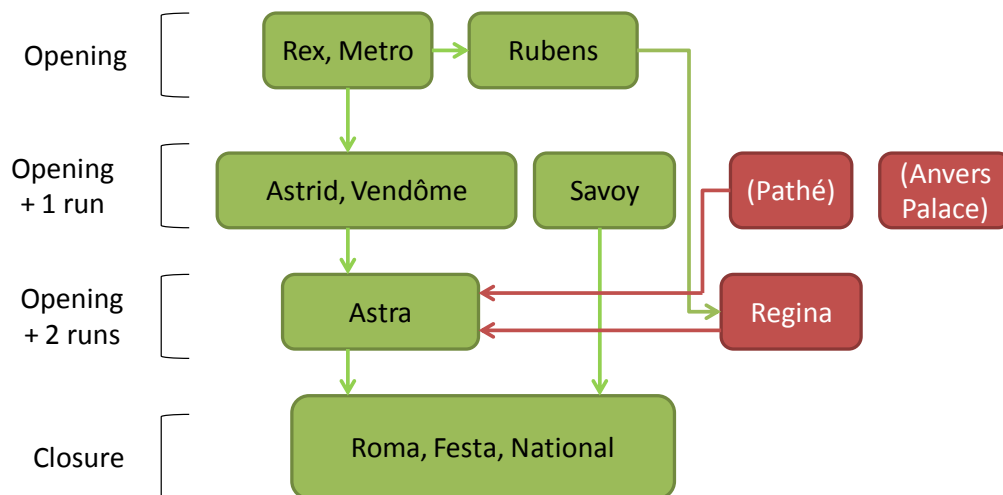
5.3.3. Film exchange and trajectories within Antwerp's cinema market in 1962

For 1962 about the same number of longest running films was examined in more detail as for 1952.¹¹⁷⁹ Again this analysis of the twenty-six longest running films in 1962 is to explore distributional patterns for films in Antwerp and to indicate the degree of cooperation between, as well as hierarchies amongst, the key players in the city's cinema business.

First of all, compared to the 1952 sample, the films which stayed in theaters for the longest times in 1962 were exchanged between Heylen and his competitors to a far lesser extent (see Figure 8 below and Table 5.30 in Appendix I). Most of the films with the longest duration played in Heylen's cinemas only. In addition, less of these films premiered at competing cinemas (Table 5.31 in Appendix I). This can be partly explained, of course, by the increased number of Heylen's cinemas and the simultaneous decrease of competing center cinemas between 1952 and 1962. However, whereas Anvers Palace and Pathé of the Tyck/Gommers/Mermans group as well as de Backer's Ambassades still had three to four premieres amongst the twenty-five longest running films in 1952, these cinemas hardly played a role as opening cinemas in 1962. Tyck/Gommers/Mermans' Pathé premiered *The Devil at 4 O'Clock*, which subsequently moved to Heylen's Astra and then to his neighborhood cinemas. Anvers Palace only got to screen Delbert Mann's production *The Outsider* second and third in line along with Heylen's second run and neighborhood cinema. Finally, Ambassades is only listed in the table because it picked up a film in second run from Empire (Spanoghe/de Paep).

¹¹⁷⁹ Please note that this regards those films which had the longest duration within the course of 1962.

Figure 8: Hierarchy of cinemas according to screening patterns of the twenty-six longest screened films in 1962.



If films were exchanged between different exhibitors, it was either amongst competing center cinemas (e.g. between Spanoghe/de Paep and NV Kinobel in case of *Madame Sans-Gêne* or between Tyck/Gommers/Mermans and S.A. Cobelciné in case of *Le Repos du Guerrier*) or between competing center cinemas and Heylen's neighborhood cinemas. Regarding the latter – as in 1952 – films moved in specific directions in 1962, from Heylen's center cinemas to competing center cinemas and/or to Heylen's neighborhood cinemas, but never from a competing center cinema to one of Heylen's center cinemas. Again, this, in combination with the general absence of competing premiere cinemas for the longest running films, points to a further increase of Heylen's power within the local film market: he obtained the majority of the most successful films (in terms of duration) before his competitors did.

Noteworthy is also the fact that the majority of most successful films at Heylen's premiere cinemas Rex and Metro was distributed by American majors. With the exception of three productions (distributed by the Belgian distributors Discibel and Elan) all twelve remaining films were distributed by one of the majors, including Paramount, Universal Pictures, UA, Columbia, and Twentieth Century Fox. This reflects general findings from the programming analysis: next to “second run” cinema Astra, which would also often screen films from competing cinemas, Rex and Metro had the largest shares of films distributed by American majors. Tyck/Gommers/Mermans' cinema Pathé was the only one competing cinema which predominantly screened films distributed by American majors. The findings suggest that Pathé had contracted Columbia, as the cinema played the largest share from of this distributor far: 25% of all films by Columbia that ran in Antwerp cinemas in 1962 were screened in Pathé (Figure 5.8 in Appendix I) and 39% of all films screened in Pathé came from Columbia. Furthermore, of Heylen's center cinemas, Astrid and Quellin had the lowest share of films distributed by American majors (Figures 5.9 and 5.10 as well as Table 5.32 in Appendix I). This can be

explained by their profile of showing predominantly German language productions, which were mostly distributed by the Belgian distributor Elan: 48% and 60 % of the films screened at respectively Astrid and Quellin was distributed by Elan. Together these two cinemas accounted for two thirds of all screenings of Elan films in Antwerp cinemas in 1962 (Figure 5.11).

Finally, a close examination of the trajectory of the twenty-six films also reveals that more than a third of the films followed a similar trajectory. They would start either at Rex or Metro, subsequently move over to Vêndome or Astrid, then to Astra and finally to Heylen's neighborhood cinemas, mostly including Roma and/or National. On the one hand, the recurrent patterns suggest that a somewhat established distribution-exhibition practice for Heylen's circuit had been formed by then. On the other hand, these patterns also point to a certain hierarchy at least amongst Heylen's cinemas. Most obvious is that – as in 1952 – Rex and Metro still functioned as premiere cinemas. Furthermore, Heylen's center cinemas Vendôme and Astrid functioned as "second run" cinemas. This nearly exclusively concerned so-called *moveovers*, where films moved from one cinema to the other without a clearance window (see Table 5.30 in Appendix I). As in 1952, Astra functioned as intermediary between center and neighborhood cinemas. These are located at the bottom of the hierarchy as "closure" venues (see Figure 8 above as well as Tables 5.30 and 5.31 in Appendix I).

By way of summary, the results gained from the programming analysis for 1962, thus confirm the findings presented in Chapters 3 and 4: by that time, Heylen's power within Antwerp's cinema market was clearly established. He was the exhibitor with the most contracts with the American majors, while most of his competitors predominantly screened productions from smaller, independent distributors. Heylen's power was most visible in the hierarchy between the different cinemas in Antwerp. Nearly all of the most successful films (in terms of duration) premiered at his most prestigious cinemas Rex and Metro and were subsequently circulated preferably amongst others of his cinemas. In doing so, most of the films followed similar patterns, from center to neighborhood cinemas, with the possibility of stopping at one of the cinemas competing with Heylen's. Yet, films would always travel from Heylen's center cinemas to competing cinemas, never the other way around. If exchange took place and films moved (back) from competing cinemas to Heylen, then these were his subsequent run cinemas. From an economic point of view the analysis has shown that, while all exhibitors competed with one another to attract audiences, Heylen was in a much more advantageous position. By operating far more - and different types of – cinemas than his competitors, he was able to maximize profits from successful films after their initial runs. While there may well have been a standard pattern of diffusion according to the run-zone-clearance logic, only Heylen controlled a sufficient amount of cinemas to operationalize it. In the next paragraph I will show how this changed after the neighborhood cinemas had disappeared.

5.4. Case study 3: Film programming in 1982 – Heylen vs. Meerburg

By 1982, Antwerp's cinema market had drastically changed. Most of the neighborhood cinemas were gone and Heylen had lost his quasi-monopoly position in the Station Quarter, with the opening of the Calypso triplex by Meerburg in 1973. In addition, two successful, less commercially oriented cinemas had settled in Antwerp's historical center (Cartoon's) and Antwerp's South (Monty).¹¹⁸⁰ Archival documents and oral testimonies point to a cooperation between Calypso and Cartoon's (and initially also Monty), with Cartoon's functioning as a second run cinema of Calypso.¹¹⁸¹ Monty and Cartoon's were partly operated by the same group of people. Shortly after Monty closed in February 1982, Cartoon's extended from two to three screens. Furthermore, by the beginning of 1982, Heylen had converted three of his center cinemas into multi-screen venues by splitting them up (as was the case with Metro) or installing screens in the cinemas' basements (Ambassades, Quellin). The question is how the changes in the physiognomy of Antwerp's cinema landscape were reflected in the film supply at the cinemas.

Again, this paragraph is structured like the former two. Following the explanations of the corpus, the film programming of the cinemas is analyzed. These general observations on film programming in Antwerp cinemas is followed by a closer examination of patterns of distribution and exhibition, with a particular focus on the exchange of films between Heylen and cinemas belonging to the Calypso-Cartoon's-circuit.

5.4.1. Corpus

For the sample year 1982 a total of seventeen film screening venues was analyzed, including thirty-three screens (Table 5.33 in Appendix I).¹¹⁸² Unless indicated otherwise, the programming of each screen was examined separately in order to also be able to examine the circulation of films within the same complex. Almost all cinemas were located in the core sample area, with the exception of Cartoon's (historical center) and Monty (Antwerp South). Paris, Plaza, Royal and Scala were excluded from analysis, because they were not mentioned in the weekly film listings of the *Gazet van Antwerpen*.

¹¹⁸⁰ Monty closed on 26 February 1982.

¹¹⁸¹ See various correspondence, notes and agreements kept in the private collection of Michel Apers. See also, Kloeck, personal interview with van Ommen.

¹¹⁸² However, in the analysis 34 screens are mentioned. The reasons for this is that the screens for Cartoon's was not consistently specified in the newspaper listings and advertisements: instead of Cartoon's 1 or Cartoon's 2, only Cartoon's was mentioned.

Not all of the cinemas were open throughout the year: Monty closed on 26 February 1982 and was partly replaced by a third screen in Cartoon's two weeks later (12 March). Furthermore, one of Antwerp's last glorious picture palaces with 2000 seats – neighborhood cinema Roma - closed in June. Finally, two additional screens opened at the Quellin-complex one week before Christmas. Night screenings (usually at Metro and Ambassades) and films that only screened for one or two days were excluded from analysis, if they were explicitly indicated accordingly in the film listings.¹¹⁸³

Of the 1757 recorded screenings thus included in the database a total of 1709 film screenings were identified, accounting for 388 individual film titles. With the exception of Savoy and "Cartoon's" (i.e. without specification of the particular screen), the identification rate for cinemas was higher than 90% (Table 5.34 in Appendix I). The exceptionally high identification rate has mostly to do with the fact that original film titles were more frequently provided in the sources than in the other sample years.

5.4.2. General remarks on film programming in Antwerp in 1982

With a total of 1709 identified screenings and 388 titles the average duration of films in 1982 was 4,4 weeks. This was more than twice as long as films were screened in Antwerp in 1952 and 1962. A great number of films still played only one week, but their share had diminished to a quarter of the total amount of films (Figure 5.12), compared to about half in 1952 and a third in 1962. One reason for this was the disappearance of neighborhood cinemas that usually changed their programs frequently. In addition, far more films screened in cinemas for much longer than a month now. Two of the longest screened productions throughout 1982 were shown for more than a half year.¹¹⁸⁴ As I mentioned in Paragraph 5.3.2, the increased average time that films were screened in one cinema can be linked to the changed patterns of cinemagoing, from constituting a regular social practice that was firmly integrated in everyday life, to more incidental visits to the cinema as a special night out. This change thus reduced the need for exhibitors to supply cinemas with new films one a weekly basis. The average duration of the films on one screen, however, differed greatly from cinema to cinema (Table 5.35 in Appendix I). The only two classical neighborhood cinemas left (Festa and Roma) still changed films on a weekly basis. On most screens, however, films stayed longer than two

¹¹⁸³ Unless explicitly indicated or in case that screenings lasted at least half a week, screenings were counted as screenings of one week. Unfortunately, not all night screenings or short screenings of two days or less were indicated in the sources as such. In case of the night screenings, they probably occurred on a weekly basis and usually entailed erotic or horror films, or were some kind of sneak previews of films which would run regularly a few months later. The screening of films for less than three days per week applied mostly for Cartoon's, hence the number of films on Cartoon's screens is more than twice as high as that in other cinemas.

¹¹⁸⁴ The two productions are *Le professionnel* (Lautner, 1981, France) and *The French lieutenant's woman* (Reisz, 1981, UK) playing for twenty-nine and twenty-seven weeks, respectively.

weeks. Compared to 1962 and 1952, films stayed much longer in cinemas and travelled from screen to screen for many weeks. This suggests that rather supplying Antwerp's audiences with new films on a regular basis, films were exploited for longer terms in order to maximize profits. Furthermore, it was not clearly particular types of cinemas or cinemas owned by either Heylen or his competitors, which screened films longer. In other words, duration strongly varied regardless the types and owners of cinemas.

Because films stayed at Antwerp screens longer, the share of the most recent films had decreased significantly: while in 1962 69% of the film titles were from the same year or the year before, in 1982 only 48% were that recent. Nevertheless, like in 1952 and 1962, in 1982 the most recent productions (from 1981 and 1982) had the longest duration on screens (Table 5.35 in Appendix I). Again, cinema Rex screened the highest number of most recent films from 1981 and 1982 (Table 5.37 and Figure 5.13). Even more so, it was the only cinema which exclusively screened films from these two years: no film screened at the Rex was older than two years. Heylen's center cinemas Metro and Sinjoor also screened mostly films from these years, as did Meerburg's Calypso 1. This suggests that Heylen and Meerburg were in direct competition when it comes to attracting cinemagoers interested in seeing the latest films. Cartoon's and Monty were predominantly responsible for the large shares of older films for the overall sample year. It is not clear whether the programming of older material should be linked to their exhibitors' initial resolution and self-imposed task (as film buffs) to provide Antwerp citizens with reruns or prolongations of films they wished to watch (again), or if the programming foreshadowed the approaching closures of the cinemas (Monty in the same year, Cartoon's in 1983).¹¹⁸⁵ In addition, Cartoon's and Monty were not the only cinemas which frequently screened older productions. Heylen's cinemas Astra, Astrid and Savoy also played quite a substantial number of older material. Along with the cinemas of Cartoon's, Monty and Rubens, Astrid also screened the largest number of film titles made before 1970. (It is unclear, however, whether or not this was a conscious programming choice by the Rex cinema group.) Nevertheless, this means, even without Cartoon's and Monty's, there was a great variety of films screened in Antwerp cinemas in 1982 (at least in terms of the "age" of the films), independent of type and management of the cinema.

Along with this considerable variety in terms of the production years, films screened in Antwerp cinemas in 1982 also varied a great deal with regard to the countries of origin. Films from the US still constituted the largest share (Table 5.38 in Appendix I). Even more so, the share of US film titles was almost 10% higher than in 1962. Generally, the shares of screenings from the US screened at Heylen's cinemas and the Calypso-Cartoon's circuit did not differ much. The share within the Calypso-Cartoon's circuit was only slightly larger than at Heylen's cinemas (Table 5.39 in

¹¹⁸⁵ For details see Chapter 4.5.1.

Appendix I). The cinema with the highest share of films from the US was Astrid (Table 5.40). This is remarkable, as Astrid used to be the cinema for the German-language films (see case study for 1962). In 1982, not one single film from Germany (single-country productions) screened in Astrid, which suggests that its focus on films German-language had been only temporary.¹¹⁸⁶ Next to Astrid, only two other cinemas dedicated more than 50% of their screen times to productions from the US: Heylen's duplex premiere cinema Metro and Meerburg's triplex Calypso.¹¹⁸⁷ The fact that both cinemas functioned as premiere cinemas in 1982, hardly shared films (for details see next subparagraph below), and screened predominantly films that were less than three years old, means that they competed directly for cinemagoers interested in the latest US productions.

Heylen's second premiere cinema, Rex, screened US productions only a quarter of its time. Most recent releases from France dominated this screen (one third of the screening time for Rex and Rex Club together, a quarter when calculated for cinema Rex alone, see Table 5.41 in Appendix I).¹¹⁸⁸ No other cinema in the 1982 sample screened nearly as many productions from France. In general, too, Heylen's cinemas screened French productions more often than his competitors did (Table 5.42). France was followed by productions from former West-Germany (which all screened in Rex Club, accounting for 25% of this auditorium's screen time), respectively by co-productions from the US and the UK (16% of the traditional Rex' screening time). This suggests a distinct profiling of the premiere cinemas by Heylen. Just as in 1952 and 1962, the overall share of productions from France was second largest. Next to Rex, Odeon also still dedicated quite a substantial share of its screening time to (co-)productions from France. Odeon's profiling for French (co-)productions as it has been demonstrated by the programming analyses for all three sample years as well as it is remembered by cinemagoers and key players in Antwerp's exhibition sector, thus points to a consistent formula that Heylen employed for this cinema for several decades.

In addition, shares of (co-)productions from the West-European countries France, UK, Italy and/or West-Germany were also quite strongly represented again. As Figure 5.14 shows, single-country productions from these countries and/or co-productions from at least four of the listed West-European countries accumulated to three quarter of all titles screened in Antwerp cinemas in 1982. Apart from this, the 1982 sample constitutes a much larger variety of productions and co-productions from all over the world, including countries as Australia, Canada and Japan, and more particularly, (co-)productions from Hong Kong and Taiwan. Surprisingly, a substantial number of

¹¹⁸⁶ Twelve screenings at Astrid were co-productions with West-Germany as participant.

¹¹⁸⁷ While at Metro, the shares of US films were about equal for the two screens, in Calypso, it was particularly auditoriums 1 and 2 where films from the US screened 69% and 79% of the time, while at Calypso Club this was "only" 21% (Table 5.41 in Appendix I).

¹¹⁸⁸ In order to keep the overview in Table 5.40 in Appendix legible, the different auditoriums of the multi-screen complexes were combined and their number indicated between brackets. For the respective shares of films per country of origin for the particular screens, see Table 5.41 in Appendix I.

these productions not only screened in the “specialized”, less commercial cinemas as Cartoon’s or Monty, but also in Heylen’s cinemas. The findings thus contest the general accusations of a monotonous film supply at Heylen’s cinemas (see Chapter 4), but can also be interpreted that Heylen at least tried to meet the general public’s demand for a more diverse film programming at his cinemas.

Finally, with regard to the ratings of the films screened, Heylen's cinemas did not particularly screen more or less KT films than his competitors (Table 5.43 in Appendix I). For both parties, all variations in terms of shares of child-friendly and less child-friendly screenings occurred. Generally, half of the cinemas showed more KT-labeled films than KNT-labeled ones. This can be partly explained by more general changes in attitudes towards what was culturally and socially accepted on screen, particularly with regard to nudity and violence on screens. It can also point to the exhibitors’ economic strategies to serve broader segments of the population (including those under 16 years of age), thereby increasing potential profits. One cinema that stands out in terms of film rating is Astrid, which exclusively screened films that had been approved by the official board for film classification as being suitable for children under sixteen.¹¹⁸⁹ This means, that while Astrid did change its profile from a cinema specialized in German-language films to a cinema where predominantly US-productions were shown, it did maintain its family-oriented film programming in 1982. On the opposite side of the spectrum stands Savoy. None of the films that screened in this cinema in 1982 was qualified as suitable for children under 16, while a little less than half of the screenings was labeled KNT and more than half of the screenings was labeled “18 years”.¹¹⁹⁰ Savoy was not only the cinema that did not play films from the US, the origin of the films also varied quite substantially. It is possible that Heylen used Savoy to cater specifically to adults interested in the more “forbidden” films, in order to counter competition of infamous cinemas such as Paris, Plaza and Royal, which were all located within a few minutes walking distance from Savoy.¹¹⁹¹

To conclude this subparagraph on general observations of the film supply in Antwerp cinemas in 1982, cinemagoers were offered a great variety of films in terms of production year and country of origin. Both major exhibitors active in Antwerp that year operated cinemas with different profiles. Both groups ran cinemas specialized in the most recent productions and cinemas screening recent productions in combination with films from the decade before (1970s), as well as cinemas screening more older material. Similarly, both groups of exhibitors operated cinemas that would

¹¹⁸⁹ For Heylen's Quellin 1 and 2 the share of KT-labeled films was also 100%, but since these screens only opened mid-December, these figures are not quite representative.

¹¹⁹⁰ The label “18 years” was not an official film rating classification. It might have been used to create additional publicity by making the films appear more daring than those admitted for audiences of sixteen years or older.

¹¹⁹¹ Unfortunately, these cinemas are not included in the programming analysis, as the film titles were not included in the weekly film listings (see Paragraph 5.3.1). For more details about their status as infamous cinemas see Van Steen and Beyen, “Stiefkinderen”.

screen films from specific countries and regions more likely, as well as cinemas with more indistinct preferences. This also means, that both key players were in direct competition with each other. Whether or not they did exchange films and in which ways the films travelled across the city, is the focus of the following subparagraph.

5.4.3. Film exchange and trajectories within Antwerp's cinema market in 1982

Similarly to 1962 (and different from 1952), based on the examination of the twenty-three films with the longest duration on examined screens in 1982, hardly any exchange of films could be observed between Heylen and his competitors from Calypso and Cartoon's (Table 5.44 in Appendix I). Except for three films, all films remained within the own circuit. Only, in two cases films traveled from Meerburg's Calypso cinemas to Heylen's subsequent run cinemas. In a third case (i.e. *Missing*) the film moved to Cartoon's after it had played in Heylen's center as well as several subsequent run cinemas.

Moreover, the films screened at the Calypso-Cartoon's complex were mostly distributed by the American majors, whereas nearly half of the films showing in Heylen's cinemas came from his own distribution agencies Filimpex and Excelsior (Table 5.45), founded in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see Chapter 4). This is a drastic change, compared to 1962, when most of the longest running films at Heylen's cinemas came from US distributors. However, it is not surprising as the vertical integration of distribution and exhibition implies potential profits. Based on the programming analysis for 1982 it becomes clear, however, that Heylen did not distribute films to his direct competitors on Antwerp's exhibition market, the Calypso-Cartoon's group, despite his growing influence on the national distribution market. It is not clear, if he did not succeed to book films for competing cinemas, or if he did not choose to do so, in order to keep exclusive rights for certain films for his cinemas. Apart from Filimpex and Excelsior, hardly any of the key distributors that supplied Antwerp cinemas in 1982 exclusively placed its films in one of the two groups of exhibitors (for a list of the total number of film titles per distributor see Table 5.46). The only exception was the Belgian distributor Elan, which almost exclusively distributed films to Heylen's cinemas. This shows that most other distributors did not have exclusivity contracts with the local exhibitors examined here for Antwerp.

The analysis of the twenty-three most successful films in terms of duration also confirms the findings from the previous subparagraph, that cinema Rex functioned as a first-run cinema (Table 5.47). Next to the Rex, also the Calypso and Metro complexes screened films in first run. Quellin, Rubens and Sinjoor (former Pathé) also showed films in first run, but to a lesser extent. An additional

look at all “first runs” from 1981 and 1982 screened at examined cinemas confirms this first observation, but also ranks cinemas Wapper and Vendôme high (Table 5.48). Concerning the latter (Vendôme was located across the street from Metro), with the exception of one film all cases were first runs.¹¹⁹² The absence of first runs at Vendôme in the analysis of the twenty-three longest running films in combination with its high ranking regarding first run screenings of most recent films, suggests that Vendôme was a premiere cinema only for films with a shorter duration, and functioned as second run for films of longer duration. Something similar applies to cinema Wapper. Along with Brabo and Tijn, it was one of the three cinemas in the basement of the Century Center across from Central Station. The cinema's high ranking in Table 5.48 contrasts with the observation based on the trajectory of the twenty-three longest running films. According to this observation Wapper clearly functioned as second or subsequent run cinema, while the cinema also had the largest share of first runs of most recent films. The cases of Vendôme and Wapper point out that further analysis is required on details on the circulation of films with shorter duration than the twenty-three films analyzed. On the one hand this could shed light on the places in line of the individual cinemas in the hierarchy of runs, on the other hand, it could also expose further patterns (or their absence) of local film exhibition and distribution.

The examination of the twenty-three longest running films provides some insights on the trajectory of the films through Antwerp. The analysis confirms, for example, that Cartoon's indeed functioned as Calypso's second run venue, as has been established based on archive material in Chapter 4.3.3. In three of the four cases where examined films moved from Calypso to Cartoon's, they did so without clearance windows, as so-called move-overs (indicated by arrows in Table 5.44). This confirms the close connection between the Calypso and Cartoon's groups in yet another way, as move-over clauses served the larger chains to keep the films within their circuits, because the license for a particular film would include all the cinemas of a circuit.¹¹⁹³ In the case of the film *Missing*, Cartoon's also served as subsequent run for Heylen's cinemas, but it only did so after the film had gone through a myriad of runs of Heylen's different cinemas and after a considerable break of fifteen weeks after the screening at Heylen's last cinema, Festa.¹¹⁹⁴

An occurrence of similar patterns in the films' trajectories points to a first hierarchy. Accordingly, Rex, Metro I and II, Sinjoor and Calypso I and II can be ranked highest in the hierarchy of runs. They screened most of the examined recent films before other cinemas did (Figure 9 below).¹¹⁹⁵ Furthermore, Brabo, Tijn and Wapper would screen films usually before Ambassadors and the

¹¹⁹² The exception was the film *Montenegro* (Makavejev, 1981, Sweden/UK), which moved to Vendôme from Quellin on 1 January 1982, where the film had premiered two weeks prior.

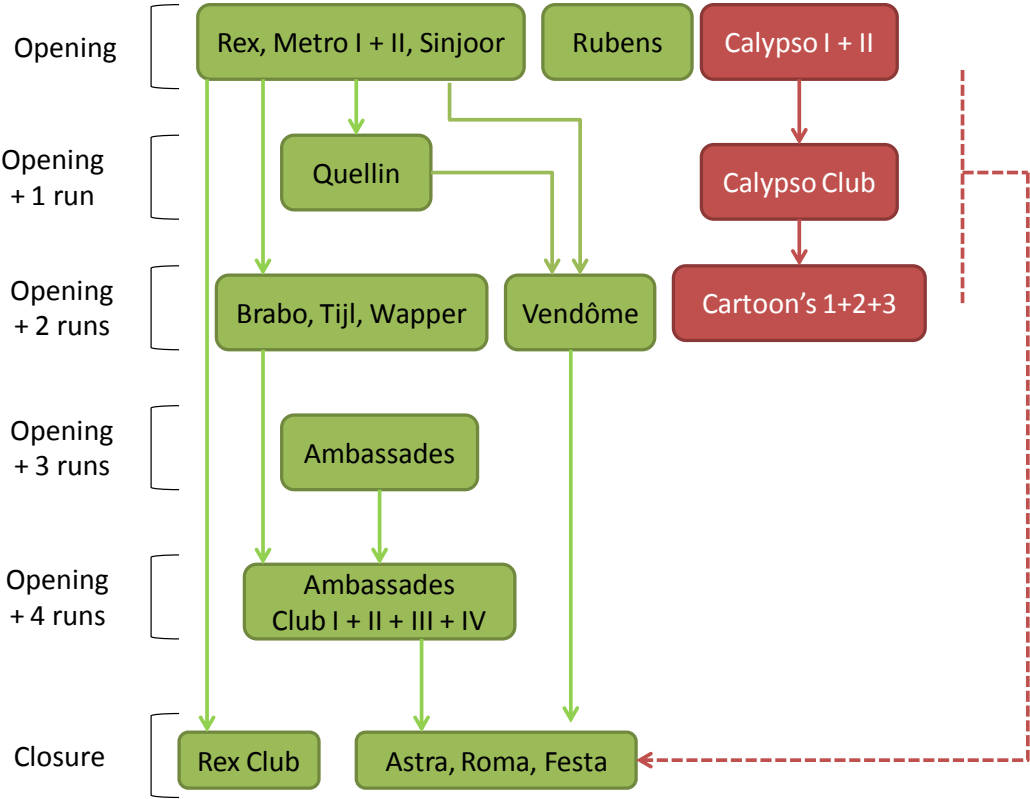
¹¹⁹³ De Vany. *Hollywood Economics*, 160.

¹¹⁹⁴ The screening in Festa was on 28 October 1982, the first screening in Cartoon's 1 on 11 February 1983.

¹¹⁹⁵ Rubens did as well, yet half of the first runs in this cinema were not recent films.

Ambassades Club cinemas. Finally, former second run cinema Astra and neighborhood cinemas Roma and Festa would screen films last in line. With this, Heylen's designated second run cinema Astra had lost its role as intermediary between center and subsequent-run cinemas. For the cinemas of the Calypso-Cartoon's circuit a separate hierarchy can be established, given the little exchange of films between them and Heylen. The films followed quite regular patterns within this circuit, usually beginning at Calypso I and/or II and moving on to Cartoon's. Just as Astra before functioned as intermediary between Heylen's center and subsequent-run cinemas, so did Calypso Club for the Calypso/Cartoon's group, passing films from the two Calypso screens to the cinemas of Cartoon's.

Figure 9: Hierarchy of cinemas according to screening patterns of the twenty-three longest screened films in 1982.



Remarkably, most of the films moved from screen to screen, without any clearance windows between the shows. In light of the argument regarding the move-over clauses provided above, this does not come as a surprise. In addition, (distributional contracts for) multi-screen venues would facilitate easier transfer of a film within one cinema complex. This is most obvious for Calypso, Metro, Ambassades and particularly for Cartoon's. In case of the latter, films would quite frequently move back and forth within the cinema complex (see the example of *The French lieutenant's woman* in Table 5.44). In other words, the films were played continuously in one complex, probably until the maximum amount of profit was achieved. This points to an observation made by Stuart Hanson for British multi-screen venues. Hanson noted that the multi-screen and multiplex concept did not

automatically guarantee a greater variety in film offer. Rather, different screens were used mainly to keep films longer in one venue.¹¹⁹⁶ The examination above also suggests that within the film screening venues, there was generally no hierarchy amongst the screens. In other words within the BTW-complex, films would screen at Brabo, Tijn or Wapper irrespective of the runs, as would films within the Cartoon's complex. The only two exceptions were Ambassadors, which would screen films sooner than the four small screens installed in the cinema's basement, and Calypso Club, which would screen films after they had been shown at Calypso I and Calypso II. Most probably, the size of the screens was the key for this.¹¹⁹⁷

By way of concluding this third case study it can be stated that the programming analysis of the sample year 1982 confirms the perceptions of players within Antwerp's cinema market of which I found evidence in the archives: two fronts dominated the cinema culture in Antwerp at that time. On the one hand Heylen and his Rex cinema group, on the other Meerburg with Calypso and his allies from Cartoon's (and initially also Monty). Both were in direct competition with one another. Furthermore, the findings on the relation between exhibition and distribution presented above, and particularly the lack of exclusive contracts with distributors for exhibitors of Calypso and Cartoon's, can be explained, on the one hand, by the number of screens at Heylen disposal, which was still proportionally higher than that of his competitors. On the other hand, this finding also suggests that Heylen had been successfully maintaining his power, even after his conflict with the distributors in the early 1970s and despite the arrival of new competitors on his "territory".

5.5. Concluding remarks on Chapter 5

In conclusion of this chapter on film programming in Antwerp cinemas the findings presented here allow for conclusions on a micro- and meso-level for the situation on Antwerp's cinema market in particular, as well as conclusions of a more general character.

With regard to the peculiarities of Antwerp's cinema market it has been shown, for example, that the number of films that circulated in Antwerp cinemas in 1982 was nearly half of the number in 1952, although the absolute number of screens was about the same again, after having dropped during the 1960s. The coming of the multi-screens in the 1970s did not result in an increase of film supply and with it a greater variety of choice of different films. This lack of variety was, however, partly compensated by a greater diversity with regard to production year and country of origin.

¹¹⁹⁶ Hanson, *From Silent Screen to Multi-screen*, 136.

¹¹⁹⁷ Compared to Calypso I and II, Calypso Club had a much lower seating capacity (of about 280 seats compared to 580 and 350 respectively). Similarly, the four Ambassadors Club cinemas could accommodate less than a hundred visitors as opposed to its bigger parent, Ambassadors (about 450 seats).

Although by 1982 cinemagoers in Antwerp were treated to new attractions less frequently than three decades earlier, the films to which they were (potentially) exposed were (co)-productions from all over the world.

In addition, the findings suggest that the location of the cinemas in relation to the city center, rather than ownership, was decisive for the prolongation of films. The differences between center and neighborhood cinemas was more profound than the differences between different exhibitors: neighborhood cinemas changed their programs far more frequently (mostly once a week) than center cinemas did, quite irrespective of the (group of) exhibitors. Furthermore, although distinctive profiles could be identified for a number of cinemas, they did so only to a certain extent. In the case of Astrid, for example, the cinema's general reputation of being specialized in German (language) films with family appeal has only been confirmed by the findings for the sample year 1962, and to a certain extent for 1952 (when it also screened a substantial number of US productions). Based on the programming analysis of the three sample years alone, it is difficult to say whether the profiling in 1952 and 1962 was typical for the other years and for the following decades and if the absence of German productions in 1982 was truly representative for a change in programming strategy, or if it was merely incidental. Further research is required to draw more profound conclusions in this respect. Similarly, Odeon's reputation as cinema for French films, to list a second example, has been confirmed by the programming analysis, but also has to be nuanced. It is true that the cinema always played relatively high shares of films from France, along with French co-productions, but the shares of US productions screened at this cinema cannot be neglected. In addition, in all three sample years, there were always two or three cinemas that played (far) more films from France than Odeon did. The fact that these were mostly different cinemas in every sample year suggests that Odeon's reputation as French-oriented cinema might have grown more from the steadiness in programming profile over the years, and less from the absolute number of films from France.¹¹⁹⁸ More research is necessary, in order to find out if the proportions of French films were higher for Odeon in other years and whether there was an increase towards the latter years of the Odeon's existence, before it closed its doors on the Frankrijklei in 1985. Furthermore, it needs to be investigated how much the perception of Odeon as cinema for French film was also shaped by publicity. From the beginning, Odeon was marketed by Heylen as "cinema for the elite". The use of this word of French origin for targeting a specific audience (the educated) to some extent elevated the cinema's film program above that of others by building on the specific discourse on French film.¹¹⁹⁹ In the following chapter, I will address this in more detail.

¹¹⁹⁸ These were Regina, Studio Movy and Ambassades in 1952, Ambassades, Anvers Palace and Plaza in 1962 and Rex and Ambassades Club III in 1982.

¹¹⁹⁹ French films were associated by our respondents with drama and problem films, meeting the specific taste of the educated (see Chapter 6). For examples of Odeon being marketed as "cinema for the elite" see, amongst others, Heylen's

Another finding of the programming analysis in relation to one particular aspect of the films' circulation through Antwerp concerns the exchange of films amongst exhibitors. The results of the programming analysis suggest that the exchange between Heylen and his competitors was highest in 1952, a time when Heylen was still at the beginning of his career and his cinema group still steadily expanding. By the early 1960s, his power had consolidated and only little exchange can be traced of the most successful films that screened in Antwerp. Moreover, neither the distribution conflict with the American majors, nor the arrival of newcomers in Antwerp's inner city in the early 1970s prevented Heylen from keeping an upper hand in Antwerp's cinema culture for almost two more decades. In 1982, the film exchange between Heylen and the operators of Calypso and Cartoon's was low, not the least because to a large extent Heylen screened pictures of his own distribution companies Filimpex and Excelsior in exclusivity.

Given the limited nature of the sample and the scope of this thesis, unfortunately, not all details can be fully explored here. An expansion of the programming analysis along geographical lines, for instance, would be interesting, in order to explore how films moved outside the confines of Antwerp's inner-city cinema market. Moreover, such extended case studies focusing on the circulation of particular films would make it possible to follow the full trajectory of a particular film across a region over a longer period of time and to draw conclusions about particular distributional patterns of the films and their circulation outside of Antwerp. Findings of the analysis certainly showed that a period of fifty-two weeks is in fact too short a period to follow a film's whole trajectory within a region, since highly successful films were usually exploited for a much longer period.

Nevertheless, the findings provided by the programming analysis resulted in preliminary insights which deserve to be explored in more depth. In addition, next to the conclusions relating to the peculiarities of Antwerp's cinema market in particular, the analysis also allows for conclusions on a more general level. While the distribution system of runs and clearances is most commonly attributed to the (period of) classical Hollywood majors, from the programming analysis it became clear that a certain hierarchy also existed amongst Antwerp cinemas, determining more or less the circulation of pictures.¹²⁰⁰ Next to the classic distinction between center and neighborhood cinemas, an additional sequencing amongst a number of the center cinemas was noticeable. Based on a small-scale bottom-up approach to local film supply, it was demonstrated that the circulation of films and their slotting in the particular cinemas' programming schedules depended on the (expectance of a)

congratulations on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the trade journal *Weekblad Cinema* in November 1951 and his New Year wishes for 1953 in the special New Year's edition of *Weekblad Cinema*. On the same pages, cinema Rex was referred to as "Antwepens prachtkinema" (i.e. Antwerp's grand cinema) and Astrid was advertised with the slogan "voor meer filmgenot" (i.e. for more film pleasure).

¹²⁰⁰ See, for example, Gomery, *Shared Pleasures*, 66-67; De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 158-160.; Wyatt, *High Concept*, 111; Scott, "Hollywood and the World," 167.

film's potential success (measured in terms of duration), and other more film-intrinsic criteria (e.g. arthouse versus blockbuster, country of origin, film rating, etc.).

If a division of the cinemas into a hierarchy of runs-like model is desirable, it would have to be less clear cut than the existing classical model of run-zone-clearances, where cinemas pretty much had a fixed place in line (dictated from above, by the majors). The programming analysis demonstrated that although certain distributional patterns were in place, especially in the 1962 and 1982 samples, most cinemas' places in line were not fixed, with the exception of Heylen's flagship cinema Rex which would always stand first in line, alternately accompanied by other cinemas. In addition, the case of Odeon in 1952 also raised the question, if a distinction between certain types of premiere cinemas would be productive. A distinction between, for example, premiere cinemas that were used for quick launches on the one hand, from which the films would move quickly to subsequent cinemas, and premiere cinemas that would screen films in first runs for far longer periods. After all, such programming strategies do have an impact on image and attendance rates of the cinemas in question.

Although an in-depth analysis of the trajectory of all films is necessary to elaborate more about this, the results point to the insight that an attempt to arrange cinemas according to a certain hierarchy is fruitful. Yet instead of the charged term “run-zones,” a more open term is required. In his chapter on the production and marketing of movies, Vogel, for instance, speaks of *sequential distributional patterns*, by which he understands that “films are normally first distributed to the market that generates the highest marginal revenue over the least amount of time. They then ‘cascade’ in order of marginal-revenue contribution down to markets that return the lowest revenues per unit time.”¹²⁰¹

It leaves us with the methodological question of classifying cinemas in such a bottom-up approach. After all, the divergence between, for example, the findings for the different groups of cinemas in 1982, when it comes to the position of certain cinemas according to the sequence of distributional patterns, underlines the difficulty of assigning first run status of cinemas in a bottom up approach, by counting the first runs per cinema alone. Whereas, about ten years ago, a qualitative approach as the one presented here was required to assess the precise trajectories of the films and the cinemas' status in the line of hierarchies of screenings, the speed with which new methods and tools spurred by the latest innovations within the digital humanities have recently been developed, is promising for also examining this in quantitative ways. Our co-authored article that aimed at exploring new ways to visualize film flows across different cities, provides first steps in this

¹²⁰¹ Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics*, 93. Although Vogel's ideas mainly relate to the current situation where theatrical exhibition is only one amongst many market windows, next to television and internet formats, the basic idea behind it could also be applied to historical accounts of different types of cinemas.

direction.¹²⁰² Although a detailed visualization of the hierarchy amongst cinemas based on programming data has not been included in this article, experiments to achieve this were promising. This would also make it possible to take into consideration the cases of move-overs, i.e. the direct change of a film from one cinema to another without the required period of clearance. According to de Vany, the screening of a picture in a second theater after a move-over would be considered a continuation of the run and not another run.¹²⁰³ In that case, however, in a number of cases (increasingly for 1982) subsequent-run cinemas would be allocated the same place in the cascade of runs as some center cinemas, since some films moved-over directly from center cinemas to neighborhood cinemas. If one counts the screenings at different cinemas after a move-over separately, however, many center cinemas would count as second run venues and venues which had been designated by experts from the field as being second run venues (as Astra and Majestic in 1952) would have to be considered third run cinemas. A looser classification as suggested above would circumvent this classificatory problem as well.

Finally, on a more theoretical level, the programming analysis provided insights in the value of microscopic studies of cinema markets, here with focus on film supply. It contested macro-level models (of the system of run-zone-clearance) by exposing the shortcomings in the conceptualization of first-, second-, subsequent-run cinemas, when approached from the bottom up. Yet the microscopic view also contributes to a patchwork of local cinema cultures and invites for a comparison of film circulation in other places, within the region, nation-wide or even abroad. A first step in this direction is currently being made by the research team of the “European Cinema Audiences” project which aims at comparing film programming in seven European cities between 1951 and 1953 from a comparative perspective. Last, but not least, the findings offered here also feed into the tales told by those who actually attended the screenings and effectively consumed the films under discussion.

¹²⁰² Pafort-Overduin et al., “Moving films”.

¹²⁰³ De Vany, *Hollywood Economics*, 160.

“Antwerp was a cinema city. I remember arriving at Antwerp station by train and see all those neon lights of the many cinemas.”¹²⁰⁴

6. Memories of cinemagoing in Antwerp

Complementing the examination of the changes of Antwerp as *Kinemastad* and Heylen’s role in it, this last chapter investigates the cinema-going experiences as remembered by Antwerp citizens and those visiting Antwerp cinemas during the second half of the twentieth century. More particularly, what is of concern here is to examine if and how Antwerp was remembered as a *Kinemastad*, how the ubiquity of cinemas was perceived in relation to the respondents’ environment of the home, how the distinction between the cinemas in terms of location (center versus neighborhood), exhibition practices and film supply figured in these oral testimonies, and, last but not least, if and how Heylen and his cinema group were remembered in relation to these aspects.

Subsequent to the discussion of method, sources, and data, the results from an analysis of thirty-six interviews are presented in three paragraphs, each relating to one of the previous chapters on respectively places, exhibition practices and films, as aspects that shape film consumption. By thematically aligning the insights gained in the previous chapters to the oral testimonies of those who actually visited the cinemas in Antwerp allows for a clearer understanding of the value of the cinemas, the films and cinemagoing in the social context of everyday live.

6.1. Method, sources, data

Within the frameworks of the “‘Enlightened’ City” project, 145 in-depth interviews with 155 Antwerp residents were carried out in 2006. The interviews were conducted, transcribed and coded by eighteen third-year bachelor Communication Studies students participating in a one-year research class at the University of Antwerp from February 2006 until March 2007.¹²⁰⁵ The students conducted interviews of between thirty minutes and two hours about the role of film and cinema-going in the past. Incidentally, archive material was used to trigger memories. At the moment of the interviews, respondents were fifty years and older and were mainly recruited from residential homes for elderly people or within the circle of family, friends and acquaintances of the interviewers. The sample of respondents was constituted in ways to achieve as much variation as possible regarding age, class, sex and political and/or ideological convictions (see Table 6 below). The degree of film consumption

¹²⁰⁴ Quote by respondent RR, male, 1939.

¹²⁰⁵ The students were trained and supervised by Philippe Meers and Gert Willems. I wish to thank Gert Willems, Philippe Meers and the students at the University of Antwerp involved in this undertaking.

also varied widely, from avid cinema-goers to those who hardly ever went to see a movie. The interviews explored who preferred which kinds of films in which cinemas in which parts of the city and the motives for, and rituals connected to, particular forms of cinemagoing and as a practice of everyday life (for details see the checklist – in Dutch – included in Appendix II-5). The interviews were recorded (audio) and subsequently transcribed ad verbatim by the students.

Table 6: Schematic overview of composition of respondents interviewed in 2006-2007.¹²⁰⁶

	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Born before 1927 (80+)</i>	43	21	64
<i>Catholic</i>	25	14	39
<i>Other</i>	12	2	14
<i>Socialist</i>	6	5	11
<i>Born 1927-1941 (65-79 years)</i>	29	33	62
<i>Catholic</i>	12	11	23
<i>Other</i>	10	9	19
<i>Socialist</i>	7	13	20
<i>Born after 1941 (under 65 years)</i>	12	17	29
<i>Catholic</i>	3	6	9
<i>Other</i>	6	6	12
<i>Socialist</i>	3	5	8
<i>Total</i>	84	71	155

The interviews were semi-structured to keep the interviews focused while allowing respondents space to develop unscripted narratives. Compared to highly structured interviews, semi-structured interviews might be considered more challenging to analyze and compare, due to the relatively unstructured answers in the transcripts. Varying answers across different social categories, for example, could be ascribed to differences in respondents' perceptions, but also to differences in the formulation and sequencing of the questions. However, the purpose of this oral history study of cinemagoing is neither quantification of the results for the sake of fact-seeking, nor a reconstruction of the past for want of historic sources. Instead, it is a thematic analysis of the respondents' (hi)stories in relation to the overarching topics of places, exhibition practices and films (see below).

The fact that the interviews were not designed and conducted specifically for this PhD project "Antwerpen Kinemastad", might be seen as a disadvantage, as questions were not initially molded to meet research purposes here and respondents' answers were not always challenged or deepened further by the interviewers. However, the half-open nature of the interviews in combination with the broad spectrum of topics addressed, does make the interviews suitable for thematic readings to investigate how the three topics, places, exhibition practices and films figure in

¹²⁰⁶ The respondents' age groups refer to the age group they belonged to when the interviews were conducted.

respondents' memories. After all, fact seeking or generalizations are not the objective of analysis in this chapter, rather than trace underlying discourses in respondents' memories. This leaves the researcher with more unscripted narratives for respondents, but also for the researcher as it decreases the chance of tunnel vision and looking for confirmations of the expected. Furthermore, working with existing interviews falls in line with recent trends to share each other's data and collections for reuse and alternative research questions.¹²⁰⁷

Here, for the purpose of an in-depth analysis thirty-six interviews were selected out of the 145. Sampling is necessary as soon as qualitative conclusions are to be drawn that refer to larger amounts than the actual number of researched objects – in this case Antwerp citizens with living memories of cinemagoing in Antwerp in the second half of the twentieth century. In qualitative research, sampling strategies vary and depend on the particularities of the research questions. Selection could be based on typical or extreme cases, for example. However, this would require knowledge of what is typical. In addition, the purpose here is not to generalize and establish models of the typical act of cinemagoing. Finally, although the transcripts yield plenty of information and potentially allow interesting analyses and comparisons of the answers along social and demographic categories, this is not of priority here. The interviews were selected based on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, aiming for an even distribution of gender, age group and political/ideological conviction (see Table 7 below, for an overview of the respondents' profiles see Appendix II-6). Although these social categories helped in explaining and contextualizing particular memories on cinemagoing in the past, this only happened to a certain extent. After all, the categories themselves are insufficient in accounting for the complexity of cinemagoing as a social act: the composition of the cinema audience differs for every screening and its members are not only defined by what they are, but also by what they do, their interests and other contextual factors that influence the degree and shape the ways of their film consumption at a particular moment and in a particular place.¹²⁰⁸

¹²⁰⁷ P. Ercole, D. Treveri Gennari, S. Dibeltutolo, L. van de Vijver, "Cinema Heritage in Europe: Preserving and Sharing Culture by Engaging with Film Exhibition and Audiences," *Alphaville. Journal of Film and Screen Media* 11 (Summer 2016): 1-12.

¹²⁰⁸ J. Fiske, "Audiencing. Cultural Practice and Cultural Studies," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks et al.: Sage, 1994), 192. Although Fiske's research concerns television audiences, his critique of the use of social categories to understand experiences of media consumption along with his preference for the concept of social formation is instructive here. While, according to Fiske, a "social category holds its members constantly within its conceptual grip; a social formation is formed and dissolved more fluidly, according to its contextual conditions. It is identified by what its members do rather than by what they are, and as such is better able to account nonreductively for the complexities and contradictions of everyday life in a highly elaborated society." (Fiske, "Audiencing," 192.) Just as television audiences are social formations, which are temporarily defined depending on interests, purpose of the gatherings and contextual factors to form such an alliance at a particular moment on a given place, just are cinema audiences. As Fiske put it: "Those who formed this alliance may well have been typical of the social category that was the core of [a particular] audience, but the alliance was not coterminus with the category..." (Fiske, "Audiencing," 192). See also, Allen and Gomery, who defined movie audiences as an unstructured group, unlike more formalized social groups (political parties, fraternities etc.): Allen and Gomery, *Film History*, 156.

Table 7: Schematic overview of composition of sample to be analyzed for “Antwerpen Kinemastad”.

	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Born before 1927 (80+)</i>	6	6	12
<i>Catholic</i>	2	2	4
<i>Other</i>	2	2	4
<i>Socialist</i>	2	2	4
<i>Born 1927-1941 (65-79 years)</i>	6	6	12
<i>Catholic</i>	2	2	4
<i>Other</i>	2	2	4
<i>Socialist</i>	2	2	4
<i>Born after 1941</i>	6	6	12
<i>Catholic</i>	2	2	4
<i>Other</i>	2	2	4
<i>Socialist</i>	2	2	4
<i>Total</i>	18	18	36

Furthermore, double interviews were excluded from the selection. Although they potentially produce more unscripted narratives as respondents might stimulate each other’s memories, priority here was to warrant an even distribution across social categories, in order to minimize alternative explanations for diverging or similar answers. Also, interviews with (family members of) persons employed in the cinema business were excluded for analysis here, as the focus on (motives for) cinemagoing as a social practice and motives of persons involved in the cinema business might be of a different order: they might even have lived in or near the cinema, for example, and might not necessarily have intrinsic motives for cinemagoing.¹²⁰⁹ Of the remaining interviews the ones with the highest word count in combination with a favorable question-answer ratio were selected, based on the assumption that the higher the wordcount for answers compared to that of questions, the more likely the probability of unscripted and thick narratives. The anonymized (Dutch) versions of the interview transcripts can be found in Appendix II-7.

The analysis was carried out in two phases. First the interviews were globally coded according to the three main themes, place, exhibition practices and films. This global coding served to locate references to cinemagoing in relation to these topics.¹²¹⁰ However, rather than using these codes to cut out passages relating to one of these topics and analyze them as isolated entities, the codes serve as lenses for inspecting parts of respondents’ testimonies from the different thematic perspectives. A passage could therefore be coded in reference to more than just one of the topics. In

¹²⁰⁹ The assumption that film and cinema are more likely to play a different role in the lives of these respondents, does not render them useless for oral history projects related to cinema history, quite on the contrary. See, for example Česálková, “Feel the Film”.

¹²¹⁰ In addition, as Daniela Treveri Gennari and Silvia Dibeltulo underlined (partly referring to Martin Barker) in their oral history study of the ways in which Italian cinema audiences experienced film censorship in the 1950s: “(t)he creation of thematic clusters provides the opportunity to ‘reveal the complex qualities of people’s experiences’ both at individual and collective levels” (D. Treveri Gennari and S. Dibeltulo, “‘It Existed Indeed... It Was All Over the Papers’: Memories of Film Censorship in 1950s Italy,” *Participations* 14, no. 1 (2017): 237).

addition, although the results for the three themes are presented in three different paragraphs, it is important to realize that they are not separate entities, but they are strongly interconnected. I will show, for example, that the location of the cinemas (coded under places) is often connected to the choice of particular films (differing in center or neighborhood cinemas) and/or exhibition practices (degree of luxury offered).

This first phase of global coding resulted in a high amount of passages from the thirty-six selected interviews that were then analyzed in depth. The guiding question was how the three topics (place, exhibition practices, films) figure in respondents' memories of cinemagoing in the past. The topic of place includes all memories connected to physical and perceived space: the geographical location of the cinemas within the city and in relation to each other and respondents' homes, or travels to and from the cinemas. The second topic, exhibition practices, refers to cinema memories related to the exhibition practices in the cinemas and staff. In the light of the focus of this dissertation on Heylen and his Rex cinema group it is especially interesting to explore, if and how he and his cinemas are remembered.¹²¹¹ Finally, the topic of films relates to memories of specific films and film preference.

6.2. Places. Proximity and ubiquity of cinemas in the neighborhoods and downtown.

Previous research has pointed to the firm anchoring of place in cinemagoing memories.¹²¹² As I will show in the following paragraph, place and space also substantially shaped cinema going memories of Antwerp citizens. I will do so by drawing, on the one hand, on the identification of three different categories of cinema memories as established by Ercole et al., and on the other hand, to what Kuhn has termed "topographical memory talk" to demonstrate how respondents organize their cinemagoing memories spatially.¹²¹³ Generally, cinemagoing memories of the respondents here can be largely framed by the perceived distinction between the city center and the neighborhoods and

¹²¹¹ Given the particular focus in this thesis on Heylen and his Rex cinema group one might argue for an additional analysis of all 145 interviews to examine how he and his cinema group were remembered by Antwerp citizens. However, this would not have been feasible within the scope of this research as it would have required a careful reading of all the 145 interviews in order to select relevant passages. A simple word search would not have resulted in a meaningful selection of passages, as neither Heylen nor his cinema group were always mentioned by their names and memories pertaining to him and his business could often only be derived from descriptive and contextual information, i.e. in the second (qualitative) phase described above.

¹²¹² See, for example, Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*; Kuhn, "What to do with Cinema Memory?", Ercole et al., "Mapping Cinema Memories".

¹²¹³ Ercole et al., "Mapping Cinema Memories"; Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*.

districts outside the center, with the center referring to what respondents call *'t stad* (the city) or Antwerp, as opposed to the off-center areas where many of the respondents lived.¹²¹⁴

Respondents' first memories of seeing a film in a cinema is often tied to childhood memories of specific locations in the neighborhoods where they grew up. These cinema memories are clearly expressed in the discourse of the home, literally and figuratively. Literally, as they describe the cinemas they frequented in their childhood as being located just around the corner from their homes and hence easy to reach. The recollection of JVE (female, 1941) is just one of many examples illustrating this: "Yes, my cinema was the Forum in the Brederodestraat. I lived in the Ballenstraat near the Haantjeslei at Antwerp South and each Saturday we used to go to the cinema. [We went there, because] it was nearby. You only had to walk down the street, down the Haantjeslei, hop, around the corner and then into Brederodestraat."

The details and vividness with which respondents reconstruct the walks to their neighborhood cinemas points to the firm embeddedness of this cinemagoing practice in the rituals of everyday life. Frequently, the ease of access is underlined by respondents by contrasting it to cinemagoing in the center, which implied longer distances and was considered to be more expensive (travel and tickets). One respondent's memories (MP, female, 1939) is worth quoting in full:

From our first year of primary school we went to a neighborhood cinema in the neighborhood. [...] We walked there, for financial reasons. Here in [the district of] Hoboken, it was cheaper and when we went to [the district of] Kiel it cost a little bit more. So it was really just a leap. Here in Hoboken, and whenever we had more money and we were allowed to, then we went to Kiel. And then it was a real luxury and really, how shall I put it, then it was a feast. Then we went to the city. Because the city – you might not remember that anymore – but it was full of cinemas. And then we went there, but that was even more expensive. So you can image, here it didn't cost anything. By foot, but not far. To Kiel, it was a longer distance, then the whole Sunday was gone. And to the city, you'd had to take the tram, so you had to have even more money.

As Biltreyst et al. showed for cinemagoers in postwar Ghent, financial rather than ideological reasons were recollected as playing a more decisive role for respondents' choice of cinema.¹²¹⁵

Implicit in these narratives is the neighborhood cinemas' function as an extension of the home. Respondents recalled cinemagoers wearing slippers or aprons to do a "quick cinema" (JV, male, 1929) or bringing their toyguns to shoot cowboys on the screen (RDW, male, 1939). Most and foremost, in times prior to the proliferation of tv in households, the neighborhood cinema was perceived as an extension of the living room. MM (female, 1924) remembered that

[p]eople would laugh out loud there and they brought their food along. I remember people bringing their table cloth, who would peel an apple and then the apple fell from upstairs down onto the people sitting there and that was annoying. [...] That was in the neighborhood cinemas. At the Rex it was different. They would never go and sit there with their table

¹²¹⁴ That is not to say that all respondents lived outside the city center (see RB (female, 1916), JC (male, 1926), PB (male, 1954)).

¹²¹⁵ Biltreyst et al., "Social Class," 113.

cloths. That was really a neighborhood thingy. Just like at the Provinciestraat. There you also had such a little cinema. I think it is still there. [...] I went there a lot when I lived in Borgerhout. It was nearby, in the evenings, we would say, because there still was no tv yet, come and let's do a quick cinema and off we were.

Cinemagoing in the neighborhood was less about the particular films or the quality of the cinemas (see also the following paragraphs about exhibition practices and films) than about social routines, of meeting family, friends and other acquaintances. MD (male, 1922) described this quite plastically: "You would enter [cinema] Leeuw and you'd see... ah, there is Jef and there is... All locals who'd go there." Similarly, JS (male, 1926) recollected that "[t]hey knew us here, right. Here we felt at home. You can't really call it our domain, but it was familiar." The feeling of belonging and the status of the cinema as an integrate part of the community are also underlined by the use of the diminutive suffix "ke" and possessive forms when talking about the cinemas: the Conscience becomes *our* Conscienceke (MC, female, 1921), cinema Real the Realeke (MM, female, 1924), Cineac becomes Cineacske (EJ, male, 1936), cinema Louis the Louiske (MD, male, 1922) and so forth.

These memories can be compared to the first one of three categories of cinema memories that Ercole et al. identified in their case study of mapping cinema memories in Rome in the 1950s – a classification based on the work of Per Gustafson and his distinction between three types of perceived spaces (*Self*, *Environment-Self* and *Other-Environment*).¹²¹⁶ Ercole et al. connect this first category to cinemagoing memories of the parish halls as places of the *Self* with a "highly personal meaning, associated with roots, and the sense of community they create".¹²¹⁷ Although the cinema memories of Antwerp citizens refer less to parish halls (which hardly figured in recollections examined here), what both sets of memories (Rome and Antwerp) share, is a clear emphasis on the importance of community and feelings of security and familiarity these places provided.

The second category Ercole et al. establish, is constituted of memories of second- and third run cinemas that "are still close to home but also scattered in other neighborhoods".¹²¹⁸ They correspond to the spaces Gustafson defines as *Environment-Self*, as areas that display respondents' "'formal knowledge (geographical, historical)' of the place, as well as 'familiarity with the lived-in physical environment'".¹²¹⁹ Although they (again) cannot be linked to a particular type of cinema, a distinct set of memories of cinemas in Antwerp conforms with this second type. Memories of this category can be characterized by a greater number of cinemas that are recalled by respondents and that are often organized topographically. In these cinemagoing memories, the respondents' (former) neighborhoods are clearly spatially defined, roughly corresponding to the administrative divisions in neighborhoods and districts.

¹²¹⁶ Ercole et al., "Mapping Cinema Memories," 71.

¹²¹⁷ Ibid.

¹²¹⁸ Ibid., 72.

¹²¹⁹ Gustafson in Ercole et al., "Mapping Cinema Memories," 73.

For the respondents examined here, this holds especially for off-center neighborhoods with a perceived high ubiquity of cinemas, including Kiel, Hoboken, Berchem, Merksem. Here, respondents remember to find a wide choice of cinemas and films, most concisely summarized in the recollection of MC (female, 1921): “In Kiel, right. We had the Nova, we had the Roma, we had the Centrum and then our Conscienceke, and then there was another one in Wittestraat, but I cannot remember how it was called. So you had quite a few and you could alternate, right. Plenty of films, right.” Similar memories were shared for the districts of Berchem (see, for example, MD, male, 1922) and Merksem (JC, male, 1928).

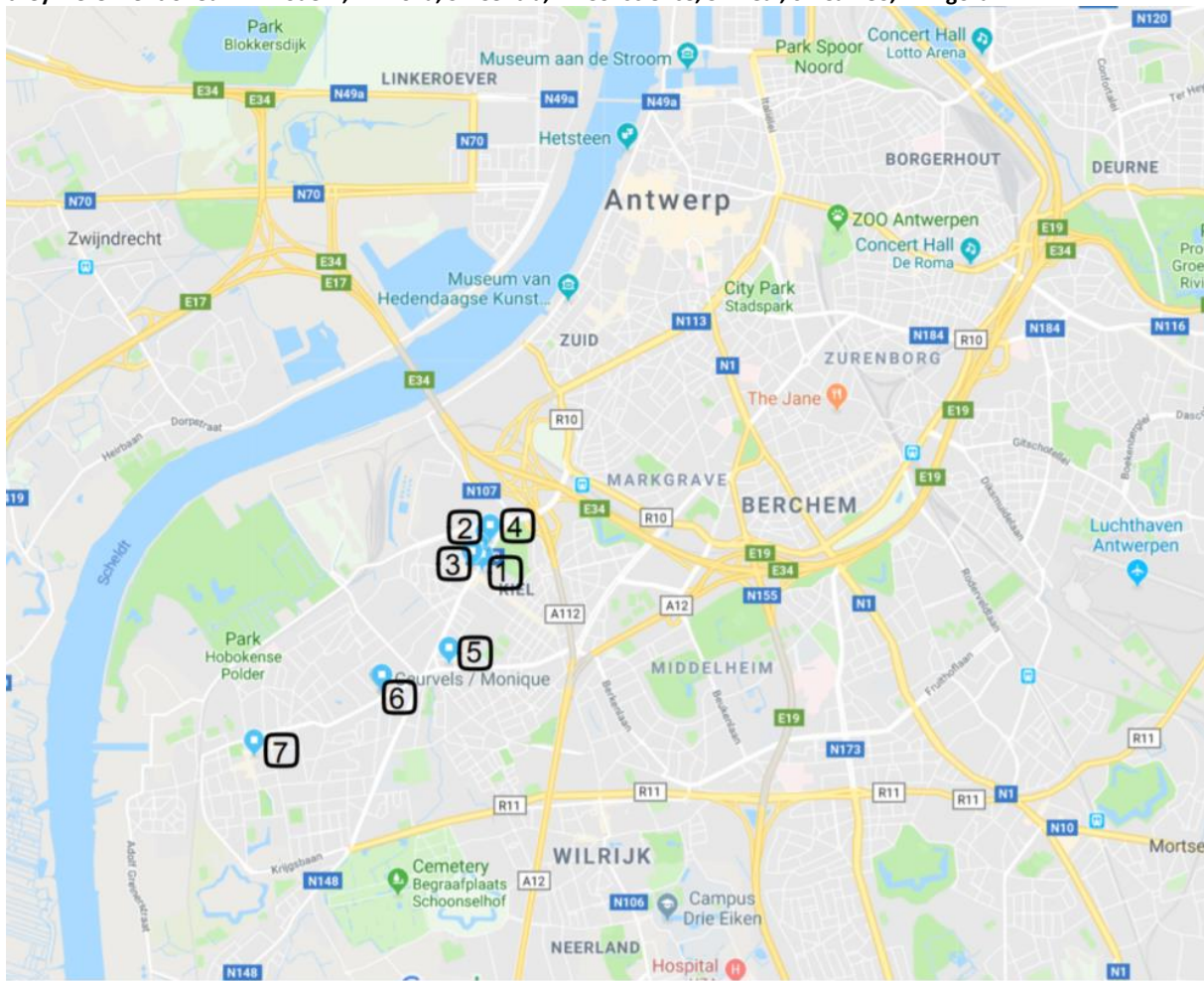
Moreover, respondents recollected attending cinemas not only in their own neighborhoods, but also in adjacent ones, rendering the trip to the city center practically unnecessary. Like MP (female, 1939), JS (male, 1926), for example, remembered visiting cinemas in his neighborhood in Kiel, but also in Hoboken:

Yes, there were various cinemas here. At Abdijstraat you had the cinema Modern, that’s where the C&A is now, at Abdijstraat. At the Den Tir, next to the Den Tir you had cinema Nova. Further down at Sint Bernardsesteenweg, in the direction of Hoboken there was the Centra. And further towards the city, across the park there was... back then it was called Conscience, later it became the Micro. [...] We also went to the cinema in the city once in a while, I’m not saying we didn’t, but you had plenty of cinemas here. We had four of them. At the Bruynlaan we also had the Real. That was a wilder one. In Hoboken there was the Cameo, at Antwerpsesteenweg, cinema Cameo. In the village of Hoboken there were another three cinemas. The Agora, ... yeah, I forgot the names.

Similarly, RDW (male, 1939) attended screenings in his neighborhood in Borgerhout as well as in the nearby districts of Deurne and Merksem. Compared to the first type of cinema memories, this second type is thus characterized by the greater distances the respondents covered in their memory walks across the different neighborhoods and districts, from cinema to cinema, in turn pointing to a larger “operating range” and increased freedom the respondents enjoyed at that time.

As mentioned before, in respondents’ cinemagoing memories, their (former) neighborhoods are clearly spatially defined and the cinemas are often listed per neighborhood, roughly corresponding to the administrative divisions into neighborhoods and districts. As shown in the map below (Figure 10), for example, JS’ recollection of the cinemas (see quote above) follows a certain order in its division between the cinemas in Kiel (Modern, Nova, Centra, Conscience) and those in Hoboken (Real, Cameo, Agora).

Figure 10: Cinemas as recollected by JS (male, 1926). Cinemas are indicated by the blue icons and numbered in the order they were mentioned: 1 - Modern, 2 - Nova, 3 - Centra, 4 - Conscience, 5 - Real, 6 - Cameo, 7 - Agora.



Accounts as the one of JS are thus clear examples of earlier findings of oral history accounts of cinemagoing suggesting that respondents “organise their accounts topographically”.¹²²⁰ Respondents’ memory walks through their former neighborhoods and the city center serve as aids to structure and elicit concrete cinema memories. Although the cinemas are not always remembered by name, the respondents’ topographical memory walks through their (former) neighborhoods, in combination with the data collected for reconstructing the local cinema market in Chapter 3, help identifying the cinemas and reconstructing emotional maps of cinemagoing in the past.¹²²¹ What Kuhn describes as topographical memory talk goes back to the ancient art of memory: orators in antiquity memorized their speeches by linking images to fixed points on a walking route (“loci memoriae”).¹²²²

¹²²⁰ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 17.

¹²²¹ In some interviews, respondents’ memories were triggered by using archival material, including lists with cinema names, film titles, maps, newspaper clippings etc. When assessing spatial aspects of cinema going memories, only “untriggered” recollections were included in the analysis.

¹²²² Tollebeek and Buelens, *België: een parcours van herinnering I*, 14.

Even more so, when remembering cinemagoing in the past, not only cinemas serve as such mnemonic anchors, but also cafes, bars, ice cream parlors and other meeting points. When asked about her choice of cinemas, SVG (female, 1932), for example, remembered that “We were a group of 20 people and on Sundays we’d meet at a cafe at Astridplein. There we’d decide what to do. [...] We’d meet at the ‘Piet Tijn’ at Koningsplein. Spontaneously. It was never planned.” Similarly, JVE (female, 1941) recollected visits to her favorite cinema, cinema Forum at the Brederodestraat, that would include a stop at the local snack bar:

At Verbondstraat, there was a snack bar and we’d go and grab some French fries first. Yes, I wasn’t one of the rich, at home we were just working people. Some French fries and then to the cinema. But a glass of beer... Never a beer after the cinema. Only when we went on Sundays, with the friends of my parents, but that was the afternoon screening then and they also had daughters, as far as I can remember. And then you’d go and have a glass of beer at Brederodestraat.

Another example is MS (female, 1932), for whom memories of cinema Roma were inextricably connected to the ice cream parlor next door:

Well, yes, the Roma was very big. A lot of people went there and actually it was more cozy. You can probably imagine, that during the break they’d come with a tray, such a huge tray, with ice cream on it. But no ice cream as you have now, but just two waffles with three scoops of ice cream. As in... the dairy was close to the Roma and just before the break they’d see to it that the tray was filled. And they would walk around with it. But you couldn’t do that in other cinemas, right. That was family of the exhibitor and that’s how it went.

However, respondents did not exclusively go to either neighborhood *or* center cinemas, on the contrary. While their association of visits to the center cinemas is pervaded by mobility and finances as two aspects that dictated the choice for a cinema in the city center or nearby home, as mobility would increase with age and as far as financial capacities would allow, neighborhood cinemas were alternated with center cinemas, as the following quote by MM (female, 1924) illustrated: “[The Roxy in the city...] was our cinema, right. We all had our regular cinemas, right. [...] We used to frequent all cinemas. There was the Jean, the Roxy, the Agora in Hoboken. The Cameo in Hoboken, the Realeke in Wilrijk. [...] I went to the cinema on a daily basis. [...] In the city. Or in Borgerhout. And then I did all the cinemas in the city, right. At De Keyserlei and everything. I’ve seen all the cinemas, right.”

Nevertheless, according to the respondents, cinemagoing experiences in the center clearly differed from those outside the center. Here, respondents’ recollections are shaped by notions of pleasurable nights (or days) out (details follow in the next paragraph on exhibition practices). In addition, the perceived ubiquity of cinemas in neighborhoods and districts, as Kiel, Berchem, Merksem and Borgerhout, discussed above, applies even more so to the Station Quarter which accommodated more than a dozen of cinemas within a walking distance of a few minutes. A number of quotes underline this, for example the one by FDM (male, 1945): “But most of the cinemas, well it

depended a bit on which film played where, but everything was concentrated around De Keyserlei and the side streets.” In a similar vein, the memories of HA (male, 1942) are worth quoting in full:

When I look back at the 1950s, 1960s and I see myself strolling through the center of Antwerp and I’m seeing all these streets ending in De Keyserlei and all these cinemas! The little ones and the big ones. [...] But the little cinemas that I used to know, like the Festa at Offerandestraat, the Nationale at Lange Beeldekenstraat, at Carnotstraat, on Astridplein, they all disappeared, right. Also at Appelmannstraat, those two big cinemas, the Anvers Palace and the Empire, they’re also gone.

Remarkably, cinemagoing in “the city” is almost inevitably linked to the exquisiteness of the Station Quarter and most notably, the De Keyserlei, which is often used as reference point for cinema in *’t stad*. As RR (male, 1939) recollected quite vividly: “I remember entering Antwerp, via de train station, when you entered Antwerp by train, then you’d already see all the neon lights of many cinemas and that was impressive for us, all those neon lights!” JC (male, 1926) stated even more clearly that he went there “for the area actually. The ambience in the street, at the De Keyserlei.” The reputation of the Station Quarter, and particularly the De Keyserlei that I have described in Chapter 3, as Antwerp’s cultural hot spot and place to see and to be seen was explicitly alluded to by RDW (male, 1939): “De Keyserlei was a street of high standing. People came there to be seen. That was not the kind of neighborhood where we’d walk around unless we had a reason to be there.”

In this way, memories of center cinemas in Antwerp and particular their embeddedness into the liveliness of the Station Quarter with the De Keyserlei at its hart, fit particularly well with Gustafson’s description of this third type of place, that of “Other-Environment”, where people “discuss the ‘atmosphere,’ the ‘climate,’ or the street-life of a place (usually a city) in such a way that properties of the inhabitants come to characterize the urban environment itself.”¹²²³ In addition, the recollections of cinemagoing in the center resonate with the third category of cinema memories that Ercole et al. link to the first-run cinemas, as “places associated with adulthood, a more stable financial situation, and [which] are significantly more distant geographically”.¹²²⁴

As the elaborations in this paragraph have shown, the threefold distinction that Ercole et al. make between different categories of cinema memories is also applicable to the memories of cinemagoing in Antwerp, even though the links to parish halls and second- and third-run cinemas that Ercole et al. established cannot be confirmed based on the analysis here. What is more important than whether or not the different cinema types match, is the insight that just like for the memories of cinemagoing in Rome, in the memories of cinemagoing in Antwerp the different cinemas were remembered in relation, not only to respondents’ own dynamic environments, but also in relation to each other. They thus exemplify the findings of Ercole et al., that cinemas are remembered in relation to other sites and leisure activities and as such also to important stages of

¹²²³ Gustafson cited in Ercole et al., “Mapping Cinema Memories,” 73.

¹²²⁴ Ercole et al., “Mapping Cinema Memories,” 73.

life (childhood, adolescence etc.).¹²²⁵ In this way, cinemas can be considered as spatiotemporal markers of personal cinemagoing memories. Yet, cinemas can also be considered as spatiotemporal markers in additional way, less related to the individual cinemagoing memories and more to collective memories related to urban change in general and that in and around the Station Quarter in particular. After all, the perceived ubiquity of cinemas in several neighborhoods and districts in Antwerp, appears to hold especially for the time that respondents link to the heydays of Antwerp as a cinema city.

6.3. Exhibition practices. Antwerpen Kinemastad and Heylen's Rex cinema group

When examining respondents' recollections of their experiences of cinemagoing in the past with a focus on exhibition practices, two lines of distinctions emerge: a distinction between cinemas in the city center and off-center, and between past and present. The latter is strongly connected to memories of Antwerp as a true cinema city in the past and memories of Heylen's cinemas in particular.

6.3.1. Pomp and splendor in the center versus modesty in the neighborhood

The distinction between center and neighborhood cinemas that has been discussed in the previous paragraph in relation to place and space, also frames respondents' memories of their experiences of exhibition practices. This distinction is already linguistically expressed in the denomination of the center cinemas as "the more chic" (*sjiekere, chiquer*, see, for example, HA, male, 1942, JC, male, 1926, MB, female, 1928), the "classy" (MD, male, 1922, HA, male, 1942) and the "larger" cinemas (MC, female, 1921, AL, male, 1926), versus denominations for the neighborhood cinemas as the "smaller cinemas" (HA, male, 1942, AL, male, 1926, AV, female, 1952) or the "peoples' cinemas" (*volkskinemas*, see, for example, MV, female, 1920).

Similar to the findings for cinemagoers in postwar Ghent, the differences between center and neighborhood cinemas as perceived by Antwerp cinemagoers relate largely to the design of the cinemas, to service and comfort, including affordability and connected to that, audience, as well as to film programming.¹²²⁶

¹²²⁵ Ibid., 69.

¹²²⁶ Biltreyst et al., "Social Class," 114.

Design

Recollections of the differences between center and neighborhood cinemas frequently center on aspects of design, including the architecture of the buildings as well the interiors. The design of the center cinemas is often described in terms of luxury and grandeur. As it was expressed by MP (female, 1939): “Going to the cinema in the city was a feast. I’m saying it, those cinemas were really luxurious establishments.” Similarly, RR (male, 1939) remembered “[o]f course, the Rubens, for example, those were the big cinemas. The Rex, the Metro, these were all cinemas that were built beautifully, with posh seats and that was much more pleasant.”

Most often, the luxury and grandeur of the center cinemas was contrasted to the more impoverished style of the neighborhood cinemas, as in the case of JH (male, 1929): “A center cinema was much more comfortable regarding architecture and interior. The chairs were also better than at a neighborhood cinema. The neighborhood cinemas often used to be former halls for all kinds of purposes. They were mostly flat and the better ones had placed a few platforms in the back and made a wooden banister. While cinemas as the Rex had been built as cinemas, with carpets and folding chairs and such.” Similar impressions were recollected by SVG (female, 1932): “Yes, these [center] cinemas were in plush, while other normal cinemas still had wooden seats. At the Rex and near the Station it was all much more grand.” Equally descriptive are the memories of HA (male, 1942): “At the classy cinemas [...] the entrance hall was bigger, was more upholstered, was more luxurious, the seats were probably a bit softer, the cinema hall was larger, the sound was probably better and the screen was bigger. But the coziness of the smaller cinemas had its charm as well, right.” The last sentence is very characteristic of these cinema memories: although the status and classiness (as well as service and comfort as I will show below) of most of the center cinemas figures very prominently in respondents’ recollections, often it was also played down against the coziness and sociability of the neighborhood cinemas.

Service and comfort

Tied to the architecture and interior design of the cinemas is the service and comfort offered to cinemagoing audiences. Service and comfort were generally much higher in center cinemas than in neighborhood cinemas. MD (male, 1922) recollected attending cinemas in his neighborhood, for example: “There was no service. You went to get your ticket and that ticket was torn and then you had to go inside. A good cinema had someone with a torch light to guide you in case it was already dark. But you sat down where there was a free seat, right.” This stands in contrast to the service at the center cinemas, where porters were remembered welcoming you at the entrance, as it was

remembered by HA (male, 1942): “At the classy cinemas there was, for example, a porter, dressed up in a uniform. Golden epaulets, a hat on and golden buttons. He was the one opening the door when you entered. You didn’t have that at the neighborhood cinemas.” JVE (female, 1941) compared similar impressions with those of neighborhood cinemas: “Yes, in the city, someone was awaiting you, a waiter, dressed in a costume, who would tear the tickets. There was luxury, right. At the neighborhood cinemas, there was a lady I think, who would get up [unintelligible] and sit behind the counter and the man who would be in the hallway...”

Hostesses who would accompany the patrons to their seats and/or offering concessions during the breaks were also remembered frequently as being more typical for the center cinemas. HA (male, 1942), for example, remembered the ladies with a torch lamp, which you saw “in particular cinemas. Certainly in the more chic cinemas as the Empire, Anvers Palace, Rex, Metro. There was a time, when this came over from America I believe. It was also some kind of employment and you were shown to your seat. They’d always ask: in the middle, in the back or on the front? Then the lady looked for free seats with a torch light, because at that time, Antwerp cinemas were frequented very intensively.” JV (female, 1949) for example, remembered ice cream and pralines offered at the center cinemas, something “you wouldn’t see [...] in Deurne. During the screening. And they walked around with pralines and so on. They wouldn’t do this in Deurne. No, you didn’t have that there. You bought your tickets, you went upstairs and you took your seat. That was all.”

Next to a generally better service, the quality of the screenings was remembered as being usually better at the center cinemas. HA (male, 1942) is just one example of many illustrating this:

Then we went to De Keyserlei to the big cinemas, where tickets were also more expensive and where you had bigger screens and the colors and sound were much better than in the neighborhood cinemas, where it sometimes also happened, that the film broke during the screening. And there would be giggling and everyone would sit there in the dark for a few minutes and then the film was out of sync, probably because they weren’t able to glue it together properly. So that was the charm of the neighborhood cinemas.

Although, the better service at the center cinemas is again contrasted to the quality of the service at the neighborhood cinemas, it is also relativized (again) as just the aspect which gave the neighborhood cinemas their charm.

Audience

Tied to the better service and comfort offered at center cinemas is the audience frequenting them. The way in which neighborhood cinemas were remembered as an extension of the home is also reflected in the recollections of audience behavior. JVE (female, 1941), for example used to go to the cinema with her parents, sometimes with her granny: “She lived with us and joined us. This was back in the times that people would line up in front of the cinema, all with their little bags. Some of them

brought their sandwiches to eat them at the cinema. That was common practice, I saw it with my own eyes. And how they'd peel their apples there." For some, the cinema around the corner also meant an ideal retreat for courting couples, as MD (male, 1922) remembered about neighborhood cinemas:

Yes, well I have to say now, that after a while many of these cinemas were dirty and gross. Where they'd talked a lot and did things. I guess the cinemas are much cleaner now, than they used to be. Because everything was lying on the floor. Because in the last two or three rows they'd make out, they wouldn't watch the film. But this also came with the corresponding noise. But you knew where it was like that. Because back then in all the cinemas you had a ground floor and upstairs and there it was always the noisiest. The couples would sit upstairs in the last rows and they didn't care about the film. But we didn't do that. We only held hands and so on. It was annoying when people in front of you couldn't sit still and you'd think by yourself that you wouldn't be doing that if you were at least a bit human.

What emerges from MD's recollection is adding nuance to the image of the neighborhood cinemas, an awareness that not all neighborhood cinemas were the same and neither were the people frequenting them. It is usually when contrasted with the type of audiences and their behavior in the center cinemas that the neighborhood cinemas were described as the cinema for the ordinary people, as in the case of MV (female, 1920) who remembered that center cinemas as the Rex, Anvers Palace and Empire "were for the better classes and back then those of the better class went there, right. And the people's cinemas, well that's where all and sundry went." In other examples, as the recollections of AV (female, 1952), this distinction manifested itself mostly in the way people dressed:

Well, yes, I found that when we went to the Rubens, they'd all be more dressed up. [...] Then the men, definitely in the beginning, they were all wearing a nice suit. It was really as if they went to a gala. Nice suit, the ladies were also dressed nicely, their hair done nicely. In other cinemas than the Rubens, you could go more, well, you wouldn't go in your working clothes [...] It was a more easygoing atmosphere, you could as well sit there in your jeans or with a loose sweater. When we went to the Rubens, it was always far more elegant, certainly in the beginning. Everyone was looking at everyone, you see. [...] People knew that they couldn't just go in their working clothes, so everyone was dressed up a little.

The perceived difference between the status of the cinemas and connected to it, the people frequenting them, contributes to the elevation of visits to the center cinemas as something more exclusive, less habitual than visiting a cinema near the home. The center cinemas were described by respondents as luxurious establishments for the higher classes, as places where seeing and being seen shaped the cinema experience just as much as the actual films that were screened there. In that sense each of these cinemas was a microcosm mirroring the "world outside": De Keyserlei as the Champs Elysées, the place of conspicuous consumption. Biltereyst et al. explain similar findings for their study of memories of cinemagoing in postwar Ghent by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of

cultural distinction, whereby respondents implicitly and explicitly position themselves in relation to other social groups.¹²²⁷

Film supply

Linked to audience is film programming as the manifestation of film supply targeting specific groups of audiences, including children, adolescents, young families, passers-by, men and women. Next to the Rex, which will be treated in more depth in Paragraph 6.3.3 about cinema memories related to Georges Heylen and his cinema group, another cinema that features prominently in respondents' recollections is the Cineac. Located across Antwerp central train station, the Cineac was specialized in the screening of newsreels and (animation) films for children. The prominence of Cineac in the cinemagoing memories can, on the one hand, be ascribed to its role as the cinema of the first cinemagoing memories. Respondents tended to remember in detail the location of the cinema on the De Keyserlei, in the cellar of the building that now houses the Century Hotel and a shopping mall. Two vivid recollections by respondents of different age groups are again worth quoting in full:

My first experience with a film event, must certainly have been in Antwerp, at the cinema Cineac. And the cinema Cineac was actually the Century Hotel, with the façade from back then. And that was a hallway, with a glass case on the wall with ads for the films, and there it went downstairs. Cineac was one of my first visits to the movies that I did there. And it was a cinema hall, not that big, but not little either. [...] And there they used to play nature films and animated films. (RA, male, 1930)

On Sunday mornings, my mother always put the money ready and slept in. [...] I went to the Cineac all by myself and that was the cellar of the Century Hotel. That was downstairs, down a slope and you had double swing doors. And there was this lady with a torch light and the program and she would show you to your seat. [...] The exit was on the other side of the Century Hotel. So you wouldn't exit where you'd entered. [...] So there was this tiny corridor up and then you were back at the De Keyserlei. (HA, male, 1942)

Recollections of the company and the rituals connected to going to the Cineac were equally vivid and detailed:

That was when I was still little, at the Cineac. They showed animated films and it happened, certainly when you went there around noon, that it was packed with mothers and fathers with little children. Then you had all the noise of the little children. [...] And at the Cineac they would play news reels all day long, interspersed with animated films and advertisement. There was my first visit to the cinema, because I went there with my father lots of times. It was also cheaper than a regular film at a regular cinema. It was also more interesting for children, because they'd play animated films and so on, no big dramatic films. [...] Many people went to the Cineac, because they were safe and warm there and they could stay there for five hours, if they wanted. They all brought their sandwiches. And the rest was of course interest in the films. (JV, male, 1929)

¹²²⁷ Ibid., 116.

After the war, I went to the Cineac, that's for sure. [...] That's where I went. Because it didn't last long and I still had some time left to do some groceries or things like that, that I had to do in the city. I'd stick to that because I didn't have a newspaper and I still could follow the news. [...] [They'd screen] only news and once in a while a nice animated cartoon, like the ones you see now, with Tom and Jerry and the like. They'd play that, but they wouldn't play big films. That's why they were so good for children, right. (MB, female, 1928)

HA (male, 1942) remembered certain exhibition practices which apparently added to the charm of the Cineac. When asked why he preferred the Cineac he answered:

It was a cinema where they'd play lots of animated cartoons. You could also go to the Cineac on Sunday mornings, because they had special kid screenings. You'd also get a tombola lot and after the screening of a number of animated cartoons there was a tombola. Every child present there had a chance to win a little prize. The Cineac was actually my first confrontation with film in Antwerp. Yes, I don't believe that a lot of older people were coming there. It was more a cinema for children. [...] It was also, that when you bought a ticket, that there was a lady with a torch light accompanying you and showing you to your seat. The same lady or Miss would then walk around during the breaks, with a basket with ice cream, parfait, snacks and candy. So that was really a little cinema for the kids.

Cineacs' particular appeal for children and passers-by, might have been partly indebted to its central location across the central station, but most definitely by the programming of news items and entertaining attractions of short duration. The newsreels, which were also referred to as dailies and which were remembered by many respondents as being an attraction in themselves. MB (female, 1928), for example, remembered that it "mostly it was the newspapers... well, everything that happened in the world. It wasn't films, right. [...] For example, the wedding of the Queen of England and the funeral of Astrid, we all saw that there. We went there specially for that." Also EJ (male, 1936) remembered particular news items he saw via the newsreels at the Cineac:

I'd say, for example, when there was a wedding, for example Boudewijn marrying Fabiola, then everyone went to the Cineac, right. Because then there was a very extensive report you got to see there, of all the things. The very first tv wedding, or the very first wedding that I witnessed, but I was still young then, was Elizabeth from England marrying her Philip. And later also all of... also on tv, but also at the Cineac, everyone went to see it, Grace Kelly marrying Prince Rainier of Monaco, right. That was all big news.

Just as the news items were appealing to adults, just as much the cartoons were the attraction for the children. HA (male, 1942) was appealed by both: "What did we see there? The earliest films by Walt Disney. The Three Little Pigs, all those stories. Also animated films about nature and so on. It might probably have been eight to ten animated films, with news in between as it was back then, from Belgavox. The news seen through the eyes of the Belgians. And every week there was also, once in a fortnight or something like this, the news from Belgian Congo. That was very popular back then and it was also shown at the Cineac."

An interesting aspect when studying cinema memories in light of exhibition practices is also the awareness the respondents showed of film programming and the trajectory of the films across the

city, as a consequence of distribution practice of runs and clearances (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Respondents recollected that films in the center cinemas offered the latest or newest films and that it could take months for films to arrive at neighborhood cinemas:

In my neighborhood [...] Kiel in Antwerp, there were three cinemas. And there the films would arrive, let's say, about two months after they'd premiered at the De Keyserlei. [...] The Roma was a neighborhood cinema. They'd show a film after about three months [later]. (EJ, male, 1936)

At the same time, respondents also recalled that their preference for center cinemas could sometimes depend on whether or not a particular film was worth the penny and effort spent for watching it in the center. As JC (male, 1928) remembered, for example, "Yes, if it was a special film that had been praised so much in America or something like this, then people couldn't wait to see it here and then they went to the city of course, because it would be seen or shown there first. [...] There certainly was a difference, right. I think that I could go to a cinema in the neighborhood twice for the prize it was shown in the city for a single time."

However, despite the general perceived advantages of center cinemas as opposed to the neighborhood cinemas, with regard to comfort, service and film programming – which would partly determine respondents' choice – the picture they painted was not as black and white.

Better neighborhood and worse center cinemas

Even though center cinemas scored largely better in all aspects elaborated on above (architecture, size, service and comfort, film supply), this does not mean that the preferences for center or neighborhood cinemas as it was recollected by the respondents is clear cut.¹²²⁸ Certain neighborhood cinemas were remembered as grand picture palaces, with good service and high comfort, just as particular center cinemas are remembered as unfavorable cinemas attracting the wrong kinds of audience. RA (male, 1930) for example, remembered his childhood and his frequent visits to the cinemas in his neighborhood Kiel,

where there were beautiful cinemas, not just scaffolds, with lounge chairs, full carpet and beautiful curtains that opened, just like at the opera. You also had an upper and a lower floor. That was classic. Below it was cheaper, upstairs more expensive. And when you were upstairs, you had a mezzanine right in front of you. [...] I think it was much more pleasant to go to the cinemas in my times. Because of the beautiful cinemas: the neighborhood cinemas were beautiful. At least the ones where I went to. I did hear of other people that they still had to sit on wooden chairs. But the neighborhood cinema here in Kiel, Centra, Nova and Modern had full carpet, beautiful chairs and a nice screen, furnished in an old-fashioned way, with lampshades along the wall. The Centra was modern, with dimmed light. The floor and the light were full of warmth and coziness. You were also welcomed friendly, by a hostess.

¹²²⁸ For similar conclusions in relation to memories of cinemagoing in postwar Ghent see Biltreyst et al., "Social Class," 117.

Also cinema Leeuw in Berchem was remembered in a positive way:

When you go to see a film in South or in Hoboken, that was also more for the common people. But it was different common people. Those who were nonchalant, without respect towards anything, who would make noise and throw everything on the floor. That's even worse, right. In Berchem you had the Flora that was more for the common people, as I'd call it. But in cinema Leeuw there were people who would keep things under control. Who would interfere and say: Hey. At the Corsa too, I think. (MD, male, 1922)

Just like cinema Roma in Borgerhout:

But the Roma was a beautiful cinema. The entrance alone would already be a place to play a movie. [...] There would still be hostesses walking around at the Roma. This was less so at the Luxor. That was also rather frequented by the proletariat. Then we also had a time, when I became older, that I became interested in girls and that you'd make out in the cinema. That wasn't allowed at the Roma: there they'd see to that. So there it was not allowed. (RDW, male, 1939)

The same holds for neighborhood cinemas in Deurne, which were considered even more cozy than the cinemas in the city center:

They were very classic. It was all still in wood. [...] It reminded me of the time of Frankenstein. All those chandeliers in the corners of the cinema and those red velvet drapes right down to the floors. The chairs were also all covered with velvet. And all with wooden curls and so on. [...] And the chairs had cushions in them and it was all with a red carpet. It really looked like the castle of Frankenstein, I used to think. It was very classic. [...] Yes, you had a ground floor, a first floor and a balcony. On every side there was staff that would show you to your seat with a little light. Plus, during some shows they'd walk around with pralines, but that wasn't so with every show. I don't know what the reason was. (JV, female, 1949)

In contrast, most cinemas in the center that were remembered negatively, were so for the types of films they screened, instead of their design and interiors. This concerns mostly the infamous cinemas located at and around Astridplein, as remembered, for example, by AL (male, 1926): "Yes, there were cinemas at Astridplein that would show third-rate movies. Films that, let's say, had more violence and shootings. Because pornographic films didn't exist back then. That came only later." Similarly, GDS (male, 1926) remembered those particular cinemas as "dubious. Studio Paris and there were... At Astridplein there was another one. That were inferior films in our eyes." This difference in the recollections could be ascribed to respondents' claims that they never set a foot inside such cinemas, irrespective of their gender or age group. As GS (male, 1947) stated, "Yes, you also had those cinemas that we'd call dirty. I definitely didn't go there." Also LR (female, 1952) remembered that "At Astridplein you had the sex films. I never went inside there, no. Of course, we did stop there once in a while. [...] But what they were called, no... The Paris or something like this." Just as JV (male, 1929) claimed to have "never set a foot inside" the cinemas at Astridplein.

Reasons for steering clear of these cinemas would vary from personal distaste and disinterest to prohibitions by caregivers. As shown in many quotes above, when being asked about cinemas they

would steer clear of, respondents would often recall cinemas near or at Astridplein, the square next to the central train station. Astridplein thus was thus not only popular for its grand center cinemas, but also for its “dirty”, “rancid” (*vuile, gore, vieze*) cinemas.

Recollections of this type of “taboo” cinemas are shorter than those of other cinemas, suggesting a more impersonal and distanced type of cinema memories. The briefness and detachment of the memories is amplified by the fact that these cinemas are often not called by their names and it was merely other people who that went there, as the recollections of MP (female, 1939) show: “And then there was a sex cinema, there at Astridplein. Right, and there also was the Palace. That sex cinema, I never went there. And then at Nationalestraat there was also such a strange little neighborhood cinema, Petertje. That was known, famous with all and sundry, we weren’t allowed to go there, at home they said so, right.” Although there were exceptions, like SVG (female, 1932) who claimed to “haven’t been there that much, once or twice or three times maybe. Just to know what it was. [I went there with] my girlfriends. We thought that was fun.” When being asked if there were also other women, SVG replies negatively and explains that she and her girlfriends mainly went out of curiosity: “Yes, then we thought it exciting, like: Oh, shall we go there for a change? And we didn’t even know what was playing. But it was the idea of going to that cinema, because we knew that it wouldn’t be approved of.”

The previous subparagraphs have shown a clear perceived difference between exhibition practices at center as opposed to neighborhood cinemas. The general picture that emerges from the recollections favors the center cinemas in many respects: design, service, film programming and linked to these aspects, (targeted) audiences. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the recollections also revealed that the distinction between center and neighborhood cinemas is less clear cut than at first sight, as accounts of specific cinemas partly refute the general picture or add nuances to it.

6.3.2. Exhibition practices: Then versus now

The second line along which respondents distinct their cinemagoing memories runs between the past and the present, with the past commonly referred to as the period before getting married and having children and/or before the large-scale introduction of television in their homes. Although comparison of the memories of cinemagoing in the past with those of the present is not unproblematic as respondents reported to hardly go to the cinema anymore, it is still interesting to examine the responses in light of the underlying assumptions, prejudices and impressions gained during such (even though infrequent) visits. Aspects of the cinemagoing experience where the past-

present divide feature most prominently in the recollections, range from design of and service offered at the cinemas, audience behavior, how the films were advertised, and technology.

Service

One aspect where cinema memories are clearly shaped by a past-present distinction is the service provided at the cinema. Although service at the cinemas differed from cinema to cinema to some degree (particularly for center and neighborhood cinemas, as has been shown in Paragraph 6.3.1), the demarcation between past and present is very prominent. Respondents remembered cinemagoing in general as being a treat. RV (female, 1952), for example, remembered “when we used to go to the cinema, then it was a feast to go to the cinema. There was always someone walking around with ice lollies [laughs] and ice pralines and so on. [...] But even that we wouldn’t get, because going to the cinema itself was already a treat.” RV’s recollections touch upon the question of (a perception of) upward social mobility, a notion that is implied in the memories of many respondents, who recall that they were treated as kings and queens.¹²²⁹ There are many examples of shared memories of usherettes accompanying cinema patrons to their seats with torchlights, as the quotes in the previous paragraph have shown. Similarly, the recollections of porters wearing an “admiral costume” (RDW, male, 1939), awaiting cinemagoers at the entrance of the high-class cinemas, as well as the memories of snacks offered by staff walking around offering snacks, expose the enjoyment of elevated treatment.

However, there is also a sharp contrast in the recollections of snacks available at the cinema in the past when compared to the present. RDW (male, 1939), for example, recollected how “[t]he lights went out and then the little ladies came with a basket and they also had popsicles. [...] You could even stay in your seat. The only thing that was added later were iced pralines. Now it’s chips and popcorn. Now, when someone is munching popcorn behind you: that’s horrible. You constantly have that crunching and munching in your neck.” Other respondents drew a similar line between concessions in the past (mostly frisco, meaning popsicles, and iced pralines) and in the present (popcorn and chips). RA (male, 1930) recollected that “[d]uring the breaks they’d walk around with iced-pralines and Artico. Maybe there were some cookies in a little bag. But we still we’d still be able to see the screen. Now we have to look right and left of the can of popcorn to see the film.” Similarly, according to the far younger LR (female, 1952), “[t]he food is actually different. I think there is more

¹²²⁹ That the question of (perceptions of) social mobility in relation to cinemagoing and class is not an easy one to assess. In their article about the role of class in Dutch cinema history, for example, Thissen and van der Velden pointed to the distinction that needs to be made between the socio-cultural elite (represented by the established bourgeoisie) and the financial-economic middle class (the so-called *nouveau riche*): J. Thissen and A. van der Velden, “Klasse als factor in de Nederlandse filmgeschiedenis,” *Tijdschrift voor mediageschiedenis* 12, no. 1 (2009): 50-72.

noise now, from eating, from that popcorn and... that's right. And it makes the cinemas dirtier, I think sometimes. They do their best to clean it, but still it leaves a lot of traces."

What can be concluded from the examples provided above is that the past and present discourse related to the concessions bears strong judgmental connotations, where popcorn and chips are connected mostly with negative attributes, such as greasy, sticky and unhealthy, as RDW's (male, 1939) description of cinemas nowadays shows: "All of the cinema is covered with popcorn. In America, they are all swollen up because of it. I don't even like it. [...] They're sitting in the cinema there throwing with popcorn. I really wouldn't want to go to the cinema anymore." Also, it is particularly the multiplexes that are associated with concessions in negative ways. As GS (male, 1947) asserted: "I really don't like sitting in Kinopolis, between those popcorn-munching people. That's where they make the biggest profit: with popcorn and beverages, with candy and noise. It's more like that people who go to the cinemas there, that we have the impression that it's more like an event than. It's just not quiet there." RV's (female, 1952) disapproval of multiplexes like Metropolis is linked to the concessions in a similar way: "Well, I actually find that quite disturbing sometimes. That bag of chips that is being handed from one person to another [imitates the noise], I have a problem with that. And sometimes I also find the drinks disturbing, if all that is sticking to the floor, just like at the Metropolis. Sometimes you really get stuck with your shoes, when they spilled coke there. That's a pity." Inherent in these recollections clearly is the connection between the concessions and service provided at the cinemas and audience behavior.

Audience

Linked to eating and drinking behavior is a more general behavior that respondents highlighted when comparing past and present experiences of cinemagoing. Often the comparisons were shaped by strong personal opinions, as in the case of PD (male, 1947): "If there's something that I can't stand in a cinema, that it's the noise that people make, like now in Kinopolis and the like. Chips and all... I go to the movies for the movies and not for something else." In respondents' cinemagoing experiences, audience behavior in the present stands in sharp contrast to how audiences behaved in the past: "No, there was no noise in the cinema. People just didn't do that. That's how it went. People didn't do that. You went inside, very quietly." (EJ, male, 1936.) The opinion by MP (female, 1939) is even more outspoken:

Cinema used to be a real treat, a feast and especially how everything was arranged. Inside it was quiet, neat. But nowadays, we go to the cinema a lot, the halls are smelly, the seats are smelly, they are torn down. In my times, a cinema would still be as new after 30 years. Now, after five years it's a worn-down palace. [...] And I often complain. When I see that all those children, when they are two and a half, they all run across the cinema hall, across the stairs and aisles, that was different back then. And don't say that that this is impossible, it's about upbringing, right. And something else what you see nowadays and what I find very negative

is eating and drinking. I think eating is something you do at home and drinking is something you do at home. [...] And yes, a piece of candy is understandable. The difference now is that they enter with a giant box of popcorn. We even saw them throwing it at each other [...] They're lying with their feet on the back of the chairs.

The generation gap that colors these cinemagoing memories in general, and the sharp distinction between the good past and the bad present in particular, must certainly not be neglected. After all, *frisco* and ice cream are not necessarily healthier than popcorn and chips.

Neither can making out in the backrows of the cinema be considered positive behavior, which might even have been a more frequent phenomenon in the past than it is in the present, as the cinema was the perfect place for couples to escape from the watchful eye of parents and care takers. MM (female, 1924) for example, remembers the matinees for children, and the screenings from five to eight p.m. "for courting couples". Respondents particularly remember the backrows as the place for young couples, as the example of MD (male, 1922) shows: "Because, everywhere in the cinema there used to be an upper floor and upstairs there was the biggest noise. The couples were sitting in the last rows and they didn't care about the film." For some courting was even the key motivation for going to and selecting particular cinemas. RDW (male 1939), for example, remembered how he would sometimes prefer the Luxor above the Roma, because at the Roma there was more control and making out was not accepted there:

RDW, male, 1939: They'd allow more at the Luxor. And from Monday's onwards you'd live towards the moment on Sunday's that you could go to the film. Then we even went in between, just to see which films they played. All just because we were so busy with our Sunday love. [...] We preferred not to travel so much, because it was all still with public transport. To own a car was too expensive. But because you wanted to expand your territory a bit, wanted to meet new people, you went there. This all happened far before we started to go dancing at night. Before you started going out, the cinema was the place to be to meet some girls. [...] We'd choose the places where the pretty girls were. When we liked it we we'd go there again, if we didn't like it we went back to our familiar cinemas. But mostly this was in Borgerhout.

Clearly, cinemagoing was embedded in, and shaped, everyday life in different ways. Moreover, cinema was more than the act of cinemagoing, as it was firmly integrated in the local supply of leisure activities.

Warm and cozy cinemas versus cold boxes

When comparing cinemagoing experiences of the past with those in the present, particularly going to one of the multiplexes, the past-present divide becomes most pronounced. The lengthy and emotionally charged comparison by HA (male, 1942) illustrates this quite clearly:

The aim is, of course, the same. Bringing people together to watch a movie together. Whether that's in one cinema or in five different little ones doesn't actually matter. Whether

you go to three different cinemas at Astridplein with different names, it doesn't really matter either. It is only that people nowadays are confronted with the question: do I want to drive to that place, is it worth my time and will I have a good feeling, will it be pleasant? And that's what is bothering me, because I'm indeed used to the situation of how it was, to have a cinema in the liveliness of the city, with everything around it. And I don't mean Pizza Hut or a candy store, which is also associated with cinema today, but the whole surroundings. The lights at Astridplein, the neon lights, the different little cafes, the busy street life, the trams and so on. That is what was compelling and inspiring. You'd enter another street and it was completely different picture. [...] The hustle and bustle [in the Station Quarter] didn't stop. That went on, practically all night long. In the morning the cafés would close late, some remained open, like the sandwich bars. It was completely different. It was different everywhere. Now they form groups, but if you get out of your cocoon you're sitting in a residential area, or you're at the port, or you're sitting on a highway.

As this quote by HA shows, experiences of multiplexes were remembered in particularly negative ways, especially when they were contrasted with experiences of cinemagoing in the former single-screen palaces. While words used to describe cinemas in the past relate to warmth, coziness and sociability, today's cinemas were described as being cold and anonymous. RDW (male, 1939) remembered that "[g]oing to the cinema used to be sociable. You'd sit in a cozy cinema, in a big hall that was decorated. Now, you're sitting in a black box." According to NG (male, 1955) socialibility made way for anonymity: "You can buy your tickets at a machine now. There are hardly any social contacts anymore. If you'd go to the cinema twice a week before, you could have a chat with the person at the ticket counter. That person would also have a chat with all the rest." PD (female, 1953) even went as far as to compare the large multiplexes, like Metropolis, with airport fields: "Yes, I mean it like that. To line up to see a film and I don't like being there in the first place. [...] And also the parking and stuff. I find that horrible." The association of Metropolis with vastness and anonymity is also reflected in SVG's response (female, 1932): "Yes, first of all, I couldn't even find my way. I think it used to be more intimate, because there was only one auditorium. Now it's all just huge and it's not cozy anymore. Now, when you go to Metropolis, one goes there and the other one there and in the auditoriums the sphere is not what it used to be. You had contact with people you didn't really know. But now that's not possible anymore, because there are so many halls."

Several explanations for the strong dichotomy between perceptions of the cinemas in the past and multiplexes in the present are conceivable. One would be the nostalgic look that brightens the memories of the past. Another one is the comparatively bigger role that cinema played in respondents' lives. After all, cinema used to be firmly embedded in rituals of daily life and easily accessible (low threshold), certainly in comparison to other leisure activities, going to the cinema was sometimes the only affordable thing to do. A third explanation might be a difference in the perception of social interaction. As I have shown above, cinemagoing in the past was largely remembered as a social event, where people go to the movies with friends and relatives, talk to the

cashier and mingle with the crowd. As Hubbard suggested, based on his study of the appeal of the multiplex in Leicester (UK), multiplexes also offer a form of sociality, but this sociality is essentially “light” and is actually encouraged in their designs. Instead of a huge lobby, where customers could mingle and dwell while waiting for the film to start, the foyer of the multiplex is rather designed to sell concessions and merchandise. Hubbards spoke of a “sociofugal space” which promotes seclusion rather than social interaction, thereby promoting a more individualistic form of film consumption. Hence, the sociality at the multiplex is not passive, but largely visual, as customers maintain a degree of “social distance” from each other; they do not mingle.¹²³⁰

Technology

There is one exception to the positive and negative framing of cinemagoing in the past and the present, respectively. The corresponding responses all relate to aspects of technology. When being asked about positive points of cinemas today, respondents generally remark that the quality of image and sound has substantially improved (see, for example, MB, female, 1928; MD, male, 1922; JVE, female, 1941). However, not all respondents agreed, that greater screens automatically mean better viewing experiences. As RR (male, 1939) pointed out, for example: “And then those screens, they are so big. You just don’t know where to look anymore. We went to see *Titanic*, the movie. That is huge and all, but you don’t see the details anymore. If you see the back of the ship, you can’t see the front. And if you see the front, you don’t see the back anymore.” In addition, and quite remarkably, although the quality of sound was largely perceived as having improved, the volume was considered by all as being far too high (see, for example, AMP, female, 1946; JVE, female, 1941). Generally, the high volume was experienced as annoying and for some respondents, this was even mentioned as being one of the reasons for not going to the cinema any longer, as is illustrated by NG’s response (male, 1955): “I got outside with headaches. That was because of the sound. That was so loud that you almost hit the ceiling when something exploded in the film.” Feelings of being overwhelmed by the loud sound also figures in JC’s (JC, male, 1946) reaction, but he – other respondents did as well – also detested the sound in the auditorium itself: “And then we didn’t want to go anymore, because of all that crunchy noise from the bags of popcorn [...] And above all because of the high volume. We became crazy because of the sound, the volume that was offered in those cinemas. And we just don’t need that anymore.”

As a matter of fact, *noise* (“lawaaai”) was recurrently used by respondents when they were asked about more recent cinemagoing experiences. In addition to the examples provided above, the

¹²³⁰ Hubbard, “A Good Night out?”, 262.

following ones are even more vivid, because of the detailed descriptions of the respondents' reactions:

It was too noisy. We went to the cinema a couple of more times, but we couldn't hear anything. We had to sit like that [puts hands on his ears]. You might think that strange, because we don't hear well. But that sound was unbearable. [...] It's too loud, we became frightened of it. (MD, male, 1922)

Because there's too much noise from the stereo. I don't hear well, but I'm getting crazy because of the noise in the auditorium. I went to see a movie just recently [...] There were a lot of explosions of those men and then it was bang, time and again and you literally jump in your seat. (JC, male, 1928)

I don't like the noise in film. Nowadays you get blown away by it, by the noise. It way too loud, it's too spectacular. I don't like it. (PD, male, 1947)

Life is busy already and when you to see such a film, it's so busy that you get completely nuts. Loud noise and so bad that it hurts my ears and I don't understand a thing anymore, that heavy. [...] It's disturbing, it irritates me. Then I almost sit there with my fingers in my ears. You're being shaken up sometimes by the music so much that you forget to follow the story of the film. It irritates me, and my wife as well. (RR, male, 1939)

What is interesting here is that the very two aspects that respondents complain about (big screens and loud sound) were identified in van de Vijver's study of younger multiplex audiences (born in the 1990s) in Ghent as the added value of the cinemagoing experience, as they contribute to a feeling of immersion.¹²³¹ In contrast, according to the elderly respondents here, the higher volume and larger screens rather disturb the pleasure of watching a movie and for them it is even a reason for avoiding cinemas altogether nowadays. However, that is not to say that for the Antwerp respondents, immersion is not important at all, on the contrary. They did admit that they preferred watching a film in a cinema to watching a film on television, as is emphasized, for example by FDM (male, 1945): "I love watching films on tv and we're regularly watching films on tv. But I find that, in order to really experience a film, you have to go to the cinema. I'll never install a room with all that surround sound and stuff, even though we have enough space, just for the two of us to go to the cinema at home and watch the movie." This underlines van de Vijver's conclusion of the immersive effect as an valued part of the cinemagoing experience, albeit to a certain degree.

The distinction between past and present that is characteristic of the cinema memories, becomes especially manifest when respondents are asked, or tell about, Antwerp as *kinemastad* (cinema city).

¹²³¹ L. van de Vijver, "The Cinema is Dead, Long Live the Cinema!: Understanding the Social Experience of Cinemagoing Today," *Participations* 14, no. 1 (2017): 136.

Memories of Antwerpen Kinemastad

Antwerp is remembered as a cinema city of the past mostly in terms of supply of cinemas and films. Respondents tended to agree – irrespective of gender or age - that Antwerp used to be a true cinema city in the past, mostly for reasons of quantity: the abundance of cinemas and – connected to it - the great choice of films. When being asked whether Antwerp used to be a cinema city, the answers are largely affirmative. JS' response (male, 1926) is one several examples where the affirmative answer, that Antwerp was a true cinema city, was immediately followed by lively walks along memory lane, with detailed mental maps of places in the city where cinemas were located:

Antwerp *was* a cinema city. When you look at how many cinemas there were. I can't sum them all up. At De Keyserlei alone you had four cinemas already. The Rex, there across the street, yes a little further, was the Coliseum. And the Century, you know that right. [...] Where the mega store is now. Downstairs there was the cinema Century. [...] In the side street you had two next to each other. Across the street, at Appelmansstraat you had the Eden and the Empire. That were also the luxurious cinemas. At Offerendestraat you had the Festa. The Coperstraat, it might not tell you much, there were two cinemas as well. In the middle of a working class neighborhood, at Nationalstraat where the busses pass by, there you had two cinemas. At Kloosterstraat there also was a cinema, the Zuidpool, but that had a bad reputation.

The ubiquity of cinemas in the past – irrespective of respondents' age group at the time of the interview – where one would find a cinema on every street corner in every neighborhood, was also contrasted to the present situation, as the lengthy quote by HA (male, 1942) illustrates:

When I look back at the 1950s, 1960s and I see myself strolling through the center of Antwerp and I see there in all the streets leading to the De Keyserlei all those cinemas. The small cinemas and the big ones. When I come back to the center of Antwerp now, I cannot help but notice that there are only a few cinema left. Well actually not, because they were rebuilt or regrouped in some kind of shopping mall, in a new form that you didn't use to have there at De Keyserlei. But the little cinemas that I used to know, such as the Fest at Offerendestraat, the National at Lange Beeldekenstraat, at Carnotstraat, at Astridplein, they are all gone, right. Everywhere where I look when I walk through the streets, little is left of it.

In the perceptions of these respondents, the number of cinemas and films were the most important indicators of the health of local cinema culture. Such quantitative reasons are also the only ones that are given for why Antwerp could still be considered, or even more, a cinema city today. When being asked if he still considered Antwerp a cinema city today, FDM (male, 1945) replied: "Certainly with regard to the supply. You have three possibilities. You have the Metropolis, the UGC and the Cartoons. I think that this is sufficient in terms of supply." Other respondents also take capacity and attendance as the measure, like JC (male, 1928): "Yes, Metropolis, that's all small cinema halls and this used to be one cinema, one big cinema hall with a balcony and everything and it could accommodate three, four times as many people. There also weren't that many cinemas concentrated in one place, right." In RV's view (female, 1952) current attendance figures even exceed past ones:

“During the weekend it used to be much more crowded. But you can’t compare that with Metropolis now, on a Saturday, it’s overwhelming. I can’t remember it being like that in our days.”

As often as the new multiplexes as Metropolis or UGC are used in such quantifying arguments, as rarely are they used in arguments relating to the quality of cinemagoing or the film supply. Next to the quantity of cinemas and films respondents have particularly fond memories of Antwerp as *kinemastad*, because of its allure, the festivity caused by the neon lights of the cinemas and the presence of film stars attending the premieres of their films. Here, respondents’ memories are particularly vivid, which suggests a certain degree of exceptionality that Antwerp as a cinema city constituted for them personally:

I was nine years old then. And then Antwerp was a cinema city. I remember entering Antwerp, the station. And when you arrived by train you could see all those neon lights of many cinemas and that was impressive, of course. With all those neon lights, cause I came from a deep hole, a very dark hole [laughs], where there was nothing more than one cinema for the whole province, almost. (RR, male, 1939)

At that time, this was a real film city, where real premières took place. [...] And that was always at the De Keyserlei, with fanfares and things like that. It was also common that actors would come there for the premières. [...] The Rex concern would organize an avant-première or a première and the actors were, ... with a red carpet at De Keyserlei and all these things. [...] Lots of people. That was really impressive. [...] But that used to exist, apparently not anymore now. There used to be more budgets perhaps. But Antwerp was a real film city back then. As far as I know, it was one of the biggest film cities, with the most cinemas as well. (PB, male, 1954)

However, it was also due to the location of many different cinemas, spread across the city, that made Antwerp a true cinema city in respondents’ memories. Not only the cinemas themselves, but also their omnipresence in the streets, were referred to in terms of *gezelligheid* and coziness, and contrasted to the soulless character of the new cinema complexes, as is illustrated by, for example, PB, male, 1954: “ Now it’s two companies in which the cinemas are concentrated, whereas there used to be many small cinemas. That was much more social. [...] I don’t think it’s enriching. I think that with regard to, well, what we used to mean as a film city. I think that has now expanded to an industrial park.”

The fact that respondents often contrast the huge variety of cinemas in the past as opposed to the two big companies controlling the market now, is remarkable, as it suggests that they were hardly aware of Heylen’s power on Antwerp’s cinema market in the past. Memories of Heylen and his cinema group, however, point in a slightly different direction.

6.3.3. Remembering Heylen and his cinemas

Memories of Heylen analyzed here, relate to recollections where Heylen was explicitly mentioned (with name and/or on behalf of his cinema group), as well as implicitly (cinemas belonging to his group or events and initiatives by him which are known based on research findings presented in Chapters 3 and 4, even though respondents did not remember him nor his enterprise directly). Three aspects relating to Heylen and his cinema group that figure prominently in the recollections are linked to his power, particular events or initiatives, and his flagship cinema Rex.

Power

The recollections of Heylen and his cinema group are shaped, on the one hand, by a more general awareness that a number of cinemas largely in the city center belonged to one person or a group. FDM (male, 1922), for example, remembers that “all films in the cinemas around De Keyserlei were all of the same owner. At Astridplein there were a few more cinemas and the Rubens, for example, was not part of it.” Other respondents do remember certain cinemas as belonging to Heylen (as “Baron Heylen”, like RA, male, 1930) or to “Mr Heylen” and his “concern” (JV, male, 1929).

On the other hand, a few respondents also link this accumulation of cinemas to the power Heylen obtained over the years. Similar to RA (male, 1930), yet in much more detail, HA (male, 1942) even explains the power relations in Antwerp’s exhibition market and Heylen’s role herein from a film-economic perspective:

I think that there were two film groups in Antwerp: the Rex concern of baron uhm.. [Heylen] and then the independent art houses, so more the neighborhood art houses. [...] It is to say, the Rex concern had the most resources and therefore the most rights to bring the most recent films to the cinemas. The private investors, because there were also people who had only one cinema, they had to wait until the film had been played there, before they might have a chance to play it in their cinema. That’s why they always had different films. You have A-films and you have B-films, right? [...] The neighborhood cinemas had to be satisfied with what they could buy from the distributors of the film companies. They were in Brussels, the distributors. So that was also a matter of money. In an ordinary cinema you couldn’t afford to bring in a brand new, recently released film, so that was a difference as well.

JV (male, 1929), frequent moviegoer, himself neither family nor good acquaintance of Heylen, also explains the power relations in quite some detail:

And that was mostly in the bigger cinemas around the station, because they, and that’s where the story of Mr Heylen plays a part, had the best films. Mr Heylen had silently acquired all those cinemas and then he’d put the distributors under pressure, because he was a good customer, to give the B-films to the neighborhood cinemas at the outskirts of Antwerp, so that they would have less visitors and so he could buy them out for little to nothing. That’s how he bought them all. Some, who turned out not be profitable enough, he closed. There were a number that wouldn’t surrender and they remained in existence.

JV's description of the way Heylen lead his business, partly reflects Heylen's exhibition practices examined in Chapter 4. It also points to signs that foreshadowed Heylen's conflict with the American major distributors in the late 1960s, early seventies (see Chapter 4). Whether or not the knowledge and memories of respondents like HA and JV resulted from press coverage or was based on insiders from Antwerp's exhibition market is unclear. In any case, the degree to which these respondents were informed about what was happening in Antwerp's exhibition market points to a strong interest and emotional involvement in the local cinema culture.

Events

Although the distribution conflict between Heylen and the American majors had a substantial impact on the film supply in Antwerp cinemas and hence on the films the respondents could see, they hardly remember it, even when being asked specifically about it. Those of the respondents that do remember the conflict mostly refer to it as the moment when there were no American films in Antwerp cinemas. GS (male, 1947), for example, remembered that there "was a problem here as well that the Rex concern could get only few American films, but actually, I thought the American films were too superficial." Similarly, PD (male, 1947) responded affirmatively, when being asked about memories of the conflict: "I still remember that. 1971, the difficulties... with Heylen and the American distributors. That was big news in Antwerp. And the founding of the Rex empire, that couldn't play American films anymore."

Other events that respondents were explicitly asked about when they did not remember them spontaneously, were the festive premieres of the films with the stars being present. However, when asked about the presence of film stars in Antwerp, respondents largely reacted rather indifferent and less enthusiastic than one would expect of events of such an allure. HA (male, 1942), for example, stated that he only went there because his mother wanted to attend these events, and because at that time, he worked as a trainee at restaurant of the Century Hotel, located on the De Keyserlei:

I was indeed a spectator of those famous premières. Why? Because it was announced and also mainly because my mother was highly interested in attending the premiere of the film when the Hollywood stars were present. It was usually around eight or nine o' clock, that the lights would start flickering at De Keyserlei – it was mostly at De Keyserlei, the Rex or the Metro – where the premieres took place and then it did happen that we tried to catch a glimpse of the stars amidst the hundreds of spectators. Whoever that was, because I often didn't know. No, [I didn't go there for a particular star], my mother probably decided on that. For example, Nathalie Wood, Gregory Peck, Rock Hudson, Errol Flynn and so on. I met [...] Fernandel and Ava Gardner, but that was in '58 when they stayed here at the Century Hotel. [...] I had the advantage of doing a traineeship at the Century Hotel, at the restaurant Les Ambassadeurs. And I was allowed to serve dinner and that gave me the opportunity to say "good evening" and "enjoy your meal" in the languages of those personalities, right. Usually, they were very friendly, but of course, they wouldn't look up to the staff. They usually sat in

good company and were having chats and laughs and so on. But in this way, I can still say that I stood next to one or I held his/her napkin, by way of speaking.

Similarly, PB (male, 1954), although recollecting the overall allure of these events, gave the impression that he mainly went, because his parents would receive free tickets for the premieres: “At that time, it was very festive. At that time this was a real film city, with real premieres taking place. My parents knew someone who worked at the Rex concern and we frequently got free tickets to go the premieres. [...] I remember seeing Roger More very well. [...] Tony Curtis, euhm Catherine Deneuve, Simone Signoret.” Other respondents, like JS (male, 1926), even claimed to have not attended these events at all, at least not on purpose:

No [I didn't go there]. But I was almost involved in an accident twice because of a film star [laughs]. I was done working and I had stopped earlier, because I needed to do some groceries. I cross the De Keyserlei and the Century Hotel, which was still a hotel then. And someone leaves the building wearing a fur cloak and she bumps – boing – into me. Later I heard it was Jayne Mansfield. A very famous film star. The same happened at the Groenplaats. Who was she again? A very famous film star? We had to stop because she had to leave the building. [...] And all the press was there. And she left the building and I was standing right there and she pushed me aside to get into the car. [Everything was closed because of the film stars.] Of course, and people had to wait and the police was there and so on. [...] But we never went there when they'd say that a person would introduce his/her film. That's not how it went.

Similar to JS, MM (female, 1924) connected her self-claimed disinterest in seeing the stars to an anecdote of a meeting with a Hollywood star:

No [I never went to see the stars there], but I crashed into one once. The one who played Bonanza. Cartwright, right. And then Gregory Peck. We once bumped into him. [...] And that was a handsome man, that Gregory Peck. And he blushed! He had a color that I had never seen on a men's face before. That Ben Cartwright also had such a color. That must be the color of Hollywood. And we bumped right into him. Because my mother couldn't say Gregory. And she said something like: “the comes..., there ... there is Gregoro,” she said. I said: “Gregoro, who's that?” And then I saw him standing there. Then we left the cinema at the back. And then we could see him well. [But I never went there for the Hollywood stars]. No. I was not interested in that.

Such memories of the stars' presence in Antwerp are vivid and detailed (as in the case of JS and MM) when it comes to actual meetings with the stars, but they are general when it comes to the overall impact of the events. Formulations as “there were a lot of people” can be interpreted as a way of detachment from the world of the stars, and that respondents did not count themselves as part of these masses. This was also made explicit in several accounts, for example, by MD (male, 1922), when he was asked if he went to see film stars: “No, certainly not me. They were strange anyway. They all had to come from America. There were no others. Around the station there was lots of people, but it didn't interest me that much.”

Similarly, FJR (male, 1916) was not very much interested in attending, but remembers that people massively did, thereby distancing herself from these masses: “Yes, that happened sometimes. I saw that once in a while. The stars were then driven around. And then I would see one or the other. They stayed at expensive hotels at the De Keyserlei and the Meir. And they would be driven to various big cinemas. Lots of people came to see them.”

The relative detachment and the recounted indifference – whether authentic or staged – of many respondents with regard to such exclusive events where they were offered the possibility of meeting the stars in person not only points to a certain degree of self-effacement and/or modesty, but – on a discursive level – it underlines the interconnectedness between individual and collective memories. Further research (including the other 103 interviews and focusing more specifically) would be required to look for patterns in this connection and examine the underlying principles.

Cinema Rex

A last recurring aspect in cinemagoing memories related to Heylen, connects to his flagship cinema Rex. Next to the Cineac (see above), the Rex surfaces frequently in the cinema memories and it does so in two ways. The first way is in connection to the bombing on 16 December 1944 (see the Introduction and Chapter 3.3.1 for details), when the Rex was hit by a V2 missile and was completely destroyed. Some of the memories are rich in detail, as the example of AL (male, 1926) shows:

That one time... when the war was over, the flying bombs were here in Antwerp, de V1 and V2. And I was with the Red Cross, as paramedic. And I was there when a V2 hit cinema Rex. There were 700 dead. And I worked day and night to rescue people from the debris. And I saved a five-year old child there, put it on my lap and gave it back to her mother who was waiting outside, screaming. And for the rest, all cinemas were empty, because of the flying bombs. Because there were so many casualties they'd decided, that was Mr Heylen, the big boss of cinema Rex, that they'd close all other cinemas, because it was too dangerous. Because too many people could get killed or so. That is my first horrific memory, from 1944.

JC (male, 1926) also remembered the Rex and vividly retold what happened on the cinema's black letter day:

By the way, did I already say something about the big cinema Rex and Metro, behind the corner? And the Rex had a thing. They were the owners of it. They were just meeting with the board of managers when the bomb hit the Rex. And they managed to pick him from the trees. Georges Heylen. He had a broken spine and his rib cage was all shook up. He fortunately survived that.

It is not clear, to which extent these recollections are based on living memory and on stories respondents have heard and read about it in the course of the second half of the twentieth century. The anecdotal character of AL's relay suggests at least that he might have actually witnessed it firsthand; his descriptions also echo those of the many other eye witnesses – cinemagoers, by

passers, soldiers, paramedics – in many ways.¹²³² However, what is more important here, is less the question of veracity of the memories and rather the ways in which respondents share these events. The personal character that this dramatic event acquired for some respondents, by linking it to their own private lives and that of relatives and acquaintances (including RDW, male, 1939, whose uncle in law lost his life in the bombing), is mixed with dramatized recounts (“picked him from the trees”) of other respondents, suggesting that with shocking events as the bombing of the Rex (and the Scala) the interdependency of individual and collective memories is particularly strong.

The second way the Rex is being remembered by the respondents is for being (one of) the most beautiful cinema(s) offering the best films and highest comfort. The recollections range from general and detached memories of the Rex as one of the best cinemas in Antwerp (see, for example, RA, male, 1930 and EJ, male, 1936). Frequently, respondents remembered the Rex as what was once their favorite cinema, as was the case for MM (female, 1924) and for AL (male, 1926) who lived in Zurenborg (about 2 km from the Rex) but would “always [go] to the same cinema, the Rex”, because of its “special” and “beautiful films”. Other respondents went to greater lengths in explaining the grandeur of the Rex: its luxurious curtain that opened slowly (FDM, male, 1945), “special kind of carpet on the floor” (JV, male, 1929), its “colossal auditorium with a hall and little shops” (AL, male, 1926), but also the many people who would “stand in line during the winter, til behind the corner, in the freezing cold” (JC, male, 1926).

No other cinema was remembered by the respondents for its grandeur and style as much as the Rex. Heylen’s flagship cinema, the one with which he started his career as a cinema entrepreneur and after which his enterprise became publicly known, is deeply engraved in respondents’ memories as being exceptional in its lavishness and grandeur, as well as the best and latest films that were shown there.

6.4. Films. Memories of films and film choice

This final paragraph focuses on the cinema memories related to the films themselves. The overarching question to be examined is how engagements with the films are remembered by the respondents. Three prominent aspects figuring in respondents’ recollections relate to their own preferences and traits, characteristics inherent to films themselves, and perceptions of change.

¹²³² See Serrien, *Elke dag angst*, 274-296.

6.4.1. Respondents' traits

The first aspect according to which the recollections can be examined relates to personal choices based on respondents' traits and personal motivations for watching a film in a cinema. Here, the focus will lie on age, gender and personal interests, as they are least problematic to define and localize in the recollections.¹²³³ The impact of religious and political convictions on cinemagoing experiences has been analyzed in depth elsewhere and is therefore not included in this paragraph.¹²³⁴

First cinemagoing memories

As addressed in Chapter 6.2, many recollections of first memories of going to a cinema center around the cinema Cineac, the cinema that was remembered favorably for its child-friendly programming, consisting mainly of newsreels and animated films. When asked about his first cinemagoing memory, FDM (male, 1945), for example, answered: "And I don't know whether that was my first film, but I remember two things. That was an animated film. It was about Peter Pan. And a newsreel about the wedding of the Grand Dukes of Luxemburg, I think." Also AV (female, 1952) remembered that her first cinema experience "was an animated film. I guess it was *Snow White*, or *Bambi*, one of the two. I was still young. I think was about five or six years old when I went to the cinema with my parents."

The importance of especially Disney films in respondents' first cinema memories has been examined by Lies van de Vijver in her examination of the exploitation and experiences of Disney's animated feature films from the 1930s to the 1980s in Ghent, where respondents remembered the films as something extra-ordinary and consumed on special occasions, as in the case of AV's quote above.¹²³⁵ In addition, similarly to van de Vijver's findings, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937, USA) and *Bambi* (1942, USA; remembered, for example, by AMP, female, 1946 and RDW, male, 1939) was also mentioned most often by Antwerp respondents, followed by *Cinderella* (1950, USA; for example, PB, male, 1954) and *Pinocchio* (1940, USA; for example, RV, female, 1952).¹²³⁶ Next to the

¹²³³ Another aspect to look at would be, for example, social status. This category, however, has not been assessed sufficiently in respondents' profiles yet in order to analyze and draw informed conclusions. One possibility to investigate this in more detail at a later moment would be to establish short portraits for each respondent, including, amongst others, general background information about the respondent as well as modalities of communication. See Genneri Trevari and Dibeltulo for more details on the use of portraits as an analytical tool (Trevari Genneri and Dibeltulo, "It Existed Indeed"). For a historiographical overview of film scholarly work on the question of cinemagoing in relation to class, see for example, Thissen and van der Velden, "Klasse," 51-53.

¹²³⁴ See Biltereyst et al., "Negotiating," 186-201. NB: This study included oral testimonies from respondents from Antwerp as well as from Ghent.

¹²³⁵ L. van de Vijver, "Going to the Exclusive Show: Exhibition Strategies and Moviegoing Memories of Disney's Animated Feature Films in Ghent (1937-1982)," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 19, no. 4 (2016): 403-418.

¹²³⁶ In order to assess the (remembered) importance of particular films, names of actors and directors in the cinemagoing memories of Antwerp respondents an inventory was created (see Appendix II-8) of titles and names that were remembered spontaneously. Some interviewees displayed historical material (newspaper clippings, advertisements etc.) and/or lists

perceived eventfulness of these films, the fact that particularly titles of Disney features were remembered most often can also be explained by their canonical status and/or accessibility via other media channels. As repeated consumption might shape the remembered importance of such films, remembering these films points to an instance where individual and collective memories converge.

This becomes especially clear in recollections of particular scenes. LV (female, 1930), for example recollected the impact *Snow White* had on her when she was a child and compared that to the way her granddaughter watched the film:

Those children's films, they were always to scream about. Just like *Bambi* and *Snow White*. Someone always died. So I bought that VHS of *Snow White* and we went to babysit our granddaughter. And when the witch appeared up on the mountain, I fast-forwarded the film and said that I had to use the bathroom, because I thought she was still too little. And that she would be scared. When my daughter came home with my son in law, I told them that I'd fast-forwarded a part of the film and she said that the little one had already seen the film. [...] And she found that very normal.

Similarly, RV (female, 1952) contextualized her viewing experience of *Pinocchio*:

I still remember when I was about thirteen, that I went to see *Pinocchio* [with my little brother]. In cinema Monty. And he would start screaming so much when *Pinocchio* died... [laughs]. I still remember that, but for the rest...

Such "situated memories of films" constitute a relatively common type of cinema memory, as identified by Kuhn based on her oral history study of cinemagoing in the UK in the 1930. They occur more often than "remembered scenes/images" (another type identified by Kuhn) and are often mediated and mixed with recollections from films and other media productions.¹²³⁷

When being asked about their first cinemagoing memories, respondents often recalled with whom they went. LV (female, 1930), for example, remembered her first visit to the cinema which happened when she was "about eight", that she was accompanied by her aunt and that it was "a film with Shirley Temple". RA (male, 1930) remembered that he was "seven, eight, nine years old, about that time. And then I'm speaking about my father who would go with me, holding hands with my father when I did that." Like RA, AL (male, 1926) remembered that one of his first cinema experience must have been with his father:

I think that was before the war, before the Second World War. I think that was at the cinema at the De Keyserlei. I used to go to the cinema there on Sundays, with my father. At the De Keyserlei, I can't think of the name right now. Where you have the Century Center today. And it was called cinema.... I forgot. That was my first film and that were films about animals,

containing films titles and names to trigger respondents' memories. Titles and names that were mainly repeated by respondents, based on these lists, and were thus not remembered spontaneously, are not included in this inventory. Besides, a number of film titles and names have not been identified. They are indicated accordingly in the table. As observed in earlier research, titles and names of actors are not always remembered (correctly) by respondents (see, for example, Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*; Treveri Gennari and Dibeltulo, "It Existed Indeed"; Van de Vijver, "The Cinema is Dead"). At the same time, this implies a relative importance of those titles and names that are remembered by respondents.

¹²³⁷ Kuhn, "What to do with Cinema Memory?", 90-92.

films about nature. And that lasted one and a half hours, from half past ten to twelve and then I went back home.

Equally detailed were the memories of the first cinema experience of MC (female, 1921):

My first film, I still remember that well, my sister was still alive and I was only nine years old. Nine years when she died. And the first film was in Kiel, at our cinema Conscience, a little, tiny cinema. And that was not far from the church. And my sister said to me: let's go see a movie. And I was allowed to go with her and so I went. And the first film that we saw was a war film and I was so scared that I sat under the bench [laughs] and my sister said: you can't go with me anymore.

As the quotes above show, recollections of the first cinemagoing experiences are often linked to the company, often members of the family, relatives or friends. The importance of friends and relatives in respondents' first cinemagoing memories can be explained by Halbwachs' claim that memory is shaped by social structures and individual memories are always socially framed.¹²³⁸ According to Erll, "[f]amily members are the people who usually constitute the first, and often most important, social frameworks for a child. And family life is arguably one of the main sites where sociocultural schemata are acquired.¹²³⁹ The relative prominence of family members, as parents, siblings or close relatives, figure in first cinemagoing memories could thus be interpreted as the consequences of social habits within the nucleus of the family that shaped these memories and/or of family memories shared with members of that community.

A certain profiling of the cinemas in relation to the age of audiences becomes especially distinct in recollections where respondents compare a film-based choice for certain cinemas later in their lives (see, for example AMP, female, 1946, and AL male, 1926). While cinemas of childhood were remembered for showing animation, documentaries, westerns, musicals, and comedies, center cinemas were so for more risqué films (see also paragraph 6.3), admitted only for persons of the minimum age of sixteen.

Gender (and genre)

Film preference in respondents' memories is clearly gendered, especially with regard to film genre, which was (next to film content) also the most important criterium when choosing a film.¹²⁴⁰ When being asked whether there was a difference in generic preference between men and women, respondents answered affirmative, usually explaining the differences to the interviewers: men preferred western ("cowboy films"), historical and more particular war films and (violent) action

¹²³⁸ A. Erll, "Locating Family in Cultural Memory Studies," *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42, no. 3 (2011): 304-305.

¹²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹²⁴⁰ It is important to note here that genres cannot be clearly defined nor are they historically and culturally stable. See R. Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999).

films, whereas women preferred romantic dramas. MM (female, 1920), for example, stated that “[m]en preferred to see war films and so on and women rather watched dramas and things like that,” and MB (female, 1928) responded that “war films, we didn’t go to see that. That was for the boys, I guess.” JC (male, 1928) clearly preferred “cowboy films and gangster films, but no love films” and GDS (male, 1926) was rather clear about choosing films:

Then we became interested more in cowboy films. Well interested, that was compelling! It was a different experience, a different world. Because love dramas just didn’t interest us at all. [...] Then you had to take into account the preferences of the partner that you went with. They have something to say as well, right. Then I wouldn’t go to a horror film anymore, because that wouldn’t work. I think there is [a difference in generic preferences between women and men]. Those love affairs, they would be more interesting for women than for us, I think.

Notably, men’s preference for “violent films”, is exclusively established in the recollections of female respondents and usually mentioned in contrast to their own preferences for lighter entertainment. The testimonies of EN (female, 1919) and AV (female, 1952), respectively, are only two of many: “The majority was boys, but seeing a violent film... no, that was nothing for us. Then the girls would be categorically against that. ‘No, just go see that movie, then we go to that on.’ Like that.” AV: “Yes, there were [differences between preferences of men and women]. I’d rather choose for light entertainment and for men, it often had to contain violence and I didn’t like that.” Similarly, women’s preference for “tear jerkers” is mentioned more often by male than female respondents, whether explicitly or by expressing it in a more roundabout way, for example by referring to the use of handkerchiefs or the “red eyes”. JS (male, 1926), for example, explained: “But let’s say, love dramas, love films that was less for me, but for the women it was much more interesting, of course. And with a handkerchief, right.” In a similar vein, JC (male, 1926) remembered:

And I had an older sister, six years older. She went to the cinema alone. I wouldn’t go with her then, because that were films that weren’t really suitable for me. Those tearjerkers. Because with every film she had to... when she came outside, she had such red eyes! That had touched her, right. She had to cry. Those romantic tearjerkers. I just wouldn’t go then. [...] That was for the girls. That was not my thing. [...] Yes, I do have to make a distinction there. For boys it had to be action. Cowboy films and so on. Lots of shooting and horse riding and stuff. But later, later more historical things.

Similar findings were presented by Dibeltulo in her study of how 1950s Italian cinema-goers remembered their engagement with film genres. By drawing on Judith Butler’s conceptualization of gender identity and behavior as a socially-constructed performance, Dibeltulo suggested normative forces as underlying principles of this opposition.¹²⁴¹ In the case of the quotes provided above, rather

¹²⁴¹ S. Dibeltulo, “Genre and Audiences’ Engagement: Analyzing memories of 1950s Italian cinema-goers,” paper presented at the HoMER conference, Amsterdam, June 27-29, 2018. The results presented in this paper will be integrated with other material and published as chapter with as (working) title “Audiences and Film Genre: A Case Study of Cinema-going in 1950s Italy,” in *Italian Cinema Audiences: Histories and Memories of Cinema-going in Post-war Italy*, edited by D. Treveri Gennari, D. Hipkins, C. O’Rawe, S. Dibeltulo and S. Culhane (forthcoming).

than the family, the group of friends with whom respondents frequented the cinemas during adolescence and later stages in life, appears to shape generic preferences. This gendered genre preference, often formed through gendered group experiences of cinemagoing of Antwerp respondents is most prominent for typically male-oriented action films and female-oriented romantic films and less so for comedies.

This normative aspect of genre preference is underlined by the observation that the clearly polarized gendered preference figures mostly when respondents talk about peoples' film choices in general. Respondents' use of the first- or third-person plural suggest a certain distance to what is remembered. Recollections expressed in the first-person singular are far less gendered and much more nuanced. Here, female respondents admit to love horror films and thrillers, or vampire films in MM's (female, 1924) case:

Yes, you know, I love to go to those films with those things in it... well what's that called again? His teeth come out like this and his eyes. And then I'd sit in the cinema like ... [covers her eyes with her hands]. Is he gone, is he gone? And yet I always went to see it and then I didn't dare to look. [...] Yes, a vampire, yes. [...] I was bewitched to go see that and he'd say: do you have to go to see that vampire again? [...] My husband had to laugh a lot about that. He'd used to say: "She went to see that vampire films again."

While male respondents attest of liking musicals and romantic comedies. RA (male, 1930), for example, recollected: "For me it had to be musical films with a bit of humor. That's what I preferred." JV (male, 1929): "And you see all those... [violent films]. That's nothing for me. Just give me a romantic film, but well, that's the age, right."

In addition, first person accounts of remembered film choice are more nuanced, as in the case of MD (male, 1922) who expressed a clear preference for the typically female-oriented musicals *and* gangster films: "The show films were the best. With a singer or something like that. That was the most beautiful. Or Ester Williams, she could swim! That were water shows. But it's all show, right. [...] [And I liked] the cowboy films, in the beginning, and gangster films. Well, honest gangster films, where the blood wouldn't drip from the walls. That was boom and then dead."

Similarly, while erotic films are typically considered male-oriented (see also Paragraph 6.4.3), the following recollection of one female respondent suggests incidents of more subversive generic preferences. SVG (female, 1932) recollected how after been brought up under strict catholic supervision, she caught up after turning eighteen and experimented with new forms of cultural practices, including going to the infamous cinemas that were known for showing more risqué material:

Yes, like that. Then I started to go to the movies and you'd think: Is that all? Yes, before I also went sporadically, but never during boarding school. And then I wanted to take advantage of it. [...] Yes, then I would go to see glamour films, but also films that were actually not allowed, to revolt a bit, to say: "I actually would like to see that". Yes [that were sex films], but not the real sex films, like you have now. [...] At Astridplein, there was one [sex cinema], at the De

Keyserlei there was a really tiny one that existed there for a long time. Well, I didn't go that many times, maybe two or three times. Just to know what it was. [I went there] with my girlfriends. We thought that was fun. No, [there were hardly any women], almost exclusively men. [...] Yes, [it was quite controversial] and we found it exciting, like "Oh, let's go there". And then we even didn't know what was playing. But it was for the idea to go to that cinema, because we knew that it wasn't allowed.

Apart from an apparent transgression of normative gendered film preference (and the impact of religion and/or ideological convictions), SVG's testimony also points to the need of examining another set of factors determining film choice: personal interests and motivations for film consumption.

Personal interests and motivations for film consumption

One of the more general, yet personal motivations for choosing to go to the cinema can be linked to the notion of escapism: of physically and mentally entering a "world in the cinema" – to borrow one of the two categories of cinema memory Kuhn distinguishes.¹²⁴² Kuhn referred to the term of "heterotopia", coined by Michel Foucault to describe "a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable".¹²⁴³ The wish to escape from reality was expressed most explicitly by GS (male, 1947): "Yes, I was fascinated by it, because you really stepped out of reality. Because you didn't really have to deal with reality, because you saw different things. It was mostly the feeling of being sucked into another world. I found that fantastic."

Linked to the wish to escape is the notion of going to the movies because "there was nothing else to do", as expressed by, for example, MM, female, 1924; JS, male, 1926; or JC, male, 1928:

Yes, like I said, people would go to the movies, because there was nothing else and therefore films stood in the first place. Because except for the film people had company at home, playing cards with relatives and things like that. But when there was a good movie, then the whole family would go and see it. There wasn't anything else back then. Now they're all sitting in front of the tv.

The lack of alternative leisure activities is largely expressed by older respondents, who had their height of moviegoing in the 1930s and 1940s and thus before the 1950s brought increased wealth, changed the offer and diversity of recreational activities and before television settled massively in households. According to Allen, going to the movies after the classical studio system period was characterized by going to see a film rather than going to the movies.¹²⁴⁴

¹²⁴² Next to "world in the cinema" the second category Kuhn identified is "cinema in the world", referring to the role of cinema in respondents' lives (Kuhn, "Heterotopia, Heterochronia," 107-109).

¹²⁴³ Foucault cited in Kuhn, "Heterotopia, Heterochronia," 109.

¹²⁴⁴ Allen, "Relocating," 57-58.

One of the cinemas that served escapist desires best, was the Rubens. The Rubens stands out in respondents' recollections for its special programming. On the one hand, the Rubens was remembered by many as a premiere cinema, as the response by AV (female, 1952) shows:

You had, for example, really spectacular films that I'd prefer seeing on a big screen and where also a lot of people went to see it, then I'd go to the Rubens. And when I went for the second, third, fourth or fifth time, I went to the Palace in Berchem. So seeing a film like, for example, *Spartacus*, *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben-Hur* for the first time, I saw all those at the Rubens first and later, when I thought it was a good movie I went to see it again in Berchem.

On the other hand, the Rubens was also remembered particularly well for screening the most spectacular films (see, for example, PD, male, 1947; RR, male, 1939).

Many respondents remembered the Rubens especially well for its largely epic (biblical) dramas, including *The Ten Commandments* (1956, USA) and *Ben-Hur* (1959, USA). These films were produced in a period when Hollywood took drastic measures in film production and exhibition to arrest the ongoing decline of its studio system in the face of the broad-scale introduction of television in households. Technological innovations, including short-lived experiments with 3D vision and the adding of odors to films, but also improved color techniques and widescreen formats had to convince audiences of the advantages of watching films in a cinema. Films as *The Ten Commandments* and *Ben-Hur* had to promote the appeal of widescreen.¹²⁴⁵ Some respondents actually remember that the Rubens was equipped with a different projector that was particularly suited for wide-screen formats:

Once, I went to the Rubens and maybe a few more times, but that was with *Windjammer*. That was the very first film on such a semi-circular screen and three different screens that were always shaking, like this. That was the first spectacular wide screen. Three screens in one, next to each other. That was shaking a bit, but well. And that was *Windjammer*. About a boat. And then I went to the Rubens, because they had the installation there, because they had it rebuilt there for that spectacle. So I actually went to see the installation. The story didn't interest me. It was all for the spectacle. [...] They'd play *Ben-Hur* then. That was also such a spectacle. (GS, male, 1947)

And if you talk about the Rubens, we have to dive into technology, because at one point you had Cinemascope. Cinemascope was a compressed image [...]. But spread out in its breadth, because you had a sharper image that way, and so on. The material improved. And then you'd have Cinemascope and you had those three projectors, on the left in the middle, on the right. What else? You had two seams which you'd look for, but that was also a screen of 110 degrees, if I remember correctly. And then you had that [unintelligible] across the whole thing. With spherical projection. That thing went all the way round. Yes [that was also in the Rubens]. And you needed a special projector. And you also had Vista Vision. That was the affaire *Windjammer*. And *Windjammer* was a boat. And there, on screen, it seemed as if you were sitting on that boat, with a wall above. Because you had such a large field of vision, that gave a greater interest. Then you could actually feel that you were sitting on a chair, but you were in there. (JC, male, 1926)

¹²⁴⁵ Thompson and Bordwell, *Film History*, 328-332.

As Heylen's long-term projectionist Corluy recollected in an interview, the Rubens was indeed the only cinema in Antwerp that was equipped with a widescreen system suitable for the screening of 70-mm films.¹²⁴⁶

With regard to personal motivations for choosing particular films, next to escapism education was surprisingly often mentioned by respondents. This was especially the case with "historical films", often biblical or linked to great battles. AV (female, 1952), for example, stated that although film was "a bit of entertainment" for her, she

actually learned the most from those biblical stories. *The Ten Commandments* and those religious films appealed to me most, because I am very religious. And it helped me to understand the bible and who Jesus was and who Moses and who Abraham. So the biblical text. But instead of reading it in the bible you also saw it filmed and I loved that, those religious stories. Like *Jesus Christ Superstar*, that is also a film that I went to see several times. So I actually got a lot out of that, from religious films. With regard to other films, it was more entertainment. [...] There were also films about blacks, for example, the negroes, the slaves. On that boat and so on. That is also a film that moved me a lot. Slave trade and things like these. [...] I mainly liked films where I could learn something.

Also JC (male, 1926) recollected to become increasingly interested in historical films:

The Robe was Cinemascope. The robe was the dress of Jesus. A whole story was based on that. And then *Spartacus*... about that slave rebellion. And things like that. So that were action films. And that was always good. The more the better. But also other things. *Henry VIII*, did you see that? Yes Henry VIII, Henry IV! Henry IV! That was a Shakespeare drama, that was constructed as a historical play, at the time of Shakespeare. Those medieval things. (JC, male, 1926)

However, it was not only the more distant past that shaped film preferences. The prominence of Cineac in respondents' recollection (see above) can also be linked to frequently reported preferences for newsreels. Next to the newsreels screened at Cineac, respondents recollected screenings of the AKA (see Chapter 4.5.3) before the main feature was shown in the regular cinemas. Respondents especially appreciated the information value of these newsreels, as becomes clear in another recollection of AV quoted above, for example: "The news reports from all over the world, they were always interesting. That was very interesting information. I still remember a film from the Expo, and what else was there... [pause]? Many events in Belgium, but I think we'd also receive information from other countries. [...] I found that very interesting, because that way you still got a bit of information." For HA (male, 1942) the newsreels were sometimes even the main reason to go to the cinema:

So the cinema was actually also informative, interesting, because they also played the news, the Belgavox news, news from all over the world. I'll give you an example. Something happened in Congo, in Kinshasa. King Boudewijn was visiting. Yes, unless you saw the film,

¹²⁴⁶ Corluy, personal interview June 25, 2008.

you wouldn't see it anywhere, right. That was always just some days later then it was published in the papers. And there was no tv yet. So the news at the cinema was really hot from the press. Every week there was follow up on it. If a war broke out in Ethiopia or other countries, or if there were natural disasters, you'd see them one or two weeks later in the news and that was an important source of information.

The level of detail in HA's and other respondents' memories of both, plots of historical films as well as news items points to the multiple function of cinema in people's lives in times that television was not yet an integral of every household: not only as places for distraction and escapism, but also for being informed about current affairs. On a more general level, the previous quotes have shown that the personal interests that shaped respondents' film preferences are closely linked to a number of characteristics which are intrinsic to the films themselves.

6.4.2. Film-intrinsic characteristics

The previous subparagraph has demonstrated that the main motivation for visiting the cinema and choosing particular films were escapism and a certain educational value of the films. When being asked to explicate their reasons for particular film choices in the past, respondents frequently recourse to the "quality" of the films. The quality as perceived by them, relates largely to genre (which has been dealt with in the previous paragraph) and linked to this, film stylistic and narrative features, but also to origin and the presence of film stars.

Film stylistic and narrative features

When respondents talk about film stylistic and narrative features of the film they do so mainly by describing the films in terms of "beautiful images" (relating mostly to camera work as part of film style) as well as plausibility and credibility of the plot and actions of the characters (relating to narration).¹²⁴⁷

The first is perceived mostly to contribute to a sensation of immersiveness and awe. Films that were associated with such feelings were especially valued for being spectacular (see the memories of watching films in cinema Rubens as discussed above) and/or vast landscapes, as in the case of RR (male, 1939), who preferred westerns for the beautiful sceneries: "Yes, for me that was always adventure. [...] A cowboy film, right. [...] And even if it was only for the beautiful views,

¹²⁴⁷ Bordwell and Thompson distinguished between film-stylistic and narrative features which together determine, and hence contribute to, our understanding of film form. Film-stylistic features encompass editing, camera work, mise-en-scène and sound, while narration in film concerns the relation between plot and story, including cause-and-effect of narrated events (D. Bordwell and K. Thompson, *Film Art. An Introduction* (New York et al.: McGrawHill, 2001)). Here I will address only aspects that figure in respondents' recollections.

because these films had always a very beautiful scenery.” One of the films that made a lasting impression on many respondents in this respect was *Gone with the Wind* (1939, USA). The film reached Belgium only relatively late, after World War II, a fact that figured prominently in the recollections as well as the fact that it was a color film, as the example of JV (male, 1929) shows: “I remember seeing *Gone with the Wind* there, that famous films from 1937 or 1938, but that wasn’t released here yet, because before the war, during the war, there were only German movies. And after the war that film, as the first color feature, was a revelation.” The recollections of EJ (male, 1936) of seeing this film are even more vivid and rich in detail:

One such experience was *Gone with the Wind*. I saw that as a young guy, because that was just after the war. [...] I must have been only 14, 15 years old. But that certainly was this was this and that, because you didn’t have anything of that genre. [...] And suddenly there is that film, that was so much longer than all other films, because that was four hours and they had never done something like this before. A film that was also very attractive, in terms of great panoramas and things like that. [...] In the end, when there were such huge films as *Gone with the Wind*, we just couldn’t miss that, right. But I think, that film, it only got here after the war was over, because in America it came out before the war, or during, I don’t know that. And here it was shown after the war.

Gone with the Wind was also the film that was mentioned most frequently by different respondents, which makes it the more surprising that another well-known US American color film from the same year, *The Wizard of Oz* (1939, USA) is not remembered once by respondents spontaneously.¹²⁴⁸ Given the comparable prominence of *Gone with the Wind* and the relative absence of *The Wizard of Oz* in a similar oral history study for Ghent, further research could be illuminating in explaining this peculiarity.¹²⁴⁹

Next to films as *Gone with the Wind* and the spectacle films that have been mentioned earlier, including *Ben-Hur* and *The Ten Commandments*, other films were remembered for (parts of) their story. JC, for example, remembers vividly how he went to see *Son of Frankenstein* (1939, USA) with his father:

JC, male, 1926: When I was twelve, thirteen years, I went to *Son of Frankenstein* with my dad. My father didn’t go to the cinema that much, so that was really something special. The film was with Boris Karloff. Do you know that head of Boris Karloff? So that was a scholar. He had built a man from clay. And he would suddenly come to life. Started to cause all kinds of devastations. He would kill people. That was monster! He couldn’t be controlled by that scholar anymore, who had built that clay man. And then preferably at night in a castle. And that castle was somewhere in Romania. And eventually, there was a [unintelligible] hanging on a cord above the sulfur pit, vaporizing. So that beast was pushed in there. And then the other one came. And it came with a speed. It stood at the edge and then it was finished. But

¹²⁴⁸ *The Wizard of Oz* was only “remembered” by two respondents, after having been shown extra material to trigger memories. And although the film’s main actress Judy Garland was remembered spontaneously by two (different) respondents, she was not explicitly connected to the film.

¹²⁴⁹ See L. van de Vijver and D. Biltereyst, “Cinemagoing as Conditional Part of Everyday Life. Memories of Cinemagoing in Ghent from the 1930s to the 1970s,” *Cultural Studies* 27, no. 4 (2013): 572.

because of that I had to look under my bed at night to see if it wasn't there. [...] That was actually the mistake of my father. But he also didn't know how bad that was, because afterwards he must have thought: "Say, what have I done to my little man".

JC's recollection resonates with Kuhn's findings of the frequency of such "horrific film memories" which "are told in some detail, and are very often recounted as if the narrator were reliving a memory in the telling", yet at the same time also distancing him/herself from these impressions by regaining the adult position and passing judgment on the younger self (or, as in this instance, his father, who would not know better).¹²⁵⁰

One film, that was recollected comparatively often for the impact it had on respondents, is *Johnny Belinda* (1948, USA). The film also figured prominently in Sue Harper and Vincent Porter's study of a survey held amongst British audiences in 1950 about crying in the cinema. According to them, the film was "a popular Warner Brothers weepie" and "aggressive tear-jerker which pulled out all the emotional stops".¹²⁵¹ As for the British audiences in this study and Antwerp respondents alike, they were especially moved by the fate of the film's protagonist:

A beautiful film that I still remember was... oh, how was that actress called again? That was about a deaf-mute girl. *Johnny Belinda* was the title of the film, I believe. And she was deaf-mute, a bit of a retarded girl and she was raped. And that child didn't even know it was pregnant, because that was... and, oh. We tried to imitate that at home. And that picture is still in my mind sometimes, when I think of it I still see... how she prayed the Lord's prayer at the coffin of her father. So, with someone who... who was deaf-mute, with gestures. That was magnificent. Yes [we were allowed to see that], we didn't really see the rape, though. But you saw a group of bummers that were passing by. And that girl was dragged into a thingy, such a small barn, because I think that was a miller who lived there. [...] And afterwards you hear that she was pregnant, so she was really raped. (MS, female, 1932)

Also RV (female, 1952) remembered that there "certainly was a film" that moved her a lot: "With school we went to [...] Filmforum. In Elckerlyc. And that was in the afternoon, after school, at two we got a film screening. But I can't remember the title of the movie. It was about a deaf-mute girl and she was unmanageable and then there is that lady who takes care of her. I thought that it was a very impressive film." Although the film is not always remembered by title by her and other respondents, the vivid memories and compassion for the death-mute girl that was raped made a lasting impression, similarly to JC's memories of *Son of Frankenstein*.

The recollections of *Johnny Belinda* also suggest that it was not only the spectacular features as color and impressive imagery that contributed to a feeling of immersion. The ability to arouse empathy and the credibility of the plot were recounted as being even more important for preferring certain films above others, as also becomes clear in the example of GS (male, 1947) who preferred

¹²⁵⁰ Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 67. As a matter of fact, Boris Karloff figured rather prominently in the horrific child memories in Kuhn's study.

¹²⁵¹ Harper and Porter, "Moved to Tears," 161.

[e]specially films that are situated in the present. About people from now, that I can identify with. European, maybe also American, but not really about foreign cultures. That's all too strange for me. It has to be something that I can identify with. Someone who experiences things, where I can say: "God damnit, that could have happened to me". I try to really empathize with the film. That there are things that could happen to me or things that also happened to me, I think that's fantastic. Then you can think how I would react, because it could happen to me as well. That is actually a moment of self-reflection. So no cowboy film, because I never will be a cowboy. It doesn't interest me.

The preference for films where respondents could sympathize with the characters and relate to the events because it felt realistic to them figures prominently in the cinema memories. As the recollection of GS exemplifies, in respondents' memories this was strongly tied to the origin of films.

Country of origin

Recollections of films in relation to their countries of origin is marked by a strong dichotomy between films made in "America" and "Europe", largely irrespective of the individual countries mentioned. While a certain influence by the interviewers' guiding questions about differences between films made in the USA and in European countries cannot be denied in creating this dichotomy, it is still interesting to examine how respondents framed this difference. Roughly two aspects of this difference emerge: the first relates to film stylistic and narrative features of the films, the second to their historical contexts of consumption.

As discussed in the previous section, respondents recounted certain preferences for films based on stylistic and narrative characteristics, yet not unconditionally. Rather, these preferences were strongly shaped by the origin of the films. This becomes manifest most clearly in comparisons of American and European films, such as those by RV (female, 1952: "Those American films were really ... pompous. Grand and so.") or EJ (male, 1936): "European films never were spectacle films. I can't remember one. Maybe there were some, but I can't remember a spectacle film. Whereas the Americans had them on a regular basis. *Cleopatra*, I just mentioned. *The Ten Commandments*. There were certainly more, that I can't recall now. It was a different genre." While the a general appeal of such spectacular films was clearly noticeable, it was also often nuanced, as the example of AL (male, 1926) shows:

Yes, the American movies were much bigger. Let's say, the American films... when we went to see *Ben-Hur* or *Spartacus* our eyes went open wide. That was in an arena that was packed with extras, but we didn't notice. It's only afterwards that we said to ourselves: "How is that possible, in such a big arena, let's say, just like here in Antwerp, that they all took extras, dressed them all and that they would start fighting with the lions or things like that". Same with *Ben-Hur*, that was also grand, right. Whereas European films, that was, let's say more our thing, because they were, let's say, made by Europeans. It was more our way of living. Yes, European films were more our style of living. We'd enter the cinema and say "yes, that's a bit like how the rich lived at that time" who we knew by name or things like that. Whereas

the American film was always so grand. It had to be grand, with a lot of noise, fantastic music, great orchestras...

The use of superlatives, such as grand and bombastic, is characteristic for respondents' descriptions of American films, especially when differentiating them from films made in Europe. To some, the grandeur of the American films was reason for admiration: FJR (male, 1916), for example, was touched the most by "American cowboy films", because "there was shooting and there was horse riding. Those other films just couldn't compete with that." Along a similar line, JC (male, 1928) valued American above European films: "In terms of film, the Americans were far ahead compared to Europe. At that time, America was unbeatable with regard to film. Later, after the war, they also played German films. I don't think they could compete. The American ones were much more luxurious."

To most respondents, however, the grandeur of the American films was a reason for denunciation. As JC (male, 1926) explained his preference for European films: "When there was a psychological case, then the Europeans tried to give it substance. It's not only entertainment, like in the American movies, superficial. They had depth." Other respondents argued along similar lines:

Gradually, I was able to distinct between American films and European films. [...] English films are more about the inside of a human, about human relations. Whereas Americans are more about appearances. Well, generally, right, because there are exceptions, of course. I know the difference. And then you also had the French film, not long after the war. [...] The series of French films which we got to see was very unbalanced. You had very beautiful ones, almost art films. And you also had the spectacular films among them, with Brigitte Bardot and so on. You had much more variety, I believe. English films rather had a social, a bit romantic plot. And American films were spectacle, like *Ben-Hur*. (JV, male, 1929)

Because that were artists that would play terribly good and at that times they had very good films in France. Better than in America, because in America it always came down to the same thing: the good against the bad. Whereas in French films, those were films with content and they were very good actors. [...] English films were all great actors and especially the comedians were fantastic. The action was always more realistic than the Americans, where it was always brutal force and where they always had to win where the Americans were always the superheroes. But that was not the case in English films and certainly not in the French films. (RR, male, 1939)

The English ones were more natural than the American ones. For example, a detective or something like that. In American films it was too wild, but in English ones you'd have to look and think a while who'd done it, and in the French as well. [...] The French films were also very good. [...] Everything was better than the American ones. The American ones were always so grand. [...] Just like France. The French films were a lot more refined and the English ones were also much more refined than the American ones. (MV, female, 1920)

Here, the association of American films with spectacle and grandeur is inevitably linked to the superficialness of the films' story and characters which, according to the respondents, often bore no relation to their own perceived reality:

When you see an American movie and you see a poor fellow or a real poor household there, then they grab the telephone or they open the fridge, huge! And then when you saw a French film, a marriage, poor guys. They'd sit in their apartments as poor fellows. They wouldn't have a telephone, they didn't have a fridge. That was more realistic. [...] America, the American film, that was bigger. Here we are! You didn't have that with French movies. They were more sober. Yes [I prefer French modesty], because it was more realistic. Can you imagine? A very poor family, but they did have a telephone and a big fridge and they even had an old car. At that time, just after the war, this didn't appeal to us. Because you knew how it had been. (JS, male, 1926)

GS (male, 1947) even claimed to find "American films stupid films", because they were "much too superficial and also the simple American way of thinking makes it all so simple." As RA (male, 1930), explained in more detail: "[In American films] you see cars flying through the air... That's just not true. You're overwhelmed by sophistries, visual tricks, tricks with computer stuff. You actually don't know any more what you're looking at. It was mostly American films, because they were pushed through, because there wasn't anything else after the war."

As the quotes show, the use of superlatives for describing American films stands in contrast to descriptions of European films, where words as "realistic", "sober" and "serious" dominate. This difference in perception might reflect film-historical changes, especially in Europe, where the 1950s saw the flourishing of neorealist and neorealist-inspired film styles in countries as Italy and France. It might also be due to the fact that especially these formerly thriving film industries had been destroyed during the second World War and cinemas were flooded by American backlog films that had been banned by the German occupier, including *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz*, after the war.¹²⁵² Thus, to a certain degree, the rejection of the bombastic grandeur, expressed in superlatives, might result from the predominance of films from the USA in Antwerp in Antwerp cinemas (see Chapter 5). Respondents frequently pointed out that while during World War II there was nothing but German films (see below), after the war there was nothing but American films. This was explicated in a nutshell by JC (male, 1928) who remembered that "after the war, the American films came by the thousands," and was explained in more detail by AV (male, 1929):

But after the war we were flooded by American films. Because also in England, they didn't make that many movies during the war, I assume. [...] And after the war we were suddenly flooded with American films. Because there were still so many films from before the war that hadn't gotten here and during the war Hollywood would keep producing films. And then they were let loose onto us just after the war. I remember being to the Forum, at the Brederodestraat. And they'd play cowboy films every week. I don't know if I had seen them already [...], as long as they were American. German films were bad, because they'd been overcome, so that was bad.

¹²⁵² See, for example, I. Jarvie, "Free Trade as Cultural Threat: American Film and TV Export in the Post-War Period," in *Hollywood Abroad: Audiences and Cultural Exchange*, edited by M. Stokes and R. Maltby (London: BFI, 2004), 34-46. For the ban of American films in occupied Belgium, see R. vande Winkel, "German Influence on Belgian Cinema, 1933-45: From Low-profile Presence to Downright Colonisation," in *Cinema and the Swastika. The International Expansion of Third Reich Cinema*, edited by R. vande Winkel and D. Welch (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2011), 78-79.

While the use of exaggerating numbers (they came by the thousands) and of verbs “to flood” and “to dump” suggest rather negative attitudes, some respondents also gave it a positive spin. AL (male, 1926), for example, remembered that he would go to the cinema after the war, “because there were all those American films. And we didn’t pay anything for it, because we were with the Red Cross.” According to JC (male, 1926) the arrival of “all the American productions” was the reason that “the cinemas flourished enormously” after the war. The example of RA (male, 1930) is most nuanced in explaining the causes and details of the predominance of US films on the local cinema market:

Then the American films came, that was after the liberation. In the beginning it was the cowboy films. Cowboy films and the sword-fighting films. Cowboy films with Johnny Weissmüller. There were many war films, because they had to show how they’d won. [...] And later, when I was seventeen, eighteen, the musical film arrived from America, after all the war films, where they showed how people had lost four or five sons, they had to show all that. Actually, the musicals as we now call them, the musical film. I couldn’t miss them. That were the show films, now you’d say the musical, with Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Doris Day, Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby. And that was with concerts of those times: Goodman and Paul Whitman and so on. There also was the purely musical film, like *Rhapsody in Blue*, where the live of a composer is central. I saw all these films. [...] America was pretty much dominating in terms of the number of films that were distributed to the local cinemas. Others were less far than the Americans. America wasn’t at war, by the way. In Europe I also saw beautiful Italian films with Gina Lollobrigida and Sophia Loren. Russia and France were at war as well. So after the war they had to begin from scratch. The film industry had to be rebuilt again. In America, everything went on.

All in all, however, in respondents’ memories, the perceived “flood” of films from the US is hardly nuanced.

While films from Europe were grouped together to demonstrate in general the ways in which they differed from the films from the US, respondents also acknowledged the differences among them. As the examples provided below show, in general, French, Italian, British and Scandinavian films were praised for their realism, while opinions of German and Flemish films varied and did so for different reasons. HA (male, 1942) even goes through great lengths in explaining them to the interviewer:

Well, yes, I think there is a very big difference in the production and depiction of the films. I’ll give you an example, because Esther Williams just popped up in my mind. The big revue films where there always were water ballets, those giant water ballets. It wasn’t about the content of the film, but the panorama, right. There were hundreds of dancers who dove into the water making routines and so forth. That didn’t exist in European film, right. Except for the German film, they also tried to do that. But we didn’t know that in Belgian or French films. The biggest spectacle films were actually made in America. The best genre was actually the English film. The art of acting, you found it back in the English films. [...] I don’t know that many, but when there was an English film, then they usually related to World War II, spy films, right. Then you got the shivers from the way the texts and the situations were. The German films were more the improved version of the theatre film from here, right. A certain clumsiness, the Germans had that too. The bombastic. You had to laugh about the situations, because they were funny, while they were also sad. Yes, [more amateurish], despite the fact that the German film industry had a very big production. The French, for example, had the

films with Fernandel. You have the classics of Fernandel with Don Camillo and Pepone, but there are better ones than Fernandel. [...] You have the films with Yves Montand and I can recall them all, but I mean the typical Paris film about the Moulin Rouge, Edith Piaf and so on. I always liked them, the films that were about the Provence. These films really have a Southern touch. Then also the Italian films, they are from a bit later, with Anita Ekberg, is one of the most famous films where she jumps in a fountain in Rome. I cannot recall the title. You have several, but the Italian films were really Italian. A bit exaggerated, just like they still make their tv-programs at the RAI. That is still something to laugh yourself to death. The Spaniards have that too. The Spaniards made a number of very good films, of course, just like *Mourir à Madrid*, that's a classic as well. And then about Guernica about the battle of the Republic against Franco and with the help of the German that they [disrupted because of failing recorder].

While such a comprehensive summary of the differences between films from the different European countries is rather exceptional, many respondents outlined distinctive qualities of films from different countries to differentiate them from American films and explain their preferences for certain nationalities. Except for qualities as realistic, sober and solid, that were attributed to British, Italian and Scandinavian films, particularly French films were also frequently described for their more risqué content and images, especially when they were compared to the more innocent, prudish American films. As LV (female, 1930) explained the difference, for example: "French films, were more special. [...] They were more liberal. They might even have gone to bed together. But you still wouldn't see anything, right. Whereas an American would never even go to bed. They'd always be on their way to.... But in a French movie they did." Similar observations were made by JVE (female, 1941):

American films were actually innocent in that matter, I thought, then right. The romantic films, I never saw more than a kiss. The French films, often they were... Carolientje Rie, I remember when I was a little child... That was already in the 1950s... That was already a risqué film, because there you already saw a deep décolleté and there you already saw a kiss that went further. But I did go there with my mother, so she obviously liked that too. No, I don't think [silence]. But French films were actually more risqué [silence]. More according to the real life, actually, because there were also films by ... The books by Zola, that were actually also sad films [...] that was actually really the life, the rest was glamor, the American movies.

One actress that was mentioned particularly often in this relation is Brigitte Bardot for her role in the French-Italian co-production *Et Dieu... créa la femme* (1956). EJ (male, 1936), for example, recollected that

the European films went much further. Well, further, compared to what you see now it's not far at all. Because, no you can say.... Brigitte Bardot... You never saw much. A lot was only insinuated and maybe that you had the chance to catch a glimpse of her back, maybe a touch, very briefly... You actually got to see only little. But in the French film it did happen. I mean, every French movie did have a bit of nudity in there somewhere. Not much, very little, but in the American films zero point zero, right, zero point zero. Also no divorces, that wasn't allowed, right. No, no. They were very prudish, these American films.

I will return to Bardot's status as remembered film star and to the question of changed attitudes towards nudity on screen in the next paragraphs.

Compared to films from France, Italy or Great Britain, opinions of Flemish films were more ambivalent. RA (male, 1930), for example, bluntly stated that he did not find Flemish films very much appealing, except for the "funny films":

[After the war] came the Flemish films. At that time Janssens against Peeters, with René Bertal, Jos Gevers, Charles Janssens and Co Flower. I don't know if these names ring a bell to you Charles Janssens, Co Flower and Bertal, Jos Gevers and Tony Bell, the Woodpeckers ... They all played in there. [...] What else do you have? Flemish films, but they don't appeal to me. They used to, but then only funny films. The genre is important. I went to see one. A film by Verheyen, *Team Spirit*. I didn't like it and was happy when it was over. My partner did think it had something. Maybe it had something, but the whole didn't appeal to me. Films by Jan Verheyen and the actor Pas, they don't mean much to me.

In contrast, JV (male, 1929) generally liked Flemish films, but not "those farce films":

At that time, just before the war and immediately after, there were also quite some Flemish films from the studio of Vanderheyden. I saw a lot of them. When there was a Flemish film that was talked about a bit, I went to see it. I didn't see all those farce films that they'd be continuously making later, such as, with, for example the Woodpeckers and Charles Janssens. But I saw the first ones, such as *De Witte* with Jefke Bruyninckx, not long after it was released. That was in the 1930s, I think.

More frequently, however, respondents motivated their preferences in more nuanced ways, as the following two examples show:

What I also have good memories of, are the Flemish films of Leo Martin, I think it was, the director. That was with Charles Janssens and Co Flower and one of the most known is *Meeuwen sterven in de haven* and *Seniorenbloed is geen limonade*. You had quite a few of them. Gosh. If you then look at *Mira* afterwards, then it's a fully-fledged film, right. The beginning of Flemish film was actually filmed theater. In a little room. They'd slam the doors open and close and someone entered and someone fainted. That was really.... Well, in the end this was the starting period and you do see that the Flemish film eventually reached a high level. Well, in my eyes. (HA, male, 1942)

I also especially like to watch Flemish films. Then I feel proud. That we, such a small country, can do actually that. That I think "such a small country and still such good films". [...] Yes, with Gaston Berghmans and Leo Martin. It was actually a slapstick. That was more about these two characters. But there were many other Flemish films. And they keep coming. *Zware jongens* really was slapstick, made to attract people. That's the problem, because we didn't have good script writers, but that's getting better now. But the films were good, because the Flemish were a people of painters. They could make very beautiful films, but the story didn't make sense. That's what used to be the problem a bit. [...] No, well, [audiences] have to get a good story, otherwise they won't go to see it. It should be an appealing story and often the stories were just too thin. Plus, the problem with the "cows and castles film". Flemish films were mostly "cows and castles films" about Pallieter and others. All those things that happened in the Stijn Streuvels kind of old Flemish peasant style. Twenty years ago, that was really bad. And later it became more up-to-date, more contemporary themes. (GS, male, 1947)

Especially GS's recollection exemplifies the appreciation of skills that are considered Flemish tradition and displays national pride.¹²⁵³ In her analysis of the popularity of the so-called Jordaan films in the Netherlands in the mid-1930s, Clara Pafort-Overduin showed not only that "Dutch films were very popular amongst Dutch audiences" but also that language played a significant role as "spoken Dutch gave the audience the possibility to immerse in the film and to truly understand it".¹²⁵⁴ In their study of memories of cinemagoing in Ghent between the 1930s and the 1970s, van de Vijver and Biltereyst addressed the question of possible preferences for national films, but mainly did so with regard to language.¹²⁵⁵ Spoken language was mentioned by Antwerp respondents as less significant in determining film choice than film stylistic and narrative features (see above), as "films were subtitled".¹²⁵⁶

However, from the analysis does emerge the importance of Flemish films in respondents' memories. Particularly films in local settings and local film stars and makers were remembered frequently, including Jan Vanderheyden and Edith Kiel, Charles (Charel) Janssens, Co Flower, Gaston Berhmans, Leo Martin and Jef (Jefke) Bruyninckx.¹²⁵⁷ The use of first names without surnames (see, for example, RDW, male, 1939) and of diminutives (Jefke instead of Jef, see RB, female, 1916, MC, female, 1921, AL, male, 1926; or Nandje instead of Nand Buyl, see JVE, female, 1941) when talking about them points to a certain appropriation of these stars, an expressed feeling of "being one of us".¹²⁵⁸ Recollections as the ones of HA and GS cited above also mirror findings by Dirk van Engeland and Roel vande Winkel about Kiel's and Vanderheyden's approach to filmmaking: prioritizing light entertainment, recognizable characters and story lines, settings in everyday working class environments and type-casted actors.¹²⁵⁹ In other words: locals made films that were often recorded in Antwerp and were thus also referred to as "Antwerpse volksfilms" (Antwerp folk films) which must have made them especially attractive to local cinemagoers.

Their success is also reflected in the results from the film programming analysis presented in chapter 5: films as *Uit hetzelfde nest* (1952, Belgium), *De moedige bruidegom* (1952, Belgium), and

¹²⁵³ According to Gertjan Willems, it was only in 1964 that a "selective and culturally inspired support mechanism for feature films was introduced in Flanders" to stimulate a Flemish identity, with as an effect an "evolution from rather homogenous to more pluralistic and less essentialist and explicit national discourses" (G. Willems, "The Role of Film Production Policy in Stimulating a Flemish Identity (1964-2002)," *Communications* 42, no. 1 (2017): 86, 96).

¹²⁵⁴ C. Pafort-Overduin, "Hollandse films met een Hollands hart. Nationale identiteit en de Jordaanfilms 1934-1936," PhD thesis, University of Utrecht, Utrecht, 2012, 364. For this study Pafort-Overduin combined film analysis with an analysis of the critical press and the Jordaan films, including *De Jantjes* (1934, The Netherlands), *Bleeke Bet* (1934, The Netherlands) and *Oranje Hein* (1936, The Netherlands), were adaptations of popular plays set in Amsterdam working class neighborhood.

¹²⁵⁵ Van de Vijver and Biltereyst, "Cinemagoing," 576.

¹²⁵⁶ See for example, HA (male, 1942), MV (female, 1920), RV (female, 1952).

¹²⁵⁷ See Appendix II-8 for an overview of frequently cited films stars and directors. Although Edith Kiel was born in Germany, her close collaboration with Jan Vanderheyden and the many films she wrote and directed together with him in Flanders lend her an air of local product. The duo was particularly successful in Antwerp and agglomeration (R. vande Winkel and D. van Engeland, *Edith Kiel and Jan Vanderheyden: pioniers van de Vlaamse film* (Brussels: Cinematek, 2014), 144-147).

¹²⁵⁸ Bruyninckx is not included in Appendix II-8, because he was only remembered after lists with films and/or actors were presented to the respondents.

¹²⁵⁹ Vande Winkel and van Engeland, *Edith Kiel*, 135-139.

De stille genieter (1961, Belgium) screened relatively long in Antwerp cinemas. In addition, particularly *De Witte* (1934, Belgium) was remembered frequently by respondents, which is not surprising given the fact that apart from being a film from respondents' own soil, the fact that it was an adaptation of a book of the same title by the popular writer Ernst Claes and that the film was screened in cinemas almost every year until the 1960s can also be considered as factors that helped to imprint the film in respondents' memories.¹²⁶⁰ In addition, vande Winkel and van Engeland suggested as additional reasons for the film's continuing popularity the natural and spontaneous: First, the talent of main actor Jef Bruyninckx and his young fellow actors; second, that the main character "De Witte" (meaning the white one, pointing to the main character's white hair) was a typical Flemish boy with whom the audience could easily identify, as well as with the typically Flemish folk culture that the film represented; and, finally, that the film was the first sound film in Dutch language addressed at a mass audience.¹²⁶¹

Similarly surprising are the recollections of films and film stars from Germany. Given the repeated invasion and occupation of Belgium by Germany during the First and Second World War, feeding anti-German sentiments under the Belgian population, the popularity (even though not unanimous) of German films and stars from that period is remarkable. Films as these were mostly admired for their artistic quality and grandeur, as the response by JV (male, 1929) exemplifies: "During the war, it was all German films, by the UFA studios and there were also already color films. [...] These German films were of quite good quality, with regard to actors as well as recording." The following two examples provide even more detailed explanations for the respondents' admiration:

When I started going to the film by myself, it was during the war, 1940-1945. There were mainly German and Austrian films, Austrian films, say, *Heimatfilms*, as they called them at the time, with famous actors as Theo Lingén. That were all films with a musical basis, because I always preferred films with music, also later. Then, after the war, it was done with the German films. Later they came back, but they didn't have such a good reputation. [...] And in the cinema Astrid at the Astridplein, there they also had German films. There were a few good ones, to me there were, at least. But I don't think that German black/white movies enjoyed much preference. Later there were also German show films with Peter Alexander, I liked those. (RA, male, 1930)

No, I did like it. I've seen amazing films there. For example, I saw a Mozart film. *Amadeus* couldn't compete with that German film about Mozart from the war. It was called *Wen die Götter lieben, Kind der goden* in Dutch. I found that much, much, much more realistic, more beautiful than the American version from later. [...] Showfilms. When they were made well, and the Germans had that too, that they'd had good show films and the Austrians as well. (GDS, male, 1926)

¹²⁶⁰ For details about this involvement see Vande Winkel, "German Influence," 79-80. Remarkably, the involvement of Vanderheyden and Kiel in dubious activities during the German occupation of Belgium (1940-1944) was not mentioned once by respondents.

¹²⁶¹ Vande Winkel and van Engeland, *Edith Kiel*, 59-60.

This popularity of German films and film stars was not unique for Antwerp cinemagoers, as van de Vijver and Biltreyst showed in their oral history study of cinemagoing in Ghent.¹²⁶² According to vande Winkel, it was even “not at all unique to Belgium”, but a phenomenon that also occurred in other countries.¹²⁶³ On the one hand, film supply was largely restricted to German productions and audiences adapted relatively quickly to the new situation.¹²⁶⁴ Memories of the predominance of German films in Antwerp cinemas during the war abound. MVR (female, 1921), for example, remembered that “[i]t was in the middle of the war. And then there were only German films.” Or, as MV (female, 1920) recollected: “Yes, all German. They wouldn’t screen English ones. Or American films, they wouldn’t screen that either. [...] that was also more advertisement... for the Nazis, right and for the SS. [...] Propaganda, yes. That’s what I wanted to say. That’s the right word. But generally, these films were not bad.”

The predominance of German films was either a reason to “choose” those films, or not go to the cinema at all. While AL (male, 1926), for example claimed never to have seen German films, because “it wasn’t allowed during the war”, SVG (female, 1932) stated that “we didn’t see many German films. That was completely different. They had propaganda films. Yes, Romy Schneider, that was different. But still, the Germans had many propaganda films, actually not entertaining.” She is one of a number of examples where respondents, or their parents, decided to ignore cinema at all, to avoid propaganda or to not support the enemy. However, while some suspected propaganda at play, often it was contained in films in rather subtle ways and quite a few respondents did not even suspect that their favorite films from that period were propagandistic.¹²⁶⁵ Rather, they admired the style or narrative, as in the case of the film *Die goldene Stadt* (1942, Germany), starring the well-remembered actress Kristina Söderbaum:¹²⁶⁶

And the other one was Kristina Söderbaum, that was such a good movie, I never ever forget that one. That was in Prague, where the film was set. That was a movie in Prague. And I’ve always loved watching films. [...] That was a German movie right. But they did have very beautiful films, those Germans. Not because I’m so German-minded. Because they took me as well, those Germans, when I was twenty-one years old. And I’ve never forgotten about that. I don’t like that. They should just stay away with that, with war. [...] Oh, they had beautiful films. *Die goldene Stadt*, that’s the one in Prague. That was magnificent. (MC, female, 1921)

As vande Winkel concluded in his chapter on German influence on Belgian cinema, audiences quickly adapted to the new situation (the occupation and the predominance of German film supply)

¹²⁶² Van de Vijver and Biltreyst, “Cinemagoing,” 572-575; R. vande Winkel, “Die Grosse Liebe – De Grote Liefde. Getuigenissen over de populariteit van Duitse film(sternen) in bezet België (1940-1944)” *Mores* 5, no. 4 (2004): 15-20.

¹²⁶³ Vande Winkel, “German Influence,” 82.

¹²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶⁵ According to vande Winkel, the number of explicitly propagandistic films that were screened in Belgium, was low (Vande Winkel, “Die Grosse Liebe,” 20).

¹²⁶⁶ Söderbaum was actually of Swedish origin (like Zarah Leander), but became the figurehead of Nazi propaganda films she made with her husband Veit Harlan, including the overtly propagandistic film *Jud Süß* (1942, Germany).

and German film stars who had been popular before the war, “developed a large fan base in Belgium, and in particular the Flemish region, where the screening of German films [...] was much more pushed [...] than in the Francophone areas”.¹²⁶⁷ Antwerp respondents frequently recollected (female) stars as Zarah Leander as well as Marika Rökk and Conny Froboess for their performances in the much admired musical and show films from during and after the war, as the following examples show:

Yes, that... you know that the Germans have it in their nature, that singing and all that. [...] They had beautiful films. (MM, female, 1924)

When the Germans came here, they came with spectacular films with Marika Rökk and Johannes Heesters, who we all knew. And more, that were all music films... (GDS, male, 1926)

Zarah Leander [makes heavy throat noise], such a very heavy voice. But I liked her, I liked her songs, but I don't know any more what's it called. Marika Rökk, that was, also to dance. But that was also a good artist. (RB, female, 1916)

Well, these songs they all came with those films. The Germans had those pseudo-romantic films with a little singer. And she'd fall in love and her father wouldn't allow that. She had to perform then, but she wouldn't want to, but in the end, it always ended well. And when we knew that it was with Conny Froboess, we definitely went to see, but then I was already seventeen, eighteen, nineteen years old, for sure. (HA, male, 1942)

Memories from the war and the postwar period figured much more prominently in respondents' recollections than those from later periods. AL (male, 1926) was one of the exceptions in this respect, recounting his memories of cinemagoing in the 1970s, when “you had that famous German: Curd Jürgens. That was *the* man right, who mad al those beautiful films as officer. He always appeared as if out of box, so beautifully dressed and the women would always fall in love with that Curd Jürgens. And he made series of films and everyone ran to the cinema.” As a matter of fact, Curd Jürgens – main actor in the *St. Pauli* series screened especially in Heylen's cinemas in the 1970s (see Chapters 4 and 5) – was remembered and admired by quite a few respondents, including RB (female, 1916):

Well yes, Curd Jürgens. I just said that is one who was acting the love so naturally and also a bit risqué, his films. [...] But I still found them great. Yes, that is a good art..., was a good artist, right [laughs]. See, almost everyone saw the film. Yes, they all went there, ... and mostly the girls. I had a photograph for a long time... Ah, I used to write him once, to Curd Jürgens. Well, you could do that. And when you wrote that and you asked for a photo, I got a beautiful photo from him. I kept that for a very long time, but I eventually gave it to a younger girl later. [Points to film ad.] Yes that... He played something like that, yes. It was a bit of a risqué film. Ah, yes, not admitted, that's right, the word says it all. Yes. Yes, I didn't care about that so much, but I liked seeing him play.

¹²⁶⁷ Vande Winkel, “German Influence,” 82.

From the elaboration above it should have become clear the respondents' memories of particular films and their origins are tightly connected to memories of the actors starring in them and the role they played in the cinemagoing memories.

Film stars

That film stars contributed to the films' appeal (or aversion) has been elaborated upon in the previous paragraph.¹²⁶⁸ What *role* they played in cinemagoing experiences and what they meant for film choice is discussed in this subparagraph. Jackey Stacey elaborated on the important role of stars as they "offered one of the key sources of pleasure to the cinema audience".¹²⁶⁹ Particularly the stars of the Hollywood era were not only consumed through films, but their lives and careers could also be accessed through a plethora of additional media (magazines, radio, and later also television) and platforms (fan clubs and publicity events).

Based on how Antwerp respondents remembered their engagements with particular film stars, their answers suggest a reserved attitude rather than active engagement with film stars. Few respondents recount having been a fan themselves or that film stars served as role models with regard to behavior or fashion.¹²⁷⁰ Even more so, as shown in paragraph 6.3.3 even the presence of film stars for premieres or galas could hardly impress respondents. When being asked if they considered themselves fans, respondents would usually answer negatively, as was the case with RA (male, 1930): "No, I never imitated Clark Gable. He had his hair flat to the back with a lot of gel and I never did that. Or a Glenn Ford, no, never." Or they would name actors and actresses that they liked to watch, as in AV's and JV's examples:

Yes, I liked watching Sean Connery, as James Bond. And then Charlton Heston who played in *Ben-Hur*. Who else you'd have? Richard Chamberlain, but he played only in a few films; he mostly played in *Shogun* and things like that. That was actually more tv series. Yes, back in the days, Errol Flynn [laughs]. [...] I actually never like... we saw the film more as a whole and less the actor. The only thing we did have was when we thought he was a good actor, then we'd also go to the films more easily, where that actor was playing in, because we found him a good actor. But for me the film was more important than the actor. Yes, because it already happened that I like a certain actor really a lot, but that I liked the film far less. (AV, female, 1952)

The name probably doesn't ring a bell anymore, but a very long time ago, I was fan of Danny K: a funny actor who made kind of like funny films. They made like three films within a period

¹²⁶⁸ It should be noted that the perception of actors and actresses as film stars is not simply film-intrinsic, but that film stars (just as stars in general) are constructs and created in processes of (re)negotiations between media consumers and the texts. Dyer, who had been doing groundbreaking work in theorizing stars and stardom, for example, considered stars as constructs of their social, psychological and textual meanings (R. Dyer, *Stars*, 1st. ed. 1998 (London: BFI, 2011)).

¹²⁶⁹ Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 106.

¹²⁷⁰ Here, fan is understood as defined by several scholars as a person whose engagement with objects (media texts as films or series, or persons like film, music or sport stars) exceeds a general attraction and is characterized by a greater investment in activities related to the desired object. See Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 95ff.

of four, five years back in the days and when they were playing we went there immediately.
(JV, male, 1929)

In respondents' memories such fan activities hardly went beyond writing a letter, as RB writing a letter to Curd Jürgens (see previous subparagraph), or in LV's (female, 1930) recollection of writing that one letter: "At that time, you didn't know much about their life style. You liked seeing them. Once in my life, I remember that well, I had a favorite actor. And I wrote him and I received a card in return with his photograph and it said 'if you want a bigger photo, you have to pay'. I thought, well thanks, no thanks. I'm not going to waste my money on that!" Neither did the respondents go far beyond imitating a certain hairstyle or clothing fashion. When being asked if she ever was a fan of a famous star, JVE (female, 1941), for example, answered:

Ah, yes, back then, but then I was already fifteen, sixteen years old, that was Brigitte Bardot. But that's later, right. Wearing these wide skirts and thick petticoats and then exciting little blouses and a little scarf around your neck. Then we were all the same at school, right. [...] Yes [we also imitated scenes from the film] and you'd talk to yourself, sang the songs, yes and most and foremost when you were in love, as a teenager. Then you're dreaming as if you were in that movie right. I still could recite and retell all those things, details, I think.

EJ (male, 1936) also remembered these times when Bardot was admired and idolized:

Brigitte Bardot, of course, that was.... Everyone was walking around with a ponytail at that time, right. The girls. Because when she was young, in the beginning, Brigitte Bardot had such a ponytail. Indeed, that had an enormous impact on clothing. At a certain moment, Brigitte Bardot got married. While everyone got married in white, she got married in a little dress with diamond-shaped pattern. Suddenly, everyone married [...] in dresses with diamond-shaped patterns, right. So it was really an explosion, right. Those things were typical.

And although JS (male, 1926) did "absolutely not" consider himself a fan, he did admit that he wore a mustache, that he grew when he was "about eighteen" (and that he still had at the time of the interview): "I had pitch-black hair then. [...] Errol Flynn had such a mustache and Clark Gable had such a mustache. I liked that and I kept it. But it's not black anymore."

Based upon these recollections in the Antwerp sample, neither of the five types of behavior that Staiger summarized following Henry Jenkins, seems to apply here – albeit in a pronounced form – and respondents can be classified rather as what she calls the "silent spectator" or what Fiske calls the "more normal popular audiences".¹²⁷¹ It also mirrors the conclusion by Kuhn who found that amongst the 1930s generation of cinemagoers in Great Britain, "only a small minority devoted themselves exclusively to one star, or joined a fan club or took part in any of the other activities associated with fandom."¹²⁷²

¹²⁷¹ Ibid., 114; Fiske cited in Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 196. Jenkins' five categories of fan behavior that Staiger discussed are, 1) adopting a distinctive mode of reception, 2) developing a particular interpretive community, 3) creating a base for consumer activism, 4) becoming producers of media texts themselves, 5) creating an alternative social community (Staiger, *Media Reception Studies*, 98-109).

¹²⁷² Kuhn, *Everyday Magic*, 196.

As the example of JS wearing a mustache already suggested, memories of fan activities were less associated with film stars, but embedded in a more general cultural context, the spirit and trends of that time. Several respondents actually explicated this:

I actually noticed that a bit in the time of Woodstock. Then I noticed that the dressing style in the style of *flower power* also reached Belgium a little bit. All those more loose clothes and men with long hair and things like that. You'd feel that in America, but I think here too. The nonchalant attitude of "I don't care anymore" and then I noticed that there were often fights at home because my brothers would have to have their hair cut. I noticed that my brothers kind of looked down at The Beatles, such pretty neat haircut, was not their style. So my brothers had that more than me. (AV, female, 1952)

Yes. I myself haven't experienced it quite this way. But I think that, for example, Elvis Presley, after he'd made his film, became a gossip and fashion phenomenon: matter of hair and behavior. I think that. Well, I didn't have that, neither someone in my environment. You didn't talk about it and we didn't imitate the actors and actresses, but I do think that it had an impact on the way people dressed. (FDM, male, 1945)

As a matter of fact, music and music stars played a more important role in respondents' memories of fan activities than did the films themselves. Next to Elvis Presley, also Marika Rökk was remembered more for singing and dancing than for acting, as seen in the recollection of RB (female, 1916) cited earlier and that of AL (male, 1926), for example: "We went to see Marika Rökk and my parents never got to know. I never dared to tell them. And it was a bit sexy and dancing and things like that with a big decolleté and you know all that." Marika Rökk was actually one of the actors/actresses that was remembered spontaneously most frequently (see Appendix II-8).

The absence of fan culture in respondents' memories however does not mean that film stars did not matter. On the contrary, as the last two paragraphs on country of origin and film stars have shown, respondents' film preferences depended also, albeit not exclusively, on the performers.¹²⁷³ Also, identification with film stars (or the characters they represented on screen) did not necessarily require active commitment, but could also be imaginary. In her study of Hollywood cinema and female spectatorship Stacey, for example, suggested that next to the purchasing of goods relating to the stars, spectator and star are also linked "through the gazing and desiring of the female spectator/consumer who imagines her ideal's choice of commodities".¹²⁷⁴

In addition, the frequency with which some actors are remembered is telling. Amongst them are not only film stars that were admired for their attractive appearance such as Brigitte Bardot and Clark Gable, or their great show performances (Marika Rökk, Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire), but also included many comedians, including Chaplin, Oliver Hardy and Stan Laurel, as well as French comedians Fernandel and Louis de Funès (see Appendix II-8). The predominance of often-

¹²⁷³ Harper and Porter, for example, showed that film stars shape audiences' responses only to a certain degree and that gender, age and social status of the cinemagoers also play decisive roles (Harper and Porter, "Moved to Tears," 172-173).

¹²⁷⁴ Stacey, *Star Gazing*, 197.

remembered actors and actresses from the USA, Italy, France, the UK as well as Germany thus mirrors the countries' actual dominance on Antwerp screens, as has been established in Chapter 5. Nevertheless, as the last paragraphs also have shown, in order to better understand experiences of film consumption in relation to film stars, approaching it from a fan culture perspective is not sufficient.

6.4.3. Changing films, changing audiences

A last aspect that figures prominently in respondents' recollections of experiences of film consumption (and preference) is the change in the films' content and imagery. In general lines respondents perceived this change from "innocent" to much more explicit in terms of sex and violence.

On the one hand, respondents often remembered that "there was just nothing to see on screen" referring to the absence of, for example nudity or actions that would imply characters' engagements in sexual activities of all kinds:

But actually, there was not much about it, about those films. I can't remember that I ever, like now, saw sex in a movie. That didn't exist. When you go now... then kids go to a movie and there you see people lying in bed. After all, there is nothing about it. (MS, female, 1932)

Yes, a lot more is permitted now. In my days, when someone was wearing shorts or there was a naked shoulder, then that was already causing fuss. I never saw a naked breast in a film around the war. (MD, male, 1922)

If now more is permitted than it used to be? Yes, I think so. [...] Yes, with sex, for instance. Yes I think so. I don't know just now if there used to be a limit on violence. Sex, definitely, that I know. [...] Yes, at that times, for example, it was about courting alone and they'd do that behind a door and *patati and patata*. Whereas nowadays, you see them kissing, right [laughs]. That you see everything. Even in the bed scenes too. [...] Back then, it would be put in scene, suggested, well, I mean more was left over for phantasy, because in the end it stirs phantasy in people when you see such a scene. Whereas now you just see everything happening in a manner of speaking. Nothing is left for phantasy anymore. (PD, female, 1953)

I don't know how it's now. But they were a different kind of movies. You'd never saw them lying in bed. No, they went to bed and then it stopped. You never ever saw anything, no. They wouldn't show anything. Yes, kisses. You had to imagine the rest, think for yourself and then the story continued. (LV, female, 1930)

On the other side, respondents recollected that even films that were considered risqué at that times, were also quite innocent. LV, cited above, for example, proceeded by telling how she did see a more risqué film and the disappointment she felt, when she realized that even that film was rather innocent:

Yes, she said it would be controversial. So I wanted to see it. I'll never forget it. So I went there. And the whole movie was just ordinary. And I thought, "say, when is there finally

something to see?" . And there was nothing to see. And you know what there was to see? When the film was done, she was all naked and she was from behind and that was it. And you'd see her disappearing in the woods. Yes [that was all]. And then we went to the film another time, a French film and that was with a striptease. And I said, "yes, I'd actually like to see that". And there we sat. And then one appeared and took off all the clothes, waved a bit with plush, and was gone. And then the next one came, took off all the clothes and gone again... And I became so tired of it! I almost went crazy. You didn't see anything else. And I said to my husband, "let's leave" and he said, "you wanted to come and see this and we stay!" [...] Yes, they appeared on screen, the whole film, and you never saw them naked. When they were undressed, they were gone. And then the next came. It was terrible. And I wanted to leave, but he said: "and now you stay, because you wanted to come here!"

Particularly when viewed in retrospect, respondents found even the more risqué films rather innocent. JC (male, 1926), for example, remembered that *Et Dieu... créa la femme* "was the porno of that time. When you saw a naked shoulder, it was already a reason for making confessions." JV (male, 1929), on the contrary, doubted whether you could call such films porn: "I don't know if that was porno, the real porno as it exists now. Because what they'd call sex films when I was young, are films for general audiences now." Also RR (male, 1939) downplayed the notoriety of such films: "Yes, yes, someone who went swimming in a tarn or something. Nothing special really, because now all that is admitted and they show more than they'd used to be. There used to be more nudity, now you see sex."

It was not only about nudity, but about social and moral issues as well, as the example of EJ (male, 1936) shows in detail:

Because it used to be much stricter than it is now, right. I mean, it was enough that there was one naked breast from a woman and the film had the label "children not admitted". It was also like, that when a marriage failed in a film, they just separated right... then it was "children not admitted". So there are films of which you say, "how can it be that this was not admitted for children?" Because we weren't supposed to know that couples could separate. [...] So the success of Brigitte Bardot came with one film, right. *Et Dieu... créa la femme*. You should see that film to realize how ridiculous this film was. Seriously. But it was a revolution in the sense, not because they'd show that much nudity, because actually very little nudity is shown, because I tell you, I think that you only see the naked back of Brigitte Bardot. And only in the beginning of the film, the very first scene and that's it. But the film was mostly a success, because that's where women's emancipation actually started. That was one thing: Normally it was always the man seducing the girl and the girl would fall in love with the man. That was how it... And then suddenly there is that character that takes the initiative herself, who doesn't care about being faithful. So actually the world was suddenly the other way around.

Similarly, violence and horror on screen were remembered as being much more innocent in the past. As a matter of fact, quite a few respondents who could not remember sexually explicit scenes in films in the past, recollected that the prohibition of certain films for children under sixteen years of age had probably to do with violence and horror on screen. AL (male, 1926), for example, confirmed that there were cinemas on Astridplein that would play third-rate films. Films which with, let's say, much more violence, shooting and killing... because pornographic films wouldn't exist at

that time. That came only later. Or sex films or things like that, that only came in the 1970s. But in my time, it didn't exist. That were second- and third-rate films, let's say. Sometimes still in black and white, white and black. Adventure films that we wouldn't go to see.

Along the same line EN (female, 1919) claimed that

[s]ex films didn't exist.... When the films were labeled "children not admitted" then it was more war films, gangster films... more like that. Because at that time, when I was 16, it didn't exist. [...] I can't remember that there were pornographic pictures. I don't think they would have shown that. [...] We didn't know about [catholic] censorship. There films where children were not allowed, but these were more box or gangster films. And we thought: that's for not passing on bad things, right. That children were not allowed... Because it said, children under such and such years not admitted. No [I didn't think about it], but that weren't porno films, right. I don't think that someone would get undressed. I never ever saw that in a movie. Never saw nudity or sex in a film. Never saw that. That was completely taboo.

Also, recollections of the rather innocent content and images in the films of the past are usually contrasted by comparing them to films in the present and suggesting possible reactions that the films of the past would evoke in today's viewers. This was explicated, for example by NG (male, 1955) who stated that "[s]cary films that would be shown then are film that we laugh about now." The laughableness and comparative innocence of the films of the past was also addressed by MB (female, 1928) who remembered that "[o]nly during the war there were a few films, where you'd laugh about now, but they'd talk about it in church. [What was bad about these films] is that there was a naked lady. *Das Bad auf der Tenne*, she took a bath. If you would see that now, you'd laugh yourself to death."

Connected to this perceived innocence of films in the past, is the questioning of censorship ratings at the time. While neither the existence nor the exact workings of the catholic censorship board was clear to many respondents (see, for example, FDM, male, 1945 and LR, female, 1952, who were even catholic, but had no memory of the catholic film ratings), they did remember the official ratings signaling whether or not a film was admitted for audiences under sixteen. Often, to respondents the banning of a film for younger audiences did not make sense and often they provided examples of films containing nudity scenes, as in the example of SVG (female, 1932): "Yes, that was completely taboo. They said that it wasn't suitable, but why, they'd never say. I didn't go particularly to see these films, because they'd say that it wasn't suitable. But it happened that a film was listed 'forbidden' and I'd already seen it. And then I thought: 'Well, why weren't you allowed to go and see that?' It wasn't a sex film or something like that, they'd only kiss."

Respondents' evaluation of censorship practices is characterized by a general dislike and a lack of understanding of their reasons of existence and they usually pointed to the harmless nature of the films, certainly compared to present day films. However, the respondents also contextualized it and linked their observations to a more general change of attitudes, implying that children today are used to nudity and (more) violence on screen. The memories of LV about watching *Snow White*

with her granddaughter (see paragraph 6.4.1) is only one of many examples. Another one is that of MC (female, 1921): “You don’t see anything when they’re kissing, do you? But now they’re making... much more, right. They’d show more to the kids. Whereas we... when we married we were still quite little silly people, right. After all, I had been dating for five years, but we still didn’t know what the kids know today, right. They know more than we used to know.”

MC resembles many other evaluations that are less anecdotal and more general in their judgement of changed attitudes amongst audiences in relation to the films’ content and images. Following Kuhn’s claim that a respondents’ “life stage is a significant component of the storytelling context”, these evaluations – which are certainly not always negative – might be interpreted as a shared feeling of lost innocence, where the lost innocence of the films reflects the lost innocence of the respondents themselves.¹²⁷⁵

6.5. Concluding remarks on Chapter 6

When reading and trying to make sense of the oral testimonies of Antwerp citizens about their experiences of cinemagoing in the past, it is essential to bear in mind that they do not provide direct access to the past, but are narratives of how this past was remembered and that these testimonies are liable to “models of story-telling which help turn events into meaningful structures”.¹²⁷⁶ Next to the respondents’ personal backgrounds and interests, this might help explain, for example, the rigorous distinctions between center and neighborhood cinemas, between the past and the present.

The aim of this oral history study of the experiences of cinemagoing in the past as remembered by Antwerp citizens was to understand how place, exhibition practices and the films themselves figured in their recollections. Similar to findings from previous studies for Flanders and abroad, place is a crucial element that structured respondents’ recollections. This is visible, on the one hand, on a more general level, in the clear distinction between neighborhood and center cinemas. On the other hand, the importance of place also emerged in respondents’ trips along memory lane, when reproducing the walks along the streets and across particular neighborhoods that were once their home environments. During these walks the cinemas served as spatiotemporal landmarks. Practices of cinemagoing generally differed for center and neighborhood cinemas and were bound to the different life stages and connected to that, the degree of mobility, of the respondents: whereas the cinemas in their home environment often constituted less of a threshold, as they required less effort and money to visit, for those respondents living outside the city center,

¹²⁷⁵ Kuhn, “Heterotopia, Heterochronia,” 106.

¹²⁷⁶ Rigney cited in Treveri Gennari and Dibeltulo, “It Existed Indeed,” 243.

the cinemas in the center were linked to different habits of cinema going, more as a good night out and less ritualized than attending cinemas in their own neighborhoods.

Closely linked to the place, then is exhibition practice, as cinemas in the center were remembered as offering more luxury and comfort than those in the neighborhoods. While this has been observed for other cities as well before, what is special for Antwerp are the rather positive memories of the cinemas belonging to Heylen's Rex cinema group, which were largely remembered as the best, offering higher comfort and service, and pictures in premiere. Although Heylen's power was acknowledged (and partly criticized) by some respondents as being responsible for less favorable conditions in competing cinemas, his reputation as a powerful exhibitor strongly emerged in the recollections studied here. Generally, the clear framing of cinemagoing memories along two dividing lines – that between center and neighborhood, and between past and present – underlines the claim by Ercole et al., that respondents structure their memories on a spatial and temporal axis.¹²⁷⁷

Finally, film preference as remembered by Antwerp citizens largely resonates with the findings in other studies, as I have shown in paragraph 6.4. This study has confirmed the gendered preference for some genres, including westerns and romantic dramas, that are known for targeting particular audience groups. At the same time, the analysis has also shown that these preferences are not unconditional and differ when respondents talk about their own personal preferences, rather than that of others (of peers). This might point to a tension between individual and collective memory and at the same time might be illuminating in how individual and collective memories interact with, and relate to, each other. Something similar holds for the finding that there is a considerable overlap in the remembered top films between Ghent and Antwerp respondents. A more thorough in-depth study of respondents' film preferences in combination with their individual profiles (for example in the form of short individual portraits) might lead to a better understanding of the relationship between individual and collective memory and might serve as point for departure for more comparative work.¹²⁷⁸

Generally, recollections appeared not to have been clearly different with regard to the respondents age, gender, and political/religious conviction, except for instances that have been discussed in the previous paragraphs. However, a more fine-grained examination of the testimonies along the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, including the 103 interviews that were not analyzed here, using digital tools for qualitative data analysis, could perhaps expose patterns which would in turn be useful in further comparative research of film preferences of historical audiences as well. In addition, as findings in this chapter and comparisons with existing research for other cities and countries and periods have laid bare similarities, but also differences

¹²⁷⁷ Ercole et al. "Mapping Cinema Memories".

¹²⁷⁸ For how short portraits can serve as analytical see Genneri Trevari and Dibeltulo, "It Existed Indeed".

that defy simple explanations, such as the generation gap, nostalgia, or national differences, this also calls for more comparative research in memories of cinemagoing: internationally as well as longitudinal. It thus remains open for investigation to explore underlying patterns and mechanisms in order to better understand not only which factors shape memories of cinema going but also the particularities of cinema memory as cultural memory.

Conclusion

In this thesis, the changes in film exhibition and experiences of cinemagoing in Antwerp have been examined in relation to the powerful exhibitor Georges Heylen and his Rex cinema group, by linking the institutional, business and film histories of Antwerp's cinema market to the oral history study of cinemagoing experiences as remembered by Antwerp citizens.

Based on historical material and data from various public archives and private collections complemented by oral testimonies and secondary literature, the changes in Antwerp's cinema landscape have been explored and related to the rise and fall of Heylen's Rex cinema group. Antwerp abounded in cinemas of all types and sizes. They were distributed across different municipalities (later districts of Antwerp) as well as the city center, but it was especially the Station Quarter that was marked by a strikingly high cinema density. While most of the cinemas outside of the Station Quarter had to close down in the course of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, cinema business in the Station Quarter remained quite lively. It was here that Georges Heylen started his career as a cinema entrepreneur and where the heart of his cinema group would beat. By the end of the 1960s, his Rex cinemas dominated the streetscape of the Station Quarter and with it its cultural and night life. Yet the socio-economic changes of the post-war decades left their traces also in this quarter and the adjacent neighborhoods where most of Heylen's cinemas were located. Changes in municipal housing policy, welfare, recreational patterns along with changed film preferences effected people's cinema-going habits and caused alarming cutbacks in Heylen's cinema business. His innovativeness in attracting cinemagoers, which characterized his entrepreneurship in the beginning of his career, made place for short-sighted solutions for structural problems, until, together with the Station Quarter, Heylen's empire was doomed to fall in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Complementing the industrial analysis of Antwerp's cinema market, a study of thirty-six in-depth interviews with Antwerp citizens about their memories of cinemagoing in Antwerp in the past has pointed to clear perceived distinctions between neighborhood and center cinemas on the one hand, and between past and present experiences of cinemagoing on the other. While respondents reported to have attended cinemas in the neighborhood as well as in the city center, their choice was often dictated by personal traits, including age, financial means, social and physical mobility as well as personal preferences for particular films and for the degree of comfort and service offered in the cinemas. Heylen's cinemas were particularly remembered for their beauty, comfort and up-to-date film programming. Hardly any memories were shared, however, about the degraded condition of the cinemas from the late 1970s onwards and his downfall in the 1990s. This might, on the one hand, result from the infrequent visits to the cinemas in respondents' later years. On the other hand, it might be explained by a certain degree of nostalgia clouding respondents' memories of the past,

when Antwerp was still a cinema city and was boasting of numerous cinema palaces within an arm's length.

The move away from the study of film texts towards their contexts of exhibition and consumption, which originates in Cultural Studies' multilayered conception of culture rather than reductionist models, gained particular momentum with the recent wave of work within new cinema history as a strand in film studies. In this thesis it has resulted in a multifaceted picture of Antwerp's film and cinema culture and exposed mutual rather than one-directional influences. By approaching Antwerp's cinema history from four different angles – place, exhibition structures, films and memories – it became clear that to a large extent cinema is not only about glamour and shine, but also about the constant struggle to survive in an ailing industry. This struggle involved local as well as international players, players from within as well as from outside the film industry, and was shaped by supply and demand. This points to the need for an integrative approach to cinema historiography, rather than studying film and cinema as an isolated phenomenon. After all, cinema (and cinemagoing) was firmly embedded in the flows of daily life routines and the socio-economic dynamics of very specific areas. In addition, the integration of oral testimonies by those who actually went to consume the films offered in the cinemas – those for which the cinemas reached out and at which the films were targeted – offered valuable insights in how the films, cinemas and cinemagoing were experienced.

The socio-historical approach taken in this thesis, and the move away from the study of film texts to its various contexts of exhibition and reception, has not – as some of its critics feared – resulted in the exclusion of the films themselves. On the contrary, film has always been the spine of the cinema industry; without films, cinemas would not exist in the first place. The film screening constitutes the focal point of film culture: it is the place where distributors, exhibitors and audiences meet. The quality, quantity as well as the diversity of the film supply in Antwerp's cinemas determined the success of cinemas as much as social, economic and cultural factors did (proximity to people's homes, ticket prices, competition, offer of alternatives for spending leisure time). Taking the analyses in "Antwerpen Kinemastad" a step further in this direction could involve textual analyses of, for example, the most popular films in terms of screening duration presented in Chapter 5, in order to examine more closely the nature and patterns of successful films to which Antwerp audiences had access in the past.¹²⁷⁹ I have briefly touched upon the success of screenings of films by Edith Kiel, for example, which was not only manifest in the prolongations on Antwerp screens, but also part of the oral testimonies of cinemagoers. Embedded in the socio-historical and economic contexts of their screenings a qualitative analysis of the commonalities and differences in film form and content would

¹²⁷⁹ I have already mentioned the work done by Pafort-Overduin in her research on the popularity of Dutch-language films in the Netherlands in the 1930s as prominent example (Pafort-Overduin, "Hollandse films met een Hollands hart").

enrich the investigations presented here, by exposing patterns of formulas of successful films, which could be linked to the taste and preferences of local audiences. As I have discussed in detail in Chapter 1, the seeds for such integrative approaches had been sown by film historians at least since the 1970s, boosting film historiographical debates in the 1980s and 1990s. In addition, the emergence of the digital humanities and the availability of new tools, methods and kinds of sources in the past two decades has facilitated and stimulated collaborations between experts in different fields, thereby paving the way for more mixed-method approaches in the field of film history. I will return to this below.

When placed in national and international contexts of film exhibition and reception, the case of Antwerp points to similarities and differences which in turn can be interpreted as points of departures for theory-building. The rapid and ongoing decline of the film industry, which manifested itself in the massive closure of cinemas after the 1950s, occurred in Antwerp just as it did in other Flemish cities and abroad. Viewed from a micro-perspective, however, differences are observable, for example with Ghent, where this process occurred much faster and more pervasively.

In addition, traditional ideas about the hegemony of Hollywood in Europe are on the one hand confirmed by the programming analysis which exposed a dominance of films from the American major studios in Antwerp cinemas in the 1950s. However, the programming analysis for this period has also shown that this dominance was not unconditional: it were foremost the neighborhood cinemas that predominantly screened films from the US, while the programming in center cinemas was more diverse and consisted of a mix of films from the US and European countries, such as France, Italy and Germany. In addition, as the findings on the arrival of the first multiplex in Antwerp have shown, despite existing claims about the blanketing of Europe by American multiplex chains, it is rewarding to examine the introduction of the multiplex on a local level. The Flemish market was dominated by two powerful (groups of) regional exhibitors who had their territories well defined. The opening of a multiplex was very much shaped by the struggles between these two (groups of) exhibitors – with each other and with local authorities. This suggests that the opening of new cinemas is not merely a top down decision, but the result of interactions on many different levels (regional and local, amongst politicians, city planners, exhibitors and, last but not least, customers).

Furthermore, the distribution conflict between Heylen and the American majors in the late 1960s and early 1970s supports existing findings, that local exhibitors were not completely without bargaining power. However, it also complicates traditional models for distribution strategies, such as the run-zone-clearance system and saturation release. The fact that – even if it was only for a restricted period of several months – films premiered in Antwerp's neighborhood cinemas instead of the more prestigious center cinemas underlines the need for more detailed studies for a thorough

understanding of patterns of distribution and exhibition. It suggests that top-down models of transnational film distribution can only partly explain the workings of the film industry on a local level, which was shaped by supply as well as demand, and the concrete shape of the local exhibition market.

Finally, the micro-case of Antwerp's cinema history in the second half of the twentieth century also supports existing ideas about the ways exhibitors sought to compensate the economic unpredictability of film as a cultural product by means of differentiation and targeted promotion. While acknowledging the need for a certain degree of standardization amongst the cinemas for economic reasons (cut costs, build a brand), the analysis of Heylen's exhibition and programming strategies also suggests a certain degree of differentiation (in terms of the cinemagoing experience, most notably comfort and film supply) amongst his cinemas. It shows that he successfully sought to differentiate and promote his cinemas and the film-viewing experience in the heydays of his career as an exhibitor, thereby eliminating most of his direct competitors during the 1950s and 1960s. This procured him with a quasi-monopoly position in Antwerp. However, the emergence of new competitors on the local market in the 1970s and his neglect to adapt quickly to changes in practices of cinemagoing and exhibition strategies eventually contributed to his downfall.

Examples such as these thus underline the value of (temporally and spatially restricted) micro-histories of exhibition markets, based on which explanations of the workings of the cinema sector and more global patterns of the circulation and consumption of films, can be grounded. In addition, the value of this thesis also lies in demonstrating the productive combination of different historical approaches, particularly of urban, business, film, and oral history. Despite the misfortune of Heylen's enterprise in the long run, the effort he had invested during the heydays of his cinema enterprise in terms of differentiation, promotion and film-viewing experience, made that even more than twenty years after his downfall, his name and his cinema empire were largely and predominantly positively remembered by Antwerp citizens. His role in keeping the city's cinema culture alive far into the 1970s, even after the ongoing recession in the film industry and a steady decline in cinema attendance had long took its toll on the cinema landscapes in other cities in the country and abroad, his contribution for making Antwerp a true *Kinemastad*, cannot be underestimated. The abundance of cinemas in the city, as described both in the institutional and oral histories, linked to the great choice of cinemas and films, as well as to daily life routines suggest that different ways of exhibition and reception made that cinema was not only the place to watch films, but also a space with which audiences could identify.

Linking cinema history and cinema memory thus invites a consideration of cinema as *lieux de mémoire*, at least with regard to three basic ideas of Nora's concept: first, as a site where history and memory meet; second, concerning the coexistence of the cinemas' functional, material, symbolic

values; third, the emphasis on changes in how cinemas and cinemagoing are perceived (remembered) throughout time. Conceptualizing cinema and cinemagoing as a social practice necessarily includes attention to their functional value (as places where films were screened), their material values (as buildings and therefore as parts of the streetscape shaping everyday life in a certain neighborhood) and their symbolic values (as meaning carriers for personal and social identities). The communities that were thus created occupied a shared space, actual as well as imagined: in the form of audiences in the actual buildings for the duration of a screening just as much as in the form of imagined communities that would outlast the screenings and make them participants in a shared history. As I have shown in this thesis, cinema as a shared space still had currency long after Antwerp had stopped being the *Kinemastad* it once had been. Also the fact that the building complex that had once housed several of Heylen's cinemas, including his flagship cinema Rex, was to be named *Rex Center* by the project developers after it had been sold to Gaumont in January 1995, points to the importance in keeping alive the city's cinema history as part of its citizens' collective memory.¹²⁸⁰

In Chapter 1 I have addressed the more general historiographical shifts (from grand narratives to aspiration for total histories; shifts in focus on great men and events to ordinary people and events; and from centers to margins) and how these shifts shaped film-historical inquiry. As I have shown, placed in an international context, the case of Antwerp confirms as well as conflicts with existing hypotheses, of for example the domination of Hollywood in Europe. Compared to metropolises such as New York, London, and Berlin, Antwerp can be considered a small city. However, measured by national standards, Antwerp is one of the largest cities and Heylen was one of the key players in the country's film exhibition and distribution. This ambivalence shows that discussions of scale strongly depend on the referential framework within which the research object is situated. In spite of the absence of Hollywood majors in Antwerp's cinema landscape, film culture in Antwerp was tied to Hollywood in several ways: Heylen's negotiations with major distributors, Hollywood glamour represented by the stars who visited the city, and last but not least, by the films made in Hollywood that were shown on Antwerp's screens.

The multi-faceted approach taken in this thesis has provided a multilayered picture of Antwerp's cinema history. It also means that a number of aspects that surfaced in the research process have received less attention than they might have deserved. The focus on Antwerp, for example, has as a consequence that Heylen's business transactions in other places – most notably Bruges, Pittem, and Ghent, where he was also active – has only been touched briefly. It would be rewarding to examine the relationship between his Antwerp enterprise and those in these cities in

¹²⁸⁰ G. Delveaux, "Rex herrijst als centrum voor cinema, horeca en winkels," *De Nieuwe Gazet*, June 7, 1995, 13; G.Fr., "Rex wordt Rex Center," *Gazet van Antwerpen*, June 7, 1995, 33.

more detail, in order to establish a fuller picture of his business strategies in relation to other competitors. Similarly, several sources (oral and written) suggest that Heylen and his cinema group benefitted from connections with authorities in local politics and the film business (in terms of mutual favors, for example), yet this has not been studied in sufficient depth, primarily due to scarcity of reliable sources. The same holds for a detailed reconstruction of Heylen's cinema group, including, for example, management, staff and real estate property.

The value of case studies like "Antwerpen Kinemastad" has been addressed on several occasions in the course of this thesis. Nevertheless, in light of theory building and in order to draw grounded conclusions, they need to be contextualized and placed in relation to comparable case studies. Heylen's role for Antwerp's cinema culture has been established in various ways. However, in order to determine the exceptionalness of his position and the way he handled his business, it needs to be compared with other exhibitors, in Flanders, Belgium and abroad. I have pointed out several instances where changes in Antwerp's exhibition market as well as Heylen's actions and experiences as an exhibitor bear parallels with those in other places – insights that nonetheless require more thorough and systematic comparisons. As a matter of fact, in the course of this PhD project, a number of projects and initiatives commenced that have been using the data and insights generated for "Antwerpen Kinemastad" in comparative perspective.¹²⁸¹ Furthermore, as I have addressed in Chapter 1 and 2, the growing body of work done by new cinema historians – of which many are members of the HoMER Network – attests to a movement away from isolated studies towards integrative and comparative approaches.

However, the step to theorizing is still to be made. This is perhaps best illustrated by the overarching topic of the 2019 HoMER conference, titled "Anchoring New Cinema Histories", which explicitly sought for contributions to provide more theoretical and methodological grounding of existing research.¹²⁸² Creating a patchwork of multilayered new cinema histories could substantially contribute to such a theoretical and methodological grounding. Ideally, engaging in comparative history, would require carefully designed research projects. Research models from, amongst others, transnational or world history, could serve as inspirations.¹²⁸³ In practice, however, a large majority

¹²⁸¹ Examples include "Moviegoing at the docks," "CINECOS," the PhD project "Comparative New Cinema History. A Theoretical and Methodological Exploration with a Case Study on Brno (Czech Republic), Antwerp and Ghent (Belgium)" (Vandenbunder Baillet Latour Chair for Film Studies and Visual Culture, 2017-2019, promotors: Philippe Meers (ViDi, University of Antwerp, Belgium), Daniël Biltereyst (Ghent University, Belgium), Pavel Skopal (Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic), researcher: Porubcanska Terézia (University of Antwerp)), as well as a collaboration of international colleagues from Belgium, the Netherlands, Great Britain, Sweden and Italy that resulted in a co-authored panel at the HoMER/Circuits of Cinema conference in Toronto in 2017 ("Shared Pleasures? Comparing Film Practices in European Harbor Cities: Antwerp, Bari, Gothenburg and Rotterdam," panel held at the "Circuits of Cinema – Histories of Movie and Media Distribution" conference, Toronto, June 21 – 24, 2017), and two articles (Van Oort et al., "Mapping Film Programming across Post-War Europe"; Pafort-Overduin et al., "Moving films").

¹²⁸² See the corresponding call for papers: HoMER Network. "CfP HoMER Conference 2019".

¹²⁸³ See, for example, respectively, J. Kocka and H.-G. Haupt. "Comparison and Beyond: Traditions, Scope, and Perspectives of Comparative History," in *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European approaches and new perspectives*, edited by H.-G. Haupt and J. Kocka (New York/Oxford: Berghahn, 2009), 1-30, and Stearns, *World History*.

of case studies written by cinema historians were not initially conceived as comparative projects.¹²⁸⁴ In order to still be able to draw more general conclusions based on individual case studies, comparative cinema histories would need to meet at least the following two requirements.

First, in order to be able to systematically compare individual case studies, the units that are compared need to be defined as clearly as possible. This includes spatial units (What do we mean by local, regional? How do we define administrative divisions, such as neighborhoods, districts, cities, agglomerations?) as well as temporal units (Should we base a programming analysis, for example, on screening days or weeks? And, connected to this, how do we determine samples: calendar years or years as they are dictated by film distribution practices; would one year per decade be sufficient or would it be more wise to compare consecutive years?). Next to spatial and temporal units, economic and administrative units also need specification (Do we define cinema in general terms as venues where film screenings are organized, independent of frequency, type of film and type of venue? Does the unit “exhibitor” include cinema owners and managers alike?). Needless to say that, from a practical point of view, in order to be able to compare the different datasets then, they need to be harmonized, which requires that the formats in which the data were initially collected should be (made) interoperable.

Second, productive comparison not only includes the identification of differences and similarities between the individual cases, but also requires an examination of how particular aspects (units if you will) relate and connect to each other, within one case as well as between cases. As I have shown, exchange of goods (here: films) *and* knowledge (of both, the local market and its potential audiences, and the workings of the film industry) shapes how local cinema markets operate and change. Instead of ascribing behavior and change to isolated cases, attention to interrelations helps to disclose the workings of local cinema cultures in their full complexity.

The development of novel tools and methods in the wake of digital humanities approaches to film history has spurred collaborative initiatives for collecting and sharing data and insights. Several of these projects have been mentioned in the course of this thesis. Their added value lies not only in the collaborative way of data collection and valorization, but also in the way the data as well as the research findings are presented, increasingly online, in the form of project websites. In addition to the dissemination of data and research results that are thus made available to scholars and to a broader community of interested persons alike, open access databases such as Cinema Context facilitate and stimulate an active engagement with the data themselves, by providing tools for downloading (parts of) the datasets and by offering examples and tutorials for a creative use of the data which can be tailored to specific needs and research interests. Current plans to make Cinema

¹²⁸⁴ For a comprehensive overview of the challenges of comparative research in cinema history see Biltereyst et al., “Comparing Historical Cinema Cultures,” 98-101.

Context available as linked open data (LOD) pave the way for broadening the scope of historical research even further. For Belgium, the inter-university infrastructure project CINECOS offers promising perspectives for historical inquiries into local film and cinema cultures. Largely based on the Cinema Context model, it integrates various datasets that have been created in the past fifteen years, including structural databases for institutional histories (cinemas and programming) and oral histories, including those for Antwerp. Similar to Cinema Context, the CINECOS datasets will be open access and accompanied by concrete examples to illustrate their richness and stimulate their creative use. Initiatives as these are laudable as they invite a broader community to contribute to existing insights and to write countless new cinema histories in the future that can be added and compared with present ones.

The writing of new cinema histories is open ended and subject to constant revision, because it depends on the availability of (additional) sources and new insights from other cases as well as the same case. This also applies to “Antwerpen Kinemastad”. New projects (and perhaps active engagement with the CINECOS datasets) focusing on Antwerp, whether or not in comparative perspective, can build on the findings presented in this thesis. As I have shown in several chapters in this thesis, the year 1993 heralded the beginning of a new chapter for “Antwerpen Kinemastad”, with the end of Heylen’s Rex cinema group and the arrival of the city’s first multi- and megaplex. What it precisely meant for the physiognomy of Antwerp’s cinema landscape and the cinemagoing experiences of the city’s residents as well as its visitors, is one chapter about “Antwerpen Kinemastad” that still needs to be written.

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Koninklijk Filmarchief België, national film archive, Brussels.

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Private collection of Serge Bosschaerts, Schoten.

Private collection of Marie-Louise Christeyns and Johan Hollants, Zwijndrecht.

Private collection of Paul Corluy, Antwerp.
Private collection Frans Druyts, Antwerp.
Private collection Frank van der Kinderen, Antwerp.
Private collection Jos van Liempt, Antwerp.
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Appendix

The appendix consists of two major parts. Appendix I is attached below and includes supplements that are referred in several instances in different paragraphs in the thesis and that are necessary to be able to follow the explanations in the text. Appendix II contains additional supplements that are not necessary to follow the explanations, but might be consulted for further research (see overview below). Due to the sensitivity of some parts of these data and information collected within the frameworks of this PhD project, Appendix II is only provided to the members of the jury involved in the defense of this dissertation. Digital versions may, however, be requested at all times via e-mail: Lotze.Kathleen@gmail.com.

Appendix II

1. Inventory database “‘Enlightened’ City” Antwerp
2. Inventory database “Antwerpen Kinemastad”
3. Overview of cinemas included in the programming data collection and analysis
4. Programming databases
 - a. 1952
 - b. 1962
 - c. 1972
 - d. 1982
5. Checklist interviews
6. Overview of respondents’ profiles
7. Anonymized transcripts
8. Overview of most mentioned film titles, stars, and genres

Chapter 3

Figure 3.1: Overview of the nine districts constituting the agglomeration of Antwerp since 1982.

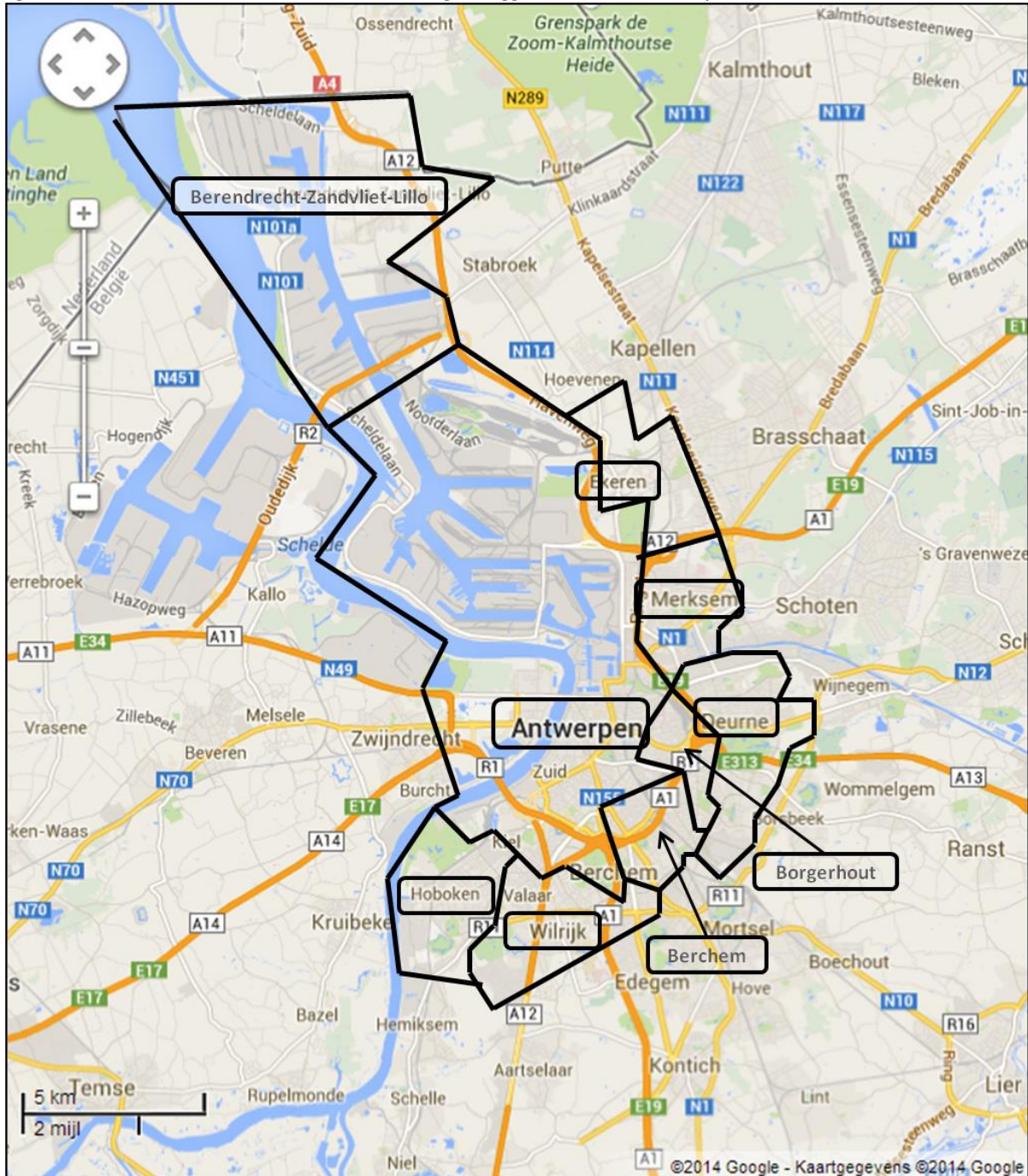


Table 3.1: Data included in the inventory database (columns added for “Antwerpen Kinemastad” are indicated in italics)

<i>Column's title in database</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<i>Year</i>	the sample year the entry in the database refers to
<i>Location listed</i>	location of the venue as listed in source
<i>Current location</i>	current location of the venue
<i>Current postal code</i>	current postal code of the venue
<i>Name cinema</i>	name of the cinema
<i>Remarks</i>	remarks on the venue, e.g. sex cinema, located in cellar of building XYZ...
<i>Earlier name</i>	earlier name of the venue
<i>Later name</i>	later name of the venue
<i>Listed address</i>	complete address of the venue as listed in source (only if divergent from standard address)
<i>Standard address</i>	address most commonly listed
<i>Street number</i>	street number of the venue
<i>Start</i>	year of opening
<i>End</i>	year of closure
<i>Ideological</i>	ideological affiliation of the cinema (e.g. catholic, socialist)
<i>Geographical</i>	neighborhood/district in which the cinema is located
<i>Number of screens</i>	number of screens
<i>Number of seats screen 1</i>	number of seats in screen 1
<i>Number of seats screen 2</i>	number of seats in screen 2
<i>Number of seats screen 3</i>	number of seats in screen 3
<i>Number of seats screen 4</i>	<i>number of seats in screen 4</i>
<i>Number of seats screen 5</i>	<i>number of seats in screen 5</i>
<i>Total number of seats</i>	total number of seats in the cinema
<i>Name cinema person 1</i>	family name of person 1 involved in exploitation of the venue
<i>First name cinema person 1</i>	first name of person 1 involved in exploitation of the venue
<i>Function cinema person 1</i>	function of person 1 involved in exploitation of the venue (e.g. exhibitor, owner)
<i>Name cinema person 2</i>	family name of person 2 involved in exploitation of the venue
<i>First name cinema person 2</i>	first name of person 2 involved in exploitation of the venue
<i>Function cinema person 2</i>	function of person 2 involved in exploitation of the venue (e.g. exhibitor, owner)
<i>Name cinema person 3</i>	family name of person 3 involved in exploitation of the venue
<i>First name cinema person 3</i>	first name of person 3 involved in exploitation of the venue
<i>Function cinema person 3</i>	function of person 3 involved in exploitation of the venue (e.g. exhibitor, owner)
<i>Organisation name</i>	name of the company or organisation involved in exploitation of the venue (e.g. MGM, Jesuit order, Catholic Film League)
<i>Current state</i>	current state of the building (e.g. demolished, houses supermarket, vacant)
<i>Comment</i>	memos/observations by researcher or person responsible for data entry (e.g. 1 st purpose-built cinema, unclear when cinema changed name)
<i>Source 1 title</i>	title source 1 from which the evidence is derived
<i>Source 2 title</i>	<i>title source 2 from which the evidence is derived</i>
<i>Source 2 date</i>	<i>publication date source 2</i>
<i>Source 2 page number</i>	<i>page number source 2</i>

Figure 3.2: Map depicting the first sample area (Station Quarter), with its main axis the De Keyserlei at the center of the map, with its West end leading to one of the main entrances of Antwerp's central station (lower right corner).

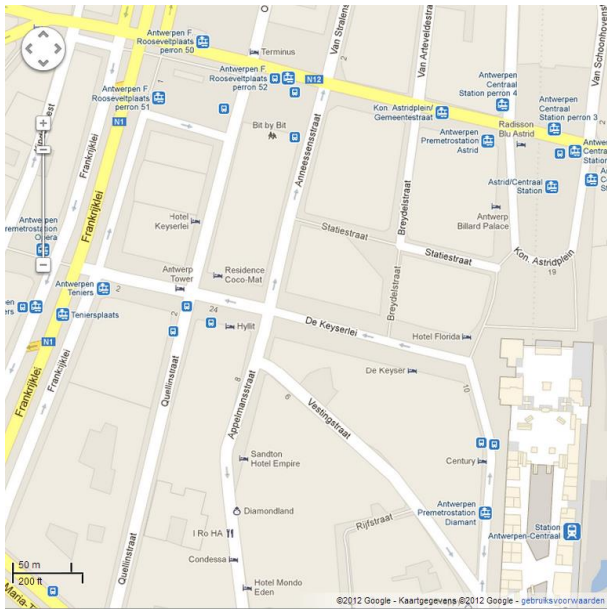


Figure 3.3: Map of core sample area, including (part of) the Station Quarter (indicated here by its postal code 2018), the neighborhoods Stuivenberg, Amandus-Atheneum (both 2060), and district Borgerhout (2140).

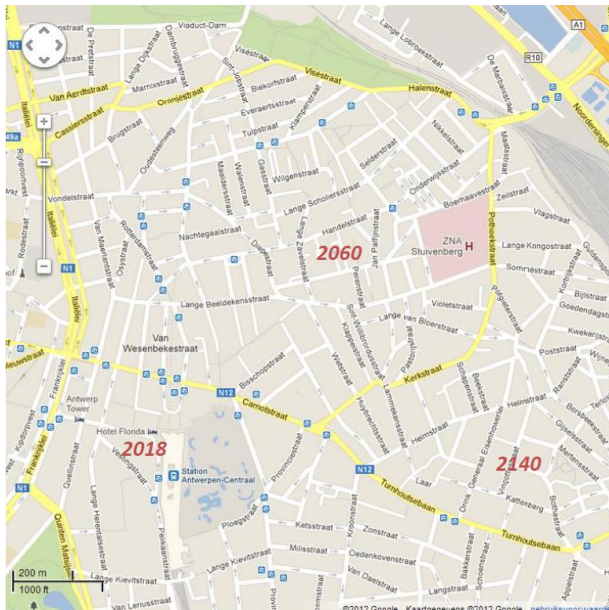
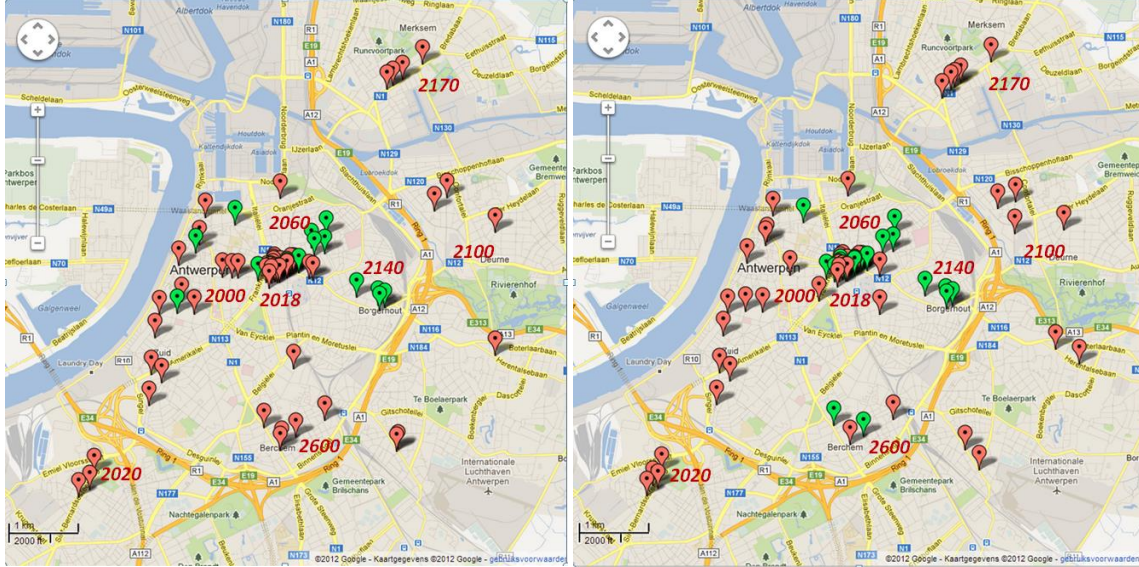


Figure 3.4: Map depicting the extended sample area, with postal codes referring to (parts of) researched neighborhoods and districts (2000 – historical center and Antwerp South, 2018 – Station Quarter, 2020 – Kiel, 2060 – Stuivenberg/Amandus/Atheneum, 2100 – district Deurne, 2140 – district Borgerhout, 2170 – district Merksem, 2600 – district Berchem).

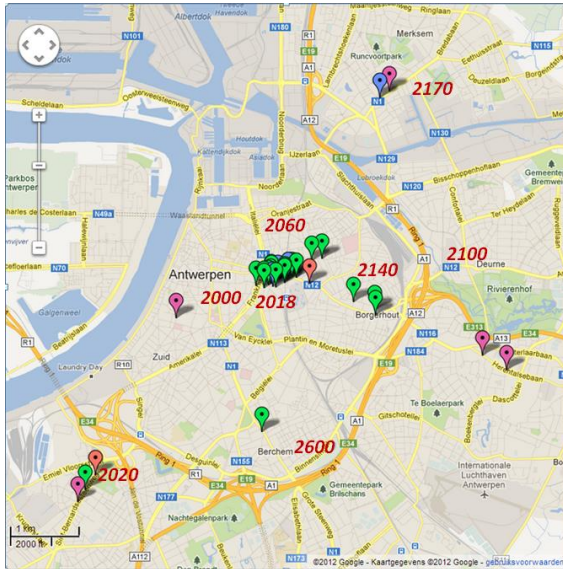


Figure 3.5: Map of cinemas within the extended sample area (for areas linked to postal codes see Figure 3.4 above) in respectively 1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992. The Green markers depict cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group; red: competing cinemas; purple in map 1972: cinemas belonging to the VOZA; blue: exhibitor's name not documented.



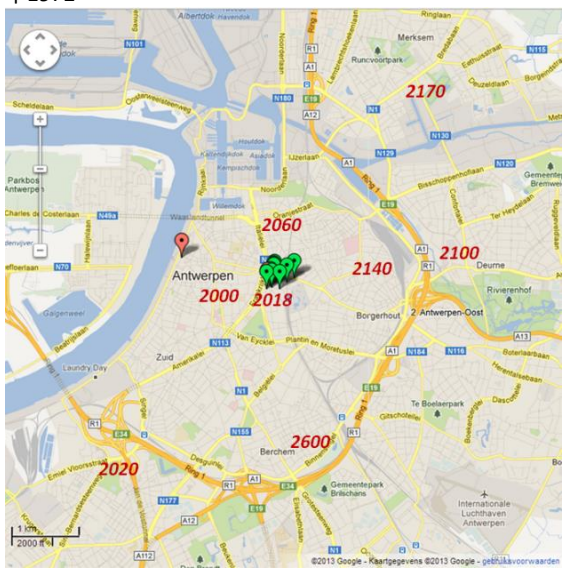
↑1952

↑1962



↑1972

↑1982



1992

Figure 3.6: Map of cinemas within the core sample area in respectively 1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992. The green markers depict cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group, red: competing cinemas; blue: exhibitor's name not documented.

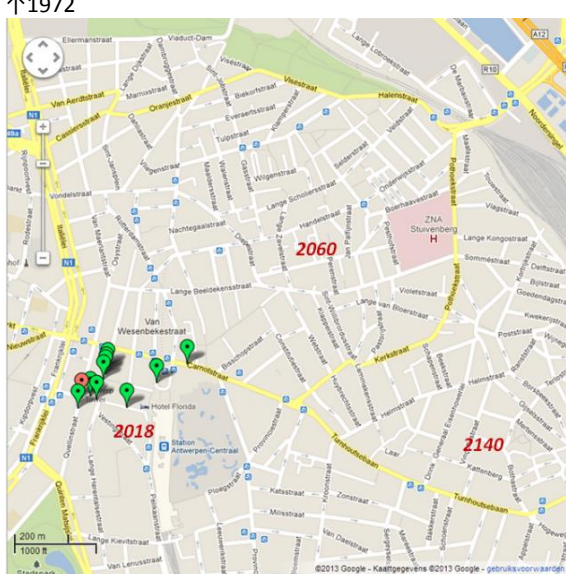
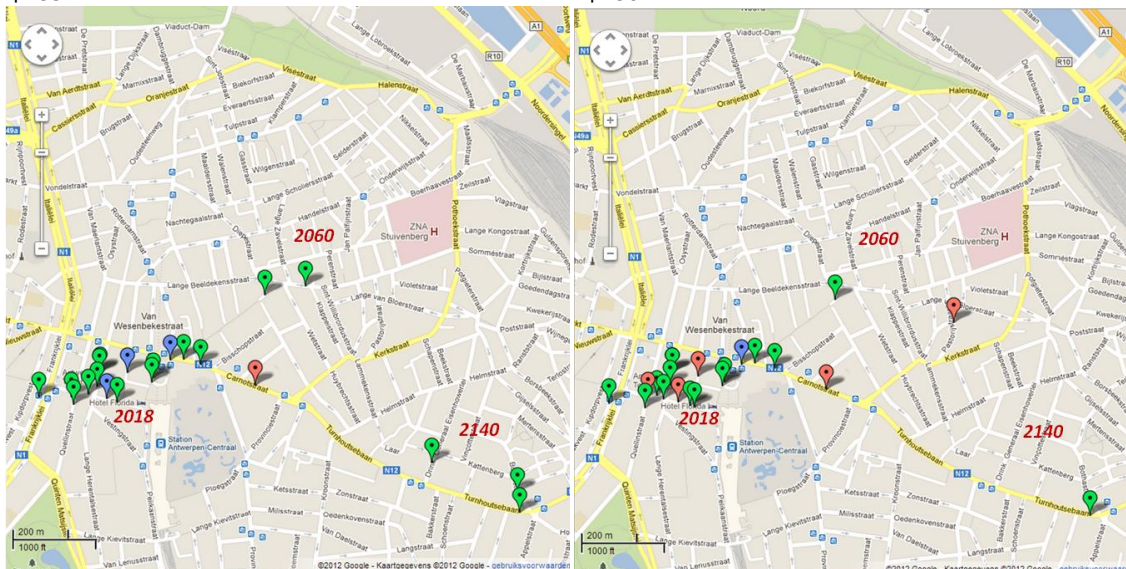
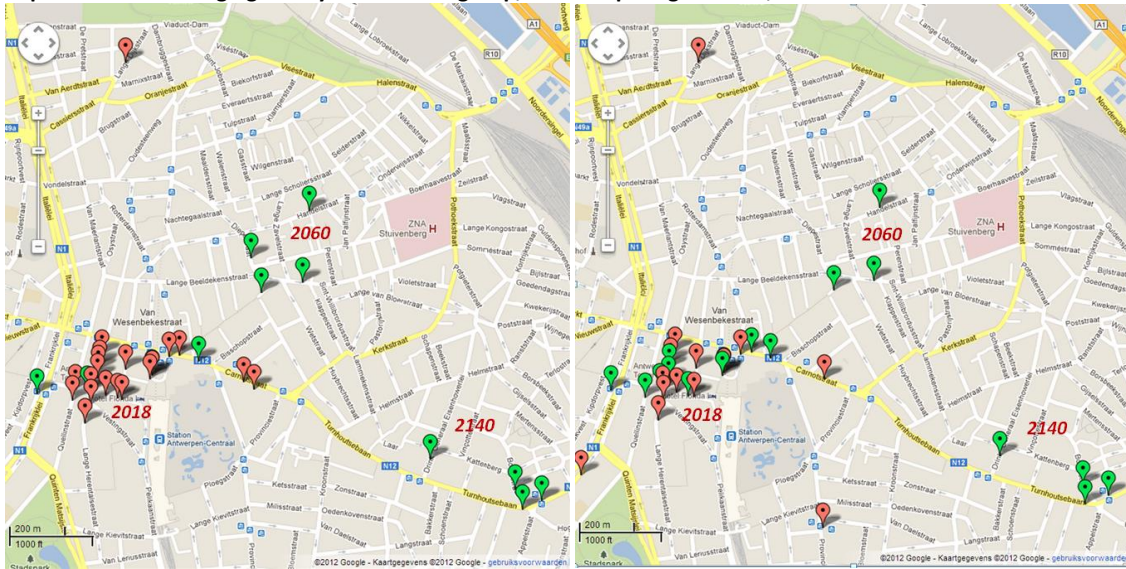
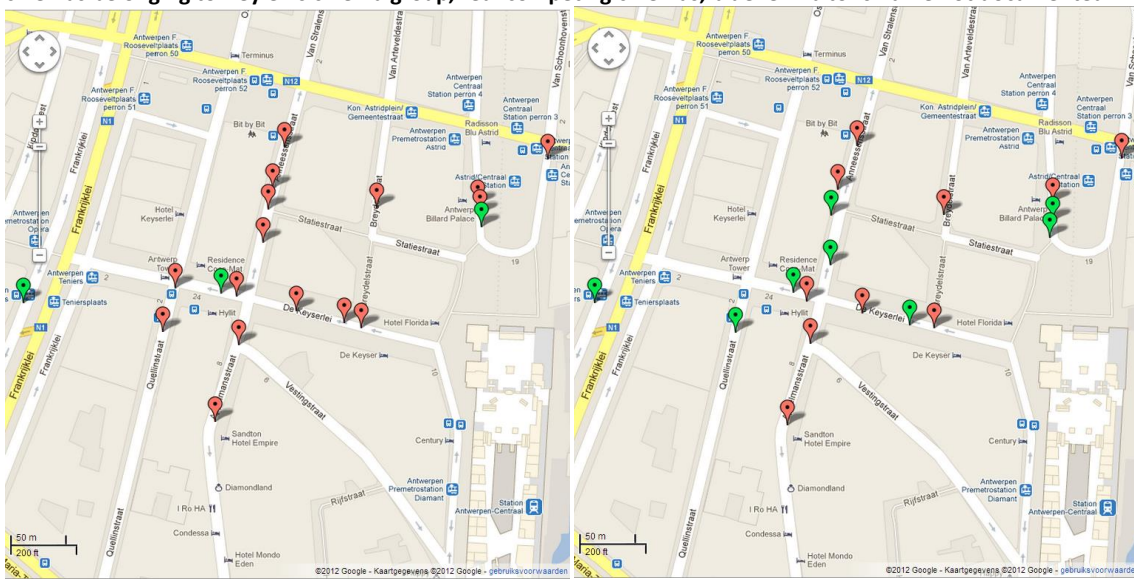
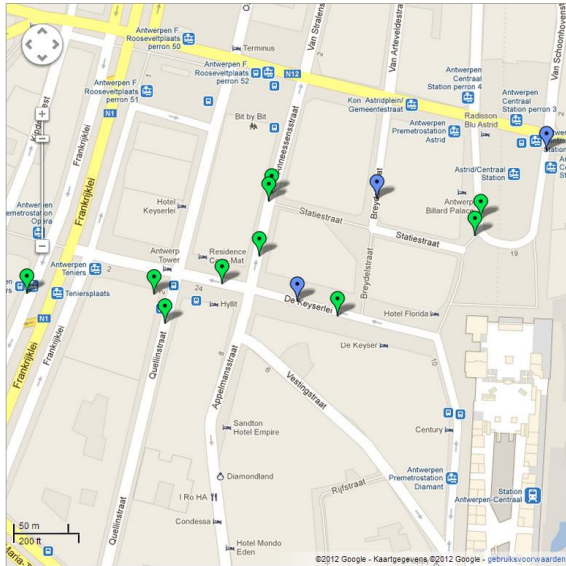


Figure 3.7: Map of cinemas in the Station Quarter in respectively 1952, 1962, 1972, 1982, 1992. The green markers depict cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group, red: competing cinemas, blue: exhibitor's name not documented.



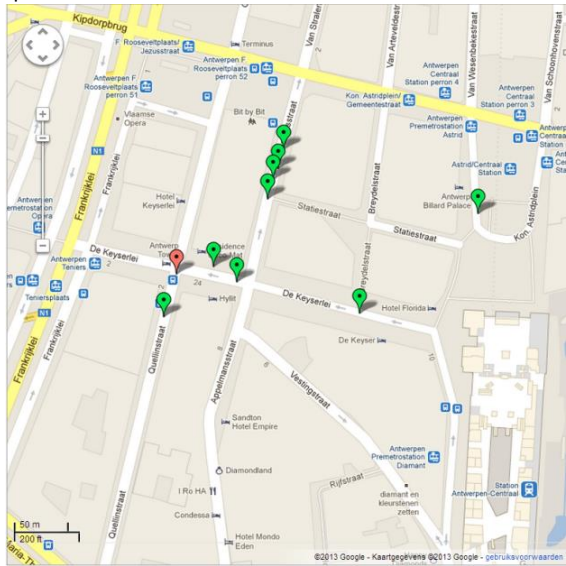
↑1952

↑1962



↑1972

↑1982



↑1992

Table 3.2: Number of venues/screens according to seating capacity in the extended sample area in the five sample years (all percentages refer to the total share of screens, which for 1952, 1962 and 1972 was equal to the number of venues).

	1952		1962		1972		1982		1992			
	# v e n .	%	# v e n .	%	# v e n .	%	# v e n .	# s c r .	% s c r .	# v e n .	# s c r .	
<500	1	16,2	9	13,8	4	11,4	7	2	56,1	3	2	78,6
500-999	3	51,5	3	60,0	1	54,3	1	3	29,3	3	2	10,7
1,000-1,500	1	26,5	1	21,5	1	31,4	1	2	14,6	5	3	10,7
>1,500	4	5,9	3	4,6	1	2,9	0	0	0,0	0	0	0,0
<i>Total #</i>	6	100,0	6	100,0	3	100,0	2	4	100,0	1	2	100,0
	8		5		5		6	1		1	8	

Table 3.3: Cinemas according to exhibitors in extended sample area in all five sample years (n/d = not documented; Heylen's cinemas are marked in bold; 1972: cinemas which joined the VOZA are indicated as such within brackets).

1952		1962		1972		1982		1992	
Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor
Postal code 2000 Antwerp historic center (Schipperskwartier, Paardenmarkt-Stadswaag, Sint-Andrieskwartier, Het Zuid etc.)									
Alhambra	Alkema	Alhambra	Quisenaerts						
Artis	Depuydt	Artis	Depuydt	Artis	n/d				
Cameo	Dessente (SA Cobelciné)	Cameo	NV Kinobel						
Coliseum	Hendrickx								
Kemo	Heylen	Kemo	De Backer						
Kinox	Heylen	Kinox	De Backer	Kinox	n/d (VOZA)				
Lido	Hendrickx	Lido	Hendrickx						
Odeon	Heylen	Odeon	Heylen	Odeon	Heylen	Odeon	Heylen		
Peter Benoit	Morel								
Ritz	Wellens	Ritz	Wellens	Ritz	Wellens				

1952		1962		1972		1982		1992	
Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor
Roxy	Spanoghe/de Paep								
Sint-Jan-Berchmans-college	Lauwers/Callens	Sint-Jan-Berchmans-college	Callens						
Winterpaleis	Gebruers	Winterpaleis	Heylen						
Zuidpool	Elst	Zuidpool	Elst						
		Elckerlyc	Jezuïetenorde						
						Cartoon's	Apers/Kloeck	Cartoon's	Kloeck
						Filmhuis	Duterne		
Total #: 14	11	12	10	4	(2)	3	3	1	1
Postal code 2018 Station Quarter, Brederode									
A.B.C.	Ostvogels	Vendôme	Heylen	Vendôme	Heylen	Vendôme	Heylen		
Ambassades	De Backer (SA Cobelciné)	Ambassades	NV Kinobel	Ambassades	Heylen	Ambassades	Heylen	Ambassades	Heylen
Anvers Palace	Tyck/Gommers/Mer mans	Anvers Palace	Tyck						
Astrid	Heylen	Astrid	Heylen	Astrid	Heylen	Astrid	Heylen	Astrid	Heylen
Capitole	Dessente	Capitole	Heylen	Capitole	Heylen	Capitole	Heylen		
Cineac	Grison	Cineac	Grison			Brabo/Tijl/Wapper	Heylen	Brabo/Tijl/Wapper	Heylen
Cinex	Van den Heuvel	Cinex	Mertens						
Crosly	Payeur					Calypso 1+2+Club	Meerburg	Calypso 1+2+Club	Kloeck
Eden	Tyck/Gommers/Mer mans	Quellin	Heylen (NV Anbima)	Quellin	Heylen	Quellin 1+2+3	Heylen	Quellin 1+2+3	Heylen
Empire	Spanoghe/de Paep	Empire	De Paep						
Forum	Bastiaenssens/Bekens/Alkema	Forum	NV Filmco	Forum	Heylen				
Kursaal/Savoy	Doisy	Savoy	Heylen	Savoy	Heylen	Savoy	Heylen		
Lux	Spanoghe/de Paep	Lux	De Clerck						
Metro	MGM	Metro	Heylen	Metro	Heylen	Metro 1+2	Heylen	Metro 1+2	Heylen
Monty	Lievens	Monty	Lievens	Monty	Apers/Kloeck (VOZA)	Monty	Apers/Kloeck		

1952		1962		1972		1982		1992	
Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor
Pathé	Tyck/Gommers/Mermans	Pathé	Tyck	Pathé	Heylen	Sinjoor	Heylen	(Sinjoor) ¹²⁸⁵	Heylen
Plaza	François/Souan	Plaza	François	Plaza	n/d	Plaza	Van Ex		
Regina	Dessente	Regina	SA Cobelciné	Paris	n/d	Paris	Schiettecatte		
Rex	Heylen	Rex	Heylen	Rex	Heylen	Rex+Rex Club	Heylen	Rex+Rex Club	Heylen
Royal	Declercq	Royal	Verzwijfel	Royal	n/d	Royal	n/d		
Studio de Paris	Gyles/van Houdt	Studio de Paris	Gyles/van Houdt						
Studio Movv	In het Panhuis	Studio Movv	In Het Panhuis						
								Odeon 1+2+3+4	Heylen
Total #:	22	17	21	14	(2)	15	(5)	9	2
Postal code 2020 Kiel									
Centra	François/Souan	Centra	Mertens	Centra	n/d (VOZA)				
Micro	Bastiaenssens/Alkema/Bekens	Micro	Bastiaenssens						
Modern Palace	Bastiaenssens/Alkema/Bekens	Modern Palace	Bastiaenssens	Moderne	n/d	Moderne	Clayes		
Nova	Langohr	Nova	Langohr	Nova	Langohr				
Total #:	4	3	4	2	3	(1)	1	1	0
Postal code 2060 Amandus-Atheneum, Stuivenberg, Dam									
Astra	Bosmans	Astra	Heylen	Astra	Heylen	Astra	Heylen		
Americain Palace	Heylen								
Dixi	Heylen	Dixi	Heylen						
Festa	Goossens/Jacobs	Festa	Heylen	Festa	Heylen	Festa	Heylen		
Majestic	Hendrickx								
National	Heylen	National	Heylen	National	Heylen				
Pax	Eyckmans	Pax	Eyckmans						
Rio	De Decker	Scala	Mertens	Scala	Mertens (VOZA)	Scala	Mertens		
Rubens	Bastiaenssens/Alkema	Rubens	Heylen	Rubens	Heylen	Rubens	Heylen	Rubens	Heylen
						Centrumtheater	Duterne		
Total #:	9	7	7	3	5	2	5	3	1

¹²⁸⁵¹²⁸⁵ Cinema Sinjoor (formerly cinema Pathé) closed down at De Keyserlei 30 on 16 January 1992, to be reopened again a month later replacing cinema Ambassades at Anneessenstraat 20.

1952		1962		1972		1982		1992	
Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor
Postal code 2100 Deurne									
Lackbors	Van Camp	Lackbors	Gijssels						
Plaza	Dyck, J.	Plaza	Dyck, J.						
Reo	Lambert								
Rix	Dyck, M.	Rix	Dyck, J.						
		Capri	Pauwels	Capri	n/d (VOZA)	Trioscoop 1+2+3	Senden		
		Centra	Stevens/Dijck						
		Elite	Lambert	Elite	n/d (VOZA)				
Total #:	4	4	6	5	2	(0)	1	1	0
Postal code 2140 Borgerhout									
Century	Heylen	Century	Heylen	Century	Heylen				
Luxor	Heylen	Luxor	Heylen						
Roma	Heylen	Roma	Heylen	Roma	Heylen	Roma	Heylen		
Victory	Heylen	Victory	Heylen	Victory	Heylen				
Total #:	4	1	4	1	3	1	1	1	0
Postal code 2170 Merksem									
Astoria	De Schutter	Astoria	Sevenhans						
Cameo	De Schutter								
Luro	Luycks	Luro	Luycks						
Palace	NV Cipa	Palace	Sevenhans	Palace	VOZA				
		Select	Van Bastelaere						
		Tosca	De Roeck	Tosca	n/d (Heylen)				
Total #:	4	2	5	4	2	(0)	0	0	0

1952		1962		1972		1982		1992	
Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor	Name cinema	Exhibitor
Postal code 2600		Berchem							
Berchem Palace	Hendrickx (NV Gerex)	Berchem Palace	Heylen	Berchem Palace	Heylen	Berchem Palace	Heylen		
Corso	Derkinderen	Corso	Heylen						
De Leeuw	Potvin/Goris	De Leeuw	Goris						
Flora	Van Aperon	Orly	Mertens						
Luxor	De Weerd	Luxor	De Weerd						
Nova	Allyn	Nova	Allyn						
Variétés	Duriaux								
Total #:	7	6	5	1	1	1	1	0	0

Chapter 4

Table 4.1: List of all companies (in alphabetical order) belonging to Heylen's cinema empire at one time or another. Companies marked with * were declared bankrupt in 1993/1994, all remaining ones before that).¹²⁸⁶

<i>Name of the Rex company</i>	<i>Cinemas exploited</i>	<i>Other primary functions</i>
*PVBA Anbima (i.e. Antwerpse bioscoopmaatschappij)	Quellin	
*NV Antwerp cine	Astrid, Dixi	
*NV Artwe (i.e. Artisanale Werkers)		Maintenance of cinemas
*NV Astra	Astra, Vendôme	
NV Berchemse Kinemautbating	Berchem Palace, Flora	
*NV Cenki		Acquisition of cinema equipment; trading in beverages and candy for several cinemas
*NV Cifia		
*NV Cinekust		
NV Eden	Eden / Quellin	
*NV Excelsior		Exploitation of film rights
*NV Festa	Real, Festa	
*NV Filimpex		Owner Quellin; Exploitation of film rights
*NV Frobera België	Cinemas in Bruges	Owner of cinemas in Bruges (Memlinc, Zwarthuis, Gulden Vlies, Rembrandt, van Eyck)
*NV Immo Anneessens		
*NV Immo Cinam	Ambassades 1-4+Sinjoor (Anneessensstr.)	
*NV Kursaal D'Anvers	Savoy	
NV MOB (i.e. Maatschappij voor onroerend beheer)		
NV National	National	
*NV Odeon	Odeon, Odeon 1-4	
*NV Pathe		
*NV Rexciné	Rex, Rex Club	Owner of Ambassades, Metro, Odeon
NV Roma	Roma, Century, Victory, Luxor	
*NV Rubenspaleis	Metro, Metro 1-2, Rubens	
NV Theatre des Avenues		
NV van Bree & Poppe		

¹²⁸⁶ See, for example, M. van Passel, letter to Fonds tot vergoeding van de in geval van sluiting van ondernemingen ontslagen werknemers, Antwerp, July 14, 1994: 2; M. van Passel, "Eindverslag inzake faillissement N.V. Cenki. Faill.nr. 13.846," March 2004, 2; overview Rex bankruptcies by van Passel in Van den G. Borne, letter to M. van Passel, Kontich, June 7, 2002, 2-3.

Table 4.2: Limited liability companies (NVs) linked to Heylen in 1959 based on the legal report by Gogne, “Deskundig verslag”.

Name of company (NV)	Foundation	Shareholders				Exploited cinemas
		upon foundation	Shares (in %)	in 1959	Shares (in %)	
NV Rexciné	emerged out of the S.A. pour l'Exploitation du Café Universal (founded in 1897), renamed NV Rexciné in 1941	unknown, in 1956 it was: Fam. van Reybroeck Fam. de Wolf G. Heylen R. Anthonis	48 36 10 6	Fam. van Reybroeck G. Heylen Swiss Group	48 1 51	Rex (Metro)
NV Odeon	25 May 1949	Fam. van Reybroeck Fam. Heylen R. Anthonis Th. Pirenne	38,5 48 12,5 1	Fam. van Reybroeck Fam. Heylen R. Anthonis Swiss Group	37,5 1,5 11,5 48,5	Odeon
NV Antwerp Cine	15 May 1950	Fam. de Wolf Fam. van Reybroeck Fam. Heylen R. Anthonis M. Th. Strooband Th. Pirenne	16,33 16,66 33,33 16,33 17 0,33	Fam. van Reybroeck Fam. Heylen R. Anthonis Swiss Group unregistered shares	16,66 0,66 16 65,66 1	Astrid Dixi
NV Cine Roma	13 July 1951	J. Heylen (father) G. van Reybroeck F. de Wolf H. van Hove R. Anthonis M. Th. Strooband Th. Pirenne	98,5 0,25 0,25 0,25 0,25 0,25 0,25			Roma Century Victory Luxor (Rubens)

<i>Name of company (NV)</i>	<i>Foundation</i>	<i>Shareholders</i>			<i>Exploited cinemas</i>	
		<i>upon foundation</i>	<i>Shares (in %)</i>	<i>in 1959</i>		<i>Shares (in %)</i>
<i>NV Festa</i>	8 September 1952	M. Th. Strooband M. Cools J. Bauwens E. de Meester L. van de Velde P. Wuyts Th. Pirenne	1 1 1 94 1 1 1			<i>Festa Real</i> (closed in 1957)
			<u>100</u>			
<i>NV Kinema Astra</i>	4 May 1953	G. Heylen F. Bosmans R. Anthonis F. de Wolf G. van Reybroeck M. Th. Strooband Th. Pirenne	50 10 10 10 10 6 4	G. Heylen G. van Reybroeck M. Th. Strooband Th. Pirenne Swiss Group unregistered shares	10,2 10 79,5 0,3	Astra Vendôme
			<u>100</u>		<u>100</u>	
<i>NV Berchemse Kinema-uitbating (i.e. Berchem Cinema Exploitation)</i>	23 July 1954	M. Th. Strooband M. Cools F. L. Doisy E. de Meester Th. Pirenne F. Bosmans L. van de Velde	15 15 15 15 10 15 15			Berchem Palace <i>Flora</i> (closed in 1958, re-opened by Mertens as Orly shortly after)
			<u>100</u>			

Figure 4.1: Overview of the bankrupt Rex companies as compiled by van Passel in February 1994. (Source: Document "Onderling aandelenbezit" kept in the archive of the company's insolvency records.) The arrows between the companies (depicted in blue squares in the outer ring) represent the direction of shareholding; thin arrows represent a one-way direction of shares (e.g. Anbima BVBA has shares in Filimpex NV), thick arrows represent mutual shareholding (e.g. Odeon NV and Cenki NV).

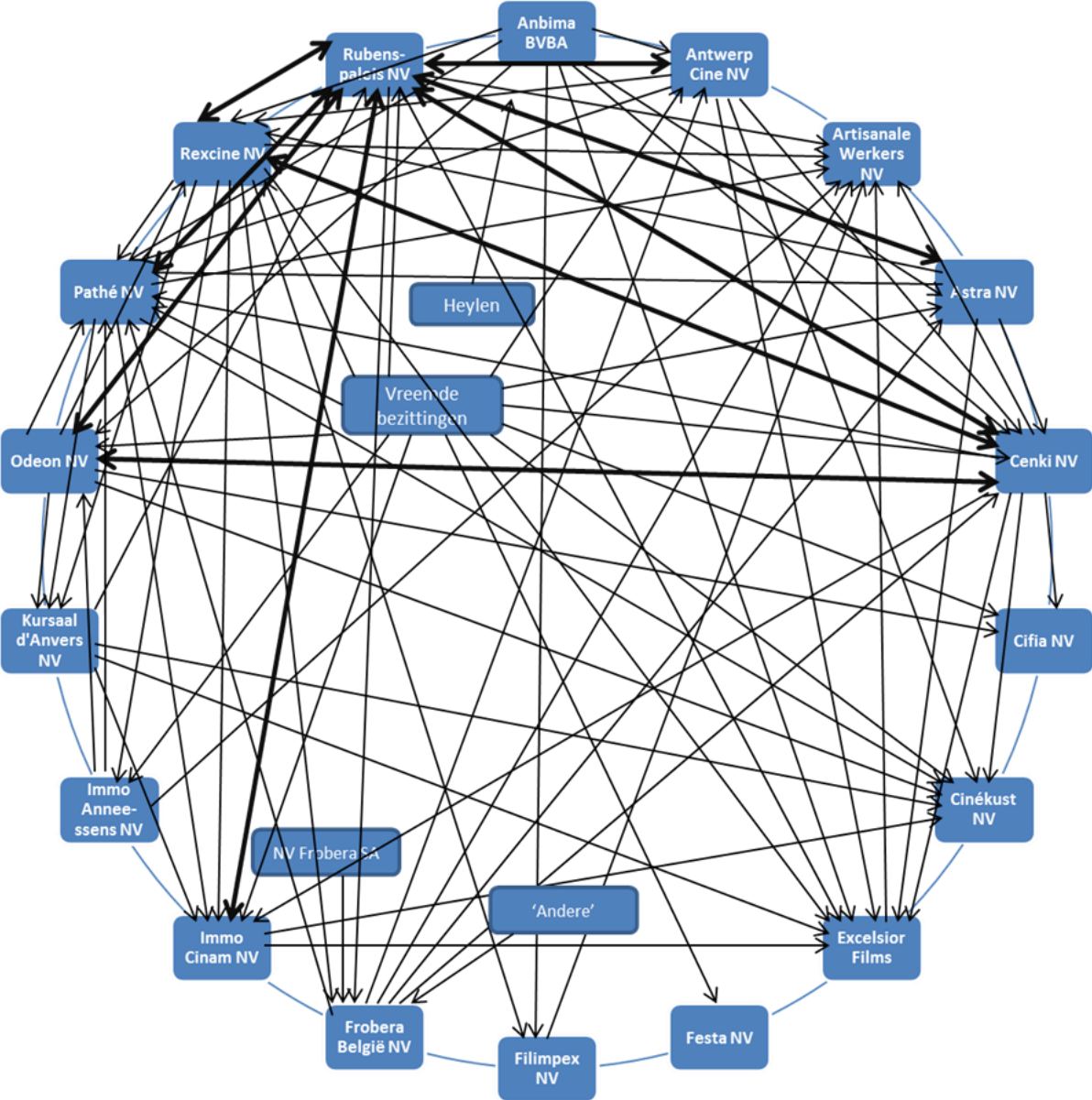
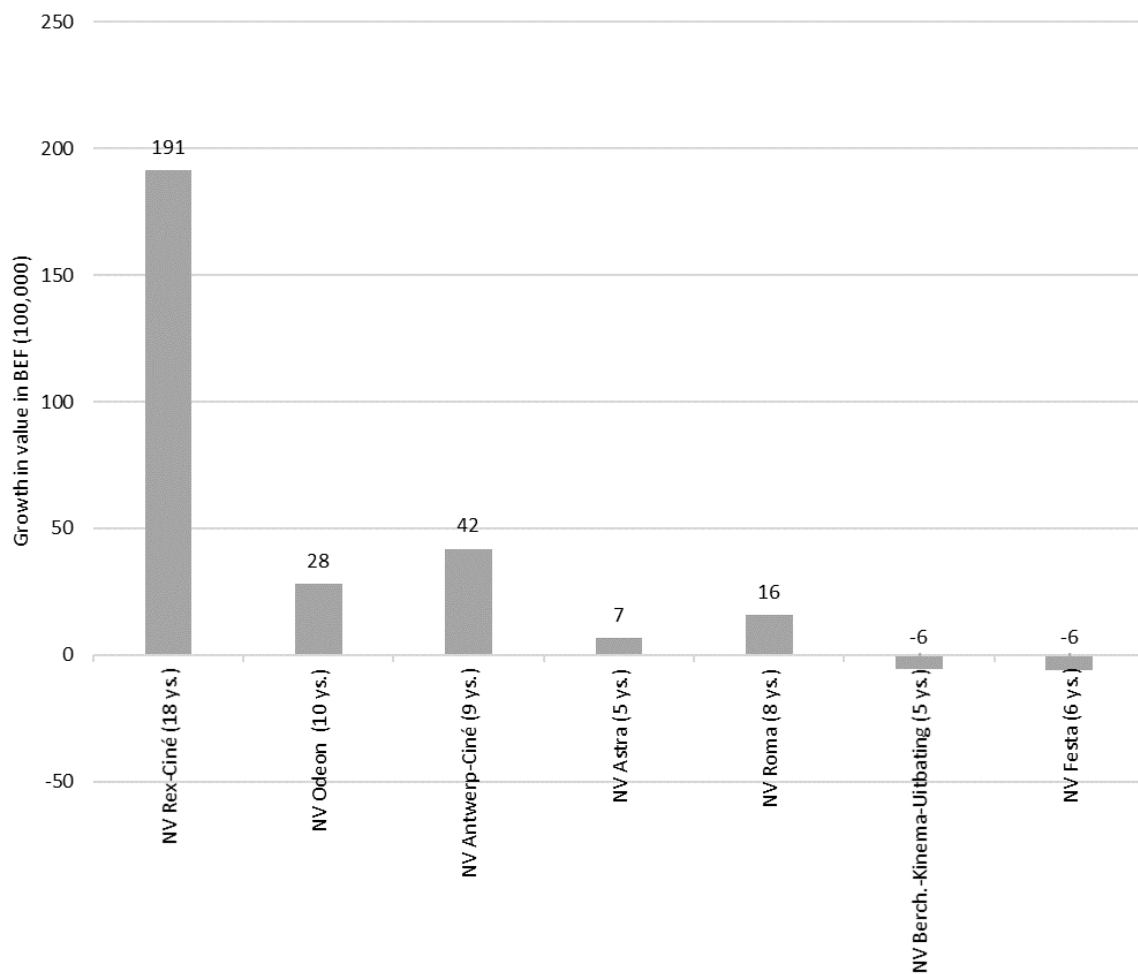


Figure 4.2: Overview of the growth of seven of Heylen's NVs in Belgian Franc (BEF) from the moment Heylen was announced director until 1959.¹²⁸⁷ (The figures are based on Gogne, "Deskundig verslag," 240. The number of years in brackets behind the cinemas' names represent the period from the moment Heylen was announced director of the NV until 1959.)



	NV Rex-Ciné (18 ys.)	NV Odeon (10 ys.)	NV Antwerp-Ciné (9 ys.)	NV Astra (5 ys.)	NV Roma (8 ys.)	NV Berch.-Kinema-Uitbating (5 ys.)	NV Festa (6 ys.)
value NV upon foundation* (in BEF 100,000)	40,0	2	3	5	2	1	1
Value NV in 1959 (in BEF 100,000)	231,5	30,1	44,9	11,6	17,9	-4,7	-5,0
Growth in BEF (x100,000)	191	28	42	7	16	-6	-6

¹²⁸⁷ On 1 January 1959 BEF 100,000 were worth about USD 2,000. Historical currency rate is taken from FXTOP.COM, the website for historical currency rates: Historical Rates, accessed November 29, 2012, <http://fxtop.com/en/historical-exchange-rates.php?MA=1>.

Figure 4.3: Number of films by distributors with at least 20 films screened at Heylen's theatres in 1952, 1962, 1972 and/or 1982 (American majors indicated by blue colors; Heylen's distribution companies in green and other independent distributors with at least twenty film titles, indicated in purple colors).

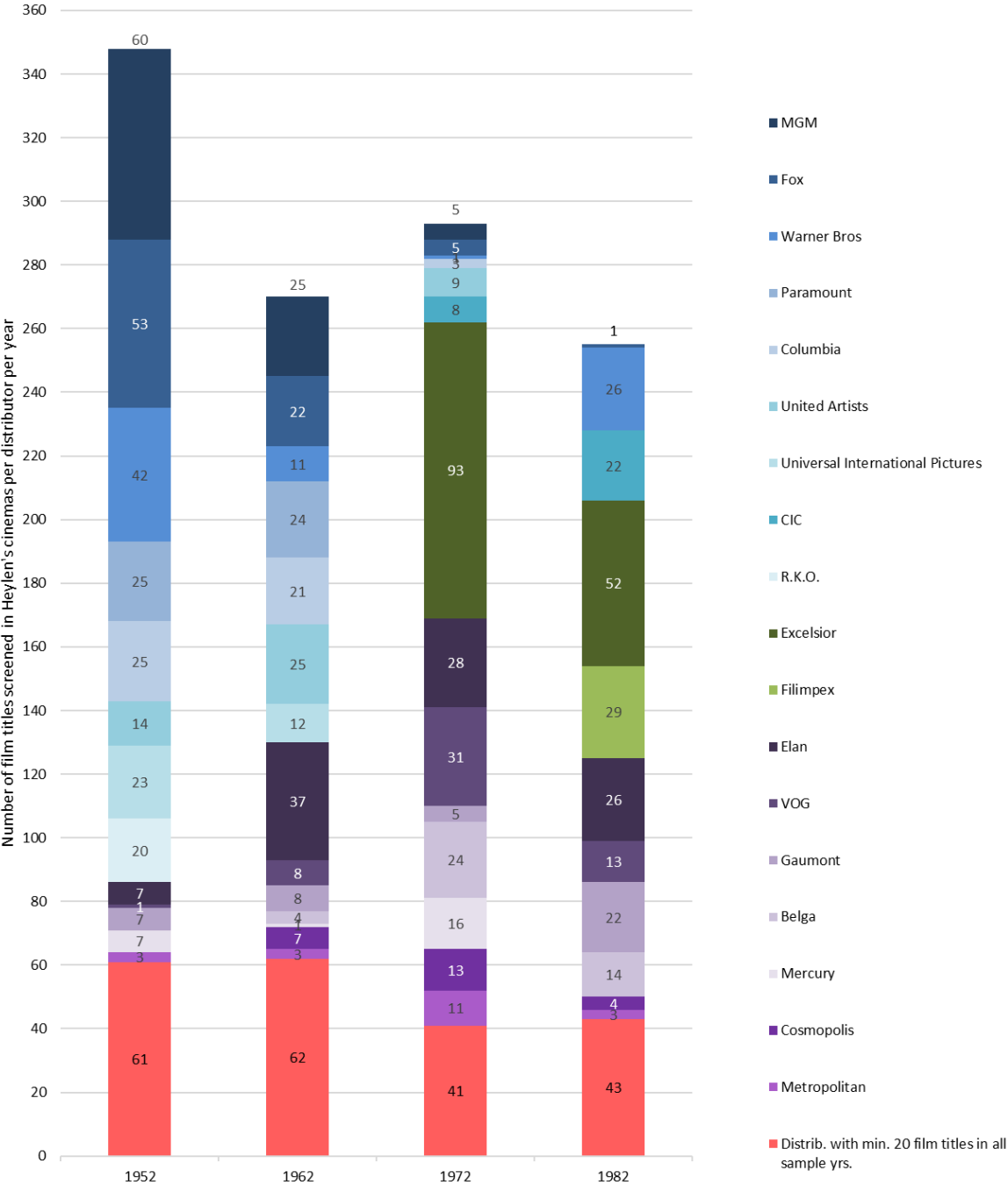


Figure 4.4: Overview of the shares of film titles in Heylen's cinemas in the four sample years according to group of distributor.

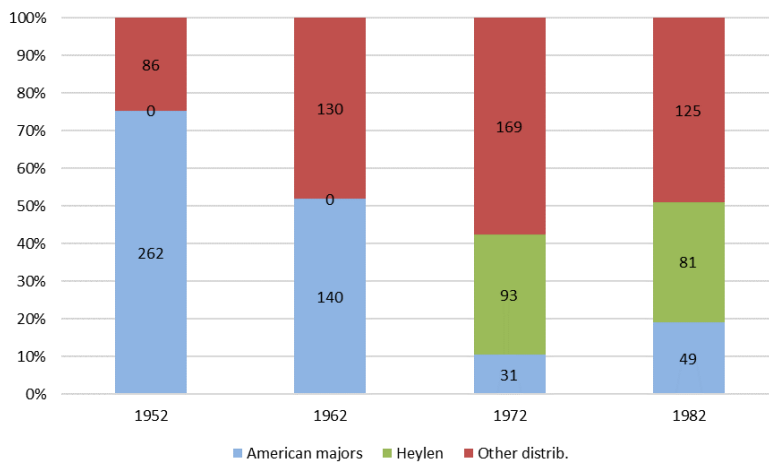


Figure 4.5: Number of individual film titles in Heylen's and VOZA cinemas, distributed by major distributors in 1972

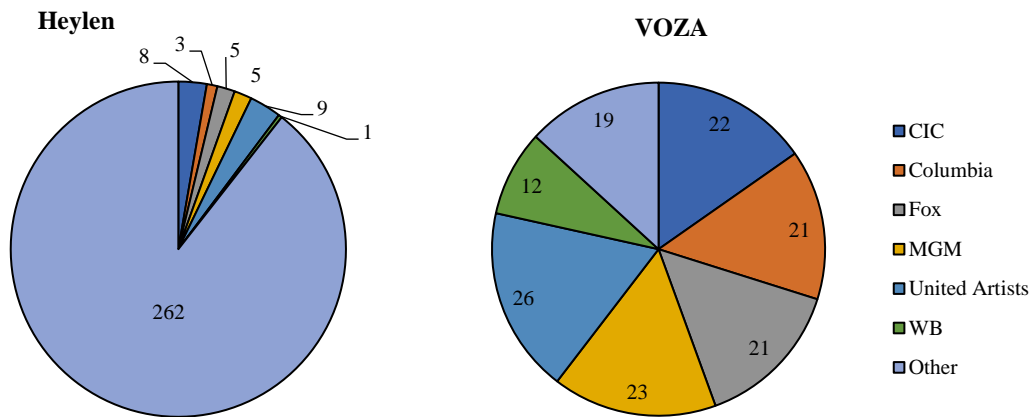


Figure 4.6: Individual film titles distributed by Excelsior screened in Heylen's cinemas in 1972

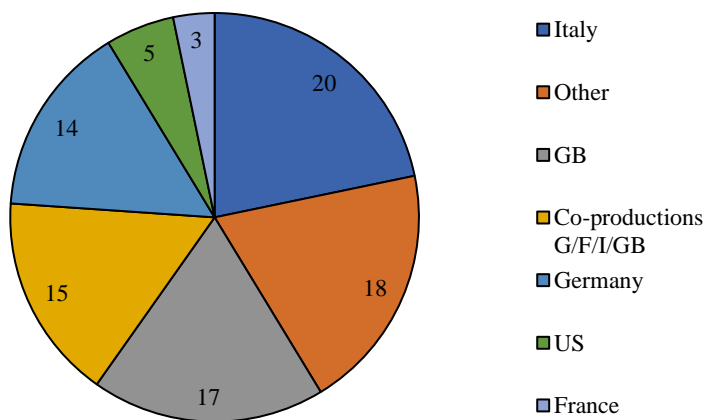
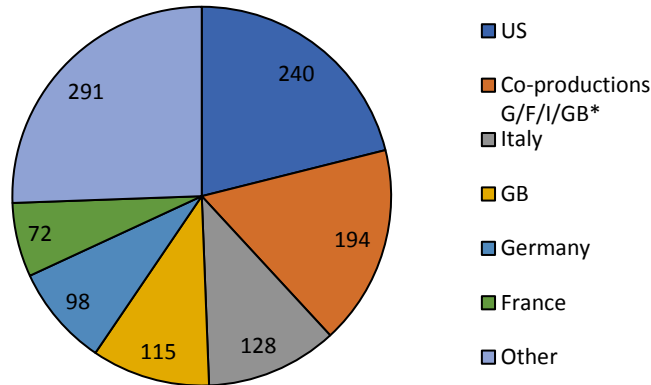
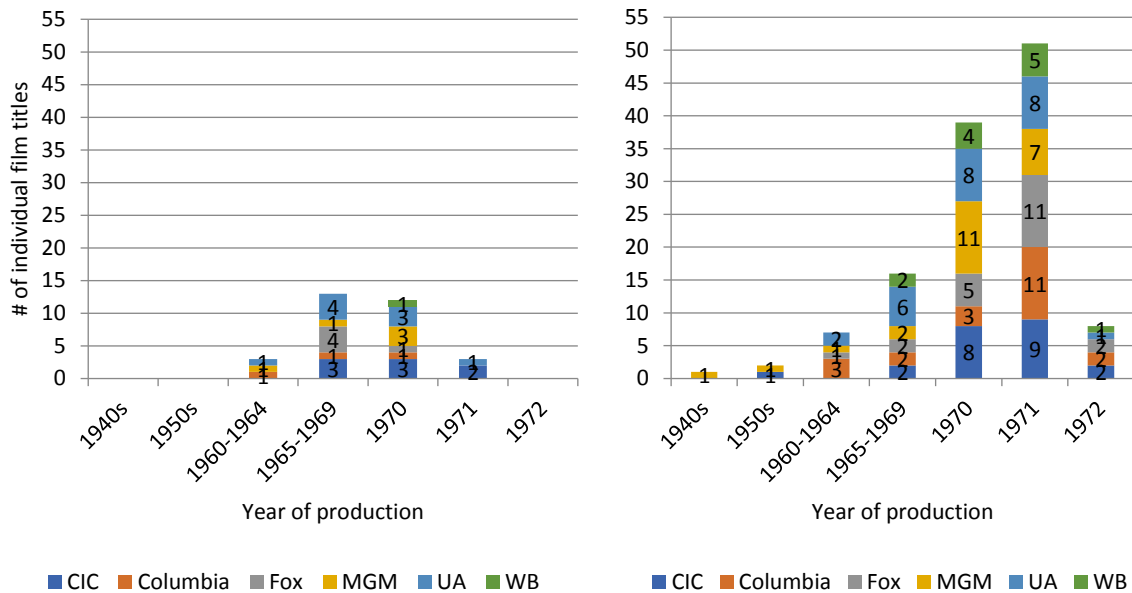


Figure 4.7: Number of film screenings in Heylen's cinemas in 1972 according to countries of origin



* i.e. co-productions with at least two of the four countries involved

Figure 4.8: Number of film titles by major distributors in 1972 in Heylen's (left) and VOZA cinemas (right) (double counting of titles is possible in case the same picture ran both in Heylen's and VOZA cinemas)



Chapter 5

Table 5.1: Crosstabulation for 229 film titles screened in Antwerp cinemas in 1952 with both official censorship rating and Catholic film advice.

	Catholic film classification		Official film classification				Total Catholic advice	
			KT	%	KNT	%		%
Positive rating	for all		78	97,5	2	2,5	80	34,9
	adults and adolescents		9	90,0	1	10,0	10	4,4
Adults	adults		62	48,4	66	51,6	128	55,9
Negative rating	to avoid		0	0,0	3	100,0	3	1,3
	advised against		1	12,5	7	87,5	8	3,5
Total official rating			150	65,5	79	34,5	229	100,0

Table 5.2: Overview of examined cinemas in sample 1952. The first block of cinemas belonged to Heylen's Rex cinema group; the second to his competitors; the last block are cinemas that were excluded from the analysis.

<i>Name of the cinema</i>	<i>Street</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
<i>American Palace</i>	Diepestraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
<i>Astra</i>	Carnotstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
<i>Astrid</i>	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	
<i>Century</i>	Drink	Borgerhout	
<i>Dixi</i>	Handelsstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
<i>Festa</i>	Offerandestraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
<i>Luxor</i>	Tunhoutsebaan	Borgerhout	
<i>National</i>	Lange Beeldekenstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
<i>Odeon</i>	Frankrijklei	Station Quarter	
<i>Rex</i>	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
<i>Roma</i>	Tunhoutsebaan	Borgerhout	
<i>Victory</i>	Bothastraat	Borgerhout	
<i>Ambassades</i>	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	Appelmansstraat	Station Quarter	
<i>Capitole</i>	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
<i>Coliseum</i>	Meir	historic center	
<i>Crosly</i>	Quellinstraat	Station Quarter	
<i>Eden</i>	Quellinstraat	Station Quarter	
<i>Empire</i>	Appelmansstraat	Station Quarter	
<i>Kursaal</i>	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	Closed on 22 Augustus 1952.
<i>Majestic</i>	Carnotstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
<i>Metro</i>	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	
<i>Pathé</i>	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
<i>Plaza</i>	Breydelstraat	Station Quarter	
<i>Regina</i>	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
<i>Rio</i>	Carnotstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
<i>Roxy</i>	Meir	historic center	
<i>Rubens</i>	Carnotstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	Opened in 19 September 1952.
<i>Savoy</i>	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	Opened on 28 November 1952
<i>Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege</i>	Meir	historic center	Not listed in GvA between 25 July and 12 September 1952.
<i>Studio Movv</i>	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	
<i>A.B.C.</i>	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA
<i>Cineac</i>	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA
<i>Royal</i>	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA
<i>Studio de Paris</i>	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA

Table 5.3: Number of recorded and identified screenings per cinema in 1952, listed alphabetically and according to identification rate. Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

<i>Cinema</i>	<i>Recorded screenings</i>	<i>Identified screenings</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Americain (N)</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Astrid</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Century (N)</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Dixi (N)</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Festa (N)</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Metro</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>National (N)</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Odeon</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Pathé</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Rex</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Roma (N)</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Rubens</i>	16	16	100,0
<i>Savoy</i>	5	5	100,0
<i>Victory</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Astra</i>	52	51	98,1
<i>Empire</i>	52	51	98,1
<i>Luxor</i>	52	51	98,1
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	52	50	96,2
<i>Eden</i>	55	52	94,5
<i>Roxy</i>	53	50	94,3
<i>Capitole</i>	52	47	90,4
<i>Majestic</i>	50	45	90,0
<i>Ambassades</i>	49	44	89,8
<i>Coliseum</i>	46	40	87,0
<i>Kursaal</i>	30	25	83,3
<i>Studio Movv</i>	49	40	81,6
<i>Crosly</i>	53	43	81,1
<i>Plaza</i>	48	36	75,0
<i>Regina</i>	52	35	67,3
<i>Rio</i>	49	27	55,1
<i>Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege</i>	46	23	50,0
<i>Total / average</i>	<i>1485</i>	<i>1355</i>	<i>91,2</i>

Table 5.4: Number of identified screenings, film titles and average duration (in weeks) per film per cinema in 1952. Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	<i>Screenings</i>	<i>Film titles¹²⁸⁸</i>	<i>Average duration film/cinema (in weeks)</i>
<i>Americain (N)</i>	52	52	1,0
<i>Astra</i>	51	51	1,0
<i>Century (N)</i>	52	52	1,0
<i>Dixi (N)</i>	52	52	1,0
<i>Festa (N)</i>	52	52	1,0
<i>Majestic</i>	45	45	1,0
<i>National (N)</i>	52	52	1,0
<i>Rio</i>	27	27	1,0
<i>Roma (N)</i>	52	52	1,0
<i>Rubens (N)</i>	16	16	1,0
<i>Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege</i>	23	23	1,0
<i>Victory (N)</i>	52	52	1,0
<i>Luxor (N)</i>	51	50	1,0
<i>Roxy</i>	50	47	1,1
<i>Plaza</i>	36	33	1,1
<i>Capitole</i>	47	42	1,1
<i>Crosly</i>	43	38	1,1
<i>Empire</i>	51	44	1,2
<i>Regina</i>	35	29	1,2
<i>Eden</i>	52	42	1,2
<i>Savoy</i>	5	4	1,3

¹²⁸⁸ Unique films per cinema. Includes multi-counts of films in case they played at several cinemas.

	Screenings	Film titles ¹²⁸⁸	Average duration film/cinema (in weeks)
Coliseum	40	31	1,3
Pathé	52	40	1,3
Anvers Palace	50	38	1,3
Rex	52	39	1,3
Astrid	52	37	1,4
Kursaal	25	17	1,5
Studio Movy	40	27	1,5
Metro	52	33	1,6
Odeon	52	23	2,3
Ambassades	44	17	2,6
Total	1355	1157	1,2

Figure 5.1: Number of films according to total duration on examined screens in 1952¹²⁸⁹

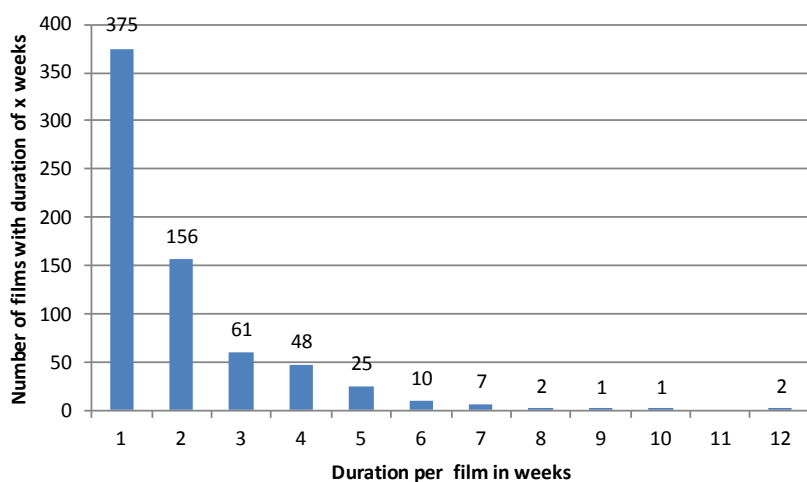


Table 5.5: Number of film screenings, individual titles and average duration per film in 1952 according to (group of) production years(s).

	Screenings	%	Valid %	Film titles	%	Valid %	Average duration (in weeks)
1952	279	18,8	20,6	115	14,4	16,7	2,4
1951	620	41,8	45,8	249	31,2	36,2	2,5
1950	192	12,9	14,2	128	16,0	18,6	1,5
1940s	216	14,5	16,0	165	20,7	24,0	1,3
1930s	47	3,2	3,5	30	3,8	4,4	1,6
Total	1354	91,2	100,0	687	86,0	100,0	2,0
Missing	131	8,8		112	14,0		1,2
	1485	100,0		799	100,0		1,9

¹²⁸⁹ The numbers include screenings in the course of 1952 only. The duration time of a number of films might be even longer, if they premiered before January 1952 or remained on screens after December 1952.

Table 5.6: Number of unique films from the 1940s screened at cinemas in 1952.¹²⁹⁰ Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	1940-45	%	1946-49	%	Total
<i>Ambassades</i>	1	100,0	0	0,0	1
<i>Americain Palace (N)</i>	7	33,3	14	66,7	21
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	1	50,0	1	50,0	2
<i>Astra</i>	5	100,0	0	0,0	5
<i>Astrid</i>	0	0,0	2	100,0	2
<i>Capitole</i>	2	100,0	0	0,0	2
<i>Century (N)</i>	5	50,0	5	50,0	10
<i>Coliseum</i>	4	40,0	6	60,0	10
<i>Crosly</i>	2	28,6	5	71,4	7
<i>Dixi (N)</i>	3	60,0	2	40,0	5
<i>Eden</i>	3	33,3	6	66,7	9
<i>Empire</i>	4	66,7	2	33,3	6
<i>Festa (N)</i>	6	42,9	8	57,1	14
<i>Kursaal</i>	2	20,0	8	80,0	10
<i>Luxor (N)</i>	4	30,8	9	69,2	13
<i>Majestic</i>	3	37,5	5	62,5	8
<i>Metro</i>	5	83,3	1	16,7	6
<i>National (N)</i>	3	50,0	3	50,0	6
<i>Odeon</i>	0	0,0	1	100,0	1
<i>Pathé</i>	1	50,0	1	50,0	2
<i>Plaza</i>	2	66,7	1	33,3	3
<i>Regina</i>	8	66,7	4	33,3	12
<i>Rio</i>	4	26,7	11	73,3	15
<i>Roma (N)</i>	0	0,0	1	100,0	1
<i>Roxy</i>	2	66,7	1	33,3	3
<i>Rubens</i>	1	100,0	0	0,0	1
<i>Savoy</i>	1	50,0	1	50,0	2
<i>Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege</i>	2	20,0	8	80,0	10
<i>Studio Movy</i>	1	50,0	1	50,0	2
<i>Victory (N)</i>	6	30,0	14	70,0	20
Total	88	42,1	121	57,9	209

¹²⁹⁰ Cinema Rex is not listed in the table, since it played no film from the 1940s.

Table 5.7: Number of unique films released in first and second halves of the 1940s screened at Antwerp cinemas in 1952 according to distributor (American majors in bold; cinemas which did not screen films from the 1940s are excluded from the list; idem for distributors which did not distribute films from the 1940s). Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

		<i>5 Continents</i>	<i>A.B.C.</i>	<i>AFO</i>	<i>Alma</i>	<i>Benelux</i>	<i>Century</i>	<i>Columbia</i>	<i>Elan</i>	<i>Filmsonor</i>	<i>Fox</i>	<i>Mercury</i>	<i>MGM</i>	<i>Paramount</i>	<i>Progrés</i>	<i>R.K.O.</i>	<i>Republic</i>	<i>Royal</i>	<i>Selznick</i>	<i>Sivo</i>	<i>United Artists</i>	<i>UIP</i>	<i>Warner Bros</i>	<i>Total</i>
1940-45	Americain Pal. (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	7
	Anvers Palace	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Astra (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
	Capitole	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
	Century (N)	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
	Coliseum	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Crosly	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Dixi (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Eden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Empire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3
	Festa (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
	Kursaal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Luxor (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
	Majestic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Metro	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
	National (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3
	Pathé	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Plaza	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Roxy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
	Rubens	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Savoy	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Victory (N)	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	
Total	3	0	0	1	0	2	4	0	0	6	0	22	6	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	6	4	59	

	5 Continents	A.B.C.	AFO	Alma	Benelux	Century	Columbia	Elan	Filmsonor	Fox	Mercury	MGM	Paramount	Progrés	R.K.O.	Republic	Royal	Selznick	Sivo	United Artists	UIP	Warner Bros	Total	
1945-49	American (N)	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	2	14	
	Anvers Palace	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
	Astrid	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
	Century (N)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
	Crosly	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	Dixi (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
	Eden	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	3
	Empire	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Festa (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	7
	Luxor (N)	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
	Majestic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Metro	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	National (N)	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
	Odeon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Rio	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Roma	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Roxy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Sint-Jan-B.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Victory (N)	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	14
Total	0	1	1	1	2	3	5	1	1	8	2	15	1	0	2	4	1	3	2	2	3	11	69	

Table 5.8: Shares of unique films (in %) at cinemas in 1952 according to year of production. Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	1930s	1940s	1950	1951	1952	Total
<i>Ambassades</i>	17,6	5,9	0,0	35,3	41,2	100
<i>Americain (N)</i>	0,0	40,4	26,9	26,9	5,8	100
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	0,0	5,3	7,9	55,3	31,6	100
<i>Astra</i>	0,0	9,8	7,8	66,7	15,7	100
<i>Astrid</i>	8,1	5,4	5,4	62,2	18,9	100
<i>Capitole</i>	2,4	4,9	17,1	43,9	31,7	100
<i>Century (N)</i>	0,0	19,2	17,3	55,8	7,7	100
<i>Coliseum</i>	9,7	32,3	12,9	22,6	22,6	100
<i>Crosly</i>	2,6	18,4	26,3	42,1	10,5	100
<i>Dixi (N)</i>	0,0	9,6	21,2	57,7	11,5	100
<i>Eden</i>	0,0	21,4	16,7	52,4	9,5	100
<i>Empire</i>	6,8	13,6	27,3	22,7	29,5	100
<i>Festa (N)</i>	1,9	26,9	17,3	42,3	11,5	100
<i>Kursaal</i>	0,0	58,8	23,5	17,6	0,0	100
<i>Luxor (N)</i>	8,0	26,0	18,0	46,0	2,0	100
<i>Majestic</i>	4,4	17,8	15,6	33,3	28,9	100
<i>Metro</i>	3,0	18,2	0,0	57,6	21,2	100
<i>National (N)</i>	1,9	11,5	15,4	65,4	5,8	100
<i>Odeon</i>	0,0	4,3	8,7	60,9	26,1	100
<i>Pathé</i>	7,5	5,0	10,0	52,5	25,0	100
<i>Plaza</i>	3,0	9,1	12,1	60,6	15,2	100
<i>Regina</i>	13,8	41,4	3,4	24,1	17,2	100
<i>Rex</i>	0,0	0,0	5,1	59,0	35,9	100
<i>Rio</i>	3,7	55,6	14,8	22,2	3,7	100
<i>Roma (N)</i>	0,0	1,9	9,6	71,2	17,3	100
<i>Roxy</i>	6,4	6,4	21,3	40,4	25,5	100
<i>Rubens</i>	0,0	6,3	6,3	37,5	50,0	100
<i>Savoy</i>	0,0	50,0	0,0	25,0	25,0	100
<i>Sint-Jan-Berchmanscollege</i>	8,7	43,5	47,8	0,0	0,0	100
<i>Studio Movv</i>	3,7	7,4	18,5	40,7	29,6	100
<i>Victory (N)</i>	5,8	38,5	28,8	23,1	3,8	100
Total	3,5	18,1	15,9	45,2	17,2	100

Figure 5.2: Shares of most recent film titles (from 1951 and 1952) out of total film supply at examined cinemas in 1952 (cinemas which did not screen films from these years are not included).

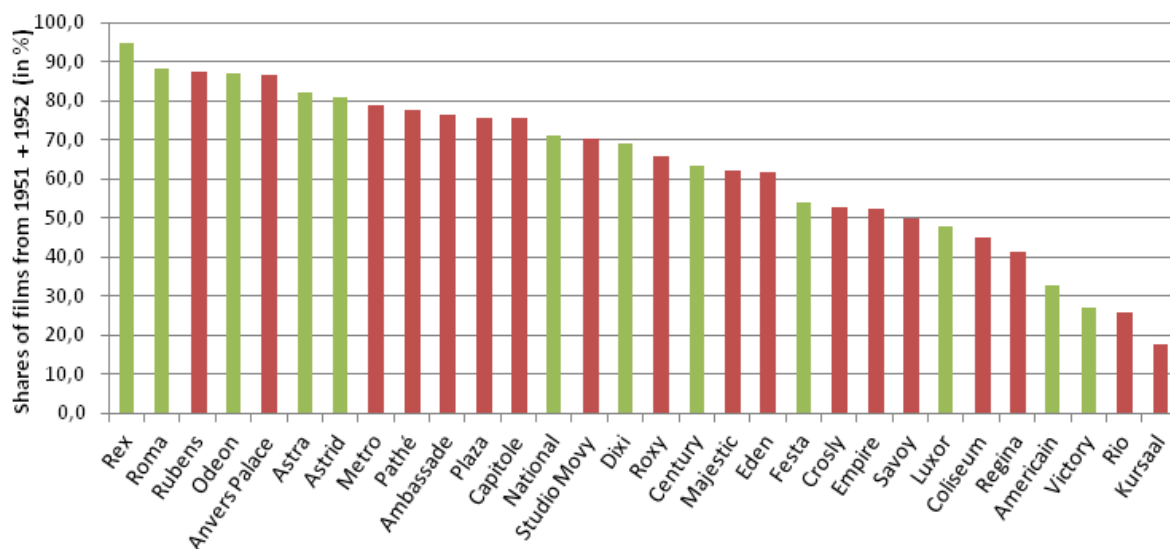


Table 5.9: Detailed overview of number of film titles and screenings, and average duration in 1952 according to countries of origin.

	<i>Number of titles</i>	<i>% (of all countries)</i>	<i>Number of screenings</i>	<i>% (of all countries)</i>	<i>Average duration (in weeks)</i>
USA	453	65,8	911	67,2	2,0
France	85	12,4	142	10,5	1,7
UK	38	5,5	54	4,0	1,4
W-Germany	22	3,2	59	4,4	2,7
Italy	15	2,2	27	2,0	1,8
France/Italy	12	1,7	41	3,0	3,4
Germany	7	1,0	10	0,7	1,4
Austria	7	1,0	8	0,6	1,1
Belgium	4	0,6	15	1,1	3,8
USSR	4	0,6	6	0,4	1,5
Denmark	3	0,4	3	0,2	1,0
UK/USA	3	0,4	9	0,7	3,0
France/Spain	2	0,3	3	0,2	1,5
France/USA	2	0,3	3	0,2	1,5
Mexico	2	0,3	4	0,3	2,0
W-Germany/Italy	2	0,3	2	0,1	1,0
W-Germany/Austria	2	0,3	3	0,2	1,5
Sweden	2	0,3	6	0,4	3,0
Argentina	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Argentina/Venezuela	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Belgium/W-Germany	1	0,1	6	0,4	6,0
Brazil	1	0,1	2	0,1	2,0
Germany/USA	1	0,1	2	0,1	2,0
France/India/USA	1	0,1	4	0,3	4,0
France/Italy/Marokko/USA	1	0,1	4	0,3	4,0
France/Italy/Spain	1	0,1	4	0,3	4,0
France/Sweden	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
France/Zwitserland	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Hungary	1	0,1	2	0,1	2,0
India	1	0,1	2	0,1	2,0
Italy/UK	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Italy/USA	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Japan	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Japan/USA	1	0,1	2	0,1	2,0
Liechtenstein/Austria	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Norway/Sweden	1	0,1	3	0,2	3,0
E-Germany	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Portugal/Spain	1	0,1	2	0,1	2,0
W-Germany/France/Switzerland	1	0,1	5	0,4	5,0
Switzerland	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
Switzerland/USA	1	0,1	1	0,1	1,0
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>688</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>1355</i>	<i>100,0</i>	<i>2,0</i>
<i>Missing</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>130</i>		<i>130,0</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>689</i>		<i>1485</i>		<i>2,2</i>

Table 5.10: Number of screenings per cinema in 1952 according to country of origin. Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey; "Co" denominates the percentage per country, "Ci" per cinema.

		Ambassades	American	Anvers Palace	Astra	Astrid	Capitole	Century	Coliseum	Crosly	Dixi	Eden	Empire	Festa	Kurssaal	Luxor	Majestic	Metro	National	Odeon	Pathé	Plaza	Regina	Rex	Rio	Roma	Roxy	Rubens	Savoy	Sint-Jan-B.	Studio Movy	Victory	Total	
US	#	4	48	40	44	25	45	9	43	48	28	46	40	4	40	13	52	46	16	31	28	1	41	14	44	39	13	1	17	0	46	911		
	% Co	0,4	5,3	4,4	4,8	2,7	4,9	1,0	4,7	5,3	3,1	5,0	4,4	0,4	4,4	1,4	5,7	5,0	1,8	3,4	3,1	0,1	4,5	1,5	4,8	4,3	1,4	0,1	1,9	0,0	5,0	100		
	% Ci	9,1	92,3	80,0	86,3	48,1	95,7	86,5	22,5	100	92,3	53,8	90,2	76,9	16,0	78,4	28,9	100	88,5	30,8	59,6	77,8	2,9	78,8	51,9	84,6	78,0	81,3	20,0	73,9	0,0	88,5	67,2	
US - co-prod.	#	4	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	3	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	26		
	% Co	15,4	0,0	7,7	7,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,7	7,7	11,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	15,4	3,8	3,8	0,0	0,0	7,7	0,0	7,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	100		
	% Ci	9,1	0,0	4,0	3,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	8,0	5,9	0,0	0,0	7,7	1,9	2,8	0,0	0,0	7,4	0,0	4,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,5	0,0	1,9		
France	#	19	1	0	1	4	0	3	4	0	1	5	0	4	0	0	5	0	15	1	7	26	4	6	1	0	1	1	1	31	1	142		
	% Co	13,4	0,7	0,0	0,7	2,8	0,0	2,1	2,8	0,0	0,7	3,5	0,0	2,8	0,0	0,0	3,5	0,0	0,0	10,6	0,7	4,9	18,3	2,8	4,2	0,7	0,0	0,7	0,7	21,8	0,7	100		
	% Ci	43,2	1,9	0,0	2,0	7,7	0,0	5,8	10,0	0,0	1,9	9,6	0,0	7,7	0,0	0,0	11,1	0,0	0,0	28,8	1,9	19,4	74,3	7,7	22,2	1,9	0,0	6,3	20,0	4,3	77,5	1,9	10,5	
Italy	#	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	9	2	4	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	27	
	% Co	0,0	3,7	3,7	0,0	3,7	0,0	3,7	3,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,7	0,0	33,3	7,4	14,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	18,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100	
	% Ci	0,0	1,9	2,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	1,9	2,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	36,0	3,9	8,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	9,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	
France/Italiany	#	13	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	13	0	0	1	3	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	41	
	% Co	31,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,4	2,4	0,0	0,0	2,4	0,0	0,0	31,7	0,0	0,0	2,4	7,3	2,4	2,4	2,4	2,4	0,0	0,0	4,9	0,0	100		
	% Ci	29,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	1,9	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,0	0,0	25,0	0,0	0,0	2,9	5,8	3,7	1,9	2,0	6,3	0,0	0,0	5,0	0,0	3,0		
French/Italian/Spanish co-prod.	#	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	
	% Co	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	14,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	28,6	0,0	0,0	14,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	28,6	0,0	14,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100	
	% Ci	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	1,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,5	
German/W-German co-prod.	#	0	2	0	3	16	0	0	15	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	12	0	3	0	8	0	1	1	2	2	2	0	2	2	1	2	80	
	% Co	0,0	2,5	0,0	3,8	20,0	0,0	0,0	18,8	0,0	0,0	2,5	0,0	0,0	2,5	2,5	15,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	10,0	0,0	1,3	1,3	2,5	2,5	2,5	0,0	2,5	2,5	1,3	2,5	100	
	% Ci	0,0	3,8	0,0	5,9	30,8	0,0	0,0	37,5	0,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	0,0	8,0	3,9	26,7	0,0	5,8	0,0	15,4	0,0	2,9	1,9	7,4	3,8	4,0	0,0	40,0	8,7	2,5	3,8	5,9	
UK	#	0	0	6	0	3	2	0	0	1	9	2	1	0	2	6	0	1	4	5	0	2	0	0	1	6	0	1	2	0	0	0	54	
	% Co	0,0	0,0	11,1	0,0	5,6	3,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	16,7	3,7	1,9	0,0	3,7	11,1	0,0	1,9	7,4	9,3	0,0	3,7	0,0	0,0	1,9	11,1	0,0	1,9	3,7	0,0	0,0	100	
	% Ci	0,0	0,0	12,0	0,0	5,8	4,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	17,3	3,9	1,9	0,0	3,9	13,3	0,0	1,9	7,7	9,6	0,0	5,7	0,0	0,0	1,9	12,0	0,0	20,0	8,7	0,0	0,0	4,0	
Belgium	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	
	% Co	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	46,7	0,0	13,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,7	6,7	13,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	13,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100
	% Ci	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	17,5	0,0	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,0	2,0	4,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,1	
Scandinavia	#	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12	
	% Co	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	58,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,3	0,0	8,3	0,0	16,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100
	% Ci	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	13,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	2,9	0,0	7,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,9	
W-European prod.	#	4	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	20		
	% Co	20,0	0,0	5,0	5,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	5,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,0	5,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,0	15,0	10,0	100	
	% Ci	9,1	0,0	2,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	2,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,9	1,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,3	7,5	3,8	1,5		
prod. from Soviet bloc	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	
	% Co	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	77,8	11,1	0,0	0,0	11,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100
	% Ci	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	28,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,7	

		Ambassades	American	Anvers Palace	Astra	Astrid	Capitole	Century	Coliseum	Crosly	Dixi	Eden	Empire	Festa	Kursaal	Luxor	Majestic	Metro	National	Odeon	Pathé	Plaza	Regina	Rex	Rio	Roma	Roxy	Rubens	Savoy	Sint-Jan-B.	Studio Movv	Victory	Total
Latin- America n prod.	#	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	8	
	% Co	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	25,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	12,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	25,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	25,0	12,5	100	
	% Ci	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,0	1,9	0,6	
Asia	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
	% Co	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	33,3	0,0	0,0	33,3	0,0	33,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100	
	% Ci	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,5	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	1,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,2	
Total	#	44	52	50	51	52	47	52	40	43	52	52	51	52	25	51	45	52	52	52	36	35	52	27	52	50	16	5	23	40	52	1355	
	% Co	3,2	3,8	3,7	3,8	3,8	3,5	3,8	3,0	3,2	3,8	3,8	3,8	3,8	1,8	3,8	3,3	3,8	3,8	3,8	3,8	2,7	2,6	3,8	2,0	3,8	3,7	1,2	0,4	1,7	3,0	3,8	100
	% Ci	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 5.11: Number of film titles distributed by the major Hollywood studios (including the so-called big five and little three) in 1952 for screening in cinemas (cinemas belonging to Heylen's Rex cinema group are indicated with H; the term missing refers to identified film titles for which no data on film distributors are available).

	American (H)	Astra (H)	Astrid (H)	Century (H)	Dixi (H)	Festa (H)	Luxor (H)	National (H)	Odeon (H)	Rex (H)	Roma (H)	Victory (H)	Ambassade	Anvers Palace	Capitole	Coliseum	Crosly	Eden	Empire	Kursaal	Majestic	Metro	Pathé	Plaza	Rio	Roxy	Rubens	Savoy	Sint-Jan-B.	Studio Movv	Total
Amer. majors	42	46	23	40	47	35	31	45	9	31	44	41	0	29	25	4	24	21	33	0	9	31	25	24	2	27	12	0	1	0	701
Other distrib.	10	4	14	12	5	12	13	7	14	8	8	11	3	5	5	7	5	6	1	3	14	0	4	1	3	5	1	2	0	3	186
Missing	0	1	0	0	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	14	4	12	20	9	15	10	14	22	2	11	8	22	15	3	2	22	24	241
Total ident. films	52	51	37	52	52	52	50	52	23	39	52	52	17	38	42	31	38	42	44	17	45	33	40	33	27	47	16	4	23	27	1128

Figure 5.3: Number of film titles distributed by the major Hollywood studios (including the so-called big five and little three) in 1952 for screening in cinemas belonging to Heylen's Rex cinema group compared to competing cinemas (the term missing refers to identified film titles for which no data on film distributors are available).

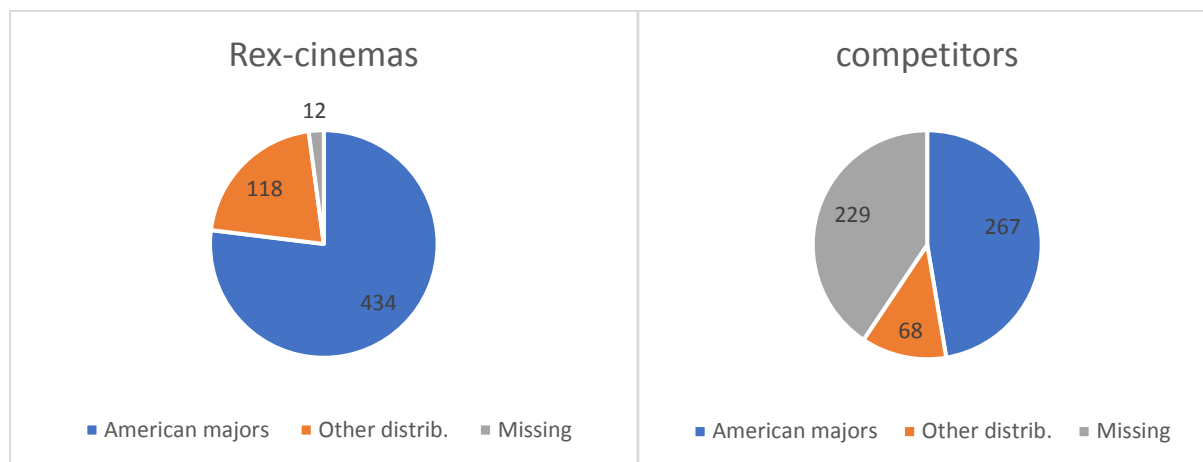


Table 5.12: Official and Catholic film ratings of all screenings in 1952 according to country of origin.

	Official film rating			Catholic film rating					Total ¹²⁹¹
	KNT	KT	Total	for all	adolescents + adults	adults	advised against	to avoid	
Argentina	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Argentina/Venezuela	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Austria	1	2	3	1	0	3	0	0	4
Belgium	1	8	9	0	0	9	0	0	9
Belgium/W-Germany	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3
Brazil	0	1	1	0	0	0		0	0
Denmark	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	2
E-Germany	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
France	30	9	39	9	1	31	18	20	79
France/India/US	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
France/Italy	3	6	9	2	0	3	6	0	11
France/Italy/Morocco/US	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
France/Italy/Spain	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
France/Spain	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
France/Sweden	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
France/Switzerland	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
France/US	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Germany	1	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	6
Germany/US	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Hungary	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
India	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Italy	7	9	16	3	0	9	4	0	16
Italy/UK	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Italy/US	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Japan	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
Japan/US	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	2
Liechtenstein/Austria	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Mexico	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	1
Norway/Sweden	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
Portugal/Spain	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sweden	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3

¹²⁹¹ In two cases, a sixth label was listed "buiten reeks" (not included in list). These two cases are part of the Russian sequel *Battle of Stalingrad I + II* (1949, USSR, Vladimir Petrov). This film has been left out in this overview.

	Official film rating			Catholic film rating					
Switzerland	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Switzerland/US	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
UK	10	19	29	13	4	18	0	1	36
UK/US	0	6	6	6	0	0	0	0	6
US	175	529	704	191	30	350	11	0	582
USSR	3	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	4
W-Germany	10	14	24	2	3	20	4	5	34
W-Germany/Austria	0	1	1	0	0	2	0	0	2
W-Germany/France/Switzerland	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	3
W-Germany/Italy	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1
	258	617	875	231	39	471	52	26	819

Table 5.13: Number of individual film titles and screenings in 1952 according to official film ratings.

	Film titles	% (incl. missing values)	% (excl. missing values)	Screenings	% (incl. missing values)	% (excl. missing values)	Average duration per rating (in weeks)
KT	293	42,6	66,3	706	52,1	69,6	2,4
KNT	149	21,7	33,7	308	22,7	30,4	2,1
Total	442	64,2	100,0	1014	74,8	100,0	
Missing	246	35,8		341	25,2		
Total	688	100,0		1355	100,0		

Table 5.14: Number of individual film titles and screenings in 1952 according to Catholic film ratings.

	Film titles	% (incl. missing values)	% (excl. missing values)	Screenings	% (incl. missing values)	% (excl. missing values)	Average duration per rating (in weeks)
positive rating	181	22,7	32,7	354	32,5	32,5	2,0
adults	297	37,2	53,7	592	39,9	54,4	2,0
negative rating	75	9,4	13,6	142	9,6	13,1	1,9
Total	553	69,2	100,0	1088	73,3	100,0	
Missing	246	30,8		397	26,7		
Total	799	100,0		1485	100,0		

Table 5.15: Official and Catholic ratings for all screenings in 1952 according to cinema. (Unless indicated otherwise, the figures in the total columns represent the total number of recorded screenings. Figures between brackets list the total number of recorded screening in the corresponding cinemas.)¹²⁹² Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	<i>Official film rating</i>						<i>Catholic film advice</i>							
	KT	%	KNT	%	Total	% rated	positive	%	adults	%	negative	%	Total	% rated
<i>Roma (N)</i>	45	86,5	7	13,5	52	100,0	14	42,4	19	57,6	0	0,0	33 (52)	63,5
<i>Victory (N)</i>	44	84,6	8	15,4	52	100,0	11	64,7	6	35,3	0	0,0	17 (52)	32,7
<i>Rex</i>	42	80,8	10	19,2	52	100,0	1	16,7	5	83,3	0	0,0	6 (52)	11,5
<i>National (N)</i>	41	78,8	11	21,2	52	100,0	9	24,3	26	70,3	2	5,4	37 (52)	71,2
<i>Dixi (N)</i>	41	78,8	11	21,2	52	100,0	11	37,9	16	55,2	2	6,9	29 (52)	55,8
<i>Americain Pal. (N)</i>	38	73,1	14	26,9	52	100,0	9	52,9	6	35,3	2	11,8	17 (52)	32,7
<i>Century (N)</i>	33	63,5	19	36,5	52	100,0	8	33,3	16	66,7	0	0,0	24 (52)	46,2
<i>Astrid</i>	29	55,8	23	44,2	52	100,0	4	28,6	10	71,4	0	0,0	14 (52)	26,9
<i>Odeon</i>	29	55,8	23	44,2	52	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	0 (52)	0,0
<i>Festa (N)</i>	34	72,3	13	27,7	47 (52)	90,4	10	43,5	12	52,2	1	4,3	23 (52)	44,2
<i>Astra</i>	31	68,9	14	31,1	45 (52)	86,5	6	19,4	24	77,4	1	3,2	31 (52)	59,6
<i>Luxor (N)</i>	30	71,4	12	28,6	42 (52)	80,8	7	29,2	14	58,3	3	12,5	24 (52)	46,2
<i>Sint-Jan-B.</i>	2	100,0	0	0,0	2 (46)	4,3	46	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	46	100,0
<i>Crosly</i>	28	93,3	2	6,7	30 (53)	56,6	26	50,0	25	48,1	1	1,9	52 (53)	98,1
<i>Eden</i>	33	82,5	7	17,5	40 (55)	72,7	25	45,5	20	36,4	10	18,2	55	100,0
<i>Rio</i>	3	75,0	1	25,0	4 (49)	8,2	22	44,9	19	38,8	8	16,3	49	100,0
<i>Roxy</i>	27	81,8	6	18,2	33 (53)	62,3	23	44,2	29	55,8	0	0,0	52 (53)	98,1
<i>Kursaal</i>	9	50,0	9	50,0	18 (30)	60,0	10	35,7	13	46,4	5	17,9	28 (30)	93,3
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	26	60,5	17	39,5	43 (52)	82,7	17	32,7	34	65,4	1	1,9	52	100,0
<i>Metro</i>	33	71,7	13	28,3	46 (52)	88,5	16	30,8	35	67,3	1	1,9	52	100,0
<i>Rubens</i>	10	71,4	4	28,6	14(16)	87,5	3	30,0	6	60,0	1	10,0	10 (16)	62,5
<i>Capitole</i>	18	66,7	9	33,3	27 (52)	51,9	14	27,5	37	72,5	0	0,0	51 (52)	98,1
<i>Empire</i>	22	81,5	5	18,5	27 (52)	51,9	14	26,9	37	71,2	1	1,9	52	100,0
<i>Plaza</i>	20	76,9	6	23,1	26 (48)	54,2	12	25,0	22	45,8	14	29,2	48 (48)	100,0
<i>Pathé</i>	18	50,0	18	50,0	36 (52)	69,2	11	21,2	32	61,5	9	17,3	52	100,0
<i>Majestic</i>	15	46,9	17	53,1	32 (50)	64,0	7	21,2	19	57,6	7	21,2	33 (50)	66,0
<i>Coliseum</i>	12	60,0	8	40,0	20 (46)	43,5	9	19,6	28	60,9	9	19,6	46 (46)	100,0
<i>Regina</i>	0	0,0	1	100,0	1 (52)	1,9	5	9,6	25	48,1	22	42,3	52	100,0
<i>Ambassades</i>	2	15,4	11	84,6	13 (49)	26,5	2	4,1	29	59,2	18	36,7	49	100,0
<i>Studio Movv</i>	0	0,0	9	100,0	9 (49)	18,4	2	4,1	23	46,9	24	49,0	49	100,0
<i>Savoy</i>	0	0,0	1	100,0	1 (5)	20,0	0	0,0	5	100,0	0	0,0	5	
<i>Total</i>	715	69,8	309	30,2	1024		354	32,5	592	54,4	142	13,1	1088	

¹²⁹² The values contained in this table include unidentified films as well, since the ratings were documented for all recorded screenings and independently from the identification process.

Table 5.16: An investigation of the twenty-five films with screen times of more than four weeks in examined cinemas in 1952. (The numbers between brackets indicate the number of subsequent weeks the film played at the particular cinema. Cinemas belonging to Heylen are marked grey.)¹²⁹³

Film title	Start	1st screening	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
<i>Les sept péchés capitaux</i> (Allégret, 1952, France/Italy, distr. Gaumont)	30 May	Ambass. (2)	Ambassades (4)	Coliseum (2)	Majestic (1)		
<i>Le banquet des fraudeurs</i> (Storck, 1952, Belgium/W-Germany, distr. Atos)	4 Apr. (until 12 Feb. '53)	Ambass. (4)	Coliseum (1)	Festa (1)	Roma (1)		
<i>Wuthering Heights</i> (Wyler, 1939, US, distr. Royal)	12 Sep.	Ambass. (4)	Majestic (1)	Coliseum (1)			
<i>Detective Story</i> (Wyler, 1951, US, distr. Paramount)	9 May	Anvers P. (3)	Rubens (1)	National (1) Roma (1)			
<i>The African Queen</i> (Huston, 1951, US/UK, distr. Metropolitan)	4 Apr.	Anvers P. (2) Roxy (2)	Plaza (1)	Festa (1) Luxor (1)			
<i>Uit hetzelfde nest</i> (Kiel, 1952, Belgium, distr. AFO)	2 May (until 12 Feb. '53)	Coliseum (3)	Majestic (1)	Dixi (1) Roma (1)	Coliseum (1)	Rio (1)	
<i>De moedige bruidegom</i> (Kiel, 1952, Belgium, distr. AFO)	24 Oct.	Coliseum (3)	Majestic (1)	Dixi (1) Roma (1)			
<i>Enrico Caruso: leggenda di una voce</i> (Gentilomo, 1951, Italy, distr. 5 Continents)	1 Feb. (until 8 Jan. '53)	Kursaal (5)	Majestic (1)	Luxor (1)	Sint Jan (1)		
<i>Show Boat</i> (Sidney, 1951, US distr. MGM)	22 Feb.	Metro (2)	Astra (1)	Metro (1)	Dixi (1)	→ Luxor (1)	
<i>An American in Paris</i> (Minelli, 1951, US, distr. MGM)	9 May	Metro (3)	Metro (1)	Astra (1)	Dixi (1)	Luxor (1)	
<i>That Midnight Kiss</i> (Taurog, 1949, US, distr. MGM)	19 Sep.	Metro (2)	Century (1) Festa (1)	Sint Jan (1)	Crosly (1)		
<i>The Great Caruso</i> (Thorpe, 1951, US, distr. MGM)	21 Dec. 1951	Metro (8) →	Astra (1)	Roma (1)	→ Victory (1)	Dixi (1) National (1)	Metro (1)
<i>Identité Judiciaire</i> (Bromberger, 1951, France, distr. Mercury)	11 Apr.	Odeon (2)	Odeon (2)	Century (1) Festa (1)			
<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i> (Kazan, 1951, US, distr. Warner)	7 Mar.	Odeon (5)	Astra (1)	Century (1)	Dixi (1)		
<i>Le petit Monde de Don Camillo</i> (Duvivier, 1952, France, distr. Filmsonor)	10 Oct. (until 1 Apr. '53)	Odeon (15)	Rubens (1)				
<i>Thunder on the Hill</i> (Sirk, 1951, US, distr. UIP)	11 Jan.	Odeon (4)	Astra (1)	Luxor (1)	→ Dixi (1)		
<i>Abbott and Costello Meet the Invisible Man</i> (Lamont, 1951, US, distr. UIP)	1 Feb.	Pathé (2)	Astra (1) →	Roma (1)	→ Dixi (1)	Luxor (1)	
<i>Die Sünderin</i> (Forst, 1951, W-Germany, distr. Elan)	29 Feb.	Pathé (4)	Eden (1)	National (1)	Luxor (1)	Rio (1)	
<i>Coiffeur pour dames</i> (Boyer, 1952, France, distr. Mercury)	12 Sep.	Rex (2) →	Astrid (3)	Festa (1)	→ Roma (1)		
<i>Die Czardasfürstin</i> (Jacoby, 1951, W-Germany, distr. Elan)	2 May	Rex (1) → Astrid (5)		Kursaal (2)	Roma (1)	National (1)	
<i>Decision before dawn</i> (Litvak, 1951, VS, distr. Fox)	14 Mar.	Rex (1) →	Astrid (1)	Plaza (1)	National (1)	Luxor (1)	
<i>Tomahawk</i> (Sherman, 1951, US, distr. UIP)	25 Jan.	Rex (1) →	Astrid (1)	Plaza (1)	Roma (1)	National (1)	Luxor (1)
<i>The Golden Horde</i> (Sherman, 1951, US, distr. UIP)	11 Apr.	Rex (1) →	Astrid (1)	Astra (1)	Plaza (1) Roma (1)	National (1)	
<i>With a Song in my Heart</i> (W. Lang, 1952, VS, distr. Fox)	29 Aug.	Rex (2) →	Astrid (2)	Rubens (1)	Roma (1)	→ Dixi (1)	

¹²⁹³ Different from the corresponding tables for the sample years 1962 and 1982, this table for 1952 includes all films with the longest duration in 1952, irrespective of the year in which they were made. This has to do with the possibility that even older films (the so-called backlog films) had not premiered in Belgium, due to World War II.

Table 5.17: Classification of cinemas in 1952 according to frequency of runs of twenty-five films with a duration in examined cinemas of more than four weeks. Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	1st screening	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Total
Rex	7						7
Pathé	2						2
Anvers P.	2						2
Roxy (in combination with another cinema)	1						1
Astrid (in combination with Rex)	1						1
Odeon	4	1*					5
Ambassades	3	1*					4
Metro	4	1*	1*			1*	7
Coliseum	2	1	2	1*			6
Kursaal	1		1				2
Astrid		5					5
Eden		1					1
Astra		6	2				8
Majestic		4		1			5
Festa (N)		1	4				5
Rubens		2	2				4
Century (N)		1	2	1			4
Plaza		1	2	1			4
Roma (N)			5	6			11
Sint Jan			1	1			2
Luxor (N)			3	1	4	1	9
Dixi (N)			2	5	2		9
National (N)			2	1	5		8
Crosly				1			1
Victory (N)				1			1
Rio					2		2
Total	27	25	29	20	13	2	

* Films of which the subsequent run was at the same cinema as the first run.

Table 5.18: Overview of examined cinemas in sample 1962. (The first block of cinemas belonged to Heylen's Rex cinema group; the second to his competitors; the last block are cinemas that were excluded from the analysis.)¹²⁹⁴

Name of the cinema	Street	Neighborhood	Remarks
Astra	Carnotstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
Astrid	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	
Capitole	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
Century	Drink	Borgerhout	
Festa	Offerandestraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
Metro	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	
National	Lange Beeldekenstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
Odeon	Frankrijklei	Station Quarter	
Quellin	Quellinstraat	Station Quarter	
Rex	De Keyserlei 13-15	Station Quarter	
Roma	Turnhoutsebaan	Borgerhout	
Rubens	Carnotstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
Savoy	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	
Victory	Bothastraat	Borgerhout	
Vendôme	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	
Ambassades	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	
Anvers Palace	Appelmansstraat	Station Quarter	
Empire	Appelmansstraat	Station Quarter	
Pathé	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
Plaza	Breydelstraat	Station Quarter	
Regina	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	

¹²⁹⁴ No trace of the film programming of cinema Luxor in Borgerhout could be found in the weekly film listings, which suggests that the cinema was already closed by then, contrary to the listings in the annual year book.

<i>Name of the cinema</i>	<i>Street</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
<i>Scala</i>	Carnotstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	
<i>Studio Movv</i>	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	
<i>Dixi</i>	Handelstraat	Stuivenberg/St. Amandus	Closed on 1 February 1962
<i>Luxor</i>	Turnhoutsebaan	Borgerhout	Not listed in GvA
<i>Royal</i>	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA
<i>Studio de Paris</i>	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA

Table 5.19: Number of recorded and identified screenings per cinema in 1962, listed alphabetically and according to identification rate. Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

<i>Cinema</i>	<i>Recorded screenings</i>	<i>Identified screenings</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Astra</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Astrid</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Metro</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Odeon</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Quellin</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Rex</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Rubens</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Vendôme</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Ambassades</i>	50	50	100,0
<i>Capitole</i>	52	51	98,1
<i>Pathé</i>	52	51	98,1
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	49 ¹²⁹⁵	48	98,0
<i>Regina</i>	48	46	95,8
<i>Savoy</i>	52	49	94,2
<i>Empire</i>	51	48	94,1
<i>Studio Movv</i>	51	47	92,2
<i>Festa (N)</i>	51	45	88,2
<i>Roma (N)</i>	55	48	87,3
<i>Century (N)</i>	62	48	77,4
<i>National (N)</i>	64	46	71,9
<i>Plaza</i>	46	32	69,6
<i>Victory (N)</i>	84	35	41,7
<i>Scala</i>	68	14	20,6
Total	1251	1074	85,9

Table 5.20: Number of identified screenings, film titles and average duration (in weeks) per film per cinema in 1962. Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	<i>Screenings</i>	<i>Film titles</i>	<i>Average duration film/cinema (in weeks)</i>
<i>Century (N)</i>	48	48	1,0
<i>Festa (N)</i>	45	45	1,0
<i>National (N)</i>	46	46	1,0
<i>Scala</i>	14	14	1,0
<i>Victory (N)</i>	35	35	1,0
<i>Astra</i>	52	51	1,0
<i>Roma (N)</i>	48	47	1,0
<i>Ambassades</i>	50	44	1,1
<i>Pathé</i>	51	40	1,3
<i>Plaza</i>	32	25	1,3
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	48	36	1,3
<i>Quellin</i>	52	38	1,4
<i>Empire</i>	48	35	1,4
<i>Capitole</i>	51	34	1,5

¹²⁹⁵ Anvers Palace was host to the musical *My Fair Lady* for the last three weeks in December, which explains the 49 recorded screenings for this venue.

<i>Savoy</i>	49	31	1,6
<i>Metro</i>	52	32	1,6
<i>Odeon</i>	52	32	1,6
<i>Vendôme</i>	52	31	1,7
<i>Astrid</i>	52	30	1,7
<i>Rex</i>	52	30	1,7
<i>Regina</i>	46	25	1,8
<i>Studio Movy</i>	47	24	2,0
<i>Rubens</i>	52	16	3,3
Total	1074	789	1,4

Figure 5.4: Number of films according to total duration on examined screens in 1962¹²⁹⁶

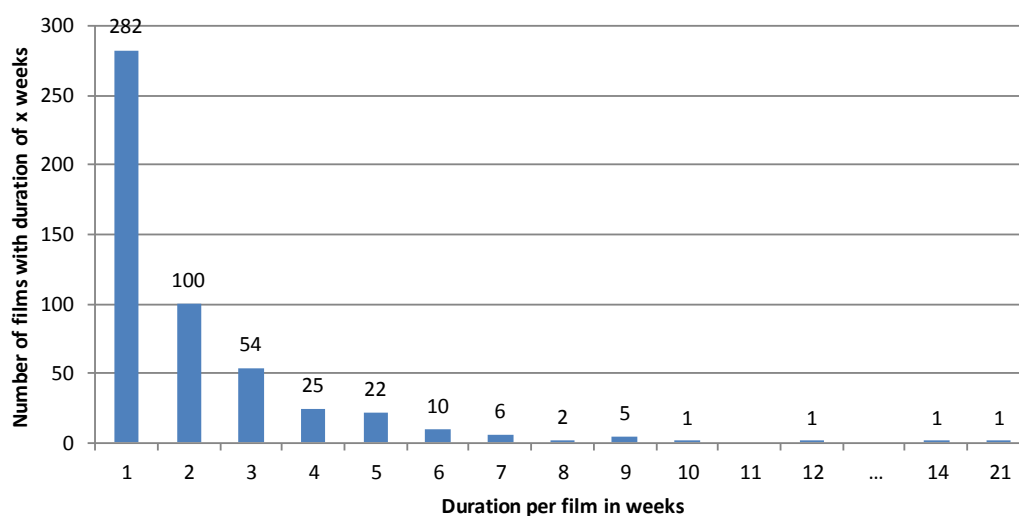


Table 5.21: Number of films with a duration of more than two weeks in one cinema in 1962. Cinemas which are not mentioned, only screened films for a maximum of two weeks. Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	<i>Number of films with a duration of</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>3-4 weeks/cinema</i>	<i>>4 weeks/cinema</i>	
<i>Rex</i>	15	0	15
<i>Metro</i>	11	0	11
<i>Vendôme</i>	6	3	9
<i>Savoy</i>	6	2	8
<i>Rubens</i>	4	4	8
<i>Astrid</i>	6	1	7
<i>Studio Movy</i>	5	1	6
<i>Capitole</i>	4	2	6
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	4	0	4
<i>Odeon</i>	3	1	4
<i>Quellin</i>	3	1	4
<i>Pathé</i>	3	0	3
<i>Empire</i>	2	1	3
<i>Regina</i>	0	3	3
<i>Roma (N)</i>	1	0	1
Total	73	19	92

¹²⁹⁶ The numbers include screenings in the course of 1962 only. The duration time of a number of films might be even longer, if they premiered before January 1962 or remained on screens after December 1962.

Table 5.22: Number of film screenings, individual titles and average duration per film in 1962 according to (group of) production years(s).

	Screenings	%	Valid %	Film titles	%	Valid %	Average duration (in weeks)
1962	355	28,4	33,1	141	27,6	27,7	2,5
1961	503	40,2	46,9	211	41,4	41,5	2,4
1960	84	6,7	7,8	57	11,2	11,2	1,5
1950s	109	8,7	10,2	83	16,3	16,3	1,3
1940s	7	0,6	0,7	7	1,4	1,4	1,0
1930s	13	1,0	1,2	8	1,6	1,6	1,6
1920s	2	0,2	0,2	2	0,4	0,4	1,0
Total	1073	85,8	100,0	509	99,8	100,0	
Missing	177	14,1		n/a	n/a		
Mixed show*	1	0,1		1	0,2		
Total	178	14,2		0	0,0		
	1251	100,0		510	100,0		

* This concerns a mixed film show of a selection of TOM AND JERRY animated cartoons from different years.

Table 5.23: Shares of individual film titles (in %) at examined cinemas in 1962 according to (group of) year(s) of production. Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960	1961	1962	Total
Ambassades	0,0	2,3	9,1	22,7	6,8	40,9	18,2	100,0
Anvers Palace	0,0	0,0	0,0	16,7	8,3	38,9	36,1	100,0
Astra	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,8	56,9	35,3	100,0
Astrid	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,7	0,0	63,3	30,0	100,0
Capitole	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,9	8,8	44,1	41,2	100,0
Century	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,4	4,2	64,6	20,8	100,0
Empire	0,0	2,9	0,0	20,0	14,3	42,9	20,0	100,0
Festa (N)	0,0	2,2	0,0	4,4	6,7	51,1	35,6	100,0
Metro	3,1	0,0	0,0	18,8	3,1	34,4	40,6	100,0
National (N)	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,7	8,7	60,9	21,7	100,0
Odeon	0,0	0,0	3,1	0,0	3,1	31,3	62,5	100,0
Pathé	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	7,5	35,0	47,5	100,0
Plaza	0,0	4,0	4,0	28,0	20,0	28,0	16,0	100,0
Quellin	0,0	2,6	0,0	5,3	13,2	52,6	26,3	100,0
Regina	4,0	12,0	0,0	32,0	12,0	24,0	16,0	100,0
Rex	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,4	3,4	31,0	62,1	100,0
Roma (N)	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,3	10,6	51,1	34,0	100,0
Rubens	0,0	6,3	0,0	18,8	12,5	56,3	6,3	100,0
Savoy	0,0	0,0	3,2	19,4	12,9	41,9	22,6	100,0
Scala	0,0	0,0	0,0	14,3	28,6	42,9	14,3	100,0
Studio Movv	0,0	0,0	0,0	29,2	8,3	37,5	25,0	100,0
Vendôme	0,0	0,0	0,0	12,9	12,9	48,4	25,8	100,0
Victory (N)	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,7	14,3	48,6	31,4	100,0
Total	0,3	1,1	0,9	11,7	9,1	45,9	31,0	100,0

Figure 5.5: Shares of most recent film titles (from 1961 and 1962) out of total film supply at examined cinemas in 1962 (cinemas which did not screen films from these years are not included).

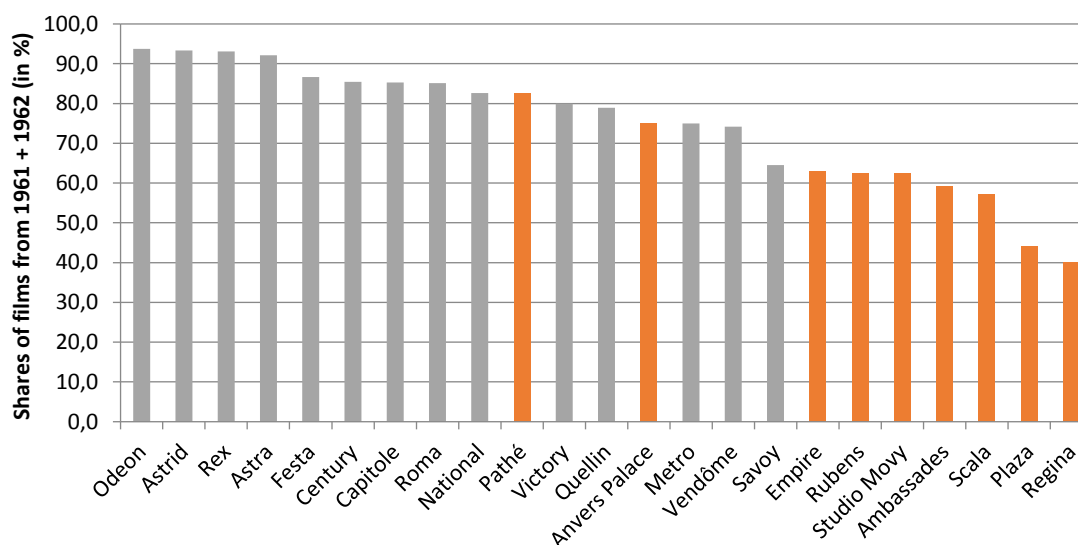


Table 5.24: Detailed overview of number of film titles and screenings, and average duration in 1962 according to countries of origin.

	Number of titles	% (of all countries)	Number of screenings	% (of all countries)	Average duration (in weeks)
USA	154	30,3	422	39,4	2,7
France/Italy	74	14,6	133	12,4	1,8
France	59	11,6	83	7,7	1,4
W-Germany	51	10,0	81	7,6	1,6
UK	48	9,4	71	6,6	1,5
Italy	21	4,1	46	4,3	2,2
Austria	14	2,8	36	3,4	2,6
W-Germany/France/Italy	7	1,4	10	0,9	1,4
UK/USA	6	1,2	24	2,2	4,0
Sweden	5	1,0	9	0,8	1,8
France/Italy/Yugoslavia	4	0,8	7	0,7	1,8
Belgium	4	0,8	11	1,0	2,8
France/Spain	4	0,8	5	0,5	1,3
Italy/USA	4	0,8	29	2,7	7,3
France/Italy/Spain	3	0,6	15	1,4	5,0
France/Italy/USA	3	0,6	5	0,5	1,7
USSR	3	0,6	3	0,3	1,0
Spain	3	0,6	5	0,5	1,7
W-Germany/France	2	0,4	2	0,2	1,0
W-Germany/Italy	2	0,4	4	0,4	2,0
Brazil	2	0,4	3	0,3	1,5
France/USA	2	0,4	3	0,3	1,5
Italy/Yugoslavia	2	0,4	5	0,5	2,5
Italy/Spain	2	0,4	3	0,3	1,5
Switzerland	2	0,4	2	0,2	1,0
France/Italy/Yugoslavia/Liechtenstein	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
W-Germany/France/Italy/Japan	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
W-Germany/France/Switzerland	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
Argentina	1	0,2	5	0,5	5,0
Argentina/Italy/Spain	1	0,2	6	0,6	6,0
Argentina/Mexico	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
Australia/UK	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
Belgium/France	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0

	Number of titles	% (of all countries)	Number of screenings	% (of all countries)	Average duration (in weeks)
Germany	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
Philippines/USA	1	0,2	2	0,2	2,0
Finland	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
France/Griekenland/USA	1	0,2	8	0,7	8,0
France/Japan	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
France/Yugoslavia	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
Italy/Spain/USA	1	0,2	2	0,2	2,0
Italy/UK	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
Japan	1	0,2	2	0,2	2,0
Yugoslavia/USA	1	0,2	3	0,3	3,0
Mexico	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
Mexico/Spain	1	0,2	2	0,2	2,0
Poland	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
UK/South Africa	1	0,2	2	0,2	2,0
USA/Switzerland	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
W-Germany/Liechtenstein	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
W-Germany/Austria	1	0,2	1	0,1	1,0
W-Germany/Turkey	1	0,2	2	0,2	2,0
W-Germany/USA/Switzerland	1	0,2	5	0,5	5,0
Total	508	100,0	1072	100,0	2,1
Missing	2		179		
	510		1251		2,5

Figure 5.6: Number of film titles from the US, France, UK, Italy and/or West-Germany, screened in Antwerp in 1952 (left) and 1962 (right).

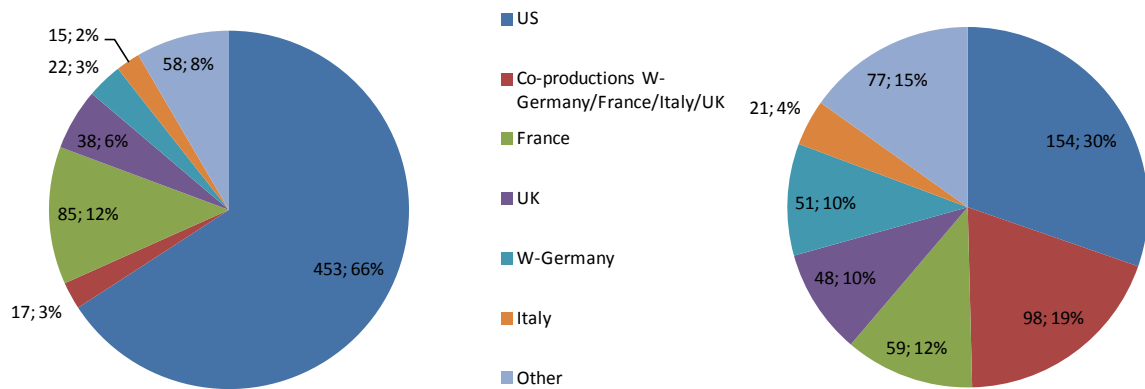


Table 5.25: Number and shares of film screenings in 1962 per cinema according to countries and regions of origin. Only (co-)producing countries with at least ten screenings are listed separately; the remaining countries have been grouped (for details see Table 5.24). Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

		% within Country (Cnt./Cinema (Cin.))		Ambassades		Anvers Palace		Astra (N)		Astrid		Capitale		Century (N)		Empire		Festa (N)		Metro		National (N)		Odeon		Pathé		Plaza		Quellin		Regina		Rex		Roma (N)		Rubens		Savoy		Scala		Studio Movv		Vendôme		Victory (N)		Total	
US	#	6	15	40	10	28	24	3	18	40	29	17	30	5	0	1	31	31	30	20	0	8	25	11	422																										
	% Cnt.	1,4	3,6	9,5	2,4	6,6	5,7	0,7	4,3	9,5	6,9	4,0	7,1	1,2	0,0	0,2	7,3	7,3	7,1	4,7	0,0	1,9	5,9	2,6	100,0																										
	% Cin.	12,0	31,3	76,9	19,2	54,9	50,0	6,3	40,0	76,9	63,0	32,7	58,8	15,6	0,0	2,2	60,8	64,6	57,7	40,8	0,0	17,0	49,0	31,4																											
Co-prod. US + Italy	#	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	9	1	2	10	0	1	0	0	0	29																										
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	3,4	6,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,9	0,0	31,0	3,4	6,9	34,5	0,0	3,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																										
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	1,9	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,3	0,0	19,6	2,0	4,2	19,2	0,0	7,1	0,0	0,0	0,0																											
Co-prod. US with France, Italy and/or Spain	#	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10																										
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	10,0	20,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	20,0	20,0	10,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																										
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	2,0	4,2	0,0	2,2	0,0	4,3	3,8	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0																											
Co-prod. US + UK	#	0	0	3	1	0	2	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	9	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	24																										
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	12,5	4,2	0,0	8,3	4,2	4,2	0,0	8,3	0,0	4,2	0,0	0,0	37,5	8,3	8,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																										
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	5,8	1,9	0,0	4,2	2,1	2,2	0,0	4,3	0,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	19,6	3,9	4,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0																											
UK	#	6	2	0	0	4	4	12	3	2	4	3	5	1	1	5	1	1	1	0	3	1	8	4	71																										
	% Cnt.	8,5	2,8	0,0	0,0	5,6	5,6	16,9	4,2	2,8	5,6	4,2	7,0	1,4	1,4	7,0	1,4	1,4	1,4	0,0	4,2	1,4	11,3	5,6	100,0																										
	% Cin.	12,0	4,2	0,0	0,0	7,8	8,3	25,0	6,7	3,8	8,7	5,8	9,8	3,1	1,9	10,9	2,0	2,1	1,9	0,0	21,4	2,1	15,7	11,4																											
France	#	15	14	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	10	4	9	0	6	0	0	0	1	2	8	8	1	83																										
	% Cnt.	18,1	16,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	12,0	4,8	10,8	0,0	7,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,2	2,4	9,6	9,6	1,2	100,0																										
	% Cin.	30,0	29,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	19,2	7,8	28,1	0,0	13,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	14,3	17,0	15,7	2,9																											
Italy	#	0	1	1	2	4	0	3	1	0	2	7	0	7	0	1	0	2	5	5	2	2	0	1	46																										
	% Cnt.	0,0	2,2	2,2	4,3	8,7	0,0	6,5	2,2	0,0	4,3	15,2	0,0	15,2	0,0	2,2	0,0	4,3	10,9	10,9	4,3	4,3	0,0	2,2	100,0																										
	% Cin.	0,0	2,1	1,9	3,8	7,8	0,0	6,3	2,2	0,0	4,3	13,5	0,0	21,9	0,0	2,2	0,0	4,2	9,6	10,2	14,3	4,3	0,0	2,9																											
Co-prod. Italy + France	#	12	13	1	0	11	3	6	5	8	4	11	3	4	0	8	9	3	3	3	3	13	5	5	133																										
	% Cnt.	9,0	9,8	0,8	0,0	8,3	2,3	4,5	3,8	6,0	3,0	8,3	2,3	3,0	0,0	6,0	6,8	2,3	2,3	2,3	2,3	9,8	3,8	3,8	100,0																										
	% Cin.	24,0	27,1	1,9	0,0	21,6	6,3	12,5	11,1	15,4	8,7	21,2	5,9	12,5	0,0	17,4	17,6	6,3	5,8	6,1	21,4	27,7	9,8	14,3																											

		% within Country (Cnt.)/Cinema (Cin.)		Ambassades		Anvers Palace		Astra (N)				Astrid		Capitale		Century (N)		Empire		Festa (N)				Metro		National (N)		Odeon		Pathé		Plaza		Quellin		Regina		Rex				Roma (N)		Rubens		Savoy		Scala		Studio Movy		Vendôme		Victory (N)		Total	
Co-prod. France, Italy and/or Spain	#	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	23														
	% Cnt.	8,7	0,0	8,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	43,5	4,3	8,7	0,0	0,0	43,5	4,3	8,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,3	4,3	4,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,3	8,7	0,0	0,0	4,3	8,7	0,0	0,0	100,0															
	% Cin.	4,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	20,8	2,2	3,8	0,0	0,0	20,8	2,2	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,2	2,0	2,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,1	4,3	0,0	0,0	7,1	4,3	0,0	0,0	100,0															
Germany + W-Germany	#	1	1	0	19	0	7	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	36	0	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	4	82																
	% Cnt.	1,2	1,2	0,0	23,2	0,0	8,5	1,2	3,7	0,0	1,2	0,0	0,0	1,2	43,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	0,0	4,9	100,0																		
	% Cin.	2,0	2,1	0,0	36,5	0,0	14,6	2,1	6,7	0,0	2,2	0,0	0,0	3,1	69,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,2	0,0	8,5	0,0	8,5	0,0	11,4	0,0	11,4	0,0	11,4	0,0	11,4	0,0	11,4	0,0	11,4	0,0	11,4	100,0																		
Co-prod. France + Italy + W-Germany	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	10																
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	10,0	0,0	20,0	10,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	20,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	20,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	20,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	10,0	100,0																		
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	2,0	0,0	3,8	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	4,3	0,0	2,9	0,0	2,9	0,0	4,3	0,0	2,9	0,0	2,9	0,0	2,9	0,0	2,9	0,0	2,9	100,0																		
Austria	#	0	0	0	16	0	4	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	6	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	36																
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	44,4	0,0	11,1	0,0	11,1	0,0	2,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	16,7	2,8	2,8	2,8	0,0	5,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																		
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	30,8	0,0	8,3	0,0	8,9	0,0	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	11,5	2,2	2,0	2,1	0,0	4,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																		
Belgium	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	11																
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	18,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	18,2	0,0	45,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	45,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	18,2	0,0	18,2	100,0																		
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,2	0,0	10,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,7	0,0	5,7	0,0	5,7	100,0																		
Nordic countries	#	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	10																
	% Cnt.	40,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	30,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	10,0	100,0																		
	% Cin.	8,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	9,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,1	0,0	0,0	2,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,9	0,0	2,9	0,0	2,9	0,0	2,9	100,0																		
W- European co-prod.	#	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	18																
	% Cnt.	0,0	5,6	0,0	11,1	5,6	0,0	5,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,6	0,0	38,9	5,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	22,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	22,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																		
	% Cin.	0,0	2,1	0,0	3,8	2,0	0,0	2,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	13,5	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																		
Soviet Bloc countries	#	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4																
	% Cnt.	50,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	25,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	25,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	25,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																		
	% Cin.	4,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0																		
Yugoslavi an co- prod.	#	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	3	0	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	2	17																		
	% Cnt.	5,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	17,6	11,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,9	11,8	11,8	17,6	0,0	0,0	5,9	0,0	11,8	0,0	11,8	0,0	5,9	0,0	11,8	0,0	11,8	0,0	11,8	0,0	11,8	0,0	11,8	100,0																		
	% Cin.	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,3	4,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,2	3,9	4,2	5,8	0,0	0,0	2,1	0,0	5,7	0,0	5,7	0,0	2,1	0,0	5,7	0,0	5,7	0,0	5,7	0,0	5,7	0,0	5,7	100,0																		

		% within Country (Cnt.)/Cinema (Cin.)		Ambassadors		Anvers Palace		Astra (N)		Astrid	Capitole	Century (N)		Empire	Festa (N)		Metro	National (N)		Odeon	Pathé	Plaza	Quellin	Regina	Rex		Roma (N)	Rubens	Savoy	Scala	Studio Movy		Vendôme	Victory (N)	Total
Latin- America	#	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	10
	% Cnt.	10,0	10,0	0,0	0,0	20,0	10,0	10,0	10,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	30,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0	
	% Cin.	2,0	2,1	0,0	0,0	3,9	2,1	2,1	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0	
Asia	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2		
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0	0,0	100,0		
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,9	0,0	100,0		
Interconti- nental co- prod.	#	0	0	3	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	4	0	0	1	3	1	0	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	0	4	1	2	3	3	31	
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	9,7	0,0	0,0	3,2	3,2	6,5	0,0	3,2	3,2	12,9	0,0	0,0	3,2	9,7	3,2	0,0	12,9	3,2	6,5	9,7	3,2	6,5	9,7	3,2	0,0	12,9	3,2	6,5	9,7	9,7	100,0	
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	5,8	0,0	0,0	2,1	2,1	4,4	0,0	2,2	1,9	7,8	0,0	0,0	2,2	5,9	2,1	0,0	8,2	7,1	4,3	5,9	7,1	4,3	5,9	8,2	7,1	4,3	5,9	8,6	8,6	100,0		
Total	#	50	48	52	52	51	48	48	45	52	46	52	51	32	52	46	51	48	52	49	14	47	51	35	1072										
	% Cin.	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100		

Table 5.26: Number of screenings from the US in group of cinemas in 1962.

	# US screening/group	Total # screenings/group	% US- screenings/group
Rex cinemas	354	738	48,0
Competitors	68	336	20,2
Total	422	1074	39,3

Figure 5.7: Shares of screenings in 1962 in Pathé by distributor.

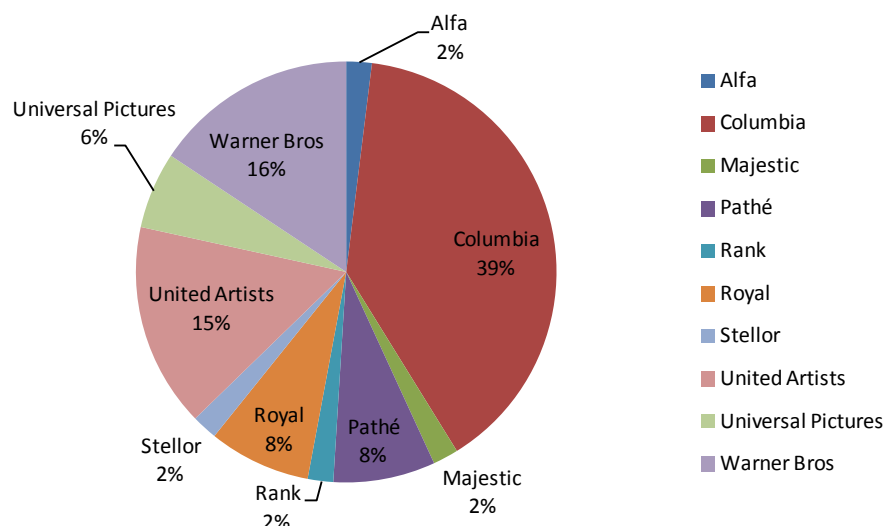


Table 5.27: Number of individual film titles and screenings in 1962 according to official film ratings.

	Film titles	% (incl. missing values)	% (excl. missing values)	Screenings	% (incl. missing values)	% (excl. missing values)	Average duration per rating (in weeks)
KT	217	42,5	48,9	526	49,0	54,0	2,4
KNT	219	42,9	49,3	440	41,0	45,2	2,0
Other ¹²⁹⁷	8	1,6	1,8	8	0,7	0,8	1,0
Total	444	87,1	100,0	974	90,7	100,0	
Missing	66	12,9		100	9,3		
Total	510	100,0		1074	100,0		

Table 5.28: Number of individual film titles and screenings in 1962 according to Catholic film ratings.

	Film titles	% (incl. missing values)	% (excl. missing values)	Screenings	% (incl. missing values)	% (excl. missing values)	Average duration per rating (in weeks)
positive rating	41	8,0	23,4	192	17,9	33,3	4,7
adults	111	21,8	63,4	342	31,8	59,4	3,1
negative rating	23	4,5	13,1	42	3,9	7,3	1,8
Total	175	34,3	100,0	576	53,6	100,0	
Missing	335	65,7		498	46,4		
Total	510	100,0		1074	100,0		

¹²⁹⁷ In 1962, next to the KT- and KNT-labels, three additional classificatory labels were recorded in the programming books: SG, KSG and KG. These labels were not used by the official board for film classification. Most likely they apply for films which were strictly forbidden to attend for minors. The letters SG probably stand for "streng geweigerd" (strictly rejected), the letter K for "kinderen" (children). These assumptions fit the fact that the labels were recorded for film of disputable content (e.g. erotic films and a film about the life of Adolf Hitler) which predominantly screened in the infamous cinemas Plaza and Studio Movv.

Table 5.29: Official censorship ratings and Catholic film advice for all screenings in 1962 according to cinema. (Unless indicated otherwise, the figures in the total columns represent the total number of recorded screenings.) Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	<i>Official film rating</i>									<i>Catholic film advice</i>								
	KT	%	KNT	%	Other	%	Missing	%	Total	Positive	%	Adults	%	Negative	%	Missing	%	Total
<i>Astrid</i>	49	94,2	1	1,9	0	0,0	2	3,8	52	13	25,0	18	34,6	0	0,0	21	40,4	52
<i>Capitole</i>	36	69,2	15	28,8	0	0,0	1	1,9	52	5	9,6	21	40,4	0	0,0	26	50,0	52
<i>Metro</i>	35	67,3	16	30,8	0	0,0	1	1,9	52	15	28,8	16	30,8	0	0,0	21	40,4	52
<i>Astra</i>	33	63,5	18	34,6	0	0,0	1	1,9	52	17	32,7	27	51,9	0	0,0	8	15,4	52
<i>Rex</i>	32	61,5	20	38,5	0	0,0	0	0,0	52	14	26,9	26	50,0	0	0,0	12	23,1	52
<i>Vendôme</i>	31	59,6	21	40,4	0	0,0	0	0,0	52	9	17,3	14	26,9	0	0,0	29	55,8	52
<i>Pathé</i>	28	53,8	24	46,2	0	0,0	0	0,0	52	5	9,6	18	34,6	0	0,0	29	55,8	52
<i>Regina</i>	28	58,3	18	37,5	0	0,0	2	4,2	48	18	37,5	3	6,3	1	2,1	26	54,2	48
<i>Rubens</i>	28	53,8	24	46,2	0	0,0	0	0,0	52	17	32,7	9	17,3	0	0,0	26	50,0	52
<i>Empire</i>	24	47,1	22	43,1	1	2,0	4	7,8	51	1	2,0	3	5,9	2	3,9	45	88,2	51
<i>Anvers Palace</i>	23	46,9	24	49,0	0	0,0	2	4,1	49	3	6,1	5	10,2	1	2,0	40	81,6	49
<i>Savoy</i>	23	44,2	28	53,8	1	1,9	0	0,0	52	8	15,4	14	26,9	3	5,8	27	51,9	52
<i>Odeon</i>	17	32,7	35	67,3	0	0,0	0	0,0	52	6	11,5	8	15,4	0	0,0	38	73,1	52
<i>Ambassades</i>	15	30,0	31	62,0	0	0,0	4	8,0	50	0	0,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	50	100	50
<i>Quellin</i>	14	26,9	38	73,1	0	0,0	0	0,0	52	1	1,9	12	23,1	3	5,8	36	69,2	52
<i>Roma (N)</i>	37	67,3	3	5,5	0	0,0	15	27,3	55	26	47,3	28	50,9	1	1,8	0	0,0	55
<i>Festa (N)</i>	25	49,0	9	17,6	0	0,0	17	33,3	51	11	21,6	37	72,5	3	5,9	0	0,0	51
<i>National (N)</i>	27	42,2	6	9,4	0	0,0	31	48,4	64	22	34,4	42	65,6	0	0,0	0	0,0	64
<i>Century (N)</i>	18	29,0	14	22,6	0	0,0	30	48,4	62	12	19,4	49	79,0	1	1,6	0	0,0	62
<i>Victory (N)</i>	2	2,4	17	20,2	0	0,0	65	77,4	84	0	0,0	53	63,1	31	36,9	0	0,0	84
<i>Scala</i>	0	0,0	3	4,4	0	0,0	65	95,6	68	0	0,0	9	13,2	59	86,8	0	0,0	68
<i>Plaza</i>	0	0,0	33	71,7	7	15,2	6	13,0	46	0	0,0	0	0,0	4	8,7	42	91,3	46
<i>Studio Movy</i>	2	3,9	39	76,5	2	3,9	8	15,7	51	1	2,0	0	0,0	12	23,5	38	74,5	51
<i>Total</i>	527	42,1	459	36,7	11	0,9	254	20,3	1251	204	16,3	412	32,9	121	9,7	514	41,1	1251
<i>Total excl. missing and others</i>		53,4		46,5					986		27,6		55,9		16,4			737

Table 5.30: An investigation of the 26 films with longest duration (>5 weeks) in examined cinemas in 1962. (The numbers between brackets indicate the number of subsequent weeks the film played at the particular cinema. Cinemas belonging to Heylen are marked grey.)¹²⁹⁸

Film title	Start in 1962	1st screening	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Le Repos du Guerrier (Vadim, 1962, France/Italy, distrib. Royal)	21 Sep.	Anvers Palace (3)	→ Regina (6)				
Blue Hawaii (Taurog, 1961, US, distr. Paramount)	16 Feb.	Capitole (4)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)	Festa (1)		
Madame Sans-Gêne (Christian-Jaque, 1962, France/Italy/Spain, distr. Metropolitan)	25 May	Empire (7)	Ambas. (2)				
Cape Fear (Thompson, 1962, US, distrib. UP)	31 Aug.	Metro (3)	→ Vendôme (1)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)	National (1)	
The Parent Trap (Swift, 1961, US, distr. Discibel)	17 Aug.	Metro (1)	→ Vendôme (4)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)		
Pocketful of Miracles (Capra, 1961, US, distrib. UA)	20 Apr.	Metro (3)	Vendôme (1)	Astra (1)	National (1)		
On The Double (Shavelson, 1961, US, distrib. Paramount)	22 Dec. 1961	Metro (3)	→ Astrid (2)	Astra (1)	Roma (1) + Festa (1)		
The Absent Minded Professor (Stevenson, 1961, US, distrib. Discibel)	16 Mar.	Metro (3)	→ Astrid (1)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)		
The Outsider (D. Mann, 1961, US, distrib. UP)	6 Apr.	Metro (2)	→ Savoy (1)	Pathé (1) + Astra (1)	Anvers P. (2) + Roma (1)	National (1)	
Don Camillo monsignore ma non troppo (Gallone, 1961, Italy, distrib. Discibel)	26 Jan.	Odeon (6)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)			
The Devil at 4 O'Clock (LeRoy, 1961, US, distrib. Columbia)	19 Jan.	Pathé (3)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)	National (1)		
Frauenarzt Dr. Sibelius (Jugert, 1962, W-Germany, distrib. Elan)	16 Nov.	Quellin (5)	Victory (1)				
The Guns of Navarone (Thompson, 1961, UK/US, distrib. Columbia)	27 Oct. 1961	Rex (7)	→ Rubens (1)	→ Regina (11)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)	National (1)
Lover Come Back (D. Mann, 1961, US, distrib. UP)	22 Dec. 1961	Rex (4)	→ Vendôme (2)	Astra (1)	National (1)	Roma (1)	
That Touch of Mink (D. Mann, 1962, US, distrib. UP)	26 Oct.	Rex (3)	→ Vendôme (1)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)		
The Counterfeit Traitor (Seaton, 1962, US, distrib. Paramount)	5 Oct.	Rex (3)	→ Vendôme (2)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)		
Mr. Hobbes Takes a Vacation (Koster, 1962, US, distrib. Fox)	6 Jul.	Rex (3)	→ Vendôme (4)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)		
Phaedra (Dassin, 1962, France/Greece/US, distrib. UA)	14 Sep.	Rex (3)	→ Vendôme (3)	Astra (1)	Century (1)		
Die Fledermaus (Von Cziffra, 1962, Austria, distrib. Elan)	10 Aug.	Rex (1)	→ Astrid (4)	Festa (1)			

¹²⁹⁸ With a duration of six weeks in examined cinemas in 1962 GONE WITH THE WIND (Fleming, 1939, US) also belonged to the films with the longest duration. However, since it did not its actual premiere in 1962 it was excluded from this table. See corresponding explanations for sample 1982.

Film title	Start in 1962	1st screening	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
<i>The Comancheros</i> (Curtiz, 1961, US, distrib. Fox)	19 Jan.	Rex (2)	→ Astrid (1)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)	National (1)	
<i>Sergeants 3</i> (Sturges, 1962, US, distrib. UA)	20 Apr.	Rex (3)	→ Savoy (3)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)	National (1)	
<i>El Cid</i> (A. Mann, 1961, Italy/US, distrib. Melior)	9 Feb.	Rubens (10)	→ Regina (9)	Astra (1)	Roma (1)		
<i>West Side Story</i> (Robbins/Wise, 1961, US, distrib. UA)	17 Aug. (until 31 Jan. '63)	Rubens (11)	→ Savoy (3)	Astra (1)			
<i>Pecado de amor</i> (Amadori, 1961, Argentina/Italy/Spain, distrib. Century)	9 Mar.	Savoy (4)	Festa (1)	Roma (1)			
<i>De stille genieten</i> (Kiel, 1961, Belgium, distrib. AFO)	22 Dec. 1961	Savoy (5)	Festa (1)	Roma (1)			
<i>After Mein Kampf</i> (Porter, 1961, US, distrib. CCB)	13 Jul.	Studio Movv (6)					

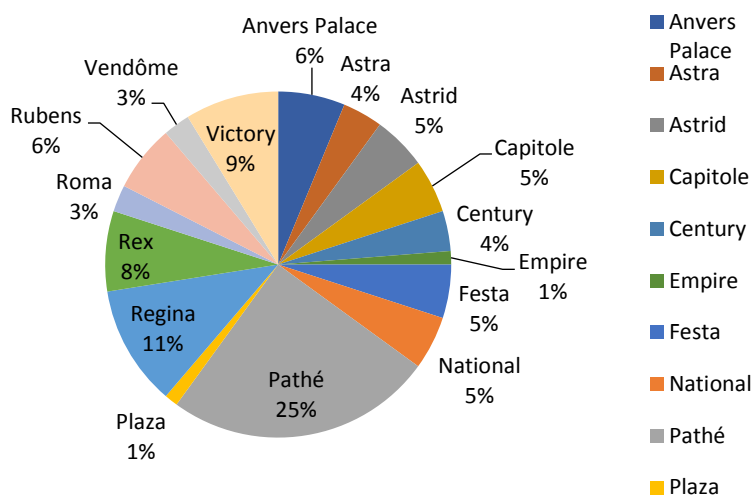
Table 5.31: Classification of cinemas in 1962 according to frequency of "runs" of twenty-six films with a duration in examined cinemas of more than four weeks. (Highest number of runs is marked in bold.) Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	1st screen	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	Total
Rex	9						9
Metro	6						6
Rubens	2	1					3
Savoy	2	3					5
Odeon	1						1
Quellin	1						1
Capitole	1						1
Empire	1						1
Studio Movv	1						1
Pathé	1		1				2
Anvers Palace	1			1			2
Vendôme		8					8
Astrid		4					4
Astra		3	15	1			19
Festa (N)		2	1	2			5
Regina		2	1				3
Ambassades		1					1
Victory (N)		1					1
Roma (N)			5	11	2		16
National (N)				3	4	1	8
Century (N)				1			1
Total	26	25	23	19	6	1	

Table 5.32: Number of film screenings in 1962 according to distributors. (Neighborhood cinemas are marked with (N). Cinemas belonging to Heylens's cinema group are marked grey.)

	American majors	%	Others	%	Missing values	%	Total	%
Astra	46	88,5	6	11,5	0	0,0	52	100,0
Rex	44	84,6	8	15,4	0	0,0	52	100,0
Pathé	39	75,0	12	23,1	1	1,9	52	100,0
Metro	35	67,3	17	32,7	0	0,0	52	100,0
Rubens	34	65,4	18	34,6	0	0,0	52	100,0
Capitole	33	63,5	19	36,5	0	0,0	52	100,0
Vendôme	33	63,5	19	36,5	0	0,0	52	100,0
Roma (N)	30	54,5	11	20,0	14	25,5	55	100,0
Odeon	27	51,9	25	48,1	0	0,0	52	100,0
National (N)	27	42,2	5	7,8	32	50,0	64	100,0
Festa (N)	21	41,2	14	27,5	16	31,4	51	100,0
Anvers Palace	19	38,8	24	49,0	6	12,2	49	100,0
Savoy	19	36,5	33	63,5	0	0,0	52	100,0
Century (N)	20	32,3	11	17,7	31	50,0	62	100,0
Regina	10	20,8	34	70,8	4	8,3	48	100,0
Astrid	9	17,3	43	82,7	0	0,0	52	100,0
Ambassades	8	16,0	40	80,0	2	4,0	50	100,0
Victory (N)	13	15,5	7	8,3	64	76,2	84	100,0
Empire	6	11,8	39	76,5	6	11,8	51	100,0
Plaza	1	2,2	32	69,6	13	28,3	46	100,0
Quellin (N)	0	0,0	52	100,0	0	0,0	52	100,0
Studio Movv	0	0,0	36	70,6	15	29,4	51	100,0
Scala	0	0,0	4	5,9	64	94,1	68	100,0
Total	474	37,9	509	40,7	268	21,4	1251	100,0

Figure 5.8: Film screenings in 1962 distributed by Columbia according to cinema¹²⁹⁹



¹²⁹⁹ Cinemas not represented in the diagram did not screen films by Columbia.

Figure 5.9: Shares of screenings in 1962 in Astrid by distributor (American majors depicted in light blue color)

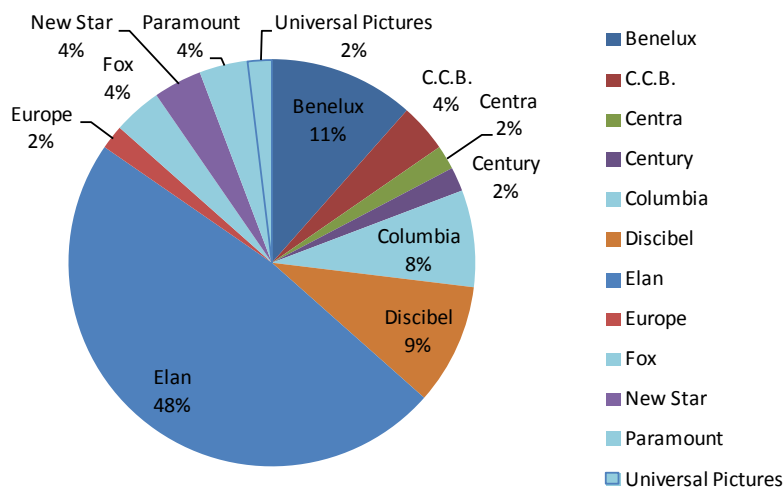


Figure 5.10: Shares of screenings in 1962 Quellin by distributor (no American majors present)

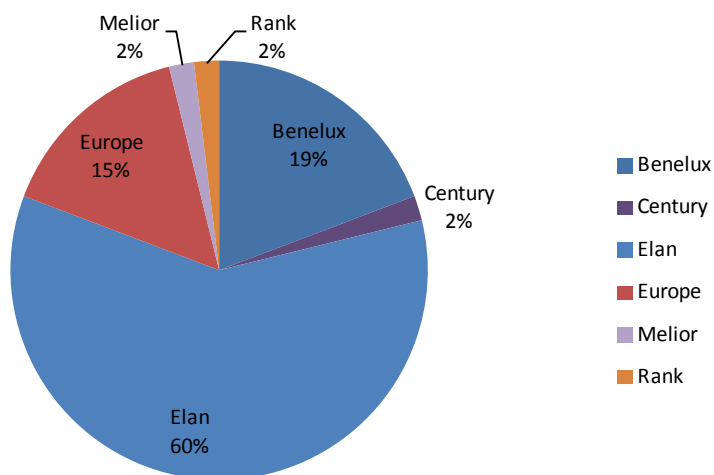
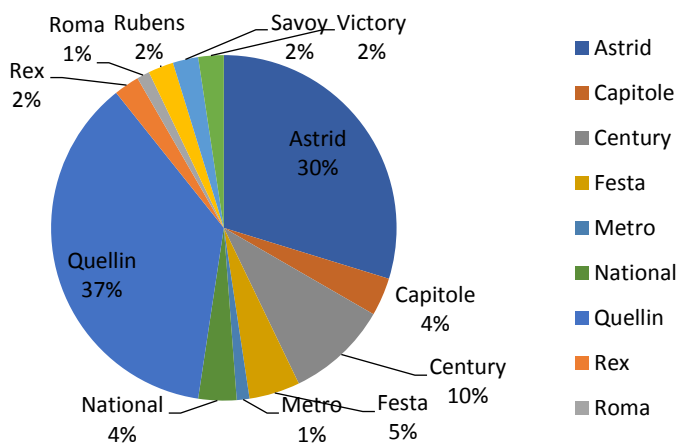


Figure 5.11: Film screenings in 1962 distributed by Elan according to cinema¹³⁰⁰



¹³⁰⁰ Cinemas not represented in the diagram did not screen films by Elan.

Table 5.33: Overview of examined cinemas in sample 1982. (The first block of cinemas belonged to Heylen's Rex cinema group; the second to his competitors; the last block are cinemas that were excluded from the analysis .)

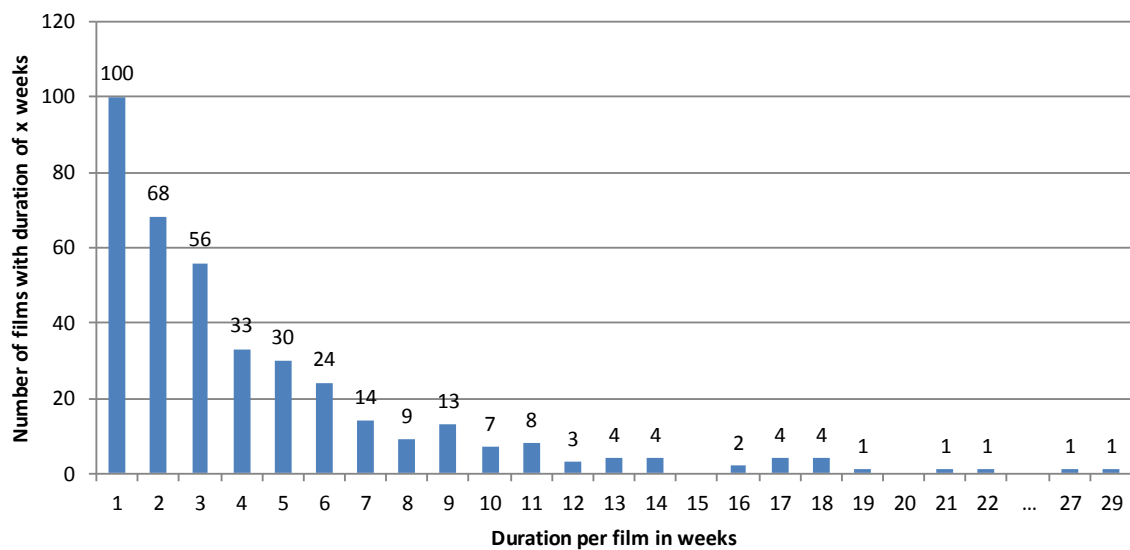
<i>Name of the cinema complex</i>	<i>Name of the screen</i>	<i>Street</i>	<i>Neighborhood</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Ambassades	Ambassades	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	
	Ambassades Club I	Anneessensstraat		
	Ambassades Club II	Anneessensstraat		
	Ambassades Club III	Anneessensstraat		
	Ambassades Club IV	Anneessensstraat		
Astra	Astra	Carnotstraat	Borgerhout	
Astrid	Astrid	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	
Brabo-Tijl-Wapper	Brabo	Century Center	Station Quarter	
	Tijl	Century Center		
	Wapper	Century Center		
Capitole	Capitole	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
Festa	Festa	Offerandestraat	Stuivenberg	
Metro	Metro I	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	
	Metro II	Anneessensstraat		
Quellin	Odeon	Frankrijklei	Station Quarter	
	Quellin	Quellinstraat	Station Quarter	
	Quellin 1	Quellinstraat		Opened on 17 December 1982
	Quellin 2	Quellinstraat		
Rex	Rex	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
	Rex Club	De Keyserlei		
Roma	Roma	Turnhoutsebaan	Borgerhout	Closed on 4 June 1982
Rubens	Rubens	Carnotstraat	Borgerhout	
Savoy	Savoy	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	
Sinjoor	Sinjoor	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	
Vendôme	Vendôme	Anneessensstraat	Station Quarter	
Calyпсо	Calyпсо I	Quellinstraat	Station Quarter	
	Calyпсо II	Quellinstraat		
	Calyпсо Club	Quellinstraat		
Cartoon's	Cartoon's 1	Kaasstraat	historical center	
	Cartoon's 2	Kaasstraat		
	Cartoon's 3	Kaasstraat		Opened on 12 March 1982
Monty	Monty	Montignystraat 3/5	Antwerp South	Closed on 26 February 1982
	Paris	De Keyserlei	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA
	Plaza	Breydelstraat	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA
	Royal	Koningin Astridplein	Station Quarter	Not listed in GvA
	Scala	Carnotstraat	Borgerhout	Not listed in GvA

Table 5.34: Number of recorded and identified screenings per cinema in 1982, listed alphabetically and according to identification rate. Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

<i>Cinema</i>	<i>Recorded screenings</i>	<i>Identified screenings</i>	<i>%</i>
Ambassades Club I	52	52	100,0
Ambassades Club II	51	51	100,0
Ambassades Club III	52	52	100,0
Ambassades Club IV	52	52	100,0
Astra	52	52	100,0
Astrid	52	52	100,0
Brabo	52	52	100,0
Calyпсо Club	53	53	100,0
Calyпсо I	52	52	100,0
Metro I	52	52	100,0

<i>Cinema</i>	<i>Recorded screenings</i>	<i>Identified screenings</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Metro II</i>	51	51	100,0
<i>Monty</i>	26	26	100,0
<i>Quellin</i>	50	50	100,0
<i>Quellin 1</i>	2	2	100,0
<i>Quellin 2</i>	2	2	100,0
<i>Quellin 3</i>	2	2	100,0
<i>Rex Club</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Tijl</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Vêndome</i>	52	52	100,0
<i>Wapper</i>	51	51	100,0
<i>Cartoon's 3</i>	110	109	99,1
<i>Cartoon's 2</i>	152	150	98,7
<i>Calypso II</i>	52	51	98,1
<i>Rex</i>	52	51	98,1
<i>Sinjoor</i>	52	51	98,1
<i>Cartoon's 1</i>	122	119	97,5
<i>Roma</i>	25	24	96,0
<i>Ambassades</i>	52	49	94,2
<i>Festa</i>	52	49	94,2
<i>Odeon</i>	51	48	94,1
<i>Capitole</i>	52	48	92,3
<i>Rubens</i>	58	53	91,4
<i>Savoy</i>	52	40	76,9
<i>Cartoon's</i>	15	7	46,7
Total	1757	1709	97,3

Figure 5.12: Number of films according to total duration on examined screens in 1982¹³⁰¹



¹³⁰¹ The numbers include screenings in the course of 1982 only. The duration time of a number of films might be even longer, if they premiered before January 1982 or remained on screens after December 1982.

Table 5.35: Number of identified screenings, film titles and average duration (in weeks) per film per cinema in 1982. Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	<i>Screenings</i>	<i>Film titles</i>	<i>Average duration film/cinema (in weeks)</i>
Festa	49	49	1,0
Roma	24	24	1,0
Cartoon's	7	5	1,4
Astra	52	31	1,7
Ambassades Club II	51	29	1,8
Wapper	51	29	1,8
Capitole	48	26	1,8
Cartoon's 2	150	78	1,9
Vêndome	52	27	1,9
Quellin 1	2	1	2,0
Quellin 2	2	1	2,0
Quellin 3	2	1	2,0
Tijl	52	25	2,1
Cartoon's 1	119	55	2,2
Cartoon's 3	109	50	2,2
Savoy	40	17	2,4
Monty	26	10	2,6
Calypso II	51	19	2,7
Brabo	52	19	2,7
Quellin	50	18	2,8
Calypso Club	53	19	2,8
Odeon	48	17	2,8
Ambassades Club I	52	17	3,1
Ambassades Club III	52	17	3,1
Ambassades	49	16	3,1
Rubens	53	17	3,1
Metro II	51	14	3,6
Astrid	52	14	3,7
Metro I	52	14	3,7
Rex	51	13	3,9
Calypso I	52	13	4,0
Rex Club	52	12	4,3
Sinjoor	51	11	4,6
Ambassades Club IV	52	8	6,5
Total	1709	716	2,7

Table 5.36: Number of film screenings, individual titles and average duration per film in 1982 according to (group of) production year(s).

	<i>Screenings</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Valid %</i>	<i>Film titles</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Valid %</i>	<i>Average duration (in weeks)</i>
1982	389	22,1	22,8	64	16,5	16,5	6,1
1981	685	39,0	40,1	121	31,2	31,2	5,7
1980	153	8,7	9,0	49	12,6	12,6	3,1
1970s	391	22,3	22,9	116	29,9	29,9	3,4
1960s	50	2,8	2,9	21	5,4	5,4	2,4
1950s	25	1,4	1,5	12	3,1	3,1	2,1
1940s	6	,3	,4	2	,5	,5	3,0
1930s	10	,6	,6	3	,8	,8	3,3
Total	1709	97,3	100,0	388	100,0	100,0	
Missing	48	2,7		n/a	n/a		
Total	1757	100,0		388	100,0	100,0	

Table 5.37: Shares of individual film titles (in %) at examined cinemas in 1982 according to year of production. Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.

	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980	1981	1982	Total
Ambassades	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	37,5	0,0	31,3	31,3	100,0
Ambassades Club I	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	23,5	5,9	47,1	23,5	100,0
Ambassades Club II	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,3	3,4	55,2	31,0	100,0
Ambassades Club III	0,0	0,0	5,9	0,0	11,8	11,8	47,1	23,5	100,0
Ambassades Club IV	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	37,5	12,5	50,0	0,0	100,0
Astra	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,5	48,4	16,1	25,8	3,2	100,0
Astrid	0,0	0,0	14,3	14,3	35,7	28,6	7,1	0,0	100,0
Brabo	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,5	21,1	47,4	21,1	100,0
Calypso Club	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	21,1	5,3	42,1	31,6	100,0
Calypso I	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,7	0,0	69,2	23,1	100,0
Calypso II	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,3	10,5	57,9	26,3	100,0
Capitole	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	38,5	19,2	23,1	19,2	100,0
Cartoon's	0,0	0,0	0,0	20,0	80,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0
Cartoon's 1	1,8	1,8	1,8	5,5	45,5	12,7	20,0	10,9	100,0
Cartoon's 2	2,6	0,0	5,1	9,0	33,3	9,0	32,1	9,0	100,0
Cartoon's 3	2,0	2,0	2,0	6,0	40,0	4,0	34,0	10,0	100,0
Festa	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	12,2	12,2	53,1	22,4	100,0
Metro I	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,1	0,0	50,0	42,9	100,0
Metro II	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	14,3	7,1	42,9	35,7	100,0
Monty	0,0	0,0	20,0	10,0	70,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0
Odeon	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,9	17,6	17,6	47,1	11,8	100,0
Quellin	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	22,2	38,9	38,9	100,0
Quellin 1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0	100,0
Quellin 2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0	0,0	100,0
Quellin 3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0	100,0
Rex	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	30,8	69,2	100,0
Rex Club	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,3	8,3	33,3	50,0	100,0
Roma	0,0	4,2	0,0	4,2	20,8	4,2	62,5	4,2	100,0
Rubens	5,9	0,0	5,9	5,9	17,6	5,9	35,3	23,5	100,0
Savoy	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	52,9	29,4	17,6	0,0	100,0
Sinjoor	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	9,1	45,5	45,5	100,0
Tijl	0,0	0,0	0,0	12,0	12,0	12,0	36,0	28,0	100,0
Vëndome	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,4	7,4	66,7	18,5	100,0
Wapper	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	17,2	10,3	41,4	31,0	100,0
Total	0,7	0,4	1,7	3,5	24,9	10,2	38,7	20,0	100,0

Figure 5.13: Shares of most recent film titles (from 1981 and 1982) out of total film supply at examined cinemas in 1982 (cinemas which did not screen films from these years are not included; Quellin 1, 2, 3 are excluded as well, since they only had two screenings in total).

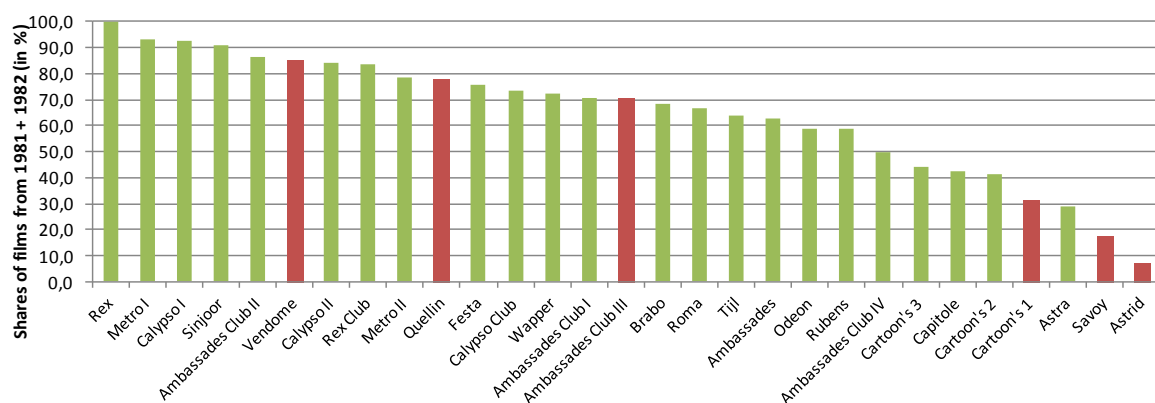


Table 5.38: Number of film titles and screenings, and average duration in 1982 according to countries of origin.

	Number of titles	% (of all countries)	Number of screenings	% (of all countries)	Average duration (in weeks)
US	154	39,7	623	36,5	4
France	38	9,8	195	11,4	5,1
UK	28	7,2	128	7,5	4,6
Italy	18	4,6	55	3,2	3,1
France/Italy	15	3,9	71	4,2	4,7
UK/US	12	3,1	113	6,6	9,4
W-Germany	12	3,1	42	2,5	3,5
France/W-Germany	10	2,6	47	2,8	4,7
The Netherlands	9	2,3	48	2,8	5,3
France/Italy/W-Germany	6	1,5	39	2,3	6,5
Australia	6	1,5	29	1,7	4,8
Canada	6	1,5	19	1,1	3,2
Italy/US	5	1,3	18	1,1	3,6
Japan	5	1,3	12	0,7	2,4
Belgium/France	4	1,0	19	1,1	4,8
Hong Kong/US	4	1,0	10	0,6	2,5
Hong Kong	4	1,0	7	0,4	1,8
W-Germany/US	3	0,8	9	0,5	3
W-Germany/Italy	3	0,8	8	0,5	2,7
Hong Kong/Taiwan	3	0,8	6	0,4	2
France/US	2	0,5	20	1,2	10
Canada/US	2	0,5	18	1,1	9
Belgium/The Netherlands	2	0,5	14	0,8	7
France/UK	2	0,5	9	0,5	4,5
France/Spain/W-Germany	2	0,5	7	0,4	3,5
Switzerland/W-Germany	2	0,5	7	0,4	3,5
France/Switzerland	2	0,5	6	0,4	3
Italy/Spain	2	0,5	4	0,2	2
Taiwan	2	0,5	4	0,2	2
Israel/W-Germany	1	0,3	21	1,2	21
France/Mexico	1	0,3	17	1,0	17
Canada/France/US	1	0,3	16	0,9	16
France/Turkey/Switzerland	1	0,3	11	0,6	11
Belgium	1	0,3	10	0,6	10
Zweden/UK	1	0,3	7	0,4	7
W-Germany/France/Austria	1	0,3	5	0,3	5
W-Germany/France/UK/Switzerland	1	0,3	4	0,2	4
Canada/Italy	1	0,3	3	0,2	3
E-Germany/Czechoslovakia	1	0,3	3	0,2	3
Italy/UK/US	1	0,3	3	0,2	3
W-Germany/Hong Kong	1	0,3	3	0,2	3
France/UK/US	1	0,3	2	0,1	2
Italy/Spain/US	1	0,3	2	0,1	2
Spain/US	1	0,3	2	0,1	2
Sweden	1	0,3	2	0,1	2
Switzerland	1	0,3	2	0,1	2
W-Germany/UK	1	0,3	2	0,1	2
Australia/Sweden	1	0,3	1	0,1	1
Belgium/France/Switzerland	1	0,3	1	0,1	1
France/Hong Kong	1	0,3	1	0,1	1
Libya/US	1	0,3	1	0,1	1
Mexico/US	1	0,3	1	0,1	1
Poland	1	0,3	1	0,1	1
W-Germany/France/Sweden	1	0,3	1	0,1	1
Total	388	100,0	1709	100,0	4,4

Table 5.39: Number of screenings from the US in group of cinema in 1982.

	# US- screenings/group	Total # screenings/group	% US- screenings/group
Rex cinemas	399	1142	34,9
Calypso - Cartoon's	224	567	39,5
<i>Total</i>	623	1709	36,5

Figure 5.14: Number of film titles from the US, France, UK, Italy and/or West-Germany screened in Antwerp cinemas in 1982.

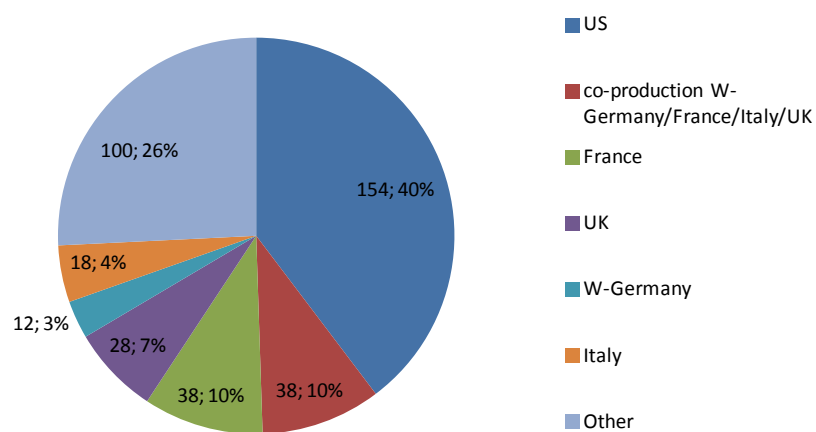


Table 5.40: Number and shares of film screenings in 1962 per cinema according to countries and regions of origin. Only (co-)producing countries with at least ten screenings and at least two different film titles are listed separately; the remaining countries have been grouped (for details see Table 5.37, for a specification for the different screens of Calypso, Metro and Rex, see Table 5.39). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey. The bracketed number behind the cinemas names refers to the number of screens per cinema complex.

		Ambass. (5)	Astra	Astrid	B-T-W (3)	Calypso (3)	Capitale	Cartoon's (3)	Festa	Metro (2)	Monty	Odeon	Quellin (3)	Rex (2)	Roma	Rubens	Savoy	Sinjoor	Vendôme	Total
US	#	68	15	37	63	87	18	127	21	59	10	10	19	26	7	26	0	13	17	623
	% Cnt.	10,9	2,4	5,9	10,1	14,0	2,9	20,4	3,4	9,5	1,6	1,6	3,0	4,2	1,1	4,2	0,0	2,1	2,7	100,0
	% Cin.	26,6	28,8	71,2	40,6	55,8	37,5	33,0	42,9	57,3	38,5	20,8	33,9	25,2	29,2	49,1	0,0	25,5	32,7	
Co-prod. Canada + US	#	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	27,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	66,7	0,0	0,0	5,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	11,7	0,0	0,0	1,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	
Canada	#	0	1	0	2	3	7	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	19
	% Cnt.	0,0	5,3	0,0	10,5	15,8	36,8	10,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,3	5,3	0,0	0,0	5,3	0,0	5,3	100,0
	% Cin.	0,0	1,9	0,0	1,3	1,9	14,6	0,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,8	1,0	0,0	0,0	2,5	0,0	1,9	
Co-prod. Italy + US	#	0	0	0	0	4	1	10	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	18
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	22,2	5,6	55,6	0,0	0,0	11,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,6	2,1	2,6	0,0	0,0	7,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	
Co-prod. UK + US	#	12	0	0	14	29	0	27	4	14	0	0	1	8	2	1	0	0	1	113
	% Cnt.	10,6	0,0	0,0	12,4	25,7	0,0	23,9	3,5	12,4	0,0	0,0	0,9	7,1	1,8	0,9	0,0	0,0	0,9	100,0
	% Cin.	4,7	0,0	0,0	9,0	18,6	0,0	7,0	8,2	13,6	0,0	0,0	1,8	7,8	8,3	1,9	0,0	0,0	1,9	
UK	#	12	7	3	12	16	1	34	4	0	4	0	16	0	2	1	9	0	7	128
	% Cnt.	9,4	5,5	2,3	9,4	12,5	0,8	26,6	3,1	0,0	3,1	0,0	12,5	0,0	1,6	0,8	7,0	0,0	5,5	100,0
	% Cin.	4,7	13,5	5,8	7,7	10,3	2,1	8,8	8,2	0,0	15,4	0,0	28,6	0,0	8,3	1,9	22,5	0,0	13,5	
France	#	53	3	0	23	1	0	38	4	7	0	13	5	34	1	0	2	0	11	195
	% Cnt.	27,2	1,5	0,0	11,8	0,5	0,0	19,5	2,1	3,6	0,0	6,7	2,6	17,4	0,5	0,0	1,0	0,0	5,6	100,0
	% Cin.	20,7	5,8	0,0	14,8	0,6	0,0	9,9	8,2	6,8	0,0	27,1	8,9	33,0	4,2	0,0	5,0	0,0	21,2	
Co-prod. France + US	#	5	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	20
	% Cnt.	25,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,0	5,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	55,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	100,0
	% Cin.	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,1	0,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	22,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	

			Ambass. (5)	Astra	Astrid	B-T-W (3)	Calypso (3)	Capitole	Cartoon's (3)	Festa	Metro (2)	Monty	Odeon	Quellin (3)	Rex (2)	Roma	Rubens	Savoy	Sinjoor	Vendôme	Total	
Co-prod. France + W- Germany	#		8	0	0	0	3	0	17	0	0	0	2	0	11	0	4	0	1	1	47	
	% Cnt.		17,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,4	0,0	36,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,3	0,0	23,4	0,0	8,5	0,0	2,1	2,1	100,0	
	% Cin.		3,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	0,0	4,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,2	0,0	10,7	0,0	7,5	0,0	2,0	1,9		
Italy	#		8	3	0	3	0	8	16	2	0	2	0	2	0	4	0	7	0	0	55	
	% Cnt.		14,5	5,5	0,0	5,5	0,0	14,5	29,1	3,6	0,0	3,6	0,0	3,6	0,0	7,3	0,0	12,7	0,0	0,0	100,0	
	% Cin.		3,1	5,8	0,0	1,9	0,0	16,7	4,2	4,1	0,0	7,7	0,0	3,6	0,0	16,7	0,0	17,5	0,0	0,0		
Co-prod. France + Italy	#		8	0	0	5	2	0	49	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	71	
	% Cnt.		11,3	0,0	0,0	7,0	2,8	0,0	69,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,2	0,0	0,0	100,0	
	% Cin.		3,1	0,0	0,0	3,2	1,3	0,0	12,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	8,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,5	0,0	0,0		
W- Germany	#		5	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0	6	13	1	6	3	0	3	42	
	% Cnt.		11,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,8	7,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	14,3	31,0	2,4	14,3	7,1	0,0	7,1	100,0	
	% Cin.		2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,5	6,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,7	12,6	4,2	11,3	7,5	0,0	5,8		
Co-prod. France + Italy + W- Germany	#		9	0	5	0	0	0	17	0	1	0	0	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	39	
	% Cnt.		23,1	0,0	12,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	43,6	0,0	2,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	15,4	2,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0
	% Cin.		3,5	0,0	9,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,4	0,0	1,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,8	4,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0		
Co-prod. Belgium + France	#		15	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	
	% Cnt.		78,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	21,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0
	% Cin.		5,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0		
Co-prod. Belgium + Netherlands	#		6	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	14	
	% Cnt.		42,9	0,0	0,0	14,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	21,4	14,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0
	% Cin.		2,3	0,0	0,0	1,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,4	1,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0		
Netherlands	#		15	2	0	0	1	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	15	4	48	
	% Cnt.		31,3	4,2	0,0	0,0	2,1	0,0	10,4	4,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	4,2	2,1	0,0	2,1	31,3	8,3	100,0	
	% Cin.		5,9	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,6	0,0	1,3	4,1	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	1,9	4,2	0,0	2,5	29,4	7,7		
Other W- European (co-)prod.	#		11	1	7	8	5	4	9	2	0	1	8	0	0	1	1	5	8	4	75	
	% Cnt.		14,7	1,3	9,3	10,7	6,7	5,3	12,0	2,7	0,0	1,3	10,7	0,0	0,0	1,3	1,3	6,7	10,7	5,3	100,0	
	% Cin.		4,3	1,9	13,5	5,2	3,2	8,3	2,3	4,1	0,0	3,8	16,7	0,0	0,0	4,2	1,9	12,5	15,7	7,7	4,4	

		Ambass. (5)	Astra	Astrid	B-T-W (3)	Calypso (3)	Capitole	Cartoon's (3)	Festa	Metro (2)	Monty	Odeon	Quellin (3)	Rex (2)	Roma	Rubens	Savoy	Sinjoor	Vendôme	Total	
E-European (co-)prod.	#	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
	% Cnt.	25,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	75,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	100,0
	% Cin.	0,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	
Australia	#	0	9	0	0	3	2	3	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	1		29
	% Cnt.	0,0	31,0	0,0	0,0	10,3	6,9	10,3	6,9	17,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	13,8	0,0	3,4		100,0
	% Cin.	0,0	17,3	0,0	0,0	1,9	4,2	0,8	4,1	4,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,0	0,0	1,9		
Japan	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		12
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	25,0	0,0	16,7	58,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0		100,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,8	0,0	1,9	26,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0		
(Co-)Prod. from HK & Taiwan	#	3	7	0	0	0	5	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	2	3	0		31
	% Cnt.	9,7	22,6	0,0	0,0	0,0	16,1	0,0	12,9	9,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	12,9	6,5	9,7	0,0		100,0
	% Cin.	1,2	13,5	0,0	0,0	0,0	10,4	0,0	8,2	2,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	7,5	5,0	5,9	0,0		
Other transcontinental co-prod.	#	17	4	0	18	2	1	18	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	10	3	11	0		89
	% Cnt.	19,1	4,5	0,0	20,2	2,2	1,1	20,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,2	0,0	3,4	11,2	3,4	12,4	0,0		100,0
	% Cin.	6,6	7,7	0,0	11,6	1,3	2,1	4,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,6	0,0	12,5	18,9	7,5	21,6	0,0		
Total	#	256	52	52	155	156	48	385	49	103	26	48	56	103	24	53	40	51	52		1709
	% Cin.	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0		100,0

Table 5.41: Specification of Table 5.40 for the different screens of the three major premiere multiscreen cinemas Calypso, Metro and Rex in 1982.

		<i>Calypso Club</i>	<i>Calypso I</i>	<i>Calypso II</i>	<i>Metro I</i>	<i>Metro II</i>	<i>Rex</i>	<i>Rex Club</i>
US	#	11	41	35	26	33	13	13
	% Cnt.	1,8	6,6	5,6	4,2	5,3	2,1	2,1
	% Cin.	20,8	78,8	68,6	50,0	64,7	25,5	25,0
Co-prod. Canada + US	#	0	0	0	6	6	0	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	33,3	33,3	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	11,5	11,8	0,0	0,0
Canada	#	3	0	0	0	0	1	0
	% Cnt.	15,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	5,3	0,0
	% Cin.	5,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0
Co-prod. Italy + US	#	1	0	3	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	5,6	0,0	16,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	1,9	0,0	5,9	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Co-prod. UK + US	#	20	0	9	5	9	8	0
	% Cnt.	17,7	0,0	8,0	4,4	8,0	7,1	0,0
	% Cin.	37,7	0,0	17,6	9,6	17,6	15,7	0,0
UK	#	9	6	1	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	7,0	4,7	0,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	17,0	11,5	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
France	#	0	0	1	7	0	25	9
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,5	3,6	0,0	12,8	4,6
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	2,0	13,5	0,0	49,0	17,3
Co-prod. France + US	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Co-prod. France + W- Germany	#	1	2	0	0	0	0	11
	% Cnt.	2,1	4,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	23,4
	% Cin.	1,9	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	21,2
Italy	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Co-prod. France + Italy	#	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	1,4	0,0	1,4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	1,9	0,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
W- Germany	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	31,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	25,0
Co-prod. France + Italy + W- Germany	#	0	0	0	0	1	0	6
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,6	0,0	15,4
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	11,5
Co-prod. Belgium + France	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Co-prod. Belgium + Nether- lands	#	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	14,3	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,9	0,0
Nether- lands	#	0	0	1	0	0	2	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	2,1	0,0	0,0	4,2	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	2,0	0,0	0,0	3,9	0,0
Other W- European (co-)prod.	#	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	2,7	4,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	3,8	5,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0

		<i>Calypso Club</i>	<i>Calypso I</i>	<i>Calypso II</i>	<i>Metro I</i>	<i>Metro II</i>	<i>Rex</i>	<i>Rex Club</i>
E- European (co-)prod.	#	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Australia	#	3	0	0	4	1	0	0
	% Cnt.	10,3	0,0	0,0	13,8	3,4	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	5,7	0,0	0,0	7,7	2,0	0,0	0,0
Japan	#	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	16,7	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0
(Co-) Prod. from HK &	#	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
	% Cnt.	0,0	0,0	0,0	6,5	3,2	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8	2,0	0,0	0,0
Other transconti- nental co- prod.	#	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	% Cnt.	2,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
	% Cin.	3,8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Total/	#	53	52	51	52	51	51	52
	% Cin.	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 5.42: Number of screenings from France (single-country productions) in group of cinema in 1982.

	# screenings/group	Total # screenings/group	% screenings/group
<i>Rex cinemas</i>	156	1142	13,7
<i>Calypso - Cartoon's</i>	39	567	6,9
<i>Total</i>	195	1709	11,4

Table 5.43: Official censorship ratings for all screenings in 1982 according to cinema. Cinemas belonging to Heylen are marked grey.

	<i>KT</i>		<i>KNT</i>		<i>18 years</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<i>Astrid</i>	52	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Quellin 1</i>	2	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	2	100,0
<i>Quellin 2</i>	2	100,0	0	0,0	0	0,0	2	100,0
<i>Calypso I</i>	47	90,4	5	9,6	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Rex</i>	47	90,4	5	9,6	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Calypso Club</i>	46	86,8	7	13,2	0	0,0	53	100,0
<i>Rubens</i>	44	81,5	9	16,7	1	1,9	54	100,0
<i>Wapper</i>	34	66,7	17	33,3	0	0,0	51	100,0
<i>Quellin</i>	33	66,0	8	16,0	9	18,0	50	100,0
<i>Calypso II</i>	32	61,5	20	38,5	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Tijl</i>	32	61,5	20	38,5	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Roma</i>	14	58,3	8	33,3	2	8,3	24	100,0
<i>Metro II</i>	29	56,9	22	43,1	0	0,0	51	100,0
<i>Rex Club</i>	27	51,9	25	48,1	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Ambassades Club II</i>	26	51,0	25	49,0	0	0,0	51	100,0
<i>Ambassades Club I</i>	26	50,0	26	50,0	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Capitole</i>	26	50,0	26	50,0	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Festa</i>	25	48,1	20	38,5	7	13,5	52	100,0
<i>Metro I</i>	24	46,2	28	53,8	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Ambassades Club IV</i>	23	44,2	29	55,8	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Cartoon's 3</i>	42	44,2	53	55,8	0	0,0	95	100,0
<i>Cartoon's 1</i>	45	42,1	58	54,2	4	3,7	107	100,0
<i>Odeon</i>	21	41,2	16	31,4	14	27,5	51	100,0
<i>Ambassades</i>	21	40,4	20	38,5	11	21,2	52	100,0
<i>Vêndome</i>	21	40,4	24	46,2	7	13,5	52	100,0
<i>Cartoon's 2</i>	54	39,4	82	59,9	1	0,7	137	100,0
<i>Monty</i>	5	35,7	9	64,3	0	0,0	14	100,0
<i>Sinjoor</i>	18	34,6	31	59,6	3	5,8	52	100,0
<i>Astra</i>	17	32,7	35	67,3	0	0,0	52	100,0
<i>Ambassades Club III</i>	16	30,8	33	63,5	3	5,8	52	100,0
<i>Brabo</i>	2	3,8	45	86,5	5	9,6	52	100,0
<i>Savoy</i>	0	0,0	24	46,2	28	53,8	52	100,0
<i>Cartoon's</i>	0	0,0	1	50,0	1	50,0	2	100,0
<i>Quellin 3</i>	0	0,0	2	100,0	0	0,0	2	100,0
Total	853	50,7	733	43,6	96	5,7	1682	100,0

Table 5.44: An investigation of the twenty-three longest screened films in examined cinemas in 1982. Cinemas belong to Heylen's cinema group are marked grey.¹³⁰²

Film	Start in 1982*	1st screen	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
Reds (Beatty, 1981, US; distr. CIC)	9-4-1982 (until 27/1/83)	Calyps. I (10)	→ Calyps. II (2)	→ Cart. 1 (2)	Cart. 3 (3)	Cart. 3 (6)						
Uns et les autres (Lelouche, 1981, France; distr. unknown)	12-6-1981	Calyps. I (2)	→ Calyps. Club (3)	Calyps. Club (1)	Cart. 1 (2)	→ Cart. 3 (4)	→ Cart. 2 (8)					
The French lieutenant's woman (Reisz, 1981, UK; distr. Belfides)	12-3-1982 (until 18-2-83)	Calyps. I (3)	→ Calyps. Club (6)	→ Cart. 1 (6)	→ Cart. 3 (6)	→ Cart. 2 (2)	→ Cart. 3 (1)	→ Cart. 3+ Festa (1)	Cart. 2 (1)	→ Cart. 1 (3)	→ Cart. 2 (1)	→ Cart. 1 (1)
Stripes (Reitman, 1981, US; distr. Warner-Columbia)	14-5-1982	Calyps. II (5)	→ Calyps. I (4)	→ Calyps. II (4)	Festa (1)							
On Golden Pond (Rydell, 1981, UK/US; distr. CIC)	2-4-1982	Calyps. II (6)	→ Calyps. Club (9)	→ Cart. 1 (3)	Festa (1)	Tijl (2)	→ Wapper (1)					
The Border (Richardson, 1982, US; distr. CIC)	11-6-1982	Metro I (2)	→ Metro II (3)	→ Rex Club (8)								
An American Werewolf in London (Landis, 1981, UK/US; distr. Filimpex)	15-1-1982	Metro I (5)	→ Metro II (2)	→ Wapper (1)	→ Amb. Club I (7)	Roma (1)	Festa (1)					
History of the World: Part I (Brooks, 1981, US; distr. Warner-Columbia)	19-2-1982	Metro I (9)	→ Metro II (7)	→ Vendôme (1)	Festa (1)							
Porky's (Clark, 1982, Canada/US; distr. Fox-UGC)	3-9-1982 (until 10/3/83)	Metro II (2)	→ Metro I (6)	→ Metro II (4)	→ Tijl (3)	→ Brabo (1)	→ Wapper (7)	→ Amb. Club I (4)				
Ragtime (Forman, 1981, US; distr. Excelsior)	5-3-1982	Metro II (7)	→ Vendôme (1)	→ Amb. Club II (6)								
The Fox and the Hound (Berman, 1981, US; distr. Elan)	27-11-1981	Metro II + Astrid (4)	→ Metro I + Astrid (3)	→ Astrid (5)	→ Astra (1)	Festa (1)	→ Roma (1)	Astrid (4)				
Paul Raymond's Erotica (Smedley-Aston, 1982, UK; distr. Excelsior)	28-5-1982	Quellin (9)	→ Vendôme (7)	→ Festa (1)								
Sous-doués en vacances (Zidi, 1982, France; distr. Filimpex)	25-6-1982	Rex (10)	→ Quellin (2)	→ Vendôme (1)	Festa (1)							

¹³⁰² It concerns only the films made in 1981 or 1982 and only those films which had the longest screen time within the fifty-two weeks recorded in the database for 1982. For the films included in the table only, the months before and after this time span were also examined, in case the first entry of the film was early January or the last entry was in December 1982.

Film	Start in 1982*	1st screen	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
<i>MISSING</i> (Costa-Gavras, 1982, US; distr. CIC)	4-6-1982 (until 17/3/1983)	Rex (3)	→ Metro I (3)	→ Metro II (2)	→ Wap per (4)	→ Amb. Club III (3)	→ Amb. Club II (2)	Festa (1)	Cart. 1 (1)	→ Cart. 3 (3)	→ Cart. 2 (1)	
Tout feu, tout flamme (Costa-Gavras, 1982, France; distr. Filimpex)	29-1-1982	Rex (5)	→ Rex Club (7)									
Le professionnel (Lautner, 1981, France; distr. Filimpex)	30-10-1981	Rex (6)	→ Amb. (10)	→ Amb. Club IV (9)	→ Amb. Club III (12)	Festa (1)						
Le gendarme et les gendarmettes (Aboyantz/Girault, 1982, France; distr. Metropolitan)	8-10-1982 (until 20/1/1983)	Rex (6)	→ Odeon (2)	→ Vendôm . (5)	→ Amb. Club II (2)							
La soupe au choux (Girault, 1981, France; distr. Filimpex)	11-12-1981 (until 10/2/1983)	Rex (7)	→ Quellin (3)	→ Amb. (1)	→ Amb. Club II (2)	Festa (1)	→ Roma (1)	Astra (1)	Amb. (2)			
Das Boot (Petersen, 1981, W-Germany; distr. Filimpex)	18-12-1981	Rubens (8)	→ Quellin (6)	Festa (1)								
La guerre du feu (Annaud, 1981, Canada/France/US; distr. Excelsior)	19-2-1982	Rubens (8)	→ Tijn (1)	→ Amb. Club IV (7)								
Shifshuf Naim (Davidson, 1981, Israel/W-Germany; distr. Excelsior)	6-8-1982 (until 27/1/83)	Sinjoor (11)	→ Brabo (8)	→ Amb. Club III (6)								
Ik ben Joep Melloen (Verstraete, 1981, The Netherlands; distr. Filimpex)	12-2-1982	Sinjoor (8)	→ Astra (2)	Roma (1)	Festa (1)							
La chevre (Veber, 1981, France/Mexico/Malta; distr. Gaumont)	18-12-1981	Tijn (10)	→ Amb. Club I (1)	→ Amb. Club III (6)	→ Roma (1)							

* Unless indicated otherwise.

Table 5.45: Number of film screenings according to distributor and group of cinemas in 1982.¹³⁰³

Distributor		Rex cinemas	Calypso- Cartoon's	Total	Corrected shares within distr. ¹³⁰⁴	
					Rex cinemas	Calypso-Cartoon's
Alfa	Count	22	4	26		
	% within distr.	84,6	15,4	100,0	61,1	38,9
	% within cinem.	1,9	1,3	1,8		
Atlas	Count	15	0	15		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	1,3	0,0	1,0		
Belfides	Count	84	48	132		
	% within distr.	63,6	36,4	100,0	33,3	66,7
	% within cinem.	7,4	15,2	9,1		
Belga	Count	43	7	50		
	% within distr.	86,0	14,0	100,0	63,7	36,3
	% within cinem.	3,8	2,2	3,4		
CIC	Count	96	84	180		
	% within distr.	53,3	46,7	100,0	24,6	75,4
	% within cinem.	8,4	26,7	12,4		
Cine Vog	Count	28	9	37		
	% within distr.	75,7	24,3	100,0	47,1	52,9
	% within cinem.	2,5	2,9	2,5		
CNC	Count	3	0	3		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	,3	0,0	,2		
Cosmopolis	Count	8	0	8		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	,7	0,0	,6		
Dragon Films	Count	4	0	4		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	,4	0,0	,3		
Elan	Count	90	3	93		
	% within distr.	96,8	3,2	100,0	89,6	10,4
	% within cinem.	7,9	1,0	6,4		
Excelsior	Count	276	0	276		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	24,2	0,0	19,0		
Filimpex	Count	210	0	210		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	18,4	0,0	14,4		
Fox	Count	17	3	20		
	% within distr.	85,0	15,0	100,0	61,8	38,2
	% within cinem.	1,5	1,0	1,9		
Gaumont	Count	85	27	112		
	% within distr.	75,9	24,1	100,0	47,4	52,6
	% within cinem.	7,5	8,6	7,7		
International	Count	2	0	2		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	,2	0,0	,1		
Metropolitan	Count	14	12	26		
	% within distr.	53,8	46,2	100,0	25,0	75,0

¹³⁰³ For each distributor three sets of data are provided: "Count" refers to the absolute number of films screenings counted per distributor and cinema group; "% within distr." indicates the share of screenings within the corresponding distributor; "% within cinem" relates to the share of screenings within the corresponding cinema group. Regarding distributor Alfa, for example, the twenty-two screenings counted for Heylen's cinemas accounted for 85% of all screenings distributed by Alfa and 2% of all screenings at Heylen's cinemas.

¹³⁰⁴ In order better compare the shares per distributor for the two cinema groups and to partially compensate the far smaller number of screens of the Calypso-Cartoon's group vis a vis the Rex cinema group, the number of screenings for the Calypso-Cartoon's group was multiplied by 3,5. This is, of course, merely an indication of the potential shares, as the calculation cannot project actual distribution deals.

Distributor		Rex cinemas	Calypso- Cartoon's	Total	Corrected shares within distr. ¹³⁰⁴	
					Rex cinemas	Calypso-Cartoon's
	% within cinem.	1,2	3,8	1,8		
New Star	Count	6	0	6		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	,5	0,0	,4		
Progrés-Cinélibre	Count	0	11	11		
	% within distr.	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0	100,0
	% within cinem.	0,0	3,5	,8		
Stellor	Count	4	0	4		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	,4	0,0	,3		
Transit Films	Count	0	5	5		
	% within distr.	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0	100,0
	% within cinem.	0,0	1,6	,3		
UGC	Count	8	0	8		
	% within distr.	100,0	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0
	% within cinem.	0,7	0,0	0,6		
United Artists	Count	0	5	5		
	% within distr.	0,0	100,0	100,0	0,0	100,0
	% within cinem.	0,0	1,6	,3		
Warner-Columbia	Count	124	97	221		
	% within distr.	56,1	43,9	100,0	26,8	73,2
	% within cinem.	10,9	30,8	15,2		
Total	Count	1139	315	1454		
	% within distr.	78,3	21,7	100,0	50,8	49,2
	% within cinem.	100,0	100,0	100,0		

Table 5.46: Number of film titles, screenings and average duration per film screened in 1982 according to distributor.

	Film titles	Percent	Valid Percent	Screenings	Percent	Valid Percent	Average duration (in weeks)
Excelsior	52	13,4	17,3	276	16,1	19,0	5,3
Warner-Columbia	41	10,6	13,6	221	12,9	15,2	5,4
CIC	33	8,5	11,0	180	10,5	12,4	5,5
Filimpex	29	7,5	9,6	210	12,3	14,4	7,2
Elan	27	7,0	9,0	93	5,4	6,4	3,4
Gaumont	25	6,4	8,3	112	6,6	7,7	4,5
Belfides	23	5,9	7,6	132	7,7	9,1	5,7
Belga	15	3,9	5,0	50	2,9	3,4	3,3
Cine Vog	15	3,9	5,0	37	2,2	2,5	2,5
Alfa	8	2,1	2,7	26	1,5	1,8	3,3
Atlas	7	1,8	2,3	15	0,9	1,0	2,1
Metropolitan	5	1,3	1,7	26	1,5	1,8	5,2
Cosmopolis	4	1,0	1,3	8	0,5	0,6	2,0
Stellor	4	1,0	1,3	4	0,2	0,3	1,0
Dragon Films	2	0,5	0,7	4	0,2	0,3	2,0
Fox	2	0,5	0,7	20	1,2	1,4	10,0
International	2	0,5	0,7	2	0,1	0,1	1,0
Transit Films	2	0,5	0,7	5	0,3	0,3	2,5
CNC	1	0,3	0,3	3	0,2	0,2	3,0
New Star	1	0,3	0,3	6	0,4	0,4	6,0
Progrés-Cinélibre	1	0,3	0,3	11	0,6	0,8	11,0
UGC	1	0,3	0,3	8	0,5	0,6	8,0
United Artists	1	0,3	0,3	5	0,3	0,3	5,0
Total	301	77,6	100,0	1454	85,1	100,0	
Missing	87	22,4		255	14,9		
Total	388	100,0		1709	100,0		

Table 5.47: Classification of cinemas according to frequency of "runs" of the longest screened films in examined cinemas in 1982.

	1st screen	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	Total
Rex	6											6
Metro II	3	3*	2*									8
Metro I	3	3 (2*)										6
Calypso I	3	1*										4
Calypso II	2	1*	1*									4
Rubens	2											2
Sinjoor	2											2
Quellin	1	3										4
Tijl	1	1		1	1							4
Astrid (together with Metro I + II)	1											1
Odeon		1										1
Vendôme		2	3									5
Calypso Club		3*	1									4
Ambassades		1	1					1				3
Rex Club		1	1*									2
Ambassades Club I		1		1			1					3
Astra		1		1			1					3
Brabo		1										2
Festa			2	5	3	1	2					13
Ambassades Club IV			2									2
Ambassades Club III			2	1	1							4
Ambassades Club II			1	2		1						4
Wapper			1	1		2						4
Roma			1	1	1	2						5
Astrid			1				1					2
Cartoon's 1			3	1				1	1		1	7
Cartoon's 3				2	2	1	1		1			7
Cartoon's 2					1	1		1		2		5

* Mover-over from within cinema complex (from 1st run onwards)

Table 5.48: Overview of the number of first runs of films from 1981 and 1982 screened in examined cinemas in 1982 (highest % of 1st runs from 1981+1982 out of total screenings / cinema first). Cinemas belonging to Heylen's cinema group are marked red.¹³⁰⁵

	<i>Number of 1st runs from 1981+1982</i>	<i>Total number of 1st runs/ cinema</i>	<i>% of 1st runs from 1981+1982 out of total number of first runs</i>	<i>Total number of identified films/ cinema</i>	<i>% of 1st runs from 1981+1982 out of total screenings / cinema</i>
<i>Wapper</i>	14	20	70,0	51	27,5
<i>Rex</i>	13	13	100,0	51	25,5
<i>Vendôme</i>	11	12	91,7	52	21,2
<i>Quellin</i>	10	14	71,4	50	20,0
<i>Sinjoor</i>	10	11	90,9	51	19,6
<i>Calypso II</i>	10	13	76,9	51	19,6
<i>Calypso I</i>	10	11	90,9	52	19,2
<i>Metro I</i>	10	11	90,9	52	19,2
<i>Tijl</i>	10	18	55,6	52	19,2
<i>Odeon</i>	8	14	57,1	48	16,7
<i>Capitole</i>	8	22	36,4	48	16,7
<i>Ambassades Club II</i>	8	11	72,7	51	15,7
<i>Rubens</i>	8	15	53,3	53	15,1
<i>Roma</i>	3	8	37,5	24	12,5
<i>Ambassades</i>	6	12	50,0	49	12,2
<i>Metro II</i>	6	7	85,7	51	11,8
<i>Brabo</i>	6	12	50,0	52	11,5
<i>Rex Club</i>	5	7	71,4	52	9,6
<i>Calypso Club</i>	5	8	62,5	53	9,4
<i>Savoy</i>	3	15	20,0	40	7,5
<i>Ambassades Club I</i>	2	6	33,3	52	3,8
<i>Astra</i>	2	21	9,5	52	3,8
<i>Cartoon's 1</i>	4	25	16,0	119	3,4
<i>Cartoon's 3</i>	3	17	17,6	109	2,8
<i>Cartoon's 2</i>	4	32	12,5	150	2,7
<i>Ambassades Club IV</i>	1	2	50,0	52	1,9
<i>Ambassades Club III</i>	1	3	33,3	52	1,9
<i>Astrid</i>	1	12	8,3	52	1,9
<i>Monty</i>	0	9	0,0	26	0,0
<i>Cartoon's</i>	0	4	0,0	7	0,0
<i>Quellin 1</i>	1	1	100,0	2	50,0
<i>Quellin 2</i>	1	1	100,0	2	50,0
<i>Quellin 3</i>	1	1	100,0	2	50,0
Total	185	388	47,7	1709	10,8

¹³⁰⁵ Festa is not included in the table, since there were no first runs of films from 1981 or 1982 showing in this cinema.

Dutch summary – Nederlandse samenvatting

Antwerpen Kinemastad. Een *mixed-method* onderzoek naar filmvertoning en de ervaring van bioscoopbezoek in de stad Antwerpen (1945-1995) met de focus op de Rex cinemagroep

Antwerpen speelde gedurende de twintigste eeuw een cruciale rol voor filmvertoning en filmbezoek in Vlaanderen en België. Het was na Brussel de stad met de meeste bioscopen en de hoogste bezoekerscijfers. Vooral in het Statiekwartier, en met name in de buurt rondom het Centraal Station, waren de meeste bioscopen gehuisvest. Al sinds het einde van de negentiende eeuw was dit dé plek van cultureel vertier, met de beste winkels, restaurants en cafés. Het was tevens de plaats waar een van de meest succesvolle bioscoopuitbaters van België, Georges Heylen, zijn succesvolle carrière als bioscoopondernemer zou beginnen en waar het hart van zijn Rex bioscoopgroep zou kloppen. In de loop van de jaren 1950 werd hij de machtigste speler op het Antwerpse bioscooptoneel, een positie die hij tot aan zijn faillissement in 1993 wist te behouden.

Bestaand nationaal en internationaal onderzoek wijst uit dat bioscoopbezoek zich in de loop van de eerste helft van de twintigste eeuw ontwikkelde tot een gevestigde en betaalbare recreatieve activiteit, die stevig geïntegreerd was in het dagelijks leven. Tot aan de Tweede Wereldoorlog was het één van de meest populaire manieren van vrijetijdsbesteding. De geleidelijke desintegratie van het Hollywood-studiosysteem vanaf de jaren 1950 en de veranderde recreatieve patronen als gevolg van toegenomen welvaart en mobiliteit hadden echter langetermijneffecten op alle sectoren van de filmindustrie. Hoewel de naoorlogse daling van het bioscoopbezoek ook in Antwerpen waarneembaar was, bleef de bioscoopcultuur in deze stad in vergelijking met andere steden in binnen- en buitenland nog minstens twee decennia bloeien. Dit nodigt uit tot een nader onderzoek van de Antwerpse bioscoopsector.

De prominente plek van Antwerpen in de Belgische filmgeschiedenis en de rol die Heylen hierin speelde, is in diverse wetenschappelijke en niet-wetenschappelijke publicaties veelvuldig besproken. Een diepgaande en systematische analyse van de veranderingen van filmvertoning en bioscoopbezoek in Antwerpen ontbrak echter. Dit proefschrift heeft als doel deze lacune te vullen. De centrale vraagstelling die wordt onderzocht is: Hoe veranderde het Antwerpse bioscooplandschap in de tweede helft van de twintigste eeuw en hoe houden deze veranderingen verband met sociale, cultuurpolitieke en economische dynamiek in het algemeen en met Heylens machtspositie en lokale patronen van bioscoopbezoek in het bijzonder? In een breder, filmhistorisch en -historiografisch perspectief draagt dit onderzoek naar de film- en bioscoopgeschiedenis van Antwerpen als een stad die gekenmerkt werd door een levendige filmcultuur in tijden van welvaart en crisis, bij aan bestaande kennis en discussies over de rol van kleinschalige investeerders voor lokale filmvertoning

en distributie in de context van transnationale stromen en processen, alsmede het verband tussen het aanbod van films en bioscopen in relatie tot de voorkeuren van het lokale publiek.

Dit proefschrift schenkt dus primair aandacht aan het onderzoeken van de veranderingen in de Antwerpse filmcultuur vanuit een historisch perspectief dat zich richt op de sociale en economische aspecten van filmvertoning en –beleving. Hiermee positioneert het zich binnen *new cinema history*, een recente filmhistoriografische stroming binnen de filmstudies. In de afgelopen twee decennia is er in toenemende mate aandacht besteed aan de institutionele, sociale en economische dimensies van filmvertoning, waaronder filmprogrammering en distributiestrategieën, evenals de ervaringen van bioscoopbezoek als onderdeel van het dagelijkse leven. *New cinema history* verlegt de wetenschappelijke aandacht van het bestuderen van filmteksten naar de contexten waarbinnen films werden gedistribueerd, vertoond en ontvangen. Het is diep geworteld in de sociaalhistorische tradities van de geschiedschrijving. Het zaadje voor een contextuele benadering van de filmgeschiedenis is reeds in de jaren zeventig geplant en was bepalend voor de filmhistoriografische debatten in de jaren tachtig en negentig. Binnen de discipline filmstudies heeft *new cinema history* in het afgelopen decennium postgevat als een historiografisch en methodologisch kader voor het analyseren op microniveau van patronen van de circulatie en consumptie van films in het verleden.

Het onderzoek naar “Antwerpen Kinemastad” kent naast een duidelijke geografische ook een bedrijfshistorische en temporele focus. Deze afbakening vloeit voort uit de bijzonderheid van de Antwerpse filmsector, waar één bioscoopuitbater grotendeels bepaalde hoe films op dat moment werden verspreid, vertoond en ontvangen. Door te focussen op de periode dat Heylen in Antwerpen actief was als uitbater, kunnen de veranderingen van de lokale bioscoopmarkt diepgaand en vanuit verschillende invalshoeken worden onderzocht. Het proefschrift bestrijkt een periode van vijftig jaar. Hoewel Heylen reeds vóór de Tweede Wereldoorlog in de sector betrokken raakte, wordt 1945 als het beginpunt gekozen, omdat het aan de ene kant met het einde van de oorlog ook het begin markeerde van een periode van wederopbouw en een significante heropleving van het bioscoopbezoek. Aan de andere kant begon in 1947 met de (her)opening van de Rex, een van Antwerpen's meest prestigieuze bioscopen, Heylens succesvolle carrière pas echt. Het was het begin van de spectaculaire groei van wat algemeen bekend stond als het "Rex-concern", maar in strikt juridische zin meer overeenkomsten met een conglomeraat vertoonde, bestaande uit een groot aantal, van elkaar in principe onafhankelijke bedrijven. Voor 1995 is gekozen als eindpunt, omdat het met Heylens overlijden een definitief einde maakte aan zijn bioscoopimperium, maar ook omdat gedurende de twee jaar naar zijn faillissement de omvang en de betekenis van zijn onderneming voor filmconsumptie en het sociaaleconomische weefsel van de stad duidelijk werd.

Een integrale benadering van de filmgeschiedenis vereist de combinatie van verschillende theorieën en benaderingen, methoden en data. In dit proefschrift wordt het principe van triangulatie toegepast op alle deze drie niveaus. Zo worden op theoretisch niveau diverse modellen uit verschillende disciplines en onderzoeksgebieden toegepast, waaronder stadsgeschiedenis, economie, bedrijfsgeschiedenis, filmstudies en culturele studies. Verder brengt de combinatie van gestructureerde data (databanken) met ongestructureerde (schriftelijke teksten, mondelinge getuigenissen, visueel en audiovisueel archiefmateriaal) uit uiteenlopende bronnen een combinatie van kwantitatieve en kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethoden met zich mee. Zo worden inzichten uit de sociale geografie en bedrijfsgeschiedenis gekoppeld aan een mediahistorische analyse van het lokale filmaanbod en herinneringen aan films en bioscopen. Triangulatie wordt aan de ene kant toegepast, omdat verschillende soorten gegevens en inzichten uit diverse disciplines elkaar aanvullen. Zo kunnen de veranderingen van de Antwerpse bioscoopgeschiedenis vanuit verschillende invalshoeken onderzocht worden. Aan de andere kant biedt triangulatie de mogelijkheid, om het hoofd te bieden aan de uitdagingen die inherent zijn aan het verzamelen van historische gegevens in het algemeen: beperkte beschikbaarheid van, toegang tot en consistentie van het bronmateriaal.

Centraal in de algehele benadering die hier wordt gekozen, is de overtuiging dat (traditionele) geschiedschrijving en mondelinge geschiedenis (ofwel geschiedenis en herinneringen) een symbiotische relatie vormen. Herinneringen worden door de geschiedenis gevoed en gevormd, net zoals de geschiedenis door herinneringen wordt bepaald. Voor de onderzoeker kunnen inzichten uit de geschiedenis belangrijk zijn om herinneringen te kunnen contextualiseren en begrijpen, evenals dat herinneringen de onderzochte onderwerpen uit de geschiedenis kunnen aanvullen en nieuw leven inblazen. Een belangrijke kanttekening hierbij is dat de mondelinge getuigenissen geen rechtstreekse toegang tot de werkelijkheid geven, maar verhalen zijn van hoe deze werkelijkheid werd ervaren. In dit proefschrift worden mondelinge getuigenissen op tweeërlei manieren geanalyseerd: als herinneringen die dienen ter aanvulling op archiefmateriaal en als herinneringen die discursief worden behandeld. Vanwege de slechte staat van de zakenarchieven van de Antwerpse bioscopen en het fragmentarische karakter van veel privécollecties, worden enerzijds interviews met voormalige betrokkenen in de Antwerpse filmsector gebruikt als aanknopingspunten om verschillende (niet of nauwelijks gedocumenteerde) aspecten van het Antwerpse film- en bioscoopverleden verder te verkennen. Anderzijds biedt een thematische analyse van de interviews met de bioscoopbezoekers zelf een extra invalshoek op hoe de veranderingen van de bioscoopcultuur vanuit het tegenovergestelde perspectief werden ervaren en herinnerd. De combinatie van beide vormen van geschiedschrijving levert een dynamisch model op dat bioscopen beschouwt als plaatsen waar geschiedenis en herinneringen elkaar ontmoeten.

Voor “Antwerpen Kinemastad” zijn zowel de film- en bioscoopgeschiedenis als de herinneringen daaraan onderzocht door te focussen op drie centrale aspecten die nauw met elkaar zijn verweven: de locaties en ruimtelijke spreiding van de bioscopen over de stad en een aantal aanpalende districten, de structuur van de vertoningsmarkt en het filmaanbod. Met betrekking tot het eerste aspect zijn aan de hand van de steekproefjaren 1952, 1962, 1972, 1982 en 1992 de locaties, uitbaters en zitplaatscapaciteiten van de bioscopen in kaart gebracht, op een plattegrond gevisualiseerd en in relatie gebracht met stadshistorische inzichten. De veranderingen die op die manier werden blootgelegd zijn vervolgens vanuit een bedrijfshistorisch perspectief onderzocht. Om de positie van de Rex bioscoopgroep ten opzichte van lokale concurrenten te bepalen, wordt er teruggegrepen op economische modellen die helpen om concentratieprocessen op de Antwerpse bioscoopmarkt te verklaren. Aanvullend hierop is daarna het filmaanbod in de bioscopen geanalyseerd voor 1952, 1962 en 1982 om zicht te krijgen op de vertoningspraktijken van, en mogelijke samenwerking tussen, de individuele spelers. Ook worden op die manier veranderingen in het filmaanbod onderzocht als een indicatie van de voorkeuren van het lokale publiek. Hierop inhakend zijn vervolgens 36 interviews geanalyseerd als aanvullend perspectief en om de betekenis van film- en bioscoopbezoek in het verleden te kunnen begrijpen in relatie tot deze drie aspecten.

Antwerpen was rijk aan bioscopen in alle soorten en maten. Ze waren verdeeld over het stadscentrum evenals verschillende gemeenten en districten. Vooral het Statiekwartier werd gekenmerkt door een opvallend hoge bioscoopdichtheid. Terwijl de meeste bioscopen in de aanpalende wijken en districten in de loop van de jaren 1960 en 1970 moesten sluiten, bleven de meeste bioscopen in het Statiekwartier nog tot ver in de jaren 1980 bestaan. De snelle en voortdurende achteruitgang van de bioscoopsector, die tot uiting kwam in de massale sluiting van vooral wijkbioscopen na de jaren 1950 was geen uniek Antwerps verschijnsel, maar is ook voor andere plaatsen in het binnen- en buitenland geconstateerd. Wat de Antwerpse casus echter onderscheidt, is dat dit proces zich hier langzamer en minder ingrijpend voltrok.

Nadat Heylen in 1947 de prestigieuze bioscoop Rex in het hart van het Statiekwartier heropende, breidde hij geleidelijk zijn imperium uit totdat hij twee decennia later hier een monopoliepositie had verworven. De basis van zijn monopoliepositie kreeg al vorm in de jaren vijftig, wat ook de periode was van zijn grootste expansie en de periode dat de Belgische filmmarkt verzadigd geraakte. Heylens expansie ging daarbij voornamelijk ten koste van zijn concurrenten, waarvan er vele moesten sluiten, door Heylen werden overgenomen of volgens zijn regels moesten spelen. In de jaren 1960 werd Heylen zo de belangrijkste speler in de Antwerpse binnenstad en een van de belangrijkste bioscoopuitbaters van België.

Doorslaggevend voor Heylens groei in de jaren 1950 zijn filmeconomische factoren aan de ene kant en sociaaleconomische en culturele factoren aan de andere kant. Beide aspecten komen

samen in de erkenning dat het filmbedrijf niet alleen gaat over het verkopen van film als een gevarieerd product, maar ook over het verkopen van de ervaring van filmkijken, inclusief de beleving van het bioscoopbezoek en de beleving van (het bekijken van) een film zelf. Heylen was een showman met uitstekende marketingvaardigheden en kennis van de lokale markt. Door te investeren in bioscoopinfrastructuur, comfort en publiciteit slaagde hij erin zijn “product”, de Rex bioscoopgroep, te *branden*. Zo bleek uit de analyse van de interviews dat Heylens bioscoopgroep algemeen bekend was en geprezen werd, omdat hij over de prachtigste bioscopen beschikte en de beste films vertoonde. Daarnaast kon Heylen door de hoeveelheid en verscheidenheid van bioscopen waarover hij beschikte niet alleen zijn positie versterken bij prijs- en huurafspraken met de distributeurs, maar kon hij ook de speeltijden van de films en daarmee de recettes maximaliseren, door ze in verschillende (types) bioscopen te vertonen.

Hoewel het distributiesysteem van *runs and clearances* (het indelen van de voorstellingsmarkt in zones waar films al dan niet met voorrang werden vertoond) in eerste instantie wordt toegeschreven aan de (periode van) klassieke Hollywood-majors, heeft de programmeringsanalyse in het voorliggende onderzoek aangetoond dat er ook onder de Antwerpse bioscopen een zekere hiërarchie bestond, die min of meer het traject van een film door de stad bepaalde. Zo fungeerde Heylens vlaggenschip Rex als premièrebioscoop, waar de nieuwste films werden gelanceerd. Dat was weliswaar ook van toepassing voor concurrerende centrumbioscopen, maar minder uitgesproken. Tevens wees het programmeringsonderzoek uit dat de films vervolgens een relatief vast traject aflegden: van de premièrebioscopen in de binnenstad, naar zogenaamde “tweede week zalen”, die vervolgens als doorgeefluik fungeerden voor de buurtbioscopen in aanpalende wijken en districten. Hiermee legden de films een vergelijkbaar traject af dan elders in het binnen- en buitenland, namelijk in centrifugale richting, vanuit de grote stadscentra toe naar meer perifere plaatsen en gebieden. Specifiek voor Antwerpen was echter dat binnen dit gebruikelijke traject Heylens bioscopen een hogere plaats binnen de hiërarchie van centrumzalen innamen: zo reisden films die in Heylens zalen in première gingen doorgaans naar zijn eigen of concurrerende zalen, maar reisden films die in concurrerende zalen gelanceerd werden nooit naar Heylens centrumzalen.

Ook in de interviews met Antwerpse bioscoopbezoekers kwam het onderscheid tussen centrum- en wijkzalen sterk naar voren. Hoewel respondenten meldden dat ze bioscopen in de buurt en in het stadscentrum hadden bezocht, werd hun keuze vaak bepaald door persoonlijke eigenschappen, waaronder leeftijd, financiële middelen, sociale en fysieke mobiliteit en persoonlijke voorkeuren voor bepaalde films en voor de mate van comfort en service in de bioscopen. Voor hen vormde bioscoopbezoek in hun buurt vaak een kleinere drempel, omdat het minder inspanning en geld vergde. Vandaar dat deze buurtbioscopen een vast bestanddeel waren van het alledaagse leven.

Het bioscoopbezoek in het centrum werd voornamelijk herinnerd als speciale gelegenheid om uit te gaan. Tevens werden bioscopen in het centrum overwegend als meer luxe en comfortabel herinnerd dan de wijkbioscopen, met een beter filmaanbod. Hoewel dit fenomeen ook voor andere steden is geconstateerd, onderscheidt Antwerpen zich door de grotendeels positieve manier waarop specifiek Heylens Rex bioscopen werden herinnerd: als de beste, die meer comfort en service boden, en waar films in première werden vertoond. Daarbij kwam Heylens reputatie als machtige bioscoopuitbater sterk naar voren in de hier bestudeerde herinneringen en werd zijn rol in de lokale bioscoopsector over het algemeen erkend, maar gedeeltelijk ook bekritiseerd, als verantwoordelijk zijnde voor de minder gunstige omstandigheden in concurrerende bioscopen.

Het Statiekwartier was de plek waar Heylen in de jaren 1960 een quasi-monopoliepositie had verworven; vanaf dat moment domineerden zijn Rex-bioscopen het straatbeeld van het Statiekwartier en daarmee het culturele leven. De sociaaleconomische veranderingen van de naoorlogse decennia lieten echter hun sporen na in deze buurt en de aangrenzende wijken, waar de meeste van Heylens bioscopen stonden. Veranderingen in het gemeentelijke huisvestingsbeleid, welzijn, mobiliteit, recreatiepatronen en filmvoorkeuren beïnvloedden de bioscoopgewoonten van de lokale bevolking. Heylens innovatievermogen in het aantrekken van bioscoopbezoekers, die zijn ondernemerschap in het begin van zijn carrière kenmerkte, maakte vanaf de jaren 1970 plaats voor kortzichtige oplossingen voor structurele problemen. Er waren nieuwe impulsen nodig om de noodlijdende sector terug op de been te helpen. In de jaren vijftig en zestig begon het idee van bioscoopbezoek immers te veranderen van een overwegend gemeenschappelijke activiteit die ingebed was in het alledaagse leven (wat grote schermen en bioscopen in elke buurt rechtvaardigde) naar een meer geïndividualiseerde activiteit met een exclusiever karakter. Dat maakte bioscoopbezoekers selectiever in hun filmkeuze. Bioscopen moesten in toenemende mate concurreren met alternatieve vormen van vrijetijdsbesteding.

Heylen realiseerde zich onvoldoende dat er een aantal verschuivingen hadden plaatsgevonden sinds hij de "Rex" van de Belgische bioscoopsector was. Film was niet langer de hoofdkomstbron voor bioscopen, maar de bioscoop diende vooral als etalage voor de films, die hun grootste recettes via andere kanalen genereerden. Daarnaast was het idee van de bioscoop als een chique ontmoetingsplaats al lang verdwenen. Bioscopen waren niet meer de aangename en exclusieve plekken die ze in de jaren 1950 waren, maar werden nu beschouwd als onaangenaam ruikende, anonieme dozen, die minder comfort en minder keuze boden dan thuis. Terwijl de films zelf weinig aan aantrekkingskracht inboetten, deden bioscopen dat wel.

Zo werd Heylen in de jaren 1970 aan de ene kant ingehaald door jonge idealistische film liefhebbers die met hun bioscopen een meer interactieve publieksparticipatie mogelijk maakten en die een meer intieme manier van filmbeleving boden. De uitbaters van cinema's als Cartoon's en

Monty bewezen bijvoorbeeld met het programmeren van filmklassiekers en nichefilms die mede door het publiek werden bepaald, dat ze met een minder conventioneel en minder commercieel georiënteerd uitbatingsconcept de kijker wel terug konden lokken naar het grote scherm, ook al was dat succes slechts tijdelijk.

Aan de andere kant werd Heylen door een nieuwe generatie bioscoopondernemers voorbijgestreefd, die zowel in nieuwe architectonische en conceptuele ontwikkelingen investeerde, als ook in de laatste technologische innovaties. Met name de groep rond Albert Bert en zijn schoonzus Rose Claeys-Vereecke (vanaf 1997 bekend als Kinapolis groep) liet vanaf de jaren 1970 met hun *multi-screen* en multiplex formules zien dat er wel degelijk manieren waren om weer volle zalen te trekken. Zo zou de groep met de jaren uitgroeien tot meest succesvolle bioscoopgroep in België en andere Europese landen. De conversie van traditionele bioscopen met één scherm naar complexen met meerdere schermen kwam vanaf de jaren 1960 al in de Verenigde Staten en Engeland in de lift. Het was een oplossing om de dalende bezoekers een hoofd te bieden: bezoekers konden gemaximeerd en de kosten tegelijkertijd laag gehouden worden. Wel hadden de opgesplitste bioscopen ook technische minpunten en waren ze minder comfortabel, wat op lange termijn de bezoekers nadelig beïnvloedde. Dit veranderde halverwege de jaren 1980 met de komst van de multiplex: speciaal gebouwd als bioscopen met meerdere schermen, die meer comfort en technologische kwaliteit boden. Ook hier had de Bert/Claeys groep een streepje voor: in 1980 openden ze als een van de eersten ter wereld multiplex Decascoop in Gent, zeven jaar later Kinapolis in Brussel, met 25 zalen 's werelds eerste megaplex.

Dat ze, ondanks hun enorm succes, met Metropolis hun eerste multiplex in Antwerpen pas in 1993 zouden openen, heeft vooral te maken met Heylens machtige positie. Hoewel de Bert/Claeys groep Heylens bioscoopgroep al in de jaren 1980 in omvang was voorbijgestreefd, bemoeilijkten Heylens relaties binnen de filmsector en met belangrijke politici en ondernemers, de onderhandelingen met de lokale autoriteiten over een mogelijke integratie van een nieuw bioscoopcomplex in de cinemastad. Een van de belangrijkste argumenten in dit debat was de vrees dat de komst van het nieuwe bioscoopcomplex zou leiden tot een massale sluiting van de bioscopen in het Statiekwartier. Dit zou de verpaupering van de buurt nog sterker in de hand werken en de daar gevestigde winkels en horecazaken de das omdoen. Voorstanders van Metropolis daarentegen wezen op de slechte staat waarin zowel Heylens bioscopen als het Statiekwartier verkeerden, wat eerder een afschrikkend dan aantrekkelijk effect zou hebben op het potentiële bioscooppubliek.

Het is overigens niet zo dat Heylen niet in zijn bioscopen investeerde, integendeel. Maar in plaats van op zoek te gaan naar nieuwe manieren om het publiek terug naar zijn bioscopen te lokken, klampte hij zich vast aan verouderde succesformules: in de jaren tachtig leken met de hand geschilderde gigantische calicots aan de façades van zijn bioscopen net zo ouderwets als de

gehandschoende ouvreuses en portiers in uniform erbinnen. Ook de betekenis van comfort was veranderd naarmate nieuwe generaties welvarender en mobieler werden. Heylen verloor vanaf de jaren zeventig gestaag terrein en was onvoldoende bereid op de sociaaleconomische veranderingen van filmbeleving en bioscoopbezoek in te spelen. Terwijl het beleid van Heylen in het begin van zijn carrière proactief was, was het in de jaren tachtig reactief geworden. Zijn oplossingen waren halfslachtig en gericht op de korte termijn: hij verhoogde de ticketprijzen, elimineerde concurrenten en investeerde in goedkope verbouwingen van bestaande bioscopen, die comfort en technologische kwaliteit misten. In plaats van op zoek te gaan naar nieuwe manieren om (nieuwe segmenten van) het publiek aan te trekken en te investeren in fundamentele veranderingen, was zijn symptomatisch management vooral gericht op winstmaximalisatie.

Bovendien beseftte Heylen – in tegenstelling tot veel van zijn concurrenten – onvoldoende dat hij ondanks zijn machtige positie toch ook afhankelijk was van het succes van andere spelers op de markt. Zo bleek uit archiefmateriaal en interviews met betrokkenen dat, ondanks dat ze Heylen weliswaar vreesden omwille van zijn machtige positie en de voordelen die hij daardoor op de lokale markt genoot, ze hem ook nodig hadden. Deels, omdat ze profiteerden van zijn investeringen in publiciteit; deels, omdat zijn vele bioscopen het voor het Antwerpse publiek mogelijk maakte om bioscoopgewoonten te blijven koesteren. Hiervan profiteerden immers alle uitbaters. In plaats van te investeren in een veerkrachtige bioscoopmarkt in zijn stad, gekenmerkt door gezonde concurrentie, stelde Heylen zich op als eenzame strijder. Mede door zijn felle concurrentiestrijd waarmee hij de meerderheid van de uitbaters in Antwerpen uitschakelde, nam het totaal aantal bioscopen in Antwerpen af. Ook het filmaanbod groeide niet, ondanks de opsplitsing van de bioscopen: uit de programmeringsanalyse bleek dat het aantal films dat in 1982 op Antwerpse schermen te zien was, de helft was van het aantal films in 1952, bij een vergelijkbaar aantal schermen. De samenhang tussen de reputatie van Antwerpen als Kinemastad en de hoeveelheid bioscopen en filmaanbod kwam ook in de interviews sterk naar voren. Respondenten die geïnterviewd werden over hun bioscoopbezoek in het verleden, evoceren het enorm rijke film- en bioscoopaanbod. Met het wegvallen van de dichte bioscoopinfrastructuur raakte de stad deze reputatie dan ook kwijt.

Dit proefschrift heeft geresulteerd in een veelgelaagd beeld van de Antwerpse film- en bioscoopcultuur en heeft aangetoond dat de manier waarop films lokaal werden verspreid, vertoond en ontvangen afhangt van complexe wisselwerkingen van sociale, economische, technologische en culturele factoren. Door de filmgeschiedenis van Antwerpen vanuit verschillende invalshoeken te benaderen is duidelijk geworden dat het in de filmwereld niet alleen ging over glamour en glans, maar dat het vooral ook een voortdurende strijd was om te overleven in een industrie die grotendeels bepaald werd door een hoge mate aan onzekerheden en machtsverschuivingen. Bij deze strijd waren lokale en (inter)nationale spelers betrokken van binnen en buiten de filmindustrie.

Een contextuele (economisch-sociaalhistorische) benadering hoeft - zoals door sommige critici gevreesd - niet te leiden tot de uitsluiting van de films zelf. Film is de ruggengraat van de filmindustrie; zonder films zouden bioscopen in de eerste plaats niet bestaan. De filmvertoning vormt het middelpunt van de filmcultuur: het is de plek waar distributeurs, bioscoopuitbaters en publiek elkaar treffen. Zowel de kwaliteit, kwantiteit als ook de diversiteit van het filmaanbod in de Antwerpse bioscopen bepaalden het succes van de bioscopen net zoals sociale, economische en culturele factoren. Hoewel een tekstuele analyse van de films geen onderdeel van dit proefschrift uitmaakt, zou dit de hier gepresenteerde inzichten verder kunnen vergroten en verdiepen. Zo zou een tekstuele analyse van de populairste films (met betrekking tot de vertoningsduur) die in dit proefschrift zijn geïdentificeerd, het onderzoek kunnen verrijken door stilistische en narratieve eigenschappen van de films te analyseren, waartoe het lokale publiek op een gegeven moment toegang had. De eigenschappen van de films kunnen vervolgens als vertrekpunt worden gebruikt om veranderingen in de voorkeuren van lokaal publiek vanuit een sociaal-, bedrijfs- en filmhistorisch perspectief te onderzoeken.

Tot slot zijn met het voorliggende onderzoek traditionele ideeën over de hegemonie van Hollywood in Europa bevestigd, maar ook genuanceerd. Ondanks de afwezigheid van de Hollywood-majors in de Antwerpse vertoningssector zelf, was de filmcultuur in Antwerpen op verschillende manieren verbonden met Hollywood: Heylens relatie met grote Amerikaanse distributeurs, Hollywood-glamour vertegenwoordigd door de sterren die de stad bezochten en door de Hollywoodfilms op Antwerpse schermen. Toch was de dominantie van Hollywoodfilms in de Antwerpse bioscopen niet onbeperkt: het waren vooral de wijkzalen die voornamelijk films uit de Verenigde Staten vertoonden, terwijl de programmering in de meeste centrumbioscoopzalen divers was en bestond uit een mix van films uit de Verenigde Staten en een aantal Europese landen, vooral Frankrijk, Italië en Duitsland. Bovendien, zoals de bevindingen over de komst van het eerste multiplex in Antwerpen hebben aangetoond, is het in het licht van bestaande kennis over de dominantie in Europa door Amerikaanse multiplexketens, lonend om de komst van multiplexen op lokaal niveau te onderzoeken. Zo heeft het voorliggende onderzoek uitgewezen dat de Vlaamse markt gedomineerd werd door twee machtige (groepen van) regionale bioscoopuitbaters met duidelijk afgebakende territoria. De opening van een multiplex werd sterk bepaald door de strijd tussen deze twee (groepen), met elkaar, maar ook met de lokale autoriteiten. Tot slot bevestigt het distributieconflict tussen Heylen en de Amerikaanse grote studio's rond 1970 de conclusies uit bestaand onderzoek, dat lokale uitbaters niet helemaal zonder onderhandelingsmacht ten opzichte van de internationale spelers waren. De grote Amerikaanse distributeurs slaagden er niet in om middels een maanden durende blokkade Heylens machtspositie in de voor hen lucratieve Antwerpse bioscoopmarkt te doorbreken. Dit voorbeeld compliceert tegelijkertijd ook traditionele

filmeconomische modellen voor distributiestrategieën op macroniveau. Het feit dat - al was het maar voor een beperkte periode - films in première gingen in de Antwerpse buurtbioscopen in plaats van Heylens prestigieuze premièrezalen onderstreept dat vanuit macroperspectief geconstrueerde modellen van transnationale film distributie de werking van de filmindustrie op lokaal niveau slechts gedeeltelijk kunnen verklaren.

Voorbeelden als deze benadrukken dus de waarde van (temporeel en spatiaal beperkte) microgeschiedenissen van vertoningsmarkten, op basis waarvan de werking van de filmsector en processen van filmvertoning en -consumptie op meso- en macroniveau kunnen worden verklaard. Ondanks de neergang van Heylens onderneming op de lange termijn, zorgden zijn inspanningen in de hoogdagen van zijn bioscooponderneming ervoor dat zelfs meer dan twintig jaar na zijn overlijden en de ondergang van zijn onderneming, zijn naam en zijn bioscoopimperium nog steeds overwegend positief door Antwerpenaren werd herinnerd. Zijn rol om de bioscoopcultuur van de stad tot ver in de jaren zeventig levend te houden, zelfs nadat de aanhoudende recessie in de filmindustrie en een gestage daling van het bioscoopbezoek hun tol hadden geëist in andere steden in het binnen- en buitenland. Zijn bijdrage om van Antwerpen een echte Kinemastad te maken, kan dus moeilijk worden overschat. Het maakte dat de Antwerpse bioscopen niet allen plekken waren om films te kijken, maar als geheel ook een plek waarmee het publiek zich kon identificeren.

Een integrale aanpak zoals in dit proefschrift werd gehanteerd betekent uiteraard dat een aantal aspecten die gedurende het onderzoeksproces naar boven kwamen, minder aandacht hebben gekregen dan ze wellicht verdienen. De focus op Antwerpen bijvoorbeeld heeft als gevolg dat Heylens zakelijke transacties op enkele andere plaatsen in Vlaanderen, waar hij ook actief was, slechts kort zijn aangestipt. Het zou lonend zijn om de relatie tussen zijn Antwerpse onderneming en die in deze steden nader te onderzoeken, om een vollediger beeld te kunnen schetsen van zijn bedrijfsstrategieën in relatie tot andere concurrenten. Op een meer algemeen, filmhistorisch niveau draagt dit proefschrift bij aan concrete inzichten over de machtsrelaties op een lokale vertoningsmarkt. Om in het licht van theorievorming gefundeerde conclusies te kunnen trekken, dienen case studies als “Antwerpen Kinemastad” echter nog diepgaander onderzocht te worden in relatie tot vergelijkbare casestudy's. Bevindingen met betrekking tot veranderingen van de Antwerpse film- en bioscoopcultuur en Heylens rol hierin vertonen parallellen met andere plaatsen, maar ook verschillen. Het zijn inzichten die grondige en systematische vergelijkingen vereisen, om de uitzonderlijkheid van Antwerpen Kinemastad als geheel en van Heylens onderneming in het bijzonder te kunnen inschatten.

Veelbelovend voor comparatief filmhistorisch onderzoek is de recente ontwikkeling van nieuwe tools en methoden binnen de *digital humanities*. Deze hebben in de afgelopen jaren tot gezamenlijke initiatieven geleid voor het verzamelen en delen van gegevens en inzichten. De

toegevoegde waarde van nieuwe vergelijkbare projecten ligt niet alleen in een collectieve manier van dataverzameling en valorisatie, maar ook in de manier waarop de data en de onderzoeksresultaten gepresenteerd worden: in toenemende mate online, in de vorm van projectwebsites. Hiermee worden de gegevens en onderzoeksresultaten beschikbaar gesteld voor zowel wetenschappers als een bredere groep van geïnteresseerde personen. Vooral *open access-databases* kunnen een actieve betrokkenheid bij (lopend) onderzoek vergemakkelijken en stimuleren, door tools te bieden voor het downloaden van (delen van) de datasets en door voorbeelden en *tutorials* aan te bieden voor een creatief (her)gebruik van de data, wat kan worden afgestemd op specifieke behoeften en onderzoeksinteresse. Verder maken ontwikkelingen op het gebied van *linked open data* de weg vrij om de reikwijdte van historisch onderzoek nog verder te verbreden, om de rijkdom van bestaande datacollecties te illustreren en hun creatieve gebruik te stimuleren. Dit kan op lange termijn bestaande inzichten aanvullen en verder nuanceren en op die manier bijdragen aan het schrijven van talloze nieuwe film- en bioscoopgeschiedenissen en daarmee ook de theorievorming vooruit helpen.

Het schrijven van *new cinema histories* kent een open einde en wordt voortdurend herzien, omdat het afhankelijk is van de beschikbaarheid van (aanvullende) bronnen en nieuwe inzichten bestaand en nieuw onderzoek. Dit geldt ook voor Antwerpen Kinemastad. Nieuwe projecten die zich richten op Antwerpen, al dan niet in vergelijkend perspectief, kunnen voortbouwen op de bevindingen in dit proefschrift. Het jaar 1993 luidde met het einde van Heylens Rex bioscoopgroep en met de komst van de eerste multiplex in de stad het begin in van een nieuw hoofdstuk voor Antwerpen Kinemastad. Wat het precies betekende voor de fysionomie van het Antwerpse bioscooplandschap en de ervaringen van film- en bioscoopbeleving van de lokale bevolking, is een hoofdstuk over Antwerpen Kinemastad dat nog mag worden geschreven.