

Common Ground: Film Cultures and Film Festivals in Central America

Jasper Vanhaelemeesch



Supervisor **Prof. Dr. Philippe Meers** | **University of Antwerp**

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Film Studies and Visual Culture at the University of Antwerp
Faculty of Social Sciences | **Department of Communication Studies**
Visual and Digital Cultures Research Center | **Antwerp, 2021**

Vandenbunder Baillet Latour Chair for Film Studies and Visual Culture



**University
of Antwerp**

Faculty of Social Sciences
Department of Communication Studies
Visual and Digital Cultures Research Center (ViDi)

Common Ground: Film Cultures and Film Festivals in Central America

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

Jasper Vanhaelemeesch

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Philippe Meers

Antwerpen, 2021

Supervisor:

Prof. Dr. Philippe Meers (University of Antwerp)

Doctoral jury:

Prof. Dr. Paolo Silvio Harald Favero (Chair, University of Antwerp)

Prof. Dr. Marijke de Valck (Utrecht University)

Prof. Dr. Nadia Lie (KU Leuven)

Prof. Dr. Tamara Falicov (Kansas University)

Prof. Dr. Aida Vallejo (University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU)

Prof. Dr. Gertjan Willems (University of Antwerp)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, without written permission from the author.

Cover photo: © Marco Estrada, Festival Ícaro (Antigua Guatemala, Palacio de los Capitanes, 2016)

Layout and formatting: Jasper Vanhaelemeesch

Cover design and printing by Nieuwe Media Dienst, Universiteit Antwerpen

Contact: jasper.vanhaelemeesch@uantwerpen.be

Copyright © 2021 Jasper Vanhaelemeesch

Contents

Lists of tables and figures	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Abstract.....	xii
Introduction.....	14
Part I: methodological, historical and theoretical reflections.....	29
Chapter 1. Exploring the field.....	30
Introduction: fieldwork at the movies.....	31
Film festival visits.....	34
Areas of concentration.....	36
1.1. Reflexive ethnography.....	38
1.2. Network analysis	44
1.3. Fieldwork and network limitations	49
1.4. Serendipity, disruptions and contingencies.....	54
Conclusions: relationality in theory, method and research practice.....	55
Chapter 2. Envisioning a regional Central American cinema	57
Introduction: in/visibility.....	57
2.1. The creative multitude.....	60
2.2. Transnational, small and precarious cinemas.....	63
2.3. Regional film culture as a common cause.....	68
2.3.1. A self-sustaining ecology of film-cultural development.....	71
2.4. Cinematic prehistory and the emergence of national cinemas.....	74
2.4.1. The first phase.....	74
2.4.2. The second phase.....	75
2.4.3. The Cuban example and New Latin American Cinemas.....	78
2.5. The third phase: contemporary film cultures.....	83

2.5.1. Domestic screen cultures	84
2.5.2. Transnational arthouse auteurs.....	88
2.5.3. Thematic and aesthetic tendencies	90
2.5.4. Archives and audio-visual heritage.....	92
2.5.5. National film commissions, policy and funding initiatives	94
Conclusions: emerging cinemas	97
Chapter 3. Post-Third-Worldist perspectives and film festivals	101
Introduction.....	101
3.1. Third World Cinemas	104
3.1.1. Poverty porn	106
3.2. Third Cinema(s)	107
3.2.1. Post-Third-Worldist cinemas	112
3.3. Film Festivals and (post-)Third (World) cinemas.....	113
3.3.1. From exhibition platforms to interfaces for film cultures.....	114
3.3.2. Festivals and regional film cultures.....	116
3.3.3. Interdisciplinary festival scholarship.....	117
3.3.4. Film festivals as educators and producers	120
Conclusions: cultural dialogues	123
Part II: thematic analyses	126
Chapter 4. Drivers of change in the Central American film festivalscape	127
Introduction.....	127
4.1. Between capitalism and socialism: the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema and EICTV	130
4.2. A space to fly in Guatemala: two decades of Ícaro spreading its wings.....	144
4.3. The seeds multiply: AcampaDOC International Documentary Film Festival	154

4.4. Starpower, industry-building and regional cinema: IFF Panama .	163
4.5. Socially committed: human rights, environmental, indigenous and sexual diversity festivals in Central America	170
Conclusions: film festivals as interfaces for film cultures.....	176
Chapter 5. Connecting the dots: filmmaking communities in Central America	179
Introduction.....	179
5.1. Identifying clusters of collaboration and visualising the network	181
5.2. Arthouse cinema, film schools and regional co-productions in Costa Rica.....	188
5.3. Institutional fragmentation and collaboration in Panama	196
5.3.1. <i>Days of light</i> (2019).....	201
5.4 The network around AGAcine, Casa Comal and EICTV in Guatemala	208
5.5. Popular national cinema from Honduras	212
5.6. Cinematic pioneers from Nicaragua and El Salvador.....	216
5.7. Gender distribution in the Central American production network	219
Conclusions: common ground	223
Chapter 6. A generational debt: postmemory films and film festivals	227
Introduction.....	227
Postmemory	230
6.1. Memory, Truth and Justice	233
6.2. Cosmopolitan strategies of affect: <i>The offended</i> (Zamora, 2016) .	236
6.3. The fallacies of memorialisation: <i>Red princesses</i> (Astorga, 2013)	251
6.4. Selective amnesia: the politics of oblivion.....	256
Conclusions: a generational and historical debt to tell stories	260
Conclusions	263

Referenced films.....	275
References.....	282
Corpus films.....	304
Summary in Dutch	318

Lists of tables and figures

Table 1: Film festival fieldwork 2017 - 2019.....	35
Table 2: Screens per capita in Central America.....	84
Table 3: Cinematographic data from the 2019 Panorama Audiovisual Iberoamericano	86
Table 4: Names ranked by closeness centrality.....	185
Table 5: Names ranked by betweenness centrality.....	186
Table 6: Films from Cluster 1 by closeness centrality	194
Table 7: Names from Cluster 1 by closeness centrality.....	195
Table 8: Films from Cluster 2 by closeness centrality	203
Table 9: Films ranked by closeness centrality in the Honduran cluster	214
Figure 1: The geography of Central American film festival case studies.....	130
Figure 2: General catalogue, International Festival of New Latin American Cinema (2018).....	131
Figure 3: Festival locations in Havana (2018)	133
Figure 4: “The overwhelming story of José Mujica” on the festival journal's front page (2018).....	136
Figure 5: Graffiti by Francis Ford Coppola, Asghar Farhadi, Fernando Birri, Carlos Sorín et al. (2018)	138
Figure 6: EICTV’s student residence doorway	143
Figure 7: Ícaro Festival Internacional de Cine en Centroamérica	144
Figure 8: “Great directors also started out like this”. Diverging Ícaro Festival art in Honduras.....	148
Figure 9: Still from Sprinter (Saulter, 2018)	165
Figure 10: The colour codes, the number of the modularity class and the percentages that correspond to the six communities in the network	182

Figure 11: Coloured graph representing the six main collaborative communities	183
Figure 12: Filtered network with labels	187
Figure 13: Cluster 1, filtered (>5 connections)	191
Figure 14: Cluster 2, filtered (>5 connections)	198
Figure 15: Infographic on the participation of Guna Yala filmmaker Duiren Wagua in Netflix' La casa de papel (2017-)	200
Figure 16: The production team of Days of light (2019) in Clusters 2, 3, 4 and 5	201
Figure 17: Cluster 3, filtered (>5 connections)	210
Figure 18: Cluster 4, filtered (>5 connections)	215
Figure 19: Cluster 5, filtered (>2 connections)	218
Figure 20: Cluster 6, filtered (>2 connections)	219
Figure 21: Gender distribution in Central American film production (1994-2019)	220
Figure 22: Gender distribution graph for individuals with two or more connections	222
Figure 23: Interviewing a former guard and torturer in The offended (Zamora, 2016)	239
Figure 24: The sound technician installing a microphone on General Muguía in The offended (Zamora, 2016)	244
Figure 25: Rubén Zamora peering at the camera operator in The offended (Zamora, 2016)	244
Figure 26: Princesas rojas/Red princesses (Astorga, 2013)	253

Acknowledgements

This dissertation shines a light on certain events, peoples and films in Central America. Much like the production process of a film, which afterwards usually comes to be associated with the name of the director, this project is a collaborative effort. In the process of producing the first chapter drafts after an inspiring time abroad, I quarantined myself for several months, surrounded by plants, screens and empty coffee mugs. Little did I know then that it was only practice for when the Covid-19 pandemic would change our lives the following year. In retrospect, and as a valuable life lesson, the research advanced most significantly when it was forced to come to a standstill.

The plan to present the dissertation by June and spend the summer of 2020 as unencumbered as the high school graduates Alice Cooper sang about was postponed by the possibility to stand in as a teaching assistant for eight months in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Antwerp. While I was largely unable to work on the dissertation during these inspiring months, it provided me with a much-needed research break that allowed to take a step back and figure out the essential story that I was trying to carve out of a dense forest of materials.

Throughout my relative isolation, I was accompanied by the people who enabled and facilitated my research, as well as by the protagonists of this story. At the Visual and Digital Cultures Research Center (ViDi), I am grateful for the guidance and support I received from my supervisor Prof. Dr. Philippe Meers and Prof. Dr. Paolo Silvio Harald Favero, chair of my doctoral committee, who both challenged me to find a consistent voice that oscillates between the disciplines of film studies, anthropology, and visual cultures overall. I benefitted greatly from our meetings, in which Prof. Dr. Marijke de Valck and Prof. Dr. Nadia Lie provided me with detailed feedback on my work. Your critical insights have been indispensable in completing this process.

The research was generously enabled by the Vandebunder Baillet Latour Chair for Film Studies and Visual Culture and by Flanders' Research Foundation FWO, who granted me the long stay abroad that allowed me to do the fieldwork without which the project would not have been the same. I'm also happy to have taken part in the TECMERIN research project CSO2017-85290-P, funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the

Spanish Government and co-financed with European Regional Development Funds.

My gratitude goes out to my ViDi and non-ViDi colleagues on the third and fourth floor of the Meerminne campus, including but not limited to Prof. Dr. Luc Pauwels, Dr. Marc Bekaert, Eva, Matthias, Kevin, Sam, Juliana, Marion, Nicola, Aleit, Gintaré, Chernelle, Ali, Vijay, Gustavo, Sezen, Vesi, Celine, Carlos, Ligia, Irene, Daniel, Daylenis and Ryan. Your support meant a lifeline to my deadlines. Thank you, Terézia, for your digital wizardry in helping me understand the basics of network analysis and visualisation. I thank Prof. Dr. Frederik Dhaenens at UGent and Prof. Dr. Joe Straubhaar at UT Austin for providing me with valuable project feedback halfway through the process.

As an integral part of the dissertation, a great part of this journey was in fact spent abroad. I especially thank Prof. Dr. María Lourdes Cortés Pacheco at the University of Costa Rica, for launching the field of Central American film studies, and for facilitating my four-month research trip in 2018. I'm thankful for the insightful questions and comments I received at the many conferences I was able to attend, and unlike the impersonal acronyms NECS, SCMS, ICA... suggest, the friendly presence of the usual suspects in the fields of film and film festival studies meant that I never felt this was 'just work'. From steak dinners in Buenos Aires, craft beers in San Diego and rooftop receptions in Santo Domingo, to seeing sights and cinemas in Seattle, Madrid, Amsterdam, San José, London, you all contributed to the outsider perspective that all we do is have a good time. They are not entirely wrong.

My entire argument would fall apart without the friendship and support of the people I met during my fieldwork at film festivals in Central America. In Guatemala, my point of entry in the field, the Ícaro Festival, was facilitated by Casa Comal's members, especially Elías and Jacob Jiménez, Rafa Rosal, Daniela Sagone and Pollo, Ray Figueroa, Carlos 'Loco' Gonzalez, Vanessa, Eddy, Wong, Leyzer, Samantha, Jorge and regional associates Martha Clarissa Hernández Chávez, Cecilia Durán, Laura Bermudez, Ana Martins, César Hernandez, Grecia Daniella Rojas, Hispano Durón, Marinete Pinheiro, Juliana Maité, Ana Sánchez, Samantha Choos and Paola Baldión, among many others. Thank you for your tireless efforts to keep making films, for your love of cultures and for allowing me to tag along to catch a glimpse of this process.

I thank Walter Figueroa at the Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, as well as the people behind the organisation of AGAcine and the International Film Festival of Memory Truth and Justice, Joaquín Ruano, Pamela Guinea,

Uli Stelzner, Ana Isabel Bustamante, Koki Ortega, Isabel Messina, Eduardo Cáceres, among others. Fond memories of Panama are made up by the people who accepted my company at AcampaDOC, Ícaro and IFF Panama: Irina Ruiz Figueroa and Alberto Ruiz, Hugo Koper, Milko Delgado, Harry Oglivie, Sam Vinal, Roberto ‘Kike’ King, Edgar Soberón Torchía, Duiren Wagua, José Tuñón, Carlo Brescia, Magaly Zevallos, Jonay Delgado, David, Carlos, Natalia, Roy, Antonio, Flor, Alexis, Camilo, Randy, Daniela, Rosana, Carlos Aguilar and Pituka Ortega.

In Costa Rica, I would like to thank Jurgen Ureña for the interview (and lunch), and Alexandra Latishev, Iván Porras, Rafa Chinchilla, Ernesto Villalobos and Laura Astorga for sharing your insights and/or your films. I thank Marcela Zamora for providing me with access to her films right from the start of the research to use for conference presentations as well as a chapter in this thesis and to Enrique Álvarez, Nicolas Ordoñez, Giselle Cruz and Susana Molina at EICTV in Cuba for opening your doors to the world, and to me. I am beyond grateful to Martha Clarissa Vallecillo and Camila Cabrera Rodríguez in Nicaragua and Cuba respectively, for putting up with me, watching and talking films, dancing and celebrating life, in Guatemala, Panama, Costa Rica and Cuba. Never have I shared an island with as brilliant and one of a kind friends as you. To my mother, father, family and friends who have been with me along the way in Antwerp and elsewhere, especially Kas, Mollie, Jolan, Elke and Gert-Jan, and to those who went their separate ways, you have kept me grounded and taught me to appreciate and relativise the process, and my outlook on life with it. This achievement belongs to you too, for encouraging and sustaining me. As an uncle to Zoë and Felix, I am certain your future holds the life and happiness that your names represent and that it will reflect the light that you have brought into our worlds.

Abstract

In the first 20 years of the 21st century, Central American film production has increased exponentially, despite a persistent lack of state support after decades of armed conflict. The relatively recent professionalisation and visibility of the 'small' and 'precarious' cinemas of Central America has coincided with the development of film festivals. In the ongoing emergence of regionally embedded film cultures, film festivals have assumed particularly mediating and enabling roles, in terms of education, promotion and distribution of local cinemas. These initiatives are contained within traditions that can be traced back to the heyday of New Latin American Cinemas during the 1980s, the Havana Film Festival and the educational ideology of the EICTV Film and Television School in Cuba, which emphasise creative solidarity and collaboration across borders. Since the signing of the last regional Peace Agreements in 1996, events responded to the broader cultural sector's call to set up networks for cultural production on a regional scale, due to an emphasis on commonality, and the need for a larger audience. Through immersive and reflexive ethnographic fieldwork at film festivals in the region and a network analysis of film production relations, this study illuminates film-cultural developments during the postwar moment, a time especially marked by the active processing of past conflict and trauma through the socially cathartic experience of cinema. This results in a threefold thematic analysis of respectively film festivals, filmmaking communities and the creative use of the 'postmemory' phenomenon in the Central American film landscape. In absence of strong national support structures, film festivals have surfaced as multipurpose interfaces that facilitate the exhibition of Central American films, the transnational mobilisation and networking of film professionals, and the mediation of a conflicted past. Against economic, social and political odds, filmmakers in Central America share a common energy to strengthen and expand the region's small cinemas for both cultural and economic reasons.

This page is intentionally left blank

Introduction

Much like in the rest of the world, film as a medium was introduced to Central America in the late 19th, early 20th century, but unlike its neighbours to the North, South, or those in the Caribbean, the region has not yet been successful in developing self-sustaining national film industries. Past efforts to establish film industries in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama have often been thwarted or neglected by agendas that prioritised other societal matters over the creation of a national cinematographic identity. Even in the consolidation of the revolutionary Sandinista government following the 1979 revolution in Nicaragua, filmmaking was seen only as secondary to the ideological propaganda potential of radio and television (Buchsbaum, 2003).

Costa Rican film historiographer María Lourdes Cortés argues that, up to the end of the 20th century, film industries did not even exist in the region, even though all countries did already possess “a modest filmography”:

What was produced in Central America before the 1970s were isolated attempts by individuals interested in cinema. These were films that required great personal and economic sacrifices, but which received no encouragement from official institutions and very little from the public. There does not exist a systematised production, no stable basis for a possible industry. Nothing. (Cortés, 2000, p. 97, own translation)¹

Within the broader spectrum of cultural manifestations in Central America, cinema is among the more recent in a series of identity-building efforts, though its problems might be paradigmatic for the cultural industries. Cortés' contribution is part of a volume on the state of the cultural sector in Central America at the turn of the millennium (2000). Its editor, Jesús Oyamburu, remarks a discrepancy in that, despite “the beautiful process of rapprochement between cultural agents of each country” (2000a, p. 7), Central America in general has never been considered a culturally productive area:

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Spanish to English in this text are my own, and translated quotations and interviews are treated as paraphrases, as per the rules of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.) (2020).

This vitality becomes invisible when we see the perceptions that people have from outside, for example, of the cultural manifestations that are generated in this region: nothing. It is supposed that in Central America, nothing happens or there is nothing. (Oyamburu, 2000a, p. 7, own translation)

In addition to the perception as a cultural wasteland, the imagined construct of Central America stereotypically relates to the countries' history of conflicts and authoritarian regimes or to their status as export-dependent, economically exploited, 'banana republics'.² From succumbing to European imperial forces in the 15th century to the end of the Cold War, the southernmost countries of North America have always been disputed and divided along geopolitical fault lines. While written histories have tended to emphasise social polarisation and foreign imperialist rule in the region, less often they account for the exceptional ethnic and cultural diversity that coexists in its social mosaic.

And yet, the re-instalment of democratic governments in the region in the mid-1990s is not only considered the official end to nearly four decades of armed conflict, as it can also be regarded as a turning point for the region's exploration into the development of new cultural identities. This interpretive turning point can be exemplified by briefly looking into the premise of two Central American short films on the role of culture in a society haunted by war. The two directors' respective approaches to the subject exemplify the change the region has experienced in terms of framing its narratives over the course of the last three decades, before and after the conflict resolution of 1996.

El hombre de una sola nota/The man with one note (1989) is a Nicaraguan short film by former war-correspondent and filmmaker Frank Pineda, produced by the Instituto Nicaragüense de Cine (INCINE). In the high-contrast black-and-white film, the camera follows a solitary musician from his apartment through the ruins of a city under siege and destroyed by war

² The Collins English Dictionary defines banana republic as a derogatory noun that signifies "a small country, esp. in Central America, that is politically unstable and has an economy dominated by foreign interest, usually dependent on one export, such as bananas". In the COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary, it is less specifically stated that banana republics are "small, poor countries that are politically unstable" ('Banana Republic', 2020; Collins Cobuild, 2006).

towards a theatre where he enters the stage to join an orchestra to play one single note, after which he returns to his apartment. His nearly apathetic demeanour denotes the normalisation of violence in a space where ordinary life and terrorism coexist.

In her historiographic work on filmmaking in Central America, *La pantalla rota: cien años de cine en Centroamérica* (2005), María Lourdes Cortés symbolically refers to early Central American cinemas as characterised by their “broken screens” that have been haunted by the violence, destruction and repression that the territories have witnessed throughout the 20th century, culminating in an all-out crisis in the 1980s. Despite official conflict mediation in the form of Peace Agreements between revolutionary factions and governments, the last of which was signed in Guatemala in 1996, many citizens continue to suffer from structural violence, inequality and discrimination, in particular women, children, indigenous and LGBTQI+ peoples.

20 years after *The man with one note* (1989), another short film, *Cinema libertad/Cinema freedom* (Menendez, 2009) from El Salvador, similarly presents urban decay and poverty in relation to culture and youth. However, as Menendez’ short film demonstrates, the fatalistic bitterness of the late 20th century has evolved into a position of careful yet precarious positivity. The story is of two children, Nacho and Ela, who revitalise an abandoned and dilapidated cinema theatre, Cine Libertad, in San Salvador, by using rays of light emanating from the old projection booth onto the screen to organise shadow puppet performances for its homeless tenants. Years later, after they were separated by their parents, Ela finds cinephile Nacho selling DVD’s from a street booth and the story concludes with their romantic reunion. Both short films convey an idea about culture and its representation in and by Central American society. The images that the two children are projecting onto the screen amidst the urban and social decay of an abandoned cinema in San Salvador metaphorically indicate the need for a renewal of narratives and modes of communication to rise from the rubble left behind by the conflicts.

Cinema, and the act of filmmaking, can present counternarratives to perspectives on the region as a homogenised and troubled imagined construct. Menendez’ short film demonstrates how the field of contemporary cultural production holds the potential to construct and represent a contextualised (local, regional or internationalist) discourse that emphasises more positive, self-determined aspects of the creativity and diversity inherent to the subcontinent’s cultural identities. Likewise, Oyamburu (2000a) calls for the

need to adopt new perspectives in order to envision Central America as a space under construction between the particular and the general (p. 7; own translation). He writes that the future of Central America lies in that it can function as a community of countries and groups that can confide in one another. He presents the notion of ‘interculturality’ as the positive estimation of cultural diversity, the vindication of the harmony of the diverse in which the good of each part is the good of the whole (pp. 7-8; own translation). Central to this postconflict reconfiguration towards conviviality, Oyamburu states, is cultural exchange in and between Central American countries (p. 9).

What Oyamburu in fact is signalling is a certain *fin-de-siècle* sensation in Central America brought on by a combination of the peace negotiations between revolutionary factions and governments and the peak moment of globalisation, described by Terry Flew as the era of

the Internet and digital media, the growth of multilateral institutions and agreements, the creation of supranational entities such as the European Union, and the rise of global social movements and a global civil society as marking an era of *strong globalisation*. In this framework, globalisation marks [...] a new era, marked by the declining significance of nation-states, the rise of a shared global culture, increasingly hybridised cultural identities and a fully integrated global capitalist economy. (Flew, 2018, p. 104; emphasis in the original)

Together, the newfound democracies in Central America and the promise of integration in a global civil society were inspiring to generations in need of cultural regeneration. Multilateral agreements facilitated the flow of trade and information and supranational entities became prominent at the presumed cost of the decline of nation-states. Indeed, as indicated at the time by Cortés and Oyamburu, the creative community in Central America was faced with an unwillingness by governments and an unavailability of support structures that would allow the generation of media and other content in which postconflict sentiments could be explored and expressed. According to the authors, in absence of structures and systems, alternative forms of organisation and production were needed.

In the reflections by 37 other Central American artists and scholars in the volume on the state of the cultural sector and the position of the artist going into the 21st century, two general necessities were signalled for Central American cultural production to be a more visible and sustained effort

(Oyamburu, 2000). The first signals that, in the search for self-sufficiency, there resides a potentially lucrative marketability in the self-identification as a Central American region with a combined population of over 50 million inhabitants. The second trend was that most authors argued for non-hierarchical structures of collaboration across the region.

20 years after the publication of that volume, Central America has produced over 350 feature films, averaging well over 20 feature films annually for the past few years. Slowly, a “new Central American cinema” (Durón, 2014) has been developing as a set of national cultural expressions that relate to each other and to the rest of the world. While the screen cultures of the 20th century had been considered non-existing or at least fragmented and “broken” (Cortés, 2005), the first two decades of the 21st century have partly restored and illuminated those screens to give way to the development of a cinematic identity.

These particular calls and strategies for cultural development were in fact heeded, particularly by the establishment and development of region-oriented events such as book fairs, a painting biennale, music festivals, theatre festivals, and, most relevantly to this study, a series of film festivals. The development of film festivals happened concurrent with the cinematographic expansion in the postwar climate of freedom of expression and cultural transformation. Film festivals were set up in Guatemala and Costa Rica in the 1990s to gather around positive and peaceful creative practices. Not coincidentally, the postwar emergence of film festivals reminds us of the ideological positioning of early European film festival development in the aftermath of the second World War (de Valck, 2007). The entanglement of the relationships between ideology and art, economics and politics have demonstrated film festival studies’ suitability to study regional cultural politics in a representative way that transcends discipline-specificity (de Valck, Kredell & Loist, 2016). In a first phase, film festivals in Central America were mainly exhibition platforms for national films and videos, including reels, music videos, reports and advertisements, organised in the state capital. Because of the unexpected success of early national film festivals, most events became regional and itinerant showcases with defined educational components.

For Central American cinemas, film festivals have not just been important actors in fostering local cinematographic cultures. Because of a persistent lack of state-supported structures such as strong film legislations, national film funds, screening quota, tax incentives and other protection or support

measures for the creative industries, film festivals have come to occupy a central mediating position by linking many of the aforementioned actors, institutions and initiatives in a dense network of Central American filmmaking. Hardly any of the films produced in Central America in the last 25 years would have been exhibited to an audience without local film festivals. By organising and managing relationships to other building blocks of film-cultural development such as policies and legislation, education, archives and research or funding mechanisms, a number of film festivals have manifested as influential drivers behind the expansion that has been occurring over the last two decades.

These primary observations lead to formulate the main question that the dissertation seeks to answer, namely how film festivals contribute to the development of film cultures in Central America? The objective is to analyse how film festivals adopt strategies to answer the challenges to production, exhibition, funding, training and policy making in the region's small cinemas. The scope of the study is the postconflict era following the signing of the Peace Agreements from 1996 until 2019 and the perspective is guided through a post-Third-Worldist lens on processes of global media and communication. The subject matter is explored through a two-part literature review and a threefold methodology that includes a qualitative vantage point, in the form of ethnographic fieldwork and textual film analysis, and a quantitative approach to these experiences in the form of a basic production network analysis and visualisation.

Central American cinemas are conceptually situated through the review of literature on small, precarious, transnational and regional Hispanic cinemas in a post-Third-Worldist context. The second part of the literature review focuses on studies of film festivals in relation to Third and Third World Cinema-heritage. These insights are applied to the analysis of three themes that respectively involve Central American film festivals, collaborative networks of film professionals in the region and the narrative and visual configuration of 'postmemory' as highly characteristic of contemporary Central American cinemas.

The developments in contemporary Central American cinemas after the Peace Agreements relate to the broader cultural sector's call for regional identification and intensified networkisation (Oyamburu, 2000). These phenomena are furthermore considered to be central to an era that follows the peak of globalisation, termed postglobalisation.

The acknowledgement of postglobalisation allows to emphasise film professionals as creative and affective labourers, working in and with cultures that are more than ever marked by the centrality of capital and mercantilism. In the context of Central America's small cinemas, this eliminates the arbitrary divisions between high- and lowbrow, mainstream and arthouse productions, and rather emphasises self-sufficiency and repeatability of productions to ensure cinematographic expansion in the region. Unsustainable productions, on the other hand, would then be those that would limit the possibilities of repeating the process in new projects because of a lack of funding or financial mismanagement, interest or the inability to pay professionals for their contribution. The organisation of film cultures, in short, is emphasised as being situated in the field of social relations, "the common", which is where the "multitude" resides (Gielen, 2009; Hardt & Negri, 2004; Virno, 2004).

Conceptually, the reasons for stressing regional commonality can be motivated positively, negatively, or most realistically, through a combination thereof. Negative characterisations refer mainly to political and economic affairs, the continent's history of colonisation and imperial rule, of repressive regimes, of patriarchal structures, authoritarian regimes, militarisation and structurally ingrained social inequality. More positive aspects that motivate and inform relationality and solidarity emphasise cultural development, material and intangible, ethnic, linguistic or natural heritage. One specific theme that emerges from a region-wide sense of commonality, namely the representation of past trauma in cultural narratives, is highlighted as a specific case study in this dissertation. The postmemorial transfer of a violent past onto newer generations combines traumatic experiences with social and cinematographic acts of resilience and solidarity through the production of films. With an emphasis on commonality and relationality, I find a shared desire to develop solid structures that place the respective localities and nations in a more prominent position in the global cinematographic landscape than has been the case in the past. In considering film-cultural development, film festivals play vital roles in negotiating local agendas for filmmaking initiatives. As such, the responsibilities of Central American film festivals are not limited to a mere reproduction of the structures of international film festivals.

While film cultures are only a small and selective part of culture and society at large, film festivals are here regarded as the common ground through which film professionals move and interact. The choice to focus on film festivals

enables to see members of the film community as creative and affective labourers who make use of the common field to develop as professionals, and as individuals, by establishing productive relationships within communities of practice. More often than not, individual film professionals come to embody their craft, and personal and professional relations intertwine.

The field of the common is thus introduced as essential to conceptualise the moment of postglobalisation, since it is inherently characterised by neoliberal forms of organisation that include intensified networkisation and by a perspective on cultural producers as creative and affective labourers. The common allows to emphasise production relations and to envision the region as a conceptual whole, not in a borderless, postnational, way but by emphasising commonality across national idiosyncrasies in a celebration of difference and cultural hybridity. By building on the neo-Marxist reasoning on the common and the multitude to discuss the field of social relations, a central role is reserved for capital in the advanced rapprochement between economy and culture (Hardt & Negri, 2004; Virno, 2004).

Equally inherent to these types of neoliberal, social organisations are either a resistance against imposed top-down structures, or a necessary alternative for direct state-involvement, preferring instead the autonomy and horizontality of, for example, funding structures such as crowdfunding or personal loans. The “common ground” from the dissertation title thus both has a literal, territorial, interpretation, as well as being a reference to the shared interests and beliefs of Central American film professionals.

My initial motivation to study Central American cinemas was inspired by a number of Central American films that made waves in the international film festival circuit in recent years, such as the films of Jayro Bustamante, Marcela Zamora, Julio Hernández Córdón and César Díaz. The apparent differences between these internationalist arthouse productions that travel the world’s prestigious festivals on the one hand and more autochthonous Central American filmmaking on the other led to the framing of a more inclusive, translocally situated approach instead of studying them through comparison. In other words, film-cultural developments in Central America are here studied, not through an emphasis on foreign funding mechanisms or on global media flows and value circuits, but through an ethnographic engagement with the communities in which the filmmakers take part.

In a first exploratory phase, I had thus adopted a somewhat Eurocentric perspective that problematically validates foreign cinemas through and after

the acknowledgement of their resonance overseas, or as Isin (2012, pp. 565–567) puts it, I reproduced the Eurocentric framework in which one culture is universalised and other cultures’ activities are mirrored to those realities. Julian Stringer also stated that the nationalist labelling and “discovering” of non-Western filmmakers in the international festival circuit demonstrates the underlying assumption that “non-Western cinemas do not count historically until they have been recognised by the apex of international media power, the centre of which is located, by implication, at Western film festivals” (Stringer, 2001, p. 135).

Following this realisation, I started to explore epistemic and ontological possibilities to frame the research in a relational “pluriverse” of “multiple, coexisting, worlds” as a more inclusive option to situate Central American cinemas as cultural expressions in their own right, both against constructs of homogenising universality (Mignolo, 2018) and against triangular comparisons with dominant film industries in North America and Europe.

In essence, it is still the encounter between different worlds that is at stake in the discussion of emerging film cultures in Central America. Since 1492, when colonialism was defined as modernity’s darker side throughout the European Renaissance and the ideals of Enlightenment, this dualistic encounter has been defined by a degree of distinction and classification. Over time, Western societies constructed and appropriated their own concept of universality, which persists in the globalised flow of moving images and the knowledge thereof. When dealing with multiple universes of meanings, though, Walter Mignolo suggests to resort to the pluriverse as an alternative conceptualisation, thereby “[r]enouncing the conviction that the world must be conceived as a unified totality (Christian, Liberal, or Marxist, with their respective *neos*) in order for it to make sense, and viewing the world as an interconnected diversity instead” (Mignolo, 2018, p. x). The pluriverse, put simply, indicates a world in which multiple worlds can coexist.

Similarly, I want to make a case for a departure from any kind of dualistic, centre-periphery perspectives rooted in dualistic ontologies of life/death, mind/body, of political-economic dependency and from comparing this particular context to other regions. Instead, in a modest exercise of knowledge decolonisation, I wish to foreground the relational and hybrid nature of the phenomena related to film production and exhibition in practices and events around the world, at a time characterised as postglobalised or alterglobalised. Whereas access to cinemas and to means of production have expanded

significantly in the last decades, a great part of scholarly work on the cinemas of the world have consistently applied interpretive frameworks that are inherently based on assumptions of, for example, story structure and aesthetics that arose in Europe and North America, thus perpetuating distinctions and divides rather than celebrating commonalities and diversifying (the study of) cultural expressions. While these interpretive frameworks have also constructed my own understanding of cinema, the use of an immersive, reflexive ethnography can lead to a confrontation of these Europeanised framings of the cinemas of the world and to an openness to introduce parallel epistemologies, other ways of understanding. I argue for the study of aspects of cultural hybridity and interculturality, taken as being the norm rather than the exception, studied through events and practices.

This particular approach to film festivals and non-Western small cinemas presents a contribution to a rapidly increasing body of academic literature on national film industries and strategies of internationalisation through the international film festival circuit. While the dynamics of the global circulation of media remains of scholarly interest, the emphasis here is shifted from overseas circulation to the national production contexts and on Central American film communities. When it comes to non-Western film cultures, there is a tendency in research and trade press articles to emphasise films' and filmmakers' international circulation and awards as a way of legitimating their work and regarding it as representative for the respective nation's filmmaking. These writings often validly refer to Bourdieu's concepts of capital and distinction as the social construction of taste and the circular processes of cultural legitimation (Bourdieu, 1984), to which in-depth analyses of the respective nations' cinematographic developments can present complementary insights from within producing communities.

In the study of national film cultures, the emphasis on a film and filmmaker's exportability (Peirano, 2018) tends to essentialise a number of characteristics in deterritorialised analyses of aesthetics, texts and marketing instead of exploring layers of representational, discursive and production-related processes through profound cultural analyses. The participation of national talent in international events, the resulting and gradual accumulation of social, symbolic, cultural and economic capital, which in turn leads to increased participation at those same events, appear to perpetuate a self-enclosed circle of a few elite filmmakers who, although influential, can hardly be seen as representative for an entire nation's film culture: "Rather, they are products of

the transnational film festival circuit, which is driven by the arthouse cinema ethos, and for which the most important exhibition circuit is that of various film festivals” (Ostrowska, 2010, p. 146).

Moreover, local policies are studied mainly as articulations of the desire to enter the international circuit or adhere to the trends and standards that facilitate access to the international (festival) market as the only alternative for smaller cinematographic cultures. In the following, I suggest to reterritorialise and ground these questions in a relational approach that enables a perspective on Central American cinemas that does not regard them exclusively as an export cinema by international standards of global art cinema but as driven by an urgency to reconstruct a positive identity through local-national-regional cultural expression.

From this perspective, international film festivals continue to be a blessing and a burden, both enabling creative production and imposing implicit or explicit criteria on aspiring filmmakers. While unmistakably important for cultural development, film festivals run the risk of becoming part of the “golden straitjacket” of globalisation that leads to a type of global integration of a transnational cultural elite (Friedman, 1999). As self-determined windows onto the world, film festivals claim to reconcile the local and the universal through the shared experience of film. For the Central American directors introduced in this dissertation, however, the goal is not necessarily to reproduce otherness to a distant audience, but rather to develop stories and images that place underrepresented groups and nations on the world map through the festival circuit.

In order to come to an encompassing argument to the question of how film festivals contribute to film cultures in Central America, the dissertation is divided in two parts, each containing three chapters. The first part focuses on the methodological and theoretical underpinnings to this study. The second part provides deeper insights into the field by analysing and discussing concrete cases that relate to the three overarching themes of film festivals, productive relationships and postmemory.

Chapter 1. Exploring the field foregrounds the ethnographic approach to the study of film festivals in Central American film cultures. It introduces the central focus, the field of film festivals, the immersive act of ethnographic fieldwork and the approaches to acquiring data and insights that have enabled this dissertation. The chapter then turns to network analysis as a

complementary tool to ethnography, inspired by empirical insights that arose from research travels and participation in film festivals.

Chapter 2. Envisioning a regional Central American cinema explores the conceptualisation of contemporary cinemas in Central America as small, precarious and transnational cinemas that identify on a regional scale due to a general lack of state-support. It discusses the main elements that make up a sustainable ecology of film-culture development in relation to the state of affairs in contemporary Central American cinemas. It discusses matters of legislation, education, archives, research, audiences, funds, film festivals and other initiatives as key building blocks of national film cultures.

Chapter 3. Post-Third-Worldist perspectives and film festivals relates to the postconflict and post-Third-Worldist moment of contemporary Central American cinemas. It situates contemporary developments against a historical background of Third, New and world cinemas in a Latin American context to analyse it as a regional cinema driven by a politics of cultural integration. The chapter develops this focus through the lens of film festivals, as an increasingly predominant approach, in both theory and method, in studies on non-Western film and media cultures.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork at film festivals in the region, **Chapter 4. Drivers of change in the Central American film festivalscape** reports in detail on four film festivals that each highlight a different aspect in the strengthening of Central American cinemas. For its importance in the development of regional cinemas in Latin and Central America, the first empirical chapter starts in Havana at the International Festival of New Latin American Cinemas. The regional Ícaro International Film Festival in Guatemala, IFF Panama and AcampaDOC International Documentary Film Festival, also in Panama, make up the other in-depth case studies, together with a range of other events that are related within the landscape of Central American film festivals. Specific industry-building activities are highlighted in each of the representative festival case studies, ranging from providing a prestigious platform for exhibition to a local or international audience to production or development support, educational responsibilities or socially committed public outreach and awareness raising strategies. The chapter can be read as a selective mapping, while also including fieldwork materials such as interview excerpts and images that reflect parts of the research experience and link to the conceptual framework that is introduced earlier.

Chapter 5. Connecting the dots: filmmaking communities in Central America discusses the organisation of collaborative networks between filmmaking communities in Central America. It concerns a context-specific and historically grounded politics of relationality, which implies an emphasis on cross-border networks of solidarity and collaboration that characterise the current expansion and resilience of Central America's small cinemas, with film festivals occupying a mediating position in this exchange. The idea for the analysis of communities and networks arose directly from navigating the field of Central American film festivals and experiencing the transnational collaboration networks of film professionals in the region who converge at the events that were analysed. In order to gauge the degree of their involvement in the development of Central American cinemas, a dataset was created in which the films and film professionals are shown according to their relations in the network of national cinemas.

Specific themes, traditions and perspectives in and on the heritage of Central American cinemas find their discursive and practical expressions in **Chapter 6. A generational debt: postmemory films and film festivals**, in which the rhetoric on underdevelopment in relation to trauma and loss is rejected through film and film festival case studies in the postmemory genre. A defining element in conceptualising commonality in the region, narrative, visual and organisational configurations and guiding principles of postmemory are discussed in relation to the International Festival of Memory, Truth and Justice in Guatemala, in the work of Salvadorian-Nicaraguan documentary filmmaker Marcela Zamora and in the fiction of Costa Rican filmmaker Laura Astorga.

The last chapter builds on the foundations of oppositional anti-imperialist theories and practices of Third Culture, including Third Cinema, within the broader category of cinemas in what was formerly known as the Third World, indicated by the description used by Ella Shohat as "post-Third-Worldist" to refer to "cinematic counter-tellings" (1997). Contemporary cultural production is marked by a generational struggle to plead for societal inclusion and to renounce impunity and corruption. This struggle often concerns accounting for a past that some are illuminating in order to restore a sense of justice and identity, while others try to manipulate or obfuscate the generational process of memory-making through a deliberate politics of oblivion (Beiner, 2018; Yerushalmi, 1988). Especially in literature, film and visual arts, the children of the victims of war elaborate their own narratives in

the realm of the familial (Maguire, 2017, p. 12) to be able to lay a personal claim on a past that has been publicly co-opted and politicised by various social and political actors in the ever-topical arena of cultural memory.

The thematically prevailing tendency to process past events through cultural production attests to the crucial role played by media in producing nations and shaping national imaginaries (Anderson, 1991; Ginsburg et al., 2002). The creative rebirth of contemporary (“new”) Central American cinemas in the 21st century is analysed as being a productive result of dealing with the social and political repression, polarisation and destruction that preceded it. In the Central American context, the search for a cinematographic identity is predominantly community-driven in postconflict societies in which the act of memory-making is highly malleable and projectable into the future.

The themes that are introduced in these six theoretical and empirical chapters essentially deal with the ethnographic field, contemporary Central American cinemas, film festivals and Third Cinema-heritage, collaborative networks and postmemory. Together, the theoretical exploration and the empirical analyses enable a nuanced perspective on contemporary Central American cinemas through an emphasis on film festivals. The choice to focus on Central America broadens the empirical scope of regional film festival studies that acknowledge the polycentric nature of cinematographic production centres around the world. The spirits of polyphony, diversity and inclusivity are central to a dissertation that is ultimately the result of a brief yet gratifying encounter with the social fabric from which contemporary Central American cinema is woven into being.

Tz'olq'omin b'e	I walk backwards
<p>K'o kuriqa' kintz'olq'omij ri nub'e: xa jewa' kinna'tisaj jun jasach.</p>	<p>Sometimes, I walk backwards: It's my way of remembering.</p>
<p>Weta xata nutukel kinb'in chonuwach kin kwin nek'uri kinb'ij chawe jas ri', ri ucholaj ri sachib'al.</p>	<p>If I would only walk forward, I could tell you, How it is to forget.</p>

Humberto Ak'Abal, K'iche' poet (Guatemala, 1952 – 2019)

Part I: methodological, historical and theoretical reflections

Chapter 1. Exploring the field

At a documentary film festival in a village, six hours south of Panama City, Peruvian anthropologist and filmmaker Carlo Brescia invited us to partake in a *despacho*-ceremony of offering to Mother Nature, or *Pachamama* in the original Quechua, involving the ritualistic gathering, burning and burying of coca leaves. As participants, we stood in a wide circle, holding three coca leaves close to our faces while incense was burnt to open a sacred space. After breathing on the leaves, the participants carefully placed them on a large piece of paper in the centre of the room, accompanied by a silent wish or a prayer for something that one wants to achieve. The leaves were then wrapped in a bundle of paper which was taken around the participants' circle who were asked to leave their sorrows and negativity with the fire that would consume the leaves, after which the bundle was burnt and buried out of sight by the leader of the ceremony.

The ritualistic offering not only conveyed gratitude to Mother Nature for its resources and energies but also served to strengthen the ties among the participants, many of whom I would meet again two months later in Guatemala, three months later in Cuba, or six months later in Panama. Brescia, the invited Peruvian anthropologist, expert on medicinal uses of plants found near Andean communities, we playfully termed the festival's own shaman of the high Andes. However unlikely, his and my own lifepaths had actually crossed before, as we both once graduated from the same master's programme in Belgium, years earlier, revealing in fact many mutual connections and experiences. This was the first of many rituals and film festivals that I participated in during the total of five months of fieldwork, but the emphasis on community and connectivity I found throughout the region inspired me personally, as well as the theoretical and methodological approach to this work.

This opening chapter explores the ethnographic engagement with film festivals in Central America, with an emphasis on relational meaning-making and the compilation, generation and analysis of data. The fieldwork includes phases of sensorial immersion, interaction, reflexivity, analysis and interpretation of the empirical material. It also elaborates on travel logistics, the accessibility of data, as well as elements of serendipity and disruption that characterise film festivals as live, ephemeral, events. Afterwards, I introduce a

basic production-network analysis and visualisation as a quantitative complement to the ethnographic study of small cinemas. The inclusion of a parallel methodological perspective serves to mutually reinforce the empirical analysis and is in line with the idea of grounding the approach in the data it pursues, as in ethnography, “research experiences, data gathering, and the development of a theoretical perspective are interwoven” (ten Have, 2004, p. 107). Overall, the methods have been guided by the main research question on how film festivals contribute to the development of film cultures in Central America.

Introduction: fieldwork at the movies

The adoption of ethnographic research methods approach fits in broader qualitative media industry studies that combine elements of political economy and cultural studies through integrated analyses of media texts, audiences, histories and culture (Deuze & Prenger, 2019; Holt & Perren, 2019; Mayer et al., 2009). In their review of a decade of media industries, Holt and Perren identify the four main areas that scholars of media industries have focused on, being “creative labour and media work, digital distribution, platforms and algorithmic culture, and infrastructure” (Holt & Perren, 2019, p. 31).

In studies on media industries, ethnography can offer “more realistic data about the actual performance of film agents” than can be found in quantitative analyses (Vallejo & Peirano, 2017) by looking at the intersections and contradictions of the actors’ agendas at festivals. This, Aida Vallejo and María Paz Peirano argue, does not only improve our understanding of the film festival phenomenon, but also of film cultures as a whole (2017). The Dutch ethnomethodologist Paul ten Have also defines its objective as “the study [of] observable activities, that which is scenic, and the intelligibility and organization of social practice” (ten Have, 2004, p. 25). The focus here is on the processes and procedures of how the social order that makes up a film festival is produced, and not on the overall causes, conditions or effects of those practices. According to ten Have, DIY research experiences, interactions, observations and on-the-spot recordings not only lead to research findings, but in themselves condition the research procedures in a retroductive fashion, i.e. by revisiting the frameworks after being in the field. During and after the fieldwork, this has meant an emphasis on reflexivity, regarding the findings but also regarding the methods used.

The written, visual, digital and sensorial discourses that make up a festival (Dayan, 2000) warrant a methodology that brings together media industry research with methods from media anthropology. From its origins within early anthropological studies of intangible cultural heritage and social structures in preindustrial societies, ethnographic research methods have diversified way beyond descriptive accounts of the lives of so-called distant others. While early ethnographies can easily be criticised for being overly theorised, insufficiently contextualised, non-reflexive and impersonal, the basic objective remains the same. Ingold (2011) synthesises that “[t]he objective of ethnography is to describe the lives of people other than ourselves, with an accuracy and sensitivity honed by detailed observation and prolonged first-hand experience” (p. 229). Olivier de Sardan furthermore recalls that “[t]he ‘emic’ (in other words, the attention paid to the actors’ point of view [...]) and the ‘descriptive’ (in other words, the use of observation [...]) are fundamental properties of anthropological work” (2015, p. 10).

Overall, the anthropological study of media cultures is inherent to film and media studies, exemplified in the seminal ethnographic study of relational structures in the Hollywood film studios in *Hollywood, the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie-Makers* (Powdermaker, 1951). Nearly seventy years later, doing “fieldwork at the movies” (Ginsburg, 2002) continues to expand media scholarship in gendered, technological and post- or decolonial directions. Whereas Powdermaker’s study revolves around the social intricacies and economic imperatives of the Hollywood film industry, this particular project elaborates the social interactions within transnational networks of Central America’s small cinemas.

Concretely, the data were gathered first through desk research in Belgium and subsequent field visits and festival participation in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Panama, Honduras and Cuba. By attending, observing and participating in these events, I eventually acquired a more profound insight into networks and connections that led to a final phase of data collection with the objective of visualising and analysing these empirically perceived networks. This led to the systematisation of a relational database containing Central American feature films produced between 1994 and 2019 and the names of the film professionals mentioned in on- or offline catalogues who worked on the films (see 1.2. Network analysis).

Ethnographic fieldwork implies an intense and time-consuming embodied experience that requires the researcher’s immersion into the field in order to

perceive and experience it first-hand and through that interaction generate and abstract knowledge. The process of ethnographic meaning-making does have to be further clarified here, as it is not only a task of jotting down fieldnotes on things that happen during and after you see them happening (cf. Clifford Geertz' "thick description"), nor is it restricted to the spatial field through which you move, as the domains of perception are at once multisensorial, multimodal, ephemeral, offline and online. Anyone who experiences a film festival is immediately aware that not everything that is on offer can be taken in. The usually packed programmes constantly force visitors to choose between the viewing of films or partaking in educational and other social activities, which makes the research process, like that of the visitors, a selective and limited experience.

Edgar Gómez Cruz and Elisenda Ardèvol (2013) reflect on the definition of "the field" in media studies, which expanded under the influence of digital ethnographic research and an anthropology of global issues, as exemplified by Hastrup and Olwig (1997):

From an anthropology of global issues, Hastrup and Olwig, for example, have argued that instead of viewing the field as a 'site' – a usually distant place to go to carry out fieldwork in – it is better to understand it as a set of relations, focusing on the connections between multiple locations where actors engage in activity: 'ethnography in this strategy becomes as much a process of following connections as it is a period of inhabitation' (Gómez Cruz & Ardèvol, 2013, p. 37; Hastrup & Olwig, 1997, p. 8)

The field in which this inquiry takes place is thus located simultaneously online and offline, near and distant, impersonal and embodied, which also characterises film festivals as ephemeral events where all kinds of media and people temporarily converge in a physical or virtual space. Every festival experience is unique and impossible to recreate, or even to analyse in its totality. Since film festival fieldwork relies heavily on being present and participating in the celebration of cinema and culture, it is not always possible to attribute meanings to the things that happen during these events. As most avid festival participants will argue, simply being there and partaking in the celebration carries a sort of emotional potency that cannot or should not be analysed, in order to foreground the lived perception that the festival event is more significant than what can be abstracted from our perceptions.

These challenges, of regarding the field as ‘a set of relations’ and ethnography as ‘a process of following connections’, are addressed through the quantitative network analysis in this work. The large-scale, data-driven visualisations that result from these analyses have to be interpreted as alternative, visual, forms of data presentation that can add meaningful layers to the discipline of (digital) ethnography. Reversely, ethnography can also provide nuance, depth and texture for the “performance of film agents” as signalled earlier by Vallejo & Peirano (2017).

Film festival visits

In November 2017, after a presentation at the first Conference on Central American cinema at the University of Costa Rica, I took advantage of being in the area to visit the 20th edition of the Ícaro International Film Festival in Guatemala City and Antigua Guatemala (see Table 1). The intense learning experience at the festival and wealth of materials that could be collected convinced me that this was the most efficient way to further develop the research.

The following year, I applied for a research travel grant with the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) which allowed me to organise a four-month festival journey through the region. After careful consideration of schedules, itineraries and possibilities, I chose to visit and participate in eight events, in four countries, from September until the end of December 2018. In addition to the festival visits, the trip started and ended in San José, Costa Rica. These particular eight events were selected because of their timing and accessibility, as well as by a prior review of online materials and literature by or about the festivals in order to arrive to an informed idea of potential case studies.

Unfortunately, the timing of the fieldwork did not allow to attend any events in El Salvador, Costa Rica or Nicaragua, where, at the time of the fieldwork, mass demonstrations against the government of President Daniel Ortega and the resulting civil unrest caused a temporary cancellation of most cultural events. In total, I attended ten film festivals from November 2017 to April 2019.

Dates	Festivals	City (country)
17 – 25 November 2017	XX Ícaro International Film Festival	Guatemala City & Antigua Guatemala (Guatemala)
6 – 15 September 2018	AcampaDOC International Documentary Film Festival	La Villa de los Santos (Panama)
21 – 27 September 2018	Festival de Cine Ícaro Panama	Panama City (Panama)
26 – 29 September 2018	Festival de Cine Ícaro Guatemala	Guatemala City (Guatemala)
2 – 16 October 2018	FICMAYAB' Festival Internacional de Cine y Comunicación de los Pueblos Indígenas / Originarios	Quetzaltenango & Guatemala City (Guatemala)
24 – 28 October 2018	Muestra de Cine Internacional Memoria Verdad Justicia	Guatemala City (Guatemala)
29 October – 3 November 2018	Festival Internacional de Cortometrajes Diario El Heraldo	Tegucigalpa (Honduras)
16 – 24 November 2018	XXI Ícaro International Film Festival	Quetzaltenango, Guatemala City, Antigua & Atitlán (Guatemala)
6 – 16 December 2018	Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano	Havana (Cuba)
4 – 10 April 2019	Panama International Film Festival	Panama City (Panama)

Table 1: Film festival fieldwork 2017 - 2019

Before I emphasise the relevance and importance of introducing a reflexive moment in the ethnographic fieldwork, it is necessary to briefly unpack the

functions of film festivals that are of interest to this study.

Areas of concentration

The study of film festivals as nodal interfaces for film cultures (Jordanova, 2015) in the Central American context connects at least five areas of concentration that each require a certain set of methods. First, film festivals are studied as a field of cultural production and as a social arena where the habitus of like-minded professionals is reproduced and further negotiated. In order to gain an understanding of this relational meaning-making and the interaction of symbols, agents and interests, it is important to commit to participant observation and insert the research and researcher as participants in the festival environment. This implies an ethnographic engagement in order to be able to interact with people in the social world of film festivals in order to collect data and generate a construction or experience of knowledge based on the described meaning-making that is applied to an ungraspable observer-independent reality (Wildman, 2010).

Second, more often than not, film festivals assume significant pedagogical responsibilities, as an alternative to existing film schools or in absence thereof (Hjort, 2013). Most festivals discussed in the following chapters offer multi-day training courses, workshops, master classes, pitching exercises and theoretical or hands-on project development labs for beginning and more experienced filmmakers. The project development workshops are often tied to funding platforms of the festival itself or of other international festival funds and markets. Since the exact course contents are never publicly divulged, it is necessary to acquire a certain position through the fieldwork in which it is possible to attend parts of these courses and workshops or talk directly to the people who participated in them. The festival-as-pedagogue also implies the fostering of strategic alliances with established film schools from the region, as well as their (individual) representatives, such as the Cuban Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión (EICTV), which in turn has strategic alliances with film festivals all over the world that serve as potential platforms for the school's student filmmakers.

Third, as mentioned in the introduction, the expansion of film festivals in Central America coincided with a postwar need for cultural regeneration from the 1990s onwards. Often, the festivals' mission statements in Central America emphasise a politics of cultural integration within Central America and the expression of transnational solidarity in the filmmaking community. A

qualitative reading connects politically-charged acts, messages and ideological undertones with the field of cultural production. The festival as a political space is often also a platform for social and human rights activists to be included in the debates of public policy, created or moderated in the context of the film festival. Participant observation again offers a more profound understanding of the public-political context in witnessing protests, chants, speeches and other activist expressions in the public spaces where the festival is organised to acquire a sense of the urgency of some of the social issues. The ethnographic investigation thus combines media and film industry research on production and policies.

The fourth and fifth areas of concentration are taken up here because of their centrality to film festival research, even though they could only partly be taken up in the specific scope of the current project. Central American film festivals are cultural gatekeepers that function as a filter that can provide an impulse to a film's circulation when it garners enough positive attention. In order to assess a particular festival as a site where value-addition and cultural legitimisation takes place, it is important to consider the nominations, awards and ceremonies for which presence at the events may or may not be required to gain insight in the actual processes of legitimisation. These proceedings are often livestreamed or recorded and disseminated by local news or by the festival's own on- and offline communication channels. The research can involve the distant monitoring of these proceedings through the revision of articles, interviews, video clips and the festival's or attendees' social media feed. Participant observation can offer a more nuanced and profound understanding of these discursive processes, including the otherwise invisible part behind the scenes of deliberations and the performance aspect of award ceremonies.

Lastly, film festivals are a necessary alternative to mainstream theatre exhibition and distribution of films in Central America. In order to consider the circuit of festivals in Central America, it is important to consider the programming strategies, specifically with regard to national and regional productions. A comprehensive programming analysis for every edition of every festival that was taken into consideration was not possible due to a lack of existing data in the form of physical or digital archives, and due to temporal constraints. A comprehensive programming analysis requires a quantifiable dataset as well as a qualitative analysis of the films and programming practices, to be studied in comparison to similar festivals. These methods, besides the

data gathering in archives or the establishing of an archive, are unobtrusive and can be applied from a distance.

1.1. Reflexive ethnography

My formation in literature, cultural anthropology, film and visual culture studies position me as a researcher in what is traditionally conceived of as the Humanities and the Social Sciences. While I have always associated the process of learning with movement and interaction, the choice to perform fieldwork was not an obvious one. Rather, my arrival at the 20th anniversary of the Ícaro film festival in 2017, following the previously mentioned conference in San José, almost immediately demonstrated the merit of being there. From the first night I arrived at the festival, I was welcomed into the lively reunion of Ícaro's regional associates and guests during a reception, which ended late at night in the garden of the festival guests' hotel in Antigua Guatemala with an invitation to tag along for the duration of the festival. The overwhelming experience of that first week made me return to the region the following year, in an attempt to continue learning through interaction during a four-month research stay.

I cannot with certainty say why exactly I was invited into a favourable setting to do research, but I can speculate that my desire to develop the research project coincided with the festival participants' eagerness to explore all means necessary to place Central American cinema in the spotlight. My at times unavoidable ignorance vis à vis local histories and contexts inadvertently presented me as a blank slate and my research a modest opportunity for voices and perspectives to be communicated through channels different from the ones they already had access to. As a white, male, European researcher, I was a foreigner at any given moment during the fieldwork, and as such subject to privilege and prejudice concerning my identification. During interaction with festival participants, my presentation as a researcher occasionally led to the suspicion of having arrived "to study them", which would come up when people would humorously introduce me to others as "a Belgian researcher who came to study us, so be careful what you say". As the fieldwork took place in a predominantly Hispanic context, the research was performed almost entirely in the Spanish language.

The goal of anthropological fieldwork is to get as close as possible to the "natural context of the subjects involved —everyday life, conversation— in a situation of prolonged interrelations between the researcher in person and the

local populations” (Olivier de Sardan, 2015, p. 22). This acknowledgement identifies two issues with studying phenomena such as film festivals ethnographically, since, as an event limited in space and time and specifically constructed to accommodate, guide and pamper its guests, they can hardly be considered as “natural contexts” in which participants can be observed going about routine tasks. Most people who have spent time at a film festival recognise how extraordinary and extravagant such an event usually is. Any film festival’s guests and visitors, including their point of view, cannot be seen as representative for a broader social order, nor can its proceedings be regarded as “everyday representations and practices” for which the fieldwork provides contextualised knowledge (2015, p. 22). While some events are more exclusive than others, in terms of providing access and credentials to different types of festivalgoers, I have reasoned from the assumption that, for film-producing individuals, film festivals have become a necessary natural context if one is working in the film industry. The extraordinary nature of such an event is in a way normalised from the perspective of the film professional as the festival becomes a mobile and transient workplace for any career in the film industry.

Despite the accompanying logistical (travel- and scheduling-related), personal (health and safety), time-consuming (festival activities run from the morning until late at night) challenges, the ethnographic method requires the researcher’s immersion in the film festival. Ethnography’s methods are applied to access the “deep structures and thick descriptions” (Nichols, 1994, p. 27) that surround and give meaning to a festival, in order to get “a sense of the particular and the local” as described in Lee (2016, p. 122). This approach could be seen as more profound than an exclusively distant analysis of the institutional rhetoric produced by or about the festivals in writings, press releases or declarations and ultimately reveals information about the festival as a social experience of performances (Lee, 2016, p. 135).

The ability to be reflexive as part of the research endeavour has been increasingly emphasised as a modality of investigation. Ethnography resorts to methods such as “participant observation” or “thick” and “thin” description (Geertz, 1973, 1994; Nichols, 1994, p. 27) to foreground knowledge that has its origins in our perception (cf. phenomenology). Alongside the inclusion of a moment in which the researcher takes distance from the individual experience through reflection, other superficial and multisensorial aspects of

thinness are also increasingly foregrounded, to aspire a greater openness to take in the world and downplay preconceived ideas on the studied context.

Any claims of truthful observations are a result of the interaction between the observer, i.e. myself, and the observed world, who relate to each other in mutually constitutive ways. As an observer, one is positioned in direct relation to the observed, breaking down “the separation between the ‘I’ and the world that was sustained by rationalism” (Favero, 2018, p. 62; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xvi). The current approach is likewise informed by this ontological relationality by suspending the clear-cut distinction between observed and observer, while incorporating a detached observation, of seeing and contemplating one’s own position as part of the observation in a reflective analytical moment. The resulting unity or oneness of the observer and the observed world implies that “[t]ruth emerges here as an experience that is strictly dependent on the observer rather than on the thing out there” (Favero, 2018, p. 62). It follows that observations obtained and rendered in the course of the research do not lay claim on an objective truth, but to an “experience of truth” instigated by the researcher’s insertion into and interaction with the research context (Merleau- Ponty 1962: xvi; Favero, 2018, p. 62). It is through the ethnographic work which implies prolonged multisensorial interaction, repetition and contestation of information through observations that the research is able to nuance the subject matter.

My first interaction with the research context occurred at the Ícaro International Film Festival in Antigua Guatemala in November 2017, where I introduced myself to the festival’s founders and coordinators at a reception. Later that night, I was asked whether I liked to join the guests and invitees in their activities for the duration of the festival, which constituted the beginning of a multi-sited interaction, of which the last physical encounter occurred 17 months later in April 2019. The initial fieldwork experience at the film festival in Guatemala consisted of mingling with the people involved in the national and regional satellite organisations that make up the Ícaro Film Festival, the longest running film festival in Central America (1998 -). I soon became aware that, in order to study these events, I would have to take a number of positions that ended up covering the whole spectrum from etic (outsider) to emic (insider) perspectives.

In etic perspectives, the researcher is an outsider looking in, at an analytical distance from where the events are experienced. At a film festival, the most etic position would be that of the anonymous spectator who only watches films

and remains a silent, distant observer to the festival's proceedings. The emphasis for insider positionings lies on allowing critical meanings to emerge from the ethnographic encounter, which is best captured in a situated description of participant observation. Participant observation at film festivals implies a necessary negotiation of emic and etic perspectives, respectively those of the other participants and of the observer, which implies that the researcher's reflexivity in itself also becomes a tool of ethnographic research in unravelling cultural discourses (Burawoy et al., 1991). In the words of social psychologist Geert Hofstede, applying the insider-perspective, the 'emic' without the outsider-perspective, the 'etic', results in case studies that cannot be generalised, whereas the etic without the emic gets stuck in abstractions that cannot be related to real life (Hofstede, 1998, p. 19). This explains the difficult and sometimes awkward balance between the descriptive and the analytical, between superficial, thin, fragments of the lived experiences and the relation to larger theoretical or historical discourses.

For example, it is difficult to situate an event such as a minutes-long standing ovation by 5,500 people for Serbian documentary filmmaker Emir Kusturica in a packed Karl Marx theatre on the opening night of the Havana Film Festival where he presented a documentary on former Uruguayan president José 'Pepe' Mujica. A mere description of the ovation omits what this means to, for and about the continent of Latin America and its past and current social and political climate, or even Kusturica's ideological leanings. Meanwhile, it also omits the feeling of enchantment of being present in the midst of the crowd's wild enthusiasm, which emotionally influences the experience to a great extent. The same documentary became available on Netflix' streaming platform afterwards. While still an enjoyable work, it was not nearly as captivating as during the first viewing in Havana.

As time and events passed, I assumed different roles while navigating the festivals. As a student, I mainly asked questions. I brought a smartphone and a notebook to write down contact details or take notes about certain events, screenings or stories I would have heard. As a festivalgoer, I watched an average of two films every afternoon for a week in Guatemala, compared to three or four films daily for ten days in Havana. At Ícaro, this was mainly because screenings would not start before late afternoon after the educational programme and parallel activities, and a choice would have to be made between at least three simultaneous screenings. My selection was guided by whether or not the international guests and the organising team would be

present or not, and whether I had already seen the films. The festival's group of international invitees consisted of actors, actresses, filmmakers, festival directors, producers and other film professionals, who moved almost as a single organism between theatres, restaurants and hotels throughout the festival.

As I established more connections with the organising crew and the guests, my role increasingly developed from observer to participant. I was granted permission to attend the awards ceremony, banquet and closing gala, otherwise accessible by invitation only, providing me with a fitting end to a rather privileged festival-going experience. On the one to last day of the festival, I was asked to be part of a jury for nine short films produced by the students of Casa Comal Escuela, the festival organisation's film school. Every year the festival coincides with the end of the academic year for Casa Comal's students, who present their work as one of the festival's side events.

A couple of months after the gratifying student jury experience in November 2017, Ícaro's coordinators asked whether I would like to be part of the festival's selection committee for the following edition. I was invited to watch short films from Guatemala, El Salvador and Costa Rica in the categories for animation, fiction, documentary and experimental films that were submitted to an online platform. In the end, I evaluated 60 short film submissions and ranked them per country and category. Two other jury members would do the same and the three films with the highest rating in every category would constitute the official national selection.

After the national selection event in September 2018, I was given the opportunity to form part of the jury for the international edition, to assess the submissions for animated and experimental short films. After a short virtual reunion five days before the start of the festival, we decided on the award winners and included a written jury statement. For the following edition in 2019, I was again invited to watch the online submissions for experimental and animated short films.

I found this inclusion in the festival very beneficial. It provided a certain credibility to my presence and participation during the events, and it also led to obtaining access at other events, as I further developed my position from observer to participant. The access to the online submission platforms brought the added benefit of being able to access the films in other categories, especially the Central American fiction and documentary feature films submitted to the festival. The online access facilitated the research, since I had to spend less

time at the festival trying to watch all the relevant films, because I would have seen them already online. This meant that I could focus on the social encounters and other meaningful activities at the festival.

My involvement in the field demonstrates the value of ethnographic fieldwork as well as the need to incorporate a reflexive moment in terms of data compilation and analysis. Similar to ethnomethodological critiques of grounded theory, the data and the context are inextricably linked and thus problematise questions of representativity on a global scale and theoretical abstraction with regard to regional film culture development. Much of the gathered data are the result of the interaction between researcher and researched, insofar the boundaries between my personal and research interests blurred. The effect of the researcher's awareness of the necessary connection to the research situation is sometimes also called reactivity (Davies, 2008, p. 7), and potential research fallacies such as bias and selective privilege have to be problematised as well (see 1.3. Fieldwork and network limitations).

The most pivotal experiences that informed the relational research approach were the recurring encounters with Central American film students and professionals. The 20th anniversary edition of the Ícaro festival in 2018 gathered its founding members as well as the counterparts from the national Ícaro competitions and itinerant showcases in the region (see Chapter 4). In a report on my first fieldwork encounter, I identified at least 34 people that were instrumental to the operation of the national and international Ícaro-related events who were present in Guatemala in November 2018. The following year, I encountered 20 of those 34 at other Ícaro or non-Ícaro-related events across the region. Some of them I even met at four or five different occasions, in Guatemala, Panama, Honduras, Cuba or Costa Rica.

At other festivals I visited afterwards, from the intimate community at the International Documentary Film Festival AcampaDOC in Panama that was referenced in the beginning of this chapter, to the affluent galas of the International Film Festival Panama, the itinerant indigenous film festival *FICMAYAB*' or the International Film Festival of Memory, Truth and Justice, time and again I would find people whose professional and personal paths would cross mine during my fieldwork in the region. The denser the social web became in which I circulated, the easier it became to position myself and my work, as well as to find connections we had in common, to justify my presence and participation.

The social network that I encountered throughout the region gathered around certain key individuals, films, production companies, government institutions and, in particular, film festivals. This eventually drove me to carry out a relational mapping, using a network analysis, to situate cultural development as an effort of individuals and communities in networked structures (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Since the corpus of Central American films is rather limited with around 350 to 400 feature film releases (in theatres or at public screenings and festivals) since 1994 up to 2019, I decided to collect what I could find in a relational dataset. The dataset includes the film titles, the country of the main producers and the individuals who worked on the films, to question whether the sense of community I observed during the fieldwork would also be reflected in a network analysis of production relations.

1.2. Network analysis

The research draws its findings primarily from the fieldwork at various Central American film festivals and the empirical relationality of peoples-events-cultures, or, in other words, of actors and networks (de Valck, 2007; Latour, 1993). The immersive data-collection and in particular the limitations and contingencies of participant observation have found both its reflection and complement in a network analysis that was developed after the fieldwork. In other words, the empirical research has led to the systematisation of a dataset containing most Central American feature films produced between 1994 and 2019 and all the professionals who worked on them that could be retrieved from festival programmes, promotional posters, production folders, International Movie Data Base listings or from social media. The analysis only considers production relations and does not explicitly include information about film schools, film festivals, exhibition circuits or social relations in a stricter sense. While it is likely that individuals who work on the same films are socially connected to each other, this cannot unproblematically be assumed here, since the data does not include direct links between individuals. In the network, they can only be connected to each other indirectly through their participation in the same or related film productions.

The dataset counts 344 feature films. The criteria for film selection include fiction, documentary, animation or experimental feature-length (>50 minutes) films that are national or transnational (co-)productions with a meaningful degree of participation from any of the six Central American countries. The 'meaningful degree of participation' is mainly determined on

the basis of the inclusion of Central American film professionals involved in the production, and can be subject to discussion on a case by case basis. The research does not establish an exhaustive list of criteria for nationhood of films, but follows general indicators such as the given producing country, the nationality of the directors and producers, the filming locations and other common parameters of ‘national identification’. The goal of the network analysis is not, however, to provide absolute data on social connections or nationhood, but to provide approximations of affinity and collaboration in the milieu-building venture of film-cultural development (see Chapter 2: “milieu-building transnationalism”).

The relational database includes 5607 film professionals who have occupied at least one or more positions in the entered film productions. If, for example, an individual is stated to occupy the positions of ‘writer-director-producer’ in a given film, she is attributed a weighted value of three. This amounts to a total of 7415 positions taken by those 5607 people for the entire dataset. The dataset not only includes directors and actors but also writers, producers, sound engineers, assistants and other crew and cast members of which information could be retrieved. The information was collected by browsing the International Movie Database, the film’s website and social media accounts if available, film festival programmes where the film appears or trade press articles and reviews, in addition to existing online catalogues by national film commissions or platforms such as those of the Fundación del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano (FNCL) or Costa Rica’s Centro de Cine. Given the multitude of people involved in the production of any film and the public acknowledgment of only a few, the dataset remains indicative and subject to change. An important caveat is that the data population includes *all* individuals that were found to be related to a certain production. This implies that for some films, all personnel including background actors and even the caterers are credited. The choice to include all credited individuals can be motivated in that this leads to a dataset with a broad basis that potentially reveals otherwise unexpected participation of peers. This also includes first-time filmmakers or significant one-time participation by well-connected foreign film professionals.

Through the open-source graph visualisation tool GEPHI, it was possible to enter this data as a series of nodes (people and films) and edges (connections) to visualise the professional networks that have produced these films in clusters and communities independently of geographical boundaries or

temporal constraints. The set thus counts two types of non-hierarchical ‘nodes’, or ‘vertices’, being film professionals, and the films they worked on. In this two-mode network of interaction, the film production process is regarded as a social occasion. In other words, the people are linked through their joint participation in the social event of producing a film, at any given stage of the process.

The main objective of the SNA is to detect and interpret patterns of social relations among actors, which can be analysed at the level of the individual element, the group or the entire network (Brandes & Erlebach, 2005). For the present research into film communities in Central America, the goal is to calculate and visually represent clusters of people and films and how they are connected to the other clusters. Those patterns of interaction, the importance of a node or a cluster of nodes and the importance of connections in the network can be detected by running a number of statistics of which the algorithms are already embedded in the GEPHI network visualisation software.

In order to understand the relative influence of individual nodes within the network, there are certain centrality measures to be calculated to analyse how information flows within a network (Cherven, 2015, pp. 15-17), three of which apply to the analysis in Chapter 5: closeness centrality, betweenness centrality and, to a lesser extent, eigenvector centrality. Closeness centrality indicates a node’s overall centrality in the network. It calculates ‘how many steps it would take to reach all other nodes?’, or, in other words, it is “a measure of the proximity of a selected node to all other nodes within the graph. A node with strong closeness centrality would typically have very short paths to all other nodes within the network” (Cherven, 2015, p. 14). The relative short paths of a node with a high closeness centrality to any other node means that these nodes are able to spread information most efficiently through the network.

Nodes with a high coefficient for betweenness centrality are “nodes that are highly influential in connecting otherwise remote regions of a graph, even though these nodes might have low influence as measured by other centrality measures” (2015, p. 15). These nodes constitute a bridge between different parts of the graph, and thus play a key role in reducing path distances when going through the graph (2015, p. 15). Calculating the betweenness centrality would find answers to the question ‘what is the likelihood that two people know each other, or worked together on a certain film?’ In more technical terms, the betweenness centrality-test measures how often a node appears on

the shortest paths between all nodes in the network (Girvan & Newman, 2002). Finally, the eigenvector centrality means that “the influence of a particular node is defined by the connectedness of its closest neighbors” which means that while an individual node might not be important on its own, its relationship to other highly connected nodes indicates a high level of influence (2015, p. 15).

In considering all the connections between people and films, the ones with the highest betweenness centrality are considered most important in connecting various social groups and thus ensuring the flow of information between the different clusters. This test is run to find nodes, i.e. people or films, that serve as bridges from one part of the network to another (Brandes et al., 2016). It also enables the generation of a clustering coefficient for the entire network that, when low, implies rather loose connections between the nodes, or, when high, implies that the network is highly clustered.

The clustering coefficient can indicate a small-world effect, since it indicates how nodes are embedded in their neighbourhood. The average coefficient gives an overall indication of clustering in the network. The clustering coefficient is a measure of the degree to which nodes in a graph tend to cluster together. In most real-world networks, and in particular social networks, nodes tend to create tightly knit groups characterised by a relatively high density of ties (Brandes & Erlebach, 2005).

At the level of analysis that concerns the entire group, running these tests results in the formation of clusters, or subgroups, in which the ties among its elements are stronger, i.e. the paths between them are shorter, than the relations between the elements outside of the group, indicating increased levels of social interaction, common ties or of a similar geographical distribution in which people are intertwined with local institutions. These patterns of interaction typically lead to a psychological sense of belonging and constitute “strong ties” (Falkowski, 2009, p. 20).

The determination of the clustering coefficient through measuring the betweenness centrality thus leads to the detection of group formation, or communities, meaning “individuals with common interests who are likely to interact in an intuitive cohesion” (Borgatti et al., 1990; Falkowski, 2009, p. 19). Sociologist Mark Granovetter argues that these clusters are interconnected by both “strong” and “weak” ties who are responsible for the efficient diffusion of information within the affiliative communities and to other communities, as explained by Friedkin (1982):

Strong ties are more important than weak ties in promoting information flow about activities within an organizational subsystem. Weak ties are more important than strong ties in promoting information flow about activities outside an organizational subsystem. The strength of weak ties in promoting boundary-spanning information flows lies not in their individual efficiency but in their numbers. In general, production of the highest probabilities of information flow is associated with a combination of both weak and strong ties. (Friedkin, 1982, p. 273)

In other words, the strong ties characterise a subgroup's cohesion by demonstrating a high degree of connections among the members of the group, whereas the weak ties are bridges that transfer information most efficiently throughout the network between the different clusters. The SNA is well-suited for the visualisation of this kind of information flow in collaborative film communities. The GEPHI software is programmed to apply force-directed algorithms that allow the detected communities to appear in a graph. After visually representing the interconnections of the network, it is through qualitative investigation of the professionals and films and their centrality measures in each community, as well as in the entire network, that it becomes possible to analyse commonalities in an attempt to determine why and how these filmmaking communities are formed.

However, the network visualisations as rendered in Chapter 5 serve mainly as an additional mode of data presentation. Rather than producing new insights, they are the result of data filtering and graphic manipulation with the objective to visualise the calculated values and relations. Depending on the research objective, this form of visual representation of data can be altered to fit particular research needs. One way in which the visualisations do serve heuristic purposes is to reveal the centrality and embeddedness of certain people or films in the overall network or respective cluster, or to visually reveal a particular film or an individual's connections. The graphs rendered in Chapter 5 serve as static examples of what the network data looks like. Because of the quantity of elements in the network, the network visualisations, including filters, are ideally consulted in an interactive software environment in which the user can choose which parts of the network to 'navigate'.

Not only do the results attest to the transnational character of contemporary filmmakers and their social network, but it reflects the forging of bonds through film festivals, through educational centres or other connecting

instances such as funds, governmental or non-governmental associations, film commissions and guilds, which more often than not constitute a rather tight-knit community. People come together because they have something in common or because they have a shared purpose, which results in social interactions and collaborations. Cinema, whether in terms of production or exhibition, is a collective effort. This data reflects and complements the ethnographic research experience and is referred to in the analytical chapters, especially in Chapter 5.

1.3. Fieldwork and network limitations

Film festivals work in such a way that they tend to create a celebratory and productive environment of exchange that influences the participants' behaviour, whether they are filmmakers, film programmers, journalists or researchers. The advantages of participant observation notwithstanding, the positioning of researchers who are invited into the festival-context and its implications should be studied further. Even so, it can still be argued that the collegial atmosphere created by the festivals constitutes the appeal that leads all of the previously mentioned participants, including researchers, to attach a certain value to the event and, for example, its funding or educational structures. The research output reflects this double hermeneutic, or framework of interpretation: the analysis in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 is the result of several stages of data collection, included in which are the participants' own interpretations of events. These are reported through my analysis of their interpretations, which constitutes the double hermeneutic.

Where the researcher's identity intersects with the space-time of the research participants and relationships are established in the pursuit of knowledge, there is always a potential for bias and a surfacing of privilege. Privileges, access and relations of power are almost always conditional. Insofar I am allowed to gain access to the inner workings of any festival, I might be expected to compensate the effort in some way. At one festival, this consisted of accepting a position on the selection committee and the jury, writing a review on the festival and sitting for a flash interview about my impressions of the festival. At another festival, I gave two interviews to a local and national radio station in the nearby city of Chitré.

The academic interest in events and organisations can potentially serve the festivals in minor ways in their promotion as international events that are able to attract foreign (academic) interest as a means of cultural legitimisation. The

research and the dissemination thereof afterwards could become part of the festival's (discursive) strategies to negotiate its position in the nation's film festival landscape. The research could inspire other students to continue the work, or to encourage festivals, commissions and universities to rebuild, collect and manage archival materials.

The biggest fieldwork limitation is the lack of data from Belize, El Salvador and Nicaragua. The film festivals of Belize are excluded from this particular research on general linguistic and cultural grounds, as it obtained its independence from Great Britain only in 1981. No fieldwork could take place in both the largest and smallest Central American countries, Nicaragua and El Salvador, because of an overlap in scheduling with other events. The Nicaraguan Ícaro Festival concluded one day before my arrival to Central America in August 2018, and was also restricted due to ongoing protests against President Ortega and violent encounters with national police forces. The dates for the 2018 Honduran Ícaro Festival were communicated too late in August to be able to include it in the schedule. I was unable to attend the New York Ícaro Festival given the expense of a return ticket from Panama. The Ícaro Festival in El Salvador coincided with the Ícaro Festivals in both Panama and Guatemala, the latter which I had to attend in the capacity as member of the selection committee. An overlap in dates made it impossible to attend the closing night of the Ícaro Festival in Panama and the last days of the Muestra Memoria, Verdad, Justicia in Guatemala.

The 'field' of film festivals, spread out across the region, thus proved at times difficult to navigate, as it required a lot of planning and traveling, with many events organising simultaneous activities in various locations. The FICMAYAB' indigenous film festival started in Quetzaltenango, moved to Guatemala City and ended in the relatively remote Guatemalan provinces of Cobán and Chisec, with simultaneous events in several other places in Guatemala. I missed the opening night of the festival in Guatemala City because of bus delays coming from Quetzaltenango. In its previous editions, the Costa Rica International Film Festival was held during the month of November and as such it was included in the preliminary schedule. In August, the organisation communicated that there would be no festival in 2018 and that it would be postponed to the end of March, thereby overlapping with the beginning of the International Film Festival in Panama, which I attended in 2019.

Since film festivals include a wide range of activities, workshops, roundtable discussions or masterclasses in addition to the film screenings, this inevitably causes an overlapping schedule and a necessarily selective experience. The abundance of data can be problematic in determining the scope of the research and data collection. While participant observation offers the opportunity to take it all in, sometimes taking notes, recordings or memos proves difficult because of the abundance of data, the relevance of which can be unclear at the time of being experienced. The festival experience is usually also physically straining, as educational activities usually start early in the morning, and industry events, receptions and afterparties end late at night. Anyone who intends to be present for both the first and the last events of the day is therefore unable to sleep for longer than four or five hours per night for the duration of the festival, as is the case for the festival coordinators. The intensity of the shared experience balances the chaos of the process.

The development of relationships with the various actors within the festival ecosystem also carries a number of risks and challenges. It takes time to gain insight into the workings of a festival, most of which happen only once each year. The gathering of data further involves studying the festivals' websites and programmes, recording speeches or other presentations and taking photographs. A particular challenge for the film festival researcher is the availability of and access to sources. A lack of resources hinders many festivals in keeping a systematised archive, with the loss of precious material as a result. Even after a total of five months of fieldwork, it is felt that the insights that could be acquired through this type of engagement have only scratched the surface of its potential. It takes time to establish personal and professional rapport in a dynamic field such as film production. With time and experience, I noticed that it became increasingly easier to negotiate the research into the field setting and to be included in the shared experiences. In a minor sense, I had to temporarily learn how to navigate the social networks of Central American film communities, in the very same way early-career filmmakers were finding entries into the field to reach out and connect with the 'right people' to learn, fund and produce films and find an audience. In order to find these 'right people', I turned to a network analysis of production relations.

It has to be acknowledged that, due to the technical expertise required in doing advanced network analysis, the scope of this part of the study has remained limited and serves mainly as a rudimentary complement to the qualitative investigation. The open source software GEPHI is foremost a network

visualisation software. The statistics run by the programme are, however useful, rather limited in terms of their analytical reach. The network analysis could be performed in more detail in R or other software environments. In more advanced network analysis, it is also possible to track temporal evolution in dynamic social networks according to the principle of “preferential attachment” to see how dynamic networks evolve over time (Barabási & Albert, 1999). This, however, surpassed the scope of the research, which instead emphasises contemporary developments, considering the generations that have produced films since 1994 as an analytical whole.

Seemingly contradictory to the focus of the study, film festivals and film schools are *not* directly represented in the dataset. Adding film festivals as a third type of node could be an interesting venue for future studies, but with added difficulties of how to determine their connections to films and film professionals. Would programming a film be enough to connect the festival-node to a film-node, and would an award represent a stronger weight? Do festivals favour producers, directors and actors, or can people in other technical positions also be linked to festivals through data-input, for example through technical-artistic awards? To what degree are festivals connected to other festivals, and should we interpret this solely as institutional agreements or is the exchange of infrastructure and personnel also taken into consideration? In listing the names of the professionals, no distinction was made on the basis of their gender. The qualitative part does, however, consider gender distribution among the highest-ranked 898 professionals, referring to those who worked on at least two films (see Chapter 5, Figure 21). In listing the films and production countries, no distinction was made between the specific year of release between 1994 and August 2019. The graph’s complexity and the amount of data to be gathered, analysed and represented would increase greatly if we were to add extra variables such as release dates, gender, film festivals, film schools or other institutions as nodes in the network.

As mentioned earlier, it is also unclear what the exact parameters are for a film to be Central American. Some examples of outliers from foreign cinemas with the inclusion of Central American film professionals that are included in the dataset are *José* (2018, a self-funded collaborative effort between Chinese director Li Cheng and US writer George F. Roberson), *Cómprame un revólver/Buy me a gun* (2018, Mexico but by a Guatemalan director, cast and crew), *Finding Oscar* (2016, US film executive produced by Steven Spielberg without the involvement of Guatemalan professionals), *Hands of*

stone/Manos de piedra, la verdadera historia de Roberto Durán (2016, US-Panama co-production starring Robert de Niro), *Carla's song* (1996, Nicaragua, directed by Ken Loach with participation of Nicaraguan film professionals) and *Paradise Lost* (2014, US-Panama, Hollywood co-production starring Puerto Rican actor Benicio del Toro in a story set in Colombia but filmed in Panama).

The temporal starting point for the dataset is 1994, since *El silencio de Neto/Neto's silence* (1994) was the only fictional feature film released in the 1990s. Around the same time, the first film festivals in the region appeared (Costa Rica 1991, Guatemala 1998) and the last of the region's Peace Agreements were signed in 1996. In analysing the data, the reliability of a source such as IMDB has to be problematised. Some of its pages list all the film's extras and individuals responsible for transportation, catering and other positions that are generally regarded as less central to the decision-making process in a production, while others only mention the more authoritative positions in the production chain such as those of producer, director, writer, and actors. The number of names attached to productions are thus not necessarily indicative of their size but rather of the recognition given to the production team. The analysis also showed that the lists available at IMDB and other online or written programmes is incomplete. Additional web searches for articles, festival programmes and social media were done for various of the higher-ranking individuals, in terms of centrality in the network. IMDB-listed information is not always consequently filled out and renders the graphs an approximation and not an absolute truth. Credits from work done outside of the region will also not appear, meaning that the statistics will not reflect the entire oeuvre of a certain professional, but only the work that took place within the region.

As a complement to the qualitative investigation, the network analysis responds to the overall research objective of analysing the role of film festivals in local film culture development, since these are the main platforms that enable networks of transnational solidarity and collaboration in the small cinemas of Central America. The ethnographic aspect of the study also required a certain flexibility, as the predefined schedule had to be adjusted along the way. The following section briefly deals with unforeseen circumstances that can arise in immersive and collaborative research contexts and how they can prove enriching to the investigation.

1.4. Serendipity, disruptions and contingencies

The 2017 edition of the Ícaro festival took place in eight different exhibition spaces across two cities, five in Guatemala City and three in Antigua Guatemala. Two festival spaces were particularly noteworthy: the San Carlos University Museum (MUSAC) in Guatemala City and the Real Palacio in Antigua Guatemala, where films were screened on the main open air patio of the colonial structure against a nightly backdrop of the (active) Acatenango ('fire') volcano. The idyllic scenery notwithstanding, the main screening event one evening was disrupted for at least ten minutes by fireworks being fired off in the vicinity of the former colonial capital and the temperatures dropped so low after the sun had set that most of the audience left before the screening was over.

During the same 2017 Ícaro Festival, a group of film historians convened to discuss the future of audio-visual heritage projects in Central America. As part of their activities, they presented a rediscovered film from 1951, allegedly one of the first Guatemalan fiction features made. The film, *Näskara/Dawn* (Juan Miguel de Mora, 1951) portrays the journey of a Mayan girl looking for justice to avenge her sister who died during childbirth after being violated by the Spanish landowner's son. The girls are part of the Tz'utujil population living near Lake Atitlán, one of 21 ethnic Mayan groups who live in Guatemala. After the death of her sister, the mourning girl travels from Lake Atitlán to the city of Antigua to plead to the town's authorities that the landowner's son be punished. Her cry for help is unanswered, and she suddenly finds herself in the midst of a battle zone, where she joins a revolutionary faction in her search for justice. The film was screened at the sixth Cannes film festival in 1953 and never premiered in Guatemala until 2017 at the Ícaro Festival. Although the film was made in Guatemala, it had been post-produced and kept in Mexico.

At the 2017 festival, the film was programmed before a special test screening of festival director Elías Jiménez' own film in postproduction, *Hogar seguro/Safe home* (2019) about a shelter for girls that was destroyed by a tragic fire incident which killed 41 of its inhabitants. A fiction film inspired by real events, many of Casa Comal's female students acted in the film, as there were over 60 girls living in the facility, and nearly all were present for this special screening, including the entire production team, families and friends of the girls and actresses. In total, the screening drew a crowd of over 500 people, completely filling the spacious exhibition room. However, due to technical difficulties of exhibiting films in an old university museum with challenging

acoustics, the film *Dawn* that was programmed well over an hour before *Safe home*, actually started at the scheduled time for Jiménez' film. This way, everyone who had come for the evening programme was watching the previously programmed film first. For the afternoon screenings, the crowd had consisted of some 20 people, including myself. This technical delay in screening archival films led to a 10-minute standing ovation for *Dawn* and its octogenarian producer Rafael Chacón Mena. The unexpected success of the screening eventually led to an honorary award after a previously unscheduled second screening of the film, this time before an eminent audience of dignitaries during the closing gala.

Conclusions: relationality in theory, method and research practice

The empirical and analytical insights gained through the ethnographic engagement are at once a product of a relational worldview and an argument for introducing a network analysis. The gradual interconnecting of dots and lines of films, places, people and other elements in the cognitive mapping of the Central American film festival landscape has led to an increasingly dense web of meaning that shines a light on past and current events. In the following, the chapters on matters of production, exhibition and conceptualisation of Central American cinemas are viewed in light of the functions of film festivals in the region.

The ethnographic perspective aims at integrating the theoretical-ontological aspects of the research with the applied methods for data gathering and data generation, the subsequent theorising and finally the inclusive, integrated analysis of how film festivals are constitutive and catalysing actors for small cinemas in Central America. Depending on the situational context, I adopted different positions, not as to lure people unknowingly into the investigation but to inspire a trustworthy connection. This method of familiarisation and inclusion on a personal level holds several risks, one being exclusion from the group or rejection of participation, but in this case, it proved fruitful. It was through my overall approach to live the festival as it unfolded and focus on the key actors and events, including unofficial sessions at local cafés and through my reluctance to schedule on-the-spot and unstructured formal interviews or look at the festival merely as an object of study but instead as an event that captivated my personal interest, that I managed to be accepted both as an individual and as a researcher. This, in turn, provided me with richer data than what I would have collected as a survey researcher.

Looking back, I ventured out of a theoretical comfort zone by allotting a total of five months to field investigations and particularly by developing a network analysis later in the research. As a format that was unfamiliar to me as a qualitative and interdisciplinary student, the input and analysis of large volumes of gathered data was quite challenging. However rudimentary, a number of results emerged that would have otherwise been hard to come by empirically through qualitative investigation. In the study of small cinemas, regional cinemas and film festivals, my experience is that data-driven and qualitative studies can serve the same research agenda and work in mutually reinforcing ways.

Both methodologies, ethnography and network analysis, offer a number of advantages that enrich the research design and study of film festivals. The initial ethnographic engagement with the subject allows to be immersed in the research context and understand some of its particularities by interacting with people at film festivals. The physical presence and emotional investment allowed to gain a glimpse of insider perspectives that help understand, not only how the festival ecosystem works, but also how it is perceived by those who circulate it. The main advantage to the quantitative data collection is that it is not bound by the temporal, spatial and sensorial limitations of perception. The network analysis can gather and interconnect information flows that span an entire generation. While it can group certain individuals together in clusters and calculate several variables, it cannot calculate the reasons that motivate the social organisation, which always requires knowledge obtained elsewhere. In light of global and digital ethnography's expanded notion of 'the field' (cf. earlier), the dissertation advocates the combined potential of 'network ethnography', with a research phase of data collection, analysis and visualisation following a first encounter with the field.

Chapter 2. Envisioning a regional Central American cinema

Introduction: in/visibility

There is over a century's worth of film history in one of the most conflictive and culturally diversified regions in Latin America, with productions that have reverberated far beyond national borders in prestigious gatherings around the world. In the synopsis to María Lourdes Cortés' seminal work *La Pantalla Rota. Cien años de cine en Centroamérica* (2005), Uruguayan academic and critic Jorge Rufinelli points out that even though they do exist, Central American cinematic and television productions are among the least known in the world. Any production had to make its way through the debris of wars and natural disasters, evade dictatorships and fight for a place on screens dominated by Hollywood (Cortés, 2005, 2010).

Within Latin America, they have consistently been overshadowed by the more dominant industries of Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, and even by a “second-tier” group consisting of Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, Uruguay, Peru, Chile and Bolivia, marking Central American countries with a status as “intermittent” film producers (Schroeder, 2016, p. 2), or as characterised by “interstitial” modes of production, indicating filmmakers who do not have access to industrial means of film production (Naficy, 1999, p. 130).

The first century of filmmaking in Central America resulted in the production of some 44 fiction feature films (Cortés, 2005) and many more documentaries, short films, reports and other types of visual media. The 21st century, however, has seen the release of over 350 feature films in less than two decades. The question whether Central American cinemas actually exist is now no longer on the table, as in both quantity and quality, in the eye of both national and international observers, critics and festival juries, Central American cinemas are increasingly manifesting on screens at home and abroad, entering the domestic theatres and travelling the world to top-tier film festivals. Since 2000, Costa Rica alone has seen the release of over 62 fiction feature films without any form of state support, relying solely on personal or private investments and international coproduction funds.

The problem with the question whether cinema has existed at all in the region is that only since the turn of the century there has been an increase in attempts to research, collect data and build archives to rescue, safeguard and promote the cinematographic heritage of the subcontinent. Only sporadically have the cinemas of Central America been the subject of academic or popular studies or overviews and nearly all did so from a historiographic and national perspective in the margins of the developments in larger Latin American cinemas. At the time that Latin American cinema carved out its space in the world cinema-catalogues in the 1960s and was widely covered in its own and others' Third Cinema-essays and manifestos such as Glauber Rocha's 'Aesthetics of Hunger' (1965) and Julio García Espinosa's 'For an imperfect cinema' (1971), there was a general lack of interest to write about the creative industries of Central America (Harvey-Kattou & Córdoba, 2018, p. 138).

Literature on Central American cinemas has generally been very scarce and disparate until the 21st century. Scholars of Latin American cinema would add very short sections on national cinemas or guerrilla filmmaking in El Salvador or Nicaragua but would mostly pass over Central America entirely or lump all countries together in a few paragraphs. As cinematic production increased in volume and some films enjoyed extensive international circulation, academic literature on the topic grew in volume as well. Since the turn of the century, many heritage projects have also been set up which are steadily leading to a strengthening of legislative, academic and industrial components of Central American filmmaking.

The production increase in the region gradually led to the regional grouping of these cinemas under "New Central American Cinemas" (NCAC, Durón, 2014), in analogy to earlier developments in the 'new' cinemas of Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile or Colombia. Central America's "new" cinemas are the most recent, having emerged from invisibility only after the signing of the last Peace Agreements in the region in 1996. The cinemas that make up the NCAC are not only 'small' but also fragile, or 'precarious', with little to no support from the state and only sporadically protected by legislation, as in Panama from 2012 onwards or in Honduras in 2019.

The general tendency in scholarly literature on Central American cinemas is characterised by a shift away from national cinema-perspectives on social- and politically committed cinemas of the 1970s and 1980s which favoured nation-centred ethnographic, testimonial films, newsreels and documentaries towards a more regional perspective on the diversity of Central American

cinemas as still largely characterised by their preoccupation with the social problems of the region, but not anymore in service of politics (Grinberg Pla, 2013; own translation). This shift in perspective resonates with the desire to steer international attention away from stereotypical characterisations of Central America as consisting of unruly and violent societies, dictated by authoritarian regimes that force thousands to migrate northward and suffering from natural disasters, discrimination and corruption.

Rather than studying filmmaking in Central America as a mere reflection of society, recent generations of both scholars and filmmakers have turned to a more reflexive emphasis on the films and their production context, gradually seeing the production of art as an act of politics instead of trying to see the production of politics as artistic (Grinberg Pla, 2013). This was not in the least inspired by filmmaking tendencies in the last three decades and, as the following chapter will describe, by broader social and cinematic developments in the so-called Third and Third World cinemas in Latin America.

Roughly since the 2000s, film has increasingly been theorised as a transnational medium in terms of the composition of its cast and crew, financing, international acclaim and recognition, exhibition and distribution outside of the nation. In the past two decades, transnational film studies have re-examined the critical vocabulary to conceptualise and analyse the cinemas of the world while also acknowledging the inevitable persistence of nationhood in (small) film cultures (Hjort & Petrie, 2007, p. 1). The literature introduced in the following sections allows to situate the elements that characterise filmmaking communities in Central America against a theoretical background of transnational film studies on small, precarious and regional cinemas in the dynamic peripheries of global and Latin American film industries. As this and the following chapter elaborate, the context of Central American cinemas has always been closely related to the cinemas of Cuba and other Caribbean isles. Chapter 3 then situates Central American cinemas in a broader post-Third Worldist context and the theoretical-practical traditions of Third Cinemas, while emphasising the relations to the film festival phenomenon.

Before contextualising Central American cinemas, it is important to acknowledge that the aforementioned characteristics can also be seen as part of a much broader political-philosophical discussion on the role of the arts and the artist in postmodern, post-Fordist economies. As stated in the introduction, the postglobalised moment is characterised by processes of

intensified networkisation on levels below that of the nation-state and by a perspective on cultural producers as creative and affective labourers. The focus on production relations is also already contained within existing theories on contemporary non-hierarchical forms of organisation such as Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomatic networks (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972, 1980). In order to understand the motives for studying collaboration networks in national film cultures and the importance of film festivals in strengthening regional film cultures, it is necessary to provide a concise basis of understanding for "the creative multitude" and the forms of organisation that characterise them.

2.1. The creative multitude

The increasingly central position of culture in the economy, and of economic concerns in cultural production, is substantiated by the acknowledgement of, in this specific case, film professionals as creative, intellectual and affective labourers. The gradual professionalisation and autonomy of Central American cinemas, in terms of a search for a proper cultural identity, runs parallel to the neoliberal work ethic which both requires and values "flexibility, entrepreneurialism, networking, the ability to deal with uncertainty, lifelong learning, creativity, innovation and so on" (Gielen, 2010). This neoliberal organisational and labour model envelops a pluriform and networked "multitude" of peoples, distinguished from earlier social mobilisations such as the proletariat class or the formless masses (Gielen, 2009; Hardt & Negri, 2004; Virno, 2004). The multitude, then, is the product of creative and technical action and transformation in the production process (Gielen, 2009).

As the product of a process of social and biological production, the multitude takes place in the field of social relations, or "the common", characterised by their networked structures with an emphasis on communication and creativity, much like the globalised phenomena of filmmaking and film festivals. In pursuit of the accumulation of wealth and the increasing appropriation of surplus-value on the part of the upper echelons of the capitalist class (Harvey, 1989, 2004), the common is increasingly commodified (as in film festivals) and the centrality of capital is shaped as a project with cultural, rather than solely economic, imperatives.

While these political-philosophical debates surpass the scope of this dissertation, I believe the common can be of use as a missing link in considering national and regional structures of filmmaking in a moment of postglobalisation. It generally refers to the shared processes of all kinds of

biopolitical production in the field of social relations, viewing the rationale of capital as central to the shared cause of film-cultural development.

From an interdisciplinary perspective in film studies, the shifts to and from national to transnational to global frameworks also reflect those of this new, multipolar, world order, as Hardt & Negri argue in their rethinking of power structures, 20 years after *Empire* (2019). The order of supranational institutions and regional agreements that enabled neoliberal globalisation from the 1970s onwards continues to exist, yet it does so in less visible ways. In reaction to these developments, the last decades have also seen several calls for the return of national sovereignty worldwide:

Newly dominant reactionary forces call for the return of national sovereignty, undermining trade pacts and presaging trade wars, denouncing supranational institutions and cosmopolitan elites, while stoking the flames of racism and violence against migrants. Even on the left, some herald a renewed national sovereignty to serve as a defensive weapon against the predations of neoliberalism, multinational corporations and global elites. (Hardt & Negri, 2019, p. 67)

The (economic, migration, epidemiological, climatological...) crises against which reactionary nationalist projects such as, for example, Trump's America First or Brexit react are not only caused by the aforementioned structures of global governance, but the latter also functions through these breakdowns, which as an idea is also contained in Deleuze and Guattari's ideas about the schizophrenic nature of the capitalist machine (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972; Hardt & Negri, 2019, p. 67). Hardt and Negri locate the ongoing crises of "Empire" as taking place within two nested spheres that characterise neoliberal globalisation, being "the planetary networks of social production and the constitution of global governance" (2019, p. 68).

The social sphere of densely interconnected networks of communication, infrastructure, transportation lines, cables and satellites, finances, social relations and interactions among ecosystems, humans and other species is increasingly out of sync with the transnational regimes of governance (2019, pp. 68-69). This characterises the tensions between the individual production relations between film professionals and the national and supranational structures within which they work, with which they have to comply or for which they provide alternative (financing and production) strategies, as theorised below in the resilience of small cinema filmmakers.

So, on the one hand, there are globally interconnected circuits that have implications for the local, such as for example in small-scale economic or agricultural production or labour versus the activities of all-absorbing multinational corporations. On the other hand, legal and political structures, international agreements, corporate networks, supranational institutions and special economic zones have emerged that displace the nation-state's centralised power and sovereignty in favour of complex and mixed configurations of different hierarchies, in which local, national and global, private and public are interspersed and take on new meanings.

In short, the vain re-installment of the sovereign nation-state (e.g. Brexit, America First) is a reaction by aristocratic powers to the social, economic, migration crises caused by the transnational, mixed and multipolar nature of systems of governance as well as of interconnected networks and circuits. Power and hierarchies are now situated internationally, and the return to the nation-state as primary point of reference is not seen as an attempt to separate from the global order but rather to rise back up in its hierarchy. The common is central to Hardt and Negri's understanding of recent capitalist developments, which has become integral to capitalist social production and reproduction in strategies of extraction, bio-political relations and relations to ecological systems (2019, p. 79). The authors expand on the social reproduction of capitalism in that, like previously identified schemes of development through accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2004), bartering, gift-giving or sharing become strategies for extracting value, turning the offering of a good to others for common use into a means of extracting value, as is the case for services such as Uber and Airbnb (Hardt & Negri, 2019, p. 80).

The potential for democracy, revolt and "alterglobalisation" also lies in the organisation of the common, through knowledge, data and social cooperation. According to Neo-Marxist reasoning, the new and intensified forms of domination are countered by the strategies contained in them (cf. Deleuze & Guattari, 1983: "capitalism's schizophrenia"), as the same principles of commonality apply to the "new internationalisms" of today's liberation and emancipatory movements regarding glocal issues of social justice, human rights and climate change.

Following this reasoning, I consider Central American film professionals as creative labourers who are connected in the common field of globalised social relations and networks in global media production, which emphasise aspects

of communication and creativity. While maintaining national tensions, the neoliberal rationale emphasises the centrality of capital in cultural projects that ultimately enable a community-driven and regional conception of production modes as a (necessary) alternative to centralised national structures.

2.2. Transnational, small and precarious cinemas

The immediacy with which Third and New Latin American film-theory was tuned to social and political developments in the 1970s and 1980s has evolved to echo the transformations of film studies in general (López, 2014, p. 137). As an interdisciplinary frame of study that has proven most salient within the humanities and social sciences, world or global cinema-theory reflects various paradigmatic shifts or turns that have tuned theory to social and political developments, much like Third Cinema theory itself (Guneratne & Dissanayake, 2003). The theoretical and practical approach to conceiving global cinemas is emblematic for a globalist turn in the sense that it becomes a way of framing the world in a non-binary and non-Eurocentric way.

Especially the influence of multicultural media studies (Shohat & Stam, 1994) and transnational film studies in postcolonial “world cinema”-contexts (Durovicova & Newman, 2010) have pushed the field of Latin American and global film studies to a more “glocalised”, i.e. bringing the local into relation with the global, perspective on cultural production outside the traditionally conceived dominant centres of media production and dissemination (Robertson, 2002; Lefere & Lie, 2016). In her critical review of over 50 works on transnational film studies in a Hispanic context, co-editor Lie (2016, pp. 17-35) lays out the field that expanded in the first decade of the 21st century. As a result, it is now generally accepted that the field is no longer exclusively bound to the nation-state as the stable frame of reference in English-language scholarship on Latin American film (Ezra & Rowden, 2006, p. 1; López, 2014; Newman, 2010). In the preface to *World Cinemas: Transnational Perspectives* (2010), Nataša Ďurovičová situates the need for transnational frameworks as follows:

Given the rapid and pervasive changes in moving image economies and technologies, the backdrop against which any represented geopolitical entity now appears is the scale of the whole – ‘the world.’ Yet the dominant strategy that teaching world cinema most commonly takes is the format of an aggregate of discrete units of national cinemas,

arranged in a sequence of peak moments, even while presenting them ‘under erasure’; so as to acknowledge the limits of the nation-state paradigm as the basic film-historical unit. How then should the geopolitical imaginary of the discipline of film studies be upgraded to a transnational perspective, broadly conceived as above the level of the national, but below the level of the global? (p. ix)

Yet, the inadequacy with which exclusively nationalist and comparative frameworks were dismissed in a globalised context of flows, counterflows and the transnational exchange of media (Biltereyst & Meers, 2000; Higson, 2006; Jay, 2010; Thussu, 2006) by transnational film studies proved relatively premature, as the persistence of questions surrounding the nation and nationhood in the study of local film production demonstrates (Delgado et al., 2017). The scholarly emphasis on national cinemas did, however, broaden and diversify to study, among other topics, gender-related issues (de la Mora, 2006; Thornton, 2017), identity politics and issues of affect (Pérez Melgosa, 2012; Podalsky, 2012), regional industry developments (Falicov, 2019), memory-making in and through cinema (Hedges, 2015), to name but a few examples. As traditional constructs of national identity in filmmaking were challenged (Lim, 2006, p. 6), the ‘national’ in national cinema became a more fluid category in which the transnational, queer, diasporic, and feminist is accommodated (Desai, 2004, p. 4).

The resulting glocalisation mentioned earlier indicates these negotiations between the local and the global that emerge as strategies of resistance to a homogenising globalisation (Pohl & Türschmann, 2007 in Lefere & Lie, 2016, p. 6). By emphasising transnationality in either marketing, production mechanisms, aesthetics and poetics, linguistics, authorship or other elements, the “transnational turn” in film studies offers the critical possibility to recalibrate the relation between the nation and other levels of production and circulation of texts (Lefere & Lie, 2016, p. 6). Here, I extend the insights from this body of work to the study of film festivals in Central America since they can equally be seen to negotiate local context-specific cultural and political markers of identity with the globalised structures of film festival organisations and film markets.

In the continuous expansion of the “atlas of world cinema” (Andrew, 2004), the cinemas of Central America are recent additions in a series of studies on small film-producing nations that are studied with an emphasis on the nation and identity in national, transnational and regional film studies. Small

cinema-studies identify and highlight the productive and environmentally sustainable potential of small-scale national film production in a world dominated by exuberantly expensive film productions and marketing, referring mostly to Hollywood 's multimillion-dollar productions.

Small nationhood can be characterised in relative comparison to large nations by measures such as its population, GDP, territory and its history of rule by non-co-nationals, in the context of colonialism or separatist aspirations (Hjort, 2011, p. 2; Hjort & Petrie, 2007). Outlining the conditions in which small-nation cinemas are able to thrive and the challenges or constraints that they generally face, Mette Hjort singles out a number of characteristics (2011):

a rejection of a winner-take-all ethos; a commitment to 'gift culture'; artistic leadership; widespread support for a philosophy of filmmaking that sees constraints as the basis for creativity; a commitment to partnering with likeminded practitioners in other national contexts for the purposes of making films and, just as importantly, if not more so, for the purposes of building capacity in various film-related areas. (p. 2)

What stands out is the importance of cross-border partnerships and collaborative networks in and between small-nation cinemas, and the use of constraints and challenges to an advantage. For small cinemas to be able to thrive, it is important that internationally successful Central American filmmakers such as César Díaz, Julio Hernández Cordón or Jayro Bustamante have to be willing to assume roles of artistic leadership in the national context of, in this case, Guatemala. It is characteristic of small cinemas that the general film community benefits from the opportunities that arise from collaborative projects in which the more successful practitioners' talent and reputation radiates onto the general film community through the broader logics of gift culture. The "artistic leadership" that Hjort identifies, fills some of the gaps left by "inadequate cultural policy or limited state support" and "institutional deficits in the area of film and education, deficits that result in inadequate local expertise and that entail a highly problematic dependence on non-local film practitioners" (2011, p. 2).

Small cinemas also demonstrate the tendency to turn industrial, economic or aesthetic challenges and restrictions into defining cinematographic traits (2011, p. 3). Hjort gives the examples of two of small-cinema's artistic leaders, Lars von Trier (Denmark) and Gaston Kaboré (Burkina Faso), who each

turned a set of constraints and a lack of means into creative rules and opportunities.

As a result of the (often necessary) solidarity among small-nation film practitioners, small cinemas are especially characterised by two models of transnational filmmaking, being “affinitive” and “milieu-building”. The use of the transnational in transnational film studies, similar to the respective descriptors of national, regional or world cinemas, has been characterised and defined through rather vague terminology, “as a largely self-evident qualifier requiring only minimal conceptual clarification” (Hjort, 2010, p. 13). A more “critical transnationalism” (Higbee & Lim, 2010) and new vocabulary emerged in works such as *The Cinema of Small Nations* (Hjort & Petrie, 2007) and *Cinema at the Periphery* (Iordanova et al., 2010), to be able to situate and study the cinemas of small nations, in a scope that transcends, but never excludes, the nation-state as a stable or unstable frame of reference.

Hjort distinguishes between “affinitive”, “milieu-building”, “cosmopolitan”, “epiphanic”, “experimental”, “globalising” and “opportunistic” transnationalism with a clear focus on production contexts.³ Especially relevant to the context of small-nation cinemas, the practice of affinitive transnationalism refers to cross-border solidarities and collaborative endeavours that find a starting point in a reciprocal sense of affinity (2011, p. 3). The related “milieu-building transnationalism” involves long-term and recurring cross-border partnerships “designed to build capacity, often on a regional basis”. The empirically-oriented chapters in this dissertation demonstrate how Central American filmmakers face the shared challenges and constraints typical to small-nation cinemas through the organisation of

³ Deborah Shaw further expands the typology “to distinguish between industrial practices, working practices, aesthetics, themes and approaches, audience reception, ethical questions and critical reception” (2013, p. 51). This results in a total of 15 different, sometimes overlapping, uses of the term transnational currently being used: transnational modes of production, distribution and exhibition; transnational modes of narration; cinema of globalisation; films with multiple locations; exilic and diasporic filmmaking; film and cultural exchange; transnational influences; transnational critical approaches; transnational viewing practices; transregional/transcommunity films; transnational stars; transnational directors; the ethics of transnationalism; transnational collaborative networks; national films (Shaw, 2013, p. 52).

collaborative networks and film festival events as industrial and educational interfaces (see Chapters 4 and 5).

One of the defining characteristics of small cinemas is that they tend to be marked by their industrial precarity, which not only refers to the scarcity of production but extends to an access to the means of production, distribution and reception of film, to “cultural and archival policies, film legislations, as well as in thematic and aesthetic choices”, as stated by Constanza Burucúa and Carolina Sitnisky in *The Precarious in the Cinemas of the Americas* (2018, p. 2). As Burucúa and Sitnisky remark, poverty and underdevelopment were the common regional denominators for the New Latin American Cinema filmmakers, and motivated the theory and practice of Third Cinema as a tool for change. Similarly, in Judith Butler’s ethical and cultural analysis of ‘the precarious’ (2004, 2009), she explores the discursive and representational strategies that surround the themes of mourning, grief and trauma, together with the political implications in the processes of othering and humanisation.

According to Butler, precarity “designates [a] politically induced condition” while precariousness “implies living socially, that is, the fact that one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other” (2009, p. 25). Precariousness goes hand in hand with empowerment and resilience in being positively perceived as a source of inventive creativity in establishing uncommon exhibition venues and finding new ways to attract local audiences or creating funds and turning precarity into a selling point (Berg & Penley, 2016; Curtin & Sanson, 2016; Sitnisky, 2018, pp. 183–199). If the present contention is that Central American cinemas are precarious, the implication is multiple. On the one hand, it refers to social precarity and difficulty of accessing the means of film production or of accessing audiences in Central American societies. On the other hand, it refers to the precarious as a recurring motif in the postwar context of memory transfer, processes of restorative justice and creative processes (see Chapter 6).

In considering Central American cinemas as creatively small and precarious, the emphasis is on developments that have occurred in spite of the lack of state- or public support, and in spite of the unequal competition with larger film industries. As such, the precarious does not refer to a lesser producer-status, to low-budget filmmaking or peripheral developments in Latin American or global cinemas. Much like was the case for New Latin American Cinema filmmakers, the discourses are localised in the social environments of the Central American settings to analyse processes and challenges that serve

specific needs without peripheralising cultures (Burucúa & Sitnisky, 2018, p. 6).

2.3. Regional film culture as a common cause

The main contribution of transnational film studies has been to shift the emphasis away from a study of national cinemas and individual auteurs, since they tend to erase regional complexities and differences (Marlow-Mann, 2018; Stone et al., 2018b), towards more historically and regionally embedded entities as an integral part of the filmmaking process. The main drive behind the expansion of Central American cinemas is the urgent need to (re)construct a sense of identity, firmly rooted in the community, in the nation but also in the Central American, Caribbean and Latin American regions. The production processes as well as the projects for cultural integration demonstrate a desire to build on the notion of Central Americanness, as both an intertwined economic and cultural necessity. In Central America, the regional labelling mainly refers to the shared challenges to production, distribution and exhibition of film, to the sensation of coexisting in postconflict societies and continually dealing with processes of memory-making. This extends to Honduras and Costa Rica where, officially, no conflict has taken place but where the consequences of neighbouring national conflicts were also felt.

The internationalist line of thought on small and transnational film studies extends to studies of regional filmmaking in that it resonates with Durovicová's call for a way to conceptualise transnational filmmaking on a level above the national but below the global (2010). It leads us to consider the regional, as accommodating the diversity of national cinemas in the communal project of Central American cultural integration as both a social reproduction of capitalism and of resistance to it.

The suggestion to consider the region of Central America as an analytical unit does not forego the polycentric situation of its constituent countries on the map of world cinemas, but contributes to the topical debate on the inclusion of the nation and nationhood in local manifestations of global cultural production (Burucúa & Sitnisky, 2018, p. 7; Durovicová, 2010; Middents, 2013). The idea for a regional cinema in Central America is also not new, as Cortés (2010) argues, it arose during the 1970s and 1980s, at the culmination of, and as a reaction against, the military conflicts:

The quest for a local and regional cinema of our own, one with a unique audiovisual language, arose at the same time as the military conflict. Central American liberation meant establishing a cinema to be used as a weapon of criticism, propaganda, and political indoctrination. This was the case in countries at war like Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, as well as in Panama, whose production was forged alongside the nationalist recovery of the Canal, and even in 'peaceful' Costa Rica, which produced its most important films during this period. (2010, p. 68)

The processes of the postwar construction of national identities reveal the tensions between integration and separation, inclusion and exclusion, centralisation and decentralisation that results from decades of imperialist occupation, neoliberal economies and extractivist development policies, processes of cultural erosion and a deliberate politics of remembering and forgetting that mark contemporary Central American societies. The intention to integrate Central American filmmaking equally builds on a tradition of conceptualising the continent of Latin America (Mignolo, 2005) and its media productions as grouped alternatives to hegemonic media cultures with which it competes in global circuits of (festival) exhibitions and markets (Getino, 2006).

Luisela Alvaray (2013) synthesised that it is the study of hybridity which is key in the transnational environment of Latin American cinemas. It covers the critical possibilities to study cultural transformations both at the level of the material (e.g. co-productions) and the discursive (e.g. genre films), to move beyond binary conceptualisations of power and resistance while remaining aware of the notion's inherent contradictions and multiple connotations (Alvaray, 2013, p. 69; Kraidy, 2005, p. xi). By referring to García Canclini's views on historical processes of hybridity in Latin America (1995) and Kraidy's nuanced views on the construction of hybrid texts (2005), Alvaray claims that (genre) films can be seen as "unstable contact zones of a wide variety of national, regional and transnational determinants, and in which hybridity may serve as a strategy to inscribe local agency in transactions of differential economic and cultural power" (p. 67).

After the New Cinema History context of emphasising cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange (Maltby et al., 2011), I resort to these reasonings on hybridity beyond the levels of the textual and the (co)production to the social sites of film festival exhibitions in the Central American context. As

liminal contact zones, film festivals can be considered active curators of hybridity involved in production processes, exhibition strategies and social sites that “inscribe local agency in transactions of differential power” (like the international festival circuit) (Alvaray, 2013, p.67).

Similarly, Alexander Marlow-Mann considers the national, regional and transnational as “merely stages along a continuum, constantly in tension and dialogue with one another” (2018, p. 324) while he proposes a “regional turn” to counterbalance the “transnational turn”:

Such an approach would involve a ‘micro-mapping’ of production contexts and distribution and exhibition strategies, but also of locally specific manifestations of larger cinematic modes, genres and styles that would complement the comparative and macro-perspectives of transnational studies. (Marlow-Mann, 2018, pp. 323–336)

In considering regional cinemas, Marlow-Mann proposes an approach that combines the transnational macro-perspective with a glocalised micro-one (2018, p. 334). He finds “location”, “voice” and “authenticity” to be defining elements for regional cinemas, which he claims are being encouraged by a combination of push and pull factors, being “stimuli from governments, funding bodies and institutions” (‘push’) and “the desire to express -or see expressed – a regional identity deriving from linguistic, cultural or political differences” (‘pull’) (2018, p. 332). His conceptualisation diverges from the persisting role of nationhood in hispanic transnational film studies (Lefere & Lie, 2016) as he claims that the regional should be understood in relation to the global, rather than in relation to the national, since the call for a regional turn is a logical consequence of globalisation (Stone et al., 2018a, p. 15).

The regional perspective allows to situate the context of Central America on a broader scale as a diversified group of production centres on the global stage through the commonality of struggles and challenges, of modes of address, representation, production and exhibition. The proposed regional turn that incorporates the different hierarchies is an answer to the dangers of erasing cultural specificity and homogenising film cultures through macro-perspectives. As the remainder of the dissertation elaborates, the transnational and regional perspective is exemplified in the study of film festivals:

Today, the filmmaking and circulation processes are marked by “a new localism” that manifests itself in terms of dynamic regional production and distribution networks (within Asia, within Europe, or the

Americas) and in a seemingly interminable proliferation of festivals. (Jordanova, 2016, p. xiv)

As far as Marlow-Mann's proposal to see the region in relation to the global is concerned, comparative studies are only interesting in relation to other globally studied regions, rather than in relation to a generalised globality, which, like universality, has too often signified specifically Western globality. The cultural regionalism of Central America cannot be regarded as an essential entity in binary opposition to Western culture. Similarly, Joseph Mensah argued that "the notion of a 'pure African culture' is insensitive to the long-standing cultural interchange between societies, an interchange that has been intensified by contemporary globalization and crystallized by such analytical concepts as cultural hybridization and indigenization" (Mensah, 2008, pp. 43–44).

Instead of regarding non-Western societies as "palimpsests upon which Westerners, especially Americans, can just (re)write their cultural ideas without any modification or human agency on the part of the Africans", Mensah draws on Appadurai to remark that "at least as rapidly as forces from various metropolises are brought into new societies they tend to become indigenized in one or another way" (Appadurai, 1996, p. 32 in; Mensah, 2008, p. 44). The same principles apply to the structures of cultural events such as film festivals, in which the local implementation in terms of programming and organisation is specifically attuned to the dynamic intricacies and needs of the organising institutions, which again leads to the acknowledgement of an inherent hybridity that opened this section (Alvaray, 2013).

2.3.1. A self-sustaining ecology of film-cultural development

Before it is possible to analyse film festivals as building blocks for transnational, small and precarious film cultures, it is necessary to lay out some of the elements and institutions that ideally characterise a self-sustaining or at least self-reliant ecology of cinematic production in weak film industries. Following Werner Herzog's reasoning that "independent cinema is a myth" (Winfrey, 2017), cinemas will always depend on "distribution systems, money, and technology" in an increasingly globalised approach to the medium, be it culturally or economically. The developments in contemporary Central American cinemas do not occur in a vacuum and are subject to outside developments in the global media landscape, and in international development cooperation, as is the case for many other post-Third Worldist

and developing economies. The overview of the following phenomena as constitutive of capacity-building developments in the cinematographic landscape of Central America has to be read as a non- hierarchical situating of the research context and the state of affairs of its national film cultures.

A first element that is considered in the self-reliant aspirations of a national cinematographic identity is film- and film-technical education. Whether it is through short-term specialised workshops and courses, public or private university programmes or film schools, in order to be self-reliant, it is indispensable to provide basic educational facilities to students who wish to enter the field of audio-visual production. In the past, the more well-off students or those with scholarships needed to study abroad and gain experience in Mexico, Argentina, Cuba, the US or Europe. National film schools, on the other hand, not only help to keep the talent within reach, but also contribute to an idea of national cinema through education-inspired networks and collaborations. The value and influence of practice-based film and media training around the world is comparatively studied in Hjort's edited volume *The Education of the Filmmaker in Europe, Australia, and Asia* (2013a) and attests to the growing relevance of the sociocultural and political values that are being studied in film education.

In many state-regulated national film industries, the provision of education is taken up in the stipulations of national film laws. However, and this constitutes the second element of self-reliant national film cultures, the reality is that most Central American countries struggle to have film legislation ratified by national congresses. The absence of a state-regulated promotion or protection system for national cinemas is what makes them precarious and dependent on an amalgam of competitive international development and production funds, which require constant travelling and participation in workshops and residencies, among other fund-specific criteria. The majority of these funds are in reality constructed as labels of quality that serve as a stimulant to secure more funding by creating a snowball effect, since the funds' intrinsic support in cash or in kind is generally insufficient due to the high demand by the global filmmaking community.

A strong and consistent national film fund can thus be considered a third aspect in aspiring self-reliance as a national cinema. There exist several strategies to replenish this national film fund including public or private investment and tax exemption schemes or more recently through extra taxes that are levied on multinational over-the-top subscription services such as

Amazon, Netflix, Hulu or HBO. For any small cinema that cannot compete with large industries who can unload their content relatively cheaply onto the peripheral markets of commercial theatres overseas, it would be beneficial to enjoy an exemption or reduction of screening fees or a minimum requirement for national film programming through provisions on screening quota, which have remained non-existent.

The fourth aspect in the quest for cinematographic self-reliance lies in recovering the nations' film-historical heritage by expressing the need for archives, research and restoration of films to establish a foundation for a national cinema that is rooted in its own cultural heritage. The incompleteness or non-existence of historical data on Central American cinemas can partly be ascribed to the years of ideological filmmaking during the armed conflict, which caused the destruction of many stocks and archives of subversive or ideologically-nonconformant films under authoritarian regimes. A number of dedicated scholars are, however, increasingly unearthing and analysing information about the first century of filmmaking in Central America, which finds great resonance with filmmaking communities interested in their audio-visual heritage.

The fifth and sixth features that are central to film-cultural stimulation reside in films' relation to the nation's audiences, of which little to no data is available, and the organisation or promotion of film festivals and other initiatives outside of commercial theatre exhibition, which constitutes the guiding focus of the present work. As it stands, the biggest hurdle for Central American film industries to be self-reliant lies with access to its audiences, since distribution remains a key issue. Distribution to Central America is often part of multi-territory package deals by large distributors in North and South America. The impossible competition has led several of the more successful Central American producers to set up their own on- and offline distribution services, such as Pacifica Grey from Costa Rica, specifically oriented towards the Central American market. Jayro Bustamante's production company La Casa de Producción created an in-house platform to distribute films locally and producer, film school and festival organiser Casa Comal set up their own distribution service and web platform, Ícaro.tv. Several other individual producers try to organise in-house distribution and pay the premium fees of platforms such as Vimeo's Video On Demand or other content-sharing websites to get their films to an audience. IFF Panama distributes its films as part of Copa Airlines' in-flight entertainment and television only sporadically

provide screen time for local films. These distribution services are often set up without extra resources or specialised personnel to manage the marketing and sales, and generally arise out of sheer necessity rather than economic advantage. For Central American filmmakers who are mainly focused on international sales through the festival circuit such as, for example, Julio Hernández Córdón, there is little to no possibility for Central Americans to watch any of his seven films, unless they are screened at a nearby film festival or gain so much international visibility that they become available for pirated downloading.

2.4. Cinematic prehistory and the emergence of national cinemas

In order to develop an inclusive and nuanced understanding of contemporary Central American cinemas, a concise review of earlier developments relevant to the current scope is in order.⁴ Central American cinemas are generally considered to have undergone three major transformations since their origins in the late 19th century.

2.4.1. The first phase

The first 60 years from 1900 until the 1960s are known as the prehistory of Central American cinemas (Cortés, 2005). According to Cortés, the first years of Central American cinema can be summarised as consisting of four types: official government-ordered cinema including tourist documentaries and newsreels, artisanal postcard-like films, (largely unsuccessful) attempts at a commercial cinema copied from dominant models such as, for example, Mexican melodramas and comedies in Mexican-Guatemalan co-productions, and lastly there was an interest in producing an auteur cinema in reaction to (Italian) Neorealism and the Nouvelle Vague (2005, 2010). The cinematographic prehistory saw the release of barely 44 fiction features and largely revolved around romantic on-screen idealisations of the nation-image and the idealised countryside as a form of political and touristic propaganda

⁴ For in-depth critical discussions on the history of filmmaking in Central America, consult Cortés (2005) and Cabezas Vargas (2015) for Central America, Buchsbaum (2003) and Gaitán Morales (2014) for Nicaragua, Soberón Torchía & Del Vasto (2003) for Panama.

(Cortés, 2005)⁵, which contrasts heavily with the socially and politically committed activist stance of filmmaking in the ensuing decades. To date, Cortés' history of cinema in the subcontinent, *La Pantalla Rota: Cien años de cine en Centroamérica* (2005), remains the only monograph dedicated exclusively to the historiographic study of Central American cinema from both a national and a regional perspective. Other generalising studies on early filmmaking in national Central American cinemas were episodically taken up by other authors. The Foundation of New Latin American Cinema (FNCL) published three extensive volumes, entitled *Hojas de Cine* (Secretaría de Educación Pública et al., 1988a, 1988c, 1988b) that covered filmmaking in all Central American countries, except Costa Rica, which was not referenced. Argentinian Third Cinema-director and author Octavio Getino also dedicated a substantial chapter to Central America and the Caribbean cinemas in *Cine iberoamericano: Los desafíos del nuevo siglo* (Getino, 2006), in an attempt to illuminate certain developments of some of the least developed and least known cinematographic industries of the world, referring in particular to the notorious lack of available and trustworthy data.

2.4.2. The second phase

The second phase coincides with the intensification of region-wide conflicts in the context of the Cold War and other US-backed counterinsurgency campaigns, reverberating throughout the entire Central American region. The last of the United Nations' Peace Agreements was signed between national governments and revolutionary parties in Guatemala in 1996 to officially end a nearly century-long and highly fragmented series of domestic and international conflicts in the region.

Ever since the Mexican independence from colonial powers in 1821 and the formation of the Captaincy General of Guatemala two years later, there have been various (failed) attempts to integrate the region as a Central American unity, be it politically, economically, socially, or culturally. In this second phase, Central American filmmaking was primarily tied to revolutionary processes that culminated in the 1970s and 1980s as it mostly consisted of

⁵ In comparison to the 344 feature films released between 1994 and 2019 that are considered here.

social and politically committed filmmaking, favouring the testimonial, observational and documentary genres to disseminate information on and denunciations of ongoing conflicts. Unlike Third Cinema's exponents, Central American cinema was not produced for a mass audience, and never garnered public, nor political, support in the process of (re-)building national cultural identities, the most salient case-in-point still being the expansion, struggles and downfall of INCINE and the revolutionary project in Nicaragua at the end of the 1980s (Buchsbaum, 2003).

The Cold War context in Central America resonated strongly with international aid communities. International solidarity and development cooperation turned to Central America, as distant supporters, as human rights advocates in the conflict or as providers of aid and assistance to the victims of war and authoritarian regimes, revolutions and counterrevolutions. Aid strategies and the accompanying development rhetoric also become new forms of exerting control over territories in neo-imperialist ways. Despite military and cultural occupations, the field of cultural production benefitted from international aid programmes that were administered to the communities who would share and represent the ideology of the organisation, coming mainly from Europe, the US, Cuba, or the USSR. The aid in kind and cash from international communities thus helped national governments to form film commissions, set up mobile cinemas and contract filmmakers in service of national politics throughout the militarised decades of the 1970s and 1980s.

Democracy was maintained in Costa Rica from 1948 onwards and most Central American cities underwent a rapid process of modernisation and industrialisation in the 1960s that, with the help of private and public US investments, had resulted from the 1960 treaty to form the Central American Common Market (CACM) trade organisation. The agrarian industrialisation and liberal markets marginalised and socially divided large parts of the population outside of urban areas. The relative regional stability of the 1960s and the regional trade and monetary integration were untenable due to the war between El Salvador and Honduras of 1969, the oil crisis of 1973 and the authoritarian rule and growing dissent on account of human rights violations and economic difficulties under dynasties of dictatorships in Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. As a result, civil wars broke out in Guatemala (1960-1996), El Salvador (1980-1992) and Nicaragua (1979-1990).

As part of her research into Central American cinemas in the second and third phase, Andrea Cabezas Vargas conducted a historiographic and comparative analysis of a regional corpus of 426 (feature-length and short) films from 1970 until 2014, of which she analysed 18 films in-depth to reveal the historical predominance of six particular themes, being 'war', 'genre', 'ethnic groups', 'inequalities', 'violence' and 'migration' (2015). Like Cortés (2005), she traces the understanding of contemporary Central American cinemas back to the emergence of national cinemas in the 1970s which continued into the 1980s before dissipating, together with the conflicts, in the 1990s.

The height of the region's civil wars and (counter-)revolutionary struggles in the 1980s and the ensuing economic and cultural crises thus signalled the end of Central America's cinematic prehistory. The emergence of projects of national filmmaking arose especially in and because of the conflictive situations that the people found themselves in. The idea of the camera as a weapon appealed to guerrilla filmmakers whose filmed reports of the conflict travelled all over the world (Burton, 1978). When the conflicts gradually dissipated after years of negotiations with the signing of Peace Agreements, the technical and ideological inaptitude of guerrilla filmmakers to adjust to postwar realities, together with economic crises and budgetary restrictions, led to a complete impasse in film-cultural developments. The short film that was referenced in the introduction, *The man with one note* (Pineda, 1988), embodies this postwar sense of disorientation and apathy of ordinary life in the urban spaces that shortly before were battlegrounds. The end of the second phase in Central American cinematic developments was complete after the dissolution of Nicaragua's INCINE due to a lack of funds following the release of Ramiro Lacayo's ambitious fiction feature *El espectro de la guerra/The ghost of war* (1988) that embodies the uneasiness of adapting modes of storytelling to the postwar reality:

El espectro de la guerra is an atypical film for this time period in Central American cinema, representing a type of hybrid between *Platoon* (Stone, 1986) and *Flashdance* (Lyne, 1983). By mixing scenes of war with scenes of break dancing, it evokes the metaphor of a generation that sees its dreams frustrated by war. (Andrea Cabezas Vargas & De Canales Carcereny, 2018, p. 166)

Even after the historical victory by the Sandinistas in the revolution against the Somoza dictatorship in 1979, the establishment of the INCINE institute of cinema in the Ministry of Culture had not been exactly as central to the

consolidation of the revolutionary government as were radio, television and press, housed in the department of Propaganda and Political Education (Buchsbaum, 2003). Unlike the Cuban example, in which the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC) produced cinema as the main ideological medium following the 1959 revolution, the media landscape had changed radically by 1979. Radio, and especially television, disrupted the weight and urgency of theatrical and mobile film projections of newsreels, or *noticieros*, that had been produced and screened weekly to inform the Cuban people of ongoing developments. In its first year, INCINE produced monthly 10-20 minutes monothematic newsreels, 11 in total, that included a lot of discourses by Sandinista leaders, as well as interviews with peasants and workers that supported the speeches.

INCINE's early name change from 'Sandinista' to 'Nicaraguan' Institute of Cinema also reflects the tensions within the revolutionary project itself, as a search for an identity, emphasising nationality, ideology, or both. The Sandinistas themselves were a heterogeneous group, divided in at least three factions with diverging beliefs for economic recovery and the reconstruction of a national identity. In the struggle for consolidation and the battle against the counterrevolutionary factions, INCINE, and filmmaking as such, were outsiders in a government struggling for economic stability, agricultural resources and the uniting of a people divided by decades of conflict, territorial disputes and racial and linguistic differences.

2.4.3. The Cuban example and New Latin American Cinemas

In many ways, the ideas behind the particular organisation of contemporary and regional Central American cinemas emerged in Cuba. Central American filmmaking efforts were fuelled in particular by the spirit of the International Film Festival of New Latin American Cinema from 1979 onwards and, since 1986, also by the *Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión* (EICTV, International School of Film and Television). The festival was first inaugurated by Pastor Vega, Alfredo Guevara and Fidel Castro on 3 December 1979 as a continuation and consolidation of the continental New Latin American Cinema project (NLAC). Organised by politically-oriented and self-proclaimed Third Cinema-filmmakers, the NLAC took shape at gatherings going back as early as 1958 at the International Festival of Documentary and Experimental Film in Montevideo, including a Fernando Birri who shortly thereafter would release the seminal *Tire dié/Throw me a dime* (1958). Also

screened in Montevideo was *El mégano* (1955) by García Espinosa and Gutiérrez Alea, which is often considered to be another early icon for social documentary filmmaking in Latin America (Hart, 2015, p. 35). Both *Throw me a dime* (1958) and *El mégano* (1955) were inspired by a period of Neorealist film training in Rome as well as by political developments in Bolivia and Cuba.

Generally speaking, NLAC's philosophy was determined by catalyst developments such as the establishment of the Bolivian Cinematographic Institute by the National Revolutionary Movement in 1953, the ousting of the Batista government by Fidel Castro in July 1959 and the adoption of the Leninist belief that cinema is the most important of the arts, to be used as an essential means of education and revolution (Hart, 2015, p. 38). These catalyst events led to a series of discussions at the first Festival of Latin American Cinema in 1967 in Viña del Mar, Chile, which were then ratified as a set of principles at the First Encounter of Latin American Documentary Film at the University of Mérida (Venezuela) in 1968:

- (1) To contribute to the development and reinforcement of national culture and, at the same time, challenge the penetration of imperialist ideology and any other manifestation of cultural colonialism;
- (2) to assume a continental perspective towards common problems and objectives, struggling for the future generation of a Great Latin American Nation; and
- (3) to deal critically with the individual and social conflicts of our peoples as a means of raising the consciousness of the popular masses. (Pick, 2010, pp. 20–21; Schroeder, 2014, p. 6)

For various, mostly political, reasons and through the influence of Alfredo Guevara within the group as head of ICAIC, the itinerant meetings settled down at an annual festival in Havana. Colloquially known as the Havana Film Festival, it soon became a landmark of Latin American cinema, setting the geopolitically-informed cultural agenda for Third World media production and defining identities for films and filmmakers. Throughout its history, the festival has been considered as one of the main exhibition platforms for a cinema of critical and reflexive, social and political commentary in Latin America, while simultaneously serving as an international launch platform for the national production by the Cuban Film Institute.

Rather paradoxically, ICAIC-produced films have been on the more conservative and formulaic side because, as a self-sustaining institution, they generally aimed at the largest possible audience to recover production

investments. The films were conceived in an industrial studio system by an elite group of (mostly male) filmmakers, not too much unlike the capitalist counterpart of Hollywood yet conform to the revolutionary ideals, with relatively limited space for narrative or technical experimentation and innovation (Kleinhans & Lesage, 1986). The Havana Film Festival never really dedicated its screens to Cuba's actual independent filmmaking, which has in fact more in common with the non-industrial cinemas of Central America that are largely produced without the state's intervention. In this sense, a significant change to the idea of 'official' Cuban cinema was accomplished on 25 March 2019 with the issuing of the new Decree-law 373/2019 for the independent audio-visual and cinematographic creator by the Cuban government.

The new decree creates a Cuban film fund that is open to all Cubans as well as a film commission presided by the Minister of Culture and coordinated by ICAIC's president. The development fund would ideally lead to a greater autonomy for Cuban filmmakers, whereas the film commission promotes Cuba, its cinematographic professionals and services, as a destination for and a bridge to international producers and productions. Many independent Cuban filmmakers who have always looked elsewhere to fund and produce their films for not fitting in ICAIC's plans remain sceptical as it could turn out as an expansion of ICAIC's control over Cuban cinema to the independent sector, who would still see their more experimental or radical projects curtailed or censored. For their part, the festival, as an ICAIC institution, has always claimed to only programme unique and innovative films with an intellectual or aesthetic purpose other than the generation of capital worldwide. In the words of former film and festival director Pastor Vega,

[t]hrough the window of authentic cinema, the Festival seeks to establish a space in which to strengthen a Latin American presence and to discuss Latin American social and cultural problems more than they've been discussed in the rest of the world. The first festival was organised here in 1979 and seemed like an explosion. More than 500 filmmakers came. We showed more than 300 films. Practically speaking, it was not a festival but a catharsis — a Latin American cinematographic catharsis. The results stimulated all of us. (Siqueira, 1984)

In the rest of the interview, taken during the third edition of the festival in 1982, the festival director talks about the cultural, social and cinematographic

tendencies that the festival has expressed and the role it fulfils for the visibilisation of the struggles for national liberation by countries such as Nicaragua and El Salvador at the time:

Nicaragua's filmmaking was born during the time of the first festival. It's filmmaking created inside Nicaragua's war of liberation and participating in it. In the second festival, the first and most authentic cinema from El Salvador erupted. And in the third festival, both the cinemas from Nicaragua and revolutionary El Salvador continued their process of consolidation, showing films full of a variety and force never seen before. (Siqueira, 1984)

After 1979, Cuban advisers had helped the Sandinistas in Nicaragua to set up a revolutionary government as well as the INCINE film institute. Cuba's approach to cinema as an ideological medium of propaganda and education inspired most militant cinema movements in the continent, as has been widely theorised. Central American countries were no exception, and cinematographic traces of the revolutionary spirit can certainly still be found in contemporary militant filmmaking. The timing of the subcontinent's late return to democratic governments and national liberations from the centuries-long yoke of international imperialism in 1996, implied that in the meantime the weight in the media landscape had shifted drastically from film to video, from cinema to television and from information to entertainment. The developments of the Nicaraguan INCINE are symptomatic for this seemingly incongruous reconciliation of the militant with the neoliberal, the anti-imperialist with the capitalist that would continue to characterise and complicate definitions of Central American cinema. In the project of defining nationhood post-revolution, and given the economic significance of the export market to the rest of North America, it was felt that Cuba's models for producing ideology through art were too restrictive and politicised (Buchsbaum, 2003, p. 10).

The cultural politics of liberation and relationality were celebrated at the Havana Film Festival in its heyday toward the end of the 1980s. Over 88 theatres in Havana would participate in the festival that extended to cities throughout Cuba. In 1985, the festival counted 1500 international guests, compared to the 420 from the year before, and was extended to two weeks instead of one. In 1985, the works of Fernando Birri and Nelson Pereira dos Santos were the subject of two retrospectives, in an edition representing the culmination of both the NLAC movement and the festival.

Overall, the festival has been the product of a support group of politically engaged filmmakers, the Committee of Latin American Filmmakers (C-CAL), founded in 1974 (Rist, 2014, p. 263) in response to the new military regimes in Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay. After the organisation of the first festival in 1979, the C-CAL group expanded into the Foundation of the New Latin American Cinema (FNCL) after five editions in 1985. The FNCL was a privately funded foundation headed by Gabriel García Márquez and included members from 15 Latin American countries, Spain, and the United States, with headquarters in Havana. The group set out to collect all documents and manifestos relating to the NLAC and its main project was to build a film school for Third World filmmakers. And so, on 15 December 1986 at the Finca San Tranquilino in San Antonio de los Baños, a former military base area at a one hour's drive from Havana, Fidel Castro inaugurated 'The School of Three Worlds':

Imagine what this School can be when hundreds of students from the three continents have graduated here, have been able to establish links and relationships among themselves, have been able to exchange ideas and experiences. (Castro, 2017)⁶

The links and relationships that Fidel hoped to see arise from the interaction at this new school have to a great extent been responsible for current developments in Central American film cultures. The three other founding fathers from the FNCL were Gabriel García Márquez, Cuban filmmaker and critic Julio García Espinosa, and Argentinian filmmaker Fernando Birri, who also was the first director of the school. EICTV's name has since changed from 'The School of Three Worlds' to 'The School for Every World' (Balaisis, 2013, p. 192), shedding the tripartite division of the different worlds from a Cold War context that has characterised a lot of the discourse on the Third World and world cinema. Not unsurprisingly, EICTV functions as the common ground from whence many film professionals have initiated their careers in the Central American and Caribbean region and it inspired its graduates to engage in the organisation of film schools elsewhere. Between 1987 and 2015, at least 108 Central Americans have completed the three-year regular course

⁶ Imagínense lo que puede ser este Escuela cuando cientos de alumnos de los tres continentes, se hayan graduado aquí, hayan podido establecer vínculos y relaciones entre sé, hayan podido intercambiar ideas y experiencias (Castro, 2017).

at EICTV with a specialisation in either direction, documentary, editing, photography, screenwriting, production, sound or television and new media (Irigoyen Sánchez & García Prieto, 2016). Many others⁷ have benefitted from shorter workshops and intensive courses of up to six months offered by the school. The school has had one Central American general director, Rafael Rosal Paz from Guatemala, from 2011 until 2013 (see Chapter 4).

After the Cold War came to an end by the 1990s, the use of digital technology spread and the first graduates returned from film schools in Cuba and elsewhere to initiate the third phase in the development of contemporary Central American cinematographic identities. The 1990s was a decade of economic crises and transitions, from war to peace, from authoritarian dictatorships to democracies, from analogue to digital... in which only one Central American fiction feature film was released, aptly titled *El Silencio de Neto/Neto's silence* (Argueta, 1994). The cultural vacuum that the postwar reality entailed invited the slow but gradual development of a third phase in the development of Central American cinematographic identities.

2.5. The third phase: contemporary film cultures

An acceleration of cultural studies on Central America has taken place since the turn of the millennium. Central American cinemas' relatively late arrival to the catalogues of world and Latin American cinemas was partly ascribed to the lack of mass popular or governmental support in the project of using cinema as a weapon in liberation struggles, as a propaganda tool in ideological conflicts or as means of education, as had happened elsewhere in the Third World and in, for example, Cuban, Bolivian and Soviet revolutions. The persisting lack of public support and the difficulty of creating a national audience for national films is common to most Central American countries, which can also be seen as a rift between producers educated (abroad) and rooted in the socially and politically committed cinemas of Latin America in the margins of society on the one hand, and the popular cultural consequences of century-long intervals of U.S. territorial, economic, political and cultural occupation on the other.

⁷ Concrete data for participants of the shorter courses is not readily available.

The work by internationally-renowned filmmakers such as Jayro Bustamante, Julio Hernández Córdón, Tatiana Huezo, Marcela Zamora, Paz Fábrega, César Díaz and others is considered innovative, original and field-defining for contemporary filmmaking tendencies in Central America. Despite their status as Central American or international auteurs, the many awards, their participation in the festival circuit and international distribution deals, their films are often only premiered domestically months or years after their international premiere and generally receive limited commercial screen time at unfavourable time slots.

2.5.1. Domestic screen cultures

The domestic unpopularity of Central American cinemas is partly due to the culture of commercial film programming in countries with a small screens-per-capita ratio (see Table 2). Whereas Spain has a theatrical screen for every 13,000 inhabitants, the two largest countries in Central America, Nicaragua and Guatemala, need to make do with one screen for every 120,000 and 110,000 people respectively. Even the vast and disperse population of Brazil with almost 212 million inhabitants can offer a screen for every 63,000 people, still scoring better than four out of six Central American countries. Due to their relatively small populations and industrialised character, only Panama and Costa Rica approach numbers found in European countries such as The Netherlands and Belgium, which average one screen roughly for every 20,000 people.

Country	Population (million)	Screens	Screens-per-capita	Capita-per-screen
Costa Rica	5	150	0.00003	33.000
El Salvador	6.47	68	0.00001	95.000
Guatemala	17.58	160	0.00001	110.000
Honduras	9.81	106	0.00001	92.500
Nicaragua	6.58	55	0.00001	120.000
Panama	4.16	155	0.00004	27.000

Table 2: Screens per capita in Central America

Despite the limited number of screens, arguably the biggest issue with the unpopularity of national cinemas consists in the programming practices by commercial film theatres, where releases from the U.S. exceed 90% of the entire programming. This is the case for ten out of the 22 Ibero-American countries, including all six Central American countries considered, in addition to Chile, Ecuador, Portugal and Venezuela. The dominance of U.S.-content in theatres is also reflected in its share of the nation's viewership (Pérez et al., 2019, p. 46). It is clear from the data represented below in Table 3 that, of all Ibero-American countries, Central American countries perform worst in producing and exhibiting national films, reaching barely 0.01% of all cinemagoers in the case of Guatemala, which is remarkably less than other countries with similar amounts of screens across the country, ranging from 50 to 150, such as Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay or the Dominican Republic. The latter has 201 theatres but saw the release of 23 Dominican films that reached 26.42% of the total cinemagoing population.

These numbers demonstrate that the problems reside not in the public's decision not to go to the theatres, since the total number of spectators is considerable, but in their decision not to watch national films, together with a lack of commercial programming of national films by the theatres, and the near non-existence of arthouse cinemas or *cinematecas*. Again, only Costa Rica and Panama approach the audience shares for national film in the region with 5.1% and 14.5% respectively, while the number of national film releases represent less than 5% of the total number of film releases in national theatres. In comparison, the four largest Ibero-American industries average audience shares of 10 to 20% for national films: Argentina's audience share is 14.68% for 223 national film exhibitions; Brazil's national film audience is 15.04% for 178 films; Mexico, 8.91% for 116 national films and 17.92% of Spain's audience have watched 633 national films in 2018 (Pérez et al., 2019, pp. 38-39).

In their statistical overview of cinemagoing in 2019 for the 23 analysed Ibero-American countries, the latest Audio-visual Panorama (2020) notes a general increase of 5.6% cinema-goers in 2019. The most significant increases in the entire region were found in Nicaragua (17.3%), Bolivia (15.3%), Guatemala (14.8%) and Colombia (14.2%). These positive trends demonstrate a rising interest in countries that are among the least well-equipped in terms of numbers of screening spaces per capita. While in 2019 Spain could offer 76.6 screens for every million inhabitants, Mexico averages 60.2 screens, and with almost 31 screens per one million inhabitants overall in the region, Nicaragua

(8.5) has the lowest density of screens on offer, barely surpassed by El Salvador and Guatemala, counting between 10 and 11 (Pérez et al., 2020).

	Screens	Premieres		Viewership		Returns (USD)
		Total	Domestic	Total	Domestic	
BOL	123	291	20	6.932.228	90.910	38.358.399
CHI	455	276	42	27.994.494	789.477	141.291.385
COL	1.140	356	37	63.999.181	2.180.692	187.385.979
CRI	150	253	11	7.308.851	377.217	37.012.603
SAL	68	212	1	3.762.559	4.909	14.479.727
GUA	160	211	2	6.292.593	2.398	29.232.758
HON	106	198	7	4.258.440	37.785	14.508.577
NIC	55	160	1	1.484.529	3.527	5.729.214
PAN	155	231	9	6.769.168	986.825	34.113.953
PAR	72	196	4	2.080.260	119.150	10.048.292
PER	657	327	27	49.788.078	7.311.113	166.668.318
DOM	201	224	23	4.934.820	1.303.901	18.358.504
URY	125	232	20	3.051.393	82.337	18.770.526

Table 3: Cinematographic data from the 2019 Panorama Audiovisual Iberoamericano

Another difference with other Ibero-American countries is the unmistakably low production volume for national cinemas in Central America ranging from one fiction feature film in El Salvador and Nicaragua to 11 in Costa Rica, which for 2018 was higher than in Peru but significantly lower than the thriving national film industry of the Dominican Republic and the small cinema of Uruguay. The modes of production that characterise Central American cinemas are, however, kin to those of the larger industries in the region, with the difference that there has been a historic lack of consistent state-interest in the support of an actual industry. Geographically as well as culturally, Central American film production has been peripheral to both the rest of North America, the Caribbean, U.S., Mexico and Canada, as well as to South America.

Central America's film theatres are dominated by big industry productions that generally rely on the domestic box office and sales to the North American, Asian and European markets to generate revenue. The omnipresence of popular blockbusters and film franchises dubbed in Spanish in Central America can be ascribed to aspects of economic and cultural dependency, clarifying the divide in media and communication in the Central American context. First, the Hollywood industry does not really rely on Latin America to generate the desired revenue and can afford to release its films for a relative bargain to multiplex theatres in for example Guatemala, Honduras or El Salvador where tickets are sold for five or six US dollars.

The dominance of foreign productions in the local theatres has left little or no room for local films to be programmed, and if they are their theatre run more often than not is short-lived and unprofitable due to high projection costs which are not capped for domestic productions. As a result, Central American citizens are generally driven to the well-marketed entertainment of foreign productions over local films of lower production values. The exposure to popular North American cultural fare and classic four-structure narratives limits the willingness of most Central American audiences to accept 'alternative forms of cinema', as sometimes aspired by the Central American filmmaking cultural elite. Film theorist Peter Wollen identified some of the recurring characteristics of the two extremes in the spectrum between what he respectively terms 'cinema' and 'counter cinema': narrative (in)transitivity; identification and estrangement; transparency and foregrounding; single and multiple diegesis; closure and aperture; pleasure and unpleasure; fiction and reality (1972).

Films that deviate from the Hollywood principles of storytelling in three acts or four parts with conservative themes and aesthetics will appeal only to a very select cinephile audience of film professionals or students, as well as to international film festival programmers. However, 'national filmmakers' cannot be considered as homogenous entities, since certain trends point towards a hybrid adoption or imitation of 'foreign' formats that have proven successful with Central American audiences such as romantic comedies, action adventures or family dramas, while the filmmakers at the other end of the spectrum resort to more experimental and reflexive styles of filmmaking that play well with an international festival or arthouse audience, by proposing a national cinema as a thought experiment for the individual as well as the society, positioning themselves in the margins of what is traditionally

considered normative. There is no reason to assume that either end of the spectrum and all hybrid work in between cannot coexist in the same Central American cinematographic landscape, as there is a growing community of film professionals who desire to establish and strengthen a cinematographic voice and identity that resonates with the nations' audiences.

2.5.2. Transnational arthouse auteurs

Contrary to what is often repeated in press coverage or festival programmes, the international festival success of contemporary Central American auteurs such as Jayro Bustamante (°1977, *Ixcanul* (2015), *Temblores/Tremors* (2019b), Julio Hernández Cordón (°1975, *Gasolina/Gasoline* (2008), *Te prometo anarquía/I promise you anarchy* (2015), *Atrás Hay Relámpagos/Lightning falls behind* (2017), *Cómprame un Revólver/Buy me a gun* (2018), Paz Fábrega (°1979, *Agua fría de mar/Cold water of the sea* (2010), Tatiana Huezo (°1972, *Tempestad/Tempest* (2016), Mercedes Moncada (°1972, *El inmortal/The immortal* (2004), *Palabras Mágicas (para romper un encantamiento)/Magic words (to break a spell)* (2012), can only to a limited extent be ascribed to the emergence of cinematographic industries in Central America.

Bustamante studied filmmaking in Rome and France, Hernández Cordón is a US-born Guatemalan who lives in Mexico, Fábrega spent three years of her youth in New York while her mother pursued a doctorate degree and studied cinematography in London and Huezo and Moncada are respectively Salvadorian and Nicaraguan directors schooled in Spain and residing in Mexico and Spain. The idea that festival films do not necessarily represent indigenous film cultures in the producing countries was noted by Dorothea Ostrowska in 2010:

What makes these films different from the films usually considered 'world cinema' is that it is very difficult to see them as examples of national cinema or products of national or indigenous cultures, although they more often than not come to represent that culture internationally. Rather, they are products of the transnational film festival circuit, which is driven by the arthouse cinema ethos, and for which the most important exhibition circuit is that of various film festivals. (Ostrowska, 2010, p. 146)

As a transnational middle- to upper-class cultural elite, their films make up a limited subset of co-produced, arthouse films that do connect domestic film cultures to transnational circuits of exhibition yet only indirectly are they products or drivers of cultural development in Central America. Their work is produced with festival-organised work-in-progress funds with an international team of professionals and almost always premieres outside the region at more prestigious film festivals around the world.

The transnational auteurs who navigate this archipelago of international film festivals and their funding schemes (Loist, 2016) to produce their films are symptomatic of the kind of global art cinema the festivals wish to circulate (Galt & Schoonover, 2010). Through the international visibility that the festival circuit offers them, more often than not they become the home nation's cultural ambassadors abroad. However, the transnational bubble in which they reside makes it difficult to relate their work to the small, low-budget, independent filmmaking or national screen cultures in their countries of origin. They are often based in countries with more favourable financial or social climates for film production and are involved in imparting knowledge only through sometimes expensive and exclusive workshops or masterclasses in Central America. Due to their adherence to an international arthouse standard of production, these films almost never enjoy a successful commercial release domestically, where traditional distribution is unwilling or, rather, unavailable to circulate their content.

The reasons for the discrepancy between international circulation and success on the one hand and domestic reception are multiple. The so-called 'burden of representation' and the relation of the 'festival film' to realist aesthetics can undermine its domestic reception in that the non-specialised audience does not necessarily agree with how they or their countries are represented. Secondly, recurring criticism from non-specialised audiences revolves around the potential alienation by the sometimes slow, reflective, poetic cinema that connects 'cultural authenticity' with 'universal' storytelling from 'Western-normative' conceptions, also unofficially known as 'the Hubert Bals effect', referring to film festivals and film funds' explicit or implicit preferences and criteria. In the comparable context of Uruguayan co-produced small cinemas, Martin-Jones and Montañez explain this as the aesthetics and politics of auto-erasing the traces of national specificity in an appeal to the widest possible audience (2013).

The value of these internationalist auteurs resides in the pioneering example they set for other filmmakers in the respective home countries, as “artistic leaders” in small cinemas as identified earlier by Hjort (2011). Because of their international regard, film institutions and film festivals in Central America reach out to these elite filmmakers to impart their experiences, to teach, to present their films in front of domestic audiences and to use the acquired cultural capital in lobbying for policies and state-support.

2.5.3. Thematic and aesthetic tendencies

In the ongoing project of establishing an informed and localised dialogue on Central American cinemas, an increasing number of scholarly investigations have considered the thematic and aesthetic tendencies of the subcontinent’s cinematographic production. Liz Harvey-Kattou edited a special issue in *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas journal* (2018) dedicated to Central American filmmaking in the 21st century. The special issue provides an introduction into the field of contemporary Central American cinemas through the analysis of films and filmmakers covering international film festivals and Central American aesthetics, decolonial readings of indigenous subject matter, the psychology and filmmaking of the postwar context, emancipatory readings of age, class and gender in film and the reproduction of colonialism and an exoticising tourist gaze that is “performed for Hollywood” (Harvey-Kattou, 2018, pp. 249-266).

Honduran filmmaker and scholar Hispano Durón took an early approach to contemporary developments in reviewing Central American cinema in the first decade of the new millennium from 2001 until 2010 (Durón, 2014). Apart from films on migration, gangs and civil wars, Durón states that these themes are being diluted in favour of a broader and more diverse range. The “New Central American Cinema” he sees also includes an increasing attention to ethnic and sexual diversity among the further exploration of genre films in horror, comedy or detective dramas. Durón discerns the factors behind the sudden growth of Central American film as being the access to digital technology, new or improved training possibilities for filmmakers and new film festivals with industrial reach or support platforms.

With respect to Central American film production in the 21st century, Cortés (2018) suggests three new characteristic divisions, two of which “clearly demonstrate a primary preoccupation with profits” (Cortés, 2018, p. 150). The first category includes “entertainment movies with no artistic pretensions”

referring to low-budget, light-hearted comedies that are typically made with approximately USD 20,000 of which the (private) investments are recovered through box office sales and product placements. These films unproblematically reproduce the tourist gaze on the nation through postcard-like branding strategies and the reaffirming of national tropes to appeal to an international audience. The “sheer entertainment” category includes certain genre films such as horror, sci-fi and disaster films that are continuity-edited and marked by overacting or poor acting, slapstick humour and basic special effects (2018, pp. 148–149).

The second category covers films that resort to a classical four-structure narrative to draw the focus to the plot and story rather than style and editing. They are different from the first category because of the professionalism of the production with budgets ranging from approximately USD 100,000 to USD 400,000 or higher. These films are moderately successful at the box office and usually receive awards in a number of smaller film festivals (p. 149). The third broad category refers to “intimate and artistic movies”, by which Cortés means films with non-linear scripts, innovative cinematography and an emphasis on exploring social issues and visuals over storytelling. The “auteur films” can boast fragmented, open-ended narratives and an “artistic” and “reflexive” style of cinematography and are, as previously mentioned, generally unpopular or unavailable at the local box office. Cortés argues that it is thanks to these films that the Central American film industries are gaining visibility on an international scale (p. 149).

The majority of reference work on Central American cinema has appeared in Spanish, yet there are recent efforts to bridge linguistic barriers and circulate work in other languages. Harvey-Kattou explored questions of exclusivity and inclusivity in the literary and cinematographic constructions of a national Costa Rican identity in *Contested Identities in Costa Rica: Constructions of the Tico in Literature and Film* (2019). She traces the creation of a shared national identity in Costa Rica back to colonisation when indigenous peoples were driven out of their lands and replaced by mostly European farmers. Current levels of discrimination and social segregation within the nation, the succession of right-wing governments and public response to, mostly Nicaraguan, immigration are contained within an exclusionary conceptualisation of the Costa Rican white, middle-class, heterosexual male. In her analysis of the positioning of the authors of protest literature from the 1970s and of contemporary national filmmakers, she finds how the dominant

and normative nation-image of the idealised *tico* identity relates to rhetorical strategies of soft power and how it is challenged to re-inscribe youth culture, Afro-Costa Ricans, female and trans-identities in the nation's narratives. The façade of the idealistic, lush and peaceful Costa Rica, crystallised in the fictitious comparison as the "Switzerland of Central America", clashed with harsh socioeconomic realities, the liberal government's extractivist development policies and discriminatory policies and practices towards more vulnerable communities, in particular in ingrained inequalities suffered by women, indigenous and LGBTQI+ communities.

Central American films have been gathered in several corpuses in Spanish in Cortés (2005), in French in Cabezas Vargas (2015) and in English in Durón (2014), in addition to the 344 feature films from 1994 until 2019 that are included in the present work. As the corpus of Central American cinema becomes increasingly more complete, more research opportunities are created. The notable lack of trustworthy data, reliable archives and other resources for research into cultural heritage and national identity (Getino, 2006) have prompted several organisations to initiative projects to salvage and systematise Central America's audio-visual heritage.

2.5.4. Archives and audio-visual heritage

Guatemalan film historiographer Edgar Barillas assumes a leading role in recovering and preserving the cinematographic heritage of the nation and the region, which led to the creation of the Association for the Audio-visual Memory of Guatemala. In April 2019, after reunions at the Ícaro International Film Festival in Guatemala and elsewhere, Barillas and a core team of representatives from the other Central American countries established the Central American and Caribbean Network of filmic and audio-visual heritage (RED-CCAPFA).

RED-CCAPFA consists of some of the region's most experienced historiographers and academics, generally gathered in recently established cinematheques in national universities. Based at the San Carlos University in Guatemala City, Walter Figueroa runs the Enrique Torres Cinematheque which includes over 18,000 titles ranging from wedding videos to historical newsreels and professional or amateur films, with some facilities for restoration and digitisation of film reels. Other participating institutions that are currently gathering expertise, materials and literature that have not yet been mentioned include the Guatemalan universities Rafael Landívar and the

Film and Visual Arts School at the University Francisco Marroquín, the Panamerican University and the Mesoamerican University with graduate programmes in communication and audio-visual production.

The Honduran counterpart of the RED-CCAPFA is the University Cinematheque Enrique Ponce Garay, part of the National Autonomous University of Honduras and managed by René Pauck, Luis Griffin and Marxis Lenin Hernández. The UNAH's biggest contribution is the publication of a book on the life and works of the first and most well-known Honduran filmmaker, Sami Kafati, who died in 1996. Kafati, who always refused to work with video, was a pioneer in emphasising the need for a film law as early as 1994. It took over 25 years, but in the first months of 2019, the Honduran Congress approved the proposal to establish a national film commission to strengthen the nation's film industry. Many, however, consider the law to be concerned with economic imperatives and the legitimisation of the current legislators under the contested president Juan Orlando Hernández, more than with the development of a healthy national film culture. Since 2008, Honduran filmmaker Servio Tulio Mateo also actively manages a social media account with over 5,000 followers titled *CineCA: Cineastas en Centroamérica*, which publishes a lot of relevant information for and about Central American films, film festivals and filmmakers, as well as providing a basic archive for new releases.

From El Salvador, the network includes representatives from the Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen (museum of speech and image, MUPI), which includes an extensive on- and offline collection of films, photographs and audio fragments. Panama's Experimental University Cinema Group (GECU) joined the initiative to start organising and restoring the film archive at the University of Panama in 2018, while also managing the country's only arthouse cinema in the University Cinema. Costa Rica is represented in the RED-CCAPFA by its national film institute, the Centro Costarricense de Producción Cinematográfica which works in cataloguing and digitising the nation's cinematography.

Building archives takes time, resources, infrastructure and a lot of individual human effort. The Panamanian writer actor, director, producer and historiographer Edgar Soberón Torchía edited *Los cines de América Latina y El Caribe*, with part 1 covering 1890-1969 (2012) and part 2 covering 1970-2010 (2013), with a greater inclusion of Central American developments, chronologically listed. He also founded the Centre of Image and Sound

(CIMAS) that aims at promoting audio-visual practices in Panama. Most recently and after the premiere of his documentary *Panamá Radio* (2019) at IFF Panama, Soberón Torchia released a volume on Panamanian film history together with Alfredo Castellero Hoyos, titled *Conversaciones del cine panameño. Antes de la ley de cine* (2019) published by CIMAS. The work builds on his previously published work including *Un Siglo de Cine* (1995) and *Breve historia del cine panameño* (Soberón Torchía & Del Vasto, 2003). The non-profit Salvadorian Film and Television Association ASCINE, presided by André Gutfreund, the only Salvadorian ever to have won an Academy Award in 1977 for Best Live Action Short Film, is also committed to the recovery of cinematographic heritage besides being active in the fields of technical and professional training, support of film projects and legislative developments. Among other activities, the association compiled a database of 280 Salvadorian films and videos produced between 1927 and 2011.

These valuable ongoing initiatives on archives and heritage continue to inform regional film cultures from the historical perspective of their own “prehistories” and contribute to the uncovering of filmic heritage. Historiographic perspectives (Cabezas Vargas, 2015; Cortés, 2005) have furthermore included the discussion of the establishment, dissolution and developments of national film commissions and funding bodies throughout Central America. The following section briefly mentions these initiatives to provide a basis of understanding for the institutional links in the collaboration networks that are analysed in Chapter 5.

2.5.5. National film commissions, policy and funding initiatives

National organisations such as INCINE first, then ANCI in Nicaragua, AGAcine in Guatemala, ASCINE in El Salvador, DICINE in Panama, Centro de Cine in Costa Rica and the Magic Lantern Honduran Association of Filmmakers have attempted to gather the nation’s filmmaking expertise and facilitate educational programmes, workshops, collaborative networks, project development and exhibition initiatives, with varying success.

In Panama, Enrique Pérez Him presides Panama’s audio-visual creators network RedCrea (*Red de Creadores Audiovisuales de Panamá*), with Edgar Soberón Torchía serving as vice-president. RedCrea was established in the context of the first reform of the film law in 2012 after it was ratified in 2007. From 2014 onwards, RedCrea started organising forums and meetings in function of the new cinematographic law in order to further develop a film

industry in Panama and stimulate cinematographic activities, in the form of short film or feature film project development, festivals and workshops. Panama counts at least three other organisations with similar goals: ProCinema, Asocine and DICINE. The 2012 reform included an annual national film fund of USD 2-3 million that was integrated in the national budget and managed by DICINE. The latter was created by the Panamanian Ministry of Commerce and Industries as the General Directorate for the Cinematographic and Audio-visual Industry, with the objective to design and execute Panama's investment and commercialisation politics. Their resources include a register for productions, incentives and an annual film fund. Since EICTV-graduate (1988-1991) and filmmaker Carlos Aguilar Navarro was elected Minister of Culture in August 2019, and after the official creation of a Ministry of Culture, he has transferred DICINE to the authority of the newly created ministry. The landscape of Panamanian film production is further completed by the recently established production centres CIMAS (Edgar Soberón Torchía, chapter 1), the foundation *Mente Pública* and the University Experimental Film Group (GECU, since 1972), together with a number of smaller yet equally powerful initiatives such as the *Microcine*-initiatives in the capital and *Contra-Peso*, the cultural Afro-Caribbean youth organisation in Colón, Panama. All organisations are inter-connected through the exchange of personnel or through the events that are integrated in the Panamanian Film Festival Network (see Chapter 4).

In 2019, the Honduran Magic Lantern Association of Filmmakers succeeded in passing a law to promote national filmmaking, as national congress approved the Honduran Cinematographic Law in January 2019, making it one of the few Central American nations with a formalised film infrastructure (Agurcia, 2019). The law stipulates the creation of a general directorate (DGC), a national industrial council (CNIC), a film development fund (FONDECI) and the creation of a tax incentive programme for national film investment. Nicaragua had also passed a Filmmaking and Audio-visual Arts Law in 2010, but no funds or regulations were approved which rendered it generally ineffective in the promotion of national film cultures. The complete absence of a legal framework for filmmaking in Costa Rica, despite two decades of lobbying and drafting laws, led the Centre of Filmmaking of the Ministry of Culture to create a film fund in 2015 titled *El Fauno*, offering USD 500,000 for the promotion and production of feature films, television and web series (Cortés, 2018, p. 153).

Since 2007 in Guatemala, the Ministry of Culture and Sports, through the Cultural Development Unit, convened the nation's film professionals in the Guatemalan Association for the Audio-visual and Cinematography (AGAcine). AGAcine's main concern has been the Law Initiative 3728 "Law to promote the Cinematographic and Audio-visual Industry", that was first presented to congress on 20 November 2007 and has not yet been ratified in 2019. In 2012, AGAcine published a catalogue of Guatemalan fiction features that had been released up to that point in the new millennium, with a historical introduction by film historiographer Edgar Barillas. El Salvador's reality is similar, as initiatives have been underway since 2007 with little progress in over a decade. The Institution of Innovation and Quality did create the Pixels-fund for the animation and videogame industry in 2009, and added a category Pixel Pro Audiovisuales for films, granting nearly USD 1.5 million on an annual basis (Cortés, 2018, p. 153). In sum, developments with regard to potential state-support structures are very recent and have yet to prove operational and effective.

The small, precarious, non-industrial cinemas of Central America necessarily rely on international funding initiatives and development cooperation. From 2004, until it had to shut down its operations in 2016, the CINERGIA Fund for the Promotion of the Audio-visual in Central America and Cuba single-handedly proved highly successful in kickstarting the region's film production. The CINERGIA platform offered cash awards, workshops, research and all-round project development services to Central American and Cuban filmmakers. In the 12 years of its existence, the platform financially supported over 80 films that obtained over 180 international awards, and benefitted over 550 filmmakers (Cortés, 2018, pp. 151-152). It allocated resources with the support of Dutch development organisation HIVOS and the Ford Foundation, also counting on the support of international film commissions in Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Puerto Rico and Mexico. Since the establishment of CINERGIA and the support to (co-)production of festival successes such as *El Camino* (Yasin, 2008), *Gasolina* (Cordón, 2008), *La Yuma* (Jaughey, 2010), *Cold Water of the Sea* (Fábrega, 2011) or *Ixcánul* (Bustamante, 2015), a contemporary Central American cinematic landscape started to take shape through the gradual recognition of the value and need of national cinema-projects by national film commissions. The dependency on international development cooperation put an end to the fund in 2016, when HIVOS had to be restructured and was no longer able to support the CINERGIA platform, despite proven successes.

Conclusions: emerging cinemas

Emerging cinemas around the world are often referred to like that for their growing market share and investment opportunities echoing the late-capitalist rhetoric of organisations such as the International Monetary Fund. Other examples in the global film landscape include nations and regions such as Turkey, Central Asia, the Middle East, the Balkans and several African countries, but also in Latin America in Paraguay, Ecuador, Peru, the Dominican Republic or Colombia, which have already shed their peripheral producer-status (Elena, 1999). 'Emerging', however, does not highlight a lesser developed status with respect to large film industries. Instead, the term simply indicates the dynamic process of growth that Central American cinemas have experienced, despite a lack of distribution outlets and the domination of foreign film in the domestic market. It does not solely refer to the economic arguments of expansion and development but to visibility and circulation. It does not imply a desired shift from underdeveloped to developed, Third to First world, but to the process of becoming self-sustaining and resilient as an affinitive set of creative communities that serve the society and the individual at home and abroad.

In the introduction to *A Companion to Latin American Cinema* (2017), Delgado et al. argue that the dominance of the traditionally largest Latin American producers of cinema, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, although still a reality, is diminishing relative to emerging film cultures and economies in Colombia, Panama or Costa Rica. The reasons for creation and growth are similar throughout the continent, with an increasing middle class with a disposable income for arts and entertainment. The gradual adoption of laws regarding tax incentives and screening quota has encouraged private-public partnerships for the financing of film productions with a consistently high degree of co-productions in the Ibero-American spheres. The relative recovery of regional economies mid-2000s, together with the re-installment of democratic governments have enabled a renewed freedom of expression that finds its way to the people through film.

The establishment of production and post-production facilities in Mexico City, Buenos Aires, San José or Havana and excellent film schools in Cuba, Mexico, Buenos Aires, San José or Guatemala have kept more talent within the continent. After the creation of funding, talent and content, film festivals provide the prominent platforms of exhibition for the nation's films. In order to keep up with demands of production standards, the existence of production

and postproduction facilities are also causally connected to the emergence of local film cultures, so that filmmakers do not have to cross borders to complete their films. Lastly, emerging cinemas are characterised by several successive generations of talented film professionals. All of the above can be seen as conducive to the idea and conception of emerging cinemas (Deshpande & Mazaj, 2018).

In Central America, the lack of strong national film institutes, legislations, structures of exhibition or distribution and funding lead to question the driving forces behind the “new Central American cinema” (Durón, 2014). According to Cortés (2018), it is through the international festival successes of a select number of filmmakers that national cinemas are gaining visibility. And yet if, for example, it is claimed that the films of Hernández Córdón and Bustamante are shaping the identity of Guatemalan cinema, they do so mainly from outside of the national film industry through international collaborations and on the festival circuit, largely out of economic and professional necessity.

The emergence, or the rationale of ‘growth’, is not constant. Small, precarious and facing persisting distribution problems, Central American cinemas are still peripheral with respect to other Latin American cinemas. The main issues with and for the aforementioned national associations and commissions have been their diverging political interests, the decentralised modes of operation and the lack of communication between institutions with similar goals. In most of the aforementioned countries, there are antagonistic relationships between competing associations that are lobbying for film legislation or national production funds. Many continue to depend on international cooperation funds such as Ibermedia, Inter-American Development Bank or governmental bodies of culture, economic and industrial developments, and have to renegotiate the terms of their existence with every election or passing of the often-limited funding period. Changes in international development strategies led to the end of the CINERGIA film fund for Central America and Cuba, and to the economically precarious position that the Ícaro Festival finds itself in to secure funding year after year. The recent developments to integrate the region’s fragmented archival efforts by the RED-CCAPFA, the Ícaro Film Festival or the Panamanian Film Festival Network are indicative of the urgent necessity to gather information, resources and people in order to be able to build towards a cinematographic identity that is historically rooted in the originating, indigenous, cultures.

The communication divide in the Central American context can be conceptualised in the triangulation that situates Latin American cinema between prevailing European and North American cinematographic traditions, which are bridged through processes of proximity, appropriation and hybridity (Paranaguá, 2003; Schroeder, 2016). On the one hand, there is the unilateral cultural imposition and dependence on popular visual culture from hegemonic media industries that dominate the local screens and taste culture. On the other hand, there are individual and collective efforts of local film professionals to develop an independent Central American film culture rooted in proper historical and cultural foundations while resorting to the international film festival circuit, its production funds and marketing strategies. Regardless of the potential influence by other cinematic cultures, the outdated conception that cinemas from economically emerging countries consist merely of derivative image cultures adopted from the US and European media hegemonies has been replaced by a focus on the transnational dynamics of cinematic exchange (Appadurai, 1990; Durovicova & Newman, 2010, p. 4).

The current scholarly emphasis is on dialogue rather than on centrifugal emulation, in the sense that Hollywood's film conventions would be copied or adopted in the cinemas of emerging economies, from the "centre" of the world of media production to the "peripheries":

The cinematic periphery is a constantly shifting constituent in a dynamically evolving relationship. It is elusive and intangible, as the centre to which it relates keeps redefining itself. In the context of globalization and the realities of the post-cold war world, the relationship between centre and periphery is no longer necessarily a straightforward, hierarchical one, where a centre seeks to subsume its margins. (Iordanova et al., 2010, pp. 6–7)

One of the centres to which the expansion of Central American cinema relates revolves around the heterogeneous and retrospectively grouped New Latin American Cinemas (NLAC), with at its core the previously mentioned ICAIC and the Havana Film Festival. In the following chapters, the encompassing capacity-building role of film festivals with respect to regional film-cultural development is foregrounded as an answer to the question of what drives the emergence of new Central American cinemas. This is done from a post-Third-Worldist perspective through which Central American cinemas can be

conceptualised as a regional cinema with shared incentives and struggles to build towards self-sustaining cinematographic identities.

Chapter 3. Post-Third-Worldist perspectives and film festivals

Introduction

Scholarly literature on the cinemas of the world gradually recognised the Eurocentric perspective as condescending and incomplete, and generally started acknowledging multiple centres of production around the world as significantly influential in their own right. The aim of this chapter is to trace a theoretical framework on global cinemas and film festivals in which it is possible to situate the micro-mapping of contemporary production and exhibition contexts in Central America from a regional perspective (Marlow-Mann, 2018). The starting point for this exploration is the aesthetic and political Third Cinema-movement that originated in Latin America but which became a tricontinental oppositional movement to neo-imperialism and global capitalism. As a result of globalisation theories on media flows and transnational film studies, Third Cinema and national cinema-studies paradigms, criticised for being homogenising and restrictive, are reconceptualised to account for changing realities. This results in an open-ended and more inclusive rethinking of Third Cinemas and cinemas of what was previously known as the Third World or, as used here, post-Third-Worldist cinemas (Shohat, 1997). The new, multipolar, polycentric, relational and regional perspective simultaneously signals a globalist turn in film and media production and scholarship as well as the ongoing struggle against neo-colonial processes of power in and through media and communication.

Studies of film festivals are emphasised for their mutually reinforcing relationship to Third Cinemas and other global cinemas from the late 1960s onwards, and for enabling New Latin American filmmakers to connect through their continental and relational project. The (ideological) politics of relationality that have brought filmmakers from all over Latin America together in the past is echoed in the conceptualisation of contemporary Central American film festivals, as mediating and enabling platforms for film professionals in the region. The final theoretical step consists in the (re-)insertion of Central American cinemas in global cinemas as significant centres of production. By way of preamble, the chapter elaborates the ideas put forward on the emergence of national cinemas in Central America as

encouraged by practices of international development cooperation and nation-building during the conflicts and liberation struggles of the 1970s and 1980s and on the rebirth of cinemas in the 21st century as arising from the destruction that preceded it (cf. earlier, “creative precarity”).

Cross-disciplinary studies from sociology over psychology to economics have covered the effects of five-hundred years of “modernity/colonialism” and globalisation through transnational approaches in a Latin American context (Mignolo, 2018). The centre-periphery-dynamics that characterise(d) (neo-)colonial projects met a lot of criticism and resistance in the second half of the 20th century through the intensification of anti-imperialist movements and decolonisation projects. In sync with postwar emancipatory movements, overt imperialism became unaccepted as a (bio)political strategy for the newly formed supra-national councils, unions and organisations. In fact, the rise of the new world order of neoliberal globalisation from the 1970s was a response to the liberation struggles, worker rebellions and revolutionary movements throughout the world in the 1960s (Michael Hardt & Negri, 2019, p. 76; Jameson, 2015, p. 129). It became clear that imperialism, far from having been eradicated by peace treaties and collaboration agreements, had transformed into other, less apparent and more disperse, forms of exerting soft and hard power and dominion on the individual.

In situating Central American cinematic productions in the panorama of global cinemas, one of the overall challenges is to critically deconstruct concepts and notions such as ‘representation’ and ‘universality’, since they are constructions that have reflected a geographic distribution of power rooted in imperialism. Shohat and Stam’s *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994) is a key text for Western scholars to avoid falling into the pseudo-universalism of Eurocentric theories and their applications onto all cinemas, as termed by Appiah (1992; Hayward, 2000, p. 399). Studies of Third or World Cinemas more often than not stuck to comparative perspectives to juxtapose Third World-media and that of the First, Western world and the accompanying theories and frames of reference, an opposition that Third Cinema itself was criticised for (see below). The discourse by filmmakers and theorists of Third Cinema, for example, inadvertently contributed vocabulary that has perpetuated the very inequality of the global divide that media and communication studies have been criticising. This developmentalist vocabulary is characterised by keeping the Third World or,

the 'Global South' in a post-Cold War context, and their practices in a perpetual state of (under)development.

As such, different theories have analysed the cinemas of the world outside Europe or the US as peripheral (Elena, 1999; Iordanova et al., 2010), small (Hjort, 2005, 2011; Hjort & Petrie, 2007), accented (Naficy, 2001), minor (Andersson & Sundholm, 2016), Third (Gabriel, 1982; Solanas & Getino, 1997) phenomena. The descriptive terminology either focuses on the size or location of foreign film industries, its distinct otherness or on the present continuous of an action that is underway but still incomplete. The developing world is thus in a perpetual state of becoming, growth, expansion, yet never seems to consolidate. Some theoretical resolution has been offered by the more recent adoption of polycentric perspectives on media production and reception around the globe or by "theorising from the South" (De Sousa Santos, 2014, 2018). In other words, by using insights and theories that emanate from grounded practices of the studied locality, scholars and practitioners contribute to a production of knowledge that aspires an inclusive locality through ceding authority to the studied processes as the ultimate source of learning.

The institutional decolonisation efforts from the end of the Second World War onwards maintained forms of inequality and exploitation between nations through the foundation of financial control organisations such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank, in which, simply put, the wealthier nations' votes outweighed others'. The conception of these institutions also guided the international cooperation discourse, very often conflating 'development' with 'economic growth'. The 'arms race', the 'space race' but also the 'race to aid' in the 1960s are symptomatic for the shifted power structures that underlie the "millennial capitalism", the culture of neoliberalism (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001) and the "casino capitalism" it gave rise to. While the Western world developed its fast-paced lifestyle, underdevelopment became a category by which to describe over half of the world's nations, through policy and rhetoric. With the creation of underdevelopment and the newfound geopolitical divide between the socialist Eastern and the capitalist Western blocs,

a third force emerged in the 1950s in the shape of the Non-Aligned Movement, created at the Bandung Conference in 1955, comprising the nations that came to be known as the Third World, in which Cuba would subsequently become a key player. (Chanan, 2011, p. 79)

The concept of a Third World was first coined by French demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952 in analogy to the revolutionary 'third estate', the commoners during the French Revolution in France, in opposition to the nobility and the clergy, respectively the first and second estates. This division then came to refer to the First, capitalist World, the Second, socialist World, and the Third, underdeveloped, World (Shohat & Stam, 2014, p. 25; R. Stam, 2000, p. 93). At the Bandung conference in 1955 and through solidarity with anti-colonial struggles in Cuba (1953-1959), Algeria (1954-1962) and Vietnam (1945-1954), the Third World came together in a political coalition that later also saw its ideological vantage point reflected in the guerrilla, militant, production of artistic and theoretical work, which famously came to be known as Third Cinema (Armes, 1987). Before expanding on Third Cinema, it has to be noted that it only represents a very specific subset of the production of broader Third World Cinemas.

3.1. Third World Cinemas

The political radicalism of Third Cinemas is not to be confused with Third World Cinemas, which largely continue to be dominated by popular genres, as the first chapter indicated (Chapman, 2003, p. 305). The former indicates an anti-imperialist political and aesthetic movement that originated in Latin America in the 1960s in opposition to European auteur cinema and Hollywood's entertainment industry. The latter refers to the film production in

the ensemble of colonised, neo-colonised, and de-colonised nations whose political and economic structures have been shaped by the colonial process -with some vague economic notion (the 'poor' or 'non-industrialised' nations), or with a geographical schema (the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America), or with an ethnic ('non-white') or cultural ('backward') classification. (Stam, 1984, p. 50)

The Third World countries and regions, later also designated the Global South in developmentalist discourse, in Africa, the Middle East, India, China, other Asian territories, and Latin America, were not part of the First, allied and capitalist World of the US and Europe and the Second, communist and Soviet World of Russia (Hayward, 2000, p. 398). While the Third World and its cinemas turned into a homogenising label for 'other' and 'foreign' films, more films have actually been produced in the Third World than in the 'first' two combined. The Third World is neither necessarily poor (e.g. natural resources,

petroleum), non-industrialised (e.g. Mexico), non-white (e.g. Argentina) nor culturally backward (e.g. Latin American literature), and 'the South' is similarly an integral and essential part of some of the world's largest metropolitan cities. The Third World can be, however, marked by the conceptual framework of a persistent struggle against colonialism, and studied through the question of a 'Third World aesthetic', indicating both a style and mode of production that are appropriate to the economic conditions and political circumstances of the Third World.

Among the more well-known examples are Fernando Solanas' and Octavio Getino's militant Third Cinema, Glauber Rocha's 'Aesthetic of hunger' or Julio García Espinosa's 'Imperfect cinema' (Stam, 1984, p. 53). On the subject of the imperfect nature of Nicaraguan filmmaking, Tania Romero remarked that the experience of producing independent cinema is like being born left-handed in a world designed for the opposite hand. They do things 'backwards' and get used to an experience opposite to the conditions in which they live (Romero, 2015, p. 58; own translation).

A broad understanding of the larger subdivisions of Third World Cinemas in which Third Cinema-filmmaking is taken up, is represented in an overlapping concentric circle structure by Shohat and Stam (2014, p. 28). The core circle of Third Worldist films includes films that are produced by and for Third World peoples, regardless of their location, and that adhere to the principles of Third Cinema. The second circle includes films of Third World peoples, whether or not they adhere to the principles of Third Cinema-filmmaking. The third circle includes films made in support of Third World peoples by First and Second World people that adhere to the principles of Third Cinema and lastly, the outer circle includes diasporic hybrid films that surpass the conventions of Third Cinema altogether (Shohat & Stam, 2014, p. 28). The Central American cinemas in this work would then correspond to the first two inner categories of Third Cinema, as films produced by and for Third Worldist peoples, regardless of their adherence to the Third Cinema principles. The thematic chapter on testimonial and postmemory films and film festivals does, however, demonstrate the pervasiveness of some of the genre's characteristics (see Chapter 6).

In analogy to projects of identity in world systems (King, 1997) and to world literature (Moretti, 2000) or world music, Third Worldist cinemas are not only a subset of world cinema, but came to represent its core matter, still inherently othered from the allegedly 'developed' film industries in Europe and the US.

This is somewhat surprising given that the production modes and aesthetics specific to the Third World nations do not exclude the hybrid adaptation of genres, tropes or techniques found elsewhere in the world while adding, rather than subtracting, to the visual imaginary through localised visuals and narratives. In the context of post-Second World War development policies, advanced capitalism and the Cold War, Central American cinemas were inscribed in the category of Third Worldist cinemas. Together with Hollywood's musicals and westerns, Mexican *rancheros* and melodramas, Brazilian *chanchadas*, Argentinian *telenovelas*, Third and Imperfect cinemas, Italian Neorealism, French Nouvelle Vague, Brazilian Cinema Novo, *cine de liberación* and many other genres and strands have retroactively influenced the denomination of New Latin American Cinemas, and as a small and precarious subset to these major industries from within and outside the Third World, also Central American cinemas.

3.1.1. Poverty porn

The modernity/colonialism-inspired thinking and the creation of underdevelopment as a category by which to assess the world also led to the exoticisation of poverty and violence in relation to Third World-media in both production and representation. This distorted and Eurocentric viewing practice is contained in the concept of “poverty porn” as treated by Colombian filmmakers Carlos Mayolo and Luis Ospina (Faguet, 2009, p. 7). “Pornomiseria” or poverty porn is employed as a strategy to elicit an emotive response to appeal to audiences’ reception of a film (Faguet, 2009, p. 7). In a short documentary of 27 minutes, *Oiga vea!/Listen, look!* (1971), Ospina and Mayolo ironically portray all the people excluded from attending the sixth Pan American Games in Cali in 1971, including themselves. Their light-hearted style of reporting reflects a development within Third Cinema that criticises (discourse on) poverty and social segregation, instead interviewing the people that are left out of the spectacle about what might be going on inside the stadium. “What makes them stand out is their sense of humour, absent from the exaggerated images of opulence and poverty that became formulaic in certain examples of Third World Cinema” (Faguet, 2009, p. 5).

Ospina and Mayolo’s *pornomiseria* is in turn based on the essay ‘The photographic image of underdevelopment’, by Edmundo Desnoes, the Cuban author of *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), which was adapted to film by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea. The essay was originally published in 1967 in the

Cuban *Punto de Vista* journal, and translated into English in *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media* in 1988. Desnoes is critical of Third World-representations in noticing that

[e]verything picturesque and exotic and beautiful within underdevelopment gets incorporated into photography. The environment is used to create an illusion that in that place tourists will live out a passionate, amorous adventure, be admired by all the natives, and — if everything else fails — have an excellent landscape to restore their eyes and their spirits. (Desnoes, 1988, pp. 69–81)

Not only the romanticised tourist gaze, characteristic of the prehistory of Central American cinema (see Chapter 2), is addressed in the discussion of photographic underdevelopment, but also the danger of the double consciousness of internalising and projecting those ‘othering’ images, as reflected in sociologist Charles Cooley’s popularised phrase ‘I am not who you think I am/ I am not who I think I am/ I am who I think you think I am’:

And this image of underdevelopment does not just come from the Western countries. We ourselves often fall victim to the form in which others see us. Thus we often lose our own perspective and we corrupt our own image of ourselves, so that we live out a lie instead of understanding it as a projection. We see ourselves as others from industrial countries see us, or as they want to see us. In Western Europe just as in the Soviet Union and the other European socialist countries, people cling to a distorted image of underdevelopment. (Desnoes, 1988, pp. 69–81)

The most common visual examples are the advertising campaigns by international aid organisations that show malnourished children, decrepit elders or naked women to elicit sympathy and gather donations. Less explicitly, the internalisation of these distinctions occurs in post-Third Worldist films around the globe. In Chapter 6, some of the rehumanising counter-strategies in representing pain and trauma in the past and present are discussed in the analysis of postmemory films and film festivals.

3.2. Third Cinema(s)

The global imaginary often links Latin American cultural productions to anti-imperialist sentiments, as social or political denunciations or in general as the products of long and hard-fought histories of imperialism and resistance. This

stems from the aesthetic and theoretical rupture called Third Cinema, defined in an explicit attempt to break away from First (Hollywood, studio entertainment) and Second (European, avant-garde, intellectual) cinemas. Third Cinema refers to a type of filmmaking that is aimed at raising political consciousness and inspiring revolution. It developed as a cinematic-political movement in the 1960s as emblematic for the later collection of (national) cinemas with the common (regional) denominator of New Latin American Cinemas (NLAC). The aesthetics that ideally characterised this rupture were inspired by a moment in Italian Neorealism with which many Latin American middle-class artists and intellectuals interacted, which was clear from practical and theoretical manifestos such as Rocha's 'Aesthetics of Hunger' (1965) and Julio García Espinosa's 'For an imperfect cinema' (1971). Third Cinema's theories, practices and critiques introduced in this section are characteristic of parts of Central American and other Third World cinemas because it represents the tensions between national projects and their reinsertion in the global film community through regional organisation.

The essay 'Towards a third cinema', originally published by Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in the Cuban publication *Tricontinental* in 1969, emphasised revolutionary filmmaking as the defining artistic arena of the anti-imperialist struggle (Buchsbaum, 2011; Mahler, 2018). The much-theorised and fluid aesthetic moment of Third Cinema, Third Media and Third Culture was based on an ideology of liberation based on the lives of Simón Bolívar, Frantz Fanon, Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, Toussaint L'Ouverture and others (Buchsbaum, 2011). The Cuban Revolution of 1959, worldwide students' and workers' rebellions in the 1960s were defining moments in the interlocking of politics and arts in the continent. This was also symbolised in the 1968 boycott of the Cannes Film Festival, led by Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut, as a result of which the festival reorganised and created the Directors' Fortnight sidebar organised by the French Directors' Guild in 1969.

Based on Frantz Fanon's three phases in the development of ideological consciousness in the direction of cultural decolonisation in the Third World, Teshome Gabriel theorised the three phases of Third Cinema as they were introduced by Solanas and Getino a decade earlier (Gabriel, n.d., 1982; Rajadhyaksha, 2019, p. 174). Similar to the Central American cinematic prehistory discussed in the first chapter, the first phase involves a close identification with Hollywood's predominance towards entertainment through escapist themes of romance, musicals, comedies and adventures with

the sole objective of generating profits (Chapman, 2003, p. 307). The second phase is “the remembrance phase” which involves an “indigenisation” and “nationalisation” of industrial production, exhibition and distribution models through national film policies, state subsidies and quotas. The second phase’s goal is to establish “national cinemas that promote the decolonisation process but without at the same time decolonising conventional film language” (Rajadhyaksha, 2019, p. 174). Thirdly, Gabriel calls for a “guerrilla cinema” in “the combative phase” (Gabriel, 1982, p. 7) about, for and by Third World peoples and their struggles as an ideological and educational tool for the masses. The goal of Third Cinema filmmakers was not the aestheticising of ideology but the politicising of cinema (Gabriel, 1982, p. 3).

Third Cinema’s framework for conceptualising Third World-media production in direct opposition to global imperialism and cinema-as-entertainment through a defined set of ideological and aesthetic principles was criticised for being overly masculine, intellectually elitist and formally restrictive. Gabriel’s Third Cinema theory was thought to homogenise all Third World Cinemas in closed and patriarchal ideas of national cinemas as politically radical in opposition to intellectual European arthouse or entertaining Hollywood cinemas (Pines & Willemen, 1989, pp. 15–17; Van Hemert, 2013, p. 47). Instead of over-emphasising the politically radical nature of Third Cinema, Willemen focused on its capacity to represent the complexity of postcolonial societies. For example, Willemen saw the films of Ousmane Sembene in Senegal or Souleymane Cissé in Mali as part of the “many-layeredness” of African culture, neither in a “myopically nationalist nor evasively cosmopolitan” way (Murphy, 2012, p. 107; Pines & Willemen, 1994, p. 4). The reductive homogenising of Third Cinemas does not consider that the “militant cinema” is actually only one mode of production and exhibition within the types of Third Cinemas, itself part of broader category of Third Worldist cinemas, as Solanas and Getino (1969), Gabriel (1982) and Shohat and Stam (1994) have analysed.

Almost immediately, Third Cinema filmmakers and theorists became aware that the boundaries between First, Second and Third Cinemas were fluid, and posing an alternative to the monolithic First Cinema would only be possible if the alternative embraced hybridity and polyglossia (Guneratne & Dissanayake, 2003, pp. 18–19). This turned Third Cinema into a theory of Third Cinemas from which global cinemas could be conceptualised as polycentric, -valent and -morphic (Deshpande & Mazaj, 2018). The Third

Cinemas-heritage that continues to mark part of Central American film production does no longer necessarily entail a political revolutionary struggle but lingers in cultural representations and identity in postcolonial and postconflict societies, in particular through its relation to the past and politics of memory (see Chapter 6).

In Central America, the second and third phase of Third Cinema as described by Gabriel were echoed in the emergence of national cinemas and guerrilla filmmaking in the 1970s and 1980s as ideological and educational tools in the armed conflicts. Later, Gabriel rethought Third Cinema as a more inclusive, heterogeneous and dynamic movement made up of narrative communities that do not define themselves in oppositions and do emphasise social problems and collective actions over individual psychology as in mainstream entertainment:

Third Cinema has branched out, diversified, multiplied. Third Cinema can no longer be defined as a singular, univocal idea if, indeed, it ever could. It has become more complex, multifarious, heterogeneous. Third Cinema, in other words, has become Third Cinemas. (Gabriel, n.d.)

Gabriel's revisioning of Third Cinemas sees it as "a cinema of elements" in its relation between peoples and Nature, as "a collective witness" to society's issues and as "a cinema of performance" at the metalevel of the filmmaking process. Gabriel argues that "Third Cinema is a relational art in that it also allows the spectator to create new relations, open new horizons, new possibilities of engagement with the work in whatever format it may be between filmmakers and film viewers" (Gabriel, n.d.).

The Third Cinema-framework was defining for the supranational grouping of adherers to the New Latin American Cinema and the worldwide recognition of auteurs, individuals and films from 1960s and 1970s cinema in Latin America. The idea is that Latin American cinema developed as a transnational community, with filmmakers traveling through Latin America and Europe to film schools, mostly to return to their respective home countries afterwards. What has later been described as a continental project to unite Latin America culturally and politically, New Latin American cinema and collectivist filmmaking are stereotypically synonymous, as well as the idea that through the medium of film, imperialism has to be confronted. In an attempt to decolonise the cultural and political landscape, many new waves of radical cinema were formed.

Argentinian Fernando Birri, Cubans Julio García Espinosa, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Gabriel García Márquez all studied at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. Glauber Rocha also spent time in Italy, Fernando Solanas was a refugee from Argentina in France, together with Patricio Guzmán from Chile, and Mexico harboured the exiled Chilean Miguel Littín. Octavio Getino was born in Spain and migrated to Argentina in the '50s. While being abroad, forced to or otherwise, all came into contact with European cinematic trends of the 1950s (Italian Neorealism), 60s (Free Cinema and Nouvelle Vague) and 70s (New German Cinema, social documentary and American Independent Cinema) among other waves. While this inspired their search for a cinematographic language that would suit the desired non-complacent national and regionally united cinema, these personal trajectories have led many of the mentioned filmmakers to meet in Chile at the Viña del Mar festival in 1967, and at many subsequent meetings afterwards which allowed to develop and exchange ideas of what future cinema should be, and an organic amalgam of different projects exchanged professionals and techniques to transform the landscape of Latin American cinema.

These various 'new' cinemas in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico were established by individuals, groups, and institutions on the basis of their education and the interaction with each other and other spheres of influence, from indigenous communities (Jorge Sanjinés, Miguel Littín and others) to film schools and avant-garde movements in Europe and across the world. The subsequent processes of, not mere imitation but of cultural translation prefigured in many aspects the way in which neoliberal film funding platforms or government institutions now exercise soft power stratagems to influence film production in the developing world and the cultural discourse from whence it originates. The big difference resides in the shift from relative autonomy (under repressive regimes) and proper agency of the filmmakers in radical cinemas towards a new kind of external dependency, leading to the question of how independent world cinema is conceived at this point, when thematic, stylistic or narrative conventions have blurred the differences between films from different parts of the world.

From the outset, the NLAC movements have materialised through gatherings throughout the continent. The social and transnational relationality that characterises the otherwise nationally differentiated projects within the broader category of NLAC leads to an exploration of the functions and

responsibilities of film festivals for contemporary developments. Film festivals have manifested as important sites for the exhibition of contemporary world cinema (Van Hemert, 2013), as their relation to Third Cinemas and global arthouse cinemas indicates (see below). This acknowledgement raises the question what film festivals located in the previously known Third World can mean for the production, the promotion and dissemination of post-Third Worldist cinemas.

3.2.1. Post-Third-Worldist cinemas

In the realm of film studies, scholars such as Stephanie Dennison and Song Hwee Lim (2006), Lúcia Nagib, Chris Perriam and Rajinder Dudrah (Nagib et al., 2012), Badley, Palmer and Schneider (2006) have tried to contextualise the catch-all “world cinema”, which was suffering the same fate as world music or world literature in becoming an analogy for everything that was not produced in the Hollywood studios or by the European vanguard. Instead of the traditional comparative centre-periphery outlook, the authors opt for a definition of “world cinema as a polycentric phenomenon with peaks of creation in different places and periods” (Nagib, 2006, p. 34; Nagib et al., 2012).

The polycentric conception of the cinemas of the world implies that all cinemas are placed on an analytic equal footing, with transnational spheres of influence spread across the globe by many inter-linked centres of production which are not necessarily place-bound. Deshpande and Mazaj (2018) add that world cinema, rather than a category of cinema, is a fluid point of view that shifts according to the viewer’s position and interpretation. Different forms of interpretation may depart from analytic positions that highlight national, transnational, postcolonial, diasporic, gendered, ethnic or other aspects of a particular film. All interpretations are relevant, and together form the polymorphic mosaic that is bigger than the parts of the producers’ intentions. At the risk of becoming conceptually redundant, Deshpande and Mazaj also express that world cinema is polyvalent, meaning that every film is a foreign film, viewed from some other part in the world. Hence, every interpretation is necessarily a local reading, or, as literary scholar Harold Bloom has it, a “misreading” with its own range of influence (Bloom, 2003).

The international film market in Cannes first took place in 1959 and opened up to world cinema after the partial reorientation post-1968 protests to find interested investors, co-production deals and other types of funding for the

new cinemas from developing film countries (de Valck, 2007, p. 43). In more radical perspectives, for European audiences, Latin American filmmakers of the 1960s served as “imaginary others” (Chanan, 2006, p. 38) and satisfied Europeans’ “nostalgia for primitivism” by Eurocentrically turning to “the culture of the underdeveloped world”, as filmmakers such as Glauber Rocha for example was very aware of at the time (Dennison, 2013, p. 15; Rocha, 1997, pp. 59–61): “We understand this hunger that the Europeans and the majority of Brazilians do not. For the European it is an alien tropical surrealism” (Rocha, 1965 in Rocha, 2019). The European consumption of the exotic other and the inherent expectations of imagery replete with violence and poverty are contained in the previously discussed 1970s critical concept of *pornomiseria* that developed from Colombian Third Cinema.

The universalising cultural implications of the previously criticised developmentalist discourse were opposed in anti-imperialist Third Cinema theory and New Latin American Cinemas, before being subjected to nationalist and transnationalist perspectives and ultimately diversified to accommodate a plurality of conceptualisations of Third Cinemas (Gabriel, n.d.) and (post-)Third Worldist cinemas (Shohat, 2004). Shohat emphasises feminist criticism of a patriarchal and nationalist Third Cinema in regarding post-Third-Worldist films as potential cinematic counter-tellings that require an openness to and an engagement with “location” and “idiosyncrasy” instead of a postcard-like Aristotelian universality that reaffirms a representational status quo (2004).

The concept of post-Third-Worldist cinemas is taken up here as an acknowledgement of the fluid heterogeneity of cinematic productions emanating from areas that were previously categorised as pertaining to the Third World, which includes the theoretical foundations of Third Cinemas and of other world cinemas together with their respective criticisms and reconceptualisations. In the empirical chapters, this implies that the localised study of individual filmmakers and the networks of collaboration in Central America reveal the transnational essence of film cultures (Iordanova, 2016), which is embodied at film festivals.

3.3. Film Festivals and (post-)Third (World) cinemas

Film festival showcases of multiple consecutive days were first set up in Europe on the eve of, and in the wake of, the Second World War, in an attempt to oppose the dominance of Hollywood’s film industry while paradoxically also

inviting Hollywood's stars to lend red-carpet prestige to the platforms dedicated to the promotion of national and international cinemas. Increasingly, and in response to developments in the global political economy from the end of the 1960s onwards, most international film festivals became internationalist windows onto the world and promoters of cultural dialogue and exchange. In- and outside of Europe, the film festival phenomenon exploded and started taking on a variety of forms. Since the functions and identities of film festivals can be aesthetically, economically, and politically motivated, the objective opens the way for an inquiry into various strands of the field of film festival studies. The understanding of the functions and responsibilities of film festivals in regional film-cultural development fits in the New Cinema History approach of considering cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange through an emphasis on the contexts of circulation and consumption of texts rather than on their content (Biltereyst et al., 2019; Biltereyst & Meers, 2016; Maltby et al., 2011).

Roughly since the 2000s and to a great degree influenced by transnational film studies, the film festival phenomenon has been acknowledged as a key multipurpose player in media cultures around the globe. In a recent general overview, Marijke de Valck, Brendan Kredell and Skadi Loist (2016) argue that Film Festival Studies are taking on new dimensions with respect to the "discursive horizon" of cinema (Hansen, 1995). Their edited volume *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (2016) provides a historical, theoretical and methodological framework for film festival studies that is useful to both scholars and festival professionals. The following segments introduce a number of frequently discussed themes in film festival studies that are useful in considering film festivals as nodal interfaces for film-cultural development in the small cinemas-context of Central America.

3.3.1. From exhibition platforms to interfaces for film cultures

Throughout the shaping of the field, questions about the functions of film festivals have occupied a central position. The first responsibility lies in the exhibition of films, especially of those that do not or not easily reach commercial theatres or television screens, by way of an alternative form of distribution that can help amass the visibility necessary to ensure a commercial release after the festival run (Carroll Harris, 2017). However, in the introduction to *The Film Festival Reader* (2013), festival scholar Dina Jordanova paraphrases Paul Willemen's preoccupation with festival

circulation of films as potentially causing a “bottleneck effect” for non-commercial cinema:

Festivals may appear to open up pathways to a global exposure but, in fact, they only produce a ‘bottleneck effect’. The proliferation of festivals we had witnessed over the previous three decades has not led to better visibility for global cinema; it all still remained outside of proper circulation channels. Festivals were not bringing cinema closer to the people. On the contrary, they were encapsulating and isolating it, shielding it from wider audiences, and thus effectively shrinking all chances of proper exposure. (Iordanova, 2013, p. 1)

The stance on festivals as restricting proper circulation by reserving it for an elite and niche festival audience was countered by those who celebrated the festival’s brand as a marker of quality that can push a film through the circuit as it accumulates awards, recognition, press coverage or what festival insiders call “buzz”, riding “waves of prestige” that significantly augments its chances at a distribution deal and a commercial release after its festival run. Films are screened at festivals “in order to be catapulted beyond the festival” and the festival circuit is “the muscle that pumps it through the larger system” (de Valck, 2007; Elsaesser, 2005b, p. 97).

Moving beyond film festivals as exhibitors, a whole substratum of diverging interests emerges. From the first multi-day festival format as we know today in Venice in 1932 onwards, festivals took on many different responsibilities, as a powerful player in city politics (Stringer, 2003), tourism, but most importantly as:

a participant in many other aspects of the creative cycle — such as production financing, networking, and distribution — and thus turns into a key player in the film industry, as well as society at large. Indeed, it is increasingly the case that film festivals bridge the film industry with politics and other spheres. (Iordanova, 2015, p. 7)

Iordanova’s recognition of the film festival as a nodal interface with a certain in- and output for the film industry is useful to see the festival as a field (cf. Bourdieu), as a social arena in which the agendas of a multitude of actors from within and outside the film industry collide, clash and intersect and where aesthetic and economic interests are negotiated (2015). Following the IT-jargon, the film festival not only provides a platform and connects the actors in the network but also relates to other entities as an institution. Each festival

is an ‘interface’ of various screens and platforms that connects to other festivals or platforms, between which films can hop onto similar or different islands in the archipelago of the global film festival landscape (Loist, 2016). Considering the festival as a nodal interface facilitates an expanded view on festivals as actively shaping and cultivating film cultures (Iordanova, 2015).

3.3.2. Festivals and regional film cultures

In the foreword to *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (2016), Iordanova takes notice that film festival studies moved beyond a scholarly emphasis on “an agglomeration of national cinemas or texts” through textual analysis, national frameworks or industry studies to reveal the social and transnational essence of film cultures (2016, p. xii). By promoting film festival studies as key to the study of film as an art form, Iordanova asserts that “[r]ecognition needs to be given to the emergence of the film festival as a hub of exchange in its own right and of the consequent seconding of text, tradition, and industry by film festival studies to its own purposes” (2016, pp. xii-xiii).

Film festivals contribute to cultural developments in cities, nations and regions in a variety of ways (Stringer, 2001), as platforms of exhibition and in particular, as an alternative mode of distribution (Carroll Harris, 2017). And yet, as SooJeonh Ahn remarks, little primary research has been conducted in film studies on the subject of the different social and cultural contexts of non-Western film festivals and their role in exhibiting and supporting the production of world cinema (2012, p. 1). In the case of the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF), Ahn notes that its “regional approach towards East Asia, synergised by the global visibility of South Korean cinema, displays a distinct agenda and sociocultural context different from that of Euro-American film festivals” (2012, p. 1). Ahn traces the interrelation of the evolution of PIFF and the increased status of national Korean cinema in the global economy since the 1990s, with an emphasis on the festival’s distinct regional Asian approach. Through a project market, the Korean festival constructs and promotes, not only national Korean cinema, but also an Asian identity in cinema “in order to survive in a highly competitive global film market” (2012, p. 2).

In analogy with the studied relationship between the film festival phenomenon and film-cultural development, former director to the Independent Film Festival of Buenos Aires (BAFICI), Sergio Wolf, also sees a direct link between the establishment of BAFICI and the beginnings of the so-called New Argentine Cinema at the turn of the century. In fact, he considers

the explosion of the latest Latin American cinemas in for example, Colombia and Chile, to be connected to the multiplication of new types of film festivals, many of which incorporate some of BAFICI's strategies in supporting production and inviting international programmers that help to give visibility to those films that are small in ambition and grand in aesthetic or narrative conviction (Wolf, 2016, p. 84). The parallel developments between BAFICI and New Argentine Cinema in the 1990s were also explored in Gutiérrez and Wagenberg, "to demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between film festivals and film production in Latin America" (2013, p. 295). The authors consider a range of new, emerging film festivals as "an essential component of the current creative boom in Latin American cinema". From East Asia, to South America, and with more potential case studies around the globe, the study of the film festival as a "discursive site through which to understand the tensions and negotiations among cultural and economic forces locally, regionally, and globally" is increasingly being acknowledged (Ahn, 2012, p. 2).

3.3.3. Interdisciplinary festival scholarship

The scholarly focus on the participation of festivals in larger networks of media, people, ideas and capital has situated the study of the festival in terms of "the transnational realm of the global" (Iordanova & Rhyne, 2009). The geographic disparities of the early focus on the European centers and the global impact of the Hollywood industry has gradually led scholars to consider events and circulation patterns in non-Western film cultures (Loist, 2016, p. 51). The Film Festival Yearbook series published by St Andrews Film Studies already devoted volumes to East Asia (Iordanova & Cheung, 2011) and to the Middle East (Iordanova & Van de Peer, 2014), while the volumes in Palgrave Macmillan's Framing Film Festivals book series focus on Africa (Dovey, 2015), China (Berry & Robinson, 2017), Australia (Stevens, 2016), queer festivals (Richards, 2016) and documentary festivals⁸ (Vallejo & Winton, 2020b, 2020a).⁸ The analysis of Central American film festivals is an addition to this rapidly growing list.

⁸ Vanhaelemesch, J. (2020). Documentary film festivals vol. 1: methods, history, politics, edited by Aida Vallejo and Ezra Winton. *Transnational Screens*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25785273.2020.1839300>

Festival studies have always been interdisciplinary because of the complex and dynamic nature of film festivals as social, political, economic, aesthetic, visual, performed, recorded and discursive events. They have typically been analysed as exhibition platforms for a global art cinema that circulates outside of the mainstream channels for exhibition and distribution (Galt & Schoonover, 2010). Some have turned to the study of films as commodities in global business and discussed the industrial role of film festivals as markets and funding institutions (Falicov, 2013a, 2013b; Finney, 2010; Iordanova, 2015; Shaw, 2016). Others have directed their attention to the festival as a forum for debate in line with Habermas' work on bourgeois (counter)public spheres and elite salons (de Valck, 2007; Wong, 2011). Cultural sociology, in particular Pierre Bourdieu's conceptualisations of the fields of cultural production, symbolic capital and habitus, is often used as a framework for festival studies that focuses on sites of value-addition and cultural legitimation (de Valck, 2007, 2014a, 2014b, 2016). In assessing the transnational flows of cultural production, globalisation theorists have regarded festivals in light of Appadurai's 'scapes' of interaction regarding media, ethnicity, ideas or finances (Appadurai, 1990) or based on Giddens' (1990) and Robertson's ideas about globalisation (2002).

Given the fact that there are currently some 8,000 film festivals being organised in the world, scholars have tried to grasp the complexity of the festival landscape in encompassing terminology. The Argentinian critic Quintín suggested a "festival galaxy" that is in orbit around Cannes as the most important festival in the system (Papadimitriou & Ruoff, 2016, p. 58; Quintín, 2009). Given the ubiquity of film festivals worldwide on every day of the year, the Cannes-centred perspective is too reductive to be useful. In fact, most scholars moved away from a conceptualisation in terms of a closed film festival "circuit" towards sociological theories on networks, flows and systems to study the interdependency of the events (de Valck, 2007) in an "archipelago" of festivals as a more suitable metaphor (Loist, 2016). The multitude of actors involved has led to socio-anthropological applications of actor-network theories (de Valck, 2007) or Giddens' structuration theory in analysing the social forces at play in festival networks (de Valck, 2007; Elsaesser, 2005b; Giddens, 1984).

The emphasis on connectivity and interaction is best captured by the metaphor of the film festival as an industrial node (Iordanova, 2015). As a multipurpose actor, this node is constituted by discourses (Dayan 2000),

visuals, a live performance, a public awareness of ‘invisible’ parallel activities behind closed doors; a social network in a celebratory environment; an institutional body of politics; an educator; a curator of national and international cinema and audiences; a marketing platform for films to be branded; an archive of cultural and historical memory; rituals and rites of passage (Van Gennep, 2011) that (re)affirm the status and capital of those who successfully ‘pass through’ the gatekeeping filters and value-addition processes of film festivals.

Since any film festival constitutes a multidimensional, ephemeral and social encounter, the study thereof has to adequately navigate its complexity. Festivals are constructed by the written and visual discourses it produces and those that are produced about them, through which their official agenda is communicated and discussed (Dayan, 2000). Sociologist and media anthropologist Daniel Dayan’s observations at the 2000 Sundance Festival are considered to have transformed film festival studies from predominantly textual analysis to transnational multi-media investigations. Dayan felt that the use of exclusively ethnographic research methods fell short to acknowledge the complexity of the festival experience and proposed a “double festival”, a visual and a written one. As an ethnographer, he realised that the different participants engage in a definitional process with a dominant written or printed component. In *Film Festivals. From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* (2007), de Valck summarises this as a new methodological intersection: “If an ethnographer has to acknowledge a written component, the media scholar must not ignore the performative components” (de Valck, 2007, p. 131).

Latin American film festival scholarship has also taken flight. In a broad scope on Latin American film industries as situated within the global circulation of film production, Tamara Falicov discusses policies, funding opportunities, audiences, censorship, the relation to television, co-productions with European and United States’ producers as well as other commonalities and challenges, in particular in Argentina, Brazil and Mexico (2019). In this wider scope, film festivals emerge mainly as alternative outlets for distribution, financing and training. Laura Rodríguez Isaza remarked that, despite their reputation as places for cultural celebration, film festivals as “scenes of power” are marked by a high degree of competition, hierarchy and inequality (Nornes, 2007, p. 65; Rodríguez Isaza, 2014). She studied the commercial aspects of Latin American film circulation, questions of identity as well as markers of

quality and authorship of Latin American cinema in the international film festival circuit (2012, 2014). The circulation of Latin American cinemas was also taken up by Minerva Campos, who analysed the construction and legitimation of transnational cinemas from Latin America through the international film festival circuit (2016). The festival circuit has thus increasingly been conceptualised as a key node of a distribution set-up that would transcend national borders and as part of a well-planned business strategy (Iordanova, 2016, p. xiv).

Iberoamerica-oriented coproduction funds have particularly garnered academic attention in recent years and occupy a central position in the literature. The *Cine en Construcción*-fund for Latin American films that is co-organised by Cinélatino, Toulouse's *Rencontres Cinémas d'Amérique Latine* and the San Sebastián International Film Festival, has been analysed in several works (Campos, 2012, 2013, 2015; Falicov, 2013a; La Parra-Pérez, 2018; Triana-Toribio, 2013; Umaran & Vallejo, 2017). The regional Iberoamerican Ibermedia-fund has equally well been studied (Falicov, 2012; Gómez Pérez et al., 2013; Villazana, 2009), in addition to IFF Rotterdam's Hubert Bals Fund (Ross, 2011; Steinhart, 2006), and the Berlinale's World Cinema Fund (Odabasi, 2018) among many other initiatives similar in scope. Most of these writings focused on the economic advantages of the co-production of films between European and Latin American producers and of navigating the festival circuit while also pointing out the funds' criteria, restrictions and the challenges and traps for (aspiring) filmmakers from "the Global South" (Falicov, 2016, p. 210; Grovogui, 2010).

3.3.4. Film festivals as educators and producers

With the organisation of roundtable conversations, workshops, lectures or educational programmes, festivals can also assume the role of educator and provide opportunities for practice-based learning (Hjort, 2013a, 2013b). The emphasis of film festivals as platforms for training and professionalisation of filmmakers fits the approach to film cultures in small nations that considers "the ways in which systemic constraints are transformed, through practitioners' agency, into creative opportunities and the conditions needed for an entire milieu to thrive" (Hjort, 2013a, p. 6). As the empirical chapters elaborate, several film festivals in Central America are either linked to film schools or involved in the organisation of training opportunities for filmmakers.

The promotion of cultural dialogue has always been central to the spirit of film festivals, be it in showcasing national cinemas or in relation to the production and circulation of foreign cinemas. Gradually, European film festivals not only brought foreign films to their festivals as a window onto the world but, simultaneous to the global political economy's neoliberal and developmentalist turn (see earlier), many established film funds aimed at attracting film professionals from the Global South to partner up with European partners in co-production schemes. The bulk of those funds would have to be spend in the funding institution's country, making it a form of tied aid that contributes to the host nation's film industry with foreign talent. Over time, these partnerships often complicated the aforementioned notions of ownership, agency and representation. In the past, festival funds were sometimes dictated by policies that included requirements and criteria that favour certain regimes of representation and narrativity that would likely appeal to their festival audiences, and their desire to bridge cultural difference through cinema. In the funds' regulations and requirements, notions of nationhood, authenticity, local flavours, cultural differences or similarities are combined with Aristotelian storytelling and a cinematography that is dynamic, reflexive-realist and slow, with long takes (Quandt, 2009; Falicov, 2016). Film programmer and critic James Quandt takes note of

an international arthouse-festival formula [...] *adagio* rhythms and oblique narrative; a tone of quietude and reticence, an aura of unexplained or unearned anguish; attenuated takes, long tracking or panning shots. (Quandt, 2009, p. 77)

For example, the Berlinale introduces its World Cinema Fund as follows:

Together with the Federal Foundation for Culture and in cooperation with the Goethe Institute, the Foreign Ministry and German producers, the World Cinema Fund works to develop and support cinema in regions with a weak film infrastructure, while fostering cultural diversity in German cinemas. The World Cinema Fund supports films that could not be made without additional funding: films that stand out with an unconventional aesthetic approach, that tell powerful stories and transmit an authentic image of their cultural roots. (Berlinale, n.d.)

Many of these funds also include pitching meetings, masterclasses, workshops, residencies and laboratories where international, often European and North American, experts linked to the respective festivals impart their knowledge

and experiences. As a result, filmmakers from the Global South are advised how to adapt their screenplays and taught how to navigate the festival circuit and its funds, piecing together the budget for the films they want to make while sacrificing as little as possible of artistic integrity.

The funding and co-production strategies can be regarded as a 'workshopisation' of cinema in which the linguistically versatile and pitch-savvy art producers from the South engage a foreign professional audience through localised storytelling produced with festival- or industry-approved standards. Having to pass through a whole series of workshops in different countries potentially runs up the (pre-)production budget and is often said to be a necessary nuisance as well as a blessing for filmmakers, who would not be able to gather the same financial support in their home country. In order to reach even more talent and in an apparent answer to the critique that only few can afford the costly travels from workshop to workshop across the world, various festivals have started organising their industry academies in Latin America through satellite programmes. Berlinale organises its Talents Lab in Guadalajara and Buenos Aires, and the Swiss 'A-list' festival of Locarno branched out to Sao Paulo in Brazil, Morelia in Mexico, Valparaíso in Chile and Panama City (see Chapter 4), clearly targeting rather affluent and high-profile film festivals in Latin America.

In the non-industrial film cultures of Central America, a select group of transnational auteurs with access to Euro-American funds and workshops distinguish themselves from the national cinemas which they somewhat problematically come to represent (see Chapter 2). This reflects the arguments made by Ahn on the increasing international visibility of Korean cinema (2012), by Nichols on postrevolutionary Iranian cinemas (1994) or by Thomas Elsaesser on the emergence of New German Cinema in the 1960s, which had to acquire international recognition before becoming part of the German canon (2005a).

Filmmakers such as Wim Wenders, Werner Herzog or Rainer Werner Fassbinder made strategic use of the international festival circuit as aesthetic forums that "elevated their works to the level of art" (de Valck, 2007, p. 60). As mentioned before, anti-imperialist sentiments criticised Western-centred cultural management of film festivals in Europe towards the end of the 1960s. This gradual shift in festival programming based on artistic merit and the discovery of new talent from all over the world signalled a second period in festival management, after decades of cultural diplomacy in which national

institutions preselected films to compete at prestigious events (de Valck, 2007). In the decade of the 1980s, when film studies emphasised the (textual) study of national cinemas, festivals had already discovered various 'new' cinemas from, among other countries, Iran, Brazil, Turkey, China and Argentina, which turned individual artistically-legitimate auteurs into ambassadors for their homeland's national cinema, which is problematic for the characterisation of larger heterogeneous national film industries such as those in India, China or Mexico with long-standing and internally diverse cinematographic histories.

The globalist shift in festival programming was accompanied by a sympathetic relationship between European arthouse filmmaking, film festivals and Third Cinema-movements such as Cinema Novo. This was the case for the New German Cinema's New-Left ideology and their Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962, in which an anti-Hollywood aesthetic was proclaimed. For instance, this impacted the programming choices for the Berlinale, which became a celebrated platform for films from outside Western Europe and the US, with early successes such as *Bushido* (Tadashi, Japan, 1963), *Susuz Yaz/Dry Summer* (Erksan, Turkey, 1964), *Os Cafajestes* (Guerra, Brazil, 1962) or *Os Fuzis* (Guerra, Brazil, 1964), the awarding or nomination of which restored Berlin's status and reputation as an event with global reach in the anti-imperialist climate following the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 (Rocha, 2019). Simultaneously, the European film festivals provided Brazilian filmmakers with an opportunity to evade censorship and cultural repression in Brazil, where a dictatorship was installed in 1964. In similar, mutually beneficial, reasoning, Bill Nichols (1994) also emphasises the popularity of 'new national cinemas' that acquired momentum through screenings and special national sidebars at prestigious festivals, which he explains through a study of new Iranian Cinema and its circulation.

Conclusions: cultural dialogues

The bulk of international film festival research has focused on four agenda-setting festivals, being those in Cannes, Berlin, Venice and Toronto (de Valck, 2007; Wong, 2011). The discussions have also covered most other 'A-list' festivals as almost anachronistically labelled by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF). The range of festivals that are written about is increasingly international, including research on Sundance, Pusan, Annecy, Amsterdam, Havana, Rotterdam, Morelia, Mar de Plata, Locarno,

Austin, Ouagadougou, Hong Kong and many other, smaller and thematically diversified events. Scholarly emphasis has been predominantly directed towards field- and identity-configuring events that are defined as “temporal organizations [...] that encapsulate and shape the development of [...] markets and industries” and as “the primary meeting grounds for filmmaking and industry professionals to network and develop industry standards” (Lampel & Meyer, 2008, p. 1026). With the curation of a film programme with defined themes, genres, geographical or other sections, the festival can curate and (re-)direct audiences towards known or unknown films, filmmakers or social matters and expand the horizons of expectation and change. Festivals then invite viewers, and critics, to participate in the relationship between producers, texts and industries in developing certain tastes and expectations that continually inform interpretative structures with a transformative power on texts.

However, the exploration of smaller film festivals’ roles in the emerging industries of Central America provides contextualised insights regarding the exhibition of regional cinemas, overall film-cultural development and the creation, and curation, of audiences. Because of a persistent lack of support structures and theatrical distribution, film festivals in Central America naturally assume the role of exhibitor, educator, gatekeeper and distributor for national industries and are therefore central to the understanding of contemporary Central American cinemas.

The situation of contemporary Central American cinemas has warranted a historical framework of Third (Gabriel, 1982) and Third-Worldist cinemas (Shohat & Stam, 1994), including the former’s productive relationship to the film festival phenomenon as a space for transnational cultural dialogue and creative production outside of mainstream channels of exhibition and distribution. Chapter 6 especially reflects on the Third Culture-heritage in considering films and film festivals in the testimonial and postmemory genre. While in technique and rationale they might still resort to a cinema as a tool for social change and denunciation, it is argued that the contemporary approach is much more nuanced with respect to the filmmakers’ voice, explicit political or ideological statements and the revealing of the production process as part of the personal and reflexive turn in contemporary Latin American filmmaking.

Through an emphasis on the logics of film festivals in the region, the following, empirical, chapters analyse how national film cultures in Central America are

constituted and strengthened from a politics of relationality within specific communities and social networks. Whereas it is empirically difficult to link international auteurs to domestic film production, the gathered data shows their degree of embeddedness in national film cultures. This information nuances the contention that transnational auteurs do not represent national film cultures and instead demonstrates the idea suggested by Hjort (2011) in situating them as artistic leaders who are involved in the transnational networks of film communities in Central America.

The dissertation's second part starts with an elaboration of four film festival case studies that were identified as important to regional developments in Central American film cultures. The analytical emphasis is different for each festival, according to its place and focus in the film festival landscape. The fifth chapter incorporates the findings of the network analysis as a complement to the ethnographic positioning and visualises the filmmaking communities that converge at the events and structures that are discussed in the fourth chapter. The sixth chapter introduces the preoccupation with memories, remembering and forgetting through cinema in Central American postconflict societies.

Part II: thematic analyses

Chapter 4. Drivers of change in the Central American film festivalscape

Introduction

In the theoretical chapters, Central American cinemas were conceptualised as post-Third-Worldist (Shohat, 2004), small (Hjort & Petrie, 2007) cinemas that, in absence of strong state-regulated industries or support structures, have come to rely heavily on their relations to national and regional film festivals (Ahn, 2012). This chapter introduces a selection of the empirical findings that the ethnographic fieldwork has yielded for four specific festival case studies, with a fifth, smaller, case following in the last chapter. Without pursuing exhaustivity, these film festivals are considered because they embody various of the more determining factors of contemporary film-cultural developments in Central America. The reported findings broadly cover the five areas of concentration in the study of film festivals as nodal interfaces for film cultures that were outlined in the methods' section (see Chapter 1).

As elaborated earlier, the primary areas of concentration refer to the roles and identities of film festivals in small cinematic cultures (cf. Chapter 1), as social meeting grounds, cultural gatekeepers, spaces for learning and as potentially expressive of ideological and political perspectives. When these general notions are applied to the studied film festivals in Central America, they translate into five dominant sub-themes around which the case studies will be structured. In a very short and necessarily reductive overview, Havana's film festival is discussed mainly in relation to aspects of ideology (1); the Ícaro festival as a proponent of regional cultural integration (2); the AcampaDOC film festival's essence lies with training documentary filmmakers (3) and IFF Panama emphasises industrial concerns as networking and project development (4). The fifth festival case study, the International Film Showcase Memory, Truth and Justice, is taken up in the last chapter for its specific relation to the postmemory-theme (5).

Apart from the Ícaro International Film Festival which I was able to attend in 2017 and 2018, most findings are based on a single festival edition, and therefore provide an episodic, cross-sectional, rather than a longitudinal perspective on this representative set of festivals (see Table 1). In line with the

focus on contemporary film cultures, the first festival that could have been considered is the Costa Rican Showcase for Film and Video (*Muestra de Cine y Video Costarricense*) which started in 1992 as an exhibition platform for local productions and which expanded to regional and international films by turning into the International Film and Video Festival San José in 2011. In 2012, its name was changed into Costa Rica International Film Festival – Peace on Earth and eventually into Costa Rica International Film Festival (CRFIC) in 2015.

Although it is an important event for Costa Rican and Central American filmmakers, the festival was not held in 2018 because of various legislative, financial and organisational reasons and could therefore not be taken up as an in-depth case study (Sánchez, 2018). In its historical development, scope and objectives for national and regional cinema, the festival can be situated at a similar footing as the Ícaro Festival, and requires further study. On the surface, it seems that CRFIC not only emphasises its responsibility as an exhibitor of national and regional cinema in an extensive range of some 15 urban and rural locations throughout the country, but also organises talent campuses for emerging filmmakers and a work-in-progress platform for the development of film projects that allows the festival to mediate and strengthen industrial practices on a national and regional scale.

The festival is part of the annual operations of the Costa Rican Centro de Cine, which organises screenings throughout the year with ‘Preambulo’ and manages the operations of the annual ‘Fauno’ film fund (Falicov, 2019; Sánchez, 2018). This integration of initiatives related to programming, industry, education and funding seems to indicate that CRFIC combines some of the defining aspects of the festivals that will be discussed in this chapter.

The first festival that is discussed instead somewhat paradoxically lies outside of Central America. The International Festival of New Latin American Cinema or, as it is also known, the Havana Film Festival, represents since 1979 the underlying institutional, practical and ideological rationale that lies at the foundation of many Central American film festivals. After the Cuban example, two EICTV-graduates created the non-profit media organisation Casa Comal and mounted a film festival in Guatemala in 1998. The International Ícaro Film Festival and its satellite events in the region represent the continuation of the EICTV film school’s educational paradigm in promoting a regional circuit of festival exhibition and training opportunities for, in particular young, and indigenous, filmmakers. For over 20 years, their goal has been to

regionally integrate film-cultural expressions while attempting to inscribe their project in the national government's cultural budget. Along the same educational principles, since 2012 the AcampaDOC International Documentary Film Festival provides aspiring filmmakers with intense theoretical and hands-on learning experiences to inspire a grassroots documentary filmmaking for, in and about local communities and vulnerable populations.

The most ambitious and wealthiest of the Central American film festivals is the International Film Festival of Panama. In 2010, one of the co-founders of the Toronto International Film Festival, Henk van der Kolk, retired to Panama with his family and inspired local government to set up an international film festival in 2012. While the two largest festivals in Costa Rica and Guatemala are primarily focused on training filmmakers and fostering regional film productions, the Panamanian emphasis lies with industry- and audience-building with ample corporate and public sponsoring.

Lastly, film festivals' social and political responsibilities in the region are highlighted through a broader discussion on the presence of human rights film festivals and related screenings that foreground dialogues on ethnic and sexual diversity (Tascón, 2015). One particular human rights-oriented film festival that is included in the final chapter, the International Film Showcase Memory, Truth and Justice, fits the context of the postmemory genre as particularly characteristic of a significant part of postwar Central American film production and exhibition. All three major festivals in the area, CRFIC, Ícaro and IFF Panama, together with a large range of smaller ones, follow in the footsteps of the Havana Film Festival, which continues to hover as a mythical spectre over current developments in contemporary Latin American cinemas.

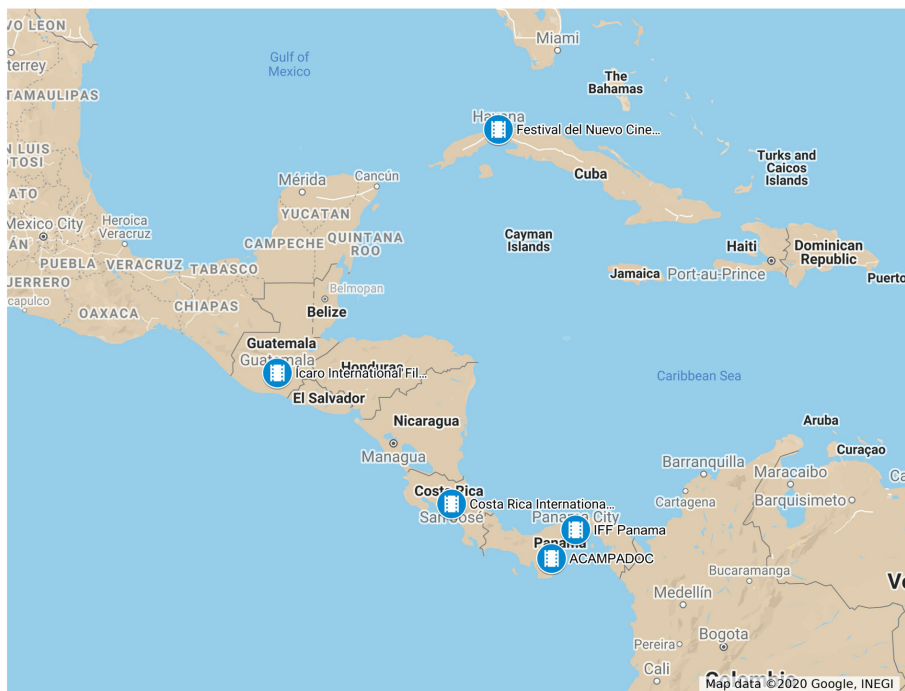


Figure 1: The geography of Central American film festival case studies

4.1. Between capitalism and socialism: the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema and EICTV

When I situated the second, militant, phase of the history of Central American cinemas in a broader historical context, the importance of the film festivals in Mérida, Caracas and Viña del Mar was highlighted in relation to the crystallisation of the New Latin American Cinemas as a continental movement (see Chapter 2: The second phase). Eventually, Havana was selected as the movement's base of operations, and the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema became the group's crowning achievement, providing a unique space where Latin American cinematography could be shared and debated between like-minded professionals from all over the world:

As one of the primary sites for showcasing Latin American film in the 1980s and 1990s, the Havana festival retained a commitment to political filmmaking and the development of a Latin American identity at a time when the New Latin American Cinema movement was fragmenting. (Ross, 2010, p. 150)

The festival's immediate success in the 1980s coincided with the pinnacle of the NLAC movement's national and international success and as a result grew exponentially. At one point, there were 88 participating film theatres in the city centre of Havana, catering to over half a million festivalgoers during a two-week-long celebration that took over the entire country for the first weeks of December (Kleinhans & Lesage, 1986). But when the social and political engagement of the NLAC movement started to dwindle in the face of new repressive adversities in and beyond Latin America, also the festival's (international) appeal faded (Turan, 2003).



Figure 2: General catalogue, International Festival of New Latin American Cinema (2018)

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the subsequent Special Period's economic crisis and the persistent dictatorial repression in various Latin American countries was a bitter pill for the festival organisation. It was no longer manageable to have a programme of 500 films in less than optimal technological and organisational conditions. The reduced budget led to cuts in the number of exhibition spaces, total films as well as invitees, and eventually to diminishing numbers of festivalgoers. Ticket sales also dropped from 4.4 million tickets sold in 2012 to 2.3 million in 2017. From the 88 theatres that participated in the 1980s, the festival is currently limited to 15 theatres located only in Havana and mainly centred along and around Avenida 23 in the Vedado area. From once serving over 500,000 festivalgoers annually, the festival currently attracts around 250,000 visitors. The festival did still programme 373 films in 2018, 333 of which qualify as Latin American cinema. In spite of the political and economic difficulties, the festival's objective hasn't changed in its forty years of existence, which is

to promote the regular meeting of filmmakers from Latin America who contribute with their works to enrich the artistic cultures of our countries. The festival was born in another century, in another era, in a bipolar world and in the middle of the Cold War. It arrives at its fortieth anniversary in a similarly complex context, confronted with the dangerous avalanche of a neo-fascist right that scales spaces and destroys also what has been built in the fields of cinema and culture. (Giroud, 2018, p. 8)

The International Festival of New Latin American Cinema is still a "vital meeting point for local and international filmmakers and film professionals" and a "generator of cinephilia and film culture for both participants and audiences" (Gutiérrez & Wagenberg, 2013, p. 296). As a predominantly "audience festival", as a type opposed by the more business-oriented festivals (Peranson, 2009), Havana is first and foremost concerned with bringing the "best" cinema of Latin American and of the world to the Cuban people. At the same time, it is an international film festival "that establishes a Latin American core from which an outward looking international perspective can be achieved" (Ross, 2010, p. 150), one that transcends the programming scope of Latin American cinema at Cannes, Berlin, Venice or Toronto (Garbey, 2008 in Ross, 2010).

The festival's programming reinforces its character as a Latin American audience-oriented film festival. With 373 films programmed at least once

during the 40th edition, but often more, in ten days, the festival offers ten times more films than can be taken in by any festivalgoer if she would attend all consecutive screening moments during the daily showtimes at 10h00, 12h30, 15h00, 17h30, 20h00 and 22h30 in seven of the 15 theatres (Chaplin, 23 y 12, Yara, La Rampa, Riviera, Acapulco, Infanta), while the remaining theatres are dedicated to the parallel screenings of galas, retrospectives and other events. The festival's locations are also spread out across Havana, occasionally rendering it difficult or impossible to attend consecutive screenings or events in different parts of the city (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Festival locations in Havana (2018)

Another immediate observation is that the local population is very committed to the festival, and queues for hours outside on the sidewalk to get into one of the 1500 seats in, for example, the Yara theatre, which is one of the more centrally located and most popular venues along Avenida 23. The general audience can buy a *pasaporte* or festival passport that consists of seven film tickets worth ten Cuban pesos (CUP), which allows people to watch all films except for the galas and depending on availability. The festival's most popular

films as well as the award winners are programmed once more in the two days after the festival has actually closed, thus offering another chance to see the films.

Whereas local visitors are queuing in front of the theatres, international visitors have the opportunity to purchase a participant accreditation for 50 Cuban convertible pesos (CUC). The accreditation includes access to the inaugural event, industry talks and press conferences, and allows to skip (most of) the lines waiting outside the theatres. Curiously, wearing the Havana Club-accreditation lanyard in the streets would change my own status from foreign tourist to festival-participant, a privileged position that elicits a certain respect and causes street vendors or scammers to steer clear. Instead, upon noticing the accreditation, people would walk up to ask which film I was presenting at the festival, in the – vain – hope of finding themselves in the company of a foreign celebrity.

The greatest challenge in navigating the festival lies exactly there, to browse through the vast catalogue and determine what films and activities to attend. The first step of the planning process always involved trying to get a hold of the festival's daily journal in the morning at the Hotel Nacional or outside the theatres, in which a number of screenings and events from that day are laid out in editorials, columns, interviews and other announcements, including an updated festival programme, as there are always last-minute changes to the programme. The festival's daily journals, or *diarios*, are the most convenient way to stay informed, since friends and acquaintances would have to be called on their landlines at home or contacted while connected to one of the public Wi-Fi hotspots near the film theatres. The more recent introduction of mobile data packages in Cuba, however still very costly, might facilitate many of the festival's communication processes, which also include a smartphone application and daily festival reports, impressions and interviews on YouTube.

The difficulties in trying to navigate the festival were overcome by a sense that, in order to best capture the festival's essence, planning became subordinate to surrendering to the city's and festival's, at times admittedly chaotic, beauty. Instead of trying to force the experience one way or another by attempting to adhere to a predetermined schedule, I was engulfed by the greatest variety of films and events, where and when they would cross my path. In this regard, the Havana festival is a unique experience, as it not only allows but actually compels anyone to immerse oneself in a world of film, alongside others who are carving out their own unique trajectory throughout the festival.

The film festival in Havana was the last in the series of festivals I attended during the four-month research stay in 2018. As a result, I had several acquaintances among those who were invited to present their films or workshops at the festival, which allowed me to obtain invitations to closed events such as the festive opening night reception at the Hotel Nacional's swimming pool. The reception followed the inaugural screening at the Karl Marx theatre, which was Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica's biographical documentary about former Uruguayan president José Mujica, *El Pepe, Una Vida Suprema/Pepe, A Supreme Life* (2018). In the film, Kusturica follows Mujica on the last day of his presidency and converses with him about life and politics while drinking *yerba mate* and smoking cigars at Mujica's countryside home. A former Tupamaros-guerrilla combatant and political prisoner, Mujica's exceptional story was also the subject of another award-winning film at the 2018 edition of the festival, *La noche de 12 años/The night of twelve years* (2018) by Uruguayan filmmaker Álvaro Brechner. Neither film is openly political, as Kusturica's film is an intimate biographical documentary and Brechner's film portrays Mujica's imprisonment under authoritarian rule as an experiential exploration of pain, torture and human resilience that transcends. Both films avoid overt political statements, despite the subject matter and the filmmakers' personal convictions, which, as is the case for Emir Kusturica, has not always been uncontroversial.

DIARIO DEL FESTIVAL

PUBLICACIÓN OFICIAL DE LA OFICINA DEL FESTIVAL INTERNACIONAL DEL NUEVO CINE LATINOAMERICANO www.habanafilmfestival.com

JUEVES 06 | DICIEMBRE, 2018 | 1.00 PESO

02

HOMENAJE A 40 AÑOS DEL FESTIVAL DE CINE

03

ENTREVISTA IVÁN CIRIOUD, PRESIDENTE DEL FESTIVAL

06

HOMENAJE AL LUGAR AL QUE ESOS SUEÑOS CONCURRIERON CON NUESTRAS FELICIDADES



El Pope, una vida a prisma es resultado de un interés por dibujar la excepcionalidad de un individuo. Un documental gineco en la noche inaugural del Festival.

La contundente historia de José Mujica

ÁMBEL HÉREZ

Latinoamérica entraña una realidad particularmente compleja. Además de un imaginario marcado por el colonialismo y una tradición plasmada por desigualdades sociales, dictaduras militares e injerencias económicas, el área ha experimentado siempre un entramado político bastante trágico, lo cual ha moldeado la subjetividad regional al punto de condicionar las más variadas prácticas culturales. La violencia de la vida social y política de América Latina ha sido un desafío para las estrategias de producción estética. Tanto el discurso artístico local como el emergente en otras áreas del globo interesado en el subcontinente, tienden a explorar sus tramas históricas, como visiones o simbologías, condicio-

namiento heterodoxo, preocupado por el modo en que las contingencias históricas o articulaciones culturales afectan el universo emocional y psicológico de ciertos sujetos-, el reconocido director serbio Emir Kusturica urde un interesante retrato de José Mujica, presidente uruguayo entre 2010 y 2015.

Dado que el cineasta reconoce el profundo grado de subjetividad que le es propio al género documental, no teme reconocer su admiración por la personalidad de este hombre que integrara el Movimiento de Liberación Nacional-Tupamaros. El Pope, una vida a prisma es resultado de un interés por dibujar la excepcionalidad de un individuo, mas no es un documental biográfico en su sentido recto, es una indagación en la sensibilidad, en el pensamiento

andados por el estatus periférico de la zona, por la marginalidad geográfica, por la intrusión hegemónica de los discursos primararistas... Y en medio de esa espesa red -como en su día hizo el Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano y hacen ahora los realizadores de la contemporaneidad-, se revela nuestra riqueza cultural y la necesidad de continuar pensando la experiencia latinoamericana, sus perfiles ideológicos y «formas y uso de la política».

Como parte de esa línea estética -concretamente del audiovisual- que se sumerge en el paisaje sociopolítico de América Latina, debemos asumir el documental El Pope, una vida a prisma. Movido por una sensibilidad militante para con las diferencias -lo cual ha nutrido su cine de un sesgo antropológico y un

andados por el estatus periférico de la zona, por la marginalidad geográfica, por la intrusión hegemónica de los discursos primararistas... Y en medio de esa espesa red -como en su día hizo el Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano y hacen ahora los realizadores de la contemporaneidad-, se revela nuestra riqueza cultural y la necesidad de continuar pensando la experiencia latinoamericana, sus perfiles ideológicos y «formas y uso de la política».

Como parte de esa línea estética -concretamente del audiovisual- que se sumerge en el paisaje sociopolítico de América Latina, debemos asumir el documental El Pope, una vida a prisma. Movido por una sensibilidad militante para con las diferencias -lo cual ha nutrido su cine de un sesgo antropológico y un

dad en el transcurso de su construcción.

Este gesto creativo de Kusturica trenza imágenes emocionales y físicas que surcan el devenir social y personal de Mujica, sin caer en el panfleto político rústico. En el transcurso de tres años, se registraron momentos de su actividad pública -más allá de su ejercicio presidencial-, algunos viajes, sitios ligados a su historia personal, así como el vínculo amoroso con su compañera Lucha Tupamaro... Con notable habilidad comunicativa, el documental expone agudas conversaciones por las que circulan temas como el estado de la política y las transformaciones del globo. Entre tanto, conocemos detalles de las vivencias de Mujica en la cárcel, de su cotidianidad, de las ideas que sustentan su ideología militante, y de su elección de una vida austera durante y después de los años de gobernación, lo cual, no podía ser menos, contribuye a su resonancia internacional. El Pope, una vida a prisma no es un sumario de datos y anécdotas sobre Mujica; antes que un minucioso muestrario informativo de su vida, es la observación de su mundo de valores y una argumentación de su diferencia.

Autor de piezas impresionables como *Underground* (1995) o *Tiempo de guerra* (1999), Emir Kusturica vuelve a proponer aquí una pieza notable. Desde luego, sustentada por un sólido dominio de la escritura cinematográfica, garante de la certeza de su sintaxis, y por un recio criterio autoral, que escapa a cualquier predefinición estandarizada del género documental. Aclamado por sus incisivas caracterizaciones -no solo de personajes, sino de la historia serbia-, por sus controversiales radiografías de las problemáticas sociales y políticas de su cultura, por su alteración de lo real, su humor negro, su capacidad de distanciamiento y su dominio de los más variados tonos y estilos filmáticos, este creador construye una obra que dará de qué hablar.

HOY EN LA INAUGURACIÓN: ENTREGA DE CORALES DE HONOR A:

- LA PRODUCTORA BERTHA NAVARRO
- EL INSTITUTO SUNDANCE
- ACTUACIÓN DE HAYDÉE MILANÉS

Figure 4: “The overwhelming story of José Mujica” on the festival journal’s front page (2018)

Mujica was last imprisoned in 1973 together with two other members of the Tupamaros guerrilla, and was moved across Uruguay from one remote cell to another in a disorienting solitary confinement for 12 years, before being released. The story of human resilience, Mujica’s frugal lifestyle and leftist politics as Uruguayan president from 2010 to 2015 appealed to the Havana Film Festival and its audience. It is therefore no surprise that the opening day’s journal promoted the film and Mujica’s story on the front page (see Figure 4). The screening was received with a standing ovation from the 5,500 people attending the festival’s inaugural ceremony at the Karl Marx theatre. The story

of Mujica embodies the repressive political climates similar to those that many Latin American countries have experienced, and his magnanimous and revolutionary spirit and solidarity were idealised at the 40th anniversary edition of the festival. Mujica was in prison when the New Latin American Cinemas consolidated and the Havana film festival was founded, and he was released around the height of the festival's success in 1985. The celebration of his revolutionary past, his presidency and personality seamlessly fit into the artistic-ideological aspirations of the Festival of New Latin American Cinema.

The opening ceremony also presented honorary awards to the Sundance Institute and to Mexican director and producer Bertha Navarro, who has been instrumental in the production of a number of socially conscious documentaries and films such as, among many others, *Cabeza de Vaca/Cow's head* (Echevarría, 1991), *Reed: México Insurgente/Reed: Mexico insurgent* (Leduc, 1972), *Cronos* (Del Toro, 1993) and *El fauno del laberinto/Pan's labyrinth* (Del Toro, 2006) (Rashkin, 2001, p. 74). Navarro is furthermore known as a cofounder of the New Latin American Cinema Foundation and as a collaborator in the Sundance's Institute's Latin American cinema program. A second honorary award was presented to two delegates of the Sundance Institute, who delivered a lengthy discourse on the Institute's commitment to providing training opportunities for filmmakers from Cuba and other parts of Latin America. The speeches were held entirely in English, interpreted in Spanish for the audience and followed by a recorded video in which Sundance director Robert Redford, expressed his thoughts on the historical collaboration with the Havana Film Festival.

During the ten days of the festival, I was mainly a festivalgoer trying to take in as many films as possible while attending a number of gala presentations and roundtable discussions at the Hotel Nacional or at the cultural centre Casa de las Américas. The festival's programming of 373 films generally reflected the dominance of the larger Latin American film industries. Argentina participated with 68 films in the 2018 programme, Brazil 68, the United States 53 and Mexico 50, followed by Cuba with 47 titles in the promotion of national cinema, including several retrospectives and homages to Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Fernando Birri. In volume and presence, Central American (co-)productions still follow at great lengths with four Panamanian films, three from Guatemala, two from Costa Rica and El Salvador, one from Honduras and no films from Nicaragua. As an acclaimed celebration and promotion of the continent's cinemas, Central American films seem to struggle to be

included in the canon of Latin American cinemas, whereas countries such as Chile (23), Colombia (24), Peru (8), Dominican Republic (8), Uruguay (5), Venezuela (6) or Ecuador (6) already represent a larger share of the programme.

My attendance at the festival allowed to see several film professionals that I had met earlier in Costa Rica, Panama, Guatemala or Honduras during the research stay. Several of the acquaintances encouraged me to visit the film school in San Antonio de los Baños and talk to EICTV's director Susana Molina. I joined Peruvian filmmaker Magaly Zevallos, whom I had met at the AcampaDOC film festival in Panama earlier in September, when she arranged to go to the school to organise the postproduction of her latest film. We were picked up in Havana and driven to San Antonio de los Baños by one of EICTV's tutors. After a tour of the grounds, I briefly talked to the school's director, picked up some literature from the school's bookshop and studied the gathered graffiti messages that internationally renowned film professionals have left on the school's walls throughout the years.



Figure 5: Graffiti by Francis Ford Coppola, Asghar Farhadi, Fernando Birri, Carlos Sorín et al. (2018)

The EICTV is involved in the festival, not only through educational activities but also in linking emerging talent with industrial networks. The production-development platform *Nuevas Miradas* (“new looks”) was first organised in 2006 by Mexican producer Martha Orozco, then head of the Production Unit. The initiative was set up for third-year students to be able to finish their fiction and documentary projects, but eventually extended to all EICTV alumni and other interested producer-director duos with films in early-stage development. The *Nuevas Miradas* workshops coincide with the Havana Film Festival in December and also offer a passage to the Ibero-American Co-Production Encounter at the International Film Festival of Guadalajara for selected projects after receiving financial rewards from the Norwegian Embassy. Selected documentaries flow through to the Documentary Forum at DocsDF in Mexico, where these projects can also benefit from a second phase of attracting (co-)production funds. Apart from the industrial activities at the Havana Film Festival, the *Nuevas Miradas* workshops have grown to be the most significant Cuban feedback and development platform for Latin American cinema with over 200 films that have benefitted from assessment and financing. The classes are imparted by specialists from the festival circuit, including representatives from Tribeca, the Sundance Documentary Film Program, The Guardian Multimedia Program, DocTV Latinoamérica, Talents Guadalajara (Berlinale), Programa Ibermedia, Cinergia (now discontinued), Encuentros Cartagena and Doc Montevideo. After the films’ production phase has been completed, many of these programmes also potentially offer further support in the form of international promotion, distribution or other support mechanisms, which is how the *Nuevas Miradas* can be an important link in the chain between the conception of an idea and the ‘career’ of a film.

Like the festival and other cultural organisations, the institution also has had to deal with Cuba’s economically more precarious moments, which has led the school, meant to be for students from all worlds regardless of class or privilege, to become a rather exclusive institution for the more economically privileged students or those who managed to obtain a scholarship. Halfway through its existence, the school started implementing tuition fees to cover the students’ and tutors’ expenses and continue managing the school. Currently, Ibero-American, African and Caribbean students between the ages of 22 and 30 are charged USD 5,000 per year, including the courses, equipment, accommodations, meals, medical services and bus transfers to Havana. Students from other countries are charged USD 8,000 per year. To prepare students for the entrance exam that the school organises, there are national

representatives, often EICTV-alumni, in most countries in the region, who gather the applications for the respective nations and organise a preparation test. The internationally renowned status has made the school competitive in the global film education landscape, and the biggest victims of this success are the low budget filmmakers and students from Cuba and the region who are not eligible for scholarships.

In discourse, programming and organisation, the undiminished politicisation of cinema as an art form continues to characterise the New Latin American film festival, while Latin American cinemas have, in fact, long transcended and reconfigured Third Cinema's aesthetic and practical guidelines. After forty editions, the militancy that the festival continues to ascribe to itself functions as a remnant of its former glory while the festival organisers try to breathe new life into the festival in an attempt to maintain or regain its position in the global, and in particular the Latin American, film festival landscape. In this respect, Kusturica's film on Pepe Mujica was the perfect opener to the 40th anniversary of the festival, as the former president "comes from that dream of finding a meeting point between capitalism and socialism", according to the filmmaker in a Cuban interview (Torres, 2018, p. 3).

The explosion of a capital-infused event-culture with ever-increasing heights of social, and live, mediatisation makes the Caribbean island a much less attractive competitor in the international (sales) circuit.⁹ However, the mythical status of the founders and some international sympathisers and invitees¹⁰ represent the difficult position of socially-conscious filmmakers whose art is too often complicated by the economics of filmmaking. Cuba and the Havana film festival fully embody this negotiation between revolutionary spirit and economic necessities in the globalised landscape of film production and exhibition. Being invited to Havana for filmmakers does not necessarily entail endless workshops or press conferences, since for the majority the acknowledgement by Havana's film festival is an honour, and time is generally spent taking in the atmosphere and watching as many films as possible.

⁹ With the advent of mobile data in early 2019 and the existing Wi-Fi hotspots the island is increasingly 'connected.' Given the steep cost of access, an on-line presence is still reserved for the wealthier segments of the population and tourists.

¹⁰ In 2018, the international guests included Benicio del Toro, Michael Moore, Emir Kusturica, Matt Dillon and others.

Havana's festival arrives near the arbitrary end of the festival season in December, as a result of which it does not include many world premieres, except for Cuban films, as most other Latin American films attempt to start their festival run with prestigious premieres in terms of attending sales agents, distributors, programmers and trade press. Many of the programmed international titles at the festival have generally first travelled to the gatekeeping quartet of Rotterdam (23/01-03/02), Berlin (20/02-01/03), Cannes (14-25/05), Venice (28/08-07/09) or Toronto (05/09-15/09), with a vast range of other options for documentary films (IDFA) and more diverse or experimental work (e.g. Locarno and Rotterdam). This was observed, not through extensive programming analysis of these events, but simply by remarking the respective festivals' laurels that serve as a marker of recognition and quality in the opening credits of a great part of the films exhibited in Havana.

Latin American cinema is generally taken up in the programmes of the aforementioned large film festivals, but also converges in festivals with a specifically regional emphasis, such as at Cartagena (6-11), Guadalajara (8-15) and Cinélatino Toulouse (22-31) in March, at BAFICI in Buenos Aires (13-24) in April or in San Sebastián (20-28) in September. Despite Havana's timing, location and diminished economic potential for films and filmmakers, it remains an important cultural site for Latin American cinema, characterised by a "reordering [...] from being a 'developing nation' that receives international media flows to a host location which produces the cultural context for audiovisual works" (Ross, 2010, 150).

In considering Cuba's specific relevance for the development of Central American cinemas, it is important to remember that the festival's genesis in 1979 coincided with the liberation movements in Nicaragua (1961-1979) and El Salvador (1979-1992). The newsreels ("*noticieros*") produced during the conflicts were immediately exhibited at the festival, which was the first and most important platform to gather and divulge information on social and political issues in Central America. New Latin American cinema and its principles, the reunions of Third World-filmmakers and the Havana film festival, but mostly the EICTV, have contributed to the aesthetics-ideology that served as the foundation on which to build film cultures in the rest of the continent. The "anti-scholastic" school, according to Fernando Birri, promotes the rejection of false oppositions between artisanal versus industrial, between polyvalence versus specialisation and between marginalisation versus

professionalism. In the school's opening statement, Birri foreshadowed one of Jacques Rancière's main arguments from *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987) by equally rejecting the verticality of teaching:

Against the verticality of a teaching that descends from the top down, the Quetzalcoatl of the three levels is fulfilled, because our feathered serpent bites its own tail: the circular flow of teaching, the internal dynamics of the School, the overcoming of the false authoritarian antithesis and static teaching-learning. This is completely overcome by its opposite: 'Teach by learning'. (Birri, 2017, p. 7).

The pedagogical "quetzalcoatl-principles" as proposed by Birri and other Third Cinema-filmmakers are key to the formation of independent filmmakers in Central America. In general, EICTV promotes creative openness, vocation and ideology. The EICTV-ideology does not refer to socialism per se but rather to a humanist, and (re-)humanising, perspective that got lost in colonial enterprises and Third-World-classifications. EICTV is the spatial and ideological expression of Fernando Birri's famous words in the School's foundational statement in 1986 in which he calls upon creative work "to express that which does not yet have a name, image or style, so the place of Utopia, that by definition is nowhere, will be somewhere" (Lord & Zarza, 2014, p. 201). At EICTV, that creative utopia lives in the doorways of graffitied student residences bearing (anarchist, antifascist, nihilist, ...) traces from all over the world (see Figure 6: LEFT: "Ignoren las órdenes fascistas. Escriban y filmen!!" (ignore fascist orders. Write and film.); RIGHT: "viva la utopia" (long live the utopia); CENTRE: "¡viva Centroamérica!" (long live Central America)).



Figure 6: EICTV's student residence doorway

The school's popularity is also due to the difficulty or impossibility to pursue a film degree in the Central American students' home countries. While the last two decades have seen the establishment of a number of film schools (e.g. Veritas University in Costa Rica, Rafael Landívar University in Guatemala), most film festivals in small film cultures have added distinct educational programmes that are organised annually during the festival, or associated to programmes that run all year long. Two good examples include Casa Comal's film school and the Ícaro International Film Festival in Guatemala, and the AcampaDOC Documentary film festival in Panama, which are elaborated in the following sections.

4.2. A space to fly in Guatemala: two decades of Ícaro spreading its wings

The winged Icarus, symbol for hubris in Greek mythology, represents the historical struggle for Central Americans to produce and exhibit films, which implies “to reach for the sun” as the 2017 festival's video introduction states.¹¹ Economic, social and political difficulties have too often side-tracked cultural development in countries such as Guatemala, and the Icarus-figure seems to represent both an ambition and a caution in moving forward with the development of a platform for regional Central American cinema.



Figure 7: Ícaro Festival Internacional de Cine en Centroamérica

¹¹ Most of this section was published as Vanhaelemeesch, J. (2018). 20 Years of Ícaro spreading its wings: Ícaro International Film Festival. *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, 7(1), 273-281.

The festival was created in 1998 as an extension of EICTV's pedagogical and humanistic principles on the Central American mainland. Less than two years after the signing of the Peace Agreements that marked the end of a 36-year-long conflict in Guatemala, two EICTV graduates gave impulse to an artistic platform to break the silence that had long characterised the Central American cultural landscape. It was a multidimensional, forced, silence, and but occasionally broken by the deployment of media and communication technology for (counter-)revolutionary militant purposes. The Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace between the government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit was moderated by the United Nations, 16 days after Kofi Annan's election as the new Secretary-General of the UN and co-signed by his predecessor Boutros-Ghali.

From the start, the Ícaro festival unearthed an unseen amount of films, videos, newsreels and music videos that had been produced in the alleged cultural vacuum mentioned earlier, but which had remained repressed, censored or got lost in the region's turbulent and highly polarised political climate. The unexpected success of the first editions at the end of the 1990s counters the myth that Central American cinema did not exist in the previous century, there was just no space for it to surface. It also attests to the great human need and urgency in the postwar period to reconstruct a positive identity through cultural expression and narrative treatment of past and present traumas as societal coping strategies (see Chapter 6).

The founding members, Elías Jiménez Trachtenberg and Rafael Rosal Paz, were among the earliest generations of filmmakers to graduate from EICTV in Cuba in the early 1990s, establishing a connection that is as relevant today as it was 20 years ago. In a reference to its foundational declaration on their website, the festival identifies itself as a platform to rid cultural discourse of its explicit ideological dimension (cf. NLAC and the Havana Film Festival) and as a cultural reflection of democratic values:

What could we show if talking about cinema in the country was like talking about nuclear physics? Here I believe lies the second great success we achieved: We had to give voice to all, to de-ideologise the discourse, to open wings for all regardless of political, religious or sexual orientations, without discriminating racial, cultural or economic origins. The Icaro would be a time and space for peace and learning. A moment of convergence that would allow us to see

ourselves in the multiplicity of mirrors of our diverse and pluricultural reality. (Rosal Paz & Jiménez, 2017)¹²

For its third edition in 2000, the Ícaro Film Festival started accepting regional submissions due to the unexpected demand and with the contributions of European development assistance and foreign embassies in Guatemala City. Initially, European development assistance consisted of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) in coordination with the Norwegian Royal Embassy in Guatemala, and HIVOS, the Dutch Humanist Organisation for Development Cooperation (Zambrano & Buvollen, 2007).

One of the first distinctive and defining characteristics I was made aware of during my attendance at the festival was its threefold exhibition strategy. First, since 2003, Ícaro-counterparts in the six Central American countries started having their own national competition from August to September to select the films that will represent the nation at the International Ícaro Festival that takes place in Guatemala¹³ in November during the full moon week.¹⁴ Second, the national selection events are complemented with screenings of award-winning and nominated films from the previous international edition. Third, the showcase of nominees and award-winners from the previous international edition also travels to New York, Havana, San Juan in Puerto Rico, Bogota and Buenos Aires as an itinerant Ícaro-showcase organised by regional associates. This way, the festival guarantees at least ten extra screenings for a package of selected films throughout the Americas.¹⁵

¹² “¿Qué podíamos mostrar si en el país hablar de cine era como hablar de física nuclear? Aquí creo que está el segundo gran acierto que tuvimos: Había que darle voz a todos, desideologizar el discurso, abrir las alas para todos y todas sin importar orientaciones políticas, religiosas o sexuales, sin discriminar origen racial, cultural o económico. El Ícaro sería un espacio-tiempo de paz y aprendizaje. Un momento de convergencia que permitiera vernos en la multiplicidad de espejos de nuestra realidad diversa y pluricultural”. (Rosal Paz & Jiménez, 2017)

¹³ In 2017, the main festival events took place in Guatemala City and Antigua Guatemala. In 2018, it was held in the Guatemalan highlands in Quetzaltenango. In 2019, the festival moved to Lake Atitlán.

¹⁴ Costa Rica did not have a national Ícaro counterpart. Representatives of the Costa Rica International Film Festival would send in a selection of their national competition event instead to compete at the Ícaro International Film Festival.

¹⁵ There is also an independently organised Central American film festival in Vienna, Austria, called ‘Mittelamerikanisches Filmfestival’ that was first organised in 2009.

The region-wide exhibition strategy directly derives from the festival's main objective, a cultural integration of Central America, much like the solidarity and militancy with which the Havana Film Festival wished to build and consolidate one great Latin American nation (see earlier). Despite the intentions to de-ideologise the field of cultural production surrounding the festival, unlike the explicit aesthetics-ideology promoted by the FCLN and the Havana Film Festival, film is inescapably a political medium in both production and curation. The regional cinema approach based on a shared 'Central Americanness' embraces each region's linguistic or cultural idiosyncracies emphasising 'voice,' 'location' and 'authenticity' as defining elements without erasing cultural specificity and homogenising film cultures from the region.

The organisation of the national events and showcases has been relatively decentralised with a great degree of autonomy for the national counterparts. Local organisations choose how to organise and programme their festival and obtained local funding from public and private sectors. This led, for example, to diverging art work and advertising in the case of the festival's Honduran edition in 2016. The Honduran delegation deviated from that year's flaming heart design to go a more creative way by praising the DIY-spirit necessary for small cinema-filmmakers and by stating that "great directors also started out like this" (see Figure 8). The promotional posters reference popular independent directors from the US and films such as *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (Wes Anderson, 2014), *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994) and Tim Burton's *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) with the respective directors mentioned as occupying all technical positions in the production. These popular films are referenced as an invitation to "come and get to know the Central American directors before they are famous". These visual references to well-known directors and their films, seen as exponents of globalised cultural content, do not aim at inscribing Honduran filmmaking in a narrative of cultural universalism but playfully emphasise the DIY-spirit of well-known individuals to motivate local filmmakers to start producing.



Figure 8: “Great directors also started out like this”. Diverging Ícaro Festival art in Honduras

The last years, in particular since the gathering of mot regional Ícaro representatives at the 20th anniversary edition in Guatemala in November 2017, Ícaro is taking measures to re-integrate its satellite representatives by demanding a higher level of coordination and consistency throughout the national showcases in, for example, adhering to deadlines, standardising the art work and releasing communication in order to strengthen the Ícaro-brand as one institution that promotes filmmaking in nearly all corners of Central America. This form of region-branding is integral to the region’s

(cultural/economic) politics for integration that underlies Ícaro's basic principles to give voice to all without discriminating,¹⁶ to provide a space for peace and learning in a moment of convergence in otherwise polarised and fragmented societies.

Through Casa Comal and Ícaro's 'open for all' production and programming intentions, it is attempted to create a space for coexistence. These are also the values with which the organisation's co-founder and director, Elías Jiménez, ran for a seat in the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) in 2019. PARLACEN is an institution that developed from the Contadora Group, an initiative set up in the early 1980s by foreign affairs ministers from Mexico, Colombia, Panama and Venezuela to mediate the conflicts in the Central American region. While its efforts proved unsuccessful, the Contadora group, named for the island in Panama where the negotiations took place, laid the foundations for subsequent attempts and the eventual Peace Agreements that brought relative stability to the region.

This is why the non-profit's three pillars of education (Casa Comal Escuela since 2006), production (Casa Comal Production since 1998), and dissemination (Festival Ícaro since 1998, festivalicaro.tv since 2017, Casa Comal Distribution since 2003) are oriented towards structural and integral development of a shared film culture. In practice, this emphasises the organisation of regular film courses, initiation and specialisation workshops and degree programmes by Casa Comal in bilateral agreement with EICTV and the Federation of Schools of Image and Sound of Latin America (FEISAL), as well as the invitation of film professionals from the region to the annual festival as meeting grounds from which new projects can arise.

More important than any of its activities is the network created by Ícaro's central organising committee and the regional associates, continuously expanded and fortified through the recurrent organisation of events throughout the region. Many of Ícaro's counterparts gathered in Guatemala

¹⁶ This means that the festival does not reject films based on their ideology such as the films partly funded by (former) military members (Kenneth Müller's *Septiembre, un llanto en silencio/September, a silent cry*(2016) and *Nebaj*(2019) which have been picked up by Netflix, causing dissatisfaction among some festival participants. The festival organisation does not interfere with the choices of the selection committees and jury members.

during the festival's 20th anniversary edition in 2017, together with a group of international invitees who, over the years, have contributed to or interacted with the festival, EICTV, Casa Comal or its films, in some or other capacity. In its pioneering 'field- and identity-configuring' capacity for Central American cinema (Lampel & Meyer, 2008, p. 1027), the Ícaro as a regional brand links filmmakers, most of whom are personally acquainted from their training at the EICTV film school in Cuba or from previous collaborations with other members of the network. My participation at the 20th International Ícaro Film Festival in 2017 facilitated subsequent fieldwork at other events in the region, during most of which there could be drawn direct personal or institutional connections to Ícaro's network (see Chapter 5).

Not surprisingly, there is a significant overlap of connections between Ícaro's relations and those established by EICTV. Through its own pedagogical activities, Casa Comal bases itself on EICTV's solidarity and collaboration principles to bring together young emerging film students and link them through a communal platform, being the school, or the festival. Additional funding from Programa Ibermedia made it possible for Casa Comal to organise an Ibero-American Meeting of Emerging Filmmakers during the Ícaro festival in addition to the regular courses offered during the academic year. In 2019, the emerging filmmakers meeting offered 50 scholarships to Latin American (30) and Guatemalan (20) film students to participate in the formative programme that takes place during the International Ícaro Film Festival.

In its more recent history, the festival scaled back its programming from 260 films in 2016 to 116 in 2017, the main reason being that more screenings per film are preferred as every programmed film receives a more privileged space in the selection. The Central American films in competition were produced in the past two years and amounted to 68 in 2017, complemented with 48 international films in competition, 23 of which were Spanish-language. Additionally, seven special Guatemalan screenings completed the programme, including a screening of the alleged first Guatemalan fiction feature, *Näskara/Amanecer/Dawn* (Juan Miguel de Mora, 1951) which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 1953 and was recovered from a Mexican archive after being lost for 60 years (see Chapter 1). Overall, out of 265 scheduled screenings, 218 were in Spanish and only eight screenings were organised for four English-language films, which is the same amount as Belgian films competing in the official selection. The programming choices

reinforce the festival's identity as a platform for local and regional productions, offering the audience an alternative to films from the US that dominate the domestic markets.

The festival also entertains alliances with a number of institutions which results in the exchange of award-winning films, invitees and jury members, such as the International Film Festival of Lebu in Chile, the *Nuevas Miradas* film development lab at EICTV in Cuba and the International Short Film Festival El Heraldo in Honduras. The festival attempts to be included in the annual budget of the Guatemalan Sports and Culture Ministry in order to remain economically viable, and is closely connected to other national film associations such as the Guatemalan Audio-visual Association AGAcine, which lobbies for the creation of national film laws. As an overarching initiative by and for Guatemalan film professionals, AGAcine integrates various members who are also associated to Casa Comal's operations, supports the International Film Festival of Memory Truth and Justice (see Chapter 6) and organises workshops and masterclasses of their own, under the general coordination of Pamela Guinea and Joaquín Ruano, among others.

The emphasis on the Cuban foundations and Ícaro's desire to work towards an integration of a Central American cinema was also evident in several conversations I had with film professionals who are not directly associated to Casa Comal. Here, I briefly turn to a translated excerpt from a conversation with Costa Rican film director Jurgen Ureña. The questions that guided the conversation relate to the notion of a Central American cinema as a distinct entity within Latin American cinemas as well as to the potential of film festivals in crafting a regionally oriented project. In the following festival case study, film festival director Irina Ruiz Figueroa addresses the same topic from the perspective of the AcampaDOC Documentary Film Festival (see 4.3).

The diversity in terms of cinematic expressions that continue to characterise Central American cinemas reflects the cultural, linguistic, social and economic heterogeneity of the subcontinent. A regional framework as such does not exist in theory, and in practice it refers more to an ideology of solidarity, to the idea of coming together in order to enable films and filmmakers to circulate and attract the appropriate viewership in a mutually empowering way, in spite of lacking state support. The conversation on the regionality of cinematic expression is important also because it introduces a reflexive moment on how, why and for whom to produce films, which are questions every filmmaker asks themselves:

I have been very interested in a Central American cinema, firstly because I think that the filmmakers' gaze on the region's own cinema... In my case it has been very important to be able to understand what others are doing, **precisely not to look outward but to see the immediate context in some way, which is curiously, or paradoxically, also a distant one. In other words, Central American cinema for Central Americans is both very near and far**, even for filmmakers. I believe that in this sense Ícaro plays a fundamental role because if it were not for Ícaro, Central American filmmakers would not know and acknowledge each other as equals. Ícaro, I believe, has played a very, very, important strategic and ideological role, far beyond what has been understood or has been achieved so far. (J. Ureña, personal communication, 4 September 2018; own translation; emphasis added)

The regional paradox lies in the consideration of other realities that are geographically near yet far removed from the known living environment, for example in the juxtaposition of rural indigenous experiences and urban centres' fast-paced capitalist systems. From the fieldwork at several film festivals, the idea arises that the notion of regionality does not aim at eliminating these differences but instead at bringing them together, to introduce different voices and experiences for the purpose of educational and cultural enrichment.

In this sense, the adherence to an ideology of regionality and solidarity inspired by the Cuban film school, and the wide reach of Ícaro-label throughout the subcontinent leads to believing that Ícaro is in fact consolidating as one of the main drivers behind film-cultural development in Central America. The network analysis in Chapter 5 further expands on the social traces that Ícaro draws throughout the network.

As in most tight social networks, however, there are traces of positive discrimination, or favouritism, that mark practices of inviting guests, jury members and extending awards. After three years of fieldwork and monitoring the festival, it has become clear that the festival has also served as a platform to accumulate prestige and mutual recognition for its associated members. Naturally, the festival serves to premiere the films produced by Casa Comal and turns to regional connections to put together a programme that does not require substantial screening fees, in addition to the freely submitted films online. To inscribe a film in the Ícaro festival implies to yield the film's

exhibition rights to all Ícaro showcases for the following year in the region without receiving fees, as stipulated in the festival's regulations.

In a way, it is only natural that inner circle creatives make use of the festival and its extended network to give impetus to their own projects and be able to launch new work with the added recognition of an award, a special mention or overall positive attention to generate publicity. This inner circle favouritism is not new to the highly hierarchical world of film festivals, as some of the world's largest and most influential film festivals in Venice, Berlin, Rotterdam or Cannes are (in)famously known for the cultivation of an elite 'club' of film professionals whose mere presence reaffirms their status and position within the higher echelons of the tribe of respectable professionals (Iordanova, 2018). Some form or other of positive discrimination occurred in nearly every festival where fieldwork was performed, and is more noticeable when the festivals are small. In the promotion of film-cultural developments throughout the region, the events and the associated creatives engage in an understandable process of mutual promotion that rather paradoxically seems to limit the aspired openness that is proclaimed but gives a larger degree of control to the inner circle driving force.

One of the first empirical research findings concerned the positioning of the Ícaro Film Festival and the film professionals associated with its brand throughout the entire region. After 20 years of growth and consolidation, the Casa Comal/Ícaro institution has become an important actor in the training and networking of emerging film professionals as well as the promotion of a regional 'Central American' cinema that aspires at cultural integration for the region in order to build and strengthen sustainable and self-sufficient film industries.

Casa Comal has developed into an important cultural institution in the region, extending EICTV's reach onto the North American mainland. Through the annual gathering of EICTV graduates and the organisation of film schools, the festival as an institution attempts to be a multi-sited vehicle for exhibition as well as production of film. Despite the continuing lack of structural support for filmmakers, there is a certain urgency to develop a conscious and critical Central American cinema. The small-world network that Ícaro has built in two decades of its existence has led to an overall increased interest in cultural affairs from the Guatemalan audience as well as the government.

4.3. The seeds multiply: AcampaDOC International Documentary Film Festival

The AcampaDOC festival is a representative case study in bringing together some key actors from the Panamanian and Central American film scene and in demonstrating the lasting energy of EICTV's educational paradigm and the collaborative networks among its alumni.¹⁷ However small-scale, the work of the festival's annual participants reverberates throughout the network of Central American film cultures and reaches out to the rest of the Americas.

AcampaDOC is a small international film festival in a small Panamanian film culture. In terms of its annual budget, of less than USD 20,000, location, programming, organisation, number of visitors, media attention and other supposed indicators of a festival's size, AcampaDOC is among the smallest events in the region, organised in La Villa de Los Santos, a village of 8,000 inhabitants located 260 kilometers south of Panama City. The festival annually exhibits around 30 international documentary films to an audience of locals, always relating to a chosen theme that fits in the larger project on the rescuing of tangible and intangible heritage as essential to a peaceful and democratic society.

The annual theme serves as an overarching theoretical framework and guides the festival's selection of tutors and projects to be considered for the workshops. From 2012 until 2021, the guiding themes have been: heritage and society; gastronomic heritage; basin memories; peasant agriculture; cultural landscapes at risk; women and work; living community culture; responsible consumption and production; alternatives after confinement and, scheduled for 2021, built heritage.

The ACAMPADOC Festival Internacional de Cine Documental de La Villa de Los Santos, Panamá is an international film festival that is exclusively dedicated to documentary cinema, held annually in the province of Los Santos at the National School of Folklore. In 2012, the organisers received a cultural development grant from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). In

¹⁷ Most of this section was published as Vanhaelemeesch, J. (2020). Las semillas se multiplican: el Festival Internacional de Documentales AcampaDOC. *Comunicación y Medios*, (42), 120-133. doi:10.5354/0719-1529.2020.57277.

2018, the program consisted of 35 films from 19 countries, distributed between the sections Competition and Panorama. Not only is AcampaDOC one of the few exclusive spaces for documentary cinema in the region, they are also Panama's most prolific producer of documentary shorts. Most of the festival's budget is allocated to the travel and accommodation of young film students from the region to follow a weeklong training at the festival, during which the students prepare a five-minute documentary in groups of three or four (programme 'Campamento' or camp, to which the festival's name refers in a play-on-words). In 2018, there were 14 students that took part in daily workshops and feedback sessions imparted by film professionals from the region.

In addition to the student camp, the festival also offers a second film lab in which a number of young Ibero-American filmmakers with feature-length works-in-progress are invited to share experiences and improve their own projects through collective and individual sessions with tutors dedicated to development and finetuning of scripts, pitches, distribution strategies, cinematographic language and other forms of coaching (programme 'Residencia' or residency). As the result of a strategic alliance, the winner of a pitching exercise receives support to go pitch their project at Bolivia Lab in La Paz.

During the festival, the more experienced residents equally develop a five-minute film in and about the village, with the objective of applying the acquired knowledge to reflect the theme or style of the individual project they were already working on in their respective countries. This way, the festival produced 11 documentary shorts in 2018, most of which are to be submitted to other film festivals in the region or abroad. For example, the sixth edition of the Panalandia Low Budget Film Festival in February 2019 programmed nine out of the 11 shorts produced in September 2018 at AcampaDOC. Panalandia in turn collaborates with the Panamanian International Film Festival in Los Angeles to circulate their awarded films overseas, and the US-based Panafest's awarded films are afterwards again showcased in Panama.

After the short films' festival runs, AcampaDOC submits the films to CurtaDoc, an online platform for documentary shorts based in Brazil. After only seven editions, AcampaDOC already produced between 60 and 70 films in and about La Villa de los Santos. The provincial town of less than 8000 inhabitants has thus become one of the most-documented areas in the region, following the example of the former Cuban military base in San Antonio de

Los Baños, home to the EICTV film school and subject of many of its famed film exercises and projects. The idea behind fostering production is to instil a desire to work together, and continue to do so after the festival ends, as explained by festival director Irina Ruiz Figueroa:

[Before 2012], there were no documentaries being made and that year we started with four. The following year we had six, then eight... Today, during the seventh edition, 11 are being produced, and up to 14 documentaries have been made [during other editions]. We are currently the largest producer of documentary shorts in Panama working on issues of auteur cinema [...] and after the young people leave the camp, they return to their communities to continue producing. So, the idea is this: to germinate all those little seeds here so that later they can always multiply by two and three. (Ruiz Figueroa, I., personal communication, 14 September 2018; own translation).

The engagement with the annual theme and the safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage does not only extend to the programmed and the produced films, but also to the invitation of the tutors and experts, who are invited based on their relation to the theme:

As every year we decide on a theme, the theoretical framework of the entire festival is marked by a person who will inspire that framework. For example, this year we were looking for someone from South America to complement the understanding of 'Community Living Culture' because indigenous societies like the Andean, Aymara and Quechua understand this concept very well. (Ruiz Figueroa, personal communication, 14 September 2018; own translation)

Besides the international guest tutors, AcampaDOC relies on a community of experienced film professionals from Panama to complete the teaching staff. Until 2019, Panama didn't have any formal education program dedicated to film production and the GECU Experimental University Film Group as well as smaller collectives such as the Afro-Caribbean Contra-Peso youth organisation from Colón or the Cine Animal production company in the capital, offer workshops and short-term courses rather than long-term accredited courses. As a didactic platform in Panama, the festival is connected to the region's film schools through the exchange of students and tutors.

In Guatemala, this is the case for Casa Comal, a production company, film school and organiser of the longest-running Central American film festival,

the Ícaro International Film Festival. Two of Casa Comal's Guatemalan film students joined AcampaDOC in 2018, and in return there were six (out of 14) of the Campamento students from Peru, Nicaragua, Panama and Guatemala who participated in the Ibermedia-sponsored meeting of Iberoamerican students held during the Ícaro festival organised by Casa Comal in Guatemala two months later. Costa Rica is generally best represented at AcampaDOC due to relatively easy and cheap access to Panama over land and the multitude of private and public schools that offer domestic film training opportunities. The call for proposals is also disseminated by the Nicaraguan film institute and EICTV in San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba. In fact, over half of all tutors and professionals at either Casa Comal or AcampaDOC are EICTV-graduates. Others have usually studied abroad in Mexico (CUEC, CCC), Argentina or Europe. The tight social networks formed by Central American film professionals, film festivals and film schools constitute an answer to the lack of state funding or public interest, in that the production of films is enabled by education, mutual empowerment and solidarity in and between creative communities, thus echoing the spirit of the Cuban film school.

Empowering the fellow filmmaker

Because students and tutors are invited to adhere to the annual theme, the short documentaries that are produced during the festival form a thematic package. The guiding theme is the first criterion in the selection of collaborators. The second criterion consists in a mutually empowering support, of creating opportunities to give, receive, and grow:

The second criterion is to look for people from here, Central Americans, and almost always they are graduates of the Cuban film school. The goal is to empower the fellow filmmaker, because people are working in advertising throughout the year and I tell them to keep a little window available [...] to come to AcampaDOC in September. So, people come here because there are no other spaces here in Central America that allow us to be teachers. The universities do not allow us to enter to teach classes and a large part of that need is covered here. For three, four years, I had a lot of people who return, year after year, for that experience. Because every time you teach, you grow. When you give, you receive. (Ruiz Figueroa, I., personal communication, 14 September 2018; own translation).

The festival director clearly mentions “the Cuban film school” as an institution that underlies the festival's pedagogical principles. She graduated the

production specialisation among the sixteenth generation of EICTV's regular course students, having attended from 2004 until 2007. The fact that EICTV is a strong marker of one's (cinematographic) identity and a label of trust and quality becomes evident through her answer about the motivation that preceded the establishment of the festival:

I arrived more than 12 years ago as a producer who graduated from the Cuban Film School. Previously, I had studied electronic engineering and I came with a motivation to do something that would bring us together as recently graduated filmmakers to talk about the nation's cinema. These were Panamanians and foreigners, young people [...] who did not find a poorly named 'industry' that many want to see in our countries. There was no educational strategy here in Panama. At the time, there was very little documentary production going on when I arrived, and there were no collectives or people who wanted documentaries or even understood what a documentary was about. (Ruiz Figueroa, I., personal communication, September 14, 2018; own translation).

EICTV functions as the common ground from whence many film professionals have initiated their careers in the Central American and Caribbean region, and it inspired its graduates to engage in the organisation of film schools elsewhere (see Chapter 2). Between 1987 and 2015, at least 108 Central Americans have completed the 3-year regular course at EICTV with a specialisation in either direction, documentary, editing, photography, screenwriting, production, sound or television and new media (Irigoyen Sánchez & García Prieto, 2016). Many others have benefitted from shorter workshops and intensive courses of up to six months offered by the school. The school has had one Central American general director, Guatemalan filmmaker Rafael Rosal, from 2011 until 2013.

The directors and tutors of AcampaDOC are similarly linked through their time spent at EICTV. Most notably, the school formed an essential institution for festival director Irina Ruiz Figueroa (2004-2007), production coordinator Hugo Koper (2005-2008), cinematography tutor Daniela Sagone (1999-2001), script tutor Edgar Soberón Torchía (EICTV script lecturer), programming assistant Milko Delgado (2015-2018) and sound tutor José Rommel Tuñón (2005-2008). Two integrated members in particular stand out for their positioning in the small cinema-network of Central American cinemas.

Firstly, Guatemalan producer and filmmaker Hugo Spencer Koper Pennington is related professionally and familiarly to the Ícaro-organising institution Casa Comal in Guatemala. In network analysis-terms, he is a direct link, a so-called strong tie (Granovetter, 1973, see Chapter 5), since he can be considered a bridge between communities by connecting the Casa Comal, EICTV and AGAcine communities of filmmaking from Guatemala and Cuba, each with their own links to other interlinked ‘clusters’ of cinematographic production, to the creative alliance of film festivals in Panama and the Iberoamerican student filmmakers who converge at the AcampaDOC Documentary Film Festival.

Secondly, Panamanian sound specialist José Rommel Tuñón is Central America’s most prolific contemporary film professional, for having been credited in at least 28 feature films from all Central American countries, excluding work done outside of the region. After studying at EICTV, Tuñón worked on several of Casa Comal’s films in addition to, among others, Julio Hernández Cerdón’s *Buy me a Gun* (2018) and *Lightning falls behind* (2017, IFFR premiere) and other festival award-winning films such as Ana Endara’s *La Felicidad del Sonido* (2016, Panama). Tuñón is a regular presence at Central American film festivals, including but not limited to, IFF Panama, AcampaDOC, Ícaro and others as a tutor, participant or guest. He has taken up teaching positions in several institutions, including at Casa Comal in Guatemala and AcampaDOC in Panama (see 5.3.1). As the network analysis in Chapter 5 demonstrates, he is among the most well-connected film professionals who promote regional cinematographic integration through their border-transgressing work.

A Central American cinema

After talking to AcampaDOC’s festival director about educational approaches, Cuba, and Latin American cinemas, the conversation turned to the implications for a Central American cinema as a distinct entity within Latin American cinemas as well as to the potential of film festivals in crafting a regionally oriented project. Can Central American cinema be seen as a distinct entity in the universe of Latin American cinemas? Her answer became a reflection of the ambivalence and cultural hybridity that characterise the diversity of the Central American film landscape:

It is a question of yes and no. The first film camera arrived in Colón when Panama was still part of Colombia and as they saw that it was a jungle here, the camera was taken to Bogotá, the capital. From there

on, we [Panama] were part of South America, but we have never considered ourselves South Americans, nor have we experienced the civil wars or social conflicts that the rest of Central America has, like our brothers to the North in Honduras or Guatemala. We are not Caribbean either because we are not on an island but we do have a lot of influence from Afro-descendants, from everyone that came here for the construction of the Canal. I feel that we are geographically linked to Central America and we share the same eagerness. (Ruiz Figueroa, I., personal communication, 14 September 2018; own translation).

It seemed almost a precondition that, in order to be acknowledged as an established documentary tradition, it would have to be based on a resistance to colonial projects, strengthened through lived conflict and transferred traumas, based on racial tensions and social injustice, a common struggle of living among a polarised population under authoritarian regimes, of suffering exploitation by multinational corporations and large-scale agriculture or other industries. The Third Culture in which documentary cinema thrived is often based on this perpetual resistance and opposition to imperialism. And yet, Central America both is and is not part of this particular tradition, among other reasons due to high levels of demographic diversity. Despite its limited geography, Central America can hardly be seen as one entity, as it is characterised by complex processes of conviviality and conflict that are simultaneously social, economic, political, ethnic, linguistic and cultural in essence. Rather than imposing a strict categorisation, the idea behind culturally integrating Central American films is a result of necessary mutual empowerment, in terms of film practices in small and precarious film cultures, but also in terms of cultural and ideological motivations, to celebrate diversity as richness:

Look at South America and you see a long tradition of documentary schools, let alone in Mexico and the rest of North America. But yes, there is a link that unites us with Central America because of the desire to claim our national and local cinematography. It is not that we are going to differentiate the type of cinema but there is a special gaze that seeks that recognition, and it has not found it yet, it is still emerging. One cannot yet speak of a trend in Central American cinema as such. We have been doing it for more than 20 and a few years, since Ícaro in Guatemala, and I think that in just ten years we are going to

consolidate something. (Ruiz Figueroa, I., personal communication, 14 September 2018; own translation).

The question of regional cultural appeal has been raised along with the cinematographic expansion over the past two decades. For AcampaDOC, the emphasis on documentary cinema and on the specific themes mentioned above, is inherent to sensitise people into sustainable practices in, and way beyond, filmmaking practices:

I think that the main role that a film festival can have, at least in the case of AcampaDOC, is to develop in order to safeguard our heritage by focusing on documentary cinema, non-fiction cinema, to emphasize aspects linked to the rescue of tangible and intangible, cultural and natural heritage of Panama, Central America, Ibero-America, of the world. In that sense, we are a window, perhaps the only exclusive window in Central America that showcases and encourages [documentary filmmaking], so that new audiences are created each time content is exhibited. (Ruiz Figueroa, I., personal communication, 14 September 2018; own translation).

The festival's engagement with sustainability and community is also reflected in its awards, which consist of living trees that are planted in a nearby ranch after the festival. Awarded films and filmmakers receive a specific type of endangered tree together with a certificate including the coordinates of its location, which is where their award will grow and contribute to the nation's biodiversity. In fact, by merely being organised, the festival interferes with the city council's urban development plans to redesign and modernise the old colonial town of La Villa de Los Santos. It takes place in the former National School of Folklore, an old and worn out building which is saved from repurposing or demolition because a minimum amount of annual activities renders it untouchable as cultural and historic heritage.

The core idea behind the festival is to foster a type of documentary filmmaking that could be regarded as exemplary in the Central American context: a reflexive, participatory and transnational cinema that adheres to international standards of production, rooted in the community with which it dialogues through the visual arts rather than merely registering it. The physical and metaphorical bodies of films and filmmakers linked to the festival are inscribed in the territory of la Villa de Los Santos, or actually planted as trees in the case of the award winners. The festival's double didactic-production strategy makes it both representative of and constitutive of documentary

filmmaking in the region, through the regular invitation of tutors and professionals linked to the region's film schools.

The film festival network

In 2017, the directors of AcampaDOC gave impulse to the creative alliance of the Panamanian Film Festival Network, a workgroup created to improve the sustainability, the outreach and impact of film festivals in all of Panama and in its diaspora. Concretely, the group implies an alliance between all of Panama's 11 film festivals and the Panama Film Festival in Los Angeles (PIFF LA), ensuring a positive diversity, exchange of materials, experts and films in the film festival landscape in Panama.

The Panamanian Film Festival Network was launched to promote, link and inform the diverse activities that member festivals offer throughout the year; to professionalise, articulate and promote the production of Panamanian film events; to share and benefit from the members' connections to grow Panamanian film festivals; to establish a platform of updated resources, dates, calls and references for the general public, international distributors and other festivals that would like to learn about Panamanian film festivals. This support platform gathers information to inform media and audiences about activities; organises meetings on training and professionalisation, articulates alliances and exchanges between member festivals; makes visible and strengthens festival management before institutions and distributors and supports those who are thinking about organising showcases, screenings or new film festivals (Red panameña de Festivales de Cine, 2017).

Starting from the community and from the aspiring filmmaker, AcampaDOC's reach thus extends through the network it creates with every generation of students and tutors who join the festival and experience the intense conviviality of sharing time, space and ideas in the school of folklore. The seeds of documentary filmmaking and the preservation and celebration of heritage are sown, one by one, in the minds of the participants, students and tutors alike, who continue to cultivate and grow them after the festival in La Villa de los Santos ends. With direct and personal links to the region's foremost film schools and through the invitation of regional experts, AcampaDOC has transcended its function as an exhibition window for documentary films in the region.

4.4. Starpower, industry-building and regional cinema: IFF Panama

Since 2012, Panama has opened up a space for Panamanian, Ibero-American and international cinema at its International Film Festival (IFF) in the capital.¹⁸ Artistic director Diana Sanchez was especially lauded during the 2019 edition, as she was recently awarded the title of Senior Director of Film at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) and has been a programming advisor to IFF Panama since its inception. This connection to TIFF is no mere coincidence, as TIFF co-founder Henk van der Kolk retired to Panama with his family in 2010 after starting up the film festival in Canada in 1976. In 2011 after intense collaboration with local governments, his involvement was a catalysing factor in the establishment of IFF Panama. After only eight years, the festival has developed into a prestigious gathering for the region's upcoming talent as well as more established film professionals in an industry-oriented event that is the only of its kind in the region. In the independent, non-state supported contexts of Central American and Caribbean cinemas, this section regards IFF Panama as an industry-building platform that attracts international agents and representatives of the press to give impulse to the cultural and economic capital of regional filmmakers through a national showcase, a regional competition, a FIPRESCI critics award and the *Primera Mirada* ("first look") work-in-progress fund.

The festival's programming in 2019 contained 74 films from 41 countries, including seven films from Panama, and 12 regional titles in the highly anticipated competition 'Stories from Central America and the Caribbean.' Given the festival's industrial predilection, it serves to briefly revise which films are placed in the spotlight as representative of the region's emerging cinemas. Following his multi-awarded debut feature *Ixcanul* (2015), Jayro Bustamante returned to the festival circuit with *Tremors* (2019b), a film on the coming out of a consultant in conservative Guatemala. The tremors from the title not only refer to the regular occurrence of seismic activity but come to represent the dark, intrapersonal struggle of reconciling one's identity with

¹⁸ Most of this section was published as Vanhaelemeesch, J. (2019). Starpower, Industry-Building and Regional Cinema: IFF Panama 2019. *Film Criticism*, 43(3), doi:10.3998/fc.13761232.0043.312.

the conservative values of the immediate community. The protagonist's public sexual identity surfaces as the tremors rumble through Guatemala City. After he leaves his wife for his lover Francisco, Catholic Pablo loses his job and ends up submitting to his religious family in order not to be criminalised any further and lose access to his children. The intense acting performance of Juan Pablo Olyslager (Pablo) leaves the viewer to decide whether the character acquiesces in the ultraconservative norms because he considers his homophily to be a disease of which he needs to be cured or more likely because he does not want to be alienated from his children, who do seem to understand his suffering. He passes through an almost surreal gay-conversion therapy in an evangelical church through which Bustamante holds a mirror up to Guatemalan society where homophily still is legally equated with paedophilia. The film is a provoking portrait of a misogyny that is internalised in the female characters and its constant disquietude is amplified by a gritty and dark cinematography set in the bustling centre of Guatemala City.

Three documentaries were included in this competition, the first being *Asphyxia* (2018) by Ana Isabel Bustamante from Guatemala. The film is a personal investigation into the disappearance of her father during the military repression in Guatemala in the early 1980s under the dictatorship of Efraín Ríos Montt. *Asphyxia* premiered at the Havana film festival, won a jury award at the Guadalajara film festival before winning best foreign film and a FIPRESCI critics award at BAFICI in Buenos Aires. The auteur style with which she and compatriot Jayro Bustamante, her cousin, have crafted their films aesthetically resonates with the wide spectrum of international standards of arthouse or festival films that are likely to be popular in the film festival circuit. The inclusion of *Asphyxia* represents Central America's topical propensity towards "postmemory" films (Hirsch 1997, see Chapter 6). IFF also included the documentaries *Tierra adentro/Inland* (Colombo, 2018), on the liminal jungle connecting Panama and Colombia as a violent division between the Americas and *Panamá Radio/Panama Radio* (Soberón Torchía, 2019) on the city's vibrant musical heritage in this regional competition.

The third auteur film from Guatemala after *Tremors* and *Asphyxia* was Chinese director Li Cheng and writer George F. Roberson's self-funded LGBTQI-drama *José* (Cheng, 2018). Like *Tremors*, this is a feature about romance and Guatemalan homophobia set in the urban complexity of Guatemala City, after the international crew had scouted 20 other major cities throughout Latin America. In all of these places, the producers held interviews

with hundreds of young people who inspired the story that eventually found its most vivid backdrop in Guatemalan society. The “Panamanian perspective” sidebar included a special screening for Edgar Soberón Torchía’s second production in the 2019 selection, *La estación seca/The dry season* (Canto, 2018).

Most of the other films, however, are marked by a desire to appeal to broader, non-festival-specific audiences of the region through more palatable, i.e. formulaic, forms of storytelling. Two popular Cuban films with creative and original storylines were included, one revolving around a journey into outer space in *El viaje extraordinario de Celeste García/The extraordinary journey of Celeste García* (Infante, 2018), and the other, *Un traductor/A translator* (Barriuso & Barriuso, 2018), the audience award-winning film about children from Chernobyl receiving treatments in Cuba. Costa Rica was represented by four films, among them *Apego/Attachment* (Velásquez, 2019), *Aquí y ahora/Here and now* (León, 2019), *Cascos indomables/Helmet heads* (Villalobos, 2018) and *El despertar de las hormigas/The awakening of the ants* (Sudasassi, 2019). The Dominican Republic presented *Miriam mente/Miriam lies* (Cabral & Estrada, 2018) and completing the selection was Storm Sautler’s Jamaican sports drama *Sprinter* (2018), produced executively by Jada and Will Smith and featuring a cameo by Usain Bolt.



Figure 9: Still from Sprinter (Sautler, 2018)

Sprinter is the most obvious crowd pleaser in this regional competition. The film tells the story of Akeem, a 17-year old Jamaican aspiring track-and-field athlete who tries to qualify for the national youth team in order to participate in the World Youth Championships in the United States. The ulterior motive

for qualifying is to be able to reunite with his mother who has been living as an illegal immigrant in the United States for over a decade. Typical characteristics of the sports drama-genre abound as the young athlete catapults from rags to riches, followed by an inevitable downfall before seeing the light and running towards victory against all odds. Akeem is sabotaged by his jealous older brother, himself a former successful athlete, who involves him in a phone scam operation that pays for luxury cars and excessive parties. It is clear that director Storm Saulter intended to make a film that brings Jamaica's social and cultural complexity out from foreign ignorance, but in so doing he passes through a Rastafari criminal underworld, romanticised sunset-on-the-beach landscapes and sexualised representations of women and dancing that do not actually counter many of the problematic preconceptions about the island.

There are, however, cultural, visual and narrative elements that lead us to consider the idiosyncratic Jamaican "Caribeanness" that lends strength and credibility to Akeem's story. The use of what Stuart Hall described as "Caribeanness" (Hall, 1990) includes elements such as the energetic dancehall soundtrack, the particular use of language and humour as well as Jamaican culinary references. In a wide-angle crane (or drone) shot, the main protagonist is seen running toward redemption on an open dirt road through an idyllic Jamaican landscape (see Figure 9). These and other idiosyncratically Jamaican sequences form, together with the sports drama-genre and other tropes and stereotyped representations, clear examples of the film's "voice" and "authenticity", of cultural hybridity and the glocalised transnational turn that combines transnational macro-perspectives with glocalised micro-ones, as was discussed earlier in relation to the understanding of regional cinemas (see 2.3. Regional film culture as a common cause; Lefere & Lie, 2016, p. 6; Marlow-Mann, 2018, p. 334).

In the end, what caused Akeem's brother's downfall was the choice to move to the US, where he was exploited for his athletic abilities and that the American dream and resulting migratory flows have caused several social and cultural issues for the Jamaican homeland. Arguably the most formulaic film in the selection, as a US co-production, *Sprinter* openly aims to reach the (black) North American market.

Characteristic of the current momentum for Central American and Caribbean cinema is that the majority of the competing films deal with central themes relating to sexuality and the negotiation of intimate (family) relationships

(*José, Tremors, Attachment, Here and now, The awakening of the ants*). To a lesser extent, *Helmet heads* and *Miriam lies* also revolve around relationships, in the former as the protagonists' struggle between life on his motorbike as a bike messenger in the streets of San José and his girlfriend's wish to move to a bike-less island. In the latter, a biracial 14-year-old girl in the Dominican Republic, Miriam, lies to her family about the internet boyfriend she wants to invite to her *quinceañera*, 15th birthday party, that she shares with her upper-class white schoolmate Jennifer. Both films make use of classic narrative strategies of conflict and resolve, even if the conflict might be internalised. *Attachment* and *The awakening of the ants* use colloquial, dialogue-driven language with lots of idiosyncratic jokes, an uncompromising cinematography with relatively high-production value and an acting style that sometimes reminds of community theatre plays.

The focus on relationships and sexuality was almost always combined with a reflection of the protagonists on their position as individuals within society and the nation. In a newfound interest in the production of Central American cinema, the canon of which has been expanding rapidly over the last 20 years despite the lack of (strong) state-sponsored funds, these stories present characteristics similar to those from more dominant film industries in Latin America. In impossible attempts to characterise the diversity of contemporary Latin American cinemas, certain trends can be discerned that have increasingly highlighted intimate, domestic struggles in which the identarian status quo is revoked through a focus on the psychosocial and the sexual. This (neoliberal) quest for individuality has largely replaced the grand narratives of social transformation that have stereotypically been associated with New Latin American Cinema. Writers make use of humour, surrealism and irony and even openly bypass potentially interesting yet politically-charged plots developments (as is the case for the Chilean political exiles in Costa Rica in *Attachment*). Despite the more conventional overtones of the festival's regional competition, the FIPRESCI press association did bestow its critics award to the postmemory documentary *Asphyxia* (2018) during their first official presence at the festival.

Most international titles were proven festival-successes from the previous editions of the world's largest and trendsetting festivals such as Guadalajara, Toronto, Venice, Berlin and Cannes. Yet in contrast to some of these festivals, all awards were audience awards. Over the course of the festival's first eight years, one can detect a slight change in taste, switching from favouring

relatively low-brow comedies towards features with higher production values, such as the Colombian *Matar a Jesus/Killing Jesus* in 2018 (Mora Ortega, 2017). This only demonstrates the role and responsibility of film festivals in not only curating film programs but educating audiences, especially in countries that do not yet have a rich cinematographic tradition of their own and whose markets are flooded with North American and Anglophone franchise fare. In spite of the market-adversity for Central American film production and an imperialist conflict-ridden social and political history, a contemporary canon for film in Panama has been steadily emerging over the course of the past ten to 25 years. With well over 20,000 tickets sold in 2019 at USD 6 each,¹⁹ IFF Panama is the only high-profile, high-capacity festival in the region that also focuses on the development of film industries in Panama and Central America. Only the Festival of New Latin American Cinema in Havana reaches more people, with over 20 participating theatres and screenings that accommodate thousands of people at a time.

For filmmakers, the most significant feature of the festival is the work-in-progress post-production fund *Primera Mirada* (“first look”), which selects seven feature films in production and awards USD 15,000 in cash from the Inter-American Development bank and a trip to Cannes Film Market for the winner. At the last press conference, festival director Pituka Ortega also announced a new production fund, *Su Mirada* (“her look”), that awards another USD 15,000 to be divided among female filmmakers from Central America and the Caribbean with projects in development. During the festival, the films selected for *Primera Mirada* are screened behind closed doors to a limited number of international sales agents, distributors and industry insiders that provide, from the perspective of the industry, indications of their potential future trajectory at festivals, appeal to audiences, and an overall insider feedback that is invaluable for films in development.

With an annual one million USD-subsidy from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce and additional support from the Environmental Ministry, MasterCard, the Interamerican Development Bank (BID) and the Pan-American airline Copa Airlines, the festival benefits from impressive institutional and commercial support to lay out the red, green (environmental) and blue (airline) carpets for its many international guests.

¹⁹ Exact attendance numbers were not released by the festival.

2019's accompanying tagline, "Cine es Vida" ("film is life") stood however in shrill contrast to the multiplex Cinépolis and its eight theatres in the Multiplaza mall in downtown Panama City, where the majority of film screenings took place. The restored historical Teatro Balboa hosted the opening and closing ceremonies and a small number of other screenings, but it ultimately occupied a rather marginal position in the overall program, as did the free open-air screenings along the city's coastline and the screening room of the Ministry of Exterior Relations, both near Panama City's old town of Casco Viejo. It is safe to assume that the festival's growing audience led to the need for high-capacity theatres, driving the bulk of the programming towards the multiplex cinemas and away from the charming colonial-style old town where the festival originated.

The week I spent at the festival in April 2019 opened with the presence of one of Latin America's best-known and most prolific actors, Ricardo Darín, and a screening of his romantic comedy *El Amor Menos Pensado/An Unexpected Love* (Vera, 2018). A couple of days into the festival and countless press conferences later, Darín was joined by *Roma's* (Cuarón, 2018) production designer Eugenio Caballero and actress Yalitza Aparicio. The latter catapulted to stardom since her first-time acting performance in Cuarón's film and was received with overwhelming enthusiasm by the Panamanian audiences. Other international stars to parade through press conferences included Cuban actor Rodrigo Santoro, actor, director and producer Edward James Olmos (*Stand and Deliver*, 1988), who presented the closing gala's screening of the documentary *The Sentence* (Valdez, 2018), as well as numerous producers, filmmakers and festival directors from high-profile festivals in Latin America and beyond.

They typically gathered at lush, all-inclusive parties and upscale bars, clubs, restaurants, and on a boat that sailed along the coast for three hours while a DJ played and cocktails were served. The night-time events were complemented by daily happy hours in the lobby of the luxury festival headquarters, the Central Hotel Panama, where industry insiders mixed and mingled to earn their keep. These happenings might seem commonplace in the red carpet- and photo call-infused world of larger European and US film festivals, but in a Central American context, IFF Panama is the only event to aspire to such a status of exclusivity. The glitter and glamour are best recorded through the commissioning of press releases, reviews and overall write-ups for the festival, including pieces in trade journals such as *Variety*, *Screendaily*,

LatAm Cinema and others that happily obliged to take part in the festival's tropical vibe surrounded by the region's who's who.

Meanwhile, the Swiss Locarno Film Festival organised an Industry Academy for eight film professionals from the region, including producer Ana Isabel Martins Palacios and filmmaker Laura Bermudez from Honduras and four Panamanian professionals. Locarno thus joins the list of European film festivals with invested interest in Latin American industrial developments, even if Locarno's central programming team is currently taking the reins at the Berlin Film Festival where it will replace the outgoing festival director Dieter Kosslick. Berlin incidentally had already established satellite talent-development programmes of its Berlinale Talents Lab in Guadalajara and Buenos Aires, in addition to the workshops, pitches and meetings of other festival-film funds for the Global South, such as Cine en Construcción, Hubert Bals, Programa Ibermedia, Aide aux cinémas du monde and Sørfond. In addition to Panama, Locarno is present through industrial masterclasses and workshops at other burgeoning high-profile film festivals in Sao Paolo, Morelia and Valparaíso. Other festival directors, from Sundance, Hot Docs, Havana and Cottbus also converged in Panama in 2019, which signals an indication from the professional community that there is a demand for regionally emerging cinemas and industry platforms in relatively uncharted cinematographic territories such as those of Central America and the Caribbean.

4.5. Socially committed: human rights, environmental, indigenous and sexual diversity festivals in Central America

Film festivals have proven to be important social actors, mediating through films the concerns of the creative community and the audience for which the festival organisers provide a public forum for debate. It follows that some of Central America's most poignant social and political issues are reflected in the programming and organisation of film festivals, which always have been, from their European origins, laden with ideological subtexts at the crossroads between arts and commerce. The following paragraphs build on the premise of international development as a post-World War tool to impose aid, ideology and order in the division of the world according to a certain degree of development. Events that are linked to the postwar restoration of justice or that serve as forums to deal with individual and collective traumas from past

and present injustices are singled out in the chapter on postmemory films and film festivals (see Chapter 6).

In her book on Human Rights Film Festivals (2015), Sonia Tascón resorts to the artificial Western construction of inventing ‘humans’ as is also discussed in Mignolo and Walsh’s ideas on decoloniality (2018). In this line of thought, “human rights” are a continuation and an extension of the neocolonial genealogy as being the accompanying legal framework that encapsulates the “rightful body” in the social system that was created by hegemonic forces. In that sense, Tascón acknowledges that the discursive history of human rights is equally a history of the West (2015, p. 5) and influences the creation and founding of thematic film festivals:

The questions about representation and global power relations turned into questions about the use of films to represent certain worldviews and ideologies, and how human rights may be implicated in a system of knowledge that, through being aligned with powerful political forces, has imposed a certain view of ‘human’ on the rest of humanity. (Tascón, 2015, p. 4)

This “certain view of ‘human’ on the rest of humanity” leads to what others have termed a potential “humanitarian gaze” by film festivals who choose to programme films that “reinforce stereotypes and power inequalities between victim and saviour” (Colta, 2019, p. 137). An interesting addition to this discussion is the emergence of a number of indigenous film festivals that are organised largely by and for specific indigenous communities.

In most Central American countries, there is a large and diverse presence of indigenous peoples whose ancestry predates the Spanish colonisation of the Americas. In Guatemala alone, there are 23 officially recognised languages spoken, but all educational programmes are held in Spanish, limiting the possibilities for people who live outside the urban centres. Throughout the continent, many indigenous communities continue to face discrimination, a systematised negation of humanity (Fanon, 1961/2004, p. 182), the loss of culture and identity as well as pressure from deforestation, mining or other resource extraction practices that disregard the wellbeing of relatively small, rural, indigenous communities.

Event-funding is less common than project development funding but there are platforms such as the Human Rights Film Network that aim to promote public debate on human rights and specific social causes, usually relating to

diversity, through the organisation or promotion of public events such as film festivals and other types of screenings. For example, in 1995, the Movies that Matter film festival was created after the Amnesty International Film Festival, located in The Hague, including an itinerant exhibition programme throughout the country. As part of the Human Rights Film Network, Movies that Matter also offers start-up and impact grants to events, organised by or in close cooperation with human rights organisations, that contribute to the discussion about human rights in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East or Eastern Europe. The festival itself prefers the exhibition of films that are produced independently, that target youth or new audiences that do not regularly attend film screenings. Notwithstanding funding application motives, human rights and social justice remain a prime focus of local and international interest that draw activists and filmmakers to produce certain stories in the hope of raising awareness or bringing about societal change by questioning, countering and adjusting the master narrative. The only Central American film festival to be included in the Human Rights Film Network (HRFN) is the International Film Festival of Memory, Truth and Justice in Guatemala with an intermittent exile abroad, which is discussed in the sixth chapter.

The importance of international development cooperation funds in the plans for cultural development in former Third-World countries is one of the red threads in this dissertation. For example, the specific support by HIVOS and the Ford Foundation for respectively cultural and human rights development programmes in Central America and Cuba with which the CINERGIA film fund was organised. Aimed at production and development of film projects that generally fell outside of ICAIC's preferential scope or that of prestigious international film festivals, CINERGIA was the largest and only film fund for the Central American and Caribbean region, until the European debt crisis altered foreign aid priorities and the fund was forced to stop its operations, despite proven successes.

A number of Central American film festivals are explicitly committed to specific social causes and human rights, such as the recently established Bannabáfest International Human Rights Film Festival in Panama, organised for the third consecutive time in 2019, by Edgar Soberón Torchía and the Centre for Image and Sound he presides (see Chapter 2). Costa Rica's International Environmental and Human Rights Film Festival (FINCADH), organised by the National Film Commission (Centro de Cine), the

Multimedia Institute of Human Rights in Latin America and the Caribbean (IMD), Argentina's Cultural Centre as well as the Argentinian embassy in Costa Rica with support of the Interamerican Court of Human Rights (IACHR), is already celebrating its eighteenth edition in 2019. El Salvador already saw seven editions of the Environmental Film Festival (CIMA) until 2018 and Honduras hosted the second edition of the Green Action Short Film Festival in 2018. In Panama, the Afro Film Festival, organised by the Contra-Peso foundation in Colón with the support of UNESCO, was held for the fourth consecutive time in 2019 and Panama's Creative Alliances Network ensures that festivals such as Emberá-filmmaker Ivan Jaripio's Jumara International Indigenous Film Festival can continue to grow as they celebrate the festival for a second time in 2019.

The NOS Diversity Film Festival in Costa Rica is the first in the nation with this specific thematic focus and was held for the first time in 2019. The Diverse International LGBT Film Festival of Panama held its fourth edition in 2019, but continues as a restructured version of an extension of the *LesGaiCineMad* itinerant showcase organised by the Spanish Cultural Centre in Panama for over 20 years, and eight subsequent *LesGayCinePty* editions after that. *La Otra Banqueta/The Other Banquet* is Guatemalan's Diversity Film Festival, being organised for the eighth time in 2019. Also in El Salvador, the National Showcase of LGBTI Films was held for the second time in 2019.

At a roundtable conversation I attended during the 13th edition of the FICMAYAB' International Film and Communication Festival of Indigenous/Originating Peoples, the discussion revolved around the questions "Does indigenous cinema exist?" and if so, "What is indigenous cinema?" Maya-Kaqchikel filmmaker Edgar Sajcabún, writer of films such as *Donde nace el sol/Where the sun is born* (Jiménez, 2013) and *La casa más grande del Mundo/The greatest house in the world* (Bojórquez & Carreras, 2015) opposed the idea of an exogenous imposition of labels such as "indigenous cinema" to which, for him, are "films made by indigenous peoples", and not "indigenous films made by people".

The film language, for Sajcabún, is universal, and should not allow to other or marginalise films on the basis of the descent of its producers, solely from an age-old Western archaeological need to categorise the world and introduce some form or other of hierarchy. In this view, each film should build its proper narrative and visual world according to the community's beliefs and perspectives, rather than succumbing to outside (funding) pressure of auto-

exoticisation or stereotyping. Other members of the panel proposed a more synergetic approach of appropriating “popular, proven” genres and formats with regards to cinematographic productions, i.e. European and Anglophone films that are popular with the general public in Central America, to the specific indigenous context. The latter strategy, despite the protest of decentring the “indigeneity” at the heart of the productions, is motivated by economic concerns and the desire to reach a larger, possibly foreign, audience with community-specific stories. According to the panel that included indigenous filmmakers such as Edgar Sajcabún, the preferred genres would be social documentaries and fictional dramas, since the entire room believed that current social and political realities for indigenous communities are too bleak to think of “lighter” genres such as comedies as a possible outlet for indigenous storytelling.

The 13th FICMAYAB’ festival’s slogan was “Por la memoria, la vida y el territorio” (for memory, life and territory). The festival is organised every two years by the Latin American Coordinator of Film and Communication of Indigenous People (CLACPI) and consists of a range of educational, political and artistic activities that accompany the film competition that was held throughout Guatemala in 2018.

In the Mayan conception, art has an actively transformative function, and poses several challenges to contemporary society. From (translated) discourses and speeches at the festival, I learned that the indigenous arts are ascribed four guiding principles: Art should decolonise; Art should depatriarchise; Art should defolklorise and Art should dignify, meaning that it should be attributed with fair value, both cultural and economic to not succumb to exploitation and respect the artists’ working rights. These four pillars are proclaimed in the face of dispossession, exploitation, injustice, criminalisation and other violent events the Mayan communities in Guatemala have directly experienced. Art’s main function, though, is to protect the life and collective rights of vulnerable groups, especially indigenous women, who have suffered a long history of structural violence inside and outside their communities. In the first ten months of 2018, 20 indigenous female social leaders were assassinated (cf. the case of Berta Cáceres in Honduras).

Throughout the festival it became clear that indigenous filmmaking is still mainly a social and political tool. The aim is to recover the historical memory, but mostly in order to denounce human rights violations and expose social

problems. Over time, further research could be done into how the Mayan cosmovision and conception of space and time would translate aesthetically into the art of filmmaking. For now, in the incipient stage of a hitherto undefined “indigenous cinema”, the emphasis is on registration and denunciation. One of FICMAYAB’s highlighted screenings was Pamela Yates’ documentary *When the Mountains Tremble* (1983) showing a young Rigoberta Menchú narrating the atrocities committed by government military forces against Guatemalan ‘dissidents’ during the civil conflict in the early 1980s.

The Guatemalan production company, Festival Ícaro-organiser and film school Casa Comal also creates didactic spaces for indigenous communities in Guatemala as well as working with indigenous themes in their own catalogue. As an answer to the global misconceptions regarding the temporal cycles of the Mayan calendar and the end of the world it predicted for December 2012, Casa Comal produced a film adaptation of the Quiché book of creation, the *Popol Vuh*, directed by Elías Jiménez, written by Edgar Sajcabún, filmed by Daniela Sagone (Ícaro, ACAMPADOC, Casa Comal, GECU) and starring Juan Pablo Olyslager (*Tremors, September, a silent cry*).

As a way of rebutting the erroneous and stereotyped visions on Mayan culture, Jiménez produced *Donde Nace El Sol/Where the Sun Is Born* (2013) to commemorate the end of the 13th *baktún*, a temporal cycle of approximately 395 years. The film envelops four chapters in which the space and time of the Maya cosmovision is represented allegorically, recurring to the symbolism of the *Popol Vuh*, the mythological Quiché book of creation, and reconciling oral narrative traditions with the language of cinematography. From the Spanish conquest to the persecution suffered during the armed conflict in the 1980s and the end of the 13th temporal cycle, the stories advance through 500 years of Quiché-Mayan history. The 2012 doomsday prophecies as misunderstood by international communities thus merely refer to the end of the 13th temporal cycle.

The number 13 is sacred in Mayan civilisation, as one year is divided into 13 moons separated by 28 days each and representing 13 goddesses. One day and one night are each divided into 13 intervals or ‘hours’ and 13 is also the symbolic value of a circle, representing both its movement and spirit. Similarly, the human body is made up of 13 major articulations and the Maya consider 13 planets in the solar system. Whereas the Western (artificial) conception of temporality in the Gregorian calendar, in which the number 12

is central (hours, months etc.), Mayans synchronised with the timing frequencies found in nature, where all creation is divided by 13. It is no surprise then that during the 13th edition of the FICMAYAB' film festival in 2018, nearly every activity started with references to or rituals concerning the sanctity of the timing.

Conclusions: film festivals as interfaces for film cultures

Film festivals in Central America occupy an important role in the development of a regional film culture as, by lack of strong national film industries, they surface as the main drivers of change regarding the creation of film laws, connection to (co-)production platforms and as circuits of exhibition as alternatives to traditional distribution mechanisms. After Havana's audience model, the other two medium-sized festivals in the region, the Ícaro International Film Festival in Guatemala and the Costa Rica International Film Festival, focus on providing a space for films, filmmakers and on creating audiences from the perspective of a peaceful, democratic, post-revolutionary ideology. These festivals do not boast red carpets, stars or accreditation hierarchies, emphasising instead the development of young film professionals, programming many short films in competition, and organising various talent campuses for young filmmakers and producers. They also do not charge industry membership or press fees and the film exhibitions are usually free or inexpensive for the general audience. Havana's all-access pass for foreigners costs USD 50 but allows for skipping the famous Cuban queues lining up for hours outside Yara, Riviera, La Rampa, Marx, Chaplin and other iconic theatres. The cost for Panama's industry accreditation varies from USD 50 to USD 90. In return, industry members receive (non-preferential) access to two daily screenings to be chosen at the start of the festival at the risk of sold-out theatres in addition to the press screenings held for the films in the Central American and Caribbean competition, as well as free access to the galas, industry parties and receptions.

Overall, there is a lot of movement in the Central American film festival landscape, with many relatively recent initiatives that profile as emerging and dynamic actors in the cultural landscape. A number of trends can be discerned throughout the discussion of film festivals in the region. In line with the history of film production in the formerly known Third World and the dynamics of international development funding, there is a tendency to profile as events that promote creativity, democratic values and social inclusion. The

majority of festivals that are organised in the region opt for a specific critical outlook that is tied to a discourse of international development, human rights, environmental concerns or sexual and ethnic diversity, rather than general city-based international film festivals as seen in the rest of the world. Often, the festival organisation is co-opted by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), UNESCO or the city government's cultural office with the support of European, Latin American or Asian embassies who may offer airfare to incoming filmmakers who are invited by the festivals. The majority of film festivals are thematic or specialised, so that it brings visibility to the organising and patronising entities through the careful and ethical selection of films from all over the world that reflect the festival's mission statement and the values of public or private sponsorship.

Most international film festivals also reserve a specific section in the programming for local and regional films, in the sense that they constitute an alternative circuit for Central American and Caribbean films that hardly reach commercial theatres because of the broader public's predilection towards foreign films (see Chapter 2). Through the intention to promote local and regional cinemas by programming them alongside international titles, there is a process of self- and mutual valorisation on a regional scale. In the case of the larger festivals, the invitation of international trade press and foreign festival programmers allows to showcase the region's own talent to an international audience. The personal networks of international festival programmers on the lookout for discoveries may determine whether a film can extend its circulation abroad after being exhibited at these regional festivals. Building on this trend, it follows that these festivals also function as gatekeepers for productions that rely on regional screenings to attract international attention.

Another recurring tendency is that the best-connected festivals invest mostly in the training of aspiring and emerging filmmakers and the workshopping and networking of projects. In the absence of (affordable) public film schools, some film festivals have offered unique hands-on opportunities to learn from and work with professionals from the field in the short, yet intense, experience of actually producing films during the festival. Through the strategic invitation of tutors, experts and other professionals, festivals continuously expand and strengthen their network by connecting emerging talent with experienced talent, each with networks of their own.

Because of these alliances, from individual to institutional links, award-winning shorts or features from the region more easily gain traction to

catapult through the network to increase their visibility. The various festivals discussed contribute according to their own specialisation to the development of a regional film culture, in their respective roles as cultural gatekeepers and legitimators (Ícaro, CRFIC, Havana), as platforms for training and project development (Ícaro, ACAMPADOC, IFF Panama, El Heraldo) as curators of taste and audiences (IFF Panama, CRFIC), as lobbyists for industry-building (IFF Panama, CRFIC) and as instigators and mediators behind the creation of film legislation (Ícaro, Panama Film Festival Network). Adding to these field-configuring festivals are the multitude of young, specialised and short film festivals and it makes for a perspective that has long abandoned the state of “intermittent” (Schroeder, 2016, p. 2) film production in a supposed cultural wasteland tormented and divided by the consequences of conflict.

Hereafter, the second thematic chapter takes a closer look at the particular collaboration networks in Central American cinemas, with an emphasis on their relations to institutions and festivals as significant clusters in the idea of film cultures as nodal interfaces (Iordanova, 2015).

Chapter 5. Connecting the dots: filmmaking communities in Central America

Introduction

Through the ethnographic encounter with the film festival phenomenon, it gradually became clear that these events occupy a centrally mediating position for the various aspects of film-cultural developments in the region's small cinemas. The close relation between film festivals and film cultures consists in the social and relational essence of film communities that are especially enabled through the periodic gathering around creative practices. The observations and analyses from the fieldwork motivated the consideration of data-driven approaches to study these developments. 'Relationality' does not necessarily imply radical inclusivity, openness or a borderless melting pot of one Central American cinematographic identity (cf. Falicov, 2012, p. 302, "Europudding"). If anything, again in reference to NLAC, the Havana film festival and EICTV's pedagogical ideology, it is an expression of empowering common causes and transnational collaboration, which might present the nation as a stable or unstable referent, but does form a real-life basis for practical alliances and cross-border solidarity.

There is a growing trend to incorporate tools and methods from the digital humanities in film studies, through the application of network analysis and visualisation methods to film and film festival studies. Some examples include the geospatial mapping of production or exhibition contexts (Porubčanská et al., 2020; Olesen et al., 2016; Verhoeven et al., 2020, 2009), the use of network analysis in studying coproduction relations (Cattani & Ferriani, 2008; Miller, 2011) or the visualisation of film aesthetics and styles (Manovich, 2013; Tsivian, 2009) along the theoretical foundations of formalist film theory. Within this growing tradition of a "social science of cinema" (Kaufman & Simonton, 2013), the current chapter looks at the production relations and patterns for 344 Central American feature-length films that were released between 1994 and 2019. It aligns with theories, methods and visualisations within the new cinema history approach of considering cinema as a site of social and cultural exchange through an emphasis on the contexts of

production, circulation and consumption of texts rather than on their content (Biltreyst et al., 2019; Biltreyst & Meers, 2016; Maltby et al., 2011).

Concretely, the network analysis identifies and visualises the productive communities of filmmakers that cluster together in the network of Central American filmmaking. Film festivals are considered as mediating and enabling curators of these relations within and between filmmaking communities. In this respect, it is a quantitative synthesis of the premise that underlies this dissertation, namely, that contemporary film-cultural development in Central America is driven by collaborative networks that gather around national film institutions and film festivals, in the absence of strong state-supported industries.

To this end, after having completed the fieldwork, I compiled 344 Central American feature films that were released in theatres or at film festivals since 1994 until the beginning of 2019. Additionally, the relational database includes the names of 5607 film professionals who are linked to the production of these films, which results in a combined total of 5951 ‘nodes’. With this information, the real-world connections that the production process implies can be represented in a network that spans the region. Within the larger network, six communities can be discerned in which the connections between the nodes, i.e. the films and the individuals, are stronger among each other than to other elements in the network. It is subsequently through observations of the production contexts that it is possible to analyse patterns.

In the analysis, I identify a number of Central American collaboration networks in detail. The profiles of some of the people that are central to the network are discussed, as well as those who can be regarded as mediators and brokers, meaning the “strong” and “weak” ties of and between the different communities (Granovetter, 1973). Because of these mediators, information can travel faster within and between groups, so that they can expand from a local to a regional scale and back. The network visualisation and data analysis point out the small world-effect of inclusion in Central American cinemas, and how knowledge about significant elements in the network can influence the efficiency with which films are produced.

5.1. Identifying clusters of collaboration and visualising the network

After the data entry of nodes (films and film professionals) and edges (links), the open source network visualisation software Gephi allows to visualise the network and run tests to determine the connectedness of the network, how many ‘communities’ of close connections it contains, which elements are most central in the overall network or within the respective communities, and which elements represent the bridges between these communities. Concretely, these calculations provide us with rankings and visualisations from which we can analyse any number of questions, including but not limited to: which filmmaker and which film are part of a certain ‘community’ or cluster; who occupies a central position in the network and in the community; who is likely to collaborate based on proximity and mutual relations; who is not influential on their own but is important through their connections; who can be considered to enable collaboration outside of their own community and eventually grow the network. Based on the acquired knowledge about film festivals in the region, it is also relevant to consider the positions of the festival organisers and their associates in the network.

Gephi’s integrated ‘modularity’ test allows to detect communities within the overall dataset (see Figure 10). By adjusting the ‘resolution’ accordingly (a lower resolution will detect dozens of smaller groups, a higher resolution ‘zooms out’ to group these into somewhat larger communities), this results in six larger collaborative communities. The largest community includes 36.66% of the 5951 nodes, whereas the smallest community that is taken into consideration accounts for 4.77%. Together, these six communities cover 94.65% of all compiled data, while the remaining nodes are spread out over 27 outlying groups that each represent less than 1% of the entered data.

At first glance, it is already clear that over one third of all 5951 elements that were entered in the dataset can be found within the same cluster, which means that they are closely connected and more likely to collaborate or have mutual relations. The six different communities are also interconnected, as some nodes pertaining to a certain coloured cluster are visually represented in or near other communities (see Figure 11).

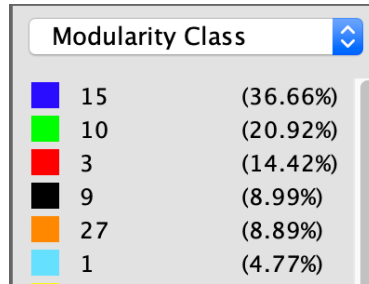


Figure 10: The colour codes, the number of the modularity class and the percentages that correspond to the six communities in the network

In the Gephi programme’s data laboratory, it is possible to identify the nodes in each cluster to analyse real-life connections that might have linked them together. The main observation is that the six largest communities in the network correspond to six interconnected clusters of national film production, the largest being Costa Rica (Cluster 1, blue), in order of magnitude followed by Panama (Cluster 2, green), Guatemala (Cluster 3, red), Honduras (Cluster 4, black), Nicaragua (Cluster 5, orange) and El Salvador (Cluster 6, light blue). While this is not the issue at stake, an argument could be made that this order somewhat reflects the nations’ share in terms of cinematographic ‘activity’ and the number of ‘national’ film professionals in the region. However, a closer look at the data reveals more intricate connections. It shows through which individuals these clusters are connected, and how the interaction is scaled, both within the group and to members of other groups. Through the qualitative research, the analysis then identifies real-world connections that correspond to the statistical proximity values. The visualisation of the entire network shows that the centre of the network is populated by closely connected representatives of most other clusters. Towards the extremes of the network, there are more exclusively single-coloured groups of nodes to be found. It also shows the nodes that are positioned in such a way that they connect to nodes of other colours, and thus constitute a connection between the cluster in which they are taken up and another one.

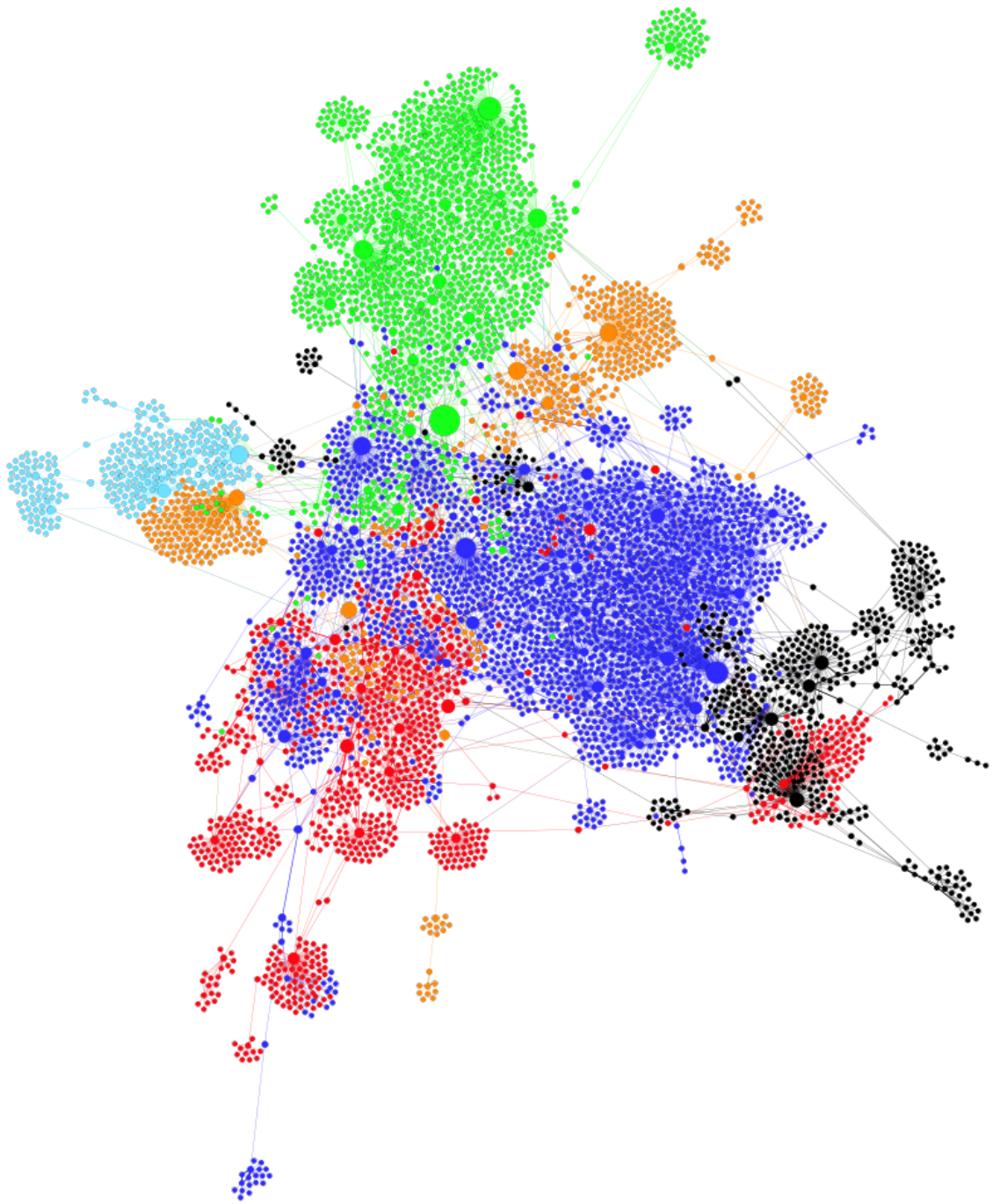


Figure 11: Coloured graph representing the six main collaborative communities

As introduced in Chapter 1, the analysis mainly centres around the measures of centrality that indicate ‘closeness’ and ‘betweenness’, and to a lesser extent the ‘eigenvector’ centrality. They respectively indicate a node’s proximity with respect to all other nodes (‘closeness’), a node’s influence in connecting various parts of the graph (‘betweenness’) and a node’s influence as defined by the connectedness of its closest neighbours (‘eigenvector’). The films are generally located more centrally in the network since they have more connections than most individuals. When considering centrality measures, I alternate between filtering out the films and the names from the results. A ranking of individuals by the numerical values calculated for closeness and betweenness centrality provides the results as exemplified in Table 4 and Table 5. The individuals who rank highest for closeness centrality are located centrally in the network. They are the ‘influencers’ that spread information most quickly and efficiently through the network. Some of these individuals also rank high for their betweenness centrality, indicating their ability to spread information, not only within the community, but also as bridges between different communities. The lists in Table 4 and Table 5 thus contain several of the same names. Closeness is determined in part by the number of connections one has, while betweenness indicates their positioning in connection to other clusters. The tables below provide a ranking for the entire dataset. However, it is also possible to consider each cluster as a network of its own, and re-calculate centrality measures and detect smaller communities to further nuance the cluster’s organisation.

Id	Label	Closeness centrality
3261	José Rommel Tuñón	0.226
2027	Enrique Pérez Him	0.215
655	Álvaro Marengo	0.214
1881	Eduardo Cáceres	0.211
4657	Nicolás Wong Díaz	0.211
3143	José ‘Chisco’ Arce	0.210
3674	Leo Fallas	0.210
3070	Jonathan Macías	0.205

3398	Juan Pablo Olyslager	0.203
4835	Pablo Rojas	0.201
4472	Miguel Caroli	0.199
1802	Domingo Lemus	0.198
2211	Fernando Bolaños	0.198
3461	Julio Hernández Cordón	0.197
942	Ariel Escalante	0.197
548	Alejo Crisóstomo	0.196
3668	Lenz Claure	0.196
5876	Winston Washington	0.196
5218	Roberto Corrales	0.196
413	Adriana Alvarez	0.196
1352	Carolina Lett	0.196
660	Álvaro Rodríguez Sánchez	0.196
4853	Pamela Guinea	0.195
2844	Jairo González	0.195

Table 4: Names ranked by closeness centrality

Id	Label	Betweenness centrality
3261	José Rommel Tuñón	1,942,750
1881	Eduardo Cáceres	784,294
655	Álvaro Marengo	708,309
3398	Juan Pablo Olyslager	659,351
2497	Giacomo Buonafina	643,536
2027	Enrique Pérez Him	566,001
3674	Leo Fallas	478,420
3143	José ‘Chisco’ Arce	467,869

1247	Carlos del Valle	461,785
4657	Nicolás Wong Díaz	447,563
3798	Ludim Jacob Jiménez	364,058
705	Ana Isabel Martins Palacios	342,466
365	Abner Benaïm	342,173
2335	Frank Pineda	301,365
5252	Rocío Carranza	298,328
3120	Jorge Osorto	257,104
4332	Mauricio Escobar	238,072
660	Álvaro Rodríguez Sánchez	237,311
2492	Gina Villafañe	235,163
4853	Pamela Guinea	225,114
4709	Olga Madrigal	214,347
5953	Michael O'Reilly	194,436
5218	Roberto Corrales	190,885
1352	Carolina Lett	183,335
3668	Lenz Claure	182,267

Table 5: Names ranked by betweenness centrality

After filtering the network from Figure 11, it is possible to visualise these well-connected individuals from different clusters (see Figure 12), together with the films through which they are connected. Arguably, anyone who engages with the field of Central American cinema is likely to run into these individuals at some point.

5.2. Arthouse cinema, film schools and regional co-productions in Costa Rica

The largest cluster (see Figure 13) represents 36.66% of the entire network and counts 2182 elements of which 109 are films and 2073 are people. The cluster centres around 73 Costa Rican films, 25 Guatemalan films, four films from El Salvador, four Nicaraguan films, two films from Panama one Honduran film. Film professionals included in this cluster are predominantly Costa Rican and Guatemalan, in close connection to the third, Guatemalan, cluster, an entanglement (of blue and red dots) that is visible in Figure 11.

The cluster includes Guatemalan directors Jayro Bustamante, César Díaz, Julio Hernández Córdón, Alejo Crisóstomo and Camila Urrutia, for having (co-)produced at least one film in and with Costa Rica or for having mutual professional relationships, likely due to their participation in the development and funding workshops of CINERGIA, the most significant platform to have supported the region's filmmaking. 'National' Costa Rican filmmakers included in the largest community are Miguel Gomez, Paz Fábrega, Hernan Jimenez, Ishtar Yasin, Ernesto Villalobos, Hilda Hidalgo, Alexandra Latishev, Iván Porras, Ernesto Jara Vargas and Páz León. Among the prominent Costa Rican actors in the first group are Adriana Álvarez, Mario Chacón, Liliana Biamonte, Álvaro Marengo²⁰ and Kattia González. Celebrated cinematographers, editors and art directors that are central to this community are Nicolás Wong Díaz, José 'Chisco' Arce, Leo Fallas,²¹ Carlos Benavides, Lenz Claire and Olga Madrigal. Costa Rica's producer duo that is in charge of the Pacifica Grey production and distribution company, Marcelo Quesada and Karina Avellán Troz, are also connected here, as are producers Karolina Hernández Chaves from Dos Sentidos producciones, Laura Pacheco, vice-minister of Culture in Costa Rica and María Lourdes Cortés, scholar, founder of the Veritas Film and Television School in 2004, former head of the Costa Rican film production centre and head of CINERGIA.

²⁰ Álvaro Marengo (°1943) is a 76-year old Costa Rican actor who has appeared in 120 theatre plays, 60 dance performances, over 50 short films and 16 feature films.

²¹ Leo Fallas (°1981) is a Costa Rican editor and post-producer. Since 2011, he has been the Academic Coordinator of Editing and Post Production, Audio & Video at the Center for Technology and Visual Arts (CETAV) in Costa Rica.

Arguably among the region's most prolific producers, Pamela Guinea and Joaquín Ruano from Guatemala are equally included in the largest group, as is Spanish-Nicaraguan director Mercedes Moncada Rodríguez and renowned Colombian producer Diana Bustamante Escobar. Other 'foreign' participation here is included from acclaimed professionals from Mexico such as producer and head of the production department at EICTV Martha Orozco, actress Lourdes Elizarrás, Uruguayan director of photography María Secco and actor Damián Alcázar (*Narcos, El último comandante*). Directors Vicente Ferraz and Isabel Martínez' CINERGIA-supported *The last commander* (2010) is also the work of Cuban co-writer Manuel Rodríguez, who participated in the Panamanian production *Historias del canal* (Benaim et al., 2014) and the Guatemalan films *Salsipuedes* (Aguilar Navarro & Rodríguez, 2016) and *La casa de enfrente* (Jiménez, 2004) and many other titles, which places him in the third, Guatemalan, cluster. He too can be considered a bridge between these communities.

Once some of the noteworthy individuals within the group are identified, the films and platforms that have united these individuals become clearer. Arthouse filmmaker Julio Hernández Cerdón has filmed in Mexico (2015, 2018), in Costa Rica (2017), Guatemala (2008, 2010, 2012b, 2012a, 2016) and appeared as an actor in Mexican filmmaker Nicolás Pereda's *Minotauro/Minotaur* (2015), filmed by María Secco. As a director of photography, Secco was in return also involved in three of Hernández Cerdón's films (2010, 2012b, 2015), Paz Fábrega's Costa Rican festival success *Cold water of the sea* (2010) and *La jaula de oro/The golden dream* (Quemada-Díez, 2013). Editor Lenz Claire worked on Hernández Cerdón's *Marimbas from hell* (2010), *I promise you anarchy* (2015), *Lightning falls behind* (2017) and *Buy me a gun* (2018), in addition to Antonella Sudasassi's Costa Rican debut feature *The awakening of the ants* (2019) and Guatemalan co-production *José* (Cheng, 2018).

Central to the arthouse success of Hernández Cerdón's films has been Pamela Guinea's production work on six of his films. She furthermore co-produced Diego Quemada-Díez' award-winning *The golden dream* (2013), starring Brandon López who is part of Jayro Bustamante's La Casa de Producción and who studied at Casa Comal. As co-director of the Guatemalan audio-visual association AGAcine, Guinea was also involved in *Nuestras madres/Our mothers* (2019), directed by César Díaz and co-produced by Joaquín Ruano. Another link between the Costa Rican and Guatemalan clusters is the work of

Spanish producer Inés Nofuentes, who produced *Ixcanul* (Bustamante, 2015)(2015), *I promise you anarchy* (Hernández Córdón, 2015) as well as Camila Urrutia's debut feature *Pólvora en el corazón/Gunpowder heart* (2019).

Two of Hernández Cordón's films (*Lightning falls beyond* and *Buy me a gun*) were filmed by the Peruvian Costa Rica-based director of photography Nicolás Wong Díaz, who worked throughout the region on feature projects such as Hernán Jiménez' *The return* (2012), *La llorona/The weeping woman* (Bustamante, 2019a), two of Ernesto 'Neto' Villalobos' films, *Helmet heads* (2018) and *All about the feathers* (2013), Paz Fábrega's *Viaje* (2015) starring Fernando Bolaños and Kattia González, besides films he shot with Costa Ricans Jurgen Ureña, *Muñecas rusas/Russian Dolls* (2014) and Hilda Hidalgo, *Violeta al fin/Violeta at Last* (2017). All films and individuals mentioned above link together in the largest cluster.

As mentioned, the Costa Rican cluster also includes internationally renowned Guatemalan 'auteur' Jayro Bustamante, and the cast and crew involved in his tryptic of feature films, respectively dealing with issues of indigeneity (*Ixcánul*, 2015), homophobia (*Tremors*, 2019) and impunity (*La llorona/The weeping woman*, 2019) in Guatemalan society. For his three features, Bustamante worked with a small but dedicated recurring team of professionals, including producers Pilar Peredo, Marina Peralta and Georges Renand, the aforementioned director César Díaz, producer Inés Nofuentes, sound specialist Eduardo Cáceres (Cluster 5), Carlos 'Loco' Gonzalez (lights-cinematography-production), María Mercedes Coroy (actress), María Telón (actress), Juan Pablo Olyslager (actor), Aiko Soto (make-up artist), Sofía Lantán (art director), Mauricio Escobar (producer), Paola Matheu (producer), Luis Armando Arteaga (cinematography) among several others.

In 2019, Jayro Bustamante premiered his third film, *The weeping woman* (2019a), at the Venice Film Festival while still touring the festival circuit with his second feature, *Tremors* (2019b) which had premiered in February at the Berlinale's Panorama section. Bustamante's first feature, *Ixcánul* (2015), had also premiered in Berlin where it won the Silver Bear Alfred Bauer Prize before becoming the most-awarded Central American film in history amassing over fifty festival awards. Similar to César Díaz' *Our mothers* (2019), *The weeping woman's* narrative is constructed around the recent genocide trials in Guatemala intertwined with a metaphorical use of the popular Latin American myth of the weeping woman, an indigenous folk tale in which a mother who drowns her children is condemned to an interstitial existence between heaven and earth in search of her children, whilst weeping. *The weeping woman's* vantage point, however, is that of an army general who is convicted for genocide, and later acquitted on appeal, thus fictionalising the story of former

dictator Efraín Ríos Montt whose state-sanctioned crimes in the early 1980s represent the epitome of impunity and corruption that continues to paralyse contemporary Central American societies (see Chapter 6).

The films that are included in this cluster range from international film festival successes such as *Temblores*, *La jaula de oro*, *Ixcanul* and others to popular Costa Rican films such as the documentary *Hombre de fe/Man of faith* (2017) on former Real Madrid goalkeeper Keylor Navas, and *Maikol Yordan de viaje perdido/Maikol Yordan traveling lost* (2014; see Table 6). However, as noted in Chapter 1, the films' closeness centrality should be relativised on the basis of the available data that could be entered into the dataset. Films that provide very extensive lists of names that include all collaborators and extras will rank higher for centrality, while it is also clear that nearly all top 24 films are relatively larger-than-average productions for the region.

Id	Label	Category	Production country	Closeness Centrality
156	Hombre de fe	Film	Costa Rica	0.282
84	El Baile de la Gacela	Film	Costa Rica	0.271
337	Violeta Al Fin	Film	Costa Rica	0.269
278	Presos	Film	Costa Rica	0.268
78	Donde duerme el horror	Film	Costa Rica	0.267
34	Atrás hay relámpagos	Film	Costa Rica	0.263
25	Amor viajero	Film	Costa Rica	0.259
229	Maikol Yordan de Viaje Perdido	Film	Costa Rica	0.256
279	Princesas Rojas	Film	Costa Rica	0.254
117	El Sanatorio	Film	Costa Rica	0.250
49	Caribe	Film	Costa Rica	0.249
29	Apego	Film	Costa Rica	0.249

87	El calor después de la lluvia	Film	Costa Rica	0.249
19	Agua fría de mar	Film	Costa Rica	0.249
120	El sonido de las cosas	Film	Costa Rica	0.248
281	Puerto Padre	Film	Costa Rica	0.248
247	Muñecas rusas	Film	Costa Rica	0.248
166	Italia 90	Film	Costa Rica	0.248
124	El último comandante	Film	Costa Rica	0.247
144	Gestación	Film	Costa Rica	0.247
104	El lugar más feliz del mundo	Film	Costa Rica	0.245
241	Medea	Film	Costa Rica	0.245
129	Enredados, la confusión	Film	Costa Rica	0.245
97	El despertar de las hormigas	Film	Costa Rica	0.243

Table 6: Films from Cluster 1 by closeness centrality

The Costa Rican cluster reveals several film school connections. María Lourdes Cortés and filmmaker Hilda Hidalgo founded and directed the film and television programme at the Veritas University in Costa Rica, where teaching positions are taken, among others, by filmmakers Alexandra Latishev, Ernesto Villalobos, Paz Fábrega and Jurgen Ureña. In the argument of a tight-knit Costa Rican film industry, the work of art director Olga Madrigal, editors José ‘Chisco’ Arce, Leo Fallas, Lenz Claure and writer-producer Carlos Benavides accounts for a significant amount of films in the contemporary national catalogues, in addition to the previously mentioned individuals

Id	Label	Category	Closeness Centrality	Modularity class
655	Álvaro Marengo	Name	0.281	15
4657	Nicolás Wong Díaz	Name	0.259	15
3674	Leo Fallas	Name	0.258	15
1352	Carolina Lett	Name	0.255	15
4644	Nicoa Ríos	Name	0.254	15
4835	Pablo Rojas	Name	0.254	15
5876	Winston Washington	Name	0.253	15
2844	Jairo González	Name	0.251	15
3813	Luis Angel Batista Teran	Name	0.247	15
4005	Marcelo Rojas	Name	0.247	15
4581	Nano Fernández	Name	0.246	15
5244	Roberto Valerio	Name	0.246	15
4506	Milena Picado	Name	0.245	15
2409	Gastón Saenz	Name	0.243	15
2211	Fernando Bolaños	Name	0.243	15
4934	Paulo Soto	Name	0.243	15
4238	Marlon Villar	Name	0.242	15
4709	Olga Madrigal	Name	0.241	15
747	Anabelle Ulloa	Name	0.240	15
3638	Laura Montero	Name	0.239	15
413	Adriana Alvarez	Name	0.239	15
710	Ana Lucía Arias	Name	0.239	15
3641	Laura Pacheco	Name	0.239	15

Table 7: Names from Cluster 1 by closeness centrality

In at least four of Hernández Córdón's films, the sound was recorded and edited by Panamanian sound engineer José Rommel Tuñón, who is credited with collaboration in 28 films in the relational database. In the network overview in Figure 11, he is easily found as the largest green dot in the centre of the network, personally connecting to elements from all other clusters. His collaborative track record in the region is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 (AcampaDOC) and hereafter in the analysis of *Days of light* (2019, see

5.3.1.).

In sum, the analysis of the first and largest cluster thus situates it around the (co-)production of films in or with Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico with a markedly regional involvement of a number of international arthouse successes and globally renowned film professionals. The inclusion of the coordinators of the CINERGIA film fund, the Costa Rican film production centre, now *Centro de Cine*, and the Veritas Film and Television School and the region's greatest commercial and festival-related successes in this cluster is not coincidental, although an additional parameter could be added to demonstrate the involvement in their careers. Not all found relations are necessarily purely professional, as collaborative networks often extend to romantic and familial partnerships. Whether the romantic or professional partnership was created first is irrelevant, as in any social network, not all relations tend to stay one-dimensional.

5.3. Institutional fragmentation and collaboration in Panama

The second largest cluster (see Figure 14) revolves around 61 films produced by 1184 professionals. Panama is the designated production country for 38 films, Costa Rica for five, Honduras and Guatemala both for four, and Nicaragua for two. The individuals with the highest coefficient for closeness centrality in this cluster are Panamanian sound specialist José Rommel Tuñón and director-producer Enrique Pérez Him, for occupying a central role in the overall network and also being among those ranked highest for betweenness centrality (see Table 4 and Table 5). In Panama, Pérez Him presides Panama's audio-visual creators network RedCrea (*Red de Creadores Audiovisuales de Panamá*), with scholar-filmmaker Edgar Soberón Torchía serving as vice-president. RedCrea was established in the context of the first reform of the film law in 2012 after it was ratified in 2007. From 2014 onwards, RedCrea started organising forums and meetings in function of the new cinematographic law in order to further develop a film industry in Panama and stimulate cinematographic activities, in the form of short film or feature film project development, festivals and workshops. Panama counts at least three other organisations with similar goals: ProCinema, Asocine and DICINE.

ProCinema is the most recently established audio-visual guild of Panama, having organised their first general assembly in October 2018, with an emphasis on creating or improving a legal framework that enables formal participation in the Panamanian film industry. From the outset, ProCinema

stresses the importance of collecting and generating data, of presenting statistical elements that allow for a comprehensive overview of past and current activities. The organisation is presided by José Luis Rodríguez, who was part of the process that led to the first film laws of 2007 and 2012.

The cinematographic association Asocine was founded over 16 years ago by actor, producer and director Luis Pacheco, who is also vice-president of the Ibero-American federation of cinematographic and audio-visual producers FIPCA. His production company, Jaguar films, has produced over ten feature films, 800 commercials, spots and programmes for television. Meanwhile, DICINE has been created by the Panamanian Ministry of Commerce and Industries as the directorate-general for the cinematographic and audio-visual industry, with the objective to design and execute Panama's investment and commercialisation politics. Their resources include a register for productions, incentives and an annual film fund. Since EICTV graduate (1988-1991) and filmmaker Carlos Aguilar Navarro (2018) was elected Minister of Culture in August 2019, and after the official creation of a Ministry of Culture, he has undertaken steps to transfer DICINE to the authority of the newly created ministry. Lastly, the mosaic of Panamanian film production is completed by the recently established production centres CIMAS, the foundation *Mente Pública* and the University Experimental Film Group (GECU, since 1972), together with a number of smaller yet significant initiatives such as the *Microcine* events in the capital and *Contra-Peso*, the afro-Caribbean cultural youth organisation based in Colón, Panama.

Despite this organisational fragmentation and the institutional tug of war between commercial and artistic imperatives, the Panamanian cluster is linked on a national and regional scale. The establishment of the previously mentioned Panamanian film festival network (see Chapter 4) in 2018 attests to the desire to create creative alliances and promote exchange over competition.

The highest ranked films for closeness centrality are *Days of light* (2019, see 5.3.1.), *Historias del Canal/Panama canal stories* (2014), Abner Benaim's *Chance* (2009) and Pérez Him's *Kenke/Weed* (2015). *Panama canal stories* (2014) is a historical chronicle that consists of five individual short films on people who were instrumental in the construction of the canal, and of Panama, or impacted by these events. The stories are directed by five acclaimed Panamanian directors, Abner Benaim, Carolina Borrero, Luis Franco Brantley, Pinky Mon and IFF Panama director and filmmaker Pituka Ortega-Heilbron. Besides the inclusion of Pérez Him, the production company Best Picture System that is highlighted below in the Guatemalan group is also represented in the Panamanian cluster through the work of sound recordist Miguel Caroli in *Kenke/Weed* (Pérez Him, 2015), which in turn is protagonised by AcampaDOC's programming assistant and EICTV-graduate Milko Delgado.

From an international perspective, Panama's cinematographic landscape has been influenced by the musician and politician Rubén Blades, who is the subject of the documentary *Ruben Blades is not my name* (Benaim, 2018). As a tax haven for international businesses, Panama has attracted several international productions such as a US-production starring Benicio del Toro, *Paradise Lost* (Di Stefano, 2014), or the popular Netflix series *La Casa de Papel* (2017-). The second season of the latter was partly filmed in the autochthonous northern island communities of the Guna Yala in northern Panama.



Figure 15: Infographic on the participation of Guna Yala filmmaker Duiren Wagua in Netflix'La casa de papel (2017-)

Unlike the international imaginary of the Guna territory as an untouched and authentically indigenous territory, the community counts a number of filmmakers who have made waves on a local and international scale, including Orgun Wagua and Duiren Wagua. Duiren served as local producer, translator and cultural mediator between the indigenous community and Netflix' production team, and is an annual guest and tutor at the events where we crossed paths, at AcampaDOC, IFF Panama and Ícaro.

In the following subsection, I highlight one particular film production that is central to the Panamanian cluster, as well as to the entire network, in that it aims to be a regionalist film in both production strategy and story structure.

5.3.1. Days of light (2019)

The desire to emphasise commonalities and a shared identity with which the previous chapter concludes finds its quintessential manifestation in the omnibus film *Días de Luz/Days of light* (Medrano et al., 2019) produced by six producer-director duos from Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala. The film is one of the last CINERGIA-supported projects to be released after the fund had to cease its operations in 2015, and also received production support from IFF Panama's Primera Mirada development fund, the film labs of Malaga, Morelia and Rotterdam as well as the Ibermedia programme in 2016. The film tells six stories that occur simultaneously during a region-wide power shutdown following a solar storm. In the network visualisation in Figure 11, the production cluster around *Days of light* is recognisable in representing a small but closely connected group of green nodes in the very centre of the network in between blue, red and orange groups of nodes.

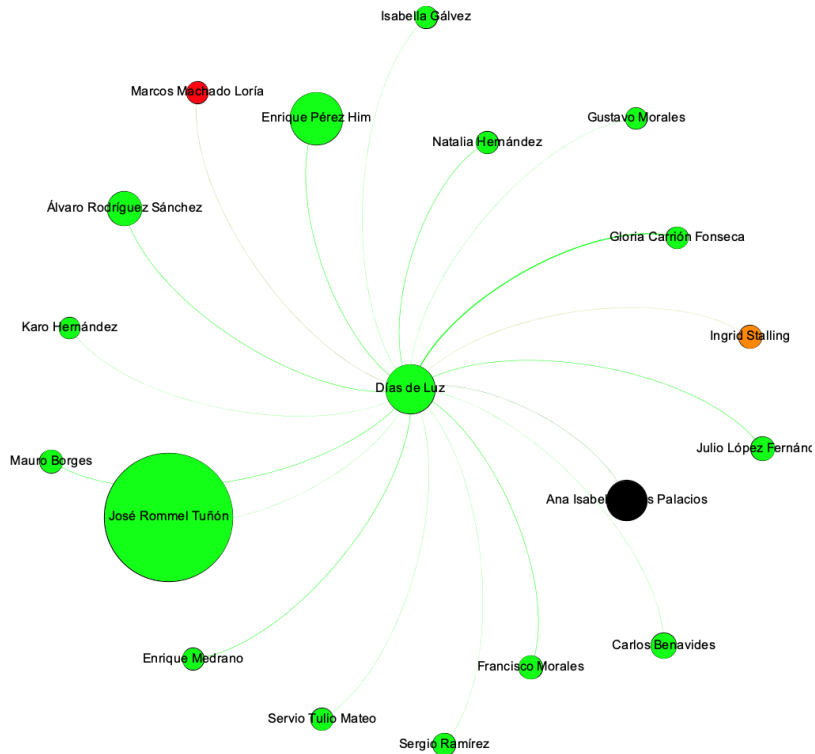


Figure 16: The production team of *Days of light* (2019) in Clusters 2, 3, 4 and 5

The idea to represent all of Central America’s internal similarities and disparities in one film was raised by Salvadorian director and cinematographer Julio López Fernández and Costa Rican producer Karolina Hernández Chaves and further developed into script by Mauro Borges. The overseeing driving force behind the project then became *Mente Pública*-producer Isabella Gálvez from Panama, likely due to the successful Panamanian applications to the national film fund in 2017 as well as the second-place award during the *Primera Mirada* competition at IFF Panama 2018. The second majority producer is *Dos Sentidos* (Costa Rica). The minor co-producers are *Lupe Lupe Productions* (Nicaragua), *Cineastas Centroamérica* (Honduras), *Trípode Audiovisual* (El Salvador) and *Chicken Bus* (Guatemala). *Days of light* is the film with the highest closeness centrality ranking in the Panamanian cluster and includes most of the other producing countries’ producers and directors.

Id	Label	Category	Production country	Closeness centrality
72	Días de Luz	Film	Panama	0.208
155	Historias del canal	Film	Panama	0.206
54	Chance	Film	Panama	0.205
172	Kenke	Film	Panama	0.201
238	Más que hermanos	Film	Panama	0.200
160	Ilegítimo	Film	Panama	0.200
295	Salsipuedes	Film	Panama	0.199
46	Caos en la ciudad	Film	Panama	0.196
267	Panamá Radio	Film	Panama	0.196
76	Donaire y esplendor	Film	Panama	0.193
343	Yo no me llamo Ruben Blades	Film	Panama	0.193
45	Calypsonians	Film	Panama	0.192
174	Konsten att döda en politiker	Film	Guatemala	0.192
59	Congelado en Rusia	Film	Panama	0.192
153	Héroe transparente	Film	Panama	0.191
286	Reinas	Film	Panama	0.190
184	La felicidad del sonido	Film	Panama	0.190
152	Heredera del Viento	Film	Nicaragua	0.189
164	Invasión	Film	Panama	0.189

332	Una noche de calypso	Film	Panama	0.187
105	El ojo del tiburón	Film	Nicaragua	0.186
12	A la deriva	Film	Panama	0.184
306	Suenan las campanas	Film	Panama	0.184
237	María en tierra de nadie	Film	El Salvador	0.182

Table 8: Films from Cluster 2 by closeness centrality

Concretely, this translate into six director-producer duos from across the entire network who each gather a crew to organise the production in their respective countries: For Costa Rica, Mauro Borges (director, Cluster 2) and Karolina Hernández (producer, Cluster 5); for Panama, Enrique Pérez Him (director) and Isabella Gálvez (producer, both from Cluster 2); for Nicaragua, Gloria Carrión Fonseca (director) and Natalia Hernández (producers, both Cluster 2); from Honduras, Enrique Medrano (director) and Servio Tulio Mateo (producer, both Cluster 2); from El Salvador, Julio López Fernández (director) and Francisco Morales (producer, both Cluster 2); from Guatemala, Sergio Ramírez (director, Cluster 2) and Ingrid Stalling (producer, Cluster 5). In spite of their status as national representatives within the collective, ten out of 12 individuals are linked together in the second cluster, centred around Panama, mostly because of their collaboration on *Days of light*, while also constituting direct links to the other communities.

To ensure continuity in sound and image, a core team of four film-technical professionals and one post-producer was chosen to join the six director-producer duos and their crew in the respective countries. The integrated international team consists of four men from Panama and Costa Rica who all converged in Cuba in 2007 and 2008 at EICTV. The four members of the internationally traveling technical crew are cinematographer Álvaro Rodríguez Sánchez (EICTV 2005-2008), Marchos Machado Loría as first assistant director (EICTV 2007-2010), Carlos Benavides as script supervisor (EICTV 2006-2009) and Panamanian sound specialist José Rommel Tuñón. *Days of light* is colour-corrected and post-produced by José ‘Chisco’ Arce (Costa Rican cluster), another individual among the top-ranking closeness centrality coefficients in the entire network.

As mentioned before, José Rommel Tuñón is, in fact, Central America’s most prolific contemporary film professional (Panama cluster, EICTV 2005-2008) for having been credited in at least 28 feature films across the region, excluding

work done outside of the region. From the analysis of the other communities, it shows that all four integrated continuity members occupy important bridging positions in and between clusters. After his studies at EICTV, Tuñón worked on several of Casa Comal's films, *Buy me a Gun* (Hernández Cordón, 2018) and *Lightning falls behind* (Hernández Cordón, 2017) and other award-winning films such as *La felicidad del sonido/The joy of sound* (Endara Mislov, 2016). Tuñón is a regular presence at Central American film festivals IFF Panama, AcampaDOC, Ícaro and others as a tutor, participant or special guest. He has taken up teaching positions in several institutions, including at Casa Comal in Guatemala and AcampaDOC in Panama. Tuñón is ascribed the highest closeness centrality coefficient in the entire network (see Table 4), which means that the average distance to connect with any node in the network is the smallest for him, and indicates that he is among the most well-connected individuals who promote regional cinematographic integration through border-transgressing work.

Another 'core team' member is Costa Rican born, Guatemala-based cinematographer Álvaro Rodríguez Sánchez (EICTV 2005-2008), who worked on what can be regarded as some of the region's most successful films in terms of regional and international visibility, such as *The greatest house in the world* (Bojórquez & Carreras, 2015), *Distancia/Distance* (Ramírez, 2012), *Where the sun is born* (Jiménez, 2013), *The room of bones* (Zamora, 2015), *The battle of the volcano* (López Fernández, 2018), *Giants don't exist* (Rodríguez, 2017), *The offended* (Zamora, 2016), *May the sun hide me* (Hernández Cordón, 2016), *Curfew* (Figueroa & Jiménez, 2011), *W2MW: welcome to my world* (Tres, 2016) and *Days of Light* (Medrano et al., 2019), all of which occupy a central position in the network.

Days of Light (2019) embodies the types of collaboration networks through which Central American cinema can be perceived as emerging from anonymity on the stage of global film production, spotlighted at international film festivals. From the reunion of a group of like-minded film professionals, over international film festival workshops and funding and a core team of integrated professionals to a final crowdfunding campaign to complete the post-production, the film, regardless of its performance on the circuit or in national theatres, highlights the transnational effort to make independent films in Central America without any state-organised support structures. The production effort to come together in diversity reflects the film's

(dis)connected story structure, in which six different stories take place simultaneously, while somehow being affected by one shared element.

During a five-day solar storm, a mysterious power outage leaves the entire Central American population without electricity. Disconnected from technology, the protagonists of the six short stories, one for each country, face certain challenges in their everyday lives. The promotional poster suggestively reads “What would happen if there is a blackout in Central America?”. Each plot develops a minimal, intimate story, including a set-up, confrontation or conflict and resolution in terms of their narrative structures.

In Panama, a domestic employee is caught between the irrational demands of her employer whose husband does not return home after work at the suspicion of adultery, and the power outage that would require her to descend 59 floors to reach the apartment lobby. Out of six stories, the Panamanian is the only one that takes place in an urban setting, on the 59th floor of a luxurious apartment building downtown Panama City, and takes on racial and class tensions in Panamanian society by both deepening and bridging the divide between the two social classes involved. It also criticises the omnipresence of empty or abandoned skyscrapers in Panama, abandoned constructions or ‘mailbox companies’ built with foreign capital.

In Guatemala, a young Maya K’iche’ couple takes in a wounded pilot who lost radio contact and crashed a light plane in the Guatemalan highlands. The husband, Juan, is protagonised by Maya K’iche’ actor Enrique Salanic, known for his role in *José* (2018). The unexpected visit temporarily disturbs the household until the power comes back and the recovered pilot can use her radio again. In El Salvador, a lady and Toñito, her grandchild, attempt to reach the city to visit the boy’s mother in the hospital. The power outage complicates the journey, as the ensuing lack of gasoline eliminates the possibility to travel by bus and the grandmother becomes unwell while walking. The child eventually continues his way to the hospital, where he finds the empty bed that his mother had occupied in critical condition shortly before.

In a small coastal town in Nicaragua, Ana sees to the preparations for her 15th birthday party, or *quinceañera*, under the watchful eye of her grandmother. Her parents, residing in the United States, send postcards and a radio that she has no use for without electricity. Ana’s story seems the least affected by the power outage, which it hardly references. In Costa Rica, a priest and his daughter predict the end of the world as led on by the outage to offer salvation

to willing believers and save their religious cult from going under financially. In Honduras, a middle-aged couple sees the power outage as an opportunity to break their monotonous relation to rediscover the passion between them.

Exactly two-thirds into the overall film, a tropical aurora, the atmospheric phenomenon of polar lights, lights up the night sky and magically interferes with the protagonists' reality. Afterwards, the stories take their final turn and conclude. The overall narrative irregularity is somewhat compensated by the constant transition between scenes and countries in an attempt to emphasise the simultaneity of the stories that are taking place. From one story to another, transitions are made up of the continuity editing of landscape scenery, churches, candles, knocking on doors or a make-believe game of string telephone by Toñito and his grandmother in which he is pretending to be a pilot, following a scene of the stranded pilot in Guatemala. The impression upon viewing is that, although different national dimensions are represented and there are no spatial or temporal interrelations in the separate narratives, the underlying plots are driven by the power outage as the common cause.

The production's merit lies in its collaborative nature, uniting the work of six teams and some 300 people overall, including one core team of four professionals who were present for the six weeks during which the film was shot. The shooting stage took one week for each of the six countries and was done consecutively. After receiving the Primera Mirada production fund at IFF Panama in 2018, the film premiered at the AFI Latin American Film Festival in Washington D.C. in October 2019, and was screened in May 2020 during the online edition of IFF Panama and continued to a public online premiere on the newly established platform La Subterránea in July 2020. In November 2019, it was presented two awards, for best editing and best production at the Ícaro International Film Festival.

According to Panamanian director Enrique Pérez Him, the main objective was to bring the Central American audience together and expand the market for Central American films. The idea is that if a film reaches a mere 5% spectatorship of the subcontinent's population of 47 million, it is potentially exhibited to 2,350,000 people, which would increase the films' economic viability and circumvent the dependence on financing by the states. The emphasis on economic viability and collaboration in cultural productions refers to the arguments made earlier on small, precarious cinemas and the role of the artist in postglobalised societies (see Chapter 2).

In the film's press kit, the directors state their intentions with this film while touching upon the central theme of the dissertation :

Central America has many stories to tell. 'Days of Light' is a **common voice for multiple realities converging in the region**. The film generates a dialogue between Central American identities through collaborations between the authors of each country involved.

Whilst each of us bears a different past and identity, a common historical and geographical fabric is shared. **As filmmakers we blend the peculiarities of our countries like a chorus; reconciling what differentiates us with what unites us**. Through this prism the film depicts the richness and diversity of looks and experiences that correspond to what we call being Central American.

Each of the stories has its personal seal; an intimate atmosphere for the spectator. They're short, subtle stories that slip into the cracks of a great event, as if they were fragments that allow us to access seemingly insignificant but tremendously human realities.

We firmly believe that this project is a **collaborative effort that can make an important contribution to the construction of a regional film industry**, through the creation and implementation of new models of co-production and distribution of cinema in Central America. (Medrano et al., 2020; emphasis added)

The directorial intentions were thus not to establish a monolithic regional narrative, but to emphasise "multiple converging realities" and to reconcile "what differentiates us with what unites us", which explains the nonlinear approach to bringing together the six short stories. This perspective diverges from the critiques to pan-European co-production projects that were termed "Europudding" for being "polyglot disasters" (Falicov, 2012, p. 302). Lastly, Panamanian film critic Trujillo (2020) remarks that in this, communal rather than an authorial project, the actual "villain" in this film is not in fact the power outage, but "underdevelopment", i.e. the lack of basic needs and services, that characterises all of Central America (Trujillo, 2020, n.p.). At the basis of the six plots, Trujillo felt an underlying and "hidden violence" that none of the directors dared to explore, despite presenting a collaborative regional work that intends to reconcile commonalities and differences. The review does not further elaborate, but some interpretations as to what this shared latent violence could imply are provided in Chapter 6.

5.4 The network around AGAcine, Casa Comal and EICTV in Guatemala

The third largest collaboration network (Cluster 3, see Figure 17) corresponds to a predominantly Guatemalan production context, centred around institutions such as Casa Comal and the Ícaro Festival, the Memoria Verdad Justicia/human rights film network and the Guatemalan audio-visual association AGAcine. The group counts 72 films and 786 professionals, with 69 Guatemalan, two Costa Rican and one Panamanian production. The Guatemalan group is strongly linked to the largest, predominantly Costa Rican, cluster, most prominently through the work of producers Pamela Guinea and Joaquín Ruano, respectively president and secretary of the Guatemalan audio-visual association AGAcine. Both constitute a significant bridge between the two clusters, especially for her aforementioned production work in the films directed by Julio Hernández Cordón. Through involvement in both clusters, they constitute an important direct bridge, or a “strong tie” (Granovetter, 1973) who have facilitated communication and exchange between these clusters. On the Guatemalan-Mexican side of Guinea’s work, we find her projects with members that are integral to the organisation of AGAcine, such as editor Koki Ortega, director Sergio Ramírez, director-producer Joaquín Ruano and César Díaz. Together with Ruano, who is also an important mediator between clusters with work spread across the regional spectrum, she also coproduced María Novaro’s *Tesoros/Treasures* (2017) and César Díaz’ *Our mothers* (2019).

The films produced by the Casa Comal institution that organises the Ícaro Festival are central to this cluster. *La casa de enfrente/The house in front* (Jiménez, 2004) and *V.I.P.: La otra casa/VIP: The other house* (Jiménez, 2007), *Donde nace el sol/Where the sun was born* (Jiménez, 2013) by Ícaro founder and director Elías Jiménez, *Las Cruces...Poblado Próximo/Las Cruces... The next village* (Rosal, 2006) and *Tierra de nadie* (Rosal, 2015) by Ícaro co-founder Rafael Rosal Paz, *Toque de queda* (Figueroa & Jiménez, 2011) and *La bodega* (Figueroa, 2009) by writer-director Ray Figueroa, *Juego de fuego* (Koper, 2016) by producer-director and AcampaDOC coordinator Hugo Koper and the Ibermedia Spanish-Guatemalan co-production *Los gigantes no existen/Giants don't exist* (Rodríguez, 2017). Other EICTV/Casa Comal-associated professionals in this subgroup are Ícaro coordinator Jacob Jiménez (cinematography), Daniela Sagone (cinematography), Giacomo Buonafina

(sound and music),²² Edgar Sajcabún (director-writer), Rafael Rojas (actor), and several others.

In addition to the associated production networks of AGAcine and Casa Comal, a third related subgroup in the Guatemalan cluster can be identified as the activist and human rights film network including the films of Luis Argueta (1994, 2002, 2011, 2014, 2017) and Pamela Yates (2011, 2017; Yates & Thomas Sigel, 1983). Ulrich Stelzner, director of the *Memoria Verdad Justicia* film showcase that is discussed in chapter 6, also occupies a central position in the group, as the films he directed are produced with involvement of members from the AGAcine and Casa Comal subgroups (Stelzner, 2009a, 2009b, 2017; Stelzner & Walther, 1994, 1997, 2002). The related work by veteran guerrilla filmmaker Guillermo Escalón (Rey Rosa & Escalón, 2015) and documentary filmmaker Anais Taracena (Taracena & González, 2017) is equally taken up here.

²² Giacomo Buonafina (°1966) is a Guatemalan theatre and film actor and sound engineer. He recorded and produced hundreds of local and Central American musical productions. As a film actor and sound engineer, he has frequently worked with Casa Comal and its members Elías Jiménez and Rafael Rosal, as well as Veronica Riedel and Luis Argueta. He teaches the Sound module for the degree in Cinematography offered by Casa Comal's centre for education. He was also a founding member and former vice-president of cultural organisations such as the Guatemalan Audio-visual Association AGAcine in 2007, MUSICARTES and AGINPRO, in addition to being nominated for a Grammy Latino in 2010.

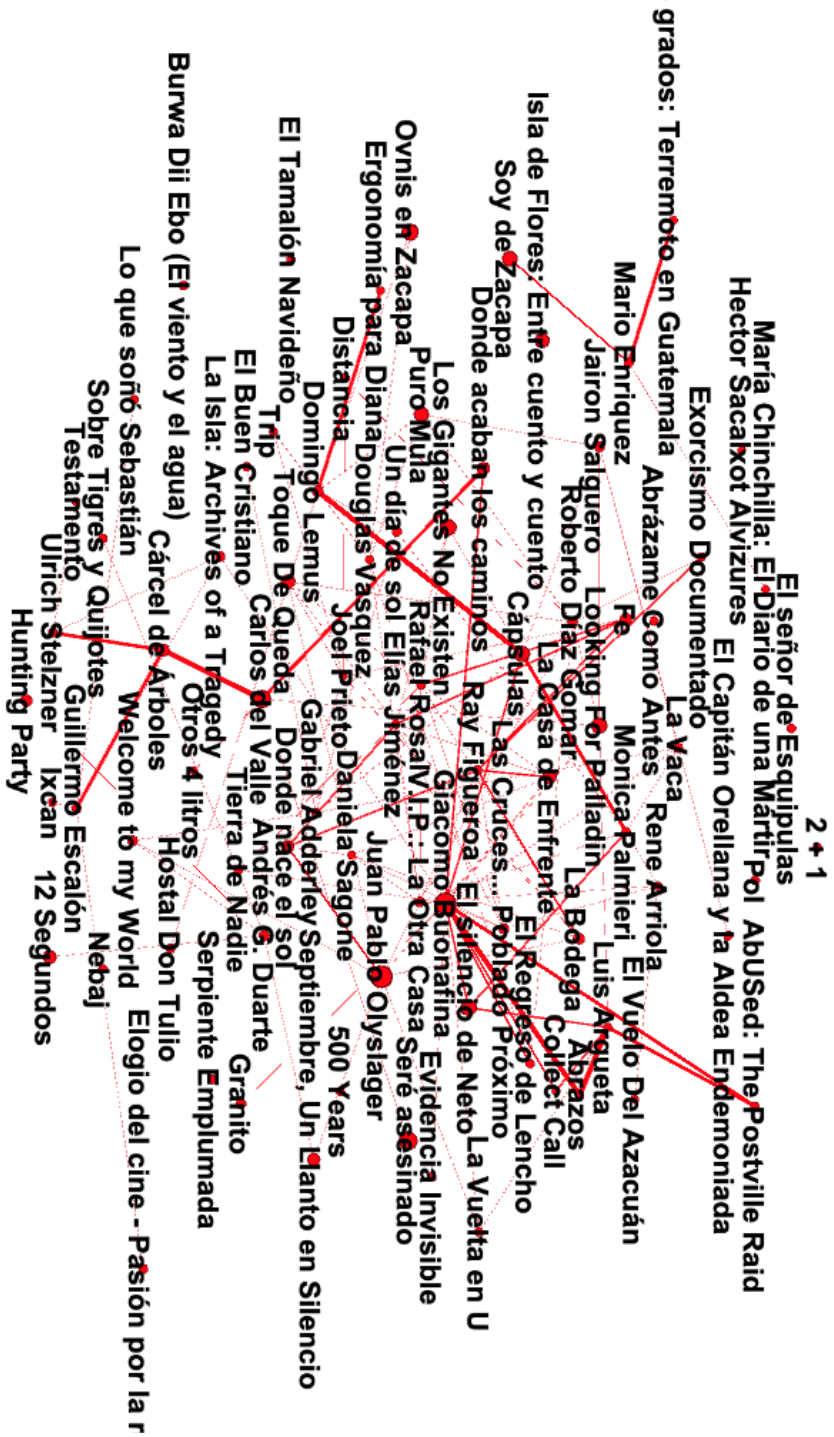


Figure 17: Cluster 3, filtered (>5 connections)

At the other, more conservative and pro-government end of the Guatemalan political spectrum, the cluster includes the three feature films directed by Kenneth Müller (2013, 2017, 2019) and the films in which Guatemalan president Jimmy Morales appeared as an actor before he embarked on his political career, in *Fe/Faith* (Crisóstomo, 2011) and *Looking for Palladin* (Krakowski, 2008). Evidently, the smaller the subgroups get, the more interlinked they become with larger representative entities, such is the case for smaller national productions that aim at a Guatemalan audience, such as *Ovnis en Zacapa* (Machado, 2015), *Puro Mula* (Pérez Him, 2011), *Resonancia/Resonance* (Saldaña, 2017), *Cápsulas/Capsules* (Riedel, 2011), *Hunting Party* (Kummerfeldt Quiroa, 2015), *Welcome to my World* (Tres, 2016), *Pol* (Espinosa, 2014), *Otros 4 litros* (Espinosa, 2017) and other related titles.

The production company Best Picture System (BPS) was established in 2011 upon the release of *Puro Mula*, their first feature, after which followed two documentaries and fiction features *Ovnis en Zacapa* (2015) and *Kenke/Weed* (2015). BPS' members form a small but influential group of Latin American film professionals who each have been responsible for a significant part of Central American film production and promotion. Similar to the core-continuity team of film professionals that worked on *Days of light* (2019, see 5.3.1.), a look into their educational and professional backgrounds immediately reveals the EICTV film school in Cuba as common ground from whence the collaboration that made these productions possible originate.

Best Picture System is made up of Puerto Rican producer Vilma Liella (EICTV 2006-2009), Mexican cinematographer Arturo Juárez Aguilar (EICTV 2006-2009), Guatemalan editor, actor and musician Domingo Lemus (EICTV 2006-2009), Venezuelan cinematographer Marco Santaniello (EICTV 2006-2009), director and new media content creator Marcos Machado from Costa Rica (EICTV 2007-2010), director Carlos Ignacio Benavides from Costa Rica (EICTV 2006-2009), Panamanian director-writer-editor Enrique Pérez Him (EICTV 2006-2009), sound designer Miguel Caroli from Venezuela (EICTV 2006-2009) and Mexican sound professional Jonathan Macías (EICTV 2006-2009). In addition to the production of films, BPS also organises a space for film education with workshops in Honduras and Costa Rica in the early years and later with “BPS es cool” (BPS is cool/BPS school), a travelling one-month course taught by BPS' members complemented by close collaborators such as Guatemalan sound professional Eduardo Cáceres (EICTV 2005-2008),

colourist and visual effects specialist José Luis Arce Sanabria (Costa Rica) and art director María José Velásquez (Guatemala). All three worked on *Ovnis en Zacapa* (Machado, 2015) with the members of BPS. The crew of *Puro Mula* (Pérez Him, 2011) further demonstrates links between the Guatemalan and Costa Rican clusters through the involvement of Costa Rican co-writer Ariel Escalante (EICTV 2006-2009) and editor Leo Fallas.

The EICTV-origins of Best Picture System and the establishment of its collaboration network across the region indicate that its members and collaborators are bridges between clusters and countries, as was originally intended by EICTV's pedagogical philosophy, and as such they serve as good examples of regional cinematographic structures that resort to the connections they made while studying in Cuba.

Among the many examples that can be referred to in the EICTV-inspired collaboration networks with respect to Central American film cultures is the establishment of the AcampaDOC documentary festival discussed in Chapter 4. The directors and tutors of AcampaDOC are similarly linked through their time spent at EICTV (Irina Ruíz 2004-2007, Hugo Koper 2005-2008, Daniela Sagone 1999-2001, Edgar Soberón Torchía). One of the feature films that is analysed in Chapter 6, *Red princesses* (Astorga, 2013) was made possible because of the work of producer Marcela Esquivel Jiménez (EICTV 2006-2009) and Carlos Ignacio Benavides (EICTV 2006-2009). The films' Brazilian director of photography, Julio Constantini, was Benavides' classmate at EICTV (2006-2009), as well as other crew members. As mentioned, Benavides worked as script supervisor for *Puro Mula*, written by Enrique Pérez Him (Panama) and Ariel Escalante (Costa Rica) and *Ovnis en Zacapa*, while both films were produced by Vilma Liella (Panama).

5.5. Popular national cinema from Honduras

According to the dataset, Honduran film production follows the region's largest film 'industries' of Costa Rica, Panama and Guatemala. The fourth largest community in the network links 504 individuals and 29 Honduran productions, one from El Salvador and one Guatemalan film. Popular national films included are, in order of centrality in the network, *Amor y frijoles/Love and beans* (Kodath & Pereira, 2009), *El Xendra* (Fanconi, 2012), *Un lugar en el Caribe/A place in the Caribbean* (Fanconi, 2017), *El paletero* (Bendeck, 2016), *Morazán* (Durón, 2017), *Trapos sucios* (Lopez, 2017), *Almas de la medianoche/Midnight spirits* (Fanconi, 2002) and *Anita, la cazadora de*

insectos/Anita, the insect hunter (Durón, 2001). In general, Honduran national film production is characterised by a high presence of formulaic genre films in the form of comedies, horror films and historical dramas.

Three main production and dissemination strategies can be discerned from the limited available data. Besides privately funded popular box-office national films such as *Amor y frijoles* or *Un lugar en el Caribe*, there are independent filmmaking initiatives such as the work of Hispano Durón (*Morazán*), sponsored by the university and a small segment of arthouse productions who look for funding in the festival circuit (*El Paletero*). Producer Ana Isabel Martins Palacios (Ícaro Honduras, *Morazán*) stands out, as do directors Michael Bendeck, Hispano Durón, Denis Godoy, David Estrada, Mathew Kodath and Juan Carlos Fanconi. The driving forces behind the promotion of national production and dissemination of Honduran cinemas are the International Short Film Festival El Heraldo, the Honduran Ícaro counterpart and producer associations such as Linterna Mágica.

Id	Label	Category	Production country	Closeness centrality
26	Amor y frijoles	Film	Honduras	0.198
126	El Xendra	Film	Honduras	0.196
328	Un lugar en el Caribe	Film	Honduras	0.190
106	El Paletero	Film	Honduras	0.186
244	Morazán	Film	Honduras	0.181
322	Trapos Sucios	Film	Honduras	0.177
333	Unos pocos con valor	Film	Honduras	0.170
320	Toque de Queda (HON)	Film	Honduras	0.162
285	Quién paga la cuenta?	Film	Honduras	0.162
24	Ambiguity: Crónica de un sueño americano	Film	Guatemala	0.162
314	The Zwickys	Film	Honduras	0.158
161	In the light	Film	Honduras	0.156

141	Fuerzas de Honor	Film	Honduras	0.156
42	Café con Sabor a mi Tierra	Film	Honduras	0.152

Table 9: Films ranked by closeness centrality in the Honduran cluster

Despite representing a small part of contemporary Central American cinemas, the national congress did approve the Honduran Cinematographic Law in January 2019, making it one of the few Central American nations with a formalised film infrastructure (Agurcia, 2019). The law stipulates the creation of a general directorate (DGC), a national industrial council (CNIC), a film development fund (FONDECI) and the creation of a tax incentive programme for national film investment. However, as in the example given earlier on the recent Cuban law proposal to incentivise independent film production, the implied progress and positive developments are countered with concerned voices questioning the legitimacy of the current government and its economic rather than creative priorities. The debates on what enables national-regional creative production, and what actually disables or limits it, are bound to characterise the Honduran film industry for the coming years.

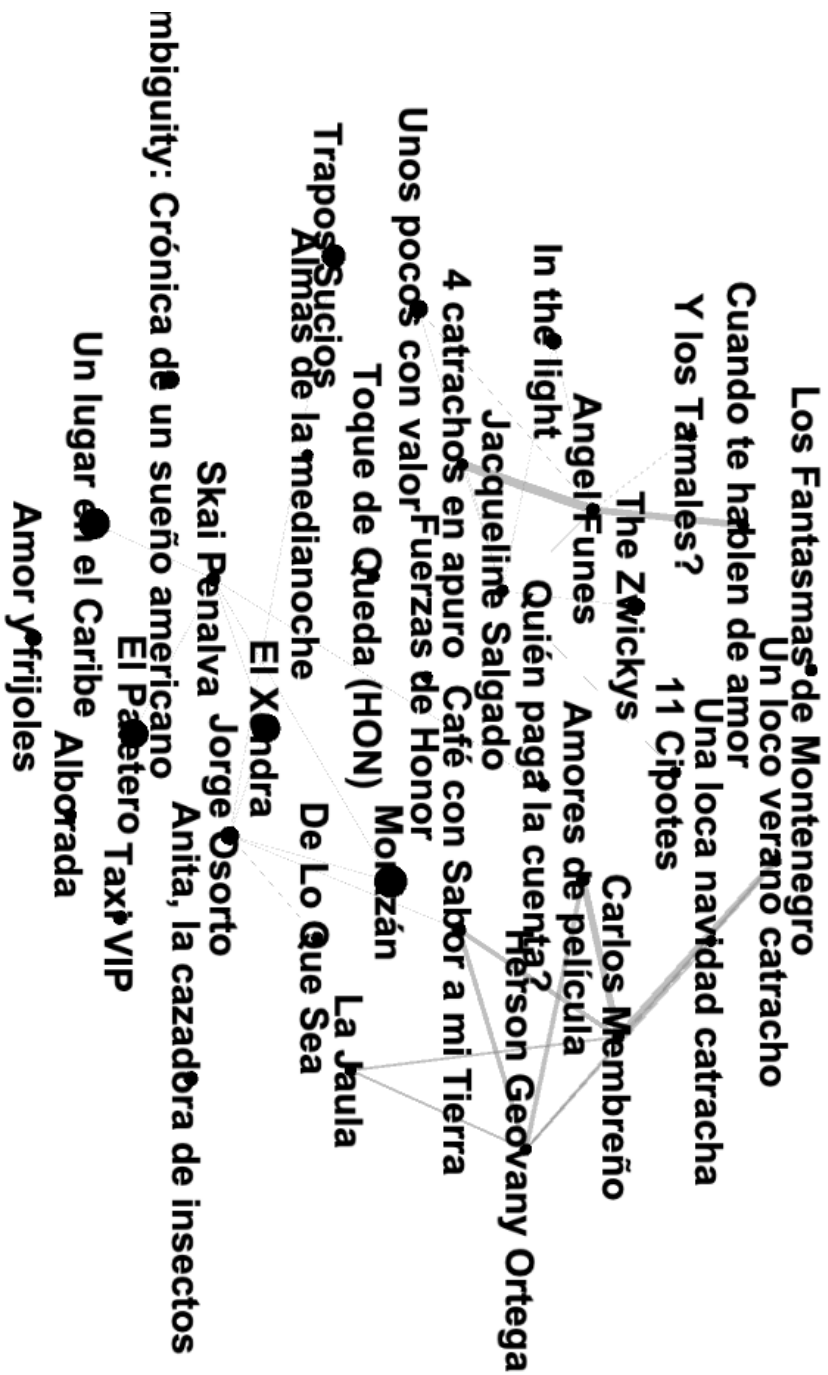


Figure 18: Cluster 4, filtered (>5 connections)

5.6. Cinematic pioneers from Nicaragua and El Salvador

The fifth community centres around 19 Nicaraguan, five Guatemalan two Salvadorian and two Honduran films and 501 individuals, who are taken up in this part of the network. The central position of Florence Jaugey and Frank Pineda stands out, with two of their films, *La Yuma* and *La pantalla desnuda*.

Like in most other clusters, there is a noteworthy involvement of collaborators of the Ícaro Film Festival. This cluster includes the Guatemalan festival coordinator and tutor Jacob Jiménez and his work as a cinematographer in *Juego de Fuego*, a film directed by Hugo Koper (AcampaDOC coordinator) for DOCTV Latinoamérica. The Ícaro organiser in Nicaragua, Martha Clarissa Hernández Chávez, is part of this list, here through her ethnographic road movie *Lubaraun* together with Nicaraguan filmmaker María José Álvarez. The most central elements in the community also demonstrate clear ties to Guatemala that are not directly or exclusively Ícaro-related, such as *Asphyxia* by Ana Isabel Bustamante, a postmemory documentary produced by Joaquín Ruano, or Eduardo Spiegeler, Guatemalan filmmaker in Nicaragua who passed away during an unfortunate accident during protests in Managua. There is also the noteworthy inclusion of Guatemalan film professional Carlos 'Loco' Gonzalez and the aforementioned Edgar Sajcabún. Other ties bridging this community to the other clusters can once again be found in the sound department. Besides José Rommel Tuñón (EICTV 2005-2008, Panama, see earlier) and Jonathan Macías (EICTV 2006-2009, Mexico), Eduardo Cáceres from Guatemala (EICTV 2005-2008, Nicaraguan cluster) has worked in Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Guatemala on high-profile productions across collaborative communities ranging from Casa Comal and AGAcine-supported productions over Jayro Bustamante's films and social documentaries by Ana Isabel Bustamante in Guatemala, by Gloria Carrión in Nicaragua and by Marcela Zamora (EICTV 2004-2007) in El Salvador to the most popular Honduran film ever made, *Amor y frijoles/Love and beans* (Kodath & Pereira, 2009).

The community includes the work by French-Nicaraguan filmmaker Florence Jaugey and her partner and filmmaker Frank Pineda. With *La Yuma* (Jaugey, 2009), Jaugey brought an end to 20 years without fiction feature releases in Nicaragua. Jaugey and Pineda had also been involved in Ken Loach's Scottish/Nicaraguan *Carla's Song* (1996), written by Paul Laverty and with participation of a young Diego Quemada-Díez (Costa Rica cluster), who

would later on make *The golden dream* (2013). Frank Pineda was one of the founding members of the Nicaraguan Institute of Cinema INCINE after serving as a war correspondent and cameramen in the late 1970s. Other early members of INCINE who are still actively involved in current cinematographic developments in Nicaragua are included with Martha Clarissa Hernández Chávez, María José Álvarez, Rossana Lacayo, Ricardo Wheelock and other, more recent members of the Nicaraguan Cinematography Association ANCI (Belkis Ramirez, Rebeca Arcia). The Nicaraguan community is characterised by an affinity with other international filmmakers who have (co-)produced in and with Nicaragua, such as two Dutch filmmakers, Jan Kees de Rooy and Koen Suidgeest, who created *La llegada de Karla* (2011), or Belgian sound professional and EICTV graduate and tutor Patrick Ghislain, who also collaborated on *Asphyxia* (Bustamante, 2018).

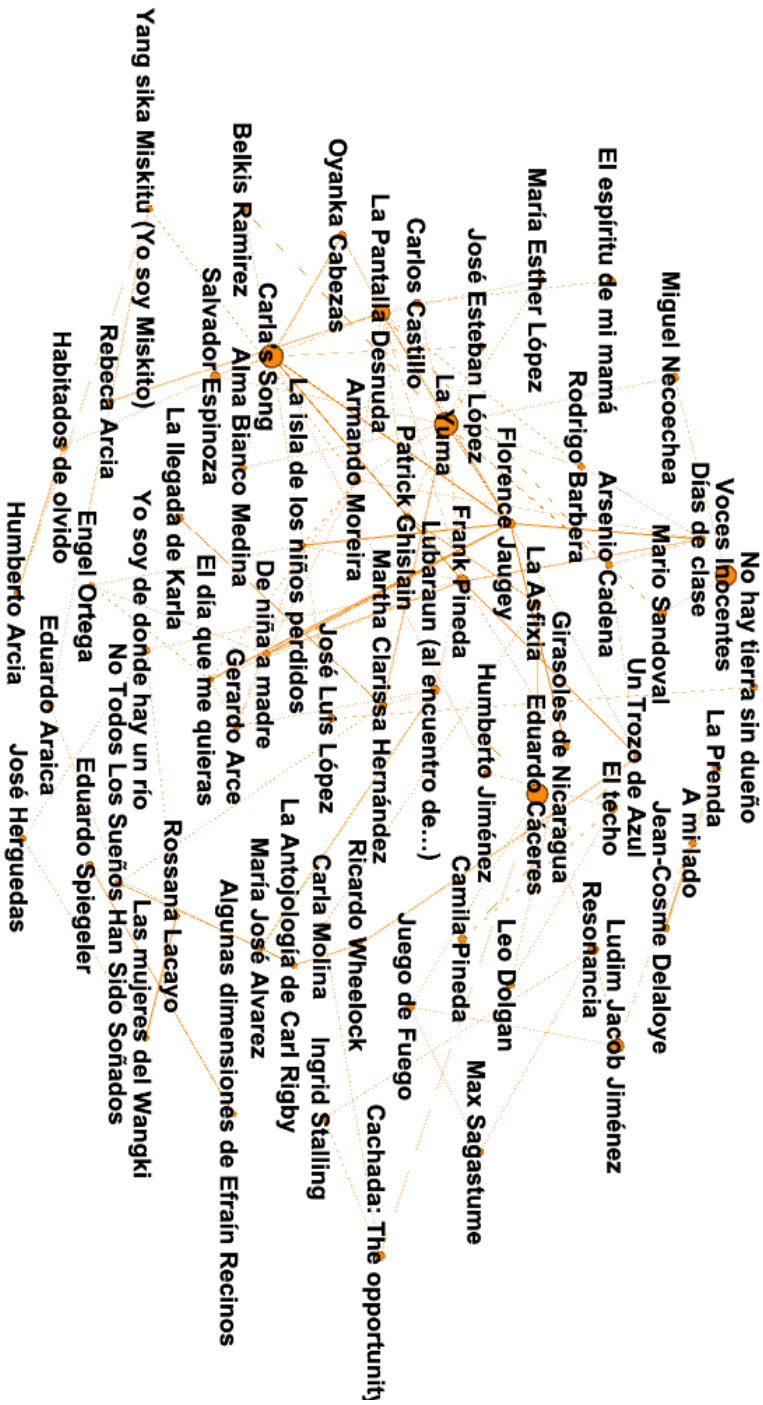


Figure 19: Cluster 5, filtered (>2 connections)

Finally, on the Salvadorian side of the cluster we find filmmaker Arturo Menendez and two of his feature films, *Malacrianza/The crow's nest* (2014) and *La Palabra de Pablo/Pablo's word* (2018) along producer Alfonso Quijada, whereas Menendez' other producer Francisco Morales was already included in the Panama cluster for his involvement in *Days of light* (2019). Central positions in the cluster are reserved for early Salvadorian filmmakers in institutionally leading positions André Gutfreund and Jorge Dalton, while the nation's most acclaimed filmmaker, Marcela Zamora, was already taken up in a larger cluster. For assuming the role of artistic leadership as a central notion to the conception of Salvadorian small cinemas, her work is analysed in detail in Chapter 6. Ties to the rest of the network are Salvadorian sound specialist Paolo Hasbún (*Malacrianza, The offended*) and Colombian actress Paola Baldión, who stars in *Pablo's word* (Menendez, 2018, El Salvador, Nicaraguan cluster) and *The naked screen* (Jaughey, 2014) and who premiered her own documentary *I am migration* (Baldión & Toll, 2019) at the Ícaro International Film Festival in Guatemala in 2018.



Figure 20: Cluster 6, filtered (>2 connections)

5.7. Gender distribution in the Central American production network

Lastly, this chapter briefly introduces the possibilities to analyse gender distribution in regional production relations by means of network analysis and visualisation. A look at the list of 898 professionals who worked on at least two films in the network reveals that 263 of them are female (29.29%). Of the 361

people who worked on at least three films, 95 are women (26.32%). Of the 198 people who worked on at least four feature films, 40 are women (20.20%). Of the 122 people who worked on at least five films, 23 are women (18.85%). Of the 73 people who worked on at least six films, 12 are women (16.44%). Only 42 people have worked on seven films or more, of which six are women (14.29%). Only ten men and one woman (9.1%) have been directly involved in the production of ten films or more (see Figure 21).

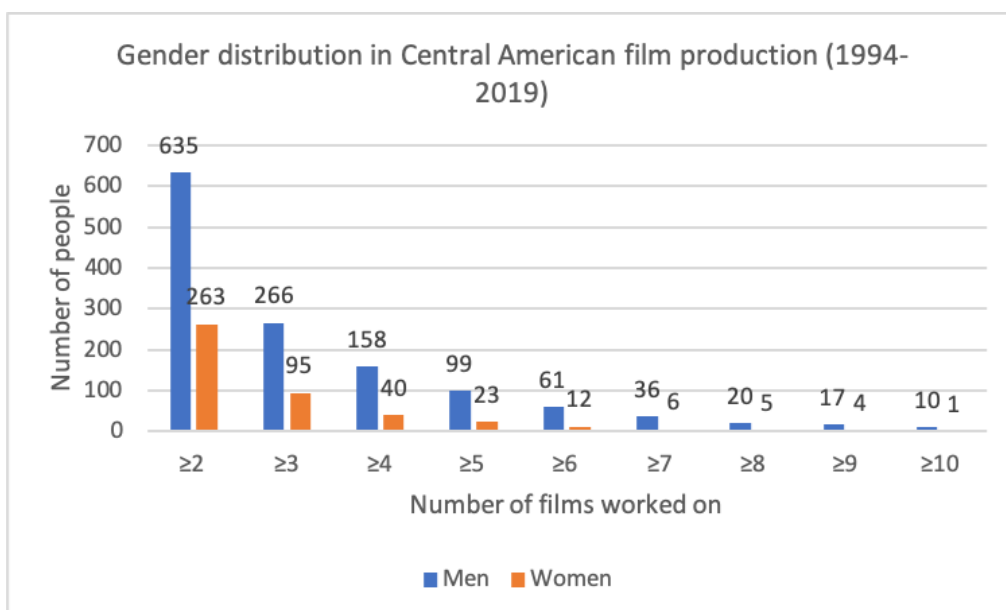


Figure 21: Gender distribution in Central American film production (1994-2019)

Of the 898 people who worked on at least two films, nearly 30% are women, which is slightly higher than the generally identified global average of approximately 20% female participation in the film industry. However, if only positions such as that of the director/producer/writer, or only the most productive people in the network are considered, female participation drops to around ten per cent. So, despite positive media coverage, female presence in Central American cinema since 1994 has to be seen in a broader historical, masculine heteronormative context, and taken as a slow but steady evolution towards fair representation and gender equality in both technical and creative positions. Many of the film festivals in the region have recalibrated their organisation towards an explicit politics of equality, such as the Ícaro Film Festival with an all-female jury for the technical-artistic awards during the 2018 anniversary edition, and IFF Panama with the creation of a new film

fund, *Su Mirada* (“her look”), designed specifically for women filmmakers from the region. A similar argument can be made for the inclusion of creative talent from indigenous descentance, although these parameters are less clear given the high degree of ethnic diversity in Central America. The women film professionals that have been involved in the production of most feature films are Guatemalan producer Pamela Guinea (13 films), French-Nicaraguan film pioneer Florence Jaugey (9), actress Anabelle Ulloa (9), production designer Olga Madrigal (9), art director Carolina Lett (8), producer Alejandra Vargas-Carballo (7) and producer Amaya Izquierdo (6) from Costa Rica. Cinematographers María Secco (6) from Uruguay and Daniela Sagone (5) from Guatemala lead the list in their field of expertise.

Figure 22 below illustrates the distribution of gender throughout the network for individuals with two or more connections to their name. The nodes that correspond to men are coloured green and the nodes that identify women are coloured red. In the overall network, close to 15% of the entered individuals worked on at least two films, of which 10% are male and 5% are female. The visualisation shows a rather equitable gender distribution throughout the network, although the biggest nodes, those with the largest ‘degree range,’ indicate men. The nodes that are coloured grey include all films and all individuals with only one registered connection in the dataset.

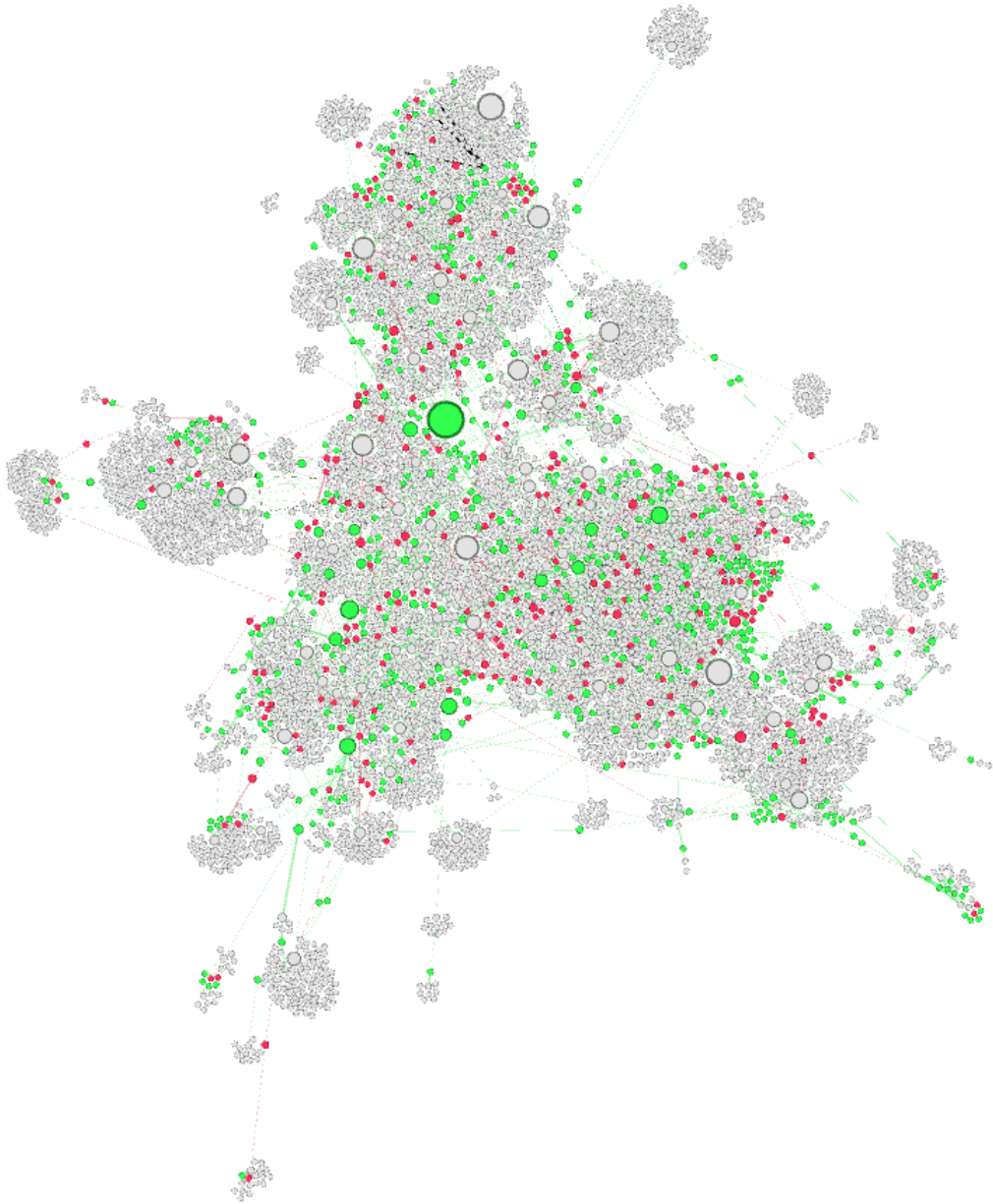


Figure 22: Gender distribution graph for individuals with two or more connections

The possibilities to analyse connections are plentiful with this dataset. The interpretations rendered here are based in part on the knowledge accrued during the fieldwork, without which it would be difficult to attribute motives for interaction. The more intimate knowledge of the field and its history one has, the more patterns and relationships can be identified. Some of the potential professional benefits of keeping such a dataset are: an efficient way to search for collaborators; to develop new relationships and new projects; to connect educational programmes to the right experts; to put together festival juries; to distribute funding in the most efficient way through the network based on prior experience; to connect national and regional networks to international funding, producers, salespeople, film festivals, ...

Conclusions: common ground

At first glance, the six communities in the network clearly correspond to six interconnected clusters of national film production. However, a closer look at the data reveals more intricate connections. It shows through which individuals exactly these clusters are connected, and how the interaction is scaled, both within the cluster and to members of other clusters. Through the prior qualitative research, the analysis can then establish a number of real-world connections that explain the centrality of the nodes. By way of conclusion, a number of things can be learned from the network analysis:

- 1) Among the most prolific professionals of Central American film production are sound specialists José Rommel Tuñón (28 listed films, Cluster 2), Giacomo Buonafina (19 listed films, Cluster 3) and Eduardo Cáceres (16 listed films, Cluster 5).
- 2) Many of the network's connections originated at the Cuban film school EICTV, as is the case for the establishment of organisations such as Casa Comal, Best Picture System or the Veritas University, whose members were part of the same generations at EICTV. The importance of film schools cannot be overstated, as the Costa Rican cluster is clearly constituted by alumni and teaching staff from the country's institutions that offer theoretical and practical film programmes. Many filmmakers return to take up teaching positions since it is impossible to depend on filmmaking as the sole source of income. For its direct influence in the region's filmmaking, the school can and should be added to the dataset as an extra parameter.

3) Over the course of the last 20 years, Casa Comal has expanded its network throughout the region, producing films, organising film festivals and educating aspiring filmmakers. The Ícaro Film Festival and its representations in all of Central America, New York, Buenos Aires, Bogota, Havana and San Juan in Puerto Rico are the most spread-out itinerant events throughout the region and potentially reach a very large and diverse audience in the promotion of a regional cinema. As a result of promoting this kind of cultural regional integration, its constitutive members are central to the network and the respective clusters.

4) The CINERGIA film fund for Central American and Caribbean productions that was organised by María Lourdes Cortés from 2004 to 2015 (cf. Chapter 2) has been instrumental in kickstarting promising careers and enabling collaboration networks to materialise across borders through the organisation of workshops and evaluations. The recognition and financial support offered by the fund strengthened relations, and, in many cases led to international circulation at major international film festivals. The fund brings many internationally renowned (arthouse) filmmakers together in the largest cluster, and, like EICTV, should be added to the dataset as a parameter.

5) Even though film festivals are not an explicit parameter in the network, the organisation of and participation in certain events lead to a high likelihood of collaboration by the event organisers and participants on future productions. This is the case for festival director and filmmaker Uli Stelzner from the International Film Festival Memoria, Verdad, Justicia (see Chapter 6) and for Pituka Ortega-Heilbron as filmmaker and IFF Panama festival director. The members integrated in AGAcine (Pamela Guinea, Joaquín Ruano, Eduardo Cáceres et al.), and certainly the Casa Comal/EICTV/Ícaro network (Elías Jiménez, Jacob Jiménez, Martha Clarissa Hernández, Cecilia Durán, Ana Martins Palacios et al.) form close-knit groups with strong connections to every other filmmaking community.

Within the six subgroups, it is possible to see film festival-affiliations that enable and are enabled by collaborative networks. The Panamanian film festival network and organisations such as RedCrea, *Mente Pública* and others previously mentioned form a tight network of exchange culminating in the appointment of filmmaker Carlos Aguilar Navarro as Minister of Culture at the newly created Ministry of Culture, transferring the film institute and fund from the Ministry of Commerce and Industries. In all of the clusters, film festival organisers Pituka Ortega (IFF Panama), Elías Jiménez (Ícaro), Uli

Stelzner (Memoria Verdad Justicia), Irina Ruiz Figueroa (AcampaDOC) and others are ascribed central positions in their respective clusters as well as in the entire network, because they combine film production and didactic responsibilities with positions as cultural managers, public-political spokesperson and all-round mediators and enablers for film-cultural development.

The existence of tight collaboration networks in small cinemas is not surprising, as film always has been a collective as well as social art form that links institutions and creative producers, public and policy in a network of dynamic multiplicity. The merit of the production network analysis resides in the detection of the brokers-mediators in the network, being those whose position indicates the shortest paths between clusters and from nodes at one end of the network to nodes located at the opposite, furthest end. The mediators are those who most efficiently pass information from any given node in the network to another and thus facilitate communication between clusters. Besides other previously mentioned mediators, key professionals in terms of a regionally integrated film culture are Nicolás Díaz Wong, José Tuñón Rommel, Eduardo Cáceres, Joaquín Ruano, Pamela Guinea, Edgar Soberón Torchía, Elías Jiménez and Hugo Koper, among many more in an ever-growing list spanning several generations.

As a last reflection on networks, perhaps a metaphor better suited to the exploration of social relations in the world of filmmaking is Ingold's interpretation of Lefebvre's "meshworks" consisting of interwoven, rather than interconnected, lines (Ingold, 2007, p. 81, 2011, p. 63, 2015, p. 82). The difference is that life as a network emphasises the lines as directly communicating between the nodes, while the meshwork indicates a "messier" reality with life being lived *along the trails created*. The analysis of the production-based network demonstrates the advantages of finding patterns in the 'messy' network of filmmaking practices. For now, the network visualisation is static and non-spatial, but holds the potential of demonstrating the dynamic qualities of a multidimensional production 'meshwork' across space and time.

The meshwork is a more dynamic, visual metaphor in that, like a spiders' web, it consists of various spatial layers that are constantly moving or growing and are entangled in knots. In its underlying philosophy, this shifts the discussion from texts to texture, as a tissue of lines that nuances the interpretation and representation of the data analysis in this chapter. The analysis shows that the

mere connections between the dots are less interesting than the motives and circumstances that the lines hide, represented as a chain between points in a seemingly static network. However, the knots in which the interweaving of lines results were initially recognised through the ethnographic engagement in the field, by travelling the circuit and following and encountering the various lines that are involved in the meshwork of Central American film. Still, the individual and episodic ethnographic engagement cannot fully reflect the dynamic nature of production relations and emerging film cultures, nor the evolution of the landscape for, for example, women filmmakers. Whereas the network analysis presents mostly hindsight, the meshwork metaphor inscribes in an ongoing exploration of possible processes, in which this dissertation offers but a condensed and festival-oriented snapshot of the totality of processes.

The texture of the productive relationships is not only spatially defined, as there are more dimensions that make up the regionalist argument in the Central American tapestry. One such extra dimension is explored in the following chapter, which, like the network analysis, also deals with hindsight, but in a way that actively, emotionally and visually engages with present affairs in the aspiration of building a better future. The decades of internal conflict and the signing of the last regional Peace Agreements in 1996 arguably constitute the most defining moments that led to the organisation of film festivals and democratic film cultures as they are known today. As a theme, the armed conflicts mark many Central American films and filmmakers, especially given the still ongoing trials against war criminals and the levels of (social and ideological) polarisation that continue to characterise most Central American societies. In the poem that precedes Part 1, the late K'iche' poet Humberto Ak'Abal worded this politics of memory as walking backwards (into the future), in order to remember.

Chapter 6. A generational debt: postmemory films and film festivals

Introduction

The creative re-birth of contemporary Central American cinema from the second half of the 1990s onwards is partially indebted to the repression, polarisation and destruction that preceded it.²³ This has led to “a certain on-screen aesthetic of violence” that was noted by Panamanian film critic Trujillo in his review of *Days of light* (2020; see Chapter 5) and by authors Cabezas Vargas and González de Canales in the work of directors such as Ray Figueroa’s *La bodega/The bodega* (2009), Enrique Palacio’s *Lucía* (2012), Héctor Herrera’s *One dollar el precio de la vida/One dollar the price of life* (2002) and the films by Julio Hernández Cordón. The authors find that

[t]his *mise-en-scène* of violence uses various strategies, such as leaving room for omissions, the opening of the focal field, taking images out of focus and slowing down scene sequences. These strategies leave the spectator with the obligation to imagine and grasp for themselves the violence by looking at it directly and taking account of its existence. Ultimately, the denunciation of social problems still constitutes an important part of Central American cinema, although the aesthetics used to take on the subjects have evolved. (Cabezas Vargas & De Canales Carcereny, 2018, p. 170)

The increased turn to cinema in the postwar years has been facilitated by the return to relatively peaceful societies, the digitisation and democratisation of the filmmaking process and cinema’s unique qualities of presenting a

²³ Part of this chapter was accepted for publication as ‘*Estrategias cosmopolitas de afecto en la esfera pública global: subjetividad e intervención en los documentales de Marcela Zamora*’ in the volume *Imaginario digitales del sur* (forthcoming), edited by Miguel Fernández Rodríguez and José Francisco Cerdán. While its subject is central to understanding a great part of contemporary Central American cinemas, the paper was finished in early 2018 before the rest of the dissertation came together, which may result in a slightly different tone compared to other chapters.

synergetic audio-visual reflection of narratives, emotions and points of view. On a societal level, the peace negotiations were accompanied by truth-seeking commissions such as Guatemala's controversial Commission for Historical Clarification, set up in 1994 to investigate past human rights violations and genocides in a conflict that disappeared or killed 200,000 people and forced millions into exile. These commissions were composed under pressure of the international community and with resistance from the government's military, to whom most of the violations are attributed and who consider it part of the militant left's political campaigns. According to the United Nations truth commission, 83% of the victims in the conflict were indigenous.

Most famously, the precedent-setting work of the UN-backed International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) led to a series of trials against Efraín Ríos Montt, Guatemalan dictator from March 1982 until August 1983, whose "scorched-earth policies" led to the destruction of more than 400 Mayan indigenous communities and over 10,000 victims by hands of the military in the first three months of his regime alone (Burt & Estrada, 2018). In 2013, Ríos Montt was found guilty of crimes against humanity and genocide against the Maya Ixil people and sentenced to 80 years in prison. However, he was released under house arrest on a technicality a mere ten days later due to pressure from Guatemala's business and military elite, and it took until the end of 2017 to restart the trial (Burt and Estrada 2018). As explained in Chapter 5, the story of the general was fictionalised by Jayro Bustamante in *La llorona/The weeping woman* (2019).

These events do not only belong to the past, as in early 2019, president Jimmy Morales of Guatemala tried to unilaterally end the agreements with the UN's anti-corruption commission CICIG due to investigations into his own and his family's work. In 2015, CICIG had already forced former vice-president Roxana Baldetti and president Otto Pérez Molina to step down after corruption and fraud charges (Associated Press in Guatemala City, 2019). In short, the country's judicial and political institutions are problematically rife with this type of backroom influence by (ex-)military members and supporters who wholly dismiss with impunity all accusations of genocide and corruption. The truth-commissions are the legal attestation of the postwar need for clarification, for "memory, truth and justice" (see below). In the field of cultural development and in line with a strong tradition of social filmmaking in Latin America (see Chapter 3), this need led to the omnipresence of the theme of human rights in a truth-seeking filmmaking aimed at establishing a

public forum for the recovery of historical memory, for debate and reconciliation.

The historical memory tied to these events is highly politicised and contributes to current acts of polarisation that impede the collective healing process of remembering and mourning in order to be able to imagine future narratives for the social collective (Moreiras, 2001, p. 318; Nelly & Moreiras, 2001, p. 14). After decades of excessive violence and oppressive political regimes, the region's politics of memory are characterised by the reconstruction and recreation of narratives and of archives, in order to transmit these experiences across generations (Nouzeilles, 2005, pp. 264–265). This chapter focuses on such reconstructions through films and festival experiences.

In what follows, the chapter introduces the theoretical vantage point from which to approach the postmemory genre. It explores the programming of the only Central American film festival included in the human rights film network, the International Film Festival of Memory Truth and Justice in Guatemala. Afterwards, a number of postmemory films are discussed that cannot be reduced to the autobiographical genre of traumatised victims. The poetic, reflexive and performative documentaries by Tatiana Huezo, Marcela Zamora and Julio López (El Salvador), Gloria Carrión Fonseca and Mercedes Moncada (Nicaragua), Abner Benaim (Panama), Katia Lara (Honduras), Ana Isabel Bustamante, Anais Taracena and Isabel Acevedo (Guatemala) embody the genre and its constitutive creative elements as a radical *cinéma vérité* characterised by testimonies, interventionism and spontaneity (Nouzeilles, 2005, p. 268).

In a strange hybrid between fiction and documentary that results from the narrative, the problematic production process and authorship issues, *Cárcel de árboles/Prison of Trees* (Rodrigo Rey Rosa and Guillermo Escalón, 2015) presents the most incongruous historical account, through which the fragility of memory and the spectatorial estrangement within the postmemory genre can be discussed. The postmemory genre is not limited to documentary work, as demonstrated by the fiction features *Red princesses* (Laura Astorga 2013) and *Giants don't exist* (Chema Rodríguez, 2017), in which the politics of memory are aestheticised into films that aim to broaden the forum to transmit memory across generations through an arthouse appeal. The other, pro-military, side of the political spectrum is represented as well through the films of Kenneth Müller, his Netflix-title *September, a silent cry* (2016) and *Nebaj* (2019).

Postmemory

In the postconflict society, memory becomes the main vehicle for rehabilitation and both drives and hinders societal developments. In the current climate of cinematic expansion, it then follows that the “symbolic labouring of postmemory” is highly characteristic of a large segment of contemporary film production in Central America. Drawing on Marianne Hirsch’s seminal work on Holocaust photographs, Gabriela Nouzeilles clarifies cinematic postmemory as an act of active imaginative investment, projection and creation (Hirsch, 1997, p. 22),

understanding by this not a ‘post’ of the mnemonic – although it could also mean that – but rather the novel setting and acting out of a secondary, post-generational memory that differs from traumatic memory because of its generational distance, and from history because of its strong personal and emotional connection with the past. (Nouzeilles, 2005, p. 265)

The conceptualisation of postmemory as a performative event helps us to frame the visualisation thereof in films and the organisation of events as discussed in the remainder of the chapter. The past contexts in which the concept appeared were the Holocaust (Hirsch 1997, 2012) and the forced disappearances during the Argentinian dictatorship from 1976 until 1983. As illustrated through the films by Argentinian Albertina Carri and many others in Argentina and Chile, the latter period gave impulse to cinematic representations in the Southern Cone that also found its way into contemporary Central American cinematic contexts:

What these films share in common is an attempt by younger generations to question processes of subjective memory formation, taking as a starting point their own personal experiences as children of disappeared parents. Because they narrate at a temporal remove, their memories are often full of gaps and distortions that serve as the impetus for the narrative act. (Lattanzi, 2016, p. 231)

The traumas, on a personal and collective level, that these decades have left are characteristic to a great deal of contemporary creative expression in the subcontinent. Even so, there has been a lot of criticism on (indirect) trauma as a collective, homogenising experience in that the indexical experience is absent for the postmemory generation, whose self-referential and subjective films attest to the highly-constructed mediation of remembering and

forgetting. In *The Politics of Postmemory* (2017), Geoffrey Maguire reconceptualises the postmemory practice to defend Hirsch's original notions (1997, 2012) against criticisms of highly personalised trauma and victimhood narratives that are impossible to relate to without the familial as the primary locus of postmemorial identification (Maguire, 2017, p. 11). Hirsch finds that

[p]ostmemorial work [...] strives to *reactivate* and *reembody* more distant social/national and archival/cultural memorial structures by reinvesting them with resonant individual and familial forms of mediation and aesthetic expression (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 33–39; Maguire, 2017, p. 11, emphasis in original).

The criticism to this theory, the lack of identification or affective bond with a publicly co-opted traumatic experience, is countered by Maguire who states that, especially in literature, film and visual art,

only by elaborating their narratives in the realm of the familial [...] these children may lay a *personal* claim on a past that has been publicly co-opted and politicised by various social and political actors in the arena of contemporary national and cultural memory (2017, p. 12, emphasis in original).

Their claim, in other words, is representative of the claims other individuals make in similar contexts, leading to a cosmopolitan engagement of affect through each's respective subjectivities. César Díaz, the Guatemalan director of *Our mothers* (2019), explains his generation's preoccupation with producing a first feature film on violent acts from the past in a behind-the-scenes video:

I believe it is about talking about the war and about the conflict from [an] intimate [perspective]. I believe that people have always talked from the perspective of the different sides; they have always tried to recount history, and I believe that I felt like recounting the war from the perspective of intimate relatives, and that was why this little seed made me write and eventually, film. (Córdova & Orozco Recinos, 2020; own translation)

The Guatemalan-French-Belgian production of *Our mothers* (2019) does not only mediate Guatemalan history for a Guatemalan audience, as it also is the Belgian feature film submission to the 2020 Academy Awards. In August 2019, a Belgian selection committee chose César Díaz' film to represent the country in the international film competition. Earlier, Díaz' debut feature, a co-

production between Belgium, France and Guatemala had already been awarded with the *Caméra d'Or* at Cannes' International Critics' Week. The fictionalised story of *Our mothers* revolves around the aforementioned genocide trials that have been taking place in the last two decades in Guatemala. While working for an organisation that investigates the identities of people who disappeared during the armed conflict, a young forensic anthropologist encounters clues to find his father, a guerrilla combatant who also disappeared during the conflict.

The committee's decision to select a Guatemalan story as a national submission is a remarkable expression of the current state of the Belgian and Guatemalan film industries. The consequences of 36 years of military conflict which prompts artists to reconstruct a sense of identity in a postwar reality of inequality, discrimination and abuse of power did not constitute a motive for the Belgian selection committee, who instead valued the film for its "cinematographic qualities, the universality of the topic and the social challenges that are evoked in a modest and decent manner" (Belga News Agency, 2019). After the Belgian avant-premiere, Díaz explained that the distance between the production process and the portrayed social context actually helped complete the film, as he was able to solicit European film funds and work without fearing government interference in his critical portrait of Guatemala's violent past and oblivious present. As such he was able to craft a film that illuminates important social issues in Guatemala's indigenous communities while reaching a large international audience through the universality of cinema. In a reaction to *The Hollywood Reporter*, Díaz commented on the selection of his film for the Academy Awards that it "is important for [him] and especially for Belgium, because the fact that this country is represented by a film in Spanish means we're living "a moment of openness and integration much beyond borders" (Green, 2019).

The study of films in which the narrative is directly or indirectly driven by past acts of violence, loss and trauma often fits in theoretical frameworks of (cultural) memory studies (Hedges, 2015). The latter, together with many other titles in the Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies series, state that the nascent field of memory studies reflects

a shift from concern with historical knowledge of events to that of memory, from 'what we know' to 'how we remember it'; changes in generational memory; the rapid advance of technologies of memory; panics over declining powers of memory, which mirror our fascination

with the possibilities of memory enhancement, and the development of trauma narratives in reshaping the past. (Hedges, 2015, p. i)

In the reading of texts that surround the theme of victimhood, the focus is not on the specific individual traumas, but on the treatment thereof in the previously mentioned “universal language of film”. Postmemory films undermine, question or complicate the act of remembering as much as the socio-economic and political context in which the story is set. The postmemory perspective thus guides this final analytical chapter in its focus on the use of images and storytelling in reference to the relatively recent end to a turbulent period fraught with civil war and authoritarian regimes. It argues that there is a canon strongly rooted in global cinematic movements and specific to the Latin American context that dialogues with the past to be able to cope with the present (Huysen, 2003). This canon of postmemory films is also linked to activist and human rights films and events, as they continue to deal with the colonisation of the imaginary, the discourse of modernity, late capitalism and postglobalised cultures.

6.1. Memory, Truth and Justice

The *Muestra de Cine Internacional Memoria Verdad Justicia* (International Film Festival of Memory Truth and Justice) was born in 2010 under bomb threats and boycott attempts in a country where human rights have always been of little value, a country which suffered a genocide of indigenous people and which today is considered as a failed state because of the debility of his institutions, its high level of violence and impunity. Private TV channels and commercial theatres have always frustrated education, historical remembrance, consciousness, human rights, dialogue and mutual respect of the 23 nationalities ethnic groups. (Stelzner, 2019)

Over the last decades, the festival’s German festival director, journalist and filmmaker Uli Stelzner has become part of Central American film heritage through his ongoing commitment to social filmmaking and journalistic investigation. The festival originated in 2010 as an event to accompany the release of Stelzner’s *La Isla: archives of a tragedy* (2009b) a film about the archives of the former National Police in Guatemala.

As cited, the first edition was held despite a bomb threat and a power cut in the national theatre, which also occurred during the third edition in

Quetzaltenango. In 2014, various producers withdrew their films from the programme out of fear for potential retaliation against the protagonists. The programming of a Guatemalan film, *La propuesta impuesta/The imposed proposal* (Red-CMI, 2014) led to resistance from three government ministries and a censoring of the event. The festival was forced to be organised in exile in Berlin (*Cine Crítico Centroamericano – Festival de Cine de Derechos Humanos en el exilio/Critical Central American Cinema – Human Rights Film Festival in exile*), in Argentina (*Festival de Derechos Humanos de Buenos Aires – Ventana Guatemala/Buenos Aires Human Rights Festival – Guatemala in focus*) and later also in Bogotá, until its return to Guatemala in November 2015 after the fall of the Pérez Molina government. In the festival's programme of the seventh edition in 2015, the first post-exile, the organisation explains the reasons for leaving Guatemala temporarily:

Why did we leave? Although in 2014 the showcase's cinemas received over 11,000 people, the censorship and autocensorship of three films about the country produced a frustrating impact and imposed the need for balance and analysis that required distance. It is one thing for the State not to support independent cinema, especially that of a social nature, and another to boycott it and cause more obstacles than there already are. No festival in the world could survive against censorship and denial, because it wears down and ends up making mistakes, or concessions that betray its commitment to freedom and integrity. (Memoria Verdad Justicia, 2015)

Officially called a 'muestra', a showcase, the festival creates a public space for independent and militant cinema that seeks dialogue and promotes social, economic and cultural justice, solidarity, emancipation, tolerance, creativity, freedom of expression and the respect of all human rights. The festival is non-competitive and has attracted over 70,000 spectators in the last ten editions. The programme consists of around 15 to 30 films, five to 15 of which are generally tied to a specific annual theme, accompanied by sections such as Guatemala's Visual Memory, World Panorama and Cine 15+ for a more youthful audience. The Guatemalan Visual Memory section is especially celebrated, as

[c]ountries from the south of this globe have always been visual object of ambition of filmmakers, anthropologists, ethnologists, war reporters, etc. Important images were taken away and never came back, leaving a vacuum of historical images. The Visual Memory

Guatemala tries to decolonialise them. We search and find these films abroad, convince the owners, try to get the distribution rights in Guatemala, translate and subtitle and bring them back. We consider these disappeared, hidden and denied images as a human and collective right. (Stelzner, 2019)

As a result of ‘bringing back the visual memory’ in 2011, three documentaries by the Finnish social filmmaker Mikael Wahlforss on the Guatemalan conflict between 1981 and 1983 were subtitled in Spanish and screened for the first time in Guatemala. As part of the restitution of the nation’s visual memory to the people, the festival is not only held in the capital and in Quetzaltenango but travels since 2017 as an itinerant exhibition to rural and indigenous territories in Guatemala, such as in Alta Verapaz, Quiché, Huehuetenango, Izabal, Santa Rosa, Nebaj and more, to exhibit films that represent the various communities. These relatively remote and rural places are selected to build bridges of dialogue and to exchange ideas through film. As the official reports confirmed, these communities have been most deeply affected by the levels of inequality, human rights violations, natural resource extraction of gold, water and oil, and a historical absence of State-support structures in postwar processes.

The International Film Festival of Memory Truth and Justice is co-organised by Stelzner’s German production company ISKA Films and the Guatemalan audio-visual and cinematography Association AGAcine. Since its establishment in 2007, the association gathers most Guatemalan film professionals to promote the ratification of the “film law 3728” which has been presented before Congress numerous times in the past decade without having been implemented. AGAcine is currently presided by editor Koki Ortega and producer Pamela Guinea and gathers filmmakers and producers such as Joaquín Ruano, Carlos ‘Loco’ González, César Díaz, Edgar Sajcabún, Sergio Ramírez and many others who are catalysing individuals in the region’s cinematic developments (see Chapter 5).

The low number of screenings, the high attendance rate of around 7,000 visitors for every edition, close to maximum capacity, make the MVJ a compelling platform for international guests and filmmakers to engage in the discussion on human rights in relation to the programmed films. Under the umbrella of human rights, thematic showcases include a wide range of films from all corners of the world that centre on indigenous and environmental concerns, sports, music, literature and (auto)ensorship, in genres and

formats ranging from fiction and documentary over video, 16mm, performances and installations. The programme is filled with filmmaker-activists and visual artists such as Ken Loach, Joshua Oppenheimer (*The Act of Killing*, 2012), Ai Weiwei, Pamela Yates, Andreas Dalsgaard (*La vida es sagrada/Life is sacred*, 2014), several movements such as Occupy Wall Street, Femen in Ukraine, Pussy Riot, the Tupamaros guerrilla in Uruguay including later president José Mujica (see Chapter 4), the Egyptian revolution on the Tahir square of 2011, South Sudan's crisis of neoliberalism, and many more. Through obvious choices in programming and invitations, the festival's activist positioning is clear, and rather than disappearing into society's margins, the festival is among Latin America's most-attended human rights film festivals. In its mission statement, the showcase avoids political identification, but nevertheless many of its sponsors had to withdraw support after the 2015 removal of the Pérez Molina presidency and the subsequent constitutional reforms, causing a temporary suspension of the festival, one edition after it had been exiled.

The showcase was always a politically independent festival, but it was never neutral! It always wanted to reach out and unite people in the cinemas, to contribute to overcoming isolation and fragmentation of society. To make the silenced public, to create memory and conscience, to stimulate creativity, poetry and, above all, courage. The showcase has been and will continue to be a call for change, in a system of amnesia and impunity. (Memoria Verdad Justicia, 2015)

Among the invitees of the festival, there are a lot of the filmmakers that were mentioned earlier in relation to the postmemory genre and some of whom will be discussed in more detail further on, such as Marcela Zamora, Gloria Carrión, Mercedes Moncada, Isabel Acevedo, Ana Isabel Bustamante or Marcela Zamora, whose work is highlighted in the following segment.

6.2. Cosmopolitan strategies of affect: *The offended* (Zamora, 2016)

The study of the documentary work by Nicaraguan-Salvadoran filmmaker Marcela Zamora revolves around the aesthetic and affective appeal of a global vernacular of ethico-political films that represent cultural diversity and openness. This affective quality is summoned by a visual discourse that, beyond the specific context of, in this case, the violence of the civil war in El Salvador in the 1980s, manages to bridge cultural differences through a highly

personalised treatment of a conflict that reconstructs national memory through testimonies and performances. Through the analysis of subjective filmmaking in El Salvador, this section links the small cinemas of Central America to broader paradigm shifts within the world of documentary filmmaking and Latin America as analysed in Ana López' "poetics of the trace" (2014) included in the edited volume of *New Documentaries of Latin America* (Navarro & Rodríguez, 2014).

Discursively, what López termed the filmic articulation of this "nexus of affectivity" (López, 2014, p. 26) is paramount to the analysis of Latin American documentaries, a canon which is not confined to Brazil, Argentina or Mexico but extends to emerging national film cultures in El Salvador and other Central American countries. Drawing on Brian Massumi's distinction between the pre-personal embodied intensity of affect and the subjective content of emotion (1995), López emphasises the relationalities between texts instead of their reading by spectators (2014, p. 27). This perspective, in relation to recent studies on cosmopolitanism in cultural studies, is thus not limited to a focus on the shared humanity-narrative (Appiah, 2006). Instead, the adoption of a "cosmopolitan cinema" lens here does not refer to a genre but to a multi-levelled way of looking at and conceiving cinema, similar to Hamid Naficy's "accented cinema" (2001). But whereas cinema is "accented" due to its exilic or diasporic authorship and thematic representation, cosmopolitan cinema as a lens is located on multiple interrelating levels.

On a first level, it acknowledges recent aesthetic and stylistic developments in documentary filmmaking that emphasise reflexive, subjective and performative aspects in the treatment of the genre. The case studies also emphasise the prevailing transnational modes of production in the recognition of existing support platforms that have enabled the production of the films in the context of Central America, which brings the focus to European film festivals and their funding mechanisms. In third and fourth place, the cosmopolitan gaze is reinforced by looking into the social life of film in terms of dissemination in and outside of the festival circuit and the filmmaker's film education. In studies of cosmopolitanism and global cinemas, festival circulation and training opportunities shape a global vernacular of documentary filmmaking, thus aiming the cosmopolitan lens more holistically beyond the reception by global consumers based on universal human rights.

In the recognition that cosmopolitanism and cultural hybridity have become fashionable categorisations for the explanation of a set of universal values, styles and aesthetics that augment a film's cross-cultural global branding potential, the analysis adheres to a situated and critical theory of cosmopolitanism contextualised through the discussed films. The cosmopolitan is located in the enunciation, the production, and not necessarily in the reception of the films, to abandon showing likeness or appeal vis à vis Western audiences and instead to analyse cultural expressions in their own right.

Through representational case studies from understudied nations and regions such as El Salvador and Central America, the aim is to counter discourses of cultural homogenisation and to promote a polycentric approach to film studies stressing cultural participation and creative clusters in Central America's regional film industry. The choice to focus on single films is inspired by Dudley Andrew's suggestion to examine a film as a cognitive map while placing the film on the map (Nagib, 2006, p. 31), not to confine them to their national traditions but to show the interconnectedness with other films from all over the world (López, 2014). For reasons of space, the analysis of Marcela Zamora's documentaries hereafter will be mainly limited to a focus on aesthetic and stylistic aspects that locate it firmly within the global public sphere of Latin American documentary filmmaking.

Several Central American news platforms, such as El Faro in El Salvador, have taken up the task to uncover concealed truths behind past conflicts. Because of this, Marcela Zamora Chamorro, former journalist at El Faro and filmmaker graduated from EICTV, got her hands on a state document from the 1980s that listed dissident people's names and pictures. The individuals listed were suspected for having ties to the revolutionary army, the communist party, or for being an all-round threat to the regime and thus had to be picked up for questioning, torturing or worse. The book contains a photo of her father, Rubén Ignacio Zamora Rivas, a former left-wing political leader, and she found out he had been tortured for 33 days by the national police forces. In *Los ofendidos/The offended* (Zamora, 2016), a documentary about the recollection and reconstruction of these events, Zamora explains in voice-over that her father would always refuse to comment on those events, but two years after his wife, her mother, died, she asked again until finally a truth surfaced.

The offended is built on personal testimonies about the capturing and torturing of innocent civilians during the civil war in El Salvador. The

filmmaker adopts an autobiographical family perspective on this national tragedy. The autobiographical perspective resonates with many other films, including Albertina Carri's family-oriented treatment of disappearances in Argentina's Dirty War from 1976 to 1983 in *Los Rubios* (2003) and Belgian filmmaker Andres Lübbert's documentary *El color del camaleón/The color of the chameleon* (2017). The latter looks to reconstruct part of the life of the filmmaker's Chilean father to know more about the reality that drove him out of Chile to Germany and Belgium, to find out he might have embodied both the roles of victim and perpetrator, albeit unwillingly, under Pinochet's regime.



Figure 23: Interviewing a former guard and torturer in The offended (Zamora, 2016)

The narrative treatment of the subject matter, dealing with questions of victimisation and (the rejection of) (institutional) amnesty in El Salvador, is reflected in the double hermeneutic of Zamora's filmmaking, in that her presence, as daughter of a former torture victim, makes her complicit in shaping reactions from interviewees, including her father. The analysis aims to show that as a filmmaker and through the careful use of rhetorical and affective strategies, Zamora's work embodies the new performative style of documentary filmmaking that cannot be ascribed to one particular national tradition or a specific school of filmmaking. This critical and eclectic approach to appropriate several styles and genres in addition to the auteur's ideological convictions was fomented by Zamora's training as a journalist at the University of Costa Rica and as a documentary filmmaker at the EICTV.

The established rapport with the tortured and the torturers in *The offended* is interesting in that it deviates from the traditions of depicting victimisation in Griersonian documentary (Winston 1988) or in general from documentaries that deal with social issues and the representation of the suffering of (distant) others. The latter, especially in relation to Third Cinema successors, has oftentimes been condemned as a representation of “poverty porn” that is employed as a strategy to elicit an emotive response to appeal to audiences’ reception of a film (Faguet, 2009, p. 7; see Chapter 3). This approach has been called cosmopolitan by those who choose to focus on neo-imperial and neoliberal global consumption patterns. Since this categorisation is hardly inclusive of the existing creativity and diversity with respect to contemporary documentary filmmaking, the analysis offered hereafter counters the neoliberal argument by focusing on cosmopolitanism as a multi-levelled way of looking at and conceiving cinema. In synthesis, the analysis intends to move from an othering or alienating Third Cinema perspective to a post-Third-Worldist approach by shedding the tripartite division, much like EICTV’s name change from “The School of Three Worlds” to “The School for Every World” (Balaisis, 2013, p. 192).

Not unsurprisingly, EICTV’s educational politics function as the common ground from whence Zamora as well as many other filmmakers have initiated their careers in the Central American and Caribbean region. The years of inclusive teaching and appropriation of techniques, genres and traditions encourage the kind of filmmaking that transcends borders or hybrid identities and eschews binary oppositions that have long characterised the global divides in media and communication. Such dichotomies do nothing but deepen neocolonial power structures and are being replaced by anti-essentialist and polycentric views on global structures of multilateral media production and dissemination (Nagib, 2006; Nagib et al., 2012).

In *The offended*, Zamora resorts to conventional narrative devices such as voice-overs, interviews, testimonies, newsreels and archival footage, the emphasis is on the reflexive self and the onscreen elicitation of elements of the production process that adhere to the style of the post-2000s subjective turn in Latin American documentary filmmaking:

The traditional concept of documentary as striving to represent reality as faithfully as possible is predicated upon the realistic assumption that the production process must be disguised, as was the case with direct cinema. Conversely, the new performative documentaries herald a

different notion of documentary ‘truth’ that acknowledges the construction and artificiality of even the non-fiction film. (Bruzzi, 2006, pp. 185–186)

The distance between the filmmaker and the subject here is nearly non-existing, and the complicity beyond the voice-over does not attempt to hide bias in the narrative. In a lot of scenes, both Zamora’s on- and off-screen presence become part of the testimonies that provoke intense emotions from the interviewees and the filmmaker. In one scene, she can be heard crying off-screen during an interview in which a doctor recalls some gruesome details about being tortured. After the conflict ended, doctor Romagoza recognised one of his former torturers as a patient at his clinic in the United States and ended up befriending the soldier who asked him for forgiveness. Despite the trauma of previous encounters, the doctor had treated him as any other patient and told Zamora that the soldier never got to have peace because he never forgave himself. The interviewee stops talking when he notices Zamora had started to cry, after which he apologises to her and she explains that despite listening to so many stories they still move her to tears. The camera is still rolling as a crew member, also off-screen, is heard suggesting to “take a one-minute room tone” to regain composure, resulting in an emotional moment that was deliberately not edited out.

This is perhaps the most striking and emotive example of a series of audible or visible, material and physical interventions by the crew that characterise *The offended* and highlight the affective potential of the encounter between subject and filmmaker in the new social documentary in Latin America. The interventions of the camera, crew and filmmaker in the film are strong examples of theories on a situated cosmopolitanism that foregrounds the materiality of places, conditions and relationships (Glick Schiller & Irving, 2014). They also exemplify the betweenness of objects and subject in the unstable moment of affective encounters as described by Brian Massumi (Massumi, 2015), who, based on Spinoza’s take on ‘*affectus*’, stresses the pre-subjective qualities of the unfolding event that can only become the content of an individualised experience post facto, after the dynamic of the encounter:

[I]t is even more important to realize that ‘pre-subjective’ in this usage means *transindividual*. Affective thinking-feeling is transindividual in two senses. First, in [...] that it pertains directly to what is passing *between* the individuals involved, which is reducible to neither taken separately. And second, in the sense that it coincides with a *becoming*

of the involved individuals. (Massumi, 2015, pp. 94–95, emphasis in original)

Spinoza's definition of affect means "the capacity to affect or be affected", which holds that an affective encounter never implies passivity from either side of the encounter but rather indicates "a differential of modes and degrees of activity that is eventfully resolved to structuring effect" (2015, p. 92). Massumi explains through the example of being hit in the face: both the force of resistance to the hand and the force of the hand denote activity, albeit in different, or, differential, degrees. According to Massumi, the reciprocity of the doing, the shared pain from being hit and hitting, which can both hurt, corresponds to a distribution of roles. The outcome of the encounter might influence a subsequent encounter, and the relative place of the subjects involved might change, up to the point of being conditioned into or reaching a structural inequality, which can evolve in the assumption and consolidation of societal roles and power structures (2015, p. 92). The distribution of roles, lastly, is termed "differential attunement" between two bodies in a joint activity of becoming (2015, p. 95).

Zamora's filmmaking stresses this dynamic of the encounter, and specifically by talking to victims as well as torturers, the unequal power relations from the past are brought under today's scrutiny. In the postwar period, either party from the encounters during the conflict now share a social space, as exemplified by the relation between doctor Romagoza and the soldier that tortured him. These interventions, along with spontaneous or scripted performances in the documentaries also convey arguments with which to approach the age-old ontological debate on representation versus reality, fiction and reconstruction with respect to documentary film tradition, the documentary being "the cinematic idiom that most actively promotes the illusion of immediacy" (Renov, 1986, pp. 71–72).

The truth claim traditionally ascribed to documentaries does have to be nuanced here, as Zamora's highly personal treatment explicitly renders interpretations and by default mediated re-constructions, not to essentialise the argument but to show the difficult process of dialoguing with both victims and perpetrators, with people who want to forget and those who want to forgive. The relationships to history that are adopted are different in every encounter or interview in that the actual events were censored and silenced for decades, so the film's testimonies serve to reconstruct events in retrospect, along with the memories thereof. Similarly, Stella Bruzzi's second edition of

New Documentary (2006) references Linda Williams' example of *The thin blue line* (Morris, 1988) as a "postmodern documentary" in that it attempts to access "traumatic historical truths inaccessible to representation by any simple or single 'mirror with memory' – in the vérité sense of capturing events as they happen" (Bruzzi, 2006, p. 195; Williams, 1993, p. 12).

Already in the film's opening scene, El Salvador's Defense Minister, General David Muguía Fayés, is interrupted as soon as he enters the room to have the sound technician connect a microphone to his belt while the camera is rolling. The sound technician reappears a couple of times in the film to readjust microphones, most notably at a moment when a former guard stands up to chalk lines on the floor to indicate the size of the prisons where people were held and the wireless transmitter falls off. These on-screen interventions by the crew alert the viewer to acknowledge the production process of the documentary.

Even though Zamora works with a written script, moments of spontaneous interaction are not cut but make the documentary process come alive in a manner of speaking. While driving to her father's house, Zamora is being filmed from the passenger seat when she pulls into the driveway and greets her father at the front door. After she enters the house, her father lingers outside the doorstep and peers at the camera operator, still in the passenger seat, seemingly not understanding why the operator would not step out of the car yet which makes for an almost comical effect. In the next shot, father and daughter look straight at the crew to ask whether "all the guys want coffee". In this autobiographical social documentary, unscripted scenes of laughter and humoristic remarks rather serve as an important humanist counterweight to the abhorrent events that are described in the personal testimonies.



Figure 24: The sound technician installing a microphone on General Muguía in *The offended* (Zamora, 2016)



Figure 25: Rubén Zamora peering at the camera operator in *The offended* (Zamora, 2016)

Another example occurs at the end of the film when Zamora's father reads a poem by Salvadoran poet Roque Dalton, *poema de amor*, about what it means to be Salvadoran, causing an emotional reaction in himself and his daughter, but the moment of commiseration is almost immediately countered by himself when he slides past the camera crew towards the stairwell and verbally and physically acknowledges their presence as the camera backs up to let him pass, which also draws the gaze of the filmmaker to the crew. As they leave the library, Zamora is joking again: "That's all, enough! You made me cry already."

But I am not drunk, which is the saddest. It came out for free”. This gratuitousness is central throughout the filmmaker’s oeuvre, partly as a coping strategy and partly to make these types of social documentaries without falling into the previously mentioned *pornomiseria*, a term coined by Colombian filmmakers Luis Ospina and Carlos Mayolo in the 1970s (Faguet, 2009; see Chapter 3).

In relation to their portrayal in *Oiga vea* (Mayolo & Ospina, 1971) of all the people excluded from attending the sixth Pan American Games in Cali in 1971, including themselves, Michèle Faguet writes: “What makes them stand out is their sense of humour, absent from the exaggerated images of opulence and poverty that became formulaic in certain examples of Third World cinema” (2009, p. 5). Much like Ospina and Mayolo, Zamora makes explicit the complicity between the production crew and the characters, which also resonates through the voice-over, which, instead of authoritative, is narrated by the filmmaker herself in the first person singular. Humour and laughter here are used as rhetorical devices of social critique to stress the victims’ resilience in living with trauma, as individuals and as a society that has overcome authoritarian regimes.

In reference to the postmemory genre, Andréa Lauterwein (Lauterwein & Strauss-Hiva, 2009) recalls the cathartic function and therapeutic potential of humour, referring to Freud (1905/1960 [1905]) and opposing Adorno, who claimed humour as a rhetorical strategy was inappropriate to refer to the Holocaust (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1972 [1944]). Instead, the catharsis evoked by laughter and humour create a community in which emotions can be freely expressed and released without the stress and tension of unprocessed emotions.

This vital and dynamic way of dealing with the adversity and the revealing of the *kino-pravda* or film-truth by the camera demonstrates the indebtedness to Russian filmmaker Dziga Vértov’s idea that the camera should be an extension of the human eye insofar that it should document all aspects of reality and human life. Zamora auto-references to Vértov on the website of her Mexico-based production company Kino Glaz. In an earlier short documentary about cohabitating elderly female sex workers, *Xochiquetzal: La casa de las flores bellas/The House of Beautiful Flowers* (Zamora, 2007), she invites the women not only to share their –often tragic– stories but also to sing, to the effect of a positive emotional relief.

Similarly, in her most recent film, *Comandos* (2017), she shows us moments in the life of heroic rescue workers in San Salvador, who tirelessly and indiscriminately come to the aid of every single individual affected by the capital's many perils, be it related to traffic, violence or accidents. The tragic relief strategy here is reversed, as the positivity from the averted tragedies is countered by a scene of a decomposing body floating in a pool of water, indicating that regardless of the rescue workers' efforts, some parts of San Salvador, and by extension the nation, are beyond saving.

The social realist aesthetics that Zamora adopts is also reminiscent of new Latin American cinema precursors such as Fernando Birri and Italian Neo-Realism, to which she auto-relates on her Facebook-profile as being a "militant of sound and image". Her uncovering of the personal truths and secrets behind collective trauma situates her firmly within new waves of new Latin American Cinema, as developed since Eduardo Coutinho's *Cabra marcado para morrer/Twenty years later* (1984) in which the Brazilian director lays bare a family's emotional experience behind the publicly political discourse. Navarro and Rodríguez (2014) write that filmmakers like Patricio Guzmán, Eduardo Coutinho and Fernando Solanas used "the camera to push the boundaries of the documentary tradition as they tackle the socio-political complexities of the present' unlike the previous generation from the 1960s and 1970s where the camera was wielded as a political weapon" (Burton, 1990; Navarro & Rodríguez, 2014, p. 4).

Navarro and Rodríguez list other Latin American documentary filmmakers who grew up during the 1980s and 1990s and unlike Coutinho and Guzmán did not necessarily bear direct witness to the rise and fall of authoritarian political regimes but continue addressing the aftermath of living under military governments. Postwar El Salvador does not just signify a 'time after the war' but signals the continued effort to understand and process past traumatic events, to learn and grow as individuals and on a societal level. *New Documentaries in Latin America* (2014) elaborates on several filmmakers who are children of political activists whose documentary work constitutes post-dictatorial examinations of the military regimes' violent acts and their consequences (2014, p. 5).

Through her life and work, Zamora is part of the postmemory generation (Hirsch, 1997) whose work is not a first-person "testimonial documentary" (Andermann, 2012, p. 107) such as for example Fernando Solanas' *Memoria del saqueo/Social genocide* (2004) but an "autobiographical or 'autofictional'

docu essay”, according to Andermann’s distinction in relation to new Argentine cinema. Postmemory refers to the current generation’s relation to personal or collective traumas from the past, occurrences which they have not lived first-hand but experience through the mediation of stories from previous generations or through institutionalised discourse.

Conflicts and their consequences are thematically very present in contemporary Central American cinema. For example, in Ken Loach’s *Carla’s song* (1996) or in *El Inmortal/The Immortal* (Moncada Rodríguez, 2004), the Nicaraguan civil war is represented in the allegorical story of a fratricide, and in *Palabras mágicas (para romper un encantamiento)/Magic Words (To break a spell)* (Moncada Rodríguez, 2012), the use of symbolic visuals critically re-examines social scars and calls for a societal reflection to accept past pains and move on.

Another curious case is Guillermo Escalón and Rodrigo Rey Rosa’s film *Cárcel de árboles/Prison of trees* (2015), an adaptation of the latter’s eponymous fiction novel from 1991 about a secret prison camp in the Guatemalan jungle during the civil war. The fictional *Prison of trees* tells the story of dozens of young people from prominent families from the United States and Guatemala that were held captive by a mad scientist, Dr. Pelcari, who conducted experiments on the prisoners while working with the state and the military. The novel was analysed as a dystopic and totalitarian sci-fi story likened to the narrative and thematic influences of Jorge Luis Borges, Rubén Darío and especially Adolfo Bioy Casares (Bollington, 2018, p. 3). After a woman approached the author in 2013 to say that similar events as those described in the novel had actually taken place during the conflicts in Guatemala, the story was eventually turned into a film. The film, vacillating between fiction and documentary, takes up the investigation of the story’s historical foundation, presented as having been written without previous knowledge about the actual events.

The violent history of Central American nations is also recurrent in Zamora’s work that preceded *The offended* (2016). *El cuarto de los huesos/The room of bones* (2015) is an allegory for the nation as one enormous mass grave, hiding bodies from drug and gang wars, migration-related violence and civil war casualties. The documentary focuses on the actual rooms of bones, the forensic labs that study unidentified remains found in mass graves in El Salvador to bring solace to the mothers who are still looking for missing children and relatives, not unlike in Silver and García Bernal’s *Who is Dayani Cristal* (2013)

in which forensic anthropologists use scientific methods to identify deceased migrants at the US-Mexican border (Vanhaelemeesch, 2018).

On production company Kino Glaz' website, it reads that they resort to cinematographic and audio-visual language in the conviction that it has the power to sensitise and motivate people to change reality. They believe the language of cinema to be universal, which is blended in with regional modalities and an individual regard. This self-inclusion in the global public sphere is brought about through the cosmopolitan lens that highlights two of Aristotle's rhetorical devices, being *pathos* to illicit emotions and *ethos* to show people as credible and fully-fledged subjects, not as victims, for example through the above-mentioned use of humour and laughter.

Much like the postwar and postmemory concepts, the past very much permeates the present in Central American cinematography, up to the point where visual and narrative claims of verisimilitude and pure fiction intersect and construct a 'new' Central American reality. The –sometimes literal– digging up of recent past events serves an aesthetic that expresses the need for knowing the truth for the purpose of amnesty and cultural regeneration. Revealing the truth about past events is not meant to assign culpability but serves as the local subtext for a particular aesthetic and ethical-political discourse that has the ability to generate public dialogue and cosmopolitan engagements with the perils of (not-so) distant others (Rovisco, 2013, p. 149).

These short examples serve to show how Zamora's cosmopolitan cinema engages with certain structures of pre-subjective affect, for example through the testimonial encounters in which the interviewer, crew, camera and interviewee are caught up in a relational meaning-making process, acknowledged a posteriori as affective. At the same time, by representing various perspectives to each story and puncturing the tragedy with hints of comedy, the realist documentary with sensorial scenes, I believe that the "others" in her stories, the mourning mothers, the rescue workers, the torture victims, are not transformed into objects of pity who lack any agency (Kogler, 2011, p. 109; Rovisco, 2013, p. 154). This is, I believe, where the cosmopolitan dialogue enters the mode of production and reception, as an attitude of openness and willingness "to make one's way into other cultures" (Hannerz, 1990, p. 239). Zamora consistently looks for a universal film language of self-reflexivity and critical engagements with generally accepted beliefs and notions (Rovisco, 2013, p. 154), including herself in a narrative "entailing self

and societal transformation in light of the encounter with the Other” (Delanty, 2012, p. 336).

In previous theorisations of cultural and aesthetic cosmopolitanism, the openness towards and appropriation of foreign influences often led to discussions of cultural hybridity or aesthetic homogenisation converging in the problematic denominator of “world cinema”. Zamora’s film style attests more to her international cinephilia inspired by her personal transnational trajectory, partly abroad in Nicaragua with her exiled father, her journalism education in Costa Rica and her film training in Cuba. The explicit references to Birri, Vértov and Coutinho in relation to her work function as selling points without inscribing hers into a cinema of hunger, a Third World cinema.

In this sense, her “offended” protagonists are not kin to Fanon’s *Wretched of the Earth* (Fanon, 1961/2004). The acknowledgement of paradigm shifts in the Latin American history of political documentary filmmaking rather serves as a commonplace which forms the basis for a global vernacular of ethico-political films that promote polycentric perspectives and invites debates instead of opinions. The invocation of empathic structures of feeling and socialist realist aesthetics as contributing to the cosmopolitan lens is but one aspect, as that reception is also guided by the trajectories of exhibition and programming practices of the international film festival circuit.

The offended was financially supported by HIVOS, a Dutch development cooperation and premiered at the revered International Documentary Festival in Amsterdam (IDFA). Its Latin American premiere took place at the Mar del Plata festival in Argentina. The documentary has been collecting awards and nominations ever since for the past two years, most notably the Audience Award at the Costa Rica Film Festival 2016, the award for Best Feature Central American Documentary at the Ícaro Film Festival in Guatemala, and the special mention of the jury at the Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano in Havana 2016. In 2017, the film received a special mention from the jury at DocsBarcelona. The following year, the documentary has been selected to be screened at the itinerant documentary festival *Ambulante* throughout Mexico and at the IFF of Guadalajara in 2017. It has been picked up by the Brooklyn-based distribution company PRAGDA, specialised in the educational market, selling and renting Ibero-American films to universities as well as organising public exhibitions in cinematheques, museums and local theaters.

Comparably, *The room of bones* (2015), had its international premiere at the Jihlava International Festival (Czech Republic) in 2015, and it was also presented at the Ambulante Festival, the Margaret Mead Festival in New York, the Icaro Festival in Guatemala, where it was awarded best Central American documentary film; and in DocsBarcelona 2016, where it won the International Amnesty award and a mention of the jury. *The room of bones* is distributed by Women Make Movies based in New York, a leading distributor of independent films by and about women.

These international festival trajectories cannot only be explained by diasporic engagements of Salvadorian people, of which it is estimated over two million live in the United States, but to the aesthetic and thematic adoption of the cosmopolitan lens, telling local stories in a universal film language. The International Amnesty awards, success at human rights and politically subversive themed festivals come not so much from an affinity with the Salvadorian struggle for reconstructing a sense of national identity in the postwar period but from the personal stories between a mother and her missing child, between a filmmaker and her father the politician, between a heroic rescue worker and everyday meaningless violence and impunity, which are universal themes that apply to many parts of the world.

By abandoning the textual emphasis and the national production context and seeing the film as a performance of both planned and improvised sound and images, of characters and crew members visible or audible in the final product, the stories of individuals become the stories of the collective, the nation, the region, the world, in the ethics and politics of both production and reception.

The discussion of a number of representative filmic strategies of affect demonstrates how Zamora's films enter the global public sphere in a critical fashion that is in line with current developments in documentary filmmaking around the globe. This section extends the scope to the Central American subcontinent, where recent developments show that a regional film culture is being fostered, propelled by film schools such as EICTV and international film festivals. El Salvador, in relation to Central America, Latin America and the world, is but a small dot in the global film landscape, but it is paramount to study the peripheries (of the peripheries), since a view from the margins promotes the kind of polycentric and dynamic studies that the discipline is still developing. Coutinho, Vértov, Birri and Solanas should not be seen as merely promoters of a Third Cinema but as the founding fathers of

contemporary social documentary that is not confined to borders, ontologically or geographically, in any stage of a film's life.

6.3. The fallacies of memorialisation: *Red princesses* (Astorga, 2013)

Laura Astorga's *Princesas rojas/Red princesses* (2013) demonstrates how familial relationships break down as a consequence of conflict and trauma. Similar to *The offended* (Zamora, 2016), the film serves as an autobiographical treatment of memories, being those of a little girl with militant Sandinista parents forced to live in hiding, together with a post-hoc reconstruction of the historical context, the Nicaraguan Revolution that brought the Somoza dictatorship to an end in 1979 and the unstable and violent transition to democracy that took until 1990 to be realised. In the focalisation through a child, the fictional reflection of the director-writer, the film focuses on the day to day effects, rather than on the causes of the violence. The incomprehension, and even the resentment, from children towards their militant parents, who would restrict their movements, force them to relocate and frequently be absent at the constant risk of injury or death runs as a thread through the postmemory genre.

Parents would generally leave their preadolescent children in the dark on their activities in, for or against revolutionary movements and also later in life would deflect attempts to discuss painful or traumatic personal experiences. This is also the case for Nicaraguan filmmaker Gloria Carrión Fonseca, whose parents had leading positions in the National Reconstruction Government following the 1979 Revolution, and Guatemalan filmmaker Ana Isabel Bustamante, whose father was disappeared by the Guatemalan Military forces because of his militant work against the Rios Montt dictatorship. Both filmmakers use the act of documentary filmmaking as an investigation into the personal stories that surround their familial relationships to give greater meaning to the transmission of trauma that has shaped their parents' as well as their own lives in direct and indirect ways.

Red princesses opens with a family who, towards the end of the 1980s, attempt to cross the border between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The parents, Felipe and Magda, take their two daughters, 11-year-old Claudia and her younger sister Antonia, back to Costa Rica after having participated in the activities of the Sandinista National Liberation Front that led to the removal of the Somoza dictatorship in 1979. From the perspective of the children, this signifies a move

away from the place where they grew up, an idyllic socialist and Marxist Nicaragua that enabled trips to Cuba. In her idealisation of Nicaragua and Cuba, Claudia sings popular Russian songs and uses her collection of pins of Lenin, red stars and other communist symbols to trade for trinkets with her new classmates, who she tries to recruit for her group of *pioneras* (scouts).²⁴

The story unfolds as a coming-of-age of Claudia, problematised by domestic tensions and the brusque relocation to a Costa Rica she has little affiliation with. Due to Costa Rica's proclaimed neutrality in the neighbouring conflict, but as the factual base for many US-backed Costa Rican and foreign counterrevolutionaries, the militant family has to constantly move between safe houses and remain in hiding. The infantile focalisation through Claudia impedes a comprehensive account of the parents' involvement, since it solely reflects their absence in service of working for the Sandinista cause from the other side of the border. Claudia's point-of-view comes with all narrative limitations in that there is no focus on political processes or indices of context, apart from a number of passing references, or her understanding not to identify as Nicaraguan. What we are shown is the intimate domestic reality of the girls, and how they experience these violent changes and the accompanying stress it provokes in their familial relations. The domestic instability ultimately leads to a mutual betrayal between the parents: while the mother plans migratory arrangements with the US embassy and sets off for Miami 'under the oppressor's protection', Felipe goes back to Nicaragua and gets badly injured in battle.

²⁴ In a Soviet-communist context, the pioneers were boy or girl scouts groups whose activities were openly and unproblematically ideological.



Figure 26: *Princesas rojas/Red princesses* (Astorga, 2013)

According to scholar Carolina Sanabria, in the case of *Red princesses*, the classic coming-of-age narrative of the *bildungsroman* is associated with a double traumatic event: the “national and familial wound” (2018, p. 16). The internal, domestic struggles of changing loyalties, mistrust and mutual distancing characterise the girl’s journey into adolescence as well as the family’s constant relocation as a reflection of the external, national, political dynamic (Sanabria, 2018, p. 24). This way, the conflict is rescaled and reimagined through the subjective point-of-view of a teenager who seeks to establish her own (militant, *pioneros*-) community with her school classmates and expresses herself creatively as a choir singer. The inclusion in a community and the freedom of creative expression are among the elements that a life in service of the revolution impedes.

Film critics praised the intimistic family drama in the margins of the Revolution and especially enjoyed the minute details of Claudia's actions and traits, unmistakably derived from the director's personal experiences, but lamented the lack of psychological depth in the characterisation of the parents and other characters. It is this chapter's contention that what the critics fail to see is that the lack of depth in the fictional postmemory treatment is characteristic of the genre, more than a dramatic fallacy. What is perceived as a narrative shortcoming is in fact a typical occurrence in the process of memorialisation, namely that its highly constructed nature depends on the limited experiences of a little girl, fused with the bigger, collective, picture she learned about in a later stage in life.

The lack of information, the incomprehension and the confusion or in short, the problematisation of familial bonds, bring into question the validity and nature of the transgenerational transfer of trauma, which is in fact characterised by the absence of details, emotions and of the overall traumatic experience. The postmemory genre that characterises this second generation, like the truth commissions, thus serves the societal need for clarification, for a historical memory (cf. "memory, truth and justice") on which to build future narratives. The film's structural disorder and the spatial and temporal disorientation reflect the uncertainty and anxiety that Astorga, and many of her contemporaries have lived through. The elliptical storytelling and the uneasy coming and going of the mother and father might confuse and frustrate the audience as much as it frustrated the real-world children who experienced similar situations.

At the very end of the film, Astorga adds an epilogue of archival footage on the 1979 Revolution, its aftermath and the ensuing tensions and battles between FSLN's different factions and the Contras, backed by the Reagan administration, which culminated at the end of the Cold War, which is when the film is set. The seemingly out of place transition from the fictional world to the archival footage of the conflict resituates the story's postmemory treatment, and with it the fallacies of subjective memorialisation of the second generation. As an answer to the criticism, and telling for the postmemory generation, the director responded that her intention was not to make a historical epic, since that would have been way too expensive, but that she solely wanted to contribute to the discussion with her own experiences and memories.

Astorga was born in 1975 in San José, Costa Rica, and grew up between Cuba, Nicaragua, Miami and Frankfurt. She took film courses in Mexico, Costa Rica, Panama, Cuba and Argentina, and her feature debut *Princesas rojas* was co-produced with Venezuela for an estimated total of USD 400,000 after an eight-year process of writing and preparing several versions of the script. Astorga obtained a script development award from CINERGIA in 2007 and a production award from the same fund in 2010. After that, there were script development workshops and awards in Buenos Aires (Proa Cine, Fundación Proa-Typa 2007 and the BAL co-production meeting at BAFICI in 2009), Amiens (Amiens International Film Festival, script development, 2008), Madrid (Fundación Carolina, 2008), California (Final Draft International Promise Award, Latino Screenplay Competition, 2009), Guadalajara (FICG 2008), Rio de Janeiro (Ríomarket, Festival do Río, 2009), Cartagena (Co-production meeting at the Cartagena International Film Festival, 2009), Berlin (Co-production meeting at Berlinale 2010 as a result of winning the Highlight Pitch Award), Costa Rica (Ibermedia pre-production fund winner, 2010), Torino (semi-finalist, Torino Film Lab) and Sundance (semi-finalist, Latino-America for Sundance/NHK Filmmakers Award, 2010). The film further participated in the coproduction forums of the Ibero-American Film Festival of Huelva in Spain and the aforementioned Nuevas Miradas programme in Cuba (see Chapter 4). Its first international exhibition was at the Works in Progress section of the International Film Festival of Guadalajara in 2012, which led to additional Ibermedia support in 2013, at which point it became a coproduction between Costa Rica, Spain and Venezuela.

Three years after participating in the Talent Project Market in 2010, the film premiered in February 2013 at the Berlinale Film Festival, and went on to win a number of Best Debut awards (Los Angeles Latino International Film Festival; Latin American and Caribbean Film Festival of Margarita, Caracas) in addition to several regional awards at the International Film Festival Peace On Earth in San José (Production Design, Art Direction, Audience Award), the sixteenth International Ícaro Film Festival in November 2013 (Best Script, Best Art Direction) as well as an award at the Havana Film Festival and screenings at Guadalajara and Panama's International Film Festivals as part of the campaign to become Costa Rica's national selection for Best Foreign Film at the Academy Awards in 2015, an ultimately unsuccessful endeavour.

6.4. Selective amnesia: the politics of oblivion

In considering the transmission and reconstruction of memory that is central to contemporary Central American cinema, the flipside of memory, namely forgetting, has to be considered. Whereas the subjective remembering appropriates past experiences and is in turn appropriated by a collective heritage of memorialisation, the deliberate act of forgetting, manipulating or even erasing historical discourse is highly politically charged. It is clear that Central American society, historically and presently, consist of a mosaic of ideologies and belief systems. What makes Zamora's films (cf. earlier) particularly unique is the confrontation of the perpetrators, the torturers, with their victims from the past and with their own memory of their actions, often performed under strict orders. The filmmaker does not wish to single out individual (ex-)military to assign culpability nor to pardon them, but to demonstrate how the experience of extreme violence affected everyone, yet with different outcomes. In *The offended*, most interviewees had become very religious and preferred to forget that they had ever formed part of the events that are being investigated. In order to live on in the postwar society, many attempt to resort to strategies of selective amnesia.

According to Paul Ricoeur, amnesia is one of the conditions for amnesty, which he explains as an institutionalised forgetting, as it

touches the very roots of the political, and through it, the most profound and most deeply concealed relation to a past that is placed under an interdict. The proximity, which is more than phonetic, or even semantic, between amnesty and amnesia signals the existence of a secret pact with the denial of memory, which, as we shall see later, distances it from forgiving, after first suggesting a close simulation. Considered in its stated intention, the aim of amnesty is the reconciliation of enemy citizens, civil peace. (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 453)

In other words, amnesty, and amnesia, present a false oblivion in the form of an institutionalised forgetting that totalises history. The alternative is what can be found in the postmemory genre: a subjective and mediated perspective on the past that is inherently unstable and vulnerable, and which considers either side of the parties involved in the conflict, albeit with no intention of being objective.

A small segment of films in Central America does, however, resort to the politics of the visual in an attempt to redirect the process of historical memory

to provide counter-arguments to the predominantly leftist-humanist social cinema discussed up to this point. For reasons of space, the current section cannot be elaborated as a full case study, but serves to indicate that film as a medium covers all sides of the political spectrum. The research does not aim to condemn or take sides in this argument, but solely takes note of the framing and manipulation of historical memory in favour of x- or y-party involved.

In present-day Guatemala, although examples from other countries can be summoned as well, there has been a lot of public outrage, especially on social media, concerning the work of filmmaker Kenneth Müller (°1985). In spite of the quality of his training as a filmmaker and his experiences in producing commercial videos in many territories with renowned professionals, his last two fiction features, *Septiembre. Un llanto en silencio/September. A silent cry* (2017) and *Nebaj* (2019) have divided the Guatemalan audience along ideological beliefs and frustrated film professionals involved in the productions. As a commissioned filmmaker, among some of the work Müller produced is a documentary that celebrates mining practices in Guatemala.

Kenneth Müller was born Kenneth Christopher Padilla Samayoa and changed his last name to Müller in 2012. He is the son of extreme right-wing, pro-government military colonel Gustavo Adolfo Padilla Morales who was accused of crimes against humanity in the case of CREOMPAZ²⁵ while he worked as a military intelligence officer in the Cobán basecamp from February until June of 1982, during Efraín Ríos Montt's dictatorship. Colonel Padilla Morales was involved in coup attempts in 1988 and 1989 and in the Ixquisis-conflict with his security company SERSECO,²⁶ together with Ricardo

²⁵ CREOMPAZ is an acronym that stands for the site of a former military base in Cobán, Alta Verapaz, from where the military was coordinated during the counterinsurgency war. For a detailed overview of past and current trials, see the North American Congress on Latin America's (NACLA) article 'Guatemala: Impunity for War Criminals, Again' (Burt & Estrada, 2019) which focuses on the Guatemalan government's attempts to overturn the National Reconciliation Law that prohibits amnesty for those who committed international crimes during the country's civil war.

²⁶ SERSECO was accused to violently repress local communities from the Ixquisis region who resisted the construction of two hydroelectric plants, Pojom I and II. Whereas SERSECO is officially listed as a private security company, it has received several security-related government contracts during the administrations of Otto Pérez Molina and Jimmy Morales (CMI-Guatemala (2017)). 'Empresa de seguridad de militares protegé hidroeléctricas en

Méndez-Ruiz Valdés, now director of the Foundation against Terrorism. The latter, as a private person, co-financed Kenneth Müller's film *September. A silent cry* (2017). On 26 May 2017, the Guatemalan Independent Media Centre (CMI-Guatemala) published an online article in which they attempted to investigate the public and private interests that revolved around the production of Müller's second feature film, which led to threats against the author of the article and the editors of the online journal. The storm of accusations back and forth that ensued were held in the margins of the trials that resulted from the investigations by the UN's anti-corruption and historical memory commissions (cf. earlier).²⁷

Müller's production company, Kraftlogic Studios, has also been contracted by the Presidency's Secretary for Social Communication in 2009, 2010 and 2016 and is the only independent production company hired to produce videos and other materials,²⁸ given that the Secretary as a government entity employs

Ixquisis. URL: <https://cmiguate.org/empresa-de-seguridad-de-militares-protege-hidroelectricas-en-ixquisis/>, accessed 7 August 2019).

²⁷ Consider, for example, the aforementioned case against Ríos Montt or the Molina-Theissen v. Guatemala trial submitted by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, to determine whether human rights violations were committed by Guatemala in relation to the forced disappearance of a 14-year-old Marco Antonio Molina Thiessen by the Guatemalan army. The Molina Thiessen family was comprised of left-leaning academics and was therefore considered a threat to the military regime in place at the time of the forced disappearance. Prior to the child's disappearance, his sister, Emma Guadalupe, was detained and illegally incarcerated, during which time she was repeatedly raped and physically and psychologically tortured. She managed to escape and Marco Antonio's abduction was seen as retaliation against the family for Emma Guadalupe's escape. After the forced disappearance, the Molina Thiessen family never again saw Marco Antonio and was forced to seek political asylum in a number of other countries. Guatemala acknowledged its international responsibility for these incidents. The Court found Guatemala to have violated numerous articles of the American Convention on Human Rights to the detriment of Marco Antonio, and "Articles, 5(1) and 5(2) (Right to Humane Treatment); 8 (Right to a Fair Trial); 17 (Rights of the Family), and 25 (Judicial Protection) of the American Convention on Human Rights, and that it failed to comply with the obligations established in Articles 1(1) (Obligation to Respect Rights) and 2 (Domestic Legal Effects) thereof, to the detriment of the next of kin of Marco Antonio Molina Thiessen", including his sister, Emma Guadalupe (Molina-Theissen v. Guatemala, 2018).

²⁸ In 2016, the government contract was issued for the production of four videos meant for television and social media, on health, security, education and a Christmas message by President Morales.

reporters, editors, graphic designers, photographers and video professionals to produce content for the presidency, since 2016 led by former actor and comedian Jimmy Morales.

In 2015, Müller won a Netflix award for his debut feature thriller *12 segundos/12 seconds* (2013), becoming the first Guatemalan filmmaker with a film released in nearly 60 territories on the popular platform. Both *September, a silent cry* and *Nebaj* have been or are scheduled to be released through Netflix as well. *September, a silent cry* tells the story of a girl who grows up deaf as a result of a bus bombing by a guerrilla group in Guatemala City, an attack in which her mother was killed. The girl's father, played by Argentinian *telenovela*-actor Saúl Lisazo, tries to raise her in the midst of the armed conflict in Guatemala in the early 1980s.

The story is based on Kenneth's real-life brother Fausto, who lost his hearing as a result of the bombing of a bus station on 5 September 1980. Although the attack was never claimed, it is believed that it was directed against people trying to travel to an anti-communist rally organised by the National Action Committee for the Defence of Democracy and Liberty, scheduled for 7 September. In the real-life events, his mother did survive the attack. The guerrilla combatants that were responsible for the attack, without dwelling on any details of the armed conflict, are identified as terrorists. The film is not openly ideological and presents as an intimate family drama of going about daily life in the middle of a conflict situation.

It was awarded for its technical-artistic qualities at the Ícaro International Film Festival, and gathered a number of awards at festivals around the world, before being picked up by Netflix for a three-year streaming contract. Müller's third feature, *Nebaj* (2019) is based on the book *Escaping the fire: How an Ixil Mayan Pastor Led His People Out of a Holocaust During the Guatemalan Civil War* (Guzaro & McComb, 2010). The book is written by Mayan evangelical pastor Tomás Guzaro, as an autobiographical testimony of how the priest led a community of Ixil people who were caught in the crossfire between guerrilla combatants and *kaibil* (special forces) counterinsurgency troops. Similar to *Septiembre*, *Nebaj* relates a perspective that demonises guerrilla forces, the oppressors and invaders of native Ixil land, and exalts the government army's qualities as protectors of local communities.

The exodus-motive, protagonised by a Mayan priest, resonates with Guatemala's more conservative and deeply catholic audience (cf. earlier, *Tremors*). Without entering into further details, the premise and production

process of both films suggest that, in spite of official investigations by the international community that confirmed that the government army was responsible for 80% of the casualties in the conflict, these films place the actions of the military in a more positive light. The fact that the story is based on a one-sided perspective and the particular testimonies of one person is countered by it being 'based on a true story' in order to validate it as the 'true' version of events, thereby influencing the collective historical memory for the audience, leading to further social polarisation.

In a way, these debates symbolise the current state of repression and resistance in the state of Guatemala, fraught with accusations of corruption and fraud in all levels of government and public policy. In the past decades, international organisations appointed commissions to investigate human rights violations. For fear of prosecution, many people that could be implicated tried to abolish the truth commissions appointed to investigate crimes committed during the civil war in the 1980s. These commissions are tasked to reveal forgotten or repressed criminal events in a series of trials that have been happening on genocides in Guatemala, the most notorious case of which has been the trial against former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt, who was found guilty and sentenced to several life sentences in prison, but who was mysteriously acquitted and lived out his life in freedom. Both *Septiembre* and *Nebaj* portray military intervention in a more positive light and are partly financed by right-wing pro-military leaders and supporters that are part of the (former) government.

Conclusions: a generational and historical debt to tell stories

As a continuation of the focus on human rights and diversity film festivals, this chapter has shifted the traditional perspectives on trauma and victimhood narratives in postconflict societies through the elaboration of several case studies. The postwar concept is, as has been demonstrated, a temporal nor a spatial indication but rather signifies a continuous engagement with the transgenerational transmission of memory, including the unspeakable violence and trauma suffered. The primary locus for this transmission, as argued by Hirsch (2012) and Maguire (2017, p. 11), is the familial bond, but once the experience is transmitted and appropriated by the second-generation, it can become included in a societal mosaic of expression that serves the collective and individual mourning process.

The focus in postmemory narratives is not so much on the traumatic experience as on what happens after the transfer, in crafting a narrative based on that particular transfer and with its particular purpose. By and large, the purpose of the postmemory genre lies in resisting current social and political injustice by drawing on past experiences. The genre's contemporary predominance in the region can be explained by the actions of the international development community, the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) and other human rights organisations that have facilitated in a way the production of cultural events and films that have memory, truth and justice as their core values.

The main discussion, particularly in Guatemala but similar arguments can be made for El Salvador or Nicaragua, is the rightful and legal acknowledgment of a genocide committed by the government military during the civil war, culminating in the 1980s, and the bringing to justice of responsible individuals. Until these trials have been completed and processed, there is bound to be more resistance and polarisation within Central American societies divided along ideological lines inherited from colonialism and from a Cold War context that has long dissipated.

The postmemory genre also signals more positive developments, in that the treatment of past and present injustices in themselves contain a mediating, cleansing aspect and could be regarded as a performance of mourning, even when the narrative does not provide conclusive answers. Despite national differences, various people throughout the region find themselves in solidarity with each other, as the relationship to a troubled past unites them across boundaries. The traces of conflict have created patterns of commonality in the identification of the individual with the larger structure. Since the Captainty General of Guatemala was disbanded in 1821, this has once again led to projects of integration for the region with regard to the legal system, the economic barriers and especially in terms of cultural development. Cinema, as a collective art form is not only a tool for cultural regeneration in the postmemory society, but is at the forefront of internationally rebranding the entire region in a positive light.

By way of conclusion to this final empirical chapter, I refer again to the video on the production process of César Díaz' celebrated first fiction feature film *Our mothers* (2019), in which Guatemalan producer Joaquín Ruano is interviewed relating the essence of this generational debt:

Almost all the films that I have worked on or that I have produced are films that coincidentally have to do with historical memory and have to do with, say, Guatemalan characters and stories, from a social point of view. But let's say that the subject of the disappeared is a subject that I have already worked on in four films. [Our mothers] is my fourth film that has to do with missing people. The four films I did on this topic are by people from my generation, *Poivo* by Julio Hernández Cerdón, *Distancia* by Sergio Ramírez, *La Asfixia* by Ana Isabel Bustamante and now *Uspantán* [Our mothers], provisional title, by César Díaz. There are these people between 35 and 40 years old who are making their first film on this topic because I feel that they have a historical debt with this theme, and with the previous generation who did experience the armed conflict from up close. Let's say that Sergio, Julio, César and Ana Isabel experienced the armed conflict in a certain way through their parents.

So we have a historical debt to that chapter of Guatemala and our first films are films on that subject in order to be able to take the plunge and, well, it is also worth saying that the producers, me, Pamela [Guinea], and everyone who is behind these films, are also from this generation, and that corresponds to a need of a generation, and of a country, to resolve these issues. And I think that it is necessary to make films with this theme and that this generation makes these films in order to be able to take steps towards another type of cinema, towards another type of society. (Córdova & Orozco Recinos, 2020; own translation)

Conclusions

The research aimed to identify how film festivals in Central America have contributed to film-cultural developments since the signing of the last regional Peace Agreements in 1996. Through an ethnographic encounter with the field of film festivals and a network analysis of production relations, the dissertation concludes that film festivals have been pivotal to the emergence of contemporary Central American cinemas by facilitating and enabling the regional networks that characterise the contemporary field of cinematographic production. The 'field' thus does not only refer to the geographical area or the film festival phenomenon, but to the set of relations that constitute the regional production and festival network, of Central American cinemas. The essence of film festivals in a small cinemas-context lies not only in the exhibition of films, but especially in their ability as a common meeting ground to gather and connect people through a shared experience that revolves around matters of education, development, production and exhibition of films.

Contemporary, postconflict, Central American cinemas have been addressed contextually and conceptually through the review of literature on small, precarious, transnational and regional cinemas in a post-Third-Worldist context. Afterwards, the connection was made to the productive relations between film festivals and the theoretical and cinematographic heritage of Third Cinemas. The idea of regionally embedded national film projects arose already in the 1970s and 1980s, as socially and politically committed Third Cinemas that opposed military conflicts. While these cinemas served nation-building purposes in service of politics, they also have to be regarded in the broader context of exchanges and developments within New Latin American Cinemas, and in the context of burgeoning international development cooperation in the region.

Recent developments, then, are framed in light of the social and organisational changes brought on by neoliberal structures of governance and globalisation, which peaked around the time that the conflicts within Central American societies were officially mediated. Despite the newfound freedom of expression and the spread of new technologies, such as video and the internet, cultural producers were faced with polarised societies and weakened nation-states with little interest in cultural production (Oyamburu, 2000). In absence of support structures, alternative forms of organisation were needed. This led

the cultural sectors to call for intense networkisation, and because of the sector's precarious state, it needed to happen on a regional scale. As the example of New Latin American Cinema had already demonstrated, an effective way to accomplish this was through setting up recurring meetings and events. For the field of film production in particular, the film festivals that were set up in the aftermath of the peace negotiations became catalysing platforms, embodying the principles of creative precarity and the celebration of commonality and diversity under that regional, Central American, umbrella.

Based on the research findings, it is clear that the re-emergence of Central American cinemas in the postwar era is characterised by a diversity of cultural expression. Whereas some films are produced predominantly by and for the international festival circuit in which they circulate, other films clearly target the community in which it is made, in a range of genres from social documentaries to horror films, as befits the all-inclusive perspective on post-Third-Worldist cinemas. The theoretical exploration in Chapter 3 charted a course from oppositional Third Cinema, to a moment of (self-)reflection and criticism, to an acceptance of the coexistence of a plurality of cultural expression. The resulting term 'post-Third-Worldist', coined by Ella Shohat (1997), is preferable as a descriptor of cinema that, by its very existence, consists as an act of resistance, of defiance, by creating countertellings that implicitly or explicitly take away the foreign-imposed stereotypes. Central America is *not* a war-torn cultural wasteland, but a vibrant space for artistic expression. What is more is that it attests to the societal resilience, to a real-life story in which people organise, in spite of the previously theorised 'creative precarity', indicating a lack of support, in order to create a visual culture, a visual memory.

The methodological approach to this project has also been guided by the practical-theoretical principles of relationality, through ethnographic fieldwork at festivals and through the network analysis of production relations. The dissertation's second part consists of the analysis of three themes that provide more in-depth insight into, respectively, film festivals, collaborative networks and the postmemory genre as characteristic of the contemporary generations of Central American filmmakers.

As the empirical chapters elaborate, the intensification of a regional film culture has demonstrated to be predominantly community-driven, in search for a cinematographic language and an on- and offscreen identity in

postconflict societies in which memory is highly projectable into the future. Both in the ethnographic and network analysis findings, the connections that enable a regional collaborative network are to a significant extent enabled by and at film festivals. The events, their organisers and participants are catalyst drivers of film-cultural development, in substituting the various elements of traditional state-support for independent filmmaking or integrated studio systems as found elsewhere. This is not, however, to be attributed to the increasing interconnectedness of a globalised network society in which the network metaphor becomes ubiquitous and therefore quite void. Instead, the dynamic relations are characterised by an act of communal resistance to processes of globalisation and deterritorialisation, as much as they are driven by the needs and conditions created by the global film (festival) market.

The shared purpose of establishing and strengthening regionally-embedded, industrial and national film cultures is expressed through various of its constituting aspects. At the intersection of, on the one hand, the needs of creative labourers who want to advance individually and communally, and, on the other hand, the demands of basic building blocks for self-sustaining film cultures, film festivals developed as dynamic capacity-building interfaces. The following paragraphs summarise how film festivals in Central America have answered five of the main challenges to career development, exhibition, funding, education and policymaking in Central American cinemas.

1) Film festivals are by their very nature characterised by a high degree of networkisation between like-minded professionals. The organisational paradigms of film festivals facilitate the creation of collaboration networks and foster the rhetoric of commonality and regionality through programming and discourse. For film professionals to develop their careers, it is almost a prerequisite to engage in constant travel and socialisation at events throughout the region, where recurrent participation and exchange with peers contributes to the mutual valorisation as creative and affective labourers. Film festivals are mobile workplaces for the filmmaker, whose professional existence is necessarily transnational and nomadic in the small cinemas of Central America. Additionally, several Central American film festivals offer project development assessment and work-in-progress funding that can kickstart a film into (post-)production. The added visibility of awards and the accumulation of cultural or symbolic capital by the festival can increase a film's cultural and economic viability in turning into a springboard to regional

and international circuits of festival exhibition and their respective funds and initiatives.

2) In response to the inexistence or inaccessibility of formal film education programmes, film festivals in Central America have presented themselves as sites for learning and teaching. For many younger filmmakers, festivals are the primary training ground to enter the discipline, as theoretical workshops and hands-on learning experiences are central to most Central American film festivals. Conversely, festivals provide opportunities for more seasoned filmmakers to impart their experience and expertise as tutors to younger generations.

3) Film festivals in Central America are spaces for public debate on societal issues and human rights. Often in relation to international development organisations, many film festivals are important discursive and activist sites of socio-political denunciation, solidarity and empowerment.

4) Most film festivals are closely associated to film institutions and serve as platforms that enable the lobbying and creation of film laws, archives, funds and other protective measures for the cinematographic industry, its heritage and its creative labourers.

5) Since most commercial Central American exhibition venues continue to be dominated by foreign productions, film festivals constitute the main alternative circuit to filmmakers who want to connect with an audience and garner support from a professional community of peers.

The main research contribution consists in mapping and clarifying the importance of film festivals in supporting and developing the small and precarious cinemas of Central America. The particular geographical focus broadens the empirical scope of a growing body of literature on regional cinemas, media cultures and film festivals. The complementary use of ethnographic fieldwork and network analysis in the context of small cinemas adds to existing models of film festival studies and the digital humanities. The dissertation can therefore serve as a roadmap for other studies that can benefit from integrating profound cultural analysis with network visualisation, the potential of which has not yet been fully explored.

The social and relational essence of a multimedia event such as a film festival has intuitively surfaced in relational analyses. Where ethnography falls short in mapping out and analysing production relations as they develop over time, except perhaps through interviews and long-term participation, network

analysis can take two decades of data to unveil links, and links by association that research participants may not even have been aware of. Social individuals are assumed to know their connections, but not necessarily the connections of their connections. The possibility to add variables furthermore opens up a field of inquiry into relations and schools, relations and funding mechanisms, relations and specific festival participation, and many other potential strands of research.

It does, however, take an ethnographic engagement to understand how and why the intricacies of the film festival phenomenon ‘work’ in the specific context to enable those connections. It is while sharing thoughts with other festival participants during the social events at the festival that one might find like-minded professionals looking for opportunities, for scripts to be produced or funded, or for their motives to surface. More often than not, projects and collaborations take flight because of these (human) connections. The deeper social, cultural and even ideological structures of these events cannot be accessed through data-driven approaches alone, as they require an immersion into the emotive transactions between individuals that take place at these events. Similarly, a thorough network analysis also invites a repeated engagement with the field, whether to present the findings or reveal the social and cultural dynamics that led to the ‘statistical’ connection. All aspects considered, the dissertation advocates the potential of ‘network ethnography’, which, combined with the appealing visual representation of data, can provide both scholars and professionals with greater insight into the significance of film festivals.

Through an emphasis on creative clusters and cultural participation within Central America, the research has grounded film-cultural developments within the producing communities. This relational perspective ideally aims to reterritorialise and reindigenise where possible the discourse on film-cultural developments in post-Third-Worldist contexts. I stated in the introduction that, while I was first drawn to Central American cinemas through the success of films such as *Ixcanul* (2014) in the international festival circuit, I entered the field of Central American film festivals with an open mind to study cultural events when and where they transpired. This implied that the Central American context would not merely be homogenised and universalised in the light of global film cultures, in comparison to European cinemas, Hollywood cinemas or others. Instead, through acts of participation and abstraction, I let the theory and methodology be informed by the practice of being in the field.

The adoption of a relational epistemology grounded in the studied practices allowed me to see Central American film cultures as a tapestry of interconnected diversity, instead of as a unified totality. The theorised regionality does not aim at flattening out the differences between the countries that constitute Central America, but instead transcends the many social, political and economic differences to emphasise moments of convergence such as the shared effort of developing small film cultures. The regional approach allows for a “pluriverse” of meanings and interpretation (Mignolo, 2018), whether they originate in Maya or Taino mythology, in the armed conflict, in the migrant experience or in the international film festival circuit. It accounts for diverging worldviews and belief systems, for both insider and outsider perspectives, for contestation and reevaluation, since the process of knowledge construction is one of complex and dynamic complementarity and compatibility, depending on the observer’s vantage point.

In a broader framework, the ways Central American cinemas have expanded since 1996 can be attributed to the confluence of the moment following the peak of globalisation and the region’s return to democratic societies. The networked organisation of creative and affective labourers typifies the fin-de-siècle state of mind that regionality and collaboration are culturally and economically necessary conditions to establish a field of production that is both viable and rooted in the communities’ multiple identities (Oyamburu, 2000b).

The postglobalised perspective allows to emphasise the micro level of individual connections and the regional scope that characterises the subject matter. The seemingly borderless and deterritorialised outlook associated to the decline of nation-states, the free flow of trade, information, goods and services characteristic of globalisation has been nuanced to trace neoliberal forms of organisation that present alternatives to the roles of the nation-state in governing the individual. Instead of a postnational identification, national tensions as well as soft and hard borders do persist, and societies continue to be marked by processes of both fragmentation and integration. However, the research is motivated by an increasing emphasis on commonality and exchange by adopting transnational and regional frameworks to answer the need to conceptualise on a level above the national but below the global (Durovicová, 2010).

The dissertation has demonstrated that, in the Central American postwar context, power dynamics have shifted from regarding the nation-state as

superior to the community, to collaborative structures of production and dissemination by individual and transnational communities who constitute alternative forms of organisation to the absent, weak or unsupportive nation-states. The network analysis demonstrated that, despite the regional outlook and transnational exchanges, the respective nations remain the foremost identifying elements for the six collaborative clusters. This reasoning on social organisation does not only ring true for the sectors of cultural development, as can be gleaned, for example, from the specific organisations of emancipatory movements regarding global issues of social justice, human rights, and climate change.

Specifically, for the Central American context, the emphasis on commonality partly stems from a collectively co-opted consciousness of living in a postconflict region. The “postmemory generation” is historically indebted to stories of violence which as a theme marks many first-time Central American directors. The performances and visualisations of postmemory that are explored in Chapter 6 in relation to the tropes of trauma narratives exemplify how the act of visual memorialisation bears the responsibility of being projected into the future as a highly politicised act with real-life implications. In this context, the power of visual storytelling serves master narratives that seek to complete or rewrite national histories and those that attempt to maintain a politics of oblivion, amnesia and impunity.

The turn to the postmemory genre is neither recent nor confined to Central America, yet it has gained a lot of traction throughout Latin America in light of historical events and the past and present persistence of authoritarian regimes and intensifying ideological schisms on the continent. Chapter 6 focuses specifically on the work by Marcela Zamora and Laura Astorga, but could have included countless more case studies beyond fiction and documentary feature film production. As such, it can include examples from across the cultural spectrum in terms of animation films, performance and installation art, fine arts, theatre, contemporary dance and many other forms of cultural expression that are creating acts of resistance and memorialisation from their own specific contexts and vantage points. Every such expression is unique, while the underlying philosophy is often in line with the films analysed in Chapter 6.

As a theme, postmemory films and film festivals can be considered a contemporary subcategory of the Third Cinema(s) theories that are discussed in Chapter 3. Whereas the ideas to establish national cinemas arose during

long-lasting conflicts and anti-imperialist liberation sentiments, the re-emergence of film-cultural expansion in the 21st century is rooted in postwar sentiments of cultural and economic regeneration. The contemporary postmemory films that are discussed echo some of the characteristics that marked Third Cinema's film history, such as Ospina and Mayolo's use of humour and irony, reflected in the jokes and laughter inherent to Zamora's (tragic) stories. It is present in postmemory films' visual and narrative strategies to rehumanise subjects and stories and devise countertellings (Shohat, 1997) that dig into subjects of pain and trauma that can generate responses on both an individual and societal level for the purpose of healing.

Postmemory's intrinsic relation to Third Cultures is analysed in both Chapter 3 and Chapter 6. For a great number of contemporary filmmakers, cinema continues to function as a tool for social change and denunciation. The contemporary cinematic treatment of violent and tragic themes is however much more nuanced with respect to the filmmakers' voice, explicit political or ideological statements and the revealing of the production process as part of a larger personal and reflexive turn in contemporary Latin American filmmaking.

The now pluralised Third Cinemas further reverberate into the theorising of contemporary Central American cinemas through their transnational essence. In their original organisation within and between Latin America, Africa and Asia, Third Cultures' emphasis was always on transcultural dialogue, on devising national industries that encompass their inherent multiplicity, their hybrid nature and other, inclusive, conceptualisations of cultural production. The diverse cinematic landscape in Central America is characterised by all three of Fanon's 'phases in the development of ideological consciousness in the direction of cultural decolonisation in the Third World' as explored in Chapter 3. Escapist themes that identify with 'Hollywood's entertainment principles' coexist with 'indigenised' and 'nationalised' productions that develop around the search of a national cinematographic identity and a place in the global film (festival) landscape, as well as with the films that adhere to the aesthetics-ideology of political, militant cinema. The Third Cinemas-heritage continues to mark Central American film production, while it no longer necessarily entails a political revolutionary struggle but lingers in cultural representations and identities in postconflict societies, in particular through its relation to the past and memory constructions thereof.

The New Latin American Cinemas inspired contemporary events and filmmakers in Central America, to emphasise the common goal of advancing the respective nations' film industries, to be able to regard the region as a market with 50 million potential buyers. The lack of distribution mechanisms and the steady, yet persistently precarious, development of film festivals within the region make that the “new Central American cinemas” as Durón (2014) had proposed are still a work in progress, as the ambivalent example of the omnibus production *Días de luz/Days of light* (2019) demonstrated in Chapter 5. Despite the regional outlook, the identification as Central American remains secondary to the nation itself. The transnational collaboration networks and information flows are in place, as Chapter 5 showed, but they are unmistakably the result of bottom-up initiatives to organise, out of an economic and cultural necessity. The result has been that the community-level structures and the buzz created by (small) film festivals such as AcampaDOC or Ícaro come to carry great cultural significance. Their efforts vibrate upward and outward to the government representatives in charge of cultural spending.

The incursion into contemporary Central American cinemas is somewhat limited by the nature of its methods. Despite a regional approach and visits to ten of the region's film festivals, the research does not claim to cover all efforts and initiatives that are contributing to film-cultural development in the region. Through an event-centred focus, the thin veil between art and commerce, storytelling, creativity and industrial or economic policies has been lifted for a holistic approach to studies of film festivals and film-cultural development. The contemporary festival landscape has been outlined in the form of a series of reflective reviews of the events at which fieldwork was performed, leaving the Costa Rica International Film Festival for further study among the chosen cases.

Although the fourth chapter is already substantial, much has been left unsaid and unanalysed. As elaborated in Chapter 1, film festivals are spatially and temporally dynamic interfaces that potentially yield an almost infinite amount of data, volatile and sensorial as well as written or recorded archives. In 2019, the festival platform FilmFreeway listed around 8,000 festivals that were active, doubling the number of events in a few years without seeming to reach a point of saturation. The exponential growth and societal interest have catapulted the phenomenon of film festivals, as well as the field of film festival studies, to the foreground of film and media studies. Because of the seemingly endless pool

of data and research possibilities on film festivals, the field's future has not been decided, with scholars continuing to explore the critical potential by tackling diverse issues regarding programming and award politics, mapping, organisational studies and management or creative industries' research, among many other available options.

In the field, the application of commonality proves more challenging when tensions between cultural and economic concerns become palpable, as the production of regional omnibus films such as *Days of light* (2019) or the EICTV film school's paradoxically rather exclusive admission policies demonstrate. The emphasis might sometimes remain a more philosophical reclamation of territory, of regrounding the ideas and beliefs of individual communities in the land they inhabit in an attempt to establish a more sustainable relation towards nature, social relations and capital, rather than an actual call to overthrow current economic and social systems.

A lack of events, in part due to social and political upheaval in Nicaragua in 2018, impeded a trip to Central America's largest country. Also El Salvador, the smallest country in the area, could not be visited for scheduling reasons. Film production in the Hispanic Caribbean, comprising Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Cuba are also largely left out. The Dominican Republic's recent investments in the national film industry, mostly through tax schemes, have led to a rise in production that by itself easily competes with that of the entire Central American region. Puerto Rico's adherence to the diverse cultural imaginary of the region is complicated, as elaborated in Dunja Fehimovic's contribution on Caribbean cinemas to *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* (2018). Because of the sheer volume of materials and potential research avenues, the "Caribeanness" (Hall, 2014) of their cultural practices can therefore best be studied integrally instead of ending up as footnotes to the current investigation.

Given the still limited catalogue of Central American feature films, it was possible to set up a relational database of most, yet certainly not all, films and of most professionals who enabled their production. While as a model, the ethnographic research paired with the network analysis of production relations can be reproduced in other contexts, this might be more difficult depending on the festivals' accessibility for researchers and the scope of the film catalogues that are taken into consideration.

The difficulty of accessing materials and literature from outside of the region serves as motivation to circulate this information on both sides of the Atlantic.

From 2017 to 2019, the fieldwork timing did not allow to visit the International Film Festival in Costa Rica which changed its dates from December to March and skipped the 2018 edition altogether. The network analysis and visualisation remain rudimentary and complement the ethnographic findings, but it is clear that they hold many more opportunities for future research into film festival networks and circulation.

Other potential venues that could benefit from further research are the historical and contemporary involvement of women and indigenous peoples in Central American filmmaking in rewriting the history of cinema or reorienting its study. The visual politics of memory that was introduced in Chapter 6 is also bound to be studied further in light of the ongoing trials and testimonies relating to questions of restorative social justice, impunity and corruption.

For a more comprehensive analysis of the current state of Central American film cultures, additional research is required into the framing of Central American films and filmmakers in the international festival circuit. Whereas the current research has analysed how film festivals within the region support national and regional film-cultural developments, the next step in research on the ecosystem of globally emerging film cultures resides in their international circulation and visibility. In the persistently proliferating and diversifying field of film festivals around the world, it remains of interest to see how international film festivals function as platforms for emerging filmmakers to develop projects and relationships. For filmmakers from 'small', 'precarious' and 'post-Third-Worldist' film cultures without state-supported production funds or efficient legislation for national filmmaking, international film festivals continue to constitute an essential, albeit transient, workplace that facilitate productivity and consolidate careers.

In the end, the research has brought together several multidimensional aspects by studying events, films and collaborative networks, and reserves limited space for in-depth textual analysis of the films itself, instead favouring the analysis of the structures that produce and exhibit them. While the subject matter has occasionally required a lot of context and description, the methodological and theoretical frameworks that are outlined for the study of film festivals and production networks in small and precarious cinemas can ideally be abstracted and applied to other regional, subnational or national identifications and their cinematographic developments.

The importance of the fieldwork in completing this research cannot be overstated. Most answers have been obtained through the social and physical encounter with the field. It is the eagerness and friendship of the festival participants that helped delineate the subject matter, formulate questions and question formulations. My only objectives during the fieldwork, which I approached with open-ended ideas and questions in mind, was to participate, and somehow be drawn into the dialogue. Over the course of those five months, I nearly turned into a node in my own network analysis, traveling from one festival to the next, connecting throughout the region with peoples and the films they produced, merging my personal and academic life in a temporary 24/7 engagement, since I could not *not* be in the field while travelling.

Along the road, there are unexpected turns, serendipitous encounters, disrupted plans and contingencies, all of which have integrally led to my understanding of current developments. It was in the days after the festivals ended, when I would be on the road to the next (festival) destination, that I became especially reflexive, or nostalgic even, with respect to the lived experiences. Going from people and places (the “nodes”) to others means that the knowledge I acquired from the perceptions and experiences at events was crafted along the way, along the lines of the meshwork where life is lived, as Ingold would argue (2015). As this is true for the way researchers can understand the small world of filmmaking in Central America, it is similarly true for the people who move through the network with their own aspirations. To summarise in the words of Chilean filmmaker Raúl Ruiz, “this book is a journey – and travelers should be aware that paths leading nowhere are also part of the trip” (1995, p. 8).

Referenced films

- Aguilar Navarro, C. (2018). *Panamá al Brown: Cuando el puño se abre/Panama Brown: When the fist opens*.
- Aguilar Navarro, R., & Rodríguez, M. (2016). *Salsipuedes/Get out if you can*. Prolatsa; Habanero Film Sales.
- Argueta, L. (1994). *El silencio de Neto/The silence of Neto*. Maya Media.
- Argueta, L. (2002). *Collect call*. Maya Media.
- Argueta, L. (2011). *AbUSed: The postville raid*. Maya Media.
- Argueta, L. (2014). *Abrazos*. Maya Media.
- Argueta, L. (2017). *La Vuelta en U/The U-Turn* [Film]. Maya Media; Dos & Dos producciones.
- Astorga, L. (2013). *Princesas rojas/Red princesses*. Hol y Asociados; La Feria Producciones; Suécinema.
- Baldión, P., & Toll, J. (2019). *I am migration*. Dos Almas Films.
- Barriuso, R., & Barriuso, S. (2018). *Un traductor/A translator*. Film Movement.
- Benaim, A. (2018). *Ruben Blades is not my name*. Compañía de Cine; Cargo Films and Releasing.
- Benaim, A., Borrero, C., Brantley, L. F., Mon, P., & Ortega-Heilbron, P. (2014). *Historias del canal/Panama canal stories*. Hypatia Films; Manglar Films.
- Bendeck, M. (2016). *El palettero/The ice cream man*. Hondufilms; Eduardo Andonie Enterprise.
- Birri, F. (1958). *Tire dié/Throw me a dime*. trigon-film.
- Bojórquez, A. V., & Carreras, L. (2015). *La casa más grande del mundo/The greatest house in the world*. Prisma Cine; TV S.A. & Filmadora Producciones S.A. de C.V.
- Brechner, Á. (2018). *La noche de 12 años/The night of twelve years*. Le Pacte; Syldavia Cinema; Movies Inspired; Netflix; trigon-film.
- Bustamante, A. I. (2018). *La asfixia/Asphyxia*. Producciones Concepción; Nanuk Audiovisual.
- Bustamante, J. (2015). *Ixcánul*. La casa de producción; Cinéart; Kino Lorber; Canvas; trigon-film; Moving Turtle; Twin Pics; Seven Films - Spentzos Film; Kairos Filmverleih; Espace Sarou; ARP Sélection; GEM Entertainment.
- Bustamante, J. (2019a). *La llorona/The weeping woman*. ARP Sélection; GAGA; Cinéart; Shudder.

- Bustamante, J. (2019b). *Temblores/Tremors*. Cinéart; Film Movement; Memento Films; Palace Films.
- Cabral, N., & Estrada, O. (2018). *Miriam miente/Miriam lies*. HBO Max; Paco Poch Cinema.
- Canto, J. A. (2018). *La estación seca/The dry season*. Centro de Imagen y Sonido CIMAS.
- Carri, A. (2003). *Los rubios/The blonds*. Primer Plano Film Group; Women Make Movies.
- Carrión Fonseca, G. (2017). *Heredera del viento/Heiress of the wind*. Journeyman Pictures.
- Cheng, L. (2018). *José*. Outsider Pictures.
- Colombo, M. (2018). *Tierra adentro/Inland*. Apertura Films.
- Coutinho, E. (1984). *Cabra marcado para morrer/Twenty years later*. Globo Vídeo; World Artists.
- Crisóstomo, A. (2011). *Fe/Faith*. Ceibita Films.
- Cuarón, A. (2018). *Roma*. Cine Canibal; Cineteca del Comune di Bologna; E Stars Films; Filmarti; Maco; Mongkol Major; Netflix; Pris Audiovisuais; Film & TV House; The Criterion Collection; Warner Bros. Home Entertainment.
- de Mora, J. M. (1951). *Näskara/Amanecer/Dawn*.
- Del Toro, G. (1993). *Cronos*. October Films; Cineplex Odeon Films; Alliance Atlantis Home Video; Cineplex-Odeon Home Video; HBO Max; Lions Gate Films Home Entertainment; MCA; MCP Sound & Media AG; Metropolitan Filmexport; Nelonen; Only Hearts Company; Prime Films S.L.; The Criterion Collection; VideoVisa; Vidmark Entertainment; Warner Home Video.
- Del Toro, G. (2006). *El laberinto del fauno/Pan's labyrinth*. CDE; Bir Film; Cinema Mondo; CP; Edko Films; Kino Swiat; Paradiso; Picturehouse; Prooptiki; Senator Film; Warner Bros. Pictures; Weird Wave; Argentina Video Home; Audio Visual Enterprises; Canvas; IPA Asia Pacific; New Line Home Video; Optimum Home Entertainment; Pan Vision Oy; The Criterion Collection; Universum;
- Di Stefano, A. (2014). *Escobar: Paradise lost*. Alfa Films; Cuvision; Fabula Films; Good Films; Odeon; Pathé; RADiUS-TWC; Shaw Organisation; Transformer; bf Distribution; Alamode Film; NOS Audiovisuais; VVS Films.

- Díaz, C. (2019). *Nuestras madres/Our mothers*. cinemien; One from the heart; Pyramide Distribution; Alfa Pictures; K Films Amerique; Outsider Pictures; trigon-film.
- Durón, H. (2001). *Anita, la cazadora de insectos/Anita, the insect hunter*.
- Durón, H. (2017). *Morazán*. Fundaupnfilms; Calderón Publicidad.
- Echevarría, N. (1991). *Cabeza de vaca/Cow's head* [111min.]. Concorde Pictures; PBS; New Horizons; E.D. Distribution; Concorde-New Horizons.
- Endara Mislov, A. (2016). *La felicidad del sonido/The joy of sound*. Grasshopper Film.
- Escalante, A. (2016). *El sonido de las cosas/The sound of things*. Fade In; Miau Films; Sputnik Films.
- Espinosa, R. (2014). *Pol*. Cinemayic.
- Espinosa, R. (2017). *Otros 4 litros/The 4 beers*. Cinemayic.
- Fábrega, P. (2010). *Agua fría de mar/Cold water of the sea*. Floris Films.
- Fábrega, P. (2015). *Viaje/Trip*.
- Fanconi, J. C. (2002). *Almas de la media noche/Midnight spirits*. Sigmavision Films; Cana Vista Films.
- Fanconi, J. C. (2012). *El Xendra*. Cana Vista Films.
- Fanconi, J. C. (2017). *Un lugar en el Caribe/A place in the Caribbean*. GatebreakR; Cana Vista Films.
- Ferraz, V., & Martínez, I. (2010). *El último comandante/The last commandant*.
- Figueroa, R. (2009). *La bodega/The bodega*. Casa Comal.
- Figueroa, R., & Jiménez, E. (2011). *Toque de queda/Curfew*. Casa Comal.
- García Espinosa, J., & Gutiérrez Alea, T. (1955). *El mégano*.
- Hernández Córdón, J. (2008). *Gasolina/Gasoline*. Interior13 Cine; Silvio Sardi Communications.
- Hernández Córdón, J. (2010). *Las marimbas del infierno/Marimbas from hell*. Interior13 Cine; Rouge Productions; FiGa Films.
- Hernández Córdón, J. (2012a). *Hasta el sol tiene manchas/Even the sun has spots*. Interior13 Cine.
- Hernández Córdón, J. (2012b). *Polvo/Dust*. Melindrosa Films.
- Hernández Córdón, J. (2015). *Te prometo anarquía/I promise you anarchy*. Interior13 Cine; TLA Releasing.
- Hernández Córdón, J. (2016). *Ojalá el sol me esconda/May the sun hide me*. Melindrosa Films.

- Hernández Cordon, J. (2017). *Atrás hay relámpagos/Lightning falls behind*. Interior13 Cine.
- Hernández Cordon, J. (2018). *Cómprame un revolver/Buy me a gun*. Rézo Films; SOMOS Next.
- Herrera, H. (2002). *One dollar (el precio de la vida)/One dollar (the price of life)*. ABS Production; Genco Films; Magma Films S.L.
- Hidalgo, H. (2017). *Violeta al fin/Violeta at last*. Habanero Film Sales; SOMOS Next.
- Huezo, T. (2016). *Tempestad/Tempest*. Interior13 Cine; ARTE.
- Infante, A. (2018). *La extraordinaria viaje de Celeste García/The extraordinary journey of Celeste García*. The Match Factory.
- Jaugey, F. (2009). *La Yuma*. Ciné Classic; Kairos Filmverleih; Camila Films.
- Jaugey, F. (2014). *La pantalla desnuda/The naked screen*. Camila Films.
- Jiménez, E. (2004). *La casa de enfrente/The house in front*. Casa Comal.
- Jiménez, E. (2007). *V.I.P.: La otra casa/V.I.P.: The other house*. Casa Comal.
- Jiménez, E. (2013). *Donde nace el sol/Where the sun is born*. Casa Comal.
- Jiménez, E. (2019). *Hogar seguro/Safe home*. Casa Comal.
- Jiménez, H. (2012). *El regreso/The return*. Miel y Palo Films.
- Kodath, M., & Pereira, H. (2009). *Amor y frijoles/Love and beans* [83min.]. Cinemark.
- Koper, H. (2016). *Juego de fuego*. Surkum Cinematografía.
- Krakowski, A. (2008). *Looking for Palladin*. Monterey Media; Wildcat Releasing.
- Kummerfeldt Quiroa, C. (2015). *Hunting party*. MundoCine.
- Kusturica, E. (2018). *El Pepe, una vida suprema/El Pepe, a supreme life*. Netflix; Albatros Film.
- Lacayo, R. (1988). *El espectro de la guerra/The ghost of war*. Instituto Nicaraguense de Cine.
- Leduc, P. (1972). *Reed, México insurgente/Reed: Insurgent Mexico*. Imperial Filmes; Connoisseur Video; New Yorker Films.
- León, P. (2019). *Aquí y ahora/Here and now*. Reverso Films.
- Loach, K. (1996). *Carla's song*. Cinemien; Diaphana Films; Lider Films; Shadow Distribution; Alta Films; Atlantic Film; BIM Distribuzione; Cannes Home Video; Epix Media; Filmes Lusomundo; Front Row Filmed Entertainment; Gativideo; Homescreen; Twilight Time; Yleisradio.
- López Fernández, J. (2018). *La batalla del volcán/The battle of the volcano*. Trípode Audiovisual.

- Lopez, B. (2017). *Trapos sucios/Dirty laundry*. Guacamaya Films; Films El Salvador.
- Lübbert, A. (2017). *El color del camaleón*. 3BoxMedia.
- Machado, M. (2015). *Ovnis en Zacapa/UFO in Zacapa*. BPS.
- Marques Ribeiro, J. (2009). *Los minutos, las horas/The minutes, the hours*.
- Mayolo, C., & Ospina, L. (1971). *¡Oiga vea!/Listen, look!*
- Medrano, E., Pérez Him, E., Carrión, G., López, J., Borges, M., & Ramírez, S. (2019). *Días de luz/Days of light* [Digital 2K Color]. Austral films.
- Menendez, A. (2014). *Malacrianza/The crow's nest*. Latam Pictures.
- Menendez, A. (2018). *La palabra de Pablo/Pablo's word*. HBO Latino; SOMOS Next; Sony.
- Moncada Rodríguez, M. (2004). *El inmortal/The immortal*. Sherlock Films S.L.
- Moncada Rodríguez, M. (2012). *Palabras mágicas (para romper un encantamiento)/Magic words (to break a spell)*. Instituto Mexicano de Cinematografía IMCINE.
- Mora Ortega, L. (2017). *Matar a Jesus/Killing Jesus*. Bobine Films; El Sur Films; Con Un Pack Distribution.
- Morris, E. (1988). *The thin blue line*. Miramax; HBO; Warner Bros; MGM Home Entertainment; The Criterion Collection.
- Müller, K. (2013). *12 segundos/12 seconds*. Rock Movie Studios; TVRHD; Netflix.
- Müller, K. (2017). *Septiembre. Un llanto en silencio/September. A silent cry*. KraftLogic Studios; Netflix.
- Müller, K. (2019). *Nebaj*. KraftLogic Studios.
- Novaro, M. (2017). *Tesoros/Treasures*. Axolote Cine; Foprocine.
- Ortega-Heilbron, P. (2005). *Los puños de una nación/The fists of a nation*. Hypatia Films.
- Ortega-Heilbron, P. (2016). *La ruta/The road*. Hypatia Films; Al Fondo del Callejón; Manglar Films; Jaguar Films.
- Palacios, E. (2012). *Lucía*. EPE Films.
- Pereda, N. (2015). *Minotauro/Minotaur*. Interior13 Cine.
- Pérez Him, E. (2011). *Puro Mula*. Best Picture System; Lighthouse Home Entertainment.
- Pérez Him, E. (2015). *Kenke/Weed*. Best Picture System; Mente Pública; Cinema Republic.
- Pineda, F. (1989). *El hombre de una sola nota/The man with one note*. INCINE.

- Quemada-Díez, D. (2013). *La jaula de oro/The golden dream*. Maison Motion; Double Exposure; Pretty Pictures; StraDa Films; Wild Bunch Benelux; Canibal Networks; Cine Canibal; Film1; Golem Distribución; Legendmain Filmes; Peccadillo Pictures.
- Ramírez, S. (2012). *Distancia/Distance*. Cine Concepción.
- Rey Rosa, R., & Escalón, G. (2015). *Cárcel de árboles/Prison of trees*. Perspective Films.
- Riedel, V. (2011). *Cápsulas/Capsules*. APM Entertainment.
- Rodríguez, C. (2017). *Los gigantes no existen/Giants don't exist*. Casa Comal.
- Rosal, R. (2006). *Las Cruces... Poblado próximo/Las Cruces... The next village*. Casa Comal.
- Rosal, R. (2015). *Tierra de nadie/No man's land*. Casa Comal.
- Saldaña, J. (2017). *Resonancia/Resonance*. Cinetenango Films.
- Saulter, S. (2018). *Sprinter*. FilmRise.
- Silver, M. (2013). *Who is Dayani Cristal?*. Pulse Films.
- Soberón Torchía, E. (2019). *Panamá radio/Panama radio*. Prolatsa; Centro de Imagen y Sonido CIMAS.
- Solanas, F. (2004). *Memoria del saqueo/Social genocide*. Ad Vitam Distribution; Atopia; Fandango; Mongrel Media; SBP; trigon-film.
- Stelzner, U. (2009a). *Asalto al sueño/Assaulted dream*. Iskacine.
- Stelzner, U. (2009b). *La isla: Archives of a tragedy*. Iskacine.
- Stelzner, U. (2017). *Días y noches entre guerra y paz/Days and nights between war and peace*. Iskacine.
- Stelzner, U., & Walther, T. (1994). *Romper el cerco/Breaking the fence—Refugees of a hidden war*. Iskacine.
- Stelzner, U., & Walther, T. (1997). *Los civilizadores—Alemanes en Guatemala/The civilizers—Germans in Guatemala*.
- Stelzner, U., & Walther, T. (2002). *Testamento/Testament*. Iskacine.
- Sudasassi, A. (2019). *El despertar de las hormigas/The awakening of the ants*. Elamedia Estudios; HBO Max.
- Suidgeest, K. (2011). *La llegada de Karla/Karla's arrival*. Cobra Films; Daggewood Films; El Rayo Films; ITVS International.
- Taracena, A., & González, R. (2017). *20 años después/20 years later*. Ek Balam Producciones.
- Tres, R. (2016). *W2MW: welcome to my world*. Codice Cinema.
- Ureña, J. (2014). *Muñecas rusas/Russian dolls*. Ceibita Films; La Ventana.
- Ureña, J. (2016). *Abrázame como antes/Hold me like before*. Mina Films.
- Urrutia, C. (2019). *Pólvora en el corazón/Gunpowder heart*. Curuxa Cinema.

- Vanegas, B. (in postproduction). *Volar/Fly*.
- Velásquez, P. (2019). *Apego/Attachment*. Ceibita Films.
- Vera, J. (2018). *El amor menos pensado/An unexpected love*. AV-Jet International Media; Alpha Filmes; Eurozoom; Feelgood Entertainment; Filmax; MOOOV Film Distribution; Raketa Releasing; Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures; HBO Max; Palace Films.
- Villalobos, E. (2013). *Por las plumas/All about the feathers*. Outsider Pictures.
- Villalobos, E. (2018). *Cascos indomables/Helmet heads*. Pacífica Grey.
- Yates, P. (2011). *Granito*. International Film Circuit.
- Yates, P. (2017). *500 years*. Paladin.
- Yates, P., & Thomas Sigel, N. (1983). *When the mountains tremble*. Skylight Pictures; New Video.
- Zamora, M. (2007). *Xochiquetzal: La casa de las flores bellas/The house of beautiful flowers*. EICTV.
- Zamora, M. (2011). *María en tierra de nadie/María in no man's land*. Idheas.
- Zamora, M. (2015). *El cuarto de los huesos/The room of bones*. La Sandía Digital; Trípode Audiovisual.
- Zamora, M. (2016). *Los ofendidos/The offended*. Antipode Sales & Distribution.
- Zamora, M. (2017). *Comandos*. Kino Glaz.

References

- Agurcia, J. P. (2019, February 8). Honduras Passes Film Legislation; Becomes One of the Few Central American Nations With a Formalized Film Infrastructure. *Cinema Tropical*.
<https://www.cinematropical.com/cinema-tropical/honduras-passes-film-legislation-becomes-one-of-the-few-central-american-nations-with-a-formalized-film-infrastructure>
- Ahn, S. (2012). *The Pusan International Film Festival, South Korean cinema and globalization*. Hong Kong University Press.
- Alvaray, L. (2013). Hybridity and genre in transnational Latin American cinemas. *Transnational Cinemas*, 4(1), 67–87.
- Andermann, J. (2012). *New Argentine Cinema*. I.B. Tauris.
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso.
- Andersson, L. G., & Sundholm, J. (2016). Accented Cinema and Beyond: Latin American Minor Cinemas in Sweden, 1970-1990. *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas*, 13(3), 227–245.
- Andrew, D. (2004). An Atlas of World Cinema. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 45(2), 9–23.
- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. In M. Featherstone (Ed.), *Global Culture: Globalisation and Modernity* (Vol. 7, pp. 259–310). Sage Publications.
- Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Appiah, K. A. (1992). *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. Oxford University Press.
- Appiah. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*. Norton.
- Armes, R. (1987). *Third World Film Making and the West*. University of California Press.
- Associated Press in Guatemala City. (2019, January 9). Guatemala: Court blocks president's expulsion of UN anti-corruption group. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/09/guatemala-jimmy-morales-un-anti-corruption-cicig-court-blocked>
- Badley, L., Palmer, R. B., & Schneider, S. J. (Eds.). (2006). *Traditions in World Cinema*. Rutgers University Press.
- Balaisis, N. (2013). The School for Every World: Internationalism and Residual Socialism at EICTV. In Hjort, M. (Ed.), *The Education of the*

- Filmmaker in Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas* (pp. 185–201). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Banana republic. (2020). In *Collins Online English Dictionary*. HarperCollins Publishers. <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english>
- Barabási, A.-L., & Albert, R. (1999). Emergence of Scaling in Random Networks. *Science*, 286(5439), 509–512.
- Beiner, G. (2018). *Forgetful Remembrance: Social Forgetting and Vernacular Historiography of a Rebellion in Ulster*. Oxford University Press.
- Belga News Agency. (2019, August 23). 'Nuestras Madres' van César Díaz is de Belgische inzending voor de Oscars van 2020. https://focus.knack.be/entertainment/film/nuestras-madres-van-cesar-diaz-is-de-belgische-inzending-voor-de-oscars-van-2020/article-normal-1500831.html?cookie_check=1567509013
- Berg, H., & Penley, C. (2016). Creative Precarity in the Adult Film Industry. In M. Curtin & K. Sanson (Eds.), *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor* (pp. 159–171). University of California Press.
- Berry, C., & Robinson, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Biltreyest, D., & Meers, P. (2000). The international telenovela debate and the contra-flow argument: A reappraisal. *Media Culture & Society*, 22(4), 393-+.
- Biltreyest, D., & Meers, P. (2016). New Cinema History and the Comparative Mode: Reflections on Comparing Historical Cinema Cultures. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 11, 13–32.
- Biltreyest, D., Maltby, R., & Meers, P. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*. Routledge.
- Birri, F. (1985). For a nationalist, realist, critical and popular cinema. *Screen*, 26(3–4), 89–92.
- Birri, F. (2016). Fragmentos del acta de nacimiento. In *Memorias 30 años de la EICTV* (p. 7). San Antonio de los Baños: Ediciones EICTV.
- Bloom, H. (2003). *A Map of Misreading* (2nd edition). Oxford University Press.
- Bollington, L. (2018). Fabricating the Thanatopolitical Body in Rodrigo Rey Rosa's Cárcel de Árboles. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*.
- Borgatti, S., Everett, M., & Shirley, P. (1990). Ls sets, lambda sets and other cohesive subsets. *Social Networks*, 12, 337–357.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- Brandes, U., & Erlebach, T. (Eds.). (2005). *Network Analysis: Methodological Foundations*. Springer.
- Brandes, U., Borgatti, S. P., & Freeman, L. C. (2016). Maintaining the duality of closeness and betweenness centrality. *Social Networks*, *44*, 153–159.
- Bruzzi, S. (2006). *New Documentary* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Buchsbaum, J. (2003). *Cinema and the Sandinistas: Filmmaking in revolutionary Nicaragua*. University of Texas Press.
- Buchsbaum, J. (2011). One, Two... Third Cinemas. *Third Text*, *25*(1), 13–28.
- Burawoy, M., Burton, A., Ferguson, A. A., Fox, K. J., Gamson, J., Gartrell, N., & Schiffman, J. (1991). *Ethnography unbound. Power and resistance in the modern metropolis*. University of California Press.
- Burt, J.-M., & Estrada, P. (2018, April 24). A Genocide and the Pursuit of Justice. *NACLA*. <https://nacla.org/news/2018/04/25/genocide-and-pursuit-justice>
- Burt, J.-M., & Estrada, P. (2019, February 5). Guatemala: Impunity for War Criminals, Again. *NACLA*. <https://nacla.org/news/2019/02/05/guatemala-impunity-war-criminals-again>
- Burton, J. (1978). The Camera as 'Gun': Two Decades of Culture and Resistance in Latin America. *Latin American Perspectives*, *5*(1), 49–76.
- Burton, J. (Ed.). (1990). *The social documentary in Latin America*. University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Burucúa, C., & Sitnisky, C. (Eds.). (2018). *The Precarious in the Cinemas of the Americas*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Precarious Life*. Verso.
- Butler, J. (2009). *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* Verso.
- Cabezas Vargas, A. (2015). *Cinema centramericain contemporain (1970-2014): La construction d'un cinéma régional: Mémoires socio-historiques et culturelles. (Doctor of Philosophy)*. Université Michel de Montaigne - Bordeaux III.
- Cabezas Vargas, Andrea, & De Canales Carcereny, J. G. (2018). Central American cinematographic aesthetics and their role in international film festivals. *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas*, *15*(2), 163–186. https://doi.org/10.1386/slac.15.2.163_1
- Campos, M. (2012). Reconfiguración de flujos en el circuito internacional. De festivales: El programa "Cine en Construcción". *Secuencias: Revista de historia del cine*.

- Campos, M. (2013). La América Latina de " Cine en Construcción" Implicaciones del apoyo económico de los festivales internacionales1/The Latin America of " Films in Progress". *Archivos de la Filmoteca*, 71, 13–26.
- Campos, M. (2015). Film (Co) Production in Latin America and European Festivals. *Zeitschrift Für Kulturmanagement*, 1(1), 95–108.
- Campos, Minerva. (2016). *Construcción y legitimación de los cines (trans)nacionales en el circuito internacional de festivales. El caso de América Latina* [Universidad Carlos III de Madrid]. <https://e-archivo.uc3m.es/handle/10016/23801>
- Carroll Harris, L. (2017). Theorising film festivals as distributors and investigating the post-festival distribution of Australian films. *Studies in Australasian Cinema*, 11(2), 46–58.
- Castro, F. (2017). Fragmento del discurso inaugural de la EICTV pronunciado por el Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruiz. In *Memorias 30 años de la EICTV*. Ediciones EICTV.
- Cattani, G., & Ferriani, S. (2008). A Core/Periphery Perspective on Individual Creative Performance: Social Networks and Cinematic Achievements in the Hollywood Film Industry. *Organization Science*, 19(6), 824–844.
- Chanan, M. (2006). Latin American cinema: From underdevelopment to postmodernism. In *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film* (pp. 38–51).
- Chanan, M. (2011). Cuban Cinema: A Case of Accelerated Underdevelopment. In J. Kapur & K. B. Wagner (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and Global Cinema: Capital, Culture, and Marxist Critique* (pp. 87–102). Routledge.
- Chapman, J. (2003). *Cinemas of the World: Film and Society from 1895 to the Present*. Reaktion Books.
- Cherven, K. (2015). *Mastering Gephi network visualization*. Packt Publishing Ltd.
- Collins Cobuild. (2006). Banana republic. In *COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* (5th ed., p. 1768). HarperCollins Publishers.
- Colta, A.-M. (2019). Creative and Emotional Labour: Programming Human Rights Film Festivals as Practice-led Ethnography. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 17, 128–145. <https://doi.org/10.33178/alpha.17.08>

- Comaroff, J., & Comaroff, J. L. (Eds.). (2001). *Millennial capitalism and the culture of neoliberalism*. Duke University Press.
- Córdova, A., & Orozco Recinos, P. (2020, March 31). *Influencia X Cine, Nuestras Madres*. [Video File]. <https://youtu.be/4EULs2vk5wc>
- Cortés, M. L. (2000). Hacia un espacio audiovisual centroamericano. In J. Oyamburu (Ed.), *Visiones del sector cultural en Centroamérica* (pp. 97–106). Centro Cultural de España.
- Cortés, M. L. (2005). *La pantalla rota: Cien años de cine en Centroamérica*. Santillana Ediciones.
- Cortés, M. L. (2010). The unexpected rise of Central American cinema. In E. A. Russo (Ed.), & H. Cleary Wolfgang (Trans.), *The film edge: Contemporary filmmaking in Latin America* (pp. 65–80). Teseo.
- Cortés, M. L. (2018). Filmmaking in Central America: An Overview. *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas*, 15(2), 143–161.
- Curtin, M., & Sanson, K. (Eds.). (2016). *Precarious Creativity: Global Media, Local Labor*. University of California Press.
- Dayan, D. (2000). *Looking for Sundance: The social construction of a film festival. Moving images, culture and the mind*.
- de la Mora, S. (2006). *Cinemachismo: Masculinities and Sexuality in Mexican Film*. University of Texas Press.
- De Sousa Santos, B. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide*. Routledge.
- De Sousa Santos, B. (2018). *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South*. Duke University Press.
- de Valck, M. (2007). *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia*. Amsterdam University Press.
- De Valck, M. (2014a). Film Festivals, Bourdieu, and the economization of culture. *Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 23(1), 74–89.
- De Valck, M. (2014b). Supporting art cinema at a time of commercialization: Principles and practices, the case of the International Film Festival Rotterdam. *Poetics*, 42, 40–59.
- De Valck, M. (2016). Fostering Art, Adding Value, Cultivating Taste. In *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (pp. 100–116). Routledge.
- de Valck, M., Kredell, B., & Loist, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice*. Routledge.
- Delanty, G. (2012). A cosmopolitan approach to the explanation of social change: Social mechanisms, processes, modernity. *The Sociological Review*, 60(2), 333–354.

- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1972). *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. L'anti-Œdipe*. Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1980). *Capitalisme et schizophrénie 2: Mille plateaux*. Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Delgado, M. M., Hart, S. M., & Johnson, R. (Eds.). (2017). *A Companion to Latin American Cinema*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Dennison, S. (Ed.). (2013). *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema: Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin American Film*. Tamesis Books.
- Dennison, S., & Lim, S. H. (Eds.). (2006). *Remapping world cinema: Identity, culture and politics in film*. Wallflower Press.
- Desai, J. (2004). *Beyond Bollywood: The Cultural Politics of South Asian Diasporic Film*. Routledge.
- Deshpande, S., & Mazaj, M. (2018). *World Cinema: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge.
- Desnoes, E. (1988). The photographic image of underdevelopment (J. Lesage, Trans.). *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 33, 69–81.
- Deuze, M., & Prenger, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Making Media: Production, Practices, and Professions*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Dovey, L. (2015). *Curating Africa in the Age of Film Festivals*. Springer.
- Durón, H. (2014). *New Central American Cinema (2001-2010)*. University of Kansas.
- Durovicová, N. (2010). Preface. In N. Durovicová (Ed.), *World Cinemas: Transnational Perspectives* (pp. ix–xv). Routledge.
- Durovicova, N., & Newman, K. (Eds.). (2010). *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives*. Routledge.
- Elena, A. (1999). *Los Cines Periféricos*. Paidós.
- Elsaesser, T. (2005a). *European Cinema. Face to Face with Hollywood*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Elsaesser, T. (2005b). 'Film festival networks: The new topographies of cinema in Europe'. In *European Cinema: Face to Face with Hollywood*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Ezra, E., & Rowden, T. (2006). General Introduction: What is Transnational Cinema? In E. Ezra & T. Rowden (Eds.), *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* (pp. 1–12). Routledge.
- Faguet, M. (2009). Pornomiseria: Or how not to make a documentary film. Afterall. *A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 21, 5–15.
- Falicov, T. (2019). *Latin American Film Industries*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Falicov, T. L. (2012). Programa ibermedia: ¿Cine transnacional iberoamericano o relaciones públicas para España? *Reflexiones*, 91(1).
- Falicov, T. L. (2013a). 'Cine en Construcción'/'Films in Progress': How Spanish and Latin American film-makers negotiate the construction of a globalized art-house aesthetic. *Transnational Cinemas*, 4(2), 253–271. https://doi.org/doi:10.1386/trac.4.2.253_1
- Falicov, T. L. (2013b). Ibero-Latin American Co-productions. In Dennison, S. (Ed.), *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema* (pp. 67–88). Tamesis Books.
- Falkowski, T. (2009). *Community Analysis in Dynamic Social Networks*. Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg.
- Fanon, F. (2004). *The wretched of the earth*. Grove Press. (Original work published 1961)
- Favero, P. (2018). *The present image: Visible stories in a digital habitat*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fehimovic, D. (2018). Connected in 'another way': Repetition, difference and identity in Caribbean cinema. In *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* (pp. 111–121). Routledge.
- Finney, A. (2010). *The International Film Business: A Market Guide Beyond Hollywood*. Routledge.
- Flew, T. (2018). Post-Globalisation. *Javnost - The Public*, 25(1–2), 102–109. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2018.1418958>
- Freud, S. (1960 [1905]). *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious: Vol. VII* (J. Strachey, Trans.). Hogarth Press.
- Friedkin, N. E. (1982). Information Flow Through Strong and Weak Ties in Intraorganizational Social Networks. *Social Networks*, 3, 273–285.
- Friedman, T. L. (1999). *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Gabriel, T. (1982). *Third Cinema in the Third World*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press.
- Gabriel, T. (n.d.). Third Cinema Updated: Exploration of Nomadic Aesthetics and Narrative Communities. *Teshome Gabriel: Articles & Other Works*. <http://teshomegabriel.net/third-cinema-updated>
- Galt, R., & Schoonover, K. (Eds.). (2010). *Global Art Cinema New Theories and Histories*. Oxford University Press.
- Garbey, M. (2008). No hay festival de cine con un publico como el de La Habana: Entrevista a Iván Giroud, Director del Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano. *Diario del festival: Publicación*

oficial de la oficina del festival internacional del nuevo cine latinoamericano.

- García Canclini, N. (1995). *Hybrid cultures: Strategies for entering and leaving modernity*. University of Minnesota Press.
- García Espinosa, J. (1971). Por un cine imperfecto [1969]. *Cine Cubano*, 66(67), 46–53.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures* (Vol. 5019). Basic books.
- Geertz, C. (1994). Thick description: Toward an interpretive theory of culture. *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science*, 213–231.
- Getino, O. (2006). *Cine Iberoamericano: Los Desafíos del Nuevo Siglo*. Editorial Veritas.
- Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. University of California Press.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford University Press.
- Gielen, P. (2009). *The murmuring of the artistic multitude: Global art, memory and post-Fordism*. Valiz.
- Gielen, P. (2010). Review of The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Memory and Post-Fordism [Review of *Review of The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude: Global Art, Memory and Post-Fordism*, by M. Oudenampsen]. *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain*. <https://onlineopen.org/the-murmuring-of-the-artistic-multitude>
- Ginsburg, F. (2002). Fieldwork at the movies: Anthropology and media. In J. MacClancy (Ed.), *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines* (pp. 359–376). University of Chicago Press.
- Ginsburg, F. D., Abu-Lughod, L., & Larkin, B. (2002). Introduction. In *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain* (pp. 1–36). University of California Press.
- Giroud, I. (2018). Palabras del director. In *40 Festival Internacional del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano: Catálogo General* (p. 8). ICAIC.
- Girvan, M., & Newman, M. E. (2002). Community Structure in Social and Biological Networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 99(12), 7821–7826.
- Glick Schiller, N. G., & Irving, A. (Eds.). (2014). *Whose Cosmopolitanism?: Critical Perspectives, Relationalities and Discontents*. Berghahn Books.

- Gómez Cruz, E., & Ardèvol, E. (2013). Ethnography and the field in media(ted) studies: A practice theory approach. *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, 9(3), 29–45.
- Gómez Pérez, F. J., Navarrete Cardero, J. L., & Pérez Rufi, J. P. (2013). Programa IBERMEDIA: 15 años fomentando la coproducción iberoamericana. *XIII Congreso Internacional IBERCOM: Comunicación, Cultura y Esferas de Poder*, 358–360.
- Granovetter, M. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360–1380.
- Green, J. (2019, August 26). Oscars: Belgium Picks Spanish-language ‘Our Mothers’ for International Feature Film Category. *The Hollywood Reporter*. <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/belgium-picks-mothers-as-international-oscar-nominee-1234391?fbclid=IwAR3L38B8H2O-KCnftBzcapIsAEXYau5Ec2RSG6Y6zPAgukKWNjc-0hx9o6w>
- Grinberg Pla, V. (2013). Mujeres Cineastas de Centroamérica: Continuidad y Ruptura. *Mesoamérica*, 55, 103–112.
- Guneratne, A. R., & Dissanayake, W. (2003). *Rethinking Third Cinema*. Routledge.
- Gutiérrez, C. A., & Wagenberg, M. (2013). Meeting points: A survey of film festivals in Latin America. *Transnational Cinemas*, 4(2), 295–305.
- Guzaro, T., & McComb, T. J. (2010). *Escaping the Fire: How an Ixil Mayan Pastor Led His People Out of a Holocaust During the Guatemalan Civil War*. University of Texas Press.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture and Difference* (pp. 222–237). Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hall, S. (2014). Cultural identity and diaspora. In *Diaspora and visual culture* (pp. 35–47). Routledge.
- Hannerz, U. (1990). ‘Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture’, *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (M. Featherstone, Ed.). Sage.
- Hansen, M. (1995). America, Paris, the Alps: Kracauer and Benjamin on Cinema and Modernity. In L. Charney & V. R. Schwartz (Eds.), *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life* (p. 365). University of California.
- Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2004). *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. The Penguin Press.

- Hardt, Michael, & Negri, A. (2019). Empire, Twenty Years On. *New Left Review*, 120, 67–92.
- Hart, S. M. (2015). *Latin American Cinema*. Reaktion Books.
- Harvey-Kattou, L. (2018). Performing for Hollywood: Coloniality and the tourist image in Esteban Ramírez's Caribe/Caribbean (2004). *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas*, 15(2), 249–266.
- Harvey-Kattou, L. (2019). *Contested Identities in Costa Rica: Constructions of the Tico in Literature and Film*. Liverpool University Press.
- Harvey-Kattou, L., & Córdoba, A. A. (2018). Introduction: Central American Cinema in the Twenty-First Century. *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas*, 15(2), 137–141.
- Harvey, D. (1989). *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Blackwell.
- Harvey, D. (2004). The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession. *Social Register*, 40, 63–87.
- Hastrup, K., & Olwig, K. F. (1997). Introduction. In K. Hastrup & K. F. Olwig (Eds.), *Siting Culture*. Routledge.
- Hayward, S. (2000). *Cinema studies: The key concepts* (Second). Routledge.
- Hedges, I. (2015). *World Cinema and Cultural Memory*. Springer.
- Higbee, W., & Lim, S. (2010). Concepts of transnational cinema: Towards a critical transnationalism in film studies. In *Transnational Cinemas* (Vol. 1, pp. 7–21).
- Higson, A. (2006). The limiting imagination of national cinema. In E. E. and Terry Rowden (Ed.), *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader* (pp. 15–25). Routledge.
- Hirsch, M. (1997). *Family Frames: Photography, Narratives and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press.
- Hirsch, M. (2012). *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*. Columbia University Press.
- Hjort, M. (2005). *Small Nation, Global Cinema: The New Danish Cinema*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Hjort, M. (2010). *On the plurality of cinematic transnationalism* (N. and K. N. Durovicová, Ed.; pp. 12–33). Routledge.
- Hjort, M. (2011). Small Cinemas: How They Thrive and Why They Matter. *Mediascape: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, 7, 1–5.
- Hjort, M. (Ed.). (2013a). *The Education of the Filmmaker in Africa, the Middle East, and the Americas*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hjort, M. (Ed.). (2013b). *The Education of the Filmmaker in Europe, Australia, and Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan.

- Hjort, M., & Petrie, D. (Eds.). (2007). *The Cinema of Small Nations*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Hofstede, G. (1998). A Case for Comparing Apples with Oranges. *International journal of comparative. Sociology*, 39(3), 16–31.
- Holt, J., & Perren, A. (2019). Media Industries: A Decade in Review. In M. Deuze & M. Prenger (Eds.), *Making Media: Production, Practices, and Professions*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (1972). *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (J. Cumming, Trans.). Herder. (Original work published 1944)
- Huyssen, A. (2003). *Present pasts: Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*. Stanford University Press.
- Ingold, T. (2007). *Lines: A Brief History*. Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2011). *Being alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description*. Routledge.
- Ingold, T. (2015). *The life of lines*. Routledge.
- Iordanova, D. (2015). The film festival as an industry node. *Media Industries Journal*, 1(3).
- Iordanova, D. (2016). Foreword: The Film Festival and Film Culture's Transnational Essence. In de Valck, M., Kredell, B. & Loist, S. (Eds.), *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (pp. xi–xvii). Routledge.
- Iordanova, D. (2018). Cannes is not a film festival—It's a club for insiders. *The Conversation*. <http://theconversation.com/cannes-is-not-a-film-festival-its-a-club-for-insiders-96651>
- Iordanova, D. (Ed.). (2013). *The film festival reader*. St Andrews Film Studies.
- Iordanova, D., & Cheung, R. (Eds.). (2011). *Film Festival Yearbook. 3: Film Festivals and East Asia*. St Andrews Film Studies.
- Iordanova, D., & Rhyne, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Film Festival Yearbook 1: The Festival Circuit*. St Andrews Film Studies.
- Iordanova, D., & Van de Peer, S. (2014). *Film Festivals and The Middle East*. Film Studies.
- Iordanova, D., Martin-Jones, D., & Vidal, B. (Eds.). (2010). *Cinema at the Periphery*. Wayne State University Press.
- Irigoyen Sánchez, S., & García Prieto, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Memorias 30 años de la EICTV*. San Antonio de los Baños: Ediciones EICTV.
- Isin, E. F. (2012). Citizenship After Orientalism: An Unfinished Project. *Citizenship Studies*, 16(5), 563–572.
- Jameson, F. (2015). The Aesthetics of Singularity. *New Left Review*, 92, 129.

- Jay, P. (2010). *Global Matters: The Transnational Turn in Literary Studies*. Cornell University Press.
- Kaufman, J., & Simonton, D. (Eds.). (2013). *The Social Science of Cinema*. Oxford University Press.
- King, A. D. (Ed.). (1997). *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Kleinhans, C., & Lesage, J. (1986). Havana Film Festival report: New Latin American Cinema. *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 31, 70–71.
- Kogler, H. (2011). Hermeneutic Cosmopolitanism, or: Toward a Cosmopolitan Public Sphere. In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism* (pp. 225–242). Ashgate.
- Kraidy, M. (2005). *Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalization*. Temple University Press.
- La Parra-Pérez, P. (2018). A Film Festival Thinking Itself: The 66th San Sebastian International Film Festival. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 16, 146–152.
- Lampel, J., & Meyer, D. A. (2008). Guest editors' introduction. *Journal of Management Studies*, 45(6), 1025–1035.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We Have Never Been Modern* (C. Porter, Trans.). Harvard University Press.
- Lattanzi, M. L. (2016). Beyond Autobiography: Rethinking Documentary Production by the Children of the Disappeared. In M. G. Arenillas & M. Lazzara (Eds.), *Latin American Documentary Film in the New Millennium*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lauterwein, A., & Strauss-Hiva, C. (Eds.). (2009). *Rire, Mémoire, Shoah*. Editions de l'Éclat.
- Lee, T. (2016). Being there, taking place: Ethnography at the film festival. In *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (pp. 122–137). Routledge.
- Lefere, R., & Lie, N. (2016). *Nuevas perspectivas sobre la transnacionalidad del cine hispánico*. Brill.
- Lie, N. (2016). Lo transnacional en el cine hispánico: deslindes de un concepto. In R. Lefere & N. Lie (Eds.), *Nuevas Perspectivas sobre la Transnacionalidad del Cine Hispánico* (pp. 17–35). Brill.

- Loist, S. (2016). The film festival circuit: Networks, hierarchies, and circulation. In *Film Festivals: History, Theory, Method, Practice* (pp. 49–64). Routledge.
- López, A. M. (2014). A Poetics of the Trace. In *New Documentaries in Latin America*.
- Lord, S., & Zarza, Z. (2014). Intimate Spaces and Migrant Imaginaries: Sandra Gómez, Susana Barriga, and Heidi Hassan. In Vinicius Navarro & J. C. Rodríguez (Eds.), *New Documentaries in Latin America* (pp. 199–218). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Maguire, G. (2017). *The Politics of Postmemory: Violence and Victimhood in Contemporary Argentina Culture*. Springer.
- Mahler, A. G. (2018). *From the Tricontinental to the Global South: Race, Radicalism, and Transnational Solidarity*. Duke University Press.
- Maltby, R., Biltereyst, D., & Meers, P. (Eds.). (2011). *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Manovich, L. (2013). Visualizing Vertov. *Russian Journal of Communication*, 5(1), 44–55.
- Marlow-Mann, A. (2018). Regional Cinema: Micro-mapping and glocalisation. In *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* (pp. 323–336). Routledge.
- Martin-Jones, D., & Montañez, M. S. (2013). Uruguay disappears: Small cinemas, Control Z films, and the aesthetics and politics of auto-erasure. *Cinema Journal*, 53(1), 26–51.
- Massumi, B. (1995). The autonomy of affect. *Cultural Critique*, 31, 83–109.
- Massumi, B. (2015). *Politics of Affect*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mayer, V., Banks, M. J., & Caldwell, J. T. (Eds.). (2009). *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*. Routledge.
- Medrano, E., Borges, M., López, J., Carrión, G., Pérez Him, E., & Ramírez, S. (2020). *Days of light press kit*. diasdeluzfilm.com. diasdeluzfilm.com
- Memoria Verdad Justicia. (2015). *VII Muestra de Cine Internacional*. <https://www.memoriaverdadjusticia.com.gt/archivo>
- Mensah, J. (2008). *Neoliberalism and globalization in Africa: Contestations on the embattled continent*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception* (C. Smith, Trans.). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Middents, J. (2013). The First Rule of Latin American Cinema Is You Do Not Talk About Latin American Cinema: Notes on Discussing a Sense of

- Place in Contemporary Cinema. *Transnational Cinemas*, 4(2), 147–164.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2005). *The Idea of Latin America*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2018). On Pluriversality and Multipolar World Order: Decoloniality after Decolonization: Dewesternization after the Cold War. In B. Reiter (Ed.), *Constructing the Pluriverse: The Geopolitics of Knowledge* (pp. 90–116). Duke University Press.
- Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. (2018). *On Decoloniality. Concepts, Analytics. Praxis*. Duke University Press.
- Miller, J. (2011). Producing Quality: A Social Network Analysis of Coproduction Relationships. *International Journal of Communication*, 5, 1014–1033.
- Molina-Theissen v. Guatemala*, (2018) (testimony of Legal Information Institute). https://www.law.cornell.edu/women-and-justice/resource/molina-theissen_v_guatemala
- Moreiras, A. (2001). El otro duelo: A punta desnuda. In R. Nelly & A. Moreiras (Eds.), *Pensar en/la postdictadura*. Editorial Cuarto Propio.
- Moretti, F. (2000). Moretti, F. (2000). Conjectures on world literature. *New left review*, 54-68. *New Left Review*, 1, 54–68.
- Murphy, D. (2012). That’s Entertainment? Art, didacticism and the popular in francophone West African Cinema. In L. Khatib (Ed.), *Storytelling in World Cinemas: Forms* (Vol. 1, pp. 104–114). Columbia University Press.
- Naficy, H. (1999). Between Rocks and Hard Places: The Interstitial Mode of Production in Exilic Cinema. In H. Naficy (Ed.), *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place* (pp. 125–147). Routledge.
- Naficy, H. (2001). *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton university press.
- Nagib, L. (2006). Towards a positive definition of World Cinema. In Stephanie Dennison & L. Song Whee (Eds.), *Remapping World Cinema. Identity, culture and politics in film* (pp. 30–37).
- Nagib, L., Perriam, C., & Dudrah, R. (Eds.). (2012). *Theorizing World Cinema*. I.B. Tauris.
- Navarro, V., & Rodríguez, J. C. (2014). *New Documentaries in Latin America*. Springer.
- Nelly, R., & Moreiras, A. (2001). *Pensar en/la postdictadura*. Editorial Cuarto Propio.

- Newman, K. (2010). *Notes on transnational film theory. Decentered subjectivity, decentered capitalism* (N. and K. N. Durovicová, Ed.; pp. 3–11). Routledge.
- Nichols, B. (1994). Discovering Form, Inferring Meaning: New Cinemas and the Film Festival Circuit. *Film Quarterly*, 47(3), 16–30.
- Nornes, A. M. (2007). *Cinema Babel: Translating Global Cinema*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Nouzeilles, G. (2005). Postmemory Cinema and the Future of the past in Albertina Carri's *Los Rubios*. *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 14(3), 263–278. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13569320500382500>
- Odabasi, E. (2018). *A Multi-Method Analysis of the Berlin International Film Festival and the World Cinema Fund* [University of Massachusetts]. https://scholarworks.umass.edu/dissertations_2/1262
- Olesen, C. G., Masson, E., Van Gorp, J., Fossati, G., & Noordegraaf, J. (2016). Data-driven research for film history: Exploring the Jean Desmet collection. *Moving Image: The Journal of the Association of Moving Image Archivists*, 16(1), 82–105.
- Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. (2015). *Epistemology, Fieldwork, and Anthropology* (T. Alou, Trans.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ostrowska, D. (2010). International film festivals as producers of world cinema. *Cinéma & Cie*, 10(14–15), 145–150.
- Oyamburu, J. (2000a). Centroamérica está en el mapa. In Oyamburu, J. (Ed.), *Visiones del sector cultural en Centroamérica* (pp. 7–14). Centro Cultural de España.
- Oyamburu, J. (Ed.). (2000b). *Visiones del sector cultural en Centroamérica*. Centro Cultural de España.
- Papadimitriou, L., & Ruoff, J. (2016). *Film festivals: Origins and trajectories*. *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 14(1), 1–4.
- Paranaguá, P. A. (2003). *Tradición y modernidad en el cine de América Latina*. Fondo de Cultura Económica de España.
- Peirano, M. P. (2018). Film festivals and the internationalization of recent Chilean cinema. *Cuadernos.Info*, 43, 57–69. <https://doi.org/10.7764/cdi.43.1485>
- Peranson, M. (2009). First You Get the Power, Then You Get the Money: Two Models of Film Festivals. In Porton, R. (Ed.), *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals* (pp. 23–37). Wallflower.
- Pérez Melgosa, A. (2012). *Cinema and Inter-American Relations: Tracking Transnational Affect*. Routledge.

- Pérez, O. B., Fernández, J. A. S., & Puebla, E. E. (Eds.). (2019). *Panorama Audiovisual Iberoamericano 2019*. EGEDA. Entidad de Gestión de Derechos de los Productores Audiovisuales.
- Pérez, O. B., Fernández, J. A. S., & Puebla, E. E. (Eds.). (2020). *Panorama Audiovisual Iberoamericano 2020*. EGEDA. Entidad de Gestión de Derechos de los Productores Audiovisuales.
- Pick, Z. M. (2010). *The new Latin American cinema: A continental project*. University of Texas Press.
- Pines, J., & Willemen, P. (Eds.). (1989). The Third Cinema Question: Notes and Reflections. In *Questions of Third Cinema* (pp. 1–29). British Film Institute.
- Pines, J., & Willemen, P. (Eds.). (1994). *Questions of Third Cinema*. British Film Institute.
- Podalsky, L. (2012). *The Politics of Affect and Emotion in Contemporary Latin American Cinema: Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, and Mexico*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Porubčanská, T., Meers, P., & Biltreyst, D. (2020). Moving Pictures in Motion: Methods of Geographical Analysis and Visualisation in Comparative Research on Local Film Exhibition Using a Case Study of Brno and Ghent in 1952. *TMG Journal of Media History*, 23(1), 1–23.
- Powdermaker, H. (1951). *Hollywood: The Dream Factory. An Anthropologist Looks at the Movie Makers*. Secker & Warburg.
- Quandt, J. (2009). The sandwich process: Simon Field talks about polemics and poetry at film festivals. In R. Porton (Ed.), *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals* (pp. 53–80).
- Quintín. (2009). The Festival Galaxy. In R. Porton (Ed.), *Dekalog 3: On Film Festivals* (pp. 28–52). Wallflower Press.
- Rajadhyaksha, A. (2019). Haile Gerima's Harvest: 3000 Years in the Context of an Evolving Language of Human Rights. In M. Hjort & E. Jørholt (Eds.), *African Cinema and Human Rights* (pp. 163–182). Indiana University Press.
- Rashkin, E. J. (2001). *Women Filmmakers in Mexico: The Country of Which We Dream*. University of Texas Press.
- Red-CMI. (2014). *La propuesta impuesta/The imposed proposal*. CMI; RevelarTV; Emancipa Producciones.
- Renov, M. (1986). Re-Thinking Documentary: Toward a Taxonomy of Mediation. *Wide Angle: A Quarterly Journal of Film History Theory Criticism & Practice*, 8(3–4), 71–77.

- Richards, S. (2016). *The Queer Film Festival*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ricoeur, P. (2004). *Memory, History, Forgetting*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rist, P. H. (2014). *Historical Dictionary of South American Cinema*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Robertson, R. (2002). Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity. In M. Featherstone & S. and R. R. Lash (Eds.), *Global Modernities* (pp. 25–44). Sage.
- Rocha, C. (2019). *Brazilian Cinema at the Berlin International Film Festival*. Research in Film and History. <https://film-history.org/approaches/brazilian-cinema-berlin-international-film-festival>
- Rocha, G. (1965). Uma Estética da Fome. *Revista Civilização Brasileira*, 1(3), 165–170.
- Rocha, G. (1997). An Aesthetic of Hunger. In Martin, M. T. (Ed.), *New Latin American Cinema Vol One: Theory, Practices, and Transcontinental Articulations* (pp. 59–61). Wayne State University Press.
- Rodríguez Isaza, L. (2012). *Branding Latin America: Film festivals and the international circulation of Latin American films*. University of Leeds.
- Rodríguez Isaza, L. (2014). De ‘Gira’ por los Festivales: Patronos Migratorios del Cine Latinoamericano. *Secuencias: Revista de Historia del Cine*, 39, 65–82.
- Romero, T. (2015). Cine “a lo zurdo” en Nicaragua/Imperfect Cinema in Nicaragua. *ArtCultura*, 17(30), 57–65.
- Rosal Paz, R., & Jiménez, E. (2017). *20 años en las alas de Ícaro*. Festival Internacional de Cine Ícaro.
- Ross, M. (2011). The film festival as producer: Latin American films and Rotterdam’s Hubert Bals Fund. *Screen*, 52(2), 261–267.
- Ross, M. (2010). *South American Cinematic Culture: Policy, Production, Distribution and Exhibition*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Rovisco, M. (2013). Towards a Cosmopolitan Cinema: Understanding the Connection Between Borders, Mobility and Cosmopolitanism in the Fiction Film. *Mobilities*, 8(1), 148–165.
- Ruiz Figueroa, I. (2018, September 14). *ACAMPADOC* [Personal communication].
- Ruiz, R. (1995). *Poetics of Cinema* (B. Holmes, Trans.). Dis Voir.
- Sanabria, C. (2018). Princesas Rojas: La memoria traumática y la vivencia clandestina. *Hispanic Research Journal*, 19(1), 14–28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682737.2018.1418977>

- Sánchez, A. (2018, July 2). No habrá festival de cine en el 2018, dice viceministro de Cultura. *La Nación*.
<https://www.nacion.com/viva/cine/no-habra-festival-de-cine-en-el-2018-dice/XYIN6DOB55BW5MCKROQG5FG5OE/story/>
- Schroeder, P. A. (2014). *Tomas Gutierrez Alea: The Dialectics of a Filmmaker*. Routledge.
- Schroeder, P. A. (2016). *Latin American Cinema: A Comparative History*. University of California Press.
- Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, & Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Eds.). (1988a). *Hojas de Cine: Testimonios y documentos del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano: Centro y Sudamérica* (Vol. 1). Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, A.C.
- Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, & Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Eds.). (1988b). *Hojas de Cine: Testimonios y documentos del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano: Centroamérica y el Caribe* (Vol. 3). Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, A.C.
- Secretaría de Educación Pública, Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, & Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Eds.). (1988c). *Hojas de Cine: Testimonios y documentos del Nuevo Cine Latinoamericano: Mexico* (Vol. 2). Fundación Mexicana de Cineastas, A.C.
- Shaw, D. (2016). *European Co-production Funds and Latin American Cinema: Processes of Othering and Bourgeois Cinephilia in Claudia Llosas*. *La teta asustada*. Diogenes.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192116667011>
- Shaw, D. (2013). Deconstructing and Reconstructing Transnational Cinema. In Stephanie Dennison (Ed.), *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema. Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin American Film* (pp. 47–65). Tamesis Books.
- Shohat, E. (1997). Framing Post-Third-Worldist Culture: Gender and Nation in Middle Eastern/North African Film and Video. *Jouvert. A Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, 1(1), n.a.
- Shohat, E. (2004). Post-third-worldist culture: Gender, nation, and the cinema. In *Rethinking third cinema* (pp. 63–90). Routledge.
- Shohat, E., & Stam, R. (1994). *Unthinking Eurocentrism*. Routledge.
- Shohat, E., & Stam, R. (2014). *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the media*. Routledge.

- Siqueira, S. (1984). Interview with Pastor Vega: Havana Film Festival. *Jump Cut: A Review of Contemporary Media*, 29, 22–23.
- Sitnisky, C. (2018). Rethinking Contemporary Ecuadorian Cinema. In *The Precarious in the Cinemas of the Americas* (pp. 183–199). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Soberón Torchía, E. (1995). *Un Siglo de Cine* (Vol. 25). Secretaria de Educacion Publica.
- Soberón Torchía, E. (2013). *Los cines de América Latina y El Caribe: Parte 2 (1970-2010)*. Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV (EICTV).
- Soberón Torchía, E. (Ed.). (2012). *Los cines de América Latina y El Caribe: Parte 1 (1890-1969)*. Escuela Internacional de Cine y TV (EICTV).
- Soberón Torchía, E., & Del Vasto, C. (2003). *Breve historia del cine panameño (1895-2003)*. CIMAS.
- Solanas, F., & Getino, O. (1997). Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World. In M. T. Martin (Ed.), & J. Burton & M. T. Martin (Trans.), *New Latin American Cinema: Vol. Vol. 1* (pp. 33–58). Wayne State University Press.
- Stam, R. (1984). College Course File: Third World Cinema. *Journal of Film and Video*, 36(4), 50–61.
- Stam, R. (Ed.). (2000). *Film Theory: An Anthology*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Steinhart, D. (2006). Fostering International Cinema: The Rotterdam Film Festival, CineMart, and the Hubert Bals Fund. *Mediascape: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, 1(2), 1–13.
- Stelzner, U. (2019). Muestra de Cine Internacional Memoria Verdad Justicia. *Human Rights Film Network*.
<https://www.humanrightsfilmnetwork.org/filmfestival/muestra-de-cine-internacional-memoria-verdad-justicia>
- Stevens, K. (2016). *Australian Film Festivals: Audience, Place, and Exhibition Culture*. Springer.
- Stone, R., Cooke, P., Dennison, S., & Marlow-Mann, A. (2018a). Introduction: The Longitude and Latitude of World Cinema. In *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* (pp. 1–20). Routledge.
- Stone, R., Cooke, P., Dennison, S., & Marlow-Mann, A. (Eds.). (2018b). *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema*. Routledge.
- Stringer, J. (2001). Global cities and the international film economy. In M. S. and Tony Fitzmaurice (Ed.), *Cinema and the City: Film and Urban Societies in a Global Context* (pp. 134–144). Blackwell.

- Stringer, J. (2003). *Regarding film festivals*. Indiana University.
- Tascón, S. M. (2015). *Human Rights Film Festivals: Activism in Context*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- ten Have, P. (2004). *Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology*. Sage Publications.
- Thornton, N. (2017). Women's (r)evolutions in Mexican Cinema. In R. Stone, P. Cooke, S. Dennison, & A. Marlow-Mann (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to World Cinema* (pp. 122–135). Routledge.
- Thussu, D. (2006). *Media on the move: Global flow and contra-flow*. Routledge.
- Torres, M. (2018, December 9). Emir Kusturica, latinoamericano de corazón. *Diario del festival: Publicación oficial de la oficina del festival internacional del nuevo cine latinoamericano*, 3.
- Triana-Toribio, N. (2013). Building Latin American Cinema in Europe: Cine en Construcción/Cinéma en construction. In Stephanie Dennison (Ed.), *Contemporary Hispanic Cinema: Interrogating the Transnational in Spanish and Latin American Film* (pp. 89–112). Tamesis.
- Trujillo, L. L. (2020, May 24). Crítica: Hágase la luz, y 'Días de luz' se hizo. *Material Extra*. <https://materialexta.com/diaz-de-luz-enrique-perez-him-isabella-galvez-22may20/>
- Tsivian, Y. (2009). Cinematics, Part of the Humanities' Cyberinfrastructure. In Michael Ross, M. Grauer, & B. Freisleben (Eds.), *Digital Tools in Media Studies: Analysis and Research. An Overview* (pp. 93–100). Verlag.
- Turan, K. (2003). *Sundance to Sarajevo: Film festivals and the world they made*. University of California Press.
- Umaran, A. N., & Vallejo, A. (2017). Rethinking geolinguistic spaces: The San Sebastian Film Festival between Latin America and Europe. *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, 6(1), 227–236.
- Ureña, J. (2018, September 4). *El cine centroamericano* [Personal communication].
- Valdez, R. (2018). *The sentence*. HBO Films; HBO Max.
- Vallejo, A., & Peirano, M. P. (Eds.). (2017). *Film Festivals and Anthropology*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Vallejo, A., & Winton, E. (Eds.). (2020a). *Documentary Film Festivals: Changes, Challenges, Professional Perspectives* (Vol. 2). Palgrave Macmillan.

- Vallejo, A., & Winton, E. (Eds.). (2020b). *Documentary Film Festivals: Methods, History, Politics* (Vol. 1). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Van Gennep, A. (2011). *The Rites of Passage*. University of Chicago Press.
- Van Hemert, T. (2013). *International Acclaim: The Role(s) of the International Film Festival in Supporting Emerging Women's Cinema*. Queensland University of Technology.
- Vanhaelemeesch, J. (2018). Tracing borderscapes in three recent documentaries on Central American migration. *Studies in Spanish & Latin American Cinemas*, 15(1), 65–82.
https://doi.org/10.1386/slac.15.1.65_1
- Vanhaelemeesch, J. (2018). 20 Years of Ícaro spreading its wings: Ícaro International Film Festival. *NECSUS. European Journal of Media Studies*, 7(1), 273–281
- Vanhaelemeesch, J. (2019). Starpower, Industry-Building and Regional Cinema: IFF Panama 2019. *Film Criticism*, 43(3),
 doi:10.3998/fc.13761232.0043.312
- Vanhaelemeesch, J. (2020). The seeds multiply: the AcampaDOC International Documentary Film Festival. *Comunicación y Medios*, (42), 120–133. doi:10.5354/0719-1529.2020.57277
- Verhoeven, D., Bowles, K., & Arrowsmith, C. (2009). Mapping the Movies. In Michael Ross, M. Grauer, & B. Freisleben (Eds.), *Digital Tools in Media Studies: Analysis and Research. An Overview* (pp. 69–82). Verlag.
- Verhoeven, D., Musial, K., Palmer, S., Taylor, S., Abidi, S., Zemaityte, V., et al. (2020). Controlling for openness in the male-dominated collaborative networks of the global film industry. *PLoS ONE* 15(6): e0234460.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0234460>
- Villazana, L. (2009). *Transnational Financial Structures in the Cinema of Latin America: Programa Ibermedia in Study*. Verlag Dr. Müller.
- Virno, P. (2004). *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (I. Bertolotti, J. Cascaito, & A. Casson, Trans.). Semiotext(e).
- Wasserman, S., & Faust, K. (1994). *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wildman, W. J. (2010). An introduction to relational ontology. In J. Polkinghorne (Ed.), *The Trinity and an entangled world: Relationality in physical science and theology* (pp. 55–73). Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub.

- Williams, L. (1993). Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History, and the New Documentary. *Film Quarterly*, 46(3), 9–21.
- Winfrey, G. (2017, April 13). Werner Herzog Says Independent Film Is a ‘Myth,’ and America Is Stronger Than Trump. *IndieWire*. <https://www.indiewire.com/2017/04/werner-herzog-queen-of-the-desert-1201804807/>
- Wolf, S. (2016). El BAFICI como Ventana al Mundo del Cine Argentino. In R. Lefere & N. Lie (Eds.), *Nuevas Perspectivas sobre la Transnacionalidad del Cine Hispánico* (pp. 82–85). Brill.
- Wollen, P. (1972). Godard and counter cinema: Vent d’est. *Afterimage*, 4, 6–17.
- Wong, C. H. Y. (2011). *Film Festivals: Culture, People, and Power on the Global Screen*. Rutgers University Press.
- Yerushalmi, Y. H. (1988). Réflexions sur l’Oubli. In *Usages de l’Oubli* (pp. 7–22). Seuil.
- Zambrano, A., & Buvollen, P. H. (2007). *An evaluation of Casa Comal in Guatemala 2004-2007*. Norad Collected Reviews.

Corpus films

Id	Title	Category	Production country
1	1991	Film	Guatemala
2	"21/12"	Film	Costa Rica
3	11 Cipotes	Film	Honduras
4	12 Segundos	Film	Guatemala
5	2 + 1	Film	Guatemala
6	20 años después	Film	Guatemala
7	4 catrachos en apuro	Film	Honduras
8	500 Years	Film	Guatemala
9	6 años	Film	Guatemala
10	8 grados: Terremoto en Guatemala	Film	Guatemala
11	A common goal	Film	Honduras
12	A la deriva	Film	Panama
13	A mi lado	Film	Nicaragua
14	A ojos cerrados	Film	Costa Rica
15	Abrázame Como Antes	Film	Costa Rica
16	Abrazos	Film	Guatemala
17	AbUSed: The Postville Raid	Film	Guatemala
18	Adentro/Afuera	Film	Costa Rica
19	Agua fría de mar	Film	Costa Rica
20	Alborada	Film	El Salvador
21	Algunas dimensiones de Efraín Recinos	Film	Guatemala
22	Almas de la medianoche	Film	Honduras
23	Amaurosis	Film	Costa Rica

24	Ambiguity: Crónica de un sueño americano	Film	Guatemala
25	Amor viajero	Film	Costa Rica
26	Amor y frijoles	Film	Honduras
27	Amores de película	Film	Honduras
28	Anita, la cazadora de insectos	Film	Honduras
29	Apego	Film	Costa Rica
30	Aquí me quedo	Film	Guatemala
31	Aquí y ahora	Film	Costa Rica
32	Asalto al sueño	Film	Guatemala
33	Asesinato en el Meneo	Film	Costa Rica
34	Atrás hay relámpagos	Film	Costa Rica
35	Bomberos	Film	Nicaragua
36	Bomberos al Rescate	Film	Honduras
37	Breaking the fence - Refugees of a hidden war	Film	Guatemala
38	Brigade	Film	Honduras
39	Burwa Dii Ebo (El viento y el agua)	Film	Panama
40	Buscando a Marcos Ramírez	Film	Costa Rica
41	Cachada: The opportunity	Film	El Salvador
42	Café con Sabor a mi Tierra	Film	Honduras
43	Caja 25	Film	Panama
44	Callos	Film	Costa Rica
45	Calypsonians	Film	Panama
46	Caos en la ciudad	Film	Panama
47	Cápsulas	Film	Guatemala
48	Cárcel de Árboles	Film	Guatemala
49	Caribe	Film	Costa Rica
50	Carla's Song	Film	Nicaragua

51	Carnavales de Panamá	Film	Panamá
52	Cascos Indomables	Film	Costa Rica
53	Ceniza Negra	Film	Costa Rica
54	Chance	Film	Panamá
55	Children of the Diaspora: For Peace and Democracy	Film	El Salvador
56	Chirripó	Film	Costa Rica
57	Collect Call	Film	Guatemala
58	Cómprame Un Revólver	Film	Guatemala
59	Congelado en Rusia	Film	Panamá
60	Contraste	Film	El Salvador
61	Costa Rica, S.A.	Film	Costa Rica
62	Creeré	Film	Guatemala
63	Cuando te hablen de amor	Film	Honduras
64	Cuentos y leyendas de Honduras	Film	Honduras
65	Curundú	Film	Panamá
66	De Lo Que Sea	Film	Honduras
67	De niña a madre	Film	Nicaragua
68	Del amor y otros demonios	Film	Costa Rica
69	Despertar	Film	Costa Rica
70	Día de Furia	Film	Costa Rica
71	Días de clase	Film	Nicaragua
72	Días de Luz	Film	Panamá
73	Días y noches entre guerra y paz	Film	Guatemala
74	Diciembres	Film	Panamá
75	Distancia	Film	Guatemala
76	Donaire y esplendor	Film	Panamá
77	Donde acaban los caminos	Film	Guatemala

78	Donde duerme el horror	Film	Costa Rica
79	Donde nace el sol	Film	Guatemala
80	Dos Aguas	Film	Costa Rica
81	Dos Fridas	Film	Costa Rica
82	Dreaming Nicaragua	Film	Nicaragua
83	El amanecer del sexto sol: viaje en el Chiapas zapatista	Film	Nicaragua
84	El Baile de la Gacela	Film	Costa Rica
85	El Buen Cristiano	Film	Guatemala
86	El cadáver exquisito	Film	El Salvador
87	El calor después de la lluvia	Film	Costa Rica
88	El Camino	Film	Costa Rica
89	El Camino de la Negrita	Film	Costa Rica
90	El Capitán Orellana y la Aldea Endemoniada	Film	Guatemala
91	El cielo rojo	Film	Costa Rica
92	El cielo rojo 2	Film	Costa Rica
93	El codo del diablo	Film	Costa Rica
94	El compromiso	Film	Costa Rica
95	El corazón de la montaña	Film	Guatemala
96	El Cuarto de los Huesos	Film	El Salvador
97	El despertar de las hormigas	Film	Costa Rica
98	El día que me quieras	Film	Nicaragua
99	El eco del dolor de mucha gente	Film	Guatemala
100	El espíritu de mi mamá	Film	Honduras
101	El Fin	Film	Costa Rica
102	El inmortal	Film	Nicaragua
103	El Libro Supremo	Film	El Salvador
104	El lugar más feliz del mundo	Film	Costa Rica

105	El ojo del tiburón	Film	Nicaragua
106	El Paletero	Film	Honduras
107	El porvenir	Film	Honduras
108	El Problematico	Film	Nicaragua
109	El profe Omar	Film	Guatemala
110	El profe Omar 2	Film	Guatemala
111	El profe Omar 3	Film	Guatemala
112	El Psicópata	Film	Costa Rica
113	El puente	Film	Panama
114	El puma de Quelepa	Film	El Salvador
115	El Regreso	Film	Costa Rica
116	El Regreso de Lencho	Film	Guatemala
117	El Sanatorio	Film	Costa Rica
118	El señor de Esquipulas	Film	Guatemala
119	El silencio de Neto	Film	Guatemala
120	El sonido de las cosas	Film	Costa Rica
121	El Tamalón Navideño	Film	Guatemala
122	El techo	Film	Nicaragua
123	El Trofeo	Film	Costa Rica
124	El último comandante	Film	Costa Rica
125	El Vuelo Del Azacuán	Film	Guatemala
126	El Xendra	Film	Honduras
127	Elogio del cine - Pasión por la realidad	Film	Guatemala
128	En un rincón del alma	Film	El Salvador
129	Enredados, la confusión	Film	Costa Rica
130	Entonces Nosotros	Film	Costa Rica
131	Entre los muertos	Film	El Salvador
132	Ergonomía para Diana	Film	Costa Rica

133	Es hora de enamorarse	Film	Panama
134	Espejismo	Film	Costa Rica
135	Evidencia Invisible	Film	Guatemala
136	Exorcismo Documentado	Film	Guatemala
137	Familia	Film	Panama
138	Fe	Film	Guatemala
139	Finding Oscar	Film	Guatemala
140	First Lady of the Revolution	Film	Costa Rica
141	Fuerzas de Honor	Film	Honduras
142	Gallo Gallina	Film	Guatemala
143	Gasolina	Film	Guatemala
144	Gestación	Film	Costa Rica
145	Gilbert, héroe de dos pueblos	Film	Nicaragua
146	Girasoles de Nicaragua	Film	Nicaragua
147	Granito	Film	Guatemala
148	Great Love: Portraits from El Salvador	Film	El Salvador
149	Guatemala 1982	Film	Guatemala
150	Habitados de olvido	Film	Nicaragua
151	Hasta El Sol Tiene Manchas	Film	Guatemala
152	Heredera del Viento	Film	Nicaragua
153	Héroe transparente	Film	Panama
154	Historia de un Óscar	Film	Costa Rica
155	Historias del canal	Film	Panama
156	Hombre de fe	Film	Costa Rica
157	Hostal Don Tulio	Film	Guatemala
158	Huaquero: Profano de las Sombras	Film	Panama
159	Hunting Party	Film	Guatemala

160	Ilegítimo	Film	Panamá
161	In the light	Film	Honduras
162	Insomnio	Film	Costa Rica
163	Insular	Film	Guatemala
164	Invasión	Film	Panamá
165	Isla de Flores: Entre cuento y cuento	Film	Guatemala
166	Italia 90	Film	Costa Rica
167	Ixcan	Film	Guatemala
168	Ixcanul	Film	Guatemala
169	José	Film	Guatemala
170	Juego de Fuego	Film	Guatemala
171	Juimolos	Film	Costa Rica
172	Kenke	Film	Panamá
173	Kimura	Film	Panamá
174	Konsten att döda en politiker	Film	Guatemala
175	La Antojología de Carl Rigby	Film	Nicaragua
176	La Asfixia	Film	Guatemala
177	La batalla del volcán	Film	El Salvador
178	La Bodega	Film	Guatemala
179	La Caja de Pandora	Film	Costa Rica
180	La Casa de Enfrente	Film	Guatemala
181	La casa encanta	Film	Guatemala
182	La casa más grande del mundo	Film	Guatemala
183	La estación seca	Film	Panamá
184	La felicidad del sonido	Film	Panamá
185	La fuerza del balón	Film	Panamá
186	La isla de los niños perdidos	Film	Nicaragua

187	La Isla: Archives of a Tragedy	Film	Guatemala
188	La Jaula	Film	Honduras
189	La Jaula de Oro	Film	Guatemala
190	La Limpia, La Chancha y la Santa Maria	Film	Honduras
191	La llegada de Karla	Film	Nicaragua
192	La Llorona	Film	Guatemala
193	La Palabra de Pablo	Film	El Salvador
194	La Pantalla Desnuda	Film	Nicaragua
195	La Pasión de María Elena	Film	Nicaragua
196	La Prenda	Film	Guatemala
197	La propuesta impuesta	Film	Guatemala
198	La ReBusqueda	Film	El Salvador
199	La Región Perdida	Film	Costa Rica
200	La sangre en el cuerpo	Film	El Salvador
201	La sirena y el buzo	Film	Nicaragua
202	La Vaca	Film	Guatemala
203	La Vuelta en U	Film	Guatemala
204	La Yuma	Film	Nicaragua
205	Las 50 Vueltas	Film	Costa Rica
206	Las Caras de Una Ciudad	Film	Guatemala
207	Las Cartas de Carmelo	Film	Honduras
208	Las cartas de Lucía	Film	El Salvador
209	Las Cruces... Poblado Próximo	Film	Guatemala
210	Las Marimbas del Infierno	Film	Guatemala
211	Las mujeres del Wangki	Film	Nicaragua
212	Lecciones para una guerra	Film	Guatemala
213	Lo que soñó Sebastián	Film	Guatemala

214	Locos Al Poder	Film	Panama
215	Looking For Palladin	Film	Guatemala
216	Los Civilizadores - Alemanes en Guatemala	Film	Guatemala
217	Los Fantasmas de Montenegro	Film	Honduras
218	Los Gigantes No Existen	Film	Guatemala
219	Los Maes de la Esquina	Film	Costa Rica
220	Los Ofendidos	Film	El Salvador
221	Los puños de una nación	Film	Panama
222	Los Vargas Brothers	Film	Costa Rica
223	Lubaraun (al encuentro de...)	Film	Nicaragua
224	Lucía	Film	Guatemala
225	Luis y Laura	Film	Guatemala
226	Luz	Film	Guatemala
227	Luz en las tinieblas	Film	Guatemala
228	Maikol Yordan 2: La cura lejana	Film	Costa Rica
229	Maikol Yordan de Viaje Perdido	Film	Costa Rica
230	Maimouna - La vie devant moi	Film	Honduras
231	Majbal Qa Be	Film	Guatemala
232	Mala Nova El Tesoro De La Montaña Maldita	Film	Honduras
233	Malacrianza	Film	El Salvador
234	Manos de Piedra: La verdadera historia de Roberto Durán	Film	Panama
235	Marasmo	Film	Costa Rica

236	María Chinchilla: El Diario de una Mártir	Film	Guatemala
237	María en tierra de nadie	Film	El Salvador
238	Más que hermanos	Film	Panama
239	Matlatl	Film	El Salvador
240	Mayordomo	Film	Costa Rica
241	Medea	Film	Costa Rica
242	Memorias	Film	El Salvador
243	Mi ayer será tu mañana	Film	Nicaragua
244	Morazán	Film	Honduras
245	Mujeres apasionadas	Film	Costa Rica
246	Mujeres en el acto	Film	Costa Rica
247	Muñecas rusas	Film	Costa Rica
248	Nebaj	Film	Guatemala
249	NICA/ragüense	Film	Nicaragua
250	Nina y Laura	Film	Costa Rica
251	No bajen los brazos	Film	Nicaragua
252	No hay tierra sin dueño	Film	Honduras
253	No Todos Los Sueños Han Sido Soñados	Film	Nicaragua
254	Norman	Film	Guatemala
255	Nosotros	Film	Guatemala
256	Nosotros las piedras	Film	Costa Rica
257	Nuestras madres	Film	Guatemala
258	Nunco estuvo solo	Film	El Salvador
259	Ojalá el sol me esconda	Film	Guatemala
260	Olancho	Film	Honduras
261	One dollar (el precio de la vida)	Film	Panama
262	Otros 4 litros	Film	Guatemala

263	Ovnis en Zacapa	Film	Guatemala
264	Padre	Film	Costa Rica
265	Palabras mágicas (para romper un encantamiento)	Film	Nicaragua
266	Panamá Al Brown: Cuando el puño se abre	Film	Panama
267	Panamá Radio	Film	Panama
268	Paradise Lost	Film	Panama
269	Paraiso for Sale	Film	Panama
270	Password: Una mirada en la oscuridad	Film	Costa Rica
271	Pocos, Suelos y Locos	Film	Honduras
272	Pol	Film	Guatemala
273	Polvo	Film	Guatemala
274	Polvo de Gallo	Film	El Salvador
275	Polvora en el corazón	Film	Guatemala
276	Pontif-Ex	Film	Nicaragua
277	Por las plumas	Film	Costa Rica
278	Presos	Film	Costa Rica
279	Princesas Rojas	Film	Costa Rica
280	Puerto el Triunfo	Film	El Salvador
281	Puerto Padre	Film	Costa Rica
282	Puro Mula	Film	Guatemala
283	Queremos tanto a Bruno	Film	Costa Rica
284	Quién dijo miedo?	Film	Honduras
285	Quién paga la cuenta?	Film	Honduras
286	Reinas	Film	Panama
287	Relentless	Film	El Salvador
288	Resistir para vivir, resistir para avanzar	Film	Guatemala

289	Resonancia	Film	Guatemala
290	Rompiendo la ola	Film	Panama
291	Roque Dalton, fusilemos la noche	Film	El Salvador
292	Rosado Furia	Film	Costa Rica
293	Roza	Film	Guatemala
294	Ruta de la luna	Film	Panama
295	Salsipuedes	Film	Panama
296	Seguimos vivos	Film	Guatemala
297	Semana U	Film	Costa Rica
298	Septiembre, Un Llanto en Silencio	Film	Guatemala
299	Seré asesinado	Film	Guatemala
300	Serpiente Emplumada	Film	Guatemala
301	Simbiosis: Un documental sobre humanos y corales	Film	Costa Rica
302	Sistiaga, une histoire basque	Film	El Salvador
303	Sobre Tigres y Quijotes	Film	Guatemala
304	Sobreviviendo Guazapa	Film	El Salvador
305	Soy de Zacapa	Film	Guatemala
306	Suenan las campanas	Film	Panama
307	Taxi VIP	Film	Honduras
308	Te presento a mi novio	Film	Costa Rica
309	Te Prometo Anarquía	Film	Guatemala
310	Temblores	Film	Guatemala
311	Tercer Mundo	Film	Costa Rica
312	Territorio Liberado	Film	Guatemala
313	Testamento	Film	Guatemala
314	The Zwickys	Film	Honduras
315	Tierra adentro	Film	Panama

316	Tierra de Nadie	Film	Guatemala
317	Todos somos Oscar	Film	Costa Rica
318	Toque de lo alto	Film	Costa Rica
319	Toque De Queda	Film	Guatemala
320	Toque de Queda (HON)	Film	Honduras
321	Tr3s Marias	Film	Costa Rica
322	Trapos Sucios	Film	Honduras
323	Tres Caminos	Film	El Salvador
324	Trip	Film	Guatemala
325	Tú no estás en mis zapatos	Film	Costa Rica
326	Un día de sol	Film	Guatemala
327	Un loco verano catracho	Film	Honduras
328	Un lugar en el Caribe	Film	Honduras
329	Un regalo esencial	Film	Costa Rica
330	Un Trozo de Azul	Film	Nicaragua
331	Una loca navidad catracha	Film	Honduras
332	Una noche de calypso	Film	Panama
333	Unos pocos con valor	Film	Honduras
334	V.I.P.: La Otra Casa	Film	Guatemala
335	Velemos contentos	Film	Guatemala
336	Viaje	Film	Costa Rica
337	Violeta Al Fin	Film	Costa Rica
338	Voces Inocentes	Film	El Salvador
339	Volar	Film	El Salvador
340	Welcome to my World	Film	Guatemala
341	Y los Tamales?	Film	Honduras
342	Yang sika Miskitu (Yo soy Miskito)	Film	Nicaragua

343	Yo no me llamo Ruben Blades	Film	Panama
344	Yo soy de donde hay un río	Film	Nicaragua

Summary in Dutch

Raakvlakken: Filmculturen en filmfestivals in Centraal-Amerika

Het productievolume van Centraal-Amerikaanse films is de voorbije jaren sterk toegenomen. Op minder dan een kwart eeuw zijn er vier keer meer langspeelfilms uitgebracht dan in de eerste honderd jaar aan film in Centraal-Amerika. Ondanks een gebrek aan structurele ondersteuning vanuit de zes respectievelijke overheden is er sprake van een culturele heropleving na decennia aan, al dan niet gewapende, conflicten in het subcontinent. De recente professionalisering en internationale zichtbaarheid van deze kleine en precaire filmculturen viel samen met de oprichting van een aantal nationale filmfestivals in Costa Rica en Guatemala, in een poging tot culturele reorganisatie die volgde op de ondertekening van de laatste regionale Vredesakkoorden tussen overheden en revolutionaire partijen in 1996. Bij gebrek aan uitgebouwde culturele industrieën en staatssteun stuurde de culturele sector in Centraal-Amerika erop aan om, naar het historische voorbeeld van de Nieuwe Latijns-Amerikaanse Cinemas, het filmfestival van Havana en de legendarische filmschool in San Antonio de los Baños in Cuba, zich te organiseren aan de hand van regionale ontmoetingen en elkaar te steunen inzake onderwijs over, productie en verspreiding van film. Het naoorlogse culturele vacuüm werd zo nagenoeg op organische wijze ingevuld door een reeks evenementen die zich al snel een regionaal bereik toemeten, en filmfestivals werden belangrijke platformen voor filmculturele ontwikkelingen binnen het subcontinent.

Dit werk bestudeert hoe filmfestivals hebben bijgedragen aan de ontwikkeling van filmculturen in Centraal-Amerika sinds het ondertekenen van de Vredesakkoorden in 1996. Om deze vraag te beantwoorden werd er een uitvoerig theoretisch kader onderbouwd dat Centraal-Amerikaanse cinema's beschouwt als onafhankelijke, kleine, precaire en regionale filmculturen met wortels in de ruimere geschiedenis van Nieuwe Latijns-Amerikaanse Cinemas en sterk geallieerd aan Cubaanse ideologisch-artistische processen. De bevindingen uit het theoretische onderzoek hebben geleid tot het opstellen van een drievoudige thematische onderverdeling in het analytische deel, respectievelijk met een focus op filmfestivals in de regio, op filmproducerende gemeenschappen en op de creatieve notie van *postmemory* als zijnde sterk karakteristiek met betrekking tot het huidige culturele landschap in Centraal-Amerika, dat zich in een fase bevindt waarin het recente

tumultueuze en traumatische verleden actief verwerkt wordt om zodoende de toekomst vorm en kleur te geven.

Na het literatuuronderzoek werd er een vijftal maanden aan etnografisch veldwerk verricht op tien filmfestivals in Centraal-Amerika en Cuba. De empirische bevindingen uit het veldwerk hebben nadien geleid tot het opstellen van een relationele dataset waarin 344 films werden opgenomen, als ook 5,607 individuen die hebben meegewerkt aan de productie van deze films. De dataset liet toe om een netwerkanalyse uit te voeren, waarbij er gezocht werd naar de connecties in en tussen de producerende gemeenschappen doorheen de regio, om deze te toetsen aan de ervaringen uit het veldwerk. In de zes bestudeerde landen werden er dan ook zes gemeenschappen gevonden, die evenwel sterk verbonden zijn onderling door een aantal katalyserende sleutelfiguren die een centrale rol opnemen in het netwerk van Centraal-Amerikaanse filmproductie. Uit de analyse blijkt dat de spilfiguren in het netwerk niet enkel regisseurs zijn, maar ook producenten, festivalorganisatoren en anderen met film-technische profielen zoals geluidsspecialisten of camerapersoneel. Filmproductie wordt op deze manier in de verf gezet als een collectieve inspanning.

De drie geanalyseerde thema's, zijnde filmfestivals, productienetwerken en audiovisueel geheugendiscours, wijzen erop dat filmfestivals in de regio zich ontwikkeld hebben als multifunctionele interfaces. Ze verzekeren niet enkel de vertoning van Centraal-Amerikaanse films, ze staan ook in voor de regionale mobilisatie en het netwerken van filmprofessionals en ze treden bovendien op als bemiddelaars van een gewelddadig verleden. Tegen economische, sociale en politieke verwachtingen in worden Centraal-Amerikaanse filmmakers gekenmerkt door een gedeelde energie om kleine filmculturen van binnenuit te versterken en uit te breiden, om culturele dan wel economische redenen.